

Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

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

Newsletter

Volume 13 No. 8

August, 2006

Darlene Bright, editor

August Meeting

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will hold its regular monthly meeting on Monday, August 21, 2006, 7:30 PM, at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to Carolina Beach Town Hall.

The Society is fortunate to have Samuel P. Townsend of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, now retired, speak on the State's early efforts to preserve lower Cape Fear history. Mr. Townsend will show his personal involvement and recollections in the establishment of Fort Fisher State Historic Site, Brunswick Town, Fort Anderson, the State Underwater Archaeology Program, and much more.

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

Last Month

Jack Fryar gave a very thorough and comprehensive presentation on the history of Fort Johnston in Southport, just across the Cape Fear River, to an audience of approximately 25 members and guests last month. Jack spoke on efforts underway to save the historic integrity of the site as it is being released by the US Government. Jack was encouraging citizens to contact their representatives to ask that the Fort be turned over to the State for possible inclusion into the Historic Site System.

Recently an announcement was made from the office of Congressional Representative, Mike McIntire, stating that the site would be transferred to the City of Southport for recreational use.

Let us all keep an eye on this historic property and contribute in whatever means necessary to keep it safe.

Message From Your President

By Judy Rhudy Thompson

Happy Hot Summer!

It sounds like good news regarding Fort Johnston in Southport. There has been some positive action – the Federal Government has decided to turn it over to the City of Southport's Parks and Recreation. There is a contract stating the City has to maintain the historical integrity of the site, so, even though it didn't land in the "hands of the State," at least for now, it won't be compromised.

Our area will miss Grover Lee Lewis. He passed away July 29. Our thoughts and prayers are with Blanche and her family.

I hope you all enjoyed our couple of days of cooler temps! I look forward to seeing you all next Monday.

Grover Lee Lewis

By Leslie Bright

Grover Lee Lewis was born in Taylorsville, NC, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains on April 20, 1916. He was the youngest of 14 children born to James William and Nancy Ann Lewis. His father, a mail carrier, died when Grover was nine years old.

During his youth, Grover displayed a keen talent for construction and design using both wood and cement. At the age of five, he began constructing facilities for his prized pigeons as well as cement ponds, birdbaths, and benches. He displayed an innate ability to add art to his designs.

At the age of nineteen years, Grover married Blanche Surratt in 1935. He moved his family to Carolina Beach in December 1941 to take a job at the Wilmington Shipyard as a welder building liberty ships, since an ailment to his leg prevented him from serving in the Army as World War II began. Grover and Blanche moved to Upchurch Apartments across from Cupboard Grocery and soon after to Marionette Cottage on Carolina Beach Avenue, North, across from Dolphin Lane. Hard working and seeing the need for more lodging facilities, Grover and Blanche leased the Raynar Lanier Motel, which contained approximately 50 rental rooms, and managed the property for the next 10 years. When a storm filled in the lot next door at 317 Carolina Beach Avenue, North, in the fall of 1944, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis purchased it and started making plans to build apartments on it.

Grover's talents for engineering and architectural design served him well in planning for what would be called Joy Lee Apartments. The Lewis family began working in the evenings making cement blocks, two at a time, using a hand operated cement block press. In spite of Grover's day job at the shipyard, the family turned out approximately 50 blocks per day.

W. W. Bordeaux was employed to help build Joy Lee Apartments which was completed in 1945. The apartments were named after Grover and Blanche's daughter as she always stole attention upon her frequent visits to the work site at the age of one and a half.

When the war ended Grover went into masonry construction full time while his wife to ran the large rooming house and Joy Lee Appartments. Grover employed a black worker, John Armstrong, who worked at his side for many years. Always displaying a flare for artful design, Grover's work was distinctive and classy, never ordinary. "His work has been featured in numerous magazines, films, and newspapers." In 1997 Joy Lee Appartments was nominated and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Throughout the years, Grover's talents were on display at Guy Johnson Motel, Paradise Inn, Seashore Drug Store (now Kings), Anchor Inn, the Boardwalk wishing well, the pool by the roller coaster in the Carolina Beach Amusement area and countless other places throughout the lower New Hanover County.

In spite of their busy life at work, Grover and his wife, Blanche, found time to foster eight children Grover quit smoking for keeps while laying the brick walls on Harbor Masters Restaurant. He placed his pipe and tobacco somewhere in the north wall. Obviously, along with his very strong work ethic, he also had a kind heart, strong will, and a keen sense of humor.

Grover Lee Lewis died July 29, 2006. According to his obituary, he retired from the Carolina Beach Fire Department after 21 years of service and was a member of the Fire Department band, "The Smoke Eaters Band." It states that Grover Lewis cherished close family ties, good friends and fellowship, hearty laughter and lively music. Grover Lewis and his family have and are continuing to contribute to making Carolina Beach a beautiful and better place to visit and live.

Society Notes

● **Membership Information: Dear Members:** At its last meeting, the Board of Directors recommended that we give each member the option of receiving your FPHPS newsletters via **email**. This might be more convenient for you, and certainly will help the Society to be fiscally responsible (newsletter postage has significantly increased). This option, also, might be especially attractive to those of you who maintain two mailing addresses, one here at the beach and another at your main home. If you would like to begin receiving your newsletter electronically, please send an email request to fphps@yahoo.com. To ensure that your message is not deleted as we clean up spam, please put "SEND MY NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL" in the Subject line.

Over the next year, as dues invoices go out, we will be requesting an update of your personal information (address, phone, email address, etc). When you receive your next invoice, please take the time to verify your data and return the information form with your check. Also, there has been some brief discussion of providing a membership directory to our members (only); and although nothing has been decided, we will be asking whether you would like to be included in a directory. Stay tuned to the newsletter for further reports on the directory – and please respond to your member information sheet when you receive it with your next dues notice.

● **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! Your support, through membership and participation, is the lifeblood of our organization!

● **Mark your calendar!** We will be having our annual membership picnic on Saturday, September 23, from 4:30 to 6:30 at Ryder Lewis's place on the water. This is always a fun and relaxing way to say goodbye to summer. The food will be pot-luck, and everyone is encouraged to bring a friend (and potential new member). Watch for more details in the September newsletter. **Thanks, Jeannie Gordon, Membership and Treasurer.**

● **History Center News!** The History Center is open every Friday and Saturday, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, or other times by appointment. We had 47 visitors at the Center this past month along with approximately 25 members and guests attending July's meeting. Thanks to our staff and volunteers: Darlene Bright-22 hours; Leslie Bright-13 hours; Jeannie Gordon-13 hours; Jo Wainright-6 hours; Henriette Weigle – 6; DK Dempster-6 hours; and, Pat Bolander-18 hours. Volunteers are always needed! Please let us know if you can spare an hour or two.

● The following persons have made a donation to our Society in memory of Mr. Grover Lee Lewis: Philip, Bruce, & Lee Lohr, of Lexington, NC; Mr. & Mrs. Guy Watson, of Charlotte, NC; Mr. & Mrs Russell Sapp and Mr. & Mrs Ray DeMattia, of Waynesboro, VA.; Mr. & Mrs. Howard Martin, of Deltona, FL; Mr. & Mrs. James D. Page and Mr. & Mrs. John Cowand, of Wilmington, NC

● If you have pictures and/or memorabilia that you would be willing to donate or let us copy, please call 458-0502 to set up an appointment.

Support our Business Members!

A & G Barbeque and Chicken
Austin & Son Garage, Inc.
BB&T
Bank of America
Britt's Donut Shop
Coastal K-9 Bakery, Inc.
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 Bros. Realty Company

● **Oral Histories.** The oral history committee has been re-activated by Ann Hertzler and Jeannie Gordon; and interviews with Lois Walton, Lynn Benson, and Jimmy Davis have already been recorded. Learning, first-hand, about growing up at Carolina Beach has been fascinating. If you know of anyone who might have knowledge of Carolina or Kure Beach, Seabreeze or the Monkey Junction area, please leave a message at the History Center, 458-0502.

● **Carolina Beach Community Church, c. 1940 (now Hope Memorial Baptist Church) To Receive Society Plaque.** On Saturday, August 26th, from 12 noon until 7:00 pm, the Hope Memorial Baptist Church, located at 4th Street and Cape Fear Blvd., Carolina Beach, will be holding an Open House Restoration Day. This is an all day event with live music and lots of good food. At approximately 5:00 pm, the Society will present the Church with a historic Plaque. Please come out and support this important event.

● **Annual BBQ Fundraiser** will be held Saturday, October 7, 2006, 11:00 am – until. Volunteers are needed, so look for the sign-up sheet at Monday's meeting. Start spreading the word.

● **Flavor of the Past**, a quintet of musical moods and flavorful foods will be Saturday, August 26, 2006, 9am until 4pm. Tickets are \$35 through August 11; \$50 beginning August 12 and include admission to four historic sites and a morning cruise on the *Henrietta III*, period music and living history experience at each site, historic-inspired food samplings at each site, and trolley shuttle among sites. For more info, call 798-4362.

We always welcome contributions and letters. We look forward to hearing from you!

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