Fort Lamar History

• By the spring of 1862, Union forces under the leadership of Brigadier General David Hunter, commander of the Union's Department of the South, were poised to launch an assault on Charleston by way of land. A Union victory at the Battle of Port Royal in November of 1861 provided the Federals an excellent staging area for organizing an attack on the city. Logistical information provided by Robert Smalls, a runaway slave who had commandeered a Confederate steamer, the C.S.S. Planter, opened the way for Union troops to advance on James Island.

• Capturing Charleston early into 1862 would have dramatically turned the tide of war in the Union's favor. The North could have utilized Charleston's large harbor and railroad connections to launch large-scale campaigns into the South's interior, potentially forcing the Confederacy to divert its eastern forces away from Virginia.

• To protect Charleston's southern flank, the Confederates, under the command of Major General John C. Pemberton, constructed a string of fortifications on James Island, extending from Fort Pemberton on the Stono River to a small fort built on the neck of the Secessionville peninsula. General Pemberton placed South Carolinian Brigadier General Nathan George "Shanks" Evans in charge of the island's defenses.

• The Secessionville fort, then known as the Tower Battery for the watchtower constructed at the site, was flanked by marsh on both sides and was built on the narrowest portion of the peninsula, which measured only 125 yards wide. Colonel Thomas G. Lamar was placed in command of the fort and tasked with overseeing its construction.

• On June 2, 1862, Union forces under the command of Brigadier General Henry W. Benham, who was placed in charge of the operation by General David Hunter, landed on the southwestern tip of James Island at the Grimball Plantation.

• A few minor skirmishes followed as Union forces began to unload supplies and organize troops, in turn prompting the Confederates to reinforce their fortifications.

• Worried that they did not have enough men to capture Charleston, General Hunter ordered General Benham to not advance on Charleston or Fort Johnson until he received reinforcements or direct orders to attack.

• Despite these instructions, in the early morning of June 16th General Benham launched a surprise attack on the Secessionville fort. This force, totaling around 6,500 men organized into two columns, was expected to easily overwhelm the Confederate garrison of 500.

• As the Union force approached the fort, they had to navigate through overgrown hedge rows and open cotton fields, slowing their advance. As the land approaching the fort narrowed, the left side of the Union column was pushed into the marsh, breaking the line and compressing the center, causing the second wave to run into the first.

• At this point, around 5:00 am, the fort's defenders were alerted to the Union's presence. As the Confederates rushed to their stations, Colonel Lamar took

personal command of the 8-inch Columbiad cannon. When the Union lines were within two hundred yards of the fort, they were met with the mighty Columbiad's blast.
• Despite sustaining heavy fire from the fort's cannons, the Union forces managed to climb onto the fort's parapets where they fought hand to hand with the Confederate defenders.
• The fort's garrison was quickly reinforced by surrounding Confederate battalions, who were able to repel the Union's foothold.
• The marshes inhibited the Union army from launching a successful flanking maneuver to assist the main assault, as the water and pluff mud proved to be impassable.
• Confederate artillery fire to the Union's flank, in addition to Confederate reinforcements, forced General Benham to order a retreat. Despite the battle only lasting around two and a half hours, losses were heavy.
• The Union sustained nearly 700 casualties, with 107 killed, while the Confederates experienced around 200 casualties, with 52 killed. Most of the battle's casualties occurred either on the narrow peninsula immediately in front of the fort or on the fort itself.
• After the battle, the Secessionville fort, which was referred to as the "Tower Battery" at the time of the battle, was renamed to Fort Lamar in honor of its commander. Colonel Lamar, who was wounded during the battle, died a year later from fever contracted while serving on the island.
• By July 8th, the Union army vacated James Island and returned to Port Royal.
• For disobeying orders and losing the battle, General Benham was court martialed and demoted.
• Fort Lamar was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Basic Map Skills Background
• A map is a symbolic representation of a place, drawn on a flat surface, and designed to display specific characteristics about a place in a visual way. Different types of maps tell us different things about a place, but all maps have a few common characteristics.
• All maps use symbols to represent information. Common map symbols include dots for cities and towns, solid lines to represent borders, rivers, or roads, and colors to represent a country's area or geography. Symbols are defined in a map's legend, or key.
• All maps are models of a place, and many maps have a scale to indicate the relationship between distances shown on the map and real distances on Earth. Scales are most commonly displayed as a graphic scale, or a horizontal line with increments that translate distance on the map to miles, kilometers or another unit of measurement.
• A common feature on maps is a grid of numbered lines, called latitude and longitude. These lines divide the world into imaginary sections. Lines of latitude run east to west, parallel to the Equator, while lines of longitude run north to

south, form pole to pole. Latitude and longitude are measured in degrees. The Equator is zero degrees latitude, while the Prime Meridian is zero degrees longitude. Lines of latitude and lines of longitude intersect to create coordinates, which are used to find a place's exact location in the world.

• Other important map elements include a map's title, author, date, and orientation. A map's title is important because it tells us what the map is depicting. A map's author and date are also important because they can inform the reader of a map's accuracy and / or its purpose. Orientation tells us direction on a map and is often indicated by an arrow pointing north or a compass rose.

• Because of the Earth's spherical shape, it is impossible to perfectly transfer the planet's surface to a flat map. Therefore, all maps suffer from some sort of distortion that alters the size, shape, and relative location of places depicted on a map. The larger the area a map covers, the greater its distortion will be.

• Projection refers to the way mapmakers, called cartographers, choose to depict a place on a flat map and what characteristics they want to accurately represent. For example, on a conical projection map, in which Earth is represented as a flattened cone, latitude lines appeared curved while lines of longitude appear straight. The result is that areas between the poles and the equator are accurately represented, while areas close to the equator or poles are distorted. Conversely, in a cylindrical projection, where the earth is represented as flattened cylinder, the areas near the equator are accurately depicted, but accuracy decreases in areas closer to the poles.

• Maps serve a variety of purposes and are designed to accurately display specific characteristics of a place, while omitting other types of information depending on the map's intended purpose. General references maps show important physical features of an area, such as the locations of cities, roads, mountains, rivers, and coastlines. Their primary purpose is to summarize the landscape and are useful for a variety of purposes. Thematic maps, on the other hand, only depict information on a specific topic or theme and are only useful for their specific purpose. An example of a thematic map could be the distribution of people's average income in a city via neighborhood, or the regional distribution of primary languages in a country.