

FORT FISHER  
STATE  
HISTORIC SITE

SPECIAL POINTS  
OF  
INTEREST

- 153rd Anniversary program (page 1)
- Friends of Fort Fisher annual meeting (page 1)
- From the site manager (page 2)
- Civil War Trust Park Day 2018 (page 3)
- A Fort Fisher Christmas Card 1864 (page 6)
- New Friends of Fort Fisher (page 8)

INSIDE THIS  
ISSUE:

Civil War playset winner announced	2
Fort's Toy Soldier Workshop activity, a hit with all ages	4
Join the Friends of Fort Fisher	9



# The Powder Magazine

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 3

WINTER 2017-2018

## Fort Fisher to commemorate its 153rd anniversary with living history program, more

In the words of one Federal soldier, the landscape of fort Fisher was a scene of "Exploding shells ... a blaze of musketry" On January 13, 2018, Fort Fisher State Historic Site will be commemorating the battle with activities to both educate and entertain.

On the grounds of the Fort, reenactors will bring the military infantry and artillery units to life. They will be on hand to talk with visitors about camp life, garrison duty, and scheduled throughout the day conducting the manual of arms and firing demonstrations. Masonboro Parlor will be on hand to provide

live period music. They are a group of local musicians specializing in 18th and 19th century music and dance. Also, on-site will be local photographer Harry



Taylor who will be bringing his 1860s wet-plate photography studio taking pictures throughout the day. For the young and young at heart, our Junior Re-

serves program will host two activities: the 'School of the Soldier' and 'Civil War Communication.'

Our keynote speaker for the event will be Dr. Keith Holland, who will discuss the story of a Union troop transport sunk by a Confederate torpedo in April 1864. That transport, the *Maple Leaf*, contained the worldly possessions of the men from six Federal regiments who would take part in the two attacks on Fort Fisher.

Those men had the military equipment replaced but all their personal effects would remain behind.

While the ship was largely forgotten by history, Dr. Holland researched and uncovered the *Maple*

Continued on page 10

## Friends of Fort Fisher to present plans and renderings of new visitor center at meeting

Friends of Fort Fisher members and descendants of soldiers engaged at Fort Fisher during the Civil War will be the first to see conceptual plans and diagrams of the planned new Fort Fisher Visitor Center and Museum at the Friends Annual Meeting in January.

The breakfast meeting takes place at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel at Carolina Beach on Saturday, Janu-



Courtyard by Marriott

ary 13, and debuts plans by the architectural firm of Clark Nexsen, the Friends and officials of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Please note that space is limited so attendees are required to register by going to the Friends website at [www.friendsoffortfisher.com](http://www.friendsoffortfisher.com) by December 31, 2017. This year's Annual Meeting & Descendants Reunion is made possible through the generosity of Friends member and site supporter Judy Ward. The Friends annual meeting will coincide with Fort Fisher's commemoration of the 153rd anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher. (see story above).

## From the site manager, Jim Steele...

Dear Friends:

2017 has been an incredible year for Fort Fisher State Historic Site. We started the year by unveiling a new exhibit, "Heart, Hearth and Home," which focuses on the domestic lives of Colonel William Lamb, his wife Daisy and their children. We installed five new interpretive waysides, and completed restoration of the historic site's "Rifled and Banded" 32-pounder seacoast gun at Shepherd's Battery. All of these projects were sponsored by the Friends of Fort Fisher and local historical and heritage organizations, and we are grateful because these could not have been accomplished without their generosity.

But the biggest news of the year was no doubt the advance planning project. With help from our state representative Ted Davis, Jr., Fort Fisher secured funding to plan a new visitor center, along with other amenities such as reconstructed fort earthworks and trails. Clark Nexsen, an architectural firm based in Raleigh, won the contract to work with the historic site, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and the Friends of Fort Fisher to study the site's needs and to conceptualize a new facility to take us into the next century. As I write this, we are on the home stretch to completing this process and are excited to soon unveil the finished work. We are thankful for the tremendous support this planning has received from DNCR, NC Historic Sites, Rep. Ted Davis, Jr., and especially the Friends of Fort Fisher. The partnership between the public and private organizations has been key to making this happen and the cooperation will ensure a facility that meets the needs of our community.

In 2018 we will be taking the next steps, which will include detailed design work and a capital campaign. We want you to be a part of this and need your help. Please join the Friends of Fort Fisher and lend your support. Our goal is to make Fort Fisher State Historic Site the premier Civil War attraction in the southeast. We cannot do it without you so please join the Friends right away and get involved. You will be proud that you did.

Sincerely,  
Jim Steele



## Civil War Playset Raffle Winner Announced

Fort Fisher volunteer Mekyah Downen (in Santa hat) draws the winning ticket for the Civil War playset raffled off at the site's Holiday Open House in early December. The lucky winner was Chloe McCaskey of Lumberton., NC . Congratulations!





## CIVIL WAR TRUST PARK DAY DAY

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!



# Join us on April 7, 2018, as we preserve and beautify Fort Fisher as part of Civil War Trust Park Day 2018

As part of Civil War Trust Park Day, volunteers of all ages are needed Saturday, April 7, 2017 from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon to help beautify and preserve Fort Fisher, the largest earthen fortification in the Confederacy,

Now in its 21st year, Park Day is an annual hands-on preservation event created by the Civil War Trust to assist with the maintenance of America's Civil War Sites. Volunteers of all ability levels are welcome and—and encouraged—to participate.

Many activities are appropriate for groups such as scout troops, service clubs, and church youth groups. At noon,

all registered volunteers will be treated to lunch provided by the Friends of Fort Fisher, the non-

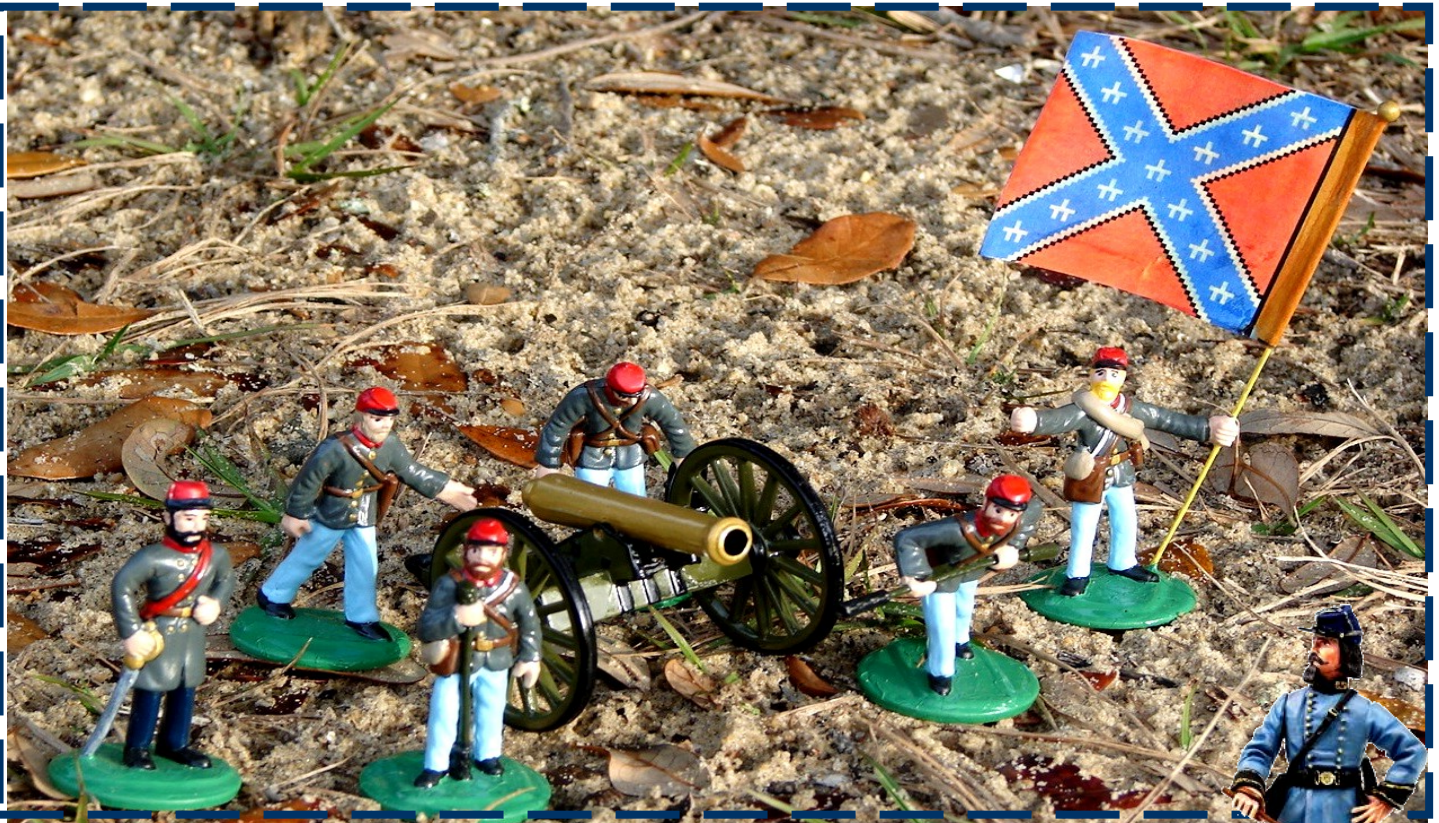


profit group which supports the site, along with its sustaining members.

All Park Day 2018 volunteers are asked to register in advance by calling Assistant Site Manager John Moseley at (910) 251-7342 or by emailing him at [john.moseley@ncdcr.gov](mailto:john.moseley@ncdcr.gov). In addition to lunch, registered volunteers will receive a free Civil War Trust Park Day t-shirt. Gloves and tools are also supplied.

"Park Day is a fantastic opportunity for our friends and neighbors to make a difference in their community by helping to maintain and preserve our valuable history and one of the most scenic and historically significant places in the nation," Moseley said. "We truly appreciate all the support we get and encourage everyone to volunteer."





# Fort Fisher's Toy Soldier Workshop

By Jim Steele



A popular children's program at Fort Fisher is the Toy Soldier Workshop. It is one of several activities that make up the Fort Fisher Junior Reserves, which is a series of educational programs for our young visitors. I originated the Toy Soldier Workshop in the summer of 2013, with the goal of giving children an opportunity to do a hands-on, craft activity and a positive visitor experience. The program has been successful here at Fort Fisher, and at other local historical attractions.

Inspiration for the Toy Soldier Workshop came from my own love of toy soldiers, which includes everything from the cheap plastic "army men" we played with as children, to the exquisite (and expensive!) model soldiers coveted by collectors. I grew up building and painting model soldiers and welcomed the opportunity to share this hobby with young people.

The Toy Soldier Workshop allows children to paint a toy soldier and keep it as a do-it-yourself souvenir. We provide toy soldiers from our gift shop, which have been spray-primed so they hold paint, non-toxic acrylic craft paints and brushes. Some children strive for authenticity, copying the clothing and equipment displayed on mannequins at the activity station. Others paint to suit their own tastes. I've seen Yanks with orange trousers, Rebels with pink jackets, and both with green skin. This is fine, it is the creativity that counts.

Children enjoy the Toy Soldier Workshop. Most of them range from 5 to 10 years old, but all ages participate including many grownups. I always enjoy seeing the varied personalities that manifest in their painting styles. Some children lay paint on like a bricklayer troweling mortar, but others will spend up to an hour painstakingly picking out every detail (girls seem to be exceptionally good at that). And many just cannot get enough, painting one toy soldier after another until their parents drag them away.

And speaking of the parents, their response has been overwhelmingly positive. They are so thankful that we offer something for their children to actually do, instead of just a passive visitor experience. And that is important. I don't believe that painting toy soldiers is particularly educational, but some children, who would otherwise be bored at a museum, will recall the Toy Soldier Workshop as a fun experience. I like to think that positive experience will help these young people see historical attractions as important and worthwhile, leading to more visits and more public support for what we do here.

So next time we offer the Toy Soldier Workshop, dress the kids in their painting clothes and bring them to Fort Fisher. The activity is free of charge and great fun. Perhaps your child will discover a new hobby! Thank you for your continuing support and I'll look forward to seeing you here.







# Fort Fisher Christmas Card 1864



By Ray Flowers, Curator of History

With the arrival of the holiday season, are you getting a little stressed? Are the mounting pressures of innumerable decisions and demands of an event laden calendar taking their toll? Does the magnitude of seemingly insurmountable tasks overwhelm you with a sense of dread? Are you inescapably consumed by a foreboding hopelessness that immobilizes you with emotions leaving you feeling lonely and depressed? If so, then you probably perceive your tepid, watered-down, half-hearted celebratory cup of wassail to be half empty? Good! Then it might just enable you to identify with how the defenders of Fort Fisher must have felt the winter of 1864, on the anniversary of the birth of the "Prince of Peace".

During the war Fort Fisher and blockade running were virtually synonymous. But by the end, the smuggling had proven to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the imports of war materiel had proven indispensable to fueling the Confeder-

ate war machine, though on the other hand, the influx of luxuries had been the ruination of the economy. To put things in perspective, \$1 in gold was now equivalent to \$28 Confederate, a barrel of flour that had cost \$8 in 1861, sold for \$500 in late '64, eggs were \$10 a dozen, while tea, coffee or ice were virtually unobtainable at any price. Two weeks before Christmas Fort Fisher's Post Commander, Colonel William Lamb, embarked on a shopping expedition to Wilmington where he paid \$50 dollars for a pair of shoes, \$25 for tooth powder, \$30 for a lady's belt, \$9 for three papers of needles, \$40 for a knife, \$6 for matches, \$405 for nine yards of flannel, \$100 for alpaca, and \$37.50 for a turkey ("...small but the flavor was delicious"). All this on a monthly salary of \$210 a month, practically a king's ransom compared to the \$11 that a lowly private could expect. So, for the rank and file Christmas shopping was pretty much out of the question. Ho, ho, ho!

To further sour the season, word now came that General Sherman had proffered the captured city of Savannah to President Lincoln as a Christmas pre-

sent. And so, the writing was on the wall for the Confederacy – and for the most part it read like an obituary. Out west, the once proud, ill-used Army of Tennessee was on its last legs, reeling, staggered like a punch-drunk pugilist after a combination of decimating blows at Atlanta, Franklin and Nashville. While up in Virginia, Lee was besieged, his emaciated line between Richmond and Petersburg stretched thin and growing thinner by the day; rumor had it that his scare crow soldiers were hanging on by their fingernails while their belt buckles were scraping their back bones. And down in Georgia and throughout the Carolinas they were robbing the cradle and the grave desperately recruiting regiments of junior and senior reserves, mobilizing militia and home guard units, scrambling to assemble a makeshift, last ditch army of children and old men with which to thwart Sherman in his inevitable and impending exodus out of Savannah. The only promising news in the whole scenario came from Fort Fisher - where the largest armada in American history was now destined.

They had assembled in the offing, but a prevailing northeaster had held them at

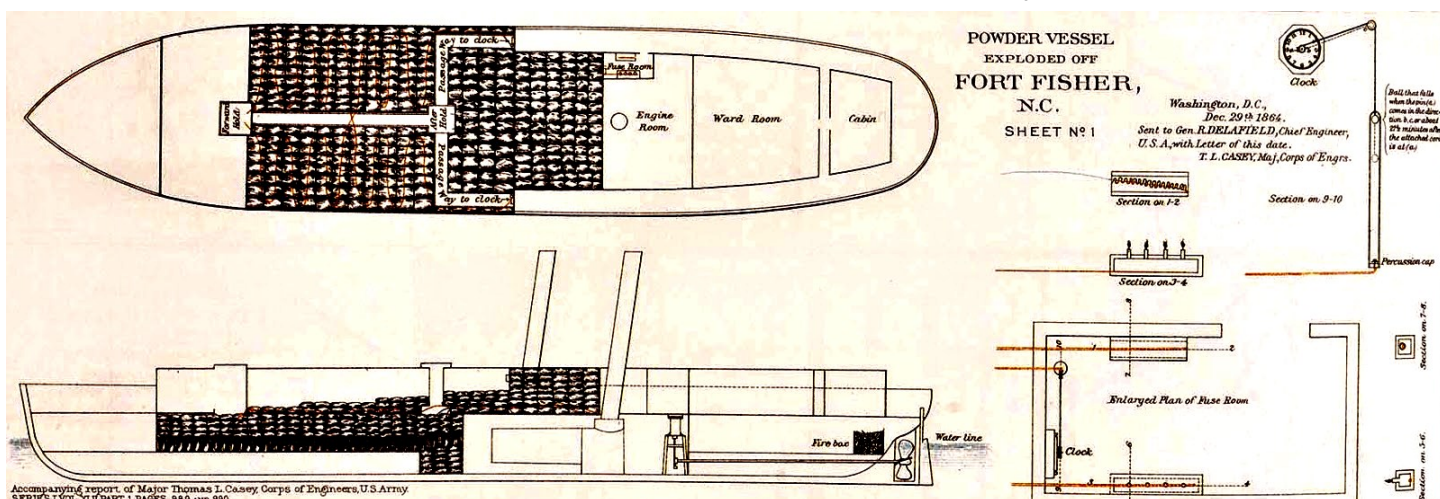
# Fort Fisher Christmas Card 1864, continued from page 6

bay for several days. Finally, in the wee hours of Christmas Eve morning the U.S. flotilla heralded their intentions with the ignominious detonation of a powder boat; it was an army scheme, diabolically intended to flatten Colonel Lamb's sand castle. In a deafening roar, two hundred and fifteen tons of explosives lit up the night like the Star of Bethlehem, but predictably the only damage done was to the Union army commander's reputation. Having dispensed with General Butler's hare-brained experiment, the navy now set about to reduce the fortification by

hold them afloat. Staring out at the spectacle, one wide-eyed "Johnny Reb" marveled at the forest of naked masts, comparing them to a thicket of dead pines. Among the vessels arrayed against the post were five frigates, three of which individually boasted as many or more guns than Fisher's forty-four; five ironclads, four of which were monitors, mounting the largest guns the United States employed in that war - fifteen inchers that burned up to thirty-five pounds of propellant in

guns was like a mighty thunderbolt." At the height of the fury of the barrage he calculated 130 balls a minute rained down upon them. Altogether, an estimated 20,271 missiles, over one and a quarter million pounds of iron, were hurled at the "Gibraltar of the South".

Around two o'clock on Sunday afternoon of Christmas Day the vanguard of the Northern infantry began landing about four miles above the fort and commenced to boldly move south as a reconnaissance-in-force. However, within a couple hours, with little more than a



the more traditional, tried-and-true method of hammering it into submission. It certainly looked like the Rebels were in for it. A few hours later, the 24<sup>th</sup> dawned with deceptive calm, it was a beautiful winter day, what they called Indian summer, the seas were flat and the air was balmy, as waves lapped lazily upon the beach. Gazing across the waters, Colonel Lamb was first startled and then agog as he espied the pageantry of the magnificent regatta unfolding before his eyes, "A grander sight than the approach of Porter's formidable armada towards the fort was never witnessed on our coast. With the rising sun, out of old ocean, there came upon the horizon one after another the vessels of the fleet..." Before it was over he could count sixty-four warships mounting 630 cannon, escorting a compliment of twenty additional transports shuttling 6,500 Union soldiers. It was impressive, so many ships that it seemed that the sea labored to

launching a 400-pound ball (one witness likened them to a volcano spewing meteors); and the *New Ironsides*, generally considered the most powerful ship yet christened and destined to be the fore-runner of the modern battleship. Having assumed their stations in arcing divisions they enveloped the defenders, taking them in front, flank and rear. Anchoring from two-thirds of a mile to no more than a mile and a half off shore they were close, brazenly close, point-blank close. At twenty minutes to one Admiral Porter let slip the dogs of war and unleashed the fury of Hell. For the next two days, twelve hours - the defenders of Fort Fisher endured the largest, most concentrated naval bombardment in American history. Lamb wrote that, "With the frigates fully engaged, their sides seemed a sheet of flame, and the roar of the

third of the troops ashore, the sortie started to lose momentum. Initially the weather began to deteriorate: The wind picked up and the seas grew rough again, the skies turned cloudy and the temperature plummeted just as darkness was descending. And then a disconcerting rumor began to circulate concerning a Rebel division of re-enforcements accumulating in rear. Suddenly paralyzed by the intangibles of war's fickle fortunes Butler turned timid; losing his resolve, his opportunity, the battle and eventually his career, the General ordered a withdrawal. That night, Christmas night, oblivious to the aborted mission, the Tar Heel garrison stood vigilant and exposed in a freezing rain awaiting a Union assault that never materialized.


Incredibly, when it was over, the fort had held. Despite being strewn with spent ordnance - cannonballs and fragments were everywhere, so much so that one Confederate officer compared it to a



## Fort Fisher Christmas Card 1864, continued from page 7

"pumpkin patch"; practically all the interior structures – barracks, stables and even Colonel Lamb's headquarters had been battered and burned; a light artillery caisson had exploded; some of the traverses had been shaved, revetments splintered and parapets scalped; several guns and/or carriages had been damaged, dismounted or destroyed and would require re-mounting; just as the telegraph lines would need to be restrung, and the ammo supply desperately needed replenishing. Yet despite the ferocity of the shelling the bomb-proofs and magazines were intact and the casualties had been surprisingly light. Of the sixty-one combat injuries, six were dead or dying and another ten severely wounded but the remainder

were expected to recover. All in all, it had been a staunch defense in the face of overwhelming odds, in fact quite remarkable when considering that

Christmas of 1864. In the wake of the enemy's amphibious departure Colonel Lamb proclaimed that, "I feel that to God that we owe this great victory, I appealed to Him during the hours of trial and He protected my men and gave my garrison that bravery and unconquerable heroism which held Fort Fisher against a formidable attack by sea and land, and which saved our homes from the invader." Undoubtedly, the survivors of that Christmas crucible must have been left with a renewed reverence, a reinvigorated sense of purpose, the exhilaration of a second chance at salvation. Irony, that having passed through the worst Christmas imaginable that they would receive the greatest Christmas gift of all. 



nearly a third of Lamb's 1431 "men" were teenage boys - seventeen-year old Junior Reserves. It is highly unlikely that any of them ever forgot the

## Welcome New Friends of Fort Fisher Members

Megan Bass  
Roxboro, NC

Kyle Berzina  
Wilmington, NC

Kerri Black  
Wilmington, NC

Brenda Hall  
N. Myrtle Beach, SC



Jan H. Lewis  
Oakland, CA

Lori Owen  
Cameron, NC

Tom Pearson  
Wilmington, NC

David Rice  
Wilmington, NC

Sara & ML Smith  
Kure Beach, NC

Thank you for supporting NC's most visited battlefield and national historic landmark.



Look for us on...



## Join the Friends of Fort Fisher

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Palisade Society	\$40
Mounds Society	\$100
Blockade Runner Society	\$250
Gibraltar of the South Society	\$500
Col. Charles F. Fisher Society	\$1000

### BENEFITS

Palisade Society – basic level of annual support includes attractive decal and member card, listing in *The Powder Magazine* quarterly newsletter, 10% discount on all purchases from our Fort Fisher Museum Shop and invitations to member only events

Mounds Society - level of annual support includes all of the above benefits plus one complimentary honorarium or memorial in one issue of *The Powder Magazine* newsletter

Blockade Runner Society - level of annual support includes all of the above benefits plus a 6" x 9" engraved brick paver on Fort Fisher's Walk of Honor

Gibraltar of the South Society - level of annual support which includes all of the above benefits except a larger 9" x 9" engraved brick paver, and a specially selected book annually from the Museum Shop

Col. Charles F. Fisher Society - level of annual support which includes all of the benefits of the Gibraltar level except the engraved brick paver is a permanent beautiful blue/gray 12" x 12" stone and may include an engraved emblem or logo

### Other ways to contribute:

Memorial and Honor Gifts, Artifact Donations, In-Kind Gifts, Volunteers, Named Gift Opportunities, Bequests – Contact the Friends Executive Director for information

### MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

☐ New

☐ Renewal

All society memberships are based on a calendar year (Jan-Dec). 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 society membership benefits

☐ I will be an Annual Society Member

### Membership Categories

Palisade Society	\$40	_____
Mounds Society	\$100	_____
Blockade Runner Society	\$250	_____
Gibraltar of the South Society	\$500	_____
Col. Charles F. Fisher Society	\$1000	_____

### Payment

☐ Cash ☐ Check ☐ Credit Card

Make checks payable to **Friends of Fort Fisher**

☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

Mail to: Friends of Fort Fisher  
 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd., Kure Beach, N.C. 28449

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Account \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit security \_\_\_\_\_

Payments or donations may be made securely on our website [www.friendsoffortfisher.com](http://www.friendsoffortfisher.com)



## Fort Fisher State Historic Site

1610 Fort Fisher Blvd. South

Kure Beach, NC 28449

Phone: (910) 251-7340

E-mail: [fisher@ncdcr.gov](mailto:fisher@ncdcr.gov)

[www.nchistoricsites.org/fisher](http://www.nchistoricsites.org/fisher)

### Fort Fisher Staff

James C. Steele, Site Manager

John Moseley, Assistant Site Manager

Becky Sawyer, Collectns Man./Interp III

Ray Flowers, Historic Interpreter II

Si Lawrence, Public Info & Spec Events

William S. Register, Chief of Police

David Sheaffer, Maintenance Manager

Jesse Hoskins, Site Assistant



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

## Fort Fisher to commemorate its 153rd anniversary with living history program, more

Continued from page 1

*Leaf* in the early 1980s in the fresh water silt of the St. John's River outside Jacksonville, Florida.

The artifacts recovered from this ship have brought about a deeper understanding by historians and collectors of the material culture of Civil War soldiers. In the words of National Park Service Chief Historian Emeritus Dr. Ed Bearss, "The wreck of the *Maple Leaf* is unsurpassed as a source for Civil War material culture.... It is the most important repository of Civil War artifacts ever found."

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

Friends of Fort Fisher  
Board of Directors:

John M. Coble, Chairman

Dennis St. Andrew, Vice Chairman

Harry Parham, Treasurer

W. Paul Harris, Secretary

Brig. Gen. (Ret) James Carper, Past Chair

Ed Halloran

James Johnson

Geoffrey Losee

Mike McCarley

Mark McLamb

Norm Melton

Brian Nunnally, Ph.D.

M. Tyrone Rowell

Richard Wallace

James Steele, III {ex officio}

Paul Laird, Executive Director {ex officio}



Web: [www.friendsoffortfisher.com](http://www.friendsoffortfisher.com)

E-mail: [info@friendsoffortfisher.com](mailto:info@friendsoffortfisher.com)