



THE WHITTLERS BENCH

Southport Historical Society

501 North Atlantic Avenue
Southport, North Carolina 28461

VOLUME XX, NUMBER ONE JANUARY 1996

REGULAR MEETING

The January meeting will be a celebration of our Society's twentieth birthday! It will be held at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, January 25, 1996, at the Masonic Lodge on Nash Street in Southport (across the street from the Post Office parking lot). There will be a cake (of course!) and other refreshments; Susie Carson and other charter members will lead the reminiscences. Bring your own favorite memories--hope to see you all there!

NEW OFFICERS FOR 1996

President - Cheryl Daniel
Vice President - Chris Suiter
Archivist/Historian - Wolf Furstenau
Secretary - Francey Wertz
Treasurer - Ben Wilson
Director - Ray Bitney
Director - Elbert Felton
Director - Peter Wyckoff

TIDBITS OF NEWS

Charter member Nonie Rogers unfortunately will miss the birthday party--she is recovering from surgery, and reported to be doing well. We'll miss you, Nonie!

The Southport Maritime Museum oral (and video) history program, in conjunction with the Historical Society, is active again. To date, twenty-two persons have participated, with several more scheduled. Of course, this is only the beginning, with the wealth of subjects and subject matter in our area. Of particular concern is that many of the most interesting people are not in good health and, sadly, we have lost some before we could reach them. Please contact Chris Suiter, 457-6629, if you or family members would like to participate, especially if there are health concerns. We who conduct this program are always appreciative of the incalculable value of these interviews to the families--don't we wish that the technology had existed to record our ancestors!

MEETING DATES FOR 1996

January 25 - Birthday Party
March 28 - Potluck Dinner with speaker Brookie Preik
May 23 - Potluck Dinner with speaker Wolf Furstenau
July 4 - Open House at Old Jail
September 26
November 22 } (To be determined)
January 23, 1997 }

1996 DUES

Begin the year by renewing your membership in the Southport Historical Society.



NAME _____

\$10

INDIVIDUAL

ADDRESS _____

\$15

HUSBAND/WIFE

\$25

SUSTAINING

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

\$150/200 LIFE

\$ _____ DONATION

MAIL TO: Southport Historical Society
501 North Atlantic Avenue
Southport, NC 28461



Here is another interesting and informative newspaper article from the files of Bill Reaves, Wilmington, NC.

A VISIT TO SOUTHPORT IN 1920.

WILMINGTON DISPATCH, 2-19-1920.

D.W. Manson, of Wilmington, wrote the following story of Southport:

"If your imagination has a habit of serving you vividly and correctly then you will be interested in this story of Southport, North Carolina.

"Let us commence our pilgrimage then at Wilmington, where we board a steamer of the same name and set out on a voyage of some 30 miles down the Cape Fear River, a beautiful scenic trip lasting about three hours, when we arrive about noon and tie up to the little dock protruding out into the Cape Fear harbor, one of the finest harbors on any coast, and with Fort Caswell, a couple of miles distant on an island-like peninsula, plainly visible on clear days across the water, this forms the beautiful outlook as a water front to Southport, the little city by the sea.

"With the briefest possible reference to the late war, there were 12,000 or more men stationed at Fort Caswell during that period and Southport was favored by being the only settlement near called upon to offer hospitality to those men who through the emergency were forced to leave their homes and serve under the rule of the camp. This gives some idea of what this little community of about 1,000 whites and half as many colored, was called upon to do as its contribution to the entertainment, comfort, benefit and uplifting morale of the men in the uniform located so near its gates and who were glad, when temporarily liberated from the rigid rule and order of the strenuous tactics and mingle with the hospitable life of the citizens of the town.

"Now, let us go to our boarding house. This large, square two-story frame house with the 20-foot wide porches upstairs and down and all around the house was built 135 years ago and many of the country's foremost statesmen have registered and enjoyed the home hospitalities afforded here, among them our own President Wilson, who penned his name on the house register in the youthful days of his life. This is Miss Kate Stuart, owner of the Stuart House. She was born in this room over 75 years ago, and while her hair is silvery white yet she is quick of step, clear of eye and keen of intellect, and during the days you will spend in her presence you will be impressed with her utmost, kindly desire to please, be called upon to follow promptness at meal times, and you will feel yourself grow into the religious atmosphere which constantly pervades her presence, and if you are alert, you will come nearer than ever before to the real love of God if you try to emulate her spirit as she succeeds in the attainments of a most lovable hostess, and thus you have an example of the fine hospitality of the largest percentage of Southport people.

"On our way to the Southport Army and Navy Club we pass along unpaved streets over a hundred feet wide and among and under the branches of live-oak trees, thick of trunk, many rearing their tops more than 80 feet in the air and their spread being fully as wide, the trees on either side stretch across the wide street and mingle their evergreen boughs together, forming a perpetual green arch across the way the year round. But now we arrive at a grove of these monster oaks covering three or more acres of ground - a natural park with most of these massive trees estimated at over 200 years old, and here on the edge of this wonderful natural grove stands the club. Through the gate we pass over the broad walk and up to the steps of a frame building onto a broad portico 50 feet wide, the roof of which is 30 feet above the floor and is supported by four large, stately white pillars, between which, over the entrance to the building, swings majestically, folding and unfolding in protecting ripples in the balmy southern breeze, a 30-foot American flag, the only flag that has never seen defeat.

"Now we enter the building into a small foyer, where we are greeted by the sight of a large white sanitary drinking fountain, true it is that it is new to the building, yet it is not the first one we have ever seen. At our right the ladies' rest room, also a broad, carpeted staircase leading to the lodge room and the spacious library and reading room above, and to our left the executive office equipped in the most up-to-date fashion for the handling of the clerical problems in the conduct of the club. The writing room of spacious proportions is just behind this entrance, provided with every necessary requirement, where anyone may enter and in quietude and privacy sit down and write to friend, home or sweetheart.

"In the rear of this is an "L" shaped room, large and commodious, where willow chairs, tables, current periodicals make it comfortable for one to stop in at any time and play a game of chess or checkers or sit in restful comfort before a native wood fire blazing cheerfully in the big, white fireplace. Attached to and off to the right of this main building is the new addition and was recently dedicated with fitting ceremonies as "Memorial Hall," in commemoration of the brave Southport boys who donned the nation's uniform in her defense. This wing of the building is capable of seating an audience of more than 200 and is provided with a stage and dressing rooms on either side, admirably suited to concerts and amateur theatricals.

"Another recent addition to the main building and in the rear thereof is the canteen, billiard and game room and men's room, fully equipped with shower baths, wash basins and all the convenient requirements. At the side of this section of the building is found a broad, covered porch, the entire length of the building, where are found a large number of easy chairs, porch swings, rockers, where, during long summer evenings, many so minded can lull into comfortable positions and watch an entertainment or listen to a concert in progress on the floor of the unique pavilion in the side yard of the club, which is also a recent addition and most useful one to the rest of the activities. In the yard in front of this pavilion are out-door benches, capable of accommodating four or five hundred people, and these provide an ideal and complete equipment for warm weather, out-door entertainment.

"Though the town is small, yet this center would do credit to a larger city. Praise for the completeness and perfect appointments of it is not vested in one person alone, however. The project was made possible in the beginning by the local Masonic lodge, who, owning the building, readily consented to its

use for the noble purpose in hand and donated it free for the period of the war. An excellent executive committee made up of some of the leading business men of Southport, together with the representatives supplied by the War Camp Community Service, also deserve much credit for the successful carrying out of the complete program and the planning of the schemes which have invariably had happy and successful outcomes. Then there are the citizens themselves. Wonderful has been the cooperation in the matter of assisting in the outline of programs in the care and comfort of the men in uniform.

"And now we are up to a perpetual Southport Community Service, and the continued use of a community center. It is hoped that the lights of a community center will continue to burn, the glow of the four lights on the massive columns which stand as guardians of cheer and good fellowship at the portals of the center will continue to light the way of the wanderer and beckon him on to come in, sit awhile and partake of the spirit of joy and pleasure "on tap" perpetually, and they arrange and carry out an ever-varying program of real community service. New life is beginning to spring up on every side. Two committees are arranging separate plays for the near future, to be participated in by young and old; a minstrel show rehearsals are in progress, a new Boy Scout master has enthusiastically declared himself, and men and women are preparing to form the various committees necessary to make up a complete program for the future.

"We wish the perpetual Southport Community Service the greatest and best success."

D. W. MANSON.