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# The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

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## The *RUNNER*

### Newsletter of The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

Editor **Bob Cooke**

October 2010

Our next meeting will be **Thursday, 14 October 2010 at St. Andrew's On-the-Sound (Airlie Rd.) Social Hour at 6:30 p.m., meeting at 7:30 p.m.**



Our guest speaker for October will be **Mr. Clint Johnson**, author of several books on the Civil War. Mr. Johnson lives in the mountains of Ashe County looking down on the New River, oddly enough, supposedly one of the oldest rivers in the world. He has written ten books on the Civil War or the South, including: *A Vast and Fiendish Plot: The Attack on New York City and Pursuit: The Chase Capture, Persecution and Surprising Release of Jefferson Davis* (this is the topic of his power point presentation to our RT). Mr. Johnson has also written, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to the South* and coming in 2010 will be updates of his two touring books: *Touring the Carolinas Civil War Sites and Touring Virginia and West Virginia's Civil War Sites*.

He is a Florida native of the small farming community of Fish Branch in Hardee County. That is about 40 miles south of Fort Meade, Florida, the fort at which Lt. Thomas J. Jackson was serving when he was put under arrest for questioning the morals of his superior officer. As a child Clint day-dreamed that Jackson patrolled the dirt road in front of his house. Later research showed that Jackson never came within 40 miles of Clint's house- which still disappoints him!

#### **Raffle Winners:**

*Secret Mission of the Civil War* - **Ed Hickmon**

*Drawn to Civil War* - **Mary Royal**

*A Politician Goes to War* - **Ed Gibson**

*Lady of Arlington* - **John Bolger**

*Piercing the Heartland* - **Gary Henderson**

*Lincoln- A Photo biography* - **Vince Myers**

Everyone knows that famous photograph of three Confederate soldiers standing atop Seminary Ridge; according to one report, they were "among 5,425 unwounded soldiers" captured by Union General Meade's army. What you may not have known is that they are North Carolinians. That was but one of the tidbits **Mr. Jeff Bockert** gave us at our September meeting with a talk entitled: "The Uniforms of Fort Fisher." Mr. Bockert began with the statement that, as there are no longer any veterans left, it is via the study of material culture- i.e. the material "things" we have left from that era that we may examine and learn from. Thus it is with a uniform that hangs in a museum: It was worn by a soldier and has a story to tell.

When North Carolina entered the war, she was ill-prepared to clothe and equip the many regiments that would be needed in the conflict. In May 1861, a Uniform Panel Board met to design a suitable uniform for the new Provisional Army of the Confederacy (PACS). Following an Austrian design, soldiers would wear a hip length, double breasted tunic with service facings indicating branch of service (light blue for infantry, red for artillery, yellow for cavalry). It was quickly realized that Richmond would be unable to clothe all the soldiers being enlisted, so the "Commutation System" was utilized. States would step into the gap and provide uniforms for their native sons and the Confederate government would give the state \$50 for each man thus clothed. In September 1861, North Carolina began to produce uniforms for its men as state agents were sent throughout the Confederacy seeking to buy cloth and leather. They were competing against other state agents and the Confederate government as well. This competition tended to drive up prices. All material went to the newly established NC Depot and material obtained was "outsourced" to tailors and local seamstresses to produce the finished product.

North Carolina then turned to foreign markets to fill its need for uniform cloth. From 1861 through 1864, according to Jeff, 255,000 jackets and 300,000 trousers were produced from the NC Depot. Donated clothing was another "important source" for the soldiers; even carpeting, once lined, became used as coats and blankets.

Imports from England accounted for 20% of all socks, 70% of all shoes and 100% of all blankets issued by North Carolina from July 1863 to September 1864. The NC Depot clothing was somewhat different than the uniforms from other states, hence it is a little easier to pick out a North Carolina trooper. At Fort Fisher, even though the site was the "entrepot" for uniforms and cloth, the men received uniforms at different times and no two companies looked alike. Even the men of the same company many times showed up wearing a variety of uniforms. As the soldiers were artillerymen, they all wore some sort of red piping somewhere on their caps and jackets. Later in the war, some Confederates might be seen wearing a "Tait" jacket. In Ireland, Robert Tait began producing an eight-button jacket with royal blue trousers and exporting them to the Confederacy. They were based on the British Army uniform.

Viewing a Frank Vizetelly (of the London Illustrated News) print, Mr. Bockert indicated that Vizetelly literally drew what he saw and the men and uniforms he sketched were quite accurate. Finally, Mr. Bockert told of the 92,000 uniform suits left in a Raleigh warehouse after the war. There are quite a few stories of these uniforms being issued to German POWs in World War I. If true, as most believe) the uniforms would most likely not have survived, making the uniform worn by the common soldier of North Carolina a very rare piece of history.

