

Southport Historical Society

Spring 2008

From the President's Pen . . .

Being a long-time "church lady", I am very excited about the theme for our Heritage Days this year (see more information on page 6). Churches were not only the houses of worship "back in the day", but also the basis of a lot of social life, especially in small communities. In this day, we have many more options for socializing so it's "not so much" as far as churches are concerned—of course there are always exceptions! Since coming to Southport twelve years ago, I have always admired the way the churches work together here, mainly through the efforts of the Interchurch Fellowship leadership. A wonderful recent example was the April 27 "All Choir Concert" to raise money for the community food pantry. What a significant event that was and how blessed we are to have almost 300 voices singing in harmony here! Just this morning as I was reading Susie's column I delighted in reading how the members of the black churches used to get up before dawn on Easter mornings and walk through the streets singing the hymns of Easter before the sunrise service on the river....hmmm, maybe we could do that again! This edition of the *Whittler's Bench* has a lot about churches and patriotism—I hope you will enjoy it and will support our upcoming events. See you there!

Pat Kirkman

Southport Minister from Civil War Era is 2008 Heritage Stone Honoree

The Rev. Alexander Davis Betts paced the front porch of the parsonage when word came that President Abraham Lincoln had called up troops to bring the seceding states back into the Union. North Carolina had not yet seceded, but Betts knew that it would in the wake of that news, and its sons would be going off to war. Betts was the pastor of what was then the Smithville Methodist Episcopal Church, South (it became Trinity United Methodist Church and Smithville became Southport). He said it was "one of the saddest days of my life." Betts wrote that he loved the Union and prayed for its preservation, but war could not be averted. "That day I walked up and down my porch in Smithville and wept, and suffered, and prayed for the South."

As in most of the nation's wars, the city and Ft. Johnston became a rallying point for troops from throughout the state. Within days, Rev. Betts was called up by the governor to become chaplain for Co. G of the 10th Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers, the Brunswick County Company. After weighing his decision, he accepted the commission and reported for duty. That wasn't much of a task, since he had only to walk a couple of blocks to Ft. Johnston. From there he went with the unit to Richmond, VA, and remained with it throughout the war, praying for the wounded from both sides.

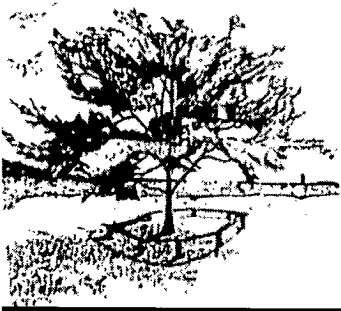
Of particular interest is that Rev. Betts had a keen interest in history and kept a journal, which he later wrote as a book on his experiences, "*Experiences of a Confederate Chaplain, 1861-1865*".

In this year in which Southport Heritage Days honors our churches, Alexander Betts was chosen for both his service to the church and for his written contribution to Southport's history. A stone in his memory will be placed in our Heritage Walk.

~ Story Contributed by Larry Maisel, Archivist~

The Whittler's Bench

"Bringing Our Past Into The Present"



THE WHITTLES BENCH

is a quarterly publication of the Southport Historical Society a 501 3-c non-profit organization
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OFFICERS:

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DIRECTORS:

Cathy Fravel
 Karen Knighton
 Tom Izod

MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of this society shall be to bring together persons interested in the history of Southport and surrounding areas. Understanding the history of our community is basic to our democratic way of life, gives us a better understanding of our state and nation, and promotes a better appreciation of our American heritage.

We further cooperate with the city of Southport to preserve the town's records and archives, and encourage the preservation of historic buildings, monuments and markers.

We endeavor to provide programs of historical interest at regular meetings, publish articles and books for the purpose of education and encourage community participation in the preservation of our heritage.

Southport Historical Society was established January, 1976 and maintains the **Old Jail Museum** located at 318 E. Nash Street Southport, NC

Membership . . .

We welcome these new members who have joined since the last newsletter was mailed. We are delighted to have each of you and look forward to your involvement in our organization!

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Jim & Nancy Crum | Grover & Marianne Gore | John & Christine Keilman |
| Gill & Francie Fitzhugh | Donn & Nancy Eaton | Katherine Glover |
| Orton Plantation, Inc. | Max & Sarah Williams | Katherine Hufham |

If you would like a **MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY** it can be e-mailed to you or we can print a copy and mail it to you. Please e-mail us at shs@ec.rr.com or call Pat at 457-0579 or write for a copy to SHS, P. O. Box 10014, Southport, NC 28461. Please be protective of the directory and do not allow it to be used for mass mailings of advertisements or solicitations. Thank you for your consideration.

In Remembrance . . .

We are saddened by the death of society member, **Sally Disher**. Our sympathy is extended to Tom and the family.

Meeting Dates . . .

Our next covered dish dinner meeting is scheduled for **May 22** at the **Southport Community Building**. Our future **2008** meeting dates will be **September 25** and **November 20**. Go to your calendar right now and set aside these dates - we'll be looking for you at each meeting at the community building.



Old Jail Advisory Board member, Bert Felton demonstrates the newly acquired stock at the Jail.

At the Old Jail Museum . . .

Training took a different twist during the April sessions for the Old Jail Museum docents as **Bert Felton** gave a "sit-in" demonstration of the new wooden stock that has been added to the Jail grounds. Built by **Bob Felber**, the stock will soon be joined by its partner, a pillory. Although not actually used on the present sight of the jail it could have well been a fixture at the first Brunswick County jail located in the Franklin Square Park.

Bert's historical interpretation was a real hit! Thanks Bob, for your building skills! Visitors to the Old Jail Museum this season (mid-April - October) will benefit from the information that will be available to them from the well-trained docents thanks to efforts of the Advisory Board. Docent coordinator, **Shirley Wilson**, has done an excellent job of contacting and setting up the schedule through June for opening the jail on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Thanks also to **Karen Knighton, Nancy Christianson and Larry Maisel** for their help in the training sessions. However the most thanks goes to all those who have committed to serving as docents - our efficient "jailbirds"! Be sure to put the Jail on your "to go to" list when you have friends and family in town this season - the kids especially will like investigating the stock and pillory and spending a little "time behind bars".

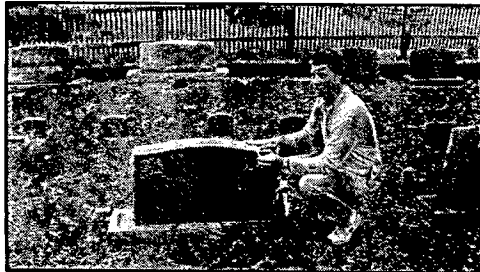
We can always use more docents - call Shirley at 454-4327 to get in on the fun!

The Old Burying Ground . . .

Work days have begun again at the cemetery and lots of live oak leaves are being raked up! Thanks to all who faithfully rake and rake and rake! We are now beginning to clean some of the stones and have cleaning kits with the special solvent developed especially for tombstones. Many times, just water and a light brushing will work wonders on the stones. If you would like to know more about the process, call **Musette Steck** at 454-0437 or **Charles Christianson** at 457-7412.



Brenda Bermilin tackles oak leaves.



Conservator, Eric Kozen from Wilmington's Oakdale Cemetery demonstrates cleaning techniques for tombstones at the Old Smithville Burying Ground.

We are still looking for folks who will **ADOPT- A- PLOT** at the cemetery. A special thanks to these who are taking care of a their "adopted" or "actual" ancestors' gravesites: **Sam & Cookie Newton, Linda Tarrall, Vicki Hogan, Susan Davis, Bud & Brenda Bermilin, Local DAR Chapter, Dick Engels, Monica & Benjamin Socelinski, Jean Esposito, Kathy Fox, SHS Board Members, Trudy Young, Delores West, Annelle Royal, Ed Boguskie, Betty Warren, Jean Ann Larkins, Shirley Johnston, Rita Wissinger, Becky Dus, Nancy Heilhecker, Bob Laughlin, Bert & Becky Felton, Ali Travis, Rick & Gay Lefebvre, Musette Steck, Debby Jacoby and Reese Swain.** If you would like to "Adopt-a-Plot" to take care of, please call **Dinah Sned** at 454-4068.

Book News . . .

We are very pleased to announce that we have just contracted for the fourth printing our **CLASSIC SOUTHPORT COOKING**. 3000 copies have been sold since the book was introduced in 2005 and now we will be selling another 1000 cookbooks. Thank you, **Lewis Hardee**, for this wonderful book and piece of Southport heritage that you have given to the society and the whole community. Most of the society's books are available at our meetings, in local shops, or may be ordered by calling **Chris Suiter** at 457-6629. You may also order by e-mail at shs@ec.rr.com or by writing to the society at P. O. Box 10014, Southport, NC 28461. For mail orders please add \$2.50 per book for shipping and handling. *There have been some price reductions since our last newsletter.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Retail Price</u>	<u>Member's Price</u>
Architecture of Southport	\$ 7.00	\$ 6.00
Bald Head	\$17.00	\$14.25
Cap'n Charlie & Lights	\$10.75	\$ 9.00
Cemeteries of Southport	\$ 8.00	\$ 7.00
Classic Southport Cooking	\$22.00	\$18.50
Ft. Caswell	\$18.25	\$15.25
Ft. Johnston	\$ 6.00	\$ 5.00
Guns for Cotton	\$10.75	\$ 9.00
History of Long Beach	\$19.25	\$16.25
Joshua's Dream	\$10.00 *	\$10.00 *
Joshua's Legacy	\$10.00 *	\$10.00 *
Leila Jane: A Very Gentle Lady	\$14.00	\$12.00
Masters of the Shoals	\$18.00	\$14.00
Reminiscences of Wilmington/Southport	\$ 9.00	\$ 7.00
Southport Secrets	\$ 8.00	\$ 6.00
Southport Chronology Vol.1	Sold Out	
Southport Chronology Vol.2	\$ 5.00 *	\$ 5.00 *
Southport Chronology Vol.3	\$ 5.00 *	\$ 5.00 *
Southport Chronology Vol.4	\$ 5.00 *	\$ 5.00 *
Three Southern Families	\$37.50	\$31.50

Looking Back : Reminiscences from our members . . .

This column is written by members of the society who give us a look back into the history of the area. In this issue we feature an article written by society charter member, Thelma Dunn. She is the sister of Susie Carson and a native of Southport. Thelma and husband, Bill, live in Boiling Spring Lakes. We are delighted to share this account of her working days with you. Thank you, Thelma!

Working in Old Southport

Do you remember when grocery stores were more like general stores, with lots of "personal touches"? There were several of these in Southport at one time and they all seemed to do fairly well. Some people went to Wilmington to do their shopping, but most of the Southport people did not have a car to go to "Town", as Wilmington was called.

I worked at Lancaster's store on the corner of Howe and Nash Streets, across from the Southport Baptist Church, for about six years. My main job was to keep the charge accounts up to date, so every afternoon, after the "morning rush" was over, I would check the accounts. Other times I worked the counter.

Mornings were usually spent taking orders over the telephone and delivering them as they were filled. We had very few packaged foods then. We weighted the foods in paper bags or wrapped them in craft paper tied with twine. We added the prices and rung them up on the cash register. The store (one long room) was arranged so that groceries were on one side and dry goods on the other. The meat counter was in the back of the room. Fresh fruits and vegetables were in the center. About halfway toward the back was an oil heater where people would meet to warm their hands and visit with friends. It was a great gathering place.

It wasn't a very fancy store, but it was quite adequate and a very pleasant place to work. You got to see most of the people when they came to town because ours was the corner store, the place where people stopped first.

Some of the people I worked with at Lancaster's were: Uncle Willie Lancaster was the boss; John Williams, Jr. drove the small delivery van; Ed Marlowe drove some, too; Pearl Mae Lewis (Soukup), like me, worked behind the counter; Sam Rees was mostly in the warehouse area bringing goods out to stock the shelves and taking in supplies as they were delivered at the back door. I mostly kept the accounts checked so that when people wanted to pay their bills, they were ready. Jessie Lancaster (Walker) and Vickie Lancaster (Aldridge) worked when they were available. Vickie was away at school part of the time and Jessie was still in high school.

Those were good days. Almost anything one needed could be bought "downtown", as we called it.

"Miss Susie" News . . .

Susie Carson asked us to let you know that she is still thinking of the society and all the friends she has made through the years in her association with SHS. She has rallied a bit in the last several weeks and welcomes visits and calls. She is always especially delighted to hear from society members. Her phone number is 910-457-6940.

Susie is eagerly looking forward to celebrating her 88th birthday on May 25. Perhaps you would like to send her a card to 501 N. Atlantic Avenue, Southport, NC 28461. Her cats, Janie and Dudley are good company to her these "sitting on the sofa days", but she would also like to see some of you whenever you can drop by. Continue to keep Susie in your thoughts and prayers as she faces each day of her struggle with cancer.

May 22 Meeting

"Saddlebag Preacher" Coming to Town!

A minister portraying Jessie Lee, a circuit-riding preacher recruited to join Bishop Francis Asbury in his 18th century travels, will interpret the historical preaching circuit from personal experience at the society's May 22 meeting.

Rev. Dennis Mardis of Aynor, SC, on horseback, completed Asbury's 1785 South Carolina route in 2005 and then went on to complete the North Carolina route in 2007. Riding at an average speed of 3.8 miles per hour, the horses steadily carried Mardis and his travel partner, Rev. Jim Ridenhour, from location to location.

On the North Carolina ride, they covered more than 300 miles from the South Carolina/North Carolina border to the North Carolina/Virginia border, making a number of stops along the way.

"We were essentially doing what they did during that time, but instead of hostile Indians we were dealing with logging trucks . . .," said Mardis. "We got to know a lot of people and formed a lot of relationships." Mardis said the history was important, but the relationships made along the way were very meaningful as well.

Circuit riders were also known as saddlebag preachers who traveled place to place spreading the word of God to settlers in the area. "They were a very determined, self-sacrificing people." Mardis said. He will also show and discuss items that were typically carried by circuit riders. "It becomes a very hands-on lesson . . .an interactive presentation," he said.

The Methodist minister will discuss his travels and the importance of Asbury and other circuit riders of that time at the society meeting as the kickoff event to Southport Heritage Days 2008 that feature as this year's theme, Southport Church Heritage. The event will be at the Southport Community Building and begins with a potluck supper at 6:30 p.m. The public is invited to the supper or may come for the program at 7:15 p.m.



Rev. Dennis Mardis - Historical Interpreter

2008 Susan Sellers Carson Scholarship Winners Named

Congratulations to South Brunswick High School Seniors

Erica Sauls - First Place \$2000 Winner

Robert Clemmons - Second Place \$500 Winner

Miss Sauls will be reading her winning essay at the May 22 meeting.

Southport Church Heritage Day



Views of five of Southport's churches from the mid-century era. (upper left)Sacred Heart Catholic; (center) St. Philip's Episcopal; (upper right) Southport Presbyterian; (lower left) Southport Baptist and (lower right) Trinity United Methodist.

SATURDAY - MAY 24 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. SOUTHPORT COMMUNITY BUILDING

As a part of the annual Southport Heritage Days, the society is proud to sponsor the Southport Church Heritage exhibit featuring the history of our local churches.

The community is invited to come by to see the historical displays from the churches as well as local church art and to hear some inspiring church music throughout the afternoon. Several churches will be open for tours during the day including the former Catholic church on Caswell Avenue which is now a private residence. Pound cake and lemonade will be served on the community center porch and we will be looking for you to join us for this event.

All churches in Southport were invited to join us.

As of this printing, these churches will be participating.

Bethel Baptist Church, Brunswick Church of Christ, Christ Body Ministry Church, First Baptist Missionary Church, Friendship Baptist Church, Mt. Carmel AME Church, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Southport Baptist Church, Southport Presbyterian Church, St. James AME Zion Church, St. Philip's Episcopal Church and Trinity United Methodist Church

Historically Speaking with the Archivist . . .

A Series Featuring Southport Homes by **Larry Maisel**

Newton-McKeithan House - 1890

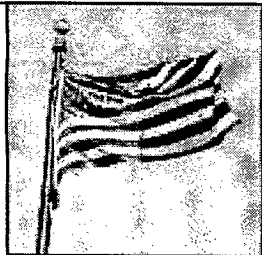
This house at 209 N. Lord Street was a part of the building boom in Southport which began in the late 1880s. River pilot Benjamin F. Newton had the house built after a home which had been on the lot was moved toward the river. Records show that Newton did "improvements" to it three years later, likely adding on to it. Prior to renovation in the late 1900s, the home had a screened-in front porch.



In addition to being a river pilot, Capt. Newton was also an investor in local business enterprises, including part-ownership of the tug "Jacob Brandow" and the Cape Fear Towing Company and Transportation Company.

The society sponsors the Plaque Program that provides plaques for homes in Southport that are at least 75 years old and meet other qualifications. **Sylvia Butterworth and Joanne Wesson** are now administering this program and if you're interested in a plaque call Sylvia at 457-5759 or Joanne at 264-4009. You may also e-mail (shs@ec.rr.com) the society and we will put you in touch.

Upcoming Opportunities . . .



**National Flag Day
Celebration
in Southport
Saturday
June 14 - 11:00 a.m.
Aldermen's Chambers - City Hall**

"**Heroes of '76**", members of Wilmington's William Hooper Chapter No. 546 of the National Sojourners will come to Southport for a special presentation of the history of the U.S. flag and flag etiquette. The program will be sponsored by the historical society and you will be in for a real treat as you watch these "patriots" in colonial dress "build" the flag stripe by stripe and star by star. This will be an excellent opportunity to expose the children of our community to the importance of proper flag treatment, so if you have children or grand children in the area be sure to bring them. Of course it will be especially interesting to all we "old history buffs" as well. In the meantime you might want to read up on the National Sojourners organization at www.nationalsojourners.org There are some very good articles in the Patriots and Patriotism section.

Please Support This Event!

SHS to Sponsor
Maritime Museum
Program

Tuesday, July 15
at 7 p.m.
Southport Community
Building

*"Growing Up
Black in
Brunswick
County"*
Featuring

Hobson Bryant

Don't Miss
This Special Evening!