

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

March, 1999

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

COLLECTING THE CIVIL WAR

March 11 Meeting

CIVIL WAR BOOKS NEW AND OLD: A CHANGING MARKET
Tom Broadfoot

CIVIL WAR ARTIFACTS AND RELICS
Mike Budziszewski
Bennett Langley

CIVIL WAR LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS
George Slaton

The March meeting will feature our own RT members who will reflect on collecting items about the Civil War or from the Civil War period. They will also bring numerous pieces from their collections for display.

Tom Broadfoot is the premier Civil War book dealer in America. For nearly thirty years, Tom has bought and sold the rarest books in his field. His Broadfoot Publishing Company offers the most comprehensive selection of reprints of Civil War books anywhere, including individual titles as well as the large classic sets such as the *Official Records* and *Confederate Veteran*.

Mike Budziszewski recently moved to the Wilmington area from Pittsburgh where he was active in a local Round Table. Mike has specialized for years in artifacts such as guns and swords. His partner in the Cape Fear Civil War Shop in Carolina Beach, Bennett Langley, grew up near Fort Fisher and is a longtime collector of relics of the war found in the Cape Fear area, including bullets, buckles, buttons, and artillery shells.

George Slaton has a twenty-five year interest in Civil War manuscripts such as official military field orders and original letters from both common soldiers and general officers.

Come early for refreshments at 7:00 pm, Thursday, March 11, followed by the program at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held as usual in Elebash Hall, St. John's Episcopal Church, located at the corner of Forest Hills Drive and Park Avenue.

EXTRA RATIONS

We welcome new members, Doc Howell, Graham Phillips, Howard Rush, and Don Sloan! Our membership is now closing in on the 120 mark.

Tommy King wants to remind all of you that there are still seats available on the bus for the Antietam Battlefield tour March 25-28, so give him a call (O. 763-7318) if you would like to go. By special arrangement, the motel will keep extra rooms open for us until March 12.

The March meeting will feature another raffle for our members. Several items will be raffled, including sheets of U.S. Commemorative postage stamps from the 1961-1965 Centennial. These were donated to the RT by member, Wilbur Jones. Our February raffle raised \$83.00!

PRESERVATION AND OTHER NEWS

Did you know that our RT is part of a network of about 275 RT's around the nation which are affiliated with Civil War Round Table Associates, established in 1968, and led by Jerry L. Russell of Little Rock, Arkansas? Jerry has guided the creation of many RT's, including our own Cape Fear Civil War Round Table! In 1993, the CWRT Associates celebrated its 25th Anniversary by holding its annual Congress here in Wilmington. The conference featured a work group to advise local CW buffs on establishing a RT. This work group inspired the creation of our Cape Fear CWRT just a year later in the fall of 1994. We maintain our tie to CWRT Associates through modest annual dues and we receive a newsletter on a periodic basis. The Associates sponsor an annual Congress featuring speakers and battlefield tours; this year the Congress will be held in Gettysburg with Ed Bearss and Licensed Battlefield Guides as speakers and tour guides. We'll print the details as they are announced.

Jerry Russell has been a powerful force for the preservation of America's battlefields. You can personally join CWRT Associates (12.50 regular, \$20 sustaining, \$50 contributing, \$100 life) by contacting him at Box 7388, Little Rock, AR 72217, 501-225-3996). Also at jlrussell@civilwarbuff.com. His HERITAGEPAC sponsors preservation alerts via large mailings. Jerry always welcomes every \$5 and \$10 gift to help with mailing costs.

Jerry's recent *Digest* contained some interesting preservation news, some of which is excerpted here below.

The Brandy Station Foundation recently acquired 17 more acres on the once-doomed battlefield near Culpepper VA which in 1863 saw the largest cavalry clash in American history. The \$70,000 purchase marks the first land preserved on Fleetwood Hill which was Jeb Stuart's headquarters. The Association for Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) bought 560 acres of the battlefield in its largest acquisition of CW property and has placed another 1000 acres under historic covenant. Yet there are still areas of the field which lie unprotected. Congratulations to the Capital District CWRT in Albany NY which raised \$10,000. for Brandy Station!

The non-profit Brandy Station Foundation (BSF) has been a very effective organization and deserves the support of preservationists. Contact BSF, Box 164, Brandy Station VA 22714.

Another hard-working private non-profit group is the Central Maryland Heritage League, Box 721, Middletown MD 21769. The group has helped protect more than 1200 acres of the South Mountain battlefield (which we'll visit on our Antietam tour) where many NC troops were deployed by CSA General D. H. Hill.

The Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond VA has of course for years preserved priceless records and memorabilia from the war. Its fourth annual fund-raising Tar Heel Ball, to be held March 20 at the Tredegar Iron Works Gun Foundry, will celebrate the contributions of NC to the Confederacy. Each year the Ball honors a southern state. And, by the way, the MOC has created a new exhibit called *North Carolina: First...Farthest...Last* which depicts its collection of NC documents and artifacts. Contact MOC, 1201 E Clay Street, Richmond VA 23219, 804-649-1861. Your membership in the MOC supports their programs.

Jerry also reminds us of two upcoming conferences which may be of interest to our members. The National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Box 470, Frederick MD 21705 will host its Seventh Annual Conference on Civil War Medicine in Shiloh TN August 6-8. They have an interesting lineup of speakers, including their keynote, Wiley Sword, the award-winning historian of books on Shiloh and Franklin. The museum invites your membership as well. Call 800-564-1864.

And the 50th Anniversary meeting of the Company of Military Historians will be held April 22-25 in Atlanta. The event will include visits to the DuBose CW Collection at the Atlanta History Center and Kennesaw National Military Park. Write: CMH, North Main Street, Westbrook CT 06498.

The Association for Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) took the lead in getting Congress to approve \$8 million in federal funds to be used to buy endangered battlefield property. Every dollar of the \$8 million must be matched by \$2 at the local level, creating a \$24 million program to buy battlefield land in ten states. Among the sites to receive protection are Perryville KY, Bentonville and Averagesboro NC, Spring Hill TN, Brandy Station, Cedar Creek and Third Winchester, in VA, Port Hudson LA, and Corinth MS.

COLLECTING THE CIVIL WAR

Shortly after the Civil War began, people, both military and civilian, began collecting its artifacts. Many surviving soldiers' letters mention sending home to family and friends items combatants had found after a battle, during the occupation of a city, or even after looting a home. Soldiers sent back captured letters and photographs, bits of enemy flags, buttons, swords, guns, and a host of other items. In the decades following the war, a number of collectors began accumulating vast numbers of artifacts. The Confederate general, George H. "Maryland" Steuart, for instance, put together perhaps the largest collection of near mint condition Confederate arms and accoutrements in existence; this collection is now housed at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond.

In the last twenty-five years, the collecting frenzy has accelerated. Because of scarcity and rising prices, most collectors have found it necessary to concentrate on collecting in specific areas. While some collectors will focus on a particular theme such as medical, artillery, or cavalry artifacts, others will search for specific items such as canteens, spurs, certain firearms, or CSA postal history.

Many non-collectors, upon attending a Civil War collectors' show, are astounded at the abundance of original material from the war. There is a booming market among dealers, auction houses, and collectors in Civil War memorabilia. The burgeoning market in contemporary Civil War art with its vivid scenes of combat attract many enthusiasts who are interested in particular battles, regiments, or personalities.

Much of the interest in collecting Civil War items has stemmed from metal detecting which became popular in the 1950's. Relic hunters began detecting Civil War skirmish and camp sites, finding a wide range of original artifacts. As a result, many general collections of artifacts have been formed. Yet, some relic hunters, through trading with fellow collectors, look for particular items. Large collections can be formed around bullets or artillery shells, since there are hundreds of types and variations. Another popular collecting category is that of buttons and buckles; many designs and patterns were produced during the war.

Collecting Civil War guns and swords has always been popular. Premiums are paid for especially rare weapons such as the large French-made LeMat revolver, generally carried only by Confederate officers such as Jeb Stuart. Any weapon, in fact, which can be identified to a particular veteran, commands a premium. Advanced collectors pay large sums for weapons which were carried by notable officers and generals, both North and South.

The really high dollar Civil War items are regimental flags and uniforms. Officers' uniforms are highly prized, but items worn by Confederate enlisted men are extremely scarce and are likewise very desirable. In this area, as well as in most other collecting categories, Confederate material is more scarce and, consequently, more expensive than Union items.

Demand for the finer Civil War collectibles has made many artifacts so scarce that collectors in recent years have turned to items which were formerly ignored. An example is the escalation in prices, in the last decade, of GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) and UCV (United Confederate Veterans) badges and ribbons which were inscribed with the dates of various veterans' reunions during the postwar years.

Another traditional collecting area is that of Civil War books. While some collectors insist on original or first editions of regimentals or memoirs published in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, other collectors seek to build libraries combining these rare books with more recently published works. A related area is that of manuscripts. Collectors search for original soldier letters and diaries, official military correspondence, and documents signed by Confederate and Union generals. Still another area is that of photography. Portraits in albumen, ambrotype, and tintype formats abound of Civil War soldiers.

Why is Civil War collecting so popular? Most collectors would probably say that finding or owning an artifact helps close the distance between the present day and the war years. Artifacts are a direct link to the war itself and to the combatants who struggled and died on many a field. Collectors have discovered that the items they once admired in museum cases when they were children are readily available for private ownership. Collecting, at its best, becomes yet another way of studying the Civil War, an event which still fascinates so many of us.

THE TENNESSEE STATE MUSEUM Civil War Collection

I've visited this state history museum twice in recent years and, believe me, I'll visit it again next time I'm in Nashville. It's just the finest collection and presentation of state history I've ever seen, and the Civil War collection is really outstanding, certainly the best outside of Richmond's Museum of the Confederacy. Unlike so many contemporary state museums whose minimal exhibits are centered around sometimes obscure themes, the Tennessee museum's exhibits have great depth. For instance, whereas North Carolina's history museum in Raleigh may exhibit several pieces of 19th Century silver to generally illustrate the NC silversmith's art, the Tennessee collection of silver includes pieces from every Tennessee silversmith in the state's collection; the silver exhibit is contained in its own gallery with special lighting.

The Civil War collection, in a similar way, is almost overwhelming in scope with choice Confederate items in profusion. I left the museum feeling the sensory overload I experience every time I visit the Museum of the Confederacy. Here are some of the outstanding pieces in their collection:

There's A.P. Hill's trunk, Patrick Cleburne's kepi, Nathan Bedford Forrest's two Navy Colts, Albert Sidney Johnston's capbox, Gideon Pillow's LeMat revolver, Otho French Strahl's officers' frock coat, John Adams' general officer's coat, George W. Gordon's sword, John Hunt Morgan's dress shirt, the sword that A.P. Stewart donated to the Tennessee Historical Society, the magnificent flag of the CSS *Alabama*, and probably the finest engraved presentation Henry rifle in existence.

The museum owns approximately fifty Confederate flags, many of which are displayed. It has a beautiful exhibit of Tennessee-manufactured Confederate swords. Then there's John Morton's College Hill sword. Morton was N.B. Forrest's artillery chief. And one of the rarest and most dramatic pieces on display is the Twelve-pounder bronze Napoleon used by Morton when he campaigned with Forrest! And there is much more.

Of particular interest to students of the Revolutionary War, the Tennessee State Museum owns the largest collection of items from the Battle of Kings Mountain aside from the National Battlepark's accumulation at the South Carolina site.

A visit to the TSM is well worth a visit of a few hours or a whole day next time you're in Nashville. It's located in downtown Nashville at 505 Deaderick Street. No admission is charged. Phone (615) 741-2692.

* * *

A PARTING SHOT

(A recent book, *Dear Mr. Lincoln: Letters to the President*, Harold Holzer, (Addison Wesley, 1993), is a survey of the correspondence President Abraham Lincoln received from the public during the war years. In fact, Lincoln received more than 250 such letters each day. Following is a letter to Lincoln from a New York private, William Johnson)

Mister ole Abe

herbi Plese find inclosed won (1) Pare of reenlistment Stripes I am a vetren which hev Bin warin sed Stripes. thinkin that as how U had reenlisted i thot i wood Cut em Off & Send em to U hopin they may cum handy. they Cost Forty (40) Sents i wood send U A pare with gold Stuf on the Ege of em if I cood git em them wons Costs A good Ele more tho. hev em Sode on with Blu thred.

my Resins For Sendin em is these Firstly U Air my Stile of A man & Besides is Onist. Seconly U Air intitled to Sed Stripes For inlistin Again & things is verry hi now. I mus put Out my lite in a fu minuts. dont let up on them jonnys A Darn bit Ile sta by U til the darn Cuses is used up for won...P.S. i rote this On a A hull Sheat Becos the Captin says it is Bisness Stile & this is Bisines