



Farthest To The Front

*The official newsletter of the
Confederate Officers of North Carolina Society Military Order of the Stars & Bars
Winner of the Col. Walter H. Taylor Award for Best Society Newsletter - 2006
Summer 2013 Edition*

David Edwards Elected New North Carolina Society Commander

STATESVILLE—The Confederate Officers of North Carolina Society Military Order of the Stars & Bars elected David Edwards of Wadesboro as their new Commander. David had previously served as Lt. Commander of the NC Society the last two years and is a member of the Henry C. Grady Chapter No. 296. The Reunion, hosted by the Maj. Absalon Knox Simonton MOS&B Chapter No. 152, was held at the historic Zebulon Vance House in Statesville. Following the Roll Call by Society Adjutant Chris Grimes, a quorum was reached by chapter representation. Major items of business included discussing the wayside markers that the Society has planned for several NC State Historic Sites and approving a resolution asking NC Gov. Pat McCrory to remove the Zebulon Vance Birthplace State Historic Site from the list of site closings in their upcoming budget proposal.



Confederate Officers of NC Society MOS&B members attending their 2013 Society Reunion are shown outside the historic Zebulon Vance House in Statesville on April 6, 2013.

Photo by Robin Lattimore



Confederate Officers of NC Society Commander Rodney Williams (left) is shown with newly elected NC Society Commander David Edwards.

Photo by Ron Perdue



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Confederate Officers of
North Carolina Society
Military Order of the
Stars and Bars*

Society Commander
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February 15th

A Message From the Society Genealogist

Chapter Officers and Members:

As you may know there is a push to restore the ranks of the MOS&B. At last check the average age of MOS&B membership is 75. New membership within the NC Society has been slow since our split at Elm Springs with the SCV. That being said the General Society is strong and standing on its own, but our membership is smaller. Many Chapters have just died out or no new members.

We need to recruit new, quality members into the Order. One of the easiest ways is to recruit a family member on which you joined that share's the same blood line. They can join on what is known as (Legacy Membership) which is \$10 less than a (new) regular membership. Chapters need to be prepared to help the applicant with their family tree and help them with Military Records.

However the applicant will need to provide copies of birth certificates, death & marriage certificates, photos of grave-stones, etc. You also need to list where these documents can be found, (example: Wake County Register of Deeds). It is understood that many States did not keep records till the late 1800's-early 1900's, so census records and photo's of old tombstones can be submitted as proof. You cannot leave the Proof section blank on the application.

Membership applications can be obtained on line at www.mosbihq.org and the submitting Chapter needs to send (2) two copies of the application and checks to me first. I send the original to the Genealogist General and I keep the copy for the NC Society. Also a separate check needs to be included for \$10 made out to the NC MOS&B for dues. Keep in mind that the new member may have to pay another full round of dues very soon if he joins late in the year, that's just the way it is. Please feel free to contact me if I can assist in any way. Being a Past Genealogist General, I know if the application will pass the national standard.

Sincerely,
Rodney P. Williams, DCS
NC Society Genealogist,
colorsgt13nc@bellsouth.net

NC Society News

North Carolina
Society Facebook Page
Now Available

Society Commander **David Edwards** has asked Compatriot **Craig Phippen** to create a NC Society Facebook Page which will help us reach out to more people and possibly future members of the Order. Craig is a new member of the Capt. James I. Waddell Chapter.

You do not have to be a Facebook person to see the page.

Check it out by visiting <https://www.facebook.com/pages/NC-Society-of-Military-Order-of-the-Stars-and-Bars/135762513277057>.

New Publication
Policy Established for
Farthest To The Front

Farthest To The Front will be published three times each year and distributed by email to all NC Society members. Members without email will receive a black and white copy through the mail. The publication dates for the next year are:

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All news articles and photos should be sent to the Editor at: byronbrady@aol.com by each publication deadline.

MOS&B Awards Presented in Raleigh

RALEIGH—On behalf of NC Society Commander **Rodney Williams**, Capt. Waddell Chapter member **George Pearson** presented seven awards at the Annual Convention of the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association (THJHA) held on April 26, 2013 at the NC Museum of History.

Jessica Pratt, Coordinator for the THJHA Program, did her usual outstanding job of managing the event which was attended by an estimated group of over 200 enthusiastic Elementary, Intermediate, and Secondary school children, teachers, and advisors from across the state. The meeting was opened shortly after 2:00 PM by Dr. Kevin Cherry, Deputy Secretary, Office of Archives and History, who was a former THJHA member himself.

The first group of awards presented by our society were in the Civil War Essay Contest which went to:

Elementary Division: 1st Place - David Young, Homeschoolers Unfolding State History, Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield; 2nd Place - Samuel Hill, History Hounds of Central Carolina-Club A, NC Homeschool Adventures, Sanford.

Intermediate Division: 1st Place - Emma Kate Halstead, Oak Tree Classical Academy, Walkertown; 2nd Place - Neal Welch, Sotterley Historians, Sotterley Academy, Four Oaks.

Secondary Division: 1st Place - Mathew Henry Young, Homeschoolers Unfolding State History, Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield, NC; 2nd Place - Nancy Samantha Halstead, W.A.T.C.H., Oak Tree Classical Academy, Walkertown, NC.

The second group award presented by our society was in the Photography Contest for Civil War Markers and Monuments which went to: 1st Place - "Confederate Grave" by John Michael Hill, History Hounds of Central Carolina-Club B, NC Homeschool Adventures, Sanford.

Society Commander's Message

David Edwards, Commander, Confederate Officers of North Carolina Society



NC Society Commander David Edwards

Greetings Fellow Compatriots:

For this first newsletter of my term I thought I would tell you a little about myself. A native Tarheel, I was born in Charlotte, NC in April 1959. In 2002 I joined the MOS&B under my maternal great-great grandfather Jason Rogers who was a Lieutenant in the 20th Brigade 119th North Carolina Militia with Supplementals for my g-g uncles Vachel Cheers (1st Lt. Company D 37th NC Infantry), Benjamin Cheers (Assistant Surgeon, Field & Staff, 48th NC Infantry), Eli Pope (2nd Lt. 81st NC Militia), Calvin Rogers (2nd Lt. 6th NC Senior Reserves) and great uncle Franklin Rogers (1st Lt. Company B 15th NC Infantry and wartime Sheriff of Union County, NC in 1864-65). My other great-great grandfathers served in the 26th NC Infantry and 43rd NC Infantry.

My wife Sharon is a native Virginian from Abingdon. She is a member of the UDC (Stonewall Jackson Chapter 220, the same chapter that Anna Jackson was a member of). We have three children. Of course two of them are adults now. Both are members of the MOS&B. Our oldest son, Doug, is currently studying at a community college in Alabama, working with

a landscape company, and also serving in the Army Reserves as a combat engineer. Doug served in the 3rd Infantry Division in Iraq as a combat engineer. Our next oldest son, Luke, has just graduated from UNC-W and is looking at different vocational options. Luke loves diving and fishing. Our teenage daughter Katie is a member of the Children of the Confederacy (Charlotte Grays). Katie loves animals and has a small Boer goatherd.

My family lives an active lifestyle on a small cattle farm, which, besides the cattle, includes a few Tunis sheep, Katie's Boer goats, guineas, and too many Bantam & GameCock chickens, blueberries, grapes, etc. Let me know if you want to learn to castrate bulls, shear sheep, or gather some eggs. We can accommodate. Our farm is a mile from the Pee Dee Wildlife Refuge. When I accepted the office of Society Commander, I mentioned that we needed to refocus on our core principles. The State Society shall be literary, historical, benevolent, patriotic, educational and non-political. The Society should strive to:

a. Cultivate the ties of friendship among descendants of those who shared the responsibilities of Southern leadership in the War Between the States.

b. Provide leadership in the collecting and assembling of data, documents, and material relating to the Confederacy; however, the organization shall preserve the history of the Colonial and Federal periods of our history since the antecedents of the War Between the States are to be found in these periods.

c. Provide for future generations of the descendants of Confederate officers and civilian officials in the Executive and Legislative branches of government an organization to commemorate and honor the leadership of their

forefathers.

d. Consecrate in our hearts the Flag of the Southern Confederacy, not as a political symbol, but as an emblem of a heroic epoch for which our forefathers fought and died.

e. Maintain a united front against doctrines subversive to the fundamental principles set forth in the Bill of Rights which, as a part of the Federal Constitution, guarantees freedom of speech and the press, together with all other rights and privileges therein provided for the protection of political minorities and of individual citizens.

f. Encourage and support true loyalty to the Constitution of the United States of America.

How will we do this?

1. Attend your Chapter meetings. Some Chapters only meet annually. I would like to challenge all Chapter Commanders to hold at least one or more fellowship events. These do not have to be elaborate. You can meet at a local restaurant to eat, go on a battlefield tour, museum, or something just to get together.

2. The greatest thing we have done as the MOS&B since I have been a member is the placement of historical markers at Bennett Place, Zeb Vance Birthplace, and the others that are planned. We are providing the leadership. Let us as individual compatriots also continue collecting and sharing data and documents. Use our state website. The average citizens do read our website. I have gotten several calls concerning the information about Anson County. I would like to challenge all members to submit some tidbit to our website. Want to do more? Visit the Museum of the Confederacy or others and see what you can do to preserve our history. Flags, paintings, and documents are in their vaults waiting to be restored, but lack funding. We Southerners should be the tip of the spear in regards to funding these restoration projects, not the Yankees.

3. Have you signed up your sons, grandsons, and nephews as MOS&B members? We have got to keep the future generations involved. How I wish now that I had asked more questions of my Grandfather Edwards who shared his bedroom with his Grandfather Edwards (26th NC Infantry) who was wounded and captured at Gettysburg. When you are a kid, you don't really know what to ask. The younger generation will appreciate your efforts, they just don't know it today. And they may need some scholarship money for college that would put a keen edge on that knife of truth & knowledge. Let us be diligent in promoting our scholarship programs for the youth, which will be the Society later on.

4. I challenge all members to fly the Flag of the Southern Confederacy at your home every day. Erect that flagpole. My flagpoles are three pieces of conduit attached to three t-posts. I think I will put up a couple more. You don't have to spend a lot of money to fly those flags and consecrate them in your hearts. Be proud of your heritage! And don't forget to fly that American flag also. We are Southern Americans! Let the world know it!

5. Speak out to protect our Bill of Rights! I challenge all compatriots to write to your Congressmen and Senators! Meet with them when you have the opportunity. Be vocal!

6. The kids are not being taught the way we were taught. Let's fully support the Junior Tarheel Awards. I will be speaking about this a later date. But this is a tremendous program. We have to encourage the children as to why it is important to protect our Rights. As a personal note, get a pocket copy of the Constitution and study it. When you get involved in discussions regarding the Constitution, pull it out. Amaze your friends and astound your cohorts! The truth is powerful.

Everyone likes to see people rewarded

for a job well done, over and above, normal service. At the next State Reunion I would like to see each Chapter recognize members for their extraordinary service they render to the Order.

We need to honor our compatriots who are active military and veterans. Let's take the initiative to award War Service Medal and Southern Cross of Military Services. The WSM is presented to an active member of the Military Order of the Stars & Bars who has served honorably in combat for our nation. Service must have been in a combat zone for 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days of duty or have drawn Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger pay. The Southern Cross of Military Service is presented to an active member of the Military Order of Stars and Bars who has served honorably in our nation's military without participating in combat. I have been a member since 2002 and can not remember this being done. This needs to be done.

We are small in number, but a small organization can accomplish a lot. As previously mentioned, already we have either placed or will place historical markers at Bennett Place, Zeb

Vance Birthplace, and the Fort Fisher lighthouse. That's great! Let us keep the momentum up! In 1861, Robert E. Lee was quoted by saying "I am sorry that the movements of our armies cannot keep pace with the expectations of the editors of the papers. I know they can arrange things satisfactory to themselves on paper. I wish they could do so in the field." I hope that you do not see that quote as reflecting what I have outlined. But I think a lot of what I have outlined is achievable.

Deo Vindice
Dave Edwards

Compatriots

The North Carolina Society is looking for volunteers in state leadership roles. If you are interested in serving any of the following capacities, please contact Commander Edwards (david.edwards.DE33@gmail.com or 704-695-4002).

Adjutant

Chaplain

Judge Advocate and Parliamentarian

Aide-de-Camp

Chapter News

News from across the North Carolina Society

Rutherfordton



RUTHERFORDTON—Shown at left is Robin S. Lattimore, Commander of the Lt. Thomas D. Lattimore Chapter of the Military Order of the Stars and Bars bringing greetings to a group gathered on the court house lawn in Rutherfordton, NC on May 10, 2013, in observance of Confederate Memorial Day. Members of both the MOS&B and SCV placed more than 700 flags on the graves of Rutherford County Confederate Veterans during the week prior to Confederate Memorial Day. Photo by Lesley Bush

Chapter News

Greensboro



Garnett-Pettigrew Chapter No. 67 Memorial Cannon Crew, 40th NC Troops, 2nd Co. G Orange Light Artillery "Patterson's Battery" and the NC MOS&B JR Reserve Color Guard participating in the 24th Annual Confederate Memorial Service in Reidsville, NC in Greenview Cemetery.

Commander General

Visits the Tar Heel State

MONTICELLO—We are proud to report that members of the Garnett-Pettigrew Chapter 67 have been active in the early months of this year. We have been involved with several Confederate Memorial Services honoring our gallant ancestors, attended the 2013 NC Society Reunion and had the opportunity to host a special visit to the NC Society by Commander General Toni Turk and his wife.

April 25th 2013 was a special day for the

North Carolina Society as we welcomed Commander General Toni Turk and his wife Barbara during their visit from Utah to the Tar Heel State.

Garnett-Pettigrew Chapter Past Commanders Larry Brown and Rodney Williams welcomed the Turks with a special afternoon Confederate tour of historical sites in our area.

The tour started at the Greensboro Historical Museum with the Murphy Gun Collection. They visited the Old Presbyterian Church Cemetery including the graves of Governor John Motley Morehead and John Gilmer and visited the AOT Monument, the marker of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet's meeting in a railroad car and the Guilford County Troops CSA marker in downtown Greensboro.

They toured the Blandwood Mansion, home of Governor John Motley Morehead, which was the place wartime Governor Zeb Vance offered the surrender of the State of North Carolina and himself to Union Generals Cox and Schofield.

They ended the tour at Greenhill Cem-



Shown left to right are Barbara Turk, Scarlett Austin, Mattie Clyburn Rice (seated), Leigh Ann McPeak, Yvonne Brown, and Virginia Jones at the April 25, 2013 special evening.

Chapter News

Greensboro Continued



MOS&B Commander General Toni Turk is shown with Real Daughter Mattie Clyburn Rice, a recipient of the Varina Davis Award April 25, 2013 in Monticello.

etery in Greensboro by visiting the Confederate Burial Mound, a mass gravesite of 300 unknown Confederate Soldiers and the graves of prominent Confederate Officers buried in the cemetery. CG Turk was honored to retire the State of Georgia flag and replacing it with the State of Florida flag at the Confederate Monument. We post the flags of each of the States representing the Confederacy in a periodic rotation honoring the unknown soldiers buried there. CG Turk also replaced the small flags on the graves of Brig. General Scales, Captain Adams, Lt. Colonel Cole, Lt. Colonel Gilmer and Lt. Colonel Chapman in Greenhill Cemetery.

The Chapter hosted a banquet that evening for our special guests at our Monticello Headquarters. It was a pleasure to show the Turks some good old fashion Southern Hospitality and “Why We Like Calling North Carolina Home”.

Chapter Commander Perdue escorted Mattie Clyburn Rice and her daughter Ruth

Young to the event. She is a proud member of the Laura Wesson Chapter 5 of the Order of Confederate Rose associated with the Lt. F.C. Frazier Camp 668, SCV, High Point, and is distinguished as a Real Daughter receiving recognition in 2008 from the Sons of Confederate Veterans. She is also a proud member of the Guilford Chapter 301, UDC.

It was a memorable event for our friends, guests and members as we enjoyed excellent food and fellowship. The meeting had the introduction and acceptance of new members, welcome from Commander Ron Perdue, greetings from North Carolina Society Past Commander Rodney Williams, NC Society Chief of Staff Ronnie Roach, Army of Northern Virginia Councilman John Williams, ANV Past Commander Larry Brown and a special message with the unexpected surprise from Commander General Toni Turk with the presentation of National Awards.

We had the privilege of introducing two new members who had the unique honor of being sworn into the Order by CG Turk..

Thomas Mason Hanks was proud to join



Commander General Turk is shown presenting the Lt. Charles Read Meritorious Service Award to Past Society Commander Rodney Williams on April 25, 2013.

Chapter News

Greensboro Continued

in the honor of his 2nd Great Uncle, Captain James M Jones, who served with the 69th Militia, Rockingham County, NC Troops.

J. Keith Jones was proud to become a member in the memory of his 2nd Great Grandfather, 1st Lt. William Jones, who served in Hampton's Legion Infantry of the SC Troops.

CG Toni Turk had a special surprise for our Guest of Honor Mattie Clyburn Rice. She was presented the Varina Howell Davis Award. The Varina Howell Davis Award is a distinguished one time National award presented by the Commander General to ladies who have demonstrated unusual support for the Military Order of the Stars & Bars.

CG Turk also presented this distinguished award to Scarlett Austin, Yvonne Brown and Virginia Jones for their dedicated support to the Order. Other awards presented by CG Turk were the Winnie Davis Award to Christine McPeak, the Commander General's Award to ANV Councilman John Williams, the Lt. Charles Read Meritorious Service Award to NC Society Editor Charles Hawks, Garnett-Pettigrew Chapter Commander Ron Perdue, Adjutant Ronnie Roach and Past Commander P. Dwain Roberts.

Other awards presented were to Commander Perdue for the Captain John Morton Award for Best Chapter Newsletter (Second Place) in recognition of *The Grey Line* newsletter, the Distinguished Commander Medal to Past Society Commander Rodney Williams.

Adjutant Ronnie Roach presented a Certificate of Appreciation to our Special Guest CG Turk and our Guest of Honor Mattie Clyburn Rice on the behalf of our chapter.

Memorial Cannon

Crew in Action

SALISBURY—On April 7, 2013 the Garnett-Pettigrew Chapter's Memorial Cannon Crew – 40th North Carolina Troops, Orange Light Artillery, Patterson's Battery, CSA, participated in their annual support to the Salisbury Confederate Prison Association. There was a service for the Federal prisoners at Salisbury National Cemetery with our cannon crew as the 4th Iowa Light Artillery and a service of the Confederate Prison Guards at the Old Lutheran Cemetery as the 40th NC Orange Light Artillery. Shown below are several photos from these services.



Chapter News

Greensboro Continued

Union County Confederate Pensioners of Color Day

MONROE—Members of the Garnett-Pettigrew Chapter participated in the historic Union County's Confederate Pensioners of Color Day on Saturday, December 8, 2012. This Sesquicentennial Event unveiled a new marker at the Confederate Monument, Old Union County Courthouse in Monroe, NC.

Chapter Commander Ron Perdue read the Union County's Board of Commissioner's Resolution proclaiming "Union County's Confederate Pensioners of Color Day".



Garnett-Pettigrew Commander Ron Perdue is shown participating in the ceremony.

Adjutant Ronnie Roach officiated over the Presentation of Colors, Military Honors and the Retiring of the Colors during the dedication service. MOS&B Society Commander Rodney Williams brought greetings. Lt. Commander P. Dwain Roberts escorted Kelly Hinson as Mary Anna Jackson, "Widow of the South" during the Laying of the Wreath. Member Bill Bunting participated in the Military Honors during the ceremony.

Chapter members enjoyed sharing this



Shown left to right are Garnett-Pettigrew Commander Ron Perdue and past Society Commander Rodney Williams at the new memorial marker at the Union County Courthouse.

Photo by Annie Perdue

historic day with the descendants of Ned Byrd, Weary Clyburn, Aaron Perry and Jeff Sanders.

Mattie Clyburn Rice, the daughter of Weary Clyburn, talked about this event and was very inspirational. She had an interesting discussion on how the weather was very cold, rainy and awful the whole week before and the following day. But not on that day, the weather was warm with brilliant sunshine. She said, "I just know Weary was up there in heaven that day just a dancing and fiddling".

Chapter News

Raleigh

Capt. Waddell Chapter

Participates in Oakwood Service

RALEIGH—Members of the Capt. James I. Waddell Chapter No. 32 participated in the May 4, 2013 Confederate Memorial Day ceremony at Raleigh's historic Oakwood Cemetery. Capt. Waddell member Darwin Roseman acted as master of ceremonies and Kelly Hinson portrayed Mrs. Stonewall Jackson. Debbie Roseman performed several musical selections and members of the 6th & 26th NC Regiments and Latham's Battery performed military and artillery salutes.

The ladies of the Capt. Samuel Ashe UDC Chapter served refreshments following the ceremony in Oakwood's House of Memory.



The Capt. Waddell Chapter's wreath was placed by member George Pearson at the grave of Col. Henry K. Burgwyn on May 4, 2013



Members of the Capt. Waddell Chapter placed a wreath at the grave of Jefferson Davis in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery May 25, 2013. Photo by Sara Powell



Members of NC State University's Alpha Zeta Fraternity placed Confederate battle flags on over 1400 Confederate graves at Raleigh's historic Oakwood Cemetery in preparation for Confederate Memorial Day Services held May 4, 2013. This is an annual event by members of the fraternity. Photo by George Pearson

National News

76th MOS&B Annual General Convention Convenes in Arkansas

SPRINGDALE, AR—Delegates from across the Order convened at the Holiday Inn & Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale May 29-June 1st for the Military Order of the Stars & Bars 76th Annual Convention. The four-day convention included a wide range of activities for the delegates and their families.

On Friday, Mark Christ, Director of the Arkansas Sesquicentennial Commission was the keynote speaker for the MOS&B Luncheon and Awards Presentation. A tour of Prairie Grove State Park followed that included a BBQ picnic. The next day, a memorial service was held jointly with the Southern Memorial Assoc. at the Fayetteville Confederate Cemetery.

Susan Young, Historian at the Shiloh Museum in Springdale delivered the keynote address at the Banquet Saturday night on *War Between the States in the Arkansas Ozarks*.

Convention activities were interrupted briefly during a tornado warning when severe weather was affecting that area of Arkansas.

Members attending from North Carolina

including Larry & Yvonne Brown from Greensboro, Larry & Pat Beeson from King, and John & Kay Williams from Concord.

The 2014 Convention is slated for Charleston, SC and Alexandria, VA will be the site for the 2015 Convention.



Ladies receiving the Varina Howell Davis Award from the MOS&B included Yvonne Brown (far left) from Greensboro.



North Carolinians make up part of the Convention's Color Guard.



North Carolinians attending the MOS&B Banquet Saturday night.

Fort Defiance – the Key to Roanoke Island

By David Edwards, NC Society Commander



Roanoke Island Redoubt Marker

After Hatteras had fallen in August 1861, plans were prepared to capture Roanoke Island. This hourglass shaped island protected Albemarle Sound and the Dismal Swamp canals, which lead to Norfolk. There were five forts, or batteries, on Roanoke Island.

Fort Bartow was the southern most battery on the western side of the island. This sand fort was revetted with sod and housed six 32 pounder cannon mounted in embrasure (an embrasure is an opening of the outer wall of the fort) and three 32 pounders mounted en barbette (mounted so they could be fired over the top of the parapets or protective walls on top of the ramparts).

Fort Blanchard was two and a half miles north of Bartow. A turfed semi-circular sand fort, Blanchard had four 32 pounders. Manning the fort was a detachment of forty men of Company G, 31st NC Infantry Regiment commanded by Lt. Isaac Pipkin.

Fort Huger was the largest. A little more than a quarter mile north of Fort Blanchard, its' parapets were eight foot tall. This turfed sand fort ran along the shore of Croatan Sound and had infantry breastworks on its' East Side.

There were eight 32 pounders mounted in embrasure, ten rifled 32 pounders mounted en barbette, and two small 32 pounders mounted en barbette on its' right side.

Midgett's Point was on the East Side of the island about three miles from Fort Bartow. It had two 32 pounders mounted en barbette.

The fifth is the subject of this article. Called Fort Defiance, it was a four and a half-foot tall by 100-foot long redoubt. This small redoubt was designed for three cannon and became the key to Roanoke Island.

New York newspapers kept the Confederates informed about the impending Union Expedition being organized by General Ambrose Burnside. The federal forces were well equipped with the latest small arms and artillery. The papers told of their movements to and from the Norfolk area. So it was not a secret that they were going to try to capture Roanoke Island.

In Wadesboro, North Carolina on October 3, 1861, a company of infantry was organized. They called themselves the OK Boys and were assigned as Company B of the 31st North Carolina Infantry Regiment. Their cap-



Fort Huger State Historic Marker

tain was twenty-nine year old Edward R. Liles. The OK Boys had arrived on Roanoke Island around Christmas 1861.

Most of the following is drawn from a March 1, 1862 letter from Captain Liles to Mr. C.W. Fenton who was editor of the North Carolina Argus newspaper of Wadesboro. Captain Liles was concerned about the allegations of wrongdoing. He wrote the letter “to correct several misstatements” and to give “a correct account of the battles of the 7th and 8th of February at Roanoke Island, and especially of the part taken by the OK Boys.” The letter was published in the March 6, 1862 edition of the newspaper.

On January 30, Colonel Shaw ordered Company B and Company F (the “Hatteras Avengers” of Martin County) to move from their camp south eight miles to guard Ashby’s Landing. The water in this area was too shallow for large steamships that drew more than eight feet of water. However, by using smaller vessels, this was the best spot for landing troops.

Captain Liles was the senior officer. Captain Charles W. Knight commanded Company F. Liles was given command of the battalion and two cannon. Liles describes the two cannon as a brass 12 pounder and a brass 18 pounder. He did not have any horses to transport the cannon. Colonel Shaw ordered him to use some of the Banks ponies. These ponies were untractable and really not much use, at first. Liles relied on manpower to maneuver the cannon. Their orders were to defend the landing and “at every hazard” to save the artillery. An 8th North Carolina Regiment officer was supposed to provide training to the squads of men chosen to man the cannon. The officer visited twice and drilled for about thirty minutes each time. Captain Liles credited Colonel Jordan and Lieutenant Kinney for giving the men more adequate train-

ing. Colonel Jordan spent an hour with them. Lt. Kinney, of Wise’s Legion, had just arrived at Roanoke Island three days before on February 4. Kinney gave the infantrymen one or two short lessons on the finery of artillery.

The Confederate troops were quartered in a large farmhouse and nearby outbuildings. Cramped, but comfortable, they waited for action. On Thursday morning, Private W. Riley Diggs spied the first Union vessels. Diggs was a twenty one-year-old Anson County native. Captured at Roanoke Island, he was again captured at Cold Harbor on June 1, 1864. At



Doug Edwards, son of Society Commander David Edwards, is shown standing on the redoubt wall of Fort Defiance.

Elmira Prison, he died of chronic dysentery on November 26, 1864. Alerted by Diggs, Liles got a spyglass to get a closer look at the awaited invaders. He saw four large steamships. With this news he dispatched a courier to Colonel Shaw.

Around the point the ships came until Liles counted sixty-four. The tiny Confederate Mosquito fleet reconnoitered the invasion force, staying just outside the range of the Union guns. At 8AM on Friday morning, the federal ships began moving towards Ashby’s Landing. The Confederates’ orders were to remain concealed

for as long as possible. Liles watched as “the ball opened”. Fort Bartow was shelled, and also returned fire. There were several good hits by the fort, which disabled three or four vessels. Around 3PM, a small boat with a dozen Yankees was observed heading toward the landing. It appeared that they were sounding the depths and checking Ashby’s Landing. Colonel Jordan ordered Liles to take forty men, and divide them into two parties, to either capture or kill the Federals who were taking the soundings. Liles got to within one hundred yards when two privates, who had been attached to the 31st, burst from the concealing vegetation shouting and shooting at the enemy in the small boat. The alarmed Federals quickly retreated. The mission of sounding the landing area had been accomplished.

Two large steamships approached, towing thirty small boats loaded with troops. The larger gunboats began to bombard the landing area. Colonel Jordan surmised that they would be cut off from the main forces if they did not retreat now.



Shown above is a piece of an original Quaker Gun used at Fort Defiance.

The Banks ponies and two old mules (Liles emphasized old) were used to haul off the 18 pounder. The 12 pounder had to be moved with human muscle. They retreated under a heavy bombardment back one and a half miles to the redoubt called Fort Defiance. The cannons were placed along with the existing brass

six-pounder.

The “Richmond Blues” (Company A, 46th Virginia Infantry commanded by Captain Jennings Wise) and “McCullough Rangers” (Company A, 59th Virginia Infantry) flanked the redoubt and were thrown out as skirmishers. The “OK Boys” numbered forty-three men. The “Hatteras Avengers” numbered fifty. Ten men from the 8th North Carolina served as a detachment to support the six-pounder cannon along with forty men for Wise’s Legion. Captain Solden, Captain Schemerhorn, and Lt. Kenny had command of the cannon.

In reserve were portions of the 31st and 8th North Carolina. They were located a half mile to the rear of the redoubt. The Union troops landed and waited until the next morning to begin their push up the island. At nightfall a slow steady rain began the next morning the assault began. The Yankees appeared down the road from the small fort. As far as the eyes of the fort occupants could see, there was a dense blue mass moving towards them. 10,000 Yankees were attacking the 250 defenders of Fort Defiance. The breastworks of the small fort had been cut with three embrasures. The 18 pounder cannon was placed on the left with Captain Schermerhorn in charge. The 12 pounder was placed on the right, with the 6 pounder in the middle. The three cannons mowed down the enemy by the hundreds. The Union troops were in an area that allowed artillery to be used effectively. Seven hundred yards of brush had been cleared from in front of the fort. With every cannon shell, it appeared that a “lane” was cleared in the Union’s advancing lines.

The Yankees attempted flanking maneuvers to the redoubt’s left and right. General D.H. Hill had instructed that fortifications be thrown up to protect the redoubt months ago. Those instructions were not obeyed because it

was felt that the swamps were impassable. Now, wading waist deep through swamps, briars, and plunging into stump holes, the Federal troops pushed through on the Confederates' flanks. Confederate reinforcements were sent in, but after two hours of hard fighting, the skirmishers were pushed back by overwhelming numbers. It was at this point that Captain Jennings Wise, of the "Richmond Blues", was mortally wounded. Draped in a red blanket because he had lost his raincoat, Wise was a conspicuous target. Mortally wounded in the breast, stretcher bearers were brought up. As they were transporting Wise was struck by three more bullets. Captain Solden (commander of the 6 pounder) was struck five times, mortally in the head. Before receiving the mortal wound to his head, Solden complimented the "OK Boys" on their gallantry. In particular he praised Private James Flowers. Flowers, though much exposed, "had fought with raw courage and the coolness of a veteran." Such a compliment from the dying Captain Solden could only be felt with high regards. Flowers was later promoted to Sergeant.

For four hours and twenty minutes, Fort Defiance had held off ten thousand Union troops. Only the "OK Boys" and the "Hatteras Avengers" were armed with rifled muskets. The remainder of the Confederates were armed with an assortment of hunting rifles and shotguns. The "Hatteras Avengers" had each fired between thirty to forty "buck & ball" cartridges. The order was given to fix bayonets in anticipation of fierce hand to hand combat. The officers realized that unless a retreat was ordered, the fort's defenders would be surrounded and annihilated. Before they left the battery, reinforcements arrived and the total number of Confederate troops swelled to over four hundred men. Still this was not enough. A retreat was ordered. Because all of the horses and mules had been

killed, the cannon were spiked. A mass panic did not occur. The entire Confederate force slowly withdrew up the road. They expected to resume combat at any given moment. Re-grouping north, they had been there about an hour when the surrender of Roanoke Island occurred.

The Federal Zouaves pillaged many of the articles that had been sent to the sick and wounded Confederate soldiers by Anson County citizens. Tempie Liles had made the OK Boys company flag when the company was organized in 1861. It was of a first National pattern on one side with gold lettering "Aut Vincere Aut Mori" (To Conquer or Die). The obverse side was white with gold lettering reading "Women of Anson to the OK Boys". Corporal H. M. May had responsibility of the flag until it was "captured" by the 21st Massachusetts infantry and presented to Massachusetts Governor Andrew. Dr. Cutter, the 21st Mass. Surgeon, told Captain Liles of the flag's demise. Cutter was the Governor's brother-in-law. It remained in Massachusetts until October 1922. The governor's children wished to return the flag to a place where it would be preserved and cherished. Mrs. Lenora Schuyler, United Daughters of the Confederacy President General, assisted in contacting three of the "OK Boys" still living. They identified the flag. Now the flag resides at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. The Confederate forces were taken to Elizabeth City and there were paroled. In the months to follow there was an outcry of protest in the way Roanoke Island was defended. North Carolina now lay open for conquest and the back door to Norfolk was opened.

Still, for four hours and twenty minutes, the "OK Boys", the "Hatteras Avengers" and three hundred other Confederates had stalled ten thousand better equipped Yankees. Their deeds of gallantry should not be forgotten.