

**Roberts Jr., W. Clifford and Matthew A.M. Locke. *Holding Charleston by the Bridle: Castle Pinckney and the Civil War***

**Savas Beatie, 2024**

xxviii + 259 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, bibliography, index

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As war with France loomed in 1797, the government of the United States and the citizens of Charleston, South Carolina, sought to improve their city's defences. A low-lying island a mile from Charleston's wharfs was chosen as the spot for a new fort to protect the harbour and city. The island was named Shute's Folly in reference to an earlier owner's failed plans to develop the marshy plot of land. While ultimately surpassed as a defensive work, the fort witnessed the beginning of the American Civil War and played its part in the final defence of the city. This book, by W. Clifford Roberts and Matthew Locke, is a history of the fort: its beginning, enlargement, role in the Civil War, use by the lighthouse service, and years of neglect.

The first fortification on Shute's Folly was constructed in 1781 by the British to defend Charleston from American rebels. In 1798, the Americans constructed a fort on high ground at the southern end of the 244-acre island. The fort was named after Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, an officer during the Revolution, an elite plantation owner, and South Carolina's representative to the Constitutional Convention. This fort was pentagonal in shape, consisting of "earthen walls stabilized by timbers" (9). A similar establishment (Fort Moultrie) was constructed on Sullivan Island at the mouth of the inlet leading to Charleston. Both forts were destroyed by a hurricane in 1804.

The second wave of coastal defences came in 1807 when stone and brick fortresses were built to defend the major ports of the new republic during a time of rising tensions with Britain. They were semicircular structures with two or three tiers. The lower one or two tiers housed large cannons inside bombproof vaults that were fired through embrasures, providing both concentration and a sweeping range of fire. Above the vaults, another tier of cannons on wheeled carriages were mounted. The fort was completed in 1811, in time for the War of 1812 although it saw no action during the war.

In 1821, a new round of coastal defences was planned which resulted in larger fortifications, including Fort Sumter at Charleston; its bombproof gun vaults were based on those of Castle Pinckney. Sumter was built in the centre of the mouth of the harbour, although it was not quite finished when the Civil War broke out.

As succession talk rose in the 1850s, the forts at Charleston were manned by federal troops on the chance that unrest broke out. Their main challenge was the annual yellow fever epidemics. After secession was declared, three companies of Charleston militia seized Castle Pinckney on 27 December 1860 in possibly the first military action of the war. On 12 April 1861, the bombardment of Fort Sumter began. Confederate gunners bombarded the fort for two days before its Union soldiers surrendered. The guns of Castle Pinckney did not take part in the bombardment. With the capture of the last Union fort, Charleston was firmly in the hands of the Confederates. The city served as a port for blockade runners as the Union navy sat off the coast for most of the war.

In the first two years of the war, Castle Pinckney acted as hospital and prisoner-of-war camp. Troops rotated through it on a six-month cycle. Castle Pinckney did witness the first successful submarine attack. Although the Confederate submarine *H.L. Huntley* sank during a trial run and the eight-man crew drowned, after being raised the *Huntley* cruised out to sink the Union sloop *Housatonic*. The mission was successful, sending the Union vessel to the bottom, but *Huntley* did not return.

The Union attack on Charleston began in the summer of 1863. The Union pulverized Fort Sumter and then began shelling Charleston. Castle Pinckney came under fire so in 1864, the fort was strengthened by building a gently sloping earthen wall outside the fort and bringing tons of earth into the fort to support the inner walls, creating a massive earthen barbette battery for a rifled Brooke gun and three 10-inch Columbiads. On 17 February 1865, as the Confederates left Charleston, Castle Pinckney was abandoned with no effort to destroy it.

In the years following the war, Castle Pinckney was manned by Black American troops until 1868, when the garrison was removed. Between 1878 and 1916, the site served as the Lighthouse Service station for the 6th District, which ran from New River Inlet, North Carolina, to Cape Canaveral, Florida. From 1916 to 1954, the site was used by the Army Corp of Engineers, and then was transferred to the National Parks Service. The fort fell into disrepair after 1916, with storms and water removing sections of the dirt piled up outside the fort during the Civil War. Currently, archaeological digs are ongoing, and an effort is afoot to preserve Castle Pinckney. As a result of channel dredging, storms, and rising water, the island it sits on is now only 14 acres.

The authors artfully weave the lives of the officers and soldiers who served in the fort into the details of the architecture, construction, alterations, and armament. Another strength of the book is the abundance of illustrations,

including photographs. Images of the troops and officers who manned the fortification add to the biographical information of those who served there during the Civil War. Contemporary drawings bolster the written descriptions. In comparison, photographs of the current state of the castle and the island are shocking.

The book begins with a glossary of terms and a list of short biographies of many of the people noted within the text. This is a novel placement of this material, which is usually found at the end. There are 18 appendices, including lists of names of those who served in the castle, prisoner lists, and the short 1895 memoir of Jane Chichester, whose husband served in the fort during the Civil War.

The book will appeal to those examining coastal defence systems. For those studying the American Civil War, Roberts and Locke provide a solid description of the defence of Charleston, South Carolina, and Castle Pinckney's place in those events.

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**Sellitti, Jennifer N. *The Adriatic Affair: A Maritime Hit-and-Run off the Coast of Nantucket***

**Schiffer Military History, 2025**

408 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index

ISBN 9780764367953 (hardcover) US\$34.99

In this exciting and ambitious book, we learn about seafaring risk, business, and shipbuilding in Maine and France, the transition from sail to steam, different propulsion systems, law, custom, cold-water survival, and much more. The trans-Atlantic passenger trade in the 1850s was competitive to the point of being deadly. Author Jennifer Sellitti is a mariner, diver, lawyer, and writer who provides a vivid, relatable, and informative backstory when it comes to two vessels, both on their maiden voyages. Both were built within a year and collided some 200 nautical miles east of Nantucket. One was the 400-ton, three-masted American barque *Adriatic* from Belfast, Maine. The other was *Le Lyonnais*, which was built in 1855 for Compagnie Franco-Americaine for mail and passenger service. Sellitti and her colleagues spent years locating and identifying the wreck, which finally happened late in 2024.

To recite the plot would risk giving away a tautly suspenseful narrative. More than 130 people died because of the collision. One vessel left an