



Photos contributed

More than 130 people attend the World War I monument dedication Nov. 11 at Fort Caswell Rifle Range.



Southport Historical Society members fire their cannon "Thor" during the Veterans Day event at Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

World War I monument dedicated at Fort Caswell Rifle Range

By NORMA LEE ECKARD

SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

On Sunday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m., the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range dedicated a monument at the site beside the 100-year-old rifle range in honor of the 724 men and women from Brunswick County who served their country in World War I. More than 130 people attended.

In 1918, this commemoration was called Armistice Day and was held on the 11th month, the 11th day and the 11th hour.

As part of the dedication, a roll call occurred after the invocation given by Kathy Miller, NSDAR Brunswick Town Chapter member and chaplain. The pledge of allegiance was recited and Martha Koletar, another NSDAR member, read the poem, "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae. A special selection was then read by Kathy Miller.

Gwen Causey and Jim McKee recited the names of the 23 men from Brunswick County who lost their lives in World War I. A descendant of Pvt. Harvey T. Chadwick, who was killed in action during the Hindenburg Line offense, was in attendance. Denise Perry, the daughter of Pvt. Chadwick's niece, brought the flag that covered his casket on the trip home from France, as well as a citation sent to the family by the U.S. government.

Crew members from the Southport Historical Society then fired the cannon, named Thor, to honor those who perished. Crew members were Marvin Johnson, Sandy Toth, Jim Crum, Phil Fravel, Bruce Hackert and Rhodes Messick.

Ron Eckard, a Friends of Fort Caswell board member, dedicated the structure by describing the writing on two sides of the obelisk-shaped monument. On the front side it reads: "This monument is dedicated to the men and women of Brunswick County, NC, who served their country during World War I with

honor, courage and commitment." On the back of the monument are the names of the 23 veterans of World War I that never came home to their families. "Today, we show their families that Brunswick County has not forgotten them," said Eckard.

He then informed the audience that Dave Kesterson, senior vice president of First Bank and a director of the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, contributed funds to purchase a plaque designating the rifle range as a listee on the National Register of Historic Places.

The monument also contains a second bronze plaque, a short copy of the certificate awarded to Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range by the United States World War I Centennial Commission and the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Amy Eckard, webmaster for Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, and her husband, Sam, donated the plaque.

Additionally, the Brunswick Town Chapter awarded Harriet Barlowe memorial funds to the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range after Barlowe passed away unexpectedly. Barlowe was a strong supporter of historic preservation and worked closely with the rifle range project. These funds were used to help pay for the monument.

Other funds for the monument came from descendants of World War I veterans, individual donations and the Honor a Brunswick County World War I Veteran project sponsored by the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

Norman Sprinthall, an active supporter of the rifle range project whose father served in World War I, submitted an insert in the program. In his document, he shares some of the things he learned about his father and the 26th Division. He provides a snapshot of what our boys went through as they entered military service and why they were called Doughboys.

The Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range were honored to be

one of two sites in North Carolina to be designated as a World War I Centennial Memorial. The other is the bell tower on the campus of North Carolina State University. Being one in 100 sites to be honored across the United States isn't bad for little ol' Caswell Beach!

The United States World War I Centennial Commission awarded the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range \$2,000 for the proposal submitted and a certificate. The certificate states the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial in Caswell Beach is an official U.S. World War I Centennial Memorial. A framed certificate was awarded to Caswell Beach Town Mayor Deborah Ahlers.

Roll calling continued with the names of another 135 Brunswick County soldiers who served their country. The callers included Ahlers, Pat Gooding, Connie Hendrix, Connie Silverstein, Marvin Johnson, Dave Lewis, Phyllis Wilson, Dana Majernik and Carl Mauney. Another firing of the cannon took place, taps were played and Diane Price gave the benediction.

Future plans were also shared:

- 1) Continued profiles and efforts encouraging family members of World War I to honor a veteran.
- 2) Another event Saturday, April 6, 2019, to roll call more Brunswick County World War I service members.
- 3) Another fundraiser Saturday, May 4, 2019.
- 4) Roll call Monday, Nov. 11, 2019, Veterans Day, to honor our Brunswick County World War I soldiers who served their country.
- 5) Publication of the book with all the profiles, Wall of Honor and history of the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

Norma Lee Eckard of Caswell Beach is president of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc.