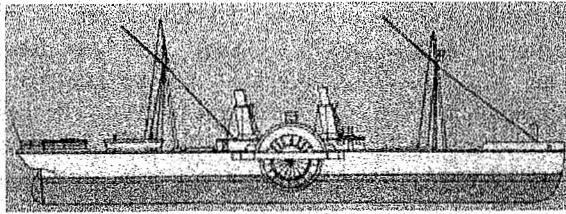


# THE RUNNER



## Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

November 2002 P.O. Box 10535, Wilmington, N.C. 28405 Editor: Bob Cooke

**Our next meeting will be 8 November at St. Andrew's On-The-Sound Episcopal Church, Social Hour 7 p.m. Meeting, 7:30 p.m.**

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Our speaker for October, J. Wilson Green gave us a thorough look at the 1864 battles around Petersburg. Beginning by placing North Carolina's role in context, he told us that Petersburg and all Virginia south of the James River were under the same military administration. Wilmington and Petersburg had a lot in common: both were port cities and both contained transportation networks. There were five railroads, like the spokes of a wheel, they led in all directions from Petersburg. By 1864, the main link of the eastern Confederacy was via the Weldon Road. This line of track ran southward, some 62 miles to Weldon, N.C., at which point it continued down to Wilmington. By early 1864, Grant, now in control of all Federal armies, wanted to destroy Robert E. Lee's army. The focus of the northern force was still Richmond, which Grant realized, must be taken. After shifting his army across the James, in a series of maneuvers, he began to surround Petersburg. After unsuccessfully trying to take the city, he decided to cut the city's two main supply lines, the Weldon road and the Boydton Plank road. By August, the rail line was taken and the tracks torn up. There was still a rail connection with the city (the Piedmont railroad) but now it would take much longer to get in and out of the city.

As Grant extended his lines, Lee was forced to do likewise. Lee however, had far fewer men to move about. As the armies settled in to winter quarters, Mr. Green told us, the war was much like the battlefields of WWI-abatis or *cheveaux-de-frise* (sharpened stakes and felled trees) in front with telegraph wire used as trip wire and miles of trenches! Indeed, the armies now faced each other on a 45-mile front. Throughout 1864, there were 79 battle-sized actions plus numerous others, resulting in seventy thousand casualties. The fighting continued during an early thaw (Hatcher's Run) and as early as January 1865, Lee informed President Jeff Davis that he would not be able to maintain the defense indefinitely and that he would have to leave Richmond and Petersburg undefended. Outnumbered 2 to 1, Lee opted to attack and attempted a breakout for he knew to "stand still was death" to his army. The battle of Fort Stedman (25 March 1865) resulted and turned out to be a Confederate disaster. Lee next planned to shorten his lines and slip away to join Joe Johnston in North Carolina, but Grant kept the pressure on. Dinwiddie Court House, plus Sheridan's victory at Five Forks on 1 April (it was here that Sheridan removed General G.K. Warren from command) and finally Horatio Wright's massive attack, (with 150 guns in support) "broke the back of the Rebellion." It was here, as Union troopers streamed through the lines, that Confederate General A.P. Hill was killed. On that Sunday, Lee sent word to Davis to evacuate Richmond immediately. Mr. Green's story of the Prentiss brothers and their battlefield reconciliation was poignant and a fitting end to the horror of Civil War. Mr. Green noted that part of the Petersburg battlefield is now included in the Pamplin Historical Park and Museum of the Civil War Soldier.

**Our November speaker, Mr. Paul Anderson,** might well be called a Wilmington native. Born in Lima, Ohio, he came here at nine years of age. After schooling at Trask and Laney (class of '86) he went to UNC Chapel Hill and attained a degree in history. His first career was in journalism when, for a year, he covered the town of Kittery, Maine for the *York County Coast Star*. Returning to graduate school at the U. of Mississippi, (says he, "I knew nothing more about it at the time than it was in Mississippi and I wanted to see Mississippi") graduated with a Master's degree in 1994. His thesis, "The Savagery in Romance" became the basis for his book. After a brief stint working for the *Winston-Salem Journal* in Boone ("a year in the mountains") it was back to Mississippi, where he finished up his doctoral degree in 1998.

After teaching for a year at Ole Miss, and a year at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, Mr. Anderson moved on to Clemson University, where he is an assistant professor of history. *Blood Image* is the title of his book. He has also written two children's books, *Robert E. Lee: Legendary Commander of the Confederacy* and a yet-to-be-titled book on George Armstrong Custer. Paul is married to the former Keri Bradford of McComb, Mississippi. Married since 1995, they have no children yet, but do have two Labrador Retrievers (Mandy & Gracie) who, he says, "act more like kids and less like dogs!" Mr. Anderson's talk will focus on the command relationship between Turner Ashby and Stonewall Jackson.

#### October's Winners!

John Moore: *Lee vs. McClellan*, by Clayton Newell; Mike McCarley: *Controversies and Commanders*, by Stephen Sears; Bruce Patterson: *Gone For Soldiers*, by Jeff Shaara; Ed Russ: *North Carolina Confederate Military History*; John Winecoff: *Make the Fur Fly*, by Timothy Mudgett; Ed Gibson: Civil War Bullet Box Display. Congratulations to all and to all who donated the items, a hearty thank you! The insert in this month's newsletter is a handy recap of items we now offer for sale. Remember, Christmas is just around the corner, now is the time to buy that shirt or cap and put it away until then. We unabashedly proclaim that the sales are a fundraiser for the Round Table! See or call Steve Gunter (686-4025) if you have any questions relating to any of the items.

TO MAKE GOOD BISCUIT.—Take one quart of flour, half a tea-spoonful of salt, the size of a hen's egg of sweet lard and cold water, and mix to a proper consistence, so as to make a stiff dough; then work or beat with the end or edge of a smoothing iron until blisters rise in the dough; then make and shape with the hand, and bake with a slow fire until thoroughly done. The biscuit will be white in the inside, light, well done, spongy and wholesome; but if rolled out with a rolling pin and cut in shape with a knife, they will be crisp, but not spongy. If biscuits are preferred brittle or moderately hard, temper them with more or less lard. These biscuits will keep sound a month in July or August, and mothers may send a lot to their sons in the army. I feed the sick on them crumbled in coffee or tea. Butter and new milk may be substituted for the lard and water; if butter, use double the quantity, but would likely keep sound long. Get a dressed poplar plank four or five inches thick and two feet square to beat the dough on, and to beat the dough long and well is the great secret of biscuit making. Soda or saleratus should never be used in biscuit; the human stomach being an unfit soap kettle.—*Southern Rural Gentleman.*

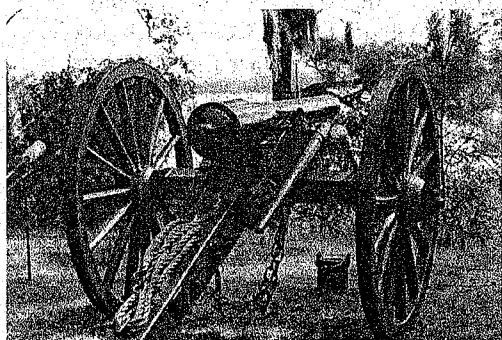
#### Scratch made biscuits, 1861 style!

Our Round Table has reached a plateau. We now have a logo (proudly sported on our clothing line!) and a name for the newsletter. In the summer of 1994, several gentlemen got together and came to the conclusion that there was enough interest in the Civil War here in Wilmington to form an RT. Thanks are due to those who worked hard to bring forth such an organization. A special thanks to George Slaton, Tommy King, Kemp Burpeau and Jerry Partrick, the original founders! And who had the honor of being the RTs first speaker? Why, Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle, of course!

## Take implements, Prepare to load! Load! Advance the round!, Fire!

The voice of the Corporal serving as Gunner could distinctly be heard as there were no other sounds except those of the men serving the piece and they were hard at work. I was recently invited to attend (I think it was a recruiting ploy) a living history/reenactment by the modern-day members of Co. D, Adam's Battery. It was an extremely hot day in August, a day that the Battery had come to Fort Anderson to show visitors what was involved in the firing of a civil war cannon. **BOOM!** The echo ("rolling thunder") could be heard as it rattled across the Cape Fear River. Woe to any pleasure craft that happened to be in the area! We arrived a little after 10 am and met with Lieutenant Colonel Donnie Shannon (of Oak Island) and First Sergeant Jim McKee (Southport) who informed me that the Battery was here to hone their skills for the Sharpsburg battle. For the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that battle, the unit traveled to Maryland in September and joined more than 100 guns and anywhere from 10 to 15,000 (both Union and Confederate) reenactors. Colonel Shannon, the "old man," has been reenacting for more than ten years now!

The unit has three guns, a six-pounder, a 3" Ordnance rifle and a 10-pounder Parrott rifle. For the upcoming trip, the Battery will field two guns, crewed by some thirty members. The men at Fort Anderson, clad in Confederate Gray, were there for a variety of reasons. For John Hawes (Oak Island) it is because he is a history buff, who feels that history books neglect things and for that reason a part of Southern history is fast slipping away or being ignored. For Bill Eakins (Hampsted) it was a trip to Antietam in 1996. The battlefield was eerily similar to that during the war and after talking to a few reenactors, he decided to give it a try and caught the bug. Richard Long (a member of our Round Table) who, in addition to having a love of the area's rich history, wanted a more active unit than the infantry outfit he belonged to (plus it's closer to home!) Others in the unit joined for many of the same reasons. At the Fort on that hot Saturday were (in addition to the above) Dick Holloman (Kure Beach) Richard Long (Winnebow) David Camp, George Willis, Roger Hawes (John's brother) and Alan Hillburn (Wilmington.)



The Piece! A 3" Ordnance Rifle.



This is how its done!

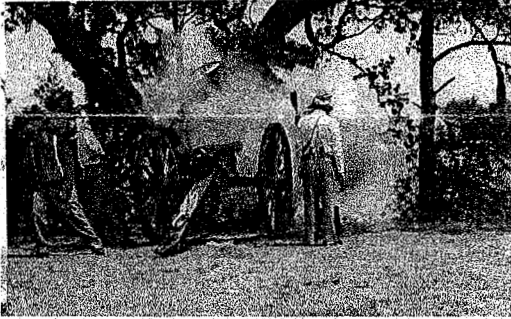
Later in the day (as if on schedule,) the Union Army appeared in the form of Fred Johnson (from Wilmington.) Fred, a member of the unit's spin-off battery, the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Colored Artillery (formed mainly of former men of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts) has a most compelling reason to be a reenactor, as his ancestors were with 3<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> USCTs. Not to be outdone, the men of Adam's Battery can also change their allegiance. They sometimes display their skills as Federal Battery E of the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Light Artillery.

The original Battery, raised in Beaufort County was reorganized in April, 1862 and elected Z.T. Adams as Captain. Most batteries took the name of their commander, hence "Adam's" battery! They were stationed mainly in eastern N.C. and took part in the attacks on Washington and New Bern. In 1864 they returned to Fort Fisher in time for the attacks of December and January. At those battles, they manned Battery Bolles (which consisted of two 10-inch rifled Columbiads) and Battery Purdie. This last battery contained the famed 150-pound Armstrong gun, a gift from it's English manufacturer. During the battle of Fort Fisher, men from the battery were at the main Sally Port, manning light artillery. Elements

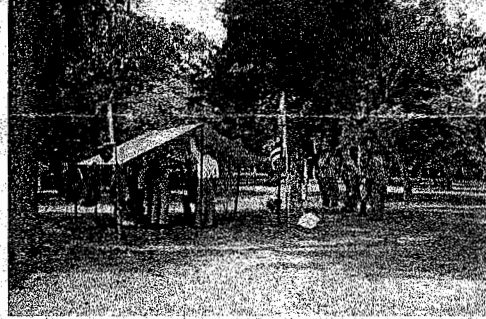


of the Battery also fought at Bentonville before war's end.

On Saturday, in addition to loading and firing the cannon to the delight of the visitors, the men were always glad to answer any questions put to them by their audience. We were shown the various functions of the men as they prepared, loaded and fired (and cleaned) the piece. It takes about seven men to properly maintain a firing rate of two (aimed shots) or four (unaimed) shots per minute. A Gunner (usually a Corporal) would direct the four men at the gun, while two men remained at the ammunition caisson. A sergeant was the "Chief of the Piece," while a Lieutenant or Captain was in overall command. The day continued with *Wet Sponge! Dry Sponge! Ram, round, ready! Pick, prime. Prepare! Fire!* BOOM! And plenty of smoke! Finally, *Secure the piece!* Everyone there knows everyone else's job; drills with 7, 6, 5, 4, 3 and even two man drills are held. Such was the attrition rate among artillerymen. Nowadays The thirty-three members of the Battery stress safety and have been called the most professional battery in Alexander's Battalion (of Longstreet's Corps,) to which they are attached.

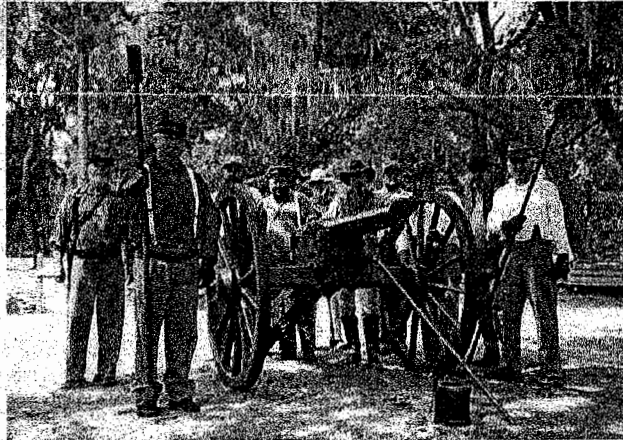


**BOOM!**



**Battery Headquarters at Fort Anderson.**

In between firings (the gun was probably fired close to twenty times that day) the men held their meeting about Sharpsburg. Schedules, driving directions and set-up locations were distributed and many questions were answered. Authenticity is a strict requirement. There would be no plastic water bottles in evidence, no wristwatches and even one's eyeglasses had to conform to the period. The present-day Battery is always looking for new members, so if you are interested in getting a real feel of black powder artillery, you can visit their website at [www.geocities.com/adamsbattery.geo](http://www.geocities.com/adamsbattery.geo) or contact Jim McKee at [batwing@southport.net](mailto:batwing@southport.net). After an initial outlay of about \$500 (for a period uniform,) you too can smell the powder. It is not all work though, there is time to play. The unit holds an annual get-together for food and fun (at Fort Anderson, which the men consider home.) If you do decide to try it out, be prepared to thoroughly enjoy yourself! Check the website or call, but the next scheduled appearance is set for Secessionville, S C, (Nov. 23-24.) Around three p.m., time to shut down operations, we watched as the men began to clean the cannon. That was our signal to depart, before we were enlisted and put to work!



**A Good Day's Work! (not shown, Jim McKee)**

P.S. In addition to reenactments, the men speak to school and civic groups and appear at special functions around town. Next April they will be at the *School of the Piece* at Fort Anderson. See Richard Long for a complimentary newsletter (and application.)