Salt Production in the Lower Cape Fear
Part II. Correspondence on the Federal Raid and the Closure of the State Salt Works at Wilmington

Compiled by LEORA H. MCEACHERN and ISABEL M. WILLIAMS

The State of North Carolina operated two Salt Works during the Civil War. One was located south of Wilmington on a 220 acre tract of land stretching from Myrtle Grove Sound almost to the Cape Fear River. Two to three hundred men were employed there. The second works at Saltville, Virginia, was smaller, and its efficacy decreased after 1863 because of transportation difficulties. Therefore in 1864 the works near Wilmington was the principal supplier of salt to the county agents of the State.

Through the efforts of Jonathan Worth, a Quaker from Randolph County, the State offered employment at the salt works to Quakers and conscientious objectors in lieu of military service. Because of the past anti-slavery sentiment of the Quakers, the salt workers were constantly suspect of anti-war activities. Jonathan Worth's son, David G. Worth of Wilmington, was appointed State Salt Commissioner in 1863.

During 1864 the State Salt Works was an illustration of the struggle between states rights and central government authority which was undermining the Confederacy. Involved in this struggle were three men who could not have worked harder for the welfare and defense of the State, yet whose patience with one another came almost to an end over the issue of closing or removal of the State Salt Works. The men were Zebulon B. Vance, Governor of North Carolina; Jonathan Worth, Treasurer of North Carolina; and Major General W. H. C. Whiting, commanding the Department of Cape Fear, who was answerable to his superior officer, General Beauregard, and to the authorities in Richmond.

The Federal Government was well aware of the importance of salt, and the U.S. Navy had been conducting periodic raids against many private salt operations along the North Carolina Coast.

MAJOR GENERAL W. H. C. WHITING, commanding Department of Cape Fear, to Z. B. Vance, Governor of North Carolina, 22 March 1864: Your attention is respectfully called to the State salt works in this vicinity. Quite a number of able men are employed upon them who should be in service. Their places might be supplied by free negroes. As at present organized, I have strong reason to believe that many of these men are disloyal, especially those from Randolph County. They are suspected, and with good reason, of various attempts to communicate intelligence to the enemy. Many depredations have been laid to them, and I cannot but regard them, as they now are, not only a nuisance, but absolutely prejudicial to the public defense. I am not aware of any law by which salt makers of military age are exempt from military service. [All exemptions had been repealed by General Orders, No. 26, from Richmond, 1 March 1864.] The position of these works, if they are regarded as absolutely necessary to the State, should be moved to the harbor of Smithville, or to the river, where their business could be equally well carried on and such surveillance established over them as would effectively prevent disloyal men from making improper use of their present facilities of communication with the city and the enemy. (1)

U. S. NAVY, REAR ADMIRAL S. P. LEE, Commanding North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, to Lieutenant J. B. Breck, commanding USS Nippon off New Inlet, 22 March 1864: Can you obtain information of any practicable way of reaching and destroying the State salt works . . . ? (2)
[On March 7, Lieutenant Breck had picked up a small boat containing 6 refugees, and subsequently took statements from them.]

U. S. NAVY LIEUTENANT BRECK to Admiral Lee, 1 April 1864:

J. H. Pucket says: "The State salt works in the sound are only protected by a few pickets, and could be easily destroyed. The men employed there are anxious to escape. There is but one battery on the beach between Masonboro Inlet and Fort Fisher." Mr. Pucket offered to pilot boats into Masonboro Sound to destroy the salt works, provided we would take off the people employed there, as they would be conscripted in the rebel Army if the works were destroyed. He seems to think a force of 40 to 50 men would be ample, and that boats could

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MEETING

Time: May 19, 1971, 8:00 p.m.

Place: Kenan Auditorium, UNC-W

Subject: Digging for American History

Mr. Hume is the Director of the Department of Archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg.

RECEPTION

The annual reception for the Society Membership will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Latimer House on May 14, 1971.

Membership dues are payable in May for the year 1971-72 and will save your Society money and a great deal of effort if you will plan to pay promptly.

A Message from the President

The Spaniards in 1526 established the first European settlement in what is now the United States in the Cape Fear. The colony predated St. Augustine, Florida, by thirty-nine years. This group was from Santo Domingo and consisted of about five hundred settlers. Among them were the first Negro slaves on United States soil. After a few months the settlers moved to a site near North Island, close to the present Georgetown, S. C. The Negro slaves staged the first slave revolt in what is now the United States. Indians, disease, and starvation struck, and the colony was abandoned. We can only wonder how different our history might have been had that colony been successful.

As the Society’s fifteenth year of service draws to a close it seems proper that we review briefly our activities of the past twelve months with a sense of accomplishment. We have been fortunate in having an enthusiastic and energetic group of officers, directors, and committee members. Forward strides have been made in several areas, and yet so much remains to be done. Let us nevertheless take pride in what we have accomplished with the positive hope that our successors will excel us. May we serve as a connecting link between the past and the future yet to be. We become what we think about. If we think positive thoughts we can accomplish things.

The membership campaign we conducted this year resulted in a gain of over one hundred new members. Personal contact and solicitation remains our most effective means of adding new members. The entire membership is urged to continuously solicit new memberships among friends and acquaintances.

The area of student memberships presents a great challenge. If they are to be our leaders of tomorrow (and who else is there?) it is our challenging duty and privilege to awaken in our young people an interest in and an appreciation of their rich heritage.

The Society has been active in the effort to save Smith (Baldhead) Island from development and to preserve it as a natural sanctuary. We should continue to work to save for future generations the most outstanding natural areas as well as places of unique historical, archaeological and cultural value to mankind.

There has been no further excavating at Old Town (Charles Town) since the visit of the state archaeologist, Mr. Garry W. Stone, last September due to the lack of professional supervision. Mr. Stone left North Carolina in late fall to take a similar position in Maryland, but he has furnished the Society a detailed professional report on the Old Town excavations which we undertook jointly with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, beginning in the spring of 1969. The site has been carefully covered with black plastic, earth, and brick rubble and we hope to resume the work in the future when competent supervision is available. We are excited and encouraged by what we have found there. This is probably the only seventeenth century village or town site in North Carolina, and it existed from 1664 until 1667.

Extensive electrical repairs have been undertaken at our headquarters, Latimer House, and several other maintenance and repair projects have been accomplished by the House Committee under the able chairmanship of Mr. Henry J. MacMillan. We are grateful for the loan of a number of pieces of appropriate period furniture by Dr. and Mrs. Walter L. Crouch and the gift of two antique brass chandeliers by Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Wyche.

The Archives and Research committee, with the unanimous approval of the Board of Directors, has named the records room the Ida Brooks Kellam Archives Room. This is an honor Mrs. Kellam richly deserves. The Board has approved the use of two additional rooms in the basement of Latimer House for the use of the growing archives collection. The contributions of Mrs. Patrick Welder of Victoria, Texas, to our archives are gratefully acknowledged.

The Publications Committee continued to publish our splendid and scholarly "Bulletin." The "Bulletin" has received statewide praise for its excellence and high standards of scholarship.

The Society has erected a plaque in Innes Park honoring Governor Gabriel Johnston who named Wilmington for his patron, Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington. It is fitting that we should erect this monument adjacent to our historic City Hall and Thalian Hall. Governor Johnston was governor for eighteen years, longer than any other in the history of North Carolina. He especially favored the growth of Wilmington and the Cape Fear region during the colonial period. The bulk of the funds for this monument were provided by Mr. Jack J. Williams, Jr., of Waycross, Georgia, who is a collateral descendant of...
Governor Johnston, and by "The Waycross Journal-Herald," the newspaper of which he is editor and publisher. Mr. O. O. Allsbrook, a former Mayor of Wilmington, contributed generously in funds and in time, Lt. Charles S. Mill, Jr., and Mr. R. V. Asbury, Jr., deserve our appreciation for their valued contributions to the completion of this project.

Our treasurer, Mr. Ben D. Lackey, has rendered a very valuable service to the Society and certainly deserves our thanks for a vital and time-consuming job well done. The two secretaries, Mrs. Duncan P. Randall and Miss Mary C. Warren, have both been most helpful and cooperative. They merit our appreciation for their valuable services. Commander Robert B. Johnston, the vice president, has served as the strong right arm of the president this year and has performed many necessary tasks for which we are most grateful. All the officers and board members have been enthusiastic and diligent in the performance of their duties this year and the Society is indebted to them all. Our immediate past president, the Rev. Walser H. Allen, Jr., has continued his capable support and we appreciate his interest and encouragement. Many persons have worked behind the scenes and without their assistance the tasks would not have been accomplished. We are grateful to all who have assisted in any way this year. Finally, thanks to each member of the Society, both individual and corporate, who by belonging and contributing annual dues have made all that we have accomplished possible. Let's continue to be an active and growing organization.

It has been a great privilege and a high honor to serve as president this year and I shall cherish the memory of these past twelve months all my life. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve in this challenging position and for supporting me in this rewarding endeavor.

We are our past. History is ours.

JOHN H. DEBNAME

SALT PRODUCTION

(Continued from Page 1)

land very near the works. This individual is now at Beaufort, N. C. and has applied to me for a position as pilot. (2)

U. S. Navy, CAPTAIN B. F. SANDS, commanding USS Fort Jackson off New Inlet, to Admiral Lee, 22 April 1864: In conformity with the authority conveyed by your endorsement . . .

I . . . organized an expedition consisting of . . . six boats and 72 men, exclusive of officers, all under the command of Acting Volunteer Lieutenant J. B. Breck, commanding USS Niphon, to destroy the extensive Salt works at Masonboro, N. C. . . . These were the most extensive salt works in the State. Their loss will be severely felt by the enemy, as they were their main reliance for meat packing, and the amount of property destroyed must be hundreds of thousands of dollars. (2)

U. S. Navy, LIEUTENANT BRECK, USS Niphon, report, 22 April 1864: The expedition left at 7 p.m. We proceeded across the bar through heavy breakers without accident, and after some delay, by getting ashore and the narrow channels, reached the State salt works shortly before 9 o'clock. We landed and got in the rear of the works without being discovered, threw out pickets, and commenced the work of destruction . . .

As near as we could ascertain, the work being done so quickly, we destroyed 50 or 60 large Government wagons and harnesses, 1 large steam pump, boilers and engine attached, 1 large windmill, several horse sheds, 7 large boilers, and some 200 salt pans, large vats, and reservoirs, and outbuildings attached. Af-

ter destroying the pans and vats, we threw 30-pounder shell into all the furnaces and under the boilers, which blew them all to fragments. Captured 160 conscripts engaged in the salt works. We learned that there were two companies of artillery and one of cavalry within a mile and a half of us; we learned also that one of our prisoners had escaped and taken the road to Wilmington, that city being but 7 miles from us; fearing that if I remained over another tide, and we could not cross the bar at low water, I might be captured, and having accomplished all I intended to, took as many prisoners as the boats would carry 60 in all, and started for the steamer; got aboard at 11 o'clock without accident of any kind. . . . I have to express my high admiration of both officers and men . . . There was no leaving their posts, and when ordered to search the surrounding houses no persons were insulted or private property injured. . . . My thanks also are due to our guides, Orrel and Bucket . . . (2)

WILMINGTON JOURNAL, 22 April 1864: Early last night some Yankees, supposed one boat load, landed on Masonboro Sound, and burned the State Salt Works. It is believed that they were piloted [sic] through the Sound by one John Orrel, who made his escape to the enemy some somths since. (10)

GENERAL WHITING to General Beauregard, commanding the Department of Southeastern Virginia and North Carolina, 22 April 1864: Nine barges of the enemy, piloted by a renegade, landed last night at Masonboro, at the State salt works, which they destroyed. They carried off a number of Conscripts or employees . . . The men carried off were in the habit of daily visiting the city to haul and dispose of salt, are fully aware of the late movements and of every exposed condition, and will no doubt give all the information they have to the enemy. If your operations will not permit you to leave a brigade with me, I beg you will present this to the Department, which has been fully advised of the circumstances of this command. I have not at present sufficient force to perform the heavy garrison duties of the city. (2)

GENERAL WHITING to Governor Vance, 22 April 1864: If the works are regarded as indispensable to the State it will be necessary to remove them to Cape Fear River. No more salt works will be permitted on Masonboro Sound. (2)

DAVID WORTH, State Salt Commissioner, to Governor Vance, 22 April 1864: The enemy . . . were not discovered till within 50 yards of the works. Immediately, on landing, they made prisoners of every one they could, and set fire to the works. They attempted to destroy the pans by throwing shells into the furnaces. They did but little damage in this way— not breaking a pan, and displacing but one. The sheds over the works being dampened by the steam from the boiling pans, burned slowly, and were soon extinguished, after the departure of the enemy. The chief damage done was to the steam pump and engine. They are badly damaged, and it will take some time to repair them and get them in position again. If I could pump water to-day, two-thirds of the works could be run. The blacksmith shop, wagon shop and tools, and stables were entirely consumed. Mules and horses were not injured. Forty-seven men were missing this morning. Of this number but one, so far as I can learn, is even suspected of having willingly gone. I mention this latter fact, for the reason that I learn it is rumored, and I understand believed by the Commanding General, that they were glad of the chance to go. I have just returned from the works, and have thoroughly enquired into the matter, and am fully convinced that they were forced to go. I may be misinformed. The landing was so sudden and unlooked for, that the alarm could not be given in time for the
men to escape. Some of those who did escape were fired on. If I am required to comply with [General Whiting's] direction, it will be equivalent to putting a stop to the works. It is impossible with the means at my command, to move, and run the works on the Cape Fear to advantage. The experience I have already had in boatting water, satisfies me that it will not do to make salt on a large scale, on the Cape Fear River. (8)

U. S. Navy, ADMIRAL LEE to General B. F. Butler, 27 April 1864: Captain Sands, commanding the USS Fort Jackson, reports to me that on the night of the 22d instant he sent two boats on shore near New Inlet to reconnoiter Myrtle Sound and vicinity and obtain information in regard to the strength and position of the enemy. The party was guided by a refugee named Puckett, who was picked up some days previously, and acted also as guide in the expedition that destroyed the State salt works near Masonboro on the 21st instant. The officer in charge of the party was conducted by this man to the house of a Lieutenant in the Masonboro Home Guard named Eli H. Davis, who came off with them and furnished the following information in substance: That the present force in Fort Fisher and the batteries adjacent consists of about 1,000 men, and the force in and around Wilmington about 2,000, General Beauregard and General Whiting commanding; in addition to which some 300 conscripts, who had been employed at the salt works, were sent there after these works were destroyed; that Wilmington could, in his opinion, be taken with little difficulty now by landling troops at Masonboro and marching across. The distance is short and the road good and undefended. The batteries at Wilmington mount but about ten or fifteen guns and they are "old-fashioned smoothbores." . . .

Mr. Davis . . . states that the destruction of the salt works by the expedition was entire. Their daily average of salt was about 500 bushels, they being the principal salt works of the State. . . . When the shells exploded in the salt works it was thought in Wilmington that we had landed in force at Masonboro, to march on the former city. . . . The morning after our raid all the conscripts left by us after the destruction of the works and State property (some 300) were marched off to Wilmington for the Army, as the work of salt making for the State was spoiled. (2)

GENERAL WHITING to Governor Vance, 29 April 1864: I have received your letter of the 27th ultimo, from which I perceive you could not have been aware of my letters of March 22 and April 22 on the subject of the State salt-works . . . I am anxious and willing to aid and protect any State enterprise, but at present and ever since the attack of the enemy on those works my men have been engaged in daily and nightly contest from Masonborough to Fort Fisher. The enemy are sending every day and landing every night for information. I have no doubt of the disloyalty of many men employed at the State salt-works. I cannot trust them at that point of the coast. I am entirely willing, however, to aid in placing the State salt-works at any point which may be selected under the control of my batteries, where communication with the enemy cannot be had. With regard to the men employed at the salt-works . . . I have called the attention of the Conscription Bureau to them. The authority to detail them is, I believe, vested in the War Department, and by it in the commanding generals of departments. (1)

[General Whiting left General Jebbert in command of the Cape Fear Forts at the end of April and took temporary duty on General Beauregard's staff in Southern Virginia. At his own request, he was returned on May 22 because of a "large amount of very important work to attend to at Wilmington." (1)

During the spring and early summer months, Governor Vance was engaged in a vigorous and bitter campaign for governor of the state against William Holden, editor of the "North Carolina Standard," and a "Peace at any Price" advocate. In 1863, Holden and other conservative leaders had backed Vance for governor, but because of Holden's increasing peace sentiments, the two split their allegiance in 1863. "The campaign was one of intense feeling in which the issue in a sense came to be the withdrawal of the State from the Confederacy. Excitement increased by the discovery of the existence of a secret and treasonable society, called the Heroes of America, but known commonly, on account of its badge, as the Red Strings. It actively supported Holden."—Hamilton, J. G. de B. "History of North Carolina. Vol. 3"

GENERAL WHITING to David Worth, 6 June 1864: I learn that your salt-works, ordered to be discontinued in the locality where they now are and moved to some other where they will be less dangerous than they now are to the security of this place, are still in operation. I now notify you to remove your force from any portion of the sound east of Wilmington. Orders have been issued that they will no longer be permitted to work where they are. (1)

GENERAL WHITING to Governor Vance, 7 June 1864: It is absolutely necessary for the security of this port and part of the State that all public and private salt-works be removed from Masonborough Sound. This measure is more especially required now than heretofore, owing to the absence of troops in the field. I have therefore notified salt makers. Please to give directions as to the disposition of the salt property. I have already received orders to send all conscripts to their proper camps. . . . The constant communication kept up with the enemy from this locality, their increased force, their daily landings for the purpose of abducting negroes and procuring information, together with the proximity of these sounds to the city, make it imperative to occupy this belt of sounds solely for military purposes. (1)

JONATHAN WORTH to David Worth, 8 June 1864: Governor Vance is in the western part of the State and your communication may not reach him for some days. . . . You ought respectfully to insist to the General that, as you are a State officer, that he ought not to require you to break up a great State work, until you have the sanction of the Governor . . . If you disband before you hear from the Governor you will be censured. (5)

JONATHAN WORTH to William A. Graham, former Governor of North Carolina and now President pro-temp of the Confederate Senate in Richmond, 8 June 1864: My son [David Worth] communicated [the April 22 order of General Whiting to move the salt works] immediately to Governor Vance . . . On 27th April the Governor replied, directing him to continue the work where he was, and at the same time he wrote to General Whiting asking him by what authority and for what reason he had issued the aforesaid order. My son, supposing that he would not be interrupted, went on with the work with several flats by which he greatly cheapened the expense of getting wood and had everything going on harmoniously and successfully, and heard nothing more from General Whiting or the Governor on the subject until the day before yesterday when General Whiting had an order served on him, stating that he had learned the works, ordered to be stopped some time ago, are still running and notified him that they must run no longer. . . . If the old [Saltville, Virginia] works shall not be captured and should produce enough, it could not be distributed for want of transportation. The works [at Wilmington] can be immediately closed and reimbursed all the money the State has
advanced and has supplied salt at prices saving $600,000 to
customers. I know not what my son will do but suppose he will
decline to remove the works until the Governor can be heard
from, and in the meantime may be put under military arrest.
Whether you can do anything to arrest this high-handed pro-
ceeding I know not, but I have thought it expedient to inform
you of the facts. (5)

GENERAL WHITING to General Beauregard, 10 June
1864: My order has not yet been executed. I communicated with
Gov. Vance he has directed Mr. Worth to move Salt works
elsewhere. The removal will be suspended until I hear from you.
(9)

JONATHAN WORTH to David Worth, 10 June 1864:
If Whiting breaks up the works it will raise a storm through-
out the State. I cannot suppose that the Governor will yield
to his demand, because such yielding would bring a storm on
him. It is his duty to see the laws executed. The pretext that
for the disloyalty of many of your hands endangers the safety of
Wilmington and therefore warrants him in breaking up a State
work, will not do. With the Writ of Habeeus Corpus suspended
and the interpretation put on the Act by the President, Gen-
eral Whiting can order the arrest of any body whom he sus-
pects, without any oath as to probable cause. He can stop the
work by arresting all—or cripple it by arresting in part. Let
him have those arrested whom he suspects, and if he can show
that there has been any complicity by any of them with the ene-
emy or any communication with the enemy or any other conduct
inconsistent with their allegiance to the State or the Confed-
ery, they would be properly detained—and you would not
retain any to whom just grounds of suspicion should attach.
I regard General Whiting's order as a great injury and insult
to the State, and that you ought not to yield obedience to it
till the governor shall be heard from, even if you are put
under arrest! If the Governor should yield, still he has no power
to remove you and there would be much for you to do for
some months to come in winding up the business and making
what salt you can on the River. . . . The Governor has no
power over the Salt Works. He can't order them discontinued.
His sole duty is to see the law executed. So in continuing
to execute your duty as well as you can, you will sustain
your own dignity, and deserve the respect of the State. If the
failure of the Governor to do his duty shall cause you to resign
in disgust, the vacancy would have to be filled and would
probably be filled by some tool of General Whiting and in a
very short time you would be in the ranks of the army and
mortified and derided for deserting an honorable and respon-
sible duty to the State. Keep cool, therefore, and act prudently
and all will round up right. (5)

[The Ordinance creating the Salt Commission passed by the N.
C. Legislature Dec. 1861 stated: "... This ordinance shall con-
continue in force and operation during the continuance of the
present war, unless the Legislature shall otherwise order."]

W. A. GRAHAM to J. A. Seddon, Secretary of War for the
Confederacy, 13 June 1864: These works [N. C. State Salt
Works] and their continued operation are of so much import-
ance to the State and country, that they should be kept up, even
if a military force be necessary for their protection. . . . The
Governor of the State is absent from Raleigh, and that alone can
account for your not having received from him a remon-
strance against the order in question. (1)

First Endorsement [to the above letter], J. A. CAMPBELL,
Acting Secretary of War, to Adjutant-General, 15 June 1864:
The reference is made that Major-General Whiting may sub-
mit such explanations and remarks as may be necessary. (1)

Second Endorsement, H. L. CLAY, Assistant Adjutant-Gen-
eral, 4 July 1864: Respectfully referred through General Lee
to Major-General Whiting, whose attention is invited to in-
dorsement of Secretary of War. (1)

JOHN W. HINSDALE, Colonel, 72nd Regiment: On 26
June the [4th] Battalion [Junior Reserve] was ordered to re-
port to General W. H. C. Whiting, at Wilmington, the only
remaining port of the Confederacy. The battalion thereupon
was stationed at Camp Davis, near Wilmington, on Masonboro
Sound [north bank of Hewletts Creek]. . . . The salt works,
from which large supplies of salt were obtained for the army,
were in the vicinity of this camp, and were guarded by the
battalion. (7)

GOVERNOR VANCE to J. A. Seddon, 27 June 1864: You
are perhaps aware that this state has works for the manufacture
of salt, near Wilmington, that have been in operation more
than two years. They constitute now the principle dependence
of our people for a supply of salt, & in case of accident to the
Va. Salt works they would constitute our entire dependence.
For some cause or other, especial hostility has been displayed to
wards them by Genl. Whiting. Frequent attempts have been
made to conscript the hands employed & other petty annoy-
ances have been offered. Not long since he issued an order to
Mr. Worth, the State Superintendent, in the most perem-
ptory terms; to remove the works from their location on Mason-
boro Sound. I ordered the superintendent not to do so, but to
continue his operation; & I respectfully requested Genl. Whit-
ing, if there existed so great a military necessity as to require
North Carolina to suspend the manufacture of salt, please to
inform me of it. Instead of doing so, after his return from
Petersburg, he issued another peremptory order to the superin-
tendent to remove the works immediately and seized the boats
by which they were supplied with wood, thus absolutely stop-
ing the manufacture of salt in defiance of the laws of this
state, in contempt of my authority & to the very great injury of
the State at large. If any military reason, sufficient to justify
this, exists, he has not seen fit to inform me of it. . . . Before
submitting to this outrage upon the rights and dignity of the
State, as well as its vital interests, I deem it proper to appeal
to you, in the hope that this officer can be made to do both
what is right and proper. If he can, then I have no objection to his
remaining in command at Wilmington—Otherwise I shall be
compelled to ask his removal. The State must have salt, & the
removal of the works from their present position is equivalent
to the abandonment of its manufacture, as there is no other
point available on the coast of this state, where salt could be
manufactured at a price, that would put it at all in the reach
of the poor. To be compelled to change their present com-
ommodious location, at a cost of from $60,000 to $75,000, at
the mere bidding of an officer, who has not sufficient respect for
the Chief Magistrate of the State, in which he commands, to
ask his consent or assign a reason therefor, is more than I feel
called upon to bear. If a military guard for the protection of
these works, or for the prevention of communication with
the enemy by the employees, cannot be furnished by Genl. Whiting, I will furnish it myself. (3)

JONATHAN WORTH to Governor Vance, 30 June 1864:
As your attention is necessarily distracted by innumerable cases,
allow me to submit my views as to the Salt works—briefly and
in writing because you are continually so surrounded with
Company that I can see no other fit mode of doing it. If you
doom them of any importance I will confer with you, if you
desire it, at any time which may suit you. . . . It was well
known that labor could not be had to carry on the work, and
produce salt at prices in reach of the poor, except by the in-
duction of military exemption. The Convention therefore exempted them. There are some two hundred of them, employed in cutting wood, transporting it and the salt, procuring and transporting supplies, etc. . . . At present the hands regard themselves as under your protection. When enrolling officers threaten to conscript them, in violation of what they consider their rights, it begat hatred toward the Government. I understand that so far from being disloyal, they will almost unanimously vote for you; but if they are conscripted they will feel injured and may endeavor by desertion or otherwise to escape service. If they were fighting men they would not be salt hands. They will make poor soldiers. The vital interests of the State seem to me to require that you exert your whole power and authority to protect the works, both by addressing Whiting, and the Secretary of War. I mention the fact that the hands will vote for you, as an evidence of their loyalty—and not for the purpose of having any influence on your action. I know that it ought not and will not have any influence.

(5)

GENERAL WHITING to Governor Vance, 4 July 1864: Your letter of the 30th ultimo, about salt-works of the State, is received. While I fully acknowledge the need the State has to procure salt for the poor, I see no reason to change anything I have reported concerning the prejudice of these establishments to a much more important matter—the safety of this place—which concerns not only North Carolina, but the whole country. On the contrary, from the movements of the enemy at this very time what I advocate with regard not only to these works but to all families living on the belt of the sound, viz. their entire and absolute removal. This has been approved by General Beauregard, and no doubt will be so by the War Department. In consideration of your request, however, the works may still proceed until the War Department is heard from, unless indeed, which is more than likely, the enemy attempt the coast. Some other means than boats must be had to procure fuel, for the reasons are that I am filling all the channels of the sound with torpedoes and obstructions, and no reliance can be had that the boats may not be improperly used. Private works use no boats. (1)

JONATHAN WORTH to his brother, Joseph A. Worth, 7 July 1864: I think General Whiting will be allowed to break up the State Salt Works. The Governor makes, as I think, but a feeble effort to prevent this calamity and insult to the State. He protests earnestly. This is disregarded. He is so engrossed with the election . . . that he can bestow little thought on the loss of the salt works. . . . So, I think the salt-works will be sacrificed—How then is the State to get Salt? (5)

WILMINGTON JOURNAL, 18 July 1864: We have been a good deal surprised to find that the conservatives of the "Straitest Sect" have been finding cause for disagreement with Mr. D. G. Worth, State Salt Commissioner. The charge made in a letter to the "Progress" from Moore County that Mr. Worth had employed anything like threats to influence and control the votes of the detailed men at the works, in favor of Governor Vance, we must believe to be wholly inaccurate. It would be altogether unlike what we know of Mr. Worth. (10)

J. A. SEDDON, Secretary of War, to General Whiting, 19 July 1864: Governor Vance, by letter, demonstrates strongly against breaking up State salt-works, near Wilmington. In lieu he proposes to place adequate guard there to prevent all communications, to be under your command. Will not this effect your purpose and yet avoid conflict with the State or disturbance of useful industry? (1)

GENERAL WHITING to J. A. Seddon, 20 July 1864: I will endeavor to avoid all conflict with State. The guard Governor Vance proposes will be welcome if composed of better material than his salt-makers. (1)

GENERAL WHITING to Governor Vance, 28 July 1864: I have at length positive information that at least two thirds of the Conscription at the State Salt works belong to the treasonable organization called "H.O.A." [Heroes of America]. Their mode of communicating with the enemy has also been ascertained. . . . I recommend strongly that the whole force be turned over to the Conscription Camp for distribution in the Army and their places be supplied by free negro or slave labor. As I am still pursuing my investigations into this traitorous association and hope to be able to detect some in overt act, you will see the reason for making this letter personal and confidential. (4)

[The election for Governor of North Carolina between Z. B. Vance and William Holden was held on August 4, 1864, and Vance was returned to office by a large majority. Holden carried only two counties. In Wilmington there were 548 votes for Vance, 12 for Holden. In Masonboro there were 59 votes for Vance, 3 for Holden. (10)]

GOVERNOR VANCE to David Worth, 18 August 1864: It will be with some difficulty that the State can furnish the two Companies required by Gen'l Whiting as a guard for the State Salt Works and I am induced to adopt another course if practicable—1st—Can you remove the works to Confederate Point [site of Fort Fisher] or any other place under protection of our guns and if so at what cost of convenience or money? 2nd—Can you designate the disloyal men in your employ for discharge or conscription, whose removal would satisfy Gen'l Whiting that no guard is necessary? I can get you other hands in place of all such. If any of your men are actually disloyal I don't wish to protect them and Gen'l Whiting avows most positively that he has proof of their constant communication with the Enemy. But we must have salt. (4)

DAVID WORTH to Governor Vance, 20 August 1864: In reply to your first inquiry I have to say that removing and running the works at Confederate Point is impracticable, they cannot be removed for want of means and could not be run to any advantage, if at all for want of wood. The wood within reach of there, that has not already been consumed for fire wood and building purposes is wanted for these purposes by the Military authorities at the Fort. The cost of removing would exceed the means at my command. I think it would not fall short of $40,000. The loss of time would amount to at least 2 or 3 months. As to the 2nd inquiry I would long since have designated the disloyal men had it been in my power and have offered to cooperate with Gen'l Whiting and with detectives who have been sent here to ferret out the mattter and discover the offenders. There is a detective now here on the special business who I have offered to assist in any and every way I could. I doubt and in fact I do not believe that the men have constant communication with the enemy—I do not believe they have communication at all—further than by occasional deserters. If Gen'l Whiting has proof of their constant communication, why does he not exercise his authority in bringing that proof to bear on the guilty ones? . . . The works are in condition to be run with success and economy at their present location for at least 6 months to come. (4)

JONATHAN WORTH to David Worth, 20 August 1864: The delays of the Governor are exceedingly annoying to you. They spring from no indifference but the want of business habits and the pressure of many responsible duties. He seems determined to protect the works. . . . The Governor told me
he had received your letter and had ordered one Company of troops placed under Whiting's order—but that he required two companies. He says he will have it fixed somehow. Be patient as possible and write him so often as you can consistent with your sense of propriety. (5)

JONATHAN WORTH to Worth & Company, 23 September 1864: Governor Vance never mentions the Salt Works and I presume never thinks of them save when the subject is brought to his attention, which I have foreborne to do lately. It is now less than two months till the meeting of the General Assembly, when it is to be hoped something efficient may be done. (5)

GOVERNOR VANCE to General Whiting, 28 September 1864: I judge from the tenor of your private letter received yesterday that you infer that I did you injustice in expressing a want of confidence in your command of Wilmington, etc. I desire to say for myself fully and frankly all that I have felt or expressed on that subject. You are universally (so far as I have learned) regarded as an officer of a high order of talent in your profession. In the fall of 1862 I solicited the President to send you to Wilmington, and my own judgment (freely admitted to be worth little) of the works erected for the defense of the place concurs with that of better judges that they are well and judiciously built. Only one thing has ever occurred to impair the universal confidence which you inspired by your diligence in fortifying the town, and that was a very general impression that you drank too much. . . . I don't think I have done you any injustice, and I know I have no unfriendly feeling, though, to confess the truth, general, you have tried me sorely on more than one occasion. Citizens have been shot down wantonly in the streets by your patrols; my trains have been frequently seized, my boats seized, and salt-works stopped. . . . You have no idea of the complaints made to me . . . with which I have declined to interfere. I believe you to be the man for the defense of Wilmington, and have endeavored earnestly to get along harmoniously with that great end in view. I have even swallowed in silence some very rough and discourteous remarks of a personal character, more than once reported as having fallen from you, conscious of my own infirmity in this respect in moments of irritation. But I can assure you in all truth and sincerity that none of these things moved me to express a want of confidence in you. (1)

ISABELLA MCDONALD to Governor Vance, 2 October 1864: Rushes mills, montgomery County governor vance i have the impudence to rite to you a bout my son he war in the state salt works he wasnet conscripted before he went nor inroled he was their 11 months he was take of a last june 1864 as a deserter which dont belong to our giration . . . nothing has greaved me more in this life than taken him of in that way we are all vance people in this neighborhood and i hope you will do somthing for my son or give som direction how to get him back a gane to the salt works a gain if you please the wife [of] Alexander Mcdonald the mother of Allen C. Mcdonald Isabella Mcdonald your your friend [Written across the letter] It will be impossible now to get him back to the works. We have more hands there now than are required. ZBV (3)

GENERAL WHITING to Governor Vance, 4 October 1864: . . . With regards to the salt-works, we are at issue, but only as to the mode and place of supply. Both my correspondence and action were inforced by my commanding generals, and still your salt-works are permitted to go on, though I am well satisfied of their prejudicial effect now as ever, of the disloyalty of the operatives, of their constant communication with the enemy, who land nightly and prowl even to the vicinity of the city. Put yourself in my situation, held responsible not only by generous people but the whole country, and satisfied that near your capital there was a dangerous and disloyal organization carried on by men who ought to be in the ranks, especially when the old and young were called out. I really don't think you would hesitate long in your line of action. Your boats have been prohibited in the sound, because all boats are dangerous there. I would not trouble the salt-works if I had any troops at all, and I never did while the War Department kept a proper force here. Since Martin's and Clingman's brigades have been away, the enemy are constantly coming in and receiving information. The newspapers which reach them get every other day and only one day old. . . . None of the people in the district which I command have suffered by the war the hundredth part of what a very large portion of the community has had to endure, and they have no right to complain. I have been compelled to adopt many measures which are harsh and hard, but it has been done without favor and with the constant endeavor to press as little as possible upon the people. Those who are willing to make any sacrifices, and who expect to live just as in peace times, and who in this city are devoted to extortation and speculation, are the only persons who would so unjustly and so shamefully attempt to extort your Excellency's mind in regard to my course here. It is natural, and nothing else is expected of such. (1)

GOVERNOR VANCE to James A. Seddon, 14 October 1864: I am informed that my hands at the State salt-works, Saltville, Va., are conscripted. Can you not forbid it? You have stopped my works at Wilmington; for God's sake don't deprive this whole community of the means of living for the sake of forty men. (1)

JONATHAN WORTH to Joseph A. Worth, 12 November 1864: . . . At the instance of Whiting and Bragg [the Governor] has abolished the salt-works—by what authority I do not know. He proposes, I understand, that we have the works removed to S.C. [South Carolina]. This cannot be done without an appropriation, and I suppose the General Assembly will hardly make one. It would be an instance of State servility to military arrogance and nonsense, to which I think the pride of the General Assembly would not stoop. (5)

DAVID WORTH to Governor Vance, Telegram, 15 November 1864: If the men are to be taken [into the army] will not those who have teams be permitted to take them home. Gen. Whiting requests all the teams to be turned over to Quartermaster & all the men sent to the army. I cannot go to South Carolina till this matter is settled. (4)

DAVID WORTH to Governor Vance, telegram, 15 November 1864: General Whiting orders me to remove trains and moveable property and all men belonging to works today before sun-down & also to send men to the enrolling officer on arrival. I am obeying your order to remove as far as possible. answer imm'd'y. (4)

DAVID WORTH to Governor Vance, telegram, 16 November 1864: The order for conscription of my men comes from War Department. The men are all here. Genl Bragg will allow only the teamsters to return to the Sound to move property. The balance will be in the way here what shall I do with them and the state and private teams. (3)

GENERAL BRAXTON BRAGG to Governor Vance, telegram from Wilmington, 17 November 1864: You are misinformed. My only action was that reported to you in my letter of the fifteenth inst. Yesterday upon the report of your agent
that he was prevented by a Junior officer from saving all the State property I gave the necessary orders to effect this object. Suspend any action until you hear from me in writing and I am sure you will have no cause to complain. (3)

DAVID WORTH to Governor Vance, 25 November 1864: Before going to the coast of S. C. to look out for a location for the works, I have been gathering up all the information I could with reference to the practicality etc. of erecting them there—I am of the opinion, from the information I have, that they cannot be erected there, especially at this season of the year, for the lack of bricks to build the furnaces. There are none to be had along the coast & they cannot be made in the winter season. The cost & difficulty of transporting them from here would be so great as to make it quite out of the question. The only remaining location on the coast of this State which is at all eligible or practicable is at Lockwood Folly Inlet, in Brunswick County, about fifteen miles Southwest of Smithville [Southport]. The cost of moving the works there would be quite heavy, but not near as great as moving them to S.C. I am informed that wood is comparatively convenient—in great abundance there. If this point should be selected, a good deal of the material at the old location, including bricks, tanks, etc. could be made available which would otherwise be lost. Bricks can be obtained on the River above here & I have the means of transporting them at my command. If this location should be decided on, I would still ask for an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars, though it would not all be needed for the re-erection of the works. I shall need a considerable amount for laying in supplies of meat for the coming year. The same objection will probably be made by the military authorities here to the erection of the works there, that were made to their continuance on Masonboro Sound. They would be quite as much & probably more exposed to raids from the enemy, & would be cut off from water communication with this place in the event of the capture of our Forts at the mouth of the River. Notwithstanding this, I think it the best location that can be selected now. (3)

JONATHAN WORTH to David Worth, 27 November, 1864: The subject of the Salt works has not been discussed much in or out of the Assembly, and it is not likely to be until your reports and the Governor's correspondence are published. I have little doubt but they will be kept up, either by removing them to Lockwood Folly—or re-establishing them on the Sound where they were. I think you should come here [Raleigh], whether you propose to continue to Superintendent them or not, in order to give full explanation & awaken interest in them. (6)

THE NEW YORK WORLD Newspaper: The "Norfolk Regime" today contains the following correspondence from Fort Fisher dated the 28th inst. [December 1864] The North Carolina Salt Works, at Masonborough, were destroyed by fire last Saturday [December 24th Naval bombardment before the first battle of Fort Fisher.] (10)

FOOTNOTES
3. Vance Executive Papers, N. C. Department of Archives and History.
9. Writings Papers, N. C. Department of Archives and History.
10. Wilmington Journal, April, July, August, December, 1864.