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*New Bern*  
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Reminiscences of Miss Mary and the Attnore-Oliver House .....	3
James R. Gooding	
Hurricanes: They Do Happen Here .....	11
Mary Osborne Conover	
New Bern as a Shipping Center .....	16
Virginia Kirwan	
Local Matters .....	24
All Saints Chapel .....	26
Mary Baker	
Elijah Newell Letters Tell of Life in New Bern During the Civil War .....	31
Dot DeWeerd	
Book Review .....	37

**JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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## REMINISCENCES OF MISS MARY AND THE ATTMORE-OLIVER HOUSE

James R. Gooding

In spite of a 30-year difference in ages, Mary Taylor Oliver and my father were close friends. She made a vivid impression on everyone; I clearly remember being taken to visit her when I could scarcely walk. When I was three, my mother and father and I occupied the western half of her home while a house was built for us on East Front Street. Miss Mary, who objected to any disturbance not created by herself, must have got more than she bargained for when my father acquired a noisy dog and a guinea hen that flew to the rooftop and woke the neighborhood at dawn every day.

My father died shortly after we left Miss Mary's in the fall of 1920. Later, in the winter of 1922-23, my mother and I moved back, along with my grandmother. Miss Mary felt the house was too large for just herself and Miss Mollie Heath, who lived with her. Besides, she wanted the place occupied in summer while they were away. She had a kitchen built for us on part of the back porch.

Vigorous and quick, she must have been in her 60's then. She was distinguished looking--tall, slender, erect and well-groomed. Her hair was white, her complexion florid. Her eyes were remarkable--a dark, cloudy blue. Although rough in manner, she used no bad language, speaking in a hoarse, cultivated voice that reached everywhere.

If she took a notion, Miss Mary went to the head of a line at the bank and demanded the

teller's immediate attention. Non-Episcopalians who chanced to meet her on the path through the churchyard were ordered off the premises. She demanded that black people clear the sidewalk when they saw her coming. Door-to-door salesmen were sent from her front steps to the back, where she vented her fury upon them for wasting her precious time.

Neither Miss Mollie nor Maggie Brimpage, the cook, were spared. Miss Mollie, an expert at the soft answer that turneth away wrath, weathered the storms quite well. Maggie, however, did the shopping and found herself in the position of surrogate for storekeepers who, according to Miss Mary, were no better than highwaymen. She declared her refusal to pay such prices; then, grumbling, handed over the money.

She said she had the best cook in town; and while both ladies ate moderately, they ate well. Their noon dinner was served during Miss Mollie's hour off from teaching first grade pupils at Central School. They usually prepared their own evening meal, but if guests were coming to supper Maggie remained long past her mid-afternoon quitting time. She was a heavy, awkward, shy woman, unnerved by the prospect of serving strangers. Decked out in the fancy apron and cap that Miss Mary had her wear for company, she might have looked happier before being hanged.

During preparations for a supper party Miss Mary became hearty and almost playful, barking orders right and left. Perhaps to add elegance to the occasion she altered the names of the persons she addressed. Miss Mollie was "Mol-LEE". And Maggie "Margue-REET"--with every vowel given its due. I still hear her little shriek on the last syllable.

The lengthy suppers were served in courses--soup, salad, baked fish, a roast and vegetables, a fancy dessert, coffee, tea. There were hot

baking powder biscuits, crisp beaten biscuits, jellies and conserves, fruit and perhaps a bowl of pecans from the trees in the backyard. My mother worked for a wholesale grocery firm, and would obtain country hams and other items for Miss Mary, who often sent some of an especially fine dish over to us. Maggie's food looked as good as it tasted. After a party she brought desserts. I recall a sort of trifle or tipsy pudding, syllabub in tall, stemmed glasses, and (not to my taste) dark coffee gelatine with mounds of whipped cream.

Supper first, then serious business--bridge. The game determined that the number of guests was usually two or six. (Space in the dining room scarcely permitted service for twelve.) Miss Mary played to win, and on the day after would berate Miss Mollie for lapses in judgment when they were partners.

Temper tantrums aside, the two got along well together. In all those years we were aware of only one serious disagreement. Miss Mary finally went too far, and for once Miss Mollie spoke up--loud and clear. "Then, Mary, I believe I shall have to leave," she said, or words to that effect. After a stunned silence Miss Mary declared she would never hear of such a thing. She apologized--abjectly. The transformation may have been temporary, but it was touching.

My mother felt Miss Mary's belligerence was a cover for insecurity. True, she had an ample income. But the country was going to the dogs, while Federal, state, and local authorities, plus countless other scoundrels, were after her money! Every funeral she attended was a reminder that her circle was growing smaller, and that Miss Mollie and Maggie, both so necessary for her well-being, weren't getting any younger. And she would be too proud to make demands upon her only relatives, distant cousins who visited her in early summer after

Miss Mollie went to the mountains at the close of school, and before Miss Mary followed in early July.

Both ladies read best sellers and went to the movies. When the "talkies" arrived in the late 1920's, Miss Mary discovered that Maggie had never seen a motion picture. She felt something must be done. She might have persuaded Maggie to go to the black movie near Five Points; with garish posters and burned out lights in the marquee, it looked like fun. That, however, was not quite what she had in mind. She went to see Mr. Kehoe at the Athens Theater on Pollock Street and arranged to take Maggie to a matinee. They had the normally closed balcony all to themselves. I wish I could recall the name and nature of the picture deemed suitable. Even more, Miss Mary being an outspoken segregationist, I wish I knew who sat where.

Maggie's life away from 93 Broad Street was an unknown. She seemed so solitary that my mother and grandmother assumed she was a spinster. Then one of my uncles heard that some men, while moving a piano up a steep flight of steps on Hancock Street, tried to hire the help of a roughly dressed idler who was watching their efforts. When he showed no interest in the offer, he was asked, "Don't you need work"? He said he hadn't needed to work since he married Miss Mary Oliver's cook!

If there were a husband, he was not around the time I went to Maggie's house. On a fall morning she sent word that she was too ill to come to work for a while. Miss Mary, very excited, declared she couldn't get along without Maggie and did much for her comfort.

On a Sunday afternoon my mother and I paid a visit. Maggie lived in a section with unpaved streets near the electric plant. The yard of the two-room house was dirt, bare, and swept, with shrubbery and potted plants at the door. A

neat garden had been harvested of all but a few cabbages. Inside, Maggie was sitting up, swathed in a quilt. She always reeked of tobacco as a consequence of dipping snuff, but now the doctor must have forbidden it. Without the privet twig she used for dipping in the corner of her mouth, she didn't look like herself.

One of the perquisites for servants was food to take home. After Maggie returned to work, Miss Mary would tell her to be sure to take enough. The two seemed to have known each other forever, and I believe that Maggie's mother had worked there--and had perhaps been a family slave.

Miss Mary was not a lady of leisure. She continued to operate, in a small way, her father's casualty insurance agency. His office had been the southeast room, which now was her office, as well as being her dining room. (Just outside, in the back hall, was a massive safe for storing business records along with the household silver.) When her desk was closed, only the typewriter table suggested the room's double purpose. The typewriter itself was a curio, circa 1910, made by the Oliver Typewriter Company! When I asked if there were a relationship, Miss Mary laughed and said she supposed so, which was strangely noncommittal. She never volunteered information, but was usually willing to answer questions--and even to swank a bit--about her forebears and connections. One is, if they're the best.

One summer she skipped the mountains for a guided tour of Europe. The tour management got her across the Atlantic and back without an international incident. Of the souvenirs she brought back, I especially remember the ceramic figurine of a brown and white spaniel. She placed it on the table between the front windows in her living room. One afternoon as I came home from school, Dr. Primrose, a dignified

gentleman of Miss Mary's generation, was being welcomed at the front door. Half an hour later I heard anguished cries, and drew near to see what had happened. Apparently, the doctor had put his cane across the arms of a chair, and in retrieving it had swept the china dog off the table, breaking it. Apologies were useless. He had no business putting his walking stick on her chair in the first place, she said; she had a hatrack in the hall for such things. The doctor's departure was less cordial than his reception.

The figurine was not in character. There were few such gewgaws around. And no family photographs. When relatives visited us in summer, we were welcome to put them in the ladies' bedrooms. One year there was a small photograph in a silver frame on Miss Mary's bureau--of an attractive, fair haired young lady, richly dressed. My mother said it was Miss Mary. As difficult as it was to believe she was ever young, I recognized the haughty expression.

She never encouraged an exchange of confidences, but once she mentioned to my mother that as a young girl she had been on the verge of marriage. And broke off the engagement when she became convinced that her fiancé couldn't measure up to her standards. Who could?

The only other photograph I saw was one she produced to show how the back yard looked before the brick kitchen burned. I vaguely recollect a stable or carriage house and a horse drawn vehicle. Several years ago I tried to distinguish the outbuildings in the large panoramic print of New Bern in the New York Public Library's collection, showing the town as it appeared in (I believe) 1863. The viewpoint is from above Bridgeton and includes familiar buildings as well as the encampment of Union troops in the National Cemetery area. 93 Broad Street is easy to locate, but the distance



causes a confusion of roof angles behind it.

In 1930, after the Wall Street crash and local bank failures, Miss Mary sang the blues like everyone else. She was ruined--she must make sacrifices--she doubted she could continue keeping a servant--then what would poor Maggie do? But instead of going to the poorhouse she went to the mountains, as always, and life went on as before. She may have lost a few hundred dollars in checking accounts, but she was certainly too cautious to invest in stocks or corporate bonds. Treasuries and a Postal Savings account were about her speed.

You can see that I remember little about Miss Mollie; she lacked the qualities for melodrama. In appearance she was a frail little person, who wore a pince-nez and had a twinkle in her eye. I believe she came to New Bern at the start of her teaching career; she remained for the rest of her life. When people inquired how long she taught there, she would say, "Since the flood". And if they asked, "The flood of 19\_\_?"--assuming she meant a year when the Neuse and Trent Rivers overflowed, she referred them to the Book of Genesis. That was her favorite joke.

Miss Mary and I got along together fairly well when I was small, but our dispositions didn't improve with age. She became more bossy and I rebellious, and as obnoxious an adolescent as ever lived. Fortunately we saw little of each other after I went away to boarding school at 14. When I was 17, I left New Bern after my mother's death, and never saw Miss Mary again. Relatives gave me news of her. She survived Miss Mollie and Maggie, and spent several years as a bedridden, hospital patient before her death.

It's regrettable that I have remembered Miss Mary's eccentricities better than her virtues, of which she had many. So in closing let me try to atone. She had great integrity, wanting

nothing that wasn't hers, while prepared to defend that tooth and nail. She never gossiped or asked prying questions--or told boring stories, as I fear I have done here. She was articulate, intelligent, well-informed, and shrewd. I admire her toughness, and I admire her as a person of true sentiment who despised sentimentality. When something got past her defenses and won her sympathy, she was embarrassed, gruff, and tongue-tied.

Reading back, I fear I've given wrong impressions. The household was actually a quiet one. Miss Mary did not erupt hourly, or even daily, and the excitement was soon over. And in defense of our waning reputations, let me assure you that my mother and grandmother and I did not listen at keyholes. Except in dead of winter, Miss Mary never closed a door; and even when she did, wood and plaster were slight obstacles to that voice.

## HURRICANES: THEY DO HAPPEN HERE

Mary Osborne Conover

On August 9, 1974, New Bern was struck by a hurricane that blew in and out without damage to the city, its citizens or its environs. Hurricane Bernice, of that date, was a "planned hurricane"--a rehearsal based upon past experience and knowledge to minimize future disaster.

Made vulnerable by coastal location and low elevation, the city has indeed experienced some very big blows and suffered their accompanying floods. Every so often, the normally benign Neuse and Trent Rivers have pushed into downtown New Bern, whipped into a frenzy of destruction by raging winds.

Possibly the first storm of great velocity to be recorded in the area occurred in late June 1586. Arriving offshore at Roanoke Island, Sir Francis Drake noted in his log that "there arose a great storm (which they said was extraordinary and very strange) that last three days together, and put our fleet in great danger".

It was nearly 200 years later that the first hurricane to really blast New Bern swept through. Fifty-nine years after its founding, two-thirds of the city was destroyed in early September 1769 by the excessively high water levels and winds of a violent storm.

"New Bern is really now a spectacle," wrote Thomas Clifford Howe, a collector of the port of New Bern, describing that storm's aftermath to an associate in England. "Her streets are full of tops of houses, timber, shingles, dry goods, barrels and hogsheds, rubbish, etc. so much

that you can hardly pass along; a few days ago flourishing and thriving--it shows the instability of all sublunary things."

So true! At one time named for saints, later for women, Atlantic Coast storms now are identified alternately as male or female, regardless of intensity, course, duration or the amount of damage they do. Many peter out; some become legend.

Beginning June 1, the "season" lasts through November, though the months of August, September, and October are when a hurricane is most likely to strike.

One that made landfall to the east of Wilmington in September 1815 pushed water levels at New Bern to at least 10 feet above normal, destroying many buildings and carrying them away.

Almost 100 years later, the next really big hurricane hit. As if making up for lost time, on September 3, 1913, it washed away the Neuse River bridge and inflicted damage estimated then at \$200,000 upon waterfront buildings.

While stories are still told about the 1913 disaster and many more about the hurricanes which occurred in the 1950's, some contend the worst to hit New Bern was a 1933 storm putting East Front Street, south of Broad Street, under six feet of water.

The wind began to rise on the afternoon of September 15, and by 8:30 p. m. the city was being pelted by driving rain and battered by winds in excess of 75 m. p. h. Many portions of New Bern were flooded. Trees and power lines were blown down. Waterfront buildings received heavy damage, and again the Neuse River bridge washed away.

The winds of Hurricane Hazel, first of four to hit the city in 1954-55, exceeded those of the 1933 storm. So did the winds of Hurricane Ione, last of the devastating quartet.

Dubbed the "most erratic" in history,



EAST FRONT AND QUEEN STREETS AFTER IONE, 1955. Photo by Benners.

Hurricane Hazel skirted New Bern in mid-October 1954, littering National Avenue with limbs as she passed close enough to let residents know what it feels like to experience 80 m. p. h. winds.

Causing heavy flooding and wind damage here, Hazel left 11 dead in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia as she blew up the eastern seaboard, then inland.

Connie and Diane rolled through within days of each other in August 1955, followed a month later by Ione. Hitting the North Carolina coast on September 19, Ione was described in local newspaper accounts as "the worst disaster in the city's history" with winds in excess of 100 m. p. h. A state of emergency was declared as isolating flood waters rose to 10 feet.

Ione caused property damage estimated at \$10 to \$12 million, yet only one fatality: a nine-year-old drowned as he went wading on New Street during a calm in the storm.

The city was threatened again on September 30, 1971, by Hurricane Ginger. Pounding the North Carolina coast with 90 m. p. h. winds, knocking out electric and telephone service, smashing windows, and flooding low-lying areas, Ginger veered north offshore, lessening the danger and damage to New Bern.

Expected to hit the coast "like a nuclear bomb," Hurricane Gloria arrived in this area the night of September 26, 1985. Heading for shore at Cape Hatteras, Gloria recorded gusts up to 92 m. p. h. at Hobucken Coast Guard Station, and dumped nearly eight inches of rain here before plowing north towards New England.

Tree damage caused most of New Bern's problems, limbs falling across power lines leaving many homes without power during much of the night. About 2,200 people were sheltered that night in six schools, and as a result many Craven County children had the following day off.

Though responsible for one death--a man was killed when a tree fell on his mobile home, pinning him in his bed--Gloria was not the tragedy forecast, quietly sparing both city and state by blowing ashore during low tide.

One can only hope for more happy endings.

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## NEW BERN AS A SHIPPING CENTER

Virginia Kirwan

It may sound strange to say that New Bern was a port before it was New Bern, but history tells us that in 1710 Baron de Graffenried sailed into a harbor at Chattookau, an Indian fishing and trading village on the point of land formed by the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers (now called Union Point). After a period of time during which de Graffenried had completed negotiations for the purchase of the land, he renamed the settlement New Berne, in honor of his European homeland.

New Bern exhibited potential as a port of distinction early in its history. Geographically, nature had richly endowed the terrain. A glance at a map of the area surrounding New Bern readily shows the water routes to the port from inland territories. Before trails became roads, these waterways served as highways upon which goods were shipped and settlers were transported. Thus, New Bern became an axis for the transshipment of goods and people, with both the Neuse and the Trent Rivers serving as commercial arteries. North Carolina's rich soil provided fruitful farms, which in turn produced bountiful harvests of agricultural produce. Abundant forests provided not only lumber, but colonial North Carolina produced more than two-thirds of all naval stores for all of the colonies.

De Graffenried's settlement suffered physical and financial difficulties, but the seeds of success for growth of the port of New Bern survived, and the fledgling Swiss venture ulti-



houses.

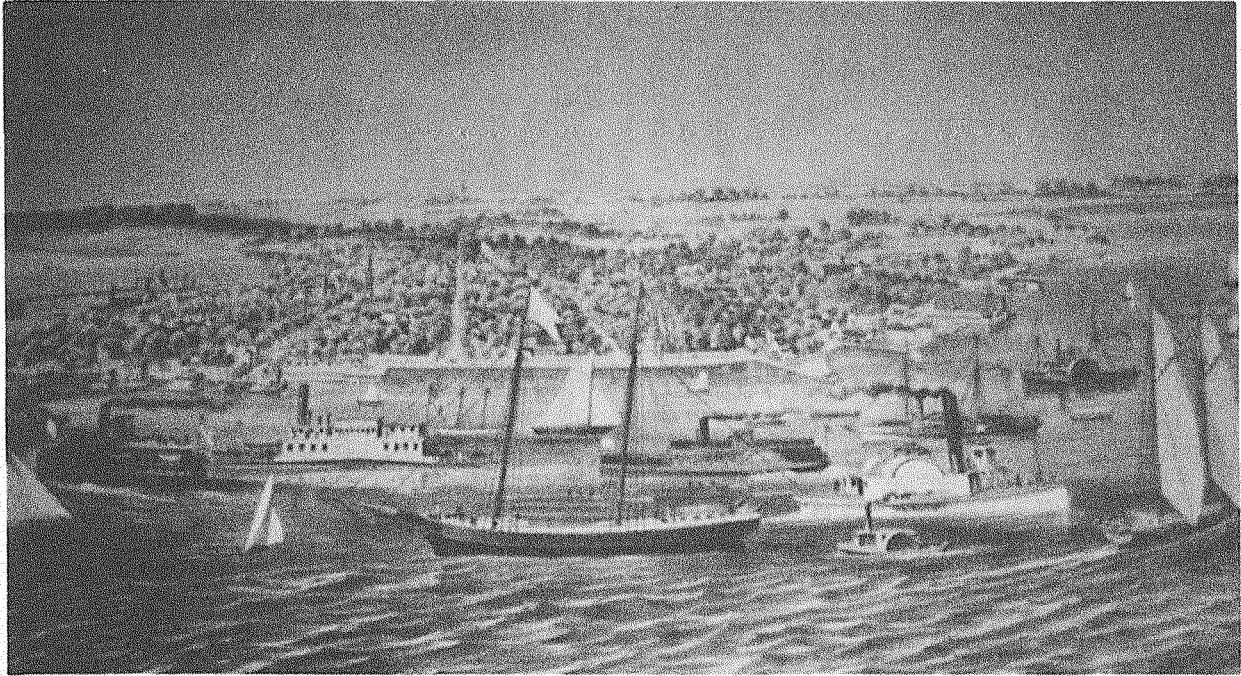
Prosperity did not last, however. The War of 1812 paralyzed New Bern's trade. The British occupation of Ocracoke and Portsmouth served to blockade the coast, rendering New Bern's fleet of brigs, galleys, schooners, warships, steamers, and paddle boats useless.

Delayed post-war recovery was accelerated by the introduction of steam in many phases of New Bern's industry and modes of travel. The Atlantic and East Carolina Railroad from Morehead City to Goldsboro was completed in 1858. New Bern boasted of nine major distilleries, steam-powered sawmills, tanneries, a marine railway and shipyard, and a cotton mill.

With the advent of the Civil War, progress in all forms of endeavor came to a halt. Once again behind a blockade, trade was stifled. Union troops captured and occupied New Bern in March of 1862. Because it was an army of occupation, it was not a force of devastation. Damage to the city and its railroad bridge was inflicted by the Confederate troops in an attempt to deny Union forces the use of facilities which could be utilized to their advantage. Most of the city's residents had evacuated, leaving a "ghost town" which became an operations center for Union forces throughout the remainder of the war.

Recovery following the Civil War was a long, slow process. In the early 1870's the expansion of the lumbering industry revitalized New Bern's economy. It became a thriving mill town, and once again shipping was called upon to fulfill its role in the distribution of goods and products.

During the following decade regular passenger and freight lines were established by steamboat companies with service provided from New Bern to Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. Shallow-draft river and creek steamboats plied the Neuse and Trent Rivers, stopping



NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGRAVING PROTRAYS BUSTLING SHIPPING BUSINESS IN QUAINI NEW BERN HARBOR.

at small landings to take on freight from farmers. River traffic flowed to Kinston and to Trenton. Then, as now, tobacco and lumber were highest among all exports from New Bern.

At just 21 years less than 300, twentieth century New Bern continues to prosper because of its accessibility among other reasons. It is served by three highways: U. S. 17, a north-south route which is commonly known as the "Ocean Highway"; U. S. 70, a transcontinental highway which stretches from Cedar Island to Los Angeles; and N. C. 55 leading to central parts of the state. The Neuse River, which connects to the Intracoastal Waterway, has a 12-foot channel. The city owns and maintains a municipal dock, and regularly-scheduled barges bring petroleum and mineral products to businesses along the riverfront. Southern Railway Systems and the Atlantic and East Carolina Railway Company provide freight service. Deregulation of the trucking industry makes accurate accounting difficult, but records show that New Bern is served regularly by 23 trucking companies, one of which has terminal facilities here. Inter- and intrastate passenger accommodations are offered by bus. An expanded facility at Craven County Regional Airport furnishes both commercial and passenger flight services.

Through the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, New Bern utilized its strategic location on the mile-wide Neuse and narrower Trent Rivers as the center of shipping for the surrounding countryside. As railroads developed in the latter half of the last century and truck lines emerged in the first part of the present century, importance of the waterways for commerce diminished. Although today's means of transportation differ greatly from those of the past, the current assets mentioned in the preceding paragraph can be considered as spokes in the wheel which makes New Bern the hub of

shipping activity for Craven, Jones, and Pamlico Counties.

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**LOCAL MATTERS****Business Brisk**

There are Just now a larger number of vessels than usual in our waters, and the activity about our docks and wharves indicate a visible and marked increase in our shipping business. the hotels have both been doing well of late as the lists of arrivals which appear daily in our columns will testify, and the receipts of cotton, naval stores and other products continue to arrive quite freely. The receipts of cotton for the present season will far outstrip any former year's business. We intend to publish a statement of the shipments at an early day.

Our retail Dry Goods trade is not only much larger than ever before but is steadily increasing; and this is not to be wondered at when we consider the extent, variety and superiority of the stocks kept by our leading merchants. We know that a general impression prevails, founded on actual experience, that Dry Goods can be bought cheaper in Newbern than in any other market in the State. We expect to see this branch of business largely increased in the next few years.

Our Grocers, though not doing as large a business as we could wish, are doing well. The amount of sales at wholesale are now much larger than at any former period, and this branch of trade must still increase, for the increasing wants of the citizens of Craven and the neighboring counties and the demand from the interior counties, whose people are pressing forward to Newbern for a market, (it being the nearest point at

which they can reach water) will compel our Grocers to increase their wholesale facilities or give way to those who will. Rome was not built in a day, nor can a town resuscitate its business and regain a trade which it has lost in a year. Newbern is doing well and her people have much cause for congratulation. Every department of business is looking up; her merchants are more energetic and active, while the number is steadily increasing by the influx of new ones, her merchants and other business men are throwing off those old goofy customs, so antagonistical to progress, and a most gratifying change is gradually working its way throughout our entire community. Let us press forward each one relying on his own strong arm and stout heart, and at no distant day we may expect an era still more bright and prosperous.

Our readers (and we number them by thousands) whenever they visit Newbern for the purpose of buying or selling may safely refer to the Progress as a reliable Directory, for the names and business of nearly all our leading business men may be found in its columns, and those who expend large sums in advertising generally do a heavy business and can afford to give good bargains. For Dry Goods, Groceries, Drugs, Books, Boots and Shoes, Hardware, Clothing and nearly every other article that may be desired our friends have only to examine the columns of the Progress to find where to apply for what they want.

DAILY PROGRESS, Newbern, N. C.  
January 27, 1860

## ALL SAINTS CHAPEL

Mary Baker

"It looks the same now as it did then, except it was a different color." Marguerite Tilghman was speaking of All Saints Chapel. She went on to say that she was brought to All Saints even before her family moved to Pollock Street, as her mother was Episcopalian and wanted her children to begin Sunday School there. Mrs. Tilghman further explained that there were Thursday night services: often the Disosways, who were the superintendents, would conduct these. Sometimes Miss Lula Disosway, who became a missionary, or Mrs. Hughes, one of the teachers, would lead them. At times the rector or the visiting bishop would conduct the services.

Sunday morning was Sunday School time with 25 or 30 youngsters in attendance. Mrs. Tilghman remembers that each child would get a chance to ring the bell. Oftentimes, after Sunday school the children and their teachers would march down Pollock Street to Christ Church for worship, but Mrs. Hughes would let them leave before the sermon. Tilghman also remembers being the angel at the Christmas play. At the yearly Christmas party taffy candy was made and pulled, fudge was made, and a jolly Santa Claus dressed in red gave gifts to the children. Mrs. Hughes gave money inserted in a greeting card. Parthenia Goulding, another Sunday School member, remembers that at the Easter egg hunt whoever found an egg colored black with a white cross on it was given the prize. Mrs. Tilghman ends by saying, "I wish I

could say what is in my heart about Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Disosway, Mrs. F. W. Hughes, Mrs. Myrtle Tooker Carr, Mrs. Ruth Medford, Mrs. Rosa Dail, and all those beautiful and faithful servants of our Lord Jesus".

It was in March 1895 that the Christ Church Vestry confirmed the sale of the old Palace outbuilding which had been used as a mission chapel. Shortly thereafter work on a new chapel was begun. The property on Pollock Street had been bequeathed to the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina by the Reverend Edward M. Forbes, who had been rector of Christ Church from 1866 to 1877. Margaret Donnell Shepard donated funds for the new building as well as for the belfry and bell. It was given the name of All Saints Chapel.

The new chapel was built in what is called the Carpenter Gothic style which is defined in Peter Sandbeck's book *THE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF NEW BERN AND CRAVEN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA* as "the vernacular, often fanciful interpretation of the Gothic Revival Style produced by carpenters and builders working in wood instead of masonry". Looking at the front of the chapel one can readily see the Gothic influence: the steeply gabled roof with a small gabled entrance vestibule, flanked by two lancet windows. The placement of the trim at the top part of the gable is repeated in the belfry and also in the interior scissor roof trusses. The double entry doors, while Victorian in style are in keeping with the lancet windows with their rounded upper panels. The memorial windows are of plain and green hued glass.

The chapel, which was probably completed in late 1895, served the surrounding area, particularly along the Trent River and Lawson's Creek, often called "Long Wharf" until 1931 when it was closed and deconsecrated. In 1938 Christ Church Vestry permitted the chapel to be used as a nursery school "for the welfare of underpriv-



ileged children in the Long Wharf section". After the school was closed the building was used only now and then, in time becoming the local headquarters for Alcoholics Anonymous. Over the years, without regular maintenance, it deteriorated badly. In March 1984 the New Bern Historical Society obtained a 49-year renewable lease from Christ Church. With funds from the Kellenberger Foundation and from private individuals, restoration work was begun. Many people gave funds for replacement of the windows as memorials to family members or to people associated with the chapel.

At one time there was an outbuilding to the chapel which served as a school. This is shown on the Sanborn maps of 1908 and 1913. By 1924 this building had been enlarged and attached to the rear of the chapel. A notation reads that it was heated by a stove, probably a wood stove, and lit with electricity. By the time the 1931 Sanborn maps were issued the school building had disappeared, and today all remembrance of its very existence is gone.

Walking inside the chapel for the first time, one is immediately impressed by its size. From the outside the chapel appears small, even tiny. Once inside, however, one realizes anew that small is a relative term: the feeling is one of space, soaring space. The "scissor" type roof trusses, so called because they resemble giant scissors, are exposed and lead the eye upward. The inside walls and ceiling are "sheathed in narrow beaded boards applied horizontally". At chair rail height, the boards are turned and applied vertically. While extensive restoration work had to be done on the outside, the inside required very little. The lighting fixtures were replaced, because the original ones had disappeared. Unfortunately, no record exists of what they were like. Consultation between the Historical Society and the North Carolina Department of Cultural

Resources advanced the suggestion that, most probably, the fixtures would have been of the combination gas and electric type, and fixtures of this type were thus chosen.

Researching the original paint colors was another interesting story. To quote from Peter Sandbeck's notes, "Paint samples were taken from 13 different locations, including the weatherboards, the trim and the front doors. These samples were cleaned, re-oiled and inspected under low power magnification and matched to color chips in natural light. The original colors were as follows: siding/weatherboards: dark brown/dark tan, all sash: dark reddish brown, and doors: dark brown natural or stained finished, varnished". Mr. Sandbeck further states: "This very vigorous color scheme is entirely typical of the colors recommended and illustrated for Gothic Revival and late Victorian structures in the popular builders guides and paint color catalogs of the last quarter of the nineteenth century". While all of New Bern's longtime residents recall the chapel as white, it was certainly not the original color, nor was it the color intended by the chapel's builder or designer. Now, after so many years, All Saints Chapel once again looks as it did when it was built almost 100 years ago.

#### SOURCES

- SANBORN MAPS OF NEW BERN. 1908, 1913, 1924, and 1931. New York: Sanborn Map Co.
- Sandbeck, Peter. THE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF NEW BERN AND CRAVEN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA. New Bern, N. C.: The Tryon Palace Commission, 1988.

Special thanks to the many gracious people who answered questions and added bits and pieces to this story.

ELIJAH NEWELL LETTERS TELL OF LIFE IN NEW BERN  
DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Dot DeWeerd

Editor's note: The following article was originally published in the NEWSLETTER of the New Bern Historical Society, March-April and May-June 1986.

"There is nothing of interest to write about for the houses are all old style." The place is Newberne (sic), North Carolina; the time is November 16, 1862; and the writer is Elijah A. Newell, native of Springfield, Massachusetts, and presently a member of Company A, 46th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, the Union Army.

Now part of the Attmore-Oliver collection, Elijah's letters to his sister Annette span the period between early November 1862, when he sailed from Boston harbor, to late June 1863 when, his term of enlistment having expired, he headed home again. Although he did not plan it so, the letters trace the evolution of his attitude from cautious Yankee enthusiasm to cynical realization of what war means to a foot soldier. His purposes for writing were quite different. First, he longed to hear from home; he begged repeatedly for letters from everyone he knew and came close to scolding when they failed to arrive in what he considered a reasonable time. Second, he hoped to reassure his family of his health and safety; "do not fret about me for I am all right hearty and tough." This phrase was repeated, often twice in the same letter, but indeed his family had

cause to worry.

November 30: "Havelock is a fever and ague hole . . . . Some eight or ten are reported sick every morning [in New Bern]." February 1: "I am tough and hearty though we average one death a day in the Rgt . . . and there are a great many sick." February 6: "Henry Bartlett was carried to General Hospital this morning and will probably die before night. he was taken suddenly sick while on guard duty yesterday! . . . I have not seen a sick day since I enlisted." February 26: He again tells of illness in his company, mainly "diarheoa (sic) and rheumatism . . . . Our surgeon dont amount to shucks."

Luckily for us, Elijah was gifted with a vivid turn of phrase, and his need to communicate his adventures often overrode his desire to calm his family's fears. He was apparently unaware that his experiences and reactions paralleled those of countless soldiers in countless wars.

He did not like North Carolina. What soldier has ever preferred an alien land to home? The climate was at once incomprehensible and unbearable. February 3: "We are having one of the coldest rawest snow storms that ever visited the face of the earth. it blows and snows and snows like blazes and the boys on guard are almost froze. Last night at ten the sky was clear the Moon shone bright and it was so warm as June, not a cloud to be seen." ". . . I have slept on the ground three nights since last friday . . . . I hoofed it to L. W. [Little Washington] in two days with the thermometer at 105 in the shade." Ambulances were full of exhausted men; both officers and men fell in the road by hundreds, and we may assume that Elijah would not have finished the march had not a friend lent him his horse and walked beside him carrying his gun in the blazing heat for two and a half miles. May 6: "The Skeeters flies wild cats and snakes are the

most prominent part of this country."

Elijah did not have much use for the people of North Carolina either. December 23: "The old gander legged tar burners have been making grand rushes to the store (Whew!) to get half a dozen apples [Apples were 25¢ a dozen.] to carry home to the children and they dont forget to get the Yellow Snuff for the 'Old Woman to Chaw'."

And then there was the army routine. February 1: "There is nothing to write about it is drill and Dress Parade and Dress Parade and drill. Salt Horse and hard tack and hard tack and Salt horse." On February 3 Elijah has been working as a cook for three days because the regular cook is ill, and he hopes to be relieved soon. "I dont like it."

But even in war there is time for fun. November 22: "The boys go out foraging once in a while and the other day the net proceeds amounted to one live black pig weight 5 lbs, four large sweet briar roots, one live opossum, three young contrabands and about a peck of sweet potatoes. A lot of persimmons and a few flea bites . . . if I had any tools I could make my fortune cutting briar pipes." December 23: "My goat is getting to be a tough cud. he is off somewhere and I have to go and hunt him up."

The goat apparently had made himself a reputation by biting any black child who dared to go near him, but by February 1 Elijah writes that they had "not got Goat dog pig or cat now." Left at the barracks the goat had become a problem because he ". . . used to tag along after the drummers when they 'beat off' down the line at 'Guard Mounting' but I shall never see him . . . any more."

And then there was the war. Monday, March 16: "I am used up with rheumatism." He had had no sleep Thursday night because of the pain. On Friday there was a forced march of thirteen miles through knee deep mud, double time when the ground was dry. He waded in ice cold brooks

waist deep when "sweat was pouring off me in streams: when we had got within a quarter of a mile of the enemy we laid on the frozen ground until morning." He could not sleep. On Saturday morning there was a heavy attack, and they retreated to New Bern to avoid being surrounded. After sharp fighting and a rest of an hour or two, they made a forced march back over the same road. After about a mile men started to fall. "I stuck it out for five miles when I fell unable to move another inch. When I came to know where I was I found myself stuck fast in the mud and the stars were shining bright and the Regt was gone." Major Spooner returned to find him, and Elijah, because of pride perhaps, assured the officer he could return alone. "I crawled back to camp . . . . on the way back the road was lined with men. Some had thrown away their shoes and with blistered feet were crawling back to camp . . . . I am all right today with the exception of the rheumatism."

Elijah was certainly not a hero in the ordinary sense of the word; however if one admires a man who keeps his sense of humor when his pay is three months late ("I am going to live honestly if I have to steal."), and his tent leaks right over his cot ("I woke up last night with a stream of water about as large as a knitting needle running into my ear. I just turned over and let her went."), and his feet are wet and the socks his sister sent are lost in transit, one cannot help liking Elijah Newell.

No, he was not a hero. He could not wait to get home when his nine month enlistment was up. "There will be 2 or 300 from our Regt reinlist (sic) in heavy Artillery but have no fears of my enlisting again for I shant do it."

Before he left for home, however, he had a last bitter comment to make about war: "'All the glory a man gets here is to have a few black

cartridges fired over his grave and then have the mourners swear because they have got to clean their guns.'" . . .

Whatever else he was by the time he left New Bern, Elijah Newell was a soldier.

One final note: If the reader is frustrated by the eccentricities of Lige's punctuation, he may follow the instructions Lige gave his sister: ". . . here is a few periods which you can scatter in this letter: I didn't have time to put them in myself."

### Following the War through the Letters

One of the most fascinating aspects of Elijah Newell's letters is the light they shed on the actual conduct of war in 1862-63. There was no censorship of information from combat areas, and consequently Elijah was able to give specific details of troop movements and Union Army strength in the New Bern area. He had left Boston Harbor on November 7, 1862, on the ironclad transport Mississippi which sailed with the Merrimac. Each ship carried 1500 men, a total of three regiments, the 43rd, 45th, and 46th from Massachusetts. They were escorted by two gunboats which joined them from New York Harbor.

When he arrived in New Bern, he reported a Union force of 15 to 20 thousand by the end of the month. Using his letters it is possible to follow the training and movement of these forces almost day to day until his departure in the summer of 1863.

Elijah himself, however, had trouble getting news. The local New Bern Progress was published regularly, but he begged for northern papers. At one point Confederate pickets across the Neuse gave him news of the defeat of General Hooker's forces and were probably delighted to do so.



Possibly because the Union forces controlled the water routes to the South, mail traveled regularly and safely; but interestingly enough soldiers had to stamp every letter, and stamps were hard to find in New Bern, so Elijah repeatedly begged his family to send him some. They seemed just as important to him as new stockings, which are certainly vital to every infantryman.

By far the most striking impression left by these letters is a sense of surprise that a war could be fought at all given the rules imposed by the times. First, officers were elected by their troops. Elijah wrote that the tents were full of apples and cigars handed out by candidates hoping added popularity would lead to increased rank. Furthermore, soldiers enlisted for short terms; Elijah signed up for nine months; and troop movements were therefore determined by the terms of enlistment. Within six to eight weeks in 1863, six Massachusetts regiments left New Bern because their enlistments were up. The fighting for them had ended, but the war was far from over.

#### SOURCES

Newell, Elijah A. LETTERS, 1862-63. New Bern Historical Society Collection.

## BOOK REVIEW

CROWN OF LIFE, History of Christ Church, New Bern, N. C., 1715-1940, by Gertrude S. Carraway. (New Bern, N. C.: Owen G. Dunn, 1940. Reprinted 1988 with additional brief appendices to 1988. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. 245 p. with 45 p. of appendices. \$10.00.)

THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW BERN by John Murphy Smith. (235 p. [New Bern, N. C., 1988.] Reprint of the original text of HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NEW BERN, N. C., 1886, by the Rev. L. C. Vass. 196 p. Illustrations, index. \$17.50.)

The history of any community is inevitably interwoven into a strong fabric by the presence of its religious institutions. New Bern, as a principal center in North Carolina for nearly 300 years has had an enduring relationship with two churches for most of that time. Both these volumes begin their story well before the actual founding of churches, when the religious needs of the community were served (and for long periods of time not served) by itinerant ministers and lay preachers. Sent from more settled colonies to minister the flocks of varied religious backgrounds, these preachers had only modest success. A permanent place of meeting was essential for religious worship. Both these books give an insight into the difficulties experienced in the founding of a church, the construction of suitable buildings, providing service to the community, and most difficult of all, finding a suitable minister.

Miss Carraway's account of Christ Episcopal Church begins with a recounting of religious ceremonies in the Roanoke Colony and through 57 chapters brings us up to 1940. The appendices provide additional brief summaries to 1988. The qualifications of the author as an historian have been repeatedly established, and her dedication to the history of New Bern unquestioned. The fifty years which have elapsed from the first printing have not in any way diminished the value of this impressive volume; the lengthy list of references provided is testimony to the depths of research undertaken.

The Episcopal Church, "established" by an act of the provincial assembly at the request of colonial Governor Henderson Walker in 1701, created parishes and allowed for the erection of churches. The act recognized Craven precinct as a part of St. Thomas Parish, [Bath]. Craven was designated a parish in 1715, and from this date the true history of Christ Church begins. The Episcopal Church being officially established by law sought to impose its will on all of the colonists, however since many had been subject to persecution in their homelands for dissenting religious views, they were not amenable to this law. Later the freedom of worship, except for Roman Catholics, was allowed. No matter that government sponsorship and funding was available, finding a suitable rector was almost impossible, and the first permanent incumbent was James Reed in 1753.

From this date Miss Carraway portrays each rector's term of office as a chapter in the unfolding of the history. Other chapters cover laws, schools, governors, the episcopate, and diocesan organization. By the time of the Revolution most citizens were as disgusted with the Episcopal and established church as they were with other aspects of British rule and the practice of an established church was abandoned in the new republic. Many other

details of Christ Church life are covered in this scholarly examination of one of New Bern's oldest institutions.

Comparable in many ways, but somewhat different in approach, John Murphy Smith, former pastor of First Presbyterian Church, has produced a more intimate book. A unique feature is, of course, the inclusion of the original text of the Rev. Lachlan Vass's 1886 history. The addition of this earlier work was a stroke of good judgment on the part of the publishers, but it makes for a work of considerable length, nearly 450 pages.

While the serious student of church history may not be comfortable with the lack of a bibliography, I think the author set out to produce a story, rather than a history. His subject matter is wide-ranging, including comment on such diverse items as the choice of lighting fixtures and church baseball teams.

The Presbyterian Church suffered many of the same frustrations as the Episcopal in the early years, but in addition, the lack of recognition. Government, until the days of Governor Tryon, did not allow Presbyterians even to be called a religion, despite the large numbers of adherents. Tryon was the first governor to permit a Presbyterian minister to officiate at a wedding in 1769! One regrettable fault in this book is the prevalence of typographical errors; even Presbyterian is printed incorrectly several times.

Both these church histories show us enlightening aspects of our early history, much of which is useful in an overall historical context. Genealogy in particular can be enhanced by a study of the family names, and individual names, cited throughout. The extensive references provided by Miss Carraway will prove of great value for those looking to widen a study of family history. Past events in New Bern and Craven County are given a new

meaning when considered in the light of their religious and church impact. The role played by churches in social and community work in the face of disastrous occurrences is worthy of greater emphasis in any account of local history. Yet many of the good works performed by the churches and their members are only given discreet mention. In reading these volumes it seems that there is as much between the lines as on the lines themselves.

Jim Gunn