

Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

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

Newsletter

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Darlene Bright, editor

May Meeting Tote-Em-In Zoo to Tregembo Animal Park 1952 - Present

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will hold its regular monthly meeting, Monday, May 16, 2005, 7:30 PM, at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to Carolina Beach Town Hall.

Mr. George Tregembo will speak on the tenure of his animal park located just south of Monkey Junction on Highway 421 in lower New Hanover County. He and his wife, June, established the park, previously called Tote-Em-In Zoo, in 1952, and it remains open today.

Starting with an interest in "everything unusual" and an obsession for having a zoo, Mr. Tregembo has many interesting experiences to tell about, from his elephant, Matteau, which he cared for for 25 years, to things just happening, which he hasn't told about yet; possibly the difference between left and right handed conks.

Folks, you don't want to miss this one. Personally, I could listen to Mr. Tregembo talk about the weather and be amused while I learn something I did not know before.

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

Last Month

Mr. Bush James, a Society member from Wilmington, presented a video film of the funeral proceedings for Confederate crew members recently removed from the recovered submarine, *Hunley*, in Charleston, South Carolina. Mr. James' stirring rendition of events leading to the *Hunley* sinking and its eventual discovery and recovery, along with his very excellent home movie, with a cast of over 10,000 reinactors, was witnessed by more than 50 members and guests of the Society. He presented a heartfelt reminder of those who gave all in an unfortunate piece of our heritage.

Message From Your President

Patricia Gray Bolander

It was a fitting close to our 140th Commemoration of the end of The War Between the States with the viewing of the last crew of the *CSS Hunley's* funeral in Charleston. We are indebted to Bush James for sharing this memorable occasion with us.

A special "Thank You" to Ryder Lewis for the beautiful old "Church lighting fixture." Be sure to see this treasure in our Church Display Case at the History Center.

I wish all our MOTHERS a very Happy MOTHERS' DAY. You will certainly be in my thoughts.

Our year is starting to come to an end, and we are so grateful to all for the help we have received from our ever faithful members.

I hope to see you all on our May 22nd **Cape Fear River to Bald Head Island Historic Cruise**. This has always been a special day for the Society. Come and bring a friend!.

Zeke's Island Oil Works and Fishery

(Compiled by Leslie S. Bright from information provided by Bill Reaves, Sandy Jackson, Wilmington Star News, and US Army Corps of Engineers).

Proprietors, Messrs. W. E. Davis & Sons were reluctant to put their fish oil works on Zeke's Island, a small island between Fort Fisher and Baldhead Island, on the eastern shore of the Cape Fear River, in New Hanover County. Even though construction of buildings had begun by June 15, 1870, under the auspices of Navassa Guano Company, a site opposite Zeke's Island on the Brunswick side of the Cape Fear River was considered as it might afford better facilities. Six days later the final decision was made to construct the oil works on Zeke's Island where oil could be extracted from a plentiful species of fish known as "fat back" for use in making fertilizer.

On July 29, 1870, the fish oil works on Zeke's Island were completed and ready for operation. Boats, fish seines and smacks arrived on August 11.

Attempts at catching the necessary fish through mid September to start the oil extracting operation proved futile due to a mysterious disappearance of the formerly prevalent fat back fish and the fact that the meshes in the nets, first in use, were too large allowing the small fish to escape through them. By November 2, 1870, with only one new smaller mesh net, the fish oil works were in full blast. 130,000 little "fat backs" were caught keeping the factory at work. A second net was put into operation the following week.

The fishery must have made changes from time to time as work commenced on the "swash dam" between Zeke's Island and Bald Head Island in the mid-1870s and work to close New Inlet by the US Corps of Engineers. During the closing of New Inlet accomplished by constructing a dam, the Corps left a gap to enable light draft vessels to pass in and out as they had done for over a century. The decision was made to close the gap on June 14, 1879. This decision affected shipping by small coasting schooners and other light vessels traveling from northern ports, as they now had to travel 64 miles farther around Frying Pan Shoals in order to reach Wilmington. This surely must have had an impact on the Zeke's Island Fishery.

On May 12, 1883, some diversity in the Zeke's Island Fishery business was reflected by a party of gentlemen inspecting the fishery, as reported in a Wilmington Star Newspaper article:

"A party of gentlemen...enjoyed a very pleasant excursion down the river Thursday. Among other points of interest visited during the trip was the large fishery of Messrs. W. E. Davis & Sons, on Zeke's Island. Four or five families reside on the island, and there are some half dozen houses. A pen was visited in which six hundred terrapins of all sorts and sizes are confined. There is also a fine stock of poultry, including some one hundred and fifty chickens, to say nothing of geese, ducks, etc. The fish traps were visited, and Messrs. Davis explained their workings. They are fished at 5 a.m., and again at 5 p.m. daily. Next the fertilizer establishment was inspected. Here all the refuse fish, such as cannot be sold, are cut up into fragments, put in a sort of press constructed for the purpose and all the oil extracted, after which the fragments are gathered up, spread out on a large platform to dry and are then bagged and sold for fertilizing purposes. A railroad has been constructed from the ocean on one side of the island to the river on the other, and on this the fish, after being taken from the traps, hoisted from the sharpies (flat bottom boat) by a derrick and placed in a car, are transported to the other side and dumped into the boats in the river. Our friends are very much interested in what they saw, and say they spent the day very pleasantly.

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. 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.

Welcome New Members! Lawrence J. and Sylvia H. Fetner, from Carolina Beach, **Jerry W. Loy**, from Kure Beach, and **Brenda Hobbs**, from Kure Beach.

● **History Center News!** Our Society is improving each and every day. Your participation in fulfilling our goals to preserve and promote the history of Federal Point is very important. We need your ideas and support to continue. The History Center is the heart of our mission. We need you to help keep it open on every Friday and Saturday, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, or other times by appointment. 14 persons visited the Center this past month, and our volunteers worked steady on the library project, filing, publications, and our upcoming Cruise. Thanks to: Jeannie Gordon - 10 hours; Leslie Bright - 14 hours; Darlene Bright - 27 hours; Pat Bolander – 3 hours; DK Dempster – 4 hours; Ron Griffin – 8 hours; and Frances Griffin – 6 hours. Have you noticed our new permanent sign?

Thanks so much to Ann Hertzler for the “All-in-One” printer, fax, scanner, copier, and to Ron Griffin for getting it up and running.

Also, a big thank-you to Ryder Lewis for his donation of a beautiful oil lamp, which came from the Federal Point Methodist Church, which was located off old Dow Road in Carolina Beach. The Church may be the “Mother” Methodist Church in North Carolina, dating back to mid-late 1700s. The Church building the lamp came from was erected ca. 1910-12, and was moved to Kure Beach when the Federal Government bought the land for a Buffer Zone for Sunny Point Army Terminal in 1956. The lamp will be the centerpiece in our soon-to-be exhibit of Churches located in the Federal Point area.

● **May 10th, Fort Fisher State Historic Site** will be having a **Confederate Memorial Day** program honoring the men who built and defended Fort Fisher, the Malakoff Tower of the South. For more information , call 458-5538.

● **Federal Point History Center** is now listed in Insider Guides’ community calendar on the web. Go to www.insiderinfo.us, click on the map for Wilmington, scroll thru the calendar.

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

Officers

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