

# Southport Historical Society

April 2006

## *From the President's Pen . . .*

As the newly elected president of the Southport Historical Society, I am looking forward to more opportunities to work with the membership to highlight Southport's history. From our 1792 beginning as the small fishing village of Smithville surrounding colonial Fort Johnston, to a flourishing seaside resort during the Victorian era and now a haven for many newcomers in their retirement years, we have had our share of fascinating folks and interesting events. All these have blended together to create our town's unique history. The society board members have agreed to humor my "historical visions" as we begin to plan for a society-sponsored event each month for the remainder of the year. Events we believe will make Southport history come alive for our homefolks and visitors alike.

2006 is the 30th anniversary year of Southport Historical Society and what better time to become more of a presence in our community. We are delighted to finally open the doors of the Old Jail Museum after several years of hard work to restore the building. We have had two general membership meetings thus far and have honored our life members and past presidents as part of our yearlong celebration.

Our next event is one of my long-time dreams - **Kate Stuart Day** - on April 13, the anniversary of her death in 1929. We will begin with a comprehensive exhibit of memorabilia coordinated by **Harriet Wheeler**. Three great-grandnieces of Kate Stuart and members of our society, **Brooks Preik, Stuart Callari and Pat Pettinger**, will present engaging and amusing stories and remembrances of Miss Kate's life. Don't miss this intriguing afternoon as we begin at one o'clock with the exhibit and at two o'clock with the program at the historic setting of the Chapel of the Cross (St. Philip's Episcopal Church) next to City Hall in downtown Southport. After the program there, we will walk to the Old Smithville Burying Grounds to visit Kate and Mary Stuart's gravesites where we'll hear words written by Miss Stuart herself as she reflected on the old cemetery. Another short stroll will take us by the site of the Stuart House on the waterfront where Kate spent her entire life and established her reputation as the "Heroine of Smithville" and "the Grand Old Lady of North Carolina". Our final stop will be at the foot of Atlantic Street where we will enjoy old fashioned pound cake and lemonade and an opportunity to mingle with "Kate" and her sister, "Almira" reincarnated!

What else are we "dreaming and scheming" about? In the early stages of planning are these probabilities: May 28: "Heritage Days Garrison House Tour"; June 14 - Flag Day event; July 4: "Historic Stars, Bars and Cars"; August 12: "River Pilot's Day"; September 4: "An Old Fashion Labor Day in the Park"; October: "Southport Secrets Walking Tours"; November 11: Veterans Day event; December 9: our ever-popular Christmas Home Tour and looking ahead to 2007; January 10: "Benjamin Smith Day". Stay tuned for more developments and if any of these strike an interest chord with you or if you have ideas to share, please let me know. We'd be delighted to have you plan with us.

It is with great anticipation and excitement that I look forward to my tenure as president. Your officers and directors are anxious to include the members in many opportunities to fulfill our mission of preserving Southport history and sharing it in the most effective ways possible. Make 2006 the year you really get involved in your society! You may Call or e-mail me anytime at 457-0579 or [shs@ec.rr.com](mailto:shs@ec.rr.com).

*Pat Kirkman*



# The Whittler's Bench

Celebrating our 30th Anniversary 1976-2006

## Noteworthy . . .

### Meeting Dates :

Did you notice that you did not receive this newsletter prior to our March 23 dinner meeting? That's because we have gone to a quarterly publishing schedule rather than the five issues previously sent just before our five general membership meetings. Therefore, you will need to watch the newspapers and your e-mails for reminders of the meetings. Better yet, go right now to your 2006 calendar and note these dates and the place for our upcoming meetings. We are happy to report that the city has reduced the price of renting the Community Building so that non-profit organizations like ours can meet there again!

**MAY 25      SEPTEMBER 21      NOVEMBER 16**

**SOUTHPORT COMMUNITY BUILDING**

### E-Mail Addresses:

We now have over 100 e-mail addresses in our data base so that we can send out notices, announcements and other items of interest between newsletters. If you did not receive an e-mail announcing the mailing of this publication you are not in our address book. Please e-mail the society at [shs@ec.rr.com](mailto:shs@ec.rr.com) if you would like to be included. We want to keep you updated with all the news and events!

### Unpaid Dues:

Dues to the society are payable each year in January. Notice cards were sent but perhaps you overlooked yours if you have not yet sent in your renewal or perhaps it just didn't reach you. In any event, we don't want your membership to become "history", so "preserve" it by renewing right away. If your mailing label on this newsletter has a red dot on it, we don't have your 2006 dues. We plan to publish our 2006-07 membership directory soon and want to be sure you're there. If there's any question about your membership please call Pat at 457-0579 or e-mail [shs@ec.rr.com](mailto:shs@ec.rr.com). Thanks!

### Book News:

Our cookbook, *Classic Southport Cooking*, continues to fly off the shelves and we have contracted for the third printing in less than a year. That's almost 2,000 sold since May of last year! The author and society member, **Lewis Hardee**, recently gave a presentation on Southport and promoted the cookbook at the National Arts Club in New York City. Here are a few quotes from a follow up article by Gary Shapiro published in *The New York Sun* on March 13.

*"The daily rhythms of Mr. Hardee's hometown emerge in this tapestry of photos, reminiscences, and 700 recipes."*

*"The book is so filled with recipes and stories of Mr. Hardee's relatives that it feels like a family reunion."*

*"The author's storytelling conveys a small-town world like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha or Mayberry, N.C."*

*"Guests at the lecture devoured Mary Temple's Chocolate Dice—also known as fudge. Also on offer was Ann Warren's chocolate pie and nonalcoholic "Methodist Champagne".*

Not only did those New Yorkers enjoy Lew's talk and the recipes the club chef cooked and offered for tasting (several more than those mentioned in the article), but **they bought our books!** Some of them may even be thinking of moving down here—uh oh! Don't have your own copy of *Classic Southport Cooking* yet? Better get one quick or you'll have to wait on that third printing to arrive! Call 457-0579 or e-mail [shs@ec.rr.com](mailto:shs@ec.rr.com) for more information.

A huge "THANK YOU" to **Chris and Debbie Suiter** for counting all the books we have in our inventory. Would you believe there were **7,051** of them! We will be making a concentrated effort to sell rather than store books during 2006. The board has approved a reduction in the prices of some of our books beginning with offering 50 sets of the four Southport chronologies for \$25 rather than the previous \$50 per set selling price. This price is available to all buyers. We will also be selling the Fort Johnston book for \$5 per copy during Heritage Days and 4th of July. We welcome **Ken and Carolee Morris** to the book committee and are still looking for at least two more members who will help us market and move those 7,000 books! Please contact us if you would like to be involved.

## At the Old Jail . . .

Volunteer docents from our membership showed up in force for a recent training session. **Beverly Wyckoff**, Museum Curator, **Marilyn Lessin**, Docent Coordinator, **Larry Maisal**, Archivist and **Bert Felton**, Advisory Board Member were on hand to give information that will help our docents extend a warm and informative welcome to visitors. If you haven't been down to see the wonderful renovation and exhibits, do come! Bring your friends, neighbors and family!



## More Jail News . . .

- Docents have been trained on Old Jail history and our operating procedures. Additional training will be provided as new docents are added. Call or email **Marilyn Lessin**, 457-0004 or [dlessin@ec.rr.com](mailto:dlessin@ec.rr.com) to volunteer.
- The 1904 Family Life Room exhibit is being completed with our donated artifacts. A small kitchen table and chairs are badly needed as well as children's clothes, toys and books of the 1904 era. Call or email **Beverly Wyckoff**, 457-5599 or [beverlywyckoff@bellsouth.net](mailto:beverlywyckoff@bellsouth.net).
- **Larry Maisel**, SHS archivist, is directing work on the old files and "paper" in the Resource Room. If you like to organize and do research, call or email Larry at 457-6222 or [olmize@aol.com](mailto:olmize@aol.com)
- **Bert Felton** is working on the law enforcement exhibit. Call or email Bert at 457-5302 or [felton@ec.rr.com](mailto:felton@ec.rr.com) to help him.
- Ticking mattresses are being made for the cells – foam padding or stuffing is needed for this project. Mannequins are also still needed. Contact Beverly.
- Landscaping: Our second Eagle Scout project is beginning and will involve creating a sitting area and some additional plants for the jail yard. The project will enhance the Heritage Garden created in 1987 and described in Susie's column in this newsletter. Plans to be used will be based on yards in the early 1900's here in Southport.

## New Members . . .

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

Terry & Bobbie Acker  
 Anne Brabetz  
 Stuart Callari  
 Debbie Green  
 Thomas Green  
 Joe & Carmela Groce  
 Jerry & Becky Harrington  
 Harvey & Judith Hatchfield  
 Ruth Jenkins  
 Jeff & Shirley Johnston  
 Vivian Jones  
 Glenn & Kay Kye

Bette Leggitt  
 Joe & Marty Loughlin  
 Jim & Lisa Malley  
 Rhodes & Ellen Messick  
 Lori Hardee Moats  
 Libby Nash  
 Paul & Pat Pittenger  
 Carolyn Galloway Price  
 Cindy Sellers  
 Dinah Snead  
 Southport Realty  
 Delores West

Tom & Martha Ellen Winstead  
 Angie Zacaro

### **New Life Members**

Ray & Peggy Campbell  
 Roy & Cheryl Daniel  
 Pat Kirkman  
 Carroll & Catherine Smith  
 Woody & Shirley Wilson



## *Looking Back with Susie Carson . . .*

As we celebrate thirty years of the Southport Historical Society, it is only fitting that we "look back" at one of our most interesting, but not well known, accomplishments. In 1987 the Heritage Garden Project of the SHS was recognized by the Brunswick County Committee for the celebration of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution at a special ceremony at the Old Jail. The Heritage Garden was developed in response to the "Plant a Living Legacy" project of the NC Bicentennial Commission and was named the Benjamin Smith Memorial Garden in honor of one of the founders of Southport (then Smithville). The Garden was described as a "living link with the early leaders and their vision of a peaceful, prosperous new American town" that will "beautify an unattractive and unkempt plot of land" in the Historic section of Southport.

Members of the Historical Society identified, recorded and collected ornamental plants that were most often used in local 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century gardens. These were planted at the Society's headquarters (the Old Jail) in a garden with "appropriate local historic landscape features". A list of plants either on the property or planted the first year included: lantana, hydrangea, abelia, spice bush, yaupon, cemetery rose, pink, thrift, spiderwort, and climbing sweet pea. Following the dedication of the Garden, each issue of the Whittler's Bench featured one or more plants complete with pictures and stories. These were written by Flora F. Greensleeves, Heritage Garden Consultant who wrote the following article to introduce the series on heirloom plants:

### *Meet Some Real "Old Timers"*

*Many of Southport's oldest and most distinguished residents seldom receive the recognition they deserve. While we are busy preserving old houses and studying historic events, these venerable citizens go unnoticed. Sometimes they are overshadowed by flashy newcomers, but mostly they just wait quietly for someone to realize that they, too, have something to tell about the past.*

*Who are these modest members of the community? Well, believe it or not, they are the many varieties of flowers, shrubs and trees that have graced the yards and streets of Southport for many generations. If you ask almost anyone to describe Southport, one of their first comments will be about the oak trees; these graceful old trees arching over the streets and shading our homes are probably more of a Southport trademark than any other feature. But a closer look at the yards and gardens of old houses around town will reveal that Southport people had some other favorite plants as well.*

*We rarely think of garden plants as items of historical interest, and yet there are a number of good reasons for doing so. First, most of Southport's old houses were built at a time when gardening and landscaping were considered an important domestic art, and people took great pride in the plants they grew to make their property more attractive. Therefore, if we want to preserve an authentic atmosphere, it isn't enough to save the buildings; we must surround them with the appropriate plantings. Secondly, these plants can tell us a lot about the social customs of by-gone days in Southport. Today when we want flowers for holidays, weddings, funerals and other occasions, we usually call a florist, but until fairly recent times people made their floral arrangements from the flowers that grew in their gardens and nearby woods and fields. Now that modern production and shipping methods make the same blossoms and floral styles available in any part of the country, the use of local plant materials is another rapidly disappearing folk tradition. Finally, many of the old varieties of plants that our forebears grew are no longer being produced commercially. Unless special efforts are made to preserve these species, they will surely disappear.....*

*Flora F. Greensleeves\**

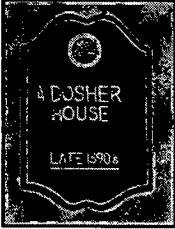
\*For those of you who may not know, "Flora F. Greensleeves" was the pseudonym of **Kathryn Carson Kalmanson** (Susie's daughter) who was instrumental in developing the Heritage Garden.

## Historically Speaking with the Archivist . . .

### 210 W. West - Part of Doshier Legacy

by Larry Maisel

First in a Series Featuring Southport Homes



The large house at 210 W. West Street stands as something of a legacy to a family which had a major presence on Southport's west side. The historic plaque says "A. Doshier House," which can be somewhat confusing, since Doshers were (and are) plentiful, and several of the men had names starting with the letter "A".

This "A" was for Asa. The home was built for Asa Doshier, Jr., who was born in 1869. He and his wife, Theodosia, both died in 1933, ten months apart. Before his death in 1890, his father, Asa Doshier, Sr., was quite active in real estate.

He had gotten much of what's now that and the next block west, running through from West to Brown Street, in a land grant from the state in 1873. Why the state owned that land isn't clear.

It's believed that the 210 W. West St. house was built by William T. Ottaway, who lived next door. In his survey of the architecture of Southport, Carl Lounsbury said he believed the right wing of the house was probably a later addition. If so, it's not the only one.

Currently a major two story addition is under construction to the rear of the home. Lounsbury also commented on the fine interior woodwork. This house is more like the West Street homes west of Caswell, where a number of the two story homes were built during the building boom of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

**\*Note:** The society sponsors the Plaque Program that provides plaques as shown above for homes in Southport that are at least 75 years old. Larry heads up this program and if you're interested call him at 457-6222.



## From the Chronicles . . .

The society has published a set of four chronologies edited by Bill Reaves that cover happenings in Smithville/Southport from 1520 to 1970. Fascinating reading! A limited number of these sets are now on sale for \$25. They will be available at the Old Jail or by calling Chris at 457-6629.

**April 9, 1844:** Henry Clay (*U.S. Secretary of State 1825-29*) visited Smithville on his way to Wilmington aboard the "Gladiator". It was at sunrise that he was welcomed to Smithville and the State of North Carolina by a committee of ten consisting of the chairman of the Whig Central Committee and one gentleman from each of the congressional districts. After about an hour he boarded his boat and proceeded to Wilmington.

**May 27, 1861:** North Carolina was accepted into the Confederate States of America. General Theophilus Holmes was ordered to take charge of coast defenses from New River in Onslow County to the South Carolina line. He engaged engineers, constructors, laborers, material and went to work building up the defenses in his department. Fort Fisher was begun and Forts Johnston and Caswell were strengthened.

**June 8, 1875:** An excursion under the auspices of the Young Catholic Friends' Society visited Smithville aboard the steamer "Governor Worth". They spent an hour on shore viewing the garrison or visiting the beach area. They went next to Fort Caswell and climbed the grass-covered hills of the old fort and explored the "Whispering Vaults". Many of the youths went surf-bathing until the steamer's whistle sounded announcing the time to go home. This was in vain as the steamer became stuck in the mud-flats for four hours. The government vessel "Easton" pulled them free.

**A Refresher Fact:** The town's name changed from Smithville to Southport on March 4, 1887.



**SHS OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2006-07**

Back row, left to right: Peter Wyckoff, Phil Fravel, Ginny Cannon, Musette Steck, Pat Kirkman, Larry Maisel. Front row, left to right: Karen Knighton, Cathy Fravel, Don Parker. Larry was unavailable for the photo, so as you can see we "imported" him!

- President**  
Pat Kirkman 457-0579
- Vice-President**  
Musette Steck 253-3855
- Secretary**  
Ginny Cannon 278-5553
- Treasurer**  
Phil Fravel 457-4794
- Historian/Archivist**  
Larry Maisel 457-6222
- Directors**  
Karen Knighton 454-8018  
Cathy Fravel 457-4794  
Don Parker 253-9703
- Past President/Ex-officio**  
Peter Wyckoff 457-5599

*The "Bored Members" . . .*

Just a play on words we assure you! Your officers and directors are anything but bored in our lively two-hour board meetings each month. There are many decisions, research projects, phone calls, correspondence, record keeping, data processing, book marketing, creative thinking and many other things going on behind the scenes to make our society work. Your board endeavors to represent you in the best possible manner and we are happy to have your input at any time to help our organization to grow and to best serve the community. The board meets every third Thursday night at 7 p.m. and our meetings are open to all members. Please call any of us if you have questions, concerns or ideas to share.

*Past Presidents Honored . . .*

As part of our 30th Anniversary celebration, past presidents and life members were honored at our March 23 meeting. For the record, here is a list of presidents throughout the years:

- Eleanor Smith** (1976,80-81,94-95)
- Susie Carson** (1977-79, 86-87)
- Elizabeth Watkins** (1982-83)
- Jean Prevost** (1984-85)
- Paul W. Sweeney** (1988-89)
- Donald K. Johnson** (1990-93)
- Cheryl Daniel** (1996-97)
- Christopher Suiter** (1998-2001)
- Peter Wyckoff** (2002-05)



Past presidents, Chris Suiter, Cheryl Daniel and Susie Carson were recognized at our March meeting for their contributions to the 30-year growth of the society.

*2006 Heritage Stone . . .*

This year's Heritage Stone to be unveiled at our May 25 meeting will honor founder and first president **Eleanor Smith**. The stone will be added to the Heritage Walk at Waterfront Park as part of our Heritage Days celebrations on May 27.

## *Upcoming Events of Interest . . .*

- April 13** Kate Stuart Day - Sponsored by the society. Read all about it in this issue.
- April 18** Maritime Museum Program - Dr. Chalres Peery of Charleston on blockade running.
- April 19** United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) memorial service - Old Burying Ground - 11 a.m.
- April 26** War on the Water: CSS Hunley with Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr., UNCW  
5:30 - 8:30 p.m. • Wednesday • Apr. 26 • \$32 • Register by Apr. 19 - Call 962-3195
- May 6** Colonial Carolina Folkways and Trade Faire - Moores Creek National Battlefield
- May 7** UDC Memorial Service - Oak Dale Cemetery, Wilmington - 3 p.m. - Bring chairs
- May 9** Brunswick County Historical Society Meeting - 7:15 - Brunswick Electric Building, Supply
- May 16** Maritime Museum Program - Gary Gentile - *Andrea Doria*, Floating Italian Art Gallery - 7 p.m.
- May 24** Lower Cape Fear Historical Society - Latimer House, Wilmington - 11a.m. Blonnie Bunn Wyche, speaker- book review on Lawrence Lee's History of Brunswick County - call to reserve space - 762-0492 - Lunch available for \$12 (reservation required)
- May 25** May 29 SOUTHPORT HERITAGE DAYS - See Newspapers for Schedule
- May 25** SHS General Membership Meeting - 6:30 - Community Building - Heritage Days kickoff event
- May 28** Garrison House Tour, Ft. Johnston - Sponsored by the society - 2-4 p.m.
- June 4** Maritime Museum Program - Taste of Southeastern NC Wines (call museum for details)
- June 14** Flag Day Event - Sponsored by SHS and DAR - Watch newspapers and e-mail for more info
- June 20** Maritime Museum Program - Mark Sudduth - Hurricane Tracker - 7 p.m.

## *A Special Invitation . . .*



KATE STUART 1844-1929  
Photo courtesy of Brooks Preik's private collection.

### **KATE STUART DAY THURSDAY - APRIL 13**

1:00 - Exhibit opens in the Parish Hall

2:00 - "Kate Stuart Remembered"

Chapel of the Cross - St. Philips Episcopal Church

Hear special stories and reminiscences by her  
Great-grand nieces,

**Brooks Preik, Stuart Callari and Pat Pittenger**

Followed by a stroll to the Old Smithville Burying

Ground to visit Miss Stuart's gravesite and  
then another stroll past the site of the famous  
Stuart House concluding with refreshments

on the waterfront lawn at the foot of Atlantic Street.

"When stories are told about Kate Stuart, one of Southport's most colorful characters of the past, it is difficult to know where truth ends and legend begins. Born August 17, 1844 at the waterfront inn she would occupy for all of her 85 years, this extraordinary woman played host to the rich and famous as well as to scores of ordinary citizens from all over the country whose memorable vacations at the *Stuart House* became an annual pilgrimage. "Miss Kate" was known as a patron of the arts, a poet, an accomplished educator, a leader in religious and civic affairs, an astute businesswoman and an innkeeper par excellence. When Kate Stuart died on April 13, 1929 she was mourned across the state as "the Grand Old Lady of North Carolina."

By Brooks Preik (*The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Bulletin—October 2005*)