

Camp Church Celebrates 225 Years Of Worship By The Shallotte River

BY SUSAN USHER

Even before Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury's first visit in 1791, men of the cloth had stopped to preach on the banks of the "Charlotte" or Shallotte River where Camp United Methodist Church now stands.

A Methodist meeting house was in existence at the site as early as 1787, served by the Rev. Daniel Combs.

This coming weekend members and friends of the church will celebrate more than 225 years of worship and Christian life with an event they're calling "Camp Meeting '91." A variety of church members, including Lena Mintz, Virginia Winfree, Al Milliken, Alton Milliken, Wilton Harrelson, Frances Stone, Sue Johnson and others have been involved in preparations for the weekend.

The name pays tribute to the locale's heritage as a site for lively camp meetings in earlier years, when residents for many miles around would camp by the river to hear traveling evangelists.

This weekend's celebration isn't homing in on a particular period in the church's history, says the Rev. George D. Speake, pastor.

Instead, church members are drawing from a rich, 200-year heritage—in dress, food preparation and a range of displays and activities.

The 26th Regiment of the

Confederate Army, a living history unit based in Wilmington, will bivouac among the woods on the church grounds, cooking their own foods and generally re-enacting a military encampment of the 1860s.

Speake, one of a number of churchmen growing a beard for the event, hasn't quite decided whether to come as a 19th century sailor or as one of his ancestors, Francis Speake, commissioned by Commander-in-Chief George Washington as an ensign in the U.S. Navy. He and others are planning to wear period costumes for the celebration.

"We're not trying to tie it to any particular period," said Speake. "We want to address all different aspects of the church and community, of who we are and what we've done. We're trying to pull in local history."

For local history buff Bobby Williamson, that's the only way to do it. "You can't really talk about one—the church or town of Shallotte—without talking about the other," he said recently. And one can't talk about either without talking also about the Shallotte River—the heart of the community and the centerpiece of its early commerce and transportation.

Williamson, one of the exhibitors at Camp Meeting '91, became interested in the town's history some time back, particularly as it relates to the river.

He has interviewed many "old

timers," recording their recollections of earlier days in the town and the role of the river in industry and culture.

Two years ago, in his spare time, Williamson began building his own traditional "work boat," a half-scale version of a New Haven sharpie, which he expects to have on display at the church along with one or more models of boats that once plied local waters.

Drawing from childhood observation of family members and area boatbuilders at work and studying, the boat has begun to take shape. "It may be another two years before I'm finished," he said, comparing the outer shell with that of a roughed-in house waiting to be finished.

Some church families plan to camp at the church as well Friday night, Oct. 4, when the evening program includes a chicken bog dinner and storytelling by local historians such as Alton Milliken and Pauline Tripp. While mullet cook on sticks over an open fire, Andrew's Chapel UMC will provide a "songing."

Saturday will open with breakfast served outdoors for all the campers and for church members who have made advance meal reservations.

Games and activities for adults and children begin at 7:30 a.m. and continue until noon, with fishing, horseshoe pitching and croquet among the events planned.

At 10 a.m. the camp meeting be-

gins, with preaching every hour.

Displays include a video by Brunswick Electric Membership Corp., a video from Ducks Unlimited, live animals and a display from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday from the N.C. Aquarium Society; chair caning and rug braiding, Mary Russ; net making, Darryl Moffett; pine needle crafts, Janice Taylor; quilting, Eleanor Hoff and Edith Pigott; crazy quilting; sailing and boats, Bobby Williamson; weaving display and demonstration, B.J. Ryan; pottery demonstration and display, Beverly Haley; and candlemaking, with Sandy Norris showing hand-dipped and modern poured candles.

A Sunday School picnic is planned from noon to 1 p.m., followed by an afternoon filled with more preaching, displays and interpretive exhibits, storytelling, singing, contests and family games.

These will include three-legged and relay races, pebble toss, round hunt, tug of war, egg toss, marbles, potato bowling and a pie-eating contest.

The day closes with a pig picking with "old fashioned" foods.

Evening worship service begins at 8 p.m., with Cedar Grove Baptist Church providing music outdoors, followed by a bonfire and singing afterwards.

On Sunday, an informal "revival" style worship service begins at 10 a.m., followed by a covered d. h. meal on the grounds.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

SHALLOTTE NATIVE Bobby Williamson, who began crafting this traditional work boat two years ago, will share information he's gathered on local maritime history at Camp Meeting '91 this weekend.

Program Viewers Can Question Sullivan On Drug Prevention

An teleconference on drug prevention strategies that airs Thursday, Oct. 10, at Brunswick Community College from 3:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. will give the public a chance to ask a top government leader questions on the subject.

Hosted by BCC's Student Government Association the free program is intended for students, parents and educators. It will be pre-

sented in the teaching auditorium in the ALS building at BCC's main campus.

Audience members at the teleconference will hear brief comments from Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., head of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, on Strategies to Prevent Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by Youth. He will then take questions and com-

ments called in by viewers, including those at BCC.

Since his appoint by President George Bush in 1989, Sullivan has used his position to clearly voice his concern about alcohol, tobacco and other drug usage by young people. He has expressed outrage at those who promote such products, especially among disadvantaged citizens.

BEMC Sets Annual Meeting Oct. 12

Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. will focus on "The Difference One Can Make" at its 1991 annual meeting Saturday, Oct. 12, at Smith's Warehouse on the 701 bypass in Whiteville.

Registration begins at 8 a.m., with an auction planned at 8:30 a.m. and entertainment from 9 a.m. to

10:30 a.m.

A fair featuring various health checks will be available during the morning and booths will offer crafts and baked goods.

During the business meeting, which starts at 10:30 a.m., members will elect four members of the board of directors, two each from Brunswick and Columbus counties.

The incumbents have been nominated for re-election, with additional nominations possible from the floor of the annual meeting.

Seats available are those held by Hubert K. Brittain, district 7, the Winnabow-Bolivia area; Bryan R. Smith, district 9, the Sunset Beach, Calabash, Longwood and Thomas-

boro areas; Bobby Jordan, district 10, Evergreen, Oakdale and Western Prong communities; and Beasley Strickland, district 11, Cerro Gordo and Labor City.

Reports will be heard from Frederick A. Tedder, president; David J. Batten, general manager; and others. Drawings will be held for a variety of prizes.

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