

COMPANY FRONT

THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA

VOL 25, ISSUE 1

JANUARY, 2012



1861

CRISIS ON THE NORTH CAROLINA COAST

This issue focuses on the experience of the 26th North Carolina in defense of our coast in the fall of 1861 and early winter of 1862. David McGee's article provides a concise account of the regiment's actions and movements during that time. Glimpses of daily life are found in the letters of Thomas and Eli Setser to the folks back in Caldwell County. Letters written by two other soldiers in 1861 appeared during the preparation of the article and are included as appendices to the Setser letters. Finally, the regiment is indebted to Paul Branch, the ranger historian at Fort Macon, for his authoritative account of the defense of Fort Macon by the small Confederate garrison.

Greg Mast

Colonel Moses James White, a twenty-seven-year old West Point graduate and native of Mississippi, commanded the garrison of Fort Macon.

Image: Fort Macon State Park.



Front Cover

A seldom-published profile photograph of Zebulon Baird Vance, possibly made about the time of his election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1858.

No image of Vance in uniform is known to exist, but a close comparison of this image with the famous "Three Colonels" painting (see back cover) suggests that the artist used this photograph when painting Colonel Vance."

Image: Vance Birthplace State Historic Site

Back Cover

"Three Colonels"

Image: North Carolina Museum of History



COMPANY FRONT

THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA

VOLUME 25, ISSUE 1

CONTENTS

“Just Let Them Land Here” 4

The 26th North Carolina on Bogue Banks, 1861

By David McGee.

“We Think We Can Whip Six Thousand Yankees” 18

The Letters of Thomas and Eli Setser, 26th North Carolina

By Greg Mast

The Confederate Defense of Fort Macon 28

By Paul Branch

STAFF

Editor and Chief / Layout
Jason Goodnite

Historical Editor
Greg Mast

Copy Editor
Alan Leonard

Production Supervisor
Skip Smith

**This publication is printed for The Society for the Preservation of the
26th Regiment North Carolina Troops, Inc.**

Warning

Contents of the *Company Front* are protected under copyright, unless otherwise noted as being from another source, and may not be reprinted in any form without the written permission of the editor or author

JUST LET THEM

26th Regiment N.C. Troops on Bogue Banks

By David McGee

During the early morning hours of September 2, the soldiers of the 26th North Carolina roused from their slumber. The day the men had anxiously awaited arrived at last. Now they were leaving the camp of instruction for their first duty post and a chance to fight the enemy.

By 3:00 a.m., the troops finished their breakfast and make final preparations for leaving. Later that morning, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn in the absence of Colonel Vance, they boarded the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad and departed for the coast. Reaching New Bern, Burgwyn received orders from Brigadier General Richard C. Gatlin to proceed with the unit to Morehead City. At 11:00 p.m., the train finally reached its destination. Weary men spent the night on the railroad cars.¹

During the time the soldiers remained in Morehead City, Gatlin received a report that Federal forces were planning an attack on Fort Macon. The brick masonry fort stood on the eastern end of Bogue Banks (Bogue runs east to west rather than north to south), which was separated from the mainland by a shallow sound. Because it guarded the ports at Morehead City and Beaufort, Fort Macon was vital to the coastal defenses of the state. Gatlin decided to move the 26th and 7th North Carolina regiments across to Bogue Island where they could support the fort if the enemy attacked.²

LAND HERE...

ks, 1861

To prepare for the move, Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn and several other officers visited the island on September 4 and selected a position for the regiment's camp. They located a site about six miles south of Fort Macon, which they named Camp Burgwyn in honor of the lieutenant colonel's father. While on the trip across to the island, the men watched as a large warship came into sight and received fire from the guns at the fort.³

When the officers returned to Morehead City in the evening, they learned that Colonel Vance had joined the regiment. Vance had been on furlough at his home in Asheville when the news of his election as colonel of the 26th North Carolina reached him. He left Asheville on September 1 and travelled nearly the length of the state to reach his new command.⁴

About 1:00 p.m. the next day, the regiment began its move to Bogue Island. While some of the troops had no trouble crossing and reached the island around 9:00 p.m., another group had anything but a smooth journey. Those men set out to cross the sound in a steamboat, but its boiler sprang a leak and the steamer had to turn back. The troops then boarded a schooner; it promptly ran aground. Finally they rowed small boats across the sound and reached their destination around three o'clock in the morning.⁵

Vance and Burgwyn crossed ahead of the troops to make arrangements for receiving the men. According to Burgwyn, the disembarkation of the regiment created quite a "scene of confusion." Company officers failed to arrive with their men and the field officers had to supervise the unloading of the soldiers.⁶

Their new surroundings must have seemed rather strange to these men from the piedmont and mountain

Lieutenant Colonel Henry King Burgwyn Jr. observed his twentieth birthday on October 3, 1861, shortly after the 26th North Carolina arrived on Bogue Banks.



portions of the state. As part of a string of barrier islands known as the Outer Banks, Bogue Island lay near the southern end of the island chain. Approximately a mile wide and nearly twenty-five miles long, the island was bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Bogue Sound on the other. Vegetation consisted mainly of dune grasses and dense thickets of short shrub-like trees, which William Glenn described as being so thick that “a rabbit can hardly get thru.” The predominate feature of the island was deep sand which the wind blew about in every direction.⁷

The day after the troops landed on Bogue Island, they began setting up camp. After erecting their tents, locating an adequate supply of drinking water received top priority. The soldiers dug wells in the sand. Fortunately, they only had to dig about four feet deep before striking water. Although the water did not taste very good, it proved sufficient for the men’s needs.⁸

Camp Burgwyn quickly took on the air of a permanent encampment. During September, the regiment received over 30,000 feet of lumber for their building requirements. For the remainder of the month the soldiers remained busy setting up large canvas wall tents, putting wooden floors in their tents, and building stables (for the officers’ horses) and kitchens.⁹

Besides working on their camp, the men labored “a rit smar” on the island’s defenses. In one instance they built a position for an artillery battery. First, they carried lumber from a boat landing to the site to provide the flooring and a defensive wall for the battery. The soldiers then brought up the ammunition and powder for the guns. According to one man, two cannon balls made a load because they weighed “a bout thirty four pounds” apiece.¹⁰

Because there was no bridge connecting the island with the mainland, boats ferried building materials, rations, forage for the animals, firewood, and various other stores across Bogue Sound. The shallow depth of the water in the sound meant that the men had to wade out to the vessels to bring in the supplies. While this did not present a problem in September, the colder weather and resulting drop in water temperature later on must have made this a particularly unpleasant experience during the winter months.¹¹

Even though building the camp and defenses and carrying supplies consumed much of their time, the soldiers spent the main part of their days on drill and guard duty. When the 26th North Carolina arrived on Bogue Island, it remained more a collection of ten different companies than a well-disciplined military unit. Colonel Vance and Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn immediately set out to prepare the troops for the combat that lay ahead.¹²

When weather permitted (the drill field flooded any time it rained), the troops practiced about six hours a day. Vance left most of the training and discipline to the more experienced Burgwyn, who worked the soldiers “continually.” Despite the amount of drill that he put the unit through, as late as December 26, Burgwyn remained unsatisfied with the conduct of the men. He stated that the discipline of the regiment was “wretched” and that Colonel Vance had become convinced that severe remedies must be used to cure the problem.¹³

Although Burgwyn’s efforts would show their benefits in battle, at the time he quickly earned the hearty dislike of the troops. According to Thomas J. Cureton, Burgwyn was very strict in camp, “so much so, that up to

Another antebellum photograph of Zebulon Baird Vance." Image Vance Birthplace State Historic Site



the battle of New Bern he was very unpopular, and I often heard the men say if they ever got into a fight with him what they would do, etc., etc." Burgwyn never achieved the popularity that Vance had with the troops, but he did mold them into an efficient fighting unit.¹⁴

One reason for the necessity of drill and discipline came from the constant presence of the Federal threat to the coast. From the day the 26th North Carolina arrived on Bogue Island until the time the regiment moved

back to the mainland, “Old Abes Ships” remained in sight almost every day. Usually, from one to three vessels could be spotted at any given moment. Despite the threat, the Confederates expressed a conviction that their defenses could withstand any attack. W. E. Setser stated that all the men were anxious to fight, and that if the “yankees want to get thinder and trim just let them land hear . . . we will feed them on canon plates and grape and musketry.”¹⁵

The soldiers remained ready to combat any possible landing by the enemy. On several instances from late September through mid-October they went on alert when reports came of Federal troops disembarking on the island. When these alarms sounded, the officers called their companies to arms and gave instructions on preparing for combat. Usually this meant that the troops were to cook three days’ rations and have their weapons close at hand. On occasion, some of the companies marched to a position to oppose a threatened landing. In every case, however, the alarms turned out to be false and the men relaxed their guard.¹⁶

When not drilling or standing guard, the soldiers employed a variety of means to enjoy their free time. As was the case at the camp of instruction, writing families and friends at home became one of their favorite activities. Although the letters varied greatly in content and quantity, the men’s desire to receive news (along with more tangible items) came through very clearly.

The soldiers frequently requested food from home. While such novelty items as fresh fish and oysters proved fine for a time, the men quickly grew bored with such a diet, especially when often eating the same thing three times a day. Foods that may have seemed common back home gained a new appeal after the troops had been without them for a while. Gus Jarratt had only been with the regiment a short time before he requested that his brother send a box of food with onions and cabbages included. The men of Company G were delighted to receive about three bushels of food from home, especially since the items included such delicacies as cheese, butter, and cakes. When one man received a box of apples from his wife, he did not have them for “three minutes” before other men came around wanting some.¹⁷

The soldiers looked to their families to provide much of their clothing. Although the army’s quartermaster department sometimes supplied clothes, these garments were often of inferior quality and fit. Fortunately for the troops, at least during the first months of the war, they received a number of shipments of apparel from home. With the onset of colder weather, men began seeking warmer clothes. In some cases, the army issued overcoats, but usually there were not enough to go around. As a result, soldiers turned to their families for such items as overcoats, comforters, and extra blankets.¹⁸

Most enlisted men had little (if any money) and, if families and friends had not helped supply them, would have had to rely solely on what little the army could provide. On September 17, Colonel Zebulon Vance informed the governor that a portion of the regiment was “almost in a state of mutiny on account of their non-receipt of their pay.” He stated that the troops had become so destitute that they could not purchase fish, cheap and abundant as it was on Bogue Island. Even with this warning, the men did not receive their first pay from the army until early November.¹⁹

More than anything else, soldiers wanted to see people from home. When the men found they could not get furloughs to go home (except in rare cases when they were ill), they repeatedly pleaded with family and

friends to come see them in camp. After several women had visited the regiment to see their relatives, Joseph White beseeched his wife “for Gods sake come never mind the cost I wil pay.” Others in the regiment expressed much the same sentiment as they became homesick. Even Colonel Vance fell victim to the loneliness. He asked his wife to come down to New Bern where he would be able to visit with her.²⁰

Although soldiers generally wished the best for their family and friends back home, their feelings for those men who remained at home instead of joining the army were very different. Sometimes the troops simply called on the men of their area to volunteer. More often, the emotions expressed became quite harsh. Noah Deaton referred to men who had nothing to keep them from joining the army as “such cowards that they would suffer subjugation rather than fight.” Deaton hoped no one would take offense at his words, but said that if they did, the best remedy would be for the offended men to take up arms and defend their homes. Another soldier became even more vehement and stated that he would be glad to see such men drafted and forced to take the front ranks in battle.²¹

When not writing letters, many of the men set out to explore their surroundings whenever they got the chance. While some of the soldiers took rides on boats around Bogue Sound and to surrounding islands, others preferred to do their travelling on dry land. A few walked the six miles up to Fort Macon to get a look at its defenses and visit with friends.²²

The ocean and its bounty seemed to hold a particular thrill for many of the men. Hunting seashells became a popular pastime. Joseph White travelled up to Shackleford Banks (an island two miles above Fort Macon) for the purpose of finding some shells. He told his wife that he had some “verry pretty conk shells” and fifteen to twenty types of other shells.²³

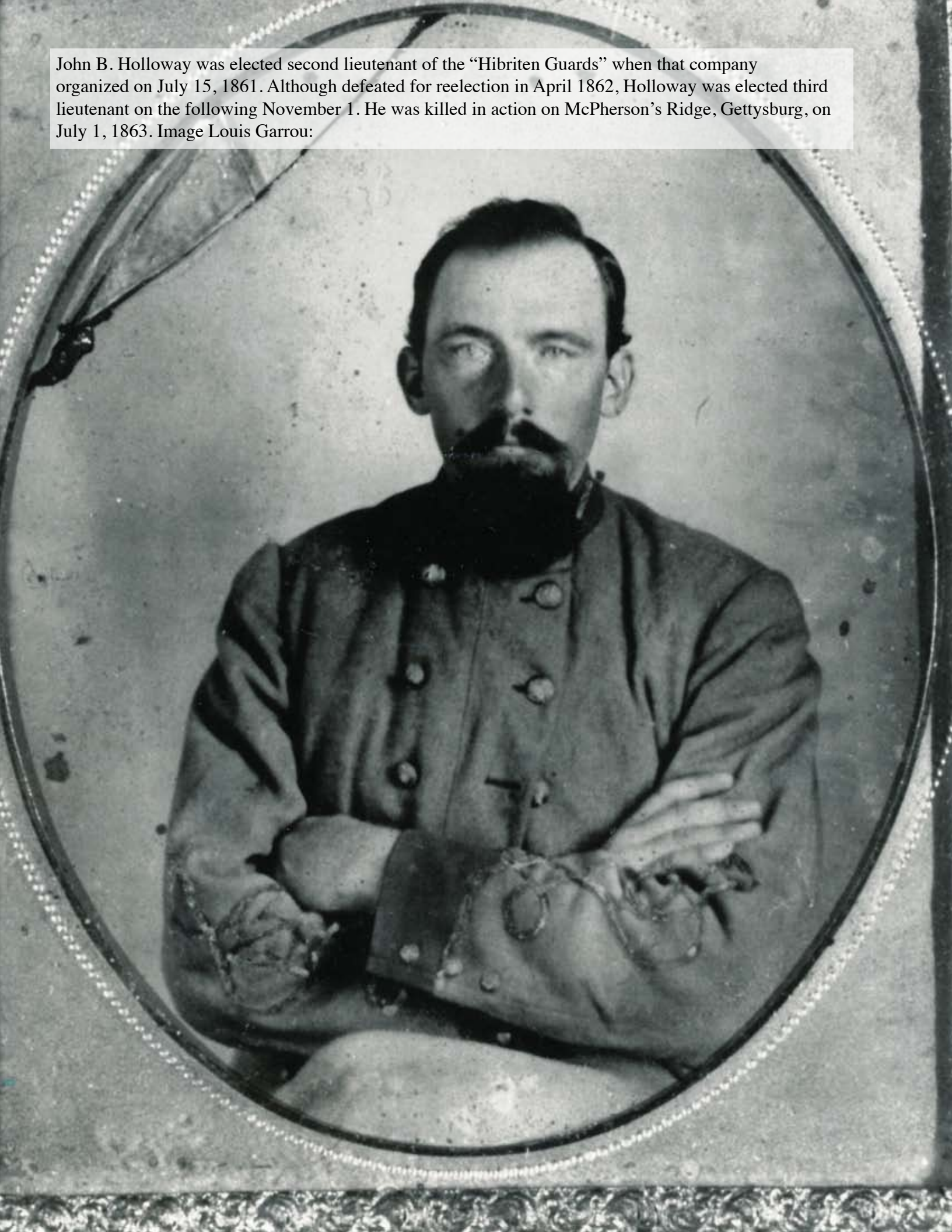
Visiting the saltworks along the coast provided another diversion for the men. The process of making salt by evaporating seawater intrigued the soldiers. Several tried to get some of the precious commodity to send home.²⁴

Two other ways that individuals found to pass the time involved highly contrasting activities. While one group of men found comfort in their religion, holding prayer meetings every night and having sermons on Sundays, others found solace in drinking alcohol. According to Thomas W. Setser, who complained earlier about the drinking and rowdiness at the camp of instruction, he and several other men went over to Beaufort and “got tite.” Other soldiers frequently requested that someone from home send or bring them whiskey or brandy.²⁵

While the troops found ways to combat the boredom of army routine, they did not easily find a way to battle a much more serious problem. Not long after the regiment moved to the coast, illness swept through the camp. The 26th North Carolina quickly came face to face with its deadliest enemy--disease.

Like most Confederate units, the first diseases to affect the regiment were “children’s illnesses”, such as measles and mumps. Less than two weeks after the regiment had arrived at Camp Burgwyn, Colonel Vance reported that a “great many” men had fallen sick with those two ailments. Measles, in particular, spread rapidly through camp. On September 15, Joseph White wrote his wife that twenty-five men in company G had measles. Two days later, the number had risen to forty. Although measles and mumps did not directly cause many deaths

John B. Holloway was elected second lieutenant of the “Hibriten Guards” when that company organized on July 15, 1861. Although defeated for reelection in April 1862, Holloway was elected third lieutenant on the following November 1. He was killed in action on McPherson’s Ridge, Gettysburg, on July 1, 1863. Image Louis Garrou:



(only two deaths on Bogue Island were attributed to measles), the resulting weakness of the immune system left soldiers susceptible to more serious diseases.²⁶

Impure water and unsanitary conditions in the camp contributed to most of the illnesses suffered by the troops. With the water table being near the surface and the shallow wells being in the camp, the number of ailments caused by impure water grew the longer the regiment remained on the island. Although the soldiers' writings reveal no information about their sanitary habits during the period, it seems likely that when they wished to relieve themselves they simply chose a convenient location without regard to possible problems with diseases. Thus, germs spread through the water and then through the troops.

While only four men died from typhoid or other fevers during September and October, the months of November and December saw the count rise to six. At the same time, the number of deaths caused by illnesses listed simply as "disease" or unknown jumped from four to fourteen. These unknown ailments were probably diarrhea or dysentery, both of which, like typhoid, were transmitted through impure water. Once the regiment moved to a more open camp on the mainland in December, the number of disease-related deaths dropped dramatically, with only two being recorded for the month of January.²⁷

Such medical facilities as existed to prevent and treat diseases proved inadequate for the task. Although immunization was tried in at least one company, no records exist that show much effort was expended to prevent sickness from occurring or spreading. Once an illness did occur, the physicians often had no idea how to combat it. When Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn contracted typhoid, he went first to the hospital at Carolina City where the regimental surgeons treated him. While at the hospital, the "drunken doctor" (who Burgwyn had recommended as regimental surgeon) continually treated him with calomel. Not until Burgwyn's father moved him to New Bern and put him under the care of the family's doctor did Burgwyn begin to improve.²⁸

For men who had not yet faced battle, deaths caused by diseases made a personal impact. The relatively small number of deaths meant that the soldiers could publicly pay their respects to their deceased comrades. During the period between November, 1861 and February, 1862, the Raleigh Standard printed five regimental letters expressing regret at deaths caused by disease. Once the troops became engaged in combat and faced the epidemics of 1862, the number of deaths became so high as to prevent continuing the practice of publishing "death" resolutions.²⁹

During the three months the 26th North Carolina spent on Bogue Island, two events took place which broke the monotony of camp life. The first occurred in mid-October, when the regiment moved to a new site known as Camp Wilkes, located approximately one and one-half miles below Fort Macon. According to one man, a "beautiful cedar grove" served as the site of the new camp. He believed that it would make a good place for winter quarters if the regiment was to remain on the island.³⁰

The second incident began on November 1, when a severe tempest swept the area around Bogue Island. The storm blew down a number of tents and left part of the camp submerged. More importantly, the rough weather brought with it an unusual visitor the next day. As Colonel Vance returned from visiting Fort Macon, he met several of his soldiers escorting a Yankee sailor who carried a white flag. When questioned by the colonel, the seaman replied that he had come from the steamer Union, which ran aground on the island during the storm.

The Northerner was going to the fort to surrender the survivors of the wreck. After learning the location of the crew, Vance led two companies at the double quick about five miles below the camp, where they found the men from the ship. The troops took eighty-one seamen as prisoners. Vance promptly sent the Yankees under guard to Fort Macon.³¹

These were the first Federal troops that the North Carolinians had met since the war began. Although some of the Confederates sympathized with the sailors, most seemed to look on them with disdain. According to one soldier, the main reason the Yankees served in the navy was to procure subsistence for themselves and their families. Another reported that the vaunted Federals gave up without any type of a fight, even though they had weapons at hand.³²

The colonel then dispatched Company K and a number of troops from a nearby artillery battery to march seventeen miles to the site where the Union had run aground. Once there, the soldiers found a large quantity of valuable material among the wreckage. The men recovered “30 or 40 Minie Rifles” and an equal number of muskets, several large casks of powder, two rifled cannon, the ship’s engine, and a quantity of clothing and bedding. Among the more unusual things the men found were twenty-four “very good” horses (of the more than sixty originally on the ship), seven barrels of whisky, and a “great many bottles of champaign.”

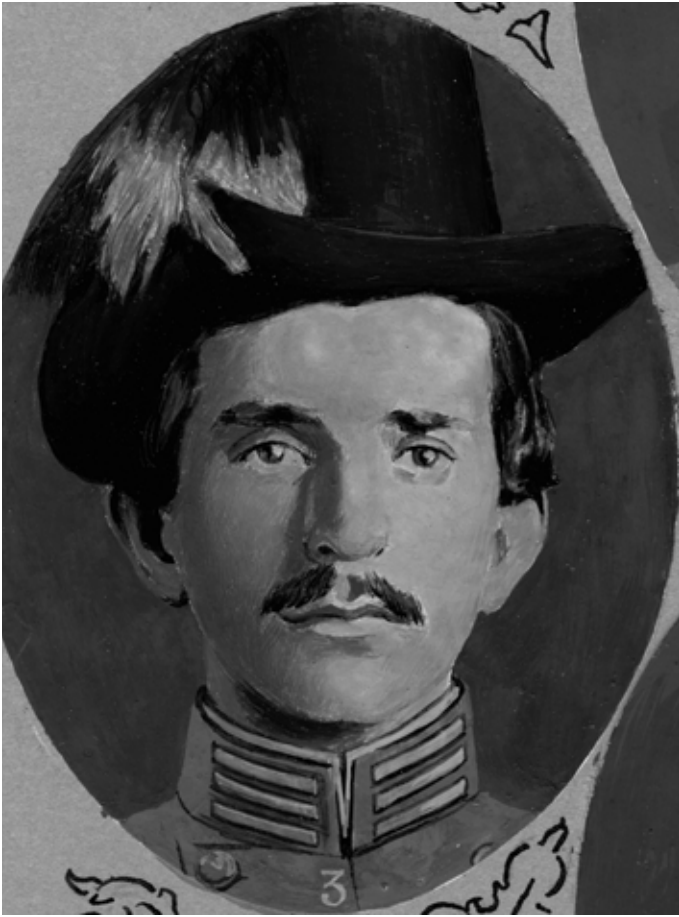
The men of Companies B and D came under hostile fire for the first time when several Federal vessels opened fire on the soldiers as they scavenged the wreck. Although the ships fired twenty-one shells at the troops, the men took refuge behind sand dunes and suffered no casualties. Several soldiers kept an unexploded round and fragments from other shells (including one piece “half as big as a head”) as souvenirs.³³

Although scavenging the Union provided the men with a break from the monotony of life on the island, they were eager to move to winter quarters on the mainland. Throughout the fall, numerous ideas had been proposed to move the 26th North Carolina to a number of different locations in the state. None of these transfers ever materialized. Finally, on November 27, the regiment moved to a new camp located on the mainland about halfway between Morehead City and Carolina City and nearly three-quarters of a mile from Bogue Sound. The new base was named Camp Vance.³⁴

Soldiers quickly busied themselves building their winter houses in what several referred to as a pleasant place in the “piney woods.” Before long the men were “snugly quartered” in their homes, enjoying the abundance of wood and “tolerably good” water located nearby. Even so, one member of the regiment remained unsatisfied. He lamented the fact that although plenty of squirrels inhabited the woods, the men could not waste cartridges shooting at them.³⁵

Minor problems aside, the troops gladly traded in their tents for wooden houses. According to W. E. Setser, they had a good house, plenty to eat, and could relax and play the fiddle. His cousin, Thomas W. Setser, added that he thought their house was one of the “purtes plases that your ever seen.”³⁶

Colonel Vance relaxed the normal routine of the troops during the Christmas season. For five days, the men did not have to drill, only reporting for roll call and guard duty. The day after Christmas, a soldier from Chatham got married in a ceremony held at the regiment’s camp. Some soldiers overdid things and ended up in



First Lieutenant William B. Wilson (left) served at Bogue Banks as First Lieutenant of the “Waxhaw Jackson Guards,” Company B of the regiment. He was killed in action “gallantly leading his men up the hill through McPherson’s woods” at Gettysburg, July 1, 1863. Corporal James W. McDaniel (right) enlisted at Cartersville, Chatham County, when the “Chatham Independent Guards,” Company E of the regiment organized on May 28, 1861. McDaniel was wounded and captured at Gettysburg, and died of disease at Point Lookout on November 13, 1863. Images: N.C. Museum of History (Wilson); Mast, *State Troops and Volunteers*, 1:232 (McDaniel).

the guard house. Even so, the men enjoyed having a “rowdy time.”³⁷

On New Year’s Eve, the big party of the season took place at Beaufort. Reserved primarily for the officers, only two privates from each company could attend. Although sixty or seventy of the “beauties of the burg” attended the party, none of the ladies met the high standards of Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn. One private reported the next day that the party-goers must have “kicked up a powerful dust they have not got back yet.”³⁸

However, life at Camp Vance did not revolve around the parties, as one soldier informed his readers in a melodramatic lament. “Winter with its chilling winds and its cold rains has come. ‘Tis a dark and gloomy day, and the shivering sentinels as they walk the wary rounds painfully remind us that the soldier’s life is not altogether romantic.”³⁹

To make matters worse for the enlisted men, Burgwyn remained unsatisfied with the military precision of the regiment. He felt that the troops had made little progress in drill during his absence with typhoid and determined to remedy that situation promptly. The men also found themselves restricted to the area around the camp. Word came that no more furloughs would be issued at the time.⁴⁰

The reason for the increase in drill and the ban on furloughs came from the fact that a large Federal force under General Ambrose Burnside sat off the coast of North Carolina. Not knowing where the Yankees might choose to attack, Colonel Vance's superiors ordered him to keep his regiment prepared to move at any time. On January 26, word reached Vance that Burnside had moved into the Pamlico Sound. The 26th North Carolina was to proceed immediately to New Bern.⁴¹

That afternoon, six companies under Vance bid an "affectionate farewell" to their comfortable winter quarters and hurriedly boarded the train that would transport them to New Bern. Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn remained behind with orders to bring the other companies the following day. Late in the night, Vance and his troops arrived at Fort Thompson, a defensive line about four miles down the Neuse River from New Bern.⁴²

Vance selected a spot for the regiment's camp about a half-mile behind the works at Fort Thompson. Given the rainy conditions during February and March, the area he chose turned out to be a poor one. The camp was situated in a low, wet place that had poor drainage because of the clay soil. Friction arose between Vance and Lieutenant Colonel Burgwyn over the camp's location. Burgwyn wanted to move to a better site, but the colonel decided to remain where they were because the men had already built "chimneys" for their tents.⁴³

(Endnotes)

1. James Quincy Adams to his parents, Sept. 7, 1861, Quincy Family Papers, NCDAAH; Henry K. Burgwyn, Jr. Journal, Sept. 2, 1861, Burgwyn Family Papers, SHC (hereafter cited as the Burgwyn Journal).
2. U. S. War Department, comp., *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, (Washington, 1888-1901), Ser. I, IV, 574. Hereafter cited as the *OR*; all references will be to Series I unless otherwise noted.
3. Burgwyn Journal, Sept. 4 and Sept. 5, 1861.
4. *Ibid.*; Zebulon Vance to his wife, Sept. 15, 1861, in Frontis W. Johnston (ed.), *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, (Raleigh: 1963), I, 114.
5. Burgwyn Journal, Sept. 5, 1861; James Quincy Adams to his parents, Sept. 7, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAAH. Company G remained in Morehead City, guarding the town and a bridge about ten miles to the north. Joseph J. White to Senura White, Sept. 7, 1861, White Letters, 26th NCT.
6. Burgwyn Journal, Sept. 5, 1861.
7. William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Oct. 7, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; "Webster's Company of Volunteers," *Confederate Veteran*, XXIII (1915), 400.
8. James Quincy Adams to his parents, Sept. 7, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAAH; William H. Glenn to Jane R. Glenn, Sept. 18, 1861, Duke.
9. Quarterly return of quartermaster stores expended at Camp Burgwyn, Sept. 1861, Box 17, folder 4, Civil War Collection, NCDAAH.
10. William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Nov. 11, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; I. A. Jarratt to his mother, Oct. 24, 1861, Jarratt-Puryear Papers, Duke.
11. *Ibid.*; Walter Clark (ed.), *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-1865* (Wilmington, NC, 1991), II, 307.
12. Clark, *Several Regiments*, II, 307.
13. James Quincy Adams to his father, Oct. 3, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAAH; Tucker, Zeb Vance, 117; Burgwyn Journal, Oct.

18, 1861; Henry K. Burgwyn, Jr. to Henry K. Burgwyn, Sr., Dec. 26, 1861, Burgwyn Family Papers, SHC.

14. Clark, *N. C. Regiments*, II, 329. Burgwyn's strict discipline continued throughout his command. At one point after Burgwyn became colonel of the regiment, Lt. Orren Hanner became so infuriated with his commander that he referred to him as a "damn shit" and a "damn rascal." According to Hanner, the colonel treated the company officers like dogs. Orren Hanner to John Harrington, Dec. 29, 1862, John McLean Harrington Papers, Duke.

15. B. G. Hollinsworth to his cousin, Oct. 15, 1861, Joseph W. Hollinsworth Papers, SHC; William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Dec. 2, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; James Quincy Adams to his parents, Sept. 7, 1861, Adams Family Papers, SHC; W. E. Setser to W. A. Setser, Oct. 14, 1861, in Greg Mast (ed.), "The Setser Letters, Part I," *Company Front* December/January 1988-1989, 29.

16. Burgwyn Journal, Sept. 22, 1861; William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Oct. 7, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; T. W. Setser to W. A. Setser, Oct. 14, 1861 in Mast, "Setser Letters, Pt. 1", 30.

17. James Quincy Adams to his parents, Dec. 6, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH; I. A. Jarratt to John Jarratt, Oct. 20, 1861, Jarratt-Puryear Letters, Duke; Joseph White to Senura White, Sept. 17, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; Joseph White to Senura White, Oct. 18, 1861, *Ibid*.

18. Quartermaster report of Lt. G. W. Reives, Box 17, Folder 3, Civil War Collection, NCDAH; Joseph White to Senura White, Oct. 22, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; Wadesboro North Carolina Argus Dec. 12, 1861; Raleigh Standard Nov. 13, 1861; Neill A. Ray to Mary Ray, Dec. 14, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke; Charlotte Western Democrat Nov. 16, 1861; I. A. Jarratt to John Jarratt, Oct. 20, 1861, Jarratt-Puryear Letters, Duke; William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Dec. 2, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke. Glenn appears to be rather unusual in that he spoke of having so many clothes that he might have to sell some.

19. Zebulon Vance to Governor Clark, Sept. 17, 1861 in Vance Letter Book, Box 49, Folder 11, Civil War Collection, NCDAH; William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Nov. 11, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke.

20. Conditions for granting furloughs are found in R. H. Riddick to Zebulon Vance, Sept. 20, 1861, Vance Letter Book, Box 49, Folder 11, Civil War Collection, NCDAH. Requests for visits from family and friends are from Joseph White to Senura White, Oct. 22, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; James Q. Adams to his father, Oct. 3, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH; Neill A. Ray to Christian Ray, Oct. 13, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke; Zebulon Vance to his wife, Oct. 13, 1861 in Johnston, *Papers of Zebulon Vance*, 117.

21. Letter from "Chatham", Raleigh Standard, Sept. 25, 1861; Joseph White to Senura White, Oct. 9, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; Noah Deaton to Miss Christian Ray, Oct. 7, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke. Deaton told Miss Ray that he hoped the ladies of the Chatham County would not "countenance such fellows."

22. Joseph White to Senura White, Oct. 9, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; James Quincy Adams to his parents, Oct. 3, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH.

23. Joseph White to Senura White, Oct. 9, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; Neill A. Ray to Mary Ray, Dec. 14, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke.

24. Neill A. Ray to Mary Ray, Dec. 14, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke; James Q. Adams to his father, Dec. 31, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH. For more information on the value of the coastal saltworks to the Confederacy, see John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1963), 259-260; Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South*, (Chapel Hill, 1987), 103.

25. William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Oct. 7, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; I. A. Jarratt to John Jarratt, Oct. 20, 1861, Jarratt-Puryear Letters, Duke; T. W. Setser to W. A. Setser, Oct. 14, 1861 in Mast, "Setser Letters, Pt. 1", 30.

26. Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, 1943), 251; James I. Robertson, Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia, SC, 1988), 150; Zebulon Vance to his wife, Sept. 15, 1861, in Johnston, *Papers of Vance*, I, 115; Joseph J. White to Senura White, Sept. 15, 1861 and Sept. 17, 1861, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT; Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr. (comp.), *North Carolina Troops: 1861-1865, A Roster* (Raleigh, NC, 1991), VII, 463-601.

27. Jordan, *North Carolina Troops*, 463-600.

28. Clark, *N. C. Regiments*, II, 307; Burgwyn Journal, Jan. 4, 1862. The type of vaccination that was administered to Company G was not revealed. However, Joseph White reported that it had caused his arm to be "verry sore" and that he would not drill any more until it got better. Joseph White to Senura White, Sept. 11, 1861.

29. Raleigh *Standard*, Nov. 6 and 27, Dec. 4 and 11, 1861; Feb. 12, 1862.
30. Neill A. Ray to Christian Ray, Oct. 13, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke.
31. The editor of the newspaper described the storm as a “hurricane.” Raleigh *State Journal* Nov. 6, 1861. Letter from “Chatham,” Raleigh *Standard*, Nov. 13, 1861; Zebulon Vance to Gen. R. C. Gatlin, Nov. 15, 1861, Vance Letter Book, Box 49, Folder 11, Civil War Collection, NCDAH. Vance sent the letter to Gatlin to rebut charges from the governor’s office that Vance had acted improperly in his handling of the prisoners and the wreck.
32. A. S. Caddell to his father, Nov. 3, 1861, A. S. Caddell Papers, Duke; Raleigh *Standard*, Nov. 13, 1861; W. E. Setser to W. A. Setser, undated, in Mast, “Setser Letters, Pt. 1”, 30.
33. James Quincy Adams to his father, Nov. 20, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH; William H. Glenn to Jane Glenn, Nov. 19, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke.
34. Letter from “Chatham,” Raleigh *Standard*, Nov. 13, 1861; William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Dec. 2, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke. At least four different proposals were made to move the regiment to such places as western North Carolina, Shackleford Banks, or Wilmington, and to take part in an effort to retake Hatteras Island. *O.R.*, IV, 559; *O.R.*, Ser. III, IV, 332, 361; I. A. Jarratt to John Jarratt, Oct. 20, 1861, Jarratt-Puryear Family Papers, Duke.
35. William H. Glenn to Robert Glenn, Dec. 2, 1861, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; James Quincy Adams to his parents, Dec. 6, 1861, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH; Neill A. Ray to Mary A. Ray, Dec. 14, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke; Letter from “Chatham,” Raleigh *Standard*, Jan. 15, 1862.
36. W. E. Setser to W. A. Setser, Jan. 12, 1862 in Mast, “Setser Letters, Pt. 1,” 31; T. W. Setser to W. A. Setser, Jan. 13, 1862, *ibid.*
37. Neill A. Ray to Miss Christian Ray, Dec. 29, 1861, Nevin Ray Papers, Duke.
38. Invitation to the party contained in the Burgwyn Family Papers, SHC; Henry K. Burgwyn, Jr. to his mother, Jan. 3, 1862, Burgwyn Family Papers, SHC; Joseph White to his wife, Jan. 1, 1862, Joseph White Letters, 26th NCT.
39. Letter from “Chatham,” Raleigh *Standard*, Jan. 15, 1862.
40. Henry K. Burgwyn, Jr. to his mother, Jan. 3, 1862, Burgwyn Family Papers, SHC; W. E. Setser to W. A. Setser, Jan. 13, 1862 in Mast, “The Setser Letters, Part 1”, 31.
41. Letter to the editor in the Wadesboro North Carolina *Argus* Feb. 6, 1861.
42. *Ibid.*; William H. Glenn to Jane Glenn, Jan. 27, 1862, Elizabeth Glenn Papers, Duke; Burgwyn Journal, Feb. 5, 1862. Clark, in N. C. Regiments, II, 308, erroneously states on that the regiment moved sometime after February 10 and the fall of Roanoke Island. Not everyone was upset at leaving Camp Vance. One of the men in Company K thought that the change in base provided a good break in the monotony and that the location near New Bern meant the men could sometimes get “a little something extra in the way of eatables.” Letter to the editor, Wadesboro North Carolina *Argus*, Jan. 29, 1862.
43. John Quincy Adams to his father, Jan. 29, 1862, Adams Family Papers, NCDAH; William H. Glenn to Jane Glenn, Mar. 5, 1862, Glenn Family Papers, Duke; Henry K. Burgwyn, Jr. to his mother, Feb. 18, 1862, Burgwyn Family Papers, SHC. The location of the camp and continued exposure of the men to the elements most likely contributed to the pneumonia that infected the camp at that time. O. A. Hanner to John M. Harrington, Feb. 26, 1862, John M. Harrington Papers, Duke.

"We think we can whip The Letters of Thomas and Eli Setser, Company F (the "Hibriten Guards"), 26th Regiment N.C. Troops

Edited by
Greg Mast

Part I: From Camp Carolina and Bogue Banks

The regiment is grateful to the late Mr. David Setser of Hildebrand, North Carolina, who granted permission for the publication of these letters in the 1989 issues of *Company Front*. We are particularly indebted to Greg Vaughn of Lenoir, North Carolina, who first located, transcribed, and typed the letters.

Like many nineteenth-century Americans, the writers of the Setser letters spelled words the way they pronounced them. Thus, besides their historical value, the letters provide a record of the dialect spoken in northwestern North Carolina at the time of the Civil War. To retain that feature, spelling and capitalization are unaltered, with two exceptions: the first person singular pronoun is always rendered as a capital "I," and the first letter of the first word of each sentence is capitalized. The letters are totally without punctuation and paragraphing. Those features have been added by me without comment. I have inserted occasional clarifications within [brackets]. Individuals and places are identified by numbered endnotes. However, such identifications are made only the first time the person or place is mentioned.

The "Hibriten Guards" were almost entirely from Caldwell County and most of the men enlisted at Lenoir on July 15, 1861. The company took its name from nearby Hibriten Mountain. The letters are written by cousins Thomas and W. Eli Setser, and all seem to be addressed to Eli's father, W. A. Setser. Eli was seventeen years old when he enlisted on July 15. The "Guards" departed Lenoir for Raleigh on July 31; upon their arrival they encamped at Camp Carolina, at the Crabtree camp of instruction. Cousin Thomas Setser joined the company at Camp Carolina and enlisted there on August 9, at the age of twenty-one.

1. W. Eli Setser

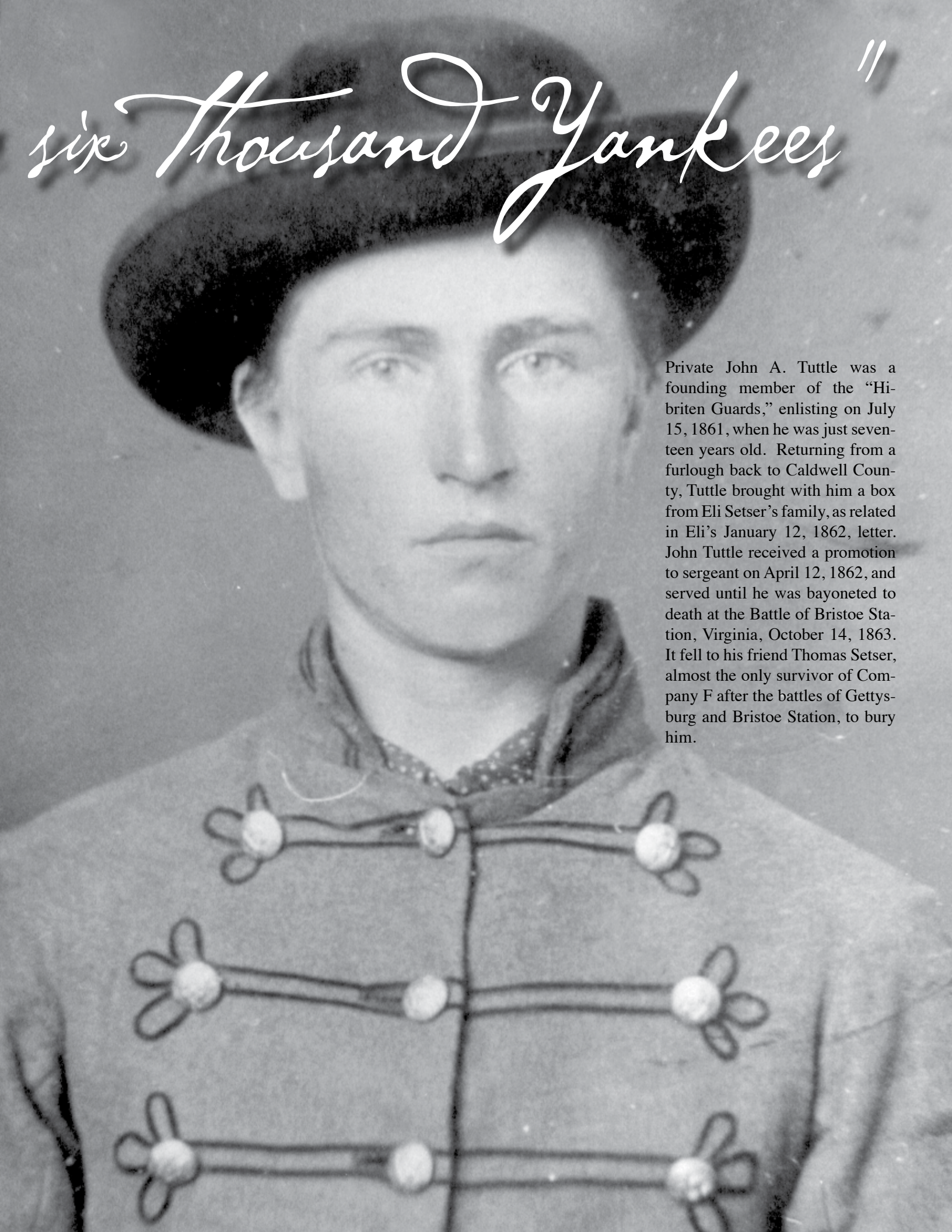
Raleigh NC August the 4th 1861

Dear Father

I now seat my Self to Rite you a few lines to let you now that I am well at this time and hoping when theas few lines come to hand that they will find you ingoying the Same helth. We have got to Raleigh and ar stationed at Crab tree Creek¹ two miles from Raleigh. I am well satisfied but I wood be beter Satisfied if I was in Rich [illegible; probably "Richmond"]. We have plenty to eat. There is about 1800 Soldiers at Crab tree Creek. There is about 40 yankes at the fair grounds.²

I want you to tell mother houdy for me and all the bois too. Tell HR³ to Rite to me. I dont no when we will leave

“six thousand Yankees”

A black and white portrait of a young man, Private John A. Tuttle, wearing a military uniform. He is wearing a dark, wide-brimmed hat and a jacket with decorative floral patterns on the front. The background is a plain, light color.

Private John A. Tuttle was a founding member of the “Hibriten Guards,” enlisting on July 15, 1861, when he was just seventeen years old. Returning from a furlough back to Caldwell County, Tuttle brought with him a box from Eli Setser’s family, as related in Eli’s January 12, 1862, letter. John Tuttle received a promotion to sergeant on April 12, 1862, and served until he was bayoneted to death at the Battle of Bristoe Station, Virginia, October 14, 1863. It fell to his friend Thomas Setser, almost the only survivor of Company F after the battles of Gettysburg and Bristoe Station, to bury him.

here but I expect we will leave in about three weeks. We are stationed clos to the caldwell Ruff and Ready bois⁴. I see them evry day. They are bad egs. I tell you tell Harriet to tell all the girls houdy for [me]. Tell Betty to Rite to me for I have not much time to Rite. Nothing more at present.

W E Setser to W A Setser

2. W. Eli Setser, August 1861

Raleigh NC aug the

Dear father and mother brothers and sisters,

I now take the opertunity of dropping you a few lines to let you now that I am well at this time and hoping when theas few lines come to hand that they will find you ingoying the Same healt. I Received Harriet leter and I was glad to hear that you was all well. I am well and well Satisfied but I wood be beter Satisfied if I was in Mis-souri. I dont no wether I will come home or not, but I think I will. I Rote you a leter and [you] never Rote back. If you dont Rite to me I will [illegible] you. I weigh one hundred 40. I want you to tell mother Rite to me and lum⁵ too. I am much of a man. I tell you I want you to Rite to me as soon as you get this leter. Nothing more at present but your affectionate Son until death.

W E Setser to W A Setser

3. Thomas W. Setser, August 25, 1861

Raleigh NC Aug 25 1861

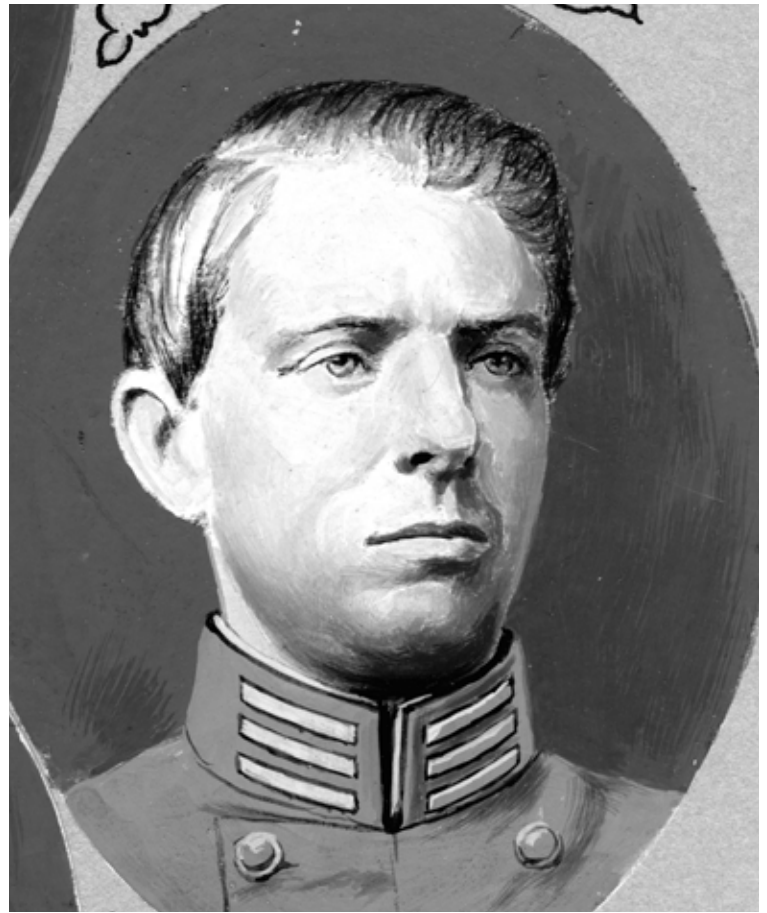
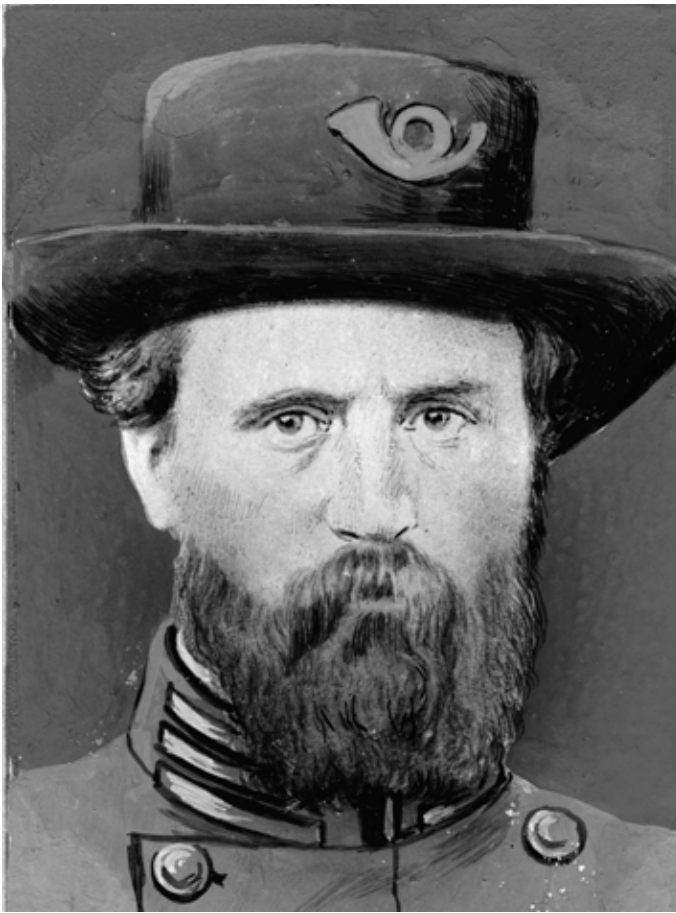
Der Sir,

I seat myself to drop you a few lines to let you now that I am well at this time and hope when thees few lines come to your hand thay will find you in the Same State of helth. I hant nothing of much importance to write you. That W. E. Setzer and D M Copening⁶ is allso well at this time, and most all of the Compney only a few is sick.

We expect to git throne in a rigment this week if the Company stays to gether that long, for hit is the [least?] sadis fide that I ever seen. And if we wont John Hollwa⁷ for a capton, and if we dont git him air N. P. Rankens⁸ dont dew beter, tha is a bout ten of us going to leav and go som wher els. We though we had a good capton [Rankin], but he is the worst out now. He wont go out to drill and wont let non go home hardly and sets and looks as Sour as the devil, and tha hant more than too air three men that would fite for him. Non like him and if [I] had made that he was bad bfore I gine this compney, I wodena bin her now. I am very well Sadis fide her if we had a capton that was Som body, and if we git in this rigment hit will bee the twenty Six.

I hav bin in and at meny plases, but this is the god dams plase that I ever Seen. Some [illegible], Som Sings, Som gits drunk, Som curses, Som plays cards and all Sorts of devil ment that white men coulda think of. I will tell you were we air at. We air three miles from town on the railroad that run from Raleigh to richmond, and the cairs [cars] pass ever day two air three times.

Tell W C Copning [that] D M Copning is fat and sases. W E Setser is fat and Sases and can beet eny body in camp a playing marvil [marbles?], and how bad tha wont to come home to see them girls. So nomore at this



Nathaniel Patterson Rankin (left) served as the first captain of the “Hibriten Guards” until he was promoted to major on March 25, 1862. Rankin retired on the following April 21 because of poor health, but later raised a company of partisan rangers that serves as Company I, 63rd Regiment N.C. Troops (5th Regiment N.C. Cavalry). Romulus Morrison Tuttle (right) served as first sergeant of the “Hibriten Guards” during the company’s sojourn on the North Carolina coast. He was elected first lieutenant in April 1862 and promoted to captain the following October. Tuttle led the company at Gettysburg, where every member was killed or wounded. He returned to duty and received wounds on three more occasions in 1864: Wilderness, at Petersburg in August, and at Jones’s Farm on September 30. Tuttle never returned to duty after the latter wound and transferred to the Invalid Corps in March 1865. Image: N.C. Museum of History.

time. Write to me as soon as you git this if you please.

T W Setser⁹

The 26th North Carolina organized on August 27, 1861, with Zebulon Baird Vance as colonel, Henry King Burgwyn, Jr., as lieutenant colonel, and Abner Bynum Carmichael as major. The regiment departed Raleigh on September 2, traveled to Morehead City, and then moved to Bogue Banks (also called Bogue Island).

4. W. Eli Setser, October 14, 1861

Bouge Island Carteret County
NC October the 14th 1861

Dear father,

I now take the oppertunity of dropping you a few lines to let you now that I am well at this time and hoping when thees few lines come to hand that they will find you ingoying the same state of health. I have nothing of much

importance to rite to you. We have move since you left hear¹⁰ up close to fort Macon. We have had no fight yet but expect a fight vy shortly. We have provisions cooked to do us three dais. They say they yankees have landed on Shaelete foot island [Shackleford Banks]. I think we will have a fight in a short [time?]. I hard that you got home safe. Their is two companys of yankees on the fur end of this island.¹¹ The bois ar all aneious for a fight. We think we can whip six thousand yankees. The bois sais they can whip five a peace. I think I can whip six my self. There is two ships in sight now, and [one] is at the lower end of Shaelete foot now. If the yankees want to get thinder and trim [illegible] just let them land hear or at the fort. We will feed them on canon plates and grape and musketry. Tele mother and the rest of the bois that I wante for them to protect tenessee [Tennessee]. So I will bring by leter to a close nothing more at present. Rite to me as soon as you get this leter.

W E Setser to W.A. Setser

5. Thomas W. Setser, October 14, 1861

Camp Burguin Carterert Co
Bogue island Oct the 14th 1861

Der Cozen,

I take pleasher to write you a few lines to let you no that I am well at this time and all of the rest of the boyes is well, and I hope when thes few lines com to hand tha will fine you ingoying the same blesing. I hant nothing of much importance to write to you at this time, only I would like to see you all won time more be fore we all went [to] new york. For I can her from up thair that we air all taken prisners, but I rote hit war a ly before I herd, and when you her of us going to new york you may say tha is a meny sand fiddlers hole stop up with the yankees. The yankees is a landing on this island, so tha say. Tha is ship in sight ever day, and some times tha is as high five or six in sight at wonst, and we spect a fight ever day.

The yankees firde on a ingland [English] ship won day last week. We dont now whether tha don eny damage or not. We coulda her the cannon roar and ex pect ted a fight. Then tha had us to rud up our gun and giv us tenn rounds of catteredd, and you never seen boyes so iger to get in a fight as we was.

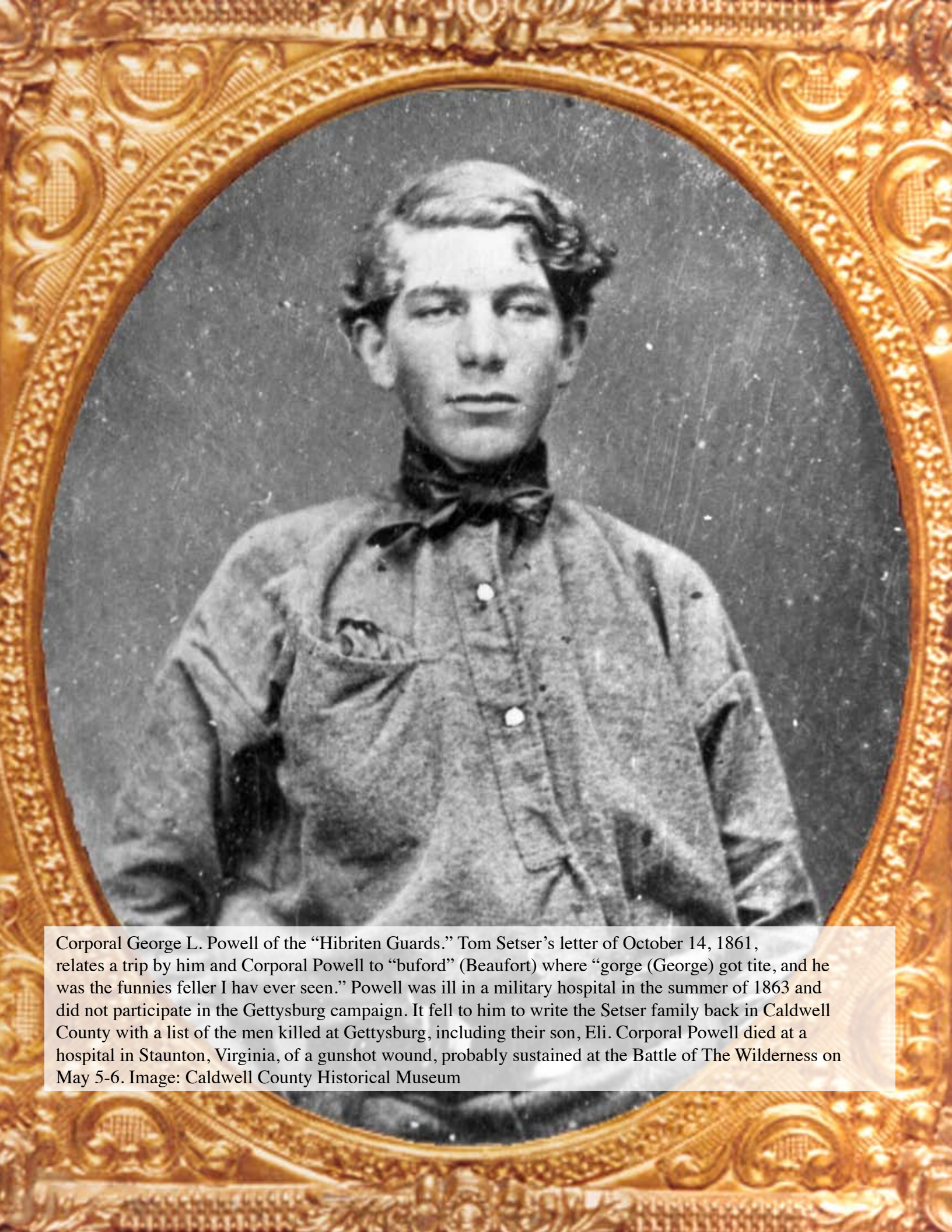
Tha had a larm up her in camp last night, and had us cook a nuf to doo us three day to go and fite the yankees that had landed on this Island a below new bern. Whitch was a fault but tha was some of Camels Rigment¹² went, but we hant herd what tha don.

Tha was a yankees ship got to the shore wher thay was men fishin on this island, and tha taken the yankees ship and all, and then tha giv the ship up to them and let them go. The yankees giv them knife and hand cuffs to kitch niggerse for them, and tha was found out and taken up and put in the fort to thump thunder at five sence a clap.¹³

We have move from wher we was when you was down her. We have move in a mile and a half of the fort, but I dont now how long we will stop her. Some sais that we will leav her in too weeks, but that is so meny tales a going that I dont now the truth when I her hit.

I and G T Powell¹⁴ went over to buford [Beaufort] the other day and gorge [George] got tite, and he was the fun-nis feller I hav ever seen. We have plenty to eat, but not much to drink but som times we git a nuf to git tite.

G.T. Powell and W.W. Cannon¹⁵ is our cooks and tha doo fine. Tell Eliza and all the rest howdy for me, and also howdy your self. So nomore at this time onley remain you Cozin un till dith.



Corporal George L. Powell of the "Hibriten Guards." Tom Setser's letter of October 14, 1861, relates a trip by him and Corporal Powell to "buford" (Beaufort) where "gorge (George) got tite, and he was the funnies feller I hav ever seen." Powell was ill in a military hospital in the summer of 1863 and did not participate in the Gettysburg campaign. It fell to him to write the Setser family back in Caldwell County with a list of the men killed at Gettysburg, including their son, Eli. Corporal Powell died at a hospital in Staunton, Virginia, of a gunshot wound, probably sustained at the Battle of The Wilderness on May 5-6. Image: Caldwell County Historical Museum

6. Eli Setser, ca. November 1861.

Bouge island Carteret County NC
[undated]

Dear father and mother, brothers and Sisters,

I now take the opportunity of dropping you a few lines to let you know that I am well at this time, hoping when these few lines come to hand that they will find you enjoying the Same State of health. I have nothing of much importance to write to you, only we have 81 prisoners.¹⁶ We got them yesterday. They got Shipwrecked night before last about 16 miles up this island. Their vessel Run a Shore and broke all to pieces. The Yankees go but on land. They had Sixty four horses on board of their vessel. They all got drowned by [but] twenty four. We got them and lots of other valuable property. The Ship is not worth any thing, The engine is good. They said they had started to Hatteras [Hatteras]¹⁷, and got washed ashore. The poor fellows gave up like cowards [cowards]. We had to double back about four miles. They said they had no arms but two cannons, but I now it is not so. They are from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Pennsylvania. We are going to send them to Raleigh for safe keeping. They said they started from Fort Monroe in a fleet of 72 vessels, and they got lost from the rest. They said they were going to attack this place yesterday or today. We had a hard storm last Friday night.

We were anxious for a fight, they gave up. We are all well I want you to write to me as soon as you get this letter, for I like to hear from home. I don't think I shall come home till my time out. We can only get a seven day furlow. Tell of friend hood for me. I am well satisfied here. So nothing more at present but your affectional Son.

W E Setser to W A Setser

There was two negroes with them worth a thousand dollars apiece.

W E Setser to W A Setser

In late November 1861, the 26th North Carolina moved back to the mainland at Carolina City, near Morehead City, and established winter quarters at a place called "Camp Vance."

7. Eli Setser, January 12, 1862.

Camp Vance January the 12th 1862

Dear Father and Mother, brothers and Sisters,

I now seat myself to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well at this time, hoping when these few lines come to hand that they will find you enjoying the Same State of health.

I received your and Harriet's letter the other day and was glad to hear from you, and to hear that you was well. I got that box you sent by John Tuttle.¹⁸ I was glad to get them. We have moved in our houses. We have got them finished. I was glad to get in them for I was tired of staying in tents. We have a good house to stay in, and plenty to eat, play the fiddle and dance and so on.

I think i Shall come home about february. I wood come Sooner but we received order yesterday for not to furlow no body else tell further orders. They are expecting a fight at Newbern. They Sent to our Regment for all the extra guns their was. To [two] Regments went to Newbern the other day. Their is Seven Steamers thair. I expect that they will have a fight their in a few days.

I will be at home as Soon as I can get a furlow. I cant tell they very time I can come before. It is just as it hapens wether you can get a furlow.

The bois all well. We have no cold wether hear yet. Their was a Ship Recked Close to the fort [Fort Macon], it was recked the other day. I have nothing of importance to Rit. Their has been Sever Storms on the [illegible] this fall.

Their was four fish caut the other day between the fort and bofort [Beaufort] on the Sound that weighed a thousand lbs a peace. They calde them the black fish. The largest one was 17 feet long, the smalles one was twelve feet long. You Rote to me for to get you Some [illegible] Sheles, but I cant get them unles I go twenty five or thirty miles from hear. I have got Some Small Shells that I will bring home when I come. I will haft Stop riting for tha keep So much [illegible] no man Rite. Some Singing, Some hollering, Some pestering a body. So nothing more at present, but Remains your affectionate Sone until Death.

W E Setser

8. Thomas W. Setser, January 13, 1862

North Carolina Carterete Co
Campe Vance
January the 13, 1862

Dear Cozen,

After my best respects to you I can informe you that I am well at this time, and hoping when thees few lines Com to your hand tha may fine you and family well and ingoying the grates plaser that is a loude for folks to ingoy.

I recive your leter the other day, and was glad to her form you, but hit was a longue time before hit Com. We have got in our houses donn, and move in them. Tha air a range So thay make a fore Squair pen, all inside is as Cleen and won of the purtes plases that you ever Seen. Hit is in a pine grove of longe leaf.

You ought to Com down and See this plase. You and father and uncle daniel Com down and see us, and the Curiosity is to be Seen her, and Stay too or three weeks with us. I now you could Com if you would.

We hante had eny fite it, but I cante tell how Soon we may have won. Tha air a mity of a fite at new bern. Tha is twenty yankee Ship at the mouth of nuce [Neuse] river, and thay Say tha air a going to attack new bern in a few days.¹⁹ Tha is seven or eigh thousand of our men at new bern, and more Coming, an if tha doo have a fite, I dont think we will be in hit for this reasons: tha will leav us to defende the forte. I expect when you her from us a gain, you will her of a big fite. Some wher about her, all tho hit may not bee.

Tha has another Ship run a Shore between wher the other won was and the forte. Som say hit is a inglish Ship and som Say hit is a yankee Ship, and So I Cante tell you what hit is, but I hope hit is a yankee Ship.

The Col [Colonel Zebulon B. Vance] has stop given furlows for a while, and for my Self and Eli to Com I cante tell you when we Can get to Com home, but if we Can git a furlow we will Com Som time this winter or Spring Some time to See you all won time more, and if we dont when our time is out you may look for us then if we air a live. W E Setser, D M Courpen, J A Tuttle, W W Cannnon, H C Courtney, G L Powell²⁰ and all the rest of the boyes is well at this time. Tell my folks that I am well. So nomore at this time, onlye I wante you to write to mee as Soon as you git this leter, and dont lete hit bee as longue as hit was before. So no more at this time, only I remain your Cozen untill deth.

Thomas W Setser to W A Setser

The 26th North Carolina abandoned its newly-constructed winter quarters on January 26, 1862, and moved to "Camp Branch," within four miles of New Bern.

9. W. E. (Eli) Setser, February 9, 1862

Dear father and Mother, brothers and Sisters,

I now take the oportunity of riting you a few lines to let you now that I am well at this time, and hope when theas few lines come to your hand that they will find you enjoying the Same State of health.

I received your kind leter dated the 30 and was glad to hear from you. We have moved from Camp Vance up close to Newborn on the Nuse River. We ar working on the river evry day a making brest works and [illegible]. Thers three or four forts on the river.

We had a general review yesternday at Newborn. Their was Six Regments their.

You Rote that you wanted to now something about Milus Edmiston.²¹ You said that he come home a told that we was the worst set of bois he ever saw. The reason he got mad no body would pay any attention to him. The reason he left so soon is this: we got orders to cook three days rations. We was expecting a fight at Newborn, and he got scard and left. He will get a whipping if he don't mind how he talks. He is the biggest courd in the Southern Confederacy. He never don any thing to be put in the gard house. Hary cook²² is as good as Milos. I will stop riting now about the rascal.

You rote that you wanted me to come home about the fifteenth of this month, but we dont get a furlow, but I Shall be at home when my time is. They ar a going to try to get Some regulars out this regment. If they can get four hunder Regulars, they will be at home the first of April. I think perhaps I shall join the regulars. If I do I will be at home Shortly.²³

Tele Harriet that I received her leter yesterday morning. I will stop riting now. Give my beste respects to lum and rom and Elizabethe and Albert. We dreu twent two Dollars yesterday, and I will Send you five. I wood send you more, but I am afraid it wood not get thier. Granny and grandfather that I am well.

On March 14, 1862, the 26th North Carolina "saw the elephant" at the Battle of New Bern. The regiment anchored the Confederate right, but it became imperiled when a militia force on its left routed from a position in a brickyard, leaving the regiment cut off from New Bern and with an unfordable creek in its rear. The 26th escaped the trap by means of a few small boats and the heroic efforts of Lieutenant Colonel Harry Burgwyn, and

retreated to Kinston.

APPENDIX I: “Carolina Camps”

Thanks are due to member Doug Davis for sharing the following letter by his ancestor, Private William H. Davis, which offers another glimpse of the very early history of the “Hibriten Guards.” Private Davis was a thirty-eight year old farmer and native of Caldwell County when he enlisted on July 15, 1861.²⁴

Carolina Camps
Crabtree
August the 3rd day, 1861

Dear friends. I take the opportunity to write a few lines to you to let you no that I am well at this time hoping these few lines will find you all well. We arrived in Raleigh Thursday coming at 5 o'clock and marched out to the camp 2 ½ miles from town on the Weldon Rail Road where there was about 2 thousand troops in camp but the regiment that was formed moved out yesterday coming to a new camp about half a mile from this. Capt. W.F. Jones company is attached to that regiment. Capt. Jones was presented a petition signed by all of his men yesterday resign his office which made him shed tears.²⁵

We had a jolly time on the road. We was hartily saluted by all from the finest ladies to the blackest negroes. The ladies would wave their handkerchiefs at half mile distance. We have not been here long enough for one to have very much to write thou I have seen a great deal since I left home.

It is the talk in the camps that if we are not called for by the 15th August that we will be sent home to drill but how true it is I cannot tell though it is very generally believed that we will not go any further though I would like to go to Richmond before I return home. General Scott is said to be dead. I suppose you would like to know how we fair. We never got our tents until yesterday coming the first night we stayed with the other company. My mess mates is G.W. Holloway, O Collet, Robert Pless, Henry Kincaid, James Correll, Jonas Rader. We have not a full mess. 10 is one mess and 2 tents. The commissary drawed our rations yesterday coming fore days. I will state of the leading articles of food and you can guess whether we will suffer for something to eat about 250 pounds of bacon, 25 pounds of coffee, 40 pounds sugar, 1 or 2 barrels flour corn meal, 1 barrel fish, 1 bucket rice 1 dr. molasses, 1 bucket vinegar, 4 dozen candles, 1 ½ dozen bare soap and various other articles two tedious to mention.

Dear Jane in conclusion let me drop you in a few words. I want you to reconcile yourself and reconcile at that the same protection is down here that is there and I feel like that if I should get in to a battle that I should be delivered for the Lord is God of war as well as Peace. I wish to be remembered to all the children and admonish them to be kind and obedient to you and each other. We have not been sworn yet or received anything but a cap a piece. There is a box of shoos sent over but I don't want any of them. I want you to write me as soon as you get this. I wish to be remembered to all inquiring friends so no more at present but remains your affectionate husband until death.

W.H. Davis

Davis never saw Richmond nor participated in a battle. He died of disease “at home” on August 31 or September 1, 1861, a mere four weeks after writing this letter.²⁶

APPENDIX II: “Seventy five Ladys”

This letter is one of the first obtained by the modern regiment of the letters written by members of Companies E

and G to R. B. Paschall, the wartime sheriff of Chatham County. The author is Stephen W. Brewer, then serving as third lieutenant of Company E. In April 1862 Brewer won election as captain of Company E, and served until he was "shot down [and] badly wounded [while] carrying his regiment's flag" at the Battle of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863.²⁷

Camp vance NC²⁸
Dece the 30th 1861

Sheff. R. B. Paschall

Sir,
I Re'd your very interesting letter this morning by Mr. Crutchfield and I was glad Truly glad to here from you all in Chatham. I have nothing that will be Interesting as Dr. Brooks is here and is going to leave in the morning. I thought I would write you a few lines to let you Know how we are all getting a long. I [am] hapy to inform you that we havent got no Sick man in our company and I think that is the best nuse that I could Right.

I will tell you Something about the ball at Beaufort to knight.²⁹ Ther is a big Military ball at Beaufort given purposely for the 26 Reg and I recand [reckon] they will have a nice time. I think there is some Six or eight of our boys gone. And I Recand that they will fly round the Marsh Poneys in a hurry and I am here crippled and cant go and bad enuff I hate it. They will have about Seventy five Ladys at the ball that will be anuff to Kick the bottom out of the sound and turn the See over. Then drink all the whiskey that they can get. That is anuff about the ball.

You said something about Pore Charley Rossen and it is too bad to talk about a man that is as Smart as he is. He has got as many friends here as any man in the Reg and ever boddy is Sorry for him. He sent after me in a few days to come to see him. Of course I went and he ask me if I could take him out of the guard house. I told him I would give the last sent of money that I had if it wold do any good. But Sheriff you know that it will no do any good. I have bin to see him to day and ever time I go we cry and don't talk but little. If Capt Webster was to tell us to take him out I think the last man would die at the [illegible] or have him. But you no that is against the law. Sheriff he told me to tell you all not be uneasy bout him for he would git out some time.³⁰

Sheriff I Recd those Boots by Mr. Crutchfield and like them Splendid. They fit me very well. I was glad to here of you & Pa Selling goods so fast. I Recand that if you had Calico Plenty you would git Rich. I have heard old folks say that if you would change [illegible] that it would be the best, and I recand that it is the same way by Clark. I think it would be the best for us to sell off for I no that it will not Pay for a man to stay with them. You can do as you think best and I will be satisfied.³¹

Of course I need not to say any thing about coming home till Lieut. Haddon³² gets back. Give Respects to all.

Your true friend
S.W.B.

(Endnotes)

1. The camp was located on the Crabtree Plantation, three miles west of Raleigh.
2. Another camp of instruction was located on the state fair grounds. The identity of the forty Yankees is uncertain, but they may have been prisoners taken at the Battle of First Manassas.
3. "HR" is probably Harriet Setser, sister of Eli and future wife of Tom.
4. The "Caldwell Rough and Ready Boys" was the first company from Caldwell County. They became Company A, 22nd Regiment N.C. Troops (12th Regiment N.C. Volunteers).
5. The identity of "Lum" is unknown
6. Private D. M. Corpening, seventeen years old and a resident of Burke County, enlisted in Company F on July 15, He received a

discharge for unspecified reasons on May 1, 1862. Louis H. Manarin, Weymouth T. Jordan, Matthew M. Brown, and Michael W. Coffey, comps., *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster*, 18 vols. To date (Raleigh: N.C. Office of Archives and History, 1966-) (hereinafter cited *North Carolina Troops*), 7:538.

7. John Burton Holloway enlisted and was elected second lieutenant of the “Hibriten Guards” on July 15, 1861. When the “Guards” reorganized in April 1862, Holloway was defeated for reelection but on November 1, 1862, he was elected third lieutenant, rejoined the company, and served until he was killed in action at the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1, 1863. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:533, 688

8. Although a Guilford County resident, Nathaniel Patterson Rankin was elected captain of the “Hibriten Guards” on July 15, 1861. In March 1862 he was elected major of the 26th North Carolina but retired on April 21, 1862, because of ill health. He served subsequently as captain of Company I, 63rd Regiment N.C. Troops (5th Regiment N.C. Cavalry). *North Carolina Troops*, 7:463, 533.

9. Thomas W. Setser joined the “Guards” a bit later than most, enlisting at Raleigh on August 9, 1861. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:545.

10. Men from home, such as Eli’s father, frequently visited their sons, nephews, and neighbors in camp, providing them with delicacies and articles of clothing otherwise unobtainable.

11. There is no record of any Federal landings on either Bogue Banks or Shackleford Banks at this time.

12. The 7th Regiment N.C. State Troops, commanded by Colonel Reuben Campbell, was also stationed on Bogue Banks.

13. The precise meaning of this colloquialism is unclear.

14. No individual named George T. Powell is found in the published roster of Company F, but George L. Powell mustered in as corporal on July 15, 1861. Corporal Powell died at Staunton, Virginia, on May 12, 1864, of a gunshot wound, probably suffered at the Battle of Wilderness a week earlier. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:544.

15. Wesley W. Cannon, enlisted in Company F on October 1, 1861. He transferred to Company H, 58th Regiment N.C. Troops in May 1862. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:536, 672.

16. The Federal steamer *U.S.S. Union* grounded on Bogue Banks about November 3, 1861. Companies F, H, and K of the 26th North Carolina helped to salvage the wreckage.

17. Fort Hatteras had surrendered to United States forces in August 1861.

18. John A. Tuttle enlisted in Company F on July 15, 1861, and received a promotion to sergeant in April 1862. He was killed in action at the Battle of Bristoe Station, October 14, 1862. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:547.

19. This flotilla was the Burnside Expedition, which attacked and captured Roanoke Island in February 1862 prior to the assault on New Bern in mid-March.

20. See notes for Corpening, Tuttle, Cannon, and Powell, above. Private Henry Clay Courtney enlisted in Company F on July 15, 1861. He survived a wound to his right thigh at the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1, 1863, and returned to duty. He died of wounds on May 15, 1861, presumably sustained at the Battles of Wilderness or Spotsylvania Court House. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:538.

21. Milas Edmisten appears in the 1860 Federal Census as a married farmer, twenty-eight years old, with two children. He enlisted in Company E, 58th Regiment N.C. Troops on July 5, 1862. *North Carolina Troops*, 14:330.

22. “hary” was probably Private H.H. Cook of Caldwell County, who enlisted at Camp Burgwyn in October 1861 and died of disease at Kinston on May 15, 1862. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:538.

23. Eli refers to the fact that the 26th North Carolina was a volunteer regiment for twelve months service, and that the men fully expected to be discharged after their term of service. The Confederate Congress passed a bill in March 1862 that extended the service time of all such units for the duration of the war.

24. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:539.

25. “Jones company” was the “Caldwell Rough and Ready Boys” (see endnote 4, above). Captain Jones in fact resigned on August 3, the date of Davis’s letter. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:12.

26. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:539.

27. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:519.

28. In late November 1861, the 26th North Carolina moved from Bogue Banks to Carolina City, located near Morehead City, and established Camp Vance as the regiment’s winter quarters.

29. See p. 14 of this issue, above, for more on the ball.

30. The soldier referred to is Private Charles F. Rosson of Company G. Neither Rosson’s published service record, nor the Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served During the Civil War, Record Group 109, National Archives, reveal what misdeed resulted in his incarceration. Rosson was fined \$11.00 (a month’s pay) in September-October 1861, and was reported in arrest in the November-December 1861 muster roll of Company G. The reference to Captain Webster is obscure. Webster was captain of Company E, but Rosson was a member of Company G. Nevertheless, Rosson’s prediction that he “would git out some time” proved correct, as he was reported present for duty in the March-April 1862 muster roll of Company G. In late 1862 Rosson was detailed as shoemaker in Richmond, and formally transferred to Company B, 2nd Battalion Virginia Infantry (Local Defense). *North Carolina Troops*, 7:558.

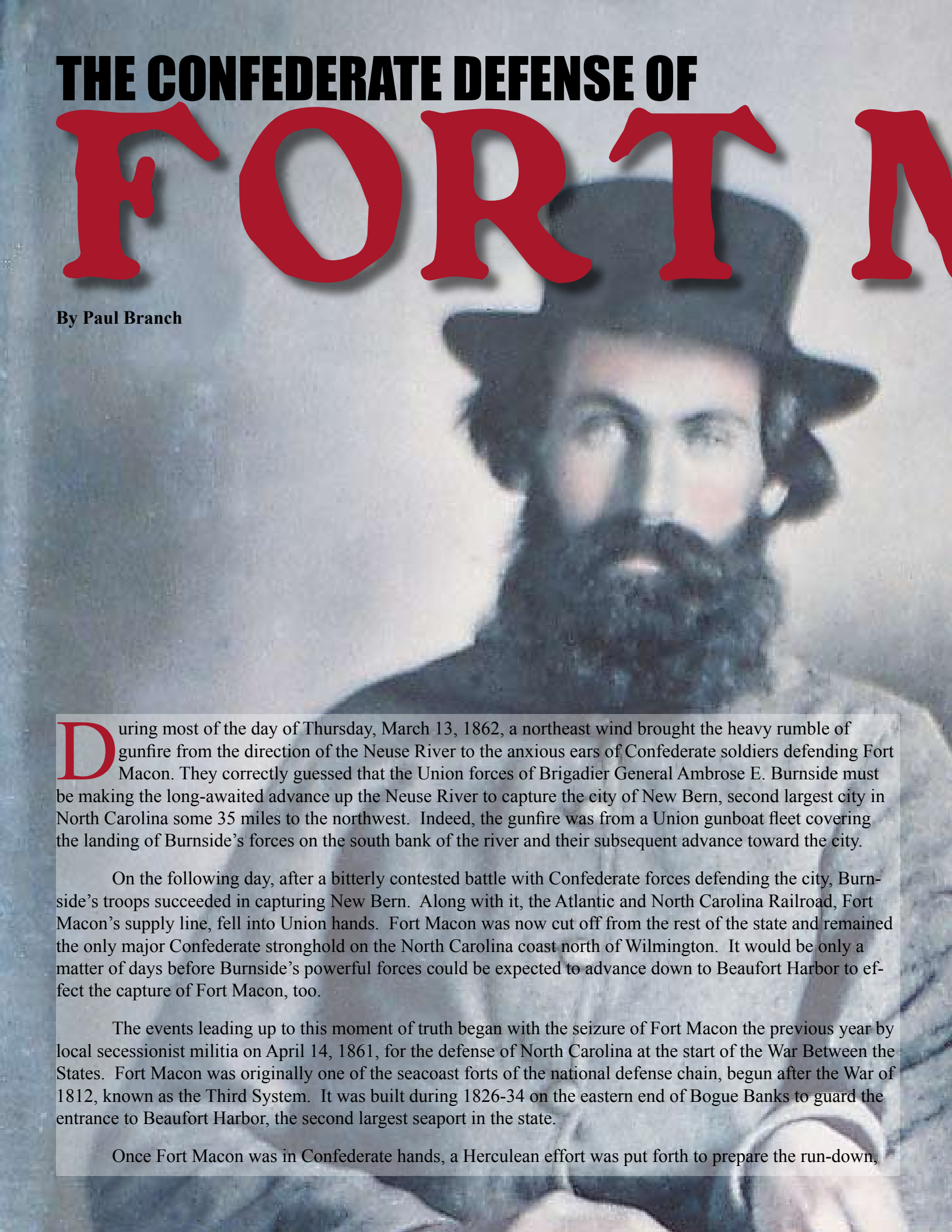
31. The context suggests that Brewer’s father and Sheriff Paschall were in business together, and Brewer’s comments seemingly refer to business transactions back in Chatham County.

32. The officer referred to is First Lieutenant William J. Headen. Headen resigned in September 1862 because of his election to the North Carolina House of Commons. However, he subsequently served as private in Company D, 61st Regiment N.C. Troops. *North Carolina Troops*, 7:520.

THE CONFEDERATE DEFENSE OF

FORT MACON

By Paul Branch



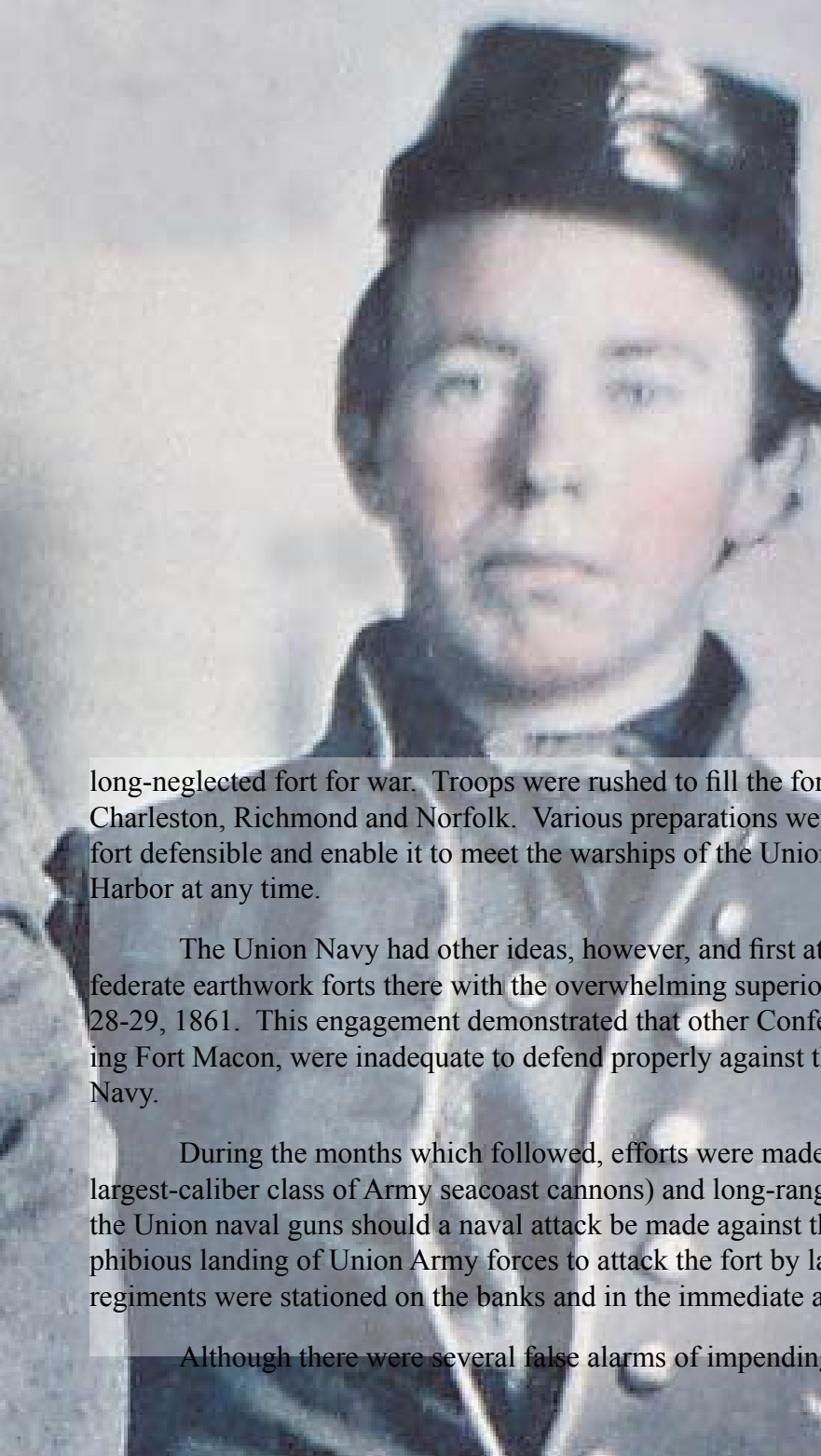
During most of the day of Thursday, March 13, 1862, a northeast wind brought the heavy rumble of gunfire from the direction of the Neuse River to the anxious ears of Confederate soldiers defending Fort Macon. They correctly guessed that the Union forces of Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside must be making the long-awaited advance up the Neuse River to capture the city of New Bern, second largest city in North Carolina some 35 miles to the northwest. Indeed, the gunfire was from a Union gunboat fleet covering the landing of Burnside's forces on the south bank of the river and their subsequent advance toward the city.

On the following day, after a bitterly contested battle with Confederate forces defending the city, Burnside's troops succeeded in capturing New Bern. Along with it, the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, Fort Macon's supply line, fell into Union hands. Fort Macon was now cut off from the rest of the state and remained the only major Confederate stronghold on the North Carolina coast north of Wilmington. It would be only a matter of days before Burnside's powerful forces could be expected to advance down to Beaufort Harbor to effect the capture of Fort Macon, too.

The events leading up to this moment of truth began with the seizure of Fort Macon the previous year by local secessionist militia on April 14, 1861, for the defense of North Carolina at the start of the War Between the States. Fort Macon was originally one of the seacoast forts of the national defense chain, begun after the War of 1812, known as the Third System. It was built during 1826-34 on the eastern end of Bogue Banks to guard the entrance to Beaufort Harbor, the second largest seaport in the state.

Once Fort Macon was in Confederate hands, a Herculean effort was put forth to prepare the run-down,

MACON



Sergeant Jechonias P. Willis (left) and Private Thomas Lindsay served together in Company H (the "Topsail Rifles"), 10th Regiment N.C. State Troops (1st Regiment N.C. Artillery), one of the five heavy artillery companies that comprised the Fort Macon garrison. During the bombardment of April 25, a bolt from the a Federal Parrott rifle struck the carriage of an 8-inch Columbiad in Willis's battery, breaking the elevating screw and ricocheting into a 10-inch Columbiad, where it killed Willis. The bolt then struck a brick revetment and caromed into a 32-pound rifle, disabling that piece as well. One luck shot had knocked out an entire battery. Image: ninth-plate ambrotype in the possession of Fort Macon State Park.

long-neglected fort for war. Troops were rushed to fill the fort's casemates. Cannons were procured from Charleston, Richmond and Norfolk. Various preparations were made during the summer of 1861 to make the fort defensible and enable it to meet the warships of the Union Navy, which were expected to attack Beaufort Harbor at any time.

The Union Navy had other ideas, however, and first attacked Hatteras Inlet instead, capturing two Confederate earthwork forts there with the overwhelming superiority of its heavy-caliber naval gunfire on August 28-29, 1861. This engagement demonstrated that other Confederate coastal defenses in North Carolina, including Fort Macon, were inadequate to defend properly against the heavy caliber long-ranged guns of the Union Navy.

During the months which followed, efforts were made to acquire more heavy columbiad cannons (the largest-caliber class of Army seacoast cannons) and long-ranged rifled cannons for Fort Macon to compete with the Union naval guns should a naval attack be made against the fort. To guard Bogue Banks against an amphibious landing of Union Army forces to attack the fort by land, elements of the 7th and 26th North Carolina regiments were stationed on the banks and in the immediate area during the fall and winter to support the fort.

Although there were several false alarms of impending attack during the fall of 1861, the Union Navy



Private George W. Taylor served at Fort Macon in Company F (“Andrews’s Battery), 10th Regiment N.C. State Troops (1st Regiment N.C. Artillery). Taylor received a parole on April 26, 1862. He was exchanged the following August but never returned to duty.” Image: Greg Mast, *State Troops and Volunteers*, 1:233.

only attempted to blockade the entrance to Beaufort Harbor and otherwise kept its distance from Fort Macon.

The new year of 1862, however, brought a different threat in the form of Union Brig. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside’s 12,000- man amphibious expedition to eastern North Carolina. After entering Hatteras Inlet, Burnside’s forces were able to capture the Confederate stronghold on Roanoke Island on February 7-8, 1862, and secure the northeast sound region of the coast. New Bern was correctly guessed to be Burnside’s next target, although it was not until March 11 that Burnside finally began to move against it.

In the meantime, Confederate forces tried to consolidate their defenses to meet the threat. Various Confederate units were stripped from other defenses to protect New Bern. This included the infantry regiments which had spent the winter near Fort Macon, and three infantry companies in Fort Macon’s garrison. The fort was left with five heavy artillery companies as its garrison, the largest number of men which could be sheltered in the fort itself in case of siege.

Enough provisions were sent to the fort to give a seven month supply for its garrison. The fort was left to fend for itself as all eyes now turned to New Bern. Despite Confederate efforts, Burnside captured the city on March 14, 1862, leaving his way clear to his third and final objective- Fort Macon.

With the fall of New Bern, Fort Macon’s commander, Colonel Moses James White, was forced to take a long, hard look at the odds which faced him. The 27-year old West Pointer knew he faced serious limitations. His garrison consisted of five heavy artillery companies: Company B (Captain Henry T. Guion), Company F (Lieutenant Daniel Cogdell), Company G (Captain James L. Manney), and Company H (Captain Stephen D. Pool) of the 10th Regiment N.C. State Troops (1st Regiment N.C. Artillery); and Company F (Captain Richard H. Blount) of the 40th Regiment N.C. Troops (3rd Regiment N.C. Artillery). No one had any battle experience. Colonel White, though a West Pointer, was a staff ordnance officer rather than a line officer. Of his five company commanders, Guion was a civil engineer, Cogdell and Manney were doctors, Pool was a teacher and newspaper editor, and Blount was a merchant.

According to muster rolls compiled on February 28, 1862, the paper strength of Fort Macon’s garrison was 484 officers and men. In reality, though, this was not the true total of men actually present for duty. Many

men were sick at home or in field hospitals. Some of them were discharged over the next few days due to prolonged sickness. Others were on furlough, leave of absence or special assignment. After the fall of New Bern, the fort garrison actually numbered 441. The general health of the men was not good.

Stocks of provisions were on hand in the fort for seven months, although there were some shortages of certain types of small stores. Much of the salt beef on hand would become rancid before the siege ended. Ammunition stocks were adequate, but the supply of gunpowder was not. The fort had a total of about 35,000 pounds of gunpowder on hand, which was estimated to be only enough for three days of sustained firing by the fort's armament (the fort's two largest cannons normally consumed eighteen pounds of gunpowder each time they fired). Most all of this was the course-grained type of gunpowder used as the propellant charge to fire the cannons. Lacking was the type of fine-grained gunpowder used as the bursting charge for explosive ammunition. Without the fine-grained powder, the fort's shells would not explode with complete effectiveness.

The fort's armament was adequate against a sea attack: two 10-inch and five 8-inch smoothbore columbiads (the largest calibers available to the Confederacy at the time), a rifled 6-inch columbiad, four old 32-pounder smoothbore cannons converted into rifled guns, eighteen 32-pounders, eighteen 24-pounders, and six stubby 32-pounder carronades for flanking defense in the galleries under the outer wall. The 24- and 32-pounders were heavy smoothbore cannons weighing between two and three tons each capable of firing cannonballs of the weight indicated over a mile with normal elevation. The rifled cannons had ranges of three to five miles with accuracy. The 8- and 10-inch columbiads were very large smoothbore cannons capable of firing large projectiles of the diameter indicated at ranges of two to three miles. The fort's largest cannon was a 10-inch columbiad weighing 15,998 pounds, which fired a 10-inch, 128-pound cannonball.

Absent from the fort's armament, however, were mortars to defend the landward side. These stubby cannons lobbed explosive shells into the air to drop among attackers from above. Even if enemy troops were hidden behind sand dunes or in trenches or foxholes, a mortar could still reach them. The Confederates had known all along that mortars were needed to complete the fort's defenses, but there had been little need of them as long as Confederate infantry regiments guarded Bogue Banks during the fall and winter against an enemy landing.

Now that the infantry had all been withdrawn to try to defend New Bern, Fort Macon's landward side lay exposed and unsupported. It was too late to procure any mortars now to guard the landward side. If Burnside's troops attempted to besiege the fort on the landward side, as they surely would, the fort's regular flat-trajectory guns could do little to reach them once they entrenched behind the sand dunes.

Once New Bern had fallen, Colonel White's first concern was the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad. Previously it had been Fort Macon's supply line to New Bern; now it was a ready-made line of communications and supply for any of Burnside's forces advancing toward Beaufort Harbor. On March 18, White sent a detachment of soldiers to Newport, where they burned the railroad bridge over the Newport River. The detachment also destroyed some military barracks and a hospital building at Carolina City, three miles west of Morehead City, and finally tore up almost a mile of railroad track at Morehead City. The railroad iron was carried back over to the fort.

On March 23, the inevitable happened. A boatload of Union officers came over to the fort from Morehead City under a flag of truce to demand the fort's surrender. Back on March 19, Union General Burnside had dispatched a portion of his Third Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General John G. Parke, from New Bern to effect the capture of Fort Macon. Parke's advance had reached Carolina City on March 22 and then Morehead City on the morning of the 23rd. While Parke's surrender demand of course was refused by Colonel White, it signified that the enemy had finally arrived and was ready to fight.

Early on the morning of March 26, Parke's forces quietly took possession of Beaufort as well. Parke planned to begin siege operations against the fort as soon as he could bring down heavy siege cannons by

railroad. The destruction of the Newport River railroad bridge had caused a great deal of hardship and delay to Parke's operations but it was soon repaired. On March 29, his forces finally landed on Bogue Banks. The siege had begun.

White continued with his preparations for battle, meanwhile. Ammunition was prepared and readied for each kind of gun. The men were vigorously trained on the guns they would be assigned to use in battle. Sand bags were placed to raise the parapet and reduce the exposure of the guns bearing on the sea front. On March 23 a bark near the fort wharf was burned to prevent capture. On the 25th, a large house about 600 yards from the fort was burned to prevent its use by the enemy. Various buildings outside the fort were demolished because they were in the fort's line of fire, including the 50-foot Bogue Banks Lighthouse. Any boatloads of Union soldiers seen passing between Morehead and Beaufort were fired upon.

The mental strains imposed on the fort's garrison over their situation began to take a toll early on. The sick list began to grow. Since Manney's, Pool's and much of Cogdell's companies were composed of men from the Beaufort/Morehead area, concerns were high over the well-being of their families which were now under Union occupation. Their homes were in sight and yet they were in a situation where they were powerless to help or check on their loved ones.

In desperation they fashioned small toy boats containing letters and messages which were released into the inlet on the incoming tide in the hope the messages would somehow be carried across the harbor to shore to reach their loved ones. When Colonel White made it known he would not hesitate to shell the towns should Union forces attempt to place siege batteries there to bombard the fort, both the townspeople and the local men in the garrison were horrified. Although White's announcement had the desired effect of discouraging General Parke from placing artillery in the towns to fire on the fort, an undercurrent of discontent began to manifest itself in the local men of the garrison. They decided they would obey no order to fire on the towns.

A number of men in Pool's company decided they were dissatisfied with the whole situation and made plans to desert so they could go home. Since Pool maintained the picket posts along Bogue Banks, it would be a simple matter for them to slip away while on picket duty and give themselves up to the enemy. Starting on March 29, Union soldiers began landing on Bogue Banks at Hoop Pole Creek, about five miles west of the fort. At this time, a group of Pool's men not only deserted but then helped Union officers conduct a reconnaissance of the area. Over the days which followed, more of Pool's men also deserted and gave themselves up to the enemy, making seventeen in all.

As if this was not bad enough, an extraordinary incident now took place in the fort which added further fuel to the discontent. One of the men of the garrison had been a baker before the war and, because the fort had a large supply of flour on hand, Colonel White ordered that the flour be baked into bread for the garrison as a change of diet rather than be issued to the individual companies. At first everyone was agreeable to this, but the baker was unable to produce any loaves which were edible. As the days went by with no change in the poor quality, the men clamored for their flour ration to be returned to them. White refused to give in to the grumbling and insisted on continuing the experiment.

Soon the five company commanders sided with their men and sent a petition to White to dispense with the baked bread. When White refused to back down, the company commanders issued an ultimatum on the morning of April 8 stating unless the flour ration was returned by 9 a.m., they would send detachments to the commissary to take it. A furious White threatened to arrest the officers and place a guard over the commissary but finally realized there was no one in the angry garrison who would serve as his guards. Five minutes before the deadline, he relented and ordered the flour ration returned.

The "Bread Incident" was an unfortunate study of how a small incident can be magnified by stress and tension in the face of a growing crisis. For eight local men of Manney's, Pool's and Cogdell's companies, the incident was the last straw. They deserted from the fort that night. The bitterness of the incident lingered for

a time but the garrison's determination to hold out did not wane. To the tune of Dixie, they sang: "If Lincoln wants to save his bacon, He'd better keep away from old Fort Macon, Look away . . ."

On the night of April 9, Colonel White sent out an officer and seven men in a boat to escape to Confederate lines with dispatches and to request reinforcements to break the siege. The boat slipped past Union ships and succeeded in reaching friendly lines. Unfortunately, there were insufficient Confederate forces available in the state to advance against Parke's forces to break the siege.

In the meantime, General Parke had been steadily ferrying his troops, guns and equipment over to Bogue Banks at Hoop Pole Creek. In all he brought over 21 companies of infantry and artillery (about 1500 men). His next step was to establish siege positions in front of the fort and place his siege artillery to bombard the fort into surrender.

On April 11, he made a reconnaissance in force up the beach to within 3/4 mile of the fort, driving in the pickets of Captain Pool's company. Sites for three siege batteries were chosen in the sand dunes and then Parke's forces retired back to camp. On the following day, Parke repeated the operation but then had his forces dig in permanently behind the sand dunes in front of the fort about 1200 yards away. They were here to stay. The fort's cannon fire had little effect on them once they were in position under the cover of the dunes. Manney's company was sent out of the fort that afternoon to attack, but was unable to dislodge the Union soldiers.

Parke now spent the next week and a half constructing emplacements for three batteries of siege guns: one of four 10-inch siege mortars 1680 yards from the fort; one of three 30-pounder Parrott Rifle cannons 1480 yards from the fort; and one of four 8-inch mortars 1280 yards from the fort.

During this time, there was deep frustration in the fort at being unable to do much harm to the Union soldiers working on their siege positions. It was almost impossible to tell where the Union soldiers were in the sand dunes or where they were working. Even establishing a lookout high up on the fort's flagpole offered only minimal help.

The fort periodically shelled the area but its projectiles did not explode properly. This was caused by the fort's lack of the fine-grained gunpowder needed for the bursting charges of shells. The coarse-grained powder used for propellant charge of the cannon was all the Confederates had available to substitute and this did not burst the shells effectively. Also, there were problems with the fuses of the fort's large columbiad shells which likewise reduced their effectiveness. The most serious problem of all, however, was the lack of mortars to lob shells behind the sand dunes where the enemy was working. As a result, minimal harm was caused to the Union soldiers.

In desperation to achieve a lobbing effect with the fort's guns, White had six 32-pounder carronades dragged out of the counterfire galleries under the outer wall and established in a battery on the northwest front facing the enemy. These stubby naval broadside cannons were then jacked up at a 40 degree angle to be fired into the air as improvised mortars. The fort's two 10-inch columbiads were also elevated at a high angle to get the same effect. Although it was a valiant effort, the fire from these guns was in no way as effective as that of a mortar.

The fort's garrison was too weak numerically to drive the Union soldiers out of their entrenched position. The number of men present was now down to 403 after losses through desertions, sending off the boat crew, and one death from disease. Sickness was now rampant throughout the garrison to the extent that no more than 300 men were present for duty on any given day. It was noted that some of the diseases were "of a nature that renders the handling of heavy guns or any great bodily exertion entirely out of the question."

The fort's pickets at times made aggressive demonstrations in front of the Union position trying to coax the Union soldiers out of the sand dunes to fight, but were unsuccessful. Whenever Union soldiers did appear out from behind cover as a suitable target during the course of their work, they frequently disappeared

again before the fort's guns could get a shot at them. This was primarily due to the fact the gunners had to seek permission from Colonel White before they could open fire. White had instituted this practice in the interest of conserving the fort's limited ammunition, but usually the opportunity to shoot was lost before permission could be obtained. This was particularly galling to the fort's five company commanders, who felt the lack of being able to aggressively use the fort's great firepower at their discretion was allowing Parke to complete his siege operations almost unhindered.

On April 21, the five company commanders presented their views on this subject to Colonel White. White agreed and allowed them to fire aggressively on the enemy at will at their own discretion. This new policy was put to the test that same night when General Parke sent a detachment of his soldiers forward to establish an advanced post for sharpshooters only 600 yards from the fort. A blast of gunfire from the fort dispersed the Union soldiers and wounded two of them.

The fort's fire was much more aggressive over the next few days, at one point keeping a Union detachment in an advanced picket post pinned down for 48 hours without proper food or water. Unfortunately for the Confederates, by this point most of the work on the Union siege batteries had been completed.

On April 23, Union General Burnside came down through Core Sound with his flagship *Alice Price* and two floating batteries. He joined the Union gunboat *Ellis* anchored off Harker's Island. The vessels were immediately forced to retreat by long-range fire from the fort's rifled columbiad. That afternoon, however, another demand for surrender was delivered to the fort by Burnside. Even though he refused it, Colonel White agreed to a parley with Burnside on Shackleford Banks on the morning of April 24 to discuss the matter further.

On the 24th, White and Captain Guion met with Burnside and his officers on Shackleford but remained steadfast not to give up the fort without a fight. When the parley ended, Burnside gave orders to Parke for the siege batteries to open fire on the fort that afternoon. However, last minute work on the three siege batteries caused a delay until the morning of April 25.

On the eve of battle, it is not known what was happening in Fort Macon, but Colonel Moses J. White and his garrison knew that the enemy was now ready to open fire at any time. They must have readied their guns and ammunition, and made last minute preparations for whatever the morning of April 25, 1862, would bring. At some point they protected the three eastern walls fronting the parade ground inside by positioning stacks of railroad rails taken from Morehead City upright against the walls to ward off enemy projectiles flying over the wall from the opposite side.

Dawn came. At 5:30 a.m. on the morning of April 25, 1862, the usual morning roll call of the garrison showed 263 men present for duty out of 403. The rest were sick.

At 5:40 a.m., the Union batteries opened fire on Fort Macon for the first time. At 6 a.m. the fort began to return fire with at least 21 of its guns which could bear on the landward side. Just before 9 a.m., four gunboats of the Union Blockading Squadron in the ocean off Beaufort Inlet joined in the action with their guns from offshore. Confederates turned some of the fort's guns to face them and hit two of them with cannon fire. One of these was the squadron commander's ship which had an 8-inch columbiad shot pass almost completely through the ship, missing the engine and main steam line by only six inches. After less than an hour and a half the ships had had enough. They retired out of range and did not return to the fight again. The fort had won the first round. Northeast of the fort, efforts to get Burnside's two floating batteries into action in the sound were largely unsuccessful due to wind and choppy seas. One battery was able to deliver some long-ranged fire against the fort but the effort was soon given up as ineffective. It was all up to the land batteries. During the morning, the Union 10-inch mortar battery suffered great damage from the fort's fire. By 11 a.m. so much of the embankment protecting its gunners had been shot away the gun crews were exposed from the waist up and were forced to take cover. The battery was thus silenced for a time. The Parrott Rifle battery and the 8-inch mortar battery continued to fire but for much of the morning their shots had been missing the fort. The

heavy smoke from the fort's guns obscured the fort so that Union gunners could not tell where they were hitting. Many of their shots were overshooting the fort and hitting in the inlet. This might have gone on all day had not Union officers manning a signal station on the top story of the Atlantic Hotel in Beaufort taken it upon themselves to signal range corrections to the batteries to help their shots zero in on the fort through the smoke. These men were lucky enough to be in a perfect position to see where the artillery fire was falling and kept the Union guns on target. Their actions marked the turning point of the battle.

With the Union artillery projectiles now falling steadily into the fort, it was the Confederates' turn to be driven to cover. The fort's fire slackened and the smoke began to clear. By noon every Union shot seemed to hit the fort or explode over it. Particularly destructive were the three 30-pounder Parrott Rifle cannons. Even from almost 1500 yards away, their phenomenal accuracy was greater than what smoothbore cannons could have accomplished at half that range. They caused great damage to the fort's walls and knocked out a number of the fort's guns. One single Parrott projectile hit three of the fort's largest guns in succession, knocking out two of them, killing three men and wounding five. Another actually went through the stacks of railroad iron leaning against the fort's walls. Some of them were able to break through into some of the fort's casemates and wound some of the men inside. One of these took off the leg of a man lying sick in his bunk. Of greatest concern to the Confederates in the fort, however, was the fact the rifled guns had the pinpoint accuracy to enable Union gunners to concentrate fire at specific sections of the fort's walls where the fort's gunpowder magazines were located. Since the fort was a former U.S. Army installation, the Union gunners knew the layout of the fort and exactly where to concentrate their cannon fire to reach the magazines. Colonel White had been active all morning, encouraging his men and directing the battle. Unmindful of the enemy fire, he made rounds visiting each of the fort's batteries repeatedly, including the heavily exposed batteries on the outer wall. By 1 p.m., his frail health had failed him and he was forced to retire to his quarters to regain his strength. Captain Guion assumed command of the fort during his absence.

By mid-afternoon, it was clear the Confederate defense had spent itself. Such a concentration of fire was being poured onto the fort that by 2 p.m. only two or three guns were returning fire at intervals of every five minutes. Later, this increased to every fifteen to twenty minutes. Union observers could see Confederate cannoneers rushing up to the ramparts to fire two or three guns during these intervals until the Union fire drove them back to cover again. During one of these lulls, a Union soldier working on top of the 10- inch mortar battery to reset aiming stakes was unable to get to cover in time when the fort suddenly began firing again. He was hit squarely in the chest with a 32-pounder cannonball and killed instantly. About 3:30 p.m. a seemingly last ditch effort was made by the fort garrison to return fire with all guns which had not been knocked out. One of the Parrott rifles was temporarily disabled by a Confederate shot which shattered one of its wheels. By 4 p.m., most of the fort's guns were silent once again.

Meanwhile, about 2:30 p.m. Captain Guion met with the other company commanders and held a council of officers to review the situation. It was not good. Many of the fort's most important guns had been knocked out. Enemy fire was so hot Captains Manney and Pool had withdrawn their gun crews from the exposed batteries on the outer wall. The garrison was exhausted as a result of its poor state of health and there was no one to afford reliefs to the gun crews. The fort's walls had provided shelter against the bombardment so that only seven men had been killed, but the lives of everyone else in the fort were about to become in jeopardy. The enemy had concentrated so much fire on the wall adjacent to the southwest gunpowder magazine that the wall was cracking and would soon be breached. Then the magazine and the 10,000 pounds of gunpowder it contained would be completely exposed to the enemy fire. A magazine detonation would, of course, cause the complete destruction of the fort and its garrison.

It was clear the fort could not hold out, especially when faced with the explosion of its magazines. The officers then met at Colonel White's quarters where the conclusion was reached there was no choice except surrender. Burnside's previous conditions for surrender had been that the garrison would be paroled and al-



The Baker of Fort Macon: Private Robert Church, Company F (Andrews's Battery), 10th Regiment N.C. State Troops (1st Regiment N.C. Artillery). Church was a resident of Stokes County but moved himself and his family to Morehead City shortly before the war, perhaps to seek employment in the nascent resort industry there. Although he was forty-five years old and the father of five children, Church enlisted in "Andrews's Battery" on July 5, 1861. He was paroled on April 26, 1862, and exchanged later that year. In December 1864 Church's battery reinforced Fort Fisher and most of the men surrendered there on January 15, 1865. Robert Church was missing in action after the Battle of Fort Fisher and his remains were never discovered. A letter from First Lieutenant Daniel Cogdell to Church's wife, written shortly after the battle, states that in the lieutenant's opinion Church was killed in the explosion of the powder magazine the day after the fort's surrender. Greg Mast, *State Troops and Volunteers*, 1:232.

lowed to return home to await exchange. White and his officers could only hope the offer was now still good. At about 4:30 p.m., a white flag was displayed from the fort, bringing the bombardment to a stop. Thereafter, Captains Pool and Guion and a detachment of men left the fort under a flag of truce and met with Union officers in front of the lines. General Parke was only willing to demand an unconditional surrender, which was unacceptable to Pool and Guion. After much discussion it was agreed to suspend hostilities for the night, leaving everything as it was, until General Burnside could be consulted as to whether the old terms of capitulation would be still offered. Although the Confederates honored the stipulation of leaving everything as it was, the Union battery commanders repaired their batteries and hauled up more ammunition. It was not an easy night in the fort. If Burnside insisted on unconditional surrender rather than honor the terms he offered previously, what then? Everyone expected to have to renew the battle in the morning. How long could the fort last? A magazine explosion notwithstanding, Colonel White estimated two more days of bombardment would "reduce the fort to a mass of ruins." The men of the garrison constructed crude wooden coffins for their seven comrades who had been killed and awaited what dawn would bring. During the early morning hours of April 26, Generals Parke and Burnside conferred over the situation and decided to grant the Confederates the terms of capitulation previously offered, namely, that the garrison would be released on their parole of honor to return home to await exchange, carrying with them their private effects. About daylight two of Burnside's staff officers went over to the fort in a boat under a flag of truce and announced the surrender terms to Colonel White. Since these were the best which could be hoped for, White and Captain Guion returned with the Union officers to General Burnside's flagship, the *Alice Price*, anchored off Shackleford Banks. Here the surrender terms were formally drawn up and signed.

Afterward, White and Guion returned to the fort while Burnside, Parke and staff officers walked up the

beach to the Union trenches to bring up their troops. The Fifth Rhode Island Battalion, on duty in the trenches that morning, was marched up the beach to the fort to receive the surrender. At 10:10 a.m. the Confederate flag was lowered from the flagstaff. Twelve minutes later the U.S. flag was raised in its place. Fort Macon now belonged to the United States once more. The Confederate garrison filled out their paroles and awaited transportation home. That afternoon, the local men from the area were transported across the harbor to Beaufort to return to their homes. On April 27 part of the garrison was carried back to New Bern with General Burnside aboard his flagship *Alice Price*. The remainder of the garrison and Colonel White boarded the Union gunboat *Chippewa* and were returned to Confederate lines under a flag of truce at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The siege of Fort Macon had passed into history.

With the capture of the fort, Burnside took 396 prisoners, the armament of 54 cannons, 20,000 pounds of gunpowder, ammunition, supplies, forty horses and about 500 small arms. The fort had taken quite a battering during the bombardment. Of 1150 shots fired by the Union batteries, 560 hits were counted. The walls and grounds were scarred with craters and pock marks, and littered with thousands of fragments of exploded shells. Seventeen of the fort's guns had been knocked out or damaged. The Parrott Rifle cannons had caused the most astounding damage. Some of the Parrott projectiles had penetrated two feet through solid masonry. Others passed through the stacks of iron railroad rails which the Confederates had leaned against the walls for protection. One passed through one of the solid stone stair steps. Of course the damage they caused in cracking the 4-foot thick upper section of the outer wall adjacent to the magazine was the primary reason for the fort's surrender. Despite the pounding the fort had taken, only seven Confederates had been killed and eighteen wounded. Union losses were one man killed and three wounded.

Burnside had taken the final objective of his expedition. Beaufort Harbor was now in his possession and would be used extensively by both the Union Army and Navy for the remainder of the war. The damage to the fort was repaired and it was continuously occupied by the Union Army for the remainder of the war. General Burnside went on to have a tumultuous career in both the eastern and western theaters of the war. Parke also served with distinction for the remainder of the war. The Confederates comprising the garrison of Fort Macon were exchanged in August and September, 1862, and served for the remainder of the war in eastern North Carolina. Colonel White battled health problems for the remainder of the war and died only three months before the war ended.

FURTHER READING

1. U.S. War Department, *War of Rebellion, A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 volumes in 128 parts (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901). Volume IX, pages 270-294. The actual battle reports of the commanders involved in the siege of Fort Macon are reprinted here.
2. U.S. Navy Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of Rebellion*, 30 volumes (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927). Volume VII, pages 277-283. The battle reports of U.S. Naval vessels involved in the siege of Fort Macon.
3. Walter Clark (ed.), *The Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions From North Carolina in the Great War; Written by Members of the Respective Commands*, 5 volumes (Raleigh and Goldsboro: Nash Brothers, 1901). Volume I, pages 489-491; 499-511. A good account of the Confederate occupation of Fort Macon, 1861-62.
4. *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War; Being Fort the Most Part Contributions by Union and Confederate Officers*, 4 volumes (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956). Volume I, pages 652-54.
5. Paul Branch, *The Siege of Fort Macon* (New Bern: Griffin and Tilghman Printers, 1999, revised edition).
6. Paul Branch, *Fort Macon, A History* (Charleston: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1999). The definitive history of the fort.
7. John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pages 10-11, 113-120.
8. Daniel H. Hill, *Bethel to Sharpsburg*, 2 volumes (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1926). Volume I, pages 247-257.
9. Richard A. Sauer, *A Succession of Honorable Victories, The Burnside Expedition in North Carolina*, (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 1996), pages 308-340.
10. Richard S. Barry, "The History of Fort Macon," (M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 1950). An excellent early history of Fort Macon.
11. Richard S. Barry, "Fort Macon: Its History," *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. XXVII (April, 1950), pages 163-77. A concise general history of Fort Macon, condensed from Number 10.

