

William Danford Blair "ONE GOOD PORT:" THE UNION NAVY AND BEAUFORT HARBOR, NC 1862-1865. (Under the direction of Dr. Carl E. Swanson) Department of History, August 1999.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of Beaufort Harbor in Union naval operations during the American Civil War. Because it was the scene of little fighting during the conflict, any importance the harbor had must be logistical. Consequently, much of the research focused upon discovering how the blockading fleet was supplied, and how Beaufort fit into the supply system.

Beaufort Harbor was a key element in the blockade of the port of Wilmington. The use of Beaufort Harbor saved the U.S. Navy money during the war in coal costs, and saved its blockading ships valuable time making the blockade more efficient. The great advantage of Beaufort Harbor was its location relatively close to the Cape Fear River approaches. This enabled ships to refuel with only a short absence from station, and with little fuel usage in transit. Another important advantage was that the inlet's depth allowed the admittance of most ships in the fleet.

Because of its location the harbor was a haven in which ships could conduct emergency repairs or refit after extended periods at sea. The harbor was well-suited as a base from which to raid towns farther down the coast and disrupt Confederate activities. Beaufort would eventually be the base from which the great attacks on Fort Fisher originated. Though little recognized, one cannot understand the blockade without understanding the role of Beaufort Harbor.

"One Good Port:"

The Union Navy and Beaufort Harbor, NC, 1862-1865

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of History

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in History

By

William Danford Blair

August 1999









### Acknowledgements

This work is the result of three years' research conducted as time permitted. In that span numerous individuals have contributed to making the current work possible. At the risk of omitting someone deserving of mention, I would like to refer to them in chronological order. Professor Lawrence Babits had valuable input in shaping the topic and thrust of this thesis. Paul Branch at Fort Macon State Park encouraged me and provided great guidance, particularly related to army affairs. I need to thank Connie Mason for making available to me the reference materials at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, NC.

The staffs at several manuscript repositories were helpful. In particular the staff of Duke University's Perkins Library was energetic in helping locate useful sources. The manuscripts staffs of East Carolina University, the North Carolina State Archives and the Southern Historical Collection also deserve thanks. The Southern Historical Collection graciously allowed the reprinting of original sketches in its holdings. The Library of Congress staff patiently endured my endless requests for materials in the week I spent there. The able staff at the National Archives was exceptionally good at helping find important manuscript material.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Professors Michael Palmer, Donald Collins, and William N. Still. I especially appreciate the input and assistance of Professor Carl Swanson the thesis director. I thank my parents Bill and Eloise for their constant support and input. My wife Elizabeth was especially important because of her love, encouragement and editorial assistance.



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### Introduction: A Blockade without fuel?

At daybreak on 30 November 1863 one hundred miles south-east of Frying Pan Shoals, crewmen on board the USS *Florida* sighted the tell-tale black smoke of a blockade runner they suspected to be the *Lucy*. They sounded the customary rattles to alert the crew, and thus began one of the Union navy's thousands of chases during the American Civil War. The *Florida*'s coal heavers shovelled more fuel into her boilers in a vain attempt to gain extra speed above the ship's maximum of ten knots under sail and steam. Her navigator struggled to keep the swift runner from crossing her bow. The sea conditions (strong wind and very heavy head sea) favored the large, sturdily built gunboat. The *Florida* occasionally appeared to gain on her target, but seemed to lose more often. Darkness closed with the runner still distant from the U.S. Navy's gunboat. The next day dawned with "nothing visible but the wide ocean."<sup>1</sup>

Too often discussions of the U.S. Navy's blockade of the southern coastline focus on such dramatic chases. Popular histories of the Civil War's naval activities go into great detail describing the characteristics of the blockade runners: long, sleek design, light gray or blue paint, telescoping funnels, and prodigious speed. Writers often recount the navy's efforts to gather ships, by purchase, new construction, or lease, to enforce the blockade. In discussing the blockade's difficulties they concentrate on the speed of blockade runners, and the geographical challenges posed by some ports, particularly

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<sup>1</sup>William Keeler, *Aboard the USS Florida: The Letters of Paymaster William Keeler, U.S. Navy to his Wife Anna*, edited by Robert Daly, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1968), 120. United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927) Series I, Volume 9, 333. Hereafter cited as *O.R.N.*.



Wilmington, N.C. What most neglect are the logistical hurdles the navy had to jump in order to maintain the blockade. Like many others who write on military topics, they overlook logistics in favor of looking at strategy or technology. The slight attention to logistics however, does not negate the importance of a ship's ability to refuel without traveling great distances. In fact, *Florida* did not go back to her post on the blockade after the chase described earlier, but instead went to Beaufort, N.C. for fuel.

Naval activities during the war have not received nearly as much literary attention as the political and military aspects. One could argue that there has yet to be a good scholarly book on overall naval operations in the war. Within this field one has to search the literature for any mention of logistics. Battles, guns, horsepower, and the thrill of the chase easily overshadow this often-overlooked military science. Bern Anderson, James Merrill, and Ivan Musicant among others have written monographs on the naval aspects of the war, and have addressed, to various extents, the blockade. Useful though they are, none of these writers adequately documented his work or relied extensively upon original research. Furthermore, none even mentioned the logistics of the blockade. Daniel Ammen, captain of a Union monitor at Charleston, S.C., during the war, scarcely even mentions the blockade, much less logistics of it in his book *The Atlantic Coast*.<sup>2</sup>

Several recent writers have addressed some issues related to Beaufort Harbor's use during the war, but none has addressed its role and primary importance. The historiography of the Civil War benefited greatly from the 1993 publication of Robert M.

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<sup>2</sup>Bern Anderson, *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962). James M. Merrill, *The Rebel Shore: The Story of Union Sea Power in the Civil War*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1957). Ivan Musicant, *Divided Waters: The Naval History of the Civil War*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1995). Daniel Ammen, *The Atlantic Coast*, New York: Charles Scribner's, 1883).



Browning's *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*. This volume traces the history of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron during the war. It examines in depth the operations of the squadron in its varied theaters: the James River, the Sounds of North Carolina, and the blockade of the North Carolina coast. Browning does include resupply, refueling, and repairs, all of which were essential to keeping the squadron at sea. Richard Sauer's recent doctoral thesis at Pennsylvania State University exhaustively covered the Burnside campaign, but did not go beyond that. Rod Gragg's work on the battles of Fort Fisher covered an event in which the possession of Beaufort Harbor was important. No one, however, has focused on the role of this harbor during the war and the critical importance of logistics.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis goes beyond Browning's work and focuses on the squadron's use of Beaufort, North Carolina's most accessible harbor for large vessels. This harbor, which had been slow in developing in the prewar era, became an essential asset of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron's effort to staunch the flow of goods into and out of the Confederacy. Though historians have not recognized its significance, Beaufort Harbor was essential to maintaining blockade. Scholars have debated since the end of the conflict the effectiveness of the blockade in harming the Confederate war effort. Whatever position one may take in that debate, the blockade would have been much more difficult without that port. By any measure, time spent away from station, likely damage

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<sup>3</sup>Robert M. Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron during the Civil War*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993). Richard Allen Sauer, "General Ambrose E. Burnside's 1862 North Carolina Campaign," Phd. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1987. Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).





resulting from transit to port, or coal costs, the blockade could not have been as effective without Beaufort.

This thesis is organized into six chapters that are roughly chronological. Chapter one covers the history of Beaufort, N.C., and the early uses of its harbor. A large part of this section is devoted to activities on the North Carolina coast during the first year of the war. These include the early efforts to stop smuggling and the capture of much of the northern coastal region, including Beaufort Inlet. The second chapter begins after the capture of the area and describes the early usage of the harbor. At first, it was little more than a rendezvous for vessels blockading the approaches to Wilmington. Reliance on the harbor grew steadily until the activities there had outgrown the administrative and support systems available. The third chapter is a logical follow-up to the second. Beginning with the appointment of the first actual commandant of the U.S. Naval Station at Beaufort, it describes the growth and development of the station to accommodate the dozens of ships that eventually relied upon it for supplies. Included is an examination of the basic process by which ships entered the harbor and refueled.

Chapter four covers the activities in Beaufort itself during the war. This includes the raids conducted from there, and the Confederate threats to the area. This chapter also demonstrates that the importance of the harbor was not purely logistical: ships frequently conducted minor repairs, and the navy obtained large supplies of naval stores. The fifth chapter describes the importance of Beaufort to the Fort Fisher campaigns. It carries historically through the end of the war and the navy's gradual withdrawal during the summer of 1865. Finally, the navy closed the station in October 1865. The final chapter



summarizes the importance of the station to the navy during the war. In particular, it provides statistical evidence of the cost savings of using Beaufort for refueling as opposed to using another facility.

There remain holes in the historiography of Civil War navies, including a good scholarly work on overall naval operations, and on the Union navy in general. This thesis is an attempt to fill one of them by bringing attention to an under-appreciated aspect of the Union Navy's war effort. Though not as familiar to most readers as Wilmington, Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans, and Hampton Roads, Beaufort was vital nonetheless.



## Chapter One: Origins

During the American Civil War the North Carolina coast posed a threatening obstacle to Union naval activities, but also presented a potential asset. The state's coastline, which juts into the Atlantic, is rimmed by a series of narrow islands that separate shallow sounds from the Atlantic Ocean. A number of inlets between the barrier islands allow entrance into the sounds from the ocean. These inlets in most cases are shallow and transitory. In fact, Hatteras Inlet, which would be important during the war, had only been open since 1846.<sup>1</sup> The sounds and inlets of North Carolina, traditionally havens for pirates and smugglers, would be a bane to the Union Navy because of the privateers, cruisers, and blockade runners that operated there.

The coastline was also dangerous. Known for years as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," the state's coast threatened passing vessels. Storms could arise quickly in the waters off Cape Hatteras to endanger shipping. From each of the capes (Hatteras, Lookout, and Fear) shoals extend outward for miles creating shallow, rough seas. Though dangerous, the coast offered great opportunity for the Northern war effort. Control of the coastal region could threaten important rail lines into Virginia and divert badly needed Confederate manpower from other theaters. Moreover, Union naval ships could have access to a safe harbor and replenishment base much closer to areas of operation off the remainder of the Confederate coast if they could gain a foothold. When the prospect of a long war loomed large, Union forces struck from the sea at North

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<sup>1</sup>Richard S. Barry, "The History of Fort Macon," (M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 1950), 3.



Carolina. The Union took advantage of the state's coastal area to threaten supply lines and siphon away Confederate strength.

As part of their operations Federal forces seized Beaufort, N.C., where the navy established a station in the deep water harbor. There its vessels enforcing the blockade were able to refuel, re-supply, and repair. This thesis will examine the importance of Beaufort Harbor to the U.S. Navy. It will demonstrate that this harbor was very important to the navy during the war, and that its primary importance was logistical. The ships that lay in the harbor on a continual basis were neither glamorous nor famous. They were colliers, supply hulks, ammunition schooners, and tugs. The fastest blockading ship was worthless if it could not refuel, just as the biggest gun was useless if it lacked shot and shell. From the fall of Fort Macon in late April 1862 through the end of the war three years later, ships enforcing the blockade called regularly at Beaufort. In that safe anchorage they received coal, ordnance, and supplies, and repaired the ravages of long stays at sea.

Only two of North Carolina's inlets, Ocracoke and Old Topsail, had been charted on maps dating back to the earliest explorations of the colony.<sup>2</sup> Mariners eventually came to regard Old Topsail Inlet (later known as Beaufort Inlet), which separates Bogue Banks on the west from Shackleford Banks on the east, as the safest of the inlets because of its depth and relatively sheltered location. In the early eighteenth century a small village originally known as "Fishtown" grew on the mainland inside the inlet and was

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*





incorporated as Beaufort in 1713. In April 1722 the colonial government recognized the potential of the harbor at Beaufort by making it a port of entry for the colony. The following October the town became the county seat for Carteret County.<sup>3</sup>

The harbor at Beaufort offered many natural advantages to the navy. The anchorage was very close to the Atlantic and was at the same time virtually land-locked, providing shelter from storms. The anchorage within ran from the east end of Bogue Banks westward for nearly two miles. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the depth of water on the bar outside the inlet ranged from fifteen to eighteen feet at low tide, allowing the passage of most ships.<sup>4</sup>

Surprisingly, despite these natural advantages, Beaufort Harbor had not flourished. During a portion of the 1700s it was North Carolina's second leading port for exporting naval stores and corn. At the same time, however, it exported only small amounts of sawn lumber, shingles, rice, and indigo. Trade at New Bern was growing at Beaufort's expense. New Bern, despite its lack of easy access to the ocean, benefited from being the colonial capital. It had good roads and was located at the mouth of the Neuse River, which

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 6. Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, 26 vols., (Goldsboro, Nash Brothers, 1904), vol. 23, 102. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 68. William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols., (Raleigh, NC 1886-1890), vol. 2, 454.

<sup>4</sup>David Whitehall Garrigues, "Sketch of Beaufort Harbor, North Carolina," (Beaufort, NC: Beaufort Harbor Company Co-Operative, 1904), 1-4. Courtesy of North Carolina Maritime Museum.



stretched far inland. On the other hand, Beaufort was not located on the main coastal highway and lacked good water communications with the interior.<sup>5</sup>

Though hampered in development by poor inland communications, colonial and later state and federal politicians recognized the value of Beaufort Harbor. Shortly after the founding of the town, officials began a series of attempts, some of them feeble, to protect the harbor. As early as 1732 the royal governor recommended that Beaufort be fortified, but for fiscal reasons no fort was ever built. Within a few years, during King George's War, Spanish privateers used nearby Cape Lookout, and seized Beaufort and the harbor in 1747.<sup>6</sup> As a result of the Spanish raids on Beaufort and other coastal towns, the colonial Assembly agreed to raise the necessary funds to build four forts, one of them specifically to guard Beaufort Inlet. No one pressed the construction of the proposed fort, however. Eventually during the French and Indian War, Governor Arthur Dobbs selected a site for the fort on the east end of Bogue Banks. A house for the garrison was constructed, but the lightly built fort, named Fort Dobbs after the royal governor, was probably never armed.<sup>7</sup>

The area was unguarded during the American Revolution, but no hostile force ever attacked the fort. Though no fort protected the harbor, shipbuilding was popular at

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<sup>5</sup>Harry Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina: a Study in Historical Geography*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 88, 109, 126-12, 150, 153-154.

<sup>6</sup>Carl E. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes: American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 159-160.

<sup>7</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 7-9, 12-16.



Beaufort during the revolution.<sup>8</sup> Early in its nationhood, the U.S. government made Beaufort an official port of entry in 1803. Four years later the state turned over to the federal government five acres of land on the east end of Bogue Banks for the construction of a new fort since Fort Dobbs had fallen into ruins. The U.S. government completed the new fort, named Fort Hampton, in January 1809. The government bought additional land to add to the federal preserve in 1810.<sup>9</sup> Garrisoned by both regular army and militia forces, the semi-circular stone fort mounted five eighteen-pounders during the War of 1812. Though the British raided Ocracoke, enemy vessels ventured no closer than Cape Lookout, a few miles east of Beaufort.<sup>10</sup> Because enemy ships were never a serious threat to the port, and because the harbors at Chesapeake Bay and Charleston were closely blockaded, Beaufort became a haven for privateers who operated from there and returned to store their prizes.<sup>11</sup>

After the end of the war, Fort Hampton fell into disuse and disrepair. By the early 1820s the erosion of the shoreline ruined the fort. The destruction of Fort Hampton led to the building of the third fortification to sit on the east end of Bogue Banks. Largely as a result of North Carolina's Senator Nathaniel Macon, the federal government planned another fort for the site as a part of its "third system" of forts. This chain of forts was

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<sup>8</sup>Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, 237.

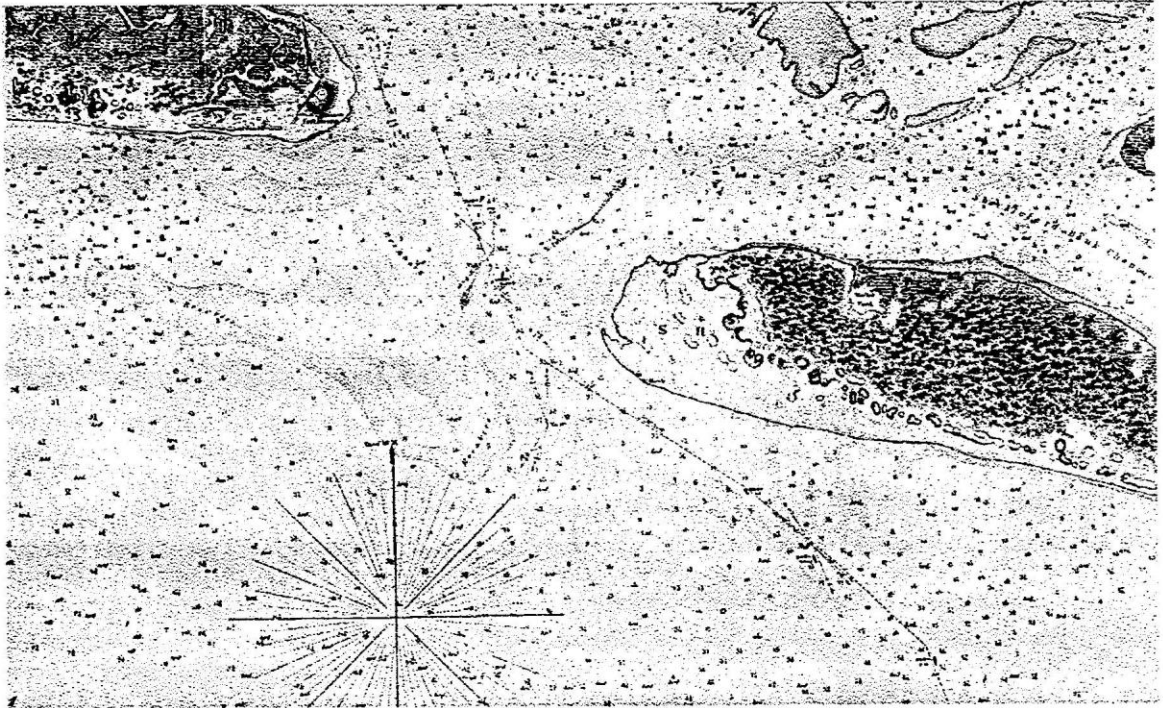
<sup>9</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 32-34.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 35-43.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 36-37, 42, 44; Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, 312.



built between 1820 and 1860 for harbor defense and includes Fort Macon, Fort Sumter, Fort Pulaski, Fort Monroe, and Fort Caswell.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 1, Part of 1857 Nautical chart of Beaufort Harbor showing main channel into the inlet, Bogue Banks with Fort Macon at upper left, and Shackleford Banks at lower right. North Carolina State Archives.**

Begun in 1826 under the supervision of army Lieutenant William Eliason, Fort Macon was much more impressive than its predecessors. Encompassing eight acres, the new fort was pentagonal. Three sides faced the channel and ocean; one faced the harbor,

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<sup>12</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 59, 66.





and one looked westward down the island. After eight years of work involving a number of delays, engineers completed the new fortification in late 1834.<sup>13</sup> (See Figure 1.)

Though Beaufort was an official port of entry and was well guarded, the attributes of the natural harbor were for a time under-used and under-appreciated. Many North Carolinians forgot the commercial possibilities of the harbor, or failed to realize them. In the early 1850s, however, there was a growing recognition of Beaufort's potential. Unlike other inlets, its channel accommodated larger ocean-going ships. One diarist from eastern North Carolina proclaimed in a bit of hyperbole (considering the quality of Charleston, Pensacola, and others) that Beaufort was "the best ship's harbor . . . south of the capes of Virginia." He wrote that it was a place destined to become important.<sup>14</sup> The completion in June 1858 of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, which ran ninety-five miles from Goldsboro to Morehead City, solved the communications problems of an earlier era and increased the harbor's potential.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, in 1853 the government considered establishing a U.S. Naval Station there. The navy did not establish a station at the time, not because the harbor was unsuitable, but apparently because there was no need for an additional naval base.<sup>16</sup> Just a few years later, during the Civil War, the navy would establish a station in Beaufort.

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<sup>13</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 45, 59, 66, 71, 94.

<sup>14</sup>William D. Valentine Diary, 26 April 1853, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, N.C.

<sup>15</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 10. Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, 380.

<sup>16</sup>Letter to William B. Rodman, 20 August 1853, William B. Rodman Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.



Carteret County's population in 1860 was 8,186, all described as being rural, and of whom 25.9 percent were non-white.<sup>17</sup> By 1860 the little Carteret County town once known as "Fishtown" had become one of only thirteen in the state with a population of one thousand or more. Moreover, prominent North Carolinians used the town as a resort because of its location and healthy summer climate.<sup>18</sup> Beaufort boasted a hotel that extended out over the water so patrons could step directly from a steamer onto the verandah. The town was described in one letter as both one of the fashionable watering places in the South and also as a "one-horse" town.<sup>19</sup>

The area was divided politically, not being as strongly democratic as some other areas of the state. In the gubernatorial elections of 1858 and 1860 the county supported the Democratic party in one election, and the Whigs in the other. In the presidential elections of 1848 and 1852 the county voted for the Whig candidate both times, but voted Democratic in 1856. In the bitterly divisive election of 1860 John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party carried the county by a narrow margin over the Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>John L. Chaney, *North Carolina Government 1585-1979: A Narrative and Statistical History*, issued by Thad Eure, (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Secretary of State, 1979), 1,087.

<sup>18</sup>Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, 400, 426. Valentine Diary, April 26, 1853.

<sup>19</sup>William Blount Rodman to Cammie, July 20, 1859, William Blount Rodman Papers, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC. James W. Iredell Letter (recipient unknown), July 25, 1862, George H.S. Driver Papers, *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup>Chaney, *N.C. Government*, 1,330, 1,400.



In the years between its completion in 1834 and the onset of the Civil War in 1861, Fort Macon had been garrisoned only sporadically. When Confederate batteries fired the first shots of the conflict at Fort Sumter, one lone ordnance sergeant, E. P. Alexander, had charge of the fort for the U.S. Army. Alexander peacefully surrendered when approached by a local Confederate company on 14 April 1861. The fortification was in a state of disrepair. In fact, only four guns were mounted, while another thirteen lay at the wharf.<sup>21</sup> The fort's new occupants recruited work crews of slaves and free black laborers from the New Bern area to restore it. Slowly, Confederate authorities augmented its meager armament, though it would be months before it was adequately armed.<sup>22</sup>

On 19 April 1861, just days after the shelling of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln ordered a blockade of the Confederate coastline that stretched from South Carolina to Texas. "For this purpose," he said, "a competent force will be posted to prevent entrance and exits from the ports aforesaid." Just over a week later President Lincoln extended the blockade to include Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>23</sup> Historically it has been much easier to impose a blockade than to enforce it. The number of ships needed to constitute a "competent force" grew ever larger, particularly for the entrance to Wilmington, NC. Numbering only ninety ships, including receiving ships and those in ordinary (similar to being in "mothballs"), the navy was decidedly unprepared to do this. Only forty-two of

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<sup>21</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 183-184.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 183-184, 226-227.

<sup>23</sup>United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927) Series I, Volume 6, 156, 340. Hereafter cited as *O.R.N.*



these ships, including sailing ships, were in commission, and half of those were unserviceable. Of the serviceable ships, one-half were on distant stations. The result was that only ten to twelve vessels were in American waters in early 1861 to patrol thousands of miles of coastline.<sup>24</sup>

In the early months of the war the coast of North Carolina was a haven for blockade-runners. Prominent citizens in New York City wrote to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles on 16 July 1861. They reported that North Carolinians were loading ships at Beaufort and Wilmington with naval stores to be shipped to Nassau in the Bahamas. Another prominent New Yorker, Moses H. Grinnell, informed Welles that vessels at Ocracoke, Hatteras Inlet, Beaufort, and Wilmington were being loaded for destinations in Halifax, Nassau, and England. Grinnell complained: "Why can not these ports named be blockaded? God knows there are steamers enough in the country--guns, men, and materials enough to close them up tight as a bottle." Customs Collector Hiram Barney sent Welles more unwelcome news on 12 July 1861. He reported that vessels belonging to Nassau and other British provinces were carrying on an uninterrupted trade with New Bern, Ocracoke, Wilmington, and Beaufort. Six days later he repeated the complaint.<sup>25</sup>

The complainants overlooked the difficulties the navy faced in trying to stop illicit traffic on the North Carolina coast. At least four inlets bore close watching: Hatteras, Ocracoke, Beaufort, and the entrance to the Cape Fear River leading to Wilmington. The

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<sup>24</sup>William N. Still, "The American Civil War," in *Steam, Steel, and Shellfire: The Steam Warship 1815-1905*, ed. Robert Gardiner, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 61-62.

<sup>25</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 6, 7-8, 28-29.





entrance there was split in two by Smith's Island, effectively making it two separate inlets. Commander Samuel Lockwood of the USS *Daylight* wrote to Silas Stringham, commander of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron, describing the difficulties faced off Wilmington. While off the northeastern entrance to the river, New Inlet, he saw a steamer sail out another channel, an older entrance frequently called the Western Bar. Because of Smith's Island and the extensive shoals extending outward from Cape Fear, Lockwood was helpless to stop the blockade-runner. He suggested that there should be one vessel off each entrance to the Cape Fear River and another off Beaufort.<sup>26</sup>

By August Federal naval and military authorities decided upon a strategy they hoped would at least partially solve the problem. Welles wrote to Stringham on 19 August 1861: "It is believed that the well-devised and matured plan of closing the inlets by sinking vessels ballasted with stone will materially aid your operations." The next week Stringham consulted with army Major General John E. Wool about an offensive to capture the two small Confederate forts guarding Hatteras Inlet.<sup>27</sup> They decided upon a joint operation by a force of 860 men under the command of Major General Benjamin Butler accompanied by a naval contingent of seven ships-- the *Minnesota*, *Susquehanna*, *Pawnee*, *Monticello*, *Harriett Lane*, *Cumberland*, and *Wabash*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 6, 11.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 6, 102, 109.

<sup>28</sup>United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. in four series, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901,) Series I, Volume 4, 577. Hereafter cited as *O.R.A.*. *O.R.N.*, I, 6, 120.



After a rough passage from Hampton Roads to Hatteras, the fleet prepared for action on the morning of 28 August. The *Wabash*, *Cumberland*, and *Minnesota* opened fire on Fort Clark near Hatteras Inlet at 10:00 A.M. Fort Clark was the smaller of the two defensive fortifications guarding Hatteras Inlet. As each ship fired a broadside, it pulled away and another pulled in to fire, thus creating a continuous fire by ships steaming in an elliptical pattern. Meanwhile, the lighter drafted gunboats, *Harriet Lane*, *Pawnee*, and *Monticello* moved in closer to the landing site to cover the debarkation of troops that began just before noon. By that time the garrison of Fort Clark had run out of ammunition and began spiking their guns and evacuating toward Fort Hatteras. At this point Stringham ordered the *Monticello* to enter the inlet and take possession of Fort Hatteras, which the Federals mistakenly thought was also being evacuated. In doing so she ran aground and before she could work her way out she had been struck several times by enemy fire from Fort Hatteras. The Federal fleet resumed its fire upon Fort Hatteras, inadvertently sending many shells into Fort Clark, recently occupied by Union troops. The friendly fire was so severe that these troops had to evacuate their prize.<sup>29</sup>

During the night Confederate forces made no attempt to retake Fort Clark from the Union troops who had landed during the day. As 29 August dawned the Federal fleet opened a withering fire on Fort Hatteras, hurling three thousand shells at the fort in three hours. By 11:00 A.M., the Confederates in Fort Hatteras had decided to evacuate that work as well. Before they could evacuate, however, the shelling caused a fire near the

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<sup>29</sup>John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 38-41.



main magazine. The dangerous situation led Commodore Samuel Barron, who was in command, to show a flag of truce. After initial reluctance, Barron eventually accepted on board the flagship *Minnesota* General Butler's demand for unconditional surrender of the garrisons.<sup>30</sup>

After the fall of the forts the army and navy officers agreed that the position should be held. This was contrary to the original plan to obstruct the inlet to prevent its further use. Commander S.C. Rowan of the *Pawnee* reported to Stringham on 1 September that the place should be held as the base of future operations along the Southern coast. Two days later he wrote:

If it is the purpose of the Department to operate offensively against the Southern coast, this of all points, is best adapted as a basis of operating. . . . The line of operations can be extended at pleasure to Ocracoke, and continued to Cape Lookout, and Beaufort by means of the sound and the Neuse River. Once in possession of Beaufort we have a fine harbor with fifteen feet on the bar.<sup>31</sup>

On 2 September General Wool reported to General Winfield Scott that he had sent Butler to Washington to ask if the position was to be held. Later that day he heard from Butler that the Cabinet had agreed unanimously to hold the inlet. Secretary of War Simon Cameron told Wool on 5 September: "The position at Cape Hatteras must be held, and you will adopt such measures, in conjunction with the Navy Department, as may be necessary to effect the object."<sup>32</sup> The results of

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<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 42-44.

<sup>31</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 6, 154-155, 161.

<sup>32</sup>*O.R.A.*, I, 4, 577, 604, 606.



the operation greatly pleased Union army and navy officers. They reported that large numbers of the outer banks natives were coming forward to take the oath of allegiance. Confederates also abandoned their forts guarding the other inlets on the northern North Carolina coastline.<sup>33</sup>

The initial planning for the Hatteras Inlet operations did not contemplate the actual occupation or use of the location. Therefore, it had not provided for a force large enough to press forward into other areas that were still lightly defended. Secessionists in North Carolina were obviously concerned about the capture of positions on their own soil, but some assumed the Federals had not come in sufficient force to press their advantage.<sup>34</sup> Officers on the scene at Hatteras immediately suggested to their superiors the possibilities open to them and requested the forces to continue the campaign. Colonel Rush Hawkins of the 9th New York wrote from Hatteras recommending, among other things, that both Roanoke Island and Beaufort be occupied as soon as possible. On 5 September Commander Rowan wrote to Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox: "A glance at the map will show you, I think, that a dash through the sound for Beaufort would be the strategic move. . . . Beaufort once in our possession and held, the forts would soon fall, and we should have one good port for John Bull."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>*O.R.A.*, I,4, 607. *O.R.N.*, I,6, 174.

<sup>34</sup>R.B. MacRae to Arthur, 1 September 1861, Hugh MacRae Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

<sup>35</sup>*O.R.A.*, I,4, 609. *O.R.N.*, I,6, 174.





Though the Union army and navy were not prepared to expand their advantage in September 1861, Confederate authorities were alarmed enough to recognize the threat. Confederate Inspector General Samuel Cooper wrote Governor John Ellis on 6 September to warn him that officers in eastern North Carolina expected an attack on Fort Macon the following weekend and asked him to dispatch two regiments there immediately. Skippers of blockade-runners in the harbor at Beaufort also reported that an attack was imminent. At this time there were not even competent gunners at Fort Macon to man its armament.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the fall Union naval and military officers collected intelligence on the defenses in eastern North Carolina, particularly those at Beaufort. At the same time, Confederate authorities did their best to remedy the extreme weakness of their positions. On 4 September 1861 H. K. Burgwyn, a young Confederate officer in North Carolina, appealed to Confederate Navy Secretary Stephen Mallory for good naval ordnance officers: "Fort Macon has not one practical gunner; has only forty reliable fuses, no rifled cannon, no ordnance officers, and only raw troops." Much-needed rifled cannons began arriving at the fort a few days later.<sup>37</sup>

Union officers vastly over-estimated the fort's strength. On 19 September Colonel Hawkins wrote to General Wool that the fort had a garrison of 1,500 men, had large numbers of guns added, had been roofed with railroad iron, and could only be taken by siege. The next day Commander Rowan reported that the fort had been at least partially

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<sup>36</sup>*O.R.A.*, I,4, 642-643.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 643,645.



covered in railroad iron, and because it was casemated its garrison could withstand a naval bombardment with impunity. By the end of the month the commander of the USS *Albatross*, which was performing blockade duty along the North Carolina coast, claimed that the work had seventy-five guns mounted, and that 2,000 men were camped outside the fort in addition to its garrison.<sup>38</sup>

The capture of Hatteras effectively sealed the upper coastline for blockade-runners. The navy could focus its efforts off Beaufort and Wilmington. Throughout September and October five to six ships were either on station off the inlets or were cruising the coast.<sup>39</sup> Despite occasional captures of runners either leaving or entering the inlets, many others were getting through. U.S. Consuls in Bermuda and Nassau provided a steady stream of information on ships loading to test the blockade. English ships were known to try to run into Beaufort and Wilmington. In his orders to take blockade duty off Beaufort, Captain James L. Lardner on USS *Susquehanna* was told to keep a sharp eye on two English ships, possibly the *Gondar* and *Alliance*, that were in the harbor at Beaufort awaiting an opportunity to slip out.<sup>40</sup>

At this time Welles made a major reorganization in the Union navy. Silas Stringham resigned his command of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron in mid-September after severe criticism by the press. The secretary used this as an opportunity to divide the manifold responsibilities on the eastern seaboard between two squadrons. The new South

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<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 618-619. *O.R.N.*, I, 6, 241-242, 269.

<sup>39</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 6, 216, 231-133, 313.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 206.



Atlantic Blockading Squadron would be responsible for the coastline below the North Carolina-South Carolina border and would be commanded by Rear Admiral Samuel F. DuPont. The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron covered the coasts of Virginia and North Carolina, and was to be commanded by Rear Admiral Louis Malesherbes Goldsborough.<sup>41</sup>

The sight of Union steamers became commonplace off the coast of Carteret County in the fall of 1861. Though they never attacked Fort Macon or other defenses, their presence caused some concern. On 1 September when two ships appeared off Bogue Banks, the 7th North Carolina Regiment, then encamped at Carolina City, turned out to repel the expected landing. The Federal ships, however, were merely sounding and reconnoitering. In November when the U.S. vessel *Star of the Union* ran ashore on Bogue Banks a slightly more serious incident took place. Confederates captured eighty men from the unfortunate ship. Enterprising Southerners attempting to remove the engines from the wreck drew the fire of two blockaders that attempted to destroy the vessel. The Union ships "burnt a heap of powder," but failed to badly damage the valuable engines.<sup>42</sup>

In December Goldsborough and Major General Ambrose E. Burnside began planning a campaign to capture most of coastal North Carolina. To complement the naval

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 216,231-233,313.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 416. R.B. MacRae to Donald, 13 November 1861, Hugh MacRae Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC. Charles F. Miller to brother, 13 November 1861, Hugh Henry Harrison Collection, Joyner Library.



forces in the operation, Burnside had ten light draft propeller ships, five floating batteries, and a few sailing ships. The army would provide the coal for the campaign, and necessary stores would be concentrated at Fortress Monroe instead of Hatteras Inlet. Burnside would have 12,000 to 15,000 men in his command.<sup>43</sup> In early January Major General George McClellan gave his close friend Burnside the greenlight for the upcoming campaign. He was to enter Hatteras Inlet and attack Roanoke Island while the navy would silence the shore batteries and cover the landings. The next objective would be to seize New Bern and the railroad. Lastly, he was to "throw a sufficient force upon Beaufort, and take the steps necessary to reduce Fort Macon and open that port."<sup>44</sup>

The navy's desire to gain access to the harbor at Beaufort makes sense in light of a situation that developed in November 1861. At this point the squadron still did not have enough ships to perform its many missions. These included blockading the entrances to Wilmington and Beaufort, keeping watch on the many smaller inlets south of Beaufort Inlet, and maintaining a strong presence at the Hampton Roads area, which was close to the Confederate capital. That month, late in 1861, the steamers USS *Young Rover* and *Albatross* had to return to Hampton Roads for coal and to make repairs; the navy was left with only two sailing vessels to watch the ports of Beaufort and Wilmington. Hampton Roads was two days' steaming from the approaches to Wilmington, and there was no other place for the vessels to go.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 6, 468-469, 472.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 465.





By February the situation had improved considerably. One steamer was off Beaufort, two others were en route, and a sailing ship was receiving stores in preparation to going there. Off Wilmington one steamer and two sailing vessels were on station while another steamer and sailing ship were at the same time loading stores to go there. Goldsborough sought to maximize his limited force by issuing detailed instructions to the commanders on blockade duty. It was imperative, he said, that vessels on blockade duty remain on their stations. Because of the time involved traveling to and from Hampton Roads, ships were to limit as much as possible time spent there when going for supplies.<sup>46</sup>

February also witnessed the opening moves of the Burnside campaign. After a hazardous, stormy crossing of the bar at Hatteras Inlet in which several vessels were lost, the fleet of naval gunboats and army transports ascended Pamlico Sound. On 7 February the naval flotilla entered Croatan Sound between the North Carolina mainland and Roanoke Island, where it shelled the Confederate shore batteries and scattered the vessels of the opposing Confederate "mosquito fleet" sent to oppose them. The army landing force of 10,000 soldiers specially trained for amphibious operations disembarked midway up the island under the protective cover of the naval guns. The following day the army drove north up the center of the island after struggling with marshy ground and the outnumbered defenders and captured the main Confederate position.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 603,652.

<sup>47</sup>Barrett, *Civil War in N.C.*, 76-85.



New Bern was the next main objective, as McClellan had set forth in his orders. Confederate engineers there had built an impressive system of small riverside forts and defensive lines on the south side of the Neuse River between New Bern and Havelock. Confederate commander Brigadier General L. O. Branch, however, had only 4,000 men to defend the position. On 12 March the Federal fleet moved up the river stopping at Slocum Creek near Havelock. The next day the troops went ashore and advanced in heavy rain slowly northward toward New Bern passing defensive positions left unmanned because of the lack of troops.<sup>48</sup>

The next day they resumed the march, and the two lead brigades ran into the main Confederate defensive line. Though outnumbering the defenders more than two to one, stiff resistance temporarily halted them. The navy's vessels unleashed a heavy fire from their big guns, a fire that in many cases landed amidst their own men, adding to the army's problems. Eventually, ill-trained, ill-armed local militia that had been placed to guard a vulnerable gap in the Confederate line cracked under the pressure and withdrew, causing a neighboring regiment to retreat as well. The entrance of the Federal reserve brigade in the fight exploited the hole in the Confederate center and caused a general retreat by the defenders. Unable to defend the town any longer, the Confederates evacuated westward toward Kinston.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 95-100.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 101-105.



The events near New Bern were no secret to inhabitants of Carteret County. Union shelling of the landing site awakened them on 13 March. Expected rail cars that failed to arrive from New Bern confirmed their suspicions that a battle was taking place.<sup>50</sup> Brigadier General John Grubb Parke's brigade arrived about a week later in Carolina City, a small community just west of Morehead City. Destruction of a railroad bridge over the Newport River in Newport by a detachment from Fort Macon had prevented him from arriving sooner. The day after he arrived, 23 March, he asked for the surrender of the fort by flag of truce for Colonel Moses J. White commanding at Fort Macon. White declined the offer, prompting Parke to send two companies to occupy Beaufort on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> after meeting with two prominent local citizens.<sup>51</sup>

While the campaign captured New Bern and advanced toward the Beaufort area, the Federal fleet was being humiliated. On 28 February the Confederate cruiser *Nashville* eluded the USS *State of Georgia* and slipped into Beaufort with 15,000 stand of arms and ammunition.<sup>52</sup> Increasing the humiliation for the navy was the escape out to sea of the *Nashville* on 17 March, despite the presence off the bar of the steamer USS *Cambridge* and the bark USS *Gemsbok*. Commander William Parker of the *Cambridge* had the unpleasant duty of reporting this escape when he returned to Hampton Roads for coal on

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<sup>50</sup>Levi S. Piggott Diary, 13 March 1862, Levi S. Piggott Diary, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>51</sup>Levi S. Piggott Diary, 14,22-25 March, 1862. Paul Branch, Jr., *The Siege of Fort Macon*, (Morehead City, NC: Herald Printing, 1988), 20,24-30.

<sup>52</sup>D.L. Whitaker to Father, 28 February 1862, Stephen D. Whitaker Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC. *O.R.N.* I,7, 131-132.



25 March. The *Nashville*, he explained, had escaped on "an intensely dark night." He went on to say that because there were three channels across the bar, two of them deep enough for large vessels, the harbor required the presence of at least four fast, powerful steamers. The escape of the cruiser had a profound impact on the navy. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox called the escape a "terrible blow to our naval prestige," and referred to it as a "Bull Run to the Navy."<sup>53</sup>

After Beaufort had been occupied the navy turned its attention toward cooperating with the army forces that were tightening the noose around Fort Macon. The captured shallow draft steamer *Old North State* ferried troops in Bogue Sound. Two small steamers, USS *Ellis* and USS *Granite*, prevented communication across the harbor between the fort and the civilian population. At the same time the ships offshore, four in number by 1 April, occasionally exchanged gunfire with the fort.<sup>54</sup>

After first making contact with the naval ships offshore at 7:30 A.M. on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the army crossed over to Bogue Banks from Carolina City during the last three days of March. Throughout April the army pushed eastward down the island toward Fort Macon, drawing ineffective return fire from the fort. Eventually, the Federals set up three batteries of siege artillery to bombard the fort. They mounted four 10-inch siege mortars 1,680 yards west of the fort. They placed three 30-pounder Parrott rifles 1,480 yards distant

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<sup>53</sup>*O.R.N.* I,7, 136-139.

<sup>54</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,7, 173,184,204. Letter to Louis M. Goldsborough (author unknown), 8 April 1862, Louis M. Goldsborough Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.





from the fort. Closest in at 1,280 yards they placed four 8-inch siege mortars. Only 2,000 feet away from the fort the Union army placed a line of rifle pits.<sup>55</sup>

Fort Macon mounted fifty-four guns at the time. These included several rifled pieces, five 8-inch smoothbores, and two 10-inch smoothbores. Most of the guns in the fort, however, were obsolescent smoothbore 24- and 32-pounders of limited range and accuracy. Ammunition for the long range rifled guns was scarce, and there was also a shortage of cannon powder. A critical weakness of the fort's armament was a lack of mortars. Without these, the fort had no guns capable of high-angle firing that could lob shells behind the dunes into the Federal batteries. Colonel White mounted old 32-pounder carronades on makeshift carriages on the outer wall in an unsuccessful attempt to simulate the effect of mortar fire. Cut off from the outside, low on powder and ammunition for its few modern guns, and with the two companies in the garrison from Carteret County suffering from low morale, White attempted the best defense possible.<sup>56</sup>

To ensure coordination between the activities of the Federal army and navy, Goldsborough sent a signal officer and two men from Parke's command on board USS *Daylight* when he sent it to Beaufort on 19 April. Along with the *Daylight*, the steamers *Chippewa* and *State of Georgia*, and the bark *Gemsbok* were also offshore to provide fire support. Upon arriving by ship from New Bern on 23 April, Burnside requested the surrender of the fort. The next day Colonel White notified Burnside that he would not

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<sup>55</sup>Barry, 235-241. Henry F. Gradding to Mother, 8 April 1862, Civil War Miscellany, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC.

<sup>56</sup>Branch, *Siege of Fort Macon*, 16-17, 39, 48, 50.



surrender the fort. In a gesture of goodwill, Burnside allowed an exchange of mail between the mainland and the fort on the 24th.<sup>57</sup>

Parke used the night of the 24th to finish work on the gun embrasures in the batteries and was ready to open fire the following morning. At dawn on 25 April Parke's Parrott rifles opened fire on the fort, and the mortars soon followed. The fort returned fire at 6:00 A.M., and a steady exchange of shot and shell ensued. The early fire by the Union batteries was inaccurate. Burnside, however, had posted two signalmen atop the Atlantic Hotel in Beaufort. They communicated by signal flag necessary range corrections to the batteries on Bogue Banks. With this aid the Union fire became very efficient.<sup>58</sup>

Rough seas prevented the land batteries from communicating with the fleet to notify the naval commanders of the planned start of the attack. Nonetheless, when the batteries opened fire on the fort, the senior officer in the fleet, Commander Samuel Lockwood on USS *Daylight*, ordered the ships to get underway. The steamers approached in line and when as close as shoal water permitted each fired and continued steaming in this elliptical pattern before the fort. Meanwhile, The *Gemsbok* anchored a mile from the fort. Despite the best efforts of the naval officers they could not play a major role in the attack. Heavy rolling seas prevented the ship's guns from being fired accurately. Meanwhile, return fire from the fort bracketed the ships, striking two of them. Unable to handle their guns in the heavy seas, and subjected to accurate return fire from

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<sup>57</sup>O.R.N., I, 7, 247. Branch, *Siege of fort Macon*, 55-57.

<sup>58</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 245-248.



the fort, Lockwood ordered his ships to withdraw at 10:00 A.M. after being engaged nearly two hours.<sup>59</sup>

Throughout the day the fort responded at intervals of ten to twenty minutes. This fire was largely ineffective because Fort Macon had no weapons capable of high-angle firing. Union shelling, however, became increasingly accurate with the aid of range instructions signaled from the Atlantic Hotel. Union gunners concentrated their fire on the fort's three powder magazines. They benefited from the knowledge of Brigadier General John Foster, one of Burnside's brigade commanders, who had been stationed in the fort before the war. Slightly over half of the 1,100 shots fired by the Union batteries struck the fort during the bombardment.<sup>60</sup>

By mid-afternoon the repeated accurate fire of the Union batteries had disabled many of the fort's guns, which were mounted en barbette (in the open). Additionally, the accurate shelling was cracking the walls and ceilings near the largest magazine in the fort. Increasingly unable to return fire, and with a powder magazine threatened, White decided by 4:00 P.M. to surrender. One half-hour later the garrison hoisted a white flag.<sup>61</sup>

After an overnight truce during which Parke consulted with Burnside, the garrison surrendered on generous terms on the morning of 26 April. The captors paroled the men of the garrison until exchanged and allowed the men to take out their own personal belongings with them. The two companies from Carteret County were ferried to Beaufort

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<sup>59</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,7, 278-280.

<sup>60</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 247-248. Branch, *Siege of Fort Macon*, 73.

<sup>61</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 249. Branch, *Siege of Fort Macon*, 81. *O.R.A.*, I,9, 284.



and released. The *Chippewa* transported under flag of truce the other three companies to Fort Caswell near the mouth of the Cape Fear River to be released.<sup>62</sup>

The navy now had its "one good port." In reporting damage the *Gemsbok* suffered striking the bar while entering the inlet, Lockwood recommended to Goldsborough that the navy deposit coal, provisions, small stores, and lubricating oil at the harbor for the vessels blockading the Cape Fear River. Because of the potential value of such a harbor in maintaining a blockade of Wilmington, Goldsborough had anticipated how the navy could use the harbor once it was secured. Consequently, on 2 May Goldsborough ordered 1,000 tons of coal be sent from Philadelphia to Beaufort, and provisions, stores, and clothing from Baltimore. Thereafter, nearly all vessels enforcing the blockade off Wilmington resupplied at Beaufort.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Barry, "Fort Macon," 250-251. *O.R.N.*, I, 7, 283, 292. Henry F. Gradding to Mother, 27 April 1862, Civil War Miscellany.

<sup>63</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 7, 281, 292, 298-299.





## Chapter Two: The New Owner Begins Operations

The navy spent years establishing an infrastructure at Beaufort. When it began shipping supplies to Beaufort in May 1862, the navy owned no warehouses or office buildings ashore. Furthermore, it had no tugs in the harbor, and no buoys marking the channels across the treacherous bar into the deep harbor. In fact, there was not even a naval officer assigned to command the post. This lack of infrastructure and administration limited the effectiveness of the harbor.

The effort to seal up the entrances to the Cape Fear River showed the Federals that possession of the harbor at Beaufort would be a tremendous asset. Rear Admiral Goldsborough awaited news that Fort Macon indeed had fallen, thereby opening the harbor, so that he could dispatch ships to the Cape Fear River that had been detained blockading Beaufort. On 1 May he wrote that as soon as he learned that Fort Macon was in Union hands he would "at once send an ample supply of coals and provisions to Beaufort for our vessels blockading off Wilmington. . . . Having a depot of supplies at Beaufort will greatly facilitate the maintenance of the blockade of Wilmington." The next day he ordered all ships blockading Wilmington to go to Beaufort rather than Hampton Roads when they needed supplies.<sup>1</sup>

The order instructing commanders off Wilmington to return to Beaufort for supplies and fuel reflected the benefits of geographic proximity. The distance from New

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<sup>1</sup>United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927.), Series I, Volume 7, 228-229, 301-302. Hereafter cited as *O.R.N.*



Inlet to Beaufort Inlet was only seventy or eighty miles. The distance to Beaufort from the mouth of the Cape Fear River was greater by another thirty to forty miles. Often referred to as the "Western Bar" in period correspondence, this older entrance to the river lay west of Smith's Island and the Frying Pan Shoals that extended outward from Cape Fear. This meant that vessels off that bar by necessity had to steam around the cape and shoals before heading northward to Beaufort.

From New Inlet travel time to Beaufort was as little as seven hours for a fast ship such as the *Mount Vernon*.<sup>2</sup> For a slower vessel such as the *Daylight*, the travel time was as much as fourteen hours.<sup>3</sup> Traveling from the Western Bar took longer. The *State of Georgia* made this passage in 10.5 hours while averaging 7 to 11 knots.<sup>4</sup> The *Dacotah* made the trip in about twenty-one hours at a speed of only 4 to 6 knots.<sup>5</sup> These travel times spurred Goldsborough to instruct commanders to go to Beaufort to refuel. Ships going from the Western Bar to Hampton Roads, the alternative location for re-supply, traveled anywhere from thirty-eight to forty-eight hours in good weather.<sup>6</sup> Frequently,

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<sup>2</sup>Abstract Log of *Mt. Vernon*, 6 April 1863, Samuel P. Lee Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.

<sup>3</sup>Logbook of USS *Daylight*, 19 September 1863, 11 October 1863, Record Group 24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup>Logbook of USS *State of Georgia*, 24 June 1862, R.G. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Logbook of USS *Dacotah*, 5 April 1864, R.G. 24.

<sup>6</sup>Logbook of USS *State of Georgia*, 4-6 October 1862, 1 March - 2 April 1864. Logbook of USS *Albatross*, 15 - 17 September 1861. R.G. 24.



rough weather lengthened the travel time as happened to the *Fah-Kee* when the ship labored badly through heavy seas, making the trip in seventy-two hours.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. gunboat *Daylight* spent considerable time in the harbor in the spring and summer of 1862, and her commander, Samuel Lockwood, represented the navy's interests at Beaufort. Lockwood's letter to Goldsborough on 23 May 1862 indicated the isolation and boredom of the harbor. In it he requested that mail be sent to Beaufort via the next ship coming south because his ship had received none since arriving there before the attack on Fort Macon. He also wanted to see some action, and asked that his ship be included in plans to attack Fort Caswell, one of the Confederate forts guarding the Cape Fear River.<sup>8</sup>

One of Lockwood's most important tasks in the navy's first month of occupancy of the harbor was to place buoys to mark the channel. Crossing the bar at the inlet's entrance was risky for larger vessels. This was illustrated just days after the fall of Fort Macon when the bark *Gemsbok*, drawing 14'9" of water, struck hard on the bar and suffered enough damage to require drydocking.<sup>9</sup> In that era before mechanical dredging, ships entering the harbor had to follow whatever natural sloughs or channels water moving from sound to ocean had carved. At the time, Beaufort had three channels through the bar offshore the inlet. The first and shallowest was called the Slue Channel, which ran close to Fort Macon and had a depth of ten feet. A second channel, the "Old" or Southwest

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<sup>7</sup>Abstract Log of USS *Fah-Kee*, 9 - 12 March 1864, Box 55, Samuel P. Lee Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Lockwood to Goldsborough, 23 May 1862, Area File.

<sup>9</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,7,293.



Channel, was deeper at fourteen feet and was stable enough to have been included on the 1857 navigational chart of Beaufort Harbor. Most naval ships, however, had to rely on the South Channel, which at eighteen feet was the deepest of the three.<sup>10</sup>

As a practical matter, however, the maximum draft that routinely crossed the bar in the deepest channel was about fourteen feet. The depth of water was greater than that, but the ocean swell on the bar limited the effective depth. Commander James F. Armstrong of the *State of Georgia*, which drew fourteen feet, complained on 15 May 1862 that during his most recent trip to Beaufort the ship had struck bottom coming out of Beaufort. Had she received a full load of stores, he said, she could not have crossed the bar except on an exceptionally high tide. He went on to say that the harbor pilots maintained that although there were eighteen feet in the channel, "...the constant Atlantic swell on an outer sand bar renders it unsafe for vessels of over fourteen feet depth."<sup>11</sup>

At the time Fort Macon fell the channels were either unmarked or were poorly marked. On 4 May Lockwood reported to Goldsborough that his crew and the army were "getting the buoys together and repairing them preparatory to placing them in their proper positions on the bar."<sup>12</sup> Once in place there were seven buoys marking the deepest channel. The outermost one was painted black, and the second one was painted black and

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<sup>10</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,7,132.

<sup>11</sup>W.F.Armstrong to O.S. Glisson, 31 May 1862, U.S. Navy Area File, Area 8, Record Group 45, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Hereafter all citations assumed to be R.G. 45.

<sup>12</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,7, 308.





white. The five inner channel markers in order were painted black, red, black, red, and black in succession. The paint scheme reveals that even then markers on the starboard side of channel when entering harbor were painted red, while those on the port side were black. Mid-channel markers were painted with a combination of white and black. This is remarkably similar to modern practice in painting markers.<sup>13</sup>

Marking the channel was preparatory work leading to the real business that would go on at Beaufort throughout the rest of the war. On 2 May Goldsborough wrote to James S. Chambers, Naval Agent at Philadelphia, requesting 1,000 tons of coal for Beaufort. Three days later Chambers replied that he had already chartered the vessels to carry the coal and would send it promptly.<sup>14</sup> The first part of this shipment, the first coal the navy shipped to Beaufort during the war, arrived on 12 May. On that date the *Lewis Mulford* arrived at 2:00 P.M. carrying 300 tons, and the *J. M. Vance* came in one half-hour later with another 331 tons.<sup>15</sup> By the time the coal arrived two ships, the *State of Georgia* and the *Chippewa*, had already entered the port short of coal. Finding no navy coal they borrowed from the army. The ships took 98 and 86 tons respectively, beginning a pattern of inter-service borrowing from each other at Beaufort.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Benjamin Dove to S.P. Lee, 2 January 1864, Box 23, Samuel P. Lee Papers. 1862 Chart of Beaufort Harbor, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>14</sup>James S. Chambers to Goldsborough, 5 May 1862, Box 489, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File, Record Group 45, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Hereafter all citations assumed to be R.G. 45.

<sup>15</sup>"Account of Naval Coal at Beaufort, NC, June 3, 1862," Box 704, File XF, Navy Subject File.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.* Lockwood to Goldsborough, 15 May 1862, Box 489, File OX, Navy Subject File.



As coal began arriving in large quantities naval officers sought a permanent place to store it. In early May Lockwood looked for the most convenient place to store its fuel, as well as provisions and supplies. Securing a storehouse in Beaufort was impractical because the water going into the town was too shallow. The railroad depot at the terminus of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad in Morehead City was much better suited for this purpose. (See Figure 2.) At high tide the water at the wharf was sixteen or seventeen feet deep. The provost marshal had recommended it, and Lockwood sought General Parke's permission to use it. The general agreed to allow the navy to store material at the depot, but expressed concern for the safety of the stores lest raiding Confederates destroy them. When the first two ships carrying coal arrived, Lockwood immediately began unloading the cargoes at the railroad depot under cover.

The plan to store coal at the railroad depot was short-lived. On 23 May Lockwood wrote to Goldsborough reporting that he had just received a request from General Burnside. Due to the anticipated arrival of 20,000 troops, space at the depot would soon be needed for supplies. Consequently, he asked them not to unload any more coal there. Unable to land coal and supplies, Lockwood asked for permission to place them at the landing near Fort Macon. The army did not respond. As a result, he planned to consolidate all his paymasters' stores onto one ship, and all his coal on hand plus that expected onto two other ships. In this way he hoped to avoid some of the cost of keeping chartered ships lying in port for an extended period.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Lockwood to Goldsborough, 15 May 1862, Box 489, File OX, Navy Subject File. Lockwood to Goldsborough, 5 May 1862, Area File.



As a cost saving measure he recommended in the same letter that the navy send one or more old whaling ships then in Hampton Roads to Beaufort to serve as storeships.<sup>18</sup> The desire to store coal, provisions, and other supplies ashore or on government-owned vessels was of serious consequence to the navy, especially considering the expense of storing it afloat. The vast majority of stores were sent to Beaufort in chartered vessels, normally schooners. The terms of the charter allowed a certain length of time for the ship to be discharged. Thereafter the navy had to pay a set amount (referred to as demurrage) for each day the ship lay in port before being discharged. If the navy could empty a ship before exceeding the number of "lay days" allowed in the charter it would avoid the considerable expense.<sup>19</sup>

The number of lay days averaged about nine, following a general rule of approximately one lay day allowed for every thirty-five tons of coal. Beyond the allowed number of lay days, the navy had to pay demurrage for each additional day the ship was in port. The rate of demurrage averaged about \$26 per day. In nearly every case the rate of demurrage was 8 cents per ton per day. For example the *John Stroup* arrived in Beaufort on 11 February 1864 with a cargo of 387 tons. Her charter allowed eleven lay days, following the general rule mentioned above. The rate of demurrage charged for this ship was \$30.96, (387 tons multiplied by 8 cents per ton). The average number of days'

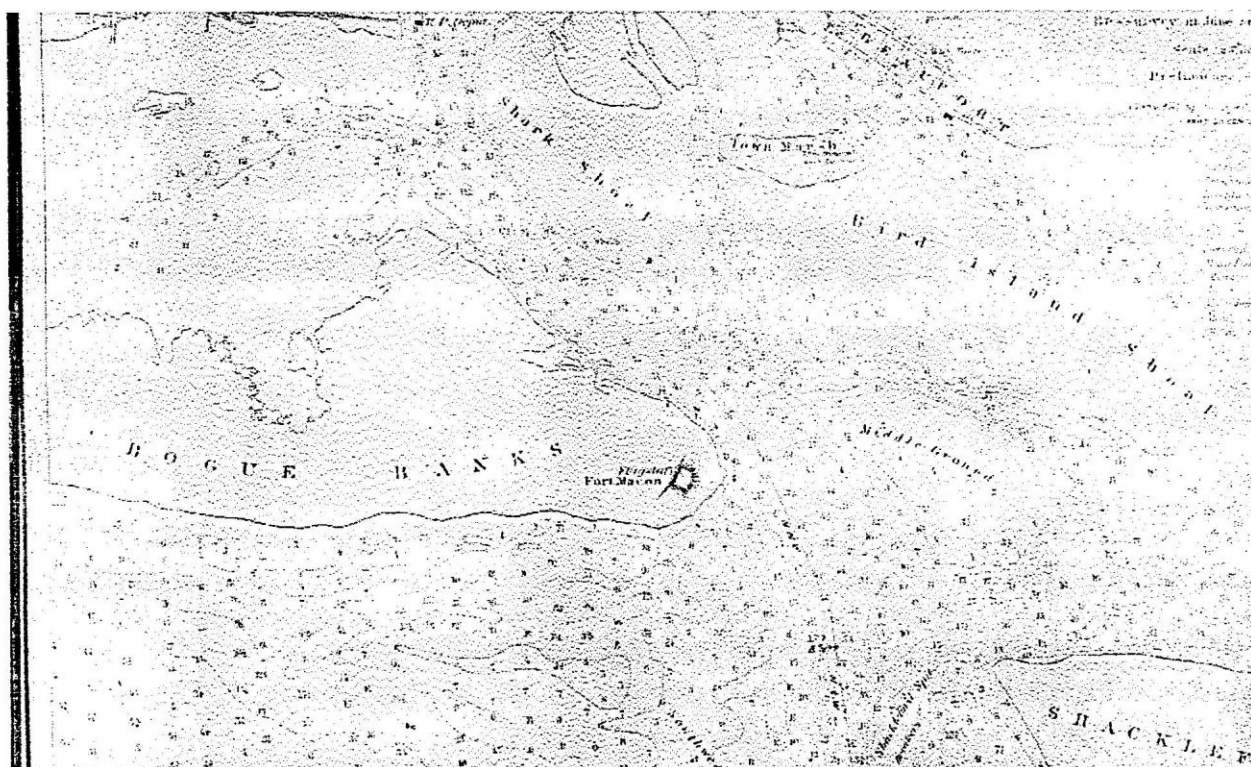
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<sup>18</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 7, 418. Lockwood to Goldsborough, 23 May 1862, Area File. Lockwood to Goldsborough, 5 June 1862, Box 704, File XF, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>19</sup>W. M. Whittemore to Goldsborough, 4 September 1862, Box 23, Samuel P. Lee Papers. Semi-Monthly Returns of Coal for Beaufort, NC, Box 23, Samuel P. Lee Papers.



demurrage accumulated by ships was twenty-nine for the period for which the best records exist-- February 1863 through March 1864. The average number of demurrage days is misleading because the number of days accumulated varied widely, between ninety-one and zero.<sup>20</sup> Naval officers in Beaufort tried repeatedly during the war, with little success, to avoid the cost of demurrage.



**Figure 2** Portion of 1862 chart of Beaufort Harbor showing Fort Macon and the anchorage behind it, approaches to Beaufort at top right, and the railroad depot at top left. North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>20</sup>Coal Reports for Beaufort, N.C., Files OS, OX, XF, U.S. Navy Subject File. Reports of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers.





In July the navy adopted Lockwood's suggestion that an old whaling ship be sent to Beaufort to serve as a supply hulk. Though it is unknown whether this was in direct response to Lockwood's suggestion, the navy sent the *William Badger*, an old 334-ton whaler it had purchased in 1861 to Beaufort. Throughout July the ship was loaded with stores for each of the various departments on board a warship. On 30 July the *State of Georgia* towed the old ship from Fort Monroe to Beaufort. After a rough passage of fifty-two hours running time they hove to off the Beaufort bar at 11:40 P.M. on 1 August.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the rest of the war this small ship, 106' long by 26'6" wide, served as a floating warehouse for provisions and dry goods of all sorts, and at times as a headquarters for the officers commanding the harbor.

With the arrival of a permanent naval storeship at Beaufort the supply system became more formal and organized. The commander of the *William Badger*, Acting Master Henry Carr, was responsible for the safe keeping of the stores in the harbor. Acting Assistant Paymaster W. M. Whittemore on the *William Badger* was responsible for keeping an inventory of all the stores there. He sent monthly requisitions from each of the ships off Wilmington and an inventory to the commander of the squadron. Assistant Paymaster B. J. Totten on the storeship *Brandywine* in Hampton Roads then filled these requisitions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Logbook of *State of Georgia*, 30 July to 1 August 1862, R.G. 24. B.J. Totten to Goldsborough, 20 July 1862, Box 487, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>22</sup>Samuel P. Lee to B. J. Totten, 27 October 1862, Squadron Books, Lee Papers.



Paymaster Whittemore had not been in Beaufort Harbor long when he recommended that the navy find a storehouse ashore just as Lockwood had attempted to do in May. On 6 September he wrote Admiral Goldsborough asking permission to secure a warehouse. The reason was 1,917 barrels of flour that were afloat in the harbor. Over 1,100 of them were in the hold of a chartered schooner and were liable to damage. He wrote the admiral that at the current delivery rate it would be several months before the schooner could be discharged.<sup>23</sup>

Goldsborough, however, had ceased to command the squadron by the time the letter reached Hampton Roads. He had asked to be relieved of duty on 15 July after the northern press had pilloried him, and after Secretary Welles had slighted him by removing the vessels on the James River from his immediate command.<sup>24</sup> Welles did not immediately act on the resignation, however, and Goldsborough remained in command until 5 September. On that date Acting Rear Admiral Samuel Philips Lee boarded the flagship *Minnesota* at 10:30 A.M. and officially assumed command of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron at 2:30 P.M.<sup>25</sup>

Acting Rear Admiral Lee replied to Whittemore, stating that establishing a storehouse ashore was not "considered expedient" for several reasons that he did not set forth.<sup>26</sup> On 6 October Whittemore met with Lee in Hampton Roads, Virginia, to explain

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<sup>23</sup>Whittemore to Goldsborough, 6 September 1862, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>24</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 7, 563, 573-574.

<sup>25</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Lee to Whittemore, 13 September 1862, Squadron Books, Lee Papers.



more completely his reasons for desiring to store the flour ashore, and convinced the admiral.<sup>27</sup> The schooner *J. W. Hall* had arrived at Beaufort on 1 September with 2,653 barrels of flour. The cost of the cargo was 75 cents per barrel, and after allowing six lay days the demurrage was \$35 per day. Though some had already been discharged onto naval ships, if he could find a suitable place ashore to store the flour he could unload the vessel and save the considerable cost of several months' demurrage. Upon receiving Lee's approval, Whittemore secured permission from the army to store temporarily 1,200 barrels of flour in the warehouse in Morehead City. Consequently, he unloaded the flour off the schooner and discharged her at noon on 4 November.<sup>28</sup>

One of the first serious issues Lee faced after taking command of the squadron was a serious shortage of coal at Beaufort. At the end of June 1862 the supply was so great (2,060 tons) that Welles suggested that some of it be sent to Port Royal. He was afraid the colliers would lie in port so long at Beaufort that they would become worm-eaten.<sup>29</sup> This situation changed rapidly, however. On 9 September Captain Ludlow Case of the *Iroquois*, senior naval officer in the Wilmington blockade, wrote Chambers in Philadelphia urging him to send the coal recently requisitioned for Beaufort. He told the agent that "...the supply there is very small," creating a possibility that some ships would be detained

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<sup>27</sup>Whittemore to Captain T. Turner, 1 December 1862, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>28</sup>Carr to Lee, 13 and 17 October 1862, Whittemore to Lee, 6 November 1862, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Welles to Goldsborough, 27 June 1862, Area File.



in port.<sup>30</sup> On 25 September Commander Gustavus Scott on the *Maratanza* wrote to Lee that he had just left Beaufort where he took the 92 tons he found there. Furthermore, he wrote that the *Cambridge* was nearly out of coal and would be leaving for Beaufort the following morning. She would have to borrow 80 tons from the army. Two days later the commander of the *Cambridge*, Commander William A. Parker, wrote to Lee after arriving at Beaufort. The situation was not exactly as Scott reported, but critical nonetheless. He said that after *Cambridge* had taken her 150 tons there would be little left.<sup>31</sup>

The arrival of four schooners (*Alliance*, *F. Irelan*, *Martha Moore*, and *Ocean Wave*) laden with coal assuaged the situation somewhat in September. These shiploads were only enough to meet the current demand because the vessels off Wilmington were burning almost 1,200 tons per month. At the first of October the amount in Beaufort was still only 361 tons.<sup>32</sup> On 5 October Lee wrote to Scott that there was 1,000 tons either at Beaufort or en route.<sup>33</sup> Long awaited colliers eventually arrived, and the amount on hand at Beaufort increased to 1,559 tons by the first of November.<sup>34</sup> To prevent such shortages in the future, Lee asked Scott to send him the average monthly expenditures for the ships

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<sup>30</sup>Case to Chambers, 9 September 1862, Miscellaneous Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>31</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 90, 94.

<sup>32</sup>Coal Reports for Beaufort, Box 23, Lee Papers. Reports of Stores on Hand for Beaufort, Box 23, Lee papers. Robert M. Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 196.

<sup>33</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 119-120.

<sup>34</sup>Reports of Stores on Hand for Beaufort, Box 23, Lee Papers.





blockading off Wilmington, and also how much coal should be delivered weekly to Beaufort to keep the ships well supplied.<sup>35</sup>

Coal was not the only essential material kept at Beaufort for the use of the blockade. Beginning in September 1862 Whittemore sent semi-monthly reports to Lee providing a complete inventory of all stores at Beaufort. The stores were divided into various categories: paymasters' stores, masters' stores, engineers' stores, carpenters' stores, boatswains' stores, and sailmakers' stores. These were in addition to coal. Paymasters' stores included food, uniforms and clothing, and small items like soap, thread, pots, and spoons. Masters' stores included tar, buckets, lanterns, lamp wicks, and marlinespikes. Engineers' stores were those items needed by the engineers to keep propulsion systems running including lard oil, tallow, sperm oil for lubrication, and hemp waste for stuffing boxes.<sup>36</sup>

The ships' carpenters were responsible for the upkeep of the vessel herself and for repairing damages to the vessel. Consequently the carpenters' stores included white and red lead, paint, nails, spikes, and chisels. Since the ships' boatswains had charge of the rigging and equipment, included in the boatswains' stores were blocks and tackle, manilla and hemp rope of various sizes, yarn, chain, and lead lines for sounding the depth. The vessels maintaining the blockade were steamers by necessity, but most carried masts and sails as well. This created the need for sailmakers' stores as well as engineers' stores. In

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<sup>35</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 119-120.

<sup>36</sup>Reports of Stores on Hand for Beaufort, Box 23, Lee Papers.



this category were items such as cotton duck cloth, sewing needles, thimbles, and rope.<sup>37</sup> In addition to these supplies, blockading vessels obtained pine cordwood in Beaufort. Unlike the rest of the stores mentioned, the navy procured this abundant wood locally.<sup>38</sup> Though they burned coal for fuel, engineers started their boiler fires with pine wood and also fed it into the boilers when in pursuit of blockade runners to produce instant heat for a quick burst of steam pressure. This generated the extra speed necessary to chase swift, elusive ships that so often evaded the squadron.

The business of the U.S. Navy at Beaufort became more complicated in November 1862 when a presidential proclamation of 8 November declared the port open.<sup>39</sup> This complicated the navy's job at Beaufort by allowing civilian commerce through the port. In the previous six months all business at the port was military. Commercial ships now arrived there from the North carrying sutlers' stores and salt, and vessels, technically cleared from Beaufort, exported lumber, naval stores, and cotton from interior regions. Some of them then received permission from Edward Stanly, Union governor of the occupied portions of North Carolina's coast, to conduct trade using non-open ports within the Union lines. Granting such permission was clearly beyond Stanly's authority as

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<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>Whittemore to Lee, 17 October and 6 November 1862, Box 23, Lee Papers. Lee to Whittemore, 22 October 1862, Squadron Books, Lee Papers.

<sup>39</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 65.



military governor of the state, and brought him into conflict with naval authorities because some of this trade inevitably ended up in enemy hands in violation of the blockade.<sup>40</sup>

After consulting with Secretary Welles on the matter Lee informed the collector at the Port of Beaufort on 2 December 1862 that Beaufort was the "only open port within the jurisdiction of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron," and not to "recognize permits authorized by anyone other than the Secretaries of War, Treasury, or Navy."<sup>41</sup> This still did not prevent nefarious traffic completely. Because a direct rail connection linked the open port of Beaufort with New Bern, the latter town was effectively an open port as well. Stopping the illegal traffic would be impossible until Stanly resigned in early 1863 and the Treasury Department used its Revenue Marine Service to stop the flow of goods on the railroad.

In December 1862 the navy changed the way it purchased coal, largely as a result of Gideon Welles' own distrust of the civilian naval agents. On 1 December 1862 Lee wrote to G. H. Scott, the Senior Officer on the blockade off Wilmington, to Whittemore in Beaufort, and to Commander H. K. Davenport (the Senior Officer in New Bern) telling them not to send future requisitions for coal to James Chambers in Philadelphia. Thereafter, all requisitions to Philadelphia went to Captain H. A. Adams of the Navy's

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<sup>40</sup>Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 134-135.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 136. *O.R.N.*, I, 8, 213-214. Lee to Collector of Port of Beaufort, 2 December 1862, Squadron Books, Lee Papers.



Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting.<sup>42</sup> This change reflected the navy's growing distrust of civilian purchasing agents.

By January 1863 storms had undone Lockwood's work of the previous May marking the channel through the bar. Sustained gales and storms altered the channels and also blew the buoys themselves out of position. In this case gales had moved the outer buoy three hundred yards, causing the monitor *Montauk* and the blockader *Dacotah* to strike hard while crossing the bar. On 7 February Lee wrote Acting Master Henry Carr commanding the *William Badger*, telling him that the buoys marking the channel had been moved by storms. He stated that this made the entrance "extremely difficult and dangerous," and that Carr should see to it that the Port Collector fixed them. Furthermore, Lee wrote that if the port collector did not replace them, Carr himself should do it.<sup>43</sup>

Admiral Lee made continuous efforts to increase the effectiveness of the blockade off Wilmington. Part of this was simply making repeated requests for more, faster ships to station on the blockade. He also concentrated on improving the logistics of the blockading squadron. This was reflected in improved record-keeping, an emphasis on a more regular rotation of ships leaving the blockade to resupply, efforts to improve the storage of coal and stores, and attempts to reduce the cost of doing so.

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<sup>42</sup>Lee to Scott, Whittemore, and Davenport, 1 December 1862, Squadron Books, Lee Papers.

<sup>43</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 488. Lee to Carr, 7 February 1863, Squadron Books, Lee Papers.





In December 1862 Whittemore tried yet again to secure a permanent storage facility for coal, this time near Fort Macon. He wrote to Lee on 12 December that it was impractical to store coal there because of the expense and difficulty of constructing the dock and building a floor on the shore. The paymaster suggested, as an alternative, that several canal boats be permanently moored in the harbor to store coal. For whatever reason this suggestion was never adopted.<sup>44</sup>

Lee also concentrated on making the refueling operation more regular. Naval officers associated with the blockade had long realized that at least one ship was always going to be absent at Beaufort for coal. As the number of ships detailed to the Wilmington blockade increased, however, it became more difficult keeping just one ship absent at a time. On 29 December Lee wrote to Captain B. F. Sands in the *Dacotah* stating that "there must be a better system about coaling to avoid weakening the blockade. Only one vessel at a time should be absent." He also recommended a system in which some of the ships did most of the traveling for coal, allowing other vessels to take coal from them.<sup>45</sup> To ensure adequate coal stocks in Beaufort, Lee directed Whittemore in February 1863 to keep at least 1,000 tons on hand for the vessels stationed to blockade the Western Bar, plus whatever quantity the Senior Officer off New Inlet felt his ships required. Furthermore, he was not to loan to, nor borrow from, the army without the consent of the military departmental commander and Lee<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Whittemore to Lee, 12 December 1862, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>45</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 331.

<sup>46</sup>Lee to Whittemore, 7 February 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



Such a system was difficult to implement. The senior officers off Wilmington found that the great differences in the bunker capacities of the ships and the great differences in the rate of consumption made it nearly impossible to carry out efficiently and consistently. Commander William A. Parker made this very point in the fall of 1862 when writing to Captain Scott, the Senior Officer off Wilmington. He wrote that it was impossible to take regular turns at Beaufort to pick up coal because of differences in bunker capacity and consumption.<sup>47</sup> A few statistics illustrate this well. The *Dacotah* consumed 2.81 pounds of coal per hour per horsepower. Another widely used ship on the blockade, the *Chippewa*, burned up to 4.68 pounds of coal/hour/horsepower.<sup>48</sup> When filled with coal the *State of Georgia* held over two hundred tons; the *Iroquois* needed about 230 tons to fill her bunkers; but the *Daylight* only held around 150 tons.<sup>49</sup>

In an effort to better calculate the rate of consumption, regulate the disbursement of coal, and keep track of costs, in March 1863 Lee issued a form to be followed in semi-monthly coal reports. In these reports the paymaster listed each collier that had been in the port during that two week period. In succeeding columns the name of each collier in the harbor was listed and the date and hour it arrived. If the ship was discharged during those two weeks the date and hour of discharge was listed. The paymaster completing the

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<sup>47</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 192.

<sup>48</sup>Donald L. Canney, *Frigates, Sloops, and Gunboats, 1815 to 1885, vol. 1, The Old Steam Navy*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 82, 92.

<sup>49</sup>Logbook of *State of Georgia*, 4, 20 May 1862, Logbook of *Daylight* 10 October 1863, Logbook of *Iroquois*, 28 February 1863, R.G. 24.



report then stated the number of lay days allowed the vessel and the amount of coal it carried. In columns that followed the paymaster listed the total cost for the freight and the demurrage cost per day. If the ship had been discharged already the paymaster listed the number of days demurrage accumulated and the total cost of demurrage. Lastly he computed the total cost of the shipment of coal, freight plus demurrage, and calculated the total cost per ton for that shipment.<sup>50</sup>

As a time saving measure, Lee also wanted to have colliers chartered to go directly to the Wilmington blockade. The ships could save the travel time spent going to and from Beaufort, and possibly reduce demurrage costs. Captain Adams in Philadelphia found it very difficult, though, to find collier masters who were willing to go to the Cape Fear River blockade. The masters were afraid of the potential damage done to their vessels while lying out at sea for extended periods.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, scarcely a week later, on 6 April, Lee ordered the senior officers off each of the two entrances to the Cape Fear to take some of the large amount of coal that was afloat at Beaufort down to the blockade.<sup>52</sup>

Rough seas made refueling at sea difficult, however. The difficulty posed by seas also hindered attempts by blockaders to send coal to other blockaders. In mid-May 1863 the *Penobscot* tried unsuccessfully to refuel the *Nippon* while off New Inlet because the

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<sup>50</sup>Report of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>51</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 631.

<sup>52</sup>Lee to Boggs and Case, 6 April 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



latter ship only had nine tons left.<sup>53</sup> No appreciable amount of coal was kept afloat on the blockade until December 1864 when a few colliers were chartered to go there.<sup>54</sup>

The best description to be found of the supply system in use at the time is from an order from Admiral Lee to R. C. Spaulding, the paymaster on the flagship *Minnesota*. In March 1863 Lee ordered the paymaster to take passage in the gunboat *Sacramento* for Beaufort and New Bern. He was to "ascertain and report what if any additional arrangements are necessary and can be best made for keeping supplies of all sorts at Beaufort."<sup>55</sup>

Lee described the supply system for the flotilla off Wilmington in this manner. The ships on the blockade made requisitions for the upcoming quarter to the storekeeper at Beaufort after the Senior Officer at the ship's position (either New Inlet or the Western Bar) had examined the requisitions. They were then sent to the paymaster on the *William Badger* who compared the whole amount with the stocks on hand. If there were any deficiencies he sent requisitions in triplicate to Lee. These requisitions listed supplies on hand, supplies required, and what shortfalls existed. After approving the requisitions Lee sent them to the proper navy bureaus to be filled. All required stores for ships on the Wilmington blockade went to Beaufort, and ones for vessels in the sounds of North

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<sup>53</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 26.

<sup>54</sup>Browning, *Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 198-199. Report of Coal Received and Discharged at Beaufort, NC, for the Week Ending December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1864, Box 490, File OX, Subject File.

<sup>55</sup>Lee to Spaulding, 18 March 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.





Carolina went to New Bern.<sup>56</sup> The paymaster at Beaufort could make immediate requisitions also. If indispensable items such as oil or coal ran short he could request them at once without waiting for the next quarterly requisition.<sup>57</sup>

In April 1863 Lee told the senior officers stationed off Wilmington that the schooner *Arletta* was going to be "used permanently as an ordnance store vessel" in Beaufort.<sup>58</sup> This ship had been used on the blockade itself and also to ferry ordnance supplies directly to the blockade.<sup>59</sup> The commander of the *Arletta*, Acting Master W. G. Wright, was to be in charge of all ordnance stores there.<sup>60</sup> Previously, ammunition stocks had been kept at Beaufort on board chartered vessels such as the bark *Guiding Star* and on the *William Badger*.<sup>61</sup> Possibly because of the danger posed by the cargo, the cost of chartering a vessel to haul and store ordnance was much higher than for other stores. The *Guiding Star* was chartered at the rate of \$2,300 per month, or about \$76 per day. This was more than double the rate for most colliers. Such a move was eminently logical, since blockaders had to go to Beaufort for coal anyway, and keeping such stores on a naval vessel saved demurrage.

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<sup>56</sup>Lee to Spaulding, 15 March 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Lee to Whittemore, 30 March 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>58</sup>Lee to Boggs and Case, 7 April 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>59</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 312, 700, 840.

<sup>60</sup>Wright to Whittemore, 4 May 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>61</sup>Carr to Lee, 26 December 1862, Box 23, Lee Papers.



At this point in the war, the navy used several means of transporting ammunition to Beaufort. They sent some on chartered schooners. Occasionally, they were able to send it via the army supply ship *S. R. Spaulding*. At times excess ammunition in New Bern was sent to Beaufort by rail.<sup>62</sup> Even after the arrival of the *Arletta* to hold ordnance stores there was insufficient space. Consequently, the brig *S. R. Allen* had to be chartered at the modest price of \$40 per day to hold the extra.<sup>63</sup> Some six weeks after sending the *Arletta* to Beaufort Lee dispatched the fleet ordnance officer, Lieutenant Commander W. W. Queen, to New Bern, Beaufort, and the blockade. Just as he had earlier sent *Spaulding* down to look into the supply system, Queen was to do what he could to "accommodate maintaining a good supply of ordnance" at each location.<sup>64</sup>

Lee was anxious to avoid excess demurrage costs when possible, but there were some measures to which he would not resort. Though the army at times had allowed naval use of its warehouse in Morehead City, on 18 April 1863 he ordered Whittemore not to stow any more supplies there, and to remove all present supplies. There are several reasons why Lee may have taken this measure: to prevent army and navy stores from being confused, to prevent army usage of navy stores, and to prevent possible friction between the services. In the same letter he instructed the paymaster to discontinue the practice of storing goods in empty prize ships. At the time there were four captured blockade runners in Beaufort awaiting disposition. To cut demurrage costs Whittemore

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<sup>62</sup>Lee to Boggs and Case, 6 April 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>63</sup>Whittemore to Lee, 5 May 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>64</sup>Lee to Queen, 6 June 1863, Squadron Letterbook, Lee Papers.



had been using them for storage. These ships were to be sent north to a prize court, although Lee allowed Carr to sell at Beaufort two of them because they were too unseaworthy to reach a northern port.<sup>65</sup>

Lee described two additional developments affecting Beaufort in a letter dated 8 June 1863 to Captain Case on the steamer *Iroquois*. He wrote that the Navy Department had informed him on 27 April that it was repairing the brig USS *Release* for use as a second storeship in Beaufort. It is unknown whether Lee had heard of this earlier; if he did, it sheds additional light on his previously mentioned orders to Whittemore of 18 April. In the letter to Case he also enclosed a letter from the Bureau of Clothing and Provisions asking if it was practical to build a naval storehouse at Beaufort. Case was an officer with long experience on the blockade, and Lee wanted his opinion on a storehouse, particularly in light of the fact that a second storeship would be coming.<sup>66</sup>

The growing use of the harbor at Beaufort led to even more calls for some sort of storehouse ashore. Just a few days after forwarding to Case the letter from the Bureau of Provisions and Clothing about a storehouse, Lee sent him a letter from Captain Adams in Philadelphia. Adams reported difficulty getting coal shipped to Beaufort and also asked about creating a naval coal depot at Fort Macon.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Lee to Whittemore, 18 April 1863, Lee to Boggs and Case, 11 May 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>66</sup>Lee to Case, 8 June 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>67</sup>Lee to Case, 19 June 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



Beaufort was the main supply depot for the ships blockading the most active port in the Confederacy, but it did not have a commandant. The number of ships on the blockade calling on Beaufort for supplies had increased from eight in September 1862 to thirteen in June 1863. In the harbor were two permanently stationed ships, another one soon to arrive, many hundreds (at times thousands) of tons of coal, hundreds of tons of ammunition and other ordnance supplies, hundreds of tons of other supplies, and always one or more blockading ships present replenishing or repairing. Additionally, there were ongoing relations with the U.S. Army, which was responsible for defending the area from attack, and which controlled all facilities ashore. All this was the responsibility of one Acting Master commanding a storage hulk. Lee wrote to Captains Boggs and Case, the senior officers on the blockade, to inform them of a change in this situation on 20 June 1863. He told them that the department had ordered Commander Dominick Lynch to the command the Beaufort Naval Station.<sup>68</sup>

The assignment of a commandant to the Beaufort Naval Station is important. There would now be an officer there permanently. This officer, who in most cases held the rank of Commander, was responsible for making sure that adequate stocks of coal and stores were available. With his rank, this officer in most cases looked upon commanders of the various ships on the blockade as subordinates or equals. He saw that refueling went smoothly, and would coordinate the defense of the position with the army. From simply a fine natural harbor with great potential, Beaufort had grown into a facility that met the great demands that rapidly increasing emphasis on the blockade placed upon it.

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<sup>68</sup>Lee to Boggs and Case, 20 June 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.









### Chapter Three: The Expanding Enterprise

Hereafter Beaufort was to be more significant. Correspondence after the appointment of a commandant referred to the "Beaufort Naval Station." In the fall of 1863, the Union Navy made great strides to tighten its blockade. Correspondingly, it sent more ships to Cape Fear. At the same time, Beaufort became a source of new recruits and critical naval stores. Greater emphasis on the blockade increased the importance of maintaining smooth operations at Beaufort. Lee repeatedly emphasized the urgency of keeping adequate stocks of coal, storing coal and other supplies efficiently, not detaining ships there any longer than necessary, and having good pilots to ensure safe navigation of the inlet. Shortages occurred nonetheless. Likewise, he contested frequently with Lynch and his successor about unnecessarily detaining ships in port and ensuring safe navigation. This chapter will show the importance of maintaining smooth operations at Beaufort and the efforts the navy made to accomplish this goal.

Acting Rear-Admiral Lee ordered Commander Dominick Lynch to Beaufort with very specific instructions that indicate the importance of the harbor. Lynch was to have temporary command of the Beaufort Naval Station. He was to live either on the *Arletta* or *Release* unless he could get accommodations at Fort Macon, in which case he could live in the fort.<sup>1</sup> Lynch had a number of resources at his disposal. The *Arletta* was an ordnance schooner. The navy had chartered the brig *S. R. Allen* to hold the excess ordnance stores. To supervise ordnance a gunner was assigned to Beaufort. The

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<sup>1</sup>Lee to Lynch, 20 June 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C..



chartered schooner *J. Lenthall* was at Lynch's disposal as a general transport that could be used to fetch supplies as needed. He could also use the coal vessels from Philadelphia for the same purpose. The *William Badger* held general stores, and later in the summer the *Release* would be arriving. Additionally, the Bureau of Provisions and Clothing was building a storehouse to be sent to Beaufort.<sup>2</sup>

For four months, Lee wrote, he had been working on a plan to get supplies shipped promptly to Beaufort. The plan was in place and he wanted to see it begin to work. Lynch was to requisition coal from Captain Adams in Philadelphia and was always to keep at least 1,000 tons on hand. Lynch's duty was to do all he could to "lessen the expense of demurrage as far as may be consistent with keeping up at all times, ample supplies of all kinds and to this end the blockaders must carry all the supplies they can stow to advantage."<sup>3</sup>

Appointing a commandant was one of several personnel changes made at Beaufort during the summer of 1863. The navy department transferred Gunner Samuel Hines from duty at New Bern to be the gunner Beaufort. Acting Assistant Paymaster S. S. Woods replaced Whittemore as the paymaster at Beaufort. Also, the commanding officer of the *Arletta*, Acting Master W. G. Wright, received command of the tug *Howquah*, then being fitted out in Boston for service on the blockade.<sup>4</sup> Transferring the commander of the

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Lee to Wright, 21 July 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



*Arletta* was done specifically so that Lynch might live on board her, rather than live ashore.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of July 1863 Lee with the flagship *Minnesota* left his Hampton Roads headquarters to go to the blockade. This was a valuable opportunity to ascertain first-hand the situation on the blockade and take measures to improve it. While there he attempted yet again to send colliers to the blockade to refuel the warships at sea. He also wrote important instructions regarding the blockade.<sup>6</sup>

On 23 August he ordered blockaders in Beaufort to tow three colliers then in port on demurrage down to the Wilmington blockade. As with his previous attempt, the difficulties of refueling at sea rendered this futile. On 1 September he wrote to Lynch to tell him that he was sending the three back to Beaufort. Though 175 tons had been unloaded from one, the *John Stroup*, bad weather forced them back. Lynch was to have surveys conducted on the *Stroup*, and the two others, the *J. Irelan* and *J. F. Farland*.<sup>7</sup> The navy paid for the damages to the schooners and also additional freight expense, amounting to half the difference between the freightage from Philadelphia to Beaufort and Philadelphia to Port Royal.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Lee to Lynch, 22 August 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>6</sup>United States Navy Department, *Official Reports of the Union and Confederate Navies*, 31 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927) Series I, Volume 9, 139-141. Hereafter referred to as *O.R.N.*

<sup>7</sup>Lee to Case, 23 August 1863; Lee to Lynch, 1 September 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Lynch to Carr, Baker, and Gross, 30 September 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.





On 1 September Lee issued a set of detailed blockading instructions to the ships off Wilmington. These were designed largely to conserve coal. He wrote that ships should not waste fuel by steaming unnecessarily in daylight (most attempts to run the blockade occurred at night). Ships were to be anchored during the day, but should weigh anchor before sunset and be in position before dark. He also forbade distant chasing and outside cruising unless the blockade was strong. These actions could weaken the inshore blockade, and both burned a large amount of coal. Ships that had been at sea for six to eight weeks would, when possible, be allowed to go to Norfolk where they could be overhauled as well as obtain coal.<sup>9</sup>

Since the late spring Lee had known that the navy was planning to send USS *Release* to Beaufort as a storeship. On 3 August Gideon Welles ordered the ship loaded with "the building that has been prepared as a storehouse at Beaufort, N.C., and such stores as may be ordered by the Bureau of Provisions." After the cargo had been discharged the ship was to remain there subject to the orders of the squadron commander.<sup>10</sup> On 5 September Acting Master Jonathan Baker, in command of the vessel wrote to Lee that he had arrived at Beaufort that day after departing Boston on 29 August.<sup>11</sup>

Preparatory to the storehouse being brought down in the *Release*, Lynch prepared the ground for it and arranged to have the pilings on which it would sit cut to size.

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<sup>9</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 187-189.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 144-145.

<sup>11</sup>Baker to Lee, 5 September 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.



Because the storehouse was loaded on board first and the stores last, all the stores in the ship had to be taken off before building materials for the storehouse could be unloaded. Consequently, upon her arrival the *Release*'s stores were unloaded at the railroad depot at Morehead City. The army tug *Stephen Decatur* then towed her to near Fort Macon where the prefabricated sections of the storehouse were unloaded. The *Release* then went back to the depot to reload the supplies temporarily deposited there.<sup>12</sup>

After erecting the sixty by ninety-foot storehouse near Fort Macon, personnel in Beaufort began loading supplies in mid-October. The storehouse had its problems, though. Within weeks of completion it began settling badly because of the softness of the mud in which the pilings were driven. Thus, additional pilings were required. Now that the navy had a permanent facility ashore, Lynch rearranged the cargoes of the ships in port and saved a considerable amount in demurrage.

At the time there were several chartered ships in port with stores. The *S. R. Allen* had ordnance stores, the *Hugh W. Frye* had provisions, the *F. P. Simpson* had engineers' stores, and the *F. B. Reeves* had provisions and engineers' stores.<sup>13</sup> Leaving the *William Badger* full, he could unload the current stores of the *Release* and the chartered ships *Frye*, *Reeves*, and *Simpson*, all into the new facility. These chartered ships could then be discharged. At the same time Lynch temporarily emptied the *William Badger* so that it could be "smoked" to eradicate the rats that plagued the vessel. Additionally, with the

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<sup>12</sup>Logbook of USS *Release*, 4-11 September 1863, R.G. 24.

<sup>13</sup>Lynch to Lee, 16 September 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.



*Release* free Lynch could transfer the ordnance on the *S. R. Allen* to the *Release*, which allowed the *Allen* to be discharged to save money. It also provided a better storage for the all-important ordnance than the chartered ship, whose decks were rotten.<sup>14</sup>

In November 1863 the navy took an important step in keeping the ships off Wilmington supplied. It began using the large side-wheel steamer *New Bern* as a regular transport to Beaufort and the blockade, routinely steaming back and forth between New York and the blockade. This allowed fresh provisions, ice, and mail to reach each destination about once every two weeks. The navy could thereafter transport some goods by her that otherwise would have gone by chartered schooner. The transport's departures from Beaufort were timed to deter blockade runners. As with regular blockaders, she tried to leave Beaufort on afternoon high tides so that steaming south for the blockade she would also be in a position to intercept runners.<sup>15</sup> Because the *New Bern* drew from fourteen to fourteen and one half feet of water, approximately the maximum depth that could cross the bar, she was not required to enter the harbor if the cargo needing to be transferred could be ferried out to her by smaller vessels. This prevented her from being unnecessarily detained in Beaufort waiting for high water.<sup>16</sup>

It was important that affairs in Beaufort be in order because the navy was growing more and more determined to seal the entrances to the Cape Fear River. On 10 October,

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<sup>14</sup>Lynch to Lee, 16 October 1863, 7 November 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Samuel P. Lee General Order, 18 November 1863, Box 487, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File. *O.R.N.*, I,9, 235.

<sup>16</sup>Lee to Lynch, 10 November 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers. Pilot Reports for Beaufort Harbor, Box 23, Lee Papers.



at the same time that Lynch was loading the storehouse in Beaufort, Lee informed Secretary Welles that there were twelve ships on the blockade at the time. This was far from adequate, though. New Inlet needed twenty ships alone, and the Western Bar needed another ten. Of the ships currently on the blockade, he described one-third as being fast, one-third as being of fair speed, and one-third as being "too slow to catch anything." Though the current blockade was inadequate, Lee gratefully acknowledged that five additional ships (four of which were fast) were promised for the blockade.<sup>17</sup> As the number of ships off Wilmington increased, the frequency of ships calling at Beaufort increased as well. In fact, one-third of the ships off New Inlet in October 1863 were always at Beaufort for coal because their bunkers were small.<sup>18</sup>

The growing number of ships off Wilmington created greater manpower needs. When possible, the navy transferred sailors to the blockade via the *New Bern*, or on ships ordered to blockade duty. The navy also shipped some of the "contrabands," (newly freed or escaped slaves) who sought refuge in the Beaufort area. In October 1863, the navy opened recruiting offices in Beaufort, New Bern, Plymouth, and Washington in an effort to meet its growing manpower needs. The commanders at each place accepted all able-bodied men who would take an oath of allegiance. Those shipped at Beaufort were examined on board the *William Badger*, *Release*, or *Arletta*. The men recruited from the

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<sup>17</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 230.

<sup>18</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 235.





sounds of North Carolina were sent to Beaufort for blockade duty.<sup>19</sup> James Gifford, a crewman on the *Release*, wrote to his parents in December 1863 that his ship was also being used as a receiving ship, and that "the captain is recruiting blacks for the navy."<sup>20</sup> The recruiting office in Beaufort was short-lived, however. The navy could not obtain enough enlistments there to keep the office open so it closed in January 1864.<sup>21</sup>

The navy was much more successful filling another of its pressing needs from Beaufort. In August 1863, the Navy Department authorized Lee to purchase naval stores from New Bern or Beaufort if it was cheaper than getting them from the North. At the end of September C. C. Upham, the fleet paymaster, took passage in the *S. R. Spaulding* to Beaufort to expedite the purchase of the naval stores. Apparently Upham worked fast, because by 4 October he had collected at Beaufort 600 barrels of turpentine and 200 barrels of pine tar. The *New Bern* took this large stock to the North from Beaufort around 20 October.<sup>22</sup> Beginning in late December the *New Bern* stopped in Beaufort on every trip to carry any naval stores from there to New York.

The shipments of naval stores from Beaufort continued through August 1864 when the navy decided that it had received all it needed. In the ten months during which it

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<sup>19</sup>Lee to Lynch, Davenport, Renshaw, and Flusser, 12 October 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Gifford to Parents, 7 December 1863, James E. Gifford Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.

<sup>21</sup>Lee to Dove, 4 January 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Lee to Upham, 22 August 1863; Lee to Harris, 19 October 1863; Squadron Letters, Lee Papers. *O.R.N.*, I, 9, 220.



shipped naval stores from Beaufort, the navy obtained at least 4,813 barrels of turpentine, tar, or pitch.<sup>23</sup>

Though the navy was happy to get naval stores from Beaufort, the most important business of the harbor was coal. Unfortunately for Lynch, the shipment of coal was subject to interruption. Between 27 August and 29 October only two colliers carrying a total of 625 tons arrived. On 29 October he complained that he had received only 312 tons of the 3,000 tons he had requisitioned recently. Army sources told him that four or five other colliers with navy coal were en route, but they had not arrived and seemed to be late in arriving.<sup>24</sup>

Conflicting demands placed Lynch in a difficult position. The Bureau of Engineering and Recruiting questioned Admiral Lee about Beaufort's large coal requisitions. Lynch was under pressure from Lee to reduce the high demurrage costs (the brig *Wethrell* had amassed ninety-one days demurrage at \$28.08 per day during the previous summer). Lee also wanted Lynch to make sure that he kept an adequate supply at Beaufort. When coal reports for October reached Hampton Roads Lee was upset. He wrote Lynch on 12 November demanding to know how the supply had gotten so low. "You must at all times have an ample supply of coal," he wrote. Two days later Lee

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<sup>23</sup>Correspondence, Box 23, Lee Papers. Lee to Upham, 17 August 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers. The figures given can be determined from the station's correspondence during the period, but the actual amount was probably considerably higher.

<sup>24</sup>Lynch to Lee, 29 October 1863; Coal Reports for Beaufort, Box 23, Lee Papers.



repeated this instruction: "There must on no account be any want (underline original) of coal at Beaufort at any time. You have no more important duty than to see to this."<sup>25</sup>

Lynch defended his actions in a letter on 14 November. Because of the uncertain demand for coal it was impossible to keep an adequate supply without occasionally keeping ships there on demurrage. One long chase of a blockade runner could empty a vessel's bunker forcing it to return just a few days after leaving port. Lee had urged the construction of a coal bin at the army wharf near Fort Macon to reduce demurrage. Lynch doubted that this could help, however. The existing army wharf was useless because it was rotten and worm-eaten. Although the army had been building a new one, Lynch felt using it was inadvisable. First, the navy could not expect to monopolize the wharf. Second, a coal bin ashore required the considerable expense of constructing a railway the length of the wharf. Lynch summarized: "Besides but one (vessel) could coal at a time, and there are generally from two to five here for that purpose. Whether saving demurrage at the expense of weakening the blockading fleet would be proper, you as commander-in-chief, are a better judge than I."<sup>26</sup>

On 23 October Lynch asked Lee for more resources. He wanted two large launches sent down from New York in the *New Bern* because there were no boats on the station capable of carrying anchors and provisions, and most blockaders were not equipped with them. The station had access to only one boat, a red lighter it hired for \$1

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<sup>25</sup>Lee to Lynch, 12, 14 November 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Lynch to Lee, 14 November 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.



per day to ferry wood to the fleet. Because this old lighter often needed to be overhauled, the station frequently had to hire others for up to \$8 to \$10 per day. A week later Lynch complained that the navy lacked a tug in the harbor. The navy had to borrow the army's quartermaster tug *Stephen Decatur*, and when this vessel was unavailable the vital task of moving colliers to the gunboats was delayed.<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately, the navy met these vital needs of the station much more promptly than many of its coal requisitions. By 7 November the *New Bern* had already taken the launches to Beaufort, and Lee had promised that the tug *Cohasset* would go to Beaufort as soon as her repairs were finished at Norfolk. On 10 November Lee ordered the *Cohasset* to take the first favorable weather to go to Beaufort. Less than a week later she arrived at Beaufort.<sup>28</sup>

On 18 November Lee left Hampton Roads in the *Fah Kee* for Beaufort to meet General Benjamin Butler to review the situation in the sounds and off Wilmington. Apparently Lee also met Lynch regarding affairs at Beaufort, because by the end of the month a new commandant had arrived there. Lee may have relieved Lynch during his visit to the station. If he did so it was likely related to the exchange of letters about the coal situation. These letters, particularly Lynch's long letter of 14 November, suggest growing tension between the two. Whatever the case, Commander Benjamin Dove, a thirty-five year navy veteran, arrived in Beaufort to take command of the station on 27 November on

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<sup>27</sup>Lynch to Lee, 23, 30 October 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>28</sup>Lynch to Lee, 7, 16 November 1863, Box 23; Lee to Acting Ensign P. C. Asserson, 10 November 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.





orders from Secretary Welles. Lynch meanwhile was transferred to command the ordnance ship USS *St. Lawrence* in Hampton Roads.<sup>29</sup> Shortly afterward, another officer in Beaufort departed. On Christmas Day 1863, Acting Master Carr of the storeship *William Badger* died after a long illness in the hospital in Beaufort.

Business in Beaufort was reaching a level where the service of tugs was absolutely necessary. At the beginning of December the *New Bern* collided with the colliers *J. C. Nicholl* and *J. S. Weldon*. At one point near the end of November there were eight blockaders in port seeking coal. They crowded there because the moon was full, and because runners attempted to slip through only on dark nights. The crowded harbor required a tug to help move vessels and prevent more collisions. On 3 December Lee ordered the tug USS *Lilac* readied for piloting and towing service at Beaufort "with all practicable dispatch." The next day he instructed Dove to make sure that transports and other supply ships were anchored so they would not hinder navigation or cause collisions.<sup>30</sup>

On 9 December Lee ordered Acting Master and Pilot J. A. Phillips to take command of the *Lilac*, then at the Gosport Navy Yard at Norfolk, Virginia. After that ship's repairs were completed he was to take her to Beaufort to assist "blockaders to obtain their coal and stores, and to perform other tender and dispatch duties in the harbor." Lee provided him with navigational charts for the coast between Hampton

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<sup>29</sup>O.R.N., I, 9, 314. Dove to Lee, 27 November 1863; Lee to Naval Examining Board, 7 October 1864, Box 23; Lee to Lynch, 5 December 1863, Squadron Letters; Lee Papers.

<sup>30</sup>O.R.N., I, 9, 345. Lee to Harris, 2 December 1863; Lee to Livingston, 3 December 1863; Lee to Dove, 4 December 1863; Squadron Letters; Lee Papers.



Roads and Beaufort. With these and through experience Phillips was to qualify himself as a pilot for Beaufort as quickly as possible. Three days later Lee appointed F. B. Owens an Acting Master and Pilot in the navy, partially upon the recommendation of Phillips. Owens, too, was to be a Beaufort pilot after studying the entrance to the harbor.<sup>31</sup>

These were the first naval pilots assigned to Beaufort for which a record exists. Before their assignment, the navy used a variety of methods to pilot its ships. On one occasion in January 1863 Acting Master Carr on the *William Badger* guided some ironclads into the harbor. Presumably, he or other officers did the same for other vessels, though there is no record of it. Apparently, the navy also hired local pilots to guide its vessels. In November 1862 Whittemore complained to Lee that Master's Mate Charles Blanchard, commanding the USS *Rescue*, left Beaufort for Port Royal, South Carolina, without paying the \$13.50 he owed his pilot. In December 1863 Commander Dove wrote Lee that the captain of the tug (*Cohasset*) should be a good pilot of area waters, and also that "the native pilots should meet with encouragement and patronage sufficient to remunerate them for their laborious and venturesome life."<sup>32</sup>

Officers in Beaufort anxiously awaited the *Lilac*'s arrival because leaky boilers had disabled the *Cohasset* soon after her arrival. When the second tug arrived on 29 January 1864, the *Cohasset* returned north for an overhaul. Lee wrote Dove in December to tell

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<sup>31</sup>Lee to Phillips, 9 December 1863; Lee to F.B. Owens, 12 December 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Carr to Lee, 30 January 1863; Whittemore to Lee, 18 November 1862; Dove to Lee, 16 December 1863; Box 23, Lee Papers.



him the *Lilac* would be there soon with two pilots on board. The tug was to have a multitude of uses. Her pilots were to lead all warships and supply vessels into and out of the harbor. She was to be a pilot boat and to place colliers alongside blockaders for refueling. She would also be a useful aid to vessels that ran aground crossing the bar. The day after she arrived in Beaufort the *Lilac* was employed painting channel markers<sup>33</sup>

When blockaders arrived off the Beaufort Bar they signaled their arrival by firing a blank charge from one of their guns. This signal indicated that a pilot was needed. Ships arriving at night also communicated with Fort Macon via signal light. In November 1862 the army and navy agreed to exchange blue signals on odd numbered days of the month and red signals on even numbered days. A tug carried a pilot out to the vessel, and near the end of the war, a tug with pilots on board remained anchored outside the bar from dawn until dusk. The pilot guided the vessel through the channel into the harbor where the ship could anchor about forty-five minutes or an hour after she had received a pilot.<sup>34</sup>

Once anchored in the harbor, a tug hauled a collier alongside the blockader, and the arduous process of refueling began. Transferring the coal in large buckets holding 375 pounds each (6 buckets per long ton), ships could receive up to sixty or seventy tons per day. Ships frequently spent up to twelve or thirteen hours a day refueling. As a general rule vessels received coal from the collier that had been in port longest so as to reduce demurrage. This was not popular with commanding officers because taking coal from the

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<sup>33</sup>Lee to Dove, 21 December 1863, Squadron Letters; Dove to Lee, 30 January 1864, Box 23; Lee Papers. Logbook of USS *Lilac*, 30 January 1864, Record Group 24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C..



bottom of the hold of a ship was harder than taking from one that was nearly full. An exception to this rule was made for particularly fast ships. Commanders of fast ships could select the coal they felt was of the best quality, regardless of how long the collier had been in port. After receiving all her needed coal and provisions the ship took a pilot on board who led her back out across the bar. Once the vessels reached the open ocean outside the bar, the pilot boarded a tug to go back into the harbor.<sup>35</sup>

The visit to Beaufort of the USS *Dacotah* in June 1864 is illustrative. She took a pilot on board at 4:45 P.M. on 4 June and anchored in five and one-half fathoms of water at 5:30 P.M. Two days later she coaled until 7 P.M. and received by cutter 944 barrels of beef, 15 barrels of potatoes, and ice from the *New Bern* anchored outside. The next day she coaled from 6:30 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. and received more provisions from the *New Bern*. On the 8th she began coaling at 6:00 A.M. and continued until 4:30 P.M., and later coaled from 5 until 8 P.M. On this visit the ship stayed at Beaufort nearly two weeks, somewhat longer than most vessels.<sup>36</sup> Other visits by the *Dacotah* were also longer than usual. She was there from 5 – 16 April, again from 9 – 16 May, from 2 – 12 July, and from 30 July – 12 August, also in 1864.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ships' Logbooks, R.G. 24. Abstract Logs, Box 55; Lee to Carr, 6 February 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>35</sup>Ships' Logbooks, R.G. 24. Abstract Logs, Box 55; Lee to Adams, 7 March 1863, Miscellaneous Letters; Lee to Lynch, 18 November 1863, Squadron Letters; Lee Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Logbook of USS *Dacotah*, 3-16 June 1864, R.G. 24.

<sup>37</sup>Logbook of USS *Dacotah*, R.G. 24.





Normally, vessels in port remained for only a few days, just enough time to receive all their required coal and provisions. In early 1863 the *Iroquois* arrived off the bar late on 23 February and left on 28 February. She was back at Beaufort from 22 through 27 March. Three weeks later she was in port from 19 – 25 April. In late 1863 the USS *Emma* was at Beaufort from 4 - 9 December and returned again from 28 December through 3 January. Other more typical visits were made by the USS *Mount Vernon*, which arrived at Beaufort on 11 November 1863 and departed two days later. She returned again on 9 December, and departed on 15 December. The weather influenced how long ships stayed in the harbor. Strong winds could make the bar too rough for passage, and at times delayed ships up to a week. This happened when the *Mount Vernon*'s departure from Beaufort was postponed four days in February 1864.<sup>38</sup>

The pilots arrived at an opportune time in early 1864. Vessels entering and leaving port experienced increasing difficulty navigating the channel across the bar. Commander Parker of the *Tuscarora* complained to Lee that his ship, which drew thirteen feet of water, had been detained for two days waiting for high water. Parker also informed Lee that the pilot thought the channel was gradually shallowing. This report prompted Lee to order Dove to have the bar sounded thoroughly.<sup>39</sup> Also in late February 1864 Acting

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<sup>38</sup>Logbook of USS *Iroquois*, R.G. 24. Abstract Log of USS *Emma*, Box 55; Abstract Log of USS *Mount Vernon*, Box 57, Lee Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Donald L. Canney, *The Old Steam Navy, Volume One: Sloops, Frigates, and Gunboats, 1815-1885*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990) 72. Lee to Dove, 6 February 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



Master Harris of the *New Bern* reported to Dove that his ship had struck bottom heavily the last three times he had entered the harbor.<sup>40</sup>

Dove responded quickly to Lee's order to examine the channel. Phillips sounded frequently, and two members of a coast survey party believed that the channel had altered considerably since the last chart was issued in August 1862. Further investigation showed that the channel had moved, possibly as a result of sustained gales from the southeast, and that the buoys did not mark the deepest water.<sup>41</sup>

Writing directly to Rear Admiral W. B. Shubrick, the Chairman of the Lighthouse Board, Lee stated that the buoys did not mark the deepest water because the channel had changed and asked that they be replaced. Lee told Dove that he had referred the difficulty with the channel to the Bureau of Navigation, which promised to give the matter its attention. In the meantime, however, he wanted Dove to see that the pilots knew the channel so well that they could find the deep water without reference to the buoys. Neither Lee nor Dove had to wait long before the bureau addressed the situation. The Bureau of Navigation referred the matter the Lighthouse Board for action within days.<sup>42</sup>

E. Cordell, Acting Lighthouse Inspector for North Carolina, had the task of re-buoyming the harbor, and arrived in Beaufort with a coast survey party on 30 March. The commandant at Fort Macon provided him, at Dove's request, a room for his drawings and

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<sup>40</sup>Dove to Lee, 28 February 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Dove to Lee, 11 February 1864, Box 23; Lee to Dove, 19 March 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>42</sup>Lee to Dove, 19 March 1864, 1 April 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers. *O.R.N.*, I, 9, 508.



instruments. Cordell lived in the storehouse, and the other members of the coast survey party bunked on the *Release*. After working over two weeks sounding the bar to determine the channel's depth and location the survey party finished its work by the middle of the month.<sup>43</sup>

On 30 April Dove informed Lee that the work was completed. The buoys were in place by 27 April and were immediately useful. Shortly after the channel markers had been repositioned two of the larger blockaders, the *Connecticut* and *Grand Gulf*, followed the markers out on the morning of the 27th without striking. This is impressive considering that the latter ship had struck bottom so hard entering Beaufort the previous November that she had to be sent to New York for repairs. The *Keystone State*, drawing less water, followed the old channel position and struck bottom heavily while leaving port at nearly the same time as the *Connecticut*.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike his predecessor, Commander Dove spent considerable energy trying to construct a coal bin near Fort Macon. Like Lynch, he believed the army wharf was too weak so he asked permission in early December 1863 to construct a wharf using local materials.<sup>45</sup> Eager to do anything that might save the expense of demurrage, the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting authorized Dove to purchase the needed lumber, and to begin construction as soon as possible. To that end the navy sent a coast survey party to

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<sup>43</sup>Dove to Lee, 1, 30 April 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Dove to Lee, 30 April 1864; List of Arrival and Departures for Beaufort, NC for April 1864; Box 23, Lee Papers. *O.R.N.*, I, 9, 327.

<sup>45</sup>Dove to Lee, 4 December 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.



find a suitable location. The party arrived on 18 December and berthed on the *Release* during the five days they were there.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, the army planned to expand its own inadequate wharf. While the party surveyed the shoreline for a proper site for a navy wharf, the army landed lumber and building materials near the navy storehouse. Commander Dove asked Captain Bowen, the quartermaster, to suspend work until the survey was complete. Apparently, Dove wanted the two services to coordinate their construction efforts. Unable to halt his work, Bowen continued, and by 15 January the frame of a new army storehouse was up behind the old wharf.<sup>47</sup>

The new wharf the army was building would have a front of 300 feet, taking in the old one. The new pier would be at the disposal of the navy. Bowen, however, did ask for the navy to provide zinc to cover the outer two rows of pilings. The work stalled temporarily in early February while the workmen pulled away to repair nearby bridges damaged during Confederate raids. Nonetheless, the pilings were ready for the zinc by 25 February. Presumably the wharf was completed, but the available correspondence is silent on the matter. Because the navy continued to keep large amounts of coal afloat in the harbor, it is doubtful that a coal bin, certainly not one of large size, was ever built.<sup>48</sup> If a

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<sup>46</sup>Lee to Dove, 14 December 1863, Squadron Letters; Dove to Lee, 18, 23 December 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers. Gifford to Parents, 22 December 1863, Gifford Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Dove to Lee, 17 December 1863, 15 January 1864; Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Dove to Lee, 15 January, 23 February 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.





coal bin had been built, the navy certainly would not have continued to keep so much afloat accumulating demurrage.

In February, the squadron began a procedure that reduced slightly the frequency with which some of the blockading ships had to come to Beaufort to coal. On 11 February Lee ordered the large steamer USS *Fah Kee* to fill up with three hundred tons of coal and go to the blockade. There she was to supply the ships most in need, particularly small ones with limited bunker capacity. Dispensing coal in relatively small amounts, up to about thirty-five tons, she allowed these ships to remain on station longer. When her own supply was low she returned to Beaufort, re-filled, and repeated the process. Because she was a naval ship Lee could send her to the blockade more easily than he could a chartered ship. Because she was larger, the *Fah Kee* could handle rough weather much more easily than one of the coal schooners.<sup>49</sup>

By early 1864 twenty-seven ships of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron were assigned to the blockade of Wilmington. Many of them were positioned very near New Inlet and the Western Bar entrances to the Cape Fear River. There were also large, fast ships that cruised far offshore between Wilmington and the ports of Bermuda and Nassau. Additional ships watched the many small inlets on the southern coast of North Carolina. These all relied on Beaufort to replenish their stores and coal.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Lee to Acting Master F. R. Webb, 11 February 1864, Squadron Letters; Abstract Log of USS *Fah Kee*, 14 - 18 March 1864, Box 23; Lee Papers.

<sup>50</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 499.



Lee's extensive orders for blockading of 16 December 1863 demonstrate the importance of saving coal. It included many of the same fuel saving measures he had directed the previous September. During the day ships were to be anchored offshore and at dusk should weigh anchor to steam closer inshore. They were not to steam during the day unless absolutely necessary because that wasted precious coal. He also wanted ships going to and returning from Beaufort to take the most direct route unless they encountered a runner they could chase with a "fair prospect of success." These instructions could not prevent increased consumption. Additionally, a ship cruising offshore burned more coal than one anchored all day. Therefore, consumption of coal at Beaufort grew to over two thousand tons per month.<sup>51</sup>

In January 1864 the supply of coal ran low once again. Only three colliers carrying a total of 1,156 tons arrived that month. By contrast twelve ships with a total of 3,200 tons had arrived in November. In December another 4,149 tons had come in eleven ships. Because of the high demand Dove reported his shortage to Lee when the supply got down to 1,700 tons on 29 January. At an earlier time that amount would have been considered quite large, but it now constituted a shortage. Eventually, the supply reached 1,200 tons in early February. The arrival of colliers on 11 February met the demand. Dove wrote to Lee that morning saying that the supply of coal was now full, that five colliers had arrived that morning. A sixth ship arrived at noon bringing the total for the day up to 2,330 tons.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 355-358.

<sup>52</sup>Report of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, N.C., 30 November 1863, 15 January, 15 February 1864; Dove to Lee, 29 January, 11 February 1864; Box 23, Lee Papers.



In response to the low supply of January Lee asked Dove to calculate the average weekly requirement of coal. Obviously, Lee felt that having an average available would make it easier to keep the supply arriving more regularly rather than in spurts. Dove found such an average to be impossible to obtain. In replying on 25 February to the squadron commander's request, Dove described the expenditure of coal for the month to date. Between the first and ninth only 183.5 tons had been supplied. Between the ninth and the seventeenth blockaders picked up 1,450 tons. Since the seventeenth four more ships had arrived making the consumption for the month over 2,000 tons.<sup>53</sup>

The late winter and early spring of 1864 were exceptionally stormy. Commander John J. Almy in the *Connecticut* returned to Beaufort for coal and supplies on 18 April after an offshore cruise of twenty days. During his cruise there had been a succession of serious gales since the first of March. He thanked God that, "no serious disaster to life or vessel has occurred."<sup>54</sup> Heavy seas frequently prevented ships in Beaufort from crossing the bar.<sup>55</sup> Levi Pigott in Beaufort recorded in his diary that "we have just been through one of the most inclement seasons ever known in this country, in the month of April." The awful month of April followed an equally awful March. Pigott thought the weather that spring was more typical of polar regions than eastern North Carolina.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Lee to Dove, 16 February 1864, Squadron Letters; Dove to Lee, 25 February 1864, Box 23; Lee Papers.

<sup>54</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 660.

<sup>55</sup>Abstract Log of USS *Mount Vernon*, 19 - 21 January, 29 February - 3 March 1864; Dove to Lee, 1 April 1864; Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>56</sup>Levi S. Pigott Diary, 22 April 1864.



The terrible spring of 1864 had more import than merely delaying departures from Beaufort, however. The inclement weather prevented the departure of colliers from Philadelphia. After the January coal shortage, ships going to Beaufort experienced even worse conditions in April. Captain Adams in Philadelphia informed Lee that it was impossible to arrange coal shipments. The late winter's ice in Philadelphia prevented the movement of colliers in port. The best hope Adams could offer was that there was a good supply of coal belonging to the army at Beaufort. Perhaps naval ships could borrow that. He promised to do his best to replace it quickly.<sup>57</sup>

Available records show clearly the reason for the shortage. Between 9 March and 13 April only one collier entered port. Three large colliers arrived on 13 and 14 April, but the 1,380 tons they carried barely met the immediate need.<sup>58</sup> In mid-April thirteen blockaders called at Beaufort for coal in a ten day period (at one point there were twelve gunboats in the harbor at once). Without new shipments arriving, this sudden demand for coal reduced the navy's supply to only 200 tons. After these large disbursements only five colliers arrived before 5 June.<sup>59</sup> During May, for the only time after the capture of Beaufort, some vessels were forced to Hampton Roads for coal. The arrival in June of ten colliers finally ended the shortage.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Lee to Dove, 13 April 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>58</sup>Report of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, NC, 15 April 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>59</sup>List of Arrivals and Departures, April, May, June 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>60</sup>Browning, *Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 195.





By the summer of 1864 the importance of Beaufort had grown greatly coinciding with greater efforts to halt blockade running. On 1 July 1862 there were a total of eight ships assigned to blockade Wilmington, and one was at Beaufort. One year later there were thirteen ships employed enforcing the blockade with two more in Beaufort. As of 17 June 1864 the U.S. Navy had twenty-six ships on blockade duty and four more were permanently stationed at Beaufort.<sup>61</sup> By June 1864 over fifty navy or navy-chartered ships per month called at Beaufort.<sup>62</sup> To support the growing number of ships depending on Beaufort for coal the navy had \$37,335.02 in provisions at Beaufort. This is nearly as much as the Baltimore and Washington Navy Yards combined and three times as much as New Bern, the main supply depot for the sounds of North Carolina.<sup>63</sup>

At the beginning of July Lee left Hampton Roads again to visit Beaufort and the blockade. That month would be important for the squadron. Welles divided it into four divisions, the James River under Captain Melancton Smith, the North Carolina Sounds under Commander Macomb, the Western Bar under Captain B. F. Sands, and New Inlet under Captain O. S. Glisson. After the division of the squadron there were thirty-three ships assigned to blockade Wilmington, and ten more were stationed in Beaufort.<sup>64</sup> Of the large number of ships assigned to blockade Wilmington, only two that drew too much

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<sup>61</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,7, 531; I,9, 98-99; I,10, 157.

<sup>62</sup>List of Arrivals and Departures at Beaufort, NC, June 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>63</sup>Report of Secretary of the Navy to Congress for 1864, 1165.

<sup>64</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,10, 224, 307, 316, 324-325.



water to cross the Beaufort bar, the *Santiago de Cuba* and *Fort Jackson*, relied on Hampton Roads for supplies.

Another important change for the squadron that month occurred on 27 July when Welles ordered Lee to make Beaufort his headquarters. Subsequent to that he arrived in Beaufort on 30 July on the flagship *Malvern*. The giant frigate *Minnesota* had been the flagship for the squadron for much of the war, but she drew twenty-three feet.<sup>65</sup> This was far too much water to cross the bar, necessitating that Lee take the smaller *Malvern*.

From headquarters at Beaufort the commander of the North Atlantic Squadron was much closer to the large number of ships blockading off Wilmington. At this port he had the opportunity to speak personally to ships' commanders on a regular basis because nearly all returned to Beaufort for supplies. He was also close to another important area of operations, the sounds of North Carolina. He was in a better position to plan an attack on the defenses of Wilmington. Heretofore during the war he had traveled to Beaufort to meet with army officers whenever operations against Wilmington were considered. From here he would be able to supervise personally the great fleets that would be assembled six months later.

Despite the amount of activity at Beaufort, duty at the station was not as appealing or rewarding professionally as sea duty. An officer there had little chance to prove himself in combat, did not command a fine man of war, and would not experience the excitement of chasing a blockade runner at high speed. Commander Benjamin Dove resented his

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<sup>65</sup>Canney, *Sloops, Frigates, and Gunboats*, 50.



assignment after many years in the navy. He felt that an officer of his rank with over thirty-five years' experience warranted a better position.

Consequently, on 20 June he sent, through his superior (Acting Rear Admiral Lee), an application to Secretary Welles for advancement. Dove stated that he had "suffered long and patiently under my present mortifying position." He requested that Lee grant him a leave of absence to plead his case in Washington.<sup>66</sup> In response the Navy Department ordered him to Philadelphia to appear before an examining board. Receiving the department's order on 15 July, Dove boarded the USS *Connecticut* for Hampton Roads en route to Philadelphia. Before leaving he transferred command of the station to Commander William F. Spicer of the USS *Cambridge*. Spicer's ship was in Beaufort for coal and repairs and Lee had ordered him to assume temporary command of the station.<sup>67</sup>

Dove's pursuit of advancement was fruitless, however. After a two month absence he returned to his post. His lack of success doubtless resulted in part from Acting Rear Admiral Lee's rather modest opinion of Dove's professional abilities. The examining board that handled Dove's case sent Lee a questionnaire about him. Lee responded that he thought Dove was a willing, conscientious officer, who possessed only moderate intellect and poor administrative ability. Though Lee believed Dove was temperate and of

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<sup>66</sup>Dove to Lee, 20 June 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>67</sup>Dove to Lee, 17 July 1864; Spicer to Lee, 18 July 1864; Box 23; Lee to Spicer, 11 July 1864, Squadron Letters; Lee Papers.



good character, he did not believe Dove was qualified to command a squadron or receive important independent assignments.<sup>68</sup>

Command of the station may not have been the choicest of assignments for a long-time veteran like Dove, but the importance of the station grew immensely when it became the headquarters of the squadron on 27 July 1864. The growing number of ships returning there for supplies created a need for more tugs. The day after Welles ordered Lee to make Beaufort his headquarters, Lee ordered the tugs USS *Cohasset*, USS *Zouave*, and USS *Harcourt* at Hampton Roads to be coaled, supplied and dispatched at once for Beaufort. The *Cohasset* and *Harcourt* arrived in Beaufort in early August. The third tug was undergoing repairs and eventually remained in the Norfolk area.

The addition of the *Harcourt* and *Cohasset* to the USS *Lilac* already stationed at Beaufort made operations much easier. The *Cohasset* and *Lilac* moved colliers and supply ships around in the harbor and could, if necessary, be used for harbor defense. The previous winter Lee had given Dove specific instructions regarding piloting when he sent Owens and Phillips to Beaufort, but he was not satisfied with how well Dove had executed them. Consequently, he ordered the *Harcourt* to be a pilot tug. Commanded by Pilot F. B. Owens, she sat outside the Beaufort Bar every day from dawn until dusk with four pilots. Any naval ship entering Beaufort Harbor was required to use one of these pilots. When a vessel arrived, one of the pilots from the tug boarded her and guided her through the inlet. Other pilots, who stayed on one of the storeships in the harbor, guided vessels

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<sup>68</sup>Lee to Naval Examining Board, Box 23, Lee Papers. Lee to Welles, 1 October 1864, North Atlantic Blockading Squadron Letters, M-89, Reel 179, National Archives.





out the inlet. Owens and the other pilots were held responsible for any accidents resulting from bad piloting. The naval pilots would decide when the weather made crossing the bar too hazardous. If a ship's commander insisted on crossing despite the pilot's objections, the commander was responsible for any mishap.<sup>69</sup>

The harbor pilots were responsible for semi-monthly reports of all ships piloted in and out of the harbor. These listed chronologically the date a ship entered or left port followed by the name of the ship and the pilot. Additionally, they recorded the ship's draft and whether the vessel was inbound or outbound. These reports show that on occasion ships drawing up to fifteen feet of water crossed the bar, and that vessels drawing fourteen feet regularly entered the harbor. This depth allowed nearly all the ships assigned to the Wilmington blockade to go to Beaufort for supplies. The reports also reveal the names of the pilots who guided the vessels. Pilots in addition to Owens, were D. L. Ingersoll, G. F. Bowen, John W. Taylor, and J. S. Farlow.<sup>70</sup>

There were only two noteworthy blockaders unable to cross the Beaufort Bar. One was the USS *Fort Jackson*, which at 250 feet long and 1,770 tons drew eighteen feet fully loaded. The other notable exception was the 229 feet, 1,850 ton USS *Santiago de Cuba*, which drew sixteen feet loaded.<sup>71</sup> These were among the largest and fastest ships

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<sup>69</sup>Lee to Welles, 6 September 1864, North Atlantic Blockading Squadron Letters, M-89, Reel 179. Lee to F.B. Owens, 15 August 1864; Lee to Glisson, 21 August 1864; Squadron Letters, Lee Papers. O.R.N., I,10, 410.

<sup>70</sup>Lists of Arrivals and Departures, Box 23, Lee Papers. Lists of Arrivals and Departures, Boxes 479, 490, File OX, U. S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>71</sup>O.R.N. II,1, 86-87, 200.



used on the blockade. In 1864 they became the ships of the divisional officers off the Cape Fear River. In March Captain B. F. Sands took the *Fort Jackson* and commanded the New Inlet division. Later he commanded the division off the Western Bar. In July the Navy Department appointed Captain O. S. Glisson to command the *Santiago de Cuba* and lead the division off New Inlet.<sup>72</sup>

Though these ships were well suited for their purposes and were successful blockaders, their selection for the commanders of the two divisions was not ideal. Because their large draft forced them to return to Hampton Roads for coal and supplies they spent less time on the blockade. Since they never entered Beaufort harbor, they were unable to expedite refueling and repairs being conducted there. Lee suggested to Glisson and to Sands that they take the USS *State of Georgia* and USS *Florida* for their divisional vessels. This plan was unworkable because both of these ships needed extensive repairs immediately. Lee then suggested to Welles, without success, that the department supply vessels of suitable draft and battery for Sands and Glisson.<sup>73</sup>

The *Fort Jackson*, *Santiago de Cuba*, and any other ship that went to Hampton Roads for coal or Norfolk for repairs performed the important purpose of delivering mail to Beaufort. As headquarters, the necessity of receiving messages to the squadron commander made mail delivery very important. Messages to the squadron commander from the North Carolina sounds could be sent easily from New Bern via telegraph.

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<sup>72</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 499, 554-555; I,10, 285-287. Lee to Glisson, 18 July 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>73</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,10, 338-339.



Dispatches from Secretary Welles in Washington, from ships on the James River and elsewhere in Virginia waters, and from navy yards in the North obviously had farther to go to reach someone in Beaufort. Lee ordered his divisional officers, Sands and Glisson, to instruct blockaders going to Norfolk to stop at Beaufort to deliver or receive mail. Mail between Beaufort and the Hampton Roads area had earlier been sent at times through the canals connecting southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. After arriving at Beaufort Lee prohibited the postmaster at Fort Monroe from using that route in the future because it was insecure. Mail from New England normally reached Beaufort in seven to ten days, occasionally in as little as four. Mail came to Beaufort on the transport steamer *USS New Berne*, the transport steamer *Petrel*, the army transport *S.R. Spaulding*, and other ships that happened to be returning to Beaufort from the North.<sup>74</sup>

The volume of mail going to Beaufort increased because by September 1864 there were eight ships stationed there. These were the storeship *USS William Badger*, the ordnance ships *USS Release* and *USS Arletta*, the three tugs, and two light draft vessels for harbor defense, the *USS Shokokon* and *USS Nansemond*. In addition to these the flagship *USS Malvern* spent considerable time in the harbor. Twenty-six ships were assigned to blockade the Cape Fear River. The number of ships assigned does not include ten normally on the blockade that were being repaired at northern ports at the time.

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<sup>74</sup>James Gifford to Parents, 3 January 1864, 27, 28 February 1864, Gifford Papers.



Except for the *Santiago de Cuba* and *Fort Jackson*, all the ships on the blockade returned to Beaufort for their coal.<sup>75</sup>

Meeting a growing demand for coal required more colliers sailing to Beaufort. During the first two weeks of September seven colliers arrived. Even more colliers arrived during the last half of the month. The increased number of colliers entering Beaufort resulted from increased efforts to stop blockade running. This led Beaufort to hold, by 30 September 1864, the squadron's largest supply of coal. At 8,376 tons, the amount of coal at Beaufort dwarfed Norfolk's 3,304 tons and City Point's 1,156 tons. Only Craney Island, Virginia with a supply of 7,575 tons, stored close to the amount Beaufort did.<sup>76</sup> In September 1864 Lee again ordered colliers to be towed to the blockade. On 24 September, the steamers USS *Maratanza* and USS *Mercedita* towed two large colliers to the blockade. The *Maratanza* went to the Western Bar, while the *Mercedita* went to New Inlet. At the same time he wrote to the senior officers on each side of Cape Fear instructing them how to coal at sea. The colliers were not to be brought alongside the warship where wind and waves could cause them to collide, but were to be kept to the stern. The coal could then be ferried to the warship in boats, a slower but safer method of refueling at sea.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 10, 410-412.

<sup>76</sup>Statement of Coal on Hand, 11 October 1864, Box 489, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>77</sup>Lee to Dove, 24 September 1864; Lee to Sands, 29 September 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.





The huge stockpile of coal required to fill the bunkers of the steamers off the Cape Fear River did not necessarily meet the needs of all the ships, however. This resulted from the growing use of captured blockade runners to blockade the coast. Because most of these ships were designed to burn bituminous (soft) coal as opposed to the anthracite (hard) coal for which U.S. ships were designed, some blockaders performed poorly using the coal at Beaufort. Beginning in late 1863 the navy purchased blockade runners condemned in the Boston and New York prize courts for its own use. During the war at least seventeen blockade runners captured off Wilmington saw service in the U.S. Navy blockading that same port; of the seventeen, twelve were commissioned in 1864. Because of growing specialization in the design of blockade runners for light draft and extreme speed, naval officials saw the wisdom of using captured blockade runners against blockade runners. Some of the fastest, most elusive runners were on blockade duty within six to eight weeks of their capture.<sup>78</sup>

Commander J. C. Howell of the USS *Nereus* suggested to Lee in June 1864 that the navy purchase some of the captured blockade runners and, "not allow our engineers to meddle with their machinery."<sup>79</sup> Even before his writing, the navy had begun to implement this program. The blockade runner *R. E. Lee* became the USS *Fort Donelson*. The *Margaret and Jessie* became the USS *Gettysburg*. The *Ella and Annie* became the USS *Malvern*, the squadron's flagship. Other notorious runners such as the *Tristram Shandy*,

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<sup>78</sup>O.R.N., II, 1, Statistical Data of Ships, United States Vessels.

<sup>79</sup>O.R.N., I, 10, 134.



*Ad-Vance* (often referred to as *A. D. Vance* in Union records), *Banshee*, *Bat*, and *Lillian* went into the United States Navy without even a name change.<sup>80</sup>

Fast as they were, it was sometimes difficult to achieve the same speed burning anthracite coal instead of the bituminous coal for which they were originally built. Lieutenant R. H. Lamson, commander of USS *Gettysburg*, made this complaint on 13 November 1864: "Our furnaces being constructed for soft coal, it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to get as high pressure of steam as is desirable in a chase with the hard. . . . coal we get at Beaufort."<sup>81</sup> Commander Dove wrote Admiral David Porter requesting soft coal. "Several of the chasers," he wrote, "burn soft coal to advantage, and it has been asked for by their commanders, but there is none here nor has there been any for some time."<sup>82</sup> Soon after Lieutenant Lamson's complaint the navy responded by shipping bituminous coal to Beaufort to fuel these ships. Once this coal was available, the former runners consumed between 500 and 1,000 tons each week.<sup>83</sup>

Beaufort was now the squadron's largest coal depot, supplying both anthracite and bituminous coal for the navy's ships. The harbor's importance to the squadron was not limited to coal, however. Shortly it would be the staging area for the great campaigns against Fort Fisher, whose capture would greatly reduce the strategic value of the harbor.

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<sup>80</sup>*O.R.N.*, II, 1, Statistical Data of Ships, United States Vessels.

<sup>81</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 54.

<sup>82</sup>Dove to Porter, 10 November 1864, North Atlantic Blockading Squadron Letters, M-89, Reel 180.

<sup>83</sup>"Report of Coal Received and Discharged at Beaufort, NC for the Week Ending December 17, 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File. Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, 196.



Additionally, ships regularly conducted routine minor repairs there in addition to emergency repairs. The following chapters will focus on these roles.



#### Chapter Four: Raids, Rebels, and Repairs

Beaufort Harbor was most important for the U.S. Navy because of its use as a supply depot. It was very valuable to the navy, however, for other reasons that cannot be ignored. Ships frequently made routine repairs there, especially to their machinery. At other times ships severely damaged by heavy weather or collision limped into port to do emergency work that enabled them to go north for permanent repairs. Prize vessels (captured blockade runners) normally went to Beaufort for coal and minor repairs before going to a northern port for adjudication.

Because of its relatively close proximity to enemy lines, the navy conducted frequent raids from Beaufort. These were intended to destroy enemy property in Bogue or Bear Inlets, or one of the other small inlets farther down the coast. The navy destroyed salt works down the coast and investigated reports of little schooners that might be using one of the small inlets to run the blockade. The close proximity to the enemy also meant that navy and army personnel in Beaufort were subject to several scares during the war. Confederate attacks against New Bern less than forty miles away made defenders in the Beaufort-Morehead City area nervous. Additionally, perceived threats of attack from sea by Confederate Navy cruisers or ironclads from Wilmington forced army and navy personnel at Beaufort to be vigilant.

Soldiers arriving in Beaufort and sailors on the ships stationed in the harbor or on others that put into Beaufort for coal and supplies provide valuable glimpses of the appearance of the area and also how it was used during the war. Cyrus Bates, a soldier who landed at Morehead City on board the large transport *Mississippi*, wrote that he





"would not give 15 cents for all of Carolina. It is miserable sandy soil, and back in the country they say it is worse."<sup>1</sup> Another soldier there had a similar impression. "Oh! Morehead thou little insignificant mean imitation of a town where nothing but sand and pigs grow abundantly and flourish. How I dislike thee."<sup>2</sup>

William Keeler, the paymaster on the USS *Florida*, recorded probably the best description of the area on his first visit in April 1863. Keeler thought the place was unremarkable. Marshy tidal flats surrounded the approach to the town. Once ashore in Beaufort he was quite unimpressed with the place that had become, as mentioned earlier, a fashionable watering hole in the South. The houses were unpainted and were surrounded by porches that displayed, to him at least, "No architectural taste or evidence of wealth or refinement." The buildings in the town seemed to be randomly located except for those on the main street. The streets themselves had no sidewalks and were unpaved. The pedestrian had to choose between wading through deep sand or deep mud.<sup>3</sup>

Occasionally when the *Florida* called at Beaufort, Keeler journeyed into the country surrounding the town to buy peaches and other fruit. The outlying areas were sandy and covered by small pines. The inhabitants lived in one-room houses built of pine. These dwellings were two or three feet off the ground, with each corner resting on pine blocks. Surrounding the yards were rough pine fences. Normally small gardens

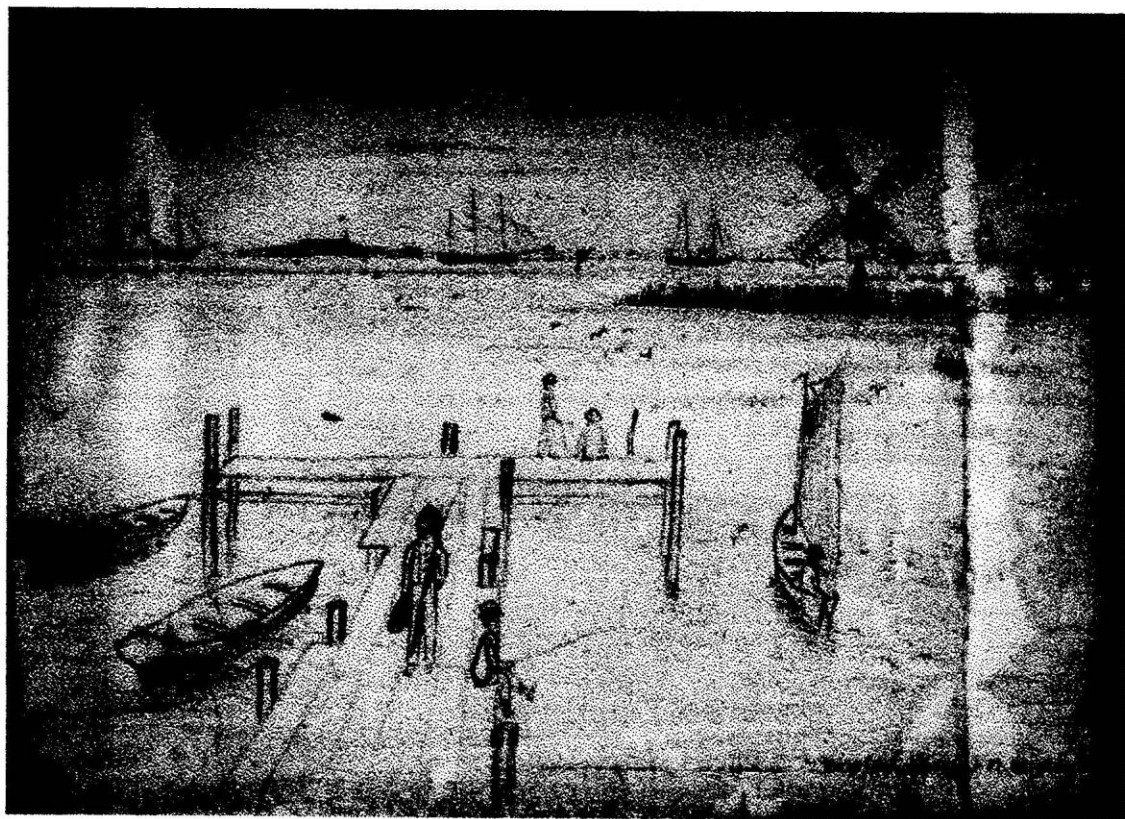
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<sup>1</sup>Cyrus Bates to Mother, 15 November 1862, Bates Family Letters, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

<sup>2</sup>Herbert E. Valentine Diary, 23 January 1863, Herbert E. Valentine Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.



containing a few stalks of corn, potatoes, and watermelons were planted in one corner of the yard.<sup>4</sup> The only local plants that impressed Keeler were the roses, which grew luxuriantly without great efforts at cultivation.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3. Contemporary sketch of Beaufort Harbor from Beaufort, N.C. With Fort Macon in background. William Valentine Papers, Southern Historical Collection.**

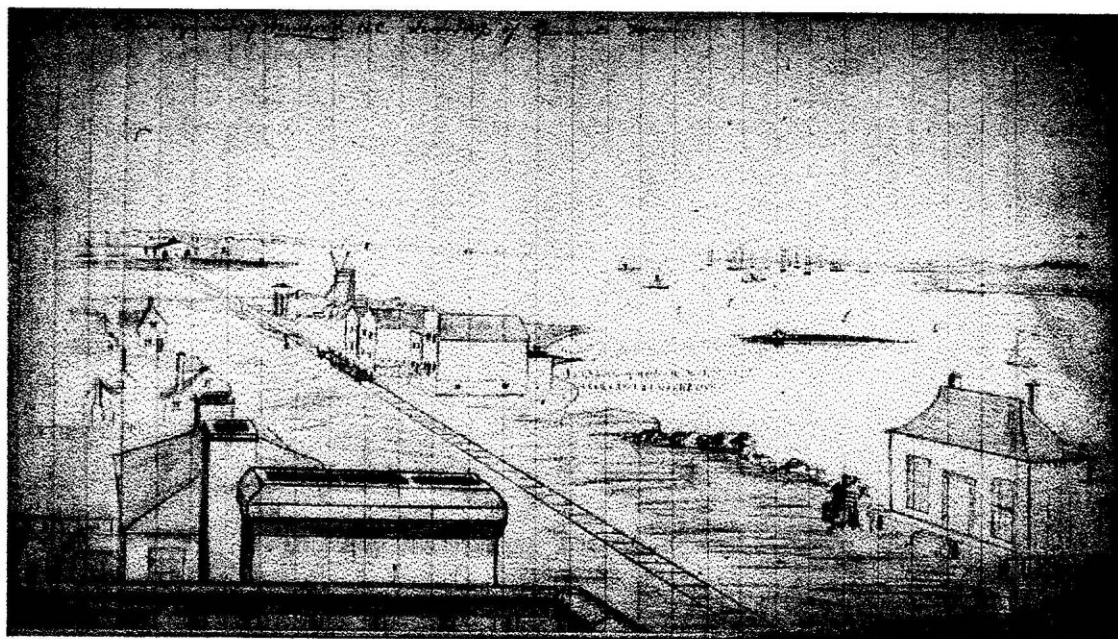
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<sup>3</sup>William Keeler, *Aboard the USS Florida: The Letters of Paymaster William Keeler, U.S. Navy to his Wife Anna*, edited by Robert Daly, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1968), 31-32.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 73-74, 183-184.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.





**Figure 4. Contemporary sketch of Morehead City showing railroad depot at upper left, and Fort Macon at upper right, William Valentine Papers.**

When in port ships' officers often found time to take small boats to explore the area around the harbor and to visit Fort Macon. Keeler found the officers and men garrisoned in Fort Macon to be very hospitable and eager to invite their guests to share supper or a bottle of whiskey with them. He also found time to enjoy local fresh fish, clams, scallops, and oysters.<sup>6</sup> Men on the harbor's storeships enjoyed the good duck hunting in the area.<sup>7</sup>

Although sailors occasionally received shore leave, most seamen who came into Beaufort on blockaders lacked Keeler's opportunities to scout around. The business of coaling and obtaining supplies could require all the vessel's available manpower. A

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 122-123.



crewman on the USS *Governor Buckingham* complained in a letter to his cousin that he would rather be at sea than in port. "There is no laying back here [Beaufort] they find a plenty for us to do most of the time. I thought when wee [sic] got in here wee [sic] would not have much to do but as it turned out I have more to do here than I did at sea...it's better at sea than in port."<sup>8</sup> James Gifford on the USS *Release* complained in early January 1864 that during the previous month he had only been ashore twice, each time on business.<sup>9</sup>

Beaufort's military hospital was one of the benefits the navy enjoyed. This hospital was particularly advantageous because it was much closer to the blockade than the large hospital at Norfolk, Virginia. The U.S. Army occupied the Atlantic Hotel in Beaufort and converted it into the Hammond Hospital that served the needs of both the army and navy.<sup>10</sup> On his walks through Beaufort, Keeler saw the hospital. He wrote that, "one of the first calls we made was at the hospital, a large rambling tumble down looking building erected for a hotel for those desirous of experiencing the beauties of nature as developed here."<sup>11</sup> The fleet surgeon made arrangements concerning naval personnel with Dr. F. S. Ainsworth, director of the hospital, in the fall of 1863. According to this agreement, and orders from Admiral Lee, sailors with chronic conditions and those requiring medical

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<sup>7</sup>Gifford to Parents, 7 December 1863, Gifford Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Joe Cleveland to Cousin, 10 August 1864, Joe Cleveland Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

<sup>9</sup>Gifford to Parents, 3 January 1864, Gifford Papers.

<sup>10</sup>Levi S. Pigott Diary, 28 May 1864.

<sup>11</sup>Keeler, *Aboard the USS Florida*, 32.





surveys were sent to Norfolk or to a northern hospital. Those who had acute conditions, however, were admitted to the hospital in Beaufort.<sup>12</sup>

Just after these arrangements were made, the doctors in Beaufort and the surgeons on the blockading ships faced a serious crisis: a smallpox outbreak. Levi Pigott recorded in January 1864 that: "The pestilence that walketh is among us, in the form of smallpox." The illness spread throughout the blockading fleet as well, though it is not known whether the disease spread from ship to shore or vice versa.<sup>13</sup>

Sailors on the USS *State of Georgia* were the first to contract the pox during this outbreak. Two days after they arrived in the harbor on 3 January 1864 four of her crewmen were sent to the hospital, and the quarantine flag was raised.<sup>14</sup> This was a recognized signal flag alerting any nearby vessels that the ship had a contagious disease aboard. Lee ordered the *State of Georgia* to remain in quarantine at Beaufort for ten days after the last case had appeared. In an effort to contain the spread of the disease, Dr. Ainsworth set up a special smallpox hospital four miles outside of Beaufort.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Dr. F. S. Ainsworth to Lynch, 10 November 1863; Lynch to Lee, 12 November 1863, Box 23; Lee to Lynch 18 November 1863, Squadron Letters; Samuel P. Lee Papers, Library of Congress manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.

<sup>13</sup>Levi S. Pigott Diary, January 1864.

<sup>14</sup>Logbook of USS *State of Georgia*, 3-5 January 1864, R.G. 24.

<sup>15</sup>United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 volumes, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927), Series I, Volume 9, 406. Hereafter cited as *O.R.N.* Lee to Commander Somerville Nicholson, 14 January 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



Fleet surgeon Dr. William Maxwell Wood issued a circular late in January prescribing measures to deal with the disease. In case of an outbreak on one of the ships on the blockade or at Beaufort, the ship's surgeon was to have the patients and their bedding and clothing transferred to the smallpox hospital at Beaufort. He also recommended a thorough cleaning and airing of ship after the last patient was removed.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the measures ordered by the fleet surgeon, and those taken at Beaufort, the illness spread to other ships as well. On 11 February the USS *Dacotah* arrived with one confirmed, and one suspected case of smallpox. After the ship's surgeon sent the two men to the hospital, the ship anchored in quarantine away from other vessels there. This was not the first outbreak aboard the *Dacotah*, however. The previous October thirty-three of her crew had been ill at once, but it is unknown whether she went to the hospital at Beaufort or Norfolk.<sup>17</sup> Less than one week after the *Dacotah* went to Beaufort, the USS *Pequot* arrived with both smallpox and measles aboard.<sup>18</sup> In March smallpox appeared on yet another ship, the USS *Fort Jackson*, forcing her to send crewmen ashore and quarantine herself.<sup>19</sup>

Months later another more serious and widespread outbreak of yellow fever struck New Bern and Beaufort. In September and October it spread rapidly through the troops and civilian populations in each town. Beaufort was crowded with white Union

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<sup>16</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 417-418.

<sup>17</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 246-247.

<sup>18</sup>Dove to Lee, 11 February 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers. *O.R.N.*, I, 9, 478, 489.

<sup>19</sup>Lee to Sands, 18 March, 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



sympathizers and escaped or freed slaves. The crowding and lack of knowledge about how the disease was transferred caused it to spread rapidly.<sup>20</sup> Federal authorities closed the hotel to prevent the spread of disease among those in it. James Gifford on the *Release* wrote that eight people a night in Beaufort died from the disease. The navy attempted to prevent the spread of the disease onto crowded warships by forbidding boats from going ashore after sunset.<sup>21</sup> Fortunately for the navy the disease apparently did not spread to blockading ships.

The Union Navy made extensive use of Beaufort Harbor to repair warships. Although, the navy never constructed any major facilities there to overhaul or refit vessels of war, the harbor provided a haven where ships could anchor and make minor routine repairs that enabled them to remain at sea longer. On occasion, however, ships in distress came to Beaufort to make emergency repairs that would prevent them from sinking.

Machinery breakdowns were probably the most common problem plaguing blockading ships. Unreliable boilers and engines were common problems. As early as the fall of 1862 Lee reported to Welles that all the ships on the blockade needed repairs except one.<sup>22</sup> These problems could easily cut a ship's speed in half and render it ineffective for blockade duty. The USS *Dacotah* was capable of attaining speeds of up to twelve knots but her actual speed was frequently only half that much because her weak

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<sup>20</sup>Levi S. Pigott Diary, 16 October 1864.

<sup>21</sup>Gifford to Parents, 16, 20 October 1864, Gifford Papers.

<sup>22</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 233-234.



boilers could not stand any strain.<sup>23</sup> Officers commanding the divisions on each side of the Cape Fear River frequently kept ships on station even though they needed repairs badly because other ships needed them more. For example, in late May 1863 Captain Charles S. Boggs commanding off the Western Bar kept the *Dacotah* on station despite needing repairs because the *Maratanza* and *Monticello* were in even worse condition. A month later he reported that all the ships on that station were crippled by their machinery.<sup>24</sup>

The condition of the machinery on the ships off Wilmington attracted attention. Fleet engineer B. F. Garvin asserted that the problems on the ships were exaggerated, and that the existing problems resulted from improper maintenance of the boilers. Captain Boggs hotly responded to Lee: "Sir, I have made steam a study, and assert that I am a better judge of the condition of the engines and boilers under my eye than any engineer can be hundreds of miles distant."<sup>25</sup>

To improve the situation Lee ordered Garvin to take a good boilermaker with him and journey to New Bern, Beaufort, and the blockade. Lee wanted Garvin to observe the skills of the ships' engineering departments and recommend possible personnel changes. In fact, a few cases of machinery breakdowns had been officially attributed to incompetent engineers. Garvin was to examine necessities at Beaufort and New Bern in engineers'

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<sup>23</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,8, 418; I,10, 160-161. Logbook of USS *Dacotah*, 5 April 1864, Record Group 24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Donald L. Canney, *The Old Steam Navy Volume 1: Sloops, Frigates and Gunboats, 1815-1885* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990) 174.

<sup>24</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 50, 101-102.

<sup>25</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 42.





stores and coal. He would also recommend whether the navy needed facilities for repairing boilers and engines at Beaufort or New Bern.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, no shore facilities for repairing boilers and engines were ever built at Beaufort, possibly because there were few suitable locations where deep water to accommodate a ship's draft could be found adjacent to the shore.

In his blockading orders of September 1863 Lee addressed the issue of repairs. He said that whenever possible ships would be allowed to return to Norfolk for coal and an overhaul after six to eight weeks on the blockade.<sup>27</sup> Another standing order concerning repairs stated that vessels should not make any repairs at Beaufort requiring over two days longer to conduct than the length of time needed to coal.<sup>28</sup> Lee did not want vessels to attempt major repairs at Beaufort because they could be done more quickly at Norfolk. Minor repairs, of course, could expeditiously be completed at Beaufort because of the close proximity to the blockade. To facilitate the ability of ships to do their own repairs, all ships in the squadron were to have a forge aboard. Additionally, bituminous coal for blacksmiths was kept at Beaufort along with other engineer's stores.<sup>29</sup>

Ships arriving at Beaufort regularly conducted minor repairs as illustrated by the following examples. The USS *Iroquois* repaired her pumps while coaling in Beaufort in

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<sup>26</sup>O.R.N., I, 9, 118, 224. Lee to Garvin, 8 July 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>27</sup>O.R.N., I, 9, 187.

<sup>28</sup>Lee to Acting Master G. B. Livingston, 27 February 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Lee to Chambers, 7 November 1862, Lee to Adams, 14 June 1863, Miscellaneous Letters; Lee to Commander G. H. Scott, 7 December 1862, Lee to Acting Master G. B. Livingston, 27 February 1864, Squadron Letters; Lee Papers.



mid-September 1863.<sup>30</sup> The USS *Iron Age* was in Beaufort repairing her machinery on 5 November 1863, and was back again cleaning her boiler flues less than a month later.<sup>31</sup> In early January the tug USS *Violet* was beached for propeller alignment. Later the same month the USS *Daylight* arrived to coal and make minor repairs.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in April 1864 the USS *Grand Gulf* repaired her machinery while coaling at Beaufort.<sup>33</sup> After a rough passage from Hampton Roads in August 1864 the USS *Cohasset* repaired burst boiler flues in Beaufort.<sup>34</sup> Weeks later engineers on the tug USS *Aster* performed thirty hours' repair work on her machinery to make her fit for duty at Wilmington.<sup>35</sup>

Lee continually reminded his subordinates not to undertake extensive repairs at Beaufort. On 22 October 1863 he criticized Captain B. F. Sands for the extensive repairs, which had required army assistance, carried out on USS *Calypso* at Beaufort. Conducting such work took advantage of the army's goodwill, but also delayed getting the repairs done thoroughly.<sup>36</sup> Acting Master G. B. Livingston, who commanded the USS *Emma*, and Commander Dove in Beaufort received reprimands in late winter 1864 because the

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<sup>30</sup>O.R.N., I, 9, 198-199.

<sup>31</sup>O.R.N., I, 9, 262-263. Dove to Lee, 2 December 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Dove to Lee, 27 January 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Dove to Lee, 25 April 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Acting 3rd Engineer James H. Finn to Acting Ensign George B. Griffin, 5 August 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>35</sup>Commander Richardson Frailey to Lee, 31 August 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Lee to Sands, 22 October 1863; Lee to Captain D. B. Ridgely, 23 October 1863; Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



*Emma* had conducted repairs there that lasted ten days.<sup>37</sup> Eventually in late March 1864, Lee rescinded the standing order not to conduct repairs taking more than two days longer than the length of time necessary to coal. He probably did this to lessen the workload at Norfolk by allowing work to be done at Beaufort.

Besides routine work, ships occasionally undertook emergency repairs at Beaufort. Engineers on the USS *Cambridge* discovered that she had a broken crank pin while she was in Beaufort in early September 1863. The damage rendered the ship unseaworthy and the engines unsafe. Unable to leave, the *Cambridge* remained in port six weeks until the necessary parts to fix the pin arrived from the north.<sup>38</sup> In November of the same year the USS *Niphon* collided with the blockade runner *Ella and Annie* just outside New Inlet while giving chase. The *Niphon* limped to Beaufort with her prize, but she had damaged her deck, knees and ceilings and lost her bowsprit and stem. Acting Master J. B. Breck commander of the ship, reluctantly reported to Lee: "I . . . find that my damage is more serious than I at first thought." To survey the damages and make temporary repairs Breck beached his ship in Beaufort. Fortunately, he patched the *Niphon* well enough to reach Hampton Roads a few days later.<sup>39</sup>

Emergency repairs conducted at Beaufort probably saved a valuable blockader from being lost. On the night of 22-23 August 1863 the USS *Connecticut* accidentally

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<sup>37</sup>Lee to Livingston, 27 February 1864; Lee to Dove, 18 March 1864; Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>38</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 189-190, 192.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, I,9, 292-293, 295-296.



rammed the USS *Quaker City* as the two ships were chasing a blockade runner. The bows of the ships collided tearing away the bowstem of the *Quaker City*. Taking on water and accompanied by the *Connecticut*, she steamed to Beaufort where the ship was moored at the railroad depot in Morehead City. To lighten his ship and keep her afloat Commander James Madison Frailey unloaded most of the *Quaker City*'s ammunition. A locally hired carpenter conducted repairs, and Frailey attempted to reach Philadelphia for overhaul on 4 September accompanied by the *Connecticut*.<sup>40</sup>

Upon rounding Cape Lookout the ships encountered a stiff northeast wind from which the cape had sheltered them and a heavy head sea. The *Quaker City*'s temporary repairs proved insufficient. Taking on large amounts of water and facing increasing winds and an ominous sky, the ships turned back to Beaufort. The *Quaker City* leaked so badly that eleven inches of water entered her hold every eight minutes even with her bilge pumps going. To prevent her from foundering in the harbor, Frailey got underway with assistance of other vessels and beached *Quaker City*. The condition of the ship grew steadily worse, and eventually nearly all her stores were removed. The Bureau of Construction sent a naval constructor to Beaufort to supervise further repairs. After a month in Beaufort *Quaker City* was finally ready to steam north again. After extreme effort, other naval ships and the army tug pulled her into deep water, and Frailey's ship

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<sup>40</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 175. Frailey to Lee, 2, 5, 7, 8, September 1863, Box 23, Lee Papers.





successfully completed the voyage. After extensive work in Philadelphia, Welles ordered *Quaker City* back onto blockade duty in mid-November.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the war naval officers worried about Beaufort's defenses. The navy's anxiety for the harbor's security reflected the importance they attached to it. At times these fears were baseless, but at other times officers in Beaufort had good reason to worry. Several Confederate attacks on New Bern caused great alarm in Beaufort. Squadron commanders, however, never wanted the interests of the blockade to be secondary to the defense of Beaufort. Defense of the area was a military (i.e. army) responsibility. Additionally, there was almost always one (and often more than one) blockader in port. Later, the storeships and tugs could aid in defense with their guns.

During the first months after the capture of Fort Macon and the occupation of the surrounding area the Union had little to fear. The fort's garrison was large, there were still many troops in the area, and the USS *Daylight* was in the harbor. In July 1862 General Parke, commander of the area, had to withdraw most of his troops from Beaufort and Morehead City. Simultaneously, the *Daylight* went to New York for repairs. Parke asked Commander O. S. Glisson, the senior officer off Wilmington, to arrange the visits of blockaders to Beaufort so that a ship would always be there for defense if necessary. Squadron commander Admiral Louis Goldsborough reminded Glisson that he was not to divert ships from the blockade for any purpose, even the defense of Beaufort. Goldsborough eventually realized the need for a ship in Beaufort. On 5 July 1862, just

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<sup>41</sup>Frailey to Lee, 12 September 1863; Frailey to Welles, 17,25,28, September 1863; Box 23, Lee Papers. *O.R.N.*, I,9, 303.



two days after the *Daylight* had arrived in New York, and the date of Parke's request, Goldsborough asked Secretary Welles to order the *Daylight* back to Beaufort as soon as possible because a ship was needed there for defense.<sup>42</sup>

In November 1862 the navy arranged a communications system between incoming blockaders and Fort Macon. Acting Rear Admiral Lee, the new squadron commander, set this up fearing that the "Rebel Gunboat 290" (CSS *Alabama*) was operating on the coast. Blockading vessels communicated with the fort by boat before attempting to enter the harbor to prevent the fort from firing on friendly ships. The much superior system of signal lights mentioned in chapter 3 was begun shortly afterward.<sup>43</sup>

The Union Navy perceived the first land threat in the late winter of 1863. Commander Alexander Murray, the Senior Officer in the Sounds of North Carolina, learned that the Confederates were strong in Swansboro at the west end of Bogue Sound and had direct communications between there and Wilmington. He relayed this news to Lee and to officers in the blockading fleet. Fearing a Confederate attack on the railroad depot in Morehead City, Murray asked Captain B. F. Sands, senior officer off Wilmington, to position the ships there for coal so that they could defend the depot. Lee also ordered Sands and Acting Master Henry Carr, who commanded the storeship USS *William Badger*, to place the colliers and storeships in such a manner that they would not interfere

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<sup>42</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 7, 540, 569, 582.

<sup>43</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 191, 192. Lee to Carr, 6 February 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



with the movement of blockaders.<sup>44</sup> Though a number of Confederate troops were present in Swansboro, they made no move to attack Morehead City or Beaufort because it lacked the necessary strength.

Naval officers also perceived threats from the sea. Knowing that the Confederate Navy was building ironclads in Wilmington, blockade officers became concerned that one of these formidable ships might steam unhindered through the blockade and attack Beaufort Harbor. On 16 March Captain Case in the USS *Iroquois* warned Lee of the danger ironclads posed. Lee then relayed these concerns to Secretary Welles, suggesting that no more ammunition be sent to Beaufort until Union ironclads were there to defend it. The ironclad threat peaked in May when Captain Charles Boggs in the USS *Sacramento* informed Lee that he had learned the Confederate Navy was building a ten-gun ironclad that they would use to retake Beaufort. "Fort Macon," he wrote, "would not hold out half an hour against such a battery."<sup>45</sup> Fortunately for Fort Macon's garrison, Boggs' information was wrong. The Confederate Navy never tried to build such a large ironclad in Wilmington.

The most credible, serious threats against Beaufort and Morehead City occurred in the early months of 1864. In early February Confederate General J. G. Martin conducted a large raid against Newport (located between Morehead City and New Bern) in conjunction with General George Pickett's attack on New Bern. Reaching Newport on 2

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<sup>44</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 478, 503, 505. Lee to Carr, Lee to Sands, 6 February 1863, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>45</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 613, 633-635; I, 9, 21.



February, Martin's command drove the defending Union troops from their barracks and back across the Newport River bridge. Then they burned the bridge and destroyed the barracks along with a large quantity of arms and ammunition. Martin reported burning three railroad bridges and two other bridges as well. In New Bern, a Confederate naval raiding party boarded and destroyed the USS *Underwriter*.<sup>46</sup>

News reached Beaufort at mid-day on 1 February that New Bern was under attack. Troops from Fort Macon built barricades in the streets of Beaufort, and all spare soldiers were sent to New Bern to bolster the defenses. On 3 February General Butler ordered a regiment of troops sent to Morehead City on the *S. R. Spaulding*.<sup>47</sup> The thick smoke of U.S. Navy turpentine burning in Newport, along with the sound of distant gunfire reminded everyone in Beaufort and Morehead City that the war was close by.<sup>48</sup>

Commander Benjamin Dove, commandant of the Beaufort Naval Station, dispatched blockaders then in port for coal and supplies to strategic points for defense of the area. He sent the shallow draft gunboat USS *Nansemond* up Bogue Sound to defend the western approaches, and he moved the blockader USS *Mercedita* up to the railroad depot. When the *Emma* arrived on 3 February he put her near the depot as well. That same day he wrote to Lee that the army force was exhausted and needed reinforcements

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<sup>46</sup>United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 volumes in four series (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901) Series I, Volume 33, 84-86, 511-512. Hereafter cited as *O.R.A.* with all citations referring to series one.

<sup>47</sup>*O.R.A.*, I, 33, 507.

<sup>48</sup>Levi S. Pigott Diary, 1-4 February 1864.





and that there were reports Confederates had landed on Bogue Banks. He also asked Lee to send him light draft gunboats to help defend the approaches to the area.<sup>49</sup>

The Confederate attack on New Bern failed ultimately, and Pickett had withdrawn by 3 February. On 6 February Fleet Paymaster Upham, who was in Beaufort at the time, reported to Lee that things were quiet there. The telegraph and railroad lines had both been cut, though they would be operational within days. Upham also reported that the loss in naval stores burned at Newport was not as great as first expected. Receiving word that things were quiet in Beaufort, Lee ordered Dove to release several blockaders that he had kept there for defense. As Goldsborough had done in the summer of 1862, Lee did not want the blockade to be weakened. The harbor would be secure, he wrote to Dove, with the tug *Lilac* and whatever blockader(s) happened in port for coal or repairs.<sup>50</sup>

Commander H. K. Davenport summed up what the U.S. Army and Navy experienced in early 1864 when he wrote to Lee on 7 February. "The enemy must be in force in this state," he wrote, "and will doubtless annoy us at all points."<sup>51</sup> Just weeks later they faced another threat. On 1 March General Peck in New Bern informed Colonel James Jourdan, commanding the U. S. Army Sub-district of Beaufort, that he expected a Confederate attack on Newport. In response Jourdan moved all his forces toward Newport and organized local inhabitants into an armed force.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 455-456.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 464-465, 480-481. Lee to Dove, 13 February 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.

<sup>51</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 468.

<sup>52</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,9, 522.



Jourdan depended upon naval firepower to bolster his defense. He coordinated with Dove to position blockaders then in port to protect vulnerable positions. Seven blockaders were in port, two of which were waiting for seas to subside so they could cross the bar. Dove placed the USS *Pequot* near the depot and moved the USS *Quaker City* and USS *Florida* to the west end of the anchorage near Bogue Sound. When the USS *Mount Vernon* got a break in the weather allowing her cross the bar, Dove had her send the *Nansemond* up to Beaufort from Wilmington because her shallow draft was useful. As prepared as possible, Jourdan and Dove awaited an attack that never came. Within a day or two the panic was over.<sup>53</sup>

This attack did not materialize, but blockaders in port still were alert for danger and were positioned where they could respond to an emergency.<sup>54</sup> Despite their vigilance, and the heightened alert of troops in Beaufort and Morehead City, Confederates struck next in eastern Carteret County. On the night of 3 April 1864 a small raiding party from the 67<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment totally destroyed the old lighthouse at Cape Lookout. They also tried to destroy the new 150 foot lighthouse (the present day Cape Lookout light). The damage to this higher tower was only slight, however. The lenses were shattered, the oil was lost, and some of the steps were wrecked. Crewmen from the

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<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.* Levi S. Pigott Diary, 2 March 1864.

<sup>54</sup>Lee to Dove, 16 February 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



*William Badger* and soldiers went to the cape in the small army steamer *North State* and made necessary temporary repairs to get the light shining again.<sup>55</sup>

This attack was the beginning of a month filled with threats, both real and perceived. On 13 April Lee passed on to Dove a captured letter written by Confederate Navy Secretary Stephen Mallory describing guerrilla and boat tactics. Lee urged Dove to be especially vigilant against raids by torpedo boats. He then asked the senior officer in the sounds to send two shallow draft gunboats from New Bern to Beaufort to help defend the harbor. Just days later the Confederate ironclad *Albemarle* sank the USS *Southfield* and cooperated with an army force under General Robert Hoke to capture Plymouth. Plymouth's fall sent large numbers of refugees (black and white) streaming to Beaufort from Plymouth and Washington. So many refugees fled to Beaufort that the army had to occupy the hospital to house some of them.<sup>56</sup>

The fall of Plymouth led to the evacuation of Washington and fear for the safety of New Bern. Colonel Jourdan sent many of his troops toward New Bern in anticipation of an attack there. In doing this he so weakened the garrison of Fort Macon that the fort commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Stone, asked Commander Dove to supply sailors to help man the fort. He sent sixty seamen from the USS *Grand Gulf* and USS *Cambridge* into the fort. Dove reported his actions to Lee and recommended that the USS *Arletta* and USS *Release* with their ordnance stores be sent away to keep them safe.

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<sup>55</sup>O.R.A., I,33, 260-261. Dove to Lee, 5 April 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>56</sup>O.R.A., I,33, 1010. Lee to Dove, 13 April 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers. Levi S. Pigott Diary, 21-23 April 1864.



He was afraid that the Confederates would cross the Newport River and attack Beaufort overland down the New Bern road making the harbor untenable.<sup>57</sup>

The supplying of sixty men to Fort Macon drew a quick response from Admiral Lee. The squadron commander ordered Dove to return the sixty sailors to their ships. In so doing Lee reminded Dove not to worry about military affairs because they were the army's problem. The two ships holding ordnance could be sent just outside the bar, but only as a last resort. Lee told Dove to send the blockaders retained there for defense back to their stations. Lee also sent letters up the chain of command to Welles and to General Butler. Describing the threats in eastern North Carolina, he told Welles that the army's request for sailors to help man Fort Macon revealed that an increase in military force was necessary. He wrote Butler that the presence of the enemy in Swansboro required increasing the garrisons in Morehead City and Beaufort. "The possession of Beaufort...is of such manifest importance that I deem it necessary to call your attention to the condition of affairs in that region."<sup>58</sup>

The anticipated attack on New Bern occurred in early May. Repeating an earlier tactic, Confederates cut the railroad line between Beaufort and New Bern. They also captured the army's Croatan outpost between New Bern and Havelock on 5 May. Though people in Carteret County heard the cannonading from New Bern, the

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<sup>57</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 664.

<sup>58</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 9, 678, 681, 698-699, 701-702.





Confederates came no closer to Morehead City than the Croatan outpost. By 8 May the Confederates had withdrawn from around New Bern restoring calm again to the area.<sup>59</sup>

Just as events in New Bern were settling, another cause for alarm emerged. On the night of 6 May the ironclad CSS *Raleigh* sortied out of New Inlet and exchanged shots with several of the blockading ships early on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> before retiring into the inlet. Hearing of this, Dove told Colonel Jourdan and Lieutenant Colonel Stone at Fort Macon to keep their eyes seaward. The commander of the blockader USS *Tuscarora* requested that Lee send an ironclad down to the blockade to counter the threat posed by the Confederate armored vessel. Concerned about Beaufort, Lee asked Captain Melancton Smith, the senior officer in the sounds of North Carolina, to send two ships to Beaufort as soon as they could be spared because "the retention of Beaufort Harbor is of very great importance to the Navy." The *Raleigh's* threat proved illusory, however. The ironclad ran aground and broke her back returning from her sole sortie.<sup>60</sup>

The Union army and navy conducted raids from Beaufort down the coast that may have brought as much consternation to Confederates as the threats to the Beaufort area brought to Union personnel. The first raid conducted from Beaufort occurred in mid-August 1862. Benjamin Porter left New Bern with a small gunboat and steamed down Core Sound to Beaufort. Leaving Beaufort on the afternoon of 15 August, he entered Bogue Inlet early on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The next day he destroyed a salt works near Swansboro

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<sup>59</sup>O.R.A., I,36,ii, 5,433. Levi S. Pigott Diary, 5-7 May 1864.

<sup>60</sup>O.R.N., I,10, 18-19, 34, 36, 44. Lee to Smith, 10 May 1864, Squadron Letters, Lee Papers.



while an army force that descended Bogue Sound simultaneously destroyed another salt works.<sup>61</sup>

Scarcely two months later the navy struck again at the Swansboro area. On 13 October Commander H. K. Davenport, then the senior officer in the sounds of North Carolina, ordered Lieutenant William Cushing, commanding the USS *Ellis*, to investigate whether blockade running was being conducted in Bogue Inlet. Cushing found nothing suspicious at Bogue Inlet, but went farther down the coast to New Topsail Inlet where he destroyed a large schooner. After returning briefly to Beaufort he revisited Swansboro on 28 October. Leaving Swansboro he returned to New River Inlet and destroyed a large salt works.<sup>62</sup> The destruction of this and other salt works on the coast cut into the ability of North Carolina to meet its demand for salt of nearly one thousand bushels per day.<sup>63</sup>

Cushing returned to New River Inlet in the *Ellis* again in late-November and steamed upriver as far as Jacksonville capturing mail, small arms, and two schooners. On this trip Cushing's luck ended. Trying to escape out of the inlet while under fire, he ran hard aground. Unable to get his ship off, Cushing loaded his men and all possible stores onto one of the schooners, burned the *Ellis*, and escaped back to Beaufort.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 7, 663.

<sup>62</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 130, 150-151, 159.

<sup>63</sup>Jonathan Worth to John D. Whitford, 12 March 1862, John D. Whitford Papers, North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>64</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 8, 230-232.



In late December 1863 Commander Dove planned yet another expedition down the coast, this time to Bear Inlet. Using the USS *Daylight* and USS *Howquah*, he carried the 158<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment and one company of the 9<sup>th</sup> Vermont. The ships and troops entered the inlet on Christmas Day and tore down a large salt works. They also destroyed 150 sacks of salt and a large number of empty turpentine barrels.<sup>65</sup>

Dove and Jourdan cooperated on a relatively unsuccessful raid in June 1864. Leaving Beaufort on 20 June the gunboats USS *Calypso* and USS *Nansemond* ferried one company (about one hundred men) to New River to destroy the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Reaching their destination, the raiders discovered that they had lost secrecy on the mission. They returned to Beaufort on 23 June after suffering very light casualties, but having failed to cut the railroad.<sup>66</sup>

In June 1864 Beaufort's location also played a significant role in the capture or destruction of three blockade runners. The USS *Keystone State*, while steaming from Beaufort toward Bermuda, captured the runner *Caledonia* on 29 May after a long chase. She returned to Beaufort with her prize and after coaling left again. En route to the blockade on 2 June she failed to seize a supremely fast blockade runner. Again she returned to Beaufort to top off her bunkers. She left Beaufort again at 8:45 A.M. on 5 June bound for the blockade off Wilmington. Just after passing the outer buoy off Beaufort Inlet she sighted yet another blockade runner, a small vessel trying to slip into

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<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 374-375.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 10, 169.



Wilmington. She quickly overtook the ship, the *Siren*, and returned to Beaufort with her prize at 4:05 P.M. having been gone only about seven hours.<sup>67</sup>

Early on the morning of 9 June while steaming toward Beaufort Inlet, USS *New Berne* sighted a side wheel steamer attempting to sneak through the blockade. The runner, which turned out to be the *Pevensey*, took flight immediately and eventually ran aground on Bogue Banks nine miles west of the inlet. After the *Pevensey* beached, one of her boilers exploded, and her crew took small boats to the shore. Commander Dove came down to the wreck site from Beaufort on the blockader USS *Cherokee*, and the tug USS *Violet* came down as well. After investigating the ship, they found it to be a fine iron-hulled vessel. They discovered a survivor and the remains of the ship's cargo of arms, blankets, cloth, shoes, lead, and bacon. U.S. cavalry came down the beach and captured the thirty-three crewmen from the runner who had escaped ashore. The *New Berne* made several attempts to pull the prize off the beach, but reluctantly left the ship to be broken up by the surf.<sup>68</sup>

Logistics may well have been the most important factor in the importance of Beaufort Harbor to the navy. This does not, however, diminish other benefits the navy derived from possession of the port. The ability of ships to conduct minor repairs at a port only eight to sixteen hours from the blockade was valuable to the navy, especially since the next closest alternative was twenty-four hours farther away. For broken down

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<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 105-107, 118, 121. Gifford to parents, 5 June 1864, Gifford Papers. List of Arrivals and Departures for Beaufort, N.C., June 1864, Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 136-137. Keeler, 175-177.





or severely damaged ships, passing Capes Lookout and Hatteras to reach Hampton Roads may have been impossible. The Beaufort hospital also received the squadron's sick and wounded. Beaufort's location was also valuable so close to the lower coast of the state, where salt was manufactured in vast quantities and where small schooners carried on trade in the numerous shallow inlets. Just over six months after the unsuccessful raid into New River in June 1864, the largest naval flotilla the U.S. Navy had ever assembled sailed from Beaufort.



## Chapter Five:

### Tightening the Blockade and the Fall of Wilmington

Refueling and resupplying blockading ships was not the only important business conducted during the fall of 1864. The harbor had an important role in the campaigns against Fort Fisher. After years of discussion and periodic planning, the Union army and navy finally made serious preparations to conduct a joint operation intended to capture the mouth of the Cape Fear River and occupy Wilmington. There had been numerous reconnaissances of the river's defenses. Naval officers on the blockade and in Beaufort frequently interviewed natives and local pilots about the depth of the two inlets to ascertain which size ships could pass through them.

In January 1863 the navy had gone so far as to assemble a fleet of ships including several monitors at Beaufort, for an attack on Wilmington.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the original Union ironclad, the famous USS *Monitor*, foundered en route to Beaufort to take part in this planned attack.<sup>2</sup> The plans had called for the army to descend from New Bern to Wilmington overland while navy ironclads ran past the forts guarding the entrance to the Cape Fear River. Meanwhile the navy's larger ships, which drew too much water to enter the river would bombard the forts. Doubts arose, however, about the ironclads' ability

<sup>1</sup>Richard Rush, et al., eds., *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1927) Series I, Volume 8, 289-300. Hereafter cited as *O.R.N.*

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 8, 327-331, 339.



safely to cross the bars while under fire.<sup>3</sup> Fearful that navy ironclads would not be present to support them, the army cancelled the operation.<sup>4</sup>

Capturing the entrances to the Cape Fear River was the only certain way to stop Wilmington's blockade running. On 6 September Lee declared to Secretary Welles: "Notwithstanding that the blockade of Wilmington is now as close as it is practicable to make it with the means at our command, and is without doubt the best blockade ever known, yet it is impossible to prevent violations of it, owing to. . . the use of steam on dark nights."<sup>5</sup> On the same date Captain Glisson informed Lee that he feared all the sleepless nights spent by the men on the blockade could not stop the running. "The port of Wilmington is the only hope of rebeldom," he wrote. "I feel convinced that if this port is taken the rebellion will not last three months."<sup>6</sup>

Acting Rear Admiral Lee, the officer who had been so responsible for strengthening and designing the blockade, was not the person chosen to command the attack on Fort Fisher. Secretary Welles desired a better known, more aggressive officer to lead such an important mission. He selected Rear Admiral David Farragut, commander of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron and commander of the U.S. fleet at the Battle of Mobile Bay. Consequently, on 5 September 1864 Welles appointed Farragut to lead the

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, I,11, 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, I,8, 301, 420; I,11, 420. Rod Gragg, *The Battle of Fort Fisher*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 34.

<sup>5</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,11, 432.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, I,10, 433.



upcoming attack. Welles directed him to take command of the North Atlantic Squadron while Lee replaced Farragut in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

Farragut, however, declined the appointment citing exhaustion and failing health. Welles turned next to Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, commander of the Mississippi Squadron, ordering him on 22 September to relieve Lee. On 12 October the command of the squadron changed hands at Hampton Roads, Virginia. As squadron commander, Porter oversaw the blockade of Wilmington and planned the attack on Fort Fisher. Though Beaufort was still the headquarters of the squadron, Porter spent most of the fall in Hampton Roads. This location provided more benefits for the preparation of the Fort Fisher campaign. General Ulysses Grant's headquarters were nearby at City Point on the James River. Porter could also monitor the repairs being conducted at Norfolk to vessels needed for the Wilmington campaign.<sup>8</sup>

Porter did little to alter the organization of the blockade. He was very concerned, however, about the length of time vessels stayed in Beaufort. He thought commanders' inattention to return to their stations at the assigned time weakened the blockade. Issuing a general order on 24 November, Porter reprimanded the commanders of the USS *Alabama*, USS *Cherokee*, and USS *Eolus* for being absent from their stations longer than necessary. In each case the ship's commander had decided to conduct repairs at Beaufort without the prior knowledge of the senior officer of his division. Porter instructed the

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 430, 467.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 472-473, 530, 557.





senior officer of each division off the Cape Fear to give written instructions to ships that were going to coal, specifying when each ship was expected to return. He wrote that "Unless broken down entirely, the officers sent away will exercise no judgment of their own in staying away on account of repairs."<sup>9</sup>

While Porter did not greatly alter the blockade, he devoted much time to overseeing preparations for the attack. Preparatory to the campaign, the Navy Department enlarged his squadron by transferring many ships from other commands. These had to be brought into the squadron from all over the coast to Beaufort, Hampton Roads, or the blockade. With this enlarged squadron he had to secure sufficient ammunition for shelling the fort. He also tried to obtain ample stocks of coal.

As early as the end of October the navy ordered to Beaufort ammunition for the attack. On 28 October Porter directed the USS *Osceola* to deliver ammunition to Beaufort and then to proceed to the blockade. Two weeks later he ordered the USS *Mackinaw* to deliver a store of large shells for monitors to Beaufort and then to go to the blockade.<sup>10</sup> Though the navy shipped ordnance on warships on these occasions, most ordnance stores for the Fort Fisher campaign arrived in Beaufort on chartered ships. On 6 November the schooner *Keokuk* arrived with ordnance stores, and the next day the

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 11, 90.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 4, 64.



schooner *William Allen* arrived. On 26 November six more ordnance-laden schooners entered the harbor within a three hour time span.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to ammunition, the navy had to stockpile adequate fuel for the Fort Fisher attack. In November 1864 twenty-two colliers arrived at Beaufort carrying 7,701 tons of coal. The inflow continued as fifteen colliers arrived in the first sixteen days of December, adding another 5,354 tons.<sup>12</sup> The arrival of so many colliers was necessary because the demand for coal was steadily growing as more ships joined the squadron. Each blockading ship burned around two hundred tons per month, and there would be many additional ships not regularly on the blockade that would need coal from Beaufort during the campaign.<sup>13</sup> In October 1864 colliers at Beaufort distributed 4,217 tons to the squadron, increasing to 6,359 tons in November. By December, the month of the first attack on Fort Fisher, U.S. Navy ships were taking over 2,000 tons per week from Beaufort.<sup>14</sup>

In late November the warships that would bombard the massive Confederate earthwork began arriving in Beaufort. Porter ordered Commander William H. Macomb, the senior officer in the sounds of North Carolina, to send all his "double-ender" gunboats to Beaufort as well as any colliers that would arrive in the sounds. In early December he

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<sup>11</sup> List of Arrivals and Departures, November 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C..

<sup>12</sup> Report of Coal received and discharged at Beaufort N.C., Weeks ending 3, 10 December 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>13</sup> Coal Usage Reports, Box 706, File XF, U.S. Navy Subject File.



ordered the gunboats USS *Tacony*, USS *Iosco*, and USS *Saco* to Beaufort.<sup>15</sup> The USS *Rhode Island*, USS *Fort Jackson*, and USS *Santiago de Cuba* towed the three ironclad monitors *Canonicus*, *Monadnock*, and *Mahopac* to Beaufort arriving on 15 and 16 December. Porter himself arrived in the harbor on 15 December.<sup>16</sup> By the time Porter reached Beaufort, there were approximately seventy ships of all types in the harbor, not including others anchored offshore.<sup>17</sup>

Porter was especially interested in the USS *Louisiana*, which he had ordered to Beaufort. This vessel was intended to be the decisive factor in the upcoming battle for Fort Fisher. The navy had altered this steamer to hold hundreds of tons of gunpowder, placed and fused to explode simultaneously. Army and navy officers hoped that when this ship exploded within a few hundred yards of the fort she would dismantle the guns, level the mounds, and kill or disable the garrison, enabling the capture of the fort to be a simple matter. After the *Louisiana* received most of the intended powder from Norfolk, the double-end gunboat USS *Sassacus* towed her from Hampton Roads to Beaufort and moored the powder ship safely away from the other ships. Once in the harbor the crews of the *Sassacus* and USS *Agawam* loaded the *Louisiana* with another 30 tons of powder

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<sup>14</sup>Report of Coal received and discharged at Beaufort, N.C., 15, 31 October 1864, 15, 26 November 1864, 3, 10, 17, 24 December 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>15</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 79, 112, 136, 186, 189.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 185-186. List of Arrival and Departures, December 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>17</sup>Report of Coal received and discharged at Beaufort, N.C., 17 December 1864; List of Arrivals and Departures, November, December 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.



(bringing the total to 235 tons for the mission), and the commanders of the *Sassacus* and *Agawam* carefully set the fuses themselves.<sup>18</sup>

The assemblage of ships of all types in the harbor and offshore made a big impression on those who saw it. James Gifford on the USS *Release*, which was moored in the harbor, wrote to his parents several times during the build-up. On 9 December he counted twelve gunboats in the harbor. Additionally, three more gunboats, two sloops of war, and a prize steamer were anchored off the bar riding out a heavy gale. Four days later he counted over twenty gunboats and the prize steamer *Emma and Henry* in port. On 15 December he informed his parents that day had been "the liveliest day I have seen down here." He saw the flagship and two monitors enter the harbor that day. A dozen other warships and another monitor dropped anchor off the bar as well. "The harbor is so full of vessels that it is hard to move around."<sup>19</sup>

Horatio G. Robinson was also in port on board the USS *Osceola*. His vessel arrived on 5 December, giving him a grand opportunity to see the harbor fill. He wrote his parents on 15 December full of excitement about seeing the monitors enter the harbor and seeing the huge frigates anchored offshore because they were so large they could not cross the bar. "The forts can not stand more than two or three hours at most against the

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<sup>18</sup>O.R.N., I, 11, 223-231.

<sup>19</sup>James Gifford to Parents, 9, 13, 15 December 1864, James Gifford Papers.





hundreds of guns," he wrote. "It is by all means the heaviest fleet which ever sailed from one of our ports."<sup>20</sup>

The great assemblage of ships departed Beaufort between 16 - 18 December for the rendezvous off New Inlet. After several days of heavy winds and seas, the weather turned favorable for the attack to begin on Christmas Eve. Shortly after 2 A.M. Levi Pigott in Beaufort was startled awake by a sudden shock followed by the sound of a distant explosion. Lieutenant Commander William C. West in Beaufort reported that between 1:00 and 2:00 A.M. he felt, "the concussion of a distant explosion. . . . at the storehouse and carpenter shop on shore," and that "A vivid light was seen at the time by the lookouts on the *Arletta*."<sup>21</sup> The *Louisiana* had exploded with enough force to be seen and heard that far away. Though people who heard or witnessed the explosion reported varying times, Commander A. C. Rhind, who was responsible for detonating the *Louisiana*, reported the time of detonation at 1:40 A.M. Confederates in the fort were unharmed and unimpressed by the explosion. In fact, Colonel William Lamb, commander of the garrison, did not even mention the explosion in his report.<sup>22</sup>

The powder boat scheme was a complete failure that was intensively investigated afterwards. Though it could be seen and heard as far away as Beaufort, it had no impact

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<sup>20</sup>Horatio G. Robinson to Mother, 15 December 1864, Horatio G. Robinson Letters, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC. List of Arrivals and Departures, December 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>21</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 249.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 226, 363.



on the fort that was supposed to be only hundreds of yards away. In the controversy after the explosion's failure Major General Butler claimed that only one-tenth of the powder on the ship had detonated. Porter, however, asserted that it all had. Commander Rhind who was responsible for the carrying out the mission, had probably the best analysis. He believed that there had not been enough fusing and confinement of the powder on the *Louisiana*. This, he reasoned, lessened the shock of the explosion and also prevented the powder from exploding simultaneously. As a result much of the powder was blown into the sky and burned by the first detonations. Further investigation also reveals that the *Louisiana* probably dragged anchor causing it to be a mile or more from the fort when it exploded rather than a few hundred yards.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the day on Christmas Eve the navy fleet shelled the fort, firing over twenty thousand projectiles, weighing 1,275,299 pounds. The army force under General Benjamin Butler landed on Christmas Day, but in a controversial decision, he did not attack the fort. He claimed that the naval bombardment had not sufficiently damaged the fort.<sup>24</sup> After loading his troops back onto their transports, Butler and his ships returned to Hampton Roads.

Meanwhile, much of the navy's fleet returned to Beaufort. Eight gunboats entered on 27 December, followed by nine more the next day and ten on 29 December, and another six on 30 December. Upon arrival the ships transferred some of their wounded to

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<sup>23</sup>Michael P. Coogan, "War Career of the gunboat *Louisiana* and the fall of Fort Fisher," M.A. Thesis, East Carolina University, 1997), 111, 128, 130-132. Levi S. Pigott Diary, 24 December 1864.

<sup>24</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 250-251, 254-260, 441.



the hospital and then coaled and repaired battle damage.<sup>25</sup> Replenishing the depleted coal and ammunition stocks on the vessels unable to cross the bar was an arduous task. Strong winds blew incessantly the last part of 1864 and the first weeks of 1865. The continually heavy seas off the Beaufort Bar made it difficult to ferry supplies to the ships offshore. In some instances waves actually broke over the ships. The refueling and rearming in and out of the harbor continued nonetheless, consuming vast quantities of stores.<sup>26</sup> To facilitate the filling of shells with powder and strapping them to their sabots, the gunner at Beaufort, Samuel Hines, requested permission to build a twenty foot by thirty foot shed on shore. Though Porter granted permission, it is unknown whether this shed was actually constructed.<sup>27</sup>

To meet the great demand for coal that existed at Beaufort at the end of 1864, Porter first ordered most of the coal in the sounds of North Carolina and all the coal at Hatteras Inlet to be sent to Beaufort. Writing to the commandant at the Norfolk Navy Yard, he directed that eight colliers be sent there from Hampton Roads if possible. On the same day he wrote to Adams in Philadelphia requesting that enough coal be sent to Beaufort to maintain a stock of 8,000 tons. Just days later Porter felt that even this stock was insufficient. Writing to Secretary Welles that day he stated that: "There is not enough coal here to supply the squadron, though I think this will not delay our operations.

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 December 1864. List of Arrivals and Departures, 25-31 December, 1864, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>26</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11,406-407.

<sup>27</sup>Hines to Porter, 4 January 1865, Box 137, File BA, U.S. Navy Subject File.



It is very important that there should be a large supply here while the squadron is so large on this coast." That same day he wrote again to Adams stating that he needed 12,000 tons of coal at Beaufort for "immediate use."<sup>28</sup> The demand for coal at Beaufort became so great that in January the navy stopped shipping coal to other locations in the jurisdiction of the squadron to meet the demand at Beaufort.<sup>29</sup>

At this time some changes also took place at the Beaufort Naval Station. Available correspondence indicates that Lieutenant Commander William C. West replaced Commander Dove at the station on 17 December, though there is no information to suggest why the change was made.<sup>30</sup> The Navy Department had ordered him detached from the station at Beaufort on 3 December, but he remained there until the attack on Fort Fisher was organized to acquaint West with the duties of the station. After the first attack on Fort Fisher Dove moved to a new assignment at Mound City, Illinois, leaving West in command at Beaufort.<sup>31</sup>

The navy also built an office ashore during the same time. This apparently was near Fort Macon and was either on pilings or was very close to shore. James Gifford on the USS *Release* wrote on 27 November that the structure was nearly finished. He mentioned the building expectantly, saying on 13 December that he expected to begin

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<sup>28</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 79, 392-393, 413.

<sup>29</sup>Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting to Porter, 17 January 1865, Box 704, File XF, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>30</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 201, 249. Dove to Welles, 28 December 1864, M-147, Roll 82, National Archives.

<sup>31</sup>Dove to Welles, 28 December 1864, M-147, Roll 82, National Archives.





using it the next day. It was January, however, before the office building was in use. When it was, Gifford could walk a plank to shore and then up to the office each morning.<sup>32</sup>

On 30 December one more change was instituted at the station. On that date the USS *Osceola* and USS *Shokokon* were ordered to duty as guard vessels for the port. Both of these vessels were double-ended sidewheel steamers. The first was 205' long, the second was 181' long, and each drew about 8'6". The purpose of these vessels was to stop all boats passing in and out of the inlet or conducting trade in the harbor. They sent any boat carrying food or other market commodity to the flagship to obtain a permit. The object of this measure was to prevent any trade that might benefit Confederates or end up in enemy hands.<sup>33</sup>

The first two weeks of 1865 continued to be exceptionally busy at the Beaufort Naval Station. Though Butler and the army transports had retired to Hampton Roads, Admiral Porter kept most of his huge fleet in place at Beaufort. Some ships remained off the Cape Fear River on blockade duty or steamed to Hampton Roads for repairs or supplies to await a second attack on the fort.

The failure of the first attack caused bitter recriminations. Never on good terms personally, Porter and Butler blamed each other for the attack's failure. Butler claimed, with some justification, that the bombardment had done little damage to the fort. In not

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<sup>32</sup>James Gifford to Parents, 27 November, 9, 13 December 1864, 29 January 1865, Gifford Papers.

<sup>33</sup>*O.R.N.*, I,11,393.



assaulting, however, Butler disobeyed Grant's instructions that once a successful landing had been made the attack must be pressed. Furthermore, though ineffective at materially damaging the fort, the navy's withering bombardment certainly would have greatly limited the outnumbered garrison's ability to resist. The bitterness was so great that Porter forbade his commander on the James River from cooperating with Butler in any operations. Following the first attack the navy and President Lincoln were very anxious to attack again. General Grant was very cooperative because he disapproved of Butler's conduct, later saying that "Butler made a fearful mistake" in not assaulting the fort. In fact, because he had little faith in Butler's abilities, Grant had not intended Butler to lead the attack at all. One of Butler's subordinates was Grant's choice to attack, but Butler asserted his prerogative and led it himself. The general in chief informed Porter that by 2 January the transports for the landing force would be assembled, coaled, and provisioned. He assured Porter that Benjamin Butler would not command the second expedition.<sup>34</sup>

General Grant ordered Major General Alfred H. Terry to command this second expedition, explicitly instructing him to cooperate fully with Porter. He suggested that Terry consult with Porter freely, and stated that: "the most complete understanding should exist between yourself and the fleet commander." Terry arrived at Beaufort on 8 January with his fleet of transports. Though Porter suggested that the transports enter the harbor to avoid a coming gale, most could not get in before the wind became violent. He

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<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 237-241, 391, 393-394. U. S. Grant, *Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols., (New York: Charles C. Webster & Co., 1885), Volume 2, 388, 394.



and Terry quickly developed mutual respect, and arranged in Beaufort the plan of attack to be used against Fort Fisher.<sup>35</sup>

By the second full week of January the fleet was refueled and rearmed. To make this possible, during the first seven days of January colliers and ordnance schooners at Beaufort distributed to the squadron nearly 2,500 tons of coal and over 15,000 rounds of ammunition. Additionally, the navy had to borrow 1,561 tons of coal from the army in Beaufort for the fleet. On 10 January five warships left for New Inlet at 5:00 P.M. The following day another fourteen ships departed. On 12 January fifteen ships sailed between 7:00 and 7:30 A.M.<sup>36</sup> The fleet assembled off New Inlet where it rendezvoused with the army's transports under General Terry.

Late in the afternoon on 13 January Porter ordered the fleet to open fire. The vessels resumed on the morning of 14 January and continued throughout the day. That afternoon the army transports sent their troops ashore in small boats. The following day the bombardment resumed, and at 3:00 P.M. the thousands of troops and a party of 1,600 sailors and 400 marines stormed the fort. Fighting their way from traverse to traverse in hand-to-hand combat they eventually took the last remaining battery at 10:00 P.M. Porter wrote on the evening of 15 January that: "I don't suppose there was ever a work subjected to such a terrific bombardment, or where the appearance of a fort was more

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<sup>35</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 404-405, 436.

<sup>36</sup>List of Vessels Arriving and Departing The Harbor of Beaufort, N.C., 15 January 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.



altered." The fleet had fired 19,682 times (a total weight of projectiles of 1,652, 638 pounds) at Fort Fisher during the second attack.<sup>37</sup>

Fort Fisher was the key to the Cape Fear River defenses. A day after it fell, on the night of 16 January, the Confederate garrison of Fort Caswell, which guarded the western entrance to the river, detonated the fort's powder magazine and evacuated the fort. Ironically, Fort Fisher experienced a similar explosion earlier on the 16th. That morning an accident exploded that fort's magazine killing and wounding a large number of Union soldiers and sailors. On the same day the first Union gunboats entered the Cape Fear River where they sent boats ashore to pick up the navy's wounded from the battle and magazine explosion.<sup>38</sup>

Refueling the fleet was not as difficult after the second attack as it had been after the first. After the first attack nearly all the ships refueled at Beaufort. After the second some ships could refuel from colliers that naval ships had towed to the Cape Fear River from Beaufort. Beginning in December Porter ordered colliers to be towed to the blockade. On 24 December only three were off the Cape Fear River. Only one remained there by 7 January. As of 14 January four were on the blockade.<sup>39</sup> On that day, as the bombardment of Fort Fisher was raging, Porter ordered West in Beaufort to send one thousand tons of coal immediately, either under the colliers' own sails or under tow.

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<sup>37</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 434-435, 436-442.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 11, 564-565, 569.

<sup>39</sup>Report of Coal Received and Discharged at Beaufort, N.C., 24 December, 7, 14 January, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.





"Whenever a steamer leaves Beaufort for this place," he added, "make her tow something down if you have anything to send."<sup>40</sup> Evidently he anticipated the successful capture of the fort. Possession of the Cape Fear River made refueling close to shore easier and also made possible refueling in the river itself. Consequently, by the end of January, of twenty-eight colliers consigned to Beaufort, sixteen were anchored off Wilmington.<sup>41</sup>

Through February and March 1865 more and more coal ships went from Beaufort to the Cape Fear River. As a result, the number of naval ships calling on Beaufort for supplies and coal declined. At the end of January Gifford wrote to his parents that though General Grant had been there that day, business in the harbor had been rather dull.<sup>42</sup> Naval operations proceeded up the Cape Fear River, and the necessary supply vessels were either towed or sent directly there. In order to keep abreast of happenings in the sounds of North Carolina and elsewhere, Porter sent a vessel to Beaufort each Monday to bring down any mail.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no good sources available describing daily naval activity in the harbor during the closing months of the war. In February, March, and April 1865 the number of ships at the naval station remained constant at about five. The *Release*, *Arletta*, and *William Badger* were always there with their stocks of provisions, stores, and

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<sup>40</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 11, 597.

<sup>41</sup>Report of Coal Received and Discharged at Beaufort, N.C., 28 January, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>42</sup>James Gifford to Parents, 29 January 1865, Gifford Papers.

<sup>43</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 12, 16.



ordnance. Additionally, two tugs or small gunboats were there to serve as guard ships, and to move colliers and supply vessels.<sup>44</sup> Warships still called in port for fuel and supplies, but not as frequently. From Beaufort ordnance and coal were shipped to the vessels in the Cape Fear River until the evacuation of Wilmington. Later the vessels in the sounds received large stocks of ordnance from Beaufort. The ordnance stores from Beaufort could easily reach New Bern by rail.<sup>45</sup> The supply of ordnance was so large that on 25 March West sent the *Queen* back fully loaded, only three days after she arrived because there was no need for the ordnance stores she carried.<sup>46</sup>

As the number of Federal armies operating in the state increased, the location of Beaufort Harbor on a railroad line made it crucial to the army. Supplies of all sorts and reinforcements poured into Beaufort to support the operations. Between 12 and 19 February four naval ships entered the harbor compared with seven army transports. The following week another fifteen transports arrived, opposed to just ten naval vessels. For the week ending 3 March sixteen more transports arrived. These ships brought troops, coal for the army, and equipment to repair the railroad inland from New Bern.<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 12, 71-73, 93-94.

<sup>45</sup>West to E. Mellack, 18 February 1865, Box 487; Thornton to Maccomb, 3 March 1865, Box 489, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>46</sup>West to H. A. Adams, 23 March 1865, Box 137, File BA; "List of Vessels Arriving and Departing Beaufort, N.C.," 26 March 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File

<sup>47</sup>"List of Vessels arriving and Departing Beaufort, N.C.," 19, 26 February, 3 March 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File. Levi S. Pigott Diary, 1 February, 8 March.



inflow of troops and their necessary supplies continued through the end of the war, beginning a direct channel from the ocean to the armies by way of the railroad.<sup>48</sup>

On 12 April news reached Beaufort of General Robert E. Lee's surrender to General Grant at Appomatox. In celebration Fort Macon fired a hundred gun salute. Other armies had yet to surrender, but this was a sign that the long war was nearly over. On 18 April the shocking dispatch that an assassin had murdered President Lincoln reached Beaufort. The celebration of a few days earlier turned into mourning. The huge salute by Fort Macon was replaced by flags at half mast on the fort and ships in the harbor.<sup>49</sup>

The American Civil War was practically over in April 1865, and the U.S. Navy, without active combat operations to perform, soon began to decommission ships and reduce its size to a peacetime level. There were still missions to perform, particularly confiscating abandoned or captured Confederate naval property, but the fighting was over. Commodore William Radford supervised the shrinkage of the squadron and the seizure of Confederate naval property. This officer had commanded the ironclads during the attacks on Fort Fisher and more recently had commanded the ships on the James River in Virginia.

Beginning 12 April Admiral Porter took a leave of absence from the squadron leaving Radford temporarily in command. His letter to Radford informing him of the change describes affairs in eastern North Carolina in the period immediately after the

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<sup>48</sup>"Lists of Vessels Arriving and Departing Beaufort, N.C.," March, April 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>49</sup>Levi S. Pigott Diary, 12, 18 April 1865.



cessation of hostilities. To fuel the continuing operations he had directed 500 tons of coal to be sent to Beaufort and New Bern from Craney Island near Norfolk. Additionally, he had requested that the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting ship 500 tons more to Beaufort and the Cape Fear River. Porter wanted the coal discharged as soon as possible to prevent high demurrage costs because coal consumption was likely to be slow. All the ships in the Cape Fear River received their stores from Beaufort as had ships manning the blockade earlier in the war. The navy wanted as much of its property as possible in the sounds be sent north. Correspondingly, ships in the sounds should receive their stores from Beaufort as much as possible.<sup>50</sup>

The coal Porter directed to Beaufort was not the last shipment to go there. It continued to through June 1865. Some of this came (as did most shipments) from the North, but a few of the colliers came from Wilmington where their cargoes were unneeded. Though naval activities slowed down in the spring of 1865, the navy still needed a coal supply in Beaufort for the ships that still called there, and to repay the army for the amount it had borrowed during the Fort Fisher campaign. As of 11 February the navy owed the army 1,508 tons, and this had grown to 1,526 by mid-April. Late that spring some of the navy's arriving coal was immediately turned over to the army to reduce this deficit. Other naval coal was unloaded at the wharf near Fort Macon. This measure prevented the accumulation of demurrage at a time when coal consumption was slow.

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<sup>50</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 12, 115.





Consumption was slow enough that in mid-June two colliers were sent from Beaufort to Norfolk still loaded, a step that would have been inconceivable months earlier.<sup>51</sup>

Radford's temporary status as commander of the squadron was short-lived. On 28 April Secretary Welles detached Porter from command of the North Atlantic Squadron. On the same day Welles informed Radford that he had been promoted to Acting Rear Admiral and that he was officially to assume command of the squadron. The day after sending these orders Welles wrote the new Acting Rear Admiral again, notifying him that, "there is nothing to interfere with a considerable reduction of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron." Radford was to select thirty vessels to retain in the squadron. The remainder would be decommissioned or sold.<sup>52</sup>

The order to reduce the squadron's size did not affect all its parts immediately. The number of ships at Beaufort remained the same (at five) until late May. The number of ships in the sounds of North Carolina was reduced much earlier. Just two days after Welles had written to Radford about reducing the squadron at the end of April, Radford replied by listing nine ships in the sounds that were no longer needed. By the first of June another twenty ships from various parts of the squadron had already returned north for disposition. Radford had also ordered another eight ships to go north once they had completed repairs needed for the journey.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>"Statement of Army & Navy Coal, etc.," 11 February 1865, Box 704, File XF; "Report of Coal Received and Discharged at Beaufort, N.C.," 25 March, 15, 22 April, 10, 24 June, 1 July 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 132, 143-144, 153-154.



The reduction of the squadron's size did not stop at thirty. On 31 May Gustavus Fox, who was temporarily acting secretary of the navy at the time, ordered Radford to cut even more ships from the squadron. The navy allowed Radford to keep in the squadron six tugs, seven steamers, one monitor, and whatever shoeships he felt necessary for that force. After the squadron had been reduced to that small number the department combined it with the South Atlantic Squadron to form the Atlantic Squadron. Radford commanded the newly combined squadrons from headquarters at Port Royal, South Carolina.<sup>54</sup>

The shrinking squadron led to reduction in business at Beaufort. Through April and May 1865 a variety of ships called at Beaufort. The number included, however, only two to three naval ships per week compared to the scores per week that had arrived earlier. Transports entered regularly to support the army garrison at Fort Macon or withdraw some of the large number of troops in eastern North Carolina. Additionally, an assortment of coast survey vessels and revenue cutters visited. The steamer *Zodiac* also arrived each week with mail.<sup>55</sup> At the close of hostilities the three long-time storeships were present. The station also had the tugs USS *Anemone* and USS *Berberry*, and small gunboats USS *Dawn* and USS *Fort Donelson*. The *Dawn* served as a guard ship for the harbor. The *Fort Donelson* spent time as a guard ship and later was detained there

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<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 153,157.

<sup>55</sup>List of Vessels Arriving and Departing Beaufort, N.C., April-May 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.



holding a court martial.<sup>56</sup> The *Fort Donelson* departed in early May; the *Berberry* and the *Dawn* departed later in the month. The USS *William Badger* and USS *Arletta* remained at the station. The *Arletta* was specifically recognized because she was "economical" and had a small crew. Of the storeships that spent so much time in Beaufort during the war, the USS *Release* was the first to leave. Departing at noon on 18 May, she went to New Inlet as a guard ship.<sup>57</sup>

On 24 June 1865 the reduction of naval forces extended to closing the sounds of North Carolina as a station. Welles ordered Radford to withdraw all naval vessels and property from those waters "without unnecessary delay." Radford sent Commander H. N. T. Arnold on the USS *Chicopee* to the sounds to oversee the removal and disposition of naval property there. Arnold used the tugs USS *Delta* and USS *Gamma*, which were stationed in the sounds, to remove naval property. Welles requested that Radford keep a shallow-draft steamer at Beaufort that could go to New Bern or elsewhere in the sounds in case of emergency.<sup>58</sup>

The naval presence in Beaufort Harbor became even smaller in late July with the withdrawal of the *Arletta* and *Anemone* to go north. Their departure left only the old store hulk *William Badger* there along with a small supply (about five hundred tons) of coal for the use of any arriving vessels. Removal of property from Beaufort began in

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<sup>56</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 12, 116-118.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 143, 153, 155. "List of Vessels Arriving and Departing the Harbor of Beaufort, N.C., 21 May 1865, Box 490, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File.

<sup>58</sup>*O.R.N.*, I, 12, 163, 167. Arnold to Macomb, 30 August 1865, Box 704, File XF, U.S. Navy Subject File.



August. The USS *Release*, after taking in some confiscated iron from Wilmington, sailed to Beaufort. There she was loaded with small stores, clothing, chains, and anchors from the station as well as some property saved from the *Aphrodite*, a chartered steamer that had wrecked on Core Banks north of Cape Lookout on 3 October 1864.<sup>59</sup>

The U.S. Navy began closing its Beaufort Naval Station in October 1865. On 17 October West held a public auction of an assortment of naval property. He advertised it only one day and only twelve people were present at the auction, of whom just six made bids. The results were disappointing. Just one-fourth of the property received bids, and most of the property sold for far less than its value. Most prominent among the items sold was the *William Badger*, which fetched \$1,650. This was the only item that went for close to its value. Three boats, a writing table, three lots of old rigging, and an old sail boat brought relatively small sums.<sup>60</sup>

Lieutenant Commander West apparently implemented very slowly the department's order to close the station at Beaufort. On 4 November Secretary Welles complained to Commodore Joseph Lanman, commander of Atlantic Squadron at the time, that U.S. naval officers and property were still at Beaufort. Lanman defended himself and West by asserting that only one-fourth of the material offered for sale had received any bids. For the \$22,000 of property that remained unsold, Lanman assumed the department would

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<sup>59</sup>West to Radford, 19 August 1865, Box 487, File OX, U.S. Navy Subject File. *O.R.N.*, I,10, 523-524; I,12, 173.

<sup>60</sup>Lanman to Welles, 17 October 1865, Atlantic Squadron Letters, M-89, Reel 184, National Archives.





send a ship. He did not try a second auction, assuming "that the department would not authorize so absurd a sale as seventy dollars (\$70) for a store house which cost six thousand (\$6,000), and fifty dollars (\$50) for good boats which probably cost seven or eight hundred (7 or \$800)."<sup>61</sup>

Commander Arnold completed the closure of the Beaufort Naval Station on 22 November. He directed the officers at the station to travel to Norfolk in the USS *Conemaugh*. By the same vessel he sent a quantity of naval property from the station. He locked the storehouses and sent an inventory of material left in them to Commodore Lanman.<sup>62</sup> The U.S. Naval Station at Beaufort, which had been so active and important for the navy, was closed.

The greatest importance of the Beaufort Naval Station was its role in supporting the blockade. It also was also a nearly ideal position from which to stage the Fort Fisher campaigns. The fall of Fort Fisher was of profound importance to both the course of the war, and also to Beaufort's Naval Station. The capture of Fort Fisher closed the Confederacy's last major port for blockade running, shutting off the flow of imported goods and supplies. Its armies pressed on all points, the Confederacy could not long survive. The capture of Fort Fisher also greatly reduced the navy's need for a station at Beaufort.

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<sup>61</sup>Lanman to Welles, 12 November 1865, *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>Arnold to Welles, 22 November 1865, *Ibid.*



There was no longer a blockade to maintain. The navy's operations up the Cape Fear River that led to the seizure of Wilmington in February 1865 did not demand the presence of a station at Beaufort nearly as much as the blockade had. The chartered colliers and supply ships now went directly to the Cape Fear River. Consequently, the number of ships calling at Beaufort dwindled. The closure of the station in November 1865 does not imply that the harbor was insignificant. There had been urgent need for a good port near the Wilmington approaches. The war created the need for a station at Beaufort. Just as in 1853 the U.S. Navy had decided not to establish a base there during peacetime. When the war ended the navy did not need to retain its station there when peace returned.



## Chapter Six: Conclusions

The facts surrounding the history of the Beaufort Naval Station do not address the importance of the station to the northern war effort. The relative obscurity of this small station can easily overshadow its significance to the U.S. Navy. The value of this harbor lay not in the grandeur of the ships that were there on a constant basis. Compared to northern ports, Beaufort was relatively shallow and could not accommodate the great ocean going frigates built for the navy in the early 1850s. Furthermore, the harbor itself was never the scene of any battles except the one in which the Union captured it. Admiral Porter in *The Naval History of the Civil War*, written long after the war, stated that: "Beaufort was a valuable acquisition to the North Atlantic Squadron, and a fine rendezvous for the smaller vessels engaged in blockading the coast."<sup>1</sup> The evidence shows that Beaufort was indeed more important than its obscurity would suggest. This harbor was more than a "fine rendezvous" for the smaller blockading ships.

The greatest limitation Beaufort Harbor placed on the navy was the draft that could cross the bar on normal conditions. This limitation is easily overstated, however. The harbor could accommodate larger ships than any other river or harbor in the state. The rivers, inlets, and harbors in most regions of the south were shallow as well. Large vessels such as the USS *Minnesota*, USS *Colorado*, or USS *Powhatan* could not enter the harbor. These ships, however, were too large to enter most southern harbors. Of 101 ships built by the U.S. Navy between 1858 and the close of hostilities, only 7 or 8 drew

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<sup>1</sup> David Dixon Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, (New York: Sherman Publishing, 1886), 403.



too much water to cross the Beaufort Bar. These were the four ships of the *Housatonic* class, the two of the *Lackawanna* class, possibly one of the vessels of the *Sacramento* class, and the ironclad *New Ironsides*.<sup>2</sup>

The navy expanded much more during the war by purchasing existing vessels than by new construction in navy yards or under contract. Some of these vessels were also too large for Beaufort. This had little impact on the importance of the station because only three ships that spent time on the blockade of Wilmington, the *Fort Jackson*, the *Santiago de Cuba*, and the *R. R. Cuyler* drew too much water to cross the bar. Of these three, the *R. R. Cuyler*, spent only a short time on the blockade. Every other ship that served on the blockade could cross the bar. Beaufort Inlet did not have to be navigable to the large battleships and frigates necessary for great fleet actions. Rather, it provided a safe anchorage where blockading ships could refuel, resupply, and repair after arduous weeks at sea. Because of the shallow water surrounding the entrances to the Cape Fear River and the type of vessels that ran the blockade, the ships most useful were fast vessels of light draft. These ships could easily enter Beaufort Harbor.

The primary business of the harbor was coal. Without that essential commodity, a blockade would be impossible. Fortunately for the historian, there are extant records of most of the coal shipped to Beaufort during its years as a naval installation. Coal reports exist for May 1862, February 1863 through April 1864, and from August 1864 through

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<sup>2</sup>Statistical Data of U.S. Ships," United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 31 vols. (Government Printing Office: 1880-1927) Series II, vol 1. Hereafter cited as *O.R.N.* Donald L. Canney, *The Old Steam Navy: Frigates, Sloops, and Gunboats, 1815-1885*, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990) 71-120, 174-177.





July 1865. These are found in the Lee Papers of the Library of Congress and in the U.S. Navy Subject File in the National Archives. For the periods indicated, colliers made 177 trips to Beaufort with coal, bringing an average of 332 tons per trip. In many cases the same collier made repeated trips to the harbor with coal. The *Richard Vaux*, *General Banks*, *John Stroup*, and *J.P. Wethrill* made four or five separate trips to the station. These colliers and scores like them brought a recorded 58,815.5 tons to Beaufort. Because there are gaps in the records, the actual amount delivered was much larger.<sup>3</sup>

Extant records reveal the mechanics behind the coal shipments, but also allow quantification, in terms of money and time saved, of the value of the Beaufort Naval Station to the U.S. Navy. This can be done by carefully examining the coal records, the normal consumption of coal per day, the travel distances, and the numbers of ships on the blockade at any given time. Calculating the cost savings of returning to Beaufort as opposed to Hampton Roads requires considering three sets of variables. The first is the freight rate for shipping coal to Hampton Roads as opposed to Beaufort. Secondly, one must allow for the average demurrage costs accumulated at each port. The third variable one must consider is the amount of coal expended in going to Beaufort compared to Hampton Roads. The freight rate for coal to Hampton Roads was cheaper than it was for Beaufort. The great savings in coal consumption travelling to Beaufort compensated for

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<sup>3</sup>Coal Reports for Beaufort, N.C., Files OS, OX, XF, U. S. Navy Subject File. Reports of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers.



this creating a net savings for the navy. Calculating the average demurrage per ton and figuring that into the equation made no difference.

The freight cost of the coal shipped to Beaufort varied between \$3.50 and \$4.50 per ton, averaging \$3.83.<sup>4</sup> By comparison, the navy paid an average of \$2.11 per ton for coal it shipped to Hampton Roads, only 55% of the Beaufort rate.<sup>5</sup> Presumably, the difference in freight rate was because Hampton Roads was closer to Philadelphia, the port of origin for coal shipped from the North. Rates of demurrage, the other major factor in coal cost, were identical for Hampton Roads and Beaufort. Not only were the demurrage rates identical, the average demurrage expenses per ton were identical for each port. Considering demurrage, coal shipped to Hampton Roads cost \$3.46 per ton, and that shipped to Beaufort cost \$6.29.<sup>6</sup>

Colliers in Hampton Roads were unloaded more quickly than they were at Beaufort. This is unimportant, however, because the average collier sent to Hampton Roads only carried 248 tons. The navy could charter smaller ships to go to Hampton Roads more easily because they did not have to go nearly as far and round the dangerous capes. The lay days allowed for each ship were based on the size of the cargo, as was the

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<sup>4</sup>Reports of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Coal Reports for Hampton Roads, June 1863-March 1864, Box 27-28, Lee Papers.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, Coal Reports for Beaufort, N.C., Files OS, OX, XF, U. S. Navy Subject File. Reports of Coal Vessels at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers.



demurrage rate per day. The average demurrage cost per ton was the same because the vessels were unloaded at the same rate relative to their size.<sup>7</sup>

Most ships burned between ten and twelve tons of coal per day. A ship travelling from the Cape Fear to Beaufort, taking twelve hours, would burn ten to twelve tons round trip. The same ship would require an additional twenty-four hours to go to Hampton Roads, adding two days and burning another twenty to twenty-four tons of coal. The following table illustrates the results when one factors in the freight rate.

**Table 1: Freight Costs**

|                 | Beaufort | Hampton Roads | % Saved |
|-----------------|----------|---------------|---------|
| Ten tons/day    | \$62.90  | \$103.80      | 61%     |
| Twelve tons/day | \$75.48  | \$124.56      | 61%     |

Sources: Abstract Logbook of USS *Mount Vernon*, Box 57 Lee Papers. Logbooks of USS *State of Georgia*, *Daylight*, and *Dacotah*, R.G. 24, National Archives. Coal reports for Beaufort, Box 23, Coal Reports for Hampton Roads, Boxes 27-28, Lee Papers.

This in itself is a powerful statement about the practical value of Beaufort Harbor. Furthermore, it is possible to estimate the cumulative advantage of naval ships going to Beaufort. To do this one must estimate the number of trips for coal made by blockaders off Wilmington. Each month the commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron sent a list of vessels and their stations in his squadron to Secretary Welles. Therefore, it is possible to know how many ships were on the blockade during any given month. By knowing the number of ships on the blockade, how frequently they returned for coal (on average), and by looking at the lists compiled in 1864 and 1865 of arrivals and departures

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<sup>7</sup>Coal Reports for Hampton Roads, Boxes 27-28, Lee Papers.



at Beaufort, one can estimate the number of coaling trips made by the ships off Wilmington.

As a rule, a ship on the blockade had to return for coal at least once each month. Therefore, one should simply be able to multiply the number of ships off Wilmington by the number of months in the time period in question to arrive at a total number of trips. To do this, however, is inexact since the result would be merely an estimate. Fortunately, beginning in January 1864 and continuing through July 1865, the station commander compiled a list each month, and later each week, of the ships that entered and left port. With the exception of only six weeks in the summer of 1864, these lists survive. Examining a list and determining the number of ships that came for coal and supplies during a given month is not difficult.

For this computation only ships on blockade duty off Wilmington that stayed in port overnight should be considered. Vessels arriving and leaving a few hours later would not have had an opportunity to coal. One finds in looking at the lists that there is a correlation between the number of ships on the blockade and the number of ships returning for coal as the following chart shows:





Table 2: Visits to Beaufort by blockading ships, 1864.

| <u>Month:</u>  | <u>Trips for Coal:</u> | <u>Ships:</u> |
|----------------|------------------------|---------------|
| January        | 22                     | 16            |
| February       | 15                     | 21            |
| March          | 32                     | 23            |
| April          | 19                     | 22            |
| May            | 21                     | 20            |
| June           | 28                     | 25            |
| August (16-31) | 12                     | 21            |
| September      | 30                     | 24            |
| October        | 35                     | 25            |

Sources: Lists of Arrivals and Departures at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers. Lists of Arrivals and Departures, Box 479, File OX; U.S. Navy Subject File, National Archives. "Disposition of Vessels in North Atlantic Blockading Squadron," United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies During the War of the Rebellion*, 31 Volumes, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1927), Series I, Vols. 7-12.

The comparison should be stopped there simply to prevent the figures from being altered by the Fort Fisher campaign. For the months examined there is a 1.15 : 1 ratio of visits to ships, very close to the one mentioned above.<sup>8</sup> With that ratio available it is possible to estimate how many visits ships blockading Wilmington made between May 1862 when they began going to Beaufort and October 1864. During this period, the lists of vessels and their stations show 421 total ships, excluding the *Fort Jackson*, *Santiago de Cuba*, and *R.R. Cuyler*, which could not cross the bar. This equates to approximately 484 trips made for coal.

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<sup>8</sup>Lists of Arrivals and Departures at Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers. Lists of Arrivals and Departures, Box 479, File OS; Box 490, File OX; U.S. Navy Subject File.



What difference then does it make to go to Beaufort for supplies as opposed to Hampton Roads? Trips to Hampton Roads equated to 968 additional days travelling to and from the coal depot. At ten to twelve tons per day, the navy saved approximately 10,000 tons of coal by using Beaufort Harbor. This is enough coal to fill thirty-three average colliers, and is equivalent to several months coal usage by the blockading fleet. The time involved in the extra mileage was also time spent away from station. Added together, the ships on the blockade would have spent over two and a half years away from their stations using Hampton Roads. Between May 1862 and October 1864 an average of 14 ships maintained the blockade. This equates to 12,782 ship days for the period. The 968 extra days that would have spent in transit to Hampton Roads mean that in time alone using Beaufort made the blockade 7.6 percent more efficient. Because the blockade itself would have been weaker, more ships would have been required to position on it, thereby creating a need for more coal to fuel them.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of Beaufort and the difficulty the navy had maintaining the blockade result from the advent of steam. Earlier, in the age of sail, a blockading fleet need not have a nearby supply base as evidenced by the British Navy in the War of 1812. Furthermore, more efficient boilers and engines of a later era would have lessened the importance of a local port for refueling. The steam power of the 1860s allowed some blockade runners to reach speeds of fifteen knots. To combat increasingly swift runners the U.S. Navy relied on steamers. Blockade runners, however, made a one way trip to

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<sup>9</sup>Coal Reports for Beaufort, N.C., Box 23, Lee Papers. Coal Reports for Beaufort, N.C., File OS, OX, XF, U.S. Navy Subject File.



Bermuda or Nassau. Navy blockaders had to maintain their stations, and be ready to give chase instantly. Because of this difference, the steam engines of the day put the navy at a decided disadvantage making a regional port essential.

The amount of coal and time the navy saved by using Beaufort Harbor is only one determinant of the harbor's significance. The location of this harbor where crews could conduct minor repairs to their ships was important. Much of the work had to be performed in a safe anchorage, rather than at sea. This enabled the vessels to remain on station longer between refits. Furthermore, it was a haven for crippled vessels such as the *Quaker City*, and *Lillian*. Badly damaged and leaking as they were, it is unlikely that they could have weathered rounding Capes Lookout and Hatteras to reach a northern port.

Beaufort's location relatively close to enemy lines provided other benefits. It was an ideal base from which to conduct raids to damage the large salt-making business on the south coast and interdict minor smuggling through the tiny inlets of the state's southern coast. This location also made it well suited as headquarters for the squadron when stopping blockade running became such an emphasis in 1864. From Beaufort the squadron's commander could much more effectively supervise the blockade. The harbor also contributed thousands of barrels of naval stores, commodities essential to keeping a wooden fleet afloat.

This does not even mention the value of having a port that close available as a rendezvous for the campaigns against Fort Fisher. The potential of storms and rough seas along the northern coast of North Carolina made Hampton Roads a dangerous location in which to rendezvous. In February 1862, a storm off Hatteras mauled Burnside's fleet.



Beaufort's location placed it much closer to the Cape Fear and greatly reduced the possibility that the fleet could be scattered in rough weather.

Without its station at Beaufort, the only feasible regional base, the navy could not have effectively blockaded the Cape Fear River. The navy would have missed an important source of naval stores, could not have effectively hampered the North Carolina salt industry, and could not have coordinated the Fort Fisher campaigns as effectively. In fact, the importance of Beaufort Harbor as a naval station during the conflict proved that the decision not to establish a station there in 1853 resulted from a lack of need at the time. Between 1862 and 1865, when the navy required the harbor, Beaufort was admirably suited for its purpose.

Today few, if any, vestiges remain of its former usage. Fort Macon remains as a silent sentinel at the east end of Bogue Banks. The wharf the army and navy used is gone, as are the navy's few buildings. The old *William Badger* is but a name in historical documents. Nonetheless, for that span of over three years when the need for a station was so great, Beaufort did provide for the navy "one good port."





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