

# Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

October, 2001

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Bob Cooke

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October 9 (Tuesday) Meeting, St. Andrews On-The-Sound Episcopal Church  
Social Hour, 7:00p.m., Program, 7:30 p.m.

## Civil War Generals

Mr. Harry Daniel, an ordained Presbyterian minister and an acknowledged expert on the subject of Civil War Generals, will speak about those men who attained that rank during the war. Mr. Daniel, a graduate of Davidson College (1963) went on to receive his M.A. and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. He has achieved numerous scholastic awards and has still found time to publish many articles on his research. Mr. Daniel is currently serving as a minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Washington, North Carolina.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE (From Headquarters, Dept. of Cape Fear)

Due to a scheduling conflict at St. Andrew's Church, we will be meeting on the second Tuesday of every month. We apologize for any inconvenience due to this change. The meeting for November will be on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Our September meeting combined several of the local Historical groups, including the Round Table, the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society and the University's History Department. About one hundred and ten attendees enjoyed a chicken dinner while greeting old friends and making new ones. Our speaker, Mr. Dan Barefoot, began with a tribute for those lost in the September 11 attacks. Noting that prior to this, one would have had to go back to the Civil War to surpass such a loss of American lives on a single day (September 17, 1862, at Sharpsburg/Antietam) he harkened back to those words inscribed on a tattered cloth carried by our forefathers: **DON'T TREAD ON ME.**

Mr. Barefoot's talk on General Robert F. Hoke and the Wilmington campaign was comprehensive and enlightening. If only, if only! If only General Hoke had been allowed one more day in his siege of New Bern (May, 1864), it is quite possible that the Union army would have been driven out of North Carolina. If only Hoke had been allowed to construct defenses along Masonboro Sound (the Union landing site). If only Hoke had been allowed to attack! If only General Braxton Bragg had not been given command of Wilmington!

### Spring Trip

More information on the trip to Gettysburg (March 21-24, 2002) is available, please see the last page of this newsletter, or see Tommy King or Dan Geddie.

## Wilmington, 1863

Just before Christmas 1863, Sewall Fremont sat working at his desk in the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad depot, when suddenly he heard screams from the station below. Springing to his window, he was just in time to see several soldiers firing down Nutt Street! He looked to see what they were shooting at, but saw nothing.

As a former U.S. Army officer and Chief Engineer and Superintendent of the Road, he was concerned for the safety of the passengers who milled about the platform. As did many railroad men during the war, Fremont held the rank of Colonel in the Confederate Army. It was probably his military background that compelled him to write to Major General William H.C. Whiting, commander of the Cape Fear District:

I beg to call your attention to an affair that occurred at our passenger depot this morning....A guard engaged in arresting citizens...and firing down the street filled with people.

If the life of the citizen is...in jeopardy because the guard cannot do its duty without arms loaded, I think we are in hourly danger of being slaughtered by our own people.

He ended by requesting that the soldiers be kept away from the depot, "as much as possible." This was an unusual request, earlier that year, Fremont wanted more soldiers around his railroad terminals, especially those within reach of Yankee raiders operating from New Bern.

He waited for several days and did not receive a reply from Whiting. Losing patience, he wrote to Governor Zebulon Vance's Aide-de-Camp, Colonel George Little, in Raleigh. He had by this time, learned more about the incident and related that that about fifteen minutes after the firing, there was another commotion. The soldiers had apparently captured their man. Fremont noted, "...the Guard brought up a man that seemed to be hurt about the head. I was told...that this man's skull [sic] was broken and that he died from its effects."

He had also spoken to the doctor that cared for the poor unfortunate and reported that the man had been wounded by a bayonet in the temple! The doctor was unsure if the man had lived or died, as he had been taken away by the squad of soldiers that had brought him there. The one thing he was sure of was that the man had been drunk. In closing his letter to Col. Little, Fremont added, "I am informed that a similar case occurred about the same time in Market Street with a drunken man who was shot, wither [sic] fatally or not" he did not know.

Such scenes were becoming more and more common in the bustling blockade-running center. The town hosted a large contingent of soldiers and sailors, "thieves, rogues and prostitutes...and crime became rampant." Many of the town's wealthier citizens went "refugeeing" further inland to get out of harm's way. Gunshots were heard more frequently as fights broke out. Also, with the new conscription law in effect, the army was also looking for deserters that might be trying to get out of town. Hence, the railway terminal was a good spot to catch these "sculkers." Indeed, as the war went on, many deserters resorted to hiding in a casket that was placed on board a train. When they heard the depot bell ring, signaling the train was pulling out, they knew they were safe.

There was no mention of such occurrences in the newspapers, (this was not unusual, most publishers withheld any news which might help the enemy) except for a brief paragraph later that month:

We have heard complaints of the manner of enforcing the Conscript Law, So far as the demanding of papers, etc., is concerned....We cannot conceive of any necessity [to] resort to...muskets...where no attempt is made to escape.

The paper suggested that "mutual courtesy and forbearance" would prevent violence. Unfortunately for both Colonel Fremont and Wilmington, things were going to get a lot worse in the coming years before getting better.

[Sources: *Zebulon Vance Papers*, U.N.C.W. Library, December 18 and 28, 1863; James Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916*; Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr., *The Wilmington Campaign, The Last Rays of Departing Hope*; *Wilmington Journal*, December 28, 1863; *Wilmington Evening Post*, October 11, 1947, Louis T. Moore Collection, New Hanover County Public Library]

We would like to note that the majority of this research was done at U.N.C.W.'s Randall Library, which now has available (on microfilm) the Papers of Zebulon Vance. In addition, the library has a great collection of nineteenth century newspapers on microfilm. We understand that General William H.C. Whiting's Letter Books might soon be coming to the library! That would certainly be a wonderful addition to their ever-expanding research material.

The following is also from the *Wilmington Journal*, December 28, 1863:

A sentimental young lady in Northern Georgia indites the following to some of her admirers in the *Ridgeament*:

'Tis hard for youens to sleep in camp;  
'Tis hard for youens to fight;  
'Tis hard for youens thro' snow to tramp;  
In snow to sleep at night;  
But harder for weans from youens to part;  
For youens have stolen weans heart.

From the Louisville [Kentucky] Civil War Round Table:

Round Table member Porter Harned has donated his Orphan Brigade [First Kentucky Brigade] photo collection to the American Civil War Institute at Campbellsville University. The Institute is making plans to properly store and display this great collection of rare photos of one of the War's most famous fighting units. The Civil War community owes Porter a debt of gratitude for his labor of love in putting this collection together and then for insuring that it will be preserved for future generations.

## **Donations--Donations--Donations--Donations--Donations**

Did you know that some of our revenues come from raffle sales? We are in need of items to be raffled off at our meetings (mainly books, but we'll raffle any Civil War items). Look through your bookcases, if you've got anything, please see (or call) Mike Budziszewski (458-1370).

# Gettysburg Battlefield Tour

March 21-24, 2002

**Thursday** March 21-- Arrive at hotel on your own. Meet at 7:30pm in the banquet room for a buffet dinner\* and speaker.

**Friday** March 22-- Board a tour bus\* at 8:00 am for an overview of the entire battle by C.F.C.W.R.T member and guide John Krohn. After a box lunch\* at noon, John will lead us on a walk of the advance by the N.C. 26<sup>th</sup> and Iverson's Brigade. Dinner will be back at the hotel with a set menu.\* After dinner, local guide and historian Paul Cooksey will talk about Rodes Division and North Carolinians Ramseur, Daniels and Iverson.

**Saturday** March 23--We will board the bus\* again at 8:00 am with local tour guide Dr. Charles Fennell, who will lead us on a tour of Culp's Hill and the North Carolina troops in action there. A box lunch\* will be served at noon on the bus. The afternoon will be left open to catch anything we might have missed with some free time to tour the town of Gettysburg and go in the shops. Dinner Saturday night\* will be at historic Monfort Farm. Located two miles from town, it was the site of a field hospital set up for Confederates wounded at Culp's Hill.

**Sunday** March 24--The tour is over and you may leave for home at your own schedule.

\* The tour includes dinner for three nights, box lunches Friday and Saturday, the bus and local guides. The price is \$150.00 per person, based on a minimum number of 30 signing up for the tour. The maximum number of persons we can take is 45.

Headquarters: Holiday Inn-Battlefield, 516 Baltimore Street, Gettysburg, Pa. 17325. Telephone (717) 334-6211, fax (717) 334-7183. Please make your own reservations and ask for C.F.C.W.R.T. group rate of \$57.00 (plus tax), double or single occupancy. Make your own reservations by February 20, 2002.

Transportation: If you are interested in a driver and a small bus or van and know others who might be interested also, please give your name to Tommy King so he can try to make those separate arrangements for you. We know some of our members prefer to travel this way. The cost can be prorated among those participating.

Suggested reading in preparation for the trip:

*The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara

*High Tide at Gettysburg* by Glenn Tucker

*Covered With Glory* by Rod Gragg