



THE WHITTLES' BENCH

Southport Historical Society

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In this Issue

- Looking Back
- Dues Are Due!
- Board Meeting Highlights
- Interesting Web Sites

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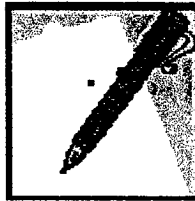
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PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPH

Thank you. Thank you. THANK YOU !!!!! The Christmas Tour of Homes was a wonderful success with nearly all of the tickets sold. It could not have happened without the committee, co-chaired by Pat Kirkman and Ginny Noble; Cathy and Phil Fravel, Susan Toth, Celeste Plassman, Chris Suiter, and all of their assistants who worked tirelessly behind the scenes: all of our gracious homeowners who so generously decorated their homes and opened them for the enjoyment of the public: all of the hosts and hostesses who greeted the public and showed them through the homes: all of the young folk who donned the costumes, donated for the occasion by Farrell's Costumes Ltd. Of Wilmington, and strolled the Bay Street area singing Christmas carols: P. D. Midgett for video taping the festivities: Kelli and Dan Menna of The Pharmacy for hosting the sumptuous appreciation luncheon on Sunday, and Beverly Wyckoff for photographing all of the activities. A very special "thank you" to Randy Jones, Southport's Director of Tourism, who not only worked on the tour committee, but also did a wonderful job of coordinating all of the events of the day. Without each and every one of these individuals, we could not have raised more of the funds needed for the restoration of the 1904 Brunswick County Jail in Southport.

Work continues steadily on the Old Jail. When a sizeable crack was uncovered in one of the interior brick walls, the Board called in a structural engineer to evaluate the overall soundness of the structure. A preliminary evaluation proved encouraging and the engineer will be returning shortly to complete his study. We still intend to have the building ready for a grand Centennial celebration, as only Southport can celebrate, by July 2004.

Peter Wyckoff



January MEETING

The January meeting will be on Thursday, January 23rd, at 6:30pm at the Southport Community Building. Be ready for a pot luck feast and an introduction to genealogy by Beverly Titerington.

"The Whittler's Bench" prepared by Becky & Bert Felton, Pauline Swain
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LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

Susan Carson, Editor

Since we have just celebrated another Christmas season, I thought that this piece written by Boyce Spencer would be appropriate. Boyce, who is a native of Southport, is writing a book about his memories of growing up in our town.

Thanks, Boyce, for sharing your memories of Christmas during the 30's and 40's with us.

Christmas in Southport

Christmas in Southport during the 30's and early 40's was always looked forward to with much anticipation and great expectations. Probably best of all was that school was let out until after new years.

Our Christmas tree was always given to us by a friend or family member until I reached the age when I could go in the woods and cut one myself. The tree was a cedar and the small needles would penetrate your skin and cause a rash of sorts that was very uncomfortable. Decorating the tree was just as bad and the removal of the decorations at the end of the season was even worse because the needles had dried and become even more of a menace. The lights we first used were the kind that when a single bulb burned out the whole strand went out. Finding the culprit light took considerable time as each bulb had to be replaced with a good one until the strand lit up. Mama tired of this yearly ritual and purchased several strings of outdoor lights. We used these on the tree for years. After mama passed away I still made use of the lights until they got misplaced after lending them to someone for use at a dance. The lights were blue with a pink center. Not very Christmas sounding but they were pretty. The tree was always in the same corner of the living room and tied to the walls to keep it from leaning. Most of the time the base of the tree was kept in a bucket of dirt so it could be watered from time to time.

Next to the tree was the fireplace with the stockings hung with care from the mantle. Santa filled the stockings with fruits and nuts and maybe a small toy for me in my stocking. For some reason I always got mama a bible for a present. She must have had more bibles than any woman in town. Evening in Paris perfume was popular and I made sure my sister Evelyn got a bottle for Christmas. It came in a small blue bottle with a tassel on top. The cost of the perfume was probably in the neighborhood of 25 cents a gallon. She pretended she liked it and that was all that counted.

Some of the houses around town were decorated but nothing like the houses of today. Carolers would come by in the evenings and sing the songs of the season. My favorite group was Erving Brown and some of his friends. They were good and reminded me of the Mills Brothers. Seems like folks don't have time for this anymore.

Where the new Baptist Church is today there was a large cedar tree and Santa Claus would be there on Christmas Eve to hand out gifts to the young children. The gifts were for the most part fruits and nuts and hard candy. Coming into Southport on Howe Street one was treated to a canopy of multicolored lights strung over the street and seeing them from a distance they looked very impressive, like a solid cover of lights. A white Christmas was always wished for but never happened. The only White Christmas then was from Bing Crosby.

Boyce Spencer

Interesting Web Sites

Here are a few very interesting web sites that you may enjoy browsing.

www.ncecho.org

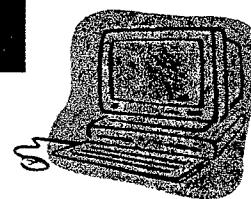
North Carolina ECHO, *Exploring Cultural Heritage Online*, is the World Wide Web's doorway to the special collections of North Carolina's libraries, archives, and museums.

www.nationaltrust.org

The web site for the National Trust for Historic Preservation

www.presnc.org

The web site for Preservation North Carolina.



Dues are Due!

Please don't forget that this is January and that this is the month to renew your membership in the Southport Historical Society for the calendar year 2003. And, when you mail in your check, we would appreciate it if you would include your e-mail address. While we all love history, we would also like to take advantage of all of the potential of modern technology. Be assured that the Society will never share or divulge your e-mail address any more than we would share or divulge your postal mailing address.

SHS BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Approved purchasing a picture of the USS Gill to include in the upcoming publication.
- Approved hiring a structural engineer to evaluate the jail for any structural problems that need to be corrected prior to renovation.
- Reviewed a heating/cooling proposal which included using exposed ducts and standard heat pumps.
- Approved using the Community Building as the standard meeting place for the society.
- Purchased prints of the old jail from Judy Hughes for a fundraising project. Judy will share part of her profit on the sales the society makes.
- Welcomed Musette Steck to the board to complete Ann Brown's term.
- Donated \$150 for the purchase of N. C. history books for the library the Southport Elementary School as a part of the Adopt-A-School partnership.
- Marvin Johnson and Irv Green reported on their current work in the old jail. The bathroom has been gutted and is ready for replacement fixtures. Volunteers are still needed.

