

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

April, 1997

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

THE WILMINGTON CAMPAIGN An Evening with Chris Fonvielle

Golden Hawk Room
Trask Coliseum, UNC-W
Thursday, April 3

Social Hour 6:30-7:30 pm, Hor d'Oeuvres
Program 7:30 pm

What is certainly the most important event in Civil War history in Wilmington NC since the CW itself is about to take place! *The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope*, Chris Fonvielle's long awaited and eagerly anticipated history of the Wilmington campaign, is fresh off the press! And this comprehensive and ground-breaking book will debut at the April meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table!

The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope is the first study to examine, in sweeping detail, the entire campaign designed to capture one of the Confederacy's most important and heavily defended seaports. Prior books and articles have focused solely on the epic struggles for Fort Fisher, leading many students of the war to conclude that the campaign ended when that mighty bastion fell in January of 1865. In many respects, the campaign was just beginning.

Author Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr., a Wilmington native, has spent decades studying this complex campaign and walking its terrain. His research has uncovered a vast array of previously unused battle reports, correspondence, diaries and journals. The entire saga, told largely through the eyes of the fascinating personalities involved, includes complete coverage (with significant new information) of both battles for Fort Fisher, the first detailed examination of the attack upon and defense of Fort Anderson, a blow-by-blow account of CSA General Robert Hoke's gallant defense of the Sugar Loaf Line against overwhelming odds, comprehensive coverage of the operations of the powerful blockading fleet of Federal warships, a tactical study of the hand-to-hand engagement at Town Creek, dozens of the finest battle maps ever created, including a double-sided foldout featuring the defenses of the Cape Fear region and a meticulous map of Fort Fisher by cartographer Mark A. Moore, and scores of photographs, many of them unpublished!

James M. McPherson, the dean of Civil War historians in America, exclaims in a recent review: "Chris Fonvielle's narrative of the Wilmington Campaign is a splendid achievement! Most accounts end with the fall of Fort Fisher, but for Fonvielle that is only the dramatic beginning of the important effort to capture the Confederacy's leading port and turn it into a base to resupply Sherman's northward advance. This gripping chronicle of the five-weeks' campaign up the Cape Fear River adds a crucial dimension to our understanding of the Confederacy's collapse." What a ringing endorsement of Chris' contribution to CW scholarship!

Chris received his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina and currently resides in Wilmington with his wife, Nancy, and their two daughters, Mary Katherine and Anne Fletcher.

The RT is hosting a reception to honor Chris' achievement. Members and their guests are invited to attend the reception, to begin at 6:30 pm, and then, at 7:30 pm, Chris' program on the Wilmington campaign. At the book-signing afterwards, Chris is generously offering to make your personal copy of his book a special one! The first 100 copies sold and signed at the RT meeting will be hand numbered 1-100 to signify forever that your book was acquired at its debut at a meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table! This will really be a memorable event. Come early and socialize with your RT friends!

CONFEDERATE RICHMOND AND THE SEVEN DAYS CAMPAIGN The Round Table Spring Tour

On Friday morning, March 21, twenty-three members and friends of the CFCWRT boarded a chartered bus for our annual spring tour in Virginia. Our destination was Richmond, the old Capitol of the Confederacy, and the site of Lee's first campaign with the Army of Northern Virginia as he drove McClellan's Army of the Potomac away from the outskirts of the city.

On arrival, we met Jim Dupriest, our tour guide of Confederate Richmond. On both Friday afternoon and Sunday morning, Jim escorted us through the city, pointing out sites of interest and leading several walking tours. Richmond, Jim told us, was not only the South's third largest city, but its largest industrial center; its iron foundries and flour mills were indispensable to the war effort. We saw numerous wartime buildings, the site of Libby Prison, the House of Delegates chamber in the Capitol where Lee accepted command of the Confederate forces in Virginia, Second Presbyterian Church where Stonewall Jackson worshiped (and often, because he was fatigued, slept through the sermon!), the White House of the Confederacy, the site of the old Spotswood Hotel where Confederate luminaries often congregated, the post-war Confederate Soldiers' Home, Tredegar Iron Works, and, finally, Hollywood Cemetery where thousands of Confederate soldiers are buried. We visited the graves of Jefferson Davis, Jeb Stuart, and many other figures from the Confederate period. Our group also toured St. Paul's Episcopal Church near the Capitol where the pews of Lee and Davis bear brass plaques.

On Friday evening, Robert E. Lee Krick, a well-known CW historian and our tour guide, presented an overview of the Seven Days campaign. We got a taste of how thrilling our battlefield tour would be! And Saturday was a full day of walking the fields and getting a firsthand feel for what was the largest campaign of the CW. Our first visit was to Seven Pines where CSA Gen. Johnston finally attacked McClellan a month before Lee took command. This site is entirely compromised by development, but we saw the area where CSA Gen. D.H. Hill's troops, many of them North Carolinians, assaulted USA Gen. Silas Casey's redoubt and entrenchments. The next stop was the Dabbs House, Lee's HQ, where the CSA commander planned the coming campaign. At Beaver Dam Creek, we saw the area where the 1st and 3rd North Carolina regiments took heavy casualties as they sought to force the USA 5th Corps from the heights above the creek. Then we went to the magnificent battlefield of Gaines' Mill. There we walked a mile or so to a rarely visited site on private property where CSA Gen. Samuel Garland forced a breakthrough on the extreme Federal right. Here the 20th North Carolina regiment (composed of troops from Duplin, Columbus, and Sampson counties) was successful in taking a Federal battery. And we visited the better known site of CSA Gen. John B. Hood's dramatic breakthrough on the Federal left.

After lunch, we went to Savage's Station, a site nearly obliterated by I-64. We stopped at White Oak Swamp where Jackson's tardiness helped undercut chances for Confederate success. We then arrived at the battlefield of Frayser's Farm. Here, many historians believe, Lee had his greatest chance to rout or destroy a Federal army; however, poor command communication caused a breakdown in coordination. Yet the fighting at Frayser's Farm was fierce, and Bob Krick took us to the area where CSA Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's troops engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with Pennsylvanians defending Randol's battery. Our Saturday tour ended with a walking tour of the climactic Malvern Hill. Recently, the battlefields of Frayser's Farm and Malvern Hill were enlarged by 750 acres through the efforts of APCWS whose members raised \$2,500,000.00. Most of both battle sites had been in private hands. This purchase includes the area around the Parsonage where D.H. Hill's troops massed for the attack against strong Federal defenses on Malvern Hill. Here, Col. Gaston Meares (3rd NC) of Wilmington fell mortally wounded.

Members were entranced with Bob Krick's stirring first-person accounts of the fighting during the Seven Days. He guided us to sites where some of our soldier ancestors' regiments were engaged. Bob's encyclopedic knowledge and expertise, as well as his attention to members' particular interests guaranteed an enjoyable and successful tour. Let's start packing for next year!

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 10535

Wilmington, NC 28405-3757

Reservation Form - Seven Day's and Richmond

Itinerary: March 21, 1997

- Leave Wilmington on March 21, 1996 at 8:00 am
- Arrive in Richmond at 12:30 and check in the Sheraton Inn
- Lunch will be fast food on your own
- 2:00 pm meet tour guide for Richmond and tour Virginia State Capital, St Pauls Church Monument Avenue, Shockoe Valley, Tredegar Ironworks, Belle Isle and Browns Island
- 7:00 pm dinner at the hotel with Robert Krick our tour guide speaking on Seven Day's

March 22, 1997

- Breakfast on your own
- 8:00 am Saturday morning tour Seven Day's battlefield including Beaver Dam Creek Gaines' Mill, Savage Station, Frayser's Farm and the climatic Malvern Hill
- Box lunch provided
- Complete tour of Seven Day's battlefield
- 7:00 pm supper at the Sheraton provided

March 23, 1997

- Breakfast on your own
- 8:00 am tour Hollywood Cemetery and the Confederate Soldiers Home in Richmond
- Leave Richmond around 11:00 am with lunch on your own
- Arrive in Wilmington around 4:30 pm

The price of the trip is \$185 per person for double occupancy and \$235 for single occupancy. This includes 2 nights at the hotel, dinner on Friday night, box lunch on Saturday, dinner on Saturday night, and guide service fee to the National Park Service and Richmond Discoveries.

To reserve your place on this tour please sign this form as indicated and include payment.

Name: _____

Enclosed is \$185_____ for double occupancy of \$235_____ for single occupancy