

COMPANY FRONT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA

ISSUE 2, 2008

WELCOME HOME

Honored Banners

FLAG RETURN CEREMONY
MAY 17TH, 2008

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26TH NORTH CAROLINA R E G I M E N T.

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Front Cover

26th Regiment North Carolina Troops Battle Flag, captured July 3, 1863
Now in located at the North Carolina Museum of History

Image courtesy of the Museum of the Confederacy

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CONTENTS

4 “ANY MAN IN THAT LINE”

THE MUSEUM OF THE CONFEDERACY & THE RETURN OF THE
TWENTY-SIXTH NCT BATTLEFLAG

6 “THAT WHAT THEY HAD DONE WOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN”

THE BATTLE FLAG OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH NORTH CAROLINA

10 “TAR HEEL CININNATUS”

MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN GRIMES

18 DETERMINED TENACITY

THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA
TROOPS AT GETTYSBURG

30 HOMECOMING

FLAG AND REGIMENT REUNITED

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"Any Man in"

THE MUSEUM OF THE CONFEDERACY PROJECT
& THE RETURN OF THE 26TH NCT BATTLE FLAG



that Line..."

Skip Smith

On March 10, 2007, Society Member Lane Brown approached me while at the Convention Center in New Bern (following our dedication of the New Bern Monument earlier that day) with a question. He asked me how I would like to have the 26th NC's Gettysburg Flag back home. He had been talking with Society Member, Mr. L. R. Gorrell about what it would take to do this and how nice it would be to have this flag back on North Carolina soil. The following week the talks began to get serious as we started researching the 1905 and 1906 Legislation that asked the U. S. War Department to return all of the Confederate Battle Flags to their respective states. For those that were unidentifiable it was determined to turn those over to the Confederate Literary Memorial Society, which was the fore runner to the Museum of the Confederacy (MOC.) In 1906 the 252 unidentifiable Confederate Battle Flags were sent to Richmond and the MOC. Over the years 100 of these flags have become identified based on modern research. Out of the 100, twenty-four are from North Carolina, including the 26th NC's Gettysburg flag. The undeniable intention of the U. S. Congress in 1905 was for each state to have all of their flags back. The plain and simple fact remains that if those twenty-four North Carolina battle flags had been able to have been identified, the MOC would have never received them in 1906. Please understand one thing, from the moment we started discussing the situation, we at no time wanted to harm the MOC or discussed the downfall of the institution. On the contrary, we want to see it flourish well into the future as a viable and worthy museum to the memory of our ancestors.

Following our failed attempts to acquire the "backing" of the State of North Carolina, it was determined that the best that could be done at this time was to work on a loan program with the MOC. One thing to understand concerning a loan program with the MOC is that they have not been open to such a project with the NCMOH in the past, but with our unrelenting presence, the MOC agreed to a long-term loan program with the NCMOH. We were asked about the items that we would like to bring home and provided a list that was honored completely except for Major General Dorsey Pender's trousers he wore at Gettysburg. According to representatives of the NCMOH we have been told that without our work and persistence, none of these items would have been returned to the Museum.

Without the work by Society Member Lane Brown, none of this would have been possible. His constant determination provided the push that was needed to get the MOC agree to the long-term loan of these items. Thanks also to the 26th NC's Board of Directors, 26th NC member Fred Burt, and the fine staff at the North Carolina Museum of History for their work on this project.

The following is the press release from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources concerning the work of the 26th NC, Re-activated, which was sent out to all papers across the state of North Carolina and to



the major Civil War periodicals.
Famous Flag From Battle of
Gettysburg on Exhibit
Battle's 145th Anniversary

July marks the 145th anniversary of the largest and bloodiest battle of the Civil War: the Battle of Gettysburg. Called the "high tide" of the Confederacy, the clash in Pennsylvania raged from July 1 to 3, 1863.

The 26th North Carolina Troops suffered the most casualties of any regiment, both Confederate and Union, during the conflict. Of the regiment's estimated 800 men, 708 were killed, wounded or missing after attacking Federal forces on July 1 and 3. During the intense fighting, the 26th North Carolina held its battle flag high. On July 1, 14 men went down while carrying the colors at McPherson's Ridge. On July 3, eight men were shot before Union soldiers captured the flag on Cemetery Ridge.

This famous flag is on exhibit for an extended time at the

N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh, in commemoration of the Gettysburg anniversary. On loan from the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Va., the historic banner was brought home to North Carolina through the efforts of the 26th North Carolina Troops, Reactivated, an organization of re-enactors that sponsored the flag loan and its installation in the museum's military history gallery. The group held a flag rededication ceremony at the museum on May 17, before the installation.

Skip Smith, colonel of the 26th North Carolina Troops, Reactivated, said several descendants of the regiment attended or participated in the ceremony. "Many had ancestors who were killed or wounded while carrying the colors of the regiment during the Battle of Gettysburg," said Smith.

To fully understand the flag's significance, one must revisit July 1 and 3 at Gettysburg. On July 1, the 26th North Carolina ad-

vanced on the 24th Michigan, posted at McPherson's Ridge. The 26th forced the Union troops to withdraw, but the costs were high. Of the regiment's some 800 men, 588 were killed, wounded or missing. Among the casualties was the regiment's leader, Col. Henry King Burgwyn Jr., one of 14 men who carried the flag that day.

On July 3, the 26th North Carolina took part in the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble charge and penetrated the Federal battle line farther than any Confederate unit. During the charge of Confederate troops from Seminary Ridge across a mile-long open field to Cemetery Ridge, the 26th North Carolina advanced its flag to an area known as "the Angle," where a stone wall dividing the field (and marking the Federal line) protruded at a 90-degree turn. At the wall, however, Union soldiers captured two of the 26th's men, Sgt. James Moffit Brooks and Pvt. Daniel Boone Thomas, who was holding the flag. The unit lost not only



its banner but 120 men, who were killed, wounded or missing.

Both Sgt. Brooks and Pvt. Thomas survived the war and returned home to Chatham County. Dennis Brooks of Siler City, a member of the 26th North Carolina Troops, Reactivated, who participated in the May 17 ceremony, has a personal connection with Sgt. Brooks. "Sgt. Brooks was a cousin to my direct lineage of Brooks," he explains.

Dennis Brooks believes the flag served as a beacon and that "any man in that line would have done what Brooks and Thomas are remembered for today. They just happened to be the men present at the time."

The 26th North Carolina Troops, Reactivated, Secures Additional Artifacts.

In addition to the Confederate flag, the 26th North Carolina Troops, Reactivated, consulted with the N.C. Museum of History to secure other artifact loans from the Museum of the Confederacy. Near

the 26th North Carolina flag in the exhibit are a frock coat, a belt with buckle, and a sword with scabbard worn by Gen. Bryan Grimes, considered one of North Carolina's top generals. Dramatic evidence of Gen Grimes' near misses at the Battle of Chancellorsville on May 3, 1863, appears on three items. The buckle is caved in where a minié ball hit it, the scabbard is dented many times from hits, and the sword is severed, cut in half by a minié ball or shrapnel.

The battle flag of the 37th North Carolina Troops, another loaned artifact, will be on exhibit in the future. Captured at the Battle of Petersburg in Virginia, the historic banner has two unusual features. It bears white battle honors, instead of the usual blue or black, and the honors were painted on both sides of the flag.

The 26th North Carolina Troops, the state's largest re-enactment unit, has formed a partnership with the N.C. Museum of History

to help fund flag conservation. The group has provided funding to conserve another battle flag of the 26th North Carolina Troops that is in the museum collection. An additional flag is undergoing conservation, and other conservation projects are planned. The organization has taken to heart the premise of the museum's Adopt an Artifact program, in which individuals and groups can sponsor a conservation project.

"It's great to be in partnership with the 26th North Carolina Troops, Reactivated, and we greatly appreciate all of their support," adds Tom Belton, curator of military history at the N.C. Museum of History.

The N.C. Museum of History's hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free. The museum is part of the Division of State History Museums, Office of Archives and History, an agency of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources.

**“THAT WHAT THEY HAD
FORGOTTEN”**



DONE WOULD NOT BE

THE BATTLE FLAG OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH NORTH CAROLINA

Michael Hardy

They were not the “boys” of the spring of 1861. They were motivated to enlist neither by some romantic notion of chivalry nor by some governmental decree. For the men of the Thirty-seventh, the desire to enlist sprang from a sense of responsibility to their families, friends, and communities. These men came from a variety of backgrounds. They were farmers, with a smattering of preachers, lawyers, doctors, and tradesmen. They came from the southern Piedmont, from Union, Mecklenburg, and Gaston Counties; from the foothills, Wilkes and Alexander Counties; and from beyond the Blue Ridge, Ashe, Alleghany, and Watauga Counties. Their regiment was created on November 20, 1861.

A year passed before the regiment received a regulation battle flag. In late November or early December 1862, the regiment was awarded a third-bunting issue Confederate flag. The 48-inch square banner was inscribed with thirteen battle honors, painted in white letters. The style of lettering used for the five flags of the Branch-Lane brigade was virtually unique to the five North Carolina regiments that constituted the brigade.

Two of the battle honors, New Bern and Hanover, were earned prior to the Thirty-seventh's formally joining the Army of Northern Virginia. The other eleven-- Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Frazier's Farm, Malvern Hill, Cedar Run, Manassas Junction, Manassas, Harpers Ferry, and Shepherdstown-- were some of the Army of Northern Virginia's most poignant battles.

After receiving their starry banner, the Thirty-seventh's war did not end, and the painter's brush would have quickly run out of canvas for additional battle honors. Fredericksburg, where the regiment fought off repeated attacks until running out of ammunition, could have been added. Then there was Chancellorsville, where the regiment sustained more losses than any other Tar Heel regiment. At Gettysburg, the Thirty-seventh was engaged late in the day on July 1. On July 3, the regiment lined up behind another Tar Heel regiment, the Twenty-sixth, and together they charged across the open fields and up the slopes. Then there were Falling Waters, Kelly's Ford, Mine Run, and the Wilderness. Twice, on May 12, 1864, at Spotsylvania Court House, the actions of the Thirty-seventh helped saved the Army of Northern Virginia from defeat. We could also add Jerrico Mills, another Cold Harbor, Jerusalem Plank Road, Fussell's Mill, Reams Station, Jones's Farm, and Hatcher Run.

April 2, 1865, found the Thirty-seventh stretched thinly in the defenses just south of Petersburg. The Tar Heels had been under an artillery bombardment since ten p.m. At four a.m., massed Federals of the VI Corps stormed the Thirty-seventh's lines, overpowering the regiments of Lane's brigade. Close-quarter fighting took place when several members of the Thirty-seventh Massachusetts of Edward's brigade, First Division, spied the colors of the Thirty-seventh North Carolina. Lt. William Waterman, Corporals Luther Tanner and Richard Welch, and Pvt. Michael Kelly, all of Company E, rushed toward the color-bearer of the Thirty-seventh North Carolina. In the following scuffle, Lieutenant Waterman was wounded in the wrist. Corporal Tanner was killed, as was Private Kelly who first bayoneted a Tar Heel who was trying to kill the Thirty-seventh Massachusetts's regimental commander. Corporal Welch knocked down the color-bearer of the Thirty-seventh North Carolina and captured the banner. Welch was later awarded the Medal of Honor for capturing the flag.

The flag of the Thirty-seventh was taken to the War Department and assigned number 384. In 1905, the flag was returned to Virginia and, in 1929, was put on display in the Lee Chapel in Lexington, Virginia, by the Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. For almost 70 years, the flag “stood guard” over the

37th NCT Battle Flag



final resting place of Robert E. Lee at Washington and Lee University. A reproduction replaced the original in the late 1990s. For several years, the flag hung in the Breakthrough Museum at Pamplin Park, most likely displayed just yards from where it was captured on April 2, 1865. On April 7, just a few short weeks ago, the flag of the Thirty-seventh North Carolina arrived here from Virginia. Who knows what adventures still await this old flag.

Only a few blocks from here are the graves of almost countless

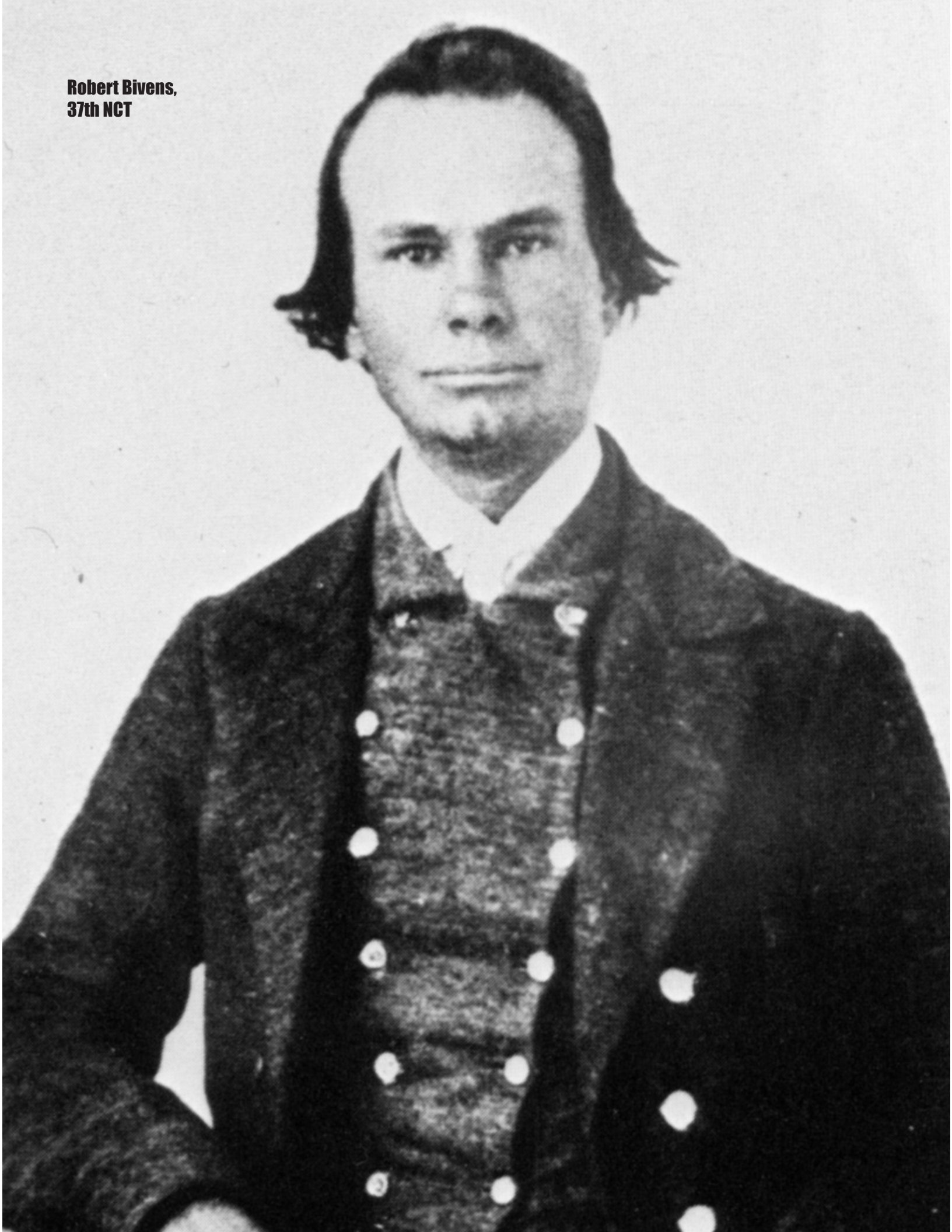
Confederate soldiers. Many of them perished during that awful war. One of those is Iowa Michigan Royster. Iowa did not survive the battle of Gettysburg. He was fearfully wounded on July 3 and passed on a few days later. He was originally buried at Gettysburg, but after the war was re-interred in Oakwood Cemetery, first in the Confederate section, and later in his family's section. We can only wonder how Iowa would feel if he knew that the battle-torn flag of his regiment was now so close.

There are no old soldiers

left. The last member of the Thirty-seventh died in 1947, the last Tar Heel Confederate soldier in 1951. The old soldiers' greatest fear was that what they had done would be forgotten. All of you here today have seen fit to honor those old soldiers, to remember that what they did is truly not forgotten.

Michael C. Hardy is the author of eight books, including a history of the 37th North Carolina Troops (2003). You can learn more by visiting his web site at: www.michaelchardy.com

**Robert Bivens,
37th NCT**





Tar Heel *Cincinnatus* MAJOR GENERAL BRYAN GRIMES

By Alan C. Leonard
Color Corporal, 26th NCT

Three sources of information help us understand the artifacts of Major General Bryan Grimes.

THE HISTORIC RECORD:

The historic accounts are summed up in a biography titled Lee's Last Major General, Bryan Grimes of North Carolina, authored by T. Harrell Allen of East Carolina University. This book tells the story of a man that I refer to as a "Tar Heel Cincinnatus," a 19th Century way of saying "Citizen Soldier."

Cincinnatus was the Roman who gave up politics and went home to his farm. Later Rome was about to fall to an enemy and a delegation of senators went to give Cincinnatus the news that he has been appointed to a six month term as Dictator with absolute power. They found him plowing in the field. Cincinnatus answered the call to save the city, put on his toga, left his farm and family, personally led the Roman infantry against the enemy and defeated them in 16 days. He then gave up his absolute authority, returned to his farm, and beat his sword back into a plowshare.

Cincinnatus became the model citizen soldier, a man who would set an example for Bryan Grimes and those thousands of North Carolinians who answered the call to duty in 1861. South Carolina has Wade Hampton, Georgia its John B. Gordon, and Tennessee can point to Nathan Bedford Forrest. I submit that North Carolina's most distinguished citizen soldier of the Civil War was Bryan Grimes.

He was raised in Pitt County on the family plantation, Grimesland, and graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1848. Grimes returned home, and over the next 13 years became very successful at agriculture, his greatest interest. In 1861 he was a delegate to the North Carolina Secession Convention, signed the Ordinance of Secession, and being a man of action as much as of words, volunteered at age 33 to defend his state.

As frequently happened in those early days of the war the influential planter; who, like Hampton, Gordon and Forrest; had absolutely no military background; was offered the colonelcy of a regiment by Governor Ellis. Grimes opted for a commission as Major in the 4th North Carolina Regiment where he could learn the military trade under the leadership of West Pointer George Burgwyn Anderson of Orange County.

Bryan Grimes and the legendary 4th North Carolina barely missed the battle of First Manassas but made up for that absence by being involved in all the remaining great battles in the eastern theater, and Grimes personally saw as much of the war as any man in the Army of Northern Virginia.

He soon became Colonel of the 4th, survived typhoid, and would lose seven horses during the war. At Seven Pines his first mount was shot out from under him and he was the only officer of the regiment not killed or wounded. He went on to fight in the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 and was not in the Bloody Lane at Sharpsburg only because he was kicked severely by a horse after the Battle of South Mountain. He was back in action for Fredericksburg and went on to fight at Chancellorsville the following year. His troops were the first to enter Get-

**Major General
Bryan Grimes**



**Colonel
Bryan Grimes
4th NCST**



tysburg on the first day of that battle and his courage at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania, where his troops saved Lee's army, led to his promotion to Brigadier General after the death of Ramseur at Cedar Creek. He was in the thick of things in the Shenandoah Valley battles and in the Petersburg campaign. Grimes became the last officer of the Army of Northern Virginia promoted to the rank of Major General in February, 1865. Commanding a division, he fought to the very end and directed the last attack of the army, driving the Union forces from the Lynchburg Road, opening a potential escape route at Appomattox Courthouse.

Major General Grimes was the highest ranking officer to surrender there, other than Lee himself, and returned to North Carolina bear-

ing the reputation of an excellent, disciplined and fearless combat leader who on many occasions somehow escaped death or capture. Walter Clark, Confederate veteran and editor of the five volume North Carolina Regiments, simply said of Grimes, "There was no braver man in the whole army."

Like Cincinnatus, at the end of the war Bryan Grimes returned to Raleigh and then to Grimesland where he continued his success as an agriculturalist, raised a large family, and became one of his state's most respected sons, only to be killed in 1880 by an assassin from ambush because of his involvement in a political or legal matter.

THE WORDS OF BRYAN GRIMES

A Second source speaks to us of these artifacts, the words of Brian Grimes himself. He was a very literate man and a prolific writer of frank and detailed letters and recollections.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be at Chancellorsville in May, 2008 heard Grimes' description of his encounter with the Stonewall Brigade on the second day of the battle. In the same letter to his wife he also said this about his experience in that action:

"In this charge my sword was severed by a ball and my clothes perforated in many places, and a ball embedded in my sword belt and scabbard, and I received a very severe contusion on the foot."



THE ARTICLES THEMSELVES

A final source of information about these items is the articles themselves. Ben Tart, who has examined the Grimes frock coat, pointed out that it is important to look at the items, let them speak, and to listen to what they tell us.

FROM THESE THREE SOURCES OF INFORMATION WE CAN SAY SEVERAL THINGS WITH CERTAINTY ABOUT THE GRIMES ARTIFACTS AND CAN MAKE AN INTELLIGENT GUESS AS TO OTHER FACTS SURROUNDING THEM.

These items did in fact belong to Grimes and were given to the Mu-

seum of the Confederacy about a century ago by the General's son Alston, who was born in 1868 and died in 1914.

THE SWORD BELT AND PLATE

This is a "common" (if that is a fair word to use) black leather U.S. pattern 1851 sword belt of the type intended for company and field-and-staff officers, with a rectangular brass officer's sword belt plate, also 1851 pattern, with the regulation eagle motif.

Further research will reveal more about these items, but the strong family and personal history tells us that this is the sword belt and plate damaged as Colonel Grimes lead the 4th North Carolina on May 2, 1863 attempting to dis-

lodge Federal troops at Chancellorsville. The damage is consistent with what would be caused by the impact of conical projectile fired from a musket to Grime's left which nearly double up the lower left hand corner of the plate. Fortunately for the wearer, it is likely that these items saved him from severe injury or death and they were retired to "souvenir" status soon thereafter.

THE SWORD AND SCABBARD

Again, there is plenty of room for work on these items but they are said to be the property of Bryan Grimes severed and damaged at Chancellorsville. The military sword is light in weigh and construction compared to other swords of the era It is missing the forward



one-third of its etched blade, and is marked as having been made in the German-influenced city of Metz in northeastern French region of Lorraine. The metal scabbard shows a prominent dent and its drag is considerably worn.

THE FROCK COAT

This is by far the most complex and intriguing item in this group of artifacts.

As we view this garment and listen to what it is telling us, we must keep in mind several things:

The Confederate government published uniform regulations but regulation uniforms were the exception rather than the rule.

Officers of differing means and tastes purchased their own uniforms and equipment and what they ended up with varied greatly depending on the skill, understanding and technique of the maker, the supplier, the place and time, and the available resources.

Army regulation called for a “tunic” but this is a looser fitting double-breasted “frock coat,” inspired by the civilian garb of the time. The size of this coat is about a modern 42, large by Civil War standards, but consider that by the end of the war Grimes was healthy and in his late 30’s.

The frock coat has only been lightly worn and certainly did not see any significant service in the field, on campaign. There is no indication of battle damage, no tears, repairs or stains.

Ben Tart concluded that this garment was Bryan Grimes “keep-at-home-in-the-drawer or keep-in-storage-at-Richmond” frock coat,



the best one he had when it came time to dress up or sit for an ambrotype.

I think it is certain that he was photographed at least twice in this garment. One of the photos is in today's program, which is probably post-war, and shows Grimes as a Major General. The other, in the Southern Historical Collection at Chapel Hill and in the book Lee's Last Major General, shows him uniformed in the same garment but as a Brigadier.

The fabric of this frock coat is a fine quality "broadcloth," in a weave known as cassimere, and may have been imported. Broadcloth was machine made and came off the loom in bolts 60 inches wide, the opposite of "homespun."

The color is now "light gray" but this is because the fabric has oxidized over the years. When Ben explored protected parts of the material he discovered that the yarn used to make the fabric was a combination of blue and gray dyed wool fibers with maybe a handful of black thrown into the mix. The fabric was not "piece dyed" a uniform color after it was woven. Ben believes the original color of the garment was "blue-gray."

The Grimes frock is adorned with Federal Staff Officer Buttons, dome-shaped with an eagle motif. Ben tells me that the most common buttons in the collection of period officer garments at the N.C.M.O.H. this same attractive and available federal staff button. Also, the buttons on this frock are from two different sources. The ones back-marked SUPERIOR/QUALITY, EXTRA/QUALITY may have been made in the north and smuggled into the Confederacy. Those marked

HORSTMANN BROTHERS/ & CO. PHIL. were made by that supplier of military goods.

Note the unused sewn-up button holes, which ended up being evenly spaced as the buttons on the garment were rearranged one or more times as Grimes advanced in rank. The original buttonholes are "keyhole" shaped, those added later are slits. This garment may have even begun life as a Colonel's frock coat. The buttons are now arranged in groups of three to show the rank of Major General. That is the same configuration shown in the photo in your program. The frock apparently at one time had its buttons grouped in twos, as is shown in the other Grimes Brigadier General photo that I mentioned.

The cuff buttons are also US staff and are non-functional.

There is light buff (or off white) wool broadcloth piping around the top of the collar and down the front.

The gold sleeve braid consists of four strands of material, regulation for general officers, but the lower strand is a different size and was added at some point, so the original configuration may have been the three strands worn by a colonel.

Also, contrary to regulation, the garment has no "facings," or different colored cloth applied to the cuff and collar, indicating branch of service.

I think the collar rank insignia is very interesting. It appears to be unchanged from the photos of Grimes in this garment.

Three stars of equal size on the collar was the rank of Colonel, but in the case of this frock coat, the center star is larger than the other

two, which would indicate the rank of general officer. But the regulation called for the general's three stars to be surrounded by a wreath which is not present here. I understand that there are other examples of Confederate Colonels wearing large center stars. Is this the rank insignia worn by Grimes as a colonel of the 4th, as a general officer, or did he leave it unchanged as he was promoted??

The stars are six-pointed and are adorned with small sewn-on 1/8 inch silver discs (now tarnished) which appear to stand out, sequin like, in the period photographs.

The lining of the body of the frock is a dark green durable wool and silk fabric called "alpaca serge," which was commonly used for that purpose. Light tan cotton material lines the sleeves.

In conclusion, there is a good bit going on here which is typical of many if not most surviving Confederate uniform items. At minimum, there remain numerous questions surrounding this garment which may have seen three changes, from Colonel, to Brigadier to Major General.

In any event, we are all pleased and grateful to have these Bryan Grimes items back in the Old North State, and to be able to hear and see what they tell us about North Carolina's most distinguished citizen soldier.







Determined

Tenacity

The 26th Regiment North Carolina Troops at Gettysburg

J.H. Stepp, Brig.Gen.,
Cmd'g The Carolina Legion

Since the first shots had been fired around 7:30 am the morning of July 1st, 1863 affairs had not gone well for Heth's Division. Harry Heth had specifically been ordered not to bring on a general engagement, however it seemed the enemy was not so restrained. But by Noon, half of the division, the brigades of James J. Archer and Joseph R. Davis, had been chewed up on the ridges west of Gettysburg. Indeed, General Archer had earned the rather dubious distinction of becoming the first general officer of the Army of Northern Virginia to be captured by the enemy. Witnessing this bloody repulse from their reserve position on Herr Ridge, the officers and men of Heth's remaining two brigades, the North Carolinians of James J. Pettigrew and the Virginians of John M. Brockenbrough, awaited their turn to advance with the almost unbearable tension such a situation brings to all soldiers. Col. Henry King Burgwyn, Jr., commanding the largest regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia had, himself, grown increasingly impatient and frustrated as the day wore on – a delay which surely allowed the enemy time to improve their positions on the ridge in front of him. Hearing the nearing rumble from the fighting to the northeast of his position toward Oak Ridge; it was obvious to Burgwyn that the time had come to again press the Yanks up ahead who had so far stymied Heth's advance upon Gettysburg from the west.

It may have troubled Gen. James Johnston Pettigrew that morning that much of this carnage could have been avoided. Based on his own observations from the reconnaissance of his brigade toward Gettysburg the day before it had become obvious to him that, at the very least, Gettysburg was occupied by regular Federal cavalry which invariably meant that enemy infantry were likely close at hand. Neither Gen. Heth, nor Corps commander Gen. Ambrose Powell Hill, had chosen to believe that the enemy troops he had observed in the environs of Gettysburg were anything more than local militia. Now, it was all too clear that veteran enemy artillery, cavalry, and infantry stubbornly confronted them.

Between 2:00 and 2:30 pm, Pettigrew's and Brockenbrough's brigades were finally ordered to advance. Col. Burgwyn gave the preparatory command to the 26th, "Battalion Forward..." and the front rank of his Color Guard stepped forward 6 paces in advance of the regiment's line. He then barked the command of execution, "March!" At that word, the 839 officers and men of the 26th North Carolina stepped forward. From his position immediately to the rear of the center of the regiment, Col. Burgwyn watched twenty-five old Sergeant Jefferson B. Mansfield carrying the new colors of the Regiment. Back in Chatham County North Carolina, Mansfield had left behind his young wife Ann, and two young sons, one only an infant. In a letter to Ann prior to the commencement of the Pennsylvania campaign he wrote, "There ain't a day, no hardly an hour, but what I am thinking of you and



the children.” When he had stood up on Herr Ridge to form the line an enemy bullet had grazed his flag staff – a warning of the hard work to come.

This would be the first engagement the regiment would fight under this new flag. Harry Burgwyn had been anxious for some time to secure a regulation battle flag for his unit. As far back as April 21st, 1863 in a letter to his father, Burgwyn had written, “...My officers are anxious

to purchase a silk Regimental flag, not a state flag, but a battle flag...” Three weeks later, Burgwyn wrote to his sister Maria an appeal for her assistance in procuring a new flag, wherein he stated, “... the officers of the Regiment are perfectly willing to subscribe any amount to purchase the material, but it is not to be found. Can you not therefore, among your many female acquaintances, and among my many feminine admirers, find someone sufficiently

enthusiastic in her admiration and withal sufficiently patriotic to devote her dress to the sacrifice? I really wish you would take the matter in hand, and try to procure the materials and to attend to the making of them up. The red silk should be of the deepest crimson color and the blue very prominent. Major Pierce can give you all necessary instructions as to the proportions which of course should correspond exactly with the regulations.”

Willoughby Run Gettysburg, PA



Fortunately for Burgwyn's many "feminine admirers", the sacrifice of their silk dresses were not required for on May 8th, 1863, the regiment's Assistant Quartermaster, Capt. Joseph J. Young, accepted receipt, from Capt. William Bentley of the Confederate Quartermaster's Department in Richmond, of five Battle Flags to be distributed to the regiments of Pettigrew's brigade. One of those five flags, all unmarked Richmond Depot 3rd issue infantry size battle flags, was the one the 26th was guided forward by on July 1st, 1863 and which we honor here today. Though not constructed of silk as Col. Burgwyn had desired, rather wool bunting, here, in this simple piece of fabric, would now reside the soul of the Regiment.

The magnificent sight of the 26th North Carolina advancing through a one quarter mile wide

field of waist high standing oats descending Herr Ridge toward the valley of Willoughby Run created life long memories for members of the 26th Regiment as well as their foes. Lt. Colonel John R. Lane noted proudly many years later that the regiment "...advanced as if the men were marching in review." Soon from their throats escaped the yipping sound of the Rebel Yell. Across the Run, Col. Henry Morrow of the 24th Michigan remembered, "They came on yelling like demons."

Waiting on the wooded ridge opposite the 26th were three veteran Union brigades of John Reynolds First Corps. The famous "Black Hats" of the Iron Brigade were in line near the eastern bank of Willoughby Run, the veteran Pennsylvania brigade of Col. Roy Stone with their trademark bucktails affixed to their caps continued the

Federal line to the right of the Iron Brigade in an inverted "L" formation and Col. Chapman Biddle's 1st Brigade of the 3rd Division was on the left and slightly to the rear of the Iron Brigade's line. Supporting the Union infantry was Battery B 1st Pennsylvania Artillery. The position they held was obviously the key to this portion of the battlefield and the Yanks had been ordered to hold their position at all hazards. When the Confederate line had advanced about half the distance from the crest of Herr Ridge to Willoughby Run, Col. Samuel J. Williams commanding the 19th Indiana Infantry ordered his Hoosiers to deliver a volley into the advancing Rebels. Posted on the left flank of the 24th Michigan, the 19th Indiana was directly opposite the right flank of the 26th North Carolina's advance. Col. Williams exhorted his men, "Boys,

Col. H.K. Burgwyn
26th NCT



we must hold our colors on this line, or lie here under them.” He then gave the order to fire and across the creek Sergeant Jefferson Mansfield falls to his knees shot in the right foot and the Colors of the regiment go to ground for the first of all too many times this hot afternoon. Sergeant Hiram Johnson of Co, G picks them up but as the line approaches Willoughby Run he too is severely wounded and down goes the flag once more. Exactly one year before to the day, the 33 year old Johnson had been wounded at the battle of Malvern Hill, Va..

As the line reaches the un-

derbrush along the west bank of Willoughby Run 21 year old Private John Stamper of Co.A takes up the flag from the wounded Johnson. As Stamper reaches the edge of the stream he takes a bullet in the right shoulder. The regiment splashes into and across Willoughby Run in the face of withering enemy fire. Private George Washington Kelly of Co.D now has the Colors but before he can get across the 35 year old private is shot through both his ankle and arm. Beside him as he goes down is Private Larkin Thomas of Co.F who calls out to Kelly, “Get up George and come on. Kelly

replies, “Can’t I’m hit. I believe my leg is broken. “What hit you” Thomas retorts and Kelly responds, “A piece of shell and there it lies. Give it to me please. I’m going to take it home for a souvenir. Take the flag Larkin.”

Once across the Run, Col. Burgwyn orders a halt to dress his line which had become disordered by the crossing of the stream and again the Regiment suffers from the heavy fire being directed on them by the enemy. Lt. Col. Lane later wrote of this stage of the fight that, “The bullets seem to be as thick as hailstones in a storm.” As the line is dressed Larkin Thomas is shot in the left arm and Private John Vinson of Co.G now takes up the bullet riddled flag. Vinson had suffered a wound a year ago at Malvern Hill too and had deserted back in March but was apprehended and had been sentenced by court martial to be shot. By some means the sentence had been revoked and he had returned to duty. This wound, the second of three he would suffer during the war, he would survive, only to receive the third and mortal wound six months later during the battle of the Wilderness, Va..

Twenty year old Private John R. Marley of Co.G next takes up the Colors but is immediately shot dead. Private William W. Ingram of Co.K, the last of the regular Color Guard of the Regiment, now has the flag but soon receives a wound in the leg. The determined tenacity of the 26th North Carolina prevails now as the first line of the enemy retreats, but quickly reforms halfway up the eastern bank of Willoughby Run. As the 26th closes in on this second line, the Assistant Inspector General of Pettigrew’s brigade, Capt.

William Westwood McCreery, Jr. arrives to deliver a message sent to Col. Burgwyn from Gen. Pettigrew. A breathless McCreery, having just had his mount shot out from under him, finds Col. Burgwyn in front of the center of the line and relates to him that, "Gen. Pettigrew says to tell you that your regiment has covered itself in glory today." Earlier in the war, McCreery had related in a letter to his sister that it was his wish to have the opportunity some day to rally troops in the midst of battle leading them forward with the flag of his new country. Capt. McCreery sees the 26th's Colors on the ground beside the severely wounded William Ingram. Impetuously, he takes them up and waves them over his head and within a few steps pitches forward shot through the heart.

While Pettigrew's message surely cheered Col. Burgwyn the continued slaughter his regiment was suffering, so exemplified by those who continued to fall bearing the regimental colors, must have been appalling. Lt. Thomas J. Cureton of Co.B later related that thus far he had been so distracted by events in his immediate front that he had not grasped the severity of the regiment's losses until he had been ordered to dress toward the center and realized that Co. F, which had been posted beside the Color Guard to his right no longer existed. Co.E, posted to the other side of the Colors had also been nearly obliterated.

Seeing Capt. McCreery go down with the Colors, 28 year old Lt. George Wilcox of Co.H grabbed the blood stained flag from under McCreery's lifeless form and now led the advance. Shot through the right side he nevertheless struggles on but seconds later is shot through

**Lt. Col. J. R. Lane
26th NCT**



the left foot. Unable to walk, Lt. Wilcox sank to the ground and tried to examine his wounds. As the line of battle passed him he noticed that this time no one immediately endeavored to pick up the fallen colors. Col. Burgwyn, sensing a crisis, retrieves the Colors from the disabled Lt. Wilcox and personally takes them up. Burgwyn looks about for someone to bear the flag and sees Lt. Cureton asking him if "Co. B could not furnish a man to carry his colors." Cureton calls on Private Franklin L. Honeycutt, who immediately put down his rifle and took up the deadly charge. As Col. Burg-

wyn passed the colors to Honeycutt, Lt. Col. Lane arrives and assures the Colonel that "We are in line on the right." Burgwyn shares Gen. Pettigrew's message with Lane and suddenly the center of the line is hit by a heavy enemy volley. Private Honeycutt is shot through the head and killed instantly. Again, Col. Burgwyn takes up the Colors. He takes a few steps in advance of the line raising his sword in his right hand and the flag in his left hand to cheer his men. As he does so he turns to see how the men are responding which threw his right side toward the enemy and at that instant a ball

**Sgt. Charles McConnell,
24th Michigan**



passed through his chest piercing both lungs. The force of the bullet's impact spun the 21 year old Colonel into the folds of the flag and his life's blood darkly stained the crimson banner. When Col. Burgwyn fell those near the center of the line hesitated, stunned by the sudden loss of their commander making any further advance questionable. Lt.Col. Lane briefly knelt by Burgwyn's side to comfort him and then wearily rose up and shouted to Capt. James C. McLauchlin of Co.K to "Close ranks and move your men quickly to the left. I am going to give them the bayonet!" Lane next moved toward the left and found Maj. John Thomas Jones still alive and directing the left flank of the Regiment. Lane issued the same orders to Jones to dress toward the center. When Lane returned, himself, to the center of the line he saw that the regimental colors still lay upon the ground, however, Lt. Cureton of Co.B was rapidly moving to pick them up. Lt. Milton B. Blair of Co.I reached them first and as he raised them up he was stopped by Lane who said to him, "Blair, give me them Colors." Lt. Blair responded by saying that, "No man can take these Colors and live." Lane somberly replied, "It is my time to take them now." Blair handed over the Colors to Lt.Col. Lane with the quick retort, "You will get tired of them!"

Lt.Col. Lane raised the Colors high over his head though the enemy fire continued unabated. As Lane looked back he must have been saddened at the greatly reduced state of his once powerful regiment as the 26th had diminished by this point to a mere skeleton of its former self. Defeat now would have made all the

sacrifice thus far sustained useless so, with the flag in hand, he shouted in his booming voice, "26th North Carolina, follow me!"

Back on Herr Ridge, Gen. Pettigrew peered through his field glasses trying to see through the gun smoke that shrouded the field. He could sense that his brigade's advance had stalled. Then, for a moment as the smoke cleared, he saw a gray clad officer holding up the colors and again his line surged forward. A nearby staff officer overheard Pettigrew saying to no one in particular, "It is the bravest act I ever saw."

This last surge on the part of the Southerners succeeded in dislodging the enemy from their final defensive position and the 26th North Carolina is said to have captured a stand of the enemy's colors, "but owing to some carelessness they were left behind." Just what Union regiment may have lost these colors is unknown, but there is within the collections here at the NC Museum of History a fragment of a National flag said to have been captured by the 26th at Gettysburg.

One of the last of the 24th Michigan's men to take leave of his position is Sgt. Charles McConnell, who steadies his musket on a nearby tree to take a final parting shot. He sees Lt. Col. Lane approaching with the bloody and shot torn battle flag and at about 30 paces he fires. Lt. Cureton later wrote that Lane, "...looked back towards us, like Lots wife, and fell limber as a rag – I thought killed dead – but not so – rather badly wounded in the back of the head coming out his mouth..."

Seeing the fleeing Union troops and his Lieutenant Colonel down with the Colors, Capt. Stephen

Brewer, the 27 year old commander of Company E picks up the Colors fallen for the last time, at least, on this bloody day. Seeing the Colors up again and the Yanks making fast to the rear, the now thin line of the 26th raised up the Rebel Yell and claimed the crest of McPherson's Ridge for their own. "Just then," Lt. Cureton would later remember, "our supports came up and relieved us." Those supports, consisting of Pender's Division advanced through the 26th's line and pushed the retreating Federals on to Seminary Ridge and beyond through the streets of Gettysburg. Some accounts have portions of the 26th North Carolina charging on with Pender's troops not having heard the command to halt in the confusion reining on the field, but no doubt most of the battered Regiment were quite satisfied to stop at the edge of Herbst Woods knowing they had won their deadly struggle with the Iron Brigade. "The ground," one soldier of the brigade would later write, "was gray with the dead and disabled."

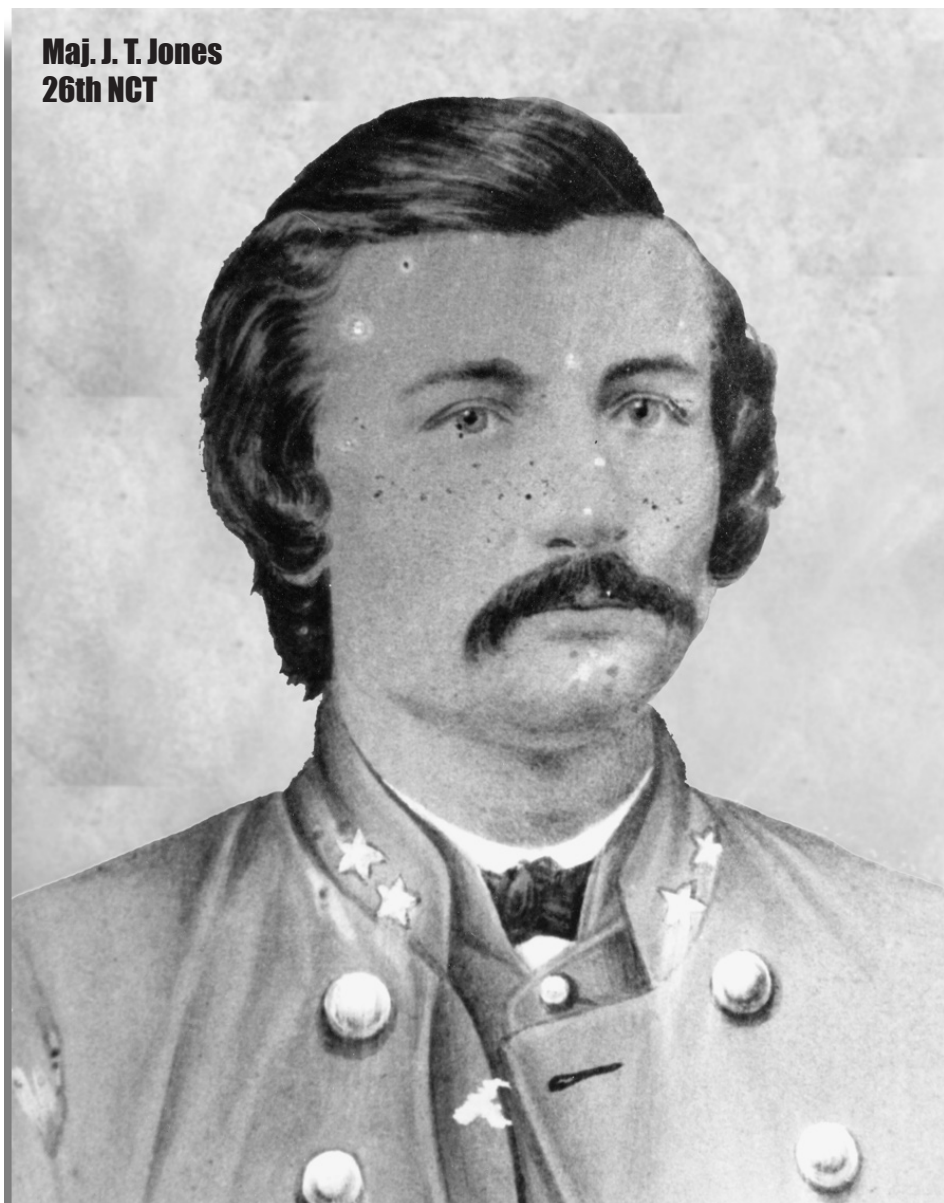
The epic struggle on McPherson's Ridge had transpired only for about thirty hellish minutes, but the losses the 26th North Carolina sustained there were truly remarkable. About 100 men of the regiment had been killed outright, and many more wounded – many mortally. Over half of the company grade officers had been killed or wounded. Fourteen men who carried the Colors had been shot, the youthful colonel of the Regiment was killed, the lieutenant colonel severely wounded, the major stunned by the concussion of a shell, the regimental sergeant major killed. The most severe losses had occurred in the two companies that had occupied the center of the Regi-

ments line. Company F, the Hibriten Guards from Caldwell County sustained an incredible 100% casualty rate with all 91 of its members being killed or wounded including the death of five of six twin brothers who served in the company. Company E, the Independent Guards from Chatham County had but two men left out of the 90 that had entered the battle. In all, by the evening of July 1st, 1863 the once mighty 839 man 26th North Carolina was able to muster only 216 men.

The remainder of the evening and night of July 1st was spent in collecting the regiment's wounded and burying its dead. The leader of the Regiment's band, Samuel Mickey who during the battle had been assigned along with his bandsmen to assist in the brigade hospitals walked over the battlefield the following morning and recalled, "Pettigrew's brigade had charged thru two fields and a narrow strip of woods, down grade all the way to a small branch, there they were in 30 steps of the enemy, who were said to have three lines of men firing into our ranks...While there I saw many wounded Yankees, and about five hundred dead on the hill, and wondered how any of the men escaped. On returning to the hospital, I found Col. Burgwyn's grave under a tree, in a large field, near a stone house..."

The men of the Regiment were not given much time to reflect upon their hard won victory, nor grieve for the loss of their fallen comrades as Gen. Pettigrew ordered the resumption of military duties on the morning of July 2nd. Pettigrew had now assumed command of Heth's Division as the later officer had received a head wound on

Maj. J. T. Jones
26th NCT



July 1st. Colonel Marshall of the 52nd NC was elevated to command Pettigrew's Brigade and Maj. John Thomas Jones now led the remnants of the 26th North Carolina. Orders were sent out for the return to the ranks of all detached and lightly wounded men but a pall of gloom had settled over the brave survivors who, as they looked about, noted the absence of so many of their comrades. Sensing this, Gen. Pettigrew directed the regimental bands of the 11th and 26th North Carolina to "get their horns and play and it was done faithfully all day long..."

The music so cheered the men, it is said that by Noon on July 2nd, "the command could raise a cheer once more."

On the morning of July 3rd, 1863, the Regiment was moved from its camps on Herr Ridge to the western slope of Seminary Ridge. That morning, Lt. Cureton of Co.B and Capt. Samuel Wagg of Co.A "...walked forward to view the positions occupied by the enemy. We saw a ridge about a mile to a mile and a Half from us a high and elevated position with a beautiful valley covered with grass – a lane

fence reached through rather diagonally across – no trees or anything not even a hill to protect a charging line from artillery – only the fence – the ridge we occupied was splendid for defense."

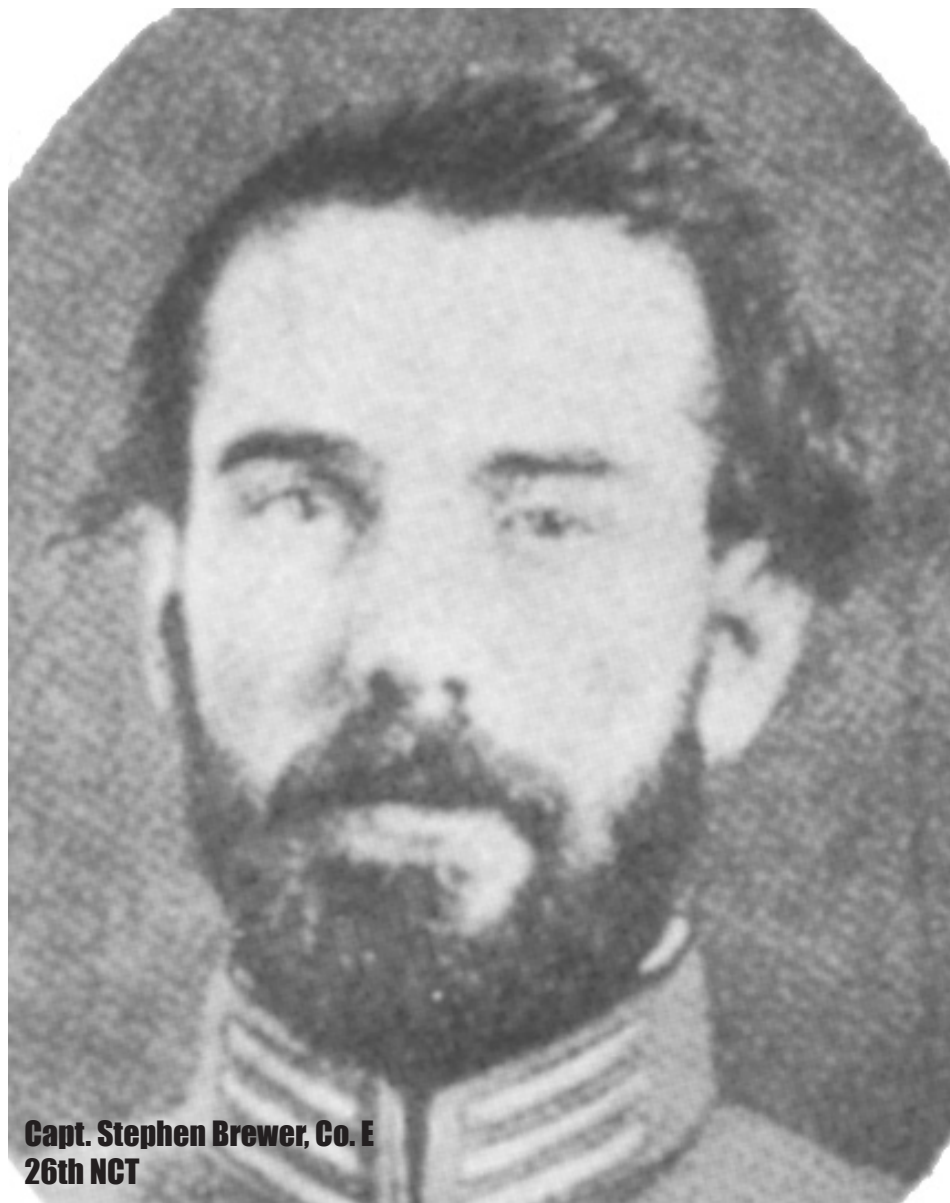
Gen. Pettigrew received orders later in the morning that his division, along with that of Gen. George Pickett's freshly arrived division and two brigades of Pender's division, to be commanded by Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble, due to Pender being wounded July 2nd, would assault the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. Pettigrew must have wondered why his men were being called upon for further sacrifice when it had already suffered far more casualties than any other in the army. Nonetheless, the division was brought up to McMillan's Woods to await the assault with many men wearing bloody bandages from their wounds of July 1st. Gen. Lee, who observed them filing into position inquired as to whose command they belonged remarking that, "Many of these poor men appear unfit for duty."

At about 1:00pm the greatest cannonade ever heard on the North American continent commenced and the ground trembled, and the air was filled with shrieking shells for two hours as preparation for the grand assault. Pettigrew's division deployed in line of battle with Archer's Brigade, now command by Col. Burkett Fry, on the right, next came Pettigrew's old brigade commanded by Col. Marshall with the 26th North Carolina on the right of the brigade, then Davis' brigade and on the far left Brockenbrough's Brigade now under Col. Mayo. Trimble's two North Carolina brigades from Pender's division, those

of Generals John Lane and Alfred Scales, formed in support behind Pettigrew's Division. To the right was the Virginia division of George Pickett and further to his right, in his support, was Col. Lang's Florida and Wilcox's Alabama brigades.

At the end of the cannonade, an eerie silence settled on the field and the 26th North rose up and formed for the desperate assault. Gen. Pettigrew soon rode up before the brigade on a dappled gray horse reminding Lt. Cureton of "the Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn." Pettigrew greeted Col. Marshall and in a strong voice heard by those in the 26th commanded, "Now Colonel, for the honor of the good Old North State, Forward!" The lines then went forward in perfect order toward their renewed appointment with the enemy.

Company B's Lt. Cureton wrote after the war of what happened next, "...to the right and left as far as the eye could see on either side that splendid sight of perfect lines of battle – but the enemy's artillery opened on us with grape and canister, but our lines crossed the lane in splendid order – when about two hundred yards from their works the musketry opened on us but nothing daunted us and our brave men press quickly forward and we had reached within about forty yards of the works our Regiment had been reduced to a skirmish line by the constant falling of the men at every step – but they kept closing to the Colours and we were still pressing quickly forward when a cry came from the left and I looked and saw the right regiment of Davis' Mississippi brigade driven from the field as chaff before a whirlwind the entire left of the line was gone and we



**Capt. Stephen Brewer, Co. E
26th NCT**

were exposed to a front and enfilade fire..."

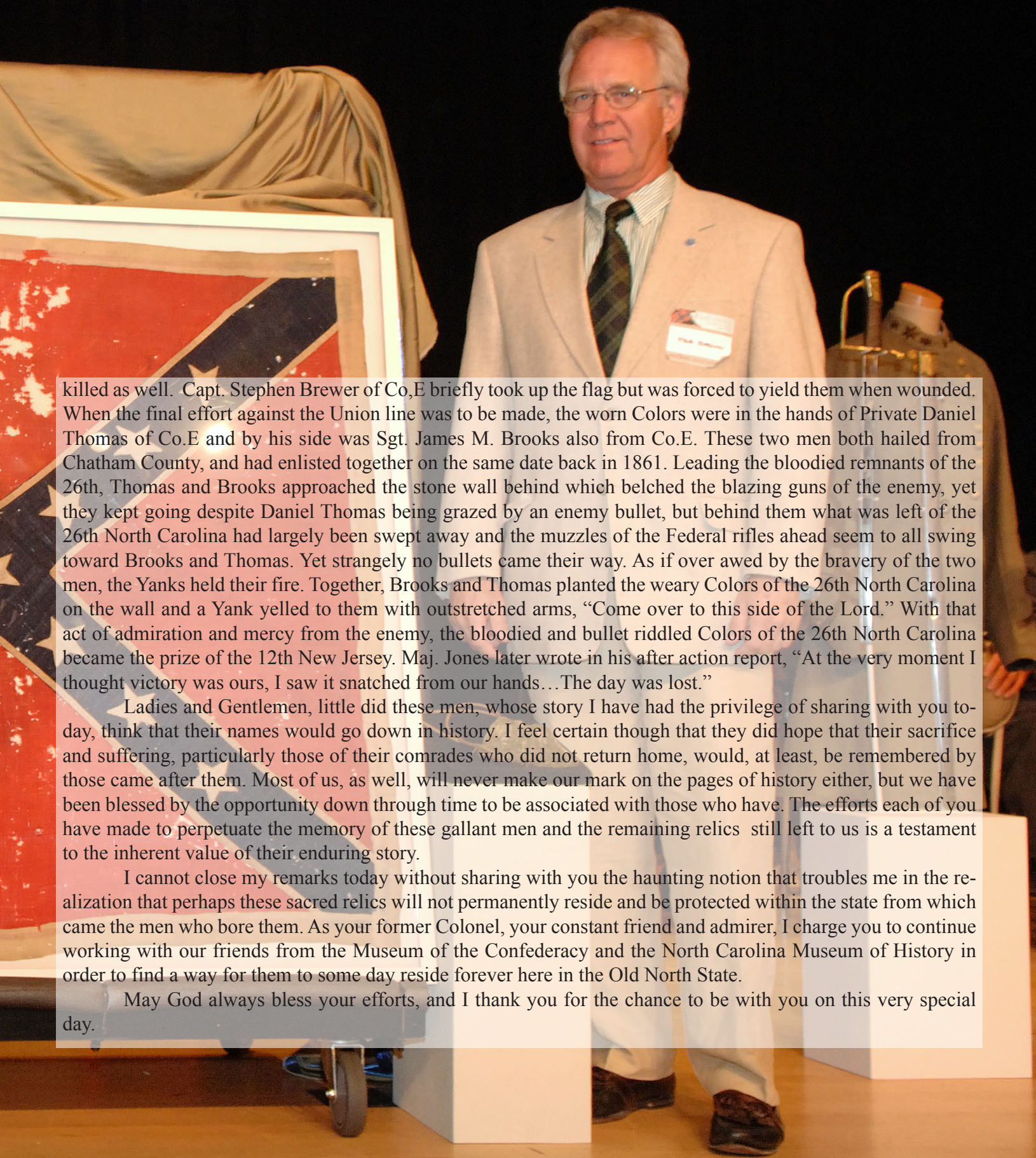
The collapse of the left of Pettigrew's Division had actually started with Mayo's Virginia brigade. Much weakened too in its fight on July 1st, it had not heard the initial order to advance and had become delayed struggling to catch up with the balance of the division on its right. The small brigade soon came under flank fire from massed guns of some 31 pieces of Union artillery and by the 8th Ohio Regiment which had deployed at a right angle to the main Federal line. The Virginians dissolved under this

pressure exposing the left flank of Davis's brigade, whose regiments were forced to flee in succession. Then it came the 26th's brigade's time to feel the full weight of the Yanks flank fire. Trimble's two North Carolina brigades moved up to try to fill the gap left when Davis's and Mayo's brigades were forced back.

Before the 26th North Carolina even reached the fences at the Emmitsburg Road they had lost two more Color bearers. Sergeant W.H. Smith of Co.K was the first to fall, killed outright then came Private Thomas J. Cozart of Co.F,



**Descendants of Col H.K. Burgwyn with the
26th NCT Battleflag, May 17, 2008**



killed as well. Capt. Stephen Brewer of Co.E briefly took up the flag but was forced to yield them when wounded. When the final effort against the Union line was to be made, the worn Colors were in the hands of Private Daniel Thomas of Co.E and by his side was Sgt. James M. Brooks also from Co.E. These two men both hailed from Chatham County, and had enlisted together on the same date back in 1861. Leading the bloodied remnants of the 26th, Thomas and Brooks approached the stone wall behind which belched the blazing guns of the enemy, yet they kept going despite Daniel Thomas being grazed by an enemy bullet, but behind them what was left of the 26th North Carolina had largely been swept away and the muzzles of the Federal rifles ahead seem to all swing toward Brooks and Thomas. Yet strangely no bullets came their way. As if over awed by the bravery of the two men, the Yanks held their fire. Together, Brooks and Thomas planted the weary Colors of the 26th North Carolina on the wall and a Yank yelled to them with outstretched arms, "Come over to this side of the Lord." With that act of admiration and mercy from the enemy, the bloodied and bullet riddled Colors of the 26th North Carolina became the prize of the 12th New Jersey. Maj. Jones later wrote in his after action report, "At the very moment I thought victory was ours, I saw it snatched from our hands... The day was lost."

Ladies and Gentlemen, little did these men, whose story I have had the privilege of sharing with you today, think that their names would go down in history. I feel certain though that they did hope that their sacrifice and suffering, particularly those of their comrades who did not return home, would, at least, be remembered by those came after them. Most of us, as well, will never make our mark on the pages of history either, but we have been blessed by the opportunity down through time to be associated with those who have. The efforts each of you have made to perpetuate the memory of these gallant men and the remaining relics still left to us is a testament to the inherent value of their enduring story.

I cannot close my remarks today without sharing with you the haunting notion that troubles me in the realization that perhaps these sacred relics will not permanently reside and be protected within the state from which came the men who bore them. As your former Colonel, your constant friend and admirer, I charge you to continue working with our friends from the Museum of the Confederacy and the North Carolina Museum of History in order to find a way for them to some day reside forever here in the Old North State.

May God always bless your efforts, and I thank you for the chance to be with you on this very special day.

Homecoming

FLAG AND REGIMENT REUNITED

Mr. Richard Lane Brown III







Ladies and Gentlemen, Officers and Men of the 26th North Carolina Regiment, Distinguished Guests all, Thank You for the opportunity to participate in these proceedings for the re-dedication of the Regiment's most honored and cherished Gettysburg battle flag. I am indeed humbled by this auspicious occasion. Prior to delivering my prepared remarks, permit me to recognize again our distinguished colleague from Richmond, the Most Honorable Waite Rawls. Waite, I personally extend to you the hand of friendship as we renew our partnership, committed to working together in the preservation of a common history. Thank you again for your good offices in helping to bring together the Flag, Regiment and our museums.

On April 10, 1865, Robert E. Lee,

General of the Army of Northern Virginia, issued from his headquarters GENERAL ORDER No. 9. This final Order issued by Lee is deserving of being read in full so as to give proper context to my remarks. Many of those attending today will recognize the Order as Robert E. Lee's Farewell Address.

"After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. I need not tell the survivors of so many hard-fought battles who have remained steadfast to the last that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them; but feeling that valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that could compensate for the loss that would have attended the continuance of the contest, I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past services have endeared them to their countrymen. By the terms of the agreement, officers and men can return to their homes and remain until exchanged. You may take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you his blessing and protection. With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell."

Just two days later, on April 12, 1865, the soldiers in Major General William T. Sherman's army were in a grand mood. They had just left their camps around Goldsboro to pursue General "Joe" Johnston's small force retiring on Raleigh. The men in blue had every reason to be happy. Not only had they successfully applied total war to the two Carolinas, but they had also just received the news of Lee's surrender to Grant. It was on the night of April 11th that Sherman learned of Appomattox, and it was not long before horsemen were riding thru drowsy camps bellowing "Lee has surrendered!" This kicked off a euphoric celebration among the soldiers in the field. Bands played, guns were fired and shouting voices filled the air. In just two weeks, General Joe Johnston would be forced to have his men lay down their arms and fold their flags. On April 26, at the James Bennett home near Durham, Johnston surrendered his forces to Sherman. Except for the stacking of arms at Greensboro, the war was over in our State. Raleigh and Chapel Hill were spared from the pillaging and destruction of much of Sherman's

march through the Carolinas certainly spared the fate of Columbia. We must give credit to the delegation constituted to negotiate with Gen. Sherman: former North Carolina governors David Lowry Swain (then president of the Univ. of North Carolina) and William A. Graham for their intercessions which saved the State Capitol and the University buildings from being destroyed.

With the Union printing presses now rolling, paroles were being issued to Confederate soldiers upon their giving a solemn parole of honor that “[they] will not hereafter serve in the armies of the Confederate States, or in any military capacity whatever, against the United States of America, or render aid to the enemies of the latter, until properly exchanged....” With this oath having been given and received, the boys started toward home. Typical of the experiences encountered, we consult the recollections of Richard Barton Meyers, from Lexington,

North Carolina, who served some three years with the 57th NC Regiment. Written by Meyers when he was 83 years old, and 60 years after the war, we find these poignant words: “Now as I have said the war is over. The soldiers what is left of them has gone home, but we have no money or anything – only a soldier’s suit of clothes. I didn’t have a copper cent. There was nothing much in the country....and all the men that was here was those that was too old to go in the war. So there was no body to work, only the soldiers that got back home from the war, but we all went to work as could....”

I am sure the recollections of R. B. Meyers mirror those of thousands of soldiers who returned to the Old North State, only to find their families, friends and loved ones destitute, broke and embittered by the long war, a hard conflict that literally broke the economies of the Southern states. The South suffered

the greatest impact of the War since most of the battlefields and skirmishes were fought on Southern soil. Sherman’s march to the sea, for example, had destroyed thousands of homes, businesses and farms. In many Southern states, the infrastructure was annihilated, and to make matters worse, the states were bankrupt. These harsh conditions were greatly exacerbated in the South since crops and livestock were scarce. Like Meyers said, “... all [we] had was hope and each other.” Indeed, it would be some years before the spirit of reconciliation and reunion would spread thru the ranks of aging veterans that had witnessed ordeals and trials never seen or since repeated with such costs in these United States. But slowly, albeit slowly, from the ranks of former leaders came direction and urging that the best interests of this State and the Nation would be served by treating former foes as brothers and sisters.



**Postwar Portrait of
Lt. Col. J. R. Lane
26th NCT**



Among those leading the cause from NC was Colonel John Randolph Lane, my namesake, the third full Colonel of this famous Regiment, after Burgwyn who bravely gave his life on that first day at Gettysburg, and after Zeb Vance, this State's wartime governor. Lane rose to the occasion when he addressed one of the first large reunions at Gettysburg on July 3, 1903 forty years after the battle. Today, we hear the echo of Colonel Lane's closing remarks: "Then, my comrades, count it not idle that your remains lie on foreign soil. It is foreign soil no more. We lost our cause, but we have won back our place in the American Union. Pennsylvania and North Carolina are sisters now, and like a sister, Pennsylvania is caring for you. Her noblest sons and daughters are pleading for a statute (sic) of Lee to overlook the scenes which last you saw, and are coming to regard you as brothers. They address your old colonel as "comrade." Year by year the relentless temper of war is giving way to the gentle tones of brotherhood and peace. Your valor is coming to be regarded as the common heritage of the American nation; it no longer belongs to your State alone, it no longer belongs to the South; it is the high-water mark of what Americans have done and can do. The day is soon coming and is already here, when your heroism will be as much admired in Maine as in Texas; in California as in Carolina. Your deeds challenge the wonder of mankind. You have brought everlasting renown on your native State and the dear old Twenty-sixth North Carolina.

As evidence of that spirit of brotherhood, Lane joined hands with his most worthy adversary,

Charles H. McConnell of the fabled 24th Michigan Regiment, known too many as the "Michigan Iron Brigade." Yes, it was McConnell who paused to take a parting shot as the 26th North Carolina Regiment surged up Seminary Ridge on that July 1st, 1863. Burgwyn had been mortally wounded, and in just minutes Lane himself would be gravely wounded. But now as former brothers in arms, the men clasped hands on the spot where the Michigander during retreat desperately wounded the Carolinian. Sharing the platform together, this was indeed a sign that the War was over, the sections of the Nation reunited.

We are reliably informed that the North Carolina Society of Baltimore, host for the 1903 reunion, gave a copy of Lane's remarks, printed verbatim in both *The Raleigh News & Observer* and *The Charlotte Observer*, to a member of President Theodore Roosevelt's cabinet - William Howard Taft who was then serving as Secretary of War. Previously, President Grover Cleveland, back in 1887, had endeavored to perform a gracious act toward the South, although himself, of course, a Northerner. Cleveland's efforts to return the flags cost him his reelection in 1888. After Teddy Roosevelt succeeded to the Presidency upon the assassination of William McKinley (September 1901), TR put forward a bill to return the Confederate battle flags. This legislation unanimously passed both Houses in 1905, was signed into law as House Jt. Res. No. 217. From Roosevelt's perspective, the 1905 Congressional Order to return all captured Confederate flags to their Respective states was done to facilitate good will between the North and South. Taft carried

out his President's Order and this led to the initial return of flags to NC, including the "Burgess Mill" or "Hatcher's Run" flag that had been captured from the 26th Regiment during the siege of Petersburg, VA on October 27, 1864. As we know from Jeff Stepp's eloquent remarks today, our Regiment's Gettysburg flag was not among those returned to the Tar Heel State in 1905, nor in 1906 when the remaining standards were sent to Richmond in the "care, custody" of Museum of Confederacy. Certainly the article appearing in the *Richmond VA Times Dispatch* on March 28, 1905 was welcome news to the many veterans of the Commonwealth: "VIRGINIA FLAGS AT HOME AGAIN" - the "Secretary of War returns all [flags] that can be identified Placed in a museum box containing 62 war banners, [they were] sent to the Governor."

In just a few more years, the Nation would celebrate "The Great Gettysburg Reunion of 1913" - the largest combined reunion of Civil War veterans ever held, hosted by the State of Pennsylvania which extended invitations to every surviving honorably discharged Union and Confederate veteran in the Nation. Free railroad transportation was provided to all invited. The response was overwhelming; despite efforts to limit the numbers attending, some 53,407 veterans came (1,265 from NC) and settled into the Great Camp situated on the battlefield. Gleaming white tents - some 6,592 in all - occupied nearly 280 acres of hallowed ground. Former foes now walked together over the old battlefield and re-lived the terrible days where so many of their comrades had lost their lives. Every day there

were programs with speeches by dignitaries and governors of many states. Though President Woodrow Wilson had made a conscious effort to avoid the event, he was finally persuaded not to let such an opportunity slip by. The President came to Gettysburg to address the veterans on July 4th – Independence Day for the Nation. With compassion and gratitude, Wilson spoke eloquently: “These venerable men crowding here to this famous field has set us a great example of devotion and utter sacrifice. They were willing to die that their people might live. But their task is done. Their day is turned into evening. They look to us to perfect what they have established. Their work is handed unto us, to be done in another way, but not in another spirit. Our day is not over; it is upon us in full tide.”

John Randolph Lane did not live to witness or attend that Grand Reunion – he died, most believe, from his wounds. At 4 p.m. on December 31, 1908, Col. Lane uttered his last words – “I am nearing the shore” – and died at age seventy-three. Among the North Carolina veterans attending the 50th Reunion, was a member of the 26th Rgt. - musician Julius Leinbach. Leinbach was befriended by Col. Chas. McConnell who invited him to his tent and there bestowed on Leinbach his own decoration ribbon from Michigan. This can all be viewed in the Southern Historical Collection of the UNC Library at Chapel Hill. With the 1913 reunion now history, the Nation then turned to an emerging World War in Europe.

We know from records kept of that encampment in 1913 that some good number of the battle flags that had been returned to the

States in 1905 were unfurled at Gettysburg, to be raised again on both sides of the Stone Wall that had seen such carnage on the 3rd day. The memories of those heroic acts by Private Thomas and Sergeant Brooks were relived by those aged veterans, many of whom had seen their regimental colors become the prize of the 12th New Jersey. This was not the last reunion for the aging Gettysburg veterans. On the eve of the Second World War, in 1938, the last national Reunion of the Blue and the Gray at Gettysburg -1,845 veterans met at the Angle. Thirty-eight of those veterans were from N. Carolina. As cameras rolled, clicked, the old gentlemen shook hands over the stone wall where our 26th NC Rgt. went the farthest on that afternoon of July 3rd. This time, the veterans gathered for a dedication. Located on West Battlefield, the summit of Oak Hill, surrounded by guns that mark Confederate artillery positions, the Eternal Peace Memorial overlooks the July 1st fighting grounds. It was the sentimental brainchild of both Union and Confederate veterans who first proposed the monument during the 1913 Reunion. It was a torridly hot afternoon on July 3, 1938 when the former veterans met to dedicate this Memorial to “Peace Eternal in a Nation United.” President Franklin D. Roosevelt was the featured speaker at the ceremony. FDR: “Immortal deeds and words have created herea shrine of American patriotism. We are encompassed by ‘the last full measure’ of many men and by the simple words in which Lincoln expressed the simple faith for which they died.” The president went on to compare the task set before Lincoln and the American people in 1863

with the task set before Americans in 1938. Of the veterans in blue and gray, Roosevelt reminded the audience, “All of them we honor, not asking under which Flag they fought then – thankful that they stand together under one Flag now.” Pennsylvania State Police estimated that 450,000 people Attended the dedication while another 100,000 remained Stuck in their cars on packed roads leading to Gettysburg.

145 years later, we convene today as a REUNION OF FLAG AND REGIMENT REUNITED! I feel compelled to take literary license with the Richmond Times Dispatch from 1905, so we can proudly say: “NORTH CAROLINA FLAG AT HOME AGAIN!”

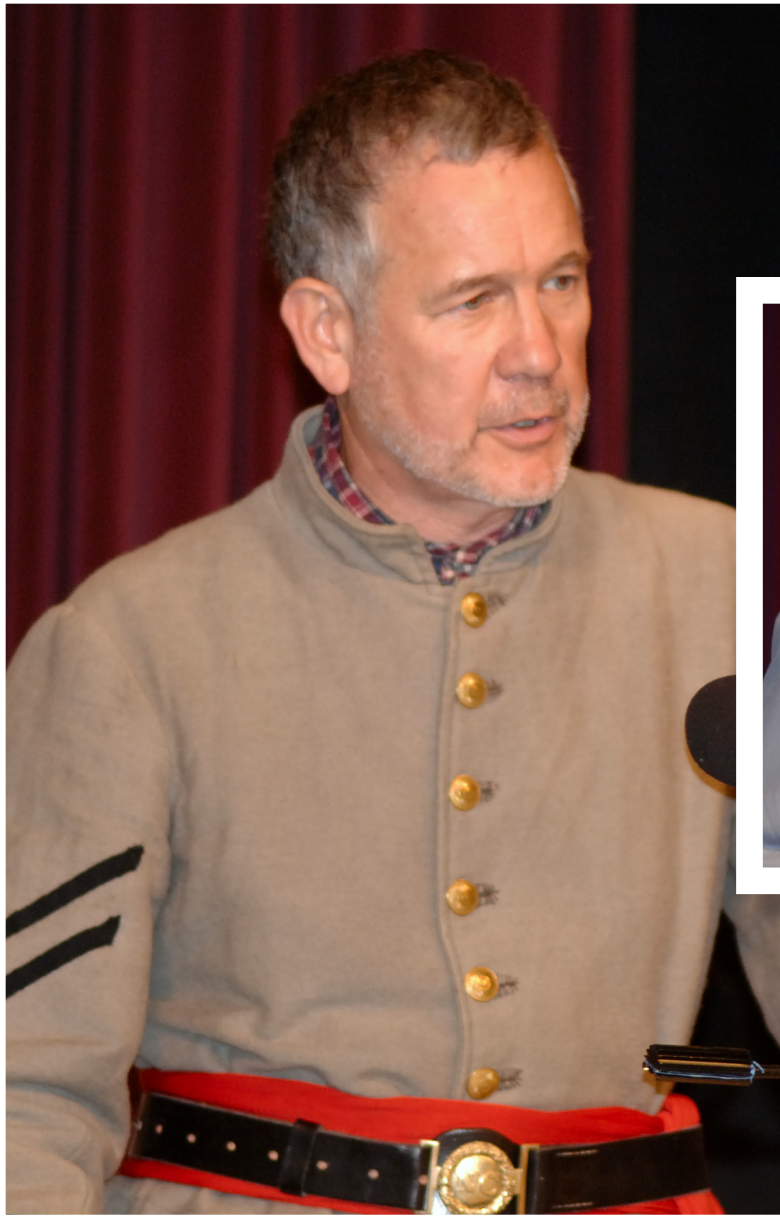
The Reunions in 1903, 1913, and 1938 helped to reconcile this Nation, bringing it together, just like returning the battle flags did in 1905 and 1906. Similarly, our two museums, Richmond and Raleigh, now have a renewed opportunity, working together, to make history meaningful, to make it come alive! In closing, this REUNION of flag and the 26th NC, in sight of our grand and proud Capitol, provides a solemn opportunity to renew our allegiance to this Nation, to renew our commitment that the cherished teachings and lessons of that great conflict will not be forgotten, that the memories of the men in Blue and Gray who paid the ultimate sacrifice will not be lost; that for all times, we as members of this great 26th North Carolina Regiment will honorably acquit ourselves in carrying out the mission to which we have been entrusted by our ancestors. I Thank You, and May God Bless You, May God Bless these United States.



May 17th, 2008

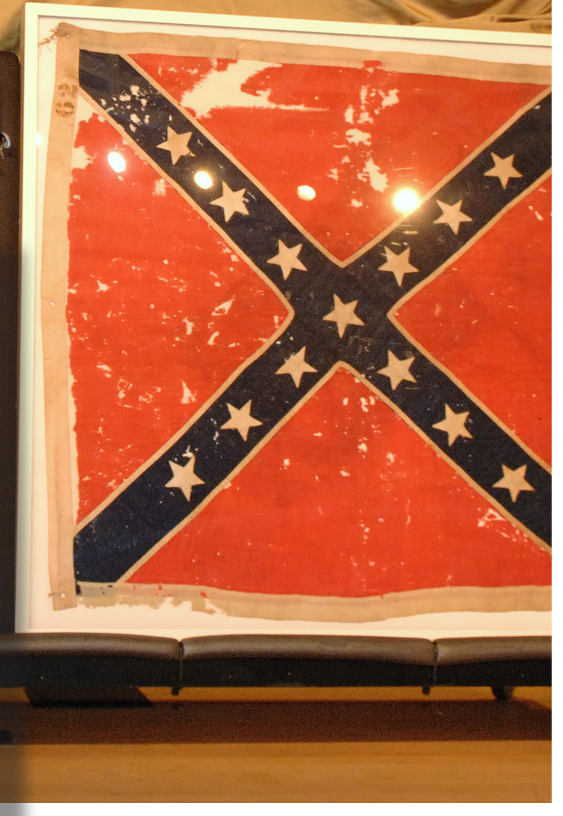


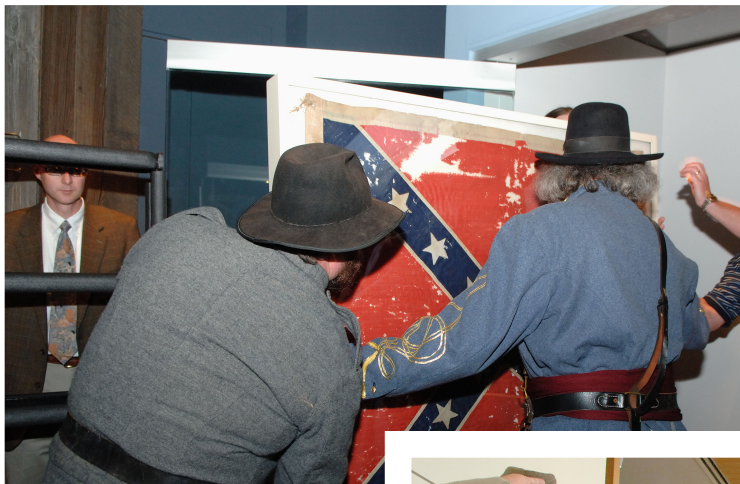


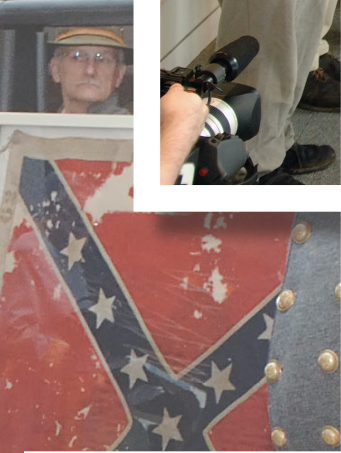












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"THE MEN OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH REGIMENT
WOULD DRESS ON THEIR COLORS IN SPITE OF
THE WORLD"

