

Today in Columbus History:

On September 30, 1864, an article appeared in the Columbus Times entitled "City Fortifications." This article and one from the day before entitled "The Last Ditch" were responding to a third article in the Daily Columbus Enquirer (not available in Galileo for 1864). Apparently, the Enquirer did not like the idea of having rifle pits constructed so close to the city. The new fortifications were in response to the threat Columbus felt after Atlanta surrendered to General Sherman's forces earlier in the month. The Times admonished the Enquirer for not having more faith in the people in charge of the project – Colonel Von Zinken, Colonel Strother and Captain Hazlehurst.

The Library of Congress has a couple of crude maps from 1864 that show Columbus' defenses, for the most part, to the west, on the Alabama side of the river. Later, a map from the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion shows rifle pits to the east of the city. They started near the intersection of Washington and Troup (16th St. and 3rd Ave.) and extending south and east. These would be the fortifications discussed in the article.

A better map of the Columbus fortifications comes from a regimental history of the 4th Iowa Cavalry that participated in the Battle of Columbus (Google Books didn't scan the fold-out map in the book but I have a copy reproduced by a local business that used to be located downtown). It shows a more complete picture of the proposed rifle pits arcing south all the way to Fulton or 5th St.

The main problem with these extensive fortifications was the lack of troops to man them. In fact, they turned out to be unnecessary as the eventual Union attack came from the Alabama side of the river. Those western fortifications were likewise undermanned which led to the Confederate defeat in the last major military engagement of the Civil War.

The article mentions three people Colonel Von Zinken, Colonel Strother and Captain Hazlehurst. Colonel Leon Von Zinken was the well-known commandant of the post at Columbus during the Battle of Columbus. He was a former Prussian Army officer who joined the Confederate service in Louisiana. Wounded at Chickamauga, he recovered in time to participate in the Chattanooga Campaign and then became commandant of the post at Marietta, Georgia. He was reassigned to Columbus in early September 1864 where he finished out the war. Afterwards, he returned to New Orleans where he died in 1871.

Colonel John A. Strother was the husband of Mary Ann Flournoy, They married in Dallas Co. Alabama (near Selma) in 1847 and lived there prior to the war. He organized the Muscogee Mounted (or Border) Rangers in February 1861. They became Company B of the 20th Georgia Regiment with Strother as their Captain. He resigned in January 1862 and returned to Columbus for an unspecified reason but it may have been due to his wife's health. She passed away in Columbus in July of that that year. Strother remained in Columbus and took part in defending the city through the end of the war. Afterward, Strother relocated to Mississippi where he died in 1879. He was returned to Columbus for burial in the J. F. Flournoy lot in Linwood Cemetery, next to his wife.

Captain George Hall Hazlehurst was Chief Engineer in Columbus in the latter part of 1864. Born in Glynn County, Georgia in 1824, he was a surveyor and civil engineer in the railroad business before the war. He holds the distinction of having two towns named after him. Before the war, he was building a railroad linking New Orleans and Chicago when the town of Hazlehurst, now the seat of Copiah County, Mississippi sprouted along the route. During the war, he joined the Army of Tennessee as part of the

Engineer Corps. He came to Columbus in August 1864 to connect the Girard and Muscogee railroads and allow easier transfer of supplies to the army. He became chief engineer in Columbus and was instrumental in engineering the fortifications in question. After the war, he resumed his civilian railroad work as president of the Macon and Augusta railroad and then the Macon and Brunswick. A second city named for him developed where the line from Macon met the line from Brunswick in what is now Hazlehurst, Georgia the seat of Jeff Davis County. He died in Chattanooga in 1883 after catching malaria while working on the Mississippi Valley railroad.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

CITY FORTIFICATIONS.—In our brief notice of the Enquirer Local's strictures on the city fortifications we inadvertently omitted to touch the main point we started out for, to-wit: to put in a plea for justice to the brave and accomplished officers who undertook to plan the city defenses. The works were planned by Col. Von Zinken, and Captain Hazlehurst, both of whom have probably seen as much service and had as much experience in such matters as any two men that could have been selected from the army of Tennessee, and executed by Col. Strother, who is another brave and accomplished officer, as all our people well know. We have no doubt that in maturing their plans for these defenses, they were actuated by motives of pure patriotism, and had in view what they deemed the best interest of this section. Of course the first thing to be considered in the formation of these plans, was the probable number of men that could be made available in action, and the lines were constructed with a view to such force. Even this inner line of entrenchments will constitute a line of two miles and a half in length, and, by a computation of our forces the disadvantages of a longer line will at once be seen.

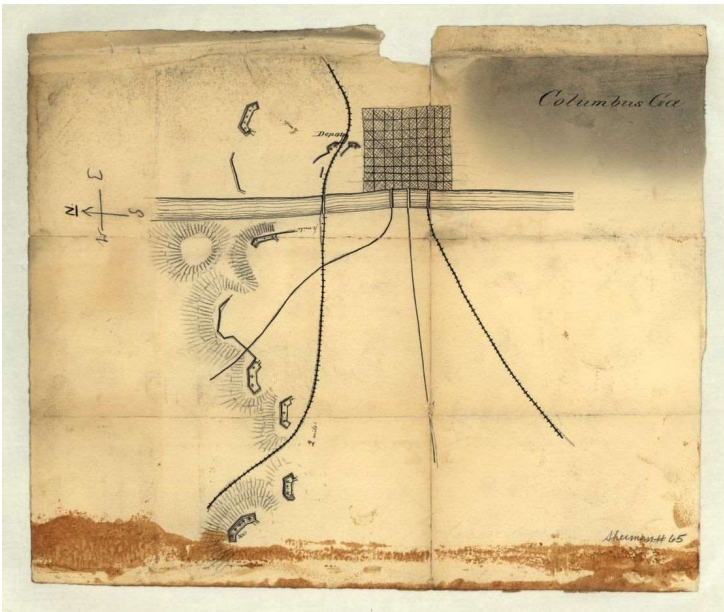
We have written this, not with a view to enter into controversy, because we believe the least said on the subject the better, but simply with a view to do justice to the brave officers who have this matter in charge, as a careful reading of the Enquirer's article will satisfy almost any one, that its reflections are calculated to do them injustice.

Article from the *Columbus Times* of September 30, 1864

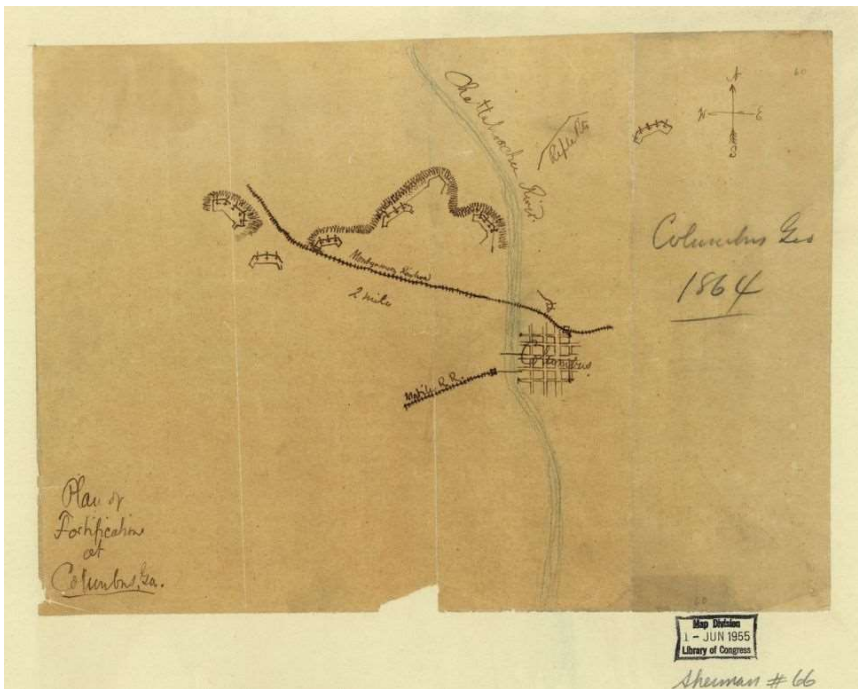
THE LAST DITCH.—Friend Jones complains of the fortifications being so near the edge of town. You know, Joe, there used to be said a great deal about fighting to “the last ditch.” We presume these trenches are intended for advocates of that policy.

We presume these ditches are being dug under direction of Col. Von Zinken. If so, he evidently knows what he is about. His enlarged military experience doubtless enables him to understand the wants of the city, and to take those steps best calculated to insure her defence.

Article from the *Columbus Times* of September 29, 1864.



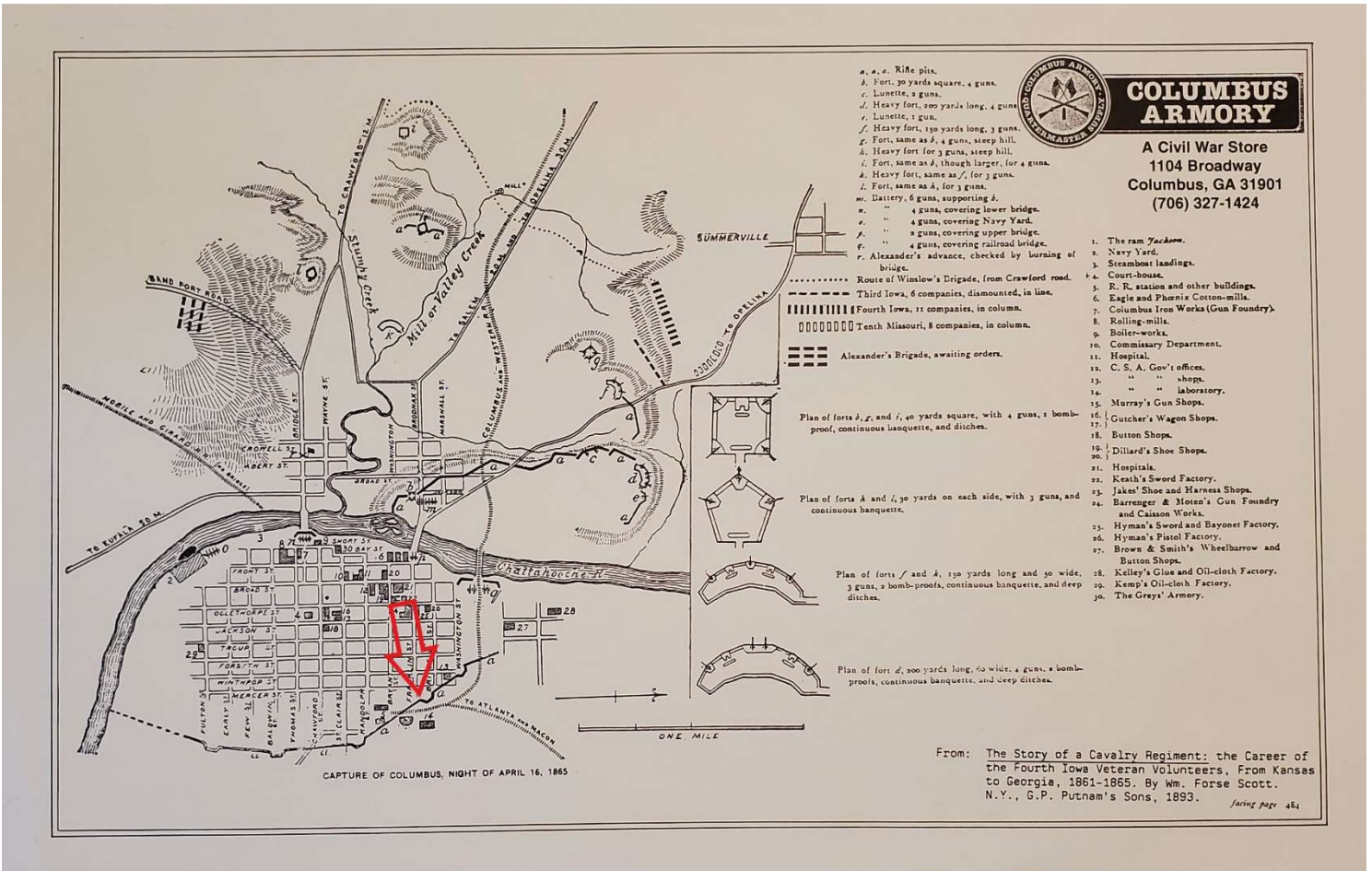
Map of Columbus, Georgia courtesy of the Library of Congress, [1864] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006459213/>.



Plan of fortifications at Columbus, Georgia, courtesy of the Library of Congress [1864] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006459214/>.



Map of Columbus from the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, courtesy of Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40797226>



Map courtesy of the Columbus Armory, formerly of downtown Columbus, from "the Story of a Cavalry Regiment: The Career Of The Fourth Iowa Veteran Volunteers, From Kansas To Georgia 1861-1865" by William Forse Scott. The arrow shows the rifle pits in question.



George Hall Hazlehurst courtesy of hazlehurstga.gov