

# Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

January, 1999

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

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## JAMES B. GORDON NORTH CAROLINA'S GREATEST CAVALRYMAN

January 14 Meeting  
St. John's Episcopal Church  
Social Hour 7:00.....Program 7:30

We welcome to the January meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table a well-known historian, author, and expert on North Carolina cavalry. Chris J. Hartley is the recent author of the highly acclaimed *Stuart's Tarheels: James B. Gordon and His North Carolina Cavalry* (Butternut & Blue, 1996). Chris, a graduate of the University of North Carolina, has published several articles on the war and is a frequent speaker to groups like ours. His current long-term projects include two new histories, one on the First North Carolina Cavalry and the other on USA General George Stoneman's 1865 raid in North Carolina and Southwest Virginia. Chris Hartley lives in Clemmons NC.

James Byron Gordon was born in Wilkesborough NC in 1832. He served several terms in the NC legislature. He enlisted as a private in the Wilkes Valley Guards and was later appointed major in the First NC Cavalry. His regiment was transferred to Virginia to serve in Jeb Stuart's brigade in the fall of 1861. Gordon served with great distinction in the engagements of Stuart's cavalry. After the sprawling Battle of Brandy Station, Gordon took command of the 1st NC Regiment. In September, 1863, this outstanding North Carolinian was promoted to brigadier general and led his brigade until he was mortally wounded near Richmond in May, 1864.

Jeffrey D. Wert, in the six-volume *The Confederate General*, describes Gordon's service in these terms: "Gordon was one of a handful of non-Virginians in Stuart's cavalry corps who had distinguished himself. At every level of command he had performed capably, with marked distinction on a few occasions. Had he lived, Gordon might have attained higher rank during the war's final months. Wade Hampton, who had replaced the fallen Stuart, knew Gordon well, and the attrition in the officer ranks offered opportunity for such solid officers as James Gordon."

Don't miss our first meeting of the New Year! Refreshments will be served at 7:00 and the program is at 7:30. As usual, you're encouraged to bring guests. Chris Hartley will have copies of his *Stuart's Tarheel's* available for sale and signing.

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George Slaton, President & Newsletter Editor (O. 452-7370, H. 452-744)  
Chris Fonvielle, Vice President & Program Chairman (H. 792-9091)  
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Ed Gibson, Hospitality (H. 675-9717)  
Ted Lynch, Raffle (H. 762-6445)  
John Krohn (H. 799-6014)  
James McLaren (H. 686-9359)

## LETTERS FROM OUR MEMBERS

I'm finding Fredericksburg VA a fascinating place to live in. There are so many things to do and see plus the opportunity to get involved in preservation efforts firsthand.

Just before I moved here I joined the Rappahannock Valley CWRT. It's a great organization. They work hand in glove with the National Park Service and the Friends of the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields. All three organizations are dedicated to preserving as much of the battlefields as possible.

Speaking of research, I'm proud to announce I will be working as a volunteer with NPS historian, Noel Harrison, on a research project. The focus of the project is claims filed against the Federal and Confederate governments for damages suffered by private citizens of Fredericksburg during the battle. It's really a two part project. One part deals with tracking down the claimants and the type of damages they were seeking and the other is following up on claims that actually went into litigation.

I'm also doing the Virginia research for an author in Columbus OH who is writing a book on the Battle of Trevilian Station. I'm also working on a project of my own which the NC State Archives is interested in. There's a Confederate cemetery at Spotsylvania Court House where over 160 Tarheels are buried. My idea is to put the names of the NC soldiers together with the information found in Manarin's in a booklet form.

Last month I gave a program on the First NC Cavalry to the Loudoun County CWRT. There were about fifty members there, and they're a very knowledgeable group. My knees were knocking together so hard I was afraid they would drown out the microphone I had to wear because they tape all of their programs for a local TV station. ...I had only one moment of real panic. For the life of me I couldn't remember the word Gettysburg so I had to refer to it as the Pennsylvania Campaign. That drew a few chuckles from the crowd. All in all, I enjoyed doing the program and will probably do it for my own RT in the spring.

Best wishes to all my friends at the Cape Fear CWRT. Hope to see some of you at Antietam this spring.

-Tonia Smith

As a member of the CFCWRT and a few other organizations, I find that they are all striving toward a common goal. In brief, it is a goal of preserving history for present and future generations. They also share the common problems of recruiting new members and choosing new projects. In twenty-five years of working within volunteer organizations, I have learned three things about the recruiting and retention of new members. The most important of these is that without a constant influx of new, enthusiastic members, an organization will wither and die. Second, a new member must feel that he or she is a welcomed part of the group, free to make a contribution. Finally, it is the responsibility of officers and veteran members to ensure that the new person is introduced to the group at large. In many organizations, someone acts as a sponsor to the new member, introducing him or her to others, perhaps inviting them to sit on committees. Assuring newcomers that they are needed helps them become an active part of the group. As veteran members and officers, we should ask ourselves the following. Did the new member get whatever he should have been issued at the first meeting? Is the new member kept aware of meetings and events? If we see a member at church, work, or on the street, do we say hello?

Then there are projects to be chosen. Depending on perspective, it is either fortunate or not that there are so many things that need to be done in NC. It sometimes seems that our state has been ashamed or apathetic about its CW history. We can change that, and there is ample work to go around. Without meaning to slight the needs of the rest of the state, let me discuss my own little corner. I recently petitioned the state for a marker at the site of the Battle of Town Creek in Brunswick County. They were very kind in their rejection, saying the battle was not significant, considering that Fort Anderson had already been marked. The marker commemorating the involvement of colored troops at the Battle of Forks Road in Wilmington has been removed and not replaced for ages. While battlefields and fortifications along the Cape Fear River are in danger of the developer's bulldozer, we defenders of NC history make donations to save Virginia battlefields. Could it be that there is something amiss with our priorities?

I envision as a sort of master project a well-marked driving tour of the two routes of the Wilmington campaign. Small parcels of land, large enough for pull offs could be secured along highways where handsome story boards would be placed. Funds could be collected to buy land where battles, even small skirmishes, occurred. To assist fund-raising, the museums at Forts Fisher and Anderson could sell a map/story book and tape of the campaign to close the last major port of the Confederacy. We must hasten to work though. It is hoped that a re-enactment to rival this year's celebration at Gettysburg will be planned. What an exciting time to announce our joint project! What an excellent time to draw thousands of tourists to the largest re-enactment in Wilmington and Brunswick County history. Imagine hundreds, perhaps thousands, of re-enactors battling along both banks of the Cape Fear. Unless we act immediately, a real opportunity will slip away.

Yet another project would be to commission a full scale model of the ironclad *CSS North Carolina*. With recent underwater archeology studies of the vessel near Southport, enough information was gathered to build an accurate facsimile. The model could be placed near the battleship moored near the location where the ironclad was built.

- R.C. Long, Box 177, Winnabow NC 28479. FIREBOSS@prodigy.net

## THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM Spring Bus Tour

We will leave Wilmington on Thursday afternoon, March 25, at 2:00 pm from the parking lot next to Roses at Hanover Center. Our bus will be furnished by Shiloh Travel Services and is a 48 passenger vehicle. It is an eight hour trip to Hagerstown MD, so we will be arriving late at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel.

On Friday morning, a continental breakfast is available at the hotel, included with the cost of the room. We will meet our guide, Timothy Reese, and go down and see White's Ford where most of Lee's army crossed the Potomac River and also the location where the Lost Order was found. We will move from there to South Mountain and see where the action was at Turner's and Fox's Gap. A box lunch will be provided during the day.

On Friday evening, we will have a buffet dinner at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, and Timothy will go over the day's activities and talk about the tour of Antietam battlefield on Saturday.

On Saturday, March 27, we will leave the hotel and spend the entire day on the battlefield, with a box lunch included. If you have particular units that you're interested in, you can mail your questions directly to Timothy Reese at PO Box 458, Burkittsville MD 21718, so he can prepare to show you their whereabouts during the battle.

We will come back to the hotel on Saturday afternoon late and go to The Washington Spy, a local restaurant, for dinner as a group. This will be either a buffet or a set dinner where you have three choices off the menu. All alcoholic beverages are on your own.

On Sunday morning, March 28, we will depart early on our bus for the return trip to Wilmington.

### Costs

Based on thirty-nine members who have signed up, the cost per person is as follows:

Double Occupancy, two double beds	\$230.00	per person
Single Occupancy, one single bed	\$325.00	per person

*(Cost per person may have to be adjusted upwards slightly if fewer than 39 go on the tour).*

Trip includes transportation, room for three nights, guide services, box lunches Friday and Saturday, dinner Friday and Saturday.

Please send checks to Dan Geddie, Treasurer, CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404. Since we are on the line to the hotel for an exact count, we must observe a payment deadline. We must have your check for the full amount by Tuesday, February 23, 5:00 pm. No refunds after this date.

Any questions about the trip, please contact Tommy King at 762-2930 (home) or 763-7318 (office).

**TOUR PAYMENT DEADLINE  
TUESDAY.....FEBRUARY 23.....5:00 pm**

- Tommy King

## BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION AT ANTIETAM

The Roulette Farm, one of the most significant pieces of Civil War battleground in private hands, was purchased September 3 and donated to the Antietam National Battlefield. The 179 acre farm, across which Union troops assaulted the Confederate defensive position in Bloody Lane, was acquired for \$660,000.00 by the Richard King Mellon Foundation which turned it over to the park the same day. NPS Director, Robert Stanton said, "We can be proud of the results of this true partnership between private landowners, a private-sector group, and the federal government in the protection and preservation of this hallowed ground of the American Civil War."

The Conservation Fund acted as agents for the Mellon Foundation. Both the Conservation Fund and the Richard King Mellon Foundation have made major purchases at Antietam before. In 1991, they bought and donated to the park 320 acres of the West Woods and the Cornfield. The purchase brings the park's holdings to 1600 acres within the 4100 acre park boundary. The park holds easements on much of the land within its boundary, while 300-400 acres are still in private hands. The Roulette Farm, where 5400 Union soldiers became casualties in their effort to take Bloody Lane, will be open to the public on the battle's upcoming September 17, 1999 anniversary.

(Reprinted from *The Civil War News*, November, 1998)

## EXTRA RATIONS

Two current Civil War book sales have recently come to our attention. Louisiana State University Press has available its extensive stock of CW titles at appealing discounts until January 31. Write LSU Press, CW Book Sale, Box 25053, Baton Rouge LA 70894 for a catalogue; no phone orders are possible. The University of South Carolina Press, 718 Devine Street, Columbia SC 29208, (Fax) 800-868-0740, has issued a catalogue recently listing its CW books at discount prices as well. The USC Press sale lasts through March 15.

I want to personally urge more members to sign up for our Antietam tour. It should prove to be one of our best ever! Tommy King has done an excellent job as always of putting this trip together. We still have eight more seats available on the bus, so call Tommy if you haven't signed up for the trip. And, of course, any member is welcome to bring a guest; costs are the same.

## A PARTING SHOT

In the North one hears the war mentioned, in social conversation, once a month; sometimes as often as once a week; but as a distinct subject for talk, it has long ago been relieved of duty. There are sufficient reasons for this. Given a dinner company of six gentlemen today, it can easily happen that four of them - and possibly five - were not in the field at all. So the chances are four to two, or five to one, that the war will at no time during the evening become the topic of conversation; and the chances are still greater that if it become the topic it will remain so but a little while. If you add six ladies to the company, you have added six people who saw so little of the dread realities of the war that they ran out of talk concerning them years ago, and now would soon weary of the war topic if you brought it up.

The case is very different in the South. There, every man you meet was in the war; and every lady you meet saw the war. The war is the great chief topic of conversation. The interest in it is vivid and constant; the interest in other topics is fleeting. Mention of the war will wake up a dull company and set their tongues going, when nearly any other topic would fail. In the South, the war is what A.D. is elsewhere: they date from it. All day long you hear things "placed" as having happened since the waw; or du'in' the waw; or befo' the waw; or right aftah the waw; or 'bout two yeahs or five yeahs or ten yeahs befo' the waw or aftah the waw. It shows how intimately every individual was visited, in his own person, by that tremendous episode. It gives the inexperienced stranger a better idea of what a vast and comprehensive calamity invasion is than he can ever get by reading books at the fireside.

*Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain, 1883