

THE WHITTAKER'S BENCH

Southport Historical Society

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MEETING - May 24, 6:30pm

The Southport Historical Society's May Meeting and Potluck Dinner will be held on Thursday, May 24, 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 speaker will be SHS Member Dr. Gary Brown whose topic will be "Native Americans in the Lower Cape Fear Region."



PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Project: *Antique Show!*

Our Antique Show is progressing very well with quality dealers from all over coming in. It will be held in the ILA Hall in Southport (rather than the much smaller Community Building) on the previously announced dates of May 26-27, 2001. A separate mail-out on our quilt raffle at the Show will be sent to our close-by members; if you do not receive one and are interested, call organizer Bob Lucas at (910) 457-6723. SHS will collect from booth rentals, admission ticket sales, and raffle tickets, and our artillery crew is operating the food concession for the benefit of the cannon fund.

training session in Selma, NC, sponsored by the National Civil War Artillery Association. The training emphasis was on safety, and all of our people are now qualified. Good work, men!

We are planning to send out our Member Directory with the September newsletter. If you haven't paid your dues, you won't be in it--you know who you are (and if you don't, we're sending you a postcard!)

Vice-President Peter Wyckoff takes over for the summer; Debbie and I will see you in September!

Chris Suiter

SHS Officers & Directors

President
Chris Suiter 457-6629

Vice-President
Peter Wyckoff 457-5599

Secretary
Pat Kirkman 457-0579

Treasurer
Wolf Furstenau 278-4050

Archivist
Susie Carson

Directors
Ann Brown 457-6710
Becky Felton 457-5302
Dick Hughes 253-9877

On April 7, 2001, six members of our cannon crew (Committee Chairmen Norm Carathanasis and Sandy Toth and Gunners Bert Felton, George Baker, Elmer Norwood and Bob Plassman) attended an all-day

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LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

Susan Carson, Editor



In this day of cell phones and e-mail, I thought this article would be of interest. Our good friend, and joke teller, Henry Williams describes the controversy over telephone service to Brunswick County in - believe it or not - the 1950's!

Telephones Come to Brunswick County by Henry C. Williams

In the late 1940's the Rural Electric Authority was getting into operation, bringing electric power to rural areas. Then, to follow up with more wonderful blessings, people began talking about telephones. The organizer of the Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperative, Dr. E.D. Bishop, started the talk of telephones. As they heard the talk, more and more people began thinking about how or if. This was creating more and more interest.

By 1953, the Bell System had refused to take Brunswick County into consideration. The answer was flatly "no". Our State Representative, Mr. Harry Mintz, Jr., went to the State Utilities Commission about it and the Commission finally sent a representative to Brunswick County to take an inventory of how many people wanted telephones. There had to be a certain number of people who would agree to take a phone before a permit would be granted. We were just past the required number when Hurricane Hazel struck (1954).

The Utilities Commission then said no one would want a telephone but the man from Utilities came back for another survey and, believe it or not, there was a greater number saying "yes" than before. In 1955, the mill began to turn. Right-of-way had to be given or permission must be obtained from the land owners to build the lines.

It was then that I went to work for Atlantic Telephone Membership Cooperative, going door to door or to owners for signatures. Every owner had to be assured that they were giving only one foot of land. A lot of explaining and time was spent in this process. Most people cooperated but some flatly refused.

Under the supervision of Mr. Fred Brown as manager the system began to take shape. By 1956 construction was underway and a few miles of line were in place. These were party lines with six or more families on a line. What a mess that was! Some subscribers tried to keep the line in use all the time. In some cases teenagers would be on the line at all times of day and night.

One case I heard about was between two friends. Friend number one called at midnight and said to the other: "Get rid of your dog or put him in the house. I can't sleep." The next night his phone rang at 2:00 AM. He answered and the man on the line said, "I want you to know I don't have a dog" and the receiver went click!

Much time was spent trying to teach people how to use the telephone as more lines were put in place, the cooperative began to grow. And Brunswick County began to grow as well. Now, as I drive around the county I realize it is not the same anymore.

Susie Carson



E.B. Daniel Homestead c. 1875



The Chain of Title for 206 West Nash Street, the E. B. Daniel Homestead, is as follows:

- 04/25/1874 Grantee, Enoch B. Daniel from Grantor, Caroline Bensel; Deed book VI/497.
- 07/28/1932 Grantee C. G. Ruark and wife Eva Armstrong Ruark from J. N. Daniel and his wife Ida Daniel; Deed book 51/547. It is this deed that refers to Lot #60 of the official plan of the City of Southport, NC as "being the homestead of E. B. Daniel, deceased."
- 02/21/1984 Grantee Gilbert M. Elliott and James C. Elliott, Jr. of Buncombe County, NC, and John M. Sherrill and F. Anderson Sherrill, Jr. of 404 Ridgeway Avenue, Statesville, NC 28677 from Grantor Eva A. Ruark (by her Attorney – in – fact Margaret A Sherrill); Deed book 560/0093.
- 04/19/85 Grantee, Eugenia B. Gronroos, from Grantor, Gilbert M. Elliott and wife, Linda Elliott, James C. Elliott and wife, Ann Elliott, F. Anderson Sherrill, Jr. and wife Cummins Sherrill, and John M. Sherrill, single; Deed book 602/613.
- 11/21/92 Grantee Peter L. Wyckoff and wife Beverly S. Wyckoff from Grantor Eugenia B. Gronroos, Deed book 907/0966.

Those are the bare bones.

Enoch B. Daniel was born February 1, 1831 & died December 8, 1880. Interment was in Smithville Cemetery, Southport, NC.

There is very little to nothing in either the Southport Chronicles or The Architecture of Southport about E. B. Daniel. We do know that he was a master ship builder & carpenter, who also built houses.

From the research that we have done on our home, we know that he purchased the original lot number 60 for \$75.00 in 1874. That was a time of severe economic distress both in Brunswick County, and in the town of Smithville. It had been only 20 years since the Civil War had ended, and Reconstruction was in full swing. The people of Smithville were still reeling from the war-torn blows of having part of the war fought right on the Cape Fear River, Fort Johnson and Fort Caswell - in their own back yard. Real money was very hard to come by, and most people lived off of the land, the river, and the ocean. When goods did change hands, it was very often through the barter system. It is because of the deprived economic conditions of the time, that it is completely reasonable for E. B. Daniel to have paid the sum of \$75.00 for the lot on West Nash Street, where our house now stands.

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E.B. Daniel Homestead continued

The Deed of 1932 is from J.N. Daniel, one of E.B. Daniel's sons, and this is the Deed which refers to the property as "the homestead of E.B. Daniel, Deceased." The master carpenters, Henry J. & Joseph N. Daniel, sons of E. B. Daniel, built two nearby houses, at 216 & 214 West Nash Street for their own residences between 1889 & 1893. Further visual evidence that E.B. Daniel built our house at 206 West Nash Street was discovered in 1994, when we were having some restoration work done. The builder, working on the front portion of the house, exposed old structural timbers that had metal fittings in them that had been peened over to get them out of the way when the timbers were put in place to support the house. The metal fittings were those that might have been used in building or fitting a ship. It was our contractor's opinion that the timbers dated from the mid 19th century, and that they had been used in another application prior to use in the E.B. Daniel Homestead.

There is no doubt that the house at 206 West Nash Street was built on the 1800's Southport cottage plan of four rooms. There is no central hall, as many of the cottages have, but it was built with the front to back plan, facing the river, to trap any breezes that came off of the river. The living room faces the street, with the dining room directly behind it on the right side of the house. The left side contained a bedroom, also facing the street, with a second bedroom behind it, connected by a very small hall. With the coming of indoor plumbing, there was a bathroom added to the left side of the house at the small hall between the two bedrooms. This was accomplished by building a small box to the exterior of the main four-room plan, jutting into the driveway. There is also little doubt that the original floor plan allowed for an open breezeway between the living room and the detached kitchen. The breezeway has been closed in, in subsequent remodeling, and now the dining room leads directly into the kitchen. It is also presumed, from evidence, the dwelling was built as a one-story cottage, & a second story was later added, probably in the early 1900's. The second story is a completely self-contained apartment, with its own kitchen & bathroom. The apartment bathroom sits on top of the bathroom on the first floor for the ease of piping. Because the two bathrooms are such an integral part of the house plan, as it now stands, it can be assumed that the two bathrooms were added when the second story was built. The need for the apartment is also supported by Southport's growth in the early 1900's, and the need for more apartments, especially with the World War 1 activity going on at Fort Johnston & Fort Caswell.

The house appears to have undergone many updatings since the early 1900's, the most extensive being done by us from 1993 to 1997. Our goal in doing this latest restoration was to bring the house as much as possible back to about 1910, but with 1998 amenities.

Our love affair with this fine old Southport residence only intensifies and our next research will be to learn more about the families who have lived here, the Daniels and the Ruarks. We cherish their history and memories as much as we cherish the "warts" which they left behind.

Peter and Beverly Wyckoff
April 21, 2001



Preserving Memory

Here's some food for thought, fellow SHS members. I've re-read it many times. Seems to make good sense to me...

Peter Wyckoff

Quoted from Old House Interiors
Vol. VII, Number 3, May 2001:

"Editor's Welcome Preserving Memory "

A house burned down in Gloucester - not just any house, but the Queen Anne that stood between Beauport (that fantasy by decorator Henry Davis Sleeper, now maintained by SPNEA) and Red Roof (house of A. Piatt Andrew, noted philanthropist). The house in the middle, informally referred to as Wrong Roof, was one of eleven originals in the development of Eastern Point, a historic and storied part of Gloucester. Miss Caroline Sinkler lived there, the lavender lady in mourning dress, who entertained Henry and William James, John Singer Sargent, and other artistic luminaries.

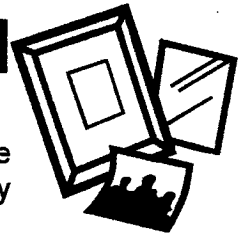
The house burned to the ground on a freezing night. Miraculously, neither of the adjoining historic properties was damaged. It's on my mind that, no matter how skillfully rebuilt, no matter the money spent, a reproduction can never replace that house. Wrong Roof is gone, and with it the echoes of footfalls on floorboards, of parties once held. The ghosts have left.

Renovation, I know, can banish tangible and intangible antiquity almost as thoroughly as a fire. This hasn't been a great concern of mine in the derelict houses I've 'rescued' and, not incidentally, remade for my own use. I do not buy museum quality houses because I have now wanted to be beholden to their history. Yet I find myself the chair of a committee that is supposed to decide how to restore (as feasible) and renovate (as necessary) a 200-year-old New England church, one with religious, civic, and architectural significance. I knew what to do with my houses: Get rid of the rats. Put back the porch and update the systems. Stay in the period but don't obsess over authenticity, which is unknowable. Make room for cowboys and Legos.

At the church, there is serious history to consider. The sanctuary has its Federal proportions but an 1860's Renaissance Revival pulpit; the addition of 1948 was ill-advised, inadequate and inaccessible, but it too is over 50 years old. . . . In any case, I worry, if we do too much, the ghosts may depart.

Memory is what distinguishes humanity from all the other critters, and memory is embodied in our buildings. Especially, perhaps, the neglected ones.

Patricia Poore - Editor-in-Chief



Members As Patrons

The Spring Antique Show is all set for May 26-27. As a member of SHS, you are invited to become a PATRON for this event. A \$10.00 contribution entitles you to one free entry (a \$3.50 value) plus your name will be listed in the program. Due to printing deadlines, please write a check now and send it to the address below. The check should be made out to "The Southport Historical Society".

Any questions...

please call me at 454-4133.

Thank you! And do come enjoy the show.

Carolee Morris
Sponsorship Chairman
6497 Walden Pond Lane
Southport, NC 28461