

Hanchey, Kathleen: The Pink Supper House ^[1]

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Kathleen Hanchey: The Pink Supper House

by David Cecelski. "[Listening to History](#) ^[2]," *News & Observer*. Published 7/10/2005. Copyrighted. Reprinted with permission.

When I'm feeling down in the dumps, I like to meet my brother by the quiet blackwater creeks along the northeast Cape Fear River, two hours southeast of Raleigh. We spend the day paddling our canoe in shady swamp forests and exploring old graveyards, then we round off the day by eating at a place called the Pink Supper House.

Located between Chinquapin and Wallace in Duplin County, the Pink Supper House has been feeding hungry crowds for more than half a century. Every Saturday from 3 to 7:30 p.m., neighborhood people dish out heaping plates of fried chicken and barbecue. Originally run by local churches, the Supper House is now a nonprofit community group. The income supports community projects and helps those in need, and the feeling of fellowship lifts many a spirit, including mine.

Recently I visited the Supper House's president and guiding light, Kathleen Hanchey, and she told me about its history.



Kathleen Hanchey. Photo by Chris Seward, 2005. To request permission to use the photo, please contact the [News & Observer](#).

"The Pink Supper House started as a community thing to [rebuild] a church. It was Northeast Church that you passed down here. It's a Pentecostal Free Will Baptist. They had a real old wooden building and it was right on the edge of the creek. There was a lady that was in the church. Her name was Sally Rivenbark, and she was a very easy spirited someone. She was kind. She was very thoughtful, and she truly loved Northeast Church. That's where all of her ancestors were, and I really, three churches went together. The other two churches were Island Creek Baptist and Wesley Methodist, and there was a lady out of each church. They were friends. They just got a bunch of pots and silverware and that sort of stuff and they didn't have to buy much at all. They picked their own beans. People would give the cabbage. Different ones donated hogs. It was all volunteer, and at first they just did it one Saturday a month. A man called Robert Cavanaugh helped them. At that time it was just called Northeast Ladies Auxiliary and I'll say it might have taken them five years to get enough money. After they got the church built, they gave a donation to those other two churches to help them. They stayed down there at that old store for 10 or 15 years. Well, they got to where they had to have health department inspections. They couldn't do the necessary things down there, so the Ruritans built this building. That was around the early 1930s. I started down there 34 or 35 years ago. When I started, I was in the back making plates and a lady named Matt Cavanaugh was managing things. We had a meeting once a month and we'd discuss what we were going to do and who we were. Whenever there was a death in the community, we would also go down there and fry chicken, do barbecue and hushpuppies and beans. If there was anybody connected with a family from here and they're close in, like a daughter or a son, or if it has always gone to the community. Any time that there was a need and we were aware of it, we have tried to help. We help the churches, and we give money to the Ruritans, like for this park that they are building up here. This past year we've helped a young man that had cancer and had a family. We have done funerals for people that did not have money enough to bury themselves. We have helped people that got their houses burned up. We've paid light bills. We've also had benefits up there for people. The biggest one that we ever had, we had it for a little girl. She had seizures, and they needed to do surgery and she needed to go to Oklahoma City. We delivered in Wilmington, Kinston, Beaufort. I have a lot of high school students who work at the Supper House, so we also decided that we would do scholarships. We do the ones that work at the Supper House first, and then we do in the fire district. We're helping the future of this community by helping the youth go to school, and hoping that a lot of them will stay in Duplin County. It's got to be the place that there's not very much for them here. You know, farming has gone out to big farmers. The flood in '99 really hit this area hard too. Water came out the windows at the Supper House. It was a time. They told me I was too old to get it going again. I hope you don't tell anybody this, but I've had congestive heart failure. I have two knee replacements. I have macular degeneration. But there was no way that I could give up just at the time when we had the flood, I bet I called 25 people for different things that we needed up there. You know I never had a one turn me down? They gave us everything from an ice maker to a commercial dishwasher. I had people that would come. I really can't express just how I feel about it. It is kind of a ministry to me. I feel like people, if they're closer together, if they've got something to do and they do it together, they know more how the other person feels. I just feel like you've got to

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