

# THE WHITTLER'S BENCH

## Southport Historical Society

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### PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPH

Mother Nature had some fun (?) with the SHS in January and forced the cancellation of the January meeting. That few inches of snow packed into some nasty ice and made driving conditions just too unsafe. We hope that none of you ventured out unnecessarily that evening. The good news is that our January speaker, Beverly Tetterton, has graciously rescheduled to be our speaker in May. Be sure to mark your calendars for 5/22 to learn about the roots and twigs – genealogy.

Travel plans scattered the Board in February. The formal meeting was cancelled, yet business continued as items for discussion were shared via e-mail. The Board's primary focus remains the Old Jail as estimates and plans continue to be gathered. These are the tough decisions; HVAC, wiring, and plumbing, as well as some structural steel work. After 100 years, the old girl has sagged in a few places and needs some shoring up and reinforcing to give her another 100 years of service. Some of the bids are astronomical and way beyond our capabilities so we are having to go back and look for other avenues to accomplish the same goals.

What an exciting time for the SHS! If you would like to become involved on any of the projects, please call Peter at 457 5599, Pat at 457 0579 or Karen at 454 8018.

See y'all on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

*Peter Wyckoff*



### MARCH MEETING

The March meeting, scheduled for 6:30 PM, March 27, 2003, at the Southport Community Building will feature Dr. Max Williams, historian and history professor. Many of you have heard his wonderful presentations before at the SHS meetings and at his series at the Barbee Library on Oak Island. His topic this time will be "What made Johnny Reb fight?"

Bring lots of your favorite dish, your hearty appetite, and lots of questions for Dr. Williams.

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

**Susan Carson, Editor**

Back in January when we had to cancel a meeting of the Southport Historical Society because of snow, I could not help thinking of a snowstorm from my teenage days, and decided to tell you about it.

Southport seldom gets snow, I'm now happy to say, and I'm sure most of you feel the same way, but I remember one big snow storm that made me deliriously happy.

In early January 1936, despite freezing temperatures, the local clam and oyster diggers went about their work as usual. This was during the Great Depression days and money was hard to come by, so a plentiful clam and oyster harvest was most welcome. Oysters were more abundant than usual and were selling for fifty cents a bushel in the shell or thirty cents per half gallon when shucked, and a truck load of clams had been gathered and sent up North. It was a good season.

Over in Franklin Square a beautification project was underway as a WPA undertaking to make the area into a city park. New grass was already springing up there. Then came the snow and freezing temperatures.

On January 29th and 30th the heaviest recorded snowfall in the area's history occurred, dumping a little over six inches of snow on the town. For the first time anyone could remember, Bald Head Island was covered with snow, three inches of it. This big snowfall in Southport and on Bald Head surprised a lot of people who had boasted many times about our mild climate. Other townspeople were not only surprised but dismayed because they remembered the snows here in 1918 and 1927 and the problems they had caused. But this snow was greeted with hilarity by many of us who were seeing snow for the first time. We knew what it was because we'd read about snow and had seen pictures of the fun that could be had playing in it. Now we had our own!

I was a Junior in high school that year and on that frigid morning we trudged off down the three blocks from our house to the school, real happy to be out in the snow. We were more than delighted when we got to the school house and learned that classes had been cancelled. Instead of going home most of us, as soon as we heard that freedom announcement, dashed down to the waterfront to look back and see what our town looked like covered in snow. Quite a few of us, including me, ran out onto the Government Dock located down the hill just in front of the Fort Johnston Garrison House. From the dock I looked up the hill and saw so many buildings covered in snow that I thought it was the prettiest sight I'd ever seen.

Eventually we realized we'd better go home, and all the way there we played in the snow, making snowballs and throwing them at each other, just as we had seen in pictures. When we reached home Mama was anxiously waiting for my sister and brother and me. She insisted that we come in and get ourselves dry and warm by the wood heater. We certainly did not have appropriate clothes for that kind of weather and Mama was sure we would "catch our death of colds" as she put it. As soon as we had thawed out, Mama went into the backyard with a big bowl and spoon and scooped up lots of the beautiful snow and made snow cream for us. I can't remember what she put in it, but I sure remember how good it tasted.



## LOOKING BACK - CONTINUED...

By February 2nd the snow was still on the ground and, in fact, some fresh snow in lesser quantity had fallen. We had managed to round up some woolen clothing, such as scarves and heavy socks, as well as mittens, and were now ready to go out and do battle with snowballs and build ourselves a snowman. School was still closed so we had a long weekend to play to our hearts' content.

The children living on our street gathered out in the road to play and challenge each other to snowball fights. A portly and elderly gentleman who lived several doors down from us happened to be in our line of fire. As he stopped to pick up something (maybe snow to join in the fight - I don't know) he got pelted from the rear and his ever present corn cob pipe was knocked from his mouth landing in the snow. Needless to say, he was not at all pleased. As soon as he turned to try to spot the culprit, we rapidly scattered in all directions. He never knew who hit him. I knew, but I still won't tell!

## To the Southport Historical Society and Its Board of Directors

It seems it is impossible for me to find the right words to express to you my deep appreciation for establishing the Susan Carson Scholarship Fund at South Brunswick High School, so please accept these simple words of "thank you, so much". This is a very special act on your part.

Many, many years ago I became interested in local history as my father took his little family around in Brunswick County on Sunday afternoons and showed us places of interest that he knew about and had heard the history of.

My mother spent time with her three kids telling us real stories of things that had happened in her neighborhood as she grew up. It is things like this that give me ideas for the column that I write for the Wilmington Morning Star.

Then in my high school years I had a very special teacher, Mrs. Arita Sasser, who encouraged my love of history and of writing about it. She always wanted me to write a book - which I finally did!

Now this scholarship you have established makes all of that background carry over to another generation and I deeply appreciate it. I truly want our young people to learn to love our local history. So there is no way of knowing how many people will eventually be blessed by your generosity and devotion to our local history.

Susan S. Carson  
1-23-03

## Heritage Tea



Ladies mark your calendars. ..

Heritage Tea  
Sunday Afternoon, May 25th  
Lois Jane's Riverview Inn

...More details to come!

## THANK YOU!



The SHS has recently lost several very hard workers who devoted many hours for the betterment of the Society.

Dick Hughes has decided to retire from the Board for personal reasons. Dick has always provided wonderful input and has also been responsible for gathering and scheduling the volunteers to staff the Southport Visitors Center on Sundays during the season. Thank you, Dick.

Ann and Gary Brown have moved to 252 Danridge Dr., Franklin TN 37067, to be closer to family. Both Gary and Ann have served the SHS tirelessly for the years that they have lived in town. Thank you, Ann and Gary, for all of your work. We hope that you find your way back to the coast and will come and visit us.

## HERITAGE DAYS



The SHS is again participating with other organizations in town to sponsor Southport Heritage Days during the Memorial Day weekend, May 24, 25, and (possibly) 26. The events on Saturday, the 24<sup>th</sup>, will center at the Southport Community Center where there will be demonstrations of net making, piracy, Indian history, weather signal flags, the dedication of another memorial stone marker to an individual who was influential in the history of the development of Southport, etc. On Sunday, the action will move to Miss Lois Jane's for a Heritage Day tea, being planned by Pat Kirkman. This is a work in progress. The final exciting details will be in the May "Whittler's Bench".

## DESIGNER SHOWCASE

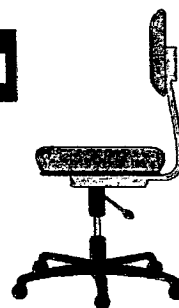


The David Murchison House at 305 South Third Street was completed in 1876. It is now restored to its former Second Empire style elegance and is open for touring from 22 March through 13 April, 2003. Talented designers have decorated the interiors of this home and special events are held throughout the time. The Murchison House represented a dream realized for its original owners, Lucy Wooster Wright and David Reid Murchison. However, time and circumstance ravaged the once beautiful home, until Ron and Sharon Dumas of Charlotte, NC, recognized its hidden beauty. Since 1997, they have been restoring the mansion, planning to open it in the fall as a Bed and Breakfast.

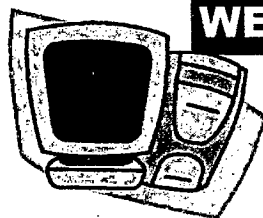
Our sister organization, The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society has planned this event. A gift shop is located in the house; designers offer some of their items for sale; and special events on certain dates include cooking demonstrations, a fashion show; sweets and tea. An individual tour ticket costs \$15.00, available at the door or at the Latimer house. Pre-arranged group tickets for ten or more cost \$12.00 and are available at the Latimer House, headquarters for the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society at 126 South Third Street, phone 762-0492. Tour hours are weekdays 10-4 and weekends 12-5.

## BOARD POSITION

When Dick Hughes retired from the Board in January, the nominating committee was prepared to recommend to the membership that Cinda Lewis be his replacement. Cinda and Jon have sold their home in Southport sooner than expected and she has decided to not stand for the Director position. The nominating committee gathered again, and are prepared to recommend the election of Bob Lucas to the Board of Directors. Bob has accepted the nomination. The nomination is now being made to the membership in this publication, and the vote will be taken at the March meeting.



## WEB SITES OF INTEREST



Here are a couple of interesting sites

<http://www.presnc.org> - Preservation North Carolina

<http://www.nationaltrust.org> - National Trust For Historic Preservation.

By the way, do we have any computer savvy members or friends out there? The SHS would dearly love to have a web presence. How do we go about it? If you know, please call Peter at 457 5599.

## SHS BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- A Heating and Air Conditioning contract was awarded to Sears. The contract is expected to be signed shortly.
- Rob O'Brient, structural engineer, submitted his final report on the structural work needed at the jail. Some support work must be done to stabilize an interior wall and beam replacement is needed. Contracts for this work have not yet been issued.
- Discretionary spending up to \$1,000 was approved for purchase of supplies, paint, etc. for jail the committee. Marvin Johnson and Irv Green were commended for their continued efforts at the jail.
- Our December House Tour was a major success and earned \$10,300 for our treasury.
- Norm Carathanasis donated prints of Tall Ships to the society to be used for fundraising.
- Susan Sellers Carson Scholarship applications are being reviewed and the winner will be announced in mid-March.
- Heritage Days will be memorial weekend, May 23-25. In addition to the events held last year, a Heritage Tea on Sunday, will be co-sponsored with the Southport Woman's Club, a veteran's recognition is tentatively scheduled and Shirley Wilson is checking on the possibility of holding a genealogy workshop as well.
- A committee is working to establish criteria to submit to the board for the Heritage Walk located at Waterfront Park as well as ways to highlight it.
- Bob Lucas has been nominated to fill the board vacancy created by the resignation of Cinda Lewis.

