

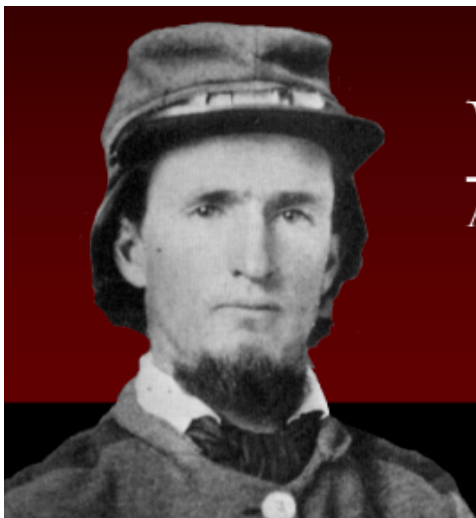
COMPANY FRONT

THE SOCIETAL MAGAZINE OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA

ISSUE 2, 2007

— 26 NC —
BURGESS MILL
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ISSUE # 2, 2007

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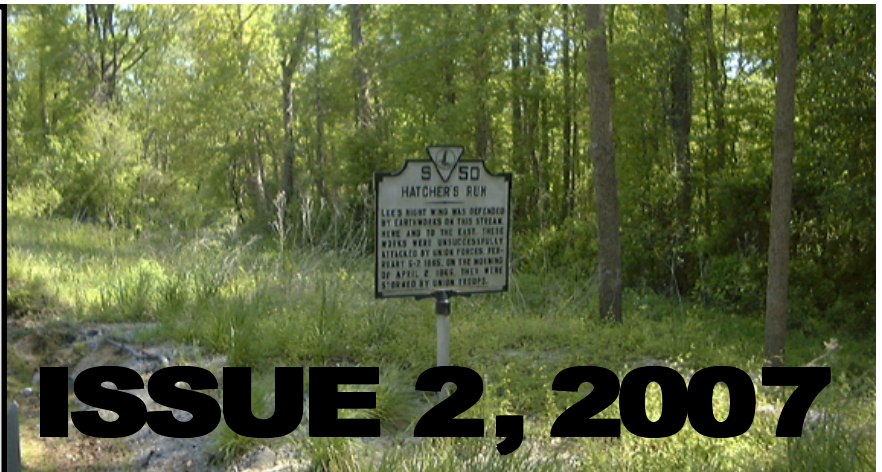
Front Cover

26 NC Flag
Captured at the Battle of Burgess Mill
Restored in 2004
and now on display at the North Carolina Museum of History
Image Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History

Above Illustration

Historical Marker for Hatcher's Run
on the Burgess Mill Battlefield

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Skip Smith



THE BATTLE OF BURGESS MILL

FORWARD

By: Jeff H. Stepp

The following article is an outgrowth of the address I was kindly asked to deliver in 2004 on the occasion of the ceremonies surrounding the completion of the conservation efforts directed toward the regimental colors of the 26th North Carolina Troops. Those colors had been captured at the engagement which took place at Burgess Mill, Va. on October 27th, 1864. The telling of the story of the flag's capture led me to the conclusion that the fight at Burgess Mill was one worthy of additional research and study. At first glance it appeared little had been done to document exactly what had happened there and with additional scrutiny the ebb and flow of the engagement that slowly unfolded began to fascinate me. None of the principle Confederate commanders wrote after action reports with the notable exception of Wade Hampton who well explained in his the role of the cavalry in the fight. Harry Heth wrote no report and the engagement merited absolutely no mention in his post war memoirs. Little is mentioned by the senior Federal commanders as well, however the subordinate US officers at division and brigade level generally all left reports found in the published volumes of the Official Records. Grant, who had ordered the movement at Gen. Meade's suggestion, summed up the action in one sparse paragraph in his memoirs, bluntly declaring the entire expedition a failure.

In the several years since my speech, I have made a number of trips to the area of the battle to observe the ground and road network, some of whose features remain amazingly intact and similar to their wartime configuration. I have, as well, accumulated a fair amount of additional primary and secondary source material and it is my hope to publish a fuller treatment of the 1864 Burgess Mill engagement when I am more satisfied that I have sifted through the principle extant sources. As such, I look upon this effort very much as an ongoing one and trust that this initial offering may shed some needed light on this little known fight in which the regimental colors of the unit you humbly portray were lost - the same which you folks came to the rescue of in yet another hour of need.

I consider myself privileged to be among the company of those whose admiration for that remarkable generation of North Carolinians remains strong. Certainly their legacy is still worthy of our efforts to remember them as well as preserving the relics they left behind for us to cherish and protect.

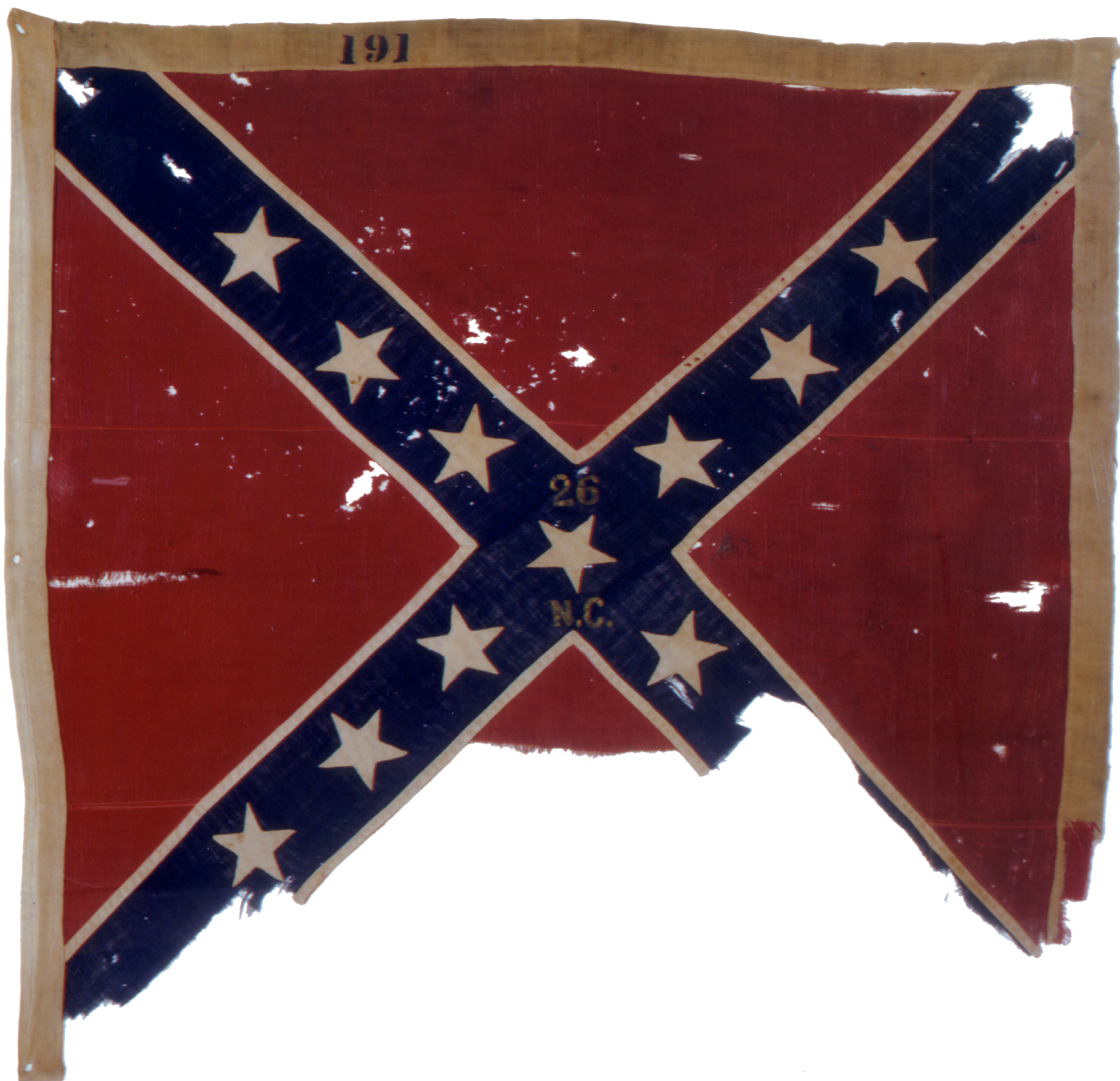


Image Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History

DISASTER NEARLY AVERTED

THE BATTLE AT BURGESS MILL, VA. OCTOBER 27TH, 1864

By: Jeff H. Stepp

The winter of 1864 was unlike the war's previous winters during which the armies ended active campaigning and erected winter quarters well before the end of October. This year was different on a number of levels. Chief among them was that all northern armies were now commanded by one man - Lt.Gen. U.S. Grant, who realized that the reelection of President Abraham Lincoln, was far from being a sure thing. Perhaps... just perhaps, if he were able to orchestrate a successful stab at Lee's vaunted army and seal off the last rail line into the besieged city of Petersburg, the war could be concluded by year's end simply by starving the Rebs out of both Petersburg and Richmond, both of which were dependent upon the supplies brought in by rail. At the very least, a decisive fight resulting in the favor of Union arms would be a big plus in the reelection efforts of the struggling presidency.

Thus, during the third week of October when George Gordon

Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac, suggested a move against what was then believed to be the lightly defended Confederate right below Petersburg, Grant wasted little time in refining Meade's plans issuing orders for the movement to occur on October 27th. This was to be no mere feint, but rather a serious attempt involving parts of three Federal corps, the Second, Fifth and Eleventh, along with a division of cavalry.

The pre dawn hours of October 27th, 1864 were all the more foreboding for the periodic downpours that had commenced overnight. It had proven, no doubt, all too brief for the men who would soon be locked in mortal combat upon the banks of Hatcher's Run. Shortly before 2:30 am, in obedience to orders, Sgt. Alonzo Smith began rousing the men of Company C, "The Jonesville Light Guard," 7th Michigan Infantry from their soggy bedding. The 7th Michigan would be a part of the 125 regiment strike force pieced together

to seize the coveted Southside Railroad. They were told that if successful, the movement could force the evacuation of the Cockade City and perhaps Richmond as well.

All Sgt. Smith knew that morning was that he and his mess mates were expected to be formed up and ready to march by 3:00 am. At this early hour the sound of sucking mud in the wet darkness portended a miserable marching day for both man and beast. Before the war in 1860 Smith, a native of Niagara County New York, had traveled in search of better prospects to Michigan. Upon the commencement of hostilities he enlisted there at age 19 on August 9th, 1861. His service had thus far been honorably marked by wounds sustained at both Antietam and Gettysburg with subsequent steady promotion through the ranks.

Further to the northwest, a mere five miles or so as the crow flies, 22 year old Private Thomas Minton of Company C, "The Wilkes Volunteers," 26th Regiment North



The Hart House on the Burgess Mill Battlefield. McRae's Brigade and the 26th NCT were encamped near here on the morning of the 27th

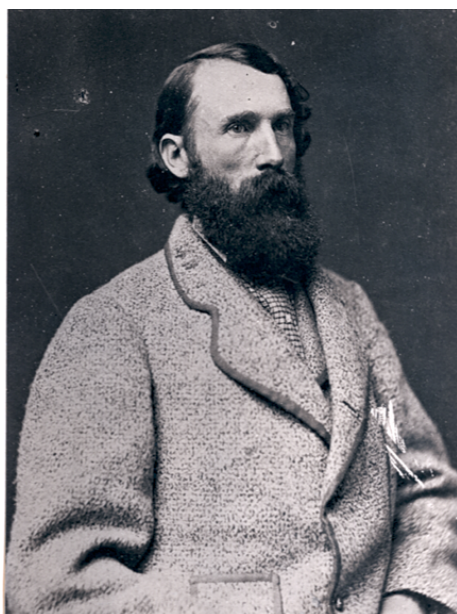
Carolina Troops, doubtless continued his damp slumbers in the camp of Heth's Division near the Hart House located close by the intersection of the Boydton Plank and Duncan Roads. Perhaps he dreamed of loved ones far way in the rugged hills of Wilkes County where he had en-

listed, in what surely seemed a lifetime ago, on June 12th, 1861. Perhaps too this cool and wet October night gave rise to visions of snug quarters in which to better endure his fourth winter of the war which the active operations of Heth's Division had thus far denied them the chance

to build.

In the 26th's great crucible at Gettysburg, Minton had been wounded in the left arm and captured. Slow recovery from this wound complicated by the harsh conditions suffered during his imprisonment at Davids Island New York had left him so emaciated that when he was exchanged in September of 1863 he was carried on the company rolls as absent due to wounds or on light duty through June of 1864. Since returning to the ranks his cool steadfastness had earned him the honor of often carrying the colors of his regiment. He had become something of a legend within the 26th back in August during the battle at Reams Station. Minton, who was serving that day as color bearer for the 26th, received a summons from none other than General Heth himself who demanded that he turn over the flag to him so that he could personally set an example before the men for the charge he was about to order. Private Minton gamely responded to the general's demand by replying, "General, tell me where you want the flag

Lieut. General A.P. Hill

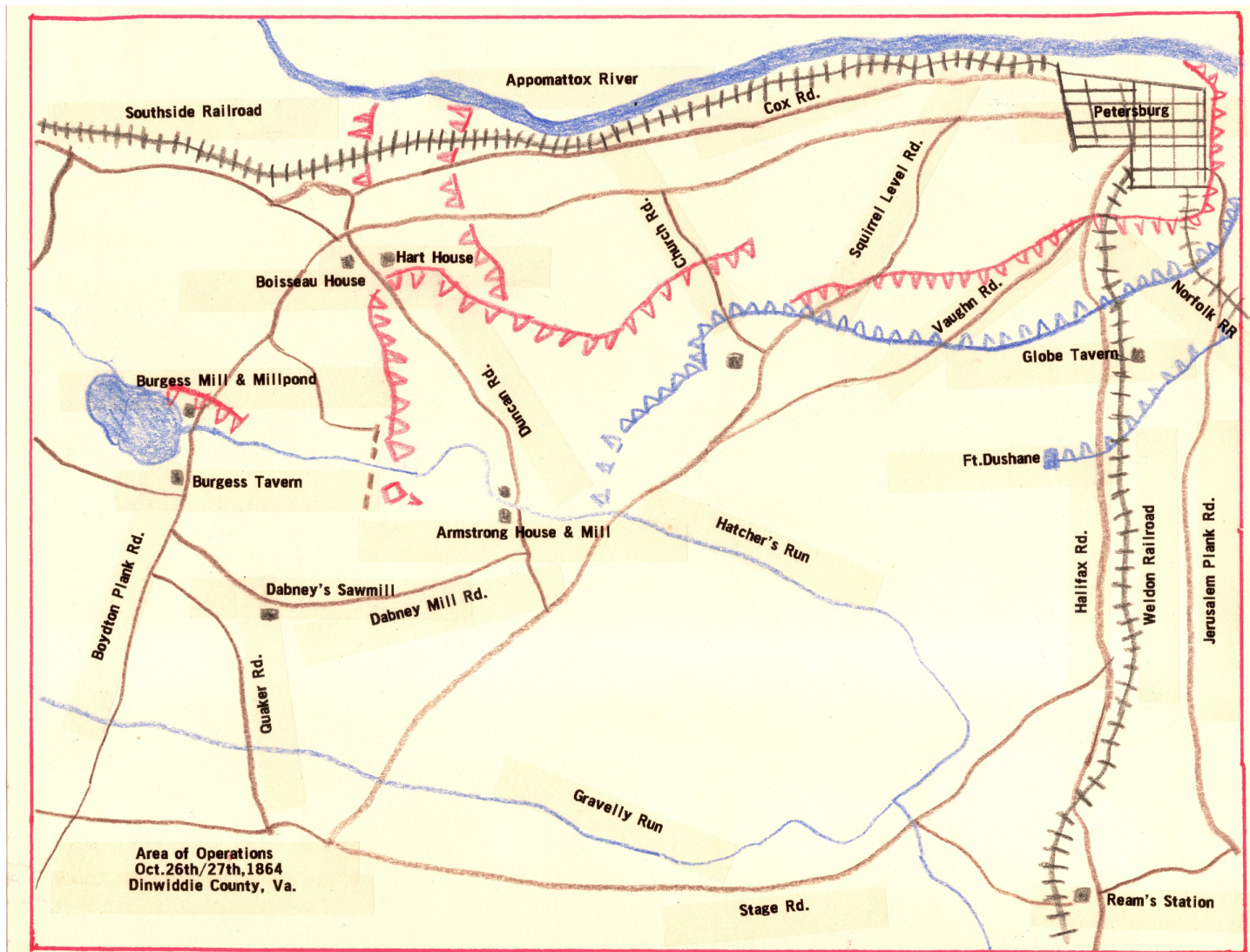


Maj. General Henry Heth



Brig. General William McRae





Operational Map for the Battle of Burgess Mill

to go and I will take it." Heth continued to argue with Minton endeavoring to convince him to at least temporarily turn the flag over to him; but was met with Minton's continued reluctance to give up his precious charge. In exasperation and anxious to commence his advance, Heth compromised and said to Minton, "Come on then, we will carry the colors together." Presented with the novel sight of their division commander advancing arm in arm with the plucky color bearer, the men of McRae's brigade charged with a yell and overran the Union position.

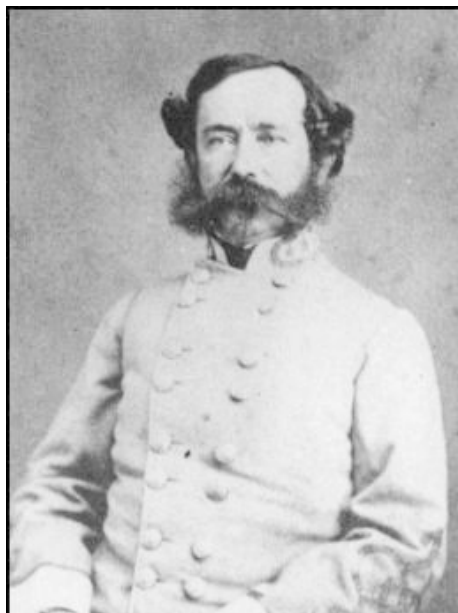
The gathering blue host to the

south would soon enough ensure that whatever peace Minton presently enjoyed would soon cease. By 3:30 am six enemy infantry divisions, along with Gregg's cavalry division, some 43,000 in all had commenced marching toward their objective of severing the Southside railroad. Grant's plan was for Hancock's Second Corps troops to swing south and then west by way of country roads to strike the Boynton Plank Road near its intersection with the Quaker Road, then form line of battle and sweep northwestward toward the railroad. Hancock was told that Confederate defenses in this sector were

incomplete and only lightly manned by cavalry. The Fifth and Eleventh corps elements would move directly westward along Hatcher's Run through heavily wooded and swampy terrain traversed at best by narrow cart paths and fix the Confederate infantry in place at what was believed to be their extreme right. In this way Hancock's approach along the axis of the Boynton Plank Road would remain largely uncontested. At the same time Grant ordered Butler's Army of the James to demonstrate against Richmond in order to prevent Lee from reinforcing his lines south of the river at Petersburg.



Major Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock



Maj. General Wade Hampton



Lt. Col. James T. Adams

While Grant was correct that only Hampton's cavalry would initially be in position to contest Hancock's advance, this feisty South Carolinian had not remained idle. In cooperation with Heth's infantry not only had he completed a solid line of works across the Boydton Plank Road but had also dammed up Hatcher's Run at the Burgess mill-pond creating a sizable artificial lake

Burgess Mill Pond which was flooded by Gen. Hampton's troopers to secure his right flank



to anchor the extreme right of the position upon. Hampton had also wisely established advance posts throughout the area in which any Federal columns would likely traverse. So thorough were his preparations that within less than an hour of the enemy's start he was aware of the movements of their columns.

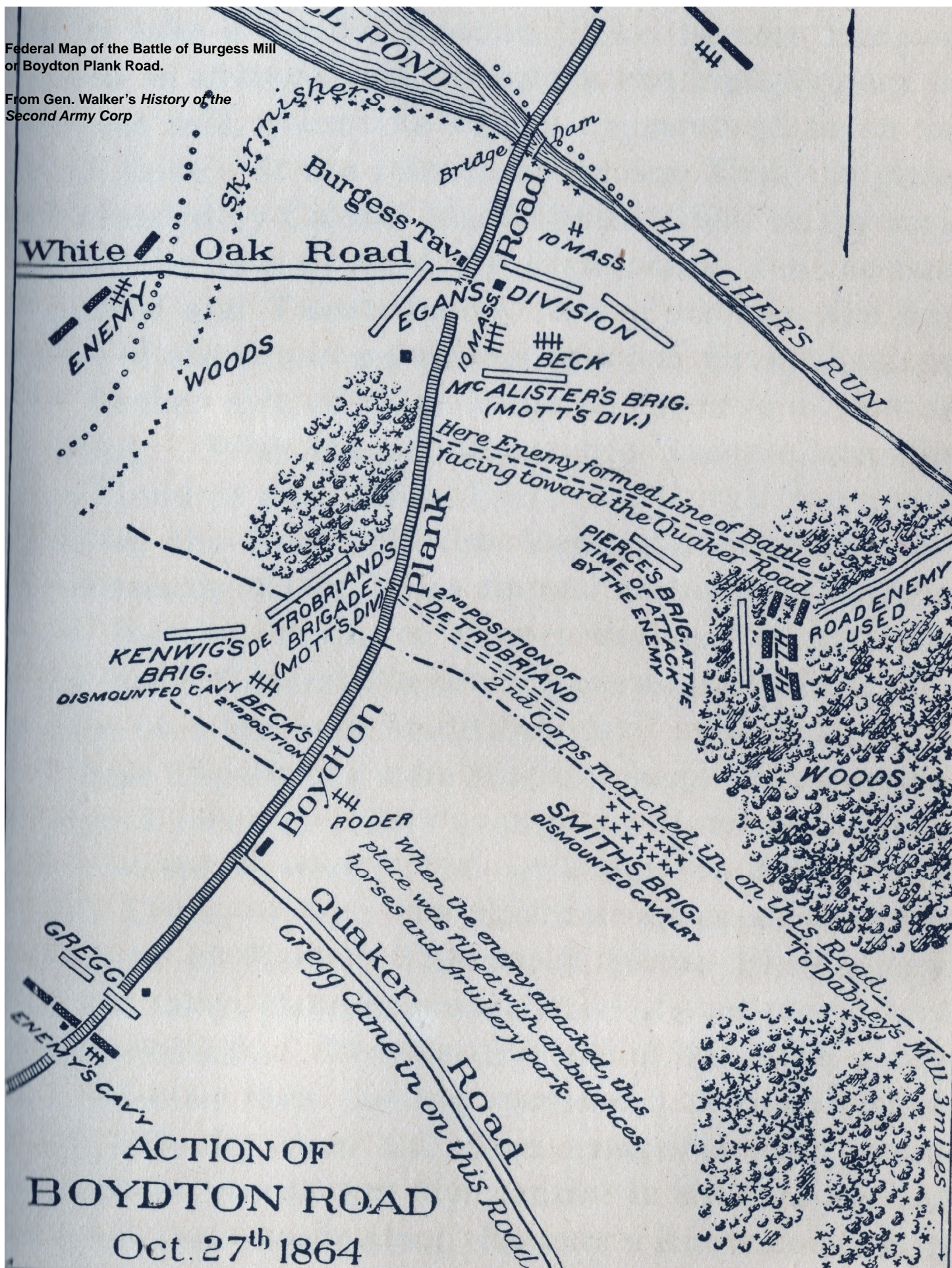
Hancock's troops, having the furthest distance to travel to their

objective, almost immediately found their progress contested by southern troopers at every creek crossing and hillock favorable to disputing their march. The Fifth and Eleventh Corps columns quickly became disoriented and lost in the difficult ground they were expected to traverse. The Federal strategy, grand in design, was unraveling at an alarming speed. Hampton promptly sent word to A.P. Hill of the enemy's movements. Hill, battling illness, would be unable to take the field. He issued orders to generals Heth and Mahone to contend with developments and turned over-all tactical control of the effort, in his absence, to General Heth.

The distant popping of musketry to the south had roused the men of Heth's Division and they anxiously awaited developments. No doubt Minton assembled the color guard of the 26th and proceeded, as regulations called for, to the tent of the Colonel to receive the regimental standard. As Colonel John R. Lane was absent recuperating from a wound received at Reams Station, 25 year old Lt.Col. James T. Adams was in command and would have ten-

Federal Map of the Battle of Burgess Mill
or Boydton Plank Road.

From Gen. Walker's History of the
Second Army Corp



dered the flag to Minton's care. Minton's gaze probably was drawn to the scarred banner placed into his hands. It had been in the care of the Regiment since October of 1863 when, by contract to the quartermaster department, Richmond sign painter Lewis Montague completed it by painting the regimental designation upon it. Since then these colors had served as the heart and soul of the regiment during the many fierce engagements which ensued.

Sgt. Alonzo Smith must have found the constant stopping and starting of the marching columns, accompanied with the distant firing ahead, an ill omen for success. Only when Hancock was able to establish a measure of concert with Gregg's Union cavalry were Hampton's troopers swept aside and the Boydton Plank Road gained at about 9:00 am. As Hancock's troops deployed in line they were presented with a startling and unexpected sight. Instead of an

open road, complete and well defended breastworks blocked their way at the Hatcher's Run crossing. As the Fifth and Eleventh Corps troops remained hopelessly entangled in swampy terrain further east, the Federal high command realized that Hancock's men would alone have to suffice if their plan still had any hope for success.

As the Federal lines emerged into the clearing at the intersection of the Quaker and Boydton Plank roads they immediately came under the fire of Confederate batteries situated to the north near Burgess Tavern and northwest along the White Oak Road. Harry Heth rapidly interposed his division into the works between Hancock's men and the sought after Southside Railroad. Heth shook out Davis' brigade to man the line at the Hatcher's Run crossing and the rest of his brigades kept a watchful eye out for the bogged down Fifth and Eleventh Corps

troops further to their left. Hampton withdrew his cavalry to harass the left flank of the advancing enemy and word was sent to Fitzhugh Lee's brigade, now located south of where the Federals had gained their lodgment, to advance northward up the Boydton Plank Road and threaten the Union rear.

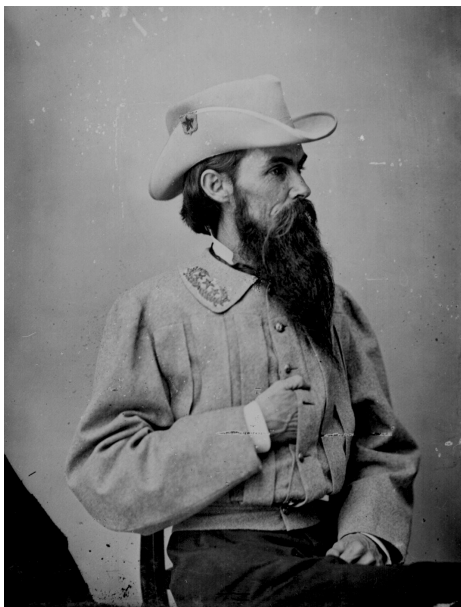
Sweeping in line of battle northwestward, Brig.Gen. Thomas Egan, acting commander of Gibbon's 2nd Division Second Corps, overran the advance Confederate position at Burgess Tavern. Hancock's pleasure with the opening phases of the engagement soon dissolved when an order from army headquarters was received informing him to halt any further advance toward the railroad and reorient his line to contend directly with the Confederate works along Hatcher's Run. This had become necessary as the supporting troops from the other two corps were still struggling through the swamps

A portion of the earthworks occupied by McRae's Brigade. These works were occupied by the 11 NC



Brig. General Thomas Egan





Maj. General William Mahone

to the east and were not yet in position to support Hancock's right flank thus creating a sizable gap between the US formations.

Harry Heth, being informed by his scouts of this gap, sensed a chance to isolate Hancock's troops and beat them in detail before the other Union forces could come into play. At about 2:00 p.m. two of William Mahone's brigades arrived as reinforcements. The same difficult terrain plaguing the Yanks had also taken a toll during Mahone's march with one of his brigades becoming lost along the way. Heth detached McRae's brigade from his own division and lent it to Mahone in order to form a strike force of sufficient strength to pierce through the opening now existing between Hancock's and the other Federal corps. These 3 brigades would ford Hatcher's Run and strike through the woods on a farm path that would place them on Hancock's right flank while Davis' brigade would create a frontal demonstration at the Boydton Plank Rd crossing to keep the attention of the enemy toward his front.



Brig. General Pierce

While Hancock reoriented his line both generals Grant and Meade arrived on the scene to consult with him. It was plain that any chance of success rested solely with Hancock now that the other troops had been stopped short. Grant was particularly anxious of the results since the political consequences far outweighed the military ones given the upcoming election. So troubled was Grant that he conducted a personal reconnaissance of the battlefield. By mid afternoon he was satisfied that Hancock had little chance of forcing or turning the formidable Confederate defenses and he ordered Hancock to hold his current position, if practicable, until the next day. Grant and Meade then rode off to see if any hope still remained in getting the Fifth and Eleventh Corps troops into a more favorable position. Grant and Meade's party rode down an obscure path leading off of Hancock's right but found that if they continued by this way they would likely become victims to Mahone's rapidly advancing flank attack. The hasty return of the generals and their es-

cort back along the path they had just gone down gave scant notice, at the time, of trouble to those who may have observed it.

Scarcely several hundred yards from the fleeing general in chief and the commander of the Army of the Potomac, Mahone's force, less yet another brigade that had become lost in the tangled terrain, advanced through the dense woods toward the enemy's unguarded flank, preceded by a heavy line of skirmishers. The right of Hancock's now northward facing line was Pierce's Brigade of Gersham Mott's 3rd Division which was placed upon open ground slightly to the right rear of Hancock's main line and supported by six guns of the 5th US Artillery. Hearing fire coming from the woods to his right, Pierce ordered his brigade to change front so as to be prepared to meet any threat to his exposed right flank. While this evolution was in progress McRae's and Weisinger's brigades burst from the tree line. One of McRae's men related that, "We found them behind an old rail fence at the edge of a field, and our rifles and the rebel yell both began to ring at the same time." McRae's advance placed him perfectly on the flank of the startled Yanks. Soon the 5th Michigan and 93rd New York were rolled up by the Tarheels. Weisinger's Virginians apparently found the going tougher as they immediately lagged behind leaving McRae alone in any further advance. Billy McRae, undismayed, continued his charge pushing back the remainder of Pierce's stunned brigade and capturing two of the 5th US's guns before the frenzied efforts of the crews could safely remove them from the path of the gray storm. With Mahone and his fellow



McRae's Brigade advanced from the far treeline to flank Pierce's line.



Weisinger's Brigade advanced from the far treeline toward the Dabney Mill Road.

Virginians nowhere in sight, McRae's advance had now amazingly carried him completely across the rear of two divisions of Hancock's Corps gaining a lodgment on his principal line of communication, the Boydton Plank Road.

Sgt. Alonzo Smith and the men of the 7th Michigan had thus far been only lightly engaged, having been detached from their brigade to shield the left and rear of the Union line from Hampton's ever hovering gray cavalry. The 7th Michigan, along with the 1st Minnesota, had occupied a small wood just to the southwest of the White Oak and Boydton Plank Road intersection facing to the west. The ominous sound of steadily approaching fighting now wafted in from a most disturbing direction - their rear.

As the North Carolinians reached the Boydton Plank Road, McRae observed a tempting target. Just to his south he spied the entire baggage train of Hancock's Corps parked and unguarded. Desiring to wheel his brigade to the left to secure this prize he was hampered by

the intermingled state of his regiments from the rapid advance. Apparently only a portion of the brigade received or understood the orders for the change of direction and as a result the right wing of the brigade, the 26th and 47th North Carolina regiments continued advancing westward across the road and into the woods occupied by the 7th Michigan and 1st Minnesota.

A stunned Hancock was now fully alerted to the threat to his line of communications. Keeping his head, he and his senior officers quickly made dispositions to prevent the Confederates from gaining additional ground. While Pierce reformed his shattered brigade, General Gersham Mott realized that if not stopped the Rebs would establish a presence on the Dabney Mill Road as well. Maj. John Willan of Mott's staff raced off with orders for Gen. De Trobriand to deploy his brigade with a view toward preventing such a dire development. De Trobriand accomplished a change of front to the rear by countermarching six of his regiments and placing them so as to

cover the Dabney Mill Road. The 1st Maine Heavy Artillery was posted at the vital Boydton and Dabney Mill roads intersection. Gen. De Trobriand exhorted his men to hold their ground at all costs. The assault on Hancock's right had caused Gen. Gregg to dismount the brigades of Kerwin and Smith. Two of Smith's regiments, the 1st Maine and 6th Ohio moved up to anchor De Trobriand's right while Kerwin's men came up to support the left.

Further north, in the dense woods protecting Weisinger's Virginia brigade, Lt.Col. George Harney of the 147th New York riding into their midst mistook the 12th Va. for his own men. When called upon to surrender, Harney saw only one course as a dozen or more muskets were leveled on him. A Sgt. Sale of the 12th Va. wrote after the fight, "He [Harney] was hurrying up his regiment to deploy them as skirmishers, when he was captured. I got a very fine haversack, sword belt, & revolver from him. He had on a fine hat & gold watch but I could not muster meanness sufficient to rob



Brig. General DeTrobriand



The Dabney Mill Road where it intersects the Boydton Road where Gen DeTrobriand placed the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery

him of these. I knew that if I were captured everything I had would have been taken from me, but I have not yet become mean enough to take private property from them."

Hancock, as was his habit, rushed to the point of danger. As quickly as De Trobriand's infantry and Gregg's dismounted cavalry were formed, he planned to lead them in a counterattack. About this time the Confederate line ahead was observed to face about and open fire toward their rear. The cause of this change of front had been Egan's counterattack from the north commencing against William McRae's exposed right flank. The 36th Wisconsin crashed into McRae's line. McRae's North Carolinians had been preoccupied with reforming in order to storm Mott's reorganized line and the Second Corps baggage train, therefore, they were largely oblivious to the approach of the Wisconsin regiment until it was too late. A member of the 44th North Carolina wrote of the moment, "The Federal commander, seeing that McRae was not supported, closed in upon his

flanks and attacked with great vigor. Undismayed by the large force which surrounded him, and unwilling to surrender the prize of victory already within his grasp, McRae formed a portion of his brigade obliquely to his main line of battle, driving the foe at every point, whilst the deafening shouts and obstinate fighting of his brigade showed their entire confidence in their commander, although every man of them knew their situation to be critical, and their loss already great. Awaiting reinforcements, which long since ought to have been with him, he held his vantage gained at all hazards, and against enormous odds. No help came while his men toiled, bled and died."

As the Federals charged from the north and the reorganized Union troops along the Dabney Mill Road were poised to do likewise from the south, McRae's men scrambled to get the two captured Napoleons of Metcalf's battery to safety. The 120th New York charged toward the cannon to rescue them but were beaten back by the 44th NC. Heth now committed his only reserve, that of Nat

Harris' Mississippians. Harris and his command rushed out of the woods to McRae's assistance. For a brief time the Yanks of McAllister's brigade were engulfed once more by gray backs yelling like demons. Col. McAllister later recalled, "Had our line broken while in this critical situation all would have been lost."

The southward charging 36th Wisconsin, however, struck Harris' right flank and swept to a resounding success sending the Mississippians back toward the direction from which they had come while capturing a set of colors and nearly 100 men. Having observed the successful charge of the 36th Wisconsin, Hancock ordered Mott to attack from the south. De Trobriand rode to the front of the 40th New York, the 20th Indiana and the 99th and a portion of the 110th Pennsylvania and gave the order to charge. Cheering lustily, his line rolled forward driving Weisinger's Virginians before them. Within a short time they had cleared the area of any remaining Confederates.

The 26th and 47th North



Image Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History

Flag of the 26th NCT captured by Sgt. Alonzo Smith

Carolina found themselves nearly surrounded. Through the gun smoke lying heavily in the woods Alonzo Smith was drawn toward a body of men that had suddenly appeared in the rear of the 7th Michigan. This development caused the regiment to face about. Not knowing whether they were friend or foe, Sgt. Smith decided to investigate. To the amazement of his comrades, Smith bounded 30 or 40 rods alone in advance of the regiment's position to investigate. Smith soon determined that the soldiers were "johnnies" who were approaching him so fast that he could not attempt to return to his regiment without risking detection. So he took position behind a tree, his bayoneted musket at the ready. A nervous and scattered firing commenced from the two Union regiments in the woods and almost

on cue the heavens burst forth with a blinding downpour

Thomas Minton clutched his colors close to his chest to prevent the flag from snagging on the plentiful tree limbs and underbrush thereabouts as he stumbled forward with his regiment in the dripping wet woods. At some point in those surreal surroundings Thomas Minton fell mortally wounded, the colors still in his grasp. Alonzo Smith saw Minton fall and rushed forward grabbing the flag from the dying color bearer and demanding the surrender of Minton's nearby comrades. One of the 26th's soldiers showing little inclination to accede to Smith's demand inquired as to whether there were other Federal troops in the vicinity to enforce their surrender. Smith bluffed and replied that there was a whole division nearby and to

reinforce his point heavy firing developed as Hancock's counter attack crashed into the 47th North Carolina further to the 26th's right. Smith, proudly in possession of the 26th's battle flag, and a handful of prisoners, returned to his lines to the cheers of his brothers in arms.

Now fully sensing the danger that the 26th and 47th had entered into, Gen. McRae raced back to the two isolated regiments and prepared to rally his men and lead them in a desperate attempt to break out of their impending encirclement. As both the colors of the 26th and 47th North Carolina had now been captured, McRae held up the colors of the 44th and shouted for the remnants of his brigade to rally. Lt.Col. Adams, having lingered behind to see what had become of Minton and his own regiment's colors, feared his men might become downcast at the loss of their flag and its brave bearer so he responded to McRae's order by jumping up on a stump between the lines calling out "Twenty-Sixth rally on your commander... he is here even if his colors are lost!" Responding with a cheer, the 26th fixed bayonets and under the admiring gaze of Billy McRae cut out of the tight spot they found themselves in.

Around 9:00 pm under cover of darkness and yet another driving rainstorm, Hancock retreated and left the field in southern hands. The Union thrust had become a dismal failure, but by dint of hard fighting, the Union Second Corps would live to fight another day.

The gallant charge of McRae's veteran brigade had nearly cut Hancock's whole force in two and had come dangerously close to staking claim to his corps wagon train as well. For a final time the North Caro-

linians had been exhilarated by the sight of enemy infantry fleeing before their bayonets and the pride of seizing Yank artillery to boot. The Union forces had literally teetered on the brink of the very military disaster that the Federal high command had sought at all costs to avoid. General Billy McRae later bitterly complained of the lack of support his brigade received from Mahone's Virginians and a lieutenant of the brigade lamented in a letter home that, "If we had had more troops to support us when the attack was made I think we could have captured the whole concern."

This, arguably, last tactical victory of the Army of Northern Virginia has largely been overlooked due to the events of the Crater explosion earlier in the summer and the eventual fall of Petersburg and Richmond a little over 5 months later. However the fighting at Burgess Mill, or Hatchers Run as it was more often called by the Federals, had lasting and far reaching consequences. Most importantly the fight literally gave the struggling Confederacy almost another half a year of existence in Virginia. But the South was now well beyond the point where Billy McRae's losses could be made good. McRae's brigade had fought in every major battle around Petersburg and had endured over 1,647 casualties since the beginning of the 1864 campaign. Robert E. Lee could offer them little more than his written praise, but that notice was sufficient to ensure that when the 26th North Carolina stacked arms at Appomattox only one other Tarheel regiment surrendered more muskets.

Winfield Scott Hancock, once the premier corp commander of the Union Army, was so disgusted

and embarrassed by the conduct of his command coupled with persistent trouble from his old Gettysburg wound that this would prove to be his last battle with the Army of the Potomac. He soon asked to be reassigned to duties elsewhere and apart from his once beloved Second Corps.

Of note only to his comrades, and perhaps to those back at home, Sgt. Alonzo Smith was awarded the Medal of Honor for his capture of the colors of the 26th North Carolina while outside his lines far from his comrades, as well as a field promotion to the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Having had adventures aplenty by war's end, Smith returned not to frontier Michigan, but rather to his old New York home, surviving there until June 17th, 1927. He is buried in the quiet little churchyard of St. Stephen's Catholic Church near Middleport in upstate New York. His grave marked by a simple government supplied marble stone, distinguished from many others like it by the citation indicating him to be a Medal of Honor recipient.

Thomas Minton earned but a hasty burial, the location of which is now lost to memory. He lies either in a forgotten grave near where he fell or perhaps in the mass grave of some 30,000 Confederates at Blandford Cemetery in nearby Petersburg where so many of the unknown Confederates who died in defense of that city were later laid to rest. Minton's brother, who also served in the 26h NC with him, survived the war, and surely carried in his mind's eye and heart, the memory of a lost brother with him to Wilkes County until he too answered the last roll call there on August 1st, 1936 at the ripe age of 97.

Though the men are no more



Grave of Sgt. Alonzo Smith

there are for us yet these physical connections to the colors and other relics they so heroically bore. Though tattered and torn they and their stories speak compellingly to us 143 years later. For people like us, that connection is a dear one. Zeb Vance once simply described North Carolina's prodigious contributions to the Confederacy as performed "well and truly." In the rescue of the Burgess Mill flag the reactivated 26th North Carolina and the custodians of that noble flag have surely done their duty well and truly too.

ROLL OF HONOR

TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA TROOPS CASUALTY LIST BURGESS MILL, OCTOBER 27, 1864

By: Skip Smith

RANK	NAME	DESCRIPTION	COMPANY
Pvt.	A. F. Calloway	Captured	A
Pvt.	George W. Little	Captured	A
Pvt.	Marshall Maab	Captured	A
1st Sgt.	Elijah F. Smith	Captured	A
Pvt.	Abraham Stout	Captured	A
Pvt.	Phillip Marsh Walton	Captured	A
Pvt.	Joel L. Church	Captured	B
Pvt.	Thomas C. Gordon	Captured	B
Pvt.	John S. McCain	Captured	B
Pvt.	Columbus McManus	Captured	B
Pvt.	Henry J. Mangum	Captured	B
Pvt.	Marshall S. Mullis	Captured	B
Pvt.	Anderson Rogers	Captured	B
Pvt.	Franklin Adams	Captured	C
Pvt.	Monroe F. Alley	Captured	C
Pvt.	Phillip Faircloth	Captured	C
Pvt.	Thomas Minton	Killed	C
Pvt.	John Ray	Captured	C
Pvt.	Caleb Rupard	Captured	C
Cpl.	Simeon A. Austin	Captured	D
Pvt.	William W. Bell	Captured	D
Pvt.	Archibald B. Booker	Captured	D
Sgt.	William C. Booker	Captured	D

RANK	NAME	DESCRIPTION	COMPANY
Pvt.	Thomas c. Cordle	Captured	D
Pvt.	William J Gattis	Mortally Wounded	D
Pvt.	Wesley G. Hamilton	Captured	D
1st Lt.	William J. Lambert	Captured	E
Pvt.	Joseph J. Andrew	Wounded	E
Pvt.	William H. Burroughs	Captured	E
Pvt.	Robert Brafford	Captured	E
Pvt.	William W. Caviness	Captured	E
Pvt.	Robert Cheek	Captured	E
Cpl.	William W. Edwards	Captured	E
Pvt.	James H. McMath	Captured	E
Cpl.	James Matindale	Captured	E
Sgt.	Lewis T. Teague	Captured	E
Pvt.	Hezekiah H. Vestal	Captured	E
Pvt.	Adolphus A. Welch	Wounded & Captured	E
Pvt.	Jiles M. Calloway	Captured	F
Pvt.	Solomon W. Crisp	Captured	F
Cpl.	James M. Crump	Captured	F
1st Sgt.	Caleb Estes	Captured	F
Pvt.	John Canter	Captured	G
Pvt.	John D. Edwards	Captured	G
Pvt.	Murphy Edwards	Captured	G
Pvt.	Wiley S. Edwards	Captured	G
Pvt.	Alfred M. Fox	Wounded	G
Pvt.	Thomas Gardner	Captured	G
Pvt.	William F. Johnson	Captured	G
Pvt.	William H. Jordan	Captured	G
Pvt.	George W. Norwood	Captured	G
2nd Lt.	George Wilcox	Captured	H
Pvt.	Matthew Cagle	Captured	H
Pvt.	Christopher C. Harrison	Captured	H
Pvt.	Thomas J. Hogan	Captured	H
Pvt.	Nelson Hunsucker	Captured	H
Pvt.	John B. Angelly	Captured	I
Pvt.	Edward B. Hendren	Captured	I
Pvt.	Emdempsey Laney	Captured	I
1st Lt.	John A. Polk	Wounded	K
2nd Lt.	Jesse L. Henry	Killed	K
Pvt.	John R. Eddings	Captured	K
Pvt.	William H. Jarmen	Captured	K
Pvt.	Henry D. Lee	Captured	K
Pvt.	John F. Lee	Killed	K

Re-dedication of the 26th NCT flag
captured at Burgess Mill.
August 22, 2004



IN AN HOUR OF NEED

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE 26TH NC, RE-ACTIVATED'S RESTORATION OF THE BURGESS MILL FLAG

By: Skip Smith

At the January 10, 2004 annual business meeting the membership were approached by member (and North Carolina Museum of History Historian) Jackson Marshall, about the possibility of the Regiment raising the money to restore the battle flag of the 26th NC that was captured at the Battle of Burgess Mill on October 27, 1864. The membership quickly approved the project, with an estimated cost of \$7,500 and President Skip Smith recommended that a committee be formed to handle the project. Randy Price, then Color Sergeant of the Regiment, volunteered to serve as chairman of the "Rally on the Flag Committee." His reasons for this, as he later told me, were because he thought, "it was only right that the Color Guard of the Regiment lead the charge."

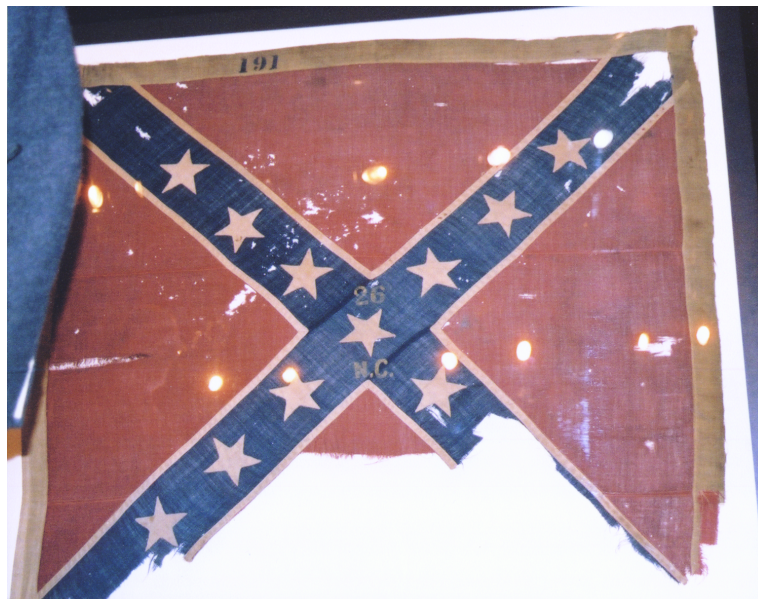
The fundraising quickly took off. As I left the meeting that day, the Regiment had raised nearly half of the amount needed. Within a few weeks we were approached with an offer from Mrs. Kim Prestipino, wife of 26th NC Member Sam Prestipino. Kim stated that she would complete the balance of the fundraising if the Regiment would provide a one-day living history seminar at the school where she teaches in Durham with at least 12 members in attendance. On Saturday, March 6, 2004, close to 25 members of the Regiment and SBS showed up to honor our part in the pledge. It was a great day for the Regiment and all of the Lowe's Grove Middle School students and parents that came out for the talks and demonstrations.

With our fundraising complete, the North Carolina Museum

of History took the flag to the conservator who lives in Maryland the following week. On Sunday, August 22, 2004, the Regiment gathered at the North Carolina Museum of History to dedicate the flag. Following the ceremony, the Color Guard of the 26th NC led the procession to the third floor of the Museum to place the flag in the display case alongside the coat of the third and final Colonel of the 26th NC, John R. Lane.

The restoration of the Burgess Mill battle flag is one of the most important projects the 26th NC has undertaken and one that all members of the Regiment can take pride in. Special thanks to Kim Prestipino, Randy Price, Clint Johnson, Don Scott, Cindy Baker and Tom Moore for their work in this project.





*“Twenty-Sixth rally on
your commander...he is
here even if his colors
are lost!”*

