



## Explore the Setting

Cockspur Island has been of some importance since the founding of the Colony of Georgia due to its strategic location just inside the mouth of the Savannah River. Behind Cockspur Island was a series of marsh islands, which in more recent times would be joined to Cockspur by the necessary dredging of the Savannah River to accommodate modern shipping using Savannah as a Port-of-Call. Savannah proper sits 15 miles upriver from Cockspur Island.

By the early 1820s, the bustling port of Savannah was a center of commerce and trade. Rice and cotton were important crops traded through the city and shipped to ports around the world. Large plantations spread out along the Savannah River as well as on the many coastal islands and marshes located outside the city. Soon, there was the need of a large river fortification to protect the growing city. Preparations on what would become Fort Pulaski began in 1829. The fort was completed eighteen years later in 1847 at a cost of nearly \$1,000,000. Slave labor was utilized by the US Government during construction of the fort. Later on, Fort Pulaski would play a larger role in the history of Savannah's African-Americans.

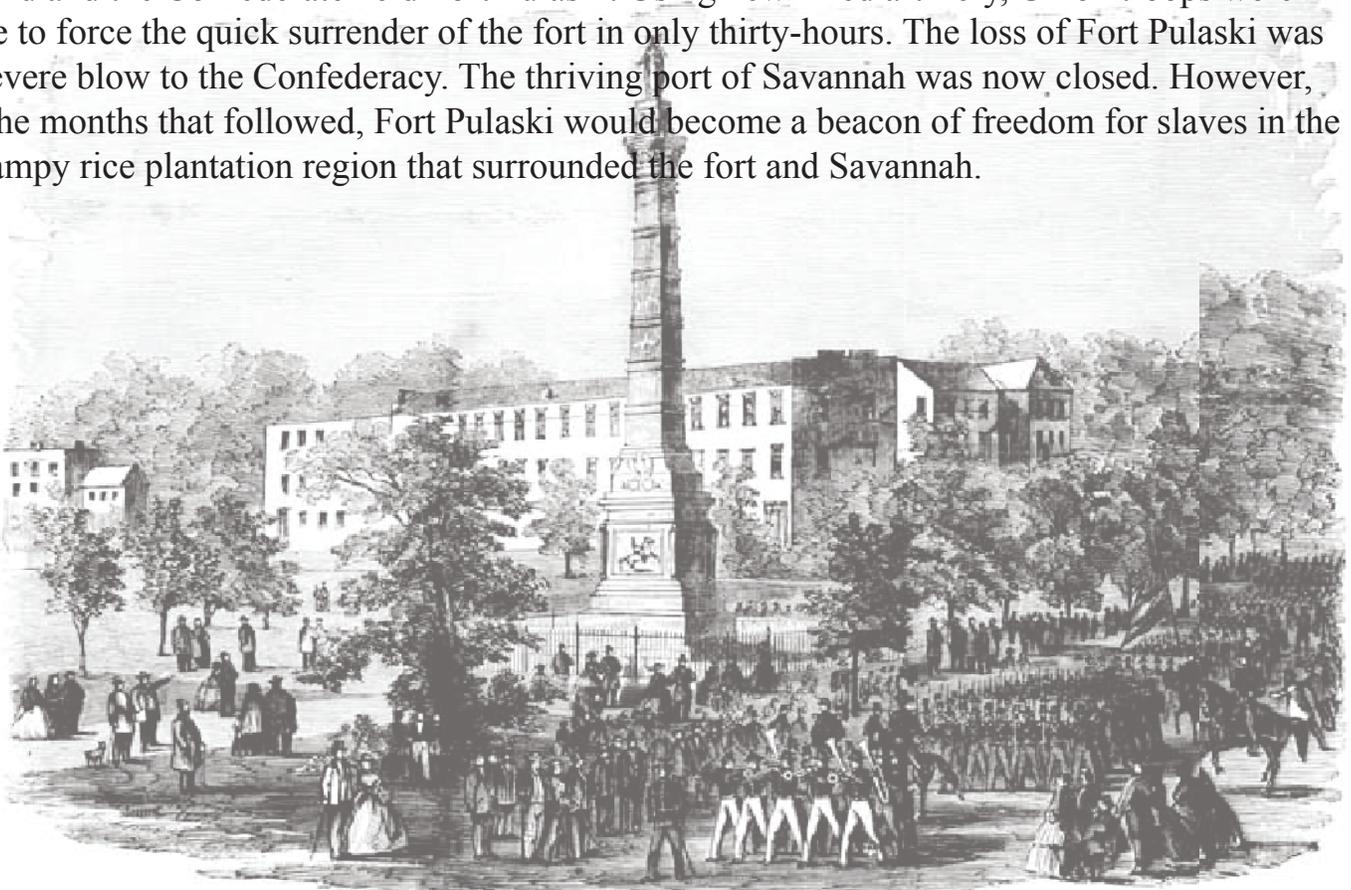




## Explore the Setting (cont'd.)

At the start of the Civil War, Savannah, the second-largest port on the South Atlantic (behind Charleston), had a population of more than 23,000, including about 7,700 enslaved and 700 free people of color (35 percent and 3 percent of the total population, respectively). The purchasing and shipment of cotton, rice, and other goods drove a thriving local economy. Most African-American residents of Savannah, enslaved or free, were unskilled laborers or domestic servants, but their number also included a significant number of skilled tradesmen.

With the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston, the nation was thrust into war. By April 1862, war would arrive at Savannah's doorstep. Perched on tiny Cockspur Island at the mouth of the Savannah River, Fort Pulaski, the imposing brick fortress built decades before would soon come under fire. On April 10-11 1862, a fierce battle ensued between Union troops on Tybee Island and the Confederate held Fort Pulaski. Using new rifled artillery, Union troops were able to force the quick surrender of the fort in only thirty-hours. The loss of Fort Pulaski was a severe blow to the Confederacy. The thriving port of Savannah was now closed. However, in the months that followed, Fort Pulaski would become a beacon of freedom for slaves in the swampy rice plantation region that surrounded the fort and Savannah.



VIEW OF CONFEDERATE TROOPS EN ROUTE TO VIRGINIA, AS THEY PASS THE PULASKI MONUMENT, SAVANNAH, GA., AUGUST 7TH, 1862