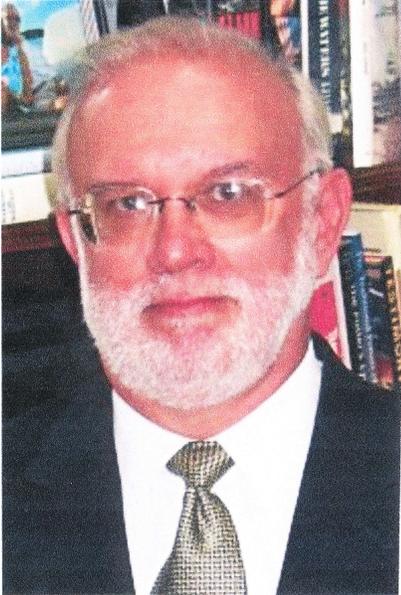


# *Richmond County Historical Society*

*'Those who don't remember their ancestors don't deserve to be remembered!'*

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## February 2018 Newsletter



### 'Southern Cooking High and Low' (Cuisine)

by John J. Beck, Ph.D.  
Historian, Author, Teacher

Professor John J. Belk holds a Ph.D. In American History, which is now expanding into a history of Southern food.

This history professor, who turned to area gastronomy, will be guest speaker for the Richmond County Historical Society on Monday, February 19 at 7:00 p.m., Rockingham City Hall.

The full title of his talk will be "Southern cooking high and low; short history of the cuisine of the South." Beck is already involved in Southern culture being co-author of a book in the subject. Retired from the N.C. Community College system, he has taught at Elon University since 2007.

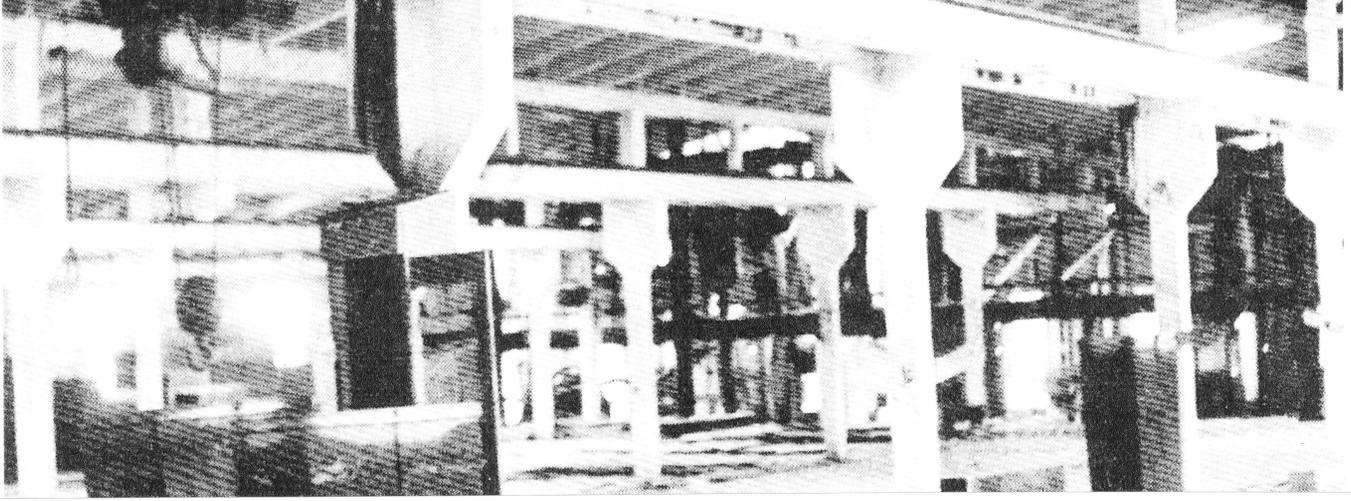
### **Preparing for the Future**

History in America is being challenged in many ways relative to what is important as a changing society to individual citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Richmond County Historical Society has been, and is continuing to preserve local history. How best to present that history to new and young residents has become a challenge. We need to connect the past to the present in personal ways.

The Executive Board this year will review where the Society is today and where we will would like to plan to be for the next 10 to 20 years in an exciting way. We want to develop a long-range plan for growth by developing tools and processes.

We are asking each member to give thought to this process and send to me by whatever means you wish to be collated and reviewed, however short or long. This is a Society team effort. **John Stevenson, president, [JSStevenson@etinternet.net](mailto:JSStevenson@etinternet.net) or to 926 Biggs Blvd., Rockingham, NC 29379.**



## Hamlet was once cold spot for South

### The abandoned warehouse of the Hamlet Ice Company

BRRRRR!

At one time, Hamlet had one of the largest cold spots in the South, all year round.

It originated chills not only in the area, but up and down the east coast. It was an underground operation that exported cold for profit. It was all about the preservation of flesh, both animal and plant.

It was unmatched in the area for some 45 years before engineering progress caused its downfall.

The Hamlet News-Messenger on July 30, 1924, headlined that "Hamlet has one of the largest re-icing plants in the South." In the beginning in 1924, Hamlet Ice Company could produce 100 tons of ice every 24 hours in 300-pound "cakes" in the freezing room and could store 5,000 tons of it in the warehouse.

By 1932, the business grew to produce 140 tons of ice daily and could store 12,000 tons in a massive warehouse on U.S. 177 north of Hamlet on a double siding north of North Yard (now Dobbins Heights area). It used 60,000 gallons of water a day from its private water wells.

Production was done underground beneath the floor of the warehouse in tanks of submerged brine through which ammonia was piped to cool water into the 300-pound "cakes" within 1,400 individual metal moulds. Water was frozen in the moulds for 56 hours. The warehouse could hold ice at 26 degrees Fahrenheit with its cork walls imported from Spain and special cement imported from China.

The railroad loading platform was a half mile long for the refrigerated rail cars. Ice was ferried to the cars on a conveyor belt powered by a 2,000-foot chain. Hamlet Ice Company was the largest supplier of ice for rail cars between Florence, S.C. and Raleigh to preserve produce being shipped in cooled rail cars northward.

At its peak, the company was producing 4,500 of the 300-pound cakes a day (675 tons) for the Seaboard Airline Railroad. One day it loaded 375 tons of ice on just one train. It had the capacity to load 150 railroad cars a day.

When the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and Seaboard Railroad merged, trains began to re-ice in Florence rather than Hamlet.

The Hamlet operation enhanced the growth of the production of peaches in the Sandhills area which could be shipped to the north. By 1968 because of the loss of re-icing in Florence, the plant was relying on poultry to improve its bottom line and had boosted poultry production.

With produce re-icing, the plant was able to use a quality of water called "dirty ice." But with poultry it had to provide "clean ice," or more purified ice for shipping.

When mechanized self-cooling rail cars and trucks were being used, the business in Hamlet was cut 10 percent. During November 1969, the plant closed without notice.

In a Richmond County Daily Journal newspaper article in April 1970, Bert Unger wrote that the "company has quietly melted into oblivion."