

FORT FISHER
STATE
HISTORIC SITE

SPECIAL POINTS
OF
INTEREST

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Fort Fisher to host WWII program Oct. 14 to honor site's anti-aircraft training role

After 80 years of silence and erosion, Fort Fisher, the scene of two attacks during the Civil War, faced the return of the US Army but under different circumstances. As the war progressed, Fort Fisher would be expanded to meet the Army's training needs. The old fort at the tip of Federal Point became home to thousands of olive-drab clad soldiers.

When the Fort closed at the end of 1944, the Anti-Aircraft base encompassed over 1,200 acres and its war-time experience would change the historic property forever.

On Saturday, October 14, 2017, Fort Fisher will host a program devoted to the fort's role in the training of the Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalions during World War II. Military and civilian reenactors will set up displays on the old Fort Fisher airstrip and will be available to talk with visitors about the life of the World War II soldier and life on the home front and the roles women played in the march towards victory. Throughout the day, three historians will be discussing the role of Fort Fisher and Southeastern North Carolina in World War II. Assistant site manager John Moseley will be

discussing Fort Fisher's role and some of the stories of the training that occurred here. Historian and author Cliff Tyndall will focus on Camp Davis and its appearance in a 1943 Hollywood movie. Lastly, Krystal Lee, local historian and teacher, will be discussing the Women's Airforce Services Pilots (WASP) program. Come explore the little known history of Fort Fisher's role in World War 2.

The program runs from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and is free to the public, thanks to the support of New Hanover County, the Town of Carolina Beach, the Town of Kure Beach, and the Friends of Fort Fisher and its sustaining members.

From the site manager, Jim Steele...

Dear Friends:

Today is the first day of fall. With Labor Day behind us, the great crowds of summer tourists are gone. In their place are local people who come to hike the battlefield, who enjoy the relative solitude and the cooler weather. We will soon see many seasonal snowbirds, people stopping by on their way from colder climes to Florida. With the slower pace of operations we have more time to work on projects, catch up on maintenance and plan for the upcoming year.

Our most important planning is off and running. People from NC Historic Sites, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and the Friends of Fort Fisher are working with the architectural firm ClarkNexsen to produce Fort Fisher's vision for the future. It will include plans for a new visitor center up to three times as large as the current facility. It will also plan for reconstruction of earthworks that were destroyed by construction of a US Army training facility during World War II. This is an exciting process we hope to complete this winter. The plan will guide Fort Fisher's expansion and improvement, with the goal of making Fort Fisher the greatest Civil War site in the country (of course we already are, but there is always room for improvement).

Speaking of World War II, please make plans to come visit on Saturday, October 14. We will present our annual World War II program in honor of all the GIs who trained here and served their country. And most importantly, please join the Friends of Fort Fisher. The nonprofit is vital to operating this site and achieving our goals. No matter how good our plans may be, achieving their objectives requires your support. Your Friends membership is the best way to do that and to become more involved with Fort Fisher.

Thank you!
Jim Steele

Please note!

**Fort Fisher State Historic Site's new phone number is:
(910) 251-7340. Off-season hours are Tues-Sat 9 am-5 pm**





Friends members and descendants attend the 2017 Annual Meeting

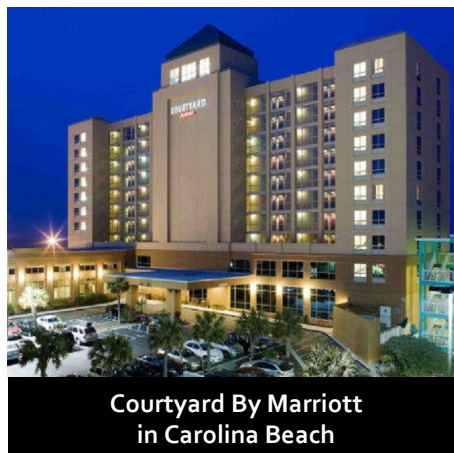
Friends of Fort Fisher to unveil plans for new, larger visitors center at annual meeting January 13

The exciting results of six months of advance planning will headline the Friends of Fort Fisher Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 13, 2018, at the Courtyard By Marriott Hotel in Carolina Beach, NC.

Conceptual renderings and modeling will be unveiled by the architectural design team lead by ClarkNexsen (Raleigh, NC), Riggs Ward Design (Richmond, VA), Commonwealth Heritage Group (Charlottesville, VA), CLH Design (Cary, NC) Friends of Fort Fisher, the NC Division of State Historic Sites and Office of State Archaeology/UAB, and NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Capital Projects Unit.

The uniqueness of Fort Fisher's natural setting demands special attention and the design of a beautiful new visitor center and museum facilities will not only complement

the coastal and historic environment but will be over three times larger than the existing building that opened in



Courtyard By Marriott
in Carolina Beach

1965. Friends of Fort Fisher will release reservation information in early

November and all Friends members will be invited to the unveiling as will descendants of those whose ancestors saw service in the Wilmington Campaign during the War Between the States. More details for the annual meeting will be released soon and will found on the Friends website www.friendsoffortfisher.com.

We are excited to share with Friends members a first look at plans for new facilities at Fort Fisher, including reconstruction of a key portion of the earthen fortification. Following the Annual Meeting guests should plan on attending the 153rd Commemoration and Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher. Visit the site to take in the all day living history program and speakers.

Fort Fisher's



Ready for a little holiday cheer, complete with music, decorations, and seasonal refreshments? Well, look no further. Fort Fisher State Historic Site will hold a Victorian Christmas Open House on Tuesday, December 5, 2017, from 9 am to 3 pm in the visitor center.

The Open House will feature a special appearance by Father Christmas himself. Although usually attributed to the USA, the character Santa Claus can be traced to Victorian England. During the Victorian age, Santa went by the name of 'Father Christmas' and brought children gifts on Christmas Eve.

Joining Father Christmas at the open house will be a variety of talented musical guests, including the Murray Middle School Jazz Band (under the direction of David Tyson), and John Bennett and Masonboro Parlor, a group of local musicians who offer a unique combination of lively 18th and 19th century dance and period music. Also appearing will be local favorite musician and storyteller John Golden.

Of course, no Victorian Christmas Open House would be complete without gift giving, so for this one day only, a special 20% discount is being offered on all museum store merchandise. Whether it's a Victorian Christmas cookbook or the new Christmas

Drummer Boy backpack, visitors can stock up on gifts for the history enthusiasts on their list. Fort Fisher is also recognized as a *Toys for Tots* collection location. Sponsored by Fort Fisher Chapter 2325 of the UDC, the Friends of Fort Fisher,

New Hanover County, the town of Carolina Beach and the town of Kure Beach, the Victorian Christmas Open House is free and open to the public. Please join us as we celebrate the holidays.



Students with the Murray Middle School Jazz Band will be among the entertainers providing holiday music at Fort Fisher's Victorian Christmas Open House to be held on Tuesday, Dec. 5, from 9 am to 3 pm. The program is free.



Interpreter Becky Sawyer assists volunteer Rick Morrison as he transcribes the Doren letter.

“...the finest sights a man ever witnessed...”

The Battle of Fort Fisher

As described in a letter written by Richard Doren, Acting 2nd Assistant Engineer USS *Osceola*

By Becky Sawyer

Over the summer, the staff at Fort Fisher was able to obtain another first-hand account of the 2nd Battle of Fort Fisher. This time from the pen of Richard Doren, 2nd Engineer on the USS *Osceola*.

The letter is titled “Sketches of Taking of Fort Fisher and surrounding batteries January 15th, 1865”. The letter details the role of the USS *Osceola* from January 13th through January 20th and is written on three pages back and front. The staff is confident that this letter was written during the war as the embossed initials “E J S” are the same as one of his fellow engineers, E.J. Swords, it is possible that Doren borrowed some paper from Swords.

The USS *Osceola* was a double ender and served in the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Doren writes about the failed attack by the naval brigade against the Fort, the magnificent bombardment by the fleet and also the turning of the Confederate guns toward the interior of the fort.

He also mentions how the *Osceola* had a been hit in the cabin during the battle just above the waterline knocking a hole through both sides. When it came to enter the Cape Fear River on 16th of January, Admiral Porter said to Captain Clitz “you are unlucky you always get hit, now see if you cannot be the first one in”. However, the *Osceola* did make it into the river safely though it was not the first ship in.

This primary source from the naval perspective will help the staff tell the Fort Fisher story and hopefully we will be able to incorporate it into an exhibit or interpretive wayside panel in the future.

Doren was born in Mobile, AL but appears in the 1855 MA census in East Boston living with his wife and child with the occupation of mariner. By 1860, his occupation is listed as engineer. In November 1863, he was commissioned into the US Navy as Acting 2nd Assistant Engineer. He served till May 1865. He died in 1902 and is buried in MA.

Editor’s Note: Please see the donation acknowledgement by site manager Jim Steele on page 10.

Getting to know Fort Fisher volunteer Rick Morrison

1. Where are you originally from and how long have you lived in the Cape Fear area?

It is hard for me to say I'm from a particular place. I was born in Mercedes, TX in the Lower Rio Grande Valley near Brownsville. However, my father was a produce buyer for A&P grocery stores and we moved a lot and, by the time I graduated from high school, I had lived in Texas, Colorado, Minnesota, and Michigan. I followed this by a long career in the Navy with over 18 duty stations and we moved here in 2010. Truthfully, I've lived in Wilmington longer than any other place in my life and I'm comfortable saying I'm from Wilmington.

2. Briefly tell us about your military background and your education.

I joined the Navy in 1975 and retired in 2008. I was a Hospital Corpsman for eight years and spent a little over three of those years with the Marines. In 1983, I was commissioned out of the ranks and spent the remainder of my career as a Medical Service Corps officer specializing in patient administration, personnel management, operational medical planning, and disaster/humanitarian response and assistance. After my retirement, I spent a little over five years as an analyst with the Homeland Security Institute in the DC area. My educational background includes a BS in Healthcare Management, an MS in Management, an MA in National Security and Strategic Studies, and I just completed a BA in History from UNCW in May.

3. What's your first memory of

Fort Fisher and what was your first impression of the site?

When I first visited Fort Fisher I was struck with the contradiction between the beautiful, pastoral setting we see today and the reality of what occurred

love for history and education. They tend to be interested in my duties and become very interested when I talk about being able to demonstrate the loading and firing of 19th century firearms. However, with current events being what they are, I'm fielding more questions concerning Confederate monuments and issues revolving around the flags of the period.

5. What has surprised you the most about volunteering at Fort Fisher?

The diversity of knowledge, myth, and perceptions demonstrated by our guests. They come from our 50 states as well as international locations and you can't expect to give one interpretation that fits all. The good news is that the complexity of the human experience here at Fort Fisher provides a wealth of stories that can be tailored to meet their expectations. The hard part is developing the various themes to support the interpretation that you are providing them.

6. In addition to Fort Fisher, you volunteer and give tours at the Burgwin Wright House, which means you cover two slightly different time periods. What are some of the similarities of giving tours at

both locations?

The process of interpretation is generally the same. You develop your approach thematically and build the themes into a fifty-five-minute tour. However, I will work at Fort Fisher one day and Burgwin-Wright the next and I can get my dates a bit mixed up. For example, the Stamp Act was in 1765 not 1865. There is one constant between the two sites and that has been the quality of the people I get to



here in 1864 and 1865. Even with the loss of so much of the fort since the early part of the 20th century I could still visualize the structures but the peacefulness of the settings kept getting in the way of my sense of what went on.

4. When people, friends, or acquaintances find out you volunteer at Fort Fisher, what do they say or ask?

The people who know me are very supportive because they know of my

Getting to know volunteer Rick Morrison

Continued from page 6

work with and it has been an amazing experience for me.

7. Tell us about your historic weapons interest and training.

I grew up hunting and fishing so I've always been interested in shooting sports. I never had an opportunity to fire 19th century rifles until I interned here last summer as part of my UNCW experience. My internship included demonstrations of the weapons and, following my training by John Moseley, I have been demonstrating the loading and firing of an 1854 model British Enfield rifled musket for site visitors. I'll admit that there is a little boy in me that jumps up and down whenever I do a demonstration and it is arguably a unique skill for today. I'm also interested in firing the larger guns such as the 12-pound Napoleon and the 32-pound seacoast here at the fort. The good news there is that I'll be going to artillery school in November to become part of that team and I'm truly excited about it.

8. What do you find most challenging about volunteering here?

Making sure that my interpretations meet the needs of our guests. That goes back to the issues of themes I talked about earlier. It takes a significant amount of research to develop themes that our guests will find interesting and that will promote further reflection when they leave the fort to go home. The research and development of the themes is the challenge and, in my case, part of the fun.

9. Tell us about someone who has influenced you in some way since you've been here?

The entire Fort Fisher team of employees and volunteers have been a positive influence for me. I learn from everyone through discussion and observation. I've discovered new ways to present a theme and gleaned nuggets of information that I can expand upon for my tours. Additionally, I've had constructive and robust discussions concerning validity of some of my interpretations that have improved my

knowledge of the fort and the Civil War.

10. If you weren't here at Fisher, what might you be doing instead?

I would probably be continuing my volunteering at the Burgwin-Wright House and possibly adding sites such as Brunswick Town-Fort Anderson, the USS North Carolina, and Moore's Creek National Battlefield to my activities. However, if the question is what would I be doing if not volunteering at public history sites then I would probably be working as a volunteer or temporary employee in some type of disaster or humanitarian response/assistance effort.

11. There's been a lot of discussion about charging admission to Fort Fisher. What are your thoughts about this?

I'm not a big fan of the idea. It potentially limits accessibility to individuals and families with more disposable income and excludes those who are living on marginal incomes. If we are a state historic site then our goal should be to reach everyone we can, regardless of their economic situation, and provide a solid educational experience when they visit. I think this is especially true today as we struggle with the legacy issues from the Civil War.

12. Who are two of your favorite authors (one historical and one contemporary), and what are you presently reading?

I grew up reading Louis L'Amour and Robert Heinlein. For a more contemporary author I would say J. K. Rowling because of clean writing style. Right now I'm reading three books: The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution by Morgan and Morgan; The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War—The Final Year; and Red Sky at Morning by Richard Bradford (this is a reread of an old favorite).

13. What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about volunteering at a historic landmark?

Be a reader and keep an open mind. We should never get so comfortable with our subject that we refuse to change our interpretation in the face of new facts.

14. What's one word that describes you well?

Reader.

15. What's the last thing you Googled?

Gaol fever (typhus).

Welcome New Friends of Fort Fisher Members

Robert Clements
Houston, TX

Carmine V. Rotunda
Wilmington, NC

Cecelia Donegan
Wilmington, NC



James Stone
Raleigh, NC

Jonathan Rohed
Charlotte, NC

Denis White
Wrightsville Beach, NC

Thank you for supporting NC's most visited battlefield



New exhibit at Fort Fisher appeals to young at heart

A new exhibit at Fort Fisher is putting big smiles on the faces of young visitors. As you enter the visitor's center, straight ahead and to your left, is a new exhibit that combines history, imagination, and toy store enthusiasm. The exhibit is the brain child of Fort Fisher's curator of history Ray Flowers. He calls it *Heroes in Blue and Gray, America's Civil War Centennial through the Eyes of a Child*.

Chief among its assets are the plastic blue and gray toy soldiers on opposing sides of the conflict, dutifully striking a permanent pose, yet perfectly willing to adjust their combative agenda depending on a child's imagination. While the actual 1865 battle of Fort Fisher

resulted in Confederate defeat, the outcome of this miniature battle is purely discretionary.

And it's not just toy soldiers. The display is fraught with nostalgic examples of what contemporary adolescents hoped for--and in many cases found--under the Christmas tree. Witness, for example, the Remco "Johnny Rebel" cannon. No doubt countless pajama-clad youngsters revelled in aiming this working treasure at an unsuspecting pet or sibling oblivious to the plastic ball soaring in their direction. Other youthful staples include an array of toy guns, plastic swords, books, and more.

As the *Heroes in Blue and Gray*

exhibit was being developed, so too was a site fundraiser which still offers ticketholders a chance to win a Giant 250-piece Antietam Playset from Classic Toy Soldier Inc. The playset contains dozens of toy Civil War soldiers along with horses, cannons, a Conestoga wagon and ambulance, a bridge, stone walls, split rail fencing, trees, terrain, and boundless feats of imagination.

Raffle tickets for the playset are \$3 each or 2 for \$5. The drawing for this \$334 value (including shipping) will be held at Fort Fisher's 2017 Victorian Christmas Open House on Dec. 5, 2017.

You do not need to be present to win, but you do need to be present to truly appreciate this new exhibit.

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 code _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Payments or donations may be made securely on our website www.friendsoffortfisher.com

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

Fort Fisher wishes to acknowledge Mrs. Charles Bushman of Belmont, Massachusetts and Vince Stevens of Chapel Hill for their donation of the Doren manuscript

(see related story on page 5)

This past July, Vince Stevens of Chapel Hill brought Fort Fisher a wonderful manuscript account of the capture of Fort Fisher. Written by Richard Doren, an engineer on the USS *Osceola*, it is a vivid, contemporary telling of the events that happened here in January 1865.

The account was discovered by Mr. Stevens's sister, Mrs. Charles Bushman of Belmont, Massachusetts. She was closing her antiques business and found the manuscript in a box of other papers. When she read it she understood that it should go to Fort Fisher's archive and enlisted her brother's help in getting it to us.

We thank Mrs. Bushman for this gift. Such firsthand accounts are the real stuff of history, and we are so grateful she decided to donate it to Fort Fisher and the people of North Carolina.

Too often, this sort of material is lost, destroyed or disappears into private collections. Now, the Doren account will be preserved, available to the public, and help expand our interpretation of the historic battle that captured the Rebel Gibraltar.

Thanks again, you are a true Friend of Fort Fisher!

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

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