

Southport Historical Society

Fall 2008

From the President's Pen . . .

A Sad Farewell to "Miss Susie"

The society is deeply saddened by the death of our dear "Miss Susie" Carson. After many months of valiantly living with cancer, Susie peacefully passed away on Labor Day morning, September 1. We have reprinted her obituary in this issue of *The Whittler's Bench* along with other tributes. Following is the eulogy I was privileged to present on behalf of the society and my personal relationship with Susie. The society provided two identical baskets of flowers for either side of Susie's casket - they were beautiful, I'm sure she loved them!



Susie Carson - September 2006

"As most of us remember, Susie Carson was good at giving instructions. If it had been possible for her to instruct me this morning she would have said, 'Now Pat, you be sure to honor God before you honor me.' And so, Glory to God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Susie believed, Susie has not perished, but has now gone onto her everlasting life.

I hope Joshua Potts made it to heaven when he died back the 1800's, because there's a sweet lady who just got there who wants to meet him. Joshua had a dream to start a town at the mouth of the Cape Fear where salubrious breezes blow. His dream came true and here we are over 200 years later talking about him because Susie kept his memory alive.

I recently read this statement: 'History teaches that one person can make a difference.' Alexander the Great? Constantine? Martin Luther? George Washington? Joshua Potts? Susie Carson? Yes, Susie certainly made a difference here. Not many places are blessed to have a dedicated living history book among them, we were! Because of her efforts we have our history written down in her first book *Joshua's Dream*. Most of us have not only read the book, we've had the history of this place impressed upon our minds if we were students in Susie's classes. How many of you ever sat in one of her history classes?

I first met Susie right here in this sanctuary twelve years ago as a newcomer to Southport. I noticed her because she reminded me so much of my grandmother and when I introduced myself to her she immediately said I needed to come to her class which started the next week, so I did and here I am now. Five years later she let me quit going to classes!

She was my mentor, I was hooked on Southport history and now I too have that same love for this place. Neither Susie nor I were born here, but it became our hearts' hometown. Because of her influence and insistence that we newcomers all attend history classes, many of us became involved in helping her to write her second book, *Joshua's Legacy*.

Susie too has a Southport legacy - the foremost being the Southport Historical Society. As co-founder with Eleanor Smith, she and 41 other folks started the society in January, 1976. How many of you were in that first group? Thirty-two years later there are now almost 400 members. How many of you are counted in that number? We have membership applications for the rest of you! Is this not a wonderful legacy?

Even just days ago, Susie was still asking me to tell her what was going on in the society. She never lost her interest in it. It was her pride and joy. She was the "wind beneath the wings" of the society. She will be so missed, but never forgotten.

(continued next page)

The Whittler's Bench

"Bringing Our Past Into The Present"



THE WHITTLER'S BENCH

is a quarterly publication of the Southport Historical Society a 501 3-c non-profit organization
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OFFICERS:

President: Pat Kirkman
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 Secretary: Charles Christianson
 Treasurer: Phil Fravel
 Archivist: Larry Maisel

DIRECTORS:

Cathy Fravel
 Karen Knighton
 Tom Izod

MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of this society shall be to bring together persons interested in the history of Southport and surrounding areas. 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.

We endeavor to provide programs of historical interest at regular meetings, publish articles and books for the purpose of education and encourage community participation in the preservation of our heritage.

Southport Historical Society was established January, 1976 and maintains the Old Jail Museum located at 318 E. Nash Street Southport, NC

(Continued from page 1)

Susie's accomplishments in life not only related to history, but to her church and community as well. They are myriad, her followers are numerous, her influence widespread.

Yes, one person did make a difference in the history of this little town on the Cape Fear where her name is engraved right alongside those of Joshua Potts and Benjamin Smith on a waterfront memorial stone. Kathryn, we are so grateful to have shared your mother with you. She was our dear "Mama Susie", our special "Miss Susie" and we loved her third book, *Lelia Jane*, the story of your family.

But Susie would have me to remind you that her most important identity was "Child of God", "Born Again Believer". As sisters in Christ, we shared some very special bedside moments in these last weeks as we prayed, read scripture and sang old hymns together. Her faith was strong though her body was weak. My mentor also taught me how a Christian endures the end of life on earth with the hope of eternal life with God.

I am sure when the call rang out in heaven early Monday morning that Susie Carson was on her way that there was a great rush of family, friends and former students who ran to the gates to help Jesus welcome her in. Thank you Susie, for all you gave us - we love you. And Susie, would you take a little time to rest and breathe in some of those salubrious heavenly breezes before you start a Southport history class!"

Pat Kirkman

Note: If you would like to send a note to Susie's daughter, **Kathryn Kalmanson (Mrs. Arnold)**, her address is 6005 Charles Cannon Road, Marion Station, MD 21838.

Membership . . .

Welcome New Members

We welcome these new members who have joined since the last newsletter was mailed. We are delighted to have each of you and look forward to your involvement in our organization!

David & Judy Holden
Pete & Dana Erbe
Ken Karn
J. Dale Sutherland
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Zawistowski

Carol Botnick
Marlene Kastleman
Jim & Marianne Shaver
Rodney & Cathy Melton

Carolyn Ferguson
Sally Buchanan
Helena Peterson
Dane & Shelia Maisel
Valorie Hallenbeck—Life Member

Meeting Dates . . .

Our next covered dish dinner meeting is scheduled for **September 25** at the **Southport Community Building**. Our last meeting in 2008 will be **November 20**. Go to your calendar right now and set aside these dates - we'll be looking for you at each meeting at the community building.

In Remembrance . . .

Along with "Miss Susie", we are sad to report the deaths of two other long-time members of the society. **Mary Jacobs Shannon**, a Southport native, who was living in Wilmington. Mary was almost solely responsible for the John D. Gill memorial that the society erected at the waterfront several years ago. **H.A. "Smitty" Schmidt** of Southport. His late wife, Dot, was instrumental in compiling the information for the society published in our book on Southport cemeteries. Our condolences and sympathy are extended to the family and special friends of these recently deceased members. Their contributions will be remembered.

At the Old Jail Museum . . .

The summer tourists have found their way to the Old Jail Museum by the hundreds. Thanks to our faithful volunteer docents who greet visitors, we continue to open the museum on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 11 until 2. Our

"REMEMBERING SUSIE" . . .



Susie in the "1904 Room" at the Old Jail Museum. She was so proud of our accomplishments in renovating the jail. She said many times, "I don't think I'll live to see it done." She did! Thanks to all who had a part of the project through the years.

special appreciation goes to **Shirley Wilson** for her efficient and untiring efforts in coordinating docents for the past two years. She is stepping aside and in her place we are delighted to have **Nancy Christianson** take over those responsibilities. She is already doing an excellent job! The jail will continue to be open through October.

The Old Jail Advisory Committee meet regularly to assess the activities and expansion of the museum exhibits. New signs are being readied to enhance the exhibits and to give more information about the jail for visitors. The "stock and pillory" are in place on the grounds - thanks to **Bob Felber** - and are creating a lot of interest from visitors. Thank you volunteers!



Pictured left to right are Beverly Wyckoff, Musette Steck, Pat Kirkman and Karen Knighton of SHS and George Edwards, Director of Historic Wilmington Foundation. The society was recognized by the foundation for our achievement in renovating the old Brunswick County jail in an effort to preserve the integrity of historical places of the Lower Cape Fear region.



Interesting characters show up at the Old Jail Museum - especially on July 4th!

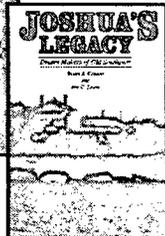
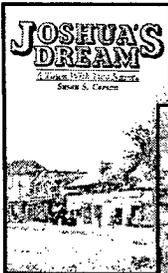


Book News . . .

GREAT NEWS!

If all goes as projected in the printing world, we will have our first printing of **Lewis Hardee Jr.'s** newest book *Of Home and the River, Southport Stories* available at our November 20 meeting. Lew has written this companion book to his *Classic Southport Cooking* with great stories of old Smithville/Southport and Brunswick County from the Civil War to the mid-twentieth century—but no recipes this time! You will definitely want to plan on purchasing a few copies to begin or finish up your Christmas shopping by early December. We are anxiously awaiting our newest publication!

"REMEMBERING SUSIE" . . .



We will be offering **Susie Carson's books**, *Joshua's Dream*, *Joshua's Legacy* and *Lelia Jane* as a **set for a special price of \$25** from September 25 - December 25.

The sets will be available at the September meeting, then at the Southport Visitors Center and the Old Jail Museum at this special price after September 25th. You may also order by mail with an additional \$5 charge for shipping. Please make checks payable to Southport Historical Society and mail to P. O. Box 10014, Southport, NC 28461.

Looking Back . . .

From the beginning of the publication of *The Whittler's Bench*, Susie Carson wrote a column called "Looking Back". For this edition, we have printed her obituary as we look back on a life that made a difference.

"REMEMBERING SUSIE" . . .

Susan Sellers Carson, 88, died Monday, September 1, 2008, at her home in Southport after a lengthy illness.

Born May 25, 1920, at Supply, she was the daughter of Lelia Jane and Craven LeDrew Sellers. When she was two, her family moved to Southport. Except for her first two years, and a brief period after marriage, Mrs. Carson lived all her life in Southport, taking a leadership role in numerous community and church activities.

Mrs. Carson served for many years on the board of trustees for the public library, where she was instrumental in establishing the town's first state-certified library and continued on the board during the evolution of the city library into a countywide system. During this period she also served multiple terms as president of the Southport PTA, was a member of the N.C. Fourth of July Festival Committee for several years, and was appointed to the Bicentennial Commission for Brunswick County.

Active in the Brunswick County Historical Society and the N.C. Genealogical Society, she was also a founding member of Southport Historical Society, where she held the office of president and then later served as archivist. During her presidency she obtained the Old Jail as a headquarters for the society and spearheaded the architectural inventory that identified Southport's noteworthy historic buildings, placing the town on the National Registry of Historic Places.

A long-time member of Southport Baptist Church, she served in many capacities with youth and women's programs and was one of the first two women to be chosen as a deacon. She wrote the history of the church, which was published to mark the 100th anniversary of the church's founding. She also held leadership roles in several Baptist organizations at the local, county and state levels.

Upon retirement after more than 40 years as a legal secretary and office manager, "Miss Susie" was able to devote full time to her lifelong passion for Southport and Brunswick County history. Her research culminated in the publication of the books *Joshua's Dream*, which tells the story of Southport from earliest times onward, and *Joshua's Legacy*, a companion volume of local biographies. Her other books include *Lelia Jane*, a biography of her mother, and several church histories. For almost a decade, she wrote a weekly history column for the Wilmington newspaper's Brunswick County edition. She also taught a popular course in local history at Brunswick County Community College. For her dedication to its educational programs, BCC conferred upon her the honorary degree of Associate in Arts in Education and Letters. She received several prestigious awards for excellence in historical research and writing, most notably the Clarendon Cup presented by the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society and an award of merit from the American Association for State and Local History. Recently the N.C. Legislature designated her as official historian of Southport.



Mrs. Carson is survived by her daughter Kathryn and son-in-law Arnold Kalmanson of Marion Station, Md.; sister Thelma and brother-in-law William Dunn of Boiling Spring Lakes; sister-in-law Ruby Sellers of Charlotte; two nephews, William R. Sellers Jr. of Live Oak, Fla., and Stephen Dunn of Boiling Spring Lakes; two nieces, Susan Sellers Fisher of Jacksonville, Fla., and Linda Sellers Dougherty of Charlotte; an aunt, Mary Lou Sellers White of Shallotte, and an uncle, Elisha Sellers Jr. of Simpsonville, S.C. Her brother, William R. Sellers Sr., preceded her in death.

The family gratefully recognizes the extraordinary devotion of Andrea Clemmons, friend and caregiver, who coordinated and supervised Mrs. Carson's nursing care, making it possible for her to remain at home during her final illness. Another dear friend and long-term caregiver, Joseph Johnson, filled her last days with comforting strength and bouquets of roses. Other close friends who gave her their love and support include Barbara Clewis, Dianne Vereen, Marilyn Lessen, Ann Price, Pat Kirkman, Larry Maisel, Ruth Johnson Jenkins, Nancy Sanders, Neil Lewis and Cecil Franck.

Special appreciation is extended to the home health workers for their outstanding care and devotion: Pat Collings, RN, Christine Haney, RN, and Heike Call, CNA of Liberty Hospice; Jennifer Collins, CNA; Patricia Davis, Nancy Frink, Anita Garrett, Herlene Garrett, Harriet Lemaster and Lilly Mae Thompson. The family also thanks Becky Felton and members of Southport Historical Society and other friends for providing many hours of in-home care in the early days of Mrs. Carson's illness until arrangements for her ongoing care could be completed.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday at Southport Baptist Church with the Rev. Bill Fryar and the Rev. Mark Owens officiating. Burial will follow in Northwood Cemetery. Pallbearers will be Cecil Franck, Afton Smith, Bert Felton, Erik Huffam, Jerry Dove and Joseph Johnson. The family will receive friends from 6 to 8 p.m. today (Wednesday) at Peacock-Newnam & White Funeral and Cremation Service, Southport.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial donations be made to S.O.A.R. (Southport-Oak Island Animal Rescue), 3376 St. Charles Place SE, Southport, an organization that was dear to her heart; Southport Historical Society, P.O. Box 10014, Southport, NC 28461 designated for the Susie Carson Scholarship Fund; or to the Woman's Missionary Union.

September 25 Meeting

After our summer break since the May meeting, it will be good to see everyone again at the September 25 society meeting. It will feature a program on two aspects of Southport's historic structures. **Paul Gawron** will show and discuss examples of construction methods used at various times in the town's history, while **Larry Maisel** will show examples of how "houses were moved like checkers" with pictures of homes and other structures which were moved during the past 100 years. Don't miss this interesting look into the "moving history" of Southport!

"Southport's Historic



Houses: Built to Last; Built to Move!"

Potluck Supper Begins at 6:30
Southport Community Building

Bring Your
Friends and Neighbors

The Old Burying Ground . . .

. . . and the work goes on . . .



SHS has completed it's second year of rescuing the Old Smithville Burying Ground from the undergrowth and neglect of many years. There has been a remarkable change in the appearance of the cemetery due to the hundreds of hours given by many volunteers organized by the society.

Our last workday was held on August 30 attended by thirteen people including a family from Mt. Holly, NC and another visitor from Ohio. About thirty plots have been "adopted" and are maintained on a regular basis between organized workdays. Hopefully more of the families of folks buried in the cemetery, other locals and the City will take a renewed interest in maintaining the cemetery now that the initial cleaning has been completed.

The society board recently approved to spend up to \$14,000 for projects in the cemetery over the next year.

"REMEMBERING SUSIE". . . we plan to restore the Captain John Brown plot, the center signature piece of the burying ground, in honor of **Susie Carson**. She expressed many times that this was her favorite burial site and would take care of it herself were she able. We'd like to do that for Susie.

Work has been completed on the Pilot's Monument and plans for other improvements are in the making. Of course, these projects as well as ongoing volunteer maintenance will have to be approved by the City of Southport's Cemetery Superintendent.

PHOTOS: Top to bottom. Charles Christianson cleans tombstones using only water—it is amazing how clean they become. Nancy Heilhecker has been a faithful "raker of leaves" at almost every workday. Cory DeLehanty and her sons, Kyle and Brian, from Mt. Holly volunteered several hours to cleaning with new rakes they bought just for the task.

Summer Highlights. . . .

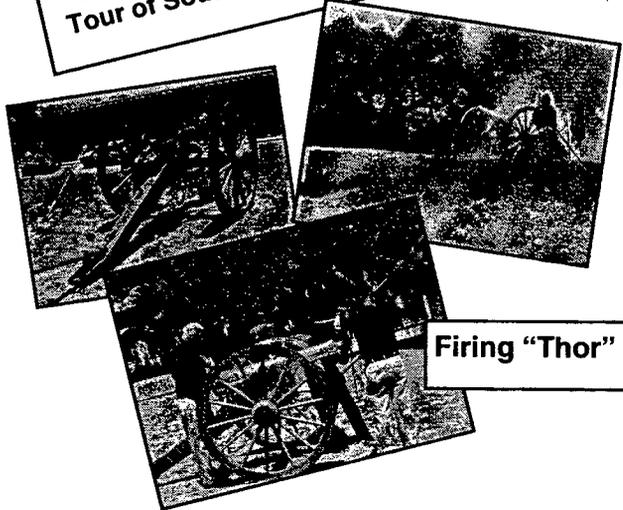


**Southport Church Heritage Day
May 24, 2008
Ten Churches Participating**

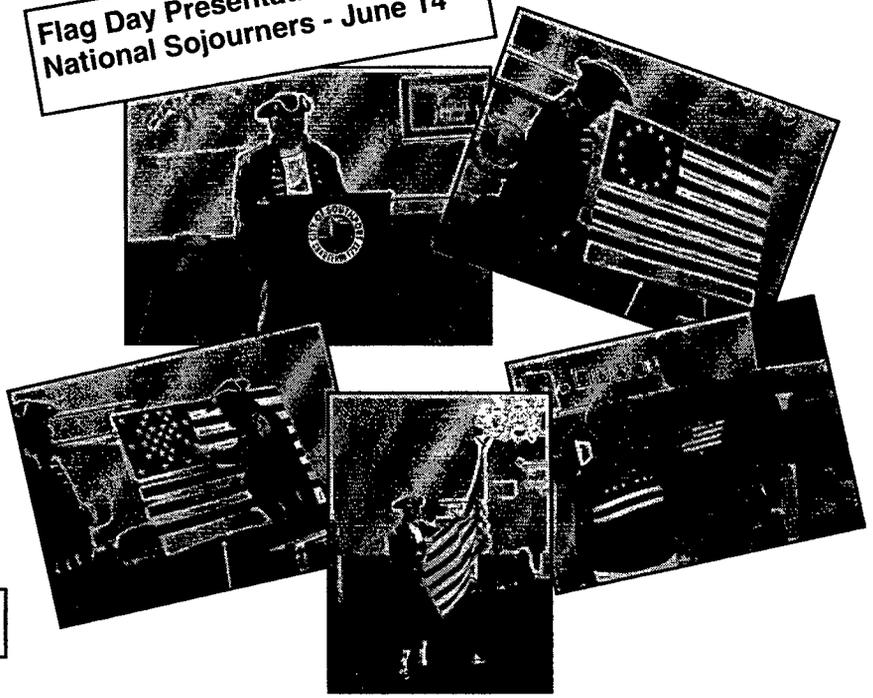


**SHS Board Members on Trolley
Tour of Southport Historical Signs**

**Flag Day Presentation by
National Sojourners - June 14**



Firing "Thor"



Historically Speaking with the Archivist . . .

A Series Featuring Southport Homes by **Larry Maisel**

Dosher-Watts House - 112 N. Lord Street

The Dosher-Watts House at 112 N. Lord Street was built in 1889 by Richard Dosher, who had been a Blockade Runner during the Civil War. By 1889 he was retired, and wealthy. He had piloted the blockade runner, Old Dominion, through the Union fleet eight times. Pilots were paid in gold, and that's where his wealth began. He was active in real estate after the war.

He died on June 16, 1893 age the age of 70. He had been an invalid for several years. Newspaper accounts said he was one of Southport's oldest and most respected citizens. His wife, Mary, died July 13, 1898. Her obituary called her one of the oldest citizens and "the most highly esteemed woman in our town."

The home changed hands briefly, and then was acquired by Samuel Watts. He and his family lived there many years. Sam was a Southport Alderman and postmaster. In fact, he and his wife both took and passed the exam for postmaster, but — in those male-dominated times — he got the job. Sam was the son of a well known politician and judge, a colorful character, known as "Greasy Sam". His son, Hulan, was instrumental in getting the charter fishing business started in Southport.

The home has recently been purchased by **Dane and Sheila Maisel**, who are in the process of restoring portions of it, including the original two-inch thick heart pine floors which had been covered by plywood and carpet for many years.



The society sponsors the Plaque Program that provides plaques for homes in Southport that are at least 75 years old and meet other qualifications. **Sylvia Butterworth and Joanne Wesson** are now administering this program and if you're interested in a plaque call Sylvia at 457-5759 or Joanne at 264-4009. You may also e-mail (shs@ec.rr.com) the society and we will put you in touch.

Wolf Writes . . .

One man's junk is another's treasure. While this is an age-old saying it is, in many ways, true still today. I am thinking of those things we, at the Southport Historical Society, call artifacts. Old photographs, post cards, public documents and deeds, bills of sales, even those love letters of Aunt Millie's, stored safely away in a box in the attic. To a researcher a reference to a road, building or person often represents a revelation and another piece of the puzzle that is our past. Piecing it together is the task the society has taken upon itself. The community is encouraged to review the important things that have been kept over the years and which, with some certainty, will be consigned to the dump when the principles move or pass away. Let us, collectively, preserve all those things which, when pieced together, make up what is our heritage and history. Please call Larry Maisel (457-6222), our archivist, and talk to him about what you can contribute!

- **Wolfgang Furstenau** -

Upcoming Opportunity . . .

**2008 CHRISTMAS
TOUR OF HOMES
SATURDAY - DECEMBER 13**



The home tour committee has been hard at work since June. Plans are being made to ensure that this year's event will not only be a fun and enjoyable day but also a another successful fundraiser for the society. **YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!** If you are available to volunteer as a **HOST/HOSTESS** in one of the lovely homes on the tour please let us know. Two shifts of volunteers will be needed. The first shift is from 2:00 - 4:30PM and the second shift is from 4:30 - 7:00PM. If we can count on your help, please e-mail the host/hostess committee at dparker14@ec.rr.com. Thank you in advance for your participation in this important society fundraiser!