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CDSG 2021 Annual Conference St. Babs XXXIX, After Action Report

Harbor Defenses of Charleston & Savannah

October 11 - 17, 2021

Mark Berhow

It has been a long year and half, with the COVID pandemic postponing our planned 2020 meeting to 2022 and delaying our 2021 meeting from its original April date to October. We managed to have a virtual meeting in November of 2020 to keep our schedule up to date. Finally, just under 60 attendees headed to the first conference hotel in Mount Pleasant, SC, to gather for the opening events on October 12. The meeting overlapped with that of CAMP, the Council on America's Military Past, whose members attended several evening talks and site visits.

Charleston, SC, has a long history of defensive fortifications. At the beginning of the American Revolution in 1775 it was the primary commercial port in the southern colonies and a key objective for British occupation. In early 1776, a fort of palmetto logs and sand was built and armed by the South Carolina militia on Sullivan's Island, overlooking the harbor entrance. The fort drove off an invading British fleet on June 28, 1776, an early Patriot victory. A renewed British effort to capture Charleston in April of 1780 bypassed Fort Moultrie by landing forces on the sea islands south of Charleston. After an overland march, the British laid siege to the city. On May 12, the Patriots surrendered, with over 2,500 prisoners.

Fort Moultrie was rebuilt in 1789 by the new United States Army, only to be destroyed by a hurricane in 1804. The third Fort Moultrie was completed under the Second System of fortifications in 1809 and though modified subsequently, remains generally intact to this day. Fort Sumter was constructed on a submerged shoal on the southern side of the harbor entrance beginning in 1829 as part of the Third System. By 1861 the fort was 90% complete, although only partially armed when it was fired upon on April 12, beginning the American Civil War. The small union garrison surrendered two days later. The masonry forts and an extensive system of earthen fortifications held the Confederate lines during Union siege that began in 1863 and only ended in February of 1865 with the Confederate evacuation of Charleston.

New batteries were planned for the defenses in the 1870s but were not completed. New modern concrete fortifications were built beginning in 1896. This included an expansion of the Fort

Moultrie military reservation as room was needed for the new gun batteries and garrison housing. Maintained throughout the first half of the 20th century, the defenses were updated during WW II, until changes in military tactics and needs brought a closure to the post in 1947 after 171 years of military service. The old second system Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter were transferred to the National Park Service, while the rest of the reservation was transferred to the town of Sullivan's Island, which sold significant portions to private owners.

Day One, Tuesday, October 12: Our first stop was a pre-tour visit to the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley restoration project at the Walter Latsch Conservation Center on the grounds of the old Charleston Naval Yard. The Hunley was found in 1995, raised from the ocean floor in 2000, and has been undergoing conservation and restoration. The guided tour took our group through the display area and up to the restoration tank. The group then gathered at the hotel conference room for opening comments by Gary Alexander. Presentations were given by Dr. Carl Borick, Director of the Charleston Museum, speaking on the British Siege of Charleston in 1780, followed by Ted Panayotoff, speaking on a series of coast artillery guns known by several names: the "Zalinski" Pneumatic/Dynamite/Steam guns



The Hunley

Day Two, Wednesday, October 13: The group gathered at the Fort Moultrie Visitor Center on Sullivan's Island at 9 AM. After a short presentation and a movie in the visitor center, the group fanned out to visit the old fort and surrounding area. The National Park Service has worked over the years to restore and interpret most of the phases of Fort Moultrie's life from the Second System, the Civil War, the 1870's Rodman batteries, the Endicott batteries, to the WWII-era's guns and harbor entrance/defense command post (HECP-HDCP). The nice thing about Fort Moultrie is its large collection of guns - Columbiads, Rodmans, Parrots, smoothbore seacoast mortars, and Endicott-era 3-inch and a 4.7-inch guns. Several are emplaced and others on display outside the fort proper. Fort Moultrie is one of the best places to see the full gamut of American defense programs all in one place. Touring the outside of the fort we visited the smoothbore gun row, one emplacement of four in 10-inch DC Battery Jasper (with its intact Taylor-Raymond ammunition hoist), the

interior of Battery 230 (somewhat modified for post-war use), and overgrown Battery Logan. A journey by foot took us past the remaining buildings of officer's row down to the 1920s-era protected switchboard room and the fort commander's station which was graciously opened for visit by the property owners. Returning to the Fort Moultrie picnic area for lunch we could see several other military buildings among the private homes that now cover the old military reservation.



Fort Moultrie



Battery Jasper



Battery 230



Battery Logan emplacement



Officers Quarters, Fort Moultrie



Protected Switchboard Room



Fort Commander's Station



Fort Moultrie Entrance Gate

After lunch we headed north to visit Batteries Gadsden and Thomson. Battery Gadsden is a four-emplacement 6-inch battery whose magazines have been repurposed as a library and a historical/community center. The CDSG contributed towards new overhead lights at the historical center, but additional work is needed to further stabilize the ceilings and prevent rainwater leaks. Moving on to 10-inch DC Battery Thomson, which is owned by the town and was used for fire department training until recent years. The closed magazines were opened for our visit. A side hike to the top of the now completely buried 12-inch mortar Batteries Capron and Butler completed this portion of the tour.

Next up was parking our cars at a local church parking lot at the north end of the island, to visit 2/3rds of the inside of the WWII-era Battery 520. We were able to go inside of the separate PSR (what goes on in the bunker stays in the bunker!), which is now a foundation for a house. We had access to the south gun house of Battery 520 with its entertainment bar, and the now empty middle section of the battery which was once a home. We headed back to the hotel for evening presentations by Thomas Lowndes and Matthew Locke, members of the SCV Fort Sumter Camp, the current owners of Castle Pinckney. Craig Swain followed with a talk on the Siege and Reduction of Fort Sumter.



Inside the history center with its new lights



Sullivan's Island Public Library at Battery Gadsden



Battery Thomson



Entrance to Battery 520's PSR



Villa Battery 520

Day 3, Thursday, October 14: The group was out to Patriot's Point by 7:30AM, home of the Essex-class USS Yorktown aircraft carrier, commissioned in 1943, (not on our agenda, but well worth the visit), for our boat journey out to Fort Sumter. On the way we passed Castle Pinckney, subject of the previous evening's presentation. It is currently off limits to visitors, so we had no visit this meeting. After a couple of presentations on the 30-minute ride, we headed into the fort and spread out to visit the remaining casemates and gun collection at Sumter and went through the rooms and parapet of 12-inch Battery Huger. Largely destroyed during the Civil War, Sumter was partially rebuilt after the war only to be knocked down to one level for the Endicott-era emplacement. Still there was a lot to see. After the return boat trip, we headed to the southern side of the Charleston harbor to visit the site of Fort Johnson and its one remaining magazine and the site of the Charleston Harbor Martello Tower. After lunch at James Island County Park, we drove a short distance to the Dill Sanctuary, owned by the Charleston Museum. Staff historians



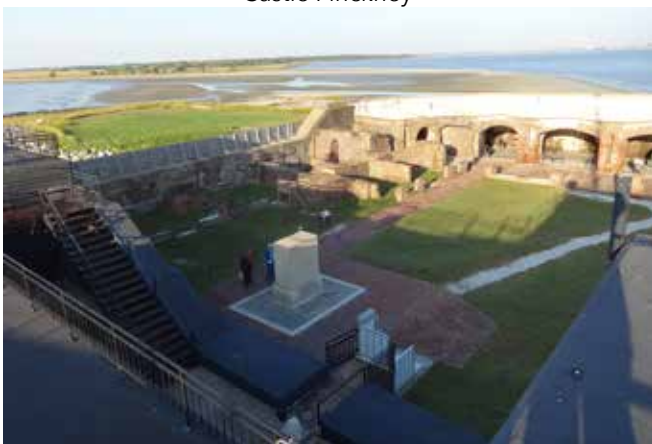
Fort Sumter



Castle Pinckney



The magazine at Fort Johnson



Fort Sumter



Looking for the bricks of the Martello Tower on James Is.

conducted a walking tour of the well-preserved earthworks of Batteries Pringle and Tynes, constructed during the Civil War to guard against Union naval incursions up the Stono River. Returning to the hotel we gathered for our annual CDSG Banquet (Carolina BBQ!!) and the annual business meeting, followed by a presentation by John Weaver on the Third-System Forts of Charleston and Savannah.

Day 4, Friday, October 15: After checking out of the hotel, we headed south to Beaufort, SC, and on out to St. Helena Island to visit Fort Fremont. Fort Fremont was built in the mid-1890s to protect the newly established Port Royal Naval Station and its dry dock. When the dry dock was outmoded by the navy's new ships, operations were transferred to Charleston and the need for Fort Fremont ended. The post was closed by 1921 and parceled out to private ownership. The neglected concrete batteries languished until they were finally turned over the county through the efforts of the Friends of Fort Fremont. During the past 10 years the batteries have been cleaned up and a new park and nature reserve established. A new visitor's center has just been completed and opened especially for the CDSG visit. This was a pleasant surprise. The nice grounds, cleaned up batteries, and a great phone app interpretive tour was a welcome change from the neglected batteries of 20 years ago. Next stop was across the sound to Hilton Head for lunch at a public access beach, then convoying into nearby gated communities to visit Union army-built earthwork Forts Mitchell, Walker, and Welles. The nearby dynamite gun battery offered fascinating remnants of a short-lived



Fort Fremont Visitors Center



Battery Jesup in 2004 (photo by Chris Zeeman)



Battery Jesup in 2021 (photo by Chris Zeeman)



The Dynamite Battery at Hilton Head

series of late 19th century coastal guns. The emplacement and foundations of the compressor and power plants were clearly visible. The last stop of the day was at Fort McAllister State Park. An excellent example of Confederate earthworks, Fort McAllister guarded the Ogeechee River south of Savannah. This was followed by a return to the new hotel and another night of presentations. First was an overview of Fort Screven by Art Worden and Karl Schuler of the Tybee Island Historical Society, followed by the Third-System forts impact on the Civil War by John Weaver and modern-era coast artillery power systems by Mark Berhow.

Day 5, Saturday, October 16: The last official day was visiting the coast defenses of the Savannah River, another key port. Defenses were started in the colonial times with a fort on Tybee

Island. The Second System brought the construction of Fort James Jackson below the city of Savannah proper and a Martello tower on Tybee Island. Still worried about the defenses of the river system, the Third System brought the construction of the larger Fort Pulaski on Cockspur Island, near the mouth of the river. The Civil War brought the Savannah River forts under control of Confederate forces, but not for long. Fort Pulaski fell to the Union army after a 30-hour bombardment in 1862, while the upriver Fort James Jackson remained in Confederate hands until December of 1864. Fort Pulaski was repaired and partially renovated in the late 1860s and early 1870s but never fully rearmed.

The group gathered at Fort James Jackson, a very nice Second-System fort originally built as an open-back four-gun brick battery. It was modified during the Third System by adding a defensive rear wall to enclose the living quarters, magazines, and supply rooms. Over the past 20 years the fort has received extensive repairs and stabilization and has a great covered area for events. The gun line was modified during the Spanish-American war, but the rest of the emplacements have been restored and are armed with artillery. This was a pleasant surprise to see how nicely the fort has been restored and interpreted.



Fort James Jackson

The next stop was Fort Pulaski National Monument, a National Park Service site. The fort is well maintained with an impressive set of interpretive displays. The group fanned out to visit the casemates and the parapet barbettes as well as the wet moat surrounding the fort and the rear redoubt. An outstanding example of simple but well-built Third System fort that shows all the details.



Fort Pulaski

The final stop of the day was at Fort Screven, hosted by the Tybee Island Historical Society. Endicott defenses consisting of six gun batteries, mine defenses, and garrison housing were built on Tybee Island beginning in 1897. The fort had a number of guns removed in 1917-18 and was inactivated as a coast artillery post by 1921, only to be repurposed as an infantry post in 1922. It remained in active use through 1945. That year the reservation was transferred to the Town of Savannah Beach (now Tybee Island). Like the Fort Moultrie reservation, most of Fort Screven was later sold to private owners. We were treated to lunch at the old guard house, now the island's community center. Our hosts had golf carts to assist members in reaching parts of the old reservation,



Fort Pulaski's scarp wall

viewing the remaining fort buildings (even going into one of the old officer's quarters), visiting the museum in Battery Garland, and entering one of the emplacements of 8-inch Battery Brumby and one pit and magazine of the mortar Battery Habersham. We also viewed three of the batteries (Backus, Fenwick, and Gantt) that have private residences built on them. Again, another pleasant experience to see a solid interest in preserving and interpreting the history of the fort. The conference officially ended at 5 PM



The Guard House at Fort Screven



Commanding Officer's Quarters, Fort Screven

Add-on Day, Sunday, October 17: For those that could not get enough, there was a day to travel south to Florida and visit a couple of sites. The first stop was the outstanding Third-System Fort Clinch with its detached Carnot walls. The second stop was Fort Caroline National Memorial. From there, NPS staff shuttled members to the nearby, recently acquired 1898 St. Johns Bluff



Battery Garland



Main gun line at Fort Screven



Battery Gantt with a house built over the top



St. John's Bluff battery



Battery, built for two 8-inch breechloading guns on modified Rodman carriages.

After a long and uncertain period during the pandemic, it was great to get together and visit some very nice coast defense sites that covered the entire range of American seacoast fortification history from the Revolutionary War through World War II. The CDSG would like to thank Gary Alexander for all his work in coordinating the site visits, arranging access, and coordinating the evening events. It was an exceptional effort, and the entire 5-day tour went smoothly. The CDSG would like to thank the following people and organizations for their help and support in putting on this tour: Andy Benke and Randy Robinson, the Town of Sullivan's Island; Hal Curry and Peggy Schachpe, owners of the protected telephone switchboard and fort commander's station on the Fort Moultrie Reservation; Mike Walsh and the Battery Gadsden Cultural Center; Steve and Cindy Brown, owners of

the Battery 520 PSR; Jim Curd and family, owners of the middle portion of Battery 520; Dr. Warren Tucker, owner of the western portion of Battery 520; Ian Harris and Spirit Line Tours; Jennifer McCormick and Stephanie Thomas of The Charleston Museum; Ted Panayotoff and the Friends of Fort Fremont; Barbara Catenaci, Director of the Hilton Head Heritage Library & Ancestry Research Center; Julia Keating, Coastal Heritage Society (Fort Jackson); Joel Cadoff, NPS Fort Pulaski National Monument; Art Worden and the Tybee Island Historical Society; and Josh Salestrom, NPS Fort Caroline National Memorial.

This remarkable tour just emphasizes the importance of CDSG conferences. We were able to see sites and structures that are normally closed or otherwise inaccessible to the public. The added bonus of being around knowledgeable people makes learning about these locations that much more enjoyable. I hope everyone reading this report will consider coming to New Orleans for our conference in March 2022.

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FORT WORDEN NEWS: Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum reopens with updated displays, better visitor experience

By Patrick J. Sullivan
Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum

A chance meeting between two "can-do" men at the Fort Worden State Park campground last winter has led to a major overhaul of the Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum at Fort Worden.

The non-profit, volunteer-led Coast Artillery Museum (CAM) located in Port Townsend, Wash., closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic. The extended closure seemed like a good time to make repairs and update displays within Building 201 (opened as an Army barracks in 1904) where the museum located soon after it was founded in 1976. CAM's financial resources are stable but the pool of volunteers is thin, and that's why the chance meeting proved so important.

Gary Kauffman retired early in 2021 as head of maintenance at a grocery warehouse in the Everett, Washington area, capping a 30-year career in the commercial and industrial construction trades. Kauffman and his wife, Patt, were looking forward to retirement and using their RV. The Kauffmans became certified as Washington State Parks "camp hosts" in which people trade their services to "host" so many hours a week at a campground, museum and/or gift shop in exchange for an RV spot.

Last winter, the Kauffmans were visiting Fort Worden when they met Ron and Suzann Replee, camp hosts and museum volunteers at Forts Worden, Flagler and other parks for six years. Ron led the reorganization of Fort Flagler's small museum and was looking at what could be done at the Fort Worden museum. The couples hit it off and Ron talked with Gary about needing help at the Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum.