



THE WHITTLERS BENCH Southport Historical Society

PO Box 10014
Southport, North Carolina 28461

Volume XXIV, No. 2 March 2000

Thursday, March 23 - Potluck Dinner and Program
6:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Doshier Cut-off and Highway 211
"Twentieth Century Wilmington" - Harry Warren, Assistant Director, Cape Fear Museum. This outstanding program has been given both at the Museum and as one of the UNCW luncheon events. Harry has assembled a wonderful collection of photographs covering the entire century. Don't miss it!

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

The City-appointed Historic District Study Committee is continuing to meet frequently to establish a locally designated Historic District appropriate for Southport that has force of law. So far (end of February) we have had three weekly meetings, with a fourth one scheduled. Interest level continues to be high on this very complicated issue. My sense of the 14-person Committee is that we will have a minimalist approach with the least individual homeowner restrictions that State law permits--it is unlikely to include color or window treatment provisions.

As an indication of the complexity, you all know that Southport has had a National Register Historic District for some twenty years. This is different from the local District mentioned above; it was approved by the National Park Service, not the State, and has no force of law for local protection. Also it was based on the plat of the first one hundred lots laid out by Joshua Potts in the 1790s, and may have been outgrown by 1800! Consequently, in a parallel move with the City committee, the SHS Board has appointed Elizabeth Hansen to lead an effort to expand the National Register District to include many houses and neighborhoods of historical significance outside of the 1970's "boundary." (The National Register rule is fifty years, and that will include 501 North Atlantic, a real "Landmark" occupied by our nationally-recognized Archivist Historian.)

National Register designation does not restrict homeowners in any way, but does provide them with the possibility of significant State and Federal tax credits for approved renovations and restorations. Thus the two programs work hand-in-hand; the National Register benefits the homeowner, and, equally important, the local designation provides the protection to the neighborhood and the city.

If you are interested in being included in this extension or are available to help with the selection and documentation, please call Elizabeth Hansen on 457-5920. (She has had personal experience with the tax credit aspects, and is also in charge of our House Plaque program.)

Our hearts go out to former SHS President and Life Member Paul Sweeney on the recent loss of his wife Jimmie. My mother always said that there would be stars in their crowns in Heaven for care-givers on this Earth. Paul will certainly have his share.

"Looking Back" The History Page

Susan Carson, Editor



More and more it seems that our little town is destined to become "Developers' Heaven" and will no longer be the sleepy little fishing village that we have loved so long. I guess that means we who are interested in our history must just keep "looking Back".

For this issue we have two submissions having to do with the fishing industry, the first with menhaden fishing and the other with the charter boat or pleasure fishing. These two industries have meant so much in our past.

I asked member Walt Dempsey to submit his article because of his deep interest in the subject which he hopes to write about in a book. If any of you can think of information or people to whom he could talk, please call him at 457-5236.

I asked member Joy Arnold Gregory to write something about her parents' involvement with the charter boat business and it is the second article.

I think you will enjoy both of these. Now how about someone writing an article about the shrimping industry?

MUNNAWHATTEUG IS THE SUBJECT
BY Walter Dempsey

Southport's main chore for 60 years was catching these things; named by the Algonquian and Narraganset Indians. The Pilgrims were shown how to cook, eat, take oil from and use the remains as fertilizer.

I can't pronounce it, either, but these fish were also known as menhaden, moss bunkers, and to a large degree, pogies.

The remains of one of the rendering plants is located near the airport bridge, the other recently razed to make way for housing at the end of Fish Factory Road. Prior to the dredging of the Inland Waterway, some steam-driven boats rendered the fish aboard, others went to a plant near what is now Sunny Point. Around 1930, when the Waterway came into being, that plant was taken down and shipped to Maryland.

At the peak of the Southport activity, old newspapers indicate that the ten boats in operation took 250 to sea, two plants took 30 each and ancillary activity would total 400 people in this village of then 1700 people.

Even as the population grew to over 2000, this along with other fishing boats, needless to say Southport's forte was fish. The end of this was not the dearth of fish, but the fact that cheaper fertilizer and oil was being imported from Peru to the United States. In the

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early 60s synthetic fertilizer was being made from pipeline methane. Anhydrous ammonia was the product, a big hit in the Midwest corn and wheat fields. The trend drifted to the coast, Europe and South America. This was a busy time in my chemical engineering career. You are still using the product on your lawn and in your garden.

I was born and reared in Islip, N. Y. which is very similar to Southport. city people called us clam diggers and hicks. We called them subway rats. I think we had a better deal.

Fishing on Long Island was different. We had long liners, trawlers, impounding nets, clam dredges, etc. Menhaden boats were in Brooklyn and would sometimes wander out our way. This was in the 30s and up to World War II.

MY MOTHER, THE "SHORE CAPTAIN" by Joy Arnold Gregory

My mother, Bertha Ann Fulford Arnold, was a "Shore Captain" in the Charter Boat business.

She was born in Brunswick County in 1906. She married my father, James Samuel Arnold, in 1922. Her father, William Fulford, was a crew member on the steamer "Wilmington". James was the son of a Cape Fear Pilot that was credited with saving the boat and crew of the "Uriah Thomas", written about in "The Chronicles of the Lower Cape Fear" by James Sprunt. His mother was Annie Elizabeth Gore and Bertha's mother was Rebecca Ann Clemmons.

Mother always had one ear glued to the telephone just in case someone was to call to make reservations for their boat, "The Kiabah" to go fishing on a shoal trip or an off-shore one. One must remember that back in those days Southport was just a lazy little fishing village by the sea with no industry except menhaden, shrimping and the charter boats.

Questions were asked and many answered: Were there certain dates open, were the fish biting, how is the weather, can we get reservations for sleeping, who can you get to fix us a lunch to take out on the boat. Also, can you find a boy to clean our fish and have the truck to bring ice so we can take them home. And, please have Art Newton meet the boat to take pictures of our catch. We would like to see them with a write-up in the State Port Pilot. And on and on it went.

Thanks to the charter boat business, Southport was soon well known as "The Fishing Capital of North Carolina". Mother became a good weather watcher. If the wind changed to northeast she knew it would be rough and no fish would bite. So then it was to call and undo the plans or let them decide whether or not to come on. If they cancelled, they would always take other dates. She spent most of her time on the telephone talking and taking care of their business.

"Looking Back"

She also took reservations for two other boats, the "Joy" and "Davis Brothers". One belonged to her son-in-law, the other to her brother. The season was very busy from June through August, but only on weekends in fall and spring. Nothing in the winter.

Mother lost her beloved James in January 1956 and her son-in-law sold his boat. Their clientele was turned over to her brother, Fred Fulford, and his "Shore Captain".

During the late 1930s, 1940s and until 1955, charter boat business was an income for many in Southport. The business continues today, but not like it used to be. Many smaller boats came on the market, and many people did not need the services of a captain for their boats.

But I will say, anytime you have a Charter Boat Captain, there is always a good "Shore Captain" at the helm on the shore. Bertha Fulford Arnold really earned her Captain's Stripes and enjoyed every minute of it! She passed away in 1996 at the age of 89.

*** * * State Historic Sites * * ***

The grounds of Brunswick Town / Fort Anderson (371-6613) are open 10:00 to 4:00 for the month of March, as is Fort Fisher (458-5538), with Sunday hours being 1:00 to 4:00. In April the schedule will shift to 9:00 to 5:00 during the week and 1:00 to 5:00 on Sunday.

NOTE: The Visitor Centers at both sites remain closed due to renovation as we prepare this newsletter on March 1.

cut here and send form with your check

Annual Membership – Have you paid for 2000 ?

Join the Southport Historical Society and receive the newsletter on a regular basis

individual	\$10	student	\$2	business/organization	\$15
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Southport Coverlet

Remember: your member discount is available only on items purchased from the society

This beautiful coverlet was commissioned by the Southport Historical Society and created by *We Love Country*. It is 100% cotton, two-layer, Jacquard woven in the U.S.A., preshrunk, colorfast and machine-washable. It is handsome and practical, measuring approximately 48 x 68 inches, and fringed on all four sides.

The design captures the history and spirit of early Southport, as seen in old photographs taken many years ago. Depicted are the Brunswick County Courthouse, the Pilot obelisk at the old cemetery, the Ft. Johnston Garrison House, the Masonic Hall during World War I, the entrance (1912) of the Southport Public Library, the Old Jail, the early school (1904) which is now an art gallery, Doshier Memorial Hospital, St. Philip's, Trinity Methodist, the old Pilot tower, Prince's Creek light, Old Baldy on Bald Head Island, the Indian Trail Tree and the Historical Society logo. The perfect gift for family members and friends both near and far, it captures special memories and will become an instant keepsake.

This unique, custom woven coverlet is available in the following classic colors: Williamsburg Blue, Hunter Green and Cranberry Red, all with Natural as a second color. The price is only \$50.00. Member discount, 10%.

Please enter the desired quantity of each color:

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Old Jail

Old Jail Report: You may not notice it from the outside but the restoration has been making great progress inside. Gerry Heller and Tom Kerns prepped the trim on the new twelve windows and will be ready to finish when the patching of the plaster is done. Irv Green is seeing to that beside many other odds and ends...like finishing removing the old iron from the deteriorated outer bars on the front doors, priming the trim and helping Angelo Gibilaro, the brick layer, replace all the missing bricks knocked out to accommodate the heating system put in early 1970 when the jail was used by the sheriffs department. Angelo has all those ugly holes re-bricked and the restoration moves a little more forward. Mary and Wolf moved the books into the new jail with help from Bert so most of the first floor is cleared and can now be restored. American Fish Co. lent us their man and cutting torch to remove the iron from the front doors...Irv and I couldn't have done it without them. To do some of the more obvious improvements and restorations- finish the fence, replace windows on first floor, and replace the bars on the front doors- we will need some serious funding and until that comes we will be tending to details on the inside. The fence has to be done before we improve the flower beds and landscape. This would really make another salient improvement to the appearance but it involves a \$1000 we don't have. There are many, many hours of labor needed to restore the inside! It doesn't cost a lot but it's very labor intensive and so far our labor pool has been, let's say, very modest at best. Anyhow, the restoration goes on every Tuesday morning for sure and usually several other days. So, if you're in need of a worthwhile activity or need a tax write-off add the Old Jail to your agenda. If you are inclined to help at other times either call Irv Green or me (Bob Wojda) and we will gladly let you in.

Bob Wojda, Restoration Committee

Southport Historical Society Officers and Directors

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"The Whittlers Bench" June Wojda / Becky Felton / Bert Felton / Pauline Swain / Marilyn Lessin

The Book Page

Southport Historical Society is actively engaged in publishing books dealing with the history of the lower Cape Fear. Works listed below are available for sale by the Society, and at book stores in the area.

Architecture of Southport, by Carl Lounsbury. Southport Historical Society, second printing 1966, 62 pp., soft-cover. \$15.00. The styles of old Southport homes are described and illustrated.

Bald Head, by David Stick. Southport Historical Society, 1998 reprint, 143 pp, ill., hard-cover. \$14.95.

Cap'n Charlie and the Lights of the Lower Cape Fear, by Ethel Herring. Southport Historical Society, fourth printing 1995, 120 pp, ill., soft-cover. \$10.00.

The Cemeteries of Southport, compiled by Dorcas W. Schmidt. Southport Historical Society, 1983, 94 pp., soft-cover. \$8.00. A unique reference book listing names of those buried in the cemeteries of Southport and environs.

A History of Brunswick County, by Lawrence Lee. Published by Brunswick County, Bolivia, North Carolina. 1980, 279 pp., ill., hard-cover, \$18.30.

A History of Fort Johnston, by Wilson Angley. Includes index. Published by Southport Historical Society, in association with the Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1996, 150 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$10.00.

Guns for Cotton, by Thomas Boaz. Published by Burd Street Press, 1996, 86 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$9.95.

Joshua's Dream, a history of old Southport by Susan S. Carson. First printing published by Carolina Power & Light Company in 1992, second printing published by Southport Historical Society, 1994. 168 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$15.00.

Long Beach, A North Carolina Town: Its Origin and History, by Wolfgang Furstenau. Published by the author in Long Beach, N.C., 1995, 2. printing 1997, 364 pp., ill., hard-cover, \$17.95

Reminiscences of Wilmington And Smithville---Southport 1848-1900, by Dr. Walter G. Curtis. Published by Southport Historical Society, 1999, 88 pp., ill., hard-cover, \$12.95.

Southport (Smithville), A Chronology, Volume I, 1520-1887, by Bill Reaves. Published by Broadfoot Publishing Company: Wilmington, North Carolina, 1978. Second edition 1985, 129 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$15.00.

Southport (Smithville), A Chronology, Volume II, 1887-1920, by Bill Reaves. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, North Carolina, 1978. Second edition 1990, 324 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$20.00.

Southport, North Carolina, A Chronology, Volume III, 1920-1940, by Bill Reaves. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, North Carolina, 1996, 248 pp., 46-page index, ill., soft-cover. First edition. \$12.00.

Southport (Smithville), A Chronology, Volume IV, 1941-1970, by Bill Reaves. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, North Carolina, 1999, 281 pp., ill., soft-cover. 16.95.

Southport Secrets, compiled by Donald K. Johnson. Published by Southport Historical Society, Southport, NC. 1998, 88 pp., ill., soft-cover. \$12.95.

Note: Membership entitles you to purchase these books from the Society at a 10% discount.
Please include \$2.00 per book for mail orders.