



# THE WHITTLES' BENCH

## Southport Historical Society

Volume XXVI, Number 5

November, 2002

### CHANGE OF VENUE

The SHS has -- wonderfully -- outgrown its meeting place at the Trinity Methodist Church Fellowship Hall! Unless otherwise planned, all of the future meetings will be held at the Southport Community Building. This change begins with the November meeting.

### SHS Officers & Directors

President  
Peter Wyckoff 457-5599

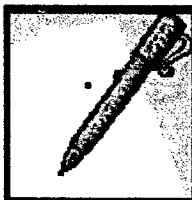
Vice-President  
Pat Kirkman 457-0579

Secretary  
Karen Knighton 457-8018

Treasurer  
Wolf Furstenau 278-4050

Historian/Archivist  
Marilyn Lessen 457-0004

Directors  
Ann Brown 457-6710  
Shirley Wilson 278-7430  
Dick Hughes 253-9877



### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Where has summer gone? Wow, did it ever fly by. And here we are looking at Halloween, Thanksgiving, and the SHS Christmas Tour of Homes. Yes, it's that time again, and your committee has been hard at work to make this a very special tour. All of the homes, this year, will be on Bay Street, and the tour itself will be enhanced by the participation of other community groups. There will be entertainment on the waterfront, costumed hosts, and the flotilla. Tickets are still \$10.00 in advance and \$15.00 on the day of the event. Remember that only 1200 tickets are printed; be sure to get yours early.

Work continues steadily on the Old Jail. Several more volunteers have joined the ranks but more are always welcome. Your Executive Board has met with several heating and air contractors and invited their bids. We are still evaluating options to provide the best system for the unique old building. We are also working with the City to underground the utilities, and install all new electrical in the building. Scraping of all the ironwork on the second floor continues followed by chemical treatment to slow / halt the formation of new rust.

And speaking of working with the City -- be sure to take a drive or walk by the Indian Oak downtown. In a cooperative effort of the City and the SHS, a new and very attractive fence has been placed around the old tree to protect it from too many loving hands. Thanks to Dick Hughes and Jim Henry.

If I haven't done it before (and if I have I'll repeat myself), I want to thank the Executive Board for all of their cooperation and hard work. The monthly meetings have jammed packed agendas that are dispatched very professionally. And every one of the members works in between on various tasks to keep us moving forward. We will be losing two dedicated members; Dick Hughes has completed his term as a Board member and the nominating committee has put forth the name of Cinda Lewis to replace him. The membership will vote on that at the November meeting. Ann Brown has also submitted her resignation as she and Gary are planning to move to Tennessee to be closer to children and grandchildren. The Board will appoint a replacement to fill her unexpired term; volunteers ??? -- please !!!

*Peter Wyckoff*

### BYLAWS AND CONSTITUTION

Your Executive Board has approved several changes to the SHS By-laws and Constitution recommended by the review committee. These will be voted on by the membership at the November meeting.



"The Whittler's Bench" prepared by Becky & Bert Felton, Ann Brown  
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## LOOKING BACK - THE HISTORY PAGE

**Susan Carson, Editor**

Since we are in the midst of a political campaign, I thought this article written in 1896 by John T. Drew to the Editor of The Wilmington Messenger would be of interest. Mr. Drew has some interesting ideas about war, marriage and family, the role of newspapers, as well as politics! Clearly the financial woes of Brunswick County are nothing new. Note that Mr. Drew was 57 years old when this was written. This article is from the files of Bill Reaves.

### Letter to the Editor:

I was born in Brunswick County, North Carolina, nine miles from old Smithville, now Southport, then and now the county seat of said county, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 1839, of poor, but honest and highly respectable ancestors, this being the poorest spot in that State, county or civil district and also the poorest township, range or section of the State or county. I was schooled about nine months at intervals in the public schools of that noble old North State.

I was the first volunteer from that county although opposed to secession. I soldiered through the unpleasant situation as much as my physical condition would permit, Dr. F.W. Potter and other eminent medical men furnishing certificates for me to remain at home with a widowed mother and several dependent brothers and sisters. I was surrendered or disbanded at Raleigh, NC, being a remnant of Col. J.G. Burr's command of State Guards from Wilmington, with Capt. Billie Bellamy's company. In our camp at Raleigh the Hon. Governor Z.B. Vance was a daily visitor. On Gen. R.E. Lee's capitulation, we were disbanded, and I tramped from Raleigh, via Fayetteville, with three other comrades to my mother's home, on Town Creek, seven miles from your hospitable city. I lived, stayed, and existed two or three years in that innocuous destitution, and, to relieve the situation, married.

'Twas not long for me to see for myself the necessity of a more congenial clime and more productive soil. I came to this, Hickman County, Ky., arriving at Columbus on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 1869. I have studied and practiced various occupations. I was admitted to the practice of law in 1873, having been burned out in my mercantile business. I have since performed all kind of labor with these hands, and am now old and cannot write, but during all vicissitudes of life I have never followed any creed, faction, ism or side track from the main line of true Democracy, and today I am an honest sound money Democrat, with men of national reputation, as McCreary, Carlisle, Cleveland and many others whose principles are undying and unchangeable.

I left many relatives and friends in the Old North State and am surely grieved to hear and know that some have gone to the Populist and some to the Republicans .... Judge D.L. Russell, I see, is likely to be Governor. Old Brunswick County should unite her Democratic forces and attend to that little matter. He was a friend of mine, but a Republican.

I read your paper with much interest and hope to see you give more space to men of your locality and especially from the poor old county of my nativity. Write an item from old Fishing Creek near the Wescott and Drew settlement and from old Lockwood Folly. Make your paper replete with news and in advance of the old regimen which once invaded your locality.

Respectfully, JNO. T. DREW

## IN SYMPATHY...

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Don Johnson on October 12, 2002. Don was not only a life time member and a two term president of the SHS, he also designed and helped craft the Bicentennial Quilt which hangs in the Southport Visitors Center, developed the first walking tour of Southport, and compiled the book Southport Secrets. One of Don's last tasks for the Society was to review the revisions for Southport Secrets. *Our most sincere condolences to the family.*

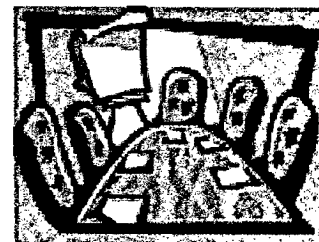


## SEPTEMBER MEETING



The November meeting will be held on the 21st and will feature John Golden, folk singer from Wilmington, with music of the history of the Lower Cape Fear. John's beautiful voice and interesting tunes will be a pleasure for everyone. Pot luck dinner is at 6:30 followed by a short business meeting, and the program. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE MEETING WILL BE AT THE SOUTHPORT COMMUNITY BUILDING AND IS ONE WEEK EARLIER THAN USUAL DUE TO THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.**

## SHS BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



- Jail: Welding, heating and AC bids are being received and reviewed. Special meetings are being set as needed to meet with contractors to discuss their bids. The board approved seeking professional advice on the structural integrity of the building before the H/AC is installed.
- Ann Brown resigned her board position and a new director will be appointed to fill the remainder of her term.
- Don Johnson completed a review of *Southport Secrets*. Following additional reviews it will be reprinted. A dedication page to D. Johnson will be included.
- SHS agreed to participate in Communities in Schools as an Adopt-a-School partner.
- Tour of Homes committee continues its work for the Dec. 14 event.
- SHS joined the Chamber of Commerce.
- Scholarship applications have been delivered to South Brunswick High School.
- SHS agreed to work with UNCW Archives to have our historical videotapes placed in their files.
- SHS agreed to publish a history of the USS Gill written by a UNCW student.
- SHS Board agreed to hold its general meetings at the Community Building in 2003.



## CEMETERY ENDOWMENT FUND

During a board meeting on January 21, 1987, Abbie Bitney, chairman of the Cemetery Committee, suggested starting a trust fund for cemetery maintenance, with "interest used for repairs, and the principal untouchable." On April 2, 1987, the *Cemetery Endowment Fund* came into being with an initial investment of \$25. It is now known as the Abbie

Bitney Cemetery Endowment Fund.

In a letter to members of the Historical Society, Abbie Bitney emphasized that the monies the fund generated were to be used "for the preservation and professional restoration of some of the old markers and monuments in the Old Cemeteries of Southport." She goes on to say that "the interest ONLY from the Cemetery Endowment Fund will be used for major maintenance and repair . . . The capital of the Fund will NOT be spent, so preservation of the Old Cemeteries of Southport will be financially secure."

The board of directors and officers of Southport Historical Society have honored this commitment, and the Fund has since grown to over \$5,000. Total earnings over the years from the Fund were \$2,875.81 at year-end 2001. To my knowledge, only one draw has been made from the earnings. In February 2001, \$672.00 was made available to the Veterans of Foreign Wars to purchase flag holders for graves in the cemetery. The Fund continues to grow from donations and an annual transfer of profits from the sale of the book *Cemeteries of Southport*.

**Wolfgang Furstenau**