

# Happenings

## Rifle range reservationists nearly finished with book on WWI

By Lee Hinnant  
Staff Writer

Supporters of the Caswell Beach World War I-era rifle range are putting the final touches on a book that details the role Brunswick County and its people played in the conflict here and abroad more than a century ago.

The nonprofit Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range group works to preserve and restore the circa-1918 pit that was part of a training area for soldiers from Fort Caswell. The well-preserved remains of the target area

are now part of the Caswell Dunes subdivision, adjacent to Oak Island Golf Course.

The rifle range, which was chosen as an official United States WW I Centennial Memorial by the National WWI Centennial Commission in early 2018, is also the site of a monument honoring the WWI veterans from Brunswick County. The names of men who gave their lives during WWI are engraved on the monument. The range is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The book is the result of a multi-year effort by authors Amy, Norma and Ron Eckard,

with help from more than a dozen volunteers. Norma Eckard said the publication follows Brunswick County veterans through the war and describes all divisions, all the major battles and all the medals or awards given.

“*Brunswick County in the Great War*” includes: the ongoing preservation of the rifle pit; offers profiles or snapshots of the soldiers and a complete list of veterans and their assignments; information on the student Army Training Corps; details of nurses at Fort Caswell; and the Wall of Honor displayed at commemorative events.

The depth of the stories and side stories makes the book much more than a genealogy with photographs and drawings. There are letters from soldiers, pictures from training and battle schematics, current shots of descendants of veterans, military forms and insignias.

Sidebars speak to daily life of soldiers and sometimes to the unusual. One short story, with a picture from the Smithsonian, describes a carrier pigeon that delivered an important battle message and was wounded during its flight home. The bird was fitted with a wooden leg and awarded a medal by France.

Eckard said the book would be donated to high schools, colleges and public libraries in Brunswick, New Hanover and Columbus counties. It will cost \$40-\$50, depending on the quantity ordered for the first printing.

Eckard is working on a system to reserve copies of the book. After final edits, the book is expected to be available in late September.

To learn more about the Friends group, visit [www.caswellriflerange.com](http://www.caswellriflerange.com).

