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On February 10, 1766, over 100 men surrounded the residence of Governor Tryon to protest the tax on all paper goods caused by the Stamp Act (W.). This was just the beginning of a conflict that would continue to escalate into the Revolutionary War over the next decade. Brunswick Town, the site of this event (shown by the attached image) and similar events has interested me for a long time as both a place of historical significance and a local landmark located along the Cape Fear River.

Brunswick Town was founded in 1726, and quickly became a very important and relatively successful port, as its waters were deep enough to allow for larger ships that were unable to dock in Wilmington (Phillips). Starting in 1765, this location became the front for a series of protests against the unlawful taxes imposed by the British, beginning with the Stamp Act. The first of these protests would occur when a ship carrying stamps docked at the port, only to be met by a mass of armed, angry citizens. The captain of the ship was unable to unload the stamps, stopping a large amount of trade in the region. Not too long after, two merchant ships were unable to unload at the port due to unstamped clearances, eventually leading to the confrontation at Governor Tryon's mansion. In the end, all of these protests managed to get the Stamp Act abolished in the region ("Early Revolutionaries").

Of course, none of this would have happened without all of the people who pitched in to lead and organize these protests. Two of the most notable leaders in the protests at Brunswick Town were Cornelius Harnett and John Ashe, both of whom were very passionate local spokesmen against the Stamp Act. According to NCPedia, "When the outraged citizens of Wilmington were ordered by Great Britain to accept the Stamp Act, Ashe took a strong stand in opposition." He was not only an eloquent speaker, but also an early military leader who raised a regiment and led an attack on the British Fort Johnston (Whiteside). With a similar sense of patriotism, Harnett served as "one of the leading voices against the administration of the royal governor, William Tryon." Harnett gained a reputation for resonating with and serving as the voice of the people as part of countless different organizations such as the North Carolina General Assembly and Sons of Liberty (Grossman). One article notes that Harnett was considered by one revolutionary leader to be the "Samuel Adams of North Carolina." (Lennon) I admire the ability of these people to see injustice and act to right it without any sense of fear, regret, or hesitation. That is the spirit that our country was founded on, and I believe many people would likewise admire these kinds of actions today.

Unfortunately, Brunswick town was left mostly deserted following the start of the Revolutionary War due to disease, hurricanes, and the British burning it to the ground at least twice ("The End of"). As the revolution intensified, many of the citizens and political ideals that started here in Brunswick Town shifted their focus to Wilmington. While not much remains of Brunswick Town today, it is important to remember the determined people who sparked the beginning of the American Revolution in the Cape Fear area.

Works Cited

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