Unusual and Interesting Newspaper Extractions

Unlike the modern up-to-date newspapers which we are accustomed to, the newspapers of a century and more ago, being the sole news media form in existence carried numerous advertisements, items of local interest, and various bits of information which readers of today would consider quite amusing and perhaps even bizarre. Nevertheless, there is no better way to obtain a clear insight into a community and the flavor of its times than by browsing through a few newspapers of the day. Accordingly, this writer has included here a few of the more flavorful and unusual newspaper excerpts which have been dug up from Wilmington papers of the early and middle nineteenth century and which should prove to be entertaining as well as informative:

(continued on next page)
to be as follows:
Families, Regular subscribers 3 cents per pound
Transient Purchasers 6 cents per pound
Barrooms or quantities of 100 pounds of over 21/2 cents per pound"

From The Wilmington Advertiser October 5, 1838

"The price for a passage to and from Smithville will be $1.50 If you do not like my terms, you can go elsewhere."

- Doyle O'Hanlen

From The Wilmington Advertiser October 26th, 1838

"Mr. Editor: I wish to know if under the regulation of our town, hogs are permitted to run at large in the streets, and also in stores and warehouses whenever a door is opened. Unless some step is taken by the authorities, or the owners of hogs there will certainly be SOME PORK made before the weather becomes cool enough to save it."

From The Wilmington Advertiser May 17, 1839

"From the nocturnal atraibilarian ululations and horrific latrations with which our auricular tympanum is made to reverberate, one might naturally suppose that the dog days had come, or that the dog-star raged. We ask, will the commissioners of Wilmington abate the nuisance and permit us to sleep?"

-Signed, No More"

From The Wilmington Chronicle March 17, 1841

"The young man, Jones, who was sentenced to death in South Carolina for the forgery of a check for $20.00 has been pardoned for that offense by the Governor, but will suffer a long imprisonment on a conviction for larceny."

From The Wilmington Chronicle June 19, 1842

"The subscriber has now in operation his soda water apparatus. This delightful and healthy beverage may be had every day from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m."

-William Shaw
From The Wilmington Chronicle  December 14, 1842

"The subscriber hereby warns all persons not to give credit to anyone, not even the woman he married, on his account, except on his order."

- Henry N. Howard

From The Wilmington Chronicle  June 7, 1843

"The subscriber has fitted up a bathing house in Quince's Alley, where cold and warm baths may be had at all hours between sunrise and ten o'clock at night."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  October 18, 1843

"The Captain of the 'Barque Wave,' arrived yesterday, from Boston, describes a sea monster seen by himself and crew on his recent outward voyage. It first rose in a perpendicular position thirty or forty feet above the surface of the water, and then falling horizontally continued at this kind of play for a half hour. Judging as they would Hercules, by the size of his feet, the Captain and his men concluded that the snake was from ninety to a hundred and twenty feet long, and with as much circumference as a hogshead."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  Nov. 22, 1843

"St. Mary's School, Raleigh, N. C.: For board including washing, fuel, and etc. with tuition in English and in the ancient languages, if desired, $100.00 per session. The plainest attire is all that students require. They are allowed to accept invitations in the city for the day, only once a month and never for the evening. They have opportunities for seeing their friends and acquiring ease of manner in society at the evening soirees, which are statedly held during the session."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  May 22, 1844

"Our citizens might have their comfort very much increased by the daily watering of those parts of the street most in use, say Main and Water Streets, between Dock and Market Streets, from the river to Second Street."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  October 9, 1844

"Through a strange inadvertence, we last week announced the death of General Robert W. Haywood. We are now happy to say that he is at this moment, SO FAR AS WE KNOW, alive and well."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  January 15, 1845

"Arrivals of ships in the port of Wilmington during the year 1844, taken from the Harbor Master's books were as follows: Barques, 2; Briggs, 266; Schooners, 333, Sloops, 2. Total 603."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  March 5, 1845

"In this town on last Thursday morning, within three hours of each other, of typhus fever, Miss M. Sophia Gibbs, aged 22, and Miss Susan B. Gibbs, aged 18, daughters of Mr. Robert Gibbs. They were buried on Friday morning, in the same grave, near the church at Wrightsville Sound."

From The Wilmington Chronicle  April 2, 1845

"Probably the oldest steamboat in the country, if not in the world, now in service is the Henrietta on the Cape Fear River between Wilmington and Fayetteville. The Henrietta was built at Fayetteville in 1818, and is of course now in her 27th year. She has been in active operation throughout the whole time, when the river was not too low for her to run. SHE HAS NEVER MET AN ACCIDENT, EITHER FROM STEAM OR SNAG."

From The Wilmington Daily Journal  October 1, 1851

"We are advised that the fisherman who stabbed himself with an eel on Thursday, is considered out of danger, having DIED on Saturday."
A COLONIAL GHOST STORY

It is certain that scarcely any of the present generation believe in ghosts. Nevertheless from time to time strange happenings take place which baffle satisfactory explanation. One of such occurred on the Cape Fear River many years ago. Sailors were firmly convinced that they saw apparitions of two men who were murdered in colonial times. The hallucination led to the rescue of two men from a watery grave while a violent storm was raging. Whether or not people will believe that these mariners saw anything out of the ordinary, the incident may well be recounted for present day information. They may draw their own conclusions.

The story was told to the late Dr. James Sprunt by Captain John W. Harper, also deceased. The latter was master of the steamer Wilmington, which vessel plied between Wilmington and Southport for many years, until the advent of the automobile and motor truck made river traffic unprofitable. Captain Harper’s narrative, for which he vouched, was as given in the following paragraphs.

One stormy night a stranger named MacMillan, who was aboard Captain Harper’s steamer, was telling the Captain about the exciting Revolutionary adventures of his grandfather. The latter had come from Edinburgh in Scotland to North Carolina. This ancestor of the traveler, MacMillan, and two other Whig Highlanders fell into the hands of Tories commanded by the infamous Col. Fanning. The latter took the three prisoners to the town of Brunswick, a long forgotten and abandoned settlement which was on the west bank off the Cape Fear River about fifteen miles below the present site of Wilmington.

After imprisoning the three captives in a loathsome old hulk of a prison ship, Fanning brought them ashore, gave them a mock trial, and immediately executed two of them. When MacMillan’s grandfather was brought out to be shot, he made a successful dash for liberty, and reached his home in Robeson County where he survived his troubles and lived until 1800.

Tradition among some individuals living near Brunswick was that on stormy nights the ghosts of the two executed Scotchmen walked abroad and sometimes rowed in a phantom boat in search of vessels bound for foreign shores. The foregoing was MacMillan’s story and from this point the narrator of Captain Harper, who continues to tell of the strange happenings on this wild and stormy night on the Cape Fear River.

Just as MacMillan finished, the storm reached the height of its fury. The steamer had stuck on jetties near big island, north of Orton Plantation, and here it had to stay until the tide turned. During this wait, according to Captain Harper, there was only one sailor on deck, a Dane named Peter Jorgensen.

Suddenly Jorgensen burst into the pilot house where MacMillan and Captain Harper were seated. The man literally was scared within "an inch of his life." He cried out that on deck he had seen the figure of a man, clad in unkempt, dripping clothes, with snow in his hair and beard, and with his face contorted in fear. With one hand he grasped the rail, Jorgensen said, and with the other pointed southward. When Jorgensen asked this apparition what he wanted, it looked at him longingly and appealingly, made no audible response to the query, and then vanished.

Captain Harper said to MacMillan that Jorgensen must be drunk. The latter, terror-stricken, denied this assertion most emphatically. He insisted that he had seen a ghost. The reply was that there might have been some natural or supernatural cause for Jorgensen’s alarm got their attention.

It was suggested that the three search for the apparition. Jorgensen declined to be a member of the searching party. He said he would not look again on the awful face he had seen - not if he were made a present of the steamer. A thorough search then, made by MacMillan and Captain Harper, revealed nothing. Jorgensen stoutly maintained that he could not have been mistaken; that the apparition was entirely too plain; that he thought the figure had climbed over the steamer’s rail; and only when he advanced to touch it did the ghost disappear.

Not long after Jorgensen had told his fearsome story, the tide rose. The steamer was then released from the jetties and started southward, to continue the interrupted trip to Southport. In a little while a gull came crashing through the pilot house window. "That’s a terrible omen," said MacMillan, "there’ll be more trouble."

Sure enough, pretty soon a call was heard like a human cry. Captain Harper gave a signal for the steamer to stop. The nerves of all aboard were not calmed to discover that they were near the place where the colonial anchorage and the old prison ship had been. Suddenly on the waved, disturbed waters of the river the crew of the steamer saw a small boat in a phosphorescent glow, an ancient rowing barge, foul
Felons Received Severe Court Sentences
In Colonial Days

Accused persons hauled before the bar of justice in superior and county courts of North Carolina in our time and generation may react unfavorably to judgments received. They may feel that whatever sentences are meted out, if severe or light, the decisions are entirely too burdensome compared with the charges preferred. However, if such unfortunates know anything about sentences felons received in the days of the Lords Proprietors - the period between 1665 and 1730 - possibly they rejoice that they were sentenced in modern times, rather than two centuries and more ago.

For the sake of comparison, and also that the citizen of the present day may know something of the judgments of the courts during early days in North Carolina, possibly a few references to judicial records of times past may not be uninteresting. With this belief in mind, a few of many will be cited so that a general insight into courts of generations long gone may be had.

In 1720, the grand jury presented John Hassell, of Chowan precinct, for "uttering profane and irreverent words, to the great scandal of the Christian religion, and the dishonor of Almighty God Himself." The defendant moved for an arrest of judgment on the general ground that the words laid in the indictment were not prosecution within six months after the alleged speaking the said words, nor was the prosecution started within the space of ten days, according to an act for observing the Lord's day. These reasons being overruled, the court passed sentence that he the said John Hassell, should receive thirty nine lashes on his bare back, and that he should give good security in the sum of fifty pounds.

In 1721 a certain Jabez Allen was charged with the theft of a saw. After the evidence was introduced a judgment as follows was given - "It is considered by the court that the said accused person do immediately receive at the whipping post, thirty-one lashes on his bare back; and twenty-one more tomorrow morning, well laid on."

Matthew Bryant was a hapless defendant in the year 1722. He was brought into court for stealing a lamb belonging to Thomas Mathews and confessed. "He appearing to be so very drunk at the time of the fact committed as to be scarce capable of knowing what he did (and being very aged), it is considered by
the court that he be carried hence to the public whipping post, and have his hands put in the bilboes; and that afterward he be set in the stocks for being drunk." The writer confesses his entire ignorance of the meaning of "bilboes," and hastening to an unabridged dictionary ascertained that they are "shackles sliding on a long bar or belt of iron, with a lock at the end, formerly used to confine the feet or hands of offenders."

In the same year of 1722, William Doyle, a white servant, left the abode of his master without permission at night. "Whereupon it was considered and adjudged that the said William Doyle be tied to the tail of a cart, and be whipped on the bare back, with thirty nine stripes, through Edenton, this day; of which the provost marshal of Albemarle is hereby required to see execution done. And that next Friday he be whipped in like manner through Bath town, of which when finished, then to deliver him to his master, William Barrow."

It appears that women also were victims of the severity of the courts. In 1722, "Hannah Davis being bound by recognizance to appear at this court made her appearance and upon examination, confessed the fact that she was charged with to wit, the pilfering of sundry goods from one John Ballard, to the value of ten pence. (So laid in the indictment, to make the offense petit larceny, instead of grand, which it really was.) Whereupon, it is considered and adjudged that the said Hannah Davis receive on her bare back nine lashes at the public whipping post, and pay the costs."

In the year 1724, Mary Colton, a spinster, was convicted of a felony, grand larceny, as a result of which her life was declared forfeited. She was a woman and a certain degree of mercy prevailed. This was the sentence - "It is considered and adjudged that she, the said Mary, at the whipping post shall receive thirty-one lashes on the bare back and that she give good security, in the sum of 100 pounds sterling, for her good behavior to all His Majesty's people for twelve months and one day; and also that she pay all fees and costs accruing by reason of her prosecution; and if she does not give such security, and pay the fees, within twenty days after the adjournment of this court, that then she shall be sold to any person, the highest bidder, who will give security to transport her out of the government; and that she stand committed until the said sentence be performed."

A 1723 court record discloses: "Whereas Thomas Dunn appeared at this bar in custody of the marshal, and he confessed himself guilty of several petit larcenies by him committed within this government; whereupon it is considered and adjudged that the said Thomas Dunn be tied to the tail of a cart, and that he be whipped on his bare back with thirty-nine lashes well laid on; and thence to continue in the custody of the provost marshal of Albemarle County or his deputy for the space of six weeks, that he may be delivered to any person that may or can make any lawful claim to him as a servant; and if no person appear in that time, then he is to be disposed of for four years to the first master of a vessel that will give security to transport the said Dunn out of this colony."

Illustrative of the wide pardoning powers of the king and showing the effect of a general pardon after a plea of not guilty and before trial, a record of 1729 (the final year of the Lords Proprietors ownership) discloses - "And new here at this day, came the aforesaid George Allen and moved for trial and likewise the attorney-general on behalf of our sovereign Lord the king; but the court being given to understand that his majesty's most gracious general pardon was since the offense committed and since the indictment aforesaid are of the opinion that the said offense is thereby pardoned, and that the prosecution aforesaid cannot be proceeded in, according to Fawcett's case, ... and do therefore order that all further proceedings thereon be stayed and the said George Allen discharged, paying costs."

The foregoing will suffice as specimens of sentences on criminals in colonial days. One evidently (continued on back page)
Automobiles in various shades of black ride along the street car tracks on North Front Street between Walnut and Red Cross. Cape Fear Community College has replaced the large building on the far left which housed offices of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The picturesque structure with the rounded entrance was the ACL Terminal located on the northeast corner of Front and Red Cross.

J.E.L. Wade in Post Office Park on the southwest corner of Second and Chestnut. The Cape Fear Club is behind him. Mr. Wade, who was affectionately known as "Hi Buddy," was a dedicated Wilmington civic leader and a high profile personality. His shape seemed customized to the Santa Claus suit he donned every Christmas season and helped make him the individual two generations of local children considered not just a helper, but the "real Santa."

The two houses on the left made way for the Belk Beery building which later became the New Hanover County Public Library. The building at the far left is the Cape Fear Hotel.

The Bishop's House, 510 Orange Street, was built in 1905 at a cost of $15,000. It was home to three bishops: Robert Strange, Thomas C. Darst and Bishop Strange's cousin, Thomas H. Wright. When Bishop Darst's daughter made her debut in 1936, she invited college roommate, Hannah Knowlton, who she introduced to her hometown friend, Tom Wright. Hannah Knowlton later moved into 510 Orange Street as Mrs. Thomas Wright and eventually offered some of the inspiration for the movie The Bishop's Wife.

To the left is the Bynum-Willard House built in 1853.

Louis T. Moore photographs courtesy of New Hanover County Library; Beverly Tetterton, Special Collections Librarian.
is forced to conclude and to agree with the fact that our worthy forefathers relied very much on the lash to correct both petty and serious offenses.

Footnotes
1 St. James Church. In 1803, not only was it deemed unnecessary to note that St. James was an Episcopal Church, but it could simply be referred to as "the church" and recognized by Wilmingtonians.

2 According to Louis Moore, "Production of salt along the sounds a century ago was an active and profitable business, as is indicated by the above advertisement. Salt water from the sounds, by gravity flow, entered the shallow basins and evaporation from the sun's rays soon produced a fine quality of salt, which was marketed commercially. Mr. Hooper was a descendant of William Hooper, one of three North Carolinians who signed the Declaration of Independence." See Salt, That Necessary Ingredient by Isabel M. Williams and Leora H. McEachern (Wilmington, 1973.)

3 Southport

4 Louis Moore stated that Quince's Alley was probably the alley leading from "Front to Second Streets and bounded on the north and south by Dock and Orange Streets. At any rate a wayfarer of a century and more ago, if he had his block of soap with him, surely could get the other necessaries in order to assure a clean-up even on nights other than the proverbial Saturday evening."

5 The Gibbs sisters were buried at Lebanon Chapel near Bradley Creek.

6 See A Colonial Apparition by James Sprunt and Tar Heel Ghosts by John Hardin.

7 James Sprunt was born in 1846 in Glasgow Scotland and died in Wilmington in 1924. He was an exporter, planter, Cape Fear historian and philanthropist. As a teenager, he served as purser for blockade runners, North Heath and Lillian. He owned Orton Plantation in Brunswick County and also resided at the Governor Dudley Mansion, 400 South Front Street in Wilmington. (Dictionary of N. C. Biography, edited by William S. Powell, Chapel Hill, 1994.)

   Captain John Harper (1856-1917) was a Cape Fear riverboat captain, resort developer and owner of the "Shoo Fly" a small tourist train which made a three mile run at Carolina Beach. Captain Harper's home still stands at 311 South Front Street. ("Captain John Harper" by Catherine R. Stirling, Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Archives.)

8 Col. David Fanning (1755-1825) was a loyalist leader in the American Revolution. His dreaded militia which usually consisted of only a few dozen men fought in 36 battles, sometimes successfully facing several hundred Whig militia.

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