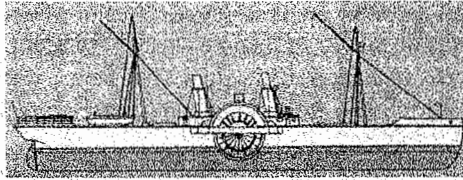


THE RUNNER



Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

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

**Our next meeting will be Thursday, 9 October at the Cape Fear Club Ballroom
(206 Chestnut Street)**

Social Hour 6:30 p.m. Meal 7:00 p.m.

Please note that you must pay in advance, we have to have an accurate number count, thanks!

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.

Our guest speaker for October will be William C ("Jack") Davis. Dr. Davis, a native of Independence, Missouri, was educated in northern California, then spent twenty years in editorial management in the magazine and book publishing industry before leaving in 1990 to spend the next ten years working as a writer and consultant. He is the author of more than forty books in the fields of Civil War and Southern history, as well as numerous documentary screenplays. He was the on-camera senior consultant for 52 episodes of the Arts and Entertainment Network/History Channel series "Civil War Journal," as well as a number of other productions on commercial and public television, as well as for the BBC abroad, and has acted as historical consultant for several television and film productions, including "The Blue and the Gray," "George Washington" and "The Perfect Tribute."

He has been twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in History, and is the only three-time winner of the Jefferson Davis Award given for book-length works in Confederate History. His most recent book, *Look Away! A History of the Confederate States of America* (published by the Free Press in June 2002.) Dr. Davis comes to Virginia Tech as Director of Programs for the new Virginia Center for Civil War Studies, as well as serving as Professor of History. As we wrote on our reservation forms, Dr. Davis is indeed an icon when it comes to the History of the War Between the States. He once informed us that he has written a book a year, since the age of sixteen! Dr. Davis' topic "The Last Days of the Confederate Government." is sure to be a crowd-pleaser (especially after a Barbeque/Fried Chicken dinner!)

Can you identify the 1860 presidential candidates below? The answers are at the bottom of page four!

(Hint: D is Abraham Lincoln!)



A



B



C



D

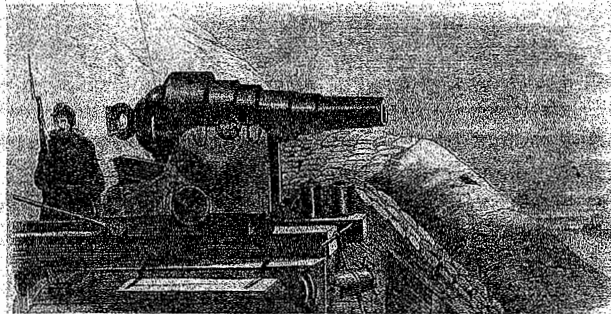
"Final Duty, the bronze figure of a dying Confederate soldier holding the battle flag aloft, will be dedicated to North Carolina's troops at South Mountain on Oct. 18....For more information about the monument and ceremony visit www.13thnc.com. (*The Civil War News*.)

The speaker at our September meeting, Dr. David Long spoke about the campaign and election of 1860. Opening with "lawyerly" remarks, he presented his case that it was that election that started the Civil War. As there were four candidates for the presidency, three of whom were Democrats, it was a foregone conclusion that Abraham Lincoln would then be elected President. Just how Lincoln went from an unknown Illinois lawyer to the frontrunner at Chicago's "Wigwam," was most interesting; after all, when Lincoln lost the Illinois Senatorial race, he was ready to "recede into anonymity."

But a different fate awaited Lincoln. After his loss to Stephen Douglas, he went on a speaking tour around the country. William Cullen Bryant heard his speech at New York's Cooper Union Hall and noted of Lincoln, "when he stood up, he kept standing!" Bryant also noted the effect of the speech on the crowd. They went wild, rising to their feet to deliver a standing ovation. At the Republican convention, N.Y.'s William H. Seward had expected to get the nomination, but lost due to the efforts of Lincoln's campaign manager, David Davis, who devised a second ballot strategy. "We will be the compromise candidate," said Davis and it worked. Although he led the pack on the first ballot, Seward steadily lost delegates as the balloting went on. Finally, Lincoln pulled ahead as a carefully orchestrated scene unfolded. A huge canvas caricature of Lincoln is rolled down as the crowd (both inside and outside the Wigwam) cheers.

Dr. Long noted that as soon as Lincoln's nomination was announced in the South, newspapers began to publish articles about the validity of secession. He also noted that while the election of 1860 was the most momentous, that of 1864 was the most important. If you want to learn more about Dr. Long's subject, pick up his book, *The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln's Re-election and the End of Slavery*.

We are guessing that most of our members read the article about Fort Fisher's Armstrong Gun (*Morning Star*, 27 March 2003.) The 150-pounder (that is, it fired a 150 shell!) is presently at the U.S. Military Academy's Trophy Point in New York. It is almost a "done deal" that the gun will be loaned to Fort Fisher for little more than a year. In 1864 that cannon was cutting-edge technology and would certainly be a welcome addition (if only temporary) to the State Historic Site. Our help is needed however. The cost of transporting the gun from West Point to Fort Fisher, as well as preparing the site upon which it will sit will have to be borne by the Fort. Paul Laird, chairman of the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee, has estimated the cost to be about \$75,000. It is hoped that enough money can be raised to pay for some of the 140th anniversary activities as well. If you would like to help, donations can be made to the Fort Fisher Restoration Committee, Inc and mailed to the Fort Fisher State Historic Site, P.O. Box 169, Kure Beach, N.C. 28449. For more information you can call the Fort (910-458-5538.)



Artist's sketch of the Armstrong gun.
(N.C. Collection, UNC Chapel Hill.)

Winners of our last raffle: Richard Bellows, *General William Averell's Salem Raid*; Jack Kuske, *Make the Fur Fly*; John Moore, Gettysburg video; Ed Gibson, Fort Donelson photo; Richard Long, *The Korean War*; Karen Budziszewski, *The Good German*; Steve Gunter, *Ghost Towns*; Bruce Patterson, *A Walk in the Woods* (audio tape) and a hearty thanks to Ed Gibson who won and returned an item! Well, we had our first ever 50/50 drawing and it is only proper that our first winner should be Chris E. Fonvielle! (p.s. he won \$20.) Please keep the raffle items coming!

More Blockade Running Stories!

There have been quite a few books written on the subject of blockade running in the Civil War, many of which took place right here in the Cape Fear area. Some of these you may have already heard or read about, but hopefully most will be new to you! The stories have been profiled in Sprunt's *Chronicles of the Cape Fear*, as well as his *Tales of the Cape Fear Blockade*; some have been gleaned from the *Wilmington Journal*, Tom Taylor's *Narrative of a Blockade Runner* and the *Whiting Papers*.

During the last year of war, the Confederacy was in dire straits for all sorts of items, mainly food. It is said that a typical meal consisted of milk, rye coffee, a wheat biscuit with honey and "hominy ad libitum." Suffering even more food hardships was the Army of Northern Virginia. At one point Thomas Taylor, who owned quite a few runners, was informed by the Richmond Commissary General that General Robert E. Lee's army had only enough supplies to last thirty days, with no prospects of relief in sight. Taylor then returned to Wilmington and embarked his ship (the *Banshee II*) to Nassau. Slipping out of the Cape Fear's western bar, the vessel (which had as passengers ex-Secretary of War George Randolph and wife) was spotted and "hotly" fired upon. Returning within a short time, he brought enough supplies to relieve Lee's anxiety about food for his army. It has been written that this single journey actually saved the Army of Northern Virginia from starvation. What is even more astounding about the trip is that when the *Banshee* made it's run into Wilmington, it actually passed through Admiral David D. Porter's fleet of over sixty vessels! Porter and Major General Benjamin Butler were winding up an unsuccessful attack against Fort Fisher and were ready to head back to Virginia. One can only imagine the nerves of steel and iron determination needed to steer the *Banshee* right through the middle of the enemy's ships!

George C. McDougal was the Chief Engineer of the blockade runner *Margaret and Jessie*, captured by the U.S.S. *Fulton* in October 1863. The vessel, taken north, was condemned and sold to the U.S. Navy (becoming the gunboat *Gettysburg*.) The crew of the runner was also taken north to New York where they were confined in the infamous Ludlow Street jail. As McDougal told it:

During our incarceration we were visited frequently by United States deputy marshals, who tried to identify some of us suspected of holding commissions in the Confederate service and of being regularly engaged in blockade running[.] These officers were immediately assailed with questions... 'What are you going to do with us here? Are you going to let us out?' to which they would respond, 'We can not tell -the crew lists have been sent to Washington for inspection[.]'

Those lists would indicate who could be set free and who was to be sent to a prison camp. After a wait of three weeks, the lists arrived and the detainees were assembled in a large hall to hear their fate and have their effects searched for contraband. Again, McDougal:

The entire office force of clerks had been drawn by curiosity from their desks to the other end of the large room, where the inspection was going on; and while my baggage was being examined by an officer, I asked him if he knew who were to be released; to which he replied that he did not know, but that the list... could be found in a large book on that desk, pointing his finger to the other end of the room... I asked if I could go and read the names to satisfy my curiosity. He said there could be no harm in doing so[.]

McDougal, feigning indifference, slowly walked to the opposite side of the room and opened the book. Looking down the list of names, he noted that his was missing. A lengthy prison term loomed before him, but quick-witted as he was, he looked back and saw that no one was interested in what he was doing. He gently guided his hand along the desk until he found a pen. He then inked in his name at the bottom of the list, "imitating as closely as possible the character of the writing before me." He turned and walked away and went back to the crowded end of the room. The deputy then inquired if he had seen his

name and McDougal responded with a hearty "YES!" "Then you are all right," said the officer.

That very evening, the entire crew was brought before a judge who called off the names of those who were to be set free. The last name called was George McDougal. He later wrote:

Promptly responding to my name, I at once passed out into the night, leaving my commander, Capt. Robert Lockwood...[and several others] who were sent to Fort Lafayette, where they remained until about the end of the war."

As for McDougal, he made nearly forty more trips as Chief Engineer of the runner *Siren* before his shipmates were released!

Not all blockade running stories turn out that way, however. In June 1864, the runner *Georgiana McCall* (or *McCaw*) was run ashore off Old Inlet by the U.S.S. *Victoria*. The Pilot of that vessel, Thomas Dyer, was something of a hothead. Described as a "lean, lanky, wiry 'razor-back' native of his own pine woods," he once threatened the British Captain of a vessel lying at a Wilmington wharf; Dyer dared the man to "come ashore you d---d English hog, and I'll make mince meat of you!" The Captain declined and Dyer was discharged from that vessel. He later went aboard the *Georgiana McCall* and was heard to boast that he "would put a steamer under his charge ashore, before he would be captured." Some aboard heard the remark and remembered it. When the ship was spotted as she attempted to come over the bar, she was run aground. Several of the crew abandoned ship, while the others were taken prisoner by a Union boarding party. Two men, Dyer and the cook (or watchman) remained hidden on board as the steamer was set afire by the Union sailors.

Leaving the vessel in flames, the Yankees returned to their ship. Observers on shore then saw two figures emerge from the smoke; a rescue vessel was sent to their aid, but when it arrived, only one man was there to meet it. The cook claimed that the Yankees had beaten Dyer, indeed he was found dying from three gashes in his head. But something was amiss. Even the Wilmington Journal sensed it:

After the Yankees left...two men were observed on board. They were hailed by some on shore, and told to put out the fire, which they did...The cook's statement, as we learn, is that the Yankees beat them both and robbed them. What appears strange in this is that these two men, Mr. Dyer and the cook, were observed on the boat after the Yankees had left...Mr. Dyer is known to have had a gold watch and some money on his person. Both money and watch were gone, and his pockets were turned inside out. The cook has been arrested, but we do not know whether anything further has been discovered.

Everyone knew something was wrong. One Confederate naval officer wrote, "There is something mysterious connected with the loss of the *Georgiana McCaw*. [sic] Some say she was boarded and fired by the Yankees; others contend there was treachery aboard...the only responsible witness, the Pilot, was murdered." Although the cook remained in prison for a while, he was never charged with the crime. For many years the identity of the man was not known, as writings of the period deliberately avoided mentioning his name. A man by the name of John H. Fisher had been imprisoned (at Fort Fisher) by the military, but was released after two months. The commander of the city garrison, Major James Reilly, was told to release Fisher, "who has been called as a witness in the murder case which occurred on the *Georgiana McCall*. You will inform the civil authorities who have the case in hand that Fisher will be released." Apparently there was not enough evidence to hold him. Sprunt summed up the case:

Another man was found on board, unhurt, who professed ignorance of his fellow. This person was the watchman, and it is said he carried ashore a large amount of money. He was arrested on suspicion, but there was no proof. He still lives on the river, but the cause of poor Dyer's death will probably never be known[.]

(Answers: A is John Bell of Tennessee, B is J.C. Breckenridge of Kentucky and C is Stephen Douglas!)