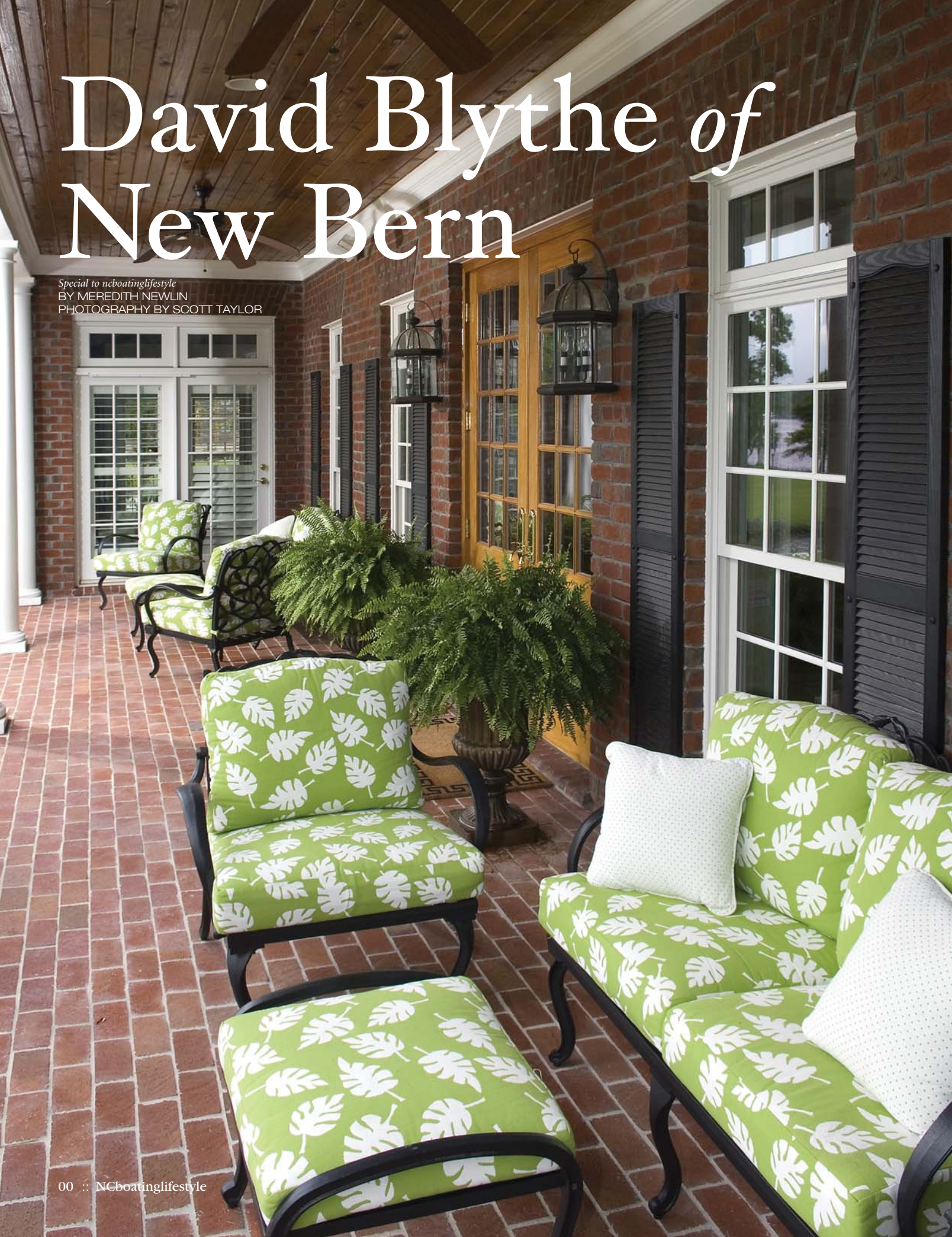


# David Blythe of New Bern

Special to nchoatinglifestyle  
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**J**f the town of New Bern were Bedford Falls, David Blythe might seem to many like a more Southern, nautical-oriented version of George Bailey.

A hard-working, strongly rooted native son of New Bern, Blythe is nothing less than an expert on the ins and outs of his town.

And in the case of New Bern, there seem to be more and more occurrences of “ins.”

“There must be something in the air here,” says Blythe. “Or in our case, something in the water. People visit and people stay.”

According to Blythe, discoveries of the hidden treasure of New Bern happen in many different ways. Some come to escape for a relaxing vacation, some come for conferences and some come to visit the ones who came to stay.

“I ask myself what draws all these folks to New Bern, but then I remember all the things I enjoy about living here,” says Blythe.

Born in in 1969, Blythe’s childhood memories are filled with outdoor activities along the Trent and Neuse rivers, the Pamlico Sound, Bogue Sound, the Atlantic Ocean and family vacations on Emerald Isle.



“My summers were simple,” he recalls. “They would start with Vacation Bible School at First Baptist Church. Then there was swimming, fishing, skiing, sailing, hydro-sliding and just having fun hanging out with lifelong friends.”

For Blythe, childhood vacations in Blowing Rock were wonderful, but he was always anxious to come home to New Bern to be on the water again.

Blythe has no shortage of other fond New Bern childhood memories, such as serving

drinks in a Pepsi stand on Middle Street with his two older brothers. (As the original location of inventor Caleb Bradham’s pharmacy in 1898, New Bern is the official birthplace of Pepsi-Cola.)

Blythe understands why visitors immediately fall in love with his town. He equates the warm, welcoming New Bern lifestyle to an immediate sense of belonging.

In many instances, visitors seek out realtors to begin house shopping on the first day of their visit. “They’ll walk around and by lunchtime are saying, ‘Which realtor should we use?’”

Instead of transporting their furniture to New Bern, many sell or give it away, leaving them with a need for new furniture.

That’s where Branch’s Furniture comes in. Founded in 1949 by Blythe’s grandfather, Branch’s is located on Pollock Street in the historic district of New Bern and is considered the one-stop shopping source for home and office furniture in New Bern.

Blythe’s grandfather, Sam Branch, founded Branch’s as an office-supply store and established its successful reputation. In 1998, Blythe and his brother Chris took over and



carried the family's legacy into the 21st century. The showroom has more than doubled in size.

"I'm so glad to have my brother there with me," Blythe says. "We couldn't do it without each other." Branch's recently expanded in August 2003 to become a home and office furniture store and gift store.

"Ownership of a business is always a challenge, but that's what I love about it. It's the people, the customer base. We have people who have been coming to us for more than 50 years. And it's also the new relationships that are built."

Blythe's newest venture is Colonial Place, a development of 10 condominiums in the heart of New Bern's historical district. Blythe has enlisted the real-estate expertise of Marvin and Michael Raines and George Zaytoun of Century 21 Zaytoun-Raines for the project.

Located a block from the water and less than a one-block walk from downtown, Colonial Place units will range from 1,200-2,400-square-feet. Owners will have two parking places per unit and large balconies. The unique position of the units, above the expanded Branch's, will offer an unbeatable opportunity for boaters and water-lovers to walk to practically everything – an activity Blythe and his family love themselves.

"Many nights my wife and kids will just go and walk around downtown. It's a meet-n-greet; everybody enjoys the fellowship of others and the chance to escape from the hustle and bustle."

If such a scene sounds like something out of a movie – it is. New Bern was the setting of



the recent film *The Notebook*, based on the novel by New Bern native Nicholas Sparks, who happens to be Blythe's neighbor and a regular at Branch's Furniture. Their children also attend school together.

The center of Blythe's busy life is his family, who all happen to be as crazy about the water as he is.

"I cherish the evenings and weekends with my wife and kids," says Blythe. "We love cooking out on the grill and riding on the boat." His wife [need name] is an avid boater and fisherwoman. His seven-year-old daughter [need name] begs to be taken on the boat, and his four-year-old son, [need name] was on the boat when he was three months old, and now even sleeps with a rope at night.

After a busy day of work, Blythe often takes the children of friends and neighbors out on regular jaunts on his 1987 18-foot center console Privateer or his 1997 24-foot Albemarle.

"They call me the 'kid man,'" he says. "I throw all the kids on the boat and take them out to the sandbar...we have a great time."

Anything that has to do with the water, and Blythe will probably be found there.

He is an active member of the Coastal Conservation Association, serving as Neuse River Chapter President and State Secretary for the Board of Directors.

And as member of the Builder's Choice Fishing Team, Blythe usually participates in five to six yearly marlin tournaments, all the way from Wilmington to Manteo.

A hectic life for some, but for Blythe, heaven.

As he says, "I don't quit." 🚤

For more information about Colonial Place, visit <http://c21zr.com> or call Michael Raines at 252.633.3069.

For information on Branch's Furniture, go to [www.branches.net](http://www.branches.net) or call 252.638.5171.