

THE WHITTILERS BENCH

SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Vol. I, No. 1
March 4, 1976

P.O. Box 487
Southport, N.C.

***** For many generations the Whittlers Bench on the waterfront has ***** been a favorite spot for relaxing, gossiping, telling tall tales or "just whittlin'." The historical society newsletter, too, is an informal gathering place where members may get acquainted, exchange ideas and share information. And so it is appropriate that Southport's most familiar landmark become the symbol of our newsletter.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello! My name is Eleanor Smith and I am president for this wonderful year of our newly organized Southport Historical Society. I want to welcome all of you and hope that you are going to enjoy our society and its four meetings during the year. We have many projects in mind and hope that you will give us your thoughts and ideas as time goes on.

Other officers for the year are Vice President, Susie Carson, and Secretary-Treasurer, Pauline Swain. Those serving on the Board of Directors are Jimmy Harper, Afton Smith and Bob Thorsen, together with the named officers.

Again, welcome! And I'll look forward to seeing you at our next meeting on April 22.

*Eleanor Smith

"REVOLUTION!" - A PREVIEW

On Sunday, March 7, there will be a preview showing of excerpts from the new outdoor drama "Revolution!". Lew Hardee, author and originator of the play, will be here for this performance, along with the librettist, the director and two of the leading actors. Showtime is 2 to 4 P.M. at the Community Building, and the public is invited.

SOCIETY PLANS IN PROGRESS

Following a meeting of the Board of Directors on February 24, efforts are now being made to have our Southport Historical Society incorporated as a non-profit organization so that we may receive tax deductible contributions.

Already you have probably received a Statement of Purpose of the society, but in short this purpose is to get together those people of our community who are interested in history and its preservation and to have programs and other projects that will help us learn more about our history.

A constitution and bylaws have been prepared and will be presented for your approval at the regular meeting on April 22. We want this to be an organization where the views of all the members are made known and taken into consideration in shaping our plans and policies.

We will have a most interesting program for the April meeting.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

On March 8, March 15 and March 22 you will have an opportunity to participate in "The American Experiment," a series of Bicentennial forums sponsored this year by the North Carolina Library Association.

Each program features a noted guest speaker followed by a panel discussion. Dr. Hugh Holman of UNC-Chapel Hill will present the March 8 lecture. More information about these forums is available at the Southport-Brunswick County Library.

Meeting time is 7:30 P.M. at the courthouse. Be sure to attend!

SOCIETY PLANS... (continued)

Bill Reaves, whose historical research and feature articles appear regularly in the Wilmington Star-News, is to be the guest speaker.

Also during the year we hope to have Janet Seapker of the N.C. Division of Archives and History with us to speak on the preservation of old houses. Other possibilities include a workshop in genealogy later in the year. * Susie Carson, Vice-Pres.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

Our next historical society meeting is April 22. Arrangements for the meeting are not yet complete, but you will receive an announcement.

A properties manager is needed for "Revolution!" If you are interested, contact Connie Ledgett, producer.

HISTORICAL JOURNAL TO BE PUBLISHED THIS YEAR

At the end of the year we hope to publish the first issue of the Southport Historical Journal.

This journal will contain articles, documents, photos and other material about Southport's history.

Much time and hard work will be necessary to produce a really good publication. We want the first issue to be our very best effort --- and YOU must help!

Perhaps you have ideas for subjects to be covered in the articles. Maybe you would like to write an article or collect material for someone else who is writing an article. If you can type, run errands or make phone calls, you can help during the final stages of the project.

Some guidelines for research and writing will be prepared soon, and future items in this newsletter will bring you up to date on some of the materials available. The editor will be happy to assist you at any time. So begin thinking about how you can help with this important project.

SPOTLIGHT ON HISTORY

During the Civil War the Confederate Signal Corps established a station just north of Southport (Smithville) at Price's Creek Light House to guide blockade runners entering the river at New Inlet.

A soldier at the signal station in 1864 wrote:

With my usual good fortune, I have met here several of the kind of friends I made two years ago in Wilmington. They are spending the summer here in Smithville and have introduced me to all the nice people in this truly pleasant village. Insomuch that every day since I have been here various servants, bearing white-covered dishes of delicacies, or fruit, or books, with notes of compliments from the ladies might have been seen wending their way toward the Signal Quarters where I reside.

The young man who wrote this letter was Sidney Lanier, the great American poet and writer.

(This letter is in the collection of Wilmington Public Library.)

ON THE SHELF

The Journal of a Lady of Quality, by Janet Schaw. Ed. by Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews: New Haven, Yale University Press, 1939.

Just before the American Revolution, a very charming and vivacious young lady traveled from Scotland to the Cape Fear area. Her journal gives a detailed account of her adventures here as well as her stay in Lisbon and the West Indies.

Janet Schaw, a devout Loyalist, has much to say about the political sentiments of such men as Colonel Robert Howe and Colonel James Moore. In fact, Miss Schaw has much to say about everything she sees and hears during her visit -- from the monstrous alligators to the appalling lack of good English tea.

The editors' notes on people, places and events add much valuable historical information to Miss Schaw's lively and unique account of colonial life in this area.

(This book is in the Southport-Brunswick County Library)

THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

If you have an announcement or some item of interest to the society, let us know. Contact the editor or one of the officers about any information that you would like to have in the newsletter.

We welcome announcements, comments and requests from any group in the community about anything that should concern our members.

Letters to the editor will also be printed as space permits.

Kathryn Carson, Editor
P.O. Box 115, Southport, N.C.
Phone: 457 - 6940

If you have not already become a member of the Southport Historical Society, we invite you to join us. Mail the application below or bring it to the next meeting.

SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(please print clearly)

Check type of membership:

Name: _____

- Annual \$ 2.00
- Contributing 5.00
- Business, Civic and Professional 15.00
- Life 100.00

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____

Return to:
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