



Molly's "Beaufort Town"

*A ten-chapter story in celebration of the
300th Anniversary of Beaufort, NC*

Chapter Seven - "Home Again!"

Molly, Jacob and their friends stood at the gate on the edge of the Nelson's walkway, waiting for news about the captain. After Jacob had reached the Beaufort docks, he had raced home to get help. Hearing what had happened, Father ran to get the doctor as Mother took off to sit with Mrs. Nelson and wait for more news. Sarah bounced up and down on Mother's hip as she bounded up the front steps of the wide double-porch.

News about finding the captain spread fast. As soon as Father, Jacob and the doctor got to the rowboat, other men of the town were taking off after them. Jacob recognized Mr. Thomson in Uncle Aaron's boat, and right behind them, paddling furiously, was Mr. Thomson's brother - the wheelwright - with three other men. Jacob commented to Father that the wheelwright was already making his contribution to the townspeople - and he hadn't even met all of them yet!

Once on the island, the doctor had examined Captain Nelson's wounds, but did not comment on his injuries. They carried the captain to Uncle Aaron's larger boat and rowed him back to Beaufort, where they took him home to be cleaned up and examined more closely.

Molly, Jacob and the other children were divided up and carried back across in the remaining boats. Molly knew they would be in trouble for going to the island without permission. It was all her idea, so she expected she would be punished the most. Father had not said a word to her yet. She suspected he was very angry.

Now, they gathered at the Nelsons with many of the other townspeople, anxiously waiting for the doctor to come out and give his report. Molly could hear the people closest to her whispering anxiously. "What do you suppose happened?" she heard one neighbor ask another. "I hope he'll be all right," said the storekeeper, who had closed his doors to hear the report firsthand.

Mrs. Ramsey, of course, chimed in. "It's got to be bad news," she said. "Poor Thea! Whatever will she do without the captain?" Molly wanted to kick her in the shins! Why was Mrs. Ramsey always so unpleasant?

After what seemed like an eternity, the doctor emerged from the Nelsons' front door. He was wiping his hands with a bloodstained white cloth and was looking down as he walked. It was hard to read his face. Presently he spoke. Molly later said that you could have heard a pin drop as he finally looked up and gave them the news they had been waiting to hear...

"The captain is going to be all right."

Everyone cheered. Father grabbed Molly and gave her a tremendous hug as he grabbed Jacob with the other arm. "I'm so proud of both of you," he said. "Once you found the Captain, you kept a clear head and did just what you were supposed to do. Your mother and I have taught you well!"

Molly scanned the crowd, looking for Lydia. Uncle Aaron was picking her up and covering her with kisses. Molly smiled as Lydia wiped her face with the sash of her dress. She knew that Lydia hated it when her father did that in public!

Just then, Mrs. Nelson stepped onto the porch to stand beside the doctor, her head held high. As the cheering subsided, Mrs. Nelson called each child, Molly, Jacob, Lydia, William, Samuel, Elizabeth and Ann, by name and asked them to come inside the house. The captain wanted to thank them in person. The crowd cheered even more as

the children filed into the house, one after the other.

As they stood beside the captain's makeshift bed, the girls held hands as the boys stood proudly behind them, peering over their head. Captain Nelson, weak and obviously in pain, acknowledged the children's arrival as he tried to sit up on the edge of the bed. Mrs. Nelson moved forward to stop him, but the captain waved her away. As he struggled up on his elbows and straightened his back, he raised his right arm, the one that was not in a sling, in a salute. "Thank you, children," he said hoarsely. "I had given up on being found, but you found me, nonetheless. I am forever in your debt."

Mrs. Nelson moved to the captain's side. "I thank you, as well," she added. "You have brought my husband safely home. Josiah and I are together again. And although I am sure there will be more travels for him in the future, for now, he is home with me. We are both grateful, to all of you."

The children took turns shaking the captain's hand, then the doctor ushered them back out onto the porch. "He needs his rest, now," the doctor said. "I'm sure you will be welcome to come back in a day or two."

The children turned to go but as Molly passed, the doctor touched her arm. "Molly, the captain's bandage.... wherever did you learn to do that?"

"My mother taught me," Molly replied. "When Jacob was injured, I helped change his bandages. Mother said that they should always be clean and tied tight if the wound was to heal properly."

"You learned well," the doctor said. "Tell your mother that you might have a future in medicine. I could use an apprentice like you one day!"

Molly blushed. "Oh, I don't know about that," Molly answered. "I think I might want to do some traveling when I grow up. Maybe even sail on a ship, like Captain Nelson. What do YOU think I should do?"

The doctor laughed. "There's no reason at all you can't do both!" he said.

"I guess you're right," Molly replied. Then she had a thought. "Does all this mean we're not going to be punished for taking the Thomsons' boat to the island? I have enough chores to do already!"

The doctor chuckled and patted Molly on the head. "I'll see what I can do to help," he said. Then he turned and went back inside to check on Captain Nelson.

Next week, chapter eight - "The Pendant is Returned"

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Newspaper Activity:

Pretend you run the newspaper in Beaufort. Write one or more headlines for a story about Captain Nelson's rescue and homecoming. Use your current newspaper's headlines as a model. If you could supplement your news story with a photo or drawing, what scene from Chapter Seven would you use? Why?

Learn more about Beaufort's history!

Beaufort Historic Site

The historic district of Beaufort is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are more than 100 Beaufort homes on this list of important historical buildings. Each home bears a plaque that tells the name of the home and the date it was built.

Within the historic district is the Beaufort Historic Site. This site covers more than two acres and includes homes and buildings which date from 1732 to 1859. All have been restored to show how people lived and worked during colonial times.

The Apothecary Shop, shown right, includes medical instruments, bottles and prescriptions used by the county's first doctors. This building was constructed in 1859. There is also a courthouse, which was built in 1796, and the county jail, which dates back to 1829. (Photo courtesy of the *Carteret County News-Times*.)

