The Civil War

in

Isle of Wight County

Isle of Wight County Museum

Visit the Isle of Wight County Museum's newest exhibit Civil War in Isle of Wight.

Answer the following questions about Isle of Wight during the Civil War.

1. How many residence were there in Isle of Wight County in 1860:
   White:
   Enslaved:
   Free:
2. What was the last name of the seven brothers who joined the Confederacy?
3. What everyday product was in short supply during the Civil War?
4. What is the name of the slave that helped to save the court records for Isle of Wight?
5. After the war, many veterans had to deal with their war injuries. Name one tool an amputee could use.
6. Look for the 9-inch Dahlgren Shell. What ship was it fired from, and where was it aiming? Why do you think that it did not explode?
7. The model of the *Smith-Briggs* shows a steam paddlewheel that would have been used as a cargo boat on the Hudson River. It was converted to a gunboat at the Navy Yard in Portsmouth. List some of the things you would have to change or add to the ship to make it battle ready.

Battle of Smithfield Walking Tour

On Jan. 31, 1864, a unit of Union soldiers sailed up the Pagan River to investigate Confederate activity. After landing and heading inland, they encountered a small Confederate unit, and after a minor skirmish, the Union detachment headed back to Smithfield to leave the area. Their gunboat departed without them forcing the soldiers to spend the night. Confederate Maj. N.A. Sturdivant took the opportunity to capture the Union troops. On Feb. 1, a skirmish along Main Street ensued. During the three-hour engagement, the Union gunboat *Smith-Briggs* arrived, and the Union troops attempted to escape. Capt. Joseph Norsworthy cut off the Union retreat with cavalry. The gunboat was destroyed by Confederate cannon fire, and the Union forces were captured.

Using the walking tour map of February 1, follow the routes the Confederate and Union forces used during the engagement.

1. The Isle of Wight County Museum's building was built in 1913. What other buildings do you think were not constructed at the time of the Battle?
2. What do you think happened to the captured Union troops?

Fort Boykin: Binoculars a Plus

In 1623, Capt. Roger Smyth constructed a fort to protect English settlements from Native Americans and Spaniards. Because of the elevation and view of the James River, this area was named The Castle. During the Revolutionary War, the fort was expanded and named Fort Boykin in honor of Maj. Francis Boykin. It was refortified during the War of 1812.

Between June 1861 and May 1862, the Confederate Army rebuilt and enlarged the fort as a part of their defensive system. It was one in a series of earthworks designed to prevent inland invasion by the Union, whose buildup at the mouth of the James River posed a severe threat to Richmond, the Confederate capital. On May 8, 1862, a flotilla of Union ships headed up the James River – including the ironclad USS Galena. Fort Boykin quickly found that its guns had too short of a range. After a few hours of bombardment, the Confederates spiked the cannons, blew-up the shot furnace and abandoned the fort.

After Fort Boykin was inspected by Union troops, it was left empty. The Confederate army then took it back as a signaling station. Lt. Jos. R. Woodley commanded 19 men on the lower James and Nansemond Rivers. The men were also charged with crossing the river to Hampton, Newport News and Williamsburg to gather intelligence. The signaling line went from Fort Boykin (three miles from Smithfield's telegraph office) to Fort Powhatan in Prince George County. They were equipped with one glass or telescope. There is no mention of using flags or lights. It is presumed that they did.

We know of Woodley and his men's activities from dispatches sent to Richmond.

> *June 23, 1863*
>
> *Off. Captain Lee:*
>
> *All quiet above Fort Boykin. The enemy in force opposite (O) Hog Island. Federal pickets on Jamestown Island. No movements in fleet of Newport News.*

As the Confederacy was able to establish information lines, the communications to Richmond became more detailed.

> *Fort Boykin,*
> *August 10, 1863.*
> *[Maj. Jas. F. Milligan:]*
>
> *Our scout from Norfolk could not get any reliable information about the Yankees' intention to evacuate Norfolk.*

They have one regiment at Deep Creek, and that place is well fortified. One regiment of infantry and one of cavalry (Eleventh Pennsylvania) at Oak Grove, 1 mile from Portsmouth. One regiment at Norfolk. The whole amount of forces at and around the cities is estimated at 4,000.

He saw the steamer that was fired into by our forces up the James River the other day. She was badly crippled-four shots into her, besides many bullets also.

A torpedo exploded while one of the gunboats was very near it, and the concussion of the water threw 14 men overboard, 3 of whom were drowned. One of the gunboats came to her assistance, and the captains of the first gunboat, thinking his boat was sinking, and in the attempt to jump on the steamer coming to his assistance was struck by a cannon ball from the shore and cut in two. This is Yankee news.

A regiment of 1,300 negroes left Fort Monroe for Charleston, August 8. Small-pox is said to be bad among the negroes at Norfolk. One English man-of-war and one Yankee are all the shipping at Fort Monroe. They are trying to raise the Cumberland.

Yours, respectfully, &c.,

Jos. R. Woodley,
Lieutenant, Commanding.

On April 9, 1864, the Confederate torpedo boat the CSS *Squib* attacked the USS *Minnesota*. The damage was minor but the *Squib* went up the Pagan River for shelter and then returned to Richmond. The Union commanders decided they needed to swipe the Isle of Wight area of Confederate soldiers/signalmen and try to find the *Squib*.

On April 13 and 14, gunboats were sent up the Nansemond and Pagan Rivers and to Fort Boykin to capture the Confederates and the torpedo boat. The Union forces landing at Fort Boykin were met by twenty-four men under Lt. Woodley. The Union forces had five men captured and the Confederate's had one.

The Fort Boykin signaling station began to alert the authorities in Richmond of a massive movement from Fort Monroe up the James River

Petersburg, May 5, 1864
General S. Cooper:
The following dispatch just received from Fort Boykin:

Four monitors, 1 double turret (the Atlanta), 5 gun-boats, 2 iron-clads, 59 transports of different sizes, carrying from 500 to 1,000 troops each, and they are still coming up; also 3 pontoon rafts.

J.R. Woodley
Signal Officer

Petersburg, Va., May 27, 1864
(Received 12:50a.m. 28th.)

Capt. John M. Otey,
Assistant Adjutant-General:
Captain: My courier arrived this a.m. from my scouts at Fort Boykin, and reported that since Sunday a number of transports have passed Fort Boykin with troops on board, estimated by them between 3,000 and 5,000. In my dispatch to the general I estimated them at about 4,000. You will perceive by the inclosed[sic] *report to me that they are taking all they can from Norfolk and Portsmouth. Four transports went down the river on Monday with wounded, and one yesterday. Transports are continually passing up with stores, forage, and ordnance. Yesterday fourteen pontoon-boats left Old Point for Butler. They were towed on canal barges by steamers.*

Jas. F. Milligan
Major and Signal Officer

What major engagement was the Union preparing for? The Siege of Petersburg: June 9, 1864 to March 25, 1865. The official dispatches continued with Fort Boykin reporting troop and supply movement up the James River.

As a signaling station, information could be provided to Richmond on the Union movements on the James River. Looking down the James River can you see Newport News? The James River Bridge? Are there any vessels on the James River today? If so, how well can you see them?

Fort Huger

As part of the Confederate defense of the James River, Fort Huger was constructed on a bluff upriver from Fort Boykin and across from the Mulberry Island fortification. The fort was named for Confederate Gen. Benjamin Huger, Commander of the Department of Norfolk. Local slaves and free blacks helped dig the fortification, and it was armed with heavy artillery. After the USS *Galena* fired on Fort Boykin, the flotilla continued upriver to Fort Huger. After two hours of bombardment and another attack on May 14, the Confederates spiked the cannons and abandoned the fort.

African-American Population

The African-American population in Isle of Wight County during the Civil War consisted of both free and enslaved people. The free population was well established, and many families lived on farms throughout the county.

Free African-Americans and Fort Huger. The Confederate Army constructed a fort near Harden's Bluff, across the James River from Mulberry Point, to fire upon Union vessels. Construction of the fort was difficult due to lack of manpower for the clearing of trees, digging of trenches and placement of the weapons. The Confederate Army rented slave labor and hired free black laborers. Records of their payment show that these men worked for 50 cents a day.

There are two payrolls produced by Acting Paymaster James Maurice: one for slaves and one for "sundry persons," free men hired by the Confederate Engineering Department to work on Fort Huger.

Questions

Looking at both lists, what are some of the similarities between the two working conditions?
Who receive the payment for the day's work?
In looking at the lists, can you tell if any of the workers are related?
On average, how many days a month did the slaves work?
On average, how many days a month did the free men work?
Why do you think some of the free men bought tobacco and shoes from the Confederacy?
On the slave list, what other services are noted?
What do the other services tell us about the status of slaves in Isle of Wight?

Looking at the *Notice: Pay Office Engineer Department of VA*. When was the pay officer going to arrive at T.B. Bourne's residence near Day's Point, Smithfield and Zuni on N(orfolk) and P(ortsmouth) R.R.?

Do you think the free men were treated fairly?

Read the letter from B.J. Gray to James Maurice. What tone does the letter have?

Pay Roll of Slaves from Isle of Wight County employed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, for Coast, Harbor and defences, on the defensive works

At Hardy's Bluff in the month of August 1861

We, the undersigned, acknowledge to have received of 1st Sect. James Maurice, Acting Paymaster, Eng. Dept. the amounts set opposite our names respectively, in full payment for the services of our Slaves for the specified, having signed duplicate receipts.

From Whom Hired	Names	Occupation	Time Employed Days	Rate of Pay Per day	Amount for each slave	Net Amount for each slave
Edwin White	Levy	Carpenter	23 ½	1.00	23.50	23.50
	Willis	"	25	"	25.00	25.00
	Roderick	"	25	"	25.00	25.00
			73 ½		**73.50**	**73.50**
William Hall	James	Labourer	17 ½	.50	8.75	8.75
	Charles	"	17 ½	"	8.75	8.75
John E. Thomas	Solomon	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	James	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Henry	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Burwell	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Reuben	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Ben	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Mike	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Leonard	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Edmund	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
	Abraham	"	10 ½	"	5.25	5.25
E. A. Madera	Isaac	"	19 ½	"	9.75	9.75
	John	"	18 ½	"	9.25	9.25
	Alfred	"	17	"	8.50	8.50
	Moses	"	20 ½	"	10.25	10.25
	Henry	"	21	"	10.50	10.50
	Edmund	"	17	"	8.50	8.50
E.P. Crenshaw	Robert	"	15 ½	"	7.75	7.75
	2 horse wagon	Hauling	21 ½	2.00	43.00	43.00
James Branch	1 mule cart & driver	Hauling	4	1.50	6.00	6.00
			294 ½		**183.50**	**183.50**
	Carpentry	**$73.50**				
	Labor	**183.50**				
		257.00				

Pay Roll of sundry persons free negroes from Isle of Wight Co. employed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, for Coast, Harbor and defences, on the defensive works

At Fort Huger in the month of September 1861

We, the undersigned, acknowledge to have received of 1st Sect. James Maurice, Acting Paymaster, Eng. Dept. the amounts set opposite our names respectively, in full payment for the services of our services for the specified, having signed duplicate receipts.

Names	Occupation	Time Employed Days	Rate of Pay Per Day	Amount	Deductions On What Account	Deductions Amount	Net Amount
Thomas Aldiman	Labourer	21	.50	10.50	2 lbs. Tobacco	1.00	9.50
Henry Briggs	"	22 ½	"	11.25			11.25
Peyton Bailey	"	14 ½	"	7.25			7.25
W.J.W. Bailey	"	20	"	10.00	1 pr. Shoes	2.25	7.75
George Bailey	"	23	"	11.50			11.50
William Butler	"	12 ½	"	6.25			6.25
Mills Butler	"	6 ½	"	3.25			3.25
Ansom Bowman	"	23 ½	"	11.75	1 lb. Tobacco	.50	11.25
John Bowser	"	23 ½	"	11.75			11.75
Henry Barber	"	23	"	11.50			11.50
Allen Crocker	"	2	"	1.00			1.00
Silas Charity	"	24 ½	"	12.25	1 lb. Tobacco	.50	11.75
Beverly Clayton	"	21 ½	"	10.75	1 pr. Shoes	2.25	8.50
Ben Drew	"	16 ½	"	8.25	1 lb. Tobacco	.50	7.75
Joseph Davis	"	24 ½	"	12.25	1 lb. Tobacco	.50	11.75
Henry Gwaltney	"	14 ½	"	7.25			7.25
Isaac Green	"	5 ½	"	2.75			2.75
Gilbert Green	"	5 ½	"	2.75			2.75
Peter Gwaltney	"	19 ½	"	9.75			9.75
Robb Hill, Jr.	"	12	"	6.00	1 lb. Tobacco +1.87	2.37	3.63
Edica Holloway	"	23	"	11.50	1 pr. Shoes	2.25	9.25
Robb Hill	"	11 ½	"	5.75	1 lb. Tobacco	.50	5.25
James Holloway	"	23	"	11.50			11.50
Robb Holloway	"	23	"	11.50	1 lb. Tobacco	.50	11.00
		416 ½		**208.25**		**13.12**	**195.13**

Isle of Wight County, Dec. 10th- 1861

Mr. James Maurice

Dear Sir,

There are a considerable number of free negroes in this and the adjoining county that have not received their pay for work on Batteries. I have seen your advertisement stating in substance- that you would not visit this county again for the purpose of paying off and application must be made to you in Richmond.

Several free negroes have applied to me to get their pay, and I have concluded if you will not be in the county again this year for the purpose of paying off, I will go to Richmond for the money, as they all want a little change for Christmas. I shall make it generally known, and let all have the benefit of it that choose.

I suppose there is some particular formality, and I will thank you to give me the necessary information, so that I may be properly authorized to receive the money.

I would also like to be informed, whether you can be found in Richmond at any time or only at particular times. I can be there on the 20 or 24th, I prefer the 20th.

Please let me hear from you immediately to oblige.

Yours Respy,

B. J. Gray

P.S. I am the Com (Commissioner) of the Revenue for this county and know the free negroes generally.

NOTICE.

PAY OFFICE ENGINEER DEPARTMENT OF VA.,

Richmond, Va., December 20th, 1861.

For the purpose of paying all liabilities due by the Engineer Department of the State of Virginia, the Acting Pay Master will visit the following places, viz:

New Kent Court House on Wednesday afternoon, and Thursday and Friday 8th, 9th and 10th of January.
Tunstall's Station, on the Richmond and York River Railroad, on Saturday, 11th of January.
West Point, in King William County, on Monday, 13th January.
King & Queen Court House on Tuesday and Wednesday, 14th and 15th of January.
Fort Lowrey, on the Rappahannock River, on Friday, 17th of January.
Richmond County Court House on Saturday, 18th January.
Tappahannock, Essex County, on Monday, 20th January.
Urbanna, Middlesex County, on Wednesday, 22d January.
Gloucester Court House on Friday, 24th January.
Gloucester Point on Saturday, 25th January.
Yorktown on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 27th, 28th and 29th of January.
Warwick Court House on Thursday, 30th January.
Williamsburg on Friday, 31st January, and Saturday and Monday 1st and 3d of February.
Jamestown Island on Tuesday, 4th of February.
T. B Bourne's residence, near Day's Point, on Thursday, 6th February.
Smithfield on Friday, 7th February.
Zuni, on N. and P. R. R. on Saturday, 8th February.
Surry Court House on Monday, 10th February.
Cabin Point, Surry County, on Tuesday, 11th February.
Prince George Court House on Wednesday afternoon, and Thursday 12th and 13th February.
City Point, Prince George County, on Friday, 14th February.
Bowling Green, Caroline County, Tuesday, 18th February.
Fredericksburg on Wednesday, 19th February. Office will be at the Court House.
Richmond City on Thursday, Friday and Saturday 20th, 21st and 22d of February.
Farmville, in Prince Edward County, on Tuesday, 25th February.
Charlotte Court House on Thursday, 27th February.
Halifax Court House on Saturday, 1st March.
Clarksville, Mecklenburg County, on Monday, 3d March.
Jerusalem, Southampton County, on Wednesday, 5th March.
Suffolk on Friday and Saturday, 7th and 8th March.
Norfolk on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th of March.

Payments will be made at the above points on approved accounts, and pay rolls for supplies furnished and work done, prior to the 1st of October, 1861, on the following defensive works, viz:

Intrenched Camp, Navy Yard Defences, Oak Grove Intrenchment, St. Helena, Forts Norfolk and Nelson, Pinner's Point, Lambert's Point, Tanner's Creek, Boushe's Bluff, Craney Island and Sewell's Point, near Norfolk; Pig Point, Cedar Point, Barrett's Point and Town Point on the Nansemond River; Pagan Creek, Fort Boykin, on Day's Point, Fort Huger, at Hardy's Bluff, Mulberry Island and Jamestown Island, on the James River, in the vicinity of Williamsburg; Yorktown, Gloucester Point and West Point, on the York River, in the vicinity of Richmond, and Fort Lowrey, on the Rappahannock River; Western Branch Ferry, and Military Roads near Norfolk and Portsmouth.

In consequence of the Confederate States Government having taken charge of all Engineer operations, heretofore carried on by the State of Virginia, and assumed all liabilities incurred since October 1st, 1861, the Acting Pay Master will not again visit any of the above mentioned points for the purpose of making payments, it is therefore desirable that all parties having amounts due them should present themselves to receive payment. Those not presenting themselves will find difficulty in collecting their claims hereafter, as the unpaid rolls and accounts will go out of the possession of the Acting Pay Master shortly after his return to Richmond, about the middle of March.

The Acting Pay Master will *not* pay liabilities incurred since October 1st, as they will be paid by the C. S. Government. He will pay only such as were incurred previous to that date, including the balances due on the April, May and June pay rolls and accounts, for the defensive works in the vicinity of Norfolk, which were heretofore in the possession of Major J. A. Johnston, C. S. Quarter Master at Norfolk.

Officers and soldiers, and all others seeing this notice, will please make it known to all interested, particularly to Free Negroes, including any they may have in service.

Payments can be made only to the party entitled to payment, or his agent, duly authorized to sign and receipt for him by power of attorney in duplicate, signed in the presence of two witnesses, or of a Justice of the Peace, with his certificate attached. In the case of Free Negroes, or others making their mark ⋈, three witnesses will be required when not certified to by a Justice of the Peace. Any number of Free Negroes, who worked on the same battery, may sign the same power of attorney, provided the certificate of the J. P., or of the three witnesses, giving the names of the signers, is attached.

JAMES MAURICE,
1st L't Act'g Pay Master Eng'r Dep't of Va.

N. B.—Please post this notice.

Boykin's Tavern

Randall Booth and the Courthouse Records

On May 5, 1862, Clerk of the Circuit Court Nathaniel P. Young received authorization to remove the records from the courthouse to safeguard them. His slave Randall Booth hid the county records in Greenville and Brunswick counties. After the war, Booth returned the records to their rightful home. He was given his freedom and a position as caretaker of the courthouse. Young gave Booth a piece of land for a home, and Booth lived there until his death in 1904.

The Court records included property transfers, court cases, and decisions by County boards, death notices and many other documents related to daily life in the county. Why was it important to safe-guard the court records?

The Womble Family

The tavern then went through a series of owners and in 1861 William Womble purchased the property. Mr. Womble was an attorney and became a magistrate of Isle of Wight County in addition to sitting on the Board of Supervisors acting as chair from 1872-1881.

Womble continued to run a small tavern, especially during court days and he also rented out rooms. During the economic depression that followed the Civil War, he was forced to sell 103 acres of the plantation.

> *In 1866, on General Washington's birthday, a tournament was held at the Courthouse. This tournament included Isle of Wight, Nansemond, Southhampton and Surry knights and lasted two days with a ball held at Boykin's Tavern Plantation at the end of each day. The winner was crowned the Queen of Love and Beauty at the ball on the night following the tournament. There were three judges and three marshals. The knights jousted using meaningful names borrowed from the days of Chivalry.*
>
> ------ Martha Segar Jordan

This tradition continued January 7, 1867, when William A. Womble applied to the Justices of the County for permission to use the Courthouse for a tournament and ball to be held on the 24th and 25th of the month.

After the Civil War a culture developed in the South of chivalry and many people tried to emulate the customs of Medieval Europe. This was played out in jousting tournaments, balls and literature. This was portrayed by the popular author, John Fox in his works: *A Knight of the Cumberland* and *The Trail of the Lonsome Pine*. You can find copies at your local library.

A Duel at the Courthouse

September, 1866, Capt. James D. Hankins and Williams S. and James C. Underwood traded insults at a dinner party in Surry County. All three men were from Surry County and continued to encounter each other. At the Surry Courthouse James attempted to goad Hankins into a fight, his brother William stated, "Fight him anyway. If you don't I will. A dammed Appomattox coward." It is still unclear why insults were initially traded between the two parties. But it is thought that they knew each other well during the Civil War.

October 18, 1866, after many more insults and a threat of a duel, Capt. Hankins departed Surry for the Isle of Wight Courthouse with a loaded pistol. He and his party arrived at 2:00pm and he joined his friends at the bar in the tavern. At 4:00, he left the tavern and walked toward the courthouse carrying a stick. William Underwood emerged from the Clerk's Office and they approached each other. Witnesses' testified to the conversation, "Hankins said, 'You are the man who attacked me sometime since,' and Underwood replied, 'I am,' Hankins then stated, 'it is the first time I have had the opportunity to meet you.'" Both men drew their weapon and Hankins' gun miss fired, Underwood fired but missing the target. Underwood then grabbed Hankins around the neck and fired into his side, he then fired again into Hankins while he lay on the ground. Henry R. Parker ran to help Hankins and while grappling his pistol fired into the Clerk's Office. Hankins died a day later of his wounds.

William Underwood was tried for murder May 16, 1867 in which he pled, "Not Guilty." After two weeks the jury acquitted Underwood to the dismay and continued animosity between the families.

Two years after the surrender at Appomattox these men still held a grudge against each other's actions. Do you think this was common after the war?

What could William Underwood have meant by saying, "A dammed Appomattox coward?"

Dueling was illegal in Virginia, why do you think the jury acquitted William Underwood?

Walk over to the Clerk's Office and try to locate the whole and patch in the wall where Hankins' gun fired into the building.

1750s Courthouse

Segar Cofer Dashiell wrote, "When the Yankees had been removed, the citizens who had congregated on the wharf were allowed to come aboard the *Smith Briggs* and carry off anything they wanted. She was equipped with fine-cut glass with the name of the vessel cut on each piece and considerable supplies of tea, coffee and other goods...Capt. Norsworthy climbed to the top of the pilot house and wrung and twisted from its bracket the handsome carved and gilded eagle that adorned the vessel and brought it ashore."

On March 20, 1969, Dr. Herbert S. Southgate, grandson of Capt. Joseph Chapman Norsworthy, "presented this splendid trophy of war to the Isle of Wight Branch, APVA, and it is now housed in the old Isle of Wight courthouse in Smithfield."
Smithfield: A Pictorial History. Segar Cofer Dashiell, 1996.

After looking at the *Smith-Brigg's* eagle, explain why a golden eagle would be a good representation for a Union Gunboat.

How would Capt. Norsworthy go to the effort to retrieve it?