



# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

## THE PRESIDENT’S CORNER - MIKE POWELL



Although not an official holiday until 1870 with its declaration by President Grant, Christmas nonetheless brightened the dark winters and war for by both sides during the Civil War. Many camps, forts and other troop gathering places decorated a

Christmas tree. They sang carols — “Silent Night” and “O Come, All Ye Faithful” were the popular tunes. Exchanging cards did not take hold until 1870, but those that could afford or find them amid the shortages of conflict exchanged gifts.

Thomas Nast, a German-speaking immigrant and Union editorial cartoonist, used his talents to spread Union propaganda via his cartoons in HARPER’S WEEKLY and often expressed the feelings of the country. Nast gave us the first modern image of the jolly, plump Santa, rather than the darker images of the European model. It was Nast that gave Santa a home at the North Pole. He wanted to prevent any nationalistic tendencies to use Santa as propaganda, so the old elf got the high ground for occupation.



As the war progressed, gifts and presents became rarer, especially in the South. Parents told their Southern children that the Union blockade prevented Santa from getting

through. Some went so far as to tell the children that Santa had been shot by Yankees!

The Lincolns spent the first Christmas of 1861 in the White House entertaining and trying to find a diplomatic way out of the Mason-Slidell incident. From 1862 to 1864, the Lincolns spent the next couple of Christmases visiting the wounded in hospitals around Washington. Mary Lincoln and son Tad also raised money to provide a proper holiday for the wounded. Locally, Union shelling from the sea interrupted Christmas in 1864 at Fort Fisher. General Sherman bestowed perhaps the best present of 1864 on President Lincoln. “I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with one hundred and fifty guns and plenty of ammunition, and about 25,000 bales of cotton,” Sherman wrote.

Christmas offered a time for some to escape the war on both sides, however briefly. For others,



it only heightened the horror of what they were living through.

**(Continued on page 8)**

# Incredible Civil War Reunion Topic of January Meeting

It is hard to imagine 55,000 official attendees from 46 of the 48 states plus thousands more descending upon a town of 4,000 (Gettysburg) during the scorching summer of 1913 to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the Civil War. This historic gathering will come to life at our January meeting - **ON WEDNESDAY**, January 8, at Hatch Auditorium - thanks to our guest speaker Thomas Flagel.

With the promise of little more than a cot and two blankets, military fare, and the presence of countless adversaries from a horrific war, 44,713 from the Union side and 8,694 from the Confederate side, soldiers and nurses, some in wheelchairs or on crutches, some without limbs, arrived to visit a time and place in their personal history that involved acute physical and



emotional trauma. The logistics of such an event were staggering, including accommodations (6,000 tents!), meals, sanitation requirements, crowd control, safety precautions, and medical facilities since the average age of attendees was 74 years.

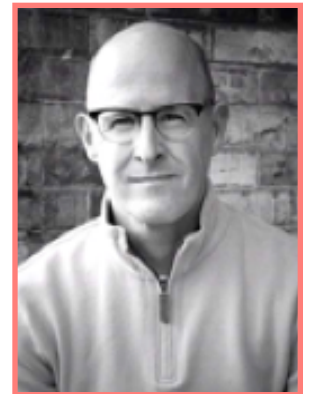
Contrary to popular belief, veterans were not motivated to attend by a desire for reconciliation, nor did the Great Reunion produce a general sense of a reunified country. Flagel will examine how individual

veterans viewed the Reunion, what motivated them to attend, how they acted and reacted once they arrived, and whether these survivors found what they were



personally seeking.

Thomas Flagel is an associate professor of history at Columbia State Community College in Franklin, Tenn. He is extremely active in Civil War preservation and education, authoring numerous books on the war, speaking at meetings, conferences and round tables across the country, and working with the Civil War Trust, the National Park Service, and battlefield commissions.



Please remember our January meeting is **WEDNESDAY**, January 8, at Hatch Auditorium on the grounds of Fort Caswell. Registration and refreshments begin at 6:15 p.m. and the program starts promptly at 7 p.m. The guest admission fee is \$10, and can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues. For more information, contact president Mike Powell at (910) 278-3545, or email to [mikepowell260@gmail.com](mailto:mikepowell260@gmail.com). Our website is [brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com](http://brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com). You may also visit our Facebook page for interesting facts, comments, announcements and updates.

# MISSING: 2,000 BODIES

*A review of Jim McKee's December Presentation*      **By Jim Medeiros**

“Ft. Anderson is the forgotten fort,” Jim McKee tells us. Yet it held the keys to Wilmington. Lost in the end of the Civil War, Wilmington’s fall seems distant in time and reality. The Confederate engineers never forgot its importance and Ft. Anderson (begun as Ft. Phillip) formed a prominent link in the chain of river fortifications. Begun as a two-gun battery atop the ruins of Brunswick Town, Ft. Anderson also served as the primary port for blockade runners. Ships unloaded their goods at Ft. Anderson and then returned to sea, eschewing the trip to Wilmington and avoiding delays of quarantine and other shipping. By the end of the war the few blockade runners that made the full run up the river did so only to effectuate repairs, to trade a special cargo, or because of an important passenger.

In 1864 the fort also supported advanced technology by assembling Civil War torpedoes (think naval mines) to defend the channels. Basically of two types, one torpedo featured a beer barrel (but only after its contents had been properly consumed and cherished) and rather primitive. The other type – a galvanic torpedo – operated with the latest push-button technology. Unlike modern tech where we expect an immediate flash-bang at the push of a button, McKee described pushing the button on galvanic torpedoes yet leaving the operator enough leisure to smoke a cigarette then make and drink a cup of coffee while waiting for the “boom.” Galvanic torpedoes were cutting edge, but the edge wasn’t needle sharp. Nonetheless, the idyllic life at Ft. Anderson ended.

When Ft. Fisher fell the Confederates fell back from Ft. Caswell (first they destroyed the powder magazine, an explosion heard in distant Fayetteville) and Smithville (changed to Southport in 1887), bringing a hodgepodge of troops to Ft. Anderson including a 900-man brigade, the Ft.’s own garrison, and 120 South

Carolina cavalymen. Six thousand Union troops marched from Smithville and, with the help of poor roads the 120 cavalymen delayed them for 12 hours. On February 18 the Federals arrived at Ft. Anderson to find all the trees cut, opening devastating fields of fire. Yet again, the SC cavalry put their thumbs on the scales and delayed Major General Cox and his Union troops who marched fifteen miles around Orton Pond and finally made any Confederate defense untenable.

By 4:30 a.m. the Confederates evacuated the fort. Gloriously victorious, the U.S. Army seized the walls only to frantically signal their surrender with bedsheets when the Union naval squadron resumed its daily bombardment. The Naval commander rowed ashore and accepted the surrender of the Confederate Fort from the Union Army commander, a grand victory for the US Navy over the US Army only rivaled by later intercollegiate football games between their military colleges.

The fiercest battle for the fort, however, involved the 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry and the 25<sup>th</sup> South Carolina. One regimental band commenced playing songs to keep up morale. The opposing line not to be outdone, fired back with a song of its own. Thus began the hour-long battle of the bands, each side firing a musical broadside at the other, piling note upon note in martial bastions in the skies.

A final note deserving further research records 2,000 people succumbing to disease. Thirty-five hundred Black refugees who followed Sherman out of South Carolina had been sent to Ft. Anderson, presumably to use the barracks for temporary shelter. An army surgeon writing in November of 1865 observed the deaths occurred in barely two months. Most horrible and mysterious of all remains the question of where the corpses were buried, a question future archeology (and perhaps Mr. McKee) may answer.

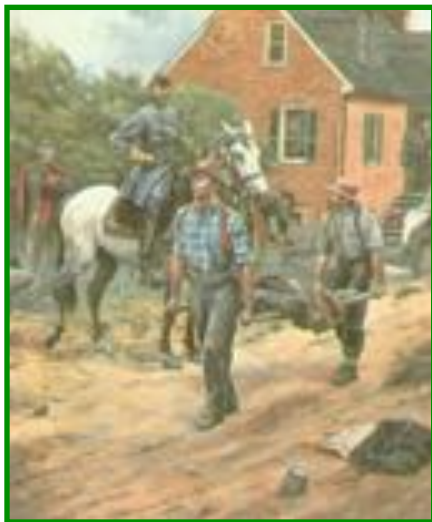
# Ladies' Department — *By Charen Fink*

Much has been written about Civil War medicine, but there is still much more to be learned about ineptness early in the war to modern innovations by war's end. Not only did people not know about microbes and disease, but they had no clue how to treat them. Oh, they had their share of home remedies, but they either were not effective or made a person worse, possibly dying from the "cure."



One of the worse diseases was small pox. However, vaccination had been available and widely used since 1776 when General

George Washington ordered it for all his troops. For several reasons many of the troops on both sides had not been inoculated. The next dreaded disease was typhoid fever (17% of all



military deaths) in 1861. This was caused by unclean water, generally by exposure to human feces. By 1865 the mortality rate was 56% of all who contracted this disease.

Initially each state was responsible for choosing a troop doctor, and some of these

were politically appointed regardless of how qualified they were. Some states required examinations to be done on the men entering service. Of the doctors from the mid-western states, Ohio's doctors were the best. Of the first called volunteers in 1861, twenty percent were discharged for disabilities. The reasons were syphilitics, hernias, no teeth or missing teeth, or men older than 60. One reported case was that of a doctor who examined over 90 recruits in one hour. But the record for speedy physicals took place in Chicago where a doctor had the recruits pass him en masse!

Initially, the major problem was teaching recruits about proper personal hygiene and use of toilet facilities. In some units the men



relieved themselves wherever it was convenient. (This is somewhat understandable considering diarrhea was the most common and deadly disease. More soldiers died from diarrhea and dysentery than from battle wounds.) Officers of the Regular Army indoctrinated their men in the use of latrines and other sanitation methods, lowering the incidence of disease.

Other causes of poor health were food and clothing.

**(Continued on next page)**

## Ladies' Department - Continued from page 4

Initially states were responsible for outfitting the regiments, but then they would present the Federal government with the bill for these items. Some troops were given shoddy uniforms which quickly fell apart after several marches. Rather than using a common kitchen for a company of one hundred men, the soldiers formed informal messes. He who could boil water was



chosen to be cook, otherwise they drew straws. The food was either overcooked, under cooked, extremely salty, too hard to consume without soaking first or fried. Ailments were referred to as "death from the frying pan."

Desiccated vegetables came into being during the war, but the troops called it "decimated vegetables" and not fit for the hogs.

Another food problem was rationing. Each soldier was issued rations for several days but would eat all of it in one day, then go hungry for several days.

Civilian efforts began with relief societies in the South and the Sanitary Commission in the North. The Commission was under the guidance of Dr. Henry Bellows and Mary Livermore who organized the Sanitary Fair to raise funds and supplies for the Northern troops. The women were the ones who did all the work. The South never coordinated their various organizations.

Both sides established Soldier's Homes or Soldier's Rests, the forerunner of the USO.

There will be more on the not so well known women who served and sacrificed to give comfort and aid to sick and wounded soldiers.



### Reference

Denney, Robert E. Civil War Medicine, Care & Comfort of the Wounded. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 1994, pgs. 7-12.

At the January 8 meeting we will elect officers. Here is the slate as recommended by the nominating committee: President - **Mike Powell**. Vice President - **Charen Fink**. Vice President - **Gar Dowell**. Secretary - **Jennifer Chapman**. Treasurer - **Gary Krupp**.

# CIVIL WAR VIEWS

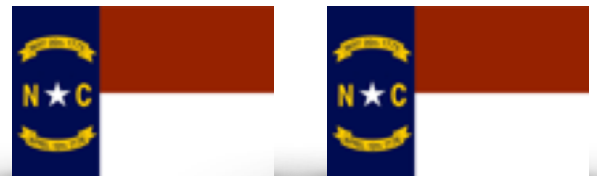
The editors of *Call to Arms* ask you to share your visits to a Civil War battlefield, monument, park, reenactment, or historical site. Simply email your high resolution photo(s) to [egstack@cnsr.com](mailto:egstack@cnsr.com) along with the name of the location, date taken, a short caption, and name of photographer.

[This month we feature two members: John Walsh and friend Edie's visit in December to Camden, SC,; and Jim Johnson and his wife Carol's November trip to New Bern, NC.]



Clockwise from top left: Historic marker for Battle of Boykin's Mill near Camden where the last Union officer of the CW was killed...by the 15 year old son of the mill's owner; monument honoring Confederate dead; the mill as it looks today; historic Bloomsbury Inn (now a B&B), built in 1854 and home to CW diarist Mary Boykin Chestnut and her husband General James Chestnut, an aide to Jefferson Davis. (Photos by John Walsh)

# CIVIL WAR VIEWS - continued from page 6



Clockwise from top left: Entrance to New Bern Battlefield Park where on March 14, 1862, Union forces defeated regiments of NC soldiers who were forced to retreat to Kinston, allowing New Bern to remain under Union control for the remainder of the war; historic marker commemorating the formation of the state's first regiment of black Union soldiers; a replica cannon at the New Bern Battlefield Park information pavilion. *(All photos by Jim Johnson)*

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From **"101 Interesting Civil War Facts,"** Fact Retriever, August 2019: During the Civil War, two percent of the U.S. population died. This is equivalent to six million men today. One of every 65 Federals and one of every 45 Confederates were killed in action. A Civil War soldier's chance of surviving the war was about one in four. By the end of the war, over 618,000 people had died...this is more Americans than WWI, WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined.

# The President's Corner, continued from page 1

I suppose their thoughts were pretty much the same as soldiers throughout history marooned away from home important days.

Christmas - whether in the nineteenth or twenty-first century - is always a big time for kids, a group we should focus on to assure history remains familiar to all generations. I would like for BCWRT to take on the task this coming year of exposing as many young people as possible to Civil War history. I am asking anyone who has a connection with a school to let them know we want to try to work out a program with them. I think we can give every child in class a free book, "Red Badge of Courage" or some other classic that we can acquire large numbers of and for a reasonable price. We encourage you to invite your child's or grandchild's class to one of our meetings. All children and teachers are admitted free. They will all leave with a book. Ensuring our survival will depend on future generations. The trend now is away from preservation, away from teaching the history of the Civil War. Let's at least give it our best shot.

We plan to hold the election of officers at the January 8 meeting. This is the largest turnover of key people that we have experienced and we are taking the extra time to fit the right people to the right job.

Our scheduled speaker, Phillip Gerard, had to cancel his appearance. He took a fall and will be undergoing surgery that will keep him off his feet for some time. We send our best to him and hope his recovery is speedy and complete. To replace Philip, I am pleased that Thomas Flagel will give us a talk on a very interesting topic, the 1913 Gettysburg Reunion. This was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle and the stories of the event are amazing and will surely be entertaining. Remember, it is Wednesday, January 8. See you there. I hope this finds you still enjoying the holiday season.

*Mike*

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## Dan O'Neill Wins Forbes Print

Member Dan O'Neill's lucky ticket was selected at our December meeting, making him the proud owner of the Edwin Forbes print depicting the Battle of Antietam, with Burnside's division charging the bridge over Antietam Creek. Dan bought the winning ticket in November...at his first BCWRT meeting! He stated, "I retired this past year and plan to be a regular at BCWRT meetings. I love to hear the back stories behind historical events, such as the battle at Burnside Bridge." He added, "I look forward to supporting future BCWRT fundraisers whether I win again or not!" Dan, who resides in Caswell Beach, has served as a Town Commissioner since 2013.





# 155<sup>th</sup> Anniversary "Last Grand Charge of the Army of Tennessee"

Bentonville Battlefield Tours

Reserve a Date

February 8, February 22, and March 6, 2020

[tours.bepm.us](http://tours.bepm.us)



As part of the 155th Anniversary of the 1865 Carolinas Campaign, Wade Sokolosky, noted author and historian of the campaign, will lead a special tour in commemoration of the historic "Last Grand Charge of the Army of Tennessee" at the Battle of Bentonville.

Come follow in the footsteps of the army as we explore the Bentonville battlefield examining critical aspects of the Army of Tennessee's role in the battle: its movement to the Carolinas, organization and command, the final charge, and its failure south of the Goldsboro Road. Highlighting the tour is a detailed examination of the wonderfully preserved trenches dug by the army during the battle, parts of which are normally restricted to the public.

Cost is \$25 per person, a portion of which goes directly to Bentonville battlefield preservation. Tour is limited to 25 participants. To maximize time on the battlefield, participants will need to bring their lunch. A cooler will be on hand to keep drinks and food items. Please wear comfortable walking shoes and seasonal wear.

For information on how to reserve your spot contact Wade Sokolosky at (252) 646-5353 or email at [wskolosky1@aol.com](mailto:wskolosky1@aol.com)



## Fort Fisher Battle Reenactment

A commemoration of the 155th anniversary of the second battle of Fort Fisher will be held on Saturday and Sunday, January 18 & 19 2020, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. The program will feature a tactical battle scenario (at 1 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. Sunday) with hundreds of reenactors in period uniforms. It will also include living history demonstrations, musket demonstrations, artillery firings, period music, guided tours and special guest speakers to educate and entertain.

There is no charge for this event, however donations would be appreciated.

This event will be held at Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd South, Kure Beach.

NOTE: THE SOUTHPORT-FORT FISHER FERRY WILL BE OUT OF SERVICE BEGINNING ON JANUARY 6 FOR APPROXIMATELY THREE MONTHS. YOU WILL NEED TO DRIVE NORTH ON ROUTE 17, THEN DOWN THROUGH CAROLINA BEACH TO FORT FISHER. For more information Google "155th Fort Fisher".



## Pictured at our December 3 Meeting

Speaker Jim McKee and 389 attendees (including 23 new members and 14 guests!) were present for our December 3 meeting. Some of the happy attendees, including the \$150 winner of our 50/50 raffle, paused for our cameras. *(Photos by Tish Gordon and E. Gifford Stack)*



## Pictured at our December 3 Meeting - Continued



Question: When is the January meeting?

Answer: WEDNESDAY, January 8.

## **MUSTER NOTES and NOTABLES**

**The January meeting of the BCWRT is WEDNESDAY, January 8, 2020. The meeting will be held at Hatch Auditorium, NC Baptist Assembly, Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC.**

**Registration and refreshments begin at 6:15 p.m., and the meeting starts promptly at 7 p.m.**

**BCWRT is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, co-founded by Tom O'Donnell and Wally Rueckel, and organized in May 2010.**

**The BCWRT website, [brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com](http://brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com), contains helpful information and is available to everyone, no user name or password required. Our Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcivilwarroundtable/>. Visit both sites to learn of future speakers, trips, and interesting Civil War information.**

### **2019 Officers, Directors, Advisors, and Liaisons**

**Mike Powell: President & Director**

**Charen Fink: VP, Director & Ladies' Forum Coord.**

**Jim Johnson: VP, Director & Ft. Fisher Liaison**

**Jennifer Chapman: Secretary & Director**

**Gary Krupp: Treasurer & Director**

**Tish Gordon: Director**

**Kathy O'Donnell: Director**

**Chuck Roedema: Director**

**E. Gifford Stack: Director**

**Peter Carmichael: Advisor**

**Jack Carpenter: Advisor & Ft. Anderson Liaison**

**Chris Fonvielle: Advisor**

**Ken Keast: Advisor**

**Tom Kehoe: Advisor**

**Paul Laird: Advisor**

**Jim McKee: Advisor**

**Roy Pender: Advisor**

**Leslie Rivers: Advisor**

**Wally Rueckel: Advisor**

**Lori Sanderlin: Advisor**

**Dave Shultz: Advisor**

**Wade Sokolosky: Advisor**

**Len Trizinsky: Advisor**

**Peter Whalen: Advisor**

**Max Williams: Advisor Emeritus**

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***Call to Arms editor:***

***E. Gifford Stack ([egstack@cnsps.com](mailto:egstack@cnsps.com))***

