

Southport visitors get warm welcome

If you really, really want to find out about Southport, if you want the absolute inside scoop, you just have to stop by the new Southport Visitors Center on West Moore Street, a block up from the Cape Fear River and Waterfront Park and right next door to that famous Indian Trail Tree.

The newly renovated, and now exceedingly comfortable, Southport Visitors Center is manned by knowledgeable people of the city. Folks who can explain why the city has streets named Lord, Howe, Dry (and) I Am. Folks who can tell you who lives in the basement of the Old Brunswick Inn.

Over 35 volunteers -- many of them members of the Southport Historical Society -- man the Southport Visitors Center. The visitors center will be open Sundays, or seven days a week, March-29 through November 15 this year.

The visitors center is the work of Southport 2000, a public-private partnership formed in 1992 to promote the city's downtown and to engage in economic development activities.

In ten months of last year, 24,199 visitors to Southport passed through the center, including nearly 2,500 during the N. C. Fourth of July Festival alone.

Of course, the center features all kinds of printed material to help visitors to Southport feel right at home. But there is much more than printed material to be had at the Southport Visitors Center.

If you're lucky, you'll barely make it to the top of the center's new spacious front porch before one of the center's volunteers greets you and engages you in talk of old Southport. Sit for a while on one of the rocking chairs and soak up the flavor of the city.

Inside the center, one wall features a historic timeline, beginning with the city's founding in 1792 and culminating in Southport's 1992 year-long bicentennial celebration.

Another wall features the Southport Quilt, with 30 panels

depicting scenes of significance in Southport and its history. Included on the quilt are the old Doshier hospital building, the Frying Pan Lightship and even *The State Port Pilot*.

Encased on the same wall of the building is a collection of tools, weapons and artifacts recovered by archeologists who have scoured Southport, including a rifle dating to 1862 and a number of plates, pipes, cannonballs and personal effects of days gone by.

Before leaving, check out the extensive video collection on Southport history.

You'll be wiser for the effort.

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looking the Cape Fear River.

July 3 will begin with the early-morning running of the N. C. Freedom Run and conclude with a street dance at the Waterfront Park stage.

Throughout the festival celebration over 150 exhibitors will display their wares at the craft show in Southport's Franklin Square Park. Musical groups, dancers, magicians and other entertainers will perform continuously from a stage on the Cape Fear riverfront at the foot of Howe Street.

Of course, the crowning jewels of the N. C. Fourth of July Festival are to be put on display Saturday, July 4, with the festival's 11 a.m. parade and 9 p.m. fireworks display.

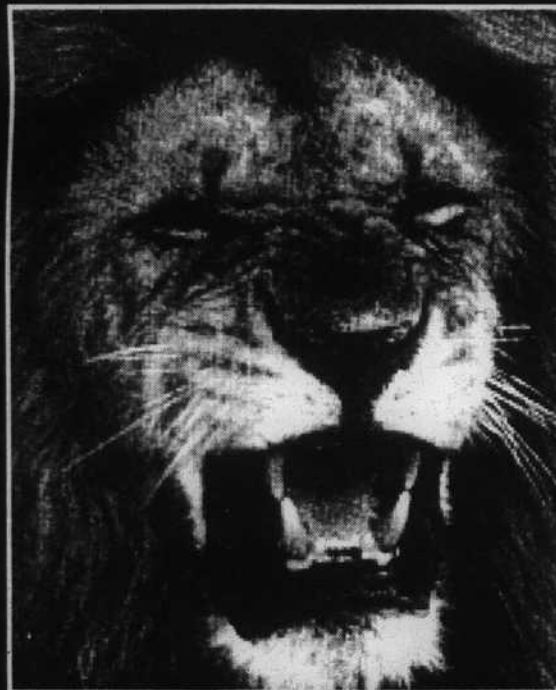
The N. C. Fourth of July Festival Parade is expected to attract over 135 units this year, including more

than 20 of your favorite Shriners' units. Military units and our local organizations and services will be well-represented also. Of course, the festival parade will feature a bevy of beautiful queens, princesses and little misses, including the newly crowned Miss North Carolina.

As the Embers concert concludes and as night falls on the Southport waterfront July 4, all attention will turn to the sky for the festival's gigantic fireworks display. In past years over 30,000 people have lined the waterfront to view this majestic and highly patriotic event. Come early, and bring a lawn chair.

The N. C. Fourth of July Festival is a precious tradition in Southport. It is the time of the year when Southport citizens open their hometown to one of the best parties to be enjoyed in the state.

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Highway 17, seven miles north of NC state line at Ocean Ridge Plantation

Frisbee event

Youngsters ages six through nine can test their Frisbee-throwing skills in the Junior World Class Frisbee Contest June 23 at Town Creek Township District Park.

Participants will compete in the categories of distance, accuracy and trick catches.

For further information, persons may call the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department toll-free at 800-222-4790.