

THE WHITTAKER'S BENCH

Southport Historical Society

Volume XXVII, Number 4

September, 2003

September Meeting

The SHS will gather for the September meeting at the Southport Community Building on Thursday, September 25th. Social and set-up is from 6:00 – 6:30 p.m.; pot-luck dinner is at 6:30 p.m. Our guest will be Wilbur Jones. Mr. Jones will be speaking about his newest book, *A Sentimental Journey*, which tells of Wilmington during the World War II; the port, railroad, shipbuilding, and so much more of interest.

SHS Officers & Directors

President
Peter Wyckoff 457-5599

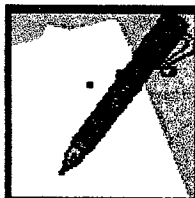
Vice-President
Pat Kirkman 457-0579

Secretary
Karen Knighton 457-8018

Treasurer
Wolf Furstenau 278-4050

Historian/Archivist
Marilyn Lessen 457-0004

Directors
Shirley Wilson 454-4327
Musette Steck 253-3855
Bob Lucas 457-6723



PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPH

Where has the summer gone???

The 4th of July Festival is behind us and the Christmas Tour of Homes Committee is hard at work planning for this winter's tour. Eight proud homeowners have already offered their homes and several more are still thinking about it.

Also in planning is the possibility of holding the SHS January meeting at Fort Caswell. We hope to be able to offer a tour of the Fort and a meeting speaker about its history. Many of our members have expressed an interest in this, and we hope to be able to accommodate them.

Planning – and work – also continues at the Old Jail. We have met with the architect and the Building Inspector and now have an order in which the remaining work needs to be done. The steel fabricator is on board, installing several new support beams, installing some support plates, crafting the remaining window bars, and crafting new front barred doors. Volunteers, -a few -, have been taking down crumbling plaster, scraping the brick walls, and painting windows. Our continuing thanks go to this hardy band, especially leaders Irv Green and Marvin Johnson, and to Karen Knighton for her wonderful organizational skills. As always, volunteers are sorely needed. There is plenty of work to do. Whether you have an hour or two, or more, please call Karen and offer your services. In spite of all of the work to be done, we continue to believe that we are on target for a grand centennial celebration in July 2004.

Planning is also keeping the Cannon Crew busy when they are not busy with actual firings or polishing the gleaming barrel. Through a lot of hard work and hard talking, our crew and Thor will have the honor of participating in the burial celebration of the Hunley in Charleston (SC) in April 2004. Keep an eye open for their new uniforms, too.

And, speaking of planning, the long planned and long awaited *Joshua's Legacy*, sequel to *Joshua's Dream* is on its way to the printers. Created by Miss Susie, and crafted into book form by Jon Lewis, this latest book to be published by the SHS will be sure to be of interest to locals and visitors as well. Also long awaited is the reprinting of *Southport Secrets* with re-editing by Don Johnson, Mary Strickland, and Miss Susie. Minding my manners (I try), I must digress here to thank Wolf Furstenau for the tremendous amount of work which he does with all of our books; negotiating with printers, marketing and transporting books to vendors, arranging for ISBN numbers, proofreading, and maintaining our inventory. Thank you, Wolf.

I'll see you all at the SHS meeting on September 25th at the Southport Community Building.

Peter Wyckoff



GREENPOINTS AT WORK

The coffee you are drinking at the September General Membership Meeting was brewed in our new DeLonghi 60-cup coffee urn which we acquired with donated S&H Greenpoints.

Thanks to an account set up by Wolf Furstenau under the name "Southport Historical Society" and donations of 65,100 points and 2,500 points in May, and another 1,480 points in August, we were able to put the gifts to good use. We thank the donors and hope to continue this worthwhile endeavor.



LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

Susan Carson, Editor

In our last newsletter (May, 2003), Looking Back – The History Page featured an article by Bill Dunn about the history of naval stores. As promised, here is the “rest of the story”.

Susie Carson

“Tarkle Pits” Bill Dunn

A “tarkle pit” was actually a pine tar kiln (“tarkle” being a contraction of tar kiln). In Brunswick County a scarred long-leaf pine would be retired from resin production for the turpentine stills after five to ten years. These trees would have from one to four scar faces around each tree trunk (known locally as “turp scar faces”). As the years passed the pine sap (resin) on those scar faces would dry, forming a deadwood known as “lightwood” or “fat lightwood”. The deadwood was loaded with dried resin that was very dense and heavy. Although the live part of the tree made a better quality of pine tar, called “green tar” in the trade, lightwood was favored in Brunswick County as it produced a greater quantity of tar called “common tar”.

The scarred pine trees were cut with the lightwood split into “bolts” about eight feet long and eight to ten inches across. The bolts were then taken to the kiln site by mule or horse-drawn wagon.

On an empty lot next to our house in Boiling Spring Lakes one of these 8-foot bolts lay for many years. I wanted to move it to our lot to preserve as memento of our county’s historical past, but it was too heavy to move by hand. In one of my walks I found a skidway of these bolts at the end of Bass Road near the shore of Spring Lake that had evidently been overlooked by a tarkle pit operator.

The tarkle pits were simple in construction – a circular or oval mound of sand or dirt from 15 to 30 feet in diameter. The mound was formed by shoveling dirt from inside and outside the kiln into the circular or oval mound. Clay and a ditch with a wooden pipe leading to a collection pit just outside the mound were then laid in the pit bottom. The bolts of lightwood were then split into strips and piled on the inside slope of the mound waist high or sometimes higher. This mass of lightwood was covered with pine bows, the favored material, or with fresh straw, and then covered with sand or dirt. Holes were punched through this covering to provide oxygen to the mass which was then set on fire. Lightwood burns readily, but if the air holes were placed correctly, the lightwood would only smolder with a limited supply of air.

The success of a kiln operation depended on the skill of the operator. Too much air would allow the lightwood to ignite, which would also ignite the collected tar. Too little air prevented complete collection of the available tar, and sometimes caused an explosion in the mass. The pine tar, liquefied by the heat, would flow out of the lightwood, down the slope of the pit, to the clay bottom. From there it flowed through the wooden pipe laid in the bottom to a barrel placed in the pit dug just outside the kiln area.

Pitch was made by boiling the collected tar with a little turpentine added. Three barrels of tar made two barrels of pitch.

The tarkle pits I have observed in Boiling Spring Lakes are circular in configuration, while those in the Green Swamp are oval in shape. Although a turpentine still was operated in Boiling Spring Lakes area into the 1930s, I have been unable to ascertain when tarkle pit operations ceased in Brunswick County.

Pat Kirkman welcomed everyone to the May 23 meeting of the SHS and introduced Susie Carson who gave the invocation. Members and guests enjoyed a covered dish dinner.

MAY MEETING MINUTES

May 23, 2003

Southport Historical Society
Southport Community Building

Pat Kirkman welcomed everyone to the May 23 meeting of the SHS and introduced Susie Carson who gave the invocation. Members and guests enjoyed a covered dish dinner.

Vice President Pat Kirkman presided in the absence of President Peter Wyckoff. Pat reviewed the new procedure for printing the minutes and treasurer's report in the newsletter rather than having them read at the meeting and indicated that copies are available for anyone who is interested. Announcements, which are directly related to the SHS, will be made at the meeting. For other community announcements and information a table will be provided.

The calendar of events for Heritage Days was presented. Shirley Wilson invited everyone to attend the genealogical workshop to be presented by Beverly Tetterton on Friday, May 24 from 10-12 at the Community Building. Pat provided information on the other activities of the weekend. Saturday is Heritage Day with presentations and exhibits in the Community Building from 10 - 4. Sunday, May 25 from 2-4 is the Heritage Tea, which is honoring past presidents of the Southport Woman's Club and the Charter members of the Historical Society. Tickets are \$8 and are available tonight or at the Visitor's Center. The tea will be held at Lois Jane's B&B. Monday, May 26 is the Veteran's Recognition at 2:45 at the Community Building, hosted by the Jr. Woman's Club and other community organizations..

Pat Kirkman presented a check for \$420 to the society from the recent "Southport Strolls", walking tours of Southport.

Shirley Wilson introduced our guest speaker Beverly Tetterton, from the New Hanover Public Library who presented a program on Genealogy 101—Getting Started in Tracing Your Family History. Ms. Tetterton started with a general overview of the process, gave some dos and don'ts with helpful hints and provided handouts with specific information for getting the process started. Pat Kirkman thanked Ms. Tetterton for her presentation and invited the audience to attend the workshop on Friday. The meeting adjourned at 8:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Knighton



TREASURER'S REPORT May - August 2003

Book sales continue to provide good, continuous income. The Cannon Committee, largely self-supporting, showed considerable income for the period. Greatest expenses were the reprint of *Bald Head* (\$7,582), the new edition of *Southport Secrets* (\$4,145) and insurance premiums (1,979). The Certificate of Deposit was cashed at maturity in anticipation of demand for funds by the Old Jail Restoration project.

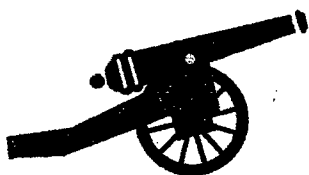
Wolf Furstenuau

INCOME

Book Sales	2,060.29
Cannon Committee	1,361.51
Donations	440.00
Dues	170.00
Ins. Premium Refund	130.00
Bank Interest	63.84
Ladies Tea	446.00
Plaque Sales	300.00
NC Sales Tax collected	11.48
Postage & Shipping	6.00
Sales Tax Refund	108.23
Dividend on investments	17.07
Income Total	5,114.42

EXPENSES

Accounting fees	690.00
Bank Charge (checks)	56.62
Book Purchases	252.00
Cannon	20.60
Christmas Tour of Homes	112.50
Donations	25.00
Memberships/subscriptions	90.00
Heritage Walk	125.00
Insurance Premiums	1,979.60
Ladies Tea	388.45
Meetings	300.34
Newsletter	184.00
Office Supplies	25.54
Old Jail	715.94
Plaque Purchases	340.00
Postal Services	128.59
Printing	11,764.50
Quarterly Sales Tax	7.28
Sales Taxes Paid	56.20
Expense Total	17,262.16



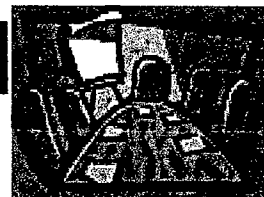
CANNON NEWS

It has been a busy summer for our cannon and its crew. In addition to the usual Fourth Of July Festival participation, we have fired for numerous weddings, several birthdays, the dedication of the BSL Community Building, and one Golden Wedding Anniversary. We fired a salute to the U.S. Coast Guard Training Ship, *Eagle* when she transited Southport on her way to Wilmington to participate in the new Nautical Days Festival. We also saluted her the next day as she sailed into Wilmington to open the festival. We made the front page of the Wilmington Star-News as we fired our first shot. We also managed to salute the new captain of the Coast Guard's *Diligence* as she transited Southport on her way to her first mission at sea under her new command. She just happened to be sailing out with the *Eagle* so we managed to salute both ships.

We are extremely proud of the fact that Thor and its crew have been selected as one of fifty cannons that will participate in the H.L. Hunley Crew Funeral on April 17th, 2004 in Charleston, SC. Thor will be located in the Magnolia Cemetery along with the other cannon. At the appropriate time, each cannon will fire one shot constituting a 50-gun salute. Nine out of eleven of our crew members are able to participate in this historic event which will require them to be in an appropriate Confederate uniform. More information on this event can be found on the web at www.hunleyfuneral.org.

One final note, in addition to the donations we ask each event sponsor to give to help defray our costs, our crew contracted with the City of Southport to power wash the Community Building and the Visitor Center. In addition, the crew also sealed the decks at the Visitor Center. The crew donated over 30 hours of their time and brought the Historical Society a considerable donation.

SHS BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



- Renewed membership in Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce.
- Cashed a maturing CD to provide funding for jail renovations.
- Heard a presentation from Bert Felton regarding purchasing a Civil War trail sign for the Southport area.
- Printed *Southport Secrets* and completed final editing for the printing of *Joshua's Legacy*.
- Renewed our commitment to support the Communities in Schools Adoption a School program.
- Implemented contract for metal work in the jail – beam will be replaced, missing bars added to windows, new bar doors added to the outside and other necessary support work.
- Agreed to spend up to \$1200 for uniforms for the cannon crew-currently there are 10 gun crewmembers.



BOOK REPORT

- We are rather excited about the companion piece to *Joshua's Dream*, the 300-page *Joshua's Legacy*. Following extensive reviews the book was taken to the printer on August 25. Besides the cover photograph, the book contains 33 illustrations and a comprehensive index. *Joshua's Legacy*, co-authored by Susan Carson and Jon Lewis, is based on articles by a number of contributing writers. Look for it in about 6 weeks!
- The second edition of *Southport Secrets*, compiled by Don Johnson, is now available. Same colorful cover, same price, but a revised text. Price: \$12.95
- A limited number of copies of *Three Southern Families* by Lewis J. Hardee, Jr have been made available for sale. If you have a family connection to the Hardee, Jones and Davis families you are encouraged to contact Wolfgang Furstenau to obtain a copy. The 8½ by 11 inch hard-cover book contains over 400 pages, is illustrated and has an index and other references. Price: \$35.00.



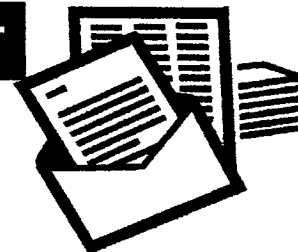
2003 CHRISTMAS TOUR OF HOMES

Believe it or not we're just three months away from our 15th annual home tour. Plans are well under way and we have nine homes committed to the tour. East side, West side, all around the town and the free trolley will be back this year! Holiday House treasures and collections will again be featured at the Community Building and the evening will be highlighted by the waterfront flotilla parade. Be sure to put the date on your calendar and you'll be hearing more about this exciting event at our September and November meetings.

ITEM OF INTEREST

Note to Southport Historical Society Members:

Susie Carson asked us to share the following information in this edition of The Whittler's Bench.



AASLH Sends Support Letter for Historical Agencies.

The following document was sent to all state historical societies, the National Governors Association, all state governors, the National Association of Secretaries and the National Conference of State Legislators.

Preservation of, public access to, and free and open debate over the content and interpretation of the past are essential to the health of American constitutional democracy. Enlightened discourse over critical issues, public policy, and the very nature of our democracy, requires continuous reference to the historical context.

That is why the American Association for State and Local History is deeply concerned over the draconian reductions in public funding of historical organizations and activities that currently are being made across the country, most egregiously at the state level. These reductions demonstrate a wanton disregard of the relationship of the past to the future of the democratic institutions that define America and its position in the world.

The threat to state historical resources and institutions is especially alarming. State libraries and archives, historical collections and museums, historic sites, and other historical resources are not frills to be discarded when budgets are tight or to accomplish particular political agendas. They are essential trustees of our democratic inheritance.

It is ironic that these threats are being made at a time when the demise of totalitarian regimes around the world has made especially obvious the connection between the historical record and the democratic experience.

Whether in Iraq in 2003 or in Eastern Europe fifteen years earlier, one of the first actions of newly freed peoples always is to open the previously closed governmental archives to public scrutiny. Through critical examination of the historical evidence the past is confronted and a future of new possibilities can be envisioned.

The American Association of State and Local History asserts that the historical record is just as important to the future of a 227-year-old democracy. Therefore, AASLH emphatically urges all Americans and the public officials who they elect to continue to invest in the federal, state, and local resources and institutions that are the custodians of our democratic experience. To do anything less dishonors the heritage upon which we build and threatens the future we aspire to create.