THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

New Season
As we begin a new fall season, your Society is a strong and effective organization making real progress in its objective to “collect, preserve and disseminate knowledge and information regarding the history of the Lower Cape Fear.” Its activities are having a worthwhile effect on the overall area development and improvement.

Past Leadership
Our position is attributable to the interest of the membership and the dedication of the officers, directors, and committees during the past five years, especially your former presidents. Under the leadership of our First President, Mr. Hargrove Bellamy, the Society was soundly organized and chartered. We have built on this firm base. Under Dr. B. Frank Hall all activities of the Society expanded and major efforts were made to protect Fort Fisher. The work flourished under Third President Henry Jay MacMillan. His detailed knowledge of history, his writings, and his vigorous promotion of all programs have stimulated renewed enthusiasm for history.

I pledge my best efforts and solicit your continued assistance and dedication in our voluntary work program.

Year Ahead
During the coming year it is hoped that we can: make progressive steps to catalogue significant buildings and establish plans for their preservation; have our awareness of history stimulated by interesting programs; enjoy participating in the centennial celebration of the Confederacy; see city planning made a virile part in the City of Wilmington through a department that recognizes the importance of our past history to our cultural and economic growth; increase our membership in order that more individuals may enjoy the fellowship, and through this kindred interest the base of our support will be spread and our roots deepened.

It is particularly hoped that we shall see our membership continue to support other cultural organizations in the area. We need a cultural center for our various groups and steps should be taken in this direction. The structure could logically include our headquarters and a museum.

Committees
Your Board of Directors has met and new committees have been appointed. The work of the Society is largely carried on through these groups working in their various fields. The membership is encouraged to contact the committee chairman and advise him if you have time and interest to devote to a particular subject. I will personally welcome any suggestions that you have for improving our work.

Fort Fisher
With the Confederate Centennial approaching, our program committee has arranged, quite fittingly, that the first meeting of the fall should focus our attention on Fort Fisher, which is this period’s most important landmark in our area. We are grateful to Mr. Jack Davis for speaking to us and sharing some of his research in this area.

We are particularly pleased that dreams and efforts of the past have finally been realized and the State of North Carolina has appropriated funds to the Department of Archives and History to start a most timely, on the site, research project. The program was launched in a significant manner with speeches, rifle salutes and band music on the evening 2 July. Guest speaker was Edward C. Gass, Assistant Executive Director of the National Civil War Centennial. W. S. Tarlton, Superintendent of Historic Sites of the State Department, discussed the restoration plans. The colorful Guilford Grays of Greensboro acted as Honor Guards. Mrs. E. A. Anderson, President of the North Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy marked the beginning of the work by the symbolic turning of earth. The Southeastern North Carolina Beach Association sponsored the program with the Historical Society cooperating in making the plans, and Dr. B. Frank Hall served as Master of Ceremonies. Exceeding all expectations was a crowd of over 500 spectators.

Site Archeology
Mr. Al Honeycutt, representing the State Department of Archives and History, is now in residence in Wilmington and is engaged full time at Fort Fisher. His work, for the present, will be archeological in nature and is thus somewhat comparable with that being performed at Old Brunswick by Mr. Stanley South.

We are looking forward to hearing detailed plans for the work. It is felt that continued efforts will result in Fort Fisher’s receiving the recognition and development it deserves. However, this will not be accomplished by the State alone, but it will be possible only if we have local promotion and support. I trust that the enthusiastic reception given to the launching of the work is an indication of the assistance which will be given by the public in general and the members of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society in particular.

—LESLIE N. BONEY, JR.
MEETING

Time and Place: Friday, November 18, 1960, St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church, 8 P.M.
Speaker: Mr. R. Jack Davis, Principal of Roland-Grise Junior High School.

Topic: The Defense of Wilmington, 1861-1865.

Mr. R. Jack Davis received both the B.S. and Masters Degrees in History from East Carolina College, the Masters in 1951. Since that time he has served in the New Hanover County school system and is now the Principal of the new Roland-Grise Junior High School.

A native of Pennsylvania, Mr. Davis became interested in the Civil War while at college, but this interest has long since blossomed into a full-time hobby. In his studies, not just Fort Fisher but the defense of the entire Wilmington area has been given the emphasis of many years' special research, and Mr. Davis is a widely sought speaker on the subject. He has become a collector of swords, guns, letters, papers, buttons—anything to do with the Confederacy. He told the U. D. C. when he spoke for them recently that only the unfortunate circumstance of his birthplace stood in the way of his being a true Southerner, and that he was proud of his first opportunity to stand before and salute the Confederate flag.

BOOKS


This charming book about the history of Wilmington from 1730 to 1890 has been republished by Mr. Howell's daughter, Laura Howell Norden. Most of the matter in it was originally published in the Wilmington Morning Star in serial form in 1927. Though he included some stories of "curious interest, not strictly historical," Mr. Howell searched diligently among original sources of record for his facts, in the hope that the people of Wilmington would see that "the history of the city should be appreciated, and considered as a thing of value which may not be purchased by a community not rightfully owning it."

CIVIL WAR CENTENNIAL

In 1967 Congress appropriated funds and organized a National Civil War Centennial Commission. The program of the Commission during the four year period, 1961-1965, is a National observance of the one hundredth anniversary of the Civil War.

The individual States were asked to form similar commissions on a State level, and in accordance with this request the North Carolina Confederate Centennial Commission was authorized by the General Assembly of 1960. The Commission in North Carolina consists of a Chairman, twenty-eight members, and a professional staff of an Executive Secretary and Administrative Assistant.

It has been announced that the New Hanover County Committee consists of: Henry J. MacMillan, Mrs. J. S. Crowley, Mrs. George Allie Moore, Jr., Glenn M. Tucker, and William G. Houch.

A proclamation from President Eisenhower on January 8, 1961, will mark the official opening of the Centennial. A day of prayer will be observed and special services held in our churches throughout the Nation.

GIFTS RECEIVED SINCE MAY 20, 1960

The Society gratefully acknowledges gifts from R. V. Asbury, Jr., Leslie N. Boney, Jr., Mrs. Carl C. Campbell, Hector H. Clark, Miss Caroline D. Flanner, Mrs. Addison T. Flanner, Mrs. J. D. Hewlett, Henry J. MacMillan, Mrs. W. D. MacMillan, Miss Mae Pendleton, Mrs. Leon R. Pierce, Robert E. Tapp, and George W. Tienczen.
PERSPECTIVE ON THE BLOCKADE

By Winston Broadfoot

SIX DAYS after the fall of Fort Sumter President Lincoln declared the Southern coast from South Carolina to Texas blockaded. Following the succession of North Carolina and Virginia the blockade was extended to cover those states. At this time (April, 1861) the Federal fleet consisted of only 60 ships in commission, 24 of them steamers scattered about the world.

That the Confederacy did not take this paper blockade seriously was one of the major mistakes of the war. At a time when cotton could be shipped safely to Europe and military supplies brought into the new nation, which had virtually no productive capacity for war, few shipments were made. "King Cotton Diplomacy" expressed the idea that England and France would have to break the blockade and perhaps recognize the Confederacy in order to keep their tremendous textile business operating. Thus did matters of military necessity get confused with diplomatic expectations.

On May 14, 1861, England and France simultaneously proclaimed their neutrality and recognized the belligerency of the Confederacy; in effect they acknowledged there was a war going on but did not acknowledge the Confederate government. The important nations of Europe soon followed suit and the diplomatic attitude plus the blockade set the pattern of the war on the high seas. In the first place foreign ports were closed, except for infrequent emergency calls, to Confederate and Federal armed vessels. Though glamorous were the exploits of such raiders as the Alabama, the Florida, and the Shenandoah, they contributed little to the waging of war. Seldom did they catch a prize carrying war materiel, and they were unable to return their costs to the Confederate treasury. Their exploits were costly to American commerce, but it was a future cost, driving from American registry many more ships than were captured. The budding business of privateering was killed off; foreign ports were closed to the adjudication of prizes and it soon became impossible to bring a prize, usually a cumbersome Yankee schooner, through the blockade into a Southern port. Finally, an occasional Confederate naval ship, hastily built and armored in a Southern port, would go forth to try to lift the blockade from a particular area. The Albemarle had a briefly successful career in northeastern North Carolina until it was blown up; the North Carolina sank on the bar off Fort Fisher returning from her maiden voyage.

Except for these brief or inconsequential ventures, the war on the water became a war of wits: the blockade runners against the Federal cruisers. Foreign neutrality permitted unarmed ships to carry whatever cargo they wished from neutral ports through the blockade—if they could make it. It is important to remember that a vessel could be seized for attempting to break the blockade as soon as she cleared a foreign port with the blockaded port as her destination. Similarly she could be seized on the outbound voyage until she reached a foreign port. Thus it was important that ports near the Confederacy be used and that blockade runners be small, swift steamers with a disproportionate speed given to large engines and coal bunkers. At first with impunity, then with mounting losses matched by mounting profits, these steamers brought goods into Confederate ports. By 1862 Nassau was the most important outbound port, Wilmington the most active inbound port; by late 1864 the Federals had captured or closed every Southern port except Wilmington.

BEFORE WE look at the two military assaults against the network of batteries guarding the Cape Fear River, it might be worth considering briefly the nature of the blockade running trade. Because there were heretics in the seamen's union, there has been imputed an undeserved glory and patriotism in the purpose of blockade running. Most of the trade was carried on by private citizens, Confederate, Yankee, and especially foreign, for pure profit. Luxury goods were preferred to war materiel because more total value could be packed in a ship's cargo and the profits were higher. By summer of 1863 the Confederate government forced blockade runners

Mr. Broadfoot is the Director of the Flowers Memorial Collection of Southern Americana at Duke University. He was one of the founders of The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society and a member of the first board of directors.

Assault of the Naval column on the northeast salient of Fort Fisher.
to carry from one-third to one-half of their cargo on government account, the freight cost to the government running as high as $1,000 a ton. Early in 1864 the Confederate Congress passed a law prohibiting the importation of luxuries altogether and allowing the export of cotton and other important commodities only under government license. Several Southern states operated their own blockade runners and these ships, if owned rather than simply chartered by the states were exempt from the government regulations. However, even here the business of war took second place to the concept of states rights and greed. Governor Vance, who was not above running goods on his own account on the state owned Advance, threatened to burn chartered ships rather than give up the arrangement. Private shippers, protesting the cargo and charter laws, went briefly on strike.

Largely through the foresight of James Bulloch of the Navy Department and Josiah Gorgas, chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, the Confederate government bought and chartered ships to bring in war goods exclusively. It was from these efforts, more than those of the speculators and state operations, that blockade running met the needs of war.

In the fall of 1864 General Grant felt he could spare the troops needed to join the Navy in an amphibious assault on Fort Fisher, by then the most formidable coastal defense work in America. Major General Benjamin F. Butler, one of the best politicians in the Federal Army, took command of the troops; Admiral David Porter commanded the fleet. Butler sought to reduce the fort by exploding an old ship filled with powder in the surf nearby. On December 24th, 1864, the powder ship was exploded completely without effect. Later in the day Porter's ships fired and subjected the fort to heavy bombardment. On Christmas Day about 2,000 infantrymen were put ashore without opposition several miles north of the fort. When the troops reached the fort they found that only two of the 17 guns facing them had been disabled. To the surprise of the fort's garrison, Butler ordered the troops to re-embark. By Dec. 27th all Federal troops had been taken off, the only loss being one man drowned. Butler had violated Grant's orders in taking active command of the troops, which were to be commanded by Butler's subordinate, General Weitzel, and also in re-embarking without making an extreme effort to take the fort. Upon being relieved of his command, Butler sanctimoniously addressed his troops: "The wasted blood of my men does not stain my garments." Weitzel was also relieved of the command he had not known was his.

Grant was not discouraged by the drowning of the soldier and he immediately laid plans for a second attack. Major General Alfred H. Terry was placed in command of the troops and the fleet, again under Admiral Porter, arrived off Fort Fisher to begin its bombardment the morning of January 13, 1865. By mid afternoon 8,000 troops had been landed five miles north of the fort where they remained as the ships fired on the fort throughout the next day and night. By mid afternoon the fleet, as large as the entire pre-war navy and much more powerful, lifted its fire, the heaviest in history, and Terry's troops attacked the fort.

Colonel William Lamb, builder of the fort and commander of its 1,200 effective troops, was aided in its defense by Major General W. H. C. Whiting, the district commander, who arrived with his staff as volunteers. General Braxton Bragg, with approximately 3,000 men sent down from Lee's army to defend against the attack, had taken up his position at Sugar Loaf, seven miles north of the fort. In vain Colonel Lamb tried to get Bragg to join him in a night attack on the Federal line that lay between the two Confederate forces. Bragg ignored most messages and appeals from the fort though he did send 1,000 troops to the fort by river transport, only 350 of which arrived, the remainder getting stuck in the mud. At the same time he ordered 600 men withdrawn from the fort, an order that Whiting with much difficulty got rescinded. A few of Bragg's troops, under command of General R. F. Hoke, made a half-hearted and unsuccessful attack against some Federal Negro troops. This was the total extent of Bragg's participation in the battle of Fort Fisher: at least two-thirds of his troops never fired a shot and did not leave Sugar Loaf.

His guns knocked out, his men exhausted and greatly outnumbered, Colonel Lamb fought well but in vain. On January 15, 1865, Fort Fisher fell and shortly thereafter Fort Caswell, guarding the other river mouth, surrendered. General Whiting died in Federal prison of wounds received in the fight and Colonel Lamb was seriously wounded. Wilmington fell within a week and the war drew quickly to a close. The town has never occupied a position of such military importance or questionable distinction as when it was the chief port of the blockade runners.

All illustrations from Volume IV, Battles and Leaders of The Civil War.
WHY RESTORE FORT FISHER?

By Dr. B. Frank Hall

The project for the restoration of Fort Fisher is far more than a sentimental gesture toward the vanished past. It is motivated by a number of sound reasons, and is worthy of our most energetic support. Let us consider some of the reasons for reconstruction, rather than merely marking the site.

To those interested in military architecture and weaponry, the fort represents a type of defense work unique in this hemisphere. Called by military engineers the “Malakoff of the South” after the great Crimean bastion after which it was modeled, Fort Fisher was designed primarily for defense against bombardment from the sea. Its sea face stretched roughly north-northeast for 1,900 yards; and at its northern terminus a land face equipped with stockade and sally-port protected the work from flanking attack from the peninsula to the north. This extension, at right angles to the sea face, was 682 yards long; and its earth-works are still substantially intact, beneath the heavy growth of oak, yaupon, and sea-grasses that conceals them. Originally, the outer slope was sodded with marsh grass. It began a hundred feet from the river with a half-bastion, and extended across the peninsula to the ocean side, where it intersected the sea face with a full bastion. Its parapet, twenty feet high and twenty-five feet in thickness, could resist the heaviest artillery fire, but the sandy nature of the soil and lack of masonry

Map on the Naval and Military attacks on Fort Fisher, January 15, 1865, showing direction of fire of Union vessels.

Note:—The flag-ship Malvern (placed on the map behind the New Ironsides) has no fixed position.
made mound and scarp construction impossible, so that defense against infantry attack by storming was inadequate, and this ultimately proved the Achilles' Heel of the fortification. In front of the stockade of sharpened logs, nine feet high, pierced for rifle fire, was a line of buried mines; and two howitzers could be run out from the redoubt guarding the sally-port at the center of the north face.

The sea face, designed primarily to repel a bombardment fleet and protect blockade runners, slipping into the river under cover of the fort's long-range guns, was less massive. It was made of a series of separate batteries connected by an infantry curtain. These presented a low silhouette to the sea, being only about twelve feet high, with guns mounted for rifle firing. At the south end, a mound battery fifty-three feet high controlled the river approach, and kept the blockading fleet far enough off to allow light-draft cargo carriers to enter the inlet un molested. A level plain of sand, flooded by high tides, lay between this eminence and the point (Confederate Point) where New Inlet entered the sheltered waters of the river. Here lay Battery Buchanan, with two twelve-inch guns sweeping the land approach, and two naval rifles covering the inlet and bar. A dock adjoining Battery Buchanan was designed for rescue of a retreating garrison, and for supplying the fort. The battery itself was an admirable citadel to defend as a delaying action should the main fortifications fall.

It was customary for inbound blockade runners to approach the coast under cover of night, north of the river mouth, and seek in the uncertain light of dawn to slip under the protecting eight-inch rifles of Fisher, which could outrange the naval guns of the blockading fleet. Of shallow draft and high speed, these heroic little ships were like a fleet football back, sweeping the end of the enemy squadron, and picking up the "interference" of the fort's powerful guns. Wrecks in the surf along the beaches north of Fort Fisher were visible at numerous points before the recent plague of hurricanes, and attest the tense and momentous struggle to supply the starving Confederacy.

So for its unique contribution to the history of military architecture and the dramatic story of its vital role in blockade-running, along a coast peculiarly fitted by configuration and topography for this strange enterprise, Fort Fisher deserves to be restored that our children may see the heroism of our ancestors, and that historians, military and civilian, may appreciate an era and a phase not otherwise represented among available monuments. The task will be made easier by the fact that much still remains, hidden but not destroyed, detailed maps and sketches are available, and the peculiar type of construction used in the fort is not expensive to duplicate.

Add the motive of the tribute we owe our valiant fathers, and the cultural and economic benefits such a project will bring to this entire area, and no sensible person need longer doubt the value of reconstructing Fort Fisher.

The Reverend Dr. Hall, of Pearsall Memorial Presbyterian Church, was the second president of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society and is now Chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of Fort Fisher.