

## Heritage Library Lesson Plan

Title: Evidence of a Life - Suttlers Row/Robbers Row at Fort Walker

Grade Level: 3-4

Standards Indicators: 3-1.3, 3-2.5, 3.3,

Literacy Elements:

- Identify the location of Suttlers Row/Robbers Row in relation to other places, the conditions of places and the connections between them.
- Explain the effects of population distribution and patterns of migration and economic development.
- Interpret the multiple points of view or biases as they relate to individual experiences, societal values, and cultural traditions.
- Identify and explain the relationships of the Union armies and merchants at Fort Walker.

Essential Questions:

How can an occupying army create sustainable economic development for an area?

What relationship existed between the Union Army and the private businessmen at Fort Walker?

How does the development of Suttler's Row at Fort Walker relate to other developments at other Forts?

Terms to Learn:

- Suttlers Row
- Robbers Row
- Contraband
- Civilian
- Freedman

- Import/Export
- Fort Walker
- Battle of Port Royal
- P. G. T. de Beauregard
- General Thomas Sherman
- General du Pont

Mini-Lessons:

Background

## **1. Confederate Fort Walker**

In May 1861, General P.T. Beauregard recommended the construction of this earthwork fort on Coggins Point Plantation to guard the entrance to Port Royal Sound. The fort was named in honor of Confederate Secretary of War, L.P. Walker. Colonel William C. Hayward, Eleventh Regiment, South Carolina Volunteers, was in command of the fort, and General Thomas F. Drayton was in charge of the overall defenses of Port Royal Sound. On November 7, 1861 the most formidable expeditionary fleet to date captured Fort Walker for the Union.

On November 8, 1861 Brigadier General Thomas West Sherman issued General Order #28, changing the name from Fort Walker to Fort Welles in honor of Gideon Welles, United States Secretary of War.

## **2. Battle of Port Royal:**

A major Union victory early in the [American Civil War](#) that demonstrated how difficult it would be for the Confederacy to defend its coastline. Port Royal is one of the best natural harbors on the Atlantic coast of America. The entrance to the bay was protected by two forts. To the north was Fort Beauregard, at Bay Point on Philips Island. This fort contained nineteen guns and a

garrison of 149 men, although in the event only seven of those guns were able to fire effectively on the Union fleet. To the south was Fort Walker on Hilton Head Island, with 23 guns, 18 facing to sea, and a garrison that peaked at 255 men at the height of the action.

The defenders were massively outnumbered by the Federal force sent to attack them. Flag Officer Samuel du Pont had a fleet of seventeen warships and 600 marines and was supported by an army 12,000 strong. The fleet alone massively outgunned the Confederate forts. However, it was widely believed that guns on ships were not the equal of guns in land based fortifications. Du Pont's fleet was not expected to take on the two forts – that was the job of the army.

The Atlantic weather interfered with that plan. On 1 November, as the fleet passed [Cape Hatteras](#) (itself the site of a Union victory in August 1861), a storm scattered the fleet, sinking several key transport ships. The intended landings on the two islands had to be abandoned. That left the success or failure of the expedition in Du Pont's hands.

He decided to use a similar strategy to the one that had been adopted by flag-officer Silas Stringham in the attack on Hatteras. Du Pont would use the maneuverability of his steam ships to counter the advantages enjoyed by the forts. When sailing ships had wanted to bombard land fortifications, they had had to anchor offshore, in order to maintain their position. Du Pont ordered his ships to keep moving, forming an oval. Each ship would fire on the land batteries in turn, and then repeat the maneuver as many times as required. They would present the Confederate gunners with a moving target, much reducing their vulnerability to the Fort's guns.

Du Pont's plan was put into effect on the morning on 7 November. The fleet's main target was Fort Walker. The first shots were fired at 9.30 a.m., and firing continued until 1.15, when the Confederate garrison was seen to be leaving the fort. By that point, only three of the seaward guns were still intact. Du Pont's tactics had worked brilliantly. The Union fleet had only lost 31 men (8 dead and 23 wounded) in four hours of fighting. Confederate losses were twice that (11 dead, 48 wounded and 7 missing, for a total of 66 casualties), but were still relatively low. However, Fort Walker was effectively disarmed, while the Union fleet was still intact.

Fort Beauregard was abandoned soon after the Federal occupation of Fort Walker. Although it had not suffered as much damage, it was clear that the battle was lost and that the fort would not be able to keep the Union fleet out of Port Royal Bay.

The occupation of Port Royal Bay gave the U.S. Navy an invaluable base for the rest of the war. The bay was used as a supply depot and coaling station, essential facilities if a fleet of steamships is to maintain a close blockade of a long coast.

By pure coincidence, on the day after the capture of Port Royal [Robert E. Lee](#) arrived in Savannah to take command of the defenses of the Confederacy's Atlantic coast. Fresh from defeat in West Virginia, Lee's second major command also ended in disappointment. The coast was too long and too vulnerable, and his resources too small. Lee was forced to abandon most of the coastal islands, and concentrate the defenses further inland, nearer the coastal railroads, in the hope that reinforcements could be rushed to any danger point in time to prevent its capture. The problem with this plan was that it allowed Du Pont and his successors to blockade most of the Atlantic coast by occupying those coastal islands, blocking the channels that connected the river

ports to the sea. Savannah itself was soon blocked in exactly this way, when Federal forces captured Fort Pulaski in April 1862.

The attack on Port Royal demonstrates well how the civil war split families. The Confederate forces were commanded by Brigadier General Thomas F. Drayton. His brother, Percival Drayton, was captain of the *U.S.S. Pocahontas*, one of the ships in the Federal fleet. Many similar examples of divided family loyalty can be found in every theatre of the civil war.

Rickard, J (14 August 2007), *Battle of Port Royal, 7 November 1861*,  
[http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles\\_port\\_royal.html](http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_port_royal.html)

### **3. Suttlers/Robbers Row:**

After the occupation of Hilton Head, a civilian town grew up to serve the needs of the large Union base and its garrison here. The town boasted a hotel, a theater, 2 newspapers, and numerous stores, centering along a street, officially Suttlers Row, which ran east from this point about ½ mile to the army tent encampment.

Hilton Head Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina — The American South  
(South Atlantic) Source

### **Classroom Discussion Questions**

1. What do the students see in their maps of Fort Walker and the surrounding area that indicate “everyday civilian activity”?
2. Make a list of the stores that developed at Ft. Walker from 1862-1864? What stores surprise you? Are there stores that should be there and are not? Why not?
3. What kinds of documents might exist to show evidence of a street, a shop, a fort?
4. Which name is more appropriate-- Suttlers Row or Robbers Row?
5. Who made up the population at Fort Walker during the Civil War?

### **Suggested Learning Activities**

1. Examine illustration, photographs, and maps of Fort Walker
2. Create a Chart of Potential Documents to illustrate examples of economic growth on Suttlers Row
3. Explore Fort Walker
4. Read articles about the Battle of Port Royal and list Lincoln’s reasons for the bombardment
5. Examine census to see what the population was before the war and after the war as compared to during the war.

## **Learning Assessments**

Students will write an essay explaining what they think is important about the civilian businesses and the economic development of a military occupied area.

Students will participate in classroom discussions, in group work, and in formal presentations.

Students will compare other military occupied areas to Fort Walker.

Students will look at the design of other forts on the island and in South Carolina.

## **Sources-Primary and Secondary**

"Battle of Port Royal," America's Civil War Magazine. Online. June 12, 2006.  
[www.historynet.com/battle-of-port-royal.htm](http://www.historynet.com/battle-of-port-royal.htm)

**Heritage Library Collections.** [www.heritagelibrary.org](http://www.heritagelibrary.org)

Littlejohn, John. The Carolina Morning News. Online. 4/21/98.

Maps of Fort Walker and Fort Howell

South Carolina Census

