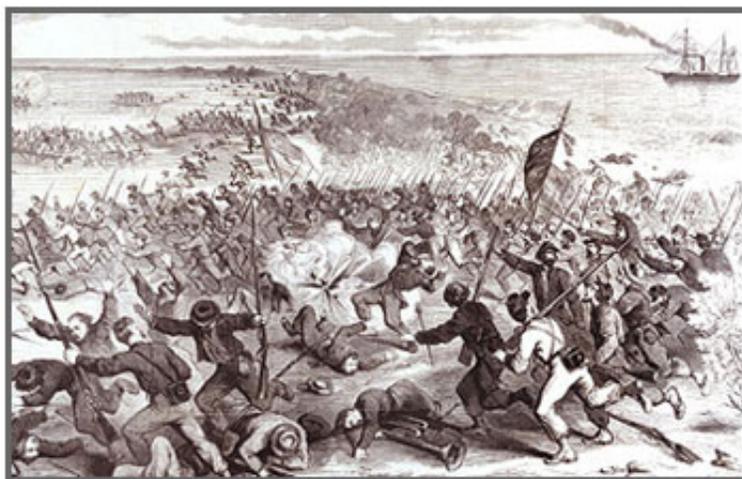


Island Features

December 26, 2013

Has Hatteras islander found a significant Civil War-era fort in Waves?

By CATHERINE KOZAK



<http://www.nps.gov>

Confederates flee from Union forces during the "Chicamacomico Races."

After piecing together clues found on old maps and historic documents, local historical investigator Mel Covey is confident that he has located a significant Civil War-era fort on Hatteras Island, as well as the underwater spot where artifacts were tossed off a fleeing Union gunboat.

Covey, an island native who grew up in Rodanthe, said that his familiarity with the island waters and topography has helped him pinpoint where Camp Live Oak had been built prior to the famed Chicamacomico Races, when Confederate and Union forces in 1861 chased each other up and down the beach.

"I do a lot of digging in my line of work," said Covey, a Buxton contractor who helped discover the remains of Fort Clark by Hatteras Inlet in the late 1990s.

By pinpointing where the fort was likely built in turn led him to locating where the Fanny, the first Union Naval vessel captured in the Civil War, probably lightened its load to escape pursuing enemy boats in Pamlico Sound.

A few years ago, Covey explained, he spotted a Civil War artifact in fill at a site near where he was working at Mirlo Beach. He investigated and learned that it had come from property in the village of Waves. That discovery triggered Covey's curiosity about the fort, and he began closely examining numerous maps and historic records from the era.

Covey said that all the information he has unearthed so far points to Camp Live Oak being located at a previously unknown area in Waves.

Records show that the fort was located near a windmill where live oaks line the shore. By overlaying maps from different years with aerial photographs and Civil War historical accounts, Covey said he has found strong evidence of an earthwork, as well as artifacts that may have originated from the fortification. Extrapolating from

that location, he said he also figured out where the Fanny most likely dumped its armaments.

Joseph Schwarzer, director of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras and executive director of the North Carolina Maritime Museums, said that Covey has pulled together “very strong circumstantial evidence” to support his findings.

“I think he has a good case for this, I really do,” he said. “I think Mel has raised some good questions, and they need to be addressed.”

Covey said that a professional archaeologist who also assisted at Fort Clark excavations will soon visit the site, and divers with Chicamacomico Banks Fire and Rescue Department plan to conduct a search for the Fanny artifacts in the spring.

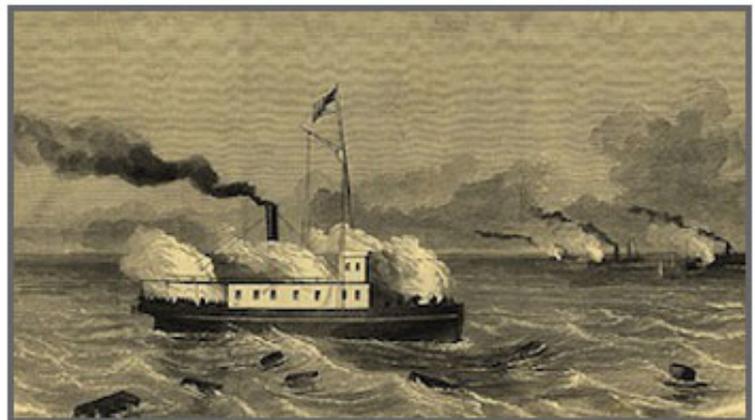
According to local historian Drew Pullen, Camp Live Oak was a Union outpost near Rodanthe established in 1861 to defend the island from Confederate attempts to recapture it. The Union commander, Col. Rush Hawkins of the 9th New York Voluntary Infantry, was concerned that the Confederates would come from Roanoke Island to try to overcome the occupying Union troops, and assigned Col. W. L. Brown of the 20th Indiana and his men to keep tabs on the Southern forces, Pullen wrote in “The Emerging Civil War.”

On Oct. 1, 1861, the armed Federal tugboat “Fanny” was captured in Pamlico Sound by three Confederate steamers while it was trying to deliver supplies to the encampment. In the process, the Confederates discovered the location of Camp Live Oak and the Union regiment. A few days later, both sides engaged in the infamous “Chicamacomico Races.”

Ultimately, the showdown was a draw, and the island remained in Union control.

If Covey is right about the fort and the Fanny, “it could be a tremendous story,” said Earl O’Neal, an author and Civil War historian from Ocracoke Island.

O’Neal, 82, is a board member of Surface Interval Diving Company (SIDCO), a Beaufort, NC-based nonprofit marine archaeology company that will be working on the Fanny expedition in May.



<http://emergingcivilwar.com>

Capture of the propeller 'Fanny' in Pamlico Sound by three Confederate steamers while conveying men and stores to the 20th Indiana Regiment.

O’Neal, who has discussed the find with Covey, said that there is something on the floor of the sound that is catching nets. SIDCO uses sonar and metal detecting devices in its searches.

“Nobody has ever said what it is,” he said. “It’s going to give you the proof if you find the cannon balls.”

The location of the search has been determined by narrowing down the likely latitude and longitude of where the Fanny was when it grounded in Pamlico Sound several miles offshore the tri-villages and ultimately forced to lighten its load.

That’s easier said than done.

“Every time they make a new chart, things move around,” said Ken Mason, a member of the Chicamacomico

Banks Fire and Rescue Department and beach patrol. "He wants us to do a preliminary location of this. We're not going to just go out there and bump into this."

Mason said that the search is for a debris field, not a single spot. The Chicamacomico dive team that he captains will be assisting as part of a training exercise.

"Right now, we believe we have a fix on an area that is probably 1,000 meters in diameter," he said.

Dennis Schurr, a Civil War historian on Hatteras Island, said that he is impressed with the potential finds, but he questioned Covey's conclusions. He said that his hypothesis would be stronger if he could verify the dates that the windmills were known to exist in the area and document the construction of Camp Live Oak by the 20th Indiana.

But Schurr said he remains open-minded that Covey may have discovered new Civil War history.

"There's something certainly there," he said. "I think it would be fantastic . . . it's exciting.

"The worst thing that could happen is it is not (the fort). And the best thing that could happen is an opportunity to see if indeed this could be the real Camp Live Oak."

0 Comments

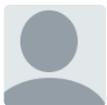
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