



Molly's "Beaufort Town"

by Lynn Allred

**A 10-chapter story celebrating
Beaufort and colonial history.**

Chapter Four - "After the Storm"

Molly looked all around her as she stepped out onto the front porch. "Now, if I were a visitor here," she thought, "I would never know that a storm hit right where I'm standing, less than one week ago!"

Molly took note of all the changes she had seen in just a few short days. All the tree limbs had been picked up and burned. All the walkways and lawns had been cleaned and swept. All the doors were nailed back onto the hinges. And the shutters of every house were thrown open wide, welcoming family and friends. "That just goes to show you," Molly thought, "we don't let a little storm get in our way!" Life returned to usual.

Molly ran down the street to get Lydia. A fleet of ships had come in and they were going down to the waterfront to see if anything new had arrived for the general store. On the way, she passed Uncle Aaron, making his visitation rounds to the families who had just moved to Beaufort. When the storm had hit last week, he had run to the closest house he could get to – Mrs. Ramsey's! Afterwards, he jokingly said that he didn't know which was worse – the storm, or having to soothe Mrs. Ramsey's raw nerves until the storm was over! Molly chuckled. For some reason, her uncle always looked up to the heavens for forgiveness each time he spoke of Mrs. Ramsey!

No word had come yet about Captain Nelson and his crew. Other ships had come and gone since last week, but none reported hearing anything from the Captain. Mrs. Nelson had been seen on her widow's walk every morning and afternoon, scanning the horizon, anxiously watching each ship that sailed in. Molly was starting to worry – not just about the Captain but about Mrs. Nelson as well. How would she take the news if his ship had been lost at sea?

The good news was that the Thomsons had returned home! The storm had not hit New Bern as hard as her father had thought. The wind had lost speed as the hurricane made landfall. By the time the storm had passed over New Bern, the pounding rain was all that was left. New Bern had some flooding, but the waters had quickly receded and the Thomsons were able to get home. They arrived a few days later than expected, but they made it, nonetheless.

Once the Thomsons returned, William told Molly and Lydia all about his family trip. While they were in New Bern, they had watched the building of Tryon Palace. What a grand place it was going to be! Lydia and William pretended to be the Royal Governor and his wife, hosting tea parties and re-enacting the grand balls they imagined would take place there. Molly, however, pretended to be an English queen, on a visit to the governor's mansion. How William and Lydia had laughed when she adjusted her imaginary crown!

Now, Molly was skipping down the road with Lydia lagging behind, as usual. "Come on," Molly urged. "You're as slow as that old turtle we saw yesterday!"

The waterfront became all hustle and bustle as loads of lumber and salted fish were being hauled onto one ship while large barrels and bolts of cloth were being taken off another. Molly and Lydia inched closer to the ships to get a better look at the fabrics that were being delivered today. Their mothers had promised to make them some new dresses if they found some material they liked. The friends were close enough now to touch each and every bolt stacked on the docks.

One pattern caught Molly's eye. It was lilac, with tiny yellow rosebuds. Lydia picked out a pale-blue gingham. The girls hoped these were being delivered to the general store. They

decided to check with the storekeeper later to see if the bolts had been priced to sell. Plus, they had a few coins in their pocket – just enough for lemon drops!

Molly scanned the waterfront to see if William and his family were there. She and Lydia had planned to steal William away if they saw him so they could share their lemon drops with him. William's mother didn't allow him to eat candy – she said it was bad for his teeth – but he loved the taste of lemon drops. He could hold them between his cheek and gum for the longest time, never even letting them touch his teeth! Molly and Lydia sneaked him a few pieces whenever they could.

No sign of the Thomsons, but Molly spied Mrs. Ramsey perched on the edge of the walk, talking to Mrs. Nelson and patting her hand! Molly and Lydia ran for cover, hiding behind a nearby barrel so the crotchety old woman wouldn't see them. What was Mrs. Ramsey doing there? It was bad enough that she looked down on them through the spectacles on the tip of her nose, but here she was, right in their path! Molly was sure she would take great satisfaction in telling Mother and Aunt Susan that she had seen the girls on the docks – alongside sailors and ruffians – where young ladies should never be!

Molly motioned for Lydia to stay put, then darted to the edge of the harbor, where she found a small round pebble. Aiming carefully, she tossed the pebble just past the heads of the two women. When they turned to look in the direction of the noise, Molly and Lydia sneaked around the barrel and made their way back to where the docks met the street, with no one the wiser.

"Whew," said Lydia. "That was close!" The two girls skipped towards the walkway, heading for the general store, when Molly suddenly stopped. What was that on the edge of the docks? She was sure she had seen it out of the corner of her eye, but where did it go? She took a step backward and looked again. There it was! The sun was hitting it just right, now, reflecting off of a shiny surface.

Molly moved closer. There, lying across some seaweed and broken seashells that had been washed up by the storm, was a silver necklace. The delicate chain was broken, but the heart-shaped pendant was intact, with some kind of engraving on it. Molly rubbed it between her thumb and forefinger to see if she could make out the words. There were two names – Dorothea and Josiah – and underneath was a date – Dec. 12, 1742. On the back of the pendant was a phrase, but it was too worn and smooth to read. The only words she could make out were "You" and "sea."

Molly turned to show the necklace to Lydia, and the two girls studied the pendant. They were curious about the people it represented and wondered what the phrase might mean. Then, remembering that they had to be home soon, Molly tucked the necklace into the pocket of her apron as the girls hurried off to the general store.

Next week, chapter five – "Stranded!"

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Learn more about the colonial capitol!

Tryon Palace

Tryon Palace, North Carolina's colonial capitol, is centrally located near the state's coast in New Bern. The building of the palace began in 1767 and fueled controversy because of its cost. Governor William Tryon and his family moved in in 1770 but lived in Tryon's Palace barely a year. Governor Josiah Martin lived there until the early days of the Revolutionary War. Today, the site consists of three historic homes, 13 gardens and the New Bern Academy Museum. Guides, craftspeople and interpreters bring American history to life for visitors. A new museum, the North Carolina History Education Center opened in July 2010, adjacent to Tryon Palace. www.tryonpalace.com.

(Photo courtesy of Tryon Palace, New Bern, N.C.)

