

Hatchery reveals Civil War secrets



Camp Lawton as it existed in 1864, drawn by Robert Knox Sneden, a Union private who was a prolific sketcher during the Civil War.

Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery in Millen, Georgia, will play a critical role in imperiled fish conservation, but extraordinary archaeological discoveries have brought new revelations about the importance of this site. The crystal clear springs that make the site ideal for a fish hatchery was once valued for an entirely different reason.

During the last days of the Civil War the Confederates built Camp Lawton—a prison camp—to relieve the squalor of infamous Andersonville. The post was hastily abandoned only weeks later when threatened by Sherman’s march on Savannah. For most of the last 100-plus years the site rested undisturbed, the exact location of the stockade having been lost to time. Prominent archaeologists long ago dismissed the possibility of significant findings, especially of personal artifacts.

In the spring of 2010, student archaeologists from Georgia Southern University, working in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, pinpointed the former site of prisoner occupation in a rarely trod pine forest near the hatchery’s ponds. Upon excavation, they discovered an enormous density and variety of artifacts, including many unique personal relics.

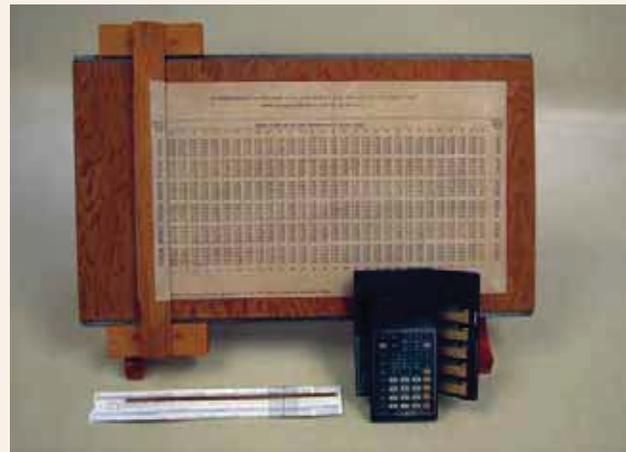
According to archaeologists, Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery may hold one of the most pristine Civil War archaeological sites in existence. To learn more, visit www.fws.gov/camplawtonsite. ♦ Judy Toppins

Courtesy Virginia Historical Society

FROM THE ATTIC Notes from D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives

Back in the dark ages, biologists did mathematical calculations by hand. Fisheries science was in the early days and complex calculations were not required. As the complexity of research advanced, difficulty of calculations grew. Slide rules, used into the 1970s, speeded things up, and were quite accurate in skilled hands. Several have made it to our collection at D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery and Archives, some with leather cases.

Recently discovered in the archives is a very special slide rule. Tucked away in an accordion file labeled “DR. ALEXANDER M. DOLLAR,” along with memos and letters, was a modified slide rule. The files came from Harvey Willoughby, Chief of the Division of National Fish Hatcheries in the 1960s. Taped along the length of the rule are badly yellowed labels with a new scale for “HATCHERY CONSTANT” and directions to set the constant and put fish length on another scale, so as to calculate percentage of body weight to feed.



Pre-PC, these tools, a 1950s fish growth chart, slide rule, and ancient programmable calculator were essential tools on National Fish Hatcheries.

Hand-held calculators were an advancement. The first programmable calculator used for fisheries work that we are aware of was not greeted with enthusiasm by the supervisor when the young employee presented the idea. Computers were met with similar distrust when they came on the scene. ♦ Randi Sue Smith

Randi Sue Smith/USFWS