

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

December, 1998

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

THE STORY OF LEE'S LOST ORDER The Intelligence Coup that Redirected the Course of the Civil War

December 10 Meeting
St. John's Episcopal Church
Social Hour 7:00.....Program 7:30

Wilbur D. Jones, Jr., a University of North Carolina history graduate, is an author and military historian in Wilmington NC. A retired Navy Captain, he has written numerous books and articles on military history and defense issues, specializing in World War II, the Civil War, and weapons acquisitions.

He served in political positions in the Nixon and Ford Administrations, including as assistant to President Ford, served as an assistant to two Cabinet secretaries, and two California Members of Congress. In 1996 he retired after nearly 41 consecutive years of service to the Department of Defense, the last 12 as a professor at the Defense Systems Management College, Fort Belvoir VA.

He is the author of the highly acclaimed book *Gyrene: The World War II United States Marine*, a study of the personal, social, and cultural life of the war's enlisted Marine; and *Giants in the Cornfield: The 27th Indiana Infantry*, a human interest treatise of the Union Army's common soldier. Both books are published by White Mane. Of *Gyrene*, General Ray Davis, USMC (Ret), writes: "This book surely will take its place in the annals of Marine Corps history and...with other landmark works of WWII."

Wilbur has written and edited two other WWII books, the memoirs of former faculty colleagues who fought on the German side, to be published in the coming months by White Mane. His book *Arming the Eagle: A History of U.S. Weapons Acquisitions Since 1775*, a military history of the United States, will soon be published by the Department of Defense.

In September 1997 he returned to Wilmington, his native home. He and his wife Carroll have been married 39 years. They have three adult children and have custody of their granddaughter Carrie, a freshman at Hoggard High School.

Wilbur leads WWII battlefield tours for Military Historical Tours, Inc., and lectures on military history at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has been an active member of the Cape Fear CWRT.

St. John's Episcopal Church is located at 1219 Forest Hills Drive, on the corner of Park Avenue. Come at 7:00 pm for refreshments; the program begins at 7:30 pm.

Special Notice to members who have signed up for the Spring Bus Tour to Antietam: Plan to come at 6:30 pm for a meeting to determine the March weekend and other arrangements for the trip!

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The Union Army's discovery of a copy of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Special Orders No. 191 near Frederick, Maryland, on September 13, 1862, outlining the disposition of his thin and widespread Army of Northern Virginia, precipitated the Battle of Antietam four days later.

The revelations of the orders, called the "Lost Order" in the North and the "Lost Dispatch" in the South, prompted Union commander Major General George B. McClellan to pursue Lee's divided army and force that fateful clash from which the South never fully recovered.

The results of Union victory at Antietam reaped political consequences exceeding this bloody battlefield of the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln used the military success to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, injecting slavery as an emotional and moral war issue. Powerful European nations eventually refused political recognition of the Confederacy and its military and economic benefits. Lee withdrew his battered forces back into Virginia, his first foray into the North a strategic failure. Antietam thus redirected the course of the war and ultimately led to the downfall of the Confederacy.

How No. 191 was lost, and who caused it to be lost, has remained one of the war's enduring mysteries, and its discovery is considered to be the war's most profound intelligence coup.

Wilbur Jones has thoroughly researched and written on the Lost Order. Members of the 27th Indiana found it, which Jones engages extensively in *Giants*. In the journal *Civil War Regiments*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1997), Jones identifies through clever detective work the Confederate who lost it and how. He is the first historian to solve the mystery. His lecture on the Lost Order involves both its loss and its discovery.

Wilbur will give a complimentary copy of the journal article to those wishing to purchase a book at the close of the program. Both his books, *Giants in the Cornfield* and his *Gyrene*, will be available for purchase.



Symposium and Walking Tour



Bentonville Battlefield March 19-21, 1999

Join **Edwin C. Bearss**, author and Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service; **John Marszalek**, author of *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order*; **Craig Symonds**, author of *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography*; **Mark Bradley**, author of *Bentonville: Last Stand in the Carolinas*; and others for this rare opportunity to walk the pristine fields of Bentonville, where the armies of Generals William T. Sherman and Joseph E. Johnston met one last time on March 19-21, 1865.

Long neglected by historians, the Battle of Bentonville saw 80,000 troops engaged in a fierce three-day fight that proved to be the last ditch effort to turn aside Sherman's relentless march through the Carolinas, and the war's last major offensive by Confederate forces. Bentonville is a National Historic Landmark and was ranked by the U.S. Civil War Sites Advisory Commission as number six of 384 sites in need of nationwide preservation action.

Cost of the three-day symposium and walking tour is \$199.00, which includes two lunches and two dinners. All proceeds benefit the preservation of Bentonville. Sponsored by the Bentonville Battleground Historical Association and the Bentonville Battleground State Historic Site. For more information, call (910) 594-0789, or write BBHA, P.O. Box 432, Newton Grove, NC 28366.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION IN THE FAR WEST Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee

Fascination with Colonel George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry defeat by an overwhelming force of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors led by Crazy Horse and other notable chiefs in 1876 on the Little Bighorn River is nearly as intense as the national interest in the Battle of Gettysburg. In fact, these are probably the two most studied engagements of all those fought on American soil. And, of course, Custer, a hero to some and an object of disparagement to others, had notable careers in both the Civil War and in the Indian Wars which followed in the years afterwards. It seems appropriate, since many students of the Civil War are familiar with the Little Bighorn battle, to share with our members an important present opportunity to help preserve a portion of this Montana site.

The chairman of the Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee is James V. Court, a former and well-loved Superintendent of the Little Bighorn Battlefield (1978-1986). Though Jim is retired, he has remained very active in Little Bighorn affairs, leading private tours and seeking to preserve the battlefield itself. Those of you who have visited the battlefield know that only a portion of it is preserved as a national military park. Much of the battlefield property and much of the surrounding area is privately owned. These areas are threatened with development and/or a compromise of their view shed and historical integrity.

The Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee (CBPC) has, over the years, purchased 2200 acres surrounding and including the battlefield. These areas include Weir Point, Medicine Tail Coulee, Water Carrier's Ravine, and the Second Reno Crossing. Those of you who are familiar with the battle understand the significance of these areas.

Now, several hundred additional acres are available. These too are crucial areas. They include the sites of Sitting Bull's Sioux village and most of the area associated with the Valley Fight: Major Marcus Reno's skirmish lines, his fight in the timber, and his route to the bluffs where he set up his defense lines. These are areas begging for preservation. Already a portion of Reno's skirmish line where he attacked the Sioux village is obliterated by Interstate 90. Other areas available include Crazy Horse's route to Last Stand Hill. The asking price is just over one million dollars.

CBPC is asking for generous contributions to this effort to preserve the Little Bighorn battlefield. Contributions of \$50. or more will entitle the donor to a Lifetime Membership in CBPC. You can contact the Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee, Box 7, Hardin MT 59034. Phone 406-665-1876, Fax 406-665-3133. Contributions are tax-deductible.

And if this facet of American history interests you, you may wish to join the Order of the Indian Wars, founded in 1979. This group is led by Jerry L. Russell who is also the national chairman of Civil War Round Table Associates. It's a spiritual descendent of the original Order which was made up primarily of actual veterans of the Indian Wars. OIW has held sixteen national assemblies with programs by historians and field tours. Write Order of the Indian Wars, Box 7401, Little Rock AR 72217. Phone 501-225-3996. Dues are \$20. per year and include a newsletter.

Yet another superb organization which all Little Bighorn devotees should join is the Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association (CBHMA), also a non-profit group. Members receive an informative quarterly newsletter and an annual journal, *Greasy Grass*, (Sioux term for Little Bighorn River) which is devoted to the history of the battle. This organization maintains a huge stock of books on all aspects of the Indian Wars on the Plains at discounts to members. And it sponsors annual week-long field trips to Indian War sites. Write CBHMA, Box 902, Hardin MT 59034. Phone 406-665-2060. Dues are \$12.50/year or \$20/two years and \$200/Life Membership.

As you know, there are great efforts underway all over the country by battlefield preservationists to preserve sites associated with American military history. They deserve our continuing interest and support.

EXTRA RATIONS

We're delighted to welcome ten more first-time members to the ranks of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table! They are: J.B. Axsom, Barbara Baker, Bernice Carver, Sandra Culbreth, Bush James, E. R. Johnston, Keith Murray, John Shawver, Bob Spencer, and Robert Stansbury.

Members were given an opportunity at the last two meetings to contribute towards the purchase of two map charts from the U.S.S. *Susquehanna* of Fort Fisher fame. They'll be preserved at the New Hanover Public Library. Members contributed \$550.00 and the RT matched this amount with \$500.00, a total of \$1050.00. Thanks to all the contributors for their generosity!

At future RT meetings, look for a table featuring monthly newsletters from RT's around the country. We're currently exchanging newsletters with the Piedmont CWRT, Charlotte NC; the CWRT of North Carolina, Raleigh NC; the CWRT of Rocky Mount, Rocky Mount NC; the CWRT of Louisville, Louisville KY; CWRT of Chicago, Chicago IL; Eastern Pennsylvania CWRT, Allentown PA; and the Jackson CWRT, Jackson MS. We're requesting newsletters from several other RT's as well. Take a moment and browse through these communications and see what kind of programs and activities other RT's are enjoying.

A number of RT members attended the 18th Annual Civil War Show in Richmond, Virginia, November 20-21, sponsored jointly by the Museum of the Confederacy and the Northern Virginia Relic Hunters Association. Mike Budziszewski had a table featuring items for sale from his Cape Fear Civil War Shop in Carolina Beach. Tom Broadfoot had an extensive stock of Civil War books, including many recent issues from Broadfoot Publishing Company. Chris and Nancy Fonvielle held down the Savas Publishing Company table from which Chris sold numerous copies of his *Last Rays*. Prowling the aisles for original CW items were Eddie White, Albert Jewell, and George Slaton.

About twenty-five RT members have signed up for the Spring Bus Tour to Antietam and South Mountain. They are encouraged to come at 6:30 pm to the December meeting for a brief planning session. We still need to choose a weekend in March and work out some other details.

A number of our regular RT members have not yet sent in their dues for the 1998-1999 year. Please submit them at your earliest convenience! You may, of course, bring your check for \$25.00 to the December meeting or mail to CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404. The member dues subsidize our dinner meetings, provide for refreshments, pay speaker expenses, and underwrite the cost of printing and mailing the monthly newsletter.

A PARTING SHOT

(No soldier, North or South, had a more discerning eye for the ironies of war, than Private Sam Watkins, 1st Tennessee Regiment, whose *Co. Aytch: Or, A Side Show of the Big Show*, published in Nashville TN in 1882, is perhaps the finest memoir of a common soldier in the CSA Army of Tennessee)

"Why, hello, Corporal, where did you get those two yellow stripes on your arm?"

"Why, sir, I have been promoted for gallantry on the battlefield, by picking up an orphan flag, that had been run over by a thousand fellows, and when I picked it up I did so because I thought it was pretty, and I wanted to have me a shirt made out of it."

"I could have picked up forty, had I known that," said Sloan.

"So could I, but I knew that the stragglers would pick them up."

Reader mine, the above dialogue is true in every particular. As long as I was in action, fighting for my country, there was no chance for promotion, but as soon as I fell out of ranks and picked up a forsaken and deserted flag, I was promoted for it. I felt "sorter" cheap when complimented for gallantry, and the high honor of Fourth Corporal was conferred upon me. I felt that those brave and noble fellows who had kept on in the charge were more entitled to the honor than I was, for when the ball struck me on the ankle and heel, I did not go any further. And had I only known that picking up flags entitled me to promotion, and that every flag picked up would raise me one notch higher, I would have quit fighting and gone to picking up flags and by that means I would have soon been President of the Confederate States of America.