

# FORT MACON RAMPARTS

a newsletter of the Friends of Fort Macon Spring 1997

Volume IV, Issue 1

## FORT MACON AS A SHELTER FOR BUFFALOES

by Paul Branch

This rather curious title refers to an interesting series of events that involved Fort Macon in the Civil War. The events in question took place in eastern North Carolina during the first months of 1864 and ended with Fort Macon receiving a controversial new garrison of Union soldiers called "Buffaloes".

During the Civil War, a sizeable segment of the population of North Carolina, chiefly in the mountains and along the coastal section, remained loyal to the Union and chose to have nothing to do with the Confederacy. The Unionists existed in the same manner that "Tories", or persons loyal to Great Britain, existed in the Thirteen Colonies during the American Revolution. Just as the Tories took up arms against the Patriots in the Revolution, many North Carolina Unionists fought against their fellow North Carolinians serving in the Confederate Army during the Civil War (including a number of men who

deserted from the Confederate Army and switched sides to join the Union Army). Two regiments of these Unionists were recruited and formed as part of the Union Army in North Carolina: the 1st N.C. Union Volunteers in June,



Major General George Pickett

1862, followed in November, 1863, by the 2nd N.C. Union Volunteers. The two regiments were stationed in the various defenses of the Union enclaves of New Bern, Washington and Plymouth during 1862-64, and also participated in a number of raids and engagements during this period.

As one can imagine, Confederate North Carolinians who encountered them had considerable contempt for these North Carolinians in blue and nicknamed them "Buffaloes", a term whose exact origin is not entirely clear. It was no surprise that the potential for serious trouble existed

Continued on page 2

## JOSIAH PENDER AND THE CAPTURE OF FORT MACON

by Bennett Moss

Fort Macon was built to protect Beaufort and its harbor from hostile invaders. Whoever possessed Fort Macon would have effective control of an important area of eastern North Carolina.

When word of the Confederate siege of Charleston's Fort Sumter was received in Beaufort, a local unit of secessionist militia decided to take action against Fort Macon. The militia unit, known locally as the "Beaufort Harbor Guards" consisted of 17 men under the command of Josiah S. Pender.

On April 14, 1861, the Beaufort Harbor Guards and some of their friends, descended upon the surprised Union caretaker, Sergeant William Alexander, and took possession of Fort Macon for the Confederacy. They lowered the Stars and Stripes and replaced it with an improvised Confederate flag.

Sgt. Alexander was not the only one surprised by this venture. The governor of North Carolina was also surprised when he heard of it. The War had barely begun. Not only did the capture of Fort Macon occur just one day after Fort Sumter fell, but North Carolina was still a part of the Union, and remained so for another 35 days!

To say the least, the military career of the militia commander, Josiah Pender, was strange. Pender was born

Continued on page 5

whenever these two factions chanced to meet each other in battle. In early 1864, the trouble did in fact come to a boil. Early in February 1864, the forces of Confederate Major General George E. Pickett, of Gettysburg fame, made an unsuccessful attempt to recapture New Bern, N.C. However, his forces did capture almost 400 Union soldiers, some of whom belonged to the 2nd North Carolina Union Volunteers. Some of the captured Buffaloes were former Confederate soldiers who had deserted and gone over to join the Union Army. In accordance with the articles of war, 22 of these men were tried for desertion by court martial and hanged at Kinston. The executions caused strong protests from Union authorities and was to be the subject of a Congressional hearing after the war.

In the meantime, the executions had a demoralizing effect on the remainder of the two North Carolina Union regiments, whose men now feared a similar fate if captured by the Confederates. Many of these men were also deserters from the Confederate Army and feared that retribution would not only be carried out against them, but possibly their families as well. These fears became so overpowering that the reliability and effectiveness of the two regiments as front-line troops began to diminish rapidly to the point they become a liability for the Union Army. To make matters worse, Confederate forces launched other operations in eastern North Carolina in April and May, 1864, that increased the likelihood some of them would be captured. In a fierce four-day battle, Confederate Brig. General Robert F. Hoke's forces succeeded in capturing the Union enclave of Plymouth, N.C., on April 20, 1864, along with about 2500 men of its garrison. Included in the garrison were two companies of the 2nd North Carolina Union Volunteers, many of whose men deserted in fear and escaped down the river before the

town was surrendered to avoid being captured.

The capture of Plymouth put the remainder of the two Buffalo regiments into a state of near panic. Union Brig. General Innis N. Palmer wrote his Department Commander from New Bern on April 23 that "Colonel (J.M.) McChesney writes from Little Washington that a portion of his (1st) North Carolina regiment is demoralized; that he...has no confidence in them...They recollect the fate of those recently hanged at Kinston, and the wives, sisters and children of those victims haunt us daily. It becomes matter for some thought as to the best disposition to be made of them. The immense number of women and children with these troops is what perplexes us, for these must be provided for." On April 26, Washington was ordered to be evacuated and its garrison, including the Buffaloes, withdrawn to New

True patriotism sometimes requires a man to act exactly contrary, at one period, to that which it does at another.

*Robert E. Lee*

Bern. Two days later, General Palmer wrote again from New Bern: "The 1st N.C. Regiment is here. They have with them some 300 women and children. I shall make the best use of them I can, but these Carolina regiments are a great drag upon us at such a time as this."

Meanwhile, Union Colonel Edward H. Ripley wrote to the District Commander on April 22 from Morehead City that since "the arrival of the news from Plymouth the remainder of the 2nd N.C. Volunteers are much excited. I cannot place the least dependence on them for the defense of Beaufort or any other place. They are utterly demoralized and will not fight. Indeed, they are already looking to the swamps for the protection they have so far failed of getting from our

government...Can they not be sent to Fort Macon, out of harm's way?"

The prospect of concentrating the Buffaloes in the area of Beaufort Harbor and Fort Macon, which constituted the Sub-District of Beaufort, appealed to General Palmer since this was the one area of his command which was least likely to become the scene of a front-line battle. Accordingly, on May 10, 1864, the 1st North Carolina Union Volunteers were transferred to the Sub-District of Beaufort, joining the remainder of the 2nd North Carolina Union Volunteers who were already there. As Palmer wrote on May 12: "The North Carolina regiments I shall establish at Beaufort and Morehead, a few companies at (Fort) Macon. The families can be established at Beaufort. The town is protected by a line of entrenchments, and as soon as they feel secure they will take heart and, I trust become effective."

Thus, because of the unreliability of the Buffaloes as front-line troops, the Union Army had been forced to shove them out of the way to continue the business of war. In much the same way troubled or abused persons today find refuge in a shelter in to get their lives back on track, the Buffaloes were shunted off to a sector where they would feel safe and secure. Fort Macon was to serve as one of the keys to their rehabilitation as soldiers. Accordingly, for almost the remainder of the war, Fort Macon would be garrisoned by the Buffaloes. From May, 1864, to March, 1865, only a month before the war ended, four or five companies of the 1st North Carolina Union Volunteers were always stationed at the fort as its garrison, and the remaining companies of the two regiments in other nearby defenses. At the end of February, 1865, the two Buffalo regiments were consolidated into one. Safe behind the entrenchments at Newport, Morehead City and Beaufort, and behind the stout walls of Fort Macon, these controversial soldiers



Continued from page 2

found essentially a shelter in which to finish out the last year of the war and where they would be one less headache for General Palmer and his superiors. In this way they unknowingly provided one of the more interesting, if little known, sidelights of Fort Macon's history.

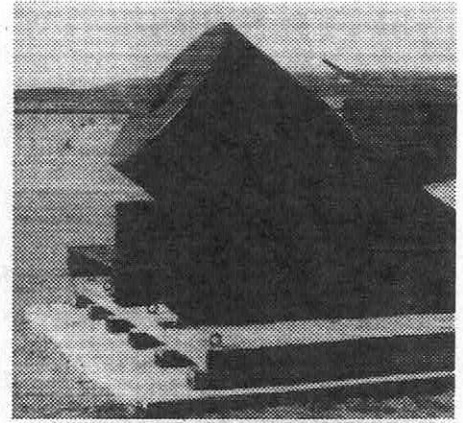
In my years as historian of Fort Macon, many people have sought my help in tracing ancestors who served in the Confederate garrison of Fort Macon during the siege and battle of April, 1862. For most Southerners, knowing their ancestors served in the Confederate Army is a source of great personal pride and satisfaction. Unfortunately for several people I have talked with, tracking their ancestor's military service at Fort Macon ended in a manner for which they were completely unprepared. For instance, one woman said her ancestor was in the Confederate Army in the 1st North Carolina Regiment and supposedly served at Fort Macon in 1864. Yet she had looked through Confederate regimental histories and rosters for this regiment and could not find any mention of her ancestor's name or any indication the regiment was ever at Fort Macon. Of course, I explained that most likely her ancestor had to be in the 1st North Carolina Union Volunteer regiment, which was in fact stationed at Fort Macon in 1864, and told her the story of the North Carolina "Buffaloes". The discovery that her ancestor was in one of the Buffalo regiments, of course, came as a complete shock. The woman was completely and utterly devastated. "You mean he was a traitor to the South?" she gasped. The reaction of the other persons who made similar discoveries was essentially the same. Despite the passage of over 130 years, the North Carolina Buffaloes still elicit the strongest emotions of contempt and disdain for many North Carolinians.

## PATRIOTS COME IN MANY COLORS

During the latter part of the Civil War, the Federal government recruited many regiments of black soldiers for the Union Army. By the end of the war, more than a quarter of the entire army consisted of black soldiers.

Blacks also served in the Confederate Army. Although most accompanied their masters as body servants, quite a few bore arms and fought in many battles. Northerners found it hard to believe, but those blacks who did fight did so with conviction. After all, the South was their home too.

On one occasion, a white Confederate officer and his black soldier/servant were both captured and sent to a Northern prison. Both were informed that they could be exchanged and sent home if they would take an oath of loyalty to the Union. The officer readily agreed, but the black soldier refused. Later, when asked why he didn't take the oath like his master, he replied, "Massa don't have no principles".



## MORTAR CARRIAGES NEARING COMPLETION

Most of our members have seen two ten-inch mortar barrels sitting on concrete pads just inside the entrance to the Fort. These two mortars don't look like much because they are not mounted on proper carriages. The carriage is as much a part of a mortar as is the barrel. Neither the carriage or the barrel is of any military use without the other. The two mortar barrels are actual veterans of the Civil War.

Fortunately for all of us, the generous folks of the Atlantic Beach Merchants and Professional Association have given us enough money to build authentic steel carriages for the two mortars.

The carriages are being built according to ordnance drawings from the 1850's. The B&W Fiberglass Company of Sea Level, NC, is doing the work. These are the same folks who built our wonderful reproduction 32-pounder cannon.

As this newsletter goes to press, the carriages are nearing completion. With a little bit of luck, by the time of our annual meeting and ice cream social, they should be sitting proudly in the Fort ready to repel any future aggressors.

**Don't Forget the  
Ice Cream Social  
Sunday , April 20th  
at 2:00PM**

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

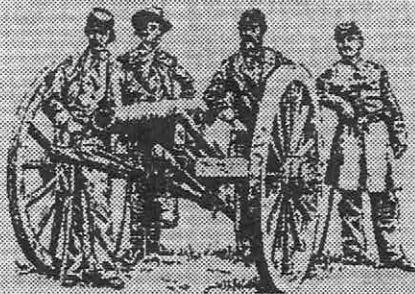
The outlook for 1997 at Fort Macon is great. By the time this Newsletter is published, several important events will have taken place. We will have received \$5,000 from the Atlantic Beach Business and Professionals Association to be used in the reproduction of carriages of the two original mortars at the fort. This wonderful group has given a total of \$20,000 to the Friends of Fort Macon to be used at the fort. Second, the park will have completed its first Training Course for volunteers by April. As mentioned in the past, this type of involvement by the Friends (volunteers) will aid our educational programs tremendously. Last, but certainly not least, the Friends of Fort Macon will have had the first annual "Friends Meeting Friends" social at the Dunes Club.

We have finally gotten the Design Contracts signed for the first phase of the fort restoration work, and the Visitors Center. Hopefully, by this time next year, we will be ready to accept bids on these two projects.

As we go through 1997, I hope you will take advantage of the different functions that the Friends will be having at the park. Please take the time to come and support the Park—as your support has meant so much to us in the past.

**Don't let this be your  
FINAL COPY!**

If the above label is on the cover, it indicates your 1997 dues have not been paid. Our mailing list is lengthy and printing is expensive. We know that everybody enjoys reading the "Fort Macon Ramparts" and we want to continue to send it to you. To assure that you receive the fall issue, use the convenient form on page 7 and mail your check today. If our records are in error, please call us at (919) 728-5495 or (919) 728-2704. We sincerely value your membership and support.



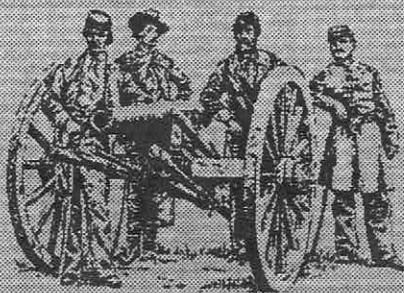
## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1997 will see a lot of new objectives for the Friends of Fort Macon. We now have a very strong, close-knit organization whose mission is more pronounced each year.

By spring a number of us will be called "Volunteer Docents". What a tremendous help this will be to our rangers and what rewarding experiences for Friends.

In early summer our "In the Fort Concerts" will start. Carolyn Campbell and Jody Merritt are working on this program. Concerts will be in the early evening and who can think of a more beautiful setting than the Fort itself. Our Ice Cream Social and Annual Meeting should be well attended on the 20th of April. It is a fine occasion to bring family and possibly a potential member to see our Fort. The Marine 2nd Aircraft Wing Band from Cherry Point will be our special guests. Thank you one and all for your support in all I have attempted to do this past year. We grow in membership each day and it is my pleasure to work with so many dedicated members and staff at Fort Macon. As we grow during 1997 I am sure our presence will be felt and appreciated even more and it should give each of us a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.

Kathryn Cloud



## STATE DISCRIMINATES AGAINST PARK RANGERS

North Carolina has a variety of Law Enforcement Officers employed by the State Government. These include State Troopers, DOT Enforcement, Prison Guards, Park Rangers, Wildlife Officers, and Maritime Police, among others.

All of these require the same law enforcement training and qualification. All of these have the same, or nearly the same, pay scale except the Park Rangers. Park Rangers are paid substantially less than the others. All of these require a minimum of a High School diploma, except the Park Rangers. The Park Rangers must have a College degree. All of these have only law enforcement duties, except the Park Rangers. The Park Rangers have similar law enforcement responsibilities and hazards, but they also have an important duty to educate the public in nature studies and history.

The low pay makes it very difficult to recruit and retain the very best men and women for these demanding jobs. If you think the State policy that results in this discrimination is both unfair and unreasonable, please write or call your elected officials and tell them so!

## VOLUNTEER DOCENT TRAINING BEGINS

A dozen members of the Friends began training in February to become docents at Fort Macon State Park. This Spring, they will begin taking Park visitors on nature walks where they will observe various bird species. During turtle nesting season, they will also reveal signs of nesting turtles. Other volunteers will give tours of the Fort, and will provide visitors with a sense of the important history that has made Fort Macon such a special part of our heritage. Congratulations, volunteers!



into a wealthy North Carolina family in March, 1819. At the age of 16, he obtained an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He entered West Point on July 1, 1835. Seven months later he resigned from the Academy because he found military discipline to be intolerable. He then turned to the study of art.

In spite of his disappointing experience at West Point, Pender still retained a mental image of himself as a dashing military officer. When the war with Mexico broke out in 1846, Pender's military juices began flowing again. In December of 1846 he joined Company A of the First North Carolina Volunteer Regiment. Apparently, the combination of a year of college education and his West Point experience resulted in his being elected to the rank of Second Lieutenant. In January, the unit was mustered into the U.S. Army and shipped to northern Mexico. By August 1847, Josiah Pender was Dishonorably Discharged for insubordination, by order of the Commanding General. This time his military service lasted for seven and a half months.

Pender successfully appealed his discharge directly to Washington, D.C. He was reinstated, with the rank of First Lieutenant, by direct order of President James Polk and the Secretary of War. He was then given administrative duties, from which he resigned five months later on May 31, 1848. Apparently, Pender was eager to serve as a soldier, but only on his own terms.

For the next dozen years, Pender pursued an artistic career. With fam-

ily funds, he built a prosperous jewelry business in Tarboro, N.C. He soon expanded into the shipping business with the purchase of three steamships operating between Beaufort, New Bern, Bermuda and New York. In 1856, he moved his family to Beaufort, and purchased the Atlantic House Hotel. Because of his frequent business trips to Bermuda, he also purchased a cottage in Hamilton in 1858.

When war clouds began to gather, and many southern states began to talk seriously of secession, North Carolina found itself straddling the fence. The coastal areas and the mountains were largely pro-union, while the principal agricultural areas of the state leaned toward secession. But there was no uncertainty in the mind of Josiah Pender. Pender already had three bad experiences as part of the Union Army. He had no qualms about aligning himself against that army. With his own funds, he recruited and completely outfitted his own secessionist militia unit, with himself as Commanding Officer. But without any orders from the State, he seized control of Fort Macon with this unit.

Prior to this, we had seen Josiah Pender enter upon active military service three times. On each occasion, he lasted less than eight months. His latest venture was to prove to be no different. One week after Governor John W. Ellis heard of Pender's action he ordered four of North Carolina's regular military units to proceed immediately to Fort Macon to take charge. Pender formally volunteered to join the State Troops. He was commissioned on May 16 as Cap-

tain of Company G, Tenth North Carolina State Troops. This was soon followed by the unit's induction into the Army of the Confederate States of America, after North Carolina left the Union.

Before long Pender began to test the limits of military authority. His wife was seriously ill in Beaufort, and barracks life had become insufferably dull. When his request for leave was denied, he decided to go home anyway. At a Court Martial convened in Morehead City at the end of November, 1861, Captain Josiah S. Pender was convicted of being absent without leave and of making false statements to the Fort's commandant, Colonel Moses J. White. Captain Pender was dismissed from State service on December 21, followed ten days later by orders from Richmond dismissing him from the Confederate Army. This finally marked the end of Josiah Pender's bizarre military career.

Although his military service had ended, Pender never wavered in his support for the Confederate cause. As Union forces under General Burnside began to approach Beaufort early in 1862, Pender felt he had to make a move. With his three steamships and his base in Bermuda, he began to operate as an active blockade runner.

While engaged in this blockade runner activity, Pender contracted Yellow Fever in October, 1864. Somehow he managed to return to Beaufort, where he died on October 25. He was 45 years old. Josiah Pender, the man who loved to play soldier but couldn't stand to take orders, is buried in Beaufort's Old Burying Ground.

**Don't forget the Annual Meeting and the Ice Cream Social**  
Sunday April 20, 2:00 PM at the Fort, Lots of Ice Cream, Brownies and Soft Drinks  
Concert by the Marine 2nd Aircraft Wing Band from Cherry Point

# ANNUAL MEETING AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL

SUNDAY, APRIL 20TH AT 2:00 PM AT FORT MACON

The 135th anniversary of the battle of Fort Macon will be observed with lots of ice cream (including no sugar ice cream), homemade brownies and soft drinks. Gary and Janet Plough are again heading the ice cream brigade, Shirley Barnes heads the brownies and Larry Richter will be in charge of the soft drinks.

The highlight of the afternoon will be a concert by the Marine 2nd Aircraft Wing Band from Cherry Point.

Plan to come, enjoy the fort, refreshments and the wonderful band concert we are so privileged to have for our program.

Bring a friend and see Fort Macon at its best. Parking is available at the Fort and the Coast Guard Station.



Everyone wants their picture taken with the new cannon; Supertendent Merritt, Senator Balentine, Representative Robinson and FOFM President Cloud  
(Ice Cream Social 1996)

The Friends of Fort Macon acknowledge with appreciation the following major contributors to our projects:

Atlantic Beach Merchants and Professionals Association  
Wachovia Bank of North Carolina  
Carolina Power and Light  
Carteret County Board of Commissioners

Because of friends like these we can continue to support the fort.

## "You Don't Say..."

Neither current events nor history show that the majority rules, or ever did rule.

Jefferson Davis, 1864

There never was a time when, in my opinion, some way could not be found to prevent the drawing of the sword.

U. S. Grant

We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free, honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve.

We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth.

Abraham Lincoln, 1861

I speak truth, not so much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little more as I grow older.

Michel de Montaigne

All I can say for the United States Senate is that it opens with prayer and closes with an investigation.

Will Rogers

## We're On The Net

Articles from past issues of the Fort Macon Ramparts can now be viewed on the Internet at:

<http://www.clis.com/friends/>

This has been made possible through a grant from Cape Lookout Internet Services.



# **FRIENDS OF FORT MACON** **BOARD OF DIRECTORS** **FOR 1997**

All officers and directors of the Friends of Fort Macon serve without compensation. The term of office is one year, beginning January 1.

President ----- Kathryn Cloud  
1st Vice President ---- Bennett Moss  
2nd Vice President --- Grayden Paul  
Secretary ----- Noble Barnes  
Treasurer ----- Vera Wetherington  
Finance ----- H. Van der Voort  
Publicity ----- Nathaniel Hill  
Programs ----- Carolyn Campbell  
Supt. Fort Macon ---- Jody Merritt  
Artifacts ----- David Pleace  
Publications ----- David Moore  
Business Membership Jean Burris  
Personal Membership Nancy Donnan  
Computer Services --- Dave Cloud  
Data Proc. Spec. ----- Bob Donnan  
Past President ----- Jean Kell  
Beaufort Hist. Assoc. - Marilyn Collins  
Carteret Hist. Soc. ---- Les Ewen  
Honorary Member ---- Pat Davis  
Honorary Member ---- Thelma Simpson

## **Membership**

We continue to welcome new members and our lifetime memberships are increasing. Clearly, interest in Fort Macon is widespread. Here's what each of us can do to strengthen the network of support:

- Share this copy of "Ramparts" with others and suggest they join the Friends of Fort Macon and receive the spring and fall issues
- Let others know they can make a tax-deductible gift over and above the membership dues
- Consider a Lifetime Membership and encourage your friends and family to do the same (\$100 per individual)
- Renew your membership now if you have not already done so by paying 1997 dues

## **Friends' 1996 Financial Report**

Expenditures in 1996 increased substantially as the Friends completed the construction of our first large reproduction cannon as well as our new Hot Shot Furnace. Most of the contributed funds for these two large projects were received, but not expended, in the previous year.

Dues income increased by 26 percent as our membership continued to grow. In spite of the pressure this growth exerts on our operating costs, there was no corresponding increase in overhead expenses.

In 1996, the Friends were the fortunate recipients of generous contributions from Atlantic Beach Merchants and Professionals Association, Carolina Power (CPL), Wachovia Bank, the Carteret County Commissioners, and many generous members of the Friends of Fort Macon.

Following is an abbreviated summary of 1996's operating results compared with the previous year:

	1996	1995
<b>INCOME</b>		
Member Dues	13,701	10,814
Donation Box	6,255	6,470
Contributions	13,615	24,190
Bank Interest	228	470
Other Income	951	511
Total	34,750	42,456
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Fort Improvements	34,726	13,756
Operating & Admin.	7,344	7,612
Total	42,070	21,36
<b>NET INCOME</b>	-7,320	21,088
<b>BALANCE IN BANK</b>		
Beginning of Year	35,424	14,336
End of Year	28,104	35,424
Increase	-7,320	21,088

## **Membership Form**

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

Fee Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Member's 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 28516-0651**