



SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P. O. BOX 115 • SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA 28461

April 18, 1988

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APRIL MEETING: Our Society will hold its regular meeting on April 28th, 1988 at the home of Don and Betty Johnson, 515 E. Moore Street. This will be a covered dish meeting. All members please bring your favorite dish.

Our speaker will be Mr. Glenn Kye of Winnabow. He will speak to us on the part Brunswick County played in the Civil War.

BOARD MEETING: Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 26 at President Paul Sweeney's house at 7:30 PM.

PRAYER TIME: All of us are praying for a speedy recovery for our Archivist Librarian, Susie Carson. Susie has had surgery and is now recuperating. HURRY AND COME BACK TO THE SOCIETY, Susie. We miss you.

BURIAL SITES CONSERVATION NETWORK SURVEY: The National Trust Southern Regional Office of Charleston, SC is undertaking a project to establish a network for the exchange of information on burial sites protection and management within its area of ten Southern States. Our Cemetary Chairman, Abbie Bitney, is filling out the survey concerning information about our cemeteries.

"CLIMBING THE FAMILY TREE,": Edgar Keal, one of our members, was interviewed by Clifton Daniel of the Star News concerning his extensive work on tracing his family roots. The article appeared in the Star News on Sunday, April 10, 1988. An interesting account of part of Edgar's research was given.

JAIL YARD BEAUTIFICATION: Ed and Frances Allen have been busy as bees down at the Jail. They have been planting flowers and doing necessary yard work. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK, Ed and Frances. Let's all help them with the beautification project.

DONATION: Mr. & Mrs. Steve Reynolds and Ms. Nan Lapan have donated humidifiers for the Jail. We are appreciative for these gifts and we say a big "THANK YOU."

H E L P !!!

H E L P !!!

THE SOCIETY IS STILL IN NEED OF AN AIR CONDITIONER.

TWIGS, BRANCHES AND TWIGS

Please write to these people direct if you have information to Share. Remember to enclose a stamped, addressed, envelope for a reply. Abbie Bitney, C.G.R.S., Genealogy Chairman.

I am looking for information on a CHARLES FULLWOOD, from Brunswick County. Born about 1760 - 1770 and died between 1830 and 1840. Any information on who his wife was or where he is buried would be appreciated. Mrs. Doreen Holtz, 12801 Witherspoon Road, Chino, CA 91710.

Need information on ROBERT POTTER, died 1783, Brunswick co.,NC. Served in American Revolution, wife ANN WILLETT received pension and guardianship of their five children. postage refunded. Dorothy P. Munson, 2275 Aaron, B-103, Port Charlotte, FL 33952.

Will exchange information on the following Brunswick county Ancestors: SHERIFF JOHN GAMBIER SCULL, died 11 Oct. 1811; ELEANOR SCHULL (sister of John Cambier Scull), she 1st married WILLIAM VERNON, 2nd THOMAS NEAL, SR; ELIZABETH ANN VERNON (dau. of William), married 1st ELKANAH ALLEN, JR, and 2nd WILLIAM WILLIAMS; MART CATHERINE SCULL, married JOHN VILLS VERNON in 1805; NANCY ANN GOTT VERNON married 1st EPHRAIM VERNON, 2nd JAMES RICHARDS, and 3rd THOMAS NEAL, JR. Robert P. Carter, Route 1, Box 360, Bolivia, NC 28422.

Searching for ROBERT POTTER, died in Revolution 1783. Wife ANN WILLETT. Children: Mary, born CA 1775; Robert, born 1776, Lydia, Samuel, born 1779/80. Was he the son of ROBERT POTTER who died 1757 in New Hanover co., NC. Postage Refunded. Dorothy P. Munson, 2275 Aaron, B-103, Port Charlotte, FL 33952

My great-grandfather was DAVID WILSON PRICE and we know his father died when he was young and that he was born in 1828 in Brunswick Co., N.C. There is a grave for JAMES PRICE and his wife, ELIZA, as well as some other PRICES in the Old Southport Cemetery. Is this the proper family?

Iris V. Jeter, 221 Cambridge Circle, Danville, VA 24541.

I am trying to determine the father of CORNEULIUS WINGATE, who resided in Robeson and Cumberland Counties. He appeared as a juror in Brunswick County in 1782. He died in Fayetteville, NC. He married SUSANNAH JERNIGAN, daughter of JESSE JERNIGAN of Wayne and Robeson counties, NC. Cornelius's daughter, ATHALIA, married ROBERT WELLS BROWN of Smithville, and their daughter, JESSIE WINGATE BROWN, married Dr. LORENZO FRINK. If anyone can offer any information I shall be grateful.

Mrs. Virginia S. Oliver, 12100 Bushey Drive., Wheaton, MD 20902.

# The GARDEN PAGE

by Flora Greensleeves

## GARDEN PROGRESS REPORT

With the return of spring weather, the Heritage Garden Committee has begun work in earnest on the Benjamin Smith Memorial Garden at the old jail site. The first major task was to till a section about 3 feet wide along the fence and sides of the building, cutting through decades of thickly matted roots and weeds. The soil below proved to be much better than expected so that planting could begin immediately. Thanks to a number of plant donations and the willing hands of committee members, we now have a noteworthy collection of typical Southport garden plants which should make an attractive display by midsummer. The next step will be to place edging along the newly developed beds in similar fashion to those constructed along the front of the building before the opening ceremonies last fall. Mulch or ground cover will also be added as soil holders in the areas of the roof drip-line. Committee chairman Frances Allen is working on a diagram of plantings to serve as a permanent record of the garden's development. We hope to reproduce this diagram along with a complete plant list as a handout for garden visitors.

### PLANTS DONATED FOR THE GARDEN PROJECT

Our efforts to collect plants that are representative of old Southport gardens have been greatly assisted by a number of recent donations. One of the most extraordinary gifts came from James Talley who sent us seeds of Four O'Clock plants grown at Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, near Charlottesville, Virginia. These are the authentic type of Four O'Clocks that would have been grown in Southport, too, from colonial times until the advent of the modern "improved" varieties (see "Plant Highlights" article on the following page). These are complemented by old-fashioned hollyhocks and chrysanthemums provided by Frances and Ed Allen. Bill Dunn contributed a sweet shrub (Carolina allspice) bush and a yellow jasmine. Seeds of a single-flowered red camellia, one of the earliest types, were given by Mary McKeithan. These have been planted in a cold frame and we are eagerly waiting for them to sprout into sturdy young seedlings. Wiley Russell has contributed thrift, periwinkle, chrysanthemums, and creeping euonymus which have been growing for many years in the yard of his Nash St. house. We have also been able to obtain a number of plants from seeds, cuttings and divisions of specimens found at the Drew-Platt House, the Bell-Clemmons House, the Woodside (Ft. Johnston Hospital) property on Bay Street, and several other properties in the oldest section of town. A complete list of plants now growing in the Heritage Garden is shown below.

### HERITAGE GARDEN PLANT LIST AS OF APRIL 1988

Lantana (Lantana camara)	Snowdrops (Leucojum aestivum)
Yaupon (Ilex vomitoria)	Tawny daylily (Hemerocallis fulva)
Crape Myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica)	Oxalis (Oxalis rosea)
Sweet shrub (Calycanthus floridus)	Spiderwort (Tradescantia virginiana)
Hydrangea (Hydrangea macrophylla)	Thrift (Phlox subulata)
Bridal wreath (Spirea)	Chrysanthemums (Chrysanthemum)
Baby's breath (Spirea)	Periwinkle (Vinca minor)
Roses (Rosa)	Cast iron plant (Aspidistra elatior)
Althaea (Hibiscus syriacus)	Climbing sweet pea (Lathyrus latifolius)
Flowering quince (Chaenomeles speciosa)	Primroses (Oenothera speciosa)
Chinaberry tree (Melia azedarach)	Four O'Clocks (Mirabilis jalapa, M. longiflora)
	Hollyhocks (Althaea rosea)

# PLANT HIGHLIGHTS

FOUR O'CLOCKS  
Marvels of Peru  
Painted Ladies

Mirabilis jalapa and  
Mirabilis longiflora



Four O'clocks are natives of Mexico, Central America and the West Indies. Seeds were first brought from Peru to Spain and from the West Indies to England in the late sixteenth century. Several of the early European plantmen called this strange new plant a marvel because of the variations in flower color that could be seen from one plant to another and even among the flowers of one individual plant. The Elizabethan herbalist John Gerard was convinced that the flowers on a single plant were a different color on each day of the blooming season. When the great Swedish scientist Linnaeus gave these plants their official scientific name, he called them Mirabilis, a Latin word meaning strange or wonderful.

By the eighteenth century, two types of Four O'clocks were being grown in American gardens. Mirabilis jalapa, so called in the mistaken belief that its roots were the source of the purgative medicine jalap, is our familiar Four O'clock with its flared trumpet flowers in solid or variegated colors. A similar species, Mirabilis longiflora, has a more elongated flower and a sweet fragrance. Thomas Jefferson, who included both types on his plant list for the gardens at Monticello, noted in his diary for July 18, 1767: "Mirabilis just opened, very clever."

To most modern gardeners these plants are "Marvels of Peru," a name which alludes both to the plant's origin and to its color variations, or as "Four O'clocks," referring to the plant's habit of opening its flowers in late afternoon. The blossoms do, in fact, tend to open around four p.m. on a sunny day, or earlier in cloudy weather, and remain open until bright sunlight prompts them to close again. Four O'clocks grow easily from seeds and thrive in almost any soil. Perennials in their native lands, they are usually grown as annuals in North America. Here in the South, the plant is often "self-sowing," that is, seeds which fall from the plant in summer will often grow into new plants the following spring. Occasionally Mirabilis jalapa will also develop a tuberous root that can be stored over winter and then divided to make new plants. Colorful, unusual, and easy to grow, Four O'clocks have been a "marvel" enjoyed by gardeners for four centuries.

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## SPIDERWORT

Trinity Flower, Widow's Tears, Moses in the Bullrushes

Tradescantia virginiana

This species of spiderwort is native to North America and belongs to the dayflower family, Commelinaceae. Its scientific name honors John Tradescant the younger who brought the plant to England from Virginia in 1637. It bears the common name Spiderwort because it was once believed to be a remedy for the bite of a particular spider. "Wort" is the Middle English word for plant or herb.

Long after its medicinal use was discredited, spiderwort has continued as a popular garden plant. Being a native of the temperate regions, it is well adapted to most American gardens and thrives in average soils. Its distinctive 3-petaled flower appears in shades of blue and lavender with prominent gold stamens. Although each flower lasts only a day, a new one appears quickly to provide continuous bloom.

In addition to its popularity as an ornamental plant, the spiderwort has received considerable scientific attention. Because it has relatively large chromosomes and its cell structure shows clearly under the microscope, this species has been used many times in the study of cells and genetics. In addition, the humble spiderwort has achieved fame as a living radiation detector. In the late 1960s, scientists discovered that even low level radiation causes blue cells in the stamen hairs to turn pink and, furthermore, that the rate of color change indicates the amount of radiation. This change can be seen under a microscope in only a few days after exposure. Now at several locations in the United States, Europe and Japan, spiderworts are being grown near nuclear power plants and processing facilities as an early-warning system for radiation escaping into the atmosphere.

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