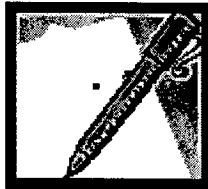




# THE WHITTAKER'S BENCH Southport Historical Society

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## PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPH~ *Peter Wyckoff*

### GIFT TO LIBRARY

Henry Williams of Shallotte has presented to the SHS library an autographed copy of "Combat Boots", a book he has written and published about his experiences in World War II.

### SHS Officers & Directors

President	
Peter Wyckoff	457-5599
Vice-President	
Pat Kirkman	457-0579
Secretary	
Karen Knighton	454-8018
Treasurer	
Wolf Furstenau	278-4050
Historian/Archivist	
Marilyn Lessen	457-0004
Directors	
Musette Steck	253-3855
Bob Lucas	457-6723
Cathy Fravel	457-4794

The Executive Board and I want to thank everyone for their support during the past year, and to wish you all a Wonderful and Blessed Holiday Season.

**OLD JAIL OPEN** ~ As a part of the SHS Christmas Tour of Homes on December 11<sup>th</sup>, "Thor's" uniformed crew will be manning the Old Jail and serving refreshments. Please plan to stop by and see the new improvements. The Society's publications will also be available for purchase – they make great gifts!

Tuesday morning, December 2<sup>nd</sup> and December 9<sup>th</sup> will be morning work parties at the Old Jail to get it polished for the tour. If you can handle a broom, swing a mop, wash a window, or whatever, please come by and lend a hand for an hour or two. All hands greatly appreciated.

**NOVEMBER MEETING** ~ Those who were able to attend the SHS November meeting had a real treat. We had the pleasure of using the new fellowship hall at the Southport Baptist Church – truly a wonderfully appointed facility. Then after a delicious pot-luck dinner, we saw a short – and rare – video of Robert Ruark, followed by personal recollections by his good acquaintance, George Saffo. Thank you, George, for sharing and making this Southport connected literary giant so much more real to us.

**NOMINATIONS** ~ Bob Lucas will be retiring from the Executive Board at the end of this year, and we all appreciate his hard work and dedication. Thank you, Bob. The Nominating Committee has recommended that his position be filled by Don Parker, former commander of Sunny Point who has retired to this area with his wife Debbie and renewed his ties to the SHS. Nominations from the floor will be accepted at the January meeting, followed by a vote for filling the vacancy.

**DUES REMINDER** ~ The SHS fiscal year begins in January, and we want to remind you that dues are now due for the 2005 year. Be sure to send your check to the Southport Historical Society, Inc., POBox 10014, Southport, NC 28461 and avoid letting the benefits of membership lapse.

**2005 CALENDAR** ~ Dates are 1/20, 2/17, 3/17, 4/21, 5/19, 6/16, 7/21, 8/18, 9/15, 10/20, 11/10, 12/15 Board and 1/27, 3/24, 5/26, 9/22. 11/17 General. The Board generally meets at the Southport Visitor's Center at 7: PM, and all members are more than welcome to attend and participate. We welcome your ideas and suggestions. The General Membership meeting location is in flux right now, and the Executive Board is working at finding an appropriate – and affordable – location for the meetings.

## CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR 2004

We are looking forward to another successful holiday home tour on Saturday, December 11 from 1:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. The committee has had some difficulty in securing homes for this year's tour, but we've come through with seven commitments as of now with the possibility of another one or two by the time tickets go on sale. Tickets will be available at our November 18 meeting, so be prepared to purchase your tickets then. Many of you have served as hosts in the past and we will be calling on you again or you may volunteer by calling Joanne Wesson at 457-0888. Please encourage your friends, families and neighbors to participate in the tour this year. Tickets will also be available at the Southport Visitor's Center, Franklin Square Gallery, Chamber of Commerce and at the Latimer House in Wilmington. Cost is \$10 in advance and \$15 on the day of the tour. A huge THANK YOU to the following homeowners who will be opening their homes on December 11: 114 W. West Street - Larry & Amy Maisel, 116 W. West Street - Holly Metzgerott, 216 W. West Street - Terry & Bobbie Acker, 404 W. West Street - Taylor & Kay Jolliff, 503 W. West Street - Kim Anne Russ, 502 W. Brown Street - Richard & Dianne Boguskie 308 Dry Street - Annelle Royal.





## LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

**Susan Carson, Editor**

This article written by a past Harbor Master of the Port of Wilmington, Captain E.D. Williams, was given to me by Bill Reaves many years ago. In excerpts from the article, which appeared in the Wilmington News-Dispatch on April 14, 1925, Captain Williams gives part of the history of Fort Johnston as well as a description of how the Fort looked at one time. This is a timely topic given the changes that are going to be taking place at this historic landmark in Southport.

### Captain Edgar D. Williams Remembers his Native Town, Southport

The beautifully located town near the mouth of the historic old Cape Fear River, rejoicing from 1792 up to 1887, in the name of Smithville, N.C., so called in honor of General Benjamin Smith, was in the latter years incorporated under the name of Southport, 1887. Fort Johnston was named for Governor Gabriel Johnston. The fort was built in 1745, and should be large enough to contain 20 cannon. It was completed in 1748.

Fort Johnston was seized by the citizens of Smithville, January, 1861. They demanded of Sgt. James Reilly to surrender the fort to them, and they took charge of the fort and garrison January 10, 1861. Fort Caswell was also seized by citizens of Southport and Wilmington. .

The first federal officer that came in the Cape Fear River after Ft. Fisher fell was Capt. Cushing of the gun boat Monticello. Fort Caswell was evacuated January 15, 1865 when Ft. Fisher fell. The magazines were blown up soon after the Confederate soldiers left there and all windows in the town of Southport were shattered and shook like an earthquake.

After Fort Caswell's magazine was blown up, Capt. Cushing came there under a flag of truce and, finding the fort abandoned, hoisted the American flag over the fort. He then came with his cutter and 15 men over to Smithville and Fort Johnston. Dr. W. G. Curtis, who was mayor of the town and W.R. Doshier, prominent citizen, met Capt. Cushing in midstream, between Ft. Caswell and Smithville, and surrendered Ft. Johnston and the town to him. Capt. Cushing landed at the garrison wharf and requested that everyone having arms bring them and surrender to him. The headquarters of the Confederate General Hebert was located where Ruark's store now stands. One night, Capt. Cushing went there and captured Capt. Kelly, one of the General's staff officers, and carried him out on board of his ship the Monticello.

During the Civil War, Capt. Cushing made many trips to the Cape Fear River. He went up the river nine miles below Wilmington and into a creek which led to a road from Wilmington to Ft. Fisher. Here he captured a courier going to the fort with important mail. He also blew up the Albemarle on the Roanoke River with tornadoes. His deeds earned him the name of "the dare devil of the Federal navy".

Fort Johnston, also called the garrison, was the handsomest place on the Atlantic coast. It was laid out with large cedar trees extending from North to South, a brick pavement 40 feet wide, and pavement running in different directions to the officers' and soldiers' quarters. The garrison was enclosed by a high fence and two large barracks on the western side of the enclosure. Once a large whale came in the harbor and ran up on the shore near the garrison wharf. He was about 70 feet long. He stayed there sometime, then he backed off and went up the river.

*Captain Williams ended his article with this commentary on the state of Fort Johnston in 1925. The Garrison, or Fort Johnston, is sadly neglected. Why not put some benches in front, so the river and harbor could be viewed, which would be a great advantage to the citizens of Southport and any visitors passing through it, to sit and rest on these benches, instead of sitting down on the sand spurs in the summer evenings, where the fine breeze from the ocean is blowing.*

## NC MARITIME MUSEUM PROGRAMS

*December 11, 2004* - Wilmington author Jack Fryar will be signing his books from 1:00 -9:00 pm at the museum. His books include "History Lovers Guide to Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear" and the very popular "Coastal Chronicles - Volumes 1 and 2". Come purchase your book, get it signed, and pick it up after you have completed your tour of homes.



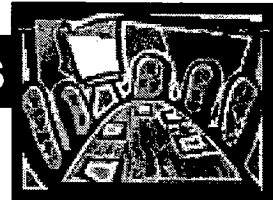
*January 18, 2005* - Chris Suiter will speak on "Guns of the Cape Fear".

*February 15, 2005* - Captain Bert Felton will speak on "Sentinels of the North Carolina Seashore: Stories of the Past and Plans for the Future".

*Remember* - Programs are free of charge but reservations are requested. Call 457-0003 or email [madeline.spencer@ncmail.net](mailto:madeline.spencer@ncmail.net)

**TREASURER'S REPORT****Aug-Oct, 2004**

<b>INCOME</b>		<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Acct Corr. (cancelled check)	37.51	Book Purchase	78.05
Book Sales	2,961.16	Brick Project	383.25
Cannon Income	600.00	Cannon	56.49
Catered Dinner	254.00	Canopy	139.00
Donations: Brick Project	3,900.00	Donations: Communities in Schools	150.00
Dues	85.00	Insurance Premiums	1,723.60
Interest	5.37	Meetings	372.68
Plaque Sales	100.00	Newsletter	205.00
Sales Tax Collected	17.04	Office Supplies	8.13
Shipping	4.00	Old Jail	113.94
Throws Sales	70.00	Plaque Purchase	185.00
Dividend income	23.72	Postal Service	67.70
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>8,057.80</b>	Quarterly Tax Return	30.98
		S. Carson Scholarship Award	1,000.00
		Sales Tax	27.99
		Website	44.85
		<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>4,586.66</b>

**SHS BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

Recent SHS Board actions include:

- 150 commemorative bricks have been sold to help fund the heating and air conditioning in the Old Jail.
- November and January meetings of the Society will be held at the Education Building at the Southport Baptist Church.
- Larry Maisel agreed to help establish the SHS editorial board to review books and edit prior to publishing.
- Tour of Home tickets go on sale Nov. 19 for \$10.
- Leases for the jail buildings are being drafted by the city attorney for our review.
- Drawings for the Heating and Air Conditioning for the Old Jail have been sent to the engineer for review.
- A mailing will be sent to non-renewing members to encourage them to join again.
- Scholarship applications were approved and will be sent to South Brunswick High School.
- Nominations for one director's position will be made at the November meeting.