

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

November, 1999

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

LEE'S LAST MAJOR GENERAL: BRYAN GRIMES

NOVEMBER 11 MEETING

St. John's Episcopal Church

Social Hour 7:00 pm.....Program 7:30 pm

Dr. T. Harrell Allen, Chair and Professor of Communication at East Carolina University, will be our guest speaker on Thursday, November 11. Dr. Allen's program will focus on the subject of his recent and well-received biography, *Lee's Last Major General: Bryan Grimes of North Carolina*. Dr. Allen received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1973. He taught for many years at California State Polytechnic University and is the author of three books and numerous articles in the communications field.

Bryan Grimes, a native of Pitt County NC, was commissioned a major in the 4th North Carolina in 1861. His steady rise through the officer ranks culminated in his appointment as major general in February, 1865, the last such appointment in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Bryan Grimes was a fierce fighter and a superb field commander, his courage in combat well-known throughout the army. Dr. Allen's biography awards this NC general the stature he has long deserved.

Robert E. L. Krick, who penned the foreword to Dr. Allen's book writes, "Lee's Last Major General is a biography of unusual relevance. Because Grimes was neither a career soldier nor a bombastic politician, some readers may reach an empathic understanding with the general. A man of modest background and firm beliefs, he found himself sucked into a situation in which his natural talents emerged to an uncommon degree. The fascinating story of that blossoming, together with Bryan Grimes' singular battlefield record and tragic postwar death, unite here in a meaningful and deserved biography." Dr. Allen will have available copies of his book for sale and signing.

A CHRISTMAS EVENING AT THE BELLAMY MANSION

December 10

Tickets On Sale Now

The Cape Fear CWRT will host a special antebellum Christmas Open House at the Bellamy Mansion on Friday evening, December 10, from 6:30pm til 10:00 pm. *Southern Horizon*, a wonderful period music group from Richmond VA, will provide Civil War era music. Light refreshments will be served. All our members are invited to bring guests. The public is also invited.

You must buy a ticket for this event! Tickets are \$8.00 each or two for \$15.00. You can purchase tickets at the RT meeting on November 11. Or you can send a check to CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404. Tickets will also be on sale (after November 11) at the Bellamy Mansion downtown; the Cape Fear Civil War Shop at 209 South Lake Park Blvd, Carolina Beach; and Hanover Iron Works, 1851 Dawson Street. Make plans to attend this festive Christmas event!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS NOW DUE

At this point, over ninety members have paid their 1999-2000 dues. We're asking each of you who have not yet submitted your dues for the current year to do so as soon as possible. Mail your check for \$25.00 for your 1999-2000 membership to the CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404 or bring it to the November meeting. Please do this promptly, as we must delete names from our mailing list when dues remain unpaid.

BATTLE REPORT October 14 Meeting

The annual fall meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table was attended by 85 members who enjoyed a satisfying BBQ dinner and a lot of good fellowship. We were also pleased to welcome the following new members to our ranks: Sylvia Bellows, Paul Burton, Raymond Cegelski, Vaiden Kendrick, Brett Knowles, Billy Mason, Kenny Morris, Kenny Morris Jr, Ken Newbold, Harry Stovall, and Mike Tickle!

Our raffle took in the largest total ever - \$146.00. The winners were Parks Downing (Confederate Print donated by Mike Budziszewski), Gray Dixon (*Official Records Battlefield Atlas* donated by Jean Lynch in memory of her husband, Ted Lynch), James MacLaren (*Bushwhacker's Civil War in the North Carolina Mountains* donated by Palmer and Mary Royal), Ed Gibson (a North Carolina 1862 #1 Currency Note donated by Cape Fear Civil War Shop), and David English (CD of Civil War Music donated by Cape Fear Civil War Shop). Congratulations to our winners and thanks to those who donated raffle items.

Two reminders. We need more donations of raffle prizes from our members! Please contact Mike Budziszewski (H.458-1370) with items you can contribute to the raffle or bring them to the next meeting. Your raffle donations will be acknowledged in the newsletter. We also ask members to volunteer to bring refreshments. Wayne and Bernice Carver (H. 383-0105) are coordinating refreshments, and they would appreciate your contacting them to sign up for program dates when you can help us out with homemade goodies.

Many members agreed that Gordon Rhea's presentation on the battle at Spotsylvania Courthouse was one of the very best programs the RT has ever enjoyed! He wove together the tragic personal experiences of a South Carolina rebel with the epic story of what was perhaps the most horrendous combat of the war. I was myself most impressed with Gordon's appraisal of Ulysses S. Grant's generalship. He spoke of how Grant presented Lee with new and awesome challenges during the campaign from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor. Whereas Lee had always dealt with Union generals who were content to rest their armies after a major battle, Lee now had to contend with a general who continued to maneuver and attack despite huge losses. And, though Grant has been characterized heretofore as a simple-minded slugger who gave little regard to his own army's casualties, Rhea helped us understand the Union hero as a general who formulated a deliberate and winning strategy and intended to pursue it, against all objections by the press and the politicians, until he achieved final victory. Gordon, who has led numerous battlefield staff rides for the military, suggests that modern U.S. military strategy is not only a legacy of Grant's Civil War campaigns, but that most leading military officers in this country consider Grant a more skillful general than Lee.

Indeed, I have developed a new appreciation for General Grant since first reading Gordon Rhea's two campaign studies. And, fortunately for us, Gordon will follow his first books with further studies on the North Anna Campaign and Cold Harbor. Gordon Rhea is the first historian who has explored this four month foray by Grant which finally led to the Union army's ultimately successful siege of Petersburg.

Another reminder! Mark your 2000 calendar for the upcoming Annual Spring Battlefield Tour March 24-26. We'll be touring sites of The Bermuda Hundred Campaign south of Richmond. You'll be hearing more about the campaign and the tour in future newsletters.

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA A Confederate City

Recently I spent two days in Augusta, pursuing family history and searching for sites associated with the wartime city. Though Augusta escaped the destruction wrought in some southern cities, it nevertheless figured prominently in the war effort.

It's pretty well accepted that, were it not for the Augusta Powder Works and its huge production of gunpowder, the Confederacy would not have survived until 1865. George Washington Rains, trained as an engineer at West Point, deserves the credit for designing and constructing the Powder Works along a two-mile stretch on the Savannah River, just on the edge of Augusta. By mid-1863, this factory was producing 5000 pounds of gunpowder daily, a total of 2,750,000 pounds for Confederate small arms and artillery. Sadly, today, all that remains of this manufacturing complex is a 176-foot high obelisk chimney which stands as a lonely sentinel along the river's edge.

Another, much smaller, factory in wartime Augusta is known only to a handful of Confederate arms collectors. The Leech & Rigdon revolver, described as "the original Confederate Colt," was manufactured in a building (which has long since disappeared) near the corner of 12th and Walker Streets. The history of this arms maker is somewhat confused. Originally known as Memphis Novelty Works and famous for its Confederate-made swords, the factory moved first to Columbus, Mississippi, thence to Greensboro, Georgia, and finally to Augusta. Leech & Rigdon's revolvers are very rare and highly prized by today's collectors.

If you drive to Summerville, a suburb situated on an elevation just west of downtown Augusta and a late 19th Century mecca for northern tourists, you will see Augusta College (2500 Walton Way) on whose grounds stand the U.S. Arsenal, built between 1827 and 1829. The Arsenal buildings now serve as administrative buildings for the college. Just across the road, on the grounds of Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church, is the antebellum *Montrose* (2249 Walton Way), the post-war home of Colonel Charles Colcock Jones, an antiquarian and Georgia historian who collected important Confederate manuscripts, as well as historical curiosities of every kind, and was active in the United Confederate Veterans.

A good source of wartime Augusta lore is *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas*. Thomas was born into the planter elite, and her journals provide a good portrayal of life in Augusta before, during, and after the war. She records her attendance at a reception honoring Jefferson Davis during his post-war visit to Augusta held at the venerable old Planter's Hotel, the site of which is indicated by a historical marker just a half block off Broad Street.

Some of our members are interested in the Union and Confederate monuments erected in towns and cities after the war. Surely there is no taller one than the 76 foot Confederate monument which stands on Broad Street, between Seventh and Eighth. The women of Augusta raised almost \$20,000 to erect this Italian marble structure which features life-sized figures of several Confederate generals. The figure on the very top of the monument, however, is that of a private soldier.

Just east of downtown is Magnolia Cemetery, an expansive burying ground from antebellum times. Seven Confederate generals are buried here, perhaps the most important of which is Edward Porter Alexander, Lee's Chief of Artillery. I searched in vain to discover where Alexander made his home in Augusta during the post-war years. Maybe next trip!

The Augusta-Richmond County Museum is well worth a visit. Some years ago, when I toured the museum, it was in very cramped quarters with mediocre displays. Since then, the museum has moved to a superb new facility. Its current displays make it one of the best city museums I've ever visited. Exhibits include good coverage of the prehistoric AmerIndians and the Revolutionary War. The Confederate collection is small, but rich. Flags of the Clinch Rifles and Cobb's Legion, both units with local connections, are displayed. Along with a variety of Civil War guns and swords, the museum prominently displays the sword and boots of General W.H.T. Walker who was KIA during the Battle of Atlanta.

Finally, I can't fail to recommend *Sconyer's*. I've been a fan of good barbeque for many years, but I declare I've never seen or enjoyed a plate of barbeque like the one they serve up at this restaurant, an Augusta landmark since 1956. A plate features a veritable mountain of barbeque with all the fixings. It's almost worth the trip to Augusta! Located at 2250 Sconyers Way, it's open only on Thursday, Friday, Saturday from 10 am til 10 pm. (706) 790-5411. If you're ever in Augusta, you gotta go!

IN MEMORIAM
Ted Lynch

Ted Lynch was an avid Civil War enthusiast. He came to the first meeting of the Cape Fear CWRT in October, 1994 and regularly attended our meetings until declining health forced him to curtail many of his activities. Even then, he stayed closely in touch with the RT. Ted served on the RT steering committee for several years and was the inspiration and a major financial supporter for the two concert programs by the 11th NC Regiment Band. He instituted our RT raffle, and, in a generous and fitting gesture, Ted's wife, Jean, has recently contributed a number of excellent books from Ted's CW library for our monthly raffles in memory of her husband. Ted studied not only the Civil War period, but read widely in early European history and religion. He was very proud of his notable Confederate ancestry. Ted had a particular interest in Gettysburg and Antietam, visiting both sites frequently and participating in numerous conferences at Gettysburg where he studied that field in great detail. We will miss Ted's fund of knowledge, his unmistakable presence, and his irrepressible good humor.

! SAVE CEDAR MOUNTAIN BATTLEFIELD !
APCWS Seeks To Raise \$290,000 For Purchase

(We've recently received the following important letter from Alan E. Hoeweler, Chairman of APCWS, America's leading CW preservation organization)

It was a hard-bitten, daylong fight that pitted the stubborn Federals of Major General Nathaniel Banks against the leather-tough veterans of Major General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. It was also Stonewall's last independent command. The engagement occurred when Major General John Pope's army moved into Culpeper County VA to put pressure on Richmond. In response, General Robert E. Lee sent Jackson's command toward Culpeper. On August 9, 1862, Jackson's men collided with Banks' corps.

Artillery fire soon echoed off Cedar Mountain as the opposing lines pitched into each other with howling intensity. Banks' men, in a driving attack by Crawford's brigade and Auger's division, hammered the Southern line, throwing its defenders into confusion. It seemed that the indomitable Stonewall was headed for defeat, but he rode into the seething mass of retreating Confederates, brandishing his sword and rallying his men with the cry, "Jackson is with you!" Helped by an onrush of reinforcements led by Major General A.P. Hill, Jackson's men pushed back the Northern tide. By the end of the day, 2500 Union and 1400 Confederate soldiers had become casualties.

The Cedar Mountain region remains relatively pristine, but is zoned for low-density housing subdivisions and commercial ventures. Development is already crawling slowly but steadily along Route 5 toward Cedar Mountain. A large residential development has been constructed close to the battlefield. APCWS wants to save and interpret the core battlefield. Can you help us raise the \$290,000 to save these 150-plus acres from the bulldozer? ...we want to obtain full title to the land that trembled under the footsteps of Crawford's punishing attack and Hill's tide-turning counterblow. A monument to CSA General Charles S. Winder, killed leading Jackson's division, is also on the property.

\$50.00 Contribution. Your name will be placed in a drawing for a Don Troiani print of Jackson at Cedar Mountain.

\$500.00 Contribution. You will be entered into the Troiani drawing and your name will be inscribed on a permanent marker placed at the site.

\$2000.00 Contribution. You can select the very acre you want to save on a first come/first serve basis. A map displaying your name or the name of an organization or Civil War ancestor will appear on the permanent marker, a lasting testament to your concern for our heritage.

Contributions of any amount are welcome. Send to Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, Suite 200, 11 Public Square, Hagerstown MD 21740. (301) 665-1400. Website: www.apcws.com. Email: apcws@intrepid.net