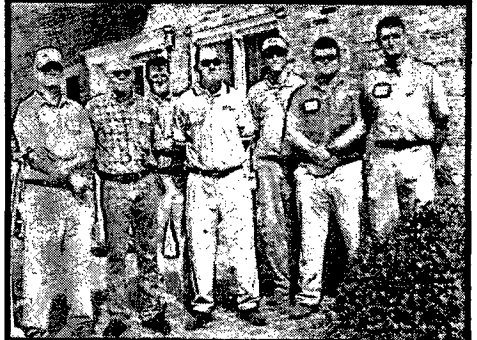


Southport Historical Society

Fall 2007

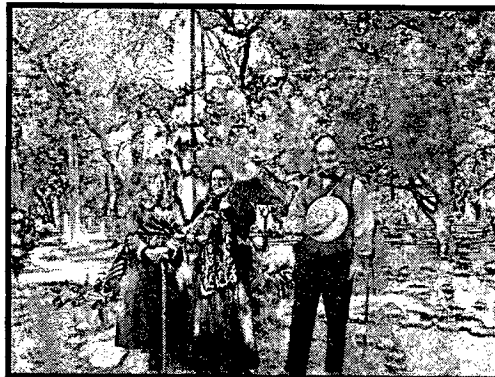
From the President's Pen . . .

What a great time we had on August 8 celebrating River Pilots Day! This was our annual "living history day" here in Southport and it was a wonderful opportunity to remember the history of river pilots who have been working in this harbor since the early 1700's and to honor the pilots who continue to do that today. We truly brought "the past into the present" with exhibits, pilot boat tours and the rededication of the pilots monument at the Old Smithville Burying Grounds. There are not enough words to thank the excellent committee who worked to make it a day to be long remembered. **Shirley Wilson, Musette Steck, Ed Boguski and Tommy Brendle** were outstanding in their commitment to the project. Many others contributed to the success of River Pilots day, notably **Larry Maisel, Becky Felton and Rev. Skip Williams** for their contributions in publicity, exhibits and the memorial ceremony. The Cape Fear River Pilots Association were most cooperative in helping us to make it a day for all the community to get to know the pilots and their work a lot better.



Some of the active pilots who were honored on Southport River Pilots Day - August 8, 2007

Their generous donations of \$1,000 to our cemetery reclamation project will help us to meet our goals of maintaining and repairing tombstones and gravesites in the burying grounds. Again, thanks to all who had a hand in the success of the day.



Society members, (from left to right) Stuart Calari, Pat Pittenger and Jim McKee came in period dress to the cemetery for River Pilots Day.

As we look to the future, we plan to highlight the history of our local churches in 2008 with Southport Church History Day. The date has not yet been set and we are looking for folks who would like to participate in this project. Please call (457-0579) or e-mail the society if this sounds like something with which you would like to become involved. We'd like to hear from you soon so planning can begin, first of all with establishing a date and inviting the churches to participate. We want everyone to have plenty of time to gather materials and prepare exhibits.

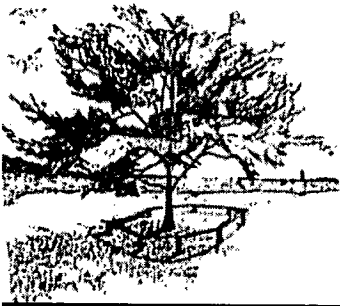
In the last year, it has been brought to our attention that Brunswick County is one of the few counties in the state that does not have a historical survey on record. I would very much like to see the society take a lead in helping to fund such a survey and enlist other county organizations and businesses to perhaps contribute as well. If you would like to become involved in an effort to make this a reality, again we ask you to come forward as we begin investigating the details of conducting the survey and working with the county commissioners in accomplishing this task. You would have an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of this project and make a lasting contribution to Brunswick County and to our state as a whole. As a side note, the written history of Brunswick County needs to be updated with a new publication - interested? Let us know.

With an organization of 350 plus members, surely there are more of you who could make a commitment to become involved in the work of the society as we endeavor to discover, share and preserve more of our local history. Do let us hear from you!

Pat Kirkman

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
Vice President: Musette Steck
Secretary: Ginny Cannon
Treasurer: Phil Fravel
Archivist: Larry Maisel

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 next covered dish dinner meeting is scheduled for **November 15** at the **Southport Community Building**. Please note that this is a week earlier than our normal meeting date due to the Thanksgiving holiday. This will be our last meeting for 2007. If you want to look ahead to **2008** our meeting dates will be **January 24, March 27, May 22, September 25 and November 20.**

E-Mail & Website . . .

E-mail address: **shs@ec.rr.com**
Website: **www.southporthistoricalsociety.com**

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. We also invite you to take a look at our website. **Marty Loughlin** is our "webmaster". You may contact her by e-mail at marty28461@gmail.com if you have any comments or suggestions.

Membership . . .

Welcome !

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!

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Judy Hinson | Richard & Florence Mason | Sam & Cookie Newton |
| Nancy Glielmi | Frank & Joyce Mahoney | Bill & Sandy Bines |
| Jane Moos | Ronald & Diane Johnson | Mr. & Mrs. Walter Geck |
| Kathleen Murray | Mr. & Mrs. Michael Clemmons | Sherol & Eric Lappala |
| Michelle Gusler | Bob & Doris Krauss | |

Our Newest Life Members: **Karl Fickensch** & **Amy Carr**; **Marilyn Ray**

???? WHEN ARE DUES DUE????

Annual membership dues are due on January 1 of each year.
If a new member joins after September 1 the membership is valid for the remainder of the year and the full next year.
Dues amounts are shown on the back page

In Remembrance . . .

We were sorry to lose one of our life members, **James (Bubba) Smith** to cancer this past summer. Our heartfelt sympathy to **Rebecca** and the family. We will certainly miss Bubba in the society and the community.

At the Old Jail . . .

THANK YOU !

The Old Jail has had a successful season starting from April 21, 2007. We had 1,670 visitors during the 51 days we were open as of Oct. 1, 2007. We will remain open through the month of October and will close until reopening in April 2008. We would be delighted to have many of you work during the season when we reopen in April. I'll be giving lots of you a call then.

We could not have been open the 51 days this season without the dedication of our volunteer docents. They have always been dedicated and generous with their time. I would like to thank them personally and in print for all their hard work. They are: **Nancy Christianson, Irving Green, Tom Izod, Gene Lasinski, Barbara Reed, Nancy Heilhecker, Pat Kirkman, Dorothy Johnston, Debbie James, Dinah Snead, Libby Garner, Becky Lucas, Brenda Birmelin, Bud Birmelin, Chris Suiter, Judy MacMurdo, Cathy Fravel, Marilyn Lessin, Deloris West, Barbara Stockbridge-Davidson, Ken Morris, Carolee Morris, Becky Felton, Bert Felton, Mary Walker, Norm Carathanasis, Larry Maisel, Betty Johnston, Beverly Wyckoff, Audrey Daigler, Musette Steck, Marvin Johnson and Dick Hughes.** If I have left anyone out, please forgive me for all of you are worth your weight in gold. We also thank Southport Police **Chief Jerry Dove** for supplying us with badges and pencils for our junior visitors. The Old Jail will be open for the Tour of Homes on Saturday, 12/8/07 from 2 – 7 pm. We will have three people for two shifts. I have several volunteers, but could use several more. If any of you are interested, please call me @ 454-4327. **Shirley Wilson**



The society gives Shirley a huge THANK YOU for the excellent job of coordinating docents!

Book News . . .

For your information and reference, we are printing the list of books available through the society. Most of the books are available at our meetings or may be ordered by calling **Ken & Carolee Morris** at 454-4133 or **Chris Suiter** at 457-6629. You may also order by e-mail

at shs@ec.rr.com. or by writing to the society at P. O. Box 10014, Southport, NC 28461. For mail orders please add \$2.50 per book for shipping and handling.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Retail Price</u>	<u>Member's Price</u>
Architecture of Southport	\$ 7.00	\$ 6.00
Bald Head	\$17.00	\$14.25
Cap'n Charlie & Lights	\$10.75	\$ 9.00
Cemeteries of Southport	\$ 8.00	\$ 7.00
Classic Southport Cooking	\$22.00	\$18.50
Ft. Caswell	\$18.25	\$15.25
Ft. Johnston	\$ 6.00	\$ 5.00
Guns for Cotton	\$10.75	\$ 9.00
History of Long Beach	\$19.25	\$16.25
Joshua's Dream	\$16.00	\$13.50
Joshua's Legacy	\$20.25	\$17.00
Leila Jane:A Very Gentle Lady	\$14.00	\$12.00
Masters of the Shoals	\$18.00	\$14.00
Reminiscences of Wilmington/Southport	\$ 9.00	\$ 7.00
Southport Secrets	\$ 8.00	\$ 6.00
Southport Chronology Vol.1*	\$16.00	\$13.50
Southport Chronology Vol.2*	\$15.00	\$13.00
Southport Chronology Vol.3*	\$ 9.00	\$ 8.00
Southport Chronology Vol.4*	\$10.50	\$ 9.00
Three Southern Families	\$37.50	\$31.50

*There are a limited number of Chronology Sets with all four volumes now priced at \$25 for the set. However, Vol.1 is nearly sold out and may not be available.

Looking Back : Reminiscences from our members . . .

This column is written by members of the society who give us a look back into the history of the area. In this issue we feature an article written by Southport native, Brooks Newton Preik. She is the granddaughter of John J. Knox. Thank you Brookie for sharing this story with us.

In June of this year Wilmington riverboat captain Carl Marshburn added a new water taxi to his growing fleet of vessels that provide transportation and entertainment on the Cape Fear River. This handsomely refurbished ex-Navy utility boat takes its place alongside the Henrietta and the John N. Maffitt on the Wilmington waterfront. In keeping with his love of local history Captain Marshburn selected the name John Knox, the name of Wilmington's first ferryboat across the Cape Fear, for his most recent addition. The story of how that boat got its name follows.

The JOHN KNOX

"Modern ferry service was inaugurated between Wilmington and Eagles Island yesterday afternoon at 4 o'clock when the up-to-date ferry boat John Knox made her maiden trip with passengers and vehicles."

The Morning Star, Wilmington, N. C., June 8, 1920

John J. Knox, for whom the ferryboat was named, was born on June 17, 1864, in the Seaside community near Shalotte in Brunswick County, the son of George E. Knox and Sarah Ann Brooks Knox. In September 1889, he married Minnie Irene Drew, and the two settled on a large farm located approximately 10 miles south of Wilmington on Highway 17, a narrow, unpaved country road at the time. For some years in addition to raising cotton and produce, John Knox also ran a small grocery store and post office across the road from his home at what was then called El Paso station. Many of the supplies for the store came by boat from Wilmington via Town Creek and were unloaded at a landing on the creek nearby. Later, the post office was moved to Winnabow and the name El Paso was eventually forgotten.

The Knox farm, with its convenient location alongside the only roadway to Wilmington from Brunswick County, became a popular stopping place for weary travelers and John and Minnie Knox became known far and wide for their gracious hospitality. There was always an abundance of good food and a welcome at their table for unexpected guests, many from Southport, in the days before a multitude of motels and restaurants dotted the rural highway.

The couple had 10 children and because there were no schools in close proximity, Knox hired a schoolteacher to live at his residence and conduct daily classes for his growing family. Always interested in education, he and his wife made certain that their children received every educational advantage and all 10 children eventually went away to college.

John Knox was a lifelong member of Zion Methodist Church near Winnabow and in the early years transported his family to services by horse and buggy. In that same horse and buggy he made his earliest trips to Wilmington, where there was only a raft to ferry them across the river.

A progressive thinker, Knox was fascinated by new technology. He was the first man in the county to have a telephone and one of the first to own an automobile, though his sons remembered his difficulty in learning to drive. It took him ages, they said, to realize that the car would not stop no matter how loudly he yelled, "Whoa!"

In November 1908, when Brunswick County Sheriff Jackson Stanland was killed in the line of duty, John Knox was asked to fill his position. According to a December 4, 1908, account in *The Morning Star*, it was Stanland's deathbed request. The Wilmington newspaper went on to say that John Knox was "among the best men in the county." Knox resigned as member-elect of the Brunswick Board of Commissioners and accepted. One of his first duties was to gather a posse and conduct a manhunt through the wilds of the Green Swamp in search of a fugitive. It was a long and dangerous undertaking and one which neither he nor his family ever forgot. As sheriff, John Knox earned a reputation for being just and fair in all his dealings, and for the rest of his life, though his term in office was a relatively short one, he was known, most respectfully, as Sheriff Knox. Some years later he also served as the county tax collector.

It was during his subsequent service on the Brunswick Board of County Commissioners, however, that he publicized the desperate need for a ferryboat across the Cape Fear from Brunswick County to the foot of Market Street. He wisely involved Wilmington community leaders and businessmen in his efforts to secure a ferry to navigate the river and in 1920 the ferryboat made its first crossing. Because he had worked so tirelessly toward that end and was largely responsible for seeing that dream become a reality, the first ferryboat was christened **John Knox** in his honor.

John Knox died from a heart attack in 1932 at the age of 68.

Historically Speaking with the Archivist . . .

A Series Featuring Southport Homes by Larry Maisel

Legendary Pilot's Home at 112 W. Nash C. C. Morse Cottage - 1873



C. C. Morse, better known as "Kip" Morse, and his wife Mary Virginia McKeithan Morse, were the first residents of this house at 112 W. Nash St. Capt. Morse was one of the most successful Civil War Blockade Runners. In 1866 they bought the lot on which it was built, along with two others, from Thomas Cowen, who was a wealthy rice planter. He did not live at this location. It is probable that "Kip" Morse built the cottage.

C.C. and Virginia had been married in 1853. They moved to Fernandina, Florida, where "Kit" became the lighthouse keeper at Amelia Island. After a few years, they returned to Smithville. They had two sons and two daughters.

They sold the property in 1885 to wealthy businessman and developer, William Weeks, who "flipped" it in less than a year, selling it to Daniel Bender, an engineer, who supervised the construction of the jetty at Snow's Cut. Daniel and Mary Ann Bender sold it in 1909, after building themselves a house a few doors away at 109 W. Nash. The buyer was Benjamin Newton, who lived around the corner on Nash Street. Newton was a river pilot, boat owner and investor in many local enterprises.

Benjamin Newton sold it to Robert S. Newton, who had been Clerk of Court at one time, and Southport's Postmaster. It then passed through several members of the Doshier and the Bell families. As with so many Southport cottages, this one was enlarged over the years.

There were several interesting things about the Morses, who owned it originally. They eventually built a large two-story home on Bay Street (then called Water Street) in the same block with the Brunswick Inn. That house was damaged heavily when a fire to the east of it destroyed two homes. Then, in 1901, someone tried to burn the Morse house down; strangely the blaze started in the cupola.

In September, 1903, C. C. and Mary Virginia Morse celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, the only couple in Southport to have been married that long. They just made it. In November, Capt. Morse died, and so did his wife, ten days later.

The society sponsors the Plaque Program that provides plaques for homes in Southport that are at least 75 years old and meet other qualifications. Larry administers this program and if you're interested in a plaque call him at 457-6222. We are looking for a few members who would like to help with this program. If you would like to be involved give him a call to get the details.

Opportunities . . .

Friends of Oak Island Lighthouse

"Light up the Sky" Gala

October 28 - 6:30 p.m.

Southport Community Building

to benefit the lighthouse site revitalization project

Featuring Jazz Music and Silent Auction

Tickets are \$15.00

Available at Caswell Beach Town Hall, Ricky Evans Gallery in Southport, Chamber of Commerce Office

The society is participating by donating to the auction four books on local history and a

Southport walking tour for four with **Pat Kirkman**

A Taste of Southport

Sunday, November 4 2-4 p.m.

Southport Community Building

Featuring Local Restaurants
Wine Tasting and Cook Book Cuisine
Live Musical Entertainment

A fundraising event for
Downtown Southport, Inc.
Tickets are \$20
Available at the Visitors Center
or by calling (910)279-4616

We will be featuring our cookbook
Classic Southport Cooking
with a taste of Southport High School
Lunch Room Candy thanks to **Cathy Fravel**
and her committee. Come and enjoy!

November 15th Program . . .

Lewis Hardee, Jr.

Our noted author and local historian will bring a part of Southport's past into the present as he shares his recent adventure to Estonia that started when a strange boat was sighted off Frying Pan shoals in 1948 . . . Lew writes:

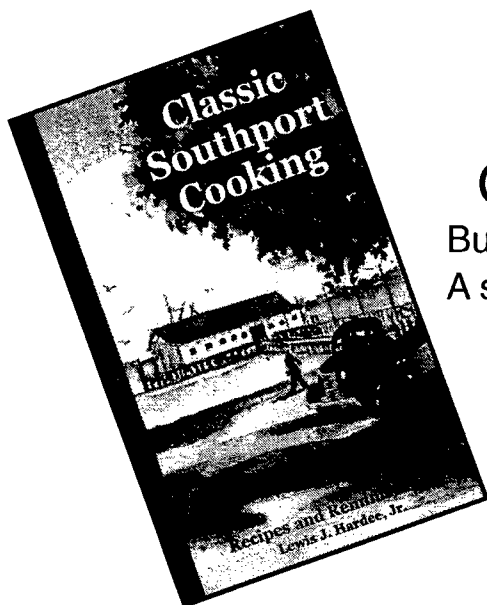
As part of a new book of Southport tales I'm writing, I recently made a trip to Europe tracking down some Southport connections. No recipes this time. Shall I call it STORIES NOT FIT FOR A COOKBOOK? The first of these European connections we might call "The Escape of the Estonians."

About an hour before sunset on a calm, late summer's day, Tuesday, August 17, 1948, Captain Hulan Watts was trolling his party-boat, the Idle-On, over Frying Pan shoals off Southport. On board was a party of sports fishermen trying their luck. Not far away, Frying Pan lightship with its bright-red hull rocked gently in the ocean. In the distance, Hulan and his party noticed a small, strange looking one-masted boat sailing toward them. He correctly guessed it was a foreign fishing boat of some kind. The small pilothouse was not at the bow like American fishing boats, but astern. Someone on the boat hoisted up a flag with bars of Baltic blue, black and white—the national flag of Estonia. This was odd, since Estonia now flew the red Soviet flag with yellow star, sickle and hammer. . . . come hear "the rest of the story" and meet some special guests!

Lewis also visited Southport, England on his recent trip. He will give us a glimpse of that "other Southport" at our November meeting. He writes:

The second European connection might be called "The Search for Mae Bamber." During the 1950s the spunky council woman and mayor of Southport England paid courtesy visits to two of the Southports here in the US, the one in Connecticut, and our own Southport. On one of these visits she spoke to my high school, and I met her down at Mack's Café, at the time, Southport's finest dining experience. . . . did he find Mae in England? Come hear "the rest of the story"!

The evening starts with a potluck dinner at 6:30 at the Southport Community Building. Bring your favorite dishes and a guest or two! Election of officers for the upcoming year will be held at this meeting. We'll be looking for you!



Cookbook Sale!

One Night Only for Members

Buy our best selling cookbook for Holiday gifts at
A special price of **\$16.00** at our meeting on

November 15

Extra bonus: The author, **Lewis Hardee** will be there to personalize your books. What an opportunity - a good supper, an interesting program and discount shopping!



The Pilots Memorial decorated for River Pilots Day in August

The Old Burying Ground . . .

We are now one year into our project of reclaiming the Old Smithville Burying Grounds and what a remarkable year it has been. Thirty-seven volunteers have helped us make a tremendous difference in the appearance of the cemetery on workdays throughout the year. We have estimated approximately 5,000 work hours by volunteers including the time those who have adopted plots have worked independently. Twenty-two plots have been adopted and many more are being maintained by extended families in town or those who come regularly from Castle Hayne, Leland, and Randolph County to attend family plots. Although it is hard to fight nature's ability to keep producing so many weeds during a drought and the fact that leaves fall from trees every season of the year, we are making progress. **Bobby Jones** has repaired the centuries-old wall around the Brown-Mellon plot—the centerpiece of the burying ground. He also rebricked and capped one of the box tombs as one enters the grounds from Moore Street. We appreciate so much the time and skill he has given. Two volunteers have been trained by **Eric Kozen**, Superintendent of Oakdale Cemetery in Wilmington. In turn, they will train four volunteers in the techniques required to restore small stones. We are also hoping to train volunteers in resetting small stones and replacing tablets on their bases. If you have a dedicated interest in either cleaning or repairing stones, call **Musette Steck** at 454-0437. Before doing any of the work, we must have permission from the city aldermen. Also, with permission, SHS has funds to pay for professional repair of the more complex breaks. We will depend on professional expert advice for direction in continuing our reclamation project. We hope many of you will join us for workdays - our next one will be on Saturday, October 27. Watch the State Port Pilot for announcements of this and other workdays. If you are interested in adopting a plot of your very own to maintain, please call **Dinah Snead** at 454-4068.

Annual Christmas Home Tour - December 8

2 p.m. until 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$15 day of tour.
Limited number of tickets.

Homes on tour:

115 E. Bay St. Owners: Mitchell & Janelle White
302 E. Bay St. Owner: James Trimble
119 N. Atlantic Ave. Owners: Bob & Carleen Sowers
408 & 410 E. Moore St. Owners: Joe & Eleanor, Joe & Marty Loughlin
405 E. Bay St. Owner: Barbara Farley
413 E. Bay St. Owners: Sidney & Janey Fortney
105 S. Atlantic Ave. Owners: Gordon & Bev McDevitt
310 N. Atlantic Ave. Owners: Karen Mosteller & Kerrie Boyan

The society appreciates so much the many hours of work and planning that go into making this day such a success in Southport. The homeowners as well as the following committee members are to be commended for their most valuable contribution to the society. Thank you all!

Audrey Carathanasis, Cathy Fravel, Phil Fravel, Randy Jones, Debbie Parker, Nancy Heilhecker, Amy Maisel, Celeste Plassman, Marty Loughlin, Shirley Wilson, and Susan Toth