

## Memories of Beaufort in the Nineties

By Thomas H. Carrow

TO MY SISTER  
LUTIE M. JONES  
Preface

I was born just outside of Beaufort, Carteret County, North Carolina, November 1, 1880. My parents moved to Beaufort shortly afterward, and I lived there until November 3, 1899, or until I was nineteen years old. These were the most impressionable years of my whole life. I am by nature a reminiscence person, and I had often thought of writing my memories of Beaufort. In the latter part of 1946, I received a letter from my nephew, Paul S. Jones, enclosing an article on THE 86TH ANNIVERSARY OF MRS. N. W. TAYLOR. My reply and the commentaries suggested by the article were expanded into these memoirs.

T. H. CARROW  
1948

### "Ma" Taylor's 86th Anniversary

Dear Paul: It was gracious of you to send me the article on "MA" TAYLOR CELEBRATES HER 86TH ANNIVERSARY. I read it with much interest. I was also impressed with your notation: "Ma's attitude must be right—she loves everybody and everybody loves her. A grand old couple, I say. I heartily agree."

It may be of interest to you to receive an outline of the impressions the article on Mrs. Taylor, as well as your comment, made upon my mind, which is extremely sensitive to facts and fancies relating to Beaufort and its environs before and immediately after the turn of the century.

"Miss Mary" is symbolical of an era, or more accurately, three eras: the '80's, and '90's, the first decade of the present century, and the years that have elapsed since about 1910.

The mechanics of living and the facilities for learning and culture fairly jumped up from one era to the other in contrast to the slow, evolutionary process that characterized most other periods in history, particularly in the history of Beaufort and Carteret County. My memory is fairly clear back '90, although



THOMAS H. CARROW  
Success hasn't overshadowed his love of home and memories of a pleasant youth.

Fifty years ago, Tom Carrow, a mason's helper working for the government on construction of Fort Maswell, N. C., little dreamed that today he would be one of the nation's foremost authorities on railroad safety.

As superintendent of safety of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Mr. Carrow has directed preparation of his company's safety rules based upon the causes of accidents in all phases of railroading and for many years has analyzed and distributed national statistics on railroad safety.

The Carteret County News-Times is proud to present his work, "Memories of Beaufort in the Nineties," the first installment appearing here.

The author was born in Carteret county, the son of Nathan L. and Emma Brooks Carrow. The fam-

ily later moved to Beaufort where Tom spent his childhood and youth. Until he was 10 years old he considered himself a Methodist, but at that age became affiliated with the Episcopal church where he attended regularly until he left Beaufort in 1898, the year Americans took up the cry "Remember the Maine!" and sailed off to rescue Cuba from the Spaniards.

Tom's first regular work was with brick and mortar, constructing Fort Caswell, near Wilmington. In the fall of that year he went to Philadelphia and after working several months at John Wanamaker's, the famous Quaker City department store, accepted a job with the Pennsylvania Railroad in the operating department Feb. 15, 1900. He remained with that company, occupying several positions prior to his present one.

In 1910 he was assigned to the general manager's office to handle safety matters, was later made a safety inspector, then supervisor of safety, and in 1927, superintendent of safety.

Mr. Carrow has served as chairman of the safety section of the Association of American Railroads and at present is a member of the committee of direction in the safety division.

A member of the American Society of Safety Engineers, Mr. Carrow has been a member of the executive committee of the National Safety council and at present represents the Association of American Railroads in the American Standards association as a member of the committee on preparation of a code for classification of accidents by causes.

During the past 30 years Mr.

Carrow has frequently appeared before senate and house committees, state legislative committees, law courts, and public utilities commissions as an expert witness in connection with the laws or proposed laws relating to the safety of railroad employees and the traveling public.

The story of his boyhood in Beaufort should pleasantly stir memories of many, and for those who were not fortunate enough to live in that era it will open the door on a scene strange and yet as dear to them as it is to their parents and grandchildren.

Mr. Carrow plans to return to Beaufort the end of this month for a visit, to see his many friends and relatives here and to feel again the southwest wind as it blows across the Inlet.

### Dedicatory Honors



LUTIE M. JONES

To his sister, pictured here at the age of 23, the author has dedicated this work. Mrs. Jones, wife of the late C. D. Jones, reared seven children, six of whom are living in Beaufort. For 43 years Mrs. Jones has lived in her present home, 805 Front street.

somewhat tinged in that period by the limitations of childhood.

Thus, in the '90's, the little white house at the foot of Ann Street in which "Miss Mary" first saw the light of day, on high tide was situated right at the water's edge. Early in that decade, or perhaps a little earlier, there was erected west of the Buckman home, one of the first oyster factories in the world. My recollection is somewhat hazy but it seems to me the factory was built on pilings, and as the empty oyster shells were dumped under and around the building, the fill reached the height of the street to the east, and in time, the shells were piled "mountain high." Indeed, those shells were the nearest approach to a mountain I had ever seen until I took my departure from Beaufort in '99.

The oyster factory was a great boon to Beaufort business. The men who ordinarily fished for a livelihood also oystered and the colored women shucked the oysters from the latticed iron cars that were run through a steam box to open them up and cook them. The women used a tin, about a gallon in size, which hung on the side of the oyster car, in which to put the oysters they shucked. It runs through my mind that ten cents was the payment received for a full can. A person turning in a can was given a brass check, and these checks were cashed at the end of the day, maybe week. My impression is that one dollar a day represented the pay of a good shucker.

At this time, "Grandpa" Forbes, an octogenarian, was the Episcopal preacher, and had been the sole incumbent for all the

previous years of my childhood. I remember him well. God bless his soul, for he was the very embodiment of the Christian spirit. But "Grandpa" objected to the factory whistle which gave its first blast at five o'clock in the morning to awaken the factory workers about two hours before he arose. His objection was to no avail, however, because the workers not only had no alarm clocks, but many of them had no clocks at all.

Speaking of "Grandpa" Forbes, I was one of a number of boys who had the privilege of visiting his home and enjoying his Christian hospitality. I remember his old colored cook, Harriet, grating roast chicken on a tin grater. This expedient was necessary for the ravages of four score years had taken away his last tooth. I mention this to point to the fact that up to that time, artificial teeth were not yet available in Beaufort, so far as I can remember. My impression is that most people as old as "Grandpa" Forbes were toothless.

The factory and the shells remind me of another very important development. There was no commercial use for the oyster shells, so the city fathers decided to build a shell road from the foot of Ann Street to "Simpson's field," on the edge of Beaufort. The shells for this project were all hauled by ox in a one-ox cart. The driver was a very fine old character, a colored man named Isaac Vann. I can't remember how long it took, but it was a prodigious undertaking for a lone man and a lone ox. I recall the ox was a spirited animal, much unlike the common run of this type of beast of burden.

The article on "Ma" Taylor quotes Mr. Taylor as saying that some of the streets were "cow paths" in those days. This reminds me of an institution rather peculiar to Beaufort, the two-wheel, one-horse carts, which did all the drayage business in Beaufort until some time after the end of the last century, perhaps until after the first World War.

Wood was the sole fuel used in Beaufort until a few years ago, and I believe is the principal fuel now, although oil has become popular in recent years. I recall wood selling for fifty cents a load (1/4 cord) and being delivered in the carts for ten cents. We rarely used the word dime, shilling was more often used.

The drivers of these carts were nearly all unique characters. Mr. Ben Glancy drove the same mare for years and years. Her name was Molly. (Mr. Ben Bell was the owner of the outfit). Mr. Glancy was brim full of humor, especially when he took a "drop" too much. Another character on the carts was Mrs. Van Madze. He usually stood up in the cart when making the empty haul and would call out some humorous quip to everyone he passed. He always got a happy response.

There was a colored driver named Cicero who was lame, and one named Cain who blew a siren when he turned the corners, possibly in anticipation of the automobile that was "just around the corner." An old stoutish negro, Owen Sheppard, got some pension money and bought a horse, a fine looking one, but shortly after, it turned out that the horse had sleeping sickness. He would go to sleep and fall down in the shafts.

### The Author at 17



Young Tom Carrow faced the future with the undaunted, steady eye of youth in 1897. This picture he terms typical of the young bucks of Beaufort in that day.

There was a negro driver, a born humorist, who was a perfect story teller and imitator. His name was Jim Brag, son of Charles Brag who went to sea with Capt. John L. Ireland in the small two-masted schooner the CHARLES.

The "cow path" reference by Mr. Taylor reminded me of the cart tracks in the sand. Literally, the wheels would make trenches in the sand six inches deep in some places. This made the shell road very popular.

### II Sail Boats to Morehead

Before the railroad came to Beaufort, we connected with the train at Morehead City by boat. Some time in the '90's a naphtha launch was provided. Prior to that, sail boats were used and getting to and from Morehead was as precarious as the wind and the tide. It took from 15 minutes to two hours. Sometimes it was impossible to make the trip.

Meeting the mail boat in the summer evenings was a regular routine for us children. The later the boat was, the more fun we had. The mail was taken immediately to the Post Office where

there were always a number of people waiting for letters that did not arrive. Mr. David Pierce was the postmaster, and he couldn't help being a little peevish when people disputed him when he said, "No mail for you."

Mr. Pierce was also called "Uncle Peterson." I don't know why. He kept a cool drink and ice cream store and also sold toys in connection with the Post Office. He was a unique personality and a good citizen.

My impression is that sharpies were introduced in Beaufort around 1890, perhaps a little earlier. The ones I remember as the originals were the VIOLA, Capt. Ben Pigott; the S. M. BUCKMAN, Capt. Frank Ellison; the EMILY, Capt. Obit Gaskill, and the RUTH, Capt. Ben Franklin. The captains were all colored men and they were clever. Captain Ben was outstanding.

A sharpie is a lovely boat for sails. The young folks occasionally enjoyed this pastime. I recall on one occasion on one of my visits back home Capt. Ben Pigott took a party of boys and girls to the Cape and on the way back the sea became so rough that he had to back into the Inlet. One of the ladies in our party, "Miss Carrie" Norcom, the chaperon, swooned. We were all relieved when we rounded the Fort and reached Newport channel.

The canoe was probably the original small boat. It was used extensively by the fishermen of Beaufort. Sometime after the canoe, the file bottom skiff came along, than which there is nothing more delightful to sail in a stiff wind and a rough sea. I mean "inland sea."

A file bottom skiff "lays" in the wind at such an acute angle that she almost defies the wind. Capt. Holl Mason had one named EDITH that was the "fastest of the fleet." There were occasional boat races.

One thing enjoyed in the nineties was superb—sailing in small boats on a high tide right out over Bird Shoal to the Inlet. The waves were big enough to gently waft a small boat about but not yet dangerous. The security of shallow water made it doubly enjoyable to the timid.

Dear old Dr. King had a big yawl rigged up with a sail, and on an afternoon when the tide was high and the squall wind was blowing, he would set sail and steer for the sea buoy, but turned back at the Inlet.

The breakwater across the shoal is a necessity, but it impaired one of the prettiest water scenes on the whole Atlantic coast, perhaps in the world. Before the breakwater was laid, you got the impression and the "feel" of the sea without its ravages.

The young folks of today may not realize that at high tide in storms we had a miniature surf right on the shore in front of Beaufort. One of my most enjoyable experiences, when in my teens, was to sit on the old bridge when storms were raging, especially when the moon shone.

And that old bridge! I have seen a lot of the world, but the thing that stands out in my memory as a "thing of beauty and a joy forever" is the old wooden bridge at high tide with the moon full, a stiff southwest breeze, and the girls and boys singing and laughing as if all of life was to be happy. Alas! What happiness and what tragedies ensued! Some passed on in their prime, some remained like Mr. and Mrs. Net Taylor, to see the social and economic evolution of Beaufort and the whole U. S. A.

### III

#### A Unique Character and The Police Gazette

A unique character was Mr. William Rice, Sr. He ran a barber shop, a photograph gallery, tintypes I believe, and repaired watches. Photography was used very little in Beaufort in those days. He had an unlimited vocabulary and made use of it on occasion. He was the kind of man Gray was thinking of when he wrote "... full many a flower is born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air." His wife, "Miss Susan," was a lovely personality and a handsome, stately woman.

William Rice, Sr., had a son called Will. He followed in his father's footsteps in business and otherwise. He was known for his philosophic sayings. His shop was a rendezvous for the young fellows where they could get a glimpse of the Police Gazette which carried photos of women in tights. It was a prized privilege of young fellows to see these pictures. Now they see the real thing anywhere they look around Beaufort on a summer day. Times have changed, but "figures" haven't.

One of my impressive memories is of how the young ladies of Beaufort, with bustles, accentuated by corsets laced tight, would walk out in the afternoon, holding their long skirts up to avoid dragging on the ground. There was a trick in doing it gracefully like Miss F—did. We boys had the fine figures all spotted and when they passed by, they were the cynosure of all eyes. Think of it! They even wore high shoes!!! Seems to me I never saw a shirtwaist that came below the Adam's apple.

When I read about the clubs and bridge parties in The Beaufort News of today, I am reminded of the social life at the turn of the century. There were very few formal parties. The children were given parties occasionally, and the women would call upon each other in their homes, but the principal contacts were in the churches. "Miss Carrie" Norcom loved the children, and she provided more fun for those of my set than any other person. Perhaps she was influenced by her four children; Will and Louise, the eldest of four, being in my age group.

The men, of course, assembled in the evening around the grocery stores, and on Sunday afternoons in fine weather they got together on the waterfront. Nearly every man in town chewed tobacco. Cigarettes were common, and Old Virginia Cheroots were consumed to some extent. I distinctly recall that it was held by some that if the cigarette habit was not curbed, the race would be ruined!

There was not one woman I know of who smoked, but some of the women of the "best families" dipped snuff. My impression is that some still do so. Why not? Snuff is only pulverized tobacco which formerly the great majority of men chewed.

(To Be Continued)