

# Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

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

## *Newsletter*

Volume 12 No. 7

July, 2005

Darlene Bright, editor

### **July Meeting**

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will meet, Monday, July 18, 2005, 7:30 PM, at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to Carolina Beach Town Hall.

Guest speaker, Susan Taylor Block, will introduce and speak about her new book, "Tales of a Shirtmaker, a Jewish Upbringing in North Carolina."

"Susan Taylor Block, a native of Wilmington, is a writer and historian in her hometown. Author and researcher of ten books on Wilmington-area history, in this volume she collaborates with her husband in telling his unique story. She was awarded the Clarendon Cup from the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society (for her history of Airlie Gardens) in 2003, as well as the organization's Society Cup in 1998 and 2002. In 1999 she was recognized by the North Carolina Society of Historians (East) as Historian of the Year. She holds the A.B. degree from the University of North Carolina."

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

### **Last Month**

No need for luck at last month's "Pot-Luck Dinner" - plenty of food, and it was all good. Many new dishes appeared along with the regular staples. We wish we could remember which of the Doetsch's jalapena peppers are hottest. We heard someone say "Jeannie Gordon brought the best corn dish in the whole wide world."

When everyone was full of food and fun, voting for Society Officers and Board Members took place. Judy Thompson was elected President; John Gordon, Vice-President; Darlene Bright, Secretary; and, Jeannie Gordon, Treasurer. New Board Members elected were Ray Flowers, Ron Griffin, Cheri McNeill, and Judge Jay Hockebury. Former Board Members, Barbara Hoppe and Punky Kure, have served three consecutive two-year terms and in accordance with our By-laws are required to sit out one year. James Bartley and Beth Keane chose not to run this year. The Society has been served well by these individuals and we all look forward to their continued participation in the future.

### **Message From Your President**

#### **Judy Rhudy Thompson**

Hi, ya'll! My first thought was to let most of you who don't know me have a chance to know about me. I was born and raised in Greensboro, NC, and moved to Wilmington the first time in 1986, then back to Greensboro, and finally back to Kure Beach in 1996. I am married to Danny Thompson (he is Field Supervisor of the Stormwater Department in Carolina Beach). I have one daughter, Keeley, two stepdaughters, and four grandchildren, whom I love dearly. Some call me Maw-Maw Judy and some, "Judy Rhudy." Rhudy is my maiden name and you will hear me called Judy Rhudy and Judy Thompson. I guess you can say I have an a.k.a.!

I am employed by Bank of America (24 ½ years) (formerly NCNB and NationsBank), and also the U.S.P.S., most always at Kure Beach. You might see me at any of our branches of the bank in our area, or at the Post Office, or out on the route.

Danny and I and our Chesapeake Bay retriever, Kure, live in Tanglewood, just north of Monkey Junction. I am looking forward to the new “position” and will welcome suggestions. My phone number is 794-8920 and my e-mail address is [paddle1@bellsouth.net](mailto:paddle1@bellsouth.net). See ya soon, Judy.

## **End of the Trail**

**By Ray Flowers**

October last, Fort Fisher State Historic Site joined Civil War Trails in the placement of a marker at Battery Buchanan. Through the funding of the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee, the significance of this long ignored gun emplacement is finally addressed. Situated at the very extremity of Highway 421, Battery Buchanan both literally and figuratively marks the end of the trail for the defenders of Fort Fisher.

Named for Admiral Franklin Buchanan of the Confederate States Navy, the battery was constructed to command New Inlet and in the words of Fort Fisher commander Colonel William Lamb, to serve as “a citadel to which an overpowered garrison might retreat.” Built during the late summer and early fall of 1864, it was the last major earthwork erected on Confederate Point. On Christmas day 1864, during the first of two battles for Fort Fisher, Rebel sailors and marines manning the four-gun position repulsed Federal boats dragging New Inlet for torpedoes (mines), sinking one vessel and severing one sailor in twain.

During the second battle, on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1865, Southern commanders General W.H.C. Whiting and Colonel Lamb fell wounded. When it became clear that the fort would fall, Lamb later stated, the two men were “hurriedly removed on stretchers to Battery Buchanan where [Major James Reilly] proposed to make a stand...but we found the guns spiked and every means of transportation, even the barge and crew of the colonel commanding, taken by Captain R. T. Chapman of our navy, who following the example of General [Braxton] Bragg had abandoned us to our fate.” Soon after a Union force led by the 27<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops, threatened to over run the battery. Waving a handkerchief tied to his sword, Reilly surrendered the fort, the battery, the garrison, and his sabre to Union Captain E. Lewis Moore, of the 7<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. In 1893, just a year before Reilly’s passing, Moore magnanimously sought out the old major and graciously returned the weapon. Today, that very sword is on loan to the State and can be viewed in the Fort Fisher Visitor Center.

## **W. G. Fountain’s Royal Palm Hotel**

**By Leslie S. Bright**

The Royal Palm Hotel was built on the corner of Harper Avenue and Woody Hewett Avenue in Carolina Beach, North Carolina, during the winter of 1936 by W. G. Fountain of Wilmington. The magnificent hotel was the largest and most modern hotel at Carolina Beach when it opened in May of 1936. It was stick built, four stories high, with a brick veneer exterior. It contained 57 rooms with modern conveniences. The bottom floor contained a large dining room and an unusually large lobby. The building contained a sprinkler system and an elevator along with a large parking area in the rear.

Lumber for the building was purchased from E. C. Highsmith of Rocky Point. Booths and tables for the Royal Palm Hotel was built by J. T. Ritter of Castle Hayne Road. Kitchen range and utensils were supplied by Gregg Bros. Of Wilmington. Electrical fixtures were supplied by Wilmington Electrical Supply of Wilmington. Peoples Furniture Company supplied furnishings for the hotel and apartments. The large neon sign with 4’ letters on top of the Royal Palm was designed and built by Art Sign Shop of Wilmington.

W. G. Fountain was inspired to build the hotel after building three large 20-room apartment houses nearby the year before. His success with these buildings, called Fountain Apartments, indicated the need for the hotel. The combined facilities brought the total rooms to 117. One could rent a room with or without a bath or rent an entire apartment, offering a wide variety of rates and services. Mr. Fountain employed E. E. Johnson as manager and W. R. Fountain as assistant manager. The presence of the hotel attracted more tourist to an already growing resort.

The Royal Palm escaped the September 19, 1940 fire, which destroyed all the buildings east of it between Harper Avenue and Hamlet Avenue. A brisk northeast wind blew the flames past the hotel. The fire created an even greater demand for the hotel while others were being rebuilt.

During and after World War II, the Royal Palm Hotel remained a popular attraction and W. G. Fountain a popular citizen, as he was elected mayor of Carolina Beach in 1946, and President of the Bank of Carolina Beach which opened August 1, 1949. Mr. Fountain's foresight, investment in, and presence in Carolina Beach served to stimulate the development of Carolina Beach as a resort, and provided many pleasurable memories for those who visited the beach and stayed at Royal Palm Hotel and Fountain Apartments.

## Society Notes

- **Congratulations to our New Officers and Board Members**—President, Judy Thompson, Vice-President, John Gordon, Secretary, Darlene Bright, and, Treasurer, Jeannie Gordon. Joining present Board Members, Leslie Bright, Lynn Benson, James Dugan, Mike Blasko, and John Gordon, are Ray Flowers, Ron Griffin, Jay Hockenbury, and Cheri McNeill.
- **Welcome New Member: Fred Grady.**

### Support our Business Members!

A & G Barbeque and Chicken  
Bank of America  
Britt's Donut Shop  
The Cottage Restaurant  
Friends of Brunswick Town  
Fort Fisher Restoration Committee  
Got-Em-On-Live Bait Club  
Hanover Iron Works, Inc.  
Historical Society of Topsail Island  
Dr. Vincent Smith, DDS  
Taylor's Heating & Air, Inc.  
Tucker Brothers Realty Company  
Underwater Archaeology Branch

- **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. Thanks to all who have responded promptly! Our renewals are up! Your support of our local preservation efforts with your membership is very important as it is the lifeblood of our organization.

- **Members Old and New:** The Society needs your help! As we start our new fiscal year, many projects await our attention. If you can spare an hour or two on a "now and then" basis, please consider joining one of our committees: Fundraising, Genealogy, History Center, Membership, Newton Cemetery, Plaquing, Publicity and Newsletter, Programs, and Social. Call the History Center, or sign-up at the next meeting.

- **History Center News!** Robin Robertson is continuing with her interviews and oral histories of people who have recollections of events in earlier years at Carolina Beach in

preparation of her Master's thesis. Work has also continued this month on preparations for the **Pictorial History** publication. D.K. Dempster is doing an inventory of images which have been collected at the Center. Jerry Parnell has drafted an outline of proposed topics for text. We still need your help in rounding up more photographs and printed memorabilia. If you have collections of photographs, please call and set-up a time for us to copy them.

We are still trying to get a committee together to decorate the History Center for inclusion in the **Island of Lights Christmas Tour**. If you have ideas and wish to volunteer, please sign-up at the meeting or call the Center at 458-0502.

We had 33 visitors to our Center this past month. Thanks to our volunteers: Pat Bolander – 3 hours; Leslie Bright – 6 hours; Darlene Bright – 25 hours; Henriette Weigle – 4 hours; and Jeannie Gordon – 14 hours. The History Center is open every Friday and Saturday, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, or other times by appointment. We especially need volunteers on Saturdays.

- **Flavor of the Past!** Saturday, August 27, 2005 @ 9:30 am until 4 pm, experience 100 years of tasty treats and southern culture, sponsored by the Historic Wilmington Foundation. Tickets \$35 through August - \$50 beginning August 15. Event ticket includes morning river cruise on the *Henrietta III*, admission to five historic sites, living history experience at each site, historic-inspired food samplings at each site, and trolley shuttle between sites. For more information, call 762-2511.

*We welcome contributions to the Newsletter. If you have something you would like to share, please call me at 458-8684.*

**Officers**

President – Judy Thompson  
Vice-President - John Gordon  
Secretary - Darlene Bright  
Treasurer - Jeannie Gordon

Lynn Benson  
James Dugan  
Ron Griffin

**Directors**

Mike Blasko  
Ray Flowers  
Jay Hockenbury

Leslie Bright  
John Gordon  
Cheri McNeill



**Cape Fear River to Bald Head Island Historic Tour Cruise aboard the *Winner Cruise Queen*. Standing (right to left) Jack Fryar, historian & publisher; John Gordon, aka, Blockade Runner Capt. Roberts & historian; along with Leslie Bright, retired archaeologist, identify historic features along the routh**

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