

Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

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

Newsletter

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Darlene Bright, editor

January Meeting

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will meet Monday, January 16, 2006, 7:30 PM, at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to Carolina Beach Town Hall.

Stan Clardy and his wife, Cathy, of Statesville, NC, famed for their Civil War History musical performances, will provide the program, "The Story Behind the Songs." The program will include Civil War stories, along with original and period music. The Clardys have received rave reviews throughout the south. After a brilliant Confederate Memorial Day performance a few years back, Mr. Gene Risley of our Society, now deceased, stated that he had not been as moved by such a performance in his lifetime.

All our Civil War History fans will not want to miss this very special event.

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

Last Month

The **Best** Christmas Party yet was had by our Society and guests Monday, December 19, 2005. John Golden and Jim Clare provided music and led the "choir" of approximately 60 members and guests as they sang favorite Christmas carols and Civil War period music on a full stomach. Speaking of which, a great quantity of assorted delicious dishes and desserts rivaled any in the past, much more than you would care to shake a fork at.

We all appreciated the many covered dishes prepared by everyone. We are convinced that people who appreciate their history share a similar fondness for their food. One covered dish appearing at most of our parties was the half acre of collards and ham hocks brought by the Hockenburys. These were the best I've had since Mama died.

Everyone had a grand time as the Christmas Spirit filled the air!

Message From Your President

By Judy Rhudy Thompson

Happy New Year! 2005 brought a lot of changes everywhere around Pleasure Island. I pray you have positive changes in your lives in 2006.

Our delicious December meeting really enhanced the festive Christmas atmosphere, and no matter where your faith is, I hope the end of the year was a wonderful time for you all. And at the History Center, we could at least come to the conclusion that we can all cook fantastic dishes and eat and enjoy each other's company.

This coming Saturday, January 14th, at the Fort Fisher Civil War Museum, Leslie and his helpers will be enhancing the re-enactment with his delicious sausage dogs and barbeque sandwiches to benefit the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society. Please offer your help as he cannot do it by himself.

See ya at the meeting!

Destruction of Confederate Watercraft To Prevent Capture, After the Fall of Fort Fisher

By Leslie S. Bright

(Some information gleaned from “Shipwrecks of the Civil War,” by Don Shomette and “Shipwreck Encyclopedia of the Civil War: N.C. 1861-1865,” by Lee Spence)

With the fall of Fort Fisher on January 15, 1865, little hope remained that the Cape Fear River and surrounding areas would remain under Confederate control. As Union expeditionary forces made their plans to proceed up the river and capture Wilmington, NC, only Fort Anderson posed any major threat. Confederate forces at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, mainly Forts Holmes and Caswell, began to focus their attention on damage control and rendering resistance as U.S. troops moved toward Wilmington, 16 miles up the river. As the Confederates pulled out of their positions, they tried to destroy or severely damage everything that might be of benefit to the enemy. Many of the watercraft in the Cape Fear River shared this fate.

The Confederate gunboat, *Tallahassee*, was blown up by her crew to prevent capture during the battle at Fort Fisher on January 15, 1865. The next day, during the night of January 16th, the crew of the Confederate transport, *Cape Fear*, sank their ship in the river off Smithville after transporting troops from Fort Holmes to Smithville as they evacuated their defenses. The steamer, *Pelteway*, was destroyed on January 17th by orders of Brig. General Louis Hebert during evacuation of Smithville. Several vessels were destroyed in anticipation of the fall of Wilmington. The Confederate gunboat, *Equator*, with one gun, was deliberately burned to prevent capture by Union forces. Confederate gunboat, *Yadkin*, a small river steamer built in Wilmington, was burned in February by Lieutenant Commander W. A. Kerr in anticipation of the fall of Wilmington. The Confederate torpedo boat, *Squib*, armed with a percussion spar torpedo was destroyed by her crew of six men at the fall of Wilmington. During the fall of Wilmington, the Confederate sidewheel steam tender, *Caswell*, was burned by its crew of thirty-two men to prevent it from falling into the hands of Federals.

Likely, there were a number of small watercraft, as well as vessels under construction, including submarines, destroyed along the Cape Fear River and Wilmington area, as the lower Cape Fear area came under Union control. The carnage continued up the Cape Fear River, at least as far as Fayetteville, NC, as Union forces advanced. In March, 1865, as Confederate General Hardee retreated from the battle of Kinston, the Confederate ironclad gunboat, *Neuse*, was set on fire and sunk to prevent capture by Union General Sherman's advancing army. The sternwheel steamer, *Caldwell*, was burned in Fayetteville, NC, on March 14, 1865.

Many of these vessels of various importance to the American Civil War effort still remain in their watery graves after playing their roles in during a trubulant part of our history.

Susie Carson Recalls Simpler Times

(Susie Carson is a lifelong resident of Southport and author of the town's history, Joshua's Dream: A Town With Two Names. She is also a member of the Brunswick County Historical Society, the Southport Historical Society, and the Federal Point Historical Preservation Society. Susie sent this to me a few years back and I hope you enjoy her memories as much as I did).

Christmas is over for another year, but did it stir up memories of old times for you as it did for me? A very dear longtime old friend came to visit me, and since we had not seen each other in many years, we had a wonderful time reminiscing about the days when we were next door neighbors on Dry Street in old Southport.

I decided to share some of those memories and to urge those of you who have children and grandchildren to write down your own memories to pass along to them. I assure you they will love them.

As Dorothy and I talked, it was only natural that we discussed those peaceful days when we were growing up. It's true our parents were coping with hard economic times of the Great Depression, and life was not easy for them from the time I was 9 years old until after I graduated from high school. But life was peaceful and slow. World War II was still a few years in the future, and the world of technology was developing quite slowly.

We had radios but no televisions. We enjoyed our radio programs, though, and waited eagerly for each episode of our favorites. There were fewer than 75 business and home telephones in town, and our family did

not have one. There were one or two pay phones downtown, but most of the time we just talked with friends in person or used a neighbor's phone if there was an emergency.

For most of that period, first-class postage was three cents an ounce for letters and one cent for postcards, but of all things, we had to lick our own stamps. In some of the downtown offices the secretaries dampened the stamps with a wet sponge or used one of those little ceramic gadgets with a wet roller.

We existed without air conditioning, too, even in the offices and hospital. Instead, there were electric fans for those who could afford the extra electric costs, but most of us made do with front porch swings and rockers. The porch was the place to be in hot weather.

On extremely hot nights some mothers made pallets from old quilts and let the children sleep on them in the hall or on the porch.

This was safe enough because Southport's crime rate was almost nonexistent. Houses were left unlocked and in summer, doors and windows were always open, protected from mosquitoes by screens that were rarely ever hooked.

A real treat for us was a visit to the five and dime stores on Front Street in Wilmington. At these stores we could actually buy items for five and ten cents. Also, we could go down to Hall's Drugstore on the corner of Front and Market and get a small cone of ice cream for five cents or a larger one for a dime.

We've never heard of a credit car, but we could go to stores in Wilmington and have clothes and appliances put on "lay-away". We paid once a week until they were paid for. Also, we could open charge accounts and make monthly payments. Daddy did not much like the idea of buying items he could not pay cash for; but sometimes he did.

Once, his three young teenagers were pleading for a record player so they could listen to 78 rpm records of Bing Crosby, Kate Smith and others, so this time he did not have any choice. We enjoyed that record player a long time and ran errands and did baby sitting to help him make the payments.

At Southport grocery stores, families could buy their groceries all week and charges were put on a running tab. On Saturday when the head of the household got paid, he went down and paid their "grocery bill" first thing. For those who were paid once a month, similar arrangements were made.

Yes, those were good and simple days in our sleepy little town where the pace was slow, and neighbors, friends and families had time for each other.

Not many today would be willing to give up modern conveniences, miracle drugs, television and computers to relive those times, but our memories of them sure are sweet!

Society Notes

Support our Business Members!

A & G Barbeque and Chicken
Bank of America
Branch Banking & Trust Company
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

● **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!** The History Center is open every Friday and Saturday, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, or other times by appointment. In addition to 62 members and guests who were here for our December meeting, we had 19 visitors to our Center this past month. Thanks to our volunteers: Jeannie Gordon-4 hours; Darlene Bright-12 hours; Leslie Bright-10 hours. And also, our faithful workers: DK Dempster, Cindy Clark, and Pat

Bolander. The History Center continues to disseminate historic information and answer public inquiries from those seeking information on the history of Federal Point. Helping hands are always 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. Thanks to the Tregemboes for the donation of a photographic display of the Tote-Em-In-Zoo/Tregembo Animal Park.

Officers

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

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Ron Griffin

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