

FORT COMPHER BATTLEFIELD



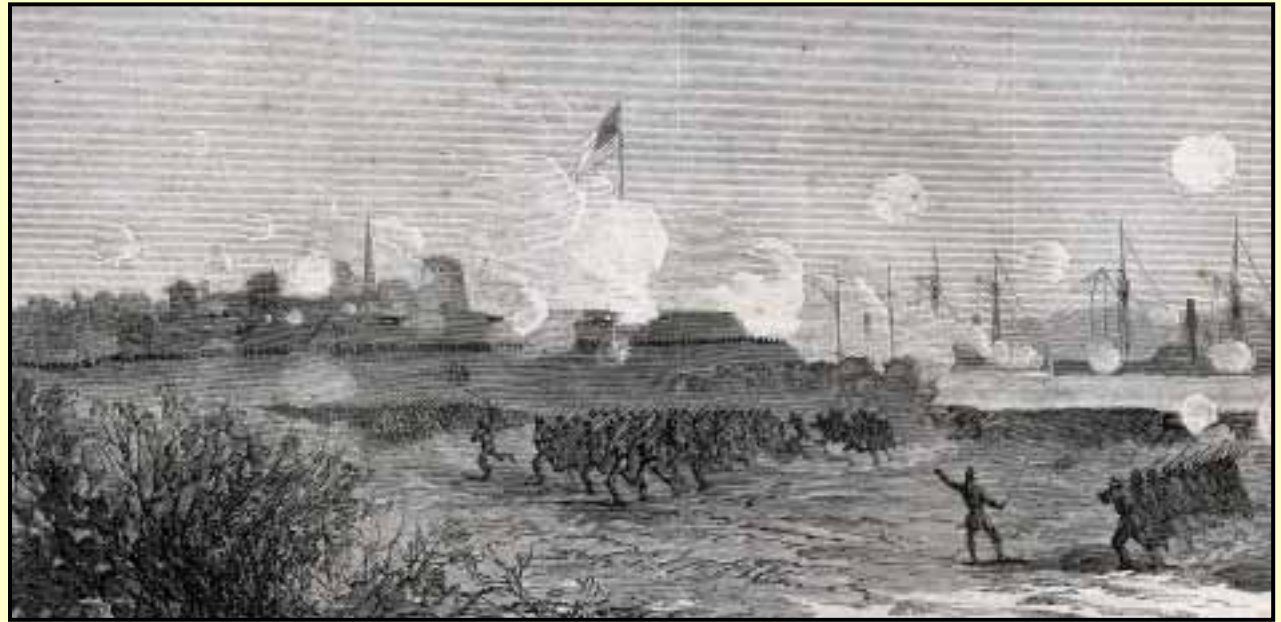
The Breakthrough



Atop the hill in front of you, on the left side of the field, stood Fort Compher (also called Fort Comfort), a key position for U.S. forces occupying Plymouth. The nine-sided fortification was named for Capt. Alexander Compher of the 101st Pennsylvania Infantry. Five earthen walls with four gun emplacements (mounted with two 32-pounders and two 12-pounders) faced east; the rear walls, facing Plymouth to the west, were built with sharpened vertical logs to form a stockade. In April 1864, Confederates under Gens. Robert F. Hoke and Matthew W. Ransom attacked Plymouth to drive out the Federals.

On April 19, Ransom positioned his brigade east of Fort Compher, which was defended by elements of the 101st Pennsylvania, 16th Connecticut, and 85th New York Infantry, as well as the 2nd Massachusetts Heavy Artillery. Ransom's men constructed pontoon bridges across Conaby Creek near present-day Riverside Baptist Church on East Main Street.

At dawn the next day, several thousand Confederates charged across the field to the fort.



A newspaper correspondent compared it to “the wildest gust of tornado as it prostrates the forest, or the mad fire as it dashes through the prairies, it was a thunderbolt.” The Union defenders threw grenades at the Confederates swarming the ditch and scrambling up the embankments. Some

of the attackers assaulted the stockade, where Union and Confederate soldiers took turns firing at each other through gunports in the stockade walls. Soon the fort fell, and the Confederates swept past into town. At midmorning, Union Gen. William H. Wessells surrendered Plymouth.