

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Early Prison Release Statistics Indicate Prison Cap Must Go

It shouldn't have taken the death of a sports star's father to draw mass attention to North Carolina's ailing criminal justice system. But it has.

One of the young men charged in the murder of James Jordan—18-year-old Daniel Andre Green—had been freed from jail two months earlier, after having served only 30 percent of a six-year sentence for assaulting someone with an ax.

Here in Brunswick County, young William Earl Hill—scheduled to be tried this month in the death of Ronald Everett Evans—had been free at the time of that killing last October for six months. Hill had served only 50 days of a three-year sentence for common law robbery.

It does nothing to jeopardize these two young defendants' presumption of innocence for citizens to question why in the world they were on the street and even in a position to be charged in these crimes. But the answer isn't very satisfying.

According to figures compiled by two Charlotte Observer reporters with N.C. Department of Correction statistics, criminals in prison for manslaughter in 1992 served an average of 2.3 years on an average sentence of 22.3 years—30 months for taking another's life.

In 1982, those convicted of breaking and entering served an average of 41 percent of their sentences; by 1992, the percentage dropped to 20.

The average time served for larceny, forgery and drug dealing is less than a year in prison.

For taking indecent liberties with a child, the average time served is 1.6 years. Perhaps just as shocking is the fact that the average sentence for that crime was only 5.4 years.

In 1992, the state paroled 13,472 felons, including 88 murderers, 37 rapists and 171 people convicted of violent assaults that resulted in injuries to others.

The state's prison population cap imposed by the N.C. General Assembly in 1987 is largely to blame for all this revolving-door justice. The legislators did that not out of any particular affinity for bad guys, but because it faced a takeover of its penal system by the federal government. Inmates were filing suit against the state because of prison overcrowding. And they were winning.

Let 'em have it! you say. But when the feds take over and make things nice and comfy for the cons, the state still has to pay the bill—no doubt a much heftier tab than it would have run up on its own.

Statistics like these, however, demonstrate that in the interest of justice and public safety, it is time to drop the cap, face the challengers and work for vindication through the courts.

And, if that isn't difficult enough, to turn around the violent times in which we live.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NAFTA Would Keep Industry From Coming To Brunswick

To the editor:
 The lead article in the Aug. 12 edition, just received here, by Eric Carlson, "Study Targets Eight Best Industries for Brunswick County," together with the disclaimer of "education skills criticized" was not altogether encouraging. Yet it even may become a far-worsening dilemma for the American labor force and those of Brunswick County.

The county's "location, climate, lifestyle and wage scale," as quoted, are truly positive and shall remain and probably increase as such. But the quote that "too many people (are) on unemployment and social services, and that employers cannot get them to work" is a tragic negative. It has been fostered upon a largely increasing body of poor folks, to their actual detriment, by 30 to 40 years of socialistic liberalism while forgetting and disallowing the intense work ethic that built this country for 200 years.

Having made those observations, we suggest to Tom Monks of the Brunswick County Economic Development Commission, and the ensuing Harper Study, that they recognize the real villain, not fully reported by the major media, the villain North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). If passed by the Congress, NAFTA will preclude any industry from locating in Brunswick County when they can easily otherwise employ labor at 58 cents an hour in Mexico as a minimum wage.

Please ask those in the county who shall be willing to work for 58 cents per hour when your article has

already stated that "employers cannot get them to work" at the 750 percent higher U.S. minimum wage (and now our esteemed Robert Reisch is suggesting a 25-cent increase—utter folly).

So many blue-ribbon companies have already closed plants in the U.S. and have relocated to Mexico, hiring replacement Mexican workers, with the loss of some 600,000 U.S. workers' jobs thus far. Those are the larger companies who can afford the move to relocate—General Electric, AT&T, General Motors, etc. Yet NAFTA will allow, with tax credits, to favorably cross the border easily as well for much smaller companies.

Industry attracted to Brunswick County? It shall only be a longing and lost dream unless we all demand the defeat of the NAFTA treaty in Congress. The citizens of this once great country may awaken too late to save us.

Jack G. Fontaine
 Wells, Maine
 (More Letters, Following Page)

Write Us

The Beacon welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must include the writer's address and telephone number. Under no circumstances will unsigned or anonymous letters be printed. Letters must be legible. We reserve the right to edit libelous comments and to shorten letters. Address letters to The Brunswick Beacon, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N.C. 28459.

Home, Sweet Home Gone, But Not Forgotten

A Presbyterian church? In Shallotte, before the turn of the century?

I never knew it existed until my grandmother, Minnie Holden Clemmons, casually mentioned Sweet Home in the course of a conversation.

Grandmother was reared in the Shallotte area, the daughter of Eudorus Holden, a farmer and tradesman. She was a Baptist, brought up in the fellowship of Shallotte First Church. She used to attend Sunday School on the grounds of Camp Methodist Church; that was where many of her friends, such as the Brooks and Mintz families, went to church, and one of the few Sunday Schools offered.

I had thought Shallotte's first and only congregation of Presbyterians was founded in the 1960s, in the former Powell Funeral Home parlor, relocating several times before settling into its new Main Street facility.

However, the local Presbyterian heritage actually dates back to October 1896, according to Wilming-

Susan Usher



ton Presbytery records and contemporary news articles.

Grandmother was the first to tell me this, but not the only one. A short while later, Lucille Blake of Leland dropped by with a copy of an old newspaper clipping about Sweet Home, excited at her recent discovery. She has brought more data as her research continues.

Marie Rourk Harrison knew something about Sweet Home also, referring me to her cousin, Harriett Marlow Moore of Charlotte and Ocean Isle Beach. And at Camp United Methodist Church one recent Sunday I asked one of its most respected members, Frederick Mintz

Sr., about Sweet Home.

Sweet Home organized on Saturday night, Oct. 31, 1896, in a ceremony held at the Alliance Hall in Shallotte, where the congregation held its early worship services. The Commissioners from Wilmington Presbytery were the Rev. B.E. Wallace (who preached), the Rev. John Wakefield, and laymen Jack Johnson and John S. Henry. Dr. John A. McNeill and John H. Mintz were elected as elders of Sweet Home, while Peter Rourk and Robert E. Lewis were elected deacons. The four were ordained and installed on Sunday, Nov. 1, 1896. About 15 members were admitted at the same time, mainly by letter.

John H. Mintz was Frederick Mintz's grandfather. John's sister was Mary, wife of Peter Rourk, if I've got all these people right.

John was apparently thrown out (the formal wording is "dismissed from the fellowship") of the Baptist church because of his intemperance. According to Mr. Mintz, his grandfather apparently liked his liquor a

tad too much for the taste of the teetotaling Baptists.

That didn't stop him from wanting to worship, so like many before and since, Mintz decided to start another congregation. He found a denomination that would tolerate his occasional indulgence.

So Sweet Home Presbyterian Church was organized, and for some years it prospered.

A November 1896 news article by correspondent "J.H.M." noted that Mr. Leonard's public school had closed the previous Friday, and that he began a pay school on Monday. It also noted: "Mr. Peter Rourk is teaching the free school at Sweet Home."

The same issue reported that "Mr. Wakefield preached twice on Sunday to large and respectable congregations. His sermons are very plain and convincing."

In a Dec. 24, 1896, article the Shallotte correspondent wrote, "The Presbyterian church under the Rev. John Wakefield is prospering. Mr. John Wakefield comes from Virginia, where he graduated in July last. He is tall and about 32 years of age. The congregation contemplated erecting a new church building where the Alliance hall is in which they now meet. They have purchased a new organ, which is expected from Wilmington by the first boat, in time for next Sunday it is hoped."

The church eventually did build, on property provided by Mintz on a small rise overlooking the creek that runs just west of the county pumping station near Shallotte Middle School on Village Road. That would put it near where the former Shallotte High School teacherage once stood.

But over the years the church, as Mr. Mintz recalled, "simply ran its course." Sometime before 1943, Sweet Home was no more. Mintz recollected that the church had been unused for some time when it was sold for use by a black congregation and moved to a site on Bridges Road.

That is supported by Presbytery records of the report of the Commission on Sweet Home Church, presented at a meeting held May 24, 1943, in Wilmington. Commission members along with "Mr. Irwin Rourk, a son of the Sweet Home Church," had visited Shallotte, secured the "rather incomplete" church session records, and visited members and former members.

"So far as we could discover, there are only seven living members," the Commission reported. When contacted by letter, only one replied, saying the party had already joined another church on restatement.

Gone but not quite forgotten.

A trace of Sweet Home lives on in the Charlotte home of Mary Rourk's granddaughter, Harriett M. Moore. She still has a lamp or lantern that was her grandmother's and was said to have come from the church in Shallotte. It is brass and was designed with a wick, glass chimney and a harp that probably held a glass globe that reflected light downward. The lamp could have been hung overhead to ease the reading of hymnbooks and Bibles.



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Off To The Vineyard—Working-Class Style

Airborne cameras pan huge oceanfront estates—beautiful rambling cedar-shingled, multi-dormered "cottages" with guest houses and gate houses, swimming pools and stables.

There's Carly Simon's place. Over there, Spike Lee's, William Styron's, Art Buchwald's. In the distance is Hyannis Port. Down there is Chappaquiddick.

It's Martha's Vineyard, the president's vacation spot where, if you believe what the TV reporters tell you, people are so accustomed to the rich and famous that Jackie O can do her own shopping at the A&P without fear of being accosted by paparazzi or autograph-hounds.

What a difference between those scenes and my brief trip to The Vineyard—working-class style.

It was two summers ago at this time, and I was a pinch-hitter traveling companion of Robin, my sister's roommate.

Robin had scheduled a car trip northeast to scout "gradual schools" at which to continue her computer studies. My sister Brenda had bought a plane ticket from Asheville to Providence, where she was to meet Robin for a weekend at Martha's Vineyard. All plans had been made far in advance of the late-August departure date.

In the meantime, Brenda was offered an all-expenses-paid corporate junket to Monte Carlo. We were talking dream-come-true. First class. French Riviera. Absolutely free.

I got the non-cancellable plane ticket north.

It was to be a quick trip. I landed in Providence after 10 on Friday

Lynn Carlson



night and met Robin at the airport. She drove us to Fall River, Mass. I was tired and there was no time to explore this hometown of Lizzie Borden, about whom I once read a fascinating book.

Next morning early, we motored to New Bedford where we had to run, bags in hand, to get in line behind a noisy, sweating mass of humanity to board a ferry to The Vineyard. The boat held 500 bodies, a hundred bikes and a thousand bags.

Taking the car over hadn't been an option. Vehicles went on a different ferry, tickets for which were sold out for months. We would soon discover that the lack of wheels was not altogether a hindrance.

Our nickel tour of The Vineyard was under way. On the ferry ride, we saw hundreds, maybe thousands, of vintage wooden sailboats and motor yachts of all ages and design, all impeccably maintained. We passed a spectacular house I recognized from the opening scene of the movie "The World According to Garp."

Our teeming mass of day-trippers and overnighters poured off the ferry and onto dozens of Massachusetts school buses to take us to our destinations on island. Ours was

Vineyard Haven, which the teenage driver informed us was "kind of a tourist trap," and not as classy as Edgartown, where the celebs hung out and the restaurants were really good.

We checked into a turn-of-the-century hotel and were assigned a tiny, hot room on the third floor. We walked around town all afternoon, rented a couple of bikes and rode them to the nearest public beach several miles away.

Later, we sat on the porch at the inn and watched the fishermen and day sailors come back into the marina across the street. We had dinner—lobster quesadillas at a Mexican restaurant down the street, the only place we could find that didn't have a waiting line. It was a great meal nonetheless.

It was back to the inn to rock on the porch and watch traffic back up into gridlock. We hadn't tuned into any television or radio, but every now and again would overhear some other tourists saying something about a storm. We didn't pay much

attention; we were leaving first thing next morning.

We were out of there 18 hours after we arrived and back in New Bedford for a leisurely Sunday in historic New England. We went through the Whaling Museum and stopped into the Seamen's Bethel described in Herman Melville's work.

I was back on a plane in Providence by early evening, arriving back in Asheville just in time to hear about Hurricane Bob, which was bearing down on Cape Hatteras and expected to whack New England next.

We hadn't seen any celebrities, and the outing hadn't exactly been luxurious. We'd escaped a hurricane we hadn't even known about.

But it was a great reminder that sometimes, when you need it, a quick trip on the cheap is better than no vacation at all.

We probably had at least as much fun as the First Family. And it didn't cost the taxpayers a dime.

Worth Repeating...

■ Noise proves nothing. Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she has laid an asteroid.

—Mark Twain

■ The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.

—Robert Maynard Hutchins

■ Nearly all men die of their remedies, and not of their illnesses.

—Moliere