

## FORT BARTOW: THE FORT THAT NEVER FOUGHT

In all our history sources we find that our Fort Bartow once in place right here on our Causton Bluff coast never engaged in what one would call a bloody, man-to-man land battle killing thousands.

Causton Bluff's 'fort' would participate in three wars: the American Revolution (1776), the War of 1812, and the Civil War (1861). During the earliest of these wars military planners agreed that this bluff location was key to protection from foreign invaders arriving by sea and on January 16, 1776 an "outpost" was completed. It was not regularly manned but was attended only when there was a threat, and that threat did indeed come in 1779 with the famous "Siege of Savannah" when French and American forces were ultimately defeated in a battle just 5 miles west of Causton Bluff and its little outpost. After the battle a peaceful evacuation of French soldiers occurred right here at Causton Bluff without British interference. It was so peaceful British Soldiers chose to graze their horses on the fertile fields of Causton Bluff's plantations.

With the start of the War of 1812 camps were established at vulnerable waterway areas. Camp Huger guarded Thunderbolt and Camp Covington, as it was then called, guarded Causton Bluff and there was mention of a Camp Jackson located on the Savannah River just northwest of Causton Bluff's Brewton Hill Plantation. All camps were considered sentinel positions during that war.

With the beginning of the Civil War Causton Bluff's fort would become an effective installation complete with a more complex pattern of earthen mounds which would include gated roads, a bombproof, a headquarters building which doubled as a small hospital, a telegraph office and most importantly canons capable of striking ships at least a mile away in the Savannah River. The headquarters building, called "The Black Box" by archaeologists because of its appearance on most of the old maps, was a home built by the Habersham family for use as a home for their overseer.

Perhaps the most memorable event that happened during the "life" of Fort Bartow was a visit to the fort by General Robert E. Lee in 1862 who was here to observe a demonstration firing of a new canon. When the canon was fired it exploded into pieces and a large fragment missed General Lee's head by inches. In 2000 marine archaeologists came to Causton Bluff and located what was left of that canon, raised it and ultimately placed it in front of the museum at Old Fort Jackson.

Some remains of the earthen fort do exist but after all of the current development it is difficult to locate them exactly. Only "pieces" are seen today on vacant lots along the Wilmington River, and some rather large berms can be seen from Sedgebank Road and Causton Harbor Drive. Their usage as burial grounds or berms for protection is debatable but one thing is sure, our existing berms are protected from future destruction.

Causton Bluff, survivor of three wars, is our very own historic treasure, truly a rich source of history to be enjoyed and honored.

BARBARA HOFER