

# Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

March, 2000

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

\*\*\*\*\*

## TRACING YOUR CIVIL WAR ANCESTOR

**March 9 Meeting**  
**St. John's Episcopal Church**  
**Social Hour 7:00 pm.....Program 7:30 pm**

Beverly Tetterton has served as librarian in the North Carolina Room at the New Hanover County Public Library for twenty years and, in this capacity, she has provided help to thousands of researchers seeking information about local and family history. Beverly's comprehensive knowledge of research methods and resources enable her to guide people in their quest to know more about their ancestors who served in the American Civil War.

Beverly is a graduate of the College of William and Mary with a B.A. in History. She received her Masters in Library Science from NC Central University. Beverly has been a mainstay in Wilmington's historic preservation efforts. She has been the longtime Chair of the Wilmington Historical District Commission and she serves as Chair of the Historic Wilmington Foundation's committee to place plaques on historic structures. Beverly is currently President of the North Carolina Genealogical Society and she has served on its board for many years.

This program will provide an opportunity for our members to learn how to begin or deepen the search to identify and find information about Civil War ancestors. Knowing more about a soldier ancestor who served the Union or the Confederacy heightens one's interest in both the study of the war and visits to the battlefields. Don't miss this chance to learn how to trace your own Civil War ancestor!

### **SPRING BATTLEFIELD TOUR** **The Bermuda Hundred Campaign** **Registration Deadline March 10**

It's time to register for our annual spring tour to be held March 24-26! That Friday, RT members and their guests will be arranging transportation on their own to the Howard Johnson Hotel at I-95 and Hwy 10 in Chester VA (about 15 miles south of Richmond). At 7:00 pm, we'll have dinner with Jerry Netherland and Mark Jacobson who will orient us to the Saturday field trip. Our group will spend all day Saturday touring sites of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign. That evening, again at 7:00 pm, we'll host one of the historians from Petersburg's Pamplin Park who will speak to us about the Union breakthrough at Petersburg. Then, Sunday morning, we'll head to Pamplin Park for a tour of the new museum and the well-preserved Confederate entrenchments and a walking tour of the field of combat.

The cost is \$150 for double occupancy and \$210 for single occupancy. You may forward your payment to Treasurer Dan Geddie, CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404 or bring to the March meeting. We hope that many of our members will plan to attend. The RT spring tours are always a lot of fun!

Remember, the absolute deadline for registration is Friday, March 10, the day after our monthly meeting. Call Dan Geddie (H. 799-5338) for a trip itinerary.

## CENTRAL VIRGINIA BATTLEFIELDS TRUST Recent Battlefield Land Acquisitions

Two years ago, members of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table responded to a \$250.00 challenge gift from another one of our preservation-minded members and sent a total of \$1000.00 to the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT), assisting in their effort to purchase 100 acres in the heart of the Chancellorsville battlefield. The effort was successful, and this hallowed ground is now preserved as a part of the national battlefield park.

Last fall, CVBT purchased a 25 acre portion of the Talley Farm at Chancellorsville over which the Confederate brigades of Ramseur, Colquitt, and Doles advanced as a part of Stonewall Jackson's victorious flank attack against the Union Eleventh Corps. The newly acquired property connects with National Park Service property across the Orange Plank Road and an earlier 5 acre tract already secured by CVBT. These purchases are timely because most of the area of Jackson's flank attack remains in private hands and is increasingly subject to development. The Talley Farm property includes the only surviving earthworks of the Union Eleventh Corps' first line. The acreage joins the National Park Service's property at the site where General Jackson surveyed the route of his attack. Interestingly, the Talley Farm site, which lies south of the Orange Plank Road, retains difficult terrain features which figured in a rather faltered Confederate attack as contrasted to the more successful attack by Jackson's brigades just north of the road.

More recently, CVBT purchased a sliver of land where an energetic young Confederate artillery officer gained the sobriquet, "the gallant Pelham." In the early morning of December 13, 1862, USA Major General Ambrose Burnside directed an assault on Lee's defensive line at Fredericksburg which resulted in a climatic battle. USA Major General George G. Meade's Division of Pennsylvania Reserves constituted the Federal army's left, or southern flank. Major John Pelham hurried one twelve-pounder Napoleon about a mile forward of the Confederate line with the object of enfilading the attacking Pennsylvanians. At great personal risk to himself and his twenty gunners, Pelham frustrated the Union assault for nearly an hour before his ammunition was depleted. During the engagement, when Union artillery return fire disabled some of his gunners, Pelham sighted the single gun himself. Little wonder that Robert E. Lee, observing the action from Prospect Hill, turned to Generals Stonewall Jackson and A.P. Hill and remarked, "It is glorious to see such courage in one so young." The area where this gallant action took place is seriously threatened with development.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization which is justly proud that its entire staff is composed of unpaid volunteers. Located in Fredericksburg, Virginia, it's uniquely positioned to monitor the availability of battlefield property and act quickly to make purchases. You can join CVBT and make a contribution by contacting its office at Suite 1, 604-A William Street, Fredericksburg VA 22401. Phone: (540) 374-0900. Website: [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org).

### BATTLE REPORT February 10 Meeting

One of our largest crowds in recent memory was present for Dr. Tracy Power's riveting slide presentation and talk about the men in the ranks of the Army of Northern Virginia. Tracy focused on the relationship between the enlisted men and their commanding general, Robert E. Lee, recounting the episodes at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania when Lee, exposed to enemy fire, took the field and rallied his troops.

The raffle brought in an impressive \$128.00! Winners were Linda Rand (Robert E. Lee print donated by Mike Budziszewski), Richard Bellows (*Confederate Treasure in Danville* donated by Cape Fear Civil War Shop), Dan Geddie (*Life of Johnny Reb and Billy Yank* donated by John Krohn), Cliff Mabry (Reproduction CSA buckle donated by Cape Fear Civil War Shop), John Moore (North Carolina Proclamation donated by Cape Fear Civil War Shop), Jim McCallum (Gold Dollar donated by Ed Russ), and Todd Brohaugh (Gold Dollar donated by Ed Russ). Congratulations to our seven winners and thanks to everyone who bought raffle tickets.

## THE BATTLE OF SUNSHINE CHURCH Or: Iverson's Revenge

Well-known to many who follow Tarheel regiments through the course of the Civil War is the disaster that befell the 20th North Carolina on the first day at Gettysburg. That excellent and battle-tested regiment, serving in General Alfred Iverson's Brigade, Rodes' Division, was participating in the advance just northwest of the town of Gettysburg against the 2nd Division of the Union First Corps along the Mummasburg Road when a large body of blue infantry commanded by General Henry Baxter, concealed behind a stone wall, suddenly rose up and delivered a punishing volley from fifty yards which decimated their ranks and set the stage for the capture of many more when Baxter's troops swarmed out and captured large numbers from the 5th, 12th, 20th, and 23rd NC regiments. One postwar account describes the sight of seventy-nine dead North Carolina soldiers lying in a perfectly straight line across the field.

This humiliation was not reflective of Iverson's record. The prewar veteran of Western Campaigns against the Comanches and Kiowas was elected Colonel of the 20th NC in June, 1861 at Smithville (Southport) NC. Iverson's troops, garrisoned at Forts Johnston and Caswell, spent their first year of service guarding the Cape Fear River. The regiment's quiet coastal duty ended when it was ordered to Richmond and assigned to General Samuel Garland's Brigade, D. H. Hill's Division.

In 1997, members of our Round Table, on its spring tour of the Seven Days Campaign, hiked to the little-visited site on private property at Gaines Mill where the 20th NC experienced its initial combat engagement. These NC troops made a valiant and costly attack against the Union right flank, capturing a battery and achieving one of the first penetrations of the enemy's formidable defenses. In fact, the 20th NC was the only Confederate regiment to achieve a breakthrough on this portion of the Union line; it occurred about the same time as General John Bell Hood's better known and more celebrated breakthrough with his Texans on the Union left flank. The 20th NC's 272 casualties were the second highest of any Confederate regiments engaged at Gaines Mill.

Our Round Table tour of the Antietam Campaign last year took us to Fox's Gap where we walked along the stone wall behind which the 20th NC put up a stiff defense against USA General Jacob Cox's Kanawha Division before it was finally overwhelmed and routed. And we walked through the Cornfield area at Antietam where Iverson's troops were once again engaged. General Alfred Iverson, within six weeks, his reputation as a combat officer assured, was promoted to Brigadier General and given command of his brigade.

Yet, Iverson's poor performance at Gettysburg cost him General Robert E. Lee's confidence, and Iverson was transferred out of the Army of Northern Virginia. Though Iverson's prospects looked dim, it was fortuitous that Iverson was ordered to Georgia, his native state. For it was there, in fact, very near his birthplace in Clinton, Georgia, that Iverson was to reap a victory which would restore his reputation.

In July, 1864, USA General William T. Sherman, frustrated in his attempts to capture Atlanta, directed units of his cavalry to drive south of the embattled city in an effort to destroy the railroad lines toward Macon. USA General George H. Stoneman commanded one wing of this cavalry movement. He vowed to proceed deep into southern Georgia to Andersonville where he planned to free Union prisoners and somehow bring them to safety. Stoneman's progress was halted on the outskirts of Macon by CSA General Howell Cobb's hastily assembled militia and homeguard units. Stoneman quickly abandoned his Andersonville objective and turned back north toward his home base. Little did he know that Alfred Iverson was waiting for him.

About twenty miles northwest of Macon, in the rolling hills of the Georgia Piedmont, there is a small hamlet called Round Oak. Just south, along present-day Hwy 11, Iverson arrayed his outnumbered force of 1300 men in a V formation, the open end yawning toward Stoneman's approach. Iverson wisely placed his artillery in the center and on the flanks of his defense line.

General Stoneman, leading 2100 troopers, stormed into the V, attempting to drive through Iverson's ranks and continue his northward journey. Yet, the Yankee cavalymen found themselves funneled into the Confederate trap, increasingly damaged by enfilading fire. For several hours, both sides parried, until Iverson sent the 1st and 3rd Georgia Cavalry in an encircling movement. Stoneman's men, pressed in their rear by the gray troopers, and believing they were under attack by Rebel reinforcements from Macon, panicked, large numbers of them fleeing the battlefield. Stoneman considered his force hopelessly outnumbered and surrendered his entire immediate command of 600 troops. It is said that General Stoneman sat down on a log and wept in despair when he learned that his campaign had been thwarted by a force much smaller than his own.

I visited the battlefield at Sunshine Church a few months ago. Sadly, the ground is marked by only a couple of Georgia Historical Commission markers, but it's not very difficult to pick out the ridge where Iverson's cavalymen waited for Stoneman. As you follow the highway south about one mile, you will note Stoneman Hill on your left where the Union general surrendered. (For a more complete description of the present-day field, see *The Campaign for Atlanta*, William R. Scaife, 1993).

Alfred Iverson, having suffered a severe reversal during the climactic Battle of Gettysburg, won a stunning victory on his own ground in middle Georgia. It's unfortunate that his achievement there has received such little attention, for it has rightly been called one of the greatest cavalry successes of the entire war. Iverson, who became an orange grower in Florida in later years, perhaps found some comfort in knowing that his last major engagement was conceived and executed in a fashion reminiscent of the finest in Confederate tactics during the American Civil War.

\* \* \* \* \*

## A PARTING SHOT

The battle (Perryville KY) began at break of day by an artillery duel, the Federal battery being commanded by Colonel Charles Carroll Parsons and the Confederates by Captain William W. Carnes. Colonel Parsons was a graduate of West Point and Captain Carnes was a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis. I took position upon an eminence at no great distance, commanding a fine view of the engagement, and there I watched... Captain Carnes managed his battery with the greatest skill, killing and wounding nearly all the officers, men and horses connected with Parsons' battery. Parsons fought with great bravery and coolness and continued fighting a single gun until the Confederate infantry advanced. The officer in command ordered Colonel Parsons to be shot down. As the muskets were leveled at him, he drew his sword and stood at "parade rest," ready to receive the fire. The Confederate Colonel was so impressed with this display of calm courage that he ordered the guns lowered, saying, "No! you shall not shoot down such a brave man!" And Colonel Parsons was allowed to walk off the field.

*Doctor Quintard, Chaplain, C.S.A., ed. Arthur H. Noll, Sewanee TN, 1905*