was again heavy resistance from the 9th South Carolina. With no reinforcements, the 79th New York also retreated.

When these two regiments were forced to retreat, they left a significant percentage of their men who were killed, wounded, or captured. Most of the Federal casualties occurred in this initial assault.

As the first Federal wave collapsed and retreated, they hampered the second wave from attacking. While the main assault was taking place, the 3rd New Hampshire was attempting a flanking maneuver but they could not make a full assault due to the impassable marsh and pluff mud.

The battle began at approximately 4 o’clock in the morning and was over within three hours. There were 3500 Federal troops involved in the assault. The troops at Fort Lamar numbered approximately 1400. Federal casualties included 487 wounded, 107 killed and 89 missing. The Confederates suffered 204 casualties — 144 wounded, 52 killed and 8 missing.

A more human side to the Battle of Secessionville is the story of the 79th New York. Among the troops in the battle were two brothers, James and Alexander Campbell. Born in Scotland, they had emigrated to America in the 1850’s and had settled in Charleston and New York City respectively. After the war began, each had enlisted to serve his adopted homeland, and in June 1862, they found themselves in opposing armies on James Island.

James Campbell was 2nd Lieutenant of Company E, 1st South Carolina Battalion, the Charleston Battalion. His older brother Alexander was Sergeant and color bearer of the 79th New York. Each brother fought on the Secessionville earthwork without meeting the other. An unnamed James Campbell jumped to the parapet on this side of the fort and rolled a log down onto a group of charging Federals. He attempted an enemy rifle and continued fighting. Alexander Campbell planted the colors on the earthwork and kept them there until his regiment was forced to withdraw.

It was only after the battle that the Campbell brothers learned how close they had been to each other at Secessionville. Both brothers survived the war.

The Confederates had one African American noncombatant killed in the battle, Daniel Bellinger. When he discovered that his master, Lt. John Bellinger, had forgotten his pistol, he rushed forward with it. He fell shot and died about one week later.

If there was a predominant Confederate hero of the battle it was Thomas Lamar. Though Lamar and others at Secessionville received the official thanks of the Confederate Congress, that gesture came in February 1864, long after Thomas Gresham Lamar’s death from malaria on October 18, 1862.

The battery that he defended that June day was finally completed in the spring of 1864 and was named Fort Lamar in his memory. Colonel Lamar is buried in his hometown of Edgfield, South Carolina.

The fortifications that were completed following the battle of Secessionville served as a major deterrent to further assault by the Federals. Fort Lamar saw no significant action during the remainder of the war.

Today, hundreds of linear miles of battle earthworks survive in landscapes east of the Mississippi River, although they are often only a fraction of their original size and extent. The protection and interpretation of the earthworks at Fort Lamar are of major concern to Archaeologist and Managers with SCDNR and with the Fort Lamar Stewardship Committee. While management strategies have evolved through the years, the basic threats to earthworks have remained constant. The effects of natural processes, primarily erosion, have been overhauled by the consequences of human activity, which ranges from the indirect results of urbanization in the vicinity of earthworks to the direct impacts of interpretive, recreational, and landscaping activities. These threats place many earthworks in danger of loss over time. They are magnified by an uncertain future of financial, material, and human resources required that are to adequately preserve these fragile structures.

Fort Lamar is now part of the South Carolina Heritage Trust. The clearing of the land and maintenance of the area is done by the volunteer Fort Lamar Stewardship Committee. The anniversary of the Battle of Secessionville is observed at Fort Lamar on the Saturday nearest to June 16.

Please feel free to walk around the area. We do ask that you remain on the path and not climb on the earthworks or disturb any of the remains of the structures. The area on the other side of the parking lot is private property.

Fort Lamar is open for self guided tours from dawn to dusk everyday. Please come back and visit again.

For information on joining the Fort Lamar Stewardship Committee please call 803-734-3893 or visit the SCDNR website at dnr.sc.gov
The plan to attack Charleston from James Island was not new. A similar plan was used by the British during the Revolutionary War with the focus of that attack centered at Fort Johnson.

The Secessionville earthwork was advantageously located on a small peninsula with tidal creeks and marshes to the northwest, southeast, and northeast. Construction had begun in January 1862 under the direction of Colonel Lewis M. Hatch, whose regiment, the 23rd South Carolina Infantry, was the larger of the two major works. The other earthwork, near the center of the island and the planters’ summer village at Seccessville, was a less strategic position than Fort Pemberton and was a lower priority. It was still uncompleted and unnamed.

The James Island defenses were new and relatively weak. Most of them had been constructed since January 1862 and were still unfinished. The interior defenses were anchored at each end by large earthworks. Fort Pemberton, at the northwest end of the island and overlooking the Stono River, was the larger of the two major works. The other earthwork, near the center of the island and the planters’ summer village at Seccessville, was a less strategic position than Fort Pemberton and was a lower priority. It was still uncompleted and unnamed.

The Secessionville earthwork was advantageously located on a small peninsula with tidal creeks and marshes to the northwest, southeast, and northeast. Construction had begun in January 1862 under the direction of Colonel Lewis M. Hatch, whose regiment, the 23rd South Carolina Infantry, was virtually the only Confederate force on James Island.

The fort became known as Tower Battery. It was still uncompleted and unnamed.

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