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## FAMOUS FORT FISHER

NOTE—In line with giving visitors definite information regarding the State of North Carolina, the editor has secured several stories of which this is the sixth to appear.

The articles already printed include the following: Dec. 29, Industries; Jan. 5, Educational Equipment; Jan. 12, Hall of History, State Museum; Jan. 19, The State Museum; Feb. 2, The Theodosia Burr Alston Portrait.



THE LARGEST and best known of all the Confederate fortifications, as well as the most important, was Fort Fisher, which stood between the Cape Fear river and the ocean on the peninsula known during the Civil War, as "Confederate Point"; but before and since, as "Federal Point."

The place was in 1861 a vast sand bank, which in itself almost formed a fortification along the ocean shore, suggesting its development. Very early in 1861 the State took the first steps towards fortification, and soon after the Confederacy took over the work was carried out after the plans of Colonel William Lamb, which were approved by Generals Stephen G. French, Gabriel Raines, James B. Longstreet, P. G. T. Beauregard and W. H. C. Whiting.

The fort guarded one of the two entrances into the Cape Fear river and to the important port of Wilmington, Fort Caswell guarding the other entrance. The sea face of Fort Fisher was 1898 yards in length and the land face 682 yards. The fort was built entirely to resist the fire of a fleet, and after the first attack upon it, which, strange to say, was not made until late in December, 1864, the Federal engineers named it the "Malakoff of the South." The fort stood that great bombardment and also the one of January 15th following, without damage except to the guns, and it has been stated by eminent engineers that this fort, more than anything else, gave the idea for the present system of fortifications which guard the harbors of the United States.

The peninsula is about half a mile wide, between the river and the surf. The outer slope of the fort was twenty feet high and sodded with the marsh grass, which is so rank, the parapet being twenty feet thick, with an inclination of only one foot. All the cannon were mounted on Columbiad carriages, en barbette, there being no guns in casemates. The gun chambers contained from one to two guns each and between these there were heavy traverses or cross parapets, which were the heaviest ever built, (the purpose of these being to give protection from an enfilading fire, extending some twelve feet or more above the parapet and running back thirty-six feet. Access to each gun chamber was by steps in the rear, and in each traverse was a magazine or a bomb-proof, while passage way penetrated the traverses in the interior, forming other bomb-proof for the gun reliefs. There was no moat as the sands were so shifting that one could not be constructed, but there was an underground system of torpedoes about 600 feet from

the fort, which could be suddenly exploded, while palisades of sharpened logs, nine feet high were pierced for musketry fire by the defenders.

Most of the cannon had been brought from the Norfolk navy yard, and the state of North Carolina had secured a good many of these before it joined the Confederacy, having exchanged with Governor Letcher about 12,000 muskets it had seized at the United States arsenal at Fayetteville, for cannon which Virginia had seized upon the evacuation of the Norfolk navy yards, at which time the Federal forces failed to destroy these great guns, which afterwards furnished the principal means of defense the south had, and in fact brought about the prolongation of the war.

There were also field-pieces for the defense of the sally-port. The entire system of defense was the most modern in the world at that time. At a point where the channel ran close to the beach inside the bar, there was a mound battery sixty feet high, topped by two very heavy guns which gave a plunging fire on the channel and which was designed to prevent the Federal blockade vessels or attacking vessels from entering it, and which permitted the gunners to shoot down upon the decks of iron-clads. This lofty battery was connected with the fort north of it by a light curtain.

At that very point was battery Buchanan with two eleven-inch guns covering not only the inlet but the land approach, with an advanced redoubt; this battery being a citadel to which the garrison of the fort, if over-powered, could retreat and be carried away at night.

The entire length of this vast fortification was over a mile, from the mound to the northeast bastion at the angle of the sea face and the land face of Fort Fisher, and upon this line twenty-four heavy guns were mounted, two of these being Whitworths of the largest size, which were brought through the blockade from England.

North of the fort there were occasional batteries formed from natural sand hills and behind these, light Whitworth guns were carried to cover blockade-runners which were belated or being chased; the Federal blockading vessels being greatly afraid of these weapons, the finest then in use, which were manned by the best gunners in the Confederacy.

Almost all the time during the war prominent English officers were in and around Fort Fisher, which was designed not only to protect Wilmington, but to enable blockade running to be prosecuted. The state owned its own blockade runner, the "Ad-Vance," which had been purchased by its agent in England and named in compliment to the wife of the governor, Z. B. Vance, and which brought in immense quantities of stores for this State.

The Confederacy also had an interest in the cargoes of this blockade runner after a time, while scores of other daring blockade runners were operated with wonderful success, though many were captured, or sunk, or went ashore, the

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