Shoo Fly Train to Carolina Beach to be Discussed at July Meeting

The speaker for the July meeting of the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society will be Mr. Jack Hart, a Wilmington resident. Mr. Hart, born April 29, 1915, will present a first-hand account on the history and operation of the Shoo Fly, a train operated by the New Hanover Transit Company from the Cape Fear River to Carolina Beach during the early twentieth century. In addition to the Shoo Fly, Mr. Hart has a wide interest in the Federal Point community, being a descendent of the local prominent Burris family. He is a World War II veteran and served as commander of American Legion Post 10 in 1962. Mr. Hart retired after nine years of service as chairman of the Wilmington Transit Authority, and was recently appointed to the Board of Trustees for the Cape Fear Museum. The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society meeting will be held on Monday, July 17, at 7:30 p.m. at the Fort Fisher Civil War Museum auditorium. Everyone is invited to attend.

You Can Help Save Sedgeley Abbey

Dear members and friends, the Society needs your individual assistance today to help save the foundation and cellar remains of historic Sedgeley Abbey which is threatened by development at Telfair Forest. Gulfstream Development has recently submitted a proposal to the county that calls for the preservation in place of the Sedgeley Abbey foundation structure, however, it extends for only a six month period! While this may be an adequate amount of time to accomplish "the completion of the archaeological investigation of this site," Gulfstream has not yet indicated how they plan to have this work completed. The Underwater Archaeology Unit, working in conjunction with the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society and the local University, have now completed a draft scope-of-work outlining what is needed to complete the archaeological excavation of the site and presented this to the developers. However, Gulfstream has yet to present a funded preservation plan for data recovery of the foundation and outbuilding or arrive at a monetary amount that they would need to have a preservation group purchase a 40-foot-wide easement around the site. You can help by writing to the developers, Gulfstream Development, 1009 North Lake Park Blvd., Carolina Beach, NC 28428, or the New Hanover County Planning Department, attn.: Sam Burgess, 320 Chestnut Street, Room 403, Wilmington, NC 28401-4027 and ask that Sedgeley Abbey be set aside with a conservation easement and preserved as a tangible piece of our heritage. Please act today, before it is too late.

Cape Fear Indians Recently Discussed

At last month's meeting Mr. Mark Wilde-Ramsing, an archaeologist with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Underwater Archaeology Unit, spoke to the Society about Indian tribes along the Cape Fear River. A large number of people turned out to hear Mr. Wilde-Ramsing speak, including 35 educators from the University of Akron in Ohio. According to Wilde-Ramsing the earliest appearance of Native American inhabitants along the Cape Fear can be traced back more than 12,000 years. The earliest people in the New World were the ancestors of the American Indian, and therefore, of the Lower Cape Fear Indians. Known simply as Paleo-Indians, they lived as small groups of large-game hunters. With the extinction of the large herd animals, Indians began utilizing more local small game and plant resources. This marked the beginning of what is called the Archaic Period when early inhabitants learned of new food resources and new methods for obtaining,
preparing and utilizing those resources. About 2,000 years ago Indians became more settled and learned how to make pottery. They built semi-permanent houses of poles and sticks covered with hides, bark or woven reeds and utilized a variety of sea life along with corn, beans, squash and pumpkins. When English explorers first visited North Carolina they provided some of our best knowledge about the native populations through their written records and drawings. Many of the early pictures were drawn by colonist John White in 1585 and 1586. Later, when explorers visited the Cape Fear area, they found approximately one hundred natives here that they called the Cape Fear Indians. In 1715 the Cape Fear Indians were reported to have had five villages and a population of 206. One of these villages, Nocoes, was located on the Cape Fear River near present day Wilmington. By the mid-1700s most of the Cape Fear Indians had been displaced from this region to the south by settlements of English colonists. Today, only the archaeological remains of the early Native American inhabitants can be found along the Cape Fear River.

A History of Fort Fisher
"The Battles for the Fort"
(Part 2 of 3)
By Sandy Jackson

Federal forces began plans for a joint army-navy attack on Fort Fisher during the fall of 1864. Shortly after the southern forces learned on October 24, 1864, of the impending attack, Confederate general Braxton Bragg assumed command of the defenses of Wilmington. He superseded Gen. W. H. C. Whiting, who remained his second-in-command. The Confederates assembled 1,430 men at Fort Fisher in preparation for the assault. An additional force of 6,000 veterans from Lee's army under the command of Maj. Gen. Robert F. Hoke were located 5 miles up the river at Sugar Loaf. The expected Federal fleet finally arrived off Fort Fisher on the morning of December 20 under the command of Admiral David Porter. Aboard the fifty-six warships that gathered off New Inlet was an army unit of 6,500 infantrymen under the command of Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler (Lamb 1896:357-358; Fort Fisher Master Plan 1974:56-57; Sprunt 1992:493).

The first attempt the Federals made to take the fort began on the night of December 23, when the powder ship *Louisiana*, with more than 215 tons of powder, was exploded within 200 yards of the fort. It was hoped that the blast from the vessel would create a gap in the earthen defense. After a lengthy delay, however, the ship finally exploded at 1:52 A.M. doing no damage. For two days, December 24 and 25, Fort Fisher came under a heavy bombardment that did little destruction. During the afternoon on Christmas day, 2,000 troops under General Butler made an unopposed landing at Battery Anderson, 3 miles up the coast. Unable to advance upon the fort because of artillery fire, General Butler withdrew his troops. On December 27 the Federal vessels sailed north along the coast to Beaufort, North Carolina, having been unsuccessful in their initial effort to capture Fort Fisher (Lamb 1896:357-358,361,366; Fort Fisher Mater Plan 1974:56-57; Sprunt 1992:493; Powell 1968:179).

The Confederates were jubilant at having withstood the land attack of General Butler and the naval bombardment from Admiral Porter's ships. General Bragg, not expecting a renewed attack from the Union forces, ordered Hoke's 6,000 troops into Wilmington in preparation for a move against occupied New Bern. Disappointed with the failure of General Butler to take Fort Fisher, General U. S. Grant replaced Butler with Maj. Gen. Alfred H. Terry and ordered an additional 1,500 troops to ready themselves for a second attack on the fortification within the following weeks. The Federal fleet, then numbering fifty-eight warships mounting 627 guns, reassembled at Beaufort, and proceeded back to Fort Fisher. On the night of January, 12, 1865, the Federal fleet reappeared off Confederate Point. The following morning, the second attack on Fort Fisher commenced when the five ironclads began bombarding the land defenses. The rest of the fleet, which joined in the bombardment of the fort that continued day and night from the thirteenth to the fifteenth. More than 50,000 shells and roundshot were

On January 14 Federal troops again landed above Fort Fisher, in the vicinity of Battery Anderson. There the infantry entrenched from the sea to the river and were supported by light artillery brought ashore. To prevent Gen. Braxton Bragg from arriving from Wilmington to enforce the fort, 4,700 men were placed along the entrenchment. The remaining 3,300 men under the command of General Terry moved against Fort Fisher. At the pre-arranged hour of 3:00 P.M. on January 15, the assault began under a covering fire from the Federal vessels. In an effort to draw the fire away from General Terry's troops, 400 marines and 1,600 sailors, landed near the fort the evening before and, armed with pistols and cutlasses, attacked the northeast bastion on the beach side. The main attack by General Terry and his men came along the river at the end battery. During the ensuing battle, General Whiting was mortally wounded and Colonel Lamb severely wounded. The Confederate survivors of the battle fled to Battery Buchanan in hopes of finding boats as a means of escape. The assault finally ended at 10 o'clock on the evening of January 15 when the last of the Confederate defenders, finding boats no longer there, could do nothing but surrender. Federal casualties had been costly, with nearly 1,300 men lost, but the expedition had finally been successful. The "last major stronghold of the confederacy" had fallen. Blockade-runners could no longer enter the safety of the Cape Fear River to unload at Wilmington, and in the following month even the city would be occupied by Union forces (Lamb 1896:371-377; Fort Fisher Master Plan 1974:57-58; Sprunt 1992:493-494).

Bibliography

Fort Fisher State Historic Site.


Lamb, William Colonel.


Powell, William S.


Sprunt, James


Federal Point Historic Preservation Society Notes

- The mayor of Carolina Beach recently informed the FPHPS that we could proceed with the purchase of the materials needed to construct the General Beauregard Shipwreck Overlook. The exhibit, to be modeled after the one at Nags Head, will be a wooden gazebo located at the foot of Spartanburg Avenue with display panels containing photographs and informative text about the shipwreck Beauregard. The blockade runner sank during the Civil War on the night of December 11, 1863, after being chased ashore by the Union fleet. At the time it sank the Beauregard carried a cargo of brown sugar, coffee, bacon, and candles. The overlook is a cooperative project between the Town of Carolina Beach, Underwater Archaeology Unit and the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society. Anyone interested in volunteering to help with the construction should contact Leslie Bright at the Underwater Archaeology Unit 458-9042.
• A new supply of Society tee-shirts and hats have arrived! Help support the Society with the purchase of a FPHPS tee-shirt or hat. The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society name is shown on the front of the shirt and our multi-colored logo of the Federal Point lighthouse is beautifully displayed on the back. Tee shirts are available in a variety of different colors and can be purchased for $10 from either Lynn or Darlene at our address listed above, or at our next meeting.

• Last month the FPHPS received notice that board members Margaret Crouch, vice president, and Harriett Boutelle could no longer serve. Mrs. Crouch submitted her resignation stating that personal matters prevented her from continuing to serve as vice president and a board member. Mrs. Boutelle asked not to be considered for a second term on the board of directors due to a conflict with other commitments. The Society wishes to thank Mrs. Crouch and Mrs. Boutelle for their role as board members of the FPHPS. At this month's meeting nominations will be accepted from the membership to fill their vacant positions.

• The Federal Point Historic Preservation Society welcomes new members: David and Adele Lombardi, Steven and Sheril MacCurry, and Carolina Beach BB&T. We hope that both our new and old members will consider lending their support to the Society by joining any of our several committees in need of help.

• Do you have something of historic interest to share with other members? Are you seeking information about a Federal Point family or place? Let others know by putting your topic or request for information in the Newsletter.

Anyone interested in membership in the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society can write to FPHPS, P.O. Box 623, Carolina Beach, NC 28428. Yearly dues are $15.00 Individual; $20.00 Husband & Wife; and $25.00 Business. Help support our local preservation efforts with your membership.