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Abstract Title: Toiling for the Confederacy: Impressed and conscripted workers at Fort Fisher

Abstract Description: In the past, a dearth of evidential records regarding enslaved and conscripted laborers at Fort Fisher meant research progressed piecemeal. Digital access to “slave payrolls” at NARA and the North Carolina Confederate Pension the State Archives of North Carolina opened new avenues of research into the men and women who toiled for the Confederacy in the Cape Fear region. As a key to defense and commerce (blockade running) in the Cape Fear, Fort Fisher was the focus of this labor force. The NC railroad network brought enslaved and conscripted men and women to Wilmington until the port was captured in early 1865. Upon arrival in the Cape Fear District, these laborers were sent to various projects - such as building river obstructions, handling war materiel to and from train cars, and building various defensive structures, like Fort Fisher. This presentation explores what current research has told us of these laborers.