

Richmond County Historical Society

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

June 2018 Newsletter



Dr. Peacock



Lt. Gen. Longstreet

Lt. Gen. Longstreet: Scalawag or Scapegoat?

Why does the life of Confederate Lt. Gen. James Longstreet matter to us today?

Road Scholar John R. Peacock III, Ph.D., will explain how Longstreet's life illustrates the use and abuse of history for political and cultural purposes much as what is timely in today's political climate.

Peacock will be the guest speaker Monday, June 18, at 7 p.m. at the Richmond County Historical Society meeting, Rockingham City Hall.

Longstreet became one of the most vilified figures in the post bellum South largely because of his support for Republican Reconstruction policies.

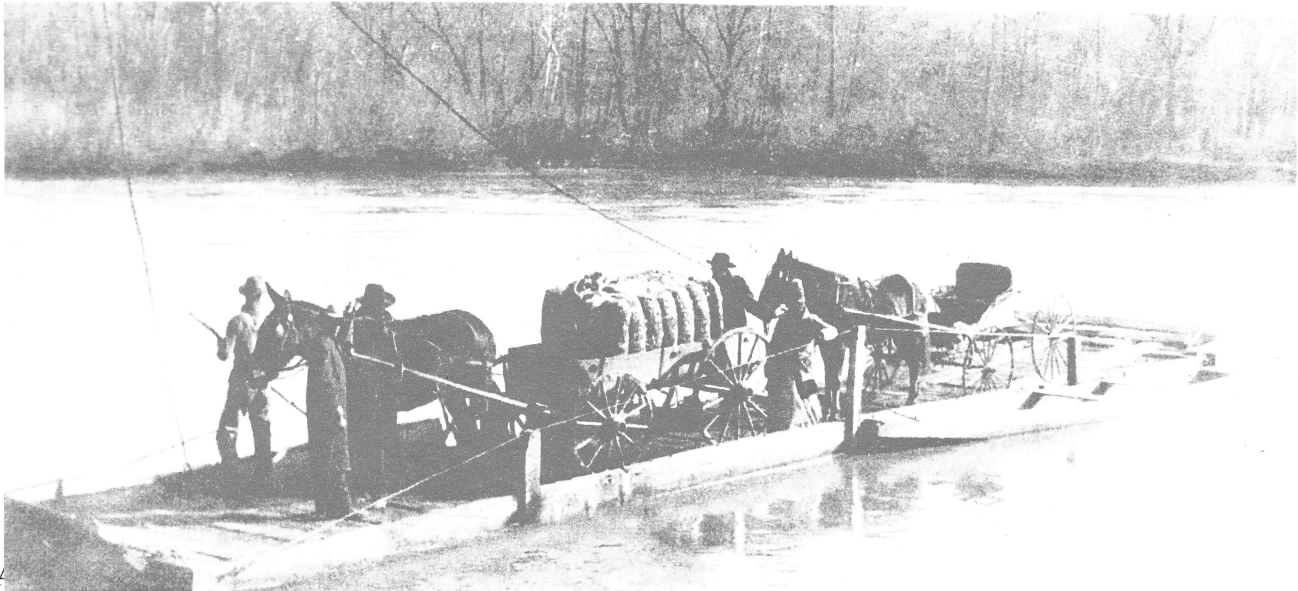
Peacock's presentation entitled "Scalawag or Scapegoat" explores his life and career. How much vilification was deserved and how much was myth? He will sort it out for us.

A modern novel, "The Killer Angels," and the film, "Gettysburg," have rehabilitated Longstreet's reputation in today's popular culture.

We might want to know about how such a transformation has taken place before passing judgment on today's public figures.

Peacock acquired his love of history - particularly Civil War - from his grandfather, John "Rebel" Peacock. As part of his program, he will show Longstreet's message pouch his grandfather got from the general's widow.

There will be no meeting in July. There will be a July Newsletter to announce the August meeting.



Pee Dee River ferries could not handle today's traffic

Traveling west from Richmond County before 1925, you would have to allow time to travel on bad roads and wait your turn for a ferry to transport you and your vehicle, wagon or animals to Anson County.

The only advantage of a ferry crossing was that you could choose from several ferry locations when river conditions were favorable.

But, you would have to pay a toll to the ferryman. Later, some ferries were operated free by the state.

It wasn't until December 16, 1925, that the Cameron Morrison state bridge opened over the Pee Dee River on U.S 74, which was 127 years later. It had a span of 1,085 feet.

The Grassy Island river fording area was used as part of the Plank Toll Road on the Fayetteville to Salisbury route across northern Richmond County in the 1850s.

Richmond County separated from Anson County in 1779 because the Anson Courthouse was located across the Pee Dee River on a point near Smith's Creek.

While most ferries ended operations in 1925, at the northern end of the county the Dumas Ferry operated until 1932 when the Highway No. 9 bridge was built. At that time, the state owned the ferry, and it was toll free.

In 1770, well before the Blewett Falls Dam was built, William Blewett built his ferry and fishery. It was operated as the Townsend Ferry and discontinued after some 142 years of operation when the dam was put in operation in 1912..

In 1917, the Blewett Falls Ferry below the dam began operation. First poled across the river attached to an overhead wire, it then was pulled with the help of a windlass. The third improvement was the use of a gas engine in 1917 pulling the cable which shortened crossing time to two and a half minutes. It could carry six cars at a time.

In all, over the years there were at least nine other Richmond County ferries in operation on the river. There were taverns associated with several of them.

It was at Stanback's Ferry during the Civil War that Presley N. and W. P. Stanback provided two ferries for Gen. Joseph Wheeler's Confederate Cavalry to get to Rockingham to attack Union forces there in 1865. After using them, they were sunk so Union Forces following them could not use the ferries.

Local Historian Irving Long said private ferries usually belonged to men who owned farm land on both sides of the river. They were for large farmers who did not want to stand in line at a public ferry when they needed to get their mules, wagons and plows across the river in a hurry. W. P. Stanback had a public ferry near Presley's private ferry.