



**Volume 55, No 1
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Battle Cry

Founded 1961,
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
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President's Message

Greetings and Happy New Year!

The year 2015 marks the last year of history's Sesquicentennial of the Civil War. For those of us who saw the movie, LINCOLN, we can reflect that this is the very month depicted in the film...150 years later....

Francis P. Blair arrives in Richmond on January 12, 1865 with a proposal for a peace conference.

William Tecumseh Sherman and his army regroup in Savannah, Georgia for a month and then proceed northward through South Carolina, the birthplace of Secession.

The Second Battle of Fort Fisher, January 13-15, 1865 is at last successful for the Union. Benjamin Butler was relieved of his army following his December failure, and Maj. Gen. Alfred Terry was placed in command of a Provincial Corps which included Paine's Division of Colored Troops, and was supported by a naval force of nearly 60 vessels. After the bombardment, directed by Rear Admiral David Porter, Union forces landed, attacked, and ultimately carried the parapet. When the Confederate garrison surrendered, the South's last open seaport on the Atlantic Coast was lost. This was such a compelling Battle, I kept myself up very late reading several accounts.

And lastly, as we know, after much frantic and fierce arm-twisting and lobbying, on January 31, 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution was passed.

This month our speaker is Erin McCabe and her presentation is entitled, "Women Who Fought in the Civil War." Ms. McCabe has written a novel, I SHALL BE NEAR TO YOU, which was nominated as a Goodreads Choice Award for 2014.

Erin McCabe has painstakingly researched the letters of the more than 200 women who are known to have served as men in the Civil War. Booklist gave the novel a starred review and had this to say, "Author McCabe makes every sentence count, with a narrative full of authentic dialog, historical realism, and great feeling."

How lucky we are to have such talent come and speak to us!

I hope the New Year is finding you all well and with a renewed sense of purpose.

Anne Peasley, President

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
Wednesday, December 10, 2014
HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO

ATTENDANCE – 31

MEMBERS – 24: Anne M. Peasley, President, Donald J. Hayden, Vice President, George W. Foxworth, Treasurer, Harvey Cain, Monica S. Foxworth, H. James (Jim) Harper, Scottie Hayden, Nina Henley, MAL, Wayne Henley, MAL, Bill Jackson, Jane Jackson, James Juanitas, Marsha Jutovsky, Dennis Kohlmann, Arnold Kunst, Barbara Leone, Rick A. Peasley, Horst Penning, John Rice, Nicholas Scivoletto, Richard E. Sickert, Silver N. Williams, PD, John V. Zasso, Vivian Zasso.

GUESTS – 7: Seanna Curler, Aaron Harris, Carmen Harris, Chris Highsmith, Tim Karlberg, Virginia Karlberg, Bret Lonsway.

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:59 PM by President Anne Peasley.
2. Dennis Kohlmann presented a letter of recommendation to Nicholas Scivoletto for his recent University of Pacific graduation with a History degree and passing the CBEST (California Basic Educational Skills Test) to become a teacher in California.
3. President Peasley displayed the Jerry Russell Award that was presented to the Club at the 2014 Conference. It was passed around the room so each attendee could see it.
4. President Peasley led the Pledge of Allegiance.
5. The guests were introduced.
6. President Peasley introduced Tim and Ginny Karlberg. Their topic was Captain John Groetsch. A few highlights from Tim and Ginny's informative and entertaining presentation follow:
 - A. John Groetsch was the great, great, great grandfather of Tim Karlberg. He was born on July 8 1826 in southern Germany, near Bavaria, and emigrated to New York in 1847. He traveled and worked his way through Canada, Rochester, NY, Chicago, Illinois, Racine, Wisconsin, and came to Mankato, Minnesota in 1854. In the spring of 1855 he settled in Chaska, MN.
 - B. At the organization of Carver County in 1858, he was elected County Commissioner. In May 1858, John was elected chairman of the town of Liberty where John Groetsch and Joseph Schaffer were Justices of the Peace, and the name changed to Laketown. He taught the first school in town in 1859 using his own home. He taught both in German and English.
 - C. John served in the American Civil War and was inducted March 15, 1862. He served in the U.S. Army volunteers, 5th Minnesota, D-Company, 1862 as a Second Lieutenant. He fought in the Dakota Sioux War of 1862, stationed at Fort Abercrombie (now located thirty miles south of Fargo, South Dakota) on the Red River and saw many skirmishes with the Dakota Indians. John was promoted to Captain and then mustered out of the Army in 1865.
 - D. After the War in 1867, John bought a farm in Kelso, New Rome, Sibley County. While living in New Rome, he was elected to the House of Representatives and served in both 1873 and in 1883-1885.
 - F. In 1902, he sold his farm and moved with his wife to his daughter's house, Mrs. Biehofer, in Saint Paul, MN. He was a member of the John Hancock Post GAR Grand Army of the Republic of Henderson and later joined the Ackerman Post in Saint Paul. John died on January 7, 1908, and is buried in the Elmhurst Cemetery along with his wife Christine Meinzer Groetsch.
7. President Peasley thanked Ginny and Tim after a question/answer period.
8. John Zasso sold additional raffle tickets and read the lucky numbers.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

George W. Foxworth acting for Secretary Paul Ruud

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the December 10th meeting was \$4,686.37. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$66.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

Coming Programs for 2015		
Date	Speaker	Topic
January 14 th	Erin McCabe	“Women Who Fought in the Civil War”
February 11 th	Donald J. Hayden	“Oliver Wendell Holmes, Father and Son”
March 11 th	George Beitzel	“The Worst Seat in the House”
April 8 th	Richard Sickert	To Be Determined
May 13 th	Paul Ruud	To Be Determined
June 10 th	Nancy Samuelson	“Nathan Bedford Forrest”
July 8 th	Joe Maxwell	George Armstrong Custer, Part II
August 12 th	Bob Hubbs	To Be Determined
September 9 th	Fred Bohmfalk	“A Personal Look at the Lives of Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan”
October 14 th	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
November 11 th	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
December 9 th	To Be Determined	To Be Determined

2015 Membership

The 2015 membership renewal is due as of January 1, 2015. The dues are \$20.00 and you can renew at a monthly meeting or send to the Treasurer through the mail. For all checks, make them payable to **Sacramento Civil War Round Table** and send them to

George W. Foxworth
 9463 Salishan Court
 Sacramento, CA 95826-5233

Remember, you can also pay at any monthly meeting.

NEWSLETTER CIVIL WAR ARTICLES

Civil War articles/book reviews are welcome. The submission deadline is the 1st of each month for that month’s **Battle Cry**. Please submit your items in Microsoft Word or regular email to:

gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net

Do not submit scanned files since I need to edit files to combine the **Battle Cry**.

The **Battle Cry** is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Submissions are subject to availability of space and size limitations. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization or the Editor. The official address of this organization is: Sacramento Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 254702, Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check the web for past newsletter editions and information about the group.



The Battles for Fort Fisher

The Union Navy had the leading role in

implementing General Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan, and its cabinet secretary Gideon Welles, took the assignment very seriously. After the abortive 7 April 1863 Navy only attack on Charleston Harbor (See *Battle Cry* article of March 2005), he recognized that certain endeavors had to be joint Army-Navy operations. However, the Army had its own priorities of importance and could not always accommodate at the time the Navy wished. Prime example was the capture of Mobile Bay, which occurred 5 August 1864, some 28 months after the capture of New Orleans on 25 April 1862. (See *Battle Cry* articles of Sept 2004 and Sept 2005.) Welles had hoped to follow up with Mobile immediately after New Orleans, but the Army simply had many other duties to attend to. Such was not the case with the Fort Fisher-Wilmington joint operations for which planning commenced almost immediately after the Mobile closure.

Wilmington, NC was the last remaining port useful to blockade runners, and, "...the last gateway between the Confederate States and the outside world." It was 20 miles up the Cape Fear River where deep draught vessels could not go, with two River entrances protected by the very strong and massive Fort Fisher (refer to drawing). Fort Fisher was a weird looking affair built in the shape of an "L," with a sea-face of nearly one mile and a land-face of 0.4 mile across a peninsula. In front of the land-face were deeply set palisades and further in front was an electrically detonated mine field. The Fort was built of sand and sod on a timber frame with steep walls up to thirty feet high and twenty-five feet wide at the top. It would absorb artillery shot and shell like a pillow and, unlike a masonry fort, was easily and rapidly repairable. The Fort had 47 guns, two of which were large-bore English-made Armstrong rifles that could fire a 150 pound shell five miles. It had been built in 1862 by slave labor under the supervision of CSA BG W.H.C. Whiting and Colonel William Lamb, who were in command at the time of its capture. The total garrison then was 1,800 men. The rebel commander of the Wilmington Department at the time was J. F. Davis' buddy Braxton Bragg. Bragg had Hokes' 6,000 men division available in the area, but he consistently refused Whiting and Lamb's numerous requests to either augment the Fort or to attack the union assault

forces from the rear. His actions were unexplainable, unconscionable, and despicable. Once again Bumbling Braxton had served the Union cause well.

Secretary Welles had asked Farragut to serve as Navy Commander for the joint operation, but the Admiral declined due to ill health, whereupon Admiral David Porter was ordered to take command of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, replacing Admiral S. P. Lee, who was sent to the Mississippi River Squadron. Porter accumulated an armada of some 60 vessels, the largest to that date in U. S. history. It included the old line broadside warships such as USS *Colorado*, *Minnesota*, and *Wabash* carrying some 50 guns each, plus four *Cononicus* (third generation) Class Monitors, and the massive casemate ironclad USS *New Ironsides* carrying 16 eleven-inch Dahlgren cannons. Total armament of the fleet was 619 guns.

General Grant, then at City Point directly overseeing the Armies of the Potomoc (Meade) and of the James (Butler) in the Petersburg Siege, recognized the urgency of the joint operation since nearly all of the limited new supplies that R. E. Lee could receive were arriving by rail from Wilmington. He also was aware that the Army of the James was not under strong leadership and was being under-utilized. He ordered that the Army's part of the cooperative operation was to be a 7,000-man Provisional Corps comprised of AOJ units to be under command of MG Godfrey Weitzel, a 29 year old Corps Commander, West Point 1855 (2-34), and former AOJ Chief Engineer. MG Ben Butler was not specifically invited. However, Butler, as Army Commander and in whose military district Wilmington was, chose to "tag along" so to speak, and he had the legal right to do so; much to Grant's chagrin. Butler's interests were two-fold: 1) He was a glory seeker, and 2) He had a "grand idea" of exploding an old ship loaded with 215 tons of powder near the Fort which he thought would destroy it. Grant did not buy the idea; but, surprisingly Porter did and he implemented it with enthusiasm.

Porter's fleet arrived from anchorage at Beaufort on 20 Dec 1864 and immediately formed for attack in arcs of concentric circles, placing the Fort under intense fire at a rate of up to 115 rounds per minute. A serious problem developed, however, in that the fleet's 100 pounder Parrott guns were exploding injuring the gun crews. Porter ordered that all be taken out of service. Butler/Weitzel's 20 army transports left Hampton Roads on 16 Dec but were delayed due to bad weather, arriving 25 Dec. In the interim, Porter had exploded the powder boat at night, making a loud

noise but doing absolutely no damage to the Fort. "It was terrible," one rebel defender said later. "It woke up nearly everyone in the Fort." The thought is that due to an error of the pilot in the darkness the ship was exploded some 600 yards from the Fort rather than the planned 300 yards. Would it have done significantly more damage if it had been closer is problematical.

Upon arrival, Weitzel conducted a ground reconnaissance-in-force from which he concluded that the Fort could not be taken by assault, rather a siege would be required. (Butler had remained aboard ship.) Many subordinate commanders disagreed with Weitzel, including Lt. Col. Cyrus Comstock, Grant's staff engineer. But Butler did agree and, with very little notice to Porter, withdrew the troops and sailed back to Hampton Roads. It was a hell of a way to cooperate! Moreover, he departed leaving an entire regiment stranded on the beach without adequate potable water, rations, blankets, or ammunition. They were rescued by the Navy two days later.

Grant was infuriated, and with Lincoln's concurrence, removed Ben Butler from command of the Army of the James. Most everyone has agreed with Grant's decision. Although possessing administrative talent, Butler was indeed an inept military commander. But some believe that while Grant's decision was right, it was based upon the wrong specific reason. Weitzel had been named by Grant to be the combat commander, so it can be argued that he was the actual ad hoc decision maker in the matter. Butler's role was only as endorser? Moreover, Weitzel's conclusion also raises questions. Is it that he either had or developed "cold feet?" Was he one of the several West Point high academic achievers who became excellent staff officers, but later proved to be flawed line commanders? (See *Battle Cry* article of July 04.)

Porter sent dispatches to the Navy Department in which he complained bitterly of having been abandoned by the army just when the Fort was (in his view) "nearly in our possession," and begged that troops be sent back again to cooperate, but with a different commander. Grant sent a messenger to Porter with a letter asking him to hold on, and that he would send the same troops back with a new commander, with some reinforcements to offset those which the enemy had received. He then selected BG Alfred H. Terry to command the Army of the James.

Terry was a 37 year old alumnus of Yale Law School. He started his military service as a militia officer at First Manassas, and ended it 27 years later as one of the very few non-West Point graduates to become Major Generals in the Regular Army. It

was said of him that "...pomposity, arrogance, cowardice, and self-conceit are foreign to his nature."

It was 6 Jan 1865 before the transports could be readied and the troops aboard. They sailed from Fort Monroe on that day. They arrived off Beaufort 8 Jan 1865. A heavy storm, however, prevented a landing at Fort Fisher until 13 Jan. Grant instructed Terry to communicate freely with Porter and have entire harmony between army and navy. This was done and high praise was heaped upon both Terry and Porter (and by each other!) for this close cooperation.

Terry deployed his men across the peninsula as had been done before, and at two o'clock on the following morning moved up within two miles of the Fort, and with a "respectable" abatis in front of his line. His artillery was all landed on that day, 14 Jan. Again Curtis' Brigade of Ames' Division had the lead. By noon, they had carried an unfinished work some 800 yards from the Fort, and turned it so as to face the other way. BG Newton M. Curtis had been one of the strongest critics of Weitzel's conclusion that the Fort could not be taken by storm.

Terry now saw Porter and arranged for an assault on the following day. The two commanders organized their signal systems so that they could better communicate with each other. At day light, the fleet commenced its firing. The time agreed upon for the assault was the middle of the afternoon, and BG Adelbert Ames who commanded the assaulting column moved at 3.30 PM against the Fort's land-front.

Porter landed a force of 1,600 sailors, all volunteers armed with pistols and cutlasses and 400 marines with Spencer rifles to provide covering fire to move against the sea-front in cooperation with Ames's assault. They were under Commander Breese of the Navy. These sailors and marines had worked their way up to within 300 yards of the Fort before the assault, but this remaining distance was over open sand upon which it was hard to walk and even more difficult to run. The signal was given and the assault commenced; but the sailors and marines were badly repulsed by the enemy sharpshooters, losing 70 killed and 210 wounded. Two of the killed in action were Lieutenants B. H. Porter and S. W. Preston, promising young stars in the Navy and members of Admiral Porter's personal staff at the time. A survivor was Lieut. Comm. William Cushing of *Albemarle* fame (See *Battle Cry* article of May 2005), because he apparently had *nine* lives?

Some consider Porter's land assault over a total of some 800 yards down the beach with pistols and cutlasses to have been ill conceived. On the

positive side it was a diversion of enemy attention from Terry's assault, but on the negative, it was a costly affair.

Curtis's Brigade charged successfully though met by a heavy fire, some of the men having to wade through the swamp up to their waists to reach the Fort. Many were wounded, of course, and some killed; but they soon reached the palisades. These they cut away, and pushed on through. The mine field failed to detonate, due to the naval artillery cutting electrical wires. The other troops then came up; Pennypacker's following Curtis, and Bell, who commanded the 3d Brigade of Ames's Division, following Pennypacker. But the Fort was not yet captured though the parapet was gained.

The works were very extensive. The large parapet around the work would have been but very little protection to those inside except when they were close up under it. Traverses had, therefore, been run until the work was really a succession of small forts enclosed by a large one. The rebels made a desperate effort to hold the Fort, and had to be driven from these traverses one by one, requiring extensive hand to hand combat. The fleet kept up a continuous fire upon that part of the Fort which was still occupied by the enemy. By means of new signal system, they could be better informed where to direct their shots. The fight continued till long after dark. Union troops gained first one traverse and then another, but by 10 PM, the place was carried. During this engagement, the sailors, who had been repulsed in their assault on the bastion, rendered the best service they could by reinforcing Terry's northern line—thus enabling him to send a detachment to the assistance of Ames.

An after-battle tragedy occurred the next day when two Union sailors wandered into the Fort's darkened main powder magazine with torches. The resulting explosion of some 700 tons of powder killed and wounded 200 plus Union soldiers and a number of rebel POW's.

During the succeeding days the enemy blew up Fort Caswell on the opposite side of Cape Fear River, and later abandoned other works. Fort Anderson later fell and the River route to Wilmington was then wide open. Union captures in all amounted to 170 guns, besides small-arms, with full supplies of ammunition, and 2,100 rebel prisoners. There were about 700 dead and wounded Confederates. Both Whiting and Lamb were wounded. Whiting died 3 months later, but due to other causes (dysentery). Federal army losses were 115 killed and 550 wounded, excluding the magazine explosion. Navy casualties, in

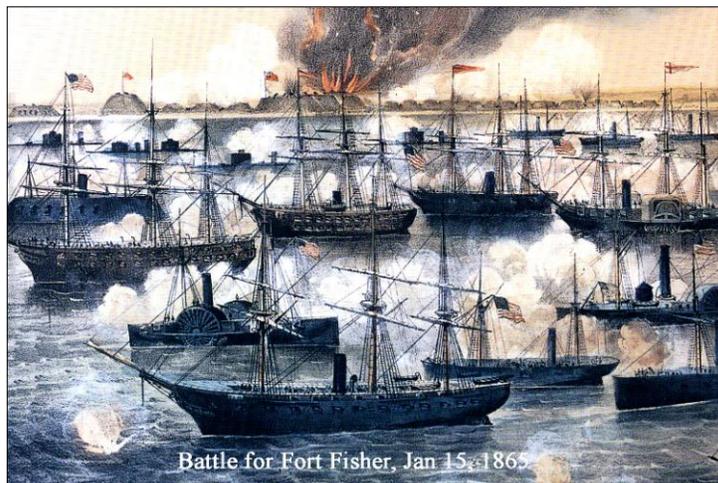
addition to those of the land assault force, were about 100. In this assault on Fort Fisher, Bell, one of the Brigade Commanders, was killed, and two, Curtis and Pennypacker, were badly wounded. Both received the Medal of Honor and Curtis, also with Terry, the Thanks of Congress. At age 20, Galusha Pennypacker was soon thereafter promoted to BG USV to become the youngest general officer in the War.

Secretary Stanton, who was returning from Savannah, arrived off Fort Fisher soon after it fell. When he heard the good news he promoted a number of officers for their conspicuous gallantry. Terry was confirmed as major-general of volunteers and soon after Grant recommended him for BG in the regular army.

Thus ends the story of the Capture of Fort Fisher, the most heavily defended fortification taken by amphibious assault during the Civil War. It happened so near the end of the War that the great victory or defeat, depending on one's viewpoint, was not then well realized by the American people. But the resulting loss of the Cape Fear River defense system and the City of Wilmington, the only remaining importing depot of the South, effectively ended all blockade running. Implementation of General Scott's Anaconda Plan was fully complete. And Admiral Porter and General Butler continued to hate each other until 1891 and 1893, respectively.

References:

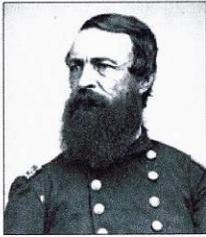
"Confederate Goliath-The Battle of Fort Fisher" by Rod Gragg, 1991; "Personal Memoirs" by U. S. Grant, 1885; "Battles and Leaders" V4 P2, 1887; "War for the Union" Vol.4 1864-65 by Allan Nevins, 1971; "ORN's" S1 V11 and S2 V1; and "ORA's" S1 V42



Bob Williams; 10-01-05; rev. 8-28-14

Graphics for Article "The Battles for Fort Fisher"

RAW: 10-05; rev 8-14



D. D. Porter



A. H. Terry



G. Weitzel



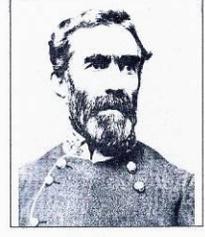
B. F. Butler



Wm. Lamb



W.H.C. Whiting



B. Bragg



K. R. Breese



W. B. Cushing



B. H. Porter KIA



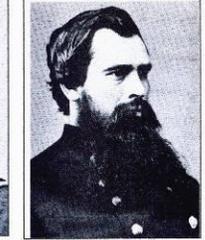
S. W. Preston KIA



C. B. Comstock



A. Ames



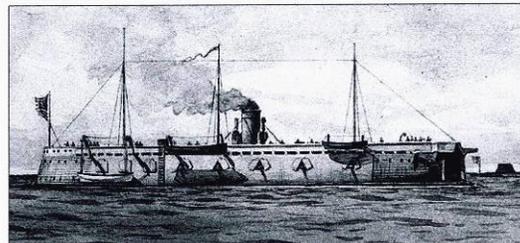
N. M. Curtis



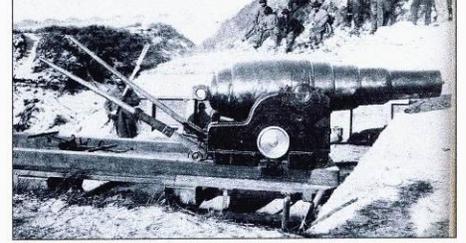
G. Pennypacker



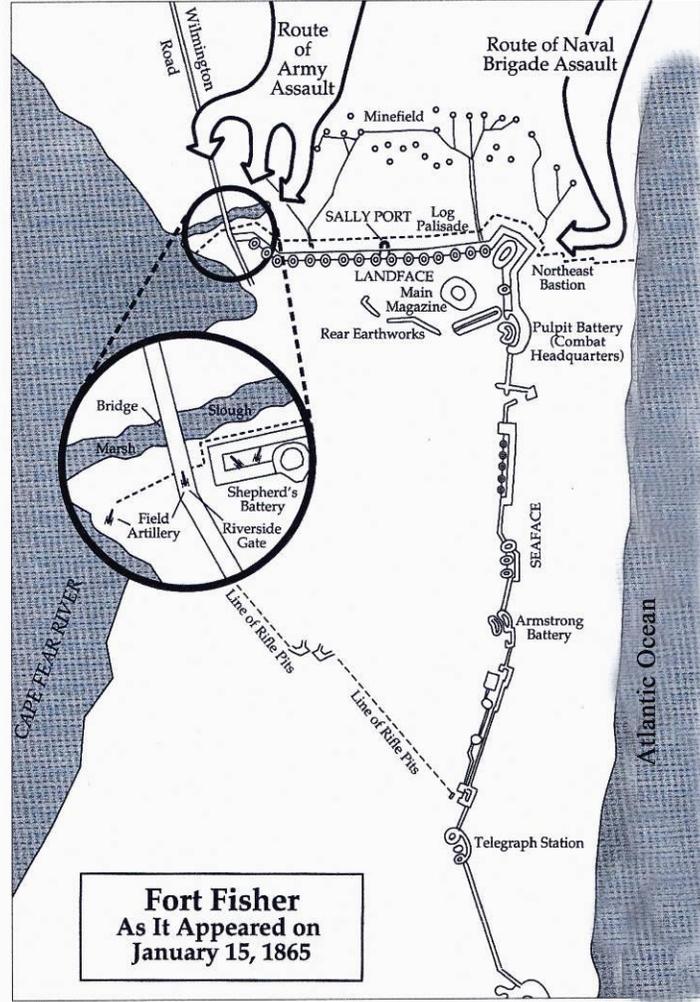
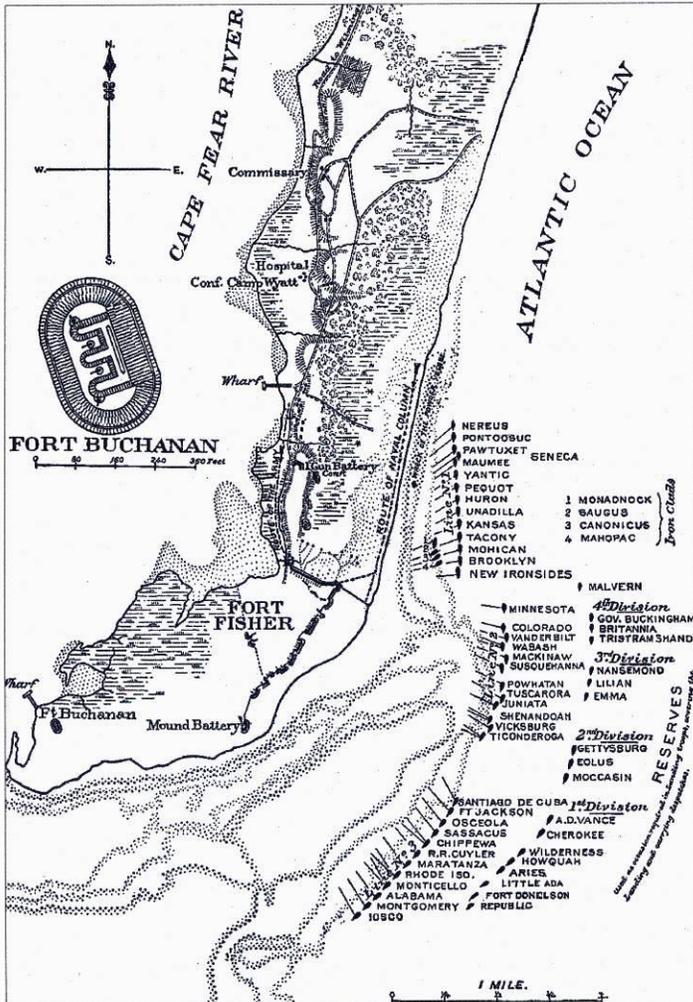
T. O. Selfridge



USS *New Ironsides*



Armstrong Cannon 150 pdr



Graphics Page to Accompany Two SCWRT Battle Cry Articles on the Cushing Brothers

William Cushing Sank CSS *Albemarle*: Awarded: **Thanks of Congress**
 Graphics for Article on Lt. William B. Cushing, US Navy

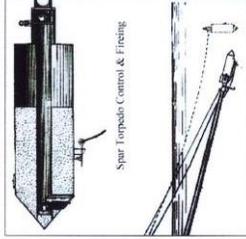
Alonzo Cushing Provided Key Artillery Support: Awarded: **Medal of Honor**
 Graphics for Article on Lt. Alonzo H. Cushing, US Army (KIA)



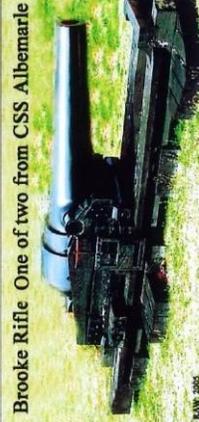
CSS Albemarle



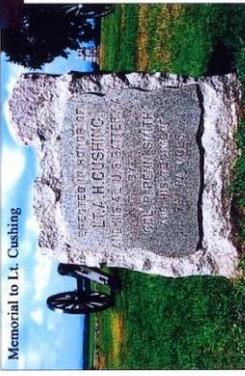
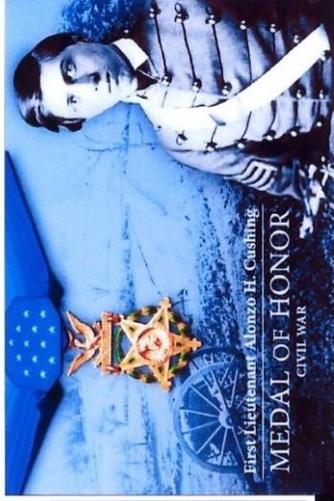
USS Sassacus ramming CSS Albemarle 5-05-1864



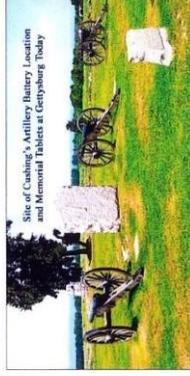
Spar Torpedo Control & Firing



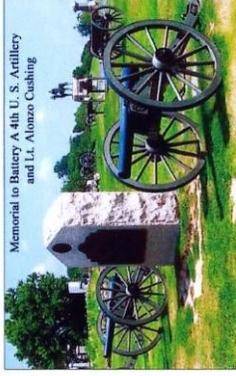
Brooke Rifle One of two from CSS Albemarle



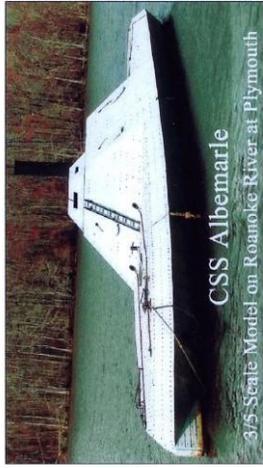
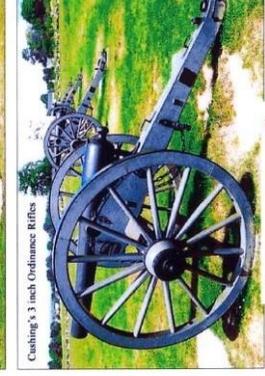
Memorial to Lt. Cushing



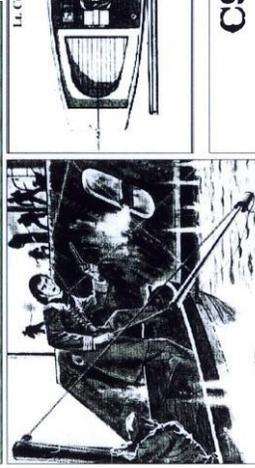
Memorial to Battery A 4th U. S. Artillery and Lt. Alonzo Cushing



Cushing's 3 inch Ordnance Rifles



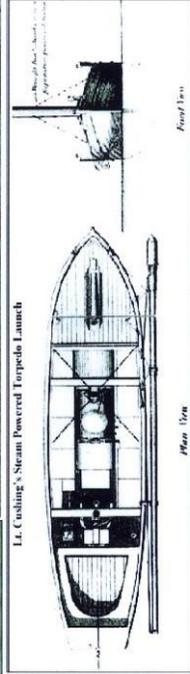
CSS Albemarle



375-Ton Santee Model on Roanoke River at Plymouth



Lt. Cushing's Steam Powered Torpedo Launch



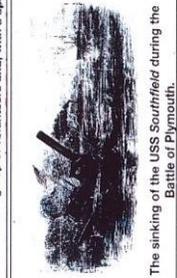
USS Miami

CSS ALBEMARLE

The ironclad ram, the CSS *Albemarle* was the most successful Confederate ironclad of the Civil War and twice defeated the Union Navy. Built in a cornfield on the Roanoke River near Scotland Neck, the *Albemarle* played a pivotal role in the Battle of Plymouth by sweeping the 5 gunboats of the Union Navy from the Roanoke River on April 19, 1864. In that battle the *Albemarle* rammed and sank the USS *Southfield*. Also in the same battle, the Union Navy Commander, Charles Flusser, was killed when his own shell bounced off the *Albemarle* and back at his feet on the deck of his flagship, the USS *Miami*.

On May 5, 1864, during the Battle of Backhouses Bay, the *Albemarle* faced another seven Union gunboats. A four hour battle ensued. The Union fleet lost 60 gunboats, including the *Albemarle's* 2 Brooke Rifles and fired 557 shells at the her, but could not sink the *Albemarle*!

The career of the CSS *Albemarle* came to an end five months later. She was destroyed on October 27, 1864 in the moon derring commando raid of the war by 21 year-old US Navy Lieutenant William Barker Cushing who was the death of the friend, Charles Flusser! During the night he steamed up the Roanoke River to Plymouth in a 30' steam launch with a group of volunteers and, with a spar-mounted torpedo, sank the *Albemarle*.



The sinking of the USS *Southfield* during the Battle of Plymouth.



19th Century engraving of the ironclad ram CSS *Albemarle*.

