



# The NEW BERN MIRROR

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Constructive criticism, someone has said, is the kind we dish out to others, while destructive criticism is the kind that is dished out to us.

It's true that most mortals, including the editor of The Mirror, react rather poorly when a fault-finding finger is pointed in their direction. Hence, if some of our friends resent today's Looking Glass—with or without good reason—we won't be overly surprised.

Since this is no ordinary New Year's Day as far as New Bern is concerned, but rather the first day of our 250th anniversary year, we are disturbed over the fact that it is passing into history virtually unnoticed.

It worries us to think that countless tourists are motoring through our town on this first day of January without the remotest idea that New Bern is now at a noteworthy milestone in its long existence. Many of these tourists will never pass this way again, and it goes without saying that they won't be around six months from now when we stage an indoor pageant at the New Bern High school auditorium.

Let's admit in all fairness that a lot of these tourists from New England, New York, Pennsylvania and way points wouldn't stop here anyhow. The fact remains that some of them would, if signs had been erected at entrances to our town proclaiming our 250th anniversary year.

Aside from the possibility of billboards, which might have been regarded as too expensive, it wouldn't have required much of a financial outlay to see to it that every restaurant menu here had attached to it a card or label indicating that New Bern, as of this year, is 250 years old. Similar information should be displayed in hotel rooms and at motels in the area.

In fact, visible at every service station should be the announcement that this is our 250th year. It might not persuade more than a minority of tourists to stop and visit for a spell, but we can hardly afford to give even one tourist the brush off.

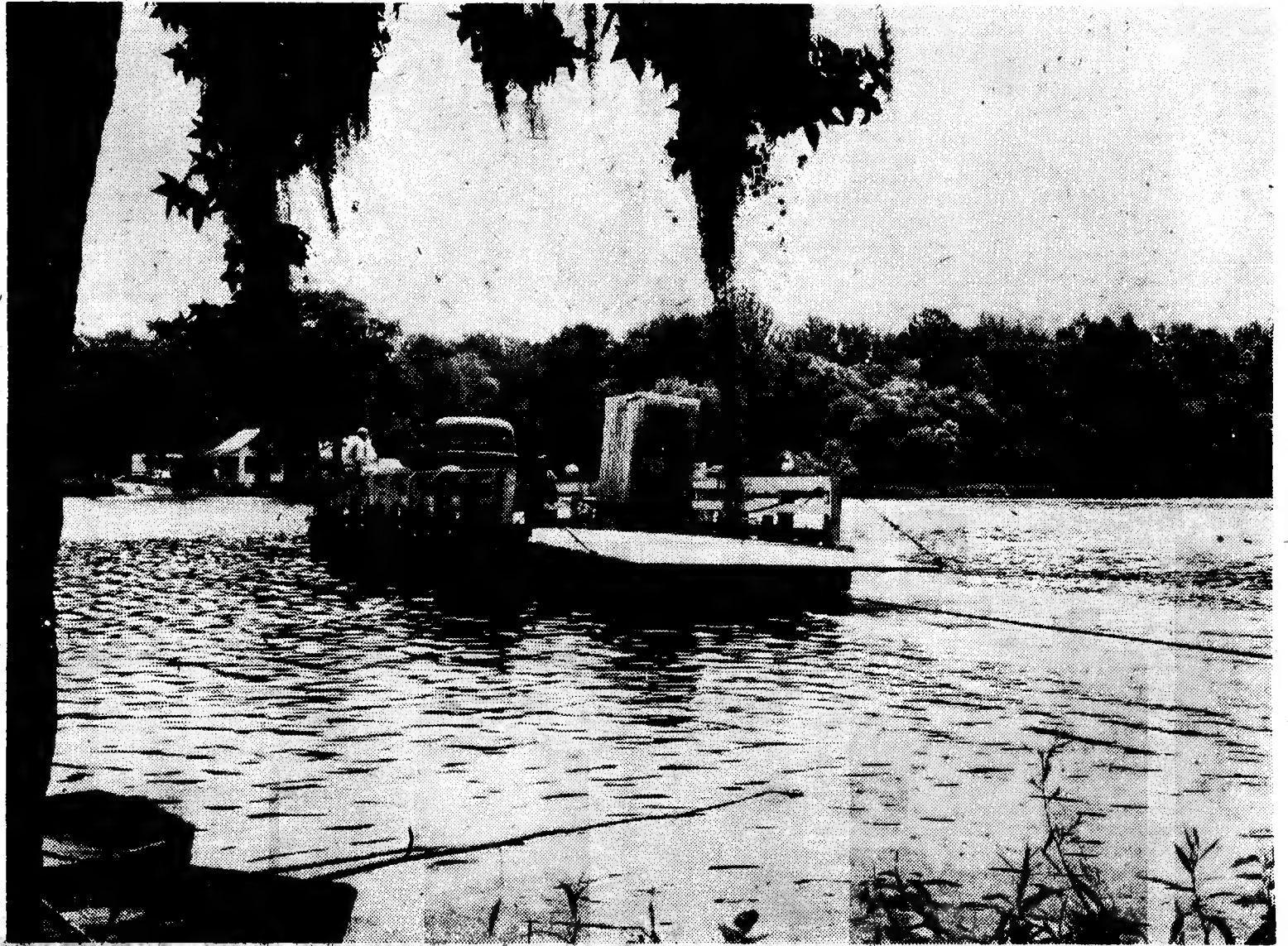
For those who did see fit to stop, there is plenty to see without waiting for June to roll around. Tryon Palace is undeniably impressive as a tourist attraction, and such historic landmarks as Christ Church, the First Presbyterian Church, the Masonic theater and the unique appeal of the Fireman's Museum are available to the visitor without further effort on our part.

It was a pity that New Bern didn't make long range plans for our 250th anniversary. And by long range, we mean plans that could have originated at least five years ago. With all due respects, it is lamentably apparent that too little is being done too late.

We can't help but regret the decision made by those in charge to hold the anniversary pageant indoors. It has been said that an outdoor pageant would have been too expensive, but our last historical pageant was held out-of-doors and properly so.

Those who contend that an open-air pageant must necessarily be ultra-expensive seem to have forgotten the delightful Wizard of Oz production presented by students of New Bern High school several years ago in Kafer park. It didn't cost a great deal, but it was tremendously effective.

Can't you visualize the impressiveness that a pageant staged in the New Bern High school auditorium would have had? Some will say that there's always the danger of bad weather. This we can't deny. However, the possibility of bad weather hasn't prevented the presentation of other outdoor pageants  
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ITS DAYS ARE NUMBERED—Approved plans for a bridge across Neuse river at this point sounded the death knell for Streets ferry. Progress and convenience will be served by a span linking the Vanceboro and Jasper areas, but it heralds the passing of a unique and picturesque sight.—Photo by Billy Benners.

## We Are All Doing It Today— Cramming Black-Eyed Peas

Not everyone in New Bern had turkey on the table for Thanksgiving and Christmas, but there'll be few if any citizens who won't partake of black-eyed peas with hog meat of one sort or another on this New Year's Day.

Rich folks and poor folks alike just wouldn't feel right if they failed to yield to one of our traditional superstitions. Besides black-eyed peas make a mighty nice serving of vittles, even if you don't subscribe to the ancient adage that it's bad luck not to eat a bate of the things on the first day of the year.

Admittedly, there's nothing very glamorous about a black-eyed pea. You can't dress it up fancy, like most other vegetables. In fact, you can't even disguise it, unless dousing it with ketchup as some of us do, can be called a camouflage.

But, if you ask us, it deserves the distinction accorded it on New Year's Day. Maybe we would have a better country, or at least less ulcers if we ate more black-eyed peas during the rest of the year, and steered clear of items that are more exotic but less digestible.

Here in New Bern and throughout the rest of America, we associate New Year's not only with black-eyed peas but with gay parties that come to a noisy climax at the stroke of midnight. Some of us forego this sort of thing to attend church services.

All of us, whether we write them down in black and white or only record them mentally, make the usual New Year's resolutions. In so doing, we act in good faith but rather suspect that they will be broken before many days have pass-

ed. Supporting this dim view of our capacity for correcting our failings is our knowledge of what has happened in the past. We recall, with a twinge of conscience, that in all the previous years since outgrowing childhood we have made similar if not completely identical resolutions, but to no avail.

Gifts are exchanged on New Year's Day in many European countries. It's easy to understand why the idea never has caught on here. Most New Bernians are still suffering from the financial shock

of gift-giving at Christmas, and would hate to dig down for more presents, even if they weren't flat broke.

Augustus Caesar is credited with starting the idea of New Year gifts way back in 47 BC. He is said to have told the Romans that he dreamed one night of seeing himself receiving gifts from the Senate and the people on January 1.

Everybody went all out in an effort to buy the most lavish gift possible, hoping to thereby get some special favor from the emperor. It was the same sort of in-

fluence peddling known today in political circles. That rather crafty gentleman, Claudius, managed to curb the practice eventually by limiting the cost of presents.


Much later along in the pages of history, Henry III brought the custom into vogue in England. Elizabeth I outdid Henry when it came to collecting swag, and is said to have coaxed enough gifts from Englanders to replenish her wardrobe for a full year.

In China it's considered bad luck to be wearing old shoes when one steps down upon the ground on New Year's Day. As a result, even the poorest Chinaman sees to it that he gets a new pair of shoes, even if it means going hungry.

In Portugal, no citizen would think of paying a bill on New Year's Day. To do so, he feels, means that he will be paying out money for the rest of the year. Here in America we can't visualize a situation where we won't be paying out money, but it is doubtful that we get around to settling many debts on New Year's Day either.

In Scotland, they have a superstition all their own. The Scots are firmly convinced that a family will have a year of bad luck, if the first person to set foot in the house on New Year's Day is a woman, a gravedigger, a person who walks with his toes turned in, or a man with red or blonde hair.

To guard against such a thing happening, they appoint a tall dark man as the "first-footer." On New Year's Day he enters each home in silence, places a bundle of fagots on the fire, then wishes the family  
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