

Chris E. Fonvielle. TO FORGE A THUNDERBOLT: THE WILMINGTON CAMPAIGN, FEBRUARY, 1865. (Under the direction of William N. Still, Jr.) Department of History, East Carolina University, November, 1987.

Combined Army and Navy operations played an important role in the Union's victory in the American Civil War. The Federal government employed its naval superiority in an attempt to blockade the Confederacy's ports and paralyze its maritime commerce. The blockade was not altogether effective, however, and the South enjoyed a steady influx of supplies vital to its military effort. Consequently, the Federals launched and were increasingly successful with joint expeditions to close Southern harbors.

The last important Union amphibious operation of the Civil War was against Wilmington, North Carolina. Wilmington was the most popular port-of-call for blockade runners, and by the summer of 1864, the last Atlantic seaport effectually open to waterborne trade with Europe. Moreover, the railroad from Wilmington to Petersburg, Virginia was the lifeline for General Robert E. Lee's Confederate army. The Federals severed that artery by capturing Fort Fisher, the key to Wilmington's defenses.

The Union Army and Navy then cooperated in a move against the town of Wilmington itself. They needed the port as a base of supply and for reinforcements for General William T. Sherman's army as it marched through the Carolinas. By capturing Wilmington, the occupying Federals

assured the success of Sherman's Carolinas Campaign and helped bring an end to the four-year-long war.

This study examines the Federal drive on and the Confederate defense of Wilmington, February 11-22, 1865. It looks at the movements of the opposing armies, the ensuing battles, and the men on both sides who commanded and fought in them. The early occupation of Wilmington by Union forces is also discussed.

The Wilmington Campaign was a model Union combined operation. Its success was the culmination of four years of experience and cooperation between the Army and Navy. While the Wilmington Campaign was the last important joint expedition of the war, it also marked the first successful movement by a large Union force against a strategic target inside the Confederacy from a captured seacoast base.

TO FORGE A THUNDERBOLT:
THE WILMINGTON CAMPAIGN,
FEBRUARY, 1865

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Chris Eugene Fonvielle, Jr.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.	1
CHAPTER ONE: "There Was Not a More Important Town:" Wilmington, North Carolina, 1861-1865. . . .	7
CHAPTER TWO: "Another Death Knell Is Booming in the Distance:" Stalemate in the Cape Fear, January 16-February 8, 1865.	55
CHAPTER THREE: "To Forge a Thunderbolt:" Union Military Operations on Federal Point, January 28- February 15, 1865.	99
CHAPTER FOUR: "A Nice Little Fight:" Battle of Fort Anderson, February 17-19, 1865.	133
CHAPTER FIVE: "Last Rays of Departing Hope:" Confederate Defense of Wilmington, February 19-21, 1865.	170
CHAPTER SIX: "Wilmington Is Ours!:" Union Occupation of Wilmington, February 22-c. April 3, 1865.	222
CONCLUSION.	276
GLOSSARY.	287
APPENDIX A: Disposition of United States Navy Vessels in the Lower Cape Fear, February, 1865. . .	289
APPENDIX B: Order of Battle for Confederate and Union Armies in the Wilmington Campaign, February, 1865.	293
APPENDIX C: Prominent Wilmington Men Who Attended the Union Rally in Wilmington, March 14, 1865. .	299
APPENDIX D: Incomplete List of Union Casualties Suffered in the Wilmington Campaign, February 11-22, 1865.	302
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	303

MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of the blockaded Southern coast and view of the blockade runner <u>Banshee</u> (I).	15
Map of the approaches to and defenses of Wilmington, North Carolina, 1865.	28
Map of Fort Fisher, N.C., and portraits of Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and W.H.C. Whiting.	33
Map of Fort Fisher attack, January 15, 1865, and portraits of Admiral David D. Porter, U.S.N. and General Benjamin F. Butler, U.S.A.	44
Map of Federal Point, N.C., late January, 1865. . . .	78
Portraits of Confederate Generals Robert Frederick Hoke and Johnson Hagood, and Union Generals Alfred H. Terry and Adelbert Ames.	79
Map of southeastern North Carolina, c. 1865, and portraits of Union Generals John M. Schofield and Jacob D. Cox.	102
Map of Federal Point, N.C., February 11, 1865. . . .	124
Map of Fort Anderson, N.C., 1865.	142
Map of the battle of Fort Anderson, February 18, 1865.	153
View of the Union bombardment of Fort Anderson, February 18, 1865; Lieutenant William B. Cushing, U.S.N.; and Admiral Porter's sham monitor, "Old Bogey".	161
Map of the approaches to Wilmington.	173
Map of the battle of Town Creek, February 19, 1865. .	181
Map of the battle of Forks Road, February 20, 1865. .	189
Map of the battle of Town Creek, February 20, 1865. .	199
Map of Union and Confederate armies' positions in front of Wilmington, February 21, 1865.	208

Map of the Confederate retreat from Wilmington, February 22, 1865.	230
Street scenes of Wilmington, c. 1875, and portraits of General Joseph R. Hawley, and Reverend Alfred A. Watson.	247

INTRODUCTION

Possession of Wilmington, North Carolina, was an important Union objective in the final military operations of the American Civil War. On January 15, 1865, a combined Union army and navy expedition closed this last effectually open Atlantic seaport to Confederate commerce by capturing Fort Fisher, the key to Wilmington's defense system. But the Federals wanted the town itself because its location on the Cape Fear River and its vital railroads made it a strategic hub of communication and transportation into the South's interior. Specifically, they needed Wilmington as a base of supply for General William T. Sherman's army as it marched through South and North Carolina en route to help defeat General Robert E. Lee's Confederate army in Virginia. Moreover, Wilmington would make a good point from which to spearhead a simultaneous army advance into North Carolina to support Sherman when he reached the state.

Although Sherman's Carolinas Campaign is well documented, the joint Union army and navy operations against Wilmington that helped assure its success, have been largely neglected in Civil War historiography. So too has the initial occupation of Wilmington by United States forces. Indeed, the more stirring events of 1865--Sherman's march,

the Confederacy's surrender, and Abraham Lincoln's assassination--pushed the Wilmington story into obscurity.

Several works cite the Wilmington Campaign in context with broader studies, but the specific subject has been overlooked. The most thorough treatment of it is in a 1969 University of North Carolina thesis, "The Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign: 1864-1865," by Alexander Torrey McLean, III. McLean's work actually surveys a much more extensive military operation focusing on the Union capture of Fort Fisher. He concludes his thesis, however, with a good, if brief, description of the Union movement against Wilmington. Combined Operations of the Civil War by Rowena Reed, like McLean's study, examines the Fort Fisher battles, but also notes the impact of Wilmington's fall on the war's last days.

James L. McDonough presents a concise analysis of General John M. Schofield's role in the Wilmington Campaign in the biography Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction. His account puts the campaign into perspective with overall Union strategy to end the war. John G. Barrett's centennial publication, The Civil War in North Carolina relates the Wilmington fight to the war in the Tar Heel state. Because of the scope of his monumental study, however, the narrative on the Wilmington Campaign is brief. Clinton Joyner, Jr., tapped important manuscripts for his East Carolina University thesis, "Major General Robert Fred-

erick Hoke and the Civil War in North Carolina." Nevertheless, Joyner's narrative account of Hoke's involvement at Wilmington contains errors.

The Federal occupation of Wilmington has received keener attention than the military campaign to take the town, but with varying degrees of credibility. W. McKee Evans's Ballots and Fence Rails: Reconstruction on the Lower Cape Fear is a generally meritorious study of reconstruction in southeastern North Carolina. Yet his description of the Federal capture and early occupation of the Wilmington area is disjointed and flawed by mistakes and misconceptions. A 1976 Florida State University dissertation, "Port Town at War: Wilmington, North Carolina 1860-1865," by Richard Everett Wood, is a splendid study of the important role the Carolina seaport played in the conflict. Wood gives the Wilmington Campaign only moderate coverage, but devotes his final chapter to the initial Federal occupation of the town. With the exception of a few minor errors that only a Wilmingtonian would probably notice, Wood's work is well researched, documented, and interpreted.

This thesis, "To Forge a Thunderbolt: The Wilmington Campaign, February, 1865," examines Union and Confederate military activity in the Cape Fear in the last winter of the Civil War. The army and navy operations comprising the Wilmington Campaign, February 11-22, 1865, and the early Union occupation of the area are emphasized. It looks at the

maneuvers of the opposing armies, the ensuing battles, and the men on both sides who commanded and fought in them. The life of the common Southern and Northern soldier stationed in the Cape Fear at that time is briefly discussed. Further, the impact of the fighting on area residents and their condition under Federal rule are analyzed.

The Wilmington Campaign was a comparatively brief and bloodless military operation in the closing days of the Civil War in which the victor had already been decided. It remains an obscure campaign waged at the same time Generals Grant and Lee were introducing new concepts of warfare and Sherman was redefining ancient ones. Yet it was a markedly significant campaign in military annals. Although it was the war's last important combined operation, the Wilmington Campaign was the first successful movement by a large Federal force against a strategic interior target from a captured seacoast base. That strategy was a key element of proposed naval operations at the beginning of the war, but never utilized until the capture of Wilmington at its end.

Acquiring sources for this study has not been an easy task. For the military part, it was necessary to consult general works to obtain bits and pieces of the puzzle. No monograph on the Wilmington Campaign has existed until now. Regimental histories and soldiers' memoirs, letters, and diaries provided the most reliable and useful information. Invaluable manuscript collections were utilized at the

Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; North Carolina State Archives and History, Raleigh; Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; and the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Contemporary newspapers complemented those materials.

Despite the more in-depth studies of Wilmington's occupation, the amount of research material of that period is even less than that of the military aspect. Fragmented military and newspaper accounts are extant, but few civilian letters and memoirs reveal conditions in the town during its Union possession. Consequently, the study of the occupation relies predominantly on official military records and the Herald of the Union, Wilmington's short-lived occupation newspaper.

"To Forge a Thunderbolt: The Wilmington Campaign, February, 1865" deals primarily with the Union drive on and the Confederate defense of the town. The social, economic, and political affairs of the early Union occupation period are examined as thoroughly as source material permits. The predominance of Union accounts gives it a bit of a Northern slant perhaps, but that slant was unavoidable.

The text includes some military terms and jargon with which the reader may not be familiar. Therefore a glossary is provided for reference. Also, the contemporary spelling of town names has been used. For example, present day Goldsboro and Greensboro, North Carolina, were at that time,

in most accounts, known as Goldsborough and Greensborough. The old spelling is maintained throughout.

This study is mainly organized according to phases of the military campaign. Chapter One examines Wilmington's importance as a Confederate seaport and Union efforts to sever its commercial ties with the outside world. The finale was the capture of Fort Fisher, the main defender of Wilmington's approaches. The focus of this thesis, however, is the subsequent Union drive to capture Wilmington in support of Sherman's march through the Carolinas. The second chapter sets the stage for this campaign. It looks at Confederate and Union activity immediately following the fall of Fort Fisher, as well as the prevailing moods of both armies. It also briefly discusses civilian affairs in Wilmington.

Chapter Three surveys the opening phases of the Wilmington Campaign. The Federals were reinforced and resupplied early in February, prompting them to initiate their attack. The following chapter documents the battle of Fort Anderson, the Confederates' strongest interior fortification guarding Wilmington. Chapter Five studies the Confederates' final desperate attempts to hold the town by fighting battles at Town Creek, Forks Road, and Fort Strong. The last chapter examines the Federal capture and early occupation of Wilmington and how they helped end the four-year-long war.

CHAPTER ONE

"THERE WAS NOT A MORE IMPORTANT TOWN:"

WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, 1861-1865

Within days after the fall of Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteer soldiers to help preserve the Union and announced economic sanctions against the seceded states--South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. On April 19, 1861, Lincoln proclaimed a naval blockade of their seaports. Eight days later he extended it to include all harbors from the Virginia Capes to the Rio Grande River. The revised notice affected some Southern states even before they had withdrawn from the Union. Infuriated by Lincoln's interdictions, those states--Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee--pushed to join the Southern Confederacy and to mobilize for war.¹

¹James R. Soley, The Navy in the Civil War: The Blockade (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 27 (hereafter cited as Soley, The Blockade); James M. McPherson, Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 176 (hereafter cited as McPherson, Ordeal By Fire); Mark Boatner III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), 170 (hereafter cited as Boatner, Civil War Dictionary); E.B. Long, The Civil War Day By Day: An Almanac 1861-1865 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 61-62 (hereafter cited as Long, Civil War Day By Day).

The agricultural South's industrial deficiency forced it to look to the international market for supplies essential to its war effort. The Union was well aware of the Confederacy's dependency and intended to halt its waterborne commerce. A blockade strategy board convened and drew up plans to close off all Southern ports by blockade or combined land/sea operations.² If successful it would handicap the Confederacy's fighting capability by choking off the influx of goods, and cripple the region's economy by restricting the export of its cash crops.

Initially the blockade fleet was divided into two commands, the Atlantic Blockading Squadron and the Gulf Blockading Squadron. Later the forces were split into four groups; the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, patrolling the coast from Cape Henry, Virginia to Cape Fear, North Carolina; the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, extending southward to Key West, Florida; the East Gulf Blockading Squadron, covering the west Florida coast; and the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, responsible for the remainder of the Gulf of Mexico shoreline to the Mexican border.³ Ships were

²Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., Why the South Lost the Civil War (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 54 (hereafter cited as Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost).

³Naval History Division, Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology 1861-1865 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), II, 8 (hereafter cited as Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology).

assigned to a squadron and station as they were commissioned for service.

From the start Lincoln's blockade encountered problems, the most detrimental of which was its disregard by foreign suppliers. European governments vowed officially to stay out of the American conflict and to respect the Union blockade. Queen Victoria's neutrality proclamation of May 13, 1861, stated England's "determination to maintain a strict and impartial Neutrality in the contest," and warned British subjects against breaking or attempting to break a lawfully established blockade.⁴ Following Great Britain's lead, France adopted a similar declaration three days later. Nevertheless, many Europeans, lured by the huge profits to be made by trading through the blockade, showed little respect for it. As the business turned increasingly lucrative and stimulated Europe's economy, heads of state simply overlooked breaches of their official stances on the blockade issue.

European suppliers justified their trading through the blockade by questioning its legality. According to a treaty signed by the world's powers in Paris in 1856 (the United States declined signing but later complied with its provisions), a blockade was defined as a barricade of a belligerent nation's ports to prevent passage in wartime.

⁴"By the Queen. A Proclamation. Proclamation By Her Majesty, dated May 13, 1861, enjoining Neutrality in War in America." Copy in possession of the author.

President Lincoln, however, refused to recognize the Confederacy as a sovereign nation, insisting instead that secession by the Southern states constituted a rebellion. In Europe's view, therefore, Lincoln's blockade contradicted international law: a nation could not barricade its own ports. Moreover, the Declaration of Paris noted that "blockades to be binding must be effective, that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy."⁵

A complete and effectual blockade of the South's coast was virtually impossible. At the war's outset the United States Navy comprised just ninety vessels, only forty-two of which were commissioned. Most of these were stationed in foreign waters or badly in need of repair. Approximately half of the fleet consisted of obsolescent sailing ships and antiquated steamers. Of the twelve vessels constituting the Home Squadron in the spring of 1861, only three steamers were ready for immediate blockade duty along the 3,549-mile-long Southern coastline interspersed with some 189 inlets, harbors, bays, and coves.⁶ In the opening months of the war the Federal Navy's blockade averaged one vessel for every three hundred miles of Southern shoreline.

⁵Soley, The Blockade, 26-28. See also: James Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear River 1660-1916 (Raleigh, North Carolina: Edwards & Broughton, 1916), 389 (hereafter cited as Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear).

⁶Soley, The Blockade, 12-14; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 390.

Consequently, the Union focused its dragnet on the Confederacy's major seaports that possessed good harbors and interior lines of communication--Norfolk, Virginia; Beaufort, New Bern, and Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; Fernindina, Jacksonville, and Pensacola, Florida; Mobile, Alabama; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Galveston, Texas. On April 30, 1861 Norfolk became the first port to be blockaded. Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans followed in late May. Wilmington was placed on the official watch-list on July 21 when the U.S.S. Daylight took up station off the Cape Fear.⁷

Other adversities plagued the Union blockade in addition to an insufficient fleet. It was beset by logistical problems (inadequate coal supplies and vessel repair facilities), disagreement over the blockade's merit, departmental inefficiency, personnel inexperience in working along the American coast, and the loss of many naval officers to Confederate service. As a result Confederate commerce experienced little interruption early in the war; ships entered and exited Southern ports almost at will. Union blockaders faced utter frustration in trying to stop blockade running. "If the vessels were captured, even in entering principal ports," observed a Yankee sailor, "it was

⁷Robert M. Browning, Jr., "The Blockade of Wilmington, North Carolina 1861-1865" (M.A. thesis, East Carolina University, 1980). Browning examines the problems faced by the Union blockading force off Wilmington which, he maintains, reflects the inefficiency of the entire blockade.

due rather to the stupidity of the persons attempting to run the blockade than to the effectiveness of the force employed to prevent it."⁸

The blockade's ineffectiveness stimulated a booming business for blockade runners. British and Southern shippers and entrepreneurs set up blockade running companies and developed strong trade alliances. Europe's desire for high-grade Southern cotton, the Confederacy's dire need for European supplies, and the handsome profits to be realized in trading through the blockade attracted investors. The risks increased as the Union cordon tightened, but so did the profits.⁹ It was claimed that if a blockade runner made two successful trips, and "afterwards was lost or captured, the investment in ship and cargo would be paid for."¹⁰

Agents abroad purchased, stockpiled, and earmarked European-made war material for the Confederacy. Transatlantic merchantmen carried the goods to neutral ports in Bermuda, the Bahamas, and Cuba. There the supplies were transferred to smaller vessels for the final run through the Union blockade. After arriving safely in Southern seaports blockade runners discharged their cargoes and reloaded for

⁸Daniel Ammen, The Navy in the Civil War: The Atlantic Coast (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 11 (hereafter cited as Ammen, The Atlantic Coast).

⁹McPherson, Ordeal By Fire, 176.

¹⁰John H. Foard, "The Blockade and the Runners," Wilmington: Magazine of the Cape Fear (August, 1975), 11 (hereafter cited as Foard, "Blockade and Runners," Wilmington).

the return trip to the transshipment points. In exchange for its cash crops (predominantly cotton) the Confederacy imported firearms, cannon, ammunition, gunpowder, edged weapons, blankets, shoes, cloth, food, medicine, lead, tin, copper, and iron. Military supplies were shipped by rail throughout the South for distribution to the Army and Navy. Private investors brought in personal articles including lace, silk, hats, and fine liquors which were sold at public auction.

At first many types of ships were employed as blockade runners. As the blockade tightened and captures of blockade runners occurred more frequently, however, it became necessary to challenge the blockade with ships capable of great speed. Fast, sleek, shallow draft steamers were built mainly in Great Britain especially for this trade.¹¹ These ships traded regularly at Southern ports after 1862. The Banshee (I) was a typical blockade runner. Jones, Quiggins, and Company of Liverpool built her in 1863 specifically for blockade running. Banshee (I) measured 214 feet in length, 217 registered tons, and was propelled by sidewheel paddles capable of pushing her up to fifteen knots. She was owned by the Anglo/Confederate Trading Company before being captured after fourteen successful runs through the blockade. Her eight trips into Wilmington earned her

¹¹McPherson, Ordeal By Fire, 176; Foard, "Blockade and Runners," Wilmington, 11.

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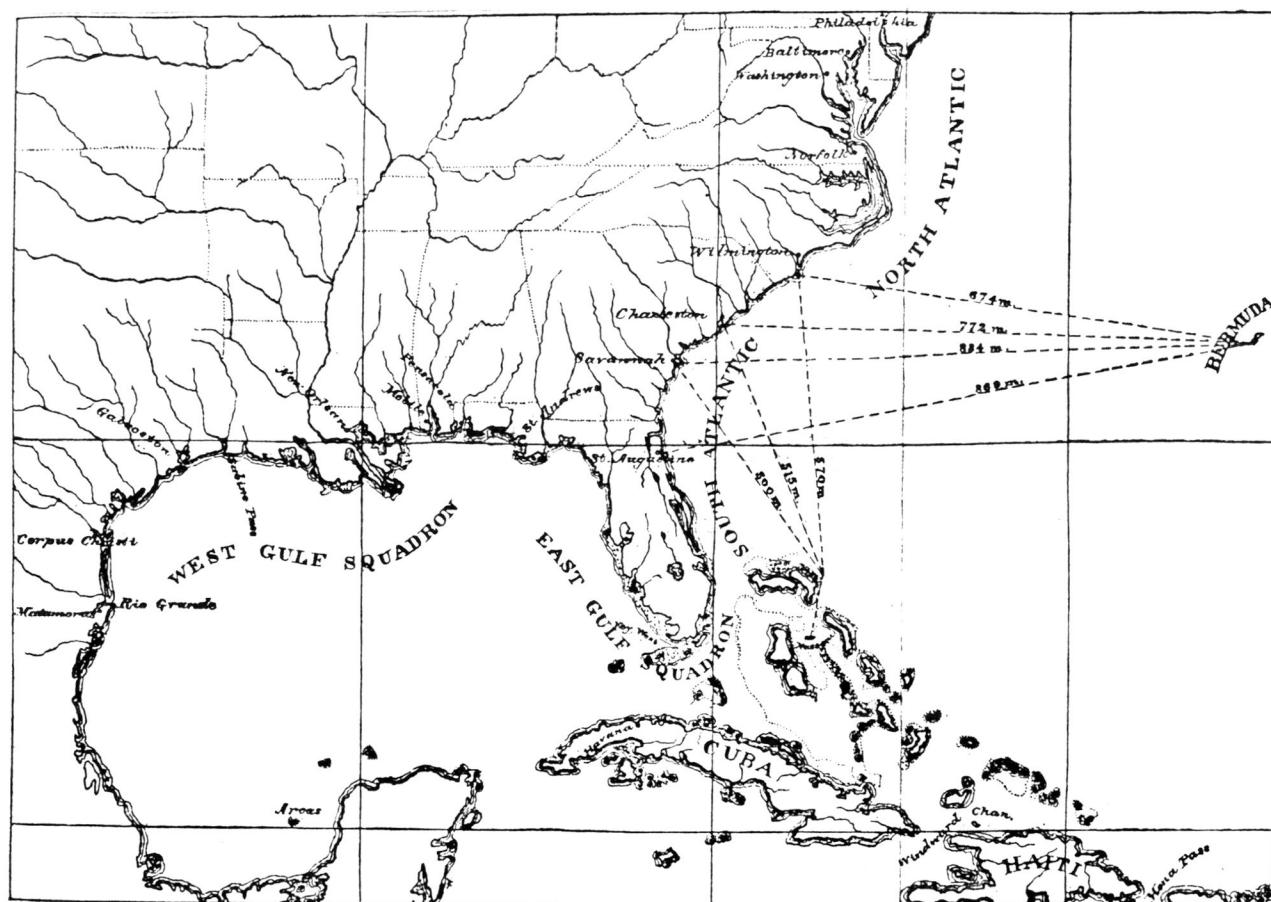
shareholders a 700 per cent profit on their investments.¹²

Although incomplete, statistics document the number and kinds of vessels employed in running the blockade and attest to its prevalence. In his annual report for 1865, United States Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles listed 1,133 blockade runners captured and 335 destroyed by the United States Navy during the war.¹³ One historian contends that some 150 active blockade runners survived the war.¹⁴ If these figures are accurate, approximately 1,600 vessels of all classes engaged in blockade running.

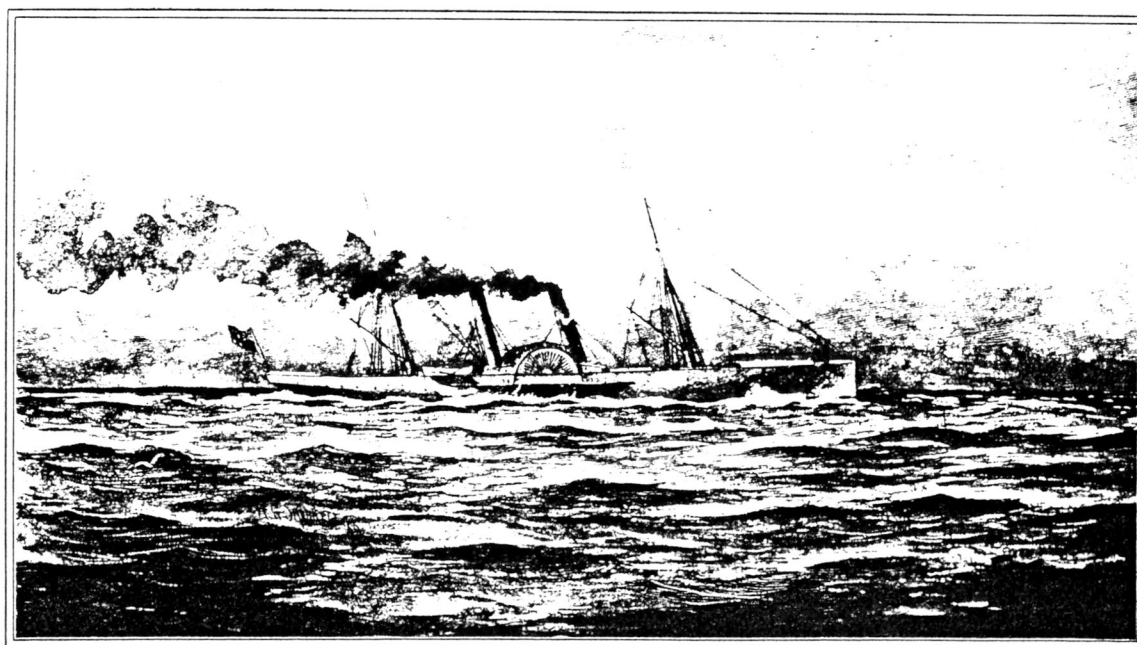
¹²Stephen R. Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the American Civil War" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1983), 536 (hereafter cited as Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy"); Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, VI-338.

¹³Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1865 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), xxix-xxx.

¹⁴Frank Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 262.



THE BLOCKADED COAST.

Blockade Runner Banshee (I)

A recent study documents 280 steamers employed as blockade runners. These vessels attempted approximately 1,300 runs of which 1,000, almost seventy-seven percent, were successful.¹⁵ One scholar claims an eighty-four percent success rate for blockade runners, sailing craft and steamers, at the Carolina seaports.¹⁶ According to another historian, the average blockade running steamer broke the Union barricade four times before being captured or destroyed. The Syren proved to be the most fortunate blockade runner, making thirty-three successful trips.¹⁷

Eventually the United States Navy nabbed or put out of action most blockade runners. The Navy Department, led by the able Secretary Gideon Welles and his energetic Assistant Secretary Gustavus V. Fox, overcame many of its adversities to create a powerful and professional navy. Through the purchase and construction of warships and the conversion of merchant vessels, fire boats, ferries, and captured blockade runners into gunboats, the fleet grew from a motley array of vessels in 1861 to a mighty navy of 671 ships by the war's end. Some 471 of those vessels saw blockade duty along the

¹⁵Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 516.

¹⁶Marcus W. Price, "Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Carolina Ports, 1861-1865," American Neptune 8 (July, 1948), 196-241.

¹⁷Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 516.

Southern coast.¹⁸

Yet the United States Navy failed to halt the flow of supplies into the Confederacy. In fact, the influx continued until the last port was closed by a combined operation just three months before the Confederacy surrendered. By then, as one recent study points out, "private and public industrial efforts had made the Confederacy less dependent on imports for products essential to the war effort."¹⁹

Unquestionably blockade running greatly aided the Confederacy's fighting capability. One historian claims that the South imported at least 400,000 rifles and perhaps as many as 600,000.²⁰ A Confederate Treasury Department report disclosed that between October 26, 1864, and the first week of January, 1865, the Confederacy brought in through Wilmington and Charleston 8,632,000 pounds of meat; 1,507,000 pounds of lead; 1,933,000 pounds of saltpeter (a key ingredient in gunpowder); 546,000 pairs of shoes; 316,000 blankets; 520,000 pounds of coffee; 69,000 rifles; 97 case of revolvers; 2,639 packages of medicine; 43 cannon;

¹⁸McPherson, Ordeal By Fire, 175-176.

¹⁹Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost, 63.

²⁰Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 524.

and a large number of other articles.²¹ Even at a time when the blockade was supposedly very tight, it was too loose to stop the importation of Confederate goods. Naturally the presence of even an ineffectual blockade impeded Confederate commerce. It did not, however, have a decisive effect. "No Confederate army lost a crucial battle or campaign because of a lack of ammunition, guns, or even shoes and food." Such material was imported on blockade runners.²²

The favorite port-of-call for blockade runners was Wilmington, North Carolina's principal seaport and, by late 1863, the most important in the Confederacy. The port's economy traditionally had thrived on maritime commerce. Trade between Wilmington, the West Indies, and Northern ports was active early in the nineteenth century. Carolina merchants exported naval stores, lumber, rice, and corn in exchange for sugar, molasses, rum, and manufactured goods. Trade shifted after 1840 to more accessible harbors at Charleston and Norfolk, but Wilmington sustained a brisk coastwise trade and steady growth. By 1860 Wilmington boasted the largest population, approximately 10,000, of any town in the state and several industries including

²¹Fayetteville, North Carolina Observer Semi-Weekly, January 9, 1865.

²²Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost, 13, 63.

shipbuilding and iron works.²³

The Civil War turned Wilmington "topsy-turvey," according to one frequent visitor.²⁴ Blockade running brought to Wilmington not only vital supplies, but also social upheaval. An odd mixture of humanity occupied Wilmington during the war. Blockade runner captains and crews representing many nationalities, but mainly British, stole into port on good tides and dark nights. Buyers, speculators, and entrepreneurs flocked to the port from all over the world to deal in the import and export business. The large amount of cash exchange attracted thieves, rogues, desperadoes, con-men, and prostitutes who roamed the streets. The government stationed soldiers and sailors there to protect its military interests.

Blockade runners also imported disease. In July, 1862, the steamer Kate brought yellow fever from Nassau, and soon "Wilmington was in the grasp of a serious epidemic."²⁵ Before it ended by the onset of cool weather four months

²³Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 156-158; Richard E. Wood, "Port Town at War: Wilmington, North Carolina 1860-1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1976), 1 (hereafter cited as Wood, "Port Town at War").

²⁴John Wilkinson, The Narrative of a Blockade Runner (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1877), 199 (hereafter cited as Wilkinson, The Narrative of a Blockade Runner).

²⁵Andrew J. Howell, The Book of Wilmington (Wilmington, North Carolina: Wilmington Printing Company, 1930), 131 (hereafter cited as Howell, Book of Wilmington).

later, 654 residents, approximately forty-three percent of those stricken by the sickness, had died.²⁶ Dismayed by the infiltration of foreigners, soldiers, criminals, and disease, many of Wilmington's permanent residents left the town for havens on the sound and in the country. Blockade running transformed Wilmington from a relatively sleepy seaport to a bustling, prosperous, wild, violent, unhealthy, and important commercial center and military post.²⁷

The Cape Fear was difficult to blockade, and blockade runners enjoyed much success there. One researcher found that from May 20, 1863, to December 31, 1864, 260 ships entered Wilmington.²⁸ According to another, from January to December, 1864, blockade running steamers made 162 runs into Wilmington.²⁹ The government of North Carolina, which invested heavily in blockade running, imported through Wilmington 45,000 blankets, 45,000 pairs of shoes, and

²⁶Approximately 1,500 Wilmington residents contracted yellow fever during the 1862 epidemic. Leora H. McEachern and Isabel M. Williams, "The Prevailing Epidemic--1862," Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Bulletin (November, 1967), 19-20.

²⁷Wilkinson, Narrative of a Blockade Runner, 199-200; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 413-414; Lawrence Lee, New Hanover County: A Brief History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1971), 68 (hereafter cited as Lee, New Hanover County).

²⁸Wood, "Port Town at War," 183.

²⁹Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 362-364, 510.

enough cloth to uniform 125,000 soldiers, the entire number of troops the state sent into the war. A Confederate officer observed that by late in the war, "after the Capital of the Confederacy, there was not a more important place than the little town of Wilmington, North Carolina."³⁰

Wilmington's longevity as a blockade runner haven was due primarily to five factors: geographic advantages, good interior lines of communication, well planned and constructed defenses, able military commanders, and Union apathy. Wilmington was ideally located for blockade running. The distance from Cape Fear to Nassau, to the south, was 570 miles, and to Bermuda, almost due east, was 674 miles; travel time by ship was two to three days.³¹ Wilmington was situated safely twenty-five miles up the Cape Fear River from where it emptied into the Atlantic Ocean. At that time the Cape Fear River possessed two navigable mouths--Old Inlet, the main bar, and New Inlet, a shallow passageway to the northeast--which gave blockade runners a choice of entrance into and exit out of the harbor. Smith Island, also known as Bald Head, and treacherous Frying Pan

³⁰A Late Confederate Officer, "Wilmington During the Blockade," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 196 (September, 1866), 497. See also: Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 483.

³¹John G. Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 245 (hereafter cited as Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina); Wood, "Port Town at War," 163.

Shoals separated the inlets. Even though the distance between the bars was only six miles inside the harbor, the ocean distance from inlet to inlet was more than forty miles because Smith Island and Frying Pan Shoals intervened. The task of maintaining an effective simultaneous blockade of both inlets posed quite a challenge to blockaders and forced them to split into two squadrons.³²

Blockade runners clearly had the advantage at the Cape Fear. In attempting to exit, blockade runners would drop down river from Wilmington to Smithville (present day Southport), a quaint fishing village on the west bank equidistant from the inlets. From there they could view both blockading squadrons and choose a time and spot to challenge the gauntlet. Inward-bound ships determined their course according to wind, weather, and blockaders. They usually made landfall well above New Inlet or below Old Inlet and crept along the shoreline just outside the breakers before attempting the final dash through the dragnet. More times than not they eluded even the most vigilant blockaders.³³

³²Wilkinson, Narrative of a Blockade Runner, 130-131; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 411; Thomas E. Taylor, Running the Blockade (London: John Murray, 1896), 44-47.

³³Blockaders were not without success themselves. According to Stephen R. Wise's research, the Union blockading force off the Cape Fear captured forty-one steam blockade runners and destroyed thirty-two others. However,

Not only was Wilmington an important entrepot for Confederate supplies, but it was also a key depot for their distribution. The town sat at the confluence of the northwest and northeast branches of the Cape Fear River. The northwest channel was navigable for approximately one hundred miles into the state's interior, as far up as Fayetteville. Moreover, three railroads connected the seaport with the upper and lower South. The Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherfordton Railroad transversed North Carolina's Piedmont and served as the route along which was shipped cotton for exportation and food for the town. The Wilmington and Manchester Railroad indirectly linked Wilmington to Charleston, the Confederacy's other major Atlantic seaport. Most important, however, was the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, which connected the seaport with Petersburg, Virginia. The Wilmington and Weldon was, particularly in the last months of the war, a vital pipeline for supplies for General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.³⁴

destruction is a somewhat ambiguous term as blockade runners sometimes beached themselves, if captured appeared inevitable, and attempted to salvage at least part of their valuable cargo. Nevertheless, the Federals often reported these incidents as kills. (Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 526-633.)

³⁴Charles L. Price, "North Carolina Railroads During the Civil War," Civil War History 7 (September, 1961), 298-309; Bragg to Gilmer, February 6, 1865, United States War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 70

The Confederates constructed a vast network of fortifications in the Cape Fear to guard its inlets and to protect the blockade runners that used them, the port that received their supplies, and the waterway and railroads along which the goods were transferred to the needy. Confederate engineers utilized abundant local resources (sand and sod, pine and oak timber) to build many fortifications from Lockwood's Folly to Virginia Creek.

The defenses in and around Wilmington were strong. Artillery batteries and entrenchments were erected in backyards and streets, and on bluffs overlooking the river. The outer defenses, about one mile from the town, comprised a system of ponds, creeks, dams, and artillery batteries connected by a heavy earthwork curtain. The works ringed the town from Smith's Creek, along Green's Millpond (present day Burnt Mill Creek), and Greenfield Millpond to the Cape Fear River.³⁵ A Union soldier who helped capture Wilmington

volumes in 128 parts (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1, Volume XLVII, Part 2, 1110-1111 (hereafter cited as ORA, e.g. 1, XLVII, 2, 1110-1111).

³⁵Wilmington's outer city defenses ran from Smith's Creek south atop the ridge along present day Burnt Mill Creek, crossed Wrightsville Avenue and Oleander Drive to Cape Fear Country Club. There the lines turned west crossing 16th and 17th streets and the sand ridge on the north side of Greenfield Lake to the Cape Fear River. Remains of the earthworks can still be seen in the rough between the first and ninth hole fairways on Cape Fear Country Club. The seventh and possibly the eighteenth hole greens were artillery batteries. (Charles S. Powell Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North

in 1865 contended that the town's defenses were the strongest he had seen during the war.³⁶

Confederate engineers also constructed four large earthen batteries, Forts Davis, Lee, Campbell, and Meares, atop high bluffs on the east bank of the river about three miles below Wilmington. These river batteries, designated collectively as Fort Strong in Union accounts, guarded the town's approaches by water.³⁷

Carolina, Chapel Hill; C.S. Powell, "The Defenses Around Wilmington During the Civil War," Wilmington Morning Star, September 9, 1917; "Cape Fear: Civil War and Reconstruction" Wilmington Star News supplement, March 7, 1976; J.A. Mowris, A History of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Regiment N.Y. Volunteers (Fourth Oneida) (Hartford, Connecticut: Case, Lockwood & Company, 1866), 187 (hereafter cited as Mowris, 117th New York); New York Herald, February 27, 1865.)

³⁶Henry F.W. Little, The Seventh New Hampshire Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion (Concord, New Hampshire: Ira C. Evans 1896), 410-411 (hereafter cited as Little, Seventh New Hampshire).

³⁷Wilmington's river batteries underwent several name changes during the war. Fort Davis, probably named in honor of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, was known early in the war as Fort Strong and then Fort Stokes. Fort French, named for Brigadier General Samuel G. French, commander of the defenses at the inlets of the Cape Fear, became Fort Lee. J.F. Gilmer, chief of the engineer bureau of the Confederate War Department, plotted a Fort Hill on a map of the lower Cape Fear defenses. It is not clear whether or not Fort Hill was located further south than Fort Meares. The remains of one river battery, either Fort Campbell or Fort Meares, is located on property owned by Exxon Company USA on River Road. The other batteries fell victim to development by the North Carolina Port Authorities and oil terminals along River Road. (United States War Department, Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891-1895], Plates LXVIII, 7 and CXXXII, 1

On the west bank of the river midway between Wilmington and the ocean loomed Fort Anderson. Started in 1862, this immense earthwork fort was built atop the ruins of Brunswick, a colonial seaport devastated by economic competition from Wilmington and the American War for Independence. Initially the fort was named Fort St. Philip in commemoration of Old Brunswick's Episcopal church whose ancient walls were still standing.³⁸ Later the post was renamed Fort Anderson for Brigadier General Joseph R. Anderson, an early commander of the District of the Cape Fear and owner of Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond.³⁹ When completed Fort Anderson was the area's strongest interior defensive work, mounting nine heavy cannon emplaced on earthen walls guarding the river and land approaches to Wilmington from the west. Moreover, Fort Anderson served as

(hereafter cited as ORA Atlas, e.g. LXVIII, 7); J.F. Gilmer Maps, maps N.C. 312 and N.C. 313, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

³⁸"Headquarters, Old Brunswick Point, Order No.4. Hereafter this post will be called Fort St. Philip after the ancient church of our forefathers at Old Brunswick, which nearly a century ago was a silent witness of our successful struggle of our fathers for liberty and independence, and whose venerable walls, by the grace of God, will witness our successful maintenance of that same liberty and independence. Major [William Lamb] Commanding." Wilmington Weekly Journal, May 15, 1862.

³⁹Ezra J. Warner, Generals In Gray (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 8 (hereafter cited as Warner, Generals In Gray).

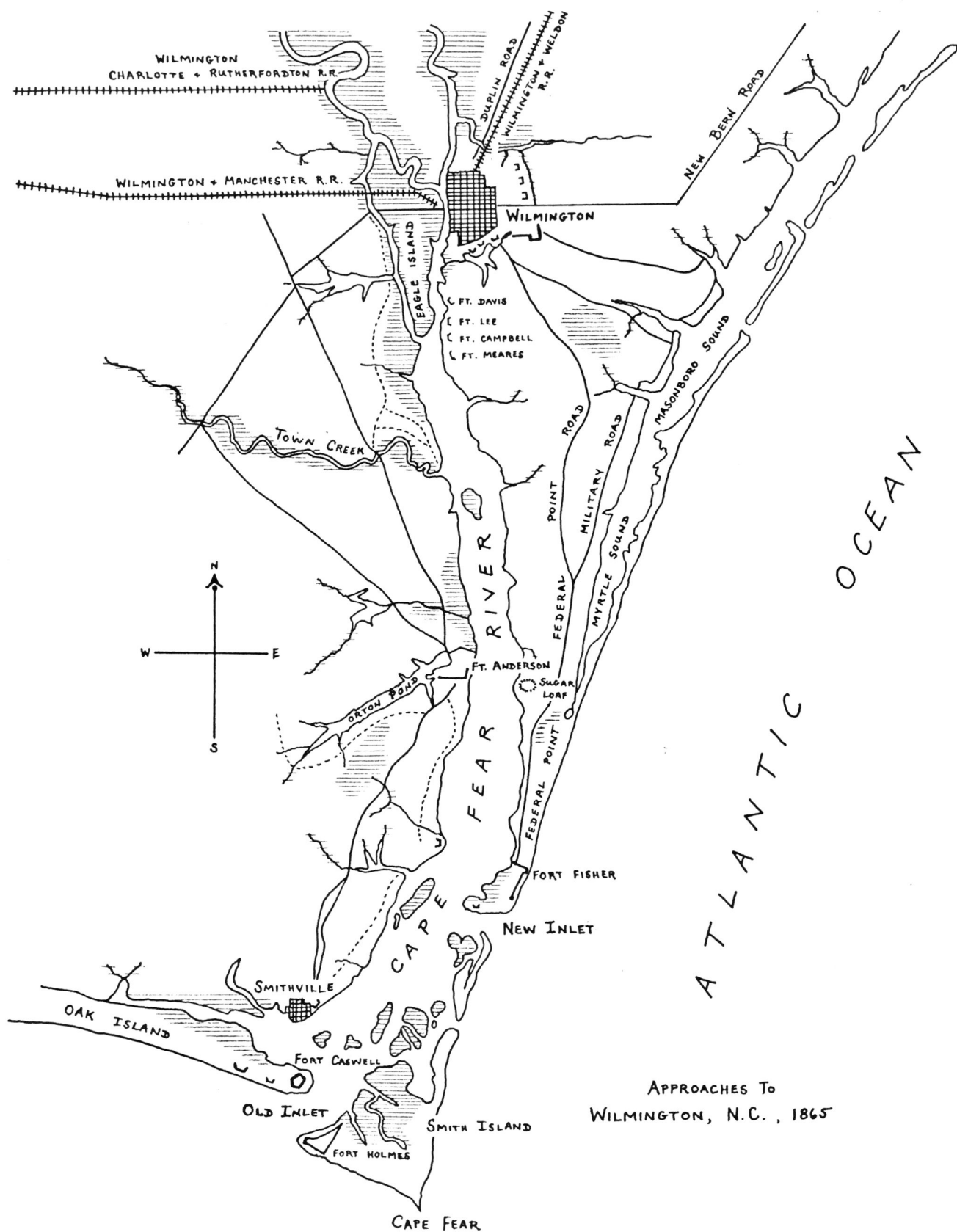
a clearance station where incoming and outgoing blockade runners were checked for proper papers, stowaways, and contagious diseases.

Also protecting the river was a gun battery on the summit of Sugar Loaf Hill, a huge sand dune on Federal Point peninsula opposite Fort Anderson. When Wilmington was seriously threatened by attack in 1864, earthworks were extended from Sugar Loaf across the peninsula to Myrtle Sound within sight of the ocean.

Two major forts and a small battery on Oak Island guarded Old Inlet from the west. On the eastern tip of the island sat Fort Caswell, a restored defense installation built by the United States Army between 1826 and 1838. The Confederates captured and refortified the enclosed pentagonal work. They covered its old brick and stone walls with sand and sod, bolstered the casemates with pine timber and railroad iron, and rearmed it. By 1864 Fort Caswell was a very strong fortification.⁴⁰ Down the beach about a mile was Fort Campbell, a well-built sixteen-gun, two-mortar battery. Between Fort Campbell and Fort Caswell lay Battery Shaw, a one-gun battery.⁴¹

⁴⁰Ethel Herring and Carolee Williams, Fort Caswell In War and Peace (Wendell, North Carolina: Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1983), 9-31 (hereafter cited as Herring and Williams, Fort Caswell).

⁴¹Herring and Williams, Fort Caswell, 32; ORA Atlas, CXXXII, 2.



The Confederates constructed Fort Holmes on Smith Island to protect Old Inlet from the east and defend the semi-tropical island against a potential Union amphibious assault. Construction on the fort, named for Major General Theopolis H. Holmes, once commander of the Southern Department of Coastal Defenses, began in September, 1863. Although incomplete when abandoned sixteen months later, Fort Holmes contained one and a half miles of earthworks interspersed with gun batteries mounting eleven heavy seacoast guns. The works extended from Bald Head Point, where the river met the ocean, up the south beach and then north across the island to Light House Creek.⁴² In spite of its brief wartime existence, Fort Holmes served its purpose.

Other less important fortifications dotted the Cape Fear. Fort Pender, built on the site of colonial Fort Johnston, defended Smithville's harbor. Shore batteries guarded the beach strand on Federal Point. Most notable was Battery Gatlin (called Half Moon Battery by the Federals because of its crescent shape) located near the end of Myrtle Sound.

The key to the Cape Fear defenses, however, was Fort Fisher, the strongest Confederate seacoast fortification and guardian of New Inlet. The sand fort, named in honor of Colonel Charles F. Fisher, North Carolina's first field

⁴²David Stick, Bald Head: A History of Smith Island and Cape Fear (Wendell, North Carolina: Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1985), 43-49 (hereafter cited as Stick, Bald Head); ORA Atlas, CXXXII, 4.

officer killed in battle, was constructed near the end of Federal Point (called Confederate Point by Southerners during the war).⁴³ Confederate authorities deemed Fort Fisher impregnable, and with good reason. Colonel William Lamb, the fort's commander, strengthened and expanded it from a string of detached batteries that "one of the Federal frigates could have cleaned out with a few broadsides" into a fortification able to "withstand the heaviest fire of any guns in the American Navy."⁴⁴

Fort Fisher had two faces in the shape of an inverted letter "L." The land face commenced about 100 yards from the river and ran approximately 500 yards to the ocean where it formed a bastion with the sea face. The land face rampart was twenty feet high, twenty-five feet thick and

⁴³Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 265; Lee, New Hanover County, 65. Fort Fisher was named in honor of Colonel Charles F. Fisher, 6th Regiment North Carolina State Troops, who was killed "while gallantly leading his men" at the first battle of Manassas, Virginia, July 21, 1861. Louis Manarin and Weymouth T. Jordan (eds.), North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, 10 volumes (Raleigh, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 1973-1985), volume IV, 267 (hereafter cited as Manarin, for volumes I-III, and Jordan, volumes IV-X, North Carolina Troops); Howell, Book of Wilmington, 129.

⁴⁴William Lamb, Colonel Lamb's Story of Fort Fisher (Carolina Beach, North Carolina: Blockade Runner Museum, 1966), 1-2 (hereafter cited as Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher). See also: William Lamb, "The Defense of Fort Fisher," Robert Underwood and Clarence C. Buel (eds.), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, 4 volumes (New York: The Century Company, 1884), volume IV, 643 (hereafter cited as Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, e.g. IV, 643).

interspersed with sixteen gun chambers mounting twenty heavy seacoast guns. Each gun chamber was separated by a traverse, about twelve feet higher than the parapet, to protect cannon and crews from enfilading fire. Each traverse contained an alternate ordnance magazine or bombproof. A sub-terra mine field and palisade fence of sharpened logs was placed in front of the land face.⁴⁵

The sea face paralleled the ocean for approximately 1,300 yards. It was constructed like the land face for the first 100 yards or so. The remainder comprised eight self-contained batteries mounting twenty-two pieces of heavy ordnance and connected by a sand curtain. At the far end of the sea face loomed a forty-three foot high conical shaped battery named Battery Lamb, but appropriately dubbed "the Mound." Its two big guns had a direct line of fire into New Inlet's channel. The inlet was further protected by Battery Buchanan, an elliptical shaped earthwork constructed at the

⁴⁵Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 3-5; Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, IV, 643; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 265-266; Lee, New Hanover County, 65. Colonel Lamb recorded that Fort Fisher's land face measured 682 yards in length. Cyrus B. Comstock, Aid-de-Camp to General Ulysses S. Grant and Chief of Engineers during the Cape Fear expeditions, measured Fort Fisher's land face at 480 yards. Lamb's survey probably included the palisade fence in front of the land face which almost breached the peninsula, approximately 700 yards wide at that point. (ORA Atlas, LXXV, 2; Report of Cyrus B. Comstock, January 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 407.)

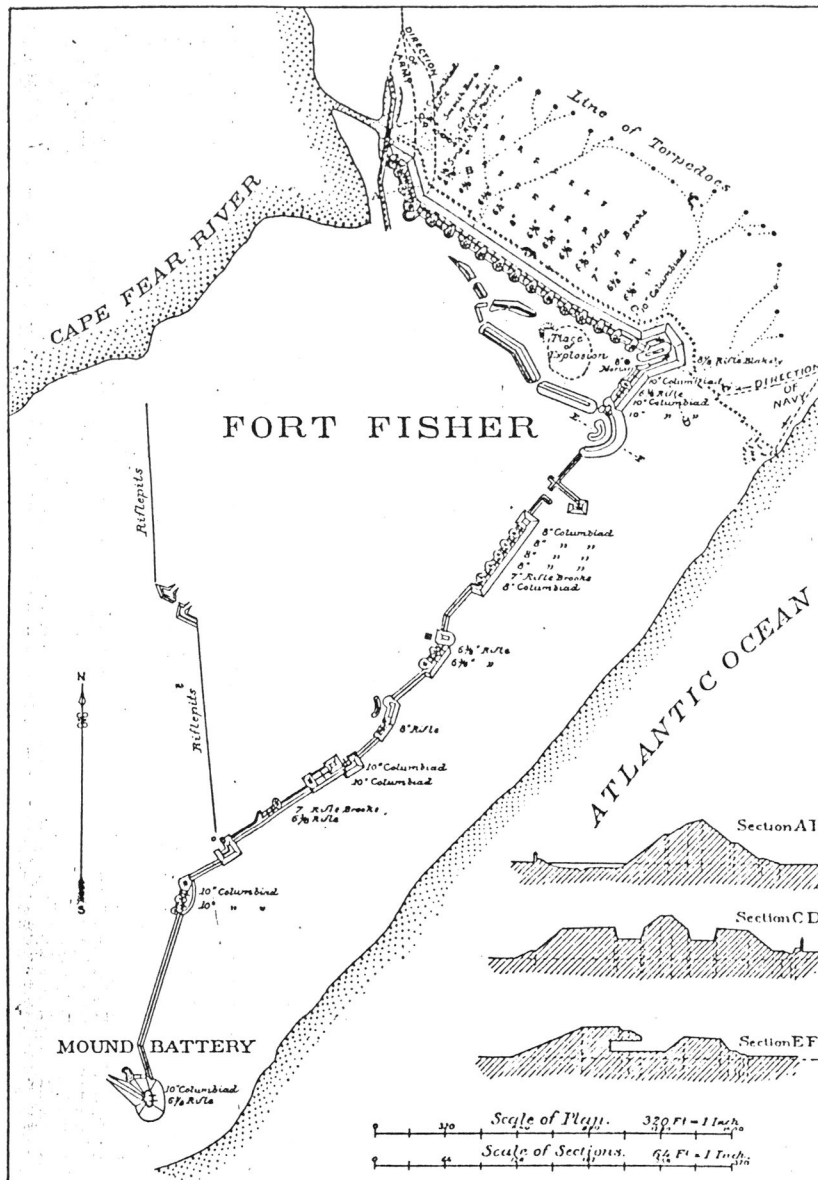
tip of Federal Point.⁴⁶ Battery Buchanan was intended also to be used as "a citadel to which an overpowered garrison might retreat and with proper transportation be carried off at night, and to which reinforcements could be safely sent under cover of darkness."⁴⁷

The plans for and construction of the Cape Fear's formidable defenses were approved and supervised by a host of general officers, including Richard C. Gatlin, Theopolis Holmes, Joseph R. Anderson, P.G.T. Beauregard, James Longstreet, and Samuel French. The officer most responsible for the strength of the works, however, was Major General W.H.C. Whiting.

William Henry Chase Whiting was a great engineer having graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1845 with the highest grades ever attained by a cadet up to that

⁴⁶Lamb's measurement of the sea face, 1,898 yards, differs considerably from Comstock's measurement of 1,300 yards. The ocean washed away the entire sea face more than half a century ago making it impossible, at this late date, to make a judgment. Did Lamb's survey include the line of rifle pits located behind the sea face? Did Comstock discount the first one hundred yards of the sea face which was built of the same character as the land face and formed the northeast bastion? It should be pointed out that Lamb did not write his account of Fort Fisher until sixteen years after the war, whereas Comstock's description of the fort is contained in his official report dated January 27, 1865, just twelve days after its capture. (Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 3-5; Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, IV, 643; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 266; Report of Cyrus B. Comstock, January 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 407.)

⁴⁷Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 4-5.



PLAN AND SECTIONS OF FORT FISHER.



General W.H.C. Whiting, C.S.A.



General Braxton Bragg, C.S.A.

time. As a Confederate general, however, he suffered through a frustrating career. His brash outspoken personality and fondness for drinking kept him in constant trouble with his superiors. Yet his talents could not be overlooked, and in November, 1862, he was placed in command of the Cape Fear District. Though he hoped and expected ultimately to be restored to field command, Whiting energetically and successfully bolstered Wilmington's defenses in the face of the Union blockade and threats of amphibious assaults.⁴⁸

Combined operations played an important role in Union naval operations. In spite of its failure to establish and maintain a wholly effectual blockade, the United States Navy helped the Army to infest the borders of the Confederacy. The footholds strengthened the blockade and established bases from where the Federal Army could threaten strategic points inside the Confederacy.

Early in the war the Atlantic coast proved vulnerable to combined operations. Confederate access to and from Pamlico Sound, North Carolina, was plugged up by the captures of Forts Hatteras and Clark on August 29, 1861. Six weeks later a joint expedition seized Port Royal Sound, South Carolina. It served for the remainder of the war as a naval base for maintaining the South Atlantic Blockading

⁴⁸Warner, Generals In Gray, 334-335; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 916.

⁴⁹
Squadron.

These initial victories were warm-ups for operations against more important Southern seaports. In fact, between March and May, 1862, seven of the Confederacy's principal ports (Fernandina, Jacksonville, New Bern, Beaufort, New Orleans, Norfolk, and Pensacola) fell into Union hands, and Savannah was sealed by the Navy. Galveston fell in October, 1862. Although the Texas port was later recaptured, it was really only of use to Confederate armies of the Trans Mississsippi after the Federals gained control of the Mississippi River. Mobile survived until summer, 1864, when the U.S. Navy finally won control of Mobile Bay. Charleston remained in Confederate hands until February, 1865, but blockade running there was uncertain at best after 1863. By August, 1864, Wilmington alone remained effectually open to Confederate commerce.⁵⁰

For a long time the United States Navy had targeted Wilmington for capture. As early as 1861 the Union blockade strategy board had recommended taking the seaport, but the project remained low in priority another two years.⁵¹ Com-

⁴⁹Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost, 186; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, I-23, I-31-34.

⁵⁰Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, II-28, 32-33, 54-56, 62, 100-101, IV-95-97.

⁵¹Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost, 195.

bined operations on the Mississippi River--the capture of New Orleans and Vicksburg--and against Charleston, the symbolic cradle of secession, postponed an attack on Wilmington.

In 1863 Rear Admiral Samuel P. Lee, then commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, stressed the necessity of closing Wilmington to blockade running.⁵² By that time, however, an enormous quantity of supplies had entered through the port and fortifications had been erected, making its capture more difficult. One high ranking naval officer believed that the Navy's failure to move against Wilmington prolonged the war. "The works had been allowed to be built in the face of a heavy force of gunboats," he maintained. "When the works were first commenced they could easily have been knocked down and the gunboats could have gone up to Wilmington without difficulty. Had this been done the fate of the rebellion would have been decided a year sooner."⁵³ By the last year of the conflict the capture of Wilmington became even more urgent. Washington was being pressured by Northern businessmen who

⁵²Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost, 195.

⁵³David D. Porter Memoir, 879-880, David D. Porter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Porter Memoir, Porter Papers, LOC).

were losing ships to Wilmington-based commerce raiders and wanted the harbor sealed.

Until late in the war the War Department showed little interest in providing the estimated 10,000 troops necessary for a strike against Wilmington. Yet the Cape Fear's shoal waters made an unsupported naval attack impractical. Although the Army empathized with the Navy's concern, it placed comparatively little strategic value on a seaport in the backwaters of the Confederacy. By autumn, 1864, however, the Army's attitude had changed. General Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Potomac was besieging General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Petersburg in a war of attrition. Grant finally agreed to a call for troops to attack Wilmington hoping that its capture would sever Lee's principal line of supply along the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad.⁵⁴ A combined operation then was planned to attack Fort Fisher, the key to Wilmington's defenses.

After rummaging around to find a naval commander, Secretary Welles chose Rear Admiral David D. Porter, a veteran officer as hot tempered and vain as he was energetic

⁵⁴Edwin Olmstead, "Fort Fisher Reexamined," unpublished manuscript possession of Edwin Olmstead, Mount Holly Springs, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Olmstead, "Fort Fisher Reexamined"); Dr. Jay Luvaas, "The Fall of Fort Fisher," Civil War Times Illustrated 3 (August, 1964), 6 (hereafter cited as Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI); Rowena Reed, Combined Operations in the Civil War (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1978), 333 (hereafter cited as Reed, Combined Operations).

and capable, to head the expedition. The Navy Department possessed faith in Porter's ability in spite of his arrogance. "Admiral Porter is probably the best man for the service," Welles contended. "Porter is young, and his rapid promotion has placed him in rank beyond those who were his seniors. . . ."⁵⁵ Indeed, Porter, a scion of sailors, had won his laurels fighting with the Mississippi Squadron and was the Union's most successful officer in combined operations.⁵⁶ Grant appointed Major General Godfrey Weitzel, chief engineer in the Army of The James, to lead the army contingent cooperating in the Fort Fisher attack.

The operation went awry from the beginning. Much to Grant's and Porter's chagrin, Major General Benjamin F. Butler, commander of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina and Weitzel's superior officer, somehow finagled his way into taking charge of the Army's role in the expedition and into going along. Grant had little patience with Butler, a pompous, self-indulgent volunteer general who held sway mainly because of his political connections. Moreover, Grant blamed Butler for the Army's defeat at Drewry's Bluff in May, 1864. There was also bad blood between Porter and

⁵⁵Gideon Welles, Diary of Gideon Welles, 3 volumes (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), volume 2, 146 (hereafter cited as Welles, Diary).

⁵⁶James Soley, Admiral Porter (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903); Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 661; Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost, 190-191.

Butler resulting from their respective roles in the capture of New Orleans in 1862.⁵⁷ That was not the only reason. Porter suspected that Butler was involved in illegal activities including issuing unauthorized cotton and tobacco permits, pocketing payoffs, and furnishing the enemy with clothing. In short, neither Grant or Porter trusted Butler. In spite of showy efforts at conciliation, Porter and Butler failed to reach any clear understanding or harmony as they planned the attack.⁵⁸

The expedition, slated for October before winter storms settled in along the North Carolina coast, was postponed when it was discovered that the Confederates had been alerted to the planned assault. Grant renewed the operation early in December, however, when he learned that part of Fort Fisher's garrison had been sent to oppose General William T. Sherman's army marching through Georgia.⁵⁹

Butler's transports, carrying 6,500 troops of the newly formed XXIV and XXV Army Corps, reached the Cape Fear on December 15, 1864. Porter's armada of fifty-eight warships did not appear until three days later, wasting a stretch of good weather and giving the Confederates more time to pre-

⁵⁷Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 6.

⁵⁸Porter Memoir, Porter Papers, LOC.

⁵⁹Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 6.

pare for the impending battle. Porter's ships and a terrible gale arrived at the same time. The storm prompted Butler to put in at Beaufort, North Carolina.⁶⁰

While Porter's fleet rode out the storm and waited for Butler to return, Confederate reinforcements entered Fort Fisher, bolstering its garrison to only 900 men. But additional support troops, Major General Robert F. Hoke's division, were on their way to Wilmington from Virginia. General Robert E. Lee also sent word to Colonel Lamb that if Fort Fisher fell "he could not maintain his army."⁶¹ The message was clear: the survival of Lee's army depended on the lifeline that ran through Wilmington.⁶²

As important as Wilmington was to the Confederacy by that time, it was ironic that Confederate high command entrusted its defense to Lieutenant General Braxton Bragg, an officer whose Civil War career was haunted by indecisiveness and failure. It had not always been so. Bragg had been an exemplary cadet at the United States

⁶⁰Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 6-7; Olmstead, "Fort Fisher Reexamined," 9-10; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 266-267.

⁶¹Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 35.

⁶²Report of David D. Porter, January 20, 1865, United States Navy Department, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 volumes (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), Series 1, Volume XI, 620 (hereafter cited as ORN, e.g. 1, XI, 620).

Military Academy. He then served with distinction in the Mexican War, in which, as a captain of artillery, he won three brevets. As a Confederate general, however, he demonstrated an irritable, quarrelsome personality and incompetence on the battlefield. He was forced to relinquish command of the Army of Tennessee in November, 1863, but was transferred to Richmond to serve as military adviser to his close friend, President Jefferson Davis. When Wilmington was threatened in October, 1864, Davis sent Bragg to direct its defense.⁶³ Bragg superseded W.H.C. Whiting, whom Davis personally disliked and in whose leadership abilities he had little faith because of the general's reputation as being a drunkard.

Bragg's appointment to such an important post at a critical hour drew swift criticism. A Virginia newspaper announced: "Braxton Bragg has been ordered to Wilmington. Goodbye Wilmington."⁶⁴ The change in commanders was also a bitter disappointment to Whiting loyalists, "who felt that no one was so capable of defending the Cape Fear as the brilliant officer who had given so much of his time and

⁶³Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 78; Jon L. Wakelyn, Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 105-106 (hereafter cited as Wakelyn, Confederate Biographical Dictionary); Warner, Generals In Gray, 30-31; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 265.

⁶⁴Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 10.

ability for its defense."⁶⁵ Whiting, disgruntled but not disheartened, repaired to Fort Fisher where he served as a volunteer adviser to Colonel Lamb.

General Butler expected the battle to end quickly with the fort falling to what he considered a secret military weapon. Butler proposed to run aground and explode near Fort Fisher a ship, the Louisiana, loaded with 235 tons of gunpowder. Wildly optimistic, the general believed that its detonation would tumble down the walls of the fort and so demoralize its garrison that it could be captured without a fight. Porter was a hopeful of the scheme but cautious enough to take his fleet further out to sea lest the concussion cause damage to the ships' boilers.⁶⁶

Porter then had the powder ship run aground and detonated near Fort Fisher in the early morning hours of Christmas Eve, before Butler returned from Beaufort. Apparently the admiral hoped to win the laurels of victory for the Navy. The flash was seen and the explosion felt at great distances (the shock was distinctly felt in Wilmington), but as a weapon the "experiment was an

⁶⁵Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 11.

⁶⁶Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 14; Reed, Combined Operations, 337-342; Alexander Torrey McLean, III, "The Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign 1864-1865" (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1969), 6-7, 9-12 (hereafter cited as McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign"); Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 266-268.

ignominious failure."⁶⁷ Colonel Lamb thought so little of the incident that he merely noted in his diary that "a blockader got aground near the fort, set fire to herself and blew up."⁶⁸

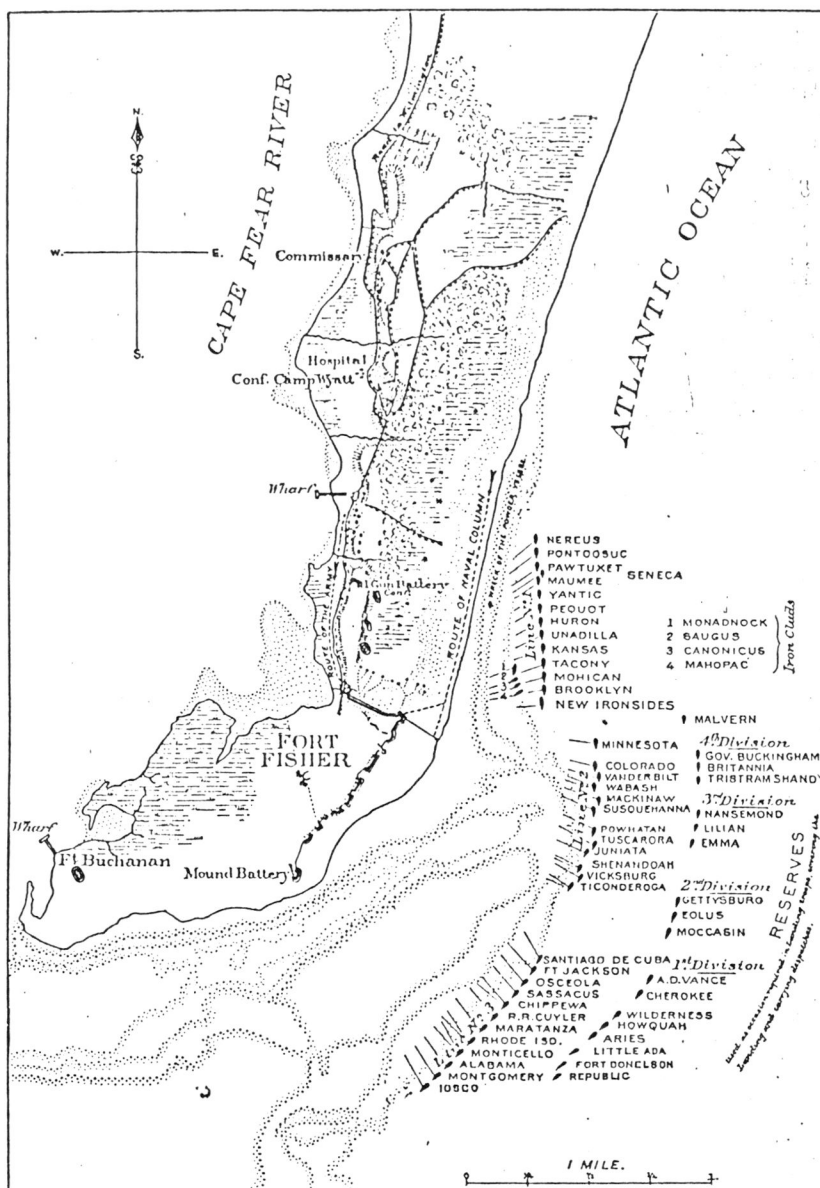
Lamb was as surprised to learn later that the explosion was from a floating magazine as Porter's sailors were disappointed to see that it had not damaged the fort. Regardless, Porter's warships mounting 617 guns took up their battle stations off Fort Fisher on Christmas eve morning and began a terrific bombardment. During daylight hours for two days the fleet fired approximately 21,000 projectiles. Fort Fisher's guns had a limited supply of ammunition and answered the ships only at thirty minute intervals. The slack Confederate fire led Porter to erroneously assume that his armada had silenced the fort and ripened it for capture.⁶⁹

On Christmas day Butler, who by that time had returned to Fort Fisher with his force, ordered Weitzel to land with approximately 2,200 soldiers of General Adelbert Ames's division and one regiment of General Charles J. Paine's

⁶⁷Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 7.

⁶⁸Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 14. See also: Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 267.

⁶⁹Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 7; Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 14-18; Reed, Combined Operations, 346; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 268-269.



MAP OF THE NAVAL AND MILITARY ATTACKS ON FORT FISHER, JANUARY 15, 1865, SHOWING DIRECTION OF FIRE OF UNION VESSELS.



Admiral David D. Porter,
U.S.N.



General Benjamin F. Butler,
U.S.A.

division of United States Colored Troops. Under cover fire from the gunboats, Brigadier General N. Martin Curtis, leading the advance, pushed a small contingent to within 100 yards of Fort Fisher's land face. Within full view of the fort, Curtis's skirmishers reported that the naval fire had not substantially damaged the works, injured the armament, or bothered its defenders. Nevertheless, Curtis requested reinforcements and a chance to attack. General Weitzel, however, was convinced that an assault would fail and advised Butler, who had remained safely at sea, to abandon the attempt. Weitzel's apprehensions and the arrival of one of Hoke's Confederate brigades at Sugar Loaf prompted Butler to order the army to reembark.⁷⁰

In spite of the fact that the decision not to attack Fort Fisher ended his stormy military career, it was, according to at least one historian, probably one of Ben Butler's wisest.⁷¹ Contrary to Admiral Porter's assertion, the naval bombardment had caused little damage to the fort or injury to its garrison. Colonel Lamb estimated that "at least one third of the missiles fell in the river beyond the

⁷⁰Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 7; Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 18-19; Reed, Combined Operations, 351; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 269-270; Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, IV, 643; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 25-27.

⁷¹Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 7.

fort."⁷² The shelling destroyed the troops' quarters and displaced earthworks, though not seriously, but only disabled five cannon and inflicted sixty-four casualties. It was claimed that a person could walk from one end of the fort to the other on nothing but iron projectiles and fragments, yet no shell penetrated deeper than five feet into the fort's sand parapet. Moreover, the Confederate defenders who had been bolstered to 1,400 by Christmas day "were in good spirits and confident in their ability to hold the fort."⁷³

Porter blamed Butler and Butler blamed Porter for the failure. The admiral charged the general with cowardice for refusing to attempt an assault and with insubordination for disregarding Grant's order to lay siege to Fort Fisher if a direct assault failed. Butler accused Porter of being tardy, thus allowing the enemy to better prepare for the impending battle. He also accused Porter of excessive caution when he declined to run his gunboats by the fort and into the Cape Fear River, a move considered "essential to the success of the operation."⁷⁴

⁷²Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 23.

⁷³Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 19-20. Note is from: Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 7.

⁷⁴Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 8.

Actually Porter and Butler both were to blame for the failure. They should have reached a complete understanding before the expedition sailed out of Hampton Roads. Porter overestimated the effect of his fleet's bombardment and blundered in not making an effort to run his ships through New Inlet and get behind Fort Fisher, its weak point. On the other hand, Butler apparently lost enthusiasm after his powder boat failed. He put ashore only a small number of his troops to make the attack and then reacted hastily in reembarking them. In fact, he carelessly left some of them on the beach for two days where they could have been captured. In the end Grant got what he wanted out of the failure: Butler's removal from active command. At the commanding general's insistence the War Department sent Butler home to Massachusetts.

At the beginning of the new year, Grant's interest in capturing Fort Fisher heightened. By then General Sherman had successfully, and with almost no opposition, marched his 60,000-man army across Georgia to the Atlantic seaboard. Grant was relieved to see Sherman safe on the coast and was anxious to transfer Sherman's army by sea to Virginia to help defeat Lee. But Sherman had other plans. He proposed to march to Virginia by way of the Carolinas, breaking along the way the railroads that sent food and munitions to Lee's army. This would certainly drive Lee out of Petersburg giving Grant and Sherman a better chance to destroy him.

Grant agreed somewhat reluctantly to Sherman's proposal. He knew that the Carolinas would not be rich in provisions for Sherman's army, but abundant in Confederate forces bent on destroying it. Grant was determined, therefore, to provide Sherman with a base on the North Carolina coast from which his army could be resupplied and reinforced. Wilmington was the best point because of its railroads and the Cape Fear River, which was navigable well into the state's interior.⁷⁵

Grant refitted the Fort Fisher expedition with an increased army force and a new commander, Major General Alfred Howe Terry. The appointment of General Terry was a wise one. Although a volunteer officer, Terry's "good head full of sense" and natural military instincts had thrust him quickly through the ranks.⁷⁶ More important, he had experience in combined operations, having taken part in the captures of Port Royal, South Carolina, in November, 1861, and Fort Pulaski guarding Savannah the following April. He also served in joint expeditions against Charleston in 1863.⁷⁷ To Porter's delight Terry was quite a different soldier from Butler and shared the admiral's determination

⁷⁵Reed, Combined Operations, 355-357.

⁷⁶Porter Memoir, 869, Porter Papers, LOC.

⁷⁷Ezra Warner, Generals In Blue (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 497 (hereafter cited as Warner, Generals In Blue).

to capture Fort Fisher. As Porter observed, he and Terry "soon understood each other."⁷⁸ On January 9, 1865, Terry's army rendezvoused with Porter's armada at Beaufort, North Carolina for a second strike at Fort Fisher. Terry's Provisional Corps contained approximately 8,000 troops including those recently returned from Butler's failed expedition plus Terry's old Brigade, now commanded by Brigadier General Joseph C. Abbott, of the XXIV Army Corps.⁷⁹

At Fort Fisher, Lamb's men repaired the minor damage done by the first attack and prepared for another they felt certain would occur soon. General Bragg, who claimed credit for the victory of the first attack, did not share their conviction and withdrew Hoke's division from Sugar Loaf to stage a grand review in Wilmington. Consequently, Bragg was unprepared for battle when the Federal fleet reappeared off Fort Fisher on January 12. General Whiting returned to Fort Fisher the following morning and greeted Lamb with the ominous prediction that the fort was doomed. "Lamb my boy, I have come to share your fate," the general said. "You and your garrison are to be sacrificed."⁸⁰ Whiting was

⁷⁸Porter Memoir, 869, Porter Papers, LOC.

⁷⁹Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 8.

⁸⁰Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 23. See also: Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, IV, 647; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 272.

embittered by the way Bragg was handling the crisis. Bragg had neglected to inform Lamb of the return of the Federal armada as it moved south past his watch en route to Fort Fisher and now he was apparently discussing a place to fall back upon. There was nothing Lamb and Whiting could do but meet the second Union assault.

Porter's warships renewed the attack on January 13. This time the navy's fire was more intense and destructive. Porter stationed his gunboats closer to Fort Fisher than before with orders to concentrate their fire on the land face. For three straight days, from nine a.m. on January 13 until after dark on the fifteenth, the fleet kept up an unabated bombardment (some 20,000 projectiles were fired) with the sole purpose of softening the land face for assault. Most of the sixty-four warships withdrew each day after sunset, but ironclad monitors lobbed shells into the fort throughout the night. The incessant shelling dismounted every Confederate cannon on the land face save one, drove the crews into the bombproofs, tore up the parapet, splintered the palisade fence, and cut the wires to the land mines. It also prevented repairs from being made to the works and killed and wounded about 350 of the exhausted garrison.⁸¹

⁸¹Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 23-24; Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 8-9; Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, IV, 647.

Meanwhile General Terry prepared to make the land attack. On January 13 he safely landed his entire force and constructed a line of earthworks across Federal Point to protect his rear from Hoke's division, which was returning to Sugar Loaf. Terry left General Paine's two brigades of U.S. Colored Troops and Abbott's brigade to man the defensive works, and then moved towards the fort with General Ames's division of 3,300 men. After reconnoitering the fort on January 14, Terry decided to attack the following day.⁸²

Terry and Porter agreed upon three p.m. as the time to make the land assault. Porter wanted a naval contingent to participate and accepted 2,000 volunteer sailors and marines for a landing party. The plan called for a two-pronged attack--the army to move down the river bank against the western end of the fort, while the naval force assaulted the northeast salient where the land and sea faces met.

On the morning of January 15, the fleet redoubled its fire upon Fort Fisher's land face. As casualties mounted inside the fort, Lamb and Whiting made repeated calls to Bragg for reinforcements. But Bragg rejected their pleas until the afternoon when he sent one brigade of approximately 1,000 troops by riverboats landing them at Battery Buchanan. Federal gunboats opened fire on the

⁸²Luvaas, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTII, 9; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 272-273.

Confederate transports, driving them off after only 350 soldiers were unloaded. "Never was a more stupid blunder committed by a commanding general," Lamb raged, than to send reinforcements in broad daylight in full view of the enemy fleet.⁸³

The reinforcements, who bolstered the garrison to only 1,500 effectives, double-quickened to the land face just as the Federals were set to launch their attack. Whiting implored Bragg to lend him more assistance. "The enemy are about to assault," he telegraphed, "they outnumber us heavily. . .Attack! Attack! It is all I can say and all you can do."⁸⁴ There was no reply.

Shortly after three p.m., as all the steam whistles of the fleet signaled with "a soul stirring" sound, the Union land attack began. The gunboats switched their target of fire to the sea face as both assault columns dashed towards the fort. Some 500 Confederates quickly lined the parapet at the northeast bastion and greeted the naval column with murderous barrages of rifled musket fire. In half an hour several hundred Union sailors and marines lay dead and wounded while the remainder retreated in utter confusion up

⁸³Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 26.

⁸⁴Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 26.

⁸⁵
the beach.

Although the naval assault failed miserably, it enabled the Federal army to gain a foothold on the west end of the fort. Ames's three brigades entered through gaps in the palisade and a lightly defended gate near the river and swarmed over the heavily outnumbered Confederates. Lamb and Whiting rallied their men, but both officers were seriously wounded while leading desperate counterattacks.⁸⁶ Then it became a soldier's fight. For five and a half hours they fought hand-to-hand in what survivors claimed was some of the most desperate fighting of the war. At one point the troops battled to a stalemate, but Porter's gunboats gave the Federals the momentum with accurate fire into the Confederate defenses. At dark Terry sent Abbott's fresh brigade into the fort and drove the overwhelmed resistors from the works. Several hundred Confederates escaped to Battery Buchanan only to find it abandoned and the transports gone. There was nothing left to do but surrender. When the ships of the fleet received news of the Union victory, they set off a magnificent fireworks display

⁸⁵Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 27; Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, IV, 650; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 276.

⁸⁶Luvass, "Fall of Fort Fisher," CWTI, 31 and 33.

to celebrate.⁸⁷

Both Lamb and Whiting, who died from his wounds two months later in a Federal prison, blamed Bragg for the fall of Fort Fisher. Bragg, who had at least 5,000 effectives entrenched at Sugar Loaf only five miles away, denied Fort Fisher the assistance that might have turned the tide.

The fall of Fort Fisher sealed Wilmington from all commercial trade and hastened the collapse of the already doomed Confederacy. Although Bragg's inaction certainly played a role, the real key to the outcome of the battle was Porter's and Terry's determination, coordination, and cooperation. It was a model amphibious assault, the lessons of which the navy and army would utilize in their campaign to capture Wilmington itself.

⁸⁷Lamb, Story of Fort Fisher, 27-37; Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders, 650-654; Reed, Combined Operations, 373-374; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-11-16; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 384-385.

CHAPTER TWO

"ANOTHER DEATH KNELL IS BOOMING IN THE DISTANCE:"

STALEMATE IN THE CAPE FEAR,

JANUARY 16-FEBRUARY 6, 1865

At about 10:30 p.m. on January 15, the night sky over Fort Fisher was illuminated suddenly in brilliant colors from hundreds of exploding signal rockets. Confederate troops, fearful that the fireworks were a foreboding omen, watched from their posts along the lower Cape Fear. Confederate stragglers, who had escaped the melee at Fort Fisher, slowly made their way across the river and reported on the fort's fall. Near midnight Brigadier General Louis Hebert, commander of the defenses at the mouths of the Cape Fear River and headquartered at Smithville, telegraphed General Bragg: "Last information is that Fort Fisher is surrendered. I await orders."¹ Meanwhile an entourage that earlier had been sent to investigate the situation at Fort Fisher returned to Sugar Loaf and confirmed Hebert's suspicions to Bragg. The Union possessed Fort Fisher!

After receiving the news of Fort Fisher's fate and realizing its significance, President Davis wired General Bragg urging him to recapture the fort "without a moment's

¹Hebert to Bragg, January 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1069.

delay."² But Bragg declined to attack because he feared that the enemy's fleet alone would destroy his army even if it were unopposed on land.³ Instead Bragg decided to protect Wilmington by concentrating his troops at Sugar Loaf and Fort Anderson.

Bragg's decision meant the evacuation of all fortifications in the Cape Fear south of Fort Fisher: Forts Caswell and Campbell and Battery Shaw on Oak Island, Fort Holmes on Smith Island, and Fort Pender at Smithville. Bragg realized that their abandonment would give the Federals control of both Old and New inlets, but they were of little use to protect Wilmington-bound blockade runners after the fall of Fort Fisher.

Bragg was apprehensive that Porter would quickly put his gunboats through New Inlet and into the Cape Fear River, isolating Confederate troops below. Therefore he ordered Hebert to abandon and destroy his fortifications and their contents immediately. Bragg's characteristic indecisiveness was evident in his evacuation instructions. His initial order just after midnight on January 16 directed Hebert to forfeit only Fort Holmes, and to send all transports up river to Fort Anderson before daylight. Messages in the

²Davis to Bragg, January 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1078.

³Bragg to Davis, January 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1078.

following three and a half hours instructed Hebert to spike the guns in all the forts, destroy their carriages and everything else of military value, and fall back with his entire command to Fort Anderson. Eight hours later, however, the commanding general ordered Hebert to maintain his position as the enemy had made no movement. Hebert proceeded with the evacuation ignoring Bragg's vague and inconsistent orders.⁴

The evacuation was hardly a model of efficiency. The garrison of North Carolinians at Fort Holmes, commanded by Colonel John J. Hedrick, "burnt everything that would burn."⁵ Gun carriages, barracks, and storehouses replete with new uniforms and imported rifled muskets were committed to the flames. That infuriated one incredulous witness, who queried sarcastically: "Were the troops on Smith Island allowed to take off new clothing that was there and leave their old clothes? Could not the [British] Enfield rifles . . . have been saved?"⁶ Captain William Badham, Jr., commander of Company B, 3rd Battalion North Carolina Light

⁴Anderson to Hebert, Bright to Hebert, Bragg to Hebert, January 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1080.

⁵Unidentified Confederate soldier to Kate, January 21, 1865, Catherine Jane Buie Papers, Manuscript Department, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter cited as Buie Papers, Duke).

⁶Wilmington Daily Journal, February 17, 1865.

Artillery, rescued his battery's field pieces and horses, but other guns were destroyed and the throats of the horses slit. Amid the confusion of the hurried withdrawal, there was some misconduct among soldiers who broke into the fort's whiskey supply for a parting toast. Within five hours, however, Fort Holmes was evacuated. As the last transports pulled away from the burning fort, "the dark and lurid smoke as it enveloped the island was gloomy indeed"⁷ and "presented a picture not soon to be forgotten" by its garrison.⁸

When Fort Holmes's evacuees arrived at Smithville, they found General Hebert and some of his troops intoxicated.⁹ Although Hebert was considered to be "a faithful and brave officer,"¹⁰ his administration of and behavior during the evacuation were, according to one officer, inexcusable.¹¹

⁷William Badham, Jr. to wife, February 8, 1865, William Badham, Jr. Papers, Manuscript Department, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter cited as Badham Papers, Duke).

⁸William Badham, Jr. to wife, February 20, 1865, Badham Papers, Duke.

⁹William Badham, Jr. to wife, February 8, 1865, Badham Papers, Duke.

¹⁰Wilmington Daily North Carolinian, January 28, 1865.

¹¹William Badham, Jr. to wife, February 8, 1865, Badham Papers, Duke.

Bragg had instructed Hebert to use the steamers Cape Fear and Petteway to remove troops and supplies at the forts, but with the exception of Fort Holmes, he did not. Instead Hebert requested that wagons to transport his stores be sent from Wilmington. Then he ordered the Cape Fear and Petteway burned at their Smithville moorings before daylight on January 17.¹² Reflecting a breakdown in communication and intelligence, Hebert assumed wrongly that Federal gunboats were already in the river. He ordered the destruction of the transports to keep them from falling into enemy hands. "The destruction of the vessels was the result of the General's imbecility," rebuked a Confederate officer. "They could have been easily saved, and brought to [Fort Anderson] more than half of the commissary and quarter stores, which were recklessly destroyed."¹³

The Confederates abandoned Smithville by 7:40 a.m. on January 17. The wagons supposed to have been sent from Wilmington never arrived. What supplies Hebert managed to save were transferred to Fort Anderson in anything he could load

¹²Hebert to Anderson, January 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1080; Wilmington Daily North Carolinian, January 28, 1865. "At 4:50 a.m. saw two rebel steamers in the river on fire." Log of U.S.S. Monticello, January 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 627.

¹³William Badham, Jr. to wife, February 8, 1865, Badham Papers, Duke.

including ambulances.¹⁴ There was some suspicion among the troops that Hebert conveyed "private property" while leaving behind government stores as well as sick and wounded soldiers. There seems to be some evidence to support the allegations of Hebert's negligence. According to one observer, as soon as the Confederates moved out of Smithville, its residents descended on Fort Pender's commissary storehouse and soldiers' quarters where, "with carts and wheel-barrows, but the majority with backs and hands," they plundered their contents. They took a "respectable quantity or provisions," including pork, meal, hardtack, canned beef, as well as uniforms, muskets, swords, bayonets, and plenty of ammunition.¹⁵ Moreover, when the Federals seized Smithville on January 18 they captured

¹⁴Overland distance from Wilmington to Smithville was approximately thirty miles. Hebert wired Confederate headquarters in Wilmington: "Did the wagons you were to send down two nights ago start? I have not been able to find them." (Hebert to Anderson, January 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1081.)

¹⁵A few young boys, looking like "sawed-off militiamen," appeared in Smithville's streets toting muskets with fixed bayonets. One of the lads recalled that "the guns were useless unless we could use them, so, like old veterans, we tore off the paper end of the cartridge with our teeth, rammed the cartridge home, pulled from our little leather boxes the percussion caps, and blazed away." James E. Price, "What a North Carolina Boy Saw of the Civil War," in Under Both Flags: A Panorama of the Great Civil War (Boston: J.S. Round & Co., 1896), 344 (hereafter cited as Price, Under Both Flags).

forty-four Confederate invalids and their attendants.

Hebert soon afterwards became chief engineer of the Department of North Carolina. Although the command meant a promotion for Hebert, some of his troops suspected that his mismanagement of the evacuation had prompted his removal from field command.

The evacuation of the fortifications on Oak Island, though also marked by unnecessary loss, was well coordinated and executed. Colonel Charles H. Simonton, a South Carolina officer and overall commander of the works on the island, received Hebert's order to evacuate shortly before three a.m. on January 16.¹⁷ Simonton assembled at Fort Caswell the various commanding officers of the island's fortifications to discuss the withdrawal to Fort Anderson.¹⁸

Hebert made no attempt to aid Simonton by using the Cape Fear and Petteway to remove stores and troops. Instead

¹⁶Wilmington Daily Journal, February 17, 1865; Report of William B. Cushing, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624.

¹⁷William Calder to mother, January 18 and January 23, 1865, William Calder Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Calder Papers, SHC).

¹⁸Eugene S. Martin, Defence of Fort Anderson (Wilmington: North Carolina Society of Colonial Dames, 1901) (hereafter cited as Martin, Fort Anderson); John Douglas Taylor, "Personal Reminiscences," unpublished memoir in the possession of Mr. Alan T. Strange, Wilmington, North Carolina (hereafter cited as Taylor, "Personal Reminiscences").

the garrisons made a forced overland evacuation using limited means of transportation. The soldiers removed only their equipment and what personal affects they could carry and abandoned the forts at about six a.m. on January 16. They "wound their way with heavy hearts" down the beach and into the woods to await the demolition teams that had been left behind. "It was with bitter feelings that I turned my back upon the mouth of the Cape Fear," lamented a North Carolina officer. "I left many things I cannot replace, but saved all that was actually necessary,¹⁹ life and liberty."²⁰

Throughout January 16 Lieutenant Eugene S. Martin, chief ordnance officer on Oak Island, supervised preparations to destroy its fortifications.²¹ Guns were spiked and cartridges piled with trains laid to explode powder magazines. Hebert's order to blow the works came at 1:20 a.m. on January 17. Within minutes the buildings and

¹⁹William Calder to mother, January 23, 1865, Calder Papers, SHC.

²⁰"I have saved enough clothes to keep me respectable but lost many of my most valuable things. All my books, my nice chest, my mattress, cot, jacket, pants, night shirts, etc, etc, were committed to the flames." William Calder to mother, January 18, 1865, Calder Papers, SHC.

²¹With Martin were Colonel Charles Simonton, Lieutenant Colonel John D. Taylor, Captain Booker Jones, and a small detachment. Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 380. Herring and Williams, Fort Caswell, 48.

gun carriages were torched and the trains lit.²² The explosion of Fort Caswell's main magazine demolished part of the fort's brick wall, pushed down a sand parapet burying ordnance, unroofed buildings, and dug a crater.²³ "As if a mighty volcano had sprung its blazing contents from the sea into the sky, a great light flashed up from Fort Caswell, accompanied by a roar and a jar that smashed the glass in our house like the wave of an earthquake," noted a Smithville lad who witnessed the explosion.²⁴ Detonations of the other fortifications' magazines in the following hour and a half produced several loud reports and shock waves that were distinctly felt in Wilmington twenty-five miles away.²⁵ Admiral Porter on board his flagship U.S.S. Malvern

²²William Calder to mother, January 18 and January 23, 1865, Calder papers, SHC; Entry January 17, 1865, William Calder Diary, William Calder Papers, Manuscript Department, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter cited as Calder Diary, Duke); Log of U.S.S. Malvern, January 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 739.

²³Comstock to Delafield, January 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 197-198; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 8, 1865. James Sprunt claimed that Fort Caswell's main magazine contained 100,000 pounds of gunpowder. Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 380; Herring and Williams, Fort Caswell, 48.

²⁴Price, Under Both Flags, 343.

²⁵"At 1:30 a.m. heard a heavy explosion in by Fort Caswell, at 2:05 heard another, between 2 and 3 several more." Log of U.S.S. Monticello, January 16, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 627. Wilmington Daily Journal, January 18, 1865; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 380; James Sprunt, Tales and Traditions of the Lower Cape Fear, 1661-1896

listened to the explosions and sensed their significance. "The death knell of another fort is booming in the distance." he wrote. "Fort Caswell with its powerful batteries is in flames and being blown up, and thus is sealed the door through which this rebellion is fed."²⁶

The following morning, January 18, Porter sent Lieutenant William B. Cushing, the daring and brash young commander of the U.S.S. Monticello who was still basking in adulation for having recently destroyed the Confederate ironclad Albemarle, to reconnoiter Old Inlet. Cushing discovered and took possession of the abandoned fortifications on Oak Island. He then proceeded across the harbor to demand the surrender of Smithville.²⁷

The Monticello's deep draft prevented her from crossing the bar, so Cushing and four sailors rowed over in a launch. At the sight of the approaching Federals, some of Smithville's residents raised a white flag of surrender over Fort Pender while "a boat containing a committee of

(Wilmington, North Carolina: LeGwin Brothers, 1896), 132 (hereafter cited as Sprunt, Tales and Traditions of the Lower Cape Fear).

²⁶Porter to Godon, January 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 609. See also: Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-16.

²⁷Report of William B. Cushing, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624; "Under the Blue Pennant," Memoir of John Grattan, John Grattan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as "Under the Blue Pennant," Grattan Papers, LOC).

prominent citizens" rowed out to meet them. A large crowd "with mingled curiosity and fear" gathered at Fort Pender's wharf, where Cushing landed at about ten a.m. and accepted the surrender of the village from its mayor.²⁸

Most of Smithville's white residents kept out of sight, but its blacks openly demonstrated their joy over the town's capture. They considered the Yankees their "deliverers from bondage." The slaves paraded through the streets "frantically waving small U.S. flags and crying 'hallelujah, hallelujah.'"²⁹ Cushing, who appointed himself military governor, addressed the sable crowd and declared them free. They cheered him and then, to show their appreciation, guided his sailors around town to search for concealed firearms.³⁰

²⁸W.G. Curtis, Reminiscences of Wilmington and Smithville, 1848-1900 (Southport, North Carolina: Herald Job Office, 1900), 34 (hereafter cited as Curtis, Reminiscences); Report of William B. Cushing, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624.

²⁹Curtis, Reminiscences, 34-35.

³⁰Price, Under Both Flags, 344; Report of William B. Cushing, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624; Journal of William B. Cushing, Navy Department Records, Record Group 45, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Cushing Journal, NA). A Federal naval officer commented in his memoir that when Lieutenant Cushing submitted to Admiral Porter his official report on the capture of Smithville, "the Admiral said nothing but went down into his cabin and had a hearty laugh at Cushing's impudence and audacity." ("Under the Blue Pennant," Grattan Papers, LOC.)

Sailors and marines from the Monticello, Vicksburg, and Pequot reinforced "Governor Cushing" that afternoon, and the following day some 150 of them garrisoned Smithville. In fact, the naval contingent occupied the town for about one week before being relieved by army troops.³¹

Admiral Porter's gunboats experienced considerable difficulty crossing New Inlet's bar and rip, a bad shoal that obstructed passage into the Cape Fear River. Apparently the effort proved more troublesome than it first appeared; otherwise Porter undoubtedly would have ordered more ships around to enter the Cape Fear River through Old Inlet. Launches spent the first couple of days after the Fort Fisher battle dragging for and removing torpedoes from New Inlet. A few gunboats anchored in the inlet by the evening of January 16, but until January 20 only one warship, the U.S.S. Tacony, had entered the river. Porter dispersed his fleet, but kept gunboats at sea off the inlets to protect the army forces on Federal Point and Oak Island. The admiral eventually assembled in the river a flotilla of approximately thirty vessels to cooperate with the army in the projected movement against Wilmington.* In the meantime, however, the navy secured control of the

* See Appendix A

³¹Report of William B. Cushing, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624.

estuary.³²

On January 19 two boatloads of sailors from the U.S.S. Wilderness and Pequot took possession of Smith Island, along with eighteen Confederate soldiers who surrendered to them when they landed.³³ Lieutenant Daniel L. Braine of the Pequot reported that Fort Holmes remained "in good condition save the few guns dismounted and although the enemy had destroyed large amounts of stores, much yet remains."³⁴

In fact, the Federals acquired a substantial quantity of artillery, and ordnance, quartermaster, and commissary stores from the fortifications in the lower Cape Fear despite the Confederates' efforts to destroy them and civilian plundering of what remained. According to military records, the Federals captured 138 seacoast guns, thirty pieces of light artillery, ammunition, firearms,

³²Report of David D. Porter, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 619; Report of William T. Truxton, January 16-18, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 471; David D. Porter, The Naval History of the Civil War (New York: The Sherman Publishing Company, 1886), 727 (hereafter cited as Porter, Naval History of the Civil War); New York Tribune, January 26, 1865.

³³Log of U.S.S. Nyack, January 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 628; Report of Daniel L. Braine, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624.

³⁴Report of Daniel L. Braine, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624.

accouterments, and provisions.³⁵ Cushing discovered a considerable quantity of supplies at Fort Caswell and several hundred stand of rifles at Fort Pender.³⁶ The capture of the works gave the Union not only control of both inlets and a foothold for future operations, but also aided them materially.

Blockade runners were unaware for some days of Wilmington's closure. Some were en route for the port while others were loading Wilmington-bound cargoes at Bermuda and Nassau. The blockade runner Owl slipped in through Old Inlet and anchored at Smithville during the night of January 16. But her captain, John Newland Maffitt, quickly steamed her back out to sea as soon as he heard of Fort Fisher's fall.³⁷

Four nights later Captain M.P. Usina in the Rattlesnake also eluded capture. Usina wanted to enter New Inlet but numerous campfires on Federal Point made him suspicious enough to call off an attempt. At about the same time the steamer Chameleon, captained by the noted blockade runner

³⁵Report of Henry L. Abbott, March 2, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 167; Report of David D. Porter, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 620-621.

³⁶Report of William B. Cushing, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 624; Porter to Watmough, January 21, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 628-629.

³⁷Wilkinson, Narrative of a Blockade Runner, 233-234; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 470-471; Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 485.

John Wilkinson, twice approached New Inlet. Wilkinson reversed his course and dashed out to sea, however, after receiving from Fort Fisher no reply to his signals and spotting two suspicious looking gunboats inside the bar.³⁸

Other blockade runners were not so fortunate. Admiral Porter ordered the Mound Battery signal lights at Fort Fisher to be "properly trimmed and lighted, as has been the custom with the rebels during the blockade [and] be ready to grab anyone that enters" New Inlet.³⁹ Porter placed Cushing in charge of efforts to lure blockade runners in through Old Inlet. Cushing promptly arrested local blockade runner pilots and threatened to hang them unless they helped him display the correct signal lights on Oak Island.⁴⁰ Union resourcefulness and intimidation paid off; three blockade runners were taken, two in one night.

The Confederate-owned steamer Stag, commanded by Lieutenant Richard H. Gayle of the Confederate States Navy, sailed from Bermuda to Smithville where she dropped anchor at about two o'clock in the morning of January 20. Union sailors immediately boarded and captured the blockade runner

³⁸Wilkinson, Narrative of a Blockade Runner, 233-234; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 470-471, Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 485.

³⁹Porter to Clitz, January 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 605. See also: Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-18.

⁴⁰Cushing Journal, NA.

which was laden with firearms, blankets, and shoes destined for the hardpressed Confederate army.⁴¹

About half an hour later the British steamer Charlotte, also out of Bermuda, anchored off Smithville. An elegant champagne dinner to celebrate the successful run was in progress when Cushing boarded and informed the astonished captain, Thomas E. Cocker, that the Charlotte was his prize.⁴² The ship's passengers included several distinguished English army officers and adventurers who ran the blockade "on a lark." They lamented their "beastly luck" at being captured, but finished their fine meal with Cushing as a self-invited guest.⁴³ The Charlotte's cargo consisted primarily of "articles for ladies use. . . French bonnets, cloaks, shoes, and other feminine bric-a-brac," indicating to Admiral Porter, "that ladies will indulge in their little vanities in spite of war and desolation."⁴⁴

⁴¹Reports of David D. Porter, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 620-623; Log of U.S.S. Malvern, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 740; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-21.

⁴²Cushing Journal, NA; Report of David D. Porter, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 620.

⁴³Report of David D. Porter, January 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 620.

⁴⁴David D. Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1886), 274 (hereafter cited as Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes).

In the early morning hours of January 25 Union tars captured the blockade runner Blenheim from Nassau. Her captain realized too late that he had fallen into a trap at New Inlet, and was attempting to get his vessel underway when a boarding party from the U.S.S. Tristram Shandy seized her. Five minutes later sailors from the U.S.S. Gettysburg boarded the Blenheim and claimed a share of the prize. All of the captured blockade runners were sent to the North for adjudication. Their cargoes were sold at auction and the prize money divided between Admiral Porter and the captains and crews of the capturing vessels. A sailor who received part of the booty remarked: "This is the kind of blockading that I like, where the prizes come to us, instead of our going out for them."⁴⁵

Captain Maffitt in the Owl arrived back in Bermuda on January 21, bearing news that Wilmington was no longer open to commerce. He arrived in time to stop the blockade runners Maude Campbell, Old Dominion, Florence, Deer, and Virginia, all loaded and ready to sail for the North Carolina port.⁴⁶ The Charleston Mercury reported that

⁴⁵Report of David D. Porter, January 25, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 700; Report of Francis M. Green, January 26, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 701; Henry Munroe Rogers, Memories of Ninety Years (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1928), 113 (hereafter cited as Rogers, Memories).

⁴⁶Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 475-476; Charleston Mercury, February 7, 1865.

warehouses at Nassau stored 30,000 British Enfield rifles, four 100-pounder Armstrong cannon, and more than two and a half million pounds of bacon awaiting shipment to the Confederacy.⁴⁷ Yet the South's remaining effectual lifeline had been severed.

From a military point of view Wilmington still retained some importance to the Confederacy even after it was no longer a blockade runner entrepot. By holding Wilmington Bragg occupied the attention of a considerable Union force. Although the Confederacy could ill afford to leave a division of troops in the Cape Fear, there was some advantage in doing so. Union deserters informed General Hoke that Terry and Porter planned an advance to cooperate with General Sherman. Confederate high command encouraged Bragg to prevent Terry from reinforcing and resupplying Sherman's army. It hoped that Confederate forces could be consolidated to strike Sherman a lethal blow in North Carolina. Bragg would protect the flank of the assault force.⁴⁸

In any event, Wilmington needed to be held until its stockpile of government stores could be removed. Moreover, Confederate authorities contemplated transferring rolling

⁴⁷Charleston Mercury, February 9, 1865.

⁴⁸Hoke to Anderson, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1115; New York Herald, February 25, 1865; Wilmington Daily North Carolinian, February 18, 1865.

stock and rails from seaborne lines to maintain and repair interior routes of communication with connections to Richmond.⁴⁹

To help defend Wilmington, chief naval constructor John L. Porter labored feverishly to complete the ironclad C.S.S. Wilmington at the Confederate Navy Yard (Beery's Shipyard) on Eagles Island opposite the town. Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory sought assurance from General Bragg that he could hold Wilmington long enough for Porter to complete the ironclad and get it into action.⁵⁰ "This place will be held as long as our means enable us," Bragg replied noncommittally.⁵¹

At first Bragg displayed signs that he meant to protect Wilmington vigorously when he ordered the town's defenses strengthened. Soldiers and slaves, borrowed from nearby plantations, buttressed earthworks and erected abatis while ordnance personnel planted torpedoes in the river.⁵²

⁴⁹Johnson Hagood, Memoirs of the War of Secession (Columbia, South Carolina: The State Company, 1910), 329-332 (hereafter cited as Hagood, War of Secession).

⁵⁰Mallory to Bragg, February 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1110.

⁵¹Bragg to Mallory, February 8, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1129.

⁵²Entry January 22, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke; Anderson to Burr, January 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1121; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 500.

Engineers sank vessels to block the waterway opposite the river batteries just below Wilmington because the works alone were "not capable of a successful resistance to the enemy's heavy metal."⁵³ Having squandered the chance to save heavy ordnance from Forts Caswell and Holmes, Bragg requisitioned cannon from armories at Augusta and Columbia for Wilmington's protection.⁵⁴ He also called on local home guard units to mobilize and urged Governor Vance to send reinforcements.

Bragg's effective force, consisting of infantry, light and heavy artillery, cavalry, engineers, sailors, marines, signal corps, coast guard, and even senior reserves, numbered approximately 7,600.*⁵⁵

* See Appendix B

⁵³Bragg to Pinkney, January 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1102; Bragg to Pinkney, January 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1079. Confederate engineers sank three steamers--the Arctic, Yadkin, and North Heath--in the Cape Fear River channel opposite the river batteries (Fort Strong) and near the southern tip of Eagles Island. ORA Atlas, LXVII, 7. Note is from: Bragg to Taylor, January 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1154.

⁵⁴Bragg to Hardee, January 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1089; Lee to Seddon, January 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1091; Hardee to Bragg, January 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1102.

⁵⁵Abstract from return of the Department of North Carolina, February 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1154; "Report of Efficient Present in Hoke's Division, January-February, 1865," Order Book of Robert F. Hoke, Robert F. Hoke Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh (hereafter cited as Hoke Order Book, Hoke Papers, NCA).

Major General Robert Frederick Hoke commanded Bragg's field forces. Hoke possessed the qualities that it took to be a good leader--self confidence, discretion, and a fighting spirit. He was managing his family's cotton mill and iron works in North Carolina when the war broke out. As a young second lieutenant of the 1st North Carolina Infantry, Hoke earned praise for his coolness and efficiency under fire in the war's first land battle at Big Bethel, Virginia. From there he rose quickly in the ranks of the Confederate Army and won his major generalship for recapturing Plymouth, North Carolina, in April, 1864. Although Hoke had been an excellent brigadier, he never displayed such performance as a division commander. Upon his shoulder rested at least part of the blame for Fort Fisher's fall.⁵⁶

Hoke established his headquarters at Sugar Loaf, where three of his four brigades, approximately 4,000 troops, were entrenched. Brigadier General Alfred H. Colquitt's brigade of Georgians, temporarily commanded by Colonel Charles T. Zachry, manned the right of Hoke's line anchored on the river. Next on the main line was Captain Andrew J. Ellis's "Northhampton Battery," Company A, 3rd Battalion North Carolina Light Artillery. Brigadier General W.W. Kirkland's North Carolina brigade and Captain Andrew B. Paris's

⁵⁶Warner, Generals In Gray, 140; Wakelyn, Biographical Dictionary, 233; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 404-405.

"Staunton Hill", battery from Virginia held the center. Colonel William S. Devane of the 61st North Carolina oversaw the defense on the far left of the earthworks resting on Myrtle Sound. Devane commanded the North Carolina brigade of General Thomas L. Clingman, who was recovering from wounds suffered in battle the previous summer. Captain Thomas J. Southerland's "Wilmington Horse Artillery," 2nd Company I, 1st Regiment North Carolina Artillery, overlooked Hoke's defenses from the summit of Sugar Loaf hill. The 2nd South Carolina Cavalry, commanded by Colonel Thomas J. Lipscomb, patrolled the environs of Sugar Loaf as well as Fort Anderson on the other side of the river.⁵⁷

Hoke placed Brigadier General Johnson Hagood in command at Fort Anderson to defend Wilmington's western approaches. Hagood was a lawyer and successful planter from South Carolina who had set aside his practice and plow in 1861 to fight Yankees. He commanded the 1st South Carolina at Fort Sumter and then transferred to Virginia, where he fought in many engagements from Manassas Junction to Petersburg. Hagood was a good man, though a bit arrogant and not altogether a good tactician. He was only good enough on the battlefield to be a brigade commander, in which capacity he

⁵⁷Unidentified Confederate soldier to Cousin B, January 28, 1865, Southall and Bowan Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

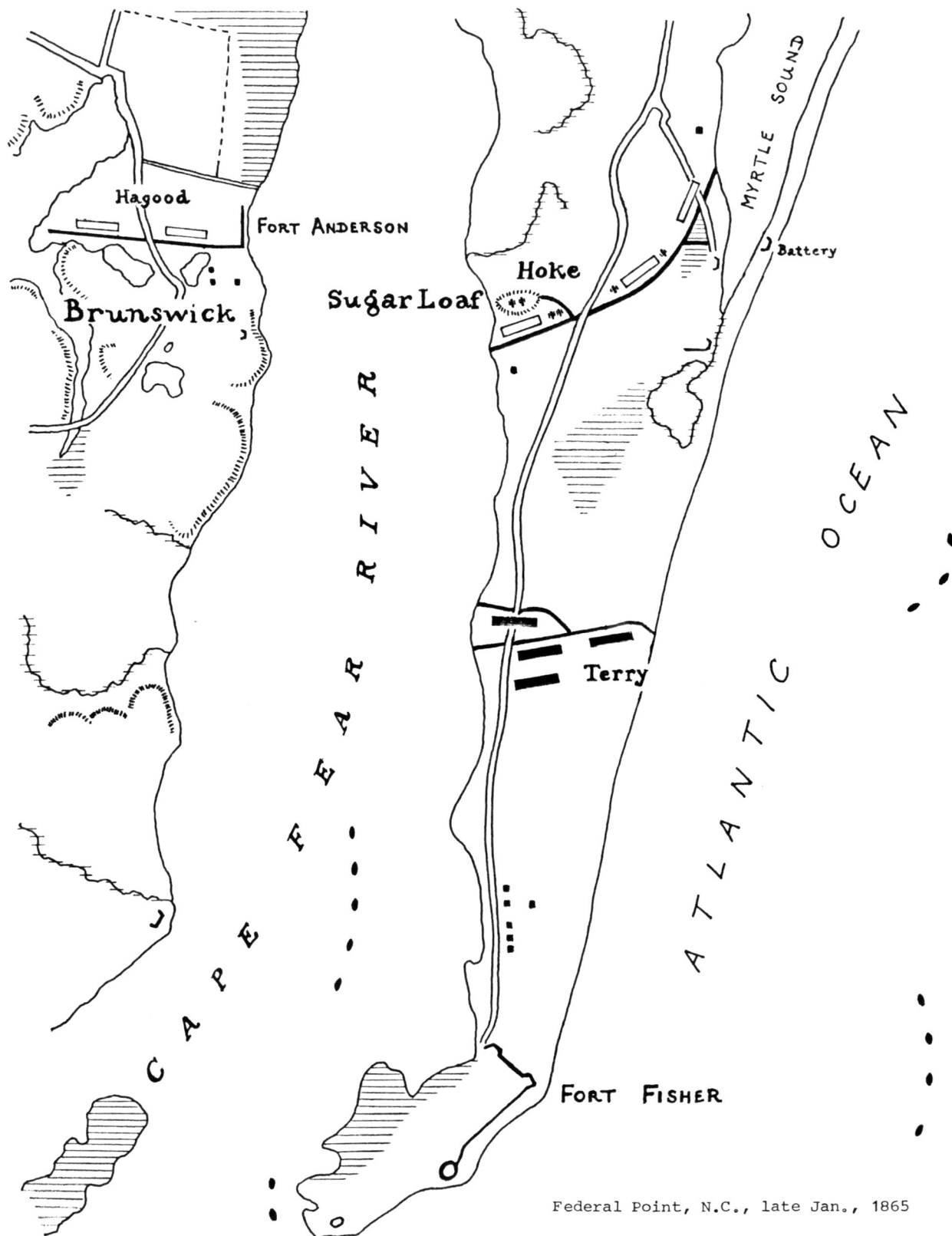
had served since 1862.⁵⁸ Hagood's contingent of approximately 2,300 troops comprised his own brigade (nearly 1,000 South Carolinians detached from Hoke's division), the garrison of North Carolinians already stationed at Fort Anderson, and the soldiers from the abandoned fortifications under the command of Colonel John J. Hedrick.⁵⁹ Hedrick replaced General Hebert who was reassigned as chief engineer of North Carolina.

General Terry faced Hoke on Federal Point with a command of approximately 7,000 troops, minus two regiments of infantry that were stationed at Smithville and Fort Caswell.* Until reinforcements arrived early in February, Terry's force remained that which had captured Fort Fisher--Terry's old unit, the Second Brigade, now commanded by Brigadier General Joseph C. Abbott, of the First Division, and Major General Adelbert Ames's Second Division of the XXIV Army Corps. Brigadier General Charles J. Paine commanded the Second and Third Brigades of his Third Division, XXV Army Corps of United States Colored Troops. The units occupied a double line of entrenchments about

* See Appendix B

⁵⁸Warner, Generals In Gray, 121-122; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 365.

⁵⁹Hagood, War of Secession, 334-335.



Federal Point, N.C., late Jan., 1865



General Johnson Hagood, C.S.A.



General Robert F. Hoke, C.S.A.



General Adelbert Ames, U.S.A.



General Alfred H. Terry, U.S.A.

midway between Fort Fisher and Sugar Loaf and were protected by Porter's gunboats in the river and ocean. A small contingent of engineers and artillerymen garrisoned Fort Fisher.⁶⁰

With momentum gained by the victory at Fort Fisher, General Terry was anxious to push right on to Wilmington. Admiral Porter, however, although he admired the general's audacity, cautioned against a premature strike. He worried that Terry might advance his army too far away from its base and get "cut to pieces by Bragg's force of cavalry," of which Terry had none.⁶¹ Moreover, Porter did not feel confident of supporting a land assault against the town until his gunboats possessed greater control of the river and were resupplied with ammunition. The admiral was more concerned with safeguarding Fort Fisher against a counterattack. "A desperate rush would give us much trouble," he contended; "what has been taken by one party

⁶⁰Organization of the U.S. Forces, commanded by Major General Alfred H. Terry, at Fort Fisher, January 13-15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 403-404; Field Report of the U.S. Forces at Fort Fisher, Federal Point, under the command of Major General Alfred H. Terry, January 23, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 214; Frederick H. Dyer, A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion, 2 volumes (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop Reprint, 1979), volume 1, 358-359.

⁶¹James M. Merrill (ed.), "The Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign: Letters From rear Admiral David D. Porter," North Carolina Historical Review (October, 1958), 471 (hereafter cited as Merrill, "Letters From Porter," NCHR).

can be retaken by another."⁶² Although Porter greatly overestimated the Confederates' troop strength and Bragg's courage, he advised Terry to dig in and wait for reinforcements from Grant or Sherman. This recommendation seemed uncharacteristic for the aggressive Porter, but the admiral had suffered a mild breakdown brought on by the excitement and excessive work in capturing Fort Fisher which may have accounted for his timidity.⁶³

Terry consented to the admiral's advice and ordered Fort Fisher restored as a defensive work.⁶⁴ At the same time, however, he directed reconnoitering parties against Sugar Loaf to determine the Confederates' strength. On January 18 Terry ordered Colonel John W. Ames to make a reconnaissance with the 4th, 6th, and 30th U.S. Colored Troops and sharpshooters from Paine's division. As Ames's force was about to move out, however, a Confederate party appeared bearing a flag of truce and requesting permission to send through the lines clothing and money for General Whiting who had been wounded and captured when Fort Fisher fell. By the time the authorized delivery was completed, it

⁶²Merrill, "Letters From Porter," NCHR, 471.

⁶³Merrill, "Letters From Porter," NCHR, 473.

⁶⁴Comstock to O'Keefe, January 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 167; Terry to Rawlins, January 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 275.

was too late for the reconnaissance to accomplish much. At about four p.m. Ames's skirmishers encountered Confederate pickets and pushed them back to within sight of their main line. General Terry came up to view Hoke's works and was fired on, but darkness forced him to suspend the movement. Ames pulled back his troops who suffered one killed and one wounded.⁶⁵

Terry renewed the reconnaissance the following morning. This time Colonel Ames took his entire brigade along with the division marksmen. They advanced up the center and west bank of Federal Point. At the same time General Abbott, with a small detachment from his brigade, marched along the beach in cooperation with Ames.⁶⁶

At two o'clock in the afternoon, Ames's brigade drove in the Confederate pickets and engaged Hoke's main defenses. Sporadic fighting raged for about three hours. Meanwhile, Abbott moved his force of about 300 men to the head of Myrtle Sound where it halted while the U.S.S. Governor

⁶⁵Report of Charles J. Paine, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 404; New York Herald, January 24, 1865; Hoke to Anderson, January 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1096; Entry January 18, 1865, Cyrus B. Comstock Diary, Cyrus B. Comstock Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Comstock Diary, LOC).

⁶⁶Report of Charles J. Paine, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 424; Report fo Joseph C. Abbott; January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 453; Report of John Thompson, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 454.

Buckingham and Cherokee shelled a Confederate outwork on the mainland blocking its advance. As soon as Abbott heard Ames's gunfire off to his left, the cue to open his attack, he and his men waded across the shallow end of the sound and advanced on the Confederate outpost.⁶⁷

Abbott deployed skirmishers who were soon pinned down by fire from Confederates in the work about one-quarter of a mile in front of Hoke's main line. Under orders from General Abbott, Lieutenant Paul Whipple led seventy soldiers of the 7th New Hampshire in on the right flank and charged the outwork. They quickly overran the Confederates, capturing two officers and about fifty men.⁶⁸

Abbott then pushed his force, shielded by cover fire from the Governor Buckingham and Montgomery, to within a hundred yards of Hoke's main defensive line. A tangled undergrowth of woods and bushes obstructed Abbott's view, so he climbed atop a nearby house to get a better look at the defenses. From this vantage point, Abbott could see that Hoke's earthworks were very strong and well manned. Colonel Ames had reached the same conclusion after experiencing

⁶⁷Abbott's force comprised 250 soldiers of the 7th New Hampshire and forty-one of the 7th Connecticut. (Report of Joseph C. Abbott, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 453.) Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 402-403; Abstract log of U.S.S. Cherokee, January 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 576-568.

⁶⁸Report of Joseph C. Abbott, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 453; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 403; Report of John Thompson, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 454.

stubborn fighting by the Confederates on the west side of the peninsula. Ames and Abbott had little choice but to withdraw, which they did at dark in a cold, steady rain. The bright spot of the movement was relatively minor casualties; only one man had been killed, four officers and twenty men wounded, and three missing, either captured or deserted.⁶⁹

The reconnaissances convinced Terry that Hoke held a formidable position and that it would be prudent to wait for additional troops before making a serious movement against Wilmington. In the meantime, however, Admiral Porter, who was feeling better, decided to do a little reconnoitering of his own. On January 22 he sent the U.S.S. Pequot upriver to test Fort Anderson. The Pequot steamed up and fired seven shots at the fort, which replied with two light artillery pieces. That was about the extent of the engagement. Commander Daniel L. Braine kept the Pequot in range for nearly two hours, long enough to observe at least six cannon pointing down river.⁷⁰ He also discovered that the

⁶⁹Report of Joseph C. Abbott, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 453; Report of John MacDiarmid, January 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 617; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 403; Report of John Thompson, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 454; Report of Charles J. Paine, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 424.

⁷⁰Report of Daniel L. Braine, January 22, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 630; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-22; Hebert to Anderson, January 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1123.

narrowness of the channel would prevent many vessels from simultaneously engaging the fort.

As January drew to a close, the Union and Confederate forces in the Cape Fear settled into a stalemate. Porter and Terry adopted a strategy of intimidation, while Bragg was content just to hold them in check as he waited for instructions from Richmond. Daily, pickets, who frequently were in view of each other, traded pot-shots while Union warships shelled the Confederates to disrupt work and scouting parties. Likewise, the Confederate gunboat C.S.S. Chickamauga, a converted blockade runner, threw shells at the Federals from its position in the river. For some unclear reason, however, the Confederates used the Chickamauga very sparingly in Wilmington's defense. Terry often dispatched reconnaissance forces while Bragg dug in deeper, but neither side made a serious effort to attack the other.⁷¹

The Union threat, however, soon unnerved the fainthearted Bragg, who reported at the end of January that "the enemy movements. . . indicate further operations at an early date."⁷² Bragg designated a line to fall back upon and prepared avenues of retreat. He ordered engineers to

⁷¹Porter to Sherman, January 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 142; Philadelphia, Inquirer, February 14, 1865.

⁷²Bragg to Taylor, January 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1154.

construct a secondary line of earthworks from Fort Campbell to Hewlitt's Creek on the east side of the river. They also erected defenses on the north bank of Town Creek, a narrow but deep stream that cut the opposite shore of the river about midway between Wilmington and Fort Anderson.⁷³ Bragg apparently had no intention of manning the defenses just outside the town limits for fear that if the Federals got that close, they might lay siege to and destroy Wilmington. Bragg also ordered a reconnaissance of and necessary repairs made to the Duplin or Goldsboro Road, particularly between Wilmington and the northeast Cape Fear River.⁷⁴

Moreover, Bragg ordered all government and private property of military value moved out of Wilmington. He threatened to destroy all remaining cotton, tobacco, naval stores, and other property that could be of use to the enemy.⁷⁵ "We are informed that if it becomes necessary to evacuate this town," the Wilmington Daily Journal reported,

⁷³Anderson to Hoke, January 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1105.

⁷⁴Anderson to James, January 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1113; Anderson to James, January 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1123.

⁷⁵Anderson to Jackson, January 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1119-1120; Seddon to Bragg, January 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1085; Anderson to Seixas, January 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1086; General Order, No. 4, Section 1, Adjutant General's Office, February 8, 1865, copy in possession of the author.

"it is the intention of the Commanding General to exercise the authority vested in him by act of Congress and destroy remaining cotton here."⁷⁶ The vast majority of stores were transferred to Raleigh, but a substantial quantity of cotton was hidden away by speculators who hoped to sell it to the Federals should they capture Wilmington.⁷⁷

Regardless of military policy, denizens viewed Bragg's actions as a clear sign that he planned to abandon Wilmington as he had Fort Fisher. "This place is still in the Confederacy," admitted a resident, "but from all indications I judge it will pass over to the stars and stripes ere many days, as things point to an early evacuation, and it is generally believed here that the Yankees have only to demand the place to get it. . . ."⁷⁸ Another citizen claimed that the fall of Fort Fisher was a dreadful blow not only to Wilmington, but signaled the Confederacy's doom. "We felt that the Confederacy must go,"

⁷⁶Wilmington Daily Journal, January 20, 1865.

⁷⁷Wilmington Daily Journal, February 16, 1865; Raleigh Daily Confederate, February 13, 1865; John B. Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), volume 2, 430.

⁷⁸Donald MacRae to Julia, February 7, 1865, Hugh MacRae Papers, Manuscript Department, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

she predicted; "the end was before us."⁷⁹ Since Fort Fisher's fall a feeling of gloom, apprehension, and anxiety had been gathering in Wilmington. Now the tempest struck full force and citizens lost all confidence in Bragg's leadership. For days newspapers and critics chided him.⁸⁰ "General Bragg's presence, wherever he has controlled" claimed an newspaper editor, "has been felt as a harbinger of disaster, an omen of impending evil--like a dark, cold, dreary cloud. . . ."⁸¹

Social and economic conditions deteriorated in Wilmington as respect for military authority broke down. A number of residents, who could afford to do so, left town. A shortage of food and fuel prevailed as local suppliers stopped bringing their products to town to sell for worthless Confederate currency or risk confiscation by the military for its own consumption.⁸² As a result prices escalated on all consumer goods, and for the poor it was "totally out of their power to procure the absolute

⁷⁹Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to Lou, May 18, 1865, DeRosset Family Papers, Southern Historical Society, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as DeRosset Papers, SHC).

⁸⁰Wilmington Daily Journal, January 17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 1865.

⁸¹Charleston Mercury, January 21, 1865.

⁸²Wilmington Daily Journal, February 2, 15, 17, 1865.

necessaries of life."⁸³ Philanthropists revived a Relief Association and lobbied for resolutions introduced into the State Senate authorizing Governor Vance to lend food to the needy in Wilmington. Vance visited the town in mid February hoping to boost morale, which had so diminished after the fall of Fort Fisher, the responsibility for which so many pinned on Braxton Bragg.⁸⁴

The constant criticism greatly distressed Bragg, yet he took no steps to alleviate the suspicions and fears of his accusers.⁸⁵ In fact the general imposed a blackout of military news when residents clamored for something more than mere rumors on the streets and the frequent sound of shelling down river. "Is it a military necessity to keep our people ignorant of every occurrence connected with their interests?" a Wilmingtonian queried. "The stereotyped phraseology of 'all quiet below' will have no effect upon us. We place [no] confidence in such reports."⁸⁶ Worse, Bragg only augmented his reputation for being "not a fighting General" when, on the eve of the Union drive

⁸³Wilmington Daily Journal, January 23, 1865.

⁸⁴Wilmington Daily Journal, January 24 and 25, 1865; Wilmington Daily North Carolinian, February 16, 1865.

⁸⁵Hoke to Anderson, January 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1096.

⁸⁶Wilmington Daily North Carolinian, January 26, 1865.

against Wilmington, he left for Richmond to reorganize his staff.⁸⁷

Bragg's seeming indifference over Wilmington's fate eroded not only the morale of local residents, but also his troops, some of whom deserted him. "I can tell you the soldiers are the worst cut down I ever saw them," exclaimed a Tar Heel; "they have all come to the conclusion that we are whipped and they are leaving by the whole sail & retail. . .

.⁸⁸ One deserter confided to his Union captors that he thought the war in eastern North Carolina had "gone up," and he attributed it, at least in part, to General Bragg.⁸⁹ A North Carolina infantryman worried that Bragg's depressed force would not stay together through another campaign. "The men are all very much disheartened," he confessed, "and the people at home are even more so and they write that strain to the soldiers and that makes them more dispirited

⁸⁷Note is from: Rogers, Memories, 118. Sale to Bragg, January 26, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1142; Sale to Bragg, February 2, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1083; Bragg to Davis, February 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1088; Bragg to Lee, February 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1138; Don C. Seitz, Braxton Bragg: General of the Confederacy (Columbia, South Carolina: The State Company, 1924), 507 (hereafter cited as Seitz, Braxton Bragg).

⁸⁸G.B. Cook to sister, February 16, 1865, letter in possession of the author.

⁸⁹Rogers, Memories, 118.

. . .there would be very few deserters if the soldiers letters [from home] were of a cheerful tone."⁹⁰

There was, however, little to be cheerful about. Set-backs on the battlefield, Sherman's march through Georgia and the Carolinas, England's and France's refusal to recognize the Confederate States of America, rampant inflation, and shortages on the homefront all broke down the will of Southerners to fight on. Perhaps General Sherman best summed up how the war had affected Confederate spirits when he wrote: "The simple fact that a man's home had been visited by an enemy makes a soldier. . .very anxious to get home to look after his family and property. . . ."91

Desertion did not confine itself to Bragg's army, but was an epidemic infecting all Confederate armies in the last winter of the war.

Yet desertion and despondency were not universal among Bragg's troops. One of his soldiers claimed that "the spirit of the troops never flagged; they were always willing to do their duty. . . ."92 Hoke's position at Sugar Loaf

⁹⁰Unidentified Confederate soldier to Denise, February 1, 1865, Perkins Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁹¹Sherman to Gillmore, March 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 85.

⁹²Walter Clark (ed.), Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions From North Carolina in the Great War 1861-'65, 5 volumes (Goldsboro, North Carolina: Nash Brothers, 1901), volume III, 694-695 (hereafter cited as

isolated the soldiers and dissuaded their leaving. Sugar Loaf was bounded on one side by the Cape Fear River, the Atlantic Ocean on the other, and separated from Wilmington by seemingly endless miles of sand hills. Those men who deserted generally went over to the enemy. But most soldiers chose to stay in the trenches rather than suffer through the winter locked away in a Northern prison.

Union soldiers in the Cape Fear also deserted their ranks. Military records reveal that nine infantrymen of the 6th Connecticut went over to the Confederates on Federal Point. Interestingly, all of them had enlisted as substitute recruits and were not veterans. Records of other regiments show a similar rate of troop attrition. Most of the Union desertion occurred, however, after the army captured Wilmington.⁹³

Both armies coped with adversities other than desertion, including the unusual environment, inclement weather, and pangs of desolation. Confederate soldiers in Wilmington and Union troops at Smithville were better off than those on Federal Point. They lived in relatively warm barracks and among civilians with whom they could interact, especially females. Even Porter's sailors lived in a fairly

Clark, North Carolina Regiments).

⁹³Charles K. Caldwell, The Old Sixth Regiment, Its War Record, 1861-5 (New Haven, Connecticut: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1875), 127-214.

controlled environment on board ships. For soldiers stationed in the field, however, it was a different story. A Union infantryman, who claimed he felt less a soldier and more like Robinson Crusoe, described Federal Point as "a field of sand, which as far as [one] could see, was as bare of vegetation and fuel as the watery waste from which [he] had disembarked."⁹⁴ Indeed, Federal Point was a low, narrow peninsula blanketed by white sand and devoid, for the most part, of vegetation and inhabitants. Only soldiers and a few watermen lived among the sea of sand dotted by intermittent thickets of scrub oaks and swamps. An Illinois soldier asserted that the ocean's waves, the continuous roar of which was music to his western ears as they rolled in among the sandy shore, was the only thing that broke the monotonous landscape.⁹⁵ To make matters worse, icy, wintry winds blew incessantly across the barren cape.

Conditions at Fort Anderson were somewhat better. There Confederate soldiers took advantage of the surrounding pine forest with its abundance of wild game and fresh water ponds and lakes stocked with fish. Some of the men lived in

⁹⁴W.S. Thurstin, History One Hundred and Eleventh Regiment O.V.I. (Toledo, Ohio: Vrooman, Anderson & Bateman, 1894), 112 (hereafter cited as Thurstin, 111th Ohio).

⁹⁵B.F. Thompson, History of the 112th Regiment of Illinois Volunteer Infantry in the Great War of the Rebellion 1862-1865 (Toulon, Illinois: Stark County News Office, 1885), 297-298 (hereafter cited as Thompson, 112th Illinois).

crude barracks, the foundations and fireplaces of which were made of ballast stones from Old Brunswick's colonial dwellings. Most of the troops, however, slept along the line of earthworks "in whatever rude shelters they could construct." Moreover, the woods on the fort's periphery were timbered or burned for defensive purposes, exposing the soldiers to bitter cold winds. One officer claimed that these were "sharp enough to cut a man in two."⁹⁶

Perpetual winds, abnormally cold temperatures, and frequent rain in late January and February, 1865, made life almost unbearable at times for soldiers in the lower Cape Fear. Although there were intermittent pleasant days, the weather was unusually bad. "I think it is as cold weather as I ever felt," wrote a Wilmington-born Confederate officer. He awoke at Fort Anderson one evening soaked to the skin by a chilling rain and pools of water that had formed under him. "Tried to lay there & sleep it out but couldn't do it," he recorded in his diary. "Got up and built a large fire around which we stood until morning, altogether a miserable night."⁹⁷ A Union soldier wrote to his brother that "a man of the 112th [New York] froze to

⁹⁶William Calder to mother, January 28, 1865, Calder Papers, SHC.

⁹⁷Entry January 20, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

death in their camp" on Federal Point one night.⁹⁸

January and February produced no lack of bad weather, but the Confederates witnessed shortages of food. The irregular distribution of meager rations provoked the soldiers to plunder. To halt the depredations, General Bragg ordered an officer from each company to be on duty all night to prevent the men from roaming the countryside. He also enforced regular drills and dress parades and closed down camp infirmaries, moving the sick, many of whom were guilty of infractions, to permanent hospitals in Wilmington.⁹⁹ General Hoke was reluctant to push his men too hard because he believed their mental state was such that he should guard against all reasons for complaint.¹⁰⁰

A Georgia soldier simply suggested "an increase in rations . . . and more attention paid to the enlisted man," to lessen desertion, straggling, and plundering.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Henry F. Jackson and Thomas F. O'Donnell (eds.), Back Home In Odeida: Hermon Clarke and His Letters (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1965), 187 (hereafter cited as Jackson and O'Donnell, Back Home In Oneida).

⁹⁹Bragg to Hoke, January 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1138; Circulars for January 26 and February 12, 1865, Hoke Order Book, Hoke Papers, NCA; Anderson to Hoke, January 30, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1164.

¹⁰⁰Hoke to Anderson, February 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1089.

¹⁰¹Wilmington Daily Journal, January 30, 1865.

It was altogether a miserable existence for both Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, but they made the best of it. The armies actually looked forward to skirmishing with each other to relieve the monotony. Out of boredom the soldiers often created their own forms of entertainment. Fraternizing with the enemy was common; they swapped newspapers, coffee, tobacco, and braggadocio.¹⁰² Confederate troops invented a unique way to pass their time. During the Union navy's daily bombardments, the Southerners exposed themselves to exploding shells in order to claim the brass fuzes which they made into rings and other ornaments. "As soon as the missile burst," explained a soldier, "you would see men running in every direction toward the place for the purpose of finding the broken parts."¹⁰³ Despite the occasional merriment, however, it was all-in-all a hard, dull existence. "In my experience in the field there was always something to keep up a pleasant state of excitement," admitted a North Carolina officer. "But here, there is neither the march nor the anticipation of a fight to cause our blood to move hurriedly through our veins, while at the same time we are experiencing as rough a time in the field as

¹⁰²New York Tribune, February 18, 1865.

¹⁰³Clark, North Carolina Regiments, III, 695.

troops ever do."¹⁰⁴

Such was the backdrop on the eve of the Wilmington Campaign. The Confederates possessed a strong defensive position, but were profoundly disillusioned by the war's progress. Their spirits lifted temporarily when they heard news of peace talks between a Confederate delegation and President Lincoln at Hampton Roads, Virginia, early in February. "We have been jubilant. . . over the numerous peace rumors affront," proclaimed an excited officer in Bragg's army. "God grant that our hopes and prayers may be realized and Peace! blessed Peace! soon smile upon our land"¹⁰⁵ Their hopes were crushed when the peace meeting fell through.

A failure of the peace negotiations was exactly what many Union soldiers and sailors wanted. Terry's and Porter's men sensed victory and received the news with delight because, as one infantryman claimed, they wanted "a soldier's peace, not a politicians peace." When asked by a reporter what was a soldier's peace, the musket-bearer replied: "To fight till one side is completely whipped, whipped till they own up, that sir, is a soldier's peace. .

¹⁰⁴William Calder to mother, January 28, 1865, Calder Papers, SHC.

¹⁰⁵William Calder to mother, January 28, 1865, Calder Papers, SHC.

. ." ¹⁰⁶ Their esprit de corps was high and they were ready to move on Wilmington.

¹⁰⁶Philadelphia Inquirer, February 16, 1865.

CHAPTER THREE

"TO FORGE A THUNDERBOLT:"

UNION MILITARY OPERATIONS ON FEDERAL POINT,

JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 15, 1865

On January 28, General Grant and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus V. Fox arrived in the Cape Fear to confer with Admiral Porter and General Terry about future operations. They brought with them Major General John McAllister Schofield, commander of the XXIII Army Corps, Army of the Ohio. For two days the officers on board Porter's flagship U.S.S. Malvern in the Cape Fear River studied maps and charts and discussed a movement to support General Sherman's army which was set to invade the Carolinas.¹

Sherman had decided to march his 60,000-man force from Georgia to Virginia to join Grant's Army of the Potomac in besieging Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Petersburg. Grant and Sherman believed that by concentrating or attempting to unite their armies they could overrun Lee or force

¹Abstract log of U.S.S. Malvern, January 28, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 740; Grant to Sherman, February 1, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 193; Entry January 28, 1865, Comstock Diary, LOC; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-31; James L. McDonough, Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1972), 150 (hereafter cited as McDonough, Schofield).

him to abandon his position. Once in open country they² could converge on and defeat him.

Sherman set out from Savannah on February 1. He intended to wreck lines of communication and consume or destroy remaining supplies in South and North Carolina that Lee's army depended upon for existence. He targeted Columbia first and then Fayetteville, both of which contained Confederate armories. Moreover, the Cape Fear River, which links Fayetteville and Wilmington, would make an ideal pipeline for provisions for his army. Sherman's ultimate object, however, was Goldsborough, North Carolina, the capture of which would be advantageous for two main reasons. First, Goldsborough connected with the seacoast via two railroads--the Wilmington and Weldon, and the Atlantic and Carolina to New Bern--by which Sherman could be resupplied and reinforced. Second, from Goldsborough Sherman could easily strike Raleigh, the state capital, where Confederate supplies from Wilmington were being sent.³

²Sherman to Grant, January 29, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 154-156; Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, 2 volumes (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886), volume 2, 401-402; William T. Sherman, Memoirs of General William T. Sherman, 2 volumes (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), volume 2, 271 (hereafter cited as Sherman, Memoirs); Porter, Naval History of the Civil War, 738; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 123-124.

³Sherman to Palmer, January 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 111; Sherman, Memoirs, volume 2, 272; Sherman to Foster, January 29, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 163; Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War, 2 volumes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), volume 2, 395 (hereafter

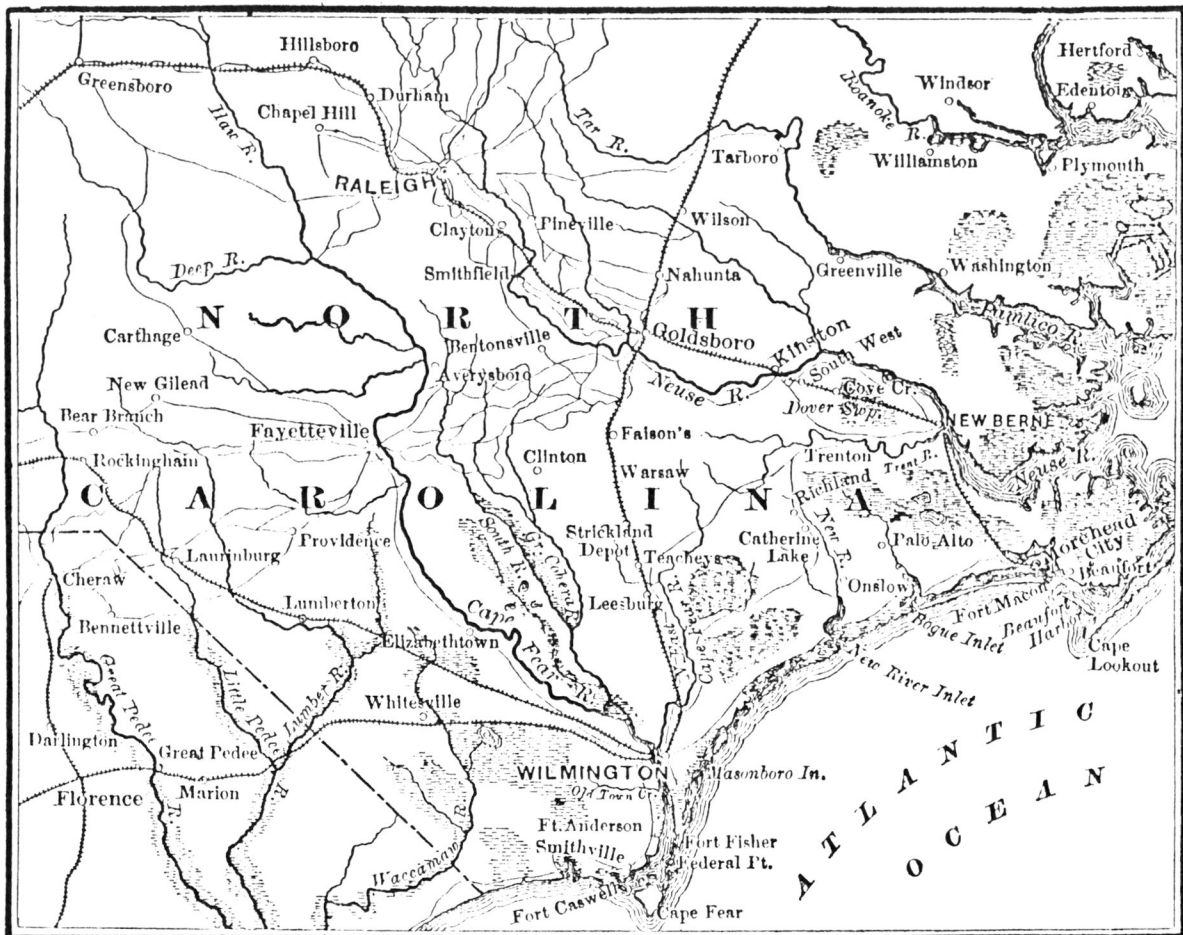
"If Lee lets us get [Goldsborough], he is gone up," Sherman predicted. "[From there] I can easily take Raleigh, when it seems that Lee must come out of his trenches or allow his army to be absolutely invested."⁴

Grant went to the Cape Fear to formulate a strategy to "open communication between the seacoast and Goldsborough by rail, so as to meet Sherman with supplies for his army and to put at his disposal an available force."⁵ Grant agreed with the advice of his officers that Wilmington was the best point from which to move against Goldsborough. New Bern, occupied by the Union since 1862, possessed a deeper harbor more favorable for a base of supply, but the railroad from there to Goldsborough needed extensive repairs. Grant figured that the presence of Bragg's army at Wilmington was an indication that the railroads to the port were still operational. A bold strike might capture them and their rolling stock before the Confederates could remove or demolish them. Moreover, although the Union possession of Fort Fisher gave Sherman a point of security on the seaboard, he needed Wilmington for a temporary supply depot,

cited as Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 395).

⁴Sherman to Grant, January 29, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 155-156.

⁵Grant to Schofield, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 492.



Map of North Carolina.



General Jacob D. Cox



General John M. Schofield, U.S.A.

and as a potential place to concentrate troops south of Goldsborough.⁶ Before he returned to Virginia, Grant deemed "the capture of Wilmington of the greatest importance."⁷

Having studied the approaches to and the defenses protecting Wilmington, Porter and Terry recommended spearheading the campaign to capture the town from the west side of the Cape Fear River. There the topography would allow the army more room to maneuver than was possible on Federal Point. Their strategy was simple. While the navy bombarded Fort Anderson, the army would launch a direct land assault or attempt to outflank the fort. Grant approved the plan, saying "it is the best and only thing to be done."⁸

Such an operation, however, according to Porter, would require at least 13,000 troops, double Terry's force. That is where Schofield came in. Grant recently had called Schofield's corps, approximately 21,000 troops, to the eastern theater of the war from Tennessee where, the previous December, it had helped defeat General John Bell Hood's Army of

⁶Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 395; Grant to Schofield, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 492; Sherman to Grant, January 29, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 154-156; Schofield to Grant, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 436-437.

⁷Grant to Sherman, March 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 859.

⁸Porter Memoir, 884-885, Porter Papers, LOC; Grant to Sherman, February 1, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 193.

Tennessee at Franklin and Nashville. Grant decided to transfer Schofield's force to North Carolina. In fact, its advance units pulled into Washington just two days before Grant and Schofield departed for the Cape Fear.⁹

Upon his return, Grant directed the War Department to recreate the Department of North Carolina and assign Schofield its commander.¹⁰ In spite of his inexperience in combined operations, Schofield's appointment was a good one. He was a regular army officer, a graduate of West Point, and a reasonably successful and dependable corps commander. He tended to be somewhat "petty and jealous of his fellow officers," but those misgivings, according to his biographer, "were overshadowed. . .by his ability as an organizer and administrator."¹¹

Yet Schofield's assignment instead of General Terry to direct the Wilmington campaign angered Porter. The admiral professed that Grant not only committed a grave error, but

⁹Merrill, "Letters From Porter," NCHR, 469; Sherman to Foster, January 29, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 163; Issac R. Sherwood, Memories of the War (Toledo, Ohio: H.J. Chittendon Co., 1923), 154-155 (hereafter cited as Sherwood, Memories); Koontz to Stanton, January 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 131.

¹⁰Grant to Stanton, January 31, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 179; General Orders No.12, War Department, January 31, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 179; Report of U.S. Grant, July 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 44-45; Grant to Stanton, February 4, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 365.

¹¹Warner, Generals In Blue, 425-426; McDonough, Schofield, 190.

performed an "actual injustice" to Terry in light of his "gallant exploit" at Fort Fisher.¹² "I am not one of those who consider [Grant] the military genius of the age, and think he makes mistakes," Porter lambasted.¹³ Porter's resentment was probably as much a reaction to what he undoubtedly considered a usurpation of his own authority, for he too would be under Schofield's charge. But, Grant's action was not a personal affront against Terry or Porter. Schofield was the senior ranking officer while Terry, irrespective of his great success at Fort Fisher, his first important separate command, had entered the army as a volunteer officer.

Grant's orders to Schofield directed him to capture Wilmington and then to move rapidly from there or New Bern, or both, towards Goldsborough. If he failed to take Wilmington, he was to secure the west bank of the Cape Fear River and open communication with Sherman in the direction of Florence, South Carolina, via the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, or Lumberton, North Carolina, on the Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherfordton Railroad. A support force from New Bern would advance regardless. In any event, Schofield's objectives were to give Sherman material and manpower aid, if needed; to open a base of

¹²Porter Memoir, 883, Porter Papers, LOC.

¹³Merrill, "Letters From Porter," NCHR, 478.

supply for his army at or close to Goldsborough; and to prevent Bragg from impeding Sherman's advance.¹⁴ Grant was apprehensive that Bragg, having held Wilmington long enough for the remnants of the Army of Tennessee to arrive in North Carolina, would unite with it, General William J. Hardee's army in South Carolina, as well as reinforcements from Virginia, and strike Sherman before he reached the Cape Fear. His concern was evident in his order that Schofield break loose from his base if necessary to save Sherman's army.¹⁵

Grant's anxiety proved unfounded; the Confederacy was in a worse state of affairs than Grant suspected. Southern forces in the Carolinas remained scattered, the Army of Tennessee again changed commanders as it retreated slowly into the Old North State, and Lee was unable to detach reinforcements because rampant desertion had weakened his own army. Moreover, the Confederate high command wasted precious time without forming a strategy to hold back the Union tide. As one study suggests, "perhaps the repeated failure of the Federals to follow up any of their coast operations by an

¹⁴Report of U.S. Grant, July 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 46; Schofield to Foster, February 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 454; Foster to Terry, January 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 114; Grant to Stanton, February 4, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 365; Grant to Schofield

¹⁵Reed, Combined Operations, 379; Report of U.S. Grant, July 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 1, 45.

immediate strong advance encouraged the belief that the forces which overpowered Fort Fisher would also disperse or remain idle on the coast."¹⁶

Meanwhile Schofield prepared to get the campaign under way. He had his corps ready to embark from Alexandria, Virginia by February 1, but severe cold weather had frozen the Potomac River and delayed its departure for three days. On February 4, General Schofield along with the first of his troops, the Third Division commanded by Major General Jacob Dolson Cox, finally set sail for the Cape Fear. The remainder of the XXIII Army Corps shipped out in the following two weeks as transports became available and the weather permitted. A provisional corps, commanded by Brigadier General Thomas F. Meagher, comprised of troops from the Army of the Tennessee, transferred at the same time to New Bern. It planned to advance simultaneously with Schofield on Goldsborough after Wilmington had been captured.¹⁷

¹⁶Reed, Combined Operations, 379-381.

¹⁷"Get off at 10 o'clock, General Schofield going with us. . .The ice is very bad. . .our ship is the Atlantic." Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 4, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 927. Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 399-400; Jacob D. Cox, March to the Sea, Franklin and Nashville (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 147 (hereafter cited as Cox, March to the Sea); McDonough, Schofield, 151; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 297; Halleck to Grant, February 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 213-214; Meagher to Palmer, February 7, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 371.

Terry and Porter wasted no time waiting for Schofield to arrive, but made ready to move on Wilmington. Terry's troops continued to strengthen their earthworks and to reconnoiter the Confederate defenses. Infantrymen from Terry's command who had stayed behind in Virginia began arriving at Fort Fisher bolstering his corps back up to a full strength of about 8,000 troops. Terry also received a small contingent of cavalry. Admiral Porter set aside his animosity because he realized capturing Wilmington would require the hearty cooperation of both the navy and army. He assembled in the river a flotilla of some thirty vessels, including the U.S.S. Montauk, a shallow draft monitor sent from the Charleston blockading force explicitly for operations in the Cape Fear River.* The navy spent much of its time mounting 9-inch and 11-inch guns to replace 100-pounder Parrott rifles, some of which had burst or cracked during the bombardments of Fort Fisher. The substitute ordnance arrived from the North and was mounted in about ten days, despite the lack of facilities for doing the work and the cold, wet weather.¹⁸

* See Appendix A

¹⁸Report of David D. Porter, February 12, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 16; Grant to Stanton, February 4, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 365; Report of David D. Porter, January 31, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 721; Porter, Naval History of the Civil War, 726; Porter to Comstock, February 8, 1865, Porter Papers, LOC.

Also, Porter sent Lieutenant Cushing and a hand-picked crew on two successive nights to reconnoiter Confederate obstructions in the river and to search for a torpedo ram rumored to be nearby. The first night the party scouted to within one mile of Wilmington. They reconnoitered heavy obstructions abreast of Fort Anderson and the river batteries just below the city, but found no torpedo craft. The following evening, February 11, Cushing and his men conducted a more thorough inspection of the obstructions off Fort Anderson. They discovered not only a formidable line of piles blocking the channel, but torpedoes as well.¹⁹ The thrill of being so close to the enemy enticed Cushing to do a little gallivanting on his own. Cushing landed and crept to a position just outside Fort Anderson's dirt walls. From there he listened to a brass band and "speeches being made by enthusiastic Confederates."²⁰ With his usual pluck the daring Union naval officer escaped with his life, but barely. Confederate guards spotted and hailed his boats as they pulled away from shore, and blasted away in their

¹⁹Report of David D. Porter, February 12, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 17; Cushing Journal, NA; Paul Murray and Stephen Russell Bartlett, Jr. (eds.), "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett Aboard the U.S.S. 'Lenapee', January to August, 1865," North Carolina Historical Review (January, 1956), 72 (hereafter cited as Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR); Special Order of Rear Admiral Porter, No.13, January 28, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 708.

²⁰Cushing Journal, NA.

direction when they failed to halt. Cushing and his cohorts answered defiantly with small arms fire as they escaped unhurt. Cushing performed good service in spite of his escapade.²¹ He found the obstructions in the channel too strong for the gunboats to break through; the fort would have to be captured in order for the vessels to pass.

Porter's main interest in the meantime was to contain the Confederates in their trenches and prevent them from constructing new works. "I am maneuvering to make them believe we are going to attack them, and keep them on the

²¹An unidentified former Confederate soldier, possibly Eugene S. Martin of Wilmington, who was stationed at Fort Anderson in February, 1865, substantiated Cushing's exploit. According to the old soldier, the Eutaw Band, attached to the 25th South Carolina, serenaded a council of officers in front of headquarters at Fort Anderson one evening in mid February. Afterwards, Lieutenant Colonel John Douglas Taylor, 36th North Carolina (2nd Regiment North Carolina Artillery), made a patriotic speech to troops gathered nearby. The assembly broke up when the officer of the day reported that unidentified boats were in the river in front of the fort. A Confederate artillery crew fired a cannon towards the vessels which returned fire and got away. In March, 1865, some of General Hoke's troops near Kinston, North Carolina, captured a Federal soldier who had a New York Herald newspaper that contained an article on Cushing's reconnaissance of Fort Anderson. In the article, Cushing related Taylor's address to his men almost verbatim. (Taylor, "Reminiscences," 4-5; Wilmington Morning Star, June 4, 1917.) According to James Sprunt, Cushing's daring reconnaissance occurred on the night of February 17, 1865. (Sprunt, Tales and Traditions, 46-48.) Admiral Porter, on the other hand, reported the reconnaissance taking place on February 11. "Last night I sent Lieutenant Cushing up again to make a more thorough reconnaissance. . .The boats had barely time to make good observations when they were hailed and then fired upon with grape and cannister from seven or eight guns, which kept up the fire until they were out of sight. Fortunately we met with no loss. . . ." (Report of David D. Porter, February 12, ORN, 1, XII, 17.)

alert, adding to present works and building others," he reported.²² Porter ordered his gunboats to shell the enemy "whenever they show[ed] themselves or [gave] indications of their presence."²³ At mid-morning on January 29, the U.S.S. Montgomery opened fire on a number of Confederate soldiers occupying a line of rifle pits on the west bank of Myrtle Sound opposite the ship. A few well directed shots sent the Confederates scrambling for cover in a nearby swamp, but the Montgomery continued firing for two and a half hours. When the soldiers reemerged from the swamp at dusk, the Montgomery shelled them again.²⁴ The next afternoon the U.S.S. Cherokee picked up where the Montgomery had left off. Her commander, Acting Volunteer Lieutenant William E. Dennison, spotted a large body of grayclad troops equipped in full marching gear on the mainland near the same rifle pits as the day before. The Cherokee opened fire, driving the Southerners again into the swamp and their earthworks. Dennison was convinced that they had been working on their

²²Porter to Sherman, January 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 143.

²³Porter to Rolando, February 4, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 5.

²⁴Report of Thomas C. Dunn, January 30, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 713.

defenses.²⁵

The navy did not provoke a general engagement, but on February 3 it got into a tough scrap with Fort Anderson. Just before four o'clock in the afternoon the U.S.S. Tacony steamed up river and fired on the fort. Her second shot tore into some quarters wounding six men, two mortally, of Company B, 40th North Carolina. A report stated that that single shot inflicted more damage than Fort Anderson had received from a Union gunboat up to that time. Captain Abner Moseley's battery of two imported British Whitworth rifled cannon, noted for their deadly accuracy and spiralled projectiles that whistled eerily in flight, retaliated from the fort with five shots. That was all it took. Three bolts passed completely through the Tacony's hull, one below the waterline, causing her to leak and withdraw back down stream. The U.S.S. Shawmut replaced the Tacony on the firing line until dark, but caused no further serious damage to the fort or its defenders.²⁶ Together the double-ended gunboats fired only twenty-six projectiles, yet they struck with "infernal accuracy, nearly every shot falling within

²⁵Report of William E. Dennison, January 30, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 713-714.

²⁶Abstract log of U.S.S. Shawmut, February 3, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 36-37; Entry February 3, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke; Hoke to Anderson, February 4, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVI, 2, 1204; Raleigh Daily Confederate, February 10, 1865; Unidentified Confederate soldier to Kate McGeachy, February 4, 1865, Buie Papers, Duke.

the work."²⁷ The navy was increasing its shore bombardments and establishing an effective range of fire. It would prove beneficial in supporting the army's advance on Wilmington.

On February 7 the first transports bearing General Schofield's troops cast anchor off Fort Fisher, "its big parapet looking like a long, low hill with knobs upon it, rising from the beach of glittering white sand."²⁸ Other vessels carrying the remainder of General Cox's division arrived the following day. A gale off Cape Hatteras had slowed their voyage down the North Carolina coast. Rough seas inflicted seasickness upon many of the landlubbers, most of them Westerners who probably had never even seen the ocean much less been on it.²⁹

²⁷Wilmington Daily Journal, February 7, 1865.

²⁸Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 7, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 927; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 297; Thomas P. Adams to Parents, February 10, 1865, letter in possession of Virginia T. Adams Zimmerman, Ohio. Note is from: Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 404.

²⁹An infantryman of the 104th Ohio humorously recounted the suffering of a seasick comrade: "He lost control over his rations and they won't stay down. He finally became so sick and weakened that he stretches himself out on the deck determined to die, and declares that only a watery grave will be satisfactory to him. To his favorite comrades he wills his personal property, and to the sharks his body is to be delivered. . . But after many hours of suffering he declares himself too sick to reach his last breath and lives on to suffer." (J.W. Gaskill, Footprints Through Dixie [Alliance, Ohio: Bradshaw Publishing Company, 1919], 169.) Thomas Speed to Parents, February 8, 1865, Thomas Speed Collection, The Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky (hereafter cited as Speed Collection, FC); Thompson, 112th Illinois,

Fog and wind kept Cox's troops aboard the vessels until the morning of February 8 when they commenced landing despite persistent bad weather. Putting 4,500 fully equipped soldiers ashore in a cold, driving rain storm and choppy seas proved to be a slow and difficult task. In fact, it took two days to land all of them. Each man had to transfer twice into shallow draft boats, first to cross New Inlet's bar and then to put in at Fort Fisher, before he again touched dry ground. General Schofield was one of the first to hit the beach. He went inshore immediately to assume command and set up his command post. General Cox did not land until February 10. Once on Federal Point he established his headquarters and division encampment in rear of General Terry's corps two miles north of Fort Fisher.³⁰ Cox's division comprised three brigades commanded respectively by Colonel Oscar W. Sterl, Colonel John S.

297; R. Noble ? to Dear Friends, February 19, 1865, Federal Soldiers Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

³⁰The 140th Indiana was the first and the 112th Illinois was the last of Cox's regiments to land on Federal Point on February 8, 1865. (Thompson, 112th Illinois, 297.) Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 404-405; Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 8-10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 927; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965; Schofield to Grant, February 8, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 355; Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 112; General Orders No.1, Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 370; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-35-36.

Casement, and Colonel Thomas J. Henderson.³¹ When all the troops were ashore, the transports returned to Alexandria to embark Schofield's other two divisions.

The massive Union build-up in the Cape Fear and at New Bern worried General Bragg. He wrote Governor Vance that the concentration of enemy troops indicated a movement towards the state capital.³² Bragg realized that a simultaneous Federal advance from the Cape Fear and New Bern could jeopardize his own army as well as Raleigh. He saw the increasing need to consolidate Confederate forces in the interior. In the meantime, however, he urged Vance to organize all the forces he could muster and send them to help defend Wilmington. Then, as if showing indifference to the whole affair, Bragg turned over his command to General Hoke and departed on February 10 for Richmond to reorganize his staff.

The same day that Bragg left for Virginia, Schofield, Cox, Porter, and Terry held a council of war on board the Malvern, to "forge a thunderbolt," as a reporter described it.³³ Time was of increasing importance as Sherman's army

³¹Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 958.

³²Bragg to Vance, February 7, 1865, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

³³Philadelphia Inquirer, February 21, 1865.

already had been on the march ten days. Schofield decided to commence operations immediately without waiting for the remainder of his corps. He believed that he could take Fort Anderson and Wilmington with the force on hand, approximately 12,500 troops.³⁴

Before moving against Fort Anderson, however, Schofield decided to threaten Sugar Loaf. He felt that pushing Terry's corps, supported by Porter's gunboats, closer to Sugar Loaf "would compel [Hoke] to hold [his works] in force," and prevent reinforcements from being detached to Fort Anderson.³⁵ Schofield hoped that a tenacious naval bombardment would enable Terry to overrun Hoke, obviating an attack on Fort Anderson. Even if this were not this case, it would at least allow Schofield more time to bring up the remainder of his corps.³⁶

Schofield scheduled the assault for the following day, February 11. He instructed Terry to "make a strong demonstration upon the enemy" and to be prepared to take his

³⁴Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 927; Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 405-406; Schofield to Grant, February 8, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 356.

³⁵Schofield to Porter, February 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 371.

³⁶Entry, February 10, 1865, Comstock Diary, LOC; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 281; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 71-72; Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 407.

works if practicable; if not to establish a counter line "near enough to threaten his position."³⁷ He called on Porter to provide Terry's assault force with cover fire by shelling both Sugar Loaf and Fort Anderson.³⁸ Porter grumbled disapproval of Schofield's plan. In his view even if the Federals "succeeded in dislodging the [Confederates], they would retreat by roads known only to themselves and leave [Union troops] in possession of barren sand hills and large numbers of killed and wounded."³⁹ The admiral reluctantly obeyed Schofield's orders.

Saturday, February 11, dawned beautiful and clear. Porter's warships steamed up to their assigned battle stations as Terry's troops broke camp and at eight a.m. advanced towards Sugar Loaf.⁴⁰ The soldiers, each supplied with sixty rounds of ammunition and three days' rations, were eager for a fight to relieve the "monotony of sand,

³⁷Special Orders, No.1, Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 384.

³⁸Schofield to Porter, February 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 371.

³⁹Porter Memoir, 884-885, Porter Papers, LOC.

⁴⁰Report of William H. Trickey, February 11, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 922; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 407; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 299; D. Eldridge, The Third New Hampshire and All About It (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Company, 1893), 630 (hereafter cited as Eldridge, Third New Hampshire).

surf, and salt water."⁴¹ General Terry personally directed the advance although he was ill and had to ride in a dilapidated buggy confiscated from a Smithville doctor.⁴²

General Abbott's brigade formed on the right, stretching from the ocean into Federal Point's interior where it joined Colonel John W. Ames's brigade of General Paine's division. General Adelbert Ames's division controlled the center and connected with Paine's Third Brigade, commanded by Colonel Elias Wright, next to the river. The left wing was supported by Lieutenant John Myrick's Battery E, 3rd United States Artillery. General Cox's division, fatigued by the long, stormy sea voyage, was held in reserve.⁴³

The Union gunboats in the ocean opened the day's fighting at about nine a.m. The Keystone State, Aries, Emma, Howquah, Montgomery, and Vicksburg threw shells in over the beach at Hoke's works. An hour later the Lenapee,

⁴¹New York Herald, February 16, 1865.

⁴²A newspaper reported that General Terry was "greatly prostrated by the poisonous malaria in his system." New York Tribune, February 18, 1865. Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes, 280-281; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 18, 1865.

⁴³Isaiah Price, History of the Ninety-Seventh Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry During the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865 (Philadelphia, 1875), 358 (hereafter cited as Price, Ninety-Seventh Pennsylvania); New York Tribune, February 17, 1865.

Mackinaw, and Unadilla in the river commenced firing on Sugar Loaf and Fort Anderson.⁴⁴

Sometime after eleven o'clock that morning the Montauk steamed upstream to engage Fort Anderson. "Every shot struck with the most remarkable accuracy," noted a war correspondent of the monitor's fire. "One after another they glanced along [the fort's] ramparts or burst on its glacis, sending the sand in clouds to the sky."⁴⁵ At about noon the fort responded, but its fire was weak. From a vantage point on Federal Point General Cox watched the duel between the Montauk and Fort Anderson. He was amused by some sailors who stood on the deck of the monitor to inspect the effect of her fire, but were occasionally forced to take refuge behind her turret when Confederate counter-shots came too close. The ironclad's deck was almost awash and offered Fort Anderson's guns little target, but some of their shots ricocheted off her armored plating or passed nearby.⁴⁶

The bombardment of Fort Anderson kept its gunners close to the parapet, but most of the shells burst harmlessly beyond them. Casualties were light; indeed, a Wilmington

⁴⁴Abstract log of U.S.S. Keystone State, February 11, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 38; Abstract log of U.S.S. Shawmut, February 11, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 37; New York Herald, February 16, 1865.

⁴⁵New York Herald, February 16, 1865.

⁴⁶Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 408-409.

newspaper reported that but one soldier was killed and one wounded. Further, it described the bombardment as "a desultory fire at long range."⁴⁷ As far as Admiral Porter was concerned, however, the bombardment served its purpose by protecting General Terry's force from enfilade fire from Fort Anderson.

At about 9:30 that morning Terry's skirmishers encountered Hoke's pickets. A running firefight ensued as General Paine's black troops steadily pushed back the Confederates. For more than an hour the shooting was heavy and continuous. Paine himself was near the front "directing and animating his soldiers."⁴⁸

Many of Schofield's troops had never seen black soldiers in action and were curious to observe their performance on the battlefield. By day's end Paine's veteran warriors left little doubt that they were good soldiers and courageous fighters. "You must turn up your nose when I say they fight splendidly," cautioned a Kentucky soldier. "I saw them and our regiment saw it--and they all acknowledge that. . .old nigger will fight."⁴⁹ Another

⁴⁷Wilmington Daily Journal, February 13, 1865.

⁴⁸Philadelphia Inquirer, February 18, 1865.

⁴⁹Thomas Speed to Will, February 12, 1865, Speed Collection, FC).

witness described them as "cool, accurate, and soldierly."⁵⁰

General Cox spent a good part of the day watching them and concluded that "they were disciplined and well led, and went forward with alacrity in capital form, showing that they were good soldiers."⁵¹ Paine's brigades absorbed the brunt of the fighting on February 11, suffering sixteen killed and seventy-six wounded. That was by far the greatest loss by any unit and comprised almost one half of all Union casualties for the entire campaign.⁵²

Adelbert Ames's division met opposition of a different kind, a dense, almost impassable swamp extending across its line of march. Ames's battle line could not penetrate the thick undergrowth and its advance slowed and became disjointed. When the scattered troops finally emerged on the far side of the swamp, they were greeted by sharp Confederate fire that pinned them down.⁵³

Abbott's brigade found the going much easier. It marched about a mile up the beach before meeting resistance

⁵⁰Philadelphia Inquirer, February 16, 1865.

⁵¹Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 408.

⁵²Report of Charles J. Paine, April 24, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 925.

⁵³New York Tribune, February 17, 1865; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 18, 1865; Samuel Bates, History of Pennsylvania Volunteers 1861-5, 5 volumes (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: B. Singerly, 1869-1871), volume 5, 580.

near the south end of Myrtle Sound. There the Confederates had repossessed, strengthened, and extended the same rifle pits taken from them on January 19.⁵⁴ At Abbott's command, Captain William Trickey led his 3rd New Hampshire Regiment to within thirty yards or so of the earthworks. They appeared well manned, but the fire from behind them was weak enough that Trickey ordered an attack. According to Trickey, the New Hampshire troops overran the Confederate works within three minutes capturing sixty-four soldiers of the 17th North Carolina. Trickey lost only one man.⁵⁵

The Confederate prisoners were marched to the rear as the remainder of Abbott's brigade came up and continued its advance. In fact, Terry's whole corps, shielded by vigorous naval barrages at about eleven a.m., surged forward to within musket range of Hoke's main works.⁵⁶ All along the line until about four o'clock in the afternoon there raged "a rattling, disconnected fire," at times very heavy.⁵⁷ In the thick of the fighting General Terry stood watching and

⁵⁴Report of William H. Trickey, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 923.

⁵⁵Report of William H. Trickey, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 923; Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921; New York Herald, February 16, 1865, Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 630.

⁵⁶Philadelphia Inquirer, February 18, 1865.

⁵⁷New York Tribune, February 17, 1865.

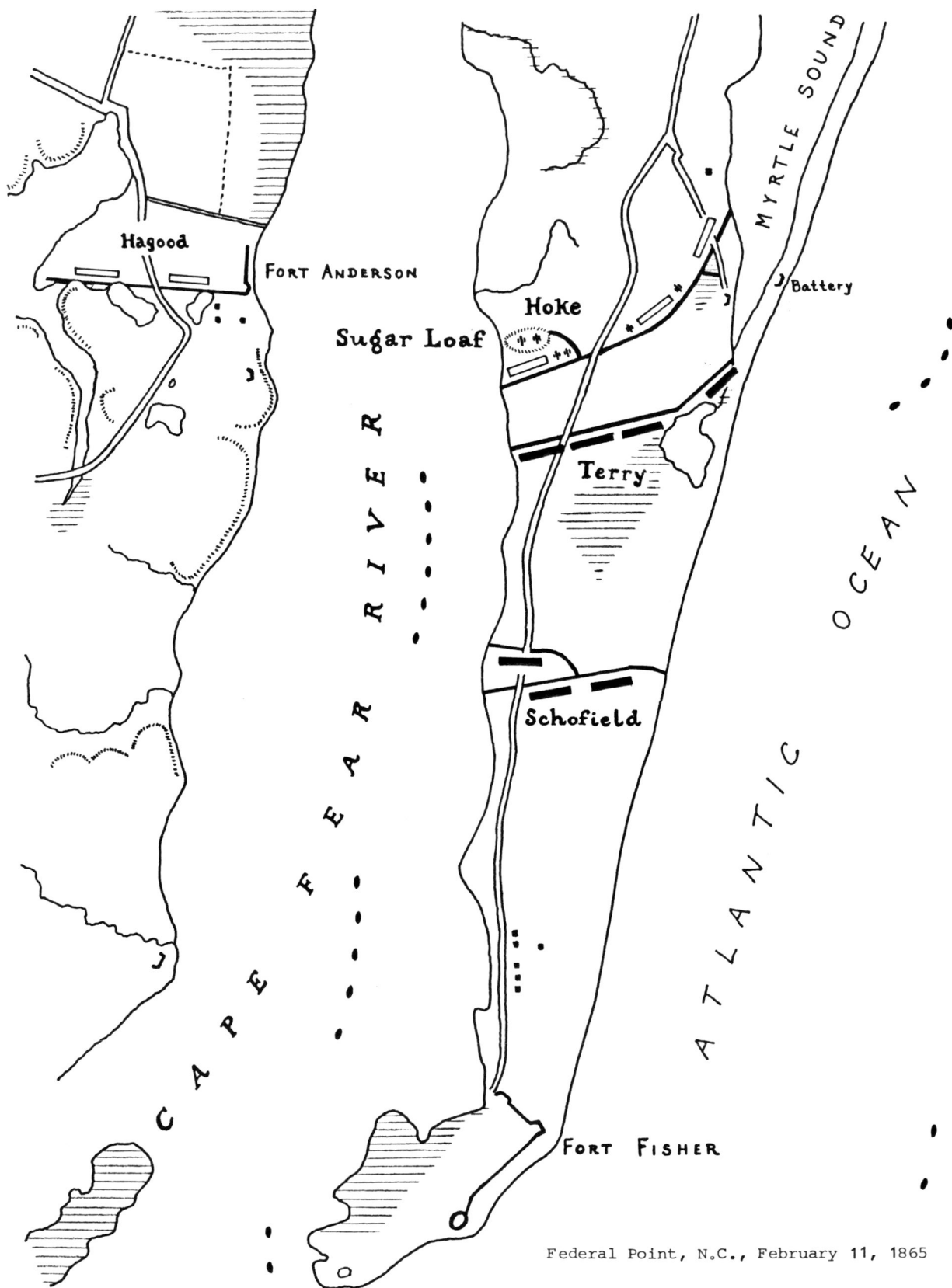
calmly puffing on a cigar. After five hours of fighting it became apparent to Terry that Porter's gunboats were not going to dislodge the Confederates. Moreover, his troops were greatly exposed to steady fire and casualties were mounting. Terry decided to entrench his corps; breastworks were constructed about 500 yards from Hoke's main fortifications.⁵⁸

General Schofield joined Terry at the front late in the afternoon. The Confederates' strong and well-manned earthworks also persuaded Schofield that they could not be broken by frontal assault. Yet he felt that the day's fighting had been advantageous, despite Terry's ninety-eight casualties. A new line had been established close enough to Sugar Loaf to detain Hoke's force. At the same time, however, the Southerners' obstinate defense made Schofield uneasy about dividing his own force. Nevertheless he ordered General Cox to prepare his division to move against Fort Anderson.⁵⁹

Schofield scrapped these plans, however, when Colonel Cyrus B. Comstock, chief engineer detached from General

⁵⁸Price, Ninety-Seventh Pennsylvania, 358; New York Tribune, February 17, 1865.

⁵⁹Philadelphia Inquirer, February 16, 1865; Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 11, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 927-928.



Grant's staff, reported that he had discovered a weakness in the Confederate defenses. Comstock reconnoitered up the beach on February 11, and found that Hoke's left flank on Myrtle Sound was exposed. Indeed, the long, narrow tongue of sand that snaked up the coast separating the sound from the ocean, skirted Hoke's left. With the shoreline completely open, Comstock believed that a swift, secret movement could put a force in Hoke's rear.⁶⁰

Comstock proposed to march a force under cover of darkness to Big Hill, a huge sand dune about seven miles up the beach. There the army contingent would rendezvous with navy steamers transporting additional troops and towing pontoon boats. The pontoons would be hauled across the beach and then used to construct a makeshift bridge or to ferry the soldiers across the narrow sound to the mainland before daylight. Comstock was convinced that a sizeable force between Hoke and Wilmington would pry the Confederates off Federal Point and into more open country, where Schofield would have a better opportunity to defeat them. To coincide with the beach movement, Terry was again to press Hoke while Porter renewed his bombardment.⁶¹

⁶⁰Entry February 12, 1865, Comstock Diary, LOC; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959; Cox, Military Reminiscences, 409-410.

⁶¹Cyrus B. Comstock Memorandum, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 404-405; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959; Cox, Military Reminiscences, 410; Special Orders, No.3, Headquarters Department of North

Schofield thought the plan "seemed quite practicable."⁶²

He agreed to try it mainly because more thorough reconnaissances suggested that Fort Anderson probably could not be taken without going around Orton Pond, a large lake some six miles long at the west end of the work. Moreover, he received word that Sherman's advance was hampered by incessant rain and flooded roads. Schofield did not see much point in "making a considerable advance along the Wilmington and [Weldon] Railroad before Sherman [came] up."⁶³

Schofield placed Comstock in charge of the beach operation and designated Jacob Cox's division and two brigades of Adelbert Ames's division to comprise the land force. Ames's other brigade, commanded by Colonel Rufus Daggett, and thirty pontoons were assembled for Porter's ships to carry by sea.⁶⁴

Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 403-404.

⁶²Schofield to Grant, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 437.

⁶³Schofield to Grant, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 436.

⁶⁴Special Orders, No.3, Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 403-404; Cyrus B. Comstock Memorandum, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 404; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-34.

Admiral Porter was infuriated when he received news of the expedition. Privately he accused Schofield of reversing the agreed-upon plan to attack Fort Anderson as soon as General Grant was gone from the Cape Fear. Porter considered it "imbecile" to attack by the beach "where all [Schofield's] movements could be seen and he stood the chance of being roughly handled."⁶⁵ Furthermore, Porter and Terry felt slighted when Schofield did not defer to them for an opinion. Yet the outspoken Porter did not challenge Schofield, but prepared his ships for the operation.

The transports, under the immediate command of Colonel Comstock, shoved off from Fort Fisher just after dark on February 12. Gunboats met the troopships as they cleared New Inlet to escort them up the coast. Schofield personally led the land force up the beach as soon as it was dark enough to conceal its movement. To avoid detection by the Confederates, whose camp fires were in full view on the opposite shore, Schofield's troops marched close to the water. Guided by the waves' white caps, the soldiers marched along in silence.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Porter Memoir, 884-885, Porter Papers, LOC.

⁶⁶Special Orders, No.3, Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 403-404; Porter to Rolando, February 12, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 27-28; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959.

A cold wind had been increasing its strength all afternoon and by nightfall had whipped into a northeast gale. It slowed the march and "seemed to find every button hole in the men's clothing, and to chill them to the marrow."⁶⁷

"The sand driving with the wind cuts like a knife and adds much to the unpleasantness of the night," complained an officer.⁶⁸ The column had struggled to within three miles of its destination when Schofield got word that efforts to bring up the pontoon boats failed because of heavy seas. Schofield then countermanded the order to attack. The troops marched back through a freezing rain that started to fall. Wet and tired, they straggled into camp throughout the early morning hours only to find that the storm had⁶⁹ blown down many of their tents.

Comstock continued to urge Schofield to launch the attack. He baited his superior by pointing out that, "if successful it would [give them] half of Hoke's army and Wil-

⁶⁷Cox, March to the Sea, 148.

⁶⁸Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 928.

⁶⁹Schofield to Grant, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 437; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959; Entry February 12, 1865, Nicholas DeGraff Diary, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as DeGraff Diary, USMHI).

mington."⁷⁰ Schofield consented to try again, as it appeared that the Confederates had not detected the movement. The inclement weather persisted, however, and the seas continued too rough to tow the pontoon boats. Because of this Comstock decided to haul the pontoons up the beach on mule drawn wagons. The pontoons were brought ashore on February 13 and readied for the second attempt.⁷¹

Schofield again accompanied the expedition but left Comstock in active command of it. The operation seemed doomed from the start. The pontoon train was supposed to be ready to move by four o'clock in the afternoon of February 14, but it was several hours late getting up to and off from Cox's earthworks, the departure point. By then the skies had cleared somewhat, but a brisk wind continued. High surf and soft sand hindered the mule teams' progress and it was nearly midnight before they reached the outer picket station at Half Moon Battery, barely a mile above Terry's new line. The troops and maybe half of the pontoon-laden wagons made it another two miles or so, but the remainder of the train became scattered up and down the strand. This led Schofield to doubt that he could make the crossing before sunrise. To

⁷⁰Entry February 14, 1865, Comstock Diary, LOC.

⁷¹Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 410; Porter to Schofield, February 14, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 29; Special Orders, No.5, Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 14, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 426.

make matters worse, a bright moon peeped out from behind dissipating clouds, exposing the convoy on the beach and the gunboats that had moved up to cover the attack. Also, campfires were observed on the mainland at the crossing point suggesting to Schofield that the Confederates were waiting for him. The general again cancelled the expedition.⁷²

A disappointed Comstock was convinced that the army should have pushed on at least another hour.⁷³ Many soldiers agreed, preferring to fight to all the marching and counter-marching. Yet General Cox wondered why Schofield had not abandoned the movement "as soon as it was evident that the pontoons would be behind time." He suspected that Schofield "thought it best not to stop till it had been well tried," because Comstock was a member of Grant's staff.⁷⁴

⁷²Entry February 14, 1865, Comstock Diary, LOC; Cox, March to the Sea, 148; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959; Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929-930; McDonough, Schofield, 154; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 73-74.

⁷³Entry February 14, 1865, Comstock Diary, LOC.

⁷⁴"My own preference," General Cox recorded, "would have been to give up the movement as soon as it was evident that the pontoons would be behind time, so as not to let the enemy have any idea of the movement, which from that time [was] certain to prove a failure." (Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 928.)

Schofield admitted he knew that "the plan was a favorite of. . .Comstock's." Regardless of accusations of his being partial or playing politics, Schofield believed that "had the wind been favorable [the operation] would undoubtedly have been successful."⁷⁵ In any event, he did not see that anything had been lost in the attempt.

Admiral Porter vehemently disagreed, asserting that they "lost about two weeks by the imbecile maneuvering." The admiral apparently was delighted over Schofield's failure. "Terry, myself, and the rebels laughed at it," he boasted. And he raged at what he deemed Schofield's incompetence claiming that, "although General Grant. . . consider[ed] Schofield a great soldier, he was never more mistaken in his life."⁷⁶

Comstock's plan more than likely would not have succeeded. Evidence suggests that, as Union observers reported, Hoke had posted a force to oppose the crossing. In the end, however, Confederate weather and not Confederate troops foiled Comstock's plan.⁷⁷ The operation angered and

⁷⁵Schofield to Grant, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 437.

⁷⁶Porter Memoir, 886-887, Porter Papers, LOC.

⁷⁷Hoke to Anderson, January 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XI, 592-593; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959; Henry Thomas Kennon to Mollie, January 31, 1865, Henry Thomas Kennon Papers, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; Clinton Joyner, Jr., "Major General Robert Frederick Hoke and the Civil War in North

bruised the egos of Union commanders, and exhausted and soaked their soldiers, yet it averted any real catastrophe. Finally Schofield resolved to go against Wilmington by way of Fort Anderson.

Carolina" (M.A. thesis, East Carolina University, 1974), 113-114.

CHAPTER FOUR

"A NICE LITTLE FIGHT:"

BATTLE OF FORT ANDERSON, FEBRUARY 17-19, 1865

Reinforcements from Schofield's Second Division--100 infantrymen from the 26th Kentucky and the 23rd Michigan from the Second Brigade--reached the Cape Fear on February 14.¹ They brought word that the remainder of the Second Brigade was close behind. The news of additional troops eased Schofield's apprehension about dividing his army. He sent the newly arrived regiments to Smithville and arranged with Admiral Porter to transfer Cox's division from Federal Point across the Cape Fear River for an assault on Fort Anderson. He also ordered closer reconnaissances of the land approaches to the fort.²

On February 15 Lieutenant Colonel Albert M. Barney, commanding army officer at Smithville, led a scouting party towards Fort Anderson. Confederate vedettes, however, prevented the patrol from getting near the fort. The Union

¹One hundred soldiers of the 26th Kentucky were temporarily attached to the Second Brigade from the First Brigade, Second Division, XXIII Army Corps. Entry February 14, 1865, Oliver L. Spaulding Diary, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Spaulding Diary, LOC).

²Schofield to Commanding Officer, February 14, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 427.

scouts spent most of the rainy day examining the terrain surrounding the work and the roads leading to it. The country, mostly open piney woods but generally low and full of swamps, was not as favorable for a military operation as the Federals had hoped. Despite frequent rain, however, Barney reported that the roads were in good condition. At any rate, the mainland offered an army more room for maneuver than did Federal Point. It was that advantage, along with the army's numerical superiority and the navy's firepower, that Schofield meant to exploit to capture Fort Anderson.³

Bad weather delayed the transfer of the troops across to Smithville until February 16. Throughout that day Porter's light steamers ferried Cox's soldiers and a small train of wagons across the harbor. The balance of the Second Brigade under Colonel Orlando Moore finally arrived from the north and joined Cox's command. Battery D, 1st Ohio Regiment Light Artillery, the only battery of Cox's division that had as yet arrived, and Moore's two units which had disembarked two days earlier, rounded out the assault force of approximately 6,000 troops. It encamped

³Barney to Assistant Adjutant General, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 439.

for the night about half a mile above Smithville and prepared to advance.⁴

At eight a.m. on February 17, Cox's four brigades moved towards Fort Anderson nine miles away.⁵ The march up the sandy Wilmington Road was slow but untroubled at first. The few inhabitants who lived along the route gaped from the doors of their simple cabins as the troops passed. Most of them had never seen Yankee soldiers before. Many slaves, however, to whom the blueclad men symbolized freedom, "came running out. . . singing and shouting with joy and thanksgiving." A soldier described it as "both an affecting and laughable scene--a prayer meeting and a circus combined."⁶

⁴The navy tugs U.S.S. Nansemond, Eolus, Wilderness, and Moccasin, transferred Cox's division from Federal Point to Smithville on February 16. (Campbell to Dodge, February 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 438; Order of David D. Porter, February 13, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 28.) Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 959; Cox, March to the Sea, 149; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 301. Official military returns report the strength of Cox's division at 4,458. (Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 958.) The author estimates that Colonel Orlando Moore's brigade contained approximately 1,500 troops. Entry February 16, 1865, Spaulding Diary, LOC.

⁵Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 281.

⁶Thompson, 112th Illinois, 301-302.

But the Federals were rudely reminded that the business of war was still at hand when Confederate cavalry attacked about three miles from Smithville. For most of the day Confederate vedettes harassed the Union column, staging hit-and-run raids and felling trees across the road to retard its advance. The horsemen made a brief stand at Governor's Creek before being pushed back by Cox's vanguard, Colonel Oscar W. Sterl's brigade.⁷

Near the creek Cox split his force. Cox led Colonel Thomas Henderson's brigade toward the river, while Sterl's, Casement's, and Moore's units continued their advance up the main road. Late in the afternoon Cox reached the river about two miles below Fort Anderson and opened communication with Admiral Porter. General Schofield was also on the river. The leading officer had set up his command post on board the medical steamer S.R. Spaulding from where he believed he could better coordinate the movements of Cox's and Terry's forces, now totalling approximately 14,000 troops, on both sides of the waterway. When Cox established contact, however, Schofield went ashore to join him.⁸

⁷Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960; Cox, March to the Sea, 149; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 968; Curtis, Reminiscences, 33; "Journal of Adam Weaver," Wilmington Morning Star, December 27, 1964; New York Herald, February 25, 1865.

⁸Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 968-969; Cox to Campbell, February 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 471-472; McLean, "Fort Fisher and

Some of Porter's gunboats engaged Fort Anderson all afternoon in an effort to distract the Confederates' attention from Cox's movement. The Montauk led the ships upstream shortly after midday. Under a vigorous fire from Confederate ordnance, the monitor assumed a position about 1,000 yards off the fort and began her bombardment. Obstructions and torpedoes in the channel prevented her from getting abreast of the work. The Lenapee, Pequot, Unadilla, Moratanza, Pawtuxet, Huron, and Tacony took up their battle stations a bit further out and also opened fire. Later in the day the Little Ada, a converted blockade runner, steamed up and joined the battle, which lasted till sunset.⁹

The Confederates did not allow the Union ships to trespass into their domain without molestation. The guns of the fort fired "pretty briskly" throughout the afternoon.¹⁰ They shot forty-seven projectiles at the Montauk alone, but

Wilmington Campaign," 74; Cox, March to the Sea, 149; McDonough, Schofield, 153.

⁹New York Herald, February 23, 1865; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 77; Ammen, The Atlantic Coast, 242; Hagood, War of Secession, 335-336; Entry February 17, 1865, George Hern Diary, private collection of Morris L. Yoder, Jr., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Hern Diary); Abstract log of U.S.S. Shawmut, February 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 37; Report of David D. Porter, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 33-34; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 74-75.

¹⁰Report of David D. Porter, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 33.

the ones that struck could not penetrate her iron plating. Nevertheless, other vessels received some damage. Soon after the Pequot took up her station a Whitworth bolt struck and splintered one of her stanchions, wounding five sailors, two mortally. Fortunately for the flotilla, the Whitworths soon depleted their scarce ammunition and were withdrawn from the battle.¹¹

The remainder of the Confederate ordnance quieted down as the Union ships pulled out of range. When darkness set in the gunboats stopped shelling and dropped back down stream. For the most part, the naval bombardment of Fort Anderson on February 17 was a limited action. The warships fired only 170 projectiles at the fort in about four hours. The shelling caused little damage to the works and wounded only one of the defenders. More important, the bombardment failed to disguise Cox's advance. Indeed, General Johnson Hagood, commanding Confederate at Fort Anderson, was well aware of Cox's approach.¹²

¹¹New York Herald, February 23, 1865; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 24, 1865; Report of Daniel L. Braine, February 17, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 31; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 77; Hagood, War of Secession, 336; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 75.

¹²Hagood, War of Secession, 335-336; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 24, 1865; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 77.

At dusk Cox reestablished contact with his brigades on the main thoroughfare. He threw out a picket line and entrenched his force about a mile and a half south of Fort Anderson.¹³ His soldiers had advanced more than seven miles and skirmished almost continuously during the day. They slept on their arms that night knowing that the morrow would bring a more difficult struggle.

Schofield and Cox spent the evening outlining strategy to take Fort Anderson. It appeared that the obstructions and torpedoes in and the narrowness of the river channel would prevent the navy from getting close enough to the fort to silence its guns. That placed the brunt of responsibility for its capture on the army. Schofield instructed Cox to make a reconnaissance in force the following morning. After a close inspection of the work they could decide whether to storm it. If they chose not to, Cox was to entrench two brigades, and then with his other two make a forced march to the west end of Orton Pond. There he would be joined by General Adelbert Ames's division that would be brought over from Federal Point.

With this combined force, Cox would then sweep around Orton Pond and attack Fort Anderson from its rear. All the while Porter's gunboats would maintain a steady fire on the

¹³New York Herald, February 25, 1865; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 968-969; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960.

fort and Terry's force would press Hoke on Federal Point.¹⁴

February 18 dawned pleasant as the weather had for the past two days. Cox advanced his force just after breakfast, at about seven a.m. Henderson's brigade moved up the river bank, Casement's unit took the center, and Sterl's anchored to the left of the line. Moore's brigade followed in echelon in the rear.¹⁵ Within an hour Federal sharpshooters engaged Confederate pickets. As the fighting heated up, the outnumbered Southerners fell back to a line of rifle pits about 100 yards in front of Fort Anderson.¹⁶ Confederate soldiers near the river, however, exposed to fire from both Henderson's skirmishers and Porter's gunboats, scurried inside the fort for safety. Their retreat created a gap on the firing line and enabled Henderson's lead regiment, the 63rd Indiana, to advance to within 300 yards of the fort. The bluecoats did not remain there for long; short shots from the gunboats wounded some of them and persuaded their

¹⁴Special Orders, No.7, Headquarters Dept. of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 17, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 470.

¹⁵Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929; Report of John S. Casement, April 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 967; New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

¹⁶Hagood, War of Secession, 336-337; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 76.

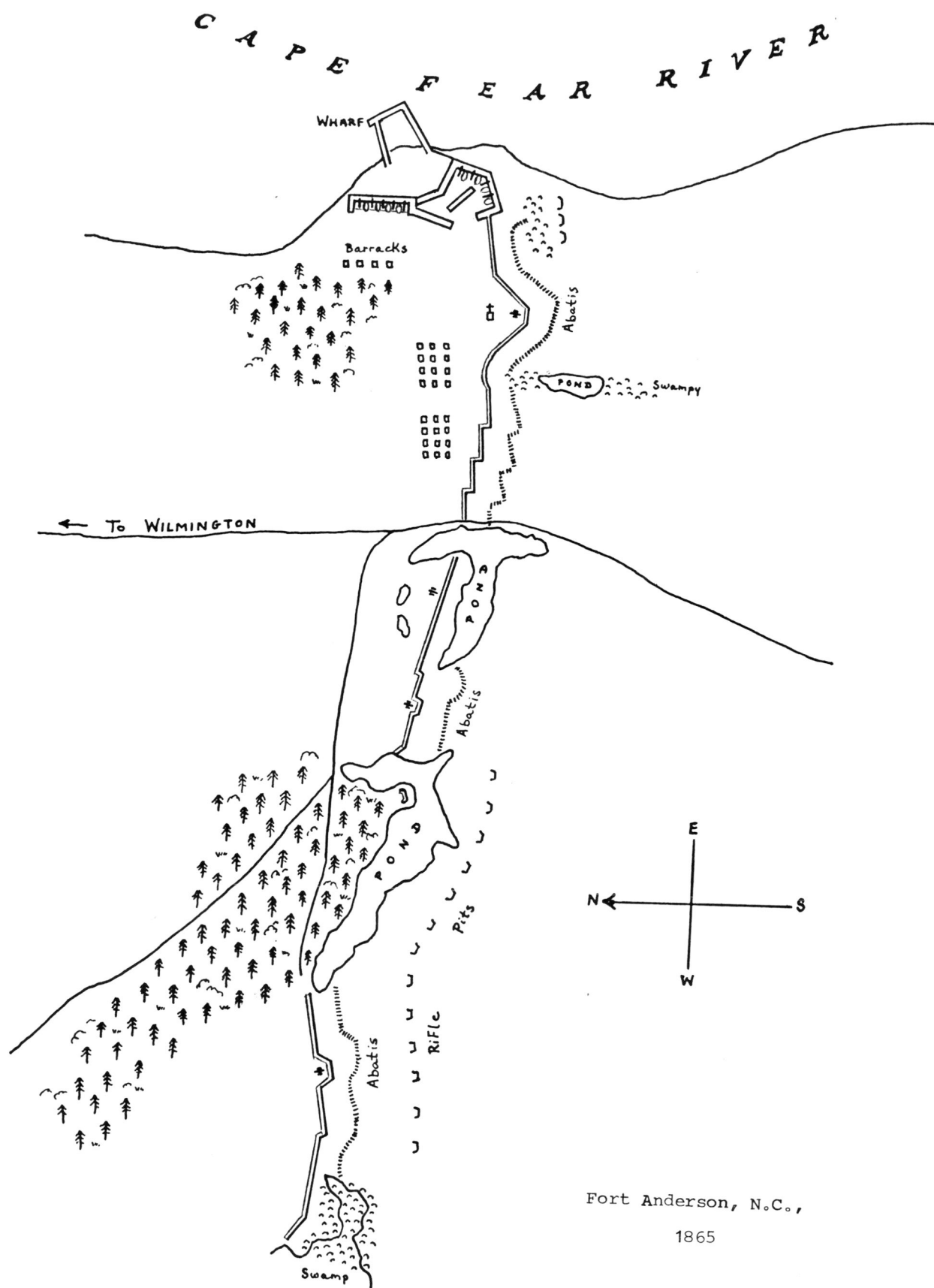
comrades to quickly retreat to the main force.¹⁷

While sharpshooting raged on the picket line, Cox advanced his division to within 600 yards of Fort Anderson. A swath about 300 yards wide fronted the work where the Confederates had slashed and burned the woods for defensive purposes. The clearing also provided Cox and Schofield with a good view of the fort, and its impressive strength.¹⁸ It was constructed much like Fort Fisher--massive earthen ramparts interspersed with gun chambers and traverses. Three major batteries mounting nine 32-pounder guns in barbette overlooked the river.¹⁹ A heavy infantry curtain connected to the principal work at St. Philip's Church and ran at a right angle from the river about 800 yards to Orton

¹⁷Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 969; New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

¹⁸Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 76; New York Tribune, February 18, 1865.

¹⁹"I inspected the armament of Fort Anderson. . .it consists of nine 32-pounder guns on barbette carriages, front pintle, wooden traverse circles. They are: Two rifled, unbanded; two oldest pattern of the U.S., which kind of guns condemned by U.S. inspectors previous to year 1860; and five pattern 1840. Below the fort is a work [Old Brunswick Battery] armed with one 32-pounder gun of oldest pattern (as described). The projectiles for these guns are 913 shot, 708 shell, 39 grape and 106 cannister shot, with a sufficient supply of projecting charge, making 170 rounds for each gun." (Inclosure Report of H. Oladowski, February 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1116-1117.) See also: ORA Atlas, CXXXV-B, 4.



Fort Anderson, N.C.,

1865

Pond. Abatis, ditches, small ponds, and rifle pits strengthened the fort's land face and light artillery enfiladed the open ground in its front. The Confederates had also erected a small one-gun redoubt, Old Brunswick Battery, on the river bank just south of the main fort, but abandoned it when the Federals approached. Fort Anderson's weakness was, as Schofield and Cox already knew, that it could be outflanked by going around the west end of Orton Pond. The Confederates neglected to construct fortifications at that point. Yet to go around the lake meant a twelve-mile detour there and back.²⁰

After surveying the strong fort, however, Schofield and Cox decided the enveloping maneuver was the best plan for capturing it. Schofield ordered Cox to make the movement. To hide his real intentions, Cox called on Porter to intensify his shore bombardment and demonstrated in Hagood's front. Cox ordered Moore's and Henderson's brigade to entrench just inside the treeline, while a strong force of skirmishers advanced into the open ground in front of Fort Anderson.²¹

²⁰Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960; Cox, March to the Sea, 149; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 282.

²¹Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960-961; Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 116; Sherwood, Memories, 161; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 969; New York Herald, February 25, 1865.

Hagood went for the bait. Anticipating an attack, he pulled his skirmishers into the fort and opened a "very vigorous fire with [his] artillery and shelled [the Federals] quite briskly for several hours."²² Union soldiers quickly dug-in under the deluge of iron and lead. "Officers and men vie[d] with each other in throwing up breastworks with whatever they could bring into requisition," noted a witness; "tin plates, cups, sticks, and hands were kept very busy until a sufficient temporary protection was formed."²³ Spades and shovels were brought up later from Smithville and the soldiers spent most of the afternoon strengthening their breastworks amid the shot and shells.

When the field trenches appeared strong enough, Cox assembled Casement's and Sterl's brigades and the 1st Ohio artillery battery, commanded by Lieutenant Cecil Reed, for his flanking force. Guided by a sympathetic black, it departed at about two o'clock in the afternoon for the headwaters of Orton Pond.²⁴ Although Hagood was unaware of

²²Hagood, War of Secession, 336. Note is from: New York Herald, February 25, 1865.

²³New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

²⁴Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960. Cox's flanking force was guided on its march to the west end of Orton Pond by a local black. (Thomas Speed to parents, February 25, 1865, Speed Collection, FC.) Cox's route of march was probably the Brunswick or British Road along the south bank of Orton Pond. (ORA Atlas, CXXXII, 1; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, map between 412-413.)

Cox's movement when it began, he was somewhat cognizant of his weak flank. In fact, he posted a small cavalry detachment at the far end of the lake to warn him of any enemy attempt to turn it.²⁵

Meanwhile, Hagood's guns continued to blast away at the Union troops in front of Fort Anderson. A Northern war correspondent recorded that Confederate cannon "for the greater part of the day kept up a furious shelling."²⁶ When a Union assault failed to materialize, Hagood redeployed his skirmishers in front of the fort.

During the fighting the band of the 104th Ohio "kept up a constant serenade of patriotic music." Not to be outdone, the Confederates posted a brass band, possibly the Eutaw Band of the 25th South Carolina, atop Fort Anderson. It played Southern melodies, including one--"Who's Been Here While I've Been Gone"--that Union soldiers recognized above the din of battle.²⁷ The bands attempted to inspire their comrades in the thick of the fighting or perhaps just to dilute its insanity.

²⁵Hagood posted troopers of the 2nd South Carolina, commanded by Colonel Thomas J. Lipscomb, at the west end of Orton Pond. Hagood, War of Secession, 335 and 337.

²⁶New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

²⁷New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

Maybe the music did ward off death and suffering. Despite all the whizzing and exploding projectiles, both armies experienced only minor losses during the day. The Federals sustained about twenty casualties. Eleven of them were members of the 65th Indiana which saw heavy action on the skirmish line in the morning.²⁸ General Schofield narrowly escaped injury when a Confederate shell exploded near him as he galloped along the line directing action. Colonel Oliver L. Spaulding, commander of the 23rd Michigan, had an unusual close call. A projectile struck and violently vibrated a sapling under which he was standing. The tree then hit Spaulding and knocked him to the ground.²⁹

The Confederates suffered even fewer casualties, approximately twelve. One received a mortal wound and another, probably 2nd Lieutenant Robert B. Vance of Company A, 40th North Carolina, was killed instantly by concussion, "without a single fragment having struck him," when a Union

²⁸New York Herald, February 25, 1865.

²⁹New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

shell burst atop him.³⁰ In fact, a terrific naval bombardment inflicted most of the Confederate losses.

Approximately half of Porter's flotilla engaged Fort Anderson on February 18. The gunboats got under fire earlier than usual, just after eight a.m. The Montauk again led the van upstream. Fourteen vessels, the Chippewa, Huron, Lenapee, Little Ada, Mackinaw, Malvern, Nyack, Osceola, Pawtuxet, Pontoosuc, Sassacus, Seneca, Shawmut, and Unadilla, followed her.³¹

Confederate ordnance fired the opening salvo as the gunboats took up their battle stations. The Montauk moved to within 800 yards of the fort, even closer than the day before. The narrow channel restricted the movement of the

³⁰Military records note that 1st Lieutenant John Z. Davis of Company A, 40th North Carolina (3rd Regiment North Carolina Artillery), was mortally wounded at Fort Anderson on February 18, 1865. Davis died of an abdomen wound the following day at a hospital in Wilmington. (Manarin, North Carolina Troops, I, 375-376; Wilmington Daily Journal, February 20, 1865.) General Hagood claimed that Lieutenant Vance was the only soldier killed in action at Fort Anderson on February 18. (Hagood, War of Secession, 337.) Thomas H. Sutton of Company D, 40th North Carolina, recalled, nineteen years after the war, that 2nd Lieutenant William H. Harrison of Company B, 40th North Carolina, was killed by concussion from an exploded Union shell at Fort Anderson. (Thomas H. Sutton, "Fort Fisher: A Soldier's Account of the Defense of the Approaches to Wilmington," Wilmington Daily Review, October 21, 1884 [hereafter cited as Sutton, "Defense of Wilmington," Wilmington Daily Review, October 21, 1884].) Official returns, however, indicate that Lieutenant Harrison was present or accounted for through February, 1865. (Manarin, North Carolina Troops, I, 386.)

³¹Report of David D. Porter, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 33-34; Ammen, The Atlantic Coast, 242.

remainder of the ships, forcing them to line up and down the waterway. They all finally got into position, however, and commenced firing. The river was as smooth as glass enabling the gunboats to quickly establish their range of fire. "The sight was most magnificent," exclaimed a Union tar. "The vessels moved into line splendidly and poured broadsides into the enemy, the enemy replied."³²

For about nine hours the warships maintained an intense, unabated, and accurate bombardment. A Confederate artilleryman noted that the "fire was tremendous and the fall and bursting of shells was almost continuous."³³ By General Hagood's count, the Union gunboats unleashed 2,723 projectiles on the fort, about one every ten seconds.³⁴ One Union sailor confessed that he found grandeur in the bombardment's terror. "The screaming of the shells, loud roar of the artillery, flashing of the guns, bursting of the shells," he recalled, "was well worth remembering."³⁵

The navy fired shot and shell of almost every description, from 30-pounder Parrott shells to huge 15-inch

³²Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 78.

³³Entry February 18, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

³⁴Hagood, War of Secession, 336.

³⁵Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 78.

cannonballs weighing 350 pounds. Confederate soldiers dubbed those immense shells "metallic coffins."³⁶ A Tar Heel officer, Lieutenant Eugene S. Martin, recalled a close brush with death when an 11-inch Dahlgren shell struck St. Philip's Church, ricocheted, and exploded. A large chunk of it whizzed between him and Colonel John J. Hedrick as they stood upon the fort's parapet. The fragment cut Hedrick's sword from his side, yet he escaped unhurt.³⁷

Fort Anderson received extensive damage from the bombardment, despite only light casualties to the defenders. "The fort was knocked out of all shape," remarked a Carolinian.³⁸ The exploding shells dotted the work's ramparts with craters, knocked down traverses, and pushed down the parapet in places to the level of the gun platforms. Surprisingly, however, none of the fort's ordnance was dismounted.³⁹

³⁶Letter of James R. Randall, October 29, 1865, James R. Randall Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

³⁷Martin, Fort Anderson.

³⁸Entry February 18, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

³⁹Zaccheus Ellis to mother, March 1, 1865, Zaccheus Ellis Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Zaccheus Ellis Papers, SHC); Hagood, War of Secession, 337-338.

Confederate cannon answered the flotilla with only occasional shots, some of which found their mark. Three Union sailors were killed and four wounded by Confederate fire during the day.⁴⁰ Hagood noted, however, that his guns fired "more in defiance than in hopes of injuring the enemy."⁴¹ Indeed, his antiquated ordnance was of little use against the gunboats. The Federal vessels kept out of range of the Confederates' smoothbore guns, and the rifled pieces, situated in the fort as they were, could not bear on them with any precision. The Whitworths were out of the battle altogether, having expended their ammunition the previous day. Moreover, as the Southerners had learned earlier, even their heaviest metal was powerless to injure a monitor.

Fort Anderson's guns fired almost half of their shots at the Montauk. Some of them struck her armored turret, but ricocheted off and fell harmlessly into the river.⁴² A Con-

⁴⁰Report of David D. Porter, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 34. A tragic accident caused the most profound Union naval losses on February 18. Early in the morning a hawser on the U.S.S. Lenapee "got fouled" and a work detail was dispatched in a launch to clear it. As the sailors worked to fix it, the U.S.S. Shawmut crashed into and flipped the small craft over. Its crew spilled into the freezing cold Cape Fear River where four of them drowned. (Entry February 18, 1865, Hern Diary.)

⁴¹Hagood, War of Secession, 336.

⁴²Hagood noted that Fort Anderson's guns fired only fifty-three projectiles at the Union flotilla on February 18. Twenty of them were directed at the Montauk. Seven struck the monitor without doing any apparent damage. (Hagood, War of Secession, 336.)

federate observed that their shells "would strike and bounce off like cherries from a boy's pop gun against a solid wall of masonry."⁴³

Hoping to divert some of the Union naval fire directed at Fort Anderson, General Hoke ordered his battery on the summit of Sugar Loaf on Federal Point to shell the gunboats. The U.S.S. Nyack returned the fire, which ceased in about two hours.⁴⁴ In fact, by three o'clock in the afternoon the fire against the flotilla from inside Fort Anderson had stopped as well.

At dusk Admiral Porter ordered his warships to slacken their fire. They had performed a good day's work. A naval captain deemed the battle "a nice little fight. The rebs stand up to their work manfully," he respectfully acknowledged, "but we are too much for them, and hope to drive them out of Wilmington before many days."⁴⁵

General Cox had the same idea in mind as he and his flanking force reached the headwaters of Orton Pond at twilight. General Ames's division had not yet arrived, but

⁴³Sutton, "Defense of Wilmington," Wilmington Daily Review, October 21, 1884.

⁴⁴Abstract log of U.S.S. Nyack, February 18, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 35.

⁴⁵Temple to Bailey, February 21, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 34.

Confederate cavalry were there to greet Cox. The troopers, about 100 members of the 2nd South Carolina Cavalry commanded by Colonel Thomas J. Lipscomb, meant to dispute a Union effort to outflank Fort Anderson. They had dug rifle pits on the north side of a creek that fed Orton Pond. These "detached trenches" guarded a narrow causeway that breached the stream, bordered by a wide marsh.⁴⁶

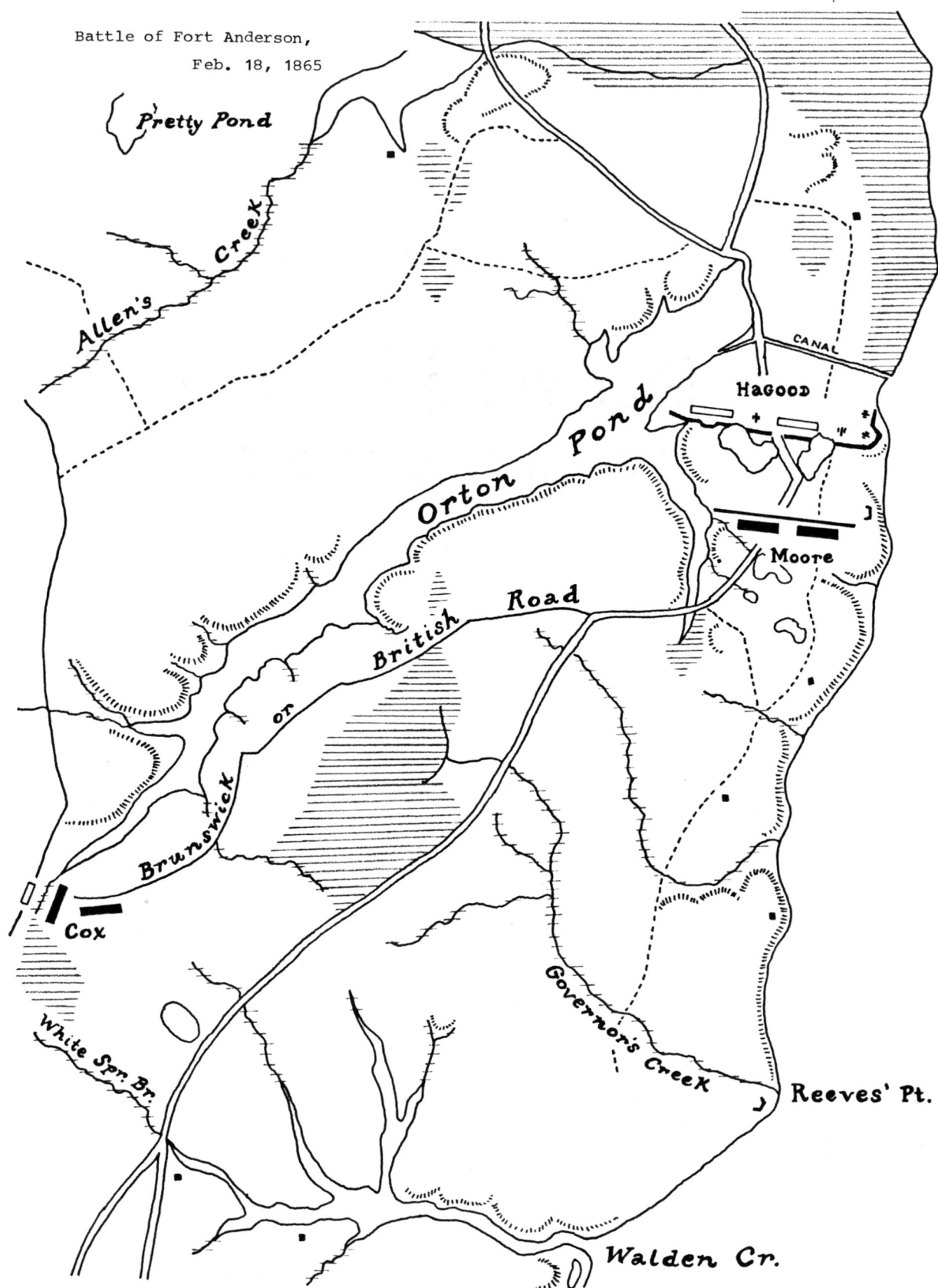
Colonel Lipscomb sent word to General Hagood of the Federal movement as soon as the bluecoats appeared in his front. For some reason Hagood took the news rather lightly. He dispatched only one field howitzer and crew to reinforce Lipscomb. Perhaps the general was misinformed as to the size of Cox's force or wildly optimistic that Lipscomb could turn it back. Yet a single field piece was hardly enough support to halt Cox's brigades determined to gain the rear of Fort Anderson. As it turned out, the artillery did not arrive in time to help Lipscomb anyway.⁴⁷

With darkness approaching, Cox pushed to sweep around Orton Pond. He deployed skirmishers from the 104th Ohio with orders to find their way through the marsh. Lieutenant

⁴⁶Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960-961; Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929.

⁴⁷General Hagood dispatched a howitzer and crew under the command of 1st Lieutenant John M. Jones of Company B (Badham's Battery), 3rd Battalion North Carolina Light Artillery. Hagood, War of Secession, 337; Manarin, North Carolina Troops, I, 347.

Battle of Fort Anderson,
Feb. 18, 1865



Horace Reed led a small party that advanced along the banks of the causeway under sharp fire from the Confederates. One by one, however, the Union soldiers reached the far side of the creek.

When Reed felt he had amassed a sufficient force, he led a bayonet charge that drove the South Carolinians out of their works, but not without some losses to the 104th Ohio. Lieutenant Reed went down with wounds in both legs.⁴⁸ Private Adam Weaver survived because of the aid of a family member. A bullet ripped into his left thigh knocking him face down into the creek. Adam's cousin, Rhody, saw him drop and knowing he would soon drown dodged zinging minie balls to pull him to safety.⁴⁹ In the half-hour fight the Federals suffered fewer than ten casualties, only one of

⁴⁸Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 960-961; Cox, March to the Sea, 150; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965; Cox to Campbell, February 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 482; James M. Merrill and James F. Marshall (eds.), "The 16th Kentucky and the End of the War: The Letters of Henry Clay Weaver," Filson Club History Quarterly (October, 1958), 343 (hereafter cited as Merrill and Marshall, "Letters of Henry Clay Weaver," FCHQ); Thomas Speed to parents, February 25, 1865, Speed Collection, FC; Hagood, War of Secession, 337.

⁴⁹"Journal of Adam Weaver," Wilmington Morning Star, December 27, 1964.

whom was killed.⁵⁰

With the crossing secured, Cox advanced Sterl's and Casement's brigades around Orton Pond. They pursued the Confederates for a mile or more, but the horsemen soon outdistanced them. Nevertheless they did overtake a few stragglers.⁵¹

General Ames's division finally reached the rendezvous point after dark. It had been a long and exhausting day for Ames's troops. Schofield's orders had transferred them from Federal Point across to Smithville where they arrived about sunrise. There the infantrymen joined with Cox's supply wagons for the trip to Orton Pond. This, however, delayed their departure and slowed the march. To make matters worse, the convoy got lost in the backwoods. The infantry column eventually left the train behind to make its own way.

⁵⁰Reports vary as to the number of Union casualties at Orton Pond on February 18, 1865. General Cox noted in his journal the day of the fight that he lost seven men wounded and one killed. (Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929.) Colonel Oscar W. Sterl reported that "[Lieutenant Reed's] charging party lost 1 man killed and 4 wounded." (Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965.) These figures are subsequently corroborated by Cox in his official Carolinas Campaign report of May 15, 1865. "After a brisk skirmish of half an hour," he recorded, "a passage was effected with 1 killed and 4 wounded." (Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961.) Confederate casualties are not known.

⁵¹Cox to Campbell, February 18, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 482-483; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961.

When Ames's division finally arrived at Orton Pond, its vanguard stumbled into Cox's rearguard in the darkness. They mistook each other for the enemy and fighting almost broke out before they discovered their error. After things calmed down, Ames's troops joined Cox's on the north side of Moore's Creek. There they bivouacked for the night, waited on the supply wagons, and prepared to attack Fort Anderson the following morning.⁵²

As the Union army rested, the Confederate garrison at Fort Anderson made ready for a Union assault at dawn. Work details repaired damages to the earthworks and placed obstructions at the sally port near the river in case of an attack from the shoreline. All the while Porter's gunboats were doing their best to make Fort Anderson's defenders as uncomfortable as possible by lobbing shells into the fort throughout the night.⁵³ A North Carolina officer tried to rest in his makeshift shanty, "but it was in fear and

⁵²Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965; Jackson and O'Donnell, Back Home in Oneida, 192; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961.

⁵³Zaccheus Ellis to mother, March 1, 1865, Zaccheus Ellis Papers, SHC; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 282. After six o'clock in the evening, February 18, Porter's gunboats slackened their fire to one shot every five minutes. They further reduced their shelling to one shot every half hour after eleven p.m. From two a.m. until sunrise the following morning, they increased their fire to one shot every twenty minutes. (Hagood, War of Secession, 337; Abstract log of U.S.S. Yantic, February 18-19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 36.)

trembling lest a shell might penetrate it and blow it to atoms. I don't think I ever passed such a night," he lamented, "but I got a little troubled sleep between the shells."⁵⁴

While his gunboats threw missiles into the fort, Admiral Porter put a plan into action that, if successful, would enable his flotilla to gain a closer firing position the following morning. Some days earlier Lieutenant Cushing came up with the novel idea of moving a fake monitor close to Fort Anderson. It was hoped that this would trick the Confederates into detonating their torpedoes in the river. Porter liked the scheme and ordered the bogus ironclad constructed. Carpenters built the monitor near Smithville using a scow, barrel staves, and canvas. When completed, Cushing claimed that "it was not possible to distinguish between it and the real one. . .at 200 yards distance."⁵⁵

At ten o'clock ^tay night, probably on February 18, Cushing towed the sham monitor, dubbed "Old Bogey" and Albemarle No.2, up river and set her adrift. A flood tide carried her up to and then past Fort Anderson. She eventually grounded on the east side of the river north of

⁵⁴Entry February 18, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

⁵⁵Cushing Journal, NA. According to a Union sailor, Cushing supervised the construction of the "Quaker monitor" February 13-14. Entry February 13-14, 1865, Hern Diary.

Sugar Loaf.

What impact the mock monitor had varies considerably in Union and Confederate accounts. A New York Tribune correspondent on special assignment in the Cape Fear reported that the "plot worked most successfully. The craft

⁵⁶Raleigh Semi-Weekly Standard, March 24, 1865; Temple to Bailey, February 21, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 34. Accounts differ as to the night Admiral Porter employed the bogus monitor against Fort Anderson. Verification is difficult because no official report of the date has been uncovered. In his book of war-time anecdotes published twenty years after the conflict, Porter recalled that he used the sham monitor on the night of February 16. "The night before we attacked that place I had a mock monitor towed up and let go within two hundred yards of the enemy works." (Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes, 275.) That date and time seems to be corroborated by George Hern, a landsman aboard the U.S.S. Sassacus, in his war-time diary. "16th, clear and moonlight. . . Sent Quaker Monitor up at 11 PM." (Entry February 16, 1865, Hern Diary.) Hern neglected, however, to specify whether the monitor was sent upstream upon its completion or against the fort. Lieutenant Cushing implied in his postwar journal that he cast the ironclad adrift off Fort Anderson on the night of February 18. He recorded a detailed account of the incident and noted: "We took possession [of Fort Anderson] next morning." (Cushing Journal, NA.) February 18 is supported by at least two contemporary newspaper accounts written by reporters on the scene. E. Smith of the New York Tribune reported on February 19: "Admiral Porter played another of his Yankee tricks upon the enemy last night. . . His mock monitor was cautiously towed up close under the guns of the fort about 10 o'clock. . . ." (New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.) A New York Herald correspondent, Thomas M. Cook, also wrote on February 19 a good account of the ruse. "The affair was towed up close to the fort at ten o'clock last evening and then cast adrift. . . ." (New York Herald, February 23, 1865.) It is not likely that the fake monitor was used on both February 16 and 18. All but one account reported that she drifted past Fort Anderson and grounded on the east side of the river behind Confederate lines. At this point the weight of evidence suggests that the bogus monitor was used on February 18.

sailed past the fort in utter contempt of the guns and the torpedoes which were exploded all about her."⁵⁷ William G. Temple, commander of the U.S.S. Pontoosuc, also claimed that "Johnny Reb let off his torpedoes. . . ."⁵⁸ Cushing declared that the ruse, for which he was greatly responsible, constituted a major reason for the fall of Fort Anderson. In fact, he boasted of it to President Lincoln and Secretary Welles when he met with them soon afterwards.⁵⁹

In spite of Cushing's vainglorious assertion, his ploy did not provoke the Confederate evacuation of Fort Anderson. Hagood did not even mention the affair in his postwar

⁵⁷New York Tribune, February 23, 1865.

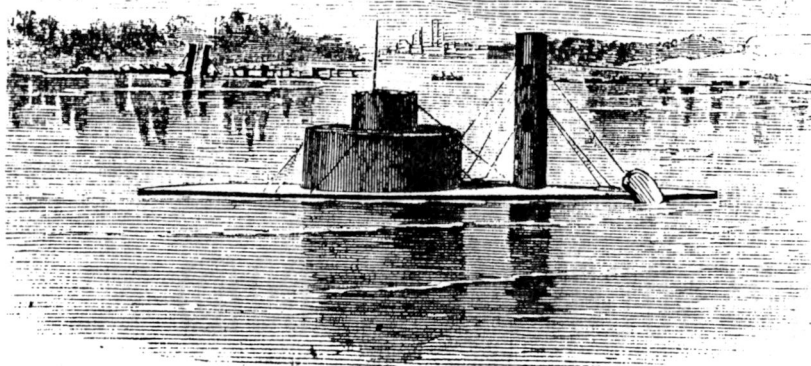
⁵⁸Temple to Bailey, February 21, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 34.

⁵⁹"The consequence was," Cushing boasted, "that the commanding Confederate knowing that the army was closing in behind him and thinking a monitor in the river above--evacuated in haste. Confederate officers told me afterwards that this was the true reason for the retreat." (Cushing Journal, NA.) Gideon Welles recorded in his diary that on February 22, 1865, "young Cushing came in with the intelligence of the capture of Fort Anderson. I went with him to see the President. . . The President was cheerful and laughed heartily over Cushing's account of the dumb monitor which he sent past Fort Anderson, causing the Rebels to evacuate without waiting to spike their guns." (Welles, Diary, II, 245.) The New York Herald perpetuated the myth that the fake monitor caused the Confederates to evacuate Fort Anderson. It reported that the "Admiral's bogus Monitor, doubtless, was the influential cause of the precipitate abandonment by the rebels of their strong defensive line on the river." (New York Herald, February 23, 1865.)

memoir, which included a detailed account of the Fort Anderson battle. It is not likely that the Confederates exploded more than a few torpedoes, if any, in an effort to sink the fake monitor. They had known for several days that the Federals were constructing her, if not others. "We imagine they intend floating them by some dark night & make us explode our electric torpedoes under them and then send the real monitor by," predicted a Confederate officer. "Or they may send them by all at once, and run the risk of our blowing up the right one. But 'forewarned is forearmed,' you know, and we will try and thwart our cute Yankee friends and render this Yankee trick abortive."⁶⁰ The Confederates took little notice of the sham monitor in the river; they were much too concerned about the Union force approaching their rear.

By ten p.m. on February 18, General Hagood realized that his situation was desperate. Dispatches from Lipscomb together with testimony from prisoners and deserters convinced him that Cox possessed a large force, approximately 6,500 soldiers, closing in behind Fort Anderson less than three hours' march away. Hagood's own garrison of some 2,200 effectives was much too small to oppose Cox's flanking force as well as the brigades in front of the fort and warships in the river. Furthermore, the

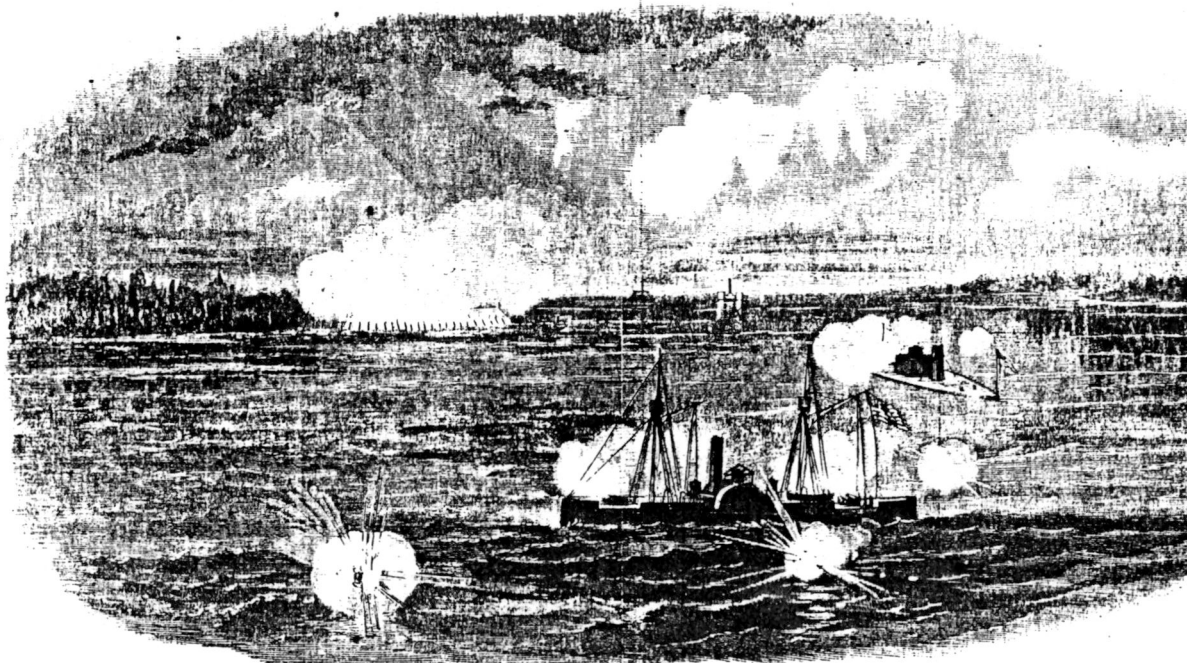
⁶⁰William Calder to mother, February 15, 1865, Calder Papers, SHC.



Admiral Porter's sham monitor, "Old Bogey"



Lieutenant William B. Cushing, U.S.N.



Bombardment of Fort Anderson

Confederates controlled only two defiles--the Orton plantation causeway and Orton Pond's milldam bridge--as avenues of escape. Hagood telegraphed General Hoke expressing his concern that capture threatened his entire command. Hoke immediately sent a staff officer across the river to confer with Hagood. After consultation, Hagood again wired Hoke at 2:05 a.m. on February 19, suggesting that Fort Anderson be "evacuated and the movement commenced in half an hour."⁶¹

Less than an hour later Hagood received Hoke's reply instructing him to abandon the fort and take up a new line of defense at Town Creek seven miles to the north. Hagood ordered an immediate withdrawal. Field artillery, ordnance wagons, and ambulances left the fort first. Quartermaster and commissary wagons, which during the battle had been moved to Allen's Creek, also headed towards Town Creek. Most of the garrison abandoned the fort just before dawn. The evacuation was so hurried that the fort's heavy guns and ammunition were not removed or destroyed. Hagood sent word to Lipscomb, whose troops had been keeping an eye on Cox, to retire to upper Town Creek bridge. Lipscomb's cavalry was to act as a flanking force to the main column which was marching to lower Town Creek bridge. It was almost daylight before Hagood directed his pickets to pull back quickly from

⁶¹Hagood, War of Secession, 338-339.

in front of the now silent fort.⁶²

The Union army attacked Fort Anderson at first light, in fact almost simultaneous with the withdrawal of the Confederate pickets. Moore's and Henderson's soldiers had heard noises coming from inside the work throughout the morning and suspected that its evacuation was afoot. Major Frank Wilcox of the 63rd Indiana led the first wave of troops, skirmishers of Henderson's brigade, against the fort. They fired a volley, advanced at double-quick time, and scaled its earthen walls only to find the fort abandoned, for the most part. Indeed, the Federals entered it in time to capture approximately fifty Confederates of the rearguard.⁶³ They also seized a garrison flag "which was rolled up and evidently had fallen off a wagon during the hasty withdrawal."⁶⁴ The main Southern force escaped,

⁶²Hagood received Hoke's evacuation orders at 2:48 a.m., February 19. (Hagood, War of Secession, 339.) New York Tribune, February 23, 1865; Entry February 18, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

⁶³Clark, North Carolina Regiments, II, 762; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 303-304; Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 116; Hagood, War of Secession, 339; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 969; New York Herald, February 25, 1865; Sherwood, Memories, 162; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 78.

⁶⁴A skirmisher of the 140th Indiana apparently found the Confederate flag when he entered Fort Anderson with the first wave of Union troops at daybreak on February 19. Yet the regiment's commander, Colonel Thomas J. Brady, "in a glowing speech about the captured flag," later presented it to Governor Morton of Indiana. A large crowd gathered on March 17, 1865 to witness the ceremony outside the National

however, by cutting the sluices and burning the bridges spanning Orton Canal. This temporarily halted the Union pursuit.

Upon hearing gunfire on the skirmish line, Colonel Moore formed his brigade into a line of battle and with fixed bayonets also attacked Fort Anderson. Moore was as yet uninformed of the Confederate retreat, and he thought the small arms fire indicated an erupting battle. The only troops his brigade encountered, however, were some of Wilcox's skirmishers bearing word of the evacuation.⁶⁵

Admiral Porter was also unaware of the situation inside Fort Anderson when at six a.m. his naval vessels renewed the bombardment. The gunboats had fired only half a dozen shots or so, however, when they learned of the fort's capture.⁶⁶ The thunderous reports of the warships' big guns and the bursting of shells in and around the fort created a mild panic among the occupying troops. Soldiers dashed to the

Hotel in Washington, D.C. President Lincoln was among the honored guests and also delivered a speech. Despite all the hoopla, the flag was not captured, according to an Illinoisan soldier who helped take Fort Anderson, it was found. (Note is from: Thompson, 112th Illinois, 304.) See also: Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1 970; New York Times, March 18, 1865.

⁶⁵Thompson, 112th Illinois, 304.

⁶⁶Extract from journal of John C. Beaumont, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 33; New York Tribune, February 23, 1865; New York Herald, February 25, 1865.

river and began blowing bugles, waving flags, coats, handkerchiefs, anything as a signal to the navy that the Union possessed Fort Anderson.⁶⁷ Colonel Moore rode his charger to the river bank and "shook out a square yard of white canvas dog tent and waved toward the fleet as a flag of truce."⁶⁸ Porter's ships got the message. The Montauk, closest to the fort, hoisted a white flag to inform the flotilla. That prompted sailors to climb into the rigging of their ships to cheer the victory.⁶⁹

General Schofield immediately notified General Terry of the fort's capture. If Terry did not know already, he may have suspected it. He and his troops on Federal Point probably heard the celebration going on across the river. At about the same time, Terry's pickets reported that the Confederates had abandoned Sugar Loaf. Unknown to Terry's corps, Hoke had abandoned his position during the early morning hours of February 19. Hoke was marching toward Wilmington when the Federals discovered his empty earthworks. Terry moved his entire force into the Confederate trenches where it rested for a brief time before

⁶⁷Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 116; Sherwood, Memories, 161.

⁶⁸New York Tribune, February 25, 1865.

⁶⁹Entry February 19, 1865, Hern Diary; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 78.

70

setting out after Hoke.

Cox and Ames were unaware for several hours of Hagood's withdrawal. Mid-morning found them still waiting for the supply wagons to reach Orton Pond. Cox thought it wise to wait on the train bringing food to his hungry troops before they attacked Fort Anderson. The wagons finally arrived at about ten a.m. As it turned out, they had gotten scattered the day before and had gone back to Smithville to reform and start again.⁷¹

Anxious to make the attack, Cox soon advanced with Ames's division, the first unit to be resupplied. He left behind his own two brigades to draw rations and follow. Cox and Ames had advanced about halfway to the fort when they met an officer of Schofield's staff who had been sent to inform them of the capture. Ames proceeded on to the fort with his division. Cox waited for his troops to catch up with him, and then reunited them with Henderson's and Moore's brigades near Fort Anderson about mid-afternoon.

⁷⁰Solon A. Carter to wife, February 21, 1865, Solon A. Carter Papers, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Carter Papers, USMHI); Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 409; Entry February 19, 1865, Scrogg's Diary, USMHI; Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921.

⁷¹Cox to Campbell, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 494; Cox to Campbell, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 495; Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929.

The division then pushed on up river in pursuit of Hagood.

Meanwhile, General Schofield and Admiral Porter went ashore to inspect Fort Anderson. Their prizes included ten pieces of ordnance, a considerable quantity of ammunition, and some fifty prisoners. The massive earthen fort and its collateral works awed Schofield. "[They] are very strong and rendered almost inaccessible by swamps," he reported. "A small force could have held them until their supplies were exhausted."⁷³

Yet General Hagood's small force had not held Fort Anderson. The fort's importance to Wilmington's security was evident in General Bragg's message to Hoke on February 8, in which he cautioned that "except in an extreme case, involving the safety of the command [it] will not be abandoned."⁷⁴ The fort's evacuation was induced by Cox's flanking column which otherwise would have gained its rear and cut off the retreat of its garrison. Hagood committed a

⁷²Cox to Campbell, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 495; Abstract from journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 929; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961; New York Herald, February 25, 1865; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 305; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 970; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 78.

⁷³Schofield to Grant, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 493.

⁷⁴Anderson to Hoke, February 8, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1131.

fatal error in not adequately supporting his weak right flank. It would not be Hagood's last blunder in the defense of Wilmington. The loss of Fort Anderson precipitated the abandonment of Sugar Loaf. General Hoke realized that the Union navy would soon control the Cape Fear River above Sugar Loaf, leaving his force exposed to enfilading fire and potential capture.

More important, the capture of Fort Anderson, like that of Fort Fisher, attested to the efficient cooperation between the Union army and navy.⁷⁵ Their strategy was well

⁷⁵Cooperation between the Union army and navy at Fort Anderson did not exclude rivalry over credit for its capture. There is no doubt that the army entered the fort first. Even most naval accounts acknowledge that the troops already occupied Fort Anderson when the gunboats opened fire at six a.m. on February 19. Commander John C. Beaumont of the U.S.S. Mackinaw reported: "At 6 a.m. fired one round at the fort, when a white flag was displayed, and we found our forces in possession." (Extract from journal of John C. Beaumont, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 33.) "At daylight discovered that Fort Anderson had been evacuated by the enemy during the night and occupied by our troops," recorded another sailor. (Abstract log of U.S.S. Yantic, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 36.) "Troops took possession," a tar claimed succinctly. (Entry February 19, 1865, Hern Diary.) Yet Admiral Porter claimed in his published naval history of the war that "the Army came up half an hour afterwards and found Fort Anderson in possession of the Navy." (Porter, Naval History of the Civil War, 728.) Porter possessed not only great ability, but also an inflated ego that he rarely missed an opportunity to pamper. A Federal soldier recalled sarcastically that he observed a naval officer who perhaps believed the navy deserved the honor for Fort Anderson's capture. "A boat manned with marines, with a naval officer, put off from the fleet and rowed up to the fort," the infantryman recorded. "The officer landed and took formal possession of the fort, 'in the name of the United States Navy'. . . ." (Thompson, 112th Illinois, 304.)

The Union army disagreed over which troops were the first to enter Fort Anderson and thus deserved more credit for its capture. Evidence suggests that Major Frank Wilcox

planned and their tactics executed with determination. Now the Federals were ready to move irresistibly on Wilmington. "Where [the Confederates] propose to make a stand," Schofield predicted, "it can probably be only a short one."⁷⁶

of the 63rd Indiana, led the initial wave of troops, Colonel Henderson's skirmishers, against the fort. In his official report, Henderson asserted: "if any credit attaches for the occupation of Fort Anderson, after its evacuation, it is perhaps due to those under my command to say that the skirmishers of my brigade were among the first, if not the first, to enter the fort." (Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 970.) Henderson apparently wished to see his brigade receive due recognition for its part in the victory. His desire may have related to his being superseded from command the previous evening. After General Cox left on his flanking movement around Orton Pond, Schofield designated Colonel Henderson in command of the troops that remained in front of Fort Anderson. Colonel Moore protested, however, claiming that he was entitled to command because his commission pre-dated Henderson's. Henderson relinquished authority in exchange for harmony. (Thompson, 112th Illinois, 303.)

In spite of the rivalry and squabble, the capture of Fort Anderson was a joint effort for which both the Union army and navy deserved praise.

⁷⁶Schofield to Grant, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 493.

CHAPTER FIVE

"LAST RAYS OF DEPARTING HOPE:"
CONFEDERATE DEFENSE OF WILMINGTON,
FEBRUARY 19-21, 1865

General Hagood's main column crossed lower Town Creek just before ten a.m. on February 19, and went into position. Hagood placed Colonel John J. Hedrick in command at the bridge, which was defended by Lieutenant Colonel John D. Taylor's battalion of North Carolinians along with three pieces of artillery in entrenchments overlooking the span. The 11th South Carolina was ordered to picket the two-mile stretch of ground along the creek to the river. A small party remained south of the stream on the road to Fort Anderson to watch for the Federals. Hagood held the balance of his force near a church about half a mile north of the bridge.¹

Colonel Lipscomb soon reported that he and his cavalry and a small detachment of infantry were at upper Town Creek

¹Hagood to Anderson, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1228; Hagood, War of Secession, 342; Entry February 19, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke. According to General Cox, the Confederate earthworks at Town Creek contained "a Whitworth rifled cannon and two brass smoothbore twelve pounder field pieces." (Cox, March to the Sea, 150; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961.) Hagood's earthworks, since pushed down, stood on a bluff on the north bank of Town Creek just west of present day Highway 133 at Town Creek bridge.

bridge. Hagood directed Lipscomb to scout his front and down the creek between the two bridges.² As soon as his troops were deployed Hagood telegraphed General Hoke for instructions. "Future operations will depend on circumstances," Hoke replied.³ For the moment Hagood could only wait.

He faced no immediate threat. The burned bridges at Orton Canal retarded the Union pursuit. Moreover, his position at Town Creek was fairly strong, mainly because of natural advantages. Town Creek, named for two ill-fated English settlements in the 1660s, was deep and unfordable with wide marshes and rice fields on both sides. An occasional bluff touched the stream here and there, but the two bridges were the only regular crossings. Both spans had been slightly fortified earlier and were now adequately defended.⁴ If needed, Hagood controlled two possible avenues of retreat--the old public road, the main thoroughfare to Wilmington, and the telegraph road, a byway closer to the river along which ran a telegraph line to the

²Hagood, War of Secession, 342.

³Hagood to Anderson, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1228; Hagood, War of Secession, 342.

⁴Hagood, War of Secession, 340; Report of Jacob D Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961; Cox, March to the Sea, 150.

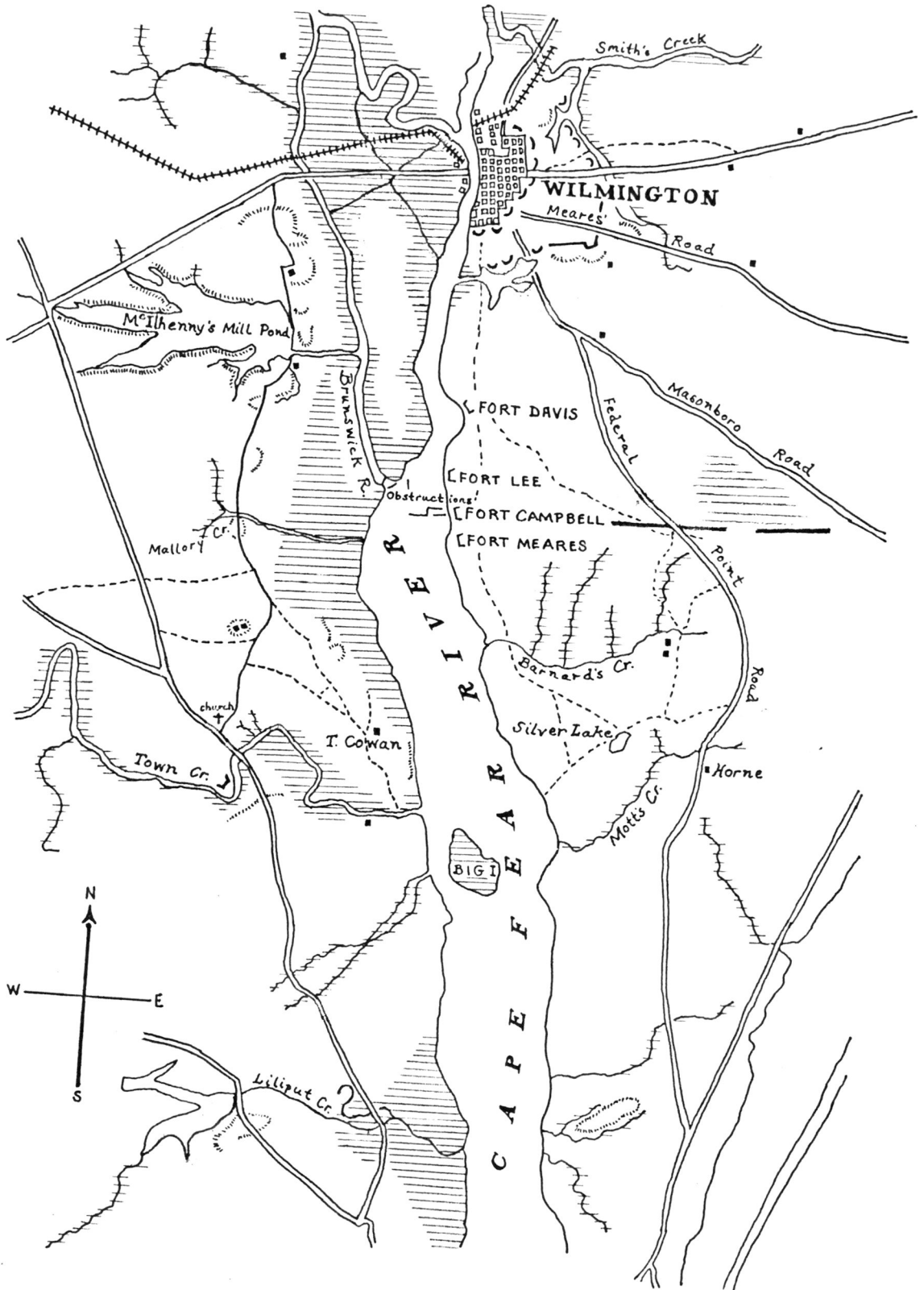
town.⁵

General Hoke withdrew up the east bank of the river to a position three miles south of Wilmington and roughly opposite from Hagood. His force occupied newly constructed earthworks that stretched from Battery Campbell on the river eastward to the headwaters of Hewlitt's Creek near Masonboro Sound. Hoke deployed the bulk of his troops near the river batteries and at Forks Road, a junction of the Federal Point Road and a byroad approximately two miles from the river.⁶

The Federals staged a three-pronged pursuit of the Confederates: General Cox's brigades moved up the west bank, General Terry's corps up the east side, and both were supported by Admiral Porter's flotilla in the Cape Fear River. General Schofield continued to direct the campaign from his headquarters on board the S.R. Spaulding. February

⁵Hagood, War of Secession, map, 341; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, map, 412; ORA Atlas, CV, 8.

⁶Parker to Bragg, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1227; Clark, North Carolina Regiments, IV, 427; W.O. Blake, Pictorial History of the Great Rebellion, 2 volumes (Columbus, Ohio: Gilmore and Segner, 1866), volume 2, 811; J.R. Hawley to William C. Church, March 9, 1865, William C. Church Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Church Papers, LOC). Remains of Hoke's earthworks can still be seen. A small sections runs from River Road to the west boundary of Babcock and Wilcox off Carolina Beach Road. Another less noticeable piece is located east of Carolina Beach Road and south of Hanover Heights. It runs to the west end of Pine Valley.



19 witnessed little fighting, but the Federals' final push to capture Wilmington was underway.

The main forces of Hoke and Terry did not clash that day. Terry remained at Sugar Loaf until about noon before advancing in Hoke's wake. Terry's skirmishers traded pot-shots with Hoke's rearguard and captured an occasional straggler, but no serious fighting occurred. Terry did not want to provoke a general engagement as his force was greatly depleted by the departure of Ames's division that had been sent to help capture Fort Anderson.⁷ Unsure of Hoke's whereabouts, Terry ordered General Abbott to search for him on Masonboro Sound and to protect the main column's right flank. Abbott advanced his brigade on the Military Road that paralleled the sound. Terry led General Paine's division up the Federal Point Road, the main road to Wilmington.⁸ Late in the day Paine's vanguard, the 5th U.S.

⁷Entry February 19, 1865, Scrogg's Diary, USMHI; Solon A. Carter to wife, February 21, 1865, Carter Papers, USMHI; J.R. Hawley to William C. Church, March 9, 1865, Church Papers, LOC.

⁸Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 409; Report of Charles J. Paine, April 24, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 925. The Federal Point Road followed approximately the same route as present day Highway 421 South, Carolina Beach Road from Snow's Cut to Monkey Junction. There the old road ran just east of but parallel to Highway 132, South College Road. It turned northwest across South College Road just south of Devonshire subdivision and ran behind Cape Fear Academy and Pine Valley School. From there it skirted the west boundary of Pine Valley subdivision to 17th Street and Shipyard Blvd. Then it ran east of 17th Street, across the hill where New Hanover County Hospital now sits, before crossing 17th and

Colored Troops, got into a scrap with Hoke's rearguard which made a feeble stand about eight miles from Wilmington. Paine's regiment entrenched and waited for reinforcements, which came up soon enough and forced the Confederates to retire.⁹

Shortly afterwards, at about four p.m., Terry allowed a flag of truce to come through the lines.¹⁰ Its bearers relayed a message from Hoke, who proposed to hand over 2,500 Union captives being held at Wilmington.¹¹ The Confederate and United States governments recently had agreed to a general exchange of prisoners-of-war. Wilmington was designated, despite Hoke's disapproval, as a delivery point for Union prisoners. Southern captives were to be released at City Point on the James River, in Virginia.¹² For days trains loaded with prisoners had been rolling into

16th streets at Jumpin' Run development. It entered Wilmington at 12th Street. Travelers used the old Federal Point Road well into the twentieth century. Today the road is all but gone, graded over by "progress" and the eternal march of time.

⁹Entry February 19, 1865, Scrogg's Diary, USMHI; Solon A. Carter to wife, February 21, 1865, Carter Papers, USMHI.

¹⁰Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.

¹¹Hoke to Commanding General, U.S. Forces, February 19, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 268.

¹²Campbell to Bragg, February 19, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 268; Hoke to Campbell, February 13, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 217.

Wilmington, mainly from camps in Florence, South Carolina, and Salisbury, North Carolina. Some of them were from as far away as Andersonville prison in Georgia, having been evacuated to keep them out of Sherman's reach. Confinement and oppressive living conditions had taken their toll on the captives, many of whom were in horrid physical condition. Hoke was anxious to rid himself of the prisoners, for he had no means to care for them properly. In fact, citizens secretly gave food to the enemy soldiers which Confederate authorities were unable to provide.¹³

Terry immediately apprised Schofield of Hoke's proposal, but the commanding general refused to agree to it. He had received no notification from his superiors of an exchange cartel, and taking in a large number of invalid prisoners at that time would hinder his advance on Wilmington. Schofield informed Terry that he would not reply to Hoke. Although this response infuriated Hoke, who subsequently moved the prisoners away from Wilmington, Schofield acted with good judgment. In fact, Grant wrote to

¹³Sidney Williams, From Spottsylvania to Wilmington, N.C. By Way of Andersonville and Florence (Providence, Rhode Island: Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society of Rhode Island, 1899), 43 (hereafter cited as Williams, From Spottsylvania to Wilmington); George A. Weiser, Nine Months In Rebel Prisons (Philadelphia: John N. Reeve & Co., 1890), 48 (hereafter cited as Weiser, Nine Months In Rebel Prisons); Fayetteville Observer Semi-Weekly, March 9, 1865; Hoke to Schofield, February 22, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 290; Parker to Jackson, February 18, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 264; Bowers to Schofield, March 22, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 420-421.

Schofield the following day notifying him of the exchange agreement, but advised him not to let it interfere with his military operations. After he heard from Grant, Schofield opened negotiations with Hoke for release of the prisoners, but a settlement was not reached for several days.¹⁴

It was almost dusk on the nineteenth when Terry finished with the flag of truce business. He decided to bivouack his force for the night and wait for Ames's reinforcements, which were at that moment being recrossed to the east side of the Cape Fear River from Fort Anderson. In the meantime Terry ordered his troops to strengthen and expand the breastworks erected earlier in the day. Abbott also entrenched with his right resting on Masonboro Sound and his left connecting with Paine. At that point Terry's troops were about nine miles from Wilmington.¹⁵

¹⁴Campbell to Terry, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 497; Hoke to Baker, February 20, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 276; Hoke to Parker, February 20, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 276; Bragg to Hatch, February 21, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 288; Grant to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509; Grant to Schofield, February 22, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 289; Schofield to Grant, February 28, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 317; Schofield to Hoke, February 21, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 286; Grant to Mulford, February 26, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 310.

¹⁵Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 409; Solon A. Carter to wife, February 21, 1865, Carter Papers, USMHI; Schofield to Terry, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 497; Terry to Schofield, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 497. Remains of Terry's breastworks could still be seen on Carolina Beach Road until 1980. Abbott entrenched his brigade at Gonto's farm on Masonboro Sound. (Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921.)

Porter's flotilla was out of sight of the land forces, but kept pace with their advance during the day. As soon as Fort Anderson fell, the navy began clearing the river of obstructions and mines. Porter dispatched thirty or more launches to drag for torpedoes and to sound and mark the channel.¹⁶ The warships followed the boats upstream in the afternoon. The vessels passed plantations on the banks of the river; some barns and outbuildings still smouldered from fires set by the retreating Confederates who wanted to keep their contents from falling into Union hands.¹⁷

Late in the day some of the launches rowed to within sight of the Confederate river batteries perched atop high bluffs three miles below Wilmington and opposite the south end of Eagles Island. Here Confederate engineers had obstructed the channel with pilings, chains, sawyers, and three sunken vessels, the Arctic, Yadkin and North Heath, a former blockade runner.¹⁸ Parrott guns of Fort Campbell, the only battery whose ordnance could bear on the boats at a

¹⁶Extract from journal of Commander Beaumont, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 33; Abstract log of U.S.S. Yantic, February 19, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 36; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 78; New York Tribune, February 23 and 25, 1865.

¹⁷Entry February 19, 1865, Hern Diary.

¹⁸ORA Atlas, LXVIII, 7; Entry February 19, 1865, Hern Diary; New York Tribune, February 25, 1865.

good distance, opened fire on them as they approached. A few well placed shots drove the launches back to the safety of the flotilla. Porter signaled for the Montauk to engage the batteries, but the monitor grounded in shoal water. The sham ironclad "Old Bogey," which had been retrieved, moved up to feint an attack, but darkness soon set in and ended the ruse. The gunboats cast anchor for the night and prepared to continue the engagement.¹⁹

Hagood's pickets near the mouth of Town Creek had watched the Federal flotilla ascend the river in the afternoon. Hagood posted scouts near the river lest Porter try to put ashore sailors and marines or transfer army troops across Town Creek.²⁰ Hagood's fears were unfounded. The Union navy was still licking its wounds from the debacle its shore contingent had suffered at Fort Fisher. Even if a party should land, it was a long way from the river to Hagood's position across ground unfamiliar to Yankee sailors and marines. Admiral Porter explored, however, the possibility of landing pontoons for Cox's troops to cross

¹⁹"A number of enemy boats advanced up river; 14 in sight of Battery Campbell. Opened upon them from Campbell only with Parrott and 32-pounder guns. After a few rounds from our battery boats retired." (Gaillard to Parker, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1228.) For armament of the Confederate river batteries see: Hebert to Anderson, February 4, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1115-1116; and Oladowski to Anderson, February 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1116-1118. New York Tribune, February 25, 1865.

²⁰Entry February 19, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

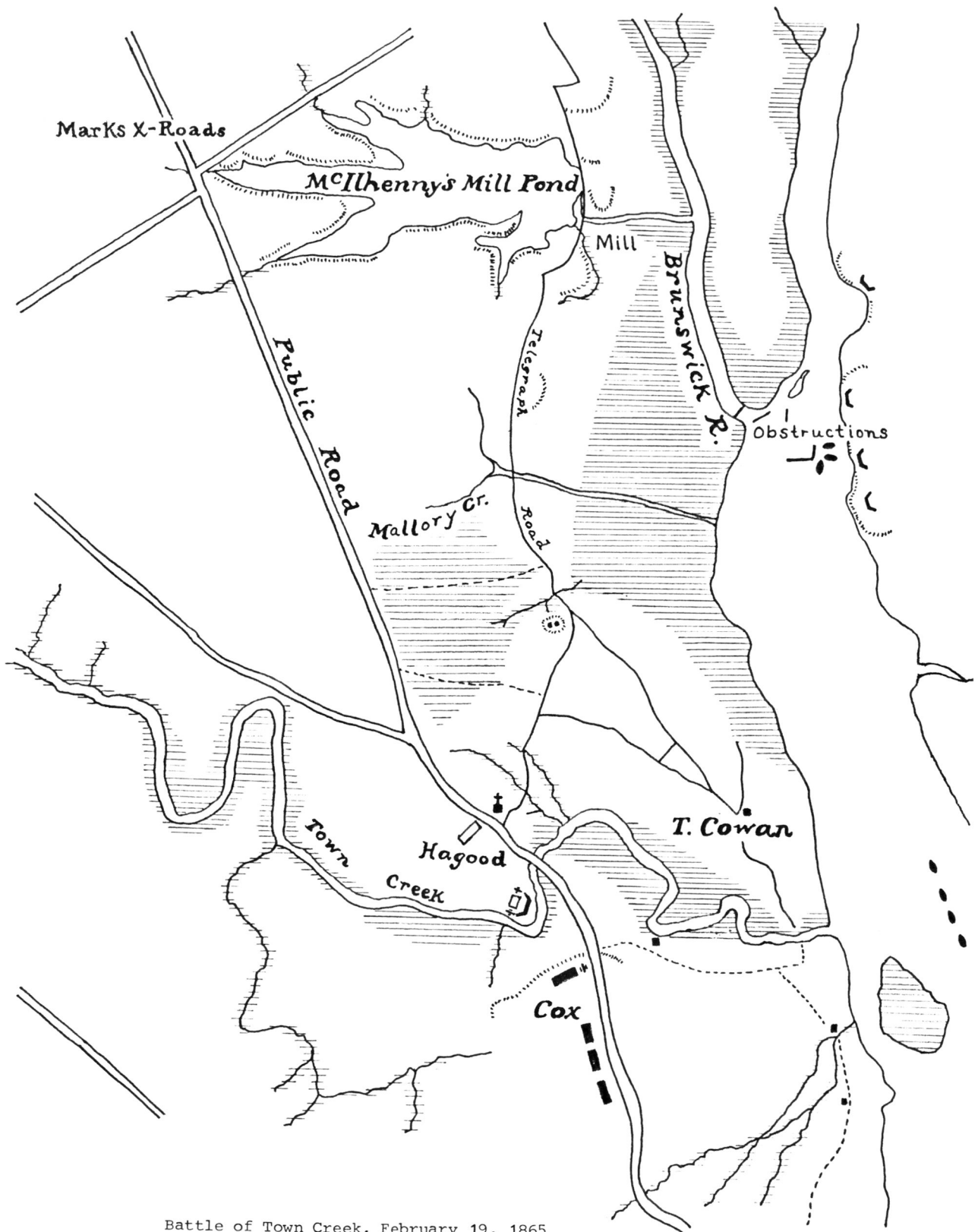
Town Creek.²¹

On February 19 Cox's brigades reached lower Town Creek bridge at about 3:30 in the afternoon. They quickly drove Hagood's pickets to the north side of the stream. The Confederates pulled up the planks of the bridge as they retreated, but did not have enough time to destroy it completely. In the meantime, Hagood's artillery opened fire on Cox's vanguard, Thomas Henderson's brigade, as it deployed on a sand ridge half a mile south of the creek. While the bulk of his unit fortified the crest of the ridge, Henderson pushed skirmishers into the marsh bordering the stream. The brigades of Moore, Sterl, and Casement stayed out of sight and under cover in the rear.²²

While sharpshooting and artillery fire ensued across Town Creek, Cox deployed reconnoitering parties to search for a place to ford it. They discovered that the creek could be crossed only by bridge or boat, which presented Cox with a dilemma. Confederate guns swept the lower bridge's only approach, a long causeway through a wide marsh. The only other span, which Cox figured the Confederates had

²¹Campbell to Cox, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 496.

²²Hagood, War of Secession, 342; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 969; Cox, March to the Sea, 150; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 305; Cox to Campbell, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 495; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965.



Battle of Town Creek, February 19, 1865

probably already destroyed, was nine miles upstream. Moreover, getting pontoon boats ashore appeared impractical. The river was wide where Town Creek emptied into it, and the pontoon-laden ships were in the channel near the opposite shore. While Cox pondered a course of action, fate intervened in his behalf.

After dark Colonel Henderson learned from a local black of a scow docked at a warehouse a mile or so down the creek on the south side. The Confederates had inadvertently overlooked it when they crossed in the morning. Henderson informed General Cox, who immediately ordered that the flatboat be confiscated and secured.²³ Cox then notified Schofield of the discovery and recommended using the scow to get a sizeable force across Town Creek and outflank the Confederates.²⁴ After midnight Cox received from his superior instructions to "see what could be done with the flat boat" as he had suggested.²⁵

Early in the morning of February 20, Cox ordered Casement and Sterl to make the crossing with their brigades.

²³Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 969; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 305; Cox to Campbell, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 495; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961.

²⁴Cox to Campbell, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 495.

²⁵Campbell to Cox, February 19, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 496.

It was tedious work as the vessel could carry only fifty men or so at a time. When the soldiers disembarked on the north side of the creek, they had to wade a considerable distance through rice paddies, marsh, and muck before reaching dry ground. By eleven a.m., only Casement's brigade had got across.²⁶

At daylight Henderson's brigade began demonstrating at the bridge to divert the Confederates' attention from the flanking movement. A strong force of skirmishers again advanced into the low ground along the creek. The marsh offered them little protection from the constant small arms and artillery fire from inside the Confederate earthworks. As cover fire for the skirmishers, Henderson ordered Lieutenant Reed's Ohio battery of Parrott rifled cannon to engage the graycoats.²⁷ For the remainder of the day the sharpshooting across the stream became "brisk and animated, enlivened by occasional duels between the artillery."²⁸

²⁶Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 961; Report of John S. Casement, April 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 968; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 306; Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 118; Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509; Entry February 20, 1865, Spaulding Diary, LOC.

²⁷Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 969-970; Hagood, War of Secession, 342.

²⁸Entry February 20, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

Henderson's skirmishers fought their way to the edge of the creek from where they sniped at any Confederate soldier who dared to show his head above the entrenchments. They also prevented further destruction of the bridge. The Ohio battery produced telling results as well. With deliberate and accurate fire, its guns disabled a Whitworth and one 12-pounder gun which the Confederates pulled out of their earthworks by noon. The firefight was intense but, as in most battles of the Wilmington Campaign, caused only minor casualties to both sides.²⁹

From his field headquarters at Forks Road, General Hoke could hear the drone of battle raging on the opposite side of the river. He telegraphed General Hagood, bestowing confidence in his judgment to move his force as he thought best. Later, however, Hoke revised his message, instructing Hagood to vigorously defend Town Creek. Wilmington needed to be held longer than he had supposed. The removal of government property and Union prisoners-of-war, whom Schofield had not yet agreed to receive, had bogged down the inadequate transportation.³⁰ Moreover, General William J. Hardee requested Hoke's assistance in getting his army to

²⁹Zaccheus Ellis to mother, March 1, 1865, Ellis Papers, SHC; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 962.

³⁰Hagood, War of Secession, 342-343.

Greensborough by way of Wilmington. Sherman's surge through South Carolina forced Hardee to evacuate Charleston on February 17. He was now retreating along the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad and approaching the port town. Hoke felt confident that he could force Hardee's passage through Wilmington as long as Hagood held Town Creek, thus protecting the rail line. Hoke told Hardee to come on. He also notified General Lee that although Schofield's army outnumbered his own by two to one, he intended to dispute the Federals at every point.³¹ Hoke would have to keep that promise as the Federals attacked his beleaguered army on all fronts for two days.

Ames's division reinforced Terry before sunrise on February 20. At nine o'clock that morning Terry resumed his advance.³² Paine's division took the lead, with the 5th

³¹Hardee to Bragg, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1231; Hoke to Hardee, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1233; Hoke to Lee, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1233.

³²Entry February 20, 1865, DeGraff Diary, USMHI; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921. During Terry's march to Wilmington on February 20, a touching incident occurred that clearly illustrates the nature of the American Civil War. According to a war correspondent, a corporal in one of General Terry's regiments asked permission to enter a house by the roadside that he claimed was his boyhood home. Permission was granted and the soldier "soon was clasped in the arms of his overjoyed mother. . .she said, 'your brother was here yesterday; he stopped as the Confederates marched past.' That mother has a son in each army," the reporter observed. Ironically, Corporal Hosea Horne, an artilleryman from New Hanover County who served in Bragg's army, had a brother, Jake, who fought for the Union. Hosea participated

U.S. Colored Troops again on the skirmish line. It soon ran into Hoke's rearguard, which opened fire but retreated with little resistance.³³ "The firing of the Johnnies was. . . desultory and purposeless," remarked a Federal, "and our columns moved gaily on to the music of the dropping shots."³⁴ The march was slow, however, as the troops often had to traverse Carolina bays--pocosins of pond pines, evergreen shrubs, and woody vine bamboo briar.

Abbott's brigade continued its march up the Military Road, but kept in constant touch by way of couriers with Terry's column. Terry directed Abbott to attack the enemy if he found him in force, and to turn his flank if possible. After advancing two miles, however, Abbott's men had not encountered a single Confederate soldier. They found instead the bridge over Whiskey Creek destroyed. That

in the Wilmington Campaign and, according to descendants of the family, so did his brother, his enemy. Further research in official military records may disclose the service record of Jake Horne. The Horne home was located on the Federal Point Road, the route both Hoke's and Terry's army followed to Wilmington (since torn down, the Horne home stood just northeast of Monkey Junction, the intersection of Carolina Beach Road and South College Road). (Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; Manarin, North Carolina Troops, I, 153; Chris E. Fonvielle, "The Fall of Wilmington, February, 1865," Cape Fear Tidewater 2 [February, 1985], 9-10.)

³³Marching Orders, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 510; Entry February 20, 1865, Scrogg's Diary, USMHI.

³⁴Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.

halted their advance. With Abbott's line of march broken and uncontested anyway, Terry requested the general to reunite his brigade with the main army.³⁵

Terry finally found Hoke at Forks Road three miles south of Wilmington.³⁶ There the Confederates were strongly entrenched with artillery to defend the approach to the town via the Federal Point Road. Fighting erupted as Terry advanced on Hoke's earthworks at about three o'clock in the afternoon. Confederate pickets bolted for their main works as Paine's two brigades moved forward. The black troops stopped when the Confederates' fire upon them increased. Six of them were wounded by the explosion of a single 6-pound artillery shell.

It looked to Terry and Paine as though Hoke possessed only one rank of infantry and a few cannon. Terry believed the works could be carried by frontal assault and he ordered Paine to make it. Paine sent in Colonel Elias Wright's brigade, which made a valiant but futile charge. The Southern force, at least one infantry brigade and six field

³⁵Marching Orders, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 510; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 410; Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921.

³⁶Cross to Parker, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1235; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 79. Hoke's position at Forks Road was at the west end of Stonewall Jackson Drive in Pine Valley. Until 1987, Hoke's earthworks could still be seen. They were destroyed when 17th Street was extended to connect with South College Road.

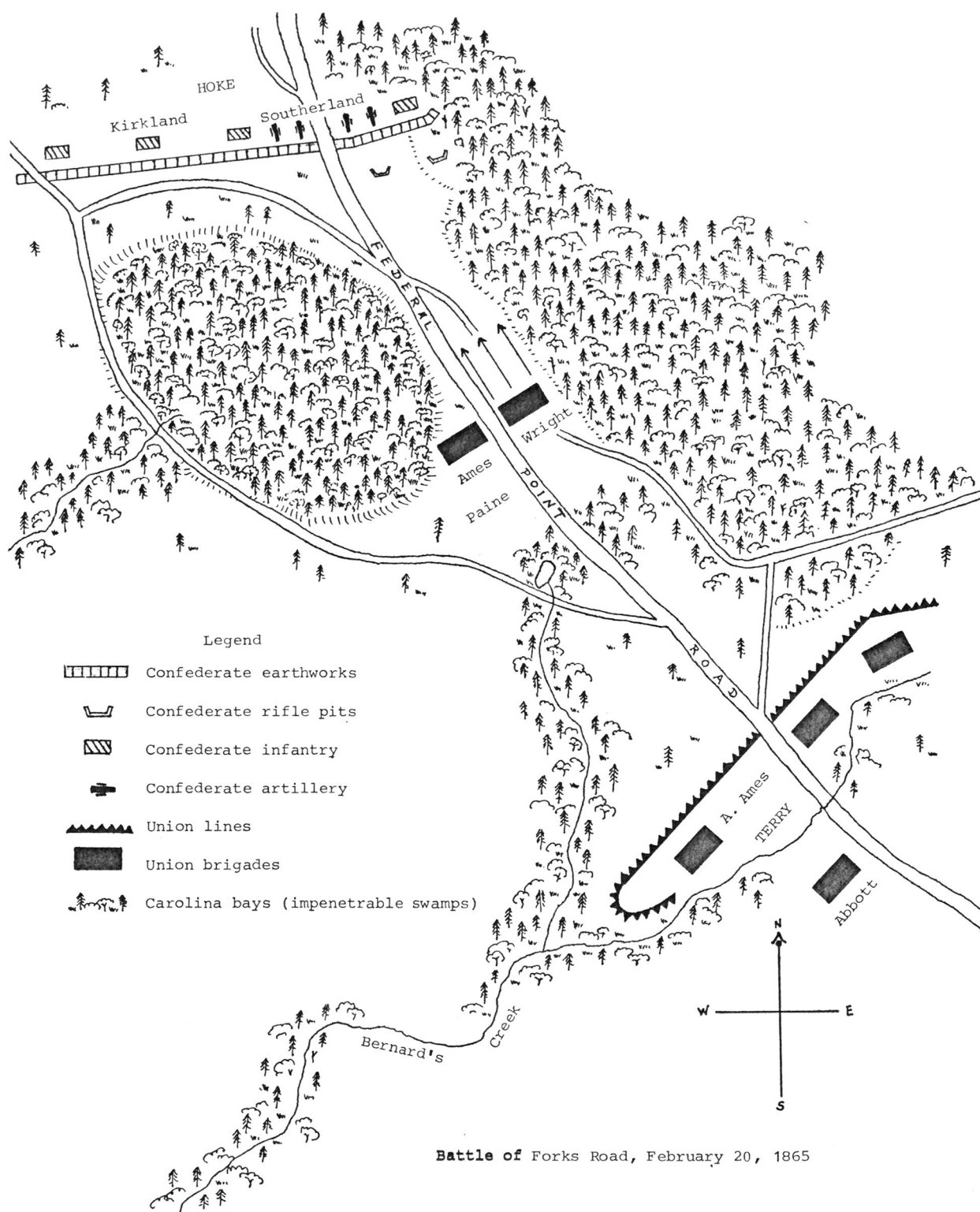
pieces, blasted the Federals with heavy volleys of musketry and barrages of lead and iron artillery cannister. The firing caused frightful Union casualties in a brief period. Paine lost one officer and one man killed, and three officers, including Colonel Wright who was shot in the wrist, and forty-eight soldiers wounded.³⁷ "General Terry ordered [us] to charge. . .and we done it," one of Paine's men aptly observed, "but we were unable to take the works."³⁸

The Confederates' obstinate defense satisfied Terry that Hoke meant to vigorously contest any further advance on Wilmington. Terry entrenched his corps, but deployed parties to reconnoiter the Confederate defenses. Paine's force dug in within several hundred yards of Hoke's works. Sharpshooting ensued between the lines and continued into the night.³⁹

³⁷Report of Charles J. Paine, April 24, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 925; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865. McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 79.

³⁸Entry February 20, 1865, Scrogg's Diary, USMHI.

³⁹Ames to Campbell, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 510; Jackson and O'Donnell, Back Home In Oneida, 193; Cross to Parker February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1235. Paine's breastworks were located approximately 300 yards south of Hoke's line at Forks Road, but were destroyed by the construction of Sun Valley subdivision as was most of the battlefield in the early 1980s. A large section of Terry's line of earthworks is still visible southwest of Pine Valley School.



Battle of Forks Road, February 20, 1865

As the armies fought on both river banks, Porter's gunboats supported them. At about ten a.m. on February 20, the Sassacus and Lenapee led the flotilla upstream to engage the Confederate river batteries. Their advance was slow because the channel was narrow and shallow. Some ships struck bottom and the Montauk could not get up past Big Island.⁴⁰

The navy could give no direct aid to the armies because they were fighting on fronts out of the gunboats' range of fire. In an attempt to help Cox, the warships lobbed shells across the river towards Town Creek, but the Confederates were nowhere near the impact area.⁴¹ Terry's corps at Forks Road was also too far away from the river. Porter's gunboats therefore concentrated their fire on the river batteries, Forts Meares, Campbell, Lee, and Davis (called Fort Strong by the Federals).

The battle began at three o'clock that afternoon. The firing from both sides was continuous for about three hours. A Union tar claimed that the ships threw eight to ten projectiles at the batteries every minute. They established

⁴⁰William N. Still, Jr. (ed.), "The Yankees Were Landing Below Us: The Journal of Robert Watson, C.S.N.", Civil War Times Illustrated XV (April, 1976), 18 (hereafter cited as Still, "Journal of Robert Watson," CWTI); Abstract log of U.S.S. Shawmut, February 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 37; Report of David D. Porter, February 22, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 45; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 79.

⁴¹Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509.

their range of fire from a buoy that the Confederates had used for target practice. Nevertheless, they were unable to silence the Confederate ordnance which answered with defiant accuracy.⁴² "This afternoon we had a splendid engagement," exclaimed a Union sailor, "the enemy made some splendid shots. . .I assure you I dipped my head as well as others who were near me for you have no idea what an ugly scream they give."⁴³ Confederate projectiles repeatedly struck the Sassacus causing her to leak badly. Her gun crews ceased firing to help bail water and keep her from sinking.⁴⁴ The battle raged till dark with neither side gaining any real advantage.

General Cox again broke the stalemate. With ingenuity and determination, he once again outsmarted Hagood who seemed unsure of how to protect his flanks.

It was past noon on February 20 before Sterl's brigade joined Casement's on the north bank of Town Creek. Before

⁴²Still, "Journal of Robert Watson," CWTI, 18; Entry February 20, 1865, Hern Diary; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 78.

⁴³Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 79.

⁴⁴Entry February 20, 1865, Hern Diary; Report of David D. Porter, February 22, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 45; Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 78; W.O. Blake, Pictorial History of the Great Rebellion (Columbus, Ohio: Gilmore & Segner, 1866), 811 (hereafter cited as Blake, Pictorial History); McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 81.

advancing, however, they threw up light breastworks for protection while waiting for Colonel Moore's brigade to catch up with them. Cox had sent them word that he wanted to attempt to outflank Hagood with three brigades instead of just two. Moore's troops crossed over by early afternoon. Cox was with them and personally took command of the operation.⁴⁵

The Confederates had not detected the crossing. Apparently Hagood's pickets thought the creek and swampy terrain would prevent the Federals from gaining their flank, so they failed to watch the stream carefully. About mid-day Hagood sent the 21st South Carolina to relieve the 11th South Carolina on picket duty near the river. They soon reported Yankees in force at Thomas Cowan's plantation on the north side of Town Creek. Hagood immediately sent word for both regiments to maintain their position. He also dispatched Colonel Charles Simonton with the 25th and 27th South Carolina regiments and two pieces of North Carolina artillery under Lieutenant Robert Rankin to help stop the Federals.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 962; Report of John S. Casement, April 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 968; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965.

⁴⁶Hagood, War of Secession, 343; William V. Izlar, A Sketch of the War Record of the Edisto Rifles, 1861-1865 (Columbia, South Carolina: The State Company, 1914), 115 (hereafter cited as Izlar, Edisto Rifles); McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 79.

Two lanes led from the telegraph road to the mouth of Town Creek. A southerly lane intersected the telegraph road approximately one mile north of lower Town Creek bridge. A north road joined the telegraph road about a mile further away. It roughly paralleled the river and ran past Cowan's plantation before intersecting with the south road near the mouth of Town Creek.⁴⁷

From a position on the south lane, Colonel Simonton soon reported to Hagood that the enemy was at that moment in his front but extending a line to the north road. Hagood sensed urgency in Simonton's message and decided to go in person to investigate. He found Simonton engaged in a sharp skirmish with Cox's sizeable force, which was endeavoring to overlap him on both flanks.⁴⁸

A quick reconnaissance convinced Hagood that Cox had again somehow managed to outflank him. That gave the Federals control of the mouth of Town Creek by which, with the navy's support, they could fling across their entire force at any time. Hagood did not know that the bulk of Cox's division was already across Town Creek, but did realize that the Union force constituted a serious threat. Hagood decided that the Town Creek line must be abandoned,

⁴⁷Hagood, War of Secession, map, 341.

⁴⁸Hagood, War of Secession, 344.

but he needed time to alert his scattered troops and effect a withdrawal.⁴⁹

Hagood instructed Simonton to delay Cox's advance and give the main Confederate force time to retreat. He directed Simonton to extend his skirmish line so as to guard both roads and to fall back slowly, making a stubborn fight. He was to concentrate his troops and artillery when he reached the telegraph road. Hagood would be close by to help support his retreat to the safety of the main army.⁵⁰

Hagood returned rapidly to his headquarters at the church near lower Town Creek bridge. He immediately sent word to Colonel Lipscomb, who had seen no action at all at the upper bridge, to withdraw his force to Marks Cross Roads just outside of Wilmington. The general then sent his wagon train, sick and wounded, and the two disabled artillery pieces to Wilmington. Two men were ordered to burn the bridge at McIlhenny's millpond and to cut the sluices to prevent the Yankees use of the telegraph road to intercept the retreat to Wilmington via the public road. At three p.m. Hagood ordered Colonel Hedrick to start pulling his force away from the lower bridge.⁵¹ "I am now evacuating,"

⁴⁹Hagood, War of Secession, 344.

⁵⁰Hagood, War of Secession, 344.

⁵¹Hagood, War of Secession, 344-345.

Hagood wired General Hoke. "Enemy are turning my flank and are pushing me too strong. Am obliged to do so."⁵² From the sound of heavy rifle fire on his flank, Hagood knew that Simonton was being hard pressed.

Simonton's small force put up a good resistance, but Cox's overwhelming number of troops was too much for it. Under Hagood's orders, Simonton stretched his thin line of skirmishers to cover both lanes. He also placed a reserve behind each flank and one piece of artillery on the south road. He sent the other field piece to the telegraph road to protect his retreat when he reached that point.⁵³

Cox pushed Simonton all afternoon. He concentrated his troops on the north road so as to be sure to gain Hagood's rear. The 65th Indiana deployed as skirmishers supported by Casement's and Sterl's brigades. They were drawn into a double line of battle and advanced on the left of the road. Moore's unit brought up the rear marching on the road itself. The Federals steadily pushed back the heavily outnumbered Confederates, but their advance was impeded by thick woods of tangled undergrowth and morasses. Only

⁵²Hagood to Parker, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1236.

⁵³Hagood, War of Secession, 344; Izlar, Edisto Rifles, 116.

occasionally did the forest open to a patch of clearing.

By about four p.m. the forces had fought their way to the telegraph road. Here the terrain changed abruptly. For several hundred yards on both sides of the byway, the ground was an open plain of sedge broom grass and scattered scrub oak and pine trees--an ideal setting for a battle. Simonton pulled his scattered troops together and formed a line of battle facing northeast towards the Federals who remained concentrated near the north road. Simonton's force was supported by Lieutenant Rankin's two brass 12-pounder Napoleon field pieces. The Confederates hastily erected crude breastworks and awaited the enemy's attack or Hagood's order to retreat, whichever came first.⁵⁴

Upon reaching the telegraph road, General Cox learned from some blacks who lived nearby that Hagood's main army was on the public road further to the west. Cox ordered Colonel Moore to rush his brigade through the swamp between the two roads and cut off Hagood's retreat. Cox then advanced with Casement's and Sterl's brigades on Simonton's

⁵⁴Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 962; Report of John S. Casement, April 9, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 968; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965.

⁵⁵Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 962; Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509; Izlar, Edisto Rifles, 116; New York Herald, February 27, 1865.

contingent between him and the creek.⁵⁶

Meanwhile Hagood ordered the remainder of his troops at the lower bridge to retire. A "hurried flight from the trenches followed" under a deluge of shells and minie balls. "The enemy opened on us with infantry & artillery & made the woods pretty hot," observed a Tar Heel officer.⁵⁷ Despite the rain of projectiles, according to another Confederate soldier, not even one man was wounded during the hasty retreat.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, about thirty men of the rearguard were captured during the withdrawal when skirmishers of the 63rd Indiana bolted across the remnants of the bridge to nab them.⁵⁹ Hagood's main force escaped, however, with a hasty retreat up the public road. It stopped about two miles from the creek and formed a line of battle to support Simonton's withdrawal.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 962; Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509.

⁵⁷Entry February 20, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

⁵⁸Zaccheus Ellis to mother, March 1, 1865, Ellis Papers, SHC.

⁵⁹Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 970.

⁶⁰Hagood, War of Secession, 345-346; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 80.

Hagood sent a member of his staff, Captain W.E. Stoney, to tell Simonton to quickly fall back. When Stoney delivered the message, Simonton ordered Rankin's artillery to limber up and withdraw along with the infantry down a path through the swamp in their rear. But just as he issued the command the Federals attacked. They came on so suddenly that Simonton revoked the order to retreat and stood and fought.⁶¹ Stoney left to tell Hagood the news.

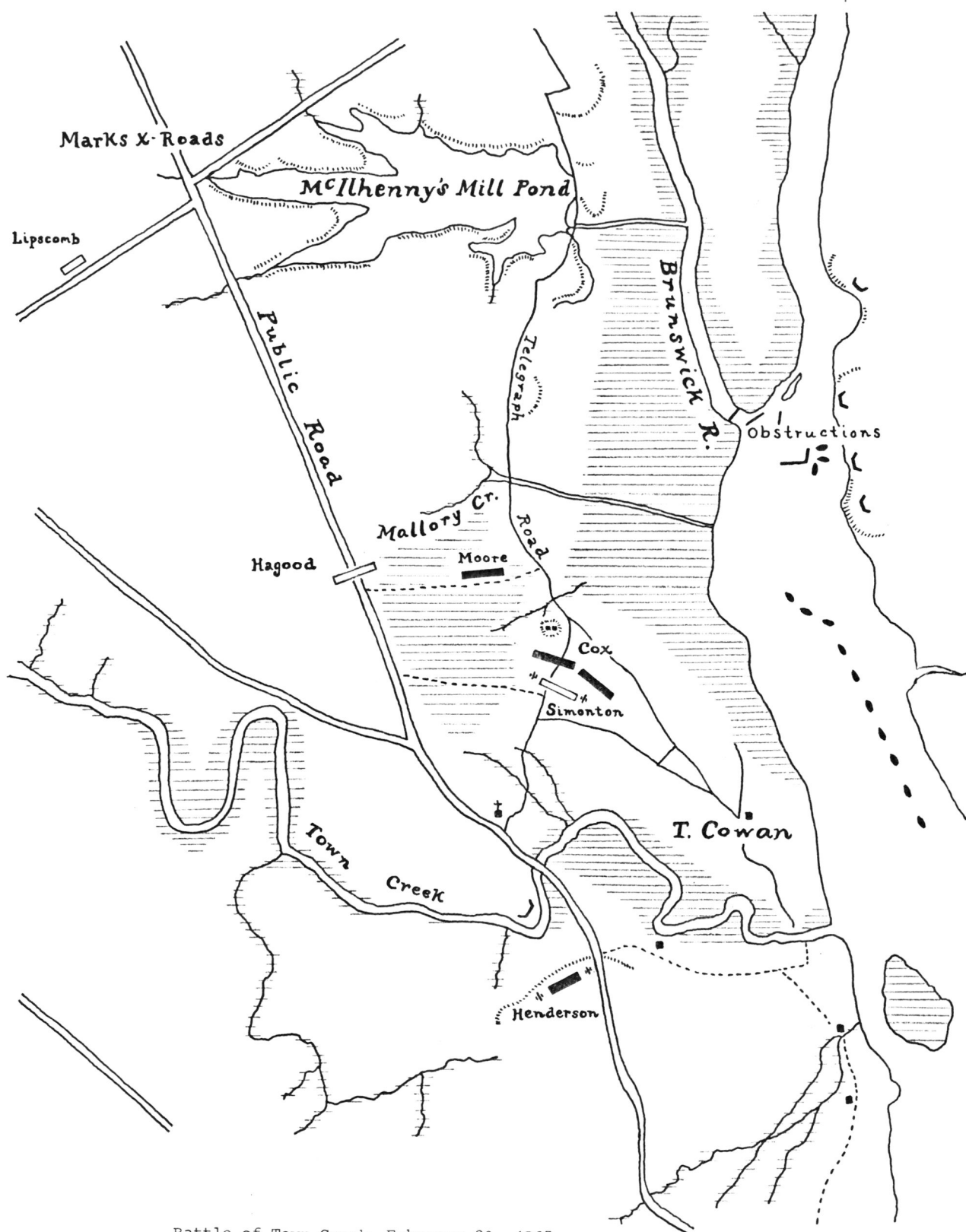
Casement's and Sterl's brigades attacked "impetuously and with the wildest enthusiasm."⁶² A Federal soldier recalled that the charge, during which they were fired upon heavily, was long and fatiguing.⁶³ The Confederates met the bayonet attack with galling volleys of small arms fire and artillery cannister. The destructive fire killed three and wounded thirty-one bluecoats.⁶⁴ A Kentucky officer observed the terrible result of one cannon discharge. A lieutenant of the 12th Kentucky rushed up to the loaded brass field

⁶¹Hagood, War of Secession, 345-346.

⁶²New York Herald, February 27, 1865.

⁶³Thomas Speed to parents, February 25, 1865, Speed Papers, FC.

⁶⁴Cox lost approximately thirty men in the charge. (Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 964.) Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509. Oscar W. Sterl noted that the Federal loss in the attack was three killed and thirty-one wounded. (Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 966.)



Battle of Town Creek, February 20, 1865

piece and demanded the surrender from its crew while they were in the act of firing. "If you shoot I'll kill you," threatened the Federal. "Kill and be damned," replied a gunner as he jerked the lanyard. The shot enfiladed a company of Ohioans, killing and wounding about twenty soldiers.⁶⁵ The fate of the Confederate gunner was not recorded.

Simonton's men stood their ground but were soon overpowered in hand-to-hand combat by Cox's superior numbers, perhaps 3,000 troops. "There was no running in these rebels," a Union soldier marveled, "they held their ragged works until the guns were snatched out of their hands."⁶⁶ In the end, however, Cox's troops captured two pieces of artillery, three battle flags, and approximately 375 men and officers including Colonel Simonton. Perhaps twenty Confederates were killed and wounded in action.⁶⁷

⁶⁵James R. Bentley (ed.), "The Civil War Memoirs of Captain Thomas Speed," The Filson Club History Quarterly 44 (July, 1970), 266-267.

⁶⁶Thomas Speed to parents, February 25, 1865, Speed Papers, FC.

⁶⁷Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963; Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 965-966; New York Herald, February 27, 1865. General Hagood wrote after the war that Colonel Simonton reported 330 men and officers captured by the Federals at Town Creek. Hagood figured that twenty of Simonton's soldiers were killed and more than 100 escaped, but "coming out of the route and not finding the brigade that night, straggled off to South Carolina, and were no more, with very

In the confusion of the surrender some Confederates escaped into the surrounding woods and swamps. The Federals pursued them until it was too dark to see. Some were apprehended, but others got away and straggled back into Hagood's line.⁶⁸ One of the escapees was Captain Stoney. Hagood had sent him back into the fray with orders for Simonton to abandon his artillery and make a run for it. Stoney arrived in time to see the Federal brigades overrun Simonton's small, if tenacious force. Although Stoney's horse was shot from under him he escaped the melee. He made his way back to Hagood after dark and informed the general of Simonton's defeat.⁶⁹

After receiving the news and stragglers had stopped coming in, Hagood ordered a retreat to Wilmington, which he

few exceptions, heard of in the war." (Hagood, War of Secession, 347.) McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 80.

⁶⁸New York Herald, February 27, 1865; Cox to Schofield, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 509. William V. Izlar of Company B (Edisto Rifles), 25th South Carolina Regiment, escaped the battle but was captured soon afterwards. When the battle ended, Izlar was on the far right of Simonton's line. He and several men ran hoping to make their way back to the safety of Hagood's main force. They struggled through the dense swamp in the darkness but finally reached the public road. As soon as they stepped onto the thoroughfare, however, they found themselves in the midst of Yankees instead of Confederates. "I felt terribly chagrined," Izlar wrote, "but quiet submission was the only alternative." (Izlar, Edisto Rifles, 116-117.)

⁶⁹Hagood, War of Secession, 346.

entered at 8:30 that evening. The bulk of his depleted army arrived about three hours later. Some of the troops were ordered to reinforce Hoke, who was still holding Terry at bay south of the town. The remainder encamped at Hilton on the northern outskirts of town. Hagood was ordered to take command of the defense of Wilmington itself.⁷⁰

Hindered by the dense swamp and approaching darkness, Moore's brigade failed to intercept Hagood's retreat. Moore was compelled to retrace his steps and rejoin Cox, who had bivouacked his troops on the battlefield. The Confederate prisoners were rounded up and placed under a heavy guard for the night. A Union soldier observed that "in a few hours everything was quiet as if no din of battle had ever been there."⁷¹ Federal engineers spent the evening repairing the bridge to enable the Ohio artillery and Henderson's brigade, which had fought all day down on Town Creek, to cross and reunite with Cox.

Hagood had again blundered in his defense of Wilmington by allowing Cox to outflank him at Town Creek. Yet he accepted no blame for his error, but criticized Hoke and Simonton instead. Hagood tried not to offend Hoke when

⁷⁰Hagood to Anderson, February 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1236; Hagood, War of Secession, 346; Zaccheus Ellis to mother, March 1, 1865, Ellis Papers, SHC; Entry February 20, 1865, Calder Diary, Duke.

⁷¹Thomas Speed to parents, February 25, 1865, Speed Papers, FC.

after the war he wrote gingerly that "the propriety of making the obstinate stand at Town Creek at all rests with the direction of affairs. . .it was a hazardous venture." Hagood was more openly critical of Simonton. He blamed the colonel, an inexperienced field commander, for disobeying orders and "allowing his greatly inferior force to become engaged in a line of battle" when the terrain was more suitable for skirmishing. Yet Hagood himself had instructed Simonton to "close his reserves together" to meet the enemy when he reached the telegraph road. Hagood admitted, however, that his fellow South Carolinian's stubborn defense saved the main force from destruction.⁷²

That was little comfort to Hoke, who realized that Hagood's defeat at Town Creek meant Wilmington's doom sooner than he had supposed. Cox's army would soon be within sight and firing range of the town. Yet Hoke needed additional time to remove government property, the remainder of the Union prisoners, and his own army. Hoke made no impetuous decisions. He had received news earlier that General Bragg was due to arrive back in Wilmington the following day.

⁷²"His fault was in allowing a greatly inferior force to become engaged in a line of battle behind obstructions hastily thrown up, when the occasion required him, and he had been directed, to make an obstinate skirmish fight," Hagood contended. "Again when ordered to withdraw, instead of facing the rear and withdrawing. . .at a double quick . . .he endeavored to make a flank march along the enemy's front, with a view of getting a road down which to retire in column." (Hagood, War of Secession, 346-348.)

Hoke decided to wait and confer with his superior before evacuating. In the meantime he continued to transfer Confederate property and Union captives out of town. He also set in motion a scheme that would wreak havoc on the Union navy.

In the evening of February 20 the Confederates floated torpedoes, perhaps as many as a hundred wooden cylinders each filled with 100 pounds of gunpowder, down river against the Union flotilla.⁷³ Before they reached the warships anchored off the river batteries, however, a Negro notified the Federals of their approach. Admiral Porter placed little faith in the informant's story, but he ordered his ships to take precautionary measures just in case. Sailors in picket boats were deployed to watch for floating mines and to spread fishing seines across the channel to catch them.⁷⁴

Sure enough, late that evening tars on board the cutters spotted the torpedoes as they drifted downstream. They fished some of the mines out of the water and sank others with musketry. Nevertheless, some torpedoes got

⁷³Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 79; Ed Vanderbilt to Mac, March 15, 1865, Leora McEachern and Isabel Williams Collection, Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

⁷⁴Porter, Naval History of the Civil War, 728; Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes, 278.

through the dragnet. One exploded underneath a gig from the Shawmut when her crew attempted to sink it with a pistol shot at too close range. Two men were killed and two others wounded. Another torpedo detonated in the paddle wheel of the Osceola, causing extensive damage to the wheelhouse. But the nets intercepted most of the torpedoes which were destroyed from a safe distance the next morning.⁷⁵ The Negro probably saved the Union flotilla from more serious damage. Throughout the campaign local blacks assisted the Federals in their effort to capture Wilmington. That moment drew nearer, but not without continuing Confederate resistance.

Before dawn on February 21 Lipscomb's cavalry torched the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad trestle and dismantled a pontoon bridge spanning the Brunswick River on the west side of Eagles Island. Some of the troopers then crossed into Wilmington, while others remained on the island to keep an eye out for the approaching Federals.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Report of David D. Porter, February 22, 1865; ORN, 1, XII, 45; Abstract log of U.S.S. Shawmut, February 20, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 37; Porter, Naval History of the Civil War, 728; Report of David D. Porter, February 21, 1865, ORN, 1, XII, 44; New York Tribune, February 28, 1865; Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes, 278; Blake, Pictorial History, 811; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 81.

⁷⁶Hagood, War of Secession, 346; Parker to Officer Commanding Detachment of Hagood's Command, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1244.

Eagles Island separated the Cape Fear and Brunswick rivers opposite Wilmington. It was large, almost five miles long and about two miles across at its widest point, but its mostly marshy interior made it habitable only for birds, deer, raccoons, alligators, and mosquitos. The only regular human activity was along the island's east bank which was lined with docks, warehouses, a cotton compress, a Confederate Navy Yard (Beery's shipyard), and the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad depot. A corduroy causeway and the Wilmington and Manchester railway traversed the swampy island heading westward into Brunswick County. With Cox's force expected on the western shore of the Brunswick River sometime during the day, the Confederates found it necessary to destroy the bridges across it.⁷⁷

Cox was anxious to get there too. Early that morning he started his brigades moving rapidly towards Wilmington. The route around McIlhenny's millpond took them some distance from the river causing Cox to lose contact with Schofield for the first time in the campaign. At noon the command reached Mill Creek, about five miles from Town Creek, where it was delayed for two hours while engineers reconstructed a small bridge destroyed by the retreating Confederates. After repairs had been made, Cox's force marched on to the Brunswick River crossing where it arrived

⁷⁷Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 14; ORA Atlas, CV, 8.

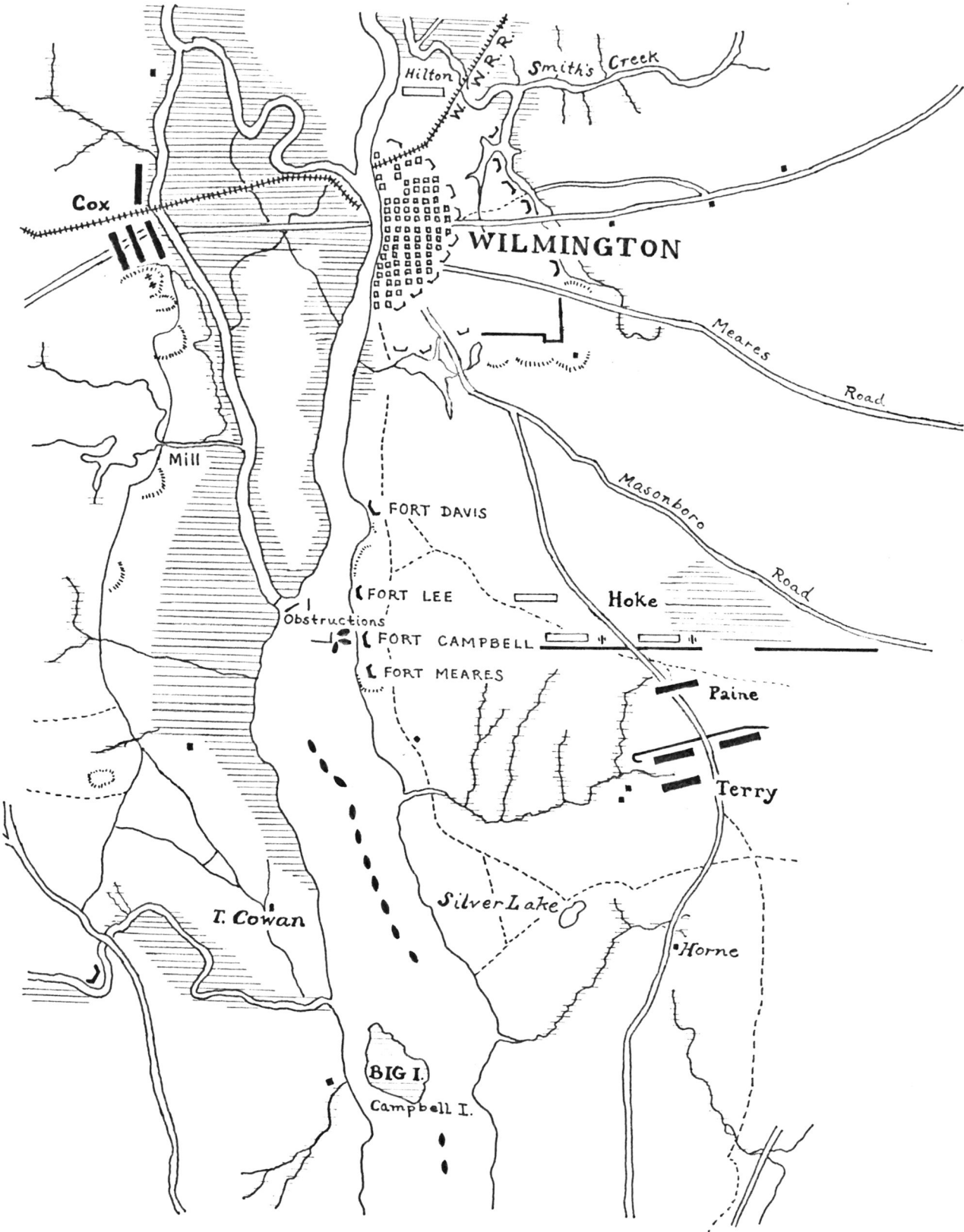
at about three o'clock in the afternoon. A small number of troops, who had taken a different route, reached the river some two hours earlier. Although the river halted their advance, Cox's men could easily see Wilmington's skyline.⁷⁸

The Wilmington and Manchester Railroad trestle was in ruins, its wooden frame still smouldering. The Confederates, however, had inadvertently left undamaged some boats which had supported the pontoon bridge. Most of the boats had been scuttled, but others had been cut adrift. Several were recovered and used to put a regiment, the 16th Kentucky, on Eagles Island. In the meantime, soldiers repaired other boats and began rebuilding the pontoon bridge.⁷⁹

With orders to reconnoiter towards Wilmington, the 16th Kentucky advanced across Eagles Island on the narrow causeway, the only pedestrian road across the island. Confederate pickets were driven back as the Federals moved to within musket range of the town. Then suddenly without warning, Confederate artillery opened fire from the streets

⁷⁸Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963; Cox, Military Reminiscences, 411; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 306; Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 119; Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 521.

⁷⁹Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963; Cox, March to the Sea, 153; Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 521; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 307; Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 119; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 970; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 82.



of Wilmington.⁸⁰ The first shot ripped along the causeway, showering the Kentuckians with dirt but no iron fragments as it exploded in their rear. Yet it prompted the bluecoats to withdraw in a hurry. Before they reached safety, however, a second shell exploded in their midst. "The blue smoke and flash of fire accompanied by the well known boom, too plainly told us to get out of the way," recalled a Kentucky officer; "scarcely had I slipped off. . .the Pike before the shell struck opposite me. . .killing one of my boys, and wounding two others." He claimed that the Confederate shots would have obliterated the regiment "had it not displayed that skill in dodging cannonballs, so often practiced on former battlefields."⁸¹ The unit withdrew to Alligator Creek about halfway back across the island. There the soldiers erected breastworks behind which they took refuge from the exploding projectiles.⁸²

⁸⁰James M. Merrill and James F. Marshall (eds.), "The 16th Kentucky and the End of the Civil War: The Letters of Henry Clay Weaver," The Filson Club History Quarterly 32 (October, 1958), 343 (hereafter cited as Merrill and Marshall, "Letters of Henry Clay Weaver," FCHQ); Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 966; Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 521; Blake, Pictorial History, 812.

⁸¹Merrill and Marshall, "Letters of Henry Clay Weaver," FCHQ, 343.

⁸²Philadelphia Inquirer, March 4, 1865; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 966.

The Confederate fire was from two cannon commanded by Abner A. Moseley, captain of the Sampson Artillery, North Carolina Troops. They were posted on either side of Wilmington's public market house at Front and Market Streets.⁸³ The guns' reports caused quite a stir in town, shattering windows in nearby buildings and attracting many onlookers, including women and children, who enjoyed watching Yankee soldiers get shelled.⁸⁴ The guns also drew the wrath of Cox's ordnance, which retaliated by sending shells into the town.⁸⁵ The unexpected reply created panic

⁸³William Harris Yopp, a fourteen year old boy who witnessed the fall of Wilmington to the Federals, recalled that Captain Abner Moseley commanded the Confederate battery at Front and Market Streets on February 21, 1865. (William Harris Yopp, "The Surrender of Wilmington to the Yankees, February, 1865," Wilmington Morning Star, August 16, 1936 [hereafter cited as Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star].) J.E. Purcell of Company D, 1st Battalion, North Carolina Heavy Artillery, was a sergeant on a gun crew that afternoon in Wilmington and claimed that Lieutenant Preston Alford commanded the battery. It is likely that Alford commanded one of the cannon; he was an officer in Captain Moseley's "Sampson Artillery" Company. (Wilmington Messenger, February 11, 1897; Manarin, North Carolina Troops, I, 36 and 605.)

⁸⁴Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, August 16, 1936; Frank D. Smaw, Jr., Wilmington Directory, 1867 (Wilmington, North Carolina, 1867), 36; Wilmington Messenger, September 8, 1895 and February 11, 1897.

⁸⁵"A field battery [Battery D, 1st Ohio Regiment Light Artillery] of [Parrott] rifled guns was put in position, on the rise of ground on the west bank [of the Brunswick River], to cover the detachment on the island, and the explosion of some of its shells in the city helped to hasten matters by showing that the town was within range." (Cox, March to the Sea, 153.) Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 307;

among the women and children who ran crying and screaming in the streets. To dissuade the Federals from bombarding the town, Hagood ordered his own artillerymen to cease firing. However, he sent one cannon across to Eagles Island to help reestablish his picket.⁸⁶ Although the pickets traded shots for the remainder of the day, there was no more artillery fire.

General Bragg found Wilmington in disarray when he arrived by train during the afternoon of the twenty-first. The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad strained to take off the remainder of the prisoners-of-war and citizens anxious to leave town before the Yankee army took it. Other residents with their wagonloads of belongings clogged the avenues as they attempted to escape. Merchants labored to close and board up their shops and newspaper publishers shut down their presses. "The circumstances under which we labor now, renders it necessary that we should say as little as possible," reported the last issue of the Wilmington Daily Journal.⁸⁷ Moreover, the enemy had driven Hagood's troops into town and some were milling about in the streets. In

McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 82.

⁸⁶Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, August 16, 1936; Hagood, War of Secession, 348.

⁸⁷Wilmington Daily Journal, February 20, 1865.

the confusion some soldiers and citizens took the opportunity to break into and ransack stores and warehouses.

The most alarming scene to Bragg, however, was the large number of enemy troops in plain view just outside Wilmington. They were busy rebuilding the pontoon bridge across the Brunswick River. Moreover, Confederate scouts reported observing Federal soldiers reconnoitering the Cape Fear River north of Wilmington, obviously looking for ways to cross and cut off Bragg's line of retreat. "This rendered our continued occupation of the town very hazardous to the whole command," Bragg maintained.⁸⁸ He ordered immediate preparations for his army's evacuation. He sent General Hardee a message calling off Hardee's attempt to get troops through Wilmington. Bragg informed General Hoke that he thought the Federals would "no doubt move soon upon the town. Hold your command ready," he instructed.⁸⁹

Things had remained relatively quiet in Hoke's front at Forks Road since the thwarted Federal attack the day before. A resounding cheer from the enemy lines broke the calm of the morning on February 21. As it turned out, the Union soldiers had just received news of Charleston's fall four

⁸⁸Report of Braxton Bragg, February 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 1077. See also: Seitz, Braxton Bragg, 508-509.

⁸⁹Bragg to Hoke, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1244.

days earlier.⁹⁰ Hoke's artillery opened fire on and wounded several Union pickets, but no serious combat occurred at Forks Road.⁹¹ Fighting did break out later in the day, however, on Hoke's far right.

With the Confederates strongly entrenched at Forks Road, Terry probed for a weak spot in their line nearer the river. At about ten o'clock in the morning of February 21, Terry sent a portion of Ames's division to make a reconnaissance in force.⁹² Paine's and Abbott's brigades remained in the trenches to detain Hoke. A brief but sharp battle ensued during the march when Ames's vanguard unexpectedly ran into a Confederate picket post. "Every

⁹⁰"News of our capture of Charleston, S.C. the nest of treason, great cheering all along the lines." (Entry February 21, 1865, DeGraff Diary, USMHI.) See also: David Libbey to Mary, February 21, 1865, David Libbey Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter cited as Libbey Papers, Duke).

⁹¹A Union soldier recounted the gruesome wounding of an Indiana soldier on the picket line near Forks Road. "We were putting out our picket relief. . . The officer in charge was foolish enough to march them out in a body; the rebs opened with a twelve pounder; one of the shells burst in their midst wounding a man severely in the leg, in Co. A, and tearing another belonging to the 13th Indiana dreadfully; one of his arms was smashed at the elbow, the other at the wrist, and the flesh torn off his thigh some of the pieces flew whizzing over our heads. . . ." (David Libbey to Mary, February 21, 1865, Libbey Papers, Duke.)

⁹²Report of Adelbert Ames, April 16, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 924; John B. Foote to father, February 23, 1865, John B. Foote Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Jackson and O'Donnell, Back Home in Oneida, 193; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.

bush and stump in front of us seemed to be alive with men, who opened a terrible fire at short range immediately upon us," recalled a New York infantryman. "Bullets fell thick and fast."⁹³ Major Nere A. Elfving of the 48th New York caught a minie ball in the knee cap that required the amputation of his leg. The Federals eventually drove the Confederates back into their main works. A few graycoats were captured.

Ames's force encountered a much stiffer resistance and casualties when it attacked the river batteries themselves. As soon as the Confederates in the batteries observed Ames's skirmishers, they opened a heavy fire upon them. Ten Federal soldiers were wounded and one was killed, along with the horse of a member of General Ames's staff. A solid shot cannonball struck and passed completely through the animal from shoulder to hip, although its rider escaped uninjured.⁹⁴

⁹³Abraham J. Palmer, History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers in the War for the Union, 1861-1865 (Brooklyn, New York: Veterans Association of the Regiment, 1885), 187-188. See also: James M. Nichols, Perry's Saints or the Fighting Parson's Regiment (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 277.

⁹⁴Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; J.A. Mowris, A History of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Regiment N.Y. Volunteers (Fourth Oneida) (Hartford, Connecticut: Case, Lockwood and Company, 1866), 185; Blake, Pictorial History, 812; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 81.

Porter's flotilla supported Ames's reconnaissance. The warships renewed their brisk bombardment of the river batteries at about two o'clock that afternoon. When they espied Ames's troops moving against the batteries, they intensified their fire. The Confederates responded to the gunboats with only occasional shots, concentrating on the Federal troops instead.⁹⁵

The Confederates' defense satisfied Ames that a full scale assault would prove disastrous. He withdrew his force and rejoined Terry.

All the while Bragg prepared to evacuate Wilmington. To help with the operation, the general pressed into service all slaves and able-bodied male citizens between the ages of seventeen and fifty. He also confiscated horses, mules, and wagons for military use. By the efficiency of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, he succeeded in removing the remainder of important government property and most of the Union prisoners. The more healthy captives were marched out of the town.⁹⁶ Some Federals escaped their captors during the evacuation and hid out to wait for their own troops to

⁹⁵Entry February 21, 1865, *Hern Diary*; Report of David D. Porter, February 22, 1865, *ORN*, 1, XII, 45; *New York Herald*, February 27, 1865; Jackson and O'Donnell, *Back Home in Oneida*, 193; Blake, *Pictorial History*, 811.

⁹⁶Report of Braxton Bragg, February 25, 1865, *ORA*, 1, XLVII, 1, 1077; Hagood, *War of Secession*, 348; *Raleigh Daily Conservative*, March 1, 1865; *Fayetteville Observer*, February 27, 1865.

take Wilmington.⁹⁷

Bragg ordered all remaining public property and private stores and commodities destroyed to keep them from falling into enemy hands. Cotton, tobacco, and naval stores were put to the torch or thrown into the river.⁹⁸ Some residents hid valuable cotton and tobacco, but the military authorities sought out and destroyed much of it. James Dawson, brother of the mayor, contracted with Andrew J. Yopp to conceal 100 bales of cotton in his barn on Smith's Creek. The Confederates discovered the ploy, however, and burned the cotton and the building in which it was being stored. Nevertheless, Dawson hid other bales which escaped

⁹⁷Approximately 200 Union prisoners escaped from their Confederate captors at or near Wilmington. (Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.) Some of the escapees were hidden in and around the town by local blacks. Corporal Thomas Entwhistle of Company D, 3rd New Hampshire, escaped near Wilmington. He and two fellow captives jumped from the train cars and hid under a barn in town until February 22. A black man discovered and fed them. "We remained secreted till our troops came into the city," Entwhistle recalled; "and when we saw the Union troops marching up, we came out. Strange to say, the first regiment we met was my own regiment, the 3rd New Hampshire; and it seemed as if my boys would eat me." (Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 637.) See also: Williams, From Spottsylvania to Wilmington, 13-16.

⁹⁸Lee to Bragg, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1241; Bragg to Lee, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 1242; Report of Braxton Bragg, February 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 1077; Hagood, War of Secession, 348; Raleigh Daily Conservative, March 1, 1865.

⁹⁹
detection.

Storehouses, foundries, shipyards, and vessels also were obliterated. While Confederates burned Cassidey's shipyard, others sunk a torpedo boat named General Whiting off Point Peter at the confluence of the branches of the Cape Fear River.¹⁰⁰ The gunboat Chickamauga, which the Confederates seldom employed in Wilmington's defense, was steamed up the northwest branch of the Cape Fear River and sunk at Indian Wells.¹⁰¹

The industries on Eagles Island did not escape the rampant destruction. Railroad facilities, government storehouses, a cotton compress, turpentine distilleries, and the Confederate Navy Yard were all razed. Burned at the naval yard was the unfinished ironclad C.S.S. Wilmington and several other smaller vessels, including a David class torpedo boat.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Report of Braxton Bragg, February 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 1077; Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, August 23, 1936.

¹⁰⁰Fayetteville Observer, February 27, 1865; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 500.

¹⁰¹Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-49 and VI-211; Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy," 556.

¹⁰²Raleigh Daily Conservative, March 21, 1865; New York Herald, February 27, 1865; Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, September 20, 1936; Wilmington Morning Star, November 12, 1937.

The devastation presented quite a different Wilmington from its heyday as a bustling blockade-running port. "The shops are all closed, Government property being destroyed, huge piles of cotton and rosin being set afire. . .you can't imagine anything like it," a Confederate soldier lamented.¹⁰³ Another noted that the raging fires created "a dense smoke, so black and compact as to appear to come from the infernal regions."¹⁰⁴ Wilmington was fortunate that it did not suffer more extensive damage. A brisk easterly wind fueled the flames, which raged almost out of control. Wharves, piers, and adjacent warehouses caught fire and were unintentionally destroyed. Had the wind been blowing from the west, the town's entire business district might have been consumed.¹⁰⁵

Cox's troops figured that the Confederates were preparing to evacuate Wilmington. From their position at the Brunswick River they could plainly see the billowing columns of smoke and hear the incessant screeching of railroad cars moving in and out of the town. Moreover, local residents, escaped slaves, and railroad workers drifted into Cox's camp throughout the evening and reported

¹⁰³Ellis Zaccheus to mother, March 1, 1865, Zaccheus Papers, SHC.

¹⁰⁴Fayetteville Observer Semi-Weekly, March 2, 1865.

¹⁰⁵Raleigh, Daily Conservative, March 21, 1865.

on Bragg's activities. Consequently General Cox was surprised when he received instructions to withdraw.¹⁰⁶

Schofield sent orders for Cox to return with his entire command to Town Creek and make ready to cross the Cape Fear River to reinforce Terry's corps. The Confederates' obstinate defense and deserters' testimony persuaded Terry that Hoke had been reinforced by Hardee's army and planned a counterattack against him. Terry asked Schofield for Cox's assistance to help hold his line.¹⁰⁷

Although Schofield issued instructions for Cox at noon on February 21, the courier got lost trying to deliver the message and did not reach the general until six hours later. By then Cox deemed the move impractical. It was too dark to countermarch his large force six miles along swampy backroads to Town Creek and make a crossing in time to help Terry. Besides, such a movement might appear to the Confederates as a retreat and prompt them to alter their plans. Cox did not want to risk that possibility. He was convinced by his observations and by what he deemed reliable

¹⁰⁶Entry February 21, 1865, Spaulding Diary, LOC; Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 522; Schofield to Cox, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 520; Cox, March to the Sea, 154; McDonough, Schofield, 155; McLean, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign," 82.

¹⁰⁷Schofield to Cox, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 520; Schofield to Cox, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 522; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963-964; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 307; New York Herald, February 27, 1865; Blake, Pictorial History, 812.

information that Bragg was evacuating Wilmington, and that Hardee's army had not arrived.¹⁰⁸ "I cannot doubt that General Terry will have an open road in the morning, and think from the general indications that I am entirely secure here," Cox reported.¹⁰⁹ He decided to retain the bulk of his force at Brunswick River, but started Moore's brigade towards Town Creek to appease Schofield. Cox also sent his superior a message informing him of his intentions. At midnight Cox again heard from Schofield approving his action, but requesting another brigade just in case. Cox sent Henderson's brigade to join Moore.¹¹⁰ At the same time Cox prepared to move on Wilmington in the morning.

Hardee's army had not, in fact, reached Wilmington as Bragg had turned it away earlier in the day. Now Bragg realized that it was time for his army to leave Wilmington.

¹⁰⁸Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 521-522; Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 963-964; Cox, March to the Sea, 154; New York Herald, February 27, 1865; Blake, Pictorial History, 812.

¹⁰⁹Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 521.

¹¹⁰Report of Jacob D. Cox, May 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 964; Schofield to Cox, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 522-523; Schofield to Cox, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 523; Entries February 21-22, 1865, Spaulding Diary, LOC; Cox to Henderson, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 524; Report of Thomas J. Henderson, April 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 970; Cox to Schofield, February 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 523; New York Herald, February 27, 1865; McDonough, Schofield, 155.

At about one a.m. on February 22, Bragg ordered his army to withdraw. Officers roused their men from their blankets and told them to pack their belongings. The morning was bitter cold as the soldiers grabbed their equipment and marched away.¹¹¹ The fires along the riverfront still smouldered and "a mass of black smoke had settled like a pall over the silent town" as the Confederates abandoned it before daybreak.¹¹² The troops were silent as they trudged through the streets and headed north. "As we passed through the town nothing could exceed the deathlike stillness that reigned around," remarked one of Bragg's soldiers. "Lights could be seen from but few windows, and these appeared to be the last rays of departing hope."¹¹³ And so they were.

¹¹¹Still, "Journal of Robert Watson," CWTI, 18.

¹¹²Hagood, War of Secession, 348-349.

¹¹³Fayetteville Observer Semi-Weekly, March 2, 1865.

CHAPTER SIX

"WILMINGTON IS OURS!:"

UNION OCCUPATION OF WILMINGTON,

FEBRUARY 22-c. April 3, 1865

At daybreak on February 22, General Terry's pickets discovered the Confederates' empty earthworks at Forks Road three miles south of Wilmington. They immediately notified General Terry, who relayed the intelligence to General Schofield on board the S.R. Spaulding in the Cape Fear River. At about the same time, General Cox's pickets on Eagles Island noted that the Southern army was gone from Wilmington. A general order to move forward passed along the Union lines.¹

Starting at seven a.m., General Abbott's brigade cautiously led Terry's corps towards Wilmington.² They encountered no enemy opposition in the advance. In the town's south suburbs, however, the Federals met Captain John

¹Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 635; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; Walkley, Seventh Connecticut, 197; Report of Edmund H. Russell, June 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 916; Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 417.

²Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 921-922; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 410; Stephen Walkley, History of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865 (Southington, Connecticut, 1905), 197-198 (hereafter cited as Walkley, Seventh Connecticut). Terry's route of march was the Federal Point Road.

Griffith of the local police who, with white flag in hand and on the mayor's authority, offered to surrender Wilmington.³ General Terry came up, called in his skirmishers, and acknowledged Captain Griffith, but pushed on into town.

In downtown Wilmington, curious onlookers lined the waterfront to watch Cox's troops approaching from Eagles Island. As a signal to them a flag of truce was placed atop merchant H.B. Eiler's building at Market and Water streets.⁴ The evacuating Confederates had removed or destroyed all boats on the west side of the river to stave off a Federal pursuit, but citizens anxious to dissuade the Yankees from firing on the town again crossed over in skiffs to transfer them to the other side. The process was slow due to brisk winds and the lack of boats. Cox's troops dribbled into Wilmington all morning.⁵ Soldiers of the 16th Kentucky ferried the river just after eight a.m. and claimed the distinction of being the first Union troops to enter

³Wilmington Morning Star, March 6, 1885; Price, Nine-ty-Seventh Pennsylvania, 361.

⁴Memoir of Mrs. Margaret Dixon Davis Philyaw, Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁵Cox, Military Reminiscences, II, 417; Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, August 23, 1936.

Wilmington.⁶

About an hour later General Terry's advance arrived. A small force of his cavalry approached a crowd of residents at the foot of Market Street where, according to eyewitness Reverend L.S. Burkhead of Wilmington's Front Street Methodist Church, an officer asked for the mayor. "His honor John Dawson being in the company stepped forward and said, 'I am the man.' The officer stated to him that, 'General Terry would meet the Mayor and Commissioners at the City Hall in five minutes.'"⁷ The Union troopers turned their attention to rounding up Confederate stragglers while the town officials, with Reverend Burkhead in tow, walked the four blocks to the designated meeting place.

General Terry rode at the head of his army as it

⁶Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 13, 1865; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; New York Tribune, February 28, 1865; Report of Oscar W. Sterl, April 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 966.

⁷Reverend L.S. Burkhead, "History of the Difficulties of the Pastorate of the Front Street Methodist Church, Wilmington, N.C. For the Year 1865," Trinity College Historical Society, Durham, North Carolina, Papers, 8 (1908-1909), 37 (hereafter cited as Burkhead, "Pastorate Difficulties, 1865"). See also: W. Buck Yearns and John G. Barrett (eds.), North Carolina Civil War Documentary (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 92 (hereafter cited as Yearns and Barrett, North Carolina Civil War Documentary).

entered Wilmington at about 9:30 that morning.⁸ With tattered flags flapping in the breeze and drum and bugle corps playing patriotic strains, the troops marched victoriously up Front Street amid an unexpected enthusiastic reception from many residents. Although the black troops had born the brunt of fighting during the campaign, the white soldiers marched into town first. General Abbott's brigade, with the 3rd New Hampshire at the front of the column, was the first of Terry's units to enter; General Ames's division paced close behind.⁹ In the rear paraded General Paine's sable division "with burnished barrels and bayonets gleaming in the bright sunshine. . .and singing with one accord. . .the famous 'John Brown' song."¹⁰

Terry left his corps at Front and Market to ride to the city hall at Third and Princess Streets. There he met Mayor Dawson, from whom he formally received the surrender the town.¹¹ "Wilmington is ours!" Terry notified Schofield

⁸Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 411; New York Tribune, February 28, 1865.

⁹Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 636.

¹⁰Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.

¹¹Reverend Burkhead witnessed the meeting between General Terry and Mayor Dawson. He observed that when Terry arrived at city hall, he "instantly dismounted and said, 'Is this the Mayor?' The Mayor replied, 'It is,' whereupon General Terry took off his hat, the Mayor did likewise, and

shortly afterwards.¹² Later in the day Schofield also met with Dawson and other civic leaders to discuss the terms of capitulation.¹³

Federal forces poured into Wilmington all day on February 22. As it was George Washington's birthday, they considered their capture of the town a good omen.¹⁴ Terry's corps marched to the north end of town, where it halted for a brief rest. It was mid afternoon before Cox got all of his troops across the Cape Fear River. Moore's and Henderson's brigades, which had been withdrawn to Town Creek the night before, did not reach Wilmington until about dark. After ceremoniously planting the Stars and Stripes on the abandoned Confederate river batteries, Admiral Porter led his flotilla up river, arriving at Wilmington late in the day. To honor the victory, the ships were dressed in full array--colored bunting and flags flying from the yards--and promptly at noon each fired a thirty-five gun salute, one

they shook hands with graceful cordiality and together ascended the steps of City Hall." (Burkhead, "Pastorate Difficulties, 1865," 37-38. See also: Yearns and Barrett, North Carolina Civil War Documentary, 92.)

¹²Wood, "Port Town at War," 224.

¹³New York Tribune, February 28, 1865.

¹⁴Abstract of journal of Jacob D. Cox, February 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 930; Mowris, 117th New York, 187.

for each state.¹⁵ One Union tar was very glad to be in Wilmington when it fell. "I shall ever remember this day and I had rather work a year without pay, than miss being here," he wrote. "We are having a day of Jubilee today."¹⁶ While the navy celebrated, the army moved to wrest Wilmington from Bragg's army which was still close at hand.

At about ten a.m. on February 22, Terry's scouts overtook part of Bragg's rearguard, the 2nd South Carolina Cavalry, at Smith's Creek half a mile north of Wilmington. Already the retreating Confederates had destroyed the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad trestle crossing the creek and had just set fire to an adjacent wagon bridge in hopes of stopping the Federals. Sharpshooting broke out across the marshy stream for possession of that span.

Abbott's brigade, resting within earshot of the gunfire, fell in and rushed towards the fighting. The 3rd New Hampshire was the first regiment to reach the creek, its remaining bridge aflame and well covered by tenacious enemy

¹⁵The advance of Porter's flotilla was impeded by Confederate obstructions and mines in the Cape Fear River. The first ships, including the flagship U.S.S. Malvern, dropped anchor at Wilmington at about three p.m. on February 22. (Entry, February 22, 1865, Hern Diary; Grattan, "Under the Blue Pennant," Grattan Papers, LOC; Report of David D. Porter, February 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XII, 45; Navy Department, Civil War Naval Chronology, V-47; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.)

¹⁶Letter of Joseph Warren Poland, February 22, 1865, Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Bulletin, February, 1977.

rifle fire. Captain William Trickey, the unit's leading officer on the scene, realized the importance of saving the bridge and he ordered his skirmishers to take it. Under a hail of bullets from both sides, the New Hampshire soldiers stormed across the scorching planks to drive off the Confederate horsemen. Then they jumped into the cold creek to draw water to fight the fire. Using only their canteens, kepis, hats, and tin cups, they extinguished the blaze and saved the bridge.¹⁷

Terry picked up the chase of Bragg's army as soon as minor repairs made to the bridge enabled his corps to cross in force. Although the principal armies did not clash, Terry's advance and Bragg's rearguard skirmished from Smith's Creek to the northeast Cape Fear River, nine miles distance.¹⁸ All afternoon Lipscomb's cavalry harassed the Union vanguard, regiments of Abbott's brigade, with hit-and-run forays.¹⁹ At dusk Abbott's skirmish line pushed

¹⁷Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 636; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 411; Elbridge J. Copp, Reminiscences of the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865 (Nashua, New Hampshire: The Telegraph Publishing Company, 1911), 499-500; Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 922.

¹⁸Bragg's route of retreat was along the Duplin or Golsborough Road, present day Highway 117, Castle Hayne Road.

¹⁹A New Hampshire soldier noted that the Confederate cavalry gave Union skirmishers "considerable trouble by dashing suddenly down the skirmish line." Although the number of casualties on both sides are unknown for February 22,

up close to Bragg's main column, its retreat slowed by a deep swamp on the north side of the river.²⁰ General W.W. Kirkland's brigade of North Carolina infantry and at least one regiment from General T.L. Clingman's Tar Heel brigade were compelled to make a stand to keep the Federals in check and enable the main army to escape. They fought approximately one mile from the river, probably at Prince George Creek.²¹ A Union soldier described the Confederates' holding action as "a determined one, and the volleys of musketry were quite heavy."²²

the same soldier claimed that men from his regiment, the 7th New Hampshire, supplied themselves with shoes plundered from the bodies of "rebel cavalrymen who had been killed during the day on the skirmish line." (Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 413-414.)

²⁰After crossing Smith's Creek, General Abbott relieved the 3rd New Hampshire from the skirmish line with detachments of the 6th Connecticut and 7th New Hampshire regiments. (Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 922; Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 636.)

²¹Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 922. Incomplete military records indicate that on February 22, Bragg's rearguard comprised Colonel Thomas J. Lipscomb's 2nd South Carolina Cavalry, General W.W. Kirkland's brigade (17th, 42nd, and 66th North Carolina Troops), and the 8th North Carolina of General Thomas L. Clingman's brigade, commanded by Colonel William S. Devane of the 61st North Carolina. (Clark, North Carolina Regiments, II, 10-11, 802, and III, 498, 695-696.)

²²Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 414.



Confederate retreat from Wilmington, February 22, 1865

Even though darkness set in, the combat intensified from Prince George Creek to the river. Bragg's rearguard withdrew slowly towards the crossing point at McRee's ferry landing, where the army was escaping across a pontoon bridge. The Federals, some of whom were armed with Spencer repeating rifles, pressed the battle as they approached the waterway. When they were again met with sharp Confederate rifle fire, General Paine threw forward one of his regiments and a battery of artillery to bolster Abbott's force. A few well directed cannon shots and the surge of the overwhelming number of Abbott's and Paine's troops, formed in a line of battle, sent Bragg's men scurrying for safety on the far side of the river.²³

The Carolinians deployed along the river bank to defend the pontoon bridge and another Wilmington and Weldon railroad trestle burning nearby. Bragg's main force entrenched on a sand ridge half a mile from the waterway.²⁴ Confederate engineers attempted to demolish the pontoons by

²³Report of Joseph C. Abbott, May 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 922; Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 636. General Paine detached the 4th U.S.C.T. and Lieutenant John Myrick's Battery E, 3rd Artillery, U.S. Regular Army, to reinforce Abbott's brigade. Report of Charles J. Paine, April 24, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 925; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 414.

²⁴A North Carolina soldier recorded that "a good strong force was left at the public road crossing and at the railroad bridge." Clark, North Carolina Regiments, III, 695.

knocking out their bottoms. Plunging fire from Federals who soon appeared on the river's south bank, however, gave them only enough time to cut loose the end of the pontoon bridge from that side and let it swing downstream with the current.²⁵

Sporadic fighting for possession of the spans raged across the river, its banks dimly illuminated in the darkness by the dying flames that had all but consumed the railroad bridge. Union horsemen attempted but failed to save the trestle when Tar Heel skirmishers turned them back "in a spirited affair."²⁶ Union sharpshooters likewise thwarted Confederate efforts to recover or destroy the pontoon bridge. The Southerners finally abandoned the bridge altogether, leaving it to the Federals who retrieved and repaired it the following day.

The fighting died down after nine o'clock that evening. Both armies, exhausted from the day's constant marching and skirmishing, collapsed on their firearms for the night. Confederate pickets fired one last defiant but ineffective

²⁵Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 414; Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 636.

²⁶Captain Charles G. Elliott directed two companies of the 17th North Carolina defending the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad trestle on the northeast Cape Fear River. Note is from: Charles G. Elliott, "Kirkland's Brigade, Hoke's Division, 1864-'65," Southern Historical Society Papers XXIII (January-December, 1895), 169. See also: Clark, North Carolina Regiments, II, 10-11.

volley into the Federal encampment as they withdrew from the river bank to rejoin their army.²⁷

Before sunrise the following morning, February 23, Bragg's army began to retreat towards Goldsborough where it planned to unite with other Confederate forces. In leaving the Cape Fear, Bragg ignored Lee's instructions to him to "be bold and judicious. . .hang upon [the enemy's] flanks, cripple and retard him."²⁸ The withdrawal, however, was in keeping with Bragg's wartime reputation as being fainthearted.

The loss of Wilmington forced the Confederate high command to enact a last ditch strategy that called for consolidating scattered forces in North Carolina for a showdown with General Sherman's army. Lee appointed Lieutenant General Joseph E. Johnston to command those forces, including the Army of Tennessee as well as the armies of General Bragg and General Hardee. If Sherman could be attacked, preferably before being reinforced by Schofield, and defeated, the Confederacy might gain more

²⁷Clark, North Carolina Regiments, I, 411; Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 637; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 412; Walkley, Seventh Connecticut, 198.

²⁸Lee to Bragg, February 22, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 1249.

favorable peace terms.²⁹

Grant had foreseen that threat in late January when he ordered Schofield's corps to North Carolina to bolster General Sherman's army, if needed, to about 80,000 men. Grant believed that as long as his own army detained Lee's in Virginia, it was unlikely that the Confederates could muster even 40,000 troops to oppose Sherman and Schofield. It was, Grant hoped and Sherman promised, a worthy gamble to help end the war.

The first phase of the plan proved successful. Schofield had captured Wilmington, his first objective, giving Sherman a safe base on the seacoast. The navy would soon control the northwest branch of the Cape Fear River as far inland as Fayetteville for supplying Sherman's army. Although Schofield had not heard from Sherman in some time, paroled prisoners reported him near North Carolina on February 24. Schofield presumed that Sherman still intended to pass through or near Fayetteville, but dispatched scouts to discover his precise whereabouts.³⁰

Meanwhile, Schofield moved to secure Wilmington while at the same time using it as a base of operations. In spite

²⁹Reed, Combined Operations, 380.

³⁰Cox, March to the Sea, 155; Schofield to Grant, February 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 619; Schofield to Cox, March 2, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 654; Schofield to Grant, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 693.

of the Confederates' destruction at Wilmington, the Federals captured some useable material there. About forty pieces of heavy artillery were found in the defenses around the town and in the river batteries below. The Federals also found a Whitworth rifled cannon, 500 rifled muskets, some accouterments, about \$5,000 worth of commissary stores, three wheezy locomotives, and a few dilapidated train cars. The Confederate stables and some machine shops also escaped the devastation relatively undamaged. Much to the soldiers' delight, the army also seized a warehouse containing tobacco, cigars, and whiskey. Not surprisingly, the soldiers soon emptied it.³¹

With Wilmington occupied, Federal officials turned to the task of restoring the town to the Union. Schofield assured Mayor Dawson that he would not interfere with civic affairs more than could be avoided. But, he "expected the inhabitants to conduct themselves as becoming citizens of the United States, to respect the representatives and defenders of the National Government, to abide by its laws, and not give aid and comfort to its enemies."³²

³¹New York Herald, February 27, 1865; Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865; J.W. Gaskill, Footprints Through Dixie (Alliance, Ohio: Bradshaw Publishing Company, 1919), 170.

³²Price, Ninety-Seventh Pennsylvania, 361.

Wilmingtonians expressed diverse reactions to their town's transfer from Confederate to Union control. Many citizens still retained deep feelings for the dying Confederacy while others displayed a strong Union sentiment. For four years Confederate supporters had sacrificed their efforts and, in many cases, the lives of their loved ones to the cause. Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares, daughter of a prominent local physician and widow of a popular Confederate officer killed in battle, openly expressed her anxiety over being conquered. "God grant us the power to cope with our giant enemy," she prayed. "The sense of captivity, of subjugation. . .is so galling that I cannot see how a manly spirit could submit to it."³³ Many did not.

Most ardent Confederates, frightened at the prospect or consequences of living under Federal rule, left prior to or along with Bragg's evacuating army. Confederate sympathizers who chose to remain in Wilmington and tolerate its occupation stayed home, for the most part, behind drawn shades and locked doors when the Union army entered town. Some ventured out to see the spectacle, but not because they revelled in their town's fall to a Yankee army.

Yet many residents considered Wilmington's capture good cause for celebration, and they turned out with open arms to

³³Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to mother, March 28, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

greet the victorious Northern army. The streets and sidewalks swarmed with people who cheered, shouted, sang, danced, and waved enthusiastically to the Union troops as they filed into town. A few denizens draped or flew from buildings U.S. flags, hidden since the war began, "which were heartily cheered by the soldiers as they passed." A woman cradling a large tray handed out cooked sweet potatoes and fried ham to the troops.³⁴ "The scene was indescribable," exclaimed a Connecticut infantryman; "the people welcomed us. . .with every indication of joy."³⁵ Such displays of Union sentiment were "a great and pleasing surprise to the officers and men."³⁶

Wilmington's blacks expressed the greatest excitement over the Union army. A journalist recorded that the "delight of the colored people knew no bounds. They crowded into the streets and followed the troops in throngs."³⁷ The appearance of Paine's sable veterans genuinely impassioned and stirred the hopes of Wilmington's blacks. "The sight of the colored troops filled the measure of ecstatic joy,"

³⁴Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 411.

³⁵Walkley, Seventh Connecticut, 197.

³⁶Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.

³⁷New York Tribune, March 9, 1865.

declared a witness; "the men danced in jubilation, the women screamed and went into hysterics, then and there on the sidewalks."³⁸

Some observers noted that social class and race tended to distinguish those who welcomed the Federals from those who did not. "There is no showing of themselves by the would be aristocratic portion of the inhabitants," wrote a war correspondent. "The common people receive us gladly."³⁹ Unionism in Wilmington apparently confined itself mainly to slaves, free blacks, and lower class whites. Blacks knew instinctively that the boys in blue signaled the opening of their way to freedom from bondage and oppression. Poor whites shifted their allegiance to the Union as the war dragged on. They particularly suffered from skyrocketing inflation and consumer prices procreated in part by the blockade running trade. The more affluent whites generally maintained their devotion to the Confederacy. Some avid Confederates refused to believe that their fellow citizens possessed sympathy for the Federals. Katherine Meares claimed that the "raptured greetings existed only in the Yankee imagination." She admitted that some of the blacks were "loud in their welcome, particularly to the negro

³⁸Philadelphia Inquirer, February 27, 1865.

³⁹New York Tribune, February 28, 1865.

troops," but insisted that the George Myers family were the "only demonstrative white people in town."⁴⁰

The Federal occupants found it difficult to gauge the genuine sentiments of Wilmington's population. A journalist observed a strong pro-Confederate sentiment in Wilmington, but noted that it was "not that bitter, unyielding character that [was] generally so conspicuous in southern communities."⁴¹ Ardent Confederates had left town, and those who remained had little choice but to yield to submission. "The fire-eaters had vanished, or turned Quaker," a Union soldier asserted. He did not find that so unusual because, as he saw it, the average Southern citizen was rapidly losing faith in the ability of the Confederate army to overcome defeat. "The storm of iron rain from the guns of Admiral Porter's fleet, which had so recently fallen upon their coast; the drum beats of Sherman's 60,000 men approaching from the southward, and the undignified speed with which their army of occupation had gone into the pine woods to the northward," he explained, "was not calculated to inspire the inhabitants of Wilmington with confidence in

⁴⁰Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to mother, March 28, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

⁴¹New York Tribune, March 13, 1865.

the future of the Confederacy."⁴² A Yankee sailor had a more cynical view of Wilmingtonians who professed loyalty to the Union. "The people are all for the Union and are glad to see us here for they are almost starved," he scoffed.⁴³ Undoubtedly, circumstances compelled some citizens to flaunt a suitable mask of devotion to the Union, while subduing their Southern partisanship.

Submission did not demand Southerners to alter their political views, only that they adhere to the policies of the military authorities. Federal commanders contended that it was "not by any means decisive against a man that he was actually engaged in rebellion, if he satisfies us in accordance with [military laws]."⁴⁴ Katherine Meares remained a staunch rebel at heart, insisting that if she had strength for anything, it was to stand up for her country and loved ones. She dealt with the Yankees by maintaining her "ladylike deportment with firmness. [That] disarms them quicker than anything else," she maintained. Yet even Mrs. Meares sometimes found it advantageous to be accommodating to the conquerors. To keep her home from being confiscated

⁴²Thurstin, 111th Ohio, 120.

⁴³Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 82.

⁴⁴Wood, "Port Town at War," 234.

by the military, she and her family boarded a Federal surgeon, a Dr. Knowlson of the 169th New York. Much to her amazement, she gained compassion for him because of his kindness and the "little courtesies" he extended to her family. "He is such a perfect gentleman," she wrote. "For myself, I did not suppose so much kindly feeling could have been drawn out for one of our mortal enemies."⁴⁵

Other Wilmingtonians formed similar relationships with Union soldiers. Andrew Yopp's family befriended a man named Perkins who stood guard over the neighborhood near their house. They often invited him in for food and drink. Perkins returned the Yopp's hospitality by obtaining scarce provisions for them.⁴⁶ The Federal occupation of Wilmington was a trying period for citizens and soldiers alike, but they adjusted as best they could. The change prompted an odd mixture of emotions and relationships--the enthusiasm of the conquerors, exuberance of the liberated, indignation of the vanquished, and accommodation between enemies. For the most part the transition was a smooth one. Even the die-hard rebel Mrs. Meares admitted that "the Union army

⁴⁵Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to mother, March 28, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

⁴⁶Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, September 13, 1865.

entered very orderly."⁴⁷

Union troops may have been orderly when entering Wilmington, but they found the town in grave disorder. The business district had suffered extensive damage during the Confederate evacuation. Wharves, storehouses, foundries, cotton presses, and ship yards lay in ashes. Stores and businesses were closed down or broken open by looting civilians and soldiers from both armies. Railroad yards, cars, and bridges were ruined. Many houses and plantations were abandoned and boarded up. Profuse garbage and debris littered the streets, yards, and vacant lots. Wilmington's appearance was in stark contrast to its heyday as a busy, prosperous blockade running port. As one Union soldier observed: "Wilmington was once a beautiful city, but now it is not very attractive."⁴⁸ That was not all. The town swarmed with Confederate deserters and displaced persons from the countryside.

The most distressing problem confronting Wilmington, however, was a shattered economy. The closing of Wilmington as a blockade running port ravaged its wartime financial base, which depended heavily on the trade. When blockade

⁴⁷Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to L.H. DeRosset, May 18, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

⁴⁸Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 84.

running stopped, "prosperity disappeared and poverty came in."⁴⁹ Moreover, the Union blockade was still in effect, prohibiting Wilmington merchants from reestablishing outside trade relations. The influx of supplies from the countryside stopped as well. Local farmers and fishermen were harassed by marauders and intimidated enough by the Union occupation to forgo taking their goods to town. With vital supplies no longer being imported by sea or from within the region on a regular basis, the shortage of food, fuel, and provisions worsened. As a result consumer goods remained unaffordable to most residents.

Furthermore, there was not enough capital in Wilmington to meet the demand for it. Citizens who had any money at all generally possessed worthless Confederate currency. Union quartermasters were as yet unable to pay their soldiers, preventing greenbacks from circulating. And since the Confederates had removed or destroyed most of the cotton, tobacco, and naval stores in town, few commodities were available to compensate for the shortage of money. The early period of Union occupation in Wilmington witnessed an economy in shambles and residents in dire need for basic

⁴⁹Joseph Becker, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington," Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly XXXVIII (August, 1894), 237 (hereafter cited as Becker, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington," FLPM).

necessities.⁵⁰ "God only knows how all the poor people are to live," wondered a young resident, "no business doing and nothing to be had without money. By poor people I mean everybody--for we all row in the same boat now."⁵¹

To satisfy the immediate needs of the inhabitants, the military authorities seized all surplus provisions and turned them over to a citizens' committee for distribution.⁵² Appeals were made for donations of food. Commissary officers provided captured produce and rice from abandoned plantations. The Federals also seized abandoned residences and other buildings for use as hospitals, barracks, and housing for the destitute. For longer term improvements, General Schofield enacted laws designed to govern the residents, regulate trade and commerce, supply the needy, collect property of use to the department, and clean the town.

Schofield's Department of North Carolina, General Order # 8 of February 27, 1865, outlined the Union military

⁵⁰Hawley to Campbell, March 31, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 93; Becker, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington," FLPM, 237; Raleigh Daily Conservative, March 20, 1865.

⁵¹Lassie DeRosset to L.H. DeRosset, June 30, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

⁵²The citizens committee comprised S.D. Wallace, president, E.A. Keith, James Shackelford, William Utley, George Chadbourn, and James Alderman. Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 9, 1865.

occupation policy for the lower Cape Fear. Persons who came forward voluntarily were administered the oath of allegiance to the United States. Only residents who swore a loyalty oath were allowed to participate in commercial intercourse, as governed by United States laws and supervised by the Treasury Department. The law also entitled them to possible restoration of property confiscated from them when Wilmington was captured. Persons of known disloyalty were to be exiled beyond Union lines or tried by a military board and punished according to the nature of the offense. Foraging was strictly forbidden, but to meet the needs of the citizens and soldiers, loyal farmers were allowed access to town to sell their goods. Destruction of public or private property was prohibited except by permission from military officials.⁵³

Schofield wisely appointed Joseph R. Hawley, a North Carolina-born Union brigadier and General Terry's chief of staff, to enforce these laws and supervise the occupation. Hawley took a great interest in his native state and desired "to do much in reconciling it to the new state of affairs. There are many good Union people [in Wilmington]," he observed, "and there are others who will be such with good

⁵³Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, General Order # 8, February 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 605-606; Wilmington Herald of the Union, February 28, 1865.

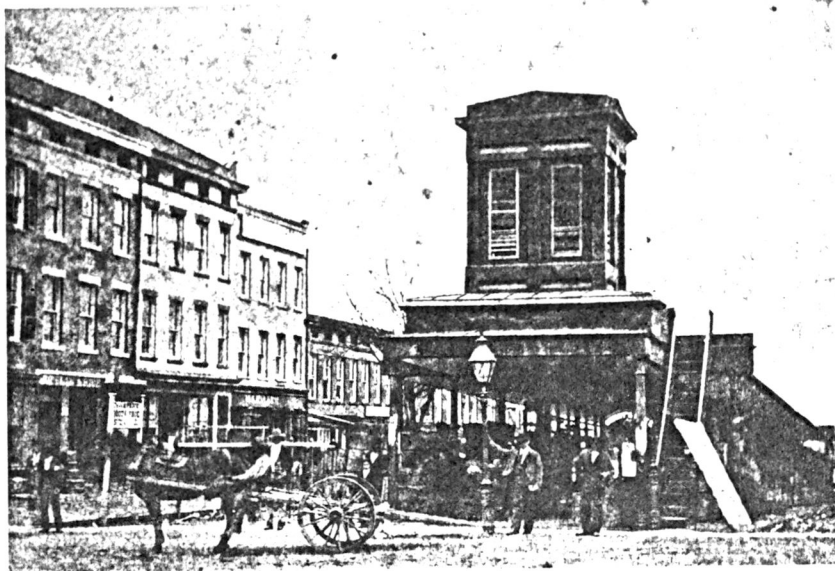
management."⁵⁴ On March 2, 1865, Hawley, a tough, resolute administrator assumed command of the District of Wilmington, a zone encompassing all territory in the rear of the Union army in the lower Cape Fear.⁵⁵ Three days later General Joseph C. Abbott, whose brigade had seen active service during the campaign, was assigned commandant of the Post of Wilmington.⁵⁶ Regiments of Abbott's brigade served as provost guard in Wilmington during the occupation. The town now had a set of bylaws to regulate its political and economic activities, a military administration to enact them, and military units to enforce them.

Yet conditions deteriorated before they improved. The necessity of caring for thousands of released prisoners-of-war and refugees further exhausted local resources, threatened the health of the community, and taxed the administrative abilities of the Union occupation officials.

⁵⁴J.R. Hawley to wife, February 28, 1865, J.R. Hawley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Hawley Papers, LOC).

⁵⁵Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, Special Orders, No. 18, March 1, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 636; Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 4, 1865.

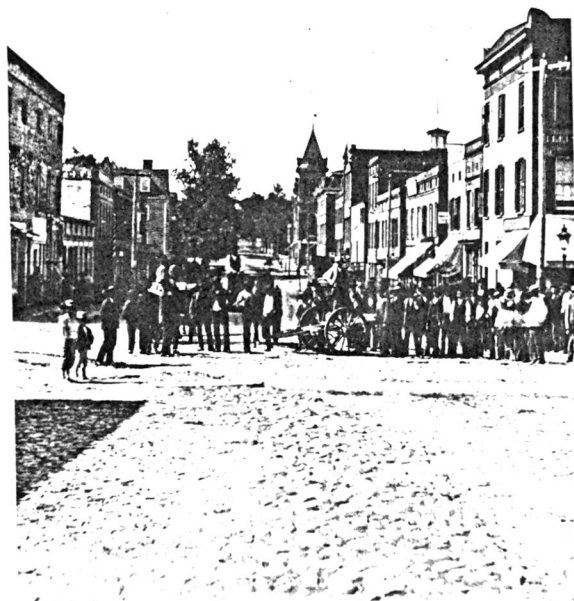
⁵⁶Headquarters District of Wilmington, Special Orders, No. 4, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 696; Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 5, 1865; Moore to Abbott, March 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 709.



Market House, Front and Market Streets
Wilmington, N.C., c. 1875



General Joseph Hawley, U.S.A.



South Front Street, Wilmington, N.C.,
c. 1875



Rev. Alfred Augustine Watson, D.D.

Under the February, 1865, exchange cartel between the Federal and Confederate governments, General Hoke was instructed to release Union prisoners at Wilmington. Yet General Schofield declined to receive them until he had captured Wilmington. Having accomplished that, Schofield consented on February 23 to accept the captives. In accordance with the arrangements, the prisoners were to be liberated at the northeast Cape Fear River.⁵⁷

Preparations to receive the prisoners began immediately. Schofield appointed General Abbott special agent in charge of the returning prisoners. Commissary stores were sent out to General Terry's encampment at the northeast Cape Fear River. Schofield requested that Terry's soldiers cook the rations for the prisoners so they could have food as soon as they were freed. Vacant houses and buildings in Wilmington were readied to accommodate the prisoners. Schofield also sent an appeal for help to the United States Sanitary Commission in New York.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Hatch to Schofield, February 23, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 296-297; Schofield to Hoke, February 23, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 297; Bragg to Lee, February 24, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 304; Bragg to Holmes, February 24, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 304; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 415.

⁵⁸Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, Special Orders No. 12, February 23, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 296; Wherry to Terry, February 23, 1865, 2, VIII, 297; New York Tribune, March 9, 1865; Little, Seventh New Hampshire, 416.

Deliveries of the prisoners began at daybreak on a rainy Sunday, February 26, 1865. The captives were shipped by train to the intersection of the Duplin Road and the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad about two miles from the northeast Cape Fear River. A Confederate and Union commissioner of exchange checked and counted the men as they disembarked from the cars. A small force of Terry's command was sent out to meet the men. They stood at present arms as the captives passed to freedom.⁵⁹

There was considerable rejoicing among the paroled prisoners who ran around shouting, whooping, alternately crying and laughing, rolling on the ground and hugging each other.⁶⁰ "I felt so happy," one soldier exclaimed, "that I ran and jumped the best I could, and tried to shout, but no sound would come, I was so overjoyed."⁶¹ Items that earlier

⁵⁹Abbott to Campbell, March 5, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 358; A.O. Abbott, Prison Life in the South (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1866), 189 (hereafter cited as Abbott, Prison Life in The South); James M. Ferguson, Life Struggles In Rebel Prisons (Philadelphia: James Ferguson, 1865), 202 (hereafter cited as Ferguson, Life Struggles in Rebel Prisons); Benjamin F. Booth, Dark Days of the Rebellion or Life In Southern Military Prisons (Indianola, Iowa: Booth Publishing Company, 1897), 319 (hereafter cited as Booth, Life In Southern Military Prisons).

⁶⁰Ferguson, Life Struggles In Rebel Prisons, 202; Abbott, Prison Life in the South, 190.

⁶¹Leon Basile (ed.), The Civil War Diary of Amos E. Stearns (Associated University Presses, Inc., 1981), 114.

had been of personal value--cups, morsels of food, and bundles of rags--suddenly became worthless articles. The released prisoners gladly discarded them along the side of the road.⁶²

Most of the liberated soldiers marched from the point of exchange to Terry's encampment. Terry's entire corps turned out to greet them with food, serenading brass bands, and an arched arbor of evergreen, flags, and a placard that read "Welcome Brothers!" To this the former captives responded with hurrahs and tears. Much to the surprise and delight of some of the freed prisoners, their old units had helped capture Wilmington and they were reunited with their former comrades. After rekindling old friendships, eating a fine meal, and taking a brief rest, the men were marched to Wilmington to convalesce. Ambulances and steamers transported those too sick to walk.⁶³

The periods of confinement, exposure, starvation, and neglect had taken their toll on the paroled prisoners. Many were sick and dying or dead by the time they reached Wilmington. As ill prepared as the Federals were to receive

⁶²Ferguson, Life Struggles In Rebel Prisons, 203; Abbott, Prison Life in the South, 190.

⁶³Abbott, Prison Life in the South, 190-191; Ferguson, Life Struggles In Rebel Prisons, 203-204; Booth, Life In Southern Military Prisons, 319-323; Walkley, Seventh Connecticut, 201; New York Tribune, February 27, 1865; Wilmington Herald of the Union, February 28, 1865.

them, they were even more unready for the horrors of their physical appearance. Witnesses declared that language failed to describe the prisoners' condition. Many of them were little more than skeletons with drawn pale skin, matted hair, expressionless faces, and ragged clothing. A Union doctor observed that "many of the men were in a state of mind resembling idiocy, unable to tell their names. . .Some of them moved about on their hands and knees. . .looking like hungry dogs. Some of them hitched along on their hands and buttocks. . .Others giggled and smirked and hobbled like starved idiots."⁶⁴

A soldier swore that he would never forget the "feeling of mingled surprise, pity, disgust, and indignation" he experienced on meeting "these wretched creatures. Manhood seemed extinguished," he claimed. "In some faces you looked in vain for a single reflection of the human soul."⁶⁵ General Hawley expressed his feelings with three words: "Awful, awful, awful." He wrote his wife that reports concerning the condition of the released prisoners

⁶⁴United States Sanitary Commission, Preliminary Report of the Operations of the U.S. Sanitary Commission in North Carolina, March, 1865, and Upon the Physical Condition of Exchanged Prisoners Lately Received at Wilmington, N.C. (New York: Sanford, Harroun & Co., 1865), Report No. 87, 9 (hereafter cited as U.S. Sanitary Commission, Report of Operations in North Carolina, March, 1865).

⁶⁵Mowris, 117th New York, 186.

were in no way exaggerated.⁶⁶ Perhaps not, if Benjamin Booth's story indicated the physical deterioration many of these men endured. After arriving in Wilmington, Booth, a former infantryman of the 22nd Iowa, weighed himself on a platform scale used for weighing rations. He tipped the beam at eighty-seven and a half pounds, almost 100 pounds below his normal weight.⁶⁷

Having just captured and occupied Wilmington, local Union officials were as yet unprepared to receive almost 10,000 released prisoners-of-war. They were brought in at an average rate of 1,400 each day for seven consecutive days. When the deliveries ended on March 4, 7,692 enlisted men and 992 commissioned officers had been liberated at the northeast Cape Fear River. Another unexpected 1,050 were taken in at the Brunswick River.⁶⁸ People and organizations in Wilmington provided the paroled prisoners with the best relief available. Union surgeons attended to their medical needs. Military sutlers and residents, ignoring diverse political beliefs, also made efforts to mitigate their

⁶⁶Joseph R. Hawley to Hattie, February 28, 1865, Hawley Papers, LOC.

⁶⁷Booth, Life In Southern Military Prisons, 327.

⁶⁸Abbott to Campbell, March 5, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 358; Schofield to Townsend, March 9, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 373; Thompson, 112th Illinois, 308.

sufferings. Some citizens invited them into their homes.⁶⁹ The Wilmington Theater (present day Thalian Hall) staged benefit performances for the soldiers. On the night of March 4, Miss Elouise Bridges played in "Dead Shot," "Antony and Cleopatra," and "Paddy Miles Boy" and helped raise \$1,074 for the former prisoners.⁷⁰ On March 19 United States Sanitary Commission agents arrived in Wilmington and took over most of the responsibility for their care.

These efforts helped a majority of the ill soldiers to recover, but others were not so fortunate. Forty-six released captives died in Wilmington during the first week of March.⁷¹ The Sanitary Commission estimated that on March 20, fifteen hospitals in town contained 2,500 invalid former prisoners.⁷² Perhaps several hundred of them, many of their names unknown, died by the time the war ended in April. Soldiers of Company A, 80th Indiana, tendered a resolution of thanks to Mrs. A.V.W. Hewlitt of Wilmington who cared for

⁶⁹Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 2, 1865; New York Tribune, March 15, 1865; Weiser, Nine Months In Rebel Prisons, 51-52.

⁷⁰Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 4 and 5, 1865.

⁷¹Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 7, 1865.

⁷²Wood, "Port Town at War," 251.

their comrade on his death bed.⁷³ Yet more than 7,000 freed prisoners were fit enough or had recovered enough by the end of March to be shipped home.⁷⁴

The appearance of thousands of refugees in Wilmington further annoyed efforts to stabilize an already heavily burdened economy, environment, and society. Most of the refugees were escaped slaves and disaffected whites who had attached themselves to the coattail of General Sherman's army as it marched through the Carolinas. Their numbers grew so rapidly that they became a tremendous burden to Sherman's military operations. Consequently, as soon as Sherman reached Fayetteville, he disposed of them by sending them to Wilmington.⁷⁵

The first refugees arrived in Wilmington by the middle of March. A massive column of 6,000 reached the Wilmington area on March 21. They spent the night on Point Peter at

⁷³Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 5, 1865.

⁷⁴U.S. Sanitary Commission, Report of Operations in North Carolina, March, 1865, 9; Schofield to Grant, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 694; Schofield to Townsend, March 9, 1865, ORA, 2, VIII, 373; Abbott, Prison Life in the South, 191; Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 10, 1865.

⁷⁵Sherman to Slocum, March 6, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 704; Terry to Schofield, March 11, 1865; ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 791; Sherman to Grant, March 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 791; Hawley to Gillmore, March 23, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 978; Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr., "War Time Reconstruction of a Southern Town: Federal Occupation of Wilmington, North Carolina, February 22 to April 9, 1865," unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.

the confluence of the branches of the Cape Fear River. The following morning they too began filtering into town. Thousands more arrived within a few days. Soon 8,000 to 10,000 displaced men, women, and children thronged the streets of Wilmington.⁷⁶

What to do with the refugees was a real problem facing Union officials. The refugees quickly became a burden to the Commissary Department. "They are devouring our stores," General Hawley complained, "and yet we cannot see them die of starvation."⁷⁷ Fortunately 400,000 hard bread rations had just reached the Cape Fear from the North. But with tens of thousands of occupation troops, released prisoners-of-war, sick and wounded soldiers, needy citizens, and destitute refugees to feed, the food did not last long. There was great need in Wilmington, but little to meet it.⁷⁸

⁷⁶J.G. Longley to Reverend M.E. Streely, March 18, 1865, American Missionary Association Records, Microfilm Collection, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina (hereafter cited as American Missionary Records, ECU); Hawley to Senior Naval Officer, March 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 946; Hawley to Terry, March 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 946; Hawley to Gillmore, March 23, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 978; Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 23, 1865; Becker, "Fort Fisher and Wilmington," FLPM.

⁷⁷Hawley to Campbell, March 26, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 30; Wood, "Port Town at War," 252.

⁷⁸J.G. Streely to Reverend M.E. Streely, March 18, 1865, American Missionary Records, ECU.

It was not that the Federal government could not fulfill that need, it was that provisions were not arriving in Wilmington fast enough. As "generous as the Government is in such matters," Hawley explained, "there must be embarrassment and suffering. We were utterly unable to furnish many of the necessities of life."⁷⁹

Compassionate residents tried to help alleviate the refugee problem. Some Wilmingtonians opened their hearts and homes to the refugees. But the sheer number of displaced persons overfilled accommodations and diminished resources. They filled every "nook and corner or vacant room any where to be found" in Wilmington and its suburbs.⁸⁰

"I can give you no idea of the utter squalidness of these miserable refugees," exclaimed a shocked Wilmingtonian. "It is heartbreaking to see their sufferings. . .poverty and sickness killing them like sheep."⁸¹

The issue of caring for the refugees was compounded by an epidemic of infectious fevers. The outbreak actually occurred just prior to the refugees' arrival, but spread

⁷⁹Joseph R. Hawley to Horace James, April 5, 1865, American Missionary Records, ECU.

⁸⁰Mrs. Alex Oldham to mother, March 30, 1865, Pleasant D. Gold Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁸¹Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to cousin, May 18, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

rapidly as they swarmed into Wilmington. The simultaneous appearance of damp, warmer weather and the neglect of residents to clean their property increased the number of cases. Physicians pinpointed ague, typhoid, and typhus as the killers.⁸² A medical update on March 19 showed 3,689 sick in Wilmington's hospitals.⁸³ General Hawley reported near the end of March that eighteen to twenty deaths were occurring daily.⁸⁴ Stephen C. Bartlett, a doctor aboard the U.S.S. Lenapee, claimed that as many as fifty people died each day. "It is mostly fevers," he diagnosed.⁸⁵ Four attending surgeons fell victim to the diseases.⁸⁶ "[The refugees] are pressing us severely, exhausting our resources and threatening pestilence," Hawley asserted.⁸⁷

⁸²Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 82 and 84; Mowris, 117th New York, 188.

⁸³Hawley to Campbell, March 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 926.

⁸⁴Hawley to Terry, March 21, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 946.

⁸⁵Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 82.

⁸⁶Mowris, 117th New York, 188.

⁸⁷Hawley to Gillmore, March 23, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 978.

Hawley acted quickly to control the refugee situation before it got out of hand. He appealed to the American Missionary Association to furnish clothing for the refugees.⁸⁸ And while the government gave the refugees food to meet their daily need, Hawley also meant for them to earn their keep. As the local Federal authorities pointed out, it was "not the intention of the government to allow this class of persons to live in luxury and idleness, but merely to sustain life till such time as they [could] help themselves."⁸⁹ Consequently, Hawley organized a battalion of refugees and freed slaves to clean Wilmington's streets, wharves, and hospitals.⁹⁰ Hawley also asked his superiors to send transportation to take the refugees out of the Wilmington area. General Sherman intended for the blacks to be sent to South Carolina and the whites to New York.⁹¹ In the meantime, Hawley relocated them throughout the lower Cape Fear. He placed many of them on abandoned or deserted

⁸⁸Joseph R.Hawley to Horace James, April 5, 1865, American Missionary Records, ECU.

⁸⁹Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 28, 1865.

⁹⁰Hawley to Campbell, March 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 928; Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 13 and 17, 1865.

⁹¹Hawley to Gillmore, March 23, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 978; Hawley to Gillmore, March 26, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 30.

lands and plantations and in captured fortifications. The military established sizeable refugee communities on Smith Island and at Fort Anderson.⁹² These areas were leased to "active and reliable persons, white and colored" primarily for cultivation.⁹³ Some of the refugees worked the surrounding forests extracting pine sap for turpentine, tar, and other naval stores. By late April, however, most of the refugees were relocated out of the lower Cape Fear.

Hawley also responded more forcefully to Wilmington's sanitation problem. The general was concerned that diseases might persist through the hot summer months unless the town was sanitized. He directed all persons to clean their premises and yards of offal and rubbish. Inflammable refuse was to be dumped outside the town limits.⁹⁴ Hawley instructed Mayor Dawson "to take such measures as he may deem judicious in relation to the sanitary condition of Wilmington." He authorized Dawson to seize carts and drays for removing garbage and impose fines on residents

⁹²Headquarters District of Wilmington, Special Orders, No. 21, March 27, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 39; Moore to Abbott, April 1, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 80.

⁹³Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 21, 1865.

⁹⁴Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 21, 1865.

delinquent in cleaning their property.⁹⁵ As a result the health of the community improved rapidly. "The town is being so thoroughly cleansed," commented a citizen, "that I hope we shall be free from the pestilence this summer."⁹⁶

Union authorities also made significant progress in rejuvenating Wilmington's depressed economy. To enable people to earn some income, the Federals employed local labor, allowed businesses to reopen, purchased small amounts of privately owned goods, and circulated greenbacks. To ease unemployment, the government tapped Wilmington's labor force. The army recruited blacks into its ranks. The Quartermaster Department hired skilled as well as unskilled workers to help operate a foundry, saw mill, carpentry workshop, dry dock, and machine shops. The foundry cast parts for ships undergoing repairs on the dry dock. Daily the saw mill produced thousands of feet of lumber for reconstructing piers, wharves, and warehouses. The government also erected hospitals. Slowly Wilmington was being restored to its former appearance.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 31, 1865.

⁹⁶Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to mother, March 28, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

⁹⁷Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 13, 1865.

The provost marshal allowed businesses to reopen after the proprietors had taken the oath of allegiance. Initially merchants were permitted to sell only stock on hand to loyal citizens. That mattered little to residents anxious to resume business as usual. They swamped the provost office with requests for swearing the oath and for permits to restore their jobs. On March 11 James Parsons, a boot and shoemaker, was the first businessman authorized to reopen his shop.⁹⁸ By the end of the month seventy-three persons--grocers, dry goods dealers, sutlers, druggists, even a photographer--had sworn the oath and obtained licenses to restart their businesses.⁹⁹ To bolster the quantity of available consumer goods, General Hawley asked his superiors to increase shipping from the North. They in turn authorized certain commission firms to import supplies through the blockade to help Wilmingtonians meet their immediate needs.¹⁰⁰ "Wilmington has changed much since we came here," observed a Union surgeon in late March. "The

⁹⁸Wood, "Port Town at War," 236.

⁹⁹Register of Letters and Endorsements Received, District of Wilmington, North Carolina, March, 1865, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands 1821-1920, Record Group 393, United States National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁰Hawley to Campbell, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 93.

stores are being opened and there is a large amount of shipping here."¹⁰¹ Soldiers finally received their long-overdue pay which gave them purchasing power. A newspaper reported that upwards of \$600,000 was being circulated into Wilmington's economy.¹⁰²

The Federal government also bought caches of privately owned commodities. Some residents had invested in and stashed away small amounts of cotton, tobacco, and rosin for their own support as inflation devalued Confederate currency. Much of it was discovered and destroyed when the Confederates evacuated Wilmington, but some survived. Technically the Federals considered it Confederate property and seized much of what had escaped destruction. Concerned about poverty in his district of command, however, General Hawley recommended to his superiors that someone be allowed to purchase these articles and "enable many families to supply their daily wants." The government adopted Hawley's suggestion and authorized the Treasury Department to set up a buying program.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Murray and Bartlett, "Letters of Stephen C. Bartlett," NCHR, 82.

¹⁰²Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 7, 1865.

¹⁰³Hawley to Campbell, March 31, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 70; Wood, "Port Town at War," 237.

The government returned some confiscated property only to turn around and buy it back. By April, the military had taken into custody a goodly amount of public and private assets. They partly comprised twenty-seven drums and four boxes of tobacco, eighty barrels of oil, fifteen barrels of turpentine, and approximately 500 bales of cotton.¹⁰⁴ Provost marshals reviewed ownership claims on these commodities. Owners were compelled to prove that they had remained loyal to the Union during the war, or that they had sworn an oath of allegiance prior to or at the time of their property's seizure. James Dawson invested heavily in cotton in the war's last days. A substantial quantity had somehow survived the Confederates' destruction in Wilmington, but fell into Union hands at its capture. After declaring and proving his loyalty, Dawson registered a claim for 109 bales of cotton. Upon his application's approval, he promptly sold the cotton to the Treasury Department for a handsome profit.¹⁰⁵ A newspaper reported that Dawson realized enough money from the sale to make him "perhaps the wealthiest

¹⁰⁴Wood, "Port Town at War," 236.

¹⁰⁵Letters Received and Special Orders Issued, District of Wilmington, North Carolina, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands 1821-1920, Record Group 393, Part 2, Entry 1823, No 179/432 VaNC, April 5, 1865, United States National Archives, Washington, D.C..

individual in the city of Wilmington."¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, Confederate supporters who attempted to regain their property received little sympathy from Federal officials. Dr. Armand John DeRosset, noted physician and wealthy blockade running entrepreneur, succeeded in repossessing his medical office, but the military refused to return his other buildings. In fact, the government required DeRosset to pay monthly rent in advance for the privilege of living in his own home.¹⁰⁷ Another prominent citizen, Dr. John D. Bellamy, was not even allowed to return to Wilmington, much less reopen his practice. The Federals seized his home at Fifth and Market streets for headquarters.¹⁰⁸ When Bellamy requested its return, Hawley adamantly refused. Hawley deemed Bellamy a rabid secessionist who should pay for his Confederate allegiance. "Having for four years been making his bed," Hawley raged, "he must lie on it for a while. I have no time to take him

¹⁰⁶Wilmington Daily Review, December 27, 1882.

¹⁰⁷Dr. Armand John DeRosset to L.H. DeRosset, July 17, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

¹⁰⁸John D. Bellamy, Memoirs of an Octogenarian (Charlotte, North Carolina: Observer Printing House, 1942), 22 and 29.

within the lines."¹⁰⁹

General Hawley was a compassionate man in seeing to the needs of the impoverished, but a tough authoritarian in dealing with opponents of the Union. His strictness left no aspect of Wilmington's affairs immune--even in the religious community. Reverend Alfred A. Watson, rector of St. James Church, encountered Hawley's wrath.

In anticipation of the Federal occupation of Wilmington, Reverend Watson obtained permission from the Diocese Bishop to refrain from continuing prayers for Confederate authorities. So as not to offend St. James's largely pro-Confederate congregation, however, the Bishop directed Watson only to modify the liturgy without making fundamental changes showing allegiance to the United States. Prayers were to be made for "those in rightful authority," or "those in civil authority."¹¹⁰

Hawley and Schofield, however, considered this disloyal conduct. With Schofield's approval, Hawley closed St. James, suspended Watson's religious privileges, and threatened to banish him from the district. A few weeks

¹⁰⁹Hawley to Campbel, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 93.

¹¹⁰Alfred A. Watson to Abraham Lincoln, April 12, 1865, occupation file, Leora McEachern and Isabel Williams Collection, Manuscript Department, Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington (hereafter cited as McEachern and Williams Collection, UNCW).

later Hawley seized the church. A squad of his soldiers entered the edifice, tore out the pews, and carted them away to make room for a hospital.¹¹¹

Watson appealed to President Lincoln's judiciousness. The reverend claimed that General Hawley reacted harshly against him because his "mental convictions [were] on the side of the Confederacy." Watson maintained that, regardless of personal political allegiance, the state possessed no right to dictate to the church in matters of religion except so far as the church assailed the State in political or secular questions. "Fundamentally," Watson insisted, "to change the Liturgy so as to make it pray for that against which it prayed before--or against that for which it prayed before belongs only to the Church in General Council."¹¹² President Lincoln was killed before Reverend Watson's letter reached Washington, but the government agreed with its content. St. James was returned to its congregation and restored well enough to hold Easter services in 1865.

¹¹¹Alfred A. Watson to Joseph R. Hawley, March 16, 1865 and Alfred A. Watson to Abraham Lincoln, April 12, 1865, McEachern and Williams Collection, UNCW; Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to Mrs. Armand John DeRosset, April 11 and May 18, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC; William R. Reaves (ed.), "Cape Fear. The Civil War--Reconstruction," Wilmington Star News supplement, March 17, 1976.

¹¹²Alfred A. Watson to Abraham Lincoln, April 12, 1865, McEachern and Williams Collection, UNCW.

The squabble with Reverend Watson was probably only a minor concern to General Hawley. His chief anxiety, aside from the regular supervision of the district, was about Northern speculators who came to Wilmington intending to defraud the government.¹¹³ Deserters and marauders committing outrages against inhabitants in the adjoining counties also worried him because he did not have a sufficient force of cavalry to combat them. He requested but was denied more horsemen to help strengthen his authority in the region. So Hawley encouraged people in the countryside to organize and protect themselves and their homes.¹¹⁴

There was, however, comparatively little crime in Wilmington itself. Soldiers' behavior occasionally got out of hand, but the provost marshal and his troops kept a tight reign on affairs. A guard shot and killed a soldier who resisted arrest after causing a disturbance in a house of ill repute. A visitor from General Sherman's army was mugged and robbed by two uniformed men late one evening in

¹¹³Hawley to Campbell, March 20, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 928; Hawley to Campbell, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 93.

¹¹⁴Hawley to Richardson, March 24, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 14; Hawley to Norcom, March 30, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 64; Hawley to Campbell, April 1, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 79; Campbell to Hawley, April 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 80.

downtown Wilmington.¹¹⁵ Black and white Union soldiers clashed occasionally. For the most part the races had been segregated during the campaign. The day after Wilmington's capture, however, a white soldier shot to death a black comrade on Market Street.¹¹⁶ An infantryman of the 3rd New Hampshire drowned a black street cleaner who had shot him in the eye during an argument. Because blacks at that time could not testify against whites, the soldier was acquitted of murder.¹¹⁷ One resident contended that Wilmington was in "constant danger of a serious collision between the races" which only the government and God could avert.¹¹⁸ For the time being they did. Wilmington remained relatively quiet during the initial Union occupation period.

Wilmingtonians seemed anxious for a "fast returning to a normal way of things."¹¹⁹ Many residents accepted the fact that the Confederacy was dying, or at least that it could no longer help them. Consequently, Mayor Dawson

¹¹⁵Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 31, 1865.

¹¹⁶Yopp, "Surrender of Wilmington," Wilmington Morning Star, August 23, 1936.

¹¹⁷Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 1035.

¹¹⁸Dr. Armand John DeRosset to L.H. DeRosset, July 17, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

¹¹⁹Wilmington Hearld of the Union, March 31, 1865.

called for a "Grand Rally of the People" to discuss the welfare of Wilmington and North Carolina. Everyone was invited regardless of political sentiments. Even Wilmington's occupation newspaper, Herald of the Union, promoted the rally not as "a union meeting or a secessionist meeting; democratic or republican; yankee or abolitionist, etc," but as a council of the people "to talk their sentiments out freely and express themselves with candor and plainness."¹²⁰

Despite inclement weather, more than 1,000 citizens attended the meeting at the Wilmington Theater on the evening of March 14, 1865. Some journalists were allowed to observe the proceedings, but Union soldiers were barred. It quickly became obvious to all who entered the theater that despite the meeting's being touted as an open forum, it was in fact a Union rally. U.S. flags draped from the stage and backdrop while bands played "Rally Round the Flag" and the "Star Spangled Banner." Mayor Dawson addressed the crowd of residents, who frequently interrupted his words with applause. Dawson spoke of peace, forgiveness of past differences, and the welfare of the national government. "The arms of the United States have been victorious, and now occupy this city. . .and we hope to enjoy the rights and privileges as citizens," Dawson envisioned. "My friends,"

¹²⁰Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 11, 1865.

he continued, "let us. . .live for the future resolving that henceforth it shall be our aim and object to secure peace, promote prosperity and add to the glory and grandeur of our common country."¹²¹

An appointed committee then drew up eight resolutions, which the attendants voted on and endorsed unanimously. They determined in part that the citizens of Wilmington should cheerfully submit and pledge obedience and hearty support to the United States. In good faith, the people claimed the rights and privileges of United States citizens. They also called upon their fellow North Carolinians to join with them by "protesting against the madness of the authorities of the State in urging the prosecution of this fratricidal war for a cause [they] believed to be hopeless"¹²²

The signers of the document apparently believed that they were advancing the best interests of Wilmington and North Carolina by advocating the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of the state to the Union. Copies of the resolutions were sent to President Lincoln and

¹²¹New York Herald, March 21, 1865. See also: New York Tribune, March 24, 1865.

¹²²New York Herald, March 21, 1865. See also: New York Tribune, March 24, 1865; Raleigh Daily Conservative, March 29, 1865.

123

Governor Zebulon Vance.

For weeks afterwards national and state newspapers carried stories, editorials, and letters concerning the Union rally in Wilmington. Some tabloids even published a list of more than one hundred prominent Wilmington men who attended it.* Northern papers hailed the meeting as a powerful influence of opinion to hasten North Carolina's return to the Union. Confederate newspapers on the other hand expressed disdain. A Raleigh journalist found it unbelievable "that any highly respectable citizens, could by any possibility, at this stage of the war, convene in public meeting and pass resolutions in favor of [the] enemy

. . . ." ¹²⁴ A refugee from Wilmington wrote a letter to the editor of the Raleigh Daily Confederate after reading about the rally and seeing the printed list of names of prominent citizens. Having lived for twelve years in the Carolina port town, the writer apparently knew all or most of the men and justified their affection for the Union. "In the list

* See Appendix C

¹²³New York Herald, March 21, 1865; New York Tribune, March 24, 1865; Raleigh Daily Conservative, March 29, 1865.

¹²⁴Raleigh Daily Confederate, April 5, 1865.

of names at the meeting," he wrote sarcastically, "I find 41 Yankees, 36 Irish and Dutch, 9 strolling play-actors, 20 pluguglies and shoulder-hitters (the same who elected John Dawson mayor), and eight tolerably respectable citizens."¹²⁵

A Wilmington-born Confederate soldier generally concurred with that assessment. The men, he asserted, fell into three groups: foreigners, transplanted Yankees, and Confederate deserters. Mayor Dawson formed a separate class by himself. After all, the soldier claimed, Dawson had obtained his mayoral position by open bribery and corruption. But he was surprised that eight "highly respectable gentlemen" had attended the rally. These men, the soldier noted, had brothers and sons still in arms for the Confederate cause.¹²⁶ Katherine Meares was appalled by the attendance at the meeting of Reverend A.D. Hepburn of Wilmington's First Presbyterian Church. "[He] has the impudence to proclaim his Yankee self to the world as the representatives of Wilmington's honor and patriotism!" Mrs. Meares fumed. "His people have deserted him in flocks," she claimed.¹²⁷

¹²⁵Raleigh Daily Confederate, March 30, 1865.

¹²⁶Raleigh Daily Confederate, April 1, 1865.

¹²⁷Letter of Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

The majority of Wilmington's citizens had been devoted to the Confederate cause. There were, however, a number of Union men who had remained relatively quiet during the war. With Wilmington now occupied, it was not surprising that Northern sympathizers, including Mayor Dawson, extolled such a meeting and the restoration of their community and the state back into the folds of the Union. The meeting undoubtedly attracted a minority of Southern supporters who felt compelled to submit to the Federal powers. Wilmington was not the only occupied Southern community to stage a Union rally. A similar meeting took place in Savannah, Georgia, in January, 1865, after the city's capture by General Sherman's army.¹²⁸

Whatever reasons motivated Wilmingtonians to repudiate the Confederacy, large numbers of them did just that. By April 3, Union provost marshals had administered the oath of allegiance to 2,082 persons in the lower Cape Fear. That number included 337 Confederate deserters and 1,336 citizens and refugees in Wilmington. Since the Confederate army had taken such a large portion of the male population with it when it evacuated Wilmington, General Hawley believed that the majority of men over twenty-one years of age who

¹²⁸Wilmington Daily North Carolinian, January 7, 1865; Charleston Mercury, January 25, 1865.

remained had sworn the oath.¹²⁹

Hawley claimed that his marshals "cheerfully and voluntarily" administered the oath only to residents who desired to restore the national authority.¹³⁰ Although Unionists undoubtedly did, evidence suggests that many denizens felt coerced to pledge allegiance. As one resident pointed out, taking the oath was something akin to a vaccination. "We 'ums hafter takum boss," he told a Union soldier.¹³¹ Loyalty meant food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, medicine for the sick, and shelter for the homeless. A Confederate journalist understood the paradox. "A pleasant land this 'land of the free' must be," he wrote, "where men or women are allowed to think as the Provost Marshals think . . . where none but such accommodating thinkers will be permitted to trade. . . and permitted to purchase family supplies."¹³² A Raleigh editor berated Wilmingtonians for selling "their honor and liberty for the enjoyment of a

¹²⁹Hawley to Campbell, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 92.

¹³⁰Hawley to Campbell, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 3, 92.

¹³¹Eldridge, Third New Hampshire, 774.

¹³²Fayetteville Observer, March 9, 1865.

day's ease."¹³³ With the war still going on, most North Carolinians disagreed with Wilmingtonian's response to the Union occupation. That disagreement was evident in the number of pro-Confederate rallies that took place in communities throughout the state in the last days of the war.¹³⁴ But then, those locales were not occupied by Union forces.

Soldiers were still fighting on battlefields far away, but for residents of Wilmington the war was over. Many were no longer willing to endure the tragedy of war for a dying cause. Even Wilmingtonians who believed that it was better to "stand on the last plank and die in the last ditch" than to surrender or submit to the Yankees, held onto misplaced hopes.¹³⁵ Like it or not, restoration to the Union was their fate.

¹³³Raleigh Daily Confederate, March 29, 1865.

¹³⁴Raleigh Daily Confederate, March 6, 17, and 21, 1865.

¹³⁵Katherine Douglas DeRosset Meares to mother, March 28, 1865, DeRosset Papers, SHC.

CONCLUSION

The Confederates' destruction at Wilmington compelled Schofield to alter his plans to support Sherman further by securing Goldsborough. Schofield found very little useable rolling stock at Wilmington, and the railroad trestles had been destroyed completely. The lines thus were useless for transporting men and supplies to the front. Intent on reaching Goldsborough by the middle of March, Schofield asked Washington to send wagons, train cars, and material for repairing the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. When the return of bad weather impeded their delivery and the repair work, Schofield shifted his base of operations to New Bern for the capture of Goldsborough. Some locomotives and cars were already at New Bern.¹

Schofield reinforced the garrison at New Bern and instructed General Innis Palmer to move forward with his army to guard the workmen who were repairing the railroad towards Kinston and Goldsborough. General Thomas H. Ruger's First Division of Schofield's XXIII Army Corps, which reached the Cape Fear about February 23, was rerouted by sea

¹Report of John M. Schofield, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 911; Wright to McCallum, February 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 579; Schofield to Grant, February 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 619-620; Schofield to Grant, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 694; Grant to Stanton, March 10, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 753; Cox, March to the Sea, 155; New York Tribune, March 14, 1865.

to New Bern.² When, on February 25, Schofield learned that Palmer had not advanced as expected, he sent General Cox to take command at New Bern and to "push forward as rapidly as practicable."³ As soon as enough supply wagons had arrived in Wilmington by March 6, General Darius Couch started his and Cox's divisions towards Kinston by way of Richlands. Couch's force had disembarked at Fort Anderson when Wilmington was captured. The same day that Couch marched from Wilmington, Schofield went by sea to join Cox's advance on Kinston. Schofield directed General Terry to move forward with his corps from Wilmington as soon as the railroad from there to Goldsborough was in working order.⁴ In the meantime, Terry was to continue efforts to make contact with General Sherman.

On March 11 General Terry sent the tugboat Davidson up the rain-swollen northwest Cape Fear River to clear the way

²Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 285; Report of John M. Schofield, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 911; Itinerary of First Division, XXIII Army Corps, February, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 155.

³Schofield to Grant, February 28, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 619; Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Army of the Ohio, February 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 579-580; Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 285. Note is from: Schofield to Cox, February 25, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 580.

⁴Schofield to Couch, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 694; Schofield to Grant, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 693-694; Report of John M. Schofield, April 3, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 1, 911-912; Schofield to Terry, March 5, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 695; Terry to Sherman, March 7, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 725.

to Fayetteville. She made contact with General Sherman who finally reached Fayetteville on March 12. Although Sherman's army had foraged liberally on its march through the Carolinas, it still desperately needed supplies, especially food and clothing. Refugees had consumed much of what the army had obtained.⁵

By that time, however, Terry possessed few supplies at Wilmington to send to Sherman. Provisions destined for his army had been expended on the paroled prisoners. Other supplies were being shipped to Beaufort near New Bern. Terry immediately requisitioned goods for Sherman from Beaufort. Within two days, Terry sent 3,800 pairs of shoes, 2,400 pairs of boots, 1,500 boxes of hard bread, 158,000 rations of coffee, all the sugar he could get his hands on, and a box of cigars to General Sherman.⁶

On March 15 Sherman started his advance en route for Goldsborough. Although the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad remained temporarily inoperable, Terry pushed forward with his army from Wilmington on March 16. That same day, Sherman's XX Army Corps met and defeated General Hardee's

⁵Sherman to Schofield, March 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 800-801; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 126; Sherman to Quartermaster, March 12, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 795; Wilmington Herald of the Union, March 14, 1865.

⁶Terry to Sherman, March 13, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 818; Terry to Sherman, March 14, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 840-841; Dodge to Sherman, March 13, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 807.

army at Averasboro. General Joseph Johnston struck Sherman a counterblow at Bentonville on March 19. In the largest engagement of the Carolinas Campaign, the opposing armies traded blows for three days. After suffering heavy casualties, Johnston withdrew his embattled force to Smithfield on the night of March 21. Sherman reorganized his army and pushed on to Goldsborough. Schofield and Cox, meanwhile, had engaged and forced Bragg's withdrawal from Kinston on March 10. Schofield then marched to Goldsborough which he reached on March 21. Sherman arrived there two days later. Terry's corps joined Sherman west of Goldsborough and accompanied him into the city.⁷

Sherman was out of danger when he united with Schofield, Cox, and Terry. His army numbered approximately 80,000 men and was near the North Carolina coast, which the Union navy now controlled completely. Sherman had railroads to both Wilmington and New Bern by which he could continually be resupplied and reinforced. Johnston confronted Sherman, but it was "with an army much inferior to his own, both in numbers and morale."⁸

⁷Dodge to Schofield, March 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 852; Terry to Sherman, March 13, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 819; Marching Orders, March 15, 1865, ORA, 1, XLVII, 2, 855; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 61 and 126-127.

⁸Grant, Memoirs, II, 418-419.

As anticipated, Lee evacuated Petersburg and moved to join Johnston in North Carolina. But Grant with a far superior force followed close on Lee's heels. The armies battled to Appomattox Courthouse, where on April 9, 1865, Lee reluctantly capitulated. Without renewing hostilities, Johnston surrendered to Sherman at Durham Station, North Carolina, on April 26.

Sherman's Carolinas Campaign compelled Lee to abandon his stronghold in Virginia. That abandonment meant the end of the Confederacy. The Wilmington Campaign had a direct influence on Sherman's operations. It provided him with a safe haven and a base of supply in southeastern North Carolina. Moreover, troops reinforced Sherman through Wilmington giving him an army strong enough to combat any threat.

The Wilmington Campaign proved to be a model Union amphibious operation. In spite of some petty infighting among commanders, the Army and Navy worked together with harmony and resolve. For the most part, Generals Schofield, Cox, and Terry planned their strategy well and executed their tactics with determination. That determination was most evident in Cox's successful flanking movements against the Confederates at Fort Anderson and Town Creek. The Union army sustained only about 200 casualties in the entire campaign. Admiral Porter's flotilla placed unwavering pressure on Wilmington's defenders. The Union navy's massed

artillery, sufficient mobility, and adequate concentration in the Cape Fear River provided the army with the necessary support to capture Wilmington.

The Federals' task at Wilmington was made easier by the Confederates' low morale and General Bragg's apathy. Bragg's refusal to aid Fort Fisher cost him the support of many of his troops and local residents. If he sacrificed the fort to save Wilmington, as a recent study suggests, he did an equally poor job.⁹ In fact, the actual defense of Wilmington devolved to General Hoke when Bragg departed for Richmond at an inopportune moment to take care of bureaucratic nonsense. By the time Bragg returned, Wilmington was lost.

When Union reinforcements arrived in the Cape Fear early in February, 1865, Hoke battled almost insurmountable odds. Hoke held tough on Federal Point, but General Hagood made fatal errors in his field command on the west bank of the Cape Fear River enabling the Federals to push rapidly on Wilmington. Hagood's blunders necessitated Hoke's withdrawal from Sugar Loaf and eventually Wilmington itself.

Of course, Wilmington was of comparatively little value to the Confederacy after the fall of Fort Fisher sealed the port to maritime commerce. Nonetheless, Bragg removed vital government stores from Wilmington and protected Hardee's

⁹Reed, Combined Operations, 379.

retreat from South Carolina. By this action, the Confederacy lived to fight another day.

Citizens who remained in Wilmington during the Union occupation experienced a difficult period of adjustment in February and March, 1865. Wartime devastation, homefront shortages, a shattered economy, and the burden of dealing with Union troops, paroled prisoners, and refugees threatened the community's well being. Residents helped ease an explosive situation by submitting to Federal authorities. For doing so, however, these Wilmingtonians received criticism from Confederate supporters throughout North Carolina. Wilmingtonians rejoiced, as did all Americans, when the war ended, but they faced a trying period of reconstruction.

After the war, General Braxton Bragg served as a civil engineer in New Orleans and later as superintendent of harbor improvements in Mobile, Alabama. He eventually moved to Galveston, Texas, where he worked in the railroad business until his sudden death on September 27, 1876. Fort Bragg, an army base near Fayetteville, North Carolina, was named in his honor. Arguments as to General Bragg's actions and capabilities as a Confederate general continue to this day.¹⁰

¹⁰Wakelyn, Biographical Dictionary, 106; Warner, Generals In Gray, 31; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 78.

General Robert F. Hoke returned to private business in North Carolina, when he was paroled in April, 1865. Resuming his pre-war career, Hoke developed iron mines in his home state. He also dabbled in real estate and served a stint as director of the North Carolina Railroad. He passed away at age 75 in Raleigh on July 3, 1912.¹¹

After surrendering to Sherman with Johnston's army, General Johnson Hagood went home where he assumed a prominent role in South Carolina's reconstruction. He served as comptroller general in Governor Wade Hampton's administration and was himself elected to the state's highest office in 1880. Hagood authored Memoirs of the War of Secession, in which he tried to defend his poor performance at Wilmington in 1865. He died on January 4, 1898.¹²

Admiral Porter received his fourth thanks of Congress for his role in capturing Fort Fisher. He was subsequently promoted to Vice Admiral in 1866 and Admiral of the United States Navy four years later. Porter died in 1891 as hot-headed, arrogant, and egotistical as he had been during the war. And he had a resplendent war record to back up his

¹¹Wakelyn, Biographical Dictionary, 233-234; Warner, Generals In Gray, 141.

¹²Warner, Generals In Gray, 122.

braggadocio.¹³

General John M. Schofield had an illustrious postwar career. He served as Secretary of War under President Andrew Johnson and later as superintendent at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He succeeded to the command of the United States Army in 1888 and was promoted to lieutenant general in 1895. He died in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1906, and was interred in Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia.¹⁴

Like Schofield, General Jacob D. Cox led a distinguished life after the war. He served one term as governor of Ohio immediately following the conflict and then in a troubled job as Secretary of the Interior in President U.S. Grant's cabinet. Cox returned to Ohio where he engaged in the railroad business, practiced law, and was dean of the Cincinnati Law School from 1881 to 1897. General Cox was also a prolific writer of military books on the Civil War including a two-volume set of his wartime memoirs. Cox passed away on August 4, 1900, and was buried in Cincinnati.¹⁵

¹³Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 661.

¹⁴Warner, Generals In Blue, 426.

¹⁵Warner, Generals In Blue, 97-98.

General Alfred H. Terry received the thanks of Congress and a brigadier's commission in the Regular United States Army for his victory at Fort Fisher. Terry was one of the first non-graduates of the United States Military Academy to hold a generalship in the Regular Army and was the first volunteer officer to attain the rank of major general in the Army. The general is perhaps best known, however, for being General George Armstrong Custer's commander at the time of Custer's defeat at Little Big Horn in the Department of Dakota in 1876. Terry died on December 16, 1900, in New Haven, Connecticut.¹⁶

At the end of the war, General Joseph R. Hawley commanded the District of Wilmington. He left the Army in 1866 and that same year was elected governor of Connecticut. For a while he had a roller coaster career as a state and national politician. Then in 1881 he became a U.S. Senator; he served in that capacity until his death on March 11, 1905. He was interred at Hartford, Connecticut.¹⁷

The Civil War changed Wilmington forever. Most importantly, the port capitalized on the international trade relations it developed as a blockade running port during the war. By the late nineteenth century vast quantities of cotton were being exported from Wilmington, and it had

¹⁶Warner, Generals In Blue, 498; Boatner, Civil War Dictionary, 831.

¹⁷Warner, Generals In Blue, 220.

become one of the busiest ports on the Atlantic seaboard. Twentieth century improvements in transportation slowly diminished Wilmington's maritime importance, but she remains North Carolina's most active seaport.

GLOSSARY

Abatis or Abattis - rows of felled trees or large branches sometimes sharpened to a point and employed for defense.

Barbette - guns are said to be in barbette when they are elevated, usually on a high carriage, for firing over the crest of a parapet.

Battery - a battery consists of two or more pieces of field artillery. The term battery also implies the emplacement of artillery for offensive or defensive purposes.

Blockade runner - Confederate vessels and those of neutral nations, mainly British, employed in the profitable though risky violation of trading goods through the Federal blockade of Southern ports. The term also applies to captains, crew, and shippers engaged in blockade running.

Breastwork - hastily constructed earthwork.

Cannister - field artillery cannister consisted of a tin cylinder attached to a sabot and filled with small cast-iron or lead shot.

Cartel - agreement for a prisoner exchange.

Casemate - vaulted chamber with embrasures for guns.

Curtain - part of a rampart joining two bastions or flanks.

Demonstrate - a show of force without an actual attack.

Ditch - excavation made around a fortification.

Enfilade - to sweep the whole length of a work or line of troops by artillery or small arms fire.

Entrenchment - ditch or trench with a parapet.

Envelop - to undertake an attack on one or both flanks or rear of the enemy.

Esprit de corps - military and regimental pride.

Feint - limited attack or movement to mislead the enemy of the real objective.

Field trenches or field works - breastworks.

Flotilla -group of warships smaller than a fleet acting in concert.

Forced march - long march of troops at a fast pace made necessary by an impending battle.

Fortification - consists of a mound of dirt called a rampart which encloses the body of the place, a parapet surmounting the rampart, and traverses, portions of the parapet which cross the breadth of the covered way.

Obstacles - objects strategically placed so as to render access to a fortification more difficult.

Ordnance - artillery, cannon.

Ordnance stores - cannonballs, shot, shells, and artillery equipment.

Outwork - work constructed away from the main fortification.

Parapet - (see Fortification)

Rampart - (see Fortification)

Reconnaissance in force - tentative or probing attack by a sizeable number of troops.

Redoubt - small work with two faces.

Sally port - opening cut into the face of a fortification to allow access. When not in use, it was usually closed by a strong timber gate.

Traverse - (see Fortification).

Volley - simultaneous firing of their guns by an entire unit of soldiers.

APPENDIX A

Disposition of United States Navy vessels in the lower Cape Fear, North Carolina, February 1, 1865

Cape Fear River

<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Guns</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Commanding Officer</u>
Berberry	4 guns	4th class	Acting Ensign R.W. Rountree
Chippewa	6 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander A.W. Weaver
Eolus	4 guns	4th class	Acting Master E.S. Keyser
Gettysburg	7 guns	3rd class	Acting Master C.B. Dahlgren
Huron	5 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander T.O. Selfridge
Iosco	10 guns	3rd class	Commander John Guest
Kansas	8 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander P.G. Watmough
Launch # 6	1 gun	4th class	Gunner H. Peters
Lenapee	10 guns	3rd class	
Little Ada	2 guns	4th class	Acting Master S.P. Crafts
Mackinaw	10 guns	3rd class	Commander J.C. Beaumont
Malvern	12 guns	3rd class	Ensign W.C. Wise
Maumee	3 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander R. Chandler
Moccasin	3 guns	4th class	Acting Ensign J. Brown
Montauk	2 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander E.E. Stone
Nansemond	3 guns	4th class	Acting Master J.H. Porter
Nyack	8 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander L.H. Newman
Osceola	10 guns	3rd class	Commander J.M.B. Clitz
Pawtuxet	10 guns	3rd class	Commander J.H. Spotts
Pequot	3 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander D.L. Braine
Pontoosuc	12 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander W.G. Temple
Republic	1 gun	4th class	Acting Ensign J.W. Bennett
Sassacus	12 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander J.L. Davis
Seneca	5 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander M. Sicard
Shawmut			Lieutenant Commander J.G. Walker

Tacony	12 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander W.T. Truxton
Unadilla	6 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander F.M. Ramsey
Wilderness	4 guns	4th class	Acting Master H. Arey
Yantic	5 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander T.C. Harris

New Inlet/Fort Fisher

Aries	7 guns	3rd class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant J.M. Williams
Emma	8 guns	4th class	Acting Master J.A. Hamilton
Fahkee	5 guns	4th class	Acting Master F.R. Webb
Fort Donelson	1 gun	4th class	Acting Master G.W. Frost
Gov. Buckingham	6 guns	3rd class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant J. MacDiarmid
Howquah	5 guns	4th class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant J.W. Balch
Keystone State	6 guns	3rd class	Commander H. Rolando
Montgomery	6 guns	3rd class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant T.C. Dunn
Vicksburg	6 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant W.U. Grozier

Old Inlet/Smithville

Bat			Lieutenant Commander J.S. Barnes
Maratanza	6 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander G.W. Young
Monticello	6 guns	4th class	Lieutenant William B. Cushing
R.R. Cuyler	12 guns	3rd class	Commander C.H.B. Caldwell

Disposition of United States Navy Vessels near Wilmington,
North Carolina, February 15, 1865

Cape Fear River

Bat	3 guns	4th class	
Berberry	4 guns	4th class	Acting Ensign R.W. Rountree
Chippewa	6 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander A.W. Weaver
Emma	8 guns	4th class	Acting Master J.A. Hamilton
Eolus	4 guns	4th class	Acting Master E.S. Keyser
Huron	5 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander T.O. Selfridge
Kansas	8 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander P.G. Watmough
Launch # 1	1 gun	4th class	
Launch # 6	1 gun	4th class	Acting Ensign C.S. Willcox
Lenapee	10 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander J.S. Barnes
Little Ada	2 guns	4th class	Acting Master S.P. Crafts
Mackinaw	10 guns	3rd class	Commander J.C. Beaumont
Malvern	12 guns	4th class	Ensign W.C. Wise
Maratanza	6 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander G.W. Young
Maumee	3 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander R. Chandler
Moccasin	3 guns	4th class	Acting Ensign J. Brown
Montauk	2 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander E.E. Stone
Nansemond	3 guns	4th class	Acting Master J.H. Porter
Nyack	8 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander L.H. Newman
Osceola	10 guns	3rd class	Commander J.B.M. Clitz
Pawtuxet	10 guns	3rd class	Commander J.H. Spotts
Pequot	8 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander D.L. Braine
Pontoosuc	12 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander W.G. Temple
Republic	1 gun	4th class	Acting Ensign J.W. Bennett
Sassacus	12 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander J.L. Davis
Seneca	5 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander M. Sicard

Shawmut	8 guns	3rd class	Lieutenant Commander J.G. Walker
Unadilla	6 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander F.M. Ramsey
Wilderness	4 guns	4th class	Acting Master H. Arey
Yantic	5 guns	4th class	Lieutenant Commander T.C. Harris

New Inlet/Fort Fisher

Aries	7 guns	3rd class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant J.M. Williams
Howquah	5 guns	4th class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant J.W. Balch
Keystone State	6 guns	3rd class	Commander Henry Rolando
Montgomery	6 guns	3rd class	Acting Vol. Lieutenant T.C. Dunn
Monticello	6 guns	4th class	Lieutenant William B. Cushing
R.R. Cuyler	12 guns	3rd class	Commander C.H.B. Caldwell
Vicksburg	6 guns	3rd class	Acting Master W.U. Grozier

APPENDIX B

ORDER OF BATTLE

Organization of Confederate troops in the Department of North Carolina, Major General Braxton Bragg, C.S. Army, commanding, February, 1865.

Third Military District (District of the Cape Fear) Major General Robert F. Hoke

Sugar Loaf

Hoke's Division Major General Robert F. Hoke
 (Brigadier General Thomas L.) Clingman's Brigade Colonel William S. Devane (61st North Carolina)
 8th North Carolina Lieutenant Colonel Rufus A. Barrier
 31st North Carolina Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Knight
 51st North Carolina Captain James W. Lippit
 61st North Carolina

(Brigadier General Alfred H.) Colquitt's Brigade Colonel Charles T. Zachry
 6th Georgia Lieutenant Colonel Sampson W. Harris
 Colonel John T. Lofton ?
 19th Georgia Colonel James H. Neal
 23rd Georgia Colonel Marcus R. Ballenger
 27th Georgia Captain Elisha D. Graham ?
 28th Georgia Captain John A. Johnson ?

Kirkland's Brigade Brigadier General William W. Kirkland
 17th North Carolina Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Sharp ?
 42nd North Carolina Colonel John E. Brown
 66th North Carolina Colonel John E. Nethercutt

Artillery

3rd Battalion North Carolina Light Artillery
 Company A (Northhampton Artillery) Captain Andrew J. Ellis
 Company C (detachment) Lieutenant Alfred M. Darden
 10th North Carolina (1st Regiment North Carolina Artillery)
 2nd Company I (Southerland's Battery) Captain Thomas J. Southerland
 Staunton Hill (Virginia) Battery (Paris's Battery) Captain Andrew B. Paris

Cavalry

2nd South Carolina Cavalry (detachment) Colonel Thomas J. Lipscomb

Fort Anderson

Hagood's Brigade	Brigadier General Johnson Hagood
7th South Carolina Battalion	Lieutenant Colonel James H. Rion
11th South Carolina	Colonel F. Hay Gantt
21st South Carolina (remnants)	Colonel Robert F. Graham
25th South Carolina (remnants)	Colonel Charles H. Simonton
27th South Carolina	

Artillery

3rd Battalion North Carolina Light Artillery	
Company B	Captain William Badham, Jr.
Captain Abner Moseley's Company (Sampson Artillery)	Captain Abner A. Moseley
Hedrick's Brigade	Colonel John J. Hedrick (40th North Carolina)
40th North Carolina (3rd Regiment North Carolina Artillery)	Major William Holland
Company A (Lenoir Braves)	Captain Ancram W. Ezzell
Company B (McMillan Artillery)	Lieutenant Macon Bonner
	Lieutenant Selby Harden
Company C (Bridger's Artillery)	Captain John E. Leggett
Company F	Captain John C. Robertson
2nd Company H (Barnes's Battery)	Captain Calvin Barnes
Company I	Captain Charles C. Whitehurst
Taylor's Battery (36th North Carolina)	Lieutenant Colonel John Douglas Taylor
36th North Carolina (2nd Regiment North Carolina Artillery) (remnants)	
1st Battalion North Carolina Heavy Artillery	
Company A (Clark Artillery)	Captain Robert G. Rankin
Company B (River Guards)	Captain John William Taylor
Company C (Brown's Battalion)	Captain William H. Brown
Company D (remnants)	Lieutenant John T. Rankin
71st North Carolina (2nd North Carolina Junior Reserves)	
Company B	
Daniel McDougald's Company (unattached)	
Coast Guard Company (unattached)	
Cavalry 2nd South Carolina Cavalry (detachment)	Colonel Thomas J. Lipscomb

Post of Wilmington

Colonel George Jackson
6th North Carolina Battalion (Armory Guards) Company B
Captain Armand L. DeRosset
78th North Carolina (8th North Carolina Senior Reserves)
Colonel Allmand M. McKoy

7th Regiment Home Guard Colonel James G. Burr
Company A
Company B

Engineers
2nd Engineers Company A Captain John C. Winder
Signal Corps Lieutenant George C. Bain

Cape Fear River batteries (forts Davis, Lee, Campbell, Meares) Colonel Peter C. Gaillard

13th Battalion North Carolina Light/Heavy Artillery
Company D (Adams's Battery) Lieutenant Samuel H.
Forbes ?

68th North Carolina Company C (detachment)
McDougald's Company (detachment) Captain W.J. McDougald
Naval detachment

Organization of Union troops in the Department of North Carolina, Major General John M. Schofield, U.S. Army, commanding, in the field for the Wilmington Campaign, February 11-22, 1865.

XXIII Army Corps Major General Jacob D. Cox
 Second Division
 Second Brigade Colonel Orlando Moore (25th Michigan)
 107th Illinois Major Thomas J. Milholland
 80th Indiana Lieutenant Colonel Alfred D. Owen
 26th Kentucky (100 men from 1st Brigade, 2nd Division)
 23rd Michigan Colonel Oliver L. Spaulding
 111th Ohio Lieutenant Issac R. Sherwood
 118th Ohio Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Sowers

Third Division
 First Brigade Colonel Oscar W. Sterl (104th Ohio)
 12th Kentucky Lieutenant Colonel Laurence Rousseau
 16th Kentucky Lieutenant Colonel John S. White
 100th Ohio Captain Frank Rundell
 104th Ohio Lieutenant Colonel William J. Jordan
 8th Tennessee Captain James W. Berry

Second Brigade Colonel John S. Casement
 65th Illinois Major George H. Kennedy
 Lieutenant Colonel William S. Stewart
 65th Indiana Lieutenant Colonel John W. Hammond
 103rd Ohio Captain Henry S. Pickands
 177th Ohio Colonel Arthur T. Wilcox
 5th Tennessee Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Witt

Third Brigade Colonel Thomas J. Henderson
 112th Illinois Lieutenant Colonel Emery S. Bond
 63rd Indiana Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Morris
 140th Indiana Colonel Thomas J. Brady

Artillery
 1st Ohio Light Artillery, Battery D Lieutenant Cecil C. Reed

Signal Corps (detachment) Lieutenant E.H. Russell

XXIV Army Corps (Terry's Provisional Corps) Major General Alfred H. Terry
 First Division
 Second Brigade Brevet Brigadier General Joseph C. Abbott
 6th Connecticut Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Klein
 7th Connecticut Lieutenant Colonel Seager S. Atwell
 3rd New Hampshire Captain William H. Trickey
 Lieutenant Colonel James F. Randlett
 7th New Hampshire Lieutenant Colonel Augustus W. Rollins

Lieutenant Colonel James F. Randlett
 7th New Hampshire Lieutenant Colonel Augustus W. Rollins
 16th New York Heavy Artillery (Companies A,B,C,F,G,K,M)
 Lieutenant Freeman F. Huntington

Second Division Brigadier General Adelbert Ames
 First Brigade Colonel Rufus Daggett (117th New York)
 3rd New York Lieutenant George E. Avent
 112th New York Lieutenant Colonel Ephraim A. Ludwick
 117th New York Captain Edward Downer
 142nd New York Lieutenant Colonel Albert M. Barney

Second Brigade Lieutenant Colonel James A. Colvin (169th
 New York)
 47th New York Captain Joseph M. McDonald
 Captain Frank A. Butts
 48th New York Major Nere A. Elfwing
 Captain Van Rensselaer Hilliard
 76th Pennsylvania Major Charles Knerr
 97th Pennsylvania Major William H. Martin
 203rd Pennsylvania Captain Heber B. Essington
 Lieutenant Colonel Amos W. Bachman

Third Brigade Lieutenant Colonel Nathan J. Johnson
 (115th New York)
 Colonel Frank Granger (9th Maine)
 13th Indiana Lieutenant Colonel Samuel M. Zent
 9th Maine Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Noble
 4th New Hampshire Captain John H. Roberts
 Lieutenant Colonel Frank Parker
 115th New York Major Ezra Walrath
 Lieutenant Colonel Nathan J. Johnson
 169th New York Lieutenant Colonel James A. Colvin
 Captain Edwin R. Smith

Artillery

1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery (Companies B,G,L) Captain
 William Pride
 16th New York Independent Battery Light Artillery Captain
 Richard H. Lee
 2nd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery (Company A) Captain
 Benjamin F. Everett

Engineers

15th New York Engineers (Companies A,I) Lieutenant Keefe S.
 O'Keefe

XXV Army Corps Brigadier General Charles J. Paine
 Third Division
 Second Brigade Colonel John W. Ames (6th United States
 Colored Troops)

4th U.S. Colored Troops Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers
 6th U.S. Colored Troops Major Augustus S. Boernstein
 30th U.S. Colored Troops Lieutenant Colonel Hiram Oakman
 39th U.S. Colored Troops Colonel Ozora P. Stearns

Third Brigade Colonel Elias Wright (10th U.S. Colored
 Troops)

1st U.S. Colored Troops Lieutenant Colonel Giles H. Rich
 5th U.S. Colored Troops Major William R. Brazie
 10th U.S. Colored Troops Lieutenant Colonel Edward Powell
 27th U.S. Colored Troops Brevet Brigadier General Albert
 Blackman
 Lieutenant Colonel John W.
 Donnellan
 37th U.S. Colored Troops Colonel Nathan Goff, Jr.

Artillery

Battery E, 3rd Artillery, United States Regular Army
 Lieutenant John Myrick

APPENDIX C

Prominent Wilmington men who attended the Union Rally at
the Wilmington Theater on March 14, 1865

<u>Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>
Alexander Adrian	Grocer	Portugal
David Aaron		
D.T. Anderson		
Dr. E.A. Anderson	Physician	North Carolina
W.J. Anderson	Jeweler	North Carolina
F.M. Augustini	Merchant	Corsica
P. Augustini	Merchant	Corsica
John C. Bailey	Mechanic	Norway
Daniel Baker		
L.N. Barlow	Grocer	Rhode Island
Benjamin Bates	Captain	Massachusetts
John G. Bauman	Merchant	Hanover
John Bishop	Hotel Proprietor	North Carolina
Joseph R. Blossom	Merchant	New York
Richard Bradley		
John Bremer	Grocer	Hanover
Michael Carr	Watchman	Ireland
Dr. Thomas B. Carr	Dentist	New York
James Cassidey	Shipbuilder	Massachusetts
George Chadbourn		
James Chadbourn		
W.H. Coleman		
W.J. Corbett		
C.J. Coney		
Miles Costin		
John T. Davis	Carpenter	Pennsylvania
Dr. William Davis	Physician	North Carolina
James Dawson	Merchant	Ireland
John Dawson	Merchant	Ireland
William H. DeNeale	Confectioner	
Thomas Evans	Merchant	Ireland
Phineas W. Fanning	Sign Painter	Massachusetts
Daniel Fergus	Sailor	North Carolina
David P. Foster	Machinist	
George R. French	Merchant	Massachusetts
H. Gerkin		

James Gorman		
James Grant		
John Griffith	Policeman	Pennsylvania
James C. Hall	Policeman	North Carolina
Owen R. Hanchey		
M. Harding		
John M. Hardwick	Grocer	
Levi A. Hart	Machinist	Connecticut
Asa A. Hartsfield	Merchant	
H. Hartz	Merchant	
A.D. Hepburn	Minister	
A.V.W. Hewlett	Merchant	New York
Arthur J. Hill		
M. Hinning		
Dr. Holden		
Sylvanius Holden	Policeman	
Andrew J. Howell	Merchant	North Carolina
C. Hussell	Grocer	
Nathaniel Jacobi	Merchant	
H.M. Jenkins		
Thomas J. Johnson	Day Laborer	
Edwin A. Keith	Merchant	Massachusetts
Edward Kidder	Merchant	Massachusetts
J.T. King	Butcher	Ireland
Williams Larkins	Grocer	
J.E. Lawton		
W.M. Lewis	Tinnier	
Jacob Loeb	Merchant	Bavaria
Dr. William J. Love	Physician	North Carolina
Jacob Lyon	Merchant	
John MacRae	Bank Teller	North Carolina
L. Madison	Printer	
Alfred Martin	Merchant	North Carolina
R.J. McCumber	Farmer	North Carolina
M. McInves		
Henry McLin	Druggist	
Levin Meginney	Teacher	
Joseph Meier	Saloon Proprietor	
James Melvin	Timber Inspector	
M. Minning		
James H. Mitchell	Gas Fitter	England
Daniel B. Morrell	Teacher	New York
C.C. Morse	Steamer Pilot	
Horace H. Munsen		
A.J. Murray	Merchant	
George Myers	Grocer	New York

A.H. Neff	Merchant	
Joseph Neff	Merchant	Connecticut
James H. Parsons	Salesman	
William Patten	Baker	New York
Treat F. Peck	Steamer Captain	Connecticut
William N. Peden	Saloon Proprietor	
J.T. Petteway	Merchant	North Carolina
William Petteway	Merchant	North Carolina
C. Polvogt	Upholsterer	Prussia
William Porter		
R.A. Price	Barkeeper	North Carolina
Dr. William J. Price	Physician	North Carolina
Parker Quince	Farmer	
A.P. Repiton	Minister	Virginia
John Savage	Watchman	North Carolina
Dr. James Schonwald	Physician	
James Shackelford	Merchant	North Carolina
J.P. Sharpstein	Clerk	New York
William H. Sharpstein	Barkeeper	New York
P. Shemill		
Daniel A. Smith	Clerk	North Carolina
J. Spelman		
John W. Straus	Grocer	Hanover
A.G. Taylor	Grocer	North Carolina
G. Tienken	Grocer	Hanover
William R. Utley	Merchant	North Carolina
G.O. Van Amringe	Bookkeeper	Pennsylvania
H. Von Glahn	Merchant	Germany
J. Van Sickle	Tobacconist	New Jersey
A.M. Waddell	Lawyer	
J. Wallace	Merchant	
Harry Webb	Saloon Proprietor	
S.M. West	Merchant	North Carolina
T.S. Whitaker	Bookseller	North Carolina
B.F. White	Paper Hanger	
J. Wilkinson	Confectioner	
George W. Williams	Proprietor	
W.A. Williams	Merchant	North Carolina
Dr. Elijah Willis	Druggist	
John C. Wood	Coroner	
W.H. Woodhall		New Jersey
John Wright	Lawyer	North Carolina

APPENDIX D

Incomplete list of Union casualties suffered during the
Wilmington Campaign, February 11-22, 1865

	<u>killed</u>	<u>wounded</u>	<u>location</u>
<u>XXIII Army Corps</u>			
Second Brigade, Second Division			
107th Illinois	1		Fort Anderson
26th Kentucky	2		Fort Anderson
23rd Michigan	2		Fort Anderson
118th Ohio	1		Fort Anderson
First Brigade, Third Division	4	40	
104th Ohio	1	4	Orton Pond
104th Ohio	1	17	Town Creek
Second Brigade, Third Division			
65th Illinois		13	Fort Anderson
65th Indiana		11	Fort Anderson
Third Brigade, Third Division	1	5	
112th Illinois		2	Fort Anderson
<u>XXIV Army Corps</u>			
Second Brigade, Second Division			
9th Maine	1		
47th New York		1	
48th New York	2	13	
76th Pennsylvania	2		
203rd Pennsylvania	3		
Third Brigade, Second Division			
4th New Hampshire		2	
115th New York	2		
<u>XXV Army Corps</u>			
Second Brigade, Third Division			
4th United States Colored Troops		2	
6th United States Colored Troops		1	
Third Brigade, Third Division			
1st United States Colored Troops	1	11	
5th United States Colored Troops		39	
10th United States Colored Troops		1	

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