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JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a semiannual publication of the New Bern Historical Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of the rich heritage of New Bern. Articles, letters, photographs, and memorabilia relevant to the history of New Bern and Craven County may be submitted to the editor for review. (Post Office Box 119, New Bern, North Carolina 28563)

THE BATTLE FOR NEW BERN

Frederick L. Sloatman

The American Civil War was only 11 months old when Union forces attacked the city of New Bern, North Carolina. By nightfall on March 14, 1862, the invaders marched into the city to begin an occupation that would last for the duration of the conflict. This was the first Confederate city to be conquered and occupied by the North. Whether this was a distinction or a tragedy, it depended on one's allegiance at that time.

In the early months of the war, Abraham Lincoln and his staff of military advisers realized that seesaw battles in the picturesque countryside of Virginia would not bring the Confederate States to surrender. To achieve victory and the preservation of the Union, the war must be brought home to the South. The Confederate States were largely agricultural, dependent on foreign countries for weapons and military supplies. An effective blockade of Southern ports would halt this flow of vital materials. Next, manpower was crucial to keep Lee's army on the move. Union troops threatening Southern states would mean a home guard must be on hand to protect the populace. This would sap Lee's reserve of troops.

In the autumn of 1861 Major General George B. McClellan authorized Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside to recruit and equip a Coastal Division to invade the South. By year's end, he had assembled 15,000 troops and an armada of 12 steamers, 23 schooners, four barks, four ships, and a single brig. Early in January 1862 this specialized force weighed anchor and

left its Maryland port. Before the departure the division's objectives were clearly spelled out: to enter Albemarle Sound via the Hatteras Inlet, take possession of Roanoke Island, proceed up the Neuse River and capture the strategic city of New Bern, followed by Roanoke Harbor and then take Fort Macon. If they were successful, the Union would control the inland waterways, the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, and be in position to make forays on cities along the Confederate supply lines.

The government in Richmond was aware of the vulnerable situation along the Carolina coast. Hampered by a shortage of troops and lacking a navy, any defense measures were of vital importance. General Gatlin of the Confederate States of America was in charge of the state's defense. In November 1861 he appointed Brigadier General Lawrence O'B. Branch in charge of the coastal plain. Branch immediately set out to improve New Bern's existing fortifications.

The city lies at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers, and a barrage from approaching enemy gunboats would devastate this community. To spare such destruction, the defense system was set up below the city.

The first site, three miles from the city on the southwest bank of the Neuse, was Fort Lane. Below it, spaced about a mile apart, were four more forts. The largest, two miles from Lane, was Fort Thompson. It boasted 13 thirty-two-pounder guns and earthworks on its right flank extending for a mile. The earthworks crossed the Beaufort Road, the Atlantic and North Carolina train tracks, passed above Wood's Brickyard and ended at Brice's Creek. A shorter and stronger defense line existed six miles below and was called the Croatan line. Two days before the battle took place, the Confederates decided against using it. There was fear that the enemy might land above the Croatan line at Otter's Creek and cut off the defenders from their city.

Hence, the Thompson line, although not perfect, would be the main line of defense for General Branch and his 4000 untried troops.

General Burnside successfully captured Roanoke Island and sustained only a few casualties. He then left the Fourth Brigade to guard the island and proceeded with his 11,000 seasoned troops to encounter the defenders of New Bern. The troops boarded their transport steamers on March 3, but rain and gale storms delayed their departure for a week. Then, on the 12th, with Commodore Rowan and 13 gunboats running convoy, they pushed forward, entering the mouth of the Neuse by noontime. As they moved upstream, signal fires on both banks of the river notified the defenders of the invader's progress. The clear skies of morning gave way to clouds and by evening threatened more rain. The armada dropped anchor in late afternoon at the mouth of Slocum's Creek. There, gently bobbing and with inky black skies above, the regimental band serenaded the troops until midnight. Most men spent a restless night, anticipating the uncertainty of the next day's landing.

General Burnside's land forces were comprised of three brigades commanded by Brigadier Generals John G. Foster, Jesse L. Reno, and John G. Parke. His naval support was headed by Commodore Stephen C. Rowan. All were ready for his orders.

At 6:30 on the morning of March 13 the troops boarded the small landing vessels while Rowan's gunboats took a position to lend fire support should it be needed. Then, with long towlines steamboats pulled the small crafts toward shore. As they neared land, they released the tow. The momentum carried them close to the river bank. With loud cheers and jubilation the men jumped overboard and waded ashore. Fortunately for them there was no rebel greeting party.

Burnside was sure that opposition was on its way. As soon as they landed and emptied the water from their shoes, the men took formation. Then, without further delay, they started off on the march towards New Bern.

There were three paths leading to New Bern. On the right, the Neuse River, a short distance inland, the Beaufort Road, and to its left, the tracks of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad. General Foster was to spearhead the advance, proceeding up the Beaufort Road. General Parke and his brigade were to follow, and behind them a detachment of men would pull the artillery pieces. General Reno and his men would advance up the train tracks. Commodore Rowan and his navy would move up the river, keeping abreast of the land force and occasionally firing volleys into the dense pine forest.

By late morning Foster's scouts came upon the abandoned Croatan line. They found smoldering fires and uneaten food, indicating the foe had made a hasty retreat. By afternoon the dark skies parted, and heavy rain began to fall. The troops plodded ahead in muck and mire. Drenched to the skin with mud caked shoes and blistered feet, the superiors reminded the men to keep their powder dry. By evening they neared General Branch's line. The rebels, huddled behind their earthworks, were equally cold, wet, and hungry. General Burnside ordered his men to halt and make camp. They sought shelter in the pine forests along the road. Some were able to make fires from pine pitch that offered some heat. However, there was no relief from the persistent rain.

Just before dawn the rain stopped. The cool damp air dilated one's nostrils. Patches of dense gray fog shrouded the area. In the forest on its pine needled floor thousands of bodies, curled up under shelter-halves, began to stir. Cold and shivering, they arose, dried themselves

off, and in the best way possible prepared for this new day ahead.

General Burnside and his generals were in the saddle by six o'clock. He had learned through undisclosed sources, the strength and placement of the enemy troops. To confirm this a captain was ordered to scout the line. By seven o'clock the brigades were formed into three columns: Foster on the right, between river and train tracks, Reno to the left of the tracks to Brice's Creek, and Parke with his men to be in a rear position on the tracks to give aid to either column in distress. Commodore Rowan and his gunboats were to shell Fort Thompson. Earlier, it had been learned that the river had been made impassable with scuttled boats and submerged hazards. This would prohibit him from advancing behind his own troops.

General Branch had set up his headquarters in the center of the line, to his left of the railroad tracks and behind North Carolina's 35th Regiment. Hopefully, from here he could observe all action. Latham's artillery battalion was set up on each side of the Beaufort Road. At 7:30 a subordinate, Lt. W. Wheeler, spotted Union soldiers on horseback, down the road from him, studying his position. He ordered a round from a Parrot gun to be fired. The horsemen fled, and the battle was begun.

Foster's troops were deployed in the clearing in front of the breastworks. They opened fire with an incessant blast that could be heard for miles around. The Confederates replied with equal intensity. A thick cloud of gun smoke hung over the field making it impossible to take accurate aim. The continuous fire and the screams from the men were deafening. Three of Fort Thompson's 13 thirty-two-pounder guns were directed toward land. Each blast effectively cut a swath in the Union line. At one point the Confederates were aided

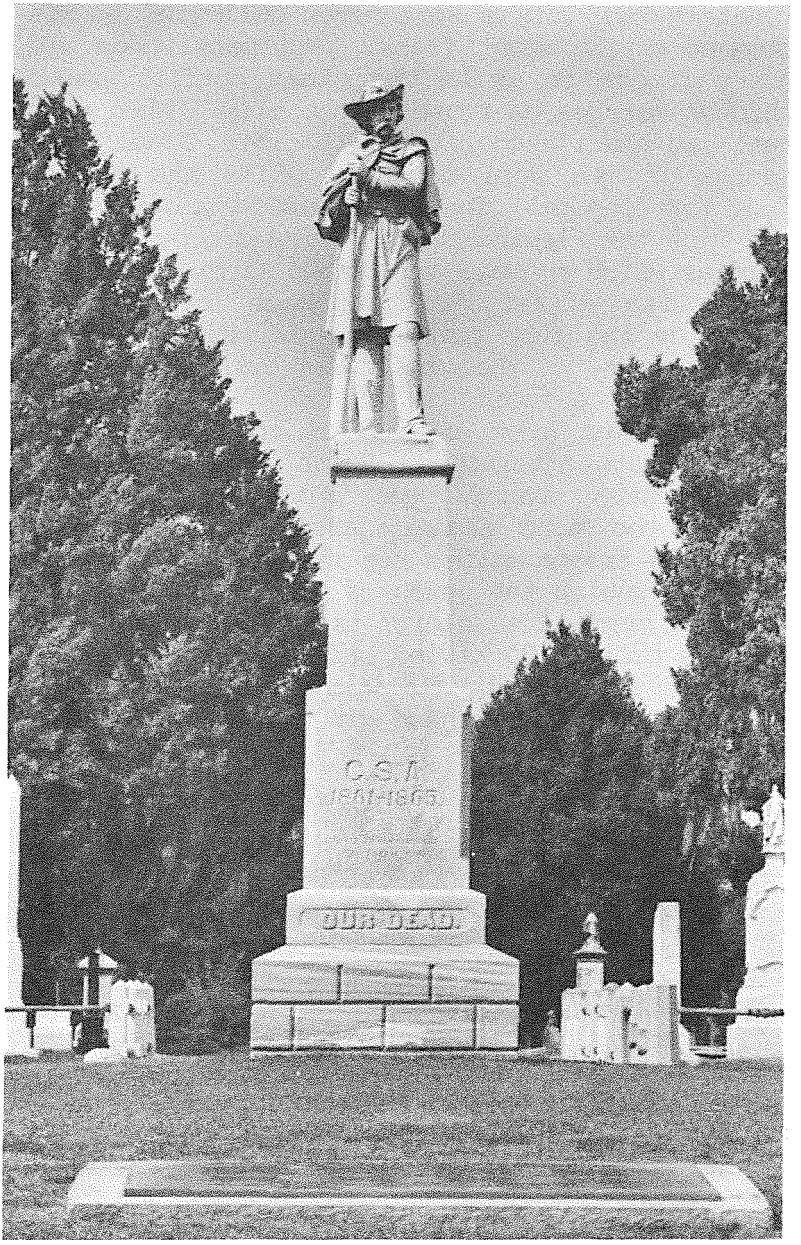
by Commodore Rowan. The gunboats positioned behind the Federal troops opened fire on the Confederate line. To the horror of Foster's men the shells were falling short and into their own lines. General Burnside was able to signal him to cease fire. Later it was learned that Rowan was aware of the mishap but felt that the loss of a Union soldier was worth the benefit of his "moral suasion".

As casualties mounted and the men ran out of ammunition, Parke's regiments moved up to replace them. The Connecticut 10th took an open position 200 yards from the line and opened a seething fire. Each man fired about three rounds per minute, which is exceptionally fast. Even this withering fire did not break the Confederate line.

On the left, Jesse Reno's men moved up on their objective. The 21st Massachusetts discovered a break in the line at Wood's brickyard. Branch was aware of this hiatus. Early that morning a train from New Bern delivered two guns which were to fill the void. Unarmed workmen, in the process of assembling them, were surprised by a Union patrol and fled. Above this position to the right of the tracks local militia men were being held in reserve. General Reno, surmising the situation, commandeered four infantry companies and attacked the militia's flank. These undisciplined, poorly equipped men panicked and made retreat. General Branch with quick action repositioned his force and repelled the charge.

Whether it was a gap in the line or a surprise flank maneuver, the defenders' line eventually was destined to fall. For five hours this courageous Southern force, outnumbered almost three to one, armed with inferior weapons and lacking in ammunition, fought back the invaders. More than reinforcements and bravery was needed to save the day.

Branch saw the Union troops pour through his



C. S. A. MONUMENT STANDS TALL IN CEDAR GROVE CEMETERY.

line and gave the order to retreat. Unfortunately, the orders were never delivered to his command on the right flank. Colonels Vance and Avery fought on while the other outfits waded through marshes en route to the city. When they realized the fiasco, it was too late. Avery and scores of men were captured while the others fled for freedom. The fight was over.

Once the fleeing troops crossed over the two bridges which spanned the Trent River, they set the bridges afire. Many men were fortunate to arrive in the city just before a train departed for Kinston. The rest set out for that destination on foot.

The Union army arrived at the Trent River edge by late afternoon. Rowan's fleet managed to navigate around the river obstructions without too much damage, arriving in time to ferry the troops across the river. By nightfall the city was in the hands of its captors.

The price for glory is not cheap. The Yankees tallied 90 killed and 385 wounded. The rebels: 68 killed, 116 wounded, and 150 captured. We bow our head in the memory of all these brave men.

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"OLD SIDEBURNS"

Victor in the Battle of New Bern

Jim Gunn

"We were much nearer the enemy than we expected, and were soon in contact with them. General Foster rapidly closed with them, and met with severe resistance. He asked for reinforcements, but was told that every man had been ordered into action, and that there were no reserves. The contest was sharp, but brief. The 4th Rhode Island broke the enemy's line near where it crossed the railroad, after which the enemy wavered, and a general advance of our whole line placed us in possession of the works. The enemy fled to New Berne, burning the bridge behind them." The battle of New Bern was over and the town in the hands of a Union army, to remain occupied for the rest of the Civil War.

The speaker, retired Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, U. S. Army, addressed these words to the Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society of Rhode Island on July 7, 1880. His firsthand account of the action which took place 18 years before was but one incident in the life of a colorful Union officer who served almost continuously throughout the North/South conflict. The distinguished-looking man who stood before these veterans and historians related, in subdued terms, his own role as the commandant of this combined operation.

The "Burnside Expedition" was conceived, so he claimed, by Ambrose Burnside himself. The idea gained the approval of General George McClellan, the Secretary of War, and undoubtedly

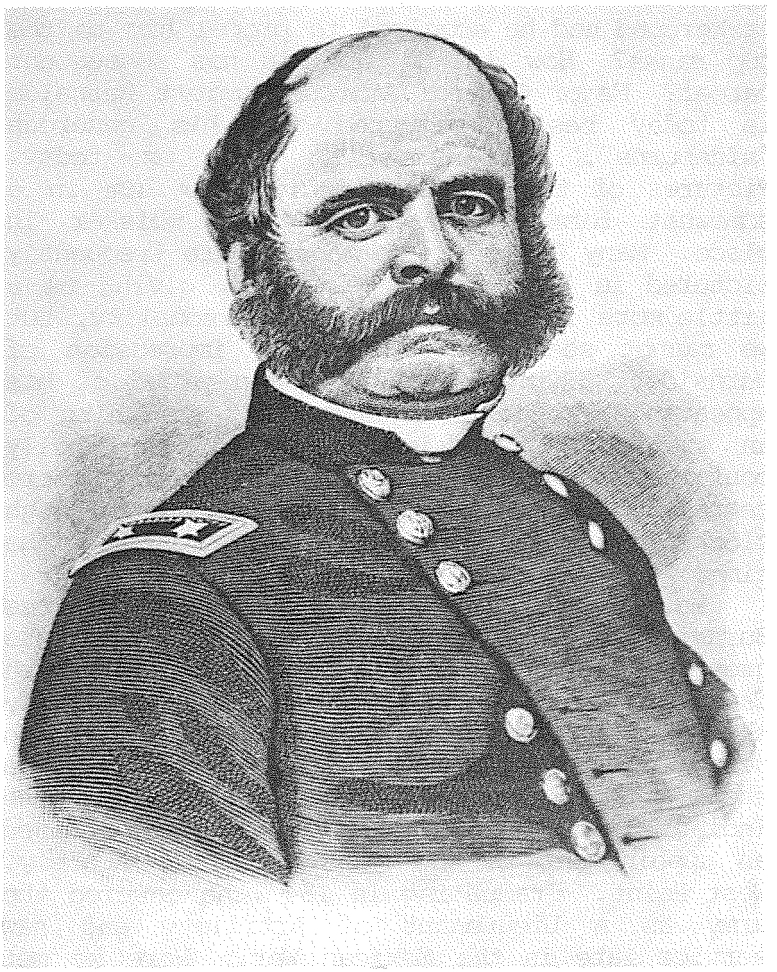
President Abraham Lincoln as well. The expedition was planned with the short-term objective of closing east coast ports to Confederate shipping and the long-term goal of cutting off the Weldon Railroad. Running between Wilmington, North Carolina, and Richmond, Virginia, this rail link was a vital supply line for the Confederate capital. Planning for this ambitious expedition began in the fall of 1861, and Burnside received an appointment to head it up with the base of operations at Annapolis, Maryland. Over the winter troops began to assemble and Admiral Goldsborough, Naval commander, started the task of gathering a suitable fleet. By January 1862 men and material that comprised the amphibious force were ready and put on board a motley collection of ships. In all 15,000 Union soldiers were transported to Hatteras Inlet, and after surmounting the difficulties of those treacherous waters, the fleet crossed into Albemarle Sound. After a small Confederate naval force was easily subdued, Roanoke Island, lightly fortified, fell to the guns of the Union fleet and a small force of the Union army.

Within a few weeks the victorious northerners had consolidated their position at Roanoke and were ready to move inland. New Bern was the first objective because of its importance as a port and its rail link to Goldsboro, a junction with the Weldon Railroad. By early March months of intense planning were over, and the operation against New Bern began. Burnside's modest description requires a little elaboration. It is almost inconceivable that a large number of small ships could transport some 10,000 men across Pamlico Sound, up the Neuse River, almost within sight of New Bern and be landed on the unknown shore with little interference from defending Confederates. After gaining a strong foothold on the banks of the Neuse, these intrepid regiments advanced on entrenched defenders through mud and rain to a relatively

easy victory. In April the Union troops moved on to consolidate their position, subduing the town of Beaufort and bombarding Fort Macon into submission from the land side. In a number of other minor actions further pockets of opposition around Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds were suppressed, and Union forces were able to exert control over important Confederate supply routes and would continue their stranglehold until the end of the war.

In Washington General Burnside gained the reputation as a man who could be trusted to both plan and execute complex military schemes. Even though Burnside's conquest could hardly be called a major event, on more important fronts between Richmond and Washington the Union forces were not enjoying great success. Any news of victorious generals was heartily welcomed. President Lincoln and the Union army needed men like Burnside to subdue the rebellious southern states. In New Bern Burnside set about organizing the administration of the area under his control, well aware of the political importance of his victory. He eagerly awaited the order and the supplies needed to advance westward to Goldsboro. That order never came.

In July 1862 campaign strategies had to be changed. Union forces, in particular the Army of the Potomac under General McClellan, had accomplished little, to the great displeasure of President Lincoln. McClellan's reasons for not moving against the rebels was the need for more men. Insistence on more men greatly distressed Lincoln, but in the end he agreed. The decision finally involved moving some troops away from New Bern. Burnside went with them and began his association with the Army of the Potomac, severing his brief connection with New Bern. It is unlikely that he was fully aware that in the vicinity of Washington as much importance was attached to political battles as to military encounters. He was about to become a babe in



GENERAL AMBROSE EVERETT BURNSIDE (1824-1881)

the woods, ready to be consumed by the wolves of the capital.

Who was this handsome six-foot tall military commander who seemed to provide success when it was needed? Where did he come from and what background had he acquired to propel him to the top ranks? How did he fare in his subsequent career? Major General Ambrose Everett Burnside is today best remembered for his generous "sideburns", a term still with us today. Pictures of the man inevitably show him in a somewhat formal pose with every whisker in place. Many Civil War commanders are frequently pictured in less formal positions, giving us a little more insight into their personality, but we cannot seem to gain a real impression of Burnside. What we see is a man proud of his appearance, a bit of a dandy, and something of an egotist. This impression is not wholly confirmed. When we examine his career, there certainly is evidence of egotism, even though cloaked under a veil of modesty most of the time.

Born in 1824 in Liberty, Illinois, Ambrose Burnside's family background was Scottish, his great-grandfather having emigrated to South Carolina in 1750. His schooling in Liberty showed no particular distinction, and after high school he became a tailor, later opening his own shop. After his father gained a seat in the Indiana Senate, the 19-year old Ambrose obtained an appointment to the U. S. Military Academy, West Point. Graduating in 1847, he entered the army as a Lieutenant of Artillery and saw service late in the Mexican War. Here he met many of the men who would be either friend or enemy in a horrible war yet to come. Not all the "enemies" would be in the Confederate forces. During six years of army duty both out on the frontier and in garrisons he designed a breech-loading rifle. Resigning his commission in 1853, Burnside sought financing for the manu-

facture of his rifle and attempted to have the army adopt the weapon. Success eluded his efforts, and there are hints that he refused to bribe the "right" people and eventually became bankrupt in 1857. Handsome appearance and a pleasing personality paid off during these difficult times, and he was nominated for Congress as a Democrat. He also maintained a military connection and received an appointment as Major General in the Illinois State Militia. His attempts to find a career were aided by George McClellan, a friend from West Point days, later the well-known Union general who was an official of the Illinois Central Railroad. Burnside was employed in the land office and eventually attained the position of treasurer.

In 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War the Governor of Rhode Island, Mrs. Burnside's home state, asked the Major General of the Illinois Militia to organize the 1st Rhode Island Regiment and to be the Colonel. Burnside accepted the job with alacrity, and the Rhode Islanders were among the first regiments to reach Washington. Term of a regimental enlistment at that time was only 90 days, and in July 1861 Burnside found himself in Washington without a regiment. He stayed there with little to do, but by August he had received an appointment as Brigadier General in charge of volunteers. He was only 37 years of age and more suited to an active position as a field commander. By September 1861 the urgencies of war pressed more strongly and he sought a more active role in an expanding conflict. Confederate coastal ports were still open, and some action had to be taken. The Burnside Expedition, a combined army and navy operation, was conceived. The successful result of the foray into enemy water and on to enemy lands was, without doubt, the key to a future career of unlimited possibilities, but the pitfalls were plentiful.

The competence Burnside exhibited in the

planning and execution of military operations in North Carolina was not always exhibited in battles fought at the later stages of the Civil War. And these battles were not all against Confederate armies; many of them were against other generals in the Union armies. His star was eventually eclipsed by more determined Union generals such as Ulysses S. Grant and Joseph E. Hooker, to name but two. On the battlefield he suffered severely at the hands of opposing Generals Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Frederick Longstreet, who seemed able to anticipate, and consequently counter, many of Burnside's too carefully laid plans.

Burnside's serious problems began in September of 1862 when Lincoln enthusiastically appointed him to replace McClellan in command of the Army of the Potomac, a position he had refused earlier. The thoroughness with which he had carried out previous assignments seemed to desert him at this time, and he was unprepared for the prima donna tactics of his subordinate generals. In December at the battle of Fredericksburg, Burnside's army was soundly beaten by the Confederates under Lee, and the political repercussions were not long in coming. Other generals as well as politicians sought to cut up Burnside, and he did not last long. By March 1863 he was assigned to the Department of the Ohio, and once more he was to be found on a secondary front. His record in this position was spotty: a small victory here, a limited defeat there, a stalemate elsewhere. Yet at times when every indication showed Burnside about to lose everything, he miraculously saved the day. When Longstreet's Confederates had chased him close to exhaustion and nearly captured his entire army, Burnside smoothly retreated to Knoxville and awaited the Confederate assault. Repulsing Longstreet's attack, Burnside waited and the siege of Knoxville was relieved a few days later by

General William Sherman's forces. At the conclusion of the battle Burnside relinquished his command to Sherman and returned to Washington.

In 1864 Burnside accepted command of a revitalized 9th Corps, which was attached to the Army of the Potomac under General Ulysses Grant. One of the four divisions consisted entirely of black troops, a unique formation. His corps fought at many battles during that year, finally participating in the siege of Petersburg, Virginia. This lengthy siege became a stalemate to Union forces, whose ultimate objective was Richmond, only 20-odd miles distant. In an attempt to finish the siege, an enormous tunnel was driven under Confederate lines by miners from Pennsylvania. In July 1864 ton after ton of dynamite which had been carried into the tunnel was set off with the plan that Burnside's 9th was to sieze the advantage and overwhelm the defenders. The size of the resulting crater amazed everyone, and men of both sides stared in wonder at the unusual sight. In confusion the supposed advantage was lost through misinterpreted orders and plain lack of determination. The 9th suffered 4000 casualties and prisoners. Burnside, sacked almost immediately by General Meade, his superior, hoped to be absolved by a court of inquiry, but their verdict also placed the blame on him. After a period of leave he did not receive a recall to army service, and before the end of the war he resigned his commission.

Ambrose Burnside was 41 when he retired from the army and had many years of life before him. He had a fine reputation for integrity in the railroad business and was welcomed back to the Illinois Central. In the next few years he joined other companies in the transportation field in Illinois and in his adopted state, Rhode Island. Highly respected on the political front, his election as Governor of Rhode

Island in 1866 began a long career in public service. From 1875 until his death in 1881 he served as United States Senator from Rhode Island. At a relatively young 57 years, "Old Sideburns" had risen from obscurity as a youth to a respected figure in his new home state. In looking at his life, facts emerge which show him as a personable man with honesty and integrity. Probably these qualities were too dominant and not necessarily qualities most desirable in an army officer of that era. While not lacking in ability, Ambrose Burnside did seem to lack a steely resolve that marked so many successful military men on both sides of the Civil War.

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Note: The principal source of information on Ambrose Burnside's military career is D. R. Larned, Secretary to Burnside during the Civil War. Larned's papers are in the Library of Congress, Washington, and many authors of Civil War books have utilized them.

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mary Baker

Standing in the 400 block of New Street, First Presbyterian Church is the oldest church building in the city of New Bern, the cornerstone having been laid June 9, 1819. Presbyterians could claim being the oldest organized denomination in New Bern but for the Indian War that occurred in 1711. It was in 1699 that a group of French Huguenots under Claude Philippe de Richebourg, their pastor, settled in Virginia on the upper James River. As this place did not bring them the satisfaction they expected, many of these emigrants with their pastor removed to the Trent River in 1707 about two miles above where New Bern is today. Here they prospered until the Tuscarora massacre of 1711. Again, they moved, this time to South Carolina and settled on the Santee River. While some Huguenots remained, almost 100 years elapsed before the First Presbyterian Church was organized.

It was in 1808 that "Mr. James Burch received a call from New Bern and the Reverends Messrs. Stanford, Turner, Robinson and Murphy were appointed an intermediate Presbytery to meet in New Bern on Friday the 27th of May next, to ordain Mr. Burch". This statement is taken from the records of the Orange Presbytery. These same records note that in 1810, "The Reverend James K. Burch applied by letter to be dismissed from his pastoral charge and also from this Presbytery to join the Presbytery of Philadelphia". The fact that Mr. Burch was called in 1808 indicates there was an organiza-

tion of Presbyterians in New Bern at that time. Unfortunately there is no record of their names or even their number. An even more telling bit of evidence as to the presence of Presbyterians was a notice for "A Subscription For the Purpose of Erecting a Presbyterian Meeting House" in an 1808 issue of the MORNING HERALD. The result of this appeal is not known.

For the next few years the Presbyterians were served by the Reverend James Waddy Thompson, who taught at the Academy, and by the Reverend Jonathan Otis Freeman, M. D. Services were probably held at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Minor on Craven Street near Pollock and at Mrs. Robert Hunt's house on East Front Street above Broad. Services were also conducted at the Baptist Meeting House at the corner of Metcalf and Johnson Streets.

On January 7, 1817, First Presbyterian Church was organized under the direction of the Reverend John Witherspoon. Tradition says that the organization took place in Mrs. Minor's parlor. Tradition also states that there were 13 original members. In 1819 a lot was purchased on New Street for $1200, and on Wednesday, June 9, 1819, the cornerstone was laid. There is no record of when the church was completed, but it was probably in the fall of 1821. The dedication service was held January 6, 1822, the Reverend Mr. Hatch preaching. The building cost $7000 and is said to be quite similar to the Congregational Church built in Litchfield, Connecticut, about seven years later. The church, a white frame building, measures 70 by 55 feet. It is indeed very reminiscent of New England style churches.

Inside there is a gallery or balcony on three sides with the organ in the gallery opposite the pulpit. The main floor rises to the rear, elevating the pews and giving a good view of the front to everyone. The pulpit is also raised and is reached by curving stairs

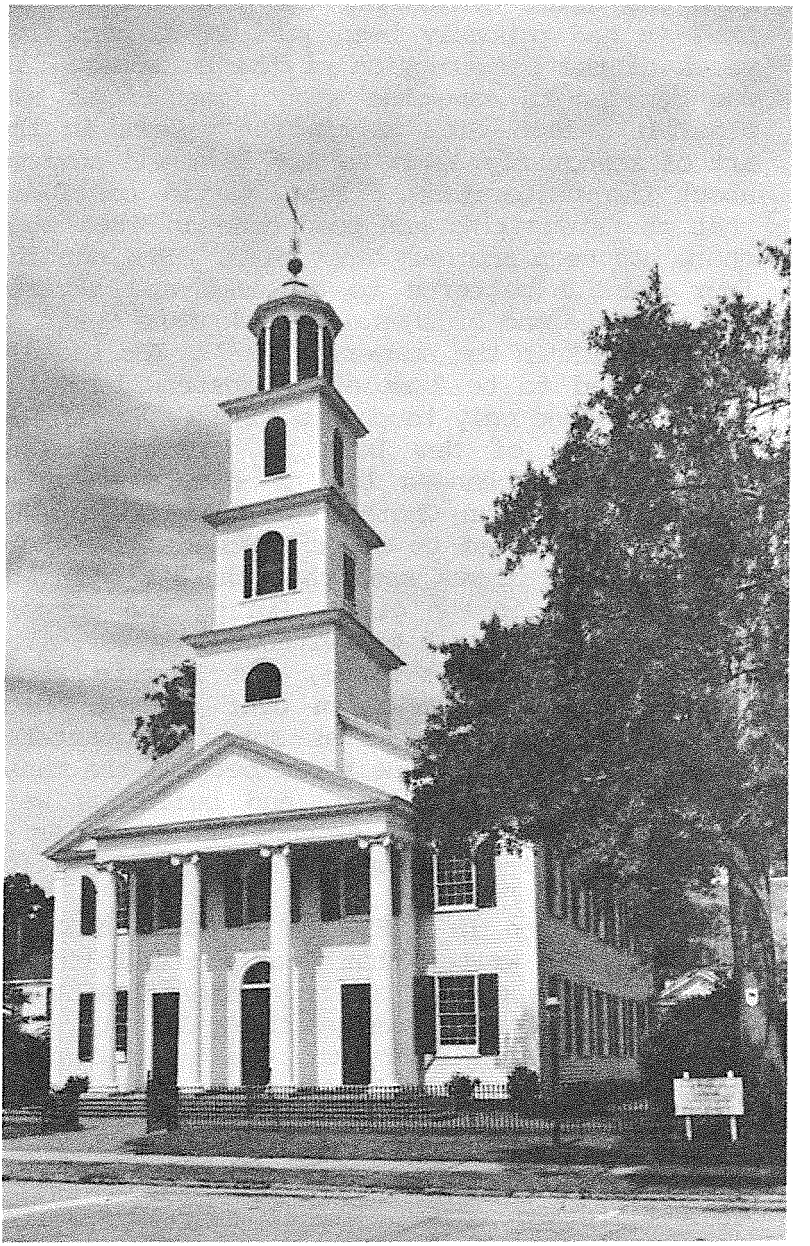
from either side. Originally there were box pews which were sold, ranging in price from $150 to $350. The pews themselves are arranged in three sections: center, the most expensive section, and two side sections. There are two aisles.

Outside, in front there is a portico with four Ionic columns rising two stories and framing three doors. There are two tiers of windows on all sides of the church, much of the glass original. Above the front entrance rises a four stage tower. A bell hangs in the third stage and is rung manually.

There can be no doubt that Uriah Sandy was the builder. An account book for the Hollister firm which supplied much of the material for the church shows that Sandy was connected with the building. A notation on May 3, 1820, indicates that he had been given a payment. If there were a separate architect for the building, that name has been lost. In all probability, however, it was Sandy who designed the structure as well as built it.

In 1842 the manse was purchased for $1800. It has undergone extensive renovation through the years and is now the attractive home at 411 Johnson Street. The lecture room, or session house as Vass called it, was constructed in 1858. Originally aligned with the front of the church, it was moved back to its present location in 1923. When the building was moved, it was enlarged with the addition of three more rooms at the rear, including a library and a kitchen. During renovation in 1955, a floor and roof were added to the open court between the lecture hall and the kitchen giving inside access between these two rooms.

In 1976, during a further renovation, stenciling was discovered in the original room and also on one wall of the library. This one wall had perhaps originally been part of the lecture room. Representatives of the Division



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SERVED AS CIVIL WAR HOSPITAL.

of Archives and History in Raleigh came to New Bern and after evaluating the stenciling said that it had probably been put on within five years of the construction of the building. It was decided to save the stenciling if at all possible. Mrs. Gina Martin, an expert in the art of stenciling, came to New Bern and advised about the restoration. Mrs. Martin concluded that the stenciling had been done in 1885 when there had been another renovation. She cut the four stencil patterns to be used and advised about paints and brushes. Miss Jo Anne Gwaltney did the work in the summer of 1977. The lecture room needed to be completely restenciled; the library needed only touch ups.

The fall of New Bern in March of 1862 brought great changes to the city, including First Presbyterian Church. Many citizens who had initially fled to other parts of the state returned when it was seen that there was safety and stability in the city. During the occupation years the church was without a pastor. The church building, the manse, the lecture room, and the grounds were taken over by the Union Army. The manse served as surgeons quarters. The dead house or morgue stood between the manse and the neighboring house, and buildings were erected on the church grounds to serve as a hospital. The church was used by the army for services.

Alan Watson in A HISTORY OF NEW BERN AND CRAVEN COUNTY writes that "early the following year [1865], a public literary entertainment was presented at the Presbyterian Church. It consisted of singing by the Quartette Club, a military group, a poem by a member of the Social Sociable Club, and a lecture by John R. French, a member of the board of the United States Tax Commission". It must have been shortly after this "literary entertainment" that the church itself was fitted up to serve the wounded. The original plan had been to tear out the pews;

however, Mr. Thomas A. Henry and Mr. Roswell Mills prevented this destruction by having the pews planked over for use as beds.

With the end of the war in April 1865 the congregation was anxious to return their church to religious functions. It took almost another year and a half for the last hospital building on the grounds to be torn down. As might be expected, the property was in great need of repair. Fences had been ripped up and nothing had been maintained during the war. Inspection of the weather vane showed several bullet holes, attesting to some soldier's marksmanship. There are still names and dates which the men carved on the attic timbers.

The church, though served on a monthly basis, remained without a regular pastor until June 1866 when the Reverend Lachlan C. Vass accepted a call. He arrived in July and was installed in December. He remained until 1890. Vass reports that, when he arrived, the church was then undergoing repairs. The renovation continued for the next several years. During this renovation the original elevated pulpit was removed and a new broad platform installed. As this pulpit was considerably lower the top of the balcony rail was lowered so people in the balcony could see. The original box pews were also removed and replaced with new ones in the "golden oak Gothic" style. At this time $300 was spent for a furnace. While we of today may decry some of the improvements, we must remember what these people had just been through. Their world had been torn apart. The world they knew before the war was no more. Perhaps the decision to change, to have something new, was a symbol of putting the past behind them as well as a willingness to be a part of the new world that was now upon them.

A decision was made in 1936 to restore the inside of the church to its original look. Much research was required to determine what needed

to be done, and much information came to light when the second pulpit was removed. In a few instances, as in the handrail, pickets, and scroll work on the side steps leading up to the pulpit, restorations were patterned after similar work in other parts of the church. An iron fence was erected in 1903 around the property, replacing a white picket fence. In March of 1949, on a recommendation from the Men's Bible Class, the elders and deacons were asked to appoint a planning committee to begin work on a new educational unit. The building was finished in 1951.

The last few years have seen a number of changes at the church. The Reverend John Murphy Smith retired in 1979, having been pastor since 1951. The church is now served by the Reverend Richard C. Boyd with the Reverend William M. Klein as associate. Additional renovation has been done on the church buildings--stripping, repairing, and painting. A new tracker-action pipe organ built by C. B. Fisk, Inc., of Gloucester, Massachusetts, was installed in 1986. A new kitchen and restrooms have recently been completed in an updating of the lecture room or fellowship hall. New mechanical systems and a brick courtyard have been added, and the one story brick building on the corner of New and Hancock Streets has been purchased and serves as the church offices. Best of all, membership has more than doubled from 471 in 1979 to 1062 in 1990.

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THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON NEW BERN'S ECONOMY

Virginia Kirwan

George Washington was New Bern's first tourist. While on his Southern Tour in 1791 our first President spent two nights as a guest at the John Wright Stanly House, one of New Bern's most magnificent frame mansions of the eighteenth century. Washington described the house as "exceeding good lodgings". He also was guest of honor at a formal banquet which was followed by an elegant ball. The aforementioned social activities took place at the North Carolina governor's mansion, the first colonial and North Carolina state capitol, which we now call Tryon Palace. With such an illustrious beginning tourism in New Bern was truly off to a good start!

Nature had richly endowed New Bern with two attributes which strongly influenced its potential as a tourist attraction--beauty and accessibility. The Neuse and Trent Rivers served as highways for commerce and travel before roads were built. As first a colonial capital and later as a state capital, New Bern served both as a political and as a cultural center. New Bern's first convention was that of the First Provincial Congress called by the patriots in defiance of the royal governor on August 25, 1774.

History has not documented early New Bern's role in the development of tourism. We do know that a huge celebration welcomed the first train on the railroad branch which connected New Bern with Raleigh in the 1850's. Records show that New Bern commemorated the 200th anniversary of

its founding by celebrating for five days in 1910. In the summer of 1929, 8000 visitors and guests joined Governor and Mrs. O. Max Gardner, members of Baron de Graffenried's family, and national and state legislators as they witnessed a historical pageant of great magnitude and scope. Each of the above festivities brought visitors to share not only in New Bern's joy but in its hospitality as well.

Looking back in time to the days before the automobile became commonplace, tourists came from surrounding areas by train for weekend conventions, for concerts, for vaudeville performances at the Masonic Theater, and for similar functions. The Shriners' Ceremonial Rite and parade continue to draw large numbers of visitors to New Bern each year.

The New Bern Historical Society was founded in 1923. Its primary goal then, as now, was the collecting and preserving of historical records and artifacts, presenting educational programs, and promoting the restoration of historically significant buildings. In 1953 the Society purchased the Attmore-Oliver House which now serves as its headquarters while housing a Civil War Museum room and a valuable doll collection. It is now tastefully furnished with period antiques, and is open to the public from April through December, Tuesday through Saturday, from 1:00 until 4:30 p. m. In 1989 this paragon of architectural beauty welcomed between 4000 and 5000 tourists. New Bern at Night is sponsored by the New Bern Historical Society on the second Saturday of November each year. Since 1986 this has become increasingly popular as a tourist attraction, luring, in 1989, guests from 10 states outside North Carolina and from 39 North Carolina cities other than New Bern. A select few historic homes are opened for viewing while candlelight and appropriate period music combine to create an aura of the beauty and mystique of the past.

The annual Spring Historic Homes and Gardens Tour is cosponsored by the New Bern Historical Society and the New Bern Preservation Foundation on the first weekend in April. This two-day event turns New Bern into a tourists' mecca each year with thousands of visitors viewing not only historic homes but churches and public buildings as well. All are invited to culminate their stay by touring the Palace Gardens complete with countless numbers of tulips in bloom.

The New Bern Preservation Foundation was incorporated in 1972 as the Historic New Bern Foundation. It was originally the revolving fund arm of the Historical Society. The name was changed to its present appellation in 1981. Its goal at its inception, as now, was to prevent demolition, because of location or physical condition, of historically significant properties in the historic district and its environs. The Foundation purchases such buildings, stabilizes, secures, and maintains them to prevent deterioration until a buyer is found. At the time of sale a covenant indicative of restoration and/or rehabilitation requirements and use is issued. As its name implies, the Preservation Foundation preserves the integrity of the historic district. A popular antique show, hosted by the Preservation Foundation at the time of the Chrysanthemum Festival in October, draws many antique fanciers to New Bern each year. The Foundation also provides catered meals in historic homes to tour groups which make prior arrangements for this service.

New Bern's historic pièce de résistance is the colonial governor's home and North Carolina's first colonial and state capitol, Tryon Palace. This outstanding restoration of the eighteenth century masterpiece of English architecture was accomplished during the 1950's and was opened to the public in 1959. The reconstructed landmark, operated and supported

by the state of North Carolina, functions under the Tryon Palace Commission whose members are appointed by the Governor. The Palace Complex at the intersection of George and Pollock Streets also embraces the John Wright Stanly House, built in 1779 and moved to its present location in 1966, and the Dixon-Stevenson House, an outstanding example of Federal architecture built in 1826. Tryon Palace hosted 77,000 guests in 1988.

New Bern now is home to five museums: the Attmore-Oliver House Museum, Bank of the Arts, the Firemen's Museum, the Civil War Museum, and the New Bern Academy Museum which will open its doors during the Christmas Candlelight Tours at the Palace. The New Bern Academy Museum, the culmination of a project begun many years ago by a local group, the Academy Restoration Association, will operate as a part of the Tryon Palace Restoration Complex. The official ceremonial opening of the New Bern Academy Museum will take place in 1991.

The Bank of the Arts hosts eight exhibits annually, featuring works of different artists and diverse media. The Craven Arts Council and Gallery, Inc., sponsors the Spring Arts Festival in May of each year. This has become a popular gathering not only for artists but for craft-lovers and hobbyists as well. Fine arts and crafts are offered for sale at booths in a street fair/theater with three stages presenting continuous entertainment. In 1988, 15,000 visitors came to New Bern to participate in this gala function. During the summer months the Council presents an outdoor concert series, Music in the Park, which features a variety of local and regional bands and musicians.

Some steps have been taken to make New Bern's approach to tourism a satisfactory, well-coordinated one. A Visitor's Information Center was established in 1982 to provide tourists with data which will make their stay in New Bern more

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PORTRAIT OF AN AIRPORT

Audrey Mellevold

When, in an attempt to preserve the history of Craven Regional Airport, a plaque was dedicated to the memory of two men whose names are now forever immortalized, Dr. Joseph Patterson finally realized a dream come true--the result of his and his family's efforts to save for posterity a fascinating bit of New Bern memorabilia.

The year was 1931; the day, Saturday, November 21. New Bern had a new municipal airport, and it was to be dedicated that day to Senator Furnifold M. Simmons. Senator Simmons was Dr. Patterson's grandfather.

Furnifold Simmons was born in 1854 in Jones County where, according to some residents, he could, in the inmost recesses of his memory, recall the sounds of the Battle of New Bern. He was graduated from Trinity College, now Duke University, and moved to New Bern seeking a more profitable law practice. As a politician he had entreated black voters, promising that he would "represent them better than either of his opponents", if elected. He was, in fact, the first white Democrat to campaign in James City. At that time the Democratic Party was near death. Simmons was responsible for its "rise from the ashes of reconstruction". Known as the "boss" of the "Simmons Machine", he was said to "pick governors, congressmen and even sheriffs", according to TAR HEELS, a book by Jonathan Daniels. Because he guided the Democratic Party so successfully to victory during the brutal politics of the late 1890's, he received the

endorsement of Governor Aycock in seeking the office of U. S. Senator. The governor described the politician as "a strong, able, aggressive, upright and sincere man, who has done and is capable of doing the state great and valuable service". Thus began a Senate career that would become the longest in North Carolina history, spanning five terms (1901-1931).

Senator Simmons was a true statesman, admired and respected on the national level. He was of fairly small stature and was known by his Senate colleagues as "the little giant". During World War I he was Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and among other things, he coauthored the Underwood-Simmons Tariff Act, 1913-1921. He also was instrumental in establishing the Intracoastal Waterway.

Simmons loved the land and farming, and he never forgot his Jones County heritage. His grandchildren remember him as a gentle, thoughtful, and caring person. And so it was only fitting that New Bern's airport be dedicated that November day to Senator Furnifold McLendell Simmons.

It was to be such a festive day. Five Marine aerobatic pilots from Quantico, Virginia, were invited to perform for the crowd attending the dedication ceremony. Those flyers were the forerunners of today's Blue Angels. The evening before all five Marines were dinner guests at the Patterson home on New Street. Doubtless it was the last public appearance in uniform for one of the members of that Marine fighter squadron.

Lt. Joel Benedict Nott was just 26 years old. A native of New York City, he was the son of Judge Charles C. Nott. Lt. Nott had graduated from Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, in 1927, where he was an outstanding student. "Ben", as he was affectionately known, was Kappa Alpha, captain of the football team his senior year, and a

member of the Student Council. He was about to embark on a wonderful new life--two months earlier his engagement to Miss Elizabeth Cornell Blair had been announced.

Today, November 21, 1931, was a day of thrilling excitement: the Marines were going to perform aerobatic flying for the crowd assembled for the occasion. According to a NEW YORK TIMES account the following day, "The planes had been stunting over the field for half an hour, going through many spectacular feats. After a series of loops they had come down to 300 feet and were circling the field".

J. Alex Meadows, another of the Simmons grandchildren,was watching the flyers. Suddenly in horror he watched as one of the planes, out of control, zoomed straight down while the others completed a big loop over the airport. That Curtiss Hawk buried its nose in the ground. The pilot was dead.

Some observers thought the slipstream of the plane ahead of him might have caused Lt. Nott's crash. Others felt he was a hero. Lt. Nott could have saved himself, but in so doing he would have endangered the crowd gathered for the event. The plane hit the center of the field away from the area where cars were parked or people were standing. Newspaper accounts of the day stated that the plane did not catch fire even though the switch was on. Nothing could be found wrong with the controls, so the precise cause of the tragedy would never be known.

It was Senator Simmons who requested that the airport name be "Simmons-Nott". And so it was formally dedicated as Simmons-Nott Airport and remained as such until 1988 with the exception of five years during World War II when it was taken over by the Marine Corps and known as Camp Mitchell in honor of Col. R. J. Mitchell, the Director of Aviation in 1941.

The phenomenal growth of Simmons-Nott has surpassed most airports in the nation. In one

month today more people board flights than boarded annually just five years ago. In addition there has been growth in private aviation as well. Two full maintenance facilities exist for privately owned planes and a long-term project is underway for lengthening the main runway thereby enabling more commuter jets as well as corporate jet planes to use the airport. Three major scheduled airlines--USAir, American, and United--now serve the area. In 1988 Simmons-Nott, as it had been known for 57 years, became Craven Regional Airport. A poignant story would soon be forgotten by New Bern natives and would never be known by newcomers flocking to the area.

The story of Simmons-Nott should be recalled for New Bern's posterity reasoned Dr. Patterson. The bronze plaque honoring the two men is mounted on the terminal building just to the right of the main entrance. It reads:

> SIMMONS-NOTT AIRPORT
> Dedicated November 21, 1931
>
> The original name of the airport was to be "Simmons Airport", in honor of Senator F. M. Simmons, a statesman from this area of North Carolina with thirty years service in the United States Senate. On the day of the dedication, during an aerial demonstration by Marine Corps pilots, Lt. Joel B. Nott was killed when his aircraft crashed at mid-field. Senator Simmons, who was present, directed that Lt. Nott's name be added to the name of the airport in honor of Lt. Nott's service to the Marine Corps and his country.

The Simmons descendants and their families continue to be active in the New Bern community. Lt. Nott is survived by three nieces and one nephew in the New York City area. They are most

appreciative of what has been done in memory of their uncle. None of them knew that the airport had been named for him. Evidently no contact was made with the family in 1931.

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SO YOUNG

Joseph Patterson

"I say, young man of Southern blood,
On which side shone the light?
Had you lived
When North fought South
And South fought North,
On which side would you fight?"

Oh sir, I am so very young
I scarce know what is right
But being young
In manner grand
I'd fight like hell for my Southland
Although I would not understand

But if I knew what I know now
I'd pledge myself and gun
To join the North
And sally forth
To fight for unison
My heart would break
But I'd hold true
And do the best that I could do

Excuse me, Sir
I must move on
I'm sure you understand
I do not have more time to spend
My ship is waiting round the bend
I'm off for Saudi Land

BOOK REVIEW

THE CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD GUIDE, edited by Frances H. Kennedy. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1990. Sponsored by The Conservation Fund, Civil War Battlefield Campaign, Arlington, Virginia 22209. Drawings, maps, photographs, and statistical data. 317 p. $25.00.)

If Civil War buffs had predicted the publishing of yet another battlefield guide on the 125th anniversary, they were recently proved correct. With a plethora of books of infinite variety on battlefields already in print, was another book really necessary? Obviously the sponsors convinced the publishers of a need. Their purpose is twofold: first, to inform the public of locations, available facilities, and visitor programs, secondly, to solicit funds from the public to assist in preservation of neglected or forgotten sites. Most Civil War buffs who take the opportunity to examine this book will feel the go-ahead was amply justified.

The Conservation Fund is a large nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation of wildlife habitat, open spaces, and historic sites. In partnership with other organizations, the fund attempts to advance conservation with creative ideas and new resources. The program for Civil War sites is but one of their many special projects currently underway. Proceeds from the sale of this comprehensive guide are entirely dedicated to the battlefields campaign.

Some 50 authors with distinguished credentials were assembled to research and prepare the contents. Every effort was made to locate an expert on each of the battles and battle

sites described. The editor managed to coerce National Park Service personnel, members of the United States Senate, Director of the CIA William Webster, and academic historians to make a contribution in their particular area of expertise. Many of the site managers employed in the National Park Service have lived with their battlefield most of a lifetime. Of over 100 known sites, 60 are described in well written text; each is accompanied by a carefully drawn map in color. There are also many excellent color photographs plus black and white illustrations from publications of the Civil War period. Troop dispositions, numbers engaged, and battle movements are clearly presented, giving this book an advantage not always found in other volumes.

A few color reproductions of original maps are included, a fine tribute to those topographical engineers and cartographers of a century past. Many of these dedicated men worked in the field under almost impossible conditions with minimal material at their disposal. A special chapter is devoted to the men and methods of mapping, which makes fascinating reading. Commanders seldom appreciated the work of these men who had to piece together limited information, add troop dispositions both friendly and unfriendly, then incur the wrath of the generals because the work was not accurate. It was a war where such blame for bad results fell on the wrong shoulders. In this era, when we take for granted that any map, complete with minutest details, will be instantly available, the problems Civil War mapmakers faced are almost too much to comprehend.

Other special chapters are devoted to related subjects; one example is battlefield preservation as presently planned and carried out in the United States. I was left with the feeling that much has yet to be learned compared to Britain and Europe. Appendices and statisti-

cal tables list, among other useful data, "lost" battlefields, plus a comprehensive list of known battle locations. The "lost" sites are those where progress has overtaken preservation and has left the sites barely distinguishable today. Among lost sites are such well-known battles as Petersburg and Spotsylvania. Photographs emphasize how this heritage has been devastated by uncaring urbanization.

How does eastern North Carolina fare in battlefield preservation? The answer, sadly, is not too well. One location, Bentonville, has been thoughtfully rescued and is covered in this book. Located close to Newton Grove southwest of Goldsboro, it is off U. S. Highway 701. Here at this tiny hamlet, Union General Sherman was confronted by a Confederate Army under General Johnston in March 1865. In an inconclusive three day battle with 80,000 men engaged, Sherman eventually became the moral victor and moved his forces on to the rail center at Goldsboro. Johnston wisely retired toward Durham and waited out the end of the war a month later.

Other North Carolina sites, Fort Fisher, Roanoke, Averasboro, and General Johnston's surrender at Durham are merely listed. Omitted entirely are New Bern, South Mill, and Fort Macon. One is forced to conclude that research, even though it appears to be well done, has not been quite diligent enough. We would like to believe that some attempt will be made to rectify in later printings what can only be called gross errors in this edition.

Despite this locally oriented criticism, I feel the GUIDE is a useful addition to any Civil War library. The size is handy and convenient to carry along on expeditions. Directions to sites are concise and easily understood. Battle maps and information give a sufficient overview to understand the relative importance of sites, as well as their size and prominent physical features.

I do not know if this volume is yet available in bookstores; my copy came through a book club. You may prefer to support the battlefield appeal directly by contacting The Conservation Fund, Civil War Battlefield Campaign, 1800 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209. They are certain to welcome a purchase and any financial support you can give. We would also like their support to restore the Battle of New Bern site!

Jim Gunn