

Ferry Guides Share Information On Area

BY SUSAN USHER

For some passengers the Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry is simply a scenic route from one side of the river to another or a fun spot to feed seagulls.

But for those who want more, it's there for the asking. Ferry Tour Guides Kim Doshier and Ronda LaBelle of Southport are there to share information about the area and answer questions. Miss Doshier, with the ferry program since its beginning three summers ago, is a student at East Carolina University; Miss LaBelle attends Western Carolina University.

Created by legislation introduced by former state Rep. Tom B. Rabon Jr., the program is under the auspices of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, and costs about \$4,000 a season.

Once passengers are welcomed aboard, they can join the tour guide in the passenger lounge.

She is armed with helpful information from local chambers of commerce about the ferry's destinations—Southport-Oak Island and Pleasure Island. Guides also are equipped with information outlines and text prepared by the staffs of the Brunswick Town and Fort Fisher state historic sites.

Each guide is ready to answer—or to find the answer to—most any kind of question about the area, from

directions to a local tourist attraction to how Bald Head Island got its name.

"I didn't know the answer to that," said Miss LaBelle on her fifth day on the job. "But I did go find out. There are several stories about it."

She still isn't sure of the answer to another question—the location of the mouth of the Cape Fear River.

But there's one area of questions she's eager to answer.

"If I could tell people about anything, I would like to tell them about the nuclear power plant. I've worked there and I know about it," she said.

"But," added Miss LaBelle, "most people don't ask."

The summer has already provided an education for her, as well as hundreds of passengers.

"After 14 years of living here I didn't know about The Rocks, I didn't know about Price's Creek Light, or where the intake canal was for CP&L," she said, noting that when a person lives in an area they tend to take it for granted. "A lot of this is new to me; I've learned a lot."

Along with answering questions, the guides provide information on things to see and do in the area, particularly those of a cultural, historical or recreational nature.

During the 30-minute crossing, the guides point out spots of interest along the river. Miss LaBelle says

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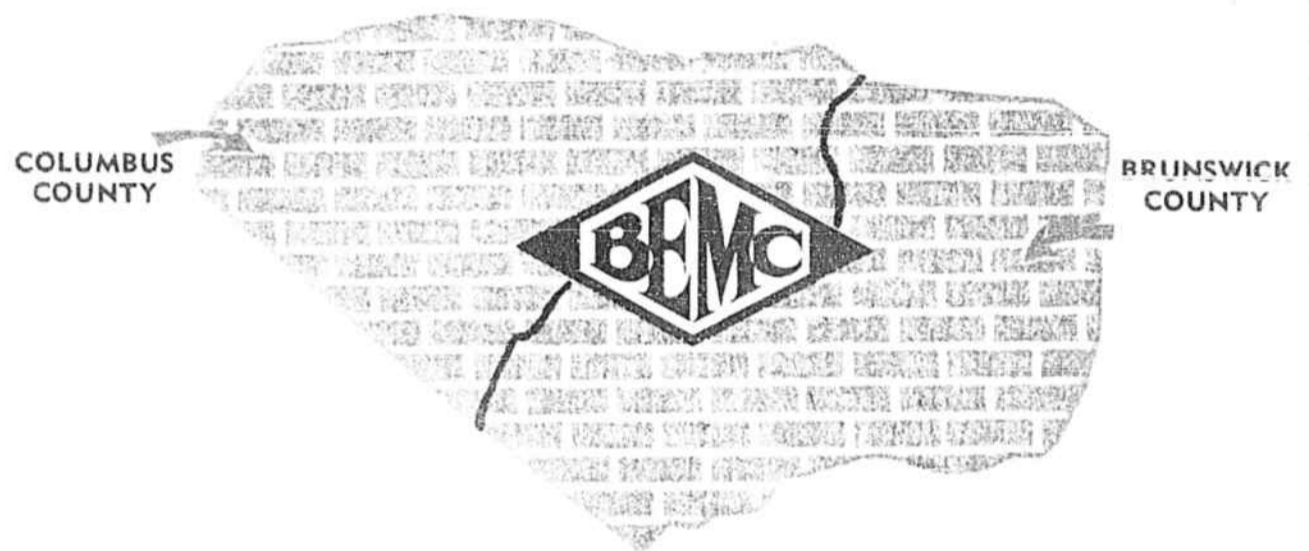


TOUR GUIDE Ronda LaBelle distributes helpful information about the area to Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry

passengers Mary Tie of South Bend, Indiana, and Greg Kebe of Greensburg, Pa.

STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER

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