

# Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

September, 1998

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

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## BLOCKADE RUNNING DURING THE CIVIL WAR

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



The first meeting of the 1998-1999 year of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table will feature blockade running, a topic of great interest to many of our members. And we are fortunate to have as our guest speaker, Stephen R. Wise, Ph.D., the leading authority on the Confederacy's use of blockade runners!

Throughout the Civil War, the Confederacy was forced to sustain its armies through the use of innovative steam-propelled blockade runners. Dr. Wise will provide an overview of the extensive supply system that allowed the Confederacy to wage a successful war effort. Not only was blockade running vital to the South's war effort, but it also provided the nation with a folklore that centered around daredevil captains, brave men, and fearless crews. The talk will cover the individuals involved in blockade running, the specialized vessels, how the system was financed and what it did to support the South. Special emphasis will be placed on Wilmington and its position as the Confederacy's primary blockade running port.

Dr. Stephen R. Wise, an historian who lives in Beaufort, SC, is the director of the museum at Parris Island SC, and the Cultural Resource Manager for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot located at Parris Island. A native of Toledo, Ohio, Dr. Wise received his bachelors degree from Wittenberg University and his masters degree from Bowling Green State University. Drawn to the University of South Carolina to study under the direction of the late Thomas L. Connelly, a noted author and CW historian, Wise earned his doctoral degree in 1983.

Dr. Wise's first book, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War*, was highly acclaimed as a comprehensive account of the Confederate effort to deliver supplies through the northern blockade. A second book entitled *Gate of Hell: The Campaign for Charleston Harbor 1863*, which covers the 1863 campaign that found northern troops battling on Morris Island for the control of Charleston harbor, was published by the University of South Carolina Press in June, 1994. *Gate of Hell* was given an award by the South Carolina Historical Society as the best book written in 1994 on South Carolina history. A future work will feature photographs of Beaufort, SC during the Civil War.

A well-known lecturer, Dr. Wise has been the featured speaker on Cunard passenger liners and Windspirit cruises. He has appeared on the Arts and Entertainment Channel as a featured speaker for the television show *Civil War Journal* and in various South Carolina Education Television productions. In 1996, he received the Daughters of the American Revolution History Medal for his service in promoting the history of the United States. Dr. Wise also teaches history as an adjunct professor at the Beaufort campus of the University of South Carolina and serves on the board of the Historic Beaufort Foundation and the South Carolina Battlefield Preservation Trust. He is also active in Civil War Round Tables and local historical societies.

St. John's Episcopal Church is located at 1219 Forest Hills Drive, on the corner of Park Avenue. Parking is available on the median along Park Avenue or on the grassy lawn on the north side of the church which is accessible through the paved parking area behind the church. Please do not park in this paved area! Enter Elebash Hall through the covered archway in front (west side) of the church. Refreshments at 7:00 pm and program at 7:30 pm. Come early and bring a friend or two!

**PROGRAM SCHEDULE**  
**Cape Fear Civil War Round Table**  
**1998-1999**

- September 10.** Stephen Wise, an acknowledged authority on CW naval history, presents a program on *Blockade Running*.
- October 8.** The annual fall meeting featuring leading CW historian Kent Masterson Brown on *Lee's Retreat from Gettysburg*. The RT will meet at First Presbyterian Church for a social hour followed by a delicious meal. Cost to be announced.
- November 12.** Bob Zeller and Jonathan Noffke will present a program, illustrated with slides, on *Civil War Photography*.
- December 10.** Wilbur Jones, author and RT member, will offer his original and recently published research on *Lee's Lost Order at Antietam*.
- January 14.** Chris Hartley, a native North Carolina CW author and researcher, on *CSA General James B. Gordon and the North Carolina Cavalry*.
- February 11.** Jim McCallum and John Krohn, RT members and retired physicians, will speak on *Civil War Medicine*.
- March 11.** Tom Broadfoot, Mike Budziszewski, and George Slaton on *Collecting the Civil War*.
- March** Spring Bus Tour to Antietam! Weekend to be announced.
- April 22..** James P. Gannon, author of *Irish Rebels, Confederate Tigers: A History of the 6th Louisiana Volunteers, 1861-1865*, will speak on the subject of this well-received recent book.
- May 13.** Robin Reed, who serves on the staff of the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, will present a program on *The Common Soldier of the Civil War*.

Note. Meeting locations will be determined later and announced through the newsletter.

**PAMPLIN PARK CIVIL WAR SITE**  
**Petersburg Campaign**

On April 2, 1865, USA General Ulysses Grant, encouraged by the Confederate debacle the day before at Five Forks, ordered his entire army forward against the Southern defenses around Petersburg. The huge attack, signaled by the Union commander's momentous words to his staff, "I have ordered a general assault along the lines for tomorrow morning," was the culmination of the ten month siege of the beleaguered city. Grant directed General Horatio Wright's VI Corps to attack the Confederates south of Petersburg in an area defended by CSA General Samuel McGowan's South Carolina brigade. The 4:00 am assault overwhelmed the Southerners, creating a gap in their lines which was later exploited by USA General John Gibbon's XXIV Corps which in turn overran the heroic Confederates at nearby Fort Gregg.

The area of Wright's initial breakthrough is today preserved as Pamplin Park, a privately owned site. The Pamplin Foundation has created an interpretive center with a small, but superb, museum, reconstructed CSA winter quarters, and left intact the extensive CSA trench lines. Tudor Hall, the HQ of General McGowan is also open to the public. A series of trails and interpretive markers lead visitors through the battlefield. The park, ably directed by A. Wilson Greene, the founding president of APCWS, will soon feature an expanded Museum of the Common Soldier, one of the first of its kind.

Pamplin Park Civil War Site, 6523 Duncan Road, Petersburg VA 23803 (804) 861-2408 was well worth my recent visit. It's easily accessible from I-95.

## **CONFEDERATES IN THE ATTIC: *Dispatches From the Unfinished Civil War* Book Review**

Run, don't walk, to the nearest bookstore or to the library for a copy of this recently published book on the Civil War, one which defies any easy categorization! Authored by Tony Horwitz, a Pulitzer Prize winner, it's both a moving and entertaining account of an experienced journalist's travels through the South and his encounters with a variety of most interesting people who pursue an all-consuming interest in the old Confederacy and its traditions. Horwitz meets and interviews a host of colorful characters, from a "super hardcore" reenactor who is always searching for another "period rush" to that fascinating embodiment of the Old South himself, author Shelby Foote. I guarantee that, once you start reading it, you won't be able to put this book down and when you do, you'll be planning a jaunt to some Civil War battlefield the very next weekend. Horwitz maintains an objective, though sympathetic stance towards everyone he interviews, yet leaving the reader with the distinct impression that the author is as hooked on the Civil War as all the rest of us. It confirmed for me that it's OK to be at least a little crazy about this compelling subject! (Pantheon, 1998).

### **CONFEDERATE MUSEUM EXHIBIT Wilmington Light Infantry Bazaar, 1893**

(The following news item from *The Wilmington Messenger*, May 16, 1893, comes to us courtesy of the Bill Reaves Collection, New Hanover Public Library. The Wilmington Light Infantry was a pre-war unit which entered the Confederate service and continued its existence long after the war. The article's highlights are reproduced below).

The grand military bazaar of the Wilmington Light Infantry opened last night at the Champion Compress under the auspices of the Wilmington Light Infantry. The spacious hall was ablaze with electric lights, Chinese lanterns, lamps, etc., and was resplendent with gorgeous decorations and beautifully arranged booths. The most interesting and instructive feature of the whole fair is the CONFEDERATE MUSEUM under charge of Mrs. Gaston Meares...and the ladies of the Memorial Association. Miss Minnie Brown as the "Daughter of the Regiment," was dressed in a suit of Confederate Gray and carries war relics in the way of canteens, etc. Among the most interesting exhibits are:

The bullet-riddled battle flag of the Third North Carolina Regiment - A bullet which wounded Colonel William Lord DeRosset and a Colt's revolver captured from a Yankee soldier by Colonel DeRosset - Colonel Cantwell's ante bellum uniform worn by the WLI - A portrait of General Whiting, the table on which he wrote his orders, his sword, spurs, cane, field glass, etc. - The musket which was presented to the WLI by Mr. H. Walters of Baltimore. This gun is described by the following which is engraved on a plate on the butt: "This gun drew the first blood of the war, in Baltimore, April 19th, 1861. A soldier of the Sixth Massachusetts shot and killed with it Phillip Thomas Miles, 19 years old. It was buried four years in a cellar of W.T. Walters & Co., 68 Exchange Place, Baltimore, Md." This gun is a curiosity - Photographs of President Davis and a Medal for his service in promoting the history of the Confederacy. He also teaches history as an adjunct professor at the Beaufort campus of the University of South Carolina and serves on the board of the Historic Beaufort Foundation and the South Carolina Battlefield Preservation Trust. He is also active in Civil War Round Tables and local historical societies.

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## JOIN THE CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

### !!! New Members Wanted !!!

The RT ended its fourth year in May with 115 members. Current members are asked to send in their membership renewals as soon as possible; this will make life a little easier for the volunteers who prepare the mailings. Annual memberships are \$25.00.

Prospective members are also encouraged to join. Again this year, we're sending out this issue of the newsletter to additional persons who have indicated some interest in the Civil War or who have formerly been members of the RT. We hope that all of you will join us!

The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, begun in 1994, is one of approximately 225 RT's across the country which are 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 and author.

Since its inception, the RT has succeeded in bringing many leading Civil War historians to Wilmington for its monthly programs which are held from September through May. Members receive a monthly newsletter. We've also enjoyed bus tours to such sites as the Wilmington Campaign, Bentonville, the Petersburg and Appomattox Campaigns, Lee and Jackson in Lexington, and the Seven Days Campaign.

The coming year will once again feature more good speakers and tours. And good fellowship too! For more information, feel free to call any of the steering committee members listed below:

#### Steering Committee 1998-1999

George Slaton, President & Newsletter Editor (O. 452-7370, H. 452-7448)

Chris Fonvielle, Vice President & Program Chairman (H. 792-9091)

Jim McCallum, Second Vice President (H. 686-1597)

Dan Geddie, Treasurer (H. 799-5338)

Tommy King, Tours (H. 762-2930)

Ed Gibson, Hospitality (H. 675-9717)

Ted Lynch, Raffle (H. 762-6445)

John Krohn (H. 799-6014)

James McLaren (H. 686-9359)

**PLEASE  
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE !**

Mail the form below along with \$25.00 membership fee to Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404 (note new zipcode!) or present to Dan Geddie, Treasurer, at the next meeting)

The area of Wright's initial breakthrough is today preserved as Pamplin Park, a privately owned site. The Pamplin Foundation has created an interpretive center with a small, but superb, museum, reconstructed CSA winter quarters, and left intact the extensive CSA trench lines. Tudor Hall, the HQ of General McGowan is also open to the public. A series of trails and interpretive markers lead visitors through the battlefield. The park, ably directed by A. Wilson Greene, the founding president of APCWS, will soon feature an expanded Museum of the Common Soldier, one of the first of its kind.

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