

Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

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

Newsletter

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September, 2005

Darlene Bright, editor

September Meeting

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will meet, Monday, September 19, 2005, 7:30 PM, at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to Carolina Beach Town Hall.

Ms. Robin Robertson, preparing for her Master's degree dissertation on the history of Carolina Beach, will conduct a panel discussion and collect oral histories with the aid of several long-time citizens of the area: Ms. Lois Walton, Ms. Isabel Foushee, Milton Warwick, Jimmy Davis, and Jim Lucas. Audience participation will be encouraged.

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

Membership Picnic and Social

To kick off its annual membership drive, the Society will be holding a potluck picnic from 4:30 to 6:30 on Saturday, September 17. The social will be held at the waterfront home of Ryder Lewis, 1314 St. Joseph Street. Look for the Lewis name on the mailbox. Members and the public are invited to attend and learn more about the Society. Bring a covered dish, a lawn chair and prepare to have a good time with door prizes and special guests.

Last Month

Mr. Tom Matheson, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the Wilmington National Weather Service, gave a most interesting, entertaining, and educational break down on cause and effects of catastrophic, as well as prevailing, weather conditions that exist in our area from time to time. Tom compared many of the hurricanes which have hit this area in the past and revealed patterns we should be aware of to help predict such weather anomalies. He assured the audience of over 50 members and guests that if a sunami or earthquake were to come to Federal Point, it would probably be small. Our weather history tells him that our biggest threat remains from hurricanes and the storm surge they bring. It is reassuring that Tom Matheson is on the job watching out for us as we are again faced with Hurricane Ophelia approximately 200 miles off our coast threatening us today, September 12, 2005.

Thanks to Mr. Tom Matheson for a very delightful evening at the Federal Point History Center.

Federal Point Invaded From the Ocean by More Than 1,000 Camp Lejeune Marines, 1947.

(From the files of Bill Reaves, Wilmington, NC, 1999)

On June 12, 1947, it was announced that the spotlight would be on Carolina Beach when it is "invaded" by more than 1,000 Camp Lejeune Marines and men of Navy Transport Division 121 and Army Air Rescue Squadron "A". This realistic beachhead assault was to be broadcast over the Tobacco Network, which included radio stations WMFD, Wilmington; WJNC, Jacksonville; WHIT, New Bern; WGTC, Greenville; WGTM, Wilson; WGBR, Goldsboro; WFNC, Fayetteville; WRAL, Raleigh; and WTIK, Durham. The network was to air a running commentary on the maneuvers and also pick up the two-way operational broadcast between the destroyer flag-ship of the assault forces and the landing barges. This spectacle was the first of its kind broadcast in North Carolina and a large listening audience of many thousand was expected.

In addition to the above, which was to be held on June 16th, the North Carolina American Legion would be in convention with 25,000 delegates visiting Carolina Beach.

On June 15th the newspaper reported that “one of the greatest displays of peacetime military might along the South Atlantic coast, if not the greatest along the eastern coast, was to be demonstrated at Carolina Beach.” Fair weather was promised by Paul Hess, the Wilmington weatherman. The Legion delegates were reminded that the plans were to show action that closely resembled that faced by troops in the taking of islands in the Pacific and the Anzio and Normandy invasions. Planes, ships, paratroopers, and helicopters were to combine to make the show “one to remember.”

Five naval ships were to participate in the maneuvers and they were to be under the command of Capt. Stamps Howard, Commander of Navy Transport Division 125. They were to lie off shore and engage in preliminary shelling of the beach before the landing starts. Marines under command of Lt. Col. D. W. Silvey, Commander 2nd Marine Division, will also participate. Commanding the landing forces as they go in to take the beach head will be Capt. C. L. Robichaud. After the beach has been softened, Marines will make their amphibious landing and “mop up.” Airborne troops will be parachuted onto the beach to bolster the attacking forces after which first aid men will be landed to care for the wounded. The wounded will be removed by helicopters. It will be a scene of realism as bombs explode and shells burst while members of the attacking party wade through the surf onto the beach.

When the 16th arrived, zero hour was announced at 1400 hours. The mock invasion was slated to get underway at 2 p.m. Just south of the Breakers Hotel will be the largest gathering ever held in the state as thousands of visitors were expected to join the delegates to the Legion convention. Immediately following the mock invasion, a crack drill outfit from Fort Bragg, in which all men are over six feet tall, will perform.

The next day’s newspaper proclaimed the “mock invasion” a great thrill for all in attendance. The attack against the enemy was short-lived when a flame-thrower ignited the grass behind the beach and the flames, swept by the wind, raced towards several parked vehicles. The Marines quickly exchanged rifles for shovels and began to throw sand on the flames and soon had the “situation well in hand.”

Some 1,000 Marines and naval personnel, five large vessels and 12 Corsair fighter planes took part in the invasion and assaulted 300 yards of beach about half a mile south of the Breakers Hotel. While the Marines supposedly cleared the beach of the enemy, an LST and LSM moved in closer to the conflict, as if to discharge tanks and provisions and more personnel. In a little more than an hour after the assault began, the boats returned and removed the victors. After the Marine invasion an Army helicopter from Pope Field effected the rescue of a soldier supposedly wounded on the field of battle. While the ‘copter hovered stationery over the man, a harness was dropped, fitted to the soldier and he was hoisted to the plane. This type of rescue has been effected at times when the space was not large enough to land the conventional airplane.

Message From Your President

Judy Rhudy Thompson

I am sorry I was not able to be with you at our meeting last month. I’ve heard that Mr. Matheson gave a very interesting and informative talk on severe weather conditions. I look forward to seeing the tape very soon. By the way, did you know that we transfer all of our programs to VCR, and members can check out these program tapes from the History Center library.

The Society has two exciting events coming up within the next week. I hope that you have already marked your calendar and plan to come to the Membership Social and potluck picnic this Saturday at Ryder Lewis’ house. In addition to your favorite dish, please bring your friends and neighbors, especially folk who might be interested in joining the Society.

This month’s meeting promises to be very special with a panel discussion on Carolina Beach in the 40s and 50s. See you there!

Meet A Member

By Jeannie Gordon

(Appearing periodically in our newsletter, the purpose of this new feature is to personalize the faces and names of members you have met over the years.)

Leslie Bright was born and raised in Onslow County, North Carolina. With three brothers and a sister, he says large families were common in his small, tobacco-farming community. Shortly after moving to Carolina Beach on May 1, 1964, he started a 34-year career as an underwater archaeologist with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Stationed with the Underwater Archaeology Unit at Fort Fisher, Leslie had a fascinating career of surveying and mapping underwater sites, within the state, which had a high potential for historical significance. He has worked in lakes, rivers, bays and ocean, from Bath, Edenton, New Bern to Carolina Beach. He has seen probably all of the known submerged Civil War blockade runners on the Cape Fear Coast, including the *Venus*, *Douro*, *Hebe*, *Lynx*, *Modern Greece*, and the *General Beauregard*.

Leslie's job was to examine and survey submerged sites to try to ascertain their degree of historical significance; once determined, the site would be documented and then preserved in the best practical manner. He gives, as an example, his efforts in Bath, North Carolina, where efforts were being made to build and berth the *Elizabeth II*, a replica of the vessel that brought explorers to Roanoke Island. When diving to inspect the waters where the *Elizabeth II* would be berthed, an early Manteo shad boat was discovered. Of a distinctive design and unique to this area of the coast, the boat was carefully removed and subsequently placed in a museum. One of the last dives that Leslie participated in was the work on the *Queen Anne's Revenge* project (Blackbeards's ship) in Beaufort. Now retired, Leslie still maintains an informal relationship with the state and is often called upon as an adviser.

Blending his son and daughter with Darlene's four daughters, Leslie and Darlene have been married for 24 years. Keeping up with a large family keeps both of them plenty busy; and one of Leslie's greatest joys is being with their 6 ½ grand "young uns". He enjoys taking them out on the beach and teaching them how to interact with nature. When he has spare time, a rarity, Leslie likes to fish and mess around with his boat. He knows the beach and its environment and is a master with the barbequed pig, down-east style!

Leslie attended both East Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and is a certified S.C.U.B.A. instructor. He taught diving through the Professional Association of Diving Instructors for over 20 years in and around Wilmington and Carolina Beach. Skilled at working with his hands, Leslie coordinated the construction of the History Center and has helped many family and friends build or renovate their homes. He coached the church-league basketball team for many years., was on the Marine Advisory Board of Cape Fear Community College, and was also on the advisory board of the Carolina Beach Parks & Recreation Department.

With his background and interests, Leslie was a natural to be part of the driving force, with Darlene, Lynn Benson, Leila Mae Bost, Maggie Leiner, and several others, to conceive a society that would document and preserve the rich resources of the lower Cape Fear region. Through their efforts, the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society was established and has grown over the last eleven years. Though never an officer, Leslie has served on the Board of Directors most of this time; he is chair of the program committee and is responsible for the majority of the wonderful speakers who come to our monthly meetings. Like Darlene, Leslie often serves behind the scenes, writing articles for our newsletter, maintaining the History Center, and responding to the numerous queries for information on the area. His most recent interview was when the Astor Hotel burned. And we can all thank Leslie for our professional-looking sign at Lake Park Boulevard, which was built at no expense to the Society!

Leslie tends to talk nostalgically about Carolina Beach. He recalls when the ocean was crystal clear and the crowds were even larger than they are today because the beach was THE summertime destination for folks who came to enjoy the cool ocean breeze (no air conditioning inland), the plentiful fishing and swimming, and the boardwalk and amusements. He is realistic about the current growth of the area and, perhaps because of that growth, hopes to continue his service of recognizing and preserving the history of the Federal Point area. Thank you, Leslie, for all that you do!

Society Notes

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
Laney Real Estate Company
Dr. Vincent Smith, DDS
Taylor's Heating & Air, Inc.
Tucker Brothers Realty Company
Underwater Archaeology Branch

● **Don't Forget! Membership Picnic and Social, this Saturday**, September 17 at 4:30 to 6:30 pm. The social will be held at the home of Ryder Lewis, 1314 St. Joseph Street. Bring a covered dish, all your friends (and potential members) and a lawn chair.

● **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.

● **History Center News!** We had 41 visitors to our Center this past month. Thanks to our volunteers: Pat Bolander – 2 hours; Jeannie Gordon – 18 hours; Darlene Bright – 16 hours;

and Jo Wainright – 6 hours. The History Center is open every Friday and Saturday, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, or other times by appointment. Helping hands are needed to work in doing inventory and indexing files, photos, and other materials. If you can spare an hour or two, please let us know.

● **Shrimparoo!** Tuesday, September 20, 2005, 6 – 8:00 pm, at Elijah's Restaurant (outside on the deck), Historic Wilmington Foundation will be having their 3rd annual Fall Membership Drive Shrimparoo, a casual evening of seafood, beer & modern bluegrass music by L. Shape Lot. \$20 for members, \$35 for non-members (includes a 1 year individual membership). For more info – 762-2511.

Officers

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Vice-President - John Gordon
Secretary - Darlene Bright
Treasurer - Jeannie Gordon

Lynn Benson
James Dugan
Ron Griffin

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Mike Blasko
Ray Flowers
Jay Hockenbury

Leslie Bright
John Gordon
Cheri McNeill

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