

# southport historical society

## Whittler's Bench

Summer/Fall 2018



### Parker's Perspective



Well, here it is Summer time on the Cape Fear already! Did we even have Spring this year? I hope everyone is looking forward to enjoying the warm weather and the many activities that Summer brings to our region.

The Southport Historical Society has had an exciting 2018 thus far and is looking to expand upon our successes during the balance of the year. Thanks to Director Scott Len, we concluded our first year of the memorial brick program with the laying of the purchased bricks this Spring along the sidewalk at the Garrison House. We were pleased with the initial response on this initiative that provided yet another revenue stream for our operating budget. If you missed the opportunity to buy a brick last year, don't worry, the 2018 brick program will kick off again this September. Watch for additional information as we get closer to kicking off the campaign this Fall.

The Old Jail is in full swing this season and you'll see many improvements the next time you drop by. Led by Director Nancy Christianson, her team of volunteers continue to amaze with their enthusiasm, creativity, and untiring efforts to maintain the Old Jail and sustain it as one of the top attractions in Southport.

Our "Second Tuesday Talks" at the Harper Library have proven to be very popular and informative. The monthly forum, free to the public, covers a broad number of historical topics and stories that make Southport such a special place. Take a look at our upcoming schedule of topics reflected within this newsletter.

This year, I'm pleased to announce that the Board of Directors approved the awarding of two \$2,000 scholarships in support of South Brunswick High School graduates entering college this Fall. This year's awardees are Gina Flow and Hogan Disbrow. Congratulations!

Of particular note, the Southport Historical Society is embarking on yet another new initiative. With our ever-expanding footprint and number of programs and activities that we conduct and support, we felt it prudent to bring on some "fulltime" expertise. Please meet Ms. Lisa Anderson, a multi-talented independent contractor with a wealth of experience and talent. Lisa has a love of history and the necessary vision and energy to make great things happen for the Society (Continued on page 6).

Contents/Board	SHS Upcoming Events
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## Stories from the Old Brunswick County Jail

What must it have been like to work as the jailer here? The Old Jail was built in 1904 and in continuous use until 1978 when the county seat moved to Bolivia. We are still looking for stories, but I can relate a few.

We know from the 1910 census that James J. Loughlin was the jailer and actually lived with his family on the first floor, and the prisoners upstairs on the second floor. J. J.



*1<sup>st</sup> Row Gertrude Loughlin, Lucy Agnes Tunstall 2<sup>nd</sup> Row Norma Loughlin, Joseph Jackson Loughlin, JJ Loughlin, Susan Tunstall Loughlin c. 1915*

Loughlin owned several businesses in Southport, so this was not a fulltime job for him. His wife, Susan, also cooked for the prisoners and was known for her “Topsy Cake”! Mostly, however, the jailers lived in town and kept an eye on the prisoners as well as managing another job. Wives would cook and the jailer’s children would bring the food to the jail for their Dad to give to the prisoners.

There was an occasion when two prisoners beat up the jailer and his helper then escaped. Another incident happened when a prisoner, who had gained “trustee” status, was allowed to go on work release to Wilmington. When he returned to the jail for the night, he realized that he had left the key in Wilmington and had to sleep in the yard.

In 1930 there was a jailbreak and three men escaped. It’s not known how the prisoners got hold of the keys.

In 1933, Jailer C.W. Easley was attacked by a prisoner using an iron pipe that had somehow been smuggled into his cell. Another prisoner, seeing the attack, jumped the attacker and shoved him into the bathroom and locked the door, saving Charlie Easley’s life. Another time 2 prisoners dug out loose bricks in the jail wall and planned to attack Jailer James Russ, but another prisoner snitched on them and their plan was foiled.



*James Russ*

Afton Smith Sr. served as jailer during the early 1950s. He was also a Justice of the Peace, issued warrants, and painted houses.

During WWII, he operated a dray business delivering groceries. Afton frequently slept overnight at the jail to keep an eye on his prisoners.

Clearly, the job of jailer was occasionally dangerous and just part-time. If any of our readers can provide additional stories about the Old Jail, please let me know.

Nancy Christianson, Curator

## Saving the Parade

### From Lew Hardee via Pat Kirkman

You know, sometimes the best history is in the little things that happen in towns like Southport daily or even on a special day like the Fourth of July. Recently, I came across this humorous story, written by long-time society member Lew Hardee, about just one of those historical or perhaps we'll call this one "hysterical" events. What better time to revisit the 1950s when our now-near-professional-parade was just getting underway with homemade floats, local queens, baton twirlers, bands and such as that. I think you will enjoy this holiday "blast from the past", especially if you've been around a while and knew any of the folks mentioned in the story. Enjoy and have a great Fourth!

Pat Kirkman

#### **HOW WE SAVED THE FOURTH OF JULY PARADE**

By Lewis Hardee, Jr.

Back in the late '40s and early '50s our Fourth of July parade floats were strictly homemade affairs. Farm wagons on loan from local farmers would be festooned with anything colorful we could round up. Each Fourth we regularly depleted Leggett's and Watson's drugstores of their stock of crepe paper and tin foil.

One particular Fourth of July back in the early 1950s the float committee gathered for the annual ritual of decorating the floats. The farm wagons had been taken to a big tin shed behind the old Leggett house on Moore Street, and here we met nightly to transform these wobbly, rustic conveyances into patriotic floats to delight the eye – at least, it seemed to us.

The committee: Bette Leggett, Waters Thompson, Boots Galloway, her sister Betty Smith, Ella Lewis, Harold Aldridge and me. None of us knew a thing about building floats – we just jumped in and did it. Bette was a town leader from way back. Boots's qualification was as soprano with the Methodist church choir, but she and her sister were indispensable. Ella was nicknamed "Creeping Jesus" by the unkind because she moved with the pace of a Panama jungle sloth, but there was never a kinder soul and, God Bless her, her float was always ready on time and equal to the best. Harold Aldridge's background in float-building was as captain of the volunteer fire department, but without him I doubt we would have had a Fourth of July Parade. Waters was the world's biggest procrastinator, never made plans for his float until the night before the Fourth, but kept everyone in stitches with gossip, his sarcasm and wit, and puffing cigarettes "Hmm", he'd say with an arched eyebrow, "I see the Rose Bowl committee is at it again." We'd drink cups of coffee until the wee hours, happily slicing up cardboard boxes from Dan Harrelson's grocery store, stapling crepe paper and colored tin foil into place.

One evening, Bette broke the terrible news: the military band had canceled. What? This would not do! We had a crisis on our hands and something must be done! Whoever heard of a Fourth of July parade without music? Some suggested rigging up a record-player on a float, but how? I had a nice 45 RPM with some records of

the First Piano Quartet playing Chopin. We might hook it up to Bill Bomberger's gasoline-powered electric generator, but that made more racket than the city power plant and would drown it out.

A brainstorm flashed in my head. Dwight McEwen was an old-time lawyer and Court

Recorder, but he had a small collection of antique pump organs. We'd borrow one,

outfit it with fake aluminum foil pipes like a calliope, and transform a lowly farm cart into a wonderful circus wagon. Harold Aldridge and a couple of city workers hauled the pump organ from Mr. McEwen's lawyer's office over to the old post office – Waters was always missing or late whenever grunt work had to be done.

Another flash of brilliance! The floor of the wagon was littered with straw and dried up manure, but also a half dozen End-o-pest cylinders that worked like pumps to create a fog of pesticide. We'd empty the cylinder of pesticide, fill it with nice-smelling talcum, and our calliope would have live "steam".

The Big Day finally came, warm and sunny. On some Fourths it rained or was so muggy that our artistic crepe paper designs sagged and drooped like wet diapers, and the patriotic red-white-and-blue colors bled and dripped in stalactite patterns to the ground. We were having great luck this year!

Clad in smart jackets with epaulets stapled on our shoulders, straw hats with red-white-and-blue bands perched on our heads, Boots and I took our seats on the organ bench before the keyboard. I pumped up the bellows with the foot pedals, hit a chord, and from the wheezing innards of Mr. McEwin's organ poured the melancholy tones of a funeral. Waters blew a puff from his cigarette and asked, "What is this? The Baptist church float?" Bette Leggett wiggled into the crawl space beneath the great "calliope pipes".

A wail sounded from the city police car siren and the parade was underway. Our float, pulled by a Chevy coupe, lurched forward and Boots and I began to play, I on the bass, she on the melody. We had worked up but one tune, "The Loveliest Night of the Year," and it wasn't exactly John Philip Sousa's marching band or a real circus



calliope, but we had music! Crouched down under the pipes, Bette began to send up puffs of “steam” from the End-o-pest pumps.

Slowly down Moore Street greeted with cheers and applause, at least from those near the curb. As the sound didn't carry very far, those standing farther back simply looked on with bewilderment. But the big problem was, Boots and I were soon covered white with talcum, spitting it out and rubbing it out of our eyes. And, after a few blocks, we began to itch like crazy. “Bette, what in the world's going on down there?” we yelled below. “I'm doing just what you told me,” came the answer.

As the parade broke up, under the shade of the big oaks in front of the high school, Boots and I leapt from the wagon and began tearing at our clothes, scratching at our burning skin, trying to dust it off. We fled to our homes and showered. (Bette emerged from the interior of the calliope without a hair out of place, with not a trace of talcum or End-o-pest, as always looking as if she was about to receive the Queen of England.) What had gone wrong? We later found out.

The pump filled with talcum had run dry and, resourceful woman she is, Bette had grabbed a pump of real End-o-pest lying on the cart floor and began spraying us with DDT. Alas, what with the city's nightly spraying of mosquitoes plus our own, no lightning bugs or dragonflies were seen for many years thereafter.

But no matter. We had saved the big parade, and Boots Galloway and I were rid of pests for the rest of the summer.

### **Parker's Perspective (continued from page 1)**

She has been contracted for the balance of 2018 and will focus on numerous projects to include developing new exhibits at the Fort Johnston – Southport Visitors Center and Museum, developing a new SHS website, collecting oral histories of those with memories of the Old Jail, further development of the Society's use of social media, and exploring public and private funding opportunities. A full plate by any measure but Lisa is up to the challenge and we look forward to her progress over the next six months.

One final note. I want to extend a shout out to Randy Jones and Sharon Venis and the entire Department of Tourism team for the great relationship we have established over the past couple of years. They have been wonderful supporters of SHS and our work together has enhanced the experience of the visitor and resident alike. I'd like to think that our teaming with the Tourism Department is a textbook example how cooperating and synthesizing our efforts always result in a “whole that is greater than the sum of its parts”. Thanks!

Debbie and I extend our very best wishes for a fun-filled and rewarding Summer.

Don Parker, President

## C. B. Caroon Crab Company

One of the newest exhibits at the Fort Johnston Museum features the C. B. Caroon Crab Company. The company, which was a leading producer of crab products in the southeastern United States, operated in Southport for more than fifty years. Following is a brief history written by Keith Caroon.

C. B. Caroon Crab Co. Inc. was established in 1965 by Cashwell and Irma Caroon in an old building at the foot of Bay Street and Kingsley where Kingsley Park is now located. The building had been damaged on the riverside by Hurricane Hazel back in 1954. Cash Caroon did the necessary repairs, installed a boiler for steam cooking, and added refrigeration units for holding. By spring of 1965 processing of Atlantic Blue Crabs was under way.



Within a couple years two more operations were added. A finished product or (value added) line of crab products as well as a mechanical claw picking operation.

The Blue Crab Operation eventually processed over twenty million pounds of live crab from Caroon Crab Company itself and thirty million pounds of cooked crab pinchers purchased from outside sources. Live crabs were steamed under pressure at 1,800 to 2,000 lbs. at a time. After cooling, the crabs were hand-picked to produce lump, backfin, and special (flake white) crab meat. Most of this meat was shipped to Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York.

The Finish Product Operation consisted mostly of deviled crabs and crab cakes in 2, 3, or 4 oz. portions. This product was flash frozen and packed for distribution throughout the Southeastern United States. In all, over 110 million units were produced.

The Mechanical Claw Picking Operation was much faster at producing crab meat than hand picking therefore more economical. Claws had to be sourced from other N. C. crab companies to meet demand and over 10,000 lbs. of meat could be produced weekly.

All C. B. Caroon crab products were sold under the "Oak Island" label and distributed in over a dozen states and Puerto Rico. In 2017 after a 52 year run, Caroon Crab Co. closed its doors for the final time.

Keith Caroon, Pres.

## State Port Pilot -Waterfront Column August 5, 2009

### Cash Caroon

As Cash Caroon was being laid to rest in Northwood Cemetery on Saturday, cries from above caused some of his family and friends to look up and see an eagle circling high overhead, and to us its appearance was so very emblematic of the man: confident, forthright, setting his own course. There was even

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something of an eagle in Cash's appearance, especially the eyes that would not let you go until they were finished seeing you; when he walked into a room everyone took note. There was certainly nothing of an eagle in his deep bass voice that made him coveted by every church choir in town. He anchored the Methodists for a good long while and then shifted to Southport Baptist, where on Saturday the choir left his seat empty in memory, and with little prospect of adequate replacement.

Cash Caroon was one of those breaths of fresh air that blow through the community and leave us better off than we were. When he and Irma (it was always Cash and Irma) came to Southport in 1965 he brought a strong background in commercial fishing and a dream of new industry that was a major factor in the local economy of the time.



The Caroon Crab Company set up in an old dock house at the foot of Kingsley Street and almost immediately there was work for crab pickers and packers, more work for crabbers in the river and creeks, and pretty soon there were plenty of Oak Island Brand crab cakes, deviled crab, and backfin to go around the community, and eventually around the country.

As the crab company grew so did Cash, until he found himself on the board of aldermen and finally in the mayor's seat, and until he found himself on the N. C. Marine Fisheries Commission and eventually its chairman.

Private memories of the man abound. David Beresoff, currently a member of the fisheries commission, remembers coming as a clammer to a commission hearing at Bolivia, and when he wanted to demonstrate a point by putting together a 32-foot clam rake, Cash said for him to go right ahead, make his point.

P. O. Midgett, speaking from the Baptist pulpit Saturday, recalled that Cash was always a friend, "but we didn't agree on everything." Indeed, even Cash would agree that he was never going to be agreeable to everybody.

And we recall when he was replaced as chairman of the fisheries commission by Gov. Hunt, Cash derided the move as political, saying, "He could have appointed someone who knows the resource. He has appointed somebody who doesn't know a flounder from a frog."

Cash and Norman Holden crossed swords in the mayoral election. "He didn't speak to me for two years after that." Holden told us. "Then one day he came up to me in church and said he was wrong and he was sorry. We got to be good friends after that and I was in a Sunday school class he taught."

Golf was one of Cash's great loves, and his pallbearers Saturday were his golfing buddies. Indeed he was golfing last week when he collapsed and died.

Nobody could have imagined him tumbling off the dock.

## 2018 Memorial Brick Program

As many of you are aware, last fall the Historical Society revived the Memorial Brick program at the request of the City of Southport so that citizens, visitors, and others with ties to the city could memorialize a person or event for posterity. Last year, the Historical Society partnered with the Tourism Department to re-route and restore the walkway in front of Ft. Johnston; the design that was utilized not only accommodated the memorial bricks ordered last year, but will also allow for bricks ordered for several years to come to be laid in this prominent location.

This program is intended to be ongoing, with orders accepted from October 1 – December 31 each year. Once the orders are complete and all payments received, the Society will place an order with the vendor in January, with delivery of the finished bricks about 6 weeks afterwards. Once the bricks have been received and inventoried, they will be placed in the walkway at Ft. Johnston for display.



Announcement of the particulars for the 2018 brick program will be made at the September Historical Society General Membership meeting, as well as by e-mail and to all Society members. In addition, look for a posting on the Society's Facebook page, as well as flyers around town. Pass the word to friends who may not be members of the Society – from comments related to last year's program, we're looking for a banner year of sales for 2018.

Remember, all proceeds from brick sales/donations are utilized by the Historical Society to preserve Southport's rich history as well as support endeavors and events that bring recognition of that history. Support the Historical Society, the City of Southport, and memorialize a person or event of significance to you through the Brick Program this year!

### 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.



## Self-Guided Tours Using Your Phone!

### What are the Tours?

In cooperation with the City of Southport Tourism, the Society is using a mobile app called *PocketSights* to provide visitors and residents with directions for self-guided tours of Southport and the Cape Fear Region. Four tours are currently available. The four tours are:

- **Historic Southport Tour**– 24 locations in Southport
- **Historic Monuments and Markers Tour** – 38 locations in Southport
- **Safe Haven Movie Tour** – 11 locations in Southport
- **Cape Fear River Circle Tour** - 8 locations from Southport to Wilmington and return

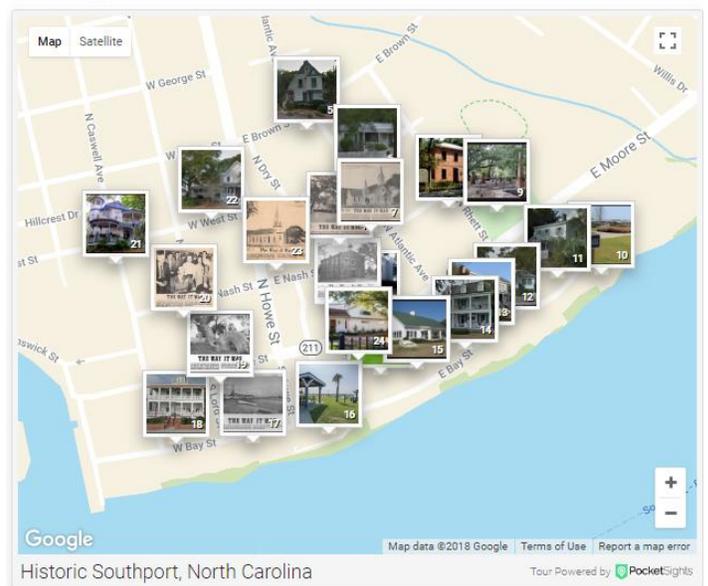
The first three tours are “Free Roam Tours” meaning that you can either walk and/or drive from location to location in any order that you choose. You will probably want to drive if you plan to take The Cape Fear River Circle Tour, as the “circle” covers nearly fifty miles and could take sixteen hours to walk.

### How do I get the App?

The mobile App by *PocketSights* will guide you from one point of interest to the next using GPS.



Tour Map



Download the mobile app to take these self-guided tours on your GPS-enabled mobile device.



## Fort Johnston Museum

Teaming with our City of Southport colleagues Randy Jones and Sharon Venis, the Society is busy improving and expanding exhibits and resources for visitors and residents at the Fort Johnston Museum and Visitor's Center. The photo collage below gives you a quick review of doings at Fort Johnston. *You have been away to long...please come and visit soon!*



## Susie Carson Scholarship Awards

The Southport Historical Society annually awards a scholarship in honor of Miss Susie Carson. It is a two year award of \$1,000 each year. Students must maintain a B average to be eligible for the second years' award. The money is sent directly to the student's school and requires full-time enrollment.

This year the Society received a total of eight applications, which is excellent participation. Seven applicants chose the topic of Benjamin Smith and one wrote about German U-boats near Southport during WW II. After the scholarship committee ranked the applicants, the top two applicants were so close that the committee recommended that both be awarded \$2,000 scholarships. The board approved that recommendation and scholarships were awarded to Gina Flow (attending UNC Chapel Hill) and Hogan Disbrow (attending Wake Forest).

The successful applicants received a letter, from SHS president Don Parker, notifying them that they won the scholarship and wishing them well in their college endeavors. The unsuccessful applicants also received a letter from Parker wishing them well as they begin their university careers. All applicants received a complimentary membership in the Southport Historical Society for their entire university stay. You can read the winning essays at the following links.

Gina Flow Essay [LINK](#)  
Hogan Disbrow Essay [LINK](#)

## Welcome Lisa Anderson!

After relocating to Southport from Austin, TX a year ago, my husband and I discovered a warm and welcoming community – one that will be our forever home. It didn't take long to feel a deep connection with the city and the people that make it the special place that it is. It's truly my happy place! Just when I thought that things couldn't get any better, the opportunity to work on projects with the Southport Historical Society opened up.



I'm thrilled to press my project management, event coordination, marketing, and design experience into meaningful service for the community. Having honed these skills over a few decades in the corporate world (Intel, IBM, GPJ), this brings everything full-circle. Between exhibit creation, website development, and other exciting projects, both my creative and "nerdy" technical sides get to be engaged in all the fun.

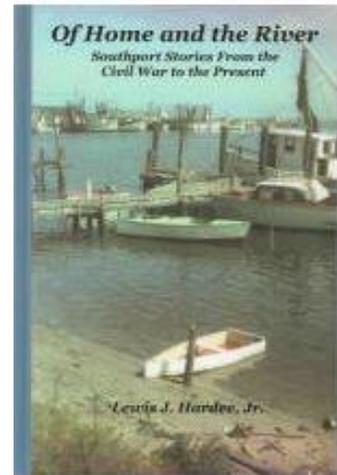
Delving into the origins of Southport has been an unexpected pleasure. It's clear that many dedicated people have been passionate about exploring and preserving the rich history and culture here. I count it as an honor to now be a part of the effort to educate and actively engage others in the deep roots of our city. What a wonderful adventure!

## Are there any good books about the history of Southport?

When asked the question above, I know that you say: "Sure, there are plenty." And you start listing them *Joshua's Dream*, *Master of the Shoals*, *Classic Southport Cooking*, *History of Fort Johnston*, *Before We Were Quaint*, *Southport Secrets*, *Southport's Art Newton*, *Joshua's Legacy*, *Hominy Muffins and Oyster Pie*, etc. etc.

Then comes the inevitable next question: "But, which one is the best?" Being a bit of a politician you respond: "well they are all really good, what are you most interested in?" They say "history" and you then find yourself squarely back on square one. Well, I am putting politics aside (that should be a nice change) and I am going to tell you what I think is the best most humorous book about Southport history.

That book is Lew Hardee's *Of Home and the River*, which tracks the history of Southport and Brunswick County since the Civil War. From beginning to end, this book offers nostalgic and often hilarious insight from one of Southport's best storytellers. The State Port Pilot in its 2008 review noted that Hardee doesn't shy away from his Southport roots when he notes that:



"I am a Southporter, and I'm afraid we natives can't help ourselves from finding humor in any subject, no matter how grim. I should further add that if certain passages in this book are a bit salty, it can't be helped. Southport is a port, and ports are salty."

The 357 page hardcover work, published by the Southport Historical Society, offers eighteen chapters spanning from the war exploits of Hardee's great grandfather, to Hurricane Hazel, to the landing of fifteen Estonian immigrants, who traveled across the Atlantic in a small fishing boat to seek asylum from the Soviet Union, plus many other stories including the visits to Southport by Mae Bamber the mayor of Southport, England.

Following is a short excerpt from the book. The excerpt is titled *Mr. Livingston's Haircut*.

Mr. Columbus Ross Livingston was a steady customer. He was tall and thin with big ears, and a big Adam's apple poked from his gullet like a rock. Norman Rockwell could have drawn him. He lived just a short walk up the street on Howe. Once a week without fail, he would stroll down to Bell's for a haircut. The funny thing was, he had about as much hair as a cue ball---no more than a dozen strands on his pate and a little fuzz around the neck.

He was a dignified, unhurried gentleman, highly respected and long active in worthy civic and church affairs. He'd take his seat in Bell's chair like a potentate upon a throne. Barber Bell would take his good time, first adjusting his visor and his sleeve garters before commencing the ritual. With a great flourish he'd ceremoniously tie it around Mr. Ross's neck. With his thin, brittle,

steel scissors, he'd snip, snip, snip, click, click, click, at the fuzz around the neck a little. He'd then fuss over the dozen hairs on his noggin for forty-five minutes or more as if he were combing out George Washington's wig. I know what I'm talking about, because I saw this first hand.

Visitors from out in the county, in town for court week or supplies and waiting for a haircut, shave or shower, would stare with puzzled looks at this unfolding fantasy and stifle chuckles. Regular customers paid it no mind and went back to reading *The Pilot*, *The Star*, or year-old issues of *Life* or *The Saturday Evening Post*, or a comic book.

Southport lovers you have to read this book! As proof, let me share how a regular Southport visitor, Hadassah Poteet, summarizes *Of Home and the River*

Lewis Hardee Jr. describes Southport in a way only a native can. His stories will have you plunging back into history you never knew you would so enjoy. You will laugh at humorous moments of the old children of Southport. You will cry when those lives leave for the unknown. And at the very end, you will fall in love with a town you knew always had a special something that nothing else has.

Copies *Of Home and the River* and other great Southport historybooks are available at the Old Jail, the Fort Johnston Museum and Visitor's Center and at the Maritime Museum.

By Bob Surridge

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