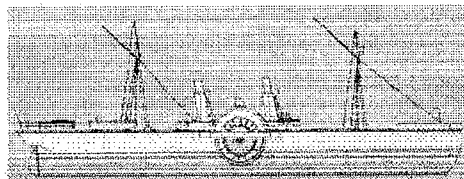


THE RUNNER



Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

December 2003 P.O. Box 10535, Wilmington, N.C. 28404 Editor: Bob Cooke

**Our next meeting will be Thursday, 11 December at St. Andrew's On-the-Sound
Social Hour 7:00 p.m. Meeting 7:30 p.m.**

Steering Committee Contact Numbers.

Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle (792-9091) Mike Budziszewski (458-1370) Dan Geddie (799-5338) Bob Cooke (792-1601) Steve Gunter (686-4025) John Moore (256-6328) Ross St. George, Dale Lear, David Norris.

Fort Caswell

Our speaker for December is Chad Johnson, probably the area's foremost expert on Fort Caswell during the Civil War. Mr. Johnson, a recent graduate of UNCW, (where he studied Civil War History under Dr. C.E. Fonvielle) wrote his thesis on the subject. Chad, who will be attending graduate school in August, was the *Mary Holloway Seasonal Interpreter* at Fort Fisher for two years and gave guided tours and served as a temporary Site Assistant. He is originally from Clinton, N.C. but has lived in Wilmington for several years.

Raffle Winners: *Richmond Raid*, Mary Royal; bottle of maple syrup, John Krohn; *While Cannons Roared*, Bill Hacker; *Gettysburg*, Ed Russ; *Piedmont Soldiers*, Steve Gunter; *Civil War: North*, Ed Russ. Winner of the 50/50 drawing, Mary Royal (\$18).

Due to a scheduling conflict, we were unable to hear about women soldiers during the war, so how about a short story instead?

A Romance of the War.

In the summer of 1861, a young man enlisted in the 1st Regiment of Michigan Engineers and left for the field. He had previously formed an attachment to a young lady, named Margaret Green, and they were engaged to be married. During the summer of 1862, she suddenly disappeared and all the efforts of her parents to discover the whereabouts of their daughter were fruitless. A few days ago she returned. She enlisted in the same regiment with her lover, shared the trials of the battle field with him, and when he was taken sick nursed him in the hospital, when her sex was discovered, and he made her folks acquainted with the facts. He has since been discharged from the regiment, and the couple united in Marriage. - Yankee Paper. [From the (Salisbury, N.C.) *Carolina Watchman*, 19 December 1864.]

More News From the Front

- ◆ As mentioned in a previous letter, the South Mountain Monument to North Carolinians was dedicated on October 18th.
- ◆ Marietta, Ga. A Union artillery fort built by Sherman's army... along with adjacent trenches, was bulldozed to make way for a Publix grocery store and shopping center.
- ◆ Gettysburg, Pa. The Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association recently launched a fund-raising raffle to benefit restoration and help pay off \$313,000 remaining on the \$400,000 mortgage on the Daniel Lady Farm.
- ◆ Fredericksburg, Va. A 9-inch Dahlgren gun from the ironclad C.S.S. *Virginia*, with its muzzle shot off, was recently moved to the Fredericksburg Area Museum on loan for three years.

[From *The Civil War News*, December 2003]

John David Smith was the guest speaker at our November meeting; his subject was the role that African-American soldiers played in the Union army during the war. Having grown up during the Civil Rights demonstrations of the 20th century, he was attracted to the similar struggles of the 19th century. He emphasized that those African-Americans, whether free black or slave, understood that by bearing arms they had reached a "watershed" in their history in this country. Over 178, 000 men (most from the 11 Confederate States) served in the Union army. Although much of the time these men were pulling garrison duty, either guarding supply lines or prison camps, they faced 449 engagements and sixteen of them were awarded the Medal of Honor. They faced more than Southern lead however; poorly trained, armed with antiquated weapons, the men also endured discrimination from white troops. They were paid less, received poor medical care (in segregated hospitals) and if captured, faced enslavement (their officers faced death).

Regardless of the risks, they fought. The costliest battle they were in was the Battle of the Crater, where they lost 1,327 killed, wounded or missing. The second was Olustee, Florida, 626 casualties. In April 1864, when Nathan Bedford Forrest captured Fort Pillow, Tennessee (a Union supply depot manned by about 550 troops, half of which were blacks) the black flag was raised and no prisoners were taken. Confederates maintained that the retreating Federals kept firing at them, while Union survivors claimed that many were shot or bayoneted after they had surrendered. After his talk, the lively questions and discussions from the audience kept Doctor Smith on the pulpit for nearly as long as his talk!

A timely tidbit from the (Wilmington) *Daily Journal*, 24 December 1864, uncovered by David Norris!

Another Misfortune.

We regret to learn that last night, about 12 o'clock, a distinguished personage while attempting to run the blockade was captured off this port. He came from the hyperborean regions of Russia, fresh from her snow-capped hills on a special mission to the juvenile portion of the Confederacy, literally laden with "sweets", and is represented to be a man about sixty years of age, of a most cheerful and benevolent countenance unwrinkled by time, tho'

His head was silvered o'er with age,
And long experience made him sage.

He purposed traveling through the Confederacy in his own conveyance, consisting of a magnificent sleigh lined with sable, and liveried by eight well-matched tiny Reindeer, covered with bells which jingled sweetly in tune to the music of the "bonnie blue flag." He brought over several capacious boxes packed in Paris, filled with the most delicate *bon-bons*, figs from Smyrna, and dates from Circassia and Afghanistan; lots of toys and curiosities, to say nothing of innumerable dolls intended for good little girls; rocking horses and velocipedes for obedient boys. Unfortunately this welcome visitor, who has shed so much joy and happiness on the surrounding country and expectant friends, fell into the hands of certain harpies cruising off our coast, and he was immediately and "sans ceremonie" gobbled up and sent to New York to await confiscation, condemnation, and a division of prize money. The name of this distinguished captive is St. Nickolas, commonly called "Santa Claus" and the above narrative will doubtless account for many empty stockings, that will hang around our desolate hearths this morning.

[Note: Santa Claus did not live at the North Pole until after the Civil War. Cartoonist Thomas Nast, whose drawings shaped the modern-day image of Santa Claus, made Santa a citizen of the North Pole so that no country could use him for propaganda purposes, as both sides had during the Civil War.]

And to all a very Merry Christmas!

Thanks to this month's Refreshment Coordinators, Bob and Joan Cooke.

Sheathed in Mystery!

(Part I of II)

Louis Froelich had to be thoroughly dejected. A fire had swept through his workshops and destroyed several buildings. Looking at the ruins, located at the southern end of the town of Wilmington, surely he thought that all his work was for naught. Just who was this man who would become known as the "Swordmaker for the Confederacy?" Even the pronunciation of his name is something of a mystery. Correctly pronounced "Fray-lee," but more often pronounced just as it reads (Fro-lick) he first emigrated from Bavaria to England, where it was said, he worked on the steamship Great Eastern, as a steam engine mechanic. After a stop in New York, by 1861 he was in Wilmington.

With the outbreak of war, Wilmington boomed as a manufacturing center, providing many of the military goods required by the new enlistees. One of those companies was Loeb and Swarzman's "N.C. Button Manufactory," which, "under the direction of Mr. Louis Froelich, a thoroughly educated and scientific mechanic" turned out uniform buttons as well as brass patterns for cannon balls. Towards the end of that first year of war, Froelich entered into a partnership with yet another unknown, Mr. B. Estvan (sometimes spelled Eastvan.) Estvan, a one-time Hungarian fencing master from Richmond, Virginia, seems to have been something of a boaster, but together they formed the "C.S.A. Arms Factory." In September of 1861, they ran an ad looking to buy thousands of pounds of copper, brass, zinc, tin and "5,000 Hickory Lance Sticks, 8 feet long, 1 1/2 inches to taper to 1 inch." The operation was to be a fairly large one the same ad offered jobs for 6 Brass Moulders, 30 Brass Finishers, 5 Machinists and 20 Polishers. Boarding was sought as close to the factory's site as possible, for 100 workers.

By November 1861, the factory was almost ready to begin production. Their chief salesman was a Mr. Newhoff who apparently traveled around the South, selling their wares. On 2 November they received the first boxcar-load of raw materials (and tools) that would make swords, bayonets, lances, pikes and Bowie knives. On 2 November the factory was visited by the Vice President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens. Stephens had been delayed in Wilmington and took the opportunity to visit the budding industry:

He was requested by the courteous agent, Mr. Newhoff, to lay the foundation for a new sword making machine, which he did, laying the brick and spreading on mortar in a most workman-like manner, taking occasion to make a few...remarks respecting the welfare of the factory and its importance to the Confederacy. [A] beautiful Sword and Lance were accepted by Mr. Stephens....Holding [them], Mr. Stephens made a spirited address....He complimented the firm on the patriotism and energy displayed in the undertaking[.]

It was something of an advertising coup! Stephens promised to bring the arms presented to him to other parts of the Confederacy so they could "see what the Old North State was doing." In an attempt to foster more State business, the firm prevailed upon one of Wilmington's leading citizens, Doctor William George Thomas, who wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Governor Henry T. Clark. One of the first orders, 128 lances and 220 "lance boots" were churned out by the factory and sent to Richmond. The total cost to the Confederate States was \$1,054. By the end of that month, the factory was turning out 900 sabers every week; this was probably under optimum conditions with no mechanical breakdowns, but this was enough to equip an entire regiment. There were some "bugs" to be worked out (there was a problem with the scabbards) but the operation was going smoothly, the blades were forged, ground and polished. After tempering and attaching handles, the swords were ready for the troopers. The (Wilmington) *Journal* commented, "The factory has turned out...lances, sabre bayonets, officer's swords, cavalry sabres, artillery swords and we suppose all other cutting, sticking and stabbing utensils." Pikes were not mentioned, but were also made by the Arms Factory. Because of a scarcity of firearms at the beginning of the war, pikes were produced and issued to some men, but never on a large scale. Regardless of what Alexander Stephens may have thought, the authorities were not pleased by the quality of the weapons coming from the factory. In a letter written to the Secretary of War (Judah P. Benjamin), Governor Clark railed against the lack of arms and added:

They are yet without sabers, though we spared neither effort nor money. We did engage from Eastvan and Froelich sword factory at Wilmington, and paid high prices, but three-fourths of the swords proved worthless.

The State of North Carolina.

F. Froelich & Estvan

1861	Dec. 19. To 232 Sabre Bayonets Containing Sheaths and Rings of Patent Iron	REMARKS: Contracted for by the Governor.
I certify that the above account is correct and just amounting to		
Dollars and _____ cents		
RECEIVED from <i>Genl. Wm. W. Ruff</i> Twenty Four Hundred & Thirty Six		
dollars and _____ cents in full of the above account.		
<i>Alfred Ruff</i> Dec. 20. 1861		<i>F. Froelich & Estvan</i>

**In 1861, bayonets from the Confederate Sword Factory cost \$10.50 each.
(National Archives.)**

At that very time, Froelich was disassociating himself from Estvan. The man had been exposed as an imposter and had absconded with the company's funds. He made his way north, eventually landing in London where he wrote a book condemning the Confederacy and the "foul and treacherous conspiracy against an excellent, just and equitable government." He wound up at Frankfort-on-Main, Germany, probably very close to where he had started out from! Froelich was forced to start all over again. Being ever inventive, he even devised a thirty-six shot "repeating revolver." It was said to be "accurate and efficient" to 1,400 yards and was mounted in a horse-drawn wagon. Although it was to be brought to Richmond for a demonstration, apparently nothing ever became of it.

The men of the N.C. 18th Regiment (many of whom were from Wilmington) could have used such a weapon on 27 May 1862 at Hanover Court House in Virginia. They were engaged in repulsing Union General Fitz-John Porter's troops and suffered nearly fifty per cent casualties. Upon learning of the battle, people in Wilmington donated foodstuffs and money to aid the stricken soldiers. The employees of the Arms Factory donated over \$300 and "a fine sword for the Colonel," Robert H. Cowan. Cowan wrote a letter of appreciation to Froelich and publicly thanked the workers, vowing that the sword given him "shall never be sheathed...until the Confederate States of America are acknowledged among the nations of the earth[.]"

Froelich employed about seventy workers: brass finishers, blacksmiths, molders, carpenters, tinsmiths and common laborers comprised the work force. By mid-1860, blacksmiths were paid \$3 per day (later increased to nearly \$10) but the big incentive for employment was not the pay but rather the exempt status that went with what would be considered a "war related" industry. Workers were not exempt, however, from yellow fever. That disease struck Wilmington in late summer 1862 and forced the closing of many businesses, including the Arms Factory. In late September, the factory shut down as families dispersed to safer areas. The Factory would not start up again until late November and in an attempt to branch out, Froelich hired about 25 workers to manufacture knapsacks and other leather goods. It has been written that from November 1861 to March 1864, the Confederate Sword Factory "furnished 18 sets of surgical instruments, 800 gross of military buttons, 3,700 lance spears, 6,500 sabre bayonets, 11,700 cavalry sabres, 2,700 officer's sabres, 600 navy cutlasses, 1,700 sets of infantry accoutrements, 300 sabre belts and 300 knapsacks." It was not all work though, for in January 1863 the workers, who had organized into a militia company, paraded through town with pennants attached to their lances and pikes. The following month a fire struck the shops, again putting Froelich out of business. Perhaps looking for another site at the time of the yellow fever epidemic, (October 1862) Froelich had purchased property in Kenansville.

[Note: portions of this article appeared in the *Wallace Enterprise* and the *Warsaw-Faison News*. Next month---The Confederate States' Armory moves to Kenansville!]