



THE WHITTLERS BENCH Southport Historical Society

PO Box 10014
Southport, North Carolina 28461

Volume XXIV, No. 5

October 2000

*This took the place of our
usual Nov. issue*

November Meeting and Potluck Dinner

Thursday, November 16, 6:30 p.m. at Trinity Methodist Church,
corner of Nash Street and Atlantic Avenue in Southport.

Dr. John A. Goree, whose article appeared in the "Looking Back"
page of the August "Whittler's Bench," will present a program
on early maps of the Lower Cape Fear.

President's Note

We, the Suiters, are back from our volunteer stint in Alaska
and are eagerly awaiting the onset of autumn in Southport, which
is rarely seen here before November. (Our northern autumn was
pretty well finished by September 5, when we headed home.)

The great coup accomplished by Vice President Wyckoff this summer
was to acquire the Christmas Tour of Homes for the Society.
(Apparently "Southport 2000," the previous sponsor, reached
the year 2000 and poof! disappeared.) Even more amazing and
unprecedented was the agreement of the two Co-Chairmen Cathy
Fravel and Kate Hardin to continue on this year! Their
experience is irreplaceable, and will ensure a continuation
of last year's success. This should be a dependable recurring
fundraiser for SHS for the foreseeable future. Everyone please
note that ticket numbers are limited to 1200 to prevent anyone's
house from being mobbed; last year was a sellout and this year
will go early--do not wait to get your tickets! (See article
inside.)

When Bob and June Wojda went South (and you guys thought this
was "South"--they moved to Mississippi! Too cold in
Southport...), they not only vacated the critical job of Jail
Project Officer held by Bob, but also left June's Board of
Directors seat vacant. We welcome Ann Brown, who has agreed
to be a voting member of the Board; she was already attending
meetings as the SHS liaison with the now-defunct Southport 2000,
and knew how painless the job was. Now we desperately need
a Jailer to replace Bob...

We are all concerned about charter SHS member and Historian
Bill Reaves, whose health is not good. Bill was the very first
program speaker when the Society was founded 25 years ago, and
we certainly want him to come down from Wilmington in January
2001 to celebrate our anniversary. Get well, Bill!



WOW! What a fine local historian I turned out to be! I have almost let the year 2000 pass without mentioning an important milestone that it represents in our history. Several months ago Bill Reaves called this to my attention, but I forgot. I hope Bill will forgive me!

This year 2000 is the 250th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Smith, for whom our town and the township were originally named. It was Benjamin Smith who introduced the necessary legislation to get our town started.

You'll be hearing a lot more about him during our 25th anniversary year of the Southport Historical Society, but here I will quote two short articles about him which appeared in the Wilmington Morning Star on October 29, 1942. These were furnished to me by Bill:

Benjamin Smith was born in Brunswick County in 1750. He was aide-de-camp to General Washington in 1776 and was with him in the retreat from Long Island, N. Y. He participated in the defense of Fort Moultrie and served during the British invasion of South Carolina.

In 1789 he gave 20,000 acres of land to the university of North Carolina, whose trustees named a hall of that institution in his honor.

He was a member of the State Senate from Brunswick County for fifteen times. He served as a major-general of militia in 1794-1810 and when war with France threatened in 1796, he raised a regiment of North Carolina volunteers for possible service.

He was governor of the State in 1810-1812 and died in Smithville, now Southport, on February 10, 1829.

(P. S. by Susie: for those who do not already know, he was one of the first town commissioners and had a lovely home on the same spot where the Brunswick Inn now stands).

Another article says: THE FREIGHTER BENJAMIN SMITH LAUNCHED IN WILMINGTON SHIPYARD, 1942: The BENJAMIN SMITH, 37th freighter to near completion at the yards of the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company here, was launched at 2 p. m. yesterday to mark the completion of the shipyard's first two contracts with the U. S. Maritime Commission for Liberty freighters. The vessel, named for an early North Carolina governor who was a native of Brunswick County, is the sixth Liberty ship to be launched this month.

THE ORIGIN AND DESTINY OF THE INDIANS OF THE CAPE FEAR REGION...

The question is frequently asked regarding the origin, especially, of the Native Americans who inhabited the lower Cape Fear region. This inquiry is natural because we know that the Iroquois language group, including the Tuscarora on the inland coast, and the Cherokee, in the mountains, of North Carolina came from other places. The Cherokee, for example, seemingly broke away from the northern Iroquois as much as 3,400 years ago, while the Tuscarora broke away from the same northern center but some 1,000 years later.

The Siouan group, who occupied a large portion of North Carolina including the Piedmont and the southeastern coastal area, were related linguistically to the populous Siouan tribes of the West, hence were sometimes called 'Eastern Sioux.' They included perhaps as many as twenty-plus tribes, as the Catawba, the Saponi, the Keyauwee, the Waccamaw, and our own Cape Fear Indians.

This does not mean, however, that the Cape Fear Indians necessarily 'came' from somewhere. Rather, it is reasonable to assume that they gradually evolved through the complex interaction of Native Americans ancient and modern.

The picture is now rather clear regarding the five major cultural traditions - from the earliest Paleo-Indian (prior to 8,000 BCE) to the latest Historic (after CE 1540) - and the fact that all are represented to various degrees in North Carolina, suggestive of a very complex process of development and interaction across the hundreds and thousands of years. Apparently, the most frequently found Archaic point in our coastal area is the Guilford (of roughly 4,000 BCE).

Recent archaeological work, however, has revealed not only evidence of Clovis culture (c 11,500 BCE) to our north (Cactus Hill site in Virginia) and to our south (Topper Site in South Carolina, where I recently spent a week on an expedition), but also evidence of earlier cultures (cf Time magazine, April 17, 2000), which means that Early Americans have been in the eastern United States, generally, for a very long time.

Now, as for the destiny, or demise, of the Cape Fear Indians, that is even more unclear than their origin. Not well tribally defined or organized to begin with, affected by disease as they encountered foreigners, and under the pressure of attacks such as those brought on by Maurice and Roger Moore, they gradually disappeared from the scene.

It is felt by many that the Cape Fear Indians moved south, in the direction of Port Royal (near present Beaufort, SC), which is supported by the evidence that certain Indians in that area seemed to know a great deal about the Cape Fear region. In any case, by 1725 the discouraged and declining-in-number Cape Fear Indians had disappeared from the scene.

It is clear, then, that both the origin and destiny of the Cape Fear Indians are somewhat shrouded in mystery. However, it is a reasonable assumption that their origin lay in a gradual and complex development over hundreds and thousands of years, as certain Early Americans intermingled with later persons who came into the region. For example, early on the first inhabitants of our area may have come by sea, as did the later Vikings; and they could have intermingled with the other Early Americans who came from Asia via the Bering Strait; while even later they could have intermingled with the number of miscellaneous groups who came to the coastal area for sustenance - all plausible but obviously still very theoretical.

Their destiny, as noted, was also somewhat complex, although more limited in time. Relatively small in number, generally not well-organized, threatened by disease and war, they gradually died out and/or moved, probably south, until they were literally not heard from again as a recognizable group.

Native Americans, in spite of our lack of certain knowledge about their origin and destiny, did occupy our region for a very long time, leaving evidence - however sparse - of their presence. Moreover, there are a number of interesting things which we do reasonably know about them, including their characteristics, their living habits, their religious beliefs and overall values, their participation in colonial wars (as both friend and foe), and others, but these are stories for another day...

Gary H. Brown, Ph.D.

cut here and send form with your check

New Membership Registration

Join the Southport Historical Society and receive the
newsletter on a regular basis

individual	\$10	student	\$2	business/organization	\$15
couple	15	(up to age 18)		sustaining	25

life membership \$ 150

life membership for couple \$ 200

name (please print) _____

address _____

city, state, zip _____

telephone _____

send to : PO Box 10014, Southport, North Carolina 28461



The Southport Historical Society
Is Proud to Present
The Annual Christmas Tour of Homes

Saturday, December 9, 2000

2:30 to 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

There will be 11 homes on the tour including Lois Jane's and The Garrison
Shops and restaurants will be open late

Tickets will be on sale on or about November 1

\$10 in advance, \$15 the day of the tour
Tickets are good for either time

Tickets may be purchased at Southport Visitors Center
Or Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce

No Rain Date – No Refunds

We would like to have members of the Southport Historical Society acting as
hosts/hostesses in the homes so if you would like to participate, please contact:

Ann Brown at 457-6710

For more information on the tour, contact Southport Visitors Center
At 910/457-7927 or 1/800/388-9635

Tour Chairpersons: Cathy Fravel 457-4794 & Kate Hardin 457-6842



Southport Coverlet

An excellent choice for Christmas gifts!

Remember: your member discount is available only on items purchased from the society

This beautiful coverlet was commissioned by the Southport Historical Society and created by *We Love Country*. It is 100% cotton, two-layer, Jacquard woven in the U.S.A., preshrunk, colorfast and machine-washable. It is handsome and practical, measuring approximately 48 x 68 inches, and fringed on all four sides.

The design captures the history and spirit of early Southport, as seen in old photographs taken many years ago. Depicted are the Brunswick County Courthouse, the Pilot obelisk at the old cemetery, the Ft. Johnston Garrison House, the Masonic Hall during World War I, the entrance (1912) of the Southport Public Library, the Old Jail, the early school (1904) which is now an art gallery, Doshier Memorial Hospital, St. Philip's, Trinity Methodist, the old Pilot tower, Prince's Creek light, Old Baldy on Bald Head Island, the Indian Trail Tree and the Historical Society logo. The perfect gift for family members and friends both near and far, it captures special memories and will become an instant keepsake.

This unique, custom woven coverlet is available in the following classic colors: Williamsburg Blue, Hunter Green and Cranberry Red, all with Natural as a second color. The price is only \$50.00. Member discount, 10%.

Please enter the desired quantity of each color:

___ Williamsburg Blue @ \$50.00 each \$_____

___ Hunter Green @ \$50.00 each \$_____

___ Cranberry Red @ \$50.00 each \$_____

Sales Tax @ 6% \$_____
Shipping (if necessary) \$ 5.00

TOTAL enclosed \$ _____

Checks should be made payable to The Southport Historical Society
and mailed to PO Box 10014, Southport, NC 28461

Ordered by:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

The Book Page

Southport Historical Society is actively engaged in publishing books dealing with the history of the lower Cape Fear. Works listed below are available for sale by the Society, and at book stores in the area.

Architecture of Southport, by Carl Lounsbury. Southport Historical Society, second printing 1966, 62 pp., soft-cover. \$15.00. The styles of old Southport homes are described and illustrated.

Bald Head, by David Stick. Southport Historical Society, 1998 reprint, 143 pp, ill., hard-cover. \$14.95.

Cap'n Charlie and the Lights of the Lower Cape Fear, by Ethel Herring. Southport Historical Society, fourth printing 1995, 120 pp, ill., soft-cover. \$10.00.

The Cemeteries of Southport, compiled by Dorcas W. Schmidt. Southport Historical Society, 1983, 94 pp., soft-cover. \$8.00. A unique reference book listing names of those buried in the cemeteries of Southport and environs.

Fort Caswell in War and Peace, by Ethel Herring and Carolee Williams, revised by Kelli Williams. Published by North Carolina Baptist Assembly. Second edition, 1999, 141 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$16.95.

A History of Brunswick County, by Lawrence Lee. Published by Brunswick County, Bolivia, North Carolina. 1980, 279 pp., ill., hard-cover, \$18.30.

A History of Fort Johnston, by Wilson Angley. Includes index. Published by Southport Historical Society, in association with the Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1996, 150 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$10.00.

Guns for Cotton, by Thomas Boaz. Published by Burd Street Press, 1996, 86 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$9.95.

Joshua's Dream, a history of old Southport by Susan S. Carson. First printing published by Carolina Power & Light Company in 1992, second printing published by Southport Historical Society, 1994. 168 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$15.00.

Long Beach, A North Carolina Town: Its Origin and History, by Wolfgang Furstenau. Published by the author in Long Beach, N.C., 1995, 2. printing 1997, 364 pp., ill., hard-cover, \$17.95

Reminiscences of Wilmington And Smithville---Southport 1848-1900, by Dr. Walter G. Curtis. Published by Southport Historical Society, 1999, 88 pp., ill., hard-cover, \$12.95.

Southport (Smithville), A Chronology, Volume I, 1520-1887, by Bill Reaves. Published by Broadfoot Publishing Company: Wilmington, North Carolina, 1978. Second edition 1985, 129 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$15.00.

Southport (Smithville), A Chronology, Volume II, 1887-1920, by Bill Reaves. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, North Carolina, 1978. Second edition 1990, 324 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$20.00.

Southport, North Carolina, A Chronology, Volume III, 1920-1940, by Bill Reaves. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, North Carolina, 1996, 248 pp., 46-page index, ill., soft-cover. First edition. \$12.00.

Southport (Smithville), A Chronology, Volume IV, 1941-1970, by Bill Reaves. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, North Carolina, 1999, 281 pp., ill., soft-cover. 16.95.

Southport Secrets, compiled by Donald K. Johnson. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, NC. 1998, 88 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$12.95.

Note: Membership entitles you to purchase these books from the Society at a 10% discount.
Please include \$2.00 per book for mail orders.