



The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

The *RUNNER*

Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

Editor **Bob Cooke**

February 2009

Our next meeting will be 12 February 2009 at the Cape Fear Club, 206 Chestnut St. at 6:30 p.m.



Our speaker for our dinner meeting at the renowned Cape Fear Club will be **Rod Andrew Jr.** who will speak on Wade Hampton. Join us for “An Evening With Wade Hampton” as **Mr. Andrews** expounds on his latest book, *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior to Southern Redeemer*. Mr. Andrew, a native of Wilmington and graduate of Hoggard High School, went on to get his degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill, Clemson University and (his PhD) from the University of Georgia (1997). Mr. Andrew served a stint in the Marine Corps (1989-1991) and has taught at both the University of Georgia as well as the Citadel. Rod is the son of Rod Andrew, Sr. More about Wade Hampton: He was one of the richest men in the pre-war South; he had no formal military training and yet rose to the second highest rank in the army. Starting out in the infantry, he became legendary when he assumed a cavalry command. One of his most famous deeds was staged in September 1864 when he raided north and returned with 2,500 head of much-needed cattle. Please join us on the 12th for what promises to be a great evening of camaraderie, food and Civil War history!



From the *Star-News* (via Bruce Patterson):

Confederate Raider Cannons Preserved.

After more than eight years of work, scientists say two cannons from the Confederate raider **CSS Alabama** have been preserved at the same lab conserving another Civil War artifact, the Confederate submarine **H.L. Hunley**. [The work will be done at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center, located on Charleston's Old Naval Base.]

Lying in 200 feet of water off the coast of Cherbourg, France, the **C.S.S. Alabama** has given up two of the several guns she carried: six 32 pdrs. (mounted in broadside) and two pivot guns (one a 100-pdr. Blakely was lifted from the wreck in 1994, the other gun was a smooth-bore 8") constituted her armament. She was the most widely feared Confederate raider and also the most successful. After a battle with the **U.S.S. Kearsarge** that lasted nearly an hour and a half, the **Alabama** went under. She had fired 370 shots, her adversary, 173; the Union gunners proved to be better shots, although historians now seem to agree that the Alabama's gunners were hampered by the fact that they had bad gunpowder (damp powder and faulty fuses) and many shots failed to explode. One non-exploding shell hit the **Kearsarge's** room, another dud hit the rudder; either of these would have seriously injured the Union vessel and may have turned the tide of battle. The unexploded shell, stuck in the rudderpost, was later presented to President Lincoln as a trophy of war.

Some more interesting facts:

John Ancrum Winslow, Captain of the **U.S.S. Kearsarge** was a native of Wilmington, North Carolina. Captain Raphael Semmes surrendered to Union forces in Greensboro, North Carolina. Before the war, both men were friends and shared the same quarters when stationed aboard the **U.S.S. Raritan**. Well after the war had ended, (December 1865) Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles ordered Semmes arrest on the charge that he had "violated the 'usages of war.'" Semmes would later be pardoned and set free, much to Welles' chagrin. In the Alabama Claims, Great Britain was forced to pay for the damages wrought by the Confederate raiders. She paid out \$15,500,000 in gold to the United States. Of that amount, the Alabama was responsible for \$6,750,000.



At our last meeting we were treated to an excellent talk by **Mr. Tom Belton** who brought to light the extraordinary collection of (Orderly Sergeant) **Alfred May** of the 61st North Carolina. Presently residing in the Museum of History at Raleigh, it is the most complete accoutrement collection of any Confederate soldier. Born in March 1843, **Alfred** was listed in the 1860 census as a "student" but would shortly afterwards enlist in Co. F of the 61st Regiment. Alfred had two older brothers, one of whom, Robert, would die in a Richmond hospital in 1864. The other, Benjamin, would suffer a head wound at Petersburg, but as for Alfred, he survived and served through the entire war. May served in the eastern part of the state, as well as at Charleston's battery Wagner and Savannah. In December 1864, May's regiment was sent to the aid of beleaguered **Fort Fisher** and participated in the battles at Wyse Fork's and Bentonville. His regiment was surrendered at Bennett Place in late

April 1865. As for **Alfred**, he lived until March, 1906.

After referring to the **May** collection as similar to the King Tut collection, Tom proved his statement by showing us slides of **May's** uniform, which initially suffered from insect damage. Kudos to those conservators who brought not only the uniform, but all the items in the collection (which had been stored in a trunk) back to life. He noted that there are less than 200 uniforms extant, most of those in private hands. Only 200 left from various sources: captures from the Union, through the blockade and from local manufacture.

The collection included **May's** rifle, indicating that **May** never officially surrendered. Most interesting about the various implements was a tool obviously designed for the Enfield rifle. Even the experts could not conclude exactly what it was for! **May's** cartridge box, although stiff from age, was X-rayed and showed it was full of cartridges. **May's** Colt pistol was also still loaded and required the assistance of the SBI to remove the rounds. Using compressed air, the Colt six-shooter was made safe.

A shelter half, knapsack, haversack, two canteens (one wooden, one metal) and a host of personal items were discovered in the old **May** trunk. The survival of the artifacts was due in large part, **Mr. Belton** told us, to not allowing the children to play with the items. The trunk was brought out at family reunions and the collection was shown to family members and then everything was packed away. My question, which will likely remain unanswered, is what was a sea shell doing in **May's** jacket pocket?



Raffle Winners

Civil War Print- **Mark Lewis**

Gordon of Khartoum- **Joshua McLamb**

Gettysburg- **Dick Covell**

Pearl Harbor- **Jim Vaugh**

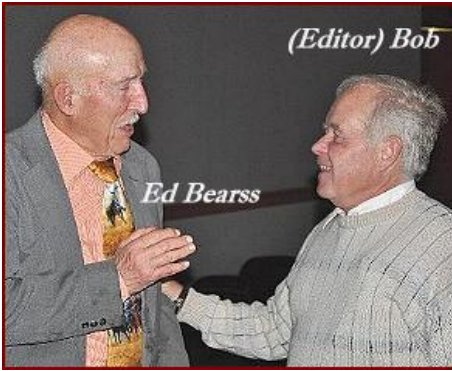
Rebel Raiders- **Ed Gibson**

Potter's Raid- **Becky Sawyer**

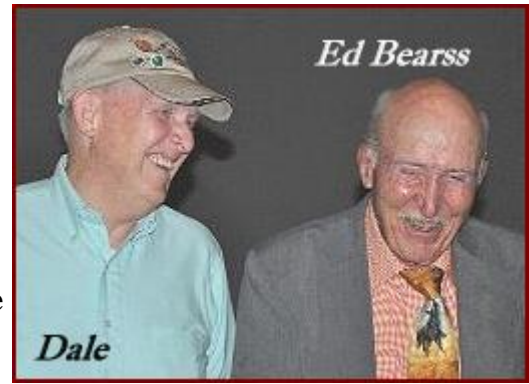
(Grand Prize)- *Don Troiani's Civil War*- **Gary Henderson**



Prelude to Our Spring Trip



Several of our RT members traveled recently to New Bern where they were treated to a discourse on the battle that took place there in 1862 by the renowned historian, **Mr. Ed Bearss**. Meeting in the historic Masonic Temple, **Ed Gibson, Dale Lear,**



Harry Clements (thanks to **Harry Clements** for providing the images), **Lance Bevins, Jack McGarrie, Bob Cooke, Tim Winstead** and guest **Nathan Alexander** listened as Mr. Bearss set the stage with Burnside's successful attack on Roanoke Island in February 1862.

The following month the Federals moved on to the mainland with Federal gunboats shelling the landing site. As the Federals made their way towards the city, the Confederate defenders, numbering no more than four thousand, awaited the coming battle. Under the command of Lawrence O'Bryan Branch (who, as Mr. Bearss noted, had a short time to live), the men were spread from Fort Thompson across a line of entrenchments (including a brick yard) beyond the rail line. The Federals, after being stopped by a hot fire from the defenders, discovered a break in the confederate line at the brick yard. Concentrating their attack at this point, the Federals broke through and scattered most of the Confederates there. Seeing this breakthrough, the Union commander, General John Foster, ordered the entire brigade to charge. This charge carried the entire works and led to the loss of New Bern.

Mr. Bearss gave a brief biography of several of the participants in his own inimitable style and after the talk received a hearty round of applause. We were even able to snap a few photos with Mr. Bearss, who, as always, was quite genial. A reception followed Mr. Bearss' talk.

