

Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

P.O. Box 623, Carolina Beach, North Carolina 28428

Newsletter

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May, 2003

Darlene Bright, editor

May Meeting

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will hold its regular monthly meeting Monday, May 19th, 7:30 pm at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to the Carolina Beach Town Hall.

We will feature a special guest speaker, Jack E. Fryar, Jr., Editor of Coastal Chronicles Magazine.

Mr. Fryar, a native of Wilmington, NC, and founder of the Writer's Roundtable writers conference at UNC-Wilmington, has served in many capacities including announcer for UNC Tar Heel softball, and UNC-W Seahawk softball, and remains a life-long local history lover. He will introduce his recent publication, "The Coastal Chronicles, Volume 1," a popular History of the Coastal Carolinas, and will be available to sign copies.

Members and the public are cordially invited. Refreshments will be served following the meeting.

Last Month

The Honorable Judge Jay D. Hockenbury, Resident Superior Court Judge, 5th Judicial District, presented a very articulate and detailed program, entitled "The Colonial Judicial System in the Lower Cape Fear" to approximately 30 members and guests at our April meeting.

Judge Hockenbury presented over 1000 years of development of the judiciary system which has really changed only a little since William the Conqueror in England.

Judge Hockenbury presented one of our best programs yet, holding the audience spellbound. We are fortunate in having him as a member and supporter of the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society.

Message From Your President

Patricia Gray Bolander

May is Confederate Memorial Month. Please take time to visit one of the sites near us in the Federal Point area. We are indeed fortunate to live in such an area with settlements dating back to before the American Revolution. Our Confederate dead should be honored as well as all Veterans of all wars. Confederate Memorial Day (May 11) is the forerunner to today's Memorial Day.

One of our members, John Golden, is well known for his portrayal of Captain John Maffitt, famed Confederate Blockade Runner, and now we congratulate John upon assuming Presidency of one of our sister groups, the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society.

We still have some outstanding paperwork on our plaques for Historic Buildings. I urge you to encourage their completion.

If you have any old pictures that could be shared with our Society, we can copy them using our new scanner with our high-tech computer. Check that old trunk or scrapbook, or even a framed picture. We must PRESERVE our history and we really appreciate your help.

Historical Background

Development of New Hanover County - Part I

(Extracted from "Historic Architecture of New Hanover County, North Carolina", by New Hanover County Planning Department, November, 1986). New Hanover County, shaped much like a whelk shell with its tip pointing south to the confluence of the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean, and Wilmington at its aperture, comprises an area of 185 square miles of low lying land in the farthest southeastern portion of North Carolina. The County is bounded on the east by a line of barrier islands, broad sounds, and salt marshes, and on the west by the Cape Fear and the Northeast Cape Fear Rivers. Elevation ranges from sea level to sixty feet. The soil quality varies widely throughout the region and includes over thirty soil types. The coastline boasts fine beaches and quiet salt marshes, while swamps and sand dunes border the river. Agricultural soils predominate in the northwestern section of the County and were responsible for the development of large plantations during the eighteenth century. These soils also encouraged flower growing and truck farm colonies during the early twentieth century. The County seat, Wilmington, thirty miles upriver from the ocean, was for many decades the most populous city in the State, and retains its distinction as the largest port city in North Carolina.

Easy access from the ocean, without the danger of shallow inlets and sand bars found elsewhere along the coast, made the region the object of early exploration by Europeans venturing along the Atlantic seaboard. The first of these explorers is believed to have been Giovanni de Verrazono, a Florentine sent by King Francois I of France, who, in 1524, anchored his ships at some point along the river to the west of present day Kure Beach. After a brief investigation of the land and its inhabitants, his party sailed on to northern waters, for scouting had the priority over settlement. Spanish exploration brought Lucas Vaquez de Ayllon north along the coast from Florida in 1526, but other than christening the river the Rio Jordan and calling it "one of the fairest rivers of the North," he, too, returned to sea after only a short stay.

For more than a century and a quarter the Cape Fear River remained peacefully isolated from the warring nations of Europe and their colonial offspring. In 1662, a group of Puritans from New England, led by William Hilton, sailed upriver past the point of land he named Cape Fear to the site of the future Wilmington. Enthusiasm for the place was keen, but the idea of settling in the area was premature, and after recording enough data to chart the area, the New Englanders returned home. In two year's time, however, Hilton was back with a large number of settlers from Barbados who took claim to lands on the west side of the river and a colony began to prosper under the name of Clarendon County. But misfortunes on both sides of the Atlantic affected the settlement severely and it was finally given up in 1667.

Finally, in 1726, after a period of time in which only pirates were reputed to claim the territory, a permanent settlement was established on the Cape Fear River composed of immigrants from both Goose Creek, South Carolina, and the region between Cape Fear and the Virginia line. New Hanover Precinct, created in 1729, became a British crown colony. Originally encompassing a wide expanse of land, New Hanover was subsequently divided into smaller precincts. After 1739 the designation of precinct became county. Bladen and Onslow Precincts were created in 1735; Duplin County in 1750; Brunswick County in 1764; and Pender County in 1875.

Following the founding of the New Hanover Precinct in 1729, the next several generations focused their attention on developing a foreign and domestic center for trade in Wilmington. The trade was naturally directed towards naval stores (tar, pitch, and turpentine), since the port was on the most navigable river between the Virginia and South Carolina colonies, and was in the midst of extensive pine forests. Shipping, shipbuilding, lumbering, and naval stores were the main operations of the river port.

Food from Home

By Ann Hertzler

Food from home during wartime is very different now than it was during the Civil War. According to a recent *Morning Star* feature, current choices such as commercial canned goods, granola and power bars, individual cereal packets, instant beverages, and lunch-to-go packets, certainly were not available in the 1860s.

Tobasco Sauce, invented in 1868 and popular as a way to “jazz up C rations,” was a favorite of Teddy Roosevelt and the dash up San Juan Hill, and during World War I and II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Care packages from home during Civil War days contained meat, boiled ham, roasted chickens or turkeys, pudding, pickles, onions, pepper, potatoes, chocolate, cheese, condensed milk, tea, sugar, “bromo,” fruit, pies, preserves, sauce, boxes of butter, and other “delicious surprises.” Many families filled every corner and crevice with a potato, an apple, an onion, a pinch of dried apples, a handful of peanuts, or other edible substances. Many of these foods would spoil by the time the box reached the soldier. Boxes were opened for inspection to prevent shipment of alcohol. Consequently, pint or quart bottles were hidden inside an empty turkey: the turkey was cooked and then the bottle filled with whiskey. Some bottles were placed in the bottom of a loaf of cake. A letter of one soldier illustrated problems with food from home, “Jars & cans of fruit smashed & run all over everything else, -bread, cakes, pies, turkeys, cheese, & moldy & rotten—whew! But some things were good...Nearly all the canned fruit was busted—the tops were off the can & all the contents distributed among the packages in the boxes. The raspberries had lost all their juice, but were not sour. ...A few of the cakes sent were barely eatable, but not good... Hattie’s jar of butter was not broken...”

Like today, soldiers’ requests for food in the Civil War were filled by parents, spouse, siblings, friends, and neighbors. Those not receiving food packages often exhibited sadness and tears. Foods from home were shipped through the mail or delivered by relief organizations, slaves, or soldiers returning from furlough. These foods added sustenance to hungry soldiers and had an electric effect on morale. Packages were usually a shoe-case or soap-box, less than a peck in size. Most men shared their package. A few men did not share the precious contents, not even an apple core.

(from John B. Billings, *Hard Tack and Coffee*, 1887; and Garry Fisher, *Rebel Cornbread and Yankee Coffee*, 2001.)



Walter's Place

(Editor's Note - From time to time we discover that what we thought was fact, in fact, is not. We recently learned from Jay Winner, while he visited the History Center, that our photograph of his parents, holding him as a child, was not taken at Wilmington Beach, as had been reported to us, but instead was at Fort Fisher.) In 1921, Walter Winner built this house a short distance southeast of the monument at Fort Fisher, where he operated a store and a bath house on the bottom level.

Two Civil War skeletons were unearthed beneath the structure during storms. Walter buried the remains behind the Fort Fisher Monument where they are proclaimed as the Unknown Soldier.

After moving the building back twice to escape constant beach erosion, in 1949 Walter Winner moved his house to Kure Beach where some sections remain today.

Society Notes

● **Membership Information:** Renewal notices are being sent on the anniversary of your joining the Society. If you have been receiving a Newsletter, and we have not heard from you within 90 days of the billing date, your name will be placed in the inactive file and no Newsletter will be sent. You are encouraged to

respond promptly. Your support of our local preservation efforts with your membership is very important as it is the lifeblood of our organization.

Welcome New Members: Henriette and Roger Weigle, of Manassas, Virginia.

● **History Center News!** The History Center's regular operating hours are Fridays and Saturdays, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. Although we had to close some of those hours because we had no one to volunteer during a couple afternoons, we still had 24 visitors. If you are willing to set aside a few hours now and then, you are badly needed. **EVERYONE DO JUST ONE THING!** Please sign up - call 458-8684, or 458-0502 (leave a message).

Items Received This Month - We are always looking for artifacts, photos, and other memorabilia. Ray Rothrock donated two books to our library: "Spirits of the Passage, The Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Seventeenth Century", by Madeleine Burnside and Rosemarie Robotten, and "Strength Through Struggle", by William M. Reaves. Jay Winner donated copies of photos of Walter's Place, along with a brief history.

A Special Thank-You to this Month's Volunteers! Ginny Wagner-8 hours keeping the Center open on Fridays. Ginny is a wonderful artist and is working on some things for the gift shop; Jeannie Gordon-11 hours doing computer work, updating brochures, and helping with the newsletters; John Gordon has been helping Jeannie with writing and updating text for the brochures; Pat Bolander-12 hours keeping the Center open on Friday and Saturday mornings; Ron Griffin-5 hours copying our programs to VHS tapes and working on census records; Carol Green-4 hours updating our membership roll and sending out renewal notices. Carol also greets our members and guests at the monthly meetings; Darlene Bright-28 hours keeping the Center open, cleaning, paying bills, newsletters, and preparing paperwork for historic plaque for old Carolina Beach Drug Store (now Laney Real Estate). We can't forget Cheri McNeill for her dedication in setting-up for the meetings, conducting the monthly raffles, and most important, seeing that we have refreshments; Leslie Bright for the wonderful programs we have every month; and, Doris Bame, a committee of one, for carrying-on with the Essay Contest this year. We invite everyone to visit the Center and bring a friend.

● **June Meeting! Elections.** Our June meeting on the 16th is a very important meeting, so please save the date! Not only will we be electing Officers and Directors for the 2003-2004 fiscal year, we will be having our annual Membership Drive Pot-Luck Supper. Bring a friend and your favorite dish and be prepared to enjoy some really good food and fellowship. For more information, call Cheri McNeill at 458-7722.

● **3rd Annual Fort Fisher Hermit Look-alike Contest!** Saturday, June 7th, 2:00 pm, at Carolina Beach. Over \$250.00 in prizes! Engraved plaque to First Place! Presented by The Hermit Society and the Carolina Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Officers

President - Pat Bolander
Vice-President - James Bartley
Sec/Treas. - Darlene Bright

Lynn Benson
Donna Godkey
Beth Keane

Directors

Leslie S. Bright
John Gordon
A.E. "Punky" Kure
Jim Dugan
Barbara Hoppe
Cheri McNeill

Anyone interested in membership in the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society can write to FPHPS, P. O. Box 623, Carolina Beach, NC 28428. Yearly dues are \$15.00, Individual; \$20.00 Husband & Wife; and \$25.00 Business. Help support our local preservation efforts with your membership.

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