

Southport Historical Society

Fall 2006

From the President's Pen . . .

Time rushes by and we are almost at the end of 2006, the 30th year anniversary of our society. What a busy year we have had with all our meetings and events, the official opening of the Old Jail Museum and our celebration of Susie's teaching retirement. We are looking forward to more opportunities to carry out our mission (see statement on page 2) in 2007. We need more of our members to become actively involved in the work of the society and we hope you will consider that for the upcoming year.

Those of you who live locally have surely noticed in the newspapers that we are starting our Cemetery Project. **Musette Steck**, our vice president, will coordinate this long-range project for the society and she is working with a steering committee to get things underway. You will have plenty of opportunities to help us, so keep your eyes and ears open. Actually, you can join a group who will do some more cleaning at the Old Smithville Burying Ground on Saturday, November 11 starting at 10 a.m. What perfect timing, as that is also Veteran's Day and you can use that opportunity to honor veterans who are buried there. Just show up with rakes, brooms and gloves and stay as long as you like. If you haven't been by the cemetery lately, you will be surprised at the amount of work that has already gone on there thanks to both the City and our members and friends.

Speaking of Veteran's Day, I want to give a salute to all our members who are veterans, especially in light of the world situation as we also remember those who are "over there" today. A little history on Veterans Day might be of interest to you. Veterans Day originated as "Armistice Day" on Nov. 11, 1918. Its purpose: to commemorate the end of World War I. First proclaimed by Congress in 1926 and each year thereafter, Armistice Day became "Veterans Day" in 1954 as a result of legislation signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The

name was changed to honor all who served the nation in wars or conflicts. Veterans Day has been observed annually on this date since 1978, except for a brief period when it was celebrated on the fourth Monday of October.

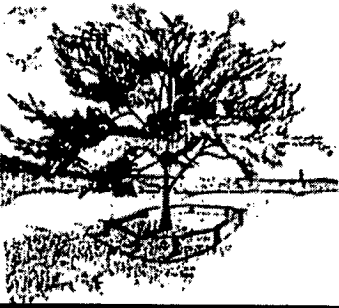
So to all veterans, "Thank you for serving our country". This 1940's photo of a local "pin-up gal" is reminiscent of one you probably have in your family album. Her identity is hidden somewhere in this newsletter, so have fun looking for it as you read all about what's going on with SHS these days.



Pat Kirkman

The Whittler's Bench

Celebrating our 30th Anniversary 1976-2006



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
 Vice President: Musette Steck
 Secretary: Ginny Cannon
 Treasurer: Phil Fravel
 Archivist: Larry Maisel
 Ex-officio: Peter Wyckoff

DIRECTORS:

Cathy Fravel
 Karen Knighton
 Don Parker

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

Meeting Dates :

Our final meeting for 2006 will be held a week earlier than usual due to the Thanksgiving holiday - **NOVEMBER 16** at the **SOUTHPORT COMMUNITY BUILDING**. We begin around 6:00 with fellowship time and set up, the covered dish supper starts at 6:30 and we try to start the program around 7:15. You might want to mark your **2007** calendar for these dates: January 25, March 29, May 24, September 27 and November 15.

E-Mail Addresses:

As events and information of interest come to our attention we send out periodic e-mails to those of you who have given us your e-mail address. If you are not receiving e-mails and would like to be included, please e-mail the society at shs@ec.rr.com. We do not share our addresses with other organizations or solicitors, so you can be assured that we will protect your e-mail address.

In Remembrance:

With saddened hearts we remember **Evelyn Huff** who recently passed away: Our sympathy goes out to her family and friends.

Book News:

If you didn't "gift" all your family and friends with **Lewis Hardee's Classic Southport Cooking** last year, keep it in mind for the 2006 holidays! Now in it's third printing, and considered "Southport's Signature Cookbook", it has been a best seller for the society. They are available in several shops in the area, but you can receive your member's discount by buying directly from the society. Retail price is \$22 and the member's price is \$18.50. E-mail your order at shs@ec.rr.com or call **Chris Suiter** at 457-6922 or **Ken & Carolee Morris** at 454-4133. They will also be available at our November 16th meeting.

*** * * COMING SOON ! * * ***

We are delighted to inform you that our own **Susie Carson** has written another book that we are looking forward to publishing in the very near future. The book will feature stories about Susie's mother, Lelia Jane Sellers and her fifty years of life in Southport.

Watch for news of its arrival in the newspapers and via e-mail.

Noteworthy . . .

At the Old Jail . . .

The Old Jail Museum is now closed for visits until the Spring except for special events. One of those coming up will be on the December 9, Christmas Home Tour day (12 - 4 p.m.) We need docents for that day (two 2-hour shifts) so if you can come be a greeter, please call **Marilyn Lessen** at 457-0004 The advisory board for the jail continues to work on new exhibits and make future plans for the museum. We especially want to recognize and thank these members who faithfully served as docents. (We hope we remembered everyone!)



This photo is of a painting by Bryan Varnam available through the society. Inquire at shs@cc.rr.com or 457-0579

Shirley Wilson
Irv Green
Larry & Amy Maisel
Bill & Harriet Wheeler
Gene Lasinski
Pauline Swain
Musette Steck
Pat Kirkman
Cathy Fravel
Mary Walker
Karen Knighton

Barbara Stockbridge-Davidson
Carol & Gene O'Brien
Joan Madsen
Libby Garner
Ann Warren
Becky Lucas
Ken & Carolee Morris
Don & Debbie Parker
Peter & Beverly Wyckoff
Marvin Johnson
Marilyn Lessen

Dinah Snead
Bud & Brenda Birmelin
Dorothy Johnston
Ginny Cannon
Bert & Becky Felton
Tom & Martha Winstead
Rebecca Smith
Noel Chisholm
Tom Izod
Norman Carathanasis
Sally Disher

Thank you each and every one !

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!

Robert & Patricia Eggenschiller
Sonny & Anita Hickman
Danny & Sandy Laughren
Mike & Martha Wicker
Lynda Saunders Walker

Betty Warren
Tom & Jane Izod
Judy Gordon
Linda Murakata

Ginger Harper
Lee Hinnant
Susan Wattts
Muriel Moore

LIFE MEMBER:
The Southport Times

2007 Dues . . .

Membership renewal dues are payable in January of each year. If you joined after September 1, you are also paid up through 2007. Dues are \$10 for individuals and \$15 for couples. Other designations are listed on the membership form on the back cover of this newsletter. When you pay your dues for 2007 why not use that as a reminder to enlist someone else to join the society! Thank you for your continued support of the Southport Historical Society.



Looking Back with Susie Carson . . .

Perhaps you will enjoy this "true story" about me that Amaretta Prevatte wrote:

"Years ago Southport decided it was time to become a "wet" town. To see how the residents felt, Ormond Leggett went around town with a petition asking those in favor of such a move to sign it. At that time Susie and I were working in the same building. Ormond came into my office and asked for Susie. He said he wanted to have some fun with her. He went into her office and told her that he would like for her to sign the petition. He stated that it was asking the City of Southport to make a change in our drinking water. Trusting Ormond, Susie never read it and immediately signed it. Ormond thanked her and started to leave. I said, "Susie, you just signed a petition to legalize the sale of alcoholic beverages in the city." Susie hopped out of her chair and ran after Ormond. She caught him and immediately erased her name! At that time everyone in Southport knew everything that went on, so what Susie had done spread quickly. In a day or two Mr. Ross Livingston heard the story and with a little grin on his face said, "We all know that Susie wouldn't sign that petition. She's so "dry" she won't even eat a wine sap apple!"

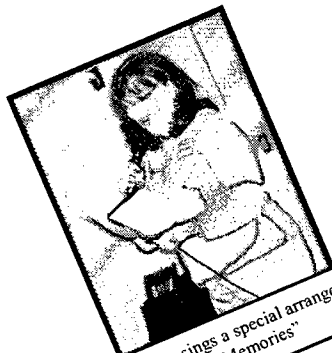
Now we did have some good drinking water in Southport. Bill Reaves includes in his chronology dated January 30, 1913 that an analysis by the U.S. government of the water taken from the pump in Franklin Square revealed the fact that it was the purest water ever analyzed in the U.S. laboratories. The well was 146 feet deep.

In August of 1957, an ABC store for Southport was approved by local voters. 474 were in favor, and 145 were opposed. (I sure was outnumbered!) Mr. H.G. Ratcliffe, who was deputy sheriff and jailer, was named to head the local store. Well, that's all I've got to say about that!

Society Honors "Professor Carson"

On September 28 members and friends gathered for "Back to Class with Susie" night. Retiring from over 20 years of

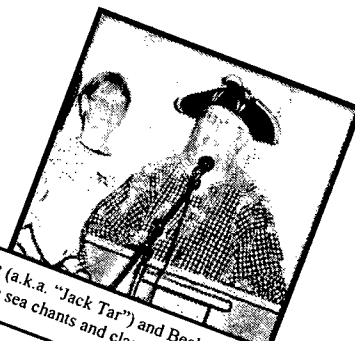
teaching local history classes through Brunswick Community College, Susie was surprised by Mayor Norman Holden who proclaimed it "Susie Carson Day" and by former students who spoke and sang about her influence on their lives. Displays of photos and her famous "handouts" reminded us of the good times we've shared in Susie's classes. The good food, fellowship and fun made it an extraordinary evening for all.



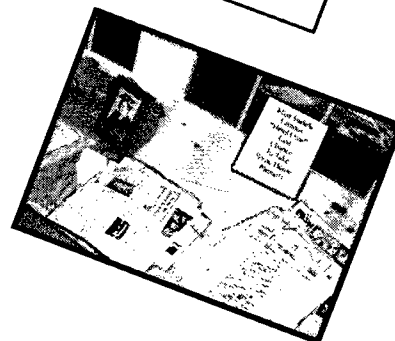
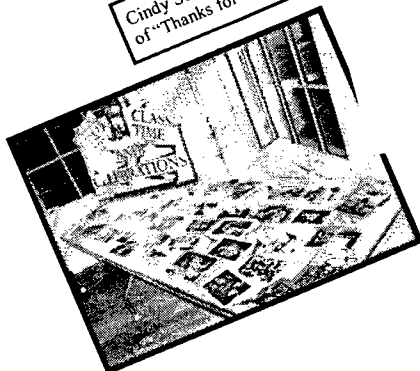
Cindy Sellers sings a special arrangement of "Thanks for the Memories"



Susie with Mayor Holden



Bert (a.k.a. "Jack Tar") and Becky Felton share sea chants and class experiences.





CHRISTMAS TOUR OF HOMES



December 9th 2 - 7 p.m.

The society is very proud to announce the homes to be featured on our annual Christmas home tour. We appreciate so much the willingness of the homeowners to open their decorated doors to the community for our major fund raiser. We could use a few substitute hosts, so if you are interested, please call Amy at 457-6222. Tickets will be available at the Southport Visitors Center, Chamber of Commerce, Franklin Square Gallery and Latimer House in Wilmington. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 on tour day. They will also be available at our November 16 dinner meeting. Many thanks to the following committee members for an outstanding job in arranging the 2006 tour - we couldn't do it without you!

**Susan Toth
Randy Jones
Marty Loughlin**

**Phil & Cathy Fravel
Amy Maisel
Audrey Carathanasis**

**Dianne Boguskie
Celese Plassman
Debbie Parker**

HOMES ON TOUR – 2006

- Julius Weeks House, c. 1896, **312 W. Moore Street**. Weeks was a river pilot and a member of the Cape Fear Silver Cornet Band of Southport. He doubled the size of his home by adding the second story. The box-like proportions of the house are accentuated by the extremely low hip roof. A back porch was added in the 1950's which was later enclosed for more living space. Owners Rob & Barbara Skinner have extensively renovated the house by removing walls and refinishing floors.
- Garrison-Potter House, c. 1880's, **404 Brunswick Street**. This home has had only three owners. It has been extensively renovated and restored by its current owner, Bill Rabon. Original to the house are the Southport bows above the windows, the beadboard ceilings, the front door and the door to the upper porch. The Garrison family built the house in 1893. It was purchased by their cousin B.M. Potter in 1899 for the sum of \$850.00 and remained in the Potter family for over 100 years. In 2003 neighbors John and B.J. Gorman bought the house and began renovations. Dr. Rabon bought it from the Gormans later that year and completed the renovations. The style of the house remains as it was originally and the floors doorways and porches are all original. It is interesting to note that the lot on which the house is located once extended all the way to the Cape Fear River. This house is said to be home of the ghost of a young child. The current owner has yet to see it.
- J. Pearce House, 1877 and 1893, **406 Brunswick Street**. In 1877, James Pearce constructed a tiny four-room cottage. Sixteen years later, George Davis built Pearce a more substantial and pretentious 'double cottage' in front of the older one which was partially demolished. John and BJ Gorman, the present owners, have been able to maintain the decorative pattern and round edges of the shingles.
- Grey Burriss House, c. 1879, **410 Brunswick Street**. The frame of this house derives from an older Methodist parsonage that was moved to its present location in 1879; the age of the parsonage structure is not known. A front room addition and a kitchen wing were added probably shortly after the house was moved, making it a typical Southport four-room square cottage. The house was occupied by Mr. Thomas Grey Burriss and his wife whose ghostly presence lives there still! It has been the family home of Sandra Potter Spencer since 1949 when it was purchased by her parents from Mr. Fred Burriss. What is now the kitchen and dining room was originally a breezeway to the original kitchen; the breezeway was enclosed in the 1950's.

(Continued on next page)

2006 Christmas Home Tour . . .(Continued)

- **Campbell House, 516 Brunswick Street.** Ray and Peggy Campbell bought the property in 1999 from Peggy Arnold Giles, who had inherited it. The Arnold family owned a large number of lots along Brunswick Street, which was popularly known as "Tin Pan Alley." Peggy Arnold's father was Capt. Cratie Arnold, who was a fisherman early in his adult life and later became one of Southport's most respected boat builders. Capt. Arnold built boats in the the yard to the east side of the house. He was a remarkable man for many reasons, but chiefly because when he was 14, the lower portion of both legs had to be amputated. The Campbells enlarged the house in 2002, attempting to make the exterior fit in with the surrounding houses, but wanting the inside to be open and modern, to maximize the wonderful waterfront views from virtually every room.
- **J.L. Phelps House, c. 1910, 407 W. Brown Street.** Larry and Lane Vickery reconfigured the rooms of this house when they purchased it in 2002. The beadboard ceilings on the front porch and in the bedroom are original to the house. In addition to J.L. Phelps, J.J. Adkins, a well known river pilot, and Joel Moore, operator of a Southport grocery store, were early owners of the house. The kitchen cabinets date from the 1940's when the house was owned by Leon Smith, a builder, who used the back building for his building supplies and storage. That building is now used as a guest cottage and party house. The Vickerys added the screened porch and back bedroom as well as the wooden floors and lovely landscaping.
- **Northrup House, c. 1910, 229 N. Caswell Avenue.** Built around 1910, this is probably the most famous house in Southport due to the filming of the movie "Crimes of the Heart" in 1986. The original house had a rather unremarkable façade but the film company added the Victorian features including the turret, bay windows and generous gingerbread trim. The current owners, Gary and Donna Albertson, did a complete renovation in 2003 including the addition of a gourmet kitchen and reproduction tin ceilings. The striking colors were inspired by the 'painted ladies' of Cape May, NJ and Charleston, SC. As with several old Southport dwellings, a supernatural presence is sometimes thought to be in this house.
- **Sacred Heart Catholic Church, c. 1941, 230 N. Caswell Avenue.** Built in part with second-use bricks, the church was dedicated in 1941 and served fewer than 20 families. By 1991, the congregation had outgrown the building so a new church was constructed in another location. Bert and Becky Felton purchased the church in 1993 and then converted it to their home in 1995. The original interior was one large room with a small sacristy to the side. The Feltons removed the drop ceiling, exposing the beams and the base of the belfry. A second floor was added and the sanctuary was divided into several rooms. The original pine flooring was uncovered during renovation and the 'footprint' of the altar and rail is visible in the kitchen. The steeple bell is also original and was donated by the local manager of the old Wilmington, Brunswick and Southern Railway. The 'jewel-toned' glass windows are also original to the building. The exterior of the structure is virtually unchanged except for the addition of porches. The interior of the home reflects the Feltons' love of the ocean and masted ships.
- **Hilliard House, c. 2004, 107 N. Lord Street.** When Mike and Wendy Hilliard bought the original cottage on this lot, they had intended to restore it. Unfortunately, there was just too much damage for restoration. However, understanding the importance of owning one of the original 100 lots of Southport, they preserved as much of the original material as possible. In addition to some beams and doors, the living room wall is made from original exterior wood and the dual fireplace was refashioned using the original chimney. The home sits in the footprint of the old cottage and the new design showcases a very mature live oak and a cypress oak as part of the home's architectural features.
- **Our Old Jail Museum on Nash Street** will be open for visitors from **noon until 4 p.m.** Do come for a visit.



WE'LL SEE YOU ON
THE TOUR !



Historically Speaking with the Archivist . . .

306 N. Atlantic Street - Thomas Larsen House

A Series Featuring Southport Homes
by Larry Maisel

The Thomas Larsen House at 306 Atlantic was the first of four virtually identical homes built by A. J. Robbins on Atlantic (formerly Potts) Street. Two are in the 300 block of North Atlantic, and two in the 100 block of South Atlantic. Robbins was a prolific builder in Southport. By the time this one was built, this carpenter had been at the home building trade for more than 30 years. In 1910, the major building boom which Southport experienced for about 25 years was nearing an end. The home is one of



those which have the "Southport Bow" over the windows. That was a popular feature which Robbins used often. Less typical is the pyramid roof which he put on this house. For the time, this was a "modern" house, with the three chimneys (one in the kitchen and one in each of two front parlors) built for stove flues, whereas earlier homes had only wider, open fireplaces. The owner, Thomas Larsen, from Norway, was one of many Scandinavians who emigrated to Southport in the latter part of the 1800's and early 1900's. Quite a few worked at the Quarantine Station, but Larsen was a steward on a Corps of Engineers dredge.

From the Chronicles . . .

The society has published a set of four chronologies edited by Bill Reaves that cover happenings in Smithville/Southport from 1520 to 1970. Fascinating reading! A limited number of these sets are now on sale for \$25. They are available at the Visitor's center and by calling 457-0579.

October 1799: Lieutenant Pat C. Harris, of the 2nd Regiment Artillery and Engineers offered a reward of \$10 each for two deserters from Fort Johnston. Joshua Wilson, 38, born in England, and John Brown, a fife player.

October, 1862: The immigration from Wilmington yellow fever epidemic ceased, as all houses in Smithville were occupied. It was some time before I was considered safe for the refugees to go back to their homes in Wilmington.

November 11, 1886: Another earthquake shock was felt at Smithville. The shock was quite severe and residents of the town ran from their houses in great alarm. Crockery and glassware rattled and the buildings were shaken.

November 6, 1897: Joe Lynch and his "Sanctified Band" of about 150 followers were holding their meetings in the Southport Pavilion which they rented for \$15 per month.

November 19, 1905: A nice building, in which there was to be a beautiful hall, was being erected at Fort Caswell. It was to be used for post dances and the post card clubs. "It is a matter of regret that the means of communication between Southport and the fort are such as to prevent closer social relations."

December, 1808: An Act to remove the Court House from Lockwood's Folly to Smithville was passed by the N.C. legislature. The new Court House was to be constructed of wood on brick pillars.

December 17, 1895: Governor Carr had planned for some time to take a trip to Southport in the winter season, at which time this place and section has a peculiar charm to upcountry visitors. He finally arrived with his party. On arrival the party made Miss Kate Stuart's hotel their headquarters, and it goes without saying that the visitors experienced all the pleasures of Cape Fear food and Cape Fear cookery, both equally to be appreciated. The next day the Governor and his party took a trip over to Smith's Island. The hunters secured some coons, squirrels and ducks. At night Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Stevens gave an informal tea and afterwards a play, *A Proposal Under Difficulties* was presented to the amusement of all present.

November 16 Program . . .

Don't miss our very interesting program with A.C. Denn presenting a "living history" demonstration and talk about

The 18th Century Surgeon and Apothecary In Colonial and Post-Colonial America

We have reproduced information from his brochure below to give you an idea of what's in store for us at our meeting.

Covered dish dinner at 6:30, program at 7:15

History

The period between 1745 and 1800 saw many changes in the American Colonies and later in the fledgling United States. Not the least of these changes was the birth of what, in a hundred years or so, was to become modern medicine. These faltering medical advances were born of military conflict. During the last half of the 18th century, rebellion and insurrection against England saw the emergence of the military surgeon in America.

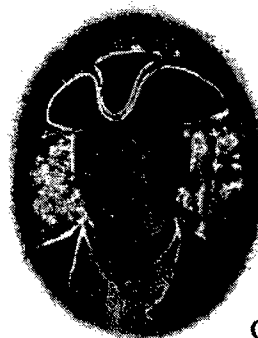
18th Century Medical Practitioners

The Physician

- a member of the upper classes
- graduated from university with a medical degree
- never saw a live patient until after graduating
- practiced chiefly amongst his own class
- deferred "unseemly" cases of the common classes to the socially lower surgeon

The Surgeon

- a commoner providing medical services for the villagers, farmers, and country folk
- not university trained and mostly illiterate he learned his trade in a six or seven year apprenticeship beginning at about age 14
- had great knowledge of anatomy, often gained by also working as a butcher
- gained knowledge of medicinal botanicals handed down through the ages from Europe and from Native Americans
- were by far the most valuable medical providers to their respective armies, many were actually members of the armies, while others were civilians contracted to accompany their armies on campaign



A.C. Denn

is a retired medical research biologist and educator with nearly thirty years of distinguished service with such notable organizations as the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, Armed

Forces Institute of Pathology, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and the United States Army Research Institute for Infectious Diseases.

The Apothecary

- predecessor to the modern pharmacist
- also learned his trade through a lengthy apprenticeship
- his knowledge came from centuries of handed down information from Europe and also from Native Americans
- usually maintained an Apothecary Shop in large villages or cities
- apothecary services were usually provided to small villages and rural areas by the country surgeon

The Nurses

- nursing as a profession or trade was not recognized for nearly another hundred years
- nursing that was provided was done so mainly by the camp necessary women (cooks & laundresses), or camp followers and prostitutes for pay

Did You Know?

- As a private soldier in any army of the period, you had a 90% chance of escaping any given conflict unharmed.
- If you entered any hospital of the time, you had only a 25% chance of leaving alive.
- Less than 1% of combat wounds were attributed to the bayonet and other edged weapons.
- As many injuries were attributed to the butt of the musket, (used as a club), as to the musket ball being shot at soldiers.
- More soldiers in the Continental Army died of camp diseases than in battle.
- There were no provisions made for wounded or ill soldiers. If they were mustered out due to illness or injury, they were totally on their own.

Events: Past & Upcoming . . .

- Nov. 11: Old Smithville Burying Ground clean-up from 10 a.m.
- Nov. 13: Brunswick County Historical Society meeting at 7:30
BEMC in Supply - Beverly Tetterton will speak.
- Nov. 16: **SHS Dinner meeting and Program - Southport
Community Building at 6:30 p.m.**
(see details on page 6)
- Nov. 12: Celia Rivenbark Returns for Maritime Museum
program at 7:00 p.m. (call museum 457-0003 for details)
- Nov. 23: Happy Thanksgiving!
- Dec. 9: **SHS sponsored Christmas Tour of Homes
2 - 7 p.m. and Old Jail Open 12 - 4 p.m.**
(see details on special insert)
- Dec. 25: Merry Christmas!



A very special "THANKS" to all who worked at the cemetery the weekend of October 14-15 for our project kickoff.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Beverly Case | Ginny Cannon |
| Brenda Birmelin | Linda Tarroll |
| Richard Tarroll | Dorie C. |
| Karin Cornwell | Susan Davis |
| Joe Loughlin | Marty Loughlin |
| Fran Carlsen | Ginger Becker |
| Larry Maisel | Musette Steck |
| Marvin Johnson | Pat Kirkman |
| Dinah Snead | Jim McKee |
| Bert Felton | Vicki Hogan |
| Carolyn Pryor | |

"Society Annual Meeting"

SHS holds its annual meeting each January and in 2007 we will enjoy a catered dinner at the Caswell Baptist Assembly on Thursday, **January 25**. Cost will be \$10 per person. (That "pin-up gal" is none other than Susie Carson!) More information to follow by mail and e-mail. Mark your calendar!



Fort Johnston News . . .

Since our last newsletter (just in case you missed the announcement), the City of Southport has secured ownership of Fort Johnston. Our next objective is to determine the best use of the 258-year old, six acre site under guidelines from the National Parks Service and those that will be set up by the Fort Johnston Committee. Three of our city aldermen, **Meezie Childs** (Chairwoman), **Stuart Callari** and **Paul Fisher** (all society members) will direct the committee which will also include community members who have been invited to join various task force teams. The society's board as a whole as been asked to participate and board director, **Don Parker**, has been designated as our leader in this effort to assist the city. Your board has recently met to discuss and establish some ideas we would like to see implemented. As your representatives, we welcome any input you have that we can consider and pass along. Please feel free to contact Don at 253-9703 with any questions or comments.

It has always been the desire of the society to maintain the historical integrity of Fort Johnston and we are very happy that the city considers our participation important to the future of the site. There are certain conditions that must be met under the "Lands to Parks" federal guidelines which will most probably mean that the visitors center will be moved to the Garrison House and it looks as if the city's parks and recreation offices will move into some of the duplex buildings. We are asking the city for one of the duplexes for our headquarters which will enable us to have a more direct presence at the site as we work to establish historical exhibits in the Garrison House and on the grounds in the future.

It is indeed an exciting opportunity to further our influence in the community and work toward preserving and interpreting Southport's history. We look forward to having the membership support all the efforts to make Fort Johnston a point of pride for Southport.