



# THE WHITTLERS BENCH

## Southport Historical Society

501 North Atlantic Avenue  
Southport, North Carolina 28461

VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 6 NOVEMBER 1994

### REGULAR MEETING

Once again it is Potluck Dinner time for the Historical Society! This one will be held at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, November 17, 1994, in the Parish Hall of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church located at the junction of NC 211 and NC 133 (on the corner of the Doshier cut-off road and the highway to Supply). Everyone should bring a covered dish and all of their family and friends--and don't get stuck at the back of the line or you'll miss out on the collard greens! The program will be the culmination of the Historical Society's participation in the "SOUTHPORT REMEMBERS WORLD WAR II" fiftieth anniversary events. Susan Carson (assisted by unsung heroine, mover-and-shaker Mary Shannon) will show P.D. Midgett's video of the March 1994 JOHN D. GILL monument dedication, plus out-takes from another video interview with GILL survivors. The two "mothers of the monument" will also talk about the tremendous effort involved in bringing about that successful event! Hope to see all of you there!

### IN MEMORIAM

The Historical Society wishes to express deepest sympathy to the family and friends of member Jo Ann Callahan, who passed away suddenly on October 23, 1994. Jo Ann was an especially staunch supporter and eager volunteer for the Southport Maritime Museum; the children's programs she gave there were wonderful!

### JOSHUA POTTS MEMORIAL

The Society wants, and needs, additional written support for establishing a suitable memorial for the founder of our town. To date, the most frequent suggestion has been to rename Waterfront Park, but additional evidence of popular support is required. Send a card or letter to 501 North Atlantic Avenue, Southport, NC 28461.

### PUBLISHING NEWS

Our "publications director" Paul Sweeney has received the copies of the second printing of Joshua's Dream, Susan Carson's definitive history of

Smithville/Southport, and they will be available at the November meeting. We are pleased to note that the price remains the same---\$15.00 per copy---a steal!

We also note and greatly appreciate that author Ethel Herring has given the Historical Society permission to republish her popular book, Cap'n Charlie and the Lights of the Lower Cape Fear, with profits to be retained by the Society. The proofs are at the publisher's, and we should have copies very soon.

#### NEXT YEAR

The Board of Directors would like to solicit suggestions from the membership as to projects and/or programs they would like to see our Society undertake during the coming year. Give Chris Suiter a call on 457-6629.

# "Looking Back" — The History Page

Susan Carson, Editor



(NOTE: The following was sent in by Bill Reaves. Remember, I have asked all of you to contribute. How about it? Bill found this item in The Wilmington Morning Star of March 29, 1914. It was written by Miss Kate Stuart, "The Heroine of Smithville")

## IN THE CEMETERY AT SOUTHPORT

We have just entered the cemetery and a tremendous old voice across the way is crooning a sad old song:

"Will no one tell me why she sings? Perhaps the plaintiff numbers flow,  
For old, unhappy faroff things, And battles long ago."

Have you ever wandered over this quaint old burying ground with its venerable oaks, so old that no living man can tell their age? Their leaves are never still, always whispering, whispering to each other the secrets of the centuries.

Here is the Pilots' Monument with its tall shaft like some marble finger pointing mutely to the sky, and telling of brave men who went forth to their perilous duties and never returned - and deeply graven on the marble sides these words: "The winds and the sea their requiem sing and shall forever more."

A few steps further on is a low slate headstone, black with age, and covered with moss and lichen: "Capt. David Hicks, Jr., who commanded the ship 'Neptune' of Providence, Rhode Island. He was bound to Europe, but death prevented the voyage. A native of Swanzey, Mass., Died March 16, 1804."

A granite stone sent across the sea from London, by the widow of a Scotch captain, bears the tender inscription from the Psalms: "He hath sheltered me from the windy storm and tempest."

The sad story of Antonia Castelletta has been very sweetly told in verse by Miss Athalia Bunting in the February number of "Tileston Topics".

Years ago, one might often have met a pathetic figure, a gentleman of the old school, who no changes in fashion ever affected, his high black stock, his ruffled shirt and diamond pin, swallow tail coat and brass buttons were familiar to all. Leaning on his cane, he always reminded us of Oliver Wendell Holmes:

"Last leaf. The mossy marbles rest,  
On the lips that he has pressed In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear,  
Have been carved for many a year, on the tomb."

He passed away at 84 while his widow lived on to the remarkable age of 103.

One monument, placed by an aged widow to the memory of her only son, who was lost at sea, has a full rigged ship carved on it, and this inscription: "In Heaven no troubled seas can roll."

Sometimes the oaks are filled with flocks of gray and white seagulls, and one can but recall the old superstition:

"That these were the souls that once were human,  
Who found it cheerless outside death's door;  
They pined for the seas that the suns illumine,  
The swelling surge and the sounding shore.  
So they all came back on white wings beating,  
To dream and dream o'er the purple tide,  
To call to the swift ships a greeting,  
To sail and sail, and be satisfied."

Sometimes a poor body borne in by the tide has been buried by torchlight - the saddest of all burials.

How many poor human derelicts have drifted here from land and sea to find a resting place, their grave soon forgotten - their names never carved in marble - but we trust the pitying Recording Angel has written them all in the Book of Life. Mother Earth takes them all to her kind bosom, where they sleep soundly on their dreamless pillows, where the swift Cape Fear rushes by, ever onward to the restless sea.

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MISS KATE LOVED POETRY. THE FOLLOWING POEM WAS FOUND BY HER CLOSE RELATIVE IN ONE OF HER OLD SCRAPBOOKS. NO TITLE, AUTHOR OR SOURCE WAS SHOWN, AND NO DATE GIVEN. MRS. STUART CALLARI ALLOWED ME TO COPY THE POEM TO SHARE WITH LOCAL HISTORY CLASSES.

Let me grow old  
With heart e'er fresh and young;  
A spender still of youth's first splendid gold,  
With ne'er a whit of love's warm kiss grow cold,  
Nor e'er a bit of life's sweet song unsung.

Let me grow old  
With softer music yet,  
My life a story, told and told and told,  
With something still more wondrous to unfold  
Ere I forget.

Let me grow old  
As ripe the yellowed wheat;  
For youth has been so bonny, brave and bold,  
Fain would I wrap its jewels fold on fold  
And lay them untarnished at the conqueror's feet."

The writer of the above poem may have known Miss Kate because the words so aptly describe her life. Her story has, indeed, been told, and told and told a great many times.