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THE FORGOTTEN SONS:
NORTH CAROLINIANS IN THE UNION ARMY

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate School of
Appalachian State University

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In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Glenda Hicks
1968

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ABSTRACT

In its pride in the Confederate soldiers from the state, North Carolina has largely overlooked the more than eight thousand men who represented her with eight regiments, and who fought on the Northern side. When these Tar Heels have been remembered, they have not been remembered well. Though they cannot begin to compare in numbers with the native sons who wore the gray, the state's Union soldiers are too numerous to be discounted. Yet most North Carolinians are unaware they ever existed. It was in recognition of this fact that The Forgotten Sons was written. The author has tried to show something of the organization and participation in the war of the four White and four Negro regiments. An attempt has also been made to present a glimpse of their character and attitudes in general.

Most of the information contained in this study came from the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Other primary sources include newspapers contemporary with the Civil War, and books by authors who lived during the period and who wrote of personal experiences which they recalled.

Secondary sources used include periodicals, books which present the Civil War as a whole, or as it happened in the state, and a study of a particular military campaign.

Under the protection of the United States Army, which occupied a part of North Carolina's coast from August, 1861, until the end of the war, the First North Carolina Union Volunteer Regiment was mustered in from June, 1862, to January, 1863. The Second North Carolina was assembled from November, 1863, to February, 1864. Personnel for all the White regiments were drawn from among Unionists, some of whom were deserters from the Confederate Army. Both the First and Second Regiments did their fighting on the state's eastern edge, helping to hold that which the United States Army had conquered. The area was subjected to periodic raids by smaller Confederate forces and two serious attempts by the Confederacy to rid the coast of Union soldiers. For those who had deserted the rebel army it was a risky occupation. Capture meant probable execution, a penalty which was suffered by a number of Union volunteers.

There was no friendly military force located in Western North Carolina to help dissenters from secession. But mid-way in the war the United States Army controlled a goodly portion of East Tennessee, many of whose citizens had always been Unionists. Moving west across the mountain trails into more friendly territory, Western North Carolinians went to fight for their chosen cause. The Second North Carolina Mounted Infantry was recruited from October to December, 1863. The Third Mounted Infantry was organized in February of 1864 and never stopped growing until the end of the war. The Carolina horsemen guarded the mountain passes, raided rebel towns, and helped to protect the rear of Stoneman's Cavalry in 1865.

The remaining four regiments of Tar Heels in the Union army consisted of the First, Second, and Third North Carolina Colored Infantry Regiments, organized from June through August, 1863, and the First North Carolina Colored Heavy Artillery which was created in February, 1864. Never leaving the coastal area, the Artillery Regiment later became the Fourteenth United States Colored Heavy Artillery. All of the Colored troops enlisted on the

Union-held coast, to which thousands of slaves fled, seeking the sanctuary of freedom. All three Colored infantry regiments served in the Carolinas and Virginia. Eventually the First North Carolina was sent to Florida and renamed the Thirty-fifth United States Colored Troops. The Second and Third Infantry, redesignated the Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh United States Colored Troops, respectively, found a home in Virginia where they served in prisons as guards and on the battle lines. The men of the Thirty-fifth finished the war near Charleston, South Carolina, and those of the Thirty-sixth in Virginia. The soldiers of the Thirty-seventh, which was removed from the Old Dominion to take part in the expedition to Fort Fisher in January of 1865, completed their service in North Carolina.

The Union volunteers contributed to the United States war effort by releasing northern soldiers for duty elsewhere, and by undermining morale among the people of the state. Tar Heel soldiers in blue were average men with average values who, in the degeneration of war, suffered at the hands of others and caused others to suffer at their hands. As a part of the state's heritage they deserve a place in its history.

PREFACE

It is a well known fact that North Carolina contributed more men to the Confederate Army than any one of her sister states. It is not so well known that eight regiments of Union soldiers also bore her name. The material presented in the following pages is designed to enumerate those regiments and tell something of their composition, movements, trials, and successes. Although individuals are dealt with only in relation to the military organizations, or the Unionist sentiment which fostered them, it is also hoped that some insight may be provided into the reasons these men dissented from the policy of their state's government.

It should be stated that this paper does not include all the Tar Heels who served in the Union army. Many left the state before the loyal regiments were conceived, to become soldiers of the states in the North. Neither were all who served in the North Carolina regiments natives of the state, though most were.

A disproportionate amount of space is devoted to the First and Second North Carolina Infantry. This fact is attributed to their being organized before the Negro troops or those in the Western part of the state. Also the activities of the two regiments were confined to a smaller area, making their movements easier to follow.

The reader will note a discrepancy regarding the terms, "general orders," and "general order." The plural refers to a headquarters communication which contains several directions and/or announcements, while the singular denotes only one directive or announcement.

I wish to thank the several persons among my friends and colleagues who have provided leads to sources of information dealing with my chosen subject. Special thanks is extended to Dr. Ina Van Noppen for her guidance in the preparation of this paper and for her tolerance of a most imperfect and tardy student. I am also grateful to my sister, Doris, for the hours she spent patiently typing.

INTRODUCTION

When the guns fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, precipitating a bloody conflict between a newly formed nation determined to live and another nation just as determined not to be dismembered, North Carolina was still a part of the Federal Union. Shortly before Beauregard's artillery fired upon the flag he and many others had until recently served, the majority of the people in the Tar Heel state had voted not to hold a convention to even discuss secession. Most North Carolinians disapproved of Abraham Lincoln but they also disapproved of the Southern demagogues upon whose agitation the Confederacy was founded. The people of the state did not want to secede but their economy and their culture were Southern. If it came to war, most citizens felt, North Carolina must go with the cotton states.

Between the secession of South Carolina and Lincoln's call for troops the people of North Carolina had walked a tightrope of unresolved crisis. Suddenly, it was over. Feeling that they had been forced to choose, most North Carolinians must have felt relieved when after an agonizing period of indecision, a stand was finally taken. The convention which finally voted the state out of the Union was a mere formality. Unity was the watchword of the hour as hitherto staunch Unionists sadly turned into secessionists. One such man, John A. Gilmer, of Guilford County pronounced the words which the

state leadership believed to be true, when he said, "We are all one now."¹ Doubtless Mr. Gilmer's statement reflected a statewide sentiment. On the eve of civil war North Carolina was probably more united than it had been, or would be again, for a very long time.

But John A. Gilmer should not have said "all." It was neither customary nor legal in those days to count Negroes, whether slave or free, as citizens or even as persons. This was unfortunate for in the next four years it was learned that these beings could march, charge, and fire guns. In the next four years at least 5,034² North Carolina Negroes, organized into four regiments, bearing the name of their native state, did all in their power to make the North victorious and gain freedom for their race.

In making his all inclusive statement Gilmer also overlooked two other types which would be found in the state. Because the Guilford Unionist and his friends lost their Unionism he presumed that all others of like mind had lost theirs too. This conviction proved to be untrue. Several thousand White North Carolinians wore the Union blue. Of these some never switched their allegiance to the Confederacy while others did, only to become disenchanted and return to the United States' fold. About half joined regiments of other states becoming lost among the names of those with whom they served. The others, numbering at least 3,156,³ were organized into four regiments of North Carolina Union Volunteers. To their fellow citizens they were cowardly

¹John G. Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 17.

²U. S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1927), Series III, Volume 4, pp. 1268-1270.

³Ibid.

traitors and in most North Carolina history books they never existed, or if they did, it was only in small numbers. After one hundred and three years perhaps it is time for North Carolinians to take a new and unprejudiced look at the approximately eight thousand whose eight regimental banners read, "North Carolina."

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THE FORGOTTEN SONS: NORTH CAROLINIANS IN THE UNION ARMY

Chapter I

LOYAL EASTERNERS BECOME UNION SOLDIERS

In the Beginning, An Invasion

The decision of the United States Government to take Hatteras Island was due to the operations of a hodgepodge of vessels which made up the North Carolina Navy and was jokingly called the "mosquito fleet."¹ Hiding inside Hatteras Inlet, with a lookout posted in the lighthouse,² the six ships comprising the state navy³ would dash unexpectedly out to capture United States merchant ships.⁴ This motley fleet was so effective that it brought about a Northern invasion at first designed only to stop its operation.⁵ Accordingly, an expedition was sent out under the command of General Benjamin F. Butler and on August 29, 1861, Hatteras Island was in the possession of

¹John Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 35.

²U. S. Navy Department, The War of the Rebellion: Or Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1927), Series I, Volume 6, p. 72, hereinafter cited as NR.

³Ibid., p. 79.

⁴Ibid., p. 72.

⁵Ibid., pp. 69, 70.

United States forces.⁶ Butler's orders had been to place obstructions in the inlet to stop the activities of the "mosquito fleet" and then to withdraw. But having gained the island this General, who is best remembered for his mistakes, made a correct decision. He saw the possibilities of a potential landing on the mainland launched from Hatteras. The calm waters of Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds also offered safe passage from "Norfolk to Cape Lookout" for light vessels which could not travel on the open sea. Butler was so sure of the rightness of his thinking that he sailed away from the conquered island on the day of his victory to successfully plead his case in Washington.⁷ Behind him he left a small naval and land force to hold Hatteras and the inlets on either end. The command of all he gave to Colonel Rush C. Hawkins of the Ninth New York Volunteers.⁸ Hawkins immediately established good relations with the islanders. He suspected that they had little reason to be good loyal Confederates.⁹ His suspicions were confirmed the day after Butler left when a delegation acting on behalf of the citizens presented him with a paper which read as follows:

We the citizens of Cape Hatteras, do ask of your honor that you will allow us to return to our homes and property and protect us in the same as natural citizens as we have never taken up arms against your government, nor has it ever been our wish to do so. We did not help by our votes to get North Carolina out of the Union. Believing that your clemency will not allow you to treat us as rebels, who have always been loyal citizens, we do earnestly

⁶U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office 1880-1901), Series I, Volume 4, p. 583, hereinafter cited as OR.

⁷Ibid., pp. 584, 585.

⁸Rush C. Hawkins, "Early Coastal Operations in North Carolina," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, eds. R. U. Johnson and C. C. Buel (New York: Century Co., 1887), p. 632.

⁹Ibid., p. 636.

request, for the sake of our women and children, that you will comply with our wishes, as we seek protection from your honor.¹⁰

Hawkins sent the delegation away with the request that all who could, meet him the following day to discuss the situation.¹¹ About thirty people came at the appointed hour and an oath of allegiance was agreed upon.¹²

During the next seven or eight days almost every man on the island promised

that we will true allegiance bear to the United States...that we will not take up arms against said Government, or hold any communication with its enemies, or aid or comfort its enemies in any way whatever, and that we will give to the commandant of Fort Clark any information we may receive of the approach of the enemy; and in case we are called upon we will assist the commandant of the said United States...and we will always, under any and all circumstances, support the Constitution of the said United States.¹³

Hawkins was so impressed with this show of Unionist sentiment that he issued a proclamation to the rest of North Carolina from his Hatteras headquarters. He told them that as

the colonel commanding the Federal Forces now in North Carolina, having heard of the erroneous impression which exists among the inhabitants as to the object and purpose of said forces, would state that it is no part of the object of said forces to pillage and plunder. We come not to destroy, but secure peace and uphold the law of the United States. The rights of property and persons will be protected and respected, and any Federal soldiers infringing upon them will be most severely punished. It is no part of our intention to war against women and children; on the contrary, they shall be protected with all the power under our control. Loyal citizens can enjoy their homes and property without fear of molestation. No law will be abrogated or interfered with unless it comes in conflict with some law of the United States or with the Constitution; all others will be obeyed and respected. It is with traitors and rebels in arms who are destroying peace and order and inciting rebellion that the Federal forces are to deal. We come to give you back law, order, the Constitution, and your rights under it, and to restore peace. We call upon traitors and rebels in arms to lay them down, and upon good citizens, who respect the law to aid us in our undertaking.¹⁴

¹⁰OR, I, 4, p. 611.

¹¹Ibid., p. 608.

¹²Hawkins, "Coastal Operations," p. 636.

¹³OR, I, 4, p. 611.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 658, 659.

Hawkins proclamation was circulated on the mainland by men from Hatteras. To Governor Henry T. Clark they were cowardly individuals who "under the fear of the enemy's guns, have taken the oath of allegiance."¹⁵ The evidence suggests that Clark's estimation of the islanders was somewhat in error. Those who took Hawkins' proclamation to the mainland volunteered to do so¹⁶ and eight of them were arrested in September of 1861, as they sought to distribute copies of it in Hyde County.¹⁷ It was a Hatteras spy who learned and informed Hawkins that a Confederate attack from Roanoke Island was coming in October of 1861.¹⁸ The Union soldiers were finally and firmly convinced of the loyalty of the natives when the attack came near the village of Chicamacomico. As the Twentieth Indiana Regiment retreated the people of the town fled with them.¹⁹

The islanders were no more cowardly than any other normal human beings caught in the midst of war; nor does it seem they took the oath under the force of circumstances. North Carolina had been in the Confederacy for about three months when the Union forces landed, and, for the people of Hatteras that was simply long enough.

Hawkins believed in their sincerity even if Governor Clark did not. As early as September 11, 1861, he had urged recruiting among the North Carolinians on his narrow strip of sand. He believed they would enlist, if assured they could remain in the state.²⁰ This suggestion reached Lincoln and on

¹⁵Ibid., p. 658.

¹⁶Hawkins, "Coastal Operations," p. 658.

¹⁷OR, I, 4, p. 658.

¹⁸Hawkins, "Coastal Operations," p. 636.

¹⁹David Stick, The Outer Banks of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958), p. 155.

²⁰OR, I, 4, p. 609.

September 16 he asked the War Department to form an order which would permit such recruitment. The order was duly made and sent out the following day in General Orders Number 79.²¹ But, in spite of Lincoln's hopes and Hawkins's enthusiasm, no United States military unit was organized in North Carolina at this time. It had to wait for the Burnside expedition in 1862.

On February 8 of that year Burnside took Roanoke Island²² and the Union army was then ready to move on to the mainland. From Roanoke, eight days after his victory, Burnside issued a proclamation to the people of the state similar to that of Hawkins six months before.²³ Meanwhile he sent out expeditions to various coastal towns. One such expedition to Elizabeth City on February 10 finally disposed of the "mosquito fleet."²⁴ Most of the coastal towns fell quickly and the arrival of the Federal forces was not often contested. Edenton was captured February 12²⁵ and Winton on the eighteenth, but only after a battle.²⁶ New Bern also called for a fight before it fell on March 14.²⁷ The capture of towns was interrupted to take Fort Macon although a number were added in the process. Carolina City was taken on March 21, Morehead City on the twenty-second, New Port on the twenty-third, and Beaufort on the twenty-fifth.²⁸ Washington received an overnight call also on the twenty-third when a naval expedition went there in search of the lens which

²¹Ibid., p. 613.

²²OR, I, 9, p. 74.

²³Ibid., p. 363.

²⁴Hawkins, "Coastal Operations," p. 645.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 646.

²⁷Ibid., p. 649.

²⁸Ibid., p. 653.

had been taken from the lighthouse.²⁹ A little more time was required to take Fort Macon which fell on April 26.³⁰

The Making of a Regiment

While bringing this bit of territory back under the control of the United States, the Union forces continued to be impressed by the expressions of loyal sentiment among the people. At Washington the invading army, aboard navy gunboats, was met some distance below the town by Mayor Isaiah Respass and other Unionists there to welcome them.³¹ When they returned for another visit on April 5, 1862, they found that the Mayor had been removed from his bed the night before by some Confederate cavalry and taken to Richmond for trial.³² The cavalry was sent there to arrest those favoring the Union causing many of the residents to flee to the woods.³³ Hawkins was not alone in wanting to get these men into the Union army. Lieutenant Charles W. Flusser of the Navy urged Hawkins to prod Burnside into taking positive action toward organizing them.³⁴ Flusser also attempted to enlist the sympathy of his own superior, Commander S. C. Rowan, in the fortunes of the Union people.³⁵ The efforts of these young men reached fruition in May,

²⁹NR, I, 7, p. 150.

³⁰Hawkins, "Coastal Operations," p. 654.

³¹OR, I, 9, p. 269.

³² Mayor Respass proved to be one of those people who gave North Carolina Unionists a bad name. The February 24, 1864, issue of the New Bern Times reported that he had convinced the Richmond judge of his loyalty to the Confederacy and been subsequently released only to come afoul of the Northern government. He somehow acquired \$20,000 in United States currency from the Bank of Tarboro. With it, and while in Richmond, he bought some tobacco which he smuggled into Union lines. When caught he confessed and was sentenced to six months imprisonment, a portion of which he served before General Benjamin F. Butler ordered his release because of his advanced age and questionable sanity.

³³OR, I, 9, p. 269.

³⁵NR, I, 7, p. 386.

³⁴Hawkins, "Coastal Operations," p. 654.

1862, when Burnside authorized the formation of the First North Carolina Union Volunteers and appointed Captain Edward E. Potter of New York colonel of the prospective regiment.³⁶

On June 12, 1862, Commander Rowan's flagship, the U. S. S. Philadelphia was anchored just off Plymouth. On board were a group of people from the surrounding countryside there to meet with the commander and Colonel Hawkins. The two officers promised the Unionists arms to use in defending themselves, provided they would organize into formal military units in the United States Army. Twenty-two men signed up before leaving the ship. Before adjournment it was agreed that another meeting would be held on the sixteenth, when Rowan hoped, there would be enough volunteers to constitute a company.³⁷ To encourage them and soothe their fears as to Confederate reprisals, Burnside authorized Hawkins to place a company in the town around which the North Carolinians could rally.³⁸ The strategy was successful. The meeting reconvened as scheduled and by June 20 Company C was a living reality.³⁹

Officially, Company C was the first North Carolina unit organized, but two Washington companies received alphabetic precedence, though they were mustered in a week later. The two were born on the same day, June 27, with Company A being commanded by First Lieutenant James M. Hervey and Company B by Lieutenant Charles A. Lyon. The enrollment of these three companies brought the First Regiment of North Carolina Union Volunteers into existence. During August and September Washington contributed another company, D, while Company F was raised at Beaufort. Company E was probably recruited at about this time but the exact date and place is unknown. The only other company

³⁶OR, I, 9, p. 385.

³⁷NR, I, 7, p. 476.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Louis H. Manarin, Guide to Military Organizations and Installations in North Carolina: 1861 - 1865 (Raleigh: North Carolina Confederate Centennial Commission, 1961), Sec. 3, p. 1.

added during 1862 was G; it came from New Bern. The two remaining companies of infantry, H and I, came from Hatteras Inlet and Hatteras Banks respectively, the latter being mustered January 21, 1863, and the former on May 6 of the same year. The last company of the regiment, L, came from Plymouth and was organized on June 20. Company L was a cavalry unit commanded by First Lieutenant George W. Graham. It was far more active than the other companies and consequently received more attention in reports.

The Baptism of Fire (1862)

When the decision was made to recruit North Carolinians, it was also decided to promise them that they would not be ordered to serve outside the state. This promise had a two-fold purpose: to cultivate Unionist sentiment and to free Northern troops for duty elsewhere. So it was that Companies A and B received their initiation into warfare in their home town of Washington on September 5, 1862. Also there at this time were two companies of infantry from the twenty-fourth Massachusetts and some artillery and cavalry units from New York. All were under Potter's command. At four o'clock in the morning Potter was about to embark upon an expedition to take the town of Hamilton, leaving only the infantry behind. Before he could get underway the town was surprised by a sizable Confederate force. The battle raged for two and one-half hours before the attackers withdrew to an encampment just outside town. The North Carolinians conducted themselves well in their first engagement. Company A suffered no losses but Company B lost two killed and seven wounded. Lieutenant Lyon was singled out for praise by the commanding officer.⁴⁰

On December 10, it was the turn of the men of Company C to defend their town, but Plymouth was less fortunate than had been Washington. The company was commanded by First Lieutenant Jonathan T. Mizell.⁴¹ Also present was a

⁴⁰OR, I, 18, pp. 4-6.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 48, 49.

portion of the Third Massachusetts Infantry whose commanding officer, Captain Barnabus Evers, Jr., was in charge of the port. The only uniformed horsemen present were referred to as the North Carolina Cavalry. Apparently this was the beginnings of what six months later would be Company L. The attacking force was the Seventeenth North Carolina Infantry, Confederate States Army, under Lieutenant Colonel John C. Lamb. The origins of the attackers may help to explain the vengeance with which the assault was carried out. Estimates of Confederate strength varied from two hundred to six hundred men. Evers reported that his own infantry numbered not more than one hundred and fifty when the attack came at 4:30 in the morning. Being outnumbered, or at least believing himself to be, Lieutenant Mizell took his men to the custom house from which they continued to fire on the enemy. The gunboat Southfield tried to help beat off the attack but was soon disabled and began drifting down stream, though not before Captain Evers got aboard. Mizell managed to hold the custom house, but he and his men could do nothing to stop the devastation going on in town. No government property was taken, but over half the town was burned after being thoroughly pillaged.

While Plymouth burned, Captain Evers, aboard the Southfield, had come into contact with the Commodore Perry downstream, where Flusser asked him what had happened to his men. Evers replied that he hoped they were in the swamp. Flusser then steamed up to help but came too late to do any good as the Confederates had withdrawn. The fearless Flusser considered the whole thing a disgrace, which he attributed to Evers. It was the now Lieutenant Commander⁴² who estimated the rebels as numbering not more than two hundred. He did have praise for a Sergeant Clift and some of the other North Carolinians. Lieutenant Mizell, himself a Washington native, praised his soldier neighbors for their calm conduct in their first battle. It was his men and their families who suffered most from the raid. Sergeant Clift and others lost

⁴²Flusser had been promoted.

their homes, clothing, and all else not on their persons. Lamb could not keep the town, but his few hours of work had been both profitable and inexpensive. Mizell thought that at least fifteen of the enemy had been killed but Lamb reported only seven wounded and none killed. Lamb also carried away seventy-five Negroes and twenty-five other prisoners.⁴³

Miscellaneous Hard Luck and D. H. Hill
(January - April, 1863)

The January, 1863, returns of Major General John G. Foster, then commanding the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, show that the First North Carolina had nineteen officers and four hundred thirty-two men present for duty. The number of officers and men present and absent was given as five hundred thirty-four. Lieutenant Lyon had been promoted to Captain by this time⁴⁴ and Potter, still in command of the regiment, had been promoted to Brigadier General dating from his assignment to the regiment.⁴⁵

The February returns show that sixteen officers and four hundred six men were present for duty. The number present and absent was five hundred thirty-six.⁴⁶ In March there was a further decrease in those present, the records showing twelve officers and three hundred eighty-two men. But again the aggregate present and absent increased, this time to five hundred sixty-one.⁴⁷ There is evidence that members of the regiment who lived outside the towns often returned to their homes and their work until summoned at the approach of the enemy. This may explain the decreasing number of soldiers present for duty while enrollment was simultaneously increasing.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 45-49.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 533.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 577.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 547.

The New Bern soldiers of Company G were spared the experiences of their fellows in Washington and Plymouth, but in March of 1863 they had the pleasure of gaining their first experience shooting at live human targets when they went on an expedition to Swan Quarter with Company F of the Third New York Cavalry, the whole being commanded by Captain Colin Richardson of the cavalry company. The expedition lasted from the first to the sixth with nothing being accomplished. There were skirmishes on the third and fourth with what Richardson referred to as "guerrillas." He had to turn back when he heard that "two hundred fifty to three hundred" such guerrillas were waiting for him at Swan Quarter. The expedition returned, having lost three killed and fourteen wounded. Of these Company G's loss was one wounded. In his reports Richardson praised his cavalry but made no mention of the North Carolinians one way or the other.⁴⁸

April proved to be a bad month for the First North Carolina. On April 1, Captain Enoc C. Sanders of Company D set out to collect his men, the company having been ordered to Elizabeth City. Sanders hitched rides with the navy to gather them. His troubles began after he left Plymouth on the fourth. Flusser had allowed him the use of the Southfield to travel up the Pasquotank near which many of his men lived. They stopped on the way at Halley's landing to find the wharf there had been burned by the Confederates. Company E was camped only ten miles away, but Sanders decided that was ten miles too many in view of the large number of rebels in the area. He refused to leave the gunboat to seek his men at that place. After reaching the Pasquotank he took those he had gathered and marched to Shiloh, ten miles from the mouth of the river, and back again, sending word to others of his men to be ready to go the next day. On the fifth he picked up William Wright and his family before going on up the river to Jones Mill, where he

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 157

landed and marched to Old Trap, returning with seven more members of Company D. The seven were Peter, Stephen, Cornelius, and Nicholas Burgess, Ithean and Wilson Duncan and Dempsey Wright. The boat then crossed to the Pasquotank County side to bring aboard Joseph Morgan and his family. Sanders sought four others in Pasquotank who belonged to his company. One, John Cartwright, came along, one was not found, one was ill, and the other was wounded. On the sixth Sanders left for Nixonton with his seventeen men on the schooner Patty Martin.⁴⁹ Later that day Sanders with seven soldiers and ten Negroes went down the Little River in the schooner for wood. As a strong wind kept them from landing, Sanders went ashore leaving the men on the boat. That night they too went ashore to see their families, where they were taken prisoner by guerillas and hastily dispatched to Richmond. Sanders himself was not among the captured, but one might imagine, from reading his report of the affair, that he was a very distressed man.⁵⁰

In Washington, Companies A and B were also having their difficulties for D. H. Hill had laid seige to the town. Luckily, the North Carolina Unionists, who had been there alone, were reinforced by eight companies each of the Twenty-seventh and Forty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers and one company of the Third New York Cavalry. On the south side of the Pamlico River about one and one-half miles below Washington was a place called Rodman's Point. Knowing of Hill's advance, General Foster sent Company B with a twelve pounder gun to occupy the point on March 30. Captain Lyon immediately built earthworks for the gun and stationed pickets around the camp, but his efforts were in vain. That night Lyon was driven from his outpost back to the river and boats from whence he came. There he waited, hoping somehow to retake his lost position, but daylight brought fire from the captured

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 259.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 674, 675.

works wounding Lyon and nine of his men. After his initial success Hill was not able to take Washington and the seige was lifted. The only man killed during the seige came from Company B, which also lost more in wounded than any other unit.⁵¹ This was no doubt due to the action at Rodman's Point.

In the round of commendations after the seige General Foster did not fail to take favorable notice of the participants from the First North Carolina, which incidentally, had a new commander in Lieutenant Joseph M. McChesney, like Potter, a Northerner.⁵²

The Travels of Company L
(May 1863 - January 1864)

After the diversions of April the First North Carolina had little to do for awhile, but July brought some riding exercise for Company L. On July 3 Colonel George W. Lewis of the Third New York Cavalry made up an expedition consisting of his own command, two companies from the New York Cavalry Regiment of a Colonel Mix, some artillery and the just completed Company L. Starting from New Bern the raid covered one hundred seventy miles in five days, took about forty-five prisoners, five hundred contrabands, one hundred horses and mules, destroyed about one million dollars worth of property, and cut the Wilmington and Weldon railroad.⁵³ The expedition cannot be counted anything other than a success, but it is unlikely that it received much notice outside the military district. While Company L and friends were riding about the Carolina countryside, George Gordon Meade and Robert E. Lee were getting a lot of men killed while they were making a hitherto unknown

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 212-217.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³OR, I, 27, pp. 860-863.

Pennsylvania town a future tourist attraction and, some say, deciding the outcome of the Civil War in the process.

General Foster took note of Lewis's achievements, however, and decided to send him out again. With the same assortment of troops the Colonel set out on the seventeenth, hardly more than a week after his return. His object was to destroy the railroad bridge at Rocky Mount. This he accomplished as well as a few other things to make the Confederacy unhappy. At Rocky Mount he destroyed a cotton mill, a flour mill, two machine shops, a depot, an entire train, twenty-five wagons filled with supplies and munitions, and eight hundred bales of cotton. He destroyed bridges over the Tar River and at Greenville and Sparta. He took one hundred prisoners and three hundred animals. This time Lewis declined to capture any contrabands but about three hundred followed the cavalry back to New Bern. Company L lost one man wounded on the first expedition,⁵⁴ one wounded and one missing on the second.⁵⁵

After the strenuous activity of July Company L received a somewhat tamer assignment in August. On the twenty-fifth the new commander of the District of North Carolina, General John J. Peck,⁵⁶ ordered it to Washington because of illness resembling scurvy in the detachment presently there.⁵⁷ The monthly return for August showed the whole regiment as being in Washington under McChesney,⁵⁸ but this might have been only a few companies.

The lack of any reports of action for the next several weeks indicates that the First North Carolina had little to do, but Company L got back into

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 964-966.

⁵⁶OR, I, 29, pt. 2, p. 101.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 144.

action on the thirtieth of October. The cavalry was sent out to reconnoiter Confederate positions "between the Greenville and Jamestown roads." Lieutenant J. R. Nicol was detached with twenty men to investigate a small rebel force at Ford's Mill. Nicol demanded surrender but was answered by a volley of shots. The Lieutenant was killed, but his men charged, "killing three and capturing seven." General Peck's report praised Nicol as "a gallant young officer who had won the approbation and regard of his brother officers by his noble conduct."⁵⁹ The successful venture drew special attention from Peck, who honored the company in his General Order Number 34 with the following statements:

The commanding general has received the official report of a gallant and dashing reconnaissance upon the Greenville road, under the command of Captain G. W. Graham, First Regiment North Carolina Volunteers. His satisfaction at the manner in which it was conducted and its results is only marred by his regret at the loss of First Lieutenant J. R. Nicol, First Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers, who was instantly killed in the discharge of his duty. Ambitious, brave and deserving high in the estimation of his comrades and commanding officers, he died as a soldier would choose to die.

The alacrity and intrepidity of Captain Graham's command are recommended as examples to other troops.⁶⁰

These words of commendation and confidence from the commander must have been very pleasing to the North Carolinians, and they quickly proved that his pride in them was not misplaced. On November 28, Company L, two companies of New York Cavalry, and a detachment from the Twenty-third New York Battery set out on another expedition. Captain R. R. West of the New York Cavalry had seniority over Graham, but he yielded the command to the Captain of Company L. Within twenty-one hours Graham was back, having traveled sixty-five miles. South of Greenville, near Swift Creek, he attacked a Confederate camp holding about seventy-five men from two companies of Whitford's Brigade. He captured the camp taking fifty-two prisoners and

⁵⁹OR, I, 29, pt. 1, p. 495.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 496.

killing a lieutenant and four men. He also brought back "one hundred stand of arms, horses, mules, wagons...and a large amount of commissary stores." Union losses were one killed and three wounded. Peck again recognized Graham's achievements in General Orders Number 39.⁶¹

Company L's last action of the year occurred on December 30. Colonel McChesney took about one hundred forty men from the Twelfth New York Cavalry, Company L, and the Twenty-third New York Artillery on a reconnaissance expedition. On his return McChesney found himself cut off from Washington by a Confederate force. Hard fighting resulted, often hand to hand. The rebels were beaten off, leaving a lieutenant and five men dead on the field with an artillery piece and its horses. McChesney lost one killed, six wounded and one missing. Captain Graham suffered a sabre cut on the hand⁶³ and the man killed was Lieutenant William K. Adams of Company L. In reporting his death Peck called him "a gallant and dashing officer who fell while making a charge at the head of his command."⁶⁴

Captain George W. Graham was a man who liked to fight, or was dedicated to his cause, or both. On January 10, 1864, with his wounded hand not completely healed, he put it through a glass window. Graham left Washington that day with fourteen men. After crossing Trent Creek they met a now unknown number of Confederates, whom they captured. Changing uniforms with one of the prisoners, Graham pretended to have captured his own lieutenant. In this manner he rode up to a rebel picket outpost. The seven pickets suspected nothing until Graham placed his hand, presumably holding a gun, through the window, and all surrendered.⁶⁵

⁶¹OR, I, 29, pt. 2, p. 661.

⁶²Ibid., p. 995-996.

⁶³New Bern Times, January 9, 1864.

⁶⁴OR, I, 29, pt. 1, pp. 995-996.

⁶⁵New Bern Times, January 16, 1864.

In the latter part of 1863 the First North Carolina began to acquire a sister regiment. The Second Regiment of North Carolina Union Volunteers was smaller than the First, having only five companies. They were A, B, C, E, and F; D having failed to materialize. All were organized in New Bern from November, 1863, to February, 1864.⁶⁶

Unlike most of the men of the First North Carolina, many, if not the majority, of the men of the Second were deserters from the Confederate army as will be seen. They had come to New Bern from outside the Union lines and brought their families with them. Many were indigent and a soliciting campaign was carried out to provide for the wives and children of those who enlisted.⁶⁷ In addition other inducements were offered, including a bounty of \$302, and a training camp one mile from Beaufort, where their families were also sheltered.⁶⁸ If this were not enough, in March it was promised that "after April 1 the draft will undoubtedly be enforced."⁶⁹

For whatever reasons, men did enlist, and by January 23 one company was said to be trained and equipped for active service.⁷⁰ General Benjamin F. Butler, now commanding the Department of North Carolina and Virginia, had also appointed officers for three companies by the above date. Captain J. T. Mizell, of Plymouth Custom House memory, was recruiting officer for the regiment. Prospective joiners could see Lieutenant Carpenter in New Bern, Captain Hoggard at Plymouth, or Sergeant Moore at Washington.⁷¹

Some of the above information, and some which is yet to come, may tend to place the Second North Carolina in an unfavorable light. Yet the regiment

⁶⁶Manarin, Guide, sec. 3, p. 1.

⁶⁷New Bern Times, January 9, 1864.

⁶⁸Ibid., January 23, 1864.

⁶⁹New Bern Times, March 9, 1864.

⁷⁰New Bern Times, January 23, 1864.

⁷¹Ibid.

seemed to have some esprit de corps. The editor of the New Bern Times during this period proudly called them "Buffaloes," a name which their fellow North Carolinians with an opposite point of view gave them and spat out in derogation. The title was first applied to lawless elements, both within and without the United States Army, but since it was eventually applied to all Unionists,⁷³ the First and Second adopted it themselves and gave it a good connotation. One North Carolina Unionist even wrote the Buffaloes a war song of the type for which the Civil War era is well known. Because it expresses a dedication not generally attributed to Southern Unionists the writer will quote two of its six verses here:

We'll give them a lesson they'll not soon forget
Dodge and run as they may, we'll be up with them yet;
We'll teach them that outlaws, the black flag who raise,
Shall find, in due time, a sad end to their days.

Full well do we know that our cause is aright;
On the dear native soil of our father's we fight,
To defend the Republic is all that we ask,
And freely we give our lives to the task.⁷⁴

⁷³Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, p. 174.

⁷⁴New Bern Times, March 9, 1864.

Chapter II

FROM CONTRABAND INTO SOLDIERS

Creation of the Black North Carolina Regiments

North Carolina slaves were no different from others throughout the South during the Civil War. To them the location of blue soldiers meant the end of the rainbow. When Burnside took Roanoke Island in early 1862, they flocked to him undeterred by the waters of the sound. By the time the flowers, trees, and birds began trying to heal the battlefields, the island was overflowing with men, women, and children seeking to maintain their newly found freedom.¹ As was shown in Chapter I, every Union raiding party brought back black human beings abstractly called contraband. In June of 1863 this multitude of Black North Carolinians was tapped as a source of military strength. In that month the First Regiment of North Carolina Colored troops appeared in the army records. It is listed as infantry not brigaded, under the command of Colonel James C. Beecher. At its inception the First North

¹Stick, Outer Banks, p. 161.

Carolina Colored was part of the First Division, Eighteenth Army Corps, in the Department of North Carolina, Major General John G. Foster commanding.²

The first expedition in which the new regiment participated as soldiers began on July 3, 1863. On that day Captain H. W. Wilson took some cavalry and twenty men from the First North Carolina Colored Infantry on a bridge repairing (in Union territory) and railroad destroying (in Confederate territory) trip to Warsaw, North Carolina. Wilson did not attempt to evaluate the infantry's performance as infantry, as they were not required to do the things infantrymen usually do, but for repairing bridges and breaking railroad tracks they were most efficient.³

By August 31, 1863, the Second and Third North Carolina Colored Regiments, commanded by Colonel Alonzo G. Draper and Captain John Wilder respectively, had a large enough membership for their names to appear in army reports. They had also, with the First Colored, been transferred to the Department of the South commanded by Brigadier General Quincy A. Gilmore. Stationed on Folly Island, they, with the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Colored, made up the Africian Brigade in a division commanded by Brigadier General Israel Vogdes.⁴

The Folly Island sojourn was short and uneventful. By October 10, 1863, all three North Carolina Black Regiments were back in New Bern, and Brigadier General Edward A. Wild had been ordered there by the War Department to bring the Third Regiment up to full strength.⁵ At this point the First Regiment

²OR, I, 27, pt. 3, p. 454.

³OR, I, 27, pt. 2, p. 863.

⁴OR, I, 28, pt. 2, p. 75.

⁵OR, I, 29, pt. 2, p. 290.

had a total strength of one thousand and two men; while the Second was not far behind with eight hundred.⁶

Edward A. Wild proved to be cold and efficient. He was given command of all colored troops in the area with headquarters at Norfolk, Virginia, to which the three North Carolina Regiments were transferred. Camps were provided for them at Portsmouth. Wild set out immediately to give his command exercise. Starting out on December 5 with portions of the First and Fifth United States Colored, the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Colored, and the First and Second North Carolina Colored, Wild marched to Elizabeth City. To get into town the troops had to build a bridge, the planks for which were conveniently provided by the home and barn of a Captain in the Confederate Army. After crossing the new construction, Wild and his army stayed for seven days while the men sought "recruits, contrabands' families, guerrillas, forage and firewood." At the end of their visit, as they left town, they were fired upon by a force which Wild described as guerrillas. One member of the attacking party, Daniel Bright, was captured and hanged wearing a placard which read: "This guerrilla hanged by order of Brigadier General Wild." Wild picked up other prisoners, civilians whom he believed were cooperating with the guerrillas. He gave them what he admitted was "a drumhead court-martial," burned their homes and barns, fed his men their livestock and took their families as hostages. Colonel Draper and his Second North Carolina were mounted, acting as cavalry. They rode about the countryside seeking to damage the Confederacy; while the rest of the command marched, seeking the same object. In addition to the accomplishments or depredations which have been mentioned, Wild reported that his command had "burned four guerrilla camps, took over fifty guns, one drum, together with equipments, ammunitions, etc., burned over a dozen homesteads, two distilleries...., captured four large boats

⁶OR, III, 3, p. 1115.

engaged in contraband trade, and took many horses." He also brought back to Norfolk "about 2,500" late slaves. His losses were seven killed, nine wounded, and two taken prisoner. He was content with his work and his men, saying they "marched wonderfully, never grumbled, were watchful on picket, and always ready for a fight. They are," he added, "most reliable soldiers."⁷

On the last day of the year 1863 all three North Carolina Regiments were at home in Wild's African Brigade,⁸ except for a detachment of the First which was left at Folly Island in the fall and was still there.⁹

On February 4, 1864, the last regiment of black North Carolinians began recruitment. This was the First Regiment North Carolina Colored Heavy Artillery which had enough interested participants to be organized at New Bern and Morehead City by March.¹⁰ The regiment got around very little. All of its traveling was done back and forth between the sub-district of Beaufort and the sub-district of New Bern.¹¹ About the only interesting thing that ever happened to it, if one is interested in one hundred year old gossip, is that the man who raised and commanded it until November of 1864,¹² Major Thorndike C. Jameson of the Fifth Rhode Island Artillery, was court-martialed in February of 1865 for "fraudulent and dishonest conduct." Convicted, he was sentenced to three years imprisonment, fined \$8,000 and dismissed from the service.¹³

⁷OR, I, 29, pt. 2, pp. 911-918.

⁸Ibid., p. 619.

⁹OR, I, 28, pt. 2, p. 138.

¹⁰Manarin, Guide, Sec. 3, p. 2.

¹¹OR, I, 40, pt. 2, p. 557. OR, I, 40, pt. 2, p. 793.

¹²OR, I, 42, pt. 3, p. 1129.

¹³New Bern Times, February 17, 1865.

The First, Second, and Third North Carolina Colored Regiments could never say they joined the army and saw the world, but those who lived saw a little farther than New Bern in 1864. Early in that year they also got new titles, even the Heavy Artillery. The First, Second, and Third were respectively designated the Thirty-fifth, Thirty-sixth, and Thirty-seventh United States Colored Troops. The First North Carolina Heavy Artillery became the Fourteenth United States Colored Heavy Artillery.

The Thirty-fifth in Florida (1864)

January, 1864, found all of the Thirty-fifth united at Folly Island.¹⁴ In February they were ordered to the District of Florida, reporting to Brigadier General T. Seymour commanding that department.¹⁵ Many of them, however, were held at Folly Island by General Alfred Terry, commander of the Northern District, Department of the South,¹⁶ because they had smallpox, had been exposed to the disease, or were otherwise unfit to march.¹⁷ The Thirty-fifth went, with other Negro troops from Massachusetts and South Carolina, into a training camp commanded by Colonel Milton S. Littlefield. The camp was located about six miles from Jacksonville, which was Seymour's headquarters.¹⁸

The Thirty-fifth could not have received much instruction before the regiment's first fight. They arrived at the camp on February 15¹⁹ and on the twentieth started out with Seymour as part of a 5,500 man expedition to Ocean City. The object was to destroy an east-west railroad at a point near the Suwannee River. They never reached the place, for at Olustee they were

¹⁴OR, I, 35, pt. 1, p. 465.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 465.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 480, 481.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 482.

¹⁹Ibid.

met and defeated by a Confederate force. The commander of the Thirty-fifth, Lieutenant Colonel William N. Reed, was mortally wounded. In addition the North Carolinians lost twenty men killed, seven officers, in addition to Reed, were wounded, one hundred twenty-three men wounded and seventy-seven missing.²⁰ Seymour was forced to retreat to Jacksonville. In his report Seymour wrote, "The Colored troops behaved creditably...the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts and First North Carolina like veterans. It was not in their conduct that can be found the chief cause of failure, but in the...yielding of a white regiment from which there was every reason to expect noble service."²¹

Seymour was replaced by Brigadier General William Birney and Colonel James C. Beecher again became commander of the Thirty-fifth.²² The Olustee battle was the first and last bloody encounter for the Thirty-fifth, as the various commanders of the Department of Florida seemed to have an aversion to fighting, much to the disgust of Major General John G. Foster, who became commander of the Department of the South in the spring of 1864.²³ In May the Thirty-fifth did picket duty along the St. John's River.²⁴ In June the North Carolinians took part in an expedition to Confederate Camp Milton, which was demolished in the absence of the residents.²⁵ The next month four companies of the Thirty-fifth went on an expedition with Birney to South Carolina. Back in Jacksonville by July 10, the four joined the rest of the regiment in taking part in an expedition to Baldwin, Florida, on the twenty-third. The expedition remained in Baldwin until August 15, when the town was

²⁰Ibid., p. 298.

²¹Ibid., p. 288.

²²OR, I, 35, pt. 2, p. 78.

²³OR, I, 35, pt. 1, p. 431.

²⁴OR, I, 35, pt. 2, p. 95.

²⁵OR, I, 35, pt. 1, pp. 402-403.

burned and abandoned. Marching to Magnolia the Thirty-fifth moved in a column led by Colonel William H. Noble of the Seventeenth Connecticut. On the way Noble's force destroyed railroad track, burned 28,000 pounds of cotton, rescued seventy-five contrabands, took horses, mules, and other property.²⁶

In November the Thirty-fifth was ordered, with other regiments in the Florida Department, to report to the headquarters of General Foster at Hilton Head, South Carolina.²⁷ The North Carolinians were assigned to a brigade commanded by now Brigadier General Edward E. Potter. Potter's brigade as part of the Coast Division took part in an expedition against the Charleston and Savannah railroad. On November 30, the expedition fought a Confederate force at Honey Hill near Grahamsville, South Carolina. Potter ordered the Thirty-fifth into the battle, but due to a confusion of orders the regiment became disorganized and never got into the fight. The disconcerted companies of the Thirty-fifth reformed, were held in reserve and did no fighting at all.²⁸

The Thirty-Sixth (1864)

Early 1864 found the Thirty-sixth guarding prisoners at Point Lookout, Maryland, and going on an occasional expedition to the Virginia shore. Point Lookout was in the military district of St. Mary's, commanded by Brigadier General Edward W. Hinks. On April 12, Hinks took the Thirty-sixth and fifty cavalrymen on a steamer, protected by three gunboats, over to Virginia. They came back on the fourteenth with one hundred seventy-seven boxes of tobacco and fifty contrabands, losing no one because they were unopposed.²⁹

May 14, 1864, three hundred men from the Thirty-sixth set out under Colonel Alonzo G. Draper to destroy some torpedoes planted at the mouth of the

²⁶Ibid., p. 37

²⁸OR, I, 44, pp. 425-427.

²⁷OR, I, 44, p. 567.

²⁹OR, I, 33, pp. 268-269.

Rappahannock River. They landed, went ashore, and destroyed several of the water bombs. Then walking through the woods which lined the river bank, six North Carolina soldiers, minus their officers, came upon nine Confederate cavalrymen and marines. The Negro soldiers attacked immediately, killing five and capturing three while one escaped. One of the colored soldiers was killed and three wounded. Those left unhurt were about to kill the prisoners but were stopped by their sergeant, also a Negro.³⁰

Another example of bitterness toward Confederates manifested by the Thirty-sixth occurred a little more than a week later at Point Lookout. As the prisoners were going to dinner, a North Carolina guard began firing at one of them, inflicting a mortal wound and wounding three others in the process.³¹

Perhaps the men of the Thirty-sixth needed more action. In any case they got it. From June 11 to June 21, Draper led them up and down each side of the Rappahannock with forty-nine cavalrymen. At one point they got into a successful scrap with Confederate cavalry. Draper called this action the "affair at Pierson's farm." Of the Thirty-sixth Draper said, "the gallantry of the colored troops...could not be excelled. They were so steady under fire and as accurate in their movements as if they were on drill." In addition to winning the little fracas the expedition brought back to Point Lookout three hundred seventy-five cattle, one hundred sixty horses and mules, six hundred contrabands and quantities of farm machinery.³²

In July the thirty-sixth was sent westward to take part in the Richmond campaign. On the third they arrived at Bermuda Hundred and went into camp.³³

³⁰OR, I, 37, pt. 1, p. 71.

³¹OR, I, 36, pt. 3, p. 175.

³²OR, I, 37, pt. 1, p. 163-167.

³³OR, I, 40, I, pt. 2, p. 615.

It was some time before the North Carolinians did any real fighting but observant generals considered them "unsteady and unreliable." For this reason Brigadier General A. Ames commanding the second division of the Eighteenth Army Corps, of which the Thirty-sixth was a part, was ordered to place among them, dependable troops to "restore confidence by their presence."³⁴

If the confidence of the North Carolinians needed restoring, it was back up to par by September 29, when they took part in the action at Chapin's Farm and New Market Heights near the James River. There the Thirty-sixth ran across a stream, up a slope, and through two lines of obstructions, to drive entrenched Confederates from their fortifications.³⁵ As the charging Negroes neared the rebel line, a Confederate officer "leaped upon the parapet, waved his sword, and shouted, 'Hurrah, my brave men.'" Private James Gardiner of the Thirty-sixth, outran his comrades, shot, and then bayoneted the officer.³⁶ In the same action Corporal Miles James, one of Gardiner's regimental colleagues, had his arm shot off in the charge but continued into the fortifications, loading and firing his rifle all the way.³⁷ Both Gardiner³⁸ and James³⁹ were awarded the Medal of Honor for their heroism.

When the victory was won, the Thirty-sixth had lost twenty-one men and five officers killed, with eighty-two men wounded.⁴⁰ Chapin's Farm and New Market Heights proved to be the regiment's last bloody action, though two men

³⁴OR, I, 42, pt. 2, p. 417.

³⁵John W. Blassingame, "The Freedom Fighters," Negro History Bulletin, (February, 1965), p. 106, hereinafter cited as Blassingame, "Freedom Fighters."

³⁶OR, I, 42, pt. 1, pp. 819, 820.

³⁷Blassingame, "Freedom Fighters," p. 106.

³⁸OR, I, 42, pt. 1, pp. 819, 820.

³⁹Blassingame, "Freedom Fighters," p. 106.

⁴⁰OR, I, 42, pt. 1, pp. 819, 820.

were taken prisoner during the fighting at Fair Oaks and the Darbytown road, October 27-28, 1864.⁴¹

The Thirty-Seventh (1864)

The Thirty-seventh remained near Norfolk until April, 1864, at that time becoming part of Butler's folly operating against Richmond.⁴² Landing at City Point as part of Hinks' Third Division on May 5, 1864, the regiment was stationed at Fort Powhatan; moving on the thirteenth into the works at City Point.⁴³ On the twenty-fourth the North Carolinians were quickly dispatched to Wilson's Wharf on the James to bolster Union strength there. Fitzhugh Lee had attacked the place that afternoon, and though he was beaten off, it was feared he would return.⁴⁴ Apparently, Lee did not come back, but the Thirty-seventh remained there until the twenty-eighth of September when they moved to Harrison's Landing.⁴⁵

On September 29, the Thirty-seventh took part in the divisional assault which cost the Thirty-sixth so heavily at Chapin's Farm. The Thirty-seventh did not suffer greatly, losing only one officer and three men killed and sixteen wounded.⁴⁶ In the October 27-28 action at Fair Oaks and Darbytown Road the regiment had one officer and one man wounded.⁴⁷

Before the end of 1864 the Twenty-fifth Army Corps had been organized with Major General Godfrey Weitzel commanding. The corps consisted of three divisions of colored soldiers. Brigadier General Charles J. Paine commanded

⁴¹Ibid., p. 151.

⁴⁵OR, I, 42, pt. 1, p. 109.

⁴²OR, I, 33, pp. 1001, 1002.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 136.

⁴³OR, I, 36, pt. 2, p. 165.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 151.

⁴⁴OR, I, 36, pt. 3, p. 182.

the First Division of which the Thirty-seventh was a part. The Thirty-sixth belonged to the Third Division commanded by General Wild.⁴⁸

⁴⁸OR, I, 42, pt. 3, p. 1126.

Chapter III

THE MOUNTAIN REGIMENTS

Organization and Early Service

Western North Carolina was the most fertile portion of the state in Union sympathies. Shepherd M. Dugger told of a night in August, 1861, when he, as a six year old boy, saw eight young men from Banner Elk slip away into the darkness headed for service in the Union army.¹ The number of men like Dugger's friends who fled over the mountains to Northern service is unknown, but the figure could be as high as four thousand.² It is also believed that slightly over one hundred eighty were killed attempting to escape to Union lines.³ It was men of this sort who made their way to Knoxville and on October 6, 1863, were mustered into Companies A, B, and C of the Second North Carolina Mounted Infantry. Company E was created four days later in the same

¹Shepherd M. Dugger, War Trails of the Blue Ridge (Banner Elk: Shepherd M. Dugger, 1932), p. 203.

²W. D. Cotton, "Appalachian North Carolina" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1954), p. 126.

³Ibid.

town. Companies F and H were also mustered in on October 6 at Walker's Ford, Tennessee. Company D was the last filled, being organized also at Walker's Ford on December 9, 1863.⁴

The Second was originally called the First North Carolina Mounted Infantry.⁵ Apparently someone got the word that there was already a First North Carolina Infantry on the east coast and changed its designation to the Second Mounted. When the Second Infantry was organized at New Bern, one month after the Knoxville muster, the Western North Carolinians were either overlooked or ignored.

On October 16, 1863, General Ambrose E. Burnside, then commanding the Army of the Ohio, ordered the Second Mounted to Greenville.⁶ In November a Confederate raiding party appeared in the area collecting stock. Approached by Union soldiers of the Ninth Michigan and the Second North Carolina, they abandoned the animals which were driven in by the Second, while the Michigan troops gave chase to the rebels.⁷

Otherwise the Second created little attention in 1863. The close of the year found them near Maynardville under Captain Andrew J. Bahney, as part of General Orlando B. Wilcox's Left Wing Forces in the Army of the Ohio. This army was now commanded by Major General John J. Foster, a man who seemed to appear in some capacity wherever North Carolina Union soldiers traveled.⁸

In January 1864, Brigadier General T. T. Garrard who commanded the District of the Clinch at Cumberland Gap, in which the Second was included,

⁴Manarin, Guide, Sec. 3, p. 1.

⁵OR, I, 52, pt. 1, 473.

⁶Ibid.

⁷OR, I, 31, pt. 3, p. 111.

⁸Ibid., p. 563.

found that his cavalry was in need of horses and turned a greedy eye upon the Second North Carolina Mounted, which was mostly dismounted anyway.⁹ The regiment probably numbered about two-hundred twenty men at this time¹⁰ and Garrard estimated that they had about thirty horses. Because "a few mounted men in a regiment tend to demoralize the remainder, create confusion, and cause straggling," the General decided to turn their horses over to his cavalry.¹¹

One company of the Second (dismounted) Mounted celebrated Washington's birthday in the custody of the Confederate Army. This company and the Eleventh Tennessee (Union) Cavalry were "stationed at Wyerman's Mill," some "five miles east" of Cumberland Gap when they arose from their sleep completely surrounded. All were carted away to prison except for seven men from the Second who escaped.¹²

By March 15 Garrard was again out of horses, there being only two in his whole command. The North Carolinians were still dismounted. Garrard had other difficulties to which the Second contributed. They and what remained of the Eleventh Tennessee Cavalry were "without discipline, especially the latter regiment and, with their present organization, of little value."¹³

It was unfortunate for any group of soldiers to be "of little value" in the spring of 1864. Sherman was about to begin his march through Georgia and, as a part of his hoards, the Army of the Ohio, now commanded by General John M. Schofield, was expected to make a contribution. Perhaps with this in mind the First Brigade (Garrard's) of the Fourth Division¹⁴ received a

⁹OR, I, 32, pt. 2, p. 233.

¹⁰OR, I, 32, pt. 3, p. 74.

¹¹OR, I, 32, pt. 2, p. 233.

¹²OR, I, 32, pt. 1, p. 411.

¹³OR, I, 32, pt. 3, p. 74.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 321.

strict directive. The First Brigade would

occupy Cumberland Gap, and keep open its line of communication with its depot of supplies in Kentucky. The Eleventh Tennessee Cavalry and the Second North Carolina Mounted Infantry, [would] be remounted as soon as horses [could be acquired and there was enough forage to feed them. These mounted units would] then protect the communication with Knoxville, and scout as far as practicable in front of Cumberland Gap, keeping inferior forces of the enemy at a distance and gaining early and accurate information of the movements of any superior force.

Schofield added that, "Cumberland Gap must be held obstinately, and raids into Kentucky or Middle Tennessee prevented as far as possible with the troops of the First Brigade."¹⁵

This was a fairly important assignment, but the original North Carolina mountain regiment was about to be placed in the shadows. In February Major George W. Kirk of the Second Mounted, was given authority "to raise a regiment of troops in the eastern front of Tennessee and western part of North Carolina." Kirk was "authorized to mount his regiment, or such portion of it as may from time to time be necessary, upon private or captured horses. This regiment will be known as the Third Regiment of North Carolina Mounted Infantry."¹⁶ The number of recruiting officers who had been present for some time in the North Carolina mountains increased as the year 1864 progressed¹⁷ and by June Kirk had enough men in Knoxville to organize his regiment. From that time onward the regiment did not stop growing until about three months before it was mustered out at the end of the war.¹⁸ This can be explained by the new optimism which prevailed among North Carolina Unionists in 1864-65¹⁹ and by Confederate deserters who changed sides.¹⁹

¹⁵Ibid., p. 338.

¹⁶OR, I, 52, pt. 1, p. 517.

¹⁷John Preston Arthur, A History of Watauga County (Richmond: Everett Waddey Co., 1915), p. 162.

¹⁸Manarin, Guide, Sec. 3, p. 2.

¹⁹OR, I, 49, pt. 1, pp. 1034-1035.

Company A was mustered in at Knoxville on June 11. Companies B, C, D, E and F were filled between May and late October at Knoxville and Bulls Gap, Tennessee. Company G was mustered in From June 11, 1864, to February 16, 1865, at the same two locations. February 16 must have brought a windfall, for all of Company H was also organized that day at Knoxville. Company I appeared between March 6 and sixteenth and K from May 13 to sixteenth; both at Knoxville.²⁰

In Cumberland Gap and North Carolina
(June, 1864 - January, 1865)

It was perhaps with the men just enlisted in his regiment that Kirk set out from Morristown, Tennessee, on June 13, 1864. With about one hundred thirty men he was supposed to destroy a railroad bridge over the Yadkin River. He failed in this objective but accomplished much in his failure. Marching by way of Bulls Gap and Greenville,²¹ Kirk continued through Washington and into Carter County, where he picked up North Carolina Unionist Joseph V. Franklin to guide him on the other side of the Mountains.²² Crossing into North Carolina, he forded the Linville River near Pineola. On June 28 with the rising sun, Kirk stood outside Camp Vance, a base for training newly conscripted Confederates. A truce flag was sent in and its bearer demanded the surrender of the camp.²³ The Confederates capitulated giving Kirk two hundred seventy-seven prisoners. Some were paroled and some were lost along the

²⁰Manarin, Guide, Sec. 3, p. 2.

²¹OR, I, 39, pt. 1, p. 233.

²²John Preston Arthur, Western North Carolina: A History (Asheville, 1914), p. 605.

²³Ibid., p. 601.

way, but one hundred thirty-two were taken to Knoxville.²⁴ Whatever else he was, and the mountain Confederates called him many things, George W. Kirk was also daring. After burning the camp it had been his intention to commandeer a train at the end of the tracks near Morganton and with it move his command to Salisbury, where he hoped to capture the prison and release the Union soldiers incarcerated there.²⁵ This became impossible as the news of his presence became known. The train and depot were captured and destroyed nevertheless. Also destroyed at Camp Vance were "commissary buildings, 1,200 small arms with ammunition, and 3,000 bushels of grain." In addition to the prisoners Kirk took with him "32 negroes and 48 horses and mules." He also picked up forty men for his regiment. Kirk left the state in a leisurely manner, crossing the Catawba River and camping near it that night. The next morning, the twenty-ninth, the Federals were attacked at Brown Mountain about "fourteen miles from Morganton." Taking cover Kirk and his men placed their prisoners as human shields before them. In this manner, one prisoner was killed and one wounded before the Confederates withdrew. Kirk then continued on his way over the mountains, making camp at Ripshin Ridge. On the following morning the Confederates tried again. On this occasion "Kirk took twenty-five men" and retraced his steps a short distance. In this affair Colonel Waightstill Avery and an elderly Morganton man received mortal wounds. Without Avery the Confederates withdrew and Kirk returned to Tennessee without further opposition.²⁶ When he completed his journey, his command had suffered one man killed and six wounded.²⁷

²⁴OR, I, 39, pt. 1, p. 234.

²⁵Arthur, Western North Carolina, p. 606.

²⁶Ibid., p. 606-608.

²⁷OR, I, 39, pt. 1, p. 233.

Word of Kirk's successful raid reached General Sherman Campaigning near Atlanta. To Schofield he wrote, "Please convey to Colonel G. L. Kirk the assurances of my appreciation of the services rendered by him in his late expedition." But Sherman was not entirely happy with Kirk. In the same message he added, "you may encourage him all you can, more in organizing the element in North Carolina hostile to Jeff Davis rather than in undertaking those hazardous expeditions."²⁸

Hazardous though it was, Kirk's raid may have been more important than Sherman or Schofield realized. The mountain people were becoming daily more disenchanted with the Confederacy, and now it was obvious that the government could not protect them.²⁹ If Kirk could march all the way to Morganton undetected, what, they may have wondered, was to stop a large army from coming over and staying?

In October, Confederate Brigadier General John C. Vaughn crossed into East Tennessee from Abingdon, Virginia. On the eleventh he decided to attack the Federals at Bulls Gap, where he believed there was only "Kirk's battalion of cavalry and some one hundred day's men." Perhaps Kirk and friends retreated before the Confederates advance, for in later reports Vaughn said that he victoriously fought Yankees, on the twelfth, at Blue Springs and Greenville.³⁰ If Kirk did withdraw, he was back in Bulls Gap with an estimated four hundred men on the eighteenth.³¹

In November of 1864 General George Stoneman communicated to Schofield a plan which he had to drive the Confederates out of East Tennessee and open a path into North Carolina or Virginia, by which route Stoneman already

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Arthur, Watauga County, p. 162.

³⁰OR, I, 39, pt. 1, p. 565.

³¹Ibid., p. 852.

dreamed of taking his cavalry to Salisbury and elsewhere according to circumstances. Schofield was receptive to Stoneman's driving the Confederates as far into Virginia as he could, destroying the saltworks at Saltville and cutting the railroad which ran from Bristol to Wythville.³² The rest would have to wait "until affairs here," [Nashville] "take more definite shape."³³

Stoneman set out, and the Third North Carolina Mounted played a role in his operation. Then in Knoxville it was sent to Point of Rocks by way of Sevierville and assigned the task of holding the mountain passes into North Carolina until the rebels were driven out of East Tennessee. Kirk was also to comb the hills clearing it of Confederates. Stoneman was successful in his southwestern Virginia raid and, the last of December, was ready for other things.³⁴

While the Third Regiment was riding about in North Carolina, the Second Mounted was still at work in Cumberland Gap. On January 28, 1865, Lieutenant Colonel W. C. Bartlett, commanding the Second, reported to Brigadier General Tillson commanding the Fourth Division, Twenty-third Army Corps, that a party from his regiment had just returned from an expedition. Led by Lieutenant J. N. Jennings this group had killed twelve Confederate guerrillas, wounded several, and brought back ten others captured. They also brought in forty horses which were probably used by the men of the Second Mounted.

After sending his first report, Bartlett later on the same day sent another on the subject of the expedition. The number of guerrillas killed had grown from twelve to "between 20 and 25." Bartlett then added what may be a significant statement, "my orders are to shoot a guerrilla wherever and whenever (he) is found, and not to take prisoners on any account."³⁵

³²Ina Woestemeyer Van Noppen, Stoneman's Last Raid (Raleigh: North Carolina State College Print Shop, 1961), p. 3.

³³OR, I, 35, pt. 1, pp. 808-810.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵OR, I, 49, pt. 1, p. 9.

Chapter IV

BACK IN THE EAST

In the Shadow of Death

The new year of 1864 found both Eastern North Carolina regiments distributed in various towns and districts. In his January report, General Benjamin F. Butler, who had replaced Foster as commander of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, showed a detachment of the Second North Carolina attached to the One Hundred and Thirty-second New York under Colonel Peter J. Claasen stationed in the fortifications of New Bern. Another detachment, commanded by Lieutenant Isaiah Conley, was in the sub-district of Albermarle. The remainder of the Second was at Beaufort under Captain Charles H. Foster.¹

The detachment from the Second North Carolina serving in the earthworks at New Bern proved to be Company F. New Bern was protected by fortifications stretching across from the Neuse to the Trent.² Colonel Claasen commanded

¹OR, I, 33, p. 484, 485.

²Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, p. 202.

that portion of the line at Batchelder's Creek between the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad and the Neuse River. Very early on the morning of February 1, Claasen's pickets were driven in by a Confederate force. The Union soldiers destroyed the bridge to prevent their crossing. The Confederates did not attempt any further advance until a fog-shrouded daybreak when two regiments crossed the creek on some trees thrown across it. The attacking party was stopped and the Federals had little trouble keeping them out of the entrenchments.

At 5:30, the time of the attack, Claasen sent General D. N. Palmer the first of ten dispatches which he wrote in the next four and one-half hours. In his first message Claasen merely reported that he was under attack and asked for artillery to match that of the enemy. Forty-five minutes later he sent another note saying he was confident he could drive them back. At 7:05 he believed them about to retreat and planned to pursue when they did so. An hour later they had not retreated, and Claasen was becoming slightly discouraged. He thanked Palmer for his aid, probably the artillery requested, and added that if he were not victorious he would retreat in good order. At 8:25 Claasen saw the light, or rather he saw the multitudes of George E. Pickett and Robert F. Hoke.³ The two brigades had merely kept him occupied while the bridge was repaired for the rest of the army to cross.⁴ For twenty minutes after his horrible discovery, Claasen held his ground, then warned Palmer to prepare for an attack on New Bern as he was in retreat.⁵ In this exercise he got no help from Hoke and Pickett. After a hard fight he reached New Bern but not with his entire command.

³OR, I, 33, pp. 93-96.

⁴Ibid., p. 68.

⁵Ibid., pp. 93-96.

Back in the entrenchments Claasen had placed a small force on his extreme right at a place called Beech Grove. Posted there was Lieutenant Samuel Leith of the One Hundred and Thirty-second New York with fourteen men from his own regiment and the fifty-seven members of Company F, Second North Carolina. During the battle Claasen sent two couriers to tell Leith to fall back along the Washington road if the enemy crossed the creek. On the road he would meet some infantry and artillery, whereupon he was to use his own judgment, only being sure to get back to New Bern with his men. Both couriers were killed and Claasen's orders were taken from the body of one of them. Unknown to Claasen, the artillery and infantry which he mentioned joined Leith at Beech Grove. A Captain Bailey of the Ninety-ninth New York superseded the lieutenant in command, and it was he who surrendered the entire force when the rebels found them all alone at Beech Grove.⁶

The action at Batchelder's Creek was part of a three-pronged land attack in cooperation with a naval expedition.⁷ The Confederates were not so fortunate in other parts as they were in attacking Claasen. Their thirteen thousand-man⁸ force withdrew from around the town on February 3.⁹ Pickett returned to the Army of Northern Virginia, while Hoke remained with the army in Eastern North Carolina.¹⁰

Most of the men captured at Batchelder's Creek were soon enroute to Confederate prisons, but twenty-two from Company F escaped detention for a harsher fate. When the Confederates learned that they were deserters from the rebel army, they took their former comrades in arms no farther than Kinston.

⁶Ibid., p. 68.

⁷Ibid., p. 63.

⁸Barrett, Civil War, p. 203.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 207.

A court martial was held,¹¹ but in 1866 when the United States Government conducted an investigation of the incident, no records of the trial could be found.¹² The Fayetteville Observer's February 8 issue stated that two members of Company F had already been executed and others were being tried.

Apparently General Peck did not know of the court martial then sitting at Fayetteville when on February 13, he addressed a letter to Pickett, who was then back in Petersburg. In it he enclosed the names of the fifty-three men from Company F and asked that the same treatment be accorded them as was given to other prisoners of war.¹³ In answer Pickett sent the following taunting reply:

the list of 53 which you have so kindly furnished me will enable me to bring to justice many who have up to this time escaped their just deserts. I herewith return to you the names of those who have been tried and convicted by court martial for desertion from the Confederate service and taken with arms in hand, 'duly enlisted in the 2nd N. C. Infantry, U. S. Army.' They have been duly executed according to law and the custom of war.¹⁴

Your letter and list will, of course, prevent any mercy being shown any of the remaining number, should proper and just proof be brought of their having deserted the Confederate colors, many of these men pleading in extenuation that they have been forced into the ranks of the Federal Government.

Extending to you my thanks for your opportune list, I remain, very respectfully, your obedient servant.¹⁵

While Pickett was thanking Peck for his cooperation, General Butler at Fort Monroe was showing his concern for the North Carolinians. He instructed Peck to send a message to Pickett disclaiming any belief that the men from

¹¹Ibid., p. 213.

¹²OR, II, 6, pp. 993-994.

¹³OR, II, 8, p. 903.

¹⁴David Jones, J. L. Haskett, John L. Stanley, Lewis Bryan, Mitchell Busick, William Irving, Amos Armyette, John J. Beck, William Jones, Lewis Freeman, William Haddick, Jesse Summerlin, Andrew J. Britteau, Calvin Hoffman, Stephen Jones, Joseph Block, Lewis Taylor, Charles Cuthrell, William H. Daughtry, John Freeman, Elijah Kellum, William J. Hill.

¹⁵OR, I, 33, p. 867-868.

the Second would be harmed but, just in case, Peck was to tell Pickett that Butler was holding eight officers as hostages in the event that retribution was visited upon Company F.¹⁶

On February 20, Peck communicated Butler's words to Pickett. He had not yet received Pickett's message of the seventeenth telling of the executions of the twenty-two, but he had come into possession of a copy of the February 8 Fayetteville Observer which he had sent to Butler and which had been the instance of his instructions.

Pickett's answer to Union threats of man for man execution, was that for each Confederate so treated he would hang ten United States soldiers.¹⁷

Fortunately for the prison population the Federals did not hang any prisoners in retaliation. Peck's final communication to Pickett was one of resignation and high moral indignation at what had taken place. He told Pickett that such behavior was the "best evidence of the weak and crumbling condition of the Confederacy. The friends of the Union everywhere truly interpret these signs of madness and recklessness, and are now making one grand rally for the utter overthrow and final extinction of all treason."¹⁸

The hard luck of the Second North Carolina was not over after Pickett's retreat from New Bern. It is likely that the departure of this Confederate general of questionable talents contributed to their misfortune. Robert F. Hoke was only a twenty-seven year old Brigadier General¹⁹ but, judging from performance, he was a better soldier than Pickett. Left to do the job Pickett had not been able to do, Hoke turned his over ten thousand men on little

¹⁶Ibid., p. 863.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 569.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 367, 368.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 869, 870.

Plymouth, where Brigadier General W. H. Wessells commanded about 2,834 Union troops.²⁰ Situated on the south bank of the Roanoke, Plymouth was ringed by strong entrenchments, while four gunboats under Lieutenant Commander Flusser patrolled the river.²¹ After enlisting the help of the barely completed ram Albermarle, Hoke began his attack on Plymouth on April 17.

Companies B and E of the Second North Carolina commanded by Captains Thomas I. Johnson and Calvin Hoggard were in the entrenchments at Plymouth. Step by step Hoke captured redoubts, forts, and batteries while Wessells' men surrendered or retired into entrenchments not yet taken. On the morning of the nineteenth the Albermarle sank or drove off all of the Union vessels, and Plymouth was surrounded. In the naval action North Carolina Unionists lost an old friend. Lieutenant-Commander Flusser died on the deck of the Miami, killed by a rebounding shell which he himself fired.²²

With the rebels all around them, morale sagged in the two North Carolina companies. That night many slipped away in the darkness by way of canoes, to be picked up in safety by the Union boats in Albermarle Sound. The four officers and 162 men who remained being made prisoners on the following day when Wessells surrendered to Hoke. Along with the other prisoners they were marched toward Tarboro, the prisoners were halted and the ranks searched for deserters from the Confederate army. Some were singled out and separated from their fellows.²⁴ Others avoided detection by taking false names and

²⁰Barnett, Civil War in North Carolina, p. 220.

²¹OR, I, 33, p. 301.

²²Fayetteville Observer, May 9, 1864.

²³OR, I, 33, pp. 226-301.

²⁴Robert H. Kellogg, Life and Death in Rebel Prisons: Giving a Complete History of the Inhuman and Barbarous Treatment of our Brave Soldiers by Rebel Authorities, Inflicting Terrible Suffering and Frightful Mortality, Principally at Andersonville, Georgia, and Florence, South Carolina, Describing Plans of Escape, Arrival of Prisoners, with Numerous and Various Incidents and Accidents of Prison life. (Hartford: L. Slevbins Co., 1865), p. 40.

claiming to belong to one of the Northern regiments also represented in the dejected group.²⁵ Those taken away did not return, and their comrades supposed them to have been shot.²⁶ After this stop the march continued to Tarboro, where the prisoners boarded a train for dreaded Andersonville.²⁷

After Batchelader's Creek and Plymouth, the Second North Carolina was sadly depleted. Only Companies A and C remained intact, and their morale was understandably low. In February these survivors were stationed at Beaufort under command of Captain Charles H. Foster. At that time another Confederate force advanced on Beaufort in conjunction with Pickett's attack on New Bern. Colonel James Jourdan of the One Hundred Fifty-eighth New York commanded there. He was forced to retreat, first to Carolina City, where he dug entrenchments only to be compelled to retreat once more, this time to Morehead, where more trenches were dug. At that point Pickett called off the attack and Jourdan's troubles were over. In his report Colonel Jourdan acknowledged his gratitude to Foster and his men for "the valuable services they rendered in completing the defenses of Morehead and the cheerful execution of all duties assigned to them."²⁸

By April 22, the men of the Second North Carolina were no longer cheerful. Death in the form of a hangman's noose cast its shadow over them. Colonel Edward H. Ripley was the commander at Morehead. The Colonel's April 22 communication with General Peck indicates that he understood their fear and sympathized with them. "I cannot place the least dependence on them or the defense of Beaufort or any other place," he wrote. "They are utterly demoralized and will not fight. Indeed, they are already looking to the swamps

²⁵Ibid., p. 243.

²⁶Ibid., p. 40.

²⁷OR, I, 33, p. 300.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 78-80.

for the protection they have so far failed of getting from our government." In the event that Morehead was attacked he thought the North Carolinians would be of no use. Under the circumstances he thought it would be best to send them to Fort Macon, where they would be "out of harm's way." Ripley indicated that he would send them to the Fort the next day "whatever the final disposition made of them."²⁹

The ranks of the First Regiment were not untouched by the events of the past few months. At Washington Colonel McChesney watched as demoralization struck the hitherto staunch and faithful Company L. McChesney's confidence in them was so undermined that he feared they might desert to the Confederacy. General I. N. Palmer thought their fears "silly and shameful" but General Palmer, if captured, did not face the possibility of a traitor's death at the end of a rope. Palmer had "but little confidence in these North Carolina troops when they are menaced by a very superior force. They recollect the fate of those recently hanged at Kinston, and the wives, sisters, and children of those victims haunt us daily."³⁰

The families of the North Carolinians, always a chore, were now proving to be a burden. Before the battle of Plymouth their wives and children had to be evacuated to Roanoke Island by the transport Massasoit.³¹ With Hoke now advancing toward Washington, Palmer had the added responsibility of caring for the families of some of his soldiers in the midst of preparations for a battle.³²

Realizing that he could not hold Washington, Palmer decided to give the town to Hoke without a fight. In doing so he sought to hold his civilian problem to a minimum. On April 26, he ordered the commander at Washington,

²⁹Ibid., pp. 768-749.

³⁰Ibid., p. 960.

³¹Kellogg, Rebel Prisons, p. 27.

³²OR, I, 33, p. 960.

Brigadier General Edward Harland, to send Company L out first, with their families and any one else who sought refuge behind his lines. At the same time Harland was instructed to keep his objective to himself, not letting the Washingtonians know they were being abandoned. Two days later Palmer reported to Fort Monroe that Company L had arrived in New Bern bringing "with them some 300 women and children." He also took this opportunity to further air his views about the Carolina regiments saying they were "a great drag upon us at a time as this." He temporarily quartered the women and children in the hospitals at Beaufort and Morehead City.³³

By the thirtieth of April, all of the Union troops were removed from Washington, and Hoke moved into a burned and pillaged town. After the evacuation became known, stealing began on a small scale. By the twenty-eighth pillaging was general, and on the last day of the Federal occupation, a fire was started by a person or persons unknown. It quickly spread through the streets leaving the town in ruins. On May 30, an army board of investigation, meeting at New Bern, condemned each and every unit of the Federal army which had been stationed at Washington. Company L was included by name in this group but should not have been. The "instances of theft" which began on the afternoon of the twenty-seventh occurred simultaneously with the embarkation of the cavalry company for New Bern.³⁴ Any participation by Company L would have been minor as the cavalrymen were gone when the general destruction began.

The Clouds Lift

After taking Washington, Hoke prepared for an offensive against New Bern, and for Union forces in Eastern North Carolina, the days ahead looked dark. The officers were still worried about the morale of the North Carolinians,

³³Ibid., p. 1010.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 311, 312.

and on May 2, Butler suggested that Palmer send the remainder of the Second North Carolina to Norfolk and safety.³⁵ This proved to be unnecessary, for Palmer received unexpected and indirect aid from the Army of the Potomac. While Hoke was taking Plymouth and Washington, General Grant was fighting Robert E. Lee from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor. While the Northern army was losing almost twice as many men as the Southern, Lee was losing a far greater percentage of his force.³⁶ On May 4, President Davis issued an order for the return of Hoke's army to Virginia.³⁷ On the night of October 27, the Albermarle was destroyed at Plymouth,³⁸ and the Union forces returned to the territory they had so lately left. It was the last time during the war that the Federal presence in Eastern North Carolina was threatened. By May 10, Palmer felt that the pressure, for the moment, was over. He decided to send most of the First North Carolina to Colonel James Jourdan in the sub-district of Beaufort where the Second had been for sometime and where the latter regiment's strength was again five companies.³⁹

Two companies of the First North Carolina were at Hatteras. The eight on the mainland (were comprised of) ^{companies} about six hundred men at this time, all of whom were drilled as artillerists. They were to be placed at Fort Macon and in Morehead City under the command of Colonel James M. McChesney. McChesney was to see their families safely settled, at which time Palmer believed the North Carolinians would "be as staunch as any men we have." If, however, their actions did not satisfy Jourdan as to their usefulness, Palmer would

³⁵OR, I, 51, pt. 2, p. 1289.

³⁶Ernest and Trevor N. Dupuy, The Compact History of the Civil War (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1960), p. 304.

³⁷Barrett, Civil War, p. 225.

³⁸Ibid., p. 229.

³⁹OR, I, 40, p. 218.

send them to Norfolk.⁴⁰ Evidently Jourdan was satisfied, for this disposition of the North Carolina troops stayed more or less the same for the remainder of 1864.

Company L, with a number of Northern troops, got away on a small excursion through Pollocksville, Young's Cross-Roads, and Jacksonville in the latter part of June.⁴¹ Otherwise, it was a time of relative quiet, which was, no doubt, good for jangled nerves.

⁴⁰OR, I, 36, pt. 2, pp. 621, 627.

⁴¹OR, I, 40, p. 218.

Chapter V
FINISHING THE JOB

Eastern Soldiers are Left Behind

From the beginning, men on both sides had hopefully predicted the end of the war from time to time, but the new year made such predictions seem more plausible. Sherman had just completed his march to the sea and was about to start through the Carolinas. On January 15, a combined land and sea force under General Alfred H. Terry and Rear Admiral David D. Porter took Fort Fisher.¹ Soon after, General John A. Schofield arrived with 20,000 veterans from the Western Army of General George H. Thomas. Schofield stopped at Wilmington to help Terry take that city, then assumed command of all troops in the department.²

In the reorganizational shake-up that followed Schofield's arrival and the orders and counter orders as he moved toward Goldsboro, it is hard to

¹Bruce Catton, Never Call Retreat (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1965), p. 417.

²Ibid., p. 432.

keep track of the First North Carolina, which in January absorbed the Second Regiment.³

Being unable to move on Goldsboro from Wilmington, Schofield reinforced Palmer at New Bern and ordered him to move toward Kinston with his entire command.⁴ But Palmer did not prepare to take his entire command. His Special Orders Number 51 left one company of the Seventeenth Massachusetts Volunteers at Beaufort and the First North Carolina at Fort Macon.⁵ Palmer also committed another sin. He was still at New Bern when Schofield thought he should have been in Kinston. Consequently, on February 25, the commanding general sent General Jacob D. Cox to replace Palmer and get the army moving.⁶

On his arrival, Cox created the Provisional Corps from Palmer's troops. He then separated the Provisional Corps into two divisions, one commanded by Palmer and the other by Brigadier General S. P. Carter. Company L of the First North Carolina was assigned to Carter's division,⁷ but reports in the following weeks show it connected with Palmer.

Special Orders Number 59, issued by Palmer on February 28, after Cox assumed command, stated that all of the First North Carolina would be located at Morehead City except one company which would garrison Beaufort.⁸ From this order and from subsequent reports which mention only Company L, it may be inferred that only the cavalry company was allowed to participate in the coming adventures.

Schofield began his advance in early March. He met his first resistance at Wise's Forks where Confederate Generals Bragg and Hoke waited. A

³Manarin, Guide, sec. 3, p. 1.

⁴Barrett, Civil War, p. 285.

⁵OR, I, 47, pt. 2, p. 511.

⁶OR, I, 47, pt. 1, p. 911.

⁷Ibid., p. 973.

⁸OR, I, 47, pt. 2, p. 621.

battle ensued which ended on March 10 with the Confederates in retreat.⁹ This battle, referred to as the Battle of Kinston, merely slowed Schofield down. He had to repair "the railroad bridge over the Nuese River at Kinston and bring up pontoons for a wagon crossing."¹⁰

A part of Schofield's army under Couch, was stranded at Trenton on the wrong side of the Trent River. On the tenth the commanding General sent for a detachment of the First North Carolina, which had been left behind. The detachment, commanded by Captain J. J. McLane was ordered up the Trent, aboard the steamer General Shepley, where the North Carolinians would provide means for Couch to cross the river. The detachment got underway but did not reach Trenton before being ordered to return to New Bern, Couch having somehow gotten himself across.¹¹

Because Joe Johnston scraped the bottom of the Confederate personnel barrel for the Battle of Bentonville, Schofield marched on to Goldsboro with little difficulty. On March 21, the Confederate commander there marched away allowing Schofield to march in. On the twenty-third Terry and Sherman also arrived.¹² Schofield's army was then incorporated into Sherman's and moved out with him from Goldsboro in pursuit of Johnston on April 6.¹³ Since there is no information to the contrary and the last news of Company I had them with Schofield, it is assumed that they were still with Sherman's army when Johnston surrendered.

On June 27 all companies of the First North Carolina Infantry were mustered out at New Bern.¹⁴

⁹Barrett, Civil War, pp. 287-290.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹OR, I, 47, pt. 2, p. 768.

¹²Barrett, Civil War, p. 344.

¹³Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁴Manarin, Guide, sec. 3, p. 1.

When General George Stoneman started on his raid of March, 1865, the First and Second North Carolina Mounted Infantry were part of his command. Stoneman had previously ordered Brigadier General Davis Tillson to use his division in protecting the raider's rear. In accordance with these orders Tillson directed Colonel Kirk to take his regiment and the Second Mounted to Boone "to hold Deep and Watauga Gaps."¹⁵ Kirk was to barricade the Meat Camp road which provided passage through State Gap and also block an unnamed road through Sampson Gap located between Deep and Watauga Gaps.¹⁶

Stoneman passed through Boone on March 28 and on April 5, Kirk left Tennessee, arriving in Boone on April 6. From there he sent Major Bahney with the Second Mounted Infantry to Deep Gap and Major Rollins with two hundred men from the Third Mounted to Watauga Gap. The remaining four hundred and six men of Kirk's Regiment stayed with him in Boone.¹⁷ Kirk established his headquarters in the home of J. D. Council and was soon very unpopular with his chosen hosts. Mrs. Council was not allowed to leave her room while the men of the Third Mounted trampled and littered the grounds.¹⁸

All three points occupied by Kirk's men were fortified. In Boone the Courthouse was turned into a fort, complete with stockade and "loopholes in the walls," of Watauga County's seat of justice. At Deep Gap Major Bahney's men dug entrenchments, and at Watauga Gap Rollins' detachment constructed a fort from timber taken from one of the summer houses which enveloped Blowing Rock.¹⁹

On April 19, 1865, Stoneman returned to Jonesborough, Tennessee, having left portions of his command at various places. Stoneman was impressed with

¹⁵OR, I, 49, pt. 1, pp. 25-27.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 338.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 337.

¹⁸Van Noppen, Stoneman's Last Raid, p. 21.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 22, 23.

the conditions existing in the mountains which he termed "truly deplorable." Because "the country is overrun by bands of disbanded Confederate soldiers, who rob and plunder indiscriminately while making their way south," Stoneman ordered the North Carolinians to remain in the mountains to curb the pillage. Kirk and the Third North Carolina were to patrol north of Asheville while the Second Mounted, under Colonel Bartlett, cleaned up the area to the south of the town.²⁰ The Second Mounted Infantry arrived in Waynesville on the fourth of May. The day before an event occurred which must have seemed to the North Carolinians a vindication of their acts and efforts. General J. G. Martin, "commanding Confederate forces in Western North Carolina, surrendered with his command to Lieutenant Colonel Bartlett."²¹

On May 6, the Second and Third Mounted were ordered to Asheville. Arriving first, the Second was to remain until Kirk's regiment galloped into town, at which time Bartlett was to depart for Tennessee. Kirk was directed to remain in Asheville, allowing stragglers to catch up, before returning to Greenville.²²

After this order was carried out, the war was over for the Western North Carolinians. At Knoxville, Tennessee, on August 8, 1865, the men of the Third Mounted Infantry were discharged. Eight days later, also at Knoxville, the veterans of the Second Regiment were mustered out.²³

The Colored Troops

The Fourteenth United States Heavy Artillery were mustered out of service on December 11, 1865, at Fort Macon. Some of them were in the army for twenty-two months, but there is no indication that any member ever fired a gun at the enemy.²⁴

²⁰OR, I, 49, pt. 2, pp. 407, 408.

²¹OR, I, 49, pt. 1, p. 339.

²²Ibid.

²³Manarin, Guide, Sec. 3, p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., p. 2.

The Thirty-fifth United States Colored Troops finished up their war at Charleston, South Carolina, and remained there for a year after it was over. It was there that they were mustered out on June 1, 1866.²⁵

The Thirty-sixth remained a part of General Godfrey Weitzel's Colored Corps. As such, they were probably among the Union troops who marched into conquered and burning Richmond on April 3, 1865.²⁶ They too remained in the Army for some time after the end of the war, being finally discharged October 28, 1866, at Brazos, Texas.²⁷

In January 1865, the Thirty-seventh was part of Major General Alfred H. Terry's expedition to Fort Fisher.²⁸ After the Fort was taken, they remained in North Carolina²⁹ and became the last North Carolina Regiment discharged. On February 11, 1867, they were mustered out at Raleigh.³⁰

²⁵Ibid., p. 3.

²⁶Bruce Catton, Never Call Retreat (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1965), p. 446.

²⁷Manarin, Guide, sec. 3, p. 3.

²⁸OR, I, 46, pt. 1, p. 604.

²⁹OR, I, 47, pt. 3, p. 253.

³⁰Manarin, Guide, sec. 3, p. 3.

They have also been called cowardly both by their fellow North Carolinians then, and those of a later day. The author contends that they were merely human. Like all members of the species they would sometimes run in the face of death, and on other occasions stand and be claimed by it. Their character and their courage were no better or worse than their Confederate counterparts and it is time for historians to recognize the fact.

CONCLUSION

It cannot be claimed that North Carolina Union soldiers made any practical difference in the outcome of the war. They participated in no tide-turning battles and Robert E. Lee would still have surrendered on April 9, 1865, had not one North Carolinian ever donned a United States Army uniform. They did, however, make a contribution. Each time a Tar Heel in blue stood in a battle line, rode on a cavalry raid, or scouted some territory a Northern soldier was freed to be elsewhere. Probably their greatest contribution was indirect. The existence of North Carolina troops on either end of the state helped to undermine morale at home, as did the knowledge that former slaves were suddenly Yankee soldiers.

Those who followed their consciences and those who were bought, as some were, have been charged, both then and since, with treason. It should be remembered that Northern statesmen and soldiers called adherents to the Confederacy traitors. In the eyes of justice the problem of who betrayed whom must be left open to question at best.

It has been said of them that they were murderers and thieves, and they were. But they did nothing to others which was not done to them. War is a state which turns men into killing machines, legalizing murder, robbery and pillage.

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