



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BRUNSWICK TOWN, P.O. BOX 356, SOUTHPORT, N.C.

VOL. XVII, No. 2

MAY 1977

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOUTHPORT - BRUNSWICK COUNTY LIBRARY: 1912-1977

By Phillip Barton with assistance
from Kathryn Carson and Sue King

According to the *Southport News* of August 29, 1912, the setting was the Garrison House at Fort Johnston. The time, 8:00 p.m. There was the sound of music, a silver-tongued orator, and young ladies serving cool and delicious refreshments on the daintily appointed tables by moonlight. The occasion was the opening of the public library for the town of Southport, to which everybody had been invited by the president and members of the Southport Civic League.

The speaker, Col. Raymond W. Springer from Fort Caswell, said: "That this is a very happy occasion no one will doubt, for it marks the culmination of earnest and patient efforts on the part of the Civic Club, resulting in the opening, on this historic site, of a public library of some four hundred carefully selected volumes. It has given your people something worthy to be done, one for another, and for the town, and has aroused their civic pride and spirit. And now the work is completed, and the books are to be thrown open to public use and enjoyment. No one can realize the civic benefit of your efforts, in measuring strength for greater efforts, and laying a solid foundation for the formation of personal character."

The editor of the paper commented that the opening of a public library in Southport marked the beginning of a new era, "... the dawn of a better, brighter day for this and the coming generation."

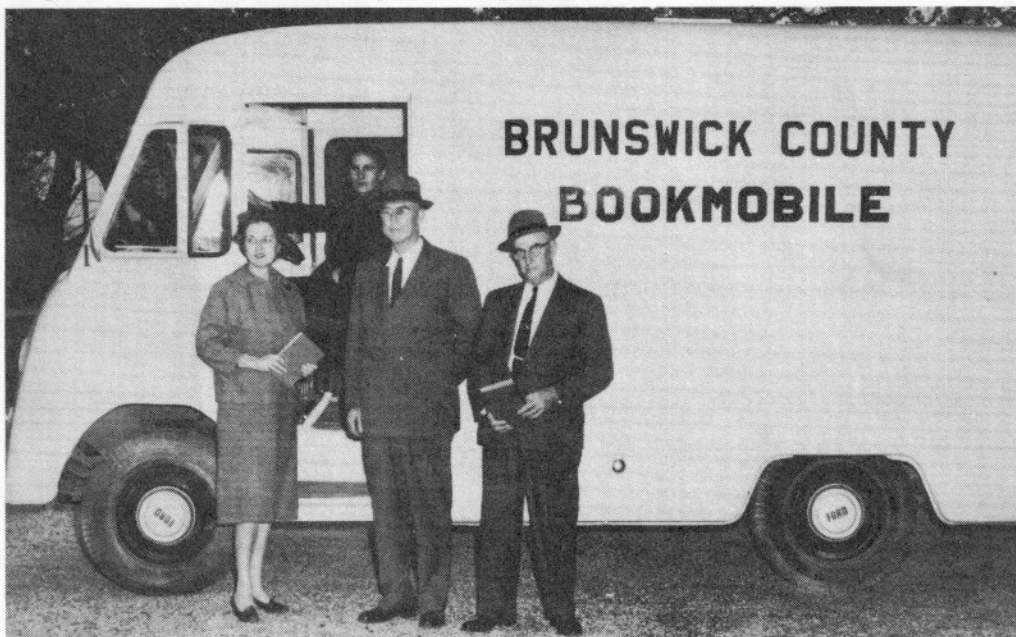
Before the orator was asked to speak and the young ladies to serve the refreshments, much work had been done by the Civic Club. Organized in 1909 at the instigation of Mrs. C.E. Taylor, the Club had taken on many projects, from sandspur control to buying a hearse. The idea of a public library grew out of the very active Literature Department of the Club, of which Miss Carrie Doshier was Chairman. Initially, members borrowed books from each other; later, they decided to place selected volumes in a central place where all members could have access to them. Finally, the Club decided to create a public library for the town.

A Board of Trustees for the library was appointed by the Club, a pattern which was to be followed from 1912 until 1959. Usually the Mayor of Southport was a member of the Board, others being prominent businessmen and club members.

The first Board was chaired by the Hon. M.C. Guthrie, with Miss Carrie Doshier as Secretary (Miss Doshier also served as first librarian). They obtained permission from the Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, to use two rooms in the east wing of the Garrison Building for a public library.

Civic Club members held a book drive and also purchased a few new books with funds from their treasury. The books were catalogued, classified, and neatly shelved. Rules and regulations were established, hours of service decided upon, a "librarian" employed, and the grand opening took place.

There was nothing that was unique about the next 47 years except tenacity. As the years passed, there were new problems, changing needs in the community, continuing financial difficulties and, at times, a lack of public support. But always, there were a few individuals and organizations who worked to keep the library alive.



Brunswick County Bookmobile Service began in 1960.

Appearing above: Mrs. Margaret Harper, Chairman of the Board, Librarian Sue King, Mayor Roy Robinson, and County Commissioner Herbert Swain.