FORT FISHER STATE **HISTORIC SITE**

The Powder Magazine

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3

FALL 2015

Fisher's development for years

to come.

- From the site manager (page 2)
- **December events** (page 3)
- Miracle survivor (page 4)
- Above the Scenes Tours (page 5)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Meet part-timer Dennis Griswold	6
New Friends of Fort Fisher	8
Holiday Open House reminder	8
Join the Friends of Fort Fisher	9

Master plan under development at Fort Fisher

On Tuesday, September 15, an advisory committee met at the Fort Fisher National Guard Training Center to begin development of a master plan for Fort Fisher State Historic Site. The committee included staff from Fort Fisher, the North Carolina Historic Sites division. representatives from the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources including the offices of State Archeology and State Construction, the Friends of Fort Fisher (the historic site's non-profit support group), and the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point. The meeting was the first of several that are planned through the fall and winter.

Tasked with facilitating the meetings and writing the plan is George "Chip" Hemingway of the Wilmington architectural firm Bowman Murray Heming-



way (BMH). Working with Chip is Laura Knott, a landscape architect with extensive battlefield experience employed by John Milner Associates. Using recommendations and ideas from the advisory committee, BMH will produce a site master plan that will guide Fort

and Properties Director Keith Hardison says, "A master planning initiative is now underway

North Carolina Historic Sites

at Fort Fisher. Underwritten by the Friends of Fort Fisher, this initiative will synthesize the finding and recommendations of the site's strategic and interpretive plans into a comprehensive plan that will direct both the preservation and sensitive development of this nationally-significant historic site. This process marks a new level of commitment to the future of Fort Fisher."

Fort Fisher State Historic Site came into being in 1960, when the N.C. Department of Archives & History acquired the battlefield and opened to the public.

Continued on page 2

Friends of Fort Fisher announce annual meeting

The Friends Annual Meeting is scheduled on Fort Fisher's 151st Anniversary weekend, January 16, 2016 and convenes Saturday morning at the oceanfront Carolina Beach Courtyard by Marriott Hotel.

Last January's Descendants Reunion was so successful that we have decided to provide a morning session at 9:00 a.m. featuring our friend, historian, author and director of the Center for Military and Veterans Studies at Coastal Carolina University, Rod Gragg. Rod is always a crowd favorite and will share personal stories of the soldiers, sailors and marines from both sides engaged at Fort Fisher in 1865. Preceding Rod, for those interested in researching their ancestors a primer is planned with Diane Richard, a professional genealogist, recently featured on the TLC television program "Who Do You Think You Are?" Diane will focus on Civil War records. Learn the methods and tools needed for successfully tracing

your family roots.

There will be a business meeting at 10:30 a.m. that will provide attendees the organization's financial status, yearly accomplishments, update on the Fort Fisher Master Site Development Plan project, announcement of new projects we will undertake at Fort Fisher during 2016 and finally, election of new directors to the board.

Continued on page 7

From the site manager, Jim Steele

Dear Friends:

Labor Day has passed, the summer tourism season is over, and fall has officially arrived. Although the kids are back in school and the beachgoers have all gone home, Fort Fisher is still busy and setting records in visitation, gift shop sales and good educational fun. It was a great summer, and we closed it over Labor Day weekend with an outstanding program commemorating the 75th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (see sample photos below).

The VJ Day program was our second World War II-themed event this year, and even more suc-

cessful than the Victory in Europe program we held in May. Nearly 2,000 people visited and enjoyed living history displays by World War II reenactors, scholarly lectures and children's activities. I myself had a great time running the Toy Soldier Workshop, where 150 children (and children-at-heart) painted toy soldiers they then got to take home- sort of a make your own souvenir activity!

And special thanks to Cliff Tyndall for bringing his vintage Willy's Jeep and to Morris Bass for giving visitors Jeep rides for site donations! As you can tell from the photo in the bottom right, the Jeep rides were a big hit with visitors. It was a terrific weekend and you can be sure that World War II programming will become a regular feature at Fort Fisher!

In closing, I encourage you to join the Friends of Fort Fisher. As our official non-profit support group they make our programming and exhibits possible with generous financial assistance and volunteers. We could not do what we do without them, so if you like what we do please become a part of this fine organization and help make Fort Fisher the premier Civil War site in the nation.

Master plan under development at Ft. Fisher, cont'd from page 1

In 1965 the current visitor center opened to much fanfare, and historic sites officials anticipated approximately 25,000 people would visit every year. Today, Fort Fisher is at the heart of North Carolina's most dynamic tourism region, the Lower Cape Fear. And the battlefield hosts more than 800,000 visitors annually, making it the most heavily visited historic site in our state.

It was never more apparent that visitation has outgrown available facilities and programming than during the recent 150^{th} anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Fort Fisher in January 2015. Over the course of the weekend's program at least 22,000 people attended the ceremo-

nies and the battle reenactment, setting a new event record. The overflow crowd proved that Fort Fisher State Historic Site needs to grow in order to be all it can be: more indoor space, more exhibits, more historical reconstructions, more activities, more of everything!

The Fort Fisher master plan will address the site's need to expand facilities and operations. It will be a blueprint for future development and fundraising. And it is the crucial next step towards making Fort Fisher State Historic Site a top tier Civil War battlefield in the nation. As the plan develops we will keep you, our Friends and supporters, informed and share the final product when it is complete. It will be full of exciting, ambitious projects and we will need your help to complete them.

The partnership of the historic site and the Friends of Fort Fisher is key. Successful implementation of the master plan will depend heavily on the Friends' financial assistance and lobbying efforts. So if you are not already a member, please join the Friends of Fort Fisher today! For more information on how to join, please see our updated membership form on page 9.



Best regards,



PAGE 3

Holiday Open House set for Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015



Fort Fisher State Historic Site will celebrate the season when we host our Annual Holiday Open House on Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015 from 10 am to 4 pm.

Enjoy seasonal refreshments, beautiful holiday decorations, and entertainment throughout the day. Among those invited to perform at the site are the Murray Middle School Jazz Band from New Hanover County.

The free program is sponsored by Fort Fisher Chapter 2325 of the UDC and the Friends of Fort Fisher and its sustaining members.

For the history lover on your list, there will be a oneday only discount of 20% off in the gift shop. Join us!



Fort Fisher to commemorate first attack with artillery program scheduled for Dec. 5, 2015

On Saturday, Dec. 5, 2015, Fort Fisher State Historic Site will host "We Kept Our Courage Up: the 150th commemoration of the First Attack of Fort Fisher."

and will be held from 10 am to 4 pm. The program will commemorate the first Federal attack on Fort Fisher in December 1864. The Confederate defenders at Fort Fisher withstood a heavy Federal naval bombardment and a floating bomb disguised as a blockade runner.

Civil War re-enactors will set up displays of camp life and talk with visitors about the life of the soldiers, sailors and marines from both sides of the December 1864 campaign.

Throughout the day, Fort Fisher will be firing the site's 32-pounder Seacoast Rifled and Banded cannon. Costumed interpreters will be on hand to interpret This free program is open to the public the drill and equipment of the massive rifled cannon that would have been found at Fort Fisher during the attack in December 1864.

> The 32-pounder cannon will be fired at 10 am, 12 pm, 2 pm, and 4 pm. For the young and young at heart, our Junior Reserves program, "Attention cannoneers!" will be educating visitors about Civil War field artillery.

> Visitors will learn about the skills it takes to be good Cannoneers using science and math to launch water balloons with our artillery simulator.

All Fort Fisher programming is made possible with the support of the Friends of Fort Fisher, the non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing this national treasure., and its sustaining members: Troy and Lori Barbour, Mike McCarley, Tammy & Jack Moore, Brian & Deedra Nunnally, Jim and Catherine Taylor, Patrick O. McCullough, Forrest Goodman, Jr., Wilson Grab, & Ivarlee E. & Thomas E. Mulligan), as well as generous sponsorships from the town of Carolina Beach and New Hanover County.

All program components are subject to change due to factors beyond the site's control.

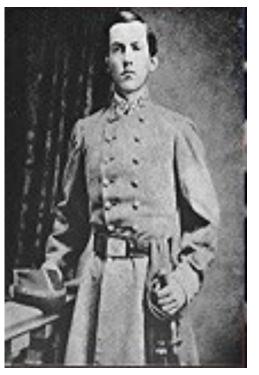
For more information, please call the site at 910-458-5538.

Indomitable courage: the remarkable story of a true survivor, Maj. John Cheves Haskell, CSA by Ray Flowers

It was nearly sundown of Friday, June 27th 1862 when Brigadier General William Henry Chase Whiting arrived on the field and immediately received urgent orders to advance. Just ten miles outside of Richmond, with the enemy threatening the gates of the capital, it appeared that the fate of the Confederacy hung in the balance. He at once formed his splendid division, comprised of two most excellent brigades, General John Bell Hood's Texas Brigade and Whiting's own (now commanded by Colonel Evander Law). As an expedient to the emergency, he rapidly led them forward, and into the center of what General Longstreet would forever declare to be the hottest musketry fight in history. With three brigades detached, Whiting's division was the smallest in the Army of Northern Virginia, but on this day it was assigned a leviathan task.

Fought on the third day of the "Seven Days Battles", the veterans would remember it as the Battle of Gaine's Mill (also called Cold Harbor or after the Second Battle of Cold Harbor, First Cold Harbor). Like the Revolutionary War Battle of Bunker Hill that was actually fought on Breed's Hill, the name was a misnomer. The rivulet of Boatswain's Creek, a mile south of Gaine's Mill, was in reality the point of contention. But by whatever name it was called it was to be Lee's first victory as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, the scene of the largest frontal Confederate assault of the war and before the sun set the second bloodiest day in American history.

In truth Boatswain's Creek was little more than a giant ditch, a shallow, crescent shaped stream passing through a wooded ravine carpeted in an entanglement of underbrush. But along the left of the line, at the point of Whiting's intended attack, the Northerners had moated and buttressed the creek's lower bank, creating a seemingly impregnable position. They had felled trees, collected fence rails and piled knapsacks full of dirt, to construct three layers of barricades. These lines along the east bank were well spaced in a manner that afforded each tier of infantry its own field of fire, while the third line at the top of the chasm was further bolstered with several sections of artillery. This compact two mile, half-moon arrangement of 30,000 infantry gave V Corps a condensed interior line that allowed them to shift assistance to any threatened point in a timely manner. Furthermore, just to the rear, nearly eighty guns studded the



Maj. John Cheves Haskell

ridgeline of Turkey Hill. From this eminence the Federals commanded both the field and its approaches. It was a veritable fortress.

The battle that had been raging since early afternoon had been conducted by a series of isolated and disjointed Confederate charges and with the sun sinking in the sky the Rebels had little more to show for the day's work than a staggering casualty count.

But finally, at long last, practically all six Confederate Divisions were up, perhaps 56,000 men, and they were all going in together. As Whiting's men moved toward the enemy the general was overtaken by Major John Cheves Haskell – a Southern staff officer who was looking for a fight. Whiting requested that he help by rallying several hundred stragglers lying prone off to the right and get them into the contest.

Haskell was up to the task as he appealed and challenged the men with a gesture both conspicuous and heroic: despite being mounted he took up the standard of a prostrate color bearer.

Apparently inspired or else abashed by the example, the men responded by renewing the advance. John Cheves however did not remain mounted, as he leapt the Yankee breastworks his horse was killed and the young major was pinned underneath. As he struggled to free himself a Union captain, pistol in hand, accosted him, seizing the flagstaff, while cursing, "You damned little rebel, surrender."

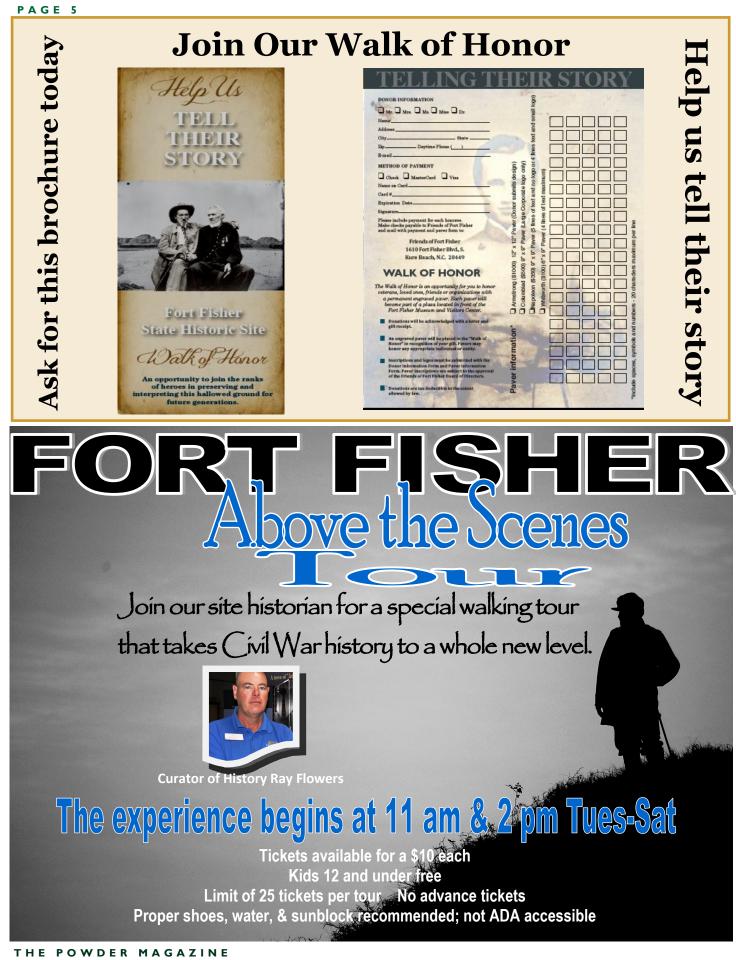
As the two men engaged in a high stakes tug-of-war over the flag the Union officer began shooting. One ball creased the major's neck, another broke his little finger destroying a ring and another grazed his leg.

However, Haskell's opponent suddenly lost interest when the exhausted U.S. lines gave way initiating a Federal withdraw that soon turned pellmell. Haskell, however, having freed himself of his mount wished to settle the score.

Having caught up to the enemy officer, Haskell took up his sword in both hands and cut down on him, "expecting to split him."

The blade bounced off, but when the captain turned to confront him, John Cheves ran him through. Having bested an enemy officer in mortal combat, Haskell now set his sights on one of the Turkey Hill guns.

Targeting a gunner affixing a lanyard to a friction primer Haskell said that he was not ten feet from the muzzle when the lanyard was pulled.





Where are you originally from?

I was born in Washington D.C. and raised in Beltsville, Maryland, a suburb of Washington.

How long have lived in southeast NC?

I've lived in Wilmington for the last 19 years, but remain a loyal Redskins and Orioles fan.

Tell us about your education and/or professional training.

I graduated the University of Mary-

land with a B.A. in Government and Politics. I'm a Terp (Terrapin). During my work career I endured constant Federal Law Enforcement training in a variety of discipline's. When did you start working part-time at FF and what were you doing prior to that?

I started working at Fort Fisher in October 2012. Prior to that I retired as a U.S. Postal Inspector having worked mail fraud, financial crimes, drugs, and bombs out of the Charlotte NC office in the mid 1980s. I was transferred back to Washington DC in the 1990s working early investigamostly fraud

tions. In 1996, I was transferred to Wilmington, NC to work burglaries, robberies, drugs and bomb Investigations throughout southeastern North Carolina. It was a great job and I had a ball. Now, working at Fort Fisher is equally enjoyable and presents new challenges each week. Life's been good.

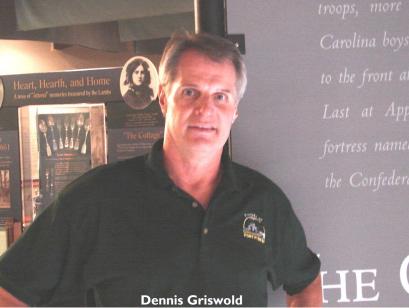
Tell us about your interest in history. At what age do you remember becoming interested in history? In what

era of history are you most interested?

I've been interested in history since I was a small child. My father would take me to museums, Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War battlefields and historic sites at every opportunity. Living in the shadows of Washington DC afforded me access to many wonderful museums and Civil War sites within a few hours drive. I'm interfear many families looking for an inexpensive place to take their kids may not visit. This would deprive some youngsters, who might otherwise not be exposed to history, an opportunity to explore Fort Fisher and perhaps develop an interest in history. I wonder if I would have been taken to as many museums and battlefields in my youth if my parents would have had to pay an admission fee; probably not. I also expect many visitors who have

Last at Appom

visited once might not be willing to pay a fee in order to make repeat visits. Once you have paid an admission fee to a particular location you are less likely to make a return trip, seeking out less costly diversions. Our many guests who come in asking if there is a fee are always excited and overioved to learn we are free, resulting in a very positive recollection of their trip to Fort Fisher. Sadly, there are few places you



ested in history from all eras, but find Civil War history the most compelling as it is one of the first American War's in which photos and detailed documentation abound.

With state budget constraints, there's been a lot of discussion about admission fees. Do you think people would be willing to pay to visit FF? Why?

I believe many of our history loving customers would be willing to pay a nominal admission fee, but I

can go these days for free, which helps make Fort Fisher a unique locale. It seems a shame that it would cost people money to seek out a better understanding of how America has evolved as a country..

Who are a couple of your favorite authors and what have you read recently?

Continued on page 7

10 Questions with Dennis Griswold, continued from page 6

I'm currently reading Thomas Jefferson, The Art of Power by Jon Meacham, and The Years of Lyndon Johnson, The Passage of Power by Robert Caro. James Lee Burke is my favorite contemporary writer, and Mark Twain and James A. Michener a couple of my all time favorites. I've also read or tried to familiarize myself with many of the books offered in our gift shop in an effort to assist customers in their selections. I always enjoy selling people books.

Hobbies or interests in your spare time?

Swimming and Cycling. I've completed about 17 century (100 mile) rides since the mid 1990s. I write a lot of correspondence with friends using only fountain pens, and enjoy bowling occasionally because it seems nostalgic. The last few years much of my spare time has been happily consumed by spending time with my twin grandchildren (the grandtwins), now almost 6 years old. I never thought I'd enjoy being called Grandpa so much. I expected to play golf regularly after retirement, but haven't really had the extra time.

If someone was willing to grant you one wish for something you could change about, or add to, Fort Fisher, what would it be?

Fill in the parking lot potholes. Many guests ask if we plan to do any partial excavations of one of the bombproofs, which would be a very involved undertaking. Many also say they wish we increased the frequency of our reenactments. Overall I feel Fort Fisher does a fantastic job presenting what we presently offer.

What else would you like for people to know about Dennis Gris-

wold? For example, how often do you give tours?

I was an extra in the movie Gettysburg, spending two weeks firing a cannon, as a townsman observing the march through Cashtown, and as both a Union and Confederate soldier battling on the movie set version of Little Round Top. It was a great experience. I also once assisted a magician in a Las Vegas stage show, sawing a woman in half. I still can't figure out how the trick was done. I currently work at Fort Fisher on Tuesdays, giving as many tours as they will allow me.

I love conversing with our guests and giving the tours, and meeting people from all parts of our country and all over the world.



Friends of Fort Fisher CEO Paul Laird addresses the audience at an annual Friends meeting

Friends of Fort Fisher to hold annual meeting continued from page 1

Following the Annual Meeting all are invited to Fort Fisher to participate in the Anniversary activities including unveiling a new exhibit on Fort Fisher's Medal of Honor recipients, living history encampments, special tours, speakers, kids activities, infantry drills and artillery firings throughout the day.

A block of rooms at the Carolina Beach Courtyard by Marriott at the special rate of \$69 is available but must be reserved by December 18, 2015.

To reserve your oceanfront room call the hotel direct at 910-458-2030 or Courtyard by Marriott central reservations at I-800-321-2211 and use the group code FOFS and mention the Fort Fisher 2016 Anniversary Program.



The Friends Annual Meeting will be held January 16, 2016 at the Carolina Beach Courtyard by Marriott Hotel



vook 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

<u>Palisade Society</u> – 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

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

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.

 $\hfill\square$ I wish to waive my society membership benefits

 $\hfill\square$ I will be an Annual Society Member

<u>Blockade Runner Society</u> - 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

<u>Gibraltar of the South Society</u> - level of annual support which includes all of the above benefits except a larger $9" \times 9"$ engraved brick paver, and a specially selected book annually from the Museum Shop

<u>Col. Charles F. Fisher Society</u> - 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 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

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

Indomitable courage: the remarkable story of a true survivor Maj. John Cheves Haskell, CSA

Continued from page 4

"The shot struck my right arm, crushing it and tearing it off at the shoulder...it seemed to knock me up in the air and spin me around two or three times...When I came to, I found my arm wrapped around my sword blade in a most remarkable manner." Remarkable indeed; soon after General Hood recalled, "Major Haskell, son-in-law of General Hampton, won my admiration by his indomitable courage: just after my troops had broken the adversary's line, and I was sorely in need of staff officers, he reported to me for duty, sword in hand, notwithstanding one of his arms had by a shot been completely severed from his body. I naturally instructed him to go in search of a surgeon."

Sometime afterward, the surgeon that treated Haskell informed him that he had administered, "... morphine enough to kill several men, and that he gave it to me to allow me to die easily, as I appeared to be in great suffering. He often said that my recovery from him was much more remarkable than my recovery from the wound."

Following a long recovery, Major Haskell went on to rejoin the army at Fredricksburg. To learn more about his remarkable military career, seek out his published journal entitled, *The Haskell Memoirs*. You'll be glad you did.

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

Friends of Fort Fisher Board of Directors:

John M. Coble, Chairman Brian Nunnally, Ph.D., Vice Chairman Col. (Ret) John E. Craig, Treasurer W. Paul Harris, Secretary Brig. Gen. (Ret) James Carper, Past Chair



Tom Conaty Jerome Fennell Geoffrey Losee Mike McCarley Mark McLamb Norm Melton Harry Parham Paul Ritchie M. Tyrone Rowell

Dennis St. Andrew James Steele, III {ex officio} Paul Laird, Executive Director {ex officio}

Web: www.friendsoffortfisher.com

E-mail: info@friendsoffortfisher.com