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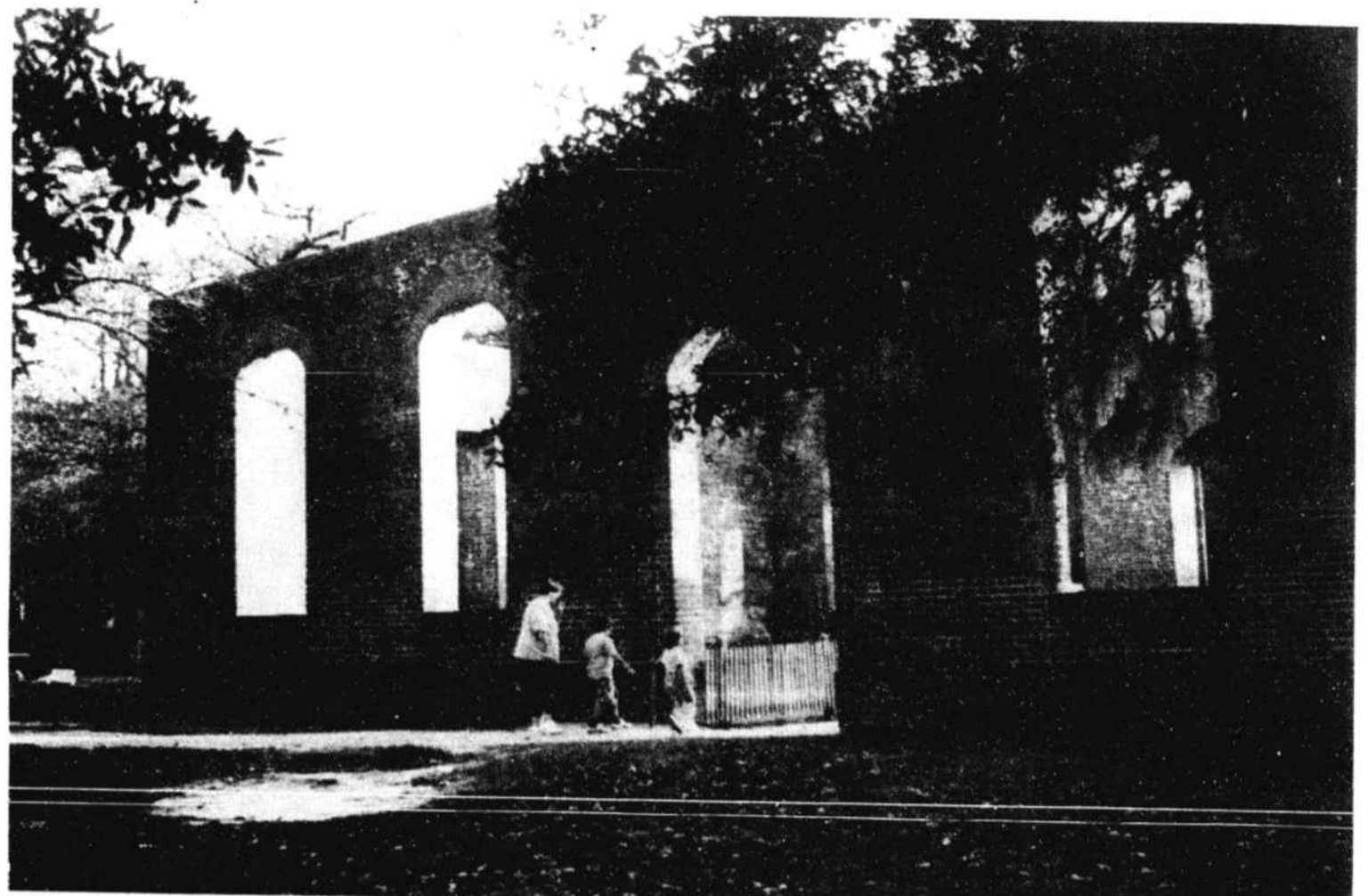
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SUNLIGHT FILTERS through tall, arched windows, enticing visitors to explore the ruins of old St. Philip's Anglican Church at Brunswick Town State Historic Site. STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Catch A Glimpse Of Colonial Glory Days Of Brunswick Town

Two hundred and sixty-six years ago, it was known as a leading port in colonial North Carolina and some of the state's most prominent leaders were among its residents.

It was occupied by the Spanish in 1748; the scene of Stamp Act resistance and an attack by the Spanish in 1766; the home of two royal governors.

At the time of the Civil War, Fort Anderson was built on its ruins.

Today, it's a popular tourist attraction known to visitors as Brunswick Town State Historic Site. A visitors' center with exhibits and a slide show; picnicking grounds and self-guided tour trails offer the curious a glimpse of an earlier time. To step through the ruins of old St. Philip's Church and to walk what was once a bustling main street is to step across the threshold into North Carolina history.

Maurice Moore, a businessman and most likely the county's first developer, is credited with starting

Brunswick. He subdivided the property and offered the first lots for sale in 1726. The town prospered and quickly became the state's leading port for export of naval supplies such as tar and pitch, and lumber to Europe and the West Indies.

It maintained that lofty position as the state's leading seaport for 50 years.

At the same time, it became an active political center. Brunswick served as the county seat of what was then New Hanover County until 1739, when the seat was moved to Wilmington.

In 1764, when Brunswick County was chartered, Brunswick Town became the scene for meetings of the North Carolina Colonial Assembly.

War first came to Brunswick County in 1749, when the town was attacked by Spanish privateers who held it for four days before an explosion aboard a Spanish ship killed most of the captors and allowed residents to reclaim much of their goods that had been stolen.

Declining in importance and population, the town was destroyed in 1776 under British torches.

In 1842, the remains of the town were sold to the owner of Orton Plantation for \$4.25.

Partial restoration came in 1862 with the construction of Fort Anderson, a Confederate garrison.

Troops stationed there were to help protect the Cape Fear River and Wilmington. Under heavy bombardment near the close of the war, Fort Anderson fell, as troops retreated toward the city. Not long after, Fort Fisher, the "Gibraltar" of America, fell to Union forces.

Now owned by the State of North Carolina, Brunswick Town is open to the public at no charge. Summer hours (April 1 through Oct. 31) are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Accessible from either N.C. 87 South or N.C. 211 South, Brunswick Town is located on N.C. 133 between Southport and Wilmington.

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