

July remembers many North Carolina historical events

BY ALAN HODGE
Special to The Herald

July in North Carolina has always been more than watermelons and firecrackers. Take a look at what the seventh month of the year has brought to the Tar Heel state over the last few hundred years.

July 1, 1898 marked the day that North Carolinian and U.S. Army officer Lt. William Shipp fell during the Battle of San Juan Hill—the same fight that brought fame to Theodore Roosevelt and his "Rough Riders." Shipp was not only a war hero, he had also been the first Southerner to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy following the Civil War.

In other July 1st happenings in our state's history, famed radio DJ "Wolfman Jack" (Robert Weston Smith) passed away in 1995 at his home in the town of Belvidere in Perquimann's County. "Wolfman" had been in the radio business since the 1950s and had achieved fame for his work in the film "American Graffiti."

July 3, 1929 saw the dedication of a statue to North Carolina soldiers on Seminary Ridge at the Gettysburg battlefield. Considered by many as the finest monument at Gettysburg, the sculpture depicts four Tar Heel Confederates as they strive forward in battle. The work was done by Gutzon Borglum, the same sculptor who carved the faces of the U.S. Presidents on Mount Rushmore.

Another July 3rd bit of North Carolina history was made in 1966 when Atlanta Braves pitcher Tony Cloninger of Iron Station in Lincoln County hit two grand slam home runs in a game

against the San Francisco Giants. This feat has yet to be repeated by any other National League player.

The first statewide celebration of July 4th as a holiday took place in 1783. The proclamation was put forth by Gov. Andrew Martin and was all but ignored by the populace. One group that did celebrate with singings, sermons, and bells were the Moravians.

Still feeling the sting of Appomattox, a group of former Confederates met at the Concord rail station on July 4, 1876 and threw rocks at passengers who were boarding a train bound for the U.S. centennial celebration in Philadelphia.

In a sports milestone, July 5, 1957 witnessed Wilmington resident Althea Gibson become the first African American to win the singles tennis championship at Wimbledon, England.

July 8, saw another first for African American athletes take place when on that date in 1933, two semipro baseball teams played in Charlotte. The teams involved included a white mill village crew from the Highland Park neighborhood and the "Charlotte Black Yankees."

The British landed at Ocracoke and Plymouth on the North Carolina coast on July 11, 1813 during the War of 1812. After staying a short while, the Brits decided they had seen all the area had to offer and left.

In a rock history moment on July 11, 1967 that would later leave many Charlotteans red-faced, a crowd at the old Charlotte Coliseum booed a guitarist name Jimi Hendrix off the stage as they waited for the pop idol Monkees. Just one year later, Hendrix was back at the same

place, headlining to an adoring throng.

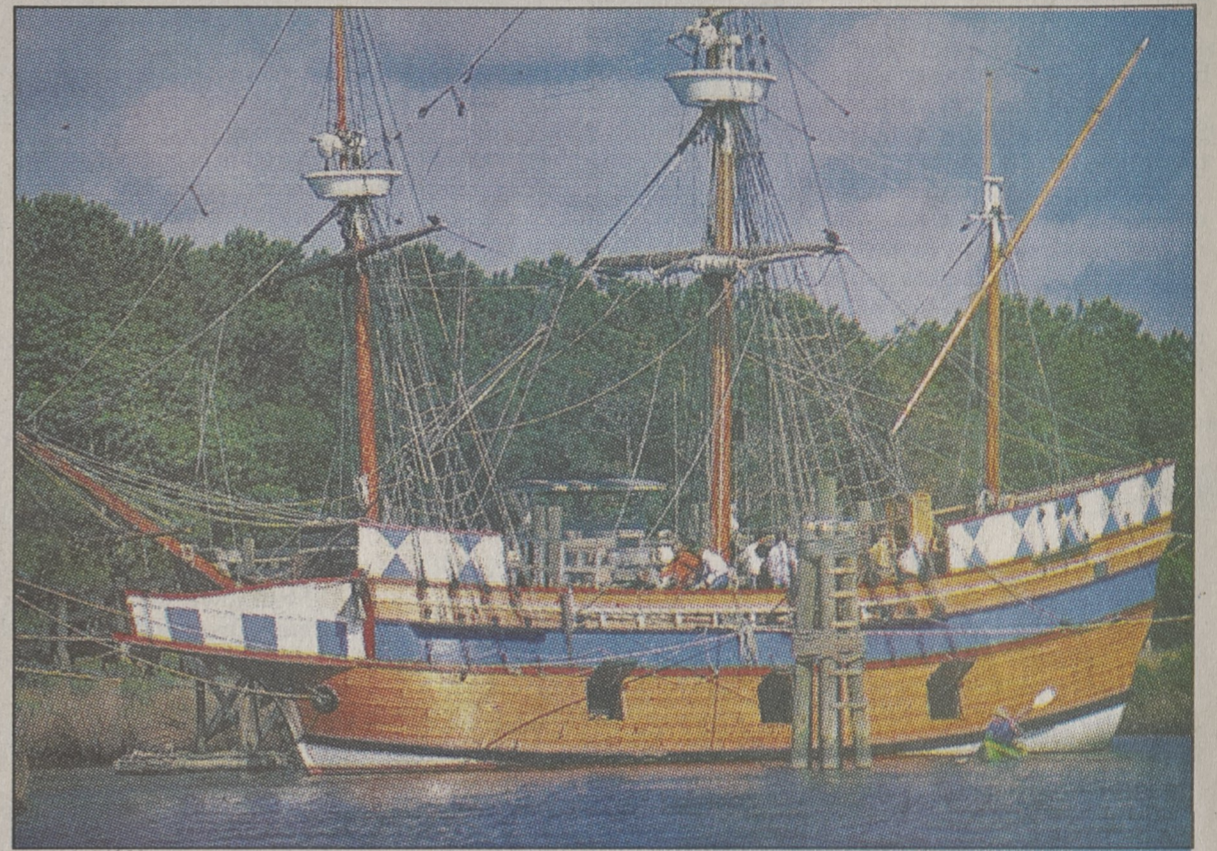
July 12, 1833 witnessed a rather gruesome day in North Carolina history when convicted murderer Frankie Silver became the first woman in the state to be executed by hanging. The crime that sent Silver to the gallows involved chopping up her husband and throwing the chunks into the fireplace.

On July 13, 1986 another sports milestone occurred when football and baseball great Bo Jackson hit his first homer over the fence at what was then Crockett Park in Charlotte. In 1990, Jackson went on to become the first athlete in history to play in both the football Pro Bowl and the baseball All-Star game.

Television made its first appearance in North Carolina on July 15, 1949 when WBTV went on the air. Prior to that WBT had become the state's first radio station back in 1922.

On July 16, 1857, U.S. Army Major Thomas Jonathan Jackson married Anna Morrison at her parent's house "Cottage Home" near Lowesville. Morrison's father, Robert was the first president of Davidson College. Jackson would later go on to achieve some notoriety as "Stonewall" Jackson, Major General C.S.A. Cottage Home was bulldozed several years ago to make way for an incinerator plant.

One of America's most beloved poets and writers, Carl Sandburg, died at his home in Flat Rock on July 22, 1967. Sandburg had christened the farm "Connemara" after the area in Ireland. His wife also raised prize goats there.



Elizabeth II, Manteo, North Carolina
Photo courtesy of NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development

Today, the farm is a popular tourist stop and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Swiveling hips were the order of the day on July 22, 1975 when none other than Elvis paid a visit to Asheville. During his stay, the "King" gained even more publicity by taking a pistol and shooting out the screen of his motel TV.

A strange twist of fate came to the Old North State on July 23, 1959 when UNC football coach Jim Tatum passed away. Tatum's death led to the deci-

sion by Greenville, S.C. quarterback Jesse Jackson to attend college in Illinois and later at North Carolina A&T. Instead of becoming UNC's first black player, Jackson would gain fame for his involvement in politics.

The first settlement by Englishmen in the New World hit the Carolina shore at Roanoke Island on July 27, 1585. Led by Richard Grenville, the explorers left 108 men behind to build a fort and set up a colony. Their encampment was named Fort Raleigh, after Sir Walter Raleigh. Interestingly, Raleigh

never actually came to what would eventually become North Carolina.

At the time one of the richest men in the world, tobacco giant R.J. Reynolds passed away on July 29, 1918 in Winston-Salem. Reynolds was 68 years old at the time of his death from pancreatic cancer.

More information and fascinating facts about what took place on a particular date in our state's past, can be found in "On This Day in North Carolina" by John F. Blair Publisher.

LARGEST PRE-OWNED INVENTORY IN GASTON COUNTY!

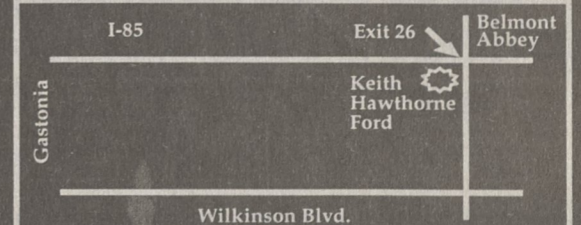
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