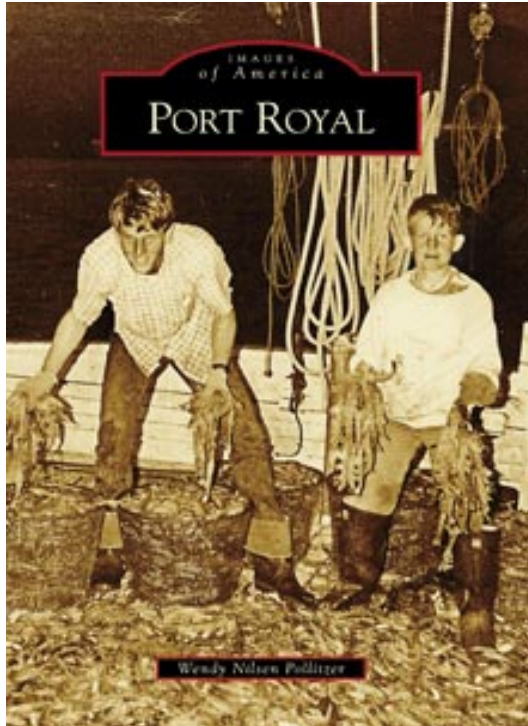


Port Royal: "No faurer or fyttter place"

Written by Wendy Nilsen Pollitzer
Tuesday, 08 November 2011 12:17

Excerpts from the book *Images of America: Port Royal*, by Wendy Nilsen Pollitzer



The Town of Port Royal is in the midst of making



significant history... again. The incorporated town has seen its ups and downs for over a century; and now, Port Royal is on the brink of prosperity. Many believe the current slate of events will be the propeller that finally puts the quaint coastal village on the map. With the sale of the port property, the completion of the Cypress Wetlands project and surprises planned for The Shed and Lemon Island Marina, the Town of Port Royal is prepared to stand tall and distinguished once more.

This article is the first in a two part series. To understand Port Royal's many circumstances of untimely fate, this first article will explain the history of the town to include information about the

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area's wealth of forts, the Port Royal Railroad, the phosphate industry, the Port Royal Navy Yard and US Marine Corps, the shrimping industry and finally, the Port of Port Royal. In the next issue, the second article will introduce the Town of Port Royal as it exists today... what's scheduled to ensue with the sale of the port property, how the Cypress Wetlands project and the Port Royal Sound Foundation will enhance quality of life and what the town is doing to create opportunity for economic success.



The Town of Port Royal was incorporated in 1874; the history of the Port Royal area, however, dates back to 1562, when Capt. Jean Ribaut, a French Huguenot, led an expedition with two vessels from Havre De Grâce, France, to prey on Spanish treasure fleets returning to Spain from Central and South America. Ribaut discovered a large harbor with marshes, rivers and inlets surrounding its entrance. He named the area Port Royal, the settlement Charlesfort, and the region *Carolus* in honor of King Charles IX of France. Ribaut wrote that he had found, "...no faurer or fyttter place...than Port Royal." He returned to France and left several men behind to defend the fort, but after several months, the men mutinied and sailed back to Europe. The Spanish destroyed Charlesfort to erase any claim the French had on the land and eventually established a permanent settlement in St. Augustine, FL. The Orista and Escamacu Indians, inhabitants before Ribaut's discovery, were once again the area's only dwellers. But, in 1669, the English settled the region, colonized present-day Beaufort, and later relocated to Albermarle Point in Charleston, where it was deemed safer by explorer Henry

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Woodward.



In 1727, the British built a fort they named Fort Frederick to protect South Carolina against French, Indian, and Spanish threats. By 1758, Fort Lyttleton was built at Spanish Point and Fort Frederick abandoned. Fort Frederick and the surrounding land was absorbed into Old Fort Plantation, owned by John Joyner Smith. When Union troops captured Beaufort and Port Royal during the Civil War, Smith's Plantation became headquarters to the first regiment of freed slaves recruited for Federal service. The site was renamed Camp Saxton. After the Civil War, the land was sold at a direct tax sale to the United States government. The Port Royal Railroad Company petitioned the state of South Carolina to construct a railroad from Augusta, GA to Port Royal Island, South Carolina, and also build a city at its terminus. Investors began speculating land to become the City of Port Royal. Hilton Head, though naturally located for a commercial port, was too exposed to storms, according to railroad experts. The editor of the *New South* newspaper described Land's End on St. Helena as the "only proper site for a *New City of the South*"

." As late as 1867, Land's End was expected to be the terminal of the railroad.

Port Royal Railroad Company ultimately chose acreage surrounding the Old Fort Plantation for the site of its terminus. In 1869, Stephen Caldwell Millett began construction on the railroad that spanned all of Port Royal Island, from the Coosaw River to the Battery River. It was completed in 1874, the same year a charter was issued for the Town of Port Royal. The town was laid out with wide streets, 25x100-foot lots and 200x500-foot blocks, with commercial and industrial development in mind. Port Royal grew quickly, boasting a cotton compress, reputed to be the largest in the world, numerous train elevators and warehouses, and a thriving port. Merchants took advantage of the natural depth and width of the Port Royal Harbor,

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