



The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

The *RUNNER*

Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

Editor **Bob Cooke**

May 2008

Our next meeting is Thursday, 8 May 2008



You may recognize our speaker for May, **Dr. Everard H. Smith**, a native of Washington, D.C., but for the last thirty-five years a resident of North Carolina, (the last eighteen here in Wilmington) will speak about the Tar Heels in the Army of Northern Virginia from a new perspective. Dr. Smith, a graduate (B.A.) of Yale University and UNC-Chapel Hill (Ph.D.) will tell us about the subject of his upcoming book, *Marse Robert's Men: Voices from the Army of Northern Virginia*. Dr. Smith began this "long-term research project" when, working his way through college, he was employed at the Southern Historical Collection and began to examine the many diaries and letters of North Carolina's soldiers in Virginia. Arranging them "more or less" chronologically, he has allowed these men to tell their stories in their own way. The book, which is soon to be published, will quickly be a necessary addition to many of our bookshelves. The members of our RT will have an opportunity to hear about it first at the May meeting!

Dr. Smith has served as senior administrative officer and adjunct professor of history at UNCW (1991-1993) and has been employed since 1994 by the N.C. Office of Information Technology Services as a senior networking analyst in voice, video and data communications. He is quite active in community affairs as well as local history activities. It is not only the Civil War that has attracted Dr. Smith's interest: it is military history in general: he was co-host of a University-sponsored trip to Normandy in 1994 to attend the 50th Anniversary Celebration of D-Day and in 1999, served on the steering committee of the Wartime Wilmington Commemoration, which honored the WW II generation with 170 events. He is a director of the Home Front Heritage Coalition (you may have seen their WW II maps around town) and has spoken to numerous organizations. He has written extensively; he has published articles in *Civil War Times*, *Civil War Magazine*, *The North Carolina Historical Review*, *The American Historical Review* and has served as a consultant to the N.C. Center for Public Television.



Raffle Winners:

Civil War Battlefields- **Ed Gibson**; *Ironclads and Columbiads*- **Gary Henderson**; *Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends and Folklore* - **Bob Cooke**; *Chicago's Battery Boys*- **Charles Watson**; *Shipwrecks*- **Mary Royal**.

Thanks to all who donated items for our raffle....Take another look around your library and see if you have anything that you could contribute to our raffle. Thanks again!



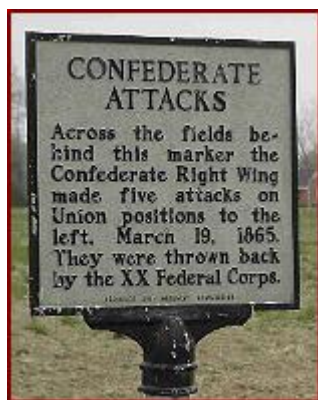
Kudos to **Dale Lear** for arranging our spring trip to the Bentonville Battlefield; Dale gave a brief report in reference to the trip and **Bruce Patterson** has penned the following article about the trip itself.

Bentonville Battlefield Tour



It was cold, windy and threatening rain on Saturday 29 March 2008 when 28 members, friends and guests of your Cape Fear Civil War Round Table traveled by chartered bus to the Bentonville Battlefield. In fact, the weather was not unlike the conditions that existed in that remote location on 19 March 1865 when one of the final land battles of the Civil War was fought.

A historical marker summarized the battle as the engagement that “checked” the Union advance towards Goldsboro. In fact, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston stopped the advance of Major general William T. Sherman, but only for a short time.



Our group of stalwart travelers had been prepared for the tour with a presentation by member **John Winecoff** at our regular 13 March meeting. John provided maps thus setting the stage for

what we were to see on the very ground fought over and virtually unchanged some 143 years earlier.

The first stop on the tour was the Harper House, the residence of the Harper family, used first by the Union and subsequently by Confederate forces as a military hospital. The vivid exhibits at the house were reminders of the ferocity with which this war was fought.

The bus then took us to several observation points from which Assistant Park Director Fred Burgess described the first (of three) day's battle.



This observer was surprised at the complexity of this particular battle thus illustrating the value of a guided battlefield tour. Throughout, Fred provided a vivid narrative.

Our chartered bus tour had been arranged by member extraordinaire Dale Lear who not only made travel arrangements but provided custom box lunches (as well as coffee, pastries, fresh fruit and soft drinks) which we

enjoyed aboard the bus and between field treks of the day two and day three battlefields.



As usual, this was a most enjoyable day of Civil War history shared by friends with like interests. As has become a tradition, the tour group enjoyed an opportunity to restock their home library with a visit to the Visitor Center Gift Shop and Book Store. Remaining on schedule throughout, the bus, filled with tired, windblown historians arrived back in Wilmington on time with thanks, particularly to Dale, but to all who made this very enjoyable day possible.

As was noted at our meeting, the North Carolina Military Historical Society will be hosting their annual symposium at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh on 10 May, 2008. Guntis Goncarovs will present *A Brief History of the Crew of the C.S.S. Hunley*. Nora Marie Brooks will give a first-person impression of Miss Mildred "Millie" Lee, daughter of General Robert E. Lee. Our own Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle will speak on *The Wilmington Campaign of 1865*. The meeting, which is free, is open to the public. For reservations call Si Harrington at 919.807.7314 (e-mail: ncmilhistoc@yahoo.com). A reservation for lunch, at a cost of five dollars can also be made and there will be raffle drawings throughout the day. The meeting will end at about 1:30 p.m.



The Blockade Runner Project

At our last meeting a new member, former Piedmont Airline pilot, **Gary Henderson**, was introduced and mentioned that he was involved in the “Blockade Runner Project.” Their Mission Statement is:

The Blockade Runner Project is dedicated to building a fully-functional replica of a blockade runner ship that would fulfill a variety of educational purposes and serve as a “living” museum and symbol of Wilmington’s rich maritime history to visitors and local residents. When completed, the ship would serve as a unique educational tool and would support the local tourism industry.

Ship specifications: Length: 90’ Beam: 30’ Power: Two 75 h.p. steam engines driving two side-mounted paddle wheels. Electricity: Diesel powered generator. Classrooms: As needed to be designed with help from teachers. Accommodations: Full galley and sleeping quarters for 20 students, plus crew. The ship will also be equipped with sails, propane stoves for cooking, showers and bathrooms of course. The construction cost is estimated to be around four million dollars. Community participation and financial contributions are vital to make this project a success! For more information, please contact: Dick Hitchcock at 910.395.7037 or rhitchcock@ec.rr.com



The Forensic Photographer



Mr. John Kelley’s presentation, *Embedded With the Troops: Photojournalism in the Civil War* opened with the statement that there were at least three hundred photographers active in the Civil War. “It was a growing industry” that in 1860 saw about three thousand photographers in the United States. **Mr. Kelley** admitted that **Ken Burns’** *The Civil War* sparked a great interest in that conflict, an interest that historians would be hard pressed to match. He also pointed out that Mr. Burns utilized photographs from that time period to illustrate “or engender the mood of the period.” Many of the pictures used, however, as indicated by Mr. Kelley were misidentified or misused. This, Mr. Kelley stated, has “created a distortion of our visual

understanding” of that conflict. Photographs are “primary source materials” and as such should be treated just as letters, drawings and diaries are. Much can be learned from a careful examination of these wartime photos and John showed us the impact such an examination can have: the famous photo of President Abraham Lincoln and General George McClellan taken by Alexander Gardner in October, 1862, after the battle of Sharpsburg. In a blow-up of the photo, the tension between the two men is quite discernable. Mr. Kelley pointed out that many such images have now been digitized by the Library of Congress and are available on-line.

Concentrating on what he termed Chancellorsville - Fredericksburg II (April 8 to May 3, 1863, Mr. Kelley stated that between the seven months from 17 November, 1862 until 13 June 1863 there were over 48,000 casualties from those two battles. Photographers were active during this period and several in particular, Captain Andrew J. Russell (the only military photographer in the war), Timothy O’Sullivan and (lesser known) Egbert Fowx.

The Photographs of April and May, 1863

Mr. Kelley told the group that he uncovered a misdated image (plate 32) in Alexander Gardner's *Photographic Sketch Book of the War* and went on to inform us that it was one of the earliest images of the Gettysburg campaign. The photo was that of the Union pontoon bridges spanning the Rappahannock River, but the image immediately preceding it (plate 31), that of Battery D, 2nd U.S. Artillery was correctly dated as May, 1863. Indeed, Battery D is also in plate 32. *Hidden in Plain Sight*, an article written for the newsletter *Battlefield Photographer* was the outcome of that discovery. There were other photos shown and Mr. Kelley led an enthralled group through several other discoveries pointing out the different variations of foliage of the trees in the photos (bare trees indicated a June date, trees at full foliage showed a May date), a snow bank nestled behind a building, the hazy image of the Lacy house or the number of pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock River. He even showed an image of a "doctored" photo in which a tree mysteriously disappeared! He stressed once more that these Civil War photos should not be treated as mere "ornaments" in a book, but placed in their correct historical context and accurately described. Thanks again to Mr. Kelley for a most interesting talk!



Confederate Memorial Day

May 10, 2008 - 4:00 PM

Memories of the War: The Battle of Fort Fisher

Jeff Bockert - Guest Speaker

In conjunction with the local chapter of the **United Daughters of the Confederacy**, this program includes a wreath laying ceremony at the **UDC monument** located at Battle Acre.

Free admission

Fort Fisher State Historic Site, Kure Beach. 910-458-5538

www.fortfisher.nchistoricsites.org



Finally, anyone interested in Civil War photography may want to contact CCWP- The Center for Civil War Photography at www.civilwarphotography.org or at 813.951.4962. Their mailing address is CCWP, P.O. Box 1740, Oldsmar, Florida, 34677.

Due to health problems, our scheduled speaker for May, Jim Steele, Director of the Fort Fisher State Historic Site, will be scheduled to speak next year.