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INTRODUCTION

As so often happens, when we get older, childhood and family ancestry becomes much more important to us. My grandmother, Marion Herbert Charlton, and mother, June Marion Kinney, tried hard to inspire us children to remember our roots. They were very much southern women and as I remember often attempted to emphasize the fact. However, still it is hard to convince a boy that things such as family heritage are important matters especially when he leaves the home for seemingly better things.

After twenty-two years in the United States Air Force, I came back into the area and eventually increased interest in our family and the Fort. Moreover, now after eighteen years at the Mariners' Museum, Newport News, I continue with some effort to tie up some loose ends. I suppose I am further inspired by my involvement with the USS Monitor recovery and a fresh outlook of local Civil War history. I am at that time in life, as many others are I am sure, when there is a feeling that "time is running out". I want to try to leave the connection with our past to my sons. My sister, Jeannette, is devoting time and resources to try to follow our family threads. Through it all, I am gaining a new appreciation for our links to Hampton Roads, and in this document concentrating on the area of Western Branch, old Norfolk County, where I grew up.

In this "getting back to roots", I have a number of objectives: Transcribe family letters and Nelle Richardson Tonkin's family history¹; transcribe correspondence between Great Uncle James Herbert and the family during WWI; transcribe and bind a book by Great Aunt Jennie Charlton, "You Can't Remember Aunt Jennie". This document about the Fort is my attempt to accomplish another goal - to record, in detail, and research the civil war era fortification located at David's Mill, Jolliff Road.

As long as I can remember, Grandma leased the surrounding fields at the Fort to local farmers for the production of sweet potatoes, corn, and soybean. The State claimed the land, including the Fort, to aid in the construction of Interstate 664. I want to mention here the part Richard R. Carroll, Southern Gun Works, played in protecting the Fort. At the time, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) began its excavation in the area he lived on Jolliff Road. With some effort, Richard made sure the Fort was not made part of land clearing operations. I think, certainly his efforts played a major role to ensure the Fort is still in existence today. Thank you Richard.

VDOT converted the fields to borrow pit areas. These once crop sated fields now show little sign of cultivation and give one the feeling of stepping into a bayou. Perhaps it is an appropriate epitaph since one of the earliest Civil War occupants in the area may have been the *Louisiana Tigers*. The resulting ponds are, I am sure, a great haven for the local mosquito population. Although I certainly feel a bit cynical

over the whole situation, I am grateful that VDOT currently protects the Fort, and except for the odd relic hunter and ATV enthusiast rarely see action that, at least for now, will destroy its grandeur. However, as the population in the area continues to expand, I fear the safety of the Fort is in jeopardy.

Although certainly a bit of nostalgia plays a part in my desire to save the Fort, my primary desire is to add some relevance and purpose to its place in history. It should be protected and conceivably take its place among the Park Services areas of choice. I believe the possibilities are tremendous for the surrounding community, Chesapeake, and Virginia.

After trying so long to get permission from the VDOT to enter the property I was pleased to begin real planning and organizing a survey to begin November 2009. We were able to muster a number of interested people on the first visit, a sunny, Sunday in April 2010. Those present included: Jeff Johnston, Monitor National Marine Sanctuary; Sam Craighead, Museum of the Confederacy; Richard Carroll (mentioned above); my sister, Jeannette Thurston and her husband Jim; my wife, Debbie; and me. My sons, Jason and Bryan, eventually joined in when the hands-on surveying started. This first meeting was more for recognition.

Interest was voiced and there seemed to be a lot of enthusiasm on that first day. Since then we continue to participate in a bit of email bantering and share research finds. The internet, of course, is an awesome tool and many of the letters, most notably from Union soldiers stationed in the area, are available. The existence of the Fort is hinted at a number of times, but neither its name nor its importance mentioned.

BACKGROUND

It is important to describe, in part at least Jolliff Road and some of the adjacent areas around the Fort. There are references to Jolliff Road, Route 191, as “the county road”, “The Road”, “Stage Road”, and “Shoulder’s Hill – Bower’s Hill” Road. Other current and past landmarks often associated with this area of Jolliff are Getty’s Station, Fort Rodman, Bower’s Hill, Bower’s Camp, Suffolk, Fort Monroe, The Nansemond River, the Elizabeth River and its tributaries, Gosport Navy Yard, Norfolk, The Dismal Swamp, Portsmouth and the connecting railroads: The Norfolk & Petersburg and Seaboard & Roanoke, and ways south to Roanoke Island, Hatteras North Carolina.

The Fort is located within an area that could have played some significant role prior to and during the American Revolution, The War of 1812, and the Civil War. There are speculative references to Jolliff Road as a significant route for the British and their mercenary troops (Hessian) soldiers². I recollect my mother and grandmother speaking of a Hessian graveyard in the area. As a child, I traced Goose Creek to

what is now the Hampton Roads Executive Airport on Route 13 and along the way remember some markers that, as I remember looked like gravestones. My interest at the time was exploration so I certainly had no idea of the possible significance. Supposedly, there is also a Herbert graveyard on the Fort property, but I have not found any evidence. Perhaps finding these graves is another adventure.

As mentioned earlier, just to the south is Bower's Hill where is located the evidence of the Norfolk & Petersburg and Seaboard & Roanoke Rail Roads. During the Civil War, these railways transported both Confederate and Union troops and supplies from Portsmouth and Norfolk to Weldon, North Carolina, Suffolk, Petersburg, and Roanoke. At the beginning of the Civil War the Seaboard and Roanoke railroad transported new recruits traveling through Portsmouth from Maryland to points west and south (Porter, _____).

Some of the iron plate to support the *USS Merrimac to CSS Virginia* conversion used these railways for deliveries from the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond to Gosport. In this case, the Fort may have been part of the Confederate line of defense. It would have been, at least in part, important to the effort to keep the Union troops from disrupting the logistics of this extremely important project under Commodore Forrest's care. There are numerous publications concerning the "Battle of Hampton Roads" including that written by Porter. Another great source for hands-on history is The Mariners' Museum in Newport News. Part of the collection contains artifacts from both the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia.

The general roadways and waterways in the area may also have been a routing for slaves coming from the Dismal Swamp and other points south such as Deep Creek and the Outer Banks. Additionally, it is somewhat significant that Goose Creek, probable head of the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River, may have been used to transport agricultural products in peacetime and military materials in wartime. Could it also have been a conduit for transporting slaves to Union held locations such as Hampton's Fort Monroe? Certainly, it is a logical conclusion in that the waterway wound its way to the main channels of the James River and the protection of the Union fleet there. In addition, in the case of the South in the early years of the war the route eventually made its way to Portsmouth and the safety of Confederate held lands.

Interestingly, the following perspective gives one an idea of how a reporter from the North perceived this area of Bower's Hill during the Civil War.³

The Troy Daily Whig.

AUGUST __, 1863

From the 169th Regiment.

BOWERS' HILL, 8 MILES FROM PORTSMOUTH, VA., July 28, 1863.

EDITORS WHIG: – The material construction of the lines of this Department, and the

diversion of several thousand of the veteran troops, – who distinguished themselves during the "Siege of Suffolk," and signally defeated the objects of the rebel investment of that antiquated city, – to other and more important points, where military operations are now being vigorously prosecuted, while the efficiency of this force for the defence of Norfolk and Portsmouth is not in the least affected thereby, their services in other quarters must have no inconsiderable effect in rendering irresistible and overwhelming a combined coup of our land and naval forces for the extinguishment of the rebellion, during the Summer and Fall campaigns.

Bowers' Hill is one of the characteristic misnomers etched from the fertile brains of Southern imagery upon local geographical charts, but the topography of this country, from Norfolk to the Blackwater, refutes unequivocally the assumption of a hill, and nowhere, perhaps, is this refutation more palpably illustrated than in this immediate vicinity. This country is decidedly level, and were it not for the dense forests and swamps that flourish on its surface, would present a view as unbroken, almost, as the sea in a perfect calm.

Bowers' Hill is located eight miles from Portsmouth, eleven from Suffolk, and is flanked on the south east by the Dismal Swamp, and on the west and north-west by Goose Creek. Thus, Bowers' Hill is very easily fortified, and hence, in a strategic point of view, of great importance, commanding as it does, the main avenue of approach to Portsmouth.

It always has been, and still remains, a great object of mystification to your correspondent, why Suffolk, of itself a place of no importance, commercially or otherwise, and a point of no military account to the Rebels, should have been so strongly fortified, – while long chains of forts, earthworks and stockades, upon which our (Clark)soldiers labored so many months, thro' Summer's heat and Winter's rain, should have been erected, incurring as it did, immense expense, when the line of Deep Creek and Bowers' Hill could have been so readily fortified, at little cost, and more effectually held with one-fifth of the imposing force required to hold the dirty, dilapidated borough of Suffolk. I can account for it only on this hypothesis – that there was a large plethora of soldiers, whom the Government found it difficult to employ elsewhere, and wishing to school both officers and men in the art of erecting field fortifications, the soil here being singularly susceptible to the spade, in the absence of all geological substances of a hard nature, this was considered a most desirable field for the prosecution of that work. The moment finally arrived when a vacuum occurred somewhere in the ranks of our mighty armies, which this large gang of "ditchers" could advantageously fill, and having turned over all the available earth in the vicinity of Suffolk, it was decided to fall back upon the line of Deep Creek and Bowers' Hill, and with a small but all-sufficient force, to protect the great Southern commercial city of Norfolk, and the lesser one of Portsmouth, from that point, where it could be so easily done, with only about one-fifth the expenditure of troops and money adequate to hold the large area of unimportant territory about Suffolk.

In the nineteenth century, Dolphin Driver owned the land on which the Fort resides. Upon his death, the land passed to his daughter, Fannie Driver. My grandmother, Marion Herbert Charlton, inherited the land from Fannie in the 1950's. Grandma Charlton was Fannie's half sister, but more importantly perhaps, she was a great friend to the Drivers and tended to the elderly, Fannie, who in the mid 1950's lived with us at the old Driver house located at the intersection of Jolliff

Road and Charlton Drive. Even as a six year old at the time, I have fond memories of Fannie. Although she was wheelchair bound, and I knew her only a very short time I was pleased to spend time with her. She seemed to enjoy her time with me as well.

Now, to continue, I offer a more detailed description of the Fort along with, images, topographical drawings, a profile and some diagrams. I also offer my own thoughts and show comparisons and evidence to present possible scenarios. It is vital we somehow realize the significance of this pristine fortification - that it remains intact and is connected with other places and times in history. Although I may reference some of the other past publications concerning the Fort, I will try to bring some other historically significant points to bare and also more fully describe the fortification itself including its topography and engineering.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORIES

FORREST'S ENTRENCHMENT

I will not attempt to repeat the research that has gone before. To find out more about the surrounding area and other ideas concerning the origin of the Fort I recommend: "A Brief Account of Hall's Corner and Forrest's Entrenchment There" by James G. Thomson and "A Record of Events in Norfolk County, Virginia" by John W.H. Porter.

Much of the following information comes from various sources off the Internet. Using public domain books and other information much of what follows can be verified rather easily. Official accounts of testimony given by the Confederate's Commodore Forrest and the War Department concerning the evacuation of the Gosport Navy Yard by the South were very interesting and shed some light on the number and types of fortifications installed during his command. As already noted, another great publication is John Porter's account of the war through the eyes of Norfolk County participants. Of particular interest as it may be related to the Fort is the mention of Major W.F. Jett.

Major Jett was eventually assigned to Anderson's third Division as a Confederate engineer and is frequently referred to as Mr. Jett. Originally, from Hampton, Virginia, he moved to Portsmouth and remained a great advocate for those southerners who gave their all for the South. After the war he diligently worked to erect a monument dedicated to the soldiers from Norfolk County. The statue can be seen at the intersection of Court Street and High Street in Portsmouth. Working for Forrest during the South's occupation of the Gosport Shipyard, he superintended the construction of earthwork fortifications such as those at Pinner's Point. Given

his expertise, he was probably also involved in other fortifications as well. Interestingly, in a testimonial given to him by Porter a road and bridge from the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River to the Nansemond River were attributed to his engineering expertise. (Porter) It is difficult to pinpoint the location of the road and bridge.

Many of the maps of the time conflict in detail. In one instance, a bridge is shown at David's Mill and no bridge is shown at a road that crosses the Western Branch – currently Portsmouth Blvd. Another map might show the opposite. It is doubtful that any part of Jolliff Road was constructed by Jett because the route is shown as an existing main road from Portsmouth to Sleepy Hole on the Nansemond River in 1781 (Rochambeau collection; 56). It is probable the road and bridge Porter attributes to Jett is what is now Portsmouth Blvd and Hodges Ferry.

This is not to say; since Major Jett was in the area and coordinated such construction, it would be a surprise to learn that he also oversaw the construction of our fort. The Western Branch of the Elizabeth River was important to the logistics in the area and certainly, the David's Mill Bridge was a good place, maybe even textbook ideal for a defense should the enemy attack from the north and northeast. Construction of a fortification for this defense may also have been built to help protect the railroads at Bower's Hill and Deep Creek.

The military map made for Col. T.J. Cram by Sergeant Ch. Worret identifies Jolliff Road as the way “to the Navy Yard” from the Nansemond River. It also approximates 2,000 Confederate Soldiers, and Getty's Station, near Bower's Hill. Alternatively, Jett's Western Branch to Nansemond River road could have been the road that extends through Driver to Sleepy Hole. Sleepy Hole is mentioned a number of times when Union soldiers talked about skirmishes and traveling in the area. It also worth mentioning that the Nansemond River was considered important by both the North and South. It was the primary way via water to Suffolk.

PROTECTING THE RAILROADS – IRON FOR THE CSS VIRGINIA

The need to protect the rails from Petersburg was certainly in part a combined effort between Commodore Forest and General Huger. As Forest's entrenchments were being established with the help of W.F. Jett the importance of protecting the route for the CSS Virginia's iron plate was extremely important. This would indeed add credence to the notion that the Fort was first built by the South.

In his book, *Ironclad Down: the USS Merrimack-CSS Virginia*, Mr. Clark describes the logistical challenges facing the Southern planners to fit the ship (Clark). I have no reason to doubt that the information contained in this book is thoroughly researched and therefore credit what it says about shipment of iron plate for the CSS Virginia as a most likely scenario. Mr. Clark very well describes the result of

lack of organization in the South. The Confederacy was born more out of passion and states' rights than organized approaches to waging war. Perhaps this passion was one of the reasons the war lasted as long as it did – and of course the reason some of the passion still exists today. It was indeed a great conflict.

The logistics in getting the Virginia's iron from Richmond to Portsmouth in that day was an ominous task considering the North's blockade of Hampton Roads that throttled travel on the James and many of its tributaries. Clark points out that, although it is undeniable that the iron was transported via rail, President Davis probably visited Portsmouth several times on an unnamed tug traveling down the James.⁴ Why then did not the plates ship using this more expedient method?

To me it is reasonable to assume that among other things, perhaps even a little graft, security was a major issue concerning the construction of the Virginia. Northern ships were probably keeping an eye out for any vessels riding low in the water that would identify industrial/military materials. In any case, it would just take one boarding of a southern transport vessel by the North to dissuade further shipments. It would mean a total halt to the Virginia's construction until alternate routes could be planned. It was likely felt that transporting this important cargo by rail was the safest route. The Confederacy, after all, did have control of the rail lines from Richmond to points south. At least until the Union began its retake of control over eastern seaboard areas in the spring and summer of 1862 ultimately resulting in a picket line officially drawn August 1, 1863.

As Clark indicates, besides the great lack of unity between rail systems, the Army of Northern Virginia's needs took precedence. Moreover, evidently communication along the routes and between military branches was poor. The Army did not have adequate knowledge of the importance of the iron shipments and sometimes considered the plating as scrap. For example: "As Army officers were scrambling, in the rail yards in and around Petersburg looking for transportation, they kept running across these flatcars loaded down with what appeared to be scrap iron. Obviously this stuff had no military value, so they threw it off along the tracks and took the cars for some important use." (Clark) Events on the Peninsula and points north were much more important than the area surrounding the fort at Jolliff. Supplying the army was most important and that meant the rail lines from the south through Suffolk and Petersburg were essential.

According to Clark the transportation agent, William Webb "was appointed to shepherd the Navy's materials from Richmond to Portsmouth."⁵ Recognizing the difficulties, he set up routes that, although adding mileage, helped get the iron to Portsmouth. "In all Tredegar produced 723 tons of armor plate that was shipped from October until February 12, when the last shipment arrived at the Navy yard."⁶

Webb set up methods to get the iron from Richmond to Petersburg. Here there was difficulty due to city politics, railroad owner squabbles, dissimilar track sizes, and

two separate routes to get to Portsmouth. The Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad used a 5' gauge track and made its way to Norfolk across the Elizabeth River from Norfolk. The materials then had to be offloaded and transported to Portsmouth via wagon. The alternate route to Portsmouth went first to Weldon, North Carolina using a 4' 8 ½" gauge track. From there it was a straight shot to Portsmouth via the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad, which was also a 4' 8 1/2" gauge track. The Norfolk and Petersburg railroad went through the area of the Dismal Swamp just north of Deep Creek. The Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad went through Bowers Hill approximately one mile from the Fort. Given the terrain, David's Mill and the Fort were in a good location and could provide an effective means to help defend the railroads, particularly the Seaboard and Roanoke. The Western Branch to its head made a natural boundary and controlled with relative ease aggression from the northwest. I believe the Union recognized this when the picket line was constructed. The North used this picket line to help control the eastern seaboard from the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River to North Carolina's Roanoke Island and the Albemarle Sound.

LETTERS AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

A promising remark as to the use of the Fort is in a letter (circa 1863) written in regards to the deployment of a 173rd Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment:

“On the 30th of November, it moved to Washington, whence it was ordered to Suffolk, Virginia, but before reaching Fortress Monroe, its destination was changed to Norfolk. Upon its arrival there, it reported to General Veile, and was assigned to duty in guarding the approaches to the town at Camp Veile, three miles out. Here the regiment was thoroughly drilled.

Subsequently, two companies were stationed at Fort Norfolk, one at Kempsville, twelve miles distant, one at the intrenched lines, an officer and twenty men at Sewells Point, a non-commissioned officer and twenty-five men at Cape Henry Light House, **two companies [about 150] at the David's Mill Bridge**, a non-commissioned officer and six men for guard to the mail boat Arrow, running through the Albemarle Canal to Roanoke, a guard at the Inlian Pole Bridge, a guard at Great Bridge, a guard at the Princess Anne Road, and a guard along Farmers' Creek. These detachments were regularly relieved at intervals of a week.” (NOTE: This may refer to the pickets set up during the Union occupation in 1863 – reference _____).”

Another diary entry from a soldier of Co. F, 23rd Massachusetts Volunteers mentions his unit defending the Union stronghold around Norfolk and Suffolk in 1864⁷:

“March 4. We took cars for the vicinity of Suffolk, where we relieved the pickets, being quartered in the barracks of the 20th New York Cavalry.

7th. We returned to camp at Getty's, remaining until March 9, when we received orders to move to Bowers Hill, as the rebels had driven in our outposts. We advanced up the railroad until we came in sight of the rebel pickets near Magnolia Springs, and they fell back before us. On the tenth we continued to advance, the enemy still retiring, although, present in some force. We formed line of battle across the county road at the railroad crossing, and shortly after fell back to a position on the Sleepy Hollow road. During this last movement a ration of hardtack was issued to us, the first we had received since noon the day before. (NOTE: Sleepy Hollow road can be accessed by way of Magnolia or Jolliff Road. If the references above and below are to the same "the county road" then the reference seems to indicate Jolliff Road as the main route.)

A letter of the time, its writer being on picket near David's Mill, says, "We have a very pleasant post off the county road, with few to trouble us. There are eight in our squad, all but one from F, and we manage to have a pretty jolly time."

Trips to a near-by house, " where a certain young lady dwells," are mentioned, but the writer adds, rather cynically, "No great danger of being charmed, for she 's thoroughly secesh in her views, and chews snuff."

The order for the South to evacuate Gosport Navy Yard came in May 1862. This was soon after the Battle of Hampton Roads and it was about that time that the ironclad, Virginia was scuttled. Also about this time General Huger, the commander of confederate forces protecting Norfolk was deployed north along the Peninsula to protect Richmond against the North's Peninsular Campaign. The South's primary interests also were also focused to the west. The confederacy wanted to hold Petersburg in particular since it was an important hub of support. Suffolk, occupied by the Union from May 1862 through July 1863 was eventually abandoned. Although some skirmishes took place most of the confederate army was pulled to Petersburg, Fredericksburg and Richmond areas. There was more than enough opportunity for the North to have full reign over these portions of southeast Virginia. This repositioning and redirection left the area from Roanoke Island, North Carolina to Portsmouth unprotected and gave opportunity for the North to take the area back and establish marshal law. It also helped that the population in places such as Portsmouth, most particular the businessmen, were not necessarily pro south, but perhaps more enthusiastic about keeping their businesses going. There was also a general sympathy for the citizens who were suffering greatly - many destitute and barely able to stay alive.

Given the circumstances the Commander, Department of Virginia, Brigadier General Henry M. Naglee made initial orders to form a picket line. The boundary extended from the mouth of the Elizabeth River's to the head of the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River, through Bower's Hill, Deep Creek, the Dismal Swamp to the

Outer Banks. A follow-up order was give a *couple of months later that gave more detailed directions and* designated David's Mill as Picket #1.
(OfficialRecordsofUnionandConfede)

“Special Orders Hdqrs. Dept. of Va., 7th Army Corps, Norfolk, Va., August 1, 1863⁸.

I. The following line is hereby established: Commencing at the Western Branch, to the had of the same; thence, by Bowers' Hill to the head of the Deep Creek; thence, through the Dismal Swamp, to Lake Drummond; thence, to the head of the Western Branch of the Pasquotank River; and thence, by the latter and the Pasquotank River, to Albermarle Sound.

II. Any person attempting to pass the above line will be arrested and severely punished.

III. Any person attempting to pass letters, information, or merchandise across the above line, and all interested with them, will be imprisoned and severely punished; and the goods seized, as well as all other personal property within this department belonging to all implicated, will be confiscated.

IV. Persons residing within the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, and Princess Anne County, will not be permitted to pass into Norfolk, Currituck, and Camden Counties, and those living within Norfolk, Currituck, and Camden Counties will not be permitted to pass north of North Landing River and Southern Branch of Elizabeth River and the canal between them, unless in pursuit of their necessary business, with passes of the provost-marshal, and no pass will be given for a longer period than fifteen days.

NOTE: A special order was given August 10, 1863 that substituted the following paragraph for Article IV:

Persons residing east of the above line, and between it and the coast, will not be permitted to pass Deep Creek, the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River above the mouth of Deep Creek, the North Landing River, and the canal connecting the above, unless in the pursuit of their necessary business, with passes of the provost-marshal, and no pass will be given for a longer period than fifteen days, and then only to pass at Great Bridge or Deep Creek Bridge during the day.

V. No boat will permitted to enter the Western Branch of Elizabeth River, Deep Creek, or the Pasquotank River; nor will be permitted to approach the left bank of Elizabeth River below the Western Branch of the same; nor will be permitted to approach the shore between Craney Island and Big Point (probably "Pig Point), under a penalty of an immediate destruction of the boat, and imprisonment and severe punishment of those taken and interested in the venture.

Articles VI through XIV cover registrations and licensing and that the “only currency permitted will be that established by the Government of the United States.” The special order was given by George H. Johnston, Captain, and Assistant Adjutant-General on behalf of Brigadier General Henry M. Naglee.

On September 15, 1863 General Naglee further defined the picket line.

“The following picket stations are hereby established, and the following order will be observed by all picket and other guard duty upon the front, between the Western Branch and the Dismal Swamp:

No. 1. At the bridge at David’s Mills.

No. 2. At the bridge at Fort Curtis.

No. 3 At the gate on the main Bowers’ Hill road, at Fort Rodman.

No. 4. At Deep Creek village.

No. 5. At the gate in the Deep Creek road, at Fort Reno.

No. 6. At the intersection of the Deep Creek road with the Portsmouth road, from the navy-yard, at the house of John Berry.

No. 7. On the main Bowers’ Hill road, near the late camp of the First New York Mounted Rifles.

No. 8. At the intersection of the main Deep Creek and Bowers’ Hill roads.

Other posts will be established upon the railroads and at less important places.

No. 1. At David’s Mills Bridge, the plank of the which will be habitually removed, the commissioned officer commanding the guard will permit no citizen whoever, either with or without a pass, to cross beyond the bridge, and no soldiers will be allowed to pass excepting officers and soldiers actually on picket and other duty. No persons will be allowed to pass in excepting contrabands, deserters, and refugees, who will take the oath of allegiance, and an oath they will remain within the lines until the termination of the war, and all of whom will be sent to the provost-marshal at Norfolk, under guard. The plank of the bridge at Fort Curtis will removed at night.

No. 2. The guard will be furnished with an alphabetical list of all citizens, not exceeding one from each family, who reside between the creeks and pass at Nos. 1 and 2. they will be permitted to pass from their respective houses to and from Portsmouth by the nearest road; passing in on Tuesday and Friday and out on Wednesday and Saturday; but they will not be permitted to travel or be absent from their homes after sundown.

The rest of the special order gives details concerning conduct and individual troop assignments.

The mention of Fort Curtis is an interesting twist. I have not been able to find a record suggesting that there was a Fort Curtis in the area. Notice also that it is mentioned almost in the same breath as David's Mills. This could conceivably name our Fort.

On the other hand there was a known fort with the name in Arkansas. There is also mentioned similar names, and places in Winchester Virginia. If a desk sitting bureaucrat was making out the orders for General Naglee it could be that he confused the locations. To counteract this supposition considering the detail given it is difficult to imagine such an error. In any case, it is interesting to consider what life was like for those Southerners living in the occupied rural areas along the North's well-established line of control.

GLIMPSE OF LIFE NEAR THE PICKET LINE

Life on the Picket-western Branch to Deep Creek (Glencoe) (reference Glencoe Diary April 1863, *The Wartime Journal of Elizabeth Curtis Wallace*.)

Elizabeth Curtis Wallace's, Glencoe Diary, describes daily activities at the pickets in and around Glencoe, Deep Creek. Glencoe was located near what is now route 17 in Deep Creek and the northwest River canal that runs to Great Bridge. Mrs. Wallace describes in some detail her attitude, even as a northern transplant from New York, towards the occupation. She helps one glimpse civilian life around the North's officially designated picket line from Western Branch to the Outer Banks.

After the evacuation of Norfolk and Portsmouth in May 1862, Glencoe was situated in sort of a no man's land, sometimes visited by Confederate forces and sometimes commandeered as an encampment for Federal troops. Mrs. Wallace, born in Ohio and educated in New York, was certainly against slavery, but also against the occupation. Although there are descriptions of paying Northern occupiers the gist of her writing portrays Union troops as rather arrogant and non-yielding. They destroyed fences to build their campfires and commandeered livestock. Her husband, George, while being able to maintain his businesses in farming and lumbering, had many of the related activities abbreviated. Many in the area were arrested sometimes under trumped up charges. Mr. Wallace, for instance was arrested for entertaining blockade runners. As Mrs. Wallace indicates in her diary (Thursday, April 14, 1863, page 35): "This we have never done by design, but could not turn them from our door." After a stay in jail he was ordered to pay a fine of fifteen hundred dollars, in greenbacks to be given to the poor. Mrs. Wallace was skeptical that the money would actually end up going to the poor – it was more likely it would line someone's pockets.

As depicted in Mrs. Wallace Glencoe Diary there was certainly animosity and some resentment towards anyone who took advantage of their generosity. The slaves were freed simply through the North's occupation of the area. To keep Glencoe going, Mrs. Wallace, responsible for general management had no problem hiring individuals, both white and black to do the required work. She however had a number of choice words to say when any of the employees were slackers. She also gave praise to those who were conscientious.

In a diary entry made Monday 12, 1863 Mrs. Wallace notes - "The Yankees are around us in full force tonight." "In a few minutes the premises were surrounded and now half an hour later these heartless invaders are demolishing the fences, destroying the fodder – fodder which we bought with Yankee money for owing to the treachery of these free Negroes which we hired to save our fodder we lost so much of it that we were obliged to purchase." "Camp fires made with our rails and other timber are burning all around and a guard is walking around the house. I am yet thankful that the same Lord is over us that has provided for and kept us this far." (Glencoe Diary, page 65):

Unfortunately, I can find little account of life near picket #1, David's Mill. This area was sparsely populated as compared to Deep Creek. Even so, I imagine the feelings about the occupation, lack of security, and strict enforcement of boundaries were similar. Relating to the previous snuff chewing girl near David's Mill the soldier seems to diminish the worth of this secesh young woman. There is another account in the area where a soldier came upon a young African-American girl. During this meeting, the soldier playfully poured molasses down her back – it was noted she giggled. On the other hand, there is yet another account about an elderly African-American man by the side of the road who was heard to gleefully thank God for the North. (NorthernAccount)

FORT ARCHEOLOGY

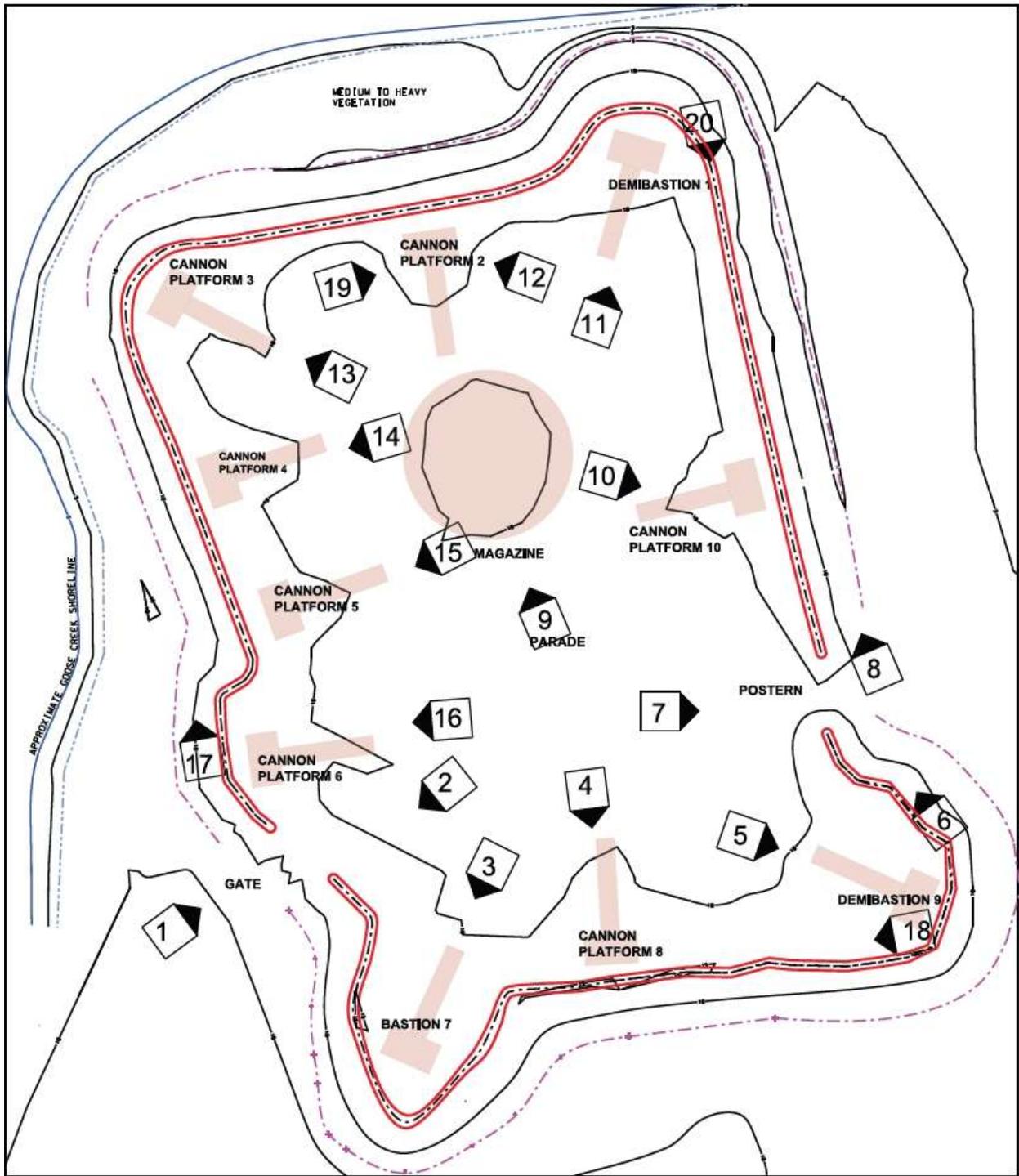
INTRODUCTION TO OUR SURVEY

The Survey Crew

I am thankful for those who helped with our topographic survey of the Fort. Cutting underbrush, three-inch grapevines, and thorn trees is not an easy job. Trying to manipulate a prism pole up and down the steep slopes of the nine hundred foot perimeter, fifteen-foot ramparts in this thicket was no easy task. one weekend, Debbie and I surveyed the northwest trench line by ourselves. Although one of the areas least overgrown it still provided quite a challenge. On the whole, it

proved to be a great family outing, helping us realize some of our heritage, and perhaps giving us a better, closer to home, concept of history. I also want to mention here the great assistance from Jeff Johnston and **Richard Carol**. We used the following equipment in our data collection efforts:

- Sokkia Total Station Total Station: Sokkia Set 6
- Carlson Explorer II data collector
- Single prism
- Handheld GPS
- Software: AutoCad; MicroStation; Carlson; Corp of Engineers', Corpscon6⁹
- Other miscellaneous support equipment



Jolliff Fortification as of Jan 3 2012.dgn Layout1 7/22/2012 11:32:02 AM

Figure 1-Fort Layout With Numbered Image Markers

SETUP

I chose to set two primary points. One on the top of the east trench line and one on the top of the west trench line. The instrument was set up on east, Point #1, and a back sight was taken on the west trench line, Point #2. The GPS was set on Point #1 and five satellites were found for the first reading. Although, not necessarily the most reliable the data is found to be reasonable for our purposes and translated properly, using UTM coordinates and Google Earth. Perhaps I will tie it in with greater precision another time.

DESCRIPTION (RECOGNIZANCE)

This is a rectangular fortification. There are 10 cannon placements, one at each of 4 corners and one or more between each of the corners. The south and west ramparts are of particular interest as there are three platforms between the corners. The main gate is also on the west side and adjacent to this gate is the only full bastion.

There are two definite means of access. The first access is probably the main gate and located at the southwest corner between cannon placement six and the full bastion cannon placement seven. The other is located at the southeast corner between demibastion nine and cannon platform ten.

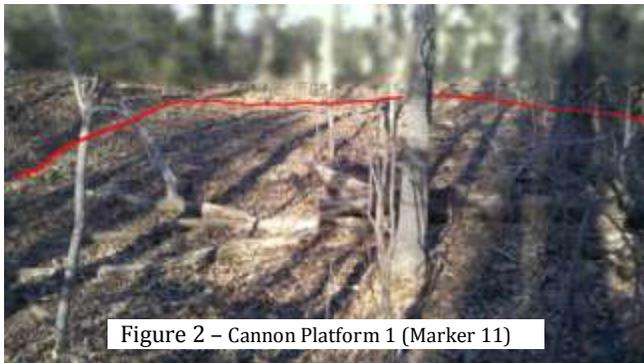


Figure 2 - Cannon Platform 1 (Marker 11)

Cannon Platform One

Cannon platform one is in the form of a demibastion and faces predominately northeast, guarding the main branch of Goose Creek. The creek winds its way through this part of the Western Branch until it reaches the main waters of the Elizabeth River.



Figure 3 - Cannon Platform 2 (Marker 12)

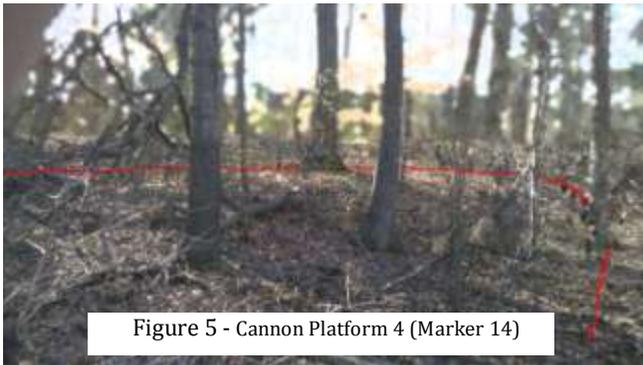
Cannon Platform Two

Cannon platform two faces north and towards Dock Landing Road.



Cannon Platform Three

Cannon platform three points down Jolliff Road towards the direction of the major redirection of Jolliff Road just beyond its intersection with Dock Landing Road.



Cannon Platform Four

Cannon platform four also faces Jolliff Road but more west towards the current entrance to the David’s Mill housing area. Until this area was developed, the road was a small dirt lane known as “Carter’s Lane”. As an aside our affectionately known “Captain Carter” for whom I suppose the lane was named, was a Spanish American War or World War I veteran who owned the property. I have great memories of both he and his wife.



Cannon Platform Five and Six

These platforms face predominately towards the David’s Mill Bridge or dam. They project out of the west earthwork seemingly sharing part of the same area. The parapet in front of six however forms about a forty-five degree angle and seems to form, along with the main gate and platform seven, the primary protection for the fortification and the David’s Mill bridge and picket.





Figure 8 - Cannon Platform 7 (Marker 16)

Cannon Platform Seven

Cannon platform seven appears to be typical of a bastioned type fortification with a salient that projects to the southwest.



Figure 9 - Cannon Platform 8 (Marker 4)

Cannon Platform Eight

Cannon platform eight is located in the middle of the south trench line.



Figure 10 - Cannon Platform 9 (Marker 5)

Cannon Platform Nine

Cannon platform nine is the second demibastion and is located in the southeast corner of the fortification. Its platform area seems to be a bit large and helps to fortify the south trench line and the second entrance or postern to the east.

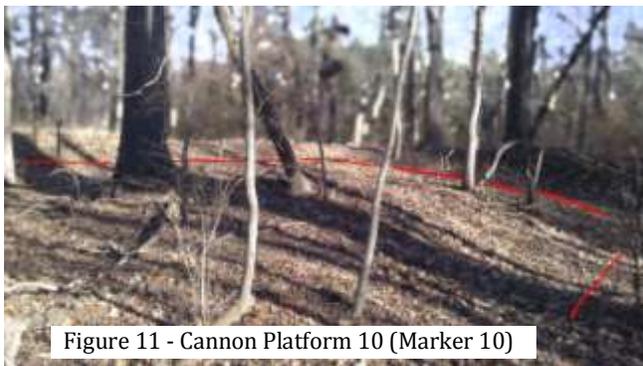


Figure 11 - Cannon Platform 10 (Marker 10)

Cannon Platform Ten

Cannon platform ten faces in an easterly direction towards the creek inlet or possible barrel roll.



Magazine

The magazine is located a bit to the north of center of the area enclosed by the rampart. To its south is enough room for the parade area.

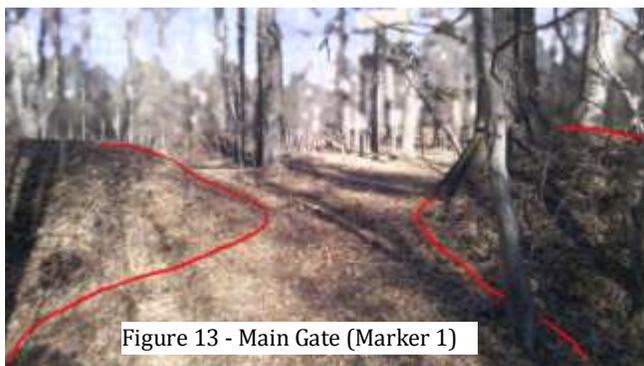
POINTS OF INTEREST

Flagged

As we progressed with the survey, we flagged certain points that were possible artifact finds. After some exploration, none (as of April 2) seemed to reveal anything of importance. One, located by my sister, Jeannette, was about two inches below the surface and contained two galvanized nails, probably roofing nails. These were located on the north side of the magazine. Another revealed another nail or bolt and another galvanized piece of metal. Bryan and I did some exploration along the east trench line, but found nothing of significance.

Barrel Roll

The suspected barrel roll is an interesting flat area or large cove extending from the creek to an area that in times past could have joined the cove to the main drive. Although it tapers a bit to the south, it is generally flat and wider than one would expect. From the creek to the dirt lane is approximately 200 feet. From the east trench line and postern to the opposite embankment is approximately 130 feet. This could have made a great loading ramp for barges or other boats that could access the mill, fort and fields to transport goods to and from the area. A quick metal detection of the area revealed nothing, but certainly, the area invites more exploration.



Main Gate

As mentioned, the main gate is evident to the southwest between cannon placement six and bastion seven. This opening at the corner of the fort was first in line from Jolliff Road. Perhaps Herbert Valentine from the 23rd Massachusetts entered the "post" here from the David's Mill picket (PostValentine).



Figure 14 - Postern (Marker 7)

The other entrance (postern) is located at the corner of platform nine and south of cannon platform ten. This could have been a secondary entrance to the Fort. It also leads to the barrel roll and perhaps from a campsite and or latrine, if one was indeed in place to the east.

Lanes (Access from Jolliff Road)

As I remember, the lanes now obscured by a proliferation of overgrowth, meandered throughout a system of fields our family used to rent to local farmers – Oh for the good ole days. Until the State exhausted the fields of material for the construction of I-664 it is doubtful these lanes changed from what they were during the time the Fort was occupied. It is likely they could have been there even earlier to support the crops and David's Mill operation. These systems of dirt lanes provide access to the Fort at the entrances already mentioned and parallel the trenches along the line that includes bastion seven, cannon placement eight and demibastion nine.

a lot of thought went into its design. Notice bastion seven faces almost due south and is the main projection towards the access from Jolliff Road. The main gate, the bastion and the lines of defense form a formable barrier with angles of defense at thirteen to twenty-one degrees, about twice that of the other angles of defense. Of course, also noticeable is the Fort's location in conjunction with Goose Creek protecting it to the west and the north. The magazine is placed more to the north, closer to the creek side, perhaps to provide a little better protection and to give more room for a small parade area to the south. As far as operating, the Fort could accommodate two companies (two hundred troops) with reasonable comfort. Typically, according to Dennis H. Mahan's except for the cannon placements, troops should be placed along parapet walls within one and a half square yard increments as follows (Mahan):

“Art. 29 (Relation between the extent of Intrenchments and the Troops for their defence). The defence of enclosed works demands that every point of the parapet should be guarded, at the moment of assault, either by cannon or musketry. The troops may be drawn up for the defence either in one, two, or three ranks; and there should, moreover, be a reserve proportioned to the importance attached to the work. The free interior space, denominated the *terre-parade plein*, should be sufficiently great to lodge the troops, with the cannon and its accessories, and will therefore depend on the nature of the defence. The following data will suffice to regulate this point.

Each man will occupy one yard, linear measure, along the interior crest, and each cannon from five to six yards. The space requisite to lodge each man is one and a half square yards; and about sixty square yards should be allowed for each gun.”

Considering the perimeter of the Fort at about 900 feet and ten cannon placements, the numbers come out about right. Admittedly, Mahan did not seem to favor half bastions (demibastions) or entrenchments with exterior sides less than 125 yards. Our Fort, although certainly well planned did not obey to the letter, the West Point professor's design parameters. The position of the Fort in relation to the creek does, however at least in principle follow Mahan's Articles 225 through 236 concerning defense near marches, rivers and associated bridges.

It is also possible that the barrel roll was constructed rather than occurred naturally. This could serve to enhance the capabilities of the Fort – Reference the topographic map and profile foldout. The angles formed between the counter scarp and lower elevations of the inlet bed conform pretty well to defensive designs. An excerpt of Article 28 follows (Mahan):

“28. The bastion Fort satisfies more fully the conditions of a good defence, than any other work; but, owing to the time and labor required for its construction, it should be applied only to sites of great importance, which demand the presence of troops during the operations of a campaign.

The bastion of a fort may consist of a polygon of any number of sides; but for field forts, the square and pentagon are generally preferred, owing to the labor and construction. To plan a work of this kind, a square or pentagon (Fig. 12 [not included]) is laid out, and the sides bisected by perpendiculars; a distance of one eighth of the side is set off on the perpendiculars in the square, or one seventh in the

pentagon; from the angular points of the polygon, lines are drawn through the points thus set off; these lines give the direction of the lines of defence; from the salients of the polygon distances, equal to two sevenths of the side are set off on the direction of the line of defence, which give the faces; from the extremity of the faces, the flanks are drawn perpendicular to the lines of defence; the extremities of the flanks are connected by the curtains."

ARTIFACTS

We have a number of artifacts in our possession, most of which were given to my mother in times past by individuals she gave permission to relic hunt on the property. Since I am not an archeologist I will only give account of what my mother told me concerning the objects and perhaps invoke some thought. I am sure the relics include typical finds any relic hunter has in their possession.



Figure 16 - Ammunition

BULLETS

It is my understanding that most of the bullets in the collection are fifty caliber shot and one is perhaps a confederate mini. I am not entirely sure all the shot came from the Fort. I am, however particularly partial to the casing shown in the middle of the image.



Figure 17 - Buttons

BUTTONS

We have two buttons, both of which are Union and probably from enlisted folks. The first is a New York button, which is twenty-three millimeters in diameter. The second is a round, domed, eagle button that could have secured a poncho of sorts and is twenty millimeters in diameter. Both the front and the back of the buttons are shown in the images. I remember my mother confirmed these to be finds from the Fort.



Figure 18 -
Miscellaneous Artifacts

CLASPS AND MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES

These pieces all are I believe from the Fort and include such things as stays, strap hooks and sheath ends. Included also is perhaps part of an epilate.



Figure 19 - Ordinance

ORDINANCE FRAGMENT

Of particular interest to me is the shell fragment that was given to my mother. This piece in particular I remember my mother saying a relic hunter gave her and said he dug it up at the Fort. Perhaps this artifact can confirm, since it is indeed a fragment, that some skirmishes took place here. Interestingly the fragment may be a Union 3" Hotchkiss artillery shell that was much used by the Federal batteries. If in fact this is exploded ordinance why would it be a northern fragment on a northern installation? Maybe this contributes some evidence that perhaps the Confederacy built the original fortification. As noted previously Captain W.F. Jett was in the area aiding in the construction of fortifications to protect Portsmouth and Norfolk. It could also help to emphasize the possibility that, as some think, this is one of Forrest's Fortifications.¹⁰



Figure 20 - Anchor

ANCHOR

The anchor was found during a dredging operation in the area of the culverts which I understand from my Mother was the general location of David's Mill. I do not know exactly where it was found, but it certainly is of a size that could have been used by larger vessels. The anchor appears to be approximately six feet tall and made of wrought iron.

CONCLUSIONS

From the available evidence, it is hard to conclude that the Fort was originally a Southern installation. Although I would love to link Commodore Forrest's and General Huger's endeavors to protect the Gosport Navy Yard and rail roads there is not the documentation to adequately support the theory. If it could be proven that W.F. Jett did in fact build a bridge and road in this area it could be concluded that it was indeed important and perhaps take a bit of the improbability out of the equation. Another significant thing that could promote the idea that it was originally a Rebel Fort is its proximity, approximately one mile, to the Seaboard and Roanoke Rail Road, which was used to transport the CSS Virginia's iron plate and armament from Richmond.

I believe there is more than enough evidence to make the claim it played a vital role in the North's occupation of the area as a post for Picket Number 1. Its location was ideal for defending and controlling a large access point from the north especially from the direction of the Nansemond River. As noted in figure _____ there were a number of trench works along the way, but none built to the size and complexity of our Fort. The surrounding swampy areas including the northern part of the Great Dismal Swamp provided a natural boundary to the west from Magnolia and Suffolk. The only access to Portsmouth was along the Seaboard and Roanoke Rail Road and the Bower's Hill road (now Airline Boulevard and Turnpike Avenue) that intersected Jolliff Road. Map 1 shows Jolliff Road (formerly one of the roads spoke of as a county road) as the Navy Yard Road giving mileage to the yard along the route.

It is remarkable that the Fort does not show up on period maps, but only alluded to in some personal letters. The only reference I found seemed to indicate a post associated with the David's Mill picket (reference) . Picket #1 was officially assigned by General Naglee in August 1863. The special order also identifies Picket #2 as a bridge at Fort Curtis. The directions indicate the plank of the bridge would be removed at night. It would seem that this would allow free access during the night – puzzling. It is also notable that as the second picket it was located between the David's Mill bridge and Picket #3, the gate on the main Bower's Hill road, at Fort Rodman (approximate area at Victory Blvd, Portsmouth).

Another possible scenario is that Fort Curtis was a documented fortification located at the Jolliff Road, Airline Blvd crossing. Although there may have been a small finger of Goose Creek near this area it is hard to say that a bridge crossing was necessary. It is also important to note that Fort Curtis is only mentioned in this

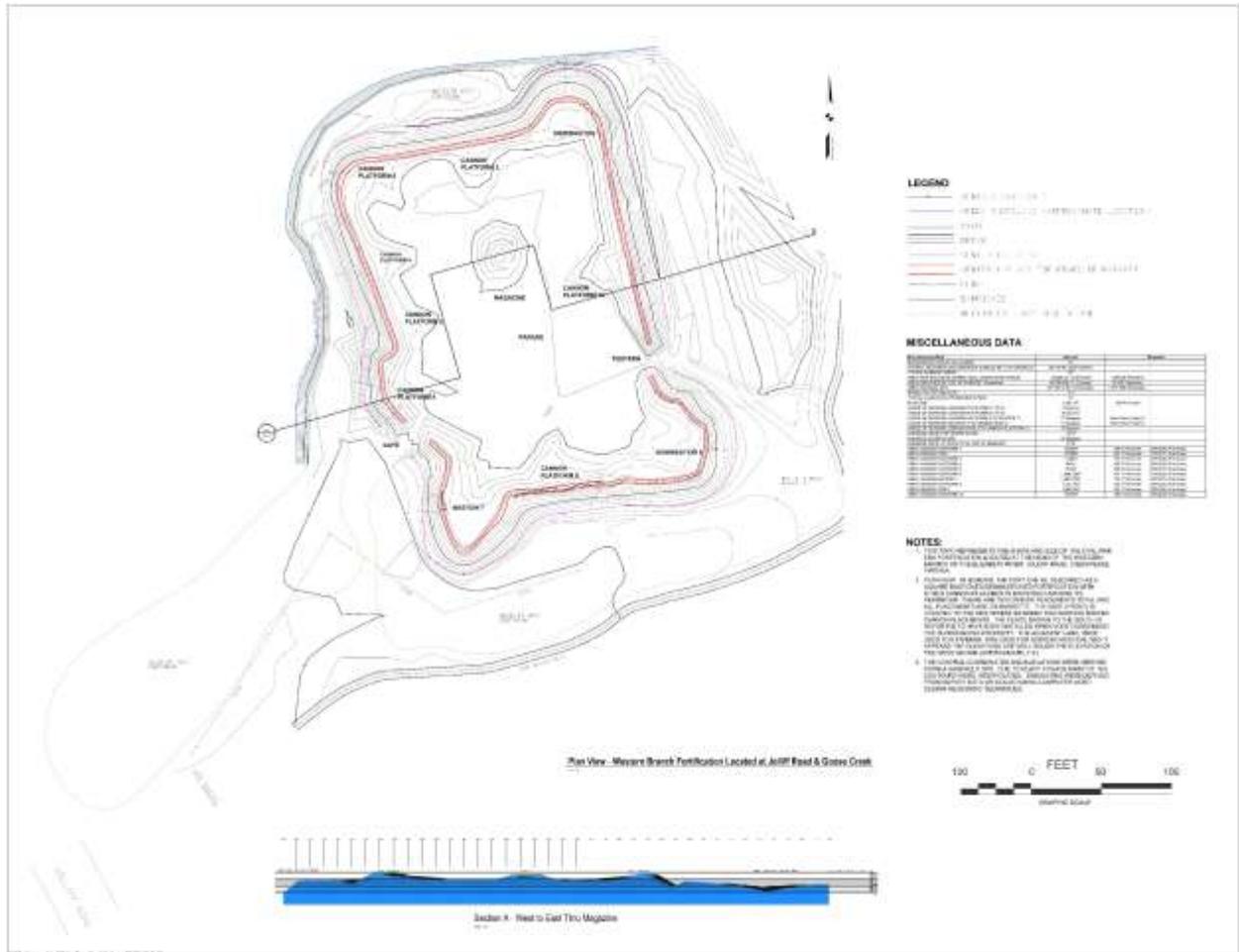
special order. The only other reference to such a fort with that name is in Arkansas.

While there is reasonable proof of the historical significance of the Fort as part of the overall network of both Southern and Northern defenses at different times during the Civil War perhaps there are other undiscovered stories.

Try to capture the attitudes resulting from the Union occupation. Whether it is a "seccish", snuff chewing maiden from the Western Branch area or the more refined owner of Glencoe in Deep Creek, Elizabeth Curtis Wallace, the North's marshal law proved to be quite a hardship for the local populace. Wallace's, Glencoe Diary gives a daily account of such hardships and provides a glimpse of her life as a plantation manager.

APPENDICES

FOLDOUT 1 FORT TOPOGRAPHY





MAP 2 ROCHAMBEAU MAP:

[Fort edited images\Misc Maps\Plan des environs - 1781.jpeg](#)

MAP 4 COPY OR WORRET MAP ABOVE

[FORT EDITED IMAGES\MISC MAPS\MIL RECON COL TJ CRAM DRWN BY WORRET-1861.JPEG](#)

[Fort edited images\Misc Maps\Worret map dated 1862 - Prob main map.jpeg](#)

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¹ Nelle Richardson Tonkin put together the Richardson family history. The Daughters of the American Revolution, Newport News Chapter, dedicated a grave marker on April 5, 1992.

² "A Brief Account of Hall's Corner and Forrest's Entrenchment There"; by James G. Thomson, Chesapeake Va., First Revision, 30 April, 1989.

³ Newspaper article, Include WWW site

⁴ Page 132, 'Victor Vifquain, the man who supposedly tried to kidnap Jefferson Davis' Ironclad Down: the USS Merrimack-CSS Virginia from construction to Destruction by Carl D. Clark; copyright 2007 by Carl D. Park; Naval Institute Press, 291 Wood Road, Annapolis, Md 21402.

⁵ Page 133.....

⁶ Page 134

⁷ http://www.archive.org/stream/storyofcof23dmas00vale/storyofcof23dmas00vale_djvu.txt; "Story of Co. F, 23d Massachusetts volunteers in the war for the Union, 1861-1865"

⁸ Archive about picket lines

⁹ The Mariners' Museum allowed me the use of most of the equipment and software. For this I am grateful.

¹⁰ Insert Forrests Fortification reference