



Historic Port of Washington Project



The Tale of Hull Anderson

By Leesa Jones

I began to share the story of Beaufort County's only Black shipyard owner and shipbuilder Hull Anderson on the initial tour of my Washington's African American Walking History Tour in 2010. Anderson's life and legacy were worthy of recognition, and he became a person of great inspiration for me. I wanted to tell his story.

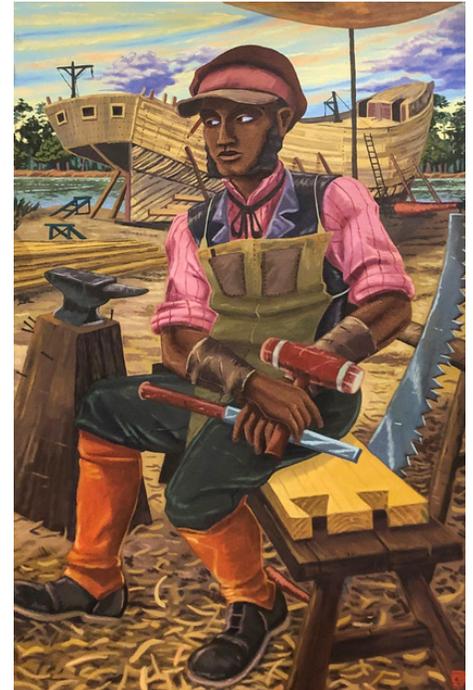
Born enslaved in 1784, he was owned by Mary Bonner. When Hull was 14, William Orr purchased him from Bonner. At the age of 15, in 1809, Orr gave Hull to Sally and John Anderson as a wedding gift. He worked on the Rope Walk Plantation in Bath, NC, for a while, making rope and hemp for Washington's shipbuilding industry. He learned how to use hemp to make oakum to caulk ships and became a sought-after expert at caulking ships.

The Andersons "rented" Hull out to local shipbuilders and kept most of the money he made caulking ships. He received some of the money as payment for his work and saved it all until he could buy his freedom at Sally Anderson's death in 1825. The rest of Anderson's life is the stuff of which legends are made.

One year later, he purchased his freedom. He began buying land from some of the wealthiest merchants and plantation owners in Washington. That same year he bought his mother's deliverance from slavery, and two years later, he purchased his wife Cherry Grimes' freedom.

In 1830, he purchased two land parcels from Byran Grimes and James O'Kelly Williams, who owned large plantations. It is on this land he built his prosperous shipyard near Main and Pierce Streets. The land parcels were from Second Street to the river. He continued to buy land for the next ten years and eventually owned a dozen lots in downtown Washington.

Around 1835, laws were passed that restricted the rights of Free Black people in Washington. Anderson and his family found themselves attending the American Colonization Society meetings at the Methodist Church in Washington. The discussions, led by Rev. George N. Gregory from the American Colonization Society of Virginia, shared information about the colonization movement in Monrovia, Liberia. Rev. Gregory said, "moving there would afford Ander-



Hull Anderson painting by Mark Brown

son and his family as well as others who would go, a higher and better quality of life and freedom than they would have in America." Hull and his wife, devout Methodists, entertained the idea about going and thought they could do missionary work in Monrovia as well. After attending many meetings and developing a friendship with Rev. Robert McKenney, Anderson decided to go to Liberia. He and his family set sail from Norfolk headed for New York on October 10, 1841. At New York, they boarded the Ship Saluda, sailing to Monrovia, arriving on December 12, 1841. He sold some of his lands before leaving for Monrovia. He left the remaining real estate in the care of his Power of Attorney, George N. Gregory. The latter handled his

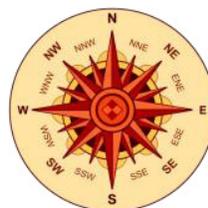
Continued on page 2

HPOW Needs You!

Become a Volunteer...Become a Friend...
Contribute to HPOW through our website

<https://hpow.org/donate/>

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.



Memories of Old Washington and the Old Mulberry Tavern

Extracted from *By-Gone Days* written by Mrs. Rodman Myers (b. 1850-d.1937)

My earliest personal recollections of the town is of its beautifully shaded streets; the English elms...forming a perfect arch the whole length of the streets. I have been told that persons who visited the town before the war preserved that picture as the foremost recollection of it. Another characteristic was its closely fenced yards. All back yards had high close board fences which shut out all views of gardens, kitchens and out-houses on each lot.

One residence was located on the bank of the Pamlico river, facing it on what is now Water Street. (Ed. recent location of The Wine Crate.) This was the home of Col. James Bonner. Later this house passed out of the possession of the family and was occupied as a tavern and known as the "Old Mulberry Tavern". It took its name from the double row of Otaheite mulberry trees standing on each side of the walk leading from the gate to the entrance. This building stood until after the War between the States and then was burned down when a warehouse next door was destroyed. The Mulberry Tavern was a two-story house with double piazza across the front. I remember going to this house when a small child with my mother to have some dresses made.

Some of my most vivid recollections have to do with the water traffic, both on the upper and lower river, and at sea. In those days there was only one small steamboat plying on the upper river, but great quantities of products from the rich counties of Pitt, Edgecombe and Nash

Hull Anderson *Continued from page 1*

affairs while in Monrovia. Anderson and his family settled into church life, community affairs, and farming. He became a grocer, owned 100 acres of land, 100 coffee trees, and owned several buildings. Some documents say he became a high statesman in Monrovia.

Because of his achievements, I have tried to honor him with an NC Highway Historical Marker. But because of the eligibility requirements that state "the subject of a marker must have made significant history in all of North Carolina," I could not get a marker. Hull and his family were not the first free or enslaved Blacks to go to Monrovia from North Carolina or any Colonization settlements in West Africa. He was not the only black shipyard builder in North Carolina.

I sought grants for a marker from many foundations and organizations over the years with no success. I then discovered the William G. Pomeroy Foundation of New York. The Pomeroy Foundation's mission is to be committed to supporting the celebration and preservation of commu-



Mulberry Tavern pen and ink drawing by Union Soldier, 1861-1865

were freighted down on flatboats consigned to middlemen, called commission merchants. The flatboats were poled down the river piled high

with bales of cotton, barrels of tar, pitch, and turpentine, bags of corn, sides of bacon and stacks of brick, staves and shingles... to be shipped away on seagoing merchant vessels...sailing northward...to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston and southward to the West Indies...The making of barrels was an important industry here, and the town was dotted with noisy cooper shops. These barrels were used by the large distilleries located here.

All the ice we had in those days was natural ice, brought from Maine in these sailing vessels. I well remember how interesting it was to watch the stevedores unloading the great blocks of ice and storing them away in the two big ice houses owned by Mr. B.F. Havens and Mr. John Myers. Then still more interesting, was the coming of the vessels from the West Indies with sugar, molasses, oranges, tamarinds, limes and a treat of stick of sugar cane for the children—with also an occasional monkey or parrot for sale.

nity history and raising awareness, supporting research, and improving the quality of life for patients and their families facing a Blood Cancer diagnosis. The Foundation makes grants available to 501(c)(3) organizations, educational institutions, historical societies, related podcasts, and celebrations of significant milestones in American history, to name a few of the grant recipients.

Their grant program has several categories, for example, "Legends and Lore," "Folk Tales," "Name Place Anecdotes," and so much more. I shared the Pomeroy Foundation grant information with my team members of the Historic Port Of Washington Project. Board President Ray Midgett and I submitted a request to the Washington City Council asking permission to have the commemorative plaque placed on city property. Consulting and working with HPOW board members, we filled out the grant request and submitted it in October 2020. We received the good news our grant for the marker was approved, and HPOW received a check for \$1,140 to pay for the plaque.

Could A Chance Encounter Have Redefined Our Past?

By Ray Midgett

One of the great pleasures of studying history, at least for me, is the discovery of connections, links between the people and places from the past to the people and places of today and how those connections might have had an impact on history. One such connection involves a famous actor, the collector of customs for the port of Washington, NC. as well as the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.



Thomas Harvey Blount

The actor was Junius Brutus Booth. Booth was born on May 1, 1796 in London, England, the son of a lawyer. Early on he showed tremendous talent on the stage and became a celebrated performer throughout England. In 1821, Booth ran away with his mistress to the United States, abandoning his wife and young son and settling on a farm near Bel Air, Maryland. Booth soon became one of the most renowned actors in America. Critic William Winter said of Booth, "He was followed as a marvel. Mention of his name stirred an enthusiasm no other could awaken." But Booth eventually grew tired of his fame and the pressure of acting and thus developed a desire for a simpler life. In 1822, while sailing between Norfolk and Charleston, Booth had a chance encounter with a fellow passenger. Perhaps while passing within view of the Cape Hatteras Light, the young thespian told his acquaintance of a desire "to retire from public life and keep a lighthouse."

Fortuitously for Booth, the fellow passenger happened to be one Thomas Harvey Blount, the Collector of Customs or import taxes for the port of Washington, NC. In addition to being the Collector of Customs, Thomas was a business man who, along with his father John Gray Blount, had large shipping interests and owned wharves, flat boats, and seagoing vessels. Their business dealings ranged as far west as Tennessee, up and down the Atlantic seaboard, and included the Caribbean. Thomas served as a major in the 2nd Regiment of the NC Militia during the War of 1812 and later was elected to the North Carolina Council of State. As Collector of Customs, one of Blount's responsibilities was the administration of



Junius Brutus Booth

the Cape Hatteras lighthouse. Blount must have been impressed with the young actor. Quoting from Booth's own memorandum, he described the conversation: "Spoke to Mr. Blount, collector of customs, and one of the passengers, about Cape Hatteras lighthouse. He offered it to me with the dwelling-house, and twenty acres of land attached; and a salary of \$300 per annum, for keeping the light, — government providing oil and cotton, — a quart of oil per diem. Grapes, water-melons, cabbages, potatoes, carrots, and onions grow in abundance there. Rain-water the only drink; a cistern on the premises for that purpose. Abundance of fish and wild fowl; — pigs, cows, and horses find good pasture. Soil too light for wheat or com. Flour bought for four or five dollars a barrel. The office is for life, and only taken away through misbehavior. Lighthouse seventy-five feet high; light requires trimming every night at twelve o'clock. No taxes whatever. Firewood is procured from the pieces of wreck found on the shoals. One dollar per day is the charge for men who assist in cases of wreck. Strawberries, currant bushes, and apple-trees should be taken there; also a plough, spades, and chest of carpenter tools. Pine tables the best. Mr. Blount is to write me word if the office can be given me in April next, from his seat at Washington, North Carolina."

History tells us Booth was not granted the position. His managers, not wanting to suffer the loss of their valuable client, used their influence and managed to prevent his appointment. Hence Booth settled down for good in Maryland where he raised his family including the ninth of ten children, John Wilkes Booth.

What if the Booth had been appointed keeper and raised his son John Wilkes Booth on the island? Would the younger Booth have pursued a different life path and the story of Abraham Lincoln ended differently? We can only wonder.

*Wikipedia, Article on Junius Brutus Booth
The Elder and the Younger Booth By Asia Frigga Clarke,
Junius Brutus Booth pp. 63-64*

Early History of Washington Park and the Small Family



John Humphrey Small

Early history tells us that the town of Washington Park, Beaufort County, NC had its beginning as Cedar Grove, so called for the avenue of lovely cedars leading to the Plantation House. This Plantation House was probably built in 1839 and was the summer home of John Humphrey Small Sr. His son Hon. John H. Small (b1858-d1946), with his wife Isabella and brother Whit, eventually developed the land in the early 1900's.

The style of the Smalls' plantation was typical pre-war-south. There was no access to the Park from the city proper, other than the Brick Kiln Road. There was no bridge across Runyon Creek, so the Smalls were frequently transported from their winter house on water Street by a barge, which was piled up and down the river by their slaves. Two previous ownerships of this property have been mentioned – The first was Reading Blount, for which the local D.A.R. was named; the second was William T. Bryan, an ancestor of Miss Fannie Bryan and Mrs. Dora Bonner Ward.

The summer home of the Smalls was one of many destroyed by fire during the Civil War. The kitchen and the

huge fireplace were spared, however, as they were separated from the rest of the house. A home was later built around this old kitchen, using the fireplace as the main attraction. The brick oven still stands and is a curiosity to the younger generation. This house has for many years been the home of the Caleb Bells on Riverside Dr.

There is little told of the Park Property during the period of Reconstruction following the war and up to 1900... but in more recent times... Elisabeth Flynn especially remembers an annual New Year's celebration held there. Each New Year's Day, several mothers cooked huge pots of Brunswick stew and after a picnic and social period, the men often went out and planted dogwood trees around the Park. There was also an annual spring picnic held each year for all residents of the Park. This picnic began in the very early years and continued until only a few years ago. In later years it was sponsored by the Garden Club.

For the younger set, the Honorable John H. Small built quite a substantial pier and pavilion. It was near where the John Mayo home is and the pilings that held the pavilion can still be seen at low tide. When the summer nights were warm and beautiful, all the young folk of the area enjoyed dancing out over the water. John H. Small attended Trinity College (now Duke), served as a US Congressman 1899-1921 and is considered the father of the 3000-mile long Intracoastal Waterway.

Friend of the Port of Washington Project

<p>Restaurant</p> <p>1212 John Small Ave Washington, NC 27889 (252) 974-2722</p>	<p>Seafood Retail Market</p> <p>321 N. Pierce St. Washington, NC 27889 (252) 946-5796</p>	<p>Restaurant</p> <p>744 SW Greenville Blvd Greenville, NC 27834 (252) 756-7813</p>
---	--	--

www.washingtoncrab.com
Veteran Owned Business

CENTURY 21.
The Realty Group

BRENDA EVANS
Broker

252-945-5400
brendahevans@gmail.com
162 West. Main Street
Washington, NC-27889