

Through
THE
Looking
Glass

The NEW BERN MIRROR

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New Bern, in the Gay Nineties, may not have been as gay as old timers fondly recall, but juice to make one jubilant was no problem. With 15 saloons operating, a stalwart citizen could quench his thirst quite conveniently and add one or two for the road.

Even those gents who found themselves confronted with a tongue as dry as dust in the wee small hours had no need to worry about a curfew. As a matter of fact, J. W. Harrell, who was the proprietor of Our House at 26 Middle street, stressed in his advertising that his establishment was open night to provide a sufficiency of wines, liquors, beers, ales, etc.

Just what that "etc." consisted of we're not quite sure, and Mr. Harrell is no longer around to enlighten us. Anyhow, we gather that a imbibor who couldn't find a type of interior decoration to suit his fancy was just about impossible to please, and hardly worth the trouble.

Thomas Bowden had his inviting oasis of 52 Middle street, and he too advertised wines, liquors, ales and beer in every logical media, including New Bern's City Directory. As Bowden put it, he carried a "full line of bottled goods."

E. W. Bryan had a nice location at the corner of Crave and South Front streets, and assured the public that the "finest goods are kept in stock and every effort made to please the trade." There is no reason to doubt, at this late date, that he did in truth bring pleasure to his customers.

John D. Dinkins was likewise a dealer for all popular alcoholic concoctions, but he emphasized in his advertising that "pure North Carolina whiskey is a specialty." Incidentally, his place of business was at 54 and 56 Middle street.

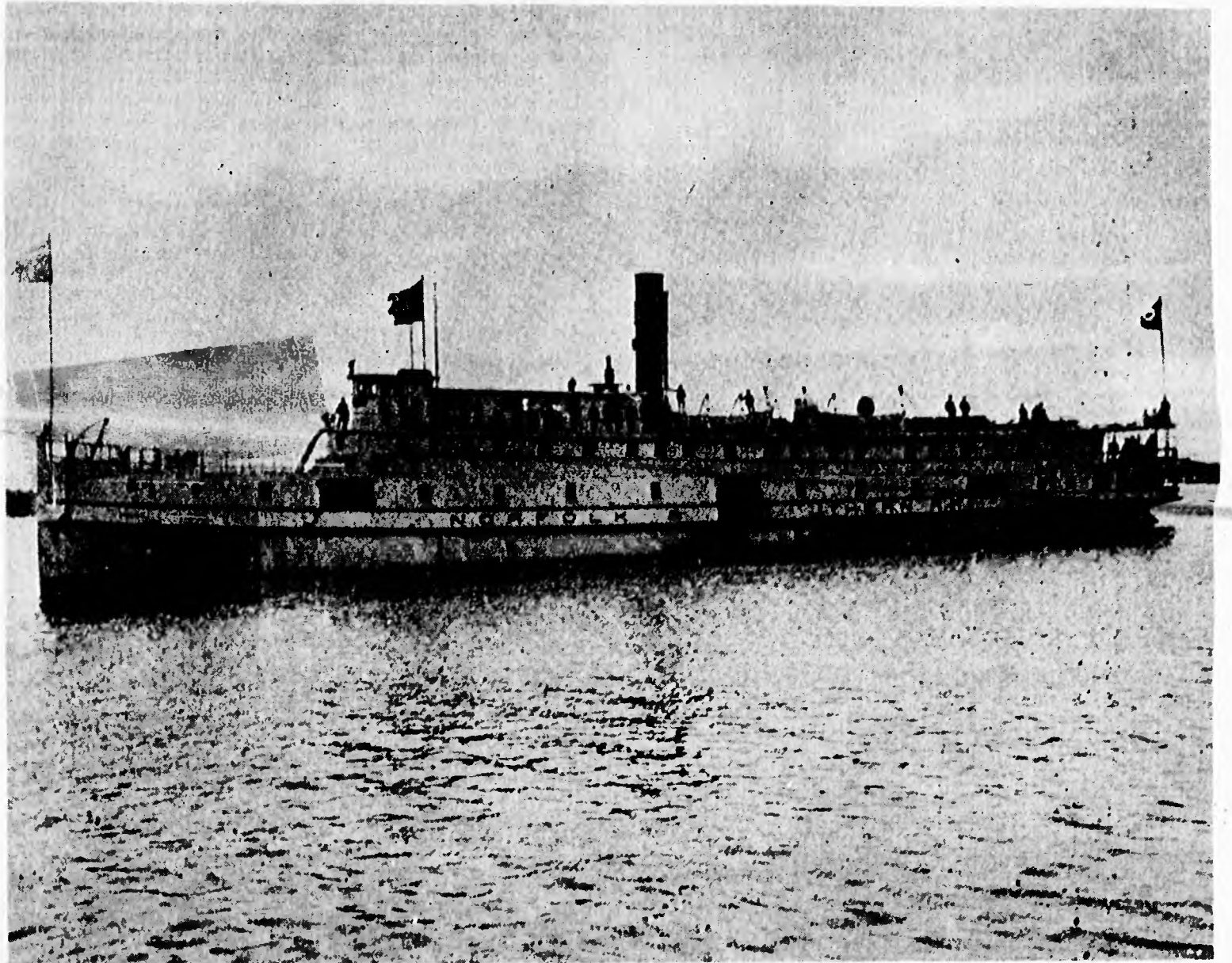
An enterprising man, he didn't restrict himself to selling joy juices. He also served notice that he paid the highest prices for beeswax, and hides (green or dry). In that connection, he announced far and wide that he was "always on the lookout for coon, fox and deer hides, and all other kinds of skin."

J. S. Garrett's Saloon, at 38 Middle street, always kept "the very best goods in stock" and gave "prompt and polite attention to all." Obviously, lower Middle street was something of a drinker's paradise and what puzzles us is why more of the town's dapper dandies didn't stagger off the market dock and drown in the midst of their invigorated meanderings.

J. F. Taylor had his welcome mat out at 18 and 22 Middle street, while a gentleman we know only as "Jimmie" kept the citizenry in a mellow glow at 75 Middle. Taylor claimed the largest wholesale and retail house in the city, and in addition to potent spirits carried a full line of groceries, boat chandlery, oil and rubber goods.

For the sake of accurate history, it should be noted that Middle street didn't have an exclusive claim on all of the more frequented spots. For

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ONCE UPON A TIME—You're well along in years if you recall the Steamer Neuse, owned and operated by the Norfolk Southern Railroad. It proudly sailed inland waters of the southeastern coast with passengers and freight, when the sight of large vessels was not uncommon on New Bern's two easy flowing rivers. McNally tugs, pulling huge barges heavily loaded with lumber destined for Baltimore and Philadelphia left local docks

regularly. There were red sails in the sunset too, as Carteret's fishermen came from Down East to dispose of their catch at New Bern's Market Dock. However, all the traffic on our streams wasn't of a business nature. Pleasure had its place too, with moonlight sails, Sunday school excursions, and just plain meandering in a skiff or canoe.

—Photo from Albert D. Brooks Collection.

