



THE WHITTLERS BENCH

Southport Historical Society

501 North Atlantic Avenue
Southport, North Carolina 28461

Vol. XIV Number 6 November 1990

MEETING (Covered Dish)

Historical meeting will be held November 15, 1990 at the Southport Presbyterian Church at 6:30 PM. Mr. Bill Reaves, Historical Author, will speak on the History of Ft. Johnson. Come out and bring your favorite dish. Invite someone.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Start thinking now about our general meeting on January 24, 1991. Make a list of items to discuss, direction the Society should take, what you liked or would like to see happen, and complaints, too.

CONGRATULATIONS

This summer the Society had two members that performed outstanding volunteer service.

Cheryl Daniels organized and ran a successful Antique Show. Problems with the 4th of July being in the middle of the week, complicated by having to find a new location made her job the most difficult to date. Cheryl has also prepared an excellent file of items that need doing in order to manage an Antique Show.

Jan Quinn has weeded, watered, planted, trimmed and worked the Heritage Garden at the Old Jail. The yard around the building looked attractive all summer. To obtain this results, it took a lot of trips to Jail and a goodly amount of time.

Thanks and well done. We appreciate your efforts.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would very much like to hear from our out-of-town members as to what they would like to see in the Society Newsletter. In addition, we would welcome Brick-bats or Bows from anyone.

The deadline for the next issue is 7th of January 1991.

BOARD MEETING

The next Executive Board meeting is tentatively planned for 7:30 PM January 10, 1991 in the home of Don Johnson. Society members are always welcome to attend Board Meetings.

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FINANCIAL

We are assembling our records from the 4th of July and the entire year. The printing and distributing of "Southport - A Chronology, Volume II (1887 - 1920)" has tremendously increased the transactions to be recorded by the Treasurer. A detailed report will be presented in the JANUARY issue of the Whittlers Bench.

COMMUNITY HERITAGE STUDY OF HISTORICAL SOUTHPORT

The North Carolina Historical Commission has certified Southport as a Community Heritage project within the States Regional History Sites program.

On Thursday, October 25, 1990, Mr. Larry G. Misenheimer, Assistant Director and Ms. Christa Howerton, Program Officer for the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History explained the Regional History Sites Program to a group of interested Southport Citizens.

The initial step in participation in this program of grants and services is to qualify on the Community Heritage Level. At this stage, small, one-year matching fund grants are available to develop a local project and prepare an overall comprehensive study of historical attractions.

It was agreed that Southport has a waterfront attraction, maritime heritage, long standing military presence, and a small town image to maintain. The suggested Community Heritage Study would review all of our Historic Resources and would make recommendations on visitor attractions, and on interesting interpretations to explain our town, thus encouraging additional investigation. In addition, a Community Heritage Study would provide professional advice on how to keep the town the way it is, and would make technical consultation from the State's division of Archives and History available.

An example of one thing that might be accomplished is a research on Fort Johnson: How was it used during each conflict or war? How many buildings were there? Where are they now? How many troops were stationed or shipped from the area? What did it look like in the past? It was pointed out that these are the type of questions visitors ask.

It was also mentioned that people passing through wonder what the "Fire Tower" and Pilot boat are all about? They want to know where the ocean is, where the ships are from, and what is there to see in Southport.

The results of the meeting was the need for a manned, self-supporting, visitor center. The State can assist Southport in the goal. If Southport can complete a Community Heritage Study, we will be eligible to apply for a Regional History Site

Southport Historical Society

501 N. Atlantic Ave.

Southport, North Carolina 28461

May 10, 1987

Dear Southport Historical Society Member,

Because we recognize the importance of the Old Cemeteries of Southport, NC the Historical Society has established the CEMETERY ENDOWMENT FUND for the purpose of preserving and providing special repairs to these local historical treasures. The financial responsibilities of this belongs to the entire community, so we must ask community and Southport Historical Society membership for help and support.

Only the interest from the Cemetery Endowment Fund will be used for major maintenance and repair, and to assist the Southport city government with the regular care of the cemeteries in our area. The elected officers of the Southport Historical Society will serve as trustees of the Cemetery Endowment Fund. Interest income from this fund also may be used for other cemetery needs as determined by the Trustees of the Cemetery Endowment Fund. Because the capital of the Fund will never be spent, the preservation of the Old Cemeteries of Southport is secure.

You can be of immediate help to us in several ways:

1. Please send us lists of names and addresses of any persons or corporations who are interested in history or civic pride. Send us your club membership lists, business contacts, employee lists, lists of family members living in other areas.
2. Help us make this need and the Cemetery Endowment Fund known by as many people as possible.
3. Help us recruit new members. The Historical Society dues are financing the solicitation and publicity for the Endowment Fund so we need additional members.
4. Make your own contribution to the Cemetery Endowment Fund of the Southport Historical Society.

A permanent record will be made of all gifts to the Fund. Contributors' names (except where anonymity is requested) will be inscribed in an Honor Book of Remembrance. The list will be published periodically in the "Whittlers Bench" Newsletter of the Southport Historical Society and in the local newspaper when possible. Gifts and donations may be made In Honor of, or In memory of, an individual or family. They may be made as: cash; checks made payable to Cemetery Endowment Fund; SHS (Southport Historical Society); or stocks and other securities readily convertible to cash. Donations will be listed in the following categories:

Benefactor	\$1,000.00	or	more
Patron	500.00	to	\$999.00
Sponsor	100.00	to	499.00
Donor	50.00	to	99.00
Friend	25.00	to	49.00

You have only to walk in any of the Old Cemeteries of Southport to see the urgency of needed professional and careful repairs to the markers and monuments. Since it may be several years before the Endowment Fund is large enough to generate any usable interest, it is very important to act now!

I want to thank Mrs. S. Dowling Thomas for becoming our first Friend, and giving us the means to open the Cemetery Endowment Fund Account, at the Security Federal Savings in Southport.

Abbie Bitney, Cemetery Committee Chairman

Abbie Bitney

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program. This program would lead to additional grants over a six year period.

The Southport Historic Society is willing to act as the States point-of-contact for the Regional History program but it was emphasized that input, coordination and support of all organizations in town is required.

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CEMETERY REPORT --

The Cemetery Endowment Funds, Certificate of Deposit, at Security Federal Savings in Southport, matures this month for \$1930.50. The Savings Account has \$249.74. We plan to take \$70 from the Savings Account and purchase another Certificate of Deposit for \$2000.00, for a 5 year period.

We have many new Society Members who really don't know about our Endowment Fund. In this issue of the Whittlers Bench, we have printed a copy of the letter we sent all Historical Society Members back in May 1987. Our most recent Friend is Mrs. Mary Branen of Florida. She sent us \$30.00 last month, honoring her three grandchildren. She had hoped for Pioneer Certificates, but had to accept Gen. Howe as a former ancestor. (You genealogists out there understand the term "former ancestor"!) A Mr. and Mrs. Ken Butters, also of Florida sends us regularly \$10 to \$20 several times a year. Bit by bit our funds grow.

This Cemetery Endowment Fund is more critical than ever. The City of Southport, while caring for the cemeteries, does so under the Parks and Recreation Department of the City. This means that any work done in the Cemeteries is after Parks and Recreation needs are met. We need to be prepared to take on the responsibilities of the Cemeteries care in case of a city wide budget cut. Our Endowment Fund can use only interest as it accumulates. Our last Certificate of Deposit paid 8.400 interest, but a five year investment of a larger amount of money should yield us more.

I believe we have made the citizens of the town of Southport aware of the value of our old cemeteries. We thank the Pilots Association for their repairs on the Pilots Memorial Shaft. The city now has a Cemetery Commission helping define rules and regulations for all the cemeteries. The Commission suggested and encouraged the city to hire a professional to map and chart the old Smithville Burying Ground. This was accomplished last January. We discovered that two of our historic cemeteries are considered abandoned with no one to care for them. The city workmen still mow them, but the city will not assume the responsibility for fencing them. . . Yet. We must always continue to stay alert to the preservation of Historic Southport.

THE HISTORY PAGE

by

Susan S. Carson

I've been thinking perhaps you would enjoy some "Capsule Biographies" of people who have lived in or been closely connected with Southport at one time or another. I certainly would appreciate your comments and suggestions.

For this issue I have chosen the biographies of two of widely different characteristics, but both of whom have had an impact on our town. The first of these is Robert Ruark the well-known author, chosen because we have just celebrated the Robert Ruark Festival in Southport. The other is Cratie Arnold. He, of course, was not as well-known, but was probably mentioned in some of the writings of Robert Ruark. You might want to get a copy of The Old Man and the Boy and The Old Man's Boy Grows Older from the library or from the Little Professor Bookstore and check this out for yourself.

ROBERT RUARK: Although not a native of Southport, Robert C. Ruark, Jr. brought our town a little bit of fame when he wrote The Old Man and the Boy. Robert was born in Wilmington on December 29, 1915, to Robert C. Ruark, Sr. and Charlotte Adkins Ruark, both of whom had very deep Southport roots. Robert weighed 8-1/2 pounds at birth! (I happened to have a copy of his birth announcement). The grandfather immortalized as "The Old Man" is apparently a composite of his two grandfathers, Hawley Adkins and Hanson Kelly Ruark. The Boy and the Old Man were great pals and spent much time roaming the fields and the streams around Southport. Robert's great love of the outdoors is particularly noted in almost everyone of his articles and books. He was a prolific writer from the time he entered journalism school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill at age 15 until he died at age 49. His prize-winning novel Something of Value, concerning African terrorist activities, became a best seller, as did another novel of Africa Uhuru.

Since his death in 1965, many articles have been written about Robert Ruark. Many people have made in-depth studies of his life and have come to varied conclusions as to "what made him tick". Dr. Michel Renouard of France wrote as his doctoral thesis Robert Ruark, Journalist and Novelist: The Failure of a Success. This 325-page treatise was translated into English by Robert's cousin Mrs. Vivian Bates, of Wrightsville Beach. Mrs. Bates has graciously given me a copy of this fascinating study. My favorite thing, though, about the author is something he wrote himself. I quote: "As a fat little kid I used to cry as I fought and was generally sick to my stomach later. And I fought a lot. I had to. I was a junior and as a result was called Bobby. Except for Grandma who called me 'Rosebud'. My middle name was Chester and 'Chester' is hilarious in the South. Also, I was a bookish brat with a massively overdeveloped imagination...I don't think I was ever anything but an adult...I was reading Shakespeare for fun at age 10, and this is no way to become popular with a bunch of young thugs..."

A notice of his death in the News & Observer (headed London) says: "American author Robert Ruark left an estate in Britain valued at 23,908 pounds (\$66,942), his will published in London disclosed today. Ruark died in a London hospital last July 1. He was 49. The writer left all his manuscripts, letters and papers relating to his work to the University of North Carolina. His property at Palamos, Spain, was left to a friend, Marily Kaytor, and half of the residuary estate to his former

wife, Virginia Webb Ruark. The writer left \$50,000 to his longtime secretary, Alan Ritchie, and his Rolls-Royce car to his friend Harold Matson. His estate in other countries is believed to be much larger than his British holdings."

He was buried near his home in Palamos, on the Cota Bravo coast of Spain, where he had lived for the last twelve years prior to his death. Another little item that I thought poignant - he took seed corn from Brunswick County to plant at his home in Spain so that he would have a "taste of home".

LEMUEL CRATIE ARNOLD: For this little biography I am indebted to Mrs. Neil O'Neal for securing the information from her mother-in-law, Mrs. Elizabeth Arnold O'Neal, a daughter of Cratie Arnold.

Captain Lemuel Cratie Arnold was born in Southport on October 26, 1883 (while the town was still Smithville), and died on February 5, 1967. He is buried in the original section of Northwood Cemetery.

At an early age Cratie developed spinal meningitis and when he was about 15 years old, Dr. J. Arthur Doshier had to amputate both of his legs from the knees down. The legs are buried in the Old Smithville Burying Ground. It was as if the strength of his legs was transferred to his arms. He learned to make the boots he wore and the crutches he walked with. He owned and operated a boat, pulling in the nets by hand with the help of a deckhand. He owned his home on Brunswick Street near the Old Yacht Basin.

Later in life, Mr. Arnold started a boat building business and he became quite famous for boat construction. He was friendly to all and helpful to all who needed him. One great thing about Cratie was he never considered himself as handicapped. He just adapted to his situation and went on about the business of living and working. He and his wife, now also deceased, had three daughters.

Once a visitor on a fishing trip to Southport saw Mr. Arnold sitting down on his boat pulling in the net. The visitor remarked to the captain of the boat he was on, "That's the laziest man sitting down on that boat pulling the net that I've ever seen". The captain told him Mr. Arnold didn't have any legs. When they all returned to the docks, the visitor went to Mr. Arnold and told him that he had changed his mind; that he was the smartest man he had ever seen!

DON'T FORGET. CALL ME, SEE ME, OR WRITE ME and let me know what you want to find on The History Page.

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