

THE WHITTLER'S BENCH

Southport Historical Society

Volume XXVIII, Number 4

September, 2004

September Meeting

**September 23rd
at
Brunswick
Community
College
Supply**

**Catered Dinner
\$9
Call
Peter Wyckoff
457-5599
for reservations!**

SHS Officers & Directors

President	
Peter Wyckoff	457-5599
Vice-President	
Pat Kirkman	457-0579
Secretary	
Karen Knighton	454-8018
Treasurer	
Wolf Furstenau	278-4050
Historian/Archivist	
Marilyn Lessen	457-0004
Directors	
Musette Steck	253-3855
Bob Lucas	457-6723
Cathy Fravel	457-4794



PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPH

The rededication of the Old Jail on July 4th was perfect in every way. First, it was hot, as only Southport on the 4th of July can be hot, with a crystal clear blue sky and salubrious breeze. Thunder threatened before and after but nary a drop fell from the sky.

The speakers were excellent and brief, a far cry, I'm sure, from the original dedication in 1904. Those days were well known for oratory.

And the enthusiastic audience of slightly more than 100 friendly folk enjoyed the ceremony and the opportunity to tour the building.

Our deepest thanks to Bob Lucas and his committee who planned and executed it all so well. What would we do without all of the hard workers?

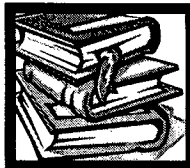
Peter Wyckoff



HELP WANTED!



The Board at its most recent meeting adopted a new editorial policy for Society publications. This was done to assure more thoroughly that there would not be any errors to be caught *after* printing. We again turn to our members for help. Will anyone with an editorial background, even if it was long ago, please call either Karen Knighton – 454-8018 or Peter Wyckoff - 457-5599 or 523-0266. This is a job that only from time to time becomes intense, leaving lots of time for those many other commitments which we all have.



BOOK SALE

Get out your Christmas lists, draw a line through robes, slippers, sleds, and ties, and replace them with BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS !!!!

At the September membership meeting, we will have a wide selection of our history publications available and many will be at reduced rates. Add in the member's discount for some fine Christmas shopping.



LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

Susan Carson, Editor

This article was written by Katy Almirall of Oak Island while she was a student at South Brunswick County High School and earned Katy one of the 2003 Susan Sellers Carson awards. Congratulations to Katy and good luck as she continues her studies at UNC- Chapel Hill this year. It is heartening to see young folks take a serious look at our history and this article provides each of us with an important lesson that is relevant for our current troubled times.

The Impact of Brown Vs Board of Education in Brunswick County Katy Almirall

In 1954, the doctrine of "separate but equal" of Plessy vs. Ferguson was declared half true. There were separate facilities for blacks and whites, but they were not equal. This monumental decision of the case Brown vs. Board of Education shook the nation, comfortable and safely nestled in the separate black and white spheres. The decision of the Supreme Court was a strong enough wind to stir even peaceful Brunswick County.

Brunswick County, like the rest of the United States up to this pivotal time in history, had separate schools for blacks and whites. Many one-room schoolhouses were scattered across the county. The Southport Post Office on Nash Street currently stands where the white high school did before it was destroyed by fire in 1969. Present-day Southport Community College was the Brunswick Training Center, a black high school. As prosecutor Thurgood Marshall showed in the Brown case, the black schools were inherently unequal. High school teacher Barbara Scott, former student of an all black high school of Brunswick County recalls the event of receiving new textbooks. The used books had names written in them that she and her classmates did not recognize: the names of the former white student owners. Students also had to cope with poor transportation. There was no bus system, so many times out- of- town students would stay with friends in Southport. Nevertheless, the black community valued education highly. The teachers were well-respected and active members of the community. As Colonel Gore, current member of the Brunswick County School Board states, "We [the black community] were made to feel like lesser beings. Our schools made us determined to prove this wrong." It was a struggle because they were not getting a fair share of the resources. Ironically, the white schools were not much better! May Moore, a current Brunswick County commissioner, recalls the poor state of the white middle school where she taught in 1962. "All we had was one unabridged dictionary and a bookcase of discarded textbooks for a library." Because of poor financing, the whole Brunswick County School System was lacking.

The wording of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, to integrate "with all deliberate speed," created many conflicting opinions on how quickly to integrate. Brunswick County prolonged integration indefinitely under North Carolina's state pupil assignment law, which allowed parents to dictate where their children would be educated. This legal slinking provided a way to preserve the status quo. A few black teachers were selected to work at the white schools during Token Integration of the mid-sixties. Although the Freedom of Choice Plan of 1965 opened the doors to all schools, only a few blacks opted to go to white schools and none of the whites to black schools.

The bomb was finally dropped in 1968 when the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina ordered the Cape Fear region to integrate. May Moore remembers the difficulty the Brunswick County School Board had deciding on a gradual plan for integration. Instead, it was decided that the schools would be totally integrated for the school year 1969-70. To add to the confusion, the white Southport High School had just burned down. Because of this misfortune, a bond finally was approved that would allow for the building of three new high schools: North, South and West Brunswick. While waiting for these schools to be built, the black Southport Training school became the high school for both races, and was renamed the Brunswick County-Southport High School. Grades 1-8 were housed in churches, the Baptist Assembly and a few remaining buildings around old Southport High School.

Many difficulties arose during this turbulent time. Some school board members and teachers resigned. Bombs threats and anonymous phone calls strained taut nerves. Rumors circulated, such as talk that only black students would attend the Junior-Senior prom. Discrimination showed its ugly face at innocent school picnics, where some whites would refuse to eat food contributed by African Americans. Graduation for the class of 1970 was canceled in Southport out of fear of racial violence. Some parents felt their children were cheated out of a decent high school education because of the turmoil in the school system and the general attitude of educators to "not push the students too hard".



TREASURER'S REPORT

May-July, 2004

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Book Sales	2,672.69	Book Purchase	66.90
Cannon Income	550.00	Cannon	421.25
Donations: Bricks	6,700.00	Dues & fees	65.00
Other	148.99	Heritage Day	23.80
Dues, SHS	115.00	Heritage Walk Stones	125.00
Interest	5.29	Insurance Premiums	162.00
Plaque Sales	200.00	Meetings: Hall rental	75.00
Sales Tax Collected	17.21	Newsletter	205.00
Shipping	20.00	Office Supplies	121.53
Tax Refund	66.01	Old Jail Restoration	2,594.11
Throws Sales	32.71	Postal Service	139.90
Div Inc	20.19	Quarterly Tax Return	3.60
		Tax	30.74
		Website	118.83
TOTAL INCOME	10,548.09	TOTAL EXPENSES	4,152.66

SHS BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



Recent SHS Board actions include:

- Received an update on the sales of the commemorative bricks (details in Treasurer's Report).
- Regretfully accepted the resignation of Director Shirley Wilson
- Received approval of a \$5,000 grant from the NC Department of Parks and Recreation.
- Agreed to hold a special session to adopt a budget for 2005.
- Approved a new publication policy that includes creating an editorial board.
- Agreed to find a member to assist with public relations work.
- Agreed to take a petition to the memberships regarding planting a tree at the Whittler's Bench in conjunction with the Maritime Museum.



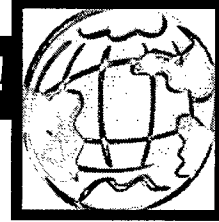
LEAVING AND COMING

It was with much regret that the Board accepted Shirley Wilson's resignation as a Director at the recent Board meeting. Shirley was into the first year of her second term of office and was always a valued participant and willing worker. As her final task on the Board, Shirley took the responsibility of finding her replacement.

She recommended to the Board the name of Cathy Fravel. Thank you Shirley!

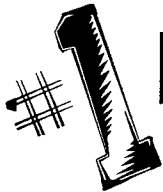
Cathy has accepted the invitation to fill out Shirley's unexpired term, and is looking forward to joining with the Board as we are looking forward to her energy and dedication. She is the former chair of the Christmas Tour of Homes and has served as a committee person for a number of years. Welcome Cathy!

SHS GOES WORLDWIDE!



Yes, that's right, anyone in the world can discover Southport Historical Society on the Internet. We now have our own website:

www.SouthportHistoricalSociety.com. Establishing a website has been a longtime goal of your executive board and we've accomplished it! We invite you to take a look at the site and give us your opinions. Please know that this website represents your organization and we welcome any comments, concerns or suggestions for making it even better. We are looking forward to making our website a source of good information and another way of attracting members to the society. We will appreciate your input. You can e-mail the board from the website or directly at shs@ec.rr.com.

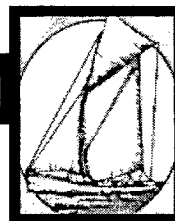


TWO FIRSTS

For the first time, Brunswick Community College in Supply will be the site of Southport Historical Societies' September 23 meeting. The program, "Back to School Way Back", will celebrate Southport's High Schools before the Brown Decision in 1954 and the founding of BCC in 1979. Alumni of the all black Brunswick County Training School and the all white Southport High School will highlight their academic and extra curricular experiences in the 1940's to 1960's. We will meet in the Student Center which is in Building A, the main Administrative building.

The meal for this program will be catered for \$9 per person. Please call Peter Wyckoff at 457-5599 for reservations or send a check to Southport Historical Society by Friday, September 17. As usual, the social hour begins at 6:00 pm, but for the first time, the Society will have many of its' 17 volumes on sale at a reduction of 20 %. The available books include: Architecture of Southport; Joshua's Dream; Long Beach - A N.C Town; Cemeteries of Southport; Chronologies of Southport.

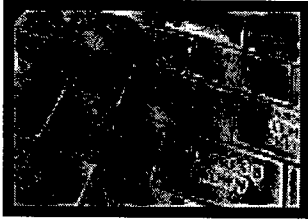
NC MARITIME MUSEUM



The North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport
Adult Program Schedule

These programs are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm. The programs are free but registration is requested (wonderful refreshments are served!). Call 457-0003 or email the museum at madeline.spencer@ncmail.net

- 9/21/04 Mrs. Susie Carson
River Pilots: Living and Dead
Museum Classroom
- 10/19/04 A Colonial Apparition - True story originally written by James Sprunt
Enjoy local people "acting" out the parts
Museum Classroom.
- 11/16/05 Dr. Chris Fonvielle
Blockade Running at Southport
Community Building



THE OLD JAIL PAVERS

The pathway from our past to our future is getting wider and longer. People from the Piedmont of North Carolina as well as from New York to Florida and from Washington to Maryland have bought pavers. Our membership as well as local friends and businesses have been very supportive. The goal to install Heating and Air Conditioning in the Old Jail is within sight.

Have you returned your order for a paver? It's not too late to add yours to the list! The Visitor's Center has order forms and, of course, order forms will be available at our September 23 meeting at BCC. September 30 is the cut-off date for orders. Don't be conspicuous by your absence!

CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR 2004

"Open Your Door" Opportunities Available!



Your Home Tour Committee is already working toward the upcoming home tour on December 11. Our first and foremost challenge is finding homeowners willing to open their homes for our annual fundraiser. We've had quite a few "no's" so far, only one "yes" and a couple of weak "maybe's". Our goal is to secure eight homes for the tour, so you can help by opening your door if your home is in the historic area of town or talking to your friends, family and neighbors who have homes we could tour. This has always been a positive experience for the homeowners and it is certainly looked forward to by hundreds of people who enjoy this special day in Southport. Remember, not every room has to be open and we have folks who will be happy to help with decorating if that's a concern. The Society greatly depends on the funds generated by our annual tour to support our projects, grant scholarships and promote the preservation of historical Southport. Call any member of the committee if you will invite us in or have a lead for us to pursue. We would love to hear from you – we need to hear from you!



LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE cont...

Despite these difficulties, Brunswick County managed to avoid many of the racial problems experienced by other parts of the country. There were no riots or major racial violence as in neighboring New Hanover County. Most people did not retreat to single-race private schools. The consolidation and growth of the school system pushed Brunswick County to look beyond its borders to the other school systems who were leaps and bounds ahead, to improve the quality of education for all children. New programs were implemented: art, music, and guidance counseling. Chorus director James Frink and band conductor Ralph Parker of the black community brought their excellent music program to the newly integrated Southport school, sharing this creative opportunity with the white students. African Americans began taking more positions of responsibility and respect in the community. In 1972, Tilghman Bowen became the first African American to be appointed to the Brunswick County School Board. Frank Randolph was the first black to be elected to the school board in 1974, serving a four-year term.

As a South Brunswick High School student of the 21st century, I have trouble imagining that only two generations ago, racism and intolerance were flagrant, displayed by people ranging from school children to the governor of North Carolina, William Umstead, who declared the Brown vs. Board of Education decision as "most disappointing". Brunswick County emerged from the struggle with feet planted firmly on the path to true equality.