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# The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

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## The *RUNNER*

### Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

Editor **Bob Cooke**

December 2005

Our next meeting will be Thursday, 8 December, at St. Andrew's On-The-Sound Church Social Hour 7:00 p.m. Meeting 7:30 p.m.



#### Steering Committee Contact Numbers.

President-Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle-792-9091; Treasurer-Dan Geddie-799-5338; Webmaster-Al Hines-799-7284, or via our website [runner.html](http://runner.html) Newsletter-Bob Cooke-792-1601; Sales-Steve Gunter-686-4025; Publicity-John Moore-256-6328.

Our speaker for December will be Tonia Smith. Ms. Smith lives in Pinehurst, North Carolina and is a native-born Tar Heel. Her first Civil War experience came at age twelve when she accompanied her father on a visit to the Stone's River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. She is a free-lance researcher for various Civil War authors and has recently begun writing for herself as well. Her article, "Gentlemen, You Have Played This D\*\*\*ed Well" (about the execution of two Confederate spies) appeared in the August issue of *North and South Magazine*. Tonia is moderator of the on-line Civil War Discussion Group. She is also the founder, past president and current program chair of the Rufus Barringer CWRT in Pinehurst.

#### An excerpt from Ms. Smith's article:

In the late spring of 1863, while U.S. Grant was laying siege to Vicksburg and Robert E. Lee was planning his move northward, Gen. Braxton Bragg and Maj. Gen. W.S. Rosecrans were locked in a stalemate in Tennessee. Both of their respective governments were pushing them for a decisive forward movement but both generals seemed reluctant to make the first move.

Rosecrans wanted to wait until he was certain that troops from his army would not be sent to support Grant. Bragg was concerned that he had been unable to penetrate Rosecrans' cavalry screen, which denied him an accurate assessment of his adversary's strength. Repeated efforts on Bragg's part to get inside Rosecrans' defenses had failed. Not even the mighty Nathan Bedford Forrest had been able to accomplish much beyond harassing the enemy at Franklin, Tennessee.

On the evening of June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1863, two fine-looking gentlemen dressed in uniforms made their way into Fort Granger. From the moment they entered the gates of the fort that protected the town of Franklin, until some eighteen hours later, one of the more unusual spy stories of the

Civil War....Enough for now- Ms. Smith will fill us in on the rest of the story at our meeting!

### Dispelling some of the Myths of Cold Harbor.

At our last meeting, Mr. Gordon Rhea led us back to the summer of 1864, a time when the fate of the nation depended on the outcome of a major battle. President Abraham Lincoln was not sure of victory, indeed, he was not even sure he would be his party's nominee. With the advent of U.S. Grant, fresh from his victories in the west, the strategy changed somewhat. No longer would the Federals merely seek to occupy territory, but would now concentrate on beating the ANV. A more profound change came when it was realized that Grant intended to continue battling Lee continuously. Mr. Rhea pointed out that at this point of the war many of the early Northern volunteers had left the army, their places were filled by conscripts. Grant outmaneuvers Lee by a downstream crossing of the North Anna River, but Lee will react quickly and attack at Totopotomoy Creek. Grant now realizes that the ANV has been weakened and it is only a matter of time (and casualties.) Both sides reinforce; Lee digs in and Union troops prepare for battle.

Here the first myth of Cold Harbor was shattered: There was not a wholesale pinning of names on jackets, Horace Porter wrote this well after the war. On 3 June the assault begins, many veteran troops move out 100 yards or so and dig in. Some of the "band-box" regiments, in combat for the first time (and perhaps wishing to prove themselves) enter the killing zone "like a pencil into a sharpener" and are mowed down in droves. It was these untried soldiers, placed in front of the veteran regiments, that suffered the most casualties. Mr. Rhea has set the total casualties at fifty-five thousand Union and thirty-five thousand Confederates, but disputes the figures of seven, ten or fifteen thousand killed in the first few minutes of the engagement. Those Southerners killed or wounded were, by 1864, virtually irreplaceable. Mr. Rhea also informed us that neither general accomplished his objective: Grant did not destroy the ANV and Lee did not drive Grant back across the North Anna River, nor did the battle change the outcome of the election.

**Winners of the Raffle:**

**Al Hines- *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*; David Norris- *Yankee Correspondence*, and also  
Janene Van Der Molen's painting of *Fort Fisher- As It Was.*'A; Bob Cooke- *The Civil War: The  
North*; Candace McGreevy- *The Civil War Book of Lists*.**

**Thanks once again to all who have donated items for our raffle...Keep up the good work!**

