

FORT MACON RAMPARTS

A publication of the Friends of Fort Macon

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FORT MACON AND THE BIG UNION SNAKE

by Bennett Moss

When the tensions between the newly formed Confederacy and what remained of the United States turned into a shooting war with the attack on Fort Sumter, both sides then had to focus on their objectives and develop strategies that would enable them to achieve their goals.

For the South, the objective was clear. They simply wanted to be recognized as an independent, sovereign nation. To achieve this goal, they had to persuade the government in Washington to abandon its opposition to the Confederacy, and agree to a treaty that would recognize southern independence.

In the beginning, Confederate leaders were confident that a convincing demonstration of Southern unity and determination through military prowess would persuade Federal leaders of the futility of opposing the South.

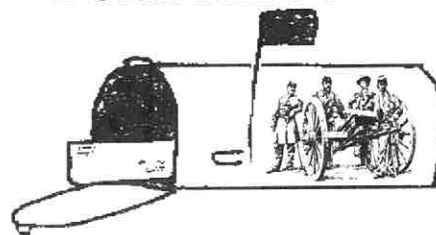
The early Confederate victories on the battlefield convinced most Southerners of the superiority of their soldiers and their generals. The popular feeling in the South was that if they could obtain the weapons and supplies they needed, they would be unbeatable. All of the needed material was available from England in exchange for

southern cotton.

As the war progressed, it became apparent that in spite of many Confederate victories, the huge resources of the North would prevent the total collapse of the Federal military machine. Over time, Confederate leaders began to realize that to win the war they would have to gain the support of England and other important European governments while simultaneously undermining northern popular support for continuing the war. Both of General Lee's failed incursions into northern territory, at Antietam (Sharpsburg) and Gettysburg, were intended to produce those results. Finally, it was hoped that the terrible toll of Union casualties would cause Northern politicians to conclude that the cost of a Union victory would be unacceptably high, and would lead them to accept a peace treaty on Southern terms.

In the North, the objective was equally clear. The restoration of the Union was clearly the goal of their military efforts. The decisive Union defeat at Bull Run (Manassas) dramatically demonstrated that a Northern victory would be both difficult and costly. Southern resolve seemed unshakable, and the eleven Confederate states

LETTERS FROM FORT MACON



This is part of a series of letters written by soldiers stationed at Fort Macon. The writer of these letters, James A. Graham, was a member of the 27th North Carolina Infantry, Company G (Orange Guards). This unit arrived at Fort Macon in April 1861. It remained there until the following January when it was ordered to join in the defense of New Bern against an expected attack by the Union forces of General Ambrose Burnside.

Fort Macon, N.C.
January 2nd 1862

My Dear Mother

I received your very welcome letter four or five days ago and as Lieut. Dickson is going up in the morning I will write by him.

I will come up as soon as Lieut. Dickson returns, which will be about the eighth or ninth.

I wish I could have been home on New Year's day, but could not.

I was on guard the night before and saw the old year go out and the new one come in.

I visited all the salt works near Morehead City today and tried to

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Wanted: Lifetime Members

could field a sizable army. Obviously, a strategy was needed that would exploit Northern strengths and Confederate weakness.

The Lincoln administration recognized that Confederate military manpower resources were limited by their unwillingness to recruit from their large slave population. Throughout the War, the Confederates would have great difficulty in replacing battle losses and keeping their ranks filled. Also, the Confederacy was almost totally lacking in warships to defend her coasts and waterways or to protect her shipping.

To achieve its goals, the North would not only have to win battles, it would need to destroy Confederate armies. But until the Union army could find some commanding generals who were more competent and aggressive than the ones with which they started the war, this objective would remain illusive.

Manpower was by no means the only problem that the South had to face. Unlike the situation in the North, the South began the War with a very modest industrial base. It would not be able to manufacture all of the weapons, ammunition, uniforms and other materials of war that its military forces needed. In the beginning, they were able to confiscate or capture large quantities of supplies belonging to the Union. But for the duration of the war, the South would depend primarily on importing needed materials from foreign countries in exchange for southern cotton.

Early in the War, Winfield Scott, the 75 year old General-in-Chief of the U.S. Army, formulated a plan to limit the Confederacy's ability to import war materials. This plan had two components:

First, the Union Army and Naval forces would have to seize control of the entire Mississippi river, including the major Southern port of New Orleans. This would effectively cut off the Confederate states of Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas along with all other western sources of men and supplies from the main Confederate armies in the east. This objective was finally achieved on July 4, 1863 with the capture of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the last remaining Confederate stronghold on the river.

The second component of the plan was to be the naval blockade of all of the South's Atlantic and Gulf ports and rivers. If successful, this blockade would effectively seal off all remaining outside sources of military material for the South.

This strategic plan was called the "Anaconda Plan". The Anaconda is a huge South American snake that can grow to a length of 20 feet and a weight of close to 250 pounds. The Anaconda is a non venomous snake that captures and kills its prey by wrapping its body around the victim and

squeezing it until it is suffocated. Like an Anaconda, General Scott's plan was intended to encircle and strangle the heart of the Confederacy.

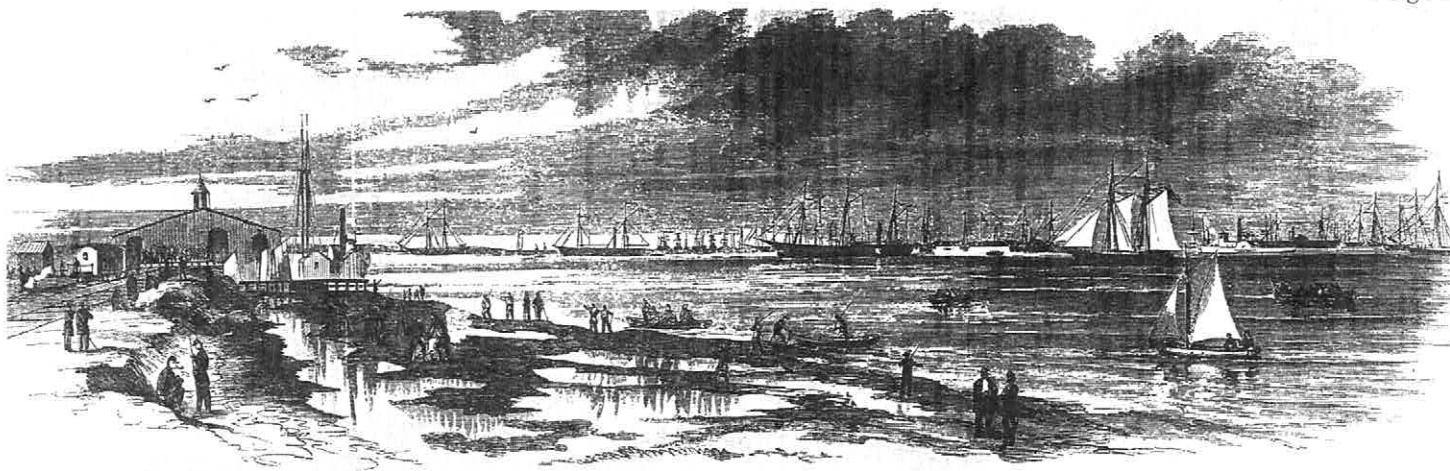
In support of the "Anaconda Plan", President Lincoln proclaimed a naval blockade on April 19, 1861. At that time, the U.S. Navy was much too small to make the blockade effective. The Navy had to embark on a crash program to build and to purchase hundreds of additional ships. The expansion program had to focus on steamers, as sailing ships could not cope with the speedy, maneuverable Confederate blockade runners.

The down side of steamers is that they could only remain on station outside the port or river they were guarding for about one month before they had to leave to get refueled with more coal. This created the need for even more blockading ships to cover the gaps caused by ships leaving station to get refueled.

Beaufort Harbor was one of the targets of the Federal blockade during the first year of the War. This ended with the capture of Fort Macon in April 1862 by Union troops under the Command of General Ambrose Burnside. With the capture of both Fort Macon and the town of Beaufort by Federal forces, Beaufort Harbor was available to be converted into a coaling station for the Union blockading squadron covering the Carolina coast. It should be understood that when letters and reports of the Civil War period referred to "Beaufort harbor", this also encompassed what today we would call "Morehead City harbor."

To blockade all of the Southern ports was a daunting task for the Union Navy. With some 3,500 miles of Atlantic and Gulf coastline, and almost 200 harbors, rivers, and inlets to cover, the Northern blockade would have little effect for the first two years until more ships were available. To aggravate the Navy's problem, most of the major Southern ports were protected by Confederate forts whose guns kept the blockading ships well off shore. Also, many of the Southern blockade runners had acquired ships that were specially designed to evade Union warships. They were faster, had a low profile, a shallower draft, burned almost smokeless anthracite coal, were painted gray, and were almost impossible to see on a dark night.

As the War progressed, and the size of the blockading squadron grew, the operation at Beaufort Harbor also grew. In the final year of the War, the flotilla blockading Wilmington alone consumed an average of 1,200 tons of coal each month. Often, Beaufort Harbor was full of ships being repaired or being refueled from collier ships stationed in the harbor. Large coal supply ships from Philadelphia also made an appearance.



Beaufort/Morehead Harbor Was A Busy Place During The War

It is likely that numbers of former slaves, who had taken refuge in Beaufort, were employed to supplement ship's crews in the heavy work of transferring coal from the colliers to the blockade ships. Toward the end of the War, Confederate prisoners of war, held at Fort Macon, were also assigned to this back breaking work.

Had not Beaufort Harbor been available for this work, the blockade ships would have needed to travel to Hampton Roads, in Virginia, to refuel and make repairs. This would have kept them away from their duty stations many extra days each month, and they would have consumed much more coal in the process.

Beaufort Harbor was not the only coaling station for the blockading fleet. By early 1862, Union expeditionary forces had also captured Port Royal, South Carolina, and Pensacola, Florida. Their harbors were also utilized as Union coaling stations for the rest of the War. The most important Union achievement was the capture of New Orleans, the South's most important port, in April, 1862. During 1862 other important Southern ports closed by Union military action included Norfolk and Portsmouth in Virginia.

Following the capture of New Orleans, the most important ports remaining in Confederate hands were Mobile, Alabama; Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; and the most important of all, Wilmington, North Carolina. Following the capture of Mobile Bay by Admiral David Farragut in August, 1864, and the advance of Sherman's army toward Savannah and Charleston, Wilmington was left as the one remaining lifeline for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

The port of Wilmington is situated a number of miles up the Cape Fear river from Cape Fear itself. Of all the Confederate ports it was the most difficult to blockade and it became the favorite destination for many blockade runners. There were two widely separated inlets into the Cape Fear

River which were protected by several Confederate forts, most notable being Fort Fisher. Fort Fisher's big guns kept the blockading ships a full five miles off shore. The U.S. Navy had to keep a large flotilla of blockaders near Cape Fear, but even so there were many successful blockade runners who managed to get through the net. All of the federal blockaders at Cape Fear were supported for resupply and repairs at Beaufort Harbor.

The Union leaders in Washington were slow to recognize that Fort Fisher was the key to closing the Port of Wilmington. General Lee was certainly conscious of it. He was quoted as having said in 1864 that "if Forts Fisher and Caswell were not held, he would have to evacuate Richmond."

When the Northern leaders finally agreed on a plan to stage an amphibious attack on Fort Fisher by a joint expedition of the Army and the Navy, it was getting toward the end of 1864. The huge fleet of troop transports and warships assembled at Beaufort Harbor before sailing to Fort Fisher. The initial bombardment, followed by the landing of troops and their attack on the fort failed. The fleet then returned to Beaufort for more ammunition before a second attempt was made.

The second effort, under the joint command of Admiral David Porter and General Alfred Terry, was completely successful. The capture of Forts Fisher and Caswell in January, 1865, sealed the port of Wilmington and the fate of the Confederacy.

Some historians have questioned the effectiveness of the Federal blockade in cutting off the movement of vital supplies to the Confederacy. They cite data showing that for every blockade runner intercepted, three others slipped through undetected in the dark of night. However, there is no question that there were acute shortages of almost every kind plaguing the Confederate forces in the field. Was this

due to the blockade, or was this the result of an inefficient transportation and distribution system? Or was it due to the other part of the "Anaconda Plan," the Union control of the Mississippi river?

But even if the blockade was less than 100 percent successful, there is little question that the blockade added greatly to the pressures on the strained Confederate supply system.

Loading coal is not the exciting stuff that grabs headlines away from battles where men are fighting and dying, but the "Anaconda Plan" was one of the principal Union strategies for winning the War, and Fort Macon and Beaufort Harbor played important roles in its implementation.

The author, Bennett Moss, is the editor of the Fort Macon Ramparts.

NEED TO FILL A VOID?

After several years, many retirees are discovering that retirement is still lacking in complete fulfillment. After playing golf three times a week for the last four years, they are reluctantly accepting the bitter truth that they never will break par. And though bridge games and cocktail parties are pleasant diversions, they do not provide the kind of material that would look impressive in your obituary. Something is still missing!

What you need is another activity that is intellectually stimulating, that involves interaction with other people from all over the world with the knowledge that you are both informing and entertaining those people, that improves your public speaking skills, and enlarges your knowledge of both local and national history.

If this is what you need, the Friends of Fort Macon have just the thing for you. It is our volunteer Tour Guide program. The Park Rangers will train you. The Friends will provide you with a uniform. And it will cost you nothing. You can schedule a few hours once every week or two when it is most convenient for you.

Our next training program will be held in February. If you would like to sign up or just get more information, call Joe Beam at (252) 726-3560.



"I have been up to see the (Confederate) Congress and they do not seem to be able to do anything except to eat peanuts and chew tobacco, while my army is starving."

Robert E. Lee

FEEDING THE TROOPS

While a Civil War army was in the field, either in a temporary camp or on the move, cooking was typically a small scale operation. Groups of men would often pool their resources and cook together over a small camp fire.

The situation was quite different in permanent installations, such as at Fort Macon, where there were brick ovens and ranges designed to prepare food for large numbers of men by Company cooks. The following directions for the preparation of food to feed 100 men are examples of those issued by the Medical Department of the Confederate States Army in 1862.

SOYER'S STEW FOR ONE HUNDRED MEN

Cut 50 lbs. fresh beef in pieces about 1/4 lb. each, and with 18 quarts of water put into the boiler; add 10 tablespoonfuls of salt, two of pepper, 7 lbs. onions, cut in slices, and 20 lbs. potatoes, peeled and sliced; stir well, and let it boil for 20 or 30 minutes; then add 1 1/2 lbs. flour, previously mixed with water; mix well together, and with a moderate heat simmer for about 2 hours. Mutton, veal or pork can be stewed in a similar manner, but will take half an hour less cooking. A pound of rice, or plain dumplings, may be added with great advantage.

SUET DUMPLINGS

Take 10 lbs. flour, 15 tea-spoonfuls of salt, 7 of ground pepper, 7 lbs. chopped fat pork or suet, 5 pints water; mix well together; divide into about 150 pieces; which roll in flour, and boil with meat for 20 or 30 minutes. If no fat or suet can be obtained, take the same ingredients, adding a little more water, and boil about 10 minutes. Serve with the meat.



This Confederate soldier is cooking his own dinner - perhaps hard-tack fried in salt pork.

THE FORT BAKE OVEN - THEN AND NOW

When the construction of Fort Macon was finished in 1834, an important feature was a large brick oven designed to provide fresh baked bread for the hundreds of men in the garrison.

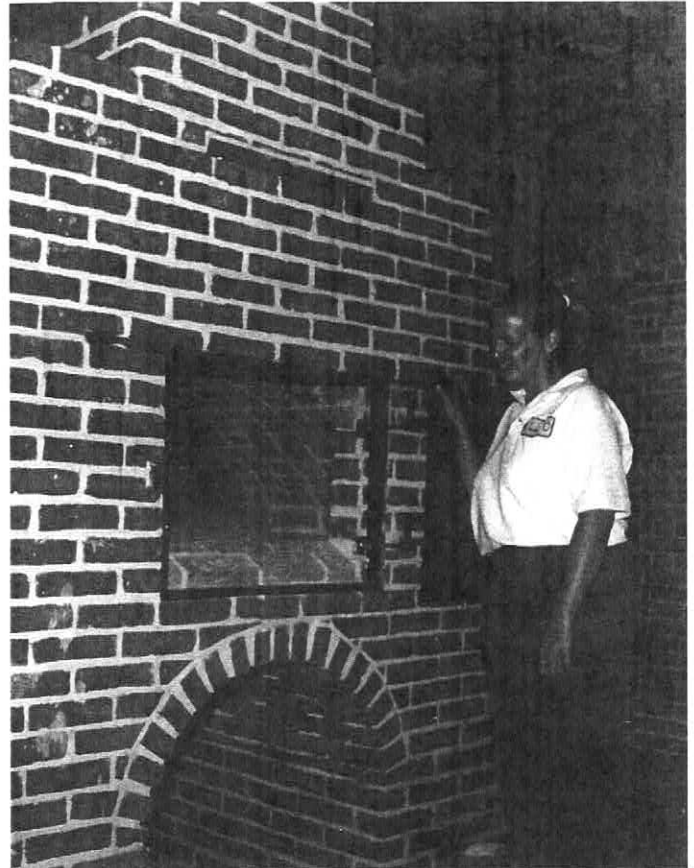
The bake oven was used during the Civil War by both Confederate and Union occupying forces. But, it was no longer usable in 1898 when the Army garrisoned the Fort during the Spanish-American War. By the time the Fort was activated for World War II, the bake oven was in a bad state of disrepair, and the Army was by then purchas-

ing bread from commercial bakeries. In 1942, the Army demolished the 108 year old oven to free up the space for storage.

During this past year, the big old oven has been reconstructed. Friends member David Pleace prepared engineering design and drawings, and the Friends provided all of the construction materials. The challenging work of constructing the oven was donated to the Fort by master mason Terry Edwards.



ORIGINAL OVEN in 1941
Ellen Humphrey
Daughter of Ft. Macon Caretaker



NEW OVEN in 2001
Michelle Bright
Summer Historian

FORT REPAIRS NEAR COMPLETION!

After three years of time, more than twelve million dollars of State funds, and about a hundred thousand man-hours of skilled labor, the extensive restoration of Fort Macon is successfully winding up. Structural repairs are scheduled to end next month, while exhibit work in some of the newly repaired casemates will be finished in early Spring.

At no time since before the Civil War has the Fort been in as good a condition as it is now. Leaks have been stopped.

Crumbling bricks and rusted railings have been replaced. New flooring has been installed in all of the casemates. Gun mounts on the ramparts have been repaired, along with other improvements too numerous to mention here.

Many of the extensive structural repairs are not visible, but if you haven't been out to the Fort for a year or two, you should come out and see what is visible. You will be impressed!

Continued from page 1

get some salt as Father requested in his last letter; but was not able to get any at all at present.

I may be able to get some in a week or two, but do not know; as it is a rather hard matter for them to get wood and some of them make no more than they want for their own use; however I will try again in a few days.

If the officers of our Company are to have uniforms made of the cloth purchased for the Company please tell Carmichael not to cut mine until I come up, for I wish it double breasted as that is the Confederate fashion for officers and I do not think he has my measure for a double breasted coat.

Capt. Webb requests me to present his respects and say that he does not say ugly words now.

Rev. Mr Thorne, who preached in Chapel Hill a year or two ago preached here last Sunday. He is now living in Kinston. There is no more news. I will write to Father in a few days. Love to all. Write soon to

*Your affectionate Son
James A. Graham*

*Fort Lane, N.C.
January 18th 1862*

My Dear Father

I have been appointed adjutant of our Regm't. I found my appointment waiting for me when I came down last Thursday.

I came up from Fort Macon this morning and will enter on the discharge of my duties tomorrow.

I wish you would buy me a good saddle and bridle

if such a thing is to be had in Hillsboro or Raleigh.

I have got the promise of a horse that I can use till our term of service is out; for his feed. It is a fine black mare, a first rate animal in every respect.

There is a good deal of talk here of Burnside's expedition attacking this place, but I think it ought to have been here by this time if it is coming here at all, but nobody seems to know where it is going. We heard yesterday that it was at Hatteras.

I was over at the Cavalry Camp to-day and saw Willie. He is pretty well.

When you write please direct your letters to Fort Lane Near Newberne N.C.

Please get my saddle of the sort called military saddles as they are better for riding I have to do than others. If you cannot get one of that sort I will buy one that Col. Sloan has here — a very good common saddle. There is no news. Write soon to

*Your affectionate Son
James A. Graham*

P.S. Please send me a servant to wait on my room if you can spare one. If you cannot spare one I suppose I can hire one in Newberne. I would like one that can cook and I want him also to attend to my horse.

*Your aff. Son
J. A. Graham*


James A. Graham was a member of a politically prominent family of Orange County, North Carolina. This letter is part of a collection previously published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1928.

IS IT THAT TIME ALREADY?

It is hard to believe, but another year is rapidly approaching its end. For most of our members, it will soon be time to renew their annual membership in the Friends.

Memberships are on a calendar year basis because both administrative and postage costs would be much higher if we had to mail renewal notices based on anniversary dates. So unless you joined the Friends after September 1, 2001, or you are a Lifetime Member, your membership may be due for renewal at the end of the year (check your mailing label). If your membership is about to expire, you will receive a renewal notice in December. You need not do anything now.

We currently have almost 200 Lifetime Members in the Friends. If you are not one of them, please consider taking that step this year. A Lifetime Membership is only one hundred dollars per person, and it will simplify life for all of us. And wouldn't a Lifetime Membership make a very special Christmas gift for someone you really care for?


"It is a damned poor mind indeed that can't think of at least two ways of spelling any word."

Andrew Jackson

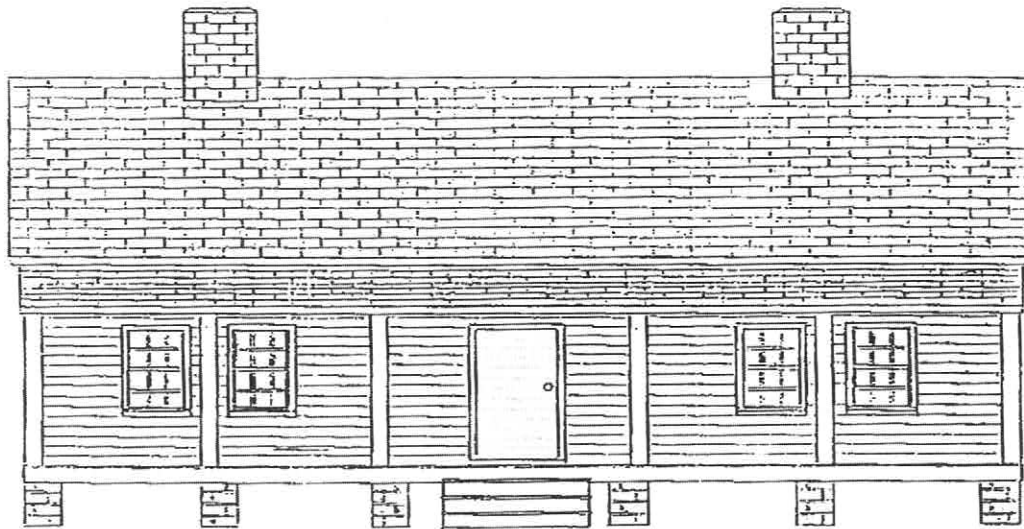
FRIENDS UNDERTAKE NEW PROJECT

The Friends are currently investigating the possibility of reconstructing one of several cottages that were located in the vicinity of the Fort in the late 1860's. Four of the houses were known to be quarters for both married and single officers. A fifth house may have been used as a laundry and residence for the post laundress. These houses were initially built in Goldsboro, NC, probably during the Union occupation of 1865. They were later disassembled and moved to Fort Macon in 1869.

We know from letters written in 1869 by Jeannie Coues, the wife of the Fort Surgeon - Dr. Elliot Coues, that the Coues family occupied one of these houses in 1869 and 1870. Although Dr. Coues was a career Army officer, his

first love was the study of birds. He was the author of many scholarly publications including *The Key to North American Birds*, a classic in the field of ornithology.

If the Friends are successful in identifying the historically accurate design details and the correct location of the original site, we will undertake to reconstruct the officer's house occupied by the Coues family. If we are successful, the house will be appropriately furnished, and volunteers from the Friends will be available to demonstrate and interpret 19th century domestic life at Fort Macon. Needless to say, finding necessary funding will be a major challenge. We will keep you informed of our progress in future issues of the *Ramparts*.



OFFICER'S QUARTERS
FORT MACON, NC - 1869

DRAWN BY G.M. PAUL

Do We Need Another Mousetrap?

The mousetrap is far and away the most invented machine in all of American history. Since it first opened for business in 1838, the U.S. Patent Office has granted more than forty-four hundred mousetrap patents, 95 percent of them to amateur inventors. Roughly forty new mousetrap patents are granted each year, in thirty-nine official subclasses that include "Impaling," "Smiting," "Swinging Striker," "Non-return Entrance," "Choking or Squeezing," "Constricting Noose," "Electrocuting and Explosive," and ten times that many mousetrap patent applications are turned away.

From *American Heritage*, October 1996

Membership Form

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

Fee Enclosed \$ _____ Date: _____

Member's Name(s) _____

Street or P.O.Box _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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