



# NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. BOX 22, WINNABOW, NORTH CAROLINA

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## THE FRYING PAN LIGHTSHIP PROJECT

By  
Frying Pan Lightship Commission

In July of 1972, Phase One of six phases planned for the restoration of the Frying Pan Lightship was completed when the ship was moved to her permanent mooring slip at the foot of Howe Street in Southport. This event marked the culmination of many hours of planning, coordination and execution of plans.

The lightship was obtained by the City of Southport in 1967 and since its acquisition has been a center of controversy, but at long last the restoration project is moving forward and is expected to gain momentum as Phase Two is begun.

Frying Pan Lightship was stationed at the outer extremity of Frying Pan Shoals, about thirty miles southwest of Bald Head Island and Cape Fear. The lightship was the last of several such vessels operating, since 1854, as an aid to navigators approaching the mouth of Cape Fear River. Built in 1929 and commissioned in July 1930, Frying Pan Lightship was the first vessel of its kind on the Atlantic Coast equipped with Diesel electric engines. An electric radio signal aboard ship transmitted fifteen minutes out of every hour in fair weather and continuously in fog. Its light was an incandescent electric beacon of 13,000 candlepower. The usual complement of the lightship was a crew of sixteen -- 3 officers and 13 enlisted men.

The ship's statistics, abstracted from U. S. Coast Guard records, are as follows: Length - 133 feet 3 inches, width - 30 feet; maximum draft - 13 feet; height of masts above keel - 78 feet; hull, decks and superstructure of steel; number of main engines - 4 (671RC-GM Diesel), 350 hp @300 rpm; main propulsion - diesel electric drive; anchors - 2 - 7,000 lbs. each; bell - 36 inches, 1,000 lbs.; air operated fog signal; ballast - 20 tons pig iron in cement; one motor whaleboat, one dinghy, one rubber boat; lanterns - two, 14 3/4 inches x 15 inches, 500 mm lens; built in Charleston, South Carolina by Charleston Drydock Company.

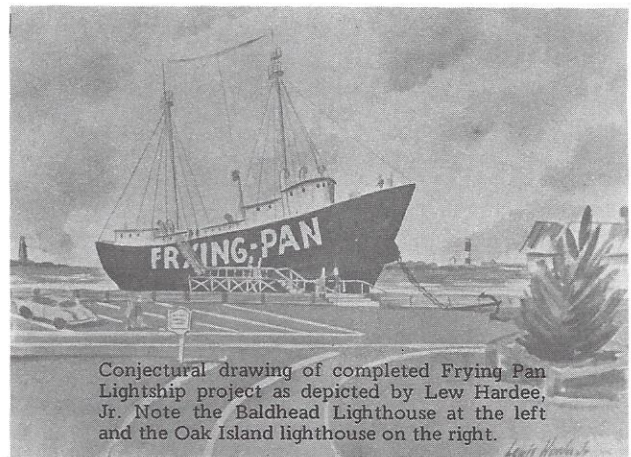
After thirty-four years of service off Cape Fear, the lightship was replaced in 1964 by a steel tower rising some one hundred feet above the ocean surface at the approximate position of the lightship station.

Although its function is the same as that of the old lightship, the modern tower has several advantages. First, the estimated length of service is seventy-five years, much longer than the average life expectancy of a vessel used in this capacity. Also, after an initial expenditure comparable to one year's maintenance costs for a lightship, the tower requires much less upkeep than the periodic overhauling necessary for a vessel. In terms of safety and dependability the tower is an obvious improvement over a lightship which was always subject to being damaged or going adrift during a severe storm, just when her service was most vital to navigators.

After the tower began operation in 1964, Frying Pan Lightship was refitted as a relief lightship and permanently stationed at Cape May, New Jersey. Then, three years later the vessel was decommissioned and given to the City of Southport.

The permanent berthing of Frying Pan Lightship on Southport's waterfront in July 1972 marked the completion of the first phase in a six part program for renovating and preserving the old lightship. The second phase will involve sandblasting and repainting of the exterior and main deck. Phase Three calls for sandblasting and painting the after deck and radio beacon room and installation of the lights. Renovation of the pilot wheel house, CO's quarters, lower deck and ward room will constitute the fourth and fifth stages of this project. During Phase Six the crew's quarters and all areas forward of the ward room, including the galley, are scheduled to be renovated.

Frying Pan Lightship offers a unique opportunity to preserve a tangible part of Lower Cape Fear history. It is hoped that the lightship will also become the nucleus of a general museum in which the story of navigation in this area over the centuries will be portrayed through artifacts, displays and exhibits.



Conjectural drawing of completed Frying Pan Lightship project as depicted by Lew Hardee, Jr. Note the Baldhead Lighthouse at the left and the Oak Island lighthouse on the right.

## VOUCHERS OF THE WAR OF 1812

On the following pages you will find a list of the Brunswick County men who are listed in the book INDEX TO VOUCHERS OF THE WAR OF 1812. This book can be found in the North Carolina Department of Archives and History. The actual vouchers are in the Treasurers and Comptrollers Papers and photo-copies of them can be made for a nominal fee if one wants them. Those names with part of the name in parenthesis is just as it was in the Index. The box number on the right side of the page is the number you need to get the original voucher for copying. I hope that you will enjoy reading the names as much as I enjoyed copying them.

Lucille Dresser Blake



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AUGUST MEETING

TIME: Monday, August 14, 1972 at 8 p.m.

PLACE: Southport - Brunswick County Library, Southport, N. C.

PROGRAM: "Early Literature in N. C." by Mrs. Mary Clayton Mintz