

The Powder Magazine

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2015

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Fort Fisher to host Medal of Honor Day on Saturday, March 28, 2015

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On Saturday afternoon, March 28, 2015, Fort Fisher State Historic Site will continue its commemorative programming focusing on the Medal of Honor and its recipients.

At 2 pm, Interpreter John Moseley will be speaking about the history of the Medal of Honor, Fort Fisher's recipients, and New Hanover County's recipients. Inside the museum, the families of Privates Bruce Anderson and William Freeman have temporarily loaned their Medals of Honor and other materials to tell their stories at Fort Fisher. In addition, there will be activities for the kid's to help understand the importance of awards for valor.

The Medal of Honor is the

highest distinction that can be awarded by the President, in the name of the Congress, to members of the Armed Forces who have distinguished themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty. It was originally created to recognize the acts of bravery by Union enlisted Navy, Marine Corps, and Army personnel during the Civil War.

In 1990, the United States Congress designated March 25 annually as "National Medal of Honor Day" to honor those who have received our Nation's highest military award. Congress chose this date because it was on March 25, 1863

that the first Medals of Honor were presented.

The Cape Fear region is no stranger to Medal of Honor recipients. The actions by the sailors, soldiers and Marines of the Union Navy and Army at Fort Fisher from June 1864 to February 1865, saw 72 men nominated for the Medal of Honor. In its history, 19 North Carolinians have been recognized for their actions with the Medal of Honor. New Hanover County's four recipients span the wars, both large and small, of the 20th century; one from actions in Mexico in 1914, two from World War II, and one from the Vietnam War.

From the site manager, James C. Steele



Dear Friends:

Fort Fisher's 150th anniversary program has come and gone. During the months of preparation it seemed it would never get here, and now it is hard to believe it is over. And wow, what an event it was! The weekend was beautiful and nearly 22,000 visitors made the trip to participate in the largest program Fort Fisher has ever seen. We were honored to have Governor Pat McCrory speak at the opening ceremony. Fort Fisher historians Rod Gragg, Dr. Chris Fonvielle and many other experts spoke to standing room only audiences. And thousands enjoyed the most spectacular battle reenactment ever staged here, with over 500 reenactors, cannons and aerial pyrotechnics making a great show. All of these activities and so many more were successfully accomplished January 17-18, making Fort Fisher 150th the perfect kickoff for North Carolina Historic Sites and the Department of Cultural Resources Civil War 2015 sesquicentennial commemorations.

Such a successful event as Fort Fisher 150 requires a tremendous amount of work to plan, organize and execute. We were fortunate to have so many people from so many different places help make the program great. We are thankful to all the NC Historic Sites and DCR staff who assisted, as well as volunteers from other agencies. We are thankful for everything the Friends of Fort Fisher did, from planning to funding to providing program volunteers. We also had great help from a variety of local governments, law enforcement agencies and the North Carolina Army National Guard. In sum, the manpower required to present Fort Fisher 150 was tremendous, and we could not have done it without the help of so many individuals and organizations, many more than I can list here. Thank you all so much, we could not have done it without you and the event was made better by your participation.

Sincerely,
Jim

Museum Store Corner

What's new in the Fort Fisher Museum Store?



In this edition of the Museum Store Corner, we highlight some new items here at Fort Fisher that focus on the 150th Anniversary. By now, you're probably aware that 2015 marks the 150th anniversary of the conclusion of the American Civil War as well as the 2nd Battle of Fort Fisher. If you have a history buff in your family, we have some great new items in the Museum Store. We offer 150th themed coffee mugs, travel mugs (see photo left), apparel, key chains and magnets.

Apparel such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, and caps sport the "Glory Enough for All" logo, while the coffee mugs, travel mugs and other Fort Fisher items have various historical prints on them. We even have Fort Fisher dog tags.

Also new in the store are sets of coasters highlighting all of the Civil War sites in North Carolina. You can either purchase the Fort Fisher coaster individually (\$2 + tax) or collect all six coasters - Fort Fisher, Fort Anderson, Bentonville, Bennett Place, CSS Neuse and the State Capitol (\$10 + tax). For the art lover in the family, local artist Ronald Williams created a print "Fort Fisher: The Gibraltar of the South & A Legacy of Valor." This print is available in 2 sizes - 5"x 7" (\$14.95 + tax) and 16"x 20" (\$39.95 + tax).

Then, beginning in March and running through Labor Day, the Museum Store will have a red tag sale. On the last Saturday of the month, items will be on sale for 40% off the retail price. Items will vary monthly, so look for updates on the Fort Fisher Facebook page.

Story by Becky Sawyer

WE 
VOLUNTEERS

Park Day



2015



Fort Fisher State Historic Site Saturday, March 28, 2015

Join us from 9:00 am-2:00 pm as we help beautify Fort Fisher, a Civil War battlefield and historic landmark. Get involved and enjoy a free lunch & free t-shirt, while preserving history. Individuals, groups, clubs, scouts welcome. We'll paint, clean, sweep & more. Tools provided. For more information, please call John at (910) 458-5538 to volunteer

Civil War Medicine:

Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, CSA

By Jack Hisley, MD

James Longstreet, Robert E. Lee's senior corps commander, was born in South Carolina on 8 January 1821. Considered one of the Confederate's most competent corps commanders, Lt. General Longstreet was present in most major battles from 1861 to 1865. His career at the United States Military Academy at West Point was less than stellar. His class standing was so low that he was not permitted to choose his future assignment upon graduation in 1842. Longstreet remarked: "I had more interest in the school of the soldier, horsemanship, sword exercises, and the outside game of football than in academic courses". Many of his classmates at West Point, including George Henry Thomas, William S. Rosecrans, John Pope, D.H. Hill, Lafayette McLaws, George E. Pickett, and his friend U.S. Grant, he would meet again in the war with Mexico and the American Civil War.

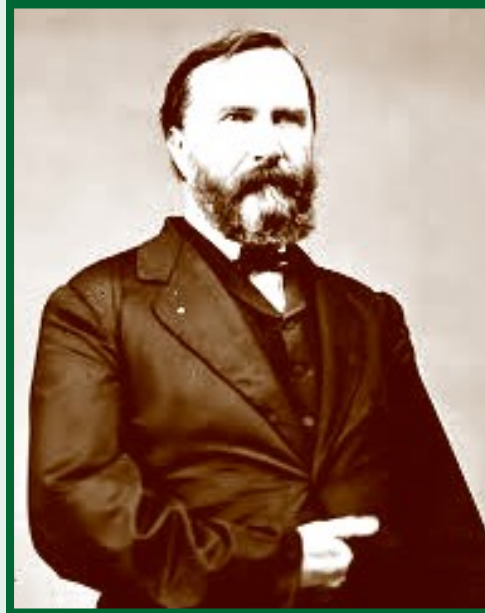
After graduating West Point in 1842, Longstreet was posted 2nd Lieutenant in the 4th U.S. Infantry Regiment at the Jefferson Barracks in Missouri. There he would join his friend from West Point days, 1st Lieutenant U.S. Grant.

Many Americans who fought in the war with Mexico (1846-1848) would meet again during the Civil War, often on opposite sides. Lt. James Longstreet and Winfield Scott Hancock fought side by side as members of the 8th U.S. Infantry Regiment in Mexico; they would oppose each other at Cemetery Ridge in Gettysburg early in July of 1863.

At Chapultepec, Mexico, while carrying the 8th Regiment Colors, Lt. James Longstreet was severely wounded by a musket ball in the thigh. Lt. George E. Pickett, who led the charge at Cemetery Ridge 16 years later, re-

trieved the colors, carrying them to the summit.

With 2 brevets and the staff rank of Major from the war with Mexico, Longstreet returned to Jefferson Barracks in 1848. Following an unremarkable career in the U.S. Army, he resigned his commission and joined the Confeder-



Lt. Gen. James, Longstreet, CSA

acted on 1 June 1861 as a Brigadier General in the infantry. Because of his reputation as a battlefield commander, Longstreet advanced rapidly, becoming a Corps Commander in the Army of Northern Virginia, achieving the rank of Lt. General on 9 October 1862. General Lee fondly referred to his second in command James Longstreet as "my war horse".

An ill-fitting boot in September of 1862 caused a troublesome heel ulcer that was very slow to heal, requiring Longstreet to wear a slipper and ride sidesaddle at the Battle of Sharpsburg. Poor wound healing often accompanies diabetes, a disorder that plagued him most of his adult life.

At Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862, the breech of a Parrot cannon burst on its 39th discharge. Although nearby, Longstreet escaped injury, unlike General Leonidas Polk, who had been involved in a similar experience in 1861.

Lt.. General Longstreet was an astute tactician in that he understood the need for strategic adjustments that must be made to accommodate the new weaponry that emerged from the Crimean War in the 1850s. He combined a tactical defense with a strategic offense that consisted of choosing your ground, fortifying your position, and attacking the enemy's flanks after his frontal attack is defeated. Longstreet's methods were successful and resulted in fewer Confederate casualties. His decisive victory at Fredericksburg convinced him that his tactics, along with his concept of the concentration of force, were the only way the Confederacy could conserve manpower and win the war. At Gettysburg, Lee's rejection of Longstreet's tactics caused strain in their relationship, although Lee exhibited full confidence in his senior corps commander throughout the war.

Longstreet was seriously wounded on 6 May 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness. The Wilderness in Virginia was about 70 miles of second growth timber, thick underbrush, briars, and brackish water. In the heat of battle, the terrain prevented a soldier from seeing much of anything beyond his location. The Orange Plank Road was the only way through the thicket. On 5 May, General Winfield Scott Hancock, USA, drove Lt.. General Ambrose P. Hill's men back to Lee's headquarters. Longstreet, with the 1st Corps, marched 28 miles in one day along the Orange

(Continued on page 5)

LT. GEN. JAMES LONGSTREET, CSA (continued from page 4)

Plank Road in time to drive the Union forces back to their starting point. After the war, Hancock remarked to Longstreet: "You rolled me up like a wet blanket".

Longstreet's mounted party, obscured by the dense underbrush and smoke, moved between the separated regiments of Brig. General William Mahone. The 12th Virginia Regiment, assuming the troops of Longstreet's party was the enemy, crouched and began firing. BG Joseph B. Kershaw realized what was happening and he yelled "Friends!" However, the damage was done. Longstreet, a large man standing 6 feet 2 inches, and weighing 220 pounds, felt a "severe shock from a minie ball passing through my throat and right shoulder and my right arm dropped by my side". His staff lifted him to the ground. Ironically, Longstreet was shot about 2 miles from where Stonewall Jackson was fatally wounded, also by friendly fire in 1863.

According to Dr. Robert M. Stecklar, who studied the forensics of Longstreet's wound, concluded that given its trajectory, the minie ball entered Longstreet's back and exited at the base of his neck. The soldiers of the 12th Virginia were kneeling or prone and Longstreet was mounted, which would account for the upward trajectory of the ball as it entered his back. The entrance wound was between the medial edge of the scapula (shoulder blade) and the thoracic vertebrae. Traveling upward, the ball tore the brachial plexus (the nerves innervating the right arm), damaging the lateral aspect of the trachea, and the recurrent laryngeal nerve while passing through the right lobe of the thyroid, before exiting at the base of the neck. With a raspy voice, the general ordered MG Charles W. Field to assume command of the corps and "press the enemy". The 1st Corps surgeon and medical director John Dorsey Cullen was summoned. He noted immediately the paralyzed right arm, the weak, raspy voice, and a bloody oral discharge, as well as hemorrhage from the exit wound. Using direct pressure to control the bleeding, Cullen rode with Longstreet in an ambulance as they traveled to a Confederate hospital tent at Parker's store. The wound was probed. Foreign debris was extracted with forceps and major vessels were sutured. Because of the injury to the

recurrent laryngeal nerve, Longstreet's once booming voice that could be heard up and down the line, had become a weak whisper, which, along with his paralyzed right arm, would be with him for the rest of his long life.

During his convalescence, with Dr. Cullen at his side, Longstreet was moved several times because of the nearby Union cavalry raids. General Lee was in constant communication with his "old war horse". Longstreet, using his left hand, apologized for his writing. Lee said "We shall not object to your chirography so you must practice it often and let me hear of your progress as well".

When he returned to the Army of Northern Virginia, which was in a defensive position south of Richmond in the fall of 1864, Lt. General James Longstreet remained at Lee's side until the surrender in April 1865. In February 1865, Lee wrote to Longstreet to thank him for his "earnestness and zeal", exclaiming: "were our whole population animated with the same spirit, we would be invulnerable". On 9 April 1865 when Lee left to meet General Grant at the McLean house in Appomattox, Virginia, Longstreet exclaimed to Lee: "General, if he does not give us good terms, come back and let us fight it out". The terms were good and the war ended. When Grant saw his old friend of many years, he smiled, embraced him, and offered a cigar, which was accepted. Lt. General James Longstreet left Appomattox with his horse Hero, his sick arm, and \$100 in his pocket.

After the war, because of his writings, his criticism of Lee's tactics at Gettysburg, and his friendship with Grant, the South's defeat was laid at the feet of James Longstreet. Attacks began in earnest after Robert E. Lee's death in 1870. He wrote "bad as being shot at by some of our own troops in the Battle of the Wilderness - that was an honest mistake, one of the accidents of war. Being shot at since the war by many officers was worse". Jubal Early, the only general that Lee relieved of command for ineptitude, Reverend William N. Pendleton, Lee's chief artilleryman and rector of Lee's church in Lexington, Virginia and Reverend William Jones, a Baptist minister in Lexington and former chaplain of the 13th Virginia Regiment fueled the controversy by

their writings in the Southern Historical Society Papers.

Louise Longstreet, James' wife of 40 years, died in 1889. Following her death, Longstreet immersed himself in writing his memoirs, which were completed and well received in 1896. Later, he married Helen Dortch, a woman who was 34 years his junior. She became his most ardent defender until her death in 1962 at the age of 99.

Many years before his death, Longstreet was partially deaf and suffered pain in his feet, which was most likely due to a peripheral neuropathy, often a complication of diabetes mellitus. In 1903 he developed what appears to be a melanoma of his right eye. He and his wife traveled to Chicago where his cancerous right eye was treated with high voltage x-ray, to no avail. This was a new and highly experimental treatment at that time. Although failing in health, Longstreet accompanied General E. Porter Alexander to the 100-year anniversary celebration of the USMA at West Point. During much of 1903, Longstreet's nutritional state deteriorated and his body weight of 200 pounds decreased to 135 pounds. While visiting his daughter in Gainesville, Georgia, Longstreet developed pneumonia, hemorrhaged from his old wound, lost consciousness, and died on 2 January 1904. Prior to his death, Lt. General James Longstreet's image was changing from the villain of the southern cause to that of the real James Longstreet, who was the "competent, wise, compassionate Commander, as well as the trusted friend of General Robert E. Lee".

On 1 January 1991, the NC Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans commemorated the military career of Longstreet by erecting an equestrian statue of him astride his horse Hero. It was unveiled on 3 July 1998 at the Gettysburg National Battlefield Park. In the end, Longstreet commanded the respect of thousands, both Blue and Gray. As he himself had said: "Error lives but a day. Truth is eternal".

John Baptist Smith: the Summer of 1862 and a Series of Seemingly Serendipitous Events

Story by Ray Flowers

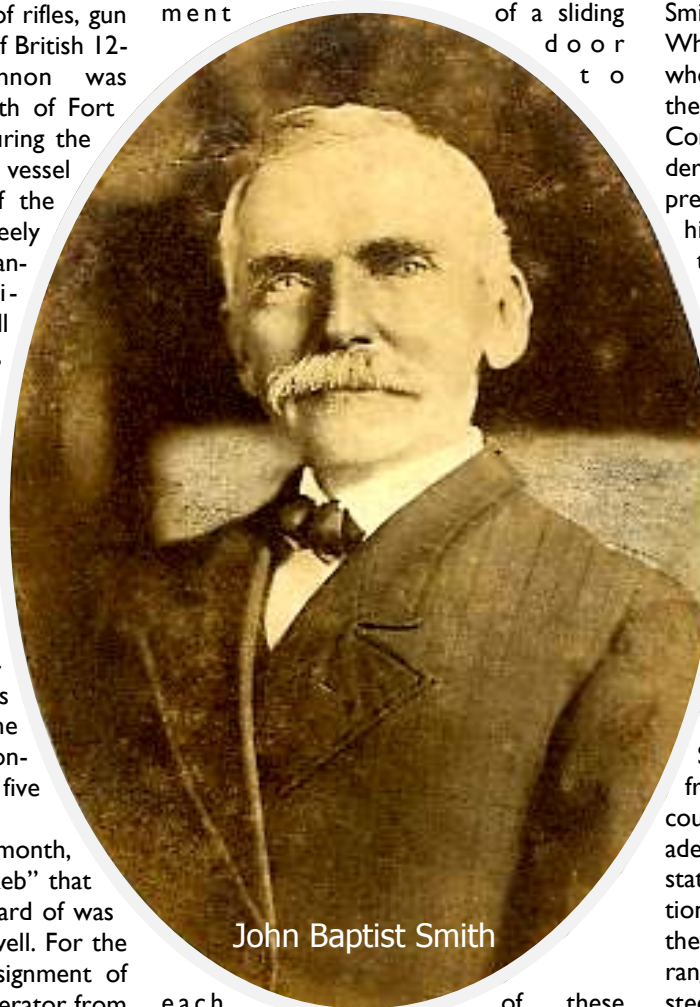
In the summer of 1862 a series of seemingly serendipitous events converged on Confederate Point setting the stage for the opening act of a drama that would soon achieve epic proportions. First, on June 27th the British Blockade-Runner Modern Greece with a cargo of rifles, gun powder, booze and a battery of British 12-pound, breech-loading cannon was beached less than a mile north of Fort Fisher. For the next week, during the ensuing salvage of the scuttled vessel apparently the better part of the garrison availed themselves freely of the copious amounts of brandy and whiskey. The multi-company bender continued till Independence Day, July 4th, when Colonel William Lamb was ordered across the river from Fort St. Philip to restore order and assume command of the post. Upon arrival he continued with salvaging the cargo of the Modern Greece, "...rescuing four twelve pounder Whitworth rifle guns which afterwards bore a conspicuous part in the operations in the war...They were the longest range guns then constructed, throwing a shot five miles..."

Finally, in that same month, the most incredible "Johnny Reb" that practically no one has ever heard of was transferred to Fort Fisher as well. For the Confederacy, the timely reassignment of this eighteen year old signal operator from his Virginia station back to his native North Carolina would soon prove fortuitous indeed.

Initially, Sergeant John Baptist Smith was ordered to Fort Fisher to assist in the organization of a signal system that would facilitate communication between the Confederate forts guarding the mouth of the Cape Fear River and incoming blockade-runners. By the following March this assignment lead to the invention of a signal system employing what Smith described as

flash lights. In detailing his chance discovery Smith wrote that: "One day while in the Ordnance Department of the fort, I chanced to spy a pair of ship starboard and port lanterns, and this thought flashed into my mind, "Why not by the arrangement

of a sliding door to



John Baptist Smith

each of these lanterns, one being white, the other a red light, substitute flashes of red and white lights for the wave of torches to the right and left, to form a signal alphabet and thus use the lanterns at sea as well as upon land.' I at once communicated my plans to Col. Wm. Lamb, commandant of the fort." Smith would go on to modestly state that they met with the Colonel's approbation. In fact Lamb would praise Smith's invention assessing it as a, "...perfect code of signals arranged by the fort with blockade-runners [that] gave to

Fort Fisher the enviable reputation enjoyed by no other sea coast fortification, that while an enemy could not approach without an assault, no friendly vessel was ever fired upon..."

Upon Lamb's instruction Smith submitted his plans to General Whiting, the department commander, who in turn referred the Sergeant to the ranking naval officer on the river, Commodore Lynch. Lynch then ordered a commission of naval officers presided over by none other than the highly respected and celebrated Captain John Wilkinson. John Baptist went on to explain that, "This commission, after careful investigation was so highly impressed with the system that upon recommendation it was adopted and ordered to be operated on all Confederate blockade-runners.

To this end, a pair of my lanterns and a Signal Officer were placed on each one of them. Signal stations were also established along the coast, so that an incoming vessel, when she made our coast, would run along as close as possible and her Signal Officer, by flashing his light from the shore-side of the ship, could escape observation of the blockade-runners, get the attention of the shore stations, and thus ascertain the position of his ship and send a message to the commandant of the fort to set range lights, by which the pilot could steer his vessel across the bar, and have the guns of the fort manned to protect the vessel if necessary."

In the event that an in-coming blockade-runner was caught short of the inlets and beyond the range of the fort's heavy guns, then one of Lamb's light "Pet Guns" (the storied 12-pound breech-loading Whitworth) might be deployed to assist the threatened steamer in its approach. Or if the runner was already beached then Whitworths might be employed to dissuade

A Series of Seemingly Serendipitous Events, cont'd

the Federals from interfering with Southern salvage operations. Patrolling the beaches with six-mule teams one Confederate officer wrote convincingly that, "Its sudden appearance from behind a sand hill would instantly make them [the enemy] show their heels. This gun was operated with as much promptness and speed as our modern city fire engines." While Colonel Lamb would add that, "With these guns, we made the U.S. Blockading fleet remove their anchorage from two and a half miles to five miles from the fort. So many vessels were saved with these guns that they soon had a reputation throughout the South..."

Indeed, there on Confederate Point beneath the new nation's star-crossed banner, the fortuitous acquisition of these weapons and tools in the hands of resolute and determined men would enable Colonel Lamb and his garrison to emblazon the pages of history till the climatic concluding chapter of the war. With Smith's signal system coupled with the importation of the British Whitworths enjoined by the effectual closing of Charleston's harbor in South Carolina, Wilmington, North Carolina would become the second most important city in the South, second only to the Confederate Capital of Richmond, Virginia. As the Confederacy's remaining port-of-call on the eastern seaboard the overwhelming majority of foreign commerce that fed and fueled the Rebel war machine was soon funneled into the Cape Fear River.

From July of 1863 thru December of 1864 some 256 steamers passed into the river, achieving a remarkable average of just over fourteen runners a month. In time, this smuggling operation would become the main artery in the "Lifeline of the Confederacy" and for the remainder of the war the fortunes of the Confederate States of America would be moored to the docks of Wilmington.

Footnote: Sadly, young Smith would never receive the proper recognition or due compensation for his invention, though in May of 1863 the Secretary of War did assign him to special duty under General Whiting. For Smith the "special duty"

meant serving as signal operator aboard North Carolina's Blockade-Runner *Advance*. It was a privileged position and his name would be coupled with the thrilling history of that notorious ship until February of 1864 when he was promoted to Lieutenant and ordered back to Virginia. Back in Virginia, Smith commanded numerous signal stations in or about Petersburg

until the evacuation in early April of '65. A week later Lieutenant John Baptist Smith was surrendered with General Lee's command at Appomattox.

On April 15, 1865, exactly 4 years to the day of his enlistment, he returned to his home and family in Caswell County and the life that he had known before.

We have a winner!



Congratulations to SSGT Freddy Mexicanos, winner of the Friends of Fort Fisher's Sharps Rifle Raffle, held at Fort Fisher's 150th anniversary event this past January. Shown here with 'Iron Mike,' SSGT Mexicanos is an instructor with the JFK Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, NC

Welcome New Friends of Fort Fisher Oct 2014-Mar 2015



John Bailey
Oak Island, NC

Rhonda Billeaud
Whiteville, NC

Michael Beaumont
Southern Pines, NC

Tom & Dianna Conaty
Southport, NC

Sue Coppley
Cincinnati, OH

Gary Cornett
Corpus Christi, TX

Hugh Daughtry
Charlotte, NC

Michael Dudney
Genval, Belgium

Howard Fisher
Deland, FL

John R. France
Clayton, NC

Forrest Goodman (Sustaining Member)
Wilmington, NC

Leonard Gregorio
Leland, NC

Daniel Grimsley
Winnabow, NC

David J. Hall
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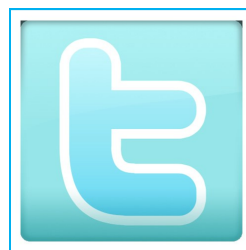
A. Paul Walker
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Look for us on...



Join the Friends of Fort Fisher

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual Membership	\$25
Family Membership	\$40
Military/Student Membership	\$20

BENEFITS

Members receive subscriptions to *The Powder Magazine* quarterly newsletter, membership card, notice of educational programs and special events, a 15% discount in the Fort Fisher Museum Store, and invitations to special Friends of Fort Fisher events throughout the year.

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP \$500 and Up

All of the benefits above, plus acknowledgement in *The Powder Magazine* quarterly newsletter, VIP acknowledgement in all special programs and recognition on the museum's permanent donor board.

BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP

\$100 and Up

Benefits will be extended to a designated representative of the business. In addition, the business shall be entitled to one free display advertisement (business card sized) in the next edition of *The Powder Magazine*.

ARMSTRONG SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP \$500 and Up

Gifts are placed into a restricted fund for capital improvements. Benefits include membership for the year in which the gift is received, permanent recognition on the museum's donor wall and at the annual meeting of the Friends of Fort Fisher.

OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Memorial & Honor Gifts
Artifact Donations
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MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

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Address _____
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☐ New

☐ Renewal

All contributions are tax deductible, less the fair market value of goods and services received.

If you choose to waive your membership benefits, your contribution is fully tax-deductible.

☐ I wish to waive my membership benefits

☐ My employer has a matching gift program.
Proper forms are enclosed

Membership Categories

Individual	\$25	_____
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Military/Student	\$20	_____
Sustaining	\$500+	_____
Business	\$100+	_____
Armstrong Society	\$500+	_____

Payment

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1610 Fort Fisher Blvd., Kure Beach, N.C. 28449

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Account # _____

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THE POWDER MAGAZINE

Fort Fisher State Historic Site

1610 Fort Fisher Blvd. South

Kure Beach, NC 28449

Phone: (910) 458-5538

E-mail: fisher@ncdcr.gov

www.nchistoricsites.org/fisher

Interested in joining the Friends
of Fort Fisher? Please visit
www.friendsoffortfisher.com

Fort Fisher's

Fun-With-History Fridays

Summer 2015



Get ready for some great kid's activities all summer long at Ft. Fisher, including many new activities from 9 am-1pm. In case of rain, we'll have indoor activities that make history fun for everyone! Best of all, it's free. Stay tuned for more details.

This newsletter was
proudly produced with
support from the Friends of
Fort Fisher

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Web: www.friendsoffortfisher.com

E-mail: plaird@friendsoffortfisher.com