

# Swamp Angel Site Is Excavated



Cannon, Said To Be Swamp Angel, At Trenton, N. J.

# Views Of Historic Gun Monument Here

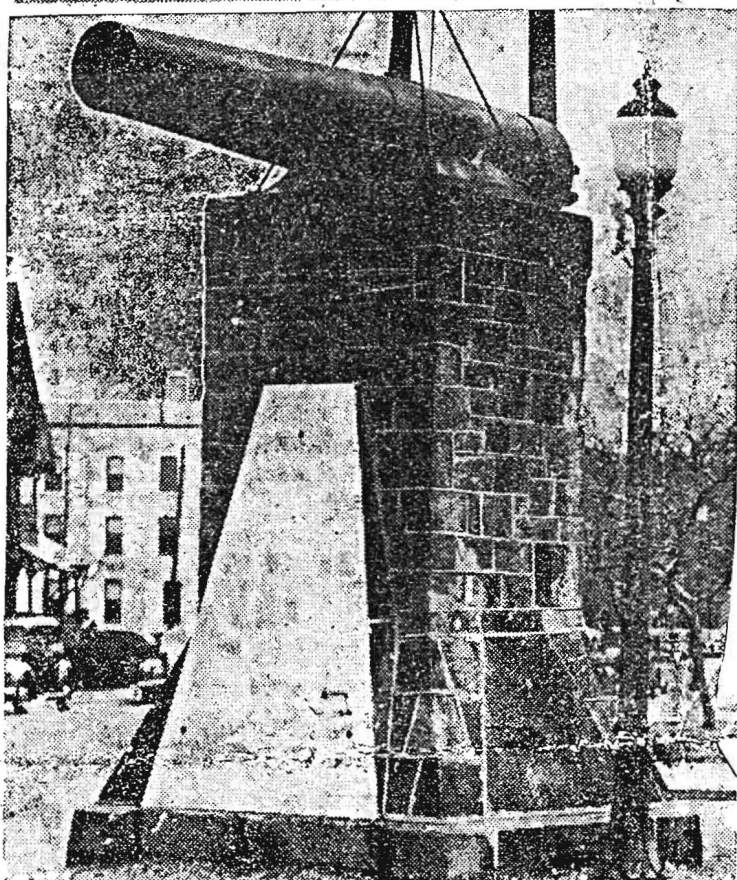
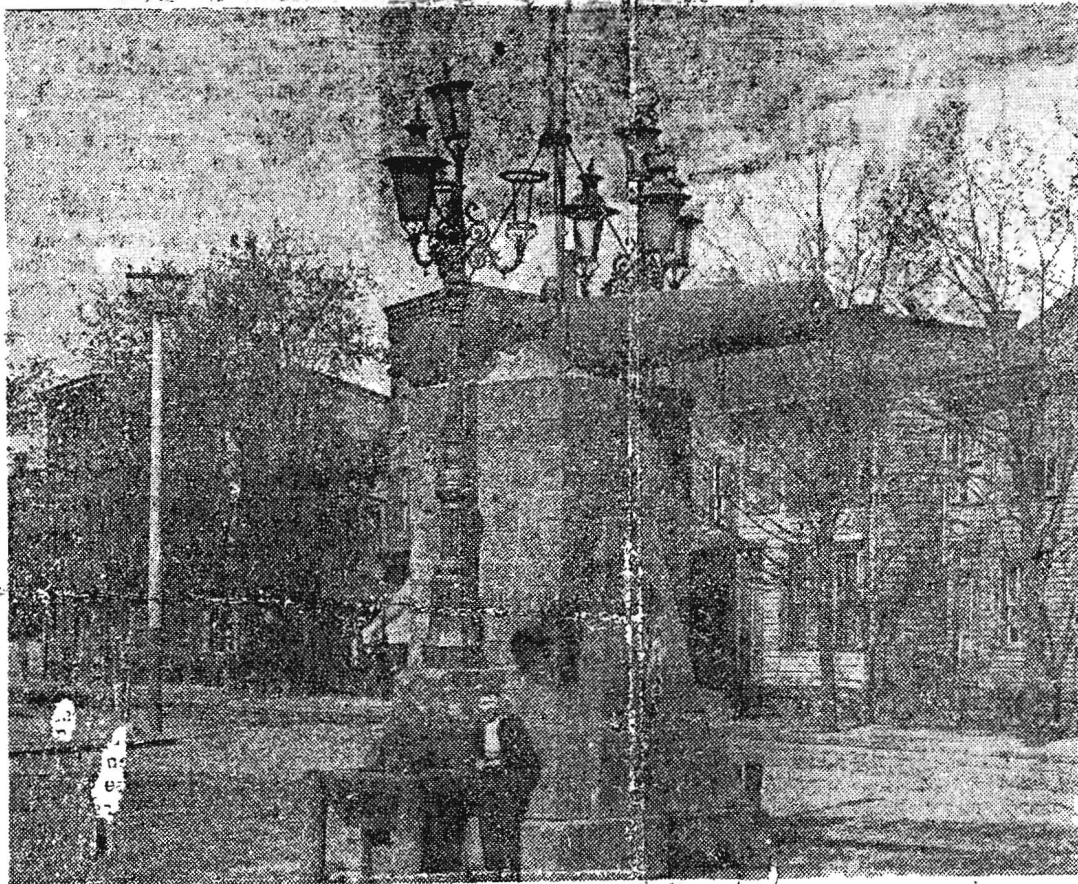
## Saved From Scrap Pile

After the close of the war it was purchased and sent with other exact-weight guns and war equipment to the Phoenix Iron Works in Trenton, to be melted and fashioned into things for other purposes than warfare. Someone recognized the old gun in the scrap pile. Through the efforts of a number of patriotic citizens it was saved and became the property of the city. It was then placed upon its granite pedestal which was designed by Isaac Bröome, ceramic sculptor, who was employed at the Etruia Works at the stone bridge, North Clinton Avenue.

Those who were instrumental in saving the gun soon found that their work in having the city take over its preservation was not appreciated on all sides. They received no grand ovation nor a unanimous vote for the presentation of bouquets of roses. For some time there were many who scoffed at the proposition, declaring the gun was not at the "Swamp Angel." However, passing years proved that they were wrong.

For years after the war had closed visitors came to Trenton to view the relic. Among them was Lieutenant Charles Sellmer of the U. S. Army, commander of the artillerymen who handled it. Sellmer identified the grim monster as the "Swamp Angel" largely by a fracture he had seen in it when it went out of commission.

The claim made for it concerning gas shells adds historic value to its stature, and calls for a special tablet with appropriate information to be placed upon its pedestal. When that time arrives, perhaps the belated dedication of the gun will be held.



The "Swamp Angel," Clinton Avenue and Perry Streets, Trenton's Big Bertha of the Civil War, is shown as it appeared in 1891. The elaborate, old style lamp posts on either side of the relic and the drinking

fountain for horses at the base of the granite pedestal. There have been many changes in the locality since this photograph was taken. The picture shows the relic as it appeared today.



# First Gas Shell Was Fired By Trenton's 'Swamp Angel'

## Data On Civil War Relic Brought To Light As Old Interview Is Unearthed—Rebels South- ern Leader Angered By Attack

By Harry J. Podmore

Nine years ago yesterday gas shells, it is said, were used for the first time in warfare.

The grim old monster that is credited with firing them can be seen any day. It is passed unnoticed daily by thousands of Trentonians. Since the time it came here as scrap metal, at least three generations have seen it. The well-known southern city into which it threw its shells would like to have it. This particular city made a bid for it a number of years ago.

Yes, perhaps you have guessed correctly. The old monster rests on its granite pedestal at Clinton Avenue and Perry Streets, where it was placed without ceremony in February of 1877. It is called the "Swamp Angel."

To many Trentonians the claim made for this large instrument of destruction may be news, especially in view of modern warfare we generally attribute to the Germans with using gas for first time in World War I against the Canadian troops. But things are not always what they seem and the old adage "There is nothing new under the sun," applies to many things that we take for granted as being new. Research unearths many surprises.

This claim, which gives the "Swamp Angel" distinction among similar relics, comes from Dr. Joseph Leidy, Lieutenant Colonel in the World War I who instructed service men in methods of defense against poisonous fumes used by the enemy. It was contained in an article in the magazine "Trenton," March 1931, but for some reason or other it aroused no local comment. The article is based on an interview William Duncan, a Philadelphia newspaperman, had with Colonel Leidy, which was published in the Evening Public Ledger, February 17, 1931.

The "Swamp Angel," known as an eight inch, 200 pounder, Parrott rifle gun, fired its shells in 1863, during the siege of Charleston from its position in the marshes outside of that city. The story as told by Colonel Leidy and quoted from the Ledger interview by the Magazine "Trenton" is reproduced here from the latter. It reads as follows:

"Later the same year, in August, General Gillmore, of the Union Army, sent a communication to General Beauregard, commanding the Confederate troops in the Charleston District, with a demand for the immediate evacuation of Morris Island and Fort Sumter stating that unless this was done the city itself would be shelled from batteries already established within easy and effective range. No attention was paid to this notice. That night orders were issued to sight the guns to the left of the steeple of St. Michael's Church, and August 22, at 1:30 a. m., the first shell with percussion fuse was fired from the battery known as the 'Swamp Angel.'"

"The noise made by the bells and whistles in the middle of the night told the Union soldiers that the shell had fallen into the city. Sixteen of the shells were of R. P. Parrott's own construction at the West Point foundry, filled with fluid composition. The other four shells were filled with Shorts' solidified Greek fire."

"General Beauregard wrote General Gillmore on the morning of August 22 as follows: 'Your firing a number of the most destructive shells ever used in war into the midst of a city taken unawares and filled with sleeping women and children will give you a bad eminence in history.'"

"The general replied to the letter and on August 23 twenty more shells filled with Greek fire were fired from the gun in the marsh. Six of the shells exploded in the gun, doubtless shortening the life of the piece to some extent. On September 7 the Confederates surrendered to the forces of the United States. The historic gun now stands in the City of Trenton, daily passed by thousands of persons, most of whom have no knowledge of its part in the Civil War."

### Local Associations

The "Swamp Angel" has a number of Trenton associations. General Quincy A. Gillmore who has already been mentioned, was the father of Captain Quincy O. Gillmore who was a Trenton resident for many years. He was active in the New Jersey National Guard.

The aide-de-camp of General Gillmore during the time of the attack on Charleston was General William S. Stryker, author of "The Battles of Trenton and Princeton" and other historical works, who for a long time was Adjutant General of New Jersey.

Rear Admiral Dahlgren, commander of a fleet in the attack of Charleston by sea, was the father of Captain Charles F. Dahlgren, an old-time resident of Trenton.

### An Engineering Feat

The planting of the big gun in the South Carolina swamp land near Charleston, was one of the difficult military engineering feats of the Civil War. After the site for it was decided upon, the work of

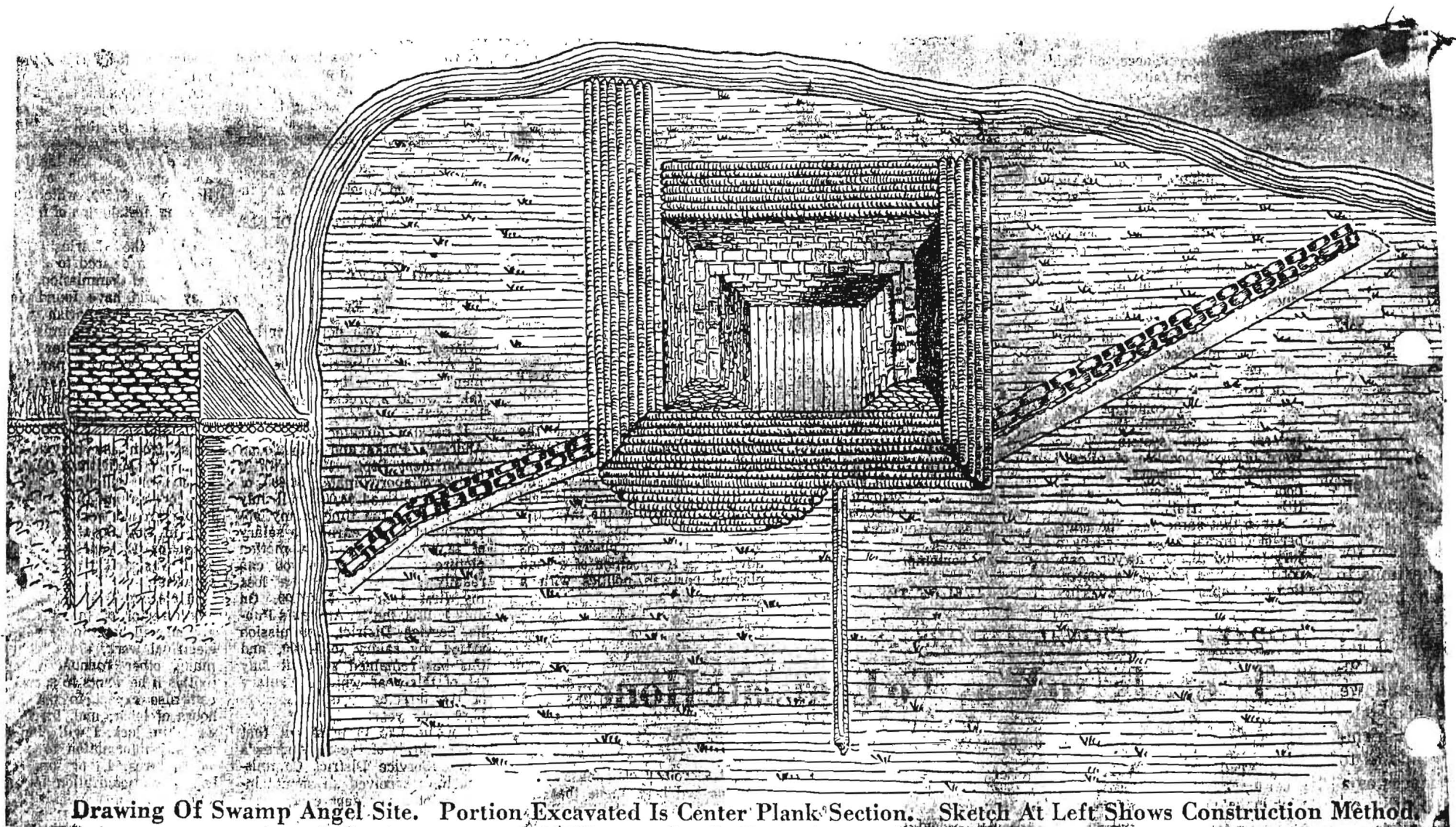
constructing a two and a half mile trestle-work roadway of heavy timber to it was commenced. Soundings were made with a 30-foot iron rod and in some places the watery mud was found to be 20 feet in depth.

The building of the battery was then started. On a foundation of pilings driven into the mud a platform of crossbeams was built. Upon this platform 13,000 sand bags, weighing 800 tons, together with logs, were placed as a protection. Then a parapet was also erected.

This work on this foundation site was done under direct fire from Confederate guns on James Island.

The work on the whole project was begun early in August and on the 17th day of that month, the huge gun was transported across the swamp land and placed into position in the battery where it was christened the "Swamp Angel" by the men in blue.

The "Swamp Angel" is a product of the West Point Foundry. Cast in 1863, it was of a class numbered six. The regulation weight of its kind was 16,500 pounds, but the exact weight was given with each gun. It went out of commission when the firing of its 36th round, the vent blew out of the gun jacket.



Charleston Evening Post  
August 21, 1957



# First Cannon To Fire On Charleston

By WARREN RIPLEY

The "Swamp Angel", the first Union gun to fire on Charleston, was an 8-inch, 200-pound Parrott rifle.

The piece weighed 16,500 pounds and with a charge of 16 pounds of powder threw a 150-pound projectile into the city. The range from the weapon to St. Michael's Church was 7,900 yards.

Authorities differ, but the gun apparently was fired at elevations between 31 degrees 30 minutes and 35 degrees.

Firing was started during the night of August 21, 1883. Fifteen rounds loaded with Greek fire were hurled at the city that night.

The weapon burst on the night of August 23 at the 36th round. It was being fired at an elevation of 31 degrees 30 minutes at the time.

The explosion fractured the tube about an inch rearward of the vent. The breech was blown out from under the re-inforcing band and the remainder of the barrel was thrown forward upon the parapet of sand-bags.

Two 10-inch mortars later were mounted at the site in place of the Parrott.

The original "Swamp Angel" is reported to be in Trenton, N. J., where it was said to have been salvaged from a shipment of damaged arms slated for the melting pot.

It was mounted on an impressive pedestal in Trenton and has been vigorously defended by the Trenton Chamber of Commerce against Charlestonians who on at least two occasions have attempted to get possession of the weapon.

The gun at Trenton is definitely an 8-inch Parrott, but whether it is the "Swamp Angel" or not is anyone's guess.

The Parrotts of this period apparently had a nasty habit of exploding and, according to official records, at least two others within three days burst at identically the same point and causing the same damage as to the "Swamp Angel".

If there were two, there might have been others. So, while the Trenton gun probably is the "Swamp Angel" there are at least two out of three chances that it isn't.



Engineer  
Diagram  
Shows Point  
At Which  
Swamp Angel  
Burst While  
Firing 36th  
Round At  
Charleston

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