

# CAROLINA WEEKLY NEWS

FREE



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Edition

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# The Blast Still Felt

## Island slowly recovering from 2009 blast that claimed four Wayne County lives

OCRACOKE ISLAND—It's been nine years since a tragic explosion on the morning of July 4, 2009 claimed the lives of four people on Ocracoke Island as they prepared to set up fireworks for the annual celebration.

The explosion occurred at the docks where residents and tourists would gather to celebrate the Fourth of July festivi-

ties, ending with what was to be yet another spectacular fireworks display. Yet, hours before the beginning of the celebration, the unthinkable occurred.

The blast was described as tremendous with such force that people thought of war when a box truck full of pyrotechnics exploded almost all at once. It was said to be a massive per-

cussion that people felt in their chests.

As emergency crews arrived at the docks, the scene looked like a bomb had gone off. A five-member team, assembled by Terry Holland, was from the Goldsboro/Wayne County area. Holland had been contracted to do the job by South Carolina-based Melrose South Pyrotechnics. He

[Holland] was experienced in setting up professional-grade pyrotechnics, as was another member of the team, Lisa Simmons.

Officials with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives investigated the explosion and found that electric igniters being pushed into the fireworks was the cause of the blast. A smaller ex-

plosion set off the entire inventory in the truck.

Four fatalities resulted from the massive detonation. Killed were Terry Holland, 49; Mark Hill, 21; Lisa Simmons, 41; and Charles Kirkland Jr., who was also 49. Only one team member survived the explosion, 27-year-old Martez Holland, nephew



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You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

-Galatians 5:13

## NORTH CAROLINA HISTORY

# Course To Freedom At Moores Creek Bridge



CURRIE, N.C.—In the pre-dawn hours on February 27, 1776, one thousand patriots under command of both Colonels Richard Caswell and Alexander Lillington faced a Loyalist force of one thousand, six hundred men under command of British Brigadier General Donald MacDonald and Lt. Colonel Donald McLeod at the bridge over Moores Creek. This site, which is twenty miles northwest of Wilmington, NC, was the final opportunity to halt the Loyalist advance on Wilmington where they would join other arriving British troops.

The quick, decisive battle resulted in more than thirty Tories killed and forty more wounded. The Patriot defense forces suffered only two casualties. With the Loyalist militia halted at the bridge, it stood as the first armed victory for the Patriots and because of this victory, arriving British naval and land forces were forced out of North Carolina. British forces sailed south in an attempt to take Charleston, South Carolina where a strong Patriot militia again turned them back to the sea. British forces would abandon their efforts in the southern colonies for the next four years and take their fight up north.

One of eastern North Carolina's own, Wayne County resident and patriot Ezekiel Slocumb would lead a band of 80 Duplin Rangers to number alongside those defending the Moores Creek Bridge. It is said that his wife dreamed that her husband had been slain in battle at the bridge. She awoke frightened, saddled her horse with determination and rode through the night the near 75-mile journey to the battlefield. While Slocumb was found safe, she stayed and helped nursed the wounded. The account of Mary Slocumb's ride has been questioned for years. Whether just a legend or authentic, the couple did apparently participate in the event and subsequently their bodies were late exhumed from their graves in Mount Olive, NC and were moved to the battleground at the foot of the Heroic Women's Monument there.

Much effort has been put in preserving and protection of the battlefield for many years, dating back to before the Civil War. Today the Moores Creek National Battlefield is part of the National Park System and is on the National Register of Historic Places to safeguard as a landmark of our nation's perseverance for freedom.

More information is available on the National Park Service History home page at [www.cr.nps.gov/history/index.asp](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/index.asp).

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# Liberty's Early Scars At House in the Horseshoe

SANFORD, NC—Standing on a hilltop inside a horseshoe curve of the Piedmont's Deep River, is one of the first large houses of North Carolina's upland frontier country. The House in the Horseshoe was built around 1772. As the American Revolution brewed with growing intensity, irregular warfare broke out across the backcountry of North Carolina. Citizen-soldiers referred to as "Whigs" or revolutionists stood against loyalists to England's king called "Tories".

The House in the Horseshoe was at that time owned by a Whig colonel named Philip Alston. It was on the morning of August 5, 1781 that Alston and his encamped revolutionist soldiers were attacked by a large number of Tories, led by David Fanning. As the skirmish proceeded, a band of Tories attempted to ignite Alston's house with a cart of burning straw. Despite their best efforts, Alston was forced to surrender. Several casualties were recorded on both sides and Alston's house stood riddled with bullet holes. Following the Revolutionary War, Colonel Alston was constantly plagued with claims of corruption. Despite his distinguished career of being a colonel in the state militia, a justice of the peace and a state senator, Alston was in-

dicted twice on murder charges, removed as a justice of the peace and was suspended from state legislature for a number of reasons. Philip Alston sold his house and plantation in 1790 and left North Carolina.

The house's second owner, Governor Benjamin Williams, bought the dwelling and its twenty-five hundred acres and named the house "Retreat". Williams was also a captain under George Washington, was a member of the first board of trustees of the University of North Carolina and served his nation as a congressman in Philadelphia. Williams later enlarged the house by adding two wings with an attached kitchen and a master bedroom. When Eli Whitney's cotton gin was devised, Williams began growing cotton and became considerably wealthy with up to two hundred acres of short staple cotton.

Williams died on the plantation in 1814 and would later be buried on the plantation. His family occupied the house until 1853. Since then, the house changed ownership numerous times until 1954 when it was purchased for its historical qualities and restored by the Moore County Historical Association. One year later, the State of North Carolina purchased the property and is now under control of the Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources and is officially listed as a North Carolina Historical Site.

The House in the Horseshoe today reflects different time periods of architecture as it was continuously modified from its original state in 1772. The interior is strikingly elaborate and decorated to express an interesting late colonial theme with early Federal-period pieces. After 225 years, the house still stands a few miles west of Sanford, NC just off NC Highway 42. Along its exterior, some remaining bullet holes remain from the guns of loyalists Tories in their attempts to stop liberty's birth in colonial America.

Visit the State Archives and History website online at [www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us](http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us) for more information.

## NORTH CAROLINA HISTORY

# First In Freedom Began In NC With Halifax Resolves



HALIFAX, NC—Colonists pursuing a successful farming life in the fertile Roanoke River Valley settled the Town of Halifax in the early 1700s. Along the Roanoke River in 1760, the town quickly became notable throughout the area for its farm produce, river port, county seat, inns and taverns. By 1769, Halifax had scores of residents and several public buildings.

During the Revolutionary War, the town played host to one of history's most politically important events. The Fourth Provincial Congress of North Carolina met in Halifax in April of 1776. The congressional body unanimously adopted a document that declared in unison a desire for a colony to have independence from the British. It was the first official document to do so prior to the Declaration of Independence. This important document would later become known as the "Halifax Resolves."

Today, Halifax has a guided walking tour of the area that takes visitors through several authentically restored and furnished buildings, which includes a 1760 home of a merchant, the house and law office of a nineteenth century attorney, the 1808 home of a wealthy landowner, clerk's office, jail, tavern and a unique archaeological exhibit.

The historic town of Halifax is located 30 minutes north of Rocky Mount, NC on U. S. Highway 301. Visit the State Archives and History website online at [www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us](http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us) for more information.

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# What's Happening

List of upcoming events around the area.

## Independence Holiday Festivities

### BENSON

Wednesday, July 4, Independence Day Celebration

From 5-10 pm, Benson Singing Grove, Live music by Spare Change, Fireworks at 9 pm near Carlie C's IGA.

### DUNN

Wednesday, July 4

1st Annual Old Timey independence Day Celebration, 72 Turlington Road, Dunn, \$4 admission for fundraiser and raffle, Games & PRIZES! Food! Family FUN & Fellowship! Edenton Bell Battery Cannon Firing!! Special Guests will be signing books!! Revolutionary, Civil War soldiers/vendors, etc. Photo Booth with Confederate or Union soldier!! Fundraiser benefits the Save the historic Shaw Half Way House!

### FAYETTEVILLE

Sunday, July 1,

Independence Day Celebration

Hosted by the City of Fayetteville at Festival Park on Rowan Street. Live music by the Fayetteville Symphony Orchestra, fireworks at the end. Bring blankets and/or chairs.

### GOLDSBORO

Wednesday, July 4 @ 9 PM

Fireworks at Berkeley Mall, Berkeley Blvd, just off US 70 Business, Goldsboro

### LILLINGTON

Wednesday, July 4 from 1-10 pm

July 4th Celebration, live music, two parachute team jumps by All Veterans Group, food, vendors, kids zone, fireworks at 9 pm Visit online at [www.lillingtonnc.org/july4th](http://www.lillingtonnc.org/july4th).

### RALEIGH

Wednesday, July 4 • 6-9 pm

Independence Day Celebration, Fireworks return to NC State Fairgrounds after 6 years. Fireworks at 9:30pm. Parking is free.

### SMITHFIELD

Sunday, July 1 • 6-9 pm

Independence Day Celebration, Downtown Smithfield on Third Street, Hosted by Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center

### WILMINGTON

July 4, 2018 • 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Enjoy live entertainment and food vendors along Water Street in Riverfront Park and stick around for fireworks at 9:30 PM over the Cape Fear River with battleship as the backdrop.

### WILSON

Wednesday, July 4

July Fourth Festival at the Fairgrounds at Wilson County Fairgrounds on July 4. Fireworks at the grandstand area of fairgrounds start around 9 p.m. BBQ cookout starts at 2 p.m. with local volunteer fire departments competing for best BBQ. Details on the Wilson County Fair Facebook page.

# Blast Still Felt

From Page 1

of Terry Holland. Martez Holland suffered burns to 20 percent of his body and eventually made a full recovery after treatment at the North Carolina Jaycees Burn Center.

Martez, the lone survivor, was able to describe to federal and state officials what he witnessed. He stated that the team was preparing to work on fuses, when he heard a spark occur in the truck and an explosion just as he jumped off the truck to the ground. Officials deemed the explosion accidental. It remains one of the worst fireworks in recorded US history.

For seven years, Ocracoke Island went without a closing fireworks display and businesses on the island felt the repercussions from that 2009 explosion at the Anchorage Inn & Marina. It wasn't until 2016 that Hyde County Commissioners decided to once again resume fireworks for visiting tourists and residents.

For 2018, Ocracoke Island Independence Day Celebration takes place July 3-5 with a traditional square dance on Tuesday evening with fireworks taking place on July 3 at 9:15 p.m. On Wednesday, July 4, there will be a sand sculpture contest, classic car show, Ocracoke Lighthouse viewing, a parade and a glow-in-the-dark laser show and dance party the night of the Fourth. On Thursday night, July 5, there will be a beach bonfire under the stars from 7 to 10. The public is invited to bring blankets, chairs, roasting sticks and s'mores supplies. S'mores will be available to the first 150 attendees.

Go online at [www.visitocracokenc.com](http://www.visitocracokenc.com) for more information.

# Southport Site Began As British Fort Prior To American Revolution

SOUTHPORT—Travel to the southeastern North Carolina town of Southport and you'll find the spot of one of the oldest forts in the history of the nation. Built under British colonization, Fort Johnston's purpose was to deter the Spanish from attacking and occupying Brunswick Town in the mid eighteenth century, standing guard near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. It was named after Royal Governor Gabriel Johnston and officially completed in 1749.

Just prior to the Revolutionary War with Britain, the Royal Governor at the time, Josiah Martin, felt threatened in the governor's mansion in New Bern, feeling that he may be the target of a kidnapping plot. Martin fled New Bern and sought refuge at the British fort of Fort Johnston. The fort itself came under threat numerous times from colonists opposed to the British monarchy. It became a prized target in which to seize. Governor Martin narrowly escaped one attempt by learning of the attack just before it occurred.

In July 1775, opposition-



ists, known as Whigs, did seize the Fort and burned it to the ground, reportedly in plain view of Governor Martin who watched from a British ship anchored in the Cape Fear River. Leading the patriotic militia was John Ashe and Cornelius Harnett. It was one of the first major offenses against the British in preparation for the war of independence.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, a newly formed American government sought to rebuild the fort. Surpassed in prominence by Fort Caswell, Fort Johnston still made up an invaluable part of the defense of the Cape Fear River mouth, leading up to Wilmington.

During the Civil War, Confederate forces would eventually capture the Brunswick forts and use them to protect supply ships steaming to Wilmington up the river.

After the Civil War, Fort Johnston fell into disrepair and essentially abandoned but an effort to revitalize the officers' quarters was successful. After the war, the fort stayed under federal service until 2006, when it was turned over to the City of Southport. At that time, Fort Johnston was the oldest active-duty fort in the United States under federal control.

Today, visitors can tour the site, along with the charming southern coastal town of Southport, once called Smithville.

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## Wilson Woman Dies In Johnston County Crash

NEWTON GROVE—Authorities say that a Wilson woman was killed in a single-vehicle crash Sunday afternoon in southern Johnston County.

Emergency personnel responded to the crash, which occurred on US. Highway 701 between Newton Grove and Four Oaks, near the Bentonville area.

The North Carolina Highway Patrol stated that Steven Sheak, 63, of Kenly was driving north when his 2003 Ford Thunderbird two-seat convertible went off the right shoulder of the two-lane highway and overturned. Sheak's passenger, 66-year old Carmen Ramos, of Wilson died in the crash. Sheak was transported to WakeMed in Raleigh for non-life threatening injuries.

Troopers say that Sheak was driving too fast for condition in the rain when the crash occurred. Charges are pending in the crash.



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# Cities, Organizations Settle Case of Near Drowning at Waterpark

KINSTON—Multiple news outlets were reporting this week that a city's insurance company was settling a lawsuit against it stemming from a tragic incident that occurred in August 2014, in which a child nearly drowned at a water park.

Attorneys representing Jaekwon Williams and his family say that settlements from multiple parties would assure that Jaekwon would receive necessary care for the rest of his life.

The insurance company for the City of Kinston agreed to settle the case for \$10 million, while the City of Rocky Mount's insurance carrier would pay \$2.625 million with the city paying a \$50,000 deductible. The Woodmen Foundation also settled out of court for an undisclosed amount.

The 13-million dollar Lions Water Adventure Park, located at 2602 W. Vernon Avenue in Kinston, took 15 months to build and opened in May 2013 with funds from multiple foundations and organizations, along with local and state funding. The Woodmen Foundation and the Lions Industries for the Blind of Kinston were major contributors.

In its second season of operation on August 11, 2014, a summer camp hosted by the Rocky Mount Parks and Recreation Department traveled to the Kinston park with youth, including Jaekwon Williams who was 9 years old at the time.

Jaekwon was found on the bottom of the lap pool at the park after going missing. It was estimated that he was underwater for approximately 7 minutes before being noticed. Jaekwon was pulled from the pool with no pulse. On the way to the hospital he was resuscitated and transported to Vidant Medical Center where he laid in a coma for almost a week, according to the family's attorney.

The family's attorney states that Jaekwon suffered permanent brain damage, leaving him with the inability to walk or talk and that the child needs around the clock medical care.



## Shake-Up of Park Ownership

In November 2017, the Woodmen Foundation informed city officials that they would like to exit their involvement with the Woodmen Center and waterpark with an offer to pay off the \$9+ million owed on the facility and donate it entirely to the City of Kinston.

Earlier this month, members of the Kinston City Council voted 4 to 1 in favor of the deal. Lenoir County Commissioners voted to distance to exit the deal, green-lighting the donation of the park to the City of Kinston.

As part of the deal, the city will change the name of the property.

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# Rocky Mount Police Officer Killed in Crash Responding to Call

ROCKY MOUNT—A Rocky Mount police officer died in a Saturday night crash while responding to a call, authorities stated.

The department reported that Officer Christopher Driver was in his patrol car headed south on South Church Street when his vehicle rear-ended an abandoned bucket truck in the street. The crash occurred at 4112 South Church Street at approximately 10:30 pm. Driver died at the scene.

The North Carolina State Highway Patrol was called in to investigate the crash. Troopers said that the truck was an old bucket truck used for a tree trimming service that had gone out of business. The truck had been sold to two men, Derrick Sheffield, 46, and Timmy Dixon, 38. Authorities believe the truck was being towed illegally at night and that the brakes on the truck malfunctioned causing the truck to become stranded in the road. Furthermore, the hazard flashers were stated to be weak due to the condition of the

truck.

It was believed that Officer Driver might have been responding to the bucket truck in the road when he crashed into it. Sheffield and Dixon reportedly left the truck in the roadway.

Sheffield was charged with misdemeanor death by vehicle and leaving a vehicle unattended/unsecured. Sheffield was released on \$5,000 bond. Dixon was also



charged with misdemeanor death by vehicle

and leaving the scene of an accident. He was later released after posting a \$7,000 bond.

Troopers also reported that Officer Driver was speeding at the time of the crash and was not wearing his seatbelt.

Driver, who was 27, had been with the Rocky Mount Police Department since 2013. He was promoted to the rank of Senior Police Officer in 2017.

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½ teaspoon salt  
6 tablespoons butter, softened  
1 cup sugar  
2 large eggs  
½ cup reduced-fat sour cream  
¼ cup fat-free half-and-half  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
2 cups fresh or frozen (not thawed) blueberries

**Topping:**  
1 cup rolled oats  
1 cup flour  
¼ cup sugar  
1½ teaspoons cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350° F. Spray a 9 x 9-inch baking pan with nonstick spray. Make the topping: In a small bowl, stir oats, flour, sugar, cinnamon and salt. Add butter and blend until crumbly. Set aside. Make the cake batter: In a medium bowl, stir together flour, baking powder and salt; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, add butter and sugar; with an electric mixer, beat until fluffy, about 1 minute. Add the eggs, sour cream, half-and-half and vanilla; beat until well blended, about 1 minute. Add the flour mixture; beat on low speed to combine, scraping the sides with a rubber spatula, about 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium and mix just until well blended, about 30 seconds. With a rubber spatula, gently fold in the blueberries. Turn batter into prepared pan. Sprinkle the topping mixture evenly on top; press lightly. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool in pan 30 minutes before serving.

Yield: 16 portions  
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# Desperado on Horseback

Hit & Run Suspect abandons truck and horse trailer after sideswiping another vehicle, using horse as getaway

ASHEBORO—In 2018, a person wouldn't expect a man to be fleeing lawmen while galloping away on horseback...in North Carolina. However, one apparent desperado made use of more primitive transportation—a horse—to flee the scene of a hit and run he allegedly caused, according to authorities.

Last Saturday a man driving a Chevrolet Blazer and pulling a horse trailer with a horse inside was traveling west on Old Castle Road. At about 10:00 PM, the Chevrolet sideswiped a 2002 Chrysler after the SUV crossed the centerline. The Chrysler was able to stop safely on the side of the road, but the Blazer continued on without stopping.

With law enforcement officers responding to the scene, at some point, the driver abandoned the Chevrolet and the horse trailer on a nearby rural



road. The hit and run suspect, then unloaded the horse and galloped away down the road before abandoning the horse and continuing on foot.

Asheboro police attempted to contact the registered owner of the vehicle, Sergio Banuelos, but Banuelos contacted 911 on Sunday to report the Blazer as stolen. When questioned by investigators, Banuelos stated that his father, J. Santos Banuelos Cossio, might have taken the vehicle.

The investigation is ongoing into who was behind the wheel...and reins.

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# Woman Charged With Murder In Death of Man She Met Online

FAYETTEVILLE—Dating shouldn't be dangerous, but lessons in love can often be the kind in which you may not live to learn from.

Authorities in Cumberland County were called to a residence on Sangi Lane in Fayetteville in June 2015 and found a man shot dead in the front yard of the home. Greeting sheriff deputies was Sheri Williams Jones, 57, who told deputies that she had shot her ex, whom she had met on an online dating website, in self defense after he came to her home.

Deputies stated that Jones readily admitted she had shot Clarence Roy Smith, 61, after an altercation after she had told him to come remove his belongings from her home.

After a three-year investigation, the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office arrested Jones on felony domestic violence and first-degree murder last Monday.

Jones said that the two had met on FarmersOnly.com, an online dating service that is marketed to single farmers and single individuals who live in more rural areas.

# Man Shot By Officers In Harnett



DUNN—Last Friday evening just minutes before midnight, two deputies with the Harnett County Sheriff's Office and two police officers with the a Dunn Police Department responded to a residence on Pope Road. When law officers confronted a man

at the scene, the situation escalated to an exchange of gunfire, according to reports.

The residence is located on Pope Road just east of I-95 Exit 72 near a Dunn power equipment business, just outside the Dunn city limits.

Authorities say upon arrival, a 27-year old male, identified as Trevor West, was confrontational and armed with a gun. Officers immediately ordered West to drop the weapon, but stated that he would not comply and fired at officers. Both law officers returned fire, hitting and wounding West.

West, who does not appear to have any prior convictions in North Carolina, was transported to Cape Fear Valley Hospital in Fayetteville, treated and released into

the custody of the Harnett County Sheriff's Office.

West is being held under a \$4 million bond and charged with four counts of attempted first-degree murder and four counts of assaulting an officer with a firearm.

The North Carolina SBI is conducting an independent investigation due to discharging of firearms by law officers. West could face the possibility of a sentence of life in prison.

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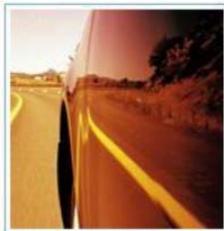
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