



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 632, SHALLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. IV, No. 3

August - October, 1964

FAMOUS FORTIFICATION AT BRUNSWICK TOWN

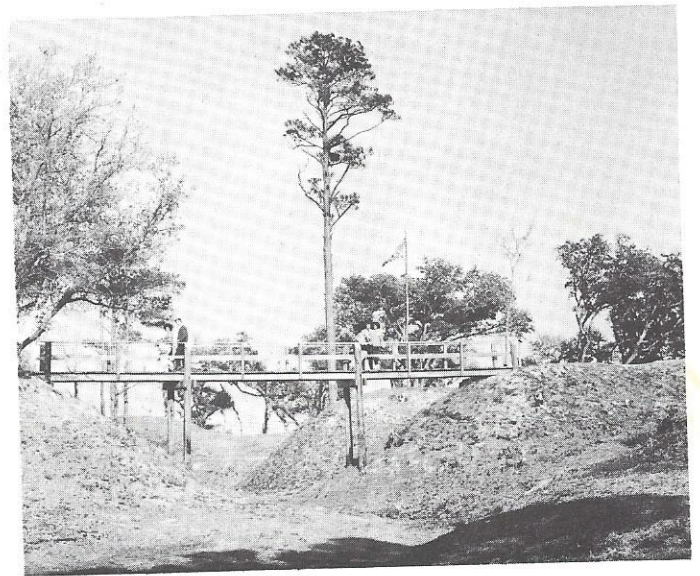
by R. V. Asbury, *Editor*
NEWSLETTER
Brunswick County Historical Society

For many years after the British burned Brunswick, it lay still and forgotten for the most part, inhabited only occasionally by a handful of people. It wasn't until April of 1861 that life in mass form once again came to this site: men working on construction of an earthen fort. Military strategists of the Confederacy had seen the need for a fortress some distance up the river from Fort Fisher, and so work was begun. Hundreds of tons of soil were placed over many of the ruins of the colonial town which had flourished eighty-six years before and which had been completely abandoned by the late 1830's and thus began the second era of life on the Brunswick site.

In 1861, forts for the defense of Wilmington and other surrounding communities were being constructed along the Cape Fear River. The Brunswick site, over which Fort Anderson was constructed, was ideally located for such fortification: it lay both on a point of the river and on a ridge. A mile in length, the fortification extended inland from the river to the ponds beyond the church. Since the labor available to build the fortifications was comprised of soldiers garrisoned at the fort, slaves whose owners donated their time to the cause of the Confederacy, Indians recruited from the Maxton area and old men and young boys ineligible for military service, completion of the entrenchments took many months.

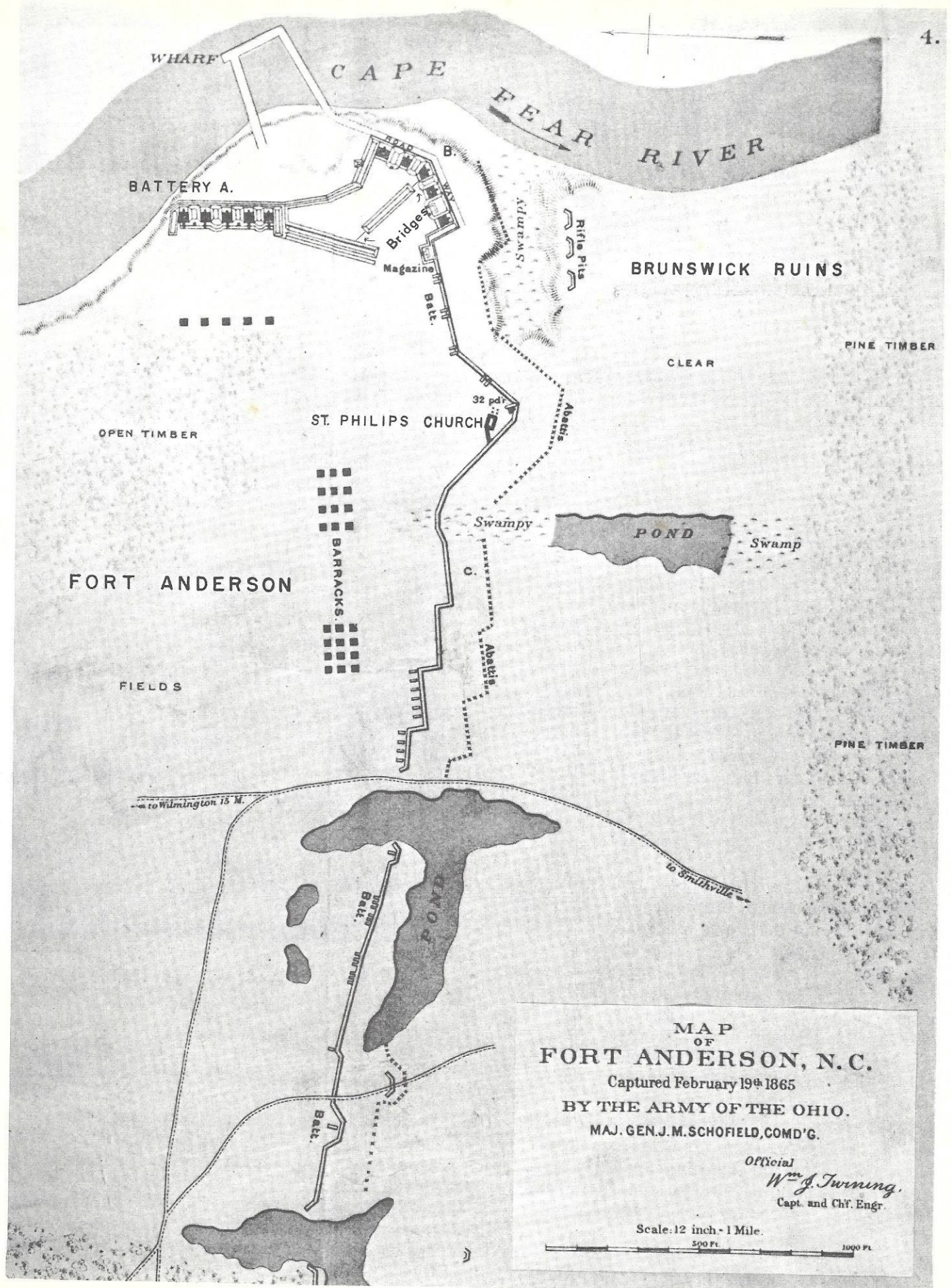
In its early days the fort was known as Fort St. Philip; the name was later changed to Fort

Anderson, in honor of General Joseph R. Anderson, then commanding officer of the military district. The fort was composed of two batteries, "A" and "B", which possessed five guns each. Other gun emplacements, less impressive than the main batteries, were strewn along the line of defense. (See map on reverse side.)



Visitors at Fort Anderson enjoy walking across the bridge connecting the mounds.

As the years wore on, duty became increasingly boring for the artillerymen of the North Carolina 40th Regiment; the diversions from tedium were few, consisting of occasional practice drills and lively practice shots from the large cannon, and visits from people in the area surrounding Wilmington -- usually on Sunday afternoons. (Several hundred people visit the site on Sunday afternoons now, but wonder if it's anything like those visits in the good ol' days?)



MAP
OF
FORT ANDERSON, N.C.
Captured February 19th 1865
BY THE ARMY OF THE OHIO.
MAJ. GEN. J. M. SCHOFIELD, COMD'G.

Official
Wm. J. Turning,
Capt. and Chf. Engr.

Scale: 12 inch = 1 Mile.
500 Ft. 1000 Ft.

As there was more strict enforcement of inspection regulations governing all ships entering the river and heading toward Wilmington during the months of 1864, the function of the fort became apparent. The importance of the fort in maintaining such a control was substantiated by a report from James Sprunt, who was aboard one of the blockade runners: "While passing the fort, a gun was fired, but having received no intimation at Fort Fisher that we would be detained on the river, we continued our course, which was immediately arrested by another gun sending a round shot through our rigging. We were boarded by Lt. McNair (still known as crazy Mac) who laughingly remarked that his next shot would have sunk us, as his orders were to stop all vessels passing the fort, for inspection."

On January 15, 1865, Fort Fisher fell. When news of the fall reached Fort Anderson, the soldiers realized the proportions of the task that lay before them: they must hold this river defense. On the day following the fall of Fort Fisher, troops came in from other river installations, among them Companies B, C, H and I from Forts Holmes and Hedrick on Smith Island. On January 17 they joined Company A at Fort Anderson, which now contained six companies and 900 men from Fort Caswell. On the 22nd of January, the Federal Navy moved 15 ves-

sels into the river, one vessel firing on Fort Anderson. On February 16, General Cox moved his command, part of Schofield's army, to Smithville and moved up the river, encamping within two miles of Fort Anderson. The next morning at seven o'clock, the Yankee forces, with small loss of life, took Fort Anderson and 50 prisoners. The Confederates, however, had slipped out of the fort in the early morning hours, much to the chagrin of the Federal troops, who found themselves fired upon by their own ships in the river. They found it necessary to raise a white flag to halt the firing - an example of the military snafu resulting from unco-ordinated Army-Navy strategies and recurrent even in our own time. General Cox caught up with the remnant of the Fort Anderson troops at Town Creek. They had burned the bridge, and in the ensuing skirmish General Cox lost 40 men.

So ended another chapter in the struggle of the Confederacy. The men who worked so hard building the fort and those who manned its noble guns in all probability had little idea that their deeds would be perpetuated by the large impressive mounds.

Earthworks in their entirety, such as these, cannot be found anywhere else along the Atlantic coastline. Having weathered the ravages of man and nature, it peacefully awaits your footsteps across its sun-mottled bosom.



The above photograph was taken October 13, 1964, when the North Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy presented two bridges to the Department of Archives and History. The bridges provide walkways for visitors to view more of the old earthworks without the inconvenience of climbing the steep embankments.