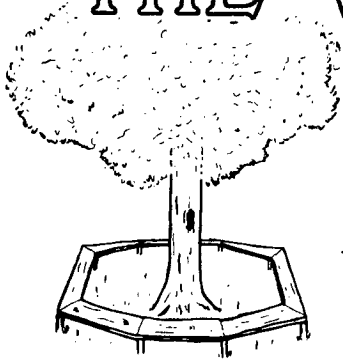


THE WHITTLERS BENCH



SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

501 N. Atlantic Ave. • SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA 28461

JUNE 4, 1987

THE FOURTH IS COMING! - and plans for our participation in it will be the subject of the Society's meeting on Thursday, June 11, at the Old Jail on Nash Street. This will be a 6:30 dinner meeting and all members are urged to bring a covered dish and join us in this important session. Drinks will be provided. The Nominating Committee and the Constitution Committees will make reports.

CEMETERY ENDOWMENT FUND: Our members should have received a letter from our Cemetery Committee Chairman, Mrs. Abbie Bitney, regarding the establishment of a Cemetery Endowment Fund, the income from which is to be used for major maintenance, repair and conservation of the historic cemeteries in Southport to supplement the routine care of the cemeteries by our City Government. Please bring with you to the meeting a list of names and addresses of other individuals or companies interested in local history or civic improvement whom we might contact for participation in the Cemetery Project. Several donations have been made and the Fund is off to a good start. A permanent record book will be obtained for keeping a list of all who give to the Fund. Gifts may be made in Memory Of, in Honor Of, or just because one is concerned and caring about the preservation of our city's past. The list will also be published in a later issue of Whittlers Bench. We solicit your help.

TRIP TO TRYON'S PALACE: At 8:30 A. M. on May 10th some 18 Society members and friends, with 21 AARP members, met at the Southport City Hall for a bus tour to New Bern for a tour of Tryon's Palace and Gardens. The Palace is truly a beautiful building in a lovely setting and is furnished throughout with fine antiques. What a wonderful restoration - one worthy of a visit by anyone interested in history, antiques or architecture.

OTHER TRIPS: Would you be interested in the Society conducting other History Trips? If so, make your suggestions to the President and perhaps something can be arranged.

REALLY ANCIENT HISTORY: The N. C. Maritime Museum at Beaufort, N. C. was the site last December of the N. C. Fossil Club's annual meeting and Fossil Fair. Some of the oldest fossil deposits of the North Carolina coast are found in the area between Wilmington and New Bern. Over forty million years ago the ocean covered our coastal plain leaving the remains of mollusks, crabs and fish in the bottom material which formed limestone deposits known as Castle Hayne marl. This marl is used in driveways, parking lots and macadam roads. Quite large sharks' teeth are sometimes found and children often find smaller teeth in the asphalt. Some have been found in asphalt on Caswell Street by the grandchildren of Jack and Jean Fairley.

ANOTHER PLEA: If you have not already renewed your membership and paid your dues for 1987, please do so now. Our year is half gone and it will soon be time to ask you to pay for 1988. You can pay for 1987 and 1988 at the same time if you desire.

COPIES OF WHITTLERS BENCH NEEDED: The Society's Archivist needs copies of the following issues to complete her file: October 1985, January 1984, April 1984, all four issues of 1983, and July of 1982. If you have any of these and desire to keep them, then please loan them to the Society long enough for copies to be made. Extra copies of many of the issues are available if you want to give them to prospective members.

HISTORY TIDBITS
by Susie Carson

(The following is an article found in the Wilmington Chronicle for Wednesday, July 9, 1845)

SMITHVILLE - FOURTH OF JULY

"Why should the good people of Wilmington (I might include the Carolinas) so frequently, en masse, at risk of life and limb and emptying of purses into the bargain, migrate so far abroad for health and recreation, when they can have it for almost turning around, at Smithville? To which, from the Capitals of the Carolinas (both in the center of their respective States), persons can be transported, now, in about 24 hours and from either metropolises in less than half the time. And then that a place to get to, at so little expense! Such air, such society, such accommodations, I, who have been somewhat a traveller have ner yet, before, had the good fortune to meet with such happy combination. A place, shaded, and yet open to the sea - retired and yet, from the daily arrivals of the Steamboats, possessing nearly all the advantages of the city with almost none of the inconveniences; no mosquitoes, no sand flies, no severe diseases, no dust, no din, no confusion; I had almost averred no blight, no mildew, ever disfigures the fair face of Smithville. A smiling Village, indeed!

' Sweet Smithville! loveliest village of the sea,
Fond memory, often shall return to thee.'

"But here, we have the 'Fourth of July' at Smithville - for Smithville we can tell ye, is as patriotic a little place as in all the land. And would be about the last to be backing out from a hearty celebration of the 'Glorious Fourth'; and so how she did make her bells ring again, and her cannons roar, as if the very Mexicans were in sight and colors were flying from every big and little mast head, and the dogs did bark, and the children scream to usher in that day. At the hour appointed in the morning, the procession marched from the Garrison to the Church. A fine show did 'Uncle Sam's men' make of it, as did the 'Thirteen Young States' - Sweet sisterly band, may they indeed be united, and every happy and prosperous in their union.

"The Declaration of Independence was read by Mr. R. M. McRackan, with fine tone and emphasis, and the excellent oration of Capt. Taylor, of the U. S. Army, was delivered in a manner calm and dignified. The Patriotci songs of the choirs seemed to be quite inspiring. Old men felt like 'shouldering their staffs and showing how fields were won', and young men like proving the temper of their maiden blades upon the Country's foe. The Garrison dinner at the Fort went off, in prime style. How could it otherwise on the good old cold water plan!

"But what a whirring and whizzing and sound of pipe and drum and tabor have we here! 'The Excursion boat is coming!' rings out simultaneously from a thousand voices. 'She's here!, She's here!' With pennons streaming, and flags flapping, and colors flying, and she appearing herself as if really concious of a holiday - - at least she's in a broad grin! for a dense mass of darkies on deck, are all at once displaying their ivories and 'turning up de yellor ob der eyes.' What a motley crew she disembaques! 'Black spirits and white', blue spirits and grey; and by the capers some of them cut we fear a due of rather undue proportions of 'the ardent'. What a pity that our noble Steamers do not sail under the Temperance Flag. Then there could be little reprehensible to the severest moralist in a scene, once a year, of Holiday hilarity like this; but it is to be regretted exceedingly, that there were cases there degrading to humanity. Oh why, when there is anything proper or pleasant or profitable going on must Satan be allowed to come. Also with his attendant train, disorder, discord and degradation? The great cause of this evil, (I cannot mince the matter), THE BAR should be removed altogether, ere these excursions be unattended with danger, or unalloyed in their enjoyment. The attraction of the evening

fireworks at the Fort, thinned 'the ship's company' of some of the most riotous. One of the 'half-seas over' ones I heard reciferating just as the boat pushed off, 'I won't no how, leave them there Firey rigamarole things, they'll be after showing off at night.' Then away we went from pleasant Smithville, the obliging Captain giving us a sail by the 'new Fort', and the 'Light-house' and affording us the sublime spectacle of the broad Atlantic, which here begins to spread itself into its grand immensity.

'Arriving in town in the cool of the evening, just before the 'sober-livered' time, we were ushered in by a merry feu de joie , while a multitude of happy mortals shouted out our welcome back to Wilmington."

(signed) A Return Passenger
Wilmington, N. C., July 5, 1845

(The above is copied from the Chronicle verbatim, including spelling, punctuation etc.)

On July 2, 1845, the following advertisement had appeared in the Chronicle:

"Excursion to Smithville

Steamboat will leave one of our lower wharves for Smithville at or about 10 o'clock
A. M. on the 4th inst.

Fare \$1.00 including collation.

John A. Taylor, S. B. Agent"

If you don't know what a "collation" is, ask an historian!