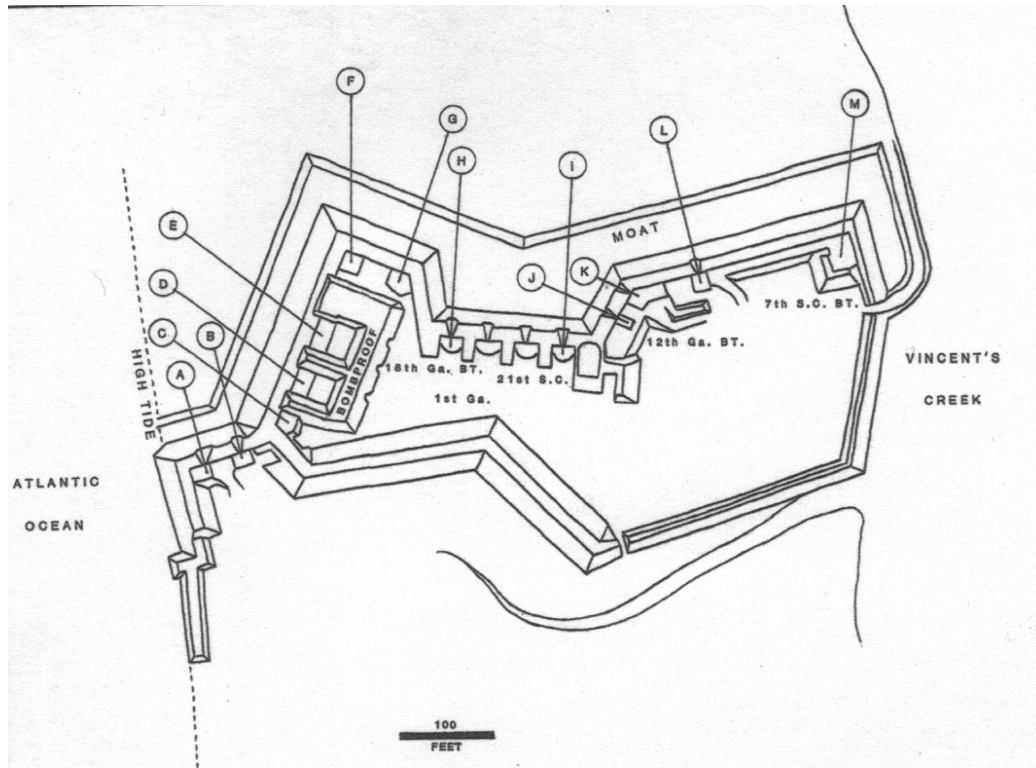


Battery Wagner July 11, 1863

Battery Wagner the most difficult model I ever made....



The model of Battery Wagner, which I created, was the most difficult one I have yet to build. Today I would do it different if not better. I spent some two years researching the Battery and the units involved. One week to build the battery. I concentrated on the first assault. The model is in 28 mm (1 inch equalling about 6 feet for the figures) but scaled down to be visually correct to the figures rather than to actual scale. Above is the map I used from my sources on Battery Wagner (C.S.A.) or Fort Wagner (Union); both sides always used different names for battle sites. In regard to sources I narrowed it down to just four main sources plus contacting Charleston museums.

It always begins with sources and then a focal point which will determine the model's size and how it will be built. The focal point with Battery Wagner was the main battery, H and I in the diagram. The required spacing for the four gun emplacements determined the size of all the portions of the battery model. From this point the battery would be constructed section by section.

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Above is the main battery of four gun emplacements. Following my sources only three guns were placed in this area during the assaults. I was surprised that sand bags were used. Below is a view of the facing of the main battery. It was built of sand with palmetto logs laid much like those described in Caesar's Commentaries about Gallic walls. The black dots are cannon shot which the facing was able to absorb. The white dots are smoke from the shots.



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Below is the bombproof which is topped by another battery of guns; D and E in the diagram. This guards the water side of the battery. I was lucky that my sources provided me with the number of guns, their types and their placement. The garrison sought cover beneath this battery and would emerge to remain their guns. Union barrages kicked up yards of sand which buried the guns requiring the defenders to shovel sand to clear the guns for operation. When the Union barrage stopped it announced an assault was soon to follow. The defenders had to quickly emerge from the bombproof when the barrage stopped. The gun crews had much work to be done to meet the assault. This task proved their skill with shovel, powder and iron. The sand and palmetto works proved to be superior to any brick and mortar forts. Sand and palmetto logs easily absorbed the heaviest of barrages. Fort Sumter being built of brick was reduced to a pile of debris from rifled artillery fire.



The moat, then (and as in the photo), was barely visible. All along the front, following the lip of the moat were slit trenches and fox holes. Several squads of poor souls were left there to brave Union artillery barrages. These braving shot and shell and would sound alarm of attack by shooting at the approaching enemy units. To the front of these squads of riflemen were crude but effective land mines. The mines were kegs filled with gun powder, set off by simple precision caps which were detonated by pressure plates when stepped on.

The main entrance to the battery was on a swamp which Vincent's creek followed (top right in the photo). This battery guarded the main gate which would be to the left of its' facing (to the top right in the photo). Riflemen would line the parapets. Any attacker in this area would face a rain of rifle and canister artillery fire at close range. The swamp was mined as well to prevent a landing from that side.

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Above is an inside view of the bombproof. The bombproof could protect the entire garrison.



To the left is the main gateway.

The rear of the battery had a parapet topped with a palisade fence. A stockade has pales which touch each other while a palisade has pales which do not touch each other. This palisade covers the swampy side of the battery (to the left, on the diagram as A and B.) The H.Q. building in the far rear was destroyed.

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Right is an overhead view of the bombproof batteries A, B and C on the diagram. The garrison could never have survived the Union barrages without the bombproof. It is estimated that the battery as a whole received some 1200 direct hits from Union counter batteries.

Below right is the gate area which is below the A and B batteries. A twelve pound field piece was placed here.



Battery Wagner July 11, 1863



Moving to the extreme opposite end of the battery were a mortar and a heavy gun emplacement, D on the diagram.

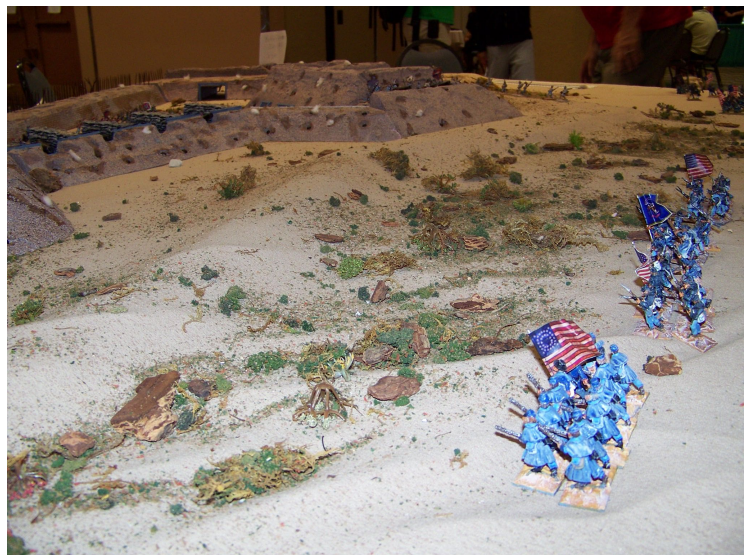


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Here is an overhead view of the battery. Here is a possible list of the armament at Wagner: One 10 inch seacoast mortar, three 32 pound carronades, two 8 inch shell guns, two 32 pound carronades, two 8 inch seacoast howitzers, one 32 pounder, one 10 inch Columbiad and one 12 pound howitzer. The garrison was of various numbers as units were rotated. It is estimated that the garrison varied from 800 to 1200 men and officers. The Union had numerous counter-batteries. The gun emplacements had about full command of the battery's front.

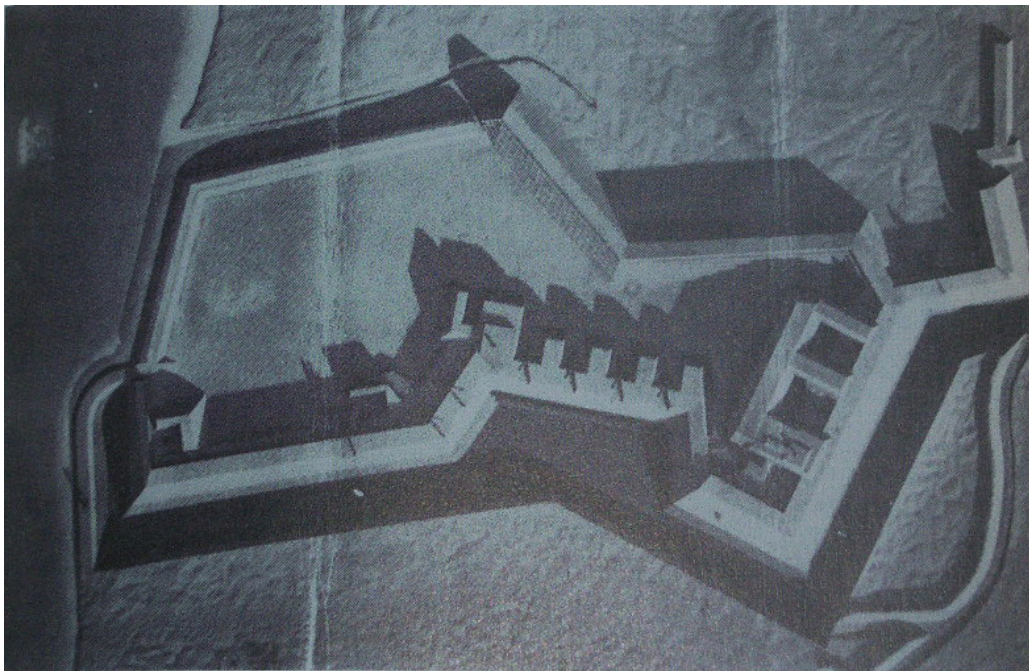
To the right are the Union forces of the first assault. The assaulting units had to attack across sandy ground. Canister from artillery torn into the Union ranks as they toiled to approach the battery. The Confederates in the trenches and fox holes retired back into the battery as the enemy approached. At the trench line land mines inflicted more casualties. Entering the ditch was easy however Confederate riflemen, shooting and throwing hand grenades supported by stopped the assault.



Battery Wagner July 11, 1863



One can easily see the crossfire of the various weapons from within the battery. Below is a model of the battery as ordered to be built by General Gilmore commanding the Union forces who led the assault forces. Gilmore appears to have planned well. Great planning does not always lead soldiers to success.



Battery Wagner July 11, 1863

The model I made was for a Historical Miniature Gaming Society convention held at Valley Forge.

At last a brief word about the sources is in order: Gate of Hell: Campaign for Charleston Harbor, 1863, Civil War Times, The Civil War Compact Edition Vicksburg to Appomattox, The Official Military of the Atlas Civil War and Arms and Weapons of the Civil War. All can be found on line for purchase.