

Fort Macon Ramparts

a newsletter of the Friends of Fort Macon

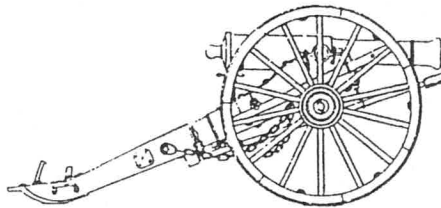
Spring 1994

The Mystery of the Fort Macon Flag

Last month a mystery which has lingered for 132 years was solved - what happened to Fort Macon's Confederate Flag. The flag has been missing since 1862 when it was taken by Union forces after the fort's surrender. It was never known if at some point after the war it was thrown away, or if it was locked away in some dusty box in some forgotten Rhode Island attic. Until now!

The story of the flag is as follows: In 1861, when Confederate troops seized Fort Macon they made a Confederate National Flag (the "Stars and Bars") out of the old U.S. garrison flag which had been in the fort for years before the war. The 20 by 36 foot U.S. flag had its red and white stripes ripped apart by the Confederates, combined and then re sewn into the three broad red-white-red bars of the Confederate First National Flag. In the blue canton, enough stars were left in to represent the Confederate States and the remaining stars were snipped out. Thus the fort's recycled U.S. flag now became its Confederate flag.

Following the Civil War bombardment of Fort Macon, victorious Union soldiers pulled down the flag on the morning of the surrender, April 26, 1862. The 5th Rhode Island Battalion, which received the fort's surrender was allowed to keep the flag as



a trophy and later presented it to the Rhode Island Legislature in session in Newport, RI, shortly afterward. From here the flag seemed to drop from view. Even as early as 1892, the regimental history of the 5th Rhode Is-

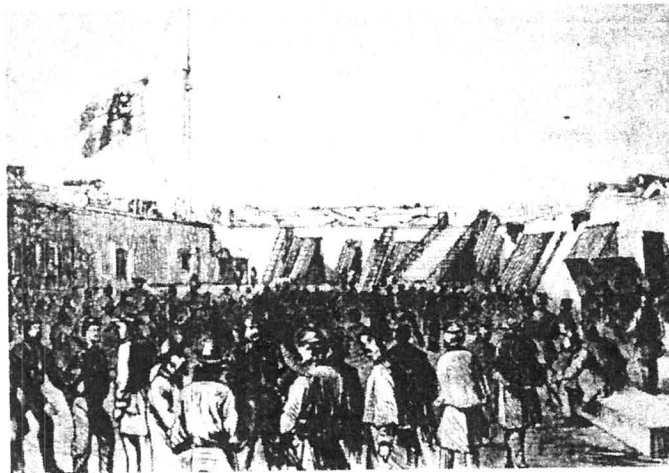
mation accompanying the flag piece was that it was a "piece of the Fort Macon, NC Rebel Flag, presented with others to the members of the 1862 Rhode Island Legislature". In other words, the Rhode Island politicians chopped up the flag into souvenir pieces for themselves.

Now, of course, it is clear why the flag disappeared so suddenly. The collector who had the flag piece said he knows of at least one other such piece in the hands of an unidentified

descendent of one of the Rhode Island Legislators. Doubtless, other fragments may also exist in forgotten Rhode Island attics. Fortunately, the flag piece possessed by the collector was acquired and, on January 15, 1994, was donated by Mr. Gorges on behalf of the New Bern Civil War Museum to Fort Macon State Park.

The piece of the flag is of wool bunting, roughly eight inches square, cut from the blue canton and containing one 5½ inch star. In the star is written "Ft. Macon, N.C.". The piece was obviously ripped at some point, probably by wind, and given a field repair. Ultimately, it is hoped to be able to display it at some point. Thus the flag of Fort Macon, even if only a piece of it, has symbolically come home and the mystery of its whereabouts is solved.

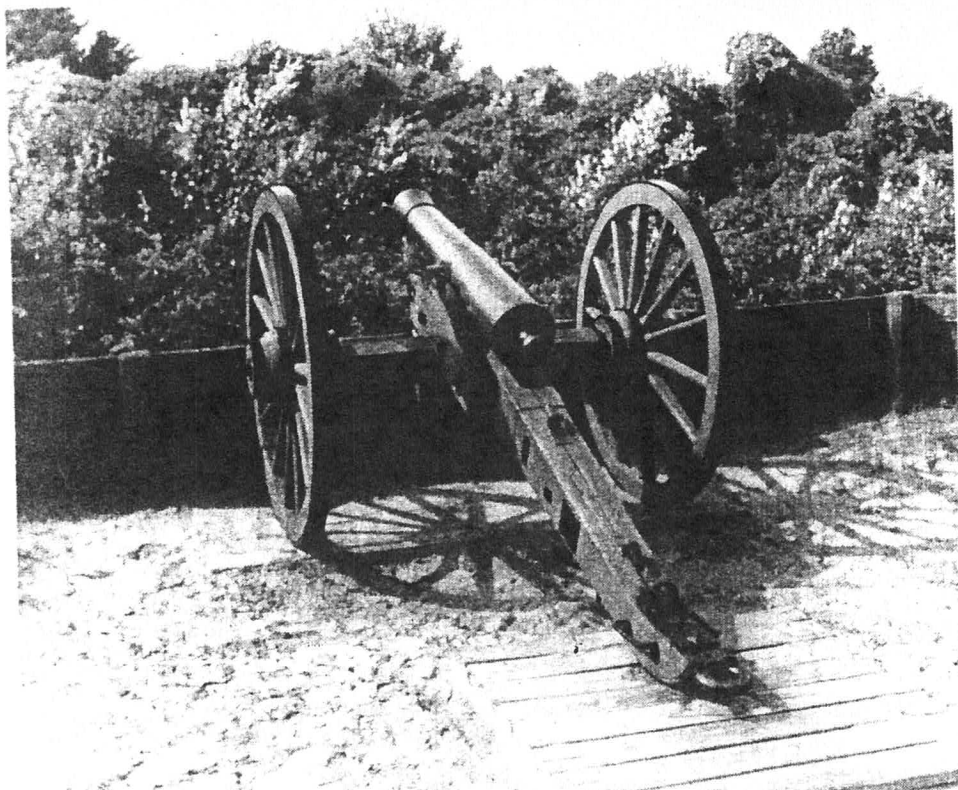
Paul Branch - Fort Macon Historian



*Surrender of Fort Macon, April 26, 1862.
From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 17, 1862.*

land noted the flag was missing and could not be found after a most diligent search.

Fast forwarding to the present, Mr. William D. Gorges, curator of the New Bern Civil War Museum, and his associate Mr. Paul Oliveira located a piece of the flag in Rhode Island last year in the possession of a Civil War relic collector. The infor-



Union cannon at Fort Macon

CIVIL WAR LECTURE SERIES

The Civil War Lecture Series is now in its sixth year. With one exception, the theme has been the Civil War in North Carolina and in particular Carteret County. That exception occurred when, with the opening of the WW II exhibit at the fort, Paul Branch presented "The Great Atlantic Turkey Shoot" sub warfare-off the Crystal Coast.

Some well known artists, historians and authors have lectured to us. Brian Krause, Charles O. Pitts, Bill Mason, Gordon Watts, Chris Fonvigle and Dr. Richard M. Fields to name a few. Subjects have ranged from battles and commanders to undersea archaeology and Civil War money.

Don't Trash This!

If you don't want to keep this newsletter don't throw it away! Please give it to a friend or neighbor who is not yet a member of the Friends. Encourage them to use the inclosed membership form.

The programs this year began in February with Mr. Pitts speaking on Appleton Oaksmith, Privateer. March, Joel Hancock spoke on the Union occupation of Harkers Island. April will bring Harry Gatton, Chairman of the North Carolina Historical Commission to speak on Colonel Walter Herron Taylor, trusted Adjutant to Robert E. Lee, only aide to ride with Lee from Appomattox to Richmond.

Lectures are held at the Carteret County Historical Society, Wallace Road., Morehead City, 7:30 p.m., the third Tuesday of February, March and April.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

November 2, 1993, will be remembered as one of the most important days in North Carolina State Park history. The voters of North Carolina passed the \$35 million bond giving the state parks system its largest single appropriation since its creation in 1915. The \$35 million in state park bonds will be used to fund capital improvement and land acquisition projects in parks across the state - pending approval by the General Assembly.

Fort Macon State Park is scheduled to receive \$701,500 of the bond money to begin a first phase of renovation to the historic fort. However, this is only 10% of the amount of money needed to complete the restoration work. There is hope that money can be found to do more work on the fort and build a visitor center at the park.

I would like to thank everyone for their support of the bond issue. A special thanks must go to Mr. Gene Gray of WRHT 96.3 for his help with the public service announcement that I was able to do concerning the bond issue.

In May the Legislature could consider a Bill (Senate Bill 733) that is very important to the state park system. This Bill, called "Park Authority and Park Fund" would create a constant source of funding for our state parks.

In January, Cleta Buck started work full time as our office assistant. In the past, she had only been working part-time. Our office hours are now 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We are very excited about having someone in the office full time to be able to assist our park visitors.

The growth of the Friends of Fort Macon continues to increase by leaps and bounds. I am happy to see so many new faces at the monthly meetings. I also look forward to seeing everyone at the annual meeting in April. If anyone has any questions about the park, please feel free to call me at (919) 726-3775.

Jody Merritt

PRESERVATION IS THE ULTIMATE RECYCLING!

World War II Brides

Do you know of any Carteret County World War II war Brides who met and married soldiers stationed at Fort Macon? Julia (Thomas) Sebes is compiling a list of these Carteret County ladies. If you have any information that would help, please call Julia at 728-5044.

ARE YOU INTERESTED?

We need help in the following categories:

Fort Duty One or two hour shifts monthly at Fort to encourage visitors to become members.

Journalism skills Write and gather articles, help with two newsletters per year.

Records Organizing and filing records of the Friends and keep files updated. Small amount of time required. Should have filing skills.

Greeting new members at monthly meetings.

Food for Thought

Each year the Friends of Fort Macon ask the Superintendent for a list of items that are not covered by the state budget. Those requested usually pertain to exhibits, interpretive matter for educational purposes, and preservation of artifacts. Dues to the Friends are very low because we have little overhead and the larger the membership the more our voices are heard. Please look over the list below and consider any financial help you might want to give. Jody Merritt, Supt. and Paul Branch, historian for the fort, would be most happy to discuss your interests.

- (1) WW II uniform items
- (2) Reference books
- (3) Duplicate 250 deteriorating slides
- (4) Artifacts for the Museum (original weapons, uniforms, etc.)
- (5) Pendulum sight for six-pounder
- (6) Hardware for six-pounder
- (7) Uniforms for mannequin
- (8) Three mannequins
- (9) Slide bank
- (10) Cabinets or metal storage units for museum artifacts
- (11) Hot shot furnace
- (12) Bake oven
- (13) Copy machine
- (14) Restore powder magazine
- (15) Three digital message units for exhibits
- (16) Security system upgrade
- (17) National Archives trip for research

*"Remove not the
ancient landmark,
which thy fathers
have set."*

Proverbs 22:28

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

1993 saw the Friends of Fort Macon grow from a handful of dedicated workers to over four hundred members as of March, 1994. We have been privileged to have such great interest in Fort Macon's causes, not only by members, but by the press and our state representatives. Monthly programs have been special and attendance far beyond expectations.

Growing pains are subsiding! There is great enthusiasm among our Board of Directors. It has been my privilege to have been chairperson for 1993 and to be involved in the fantastic growth of this supportive arm of Fort Macon.

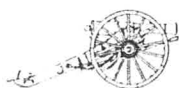
Kathryn Cloud

FRIENDS OF FORT MACON ANNUAL MEETING AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL

TO OBSERVE THE 132ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BATTLE OF FORT MACON
SUNDAY, APRIL 10TH AT 1:30 PM AT THE FORT MACON
BARRACKS BUILDING OPPOSITE THE COAST GUARD STATION

The First N.C. Volunteers (based in Edenton) will be holding a re-enactment in the Fort until 4:00 pm. We encourage you after the meeting to walk down to the Fort and see what life was like in the 1860's.

NO APRIL MEETING AT THE REX RESTAURANT



The Fort Macon Story

The following story has been handed down in the Pake family for over five generations. The story had its beginning in the year 1829, when work began on the building of Fort Macon. Word spread to the "Down East" community on Jarrat's (later named Smyrna, N.C.) that brick masons were being hired to help with this work. The Pake men were skilled artisans in laying brick, so William Thomas Pake, a young man of twenty one, left his home by horseback headed for Beaufort to seek employment.

The oft-repeated story goes that upon demonstrating his skills, he and his "boys" were hired to help in this endeavor. The archway and gun emplacements, still standing, attest to the skills of these brick masons.

In 1844, when work was needed to repair damage caused by erosion and storms the Pake men were hired again to help with this repair. Several years ago, a park ranger showed the author an account book showing names and earnings of these artisans. William Thomas Pake's name was enrolled there. He was the second highest paid man at \$45.00 per month.

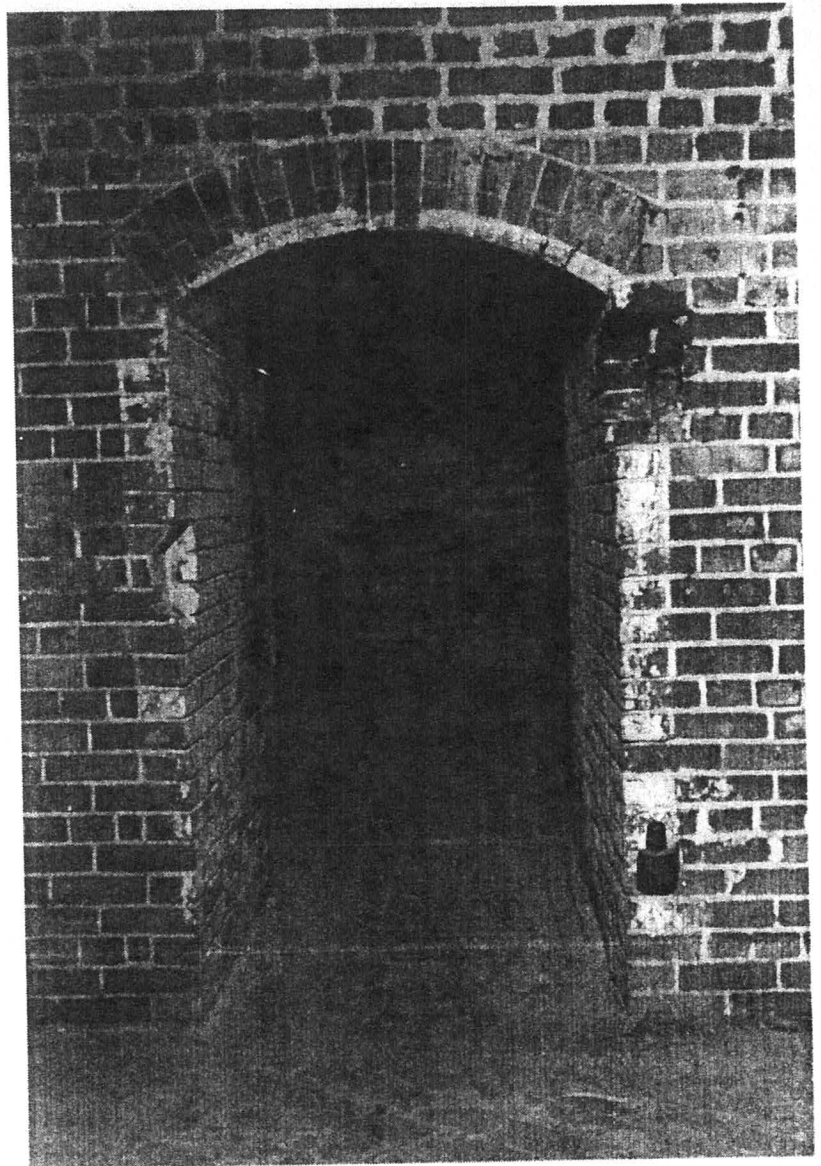
This story was retold to the author in 1975, when William Tyler Pake, then 84 years of age repeated this same story, adding this same William Thomas Pake also helped with the building of Cape Lookout Lighthouse and that his own father, a ten year old boy "waited" on him by carrying the bricks up the steps for him.

Thelma P. Simpson
Historian Friends of Fort Macon

DID YOU KNOW

If another reason were needed for folks in Carteret County to make an effort to support Fort Macon, it appeared in the February issue of the Chamber of Commerce newsletter. Carteret County has many attractions, not only for tourists, but also available to local residents on a full time basis. Under the bland title "Traffic Counts Listed for Crystal Coast Attractions," bare numbers reveal a truth that Friends of Fort Macon have been striving to impress upon County officials.

Comparing the number of visitors to our five major attractions from 1990 to the present, the data pinpoints some interesting comparisons. In 1993, 1,347,500 people visited Fort Macon; 454,500 visited the North Carolina Aquarium; 289,900 enjoyed the ride to Cape Lookout Park; 203,300 visitors took in the Maritime Museum and 31,900 visited the Beaufort Historic Site. Again and again we contend that this composite figure represents a whale of a lot of income for Carteret County!



Brick work at Fort Macon. NC Archives & History

*PRESERVATION IS THE
ULTIMATE RECYCLING!*

Future Monthly Programs

1st Wednesday of the Month
Rex Restaurant - 11:30 AM

May - David Yelton, Beaufort Historian, *Fort Macon Stories*

June - Mayor Derryl Garner of Newport, *Early Religion in Carteret County*

July - Paul Branch, Fort Macon Historian, *Designs of Fort Macon*

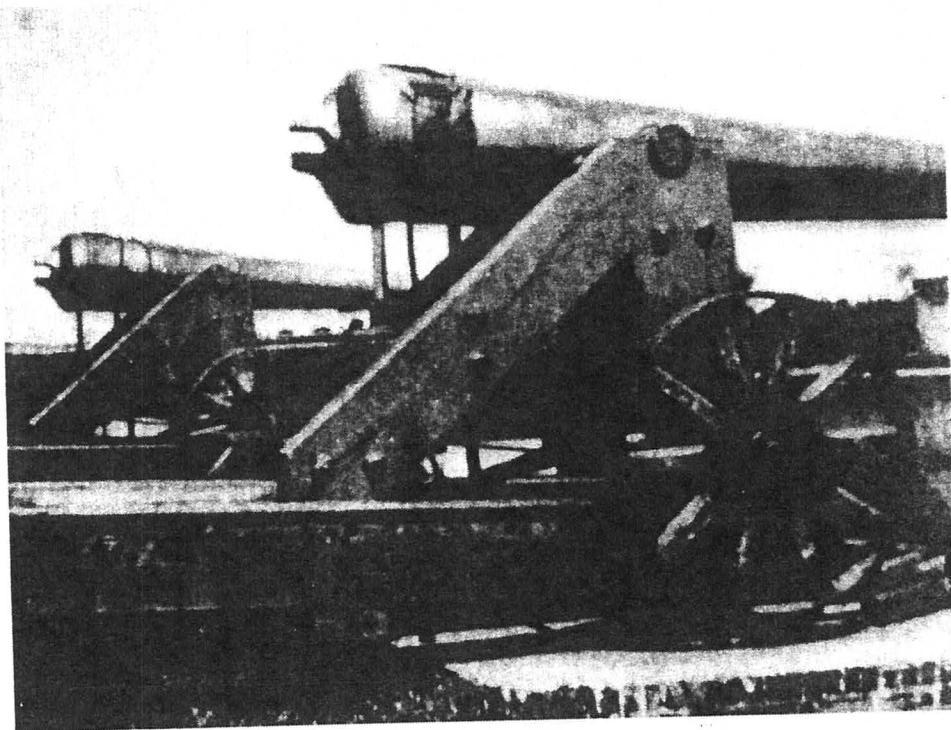
Cannons

We have always felt a representative selection of reproduction seacoast cannons and carriages for Fort Macon was desirable, viz: a 24-pounder howitzer or 32-pounder carronade as an example of flanking defense guns used in the counterfire Galleries in the covertway; one 24 and one 32 pounder, which were the two types constituting the bulk of the fort's 1862 armament; and an example of the fort's heavier guns - an 8-inch Columbiad (the largest size we can get in an iron reproduction) or a 10-inch Columbiad (cast by an alternate means such as concrete). We can get everything **but** the 10-inch gun as an iron reproduction from South Bend Replicas. They are just that - reproductions. None are shootable except the howitzer or carronade.

It might be possible to find a foundry with the weight and lathe capabilities to make a shootable seacoast cannon, but the cost of a one-time custom operation to make a mold, then cast and machine something like that would be prohibitively expensive. Thus it does not appear a shootable big gun is something we can have. There are alternative means of casting the 10-inch gun, or any of the guns, in fiberglass or concrete. Fort Independence, Boston Harbor, cast fiberglass replicas of 8 and 15-inch Columbiads after making molds from original guns they have.

Mr. Bill Brown, technician with the National Park Service, worked on this project and says they are good, convincing replicas. The 15-inch gun is outside in the weather and does have some bleaching out in the sun, but otherwise has been no problem.

As for concrete, Fort Clinch, Florida, cast 10-inch Columbiads in concrete in 1968



Rifled 32-pounder at Fort Macon, 1867. Fort Macon Archives

which are still in use. Two staff members of Fort Macon State Park have seen them firsthand and say they are very convincing, as have other people who have seen them.

The two weapons are probably our best ways of getting the repros of guns we want. We would need to make a fiberglass mold off existing original guns (the National Park Service can help us with this) and then cast them in fiberglass, or in concrete much like a swimming pool contractor casts a pool, or concrete companies cast steps and yard ornaments. It would require some footwork to locate companies to do the fiberglass and concrete work, as well as get the cooperation of the N.P.S., but it could be done.

Also, there are original plans and drawings of all these guns and carriages in the Cartographic Branch of the National Archives which we can get copies of if needed. Gun carriages are probably the least trouble. Paulsen Brothers Ordnance Corp. makes full-scale wood seacoast gun carriages for all of these guns. Ten-inch Columbiads would require wrought-iron carriages but these could be made by a competent foundry. The N.P.S. had iron carriages made for some Columbiads at Fort Foote, Md. several years ago by the Frederick Iron and Steel Co., Frederick, Md. The cost was about \$18,000.00 apiece.

Paul Branch

Membership Form

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

Name _____

Street Address _____

City and State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Date _____

☐ \$5 Individual

☐ \$10 Family Membership

Mail completed form and check to:

Friends of Fort Macon, P.O. Box 651, Beaufort, NC 28516