



THE  
WHITTLERS BENCH  
Southport Historical Society

PO Box 10014  
Southport, North Carolina 28461

Volume XXIV, No. 3

May 2000

Southport Heritage Week  
May 21 to May 27, 2000

Sunday, May 21  
Ladies' Historic Tea  
Party

Thursday, May 25  
"Susan Sellars Carson Day"  
& Birthday Party

Saturday, May 27  
Dedication of Joshua  
Potts Memorial

*See inside for details*

**President's Note**

The month of May will be an exciting month for our Society. We have prevailed upon the city of Southport to declare the week of May 21 to 27 "Southport Heritage Week." The first event on Sunday afternoon will be a Ladies' Historic Tea Party at Lois Jane's Bed and Breakfast. Tickets are \$15.00, limited in number, and available only at Southport Antiques on Moore Street. You better hurry on this one! The second event on Thursday, May 25, is "Mama Susie's" 80th Birthday Party, an open house for everyone from 5:00 to 8:00 P.M. at Trinity United Methodist Church, on "Susan Sellers Carson Day" as proclaimed by the Mayor of Southport. The week concludes with the public unveiling and dedication of the Joshua Potts Monument on the lawn of Fort Johnston at 2:00 P.M. Saturday, May 27. Miss Susie has been waiting a long time for this one!

The first public meeting of the City's Committee on a Local Historic District was held on April 25 with a reasonably good turn-out. Opponents were conspicuous by their absence, so we hope that this effort is still going forward. SHS is continuing with the projected extension of the National Register Historic District, a completely separate but parallel project to the city's. We have teams of photographers out taking pictures of all the structures, regardless of age, in the additional areas. When this is completed, laborious title searches will be required to establish original builders and ages of buildings--probably an intern-type project. We'll keep you posted.

MEMORIAL DEDICATION  
INVITATION

THE SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Invites you to attend  
a celebration of our heritage  
at the unveiling of  
a monument dedicated to our founder  
Joshua Potts  
and  
in honor of our city historian  
Susie Carson  
on  
Saturday Afternoon  
May 27, 2000  
2:00 p.m.  
on  
The Ft. Johnston Garrison Lawn*

*Come by for Cake and a Hug  
as we celebrate Susie Carson's  
80th Birthday*



*Thursday, May 25th, 5-8 p.m.  
Trinity Methodist Church  
Fellowship Hall*

**\*\*\*Please contact Marilyn Lessin at 457-0004 if you can  
help with refreshments\*\*\***

## LADIES TEA FUND RAISER

A fundraiser for the Society has been planned for Sunday afternoon, May 21 from 3 until 5 p.m. at Lois Jane's Bed & Breakfast. The Pharmacy Restaurant will cater the tea. This will be the opening event of Southport Heritage Week and we are looking forward to a sell-out! Tickets will be limited to 100, so be sure to get yours early. They will be sold ONLY at Southport Antiques - 101 S. Howe Street - for \$15.00 (donation to the Society). Several "historical ladies" will also be attending (Judith Potts, Kate Stuart, and et.al.). You won't want to miss this occasion to celebrate our heritage. Do plan to attend and bring friends and visitors (you might even want to wear a "tea hat"). A ticket to the tea would be a perfect Mother's Day Gift! Special envelopes will be available with the tickets if you are planning to make it a gift. Thank you for your support in this endeavor.

P. S. We need a little help! If you can provide a card table and four chairs AND decorate the table with a cloth and flowers it will be much appreciated. These tables and chairs will be on the side lawn and will add much to the festivities. Your participation will help keep our costs down, making more money for the Society. Any type flowers and white or pastel cloths will be perfect. If you would like to help in this way, please call Pat Kirkman (457-0579 (home) or 454-2911 (office). Thanks!

---

**Are your dues for calendar 2000 paid?? Please note this will be the L A S T newsletter if you have not paid for this year. THANKS**

-----  
cut here and send form with your check

### *New Membership Registration*

Join the Southport Historical Society and receive the newsletter on a regular basis

individual	\$10	student	\$2	business/organization	\$15
couple	15	(up to age 18)		sustaining	25

life membership	\$ 150	life membership for couple	\$ 200
-----------------	--------	----------------------------	--------

name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

city, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

send to : PO Box 10014, Southport, North Carolina 28461

## *"Looking Back"* The History Page

Susan Carson, Editor



---

Just recently I had the good fortune of meeting and making friends with Mellin and Evelyn Huff of Decatur, Georgia. He was stationed at Caswell Section Base during part of WW II and his bride was here with him. I am including Evelyn's notes about being a war bride in wartime Southport. Mellin has been mentioned in the Waterfront column of the State Port Pilot and some of his pictures from the 1940's have been used by THE WAY IT WAS. In 1992, Wanda Golden of Illinois wrote her memories of the same time.

### **A War Bride in Southport** *by Evelyn Huff*

Living in Southport beginning in 1942 was a great treat for me as the wife of a Navy service man stationed at the U.S. Navy base. Southport was a quaint fishing village, so different from any place I had previously experienced. It was near the sandy beach and the water and I had an opportunity to make new friends.

Fortunately, Mrs. Helen Bragaw took me in at the "Camellia Inn." Here I met Bill Keziah who wrote, edited, printed and distributed the State Port Pilot from the basement. He was mute and taught me to communicate with him using hand gestures. He instructed several Navy wives about catching crabs from a nearby dock and made sure they understood to return females with eggs to the water.

Mrs. Bragaw often mentioned her son Churchill. Unfortunately, this young man was killed at the Battle of Anzio Beach. Food purchases were rationed. One evening Mrs. Bragaw served cake and coffee to a few friends. She then told us that the cake had been baked using chicken grease as a substitute for shortening! Maybe so—maybe not so!

Mrs. Grace Ruark rented us a room after our baby was born and we lived there until my husband Mellin was transferred to sea duty with the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific Ocean. Grace worked with the County Welfare Office and her husband Joe was a State Senator and an attorney. One of the affluent Navy wives here at the time brought her French maid to Southport with her. What luxury!

When the daily mail arrived at the post office, several residents were usually already there, visiting with each other while they waited for the mail to be put in the boxes. The Waccamaw Bank was pleased to receive deposits and handle checks at no charge. Mack's Restaurant had the best seafood meals we had ever eaten. Seafood was fresh from a local fisherman's catch and a meal was less than fifty cents.

Mrs. Nellie Niernsee was kind enough to prepare lunch for a few of the Navy wives. Rental units with kitchens were not available for all of us.

## *"Looking Back"*

We hope the community will be successful in establishing codes to retain a quaint Southport village. As an example: the Isle of Capri in Italy will look the same in 50 years as now because they have decided to preserve that appearance. After an absence of a number of years, we were disappointed to see that the building that replaced the "Camellia Inn" after a fire did not blend in with the surviving community.

### **Another War Bride in Southport** *by Wanda Golden*

"What I remember about Southport, NC as a Yankee War Bride,  
May 1943 -October 1945"

I remember we lived at Miss Louise Watson's on the left hand side of the hall, in one big room. Later we moved across the hall to two rooms. I washed clothes on a scrub board and cooked on a kerosene stove. I remember Archie Watson coming down the hall afternoons calling "Miss Wanda." They had a fig tree in the backyard. That was my first look at a fig tree and first taste of fresh figs. They were delicious.

I remember the Baptist church, located diagonally across the street. Here we met the Rev. and Mrs. A.L. Brown and family. They took me "under their wing" and treated me like a daughter. I remember going to many homes after church on Sunday nights to the servicemen's fellowship. There we met many Southport friends including Thelma and Susie Sellars.

I remember helping Susie publish The Short Circuit, a newsletter written especially for the boys in service and a project of the young people at the Baptist Church. Mr. Jimmy Prevatte, a lawyer, let us use his typewriter, and Ressie Whatley ran the copies on a mimeograph machine in her office. The church did not then own any office equipment.

I remember going down to the Yacht Basin. Marjorie Potter (Livingston) worked at the Post Office and became a good friend. The Potters lived at the Yacht Basin (also called "Tin Pan Alley") on Brunswick Street. Mr. Potter and his sons mended their nets on the front porch.

I remember going out the River Road to the home of Mrs. Margaret McRackan. They raised tobacco, which I had never seen and the tobacco barns were all new to me. I remember that first Easter going to Orton Plantation. What a beautiful sight with all the flowers blooming. We had Easter Worship services at the Caswell Naval Base. The sun coming up over the water was "soul thrilling."

I remember working at the Court House as a sort of "floating typist." Whoever needed extra typing that day, got me. I often went to Leggett's Drug Store for a cherry smash with Myrtle Watson, Josephine Smith (Stevens), Louise Rees, Ressie Whatley and Susie Sellars.

I remember Lancaster's grocery store, the rationing stamps and Vicki Lancaster (Aldridge). Vicki and I spent many afternoons swinging in the porch swing at their house which was just back of the store facing Nash Street.

I remember walking down to the USO building on the Garrison and walking along the waterfront on moonlight nights. We walked a lot in those days.

I remember (after getting a bicycle) going out the road to Ralph Seller's place. I visited Essie and Grandma Sellers often. When Grandma Sellers went to Doshier Memorial, I sort of "lived" there, too. Ralph Sellers, Connie Lupton, Adrian Willetts and Walter Lewis were all officers at Oak Island Coast Guard Station when Phil was stationed there.

I remember Southport as then being a very beautiful village with oak trees, Spanish moss, very sleepy and slow paced, with shrimping and fishing going on. How it has changed! Southport, though, still has a special place in my heart.

# OLD JAIL REPORT

Since the last report there have been salient achievements at the Old Jail and the Jail Annex. The Friends of the Library have made great progress in the Annex, including getting a toilet to work. I'm jealous of the workers that Marge Leuschner has turned out to work for FOL.

Wolf and Mary completed moving the books into storage in the Annex. Gene Lasinski stripped these rooms with June's assistance. The good wood that came out of the old building that will not be used is piled in back. Anyone who wants to use it should take it soon before it starts to grow mushrooms. Irv Green has been hard at work on preparing windows for Jerry Heller to trim.

All the new wooden fencing has been purchased and is going up. . 320 feet and 40 posts. Irv and his visiting son Tom Green, Gene, June and I put up most of the front fence on April 25. The Master Gardeners Restitution planted azaleas that were donated by Ginger Harper, who has generously offered more from her nursery. Many thanks to Ginger—these flowers should be a Southport highlight for years to come. Dale Clemmons, my welding teacher from BCC, has already worked on one door and reports that he will furnish the material and labor for welding the other door. He is doing all this in addition to running the family farm and teaching!!

The Old Jail needs more Gingers and Dales to help with this project. We need ten windows that will cost \$325 each, two heavy wooden doors, and steel bars for the new doors. Also we need more Irvs, Genes, Jerrys, Junes and Bobs to put in the labor hours needed to restore the interior. This job will NOT be done until it GETS done!

By the time this newsletter gets to you June and Bob will be "Southport History" and I am hoping Mr. Green takes over the job. This project is "doable" if you keep at it. So, hasta la vista from June and Bob. We will be keeping in touch.

---

**How is that for a stunning conclusion to a report! The Wojdas are moving to Mississippi to be closer to family and this will be a major loss to the SHS. We wish them only the best and we will provide more details in next month's newsletter.**

## Southport Historical Society Officers and Directors

President	Chris Suiter 457-6629	Director	Marilyn Lessin 457-0004
Vice-Pres	Peter Wyckoff 457-5599		Becky Felton 457-5302
Secretary	Pauline Swain 457-6537		Pat Kirkman 457-0579
Treasurer	Wolf Furstenau 278-4050		Dick Hughes 253-9877
Archivist	Susie Carson 457-6940		
Representative for Southport Visitor Center	Ann Brown 457-6710		

"The Whittlers Bench" prepared by Marilyn Lessin, Becky Felton, Bert Felton, Pauline Swain