

COLE ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

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## HISTORIC COLE ISLAND SOUTH CAROLINA

Accessible only by boat, within minutes of Sunset Cay Marina on Folly Beach, Cole Island offers an extraordinary opportunity for preservation, conservation, or legacy stewardship.

*Listing Agent:*

**SOUTHEASTERN PROPERTY GROUP:**

*Presents a rare opportunity  
for a conservation-minded buyer,  
to preserve one of the  
Lowcountry's most extraordinary  
privately-owned islands,  
where nature and history peacefully  
co-exist in a beautiful harmony.*

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## LOCATION:

Cole Island sits southwest of Charleston, near the mouth of the Atlantic Ocean at the Stono Inlet, where the ocean meets the Stono and Folly Rivers. The island's 300-acre footprint, rests between Folly Island and Kiawah Island, near Bird Key Sanctuary. The island's surrounding wetlands are part of the South Carolina Lowcountry salt-marsh ecosystem, supporting marine and coastal wildlife.

## HISTORY:

History acknowledges Cole Island as the "back" gatekeeper to Charleston with its strategic location on the Stono Inlet. Cole Island's historic past includes the remains of Ft. Palmetto (circa 1812), along with a documented American Civil War history of being occupied by both the Confederates and the Union.

## IMPROVEMENTS:

Owner improvements include, rustic twin cabins, walking trails the length of the island shaded by a canopy of live oaks, a floating dock on Cole Creek, historical landmarks, and scenic sitting areas with breathtaking Lowcountry views.



## NATURAL BEAUTY:

At the mouth of the Stono Inlet, Cole Island rises from the marsh, where nature and history intimately co-exist in harmony. The island's beauty hides under a canopy of ancient live oaks, having bore witness to the island's history and time.

**Cole Creek**, also known as '**Mom' Sally Creek**, is a deep tidal creek on the eastern side of Cole Island, vital to the island's ecosystem, supporting both marine and coastal wildlife. Cole Creek is a known location where **bottle-nose dolphins** engage in **strand feeding**, a learned hunting technique in which dolphins intentionally beach themselves on marsh banks to capture fish.





## FORT PALMETTO:

The British siege of Charleston during the American Revolutionary War exposed the city's vulnerability through its southwestern waterways.

In response, Fort Palmetto was a circular fortress constructed out of tabby concrete during the War of 1812 as part of Charleston's coastal defense. The fortress provided a defense against ships entering from the Atlantic Ocean and accessing the Stono River, providing entry to Charleston Harbor from the southwest.

The Hurricane of 1911 destroyed the fortress, leaving only remnants of the circular fort's footprint of tabby walls in the marsh.



*Fort Palmetto's remains are protected by:*  
**SOUTH CAROLINA BATTLEGROUND PRESERVATION TRUST.**



## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: *Confederate Occupation*

During the American Civil War, Cole Island played a strategic role by supporting Confederate and Union operations around Charleston.

The occupation of Cole Island meant control over the Stono and Folly Rivers. History recognizes Cole Island as the *back* gatekeeper to Charleston by way of the Stono Inlet from the Atlantic Ocean. In contrast to Charleston Harbor's Fort Sumter, the *front* gatekeeper to Charleston's primary maritime entrance.



### **JOHNSON HAGOOD**

*80th Governor of South Carolina and  
The Citadel's Stadium Namesake:  
Johnson Hagood Stadium*

The Confederates would be the first to occupy Cole Island. Under Confederate Colonel **Johnson Hagood's** command, Cole Island was developed into a Confederate military training camp and fortified post. Facilities constructed on the island included barracks for up to 1,000 men, bombproof batteries, commissary and quartermaster buildings, bakehouses, and a hospital.

Hagood, Johnson. "[Memoirs of the War of Secession From the Original Manuscripts of Johnson Hagood, Brigadier-General, C. S. A.](#) The State Company, Columbia, S. C. (1910), pp. 51-62.



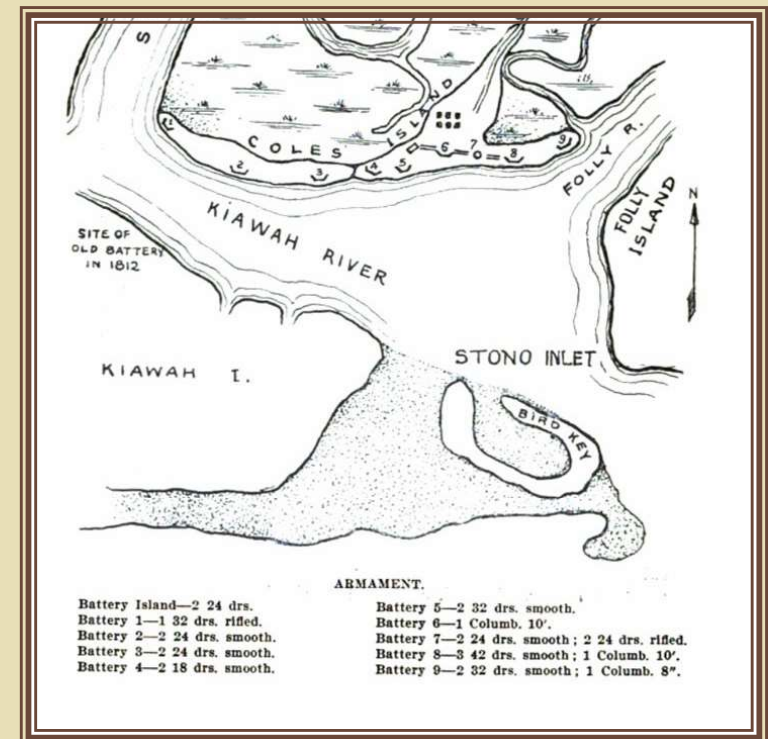
## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Confederate Occupation*

In anticipation of Union advances, Colonel Hagood received authorization from Brigadier General Ripley to construct a series of **nine defensive bomb proof batteries** along Cole Island's perimeter, facing the Stono Inlet, between the Folly and Kiawah/Stono Rivers.

**Batteries 1-3** were situated on what is now known as Snake Island, then considered part of Cole Island's southwestern end.

The historic **Fort Palmetto**, constructed during the War of 1812, was designated **Battery 7**.





## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

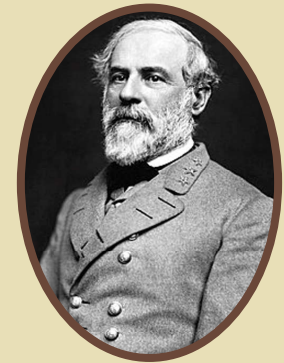
### *Confederate Occupation*

In the spring of 1862, Cole Island became a topic of a political debate within the Confederacy. General **Robert E. Lee**, then Confederate Commander-in-Chief in South Carolina, visited Cole Island and inspected its batteries.

General Lee's assessment was that Cole Island should be abandoned. Lee believed the earthworks would not withstand the bombardment by the Union Navy's gunboats, resulting in the loss of soldiers and artillery.

### **ROBERT E. LEE**

*Confederate Commander-in-Chief  
in South Carolina who later became  
The Commander of the  
Confederate States Army*



In response, Brigadier-General **Roswell S. Ripley** and Colonel **Johnson Hagood** advocated for further strengthening Cole Island into a self-sustaining fortress to block Union naval passage through the Stono Inlet. General Ripley's request for additional artillery and ammunition was denied.

Hagood, Johnson. "[Memoirs of the War of Secession From the Original Manuscripts of Johnson Hagood, Brigadier-General, C. S. A.](#) The State Company, Columbia, S. C. (1910), p. 51-62.



## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Confederate Occupation*

Under Union pressure of an attack on Charleston, Confederate Major-General **John C. Pemberton** issued the final order to **Brigadier-General Ripley** to abandon Cole Island on **May 6, 1862**, and relocate the island's defenses closer inland to defend Charleston.

Pemberton's order would prove to be detrimental to the Confederates. The consequences of his order would result in the removal and relocation of both Ripley and Pemberton from South Carolina.

Hagood, Johnson. "Memoirs of the War of Secession From the Original Manuscripts of Johnson Hagood, Brigadier-General, C. S. A." The State Company, Columbia, S. C. (1910), pp. 51-62.



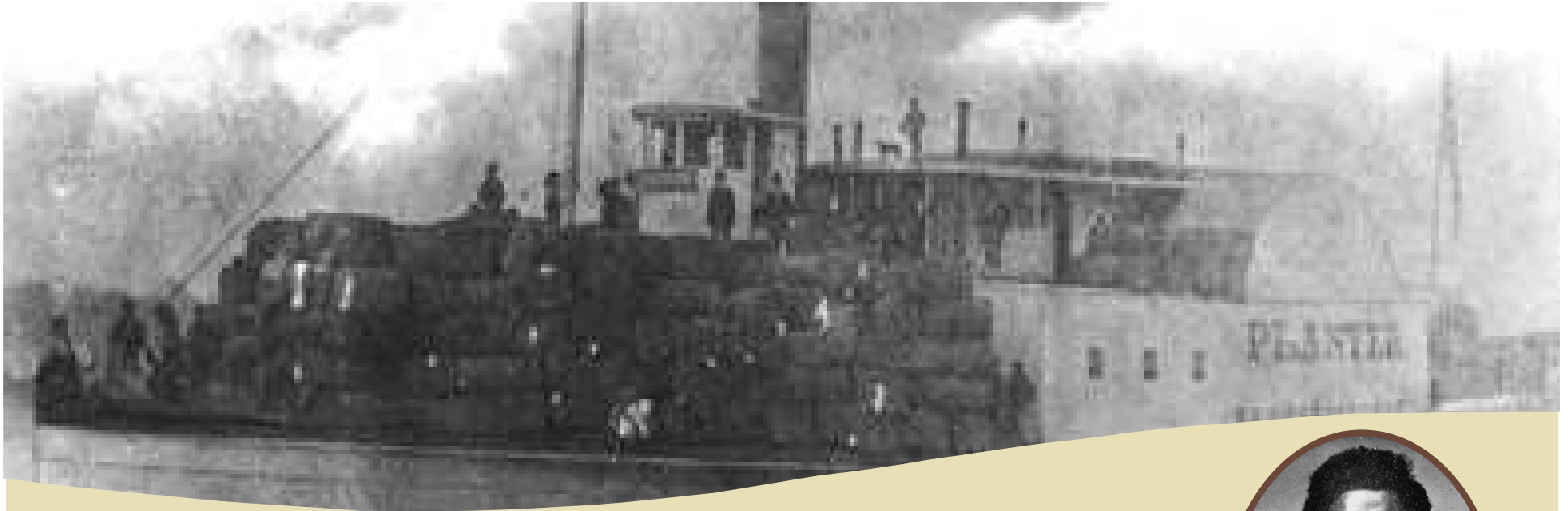
**JOHN C. PEMBERTON**

*Major General of the  
Confederate Department of  
South Carolina and Georgia*



**ROSWELL S. RIPLEY**

*Confederate Brigadier General*



## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Robert Smalls's Heroic Escape to Freedom*

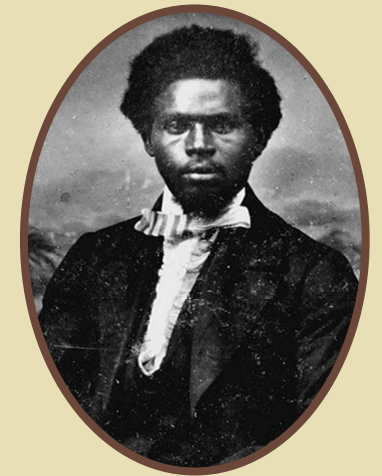
On **May 12, 1862**, the Confederate Steam Ship (C.S.S) *Planter*, crewed by enslaved men, including **Robert Smalls**, was ordered to remove the remaining artillery, officially disarming and abandoning Cole Island.

That night, *C.S.S. Planter* was moored in Charleston Harbor, loaded with artillery removed from Cole Island earlier that day.

While the *Planter's* captain and officers were ashore, **Robert Smalls**, an enslaved crewman, seized the opportunity to escape.

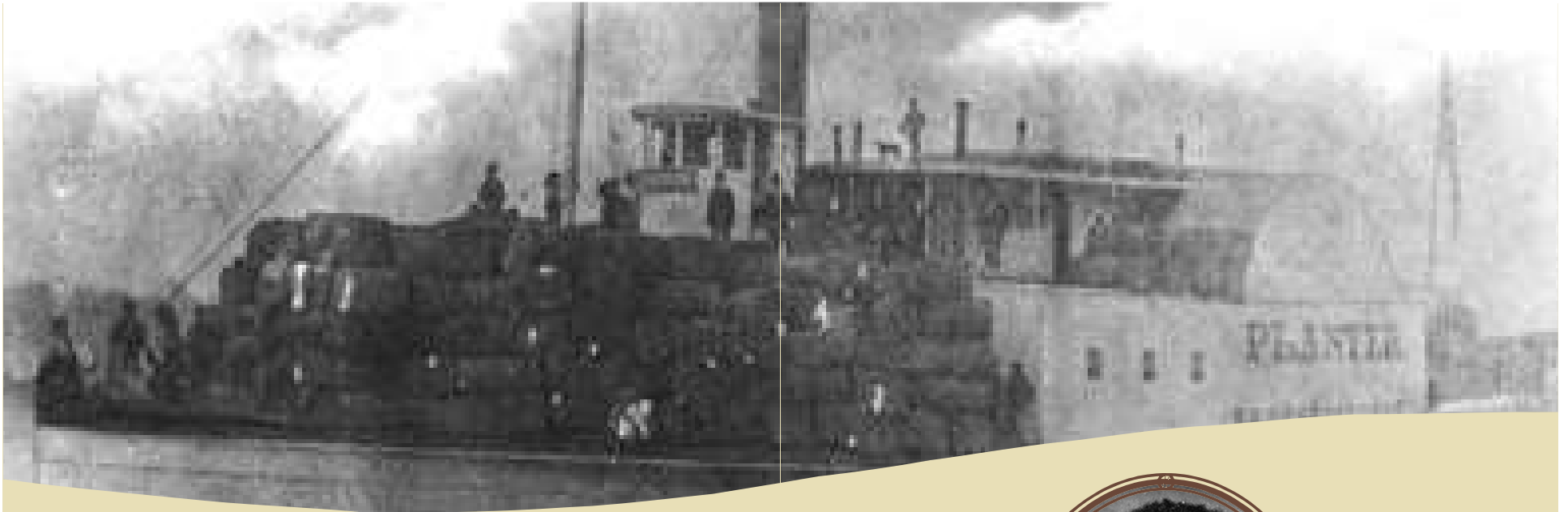
## **ROBERT SMALLS**

*Elected to Congress in 1874 as a representative from South Carolina and served five terms.*



Smalls successfully piloted the *Planter* to freedom through Charleston Harbor and past Confederate checkpoints undetected. He delivered his family, the ship's enslaved crew, and the *C.S.S. Planter*, along with its cargo, including Cole Island's artillery, to the Union Navy in the early morning hours on **May 13, 1862.**

Terrell, Bruce G. "The Search for Planter, the Ship That Escaped Charleston and Carried Robert Smalls to Destiny". NOAA Repository Library.



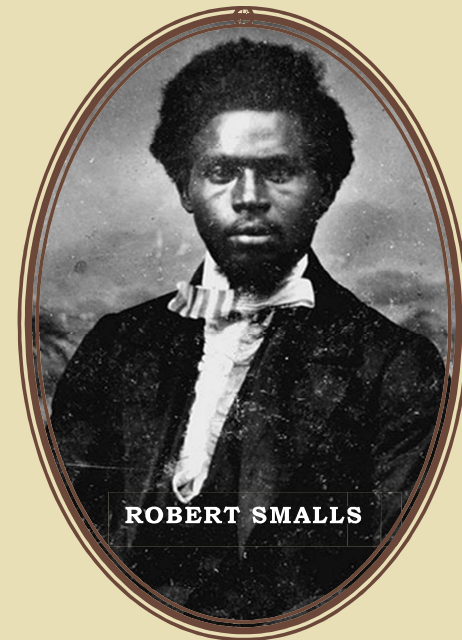
## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Robert Smalls's Heroic Escape to Freedom*

**Robert Smalls** provided intelligence to the Union indicating that Cole Island had been abandoned by the Confederates and the Stono Inlet was unguarded.

As a result, on **May 20, 1862**, Union forces bombarded Cole Island. The Union followed by occupying Cole Island, and securing control over the Stono Inlet until the end of the Civil War on **April 9, 1865**.

Terrell, Bruce G. "The Search for Planter, the Ship That Escaped Charleston and Carried Robert Smalls to Destiny". NOAA Repository Library.



*On **May 15, 2023**, South Carolina's Governor Henry McMaster signed a bill recognizing May 13th as **Robert Smalls Day**, the date enslaved Robert Smalls made his heroic escape to freedom on **May 13, 1862**.*



*McLeod Plantation  
James Island, South Carolina*

## SELF-EMANCIPATION:

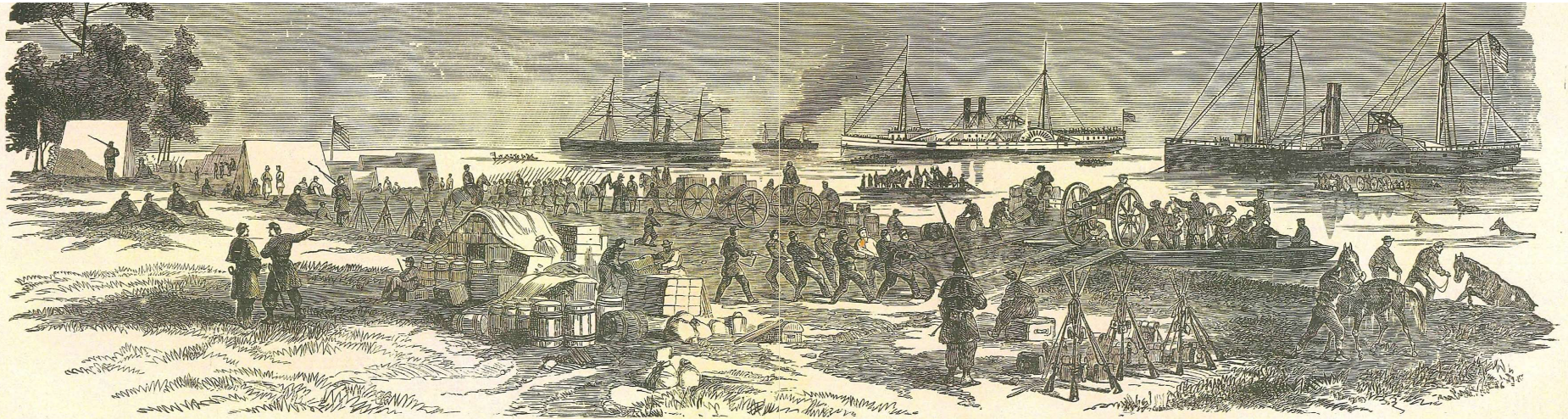
In late May 1862, Cole Island became one of the first footholds for self-emancipation for the enslaved people in the Charleston area. Courage would have spread quickly following Robert Smalls's heroic escape to freedom, and rumors even quicker of the Union occupying Cole Island. For the enslaved, freedom had never been so close with Cole Island being within ten miles of the City of Charleston.

The night of **May 25, 1862**, nine enslaved individuals, ((Syphax (55), Beck (55), Tony (40), Ben (35), Rose (24), child (14 months), William (28), York (34), Molly (25)),

would make their escape from McLeod Plantation on James Island to Cole Island. It is believed they traveled unnoticed by boat along the Stono River, taking cover when possible through the marshes, following back-winding creeks, making their way towards Cole Island.

**\*On May 28, 1862**, Commander J. B. Marchand on the U.S.S. James Adger reported that a group around 400 self-emancipated individuals were colonized on Cole Island in need of provisions, and protection from the Confederates. The nine enslaved people who escaped McLeod plantation were likely part of the growing colony on Cole Island.

\*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. Series I - Volume 13. Washington: Government Printing Office (1901). p.50-51.



THE ADVANCE UPON CHARLESTON, S. C.—PIONEER MOVEMENT—LANDING OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS UPON COLE'S ISLAND, MARCH 28TH, 1863.  
FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.

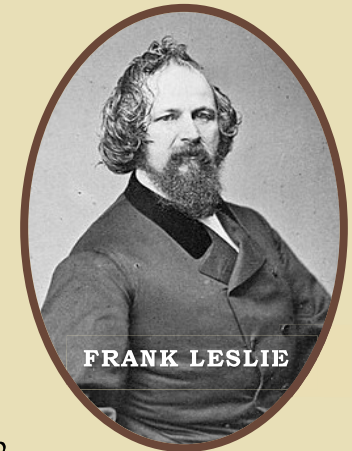
On the morning of the 28th of March, 1863, the One Hundredth New York Volunteers, Colonel G. B. Danby, landed on Cole's Island, at the foot of the Eighteenth Army Corps, and may be considered the pioneer of the grand expedition against Charleston. A reconnoissance of the island from John's Island to James Island, and also evidences of numerous concealed works on Folly and James Islands, where the Confederates were entrenched. John's Island is to the southwest of James Island, and may be said to include Seabrook and Cole's Island, which are the most important points of the coast.

## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Union Occupation*

While Confederate leadership believed the abandonment of Cole Island was justified, they underestimated the strategic advantage it provided the Union. The Union considered control over Cole Island and the Stono Inlet vital for operations against Charleston, and used it to plan and launch attacks in the region.

*Illustration published by Frank Leslie of Union troops landing on Cole Island on March 28, 1863, in preparation for an attack on Charleston.*



The Union would set up camp with tents, cookhouses, a bakehouse, and a chapel. Cole Island provided comfort and shelter for hundreds of Union soldiers, helping them through the winter of 1863 and until the end of the war in 1865.

McGrath, Franklin (1919). *The History of the 127th New York Volunteers*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Library. p. 78 .



*Battle of Fort Wagner on Morris Island  
By Kurz & Allison*

## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Union Occupation*



**ROBERT C. SHAW**  
*Commander of the  
54th Massachusetts  
Infantry Regiment*

On **July 17, 1863**, hundreds of Union Soldiers would be waiting on Cole Island to attack Fort Wagner on Morris Island, including the **54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment**. The 54th Massachusetts was one of the first regiments of enlisted African American men.

*Glory*, the Oscar-winning film, immortalizes the bravery of **Colonel Robert C. Shaw** and the **54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts** spotlighting their place in history. Colonel Shaw's leadership and the 54th Massachusetts's bravery were also legendary in their own time, inspiring 180,000 additional African American enlisted men to fight on behalf of the Union, turning the tide of the Civil War.



*Battle of Fort Wagner on Morris Island  
By Kurz & Allison*

## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:

### *Union Occupation*



**ROBERT C. SHAW**  
*Commander of the  
54th Massachusetts  
Infantry Regiment*

The **54th Massachusetts** arrived on Cole Island on **July 17, 1863** around 5:00 a.m. That afternoon at 4:00 p.m., Colonel Shaw sat on the shore of Cole Island and wrote what would be his last letter to his wife, **Annie Kneeland Haggerty**.

Colonel Shaw would be killed the next day, **July 18, 1863**, in battle leading the 54th Massachusetts in the charge on Fort Wagner.

"Letters from the Soldiers and Officers of the 54th Massachusetts." Written in Glory.



1741 King's Grant Survey

## HERITAGE:

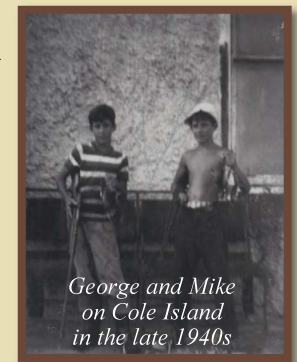
Cole Island's early inhabitants were collectively classified as the "Cusabo" to identify the network of tribes living between Charleston Harbor and the Savannah River.

During the Colonial period, Cole Island's ownership began with a 1741 King's Grant. King George II of Great Britain granted the parcel of land to a planter named **Robert Cole**, who became the island's namesake.

A 1921 survey separates Snake Island, Pumpkin Island, and Cole Island. Following the recording of this plat, Cole Island will be officially referred to as "Cole Island," rather than "Cole's Island" or "Coles Island."

After World War II, identical twin brothers, Mike and George Buero, spent their boyhood summers working on Cole Island as commercial fishermen alongside their grandfather, uncle, and cousins. At that time, the twins and their family were guests of Cole Island's owner.

Cole Island is a special place where only Mother Nature can truly claim its ownership, but in 1994, Mike and George became the new stewards of Cole Island on their 58th birthday, along with Mike's son, Matt Buero. It was the twin brothers' childhood dream come true.



George and Mike  
on Cole Island  
in the late 1940s



## BUERO FAMILY STEWARDSHIP:

The Buero Family's stewardship focuses on reclaiming Cole Island's historical significance and preserving its natural beauty.

The family's stewardship includes: island walking trails, historical markers, cabins, dock, merchandise, branding, a website documenting island related stories and historical research, and the Cole Island Foundation for Preservation and Stewardship.



*To make a donation to  
Cole Island Foundation for  
Preservation and Stewardship visit:  
[www.coleislandfoundation.org](http://www.coleislandfoundation.org)*



*To learn more about Cole Island  
visit the family's website:  
[coleislandsc.com](http://coleislandsc.com)*



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in a beautiful harmony.*

*Contact Listing Agent:*

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