



Federal Point Historic Preservation Society

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Newsletter

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Darlene Bright, editor



October Meeting Monday October 20, 2008

The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will hold its regular monthly meeting on Monday, October 20th at 7:30 pm at the Federal Point History Center, 1121-A North Lake Park Blvd., adjacent to the Carolina Beach Town Hall. Members and the general public are cordially invited. Refreshments will be served following the meeting.

Society member and esteemed local author, Elaine Hensen, will speak on "Bathing Beauties in Vintage Postcards." She will discuss and expand on Chapter Eight from her book, *Carolina Beach: A Postcard History*, which was published by Arcadia Press in Spring 2007. Elaine's talk will be illustrated with many postcard views of the changing beach fashions and mores through the past century.

Elaine Henson grew up in Wilmington and has loved going to the beach all her life. A career educator, she and her husband bought a 1940's cottage at Carolina Beach as a summer rental. In searching for vintage pictures to use in the cottage, she began collecting old postcards, and collecting old postcards, and collecting old postcards. Luckily she loves sharing the history these long ago "throw-aways" portray. She continues to scour e-Bay for the latest uncovered treasure.

Membership Picnic and Social Debbie Price, Chairperson

What a glorious evening! The weather couldn't have been more perfect, and Ryder and the Lewis family had done a wonderful job of grooming their maritime grove along the waterway. It was hard to imagine that just two days before the area had been ravaged by a "unnamed" Nor'easter – which felt an awful lot like a hurricane.

30+ people attended, and the food was, as always for this group, beyond yummy. From Debbie's great grilled hotdogs to a scrumptious banana pudding for desert, everyone ate way too much. Sadly we had no new members present – though many had been invited. It seemed to be a particularly busy weekend with everyone having way too many charitable and social engagements to juggle.

The door prizes that Debbie and her volunteers had rounded up were popular, with the subscriptions to the Island Gazette being the most fought-over item. Please take time to thank the following merchants for their generous participation in our event.

Membership Picnic 2008 Donors

Big Daddy's (Kure Beach): \$40.00 gift certificate.

Britt's Donut Shop (Carolina Beach): 2 t-shirts, three certificates for a dozen donuts good 09 season.

Checkered Church (Carolina Beach): Green scented candle

Coastal K-9 Bakery (Monkey Junction): Basket of Halloween treats for the doggie in your life.

Frank's Pizza (Carolina Beach): \$15.00 gift certificate.

FPHPS two tote bags, two sets note cards, 1 FPHPS cookbook.

218 personal members 22 business members

September Meeting

Leslie Bright introduced our speaker, **Harry Warren**, director of the North Carolina Museum of Forestry located just 45 minutes west of Wilmington in Whiteville, NC. Harry's talk, "**Why We Are Called Tarheels**," was a well illustrated description of the tar and turpentine industry that became as important to shipping as oil is today. The production of naval stores in the era of wooden ships became the major industry of eastern North Carolina and made Wilmington the largest city in the state until the 1920's. As times changed due to iron and steel ships and the depletion of the local pine forests, the field workers moved deeper into the South for employment.

Harry encouraged everyone to take a trip to Whiteville to visit the growing museum, a subdivision of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. Their hours are: Monday – Friday 9:00-5:00, Saturday 1:00-4:00 and Sunday 2:00 – 5:00. It is a perfect outing for one of our glorious fall days.

President's Message October, 2008

As I write this, Sylvia and I are preparing for a six weeks volunteer host/caretaker assignment at Balsam Lake Lodge in the Nantahala National Forest in western North Carolina. As a result, we will be AWOL (absent with official leave) from the Society from Oct. 7 to Nov. 22. Fortunately, a number of people have volunteered to chair the meetings in my absence, and I thank them most sincerely.

In the past several weeks I have had a number of conversations with members who are interested in various society projects. I need to beg their indulgence and let me get back to them after we return in November. Of course, all are welcome to proceed in my absence. If you need to reach me, Rebecca has our snail mail address and phone number.

I know you all will have a number of super events in October and November, and Sylvia and I are sorry to miss them.

Don

Lights of the Lower Cape Fear – Some Important Dates By Rebecca Taylor & Gayle Kersey

1761 In 1761, the pilot road across the beach at the "Hawl-over" was blown out by a terrific hurricane and was converted into what was to be known as "New Inlet."

1784 NC General Assembly passed an act levying an additional sixpence per ton duty on all vessels entering the Cape Fear River, the proceeds to be set aside for construction of the proposed lighthouse at **Bald Head**. Benjamin Smith, owner of Smith Island, offered to donate ten acres of "high land on the promontory of Bald Head" to the state of NC, after a special assembly action providing protection of the cattle and hogs he grazed on the Island.

1789 The NC General Assembly enacted legislation that added Smith Island to the "commissioners of pilotage for the bar and river of Cape Fear" and further prohibited any person from keeping "cattle, hogs and stock of any kind on Smith's Island."

August 7, 1789 United States Congress passed act "for the establishment and support of light-houses, beacons, buoys and public piers." As of August 15, 1789 the federal government would assume all costs for lighthouses and other aids-to-navigation. They assumed all responsibility for twelve colonial lighthouses and four incomplete projects including **Bald Head**.

November 27, 1789 "A committee of the House of Representatives reported that the Cape Fear commissioners had contracted with a man named Thomas Withers to deliver 200,000 bricks to **Bald Head** for the purpose of erecting a lighthouse."

1790 NC General Assembly transferred land for **Bald Head** and **Ocracoke lighthouses** to Federal Govt.

1795 Congress had to make three additional appropriations of over \$7,000 before the work was finished. **Bald Head Light** lit. First keeper Henry Long who was paid \$333.33 a year.

1810 US Dept of Treasury authorizes double line of 2000 poles filled with brush to stop reported erosion endangering **Bald Head**.

April 1813 Bald Head (1) "lighthouse it self is washed down." Only remnant of Bald Head (1) is steel engraving showing a water spout approaching the lighthouse.

May 22, 1816 Treasury Dept. published calls for proposals for the building of a Light-House on **Bald Head** (Old Baldy) in the State of North Carolina.

1817 Bald Head (Old Baldy) completed and lit.

September 1816 -- March 1817 Federal Point Lighthouse (1) was built by Benjamin Jacobs. He was paid \$1300. The beacon was 40 feet high and painted white. It stood on the north side of the entrance to the Cape Fear River.

April 7, 1817 Charles B. Gause deeded an acre of land on **Federal Point** to the United States government for the erection of a **light house**. The deed was recorded in New Hanover County Deed Book P, page 396.

April 13, 1836 Federal Point #1 was destroyed by fire.

1837 Federal Point Lighthouse (2) and a Dwelling House was built by Henry Stowell. The height of the tower was 40 feet from base to lantern, which was a Fixed light with 11 Winslow Lewis Patent lamps with 14 inch reflectors. The visibility was 15 miles.

1843 - 1845 "A complete renovation of the lighthouse Federal Point (2) and the keeper's dwelling was made during the years 1843 through 1845."

August 14, 1848 Congress authorized bill for series of lighthouses from Bald Head to Wilmington. \$3,600 for: beacon light on the **Upper Jetty**, Cape Fear river. \$3,500: beacon light on **Campbell's island**; \$3,500: beacon light at **Orton Point** \$3,500; light boat at **Horse Shoe Shoal** \$10,000; two beacon lights placed at **Price's Creek** \$6,000; two light-houses and keeper's house on **Oak Island** \$9,000; two buoys marking the bar \$500."

1849 "The last inlet light to be placed along the Cape Fear River was the **Price [s] Creek Lighthouse**, which was built in 1849. Two structures were actually built on the river, and were part of a larger group of river lights that helped ships reach Wilmington, North Carolina's largest port. The lights included **Oak Island, Campbell Island, Orton's Point**, and a lightship at Horse Shoe [Shoal]. The beacons were configured as range lights that would line up to better reveal the inlet and help vessels navigate the channel."

September 7, 1849 "**Oak Island lights** were completed." "...It had two free-standing beacons and a separate structure for the keeper," commonly called Caswell Lights.

May 2, 1851 Letter from Mr. Rankin commending payment to Wm. A. Wright "for services rendered under the appropriation for the erection of Light Houses."

-- January 1, 1850 erection of Beacons at **Oak Island**.

-- May 1 – Aug. 17, 1850 Erection of Beacon at **Orton Point**.

-- May 1 – Aug. 17, 1850 Erection of Beacon at **Campbell's Island**.

-- January 21 – Aug 17, 1851 Erection of Beacons at **Price's Creek**.

In this letter there is a P.S. reading; "The Light Boat has arrived."

"During the War" "Despite the fact that all lights were extinguished at the advent of the hostilities between the States in 1861, Colonel William Lamb found it necessary to have a beacon at Fort Fisher mounted on a very high mound of earth called Mound Battery, to guide the blockade runners through New Inlet. The beacon was only lighted upon the return of the proper signal from a friendly vessel and after the vessel had entered the Cape Fear safely, the light was extinguished. From reports, this light was a type of mobile unit."

1863 "Price's Creek Light House – Confederate States Signal Station. We see on the Western side of the Cape Fear River the old ante-bellum light house and keeper's residence on Price's Creek, which were used during the Civil War as a signal station – the only means of communication between Ft. Caswell at the western bar and Fort Fisher at the New Inlet was Smithville, where the Confederate General resided." There are also references to signal communication between Ft. Fisher and Ft. Anderson near Orton Pt.

After the war “The lighthouses on the Cape Fear River south of Wilmington, extinguished during the war, were not replaced, except for the screw-pile at **Federal Point** near New Inlet and the small lighthouses on **Oak Island** near the mouth of the main river. Temporary day markers were erected to take the place of the other lights on the Cape Fear, and in the 1880’s a series of fourteen unattended range beacons, for the most part consisting of lanterns mounted on top of pilings, were installed to aid mariners navigating the lower reaches of the river. “

1865 Frying Pan Shoals: “A two-mast schooner-rigged vessel was anchored off the tip of the shoals in ten fathoms of water. The hull and lower part of the masts were painted yellow and the words ‘Frying Pan Shoals,’ in bold black letters on each side, the vessel exhibited two lights at an elevation of forty feet above sea level.”

1866 Cape Fear (Old Baldy) Lighthouse was extinguished because a new lighthouse had been erected on **Federal Point**. “Screw pile at Federal Point”

1879 Oak Island range lights rebuilt. “Commonly called Caswell Lights.” “Also, written records clearly describe the lights that were rebuilt in 1879. The front range light was a wooden structure with gingerbread-house elements, secured to a sixteen-foot high by fourteen-foot wide brick foundation...” “...The lower or rear light was a simple one, Mounted on skids so it could be moved when the channel periodically shifted.”

June 14, 1879 Mr. Henry Nutt, chairman of the Committee on River and Bar Improvement, informed the Wilmington Newspaper, THE MORNING STAR, that New Inlet was closed. It was his honor to be the first to walk across this day, at 12 noon, dry-footed, from Federal Point to Zeke’s Island, a distance of nearly a mile, in the company of his grandson, Wm. M. Parsley.

1880 The **Bald Head Lighthouse** (Old Baldy) was re-lighted, because the New Inlet was now closed. The **Federal Point Lighthouse** (3) was found to be useless.

August 23, 1881 The **lighthouse at Federal Point** was destroyed by fire late this afternoon. This lighthouse had not been in use since the closing of New Inlet, but it was occupied as a dwelling by Mr. Taylor, the former keeper. It was a wooden structure, situated about one mile from the site of Fort Fisher.

1893 “A hurricane seriously damaged the **Oak Island range lights and keeper’s house.**” “Front beacon was rebuilt.”

July 18, 1893 Congress approved \$35,000 for **Cape Fear Lighthouse**. Also authority for an additional \$35,000 if needed.

August 31, 1903 Charlie Swan became keeper of the NEW **Cape Fear** Lighthouse. He lit the lamp that put it in service.

1941 Bald Head Lighthouse (old Baldy) becomes a **radio beacon**.

May 15, 1958 “The former keeper for **Cape Fear Lighthouse**, Cap’n Charles Swann, threw the switch that activated the **Oak Island Lighthouse** on May 15, 1958. This was the last lighthouse built in North Carolina, and one of the last built in the United States.” Two Marine Corps helicopters were needed to put the lamp into place.”

September 12, 1958 **Cape Fear Lighthouse** demolished.

1964 Frying Pan Lightship replaced by 1/5 million dollar “tower.”

November 27, 1964 Last **Frying Pan Lightship** was relieved of duty after 110 years. Was reassigned at a “relief” ship for the Cape May Station. Was Lightship # 115, the first diesel on the east coast.

1964 Frying Pan Light Station Built in Louisiana and brought on a huge barge to NC 28 miles southeast of Cape Fear cost \$2 million.

Spring/Summer 2004 Frying Pan Shoals Station scheduled to be demolished.

Society Notes

Support our Business Members!

BB&T
Bame Ace Hardware
Britt's Donut Shop
Coastal K-9 Bakery, Inc.
Fort Fisher Restoration Committee
Frank's Pizza
Friends of Brunswick Town
Got-Em-On-Live Bait Club
Hanover Iron Works, Inc.
Historical Society of Topsail Island
Island Florals by Roxanne
Island Gazette
Island Tackle and Hardware
Laney Real Estate Company
B. Parker Protective & Lock
Pleasure Island Chamber of
Commerce
Dr. Vincent Smith, DDS
Snow's Cut Monthly Magazine
Taylor's Heating & Air, Inc.
Tucker Bros. Realty Company
Zorba's Steak & Seafood

- **Membership Information:** Debbie Price, Chairperson. No new members again this month though everyone tried valiantly to bring new members to the picnic. Are we beginning to see the effect of the current economic woes? September and October should see the most new members! Even renewals are lagging behind. PLEASE encourage friends, neighbors, and especially family to join and help keep our work of preserving the history of this special area alive.

Would you like to receive e-mail reminders of our meetings and events? Some members who get the Newsletter on paper (because they like to keep them) as well as those of us who are "calendar challenged" would like to get a brief e-mail reminding them of upcoming programs, fund raisers and socials. Please e-mail Rebecca and asked to be put on the "Events Reminder" e-mail list. I'll do my best to get a reminder out about 4-5 days before all of our events.

- **History Center News:** Darlene Bright, Director. Our volunteers who helped keep the History Center open in October were Juanita Winner, Ron Griffith, Sylvia Snook and Lois Taylor. Lois also helped again this month with the newsletter mailing. In addition to approximately 40 members and guests at our September meeting, we had 42 visitors at the History Center in the month of August. Both Got-'em-on-live and the UDC held their monthly meetings at the

History Center. The UDC hosted Col. Black Jack Travis for a book signing on Saturday September 20. Also of great interest to our visitors was the Wilmington "Ladies Tea Walk" Chapter, NSDAR's wonderful teapot display marking Constitution Month here at the center.

Mark your calendars now for Saturday December 6th. Darlene and Rebecca are planning a Gift Shop Winterfair with local authors selling and signing their books, new items available in the gift shop and a special table for our business members to promote their services. A list of authors will follow as soon as they are all confirmed. We will also be making Christmas ornaments to sell so gather your glitter, ribbon and glue gun and get ready to craft.

- New merchandise for the Gift Shop at the History Center. We have begun adding items for the Gift Shop in preparation for our busy holiday season. On order are sweatshirts, mugs and lanyards with our logo on them, as well as a number of puzzles and games for kids, featuring pirates, the Civil War, and lighthouses. I have every hope that most of the merchandise will be in the shop by the October 20th meeting so bring your wallet or checkbook along to the meeting and get started on your gift giving list. Who doesn't have a grandchild, niece or nephew who isn't mad about pirates?

- The **ATTRACTIONS Coupon books** are here! We have 36 to sell this year *and the price hasn't gone up!* They are still \$25.00 [of which we get \$10.00] and include hundreds of dollars worth of coupons. That means you get even more value for your money. With places like the Ocean Grill, Courtyard by Marriott, Subway, Krispy Kreme, and even Bame Ace Hardware and the Ft. Fisher Aquarium included, there's plenty of places right here on the Island to save some money. Please consider buying them to give as Christmas presents as well as buying one for yourself. I used my last one to find new places to eat out as most of the restaurants have included their menus.

- A HUGE THANKS to the folks in the **Got-'em-on-live Fishing Club**. They have paid for the building of two new display cabinets for the History Center as well as made a substantial donation toward the upkeep of the History Center's display space. Their display should be finished soon, so look for it on the back wall at the next meeting,

Upcoming Events – FPHPS

November 1, 11am – 3 pm. MARK your calendar NOW for our annual **Down East Barbeque!** Please pick up tickets to sell to your friends and neighbors as well. We've even got extra posters at the History Center for members to post around town! This is one of our most popular projects, and EVERYONE says it's the best barbeque around. Besides Leslie's "secret recipe" pulled pork, there will be beans, slaw, and hushpuppies included on each \$6.00 plate. Drinks and desserts can be purchased for \$1.00 each.

Upcomng Events – Around the Area

On Saturday October 11, the **Wrightsville Beach Museum of History**, 303 West Salisbury Dr., WB, will conduct a "Porch Sale" from 8am to noon. Gently loved household goods as well as knick-knacks, furniture, glassware, toys, children's clothes, or baby equipment will be among the items available. Take a morning and drop by our sister museum and help them raise funds for future activities and programs.

Sunday October 19, **Horse-drawn Wagon Tours of Oakdale Cemetery** Looking for a fun family outing with a little history thrown in? We have the perfect answer - Friends of Oakdale Cemetery will offer horse-drawn wagon tours in the cemetery on **Sunday, October 19, 2008** (rain date – October 26). Nip and Tuck, two magnificent Percheron horses, will pull the wagon driven by Ed Lewis of Currie Work and Driving Horse Farm. Climb aboard Ed's wagon and enjoy a 30-minute, late afternoon trot and narrated tour of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery. **Tours are offered every thirty minutes from 3:00 PM, with the last tour leaving at 5:30 PM.** The fee is 10.00 for adults and \$8.00 for children 12 and younger. (Friends of Oakdale members receive \$2 off the price!) Mark your calendar now because this is something you won't want to miss!

October 23-25, The annual conference of the **North Carolina Maritime History Council** will be held in Fayetteville this year. Hosted by the Museum of the Cape Fear, the keynote speaker will be Larry Earley, author of *Looking for Longleaf: The Fall and Rise of an American Forest* published by UNC-Press. For more information on this event, go to <http://www.ncmaritimehistory.org> or just put "North Carolina Maritime Council" in your favorite search engine.

Officers

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Vice-President – Hazel Logue
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Elaine Henson	John Gordon	Cheri McNeill
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