

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

May, 1996

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

BATTLE SITES OF GENERAL JOHN B. HOOD'S 1864 TENNESSEE CAMPAIGN May 23 Meeting

Tommy King and George Slaton, who attended the annual conference of the Association for Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) in Nashville in late April, will present a program on CSA General John Bell Hood's ill-fated bid to drive USA General George H. Thomas' Union forces from Middle Tennessee. They will discuss their visits to various important sites of the campaign, such as Columbia, Spring Hill, and Franklin, with conference historians. Following will be a general discussion of the RT, especially the year we've just completed and the year ahead. Your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions will be helpful as we plan the next program year.

Remember that the May meeting of the RT will be the last one of the 1995-1996 year. As usual we'll break for the summer and begin our 1996-1997 year in September.

The meeting will be held Thursday, May 23, at 7:30 pm in Room 101, King Hall, University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

EXTRA RATIONS

Mark your fall calendar now for The First Annual East Carolina Civil War Symposium to be held the weekend of October 11-13 at East Carolina University. Dr. David B. Long, Civil War historian at ECU is putting together this symposium in conjunction with the Department of Continuing Education and the Institute for Historical and Cultural Research on campus. The theme will be "Eastern North Carolina in the Civil War." The symposium will feature prominent Civil War historians such as John Barrett, Clyde Wilson, Mark Bradley, Chris Fonvielle, and others. Members of the RT will receive by mail brochures describing the event. As you can see, study of the Civil War is alive and well and growing by leaps and bounds!

The United Daughters of the Confederacy is currently compiling a list of burial locations for Confederate soldiers. You can help by sending any information available such as soldier name, company & regiment, county & state of residence, birth & death dates, service record, and location of cemetery to Mrs. Charlotte Carrere, 1612 Woodland Road, Garner, NC 27529.

The RT steering committee will be working through the weeks ahead to plan a full schedule of programs and tours for the coming year. Some exciting things are already in the works!

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE SUMMERTIME BLUES

Hopefully, summer will provide you with greater opportunities to pursue your interests in the Civil War. Take the family to visit a battlefield. Join a preservation organization. Browse the extensive collection of CW books at the public library and at UNC-W. Research a favorite regiment or battle. Write the National Archives for military service records of ancestors who served the Blue or the Gray (General Reference Branch, National Archives & Records Administration, 7th and Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington DC 20408, for applications). Watch or participate in a reenactment. Attend a Civil War show. There's no excuse for summertime blues if you're a Civil War enthusiast.

FAVORITE GENERALS JOHN BUFORD (1826-1863)

Although his family had Virginia roots, John Buford was born in Kentucky and grew up in Illinois. He spent several years on the western Frontier after graduating from West Point in 1848. He rose rapidly in ranks and was wounded at 2nd Bull Run.

Buford was similar to JEB Stuart in his ability to rapidly recognize strategic portions of a battlefield. This was particularly true at Gettysburg on the first day when he arrived almost simultaneously with the Confederates (Early) and immediately surveyed and recognized the importance of the terrain. It is felt that he contributed as much as any Union leader in the victory at Gettysburg. In defending these early positions, he allowed Union access to the more strategic positions at Gettysburg.

Similar was his concept of defence and the ability to see the importance of tactical moves on the battlefield. At Brandy Station, Buford led the northern wing which included the 2nd Division across Beverly's Ford early in the morning. Unknown to him, the concentration of the Confederate cavalry was less than a mile from him rather than ten to twenty miles from him at Culpeper as he was told. When he crossed the ford, he was immediately challenged by pickets of the Confederates. Within moments, he was in the thick of battle where not only did he hold his own, he advanced to positions that Rooney Lee, Fitz Lee and Hampton held. The position at Ewe's Hill that Rooney held was an excellent defensive position. Buford recognized it as such and made only probes at this position. Imagine his surprise when just at the moment it seemed that the Confederates had a commanding defensive position, Buford saw them pulling out of those positions. Actually the surprise was more than likely momentary as he realized that Gregg was achieving his objective of flanking the Confederate right on Fleetwood Hill, no thanks to General Beverly Robertson near Kelly's Ford, who watched Duffie's cavalry pass his position with very little interference. Buford saw the situation quickly and reacted expeditiously. With Rooney Lee disengaging slowly from Ewe's Hill to protect the extreme left flank of the Confederates on Fleetwood, Buford took advantage of his frontal position by keeping Rooney's men occupied preventing Rooney from giving full aid to Stuart. Buford maintained his position until later when Pleasanton gave orders for him to disengage.

These abilities of instant recognition and reaction were major components of his command talents. Buford was a hard fighter who, like Sheridan in his tactical methodology, was very aggressive with the ability to recognize victory. Unlike many Union commanders at this time, he pursued his enemy in their "Strategic" withdrawals and took advantage of the factors in his favor. It was sad for the Union and probably beneficial for the Army of Northern Virginia when he died of Typhoid Fever six months after Gettysburg, on December 16, 1863. With his many faults, one credit that Alfred Pleasanton can take is the recognition of the talents of John Buford. Sheridan would have loved him and they would have made a good team. I hope he is in the Heaven that I envision; he is one I want to talk to if I make it there.

(Thanks to Jerry Partrick, RT member who is currently pursuing several historical research projects, for the foregoing article, the second of his contributions to our newsletter!)