

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

March, 1998

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

LEE AND JACKSON IN LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA Spring Bus Tour

Twelve RT members are signed up for the March 20-21 bus tour to Lexington to visit sites associated with two legendary Confederate generals. We've now chartered a 15-passenger van for this trip, and registration is closed. Dan Geddie will forward trip details to each registrant.

WILMINGTON CAMPAIGN TOUR Report From The Field

A large contingent of RT members and friends braved the early morning rain last Saturday to follow the steps of long-ago soldiers who clashed in battle during the Union assault on Confederate defenses in the Lower Cape Fear. A stop at the Cape Fear Civil War Shop, operated by RT member Mike Budziszewski, in Carolina Beach afforded everyone the opportunity for fresh coffee and a look at the shop's Civil War memorabilia. Everyone enjoyed Chris Fonvielle's stirring account of the Wilmington Campaign. Those registered for the trip included: Ann Boseman, Ray Brackett, Mike Budziszewski, James Burroughs, Frank Conlon, Anthony Coppola, Richard Covell, Dan Geddie, John Krohn, Dale Lear, Richard Long, James MacLaren, John Moore, George Penick, Richard Rand, Mary and Palmer Royal, Chet Rudolf, Ed Russ, Palmer Smith, Bart Streb, John D. Taylor, George Wolf, and Eddie White.

ROUND TABLE MEMBERSHIP GROWS TO 114

Our RT membership has reached an all-time high! Last year's membership of 90 has grown by more than a quarter to the current 114, making our RT considerably larger than many RT chapters in much larger cities. I think we are all impressed at the burgeoning interest in the American Civil War. Personally, I am continually amazed at the number of people I meet who share this interest. Hopefully, the CFCWRT will continue, through its programs, tours, and support of preservation, to contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of this pivotal event in our nation's history.

APRIL AND MAY MEETINGS

Our Thursday, April 9 meeting will begin at 6:45 pm with a social hour at St. John's Episcopal Church. The program will begin at 7:30 pm. Dr. Everard Smith will present a program on the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864. Details in the April newsletter.

And make plans to attend the final meeting of the RT year which will be held on Friday, May 1, on the *USS North Carolina*. There we'll join the Chicago Civil War Round Table for dinner and a program on the 1865 NC campaigns led by Chris Fonvielle and Mark Bradley.

CONTINUING PRESERVATION AT BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD

The March, 1865 clash between CSA General Joe Johnston and USA General William Sherman was climactic in more than one way. It was the largest land engagement in Civil War North Carolina and it marked the culmination of Sherman's March northward from Savannah. For the Confederates, it meant one of those rare occasions when the Army of Tennessee was combined with elements of the Army of Northern Virginia and it was unique in that CSA coastal defense forces from Charleston and Wilmington joined in the fray as well. Our RT journeyed to Bentonville in March, 1995 where Mark Bradley, Lauren Burgess, and the battlefield staff gave us an unforgettable field tour.

The Bentonville Battleground Historical Association (BBHA), under the energetic leadership of President Lauren Burgess, is making great strides in preserving the battlefield! Here are some of the exciting developments.

In February, 1997 the American Battlefield Protection Program, an agency of the National Park Service, granted \$24,000 to BBHA to complete a survey of Bentonville battlefield using Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology. GPS methodology has been applied to ten Civil War National Battlefield Parks since 1990. When completed, survey information will create computer-generated overlays detailing the exact location of every historic house, creek, roadbed, and trench line on the battlefield, providing a highly accurate "photograph" of its historic resources. NPS technicians will request landowners' permission to physically walk the length of the trench lines. Already, the GPS has recorded three miles of trenches, sixty rifle pits, and several artillery emplacements on the battlefield!

Further, a comprehensive preservation plan for Bentonville undertaken by BBHA in 1997 is nearing completion. Funded by a grant of \$26,000 from the American Battlefield Protection Program and a \$5,000 donation from Johnston County NC, the final plan will serve as a blueprint for all future efforts to preserve this important CW resource. Throughout the planning process, area landowners provided invaluable input and expressed interest in BBHA's efforts to preserve Bentonville's rural complexion and its history. The process has led to a recommendation to continue BBHA and state efforts to acquire and/or accept donations of historically significant property. Another recommendation involves developing a master plan for five roadside pull-offs to improve road safety in the area for both residents and visitors. Visitors are currently threatened by fast-moving traffic if they slow down to read historic markers or view areas where fighting took place.

And, even more exciting, the battlefield is growing through acquisitions! The NC Natural Heritage Trust approved a grant last fall for the purchase of two tracts totaling 13 acres. The first is a 4.1 acre property adjacent the the northern boundary of the USA 15th Corps tract acquired by BBHA at public auction in 1995 and incorporated into the State Historic Site. Though it no longer contains trenches, it was the site of the CSA defensive line on the second and third days of the battle. The second tract for which a grant has been approved is 8.9 acres adjacent to the State Historic Site where the first shots of the battle were fired.

And the acquisitions get even better! BBHA has the opportunity to acquire major properties that contain extensive remains of USA and CSA field fortifications that are in a nearly pristine state of preservation. This property is in key areas of the battlefield where extensive fighting occurred.

Just south of the Harper House Road lies a 32.5 acre property that has been offered to BBHA by its owners. Initially occupied by the division of USA General James D. Morgan, this land witnessed desperate fighting when the CSA Army of Tennessee's Last Grand Charge crossed the Harper House Road and hit Morgan's tenuous position from the flank and rear. As Morgan's position, and with it the entire Union line, appeared on the verge of collapse, the Union brigade of General William Cogswell arrived on the field and rushed to the attack. Cogswell's brigade struck advancing Confederate forces in their exposed right flank and drove them in confusion to their previous positions north of the road. Veterans would later attest that Cogswell's counterattack saved not only Morgan's beleaguered division, but also the entire Left Wing of Sherman's Army. The timing and ferocity of the counterattack that occurred on this property arguably prevented a Confederate victory on the first day of the battle.

You can join BBHA by sending \$20.00 or more to 5466 Harper House Road, Four Oaks NC 27524. BBHA is an unstaffed, all-volunteer not-for-profit organization; gifts are tax-deductible. (Taken from the BBHA newsletter, *The Battle Cry*, Winter, 1998, Lauren Burgess, Editor.)

THE JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN HOUSE

No trip to Maine would be complete for a student of the Civil War without a stop in Brunswick at the home of Major General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. Although born in nearby Brewer, Chamberlain moved to Brunswick in 1848 to attend Bowdoin College, graduating four years later. Following theological training in Bangor, he became an instructor in logic at Bowdoin in 1855.

The Chamberlain house, across the street from the college, was built in 1825. Beginning as a simple one-story dwelling in the Cape Cod design, it had been occupied by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in the 1830's. Chamberlain purchased the house in 1859.

After the war, Chamberlain added a red Maltese cross, his Fifth Corps insignia, on the chimney. Needing a larger house but not wanting to disturb the roofline which he admired, Chamberlain simply raised the entire house eleven feet in the air and built a Victorian Gothic/Italianate first floor underneath.

After his death, the house was occupied by family members until 1939, when it was sold by his granddaughter. Unfortunately, the new owner held a yard sale to get rid of the old furnishings and then converted the house into seven apartments which were rented to college students.

Over the next forty-plus years the house deteriorated and by 1983 was threatened with demolition. It was rescued from the wrecking ball by the Pejepscot Historical Society and has been undergoing restoration ever since.

Of special interest now are the many Chamberlain artifacts in the house, some tracked down from the notorious yard sale. His wartime saddle sits in a corner, across from a large glass case. It is the contents of the case that made my trip worthwhile.

His shoulder straps and assorted uniform regalia were there. And so was the minie ball that had traversed both hips, pelvis, and bladder in June, 1864, at Petersburg, resulting in lifelong urinary tract complications that finally killed him in 1914.

But I was drawn mostly to his boots, for they were the boots worn at Little Round Top, where I knew he had been wounded in the foot by a shell or rock fragment. And there, on the right instep, the leather had been patched! I suddenly felt that 134 years had just been erased from time. I had connected with the "Fighting Professor." My trip to Brunswick was complete.

- John R. Krohn

CIVIL WAR WALKING TOUR Charleston SC

Some of you who attended our February program on the Charleston Campaign will want to follow up with a visit at some time to the city itself. When you're there, you might consider joining Jack Thomson for a fascinating walking tour of Civil War sites in Old Charleston.

I took Jack's tour in 1990 and found it very enjoyable. The one and a half mile tour begins at the Mills House Hotel, proceeds down cobblestoned Chalmers Street to East Bay, down to the Battery and back up Meeting Street, returning to the Mills House. Jack tells intriguing stories about each stop along the route. One of the unique features of Jack's tours is his collection of 118 photographs of Charleston during the war years. He makes good use of many of these photographs during his tours by stopping at the exact 1860's camera positions and giving tour-goers the opportunity of comparing the modern and wartime views. Jack concentrates on the human interest aspects of tour sites and creates a living history experience for his audience. His knowledge of wartime Charleston is quite impressive.

You can arrange to participate in the walking tour (cost is \$12.50 per person) by contacting Jack Thomson at 17 Archdale Street, Charleston SC 29401, phone (803) 722-7033.

CONTRIBUTORS TO CHANCELLORSVILLE BATTLEFIELD Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

Fifteen members of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table responded to the challenge to send contributions to CVBT's current effort to purchase and protect 100 acres in the heart of the Chancellorsville battlefield! The challenge goal of \$1000.00 was contributed in full and forwarded to CVBT.

Our special thanks go to the generous and anonymous RT member who offered the \$250.00 challenge matching gift. It was this matching gift which enabled the RT to reach its goal!

Members who supported this important preservation effort in Virginia are:

Joyce Binkley
Mike Budziszewski
Wayne Carver
Bill Clark
Dan Geddie
Steve Godwin
Ed Hartz
James Johannes
John Krohn
Cliff Mabry
James MacLaren
Jim McCallum
John Moore
Linda Rand
George Slaton

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A PARTING SHOT

During the Atlanta Campaign, General William T. Sherman conducted his usual personal reconnaissance in the Cassville area, where he showed that his determination to fight a total war did not preclude his genuine affection for the people in his path. Sherman stopped at a small plantation house and had a friendly conversation with an old woman inside. "Well, have the boys taken much from you?" he asked.

"Almost all I have," she answered. "Sherman himself was here; he is a right nice 'un. The poor man said he was hungry, so I got him something to eat." "Sherman said his men needed food too", the woman continued, "so he took even more, but he left me something he called a 'purtection' paper."

At this she pulled out a rumpled scrap and handed it to Sherman. It read: "Sergeant Take-
Them-All gives general protection to this poor, lone widow, with her husband in the army, and to her helpless chickens and roosters; that is, what's left of them."

"All the soldiers who read this 'purtection,'" she said, "just laughed at it; it 'pears like they have drefful little respect for their general."

"I'm afraid so, madam," Sherman replied. "If you give me some paper, I'll write one they won't laugh at."

"And are you an officer?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

(Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order, John Marszalek, 1993)