

FORT MACON RAMPARTS

a newsletter of the Friends of Fort Macon
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Spring 1996

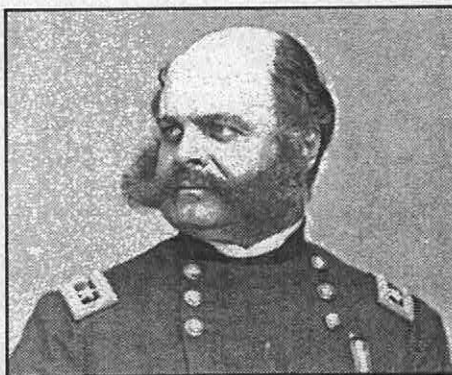
THE RISE AND FALL OF AMBROSE BURNSIDE

By BENNETT R. MOSS

When Union forces under the command of General Ambrose E. Burnside succeeded in recapturing FORT MACON on April 25, 1862, the victory capped the most successful campaign of the Union Army thus far in the Civil War. This success had its origins in the fact that Burnside had proposed the War's first Amphibious Division, which combined Army units with shallow draft Navy vessels under a single command. In this he had the support of his good friend and mentor, General George McClellan, the recently appointed commander of the Army of The Potomac.

Ambrose Burnside graduated from West Point in 1847. After six years of routine duty on the frontier and in garrison duty in Rhode Island, he resigned from the Army to go into business to manufacture a breech-loading carbine he had invented. The business, located in Rhode Island, was a failure; but his friend McClellan, who was then Vice-President of the Illinois Central Railroad, obtained a position for Burnside on the railroad. While living in Chicago, Burnside lodged with the McClellans. Because of his good organizational abilities and McClellan's influence, Burnside soon rose to become the Treasurer of the Illinois Central.

When the War broke out, the governor of Rhode Island asked Burnside to organize and lead a regiment of Rhode Island Volunteers. Thus, when the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) took place, Colonel Burnside commanded a brigade of Rhode Island and Massachusetts regiments. It was shortly afterwards that Burnside surfaced his amphibious division proposal. With McClellan's support, the idea gained approval at the highest levels, including that of President Lincoln. It was at this time that Burnside was given his Brigadier's star.



During the Civil War, it was not unusual for a general to be given command of a major military organization on paper. But with the command might come the responsibility of recruiting, organizing, and equipping the organization he was asked to command. In the case of Burnside's amphibious division, he also had to find many of the ships and boats he would need in his campaign to invade the North Carolina sounds.

Burnside's expedition almost foundered in getting through the treacherous shoals of Hatteras Inlet. After regrouping and consolidating his forces on Hatteras, Burnside's forces were clearly much stronger than the local Confederate militia units they encountered as they swept over the Core Banks to Roanoke Island and secured Pamlico Sound, including the town of Washington. The important battle for New Bern was well contested by its defenders, but the Federals had too much strength to be denied. The subsequent capture of Beaufort and FORT MACON provided the North with control of eastern Carolina that it would maintain throughout the rest of the War. The details of this interesting campaign will have to await a future issue of the RAMPARTS.

With the capture of FORT MACON, Burnside became a national hero in the North. With the exception of Ulysses Grant,

who had some notable successes in Tennessee, up to this time Union generals had presented the North with an unrelieved series of military disasters. Thus, the North Carolina campaign propelled General Ambrose E. Burnside to a prominence that he would later have reason to regret.

While Burnside was basking in glory, his friend, General McClellan, was struggling to keep his job. McClellan had built the Army of the Potomac into what even his detractors considered to be a first class army. His officers and soldiers loved their commander, "Little Mac", and McClellan loved them. Apparently, he loved them so much that he didn't want to lose any of them by committing the army to battle. Lincoln was constantly frustrated by McClellan's delays and failures.

On two occasions, Lincoln offered the command of the Army of The Potomac to Burnside. On both occasions Burnside rejected the offers. He told Lincoln that he didn't feel that he was qualified to lead an army of more than 100,000 men. But unspoken was his reluctance to be the cause of his good friend losing his position as the top field commander in the Union Army.

McClellan should have been grateful to Burnside for his loyalty, but instead he began a quiet campaign to make Burnside appear deficient as a commander. After the battle of Antietam, McClellan's reports made it appear that Burnside's failure to capture an important river crossing soon enough was the cause of the Union Army's failure to crush Lee's Confederates. In spite of McClellan's best efforts to destroy Burnside's reputation, Lincoln proceeded to fire McClellan and give command of the army to Burnside.

Ambrose Burnside not only inherited the Army of The Potomac, but with it he also inherited all of McClellan's very loyal, and
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Ambrose Burnside . . . cont from page 1

bitter, subordinate commanders. Most of his Corps and Division commanders would be happy to see Burnside fail and be replaced by one of their own. It only took one major battle for them to have their wishes fulfilled.

It was agreed by the President and Lincoln's chief military advisor, General Halleck, that Burnside should quickly move his army south, about 40 miles, then cross the Rappahannock River to capture lightly defended Fredericksburg. He would thereby get between Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate capital of Richmond. Unfortunately, the pontoon boats that were to be used for bridging the river were delayed.

Burnside waited for weeks for the boats while Confederate forces across the river grew substantially. When Burnside finally launched the attack, the Confederate position was almost impregnable, but he counted on General Franklin to use his Grand Division to roll up Lee's right flank while Burnside's main body attacked the entrenched center of Lee's forces defending the high ground. Unfortunately, the less than loyal Franklin failed to even begin the critical flanking attack. The resulting Union losses at Fredericksburg exceeded 12,000 killed and wounded. The defeat at Fredericksburg resulted in Burnside being replaced as commander of the Army of The Potomac by General "Fightin' Joe" Hooker.¹

Although Fredericksburg ended Burnside's brief tenure as head of a large army, it was not the end of his troubles during the war. Later, Burnside commanded a Corps under the

control of Generals Meade and Grant during the siege of Petersburg in 1864. One of Burnside's division commanders had a regiment of former Pennsylvania coal miners. They suggested to Burnside that they could tunnel more than 500 feet to place explosives under a Confederate strong point and blow it to kingdom come. Although there was the usual skepticism on the part of higher headquarters, Burnside enthusiastically approved the plan. The resulting explosion blew up a Confederate infantry regiment and a battery of artillery, and created an enormous crater (which can still be seen). For some mysterious reason, no one told Burnside's troops to charge **around** the crater. Instead, they charged right into it and then couldn't get out! Needless to say, for the Confederates it was like shooting fish in a barrel!

The battle of The Crater marked the end of Ambrose E. Burnside's military career. Who would have believed, on that fateful April day in 1862, when the brave defenders of FORT MACON were forced to lower their flag, that their conquering opponent was destined to write one of the most unusual chapters in American military history? Is it any wonder then, that General Burnside is better remembered for his bushy "sideburns" than he is for his military exploits?

¹ General Hooker was no more successful than Burnside, as commander of the Army of The Potomac, but he too left his imprint on the American language. He was notoriously fond of one component of the civilian opportunists who followed the Army wherever it went. The officers referred to them as "Hooker's Ladies", but to the troops they were simply "hookers".

GREAT NEWS!

After years of dreaming and scheming, it finally looks like the Fort is going to have its first big cannon and a hot-shot furnace too! With a little bit of luck (and a little more money), both should be in place in time for the annual meeting on April 21.

We have recently received a grant of \$3,000 from the Division of Archives and History to be applied to the cost of the hot-shot furnace. When added to the very generous gift of the Atlantic Beach Merchants and Professional Association, and others, the estimated cost of \$23,000 for the furnace has been covered. If all of the needed materials can be acquired in time, the construction work should be finished in April.

Our first large (32 pounder) cannon is nearing completion as this is being written.

The barrel and carriage will weigh about five thousand pounds. It is being fabricated by the B & W Fiberglass Co. in Sea Level, North Carolina. There are three problems that are still awaiting solutions at this time. Some of the metal components are not yet fabricated; we still need another three thousand dollars to pay for it; and we will need a heavy-lift helicopter to place the cannon on the Fort's ramparts. We are working on all of these problems, and are hopeful that the gun will also be in place in time for the April meeting and ice cream social.

Neither of these projects could have gotten to this point without the dedicated efforts of three of our member volunteers. The Friends of Fort Macon will always be grateful for the generous efforts of David Pleace, J.O. Barbour, and Howard Moberg.

AS WE GROW . . .

Each day our mail brings new memberships and commitments from friends who are already members. Our membership rolls are well over a thousand now and it is very exciting to see what is happening to us on a daily basis. We have over fifty life members and over 100 businesses and well over 1000 regular members. We are told that we are the largest Park Support Group in North Carolina.

Our NC Department of Cultural Resources has been supportive not only with funds but in sending John Clawser and his archeological staff to help with a dig concerning our upcoming Hot Shot Furnace's construction. Our Senators and Legislative representatives, Jean Preston, Jonathan Robinson, Beverly Perdue and Patrick Ballantine have all been very supportive to further our efforts, and the Atlantic Beach Merchants Association has been such a wonderful backer.

I think our success is due to Knowing What Direction To Take. It's having a very special Fort Superintendent and his great staff that is always there. It's a committed Board and above all a growing membership who like what the Friends are doing. Large memberships are very important for impact in moving an organization forward.

The first cannon and the Hot Shot Furnace should be completed in the Spring. Members, County Commissioners, State Archives, Senate and Legislative support, Atlantic Beach Merchants and donations of much time and effort by many have made this possible.

We offer a lot for a small fee. Great monthly speakers, two special newsletters yearly, our Ice Cream Social in April and a chance to see your contribution put to work in supplying Fort Macon with needs they would never have met otherwise. For those who have joined and those who will join, my heartfelt thanks for making this chapter of my life so rewarding. It is a pleasure and an honor to head such a marvelous group. Thanks to those who care and show it constantly.

Kathryn Cloud

ARMAMENT OF FORT MACON

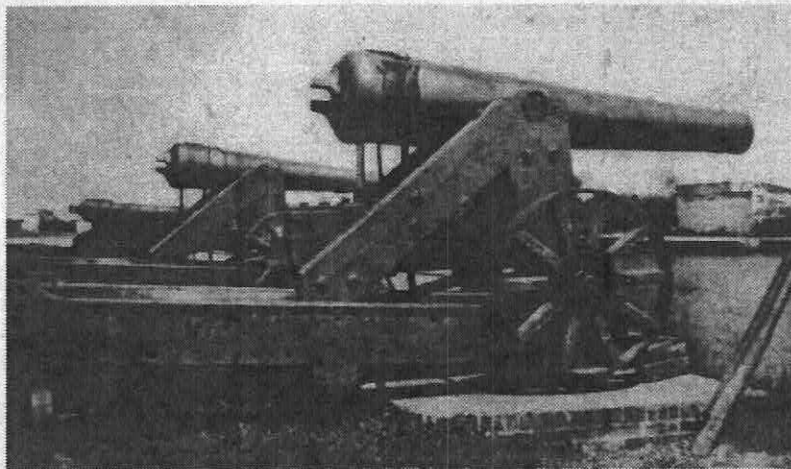
BY PAUL BRANCH

With the completion of the rifled 32-pounder cannon for Fort Macon by B & W Fiberglass of Sea Level (one of the Friends' long-standing projects for many years) it is hoped an interest will be stirred to know more about the old Fort's armament and what it was like. The 32-pounder was actually only one of several types of cannons used at the Fort, and perhaps the reader may wish to know something about these other types as well. What follows, then, is a description of the types and number of cannons used at Fort Macon at different periods. The reader should keep in mind that nineteenth century artillery is classified by two different methods with either a "-pounder" designation referring to the weight of the projectile it fired (i.e., a 32-pounder fired a 32-pound cannonball), or an "-inch" designation referring to the actual diameter of the cannonball (i.e., an 8-inch Columbiad fired an 8-inch diameter cannonball).

Prior to the Civil War, Fort Macon possessed an armament of seventeen 24-pounders and three 6-pounders which had been there for 25 years. With the outbreak of the war more guns of heavier caliber were needed for defense of the state's coast, prompting Governor John W. Ellis to send agents to Charleston and Richmond to purchase them. At Charleston, a battery of two 24-pounders and two 32-pounders which had helped bombard Fort Sumter were acquired and sent to Fort Macon in April, 1861. The following month larger guns—two 10-inch and four 8-inch Columbiads—arrived from Richmond, of which Fort Macon ended up keeping all but one of each caliber.

During the summer of 1861, a large number of medium caliber Navy guns, mainly 32-pounders, were supplied to Fort Macon from the Norfolk Navy Yard. However, in the Battle of Hatteras Inlet (August 28-29, 1861) two Confederate Forts had to surrender after their medium guns could not even reach an attacking fleet of Union ships. The battle demonstrated the need for more long-ranged heavy guns to compete with the Union fleet. Accordingly, between September, 1861, and January, 1862, Fort Macon received one 10-inch

Columbiad, two 8-inch Columbiads and a 5.82-inch rifled Columbiad. In addition, four of its smoothbore 32-pounders were rifled in place by the portable rifling machine of the Charleston firm, J.M. Eason and Brother. The rifled 32-pounder replica which the Friends of



A 32-pounder on the ramparts

Fort Macon has built depicts one of these converted 32-pounders.

By the time of the bombardment of Fort Macon on April 25, 1862, Fort Macon had as many as 54 cannons, although the exact number is still not accurately known at this time. The breakdown of guns is believed to be as follows:

- 2 10-inch Columbiads
- 5 8-inch Columbiads
- 1 5.82-inch rifled Columbiad
- 4 rifled 32-pounders
- 18 32-pounders
- 18 24-pounders
- 6 32-pounder carronades

After Fort Macon was captured, Union forces retained most of the Fort's Confederate armament but added three 100-pounder Parrott Rifle cannons, two 10-inch siege mortars, and six 24-pounder howitzers.

Further changes in the armament took place so that by the time Fort Macon's garrison was withdrawn in 1877, at the end of Reconstruction, only six guns remained: two 100-pounder Parrott Rifle cannons, two 10-inch siege mortars, and two 12-pounder "Napoleon" field guns. Of these, the two mortars, now in the Fort parade ground, are the only two which are known to survive today.

Movies tend to make Civil War cannons appear quite primitive, but it might be surprising to know what they were actually capable of. The Columbiads were the largest class of smoothbore cannons in size used in land service by either side and were the largest guns Fort Macon had. Of these the 10-inch was the largest of the two calibers used at Fort Macon. The barrel of the 10-inch Columbiad was about 10 feet long and 2½ feet in diameter. One of them is noted as weighing 15,998 pounds. It could fire a 10-inch 128-pound cannonball over three miles with a high elevation and an 18-20 pound gunpowder charge. Rifled cannons utilized a spinning elongated projectile rather than a ball, which was more accurate. They were capable of ranges of four to five miles with accuracy.

During the siege of Ft. Macon, the 5.82-inch rifled Columbiad in the Fort was fired at a Union gunboat in the mouth of North River near Harker's Island (range about 4 miles) and hit within six feet of the ship on the second shot.

The rifled 32-pounder replica which the Friends of Fort Macon has made for the Fort depicts one of the four Navy smoothbore 32-pounders which Confederates converted into rifles by having rifling grooves cut down the length of the inner bore. Once converted, the weapons no longer used round 32-pounder cannonballs, but instead elongated rifled projectiles weighing 50-64 pounds. Such conversions of smoothbore cannons into rifled cannons were commonplace in the war, especially in the South.

However, the bulk of Fort Macon's armament consisted of smoothbore 32- and 24-pounders, which fired cannonballs of their respective size over a mile with normal elevation. All of Fort Macon's 32-pounders were Navy guns, which were usually lighter than their Army counterparts due to weight limitations aboard ships. Most of Fort Macon's Navy 32-pounders were Model 1841, being nine feet long and weighing over 4700 pounds. Curiously, they were a foot shorter and 1000 pounds lighter than the Army 24-pounders the Fort had, but fired a larger cannonball.

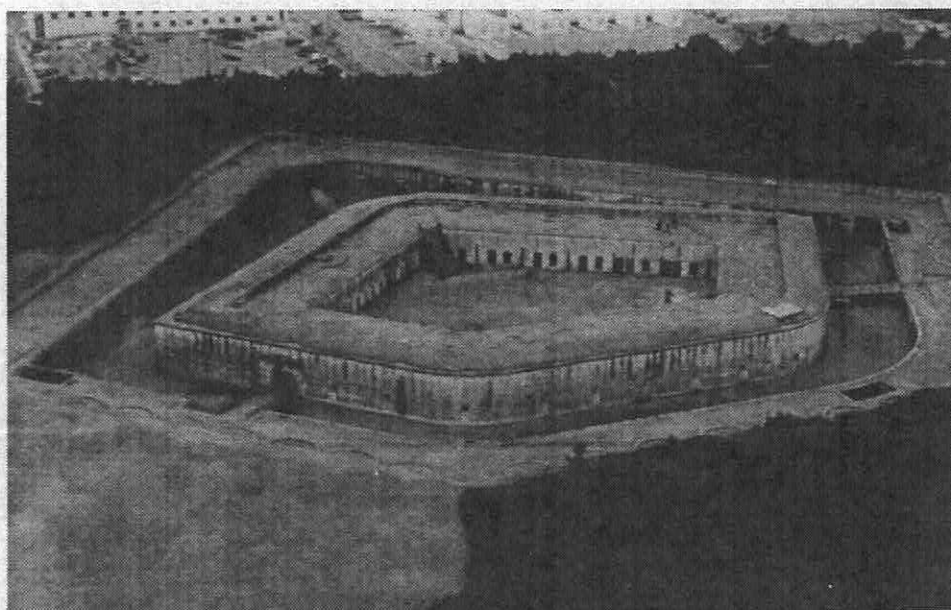
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The 32-pounder carronades used at the Fort during the battle were yet another interesting type. Carronades were stubby, obsolete Navy broadside guns which were formerly used to crush ship hulls at close range. In Fort Macon they were first acquired with the intention to be used in the rooms under the Fort's outer wall to blast any attackers who got into the ditch with fragmentation ammunition. During the siege, however, they were mounted by Confederates on angled gun carriages as improvised mortars in an unsuccessful attempt to lob explosive shells into Union positions behind the dunes.

Howitzers and mortars were stubby weapons designed to fire explosive shells at high arcing angles. The two 10-inch mortars

currently in Fort Macon could lob an 88-pound 10-inch explosive shell over a mile with accuracy.

Thus Fort Macon possessed an interesting variety of cannons during its history. It is unfortunate that the two 10-inch mortars are the only ones of the original armament left in existence today. The completion of the replica rifled 32-pounder and its gun carriage by B & W Fiberglass Company of Sea Level has been a major milestone for interpreting the history of Fort Macon. While two other 32-pounders are planned for the near future, it is sincerely hoped enough interest will be generated in seeing these great implements of war back on the Fort's walls to also make a replica of one or two of the other types of cannons which also would have shared the wall with our 32-pounders.



ANNUAL MEETING AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The FRIENDS OF FORT MACON will hold their third annual meeting and ICE CREAM SOCIAL at the Fort on Sunday, April 21, 1996. The meeting will commemorate the 134th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Macon during the Civil War. The meeting will begin at 2:00 PM, and will be held on the parade ground within the walls of historic Fort Macon. Cars can be parked in the main parking lot at the Fort.

This will be our finest affair ever! Besides all the ice cream and goodies you can handle, we will have fascinating demonstrations by Park Rangers, wonderful Civil War songs performed by Connie Mason, and brief comments by guest officials and Friends' officers. But the true highlight of the day will be the dedications of our first large reproduction cannon and our newly rebuilt hot-shot furnace (vintage 1834).

This will truly be a memorable occasion. Mark it on your calendar right now. Cancel that world tour, if necessary. And please bring some prospective members with you. A good time will be had by all!

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1996 looks like it will truly be an exciting year for Fort Macon State Park. In November, 1995 at the Friends' monthly meeting, we saw the first views of what the Coastal Education Center may look like, and what types of repairs will be made on the Fort. We are now in the process of incorporating some of the suggestions made during that meeting into the plans. The final plans should be ready by the end of 1996.

We look forward to the approach of Spring and the beginning of the Cannon and Hot Shot Furnace projects. These two projects show what can be accomplished when the community gets involved with the Park. In the spring the short session of the Legislature will meet, and the Friends' support during the session of the Legislature will be very important.

As you go through the Newsletter, be sure and complete the Volunteer Interest Form. We hope that volunteers will be able to play a larger role in some of the functions of the park in the future—especially when the Coastal Education Center opens.

On April 21st the Friends will have their annual Ice Cream Social at the Park. Last year we had a wonderful crowd, even with the bad weather, and I look forward to seeing everyone again this year.

As I have said in the past, the Friends' support means so much to the Park. I thank you for that support, and as I look forward to the future, it looks so bright for the Friends and Fort Macon.

Jody Merritt



HARD CHOICES

The dramatic growth of the Friends of Fort Macon over the past three years has been very gratifying and exciting. But with the growth has come a substantial increase in the work of administering the organization--soliciting memberships, computer processing, seeking donations, planning programs, preparing newsletters, coordinating and construction of major acquisitions for the Fort, etc. It has stretched the personal resources of the handful of volunteers doing this work almost to the breaking point.

One possible solution to the problem is to hire a part-time administrator. But to do so would deprive us of the funds needed to acquire more cannons and other major artifacts that the State is unwilling to provide for the Fort, unless the Friends choose to require an increase in the dues levels. An increase in dues would have to be very substantial to provide the needed funds to hire an administrator. But a large dues increase would inevitably result in a loss of members, or at least in a drastic lessening of our rate of growth.

It seems evident that the best way to deal with our growing pains is to increase the level of volunteer participation. The work that needs to be done is usually quite enjoyable when shared with other congenial people working towards a common goal. So if you live in Carteret, Craven or Onslow counties, and can spare a few hours a month, please fill out the volunteer form that is included with this newsletter and send it in.

We really need to hear from you.

FRIENDS OF FORT MACON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Kathryn Cloud
1st V/President	Bennett Moss
2nd V/President	Patrica Davis
Secretary	Noble Barnes
Treasurer	Vera Wetherington
Finance Chairman	H. Van der Voort
Publicity	Nathaniel Hill
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Programs	Carolyn Campbell
Supt. Fort Macon	Jody Merritt
Artifacts	David Pleace
Past President	Jean Kell
Historian	Thelma Simpson
Membership	Adele DeLuca

FRIENDS 1995 FINANCIAL RESULTS

Upon receiving substantial contributions toward the construction of a Hot Shot Furnace and a replica of a 32-pounder cannon, work commenced on both projects in 1995. The balance of these funds will be expended in 1996 as the two projects are completed. Major contributors in 1995 included the Atlantic Beach Merchants and Professional Association, the N.C. Division of Archives and History, the Carteret County Commissioners, and many generous members of the Friends of Fort Macon.

Following is an abbreviated summary of 1995's operating results compared with the previous year:

	1995	1994
INCOME		
Member Dues	\$10,814.	\$10,065.
Donation Box	6,470.	6,731.
Contributions	24,190.	1,850.
Bank Interest	470.	180.
Other Income	511.	0.
TOTAL INCOME	42,456.	18,826.
EXPENSES		
Fort Improvements	\$13,756.	\$4,903.
Operating & Admin.	7,612.	4,660.
TOTAL EXPENSES	21,368.	9,563.
NET INCOME	\$21,088.	\$9,263.
BALANCE IN BANK		
Beginning of Year	\$14,167.	\$4,904.
End of Year	35,255.	14,167.
Increase	21,088.	9,263.

CANNON TALK

Do you have an antique cannon, a toy cannon, a handmade cannon or a miniature cannon that you would like to give to the Friends of Fort Macon to start a collection of table model cannons?

We have noticed in antique shops and flea markets small cannons for sale. We could build a nice collection that could be displayed from time to time. If you have such items or are interested in helping to locate them please give me a call. It might help to have such a display for background as we continue to raise money for the **BIG CANNONS**. What about a cannon ball collection also? Kathryn Cloud 728-2704.

Membership Form

Check One: ☒ New Member(s) ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift Membership

Fee Enclosed \$ _____ Date _____

Members Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Name of Donor, if gift _____

Membership Categories and Fees

Individual - \$5.00	Family - \$10.00	Lifetime (ea.) - \$100.00
Business or Organization - \$25.00	Business Lifetime - \$500.00	
Friends of Fort Macon, P.O. Box 651, Beaufort, NC 28516		