



# Newsletter



## Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, Inc.

5 Foxfire Trace, Caswell Beach, NC 28465

2022

Website: [www.caswellriflerange.com](http://www.caswellriflerange.com)

Welcome to the first newsletter by the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range. We plan to publish a newsletter at regular intervals throughout the year to update our supporters. All newsletters will be available on the website.

As you probably know, the United States World War I Centennial Commission designated the rifle range an official World War I Centennial Memorial in April 2018. We were awarded \$2000 with our proposal acceptance. The money was applied to the cost of purchasing the monument.

The United States War Department authorized the construction of the rifle range structure in 1918, not envisioning that eventually this site would become a subdivision of condos, patio homes, single family homes, and a golf course. The military compound encompassed nearly all of eastern Oak Island.

In the WWI era, the Springfield rifle was the main weapon used by infantry that trained here in eastern Oak Island. The military qualified a soldier as expert, sharpshooter, or marksman at the rifle range prior to leaving for France. The firing line was 300 yards from the western side of the target pit, the range most accurate for the Springfield rifle. We recently learned that there was also a hog pen near the rifle range which held animals used to feed the soldiers at Fort Caswell. In time, we will request a survey to identify and mark the location of the firing line and the hog pen.

How wonderful that many of us live or reside near the Caswell Dunes community. This historic structure in the middle of a residential area offers the Friends a site to conduct patriotic events or reflect at the site where local soldiers prepared for war.

***There are few WWI rifle ranges remaining in the world today. We are fortunate to have one in our backyard.***

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Mission : To stabilize and preserve the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range. Additionally, to research, publicize, and preserve the legacies of the men and women of Brunswick County who served in the World War.

**Officers:**

President: Norma Lee Eckard

Vice-President: Ronald M. Eckard

Secretary-Treasurer: Thomas Luken

**Directors:**

Gwen Clemmons Causey

Lorraine M. Eckard

Webmaster: Amy R. Eckard

## April 6 Roll Call Canceled

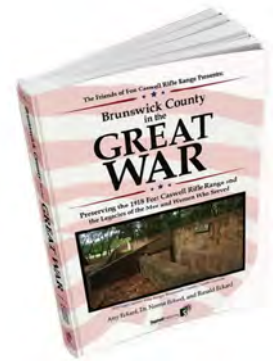
We regret that the Roll Call planned on April 6, 2022, to commemorate the date the United States entered the World War, has been canceled due to health concerns. We hope to continue the Roll Call at a later date; our target is Veterans Day, November 11, 2022.

### Update: Brunswick County in the Great War Book Sales

To date, 154 books have been sold (81 soft and 73 hardbacks). The book sales total \$9300. The pandemic has had an effect on sales opportunities.

The prices are \$50 for softbacks and \$70 for hardbacks. Softback books are being sold at Fort Fisher, the Maritime Museum, and Fort Caswell. Books may also be purchased by calling Norma Eckard at **910-278-7584**, or by sending email to [ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto:ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com).

Credit cards may be used with PayPal for an additional low fee.



*Note: This is not a fundraiser. The price of the books was chosen to cover the costs to research, publish, print, and ship the books.*

### Taps Across America: Veterans Day Tribute



**Richard Slease**, past president of Brunswick Bands, organized the Taps Across America tribute at the rifle range in 2020, honoring the military at a time when the pandemic caused the cancellation of Veterans Day events. Richard returned to the rifle range on Veterans Day in 2021.

Prior to playing Taps there were announcements. **Okey Tucker** and wife **Andrea** were recognized, along with **Rob Campbell** for their volunteer work on the rifle range. **Martha Koletar**, regent of Brunswick Town Chapter NSDAR presented the History of Taps.

DAR chaplain **Judy Holden** offered a prayer in honor of the 718 military men and woman who served in WWI from Brunswick County.

After the Taps presentation, WWI reenactor **Carl Mauney** was introduced. Carl described his experiences twice/year with WWI reenactors in Pennsylvania. As usual, Carl enlightened the assembled group with information about WWI.



*The History of Taps is attached to the end of this newsletter.*

## University Website Links to Our Fort Caswell Nurse Research



The Friends discovered that the School of Nursing at Appalachian State University is using the Friends of Fort Caswell research on the 14 nurses who served at Fort Caswell during World War I. Quite a few visitors to our website arrive using links on the Appalachian State University North Carolina nurse webpage. We are pleased that the research is evidently important to their program.

*Pictured at left is Nurse Faye White Elmo, who served at Fort Caswell during WWI. Photo courtesy of her family.*

## Anonymous Monthly Donation Keeps Giving

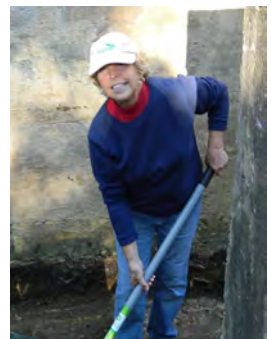
The following is taken from the letter to Friends: “*The Blackbaud Giving Fund is pleased to present the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc an enclosed grant made on behalf of Duke Energy Foundation and its donors.*”

Since February 2021, our nonprofit has received a monthly check from an anonymous employee at Duke Energy who chose to support our historical preservation of the rifle range. The gift is appreciated. It is used to pay for supplies for Okey Tucker, the pro bono engineer who has completed work on the gate, steps, window in the storage room, and the lowering of the shoring to enable us to clean the passageway. Many thanks to the Duke Foundation anonymous donor. We are putting your grant to work!

## Spotlights Shining on Local Homeowners

Spotlights are often published on the website to shine a light on contributions from local homeowners and supporters. Recent spotlights highlighted work clearing debris from the rifle range.

In 2019, **Betty McGaha** (right) cleaned the range of leaves, branches, and soil leaking into the pit via the french drain located on the floor of the south wall. Betty and husband Doyle McGaha have supported the mission of the Friends since 2014 and we thank them.



**Rob Campbell** (left), who joined the community in 2021, also offered help in cleaning the inside of the pit of leaves and debris.

The clearing of debris is a constant chore throughout the year. All help is very much welcome and we thank Rob and Betty for their support!

## Monitoring of Damaging Plant Growth Required

The 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range is nearly 104 years old and one of only a few remaining WWI rifle ranges in the world. It not only requires clearing of debris inside and other maintenance, but also constant monitoring of the growth of trees and bushes that may damage the walls of this rare military structure. The north (back) wall of the pit is made of fragile concrete, which requires plant growth and weeds to remain six feet from the structure. (*See the recommendations from the structural engineer at the end of this newsletter*).



### Additional Thanks



**Okey Tucker** was featured on the website and in the *Brunswick Beacon* for his extensive pro bono work to rehabilitate the rifle range. He has installed a plexiglass window, lowered the shoring inside for ease of navigation, and modified the step and installed a gate system designed for the safety of visitors and animals.

Okey plans to build a Message Center for educating visitors on the purpose and history of the rifle range, and hopes to

install a historically accurate roof for the Storage Room. Okey is not yet retired, so he spends his limited free time on this effort. The Friends are paying for the supplies. We are thankful for his skills and appreciate his interest and time dedicated to restoring the rifle range.

New homeowner **Karen Dean** scrubbed the monument two times over a period of several months. She also placed pebbles around the bottom of the monument to keep it clean and helped to gather weeds behind the north wall. Thank you Karen!

Thanks also to **Drs. Norman and Lois Sprinthall** for purchasing three hardback copies of *Brunswick County in the Great War* for our Caswell Dunes library in the clubhouse. They also paid for the installation of two No Trespassing signs placed at the rifle range. Norman and Lois have made numerous donations through the years to help with funding projects.

Anyone wishing to sign up to clear debris please call Norma at **910-278-7584** or send an email to [ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto:ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com).

## **Maritime Museum Living History Weekend**

Norma Eckard, president of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range and one of the three authors of *Brunswick County in the Great War*, was invited to present a display for the Maritime Museum Living History Weekend in September 2021. The display included sections of the book and trifolds showing the history of the restoration work, including how the mission grew to include the writing of the book.

### **Website Statistics**

Our website, *caswellriflerange.com*, continues to serve as a resource for WWI history and military enthusiasts. In 2020, when *Brunswick County in the Great War* was published, a record 9600+ visits were recorded. 2021 saw 8000+ visits. Visitors from around the world read the website, with North Americans and Europeans being the most common.

Referrals to our website include Facebook, which was the most common referrer, followed by Wikipedia, the Appalachian State University nursing website, and local websites such as the Caswell Dunes HOA, DAR Brunswick Town Chapter, John N. Smith Cemetery, local media, and the website of our book's publisher, *carolinabeach.net*.

### **Future Needs**

- Install Message Center at the rifle range site to educate visitors.
- Purchase three bags of 50 pounds of river rock to prevent soil from washing into the rifle pit and to control mud after heavy rains.
- Survey to identify and mark the firing line and hog pens.
- Maintain the property, including mowing and debris removal inside and out.
- Clear the black growth on the walls of the rifle range.
- Build the storage room roof.
- Move soil back in place behind the north wall after the doorways are fixed.

Please sign up for volunteer work if you are interested in any of these tasks. Please call Norma at 910-278-7584 or send an email to [\*fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com\*](mailto:fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com).

### **From our Mailbox**

This delightful note was received from the Brunswick County Library Crew.

***Dear Neighbors and Friends of the Fort Caswell Rifle Range,***

***Thank you, thank you for the glorious copies of Brunswick County in the Great War. At last, we have them all cataloged and into circulation, 2 copies per branch. Barbee's copies were checked out the first day!***

***This book is going to renew interest in local history. Keep up the good work and stay safe.***

## 2022 Membership Campaign

It has become difficult to organize and hold fundraisers due to the pandemic and aging of those serving the nonprofit. The decision to begin membership campaigns has been made.

Please consider donating funds to complete the tasks detailed above. We appreciate your generosity in restoring and maintaining the historic 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range, as well as helping to publicize the sacrifices made by our local Brunswick County families serving and supporting our military during World War I.

If you wish to support our mission, detach the form below and mail to the address listed.  
Thank you for your support!

### 2022 Membership Campaign



*Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range*  
*5 Foxfire Trace*  
*Caswell Beach, NC 28465*

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Telephone:**

**Email:**

**Annual Dues: \$25**

**Lifetime Membership: \$150**

# Stature Engineering, P.C.

Structural, Marine, Historical Engineering and Construction Management

Caswell Dunes  
Attn: Connie Silverstein, Board President  
2 Fairway Drive  
Caswell Beach, NC 28465

May 17, 2021

Re: Preservation Recommendation  
Fort Caswell Rifle Range, Caswell Beach, NC

Dear Connie:

The purpose of this letter is to address vegetation located near the historic Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

The rifle range target pit is a concrete structure. It has minimal steel reinforcing throughout. Concrete structures are susceptible to adjacent vegetation. The root structure from any large plant (e.g. trees, bushes, etc.) grows into small cracks in the concrete structure. As the roots grow longer and thicker, they enlarge concrete cracking. Over time this breaks down any concrete structure. This is especially true of a historic structure where steel spacing allows more cracking than modern concrete structures. Historic concrete structures are also susceptible to vegetation growth due to the low-quality concrete material.

We recommend that all vegetation be kept a minimum of 6' away from the existing concrete rifle range pit to minimize damage to this endangered historic structure. While a grass ground cover is not recommended (we would prefer a gravel surface cover), it is acceptable. All other vegetation, including, but not limited to: trees, bushes, vines should be removed. This condition should be maintained over time.

We reserve the right to modify our conclusions and recommendations if new information becomes available.

If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



**STATURE ENGINEERING, P.C.**  
**NC PE Firm License C-4719**  
Everett B. Pannkuk, P.E., SECB



Enclosures:  
Photos A and B



Photo A. Previously condition with removed vegetation.



Photo B. Current condition with vegetation encroaching the rifle target pit.





U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20420

## CELEBRATING AMERICA'S FREEDOMS

### **24 NOTES THAT TAP DEEP EMOTIONS THE STORY OF TAPS**

by Jari Villanueva, Taps Historian

Of all the military bugle calls, none is so easily recognized or more apt to evoke emotion than "Taps." The melody is both eloquent and haunting and the history of its origin is interesting and somewhat clouded in controversy and myth.

The use of "Taps" is unique to the United States military, as the call is sounded at funerals, wreath-laying ceremonies and memorial services. "Taps" originally began as a signal to extinguish lights. Up until the Civil War, the infantry call for "Extinguish Lights" was the one set down in the Infantry manuals which had been borrowed from the French. The music for "Taps" was changed by Major General Daniel Adams Butterfield for his brigade in July, 1862. Butterfield was not pleased with the call for "Extinguish Lights" feeling that it was too formal to signal the day's end. With the help of the brigade bugler, Oliver Willcox Norton, he created "Taps" to honor his men while in camp at Harrison's Landing, Virginia following the Seven Days' battles during the Peninsular Campaign.

Butterfield did not compose "Taps" but actually revised an earlier bugle call. The call we know today as "Taps" existed in an early version of the call "Tattoo" which had gone out of use by the Civil War. Butterfield knew this early call from his days before the war as a colonel in the 12th New York Militia. As a signal at the end of the day, armies have used "Tattoo" to alert troops to prepare for the evening roll call. Butterfield took the last 5 and a half measures of the "Tattoo" and revised them into the 24 notes we know today. The new call soon spread to other units of the Union Army.

Oliver Willcox Norton wrote about the experience later in his life:

*"During the early part of the Civil War I was bugler at the Headquarters of Butterfield's Brigade,... One day, soon after the seven days' battles on the Peninsular, when the Army of the Potomac was lying in camp at Harrison's Landing, General Daniel Butterfield sent for me, and showing me some notes on a staff written in pencil on the back of an envelope, asked me to sound them on my bugle. I did this several times, playing the music as written. He changed it somewhat, lengthening some notes and shortening others, but retaining the melody as he first gave it to me. After getting it to his satisfaction, he directed me to sound that call for "Taps" thereafter in place of the regulation call. The music was beautiful on that still summer night, and was heard far beyond the limits of our Brigade. The next day I was visited by several buglers from neighboring brigades,*

*asking for copies of the music which I gladly furnished. I think no general order was issued from army headquarters authorizing the substitution of this for the regulation call, but as each brigade commander exercised his own discretion in such minor matters, the call was gradually taken up through the Army of the Potomac."*

The earliest official reference to the mandatory use of "Taps" at military funeral ceremonies is found in the U.S. Army Infantry Drill Regulations for 1891, although it had doubtless been used unofficially long before that time, under its former designation, "Extinguish Lights." The first use of "Taps" at a funeral was during the Peninsular Campaign in Virginia. Captain John C. Tidball of Battery A, 2nd Artillery ordered it played for the burial of a cannoneer killed in action. Because the enemy was close, he worried that the traditional three volleys would renew fighting.

The origin of the word "Taps" is thought to have come from the Dutch word for "Tattoo"- "Taptoe." More than likely, "Taps" comes from the three drum taps that were beat as a signal for "Extinguish Lights" when a bugle was not used.

Other stories of the origin of "Taps" exist. A popular myth is that of a Northern boy who was killed fighting for the South. His father, a Captain in the Union Army, came upon his son's body on the battlefield and found the notes to "Taps" in a pocket of the dead boy's Confederate uniform. There is no evidence to back up the story or the existence of the Captain or his son.

As with many other customs, the twenty-four notes that comprise this solemn tradition began long ago and continue to this day. Although General Butterfield merely revised an earlier bugle call, his role in producing those twenty-four notes gave him a place in the history of both music and of war.

Today, "Taps" is sounded as the final call every evening on military installations and at military funerals. In 2012 Congress recognized "Taps" as the "National Song of Remembrance."

More information on Taps and bugling in the United States can be found at [www.TapsBugler.com](http://www.TapsBugler.com)

*"There is something singularly beautiful and appropriate in the music of this wonderful call. Its strains are melancholy, yet full of rest and peace. Its echoes linger in the heart long after its tones have ceased to vibrate in the air."-Oliver Willcox Norton*

