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FORT WINYAW AT GEORGETOWN, 1776-1923

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The third-oldest of South Carolina's principal coastal settlements, George Town was also the last of the three to erect defenses against enemy attack from the sea. The settlement near the head of Winyaw Bay (as it was then spelled) seemed too far from the open sea to tempt privateers, and the more immediate threat was from the Indian lands to the northwest. The earliest thought of seaward defense was about 1735, when the settlement was formally laid out as a town. At that time it was divided, by five east-west streets roughly parallel to the Sampit River, into 230 lots; lot 230, on the south side of Front Street, nearest the river at the east end of the town, was set aside for the construction of a fort for the common defense. A fort there would have provided some protection against hostile vessels ascending the Sampit, but obviously as soon as the town expanded eastward, a fort built on lot 230 would have been too close to keep a ship from firing into George Town itself. This seems to have been recognized officially in 1753, when lot 230 was withdrawn from the common domain and sold, together with two adjacent lots, to a local shipwright for the establishment of a shipyard.¹

With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War the seaward defense of George Town took on more importance in view of possible raids into Winyaw Bay by Royal Navy ships and privateers. During the early months of 1776, while the Carolina coast awaited the blow that eventually fell on Charles Town, the militia and volunteers of George Town hastily erected an earthwork fort on the Sampit east of the town, apparently at some spot between the shipyard and the junction of the Sampit and Black rivers. The garrison of the unnamed fort, actually only a battery, was provided by the George Town Independent Company of Artillery, under the command of Capt. Paul Trapier, Jr.² But after the dramatic and highly successful defense of Charles Town, a euphoric overconfidence led to a relaxation of defenses the length of the South Carolina coast. Although the Commissioners of the Treasury reported

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¹George C. Rogers, Jr., *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* (Columbia, 1970), pp. 34, 47n.

²William E. Hemphill, Wylma Anne Wates, and R. Nicholas Olsberg (eds.), *Journals of the General Assembly and House of Representatives, 1776-1780*, The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia, 1970), pp. 146, 153.

did not prepare students for the "active" life, in a subtler sense it did just that. Behind the walls of the College students enjoyed the freedom to explore the roles they would play after graduation. Taught to be gentlemen, they tested the limits of that role as they tested the wills of their teachers. Occasionally they pushed too hard and the result was violence and expulsion. But all in all, they learned their lessons well, and when the war came they were ready to take their places among the Confederacy's leadership.⁶⁸ The Guard House Riot reveals the College to be much more than a seminary of classical learning; it was first and foremost a school of honor.

⁶⁸Forty percent of the members at the Secession Convention were graduates of the College, Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, I, p. 267. The College supplied seventeen generals to the Confederacy, as well as numerous officers of lower rank. See William I. Layton, "The Part Played by the South Carolina Student and Alumni in the Confederate War," Typescript, n.d., South Caroliniana Library. Of the "chief offenders" in the riot, I have been able to trace the subsequent career of only J. T. Rhett. He served as a lieutenant in the Hampton Legion Cavalry. After the war he practiced law in Columbia and was elected mayor in 1882. See *An Historical and Descriptive Review of South Carolina* (New York, 1884).

that over £7,000 had been spent on Trapier's company at George Town "and for the fort there," nothing further was done to improve the fort, and in October of 1776 the Independent Company of Artillery at George Town was incorporated into the 4th South Carolina Regiment (Artillery) and became liable for field service in other areas.³

In 1780 the war returned to South Carolina. Charles Town was besieged and captured, British occupation forces garrisoned the city, and a detachment was sent to seize and occupy George Town. The senior British engineer, Lt. Col. James Moncrief, went to George Town to erect modest defenses, both landward and seaward, and is thought to have refurbished the earthwork battery on the Sampit.⁴ But the principal threat to the British garrison, supported by the Loyalist militia, was from the American partisans, and in November 1780 and January 1781 Francis Marion and Henry Lee made two unsuccessful attacks on the town. In the late spring the Americans had more success; this time the Loyalist militia was neutralized by Thomas Sumter's partisans, and when Marion approached George Town the British garrison hastily evacuated. Marion seized the remaining stores, demolished the defensive works, and withdrew, whereupon a British ship in the Sampit, in retaliation for alleged excesses by Sumter's men, fired into the town and virtually destroyed it.⁵

By the beginning of 1782 George Town had rebuilt to some extent, and a modest amount of trade was flowing into the town. There were soon rumors that the British forces in Charles Town intended to reoccupy George Town to halt this economic renaissance, and Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, commander of the Southern Department, thought this quite likely. Greene and Marion urged the merchants to remove their goods up the Black River to Black Mingo Creek, and at the same time Greene corresponded with Governor John Matthews about erecting hasty fortifications for the seaward defense of George Town.⁶ Matthews

³Ibid., pp. 146, 165.

⁴Rogers, *Georgetown County*, p. 129; Moncrief's reports on George Town have not been found.

⁵Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department* (New York, 1869), pp. 223-225; Mark M. Boatner, III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York, 1966), p. 420. Years later Intendant Savage Smith wrote that in 1781 George Town had been "reduced to ashes"; Smith to James Madison, Aug. 20, 1807, National Archives Records Group 107, Letters Received, Office of the Secretary of War, Oct. 1806-March 1808 (R-S) (microcopy M221, roll 12).

⁶Matthews to Marion, Feb. 26, 1782, R. W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution . . . Chiefly in South Carolina*, III (Columbia, 1853), p. 258; Greene to Marion, Mar. 1, 1782, *ibid.*, p. 260.

sent the senior state engineer, Lt. Col. Christian Senf,⁷ to erect such defenses, and Senf worked on them from March through June of 1782, using slave carpenters and other artisans from confiscated Tory estates and subsequently calling for additional slaves from the patriot planters, for which they were eventually reimbursed.⁸ General Marion inspected "the fort on the point" about June 1, and reported to Greene that work was progressing well; the fort commanded the Sampit within point-blank range, and was about a thousand yards from the channel leading into the Black River. From this description it appears that the fort was on the southwest tip of what was then called Waties' Point, on the left bank of the Sampit as it flowed into Winyaw Bay. Marion, however, thought that an enemy force could easily bypass the fort by landing on the right bank of the Sampit, crossing a bridge higher up that river, and attacking George Town from the rear.⁹

Neither Marion's fears nor Senf's fort-building skill were to be put to the test. Whether the anticipated British attack on George Town was deterred by the news of the new fort on the Sampit, as one would like to think, or whether the rumored attack had been only a rumor, no such operation materialized, and indeed there was no further significant activity around George Town for the remainder of the war. Near the end of the year the British occupation forces evacuated Charleston, and for the next decade coastal South Carolina was free from enemy threat.

The First Federal System of Seacoast Defenses

The eruption of revolution in France brought war to Europe in the early 1790s, and the rights of neutral nations were soon subordinated to the need by the European monarchies to curb the spread of revolution and republicanism. Great Britain in particular ignored American maritime rights, and by the end of 1793 it appeared that war with Britain would break out again. Washington's administration was concerned for the safety of the seaboard, and decided that coast defense should become a federal responsibility. In February 1794 a Congressional committee drew up a list of priority ports and harbors from Maine to Georgia, and in

⁷Johann Christian Senf (ca. 1754-1806), a Saxon engineer, served with Burgoyne's German auxiliaries at Saratoga. After Burgoyne's surrender, Senf was hired by Henry Laurens as a state engineer, and served as captain to lieutenant colonel in the South Carolina forces. After the war, in addition to repairing the forts in Charleston Harbor, Col. Senf acted as chief engineer for the Santee and Catawba canal projects, and as superintendent of construction of the United States armory at Rocky Mount on the Catawba until just prior to his death.

⁸Matthews to Marion, March 4, 1782; Marion to Horry, March 7, 1782, Gibbes, *Documentary History*, III, pp. 263-264; Rogers, *Georgetown County*, p. 154.

⁹Marion to Greene, June 1, 1782, Greene Papers, quoted in Rogers, *ibid*.

April Congress approved these and a few more for defensive fortifications; in South Carolina the priority ports included Charleston and Georgetown.¹⁰

The United States had almost no trained military engineers at this time and no engineering school of any sort, so Secretary of War Henry Knox was forced to seek out foreign-trained former engineer or artillery officers. Fortunately there were several in the United States, most of them French, and Knox was able to fill his needs for the initial phases of what came to be called the First System of federal seacoast fortification. To undertake the defenses of the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia, Knox selected Paul Hyacinthe Perrault, a French refugee from Santo Domingo then living in Charleston. In mid-April Knox sent Perrault instructions for surveying the coastal areas, and urged him to begin as soon as possible.¹¹

Unfortunately for the history of this First System, most of the correspondence between Secretary Knox and the foreign engineers was lost in the War Department fire of 1800. However, Knox reported in 1794 that of \$106,000 appropriated for all seacoast fortifications — a most inadequate total — he had allocated \$1,423 to a work at Georgetown; Perrault actually expended only \$250 in 1794, and \$573 the following year.¹² None of Perrault's sketches survives, but he seems to have selected the site of the old earthwork battery near the tip of Waties Point, which was now known as Blyth's Point after its new owner Dr. Joseph Blyth, a former wartime military surgeon whose wife had inherited the site.¹³ Tradition, if not sound military thinking, favored this location, but by 1794 there were two considerable problems with respect to Blyth's Point. First, it was prime rice land, highly valued by Dr. Blyth; to purchase even a few acres would cost more than Congress had appropriated for construction of a fortification. Second, the low-lying land adjacent to the proposed site was periodically flooded for rice-growing, and the area was considered very unhealthy, especially to unacclimated whites. Perrault prepared brief surveys, and seems to have repaired the old earthen battery, but after reporting his findings to the War Department he returned to the much larger project in Charleston.

Secretary Knox resigned at the end of 1794, and was succeeded by Timothy Pickering. The new secretary reviewed all of Knox's correspon-

¹⁰The modern spelling will be used hereafter. On the Congressional actions, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, I, pp. 61-62, 101-102, cited as *ASP, MA*.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 106-108, 141.

¹³On the changing ownership of this land, Anthony Q. Devereux, *The Life and Times of Robert F. W. Allston* (Georgetown, 1976), *passim*.

dence, but some time elapsed before he decided whether to continue or suspend work on some of the smaller proposed works. Meanwhile 1795 saw a thawing of Anglo-American relations and hence less willingness by Congress to provide funds for defensive works, so late in the year Secretary Pickering suspended work at Georgetown. In a report to Congress, Pickering devoted a short paragraph to the recent activity there. "A battery was begun, and materials collected," Pickering noted, "when the work was suspended, the owner of the land previously desiring to ascertain the terms on which it was to be occupied. . . . The unhealthiness of the situation and other circumstances authorize an abandonment of the work until war, actual or impending, shall require it to be resumed."¹⁴

Jay's Treaty brought temporary peace with Britain, but at the price of exacerbating relations with republican France. Believing that American sentiment was moving toward Britain and her allies, the French Directory took retaliatory measures against American shipping, and by 1798 the two nations had reached that state of belligerence known as the Quasi-War of 1798-1800. The Americans feared not only an attack by French land and naval forces, but also an attempt by French agents to incite a slave insurrection in the South. The federal government raised additional troops and renewed the fortifications construction program — the second phase of the First System.

This time, however, the list of priority ports did not include Georgetown. Officially, the federal government had lost interest because the state of South Carolina had failed to cede jurisdiction over the proposed defensive site. Congress had stipulated in 1794 that land under and adjacent to seacoast fortifications must be ceded to the United States; if the land was state-owned, it was to be conveyed outright, while if it was privately-owned, the government would purchase it direct from its owner.¹⁵ Once the state ceded the land, the United States had a specified period, usually three years, to complete the purchase and begin construction of a fortification; if it failed to do so, jurisdiction would revert to the state. But South Carolina, for reasons still not clear, had by 1798 failed to cede jurisdiction of any sites along the coast, and although the United States continued work already under way in Charleston Harbor, the Secretary of War disclaimed further immediate interest in Georgetown.

The citizens of Georgetown thought their prosperous rice industry particularly vulnerable, and at a town meeting on May 21, 1798 they passed resolutions affirming their support of the national government

¹⁴ASP, MA, I, pp. 110-111.

¹⁵Act of March 20, 1794, *U.S. Statutes at Large*, I, p. 345, cited as 1 Stat.

and their willingness to defend themselves.¹⁶ A committee was formed under the leadership of Peter Horry to raise funds to construct a fort for the defense of the town. The fort was erected during the summer and fall of 1798; no description has survived, but it was almost surely thrown up on the site of the old earthworks on Blyth's Point. The new work was probably of earth, perhaps shored with timbers, and it did not last long, for nine years later the intendant would write that in 1798 the citizens "did at a considerable expense erect a fort for their own protection which has since fallen to decay. . . ."¹⁷

President Adams resolved the difficulties with France early in 1800, and with the removal of the French threat, interest in the seacoast defenses died quickly. The succeeding Jefferson administration reduced the little Army to the barest minimum in 1802, although it did continue Adams's project of creating a corps of engineers and a tiny national military academy, primarily to provide native-born military engineers to design and build the seacoast fortifications. But in 1803-1804 attention was focused on Louisiana, and shortly thereafter the existing seacoast garrisons were reduced to provide troops to occupy the new Louisiana Purchase.

Meanwhile the federal government had been pressing South Carolina to cede jurisdiction of the seacoast-defense sites along its coast, and at the end of 1805 the General Assembly finally passed the necessary legislation. Included in the cession of December 19 was a tract of "four acres at Dr. Blyth's point of land at the mouth of the Sampit River" below Georgetown.¹⁸ It would now be up to the United States to negotiate directly with Dr. Blyth for the purchase or lease of those four acres.

Beginnings of the Second Federal System

The so-called First System of American seacoast fortification, begun in 1794 with hired foreign-born engineers, effectively ended with Jefferson's inauguration. For the next five years the Democratic-Republican administration was concerned primarily with consolidating its political position, and with acquiring and occupying Louisiana. But in the early months of 1806 relations with Britain began to deteriorate once again, over the same old problems of maritime rights, and in the course of that year, step by step, the nation entered the Second System of federal defense of the seacoasts.

¹⁶Rogers, *Georgetown County*, p. 183.

¹⁷Savage Smith to James Madison, Aug. 20, 1807, loc. cit.

¹⁸Act No. 1856 of Dec. 19, 1805, David J. McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, V (Columbia, 1839), pp. 501-502.

Secretary of War Henry Dearborn of Massachusetts had shown little concern for the seacoast fortifications for five years, but he knew that the time had come to devote his attention to the maritime frontier. He knew also that the Corps of Engineers had been created in 1802 primarily to design and construct seacoast defenses, and he decided that it was time to involve the little Corps more fully in building whatever new fortifications might be needed. He called the Chief Engineer, Lt. Col. Jonathan Williams,¹⁹ to Washington, and the two drew up a priority listing of ports and harbors to be defended; as approved by President Jefferson, initial emphasis would go to New York City, Charleston, and New Orleans.²⁰ Colonel Williams himself was fully occupied in New York Harbor, and for the remainder of 1806 nothing was done toward additional defenses of the South Carolina coast. Secretary Dearborn so far deviated from his priority list, in fact, as to send two Engineer officers, Capt. Alexander Macomb and 2d Lt. Charles Gratiot, to speed a three-year-old project of constructing a national armory for the Southern states near the hamlet of Rocky Mount on the Catawba River in north-central South Carolina.²¹

Early in 1807, however, Secretary Dearborn directed Chief Engineer Williams to travel down to Charleston to assess the requirements of that priority harbor. Williams passed through Georgetown in early March, and paused to inspect the four-acre site at Blyth's Point; he included this site in a brief preliminary report to the Secretary:

In my way through George Town, I saw the scite marked out there, which although in a good scituation for defence is totally inadequate for a permanent defence. 1[st] Four acres is too small an area for all the purposes wanted, and 2d It would prove a grave in succession for all the Troops that might be sent to garrison it, being a Marsh on a fresh water River, the whole rear of which is a large rice Swamp. This Post I think should be left entirely to the care of Gun Boats.²²

¹⁹Jonathan Williams (1750-1815), grandnephew of Benjamin Franklin, was Franklin's secretary in Paris and later agent at Nantes during the Revolution. A student of military architecture and an officer of the American Philosophical Society, Williams was appointed a major in the Army in 1801 and selected in 1802 to head the new Corps of Engineers.

²⁰Dearborn to Williams, April 10 and May 22, 1806, National Archives Records Group 107, Military Book No. 2, Letters Sent, Office of the Secretary of War, microcopy M6, roll 2, hereafter cited NA RG 107, MB 2, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/2).

²¹Arthur P. Wade, "Mount Dearborn: The National Armory at Rocky Mount, South Carolina, 1802-1829," this *Magazine* 81 (1980): 207-231.

²²Williams to Dearborn, March 19, 1807, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1806-07 (W) (M221/14).

This reference to gunboats stemmed from President Jefferson's firm belief that for the defense of all but the largest ports, small naval gunboats would be adequate and far cheaper than fixed fortifications. Few army or navy officers agreed, however, and although some 200-odd gunboats were laid down and many completed, interest in their use declined sharply after Jefferson left office in 1809.²³

After visiting Charleston Harbor and the unfinished armory at Rocky Mount, Colonel Williams penned a long report of his trip to the Secretary of War. His description of Georgetown and its defensive needs was quite detailed:

[T]he site at Dr. Blyths point, in George Town, which has been laid out by the Commissioners, as to inscribe four acres of land in the shape of a Quadrant, the arc embracing the point, and the two sides, at right angles with each other, running to the water on each side. . . .

This point is the termination of a large rice swamp, which in the summer and fall months is covered with fresh and stagnant water, and avoided by the white inhabitants, as the certain cause of a fatal pestilence. To establish a garrison in such a place, would be like a condemnation to disease at least, if not to death. The most that [I] could conscientiously recommend . . . would be to throw up a breast-work of earth, (which is here very tenacious) with a platform behind, and to have heavy pieces on travelling carriages, lodged in some safe place under cover, to be drawn to the spot, and used by the Citizens as occasion might require.

George-Town cannot admit even a sloop of war over its bar, on which there is only the depth of 14 feet of water. It is therefore only exposed to smaller vessels, and by the numerous flats which afford many advantageous positions to gun boats, this mode of defence would evidently be the most effectual . . . and united to the heavy pieces before mentioned . . . would supercede the necessity for a permanent work. It therefore appears to [me] that the cession of this point is not . . . an object of importance to the United States, at any rate not worth purchase.

George-Town being the sea port of the rice country, doubtless demands protection, but it is their produce and shipping, rather than the scattered buildings in Town that would engage the attention of an enemy, the former could not be obtained or destroyed without a superior force by land as well as sea, the latter might be

²³The story of these gunboats is well told by Howard I. Chapelle in *The History of the American Sailing Navy* (New York, 1949), Chap. IV.

blockaded at the harbour mouth, as well as the river. Therefore a permanent Fortification . . . does not seem to be in this place an indispensable requisite. Dr. Blyth values the four acres of land in question at two thousand dollars, and understanding that he is to grant a passage to and from [Georgetown], which he supposes will require ten more, his demand is increased to seven thousand dollars. This price is measured by the produce of rice land, but the Doctor offers to submit to a valuation of impartial men. . . .²⁴

The Chief Engineer's recommendations were reinforced to a large extent, if that were necessary, by an independent report submitted by Capt. Alexander Macomb. The young Engineer officer had left Rocky Mount in April to make some preliminary surveys in Charleston, and he returned to the armory by way of Georgetown, apparently on his own initiative. At the end of the month he submitted a report directly to the Secretary of War; it generally paralleled Williams', but it contained some interesting additions:

[I]nclose you a Plan of Georgetown Harbour together with Dr. Blyth's Point, which is specified as one of the scites ceded by this State to the United States. The Plan of the Harbour is copied from one taken by Judge Waiting [probably John Waties, Jr.] and a Company of Gentlemen . . . with a view of improving its navigation by finding some means of avoiding the Bar, and that intricate and dangerous channel thro' the Breakers, which is now used. It was at length agreed to try the opening of a canal through North Island near the light house, which is now carrying on and nearly completed. This canal will if it succeeds afford them a good and safe passage and they will gain a considerable depth of water as there are eighteen feet within the Bay and twenty feet where the canal enters the sea, but by the channel now used, which is extremely hazardous, a vessel drawing more than ten feet of water cannot enter.

This circumstance alone shews that it will scarcely be worth while building any work at Georgetown more than a small Battery, which however it would be a pity to garrison with regular troops, as it would only be sacrificing them to no purpose for in truth Dr. Blyth's Point appears to be one of the most unhealthy possible. [T]he whole country about Georgetown is esteemed so unhealthy that the Inhabitants themselves dare not risk a summer in that vicinity. The Work in case of emergency might very well be garrisoned by the militia of the place and gun Boats in time of danger might be

²⁴Report of Apr. 23, 1807, inclosed with Williams to Dearborn, May 3, 1807, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1806-07 (W) (M221/14).

employed in the Bay and rivers to great advantage.

Dr. Blyth expects a very high price for his lands and seems to think that it would be necessary to have a road to lead to the work and so adds to the four acres ceded by the state ten more, but in truth there is no necessity whatever for a road as the water passage is much more convenient and easy and all heavy articles could be transported in flats to the fort, besides it would not only be a great expense to get the ten acres [but also] to make a passable cause-way would be enormously expensive. . . .²⁵

If Colonel Williams and Captain Macomb did not agree on the depth of water over the bar, they were in agreement that it would be unduly expensive to buy Dr. Blyth's land at his valuation. Blyth was probably asking the going rate for prime rice acreage, for in 1807 rice was Georgetown's chief source of income, but Secretary Dearborn remembered that four years earlier he had bought the land for the armory at Rocky Mount for six dollars an acre,²⁶ while Dr. Blyth was asking \$500. Dearborn was unwilling to consider such a price in peacetime for such a reportedly unhealthy site, and in mid-May he wrote to Captain Macomb to advise Dr. Blyth that "it is not certain any works will be erected on his land; and of course no arrangements will at present be necessary relative to the quantity and price of it."²⁷ This appeared to remove Georgetown from the list of proposed sites for fortifications — but events to the northward were to change the situation completely.

The Chesapeake-Leopard Crisis

Prior to 1807 the British encroachment on American waters and flouting of American maritime rights had become increasingly irritating, but there had been no acts of overt hostility. This situation worsened dramatically with the news of the firing on and boarding of the USS *Chesapeake* by HMS *Leopard* off Hampton Roads on June 22. By the first week of July the Secretary of War had ordered the federal seacoast garrisons on the alert, and had warned the governors of the seaboard states to have detachments of their militia in readiness for a possible British attack somewhere along the coast.²⁸ Opinion was almost unanimous that there would be such an attack, and even so analytical an observer as Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin warned President Jefferson on 25 July that "if the British Ministry is possessed of energy, and that we have no reason to doubt, we must expect an efficient fleet on

²⁵Macomb to Dearborn, April 29, 1807, *ibid.*, (M) (M221/10).

²⁶Wade, "Mount Dearborn," p. 213.

²⁷Dearborn to Macomb, May 19, 1807, NA RG 107, MB 3, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/3).

²⁸Dearborn to Col. H. Burbeck, July 3; circular to governors, July 6, 1807, *ibid.*

our coast this autumn, with perhaps a few thousand land forces, for the purpose of winter operations in the South."²⁹

The citizens of Georgetown quickly caught the national fever, and the rice planters convinced themselves that Winyaw Bay would be the immediate objective of the coming onslaught. A citizens' meeting convened on 18 August, under the leadership of the intendant, Savage Smith, and prepared a memorial to the President asking for federal protection. Forwarded to the Secretary of State, the memorial was long on rhetoric but rather short on specific needs:

At this awful crisis, when Britain unmindful of natural Justice, and amid professions of friendship, daily commits acts derogatory to the sovereignty of our Nation, and in violation of the rights of her Citizens, Your MEMORIALISTS are impelled by their danger to represent the defenceless state of the Port, and Harbor of Georgetown. . . .

That your MEMORIALISTS speak not from apprehension alone but also from past experience during the [Revolution]. Their town unfortified *then*, as it is *now*, was by a private vessel of war reduced to ashes, and their Wives and Children . . . forced into miseries, which are more easily imagined than described.

That, in proof of the justice of their plaint, and of their strong disposition to relieve the Government of its constitutional charge, YOUR MEMORIALISTS represent that on the rupture which took place between the United States, and the Republic of France [in 1798], they did at a considerable expense erect a fort for their protection which has since fallen to decay — and their town undefended by fortifications of any kind must in case of invasion inevitably yield to vessels of the smallest force, resistance of their part, if unprotected by batteries or Gun-boats, being vain and ineffectual.

WHEREFORE Your MEMORIALISTS pray, that taking into consideration the defenceless state of their Port and Harbor and the irremediable miseries into which they would be involved in case of invasion, You will order such modes of defence either by Gun-Boats or fortifications as to your Wisdom shall seem meet.³⁰

This memorial was only one of scores received by the federal government during August and September of 1807; all of them called for some degree of federal assistance, but admittedly few reflected such a spirit of

²⁹Henry Adams (ed.), *The Writings of Albert Gallatin* (New York, 1872), I, p. 341.

³⁰Inclosed with Smith to Madison, 20 Aug 1807, filed NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1806-08 (R-S) (M221/12).

abject helplessness as marked the Georgetown memorial. It was read by Secretary Madison and possibly by the President, and was sent to the War Department for information and appropriate action. Secretary Dearborn, however reluctant to purchase Dr. Blyth's expensive land, decided that some sort of protection was due Georgetown, which had figured as a priority port since 1794. When a committee of the House called for recommendations for additional defensive works, Dearborn added Georgetown to a list of ports "of minor importance, requiring protection, and which may be protected by less expensive works." Of Georgetown he noted: "This place is extremely difficult to approach by water, but it may be proper to erect a small battery for two heavy cannon on travelling carriages to be aided by one Gun-boat." The cost of such a work, the Secretary estimated, would be about \$4,000.³¹

What Dearborn had in mind, based on more detailed instructions for certain other small ports, was a small brick structure in which two large guns, mounted on mobile field carriages, could be stored, and from which they could be hauled to threatened points. Such a structure could be erected on public land anywhere in Georgetown, a solution that would save the \$2,000 that Dr. Blyth was asking for his four acres and would not expose a permanent garrison to the unhealthy climate of Blyth's Point. In retrospect it was a good decision, but then the Secretary promptly changed his mind. At the end of 1807 Congress proved willing to appropriate additional funds for seacoast defense, and Dearborn decided to be more generous to Georgetown. In January he wrote to Captain Macomb of the Engineers to advise him of the renaissance of the coast-defense program, and directed him to arrange for the construction at Georgetown of a battery for *four* guns, with no mention of mobile carriages. The Secretary gave no details of the projected work, but specified that it would include a magazine and barracks to accommodate a garrison of 12 to 15 men per gun.³²

During the winter of 1808 the officers of the Corps of Engineers were divided among several geographical districts for better supervision of the renewed coast-defense program, an action that marked the true beginning of the Second System of fortifications construction. Alexander Macomb, promoted to major, was placed in charge of the coasts of North and South Carolina and Georgia, with his headquarters in Charleston Harbor; assigned to serve under him were Capt. William

³¹Dearborn to S. S. Mitchell, Nov. 20, 1807, NA RG 107, Reports to Congress from OSW, 1803-29 (M220/1); *ASP, MA*, I, pp. 217-218.

³²Dearborn to Macomb, Jan. 26, 1808, NA RG 107, MB 3, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/3).

McRee, Capt. Charles Gratiot, and 1st Lt. William Partridge.³³ In making his initial assignments, Major Macomb gave responsibility for the fort at Georgetown to Lieutenant Partridge. Even before Partridge began work, it was accepted that the four-acre tract at Blyth's Point, already ceded by the state, would be too small to provide adequate access to the fort, and during the summer Partridge quietly sounded out members of the area delegation to the General Assembly about the cession of adjacent land. Dr. Blyth wanted to add ten acres to his eventual sale to the United States, but Major Macomb had already reported that 14 acres would be too much, so the decision was made to ask for six additional acres. The delegation agreed to introduce necessary legislation at the next session in Columbia.

Lieutenant Partridge completed his survey and design preliminaries during the summer, conferring with Major Macomb on the final proposed design, and in the early fall began laying out a trace near the southeast tip of Blyth's Point, probably just east of the remains of the 1798 earthwork. By November Major Macomb could report to the Secretary of War that work was "going on with speed," and to note that Partridge was asking for an official name for the new fort. "It is now called Fort Winyaw after the Bay it protects," Macomb advised Dearborn, "but should you be pleased to honor it with a name it can be called accordingly."³⁴ The Secretary had no suggestions, so the work at Blyth's Point continued to be known by the rather unimaginative name of Fort Winyaw.³⁵

Meanwhile, as promised, the General Assembly on December 17 ceded to the United States an additional six acres of land adjacent to the 1805 cession. The act appointed five prominent citizens — Joseph Alston, Savage Smith, Benjamin Huger, John Keith, and Paul Trapier — to act as a commission to examine the Army's needs and to lay out the precise bounds of the cession.³⁶ The federal government had still made no move to purchase the land from Dr. Blyth, but this seemed just a technicality — except perhaps to Joseph Blyth — and in his final annual report to the

³³Col. J. Williams to Dearborn, Feb. 29, 1808, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1807-08 (W) (M221/15).

McRee, from Wilmington, N. C., had graduated from the Military Academy in 1805; Gratiot, from Louisiana Territory, and Partridge of Vermont graduated in 1806.

³⁴Macomb to Dearborn, Nov. 1, 1808, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1808-09 (M-O) (M221/27).

³⁵It is surprising that local citizens did not want the fort named after Francis Marion, who had died in 1795, or some other local Revolutionary hero.

³⁶Act No. 1923, Sects. I-III, of Dec. 17, 1808, McCord (ed.), *South Carolina Statutes*, V, p. 575.

President, Secretary Dearborn advised that the works at Georgetown "are progressing and will soon be completed."⁸⁷

The Madison Administration and New Economies

In March 1809 James Madison succeeded to the Presidency, selecting as his secretary of war Dr. William Eustis of Massachusetts, a Revolutionary War surgeon and more recently a member of Congress. By this time the alarms generated by the *Chesapeake-Leopard* encounter of mid-1807 had died down considerably; no British invasion force had materialized, and the new administration thought it time to revert to the strict economy in defense matters that Jefferson had fostered in 1802. There was hope that Britain would relax the most onerous of her maritime policies, but the two nations were unable to reach a full understanding over the next three years, and so drifted inexorably toward war. Few sensed the seriousness of this drift, however, and both Congress and the administration exacted stringent fiscal economies that left the country virtually unprepared for the war that it declared in 1812.

The belt-tightening was soon felt at Georgetown, where the construction of Fort Winyaw followed the administrative procedures established by Henry Dearborn. The Engineer, Lieutenant Partridge, was in complete technical charge, and no funds could be expended except on his order. The funds themselves were transmitted from the Treasury to the Military Agent for the Middle Department, William Linnard in Philadelphia, and thence to the Assistant Military Agent for South Carolina, Capt. Clarence Mulford of the Regiment of Artillerists, who was also commander of Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbor. In turn, Mulford supplied funds to temporarily-appointed agents for fortifications at each construction site in the state. At Fort Winyaw, Lieutenant Partridge's selection as agent was John Shackelford of Georgetown, who on Partridge's order purchased construction materials and contracted for laborers, usually local slaves hired out by their masters.⁸⁸ Shackelford forwarded his vouchers and estimates to Captain Mulford, who consolidated them with those of other agents in South Carolina and forwarded them to the Accountant of the War Department; approved vouchers went to the Treasury, while disputed vouchers were returned for sup-

⁸⁷Dearborn to Jefferson, Dec. 1808, *ASP, MA*, I, pp. 236-239.

⁸⁸Labor costs were probably about the same as in Charleston, where in Sept. 1807 Macomb complained that he had to pay "the enormous wages of a Dollar a Day and found" to the owner of each slave employed; Macomb to Dearborn, Sept. 16, 1807, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1806-07 (M) (M221/10). By comparison, the pay of a private in the Army, before deductions, was five dollars a month.

porting documents and occasionally rejected altogether. Payment was usually by a Treasury draft on a Charleston bank, but occasionally Mulford was authorized to draw cash or notes from the receipts of the Collector of the Port of Charleston. The system was thorough, but very slow, and denied the agents for fortifications the opportunity to save money by paying cash in advance. Agents were paid commission in lieu of salary, so that a careful agent could make a good living, but even one rejected voucher at the War Department, which the agent would have to pay from his commission, could be disastrous.

The problems of the system are exemplified at Georgetown in the spring of 1809. In April Agent Shackelford applied to Captain Mulford for \$3,300 to pay off completed contracts, but when he had not received the money by the end of May, when he prepared his semiannual estimate, he added the sum due to the estimate. These are his detailed estimates for constructing Fort Winyaw:

239,500 Bricks @ \$8 pM	\$ 1,916
3624 Bu Lime @ 16/100	579.84
1500 Bushels Shells @ 3½/100	525
Lumber of different kinds	800
Nails, Locks, Hinges, Glass, Paint, Oil &c.	700
Black Smiths Work	900
Masons Do.	1,150
Carpenters Do.	800
Labour	2,000
Labour &c now due	3,300
Contingent	1,000
	<hr/>
	\$13,670.84 ³⁹

Shackelford submitted vouchers for and was requesting payment only for the \$3,300 already committed. However, he asked Captain Mulford to send him a total of \$5,000 in order to have "a few Hundred Dollars in hand to pay for several articles which cannot be procured without Cash." It was not an unreasonable request, but it exceeded Mulford's cash on hand, and Mulford had no choice but to send Shackelford's request, and his total estimate, to the new Secretary of War for approval.

Unfortunately for Shackelford, Major Macomb had made a long report on the status of his entire district on May 2, including his own

³⁹Shackelford to Mulford, May 31, 1809, inclosed with Mulford to Eustis, June 2, 1809, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1808-09 (M) (M221/27). The lime and shells were combined with sand and water to form a cement-like mix known as *tapia*, from the Spanish *tapia real*, used as a facing for brickwork and often for the walls themselves; *tapia* was corrupted in the Southern states to "tabby."

rough estimates of the remaining cost of each fortification. He reported that Fort Winyaw was almost completed, and thought that it would be finished by mid-July. Although Henry Dearborn had grudgingly authorized a work for four guns, Macomb advised Secretary Eustis that Fort Winyaw would "be capable of mounting eight pieces of heavy cannon and completely command the Town and the entrance into the rich and fertile country of Waccamaw and Black rivers. It is built of Brick and Clay on a foundation of piles."⁴⁰ At the end of his report, under estimates for his entire district, Macomb noted optimistically that Fort Winyaw could be completed for another \$4,000.

Having noted with satisfaction Major Macomb's estimate, Secretary Eustis was shaken by Shackelford's much higher figure; even after deducting the overdue labor costs, the agent's remaining estimate was over \$10,000. Eustis wrote angrily to Captain Mulford that Shackelford's figures were far too high. Mulford queried the agent in Georgetown by mail, and in mid-July attempted to appease the Secretary:

I beg leave to observe that I am directed (and I have given the same instructions to the Agents . . .) to answer all requisitions of the Engineer present, from which it would seem that the Engineer ought to be the proper judge of what materials and workmen would be required to erect any work, and from which the Agent can alone make an estimate [of] the probable cost of the articles required. [However,] as four Thousand Dollars has been considered a sufficient sum by Major Macomb, to compleat the work erecting at Georgetown (which sum I have furnished the Agent at that place out of the last sum received) I shall wait your instructions before I furnish him with a further supply of cash.⁴¹

Mulford's argument was sound, and the Secretary accepted it; it was clear that Major Macomb's estimate should have been checked with Lieutenant Partridge first. But the whole matter proved to be academic. Macomb had estimated that he would need \$65,000 to complete all the seacoast works in South Carolina, and the War Department just did not have that much money to disburse for a single state. The Secretary wrote Captain Mulford that he was remitting another \$30,000 for South Carolina, and that Major Macomb would have to decide how much to allocate to Fort Winyaw.⁴²

Facing heavy construction costs in Charleston Harbor, Major Macomb realized that he could allocate to Georgetown very little of the sum

⁴⁰Macomb to Eustis, May 2, 1809, *ibid.*

⁴¹Mulford to Eustis, July 20, 1809, *ibid.*

⁴²Eustis to Mulford, Aug. 8, 1809, NA RG 107, MB 4, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/4).

remitted by Secretary Eustis, and he sought an excuse to suspend work on Fort Win yaw. When called upon by Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton for the services of an Engineer officer, Macomb unhesitatingly volunteered the name of Capt. Charles Gratiot, then working on the North Carolina coast, and advised Secretary Eustis that he intended to transfer Lieutenant Partridge from Georgetown to North Carolina.⁴³ As he proposed no replacement for Partridge, the implication was plain that work on Fort Win yaw would have to be suspended. But officially the onus fell on the Secretary, for before he received Macomb's letter he had decided to suspend virtually all fortifications construction in the state. The program in South Carolina would have to be "arrested or contracted," Eustis decided, and he notified Macomb to suspend at once all construction except at Fort Pinckney in Charleston Harbor.⁴⁴ The Engineer complied without demur, and in December reported on the status of the forts at the time work was suspended. "The fort at Georgetown is finished," Macomb wrote, "except as to guns and carriages. Should this fort remain without a garrison, it will soon be destroyed by the pilfering blacks of the vicinity, who will plunder the bricks and iron and every thing else they can take away."⁴⁵

A Garrison for Fort Win yaw

In Eustis's year-end report to Congress, he mentioned the four forts in Charleston Harbor and even the unfinished work at Beaufort, but omitted entirely the nearly-completed Fort Win yaw. Almost immediately Representative Robert Witherspoon, whose district included Georgetown, queried the omission. "I am not certain whether the fort stands upon ground ceded by that State to the U.S. or not — if it belongs to the U.S. I request the favor of you to inform me why it has not been mentioned in your report."⁴⁶ No reply appears in the Secretary's letterbook, and possibly he spoke directly to the Congressman, whose query underlined the anomalous status of the fort on Blyth's Point. Certainly Eustis now discovered what he may not have realized before, that although ten acres of land had been ceded to the United States, that land

⁴³Macomb to Eustis, Oct. 30, 1809, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1808-09 (M-O) (M221/27). Hampton was taking over an enlarged command and was moving his headquarters from Columbia to Natchez.

⁴⁴Eustis to Macomb, Nov. 1, 1809, NA RG 107, MB 4, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/4). Fort Pinckney on Shute's Folly Island was redesignated "Castle" Pinckney by Macomb in February 1810, as a parallel to Castle Williams in New York Harbor.

⁴⁵Macomb to Eustis, Dec. 8, 1809, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1808-09 (M-O) (M221/27).

⁴⁶ASP, MA, I, 245-246; Witherspoon to Eustis, Jan. 3, 1810, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1810-11 (U-Y) (M221/41).

still belonged to Dr. Joseph Blyth. In early 1810, however, the War Department had no funds to buy land at \$500 an acre.

Witherspoon's query probably also reminded the Secretary of Major Macomb's warning that Fort Winyaw, ungarrisoned, would soon be vandalized. The troops organized specifically to garrison the seacoast forts, the twenty companies of the Regiment of Artillerists, were already posted the length of the seaboard and along the Canadian frontier, but infantry and light artillery recruits being raised under the Army Augmentation Act of 1808 could be diverted to man some of the new forts, particularly those where no guns had been mounted.⁴⁷ In South Carolina several companies of the new 3d Infantry, under Lt. Col. John Smith, had just marched from the recruiting rendezvous to Charleston, under instructions to reinforce the small garrison of artillerists in the harbor forts. Smith, as senior federal officer in the district, was given command of all federal troops in South Carolina and Georgia.⁴⁸ Thus when Secretary Eustis directed the Adjutant and Inspector of the Army to provide for a small garrison at Fort Winyaw, that officer notified Colonel Smith in Charleston to detach to Fort Winyaw a lieutenant, a sergeant, and seventeen men.⁴⁹

Smith selected for the mission a young officer from the Georgetown area, 2d Lt. Benjamin D. Heriot of the 3d Infantry.⁵⁰ Heriot led his little detachment to Georgetown in February 1810, and established the first federal garrison of Fort Winyaw. He was encouraged by Secretary Eustis's report to Congress that Fort Winyaw was now on the list of fortifications to be "considered permanent works, which are to be kept up," and his post was made more attractive in June when the Secretary designated the commander of Fort Winyaw as entitled to double rations.⁵¹

During the spring and early summer Lieutenant Heriot requisitioned necessary supplies for his command; pointing out that there were no seacoast guns at Fort Winyaw, he asked the Adjutant and Inspector to provide both guns and carriages. Being a new infantry officer, Heriot did not realize that in 1810 there was almost no standardization of fortifications construction; there was no standard height of parapet or width of

⁴⁷Act of April 12, 1808, 2 *Stat.* 481.

⁴⁸Eustis to Smith, Dec. 12, 1809, NA RG 107, MB 4, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/4).

⁴⁹A&I to Smith, Jan. 20, 1810, NA RG 94, Letters Sent by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO), Vol. 3, (M565/3).

⁵⁰In contemporary records and correspondence the name is variously spelled Heriot, Herriot, and Herriott; around Georgetown it was usually Heriot.

⁵¹Eustis to John Clopton, Feb. 5, 1810, *ASP, MA*, I, 247; Eustis to Paymaster of the Army, June 9, 1810, NA RG 107, MB 4, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/4).

embrasure, and hence there could be no standard gun carriages. The Adjutant and Inspector, Maj. Abimael Y. Nicoll, was an artilleryist, and he explained the problem to Heriot:

I presented your letter and return to the Secretary of War. Having no special plan of the fort, he directs me to write you, to forward to this office a particular statement of the Height of the Parapet, if it is a Barbette⁵² battery, or the height of the embrasures. Such an account as will enable a person to mount the guns at any distant place from the fort. It is essential to have these particulars in order to have the carriages modelled to the work.⁵³

Certainly Heriot would have complied without delay, and it would be useful to know the dimensions of Fort Winyaw in 1810, but Heriot's reply has not been found.⁵⁴

Meanwhile the appearance of federal troops in Georgetown did not escape the notice of Dr. Joseph Blyth, and in the midst of his rice-planting duties he was reminded that he had not yet been compensated for his land. In November 1810 he wrote to Senator John Gaillard in Washington for assistance:

The jurisdiction of ten acres has been ceded [or] so much of the ten acres as the United States may have occasion to occupy. This Cession however makes it the duty of the United States to make me Compensation. . . . When Major McComb [sic] first applied to me on this subject and asked for my terms in writing, I answered him in the following words, "land in an unimproved state adjoining me is worth \$300 per acre; mine in the highly improved state it is, I value at \$500 per acre of ground; for the fee simple therefore of a piece of land not exceeding 4 acres for the scite of a Fort or Battery, and the use of the necessary way to and from the same, I shall expect a Compensation of seven thousand Dollars." The Engineer however instead of taking 4 has taken 7 acres of my land — he has not yet made any road to pass to and from the fort but along my Banks and directly by my Door. . . .⁵⁵

⁵²In a barbette battery the guns were fired over the parapet; in a casemate battery the guns were mounted in casemates between the inner and outer walls and fired through narrow embrasures.

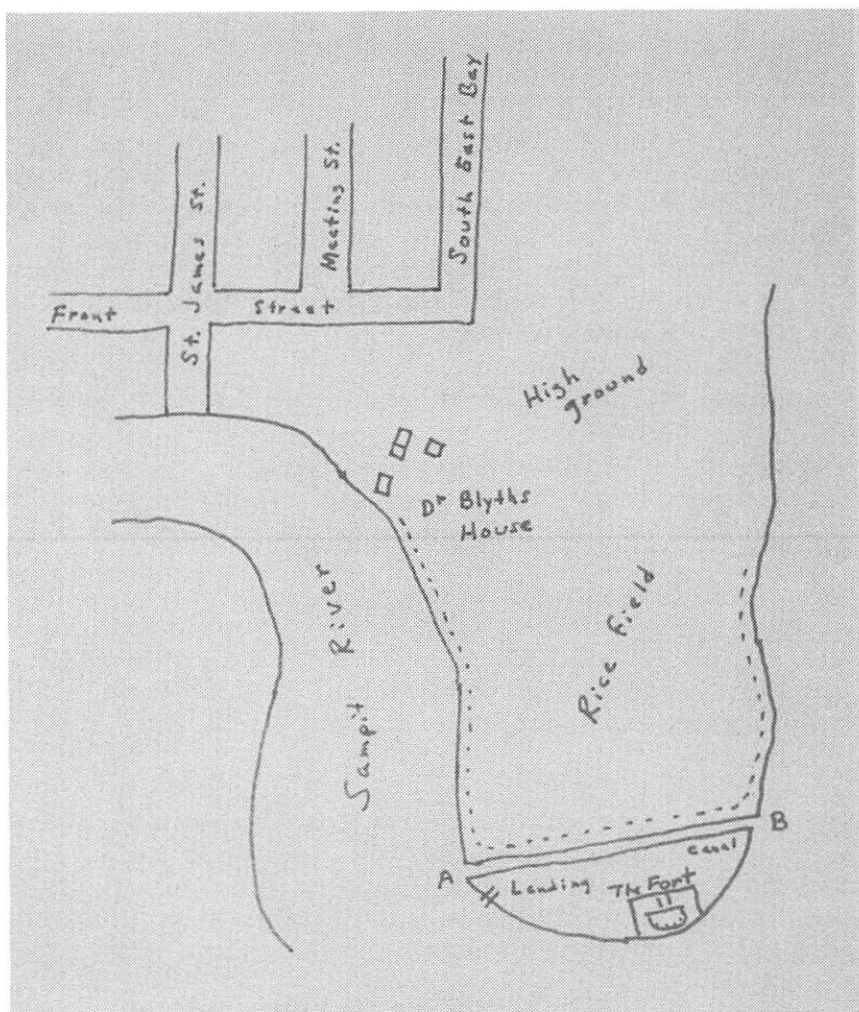
⁵³A&I to Heriot, July [ca. 16], 1810, NA RG 94, Letters Sent, AGO (M565/3).

⁵⁴His letter was probably forwarded either to a civilian contractor of the Purveyor of Public Supplies, or to a post where experienced artificers were constructing gun carriages for other forts.

⁵⁵Blyth to Gaillard, Nov. 20, 1810, inclosed with Macomb to Eustis, Jan. 21, 1811, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1810-11 (M-R) (M221/39).

Gaillard forwarded his constituent's letter to the War Department with a request for information, and Eustis in turn passed it to Macomb in Charleston. Macomb's reply on January 21, 1811, provided for the first time a good general view of Fort Winyaw and its environs.

The Fort is a small work built on piles and is capable of mounting six pieces or even eight. It has Barracks for a Company and a small powder magazine. The parapet is of mud or black clay



Sketch drawn by William Partridge in 1809, showing Fort Winyaw in relation to Georgetown.

revetted on the inner side with brick, on the external side it is sodded. The whole work is surrounded with a broad ditch, over which is a draw bridge. The barracks are of Brick two story high. The whole expence of the work I am informed is between 30 & 35,000 dollars — this information I have from Capt. Mulford. . . .

Dr. Blyth estimates his land very high when he values it at 500\$ and the part particularly on which the fort is built being without the banks is not to be considered as valuable as that within the banks. However taking into consideration all things and particularly the privation of that privacy of which the Dr. [writes]. . . I do not on the whole think it would be unreasonable to allow him 500\$ per acre for the seven which he states has been taken for the use of the Fort. . . .

Now I am of opinion that it will be better for the fort to communicate with the town always by water instead of going by land, not only because it is shorter but it is likewise cheaper and [to build] the cause way would cost more money than it is worth.

All the land which lies between the point and the canal marked AB on the inclosed sketch of Dr. Blyth's point is necessary for the fort & I think quite sufficient.

I beg leave here to remark that Dr. Blyth has allways afforded us every assistance in forwarding the work & is a very patriotick worthy character.⁵⁶

The inclosed sketch had been drawn by Lieutenant Partridge at the end of 1809, showing the area from the southeast corner of Georgetown to the tip of Dr. Blyth's land. Fort Win yaw stands near the southeast end of Blyth's Point, its D-shape wall convex to Win yaw Bay. The ditch is square instead of paralleling the wall, and its south side is formed by the shoreline. An east-west canal separates the ceded tract from Dr. Blyth's rice lands, and just south of the west end of the canal is a small pier or landing stage, presumably the point from which Major Macomb recommended water communication to the foot of St. James Street in Georgetown.

After six weeks without a reply from Senator Gaillard, Dr. Blyth grew impatient and sought assistance from Representative Witherspoon. Witherspoon also queried the War Department, in mid-January 1811. But Major Macomb's report to the Secretary had not arrived when Witherspoon's letter reached Eustis, and there is no record of a written reply to him before Congress adjourned on March 3.⁵⁷ Dr. Blyth would

⁵⁶Macomb to Eustis, Jan. 21, 1811, *ibid*.

⁵⁷Witherspoon to Eustis, Jan. 12, 1811, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1810-11 (U-Y) (M221/41). Witherspoon did not seek reelection to the House, and apparently left the problem to his successor.

eventually get his money, but it would take another year and the immediate threat of war to accomplish it.

The year 1811, despite the continuing threat of war with Britain, was not a productive one for the seacoast fortification program. All construction had been suspended in the Carolinas and Georgia at the end of 1809, except for the finishing touches to Castle Pinckney, because the ultra-partisan 11th Congress provided no funds. At Fort Winyaw Lieutenant Heriot was promoted to 1st lieutenant, but otherwise his command provided little excitement and mostly caretaking duties. At some time during the year Fort Winyaw began receiving guns and carriages; the initial guns were 12-pounders, while the first carriages to arrive were for larger 18-pounders. As the carriages had been built to the fort's specifications, Lieutenant Heriot went ahead and mounted the 12-pounders on them; the result was temporarily effective if not entirely esthetic.

Alexander Macomb, district Engineer for the three southeastern states, was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the Corps of Engineers, second-in-command to Chief Engineer Williams. In June Macomb was assigned as a member of a general court-martial to convene at Frederick Town, Maryland; it was assumed that he would subsequently return to Charleston and his district, but the trial was delayed, war became imminent the following winter, and Macomb never resumed his duties on the coast.

In the winter of 1811 at Fort Winyaw, Lieutenant Heriot seemingly had too much time on his hands, for it was alleged that he dabbled in state politics while serving as a federal officer. Perhaps "dabbled" is too mild, for Intendant John L. Wilson of Georgetown dashed off an angry letter to the Secretary of War:

The charge I prefer is as follows, "For having made use of the privates stationed at Fort Winyaw in influencing an election contrary to the Constitution of the State."

... The facts are, that Mr. Heriott warmly espoused the cause of Mr. Taylor a candidate for our legislature in Feby last, and in order to secure his election dispatched the privates stationed at Fort Winyaw to different places of election where they were not known, in the garb of citizens, where two voted; how many more I know not, but others would have but for a timely discovery of who they were. ... These men voted under different names than their real ones and those offering to vote offered to vote in fictitious names. Our [state] Constitution expressly precludes "non-commissioned

officers and privates of the United States army" &ca. in an amendment made and ratified the December previous.⁵⁸

It is not clear why Wilson waited almost a year, until February of 1812, to lodge his charge, but his timing was self-defeating. Despite the problems of jurisdiction, the Secretary of War would probably have referred the allegations back to the department commander for investigation, but at the time the Army's chain of command was in some disarray. Lt. Col. John Smith, who had been Heriot's immediate commander, had died in June 1811 and had not been replaced as district commander, while the nominal commander of the Southern Department, Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton, was on the lower Mississippi. In any event, there is no record of a direct reply to Intendant Wilson from the War Department, nor of any action taken against Lieutenant Heriot.⁵⁹

War Approaches, and Dr. Blyth Sells His Land

The first session of the 12th Congress convened in November 1811, and quickly proved a much more aggressive and decisive group than its lackluster predecessor. President Madison echoed the Congressional mood, and in his Annual Message referred to "ominous indications" from Britain and called for another augmentation of the army. There were signs early in 1812 that Congress planned much larger appropriations for seacoast defense, particularly on the Southern seaboard. In March Secretary of War Eustis directed Maj. Joseph G. Swift of the Corps of Engineers to inspect the existing fortifications from Norfolk to Savannah and to report what last-minute repairs and additions were required.⁶⁰

The Secretary did not mention Georgetown, probably because the United States still lacked title to the land at Fort Mifflin. But Eustis sounded out members of the House, and was convinced that adequate funds would be appropriated for the long-overdue acquisition of the land, even at the high price Dr. Blyth was asking. Then a little confusion crept into the purchase price. Dr. Blyth valued his land at \$500 an acre, but he insisted on including land for a road to Georgetown that would bypass his own home, and his price for the package was \$7,000. Major Macomb had recommended a water communication with the town, and thought that seven acres south of the canal would be adequate. When the Secre-

⁵⁸Wilson to Eustis, 25 Feb 1812, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1811-12 (U-Y) (M221/49).

⁵⁹Heriot was promoted to captain in 1813, served as an assistant adjutant general in 1814-15, and was offered an artillery captaincy in the postwar Army in 1816, which he declined and left the service; Charles K. Gardner, *Dictionary of . . . the Army of the United States* (New York, 1853), p. 227.

⁶⁰Eustis to Swift, March 18, 1812, NA RG 107, MB 5, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/5).

tary wrote to Thomas Parker, the United States District Attorney in Charleston, he advised Parker that the Treasury was placing to his credit in the State Bank at Charleston the sum of \$7,000 "for the purpose of completing the purchase of the land . . . on which fort Winyaw is erected."⁶¹ District Attorney Parker, after researching the title, offered Dr. Blyth \$7,000 for the tract itself, with no reference to any land for a road north of the canal. The worthy physician accepted with alacrity, signed the agreement of sale, and endorsed his deed over to the United States on April 21. The transaction was entered in the War Department Deed Book, noting that while South Carolina had ceded ten acres, the actual purchase was only seven acres, described as "bounded northwardly by a canal from Winyaw Bay to Sampit Creek, the middle of which is the partition line separating said tract from lands belonging to Dr. Jos. Blyth; westwardly by Sampit Creek and southwardly and eastwardly by Winyaw Bay."⁶² All extant War Department records indicate that the United States paid Dr. Blyth \$7,000 for seven acres of what he called "highly improved" rice land. The doctor could take satisfaction in knowing that his \$1,000 an acre was one of the highest rates paid for land by the federal government during that era.⁶³

Early in 1812 the new Congress voted to augment the army, and authorized the appointment of additional general officers for the duration of the emergency. The Southern Department, from Virginia through Georgia, had not had a resident commander while General Hampton was on the lower Mississippi, and President Madison now assigned command of the department to the newly-appointed Maj. Gen. Thomas Pinckney of Charleston.⁶⁴ General Pinckney took up his duties about June 1, and among his first concerns was the condition of the seacoast defenses within his command. On June 12 he reported to Secretary Eustis the severe shortage of federal troops for the seacoast garrisons, noting that the total in Charleston Harbor and Fort Winyaw was only 118 men fit for duty. At his request, Governor Henry Middleton had agreed to call up two regiments of the state militia, from which one battalion would be posted around Georgetown to support the tiny garrison of Fort Win-

⁶¹Eustis to Parker, March 17, 1812, *ibid.*

⁶²Parker to Eustis, May 21, 1812, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1811-12 (M-P) (M221/47); *ASP, MA*, III, 286; War Department Deed Book (South Carolina).

⁶³The highest figure found by this writer was the \$15,000 paid for six acres on Governor's Island in Boston Harbor in May 1808, and Secretary Dearborn admitted that the "enormous sum" of \$2,500 an acre was an "unreasonable price"; Dearborn to Jefferson, May 14, 1808, NA RG 107, Letters to the President from OSW, Vol. 1 (M127/1).

⁶⁴Eustis to Pinckney, April 30, 1812, NA RG 107, MB 5, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/5).

yaw.⁶⁵ Even as General Pinckney was making these hurried preparations, Congress was in session debating the President's call for a declaration of war against the world's foremost naval power.

Fort Winyaw During the War of 1812

After almost exactly five years of indecision, Congress decided to terminate the twilight state that had characterized Anglo-American relations since the *Chesapeake-Leopard* encounter. Undeterred by the untrained and poorly-equipped state of the army and navy, and neglecting to give any advance warning to commanders on the Canadian frontier, Congress declared war on Britain on June 18. Secretary Eustis was soon embroiled in prospective invasions of Canada, and found little time for the seacoast defenses except to eye their federal garrisons as reinforcements for the northern frontier. Major Swift, after reporting on his inspection of the southeastern coast, was assigned to Charleston as Engineer for the Southern Department. His stay was short, however, for in August Colonel Williams resigned as Chief Engineer of the Army, and Swift, newly promoted to lieutenant colonel, became the senior officer of the Corps.⁶⁶ In late September Swift was called to Washington, and was subsequently promoted to colonel and Chief Engineer at the age of 28. He was succeeded in the Southern Department by Capt. William McRee, who had been supervising the defenses of Savannah.

During the fall of 1812 General Pinckney was directed to assemble troops on the St. Mary's River for a potential invasion of Spanish East Florida, and to build up a force Pinckney was obliged to levy upon the federal seacoast garrisons and to replace them with militia. Even the tiny garrison of Fort Winyaw had to be withdrawn, and in October Lieutenant Heriot was alerted to march his men to Charleston for further movement to the St. Mary's. At the same time the battalion of South Carolina militia encamped on North Island near the mouth of Winyaw Bay was directed to provide a replacement garrison, and on October 24 a detachment of Gasque's company, under Lieutenant McCollough, arrived at Fort Winyaw. General Peter Horry of the militia noted that his men were replacing "Continental" troops.⁶⁷ Only a month later, however, orders arrived for the relief of the militia at Fort Winyaw by a detachment of the 10th Infantry, being raised around Salisbury,

⁶⁵Pinckney to Eustis, June 12, 1812, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1811-12 (M-P) (M221/47).

⁶⁶Alexander Macomb had been appointed colonel of the new 3d Artillery, and had severed his connection, for the moment, with the Corps of Engineers.

⁶⁷Pinckney to Eustis, Oct. 6, 1812, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1811-12 (P-T) (M221/48); "Journal of General Peter Horry," this *Magazine* 42 (1941): 191, and 43 (1942): 57.

North Carolina. General Pinckney gave that regiment the mission of providing small garrisons for all the seacoast fortifications of his command north of Charleston, and troops of the 10th were apparently at Fort Winyaw by the end of 1812.⁶⁸

Critically short of trained artillerymen for his seacoast defenses, General Pinckney turned to the Navy for help. Commodore John D. Dent at Charleston was responsible for the length of coast from the Cape Fear River to Port Royal, and in January 1813 General Pinckney queried Dent as to his strength and his capability of defending the many harbors, rivers, and inlets that marked his command. Dent listed the ships, gunboats, and barges available to him, and expounded at length on the important and hard-to-defend points along the coast. His assessment of Georgetown was not encouraging. "Georgetown Bar," Dent wrote, "is difficult of access, and has not more than 12 feet of water on the bar, it can only be entered by small cruisers, or boats from Ships of War. . . ." He had no vessels off Georgetown, nor did the Navy Department plan for any, but Dent conceded to Pinckney that there *should* be a gunboat and two armed barges posted in Winyaw Bay.⁶⁹

Secretary of War Eustis, worn out by his duties, unsupported by Congress, and blamed by press and public for the disasters on the Canadian frontier in 1812, resigned his post in January. To succeed Eustis, the newly-reelected President chose John Armstrong of Pennsylvania, lately minister to France. Armstrong was more concerned with launching new offensives in the Napoleonic style than he was with stiffening the seacoast defenses, and the coastal fortifications remained the primary responsibility of the department commanders. However, the Corps of Engineers had been augmented in 1812 by several promising young engineers from civil life, and these were assigned to assist in the seacoast fortification program.

General Pinckney's department Engineer, William McRee, was promoted to major near the end of 1812, and early in 1813 he was given the services of one of the first of the new Engineer officers who had not passed through the Military Academy. This was 2d Lt. James Gadsden of Charleston, grandson of Christopher Gadsden of the Revolution and a graduate of Yale College in 1806. Reporting to Charleston in January, Gadsden was instructed by Major McRee to visit Georgetown and report on the condition of Fort Winyaw. Gadsden's initial report in early February was relatively optimistic:

⁶⁸Ibid., 43: 181; Pinckney to John Armstrong, Feb. 11, 1813, Letters Received, OSW, 1812-14 (M-P) (M221/55).

⁶⁹Dent to Pinckney, Jan. 16, 1813, inclosed with Pinckney to SecWar, Jan. 20, 1813, *ibid.*

Agreeably to your orders I have examined Fort Winyah⁷⁰ and have to report that it is in better condition than anticipated.

The Parapet and Barracks will need no immediate repairs. The outer revetment however of the former is defective in its construction. The Pine Logs of which it is composed being of an inferior quality, with no braces, and but slightly held together by a few wooden Pins. The lower floor of the Barracks suffering much from dampness, the earth beneath being inundated every high tide.

All that I conceive immediately requisite are the erection of a new Platform, the raising of the Floor of the Magazine, and the repairing of the Cistern.

The present Platform is but 18 feet wide and much decayed. The Plank (many of which are scarce two inches thick) rest upon five Sleepers placed on the surface of the Earth and buried in Mud. The Magazine has sunk considerably and . . . the floor is covered with water every high tide. The Cistern is in a leaky condition. . . .⁷¹

The young Engineer continued his inspection of the fort, and upon closer examination he lost some of his optimism. His follow-up report to Major McRee just over a week later revealed other basic problems:

To obtain a firm foundation for the Platform, it will be necessary to drive piles under each counterfort, and the difficulty of procuring materials and the delay attending their delivery is immense. I have been informed by the Agent for Fortifications that the Bricks and lime contracted for, will not be delivered in less than a fortnight, and that the lumber of the description required cannot be obtained in a shorter period than two months. The only mill in the vicinity of Georgetown (and that is 15 miles distant) is at present out of repair. . . .

To expedite the work I have no other alternative than to make the sleepers and joists of solid Timber and . . . having the Plank sent from Charleston. . . . 170 Planks [3- or 4-inch] 25 feet long and 12 Inches Broad will be sufficient.

Three days later Gadsden hastily wrote McRee that he had been able to contract for the planking in Georgetown and would not need any sent from Charleston.⁷²

Had Lieutenant Gadsden been able to stay longer in Georgetown, it

⁷⁰This spelling was becoming prevalent around Georgetown, but the spelling "Winyaw" will be retained in this paper.

⁷¹Gadsden to McRee, Feb. 8, 1813, NA RG 77, Buell Collection of Engineer Historical Documents, Vol. 2 (M417/2).

⁷²Gadsden to McRee, Feb. 17 and 20, 1813, *ibid.*

is probable that Fort Winyaw would have been thoroughly repaired. On March 12, however, McRee wrote from Charleston to alert Gadsden to an impending reassignment. Colonel Swift, who as Chief Engineer was *ex officio* superintendent of the Military Academy, had directed that Gadsden report to West Point in early April to sit in on some of the lectures in military engineering being given to the cadets.⁷³ McRee advised Gadsden to "place the works at fort Winyaw, with proper instructions, under the care of some capable person," and to proceed to West Point without delay.⁷⁴

In March 1813 Secretary of War Armstrong directed a major geographical reorganization of the Army, the effects of which were felt even at Fort Winyaw. The existing departments were abolished, and were replaced by a larger number of military districts, each accountable to the War Department. Maj. Gen. Thomas Pinckney's command, reduced to the two Carolinas and Georgia, was designated the Sixth Military District; Virginia became part of the Fifth Military District under the newly-promoted Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton. Hampton's headquarters would be at Norfolk, and to provide him a nucleus of trained troops, the 10th Infantry was transferred to Norfolk from its stations in the Carolinas.⁷⁵ As the 10th had provided the garrison for Fort Winyaw, Pinckney would have to make new arrangements from the troops remaining in his reduced district.

At the time of the reorganization Pinckney was on the St. Mary's River, directing the on-again, off-again invasion of East Florida. With the loss of the 10th Infantry, Pinckney's principal federal troops were the 18th Infantry under Col. William Drayton, based around Charleston, and the recently authorized 43d Infantry, just beginning recruiting in South Carolina and Georgia; with little choice, the General instructed Colonel Drayton to post one of his companies at Fort Winyaw, and in late May he thought it well to apprise Secretary Armstrong of the conditions at that post:

...on the extreme point of the ist[h]mus on which the town is situated and nearly half a mile from it, is constructed a Battery calculated to mount 4 Cannon, which like most other batteries may be passed by armed vessels, which having arrived oppisite to the

⁷³There was a precedent as early as 1802, when Lt. Alexander Macomb, transferred from the infantry to the new Corps of Engineers, was ordered to West Point and attended lectures with the handful of cadets then attending the Military Academy in its first full year.

⁷⁴McRee to Gadsden, March 12, 1813, NA RG 77, Buell Collection (M417/2).

⁷⁵Armstrong to Hampton, April 15, 1813, NA RG 107, MB 6, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/6).

Town cannot be annoyed by the Guns of the Battery. As none but small vessels can pass the Bar, it appears that two Gun Boats would afford sufficient protection for this place and the rich production of the neighbouring country, where about a fourth of all the rice exported from South Carolina is raised.

The space between the Town and the Battery is a rice field, and the air so humid that the plat-form has rotted and the Guns are consequently dismounted, and although a new plat-form was ordered near six months ago, yet for the want of proper materials and lately of Funds, the Guns have not yet been replaced: this humid and insalubrious atmosphere where the Fort is placed has induced me to order the garrison consisting of fifty men to retire to the pine land within about a mile of the Battery and to keep permanently there only a small guard. . . .⁷⁶

A renewal of operations against Canada in the spring of 1813 created a demand there for Engineer officers, and General Pinckney was asked to release Major McRee for service on the northern frontier. Pinckney made no objection, noting that he had no funds for seacoast-defense construction or even major repairs. McRee left at the end of July, and Pinckney called Capt. Prentiss Willard, supervising at Savannah, to Charleston as Engineer for the Sixth Military District. But Willard, returning to Beaufort to complete Fort Lyttelton, died there in October 1813, reportedly of local fevers; there is no indication that he ever visited Georgetown during his brief tenure.⁷⁷

On 27 August gale-force winds struck the South Carolina coast and did considerable damage to the coastal forts; General Pinckney subsequently reported that Fort Winyaw had been rendered "almost useless."⁷⁸ As the bulk of the garrison had been withdrawn to the nearby pine land, no casualties were reported at Fort Winyaw. Just before or just after the storm, the 18th Infantry company at Georgetown was reinforced by a detachment, newly raised in North Carolina, of the 2d Artillery, for in mid-November General Pinckney wrote that 1st Lt. William J. Cowan of that regiment "has lately suffered much in the sickly station of Georgetown."⁷⁹

The commander of the Fort Winyaw garrison at the end of 1813 was Capt. Edward King, 18th Infantry. King was conscientious, and in his quest for military and medical supplies for his men he did as many

⁷⁶Pinckney to Armstrong, May 20, 1813, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1812-14 (M-P) (M221/55).

⁷⁷Pinckney to Armstrong, July 30 and Oct. 18, 1813, *ibid.*, (P-R) (M221/56).

⁷⁸Pinckney to Armstrong, Aug. 30; Pinckney to James Monroe, Nov. 3, 1814, *ibid.*

⁷⁹Pinckney to Armstrong, Nov. 17, 1813, *ibid.*

wartime appointees would always do — he solicited the aid of his Congressman. He opened correspondence with Representative Theodore Gourdin in Washington, and fortunately two of his letters found their way into the unregistered files of the War Department. King's letter to Gourdin, December 16, was near the end of their correspondence:

I had the twelve pound pieces that were mounted on the eighteen pound carriages, dismounted and eighteen pound pieces mounted in their stead, with great difficulty there being no machine at this post that was in repair to mount Cannon. We have at present mounted and in good order three eighteen pounders and will in a few days transport from Georgetown two twelve pound field pieces and immediately upon the receipt of three twelve pound Carriages that I have made requisition for, I will have in addition three twelve pounders mounted. The Parapet in many places is only eighteen inches through, and in case of an attack the Magazine stands at the most exposed point and is a small building covered with shingles. . . .

You mentioned in your last, that you would have a Surgeons Mate appointed for this garrison, I do assure you that such an appointment is much wanting, for the Do[c]tors in Georgetown do not consider the sum that I am impowered to give them a sufficient Compensation for the duties that ought to be rendered to the sick once a day, notwithstanding what casualties might happen. . . .

In my present situation if you could obtain a furlough for thirty days or a shorter time [it] would confer an Obligation that shall be lasting.⁸⁰

His concern for his men notwithstanding, Captain King had his own financial problems at home and his need for a furlough soon became paramount. But both the War Department and the Sixth Military District were too involved in military operations — General Pinckney was now directing an expedition against the Creeks — to give adequate attention to the letters of a captain at Fort Winyaw, and King's next letter to Congressman Gourdin, in early January 1814, was apparently his last as an officer:

[It is] incumbent on me to make you acquainted with the large expences incurred at this place for the Want of a Surgeons mate to take care of the sick in this harbour. I am at present giving Doctor Denison the pay and emoluments of a Surgeons Mate, Lieut. [Thomas] Harriott of the 1st Regt Dragoons is giving him the same for his recruits [and] Sailing Master Monk of the navy the same

⁸⁰King to Gourdin, Dec. 16, 1813, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW (Unregistered Series), 1813 (H-O) (M222/8).

which if there was an appointment of such an Officer there would be a great saving of the public Money.

I am sorry in the present situation of my beloved Country and at this particular time to have to resign but my private concerns are such that any time lost may be the means of throwing me out of thousands of Dollars. I have in vain solicited a Furlough. . . . Some days since I sent in my resignation to Genl Pinckney in consequence of my failing in every effort.⁸¹

Early in 1814 Colonel Swift, the Chief Engineer, who had been serving on the northern frontier, was recalled to Washington, advanced to brigadier general by brevet, and directed by the Secretary of War to devote his full attention to the defenses of the Atlantic coast. Swift prepared a long list of recommendations, giving considerable attention to the Southern states, and his suggestions for South Carolina were innovative and probably long overdue. In his opinion, General Swift told the Secretary, two strong blockhouses should be erected, one on Cat Island — that part of South Island west of Mosquito Creek — near the mouth of Winyaw Bay, and another to the southward on Bull's Island in Bull's Bay. A work in Bull's Bay had been suggested from time to time since the 1790s, primarily to deny that anchorage to an enemy flotilla; a battery on Cat Island, facing North Island across the mile-wide channel, would deter entrance into the bay, whereas the existing Fort Winyaw protected only the mouth of the Sampit. Secretary Armstrong accepted Swift's recommendations as both feasible and inexpensive, and on March 22 he wrote General Pinckney to erect the two blockhouses, of tapia foundation and palmetto or pine superstructure, each to take six 12-pounders. Apparently anticipating no delays, Armstrong added that Fort Winyaw could be evacuated and its guns and supplies taken to Cat Island, "where the garrison may be encamped until the block house is finished."⁸²

General Pinckney made no objection to the idea of the two blockhouses, although he would have preferred to give priority to erecting a gun-tower behind the badly storm-damaged Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbor. After the death of Captain Willard he had been assigned the services of Lt. Col. Walker K. Armistead, second-ranking officer of the Corps of Engineers, but by War Department direction Armistead was sent to develop new defenses for the North Carolina coast.⁸³ Pinckney

⁸¹King to Gourdin, Jan. 6, 1814, *ibid.*

⁸²Armstrong to Pinckney, March 22, 1814, NA RG 107, MB 7, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/7).

⁸³D. Parker, Chief Clerk OSW, to Armistead, Nov. 17 and Dec. 15, 1813, NA RG 77, Buell Collection (M417/2).

was by this time free of his command against the Creeks, and he personally devoted much attention to the seacoast defenses. Money was a problem, as always, and in mid-July Pinckney reported his progress and his difficulties to Secretary Armstrong:

The materials for the Block House of Bull's Island will be on the spot in a few days, but we have not yet been able to make a Contract for that which has been ordered on Cat Island near Georgetown, though we hope soon to effect it.

I shall draw as authorized . . . for the sums necessary for their construction: that on Bull's Island will require twelve thousand Dollars; but the Agent for Fortifications [here] is without funds and . . . the repairs at Fort Johnson . . . must soon be stopped for want of them; I have therefore to request that you will direct a further supply of money for this service.⁸⁴

But by late July it was known that a large British fleet, with a landing force, was hovering off the Atlantic coast, and Secretary Armstrong was beset from all quarters for troops and money. In a short private note to General Pinckney on 11 August, the Secretary admitted bluntly that his office had no funds, and he told Pinckney, in effect, that if South Carolina wanted defenses, the citizens would have to raise the necessary money themselves, to be repaid by the United States after the end of hostilities.⁸⁵

The British capture and burning of Washington in late August 1814 halted most ongoing planning and ruined several careers. On September 3 John Armstrong resigned as Secretary of War, and with him went the project for blockhouses on the South Carolina coast. Secretary of State James Monroe added the War Department to his responsibilities, and his first letter to General Pinckney confirmed the latter's authority to repair Fort Johnson and made no mention of blockhouses on Bull's Island or Cat Island.⁸⁶

General Pinckney still had five tension-filled months ahead of him, calling for militia reinforcements and trying, with some success, to raise money locally to restore the seacoast defenses. A small British force did land at Point Petre, at the mouth of the St. Mary's River, in January 1815, but its inland progress was halted by the long-overdue news of the Treaty of Ghent. In February all commanders were notified of the

⁸⁴Pinckney to Armstrong, July 19, 1814, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1814-15 (N-R) (M221/65).

⁸⁵Armstrong to Pinckney (private), Aug. 11, 1814, NA RG 107, MB 7, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/7).

⁸⁶Monroe to Pinckney, Sept. 5, 1814, *ibid.*

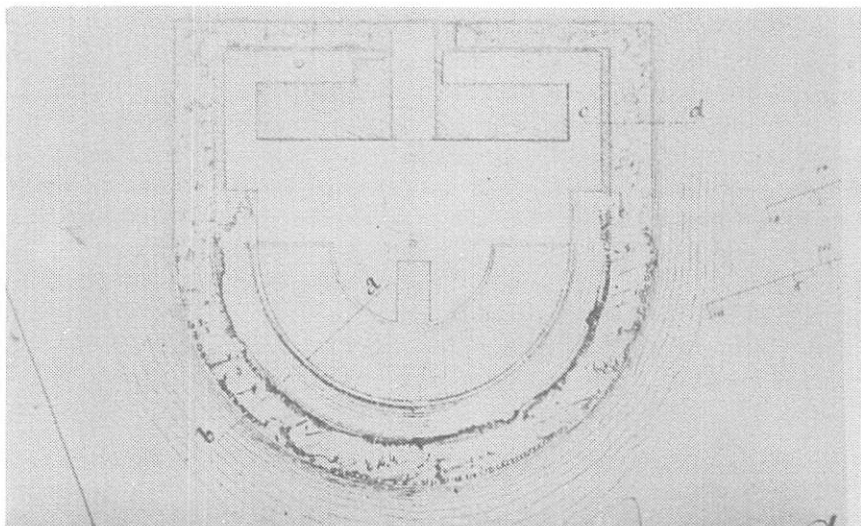
termination of hostilities, and in May Thomas Pinckney, almost 65, applied for permission to lay down his commission as second-ranking major general of the Army and to return to civil pursuits.⁸⁷

Fort Winyaw: The Later Years

President Madison was convinced that the war had proved the need for more and better seacoast defenses, and he strongly urged Congress to provide funds for a long-term construction program. Pending Congressional action, the President directed General Swift, the Chief Engineer, to have his officers survey thoroughly the existing defensive works and to report their basic needs. The first such survey of Georgetown was conducted by 1st Lt. George Trescot⁸⁸ in the summer of 1816, but his report to General Swift has not been found. In January 1817, however, Acting Secretary of War George Graham wrote directly to Lieutenant Trescot, then at Charleston: "It has been represented to this Department that Fort Winyaw near George Town S. Carolina is under the care of one

⁸⁷Pinckney's wartime service has been consistently overlooked by historians, probably because he took part in no great battles. He was surely the ablest of the district commanders, and both the East Florida operation and much of the Creek Expedition were under his supervision; in the latter it was Pinckney who recognized and reported the talents of his subordinate, Andrew Jackson.

⁸⁸Trescot — sometimes Trescott — was a Charlestonian who graduated from the Military Academy in late 1813. He subsequently left the service in 1819 to become the City Surveyor of Charleston.



Plan of Fort Winyaw drawn in 1821 by Capt. G. T. Poussin, showing ramparts and parapet, gun platform, barracks (left), and powder magazine. National Archives Records Group 77

person and that the materials are daily taken off or destroyed. You will therefore ascertain and report what is the real situation of the Fort and request Dr. Blythe[sic] in whose Lands it is stated to be, to take charge of it and prevent dilapidations.”⁸⁹ It was probably Trescot’s own 1816 report that triggered Graham’s concern, and Trescot replied at once:

... agreeably to the order of Gen. Swift, I have already visited that work and reported its state. Situated at the extreme end of a rice field it is much exposed to the violence of the waters of the Bay, which by undermining the base of the outer revetment of the rampart have completely destroyed it. While in George Town I was told that some of the bricks had been taken off by the negroes of the surrounding plantations and that the work was then under the care of Dr. Blythe for which he received a salary. I . . . shall as ordered write immediately to Dr. Blythe.⁹⁰

It is difficult to understand the government’s continued interest in Fort Winyaw, which had been effectively abandoned in 1814 in favor of the never-built blockhouse on Cat Island. But the site *was* federal property, acquired from Dr. Blyth for the stiff price of \$7,000, and over the years, according to subsequent Treasury reports, another \$11,590.42 had been spent just on maintenance and repair.⁹¹ No garrison was provided after 1814, and not even a military caretaker was posted there, if Trescot was correct that Dr. Blyth was being paid to look after the government property. But while vandalism may have been a problem, the greater problem was the progressive destruction of the ramparts by the waters of Winyaw Bay.

A station list of the postwar Army in 1818 shows Fort Winyaw as having six cannon, which argues that the guns had not been moved from Fort Winyaw to Cat Island in 1814; no installations are shown for Cat Island or Bull’s Island. In the return of the Army for 1819, Fort Winyaw is listed without comment as to garrison or armament. After 1819, Fort Winyaw disappears from the annual returns.⁹²

Georgetown itself, however, was not to be left undefended in the postwar planning. A Board of Engineers in 1821 drew up a priority list for future seacoast defenses, in which Charleston, Beaufort, and Georgetown were included. Charleston was in the second class — from which would come Fort Sumter — while Beaufort and Georgetown were among

⁸⁹Graham to Trescot, Jan. 9, 1817, NA RG 107, MB 9, Letters Sent, OSW (M6/9).

⁹⁰Trescot to Graham, Jan. 18, 1817, NA RG 107, Letters Received, OSW, 1816-17 (R-Y) (M221/76).

⁹¹Reports of the 2d and 3d Auditors, 1826, *ASP, MA*, III, 248-250.

⁹²*ASP, MA*, I, 789, 819.

the third class of proposed works. The Board explained why these forts were necessary: "The forts which will be projected . . . in South Carolina, will have for object to secure the communication between the sea and the interior; to prevent a blockade of the rivers and harbors . . .; to secure naval stations, necessary in guarding the coasting trade; and to cover the great commercial cities against attack by land or sea."⁹³

Five years later, in March 1826, the Board of Engineers drew up a revised and more detailed plan, in which two paragraphs were devoted to Georgetown and its needs:

GEORGETOWN HARBOR — The first inlet of any consequence, south of Cape Fear river, is at the united mouths of the Waccamaw, Pedee, and Black rivers, forming Georgetown harbor. The two latter rivers join a few miles above Georgetown, which lies at the mouth of Sampit creek, fifteen miles from the sea, and their united waters mingle with those of the Waccamaw, opposite that town. Below this junction the waters spread out to a considerable width, affording a commodious and capacious bay, having sufficient depth of water within and upon the bar, near the mouth, for merchant vessels and small vessels of war.

It is probable this harbor may be well defended by a work placed near the mouth of Moschito [sic] creek, a little within the chaps of the harbor, or perhaps upon Winyaw Point. The present fort, situated near the town at the mouth of Sampit creek, can be of no avail except to defend the approach by water to the town. It has long been neglected, and is in ruins.⁹⁴

Ungarrisoned for 12 years and not adequately guarded or maintained, Fort Winyaw was thus written out of what became the Third System. Surprisingly, the best map of the fort dates from this period of neglect. It was prepared for the Board of Engineers by Capt. Guillaume Tell Poussin, a French military engineer then employed as a quasi-member of the Corps of Engineers, who acted as a topographer to the Board and who drew many fine maps of American seacoast fortifications between 1818 and about 1832.⁹⁵ Poussin's map of Fort Winyaw is dated 1821, and shows both a carefully scaled plan and three sectional profiles. At first glance the fort appears to be in good condition, but closer examination shows the encroachment of the waters of Winyaw Bay, and the extent to which the revetments have been washed away.

⁹³Ibid., II, 306.

⁹⁴Ibid., III, 292-293.

⁹⁵A brief biographical sketch of Poussin is in Willard B. Robinson, *American Forts: Architectural Form and Function* (Urbana, 1977), pp. 89, 194.

The name of Fort Winyaw surfaced briefly in October 1838, when Robert F. W. Allston of Georgetown offered to buy back the land. Allston had graduated from West Point and served briefly on topographical duty before resigning from the Army in 1822 to manage his family's rice plantation on Waccamaw Neck. Subsequently Allston inherited Dr. Joseph Blyth's land from his aunt, Blyth's widow, and he thought it would be well to repurchase the remaining acreage at Blyth's Point — or Waties Point, as it was then usually called. He wrote to Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett, another South Carolinian, offering to buy, pointing out that three-quarters of the land sold by Dr. Blyth in 1812 had been washed away by the tides.⁹⁶ Poinsett's reply is not of record, but he would have been obliged to tell Allston that not only would Congress have to approve such a sale, but there would also have to be a formal act of retrocession of jurisdiction to South Carolina. Faced with these bureaucratic obstacles, Allston apparently lost interest. In 1854 Allston sold the old Blyth plantation to David Risley, a lumber man from Philadelphia, and around the turn of the century a Coast and Geodetic Survey chart shows the Winyah Lumber Company just across the canal from what was still called the Fort Winyaw Military Reservation.⁹⁷

Tiny and useless though it was, the United States retained title to the Fort Winyaw reservation until 1923. Then, in the optimism following the Great War, the 67th Congress decided to dispose of a long list of such reservations, a few quite large but most relatively small; many of these contained seacoast fortifications in varying states of repair, several of them antedating even Fort Winyaw. Legislation of March 4, 1923, declared these properties surplus to military needs, and offered them for sale to state, county, or municipal governments, with the proviso that the land had to be used for public-park purposes. In order to clear its books, the War Department listed the Fort Winyaw reservation as containing the same seven acres it had acquired from Dr. Blyth, although by 1923 only two or three acres remained above the water line. After an appraisal, the City of Georgetown bought the land for the sum of \$150 on March 11, 1924, and today the tract, all traces of the fort gone, forms part of the attractive and much-used East Bay Park.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Rogers, *Georgetown County*, pp. 208, 285; J. H. Easterby, "Robert Francis Withers Allston," *Dictionary of American Biography*, I, Part 1, p. 223.

⁹⁷Rogers, *Georgetown County*, p. 285; NA RG 77, Engineer Fortifications File, Drawer 189, S. C. 2-6, undated, labeled "Traced from U.S.C. & G. S. Chart 428."

⁹⁸Act of March 4, 1923, 42 Stat. 1450; Deed Book Georgetown County, Vol. D-2, p. 4, Office of the Clerk of Court, Georgetown.

SOUTH CAROLINA EPISCOPAL CHURCH RECORDS

MARGARETTA CHILDS and ISABELLA G. LELAND

This is the first in a series of records of different religious congregations in South Carolina. Publication has been made possible by a grant from the South Carolina Committee for the Humanities, an agent of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency.

Each article in this series will survey the known archival holdings of a religious denomination's South Carolina records. These surveys will not be comprehensive, for the records are widely scattered and their existence is often not recorded in print. Nevertheless, using these surveys, scholars and genealogists will be able to determine both what archives to visit in their search for records and what records are held in which archives.

No attempt has been made to update the 1930s survey by the Federal Works Project Administration of records held by individual congregations. However, under an earlier South Carolina Committee for the Humanities grant, directed by Richard Côté, the South Carolina Historical Society did film these surveys and place copies of the surveys pertaining to each county in the appropriate county library. (For a listing of these surveys consult Côté's 1981 *Local and Family History in South Carolina: A Bibliography*, pp. 381-414.)

Margaretta Childs prepared the descriptions of the Dalcho Historical Society holdings on deposit at the South Carolina Historical Society. Isabella G. Leland is author of the introductory review of Episcopal records.

* * *

The Act of 30 November 1706 establishing the Church of England in the province of South Carolina read that each parish was to provide "a fit person for a register of births, christenings, marriages and burials" (excluding those of negroes, mulattos and Indian slaves).

Ten parishes were set up — St. Philip's in Charles Town, and nine others: in Berkeley County, Christ Church, St. Thomas's, St. John's, St. James Goose Creek, St. Andrew's, and St. Denis; in Colleton, St. Paul's and St. Bartholomew's; and St. James Santee in Craven.

Church records of these and the later eighteenth-century parishes provide vital statistics not only for South Carolinians, but for generations of descendants of the early congregations — black and white — from all over the world. Until civil registration in the twentieth century, church records or family Bibles are frequently the only source of birth