

# southport historical society

## Whittler's Bench

Spring 2016



### Important Dates

**May 10, 2016** - Second Tuesday Talk with Martha Johnson, *The Diary of Mrs. Clitherall*, 10:30 am at the Harper Library

**May 26, 2016** - Membership Meeting with Brooks Newton Preik, *Miss Kate Stuart - The Heroine of Smithville (Southport)* 6:30 pm at the Community Building

**May 28, 2016** - *Living Voices from the Past*, 2:00 pm at the Old Smithville Burying Ground

**June 14, 2016** - Second Tuesday Talk with Jason Tyson, *Brunswick County's Lost Hero of WW II*, 10:30 am at the Harper Library

**June 25, 2016** - *Work Day - Cleaning the Burying Ground*, 9:00 am at the Old Smithville Burying Ground

**July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016** - *Free Guided Tour of the Old Smithville Burying Ground*, 2:00 pm at the Old Smithville Burying Ground

**July 12, 2016** - Second Tuesday Talk with Musette Steck, *200 Years of Celebrating the Fourth*, 10:30 am at the Harper Library

**August 9, 2016** - Second Tuesday Talk with Stuart Callari, *Growing Up In Two Cultures*, 10:30 am at the Harper Library

### Parker's Perspective

#### MISSION STATEMENT:

The Southport Historical Society is dedicated to bring together persons interested in local area history. SHS endeavors to do so by providing opportunities for learning through programs and special events; published articles and books; educational classes; and community projects that will both enhance and preserve the unique history and heritage of Southport and the surrounding area. The Southport Historical Society was established January 1976 and maintains the Old Jail on Nash St. and the Susie Carson Research Room in the Garrison.

#### OFFICERS:

President: Donald Parker  
Past President: Musette Steck

Vice President: Pat Kirkman  
Secretary: Charles Christianson  
Treasurer: Phil Fravel

#### DIRECTORS

Nancy Christianson  
Scott Len  
Joni Schinske  
Bob Surridge

I am indeed fortunate to have been elected as your President. I am looking forward to my tenure with great anticipation as the Southport Historical Society continues to make remarkable progress on many fronts. I salute our Past President, Musette Steck, for guiding this organization for the past four years and look forward to her remaining on the Board as Ex-Officio in order that we may continue to leverage her incredible expertise on the history of Southport.

It was wonderful to see so many of you at our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner celebration in January. Vice President Pat Kirkman orchestrated a wonderful evening, highlighted by her presentation that took us from the very beginnings of the Society, through subsequent growth and relevancy, to present day projects and accomplishments. It was a super journey and a legacy that I desire to build upon moving forward.

Our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coincided with the installment of new members on the Board of Directors. We welcome Nancy Christianson and Scott Len to the Board in 2016. Nancy is no stranger to most as she has served and continues to serve as the Society's Curator for the Old Jail museum. If you haven't visited



Don Parker

the Old Jail recently I encourage you to take a look around at the many enhancements introduced by Nancy and her team. Scott has been very supportive of the Society and brings a wealth of experience to the Board. His love of Southport coupled with his inherent instincts for the betterment of the Society make him a perfect addition to the Board. As the Board evolves, a departure is also typically part of the equation. We bid Betsie Lytton a farewell as she completed her term on the Board in January. We very much appreciate her great work as Membership Chairman and fully expect to see her at Society events in the future. Thanks again, Betsie!

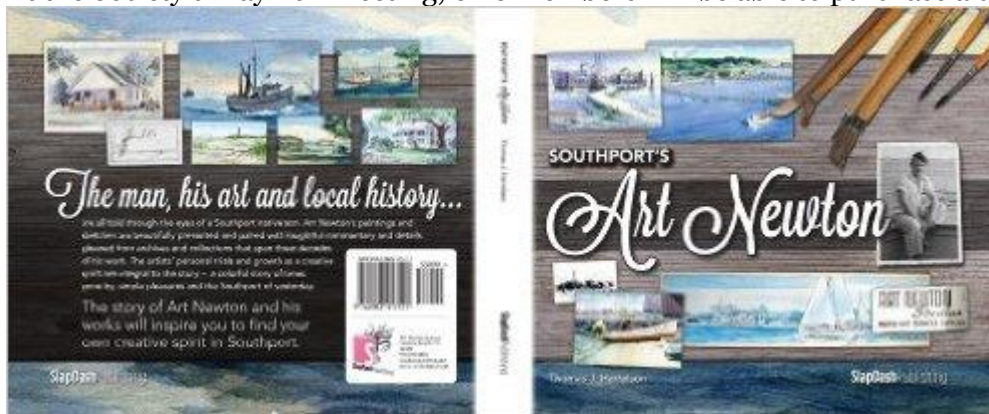
The balance of the Board sees Pat Kirkman moving to the Vice President position, Charles Christianson and Phil Fravel remaining as Secretary, Treasurer respectively, while Bob Surridge and Joni Schinske continue as Directors. What a great team!

The underpinning of the Southport Historical Society is its membership. Our membership rolls continue to increase as are the number of responsibilities and initiatives associated with the Society. I would encourage you to get involved in our projects as the Society is only as strong as its active membership. Incredible strides have been made in support of our mission and, with your help, we can become even more relevant to the community. Don't hesitate to drop me a line at [coastingdon@gmail.com](mailto:coastingdon@gmail.com) should you be interested in assisting and I'll point you in the right direction!

I look forward to seeing you at our next General Membership meeting on May 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM at the Southport Community Building. We'll begin with our usual covered dish dinner followed by a presentation by Brooks Newton Preik on her ancestor, the indomitable Southport lady, Miss Kate Stuart. See you then!

## *Southport's Art Newton*

At the Society's May 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, SHS members will be able to purchase a copy of Tommy Harrelson's book



*Southport's Art Newton* at \$25.00 per copy. There are a limited number of copies available. Copies will only be sold to members who attend the meeting. The sale will be on a first-come first-serve basis and advance orders will not be taken. The sale will begin at 6:30 pm. The Society would like to thank Tommy Harrelson for making this sale possible.

## *Old Jail Report*

The Old Jail opened the new season on Saturday, April 2, and we have had robust attendance ever since. Many thanks to Dottie Capriotti for continuing as the docent scheduler. Thanks also to the Advisory Committee who have worked diligently to create new displays as well as clean and update old ones. The members of the Advisory Committee this year are Cathy Clegg, Shirley Johnston, Linda deTorres, Eric Royer, Scott Len, and Bob Surridge. A special thanks goes out to Bonnie Erickson, who was a very faithful docent for us for several years, but who has moved to Charlotte. She will be missed.

I invite all Board Members to visit the Jail to see the current changes. The entry room cases have been moved to give visitors better view of them as well as putting the book case next to the entry door. We continue to rotate the butter churns so that many will be displayed in one season. We have new cases in the Sheriff/Jailer room and in the upstairs patch room. In the Graffiti room we have covered the table and Charles Christianson lined the tabletop case with fabric, which shows up the artifacts better. The Mug Shot Corner has a new

prisoner number board which has been laminated so we will not have to replace it as often. On exhibit in the bullpen cells are two prisoner suits which were used in the first Bolivia jail.

Thanks to photos Mayor Dove donated to the Old Jail Museum, we have started a new display of photos and information about past Southport Chiefs of Police. This display is up and continuing. We are still looking for more photos, but the info came to us from Bill Johnson and thanks to Bill for his research

Finally, the paranormal investigation at the Jail, which the Board approved, went very well on March 19, and we await the group's final report. A State Port Pilot article will be in one of the future editions with photos.

Prepared by Nancy Christianson, Curator

## L. T. Yaskell Tells His Story

Hello, my name is Leonard Thadeus Yaskell...L. T. to my friends and Leonard to my wife, Louise, and, Uncle Leonard to our lovely niece Gwendolyn. Those of you native to Southport know Louise as Louise Standland. Louise and I did not have children, but we were very involved in Gwendolyn's life. Gwen's mother was Louise's older sister, Alneta. Alneta died in December 1915, when Gwendolyn was just one year old. Gwendolyn was always a joy and Louise and I were so proud when she named her daughter Alneta after her mother.

I was what people now call a "Newcomer." I made my way to Southport shortly after World War I. I was a Marine corporal and commanded a gun crew on the cruiser USS Charleston. During my time on the Charleston, we did escort duty in the Caribbean. We also made two convoy voyages to France during hostilities and later took occupation troops to France and then brought combat veterans home.



Leonard T. Yaskell  
11/4/1898 – 11/28/1986

But, I'm getting ahead of myself. I was born in 1898 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. My father was Michael (Micha) Yatskoslavage. He came to America from Poland in 1888. My mother Mary, who was 10 years younger than my father, came in 1890. They were married in 1893. I had two older brothers Brunslaw (Bernard) and Adam, plus two younger sisters (Matilda and Stacy). My father was a coal miner. He worked in the hard coal (anthracite) mines, mines that go hundreds of feet underground. The men would say: "I no speak English, hard work...any job!"

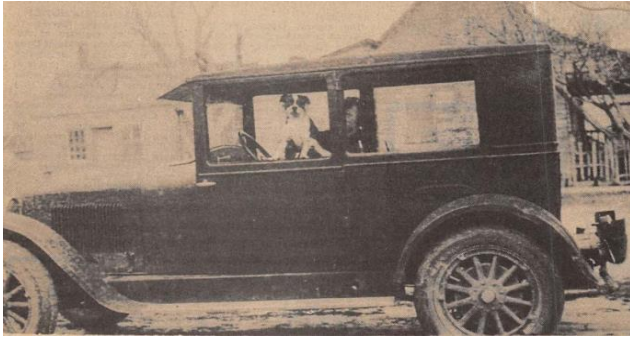
Life was very difficult for immigrants in the coal regions and many stayed just a short time before returning to Europe. Did you know that, when my parents came here there was virtually no such thing as "illegal" immigration... anyone who was healthy and not a criminal was allowed into the country. Once here, the "hunkys" (as they called us), both men and boys...went to work in the mines 12-14 hours a day. It was a hard life, which was made more difficult because the people who came to America before us did not like us...they said we were dirty and ignorant...lower class...not worthy to be Americans...even the head of the U. S. Immigration Service said that we were not mentally and socially as good as the earlier immigrants. Many people said we were ruining American culture. In fact, in the 1921 and 1924, congress passed quota laws designed to keep Polish, Italian, Hungarian and other immigrants from central and southern Europe out of the country.

So, you're thinking how did I get to Southport? Well, like I said, I was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and like most sons of miners, I worked in the mines. Then a friend told my father about St. Helena, North Carolina, where Mr. Hugh MacRae was selling 10 acre farms for \$240. Ninety dollars down and the rest in equal payments over three years. Hearing this, my family made the decision to go to St. Helena. Unfortunately, my father died (perhaps because of black lung disease) shortly after we arrived in NC, but with

myself and all my brothers and sisters working with mother...we made our dairy farm work. I eventually took a job as a salesman for the Carolina Trucking and Development Company. And, it was that job that brought me to Southport in the early 1920s. Back then Southport was a dusty, windblown pogie fishing village. Sometimes



the odor from the pogies would be terrible, but what Southport founder Joshua Potts called “salubrious breezes” took away the odor.



Mayor and Mrs. Yaskell's Essex Sedan.  
From the The Way It Was.

In Southport, I found some of the prettiest girls I'd ever seen. One in particular, Louise Standland caught my eye and my heart. Louise and I married in 1921 and took a house on Caswell Street. We started a grocery store and ran it together. By 1927, we were well enough off that I spent a term as the mayor of Southport. In January, 1929, Louise and I packed up our Essex sedan and made a month long trip to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania to visit family and friends. Louise was shocked to learn that I had about as many relatives as there were people in Southport!

Over the years, I developed a strong interest in politics and public service. In addition to serving as the mayor of Southport, I also served as the Chairman of the Brunswick

County Board of Commissioners. Then in 1935, I was appointed to be Southport's Postmaster. I was postmaster until 1945. However, I think my proudest time in public service came in 1939 during my tenure as chairman of the hospital's Board of Trustees, when the J. Arthur Doshier Memorial Hospital was established.

In the late 40s, Louise and I moved to New Jersey to help my mother and brothers run the Brick Church Restaurant in East Orange, N.J. The restaurant was near the Brick Church commuter train station that took workers to and from New York City. Location, location, location. The restaurant was very successful and we stayed in New Jersey until I retired in the early 1960s and we then returned to Southport. At that time, I was able to pick up my work with the Board of Trustees of the hospital. In 1980, I was honored to be asked to cut the ribbon at the opening of the new Southport Post Office.

As you can tell, I lived a long and I believe a successful life. And, I enjoyed every minute of it. I just hope the people of Southport think I helped make Southport a better place to live.

Prepared by: Bob Surridge

## Welcome to New Members

### New Members since January 2016

Mrs. Noel Dusanenko (Life)  
Marti Fowler  
Mary Lou Green  
Peg & Rocky Ingalls  
Bob & Brenda Hagerman  
Richard & Florence Mason

Marilyn O'Meara  
Phillip & Sharon Venis (Life)  
Kathleen Varah  
Ken & Jessica Weaver  
Max & Sarah Williams

Current Membership – **239**

Prepared by Pat Kirkman



## Old Smithville Burying Ground Stone Repair

### Cornelius Smith Stone

In the last issue of the Whittler's Bench, we reported that with the help of Charles Burdick of Mint Hill, NC we were able to set up the base of the Cornelius G. Smith cross at the Nash/Rhett section at location A1. Unfinished was the task of lifting the cross top, holding it so that epoxy could be applied to it, and then setting the top down onto the base so the glue could dry. We are pleased to report that the repair work has been completed. In March, the Burying Ground's stone maintenance team (Marvin Johnson, Ken Morris, and Charles Christianson) were able to place the cross on top of its base. Being an experienced and wily group of septuagenarians, the team quickly determined that they could not physically pick the stone up and lift it on its base. Since desperation is the mother of invention, the team developed a stone lifting tool, which utilized a 2,000 pound capacity boat winch to lift the cross. As a result of their work and ingenuity the cross monuments of Cornelius and Fannie McKeithan Smith once again stand together.



Charles Burdick at start of repair-04/2015



Cross base glued and cemented to foundation



Ken Morris and Marv Johnson with top glued on



View from Rhett Street side of Burying Ground

Cornelius G. Smith (1836-1898) was a river pilot during the Civil War. According to Jim Mc Neil's book "Master of the Shoals", Smith piloted two blockade runners. The first ship was the *Margaret and Jessie* and the second was the *Calypso*. The *Calypso* was on its third "running" coming back from Nassau, when it was found by the Union blockader the *USS Florida*. The *Calypso* was captured on June 11, 1863, and Captain Cornelius Galloway Smith was placed in a Union prison where he remained for two years and nine days. The ship, *Calypso*, went on to be the *USS Calypso*, and was used in the Union blockade of Wilmington.

### Joseph Newton Burriss Family Stones

Mary Jane Burriss (1833 - 1903) and Joseph Newton Burriss (1827 - 1889) stones are in the Nash/Rhett section of the burying ground at location F6. It appears that they were broken when a tree fell on them some time ago. These two stones were knocked off of their foundations and Joseph's stone was broken into two pieces. To restore the stones, the foundations for the Mary Jane and Joseph stones had to be rebuilt. Both, Mary Jane and Joseph's stones were glued back into their base stones and the main stone was glued back together. The small stone on the right, Sallie Potter Burriss (1887 - 1889) was quite loose. The maintenance team found that while



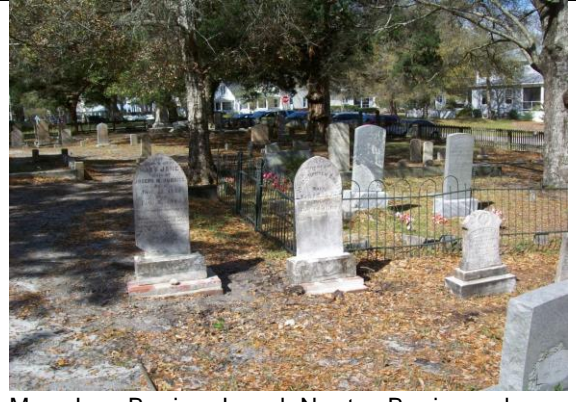
it appeared to be solid, it could come apart and was tilting toward the front. The team leveled and glued the stone together.



Mary Jane Burriss stone off its foundation



Joseph Newton Burriss stone broken and off foundation



Mary Jane Burriss, Joseph Newton Burriss and Sallie Potter Burriss stones back on their correct placement foundations and glued together and cleaned.

Joseph Newton Burriss was a river pilot, and also a blockade runner. According to the Jim Mc Neil book, "Masters of the Shoals", he piloted the blockade runner, *Hansa*, and made twenty successful runs in and out of the Wilmington port. He enlisted on October 1, 1861 from New Hanover County as a Private at the age of 33. He served in the North Carolina "Enlisted Howard's Company, Independent Cavalry Regular". He transferred on April 11 1862 to the Confederate Navy (Source: North Carolina Troops 1861-1865 (A Roster). He was born at Federal Point in North Carolina and is buried at the Smithville Burying Ground. He and his wife Mary Jane had eight children.

Sallie Potter Burriss was a two year old child. She was born on September 8, 1887 and died on October 8, 1889. Her mother was Carrie Vance Burriss (second marriage), and her father was Jacob David Burriss. She was the granddaughter of Joseph Newton and Mary Jane Grisson Burriss.

### Phelp's Stone

The granite main stone for the Phelps lot, at the Brook/Nash section at location A6, had fallen over and was on its face. The long granite base had been lifted by a cedar tree root and tilted toward the front. Our team of septuagenarian stalwarts moved the stone to a vertical upside down position. They then moved the granite base stone so the root could be removed. Next they put the base back into place, leveled the base, and then put the head stone back on to the base. The team used a couple of pneumatic jacks (2 tons, 6 tons) to develop a second tool that would allow the 6 ton pneumatic jack to be placed at a 45 degree angle to push the stone up. The tool is in the center of the photo below. The estimate of the weight of the head stone with a standard of 175 pounds for a cubic foot of granite is 690 pounds.



Phelps stone upside down while the base is having pebbles pushed under it to make it level.



Marv Johnson and Ken Morris behind the corrected Phelps stone and level base with the developed 45 degree pneumatic jack holder in front.

This stone marks the Henry Earl (1864 - 1910) and Serelia Annie, (1866 - 1953) Phelps lot. Henry Earl was twenty-two years old when he married Serelia Annie. They had eleven children, three of whom lived to adulthood. He was 46, in 1910, when he died an accidental death. Serelia Annie died at the age of 82 (almost 83) in 1953.

### McKeithan Stone

The granite main stone for the McKeithan lot, at the Brook/Moore section at location A6, was in the same disrepair as the Phelps stone. It, too had fallen on its face due to its granite base stone tilting toward the grave. The base stone foundation had sunk in to the ground, away from the cement lot border. The border had more of a cement foundation than that of the base. The team used the same process as was done on the Phelps stone. However, the McKeithan stone has been down for about 5 years, so it was lodged into the soil in the grave, and the distance that the stone had to be pushed upward was more like 18 inches compared to the Phelps stone's 6 inches. Using the pneumatic jacks, the winch tool, a lot of bricks, some wood stakes, and a lot of time and muscle, we got the head stone back onto its base stone. The estimated weight of this granite head stone, using the standard of 175 pounds per a cubic foot, is 720 pounds.



Marv Johnson and Ken Morris at the McKeithan stone

The names of John W. (1849 - 1936) and Katherine T. (1869 - 1942) were on the raised stone (as can be seen in the above photograph). John and Katherine had two sons Phillip Thompson McKeithan and Joseph William McKeithan.

Prepared by Charles Christianson



### Oral History – George E. Hubbard

From the Susie Carson Research Room Website  
[southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room](http://southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room)

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. George Hubbard. Mr. Hubbard was born in South Carolina on October 18, 1890. He died at age 99 on February 14, 1990.

*"I moved to Southport in 1913. Ford Motor Company was looking for a place to start a new dealership. They chose Southport because it had more money than any town in two states. All the ships stopped at the foot of the street for coal and groceries. There were seven fish factories. Three were located where Sunny Point is now. We started the dealership where First Citizens Bank is now. I sold the first Ford to a man from Myrtle Beach and had to deliver it to him. When I got to Myrtle Beach there were two shacks and people pulling fishing nets. I had the dealership until they quit making Model T's. Ford Motor Company made us buy equipment that cost \$3,000.00 to repair Model T's and the next week we got a notice that they were not going to make Model T's anymore. After that I operated a service garage on Howe Street for 55 years and never missed one day of work."*

*"I joined the Southport Fire Department in 1914 when I sold them their first truck. It cost \$285.00 and took me a year to talk them into buying it. Harry Aldridge was an electrician and we made him chief. When he died the boys appointed me chief and remained chief for 19 years. The city and county didn't give us any money we had to raise funds for the trucks with fish fries and plays on the stage at the school. Bunn Frank introduced a bill in the Senate for the volunteer firemen to have a pension fund. Every fireman in the state had to pay \$1 00. I was the first man to draw a check from the fund."*

*"For six of the 19 years I was fire chief I was also an alderman and I did the same things the city manager does today."*



## Susie Carson Research Room (SCRR)

[southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room](http://southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room)



### C. C. "Kit" Morse Exhibit

Thanks to the work of SCRR intern Bonnie Soper, and the loan of artifacts from James Morse and Teresa Morse Shoemaker, the SHS has an additional exhibit at the Visitors Center. The exhibit highlights the blockade running career of Christopher Columbus "Kit" Morse. Artifacts, include a family bible, spyglass, sword, and books.

### SCRR Student Interns

UNCW Graduate student, Bonnie Soper recently completed her internship at the SCRR. During her stay Bonnie completed an inventory of books in the SCRR library. She also researched and the Christopher Columbus "Kit" Morse exhibit.

Ms. Hadassah Poteet will be the SCRR's summer intern. Ms. Poteet is an undergraduate student majoring in English at the University of West Florida.



Hadassah Poteet



### Donations and Loans

Thank you to the following individuals who over the last few months have donated or loaned historical items to the Susie Carson Research Room:

Daniel and Patsy Baumgarten  
Cindy Brochure  
Peggy Campbell  
Lee Evins  
Tommy Harrelson  
Melina Hohn

David Gale  
Ellen Howell  
Patrick Jones  
Jan Mousley  
Lois Myers  
James Morse

Char Porter  
Brooks Newton Preik  
Larry Rittinger  
Shelagh Rune  
Teresa Morse Shoemaker

## Cannon Thor

On February 29<sup>th</sup>, Cannon Thor was taken to Murry Middle School in Wilmington for a demonstration and educational talk for the eighth grade class. We estimated 150-200 students attended, along with several staff members and NHSO resource officers. Teacher Brad Hodges, for whom we fired at his wedding in 2004,



Students at Murray Middle School in Wilmington

requested Thor's presence; he further requested that we return next year with this becoming an annual visit. We had six crew members in Period Attire.

After a brief talk about Thor, we fired twice, which the kids thoroughly enjoyed. After firing the kids came over for additional Q&A, and we were pleasantly surprised with the number and quality of their questions. The students wanted to know about Thor, how we fire, how the implements are used and about our uniforms.



Please tell your out-of-town family and friends that  
the **Susie Carson Research Room Is Online!**

[southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room](http://southporthistoricalsociety.org/research-room)



**Susie Carson Research Room**

Search this site

Research Collections	Availability
<a href="#"><u>Bit of History</u></a> weekly columns from the <i>StarNews</i> (1999 - 2007)	Online (complete collection)
<a href="#"><u>The Way it Was</u></a> Photo Column (The State Port Pilot)	Online (complete collection)
<a href="#"><u>Brunswick County Historical Society Newsletters</u></a> (1961 - 2005)	Online (complete collection)
<a href="#"><u>Chronology of Southport</u></a> Volumes I - V (1520 - 1990)	Online (complete collection)
<a href="#"><u>People/Genealogy Files</u></a>	Online (complete collection)
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<a href="#"><u>Reference Books</u></a>	At the SCRR (complete collection)
<a href="#"><u>Reports and Articles</u></a>	Online (partial collection)
<a href="#"><u>Subject Files</u></a>	Online (complete collection)
<a href="#"><u>Whittler's Bench</u></a> Newsletters (1976 to present).	Online (complete collection)

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**SOUTHPORT (SMITHVILLE)**

A Chronology

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Also tell them that they can



## Volunteer Opportunities

**Old Jail Docents** - Serve 3.5 hours a month as a guide at the Old Jail. The Old Jail is currently open from April through October for two afternoons a week. Anyone interested will be trained on docent procedures and the stories and information given to the jail's visitors. Interested persons are asked to contact Nancy Christianson at [christianson@juno.com](mailto:christianson@juno.com).

**Pot luck Setup/Cleanup** - Volunteers needed to assist with the preparation for and cleanup after the SHS general membership meetings. The "crew" arrives a half hour prior to the meeting start to set and decorate the tables for the pot luck dinner, make coffee, etc. After the meeting, a quick cleanup is performed. It's an easy job with big benefits - those on the crew get to sit at the table closest to the desserts! See Scott Len or Nancy Caves during the May meeting if interested in helping out.

**Susie Carson Research Room Assistants** - Work at the SCRR or at home organizing and cataloging holdings such as newspaper clippings and periodicals. Please contact Bob Surridge at [bobsurridge100@gmail.com](mailto:bobsurridge100@gmail.com).

**Facebook Assistant** - Help maintain the Society's Facebook page. Experience using the WWW and Facebook would be helpful. Please contact Bob Surridge at [bobsurridge100@gmail.com](mailto:bobsurridge100@gmail.com).

**Newsletter Editor** - Compile and edit the newsletter using Microsoft Word.

**Book Sales** - Help sell Southport Historical Society books at events like the Spring Festival, the Waterfront Market, Fourth of July, Christmas Home Tours, and First Fridays. Volunteers selling books will not be responsible for carrying the books, tables, chairs to and from an event. Sales shifts will be less than 2.5 hours. Please contact Bob Surridge at [bobsurridge100@gmail.com](mailto:bobsurridge100@gmail.com).

**Book Sale Setup** - Volunteers are needed to transport books and setup and tear down book sale tables at events. Please contact Bob Surridge at [bobsurridge100@gmail.com](mailto:bobsurridge100@gmail.com).

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