

# AUSBON HOUSE



## *Sniper's Nest*



Bullet holes around the upstairs window of the Ausbon House are haunting reminders of a fight to the death here on December 10, 1862, when a Confederate sniper refused to surrender. Hoping to drive out the U.S. forces occupying Plymouth then, Lt. Col. John C. Lamb attacked with several companies of the 17th North Carolina Infantry, a squadron of cavalrymen, and Moore's Battery. After capturing most of the Union pickets, Lamb found the remaining Federals blocking Main Street and dispersed them with a cavalry charge. Then he turned his cannons on USS *Southfield*, the sole gunboat supporting the garrison, disabled it, and drove it downstream. Capt. Barnabas Ewer, the Federal commander, took fright when he saw *Southfield* depart, abandoned his men, and went aboard to escape. When asked where his men were, he replied that "he did not know, but hoped most of them were in the swamp." Ewer's superiors later deemed his actions "disgraceful."

Unlike Ewer, some of his men kept fighting, and the Confederates eventually withdrew

because they lacked sufficient numbers to hold the town. A Confederate sniper, however, remained in the Ausbon House picking off Union soldiers until he was killed. The bullet holes are monuments to his courage.

As the Confederates withdrew, they burned half the town, which suffered further during engagements the following year. The Ausbon House, probably built about 1840 for Edmond Windley, then bought by the Ausbon family in 1885 and modified, is one of only four surviving antebellum houses in Plymouth.