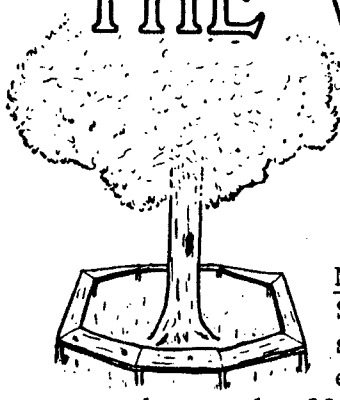


THE WHITTLERS BENCH

SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

501 N. Atlantic Ave. - SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA 28461

June 13, 1989



MEETING: Historical meeting will be held on June 22, 1989 at the Southport Public Library on West Moore Street at 7:30 P.M. The speaker will be Mr. Richard Triebe; Scuba diver, Author, and History enthusiast. His speech and slides will be on the History of Ships that sank off the North Carolina coast. This should be an interesting evening for all.

THE OLD JAIL: The Jail will feature "The Living Legacy Garden" out side, and on the inside, costumed guides will show the newly restored Library and several rooms of Cemetary rubbings and Certificates presented by the Genealogical Society.

Mr. John Turner will exhibit a collection of his pen and ink renderings in the main room.

In the main, rear room there will be a Video of points of interest in the area. The Jail will be opened the following:

July 1	10:00 to 5:00
2	1:00 to 5:00
3	10:00 to 5:00
4	1:00 to 5:00

ANTIQUA SHOW: The Antiqua Show will open on Friday, June 1 for exhibitors to set up from 6:00 to 9:00 P.M. The show will open for the public on the following:

July 1	10:00 to 8:00
2	1:00 to 6:00
3	10:00 to 6:00
4	1:00 to 5:00

The Historical Society would like to extend a BIG THANK YOU to Mr. McCrodden for his donation of flowers for the Jail.

GOOD NEWS! Bill Reaves is making great progress on Volume II of the SOUTHPORT CHRONOLOGY. We are looking forward to getting it to the printers within the next few months. We cannot yet tell how much it will cost per copy, and we may have to go with a limited edition, so it would be helpful to the Society if you and your friends who might be interested in having a copy will write in and state that you are interested so we will have some idea of how many copies we will need. I think almost everyone on our membership roll is familiar with the first volume of the CHRONOLOGY.

ANOTHER NOTE TO OUR MEMBERSHIP: For this page in future issues, I would like to carry letters from you, our members. Please write me about things you remember about Southport if you grew up here during "the good old days"; or if you have lived here at any time; or what your ties are with the town. If you have Old Southport Family connections, please write us about the family. This is a way that we can share our interest in the town. This is for everyone, local as well as out of town.

BICENTENNIAL TO BE CELEBRATED: Southport/Smithville will be 200 years old in 1992 - and not much time remains to get ready. The Historical Society has been asked by the City to be active in planning for this occasion. Do you have ideas you would like to share for the celebration? Let us hear from you quickly as committees will be formed and work started.

HISTORY TIDBITS: On September 12, 1918, the Army & Navy Club Annex was formally opened and dedicated. For those of you not familiar with the Army & Navy Club, this was a project of the War Camp Community Service of World War I. The club served the service men stationed at Fort Caswell and other nearby military points. This included a library, bowling alley, band concert stand, and a "home away from home" where letters could be written, music listened to and refreshments enjoyed. The club was quartered in the Masonic Lodge building across from the present day Post Office, on the corner of Nash and Dry Streets. The townspeople were very proud of this and did all they could for the service men.

The program for the occasion was printed by Pvt. Ray F. Kern, Post Printer, Fort Caswell. The agenda was as follows: (Mr. Jens Berg, of Southport, War Camp Community Service, presided. Mr. Berg was a pharmacist and very active in the Pythagoras Lodge that made the building available for the Army & Navy Club).

Music	Fort Caswell Band
"America"	In Unison
Welcome	Mayor Joe Ruark
Brief Address	Attorney Robert W. Davis, for the Lodge
Prayer	Rev. F. R. Lee
Music	
Presentation of the Annex	Mr. A. L. Weatherly
Acceptance of the Annex	Representative of Army & Navy
Music	
Social Hour	

(MORE ON THE USE OF THE ANNEX AT A LATER DATE)

May 30, 1989

CEMETERY REPORT

This month the cemetery committee learned of a very distressing event, that makes our project for the Cemetery Endowment Fund more urgent than any of us thought. Dot Schmidt, who compiled our book, The Cemeteries of Southport (Smithville) and Surrounding Area, called me that someone had vandalized one of the cemeteries listed in the book. It was the Old Wescott Cemetery. People living in the neighborhood had seen a strange man going into the woods with a metal detector, and others had seen him come out with a knapsack on his back, which he loaded into his parked van. They did not realize that desecrating a cemetery is illegal until nearly a month had passed. It was something they saw on the television alerted them to call us.

We filed a complaint with the Sheriff's Department. Deputies responded very quickly, examined the area and a formal report is being filed. Members of the of the Historical Society, joined me and other committee members to examine the area. We invited the newspaper feature editor, Marybeth Bianchi, to go with us into the woods and take some pictures. The committee discussed what we can do to prevent such a thing from happening again. We really came up with only one idea: we can try to publicize the fact that digging in a cemetery is illegal. We hope that the Feature Story the State Port Pilot printed will help with that. We wonder about erecting an sign in the area, citing the illegality of disturbing the graves, fences, tombstones or other orientation. Actually, there is not much we can do unless someone is caught. This particular cemetery is small and hard to locate as trees and undergrowth cover the area. Yet, two stones were recently broken, and one grave dating to 1845 was disturbed by digging. We have other old abandoned cemeteries which we will examine soon. We will appreciate any suggestions or ideas anyone may have.

The cemetery committee does have some better news. The Cemetery Endowment Fund grows slowly, we do receive small donations when we issue a Century or Pioneer Certificate. We have a CD now valued at \$1,701.59, and \$70.14 in the savings account. Only interest from this account can be used to supply special care or maintenance for the Old Cemeteries of Southport. Why not make a donation here to honor someone, or as a gift to someone "who has everything."

Janice Stanley and Bill Delaney are making plans to map the Old Smithville Burying Grounds. When the cemetery is marked off in squares, we hope there will be volunteers to record the markers in each square. Plans are also being made to have a tombstone rubbing day.

The City of Southport has established a Cemetery Committee, which is under the Parks and Recreation Department. The Historical Society is well represented on the Committee, by Susie Carson, Abbie Bitney, Orie Gore, and James Smith. Dot Schmidt is chairman. Right now the City Committee is trying to update and formulate the regulations for the Northwood Cemetery.

GENEALOGY

The genealogy committee is planning to start meeting on a regular basis soon. We have all those great books that have been donated to us to catalog. We must get the certificate requests and documentations filed. Also, it would be fun just to get together and talk genealogy questions and answers. It seems to me, at the last meeting, someone suggested that we open The Old Jail Headquarters on Sunday afternoons during the summer. Let me know if you are interested in genealogy. We're hoping the little room to the left of the front door will soon have shelves and a work table. I'm calling it a library, but some are calling it an office. Abbie

The GARDEN PAGE

by Flora Greenleaves

PETUNIA

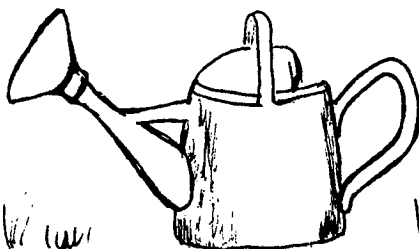
Petunia hybrida

One of the most familiar of all garden plants, the petunia is a comparative late-comer to America. Yet its flower has been changed so dramatically by plant breeders that the large frilly blossoms of today's hybrids would be unrecognizable to the gardeners of only a few generations ago who knew only the modest white and lavender blooms of the first cultivated petunias.

Petunias are natives of South America and were introduced into cultivation from the Argentine. They belong to the nightshade family, SOLANACEAE, and are thus closely related to tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco. In fact, the name petunia is the Latinized form of "petun," the native South American name for tobacco. The first petunias seen outside their homeland came from seeds collected along the banks of the Rio de la Plata by a group of Frenchmen in 1823. These men had been sent to evaluate the resources of the Argentine and, taking a cue from the native Indian name, they hoped that the weedy little white-flowered plant might have some commercial value. In Paris, the distinguished botanist Antoine de Jussieu, a foremost authority on plant classification, named this new plant Petunia nyctaginiflora, confirming its relationship to tobacco but finding no economic potential. Jussieu suggested that the fragrant white flowers might be used as a garden ornamental, but apparently no one was interested.

Among the Europeans who came to settle in the Argentine during this period was a Scottish botanist named James Tweedie (1775-1862) who arrived in 1825 and spent much of the next 35 years exploring the land and sending plants back to Europe. In 1831 he discovered Petunia violaceae, a small trailing plant with purple flowers which would be important as one of the progenitors of modern petunias. Both this and the white species nyctaginiflora appeared in European gardens about 1860 but they remained unknown in America for another half century. These two, plus the P. bicolor, another South American discovery, eventually became the ancestors of our modern hybrids. The earliest garden petunias were the single-flowered magenta, purple and white blossoms that, well into this century, were the only petunias known to most gardeners. Since the arrival of the fancy modern varieties, these older types are seldom cultivated and, because they do re-seed themselves, are often mistaken for wildflowers. No longer available from seedsmen, they can now only be had from country gardens and rural roadsides.

All petunias are easy to grow, requiring only a sunny location and moderate watering during the hottest weather. Pinching faded blooms helps to prolong flowering, though if the old types are grown they must be allowed to make seeds in late summer in order to reappear the following year. Because of their close kinship with tobacco, petunias are very susceptible to the viruses that affect tobacco plants and can easily become infected from the hands or clothing of a person who has been smoking or chewing tobacco products. Otherwise, petunias are occasionally damaged by a few common garden pests such as caterpillars or scale insects, which are easily controlled. Most gardeners consider petunias among the most trouble-free annual flowers. They grow equally well in beds or pots and provide a bright splash of color from spring until frost. In Southport's mild climate, the old types can be allowed to "go to seed" in a permanent bed where the fallen seeds will survive and grow the following spring. Gardeners who prefer the modern hybrids can select the single-colored blues, purples and whites for an old-fashioned look.



W. J. Greenleaves

Chinese Tallow Tree
Popcorn Tree

The tallow tree, with its unusual leaves and berries, was once popular as an ornamental in Southern gardens. Today, however, it is seldom planted and rarely even mentioned in garden books or tree-identification guides. Yet this tree is highly decorative, has interesting features at every season and, in this climate, is very easy to grow.

A native of China, Japan and Taiwan, the tallow tree is a member of the spurge family, EUPHORBIACEAE, which makes it a relative of the poinsettia. A small tree, it grows to about 30 feet with rather short branches. The bright green leaves, which often become clear red or yellow in autumn, are a peculiar wedge shape with long stalks and a finely tapered point. But the tree's most interesting feature is its novel seed pods which form in late summer and ripen in autumn. The seeds are borne in small clusters of three-lobed dark brown pods. The pods eventually split open, revealing white seeds with a waxy coating that later becomes hard. At this stage the seed clusters resemble kernels of popcorn, giving the tree another of its popular names, the popcorn tree.

The Latin name sebiferum means "bearing wax" and in fact the seeds were once used extensively in the Orient as a source of vegetable tallow for making candles and soap and for treating fabrics. A British Army doctor provides us with a detailed description of the wax-extracting process as he observed it on the island of Chusan in the early 1800s:

The seeds are in the first place taken to the building where the process of making the tallow is carried on, and picked and separated from the stalks. They are then put into a wooden cylinder, open at the top, but with a perforated bottom. This is placed over an iron vessel (about the same diameter or rather larger than the wooden cylinder, and about six or eight inches deep) containing water, by which means the seeds are well steamed, for the purpose of softening the tallow and causing it more readily to separate....When the seeds have steamed ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, they are thrown into a large stone mortar, and are gently beaten by two men with stone mallets....They are then thrown upon a sieve, heated over the fire, and sifted, by which process the tallow is separated, or nearly so, although they generally undergo the process of steaming &c. a second time that nothing may be lost.... The tallow now resembles coarse linseed meal....In this state...it is carried away and placed in the press....The tallow is pressed out by means of wedges driven in very tightly with stone mallets, and passes through a hole in the bottom of the press into a tub....It is now freed of all impurities, and is a semifluid of a beautiful white colour, but soon gets solid, and in cold weather is very brittle....The cake, or refuse, which remains after the tallow has been pressed out of it, is used for fuel or to manure the land....

The Chinese also used tallow tree wood for making furniture and printing blocks and the leaves for making a black dye. In the U.S., however, the tree has been grown only as an ornamental. Along the Southern coast where temperatures are generally mild and the soils light and sandy, the tallow tree grew so well that in time it escaped from gardens and became naturalized in surrounding woodlands. In Southport, a mature specimen of this tree can be seen in the garden of the Dr. Lorenzo Frink house on Bay Street. It is unfortunate that more Southport gardens do not display this plant which was a choice shade tree and conversation piece in the Victorian South.

