

**Folklife and Traditional Arts  
of  
Pender County, North Carolina**

Sarah Bryan and Michael Taylor  
North Carolina Folklife Institute

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## Introduction and Acknowledgements

During the first half of 2010, North Carolina Folklife Institute folklorists Michael Taylor and Sarah Bryan conducted documentary fieldwork in Pender County, North Carolina, on behalf of the Pender County Arts Council and with funding from the North Carolina Arts Council. Bryan and Taylor interviewed and consulted with more than 40 artists, musical groups, and organization leaders—a total of more than 50 individuals. Both folklorists also made photographic documentation of the fieldwork, including portraits of artists and their work.

The artists documented in this project are practitioners of traditional, or folk, arts, and their work represents expressions of deeply rooted traditions. The National Endowment for the Arts defines such genres in the following manner:

The folk and traditional arts are rooted in and reflective of the cultural life of a community. Community members may share a common ethnic heritage, language, religion, occupation, or geographic region. These vital and constantly reinvigorated artistic traditions are shaped by values and standards of excellence that are passed from generation to generation, most often within family and community, through demonstration, conversation, and practice. Genres of artistic activity include, but are not limited to, music, dance, crafts, and oral expression.<sup>1</sup>

In selecting individuals to document, folklorists Bryan and Taylor strove to identify artists based upon the excellence and authenticity of their work, and their significance within particular traditions. Following guidelines established by the North Carolina Folklife Institute in previous documentary initiatives, this research focused on traditional artists who are either native to the region or who have become residents of the region and have achieved a level of artistry that is accepted by other artists in the community as accomplished; learned by oral tradition; are recognized by their community as outstanding representatives of local and/or regional culture; and are practicing traditions handed down over generations. In addition to individuals who carry on traditions that would be defined conventionally as arts, Bryan and Taylor also documented the work of Pender residents who represent occupational traditions, such as agriculture and fishing, that are also essential aspects of the county's folk heritage.

The following pages detail the findings of the North Carolina Folklife Institute's research on Pender County folklife traditions. The first section of the report discusses the historical origins of Pender County's ethnically and religiously diverse communities. The next chapter is an overview of some of the folk art and folklife traditions found in the county, historically and today. Following these discussions are profiles of many of the artists and community resource people whom Taylor and Bryan interviewed. The artists profiled in this section include those who most fully represent the depth of folk artistic traditions in Pender County communities, based upon the criteria detailed above.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov)

Following the interviewees' profiles, the North Carolina Folklife Institute offers suggestions for folklife-based programming that the Pender County Arts Council may wish to consider, which would celebrate and educate the public about the county's unique and rich heritage. Finally, this report concludes with an Appendix that lists all of the interviews and consultations conducted for this project.

Michael Taylor and Sarah Bryan received guidance and recommendations from many residents of Pender County, and especially wish to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support during the research process: the Pender Arts Council; the North Carolina Arts Council; John Rau; Marsha Dees; Samm-Art Williams; Robert and Eula Ramsey; Bill Messer; Ruth Johnson; and Bill Lowe.

## Historical Background

### *Early history*

The early history of Pender County, which was formed in 1875 from New Hanover County, has much in common with that of the surrounding region. According to Mattie Bloodworth, author of the 1947 *History of Pender County*, many early white migrants to the region were of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh origin, or came south from Virginia, particularly during the Revolutionary era. Early African Americans by and large came to Pender County as enslaved laborers. Less than one-half of one percent of Pender County's current population is Native American, but the discovery of artifacts in the county points to a notable early presence. (Penderlea resident Ann Cottle remembers that, when tilling their fields in the 1940s, her family would routinely uncover apparent Native American arrowheads, axes, and other implements and weapons.)

Sloop Point Plantation, dating to the 1720s, may be the oldest surviving structure in North Carolina. The house stands by the water, near Hampstead, and indicates the presence of early maritime activity in the area north of Wilmington. Sloop Point was the site of a colonial wharf, as well as a salt-manufacturing operation. Hampstead has long been a center for the fishing industry, and families such as the Leas have carried the seafood wholesale business into the current century.

Early crops in what is now Pender County included sweet potatoes, corn, peas, peanuts, and some grains, including, according to Bloodworth, "a little rice."<sup>2</sup> Later, cotton was a staple crop, until the twentieth-century boll weevil infestation. Some tobacco was grown, as well as strawberries and blueberries (the latter an important crop today). Bloodworth writes that Burgaw was once "considered the largest [string] bean market in the world."<sup>3</sup>

In the 1830s and '40s the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad (later the Atlantic Coast Line) was laid across Pender County, leading to Wilmington. Burgaw, originally called Cowan, grew along the railroad near the center of the county. The earliest part of Burgaw's historic board-and-batten depot dates to 1850, and a post office was established in 1858.

In the mid- to late nineteenth century, industries based in the region's pineywoods were a staple of Southeastern North Carolina's economy, including that of present-day Pender. Area workers produced turpentine and naval stores, and rafted logs downstream to Wilmington. In the 1880s, steamboats were built on the Black River, near Point Caswell.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *History of Pender County*. Mattie Bloodworth. Dietz Printing Company, Richmond, 1947. P. 10

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>4</sup> [www.historync.org/NCsteamboatlist1861-1880.htm](http://www.historync.org/NCsteamboatlist1861-1880.htm), accessed July 12, 2010. Bill Lowe of Hampstead has researched this industry and can provide insight into its history.

### *Immigration and In-migration to Pender County*

Until the twentieth century, Pender County was an area of relative demographic stability, home primarily to African American and white residents who had been born in the county or not far away. In 1910, Burgaw Township had 831 white residents and 838 black residents; of those 1,669, only 15 individuals were born outside of North Carolina.<sup>5</sup> During that first decade of the century, however, projects were set in motion that would bring hundreds of immigrants to the county. From the European settlers of Pender County's early planned agricultural communities, to the Latin American immigrants and retirees from around the United States who make up much of the county's current newcomer community, the history and folklife of Pender County represent a diversity of cultural influences unusual in the region.

Much of Pender County's twentieth-century diversity is due to experiments in agricultural and community planning undertaken by Hugh McRae. McRae was a prominent Wilmington resident whose business ventures included Tidewater Power, cotton mills in Wilmington, and brokerage and real estate concerns, among many others. In 1905, his Carolina Trucking Development Company embarked on the development of six agricultural colonies along the Atlantic Coast railroad line in Southeastern North Carolina. The company would establish the communities of St. Helena and Van Eeden (later Van Eden) in Pender County, Castle Hayne(s) and Marathon in New Hanover County, and Newberlin (later Delco) and Artesia in Columbus County. These colonies McRae peopled by attracting migrants from Europe, according to prevailing notions about the respective talents and temperaments of the people from various regions.

#### *St. Helena*

McRae's first endeavor was the development of what would be named St. Helena, a truck farming colony a couple of miles down the rail line from Burgaw. The company recruited residents of northern Italy, from the Po River Valley, with offers of ten-acre tracts of land, homes, and livestock, and a path to eventual ownership of their farms. John Santucci, who authored a dissertation about the religious life of St. Helena's Italian immigrants, writes that McRae felt it necessary to conduct a "public relations campaign that aimed at undercutting anti-foreign sentiment in Southeastern North Carolina."<sup>6</sup> Anticipating that suspicion would be mutual, he also tried to fight public opinions that portrayed the American South negatively. He urged potential immigrants and investors to "...get the facts, the South has been calumniated long enough."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Italian Agricultural Colony and its German Mission at St. Helena, NC: A Parish History, 1905-1925*. John A. Santucci. UNC-Chapel Hill PhD dissertation, 1993. P. 76. These census figures presumably do not include residents of nearby St. Helena.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87

On December 12, 1905, the first 13 Italians arrived in St. Helena. They disembarked from the trains that had carried them to North Carolina not at a railroad platform, but at a “getting-off place” in the woods. 10 small cottages awaited the settlers, situated along a newly cut dirt road, all the work of the African American laborers who preceded them.

Behind the cottages were the “farms,” heavily wooded ten-acre tracts that would take a year or more to clear before crops could be planted. As the clear-cutting progressed, the company divided the area around the train station into city blocks. The Italians gave names to the dirt paths in this imaginary downtown. The company’s management hoped that these blocks would one day become the nucleus of St. Helena where the immigrants would shop on Verona, Sabastian, Garibaldi, Rovigo, Villanova, and Milan Streets. By 1910, when St. Helena’s Italian population reached its height, this village center contained a store, a one-room schoolhouse, and a church.<sup>8</sup>

The first missionary arrived in St. Helena less than 24 hours after the colonists stepped off of the train. Two years later, the community built St. Joseph’s Church, and in the spring of 1909 the parish received its first resident priest, Rev. Umberto Donati.

At its height, the Italian population of St. Helena reportedly numbered over 60 families, comprised of more than 300 individuals. (Santucci cautions that these numbers may be inflated.) The community would not last long, however. Within a few short years the Italians began to depart, driven away by such factors as injury and illness, the coming of Prohibition, which undercut many residents’ side business of wine making, and the fact that the purchase of their farms would be much more difficult than initially represented. (Santucci writes that 85% of the Italians were unable to purchase their properties.) By 1914 nearly all of the Italians had departed, leaving little sign of their time in Pender County other than a handful of gravestones with Italian inscriptions.

New waves of settlers arrived to populate and work the lands of St. Helena. In 1915, approximately 75 Belgians arrived, and just as quickly left. Eight Hungarian families followed suit the next year. In 1918, 12 Slovak and Serbian families arrived, of whom all but one family quickly departed. That same year, however, 18 Ukrainian, Austrian, and Russian families settled in St. Helena, and it was their community that finally took root.<sup>9</sup>

Current residents Ann Mizerek and Mary Bakan are daughters of two of St. Helena’s Ukrainian farmers, Elias and Anastazia Debaylo. Elias came to the United States in the early 1920s, Ann says, and was working on his brother’s farm in New Jersey when agents from McRae’s company came through the area.

[The agents had] all these brochures telling about how beautiful the area was, and how fertile the property was. [McRae] divided the land into ten-acre tracts, and people could buy that ten-acre tract and then pay like in installments, and in three

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 109

<sup>9</sup> *History of Pender County, North Carolina*. Mattie Bloodworth. Dietz Printing Company, Richmond, 1947. P. 84.

years they could have it all paid off. So my father was influenced by all the information that he read. He came down, but it was not really like he thought; they'd have to dig stumps, and clear the land. It was really hard work.<sup>10</sup>

Mizerek's and Bakan's mother immigrated separately, coming from the Ukraine to work with her brother and his family in McRae's Castle Hayne(s) settlement.

[Elias Debaylo] said the neighbors and all, the people said, "Oh, there's this nice Ukrainian lady in Castle Hayne. She would make a good wife for you." But her brother, he brought her here to help him on the farm, and help with the children, and he didn't want her to get married. He said, "Oh, no, I don't want her to leave!" So he said, no, he objected to that. But then they all got together and they went to visit him—they went to visit one Sunday—my dad's brother, and Pete Vdovich was another neighbor here—they all went to Castle Hayne. And they were visiting, and somehow my parents—my mother and father, and this one man—they slipped out of the house, and they eloped to South Carolina and they got married! You know, I don't think Uncle Waysle ever got over it.<sup>11</sup>

Ann Mizerek, the eldest of the Debaylo children, was born in Pender County but spoke Ukrainian before she spoke English. She remembers that most of her early childhood friends were European, and says that had she been asked as a young child what her nationality was, she would probably have responded that she was Ukrainian. However, as she got older, she increasingly felt pressure to assimilate to the county's wider population.

I guess up North it's not quite so evident, but down in the South, maybe, we were more different. Like up North everybody kind of blended in so you didn't really stand out as being different. You went to school, there were others like you. And here, I guess, there were just a few of us, so we were really a little bit different...

And then when I got in high school it was different. I guess the teachers all knew that we spoke a foreign language. We had to do essays—she asked me to do one in Ukrainian, and I didn't want to do it, because it really made you stand out, being different. But I did. My dad helped me. We wrote a story. This soldier that went off to war, and he came back. And when I read it, the teacher really did like it, but I didn't want to do it. I told her I didn't want to do it. Because you felt like all these kids are staring at you, they don't know what you're talking about. And here you are blabbing away. We had different experiences like that.

... when I was in school I didn't want to be different. I wanted to be like my peers, so I just tried to shed my background. When I think back on it, I was trying to become more Americanized, and I didn't want anybody to know about my background, or that I had these funny customs. They were different, not funny but I guess different.

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<sup>10</sup> Ann Mizerek and Mary Bakan, interview with Sarah Bryan, May 27, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. (Quote from Ann Mizerek)

Evidently both sisters were able to adapt to life in the wider community with great success: Ann graduated as Valedictorian of her high school, and a few years later, Mary was Valedictorian for all of Pender County.

Mizerek and Bakan remember St. Helena of their childhood as a community of great cultural vitality. The spiritual center of St. Helena was Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church, built in 1932. The tiny onion-domed church, with its sky-blue sanctuary surrounded by religious icons, is the oldest Russian Orthodox Church in North Carolina. St. Helena residents had a community center as well, where they held dances and other town gatherings.

Both sisters say that as they got older, particularly after their children were grown, their interest in remembering and preserving their Ukrainian heritage grew. Ann has researched their family history, and she and Mary both keep many of the important traditions that they grew up with, such as celebrating Old Christmas in January, as well as on December 25, observing the saints' day of Saints Peter and Paul with a "picnic" (nowadays a restaurant meal), and creating ornate *pysanky*, decorated eggs, during Holy Week. They and Ann's son are the remaining three active members of Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church, and have taken on all tasks related to its maintenance and preservation.

### *American missionaries*

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American members of two religious groups came to Pender County and established communities here—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), or Mormon church, who have long been associated with Hampstead, and a group of Unitarians who established a school at Shelter Neck.

LDS missionaries had been traveling throughout North Carolina since the 1840s, and Elder John Eldridge wrote in his diary of passing through Wilmington in 1843. In the late 1890s a ward was successfully established at Harkers Island, in Carteret County. The LDS church took root in Hampstead around this time too, as evidenced by a reference to "Mormon elders who have succeeded in establishing a church in that section of Pender County" in a 1900 article in the *Wilmington Star*.<sup>12</sup> Historian Marion Barnhill, a Hampstead native, writes of missionaries entering the area in 1898 and requesting unsuccessfully to speak to members of the local Second Advent Church. Though permission was denied, 18 members of that congregation—more than one-third of its membership—converted to the LDS faith over the next year.

Latter-Day Saints who proselytized in the Southeast were sometimes met with violence, and in the 1870s and '80s several were killed in Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Barnhill documents a second-hand account of an attempted, and ultimately foiled,

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<sup>12</sup> "Large Crowd Present to Hear Debate between Adventists and Mormons," *Wilmington Star*, April 1900, 10; cited in Marion F. Barnhill, Sr., *A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Hampstead, North Carolina* (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, 2004), 27.

lynching of Mormon elders, apparently in Hampstead, around 1898.<sup>13</sup> Sectarian tensions in the Lower Cape Fear came to a non-violent head in 1900, when two debates were held in Hampstead. In the late winter or early spring of that year, Rev. J. W. Sylvester Harvey of the Second Advent Church was chosen to debate 24-year-old Elder Joseph E. Caldwell, a Utah native who was president of the North Carolina Conference. That first debate is scantily documented, but was evidently well attended and caused a great deal of interest in the region. On April 8, 1900, a rematch was held, this time between 52-year-old Rev. Joseph Pyram King of Wilmington, and 21-year-old LDS missionary Elder Gilbert Manning Williams from Salt Lake City, who was at the time working in the Maple Hill area. The debate was widely publicized in the region. The day before, the *Wilmington Star* ran the following announcement:

#### Exposition of Mormonism

Excursion to Hampstead, Pender County, on account of religious discussion.

The joint debate between Elders J. P. King and J. W. S. Harvey, of the Second Advent church of this city, and a number of Mormon elders, which is announced to take place at Hampstead, Pender county, on tomorrow morning, promises to be an interesting affair. A large crowd from Wilmington will attend the speaking and will leave on a special train, which the Atlantic Coast Line has scheduled to depart over the Wilmington and New Bern road at 9:05 o'clock AM, Sunday. The fare for the round trip will be fifty cents, and the train returning will leave Hampstead at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. . . . a lively discussion is expected.<sup>14</sup>

Local papers the next day reported that between 1,000 and 2,000 people from surrounding counties attended the debate. Rev. King and Elder Williams each spoke for around three hours, debating aspects of the Book of Mormon, and such incendiary topics as polygamy and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Estimations of who won the debate are predictably conflicting. The *Wilmington Messenger* reported two days later that "Elder Williams . . . made a very eloquent speech in defense of his doctrine. Those who were present say, however, that he evaded the vital questions which had been put and practically made a political speech by consuming most of his time in eulogizing Brigham H. Young."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, LDS historian Barnhill points out that, following the debate, so many members of the Second Advent Church converted to the LDS faith that "they brought the church building with them."<sup>16</sup>

Today there is still a significant community of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Hampstead. Their church is located on Highway 17 in town, just south of the intersection with Route 210. On 210, close to the same intersection, is the

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<sup>13</sup> Barnhill, *A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Hampstead, North Carolina*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> "Exposition of Mormonism." *Wilmington Star*, April 7, 1900; cited in Marion F. Barnhill, Sr., *A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Hampstead, North Carolina*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> "Many People Heard the Discussion at Hampstead Sunday Between Rev. J. P. King and Mormon Elders. *Wilmington Messenger*, April 10, 1900. Cited in Barnhill, pp. 28-29.

<sup>16</sup> Barnhill, p. 31.

Hampstead, North Carolina, Latter-Day Saints Cemetery, said to be one of the only dedicated LDS cemeteries in the United States.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Unitarians from Boston established a mission school in Pender County, in the tradition of the Northern mission schools that dotted the Southern mountains. The Carolina Industrial School was founded in 1902 (1905, according to Mattie Bloodworth<sup>17</sup>) by the National Alliance of Unitarian Women, “and provided students with studies in literature, languages, and fine arts along with the ‘3-Rs’.”<sup>18</sup> The site of the campus was at Shelter Neck, near Croom’s Bridge, the location of the present-day Shelter Neck Unitarian Universalist Camp.

According to Mattie Bloodworth’s 1947 history of Pender County,

Here, at Shelter Neck, the Unitarians, headed by such men of note as Edward Everett Hale, Charles W. Elliott and other Boston ministers, writers and educators, financed the new school. The Reverend W. S. Key, an Englishman by birth, was sent to the school as minister, educator and special worker.

There was so much done in the way of social and educational work that little or no attention was directed to the task of spreading Unitarianism. Unlike most Missionary enterprises the Unitarians found that common necessities of life, better living conditions, and general work for higher standards of education, came before the spreading of religious dogmas.<sup>19</sup>

The school operated until the late 1920s, and offered, according to Bloodworth, “aside from the usual school courses, elocution, public speaking, music, vocational training, and domestic science, as well as other courses...”<sup>20</sup>

Though the Carolina Industrial School at Shelter Neck operated only for a generation, there are presumably still elderly residents of Pender County who were educated there. The land is still owned by a Unitarian organization. The Pender County Library has an extensive photographic collection documenting the school’s activities, available in digitized form online.

### *Van Eeden*

Four years younger than St. Helena was the agricultural colony at Van Eeden. This community was the product of partnership between Hugh McRae and Frederick van Eeden, a Dutch transcendentalist who had previously tried and failed to establish a farming commune, known as Walden, in the Netherlands. Van Eeden recruited settlers

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<sup>17</sup> *History of Pender County, North Carolina*. Mattie Bloodworth. p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.shelterneckuucamp.org/Hist/History.html>, accessed July 29, 2010

<sup>19</sup> *History of Pender County, North Carolina*. Mattie Bloodworth. p. 93.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

for the North Carolina colony that bore his name, some of them Dutch farmers who had previously lived on Walden. However, like the early settlers at St. Helena, these residents soon became discontented and left.

By 1912, five families had settled at Van Eeden. Poor drainage hampered their truck farming so they turned to dairy work. That failed as well and Van Eeden was abandoned. Most of the Dutch farmers were swept into urban jobs and the complicated lives Dr. van Eeden had hoped to enable them to avoid.<sup>21</sup>

A generation later, Van Eeden would be reborn. McRae, now in his seventies, in partnership with his old friend Alvin Saunders Johnson, an economist and director of the New School for Social Research, wanted the farmland of Van Eeden to be brought back under cultivation in the hands of a very different group of immigrants. In the late 1930s, through his connections in New York, Johnson became aware of the growing danger faced by European Jews in countries under Nazi control. He made positions available at the New School in order to bring some Jewish academics and intellectuals out of Europe, but he knew of many more endangered families than he was able to provide for in New York.

Johnson formed the Alvin Corporation to bring Jewish families out of Europe and settle them on farms in America, and tied in his efforts with those of the already established Refugee Economic Corporation, which was financing refugee settlements around the world. Addressing the seeming mismatch of attempting to resettle white-collar urban professionals into an entirely agricultural setting, he wrote,

The Refugee Economic Corporation and its predecessors have proved, by the brilliant agricultural achievements of religious refugees in Palestine, that even urban families of many generation's (sic) standing can build up a wholly satisfactory life on the land.<sup>22</sup>

Remembering his friend Hugh McRae's land holdings in Eastern North Carolina and interest in establishing agricultural colonies, Johnson contacted McRae about the prospect of resettling Jewish refugees in Pender County. In the summer of 1939, the Alvin Corporation purchased 150 acres of the Van Eeden tract, and acquired a three-year option on the remaining 800-plus acres. By the spring of 1940, eight families had been brought over from Europe, settled on ten-acre tracts in Van Eeden, and given Guernsey cows and access to company-owned farm equipment.

In its new incarnation, Van Eeden was once again ultimately unsuccessful as an agricultural venture. It did, however, succeed in its mission of providing an escape for several families who, had they been unable to emigrate to North Carolina, might have died in the Nazi genocide. Farm life was difficult for these primarily urban refugees, and

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<sup>21</sup> "Van Eeden," Susan Taylor Block. *Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc. Bulletin*, Vol. XL, No. 1, October 1995. p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> "Van Eeden: A Farm Community for Refugees Organized by the Alvin Corporation," by Alvin S. Johnson. May 12, 1939. Quoted in Block's "Van Eeden," p. 15.

author Susan Taylor Block describes “the two moods of many of the settlers: gratitude for being alive and frustration at conditions on the farm.”<sup>23</sup> Block writes of the Heimann family from Berlin—parents Klaus and Henny, and their children Klaus and Eva—who were ethnic Jews, though practicing Lutherans. The elder Klaus had been fired in 1938, because of his ancestry, from his job as the chief financial officer of a coal company; Henny was a tri-lingual bookkeeper with a teaching degree. After settling in Van Eeden, Klaus wrote to Alvin Johnson, “Above all, we enjoy every day the loveliness of the country and the kindness of its population and we are grateful and happy that we have the chance to settle down here.”<sup>24</sup> The Heimanns, however, had an extremely difficult time adjusting to life in rural North Carolina, especially in the summer of 1940 when both father and son became infected with malaria. After some months of fighting illness and attempting to control the mosquito infestation around his farm plot, the Heimanns expressed their regrets and gratitude to Alvin Johnson, and moved to Connecticut.

Another family who settled at Van Eeden were Felix and Paula Willman, a young Viennese couple. Felix, a bookkeeper, photographer, and pianist, was interned for a year at Dachau and Buchenwald, but his wife successfully fought for his release. They came to Van Eeden by way of Brooklyn, carrying the single box of possessions they had been permitted to bring out of Austria, which contained a few of their most beloved opera records. At Van Eeden they often entertained friends from Penderlea, playing the opera records and serving Paula’s fresh-baked biscuits. One day a group of Wilmingtonians showed up at the Willmans’ door, having heard that their home was “the Viennese Coffee House.”

Felix was initially successful in raising strawberries at Van Eeden, but like the Heimanns, the Willmans were ultimately forced for reasons of health and farming difficulties to leave North Carolina. They settled in New York, where Paula eventually became a renowned sculptor.

The Flatow family escaped Germany after being hidden by a Gentile family in Berlin. Arthur Flatow was an architect, and his wife, whose father owned a prominent auction house, had grown up living a privileged lifestyle that left her entirely unsuited for life as a farm wife. Their daughter Ursula, interviewed by Block in 1994, remembered,

It was very hard on my mother. She had always had servants and she was useless as a housewife. She used to make fantasy lists of things to do while we were there: ‘1. Go to the opera. 2. Go to the symphony.’<sup>25</sup>

The Flatows left Van Eeden in 1942, eventually becoming innkeepers in the Catskills. Ursula learned English before her parents, but Block writes that “the combination of her German accent and the rural Pender County dialect she had acquired at Penderlea School made her almost unintelligible in New York.”<sup>26</sup> Reminiscing in 1994 about their time in

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<sup>23</sup> Block, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Block, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43

Pender County, Ursula told Block, “Oh, the snakes, the mosquitoes! We got out of there.”<sup>27</sup>

In early 1941 Alvin Johnson’s personal secretary, Sarnia Marquand, made an observation trip to Van Eeden. The letters that she sent to Johnson are a fascinating record of daily life in the colony, detailing such matters as the residents’ attempts to find opera broadcasts on the radio, and their apparently pervasive anxiety about snakes, in addition to the concerns of attempting to make a living at farming poorly drained land. Marquand’s letters are now held in the Alvin Johnson Collection at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Eventually the settlers of Van Eeden made their way to other parts of the United States, and the Van Eeden tract was sold in 1948 to James Wilkins. Though the Jewish community at Van Eeden didn’t take root with the same success as the Russian Orthodox community of St. Helena, their time in Pender County is remembered by older residents, particularly by their friends in Penderlea, who, according to Block, still reminisce about the sound of “Germantalk.”

### *Penderlea*

Of Pender County’s experimental agricultural communities, the one that met with the greatest long-term success was Penderlea. In northern Pender County, roughly equidistant to the southwest of Willard and the northwest of Watha, Penderlea survives as an agricultural community lived on and farmed by many original settlers and their descendants.

Penderlea was born in 1934 when Hugh McRae proposed to the Department of the Interior the establishment of a resettlement colony for farm families whose livelihoods and wellbeing were threatened by the Depression. The government inspected the land, found it to be ideal for the production of truck crops, and purchased nearly 5,000 acres from McRae, who became the manager of Penderlea Homestead Farms, Inc.

Ann Cottle, Penderlea community historian and longtime resident, writes that this tract of land had already been the site of an attempted agricultural development a couple of generations earlier.

According to an 1870 map of the state . . . approximately the same tract of land was purchased after the Civil War by E. R. Brink, a carpetbagger from New York . . . Brink designated the land “The Brinks Colony,” subdivided it, prepared the map, and sold about fifty farms to people in New York City. The colony failed when a Wilmington bank foreclosed on Brink’s mortgage, costing the New Yorkers their farms and money.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>28</sup> *The Roots of Penderlea: A Memory of a New Deal Homestead Community*, by Ann Cottle. UNC-Wilmington, 2008. pp. 5-6

The “farm city” was laid out by city planner John Nolen, from Boston. Arranged in a horseshoe pattern, the ten-acre truck farms would surround a community center that was to include a school, gymnasium, and library, agricultural facilities such as a grading shed, cannery, and grist and feed mills, as well as a furniture factory. The initial construction of Penderlea was done by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The more than 1,000 young men, many locals, who lived on the construction site were a community in their own right. They occupied barracks left over by the Bates Lumber Company. The men had a ball field, mess hall, and canteen, published their own community newsletter, and entertained themselves with such activities as a barrack yard beautification contest.

Families who applied to live on Penderlea underwent rigorous screening and qualification procedures. (Penderlea is pronounced with a slightly greater emphasis on the final syllable than the first, and according to Cottle, the preposition traditionally used to describe the location of Penderlea is “on,” rather than “at” or “in.”) Only Protestants were eligible, and preference was given to young couples who had children already or were expecting—and the more sons, the better. Cottle’s family, the Southerlands, lived in neighboring Duplin County when they applied to become part of Penderlea. As part of the qualification process the Southerlands were required to keep a to-the-penny accounting of all of their household income and expenditures in the months leading up to moving in 1941.

I found a booklet that Mother had to keep . . . there were quite a number of criteria that you had to meet, and one of those was you had to keep a book, and every cent that you had, anything you bought, anything you took to the store to swap with them at the store that had a price to it, had to be jotted down. And I remember seeing particularly in one spot where Mother had bought a hairnet that was five cents, and she had to put that hairnet down . . . we would go and buy a bar of candy, we would have to put that down. And how many of us could keep a record like that?<sup>29</sup>

Cottle recalls as well that government agents made home visits to prospective settlers, to inventory their possessions. A family of Penderlea applicants from Pitt County, she recounts,

. . . were eating lunch one day, and this man came, knocked on the door and came right in, went right on back through their house and just pulled out drawers and looked, and in short checked to see what they had. And she said it was a little insulting that somebody would do something like that.<sup>30</sup>

Penderlea’s first homesteaders arrived on the project in 1936. A detailed contemporary account of the early Penderlea farms was written by UNC-Chapel Hill student Thomas Russell Everett, whose 1942 Master’s thesis was entitled *Penderlea, An Experiment in Community Education*. He wrote,

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<sup>29</sup> Ann Southerland Cottle, interview with Sarah Bryan, May 27, 2010

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

On the two thousand acres of the project under cultivation, soy beans, hay, seed corn, lespedeza, barley, and oats are grown for feed crops and cucumbers, beans, bell peppers, Irish potatoes, bulbs, and flowers are grown for truck markets. Before the project began this land was the type known as “cut-over woodland.” . . . The typical farm unit grows feed crops, money crops, livestock, and has a home garden. Each farm has one or two cows, one or two mules or horses, and about twenty-five hens and chickens.

Each farm unit consists of one dwelling house, a corn crib, hay barn, horse and cow stalls, a poultry house, smoke house, hog house, pump house and wash house . . . The homes have from four to six rooms ceiled with pine lumber and two small porches. There are 142 with electric lights, running water, and complete bathrooms. Fifty houses have outside pumps and toilets. These houses are partly furnished by the Farm Security Administration. The furniture is Swedish Modern and made by skilled labor from oak and maple.<sup>31</sup>

Cottle recalls that residents of neighboring communities felt some resentment towards Penderleans, who had electricity and indoor plumbing before either amenity was commonly to be found in the surrounding area. “. . . we were in basically the same condition that folks outside Penderlea were,” she says, “except we did have electricity and plumbing. They seemed to think that we were uppity, as though we had more than everybody else; which we didn’t.”<sup>32</sup> Penderleans’ sense of modesty is reflected in a poem, entitled “What I Would Like Penderlea to Become,” written in 1937 by 17-year-old Penderlea High School student Gerald Taylor, which begins,

My hope for the wide, level fields of Penderlea  
Has never yet been said.  
But let me hope for it to be  
A place with no big head...

Most early Penderleans were Methodists and Baptists. Oddly enough, even though the project’s designers placed great importance on applicants’ standing in their home churches, they neglected to include a church in the otherwise meticulously planned community. The homesteaders banded together and began to hold services and Sunday school in the barracks that had previously housed the work crews who built Penderlea. The Presbytery of Wilmington supplied a pastor, who was highly regarded by the community. Eventually the homesteaders determined to build their own church, and because they were so evenly divided between Baptists and Methodists, a vote was held to determine the denomination of the new church. On the first vote, the Baptists carried the day, but not with a majority. On the second vote, the majority chose a third denomination, that of their pastor. A Presbyterian church was established, and both

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<sup>31</sup> *Penderlea, An Experiment in Community Education*, by Thomas Russell Everett. UNC-Chapel Hill Master’s Thesis, Arts in Education, 1942.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Methodists and Baptists attended. (Eventually the Baptists departed to form their own congregation.)

Cottle recalls that despite the homesteaders' differing religious backgrounds, the community was otherwise very cohesive from the beginning.

It was not like in some of the older towns, [where] if you weren't born in that town you could live there all your life except maybe a couple of years, you still are not a part of that town, you're sort of an outcast. Here, nobody lived together [before]; you all came from everywhere, so it didn't matter where you came from. It was like one big family. And they looked after each other. We all looked after each other.

Penderlea grew into a vital community, distinguished not only by its agricultural enterprises, but by its good school and library, and its active sports teams, ladies' clubs, and youth groups, and square dances and other social gatherings. In June of 1937 Eleanor Roosevelt visited Penderlea, following an invitation and gift of Penderlea-grown irises from homesteader Bruno Van Bavel. The Penderleas hosted an outdoor dinner and dance for Mrs. Roosevelt, and put on a pageant in her honor that dramatized the history of the settlement. (In the course of the present fieldwork, an NCFI folklorist found and purchased a snapshot in Wallace that shows a group of people in a "Time Marches On" pageant in 1937, including approximately two dozen participants dressed as pocket watches. Upon examining the photograph, Ann Cottle said that she believed it may be a photograph of the pageant put on for Mrs. Roosevelt, in which case it could be the only surviving picture from the performance. The photograph has been donated to the Penderlea Homestead Museum.)

Penderlea has undergone many changes over the last seventy years. When the government made a purchase option available, homesteaders gradually began to buy their farms. Some converted from production of truck crops to dairy operations. The hosiery mill that was built on the project to supply residents with off-season work became a perfume factory, pervading the entire community with its not-unpleasant fumes. That plant has since closed. One of the original homes has become the Penderlea Homestead Museum, on Garden Road, where the community maintains an extensive collection of artifacts pertaining to everyday life on Penderlea. Like Ann Southerland Cottle, many Penderleas have remained on their family homesteads. Even though all of the original homesteaders originally came from other places, she says, "the thing is, once you had lived on Penderlea, it's almost like that's where your roots are."<sup>33</sup>

### *Today's newcomers*

More than a century after the first Italian settlers disembarked at the "getting-off place" along the railroad line in St. Helena, Pender County continues to draw new residents from diverse communities around the United States and the world.

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<sup>33</sup> Ann Southerland Cottle, interview with Sarah Bryan, May 27, 2010

Americans from outside of Pender County, both retirees and younger people, are settling here in large numbers and contributing to the ever-changing artistic and cultural landscape of the region. The coastal sections of Pender County—Topsail, Surf City, and Hampstead—are home to especially large newcomer populations, while the inland communities are also home to in-migrants. Some of these Pender County residents grew up in other parts of North Carolina, such as Burgaw tatter Ann Mendenhall, Hampstead quilter and musician Cindy Rhodes, and Burgaw weaver B. J. Ryan. Others moved to North Carolina from other states, particularly in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast. Among these newcomers from the North, some, such as Hampstead fisherman Bill Moller, a native New Yorker, have become deeply involved in the cultural and occupational traditions native to Pender County. Some, like Pennsylvanian paper-cutting artist Dottie Netherton, who lives at Topsail, have brought with them the artistic traditions of their own native homes. Still others—like Connecticut-native bowl maker and potter Burt and Joan Millette, of Hampstead, Michigander potter Rick Austin, who lives in Burgaw, and New Jersey native and Hampstead resident Bill Fisher, who makes large wooden models of fishing lures—have settled in the area and pursue highly individualist paths of artistry.

Like much of North Carolina, Pender County has undergone a demographic transformation over the past generation as many immigrants have arrived from Latin America. Like Latin Americans in general, the Latino residents of Pender County come from diverse regional, ethnic, and linguistic groups. The greatest concentration of Latino newcomers to Pender County, however, are said by such experts as Lucy Vasquez, director of Wilmington's Centro Latino, to be agricultural workers from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Increasingly, such families who live and work in the western part of Pender County are more likely to be residentially settled than was the case a decade ago, when a greater number of workers lived a migratory existence. Life can still be full of obstacles for such newcomers, though, as many live at a subsistence level, working hard for very little pay; and in this region in particular, a significant number of immigrants arrive speaking neither English nor Spanish, but only the indigenous Mesoamerican language of Mixteco, presenting an additional obstacle to cultural acclimation. The Latino presence is evident in diverse areas of Pender County's folklife, from music and dance traditions to cuisine—the latest transformation of a local culture already enriched by many international traditions.

## **Historical and Contemporary Folklife Traditions in Pender County**

Pender County's folklife traditions spring from the great diversity of its residents—from the heritage of the native-born white and black fishermen and farmers, to the culture of the ethnically and religiously diverse immigrants from around the world who have made Pender County their home over the last century. This heritage can be seen in many aspects of the county's history, and in its present-day residents' ways of life. Artistic traditions of music and craft, as well as traditions of work, cooking, and other practical matters of daily existence, all exhibit the county's rich folklife heritage. The following pages describe some of these traditions, which range from classic Southern folkways like blues and country music, to unique local traditions like collard-stealing and nailing shoes to a tree.

### ***Music and dance***

#### ***Blues***

While there have been many talented traditional musicians in Pender County over the generations, probably the most widely known was blues guitarist George Herbert Moore, from Burgaw. Born in 1929 in Mount Olive (Wayne County), Moore moved to Pender County as a child. His father, a sharecropper, was a guitarist, but was forced to lay down his instrument when he lost some of his fingers in a farm accident. Moore and his brothers in turn learned to play.

Moore's musical epiphany came at the age of nine, when he encountered Carolina blues legend Blind Boy Fuller playing on the street in Durham, one day when the Moore family brought their tobacco to market. Later inspirations included Texan Lightning Hopkins, Atlanta's Buddy Moss, and Mississippian Jimmy Reed.

Moore worked for many years as a sharecropper, and later in the logging and sawmilling industries in Pender County. During those years he played music primarily at such events as house parties and fish fries, as well as for his own pleasure. It was not until he was nearly 70 years old that he embarked on a career as a professional musician. A weekly gig on Water Street in Wilmington led to engagements at prestigious blues festivals around the country. He recorded two albums, *Blues Came to Burgaw* (1998, Lost Gold Records), and *Roots and Shoes* (2000, Lost Gold Records).

#### ***String band music***

Historical sources suggest that traditional string band music was common in Pender County's history. The Pender County Museum in Burgaw has in its collection a fiddle owned by Alex Bannerman, a Pender County native who was captured at Gettysburg and died in hospital in Richmond in 1865.<sup>34</sup> In the local history files of the Pender County

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<sup>34</sup> "Museum is reason to reminisce." Andrea Monroe, *Wilmington Morning Star*, October 23, 1991.

Library in Burgaw, there is a photocopy of an old photograph, apparently from the first decade or so of the twentieth century, showing a string band composed of three musicians. The picture is labeled “Local band that played at Point Caswell,” and the musicians are identified as Cisero Bulter of Atkinson (fiddle), Hybert C. Devane of Point Caswell (guitar), and Hybert G. (or S.) Devane of Point Caswell (fiddle).<sup>35</sup> Other sources point to the prevalence of string band music in early Pender County as well. Hampstead community historian Marion Barnhill, in his *Vignettes of Hampstead and Other Exotic Places* tells of the Devane family musicians.

Stewart Devane’s grandfather played the fiddle, while three of his sons played various stringed instruments. There were other musicians in the area. Most of the musicians were in and out of good standing in the church, resulting from charges of aiding and abetting. Stewart also said that many instruments were broken in fights. He lost his violin when he became incensed at a heckler, breaking the violin over the heckler’s head.<sup>36</sup>

Barnhill relates an anecdote that he calls “The Shindig,” concerning his grandfather and, again, a member of the Devane family.

During an oral history session in his home, my cousin Stewart Devane told me about some activities that occurred in the upper Pender/lower Bladen County areas. One of the incidents concerned members of the local church who were dancing or playing music for the dances. These activities were forbidden and were grounds for being turned out of the church.

My grandfather, James Bradbury Barnhill, was a little more liberal in his thinking and would not object to some dancing, provided it was dignified and not too loud . . .

Following one of these affairs, one of his distant neighbors, Mr. John B. Gaylor, thought his family should have been invited. He decided to have a party and not invite the Barnhills. Stewart’s father and Mr. Jim Sherman were burning a tar kiln near the Gaylor home when they heard a violin . . .

James Barnhill and Gaylor evidently reported each other to their church, and Gaylor was called to account for the goings-on at his home.

. . . Mr. Gaylor denied that they were dancing at his house. He said it was nothing more than a “shindig.” This puzzled the pastor, who asked an older man, “What is the difference between a dance and a shindig?” The gentleman replied, “On the

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<sup>35</sup> Vertical File “Pender-Musicians and Music-Personalities,” Pender County Library, Burgaw. Identifications per Julia Devane Newton. The Social Security Death Index records three Hybert Devanes from North Carolina: Hybert Devane, 1919-1972, last known residence not specified; Hybert Devane, 1884-1973, last known residence Castle Hayne; and Hybert T. Devane, 1918-1990, last known residence Columbia, South Carolina. No record was found of Cisero Bulter.

<sup>36</sup> *Vignettes of Hampstead and Other Exotic Places*. Marion Barnhill. Trafford Publishing, Victoria, Canada, 2004. P. 28.

south side of Colly [a very large swamp], they have a dance, while on the north side of Colly, they have shindigs.” The evasion was fruitless. Musicians and dancers were turned out.<sup>37</sup>

Barnhill also writes that, “Mr. I. J. Kellum, Topsail High principal, sponsored an annual Old Time Fiddlers Convention each fall. Prizes were given for the various events. Besides the musical events, there were also a cakewalk, a pretty girl contest, and an ugly man contest.”<sup>38</sup>

Ann Southerland Cottle recalls string band music during her childhood on Penderlea. She writes,

Since the beginning, Penderlea was a close-knit community where the people worked together, took care of each other, and had good times together. They held weekly socials that included square dancing, usually called by Sut Austin. Several men on the project who enjoyed getting together to play their fiddles and guitars provided music for the socials. Families sometimes gathered on a Sunday afternoon at one of the homes for music and singing, while the children enjoyed dancing and playing.<sup>39</sup>

A 1937 Farm Security Administration photograph by Ben Shahn, held at the Library of Congress, shows a scene much like that described by Cottle. A man sits outside in a straight-back chair playing a fiddle, while a young girl dances, and a group of women and children look on. The girl appears to be flat-footing or clogging. The subjects’ clothing and relaxation suggest a Sunday afternoon.<sup>40</sup>

Although Penderlea had an active religious life, Cottle recalls that there were no tensions about or proscriptions against dancing at Penderlea, as in other communities. Her husband, Gene Cottle, grew up in nearby Wallace (Duplin County), where, she says, “his pastor would not allow his young people to go to dances; but his young people didn’t pay attention to that.”<sup>41</sup>

Present-day bluegrass and country and Western music (the most evident musical successors to string band music) in Pender County is exemplified by the weekly gatherings at Robert and Eula Ramsey’s Pickin’ Palace, an informal venue built by the couple on the banks of the Cape Fear River where musicians from New Hanover, Brunswick, and Pender Counties assemble each Friday night to share songs, conversation, and food. While the atmosphere at the Pickin’ Palace is casual, with musicians frequently joining in spontaneously, the core house band at the Palace often includes some combination of the musicians Barry Hayes, Ivey Blackburn, Tonya

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> Library of Congress digital ID fsa 8a17289. <http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8a17289/>, accessed July 14, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Cottle, interview with Sarah Bryan, May 27, 2010.

Morrison, Betsy Ramsey, Derwin Hinson, and proprietor Eula Ramsey. Ramsey is considered by many to be one of the area's consummate traditional musicians, both for her multi-instrumental virtuosity, and her breadth of knowledge concerning songs and lyrics. While the repertoire at the Pickin' Palace draws from a wide range of material, including both "classic" and contemporary country, bluegrass, and gospel, the song choices are united by the underlying musical aesthetic, which celebrates largely unadorned acoustic instrumentation, and close vocal harmonies.

Burgaw's Cripple Creek Cloggers, founded by Buck and Nancy Aycock, are the most visible practitioners of traditional dance in Pender County. Nancy Aycock, an area native, was introduced to clogging during a teaching retreat in the mountains of Western North Carolina in the late 1970s; after performing in Pender County during Burgaw's Springfest—in a performance that recognized the connections between mountain dancing and the square dances that were practiced in Eastern North Carolina—the Cripple Creek Cloggers went on to become one of the most celebrated dance teams in the eastern part of the state. While the team travels frequently, they still maintain their home base at the Cripple Creek Corner building (adjacent to the Pender County Public Library) in Burgaw.

### *Gospel*

Eastern North Carolina is home to exceptionally rich traditions of African American gospel music. Pender County has particularly strong church- and family-based legacies of a capella quartet-style gospel singing, a tradition that once appeared to be fading, but which has recently been acquiring renewed vitality.

Singer Roy Johnson of Burgaw grew up in the 1940s and '50s in a large farming family in Pender County. "We came up out of a singing family," he says. "My mom could sing, my uncle could sing—we just liked singing . . . Growing up back then, quartet singing was what we were familiar with."<sup>42</sup> In the late '40s and early '50s, several Johnson family men sang together as the Burgaw Quartet. Roy Johnson, whose father was one of the singers, remembers,

As children—as boys—we were just excited about hearing people sing without a lot of music. We weren't used to guitars and pianos, stuff like that. Those voices really excited us.<sup>43</sup>

By the early 1960s, the sons and nephews of the Burgaw Quartet began to sing together as well, also performing a capella gospel music. They called themselves the Burgaw Community Quartet. For much of that decade, the group—which started with 11 or 12 members but became smaller over time—was frequently engaged to sing at area churches in Pender and the surrounding counties. They appeared on television in Wilmington, on a Sunday-morning program that Johnson believes had featured few if any black performers previously.

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<sup>42</sup> Roy Johnson, interview with Michael Taylor, April 1, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

By the late 1960s, increasingly important roles in the church, as well as family and career obligations, led the Burgaw Community Quartet to scale back on performing, and they entered a period of decreased musical activity that would last for some decades. James Dion Smith, a younger member of the family, says, “A capella was missing from this area for such a long time.” He adds, “I think it was missed around here . . . The older generations, the deacons and mothers in the church, were raise dup on quartets.”<sup>44</sup>

In September of 2009, a new chapter of the tradition began to unfold. Younger members of the Johnson and Smith family decided to honor their grandmother at a community gathering with a surprise performance of favorite songs from the repertoire of the Burgaw Community Quartet—their fathers, uncles, and cousins. The performance was so successful that they were soon asked to sing at a formal engagement.

Calling themselves the Brothers in Christ, this third-generation quartet, which models itself after the Burgaw Community Quartet, now has a full schedule of programs and church visits. In February of 2010, the C. F. Pope High School Class of 1964 hosted “An Afternoon of Quartet Singing and Gospel Music History” in Burgaw. The Brothers in Christ—James Dion Smith, William Smith, Jr., Kevin Smith, Adrienne Smith, and Elmer Jerome Johnson—sang on the program, to an enthusiastic reception. Their performance was followed by a reunion of the Burgaw Community Quartet, featuring Roy Johnson, Rev. William Smith, Sr., Rev. John B. Smith, Jr., Gary Armstrong, and Roger Farris. The Quartet had not sung together publicly in at least five years, but their appearance on that day’s program has rekindled the singers’ interest in working together as an active quartet. According to Johnson,

We love to sing, and there might come something great out of this— we don't know. We believe that God is in the blessing business, and whatever he has in store for us will be. It might turn out to be something great.<sup>45</sup>

Another family quartet from Pender County, the Artis Sisters, sang on the Class of 1964’s program as well. The three-member group includes Maggie Hucks, 75, of Hubert in Onslow County; Ida Artis, 73, of Wilmington; and Mary Boney, 59, of the Burgaw area. Encouraged by their mother to sing in harmony, the sisters have been singing as a group since approximately 1990.

Also on the program that day were white Southern gospel groups the Gospel Lites and the Blessed Quartet. The Gospel Lites are based at the Penderlea Baptist Church, and include singers William Rivenbark, Glenn Rogers, and Joey Rivenbark, with musicians Shirley Richard (piano), Ray Donald (drums), and David Farris (bass). The Blessed Quartet, from Burgaw, sing with recorded instrumental backup, and include singers David Connor, Wayne Horrell, Elton Lee, and Rodney Gardner.

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<sup>44</sup> James Dion Smith, interview with Michael Taylor, April 3, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Roy Johnson, interview with Michael Taylor, April 1, 2010.

Performances by the Burgaw Community Quartet, Brothers in Christ, and Artis Sisters, at the Class of 1964's gospel program, can be viewed on the YouTube channel of Maximus364.

### *International traditions*

Given the unusually diverse ethnic and national origin of many of Pender County's citizens, immigrant traditions of music and dance have been important parts of the county's cultural landscape, both historically and today. Ann Mizerek and Mary Bakan recall regular dances at St. Helena's community center. The dances featured polkas and waltzes, and Bakan remembers that some of the music was provided by a local accordionist named Johnny.<sup>46</sup> Mizerek has retained a connection to Ukrainian music in part through the recordings that she owns, which she describes as being primarily of Ukrainian religious music. Recorded music from home was similarly important to Van Eeden settlers Felix and Paula Willman, who cared for their opera records so deeply that they included them in the single box of possessions they were permitted to carry out of Austria when they fled the Nazis. They regularly hosted gatherings for friends from nearby Penderlea, who would visit the Willmans' house and listen to their records.

Today, the music and dance traditions of Pender County have expanded to include those of the region's Latin American immigrants. Lucy Vasquez, director of Wilmington's Centro Latino, reports that among Latino immigrants in the Cape Fear region, an especially popular style of music and dancing currently is *duranguense*, or *pasito duranguense*. *Duranguense* emerged as a distinct style among Mexicans in Chicago, and soon became popular in Mexican and Mexican American communities throughout the United States, as well as in Mexico. It is characterized by a fast tempo, and ensembles of brass instruments, synthesizers, and, at its heart, bass drums. Like many Mexican styles, *duranguense* musical culture parallels American country music culture in its integral cowboy aesthetic and romanticization of outlaws. As a manifestation of the depth of the genre's popularity in the Cape Fear region, Vasquez cites the student-led *duranguense* dance group at Rocky Point's Trask High School, in Pender County.<sup>47</sup>

### **Craft**

Weaver B. J. Ryan, who directs the craft program at Poplar Grove Plantation, suggests that, with some exceptions, traditions of creating handmade goods are less prevalent and enduring in the Lower Cape Fear region than elsewhere in the state. She speculates that historically this could be due to the fact that "because we were closer to a port, it was easier to get things already made that were shipped in. We didn't have to be quite as self-sufficient for quite as long as they did where they were more isolated." While Pender County does seem to be home to fewer ongoing craft traditions than, for instance, some

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<sup>46</sup> Mizerek and Bakan, interview with Sarah Bryan, May 27, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> "Report on the Arts Resources and Traditions of Wilmington and New Hanover County." Sarah Bryan, North Carolina Folklife Institute. April, 2010.

of North Carolina's mountain counties, nevertheless there have been, and continue to be, highly skilled artisans practicing in Pender communities.

### *Fiber arts*

In 1991, two sisters, Effie Rhodes Bell and Hazel Rhodes Reece, were recognized with the North Carolina Heritage Award for carrying on their family tradition of making exceptional quilts. The Rhodes sisters, sixth-generation craftswomen, grew up in the section of Onslow County that became Camp Lejeune. Effie Bell moved to Hampstead as a young woman, and lived there until her death in 2007. Hazel Reece still lives outside Jacksonville.

The Rhodes sisters' grandmother had stitched Confederate uniforms, and their aunt Mary Jane Rhodes Robinson was also an admired quilter whose work has been documented by quilt scholars. Many other women in their family were skilled needleworkers as well. Both Hazel and Effie learned the art as children, as had their aunt Mary Jane.

Like pottery, blacksmithing, cabinet making, and many other crafts that are increasingly regarded as art, quilting was a more emphatically utilitarian skill in earlier generations, a practice that allowed the makers to express themselves aesthetically, but which ultimately served an essential practical purpose. In a 2000 interview with historian David Cecelski, Hazel Reece emphasized that during her childhood, "Times was hard, and so they would make quilts out of the old worn clothes. They didn't make quilts for looks. They made a quilt for cover, because the houses were cold."<sup>48</sup>

In later years both sisters quilted professionally, and from the proceeds of her sales Mrs. Reece was able to have a freestanding building constructed on her property, in which she made her quilts. The sisters had a repertoire of traditional patterns, and also invented their own designs based on memories, nature, and current events. One of Hazel Reece's quilts received the 1978 Best in Show award at the North Carolina State Fair, and another is in the permanent collection of the North Carolina Museum of History. Effie Bell taught her daughter Vivian Storck of Hampstead how to quilt, as well as her daughters-in-law Roseanne and Linda Bell.

Reece reminisced that when she was a child, the ladies in her family would gather at her home to quilt, and sometimes she would climb under the quilting frame while they worked. "When I was little, I would get under the quilt and play," she said. "I cannot tell you what an impression that makes on a child, to be under one of those pretty quilts with the light coming through it." Another artist who was deeply influenced by family elders' quilting was painter Eddie Hayes, who grew up in a farm family outside Atkinson. His grandmother, Beatrice Fennell, made many quilts. Hayes remembers that when a quilt top was ready to be quilted, it would be stretched out between two long sticks, specially cut for the purpose, and set on a tobacco horse; then his grandmother, her sisters, and their neighbors would gather together to work on the stitching together. As an artist Hayes has a fascination with colors and how they relate to one another, and he says that he still

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<sup>48</sup> "Hazel Reece: A Quilter's Life." David Cecelski. *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 9, 2000.

receives inspiration from his memories of the colors and patterns created by his grandmother.

Outstanding historical examples of quilts from Pender County have been documented in recent decades. In the book *North Carolina Quilts*, edited by Ruth Haislip Robinson, there is a photograph of a crazy quilt made by Pender County's Pauline Armstrong. She made the quilt in 1894 for her son Thomas James Armstrong. On top of the jagged patchwork of contrasting colors, Pauline Armstrong embroidered such fanciful devices as birds, a spiderweb, an anchor, moons, and many kinds of flowers. Another historical quilt from Pender County is the circa-1920 "Rose Variant Quilt," by an unknown maker, that is now part of the Farmer-James Collection of African-American Quilts.<sup>49</sup>

From the same era of the "Rose Variant Quilt," there is a record of a Pender County resident who was still spinning her own yarn or thread well into the twentieth century. In a 1924 article for the *Christian Register*, Edith Norton chronicled the work of the Unitarians from Boston who had established a school near Shelter Neck. In that account she wrote,

A quaint little maiden lady still lives in a tiny house which belongs to the school farm . . . She spins . . . and I love to sit and watch the big wheel whirring and Miss Sally stepping back and forth as she draws out the long thread.<sup>50</sup>

Skilled artists create other kinds of fiber art in Pender County today. St. Helena's Ann Mizerek is a talented cross-stitcher and tatter, as demonstrated by a traditional Ukrainian Easter basket covering that she created. Mizerek says that needlework was not done in her household during her childhood, but as a young married woman living briefly in Milwaukee, she learned how to knit, crochet, and tat, skills that she brought home to Pender County and taught all her sisters. Another accomplished fiber artist is tatter Ann Mendenhall, who grew up in Piedmont North Carolina and lives today in Burgaw. She learned tattering from her grandmother, and has since taught many others the art.

### *Other crafts*

In traditional agricultural communities, many uses, both decorative and functional, are found for the byproducts of farmwork. Pembroke, North Carolina, artist Lela Brooks, for example, made beautiful use of the tobacco twine left over from her family's crop by crocheting it into intricately patterned blankets. Corn shucks, a ubiquitous remnant found on many farms throughout the world, have provided the raw material for countless products. A 1972 article in the *Pender Chronicle* told of Thelma Colvin, an African American storekeeper who at the time lived in the Tuckahoe section of the county, near Atkinson. Colvin and her sister Elizabeth both learned from their aunt Jane Henry how to weave chair bottoms from corn shucks. Thelma Colvin had a steady sideline business at

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<sup>49</sup> *African-American Quilts: Farmer-James Collection ca. 1860-1947, a traveling exhibition 2003-2004*. 2003, Two Sisters Gallery of North Carolina Wesleyan College, Rocky Mount, NC.

<sup>50</sup> "Life in a North Carolina School: Backward conditions and people of good stock—an opportunity." Edith C. Norton. *Christian Register*, September 23, 1924, p. 923.

her grocery store, bottoming chairs for local refinishers and other neighbors. She also knew how to make dolls, floor mats, and baskets from shucks.<sup>51</sup> (Today Colvin would be ninety years old. A Thelma Colvin appears in the phonebook, listed in the nearby Sampson County community of Ivanhoe, less than ten miles from Tuckahoe.)

Pottery is an art form strongly associated with Piedmont and Western North Carolina, where the location of early trade routes and deposits of clay made it an important occupation. Though Pender County does not have a significant historical tradition of pottery, there are several active potters in the county today. Hampstead community historian Bill Messer makes functional stoneware, and is deeply versed in North Carolina's pottery traditions. Burgaw resident Rick Austin, a native of Michigan, hand-builds fanciful pottery sculptures, including mushroom houses inhabited by small pottery animals. Recently Austin has also taught pottery technique at the Pender County Library.

Hampstead residents Burt and Joan Millette, formerly of Connecticut, are also active craftspeople. Burt Millette creates wooden bowls (and other vessels) out of a variety of locally sourced woods, including walnut, cherry, and sweetgum, while Joan Millette—though currently concentrating more on abstract sculpture—spent nearly 35 years making a variety of utilitarian wares (including plates, bowls, and cups) for her full-time pottery business.

### **Memory and visionary art**

It can be argued that visionary and memory art, often grouped together under the generic term “folk art,” fall outside the boundaries of folklife. Folklife, by its standard definition, has to do with group traditions—practices that are part of community life, handed down from one person to another. The creation of visionary art and memory art are usually solitary pursuits, involving artists who are generally self-taught, expressing personal concepts. On the other hand, both forms tell us about community traditions. Memory art, works depicting scenes from the artists' earlier life, are records of traditions of community life in earlier eras. Visionary art, often based on the artists' spiritual experiences, reveals much about the context of spiritual life in which the artists live. Pender County has been home to extraordinary African American artists in both the visionary and memory styles.

Among the most celebrated American visionary artists of the twentieth century was Minnie Evans. Although she is most closely associated with Wilmington, where she spent most of her life, Evans was in fact a native of Pender County. She was born in the Long Creek community, between Rocky Point and Currie. When Evans was born her mother was still a young teenager, so she was taken early to Wilmington to be cared for by her grandmother. There Evans attended school through the fifth grade, and then left school to become a sounder, selling shellfish on the street. She married at sixteen, raised three sons, and later joined her husband in working for the family of Pembroke Jones. In time her

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<sup>51</sup> “Pender Woman Keeps Ancient Art Alive.” Herb Pate, *Pender Chronicle*, March 8, 1972. Archived in verticle file Pender – Cornhusk Craft at the Pender County Library, Burgaw.

connection to the Jones family led to a position as gatekeeper of Airlie Gardens in Wilmington.

It was not until she was forty-two years old that Minnie Evans received the inspiration to begin drawing. Since childhood she had been having religious visions, and on Good Friday of 1935, she had a spiritual experience in which she heard God tell her to “draw or die.” She made her first picture that day. Over the next thirty years Evans created a body of work primarily in crayon, as well as oil paints and inks, depicting her religious visions. The pictures were psychedelic in the truest sense, and featured swirling floral patterns, eyes, Biblical imagery, and ancient-looking races of people. “This has come to me, this art that I have put out,” she once explained, “from nations that I suppose might have been destroyed before the flood. No one knows anything about them, but God has given it to me to bring them back into the world.”<sup>52</sup>

Both within her lifetime and posthumously, Evans has received a tremendous amount of recognition for her work. Her pictures have been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian, the Museum of American Folk Art, and many other prestigious institutions. The Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington received a bequest upon Evans’ death of many of her artworks, and has established the Minnie Evans Study Center.

Today, Pender County artist Eddie Hayes creates important work in both the memory and visionary categories. Hayes works at his home outside Atkinson, living on the family land that he helped farm when he was growing up. Many of Hayes’ pictures, which are done in a variety of media—colored pencil, marker, paints—depict rural scenes from his childhood. He recreates scenes of his family and neighbors planting, tending, and harvesting their crops; dressing meat after hog killings; working on chores around the homeplace, such as chopping wood and washing laundry; and worshipping in church. These pictures are highly detailed, reproducing exact details from Hayes’ memory, rather than imagined or generic rural scenes.

Hayes also creates what he calls “mind pictures.” These works derive from his dreams, and often have a strong spiritual element. Hayes showed an interviewer for this project pictures that he had drawn that represented dreams he had had about the redemption of sinners, and a mother praying for her lost son. These artworks contain many abstract and symbolic elements, and some bear a strong resemblance to the work of Minnie Evans. Never having been to an art gallery, and having seen very few books of art in his life, Hayes does not believe that he has ever seen Evans’ work; his mind pictures would seem to be created independently of any influence from Pender County’s famous daughter.

Ivey Hayes and Harry Davis, Wilmington-area painters and cousins, trace their roots to Pender County. Though neither could be considered a “folk artist,” the influence of African American rural life in Pender County is evident in both artists’ bodies of work.

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<sup>52</sup> “Minnie Evans, 95, Folk Painter Noted for her Visionary Work” (obituary).New York Times. December 19, 1987.

Ivey Hayes grew up in a farm family near Rocky Point, and had a strong interest in drawing as a child. He would grow up to earn a BA in Art Education from North Carolina Central University, and an MFA from UNC-Greensboro. He is known for his work both in acrylics and watercolor, and among the many subjects he paints are scenes of farm life, including pictures of the culture and harvest of such typical Eastern North Carolina crops as strawberries, cotton, and—especially iconic of Pender County—blueberries. Painter Harry Davis, who lives in Leland, is also influenced by his family’s rural roots. Though he himself was born and raised in Wilmington, Davis’ mother was from rural Pender County. Davis’ work focuses to a large extent on African American and African themes—portraits of people of different African ethnicities, black cowboys, and black athletes. Davis also paints scenes of farm life in earlier eras, and says that, though he grew up in the city, he always felt the influence of the rural areas surrounding Wilmington.

### **Maritime traditions**

The maritime trades—particularly fishing and boat building—have been extremely important to the culture of coastal Pender County for generations. As is the case throughout much of the coastal South, these occupational traditions are waning as globalization and modernization transform the seafood industry.

Pender County has a strong boat building tradition, exemplified by the Lewis family of Hampstead. The Lewises have lived and worked on the water in Pender County since their forebear, Captain Ivey Lewis, came south from Carteret County in the early twentieth century. Ivey Lewis was a fisherman and horse trader, and the son of a sail maker. He and his sons, and later his grandsons, spent decades building boats on their property along the Waterway, facing the marshes that border Topsail Sound. Like many traditional boat builders, the Lewises made their craft without the use of printed plans, relying solely on their judgment and experience. Family tradition holds that when T. N. Simmons was in the early stages of developing what would become his world-famous Simmons Sea Skiffs, he sought out members of the Lewis family for instruction in cutting boards.

Lewis boats combined some of the basic element of traditional Carteret County boats with adaptations suited to the needs of Pender County watermen—for example, a shallow draft on some models, allowing for maneuvering in and out of Topsail Inlet, or an inset motorwell to permit easier letting-out of nets. Though the Lewises have not built boats for more than twenty years, their reputation in the county is still considerable. Glen Lewis, one of Ivey’s grandsons, lives on the old family land, and has many of his family’s photographs, showing their boats both under construction and in use on the water. Glen Lewis says that to this day he sees Lewis boats on the water, and can recognize them easily by their distinctive lines.

Boatbuilding continues in Hampstead, though no longer of the variety of traditional workboats that the Lewis family constructed. Caison Yachts, founded by Danny Caison,

creates customized sport fishing boats. The Caison construction crew cold-molds the wooden hull, and then seals it in fiberglass. The yachts feature the exaggerated bow line prized by sport fishing boat enthusiasts, the Carolina flare.

Net hanging, the making of fishing nets, is a complicated art that was once common along the Carolina coast. Glen Lewis remembers his father “building” nets in the house during the wintertime, hanging them from interior doors. He made both spot and shrimp nets, and Lewis recalls that the building of shrimp nets was much more complicated because of the funneling structure required. Lewis’ father primarily made these nets for his own use. “He made a few for other people,” remembers Glen, “but mainly he didn’t want somebody out-catching him!”

Local oral historian Bill Messer writes that Hampstead resident Bill Piner still hangs his own nets. Glen Lewis believes that Nancy Coston, also of Hampstead, hangs nets too.

## **Food**

In 1924, Bostonian Edith C. Norton wrote of her impressions of Pender County residents, based on her experience at the Unitarian mission school at Shelter Neck, in the *Christian Register*. Her article is interesting, despite its unfortunate and presumably unintended tone of condescension, because evidently she found many aspects of everyday Southern life alien, and described in detail practices that would have seemed unremarkable to anyone from the region. Norton frets about local residents’ nutrition, describing what was then the staple diet of most rural white and black people in this part of the South.

To us their mode of living does not seem wholesome. Their food is chiefly “hog-meat,” as they call it instead of pork, corn meal, and sweet potatoes. In that ideal climate for gardening they raise and eat very few vegetables and fruits. But they escape one evil of our Northern life—the excessive use of candy and sweets of all kinds. It is a fact that most of our girls do not even know the meaning of a “soda”!<sup>53</sup>

It is worth noting that in an earlier paragraph, Norton says that “peaches, pears, and grapes seem to flourish,” perhaps in contradiction of her later claim that local residents ate few fruits. One wonders as well whether “our girls” were quite so innocent of sugary drinks: had Norton known to poll them about “coke” or “dope” rather than “soda,” she might have come to a different conclusion. But her identification of hog-meat and cornmeal as the two staples of Pender County cuisine is important. People who grew up in rural parts of the county confirm the centrality of these two culinary elements.

Nutritionist and Pender County native Ruth Johnson, though she grew up more than a generation after the time that Norton’s article describes, also calls into question the assertion that Pender County residents did not eat many vegetables. Johnson recalls

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<sup>53</sup> “Life in a North Carolina School: Backward conditions and people of good stock—an opportunity.” Edith C. Norton. *Christian Register*, September 23, 1924, p. 924.

waking up early in the morning as a child to pick beans and cucumbers, explaining that her family—as well as the majority of her friends and relatives—grew their own crops. Maple Hill residents Mary and Nelson James, proprietors of Dogwood Farms, continue this tradition today. The Jameses tend 35 acres of onions, leeks, strawberries, cabbage, corn, and a host of other fruits and vegetables, using organic and sustainable farming practices.

Hog killing is a vividly remembered experience for many rural Southerners, who often emphasize the lack of waste in the process, the fact that nearly every part of the hog was saved and put to some use. Eddie Hayes, who grew up near Atkinson, has drawn pictures of hog-killing scenes. In explaining one such picture to an interviewer for this project, he said,

See . . . it's a cold morning, and that's what time they killed hogs. Okay, he shot the hog with a .22, and they throw hot water on him to clean him off. Then once they clean him, they cut him. I didn't put too much blood in the picture! They cut him, and all of the insides drop off in the bucket. And clean him. Then they cook the meat, like the chittlins and crackles, they make hog crackles and hog-head cheese, and pig feet. Because when they kill hogs, they don't throw away nothing.

Ann Cottle, who grew up on Penderlea, writes of a similar scene.

On cold winter days, there would be hog killings. Neighbors helped each other. The day of the hog killing, the men arrived early to get everything ready. Knives were sharpened, the washpot was filled to the brim with water, and the fire was built hot under it. A frame built the day before stood ready, as did a vat where the hogs' hairs were scraped before the meat was cut up.

Everyone knew exactly what they were to do, and by the time the children arrived home from school, the sausage was being made, the liver pudding was ready to be mixed, and the ingredients for souse meat were cooling. Tenderloins and hot biscuits waited in the kitchen. Boy, was it good! We hurriedly changed clothes and got to work cutting up fat to cook for cracklings and lard or stuffing the sausage.

When it came time to clean up, I always wanted to be outside. I did not like washing up all the pots, pans, and utensils used during the day. Everything was greasy, and the water had to be really steaming to be sure it came clean. Over the next few days Mother canned sausage, tenderloin, pork chops, and other meats. Daddy cured the hams, shoulders, and sides. We always had good meat to eat and did not realize how fortunate we were.<sup>54</sup>

Another cold-weather food tradition, more recreational than practical, was collard stealing. Reported in various parts of Eastern North Carolina, the tradition was apparently

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<sup>54</sup> Cottle, *The Roots of Penderlea*, p. 51.

strong in Burgaw during the first half of the twentieth century. While collard stealing pranks might be perpetrated anytime in the winter, it seems that in Burgaw it was done primarily in observation of Old Christmas, in early January, on what was known as Collard-Stealing Night.

On Collard-Stealing Night, Burgaw residents would sneak into each other's collard patches after dark, and cut down a few plants. They would then tiptoe onto neighbors' porches, where they would pile or strew the leaves, before ringing the doorbell or knocking on the door, and fleeing. In a 1989 article about the tradition in the *Raleigh News & Observer*, Burgaw native D. Vann Harrell, Jr., described the ideal collards for the job. "You want big ones," he said. "Ones the size of foot tubs, ones that have a lot of manure on 'em. The stinkier the better."<sup>55</sup>

Collard stealing was mentioned in an article that appeared in the journal *Southeastern Geographer* in 1995, described as an Eastern North Carolina Tradition.

Collard stealing was engaged in by groups of teenagers who would spend hours on a cold December night walking the dirt roads and trails of their rural communities to play tricks on people thought to be wealthy or eccentric. Participants in a few areas participated in collard stealing in early January as a part of the celebration of Old Christmas. In this folk activity, a few mature collard plants would be pulled from a roadside garden, then taken to a nearby residence and dropped on the front steps. The celebrating youths would then knock on the door of the unsuspecting recipients of the collards, yell loudly and run away. The offended resident would answer the door to discover their gift of collards. During the hard times of the Great Depression, the practice of collard stealing was sometimes feigned by teens who would bring stolen collards to their own homes and leave them on their steps or porches. Their unsuspecting parents would discover the collards the next morning, thinking they were left by mischievous neighbor kids. Then, of course, they would cook and eat the needed food.<sup>56</sup>

The author of the *News & Observer* article speculates that Collard Stealing Night may take place on Old Christmas in Burgaw, rather than simply anytime in cold weather, as in other parts of the region, because of the proximity of St. Helena, where Old Christmas is observed. Home to several waves of European immigrants, St. Helena has its own interesting culinary history. Scholar John Santucci writes that, among the many factors that caused dissatisfaction among the first Italian settlers was the lack of variety in their diet. They were tired, he writes, of eating "polenta and cornbread." (Polenta, a dish made of boiled cornmeal congealed into stiff loaves, would presumably have been one of the traditional dishes from their homeland for which the immigrants would have easy access to the necessary ingredients.) The later Ukrainian immigrants, according to descendants

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<sup>55</sup> "Gathering up a mess o' greens (but not for cooking)." Jan Leitschuh. *Raleigh News & Observer*, Sunday, January 1, 1989.

<sup>56</sup> "Collards in North Carolina." Edward H. Davis and John T. Morgan. *Southeastern Geographer*, May 2005.

Ann Mizerek and Mary Bakan, continued to make their traditional foods after settling in St. Helena. Mizerek recalls,

Growing up I remember they used to bake a lot of Ukrainian dishes. They had *holubtsi*, which is like . . . stuffed cabbage. You had the rice and the meat, and everything wrapped. And pierogies, *pyrohy*, I guess. And that was like, you had the potatoes, the cheese, and you could wrap it with like a dough, and they would prepare those. Everybody did everything from scratch. Now we have *pyrohy*, but we get them at the grocery store in the frozen food section.<sup>57</sup>

Today, Pender County enjoys the presence of a new immigrant cuisine, that of the Mexican and Central American newcomers to the region. Latin groceries have sprung up throughout the region, such as La Tiendita, between Burgaw and Rocky Point. In addition to non-food necessities of recent-immigrant life (international phone cards, no-contract cell phones, money-wiring services), these groceries typically carry many of the staple products that are prevalent across Central America's culinary traditions: *tortillas*, cheeses like *queso fresco* and *queso blanco*, a variety of beans, *mole* and other sauces, chiles, and popular spices. Apart from such staples, some elements of the various regional cuisines must be acquired elsewhere. Mexican immigrants in North Carolina, including in the Cape Fear region, often celebrate special community occasions by slaughtering and roasting a goat, much as other North Carolinians might hold a pig picking. While goats can be acquired from local farmers, some ingredients are harder to come by. For example, a favorite food in Oaxaca, both as a stand-alone snack and as an ingredient in larger dishes, is *chapulines*, a kind of small grasshoppers. According to Lucy Vasquez of Wilmington's Centro Latino, Oaxacans in the United States often ask their relatives in Mexico to ship *chapulines* to them.

Historian and food writer David Cecelski wrote in late 2009 about the cultural transformation of the Route 701 corridor in Southeastern North Carolina, describing some of the establishments and foods one is likely to encounter in Pender and surrounding counties.

I was astonished at how Latin American that swampy corner of Bladen, Pender and Sampson counties is now. There may not be as many Latino immigrants there as in, say, Charlotte or Raleigh, but the percentage of residents who have come from Mexico and Central America is much higher—it feels Latin American.

Without leaving US 701, you can now buy fresh tortillas and pork tamales (only \$5.00 for a half dozen) at Tortillería San Juan in the sleepy little town of Garland, next to the beautiful swamps along the South River. You can also get *chimichangas* and *gorditas* at La Lomita, a Mexican snack bar north of Garland, as well as weekend specials like *menudo*, a traditional tripe soup, and *camarrónes del diablo*, shrimp in a spicy red sauce.

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<sup>57</sup> Mizerek and Bakan, interview with Sarah Bryan, May 27, 2010.

Farther up US 701, you can also find *pollo rotizados en estilo ranchero*—roast chicken in a tomato-chile sauce—at Tortillería Carolina in Clinton, as well as many different kinds of Honduran and Oaxacan dishes at Taquería La Mixteca, a Mixtec diner just down the road.<sup>58</sup>

## Narrative

Southerners in general—and North Carolinians in particular, from Thomas Wolfe to Ray Hicks to Andy Griffith—have long been noted for their talent for telling stories. Some storytellers do so in a formal or semi-formal way, telling set pieces as a performance. Others storytellers are simply good talkers, people who wouldn't consider themselves artists but whose knack for framing an anecdote makes them memorable figures in a community. Many Carolinians refer to this talent as “telling lies,” referring not to the truth or falsehood of a particular story, but to the teller's ability to embellish it.

Samm-Art Williams, a *Tony*-nominated playwright and actor, grew up in Burgaw. He credits his early exposure to great local talkers with helping him develop storytelling skills that led him to great creative success in later life.

Coming up in a small town, the good part about it is that everybody is a storyteller. In writing you have to have a good story—beginning, middle, and an end—for me, that's the magic. Everybody around here, whether they could read or write, could tell a story. They could sit around a pot-bellied stove, and give them two shots of anything, and my god. But I didn't appreciate them, because it was normal. Everybody almost was like that. But the older I got, even in my writing, I began to draw back and look back on things that happened to me in my youth, and it's coming from this small town. I'm so glad I grew up here.

Williams remembers his grandfather's store as a fertile ground for storytelling.

...my grandfather had a little gasoline station, two pumps, and he would sell canned goods and hoop cheese and that kind of stuff...on Saturday nights he and all of his lodge buddies—he was a Mason—he and his lodge buddies and his cousins would get together at the store. And you talk about happy hour—this was like way past happy hour. What was so funny was all these guys were great storytellers. Some of them I know couldn't read and write, but they could tell the best story. And they would set around this pot-belly stove...and they would just tell stories. And it wasn't like they were storytellers; they were just telling things that happened to them during the week. And as I look back on some of the stuff, it was just absolutely hilarious.

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<sup>58</sup> “US 701 – La Mixteca and La Michoacana.” David Cecelski. North Carolina Folklife Institute's NCFOOD blog, November 30, 2009. <http://www.ncfolk.org/ncfood/us701.aspx>, accessed July 20, 2010.

...When you hear good storytelling, nothing is off-limits. And I think that all kids, especially college kids, and any aspiring writer, should be around storytellers. Old-time storytellers. The new storytellers should be learning from the old ones, people like around in their eighties... They ain't learned this from the books. They're not Shakespeare-informed, and all these other writers, and Langston Hughes, they don't know anything about that. All they know is their God-given ability.<sup>59</sup>

Pender County is currently home to several professional storytellers. Ray Mendenhall, pastor at the Burgaw Presbyterian Church, explains, "I've been telling stories all my life, and then I discovered that people will pay you to tell stories. So I said, 'This is a good deal.' . . . I think being a minister and being a storyteller are fairly symbiotic—both are oral traditions."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Mendenhall explains his dual roles as storyteller and pastor as mutually beneficial.

I really see [storytelling] as the practice of a folk art—a lost art that's having a revival right now. It's not just me performing, but it's me conveying a tradition—I become a spokesperson for a rich tradition. . . . A good story is one that reflects an aspect of human experience that we as a large body of humans can share.<sup>61</sup>

For his part, storyteller and relatively new Pender County resident Tim Dillinger explains that Burgaw's quietude offers him the right atmosphere to compose tales that he later presents onstage. "When I write, I go hundreds of miles to find a quiet place," he says. "It's got to be absolute, total quiet. And that's one thing I like about it out here. I can sit and write, and spend the entire day and not hear a sound. It's really nice that way."<sup>62</sup>

### **Miscellaneous traditions**

In the course of this research, documentation was found of several folklife traditions that do not fit neatly into the categories listed above. They merit mentions here, though, as well as further study to determine their place in the larger cultural context of Pender County.

Systems of belief are a virtually boundless area of folklife study, encompassing everything from religion to medicine to meteorology. John Santucci, in his study of the early Italian community of St. Helena, makes an intriguing mention of residents'

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<sup>59</sup> Samm-Art Williams, interview with Sarah Bryan, December 11, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Ray Mendenhall, interview with Michael Taylor, March 18, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Tim Dillinger, interview with Michael Taylor, March 18, 2010.

superstition of placing a knife on the front porch when a storm was coming, to ward away potential damage from the bad weather.<sup>63</sup>

Hunting is another arena of life that carries with it many community traditions. The 2006 *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, edited by William S. Powell and Jay Mazzocchi, mentions a breed of hunting dog developed in Pender County. According to the encyclopedia entry, the dog is known simply as the “Dog of the Hunt Club of Pender County.” Preliminary investigation turned up no references to a Hunt Club of Pender County or to its dog.

In 1995, local author Celia Rivenbark wrote in the Wilmington *Morning Star* about a “shoe tree” in Pender County. On NC 210, about five miles west of Hampstead, she wrote, was a large sweet bay tree to which anonymous visitors had nailed many pairs of shoes.<sup>64</sup> In a Facebook group dedicated to the “Topsail Shoe Tree,” as the tree in Hampstead was known, local residents report that the tree was hit by lightning, and/or that the shoes were removed when the property was developed. Vacation-goers from inland places reminisce on the Facebook group about knowing that the beach was close when they saw the shoe tree.<sup>65</sup> Rivenbark writes that to Hampstead-area residents, it was nothing remarkable.

Most people who drive by the tree every day have gotten used to the shoe tree and even seem mildly surprised that anyone would be interested in finding out why there’s a tree in the middle of the country covered with shoes. “It’s just a shoe tree,” said a woman who lives nearby.

A Pender County deputy sheriff admitted he’d driven by the tree for a while when one day it dawned on him that, “Damn, there’s shoes all over that tree!”<sup>66</sup>

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The folklife of Pender County represents the juxtaposition and blending of a unique combination of cultural traditions. Documentary sources shed light on the depth of many of these traditions’ roots, while the vitality of the county’s folklife and its importance to the contemporary community demonstrate the ongoing role that the traditions play in the county’s heritage.

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<sup>63</sup> Santucci, *The Italian Agricultural Colony and its German Mission at St. Helena, NC*. P. 145-146.

<sup>64</sup> “Pender’s ‘shoe tree’: Last repose of lost soles?” Celia Rivenbark. *Wilmington Morning Star*, Tuesday, August 1, 1995.

<sup>65</sup> [www.facebook.com/pages/Hampstead-NC/Topsail-Shoe-Tree/356150662393](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hampstead-NC/Topsail-Shoe-Tree/356150662393), accessed July 20, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> “Pender’s ‘shoe tree’: Last repose of lost soles?” Celia Rivenbark.

## **Pender County Artists and Community Resources**

Over the course of this research, folklorists Sarah Bryan and Michael Taylor interviewed and/or consulted with more than fifty Pender County residents who are practitioners of folklife traditions or play a role in the preservation of the county's heritage. The following pages profile many of those consulted, including actively producing or performing artists who might be available for future programming, as well as individuals whose depth of knowledge about the county and its traditions make them invaluable resources for future documentary efforts.

### *Craft and Performing Artists*

#### **Nancy Aycock Clogger and clogging instructor**

5041 Malpass Corner Road *or* P.O. Box 873  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 602-0257  
cripple\_creek82@hotmail.com

The highly celebrated Cripple Creek Cloggers were founded in Pender County by Nancy Aycock and her late husband Buck. In the late 1970s, Nancy Aycock, a lifelong dancer and Pender native, was a former public educator who was teaching dance at a Presbyterian camp six miles outside of Burgaw. During a teaching retreat in Montreat, North Carolina, she was introduced to clogging by the renowned Bannerman clogging family.

What we realized was that the origin of clogging came from the Appalachian mountains. The Appalachian music and dance just went hand in hand . . . And although my family was here in Rocky Point, we realized later on that the square dancing that they had done—and that I had enjoyed even as a tiny child—was that was what the people in the mountains had put together with the clogging. It was a Scotch Irish background. I can remember going to square dances when I was really little. The smooth dancing—the oldest form of what we call clogging—is a square dance in precision with just the sliding feet, and not any of the big, boisterous tapping . . . Whenever Buck and I started delving into clogging in the mountains, my father realized that that was the same kind of thing that they'd been doing here.

Upon returning to the camp where she worked, Aycock set up her first clogging course. “I had two cloggers. Only two people were willing to give it a try,” she remembers. “But the two cloggers came to town and danced at Springfest [in Burgaw]. It was a really exciting time because nobody had ever seen it before. It was really cool.”

After that first public clogging performance, enrollment in her clogging class jumped to 22 students; the following year, 52 enrolled. Since that time, clogging has seen something of a renaissance in and around Burgaw; in the early 1980s, with demand for adult clogging instruction growing, the Aycocks bought a crumbling Chevrolet dealership in Burgaw, and turned it into a dance school and hall, which they christened Cripple Creek Corner.

The way that it got its name, Cripple Creek, is that when the adults would come to dance, they'd play music as well. So they brought in their instruments, and they would dance a while and play a while. But the only song they could play really well was "Cripple Creek." So when we bought this old broken-down place and we built a dance floor, they were so excited that they would come in and help us; they would paint and fix it, and do whatever. When Buck and I decided we had to have a name, because of their contribution to it all, we decided to name it Cripple Creek Corner.

Though the Cripple Creek Clogging Team has traveled far and wide to compete in various clogging competitions around the country, Nancy Aycock's proudest achievement speaks to her love of and devotion to her home of Burgaw. "I think probably the best testament [to our school] is that the people in town are the people who have come through here," she explains. "They love it and think of it as part of our community."

**Tim Dillinger**  
**Storyteller**

1405 Cameron Ct.  
Wilmington, NC 28401  
(910) 232-2607  
captaindillinger@yahoo.com  
<http://captaintimdillinger.com>

Storyteller, historical reenactor, and stuntman Tim Dillinger was born and raised in Vienna, West Virginia. Following his graduation from high school, he lived and worked as a clammer and volunteer fireman on Virginia's Eastern Shore before winning a scholarship to the Art Institute of Philadelphia. "I entered a contest called the Eastern Shore Undiscovered Artist Contest, and I was so undiscovered, I'd won first place and didn't know it," remembers Dillinger.

When I went back a couple weeks later to pick up my stuff, the lady said, "Where were you?" I was like, "I don't know. Nobody called me." She's like, "Yeah, you won . . . first place. And oh, by the way, you got a college scholarship out of the deal." I said, "Really?" She's like, "Yeah, you won."

So I got an all-expenses paid scholarship to the Art Institute of Philadelphia. That's how I ended up there.

After graduation, Dillinger moved to Pawley's Island, South Carolina, where he worked as a photojournalist and sportswriter; it was during this time that he became involved in dramatic reenactment, often playing the legendary Gray Man of Pawley's Island, a locally famous ghost who is said to appear before hurricanes.

Due to his work as a reenactor and his stunt skills, Dillinger has frequently been called on to appear in films being shot in and around Wilmington. His resume includes roles for the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, and MTV. "The trick to being a stunt guy is not to let the camera see your face," laughs Dillinger.

They call that being "burned on film," and as soon as you're burned on film, you're basically useless to them. So the trick is to look like a whole bunch of different people, and always be able to change it up—a different hat, a different look, a different coat. And whenever you come by the camera, you always kind of look away. You don't look right into it, like, "Hey Mom, how're you doing?" You just breeze right on by, like you're not even there. That way, you get more longevity in the movie business.

Dillinger has also maintained a prolific career as a storyteller since the mid-1980s; he recently published two books, *The Pick Pocket Pirate: An Original Pirate Tale*, and *August House Book of Scary Stories*. "When I write, I go hundreds of miles to find a quiet place," he says. "It's got to be absolute, total quiet. And that's one thing I like about it out here [in his adopted home of Burgaw]. I can sit out here and write, and spend the entire day and not hear a sound. It's really nice that way."

## **Barry Hayes** **Guitarist**

(910) 675-9468

Musician and longtime Pender County resident Barry Hayes was born in Sampson County, where his family raised crops, including tobacco, corn, and soybeans. Hayes' introduction to the county of Pender occurred in his late teens, when he began to work a plot of land near Rocky Point known as the Dick Jayne Farm with his father and brother.

Hayes began playing guitar during the late 1950s after being taught the chords of A and D by a cousin; following an accident in which he broke his ankle, he began working in earnest to improve his musical skills. Not long afterwards, he was taken by a friend to a picking party at a tobacco barn in Pender County, where he would meet the other musicians with whom he would eventually form his group the Country Strangers.

It was probably 1969 or 1970 . . . I met [the future Country Strangers] at a tobacco barn; they were playing flattop guitars, just doing country songs. I went up there with a friend that knew these guys; he took me up there one day . . . So they were playing their flattops and I went and picked along with them, and they liked the way that I played. So they said, “Let's get together and try to put something together.” Me and a friend of mine—Elwood Fussell, who is still picking with me—were laid off from work at the same time. He was originally a drummer, but I told him, “If you can scrape up the money to buy a bass guitar and amplifier, I will teach you how to play it. And if I can't teach you, I'll buy it from you.” So he bought it . . . We went back to my house, and in 30 minutes time, I had him playing the bass. He's a superb bass guitar player now. So it was him, Allen Rivenbark, plus a guy named Mike Lanier from Maple Hill who played drums. Well, we started putting together a country show. We were called the Country Strangers. We got pretty popular around the local clubs and stuff. We played for a lot of years.

Following the dissolution of the Country Strangers, Barry Hayes cycled through various musical groups, and played at a variety of venues up and down the East Coast, before meeting Pender County musical mainstay [and Pickin' Palace owner] Eula Ramsey in the 1980s. “Miss Eula has brought me to where I'm at today in my music;” explains Hayes. “The type of music that I play with her is what I've been wanting to play the whole time, but I just didn't know how.”

Hayes often performs in tandem with his daughter, singer and guitarist Tonya Morrison. The duo—who perform country and gospel in a traditional vein—recently recorded Morrison's debut album, *Live. Laugh. Love.* with many of the musicians who make up the house band at the Pickin' Palace.

“As far as the style of music that I want to play, what to do and what not to do—Miss Eula took care of that,” says Hayes. “And the style of music is all Tonya—she got me there. I'm going to do whatever she wants to do.”

### **Eddie Hayes**

#### **Painter**

108 Grady Dr.  
Atkinson, NC 28421  
(910) 283-7108

Eddie Hayes, who paints and draws scenes of rural life remembered from his childhood, grew up outside Atkinson, near the Bladen and Scotland County lines. Hayes, who is in his mid-fifties, says that he first began drawing when he was in the first grade, to illustrate what he had done during his summer vacation.

So my teacher had asked me what I done. So I couldn't explain it, so I had said that I'd draw stuff, what I did during the summer when I was out of school. So I started drawing little stick men, and little churches and cars and stuff, and what I did with my granddaddy and stuff. And I just kept it up, and that's how I started.

Though he quickly progressed past the stage of drawing stick men, some of the subjects of Hayes' current art are the same. He draws and paints many scenes of the farm work that his family did, which included growing corn, peanuts, and tobacco, among other crops. In particular, he likes to recreate scenes of his family working their tobacco crop, from planting to curing. He and his relatives and neighbors also picked blueberries for nearby farmers, a scene he has illustrated in great detail.

Other paintings and drawings show farm and household work such as hog killing, canning preserves, and washing laundry in an iron washpot. In many of Hayes' pictures, the people shown are relatives or other specific individuals remembered from the past, and even the animals he draws often represent real creatures who lived around the Hayes' farm, like Spot the dog and Annie the mule.

In addition to his scenes of rural life, Eddie Hayes occasionally makes artworks that recreate his dreams. These pictures are a mixture of abstract and figural representations, swirls of color, and religious imagery. He refers to them as "mind pictures." One mind picture that he showed an interviewer for this project in early 2010 bears a striking resemblance to the work of visionary artist Minnie Evans. Though Evans was originally from Pender County and her work has been shown in the region, Hayes was not certain whether he had heard of her, and did not think he had ever seen her work. He has never been to an art gallery. He watches *The Joy of Painting*, the long-running PBS instructional show hosted by the late Bob Ross, and now and then sees art books; otherwise, however, his subject matter is drawn from memory and imagination, and his technique is self-taught.

Hayes remembers that his grandmother, Beatrice Fennell, made many quilts. He still owns one, which is pieced in a block pattern, and shows a vivid and creatively designed arrangement of color. Hayes says that he gets some of his ideas for the use of colors from his grandmother's aesthetic. However, he says that rather than presenting color in boxes, as in a block quilt, he follows a looser form.

But I decided to do it different from her, because most of the thing she was doing, she was putting like squares . . . or boxes . . . All of them be different colors. So what I done, I just took my colors, and instead of putting them in a box, I just took them and spread mine out wide.

Eddie Hayes worked for years in an area cosmetics plant, but like many North Carolinians was laid off in the recent economic downturn. He now devotes himself to his art full-time.

**Roy Johnson**  
**Member of Burgaw Community Quartet**

P.O. Box 522  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 231-4104

Singer Roy Johnson was born and raised in Pender County, where he grew up in a close-knit farming family. Singing was always important among the Johnsons; in the late 1940s, his father and uncles had a quartet-style a capella gospel group called the Burgaw Quartet, which exerted a profound influence on the young singer. "Our role models were right in the neighborhood with us," he explains. "Our dads—they did their thing, but they provided for their families, and they were there for their families. That's who we looked at as role models."

In his early twenties, Johnson gathered together with several of his contemporaries—many of whom were family members—to form the singing group that would eventually become the Burgaw Community Quartet.

As boys, we were just excited about hearing people sing without a lot of music. We weren't used to guitars and pianos, stuff like that. [A capella] voices really excited us. We came up out of a singing family; my mom could sing, my uncle could sing—we just liked singing. As we grew up, we started the [Burgaw Community Quartet] as an all-male choir. We had a lady here in Burgaw named Mrs. Leona Johnson; she was a music teacher, and she played for several choirs at churches. She was teaching classes for Cape Fear Tech Community College, and she had a house over here on Wright Street where she had all her pianos set up, and she would teach lessons. We got together, and she started teaching voice lessons; all the fellows decided we'd go over and take voice lessons under her. We got over there, and we started singing, and she was excited about all her boys singing. That's how we got started singing as a male choir. That was the beginning of the Burgaw Community Quartet.

Eventually, the group started performing on church programs throughout Pender County, as well as in venues in New Hanover, Duplin, and Onslow Counties. Recalls Johnson, "I think we were one of the first groups on a gospel program on television back then, maybe in the late '60s, early '70s, down in Wilmington. We were one of the first black groups that went on that program on Sunday morning to sing."

By the early 1970s, however, family and church obligations led the members of the Burgaw Community Quartet to put the group on hiatus, although they continued to perform on special occasions. In early 2010, the C. F. Pope High School Class of 1964, of which Johnson's wife Ruth is a member, presented a quartet program at the school (now Burgaw Elementary School), at which time the members of the Burgaw Community Quartet made the decision to begin performing regularly again.

The Burgaw Community Quartet continues to be one of the preeminent quartet-style gospel groups in the region, and has inspired a host of younger groups, including the Brothers in Christ. "They always admired us when we would sing," explains Johnson of the younger singers. "When they got started, it was exciting to know that they wanted to follow in our footsteps."

**Stacy McDuffie and Michael Hollis**  
**Southern NC Burgaw Panther Band directors**

115 N. Dudley Street  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 604-8461

The Southern NC Burgaw Panther Band is a nonprofit community drill team founded in 2005 by group director Michael Hollis. "There weren't too many youth organizations [in Burgaw]," Hollis remembers. "I was like, 'Maybe there's a program that we can give to the community that the kids would enjoy.'"

Hollis was no stranger to drill teams and marching bands, having been involved in step groups, pep bands, and drill squads in Wilmington since the age of six. However, it wasn't until co-director Stacy McDuffie, a Burgaw native with a background in high school music and drama, got involved with the group that it became a serious and organized entity. Says Hollis, "When me and Miss Stacy came together, it just shot up from there."

While music and dance is at the center of the Southern NC Burgaw Panther Band, both Hollis and McDuffie see the group as way for young people to join together in a peaceful and productive way. McDuffie is clear about her conception of the band as social interaction, and sees her involvement as her obligation to the young people in her home community.

Music has always been in my heart. It basically got me through all the hard times. That's something that keeps me going with [the band]—remembering the way music made *me* feel, getting me away from things that were going on at home. It gave me an opportunity to just be something else once school got out. It made me more comfortable in my surroundings.

The group maintains a rigorous schedule, rehearsing three times a week and traveling as far as Newport News, Virginia, and Atlanta, as well as to a host of locations around North Carolina, to participate in parades and marching band competitions. Despite their ambitions and evident work ethic, however, the Southern NC Burgaw Panther Band has an uneasy relationship with the town of Burgaw; after several encounters with local police, who cited the group for noise violations during practices, Hollis and McDuffie

relocated the group's rehearsals to Wilmington. Laughs Hollis, "We're marching around as hard as we can to support this town, and we have to drive 30 miles—to a whole other county—to practice."

If you could make folks go to Fayetteville State's Homecoming, or participate in the Strawberry Festival in Chadbourn, or go to the homecoming parade in Princeville—those groups start their marching band programs in elementary and middle school for those kids . . . I just wish that Pender County could see that we're not the only group that performs and moves and acts like this.

McDuffie elaborates on their heretofore unsuccessful attempts to establish a rehearsal location in the group's hometown, explaining, "We basically left it alone. We just travel the 30 miles to Wilmington where we have no trouble practicing at all . . . It's sad that in our own town we can't beat a drum, or march, or anything. Nothing."

Nevertheless, Hollis and McDuffie are excited by the group's prospects, seeing their organization as a method of active and social involvement for local youth. "Together," Hollis says, "we're the dynamic duo."

### **Ann Mendenhall Tatter**

P.O. Box 579  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-8530

Ann Mendenhall, Youth Services Specialist at the Pender County Public Library in Burgaw, is an accomplished tatter and experienced teacher of the art form. She learned tatting, a technique that produces sturdy lacework from knotted thread, from her grandmother. Mendenhall grew up in Piedmont North Carolina, with deep roots in the Quaker communities of Guilford and Randolph Counties.

Both of Mendenhall's grandmothers, and at least one great-grandmother, were highly skilled tatters. The family retained examples of relatives' handwork, including baby garments and special-occasion dresses for women, which were decorated with tatting. Mendenhall too creates pieces for the family's special occasions, such as the tatted hearts that adorned her daughter's wedding gown. One of the shuttles she uses, a decorated silver instrument, was passed down from the older women in her family.

In the community that she grew up in, as well as in the places she has lived since—in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Pender County—Mendenhall has encountered many older women who were tatters. (St. Helena resident Ann Mizerek, for example, knows how to tat, though she learned the technique when she lived briefly in the upper Midwest as a

young woman.) Many of the patterns she herself uses come from vintage women's magazines, some of which, like *Workbasket*, would regularly publish patterns.

Ann Mendenhall has taught many people how to tat, both one-on-one and in classes. Her teaching technique has been honed over many years of experience explaining and demonstrating the art form. She has taught classes through the Pender County Arts Council, as well as the Pender County Cooperative Extension.

**Rev. Ray Mendenhall**  
**Storyteller and musician**

P.O. Box 579  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-8530

Pastor, storyteller, and musician Ray Mendenhall was born and raised in Guilford County. He graduated from Davidson College in 1972, and attended seminary at Union College in Richmond, graduating in 1977. He worked as a minister at churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia, before settling in 1998 in Burgaw, where he pastors the Burgaw Presbyterian Church. "I like small-church, small-town ministry," he explains. "This church really impressed me because it [has always been] a very mission-minded church, an outreach church, and it's continued to be over the years that I've been here."

Mendenhall comes by storytelling and musical abilities naturally; he describes his upbringing as one in which talk and music were very important. Moreover, he came of age during a time when social activism and civil rights were being brought to the fore. He describes his time at Davidson—years that had a soundtrack of the folk revival music of Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and the Highwaymen—as:

. . . kind of an interesting and strange time. There was a lot of free thinking and free living, a lot of questioning traditional institutions—that was all fermenting at that time . . . Things were breaking open, and young adults were starting to break away from being [in] lockstep.

Upon moving to Burgaw, both Ray Mendenhall and his wife Ann Mendenhall became involved in the North Carolina Storytelling Guild. "I've been telling stories all my life, and then I discovered that people will pay you to tell stories," he jokes. "So I said, 'This is a good deal.' . . . I think being a minister and being a storyteller are fairly symbiotic—both are oral traditions."

I really see [storytelling] as the practice of a folk art—a lost art that's having a revival right now. It's not just me performing, but it's me conveying a tradition—I become a spokesperson for a rich tradition . . . A good story is one that reflects an aspect of human experience that we as a large body of humans can share.

Mendenhall says that telling stories has changed his sermons for the better. "Storytelling is not so much a performance as it is a dance with an audience . . . It's a very intimate kind of relationship that you develop with an audience . . . My ability to communicate in preaching has increased dramatically as I have become more of a storyteller outside the church."

**Ann Debaylo Mizerek and Mary Debaylo Bakan  
*Pysanky* artists and St. Helena community resources**

412 S. Bickett St. (Ann)  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-4581

Sisters Ann Debaylo Mizerek and Mary Debaylo Bakan, born in 1928 and 1936, respectively, are daughters of Elias and Anastazia "Nellie" Debaylo, Ukrainian immigrants who came to North Carolina in the 1920s to work on Hugh McRae's St. Helena and Castle Hayne settlements. The sisters continue to live in St. Helena and to preserve many of their family's Ukrainian folk traditions. They and Ann's son are the last active members of Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church in St. Helena.

Though they were both born in Pender County, the community in which the Debaylo sisters grew up had a strong ethnic Ukrainian identity. Ann, the eldest child in the family, spoke Ukrainian before she learned English, and most of the girls' friends in school were also from Ukrainian families. The Russian Orthodox church was one of the centers of community life in St. Helena, and many of the Debaylo family's traditions came from their religious heritage. They celebrated (and still observe) Old Christmas in January, in addition to December 25. "They allowed us to stay out of school that day," remembers Ann. "We didn't have to go to school, and we were not counted absent." The St. Helena residents would attend a church service on Old Christmas, as well as a dance at the community center.

Among the community's Easter traditions was the making of *pysanky*, ornate eggs decorated in a wax resist technique. Ann remembers community members staying up late at night during Holy Week to have all their eggs dyed in time for Easter. Everyone was given one dark red egg, she says, which Bakan explains represented the blood of Christ. Both sisters learned *pysanky* from Constantine "Connie" Hodoba, a man who lived across the road from them and decorated eggs every year. Hodoba heated wax in a metal jar lid, and applied it to the eggshell with a straight pin. In more recent years, Ann has purchased a *kistka*, an electric stylus for wax application. She and Mary continue to make *pysanky*, and have taught relatives the art.

When the Debaylo sisters were growing up, the congregation of Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church would celebrate the saints' day of Peter and Paul in July. (The feast day is celebrated by most Catholics in late June, but some Orthodox adherents mark

it in July, when the date falls in the Gregorian calendar.) The congregation would gather at the church for a picnic on the grounds, and share traditional dishes like *holubtsi* (stuffed cabbage) and *pyrohy* (pierogis). Over the years the congregation began to celebrate the holiday by going to a restaurant, but to this day, much to younger family members' puzzlement, the elders still refer to the meal as a "picnic."

Today the once-crowded church has a congregation of three, and is no longer served by a priest. One of the church's former priests recorded his last administering of the Divine Liturgy, and the congregants now use this recording for their services. The Mizerek and Bakan families continue to maintain the church with their own resources, from caring for the altar to mowing the grounds. They are happy to share with others the history of their congregation and community. Ann says, "We're always glad to share what we know about our faith."

**Clifton L. Moore**  
**Bluegrass musician**

215 N. McNeil Street  
Burgaw, NC 28428  
(910) 259-9800

Pender County native Clifton Moore was born in Wilmington in 1936. The son of a North Carolina Supreme Court judge, Moore himself attended law school at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Following his graduation, he returned to Pender County, where he practiced law for nearly 50 years. For 26 of those years, he acted as the Pender County Attorney, and also served as the mayor of Burgaw.

"I've lived here in Pender County—in Burgaw—all but probably eight or nine years," he explains. "So if there's anybody that's a native, it's me." Moore has seen Pender County change in many ways over the years, but he has fond recollections of growing up in Burgaw.

We lived right here. I'll tell you, it was the kind of town, when I was growing up, where you knew everybody; everybody knew you. In the afternoon, you could go to somebody's house on your bicycle, and your parents didn't worry about where you were, because they knew somebody was looking after you. You could even come home after dark and they'd understand. It was a free-living place. Everybody knew each other. It was a good place to grow up.

Moore is also an accomplished musician; he plays harmonica and guitar with many local musicians. He explains that he picked up the harmonica—the instrument with which he is most closely associated—almost by chance.

I was young—probably in the fourth or fifth grade. I had a friend that was real musical—he was a good singer, even then. I was going out on the playground one day for recess and he was coming in, and he had a harmonica in his hand. When I went by him, I said, “Billy, what is that you have there?” He said, “It’s a harmonica. Here, take it. Go out there and play it.” I said, “I can’t play a harmonica.” He said, “Go on out there and play it.” Well I went out there off by myself, and I started puffing and sucking and nobody told me how to do it. But whatever tune I had in my head, I could play it.

Moore explains that an early group of his—the Burgaw Bluegrass Boys, including his longtime friend Ivey Blackburn—was among the first in the area to play bluegrass music. This group served as the house band at Robert and Eula Ramsey’s Pickin’ Palace in the early days of that venue’s existence.

Clifton Moore retired from practicing law in 2004. He still lives in the house in Burgaw in which he grew up.

**Dottie Netherton**  
***Scherenschnitte* paper cutting artist**

2104 Inlet Dr.  
Topsail Beach, NC  
(910) 541-0274

Many European countries have paper cutting traditions, explains *Scherenschnitte* artist Dottie Netherton, but the Germans were foremost in bringing the tradition to America, through immigration to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Germans are credited with the invention of the valentine, around the 1770s. Men gave elaborately cut *Liebesbriefe* (love letters), with *fraktur* lettering written in a spiral throughout the page. These were given “all year long,” she says, “to entice [the recipient] to marry . . . If you were illiterate, you could go to your schoolmaster and he would do it for you. You could do the cutting and he could do the writing.” Pennsylvania Germans also gave “puzzle purses,” folded papers with messages hidden inside.

Netherton is a native of Pennsylvania, whose Pennsylvania German ancestry traces back to 1732, when her Silesian ancestors followed religious leader Caspar Schwenkfelder to America. Though her mother was a quilter and needleworker, and she owns doilies made by her grandmothers, Netherton herself did not grow up making handcrafts. “It wasn’t that we looked down on it. There was a pride, I guess, that your generation was going to college . . . I think my mother’s main thrust was to make sure that we could earn a living if we never married.”

In 1982, Netherton, then a teacher, and her husband, who worked in the textile industry, left Pennsylvania, and moved to Pleasant Garden, near Greensboro, North Carolina. She found that many of her neighbors in Pleasant Garden were crafters. An old lady on her street was a basket maker, who made her own dye by boiling walnuts. Another woman on the street made household fabric items on a home loom, and still another neighbor was a celebrated porcelain painter. Soon after moving to the area, Netherton began to take craft classes, but at first did not find an art form that appealed to her greatly.

Then one day, she visited Old Salem. The Moravian pilgrims who settled Salem had much in common, in both culture and ancestry, with Netherton's own Pennsylvania German forebears. In the Moravian Book and Gift Shop, she saw cut paper work, *Scherenschnitte*. "And I said, 'This is my heritage. I should learn how to do this.'" She purchased a book on paper cutting that day, and began to teach herself how to make the intricate designs. Soon she was selling her work in the same shop, as well as at craft fairs.

Over the years Netherton has become a highly accomplished paper cutter. She has received commissions, including from the John Jay Homestead in Katonah, New York, for which she designed a large, intricate cutwork pattern representing scenes from Jay's life. She has also been featured in *Our State Magazine*, which in late 2010 will begin selling Christmas ornaments based upon one of Netherton's designs.

Netherton feels that there is a deep emotional as well as aesthetic connection between her delicate *Scherenschnitte* cuttings, and the tatted doilies and other handcrafts that the elder women of her family made. Despite the miles between her native and adopted homes, Netherton says, "Had we not [moved to North Carolina], I never would have had the nerve to turn my hand to trying to do anything like this."

### **Robert and Eula Ramsey Musicians and Pickin' Palace hosts**

404 Old Ramsey Road  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-2741  
eulawr1@aol.com

Robert and Eula Ramsey are the owners of the beloved Pickin' Palace, a musical gathering place on the banks of the Cape Fear River. The Ramseys both hail from Pender County farm families; Eula grew up in Atkinson, and the land they live on in Burgaw is where Robert was raised. Mrs. Ramsey worked for 34 years in a factory in Burgaw that manufactured artists' supplies. When the factory closed, she sold strawberries for 15 years. Mr. Ramsey worked for 31 years at a sawmill in Wallace. "I've seen a lot of boards," he explains.

Mrs. Ramsey is also an accomplished and locally celebrated multi-instrumentalist; she plays the guitar, banjo, Dobro, piano, fiddle, bass, and accordion, among other

instruments. "I'd probably have been better off to have stuck with one when I was little," she muses. "But instead I wanted to do it all."

When I was probably 10, my uncle came from Germany, and he brought an accordion. He brought it to my house; I had never seen one in my life. . . It was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen. I was so interested in it—and he couldn't play it, but he knew you were supposed to play it—that he said, "I'll leave it with you and let you play with it for a week." I said, "Yeah, I do. I want to." So he left it, and when he was leaving he said, "If you learn how to play one song, I'll give you five dollars." Five dollars was big then. So he left, and I played that thing all week long. The next Sunday he came back, him and his wife and family. He said, "OK, are you ready to play something?" I said, "Yeah." I went in the bedroom and got it all strapped on and I walked in the living room where they were at and started playing, and they started laughing. I played the song good, and when I got finished, I said, "Why are you laughing?" He said, "Honey, you've got that thing on upside down and backwards."

The Pickin' Palace, a hand-built dancehall on the banks of the Cape Fear River, was initially built by Robert and Eula Ramsey in 1985 as a venue for a family reunion, and soon became a gathering place for friends and loved ones to share music and food on Friday nights. Explains Mrs. Ramsey,

[Robert] likes to pick the pigs, and I like to pick the music. Many years before we had the building, he had a little shed where they went shad fishing and they had fish fries, and we'd have music and fish fries down there. Then so many people started coming that he put a big flatbed trailer down there so the band could get on the trailer, and people would sit on the banks. So we played on that for a few years before we got the building started.

Many traditional musicians in Pender County (as well as Brunswick and New Hanover) are regulars at the Pickin' Palace, which hosts mainly (but not exclusively) folk, country, bluegrass, and gospel music. Jokes Mr. Ramsey, "We don't ever know who's going to show up, really."

**B. J. Ryan  
Weaver**

Poplar Grove Plantation  
10200 US Highway 17 N.  
Wilmington, NC 28411  
(910) 686-9518 x 29  
www.poplargo.com  
bjr@poplargo.com

Burgaw resident B. J. Ryan has lived in Pender County for thirty years. She directs the craft program at Poplar Grove Plantation, between Wilmington and Hampstead, and runs the plantation's demonstration weaving studio.

Although Ryan did not learn weaving from her relatives, the tradition was practiced by her forebears. Ryan's maternal lineage is from the Quaker communities of Northeastern North Carolina. Her maternal grandmother raised sheep and used their wool for quilt batting. Ryan has a spinning wheel that was in her mother's family. One of her uncles was a blacksmith as a young man, and during World War II local farmers petitioned for him to be exempt from the draft, because his services were essential to their community.

As there are evidently no existing records that document what kind of crafts might have been made at Poplar Grove in its early years, Ryan's educational programs are based on general research into the crafts of that era. She theorizes that, because Wilmington is a port town whose early residents would have had ready access to manufactured fabrics and other household goods for purchase, the practice of crafts like weaving has been less likely to survive here than in other parts of the state where residents had to be more self-sufficient.

Ryan primarily teaches rag weaving to visitors and beginning weavers. At the plantation she talks to visitors about rag weaving, coverlet weaving, and production of cloth, demonstrates spinning to show how yarn was made, and talks about natural dyes. Though she rarely uses natural dyes now, Ryan does know how to produce them. Most of the coverlets and samples on display at Poplar Grove's weaving room, including work in such patterns as Blooming Leaf of Mexico, Whig Rose, Cat Track, and Snail Trail, were made by Ryan.

**James Dion Smith**  
**Member of Brothers in Christ gospel quartet**

214 Barrow Street  
Castle Hayne, NC 28429  
(910) 604-0821  
jayd\_74@yahoo.com

"I would like to think that what we're doing is working," states singer James Dion Smith of his recently formed quartet-style gospel group the Brothers in Christ. Although the group, who sings a capella, has only been in together since September of 2009, its individual members have deep roots in gospel singing. All of the members of the Brothers in Christ are Pender County natives who grew up in the Hall's Chapel Baptist Church. "This was the church that we were raised in," explains Smith. "This is the heart of Burgaw—the church . . . This church here is where everybody came."

The Brothers in Christ have another deep connection to a capella gospel singing: they are all related—as sons, cousins, or brothers—to the lauded Burgaw Community Quartet, who inspired the younger group's repertoire and sound. "A capella was a no-brainer for us, because that's what we were all raised singing" says Smith.

[The Burgaw Community Quartet] was the standard. Every weekend, they had somewhere to be. I remember instances where I would go with them to programs; they were the featured guests, but the congregation couldn't wait. They wanted them to sing then. They would always take two or three songs, but then there would be two or three requests. I just thought it was fascinating. That choir was filled with uncles, my dad, granddad, brothers-in-law—all men, no [instrumental] music. It was just amazing. The thing that amazed me about them was that if one didn't show up and somebody requested a song, there was always somebody else who knew that song, and they made the adjustments.

Smith explains that despite the demand for the group at a variety of programs outside Pender County, the primary focus of the Brothers in Christ is their home community. Asked about the enthusiastic response to their performances, Smith suggests, "I think [a capella singing] was missed around here. The older generations—the deacons and mothers in the church—were raised up on quartets."

I remember this one instance we were singing on a program, and this lady was in the front with her hat singing word for word every song. I remember looking at her, and I had this huge smile on my face. I was like, that's what I wanted right there. That's what I wanted to touch—this older generation. If you've got them standing up, you're singing about something.

The reputation of the Brothers in Christ has spread far and wide since their recent inception. “I had to go buy an appointment book,” laughs Smith. “This book is literally filled all the way up to October, and I’m still getting phone calls.”

### *Representatives of Occupational Traditions*

#### **Jason Fennell** **Peanut farmer**

691 Little Kelly Road  
Rocky Point, NC 28457  
(910) 259-6083

34-year-old peanut farmer Jason Fennell was born and raised on the land that he now farms with his father in Rocky Point. “I’m from right here,” he explains. “Right here in this room—this farm. This is where I’m from.”

Fennell got an early start in agriculture when he started farming full-time directly out of high school. After some financial setbacks, he began working a diversity of crops with his father; the duo now grows corn, tobacco, and soybeans, and Fennell has devoted approximately 16 acres to a variety of peanut called the African Jumbo. “I’ve pretty much been working since I was about 12,” he says. “I was still in high school when I started farming.”

As a peanut farmer in Pender County, Fennell considers himself a dying breed. The dry peanut market—peanuts that are roasted and salted for snacks and peanut butter—is not an option for small peanut farmers like Jason Fennell; instead, he sells raw green peanuts, which customers take home to make boiled peanuts. Explains Fennell,

I started growing peanuts in 1994. I grew peanuts for the dry market from '94 until '96. '96 was my last crop of that. There's no more farmers here in this county here that grow them. The ones that were are dead; they were all up in age. About the year 2000 is pretty much the last peanut farmers there were. Most of the peanuts were grown in Hampstead . . . Now it's pretty much just green peanuts. That's all I do.

Running a family farming operation, as Fennell does with his father, is a hard, and often financially risky, proposition. “The income’s the same [as it was a generation ago], but we have to do three times the work to get it,” he explains. “It’s not the bed of roses that people think it is.” Importantly, though, farming has allowed Fennell to be his own boss on his family’s land. Moreover, peanut farming is Fennell’s way of recognizing Pender County’s position, however diminished it may currently be, as the Peanut Capital of North Carolina. “I don’t think I’ll ever quit,” he laughs. “I’ll probably do it until I die.”

**Mary and Nelson James  
Farmers**

18108 NC Hwy. 53E  
Maple Hill, NC 28454  
(910) 470-0002  
mjmaryjames5354@aol.com

Maple Hill's renowned Dogwood Farms is operated by Pender County natives Mary and Nelson James. Dogwood Farms—which was awarded North Carolina A&T University's Small Farmer of the Year Award in 2008, and was recently featured on UNC-TV—offers a diverse yield, from onions, leeks, cabbage, and strawberries, to pork, chicken, turkey, and rabbit, all grown and processed naturally using organic methods. The 35 acres that the Jameses tend has been in Nelson's family since the nineteenth century.

It goes back to the 1800s. My grandmother and them stayed up there by the church. All this was just one lot at one time. It was 100 acres. But see, what happened is my grandfather lost it back in the late 1800s, about the end of the 1800s. He lost it. My dad was off teaching school—he was a principal. So he came home, and my grandfather had all the stuff loaded on a mule cart, getting ready to leave. And my dad said, “Well, go ahead and put your stuff back in the house. I'm going to go and talk to Old Man Ransom.” They had already foreclosed on them. So he goes to the man that was foreclosing and says, “Mr. Ransom, I'd love to take a shot at it.” [Ransom] said, “Well, I'll let you try it, but doggone it, you'll never pay for it.” The guy ran a store, and he came back with the agreement that anything [my father] raised on the farm, he could swap it out as money to pay down on the farm. He planted field peas, he had collards, and hogs. He sold it, and he carried the money directly to him. And back then, there were six head of us; that was more or less free labor.

Despite Mr. Ransom's nay saying, Nelson's father, Macarthur James, soon paid off the money he owed on the farm, and eventually divided the land among his family. Despite the fact that he is the last of his siblings to work the James plot of land, Nelson explains that he still loves his work. “[Farming] gets into the system . . . I'm hoping that someone else [in the family] will go crazy and want to do it too.”

Mary and Nelson James have a clear affinity and affection for farming, and at a time when organically grown food is being recognized as healthier and more sustainable, the Jameses lead the way as some of the most progressive, enthusiastic, and successful farmers in Eastern North Carolina. “I tell people if they have an apartment, they can grow vegetables in a container,” explains Mary. “There's more than one way to skin a cat.” Dogwood Farms currently offers CSA boxes, and sells their vegetables and meat at a variety of locations, including farmers' markets and stores such as Whole Foods. “This is heaven,” says Mary. “What more could you ask for?”

**Glen Lewis**  
**Former boat builder**

668 Lewis Rd.  
Hampstead, NC 28443  
(910) 352-2749

Hampstead native Glen Lewis is a third-generation member of a Pender County boatbuilding family. Lewis' grandfather came to Hampstead from Carteret County, bringing with him the traditions of maritime work and craftsmanship indigenous to the Harkers Island/Morehead City/Beaufort region, which the family has adapted over the years to the waters of Pender County.

The Lewis family's oral history tells how Glen's grandfather, the son of a Carteret County sail maker, settled in the area.

My granddaddy, on my daddy's birth certificate his occupation was [listed as] horse trader. (Laughs) But he fished mostly. But that's how he met my grandmother, he was down here trading horses or mules. When they got married and he bought this place, they put the family, which was two boys and a girl and my grandmother, and their belongings in a boat, and came down here...

The land on which the family made their home lies along the Waterway. Glen Lewis lives on the same property today, in a house on Lewis Road that his grandfather constructed from lumber salvaged after Hurricane Hazel in 1954. The Lewis men built boats here for three generations, until the 1980s. Their boats ranged from skiffs and rowed dories up to 65-foot shrimpers, made of juniper, cypress, and pine.

Lewis built his own first boat when he was 15 years old, a 16-foot skiff that he estimates took him a month or two to build. The process was much faster, though, when the builder was experienced. "My dad and uncle one time," Lewis remembers, "their daddy sold the dory that they had been fishing in that day, and they had one built and painted and in the water the next morning." When Glen became an experienced hand at the trade, he joined the other men in his family building boats throughout the fall and winter, and shrimping in the summer.

Working in Pender County with roots in Carteret County, the Lewises built boats that incorporated aspects of their ancestral tradition but that were adapted to the waters of the family's more recent home.

[Lewis boats] didn't have all the flare that Harkers Island [boats] had. Most of them were shrimp boats, built like most of the larger shrimp boats in Harkers Island, and then Holden's Beach. But we could still tell ours when we saw it go by. [Interviewer asks: And how is that?] You just know! Certain things, you know, you could tell . . . They tried to make it turn as big a propeller as it could,

because the bigger propeller the more it pulled. But yet we tried to keep it shallow enough where it could go out of Topsail Inlet. Topsail can get pretty bad.

Like many traditional boat builders, the Lewises constructed watercraft relying entirely on their eyes and experience, rather than written plans.

... when people would come with blueprints, we would say, "Okay." (Laughs) "You want it this long, and you want it this wide, and you want it to turn this size propeller. Is that right?" They said, "Yeah." We'd say, "You take these and go home, then." That's all we needed—the length and the width, and the size propeller they wanted to turn, and that would do it.

... My brother and I built ours outside, and even though you could get off away from them a lot so you could look at them, you'd still walk around it probably hundreds of times, making sure you had the lines the way you wanted it. ... I guess [the knowledge] developed, I would think. Everybody has a difference too, now, a little bit different vision, I reckon you'd call it, as to what they think is correct shape. ...for me, some of them come off the stem and just make a slow swoop. Some of them are right straight. I always like mine to come off not exactly straight, but coming down some, and then about eight or ten feet back make it a little bit more drastic coming back—just a little bit of hump in the very front of the boat. Not much. ... But that's always the main shape of a boat, the sheer line, the very top line. But everything else is considered too.

Glen Lewis stopped building boats, as well as fishing commercially, a little over twenty years ago, pushed by such factors as rising fuel costs and the decline of the fishing industry in North Carolina. He sees traditional boat building as a heritage that has largely been replaced by a less skilled level of craftsmanship.

... maybe I look at it wrong, but I've had a lot of people tell me they were boat builders, and what it was, they were fiberglass laminators. They built inside of a mold that somebody else built. Now, whoever built that mold was a boat builder. But the ones that's just laying the fiberglass in the mold that somebody else built, to me they're fiberglass laminators. They might be real good fiberglass laminators, but to me that don't make them a boat builder. He could be doing the same thing making a bathtub. It takes the same technique. But unless he can build that mold, to me, in my book, he's not considered a boat builder. [Interviewer asks: "Because he's not creating the form?"] Right. He's not made that shape.

**Bill and Tina Moller**  
**Fisherman and goat dairy operators**

Nature's Way Farm and Seafood  
115 Crystal Court  
Hampstead, NC 28443  
(910) 270-3036  
tnaturesway@aol.com

Sloop Point residents Bill and Tina Moller are the proprietors of Nature's Way Farm and Seafood, their home-based business through which they sell the shellfish that Bill harvests and the goat's milk cheeses and soaps that Tina makes.

Bill has been oystering and clamming for 40 years. Originally from Long Island—where he learned his trade in the Great South Bay—Moller moved to North Carolina in 1980, eventually settling in the coastal region of Pender County, where he works a six-mile area south of the Surf City Bridge.

Moller takes a philosophical approach to oystering and clamming, explaining, "Everybody thinks that clamming and shellfishing is physical work; I've never looked at it that way. . . . You have to have the right attitude. . . . If you don't think clams or oysters, you're not going to catch them."

During his three decades working the waters around Sloop Point, Moller has seen many changes in North Carolina's shellfish industry, many of them not for the better. "I will be point honest—our oyster industry is in bad shape," he says. "Overharvesting is a factor; environmental degradation; pollution due to development; water quality in certain areas; some of it is due to plain old hurricanes. . . . Once an oyster bed is gone, just throwing shells out isn't going to bring it back."

However, given the chance, he wouldn't change a thing. "I love oystering," says Moller. "It's just me and the oysters. Once in a while I'll see a raccoon."

If I looked back from day one, I'd never switch it for anything else. Don't get me wrong-- I've had many a bad, rough day. In my younger years, I had a lot of economically rough times. I've had times when I couldn't feel my fingertips; I'd have to put them in my armpits to get my feeling back before I could go to work. I've had to walk my boat in the dark because the tide was so low I couldn't get out of where I was at. Every fisherman experiences something, but that's part of it. Everybody's in the business to make a living, but if you don't love it, get out of it. You couldn't stay in it if you didn't love it. . . . I have no regrets whatsoever.

Tina Moller grew up in Michigan, and learned about animal husbandry on her grandfather's farm. After she and Bill moved to Pender County, Tina raised sheep, and was a gardener. When she began to devote her efforts seriously to producing food, she

decided to try raising goats. She started with one goat, who turned out to be a prodigious milker; that goat soon birthed a kid, who also grew up to be a highly productive milker. When they were interviewed in the spring of 2010, the Mollers had 13 milkers, two adult males, and several new kids.

Based on the Mollers' experience raising both goats and sheep, Bill Moller compared the two animals' temperaments. Goats, he says, are more individualistic and contrary.

[Goats] got more of a personality. And of course sheep, you know, have the shepherd—when one goes they all go. Goats, when one goes, nobody goes. They all go their own ways.

Bill says that they also find their goats to be highly intelligent. Early on in the enterprise, the Mollers had to replace the snap-latches on their pasture gates with spring-loaded latches, because the goats had learned how to open the simpler latches and let themselves out.

The cheeses that Tina makes include feta, mozzarella, bleu, and chèvre. She learned by a process of trial and error, guided by books on how to make cheese from cow's milk. She has placed in the top three several times in the American Dairy Goat Association's National Cheese Competition. Tina also makes a variety of milk-based herbal soaps, and more recently, the Mollers have begun to learn beekeeping.

### **Susie and Al Newberry Blueberry farmers**

5387 Highway 53 East  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-7436  
blueberryburgaw@aol.com

Farmers Susie and Al Newberry raise approximately 45 acres of Southern Highbush and Rabbit Eye blueberries just outside of Burgaw. While the couple had farming experience prior to their purchase of the farm that eventually became Newberry's Blueberries—Al Newberry had previously grown turf grass—blueberries were a wholly new endeavor for them. Explains Susie, "We liked the piece of land; we liked it out here. And we liked that there were blueberries here. We thought that sounded like something we might be interested in."

Pender County's very poor soil doesn't grow many things, but it's perfect for blueberries. . . . It's sandy. . . . Almost nothing will grow here but blueberries. It's perfectly suited. When they grow them in California, they spend a lot of money getting the soil to what we have here naturally. . . . We've got a spot that just happens to be ideal for it.

The couple started refurbishing their farm slowly; when they purchased it, it had been in foreclosure, and there was plenty of work to be done. "It was so run down, nobody wanted it," remembers Al.

[Initially] I wasn't even interested in blueberries; the land was so cheap, I was just land speculating. I found out how blueberries were doing, so I started putting in some blueberries. Every bush has been replaced out here and irrigation has been put in.

"When we started it was just five or ten acres," continues Susie. "We'd plow under and replant. . . . We don't have a lot of hired help." Ten years on, the Newberrys harvest between 4,000 and 5,000 pounds of blueberries per acre, which find their way to wholesale food co-ops, local roadside stands, and farmers' markets. Despite her daily work among the blueberry bushes, Susie Newberry explains that she still loves to eat the sweet berries. "The health benefits are pretty amazing," she says.

**Ricky Rambeaut**  
**Commercial fisherman**  
111 Dolphin Dr.  
Hampstead, NC 28443  
(910) 270-3080

Fayetteville native Ricky Rambeaut learned from his father how to fish in rivers when he was a boy. As a young man, he was injured during a construction job, and became unable to continue in that profession. "When I was sitting on that riverbank and I was fishing for free," he says, "and I was broke up from my construction job, I realized then that what I was doing for fun I could get paid for. And then I took it from there." For the last twenty years he has made fishing his career, working as a commercial hook-and-line fisherman in the inlets and ocean off of the North Carolina coast. He lives in Hampstead, and docks his boat, a 1980 Sisu, at Topsail.

Early on, Rambeaut learned the basics of navigation from older fishermen and boat operators, working on charter boats and head boats.

I would go up there and help the captain run his equipment, the navigation equipment, to tell him where he was at. At the time, [it] was not like is today, where you just look up there and see where you're at, now. Back then it took ten, fifteen minutes just to figure where you were at. So I helped him do that.

[...] I started [fishing commercially] on an old boat. It didn't have no navigation equipment whatsoever. Went out and caught fish, and bring them back, and sold a few of them. And then advanced from there, you know, with the new technology and stuff, and was able to buy things then for the boat. And eventually got to where I was actually making a good, substantial living for my boys, and putting

them through school and college. And just started day by day, more or less. It just kind of grows like love, you know what I'm saying?

Today Rambeaut fishes an area that runs approximately 120 miles from north to south, between Frying Pan Tower, off of Cape Fear, and Cape Hatteras; and about 60 miles wide, between the coast and the Gulf Stream. He catches snapper, grouper, wahoo, tuna, dolphin fish, and king mackerel, and sometimes he shrimps.

Rambeaut expresses frustration at regulations aimed at preserving the environment and Atlantic fisheries. He points out that no one has a higher stake in preserving the health of the ocean than commercial fishermen, and says that he himself is careful not to throw debris in the water and often retrieves items like deflated helium balloons that could be harmful to aquatic animals. Yet he feels that regulations to protect sea turtles are misguided, and suggests that efforts to prevent overfishing are also of questionable wisdom.

Well, I went to Marine Fisheries one day, and I said, "Do you believe in the Bible?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Do you know, in the Bible, everything's come true. And we're in the last phases of the Bible." He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, tell me this. Who you saving the fish for?"

Also making the fisherman's work harder these days is coastal development, which increasingly restricts public and commercial access to the water in favor of residential development. In Pender County, much of the land along Topsail Sound is now lined with private homes, privileging residents' recreational use of the waterfront over the needs of the community's maritime industries.

I shrimp, and I use the bank as a guideline. But it don't matter where I shrimp, because if there's somebody owns a piece of land there, they build to the water and then they build a 200-foot dock. And where I used to drag, I drag no more. They took it from me. Because the state issues them a permit to build a dock that's right on a piece of bottom that we shrimp. What fairness is there to that?

For all that his work is complicated by modern environmental and economic considerations, Rambeaut still takes obvious pleasure and pride in his profession.

I'm a hook-and-line fisherman. I've hook-and-lined all my life. I don't do the net thing. That's their bag. I do it because I love the thrill and adventure of hook-and-line fishing,

## *Community History and Culture Resources*

### **Ann Southerland Cottle**

#### **Penderlea community historian**

Penderlea Homestead Museum  
284 Garden Rd.  
Willard, NC 28478  
(910) 285-3490  
www.penderleahomesteadmuseum  
info@penderleahomesteadmuseum.com

Journalist and community historian Ann Southerland Cottle grew up on Penderlea, a daughter of some of the early settlers in the New Deal homestead community in northern Pender County. The Southerlands, who were from Registers Crossroads in Duplin County, moved onto Penderlea in the early days of 1941, when Cottle was four years old. They had undergone a rigorous application process in order to be selected for the community, documenting their household finances to the penny, submitting to physical exams, and obtaining the recommendation of their pastor.

Like many early Penderleans, the Southerlands had lived without electricity in their former home. Cottle remembers her first encounter with electricity, the night that her family arrived on the project.

Daddy brought his mule with him when we came. It was such a black night when we got there, and they put her in the stable. And of course they had the lantern that they had to use out there. Got into the house, and he picked me up and he showed me with the lantern that there was a switch on the wall, that I should push that switch up. And when I did, everything just flooded [with light]. It was wonderful. We were just ecstatic, because we had never seen anything like that before.

Most early Penderleans were Methodists and Baptists. Oddly enough, even though the project's designers placed great importance on applicants' standing in their home churches, and insisted that only Protestants could live on Penderlea, they neglected to include a church in the otherwise meticulously planned community. The homesteaders banded together and began to hold services and Sunday school in the barracks that had previously housed the work crews who built Penderlea. The Presbytery of Wilmington supplied a pastor, who was highly regarded by the community. Eventually the homesteaders determined to build their own church, and because they were so evenly divided between Baptists and Methodists, a vote was held to determine the denomination of the new church. On the first vote, the Baptists carried the day, but not with a majority. On the second vote, the majority chose a third denomination, that of their pastor. A Presbyterian church was established, and both Methodists and Baptists attended. (Eventually the Baptists departed to form their own congregation.) The Southerland

family included a parent of each faith, and like many on the project they compromised and became Presbyterians.

Cottle recalls that despite the homesteaders' differing religious backgrounds, the community was otherwise very cohesive from the beginning.

It was not like in some of the older towns, [where] if you weren't born in that town you could live there all your life except maybe a couple of years, you still are not a part of that town, you're sort of an outcast. Here, nobody lived together [before]; you all came from everywhere, so it didn't matter where you came from. It was like one big family. And they looked after each other. We all looked after each other.

In 1943 the federal government began to allow homesteaders to purchase their homes and farms. The Southerland family eventually did so, and like some other Penderlea families ceased farming commercially in order to enter the dairy business. Ann grew up to marry Gene Cottle, from Willard. The couple returned to Penderlea, where they live today.

Many of the houses and community buildings of Penderlea remain in use. The community has established the Penderlea Homestead Museum in one of the original houses on Garden Road. Largely unchanged from its original design, the house is full of artifacts of local history and daily life. Ann Southerland Cottle is one of the Directors of the museum, as well as the author of the 2008 book *The Roots of Penderlea: A Memory of a New Deal Homestead Community*. She serves as a resource for community history, a heritage that she has researched deeply, as well as lived.

**Bob Fisher**  
**Spot Festival organizer**

124 Canvasback Pt.  
Hampstead, NC 28443  
(910) 270-4923  
raffish@charter.net

Bob Fisher moved to Hampstead in 1998. He and his wife had both been involved in arts and crafts in the Northeast; upon moving to North Carolina, he began volunteering in the arts and crafts section of the annual Spot Festival, which, as he explains, was in dire need of reorganization. "When I first got involved, I said, 'No more buy-and-sell. No more sunglasses. No more of that, okay?' It had to be handmade by the artist."

Since he began working on the Spot Festival, Fisher has seen the event grow by leaps and bounds. He has also developed a deep appreciation for the legacy of fishing in Pender County, which was the impetus for naming the yearly festival after the popular local fish, the spot.

I think at one time, [fishing] was how people made a living. It's become less and less, like in other places. You go down to the waterfront, you can still see commercial fishermen out there, but I don't think as many as there used to be. . . . You'll still see guys today up and down the highway, selling shrimp out of their trailers; there are local people that still do that. They go out shrimping, and sell fresh shrimp. So it's still there, but a lot less than it used to be.

While Fisher understands that there is always work to be done to make the Spot Festival more successful, he is proud of what the festival organizers have accomplished. A couple years ago, he explains, attendance at the two day event topped 20,000 people, with over 9,000 spot dinners sold. That year, the Spot Festival contributed over \$60,000 dollars to the Pender County School System. "It's starting to get a good reputation," Fisher says. "That's what you need to make it really successful."

**Ross Harrell**  
**Springfest organizer**

P.O. Box 247  
Burgaw NC 28425  
rochellefurnitur@bellsouth.net

Burgaw native Ross Harrell remembers when the idea for Springfest—an annual, community-based celebration that occurs on Burgaw's historic courthouse square—was first conceived. It was the late 1970s, and he was sitting in his living room talking with his wife and his brother about the need for an event that would counteract what the trio saw as a general devaluing of Pender County's unique local culture. "The need for a festival came from the beginnings of the selling of Pender County, and the realization that the people who lived in Pender County basically undervalued who they were, and where we lived," explains Harrell. "We wanted people to begin to value who we were, and what we have here in Pender County."

The first year, we went before the county commissioners to request the use of the courthouse square, and all they could see was a bunch of young people putting together a little Woodstock in downtown Burgaw. They weren't very receptive to the idea, and they wouldn't let us use the courthouse square, which is a beautiful venue with huge oak trees. It's shady and very picturesque. So we took to the streets, and we got permission from the town of Burgaw to have the festival on the streets. We just lined the streets of Burgaw with the booths, and baked in the broiling May sun. It was a success, and was well-attended, and the county fathers saw that it wasn't something so scary after all; it was just their neighbors and friends, and the people that they knew very well. Ever since then, they said, "Sure, use the courthouse square."

Now in its 32nd year, Springfest has become something of an institution in Burgaw. While the celebration welcomes visitors from outside the area, Springfest's primary focus is on the communities and people in and around Pender County. Booth space is only available to those who "live, own land, or work" in Pender County; moreover, wares and food on offer at the festival must be "handmade, homemade, or homegrown."

While Springfest operates on a shoestring budget, and depends upon volunteer staffing, Harrell says that he is proud to play a role in this celebration of Pender County's culture. "Springfest is all about community," he explains. "Springfest is all about who we are with each other."

**Ruth Johnson  
Nutritionist**

P.O. Box 522  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 231-4104  
rccake@ec.rr.com

Ruth Johnson was born and raised in the Watha section of Pender County. "I am a farm girl from the heart," she says. "I know what it means to get up at five o'clock in the morning and pick beans and cucumbers for the market."

When I was growing up, [Pender County] was very rural. You didn't see many houses; there were a whole lot of dirt roads; and you didn't have access to television. You didn't even have inside bathrooms in the country, unless you were a well-to-do family. . . . Years ago, you could hardly get to Burgaw from the country if it was raining because the roads were so muddy.

Indeed, Johnson remembers the Burgaw of her childhood as a "big city," the place from whence came the traveling fishmongers and icemen each weekend. The Johnson family produced the majority of their own food, raising hogs and chickens, trapping birds, and catching fish to supplement the vegetables they grew in their garden. Her mother, a renowned local chef, began teaching her to cook at the age of five.

When I was in school, my teachers lived in the city of Burgaw. I was a country girl, and I would bring country ham sandwiches to school, and my teachers would trade off with me. I was a child, so I didn't know—they wanted my ham sandwiches, so they would give me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and eat my ham sandwich. My mom was an excellent cook. She always cooked all types of raisin cakes and what have you, so I would feed the teachers, and they enjoyed that. They talked about that after I got grown.

Following her graduation from high school, Johnson went to work as a nutritionist for the Pender County Agricultural Extension Agency. This work took her into rural, working-class areas of Pender County, where she would teach families the value and preparation of balanced meals. "I had to learn to utilize, and make good use of, what the people had," she recalls. "I taught about nutritional value and how to have a balanced meal, which was something that most people didn't think anything of. They were well-filled, but they weren't well-fed."

Johnson was perfectly suited for this work, which required a sensitive approach to communities in which country cooking was central to the diet; she herself was raised in a low-income farm family, and was taught to prepare food in the "old timey" way. "I was brought up with rice and gravy, and hot biscuits," she explains.

Ruth Johnson's food expertise, and her understanding of Pender County traditions, allow her to view local culture through the lens of foodways. Moreover, her status as a Pender County native has enabled her to strike the delicate balance between healthy eating and delicious, old-style country cooking; no longer does she eat her fried chicken smothered, but she does like a good serving of redeye gravy on occasion.

**Bill Messer**  
**Documentarian and Pender County community historian**

Fuzzydog Video Productions  
(910) 270-9198  
www.fuzzydogvideo.com  
billmesser@charter.net

Documentarian Bill Messer, a native of Georgia, has been living in Hampstead for more than fifteen years, and during much of that time has been conducting oral history and other historical research into the heritage of Hampstead and Pender County. He has assembled the edited and annotated interviews into a book, *A Sense of Time and Place*. Messer is also a skilled potter, who has studied traditions of North Carolina pottery through first-hand work.

Messer writes, "I got my first 35mm camera around 1956 with 1 7/8 books of S&H Green Stamps and began what was to be a lifetime pursuit of photography and cinematography, then videography."<sup>67</sup> His early hobby became a professional pursuit, as he photographed over the years for local newspapers, sports magazines, and other publications. Service in the Navy followed, and then another career as an IBM programmer, which brought him to Raleigh.

After retiring to Hampstead, Messer became interested in the history—both early and living—of his new home. He has since become friends with and documented the lives and work of dozens of his neighbors, from community elders who share reminiscences of

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<sup>67</sup> <http://fuzzydogvideo.com/bill.htm>, accessed August 5, 2010

growing up in the area, to farmers and fishermen who share insight into their traditional ways of work and life. His documentation is primarily in the video medium, but he also works in still photography, and collects and scans primary and secondary sources, which he incorporates into presentations of his work.

Bill Messer is an enthusiastic resource for the history of Pender County in general, and Hampstead in particular. He gives presentations in the area about the heritage of Pender County, and is generous in sharing his work.

*Please see: Ann Debaylo Mizerek and Mary Bakan, St. Helena community resources, in “Craft and Musical Artists” section.*

**Michael Raab**  
**Videographer and documentarian**

P.O. Box 725  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-7911  
(910) 259-8323

Videographer and documentarian Michael Raab grew up in the Hudson River Valley town of Cornwall, New York, and moved south in the late 1980s, eventually settling in Pender County. His adopted home of Burgaw, he explains, reminded him—both in its unique culture, and its modern day challenges—of the small town he grew up in. “It’s like going home,” Raab remarks.

The area I [grew up] in was farmland, 100 miles north of New York City. It was Orange County, New York; it was black-dirt country. It was onion-growing country. They put in a high-speed rail transportation up the west bank of the Hudson, so the people who couldn't afford to live in the immediate counties to New York [City] found out that they could commute to Orange County. Overnight, Orange County became developments. The farms disappeared. And that's not happened here yet, but it is happening slowly. When I moved here, [Highway] 40 wasn't open all the way from Raleigh. As soon as that opened, it became a shore destination, and people realized they could work in Wilmington and still live here in Burgaw, and have the best of both. So Burgaw has been very wisely cautious in development, because they saw what happened in the eastern part of the county, in Hampstead. Hampstead had this huge explosion, like overnight, in the '90s. So they decided that the wave is coming, but let's get ready for it. They're very smart about what they're doing as far as development here.

Raab started shooting video during his time in New York in the 1980s. “I started shooting everything under the sun,” he recalls. “I thought, ‘This is history that I’m saving.’” After arriving in Pender County, Raab completed a documentary about celebrated local blues musician George Herbert Moore. “He played a Piedmont picking style; lots of Jimmy Reed, stuff like that, and he was just a charmer,” Raab remembers.

He was always dressed well and looked good. He always sounded good. He was a gentleman. So he started playing Wilmington, and he got picked up by a local agent. He started doing CDs. He released his first CD at 69, did his second one at 72, and then he died of cancer. But his story was pretty cool. He started a career at 68, and he was from right here in Burgaw.

Raab is currently at work on a documentary about the Pawsitive Partners Prison Program, a canine rehabilitation initiative currently underway at the prison in Burgaw, and is in the planning stages of a piece about Burgaw’s Cripple Creek Cloggers.

Raab explains, “There’s an interesting sense of community here. They’ve worked hard to preserve the past. There are very few communities like this, and I’ve been all over this area. There are very few places that have this set up and this feeling about them.”

**Nancy Simon**  
**Poplar Grove Historic Plantation Director**

Poplar Grove Historic Plantation  
10200 US Hwy 17 N  
Wilmington, NC 28411  
Nancys1@poplargrove.com

Nancy Simon is the Director of the Poplar Grove Historic Plantation, a nineteenth-century peanut plantation that has functioned as “a non-profit foundation dedicated to education, preservation, and service to the community” since 1980. Over the years, the Scott’s Hill plantation has become something of a cultural meeting place for coastal Pender County and the surrounding areas. “We have over 100-plus volunteers that work in different areas,” explains Simon. “We offer classes in the Cultural Arts Center; we have woodcarvers that meet here every Thursday; we have quilters and rug hookers; we have a blacksmith . . . Our goal is to educate the public about what life was like on an 1850 plantation.”

The land grants go back to 1795; this plantation was built in 1850. The first plantation burned. . . . The [original plantation owners the] Foys relocated Poplar Grove closer to Highway 17 because that was where they would send their crops, which were peanuts, to the ports to be shipped out. This was a peanut plantation. According to the North Carolina Peanut

Council, we are the oldest peanut plantation in the South. So we take pride in that.

Poplar Grove also hosts a popular Wednesday farmers' market, and welcomes school field trips, during which students are given a tour of the historic home and witness a variety of crafts demonstrations. "The people that work here truly love their jobs," says Simon. "You can tell they really enjoy what they do. That makes a difference. People get a feel for that."

### **Samm-Art Williams<sup>68</sup>** **Playwright**

PO Box 1269  
Burgaw, NC 28425  
(910) 259-9710

After decades of living in Philadelphia, New York, and Los Angeles, playwright and actor Samm-Art Williams has returned home to Southeastern North Carolina. With a career on stage and screen that reaches back forty years, Williams is a prominent American playwright whose work has been produced on and off Broadway, receiving awards and critical accolades. He is perhaps best known for his Tony-nominated play *Home*, the story of a young African American man from rural North Carolina who, through a series of misfortunes and missteps, finds himself in desperate straits in a hostile Northern city, and eventually makes his way back home to work his family land. Williams' many plays cover a broad range of subject matter, but many draw upon the complexities of the African American experience in the South. Despite his work's sometimes emotionally dark themes, Williams is also recognized as a talented humorist. A reviewer for *Time* Magazine described him as "a prose poet with a lavish sense of humor."

Williams grew up in Burgaw. His mother Valdosia, from Pender County, was a teacher, and his father Samuel, from Philadelphia, had come to North Carolina as one of the famed Montford Point Marines. Williams' mother encouraged him to read widely as a child, introducing him to great American and world literature. He also received an early education in the artful use of language by listening to the casual storytelling that went on among community members.

Coming up in a small town, the good part about it is that everybody is a storyteller. In writing you have to have a good story—beginning, middle, and an end—for me, that's the magic. Everybody around here, whether they could read or write, could tell a story. They could sit around a pot-bellied stove, and give them two shots of anything, and my god-- But I didn't appreciate them, because it was normal. Everybody almost was like that. But the older I got, even in my

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<sup>68</sup> Profile of Samm-Art Williams is drawn from *Report on the Arts Resources and Traditions of Wilmington and New Hanover County*. Sarah Bryan. April 2010.

writing, I began to draw back and look back on things that happened to me in my youth, and it's coming from this small town. I'm so glad I grew up here.

...When you hear good storytelling, nothing is off-limits. And I think that all kids, or especially college kids, and any aspiring writer, should be around storytellers. Old-time storytellers...They ain't learned this from the books. They're not Shakespeare-informed, and all these other writers, and Langston Hughes. They don't know anything about that. All they know is their God-given ability.

Since coming home to North Carolina, Samm-Art Williams continues to write, educate young writers, and be actively engaged in the region's cultural life. He was an artist in residence at North Carolina Central University in 2008, and in 2010 NCCU staged his play *The Dance on Widow's Row*, set in fictional Port Town, North Carolina. Williams is a member of Wilmington's Black Arts Alliance, and has collaborated with musician and performer Grenoldo Frazier, among other local artists. Currently Williams is writing a new play about the Montford Point Marines.

## **Programming Recommendations**

Among the intended purposes of this report is to provide the Pender County Arts Council with information around which to plan folklife-based programming. With so many talented traditional artists in Pender County, and interesting and unusual traditions, there is great potential for concerts, exhibitions, demonstrations, educational programs, and other special events.

The newly renovated historic Burgaw Depot is an ideal venue for public programming. This facility offers a large and comfortable space capable of accommodating a large crowd; moreover, it is a location that holds historical significance within Pender County. The official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Depot will occur sometime in the fall of 2010. The Pender County Arts Council might tie a folklife-related public program to this celebration, thereby increasing visibility for both events, and creating cohesion among the various programs connected with the reopening of the Depot.

Many of the Pender residents consulted in the course of this project would be excellent candidates for featuring in public programming. Such potential presenters and performers include Cripple Creek Cloggers founder Nancy Aycock; gospel groups the Brothers in Christ and the Burgaw Community Quartet; Penderlea community historian Ann Cottle; storyteller Tim Dillinger; Hampstead community historian Bill Messer; Dogwood Farms owners Mary and Nelson James; St. Helena residents and artists Ann Mizerek and Mary Bakan; musician Eula Ramsey (possibly in performance with sister Bonnie, guitarist Barry Hayes, and other musicians who perform regularly at Ramsey's Pickin' Palace); the Southern NC Burgaw Panther Band; and author Samm-Art Williams. While there are surely many others who could be involved in programming, those listed above have experience in public performance/presentation, or, in the opinion of this project's researchers, are likely to be effective presenters.

The North Carolina Folklife Institute looks forward to working with the Pender County Arts Council on folklife programming, and invites the Arts Council to consider NCFI a resource for ongoing consultation on folklife programming.

## *Appendix*

Sources consulted

### **Nancy Aycock**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 2, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos, scans of print photos of Cripple Creek Cloggers by Mike Taylor

### **Ann Cottle**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: May 27, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview transcript, digital photos of collections at Pender Homestead Museum

### **Tim Dillinger**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: March 18, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

### **Jason Fennell**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: May 15, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos, scan of print portrait by Mike Taylor

### **Bill Fisher**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos, print photos given by artist

### **Bob Fisher**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

### **Ross Harrell**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 17, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Barry Hayes and Tanya Morrison**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 1, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos, scan of print portrait by Mike Taylor

**Eddie Hayes**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview transcript, digital photos, scan of print portrait by Mike Taylor

**Michael Hollis and Stacy McDuffie**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: May 14, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Mary and Nelson James**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 2, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos, scan of print portrait by Mike Taylor

**Roy Johnson**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 1, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, digital audio of performances by Burgaw Community Quartet, interview log, digital photos of Burgaw Community Quartet, scans of print photos of Burgaw Community Quartet and Roy and Ruth Johnson by Mike Taylor

**Ruth Johnson**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 1, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, scan of print portrait of Ruth and Roy Johnson by Mike Taylor

**Kevin Lawrie**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log

**Glen Lewis**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: May 27, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview transcript, digital photos. (Note: Please contact Mr. Lewis for permission before using any historic photos included.)

**Bill Lowe**

Met with: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: notes from conversation

**Ann Mendenhall**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Ray Mendenhall**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: March 18, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photo

**Bill Messer**

Met with: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

**Burt Millette**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 2, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Joan Millette**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 2, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Ann Mizerek and Mary Bakan**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: May 27, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview transcript, digital photos

**Bill and Tina Moller**

Interviewers: Mike Taylor and Sarah Bryan

Dates: April 16, 2010 (SB) and May 15, 2010 (MT)

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview logs, digital photos, scan of print portrait of Bill Moller by Mike Taylor

**Cliff Moore and Ivey Blackburn**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: March 18, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Dottie Netherton**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: May 27, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Susie and Al Newberry**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 1, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photos

**Michael Raab**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: March 19, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photo

**Ricky Rambeaut**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview transcript, digital photos

**Robert and Eula Ramsey**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: March 19, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, digital audio of performances by the Ramseys, interview transcript, digital photos, scans of print portraits of Bonnie and Eula Ramsey and Eula and Robert Ramsey by Mike Taylor

**Cindy Rhodes**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: March 18, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photo

**B. J. Ryan**

Interviewer: Sarah Bryan

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: notes from conversation, digital photos

**Nancy Simon**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 16, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, interview log, digital photo

**James Dion Smith**

Interviewer: Mike Taylor

Date: April 3, 2010

Documentation: digital audio of interview, digital audio of performances by Brothers in Christ, interview log, digital photos, scan of print portrait of Brothers in Christ by Mike Taylor