

# THE WHITTLERS BENCH

SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA 28461

July 17, 1980

Volume V Number 3

## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Southport Historical Society will meet Thursday evening, July 24th, at 8:00p.m. in the board room of the Southport-Brunswick County Library.

Dr. Alan D. Watson, noted historian and scholar in the field of state and local history, will be guest speaker at Thursday's meeting.

Professor of history at UNC-W, Dr. Watson is a member of the Advisory Editorial Board of Archives and History and the recipient of several distinguished awards for historical writing. Some of his articles dealing with the Lower Cape Fear area have appeared in the North Carolina Historical Review and other periodicals. He is coauthor of a recently published book, Harnett, Hooper and Howe, which tells the story of three Lower Cape Fear patriots in the Revolutionary period. Dr. Watson will speak on Cornelius Harnett, one of the most colorful and dynamic figures in the Revolution. Harnett's career touches directly on the history of Southport in many instances, perhaps the most dramatic being his leadership of the "savage and audacious" patriots who burned Ft. Johnston in 1775.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We were pleased to have David R. Black, a restoration specialist from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources visit the Old Jail. He offered both immediate and long range proposals for restoration of the building.

Mr. Black suggested that our next project should be getting the window sash and jams in shape. We need to have heating, airconditioning, and plumbing checked out. He recommended eventually taking down the paneling and hung ceilings.

Upstairs there is much metal work that needs to be scraped of loose and peeling paint. Mr. Black reminded us to wear a mask when we are scraping paint from old buildings as these paints are full of lead and other toxic metals.

The Southport Historical Society was pleased to make a donation toward the repair of the marker at "Bonnet's Creek"

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting this week. If you know others who are interested in local history but haven't joined our Society, invite them to attend this meeting as guests.

Eleanor Smith



NATIONAL REGISTRY HEARING HELD

On June 19th about thirty people gathered at City Hall to hear details of the nomination that will list a portion of Southport on the National Registry of Historic Places. Renee Gledhill-Early and Catherine Southern, representing the preservation section of Archives and History, began the meeting by explaining the nomination procedure and the significance of the National Registry. Afterwards the audience had an opportunity to ask questions and to inspect maps of the area under consideration.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Gledhill-Early outlined the major points of the nomination document. First, the proposed district follows almost exactly the 1792 boundaries of the town. Within that area, most of the structures date from the last quarter of the 19th century and show a unique continuity of local design and construction. Due to the excellent documentation in Carl Lounsbury's Architecture of Southport, over half the buildings can be dated precisely. Ms. Gledhill-Early also noted that of all seaport towns in the state, only Southport has retained much of the flavor and character of the Victorian era. One of the most visual elements is the impressive canopy of trees covering most of the town and forming a natural pattern in the streetscapes.

Ms. Southern continued the program by explaining the effects of being listed in the National Registry. First, it is an honor to be included. The National Registry is simply a record kept by the Department of the Interior of sites all across America that are judged worthy of special recognition as part of our heritage. Secondly, being listed in the Registry gives some degree of protection in that the Federal and State governments cannot alter the area without filing a legal assessment of their actions. Ms. Southern emphasized, however, that private property owners are in no way restricted in any action they may wish to take. On the other hand, they are eligible for certain benefits such as federal grants and tax credits for specific types of improvements.

Ms. Southern explained that the National Registry has nothing to do with local property taxes, a fact that is often misunderstood when cities have their own preservation programs as well as a National Registry listing. Local governments can, under N.C. law, set up either a historic properties commission which allows lower taxes for individual properties, or a historic district commission which controls exterior appearances of buildings, but these are strictly local options, completely separate from the National Registry.

On July 10 the state preservation officer, Dr. Larry Tise, and his committee were to review Southport's nomination to make sure that it meets all requirements for the National Registry. With their approval, the document then goes to Washington where a similar review is conducted by the Department of the Interior. In approximately 90 days, the nomination process is completed and the selected area of Southport will be entered in the National Registry. Dr. Tise is expected to make a formal announcement of Southport's designation in October.



The Southport Historical Society is continuing its efforts to obtain oral historys from our residents. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. William Roscoe Davis. Mr. Davis was born Sept. 5, 1902, on E. West Street. His father was Willie Davis and his mother was Annie Swain Davis. Mr. Davis was interviewed by Mrs. Dot Schmidt.

"When I was still a small child my father went blind and my mother left Southport. The family was split up and I stayed with my Aunt Rosa Davis." My father sold peanuts in Southport."

"One day Mr. Willie Fullwood, who lived above a watch repair shop on Dry Street, called to me and asked me my name. I told him and he took me to Hoods Dry Goods Store and bought me a suit of clothes and a pair of shoes. When I came home my father asked my why he bought me the clothes and I said I didn't know why so he took me by the hand to talk to Mr. Fullwood. Mr. Fullwood told my father to send me by his livery stable in the morning. I was 15 years old and started going with Mr. Fullwood every day to deliver the mail. We used a horse and buggy. We left Southport at 6:00 a.m. and went to Will Smiths, then to Carl Ward's, and then to Supply. We could get warm around the pot bellied stove in Supply and then would come straight back to Southport at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Fullwood was the first man around here to deliver the mail in a Model T Ford."

"My Aunt Rosa worked for Dr. Doshier. When Mr. Fullwood left I went to work for Dr. Doshier. I chopped wood and cleared the table. Miss Grace Doshier taught me my lessons. When Dr. Doshier went to Little Rock my Aunt went with him and that left me out in the cold. I worked during the summer at the shrimp canning factory and stayed with the Thompsons. During the winter we went to the cottage at "Thompsons Neck" and we went fresh water fishing at Orton. I worked for a while at the coal docks. We unloaded coal from the train and loaded it on the fishing boats. I finally left for the "Promised Land", about 100 miles beyond New York and fished until I made enough money to return to Southport."

"I then became a seaman and went to Europe for 3 years. I returned to Southport in 1926, and married Miss Bertha Lee in 1929. We lived with her Mother and in 1934 we were given a house on Caswell Street by the Lee Family".

#### SMITHVILLE - 100 YEARS AGO

The Cape Fear (Bald Head) Light-house was relighted, because the New Inlet had been closed, and the Federal Point Light-house found to be useless.

(July - 1880) A large water spout was witnessed by 75 persons between Fort Fisher and Snow's Marsh, on the Cape Fear River. The water spout covered a space of about 50 yards in circumference, and moved about one mile and a quarter. The water from the spout ascended about 150 feet.

(March - 1880) The ladies of Smithville, to the number of 100 or more sent a petition to the county commissioners, asking them to prohibit the sale of liquors in that town, and an election for a "Wet" or "Dry" ticket was ordered to be held.