

# southport historical society

## Whittler's Bench

### Spring 2019



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### Parker's Perspective



Several Southport Historical Society Board members and volunteers are working to create a new display in the Garrison House depicting "Life in the Garrison", featuring memorabilia from SHS Lifetime Member Debbie Mollycheck. Debbie's father grew up in the Garrison House. Her grandfather, Franto, worked for the U.S. Lighthouse Service and oversaw the lights along the lower Cape Fear and the Intercoastal Waterway for many years.

This effort brings back memories for me when my family lived in the Garrison House when I served as Commander at the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) from 1995 to 1997. While federal troops were withdrawn from Fort Johnston in 1881, the installation itself remained federal property and served several purposes from that time until the government transferred the property to the City in 2006. We used to boast that Fort Johnston was the smallest and longest serving active federal installation in the United States. I'm not 100% sure that was true, but we were never challenged on the veracity of the claim.

My wife, Debbie, and I and our two daughters arrived to take up residence in the Garrison House in July 1995, six months after the old USO/Community Building burned down next door. While we were moving into the Garrison House on a hot and humid July day with furniture and cardboard boxes strewn around the front room, a local visitor from a nearby home on Bay Street arrived and introduced himself. He was pleased to welcome us to Southport and was anxious to get to know us.

After Debbie hustled to make some sweet tea, he asked me where I was from. I told him I grew up in an Army family and we moved all over the country as well as several countries overseas but was familiar with North Carolina as we had spent a few years at Fort Bragg. He seemed satisfied with my answer and then turned to Debbie and asked where she was from. Debbie answered, "I'm originally from St. Louis, Missouri." The visitor rubbed his chin a bit and then Debbie blurted out "SOUTH St. Louis!" It turned out that we became fast friends with our early visitor and his wife.

Our younger daughter, Valerie, graduated from South Brunswick High School in 1996. Later, during Spring Break from Wake Forest University in 1997, Valerie gave a tour of the Garrison House to two college friends from Wilmington when nobody else was at home. At one point, they decided to look at the view from the small balcony over the front porch. When the door closed behind them, it automatically locked preventing them from coming back into the house. (cont. p.2)

## Parker's Perspective (cont. from Page 1)

So, there the three girls were, trapped on the balcony with nobody home. Luckily, after frantically trying to open the door they finally waved down to a passerby and asked the stranger to please come into the house, come up the stairs, and let them back in!

We were honored to host the very first Naturalization Ceremony during the NC Fourth of July Festival in 1996 on the Garrison Lawn. This new event for the Festival was the brainchild of Lois Gable who coordinated the event for many years thereafter. The very first guest speaker was the high-profile Bill Bennett, former Secretary of Education under President Reagan and the first Drug Czar under President H.W. Bush. Howie Franklin, former USAF Chief Steward on Air Force One and director at the Brunswick County Airport, was able to gain a commitment from Bill Bennett whom he had known during his many years flying on Air Force One.

The timing was perfect as Mr. Bennett and family were vacationing at their home on Bald Head Island over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. So, prior to the start of the ceremony, in order to escape the heat, we invited the Bennett family into the house. While chatting, it became apparent that Mr. Bennett wanted a photo opportunity with the family. I suggested the small balcony over the front porch that was decorated with red, white, and blue bunting. The photo turned out great and somehow found its way into a spread in Newsweek a few months later that featured Bill Bennett and hinted at his potential Presidential aspirations.

Category Three Hurricane Fran visited the Cape Fear region in September 1996. Hurricane preparation included boarding up all the windows at the Garrison House. I wanted to remain at MOTSU throughout the storm to monitor events at the terminal. With the Garrison House boarded up and the likelihood of losing power with no generator back-up, Debbie accompanied me to MOTSU to ride out the storm.

The storm roared all night long but the next morning was calm and beautiful which belied the destructive impact that occurred in downtown Southport. After surveying damage at the terminal, I drove back to Southport to inspect the Garrison House and our family housing at Fort Johnston (buildings that house the NC Maritime Museum today were formerly duplexes that served as family housing for MOTSU soldiers and their families).

Damage throughout Southport was extensive, but I was able to pick my way down to the waterfront. As I crossed the intersection at Atlantic Avenue and Moore Street, I was pulled over by the Southport police. Indeed, it was the Police Chief himself, Bob Gray. We knew each other and he seemed surprised that it was me behind the wheel. I asked what was wrong and he advised that I had just run through a stop sign on the corner of Atlantic. He pointed back at the intersection where we both saw the stop sign lying on the ground. He grinned at me and said that he hoped things were OK at Fort Johnston and we both drove off.

These are just a few of the many vignettes that make up our memorable time as residents of the Garrison House. To this day, we feel very fortunate to have had this experience in this wonderful, riverfront town. It is gratifying to see the Southport Historical Society involved in the continued development of the Garrison House in concert with the City's vision for its public use.

## SHS Upcoming Events



- [Second Tuesday Talk:](#) with Lori Sanderlin “*Opportunists or Confederate Heroes: Blockade Running Commerce and the Economic Plight of North Carolinians during the American Civil War*”, April 9, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [Southport Historical Society Scholarship](#) Submissions Deadline, April 19, 2019
- [Ticket Sales for “Savor the Sweet Life” Southport Kitchen/ Dessert Tour](#) at the [Southport Spring Festival](#), Friday and Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, Franklin Square Park, also on our website and at the Ft. Johnston-Museum and Visitor Center while supplies last.
- [Gullah Geechee Culture](#), Heather Hodges, Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, April 25, 2019 @ 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [Ribbon Cutting for New Exhibit “Life at the Garrison House”](#), April 26, 2019 @ 11 am, Garrison House
- [Second Tuesday Talk](#) with Randy Jones “*Quarantine Station to Hospital*”, May 14, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [SHS General Membership Meeting](#), with Wilbur D. Jones, “A WWII Hero – Henry Churchill Bragaw” May 23, 2019 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Southport Community Building. Potluck Dinner.
- [Second Tuesday Talk](#) with Liz Fuller, “*Prohibition North Carolina-style*” June 11, 2019 @ 10:30 am - 11:30 am, Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library
- [Savor the Sweet Life Kitchen Tour](#) June 15<sup>th</sup>, historic downtown Southport followed by Book Signing, Bob Surridge, author of *Hominy Muffins and Oyster Pie – The Lives and Recipes of the Ladies of Southport in 1907*, June 15<sup>th</sup>, Keziah Park



**SAVE THE DATE!**

***Savor the Sweet Life***

**on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at  
Southport's First Annual Kitchen Tour!**



## A New Exhibit Coming Soon!

A new exhibit is opening at the Southport Visitor's Center and Museum. **"Life at the Garrison House"** will honor the families who lived at the Garrison House from 1935 through 2005. The focal point of the exhibit will be a room that illustrates the life and times of the Mollycheck family who lived in the Garrison from 1937 until 1950. During that period, Franto Mollycheck II worked as Light Keeper on the Lower Cape Fear and Intercoastal Waterway.

The new exhibit space will contain furniture, photographs, and keepsakes from the Mollycheck's private collection. Visitors will have an opportunity to glimpse what life was like in Southport more than eighty years ago.

This new exhibit was designed and coordinated by Lisa Anderson. It was a collaborative effort that involved many Historical Society volunteers: Scott Len (retrofitted the room and made repairs), Phil Fravel (painted), Dick & Lisa Anderson (wallpapered), Liz Fuller (sewed pillow and window-seat covers), and Bob Surridge (procured equipment).

The exhibit would not have been possible without the extensive research conducted by Debbie Mollycheck, grand-daughter of Franto Mollycheck II, and Lifetime Member of the Southport Historical Society.

A Ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new **"Life in the Garrison"** exhibit will be held **April 26, 2019**, after which it will be open to the public.



*Photo Credit: Bill Keziah, Mollycheck Collection (c) Debbie Mollycheck*

Lilla Mollycheck was awarded this picture of the Garrison as a June 29, 1939, weekly prize for best entry in the Charlotte Observer Fishing Contest. Lilla entered her 6-pound large-mouth bass. The State Port Pilot reported on July 5, 1939, "This picture was taken by moonlight and is credited with being about the most unusual and attractive picture that has ever been made of the structure." The lighted rooms show the living quarters of the Keeper and his family. The East Wing held the first Southport library and the West wing held storage.

## When the Garrison House Was a Home

by Liz Fuller and Don Parker

When you wander through the exhibits at the Garrison House, do you ever wonder what it would be like to live there? These days, it's hard to imagine the rooms as anything but a museum, but believe it or not, for nearly eighty years, families used to live there!

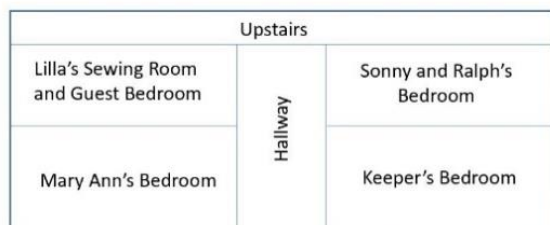
In 1935, the War Department granted the Bureau of Lighthouses permission to use the center section of the Garrison House as a residence for Light Keepers and their families. The west wing continued to be used as Southport's library and the east wing as a storage facility. The first keeper to occupy the Garrison was Thomas Willis. He stayed for two years.

In 1937, Keeper Franto Mollycheck II, his wife, Lilla, and their two children, Mary Ann and Franto III (Sonny) moved in. The Mollychecks lived in the Garrison House for thirteen years and really made it their home. Three months after they moved in, their third child, Ralph, was born. Nine years later, their daughter, Mary Ann, and her new husband, Tom Wharrie, held their wedding reception on the front lawn. Franto continued to maintain the acetylene lights along the lower Cape Fear and the Intracoastal Waterway between New River and the Cape Fear until he retired on January 1, 1951.

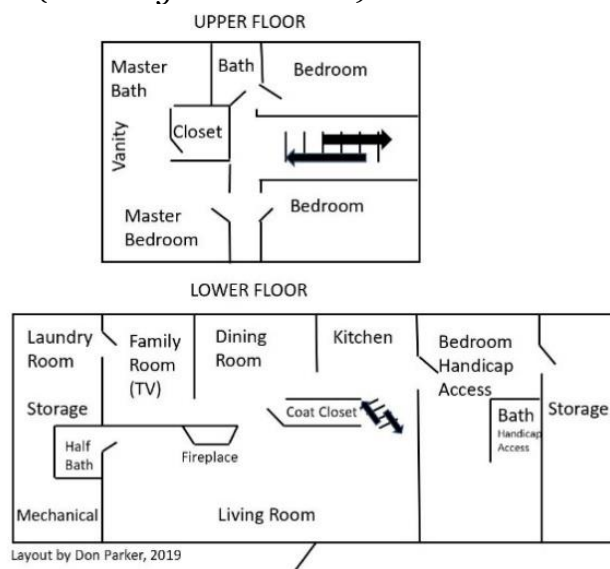
The Garrison House was renovated in the early 1950s and served as the family quarters for the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) Commanders after the Army assumed ownership of Fort Johnston concurrent with the establishment of the Terminal in 1955. Commanders and their families lived in the Garrison House until 2005 when the Army began the process to transfer the Fort Johnston property to the City of Southport.

Retired Brigadier General Don Parker, his wife Debbie and their two daughters, Nicole and Valerie, lived in the Garrison House from the Summer of 1995 until the Summer of 1997 when as a Colonel, he commanded MOTSU. Don and Debbie retired from the Army in 2002 and returned to Southport. You may recognize Don's name as he is the current President of the Southport Historical Society!

Here are the layouts of the living quarters of the Garrison House as the Mollycheck Family (left) and the Parker Family (right) lived in them: (*drawings not to scale*)



Layout by Patricia Livingston Wooten, 2013



Layout by Don Parker, 2019

Source: Mollycheck, Debbie S. (2019) Imagine Life at the Fort Johnston U.S. Lighthouse Station. Unpublished Manuscript.

## Savor the Sweet Life...

Join us on Saturday, June 15th, 2019 for  
Southport's First Annual Kitchen Tour!

This exciting event will showcase six select kitchens centered near Keziah Park in historic downtown Southport. This very walk-able Kitchen Tour is the perfect opportunity to spend the day with family and friends delighting in Southport's "salubrious breezes" and exploring unique kitchen designs.

You'll also enjoy tasting samples of delicious dessert recipes from the book *"Hominy Muffins and Oyster Pie – The Lives and Recipes of the Ladies of Southport in 1907,"* by Southport resident Bob Surridge. A local historic character will "come to life" in each kitchen and tell you a little about the vintage dessert recipes and the history behind them.

All proceeds from the Southport Kitchen Tour will benefit the Southport Historical Society.

The Southport Kitchen Tour will be held on Saturday, June 15th  
from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Make a day of it! After the tour, Up Your Arts and the City of Southport are hosting the [Southport Plein Air Festival](#) outdoor painting event which will take place starting at 4:00 p.m. Stay to enjoy food, live music, and watch the artists in action.

Tickets are limited, so get yours early! We expect this event will sell out! Tickets (\$15 pp) may be purchased on the [SHS website](#), or in person at:

- The Southport Historical Society table at the 2019 Spring Festival in Franklin Square (April 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> if still available)
- The Southport Visitor Center and Museum at Ft. Johnston starting at 10:00 a.m. (while supplies last.)

Children in arms are free, but tickets are required for all other tour guests.

Watch a sneak peek of the fun when ["Mrs. Dunbar Davis"](#) visits the SHS General Membership meeting!





## Old Jail Reopens!!

By Nancy Christianson

The Old Jail reopened this week! It's been a busy winter, adding new displays, updating existing displays, doing repairs, and cleaning for the new season. But we finished it all in time, and we're ready to receive visitors!!



A new display, created by Lisa Anderson and Liz Fuller, contains information about Prohibition in Brunswick County. Come find out what Swamp Hogs, Blind Tigers, Sugar Rations and Doctor's Orders have to do with Southport's history with alcohol!

A special part of this display will be the "birdcage", which was used to roll dice for illegal gambling and hidden whenever there was a raid by the sheriff. This display will accompany what is already in the Jail about how a still operates and about Brunswick County stills that were closed down by Sheriff Gray in the 1950s.

A new display board will be put up for future information, part of which will be about the role of the Old Jail in the Southport community. **We are also looking for any women who did work at the Jail, so if one of our readers knows such a person, please let us know. (info@southporthistoricalsociety.org).**

*Prohibition in Southport, photo credit: Lisa Anderson*

If you have never visited the Old Jail, please mark your calendar and make a point of it. Our docents tell its history and the history of people who have worked there, as well as stories about prisoners, how they were fed and housed, escapes they attempted and some they achieved, and details of the Jailer's job. We have one whole room devoted to First Responders.

The Jail is open Wednesdays and Saturdays 12:30-3:30. We look forward to seeing you!

## Memorial Bricks have been Installed

Next time you are at the Garrison House, Fort Johnston Visitor Center and Museum, be sure to check out the Memorial Bricks in the walkway. Thanks to Scott Len, David Kelly, and Mark Southerland, all the bricks purchased in 2018 have been installed.

In case you missed last year's sale, or you thought of another reason to buy a commemorative brick, don't worry – more will go on sale at the end of this year!



*Walkway at Garrison House Photo Credit: Lisa Anderson*

## African American Education Exhibit Opens to Success

The grand opening of our new exhibit “**A Fierce Desire for Education Prevails**” was a great success. Framed certificates were handed out to everyone who had shared their stories of Brunswick County Training School and contributed mementos to the exhibit. The highlight of the evening was the surprise appearance of Mr. Frink, retired BCT educator. He and his former students experienced a joyful mini-reunion.



Mr. James Frink  
Photo Credit: Lisa Anderson

**A Fierce Desire for Education Prevails** provides a view into the incredible perseverance of the local African American educators and their students who were determined to get a quality education. The exhibit spans a 100-year timeframe and touches on such topics as Jeanes teachers, Rosenwald schools, and the challenges of segregation.

We've gotten a lot of positive comments on the exhibit. So be sure to come by and learn this inspiring story of the struggle for education in 19th and 20th century Southport.



L-R, Mrs. Ennis Tobler, Donnie Joyner, Mrs. Jean Parker, Judy Gordon, Musette Steck, Col. Willie Gore, Lisa Anderson (not present: Lois Gore Thompson) Photo Credit: Zeb Starnes



## John N. Smith Cemetery

Southport Historical Society is always delighted when we can partner with other historical associations in the community. Recently we assisted the John N. Smith Cemetery Board with their efforts to be put on the National Historic Register by conducting research and contributing to their written application. This is a multi-step process that takes several years to accomplish.

We are pleased to announce that the John N. Smith Cemetery has achieved the first step in this process. They have been added to the North Carolina State Study List and have been approved to move forward with being recognized at the National level. We look forward to assisting further as they continue to pursue this designation.

## Gullah Geechee Presentation

**Heather Hodges, Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission presents on April 25th 4-5:30 pm Harper Library.** Preserving and memorializing African and Gullah Geechee burial grounds across the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is important preservation work that provides communities with opportunities to memorialize ancestors, share local history and to learn more about traditional burial and spiritual practices -- some retained from West Africa and others that evolved here. Join us for a talk with Heather Hodges, Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, about how Gullah Geechee funeral and burial practices reflect their shared West African ancestry as well as their specific, historic experiences in the Lowcountry. She'll discuss the challenges to burial ground preservation as well as the creative ways that some Gullah Geechee communities have found to sustain these important expressions of Gullah Geechee spirituality and lifeways. (event organized by John N. Smith Cemetery Restoration and Preservation)

## Southport's Black History Symposium

The Southport Historical Society was honored to be part of this year's Black History Symposium, Feb. 8 - 10. Our own Lisa Anderson was a featured speaker on the second day of the three-day event. Lisa spoke on the development of our new African American exhibit and gave a behind-the-scenes look at how it was put together.



Other Saturday speakers were Kisha Kinard and Mike Powell. Kisha gave a demonstration on making Sweet Baskets and had some for sale. Mike, Director of Brunswick Civil War Roundtable, gave a presentation on African Americans in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War.

The event opened on Friday night with an astounding standing-room-only performance by Ms. Carolyn Evans who performed a one-woman show about the life of Harriet Tubman. The culmination on Sunday was another standing-room-only event, an Old-time Gospel Fest hosted by Mrs. Gwen Wearen.

[Watch and listen here!](#)

*2019 Southport Black History Symposium organized by Donnie Joyner.  
Photo Credit: Zeb Starnes*

**CORA MABEL DAVIS (1908-1995)****Educator and Musician**

By Judy Gordon

Cora Mabel Davis was born in Southport, North Carolina to Eliza Wortham Jackson. Cora received her early education in the public schools of Brunswick County. She earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education from Elizabeth City State College in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Upon completion of her education, Cora Davis taught elementary school here in the county and later at the North Carolina Baptist Assembly on Caswell Beach where several of the elementary classes were relocated in 1970. She was a Life Member of the Retired Teachers of the Cape Fear Area.

*Cora Mabel Davis (1908 – 1995)*

Along with teaching, music was a very integral part of Cora's life. She discovered early the goodness of giving thanks to the Lord and singing praises unto His name. For not only did she sing of mercy and judgment unto the Lord, but she taught many others to do likewise. At a young age, she led a band called Cora and the Boys. This group played at many functions in the area during the 1930s. Among those in the band were Ephraim "Bay Boy" E. Swain, Willie "Patty" Moore, James H. Davis, and William "Pappy" Jackson. This group later became the gospel singing Melody Quarter.

Cora touched the lives of many people in the community and elsewhere with her music and her many talents. She was a devoted member of St. James A.M.E. Zion Church, giving of her time, talents and her financial blessings. She was the church musician for many years and organized the gospel choir and the gospel singing Melodaires. The Melodaires singing along with Cora were Mary Anderson, Mary Jackson, and Lillian Clemmons. The group traveled extensively throughout many states, going as far north as New Jersey and as far south as Atlanta, they carried the message of the gospel.

When pierced ears became fashionable, Cora was the person you contacted to have it done. She very patiently helped you through the process, and after the ear healed you could wear your "pierced" earrings. There are many in the community that can attest to her skills. Cora adopted one daughter, Andrea Davis Giles.

Outside of her love for people and music, fishing came high on her list. After she retired and her daughter had grown, fishing moved up on her list of things to enjoy. Anyone that knew her will always remember her smiling face which no doubt stemmed from the music she felt in her soul.

## Meet New Board Member: Linda DeTorres

I'm Linda DeTorres and I'm happy to introduce myself and very excited to be joining the board of the Southport Historical Society. Since moving to Southport 6 years ago, I have enjoyed participating in many of our town's events and programs highlighting our rich history. I have been on the Christmas tour of homes committee for 5 years and have been a docent and committee member of the Old Jail for 4 years.



Linda DeTorres  
Photo Credit: Zeb Starnes

Upon our retirement, my husband, Charlie, and I moved here from Ocean Grove N.J. where I was an active member of another wonderful Historical Society. I am a retired real estate agent of 30+ years in N.J. and N.Y.

## Meet New Board Member: Liz Fuller



Liz Fuller Photo  
Credit: Zeb Starnes

I'm Liz Fuller, although those of you who attended the most recent General Member's Meeting might know me as "Mrs. Dunbar Davis"! I had a fun time dressing in period attire and telling everyone about Mrs. Davis' life in Southport. If you missed it (or you saw it and want to see more!) please join us at our upcoming Kitchen Tour "Savor the Sweet Life" on June 15th when six SHS volunteers will portray Southport residents from the turn of the 20th century.

My love of local history began a decade ago when I became interested in genealogy. I found that big historical events were so much more meaningful to me when I could see how they affected the daily lives of my ancestors and their communities. I'm excited to be volunteering with the Southport Historical Society because it gives me the opportunity to explore the effects of more than 200 years of history within one community.

So far, as a volunteer, I have helped with interviews for the African American Education exhibit, conducted research and archived documents for the Susie Carson Research Room, given a presentation at the Tuesday Talks, assisted in putting together new exhibits at the Garrison and the Old Jail, partnered with the John N. Smith cemetery board, and responded to genealogy questions. As a board member, I am serving as editor of the Whittler's Bench, and I'm part of the new Acquisition Committee and the Oral History Committee.

The best part of volunteering with the Southport Historical Society is getting the chance to meet so many interesting and dedicated people. I look forward to getting to know more members and volunteers. If you have an idea for an article in the Whittler's Bench or would like to discuss how you can get more involved with the SHS, please contact me at [info@southporthistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@southporthistoricalsociety.com).



## Scholarship Opportunity for High School Senior

### Time's running out to apply for the 2019 Susan Sellers Carson Scholarship!

Submission due date: April 19, 2019

Each year the Southport Historical Society offers a \$2,000 academic scholarship for a graduating senior from South Brunswick High School continuing their education at an accredited college or university. One thousand dollars (\$1,000) will be paid in each of the first two years of enrollment. Application forms and instructions are available from the South Brunswick HS Scholarship Coordinator, Nikita Webb James, and on the [SHS website](#).

The application includes a 900-word essay on one of the following local history topics:

1. Rosenwald Schools – origin, purpose, and results (include history with a concentration on the Rosenwald School in Southport).
2. Kate Stuart (1844-1929) – A woman for all seasons.

We encourage interested students to visit related exhibits at the Fort Johnston-Southport Museum & Visitors' Center, 203 East Bay Street.

## Continuing Education at Southport Historical Society

Musette Steck provided an enlightening 5-week class this past March entitled **Dispelling Southern Myths of Slavery, Secession, Speech, and Sects**. As she said, her goal was to tell “the rest of the story”. Musette has been a popular educator in Southport for over twenty years as was evidenced by the large enrollment in her class. In order to accommodate everyone, Musette relocated the class from the Harper Library to the Trinity United Methodist Church.

The class covered little-heard historical facts and a Southern perspective on the events leading up to and immediately following the Civil War. As a bonus, at the end of the five-week term, Musette conducted a tour of the Smithville Burial Ground. Unfortunately for those who missed it, Musette has decided to retire from teaching. This was her final class. But all is not lost – Musette says she will still give the occasional talk, plus she will be conducting cemetery tours this summer.

If you'd like to hear the last session of Musette's class which focuses on Reconstruction, you can [listen here](#)!



*Musette Steck, Photo Credit: Zeb Starnes*

## Thor Roars Once Again by Phil Fravel

As has become an annual tradition, Thor's first firing of a new season started with the Cape Fear Yacht Club's annual Commissioning Ceremony on Saturday, March 16. We continued our tradition on Sunday, March 17 when we fired to open a safe boating season with the CFYC's Blessing of the Fleet. This tradition started some years ago when our first "paid" firing was for the Cape Fear Yacht Club at the "river beach" on W Bay Street.

If you would like to have Thor be part of your celebration or educational event, please contact us at [info@southporthistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@southporthistoricalsociety.org).



*Cape Fear Yacht Club 2000 Photo Credit: SHS Thor Crewmember*



*Cape Fear Yacht Club 2019 Photo Credit: SHS Thor Crewmember*

## Genealogy Corner by Liz Fuller

*"...that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs"*

- George Eliot, Middlemarch

One of the nice things about a local historical society is that it allows us to honor the people who aren't found in history books. Those whom, as Ms. Eliot said, "lived faithfully a hidden life".

Recently in the Susie Carson Research Room, we were contacted by a woman from Atlanta, looking to find information about her great-aunt, Emma Elizabeth Scribner. She knew that Emma had been born in Iowa and that in 1899 she had married a man from Vermont. The Scribner family were living in Vermont in 1910, then inexplicably they moved to Southport. A little more than a year later, Emma passed away at the age of 43. Her husband buried her in the Smithville Burying Ground and then he took their three children, ages 11, 7 and 4, back home to Vermont to raise.

We searched Bill Reaves' chronology books and the minutes of the Southport Woman's Society. We couldn't find any more specific information about Emma than her niece already had. We were able to tell her some general information about Southport during that time period. Perhaps the Scribners had come looking for a job. Southport was experiencing an economic boom (*the railroad was coming!*). Or perhaps they had come for the sake of Emma's health (*salubrious breezes!*).

A few years back, Charles Christianson, volunteer caretaker of Smithville Burying Ground, had repaired Emma's broken tombstone. He hadn't known who she was, or how she fit into Southport's past. It didn't matter. She was part of Southport's history.



credit: Jane Howard,  
findagrave.com

A few days ago, I had the opportunity to visit Emma's grave. It's obvious that she was dearly loved. Her grave is carefully edged with bricks. Her inscription reads "Called home".

If anyone finds a mention of Emma Scribner in a family diary or letter, please let us know. We will be sure to pass it on to her descendants.



credit: Liz Fuller, Southport  
Historical Society

Please feel free to contact the Southport Historical Society for your genealogy questions.  
[info@southporthistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@southporthistoricalsociety.com)



## Researching History Just Got Easier!

Looking for historical information? SHS volunteer, Doug Donaldson, just made your job easier! Doug spent several weeks inventorying the books in the Susie Carson Research Room and developing an index of categories. Now, if you want to find information on the Cape Fear, the Civil War, North Carolina History, or a variety of other topics, we can quickly make recommendations.

The Susie Carson Research Room, located in the Ft. Johnston- Southport Museum & Visitors Center (Garrison House), is open on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10 am to 4 pm.

## Want Even More Southport History? By Bob Surridge

Do you love the Whittler's Bench, but long to get even more updates on Southport's history?

Then, hop on over and join the 2,040 followers on our Facebook page!



It is packed with information about people and events in Southport's history.

On Mondays, we generally post one of the 500 plus [Bit of History](#) columns that were written for the StarNews by [Susie Carson](#).

On Fridays, we again dig into the online [Susie Carson Research Room](#) to post one of the State Port Pilot's [The Way It Was](#) columns.

*(As always, many thanks to the State Port Pilot and the StarNews for allowing us to post these columns.)*

With these two columns as bookends, on the other days, we use a variety of items from the five-volume Chronology of Southport (Smithville) 1520 – 1990, which was prepared by [Bill Reaves](#), who was also a founding member of the Society. On other days we post photos of Southport's past leaders like John Erikson, a WW I veteran who served from 1935 to 1949 as Southport's mayor. Or we post items about the Society's historical exhibits at the [Old Jail](#) and the [Ft. Johnston Museum](#). We also use our Facebook page to post announcements of SHS events and meetings.



John D. Erikson c. 1918, SCRR Collection

Most of our posts are viewed by 600 or so followers. However, others, like the recent post about the AMUZU Theater was viewed by over 4,000 followers. And our post of P.D. Midgett's video titled [A Village By the Sea](#) reached over 17,000 people – which was viral as far as we were concerned!

We invite you to join us on Facebook and get a daily dose of Southport History!



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