

southport historical society

The Whittler's Bench

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OFFICERS:

President: Don Parker
Vice Pres: Pat Kirkman
Secretary: Audrey Daigler
Treasurer: Phil Fravel

DIRECTORS:

Nancy Christianson
Bob Hagerman
Scott Len
Ken Morris
Cindy Sellers
Bob Surridge

MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of the Society is to bring together persons interested in the history of Southport and the surrounding area.

Understanding the history of our community is basic to our democratic way of life, gives us a better understanding of our state and nation, and promotes a better appreciation of our American heritage.

We further cooperate with the city of Southport to preserve the town's records and archives, and encourage the preservation of historic buildings, monuments and markers.

Parker's Perspective

Fall 2017

As we bid farewell to the summer of 2017, it's time to look forward to another great season for the Southport Historical Society. I look back over the past few years and marvel at what the Society has achieved in building upon past accomplishments while seeking out new opportunities and challenges. Our footprint continues to grow and we have been successful in celebrating Southport history on so many different fronts. We are blessed to have hard-working volunteers across our many programs, events, and activities.

Whether speaking of our Old Jail docents, Thor cannon crew, Christmas Tour of Homes volunteers, cemetery upkeep volunteers, historic plaque researchers, Susie Carson Research Room and Southport Museum volunteers, those involved in the operation of our retail store in the Garrison House, people who sell our books at different venues throughout the year, or the volunteers who ensure our general membership meetings are set-up prior to our program, everyone's contribution is very much appreciated.

Our Board of Directors never let the grass grow under their feet. As I mentioned at our May meeting, we are initiating a memorial brick program this fall. Some of you may remember our brick program from some years ago. With the full support of the City, this program will be the "go to" program for memorials to people, pets, and things. Director Scott Len has done all of the legwork to get this program up and running. Please see his article in this issue of the Whittlers Bench for more information and we'll provide a complete rundown on how it will work at our September 28th general membership meeting.

Speaking of bricks, if you haven't seen the great re-pointing job at the Garrison House yet, you should make an effort to go by and inspect it. We were able to help the City with this effort with a donation of \$5,000 in support of this project that was overseen by the Southport Tourism Department. The funds came from a donated set-aside that was specifically ear-marked for Fort Johnston as well as profits from our retail store that must be spent on Fort Johnston issues. Did I say "profits" from the retail store? Yes, we hit a milestone this summer by turning a profit at the store.

As always, I look forward to seeing you at our general membership meetings. Our next one is on Thursday, the 28th of September. I'm pleased that once again this year, we have teamed with the Wooden Boat Show and our program will be on wooden boat building. As usual, our covered dish dinner begins at 6:30 PM with program to follow. See you then!

Don Parker, President



SHS Upcoming Events



Sept 11th - Cannon THOR firing in honor victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. The program will begin at 8:45 am at Fort Johnston lawn.

Sept. 12th – Second Tuesday Talk with SHS board member Bob Hagerman. Bob will detail the short history of Wilmington, Brunswick and Southern railroad, which once had a station at the NW corner of Rhett and Moore streets. The program will begin at 10:30 am at the Harper Library.

Sept. 28th - General Meeting. The meeting will include members of the Wooden Boat Show. The speaker will be local boat builder Dean Doshier. The potluck dinner will begin at 6:30 and speaker at 7:00 pm. The location will be at the Southport Community Building.

Oct. 10th – Second Tuesday Talk with the Co-chair of the Southport Forestry Commission and SHS board member, Scott Len. Scott's talk will be about the history of "Southport's Trees". The program will begin at 10:30 am at the Harper Library.

Oct. 28th – "Living Voices of the Past" Society members will don period attire to tell the stories of some of the people interred in the Old Smithville Burying Ground. Presentations will be from 2:00 to 3:00 pm.

Nov. 14th - Second Tuesday Talk with SHS member Rick Pukenas. Rick will speak about the myths of celebrated writer Robert C. Ruark, Jr. The program will begin at 10:30 am at the Harper Library.

Nov. 16th – General Meeting with special guests, Governor Benjamin Smith and Joshua Potts. The potluck dinner will begin at 6:30 and speakers at 7:00 pm. The location will be the Southport Community Building.

Dec. 9th - Christmas Tour of Homes. From 2:00 to 7:00 pm.

Dec. 12th – Second Tuesday Talk with SHS vice-president Pat Kirkman. Pat will speak about the establishment of Smithville on December 31, 1792.

Dec. 31st – Southport's 225 year Anniversary Celebration from 2 – 5 pm at the Fort Johnston – Southport Visitor's Center and Museum

Old Brunswick County Jail Museum

It is a battered cap fished out of the Hudson River sometime after 9/11, and it says NYPD HARBOR UNIT, but nothing else. So why is it on display in our Old Jail Museum? You will find it in the room with all the patches donated to the Old Jail by first responders from North Carolina, other states across the country and even from other countries. We are proud to honor those who serve their communities this way as did those who worked at the old Brunswick County Jail for over 70 years. So do come to see the NYPD cap and the patches.

Let our docents tell you the stories of the jail from its past, and if you know any stories you can add to our repertoire, please let a docent know. The Old Jail Museum is open April through October and the schedule will be Wednesdays and Saturdays, 12:30-3:30 for the remainder of this year. If you would like a private tour for your organization, please contact Nancy Christianson at christiansonn@juno.com

When you visit the Old Jail, you will note the brick walkway in front of the building honoring or remembering friends and family members. Those bricks will now be on sale by the Southport Historical Society, the details of which you will find on the Society website. The proceeds will fund future activities of the Society and the bricks sold will be added to the Old Jail walkway. If you have never been here, please make a point of visiting. If you have been before, please return as our displays are forever changing, and you will want to see that battered cap.

Nancy Christianson, Curator

Memorial Brick Program Reinstated!

The Southport Historical Society is pleased to announce that we will once again be accepting orders for Memorial Bricks! The Memorial Brick Program is your chance to add your personalized support to help the Society continue to play an important role in keeping Southport's history alive.

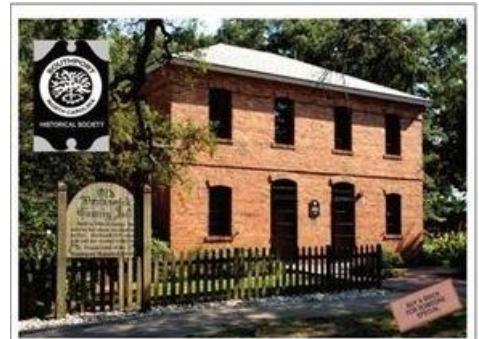
The Society had previously sold these Memorial Bricks, which were laid at the Society's "Headquarters" at the Old Jail on Nash Street. However, it has been about 10 years since that project and no new bricks have been available. Through an informal request from the City, the Historical Society was asked to revitalize the program as a way for citizens, visitors, and other interested parties to memorialize a person, organization, or event of personal significance. Over time, it is planned that these bricks will be the "official" way to place a remembrance within the City.

While the previous bricks had all been laid at the Old Jail location, we are in discussion with the City to place these new bricks at various historical sites around town, to include Ft. Johnston. Obviously, we are dependent on the number of bricks that are sold and available for these projects but we are looking at this program as a long term, sustaining part of our role to preserve the culture and heritage of Southport. Orders for this year's drive will be accepted through December 31st.

For further information and to order your Memorial Brick please visit:

www.bricksrus.com/donorsite/southporthistoricalsociety

Please support the Southport Historical Society, as well as the City of Southport, while at the same time memorializing a person, organization, or event of personal significance to you!

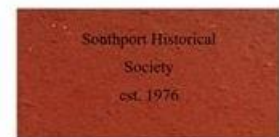


Create your own Memorial!

Support the
Southport Historical Society
in preserving our rich history!

4x8 Brick \$75 (3 lines of text)
8x8 Brick \$100 (6 lines of text)

Place your order at:
www.bricksrus.com/donorsite/southporthistoricalsociety



Questions? Email to
info@southporthistoricalsociety.org

Put "Bricks" in the Subject line

Orders to be taken through 31 December



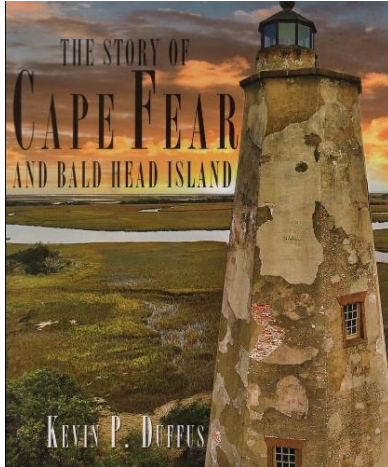
Coming November 16th
Benjamin Smith
and Joshua Potts

At our November 16 meeting these two men will be represented as they discuss how a small town on the Cape Fear River was established in 1792. Plan to join us as we commemorate the 225th anniversary of the founding of Smithville

Visitor's Center Store

The Story of the Cape Fear and Bald Head Island

By Kevin P. Duffus - Copies available at the Ft. Johnston Southport Museum and Visitor's Center, \$40.



The Visitor's Center Store is pleased to announce that Kevin P. Duffus's book *The Story of Cape Fear and Bald Head Island* is now available at the Ft. Johnston - Southport Museum and Visitor's Center. This 200 page book was researched and written by Duffus on behalf of the Old Baldy Foundation. The author is considered to be an expert on anything to do with the North Carolina coast. In fact, he was named 2014 North Carolina Historian of the Year by the NC Society of Historians. Ben Steelman's recent review in the *StarNews* noted that: "The Story of Cape Fear and Bald Head Island, is a handsome coffee table-sized volume with plenty of color photos and vintage illustrations from the 1700s and 1800s. What's surprising is, Duffus turned in much more than a coffee table book. Duffus has, in fact, turned in a fine history of the early settlement of the whole Lower Cape Fear."

Fox and Friends

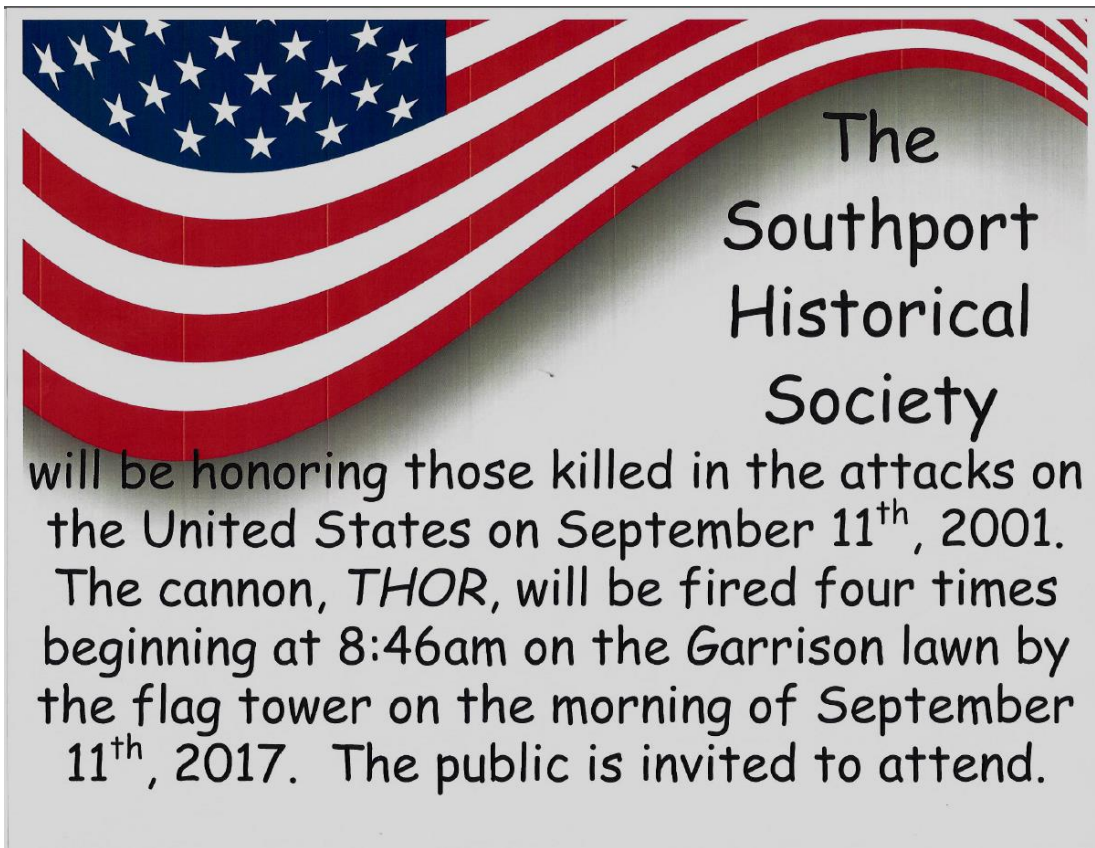
On Sunday July 2 Thor was featured "live" on Fox & Friends as part of their coverage of the *Southport July 4th Celebration*. Fox News Proud American correspondent, and North Carolina native, Anna Kooiman assisted in the firing of Thor by giving the Fire command countdown.

<http://video.foxnews.com/v/5490560730001/?#sp=show-clips>



Proud American correspondent Anna Kooiman with the Thor Crew

9/11 Cannon THOR Firing



Find us on Facebook!

The Southport Historical Society has joined many of the Society's members and friends and launched a Facebook page. 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. We hope you will "Find us on Facebook" and of course let us know that you "Like" the Southport Historical Society.



September 28th Meeting

The speaker for the meeting will be Dean Doshier, Doshier is a native of Southport but his family moved to the Holden Beach/Varnamtown area when he was a young child. Dean and his brother grew up watching wooden boats being built for commercial fishing and, a few years ago, Dean decided to build a boat using techniques that have been handed down for generations in our area. After several years of work, Dean has almost completed a traditional, "Down East" style boat with a round stern and a hunter-style cabin.

The boat, built of cypress, is 36 feet long and 12 feet wide with a 3 foot draft and he hopes to put her in the water soon. Dean will describe, in words and pictures, what it was like to grow up with wooden boats as well as the boat building process that he learned as a young man. The meeting will be held at the Southport Community Building, starting at 6:30 P.M. with a covered dish supper. All are invited to attend.



The Book Page

Books can be purchased at the Southport-Fort Johnston – Visitor's Center and Museum, The Brunswick County Old Jail Museum and online at http://www.southporthistoricalsociety.org/book-store.	
<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 Furstenau	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 Furstenau (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

SHS presents plaque to First Baptist

By Renee Spencer
Staff Writer

On Sunday, local historian and a representative of the Southport Historical Society (SHS) Musette Steck, presented a plaque to the congregation of First Baptist Church of Southport.

But this presentation was actually part of a larger effort that began nearly two years ago when Steck served as president of Southport Historical Society.

"My last year as president, I proposed giving plaques to all the churches in Southport," she explained.

She noted that a few churches, such as Southport Baptist and Trinity United Methodist, already had historical markers displaying the years they were established. Mt. Carmel A.M.E. also had one because its building once served as the original sanctuary for Trinity United Methodist and has been around for quite some time.

"Mt. Carmel is the oldest building with the same continuous use in town," Steck said.

Steck hopes the plaques will make people aware of the area's rich history.

"I want people to be riding around and see those markers and say, 'Oh, this church was established in the 1800s,'" she said.

The Southport Historical Society has donated plaques to seven churches within the city. In order to be eligible to receive a marker, the building has to be at least 75 years old. Steck explained the process took time because she has performed the necessary research on the deeds for verification.

The society is planning to distribute plaques to St. James A.M.E. Zion Church and Southport Presbyterian Church in the near future.

"I think this fits with the Historical Society's main mission, which is to educate and preserve our history—all of our history," she said.



Photo by Renee Spencer

Local historian Musette Steck, right, presented a plaque to First Baptist Church of Southport deacon Ed Lewis during a service held Sunday afternoon at the church. The plaque displays the date the church was established.

Reprint with the permission from the August 23, 2017 edition of the State Port Pilot

History Class

Beginning at 10:00 am on Friday, September 29th and ending on November 17th former SHS president, Musette Steck, will offer an eight week history class at Harper Library. The class is titled *Slavery, Secession, and Reconstruction in the North and the South*. The class is free and open to everyone. To register please contact Musette at 910 454-0437 or you can register at the Harper Library.



Find us on
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Golf in Southport?

In the early 1900s, there was golf in Southport. This is just one of the interesting nuggets of Southport history you can find in the Susie Carson Online Research Room. A five-hole course that was located east of Atlantic Avenue. Thanks to the State Port Pilot, there are hundreds of "The Way It Was" columns on our research website. So, please don't forget to tell your family and friends, in nearby and faraway places, that the Society's collection of research materials are now easily available at the Susie Carson Online Research Room.



www.southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room

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Research Collections

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- ▶ "The Way it Was"
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- ▶ Chronology of Southport
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- ▶ Reference Books
- ▶ Reports/Articles
- ▶ Ruark Collection
- ▶ State Port Pilot

Return to the *Southport Historical Society* Home [LINK](#)

Welcome to the *Susie Carson Online Research Room*

MEMORIAL BRICK PROGRAM

The Southport Historical Society, with the support of the City of Southport, is restarting its popular Memorial Brick Program. Memorial bricks may be purchased in memory or recognition of a person, organization, or event of personal significance. The new bricks will be placed at one of Southport's downtown historical locations in coordination with the City.



"Bit of History" - From 1999 to 2007, Southport historian Susie Carson wrote a weekly "Bit of History" column for the Brunswick County edition of the *StarNews*.

"The Way It Was" - *State Port Pilot* photo columns provide readers with a magic carpet ride through Southport's history.

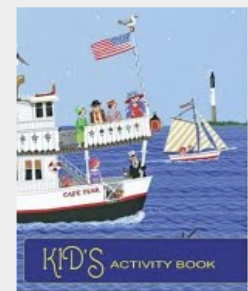
[Brunswick County Historical Society](#) newsletters (1961 - 2005)

[Chronology of Southport](#) (Smithville) from 1520 to 1990

Historic Southport

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR

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THE LOCATION OF SMITHVILLE

By Joshua Potts

(From the Sprunt monograph collection in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill)

Matters, even of consequence, have sometimes originated more by chance than by design. A number of instances might be cited. It was the case relative to Smithville though a place not yet of great importance.

The first movement happened as follows:

About the year 1786 Joshua Potts, the writer hereof, then living in Wilmington, was taken sick and by medical attendance had got better but, notwithstanding, still continued very weak and a loss of appetite, etc. So it happened that his old friend, Capt. John Brown, who had been master of a packet that plied between Wilmington and Charleston, meeting me one day, asked me to take a sail with him in an open boat down the river, saying that the salt air might recruit me, etc.

Accordingly, debilitated as I was, I proceeded with him down the river Clarendon, or Cape Fear, in an open boat, being at the time only able to sit up. Capt. Brown had put on board some eatable refreshments, but I had no thought of partaking any. We had not proceeded further down than opposite the New Inlet when Capt. B. asked me to eat something. I listened to what he said, and discovered an inclination to partake of such cold collation as he had set forth. My appetite returned and in a day or two I felt myself braced up by the effects of the salubrious breeze from the sea, although I was exposed in camping out, etc. for at that time there were only two or three pilots' houses on the bank. I returned to Wilmington in a few days perfectly recovered.

I was at that time single, but in a year or two more became a married man and in a summer season determined that my family should retire from Wilmington to Fort Johnston and there experience the cool and healthy sea breezes. Accordingly I carried my then small family down to the Fort, and rented the loft of a pilot house (Joe Swain's) where we were all stowed away, breathing health and rough pleasure.

While thus living a fisherman's life, I received a letter from John Huske, Esq., of Wilmington, then in low health, on the subject of having a town laid off on the levee, near Fort Johnston. Mr. Huske wished to reside there for the sake of his health. This letter was dated Wilmington, October 18th, 1790, and it is herewith enclosed, No. 1.

Mr. Huske would have called the proposed town Nashton had an act of the Assembly been passed-concerning which intelligence shall hereafter be given.

Mr. Huske was the first mover of a town near the Fort, and I myself was to become the operator. I stepped off the ground from the old Fort southward to the first small creek. The distance was shorter than what was wished. I accordingly wrote Mr. Huske; notwithstanding I was prevailed on to form a petition to be circulated through Brunswick County, setting forth the prayer of the inhabitants that an act of the Assembly might be passed for the establishment of such a town. The said petition accompanies the report, No. 2.

J. Potts having written said petition was applied to for it by Charles Gause, Esq., a leading inhabitant of Brunswick County, who undertook the exhibition of it in order to obtain subscribers' names. This was performed and introduced to the General Assembly which in that year sat at Fayetteville.

The whole intention was unexpectedly opposed by Gen. Smith who was then a member of and for Brunswick County. It was said he supported his negative role on account of two or three pilots who had built their houses, by public permission promiscuously on said land - as it was, however, he had influence to stop the proceeding in the Assembly, and thus ended the prospects of a town at that time.

Some people in Wilmington and others in Brunswick County, being disappointed in their expectations of a town were said to have imputed the opposition of Gen. S. to the cause, not of pilots, but that he had not been previously consulted in and about the business.

Now, so it was that the old Fort Johnston as well as the surrounding lands was the property of the State of North Carolina, and that power alone the petitioners had relied on for the grant alluded to.

Capt. John Brown and Joshua Potts determined, however, not to abandon the place, and fearless of any molestation proceeded to occupy as a temporary residence for Summer and Autumn, each a few square feet near the shore, and accordingly proceeded to have each a cabin formed and framed in Wilmington and procured a sufficiency of boards and shingles to complete these; employed a periauger (shallow draft boat) and put on board the frames and other materials of both houses, engaged carpenters with their tools and both families of said John and Joshua, with plenty of provisions, etc., all together went on board the lighter at Wilmington, arrived at Fort Johnston and there landed the whole.

In a few days afterwards we had erected each a summer house, in a temporary manner, near the water, between where now Mrs. Wade's is and the beach. The said two houses, or camps, had not chimneys of any kind, and only rough shutters to the windows (no glass), the whole of the sawmill roughness, as a plane had not been used about them. Our two families were thus coarsely encamped; and instead of a kitchen our cooking fires were made among thick bushes near hand, which screened the inconvenience of the wind, but rain would sometimes moisten our cooking and depredating hogs would run off with our hot cakes in their mouths. In this way our families enjoyed health, cool breezes and, a coarse way of living several summers. In the meantime Capt. B and myself became expert fishermen.

During' these rugged scenes there was no town laid off, and only a few neighbors, pilots and their families. The first twelve months had nearly expired after the failure of the bill at Fayetteville and the General Assembly were next to sit at Newbern.

Who should come in my cabin at the Fort but the same old Mr. Charles Gause whose business was to get me to write and renew the petition for the establishment of said town. I remember reminding Mr. Gause that any such attempt must be of no use as no doubt Gen. Smith would oppose it as before. Mr. Gause replied in a positive voice that if I would copy off the petition he would advocate it as before and that Gen. S. should not be sent to the Assembly unless he would use his endeavors to have a suitable act passed for the intended purpose. (The election was then pending.)

Conformably to the request of Gause, I then wrote off a new petition, much after the tenor of the first. The venerable old man made his word good. Gen. S. was elected, went to Newbern and assisted to get the act passed and which is herewith enclosed. See No. 3 - Passed, at Newbern, 1792.

The writer hereof remembers hearing Gen. S. say, when he returned from the Assembly, that on his making a motion and offering the bill for the act Mr. Macon or some other respectable member made an observation that many applications had been acted upon for different towns in the State, but that few, if any of them, had succeeded; that the said worthy member said as Gen. S. has applied in behalf of this petty town, it should be called Smithville, as if by way of derision to the applicant, should the town, (like many others) not succeed.

The next desirable object was to secure my attention and services in laying off and beginning the necessary operation to form the town; see a letter from Gen. Smith dated Belvidere, January 29th, 1792, No. 4.

By reading over the first act of the Assembly, No. 3, it will be seen that the town was to consist of one hundred lots, with streets and squares; that each subscriber should pay forty shillings or four dollars, to the State, for each and every lot of half an acre he might determine, but no one person might subscribe to more than six lots, that many might have a chance. The plan of the town was at length sketched off by Gen. Smith and J. Potts, and the lots numbered thereon, from No. 1 to No. 100. Meanwhile all the lots were subscribed for.

(The rest of the manuscript and also the documents referred to are lost. Mr. Potts was a leading citizen of Wilmington).

Prepared by Pat Kirkman



**Tea and Cake Served
2 until 5 in the Afternoon
At the Garrison**

DECEMBER 31

Yes, New Year's Eve Day!

The public is invited to celebrate the

225th Anniversary

of the founding of

Smithville

on December 31, 1792

Sponsored by the Southport Historical Society

Southport Historical Society
PO BOX 10014
Southport, NC 28461

