

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

April, 2002

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Bob Cooke

**April 11 Meeting, St. Andrews On-The-Sound Episcopal Church
Social Hour, 7:00p.m., Program, 7:30 p.m.**

Civil War Prisons

Lonnie Speer is an author and historian who has written for such publications as *Civil War Times Illustrated*, *America's Civil War*, *The Civil War Book Review* and a wide range of other history-related magazines. He is the author of *Portals to Hell*, published by Stackpole Books in 1997, which culminated more than twelve years of research into the military prisons of the American Civil War and is now considered the first modern-day unbiased account of the prisons of both sides. The book was originally chosen as an alternate selection in the History Book Club.

His next book, *War of Vengeance, Acts of Retaliation Against Civil War POWs*, also published by Stackpole, will be available this September. Lonnie and his wife, Melba, reside in the Blue Ridge Mountain range of western North Carolina.

Gettysburg

Well, I told you so! After whetting our appetite for more at our February meeting, Dr. John Krohn delivered! Despite the intense cold, our spring trip to Gettysburg was one of the best ever. The drive to Pennsylvania, took one through "Mosby's Confederacy," (Fauquier and Loudoun Counties) in Virginia. Although I wanted to stop several times, it was on to Gettysburg (for now at least.) After dinner Thursday evening, author and guide Mr. Paul Cooksey jumped right into the first day's battle, with a description of Rode's Division (Daniel's Brigade in particular) and it's attack on the Union forces occupying Oak and McPherson (pronounced 'fer', not fear, as Dr. Krohn related, there's no "fear" in a McPherson!) Ridges. In what can only be described as utter confusion which was caused in part, as Mr. Cooksey pointed out, by the topography as well as the unexpected appearance of Union troops (from the Army of the Potomac!) With further attacks by Iverson and Ramseur's Brigades, the blue-clad troopers were driven off the ridges, through town and onto the high ridges south of Gettysburg. At the end of the first day's battle, controlling eight of the ten roads into Gettysburg, it appeared that the South had won the day.

On Friday, Dr. Krohn led us out to Cashtown, so we could approach just as the Confederate army did. Driving the seven miles from Cashtown to Gettysburg, Dr. Krohn soon had us walking the ridges: Herr, Oak and McPherson. Then it was on to the Railroad Cut and Willoughby Run. The tour was as billed; we concentrated on the North Carolina regiments and followed the route of Iverson and Daniel's Brigades as they advanced and were repulsed with heavy losses. On McPherson Ridge (defended by the Iron Brigade) the Twenty-sixth (Pettigrew's Brigade) also suffered heavy losses. All the officers of the regiment save one, were killed or wounded, while fourteen of the regiment's color bearers were casualties. Indeed, the casualty rate reached eighty-five percent, the highest in the army of Northern Virginia. Dr. Krohn pointed out the approximate position where young Colonel Henry Burgwyn was killed.

There are more than 1,300 monuments in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Several have been recently installed, including one to the Twenty-sixth. Another North Carolina monument that attracted our attention was Borglum's masterpiece situated on Seminary Ridge; the spot at which Pickett's Charge was launched. Dr. Krohn promised that we would walk the entire route of the charge, but not today! Instead, it was on to the Round Tops, both Big and Little, then to Devil's Den. It was at Little Round Top that the Twentieth Maine, immortalized in the movie, held the line and saved the day for the Union. Many historians view this action as crucial, saying the South came very close to winning the war at this point. Tomorrow we would be visiting yet another missed opportunity.

It was on Saturday, with tour guide Charles Fennell that we examined the action at Brenner's, Culp's and E. Cemetery Hills. It was at Culp's Hill that Johnson's Division, in a night attack, ran up against Union General George S. Greene's brigades of New Yorkers. The Yankees were entrenched behind breastworks (which proved highly effective) when Confederates found themselves under fire from two and sometimes three directions! The First North Carolina (Steuart's Brigade) came within a few hundred yards of the Baltimore Pike, the main Union army supply line. Had that road been taken, North Carolinians and Virginians would have been in the rear of Meade's army! This was as close a call to the Union army as was the action on Little Round Top. A special honor reserved for the tour was to visit the Confederate burial site where over 900 Southerners were hastily buried (they were later reburied in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond.) Likewise, it was a treat to be shown the boulder where a soldier of the First N.C. carved his name! (Pvt. A. Lucian Coble carved it at a reunion in 1913.)

Then, as promised, Dr. Krohn had us back on Seminary Ridge. Preparing to follow Pickett's Charge, we looked out at the "Cope of Trees," one mile away. We walked the entire route of the charge, no one faltered, but many thought about the courage it took in 1863 to keep on going. While it took us fifteen minutes, back in '63 it took twenty minutes to get to the High Water Mark.

The tour went on and on! We visited the National Cemetery and Dr. Krohn pointed out the gravestone of George Nixon of the Seventy-third Ohio. He was President Richard Nixon's great-grandfather. Sgt. A. Humiston, father of the "children of the battlefield" is here, as well as several Confederates (the Cemetery was to be for Union soldiers only) who were somehow buried here! Later that evening, we dined at the historic Montford Farm. The barn was one of the largest Confederate Field Hospitals, with over 1,300 wounded occupying not only the barn, but the house and space around the farm. Finally with the tour ended, many decided to shop (some had opted to visit the Eisenhower Farm earlier that day) we packed up and headed south. Congratulations and kudos to Dr. Krohn, Tommy King and Dan Geddie, as well as the others who were instrumental in making the trip the huge success it was!

Fork's Road

For the second time, a stalwart band appeared at the Fork's Road earthworks to do their duty! The day was perfect for the work. At ten sharp, several members of the Round Table, Chris Fonvielle, Dan Geddie, Albert Jewell, Bob Cooke, Steve Gunter, as well as Jonathon Adams (UNCW History student!) and D. "Mule" Skinner (who came down from Topsail) began clearing the brush. On the Round Table's first visit, the west side of the earthworks, to the old Federal Point Road, had been cleared. On Saturday (16 March) we began work on the east side of the road. Several more trips and we'll have the entire section of the line exposed! Apologies to those members who were not contacted by phone, we received permission to work on the site a little too late to include in the last newsletter.

\$5 Reward.

STRAYED or stolen from the undersigned Saturday evening the 17th inst, or Monday morning the 19th inst.,

A Bridge nearly seven feet wide,
Built with pine poles principally, near the Farm of Dawson Taylor, on a path formerly owned by Frederick Taylor, and now by the undersigned. I will give the above reward for such information as will lead to the detection of the thief.

REUBEN MAYO,

October 22, 1863.

The Tomb of Our Country's Hopes

As we approach the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the dedication of the Oakdale Cemetery Confederate Memorial, it might be time to look back at that ceremony which took place on that brutally hot day, May 10, 1872. Member Wayne Carver has researched the occasion and has written the following:

When was the memorial built? Who was behind getting this grand item? Who sculpted it? When was it dedicated? Who gave the dedication address? Hopefully the following will address these questions and more.

The Confederate Memorial was the idea of the Ladies Memorial Association. This band of faithful women who had worked under Mrs. Armand J. deRosset as the Soldiers' Aid Society during the late unpleasantness, organized a permanent Memorial Association in July, 1866 with the purpose of rescuing from oblivion the names and graves of the gallant Confederates who were buried in and around Wilmington. The Association obtained a Charter from the Legislature through Col. William L. Saunders in order that they might hold the deed for a "Confederate lot," for which they had lobbied the Oakdale Board of Directors. The Cemetery Board actually gave the Association four lots and this now comprises the current site. They began raising funds for bringing the soldiers, known and unknown, and some type of Memorial to Oakdale.

After several years of fund raising and planning, the Association concluded this effort with the unveiling of the beautiful Confederate Memorial on May 10, 1872. This was done on the sixth anniversary of Confederate Memorial Day services held at Oakdale. According to the May 11, 1872 edition of the *Wilmington Star* a total of 466 Confederate Unknowns had been interned in one mass grave on the four lots held by the Association. At this time the plot was known as the Confederate Cemetery within Oakdale.

In the early days of the celebration of Confederate Memorial day, the old soldiers, officials and civilians would meet in downtown Wilmington and have a parade out to Oakdale. On May 10, 1872 everyone gathered downtown and were organized under the direction of Col. Edward Dudley Hall, former Colonel of the Forty-Sixth North Carolina Regiment. The group formed and proceeded to the old entrance being led by the Cape Fear Cadets under Gen. R.E. Colston. As they entered the gate, the Wilmington Light Infantry Cadets under direction of Capt. James D. Cumming, former member of Cummings' Battery of the Thirteenth Battalion of Heavy Artillery presented a cannon salute. Colonel John J Hedrick was Chief Marshall of the Parade. The group proceeded to the Lodge where the service began. An anthem was sung, led by the First Presbyterian Choir. The Rev. Mr. James Dickson, Pastor of First Presbyterian led the Prayer. The Choir then sang an original ode, which had been specially written for the service. At this point the Address was given by Major Charles W. McClammy, former Major of the Third North Carolina Calvary. After another anthem the group proceeded to the top of the hill where the new monument was to be dedicated. Col. Hedrick unveiled the statue and as quiet settled over the crowd of between 2,500 and 4,000, the Wilmington Light Artillery sounded another salute from a hill just west of the monument. Another original ode was then sung by the Choir, followed by the laying of the flowers (a custom of all the early Memorial Services) and then the Benediction by Rev. Dickson.

The Monument was made of North Carolina granite, taken from a quarry of Mr. P. Linehan near Raleigh. The granite was shaped by Mr. Linehan and shipped by rail to Wilmington. The statue, according to James Sprunt was cast from cannon captured during the War (Sprunt says this was not revealed until 1899). The statue was designed by a Mr. Donovan from Virginia and executed by Maurice J. Power of New York. It is of an Infantryman standing at ease with an Austrian rifle in hand, wearing an Army overcoat with a belt around his waist, a bayonet sheathed, cartridge box attached in the rear and an ordinary military fatigue hat with the letters NC. The die on the east and west show the faces of R.E. Lee and Thomas J. Jackson. In the lower corners were weapons and munitions of war.

Also on the monument are the words it took to get the monument completed. "Self-denial, work, prayers, tears and heart's blood."

The steps surrounding the monument itself were erected in 1958 by the Bryan Newkirk family and presented as a memorial to Capt. Abram Francis Newkirk of the Third North Carolina Calvary and later an M.D. (James Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River; Wilmington Morning Star*, May 10, 1872; N.H.C. Library files)

Some other things you may not have known about the memorial:

The statue itself is of "heroic" proportions, that is, it is "larger than life," (seven and a half feet tall).

The sculptor, Maurice (or Morris) Power, also sculpted the statue of Samuel F.B. Morse in 1871 (which is also bronze and "heroic" in size), which stands in New York City's Central Park. [*New York Times*, June 7, 1871]

The Memorial Association began raising money for their project by having bazaars and concerts.

In 1948, Mrs. George Davis reported that her first husband, Percy Cowan (later a sheriff of New Hanover County) had posed as a model for the statue. He told her that, "...when he was a lad of 18 years...he was a student in General Colston's Cape Fear Academy...Mrs. Davis said...Cowan told her he wore General Colston's old Confederate army coat and had a false mustache when he posed for the artist...Major [Charles P.] Bolles...is understood to have drawn the design for the monument." Mrs. Davis also said that there were others in town who claimed to have been the model. [From the Bill Reaves Collection, "Oakdale Cemetery" file, New Hanover County Public Library]

We have also been told that the statue may have been cast from a common die, hence there may be other Confederate statues that look remarkably similar.

Another news article destroyed the myth that the statue was "cast from metal obtained from Yankee cannon," as the statue was made of bronze. [*Wilmington Morning Star*, April 6, 1948]

At least two of the Unknowns buried in the Confederate lot are known. In an 1897 news article, the Superintendent of Oakdale, Timothy Donlan wrote that when he looked over some old records, he found the names of two McDowell County men who were interred there. Roland (or Rowland) Harrison and Troy Loftin became ill while in Wilmington; Harrison (who was 45 years old) died on November 3, 1864, Loftin followed on November 7. Back home, both men lived within two miles of each other and Harrison was thought (for thirty-one years) to have deserted to the enemy!

Questions for you die-hard buffs! What kind of a rifle is the soldier holding? Why is May 10th Confederate Memorial Day? (Answers next month!) While we're on the subject of Confederate Memorial Day, ceremonies are usually held on the Sunday closest to 10 May. Check the newspapers as the date gets closer, but 12 May will probably be the day. See you there!

