

# FORT MACON RAMPARTS

A publication of the Friends of Fort Macon

Volume VII, Issue 1 Spring 2000

## FOR UNION OR SECESSION?

by Bennett Moss and Dr. James Manney

It was March, 1861, and Sergeant Alexander was getting nervous. William Alexander was a U.S. Army Ordinance Sergeant at Fort Macon, North Carolina. The Fort did not have an active garrison, and Alexander was the sole caretaker of the Fort. The sergeant had just received a message from the Chief of Ordinance that his request for a pistol had been denied.

In recent months the nation had been in turmoil following the election of Abraham Lincoln. Even before Lincoln was inaugurated, seven southern states had seceded from the Union. There was talk of war. Would North Carolina also secede? If so, what would happen to Fort Macon? What would happen to Sergeant Alexander and his young wife?

North Carolina, along with neighboring states Virginia and Tennessee, did not rush to join the Confederacy. The people of North Carolina were sharply divided over the issue. There were many pro Union sympathizers in the coastal area and also in the western mountains of the state. By contrast, the plantation owners and other large slave owners of the central part of the state were strongly in

favor of secession. As in most states, the state legislature was dominated by wealthy property owners. In North Carolina most of these men were slave owners.

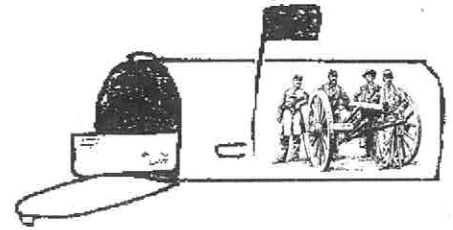
Ever since the ratification of the Constitution, there had been strongly divided factions, usually along regional lines, that threatened to tear the Union apart. From the very beginning the Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, pushed hard for a powerful central government. On the other side, the Jeffersonian Republicans fought to retain a greater share of power for the individual states. This issue of "States Rights" was not resolved for 75 years.

One especially heated aspect of the States Rights argument was the theory of "Nullification". Its proponents held that if the Federal government passed a law that any state felt was in violation of the letter or spirit of the Constitution, the legislature of that state could declare the law to be without effect in that state. Most notable among the "Nullifiers" was John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina.

Other issues continued to divide the nation. Often the divisions coin-

*Continued on next page*

## LETTER FROM FORT MACON



This is the sixth, and final, installment of letters written by "Jeannie" Coues, the wife of the post war Fort Macon Surgeon, Dr. Elliott Coues, addressed to her sister Louise. At this time the Fort was being used as a Federal penitentiary.

*Fort Macon, North Carolina  
Oct. 20th, 1870*

*My Darling Sister;*

*Your stunner of the 17th is this minute received, and I rise from a sick bed to indignantly deny the base assertions you scatter broadcast through out it. What motive other than pecuniary could I have for not coming to you? The fact that I had been spending so much all summer was the reason why I couldn't come instead of being as you say the very reason why I could. I am confident that \$30 would have been the very least that a trip to Canton would have cost, and that \$30 I didn't have to spare. My stay in New York was a purely business*

*Continued on page 5*

*Don't forget the Ice Cream Social  
April 30th - See Page 6*

cided with the Mason-Dixon line. The Northern economy was based upon commerce and industry, while the wealth of the South was in land and slaves. Thus the North wanted high protective tariffs and centralized banking, which did not correspond to the interests of the southern planters. But most of the antagonism between North and South centered upon the South's "peculiar institution" of slavery.

Because of its greater voting population, the North usually had majority control of the House of Representatives. Thus in order to safeguard its position on slavery, it was critical for the South to at least maintain a balance in the Senate. During the great national expansion of the early 18th century, every time a new territory applied for statehood, a heated debate would ensue over whether the new state would come into the Union as a slave state or as a free state, thereby affecting the balance of power in the Senate.

Even though slavery was the perennial hot issue in the country, the first organized movement for secession was not to defend slavery, nor did it occur in the South. In December 1814, representatives from most of the New England states held a convention in Hartford, Connecticut, to discuss secession from the Union. The New England states had opposed the declaration of war against England in 1812 because of its devastating impact on New England's important shipping industry. Neither the Madison administration nor the preceding Jefferson administration had made any military preparation for a conflict with England. The result was a series of humiliating military defeats. For some of the New England states, which had opposed "Mr. Madison's War" from the beginning, this was too much to bear. However, the Hartford Convention failed to produce an agreement on secession, and as delegates returned home, word of Andrew Jackson's stunning victory at New Orleans in January 1815, and a peace treaty with England stilled any further talk of secession for several years.

Later, in the 1840s and 1850s, the Abolitionist movement in the North grew larger and more strident, generating more heated calls for secession in the South, especially in South Carolina. The issue of Secession vs. Union, was also on everybody's mind in North Carolina. There were strong opinions expressed throughout the state.

Among the most outspoken was Dr. James Manney of Beaufort, North Carolina. Dr. Manney had a close connection with Fort Macon. He was one of two major suppliers of brick for the construction of the Fort. He was also the contract provider of medical support for the fort's construction workers. Dr. Manney was a tireless letter

writer about the big issues of the day. Here is a letter that he wrote to the editor of *The Republic*, which he later followed with a similar letter to the *Raleigh Register*. These letters were written near the end of November, 1849:

*Messers Editors-*

*It is time for every friend of our glorious union to speak out fearlessly in its defense. The crazy abolitionists at the North and the crazy pro-slavery men of the South are striving with all their strength to rend asunder the bonds which unite us as one people and made us the greatest and most prosperous Republic which has ever existed. The hoary years of age have arrived - I am old enough to give good advice to those just entering upon the stage of action - if wise enough, others must judge.*

*I can recollect the latter years of Gen. Washington's Administration and that even the father of his country did not easily escape the virulence of the Red-Republican of that day. An elder and beloved brother wrote an able and patriotic article in his defense for the public press. Washington's Administration ended after two terms of 4 years each and John Adams succeeded him. He recommended some very unpopular measures, of which a majority of the people disapproved, and at the end of four years his administration terminated. Thomas Jefferson was then inaugurated and served two terms. No president was ever more furiously assailed by the newspapers than Thomas Jefferson - but a great majority of the people sustained him. And I believe that he faithfully and honestly discharged the duties of his high trust. He was succeeded by James Madison, one of the purest, ablest and best of men. During his administration war was declared against Great Britain and, notwithstanding it is the duty of every patriot to defend his country against all and every foe - thousands were found who denounced every measure - and a Hartford Convention met and threatened to destroy the Union. I lived to see that effort end in smoke. Now portentous clouds are gathering in the South-West and we are occasionally threatened with a dissolution of the Union by some crazy pro-slavery man. Tread lightly upon the ashes of your immortal sires who poured out their blood like water upon a hundred battlefields for liberty, independence and Union. If you persist in such madness and folly, they will rise up from their graves to rebuke you.*

*Most quarrels and battles among individuals and nations may arise from a neglect of what H. Niles called the 11th Commandment: "Let every man mind his own business". Slavery is a State institution, it was recognized by the non slave holding states in the Constitution which*

created us a Nation. It is none of their business to interfere in our local state affairs. Thousands in the Southern States consider the institution of slavery an evil - yet we insist that this evil be removed in such manner, and such time as the sovereign power in each State may deem best. The fanatical Abolitionists at the North have rooted more

strongly the chains of the slaves, and greatly retarded their emancipation. The Empire State was once a slave state. In my early youth I lived in the State of New York, when my father and several of his neighbors were slave holders, upon a small scale. Now suppose our neighbors in Canada or Vermont had in the

fervor of their zeal for emancipation, come down among us and insisted that we free our slaves immediately, or they would instigate them to attack us and cut our throats and burn our houses. Most assuredly such incendiaries would have been punished in so exemplary a manner as to prevent a repetition of the crime. One of the best moral maxims ever delivered to man is: "Do unto all men as you wish they should do unto you".

I am etc.

J. Manney

Dr. Manney, who was then 65 years old, did not restrict his observations and advice to newspaper editors. On February 18, 1850, he sent the following letter to the White House:

To His Excellency, Zachary Taylor,  
President of the United States

Respected Sir,

This is not an application for office.

It is a duty which I owe to my country to apprise you that there is a great excitement in the public mind in some parts of this State, against the integrity of the Union. In some parts of the State they are getting up meetings, and appointing delegates to a Hartford Convention, which is to meet in June at Nashville, Ten.

In 1832 while Genl. Jackson was President, the South

Carolina Nullification Convention was performed. At that time I only saw a furious, foaming Nullifier now and then, well I had some plain talks with them - they never walked over this child rough shod. I told them that under our mild system of government, men might think treason, talk treason - but beware if they committed the overt

act of Treason, I would assist President Jackson to have them hung by the neck, like sheep stealing dogs.

I lost ten thousand dollars some years ago on bricks, when Fort Macon was built, and I should think this the best investment I ever made if I had about fifty Nullifi-

ers and Abolitionists like Clingman, Lloyd Garrison, Giddings and others like them in the powder magazine, I'd put fire to it - and then there would be peace for a time. And it would be a salutary example to such scoundrels. I am willing to lay down my life at any hour, rather than see our stripes torn or one star blotted from our glorious banner - at sight of which, tyrants tremble on their thrones! "Greater love than this no man can show".

It is my duty to apprise you that the malign influences, acting against the integrity of the Union, are greater at this time than I have ever known before. The crazy abolitionists at the North are trying to dissolve the Union - the crazy pro-slavery men at the South are trying to dissolve the Union. Aspiring demagogues who would rather be President of 3 or 4 states, than have the second station in a Republic of 30 states, are trying to dissolve the Union.

A great deal of the excitement about slavery is a Humbug! Kept up to embitter the feelings of the North against the South - the South against the North. The Methodist Church have quarreled about slavery and separated on Mason & Dixon's line - it is M. E. Church North, and M. E. Church South. This is a very large and influential Society. I have been a student of History, Ancient & Modern, for fifty years. I know that religious fanatics are the most dangerous and cruel in the world. These great churches are striving with all their talent, and influence, to divide the Union on Mason & Dixon's line.



Dr. Manney's house in Beaufort as it appeared in 1907



*You will now perceive that mighty influences are directed against the Union. A Northern Convention of Dissensionists is to be held at the same time of the Convention at Nashville. Then the Black Flag of Nullification is to be unfurled.*

*I should think it will be prudent to garrison the Forts and guard the arsenals, before the first of June, in the disaffected states.*

*May the Almighty Creator and Governor of the Universe give you the strength and wisdom to conduct the Ship of State safely through this portentous storm.*

*With the most profound respect, your devoted friend and servant,*

*James Manney*

Dr. Manney did not live to see his beloved Union shattered by secession and the resulting War Between the States. He died in 1852, at the age of 67. Ironically, his own son, Dr. James Lente Manney, was part of the secessionist militia force that seized Fort Macon from the unarmed Sgt. William Alexander. It was on April 14, 1861 that the Fort's flag was hauled down and replaced with an improvised Confederate flag. The seizure took place without the Governor's knowledge, while the State was still in the Union. North Carolina was the last state to secede, and finally did so on May 20, 1861.

Sgt. Alexander and his wife were unharmed, and allowed to pack up their possessions. They took a boat across the sound to Beaufort, where they resided until

the Fort was recaptured by Federal troops a year later.

Many southerners had mixed feelings about leaving the Union, especially if a father or grandfather had fought in the Revolutionary War. Among these was Robert E. Lee, the son of the Patriot hero, Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee. Robert E. Lee was strongly pro Union, but his first loyalty was to his native Virginia.

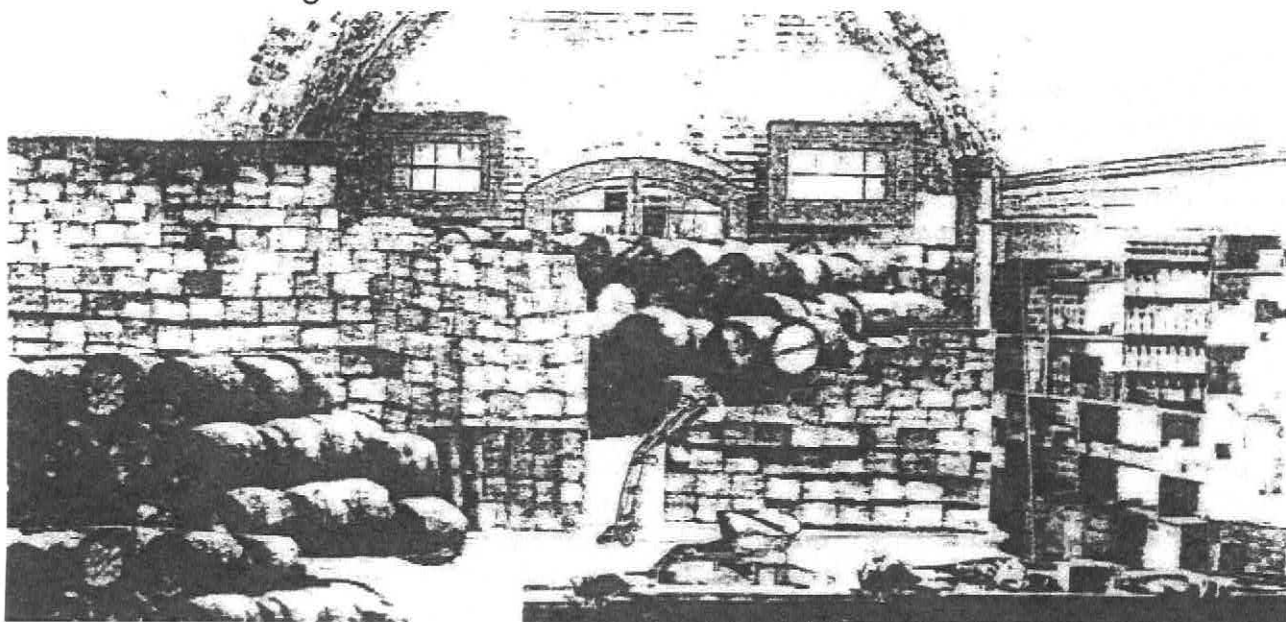
His ambivalent feelings were expressed in a letter he wrote to one of his sons in January 1861:

*"Secession is nothing but revolution... the framers would not have devoted so much care to the formation of the Constitution if it was intended to be broken by any member of the Confederacy at will... In 1808 when New England states resisted Mr. Jefferson's embargo law, and when the Hartford Convention assembled, secession was termed treason by Virginian statesmen; what can it be now? Still, a Union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets, and in which strife and civil war are to take the place of brotherly love and kindness, has no charm for me. If the Union is dissolved and the government disrupted, I shall return to my native state and share the miseries of my people. Save in her defense, I will draw my sword no more."*

Bennett Moss is the president of the Friends of Fort Macon. Dr. Manney's letters can be found in the collection of the Beaufort Historical Association.

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## New Exhibit Work Progresses



Drawing of Commissary Store Room Now Under Construction

## LETTER FROM FORT MACON

(continued from page 1)

*matter. I went there and stayed there expressly to get the Dr. ordered North, which I accomplished.*

*We are going either to Fort McHenry near Baltimore, or Fortress Monroe, Va., in two or three weeks or maybe a month. This is at present a secret in military circles. I wanted very much to get to Boston, but the oldest surgeon in the Army is stationed there and didn't of course want to be moved, so my next choice was Baltimore or Ft. Monroe.*

*I arrived here two weeks ago - found my family salubrious and everything lovely. My baby is as plump and pretty as ever and has beautiful golden hair half way down her back. She says and does everything and I think her the darlingest of darlings. I am so glad that you are having a pleasant time. Give my love to Aunt and Uncle and the girls. Tell Lucy that I have no photographs of myself at present, but will certainly have some taken this winter after we are settled in our new home and will then send her one of us all. You know we can't get anything of the kind down here.*

*Last night I spent the evening next door. Didn't go to bed until 1 o'clock and was wakened this morning at reveille by the baby, all of which combined has given me a sick headache.*

*I wish you would write me while at Uncle John's and give a full account of your visit and tell me about Lucy and Gertrude. I wish Lucy would write me. I can't spend my summers in Baltimore any better than I can here, so I shall certainly see you early next year ...funds or no funds. You can't possibly want to see me any more than I you. Don't eat up the plum preserves. When I think of the new counterpain my heart goes pit a pat and would's it were with thee. Are any of the children with you? Are you comfortable as to clothes? Do, do write immediately.*

*Jeannie*

We are deeply indebted to David Dean of Rochester, New York, who has graciously permitted us to publish these letters from his private collection. Mr. Dean is descended from Jeannie's sister Louise.

## POSTSCRIPT - JEANNIE'S LIFE AFTER LEAVING FORT MACON

*by Randy Newman*

For the past two years, readers of the Fort Macon Ramparts have followed a young mother's life at Fort Macon in the late 1860's, as revealed by her letters to her sister in the North. Jane "Jeannie" Coues was the wife of Fort Macon's Surgeon, Dr. Elliot Coues. Dr. Coues made his living as an Army officer, but his primary interest in life was developing and enhancing his international reputation as an authority on North American birds. When the Army reassigned Dr. Coues in 1870, we lost our correspondence connection with "Jeannie".

In November 1870, Dr. Elliot Coues, along with his wife Jeannie and their daughter Edith Louise, would leave Fort Macon to go to Fort McHenry. Jeannie must have been very excited about this move from Fort Macon for one of the best army posts, located near Baltimore Maryland. Also, with her husband's transfer came a pay raise from \$2500 to around \$4000. The officers' quarters at Fort McHenry were of sturdy construction, well heated and ventilated. Jeannie now had a home that provided her family with the comforts which had been lacking at Fort Macon. The Officer's House at Fort Macon had cracks in the

wall that let the sand and rain in. Jeannie probably never missed her house at Fort Macon which she called "my cottage by the sea".

On January 16, 1872, Jeannie gave birth to her first son, Elliot Baird Coues. Dr. Coues wanted to name their son Spencer Baird (Spencer F. Baird was then the Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution), but Jeannie had her heart set on Elliot Baird. Sometime around late September 1872, Dr. Coues would be sent to Fort Randall, in the Dakota territory. In 1878, Jeannie would give birth to another son, Beverly Drinkard. Jeannie had two other children, but both died in infancy.

On November 26, 1880, Dr. Coues was ordered to Fort Whipple, Arizona Territory. He had begun his military career at Fort Whipple and did not want to return to this outpost. He considered this appointment an insult. Dr. Coues did not want to return to "tent-life in unbookish Arizona". He believed this appointment from the War



Jeannie Augusta McKinney Coues  
as she appeared about 1900

Department was secretly arranged by his "worst enemy". Dr. Coues' "worst enemy" was his wife Jeannie. Dr. Coues would write "...my whole career is at present blocked, in the deadlock brought about by the most devilish malignity and ingenuity of my infamous wife, whose subtle antagonism has been manifested for years in every possible endeavor to thwart and hamper and degrade me... I have been utterly helpless; and so sure did a long matured plot leave her in full possession of my name, house, children, and money..."

Jeannie's hatred for her husband had resulted from his many affairs with other women over the years. In 1881, Jeannie and her husband decided to go their separate ways. Jeannie continued to reside at 1617 K Street, Washington, D.C., where the entire family had lived before Dr. Coues' second tour of duty in Arizona. Jeannie kept custody of their daughter, Edith Louise, and youngest son, Beverly Drinkard. The oldest son, Elliot Baird, went with his father. On May 12, 1886, Jeannie filed for divorce in the District Court of Washington, D.C. On July 27, the judge granted the divorce on the grounds of desertion. According to the decree, Jeannie was to receive fifty dollars a month from Dr. Coues and was to have custody of the children, except Elliot Baird, who was to stay with his father. Dr. Coues died on December 25, 1899. The lowest point in Jeannie's life must have been on January 2, 1913, when her oldest son, Elliot Baird, passed away.

Edith Louise was age two while at Fort Macon. She would ride a broom-stick around the fort and would often ask for "tandy" (candy) from the soldiers of the fort. The soldiers made a point to keep candy in their pockets for Edith. Later, she would receive her education at the Convent of Notre Dame in Maryland, and from private tutors.

On April 22, 1901, at the age of thirty three, Edith married Nelson O'Shaughnessy of New York City. The wed-

ding took place in Rome, Italy. Nelson O'Shaughnessy worked for the American Diplomatic Service. In 1907, Edith would give birth to her only child, Elim, a son. Elim would also spend most of his life in the diplomatic service as a Foreign Service Officer.

Edith became an excellent writer and wrote many books. Her first and best known book was *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico*. Around 1920, Edith wrote about her mother, Jeannie: "My mother is very tall, her figure little or not at all bent by time, and her gait is of a peculiar rhythmic majesty. She generally wears capes of unique and beautiful cut... Often too I picture her sitting at one end of the long white table of the white upper chamber, the light from the electric bulb in the paneled ceiling, cutting out her beautiful, high, straight nose, deepening her large-socketed, still blue eyes, tracing her delicate, so often smiling lips, and finding the gleam or sparkle of something around her unravaged throat. Over her face lies a great calm which has come after much combating with circumstances and many enforced or voluntary renunciations... Under that light yesterday she was saying, 'Love your griefs; they are your best friends. Looking back over these many years I see that the good and admirable things of life have indeed belonged to adversity rather than prosperity'".

Jeannie spent her last years traveling with Edith and her family. She died on January, 1925, in Rome. Edith O'Shaughnessy died on February 18, 1939, in New York City.

*The author, Randy Newman, is a Park Ranger at Fort Macon State Park. The source of much of the material in this article is the book titled: "ELLIOTT COUES, Naturalist and Frontier Historian" by Paul Cutright & Michael Brodhead.*

## THE BIG DAY IS COMING!

**G**o to your calendar and draw a big red circle around the date of **April 30**. That is the day when the Friends will sponsor our most important event of the year. That is when we commemorate the 138th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Macon. On that Sunday, at 2:00PM, we will celebrate with our Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social.

As usual, there will be music, demonstrations in period attire, and all the ice cream and brownies you can eat. What isn't usual is the number of new exhibits that will be on display for the first time. Other than

trying to persuade State officials to provide needed repairs to the Fort, the most important function of the Friends is to provide historically accurate replicas of facilities that were present in the Fort before, or during, the Civil War period. Come see how we are doing! If you like what you see, give yourself a good pat on the back, because you were part of the process.

So mark your calendar, and join us for a well deserved celebration as the Friends complete another year of Supporting the Fort! The best is yet to come!



## FRIENDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2000

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There are several important positions that are not yet filled. If you are able to help us in any one of them, please call Bennett Moss at 728-5256.

Board Members serve without compensation for a one year term beginning January 1.

## FINANCIAL RESULTS SUMMARY FOR 1999

### INCOME

Member Dues .....	\$10,395
Gifts & Grants .....	5,255
Fort Donation Box .....	5,042
Interest on Deposits .....	987
Other .....	<u>1,272</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME .....</b>	<b>\$22,952</b>

### EXPENDITURES

Membership Support	
Printing & Mailing .....	\$3,776
Office Operations .....	122
Computer Operations .....	261
Annual Meeting .....	606
Other Op. Expenses .....	361
Fort Exhibits .....	25,040
Fort Equip. & Operations .....	<u>1,389</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....</b>	<b>\$31,555</b>

DEFICIT ..... (\$8,603)

### 1999 FUNDS

JANUARY 1 FUND BALANCE .....	\$69,403
DECEMBER 31 BALANCE .....	60,800
DECREASE FOR 1999 .....	(\$8,603)

### COMMENT:

Our operational goal is to convert available funds into educational exhibits as soon as practicable. Although spending on new exhibits more than doubled from the level achieved in 1998, it is hoped that most of the money still on hand at the end of 1999 can also be spent on major projects in 2000.

In 1999, The Friends were the recipients of very generous donations from the Carteret County Commissioners, the Town of Atlantic Beach, Mr. Dick Parker, Mr. John D. Kilroy, Maola Dairy, and Bunch Pattern Works Co. We were also blessed to have dozens of loyal members who sent unsolicited contributions over and above their annual dues. To top it off, 30 of our members became Lifetime Members in 1999.

Thank you, one and all!

## Membership Form

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

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

Member's Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of Donor, if gift \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Categories and Fees

Individual/Family - \$10.00    Lifetime (Individual) - \$100.00

Business or Organization - \$25.00    Business Lifetime - \$500.00

**Friends of Fort Macon, P.O.Box 651, Beaufort, NC 28516-0651**