

Mutiny And Murder—

# Strange Case Of Henry Scott

By EUGENE FALLON

... And talked to him of bloody men  
Whose deeds tradition saves;  
Of horrid stabs in place for-  
lorn  
And murder, done in caves"  
—From "The Dream of Eugene Aram" by Thomas Hood.

The time was this very century, the place was the high seas only miles off Southport. A schooner wallowed about in circles, her decks slippery with the blood of five innocent men. Mutiny and murder raged almost within sight of the Brunswick coast.

The terrible doings on the four-masted Harry A. Berwind, out of Camden, New Jersey, more recently out of Cuba and Mobile, Alabama, and headed for Philadelphia, became known to the world on the early morning of October 9, 1906, when she was hailed in the darkness by officers aboard the Blanche H. King.

No answer forthcoming, the master of the Blanche King ordered that his command be "idled close to the mystery ship to await sunrise." With the coming of light the master and mate of the King received their first shock: The helpless vessel was a sister ship, under ownership of the same Camdentite!

A boarding party went aboard the motionless Berwind. For some reason—call it a sixth sense if you will—the boarders climbed onto the strangely becalmed vessel armed to the teeth. A wise precaution as it turned out.

Blood was everywhere topside the Berwind. A Negro lay dead on deck. Shackled in chains, the boarders found another Negro, a huge fellow, who greeted them with cries of joy. Going below, pistols at the ready, the visitors came upon still two more Negroes, stretched out in their bunks in what appeared to be total exhaustion.

Captain John William Taylor nudged one of the sleepers with his boot. The man's eyes opened and he leaped to his feet. In his belt, Captain Taylor saw an ugly, black-handled pistol.

Snatching away the weapon, Taylor shot a question.  
"Where's the ship's officers?"  
"Dead and thrown overboard,"

said the man. "Murdered by the man tied in chains on the deck."

The two Negroes identified themselves as Robert Sawyer and Arthur Adams. They had been hired at Philadelphia, they claimed, almost a year earlier.

"That Henry Scott," said Sawyer, "he that went mad and took to killing, he was taken on at Mobile. It was a bad day the Captain ever signed him aboard!"

The nervous pair related a tale which tightened the mouths of the captain, mate and engineer of the Blanche King. They said they had been awakened during the night by the sound of pistol shots. Creeping up to deck, they claimed to have arrived just in time to see Scott shoot the mate, one John T. Hall, and throw the body overboard. There was no sign of any of the other white crew members, they swore, but they immediately suspected the others to be dead.

"We slipped on something we figured must be blood," they told the visitors.

Missing was Captain E. R. Rumill, Engineer C. L. Smith, 2nd Engineer John S. Coakley (also a Negro), and the cook, John Falde; like the others, a white man.

Sawyer and Adams claimed they later witnessed two additional murders: those of the cook and the second engineer, Coakley.

Scott, they said, had disappeared below, shot Falde, and coming back on deck toting the small body of the cook as if it had been a child, tossed the corpse overboard with a laugh.

It was at this time, claimed the pair, that "we decided we must overpower Scott or else go to the sharks ourselves." Just then Coakley came up from some hiding place or other, and the pair whispered their intentions to him. He agreed. Taking Scott unaware the trio got him down after a furious struggle, and secured him with chains taken from the ship's brig. Removing their prisoner's revolver, the trio thought the day saved.

But the wily Scott was not yet through. Sawyer resumed his dreadful tale:

"Scott begged us to release one of his arms, claiming circulation had been cut off, and also asked for a drink of water."

One arm of the prisoner was freed, and Coakley went below

for a cup of water. As he was reaching the tin dipper to the

prisoner, Scott suddenly whipped out a second pistol from an inner pair of trousers he was wearing and shot his benefactor dead.

Forcing the survivors to free him completely, he allowed the stark corpse of Coakley to remain where it fell, a mute testimonial to madness and murder.

Adams, a thin pale-complexioned Negro who called New Bedford, Mass., home, took up the terrible narrative:

"I was crazy with fear. The engines had cut off and the wind rose. Clouds covered the moon. Scott sneaked around and lighted a ship's lantern. He stood over Coakley's body laughing. He made us come close. The rays from the lantern reflected on the opened eyes of the dead man (Coakley). It was like hell must be. I decided to die fighting."

The two survivors then set upon Scott and managed to overpower him anew. They then retired to their bunks to await dawn. That was their story.

Like fair men everywhere, the officers of the Blanche King desired to hear the other side of the story. As matters stood they only knew the frightful score: Five men missing and presumed dead, and three survivors aboard the death ship.

Scott dropped a bombshell in their laps!

"Adams and Sawyer are murderers!" he told the startled mariners. "Why am I tied up like an animal then, and those two sleeping like kings in their bunks? I tried to help Mate Hall when they set upon him. They turned on me after throwing the mate into the sea. I think they would have killed me right then, except they had no sense to operate a vessel at sea. They knew I could do it. And so I live to tell the truth!"

There was but one course open to Taylor. He had Adams and Sawyer put in chains also, before sailing the ill-fated Berwind into Southport.

All three survivors were locked away—still in chains—in the Quarantine Station. Here they remained for a full year. During their long imprisonment, U. S.

Marshalls journeyed more than once downriver from Wilmington to interrogate the trio and try to separate truth from falsehood. All three stuck grimly to their original stories.

Meanwhile, up at Wilmington, U. S. Commissioner W. Pinner, conducted a preliminary hearing for the trio, all of whom were ordered held without privilege of bond, for mutiny and murder on the high seas.

The prisoners went on trial in the U. S. District Court at Wilmington. Proceedings were held in the ancient brownstone post office building, with Federal Judge Thomas R. Farnell of Raleigh sitting on the bench.

History does not record why each prisoner was able to secure fine legal defense counsel. It is doubtful they possessed any money. But the fact remains that they did, presumably appointed by court.

William J. Bellamy represented Scott, while George L. Peschau was counsel for Adams and Sawyer. U. S. District Attorney Harry Skinner got in the first blow by announcing he would try Scott and the other defendants separately. Skinner let it be known that he would use Scott as a material witness against the two others.

The trial got underway on October 9, 1906, exactly one year from the discovery of the crimes.

Scott, on the stand, damned his companions with his given testimony. A jury believed him apparently, for it took them but 48 hours of deliberation to return a verdict of guilty. Scott did not manage to absolve himself. All three were sentenced to be hanged, and this in spite of the almost incredible fact that the jury had asked for mercy for Scott!

The huge Scott, a native of Baltimore, was to be executed before the other defendants, who were led away to the Wilmington jail, there to await the dread summons.

The case took a sensational turn, just three days before the burly Scott was to swing. To a Negro minister, the Rev. Robert Bennett, and in the presence of G. W. Borneman, a justice of peace, Scott confessed that he, and he alone, had turned the decks of the Berwind into an abattoir. The story told by Saw-

## Speak Of History



**GREETING**—Governor Sanford is shown talking with a "Gentleman of Brunswick" on his visit to Shallotte Tuesday. Brunswick Town guide R. V. Asbury was on hand to greet the governor, and reminded him that Brunswick Town was once the home of Royal Governors Dobbs and Tryon. Education has come a long way in North Carolina since the slate pencils found by the archaeologist in the ruins of Brunswick were used by the children of that historic town.

yer and Adams, admitted Scott, was substantially true.

The only reason for the blood-letting given by Scott was that he had "had trouble with Captain Rumill prior to sailing from Mobile." Scott also claimed that the captain and all the other officers of the Berwind "had conspired to have him arrested upon the ship's arrival at Philadel-

## Waterfront



This week we talked to a fellow who has just returned from a week's vacation on Bald Head Island and the only complaint he had is that the place is becoming too mechanized.

The vacationer was Capt. Jimmie Loughlin of the Cape Fear Pilots Association, who had spent an idyllic week as guest of Caretaker Reese Swan on the nearby semi-tropical island. The mechanization to which he objected were automobiles which operate up and down the strand, particularly on weekends.

"They ferry them across the little inlet up near Fort Fisher," he explained, when we expressed surprise that there are automobiles on the island. "Last weekend there were six of them. It keeps a man busy reeling in his line and moving about to stay out of the path of the cars on the beach." Capt. Loughlin said that he understands that Corn-cake Inlet now is completely closed, and that only the one small inlet separates the island from the tip of the mainland.

He says that there is a great migration of fishermen to the island on the weekend. "It actually gets too crowded for good surf casting on the point of Bald Head," he declared. "Some of the fishermen who know the condi-

tions stay in their boats and fish just offshore from the island. Some of them use their boats to get to the lump, then do their casting from there."

Capt. Loughlin, a Wilmington native with relatives in Southport, says that his love for life on Bald Head Island is no newly acquired taste. "I used to row down river from Wilmington when I was a boy and a buddy and I would spend two or three weeks each summer over at the island. I thought it was the best place in the world—and I still do."

"If I had enough money to own the island I'd never sell it," he continued, nostalgically. "I wouldn't let anybody take a car over there, but I'd let anybody who wanted to go over there to camp out or fish."

Capt. Loughlin thinks that Swan has the best job in the world. "Imagine being paid to stay over there all the time," he sighed enviously. "Reese loves it, too, so Frank Sherrill couldn't get a better man for the job."

There are new rumors regarding possible development of the island. Some say it will be a gigantic real estate project; others think it will be an exclusive residential development. These appear to be the best place in the world—and I still do."

## What Are We Going To Get For The Bond Money?

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Following is a complete breakdown on the 10 issues to be voted on Nov. 7 in the state wide bond referendum. Each issue with the amount of money going to each is listed. It has been noted that no additional taxes will be necessary to pay for the bonds if passed.

1. Capital Area Buildings	\$ 2,858,000
Department of Administration	
State Surplus Property Building	\$ 58,000
New State Office Building	2,800,000
2. State Training Schools	\$ 1,110,000
Stonewall Jackson Manual Training and Industrial School	
Completion of Academic and Vocational School	373,000
State Home and Industrial School For Girls	
Cottage for 25 Girls	95,000

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U. S. D. A. GRADE "A"

**FRYERS** lb. **23c**

"TIDELAND" PURE PORK

**SAUSAGE** 1-LB. ROLL **29c**

"FROSTY MORN" SLICED

**Bologna** lb. **39c**

RED DELECIOUS

**Apples** 2--LBS. **19c**

U. S. No. 1 WHITE

**Potatoes** 25-Lb. Bag **49c**

"FROSTY ACRES"

FROZEN **LIMA BEANS** 1 1/2-Lb. Bag **45c**

FROZEN **GREEN PEAS** 1 1/2-Lb. Bag **35c**

"Red Dart" Seasoned **LIMA BEANS** 303 SIZE CANS **8 FOR \$1.00**

FRESH FLORIDA **GRAPEFRUIT** 3 for **19c**

LOCALLY GROWN **SWEET POTATOES** 2-LBS. **29c**

RED CALIFORNIA **GRAPES** 2 lb. **29c**

**CELERY** FRESH LARGE STALK **15c**

FRESH GREEN **PEPPERS** lb. **23c**

"JIFFY POP"

**POPCORN** 29c  
IN CONTAINER READY FOR POPPING ALL SEASONING ADDED MAKES A GALLON

"DEL MONTE"

**CATSUP** 14-Oz. Bottle **5 FOR \$1.00**

46-Oz. Cans **Grapefruit-Pineapple Juice 4 for \$1.00**

**PEACHES** HALVES or SLICED **5 303 CANS \$1.00**

FRESH LOCAL **Collards** 2 LBS. **25c**

YOUNG TENDER **Mustard Greens** 2 LBS. **25c**



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**PAN ROLLS** Pkg. of 12 **10c**

**COCONUT PIES** REGULAR 49¢ VALUE **39c**

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