

## 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE LESSONS/ACTIVITIES: CIVIL WAR ON HATTERAS ISLAND

### Civil War on Hatteras Island (Reading Level 8.9)

Essential Standard 8.G.1 - Understand the geographic factors that influenced North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.H.1 – Apply historical thinking to understand the creation and development of North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.H.2 – Understand the ways in which conflict, compromise and negotiation have shaped North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.H.3 (8.H.3.1, 8.H.3.3) – Understand the factors that contribute to change and continuity in North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.E.1 – Understand the economic activities of North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.C & G.1 – Analyze how democratic ideals shaped government in North Carolina and the United States.

Essential Standard 8.C.1 – Understand how different cultures influenced North Carolina and the United States.

### Civil War on Hatteras Island

On August 28, 1861, the people of Hatteras Village woke to a strange sight. A large Federal fleet was anchored off their coast. The peaceful life of Hatteras Village was shattered by the sound of their naval guns. The Union fleet fired on two Confederate forts. The forts were under construction at Hatteras Inlet. The Confederate soldiers first arrived at Hatteras on May 9, 1861, one month after the Civil War began. Six Confederate regiments were responsible for protecting over 400 miles of the coast.

The Confederate government of North Carolina authorized the use of privately owned vessels. They were armed with small cannon to seize Northern merchant ships off the coast. In the month and a half before the capture of the forts, the private ships, operating out of Hatteras Inlet, seized over 15 Northern merchant ships and their cargoes. It was the seizure of the ships out of Hatteras Inlet that caused the response by the Union Navy and Army.

The attack against these forts was the first combined military operation of the Civil War. A black gun crew on board the Union flagship *Minnesota* fired upon Fort Clark, providing the first deployment of black troops to fire on the Confederacy in the Civil War. The Confederate troops inside Forts Hatteras and Clark were unprepared for the assault. Construction of the forts was not yet complete. Several of their larger cannon were not in place and operational. When the Confederates returned fire, they were unable to damage the Union fleet because they couldn't reach them. After hundreds of shells exploded into Fort Clark, it was abandoned. Troops in Fort Clark ran, under fire, to Fort Hatteras. Meanwhile Union forces, under the command of General Benjamin Butler, seized control of Fort Clark. The following morning, Fort Hatteras became the main target. After about four more hours of intense fire, the white flag of surrender was waved. The Union finally experienced its first victory of the Civil War.

It was a scary time for Hatteras islanders. The Union soldiers robbed their homes. The islanders appealed to President Lincoln. They had taken an "Oath of Allegiance" to the Federal government and were supporters of the U.S. Constitution. Some wives and children hid in the woods until the islanders could determine the treatment they would receive from the Federal troops. There was a risk in taking the "Oath." If the Confederates recaptured the island, then all who took the oath would be seen as traitors. This threat resulted in most of the local men on Hatteras Island joining the Union's First North Carolina Regiment. They joined to receive protection by the Federal government and to receive an income.

The Union had other regiments on Hatteras Island to assist in protecting against any possible attempt by the Confederates to retake the island.

Islanders were used to having limited drinking water. They lived with mosquitoes and other biting insects, and the wind, and humidity. But the Union troops saw Hatteras as an unhealthy place. In order to deal with the isolation, the soldiers interacted with the local people. A Union soldier wrote of poling a boat from Hatteras to Trent (Frisco) to be part of a "molasses boiling party" where they made candy. He said:

"But we wanted to see a molasses-boiling, and we 'went-in' considering ourselves welcome, of course, and there, sure enough, were the girls done up in their prettiest, and there were a couple of old women and several children and the 'old man of the house,' all gathered up in two corners, on either side of the chimney, and there was an industrious young lady stirring a kettle of 'mozy.'" (Source: Forty-Eighth in The War, by Oliver C. Bobbyshell, p. 25.)

Union soldiers also spent time learning how to fish from the locals.

The fear of the Confederates recapturing Hatteras Island was a valid concern. An incident occurred in early October, 1861, called the Chicamacomico Races. Confederate soldiers escaped when Forts Hatteras and Clark fell. They made their way to Roanoke Island, where they joined other troops to train to recapture Hatteras Island. The effort to take over Hatteras again began at Camp Live Oak. At first it met with success. But it soon collapsed as the Confederates were unable to get troops ashore due to shallow water. Union reinforcements came up from Hatteras. With the assistance of the gunboat USS *Monticello*, the Union troops forced the Confederates to retreat to the north. They abandoned Hatteras Island once and for all.

The Federal Government realized that by controlling Hatteras Inlet they would be able to control most of the inland waterways. This allowed them to capture important strongholds. They could threaten supply lines to the main concentration of troops in Virginia.

In January, 1862, Union General Ambrose E. Burnside led a large fleet of Union ships from Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. They sailed south towards Hatteras. The fleet encountered a severe storm. More than 60 ships tried to sail through Hatteras Inlet. Some went aground. They were smashed to pieces by the waves. Others were damaged as they crashed into each other and the shore. Men, horses, and cargo were lost. A sufficient number of ships made it through the inlet. They sailed up the Pamlico Sound and captured Roanoke Island.

As a result of Hatteras Inlet falling into Union hands, the inland waterways and strategic locations such as Roanoke Island, New Bern, Washington, and Plymouth, came under Union control. Men serving in North Carolina's regiment with Confederate forces in Virginia were demoralized. They were distracted by the thought of Union forces in control of large sections of the eastern part of their home state.

The Civil War action on Hatteras Island was significant, but not in terms of numbers of troops, duration, or loss of life. It was important in terms of weakening Confederate morale. It also posed a threat from deep within Confederate territory itself. The win gave a boost to the Union cause, since up to the attack at Hatteras the Union experienced nothing but defeat.

Word of this first Union victory of the Civil War reached enslaved people on Roanoke Island and the coastal mainland. Almost immediately, they began arriving on Hatteras Island. By February 15, 1862, over 40 families were on the island. They believed they would be guaranteed freedom since the island was under the control of the Union.

One of the barracks was given as lodging for these families. It was named Hotel De' Afrique. This was the first safe haven for African Americans fleeing slavery in North Carolina.

The Hotel was located on the beach at Hatteras Inlet. A severe storm in early 1862 damaged it beyond repair. A new campsite was built behind Fort Clark on the sound side of the island. During March 1861, some drunken soldiers attacked some of the African Americans and killed an older man named Old Galloway. None of the soldiers involved in this vicious attack were held accountable.

Later, a Union officer recruited some of the men from Hotel De' Afrique to serve as troops. They attacked Confederate positions in eastern North Carolina.

In 2014, an historic monument was placed at the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras. One side of the monument draws attention to Hotel De' Afrique. The other side is dedicated to a black gun crew of the U.S.S. *Minnesota* that fired on Forts Hatteras and Clark. This historic monument is an official stop on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Trail.

#### Questions

1. Why was capturing and controlling Hatteras Inlet strategically important in the Civil War?
2. Why would the battle at Hatteras Inlet be not as known as other battles even though it was strategically important and the first Union-won battle in the Civil War?
3. What is the value of firsthand accounts or primary source material such as that of Oliver C. Bobbyshell from "Forty-Eighth in the War"?
4. What could the island people and Union soldiers have learned from one another following the capture of Hatteras Island.
5. Why would enslaved African-American people flee to Hatteras Island after the Union took control?
6. While the Union took over Hatteras Island and set the stage for the occupation of Hotel De' Afrique, do you think the formerly enslaved people arriving on the island were accepted as equals? Explain your answer.
7. Why was the Civil War a scary time for Hatteras residents? How did they cope?
8. Fort Hatteras and Fort Clark are symbolic landmarks in the Civil War on Hatteras Island. Why would two significant forts now be underwater?

## Activity

Build a Lean-to Shelter (Taken from: *The Civil War for Kids: A History with 21 Activities*, Janis Herbert, page 80.)

**Purpose:** Reinforce the hardships of being a soldier and the possibility of discomfort and having to make do and survive in a natural environment.

**Materials:** 2 branches about 3 feet tall with a fork on one end of each branch, 4 long straight branches, 4-foot blanket.

**Project:** Place the forked branches upright in the ground about four feet apart. Lay a branch across the top nestled in the forks. Lean the other three branches on an angle along one side of the structure. Soldiers may not have had string, but if you do, you can tie the leaning sticks to the one lying across the top to help it from falling down. Lay a blanket over the branches to make a shelter.