

Primary Battery File

National Archives, Washington D.C.

Record Group 77

Correspondence of the Chief of Engineers

Entry 103

File, Fort, Battery:

26116

Hilton Head

8-inch / Rodman

Temporary battery

SUBJECT:

*Office of the Chief of Engineers,
United States Army,*

Washington April 27, 1898.

Maj. E. H. Ruffner,
Corps of Engineers,
Charleston, S. C.

Major:

In order to utilize a number of 8-inch B.L. rifles on hand and available, but for which there are no carriages of approved type, the Ordnance Department proposes to mount them on strengthened barbette carriages for 15-inch smooth bore guns by using steel cradles.

You are requested to prepare emplacements for mounting two of these carriages on Paris Island, Port Royal, S. C.

There are some slight changes to be made in the carriages, which it is understood the Ordnance Department can make in the field.

Where there are no emplacements now ready, it is proposed to build them substantially according to the latest type adopted for the 15-inch smooth bore carriage.

There are sent you under separate cover the following papers for your information and guidance:

1. Blue print of carriage for 8-inch B.L. rifle converted from carriage for 15-inch smooth bore. Plate 1.
2. Sheet of front pintle platform for 15-inch smooth bore carriage.
3. Plan of barbette traverse magazine.

Where there are platforms and magazines ready, it is expected that they can be utilized with slight repairs and alterations.

You are authorized to make such modifications in the designs sent you as you deem best under the circumstances. Attention should

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be given to providing a convenient and rapid ammunition service.

You are authorized to commence construction in advance of the approval of plans whenever you are prepared to go ahead, forwarding preliminary drawings whenever practicable.

It will of course be necessary to arrange for the occupation of the land and to obtain the consent of the owner before commencing operations. The arrangement you effected for St. Helena Island appears to be very satisfactory.

It is desired that the platform proper be pushed to completion as soon as possible to permit the mounting of the gun in advance of the completion of the entire emplacement.

A provisional allotment of \$12,000 is hereby made from the appropriation for National Defense, Act of March 9, 1898, to be applied to the construction of the above emplacements.

Very respectfully,

Brig. Gen., Chief of Engineers,

U. S. Army.

26116.

Copy of D.161,S.13, & of D.168,S.87,
and addnl.inclos.in sep.roll

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,

Charleston, S. C., May 17, 1898.

Brig. Gen. John M. Wilson,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:-

It being impossible to explain by wire the situation at Hilton Head, I must add the following to my letter of May 13. To transport anything from the landing on the creek at Hilton Head to the site for a temporary battery suitably located calls for a railroad track of about 3,000 feet. The transportation of guns and carriages alone justifies this as economical, not to speak of brick, stone, or cement; and as I know of the cost of wheeling or of carting stone, and cement for the short distance on St. Helena, I feel that a railroad is a distinct economy. Flat cars at \$25.00 each; and dump cars at \$30.00 were offered me on Sunday last. Such prices would insure their paying for themselves in a month. A landing wharf in the creek must be built under all circumstances; also cement sheds; tool sheds; rock bins; and office, and quarters for engineering staff; casings; scaffolding; blockings; derricks; hoisters; water tanks; run-ways; are all absolutely necessary besides a quantity of brick (which would cost more than stone) and stone, and cement.

These must be bought, and transported; and if we use the creek we can save the wharf, at the expense of taking some time; as we can only go in and out at half to full tide. (On Paris Island a very long wharf would have been necessary, and unavoidable.) Now as to lighters, the least price I have been able to secure was the hire of four for three months at \$1300.00 , and at Port Royal nothing less than \$5.00 to \$8.00 per day, or \$150.00 to \$240.00 per month. Friday & Sons

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offer me six lighters that they used on the jetties for \$300.00 each. Manifestly it would be cheaper to buy some of these than to hire, as they would pay for themselves in two months. I hire a tug at \$26.50 a day, which I think can be run so as to attend to both of these places, Hilton Head and St. Helena.

I hesitate to suggest that there is little economy in erecting temporary battery, (unless timber and sand alone be used) and I hope my recommendation will be considered that the construction on Hilton Head be a permanent one, to conform to the adopted scheme for defense.

I think that I could put up (for example) a permanent parapet with magazines for two 8" rifles on disappearing carriages; and arrange the platforms for temporary use with the temporary carriages, as proposed, and later on remove these, and put in the proper carriages. In this event there would be little loss of work, and the platforms could be put up first as desired.

Very respectfully,

Will R. Thompson
Major of Engineers.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,

Charleston, S. C., June 26, 1899.

Brig. Gen. John M. Wilson,

Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army,

Washington, D. C.

Through Col. Peter C. Hains,

Corps of Engineers

District Engineer South Atlantic Division.

General:

The temporary battery on Hilton Head of two 8" rifles on modified 15" carriages was ready for a garrison two months ago. In that interval it has had five garrisons, and at times no soldiers. Once an officer was there for a short time. The battery was never put in working order, and no one has taken the slightest interest in it. There never were manoeuvring bars, and the carriages never traversed. There never was ammunition; and the tremendous rainfall August 31st showed that the magazine was altogether too low. We have one small house there, which has been all the shelter the men have had except tents. The Quartermaster's Department is now moving a building from St. Helena there to accommodate to some extent the ten men now there, and to remain there: (the detail being relieved from time to time from St. Helena). The breech blocks are fortunately in good order. One reason probably no interest is felt in the battery is because every officer unqualifiedly condemns the carriage as a makeshift, unreliable, and not to be considered as a permanent arrangement. Of course there is no earthly use in maintaining an utterly inefficient battery and calling it an element of harbor defense. At some time something must be done. A capable energetic young man would get all the necessary articles and have the

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guns in such condition that they could be fired. With the scarcity of artillery officers now probably no one will be sent to the sub-post at all.

It would be eminently desirable on many accounts if the mortar battery intended for Hilton Head could be built in a manner permitting an accumulation of materials, and an economical use of plant; all of which we now have on hand in this district.

Very respectfully,

EH Ruffner

Major of Engineers

Attention of the several batteries of the 1st Artillery is hereby directed to the fact that the 1st Artillery is now in the process of being reorganized. It is requested that the batteries of the 1st Artillery be kept in readiness to receive the new organization. The 1st Artillery is now in the process of being reorganized. It is requested that the batteries of the 1st Artillery be kept in readiness to receive the new organization. The 1st Artillery is now in the process of being reorganized. It is requested that the batteries of the 1st Artillery be kept in readiness to receive the new organization.

June 20, 1898

Respectfully, *John M. Smith*

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This paper to be returned to the office of the Adjutant General, Department of War, Washington, D.C.

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the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army, and forwarded same during the absence of the Divisioner.