



# THE WHITTAKER'S BENCH

## Southport Historical Society

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### MEETING - March 22, 6:30pm

The Southport Historical Society's March Meeting and Potluck Dinner will be held on Thursday, March 22, 2001 at 6:30pm at Trinity United Methodist Church on the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Nash Street, across the street from the Post Office in Southport.

Our special guest speaker cannot be identified in advance, but rest assured that he has interesting things to tell us. (During his last visit to this area, his presence here was revealed which caused him no end of trouble!)



Project:

*Antique Show!*

### PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Our next big project is an Antique Show on May 26-27, 2001 at the Community Building.

Organizers Bobby Hennessey and Cheryl Daniel will have detailed information at the March meeting and we will, as always, be recruiting helpers! This is a traditional activity for historical societies, and will be our third one, though not consecutively. A proper venue was a problem in the past.

One project successfully completed has been fund-raising for Veteran grave markers in the three Southport cemeteries (Northwood, John Smith, and Old Smithville). Three veterans' organizations have provided flags to the South Brunswick High Junior ROTC unit, who place them on the graves of 289 veterans on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Veteran's Day.

When a recent fund raiser for permanent flag holders fell short of it's goals, SHS made up the difference from our cemetery fund. When you see the flags this spring, remember that we helped - and if you know of a veteran who has been overlooked, let us know!

We have continuing requests for an annual Member Directory such as produced by other organizations, and one will be forthcoming. However, I am aware that some people object to being included in such things for privacy reasons; we can leave you out entirely, or include name only if you wish. Let us know...

Chris Suiter

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# The Whittler's Bench Southport Historical Society

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## LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

Susan Carson, Editor



One of our members, Joy Arnold Gregory, was born and reared in Southport, and now lives at Boiling Spring Lakes. I asked her to share with us some of what it was like to be the first woman in Brunswick County to serve as Chief Deputy Sheriff and Jailor. Let's see what she has to say:

"In 1968 or 1969 I became the first woman in Brunswick County to serve as Chief Deputy Sheriff and Jailor. Southport was the county seat and the courthouse and jail were in Southport. Monday was the big day because the Recorder's Court was held that day and all the county headed for Southport.

I can remember some of the judges, Willie Joe McLamb, Cortez Ward, Earl Bellamy and Clinton Bellamy. At the time I was Deputy Clerk of Superior Court.

Superior Court, criminal and civil, were held in special months, and special terms could be held if the courts had backed up cases I can remember two City Attorneys who became superior Court Judges - Jim Bowman and Ray Walton. I was so proud of them.

Our law enforcement for the county consisted of Sheriff Ed Leonard, Chief Deputy and Jailor H.G. Radcliffe (whose wife prepared the meals for the prisoners at the jail); three deputies: Alex Gainey (middle part); and Drew Long (southern part). Aubrey Hickman and Henry Pike were constables. Justices of the Peace were Bill Sue, Lela Osborne, E.O. Rabon and Afton W. Smith, Sr. Later Skeet Gore served.

The Superior Court was Jack Brown; Assistant Clerk was Vicki Aldridge and I was the Deputy Clerk. When I left I had really been educated in the legal profession!

When I became Chief Deputy Sheriff and Jailor, Harold Willetts had been elected Sheriff. He hired his deputies but needed someone who knew the ins and outs of the court system to run the office and serve as dispatcher, so he thought of me. At the time I was recuperating from major surgery, but I said O.K. There was no slot open for office personnel, but there was one for Chief Deputy and Jailor, so Harold said to the Clerk of Court, "Swear her in". Then another problem popped up. I had to be certified as Jailor by the State Commissioner of Welfare and would have to go to school for that. I had never been off to school for my county job without Vicki, so she agreed to go to Jacksonville, NC with me and she, too, became a certified jailor, but she never would take a shift at the jail!

There was a young man that Harold kept at the jail at night because the young man's (James) mother thought the sheriff could teach him what it was like to get locked up. James had the keys to the bull pen at night and I had the gate keys when I left the jail at night, so James was there all night. We just could not hire a jailor for thirty-eight cents an hour. My pay was \$250 a month, unheard of for a woman back then, the same as that of a male deputy.

Harold had a radio in the office and at the jail, so I could work either place. We used our personal vehicles for transportation, but had a radio in each for communication. We even had uniforms, and I carried a gun. I became known as "Deputy Dog".

There's one small story I must tell you about this. I was out of uniform on this trip and there was no air conditioning in my car, and I was taking a lady to Goldsboro. On reaching the hospital I rang the bell for the elevator and the guard came down to accept the woman for lockup. Well, my hair was wind blown and my clothes wrinkled from trying to keep the woman in the car and drive at the same time. The guard took one look at me and grabbed my arm, took my pocketbook and tried to pull me into the elevator. All the time I was saying, "Not me, her" and pointing to the woman who had a smile on her face. Finally he gave my pocketbook back and I showed him my I.D. from then on, I always wore a uniform regardless of how hot it was."

Thank you so much, Joy, for sharing some of your experiences as you helped "blaze the trail" for other women to follow in the law enforcement world.

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Now in a personal vein: I will be teaching a course in Southport History at Brunswick Community College, Southport campus, beginning April 4th. I have chosen as my topic "Southport in the 20th Century". The classes will be held on Wednesday evenings, 6:30 to 8:30. If you are interested, please call the college office and sign up because sometimes spaces are limited.



## TRIBUTE TO BILL REAVES

With the death of Bill Reaves late last year, the Southport Historical Society lost a valuable member, historian and writer, as well as close friend to so many of those who were members of the Society in its earliest days.

Bill was the first person who ever gave a program for us; he was our first lifetime member; and was constantly contributing to us in the form of the Chronologies which he wrote and did not charge us for and also for special monetary contributions to the Society. He was indeed a friend to our Society up until his very last days as he continued his research and gave us items for "Whittler's Bench".

Bill was born in Newark, NJ where his father was employed at the time. However, his Reaves and Somerset ancestors have lived in the Cape Fear region since the 18th Century.

He became interested in history at a very early age and when he came to live in Wilmington he, as an employee of the NC Department of Archives and History, worked at Fort Fisher, Brunswick Town and Town Creek Indian Mound. He also became a columnist with the Wilmington Morning Star, writing popular historical columns. He had come under the spell of the history of our area and became a Southport "treasure" as he wrote "Southport (Smithville), a Chronology" in four volumes, published by our Society.

Already we have missed Bill in so many ways and will continue to do so. He loved history and wanted to help preserve as much of it as he possibly could. We shall always be grateful for what he did for us.

-Susan Carson



## ST. PHILLIPS 150th YEAR CELEBRATION

Saint Philips Parish would like to invite you to join them for their 150th year celebration, May 4-6, 2001. They will have a service at Old Saint Philips at Brunswick Town at 5:30pm on Friday, May 4th. On Saturday, May 5th, they have planned a lecture on the history of the church at 2:00pm with tea following.

On Sunday, May 6th, they have planned a program at 7:00pm that will feature Dr. Robert Cain of the Department of Archives and History.

Dr. Cain is an expert on the church in the colonial period and his talk will center on the Old Saint Philips period and perhaps the period immediately after the revolution. Other speakers will discuss the history of the current Saint Philips.

For more information, please call:

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or e-mail at  
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