

29 Jun 2005

Union Blockade - Federal naval records tell us that there was considerable blockade running activity in the Little River Inlet area. We find in the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies* that Acting Volunteer Lieutenant George W. Browne, commander of the U.S. Bark *Fernandina* off Wilmington on 14 Dec 1861 reported, “*Sir: I have to report that on the evening of the 13th instant, off Little River Inlet, North [sic] Carolina, I observed numerous fires. Some forty were counted in one place, and several others in scattered positions of from 1 to 2 miles apart along the coast. At 7 p.m. I tacked and stood in to reconnoiter. On nearing the shore I observed several bodies of men, which caused me to believe there was an encampment of Confederate troops and the distant fires were their picket guard. After having burned a preparatory signal and receiving no answer, I opened fire with my starboard battery on the men and fired, several of the shots being heard to strike some hard substance very distinctly. At this time the vessel was within 700 yards of the beach in 4 fathoms of water; could see the men on shore running plainly. After firing three rounds with the starboard battery, tacked ship and fired one round of shot and one shell from port battery. By this time the fires were mostly extinguished. Secured the batteries and proceeded on our course. From the appearance of things, I am now led to believe the fires were signals for some vessel endeavoring to run a cargo. Having stood close in during the morning, and seen several men on the beach, they perhaps supposed I was the vessel expected, or one wishing to run the blockade.*” It should be mentioned that some U.S. naval reports erroneously referred to Little River Inlet as being in NC instead of SC. The state line is located just north of the mouth of the inlet.