

southport historical society

Whittler's Bench

Winter 2019



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Parker's Perspective



Happy New Year! It is my hope that those who suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Florence are now on their way to a full recovery and repair and that 2019 will bring complete closure to that catastrophic event. It was an impactful storm in more ways than one. Our SHS general meeting in September was disrupted and required rescheduling. Other than that, your Southport Historical Society enjoyed another year of growth and now looks forward to 2019 with great anticipation for continued success.

I am very proud of the contributions of our Board members and the scores of volunteers across our many projects and programs. Quite frankly, our success is reflective of the energy and enthusiasm displayed by those who share the interest and love of our Southport and regional history. Whether our volunteers are seen participating as docents at the Old Jail, cleaning cemeteries, and supporting special events or working behind the scenes in the Susie Carson Research Room (SCRR) and the Christmas Tour of Homes, they all deserve our appreciation for yet another great year in 2018.

Last year also marked another watershed event when we took a step to contract some assistance with technical aspects of our Society to more efficiently organize and communicate. This has been met with resounding success as evidenced by a revamped and modernized website, a robust media expansion, and new exhibits at the Old Jail and the Garrison House. Lisa Anderson's expertise has become a valued asset to SHS and the Board has recently approved an extension for 2019 whereby Lisa's presence and impact will become even more evident. In addition to maintaining full time hours, twice per week at the SCRR, she will professionalize and enhance virtually every aspect of the Society. Stay tuned for further information through our email blasts. I firmly believe that our membership will be impressed!

Finally, the end of 2018 coincides with the farewell of a few of our valued Board members who have served faithfully over the past several years. We have been the distinct beneficiaries of the services of Nancy Christianson, Scott Len, and Audrey Daigler over the course of their terms on the Board. Nancy has overseen the activities of the Old Jail for many years, Scott has shepherded our Education program and spearheaded our Memorial Brick program while Audrey faithfully took the minutes at every meeting as Secretary. On behalf of the entire Society, I extend our sincere appreciation to you!

While term expirations result in turnover, I am pleased to announce that two talented folks are nominated to be placed on the Board beginning this year. Linda DeTorres has been involved in both the Old Jail and the Christmas Tour of Homes (Chair) for many years and Liz Fuller has taken on several research projects in the SCRR and has assumed the role of editor of this very newsletter. They will be formally voted upon at our Annual General Membership meeting on February 7th.

SHS Upcoming Events



- [Second Tuesday Talk: A Fierce Desire for Education Prevails](#) with Lisa Anderson, January 8, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [SHS Annual Business Meeting and Luncheon](#), February 7, 2019 @ 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm, Southport Community Building. Lunch will be provided by the SHS Board of Directors!
- [Grand Opening of the African American Heritage Exhibit](#) at the Southport - Fort Johnston, Museum and Visitor's Center, Saturday, February 9th. Presentation at the Community Center is at 2 pm.
- [Second Tuesday Talk: Harry Hayden and the Wilmington Rebellion of 1898](#), with Liz Fuller, February 12, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [Second Tuesday Talk](#) with Donnie Joyner, March 12, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [5 Week Class: Dispelling the Myths of Slavery, Succession, Speech and Sects](#) with Musette Steck, Fridays March 1 – 29, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [SHS General Membership Meeting](#), Speaker to be announced, March 28, 2019 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Southport Community Building. Potluck Dinner.

Old Brunswick County Jail Museum

On November 14 we did a special tour for some students from a public school in Wilmington. There were over 100 children and we rotated groups among the Maritime Museum, the Garrison museum, the burial grounds and the Old Jail. My husband, Charles Christianson, gave the students some information on many who are buried in the Smithville Burying Grounds and we were able to run two shifts of docents at the Jail because the tour totaled five



To the delight of many, the Old Jail was open Halloween night. Families lined up to see the fun and spooky displays including Charles Christianson (L.) and Ron Thompson (R.) in costume. It was the Old Jail's first Halloween, but we all hope it won't be the last!!

hours. My sincere thanks to Karen Rogers, Eric Royer, Linda de Torres, and Ron Thompson for their help with this large group.

On November 28, the Old Jail Advisory Committee met for this year to plan for any changes the group wants to make to the displays as well as any improvements and maintenance of the facility. My thanks to those who attended and have taken on numerous projects and tasks. They include, Lisa Anderson, Liz Fuller, Rich Sullivan, Eric Royer, Linda de Torres, Karen Rogers, Candace Bland, Dottie Capriotti, Barb and Sue Crippen, Ken Morris and Shirley Johnston. Some were able to attend the meeting and others have agreed to help since the meeting.

Our next meeting will be January 23, 2019 when we will get down to details of projects discussed. Much of the November meeting was asking for volunteers to take on some of the usual responsibilities which Charles and I have developed in the past, and we so appreciate those who have taken on these tasks. Liz Fuller will be researching Prohibition in Brunswick County, which may be a new display for us. We also want to add a flyer of info for visitors about the cemetery with names and locations of people of interest. We will find a location for the digital frame we just purchased which will be used to run comments and oral histories we have recorded, starting with the Tuesday Talk given by a former deputy sheriff, Marty Folding.

Rich Sullivan has offered to loan the Old Jail a birdcage used in a "speakeasy" that he obtained, and it will be added to our moonshine

display. Speaking of acquisitions, we will be asking for 2 volunteers to attend the committee already formed at the Garrison who have created a preliminary document which covers this topic. Ken Morris has agreed to help Charles with updating our inventory, creating new labels and photographing new acquisitions. It is my hope that this group will continue to meet during the year to address progress and future needs. Again, my thanks to all who have been so devoted to the Old Jail Museum.

Nancy Christianson, Curator

Well, Look at That! The Southport Historical Society has a Snazzy New Website!



Hurray!

Our shiny new website is LIVE!

As a historical society, we embrace the past. But the future is now! Check out how we're using our technology at a whole new level.

We sure have made a lot of progress as an organization since our inception around a coffee table in the '70s. Our membership has grown to over 250 people, and great strides have been made to find better ways to share information. For instance, in 2015 Bob Surridge created the [Susie Carson Research Room](#), an invaluable online database resource that encompasses all of Susie Carson's historical treasures and so much more. Most of you are reading a digital version of this newsletter which you received via email – a far cry from the typed, mimeographed, hand-delivered or mailed newsletters that we started with! And over the past year, we have developed a very successful Facebook page. If that isn't hip, I don't know what is.

Today, we are proud to announce a brand-new website to serve our members and the community!

In addition to a cool new look and feel, we're upping our game and rolling out several new features:

- [The SHS Online Store](#): You can now purchase books *and* SHS memberships from our website!! No more mailing in forms and a check (unless you want to, which is just fine).
- [The SHS Event Calendar](#): The new calendar provides a great level of detail to help you plan for all of our upcoming meetings and events.
- [The SHS Blog](#): We love our members and want to stay in touch with interesting stories, important updates, and exciting news!! Members will receive an email with a handy link to let you know when we've posted a new blog entry on the website so that you can go and take a peek. And don't worry, the Whittler's Bench Newsletter is still very much a part of our communication plan!
- *Coming Soon* – [Virtual Exhibits](#)! We weren't kidding when we said that we were kicking our digital presence into high gear! Our resident techie is pushing the SHS envelope and preparing some great exhibit content to be available online.

We'd love for you to take a gander at our new site and we'd appreciate your feedback! You can find all the new digital goodness at www.southporthistoricalsociety.org.



THE U.S.O. AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

No doubt, if you have been around Southport for a while, you have had occasion to attend an event at the Southport Community Building. But did you know that there was another building on those grounds before the current one? Here's an account of the "U.S.O. Hut" from the society's publication *Southport Secrets* written by Joanne Callahan in 1998 and edited by Pat Kirkman for *The Whittler's Bench*.

Five a.m. Monday, January 30, 1995 –

FIRE!

Started by a malfunctioning heating system blower, the flames destroyed the historic U.S.O. landmark. The recreational building was constructed in 1941 by the Federal Works Agency, Bureau of Community Facilities for approximately \$23,000. Workmen digging the foundation for the building excavated a ten-pound cannon ball about 18 inches below the surface. Based on its size, it was believed to be from the Revolutionary War. Completed before the beginning of World War II, it was a long, low, one-story building on high ground overlooking the Cape Fear River. It consisted of a large room with heart-pine paneling, a huge fireplace, a kitchen canteen, long porch facing the river, reading room, club room, and shower facilities.



Fire at U.S.O. in 1995. See [video](#) in the online Susie Carson Research Room

The "U.S.O. Hut" on the grounds of Fort Johnston was the home away from home for soldiers and sailors stationed at Fort Caswell, Fort Bragg and the Oak Island Coast Guard Station. The facility was operated by the Salvation Army which, in keeping with long-standing tradition, served hot coffee and refreshments gratis to the servicemen. It became the entertainment center for movies, dances, socials, relaxing, and music. Most popular was the "coin-operated piccolo" or "jukebox" – five cents a song or six for a quarter.

After the war, the government sold the building to the City of Southport for \$2,100, with the intention that it be removed from U.S. Army land. This never came to pass, so it remained on Fort Johnston by mutual consent. In 1959, the Southport Lion's Club obtained the U.S.O. Building for \$10 (yes, \$10!). It then became the scene of club meetings, dances, dinners, plays, classes, weddings, flower displays, Holiday House, concerts, Patriots Balls, various celebrations and anything else the community needed. When the courthouse was damaged by fire, it was the location of Superior Court sessions. In the 60's when the Southport High School was destroyed by fire, classes were held in the building.

The Lion's Club with the help of the Southport Woman's Club, paid rent to the U.S. Government and maintained the building. However, in 1990, with increased rent, escalating maintenance costs, larger insurance premiums, and higher utility bills, the need for major repairs and politics made it impossible to continue under the lease agreement. The city of Southport took over and began major renovations. The city had invested over \$57,000 to upgrade the building before the blaze destroyed it on that early January morning, 1995.



LOOKING BACK . . . by Pat Kirkman

We are so fortunate to have a collection of Whittler's Bench newsletters that reach back to the first issue in 1976. In most of those issues, SHS co-founder and local historian, Susie Carson, contributed a column titled "Looking Back". As we begin our 43rd year in 2019 we thought it might be good to look back again at some of the items of interest from the newsletters. These will also shed more light on the "doings" of the society throughout the years, so here goes . . .

Looking back . . . Winter 2001

The Society's First Annual Christmas Tour of Homes was successfully completed on December 9, 2000 with 1,068 tickets sold - a tremendous event by any standard! Our special thanks go to the Co-Chairs of the Organizing Committee Cathy Fravel and Kate Hardin. We hope they will continue their wonderful work and do it again in 2001. As an indication of the organizing and leadership skills required, individual name tags were issued to 167 volunteers!

Looking back . . . Winter 2009

The Whittler's Bench gets its name from our founders back in 1976 who were following the 19th century Southport tradition when folks in town sat under a cedar tree at the foot of Howe Street to discuss the latest happenings. First editions were typed on a manual typewriter, mimeographed and handed out or mailed to members. As word processors and computers came along, the typing, graphics and printing got easier but it was still distributed by mail. Now we have captured the essence of the 21st century by issuing our first electronic edition! This method will save us over \$300 in printing and mailing expense.

Looking back . . . Winter 2009

On February 4, 2009 the society delivered a proposal to establish a museum and learning center in the Garrison House to the City Aldermen's Ft. Johnston committee for consideration. The committee in turn presented the proposal at the February 12 Aldermen's meeting. It is our understanding that the proposal with supporting documentation has been sent to the federal and state agencies that must approve the usage of the property under the covenants set forth when the property was deeded to the city through the US Lands to Parks agency. We are hopeful that if approval is granted that the city will accept our proposal to set up historical exhibits and displays on the ground floor of the building and to develop relevant learning opportunities for the general public.

You can "look back"  at our *Whittler's Bench* collection any time on our [website!](http://www.southporthistoricalsociety.org)

Last Chance to take a Class from Musette Steck

Musette Steck, who has been teaching community college classes and seminars for 20 years, is teaching her final class. She will be offering a five-week seminar entitled **Dispelling the Myths of Slavery, Succession, Speech and Sects** at the Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library, on Fridays, March 1st – 29th, from 10:30 to 11:30. Call the library at **910-457-6237** to sign up for the class. Cost is free. Registration is limited.

The Harper Family and The State Port Pilot

The Southport Historical Society is indebted to Bill Keziah and the Harper family for their dedication to keeping a newspaper alive in Southport. For almost 90 years, The State Port Pilot has documented local historical happenings—both large and small—which has helped us to preserve and share Southport's history with all of you.

In 1990, the Southport Historical Society, in conjunction with UNCW, interviewed James Madison Harper, Jr. as part of our Oral History project. The following is an excerpt from that interview, in which Jim talks about his early days on the paper and the changes that took place over the decades.

To read the full interview, and other interviews in the collection, please visit the [Susie Carson Online Research Room](#) on the Southport Historical Society website.

Interviewer: *What brought you to Southport?*

Jim Harper: I was working on a newspaper in Clinton and saw an ad in the Observer saying they wanted someone to come to Southport to edit a weekly newspaper and I thought I could do it. I applied for the job and got it and have been here ever since. The weekly newspaper was The State Port Pilot.

Interviewer: *So, tell me how your job evolved from coming to Southport to your position now.*

Jim Harper: Well my position now isn't much of a position. I'm sort of retired and I have a son who runs our newspaper.

Interviewer: *I guess what I'm saying is give me a profile of your career from the time you came here with your involvement with The State Port Pilot.*

Jim Harper: Well from 1935 to about 1960, I ran the paper largely by myself except early on, there was a deaf and dumb newspaper man, as a matter of fact the man who started The State Port Pilot. His name was Bill Keziah and he helped me until he died in the early 50's. During World War II when I was in the Navy, my wife and Mr. Keziah kept the paper going so I'd have a job when I got out and came back home.

Later on, I had some people who helped me from time to time, but it was not until my son Ed came home after he graduated from college and became associated with the paper that I really had consecutive ongoing help. Incidentally the paper is a whole lot better than it used to be when I ran it by myself.

Interviewer: *Tell me how the paper has evolved?*

Jim Harper: Well go back again, Mr. Keziah, he started the paper and called it The State Port Pilot because he thought that the harbor out here was the place where the state port for North Carolina should be located and he took on Wilmington and all the powers that be trying to fight off the railroad people who wanted to keep the state port in Wilmington. Of course, you know how that turned out. The state port still is in Wilmington.

Mr. Keziah perceived the idea that if you had a newspaper and it was called The State Port Pilot, that would help kind of tilt the table. It was a very modest undertaking. It was begun during the height of the Depression and that wasn't a very good time to be able to sell enough ads to pay your printing bills and you do have to pay that bill. That's how it came that the folks in Whiteville that had been doing his printing simply just accepted a title to the newspaper in payment for the printing.

It was a very modest undertaking when I first came down here and my main concern was, I had left a job in Clinton where I was being paid and I didn't know how long this would last, but it's still going on and as I said, it's better now than it was then. It evolved to where we had four pages to six pages to eight pages and I think this week we had 32 pages. We had more advertising revenue in this week's paper than we used to have in a whole year of operation back in the mid-30's.

Interviewer: *So that's the main way it's developed. Tell me other ways the paper has evolved along with the city as a community.*

Jim Harper: Well nothing, there has not been a single spectacular thing involving the city or the newspaper. I mean we didn't suddenly start splashing color before anybody or hire five bright new young people, although we've had some bright young people who have worked for us at various times some of whom have gone on to greater things and we're real proud of that.

The paper...I remember one of the things when I first came here, I had established the fact that we weren't going to get out every week. Mr. Keziah had not always been able to get the paper out from the printer every week because he couldn't pay his bill. I had established the first year or two the fact that we were in fact a 52 time a year operation.

Nobody worries about that anymore. I mean that's one of the things that's happened. It didn't happen suddenly. It just happened because we were successful in our continued operation of the paper.

Interviewer: *You've written a lot of stories over the years in Southport. Give me one that stands out in your mind.*

Jim Harper: Well first let me say, I'm not a great writer. If I had to pinpoint anything that over the years might have been significant, it's sort of a putdown to say I'm the best obit writer on staff. Mostly because I've been here a long time, I know some good things about a lot of people that get overlooked as time goes on. So, what I have done if I have done anything significant at all in the newspaper business was to write good and kindly editorials about people who have lived here a long time and who have died.

I remember one time several years ago in one of these western series this woman was running the weekly newspaper at some outpost and somebody came in and offended her. She said, "You better watch out or I'll never mention you again kindly in print". I guess my main contribution is that I have mentioned a lot of deceased people kindly in print.

Interviewer: *You've been here how long?*

Jim Harper: 54 years.

Interviewer: *What do you think is your best contribution to the community?*

Jim Harper: To have kept the newspaper active back in the days when I didn't know how I was going to pay the bills. There were some awfully... just periods when...you see, Southport now was a trading center. There's water on one side and woods on the other and you were dealing principally with the people who live here. Remember Oak Island is a development over the last 25 or 30 years.

Prior to that the only people on Oak Island were the Coast Guard folks, the folks that ran fish camps in the fall. Normally a town like Southport upstate would have a perimeter of farm people who came to town and bought stuff and the folks who wanted to appeal to them with advertising. Take Whiteville for instance, this was true of Whiteville. We didn't have that.

Honestly if I have made any contribution at all that's worthwhile it was to help keep this paper running all of those years so it's still here. I think the newspaper is really good now. I shamelessly say it's a good newspaper and I must have helped it some by having it here, so my son and his help could do a good job. I don't think they could have started from scratch. If I've made any contribution, I guess that's what it is.

Southport suffered a great loss with the passing of Jim Harper's youngest son, Charles Edward Taylor "Ed" Harper, at age 71 on November 14, 2018. His 46-year long contribution as editor, and later also publisher, of The State Port Pilot was just one of the many ways that he impacted this community.

The Harper family's steadfast legacy of providing "A Good Newspaper in a Good Community" will continue in the capable hands of Ed's youngest daughter, Morgan Harper, and The State Port Pilot staff.

Christmas Tour of Homes

It was another good year for Southport Historical Society's Christmas Tour of Homes, the 29th year of this event and 18th year of our sponsorship. Our event was part of the City of Southport's Winterfest Festival and was held on December 8, 2018. We were very fortunate to have eight homes available for the tour and we would like to thank each of the homeowners.

Thanks to the generosity of the homeowners, and the Home Tour Committee, once again our largest fundraiser was a great success. Proceeds are used to further our mission to bring together persons interested in the history of Southport and to promote a better appreciation of our heritage. Funds from this event will enable the Society to continue to maintain the Old Jail on Nash Street, provide improvements to the Fort Johnston museum, fund a scholarship at South Brunswick High School and continue to enhance the Susie Carson Research Room at the Fort Johnston museum. An incredible amount of time and effort by the Home Tour committee members, the Homeowners and Docents go into organizing the Tour. The Home Tour committee greatly appreciates the members, Homeowners and Docents support and interest in the Tour.

4B — The State Port Pilot, Southport, NC, Wednesday, December 12, 2018



Hundreds braved the bad weather on Saturday to visit the houses on this year's Christmas Tour of Homes. Eight residences were featured on the tour, and each had their own unique story explained by Southport Historical Society volunteers. Tour proceeds help provide funds for historical restoration, community education programs and high school scholarships. —Photos by Morgan Harper

Next Year's tour will be held on Saturday December 14, 2019. If you want to mark your calendar for future Home Tours, it is always held on the Second Saturday in December. As always, **we are in need of Homes for the Tour**, so if you are willing to have your home on the 2019 tour please contact the Society from our [Website](http://www.southporthistoricalsociety.org), or via email at info@southporthistoricalsociety.org.

Photo credit: Morgan Harper, Used by permission of The State Port Pilot

By Phil Fravel

Follow us on Facebook!

Less than a year after launching our Southport Historical Society Facebook page, we have nearly 1900 Followers! We are using our page to keep our members and friends informed about the Society's events and activities and to post information about Southport's history and heritage. Our most popular posts are those that encourage a nostalgic walk down memory lane. We hope you will "Follow us on Facebook" and of course let us know that you "Like" the Southport Historical Society!



Thor at Murray Middle School

On November 30, Cannon Thor travelled to Murray Middle School in Wilmington for a demonstration and educational talk for the eighth grade class. We estimated 150-200 students attended, along with several Staff members and NHSO resource officers.

Teacher Brad Hodges, for whom we fired for at his wedding in 2004, requested Thor's presence. This is our 3rd time visiting Murray Middle School. We had six crew members in support of Thor. Part of the 8th graders' curriculum includes the Civil War and Thor demonstrates how the weaponry was used.

After a brief talk about Thor and its history, we fired twice to the delight of the students. After firing the kids came over for a Q & A and we were pleasantly surprised by the number and quality of their questions. They wanted to know how we fire Thor and it's implements and how they are used. We plan to return in 2019 as part of SHS educational programs.

By Phil Fravel



Tim Terman on Sea Shanties



Our December Second Tuesday Talk was on the subject of Sea Shanties. Tim Terman shared the origin and purpose of many Sea Shanties. Of particular interest was their use by Southport's own menhaden fisherman to ease the work of pulling in their heavy fish-laden nets.

Attendees got to hear recordings of several shanties and to enjoy live banjo playing by Tim. We even had a chance to participate in some call-and-response shanties. Tim is forming a group of Southport Shanty Singers to perform at local venues and events. No experience is necessary. Enthusiasm is appreciated. You can learn more at www.facebook.com/SPshanty

Photo credit: Zeb Starnes

February 7th Meeting, noon to 2 pm

The meeting on February 7th will be a luncheon meeting. The SHS Board of Directors will be serving their own homemade soups to all members and friends!

This is our annual Business meeting so there will be a review of 2018 activities and a preview of plans for 2019. The membership will vote on the slate of Officers and new BOD members.

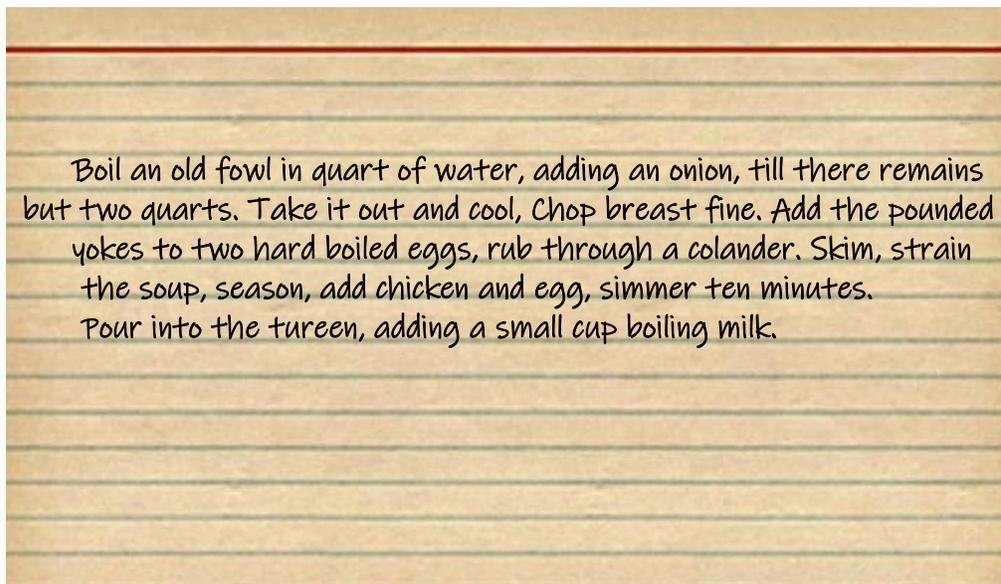
Lisa Anderson, SHS Director of Education and Outreach, will discuss our new and improved website and will give an overview of our new exhibit series: African American History and Culture in Southport.

All attendees will be invited to the Garrison House following the meeting for a special tour of the new exhibit!

There's no telling what yummy soups the SHS Board of Directors will bring to the luncheon. To give them an idea of what to make, here's a recipe from Director Bob Surridge's [book](#) *Hominy Muffins and Oyster Pie: The Lives and Recipes of the Ladies of Southport in 1907*.

Chicken Cream Soup

contributed by Mrs. M. A. McKeithan



Melvina Pinner McKeithan was born in North Carolina in 1847. In 1866, she married Moses McKeithan, who was a Civil War veteran. He enlisted in Company C, North Carolina Heavy Artillery Company in May, 1862 and was promoted to Full Corporal in March of 1863. After the war, he worked as a carpenter/builder. In 1903, he won a \$2800 contract to build a new school building in Southport. The building currently houses the Franklin Square Art Gallery. Moses and Melvina had three children Elizabeth, Fred, and Bessie. In 1910 they lived on Boundary (Caswell) Street in Southport with their daughter Elizabeth (Lizzie) Potter and their grandsons; Julius, Moses, and George....Melvina Pinner McKeithan died in 1911 at age 64.

Adapted with permission from the book: *Hominy Muffins and Oyster Pie: The Lives and Recipes of the Ladies of Southport in 1907*.

The Book Page

Books can be purchased at the Southport-Fort Johnston – Visitor's Center and Museum, The Brunswick County Old Jail Museum and on our website.	
<i>Architecture of Southport</i> By Carl Lounsbury	A survey with a brief history and photographs of 151 Southport homes and other structures made in 1978.
<i>Before We Were Quaint,</i> by Larry Maisel	This book is a result of more than a dozen years of research, more than 80 interviews.
<i>Cap'n Charlie and the Lights of the Lower Cape Fear</i> By Ethel Herring	Story of Captain Charles Swan and his many years with the US Lighthouse Service, especially at Bald Head Island.
<i>The Cemeteries of Southport</i> Compiled By Dorcas W. Schmidt	An inventory of gravesites and tombstones published in 1983 for the Old Smithville Burying Ground and other local cemeteries.
<i>Chronologies of Smithville/Southport, Volume I, II, III, IV & V.</i> By Bill Reaves	Five volume chronology from 1520 to 1990 of the history of Southport (Smithville) and surrounding community.
<i>Classic Southport Cooking</i> By Lewis J. Hardee, Jr.	"Southport's Signature Cookbook". There are over 700 recipes with many coming from the town's best cooks past and present.
<i>Fort Caswell in War and Peace</i> by Ethel Herring and Carolee Williams	A history of Ft. Caswell from the 1830s to the present.
<i>Haunted Wilmington and the Cape Fear Coast</i> by Brooks Newton Preik	Ghost stories...some horrifying, some whimsical, some bizarre. And all of them, according to their terrified witnesses, "true."
<i>Of Home and River</i> by Lewis J. Hardee Jr.	A native son relates stories of the "children of the river" laced with humor, heartaches, tears and a little scandal here and there.
<i>Hominy Muffins and Oyster Pie: The Lives and Recipes of the Ladies of Southport in 1907</i> by Bob Surridge	Life stories of 54 Southport ladies who contributed their recipes to a 1907 church cookbook. Also includes nearly 100 of their everyday recipes.
<i>A History of Fort Johnston</i> By Wilson Angley	A comprehensive history of a North Carolina colonial fort, which is the historic centerpiece of the city of Southport.
<i>Joshua's Dream – The Story of Old Southport – A Town with Two Names</i> by Susan S. Carson	The most comprehensive published history of Smithville/Southport is in this book.
<i>Joshua's Legacy – Dream Makers of Old Southport</i> Edited by Susan S. Carson* and Jon C. Lewis	Compilation of stories about the people who built the town we now know as Southport.
<i>Lelia Jane, A Very Gentle Lady – A Half Century of Life in Old Southport</i> by Susie Carson* and Larry Maisel	This charming book began as a family memoir project and developed into a short history of the town's lifestyle between 1922 and 1972.
<i>Long Beach, A North Carolina Town: Its Origin and History</i> By Wolfgang Furstenuau	Fifty years of the development of this beach town are covered including maps, photographs, and short biographies.
<i>Masters of the Shoals: Tales of the Cape Fear Pilots Who Ran the Union Blockade</i> by Jim McNeil	Recounting of blockade-runners' tales with photographs and maps.
<i>Reminiscences of Wilmington and Smithville-Southport 1848-1900</i> by Dr. Walter G. Curtis (1905) and edited by Wolfgang Furstenuau (1999)	This small book gives an inside look at one man's thinking on topical ideas and issues over some fifty years before the turn of the 20th century.
<i>Southport Secrets</i> Compiled by Don Johnson	Little known and well known facts of the town's history are written in this book describing local scenes.
<i>Three Southern Families</i> by Lew Hardee Jr	Hardee, Jones, and Davis families of Coastal North Carolina

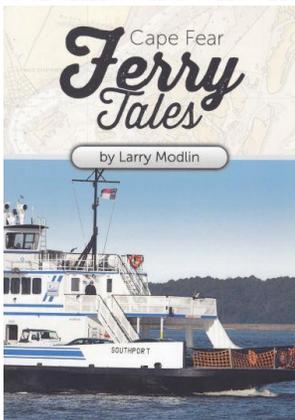
New Addition to the SHS Bookstore

Cape Fear Ferry Tales

by Larry Modlin – Copies available at the Ft. Johnston Southport Museum and Visitor's Center and [online](#), \$13

The Visitor's Center Store is pleased to announce that Larry Modlin's book *Cape Fear Ferry Tales* is now available at the Ft. Johnston - Southport Museum and Visitor's Center.

Cape Fear Ferry Tales, takes the reader on a leisurely journey of discovery down and back up the Cape Fear River. In this book, Larry Modlin shares stories from his life growing up in Eastern North Carolina and what he discovers working as a deckhand aboard the ferry M/V Southport. It colorfully illustrates how he came to understand that there is more to living than just going with the flow. His book is a love letter to the passengers, crew and vessels that changed the way he looks at the world.



Author, Larry Modlin spent his childhood in the small northeastern North Carolina town of Jamesville, in Martin County. He attended East Carolina University and began his adult life in the garment industry. He moved to Brunswick County to become a nuclear power plant operator, and then public works director. During the late eighties, he worked as a movie stuntman at De Laurentiis Entertainment Group studios with the International Stunt Association. Larry's most recent career move was as a member of the crew aboard an NCDOT Ferry."

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Most folks know that the word **FILIBUSTERING** (fil-i-bus-ter-ing) means giving a long speech to obstruct progress in a legislative body. As in "*The bill was defeated by Senator Foghorn's filibustering.*"

However, I did not know that in the past **FILIBUSTERING** meant engaging in unauthorized warfare against a foreign country. I also did not know that Southport's Captain J. J. Adkins (1851 – 1951) was a known filibuster. And was known by struggling Cuban rebels as a "filibustero." In 1897, Captain Adkins and his crew took the pilot boat **JOHN D. LONG** and the tug boat **ALEXANDER JONES** on what was clearly a filibustering expedition to Cuba. Both boats were loaded with dynamite and tons of arms, for the struggling Cuban rebels who were fighting Spain for their freedom.



JJ Adkins House 113 E. Bay St

Since filibustering was a business activity, Adkins and crew were likely well paid for their assistance to the Cuban rebels. It's possible that we see some of the "fruit of his labor" when we admire the two-story J. J. Adkins House at 113 E. Bay Street. As page 21 of the book *The Architecture of Southport* clearly states that Captain Adkins had the house raised from a one-story to two story house in 1900.

Now maybe you and I know a little bit more of Southport's history.

By Bob Surridge

A New Exhibit Coming Soon!

The new exhibit series at the Southport Visitor's Center and Museum, "**African American History and Culture in Southport**," begins with a focus on education. The first installment titled, *A Fierce Desire for Education Prevails*, provides a view into the incredible perseverance of both the inspiring local educators and the students that were determined to get a quality education.

The purpose of this exhibit series is to cultivate awareness and appreciation of the significant contributions of African Americans in Southport by advocating, showcasing, and preserving the art and history through memorabilia, photographs, and objects relating to the African American experience that helped to shape our community.

The exhibit will rotate periodically and will focus on a different part of African American culture in Southport.

Future topics will include:

- *Business/Entrepreneurship*
- *Church Life*
- *Music and Art*
- *Military Service*

The Southport Historical Society invites you to view the new exhibit which will be introduced during the Southport Black History Month program **February 8-10, 2019**.



PTA Meeting at the Brunswick County Training School, inside the old Rosenwald Auditorium, circa 1940's

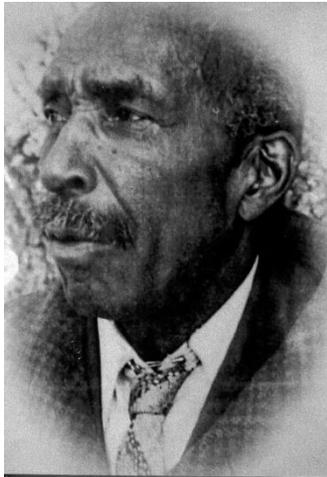
“Fessor” Frank Gordon (1856-1937)

By Judy Gordon

(From the [People of Southport Collection](#) in the online Susie Carson Research Room)

Frank Gordon, son of Pomie and Mary Gordon was born on the John C. Swain plantation near Southport. He was nine years old when the Civil War ended and he received his freedom. The years following the war were hard for everyone, but especially for ex-slaves in the South. Families subsisted on whatever means were available to them. Little is remembered about Frank's father, but Frank remembered having to help support his mother and other siblings by collecting scrap iron, rags and other junk to sell to a local scrap dealer. When there was nothing to sell and his mother could not provide for them, he and his brothers and sisters ate mulberries for lunch.

During this Reconstruction period, schools were established, and Frank learned the value of an education. He remembers that the school teachers were usually white ladies of the community. Though school was held only two or three months a year, Frank was able to acquire an education that enabled him to teach others. So strong was his hunger for education that when an educated black man came to Southport from up north Frank persuaded the man to teach him fractions. He was able to pay him five cents for every two mathematical fraction examples he was taught.



Frank Gordon, Educator

Long after he started teaching others, he continued to read and study to better prepare himself for a career that would last over fifty-five years. At the age of twenty, Frank began to teach school in the county. Using simple alphabet books with one sentence readings called "primers", he taught many in and around Brunswick County to read and write. At one point he taught in a school located at what was then called Marsh Branch. It is said that at one period he also taught school in Georgia.

In 1879 at the age of twenty-three, he married Nannie Freeman, and they had three sons: William James, Collier, and Cenelius. He was loved by everyone, especially his family. "Pop Frank", as he is remembered by his grandchildren, always brought them bags of fruit on Christmas, which in those days was a feat in itself.

During the era that the "Fessor" taught school, grade promotions were very different from those now. Student advancement was determined by the ability to read and complete the class reader. When a student had completed a reader, he was moved to the next level or grade. "Fessor Gordon", as he was called by his students, was an earnest teacher and disciplinarian who wanted everyone to get an education. One of his students remembers that he would literally "make you get your lessons". She remembers that he always kept a hickory stick in the corner of his classroom and did not hesitate to use it when he thought it necessary.

Frank was also a great lecturer and an orator. He was asked to speak on countless special occasions, often during May Day and Memorial Day celebrations in the community. During those occasions after the musician had finished playing and the choir had sung, "Fessor Gordon" would be introduced, and he would actually hold the people spell-bound with his orations. To quote one listener, " he could put on the dog".

"Fessor Gordon" was active as a schoolteacher until the end of the school term in 1934. Frank was a member of the St. James A.M.E. Zion Church in Southport where he served as Sunday schoolteacher. He believed that "before the hills stood there was God behind it all ". Frank died in 1937 knowing that in the field of education he had done all that he could do with what he had. He had no doubt that if he had been blessed with more he would have done more. He "reckoned" that he had taught more Negro children in this county to read and write than any other person during that time.

What does your membership in the Southport Historical Society mean to you?

- Is it just one of several organizations you belong to because it seemed the thing to do when you moved to the area?
- Is it a holdover from your classes with Miss Susie and you just keep renewing every year?
- Is it a back-burner organization that you "someday" intend to bring to the forefront and really get involved?
- Is it a peer issue—all your close friends or neighbors are members, so you joined too?
- Is it a business-related advantage - "... oh, by-the-way we are members of the local historical society" ...?
- Is it a continuation of your love for history in school or your love of travel to historical places?
- Is it an avenue for you to meet more folks in the area and enjoy a good meal five times a year?
- Is it a curiosity to know more about the local history through the programs presented?
- Is it a way that you can actively involve yourself in an organization with a mission in which you have confidence and thereby want to be a part of its enhancement?

If you answered "yes" to one, some or all of these questions, that is sufficient reason to maintain your membership, so please don't drop out! You are welcome as a member whatever your reason. However, we are hoping that more and more of you will answer a resounding "YES" to that last question. Now that we are off to a new year—beginning our 43rd year of existence—we are looking for more involvement from our 250 plus membership. There's a place for you to volunteer in SHS. Let us know if you are ready to make your membership more meaningful. We look forward to hearing from you.

JANUARY

Is Membership Renewal Month

**Please mail your renewal check during
the month to keep your membership
in good standing!**

We'll also remind you via e-mail.

Annual Membership:

Individual - \$15

Couple or Business - \$25

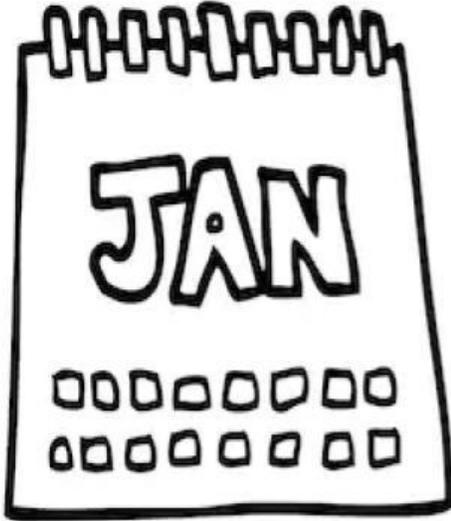
Life Membership:

Individual \$150

Couple/Business \$200

Pay [Online](#) OR

**Please mail checks to SHS
PO Box 10014 – Southport NC 28461**



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**January is Membership
Renewal Month!**

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