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Horry County Historical Society

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Stories in Stone—First United Methodist Church & Graveyard

The Horry County Historical Society’s second Stories in Stone fundraiser was held on April 12-13, 2013 in partnership with the Peter Horry Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of Confederate Veterans Litchfield Camp 132 and sponsored by Goldfinch Funeral Home and South Atlantic Monument Company. HCHS co-chairpersons Janice Gardner Cutts and Shirley Long Johnson worked tirelessly coordinating the event.

In Conway, the tours included the First United Methodist Church’s 1898 sanctuary and graveyard; and, in Bucksville the Hebron Methodist Church and graveyard and the Buck Family Cemetery which are all listed in the National Register of Historic Places. At each venue, docents were dressed in period costumes, sharing the lives of some of the people who have impacted the history of our beloved Horry County.

At the First United Methodist Church, the tour began in The Hut with June Thompson Brown and Mary Ellen Rogers Scarborough. Sims Hart Gasque directed everyone to the adjoining graveyard.

Other participants here were H. T. Abbott III, J. Benjamin Burroughs, B. Pratt Gasque Jr., Emma Lou Thomp¬son Johnson, Robert B. Scarborough III and Johnny Sessions.

Hebron participants were Jamie Dusenbury Black, Charles and Buck Cutts, Sam Dusenbury, Jamie and Lisa Hutchins Graham, Lois Causey Harrelson, Genie Cutts Peterson and Ronnie Roach.
In 1828 the first organized congregation of Methodists in Conway proper grew out of a small group of women who began meeting at Mrs. Jane Norman’s boarding house located between Third and Fourth Avenues on Main Street. That is how Norman Alley got its name. Her garden was across what is now Norman Alley where the Trestle Restaurant is today. Mrs. Norman suggested that the group start a building fund and placed a bowl at her dining room’s entrance to encourage donations.

In 1842 Mary Hillen donated the property for a new sanctuary, where this structure stands at the corner of Fifth and Main. It is recorded that she gave the property “for and in consideration of her love to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

By 1845 the first church building on this property was completed. It was a wooden, rectangular structure with three large windows on each side. Steps were on the front facing Main Street. According to the custom of the day, men entered through the left door and sat on the left, and women entered through the right and sat on the right. In 1898 the original wooden building was dismantled, and the lumber was sold to build a house on Fourth Avenue.

In October 1898, the second sanctuary, the building where we are assembled today, was dedicated. An observer at the dedication wrote that it was “a thing of beauty.” At the time, membership numbered 113 and the building was valued at $3,500. The building is architecturally significant for its Gothic-influenced styling. The Hut Bible Class was formed in 1917 and began meeting in this building in 1938. As a result, this building is now called The Hut or sometimes “the little church.”

Between 1900 and 1910 Conway grew dramatically and so did the Methodist Church membership. By 1910, just 12 years after the second sanctuary was built, a
third sanctuary was constructed. It is the Mission Revival stucco structure standing behind this building and cost $13,000 when the membership was 208. The building now serves as the church Fellowship Hall.

In 1938 an education wing was added west of the 1910 sanctuary and was expanded in 1952. By 1958 church membership reached 1,200. A new congregation split off, calling itself Trinity United Methodist Church.

In 1961 the present Georgian-style sanctuary was built on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Laurel Street at a cost of $164,000. A Schantz pipe organ was installed in 1973, costing $58,000. The Family Life Center on the corner directly across Laurel Street was consecrated in 1999. Renovations to the present sanctuary and educational area interiors were completed in 2012.

Let’s go outside now and meet one of Conway’s oldest living citizens, the Alligator Oak. This tree was already old when the cemetery was opened in 1845. Its name comes from the pattern in the bark of the most prominent limb branching to the right appearing to be an alligator wrapping around the tree. A young boy visiting Conway was the first to call it the Alligator Oak and has been known by that name ever since.

In the graveyard, a cenotaph has been installed by the Sons of Confederate Veterans in memory of C.S.A. veterans who were buried in the churchyard. They are: William J. Abrams, Samuel Bell, Benjamin G. Collins, William Currie, William E. Hardwick, Issac Lewis, Abijah H. Skipper, Malcolm Wood, Thomas A. Cooper and William Norman McAnge. —Information largely contributed by Mayor Greg Martin, Mary Ann Scarborough and others.

My Papa, B. G. Collins: Emma Lou Thompson Johnson

Hello, I am Emma Collins Thompson. I’m so happy you came today to hear about my father, Benjamin Grier Collins and my mother, Laura Jane Cooper Collins, who are buried right here, along with several other family members. Most people call my father “B. G.,” but I always called him “Papa.”

On October 6, 1845, he was born in Georgetown County and lived to be almost 85 years old. He and Mama had ten children. (I was the fourth one). Papa was a wonderful father, if I do say so myself. He was a charter member of this Conway Methodist Church and always dedicated, faithful and useful to his church in many ways.

B. G. was a large landowner in Horry County, farming much of his land. Papa enjoyed a reputation for astuteness, honesty, and working hard. He expected the best from his employees as well as from his children.

It is amazing that he amounted to anything, because he was orphaned when he was nine years old. His parents, Mary Jane Grier and Robert H. Collins, died of tuberculosis at the age of 36 and 46. At the time, they were living in Georgetown County.

Benjamin, along with his eight brothers and sisters, were taken to live with an uncle who claimed all the children’s inheritance from their father for himself. He said he deserved to have the inheritance for “taking that many young’uns in.” The inheritance was right big because Robert Collins had a very profitable business making cypress and heart pine shingles in the Yauhannah section of Horry County.

Papa left his uncle’s crowded house when he was 13 years of age and took odd jobs wherever he could find them.

When he was 16 years old in 1861, the Civil War broke out. He was among the many area volunteers who joined the Confederate cause. The units had names like, “Horry County Dixie Boys” and “Lake Swamp Volunteers.” He served as a private in the Tenth S.C. Infantry Regiment. Times were hard during the war, and supplies were very limited. Food was scarce for everyone. I remember Papa telling us that most of the time the meals had hardly enough food to say grace over. When the war ended, he walked home all the way from Tennessee.
My Papa was a self-made, religious man with what people called, “good business sense.” Perhaps that was why he found a job rather quickly when he came home from the war. He worked with the Burroughs & Gurganus Company as a wagon driver hauling timber for the mill and working in the Gully Store, a large mercantile store. Papa was making 50 cents a day and became confident in his ability to take on the responsibility of a family. He had an eye on a young lady he met at church named Laura Jane Cooper, the youngest daughter of Timothy A. and Harriett Beaty Cooper. After a short courtship, they married on September 4, 1870, when she was 21 years old.

Mama and Papa lived for a short time in a small wooden house on a dirt road that is now Lakeside Drive. After living a frugal lifestyle and saving $1,000 over the first few years of their marriage, they bought a house of their own. In 1864 they purchased William D. Gurganus’s large farm house which had 100 acres adjoining it. They called it “The Homestead” and that is where I was born. The house stands there today on the corner of Elm Street and Ninth Avenue.

Although this house has a second story, Papa didn’t allow any of his children to sleep upstairs. In the event of a fire, he wanted to be able to get everyone out quickly and safely. The second floor was used for storage, not sleeping. “The Homestead” had a wash house, a smoke house, and, of course, an outhouse, along with a separate kitchen, a barn, a house for the servants and some other storage structures. We had a fireplace in every room for heating and for light if the kerosene in the lamps gave out. The tall windows provided good light and ventilation. The artesian well in the back yard furnished us with a constant supply of the best cool water. Later Papa put a pump on the side porch. I have great memories of living in that house. As a young adult, I taught piano in the parlor.

Mama was a life-long, active member of the Conway Methodist Church and a prominent figure in the community. We spent most of our summer months at our house in Hendersonville, N.C., because summers were so hot in Horry County. Mama was loving and caring and always supportive of Papa in the many ways he served his church and community. We thought living in Conway was wonderful.

After the crops were harvested in the fall, I remember the carnival coming to town. It was about 1912 when the carnival came in conjunction with the county fair and for the first time an airplane came, too. The plane landed and took off from Second Avenue between the jailhouse and the courthouse. It took two men to hold the plane while the pilot cranked the motor and crawled up on a red box to operate the plane. The pilot circled around the area drawing crowds to the carnival located on the courthouse grounds. About the second time around, the plane crashed in the large field behind Papa’s house. Mama was home at the time and got a great big scare! A few students left the Burroughs School, which was just few blocks away, to look at the wrecked airplane. Later they were penalized for leaving the school grounds.

This may have been the same time that William Cody, better known as “Buffalo Bill,” came to Conway accompanied by a troop of Indians and cowboys who performed rope and trick riding acts. “Buffalo Bill” made an impressive appearance dressed in his western cowboy regalia. He made millions as a showman but lost it all to his creditors through mismanagement of his money and died penniless in his sister’s home in 1917. Maybe he should have let my Papa manage all that money.

Mr. F. G. Burroughs, with the help of Mr. Gurganus, ran the Burroughs Company. My Papa’s close attention to business and the knowledge of what to do and when to do it for the advancement of the business made him valuable to the firm. In 1871, Mr. J. H. Hart, a realtor from New York, and B. G. Collins each purchased quarter interest in the business. A year later when Mr. Hart decided to return to New York, Papa bought his fourth of the company, thus becoming an equal owner with Mr. Burroughs. The firm’s name was then changed to Burroughs and Collins Company.

Although different in personality and habits, they were much admired within the community. Both were generous in donating land for community projects, including churches and schools.
The company had naval stores, produced turpentine, operated a sawmill, and, of course, had the mercantile Gully Store. Papa’s company took over an abandoned shipyard located [on the Waccamaw River just above the point where Kingston Lake flows into the river]. In the 1880s, a steamship line which ran from Conway to Georgetown carrying passengers and supplies was purchased. The first boat built at the shipyard was the Driver and many boats were built there for the Burroughs and Collins Company. My favorite one was the last one built called the Michelle C. It was named for my sister, Mitchelle, who was the last person to be buried in this graveyard. She was 89 years old and lived with polio most of her life. Another ship, the Juniper, was purchased from Wilmington.

Papa teamed up with C. P. Quattlebaum, a leading attorney at the time, to start the first bank in Conway. The bank grew under the skillful management of D. A. Spivey who was one of Papa’s sons-in-law.

Shortly afterwards in 1887, the company built the first railroad line to take passengers and supplies from Conway to [Pine Island and eventually to] New Town, now called Myrtle Beach. Papa was ready to sell his stock in the company, [which he sold to two sons of F. G. Burroughs]. He believed it would be too many years, if ever, before that land by the ocean would be more than a big sand pile with lots of mosquitoes. Surely no crops would grow over there.

Papa was a self-taught preacher of Methodism and saw to it that his ten children attended church regularly. Every Sunday morning, he hitched his horse to a buggy with a small Bible tucked in his pocket and went into the county to preach in the many little country churches. He enjoyed contact with the country folks, and they welcomed him as a dedicated lay preacher.

One morning in 1918, Papa attended the chapel exercises at the Burroughs School. With his open Bible in one hand, the students listened as he read the Ten Commandments. Then he said, “See this Bible. It’s God’s word and won’t wear out. I’ll give each of you one like it if you learn the Ten Commandments by heart within the next six weeks.” That afternoon many of the children took their family Bibles, and with parental help, started memorizing. True to his word, after their teachers verified they had completed the challenge, Bibles were presented to them. Perhaps some of those Bibles are still in homes throughout the county. I have Papa’s personal Bible with me today.

Papa donated some property behind our house for a new high school which was built in 1928. He also gave property on the side of our house to the Presbyterian Church for a parsonage. It was never built, and, eventually, the church sold the lot.

Mama was always so proud of Papa. At his death in 1929, she, his children and grandchildren donated land with lots of pine and dogwood trees, wisteria, azaleas and wild flowers for a future city park in Conway in Papa’s memory. In 1941 a memorial service was held there to officially open and name the “Collins Memorial Park.” A beautiful monument was put there in his memory. Some of the things said about Benjamin Grier Collins at this ceremony were:

- a pioneer who devoted his life to the religious and social welfare of his town and county.
- a benefactor to rich and poor, who gave wholeheartedly of his time and talents to the enrichment of his fellow man.
- a staunch Christian gentleman whose lofty ideals were an inspiration to those who knew him.
- truly one of God’s noble men.
- his works are a monument to a life of service.

Families still come from all over Horry County to have picnics, watch the birds and have fun there. The City of Conway now maintains it.

Mama died in 1938 at her summer home in Myrtle Beach at the age of 89. She was buried beside her loving husband in the church graveyard. Their burial plot is right beside Mama’s parents, Timothy A. (1803-1871) and Mary Harriet Beaty Cooper (1807-1884).

I know you have other places to go and stories to hear, so as you leave, I invite you to come by and read the very fitting words on Mama and Papa’s grave stone. “B.G., great in counsel and mighty in doing; Laura, noble woman full of good works.” —Emma Lou Thompson Johnson

Mr. and Mrs. B. G. Collins
in the church today. Following in her mother’s footsteps, Charlotte also solicited donations, this time for a church bell. After it was purchased and installed in 1845, it was she for whom the bell first tolled at her untimely death. Her mother, Jane Norman, took Charlotte and George’s children into her boarding house to raise.

Horry Herald, December 6, 1917

Former Horry Woman Dies in Boston, Mass.

Miss Eliza Jane Congdon, familiarly known to her Horry friends as “Aunt Jennie” formerly of Horry County died at her home in Boston, Mass., on Monday of this week. As it was her request that she be buried at her old home in Conway, the body will leave Boston t-day (Thursday) and if the present plans are carried out she will be interred at the cemetery of the Conway Methodist Church on Saturday of this week by the body of her mother, the late Charlotte Congdon. As stated above it was a request of hers that she be buried by her mother at the [Methodist Church Cemetery] in Conway, and permission was gotten from the Local Board of Health and her wish will be granted.

Aunt Jennie was known to only the older residents of Conway where she once lived. She was the daughter of Mrs. Charlotte Congdon and had one sister, Mrs. Joseph T. Walsh, now living and a brother, George Congdon, who died in Georgetown several years ago. She was raised by her grandmother “Aunt Jane Norman” and lived with her at the old Norman homestead formerly located on Main Street in Conway near where the present Burroughs and Collins Company Store now stands.

She was at one time a school teacher and conducted a private school in Conway. Among her former students now living here being, Dr. H. H. Burroughs, Mrs. Julia Causey, and Mrs. Ella D. Smith. [She] moved to Boston since which time she has been affiliated with the New England Conservatory of Music.

Her many friends here will be pained to learn of her death, but since the end should come, it will be a source of gratification to know that her remains may rest in Conway alongside her loved ones....

J. Samuel Bell: Bobby Scarborough

J. Samuel Bell (1823-1869) was born in Pitt County, N.C. and the son of Lydia Tucker, a Quaker, and Benjamin Bell Jr. In 1844, he married Sarah Adeline Hartsfield who was born on October 17, 1823 in Green County, N.C. and died August 21, 1869 in Horry County, S.C. Their daughter, Georgia Virginia “Jennie” (1846-1925), married Henry Lee Buck (1844-1902) in 1866. Other children were Ella, Iola, Henry Thomas and James Samuel. Samuel and Sarah were both active in the Methodist Church where he served as a steward.
In the 1850 census, Samuel’s occupation was listed as merchant. We also know that he owned 3,580 acres of good, long leaf pine and was a turpentine distiller, owning S&H Bell Co. In fact, a young F.G. Burroughs bought his first turpentine still from "old man Bell."

Capt. Bell’s and Capt. Ervin’s Company of home militia had been ordered to defend Conway from advancing Union Troops in 1865. Lying in wait, Capt. Bell and his troops, seeing an advancing group of soldiers, fired on them. By accident, they had shot and mortally wounded Capt. Bell’s best friend and second in command, Lt. John R. Beaty, in this unfortunate case of friendly fire. Three others were also wounded.

Union troops came later, but found little opposition except two small boys shooting at knotholes in a wooden fence located out on the road from the Musterfield leading to Georgetown. Later that night, Capt. Bell’s wife, Sarah, was terrified when Union Troops broke into their home searching for him. Every nook and cranny of the house was searched, but Capt. Bell was nowhere to be found. For a long time after the incident, saber marks could be seen on the old oaken door of their home.

At a very critical time during the War, Bell also served a term as S. C. State Senator.

Abijah H. Skipper: J. Benjamin Burroughs

Like his father, Abijah Hollingsworth Skipper was born on the east side of the Little Pee Dee River, near old Zion Church in Horry County and a few miles downriver from Galivant’s Ferry.

He was born April 7, 1821. The oldest son of Joel B. and Elizabeth Skipper, Abijah grew up in a household in which politics and law would often be discussed. This environment would help shape Abijah’s life.

His father, Joel B. Skipper, was born about February 18, 1799 and his mother, Elizabeth, was born May 21, 1796. Joel B. Skipper’s first public service was that of Horry District Quorum (Justice of the Peace), a position he held for 24 years prior to being elected to the S.C. State Senate. Politically a “Whig,” Joel B. Skipper served as S.C. State Senator in 1843-1844, 1844-1848, 1848-1852 (preceded by J. T. Sessions and succeeded by R. G. W. Grissette). In 1865 he was elected a delegate to the State Convention to form a new State Constitution “necessary to the change of affairs in the government.” That same year he was elected again to the State Senate for an additional term from 1865-1867 (preceded by Samuel Bell and succeeded by Henry Buck).

The Whig Party was a U.S. political party organized by opponents of President Andrew Jackson. The party’s name was borrowed from the British antimonarchist party. The Whigs favored a program of national development. Henry Clay, a Whig Party leader, brought fiscal conservatives and southern states’ rights proponents together and united them with those who believed in a protective tariff and federally financed internal improvements. Eventually the party began to split, and by 1854 most Southern Whigs had joined the Democratic Party and Northern Whigs had joined the new Republican Party.
Abijah's involvement in politics is first seen when he became a “Manager of Elections for Horry District and Election Polls.” He served in that capacity in 1841, 1843, 1851 and 1859.

Politics was not the only thing on young Abijah's mind. In 1844, he is listed on a “Petition for funds to clear Chinners Swamp to Little Pedee River.” On another document he is listed as requesting “Exclusive right of the navigation of Lake Swamp, proposing Toll Rates.” Both of these documents are interesting in that they show efforts by residents living along the Little Pee Dee River to re-open streams that were formerly navigable. By making these waterways navigable again, it would have greatly increased the value of the surrounding properties by providing those areas with excellent transportation routes for taking produce to markets and for receiving supplies.

Abijah married Sarah Caroline Smith (June 17, 1829 - December 2, 1912) of the Buck Creek area near Little River about 1848. Caroline was the daughter of John Washington Smith and Sarah C. Stanley Smith.

Neither the 1850 nor 1860 Slave Censuses show Abijah as owning any slaves. However, in 1856, Abijah owned 900 acres on/near the Little Pee Dee River between Tredwell Swamp and Chinners Swamp in the vicinity of the old Pee Dee Road, below Galivant's Ferry.

When the War Between the States broke out, Abijah served his native state by joining the 2nd Regiment, First Corps of S.C. State Reserves. During the war years, he also served on several Horry District boards and commissions, including the Soldiers Board of Relief. Afterwards, in 1868, while the county and state were in the midst of carpetbagger rule, or Reconstruction, as the federal authorities called it, he was successful in being elected to the office of sheriff of Horry County. He replaced the carpetbagger John Newton as sheriff and regained control of that important office for local Democrats (and former Confederates) in a very critical time. However, Reconstruction would linger on in the state until the election of former Confederate Gen. Wade Hampton as governor in 1876, and it was under those circumstances that Abijah would have to operate as sheriff.

In those days, the office of “High Sheriff” personified local authority. In addition to maintaining law and order within the entire county, the sheriff was also responsible for maintaining tax records and handling the sale of estates when ordered by the court. The sheriff’s office was located in the county courthouse, and he was in charge of the courthouse and the county jail.

Abijah's terms as sheriff lasted from 1868-1876. During his terms, he dealt with the upheaval that followed the defeat of his home state in the War Between the States. In addition to having to contend with the federal authorities concerning Reconstruction, there were certainly many difficult problems to deal with in regard to the “new order of things.” His successor, Francis Ichabod Sessions, would serve in that capacity from 1877-1884, and would inherit a county free of federal troops and carpetbagger intervention.

This photograph, estimated to date from circa 1890, is believed to be the home of Abijah and Caroline Smith Skipper which stood on the southeast corner of the intersection of Laurel Street and Sixth Avenue in Conway. It is believed that Abijah and Caroline are sitting in the chairs on the sidewalk in front of the steps and that left of the steps is Henry Homer Burroughs, beside him standing on the porch is his wife, Isadora C. Skipper Burroughs, sitting in a chair on the porch is an unidentified man, standing on the porch to the right is Julia Skipper Causey and standing to the right of the steps and behind Caroline is Capt. Coleman S. Causey. The house was purchased by Dr. Henry L. Scarborough. Around 1918 it was demolished to make way for a new house that is currently located there.
At some time, probably around 1865-68, when Abijah was elected to the office of sheriff, he moved to the village of Conwayborough as it was customary in those days for the Sheriff to live near the courthouse. His home was located on the southeast corner of Laurel Street and Sixth Avenue. It was an elevated two-story wood frame structure with shuttered windows and a one-story front porch which spanned the width of the house and was supported by six square columns spanning the width of the porch. The front walk was framed with crepe myrtles and a joggling board was on the front porch.

When his term as sheriff expired in 1876, Abijah turned his attention to the South Carolina House of Representatives. He was elected and served as a member of the 53rd General Assembly of South Carolina from 1878-1880. He was preceded in that office by John Robertson Cooper and succeeded by Jeremiah Smith. In the 1880 Horry County Agricultural Survey, Abijah is listed as living in Conwayborough and owning 2,600 acres (60 tilled and 2,540 woodland) in Horry County.

Abijah and his wife, Sarah Caroline Smith, had four daughters: Julia E., Isadora C., Sallie and Caledonia L. Their daughter, Julia, married riverboat captain Coleman S. Causey and lived just down Laurel Street from Abijah and Caroline. Sallie moved to Florida and never married. Caledonia died young without ever marrying. Isadora “Dora” married Henry Homer Burroughs and lived out her life in Horry County, eventually moving back into town as a widow and passing away at her home on Burroughs Street beside the home of her son, Wade Oscar Burroughs and his wife Theodosia Sweet (Parker) Burroughs. Dora was the only child of Abijah and Caroline to have children, thus all of Abijah’s grandchildren were children of Homer and Dora Burroughs.

Abijah passed away on October 25, 1895, and is buried in the graveyard of First United Methodist Church beside his wife, Caroline, and daughter, Caledonia. Sallie’s gravesite is unknown. Julia and Coleman Causey are buried in the brick mausoleum at Lakeside Cemetery in Conway, S.C. and Dora and Homer Burroughs are buried in the H.H. Burroughs family plot also located at Lakeside Cemetery. — J. Benjamin Burroughs

Benjamin Eson Sessions: Johnny Sessions

From John Amasa May and Joan Reynolds Faunt’s book, South Carolina Secedes, we find the following:

Benjamin Eson Sessions was born at “Savannah Bluff” plantation in Horry District on August 23, 1815, the son of Benjamin Jenkins Sessions [1784-1832] and Lillian Davis Sessions. He attended private schools in Georgetown District and Conwayboro. He was known as "Colonel Ben." He owned many slaves and...his valet, John Moore, always accompanied him to Columbia when the Legislature was in session. Colonel Sessions married Ann Monk Browne [1816-unk] on March 31, 1842. Four children were born to them, two daughters who died in infancy and two sons, James Whiteford [abt. 1846-1875] and Benjamin Jenkins [1849-1914], who was sheriff of Horry County [from 1902-1914]. Benjamin E. Sessions was commissioner of the poor, and was a member of the House of Representatives 1862-65. He was a delegate to the Session Convention from All Saints Parish, Georgetown District, and signer of the Ordinance. During the war, he was in charge of mail service in Horry District. B. E. Sessions was tax collector of Georgetown District 1859-62, and commissioner in equity in 1865. He was clerk of court when he died on January 14, 1873. [Tradition has it that] Sessions was buried in the old churchyard in Conwayboro, just beneath the memorial stained glass window dedicated to him in the Old Methodist Church. He was a faithful church member, steward superintendent of Sunday School for 40 years. Benjamin E. Sessions’ descendants have in their
voice" of the people being heard through this their chosen organ. By this means each State is enabled to act in its "sovereign and independent character." It was this Convention that passed the Act of Secession from the Union in April, 1861, as above stated; and this body, I was informed, so far amended the State Legislature of South Carolina as to appoint members of Council to assist the Governor of this State on account of the great pressure of business arising from the war.

The Reverend Malcolm Vesuvius Wood:
H. T. Abbott III

Rev. Malcolm Vesuvius Wood (1846-1874) was a medical doctor and an itinerant Methodist minister who was born in Greenville, S.C. to The Rev. Landy (1823-1892) and Annie Eliza Snyder (1823-1881) Wood. Landy served the Conway Station from 1877-1880. Malcolm served Conwayborough from 1873-1874. His brother Paul T. served Conway in 1917-18. It is said the Wood family sent five ministers to the S.C. Methodist Conference, all of whom have touched this "old Methodist Church."

Malcolm was believed to have served in the war as a teenager as a private in C.S.A., Company A, 3rd Battalion (Palmetto), S.C. Artillery. He graduated in 1867 from the Medical College of Charleston and married Rebecca Ann "Annie" Varn (1849-1928) from Varnville, S.C. in 1868. They had two children, a son and a daughter who died in infancy.

He was called into the ministry in 1871 and was received on trial in the S. C. Methodist Conference in 1872 being assigned to the Westfield Mission. In 1873, Malcolm was assigned to the Conway-Hebron charge. He was a good preacher and pastor with a heart for missions.

It is said of Wood that, "He possessed a moral magnetism that was almost irresistible. He drew men to him."
One of his exhorters, Benjamin Grier “B.G.” Collins, named a son for him.

His health was not good and fell victim to fevers. On his deathbed, he was attended by his parents, family, and two close friends, Travis Walsh and Evan Norton (who was his Sunday School Superintendent). Walsh assisted him in singing “Nearer My God to Thee.” He crossed over the river to his next assignment.

Before Wood died, he asked to be buried in the ground just behind the pulpit of the first sanctuary at the Methodist church and so it was. His tombstone epitaph reads, “Our pastor, Son of L. and A. E. Wood, age 28, Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

To be continued in the next Independent Republic Quarterly
Stories in Stone—Hebron Methodist Church, Graveyard & Buck Cemetery

The Norton Twins
World War II B-26 Bomber Pilots

By J. Benjamin Burroughs

(“...these young Americans did sacrifice their life, to liberate us.”)

Recently, I received an e-mail from a gentleman by the name of Henk Marinus who lives in the Netherlands. Mr. Marinus was seeking information about James A. Norton Jr. (1920-1943) and his twin brother, Edward R. (1920-1943). They were the sons of Dr. James A. (1876-1950) and Mrs. Edward “Miss Ed” Robertson (1883-1955) Norton of Conway and were considered by many as the “golden boys” of the town. Some long-time residents will recall the Norton twins’ fascination with airplanes. By their graduation from Conway High School, they had each logged over fifty flying hours as student pilots. They even had their own plane and an airstrip in Conway.

After attending Clemson University for two years, the brothers entered the Army Air Corps where they continued their pilot training. On September 6, 1942, they received their wings and commissions as second lieutenants. They were eventually assigned to the 322nd Bombardment Group stationed in Rougham, England where on May 14, 1943 some of that group partook in a bombing mission to destroy a power plant in Holland.

On May 17, 1943, it was the twins’ turn to take part in that mission. Lieutenant Edward R. Norton was the pilot and his brother, James A. Norton, Jr. was his co-pilot aboard their B-26 Marauder bomber. As they approached their target, their plane was hit by German anti-aircraft fire, however, they were able to complete their mission before they turned to return to their home base. Unfortunately, their bomber went down in the North Sea and neither survived. Sixty men from that mission did not return and all of them perished but one who was captured. The body of James Norton eventually washed ashore but Edward’s body was never recovered. Their family and friends were devastated after receiving two separate messages on May 19, 1943 -- “Missing In Action.”

Edward and James were both recipients of a Purple Heart; and, Edward also received the Air Medal for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight.

In Mr. Marinus’ e-mail, he explained to me that he had “adopted” the grave of James A. Norton Jr. who is buried in the Margraten Netherlands American Cemetery and that Edward R. Norton’s name is on the “Missing Wall” at the same cemetery. In his own words, “I adopted the grave because these young Americans did sacrifice their life, to liberate us.”

Mr. Marinus knows what it is like to have his hometown overrun by an invading army. He states, “In 1943 when they were shot down, I was a boy of 10 years old. I was living in the small village Eerde in the county Brabant. Eerde was the dropping-zone of the 501st Regiment from the 101 Airborne Division on Sept. 17, 1944, in the operation Market Garden. Two days after the dropping, our village came in the frontline where vigorous fighting continued for three weeks. We were evacuated under the escort of paratroopers to another village.”

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My Bucksville Connections
By Monica R. Pattangall

I came to Horry County in April 2013 looking for 10 years of my father’s paternal great-grandfather’s life. For seven years, I’ve been researching a biography for Captain William Sewall Nickels. He is one of the “Searsport Sea Captains” in the book by the same name published by the Penobscot Marine Museum in 1960. I had found details on nearly every year of his life except for 1860–1871, the years of the War Between the States and early Reconstruction. He spent fifty-five years at sea, and I couldn’t find eleven of them. It’s not likely I’ll visit the foreign ports he did, but I have been to most of the places he sailed from Nova Scotia to Key West. I even got to Belize a few years ago, but I was still missing those eleven years.

Not only did I find them here on the banks of the Waccamaw, but through the gracious efforts of the Cutts family I was able to walk where he walked, see what he saw and meet the descendants of the people who were his friends, hosts, and associates.

Patsy Buck invited us to picnic with Janice, Ed, and Charles Cutts on her riverfront and afterwards guided us on a tour of her historic home – a home in which my family stayed and were welcomed a century and a half ago. I can’t describe the déjà vu I felt standing by the chimney in her yard. My great-great-grandparents William and Priscilla had stood in that place. So had her sister and his brother and countless Nickels cousins. Their twin daughters had been there as children – one of whom became my great grandmother. Buck Cutts referred me to Robert McAlister at the Georgetown Maritime Museum who showed me the list of owners of Bucksville’s ship Henrietta – and I discovered names of my blood kin who were part of the Henrietta.

Those familiar with the Buck family history know that Bucksville was named for Henry Buck who was born in 1800 at Bucksport, Maine, and removed permanently to the banks of the Waccamaw River by 1830, leaving with their mother in Maine two children, William and Mary Jane. The children moved to Bucksville in the mid 1840s about the time their mother remarried in Maine.

The Buck families of Bucksport were primarily lumbermen, and William was born to the business. He spent his first years at Bucksville working his father’s lumber business there and with the shipbuilders around Searsport, Maine where he had been raised and was now a frequent visitor. Among the primary buyers of Bucksville lumber were Searsport area ship builders Capt. William McGilvery and his brothers, all once Master Mariners. The ships that Capt. William McGilvery and his brothers built near Searsport were commanded by Searsport men, a large number surnamed Nickels.

Captain W.S. Nickels was born June 1836 in Prospect, now Searsport, Maine. He went to sea as an apprentice in 1852 with his uncle, Captain Manley Lancaster. His brother Captain James Nickels was eight years older and earned his master mariner rating that year. When Captain James became first master of the Brig Kentucky 2nd in 1855, William sailed with him. Several news items show Kentucky 2nd in Georgetown after 1855.

In 1859 James took command of the Brig Waccamaw, owned by Henry Buck of Bucksville and built for him in 1855 at Searsport by Capt. William McGilvery. She was registered to Bucksville, S.C. In May of 1860, Capt. Wm. McGilvery’s daughter,
Elizabeth, married Capt. Albert Vinal Nickels, in Searsport. He was the new master of the McGilvery Bark Sarah A. Nickels. Capt. A.V. Nickels' brothers were Searsport Captains—David, Jonathan Clifford, John Frederick, Amos, and E.D.P. Nickels. They were cousins to Captains James and William S. Nickels, therefore, blood kin to me. Fifteen years later, Captain Jonathan built the ship Henrietta at Bucksville and was her first master.

In October of 1860, Capt. Wm. McGilvery's daughter Desiah, who once had been engaged to the late Capt. Amos Nickels, married in Searsport William L. Buck of Bucksville, son of Henry Buck.

Brig Waccamaw, with James Nickels commanding and William Nickels as mate, left New York for Bucksville on November 19, 1860, about seven weeks after William L. and Desiah McGilvery Buck were married in Searsport.

Waccamaw arrived at Georgetown on December 12th. Perhaps this was the voyage which brought the newly wed couple home to Bucksville.

South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20th while Waccamaw was in Bucksville. An unusual transit followed that had Waccamaw sailing on January 4, 1861, directly from Bucksville to Searsport, not a normal merchant route for the little brig. She arrived at Searsport on February 2, 1861. Whatever her passengers and cargo, they were bound for none other than Searsport.

On March 4, 1861, Waccamaw left Searsport directly for Bucksville. After a stormy trek at sea where her deck load was washed overboard, she arrived in Georgetown on March 29th. Her cargo and passengers bound only for Bucksport. Perhaps it was this more dangerous passage that brought William and Desiah Buck home.

While Waccamaw was still at Bucksville, the battle at Ft. Sumter began April 12th and the Union blockade of southern ports began April 19th at Charleston. Fortunately for Waccamaw, she was of South Carolina register and ownership. My great-great-grandfather and his brother, however, were destined to spend indefinite time in Bucksville until there was a plan and opportunity for them to leave safely. Nothing more is written of Waccamaw until she was reported as arrived at St. Thomas on June 7, 1861, under Confederate register and sailing for Searsport on June 8th. At the end of June or early July of 1861, with Captain James Nickels, his brother William and their crew, Waccamaw became the only known vessel to enter the Penobscot River at Searsport flying the Confederate flag.

Waccamaw left Searsport on July 29, 1861, under Union register with Captain William McGilvery as owner and Captain James Nickels still master. Certainly the dicey sail home to Searsport had brought the necessary papers to change her ownership and register, but not her name.

Recently licensed as a Master Mariner, Captain William S. Nickels assumed command of Waccamaw from his brother in January 1862. He married Priscilla Small Austin May 23rd in Addison. In the tradition of many Searsport Captains who sailed with families, they sailed together for Cardenas, Cuba on May 28th. Their twin daughters were born in Addison on September 21, 1863. In January 1864, the Waccamaw left Portland for Matanzas, Mexico with the Captain's wife and twin babies aboard. My great-grandmother and her sister grew up on the sea. Each of them married a Maine master mariner and sailed the world with them and their own children. In February 1865, Captain Nickels became a member of the Masonic Tuscan Lodge #106 F & A M at Addison, and sailed the Waccamaw immediately from Portland for Matanzas.

Waccamaw apparently never returned to her home in Bucksport. She passed the war years on voyages to Cuba, the West Indies and Mexico. It was in Mexico where she met her end on the Campeche Banks on June 6, 1866, Captain W.S. Nickels commanding. News reports were that all passengers and crew were saved and returned home via the U.S. Consul at Vera Cruz.

Bucksville, January 1871 - The Diary of Mary Ann Austin

In 1869 Captain William Nickels assumed command at Searsport of the newly built Brig E.F. Dunbar built by Capt. William McGilvery. Some sources say she was named for her master builder Elisha F. Dunbar, others that she was named for his wife, Elizabeth Freeman Dunbar. The brig was known in shipping news
simply by her initials. In 1875 Elisha would be Master Builder of the ship *Henrietta* at Bucksville. The *E.F. Dunbar* made perhaps two or three successful trips in the West Indies trade that first year.

An obscure document, “The Diary of Mary Ann Austin,” is a transcription housed at the Mayhew Library in Addison. The diary covers January 1871 when 19 year old Mary Ann Austin briefly described each day of a three-week stay in Bucksville, S.C., socializing with the Buck family and their visiting McGilvery kin from Searsport. It also tells of being shipwrecked on January 22, 1871, being run into by a steamer after being towed to sea from Georgetown via North Island.

With the diary as a guide and with newspapers from the time, I recreated the voyage which brought Mary Ann to Bucksville aboard the Brig *E.F. Dunbar*. There were many newspaper accounts of the shipwreck she described and its aftermath. An article in the *Boston Herald* in 1933 celebrated the Nickels twins’ 70th birthday. In it they recalled being shipwrecked as children.

Mary Ann left Maine for Philadelphia on December 9, 1870. Joining her sister Priscilla and her nieces Priscilla and Alice there, she left Philadelphia for Charleston on December 14th aboard Brig *E.F. Dunbar*, brother-in-law Capt. W. S. Nickels commanding. They arrived at Charleston on December 22nd, and on the 31st were towed up river from Georgetown to Bucksville. It tells in her diary that Mary Ann passed three weeks at Bucksville, living aboard the *Waccamaw*, and enjoying the company of Misses Hattie and Mary McGilvery, Desiah Buck’s sisters from Searsport and with Holmes and Fred Buck. She stayed overnight at the homes of William & Desiah Buck and the recently widowed Fannie Buck. She dined at their home with Capt. Cephas and Lucinda Buck Gilbert.

Fannie Buck, Henry Buck, and Albert Springs visited them aboard the *E. F. Dunbar*.

Albert Springs towed them to Georgetown on January 19th. From there they were towed to North Island on the 20th and to sea on the 21st destined for Cardenas. Early in the morning of the 22nd they were run into by a steamer at 31 58 N, 76 08 W. The Brig was sinking when the Schooner *Joseph Segar* of Stockton, Maine, Captain Ellis commanding, rescued passengers and crew and many salvageable parts from Brig *E. F. Dunbar*. He took them to Martha’s Vineyard, then to Boston by February 2nd. In their 70th birthday article, the Nickels twins (by then Priscilla Pattangall and Alice Lancaster) recalled the shipwreck and the kindness of the captain and crew who rescued their dog, a Newfoundland named “Old Mack.” Their dolls and their dolls’ tea set was also retrieved. Mary Ann Austin was home in Addison on February 8th. We don’t know if she ever made her trip to the West Indies or not.
So it was that the Brig *Waccamaw* built for Henry Buck in 1855 by Capt. William McGilvery, and later commanded in turn by Capt. James and Capt. William S. Nickels, was an early predecessor of the Ship *Henrietta* launched in May 1875 at Bucksville and built by their cousin Capt. Jonathan Clifford Nickels and Henry’s son, William L. Buck. Other *Henrietta* owners among the Buck and Nickels families were their wives Desiah McGilvery Buck and Henrietta Thompson Nickels; also Capt. William McGilvery, T. Holmes Buck, Jonathan’s brother, Capt. A. V. Nickels and wife Elizabeth McGilvery Nickels, Desiah’s sister; William Buck’s sisters Mary Buck Sarvis, Alice Buck (not yet married to Albert Springs), and Lucinda Buck Gilbert. Launched later that year, in October 1875, at Addison, was the Bark *Mary E. Russell* built for Captain W. S. Nickels. Among her owners were Capt. William McGilvery and Capt. James Nickels. Capt. Williams commanded her for 20 years.

Monica R. Pattangall is a native of Attleboro, Maine and lives in Lenox, Maine. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, she is now retired after 40+ years in computer systems software. Pattangall is a member of General Society of Mayflower Descendants and National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and a family historian. She and husband, John, have one daughter and two grandchildren.

From the *Horry Dispatch*, August 29, 1861

**The Confederate Loan**

We are informed that B. E. Sessions, Esq., has been appointed Commissioner for this District, to solicit and receive subscriptions to the Confederate Loan. Horry District, unfortunately, has but little cotton to subscribe, but we feel assured, that that little will be subscribed, and be accepted, in the same spirit as was the “widow’s mite.”

Although we may not be able to furnish much of the means necessary to the support of the Government, we have made a noble subscription of brave and hardy men for its defense.

From the *Horry Dispatch*, October 8, 1861

**NOTICE**

Mr. J. N. PIERCE is my authorized attorney and will act as my agent in my absence. SAM’L BELL

In hope some of my debtors will furnish Mr. Pierce with some hogs to make meat for my family in my absence. I want them forthwith.  
Sept. 5  
SAM’L BELL
Norton Twins Continued from Page 11

Mr. Marinus was searching for information about the twins, which I have sent to him. He was especially interested in photographs of the plaque on the wall in the lobby of the General Aviation Terminal (that was dedicated as the “Norton General Aviation Terminal” several years ago) at the Myrtle Beach International Jetport.

Mr. Marinus regularly checks on the grave of James Norton and places flowers there. He has committed himself to caring for the grave for the rest of his life, and according to him, “My grandchildren will take over the care for the grave after my life.”

He continues, “First I did not know that James Norton had a twin brother Edward, who also was in the same plane. For me it is a difference now when I visit the grave because now I know a bit of his family and the place they come from.”

In these times, when it seems like the rest of the world dislikes America, it is touching to know that an elderly gentleman in the Netherlands, who as a boy of age 10 witnessed his people being overtaken by invaders, is to this day thankful of the ultimate sacrifice that two young brothers from Horry County, S.C. made to liberate his people.

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James A. Norton Jr.
2 Lt 452 Bomb Sq. 322 Bomb GP (M)
South Carolina, May 17, 1943

Norton, Edward R.
2 Lt 322 Bomb GP (M)
South Carolina, May 17, 1943