

Lego NC History: The Battle for Fort Fisher



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Game Title

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Premise

The American Civil War (1861-1865) was a civil war in the United States of America. The war initiated when eleven states seceded from the U.S. and called themselves the Confederate States of America. These eleven states were referred to as slave states, and were in support of slavery. The federal government, the “Union”, was supported by all of the “free states” and five border slave states. In the presidential election of 1860, the Republican Party, including Abraham Lincoln, rejected expansion of slavery. Tensions between the North and South rose as Lincoln took office in the spring of 1861. Roughly a month after Lincoln took office, Confederate forces attacked a U.S. military installation at Fort Sumter, in Charleston, South Carolina. Two battles occurred at Fort Fisher in Wilmington, North Carolina. North Carolina’s role in the war was to protect and maintain a valuable port where supplies were delivered by blockade runners. Once the second battle at Fort Fisher was lost, the supply line to the north was cut, severely hurting the Confederate army.

This was the deadliest war in American history, which resulted in the deaths of 620,000 soldiers and an unknown number of civilian casualties. Although it was a losing battle, the war ended slavery, restored the Union, and strengthened the U.S. Federal government. It strengthened the idea that all men are created equal, and as a country we were able to live up to our founding fathers’ belief in a fair and equal government.

The Narrative

The Ordinary World

William Lamb was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia. Lamb was raised in a wealthy family that was very militaristic, which led him to gain a great interest in military history at a very young age. A highly intelligent man, he performed vast amounts of research on different wars that were being fought in Europe among other places. He studied their defenses and fortifications. As he grew up he continued his research and later became a newspaper editor in Norfolk, VA.

Call to Adventure

In 1860, the United States became divided over states’ rights and slavery. The Southern states’ economy depended heavily on slavery because of their massive plantations. The South believed that states should have the right to decide for themselves how they would live and govern their people. The North supported the national government that believed that “All men were created equal.” In 1861 the South seceded, eleven states total, and formed its own government. The Southern States formed their own country called the Confederate States of America and declared war on the United States. In 1861, the first shots of the Civil War were fired on a federal fort, Fort Sumter in Charleston, SC. The Confederate army fired shots for 34 hours on the Union defended fort. After the Union soldiers surrendered, the Confederate soldiers took over the fort. At this time there was a call to arms by the Southern states.

Refusal of the Call

During this time William Lamb was a newspaper editor in Virginia and had a new family. As a result, he did not answer the call to arms and stayed in Virginia. During this time, the Union Navy had begun the blockade of all Southern ports. The blockade served as a way to stop Southern states from receiving goods and ammunition for the war. Therefore, the ports in the South had to be heavily guarded and strong enough to withstand the firepower from the Union Navy ships.

Meeting with the Mentor

At this time, it was important to find soldiers with a military background and knowledge of how to build fortified defenses against the Union Navy and blockade at the major port of calls. After meeting Major General Whiting, William Lamb decided to answer the call to arms and came to North Carolina to help build and fortify forts on the Cape Fear River. William Lamb became Colonel William Lamb at the age of 29.

Crossing the First Threshold

This was a defining moment in the life of Col. William Lamb; he decided to take on the responsibility of securing the forts in the South. Col. William Lamb transitioned into new world where he left the safety of his home and the cost of failure was high (possible death). Col. Lamb's command of Fort Fisher began the 4th of July, 1862, only 3 years before the monumental battle took place. Right from the start, he began remaking and remodeling fort to better withstand attacks from land but mostly from sea. The Colonel's designs were highly influenced from his studies, particularly from Russia. The constant threat of Union blockade runners sitting offshore made it a necessity to keep Fort Fisher as protected as possible. With the control over the river and the ports, Fort Fisher became one of the most recognized areas in the Confederacy thanks to the hard work of Col. Lamb and the builder and planner, General W.H.C. Whiting. It soon became the last port open for the Confederacy.

Tests, Allies and Enemies

Blockade runners were the allies for the Confederate troops. The blockade runners were fast, low to the water, sleek ships that were hard to see. These ships mainly traveled from Bermuda, the Bahamas, and Nova Scotia. They would bring supplies, artillery/ammunition, food, and clothing that were traded for cotton and tobacco. Union Navy blockades made it nearly impossible for the Confederate ports to get supplies and artillery/ammunition. Being a blockade runner was highly risky because if they were spotted by the Union Navy, they would be shot at with cannons and other munitions. The goal of the Union Navy was to destroy the ships and their goods before they reached the port of call. Blockade runners ran a risk of losing large amounts of money if they lost their cargo, however they stood to become potentially rich if they were able to deliver their goods safely. Captain John Newland Maffitt was an exceptional blockade runner. Maffitt was so successful that the Union Navy assigned several ships whose only job was to catch him. They were never able to catch him.

The Union blockades and Union forces were the enemies to the Confederates. With the use of cannons and other weapons, Fort Fisher was able to withstand and keep the blockades and Union forces at bay. Col. William Lamb tested his fortress every time a blockade runner got within the range of the fort's defense. The weapons and cannons kept Union soldiers from coming on land to siege the fort and kept Union blockade ships at bay.

Approach to the Inmost Cave

The day finally came when Col. William Lamb would be able to see the well-functioning, well-prepared fort on Christmas Day, 1864. A joint attack by the Union's army and navy came stampeding into Wilmington led by General Benjamin Butler. Once Butler laid eyes upon the well fortified port area he retreated back to Virginia, much to the disdain of General Ulysses S. Grant.

Ordeal

Grant put new commander General Alfred H. Terry in place of the cowardly Butler and on January 13th, 1865 the final attack of Fort Fisher began. "All day and night on the 13th and 14th of January, the navy continued its ceaseless torment. It was impossible to repair damages at night on the land-face, the Ironsides and monitors bowled their shells along the parapet, scattering shrapnel in the darkness. We could scarcely gather up and bury our dead without fresh casualties," explained Lamb himself according to www.us-civilwar.com. One of the largest and strongest forts of the Confederacy was about to fall. On January 15, 1865 the navy dealt its final blows, distracting Col. Lamb and the other Fort Fisher Soldiers from the Union army that was attacking on land. On this day General W.H.C. Whiting was mortally wounded and he fell with his fort. Lamb, still trying to hang on to his creation, and one of the last standing forts, fought with wounded soldiers trying to hold the pounding of the Union army and navy. The north wall of the fort was the final straw and around 10:00 at night Lamb and the Confederate soldiers surrendered.

Reward

Though the battle of Fort Fisher was a loss to the Confederacy, it was also a great loss to the Union. Out of their 10,000 soldiers the Union lost over 1,300 soldiers whereas the Confederacy only lost around 500 of their 1,500 soldiers. Lamb and Fort Fisher was the David to the Union's Goliath and they were able to hold off and hurt the Union army regardless of their small size. With the fall of Fort Fisher, and without Wilmington, no more supplies made it to the Confederate army that was still fighting in Virginia and northern North Carolina.

The Road Back

Lamb was seriously wounded in the battle of Fort Fisher. He was taken back to Virginia to heal. At that point in this hero's story, history was changed forever. The Civil War was coming to a close and the Union army was overpowering the Confederate states. The Confederate states could no longer get supplies, and they were starving and not armed to fight off the Union troops. So, it was time to end the war and unify the nation once again.

Resurrection

The Confederate Army continued their fight in Virginia and eventually the Confederate army surrendered at the Appomattox Courthouse in 1865. It should be noted that in Wilmington, North Carolina, newly freed slaves ventured downtown to celebrate and start their new lives.

Return with the Elixir

Col. William Lamb and a number of other Confederate soldiers were still able to carry on their political dreams. Col. William Lamb later became the Mayor of Norfolk, Virginia from 1880 to 1886 following his father and his grandfather. Col. William Lamb was a true confederate hero. He did not run when 10,000 soldiers threatened his home. He held strong and stayed with his troops and with his fort until the very end. His methods have been studied and practiced and have proven very effective. He risked his life for his country, his beliefs, and for what is now known as Pleasure Island. Many lives were lost in this war, but the overall effect was that the country became unified once again and all men were in fact considered to be equal.

Game Play

Lego NC History: The Battle for Fort Fisher has four main missions, and each main mission is up of four mini-missions. When a player first begins the game they are located at Fort Fisher. The player plays as the character Col. William Lamb, and can walk to each of the main missions to select a level. For example, the player begins in the field of Fort Fisher and walks to the water to reach the Blockade Runner main mission. Once the player selects a main mission, they will play the levels in a linear fashion. The linear game play will be referred to as "Story Mode". Once the player has completed each of the levels in a main mission, they will be able to go back and play non-linearly as they choose. In "Story Mode" the player must play as the character they are assigned, however in "Free Play Mode" the player may choose a character from their collection of characters. Upon completing mini missions, players collect the main characters that are featured in the level.

The initial conditions of each level are to give a brief historical overview of the level and then the current situation that the player will be entering upon beginning the level. For example, in a mini mission about blockade runners, there would be a brief background description of blockade runners and their purpose. Then, there would be a brief explanation of the goal of the mini mission, and the player would begin the game. The perspective of the game is third person. The termination conditions of a level are completing all of the objectives that were stated at the beginning of the game.

Within each mini mission, players will have to complete small challenges to acquire mini kit pieces. There are a total of ten of these pieces, and when all are collected, they are put together to create a historical artifact at the end of the level. Also, the player can collect studs throughout game play which can later be used in a marketplace to buy hints, characters, and historical artifacts.

There is limited information on the screen during game play, in order to minimize distraction and encourage player focus. For the very first screen after level selection, the upper left and right corners display the first and second player. The life of the character is represented by four hearts. At the bottom of the screen there are three objects: a minikit, a stud total counter, and a red brick. These three objects signify whether or not the player has found or achieved these things throughout the level. Underneath the objects the title of the level will be displayed.

In the upper right corner there are four small hearts which represent the player's health. Hearts are displayed in the upper left corner as well if a second player is playing. Directly underneath the player's hearts is a stud counter that changes as studs are collected. After all four hearts are used, the player gets regenerated and is penalized 1,000 studs. If the player has less than 1,000 studs they are penalized by only 100 studs. This is meant to create a consequence without "killing" a character and to not discourage a player too much when they fail. In the upper left and corner there is a counter that shows how many studs a player has collected. When the player presses the "start" button on their controller, they have the option to "continue", "end game play", or view "objectives" of the level. The visual interface is active during free play when the player can toggle and switch characters without stopping play. The player can press a button on their controller and switch characters at any given time. The game is automatically saved periodically.

Game play is enhanced by audio that reflects where the player is in the level. For example, if they are encountering something particularly dangerous or suspenseful, the audio reflects that feeling. There are also sounds that represent the environment: canons exploding, guns firing, men yelling, the ocean churning, and the wind blowing. These are examples of some of the sounds reflected in game play.

This game is designed to be played with one player or two players. When only one player is playing, the computer steps in and assists or works collaboratively with the player when needed. In two player mode, both players must work together to accomplish various tasks.

Educational Value

Lego NC History: The Battle for Fort Fisher is a historically accurate game that serves to educate and entertain players simultaneously. In playing the game, players will learn about the events that occurred at Fort Fisher, as well as gain a basic understanding of the Civil War.

Lego NC History: The Battle for Fort Fisher is specifically relevant to students in North Carolina in grades four and eight. In each of these grade levels, the strand taught for social studies is North Carolina history and geography. However, the Civil War is an important piece of United States history, and is therefore a topic that is taught in all states within grades kindergarten

through twelfth. Wilmington had a large impact on the Civil War; therefore it would be a relevant game for students outside of North Carolina to play.

In North Carolina, many county school systems allow students in grades four and eight to travel around North Carolina on field trips as a form of connecting with the grade level curriculum. Given the current economy and the limitations that have been created, this game can serve as a substitute to an actual field trip. Ideally the game would support the curriculum and not serve as an alternate to a field trip, however this is a realistic alternative given the current economy. Also, the game may serve as a virtual experience for students located outside the state of North Carolina, for which visiting Fort Fisher is not possible.

Player Motivation

Lego games have had large success mainly for providing action/adventure in conjunction with logical and strategic challenges. The multi-faceted games have lent themselves towards achieving multiple goals while portraying a narrative. Players will be motivated to play this game because they will play the role of various Civil War heroes such as Colonel William Lamb, nicknamed the “hero of Fort Fisher”, and Captain Maffitt. Despite the fact that this is an educational game, players will not be turned off because of the story line. The story line will be blended into the game in such a way that it is meaningful and allows players to get a sense of the events that truly occurred. Players will not only learn about historical events, but utilize problem solving and logic throughout game levels, thus increasing their interactions with the game. Players will also enjoy collecting characters, studs, and historical artifacts that they can learn about and use at the marketplace.

Target Market

The ideal target market for this game will be ages 9-14 which are common ages for children in grades 4-8. This game will be marketed towards North Carolina Schools (both public and private) for use in the Social Studies curriculum. An attempt to market this game in other states will also be made as it can provide additional instruction in the “Rise and fall of the Confederacy.”

This game will involve the use of three of the five senses: sight, sound and touch. Students will need to be able to utilize basic hand-eye coordination in order to play this game. Students should be able to read on a 3rd grade level or higher and have the ability to comprehend a rewards system involving strategic scenarios in order to complete each level of the game.

Genre

The genre for this game is action/adventure. The game will include situational problems for the player to solve. Rewards in the form of a mini kit will be given to the player for solving each problem within the level. Each level consists of opportunities to earn ten mini kits. One historically significant artifact will be given to the player once they obtain all ten mini kits within the given level. Action-adventure is a hybrid genre. The adventure is presented in terms of a journey involving action through problem solving throughout the overall game experience. The game will entail mild violence.

Target Rating

This game will be rated E. E symbolizes everyone. Titles in this category may contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language. (http://www.esrb.org/ratings/ratings_guide.jsp) There is no population that would be considered inappropriate to take part in this game due to the content. Limitations are only possible in terms of the user's reading level.

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<http://www.lego.com/eng/info/fairplay.asp>