

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

January, 1997

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

TWENTY-TWO DAYS OF TERROR: THE SAGA OF THE C.S.S. ARKANSAS January 9 Meeting

Theodore P. Savas is the editor of the popular *Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the American Civil War*, a quarterly devoted to the scholarly examination of Union and Confederate regiments in particular battles or campaigns as well as other CW subjects. His Savas Publishers produced Mark Bradley's book on the Battle of Bentonville and will be printing Chris Fonvielle's forthcoming book on the Wilmington Campaign. Ted, an attorney in San Jose, California, has authored numerous Civil War articles and book reviews and co-edited *The Campaign for Atlanta & Sherman's March to the Sea* (1994). He served as Project Historian for the recent expedition to find the submarine *CSS Hunley*, off Charleston, SC, in August-September, 1994. Ted is well-known to many in the Civil War community and is regarded as one of the nation's authorities on the American Civil War. Ted co-founded the San Jose Civil War Round Table several years ago and he's been a presenter at many RT's and CW conferences around the country.

Ted's topic for our January meeting will be the brief, but exciting career, of the *CSS Arkansas* which operated in the summer of 1862 in the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers. In its first engagement, this Confederate ironclad encountered three Union vessels; it disabled the *Carondelet* and caused the *Tyler* and the *Queen of the West* to retreat.

Ted is a very lively and dynamic speaker, and we're fortunate to have him visit us from the West Coast. He will also bring a number of his recently published Civil War titles which will be available for purchase by RT members.

Our first meeting of the New Year will be held in Cameron Hall on UNC-W campus, Room 132, 7:30 pm, on Thursday, January 9. (Cameron Hall is located 200-300 yards east (or behind) King Hall, where our meetings were held last year. Parking Lot R is just in front of Cameron Hall, while Parking Lot S is the next closest to our new location).

SPRING BUS TOUR: RICHMOND AND THE SEVEN DAYS CAMPAIGN ! Time to Sign Up !

The Seven Days Campaign marked the debut of Robert E. Lee as the field commander of the legendary Army of Northern Virginia. In a series of aggressive initiatives, Lee attacked McClellan's huge Army of the Potomac at Beaver Dam Creek, Gaines' Mill, Savage Station, Frayser's Farm, and Malvern Hill. On our Saturday tour with Robert E. Lee Krick we'll visit each of these sites.

Our tour will also cover Confederate Richmond; on Friday afternoon and Sunday morning, we'll see numerous sites in the old Capitol of the Confederacy associated with the war.

We leave Wilmington at 8:00 am Friday, March 21 and return about 4:30 Sunday afternoon, March 23. We've reserved rooms at the very comfortable Sheraton Inn where we'll enjoy Friday dinner with Mr. Krick who will provide an overview of the Seven Days Campaign.

The cost is \$185 per person double occupancy and \$235 single occupancy. This total includes two nights at the Sheraton, dinner Friday night, Saturday box lunch, dinner Saturday night, and guide service fees. Sign-up deadline is Monday, March 3. Your check (given or sent to Dan Geddie, CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28405) is your reservation. Let's fill up the bus!

CONFEDERATES AT OAKDALE CEMETERY

On Sunday afternoon, November 24, at 3:00 pm, local members of the McRae family, as well as Dan Geddie, Harry Daniel, John D. Taylor, Wayne Carver, Chris Fonvielle, and George Slaton of the Round Table gathered at Oakdale for a rededication of the gravemarker for CSA Brigadier General William McRae. General McRae, a Wilmington native, was a hard-fighting brigade commander in Lee's army. This ceremony resulted from the efforts of Chris Fonvielle and Hugh McRae of Wilmington and Scott Mauger of Richmond to secure an attractive marble tombstone for the general. Hugh McRae, a descendent, gave a summary of General McRae's life and military service. A CSA reenactment color guard was on hand and fired volleys from their period muskets. It was an impressive ceremony.

Afterwards, several of us gathered with Scott Mauger to look for other Confederate soldier tombstones in the cemetery. Scott is a well-known necrolithologist, a Civil War enthusiast who searches out the burial places of Union and Confederate soldiers, especially generals and other officers. He has personally visited the gravesites of every CSA general, about 425 in number! As our group walked through the cemetery, encountering a number of officers' gravesites, our enthusiasm grew. We talked about the possibility of researching and recording all the CW soldiers' burial at Oakdale.

The next day, Wayne Carver was out at Oakdale bright and early! Armed with a very brief list of Confederates compiled by the Oakdale staff, Wayne began systematically walking through the cemetery, looking for the small CSA marble markers placed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy at the foot of soldiers' graves. Wayne then moved back and forth from the graves to the cemetery office, gathering information and plotting locations. Soon, he was using James Sprunt's 1914 *Chronicles of the Lower Cape Fear* to determine the names and service of Wilmington area CSA officers who were likely buried at Oakdale. Day after day, Wayne visited Oakdale, finding more and more CSA officer burials. To this date, Wayne has located the burials of 160 Confederates, mostly officers, in Oakdale Cemetery! These include at least 3 generals, 17 colonels, 7 lieutenant colonels, 14 majors, 46 captains, 38 lieutenants, 8 surgeons, 2 chaplains, 4 sergeant majors, 1 spy, and 1 attorney general! Recently, Dan Geddie and I spent four hours following Wayne through Oakdale as he pointed out the gravesites of many of these veterans. Dan is now compiling a list of CSA enlisted men buried at Oakdale.

Our idea eventually is to make a complete list of these CSA burials and then add a brief biographical sketch of each soldier found. Wayne has already done considerable research in the North Carolina Room at the public library with the help of Beverly Tetterton.

And Wayne's enthusiasm is already taking him beyond Oakdale! Several days ago, Wayne tracked down the grave of CSA Captain Edward C. Armstrong, a well-known local officer who was killed at Spotsylvania Courthouse in May, 1864. He found Armstrong's grave in a small and obscure family cemetery in Pender County, probably on the site of the former Armstrong plantation.

We hope to plan a spring tour of Confederate Oakdale for RT members. In the meantime, if you're interested in joining Wayne Carver in his searching and researching, he would be happy for you to contact him at 791-0105 (home). This is a big project which has room for several volunteers.

And one thing leads to another. The morning that Wayne, Dan and I were at Oakdale, an elderly lady stopped her car to ask directions to the grave of General WHC Whiting. Turns out she was a Whiting family descendent visiting from Pennsylvania. After a long discussion about Whiting, we led her to his grave and helped her do a rubbing of the inscription. She confessed that, though she herself is proud of her connection to the general, the published history of the Whiting family, which has strong roots in the North, left out any mention of General Whiting who was seen by other family members as 'that Rebel general!'

And speaking of Oakdale Cemetery....you may be interested in visiting the cemetery on Friday, January 10, at 10:00 am. You'll witness the dedication of 'Little Billy,' a reproduction Model 1857 light twelve-pounder Napoleon bronze cannon which will become a permanent display at Fort Fisher Historic Site. The cannon, of course, is named for General Whiting! The cannon will likely be fired at Oakdale during the dedication, a sight and sound to behold.

That Saturday, January 11, 3:30 pm, there will be a reenactment at Fort Fisher of the Union infantry charge of the fort. Both Union and Confederate reenactors will take part. A Civil War encampment will be held Saturday and Sunday for the public. It's free and sounds like fun.

- Col. Sewall L. Fremont -

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table
LAST CALL FOR MEMBERSHIP
Sign up Now!

The September and October newsletters were mailed to 160 known Civil War enthusiasts in the larger Wilmington area. This number includes 90 paid members from the 1995-96 year, as well as former members and other interested persons.

The Round Table meets monthly from September through May. Monthly meetings feature programs reflecting various aspects of the American Civil War. Our membership seems to favor programs about battles and military/political leaders of the war. We've had a number of programs on CW naval subjects. The RT has also provided three bus tours. During the first year, we took Saturday tours to sites of the Wilmington/Fort Fisher campaign, led by Chris Fonvielle and to Bentonville, led by Mark Bradley. Our second year offered a weekend tour of the Battle of Petersburg/Lee's Retreat in Virginia led by Chris Calkins. Each of these tour leaders are the acknowledged authorities on the battles featured in their tours.

The current 1996-97 Round Table year once again provides opportunities for members to enjoy monthly programs as well as a weekend tour of the Seven Days Campaign (Richmond Va area) in March, 1997 to be led by Robert E. L. Krick. The cost of membership is only \$20.00 and covers primarily the cost of the monthly newsletter and speakers' expenses during the year.

The RT has succeeded in bringing some top-flight Civil War historians to Wilmington. We feel that the quality of our programs improves each year and we're proud to say that we have some very active members who drive 75-125 miles for our meetings.

Our RT, one of approximately 225 Round Tables across the country, is devoted to taking a serious look at fascinating CW topics. It's a non-partisan group which welcomes men and women with ties both North and South. Our membership reflects everyone from the casual reader to the inveterate researcher.

The Round Table officers for this year are **George Slaton**, President, (O. 452-7370), **Dan Geddie**, Treasurer (H. 799-5338), **Tommy King** (H. 763-2930), **Ted Lynch** (H. 762-6445), **Chris Fonvielle** (H. 792-9091), **Jim McCallum** (H. 686-1597), and **James McLaren** (H. 686-9359). Call us with any questions about the RT.

Remember.....you must send in your check for \$20.00 by October 31st in order to receive the next issue of the newsletter. Of course, you can join the RT at any time after that, but only those who have joined by Oct 31st will be included in the November mailing. If you have an interest in the American Civil War, you should take a look at joining the RT for the current year. We'd like to welcome you into our ranks!

.....**And Looking Ahead.....**the November 14 RT program will be *The Union Sixth Corps at Gettysburg*. Tom Prisk, our speaker, asks that members read up on this subject. A good source is the classic *The Gettysburg Campaign*, by Edward Coddington. Also, we hope to reschedule Dr. Stephen Wise's program on *Blockade Running and the Civil War* which was canceled due to Hurricane Fran.

Mail the form below along with \$20.00 membership fee (Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28405) or present to Treasurer, Dan Geddie at the next meeting!

Name _____ Phone Ofc. _____ H. _____

Address _____

Any special CW interests _____