



THE WHITTLERS BENCH

Southport Historical Society

501 North Atlantic Avenue
Southport, North Carolina 28461

Vol. XV No. 5 Sept. 26, 1991

MEETING

The Southport Historical Society meeting will be held September 26, 1991 at Southport Presbyterian Church at 7:30 P.M.

Our speaker, Mr. George Willcox, President of Old New Hanover Genealogical Society, will speak on the Early Settlers of the Lower Cape Fear. Please come out and support us.

BICENTENNIAL QUILT

With a little "needling" and a lot of assistance, work on the squares has started. Solid, print and calico fabric is being stitched into scenes of Southport. Hopefully, some photographs and samples will be available for show and tell at our next meeting.

A special thanks to Sue Kaufman who arranged for space and location, and who is keeping records of fabric and designs.

OFFICERS, DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEE WORKERS NEEDED

The Nominating Committee is looking for a slate of candidates to run for the Bicentennial 1992 Executive Board. They would like to know your preference of position; or if you don't wish to serve on the board, what committee can you help. Please talk to: Eleanor Smith (457-6118), Laverne Rehder (457-4645), or Bill Dunn (845-2163).

To be a knowledgeable candidate or an informed voter, please study the following summary of Executive Board duties:

POSITION

RESPONSIBILITIES

(included but not limited to)

President

Supervise Society Affairs, preside at meetings, review and update by-laws and Executive Board duties, coordinate with Southport July 4 and Bicentennial Committees, oversee grants, chair "do nothing" committees and other duties as inherited.

VICE PRESIDENT

Assume duties in absence of President, oversee membership and public relations committees, also genealogy and cemetery committees, develop, distribute, and maintain brochure. Maintain roster of members, other duties by default.

EXECUTIVE BOARD DUTIES CON'T

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITIES</u>
Treasurer	Financial custodian of funds, prepare annual report and budget, arrange for annual audit, administer Cemetery Endowment, other duties as required (collection and expenditures).
Secretary	Administration Assistant of the Executive Board, prepare board information and notify of meetings, distribute calendar of events, oversee minutes of all meetings, prepare correspondence and other duties as requested.
Archivist/Librarian	Collect and maintain historical source material, oversee Society historian and scrapbook, coordinate publications committee, oral and video history, sales of Society books and cards, publications and printing and other duties as assigned.
Director #1	Fund Raising. Executive Board representative for all fund raising efforts and committees, such as antique show and historic building markers; review annual goals and budgets, recommend action and prepare progress reports.
Director #2	Programs. Arrange for speakers and facilities, oversee publicity, heritage garden, social and nominating committees.
Director #3	Property. Maintain Old Jail and Timber Building Committees, prepare or oversee displays and host/hostess for July 4th open house at the jail.

JULY FOURTH CELEBRATION (199th)

Thanks to all the Jail keepers over the 199th 4th of July Celebration.

	<u>DATE</u>	<u>VISITORS</u>	<u>BOOK</u>	
		<u>SIGNING</u>	<u>& CARD</u>	
	<u>1991</u>	<u>REGISTER</u>	<u>SALES</u>	<u>DONATIONS</u>
TUES.	2 July	102	\$40.00	\$14.00
WED.	3 July	128	66.00	48.00
Thurs.	4 July	162	60.50	27.93
HOLIDAY TOTALS		392	\$166.50	\$89.93

Eighteen States were represented: NC, SC, GA, VA, TN KY, FL, TX, OK, OH, LA, IN, WV, NY, MA, PA, MD, MO

Well over 600 people toured the Old County Jail. Melted ice cubes were available and well received.

Comments included: Very interesting, nice accommodations, neat, great, swell, cool, wow, awesome, last time I want to be in jail!



Susan Carson, Editor

SOME RECENT HISTORY: You will be happy to know that Bill Reaves, our first lifetime member and author of our two best sellers (The Southport Chronology I and II) has been notified by the American Association for State and Local History that he has been chosen as one of their 1991 award winners. The AASLH Awards Program is the nation's most prestigious competition for recognition of achievement in the preservation and interpretation of local, state and regional history. CONGRATULATIONS, BILL! As soon as we learn more about when the presentation will be made, and where, we will advise you. Perhaps some of us can attend and see Bill receive an award that he so richly deserves.

AND, speaking of Bill, he has sent to us for inclusion in Whittlers Bench an item which he found in the Wilmington Morning Star for June 3, 1923. I quote it below:

Southport has a relic of the past in the old whittling tree, near the waterfront, which has been standing there for 35 years. This noted cedar has two graceful partners, cottonwoods of leafy nature.

Natives and visitors while their time away beneath the shade of the tree. Every year the benches must be renewed as the whittlers often take it in their heads to whittle them away.

Among the tales related about the famous tree is the number of knives used by the whittlers. It is said that the man in the nearby store sells two or three gross of knives every week. Another story runs that enough corn liquor has been drunk under the tree to float a battleship.

When the trees were recently named, there were four in the group. They were Woodrow Wilson, William McKinley, Bill Bryan and Warren Harding. According to Southport legend, the Harding tree would not grow and was unable to flourish among the Democratic trees and country.

Very few remnants of this old art of whittling or carving remain in America or even in foreign countries. Formerly whittling or carving was done in the open, and it was an old custom dating back to early colonial times."

Thanks for the item, Bill. Now to the others of you - why don't you help me out, too? Write an original article or find one in an old State Port Pilot (see micro-film at Library - or see some of the old books there).

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THESE NAMES? Joshua Potts, Benjamin Smith, Charles Gause, Robert Howe, Jr. and William Espey Lord. You should get acquainted with them. In addition to other interesting things in their lives, they were the five commissioners appointed by the General Assembly to lay off the Town of Smithville and get it going. (Joshua was the real dreamer of the group. Watch for the publication of Joshua's Dream in 1992).

The reasons for being in jail or the offences charged were recorded as follows:

Eating too much	"She made me do it!"
Sibling assault	Getting sunburned
Going to NC instead of Duke	Assault on Building
Being hot, sweaty and	Inspector
dressing funny	Indecent exposure
"Hirting"	Who knows
Husband harrassment	Damn Yankee
Complaining about the	Loitering
weather	"Coplaining"
Being too obsessed	Loafing
Trying to lose the kids	

The last vagrant departed on parole for good behavior at 5:15 P.M. on July 4th.

WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA HAPPENINGS

DESIGNER SHOWHOUSE

A Benefit for the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society

November 23 - December 15, 1991

For tickets or more information please contact

The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society

P.O. Box 813 • Wilmington, NC 28402

(919) 762-0492



Old Wilmington ★ by ★ Candlelight ★

A Tour of Historical Homes

To Benefit the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society

December 7 & 8, 1991

4:00 - 9:00 p.m.

For tickets or more information please contact

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P.O. Box 813 • Wilmington, NC 28402

(919) 762-0492

CEMETERY — From the newspaper I see Southport again will be the locale for movie making. Again camera crews will be photographing the Old Smithville Burying Ground! I hope that as many of our members as possible will be there to "watch". Last time a movie company used our headquarters and photographed in the cemetery, they were not careful of our historical treasures. If Historical Society people are alertly on hand to "watch" maybe we can assure some care is taken of our Heritage Area, Maybe.....

GENEALOGY

Some years ago I attended the Institute of Historical and Genealogical research at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. That year I attended a special interest session on Southern research.

One joy of the Institute was the informal gatherings after the dinner hour. That year Dr. Richard S. Lackey, from Mississippi, author of Cite Your Sources, (A manual for Documenting Family Histories and Genealogical Records) was one of the instructors. One evening he was asked if he would read a copy of his "famous letter" in class the next day. I am told this is a true story:

A Washington, DC lawyer wrote a Mississippi colleague asking for a land search on a specific piece of property. The Mississippi lawyer made the search, wrote his report which gave title references back to 1824, and sent it all to his client in Washington, DC.

The Mississippi lawyer was surprised, a few weeks later, to receive a letter which congratulated him on his fine piece of research work, but with the following note "I had hoped you could take this land ownership record back a bit further than 1824." I will quote from the Mississippi lawyer's answer as best I can:

"Sir, I cannot believe that anyone with an education such as yours, and a practicing attorney, can be so lacking in general knowledge.

I will, therefore, comply with your request to take the land ownership back a bit further. Before the 1824 title was registered the land belonged to the United States Government, who obtained the title from the King of France, by right of purchase.

The King of France obtained the title from Spain, by right of conquest.

The Queen of Spain obtained the title by the right of discovery by financing the voyage of one C. Columbus.

Now this Queen of Spain was a very pious and prudent lady, especially when it came to land titles (almost as careful as you, I might add.) So before permitting the fleet of exploring ships to sail, she took the precaution to write for permission of the Pope in Rome.

Now the Pope is known as vicar, personal representative on earth of Jesus Christ. It is generally accepted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Thus, we can be assured the state of Mississippi belonged to God. If you have any further doubts about this, we invite you to come to Mississippi and to see God's Country."

N.B.: You can be a historian, and not care a bit about genealogy, but you sure can't be a genealogist, if you don't know history! (AWB)