



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

April 30, 2015

Save your confederate money, boys, the South shall rise again.
~ The Confederates (Barbershop Harmony Society 1956 champions)

Breaking the Rocks and Connecting the Dots

In Gareth McGrath's excellent article in the *Wilmington Star News* yesterday, he disclosed language buried in SB160, a bill pending in the State Senate, providing for the removal of a rock wall on the east side of the Cape Fear River running south of Fort Fisher. That wall had been built by the Corps of Engineers shortly after the Civil War to close New Inlet, the passage from the sea to the river used by blockade runners, in case the South should rise again. The bill would also shrink Zeke's Island Reserve, behind the wall, by moving the boundary 200 feet closer to the ocean.

So why would the State spend scarce funds to remove that wall now? It effectively keeps storms from cutting a new inlet through the very low areas of the Cape Fear extending down from Fort Fisher to Bald Head. Such an inlet, open to the sea, would lead to shoaling of the navigation channel and might destabilize the beaches. Mr. McGrath elicited the reason from Senator Michael Lee, the author of the language: "removing the Rocks would simply help restore the area's natural equilibrium." Senator Lee told Mr. McGrath: "The general idea is that they don't need to be there, so let's see if we can get them removed."

Hmmm. We have not encountered any action by the General Assembly in recent years to "restore natural equilibrium." Have you? Something's fishy.

We find a clue in the State Ports Authority's 2015 Strategic Plan: "Finally, an independent long range study needs to be initiated to examine a new strategic North Carolina seaport. The study will need to examine the benefits and advantages of Authority owned properties at Radio Island/Morehead City, *in coastal Brunswick County*, as well as other possible locations."

Dear reader, the Authority-owned property in coastal Brunswick County is just above Southport, directly across the Cape Fear River from that rock wall. That wall is what stands between the property and the sea. Removal would be the first step to a new inlet, a channel for that property.

So the North Carolina International Terminal rises again. The huge container terminal project started by the Ports Authority in 2005 and put to rest in 2010 in the face of strong opposition from six local municipalities, Representative Mike McIntire, and the State General Assembly, is back. After wasting \$50 million, the Ports Authority now plans to throw more money after it. According to the Ports Authority's consultants, they will have to throw \$4.4 billion.

Why? The market doesn't want it. The State wouldn't benefit. The real question is "Who?"

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