

Ferry View Spans 200 Years Of Change

BY SUSAN USHER

A ride on the Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry offers more than an interlude from the stresses of daily living: The hour-long crossing aboard the *Sandy Graham* offers a panoramic view spanning 200 years of a changing county history shaped by the confluence of the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean.

Along the riverbank, relics of the Colonial and Civil War eras stand adjacent to the smokestacks and loading docks of modern industry.

As the ferry slides from its moorings on the Southport side of the Cape Fear River, the smokestacks of the Pfizer Chemical Corp. pharmaceutical plant can be seen to the right.

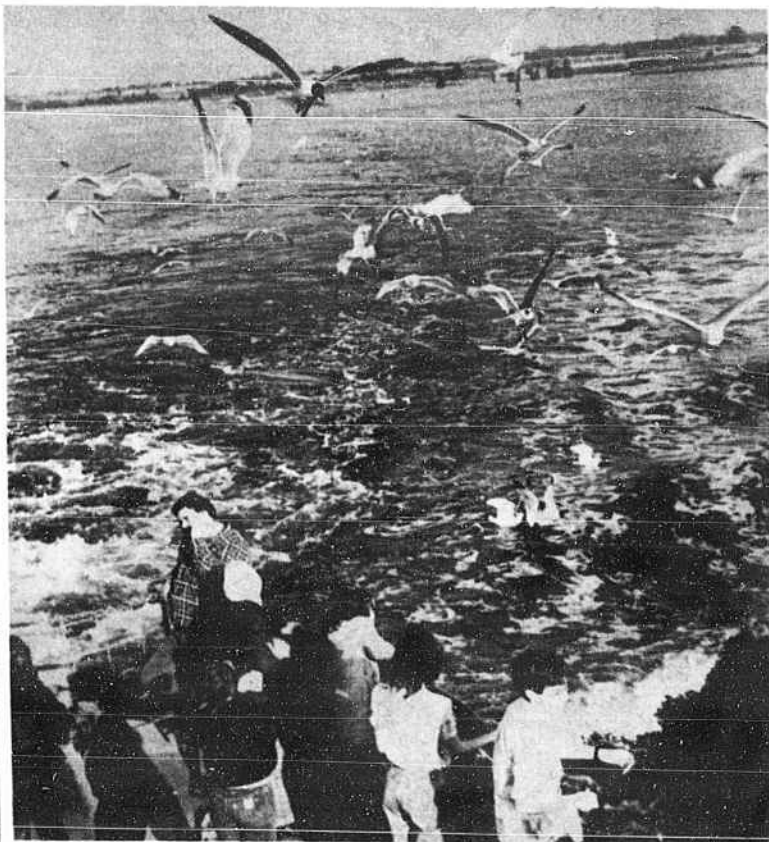
In a curve of marshland between the ferry landing and Pfizer's docking facilities the old Price's Creek Lighthouse stands, hardly visible against a stand of trees. The circular brick tower is one of the oldest range lights still standing in the Cape Fear

region. It and a smaller beacon atop the adjacent lightkeeper's house were built about 1849 to serve as range lights for vessels navigating New Inlet. The tract has been preserved by Pfizer, its present owner.

Looking back toward Southport as the ferry moves across the channel, two more lighthouses can be seen—the modern high-beamed Oak Island Lighthouse on Caswell Beach and "Old Baldy," an octagonal 90-foot tall brick lighthouse on Bald Head Island, one of three lighthouses built there at one time or another.

Just to the left of the Oak Island light the profile of Fort Caswell can be seen. Blown up and abandoned by a fleeing Confederate garrison near in the final days of the Civil War, it was one of the most well built forts in the South. The site has been owned by the North Carolina Baptist Convention since 1949 and is used as a religious conference center. Public

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TOSSING BREAD CRUMBS to the seabirds that flock greedily in its wake has become a tradition aboard the "*Sandy Graham*."

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER



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