

LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

April 2008 Issue 72

The Battle of Fort Fisher

The Battle of Fort Fisher was a joint assault by Union army and naval forces against the fort, outside Wilmington, North Carolina. Sometimes referred to as the "Gibraltar of the South" and the last major coastal stronghold of the Confederacy, Fort Fisher had tremendous strategic value.



ATTACK ON FORT FISHER

Wilmington was the last major port open to the confederacy. Ships leaving Wilmington via the Cape Fear River and setting

sail for the Bahamas, Bermuda or Nova Scotia to trade cotton and tobacco for needed supplies from the British were protected by the fort. Fort Fisher was constructed mostly of earth and sand. This made absorbing the pounding of heavy fire from Union ships more effective than older fortifications constructed of mortar and bricks.

The fortifications were able to keep Union ships from attacking the port of Wilmington and the

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BIOGRAPHY OF CHRIS FONVIELLE

Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr. is a native of Wilmington, North Carolina, with a life-long interest in American Civil War, North Carolina, Lower Cape Fear and Southern history. His in-depth research focuses on Civil War coastal operations and defenses, blockade running, and the navies. He has published two books on North Carolina's coastal war, *The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing*

Hope (Savas Publishing, 1997) and *Fort Anderson: Battle for Wilmington* (Savas Publishing, 1999). Dr. Fonvielle also co-authored a third book, *The Best Ever Occupied: Archaeological Investigations of a Civil*



War Encampment, Folly Island, South Carolina (South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1989), that dealt with African American soldiers' wartime experiences. His most recent article is "Making the Obstinate Stand: The Battle of Town Creek, North Carolina," *Civil War Regiments* Vol. 6, No. 1 (1998).

After receiving his B.A. in Anthropology at UNC-Wilmington, Fonvielle served as the last curator of the Blockade Runners of the Confederacy Museum. He subsequently received his M.A. in American history at East Carolina University, under the direction of Dr. William N. Still, Jr., and his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina, where he studied with noted Civil War historian Dr. Thomas L. Connelly.

Dr. Fonvielle returned to his undergraduate alma mater at UNC-Wilmington in 1996, where he now teaches courses on the Civil War, Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear, the Old South and Antebellum America. He also teaches extended education courses on the history of the Lower Cape Fear through the university

WHISTLING IN DIXIE

BY BOB HAM

Thanks to Steve and Brenda Bacon for bringing us a most informative and unique program at our February meeting. Also many thanks to their lovely daughter Chance Bartek for assisting Dana Chapman in her presentation. Dana's huge array of Civil War artifacts and collectables was indeed a treat.

Ed and Edna Hobbins greeted us at the door and Ricki and Fred Kluessendorf, along with Don William, "worked" the crowd attending dinner with our 50/50 ticket sales. Incidentally, these folks are last in the dinner line, so get your 50/50 tickets by 6:15, so they will have time to enjoy their meal before the program starts.

Golden Coral did an outstanding job tickling the taste buds of the 120 who ate. We had a total of 195 attending the program. Our second half membership drive has gone well. Don Hubsch produced a "flyer" to attract new members. His "gang of 13" composed of Johanna Verwer, Bernie Covert, Paul Bucklin, Chris Clayton, Bill Bodoh, Mitch Sackson, Ricki Kluessendorf, Pat Brennan, Bob Zabawa, Gwen Alstatter, Harry Joe King, Bob Davitt and Carol Layton distributed them throughout our low country area.

As a result several new members enlisted and our membership is now up to 340 and I have had several calls from folks interested in our LCWRT. Our goal is to finish the year with 350 - or more - members. I also passed out the flyer to members of the Kiwanis Club, to whom I had the privilege of telling them about our LCWRT.

THANKS TO ALL WHO TOIL IN THE BACKGROUND I am looking forward to our April program. Dr. Chris Fonvielle will be our speaker and will focus his presentation on the 1864 military affairs at Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear, and the battle of Fort Fisher at Christmastime. Dr. Fonvielle presently teaches at UNC-Wilmington and is the author of several books and articles on the Civil War.

See you there. Bob Ham

Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Inc.

The Minie Ball Gazette

P.O. Box 2252

Bluffton, SC 29910

WWW.LOWCOUNTRYCWRT.ORG

*Dedicated to Historic Preservation
and Enlightenment*

Editors: Mitch & Marian Sackson
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MARCH DINNER WAS ANOTHER WINNER

The catering by Golden Corral has been so good to date.

See you at our next dinner in April.

The 2007-2008 Lecture Series

May 14, 2008 *The Port Royal Experiment*: Steve Wise

The Port Royal Experiment was a program begun during the Civil War in which former slaves worked on the land abandoned by plantation owners. In 1861, the Union liberated the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and their main harbor, Port Royal. The white residents fled, leaving behind 10,000 slaves.



STEVE WISE

Several private Northern charity organizations stepped in to help the former slaves become self-sufficient. The result was a model of what Reconstruction could have been. The former slaves demonstrated their ability to work the land efficiently and live independently. They assigned themselves daily tasks for cotton growing and spent their extra time cultivating their own crops, fishing and hunting.

By selling their surplus crops, the locals acquired small amounts of property. In 1865, President Andrew Johnson ended the experiment, returning the land to its previous white owners.

(FISHER Continued from page 1)

Cape Fear River. On December 24, 1864, Union forces under Benjamin F. Butler launched a two-day attack. This attack by joint army-navy Union force on Fort Fisher, fizzled when Gen. Benjamin F. Butler lost his nerve, pulled out his troops, and returned to Hampton Roads, Va. To Adm. David D. Porter, the disgusted naval commander of the expedition who had prepared the way for Butler's assault with the greatest bombardment of the war, Union Gen. Grant wrote that he would "be back again with an increased force and without the former commander."

The new commander was Gen. Alfred H. Terry, one of Butler's former division commanders, and the increased force was composed of 8,000 men in three white divisions and one black division. On January 13, 1865, under covering fire from Porter's 44 ships, Terry's men went ashore and established a beachhead five miles north of the

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VIEW FROM FORT FISHER

IRONCLAD OATH

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Ironclad Oath** was a key factor in the removing of ex-Confederates from the political arena during the Reconstruction of the United States in the 1860s. It required every white male to swear he had never borne arms against the Union or supported the Confederacy — that is, he had "never voluntarily borne arms against the United States," had "voluntarily" given "no aid, countenance, counsel or encouragement" to persons in rebellion and had exercised or attempted to exercise the functions of no office under the Confederacy. Its unpopularity among ex-Confederates led them to nickname the oath "The Damnesty Oath."

Congress originally devised the oath in July 1862 for all federal employees, lawyers and federal elected officials. It was applied to Southern voters in the Wade-Davis Bill of 1864, which President Abraham Lincoln pocket vetoed. President Andrew Johnson also opposed it. Both Johnson and Lincoln wanted Southerners instead to swear to an oath that *in the future* they would support the Union, which was known as the ten percent plan.

In 1866, the Radical Republicans used the ironclad oath to prevent all former Confederates from voting or even serving on juries. In 1867 the United States Supreme Court held that the federal ironclad oath for attorneys and the similar Missouri state oath for teachers and other professionals were unconstitutional, because they violated the constitutional prohibitions against bills of attainder and ex post facto laws. *Cummings v. Missouri*, 4 Wall. 277 (1867); *Ex parte Garland*, 4 Wall. 333 (1867). However, it was still applied by the Radical Republicans wherever they held power. The oath was effectively ended in 1871 and finally repealed in 1884. Hyman (1959), pp. 264-5.

ADDITIONAL READING ON THE EVENTS OF THE CRATER

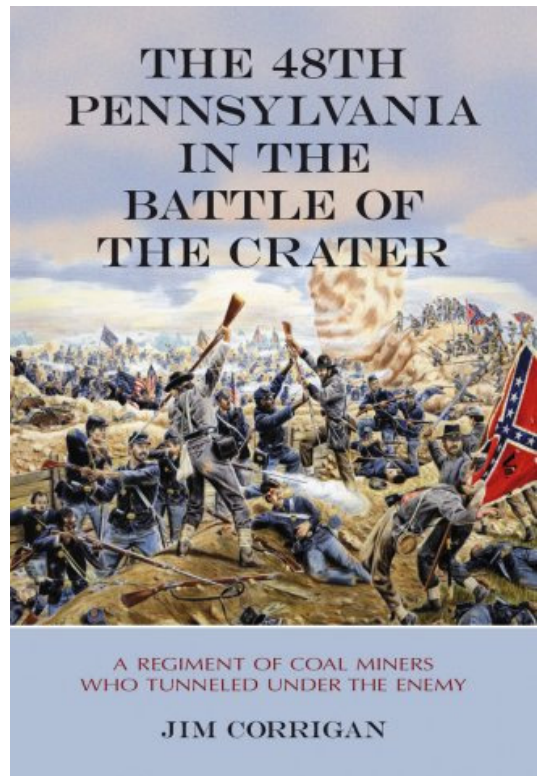
The 48th Pennsylvania in the Battle of the Crater by John Corrigan follows the remarkable series of events that led to one of the most unusual engagements of the Civil War.

Recruited exclusively in the coal regions, the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment contained a large number of experienced miners. When the Union army laid siege to the city of Petersburg, Virginia in the summer of 1864, these men found themselves entrenched just one hundred yards from a heavily defended Confederate fortress. Led by Lt. Colonel Henry Pleasants of Pottsville, Pa., the miners tunneled beneath the fort and planted a massive gunpowder charge.

The resulting explosion destroyed the Confederate stronghold, killing most of its occupants. But Federal officers squandered the extraordinary opportunity. Rather than a swift Union victory that could have brought an early end to the war, the Battle of the Crater turned into a bloody debacle that Ulysses S. Grant described as "the saddest affair I have witnessed in the War."

Far more than a narrative of tactics and troop movements, *The 48th Pennsylvania in the Battle of the Crater* delves into the human and political elements behind the battle. From eyewitness

accounts of the explosion's awesome power and its horrific results, to descriptions of the ensuing combat as told by Union and Confederate soldiers, events unfold from a gritty, personal perspective.



APRIL 2008 DINNER

Fried Chicken • Salisbury Steak • Cajun Fish

Please make your reservations early.

It needs to arrive by Thursday April 3rd.

Don't forget to mail your check with the reservation form to

Bob Clarkson
61 Falmouth Way
Bluffton, SC 29909

Notice About Sale of 50-50 Tickets

Due to the pressures of the volunteers who perform the sale of the 50-50 tickets and the required counting and creation of the awards, sales of the tickets will cease at 6:15pm. So if you do not partake of dinner, make sure you arrive before that time if you wish to contribute to the 50-50 drawing.

The Dinner Menu for April 9 2008

Fried Chicken • Salisbury Steak • Cajun Fish

Spinach • Green Beans • Rice Pilaf

House Salad with Carrots, Cucumbers, Onions, Peppers, Tomatoes, Cheese and

Several Types of Dressing • Dinner Yeast Rolls with Honey Butter

Brownies • Bread Pudding • Carrot Cake • Fruit

Sweet & Unsweetened Tea • Lemonade • Decaffeinated Coffee • Water

Dinner Reservations no later than Thursday April 3 2008. Meeting is at Bluffton High School. Social @ 5pm • Buffet @ 5:45 • Meeting @ 6:45 • Presentation @ 7:00

All Members are invited to the General Meeting. Reservations are required ONLY for DINNER.

Dinner Reservation For April 9 2008

MUST ARRIVE NO LATER THAN THURSDAY APRIL 3 2008

Number of Dinners: ____ @ \$12.50 each = \$_____

Name 1: _____

Name 2: _____

Guest(s): _____

Phone #: _____

List Additional Guests on a separate piece of paper, if necessary.

Make Check Payable to: ***LCWRT Inc.***

Mail check with this Form to: →

Or place it in the Clarkson's Lower Box



Bob Clarkson
61 Falmouth Way
Bluffton, SC 29909



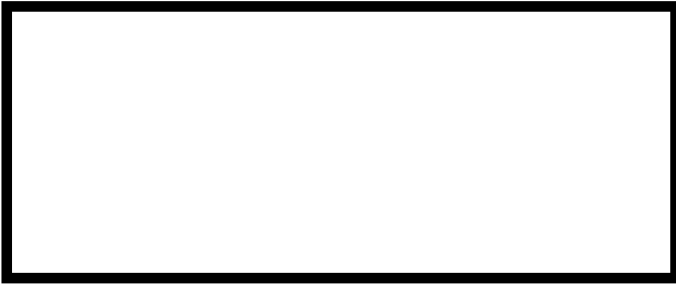
THE ENTRANCE TO THE
"CRATER" DUG BY THE MINERS
OF THE 48TH PENNSYLVANIA

SUN CITY RESIDENTS ONLY

On April 23rd you will see uniformed Nat'l Guard troops walking our streets. Sun City has been chosen as a practice community in case of an emergency (Hurricane, etc). **THIS IS JUST A DRILL**

They will not be on your property. It's just a drill for the Guard. You may see a chopper or two, as well.

DO NOT CALL SECURITY



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 The Battle of Fort Fisher
 Presented By
 Dr Chris Fonvielle

We thank Palmetto Electric for their
 allowing the LCWRT usage of their



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(FISHER Continued from page 3)

fort. Terry set his black troops to work building and manning a strong line of works across the peninsula to hold off any Confederate threat to his rear. Terry scouted the land face of the fort and decided to make his attack there.

In the Union's second attempt to capture the coastal fort, a 44 ship flotilla pounded away at the fort, preparing the way for an assault by Union infantry, sailors, and marines. At 2:30 P.M. on January 15, 1865, the great ship-borne guns suddenly fell silent, signaling the Union soldiers to attack.

Colonel Lamb fought valiantly to save his fort. He even gathered together wounded men and led them back into the fray, only to be severely wounded himself. The Confederates were outnumbered, and fail to successfully defend the fort at it's most vulnerable point—the riverside gate. The Parrott rifle near the river marsh and the 12-pounder Napoleon at the gate soon fall silent. In desperation, the Confederates unleash a long-range fire from guns at Battery Buchanan, at the base of the peninsula. These incoming rounds rain down on the western salient, killing and maiming

friend and foe alike.

Once the northern wall of the fort had fallen, the rest of the bastion, the 1,898 yard sea face, was doomed. At nighttime, General Whiting, who had been injured during the battle, surrendered as Commander of the District of Cape Fear. He was then imprisoned, where he died March 10, 1865. The Confederates who had been captured were taken to prisons in New York. The Union attackers suffered 1,338 casualties. The 1,500 Rebels lost about 500 killed and wounded. After the fall of Fort Fisher, the trading route toward Wilmington was cut. On February 22, the Union occupied Wilmington definitively. The war officially ended three months later. The battle was the largest amphibious operation until the Second World War.

Fascinating Fact: That night (January 16 1865) a company of New York soldiers slept on a grassy spot that was also the roof of the fort's main powder magazine. A pair of drunken sailors with torches stumbled into the magazine at dawn, touching off an explosion that killed or wounded another 104 Yanks.