



Pat Gooding and Martha Koletar of the Brunswick Town Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution place a wreath on honor of veterans Monday.



Norma Eckard, president of the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, welcomes guests to the Veterans Day ceremony.

Photos by Lee Hinnant

Veterans honored at Fort Caswell Rifle Range ceremony

By Lee Hinnant
Staff Writer

Caswell Beach residents and guests remembered and honored veterans Monday with ceremonies at the Fort Caswell Rifle Range - one of the few standing monuments of the Great

War - nestled today between a golf course and resort condominiums.

Sponsored by the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, the event drew dozens of attendees that included members of the Brunswick Town Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the Brunswick County Historical Society,

and the Southport Historical Society, whose cannon "Thor" was fired to note the veterans.

Norma Eckard, president of the Friends group, welcomed the crowd and introduced speakers and guests. After a pledge to the flag and invocation, members of the DAR presented a wreath.

Eckard described how 724 men and a woman nurse from Brunswick County served in World War I, when Fort Caswell was a training facility and hospital. She also reviewed the progress of the Friends group.

Since beginning their work more than eight years ago, volunteers have raised the money to clean and stabilize the former rifle range pit, where soldiers learned long-range marksmanship before shipping overseas. They have gathered funds for an impressive stone monolith honoring and naming those who died in service. The group continues to chronicle on its website those who served and is putting together a book about their lives expected to be more than 400 pages long.

They continued a "roll call" of those who served and speakers told the stories of some of the Brunswick County residents who served, part of the contingent of 4-million troops the nation sent to help save Europe and the world. They read aloud the names of many of the veterans and invited attendees to share stories about their relatives who served. They also described life shortly before, during and after the Great War in the Southport area.

Among those who spoke was Fred Stanley, grandson of Robert Bollie Stanley, who was severely injured in battle and captured as a prisoner of war. Stanley, an African American farmer from Brunswick County, lost a leg and suffered permanent injury to his shoulder and arm. He came home to farm and raise Fred until he died in 1961.

"He didn't talk much about the war," Fred Stanley said. "But he went through a lot."

After his grandfather's death, Fred went on to serve in the U.S. Navy.

The next Rifle Range event will be April 5. It will complete the roll call. To learn more about the group, visit www.caswellrifle.com.



Fred Stanley, grandson of Robert Bollie Stanley, reads some of the names of soldiers who served in the Great War. Stanley's grandfather from Brunswick County was severely wounded and survived as a prisoner of war to return home and run a farm.



Cannoneers from the Southport Historical Society fire "Thor" in honor of fallen veterans during the ceremony at the Fort Caswell Rifle Range.