Steven J. Hill. War-Time New Bern: Union Occupation of a Confederate Town. (Under the Direction of Professor Mary Jo Bratton) Department of History, East Carolina University, October, 1989.

The purpose of this study is to examine social and economic conditions in New Bern during the Civil War. This work will better clarify and define the situation of the town during that critical period in our nation's history. Not only is New Bern the focus of this thesis, but attention will also be focused on the areas surrounding the town.

New Bern, the county seat of Craven County, was a prosperous community before the war. It was favorably situated at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers; thus the town served as an important port for the central and northeastern sections of the state. However, the presence of shallow sounds prevented it from becoming a great port such as Wilmington or Charleston, South Carolina.

This study has been divided into topical areas which constitutes chapters in this thesis. The initial chapter basically provides a description of New Bern from 1860 until March 14, 1862 when the town was captured by Union forces. The description includes social and economic conditions of the town and county, and also describes civilian attempts to prepare for war several months before the state actually seceded.

The second chapter is focused on the Battle of New Bern beginning with the launching of Burnside's force against

North Carolina. The town was considered a major target of the Federals and was second only to Wilmington in importance. The capture of the town represents the first direct contact New Bernians had with the war.

The third chapter describes the town shortly after its capture by Union forces. It explains the military presence in the town and describes the attempts to convert it from Confederate to Federal control. This chapter also describes the two unsuccessful attempts of the Confederates to recapture this important city.

The fourth and final chapter of this study describes the social institutions as they existed in the town shortly after its capture. During that time three main groups were present: the military, the civilians, and the freedmen, all of whom had particular effects upon the town. This chapter also describes sickness and disease which affected the civilians and Federal soldiers stationed in New Bern. The most dreaded of the diseases was the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1864.

It is further intended that this thesis will shed new light upon the social, economic, and political conditions of New Bern during the Civil War.

WAR-TIME NEW BERN:
UNION OCCUPATION
OF A CONFEDERATE TOWN

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INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the Civil War is perhaps one of the most talked-about subjects in American history. Known by many names -- the War for Southern Independence, the War for States' Rights, the War of Northern Aggression, and the War of the Rebellion -- the Civil War was certainly one of the most costly American wars in terms of lives lost: at least 618,000 Americans died, of that number 314,152 of disease.[1] In North Carolina, which was very hesitant at first to enter the secession movement, the war eventually resulted in 40,275 casualties, killed in battle and by disease.[2]

One of the conflicts which separated the North from the South had its beginnings during the 1830s under the presidency of Andrew Jackson. The major issue at that time was not slavery, per se, but states' rights; although the abolition issue and antislavery agitation in the North continued to gain strength. South Carolina, just as it would be in 1861, was the seat of political discontent. It had always thought of itself as being independent from the rest of the nation, as was so clearly pointed out in the Ordinance of Nullification.[3] President Jackson, however, had no sympathy with nullification. At a dinner in the spring of 1830, he had proposed a toast. "Our federal

union: it must be preserved."[4]

As President Jackson stressed the importance of preservation of the Union, so did successive administrations. Throughout the 1830s the issue of slavery became more and more important as a divisive factor between North and South. In most southern states agriculture depended a great deal on slave labor. This condition was especially true in South Carolina where rice and cotton crops were very dependent on such labor.

On December 20, 1860, at a state convention called for that purpose, South Carolina passed an ordinance repealing its 1788 adoption of the federal constitution, becoming the first state to secede from the Union. Other southern states began to follow suit: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas seceded also, and on February 8, 1861, representatives of the seven states met in Montgomery, Alabama, to outline governmental plans for the "Confederate States of America."[5] North Carolina held back, feeling that compromise with the Union could still be worked out, and that preserving the Union was preferable to secession. North Carolina even sent delegates to a peace conference in Washington in February, 1861.

On April 12, 1861, South Carolina rose up in arms, and fired on the Federal Arsenal, Ft. Sumter. Virginia seceded later that same month. Still North Carolina resisted secession, and did not secede until May 20, 1861, following

President Lincoln's call for troops. In his inaugural address three months earlier, President Lincoln had promised that there would be no blood shed unless war was forced upon the federal government. This war now seemed inevitable. On April 15, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve for a period of three months. Secretary of War Cameron wired Governor John W. Ellis to furnish two regiments of North Carolina troops. The Governor then replied:

> Your dispatch is received, and if genuine, which its extraordinary character leads me to doubt, I have to say in reply that I regard the levy of troops made by the administration for the purpose of subjugating the states of the South as a violation of the Constitution, and as a gross usurpation of power. I can be no party to this wicked violation of the laws of the country and to this war upon the liberty of a free people. You can get no troops from North Carolina.[6]

Before Lincoln's call for troops, the majority of North Carolinians were pro-Union. They preferred to nurture a "watch and wait" attitude. In New Bern (a coastal city which had served as the capital of North Carolina from 1770 until the present capital was established in Raleigh in 1794 and which had grown dramatically in trade, prosperity, and population since the Revolutionary War), many citizens had indeed expressed regret that a "Black Republican" was presiding over the nation's highest office. As one New Bernian wrote to her friend, "...I do wish I had the cooking of his dinner. I'll warrant I could have put a spider in his dumpling - miserable old wretch!!!"[7]

Regardless of these sentiments, however, many New Bernians were in favor of the preservation of the Union, but only if it could be done in terms favorable to the South. The New Bern Daily Progress of January 7, 1861, reported that the people were quiet, the majority not frightened by war or rumors of war:

> We can tend to our business, eat oysters and keep quiet. Even if other cities secede, New Bern will not leave her moorings. Our people infinitely prefer an evening in the theatre to a night at Fort Macon.[8]

This sentiment, however, would not remain strong, for on February 28, 1861, the state was to vote on the question of calling a convention and to elect 120 delegates. The purpose of this convention would be to ponder the question of whether North Carolina would secede. When the votes were counted, Craven County had voted for a convention (911 votes for, 362 opposed), but in the overall vote, the state had said "No" to a convention.[9] Since there were relatively few wealthy planters in North Carolina, as there were in most of the lower southern states, many felt that it was unnecessary to agitate for a break with the Federal government.

The purpose of this study is to examine social conditions in New Bern during the Civil War. The period selected encompasses the months just before the capture of the town by Union forces on March 14, 1862, through April of 1865. The main objective is to examine conditions in New Bern before and after the capture by federal forces.

This study has been divided into topical areas which constitute chapters in the thesis. The initial chapter contains a description of New Bern from 1860 until March 14, 1862. During that time New Bern was a prosperous community. It was favorably situated at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers; thus the town served as an important port for the central and northeastern part of the state.

The second chapter is focused on the Battle of New Bern beginning with the launching of Burnside's force against North Carolina. It also includes the capture of Roanoke Island on February 8, 1862, and concludes with the Confederate retreat and capture of New Bern by Union forces on March 14, 1862. This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the actual battle, but only to describe what happened, why it happened, and what was the importance of the battle to both Confederate and Union positions.

The third and fourth chapters contain an examination of conditions in New Bern during the occupation by Federal troops. The third chapter describes the military aspects of the town shortly after its capture and the attempt to convert it from a Confederate to a Federally controlled city. This chapter also describes the two failed attempts of Rebel forces to recapture the town.

While the focus of the third chapter is on the Union occupation of New Bern by the military, the fourth and final chapter describes the social institutions as they existed in

the town shortly after its capture. During that time three main groups of people were present: the military, the civilians, and the freedmen, all of whom had particular effects upon the town.

It is further intended that this thesis will shed new light on the social, economic, and political conditions of the town during that critical period in our nation's history.

Chapter 1

NEW BERN: 1860 TO MARCH 14, 1862

New Bern was a prosperous town in 1860. Favorably situated at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse rivers, the town served as an important port for the central and northeastern area of North Carolina. Not only did it serve as a port of entry, but also as a place where farmers could bring their produce to the city wharves to be shipped north and abroad.[1] However, the presence of shallow sounds along the coast of North Carolina prevented it from becoming a great port such as Wilmington, or Charleston, South Carolina.[2]

New Bern, the second oldest town in North Carolina, was founded in 1710 by a group of Swiss and German Palatines under the leadership of Christopher von Graffenried.[3] Named for Bern, Switzerland, this settlement in its early years faced many hardships, but by 1770 it had become the first permanent capital of North Carolina.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the town was the center of business and culture throughout the state. This distinction caused many people to refer to New Bern as the "Athens of North Carolina," or simply "Old Athens."[4]

There were within New Bern many prominent men who because of their background were known to be men of culture. Among the most notable were William Gaston, John Stanley, Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., John H. Bryan, Francis L. Hawks, John P. Daves, and George Pollock. While Gaston, Stanley and Spaight were prominent lawyers and politicians known throughout the state, Hawks was an Episcopal minister and the grandson of John Hawks, the famous architect of Governor Tryon's Palace. Daves and Pollock were wealthy planters who acquired sizable plantations in the country and lived in fine homes in town.[5]

During these years, New Bern streets were lined with some of the most beautiful homes ever seen in North Carolina. The architecture was exquisite, ranging from the simple Georgian design to the Federal, characterized by the side hall and double-chimneys. During the spring, the town would be transformed into a garden where flowers, especially roses, would adorn the outside of many homes. New Bern streets were also well shaded, abounding with many elm trees. Some people not only referred to New Bern as "Old Athens," but also as the "City of Elms."[6]

By 1820 New Bern emerged as North Carolina's largest town with a population of 3,663 inhabitants. During the next two decades, however, both the population and the economics of the town began to decline.[7] Not only was New Bern declining, but the state as a whole seemed to be

standing still while other states were progressing. Thus North Carolina was nicknamed the "Rip Van Winkle State."[8]

By 1860, New Bern began, once more, to enjoy the economic prosperity that had characterized it at the turn of the century. The main reason for the return of prosperity was the completion of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad in June of 1858.[9] This railroad, with its eastern terminus in Beaufort, ran via New Bern to Goldsboro where it connected with the North Carolina Central Railroad. It also intersected the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, which would later be known as the "life line of the Confederacy."[10] With this system of railroads, the western sections of the state could then be connected with the eastern ports of New Bern and Beaufort. The main office of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad was located in New Bern, and its first president was John D. Whitford. By that time New Bern was the second largest town in North Carolina--second only to Wilmington--and in 1860 it had a population of 5,432.[11]

The county seat and largest town in Craven County, New Bern, contained many businesses and industries. According to the 1860 Agricultural & Manufacturing Census, twenty-five manufacturers were listed as operating within the town. Among those listed were nine distilleries, four cooper shops, two sash and blind factories, a saw mill, a cotton mill, a leather tannery, and two copper and tin factories.

Of these, the most affluent industry listed was the turpentine factory owned by William P. Muse. This distillery, manned by twelve men, produced 10,000 barrels of spirits of turpentine at an annual value of $160,000 and 40,000 barrels of rosin at an annual value of $40,000.[12] Turpentine was quite useful for medicinal purposes; it was essential as well as useful in the manufacture of paint.[13] Muse also owned the only leather tannery in New Bern as well as a cooper shop where the barrels were made to contain the "spirits" manufactured in his distillery.[14]

Another important industry located in New Bern was a steam saw mill owned by M. Taylor. Since New Bern was located at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers, trees could be felled in the forest and made into rafts that could be easily transported down the river to the saw mill. This mill was manned by twelve workers and produced lumber at an annual value of $17,000. Taylor also owned a turpentine distillery, a cooper shop, and a sash and blind factory.[15]

Other factories operating in town were the C.C. Boepan Copper and Tin factory and the C.A. Hart Tin Ware and Copper Factory, the latter destroyed during the January 15, 1861, fire. New Bern also had a steam cotton mill which employed five males and 25 females. The annual production was 146,000 pounds of spun cotton at a value of $24,000.[16]

Workers' wages in 1860 were not very high; the scale

depended upon the type of industry (work as well as competitiveness). Of all the industries in New Bern in 1860, only two, Taylor's Steam Saw Mill and Muse's Leather Tannery, paid their workers as much as $30.00 per month. These were the highest wages offered by any industry. The New Bern Steam Cotton Mill offered the next highest wage, paying their male employees $26.00 per month, followed by the cooper shops, tin and copper factories, and turpentine distilleries, each paying $25.00 per month to their male employees.

Some women were hired to work in factories, although they never expected to receive the same wages as men. Only two industries were listed as having females in their employment. The New Bern Steam Cotton Mill hired 25 females at a monthly wage of $8.00, and the William P. Muse cooper shop listed the services of seven females. However, their monthly wage was not listed, suggesting that it may have been an oversight, or that they could have been members of his own family.

In 1860, Craven County had a total of 710 farms, ranging in size as well as value. Most Craven County farmers had a larger percentage of uncleared land than that of the cleared, workable land. In fact, with the abundance of unimproved or woodland acres, the value of the cleared land became more valuable.[17] Of the farmers listed in 1860,

Peter G. Evans was the most affluent. His land holdings consisted of 1,200 acres of improved land and 4,460 acres of unimproved or uncleared land. The total value of his plantation was listed in 1860 at $35,000.[18]

Almost every Craven County farmer had a large number of farm animals which were used for various purposes. The most common animal was of course, the horse. The horse not only served as providing a means of transportation to and from town, but also as a work animal along with mules and oxen. Cattle were also raised in large quantities for food, as well as the milk cow which was used to produce dairy products such as butter, cream, and cheese.

Swine was the most common livestock raised in Craven County. The pig to the farmer can often be compared to the buffalo of the plains Indian, in that the farmer used virtually almost all of the pig, from his head to his intestines, to his hoof. Not only was the animal used as a source of food, but lard could also be obtained from the pig so that it could be used for general cooking purposes.

Sheep were also raised on almost every farm. Wool obtained from the animal could be made into blankets as well as articles of clothing. Of the 328 farmers who produced wool in 1860, Samuel Hill was the largest producer, owning 128 sheep and producing 320 pounds of wool.[19] Flax was also grown by a few farmers, but never in large quantities. The fibers of the flax plant, being very strong and durable,

could be spun into linen.

Cotton was not a major crop in Craven County during the 1860s. Out of 710 farmers listed, only thirty-five raised any cotton at all. Cotton quantity was measured by the number of four hundred pound bales of ginned cotton each farmer produced. S.S. Biddle, the second most prosperous farmer in the county with his farm valued at $29,948, produced 167 bales in 1860, the greatest amount of any farmer.[20]

Since rural Craven County was mostly agricultural, farmers grew a variety of crops. The most commonly produced crop in 1860 was Indian corn. Indian corn, speckled or reddish in appearance, was grown for human consumption as well as fodder for farm animals. It also could be dried and ground into meal. Craven County farmers relied heavily upon this crop, producing a total of 288,741 bushels of corn in 1860. Only nine farmers reported to have produced no corn at all.[21]

Sweet potatoes was the next most important crop in 1860. This delicious reddish brown food could be cooked or baked into breads and pies. Farmers produced a total of 139,062 bushels of sweet potatoes in that year.[22]

Rice was the third most important crop in 1860. A.C. Latham was the largest producer of that crop, producing 2,800 pounds. He, along with other farmers produced 32,113

pounds of rice in 1860.[23] Among other crops produced by farmers were peas, rye, Irish potatoes, wheat, and oats.

Tobacco was also grown in Craven County; but like cotton, it was not grown in large quantities. Only three farmers were listed as growing tobacco: Celia Lewis, Jacob Edwards, and Elias Dixon, who produced 600 pounds, 150 pounds, and 30 pounds respectively.[24]

Not only did farmers raise crops, but some raised huge quantities of bees, whereby they could obtain honey and bees wax. Sugar cane, which could be boiled and made into molasses, was also grown by a few farmers. One farmer even reported making molasses out of watermelons.[25]

Thus it can be determined that Craven County farmers produced a variety of crops during the pre-war years. The majority of these crops were mostly used for local consumption, being taken by the farmers to the market house whereby the produce could be made available to the public. Cotton was considered a "cash crop" in 1860, although it was not grown by many farmers. Corn and rice were also probable exports, as well as lumber and naval stores. Not only were these products exported from New Bern, but other goods were also considered as viable exports.

Before the outbreak of hostilities, many Northerners depended a great deal on Southern goods. The same would also hold true for those Southerners desiring Northern manufactured goods. In January, 1860, the Daily Progress

reported that from one to three hundred "Yankee Drummers" visited the town every season. These seagoing salesmen maintained a good rapport with Southern farmers, shipping out cotton, turpentine, and other articles to Northern merchants, and returning with groceries, clothing, and other items. This arrangement deprived the state of much needed income. It was even suggested that New Bern should do as Portsmouth, Virginia, had done, placing a tax on each "Yankee" entering the town for that purpose.[26] To further confound matters, many farmers were investing their surplus in Northern stocks.[27] It was evident that before North Carolina seceded much of its income was flowing North.

Even as early as March 30, 1861, the Daily Progress made the statement that it was hoped that no local merchant would go North to purchase goods: "The affairs at present justify them in not going."[28] One unidentified female merchant who ordered goods from New York as usual, after seeing Lincoln's proclamation to raise troops, ordered her merchant in New York to unship the goods and keep them upon his own shelves.[29] The town merchants were also admonished to follow the example of Druggist J. W. Carmer, who left for Europe to purchase drugs, rather than to purchase them from the North. Many considered this to be the first direct importation ever.[30]

By March 1861, many businesses were feeling the pinch

of a nation threatened by war. At first the "dull" and "low ebb" of business was blamed upon the deteriorating appearance of the town. The Daily Progress made the comment that if real estate owners would tear down "the miserable huts that obstruct and disgrace the public corners and prominent places...and erect larger, comfortable, and safe houses," then enterprising men from elsewhere would come and occupy them. In this way New Bern would soon have a business appearance "commensurate with its position and surroundings," the Progress predicted.[31]

One month later, after the opening of hostilities at Fort Sumter, in South Carolina, the Daily Progress admitted that the war excitement "has prostrated business and little is doing in anything except for provisions."[32] Farmers throughout the county began holding meetings to discuss the economic conditions and also to talk about raising grain and other provisions within the coming year. It was evident to the farmers that it would be wise not to plant as much cotton, but to plant more corn and raise more hogs and cattle.[33]

Even before the terror of war became a reality, citizens of New Bern were concerned about destruction by fire. During the mid-nineteenth century, many of New Bern's residences and some businesses were constructed entirely of wood. These buildings were unfortunately built very close together so that if a fire did develop in one building

within minutes it would spread to the next. One of the most unforgettable fires occurred on the morning of January 15, 1861. The fire originated between the C. A. Hart Bro. & Co.'s tin and sheet iron manufactory on the corner of Broad and Middle Streets, and the New Bern Restaurant owned by Richard Wilkins. Before the fire could be extinguished it left a path of destruction which not only included those buildings, but also included the historic three-story Court House located at the intersection of Broad and Middle Streets.[34]

This court house, built ca. 1800, was reputed to have contained the oldest four-faced tower clock in the United States.[35] Fortunately, at least the public records were saved. The damages were estimated to be between forty and fifty thousand dollars. The least amount of damage on the block was done to the restaurant which was relocated in the Washington Hotel on Broad Street.[36]

One building that was miraculously saved was the Market House. It was there that the farmers would bring their produce to be sold; it was also where slaves would be brought and auctioned off to the highest bidder. Many New Bernians had expressed regret that this building did not burn, since it was situated near the Court House and not in a very good location. Some would like to have had the Market House moved to a more suitable location, near the

County Wharf.[37]

On January 17, 1861, the Daily Progress suggested that in order to prevent destructive fires in the future, the town needed to form more fire companies; at least three for each "machine." It also voiced opposition to a town ordinance that barred blacks from going to fires, stating that blacks make better firefighters than whites. The paper reported that the majority of white people "will not work at fires." According to one observer, all they seemed to do was to give orders and make suggestions.[38]

On March 10, 1861, a meeting of concerned citizens was held to reorganize the fire company. Two companies were organized with thirty-five members each. It was also suggested that the recent outbreak of fires was probably the work of "incendiaries." By late March, the court appointed a town patrol of twenty-four men, although all citizens were later urged to "keep a good lookout."[39] On May 1, 1861, the Daily Progress stated: "It seems that someone is determined to burn up the town...."[40]

The fire bell was an instrument used quite often in New Bern. Not only was it used for fires, but it was also used to call citizens together in an assembly to discuss war measures. However, it was requested that when the bell was rung for assembly, it should be rung more slowly. When it was rung too fast, the ladies and children thinking it was a fire would "pour out of the houses in every direction

almost frantic with fear."[41]

Even when a residence was threatened by fire, some citizens seemed to do more harm than good. The Daily Progress reported that, "some people get crazy as soon as the fire bell rings!" One report stated that during the removal of furniture from a house threatened by fire, more damage was done to the furniture rather than by the actual fire. One particular fellow was seen throwing "a fine mirror" out of a second floor window and coming down with a rug rolled up under his arms.[42]

Some citizens were indeed very fearful when the word "fire" was mentioned. With that in mind, certain youths of the town decided to play an April Fool's joke on the congregation of the Methodist Church. On Easter Sunday night, April 1, 1861, a young lad had interrupted the services with the alarm of "fire" from a crowd of boys who had gathered on the church steps. The congregation sprang to their feet and ran out of the church. Of course the alarm was false, "but not until the minister was left with nothing to preach to but empty benches," the reporter observed.[43]

Education was a primary concern of many families in ante-bellum New Bern. The town possessed the first school incorporated in North Carolina. Yet education was not without its difficulties in "Old Athens." The New Bern

Academy, completed in 1810, had suffered many years of neglect. In December 1860, on the eve of war, the trustees of the Academy announced that they were "engaged in repairing the building and renewing the furniture, and procuring new and suitable apparatus for philosophical and chemical experiments; also a piano and melodeon for the musical department, with maps, charts, and books to illustrate the studies and lectures."[44]

The Academy reopened in February, 1861 under the guidance of Professor W. H. Doherty, a former college president. Assisting Professor Doherty were his wife and two daughters. Also assisting were Mr. H. C. Thomson as tutor; Mrs. J. H. Cuthbert, a wife of one of the trustees, teaching vocal and instrumental music; and Colonel J. V. Jordan instructing young men in military drill.[45]

The school was conducted according to the policy of "United Education" where ladies and gentlemen were instructed together. Sessions were held for twenty weeks with one-half of the tuition payable in advance, and the other half at mid-term.

The prices of the sessions were as follows:

Primary	$ 8.00
Intermediate	$15.00
High School	$25.00
Music with use of instrument	$20.00
Fine Arts: paintings, drawings, etc.	$ 5.00[46]

Located across from the Academy was the New Bern Theater, a popular attraction among the people. This theater, which was located directly under Lowthrob Hall and St. John's Masonic Lodge, was first used in 1805. Here traveling theatrical groups would perform such plays as Our American Cousin, The Charcoal Burner, and other popular plays of the day. Not only were plays performed, but traveling minstrels were also being scheduled there. As late as February 1862 the "Confederate Minstrels" were performing songs, dances, and burlesque shows to the enjoyment of many patrons.[47] The admission price was quite reasonable: 50¢ for adults, children and servants 25¢ each.[48]

During the summer months, many New Bernians enjoyed walking along the wharves on East Front Street which bordered along the Neuse River. This shaded area was often referred to as being the most pleasant resort the town people had.[49]

For recreation, some people preferred the wooded area of Tuscarora located about fifteen miles west of town. Here they could commune with nature, hold picnics, and just get away from the busy town life. On May 1, 1861, despite war clouds, several students from the Academy chartered a coach from the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad company, to enjoy a "May Day" outing in the country. The Daily Progress

reported that they, being "shut up in the dusty streets and musty walls of a school house," returned "much refreshed and invigorated."[50]

Dances were also popular among the young people and were often held at Lowthrop Hall. There also many "soirees" were held while the guests danced to the music of a small band stationed within a cubbyhole elevated above the dance floor. For those young people who could not dance, Samuel Slater was advertising in the Daily Progress by April 1861, that he was holding dancing classes at the Hall.[51] Although the laughter of young people has now vanished from this popular social attraction, the cubbyhole still remains as a testimony to an era long gone.

During the winter, ice skating was also popular. With the winters being quite cold, many ponds as well as parts of the Neuse and Trent Rivers would freeze over, thus enabling many people to enjoy this type of recreation.[52]

One particular day that was often enjoyed by the citizens was Independence Day. New Bernians often boasted that their town was the first in North Carolina to celebrate that day, and it was also believed that it was the third town in America (after Boston and Philadelphia) in celebrating the patriotic occasion.[53]

After North Carolina seceded, however, July 4, 1861 was marked with less fanfare than before. Businesses were closed as usual, and in the afternoon, the "Jeff Davis

Cadets" paraded through the town to everyone's delight.[54] Many New Bernians thought that they should have as much right to the Fourth of July as anybody in the North. Although this was a national holiday, there were plenty of reminders that the nation was not celebrating the day in unity.

In front of the building being used as the temporary Court House, which had replaced the Court House that burned earlier in the year, three effigies were seen hanging over the street. On each effigy signs had been placed which described how New Bernians felt about Union leaders. On the effigy of Winfield Scott, the sign "The Traitor's doom" appeared. On Lincoln's appeared, "Somebody is hurt. The irrepressible conflict ended, the South Victorious." And on the effigy of William H. Seward was the sign, "The 'higher law' has ascended."[55]

One of the main factors that caused the South to differ from the North was the institution of slavery. Many Southern states which exported large quantities of cotton depended upon the institution.

Because North Carolina was not as well suited for growing cotton, as most of the other southern states, there were relatively few wealthy planters with large slave holdings. The only region of the state that was well suited for growing this crop (as well as tobacco) was the coastal

region. Of the sixteen counties in the state that had more slaves than whites in 1860, all but three were located in the coastal plain.[56] So comparatively speaking, North Carolina was never a major slave-holding state.

Even in Craven County where the population of whites totaled 8,747, only 674 families owned slaves.[57] Out of that number, S. S. Biddle was the largest slave holder with 100 slaves.[58] In 1860 New Bern had a total population of 5,432. Of that number 2,383 were slaves and 689 were free Negroes.[59]

Many northern abolitionists constantly preached about the evils of slavery. But to Southerners, the presence of slavery was the only way of life many of them knew and so they depended a great deal on that institution. It was the feeling of many Southerners that "our blacks" were "more sprightly and happier than any laboring person ever seen in the North."[60]

Throughout the ante-bellum period, slaves "manifested a freedom of action."[61] Many masters enabled their slaves to go to town on Sundays, holidays, and nights for socializing and recreation. This caused many problems for the New Bernians, especially ladies, who complained that the streets were often "infested with Negroes" moving about noisily at night.[62]

Some slaves managed to escape from their bondage, and when they did, rewards were posted in the newspapers for

their capture. Rewards varied depending upon a particular runaway. Sometimes rewards were offered "Dead or Alive."[63] One particular runaway who caused much consternation in eastern North Carolina was Ben Soon who belonged to a gentleman in Pitt County. Soon was the leader of a band of runaways and in December of 1860, killed John Chapman, a well-known resident of the Swift Creek Community of Craven County. Four hundred dollars reward was placed on his head.[64]

The following April, 1861, the Progress reported another death -- Bowden Edwards of Beaufort County had been shot and killed by Ben Soon. Edwards had apparently stumbled on his hiding place. The Progress asked the questions, "Why can't someone get a pack of dogs and go after him?"[65] Certainly the Progress should have realized that it was more than just a simple task of chasing him with a pack of blood hounds.

On many occasions slave holders would allow their slaves to be hired out to work in the turpentine industry or cotton fields further south. Prices would go as much as $250 and up.[66] In January, 1860, the Daily Progress reported that the "institution is in a flourishing condition," and that prices for hirelings were 10 to 20 percent higher than for "the same stock" the year before.[67] The average prices for girls were from $40-60, and for boys $40-75.[68]

North Carolinians had always been concerned about their free Negro population.[69] In 1860 the number of free Negroes totaled 30,463, and most of them were concentrated in the eastern counties.[70] Although many tended to settle in rural areas, in Craven County the majority concentrated in New Bern. There they made up 12.7 percent of New Bern's population, making it the largest holder of free negroes in any town throughout the state.[71]

Even as early as 1854, a prominent New Bernian J. W. Bryan wrote that some of them were very society minded. "They dress elegantly and have taken to the Episcopal Church. Several of the merchants have Negro wives or 'misses' and keep them openly, raising up families of mulattos. The depravity of the place is shocking -- Preachers may preach forever and they will produce no change."[72]

Conditions of free blacks were more lenient in North Carolina than in any southern state. Even though the "Free Negro Code" was in effect in the state, it simply was not rigidly enforced. John Hope Franklin, in his study The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860, suggests that this lax enforcement explains the prevalence of drunkenness and thievery among those people.[73] Free blacks were even accused of stirring up the slaves of various communities causing them to steal.[74]

The free Negroes were looked on as a third class of the

population. Although in North Carolina they had been disfranchised in 1835, they were not exempt from paying taxes. In New Bern, if a free Negro was delinquent in paying his taxes, he was required to work on the streets "two days for each and every dollar due the town."[75] Free Blacks were also prohibited from engaging in fights with whites or striking a white unless it was for his own self defense. Furthermore, they were even denied the privilege of owning weapons; however, some managed to obtain them anyway. In August 1861, some Negroes had broken into a house on Pollock Street and threatened the white inhabitants with a pistol. Many reports had surfaced of sympathetic whites furnishing weapons to blacks; and others warned that the citizens should be more afraid of the sympathetic whites than the Negroes with weapons.[76] If a free Negro (as well as a slave) resisted or attempted to escape from "the watch," according to a city ordinance, he shall in addition to the usual fine be subject to be whipped not exceeding thirty-nine lashes.[77]

While most free blacks were common laborers, farmers, farmhands, seamstresses, servants and washerwomen, some learned skilled trades. In 1860, free blacks were employed in Craven County as bakers, carpenters, coopers, iron molders, tailors, nurses, shoemakers, coachmakers, hatters, hosiers, plasterers, and weavers.[78] These people

represented economic competition for whites, and that was one of the major reasons why they were mostly detested.

During the late ante-bellum period, while North Carolina was engaged in a campaign of internal improvements, many free Negroes found opportunities to work on the railroads and public buildings throughout the state, thus depriving white inhabitants of many jobs. Petitions were circulated by citizens of Beaufort and Craven Counties to the Legislature asking them to lay a tax on free Negro mechanics for the purpose of colonizing them in Liberia.[79] In January 1860, the Daily Progress requested the Legislature to do like Mississippi had done in excluding free Negroes from the state or else make them slaves.[80] Even the New Bern New Era earlier had urged free Negroes to migrate to Haiti, suggesting that they would receive an attractive offer from the Haitian government.[81]

In 1860, the total number of free Negro property holders for Craven County was 179. The most notable of these were Catherine Stanley, William Martin, and Willis Lewis, each of whom had property valued at more than $2,500.[82] While Martin and Lewis were farmers, Stanley was a dressmaker. She was the daughter of the late John C. Stanley, a wealthy free Negro and one of the wealthiest men in Craven County during the 1850s. While investing his money in plantations and town property, he was also a barber who catered specifically to white clients. "Barber Jack"

was reported at one time to be worth more than $40,000.[83]

The possession of slaves by free blacks was the only type of property holding ever questioned in North Carolina. In 1860, there were eight free Negro owners of slaves throughout the state. In Craven County, Catherine Stanley was the only free Negro slave holder. Possessing seven slaves, she exceeded the slave holdings of the other seven free Negro slave owners in the state.[84]

Even though the free black was perceived as a threat, the whites still considered them Southerners, and suggested this fact at every opportunity. Several months after South Carolina seceded, the Daily Progress reported that on the night of April 16, 1861, sixty free Negroes volunteered to go down to Ft. Macon and "battle for their country." It was also reported that a wealthy free Negro gave $25 in cash to assist in the war effort while one poor free Negro donated a load of wood to be auctioned off and the proceeds to go for the same.[85] Thus it was apparent to New Bernians that "Lincoln and his hirelings will have to fight the whites, slaves, and free Negroes of the South."[86]

Through these trying times, with the threat of war drawing closer, New Bernians turned to religious inspiration to assist them. By 1860 there were seven churches that were actively holding services every Sunday: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Christian, Union/Baptist,

and Andrews Chapel, which was for the Negroes of the town. Not only did these churches offer religious inspiration, but they also served as social gathering places.

Later, while the military volunteers were being stationed in town, the Episcopal, Baptist, and Methodist churches held special services for them. On Sundays it was especially impressive to the townspeople to see these volunteers march in formation to services. Even as early as April 23, 1861, services were held every day in the Baptist Church "to ask God's blessings and protection...toward those who may be exposed to the dangers and evil influences of a camp life."[87]

On June 13, 1861, a special day of prayer and thanksgiving was proclaimed by Confederate President Jefferson Davis. On that day businesses were closed and church services were well attended. Many citizens believed that New Bern had never before observed with anything like such unanimity a similar proclamation by any former ruler.[88]

When news arrived in New Bern about the fall of Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, the citizens of the town gathered at the depot. Cheer after cheer went up for the Confederacy as the dispatches were read out. A seven gun salute was fired that evening from the fairgrounds, one gun for each of the Confederate States. During the night streets were "lit up by bonfires made of tar barrels," and by early morning "Old Abe" was seen suspended in effigy on the ruins of the

old Court House. On this effigy hung a sign: "May all Abolitionists meet the same fate."[89]

Realizing that North Carolina could no longer continue a "watch and wait" attitude, and that it was being drawn closer into the realm of seceding states, Governor Ellis acted quickly. On April 15, 1861, he directed the mobilization of North Carolina troops, the "Orange Guards," "Guilford Greys," the "Goldsboro Rifles" and the "Wilson's Light Infantry" into action. He then directed them to take over the forts along the coast, as well as the Fayetteville Armory and the mint in Charlotte.[90]

The Governor however was unaware that on the afternoon of the 14th, Captain Josiah Pender of Beaufort had led a group of fifty volunteers and captured Fort Macon.[91] This fort was of great importance to the protection of eastern North Carolina. It was also an object of much concern to New Bernians since it was located about forty miles from their town. Thus if Fort Macon would fall to Union hands, many believed it would be only a matter of days before New Bern was threatened.

With this in mind, on April 15, 1861, a group of concerned citizens met in New Bern at Lowthrop Hall within the Masonic Temple. At this meeting a committee was appointed to visit Fort Macon and "hold, possess, and occupy that fortification until relieved."[92] It was also reported

that the editor of the New Bern Daily Progress, J. L. Pennington, was presently on duty at the Fort. Evidently, he was among the group of volunteers that had been led by Captain Pender. On April 17, 1861, Captain Marshall D. Craton, commander of the "Goldsboro Rifles," arrived at the fort and relieved Pender.[93]

Although North Carolina had not officially seceded, many thought "the die was cast."[94] People believed that if North Carolina was to be invaded by the North, it would be by sea. Fort Macon was strategically located so as to guard Beaufort Inlet from any intrusion from an enemy force.

It is uncertain when the fort was first completed, but records show that the first brick was laid in June of 1827 and by November 15, 1835, it had been completed and garrisoned by U.S. troops.[95] However, during the time of its capture by Pender, the only garrison was that of the caretaker and his wife.[96]

By that time Fort Macon had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. The woodwork throughout the structure and one of the drawbridges was in need of replacing and repairing. Much of the iron work was rusted and there were only a few guns mounted on "decayed and weak carriages." Thirteen others were laying at the wharf.[97] It was evident to the citizens that if this fort was to be used to protect the coastal region of North Carolina, it had to undergo a great deal or renovation. By April 17, a schooner under the

command of Captain H. T. Guion arrived from New Bern with sixty-one slaves and free Negroes along with lumber, tools, railroad iron, bedding, and other much-needed supplies.[98]

While the fort was being secured, plans were also being made for the protection of New Bern and Craven County. A Committee of Ways and Means was set up under the Chairmanship of prominent merchant A. T. Jerkins and later John H. Houghton. This committee, consisting of twenty-two men, was to act as a Committee of Safety for the town and county. This committee appointed George Green and J. H. Houghton to go to Raleigh and discuss with Governor Ellis the importance of fortifications on the Neuse River. In the meantime, Rep. Duncan K. McRae of the N. C. House of Commons, had traveled to Charleston and was able to bring back several large guns from that fortification to New Bern to assist in the defense of the town.[99]

The committee also recommended that the people "abstain from all luxuries and use the necessaries of life." The townspeople were further urged to save any old iron, castings, old pots, stoves, andirons, and horseshoes, etc., so as to make bullets to kill the "Abrahamites." It was even reported that the blacks in town donated at least two pounds for that cause.[100]

The committee was also very much concerned with business speculators who would attempt to take advantage of

the citizens of the town during those trying times. It was reported that many merchants were raising their prices on pork, bacon, meat, and other necessities to exhorbitant heights. The committee assured the citizens that proper steps were being taken to supply their wants in the way of provisions at reasonable prices.[101]

On May 20, 1861, one hundred twenty delegates met in Raleigh to decide on the question of seccession. The convention contained some of the ablest and most distinguished men of the state.[102] The men representing Craven County were George Green and John D. Whitford. The convention voted for secession and also passed an ordinance ratifying the Provincial Constitution of the Confederate States of America. A member of the convention described the gathering as resembling "a sea partly in storm, partly calm, the Secessionists shouting and throwing up their hats and rejoicing, the Conservatives sitting quietly, calm, depressed."[103]

In New Bern, where some Union sentiment was still abiding, the Daily Progress made this statement: "If any be found who are not for the South now, let them be made to leave, or swing from the nearest tree. There must be no divisions now, and hanging a few might have a good moral influence."[104]

Governor Ellis made a plea for 30,000 volunteers to be raised. In overwhelming numbers the youth of the state

responded to the Governor's call. It was predicted that Craven County would have seven or eight companies ready for service by early May. However, it soon appeared that Craven County was not as quick to raise volunteers as her neighboring counties. The Daily Progress of May 31, 1861, criticized the county: "We have been informed on what we deem good authority that not a single volunteer has offered from the county -- or had not a few days ago."[105]

Even some Union sympathizers were using their influence to keep men who wished to enter the service of the state from doing so. This made many citizens angry and the general feeling toward these people was that they would rather "take more deadly aim at these sympathizers than they would at old Scott or even Lincoln himself."[106]

First Lieutenant A. F. Cone opened a recruiting office in the Gaston House Hotel and inserted an advertisement in the Daily Progress:

> Wanted---Sound able-bodied men for the Army of the Confederate States. A premium of 2.00 dollars will be allowed for each recruit, to citizens who may bring them to my rendezvous. The cost of transportation from the residence of the recruit, (within 50 miles) by railway will be paid, provided the applicant is received under the following restrictions:
> The requisites are that they shall be free white men, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five; at least five feet four and a half inches high; sound, able-bodied, and of good character.
> Those desirous of forwarding recruits will communicate with me without delay.[107]

By August, Craven had raised at least six companies.

The scenes at the depot where some of these men were departing for more active service were "overwhelming." As the men bade their families goodbye and boarded the train, bands played, ladies waved hankerchiefs, and blew kisses. One particular fellow was urged by his girl friends "with the eloquence of tears" to abandon his company. But their efforts were in vain.[108]

Native New Bernians were not alone in supporting the Confederate cause. The Daily Progress reported that there were twenty-one Germans living in town, and that fourteen of them had signed up and were ready to march "at the tap of the drum."[109]

Some of the families of men who volunteered were in need of aid, and the Committee of Safety appointed a Committee for Relief. The funds appropriated by this committee were to be used to relieve those persons who "can't by economy or industry take care of themselves."[110]

Not only were men forsaking their families to join the military, but they were also leaving their jobs. One sea captain tried to get the sheriff to arrest a crew member who had deserted and joined a military company. The sheriff, patriotic to the Southern cause, would not do so. Many people felt that he should have arrested the captain and made him enter the military service.[111]

Even before the state seceded, some military companies began to hold parades and drills. In late March the "Neuse

Cavalry" drilled in full uniform through the streets of New Bern. The "New Bern Light Infantry" was out on the same day for the purpose of testing a new cannon ball, which had been manufactured at the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad shops located in town. The new ammunition was tested at the fairgrounds where several shots were fired at the distance of 500 to 1,000 yards "with entire satisfaction."[112]

After the state seceded, parades and military drills become more frequent. The Daily Progress reported that some soldiers had a tendency to parade through the streets around 10:00 p.m., beating drums and awaking the citizens. Some soldiers called these "free and easy parades."[113]

Military drills were often well-attended by the populace. Forty-three merchants agreed to close their shops at 5:00 p.m. every day except Saturday for the purpose of people attending military drills in the evening. Those merchants who did not were severely criticized.[114]

Drills were important for obvious reasons: 1) they fostered the spirits of the men; 2) they increased discipline among the volunteers; and 3) they prepared the soldiers for combat.[115]

By December 1861, a drill master was employed at $3.00 a day for twelve months for the purpose of drilling these companies.[116] A Camp of Instruction was also located at the fairgrounds west of town. While troops continued to pour

into New Bern, companies pitched their tents on those grounds as well as the grounds of the New Bern Academy. Some volunteers were also quartered near the jail.[117]

While these men moved into town a few businesses decided to make special note of the circumstances. In fact, even before the state seceded an advertisement appeared in the Daily Progress of the "Confederate Barber Salon of Fashion." This establishment was located on Middle Street and was run by J. H. William Bonitz. The advertisement stated that it was the only place in town to get a "haircut and your whiskers shaped in the latest military style and taste. So, while you are preparing for war, don't forget to have your haircut and shampooed."[118]

The photography business was also advertising for more patronage. Mr. J. W. Watson, owner of Watson's Deguerean Gallery located on Craven Street, placed an advertisement in the Daily Progress: "While you are preparing for war, don't fail to secure good photographs of yourselves." Mr. Watson also advertised Confederate badges containing a photo of Jefferson Davis for 35¢ each.[119]

The "liquor stores" also made many attempts to get the soldiers' business, although selling alcohol to soldiers was frowned upon. In order for a person to obtain a license to sell "spirits," the applicant must prove in open court, upon the oath of two respectable witnesses, that he was a man of good moral character and also the keeper "of a good, orderly

house."[120]

However, many of these establishments were not orderly. When the soldiers frequented these places, "swearing and cursing," as well as intoxication, were usually the norm. The Daily Progress reported that it was indeed disgusting to hear drunken Negroes curse; but when they did, "it's time for white folks to quit."[121]

On one particular Sunday afternoon in January, 1862, a few drunken soldiers caused some havoc in a black kitchen. It was reported that a soldier shot above the head of one of the blacks causing much havoc.[122] The Daily Progress also reported that one soldier was even court martialed because of insubordination. The paper warned: "Soldiers should be cautious how they tamper with whiskey, for it has killed more men than Lincoln's army will ever be able to slay."[123]

While the young men were enlisting as volunteers, the older men signed up to be used in the "Homeguard." Not only was this the case in New Bern, but other communities within the county were also organizing volunteers for their defense. However, these volunteers were not always older men. Ages ranged from seven to seventy among those who were willing to take up arms in defense of their town and county in case "Old Abe should send any of his cut throats" among them. These volunteers, numbering around one hundred fifty, were divided into four companies: The "Athens Guard," the

"Town Guard," the "Home Guard," and the "Jeff Davis Cadets." The first two, under the commands of Captain J. V. Jordan and a Captain Clark, respectively, were composed of able-bodied men "in the prime of manhood" who would, if necessary, travel a short distance from home. The third company, captained by a Mr. Slover, was composed of men too old to be called into active service, but who could guard their homes if necessary. The fourth company, commanded by a Captain Gardner, consisted of boys sixteen years of age "who would go anywhere and fight anybody if their mommas would let them."[124]

One other company should be noted: the "Juvenile Rangers", under the command of Captain Willie Guion. This company formed in the early days of the war, consisted of eight children besides the captain and a "colored" drummer. These young men, not under the age of seven, used toy guns and a toy drum; but it was reported that they performed many of the maneuvers of military drill with such precision that it would put many of the older companies "to the blush."[125]

Many people doubted the actual benefit of these home guards. Some believed that "if the Yankees were to be whipped...it must be on the battlefield and not by street display at home."[126] Others believed that the formation of home guards were often used as deterrent of some men from entering the military service of the state. It was reported that in some precincts of the county, home guards were

formed every time the recruiting officer went around. The Daily Progress reported on August 31, 1861:

> We saw one home guard company formed on Thursday last, immediately after we made a strong appeal for recruits, and the company, about twenty in number, were almost entirely young men; many of them, we were informed, without families. We confess that we think home guards do more harm than good, and we never see a young stout, hearty man in the ranks of one that we do not want to put petticoats and a hoop on him.[127]

Although there was a ban on firing any weapon within the city limits, many citizens had weapons stashed away in the back of their closets. Many of them had not been fired in years. One particular gentleman was proud of his gun. He had taken it out, "greased [it] up," and loaded it. He assured his friends that this gun, having been made some time after the Revolution, could "take down a Black Republican at a hundred yards with it [at] every pop."[128]

For those citizens who had not fired a weapon in many years, a Pistol Gallery was set up. Not only was this to be used for the men to practice, but the ladies were also encouraged to use it. The Daily Progress stated: "We do not imagine that our ladies aspire to become 'Amazons.' But when the natural protector of many a hearthstone is at a distance to meet a more certain foe, would not the lady, known to have the nerve and hand to use the pistol, be more safe?"[129]

Not only were the ladies learning how to use a gun, they were also volunteering their time and talents to the Confederate cause.

Throughout the course of the war, many ladies of the town would often meet at Lowthrop Hall within the Masonic Temple. It was at this location that the ladies formed a "sewing circle" for the purpose of making clothing and bedding for volunteers of regiments stationed at Fort Macon and around New Bern. The Daily Progress commended these ladies by stating: "In doing this they are but following the self-sacrificing example of their noble mothers of the Revolution and showing to the world that they are worthy descendants of those heroic matrons."[130]

The Daily Progress also reported that the ladies of Charlotte had made sixty military suits in six days, "...which is very good, but the ladies of New Bern can beat that." Although this goal seemed to be overly optimistic, it was later reported that the ladies of New Bern had furnished one company with twenty blankets, ten quilts, 30 sheets, forty-three "pairs of drawers," and fifty pairs of socks. The Progress made the comment that "Heaven bless the ladies' should be added to the soldiers' prayer."[131]

Gloves were also made by the Ladies Aid Society from scraps of cloth that had "fallen from the tailor's shears." Other towns in the state were also making gloves in this manner, but it was believed to have started in New Bern, a town known for its "Southern ingenuity and enterprise," according to the Daily Progress.[132]

Not only was clothing in demand, but sand bags seemed

to be in dire need. A military announcement appeared in the Daily Progress stating that 5,000 more sand bags were needed at Fort Macon. The specifications for such were that they be "made of stout canvas, two feet by eight inches, and open at one end."[133] Apparently the ladies met their quota.

Not only were the ladies known for their ingenuity but they were also known to be great cooks: feeding local volunteer units, preparing meals for volunteers from North Carolina and other states as they passed through New Bern toward the Virginia battlefields, contributing to food supplies of men in camp, and sending packages of food to troops in the field.[134]

On June 18, 1861, the ladies of the town prepared "an impromptu collation" for members of the "Elm City Rifles" and the "Jones County Rifles." The tables were set up to serve 150 men, who "tasted of a rich, abundant, and superb dinner."[135] The "Jeff Davis Rifles" also placed a "thank you" in the Daily Progress for all the acts of kindness that were shown to them while they were encamped on the Academy Green. One particular item that was especially noted was a whortleberry pudding that had been made by one of the ladies. Some of the rank said that their "language utterly failed them to describe its huge proportions or the deliciousness of its taste."[136]

Confederate flags were also made by these patriotic

women of the South. Whenever a flag was made to be presented to a regiment, the presentation was always accompanied by a ceremony. Some of these presentations were held on the fairgrounds, which was often the scene of many military drills and sometimes used for the encampment of troops. It was the general feeling among the ladies that these flags, made by their own hands, were to remind them that "every manly heart beats for their safety and that every manly arm will be raised, when occasion requires, for their protection -- every life laid down, if the fortunes of war demand it, in their defense."[137]

As this chapter has established, the Civil War was bringing about a change in New Bern and vicinity. Although New Bern was considered a prosperous town in 1860, this prosperity would not last long. After the outbreak of hostilities in April 1861, New Bernians felt themselves being drawn closer into the threatening tides of war. As the economic situations of the town began to worsen, preparations for war were the main focus of the town during that period.

However, as fighting intensified in Virginia, many of eastern North Carolina's troops were sent to the battle front there. This of course left the eastern part of the state not as well defended in case an attack should be made on the coast. This factor caused many state officials a great deal of concern. Confederate officials in Richmond

believed that this concern was greatly exaggerated. Little did they know that a large force of about 12,000 men was being organized for an assault on the North Carolina coast.

Chapter II

THE BATTLE OF NEW BERN - MARCH 14, 1862

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the conditions circumscribing the capture of New Bern by Union forces on March 14, 1862. It will explain why New Bern was considered so very important to the Federal and Southern cause. It will also endeavor to outline major aspects of the battle as well, and to give some reasonable conclusion about the cause for the Confederate loss of this important city.

Not only should the importance of New Bern to the Confederacy be emphasized, but it should also be recognized that the sound region of North Carolina was of paramount importance to the Federal cause as well.

The North Carolina coast is indented by many sounds varying in width from one to forty miles. Within these sounds empty the navigable rivers of the coastal plain. From the Albemarle Sound, one could easily travel the Pasquotank River to Elizabeth City; the Perquimans River and the Chowan River lead to Hertford and Winton respectively; and the Roanoke River leads to Plymouth. From the Pamlico Sound, the Pamlico River offers navigation to Washington and from there the Tar River leads further inland past Greenville to Tarboro; the Neuse River is navigable to New

Bern and further inland to Kinston. Beaufort and Morehead City could also be reached from Pamlico Sound via Core Sound.[1]

Northern leaders looked toward these waters with great interest. If one or all of these waters were to fall into Union hands, it would threaten the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. This railroad, which ran 226 miles north to south across the eastern section of the state, was the largest railroad ever completed in North Carolina. Often called "the life line of the Confederacy," this railroad was of great importance to the Confederate States of America. If the railroad were severed it would cut off the major supply line to Richmond from the rest of the southern states, and from the outside world, via the port of Wilmington.

The Secession Convention which met in May, 1861, showed extreme anxiety for the protection of the coastal waters of the state.[2] Under Governor Ellis' direction, as noted in the preceding chapter, plans were made to strengthen the existing fortifications and to build new ones. Forts were constructed at Oregon Inlet, Ocracoke, and at the state's busiest port, Hatteras.

On July 10, 1861, the Federal steamer "Harriet Lane" fired on the Hatteras fortifications. This episode represented the first time shots were fired on the South by the U.S. Navy. Since the fortifications had not been

completed at the time the attack occurred, the shells did little damage.[3]

To further assist in the protection of the coast, the state secured and armed five small steamers. The purpose of this "mosquito fleet" was not only to defend the coast against enemy attack, but also to intercept shipping as the merchant vessels traveled to and from Northern ports.

In April, 1861, President Lincoln not only issued a call for troops, but also ordered a blockade of the Southern ports.[4] However, despite the blockade, many merchant vessels were able to slip through and some were even captured by the "mosquito fleet," as they were making their way from the West Indies to the North. When Fort Hatteras was captured by Federal forces on August 29, 1861, it was discovered that for the period of six weeks preceding the capture, eight schooners, seven brigs, and one bark had fallen into Confederate hands. The captain of one of those captured vessels later testified that while he was a prisoner at New Bern, he saw four vessels depart loaded with rice and bound for the West Indies. He also reported seeing two other vessels depart loaded with spirits of turpentine, headed for Halifax, Nova Scotia, as well as four vessels that had been brought there as prizes, schooners loaded with fruit and two brigs loaded with sugar and molasses. Moreover, he reported that while at New Bern he was present at an auction sale of about 600 hogsheads of sugar, which

had been taken from prizes that had been brought to the port of New Bern. When he was released, he also reported seeing twelve vessels anchored in the river, all of which had been captured by the Confederates.[5]

The main reason the Union blockade was not effective was because the dangerous waters of the North Carolina coast (often referred to as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic") kept the blockading force well out to sea. These waters also helped the Confederates by offering a safe anchorage behind the sand bars for blockade runners, privateers, and the North Carolina Navy "Mosquito Fleet."

After the fall of Hatteras, the Confederates abandoned both Forts Ocracoke and Oregon, which were later taken over by Federal forces. The loss of these defenses was a serious blow to the Confederacy. General Benjamin F. Butler believed that Hatteras should be retained by the Union forces at all cost. He wrote: "It was the opening to a great inland sea running up 90 miles to New Bern, and so giving water communications up to Norfolk."[6] If the Federals were to operate in North Carolina, that "inland sea" would lead to success. The first strike at the North Carolina coast gave the Union forces a foothold on southern soil, and at the same time boosted the morale of the North. This boost in morale was greatly needed especially after its embarrassing defeat at Manassas Junction (Bull Run) on July

21, 1861.

In the fall of 1861, another plan for a second strike on the North Carolina coast was made. Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside had suggested to General George B. McClellan, Commander of the Eastern Army, that a force of 12,000 to 15,000 men, mainly from states bordering along the northern sea coast and who were familiar with the "coasting trade," should be raised to make this second strike a success. The result was the formation of the largest amphibious force ever assembled in the history of the United States.[7]

On January 7, 1862 General McClellan issued instructions to the expedition that it was to travel to Fort Monroe in Virginia and unite with Commodore Louis M. Goldsborough and his fleet. They were then to "proceed under his convoy to Hatteras Inlet" where the expedition was to cross over the sound and attack Roanoke Island. After securing Roanoke, they were then "to make a descent on New Bern." After capturing the town and the railroad which ran through it, the expedition was to proceed to Beaufort and Fort Macon and open that port.[8]

The orders went on to state:

> ...I would urge great caution in regard to proclamations. In no case would I go beyond a moderate joint proclamation with the naval commander which should say as little as possible about politics or the negro; merely state that the true issue for which we are fighting is the preservation of the Union and upholding the laws of the general government, and

stating that all who conduct themselves properly will, as far as possible, be protected in their persons and property.[9]

Burnside organized his forces into three brigades under the commands of Brigadier Generals John G. Foster, James L. Reno, and John G. Parke. The mission was to be carried out in ultimate secrecy. Only the General, his staff, the commanders, and the President of the United States, knew the destination of this amphibious mission.

President Lincoln later told Burnside that an elected official had asked him where the force was headed. The President told the man that he would tell him the destination if the man promised not to reveal it to anyone. The man agreed and the President then replied, "Well, now, my friend, the expedition is going to sea."[10]

The expedition left Fort Monroe on January 11, 1862, headed toward the sounds of North Carolina. Although, this was identified as a secret mission, by the time the force headed South, there was little doubt as to its destination. New Bern newspapers reported as early as January 7 that an enemy attack was expected and that the Home Militia should be on the alert, drilling night and day.[11] Three days later it was reported that heavy cannonading could be heard down the Neuse River. In order not to alarm the citizens of New Bern, this was reported to be target practice to welcome Burnside on his expected arrival.[12]

On January 22, 1862, a Confederate soldier wrote to his

wife that although Burnside had not made an appearance, the "whole country" was expecting him.[13] Many citizens decided that the Federals were indeed too close for comfort. Plans were made by many residents to transport their slaves west, in order to take them "up away from the yanks."[14] Many people, fearing the advancing Federal forces, packed their belongings and left the city. One soldier wrote that nearly all the women had left as well as some of the men.[15] According to one observer, "It took two extra trains to carry the people away."[16] Still another wrote that the fleeing people were "the worst frightened Dam set I ever saw in my life."[17] The exodus from New Bern probably gave many Confederate soldiers the feeling that the citizens did not have faith in their ability. On January 16, 1862 a soldier wrote that he saw no necessity for the citizens to leave.[18]

Due to inclement weather and rough seas, the expedition did not reach Roanoke Island until February 7, 1862. There on the island the Confederates had gathered 1,435 men under the command of Colonel Henry M. Shaw to meet a more formidable foe of not less than 15,000. On February 8, Burnside's amphibious force landed and took possession of the fortifications. Burnside later called this first landing a "beautiful sight."[19]

Not only did the Federal forces capture Roanoke Island, but the North Carolina Navy under the command of Commodore

William F. Lynch, was also later destroyed. These vessels, numbering six in all, were the only obstacle between Burnside and his complete control of the sound region. In fact, this small fleet was probably looked on more as a nuisance than as an obstacle to Federal occupation.

Even before Federal forces made an assault on Roanoke Island, Governor Henry T. Clark, who took over after the death of Governor Ellis on July 7, 1861, realized the necessity for maintaining strong forces in the sound region. He tried in vain, requesting Richmond for more troops, but the War Department replied that all trained recruits were needed in Virginia. The only forces that could be made available were "untried" newly recruited troops. Governor Clark appointed Richard Caswell Gatlin, a native of Lenoir County, brigadier general and gave him command of the Department of North Carolina. General Daniel H. Hill was then placed in charge of the defenses of Albemarle and Pamlico sounds, which of course included the fortifications guarding New Bern.[20]

After making a complete tour of his district, Hill was very much troubled about the conditions of fortifications along the coast. He described New Bern as having "a tolerable battery, two 8-inch Columbiads, and two 32-pounders. It is, however, badly supplied with powder."[21] Hill, not being satisfied with his post, resigned his commission and was transferred to Virginia. To replace

Hill, Generals Henry A. Wise of Virginia and Lawrence O'Bryan Branch, a North Carolinian from Wake County, were put in charge of the region extending from Norfolk to Roanoke Island and from Roanoke Island to New Bern, respectively.[22]

When General Branch arrived in New Bern in November 1861, he spent at least six weeks making changes in the existing fortifications. Branch sent notices throughout the state that 500 free Negroes were needed to help build fortifications. They would be offered food and shelter and would be paid ten dollars per month. The troops stationed at New Bern had already performed a large amount of work, but it was mainly on the river defenses. Now, Branch wanted to "take the spade from them and give them their muskets."[23]

He received from two counties a small party of free Negroes without implements. He then sent a notice for plantation owners of the vicinity to hire out their slaves with implements. Branch, appalled by the lack of interest or unwillingness of the citizens to assist him, received only one slave.[24] Because of the shortage of slave labor, Branch had to rely upon labor supplied by the troops defending New Bern. At least 500 men were detailed each day to work on the breastworks; some without tools of any kind, others with only half usable and worn out implements.[25]

Colonel Charles C. Lee, of the Thirty-seventh Regiment,

wrote to his sister concerning the defenses of the city: "When I came here our forts though finished are very erroneously built and I am earnestly engaged in making necessary alterations."[26] Another soldier wrote to his sister that the troops defending New Bern were not "really prepared" for an attack. He further stated that they had plenty of horses and "probably guns", but lacked sabres and pistols.[27] One other item was needed -- more soldiers. To defend the city, a total of 4,000 troops had been gathered to resist the arrival of Burnside's forces. These troops were hardly the type of troops that should have been called upon to defend such an important city as New Bern. They were fresh, untried new recruits, and not having yet smelled the stench of battle.

As the Federal fleet was making its advance toward New Bern, Branch and his men were making the necessary alterations of the existing fortifications. The Confederate engineers had erroneously believed that the river defenses were the most important; therefore, "the largest amount of labor had been bestowed" on those works.[28] If an attack were to come many believed that it would be solely by water. Several forts had been planned along the Neuse River, "but not a single heavy gun protected directly the railroad and the county road running along side the river...". Daniel H. Hill in his history, Bethel to Sharpsburg stated: "The state engineers were excellent designers and erectors of

forts, but their civilian lack of military insight led to many a blunder in the locations of these forts."[29]

About three miles below New Bern on the Neuse, stood the first and the oldest of the river forts, Fort Lane. This fort, originally named Fort Caswell, was built 1775-1776 as a Revolutionary War fort to protect New Bern.[30] Fort Lane, mounting three guns was garrisoned by Captain William Sutton and his Artillery Company from Lenoir County. A mile south of that fort was Fort Ellis, mounting eight guns and manned by the Pamlico Artillery Guards under Captain J. M. Mayo. Below Fort Ellis was Fort Allen, which had not been completed by the time the attack occurred. It was mounted by two guns and manned by Company B of the 1st Maryland Regiment under Captain John D. Edelin. These troops, while on furlough, volunteered to assist in the defense of the town. They represented the only Confederates who were not North Carolinians.[31]

The largest of the river forts was Fort Thompson, located about five miles from New Bern. This fort, mounting thirteen guns -- "ten bearing on the Neuse River and three on the 'land approaches' to New Bern," was manned by the Companies of Captain John N. Whitford and W. A. Herring. About ten miles below New Bern was Fort Dixie which mounted four guns. The artillery in both Forts Thompson and Dixie was under the general command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas

M. Crossan.[32]

To protect New Bern from a possible invasion by land, two sets of breastworks had been constructed. The first set of breastworks, known as the Croatan Work, extended from Fort Dixie for three-fourths of a mile to a dense swamp. These entrenchments had been erected across the Beaufort road (the Old Cherry Point Road), the road most likely to have been used by the invaders. General Branch believed this to have been his strongest military position; but fearing the enemy might land six miles further up the river, he wrote:

> It is obvious that the breastwork is useless if I had not sufficient force to hold it and at the same time guard six miles of river shore. I have at no time been able to place 4,000 men in the field at New Bern, and at the time of the battle had been seriously weakened by the re-enlistment furloughs.[33]

The second line of breastworks stretched westward from Fort Thompson for one mile to the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad. The breastworks were originally planned to continue across the railroad to a dense swamp near Brice's Creek. General Branch, because of his small force, decided to drop the line of breastworks back 150 yards to a tributary of Bullen's Creek. A line of rifle pits was then dug from the railroad to the Weathersby Road near Brice's Creek. It is from this line of breastworks, known as the Fort Thompson work, that General Branch would attempt to defend New Bern.[34]

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Brigadier General Gatlin examined these changes in the breastwork and agreed with Branch, providing that the brick-kiln near the railroad was protected. On the evening before the battle, Branch had ordered two 24-pounder guns to be brought from New Bern and placed there. However, it was afterward explained: "The enemy's skirmashes drove the laborers from the battery when an hour more would have enabled them to get the guns in position."[35]

Branch later wrote, concerning the Fort Thompson work, "that the timber had been felled in front of the breastwork for about 350 yards, and the space was swept by ten field pieces besides three navy 32-pounders, discharging grape and canister from the rear face of Fort Thompson."[36]

On January 22, 1862, a soldier of the Thirty-fifth North Carolina Regiment recorded: "Long role beat to be in line of battle in a few minutes and we got up and put on our clothes and all of our equpipsments [sic] and guns and was in Line of battle in thirty minutes." The alarm, of course, was false. These type of drills were often seen in Confederate camps around New Bern to prepare for Burnside's invasion. He went on to state: "It is a cerious [sic] time when a person is ordered to be in ranks...but I was not sceerd [sic] it only made me have a curious feeling but I trust in God that he will take care of me."[37]

While the soldiers were encamped about New Bern, many citizens did all they could to make the living conditions in

camp more bearable. Some citizens sent milk for the soldier's coffee into camp at least twice a day.[38] As far as food was concerned, the defenders of New Bern got all they desired. Usually their diet consisted of pork, beef, flour, corn, bread, rice, molasses, sugar, and "rie tea."[39]

Many soldiers, however, complained that they were not free to go and come as they pleased. A soldier wrote to his father: "We have hard times here for we have got the meanest Curnal [sic] in North Carolina...he won't let no prived [sic] go in town at all we are not allowed to go after water two men toats water for his company two today and two tomorrow."[40]

Meanwhile back in town, life went on as usual for the remainder of the citizens who decided to stay, ever confident in the Confederate forces guarding New Bern. About 3:00 Saturday morning, March 8, one week before the battle, a small boat was seen by sentinels passing under the railroad bridge; it did not stop. At 4:00 a light blaze was seen midway the bridge and the alarm was given.[41] The soldiers quickly tied their coats together and lowered buckets down to the river to extinguish the flame. According to the New Bern Weekly Progress of March 11, 1862, it gave the citizens the first threat of an attack on the town. The article went on to state: "No doubt the Federals intend an early attack on this place and had made some

arrangements with some infamous, low bred contemptible scoundrel here abouts to burn the bridges so as to cut off the possibility of a retreat in case such a measure should become necessary."[42]

In the meantime, after Federal forces had captured Roanoke Island and the North Carolina Navy had been destroyed, Commodore Goldsborough of the Union Navy received orders to go at once to Hampton Roads where "the iron clad the Virginian had played havoc with the Federal fleet."[43] He then left Commodore Stephen C. Rowan in command of the naval vessels of Burnside's expedition.[44] Early in the morning of March 12, the fleet set sail for New Bern.

The weather that day was perfect as compared to the rough weather the Federal fleet had encountered off Hatteras. A soldier of the Eighty-fifth Pennsylvania Infantry wrote to his sister, "This was the most beautiful day I have ever seen. Not a breeze rippled the waves---not a cloud in the sky---all was blue---blue overhead---blue underneath---blue all around."[45]

Another soldier wrote:

> I have seldom witnessed a prettier sight than the passage of the fleet up the Neuse River during that afternoon. The river for the greater part of the distance was quite broad, and calm as a mirror, the fleet of transports sailed in two parallel lines, the decks of every vessel being apparently as crowded with uniformed men as are the decks of our summer steamers with excursionists.[46]

The Lieutenant-Colonel of the Twenty-first

Massachusetts Infantry described the scene as he wrote to his mother: "We are now moving in a magnificent column of more than fifty large vessels up the Neuse River on our way to New Bern. The 'Northerner' with all my regiment on board leads the way for the transports, following close behind gunboats and the flag-ships of our Generals."[47]

When General Burnside and his forces moved into the mouth of the Neuse River toward New Bern, they were amazed to see so many houses along the shore. Some of the soldiers tried to get a glimpse of some form of life within those houses, but none was to be seen. According to the reporter of the New York Herald who accompanied the expedition, any person could have easily shot at them. It was decided that all the men were in the army or at fortifications along the coast and that "the women were somewhat afraid to show themselves."[48]

By 9:00 p.m. the fleet anchored off the mouth of Slocum's Creek.[49] This area, which is now the site of Cherry Point Marine Air Corps Station, is about twelve miles below New Bern by river and seventeen miles by land.[50]

After anchoring, General Burnside called together Generals Reno, Parke, and Foster in council and after consultation with Commodore Rowan, it was decided to land at the mouth of Slocum's Creek on the following morning under the cover of naval guns. They were then to "proceed up the direct road to New Bern."[51]

Burnside had already sent spies ahead to obtain information as to their fortifications and position of the Confederate forces.[52] The intelligence report must have been a challenging one, for a soldier wrote: "Tomorrow we expect a hard fight as the Rebels are supposed to be strong, but we are willing to try them."[53]

Throughout the night the anchored vessels could spot the Rebel signals located farther up the river. These signals were comprised of huge bonfires to signal the Confederate outposts up and down the Neuse. Some of Burnside's men mistook these fires as an indication that the enemy was destroying supplies that might fall into Federal hands.[54]

The next morning at about 7:00 the landing of Burnside's forces commenced. The men had been ordered to land in "light marching order" and to take with them three days of rations, rubber and woolen blankets, sixty rounds of cartridges (forty in the boxes and twenty distributed about the person ready for use.)[55]

Burnside later reported that the scene of the disembarkation "was effected with the greatest enthusiasm."[56] As the boats were lowered into the water to take the troops ashore, many "leaped into the water and waded waist-deep...",[57] a distance estimated by one solider to be 150 yards.[58] Within twenty minutes three regiments

had landed, and by mid-morning nearly 11,000 had landed and were ready to take up the march. As the march commenced, the Naval vessels continued along the river shelling and keeping up a "steady fire."

A corporal of the Fifth Rhode Island Volunteers wrote this concerning the march:

> The clouds which had threatened rain all the morning, now began to pour down their contents as we took up the line of march toward New Bern. Our road lay mostly through a wooded country, interspersed by frequent clearings, some of which extended to the river, giving us an occasional glimpse of the gun-boats, which were following up our march, keeping nearly abreast of the head of our column. After about an hour march, we came upon a deserted rebel cavalry camp, which had been abandoned in such a hurry that the dinner of the officers were found smoking on the table.[59]

Another soldier explained: While the rain fell, "some of the time in a heavy shower," the road was so deep in mud and clay that many soldiers found it hard to keep their shoes on.[60]

At about 8:00 that night and after ten miles of marching, the order to cease march was given and the troops bivouacked for the night. Throughout most of the evening the rain continued. One particular soldier was most uncomfortable during the night. He later wrote to his father regarding his predicament:

> "...all except myself had rubber blankets and overcoats. Jacob had mine and [it] was dark long before he could overtake us. So all night long I sat on a log, by the fire, the water running down the back of my neck, when the seat of my breeches got pretty full of water, I would stand up and let it run down

into my boots, then sit down again.[61]

One lady was reported to have accompanied her husband on the march. Mrs. Kady Brownell, the wife of Sergeant Robert S. Brownell, started on the march with a "pair of ladies' ordinary walking shoes." As the long hard march continued, her shoes had become saturated with water. One of the soldiers, being filled with sympathy for her, offered her a pair of men's calfskin leg boots which he had taken from a house along the way of the march. These also became saturated with water. By the time they stopped for the night, one could have easily imagined the condition of her blistered feet; as "she sat with her back against a tree, weeping with her head on her husband's shoulder."[62]

Before dark on the evening of March 13, Confederate pickets had been sent out to scan the area and to ascertain how close the enemy was. They returned before day break on March 14, with a report that Burnside's force had landed during the night at a place called Fisher's landing, and were advancing in force.[63]

General Branch placed the "immediate Command of the troops" under the leaderships of Colonel Reuben P. Campbell of the Seventh Regiment and Colonel Charles C. Lee of the Thirty-seventh. Colonel Lee was given command of the left wing of the Confederate fortifications which constituted the troops stationed between Fort Thompson and the Beaufort road (Old Cherry Point Road). These troops were comprised of the

Twenty-seventh North Carolina Regiment under the command of Major John A. Gilmer, and the Thirty-seventh North Carolina under Lieutenant-Colonel William M. Barbour. Colonel Campbell was placed in command of the right wing which comprised the Seventh North Carolina under Lieutenant-Colonel Edward G. Haywood, and the Thirty-fifth North Carolina under Colonel James Sinclair. These troops were stationed on the opposite side of the Beaufort Road. On the right side of Sinclair's forces stood the brick kiln or Wood's brickyard as it was known to New Bernians. As stated earlier it was here that General Branch decided to drop the line of defenses back 150 yards. This was a serious mistake on Branch's part, for it left a gap of 150 yards in these defenses. To make matters worst, General Branch placed in command of this vulnerable position Colonel H. J. B. Clark and his battalion of local militia. These men were far less prepared than any of the troops defending New Bern. Having been drafted only two weeks before, they were without uniforms and armed with hunting rifles and shotguns. Many historians agree that this was the immediate cause of the loss of the battle.[64]

On the right side of the railroad a line of rifle pits reaching toward the Wethersby Road was occupied by the Twenty-sixth Regiment under Colonel Zebulon B. Vance, aided by a detached infantry under a Captain MacRae, and two

dismounted companies of cavalry commanded by Captain George W. Hays and Lieutenant William A. Graham, Jr.[65]

Meanwhile, General Burnside had divided his forces in three columns. General Foster's brigade was to lead the advance. His force was to continue up the main road to attack the Confederates left between the river and the railroad. General Reno's brigade was to travel up the railroad to attack their right (left of the railroad). General Parke was to follow General Foster and attack the enemy in front and to offer support to "either or both brigades."[66]

By the next morning the rain had ceased, but an early morning fog had settled over the region hampering visibility. After a quick breakfast on what rations they had carried with them, the invaders continued on their mission. After a short march of about two miles, the battle commenced.[67]

As Foster's brigade was advancing up the main road, they came in contact with the Confederate left. For almost two hours the men of his brigade fought to a virtual stand-still, falling back only in the case of lack of ammunition. While they were attacking, the gunboats on the river were shelling the forts and the area surrounding Fort Thompson. This of course was endangering the lives of the men of Foster's Brigade. But as the Naval Commander wrote, "I know the persuasive effect of a 9-inch [shell], and thought it

better to kill a Union man or two than to lose the effect of my moral suasion. The effect was terrific...and if I did not push on Burnside would be defeated."[68]

A soldier of the Eleventh Connecticut Infantry wrote: "The cannon balls and shells whizzed all around us and sometimes the musket balls rattled like hail all around us. The noise made by the reports of our arms was almost deafening."[69]

Because of the heavy rains the night before, "many of the rifles were rendered quite unserviceable by the moisture."[70] In some of the rifles the powder had become too wet to ignite, and in many of the muskets the ramrods were almost immovable from the swelling of the stocks. It was nothing unusual to see the men eagerly "seize the weapons of their comrades as fast as they fell beneath the leaden storm from the enemy's earthworks," one observer reported.[71]

A soldier wrote to his father concerning the battle, "I saw a dead man near me and took his gun and ammunition and went in. I experienced no such feeling as I expected to, not even a desire to dodge bullets. I fired some ten rounds one of which I think took effect when the Regiment was ordered to fall back on account of want of ammunition."[72]

Because of the poor condition of some of their guns, one Lieutenant-Colonel stated that at least fifty of his men

went into the battle using only their bayonets. Many of them, however, did not have "the pleasure" to cross them with the Confederates. He went on to state, "though the rascals carry tremendous Yankee slayers---regular cleavers some of them two feet long---they somehow don't like to take the position necessary in order to use them."[73]

To make matters worse, the Federals as well as the Confederates were faced with a dense fog that hampered visibility. As Burnside later wrote, "the fog being so dense at times that the position of the enemy could only be ascertained by the rattle of their musketry and the roar of artillery."[74]

General Reno's attack on the right wing of the Confederates was also having its difficulties. There they were being confronted by the Twenty-sixth and Thirty-third North Carolina Regiments. These men were the best armed and fought the most bravely of any of the Confederate forces. While the majority of Reno's forces attacked Colonel Vance's Twenty-sixth Regiment, a detachment fell on the inexperienced militia of Colonel H. J. B. Clark as they guarded the "gap" near the railroad. As was previously stated, this was the most vulnerable position of the Confederates; for this "gap" was located almost at the center of the Confederate works.

Seeing the gap in the breastworks, the Federals rejoiced at their discovery and pushed further to flank the

Confederate Militia. As Clark later recalled, "a panic seized my command and part of them broke ranks."[75] One writer observed that the fleeing militia exceeded the Yankee retreat at Bull Run.[76] Clark, believing it impossible to reform his lines, ordered "a retreat in order," which was followed by "a stampede" of most of his command.[77]

At about that time, Colonel Sinclair of the Thirty-fifth North Carolina, which was stationed on the Militia's left, reported to Colonel Campbell that the enemy had broken through and was coming up the trenches which had been vacated by Clark's men. Colonel Campbell then ordered Sinclair to "charge" the advancing Federals. But according to Campbell, Sinclair "failed to form his men and left the field in confusion."[78] However, according to Sinclair, the Colonel ordered him to retire by stating, "You had better take your men out of that as quick as possible." At which time he did, retiring "in perfect order."[79]

Seeing the Thirty-fifth retreating, Campbell then ordered Colonel Haywood's Seventh North Carolina to carry out his orders. This they were able to do and drove the Federal forces from the trenches. Thus for a short period the Confederate front was restored, except for the huge gap in the breastworks which had been previously occupied by the Militia and the Thirty-fifth.

In the meanwhile, General Parke and his brigade had

been stationed on the railroad as reserves awaiting orders to assist either Reno or Foster. The retreating Federals informed Parke about the gap in the Confederate breastworks. He then ordered his men into the unfortified section of the Confederates defenses. They swept along the Confederate line and struck the Seventh North Carolina "squarely on its right flank."[80]

As General Branch was observing the situation from his headquarters, he realized that the day had been lost. He then ordered his forces to fall back on New Bern. Vance, however, never received these orders. As he was holding his line of defense against Reno's forces, news reached Vance of the Confederate retreat. He realized that there was nothing else to do but to give the order to retreat. As Vance later recalled:

> The fight was kept up until about 12 o'clock, when information was brought to me...that all the troops on the field were in full retreat except my command. This being so, there was no alternative left me but to order an immediate retreat or be completely surrounded by an overwhelming force. Without hesitation I gave the order. My men jumped out of the trenches, rallied, and formed in the woods without panic or confusion...[81]

The regiment then retreated across the Weathersby Road to Bryce's Creek with the intention of crossing the creek to get to the Pollocksville Road on the opposite side.

When they arrived at the creek, they found only one small boat capable of carrying three men. The Colonel's horse refused to cross the creek, so Vance had to swim to

the other side. He then was able to secure three small boats from a farm house by which he was able to get the rest of his men across. Only three men had been drowned in the process. Vance's forces then made their way to Kinston where they would later be joined by other troops.[82]

While things were in a turmoil at the battlefield, New Bern was going through times it had never seen before. It was only the day before that the editor of the Daily Progress, J. L. Pennington, gave warning of the enemy's arrival. He stated:

> The signals of the Neuse River, below our batteries, gave news of the approach of the enemy, yesterday afternoon about 5:00. A boat was immediately dispatched down the river, and on its return we were placed information of the presence of 10 steamers and one large transport (schooner) in the river twelve miles below New Bern and in a few miles below the lower batteries. Everything was active and preparations were busy here last night and a battle is certainly expected today, and the day will probably decide the fate of New Bern.[83]

However, his warning did not reach the printer in time. He and Pennington along with other citizens hearing of the Confederate retreat fled from the town taking what possessions they could. Some people left what things they had in the streets as they became too burdensome to carry. As soon as General Branch and his forces crossed the Trent River Bridge, they found the town in a complete uproar. Branch then ordered his men to fall back upon Tuscarora while he superintended the destruction of the bridges and the public property in town. As the enemy gunboats passed

up the river toward the town, they commenced to shell it while the sick and wounded were being loaded on the train to transport them to Goldsboro.

One report of the evacuation was in the Weekly Raleigh Register of March 19, 1862. This interview was from the conductor of the last train to leave New Bern. He states:

> I left New Bern Friday afternoon at 5:30 p.m. The first shot was fired by the Federals at the Atlantic Railroad Shop. Our troops disputed their advance bravely. The Federals numbered 12,000 on hand and 61 transports and gunboats, while our force was only about 6,000. The citizens at last (several of them) fired their own dwellings and business houses. The Cotton and Turpentine stored in New Bern was first and totally destroyed. The army stores and provisions were all removed. Two batteries and two car loads of ammunition and the other of arms fell into the hands of the enemy.[84]

As the Federal troops entered the town, one soldier described the town as "a sight to behold." The Confederates had set fire to "the railroad bridge, steamboats, mills, warehouses full of cotton, rosin and turpentine, the dockyards, etc., and the flames and smoke were going up to the heavens."[85]

One Confederate observer wrote:

> As we passed near New Bern we saw the town on fire in several places....The streets were filled with Yankees, trying to subdue the fire... On reaching the Kinston road we found a perfect stampede prevailed, and had been in progress for sometime before. The panic-stricken crowd consisted of a heterogeneous mixture of soldiers, citizens, men, women, children, and negroes leaving the town in the utmost confusion. Trunks, boxes and household plunder, of all kinds, together with army equipments, were scattered along the road for a considerable distance.[86]

Although some accounts tell of the damaging fires, they may have been slightly exaggerated. One Federal soldier wrote, "When we came in sight [of the town] we thought it was all in flames but only a few buildings were destroyed."[87] Another observer wrote: "The retiring rebels...left the town to all interests almost as good as new."[88]

A Confederate observer wrote:

> We had extra dinners prepared, expecting to feed the Confederate soldiers, instead of that there was a perfect panic and stampede, women, children, nurses, and baggage getting to the depot any way they could, our home and hundreds of others were left with dinners cooking, doors open, everything to give or northern friends a royal feast, which I understand they thoroughly enjoyed. Our house was nicely furnished, a year's provisions in the smokehouse, in the pantry all sorts of jellies, pickles, catsups, cordials, and so on, and we panic-stricken, running away with a few trunks of hastily packed clothing.[89]

By the time Federal forces arrived in New Bern on the afternoon of March 14th they found its tree-lined streets almost deserted except for blacks and "poor whites" pillaging the stores and houses. The Union soldiers and sailors also took part in the looting until order was restored two days later.[90] The next morning Yankee printers printed the news in the New Bern Progress: "Friday did it. We have taken New Bern. The enemy endeavored to burn the town, but were unsuccessful, the inhabitants using the fire-engines and other means in their power to extinguish the flames."[91]

The Federal authorities were concerned in restoring New Bern's industry and mercantile pursuits. Within a week they called for all the businessmen to return to the city and "reap a golden harvest." They urged: "Come one, come all and open your shops and stores and let the busy hum of business once more ring through the streets."[92]

It was evident that the Federals had captured the second most important town in North Carolina the first being Wilmington, in so far as military targets were concerned. On Tuesday, March 18, 1862, they held a dress parade to celebrate their victory.[93] As for the Confederates, by Saturday afternoon all the troops had been gathered in Kinston where a dress parade was held for the routed troops. Many people felt that it was a disgrace for the troops to retreat as they did, leaving the town to its fate. In the word of one of the soldiers: "...we retreated to New Bern, but the enemy got there in their gunboats as fast as we did on land. We saw that we could not hold it and therefore set the town on fire and retreated to this place."[94]

Now that they assembled in Kinston, everyone was sure that it would be a matter of days or months before they would be confronted with the fighting there.

Northern feeling about the South and the war was certainly evident after the battle of New Bern. In the words of the Yankee editor of the New Bern Daily Progress of

March 22, 1862:

> We came to punish the disturbers of the public peace and did it. We came to scatter the armed forces that were in rebellion against their own just government, and we did it. We came to show all traitors that the government of the United States of America is a power in the earth upheld by strong hands of loyal millions and we did it.[95]

After the Battle of New Bern, it was estimated that the total Confederate losses were: 64 killed, 101 wounded, and 613 missing or captured. The Federal losses were: 88 killed and 352 wounded.[96]

With the loss of this important city, many Confederate officials and military leaders shifted the blame to General Branch, who as one writer observed, was "a mire [sic] neophyte in military matters."[97] As previously stated, many historians believe that the immediate cause for the loss of the battle was the gap in the Confederate defenses that was guarded by Clark's inexperienced militia. Branch later wrote Governor Clark in an attempt to vindicate himself, stating that for three and one half hours his force of 3,800 fought against a more formidable foe of 12,000. Branch then told the Governor he considered himself "lucky if not judicious" by losing no more men than he did.[98]

However, a Union soldier, Thomas Low, observed that the Confederate defenses were indeed very well constructed. He suggested that if they had been defended with one-half the valor with which they were assailed, it would have been impossible for the Federal forces to have taken them.[99] Low

also considered the Federal forces to have been "vastly inferior" to the Confederates although it was later determined that they were not.[100]

Even before the Battle of New Bern, state officials requested the Confederate government for more troops to protect the coastal defenses of the state. Now that the eastern part of the state was in Union control, the Confederate government made an overall effort to rush troops into the interior of the state to prevent Federal forces from pushing towards Goldsboro and Raleigh. Many historians believe that if the Confederate government had seen the need earlier, the eastern part of the state might have been able to withstand this Union invasion. Thus New Bern was to serve as a military base for the Union forces throughout the remainder of the Civil War.

Chapter III

UNION OCCUPATION OF NEW BERN

MILITARY ASPECTS, 1862-1865

The following chapter describes New Bern as seen solely through the eyes of the Union invaders. There are several reasons for this perspective: First, as was stated in the previous chapter, many citizens had fled and those who remained were mostly blacks and illiterate "poor whites." Second, it was extremely difficult for citizens of the town to mail out letters beyond Union lines. Thus the Federals had hoped to minimize any chance of spies working within the occupied region. Third, most Southern accounts during the occupation are reminiscences written many years later. Therefore, these accounts did not deal with the immediate daily activities of the people. Lastly, even before the Union occupation, letters written by local residents generally did not contain detailed descriptions of their town.

Many of the Federal soldiers were from "rocky New England." They therefore were amazed to see the streets lined with trees, flowers growing at almost every house, the sandy country roads, and the hot humid weather which was the cause of much complaint. Their diaries and letters are

filled with vivid accounts of the people, colorful descriptions of the town, and realistic reports of sickness and disease which many of them faced while stationed in New Bern.

This chapter will describe the Union occupation of New Bern and the Federal endeavors to make the town a military stronghold. It will also describe the two failed attempts of Confederate forces in their desire to recapture this important city.

On March 14, 1862, for reasons previously mentioned, Confederates could not hold the town. As Confederate forces retreated from New Bern, they successfully set fire to the railroad bridge and the "draw" of another bridge which was located about a mile above the town. This prevented the Federal army from following close behind on the heels of the retreating Rebels and civilians fleeing for safety. Since the bridges were impassable, Burnside's troops had to be ferried across the river by naval gunboats. Many of the troops did not get across to New Bern until late on the afternoon of the 14th. As they entered the town, some soldiers were amazed to see that the streets were practically deserted. To one soldier it seemed more like "a city of the dead" than any other place on earth. As they walked down the tree-lined streets, many noticed that the windows of the houses were darkened as if "everyone had gone to a funeral...." New Bern, deserted, was certainly not the

kind of place many of them expected to see.[1]

One soldier wrote that the streets were

> deserted and silent, save when the stillness was broken by the tramp of the soldier, the citizens - those who remained - keeping inside their houses. Black faces peered at us from all quarters, and pieces of white cloth waved from every corner and Negro shanty. The slaves did not appear to be afraid of the soldiers, although they had been taught to fear us.[2]

It was apparent to many that the blacks considered the Federal soldiers as guardian angels.[3] For as one soldier wrote: "The Negroes were holding a grand jubilee, some of them praying and in their rude way thanking God for their deliverance; others in their wild delight, were dancing and singing...while others...were pillaging the stores and dwellings."[4]

While some of the soldiers joined the Negroes in the pillaging, it was apparent to many northerners that the city was "full of wealth." One contemporary observed that for three days the pillaging was so unrestrained by the soldiers that he believed much merchandise was probably sent North, such as silks, laces, books, silver, etc. "Money was found in some places and liquor everywhere...."[5]

Some of the money was probably Confederate and worth little, but liquor could never be considered worthless to the soldier. It was used for medicinal purposes as well as for simple drinking enjoyment. One soldier wrote: "I have not got a drink of rum since I left Hartford or any other

kind of spirits But I should [have] liked very much to [have] had a good horn the day after [the] Batle [sic] as wee [sic] needed it Badley...[6]"

Upon entering New Bern, General Burnside found mostly chaos and disorder as a result of the pillaging of houses and businesses. In his official report to the Secretary of War, he stated that he had "succeeded in restoring the town to comparative quietness by midnight on the 14th" and likened it to the quietness "of a New England village."[7] However, others have reported that the pillaging continued for at least two more days. Burnside also placed the town under martial law and appointed General Foster military governor. As far as the pillaging was concerned, Burnside was convinced that nine-tenths of the depredations were committed by the Negroes before the Federal troops entered the town. He further stated that these blacks were "a source of very great anxiety" to them.[8]

Under military rule, New Bern was divided into three districts. In each of these districts, a lieutenant assisted by about one hundred men was to keep law and order in the respective district. No one was allowed on the streets after 9:00 p.m. without authorized passes, and no citizen was allowed into the forts and camps of the Federal Army without permission.[9]

To patrol the city, one writer observed that it took

250 men each day, stationed at almost every corner.[10] Horses were always furnished the officers of the guard, so they could visit the different posts throughout the city.[11]

Duties of the soldier stationed about New Bern were varied. A normal day began at 5:00 A.M., with breakfast at 5:45, drill from 7:00 to 8:30, and dinner at 12:00. Drill again from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m., and dress parade at 7:00. Supper was then served at 7:30, roll call at 8:15, "taps" at 9:00 with "lights out."[12]

Another soldier wrote to his wife that they drilled from three to four hours each day, sometimes in the hot sun. Dress parade would always come at sundown, unless it was raining, and guard duty came about once a week.[13] In addition to these duties, the soldiers as well as the Negro laborers were constantly at work on the breastworks surrounding New Bern, always in apprehension of a Confederate attack.[14]

Sunday morning was usually reserved for church; the soldiers could attend services in the city, or attend "Divine Services" in their camps.[15] On June 16, 1862, a soldier recorded in his diary that he had attended services at the Presbyterian church and stated that it was a "very good edifice in a fine location. The sermon was by one of the army chaplains and was an instructive discourse. The searching question...What are you gleaming," which according to that observer, came home to the hearts of the soldiers

that listened.[16]

On another occasion, a soldier wrote to his mother that he attended church services inside the city. Although the place or the topic of the sermon was not mentioned, he did write that it was "delightful to get inside a church again and hear an organ play."[17]

On Sunday afternoons, the soldiers were required to line up in full uniform for inspection. As one soldier described it, standing two or three hours with their guns was "very tiresome."[18]

A soldier's life in camp was not very comfortable, especially during the winter. Some soldiers were living in barracks that had been built by the Confederates while they were stationed at New Bern. "The Barracks in which we are quartered," wrote one soldier, "is very open built of green timber, and is very cold."[19]

Some soldiers lived in "A" tents which also lacked comfort. The dimensions of these tents were generally six feet high by eight feet wide. One soldier complained that, he, being quite tall, had to go outside to put on his overcoat. In order to make his tent higher, he built "Stockades of wood about 3 ft. high" and mounted the tent upon it.[20] Some tents were also built on wooden foundations. Not only was this helpful in making the tent higher, but also in preventing dampness.[21]

The furniture of a tent was described by one occupant as consisting of a small stove in one corner which made it "just warm enough," two bunks, one on either side; and a "camp stool" which could have easily served as a small table. It was not unusual to see a soldier reclining upon his bunk, writing or reading by a candle placed on a "camp stool."[22] Many soldiers found these bunks very uncomfortable, and as one soldier wrote to his wife: "I do not know how it would [seem] to get into a feather bed..."[23].

Regardless of certain hardships and duties, many soldiers found time for leisure and relaxation. Some regiments formed literary clubs, debating societies, and glee clubs. One regiment even collected $150 to buy books from the North to start a regimental library.[24]

Some soldiers constantly complained of noise that was often heard within camp. As one soldier wrote, "...some [are] singing, some playing cards, some dancing and some writing, anyone to look in would suppose it [to be] a broken down camp meeting in distress."[25]

Many soldiers also found time to write letters back home to family and friends. However, one soldier complained that it was impossible to write about anything. While some in the camp were dancing and playing cards, others were "reading loud enough to be heard 1/4 of a mile."[26] But whenever the camps seemed too boisterous, it was only

because many of these soldiers tried to make the monotony of camp life more bearable. They also tried to fill the void in their lives that many of them felt as a result of longing to be near family and friends. As one soldier wrote, "I have spent a pleasant evening with the boys in singing and conversation and feel at home here even on the Sands of the 'Old North State.'"[27]

While some were writing about leisure moments in camp, others were confessing that life was too monotonous for a soldier. "I am sick of doing nothing here," wrote a soldier to his sister, "...I long for the march and active operations against the enemy...It does not seem as if I was doing any thing for my country."[28] However, as the months passed and the threat of a Confederate attack was ever more evident, one soldier complained at not having any free time at all. When they were not on picket or guard duty, they were digging fortifications.[29]

Of all the duties that a soldier had to perform, the best jobs were the ones involving provost duty garrisoning the city. Many of these soldiers were quartered in some of the finest homes in New Bern.[30]

An officer of the signal corps of the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts Volunteers commented about the house chosen for their stay. It

> was a large two-story brick mansion, elegantly furnished throughout, having two pianos in the parlor,

> Brussels carpets on the floors, a fine library and everything in like style. There were servants quarters in the rear, which were occupied by an old negro named Stephen, a young mulatto woman called Phyllis, and two children. Stephen was engaged to black boots, etc., for the officers, while Phyllis, at a good salary, was installed as a maid of all work.[31]

One soldier wrote that his house had "a white marble fireplace and mantle piece, splendid chandeliers, handsome curtains, and everything fixed up in gay style." Certainly not all the houses were like these, but all were considered comfortable and furnished with "gas at government expense."[32] Not only were the houses furnished with gas, but the principal streets were also illuminated with gas, a feature which caused many northern soldiers to marvel.

Another soldier wrote: "I kill time by sleeping, reading, writing, etc. We are very aristocratic in our meal hours, breakfasting at 9 or 10 A.M. and dining at five P.M....I seldom get up before nine and retire early to read. So time passes swiftly."[33]

The soldier's diet consisted mostly of "Hard tack" and salted meat. Hard tack was a type of unleavened bread that was made into a very large hard wafer. This bread along with the salted meat could last for a long time without spoiling. It could be stored in the commissary and rationed out to the regiments when needed. This type of food could also be easily taken along on expeditions lasting several days.[34]

As the foraging expeditions raided the country side

looking for supplies, the troops found an abundant number of cattle, hogs, corn, horses, along with other supplies that were loaded up and taken back to town. But these supplies soon became depleted. One soldier later complained that there were no fresh vegetables, and their food consisted mostly of salt meat, fresh fish (one meal in eight), along with "a few old potatoes" and a small helping of rice.[35] Another soldier complained that his meals were consisting of green peas for dinner and blackberries for supper.[36] Still another stated that all he was getting was "a few beans boiled or rather half boiled."[37]

Economic conditions were not very promising in New Bern during the years of occupation. A soldier writing to his cousin shortly after the Battle of New Bern stated: "If you want to make money just come down with a load of butter, cheese, potatoes, eggs, etc." He furthermore stated that butter was selling for thirty-five and forty cents per pound; cheese for twenty-six cents per pound; potatoes for two dollars per bushel; and eggs for twenty-five and thirty cents per dozen. He also stated that the only thing cheaper than up North were peanuts, although he did not mention for how much they were selling.[38] Another observer wrote that milk was also very high, selling for twenty cents a quart.[39]

By December, 1864, the economic situation changed very little; if anything, it got worse. Butter was selling for

eighty cents per pound, cheese for fifty cents per pound, sweet potatoes for one dollar and fifty cents a bushel, and bread for fifteen cents a loaf.[40] These pieces prompted one soldier to write, "Things are awfull high out here, the things we eat especially."[41]

In contradiction to this, however, another soldier wrote five months earlier that things were cheaper in New Bern than they were in his hometown up North.[42]

In order to assist the families of the enlisted men stationed at New Bern, the commissaries were authorized to sell "stores" to them at cost. It was hoped that this would greatly help both white and black regiments during these troublesome times.[43]

The capture of the second most important town on the North Carolina coast gave the Federals an important base from which they could push any number of troops into the interior of the state and thus divide the Confederacy. With New Bern firmly in Union hands, it was chosen to be the headquarters of the Federal government in North Carolina.

Many advisors of President Lincoln believed that there was a great deal of Union sentiment in North Carolina. With this in consideration, Lincoln desired to establish a loyal government in North Carolina, and appointed Edward Stanley to be military Governor of the state on March 19, 1862.[44]

Stanley was born in New Bern, but later moved to

Beaufort County to practice law. By the time of his appointment he was residing in California.[45] Stanley, too, believed that the majority of North Carolinians were in favor of the Union and had never been in favor of secession.[46] However, when he arrived in New Bern to assume his duties on May 26, 1862, he later found that the Union sentiment had been greatly exaggerated.

The purpose of Stanley's appointment was simply defined: "...your appointment is to reestablish the authority of the Federal government in the state of North Carolina and provide the means of maintaining peace and security to the loyal inhabitants of that state until they shall be able to establish a civil government."[47]

Upon Stanley's arrival, General Burnside gladly assigned him jurisdiction over all civil and political affairs with the full cooperation of the military.[48] On May 31, a review of all the troops was held by General Burnside, accompanied by Governor Stanley and Generals Foster, Parke, and Reno along with their staffs. One soldier described it as being "the finest military display" he had ever seen.[49]

One of the first problems facing Stanley in his new administration concerned the black population. Shortly after the governor's arrival in New Bern, Vincent Colyer (superintendent of the poor) informed Stanley that he had started a school for black children and asked him his opinion about the endeavor. Stanley was adamantly against

it. In a letter to Stanton in June of 1862 he stated:

> I approved all he [Colyer] had done in feeding and clothing the destitute white and black, but told him I had been sent to restore the old order of things. I thought his negro-school, if approved by me, would do harm to the Union cause...Another reason I urged was, that by one of the cruel necessities of slavery, the laws of North Carolina forbade slaves to be taught to read and write, and I would be most unsuccessful in my efforts if I encouraged the violation of her laws.[50]

In regards to slavery, Stanley wanted to return all run-away slaves back to their former masters who would take an oath of allegiance to the Union. According to many extremists in the North, this was restoring too much of "the old order of things," and thus he was looked on as a Confederate sympathizer.[51] A lieutenant of the Third New York Cavalry even referred to Stanley as "the nigger hunter, whom our Southern Kentucky President has sent down here to insult us."[52]

Even though Stanley was a native North Carolinian, he was looked on as a turn-coat and traitor by the very people who would have otherwise called him their friend. In referring to Governor Stanley, the Raleigh Register of June 18, 1862, stated:

> It would seem that this functionary term of office is about to prove a very short one...poor misguided man, he split upon a rock. His vanity taught him to believe that he could come to North Carolina and throw oil upon the troubled waters...and that his name would go down in posterity as the great "Pacificator."[53]

The prediction of the Raleigh Register became true, for shortly after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation,

Stanley tendered his resignation, which became effective on March 1, 1863.[54]

With New Bern secure in Federal hands, General Burnside had planned to push westward towards Goldsboro in June, 1862. As Burnside was about to commence his march, he received an urgent unexpected message from President Lincoln: "I think you had better go, with any reinforcements you can spare, to General McClellan," who at that time was having difficulties near Richmond.[55] On July 6, 1862 Burnside along with two divisions consisting of seven thousand troops, left North Carolina to assist McClellan.

Upon leaving, he placed General Foster in command of the Department of North Carolina. Rather than to push towards Goldsboro as Burnside had planned, Foster decided to stay in New Bern and strengthen fortifications throughout his command. By August 1862 he had successfully erected a line of earthenworks stretching from Trent River to the Neuse. Along this line Foster erected Forts Totten, Rowan and Dutton.[56] Totten was the largest of the forts and was located on the western most perimeter of the town. Fort Rowan was located near the center of the earthenworks and Fort Dutton on the Neuse River approach to the town. Two other forts were also erected along the Neuse River: Fort Stevenson just above Fort Dutton and Fort Anderson on the

other side of the river opposite Fort Dutton.[57]

In building these fortifications, Foster not only used the services of his own troops but also employed the services of blacks who had sought freedom and refuge behind Union lines. Many of the blacks were employed for eight dollars a month and were hired as carpenters, blacksmiths, and coopers. They were useful in not only building fortifications but also in repairing ships and building bridges. The railroad bridge which had been torched by the fleeing Confederates was rebuilt using their labor. A soldier writing on March 30, 1862, stated that they were commencing to build the railroad bridge, and that it will be built cheaper than what it was before. He went on to state that spikes were being driven every ten or twelve feet with timbers being laid there on. This arrangement therefore would save bracing. He furthermore stated that he hoped that an engine would be "on the ground soon," because the hand cars that were being used were "dreadful hard things to run." On a trip from New Bern to Beaufort it took five hours by using one of these cars by manual labor.[58]

Black laborers were also responsible in building many of the cots that were being used in the hospital. Even a wheelwright shop located on Hancock Street, which was run by free blacks, kept up a thriving and "cheerful industry" for the Federal soldiers.[59]

Many of the blacks were employed as spies, scouts, and guides for the Union army. It was very easy for them to travel into the Rebel lines to Kinston, Goldsboro, Trenton, Swansboro, Tarboro, and points along the Roanoke River. These "faithful ones" as Colyer described them, would bring back valuable information as to the defenses of Confederate fortifications and the positions of their camps. In many cases they would place their own lives in danger. In one scouting expedition to Tarboro, a black escaped being captured by washing the feet of his party in turpentine to prevent being traced by the blood hounds.[60]

The black women and children were also a valuable service to the Union soldiers by washing, ironing, and cooking. According to Colyer, a few of the women were employed in the hospital for four dollars per month. They also received clothes and one ration for that month.[61]

However, as late as 1889, while the blacks were applying for pensions from the government, a female Sally Spikes stated that she was employed in the hospital from March, 1862, to September, 1864, for eight dollars per month. She, therefore, was applying for back pay since she received no money. Other blacks with similar stories made sworn statements that they too had not been paid.[62] Whether they were employed for eight dollars or four dollars as Colyer had stated, it is unknown whether they received their money.

Throughout the remaining years of the war, eastern North Carolina would become the object of much pillaging and vandalism. Many Union soldiers held the belief that they should supply their wants from the country through which the army passed. In fact, foraging had been a long-standing custom of most armies throughout history, to literally "live off the fat" of the conquered land. This pillaging imposed a great loss on the rich agricultural section of eastern North Carolina.

As was stated in the previous chapter, the plantation of Peter G. Evans was the most profitable plantation in Craven County. A Union soldier wrote in his diary of June 7, 1862: "The Plantation of Evans is the finest I have seen in these parts. It has upon it an orchard of some 75 acres of apple trees looking very thrifty."[63]

Another soldier wrote:

> We found on the [Evans] place ninety slaves, large quantities of cotton, some of which was in bales, some loose, some in the press, and some in the gin; also a large number of horses and cattle, 175 hogs, 50 goats, 25 mules, 75 ploughs, a great many carts, saw-mills, flouring-mills, with a great quantity of flour and corn meal in them, and about 14,000 bushels of corn, all of which we took possession of...We soon found the sweet potatoes, which were near a mile from where we bivouacked. Evans had about 1,100 bushels of them buried in three different holes. We stacked our arms, and made a large number of fires, killed 20 hogs and 2 bullocks, and soon had something to eat. I had a better supper than I have had for a long time...I ate until I felt sick...The next morning, at ten o'clock, we loaded up the cotton, and other things and left for our barracks.[64]

In some cases, it was even reported that soldiers carried the vandalism into family cemeteries which had been located not far from the plantation house. Some soldiers felt no shame as they desecrated these grounds, believing that they might contain gold, jewels, and other valuables which had been hidden by family members. As one observer wrote:

> All the large plantations throughout the South have vaults or graveyards close to the mansions for the interment of the deceased members of the resident families. About two miles from camp on the opposite side of Brice's Creek, was a stately plantation of five thousand acres belonging to a Colonel Hill, who was at that time an officer in the rebel army. A vault on this place, close to the dwelling-house and within 50 yards of the Trent River, contained a large number of coffins with remains of members of the family for several generations back, but a visit to the place by members of a Connecticut and New York regiment, soon reduced the structure to a shapeless collection of ruins, having burst the casements of the departed and piled the bones in a confused mass.[65]

Most soldiers, however, frowned upon this type of depredation. A soldier of the Twenty-first Massachusetts Regiment wrote,

> A private of the 11th Connecticut regiment, so drunk that he could hardly walk, even with the aid of a negro who accompanied him, carrying an ancient copper coffin, was arrested by our guard as he passed our camp. The coffin bore the name of Richard D. Spaight, a distinguished Revolutionary patriot, and governor of North Carolina from 1792 to 1795. Its contents, fortunately, had not been disturbed and it was once restored to the dilapidated family tomb of the Spaights, from which it had just been taken, close by our camp. Frightened by the indignation of our men at his sacrilegious act, and apparently becoming himself aware of its indecency, as the coffin was taken roughly from him and he thrust into our guardhouse. Thus, the

> drunken soldier wept bitterly as he told us, in explanation of his conduct, that his captain had just died, and the company wanted to send his body home, and that having been told by the negro where he could find a splendid copper coffin, he thought he had a right to take it to send the Captain home in good style.[66]

While New Bern was in Union hands, it would serve as a base for foraging expeditions to Trenton, Pollocksville, and Kinston, as well as other places. A lieutenant of Company I of the Twenty-third Massachusetts Regiment reported that on one such expedition they had succeeded in destroying four or five miles of railroad and captured about 500 horses, and fifty prisoners along with 250-300 contrabands (slaves), "besides destroying quite a large amount of arms..."[67]

Twenty-eight year old Lieutenant Rowland M. Hall wrote his father that he was proud to be a part of these raiding expeditions. "I hate the people of the south," wrote Hall. "They are starving to death in this state and if I could destroy every field of corn they have, it seems to me I should feel it a duty to do it."[68] He also stated that he was part of the same expedition that went to Trenton and burned the court house.[69]

On an expedition toward Pollocksville, one writer observed that the land was higher and "seemingly more healthy" than it was around New Bern.[70] Another observer wrote, that most of the plantations he encountered were large two-story frame dwellings with green shutters. Although it is interesting to think that many of them had

the same style, he did report that they were "quite handsome."[71]

Another observer wrote:

> The way of living of the wealthiest planters is far inferior to that of ordinary farmers in New England. The houses small, so ill built that no one could inhabit them in our climate, carried on logs or brick pillars three or four feet from the ground, surrounded by dense groves of the Pride of China, the live oak, the hickory growing in the white sand and looking out upon the broad sandy plain of the plantations encircled by its dense hedge of forest. The loneliness of plantation life forbids the spread of anything like civilization. The brats of children grow up ignorant depraved barbarous little tyrants - The plantation negroes hardly appear like human beings.

In comparison the same observer wrote,

> Five acres is about the extent of the farms where the greyish ashen colored decrepid poor whites live, the women and girls bare footed filthily dirty, and clad only in the most wretched homespun fabrics of cotton, with long coal [?] sunbonnets over their haggard and repulsive features, and always a stick dipped in snuff in their mouths with which they rub their gums for amusement. This horrid practice extends to the most refined and cultivated ladies of Newberne who are about as refined as the characters in Uncle Tom's Cabin.[72]

Many of these expeditions into the country found most of the plantations deserted. One observer was astounded when his regiment came upon a cotton field of 125 acres and noticed that the cotton had not been gathered, "but was spoiled and blowing about."[73]

Another soldier wrote that even though many of the Negroes decided to remain on the plantations after their masters fled, little was grown within forty miles of New Bern. Actually one soldier attributed the poor conditions

of some of the crops to the dry weather that blighted the region during May of 1863. In spite of these circumstances, many of the "poor women" were trying to cultivate the land with their own hands, the invaders reported.[74]

However, when one traveled far enough from the Union lines, a different scene was depicted. On a raid to Duplin County, one soldier was amazed to see the flourishing conditions of the country. Fields rich in corn, pumpkins, beans, etc. and yards full of cattle impressed him. Upon seeing this he wrote, "They can't be starved out, that is out of the question entirely."[75]

The depredations of the military against the civilian population so outraged Governor Stanley that he wrote Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts expressing his indignation.

> Had the war in North Carolina been conducted by soldiers who were Christian and gentlemen, the state would long ago have rebelled against rebellion. But, instead of that, what was done? Thousands and thousands of dollars worth of property were conveyed North. Libraries, pianos, carpets, mirrors, family portraits, everything in short that could be removed was stolen by men abusing flagitious slaveholders and preaching liberty, justice and civilization....They literally robbed the cradle and the grave.[76]

Not only were these expeditions foraging the country for supplies, but they were also looking for rebel pickets who might have been in the area.[77] Although Union and Confederate pickets were often engaged in skirmishes near New Bern, a soldier wrote on February 13, 1863, that no

attack on the town was expected. He further stated, however, "Nothing more to be desired as the town is well fortified in every direction."[78]

The first major attempt of the Confederates to recapture the town occurred on March 13, 1863, just as the Federals were planning the first anniversary of its capture. General Daniel H. Hill who had taken over command of all the Confederate troops in North Carolina, ordered Brigadier General Junius Daniel to attack New Bern by the lower Trent Road. Brigadier General Beverly H. Robertson and his cavalry was ordered to advance south of the Trent River; and Brigadier General James J. Pettigrew was to approach near Barrington's Ferry. Robertson had orders to break up a segment of the tracks of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad while Pettigrew had orders to shell Fort Anderson and the Federal gunboats in the river.[79]

On March 13, the Federal outpost along Trent Road was the first to be attacked by General Daniel's Brigade. In this attempt the Confederates were able to drive the Federals from their entrenchments. By the next morning, being unable to recapture their lost grounds, the Federals retired to the stronger defenses of New Bern.[80]

General Pettigrew, on the other hand, was not as successful in his attempt. On the 14th, Pettigrew's Brigade opened fire on Fort Anderson. The fort was manned by the

Ninety-second New York under Lieutenant-Colonel Hiram Anderson, Jr. This regiment, numbering some 300 strong, defended the Fort against the Confederates with 4,000 Infantry and eighteen pieces of Artillery.[81]

When the first shots were fired, the Federal garrison in New Bern thought that it was a salute in honor of the anniversary. However, after news arrived that Fort Anderson was being assailed, the Eighty-fifth New York was ferried across to support the Ninety-second. While Pettigrew's troops were attacking the Fort, the Union gunboats in the river kept up a steady fire at intervals "sending shell" to the distance of three miles "with the greatest ease."[82] Pettigrew's guns were ineffective in reaching the gunboats for various reasons. Rather than sacrifice his Infantry by storming the works, he decided to withdraw.

Robertson also failed in his orders to break up the railroad. This failure certainly did not come as a surprise to General Hill, who earlier referred to Robertson's cavalry as "wonderfully inefficient."[83]

Although Hill's attempt to recapture the town failed, many Confederates as well as Federals did not understand the true intent of this expedition.[84] Eben T. Hale of the Forty-fifth Massachusetts wrote that New Bern was "perfectly inpregnable" and that many believed that Hill had no intention of recapturing the town, but to draw off Union attention from Confederate maneuvers around Charleston.[85]

The Confederates would not make another attempt to recapture the town until winter of the following year. General Robert E. Lee was very much concerned about the presence of Federal troops in eastern North Carolina. On January 2, 1864, he wrote to President Jefferson Davis stating:

> The time is at hand when if an attempt can be made to capture the enemy forces at New Bern it should be done. I can now spare the troops for the purpose, which will not be the case as spring approaches....A large amount of provisions and other supplies are said to be at New Bern, which are wanted for this army, besides much that is reported in the country will thus be made accessible to us.

Lee furthermore stated:

> A bold party could descend at the Neuse at night, capture the gunboats, and drive the enemy by their aid from the works on that side of the river, while a force should attack them in front [by land].[86]

Thus the plans were made to make a two-prong attack on New Bern: one by land and one by sea. To head the land attack, Lee suggested Brigadier General Robert F. Hoke, who had earlier shown his ability in the campaign against Confederate deserters in western North Carolina.[87]

President Davis, however, believed that a man of higher rank should be chosen to lead this important expedition. Lee therefore offered the command to Major General George Pickett who had taken over the command of the Department of North Carolina on September 23, 1863.[88] For the command of the naval operations, Davis suggested his nephew and chief

military aide John Taylor Wood. Wood was also the grandson of Zachary Taylor, twelfth President of the United States.[89]

It was apparent that if all went well, the success of this operation would depend upon Wood. The plan was to capture the Federal gunboats that patrolled the rivers, and use them to aid Pickett on his land offensive. Wood was probably even reminded that it was those gunboats that aided the Federal defense when Pettigrew attacked Fort Anderson in March, 1863.

The land expedition was to be advanced in three columns. The first column would be commanded by Brigadier General Seth M. Barton. It was to include his own brigade and the brigade of Brigadier General J. L. Kemper along with three regiments belonging to Brigadier General Matt W. Ransom. They were to proceed from Kinston on the morning of January 30th, and cross the Trent River near Trenton and proceed to Brice's Creek below New Bern. After crossing the creek, they would then move against the fortifications along the Trent and the Neuse, capturing them from behind. Afterwards, they were to cross the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad bridge and enter the town. Gaining control of this railroad would prove effective in cutting off any reinforcements from arriving by Morehead City and Beaufort. The second column was to be commanded by Colonel James Dearing and composed of the Fifteenth and Seventeenth Virginia along with Colonel J. W. Whitford's regiment and

three pieces of artillery and three hundred cavalry. They were to travel along the north side of the Neuse River and attack Fort Anderson. By taking the Fort, Dearing would have a direct line of fire upon the town on the opposite side of the river.[90]

The third column was commanded by General Robert F. Hoke, accompanied by Pickett.[91] It was to travel between the Trent and Neuse Rivers to Batchelder's Creek (currently inhabitants pronounce this "Bachelor's Creek") where an attack would be made on the Federal forces there. After crossing the creek they were to capture the Federal fortifications near the Neuse. Before proceeding any further towards the town, they would wait to hear of Barton's advance. The attack was to be carried out simultaneously while Wood's men were to gain control of the gunboats in the river. The whole operation was to be of utmost secrecy. The date had been set for Monday February 1, 1864. General Lee had also ordered General W. H. C. Whiting to advance a force from Wilmington to Swansboro on the same day of the attack so as to draw off attention from around New Bern.[92]

The expedition had been well planned, but it did not succeed. On the morning of February 1, Barton's column advanced near Brice's Creek. Instead of surprising the Federals, he in turn was surprised to see the well built

fortifications along that area. In his officer report Barton wrote:

> An open plain, varying from 1 mile to 2 miles in breadth, reaching to Brice's Creek; this very deep and about 80 yards wide, with marshy banks, the timber upon which had been cut down, a temporary bridge, on the east bank a blockhouse and breast-works, behind which a camp; at confluence of creek with Trent River, 1,000 yards distant, a field work mounting ten guns; 300 yards east another work with eight guns; one-half or three quarters of a mile east, near railroad bridge and about 1 mile from Brice's Creek bridge, another very large work; south on Neuse River about 2 miles from Brice's Creek bridge, a very large fort for land and river defense; a line of breastworks extending from the west to Brice's Creek, and terminating in a field work 1 mile above the bridge, other works of less importance covering the plain and connecting the forts; on North side of Trent, here 700 yards wide, two field-works commanding those on south side.[93]

Barton furthermore stated that he was "unprepared to encounter obstacles so serious."[94] He then dispatched couriers to General Pickett asking for instructions. Pickett sent word back that he was to recross the Trent and join the troops for a general assault on the town. However, in order to do this, he would have to retrace his steps all the way to Pollocksville and could not join Pickett until February 4th.

Colonel Dearing who had orders to take Fort Anderson had also reported that the fortifications were too powerful to take. Pickett then made the decision to abandon the New Bern operation and withdrew all troops from New Bern on February 3.

The naval operation was the only successful part of the

mission. Since this raid was to be conducted at night, each man was given a white arm band and the word "Sumter" was given as the pass word. The expedition consisted of about 250 seamen and landmen, 25 marines, and about 30 officers in twelve boats and two launches, the latter carrying forty-five men each. The expedition was prepared to attack four or five gunboats that were often stationed in the river; but on the morning of February 1, none was to be found.[95]

According to Commander B. P. Loyall:

> The night was so dark that we could not see each other, and often the leading boat ran into a shoal point, got aground, and the whole line would be jumbled up in a crowd. After 2 o'clock in the morning the river widened, and we began to see better around us. Soon we reached the mouth of Swift Creek and sniffed the salt air from the sound. Every eye was strained to see a ship in the direction of the town of New Bern, and searched in vain to find some thing afloat, although we got close enough to the wharf to hear talking, probably the sentries on the dock.[96]

Wood decided to delay any further advance until the next night, hoping visibility would be better. He directed the expedition back up the river three or four miles to Batchelder's Creek where they landed on a small island covered with "tall grass and shrubs."[97]

Throughout the morning of February 1, Wood's men could hear the rattle of musketry further up the creek and knew that Pickett had commenced his attack. Upon hearing news of this, Lieutenant G. W. Graves of the "U.S.S. Lockwood" commanding the Federal vessels at New Bern, ordered Acting Master Jacob Westervelt of the "U.S.S. Underwriter" to move

to a position on the Neuse just below Fort Stevenson. He also ordered the "U.S.S. Hull" to take a station above the "Underwriter". Graves then moved his gun boat further up the river towards Brice's Creek to cover the land defenses there. The "Hull" however ran aground and never got to its destination. Thus, as fate bequeathed, the "Underwriter" was the only vessel in close proximity to Wood's men.[98]

On the morning of February 2, under a downpour of rain, Wood again launched his boats. As they came closer to the "Underwriter" with its crew of eighty-five men, they could hear the ships bell strike, signalling 2:30 a.m. Suddenly a sailor aboard the vessel spotted the Confederate boats and gave the alarm--the siege of the "Underwriter" had begun. As the Confederates boarded the ship, they were met with the ship's crew dazed by sudden awakening and many of them undressed. After about ten minutes of heavy fighting the ship was taken over by the Confederates. Many of the crew jumped overboard and swam to the shore. Among these was Acting Master Westervelt, who according to one report was killed while holding on to a hawser.[99] Another report stated that he was wounded in the leg, jumped overboard, and was drowned.[100]

While Confederates were trying to move the captured ship, Fort Stevenson opened fire upon her. The first shell went through the wheelhouse and exploded on deck. All hopes

to move the vessel now had vanished. Colonel Wood then gave the order to abandon the ship and set fire to the vessel.[101]

The Confederate losses were: 16 wounded, 4 killed and 4 missing.

The Federal losses were: 20 wounded, 9 killed, and 19 were taken prisoner. Twenty-three of her men escaped.[102]

The engineer of the "Underwriter" was one of the ones fortunate enough to make his escape. He wrote:

> I, together with eighteen or twenty of the crew, being put into a whale boat belonging to the "Underwriter" ...We then shoved off and were proceeding up the stream, the boat I was in being astern the rest, when I discovered that in their hurry to get off, they had put only two men as guard in the boat...I snatched the cutlass from the belt of the guard and told the men to pull for their lives. Some of the men, the other guard among them, jumped overboard and swam for the land. I headed the boat for the shore and landed at the foot of the line of breastworks, delivered my prisoners to the commanding officer...."[103]

Throughout the day, dead bodies washed ashore, along with the wheel-house, which had been damaged by the opening fire of Ft. Stevenson. Some of the Federal soldiers utilized the wood from that wreckage to make fires for cooking and washing.[104] One soldier even stated that they had salvaged enough galvanized nails to "make a man rich."[105]

The Confederates had hoped that the recapture of the town would boost the morale of eastern North Carolinians.[106] Although this mission was a failure, the Congress of the Confederate States of America issued a joint resolution of

thanks to John Taylor Wood and his men, for their daring and brilliant conduct.[107]

Since this second attempt had failed, it was evident that New Bern was well anchored in Union hands. Although the Confederates realized the importance of this coastal town--second only to Wilmington--they would abandon all hopes to recapture New Bern. Thus New Bern would remain in Federal hands for the duration of the war.

Chapter IV

THE UNION OCCUPATION OF NEW BERN: SOCIAL ASPECTS, 1862-1865

As the Federal forces tightened their hold on the town and the eastern section of the state in the spring of 1862, many of the troops hoped the war would soon end, so they could once more be back home with their families and friends. The war, however, would continue for three more years. Those soldiers occupying New Bern were living in a town that many of them considered far different from their own. This chapter describes the town and people as seen through the often prejudiced eyes of the Federal soldiers. It also describes the Freedman's presence in the town and attempts of the Federal government in coping with these former slaves. While most of the chapter deals with the social history of the town during 1862-1865, it also includes an account of sickness and disease which had its effect upon the military as well as the civilian population.

After New Bern fell to Federal forces on March 14, 1862, many of the Northerners found it to be "a charming little city." The New Bern Progress, after it had been taken over by Federal authorities, stated that the town was "in advance of anything" they had seen in the South since they entered Maryland.[1] Many soldiers wrote letters back home commenting about the streets lit by gas and the

"beautiful manner" in which its streets were shaded.[2] One soldier wrote, "This town puts one more in mind of the City of Elms than any place I ever was in, and in peaceful times must be a beautiful city."[3] Another soldier wrote, "The trees in the streets are so thick that before you get to the city you can't see any thing but the trees and the steeples of the meeting houses...." Thus New Bern reminded him more of a thick woods than a city.[4]

Another natural element that caused many soldiers to marvel were flowers. "They have the prettiest flowers here I ever saw," wrote a soldier of the Eighth Connecticut. "I can see them looking over almost any garden fence...."[5] Another wrote that the flowers were so abundant that they were "growing almost in the road."[6]

Lieutenant Rowland M. Hall of the Third New York Cavalry described the town as being well built with frame houses standing in the midst of gardens. In these gardens were roses, some of them standing almost "ten feet" high. Many of the houses were covered with honeysuckle and "running roses." Pomegranate and fig trees could also be seen in many yards. He also described the tree-lined streets, but the most impressive of the trees were the "Pride of China trees" festooned with large lilac colored bunches of Wysteria.

"I suppose there are more flowers in New Berne than in

the whole state of New York," wrote Hall. "Large bunches of roses stand on every table in the town."[7] Thus many soldiers in their letters referred to New Bern as "the City of Roses."[8]

While most soldiers seemed to be impressed with the town, some were not. Lucius Thomas of the Forty-third Massachusetts Volunteers described it as being a "poor looking place." In a letter to his mother he stated, "All the houses except a few brick ones were old wooden things some of them looked as bad as ours did before we fixed it up." He furthermore stated, "The streets were straight with trees on each side. In summer it would look pretty and that was all you could call handsome in the place."[9] A few months later he wrote another letter stating that if it had not been for the trees, the city would indeed be a "bare looking place."[10]

The weather was another element the soldiers often wrote about. New Bern was simply too hot for the "Yankees." Lieutenant Hall writing to his sisters, compared the climate found in New Bern to the climate of a tropical country during the summer.[11] He later wrote his brother stating that the climate found in New Bern was also similar to the climate a European would find if he visited India.[12] But winters, on the other hand, were quite nice. In a letter to his father, he stated that throughout the month of December, it never got cold enough for an overcoat or gloves. He even

expressed a desire that his mother, who was constantly "shivering" from the cold, could experience winters similar to that.[13]

In a letter to his mother, he described another characteristic of eastern North Carolina.

> I cannot pretend to describe to you the feeling of gloom to which these boundless swamps overgrown with gigantic vegetation foreign to us, impressed me. The ground is covered with a gigantic black water, from one foot to four feet in depth, and out of it spring cypresses hung with moss six feet long or more, wreathed with climbing plants festooned in every direction from tree to tree. Under the tall cypress a hundred feet high or more, grow magnolia, bay, laurel gum, and a hundred other trees, which the neglect of my botanical education prevent me from mentioning. The trumpet creeper, and that vine flowered climbing plant (the Wisteria) make the swamps gay with their blossoms.[14]

A week later he wrote his father stating that even the wounds of men could not heal in this "barbarous wilderness," and all the wounded had to be transported up North.[15]

The house in which he and other members of his regiment was stationed was considered a "good house." However, it was situated on the river where he could observe the alligators swimming back and forth; some of them reported to have been ten feet long. It was nothing unusual to see soldiers shooting at these reptiles, because they were "suppose" to carry off the bodies of drowned persons.

Not only were alligators considered a problem in these swamps and rivers, but also "water moccasins," which caused many soldiers to dread going out about the house at night.[16]

A few of the well-to-do citizens decided to stay in New Bern and not forsake their homes in the wake of Federal attack. A soldier of the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts noted one such individual. He wrote:

> Passing along Pollock, above Middle street, today, I was accosted by a man who was sitting on the veranda of his house and invited to come in, as he wished to talk with me. Noticing that he a was smart-looking, well-dressed, gentlemanly-appearing man, and withal a M.D., according to his sign, I was nothing loth to gratify his whim. As I stepped up on the veranda, he invited me to be seated. After a little commonplace talk, he began to inquire about our troops, their number and where they were from....He said our capture of the city was totally unexpected and at the last moment nearly all the better class of citizens left, leaving their houses and property as we found them....After some further talk about state rights and state sovereignty, in which we could not agree, he invited me into his house. Here, like a true Southern gentleman, he entertained and extended hospitalities right royally, and I think we must have sampled his best bottle. He told me it was six years old, and from a silver goblet, I sipped the best native wine I ever tasted; it was rich, mellow and fruity. He said it was made from a choice variety of grape called the Scuppernong. It was really a splendid native wine, as so it appeared to me.[17]

Many of the plantations that had been abandoned were seized by the Federals to be leased or rented as Government housing.[18] The citizens who remained were compelled to take an oath of allegiance to the United States. If any refused, they were then transported out of New Bern and beyond Union lines.[19]

General Burnside in his official report to Secretary Stanton stated that he had noted much Union sentiment in the

region. However, the citizens were slow at first in taking the oath. Private A.C. Fish of the Forty-fourth Massachusetts believed that there was not much Union sentiment existing. He, as well as others, believed that many people professed Union sentiment only to protect their property.[20]

The New York Herald reported as late as January 21, 1864, that those people desiring to obtain possession of their property must "give conclusive evidence of their intention to keep, in good faith, the oath required of them and that they have come into our [Federal] lines for the purpose of becoming loyal citizens of the United States, and not for the sole purpose of obtaining their property."[21] Although the New York Herald did not clarify how this conclusive evidence was to be given the North Carolina Times did report that many people had come from miles around "to take this binding oath" and "depart with fixed resolutions to stand by the flag with unshaken resolution."[22]

Even as early as July, 1862, a soldier recorded in his diary that many families were returning to their homes.[23] A prominent physician, Dr. A. Graham Tull, who was not a Confederate sympathizer, wrote that many citizens were returning and he would be glad to see them once more in their "old homes."[24]

Another resident wrote that she had a "feeling of sadness and desolation" concerning the ones who left:

> I sit on my piazza of an evening, crowds pass by but rarely a face that is familiar to me. I sometimes walk out, and pass the residences of my friends and acquaintances. They are occupied, but alas, where are those whose light step, cheerful voice and merry laugh spoke to glad hearts and happy days, they are scattered in every direction among strangers, far from their homes, and many of them suffering for the comforts they have left.[25]

Not only were some families returning to their homes, but Confederate soldiers were also deserting to the Union lines. Some of them even provided an invaluable service to the Federals by divulging Confederate troop locations and strengths of their fortifications. One such Confederate deserter stated that he had always been a Union man and had been forced into the Confederate service. He also gave the Federals information of Confederate troop movements and fortifications around Kinston.[26]

In July, 1862, it was also reported that a Confederate colonel, captain, and first lieutenant also deserted bringing with them several families returning to their homes. Among that group was a young woman from Massachusetts who had been teaching in the South.[27]

Some of the Confederate deserters later were enlisted into the Federal army. A soldier of the Tenth Connecticut wrote that they had nine hundred men in their regiment, some of whom were once in the "Rebel Service." Of special note was a Confederate captain who later enlisted as a private.[28]

After the town had been placed under military rule,

many slaves escaped from the plantations of their masters to find refuge behind the Union lines.[29] Some of them traveled an undetermined distance. A soldier asked one of these blacks how far did he have to travel to get to this place of refuge. The run-a-way in his own manner of describing distance stated that he had come "as much as two good looks," whatever distance that might have been.[30]

General Burnside had written to Secretary of War Stanton concerning this situation:

> The city is being overrun with fugitives from the surrounding towns and plantations. Two have reported themselves who have been in the swamps for five years. It would be utterly impossible...to keep them outside of our lines, as they find their way to us through woods and swamps from every side.[31]

For the first two weeks after the capture of New Bern, so many blacks sought refuge in the town that it prompted one soldier to write: "I am sick and disgusted with the subject of nigger, and would like to be transported to a place where niggers are unknown."[32]

By May of 1862, a soldier wrote that

> The contrabands [former slaves] are quite an element in the population here....Many of them have left their original state of bondage and now are on their own work. They are more intelligent, and enterprising as a class than the whites who were once their lords and masters, as least as far as conducting the necessary business and affairs nececesary [sic] to existence.[33]

That following September another observer wrote that at one time new Bern was quite a city, but now it seemed that "everything" had been placed in "the hands of the colored

population." The only place of business in operation as far as he could tell were the turpentine and rosin factories, and those were in the employment of Negroes.[34]

By September of 1864 it was estimated that at least 15,000 blacks were in New Bern, which prompted one observer to write that it was the "greatest place" for blacks he had ever seen.[35]

Although some of them were very interested and eager to work, many of them seemed to believe that freedom meant freedom from work. A soldier commented about the "swarms of negroes" he saw in New Bern:

> They sit along the streets and fences, staring and grinning at everything they see, laughing and chattering together like so many blackbirds. They have a very exaggerated notion of freedom, thinking it means freedom from work and license to do about as they please. There is no use trying to get them to work, for if they can get their hoe-cake and bacon, it is all they want, and they are contented and happy.[36]

For those blacks who were employed by the government as laborers and later soldiers, many times "pay" would not be forthcoming. When this happened many of them who would work, refused to work. At one time, 200 blacks were taken to the "guard house" for refusing duty.[37] Sometimes blacks would be transported out of New Bern to assist the Federal army in digging fortifications in Virginia.[38]

On some occasions soldiers would find themselves involved in fights and altercations with blacks. Usually the disagreement would be between one soldier and one black,

but by the time the altercation progressed, it involved the attention of other blacks. Thus the soldier would be well outnumbered. Such an instance occurred when a soldier found himself surrounded by about twenty blacks. The soldier in self-defense shot three of them and stabbed several others, but was reported not to have killed any.[39] Although it was uncertain who caused this squabble, some soldiers were objects of insults by blacks. When such an occurrence happened a soldier very seldom turned the other cheek. One soldier wrote that if a soldier insulted a black or struck him, he would be "sentenced to Ft. Macon for 6 months with a ball and chain to his leg to live on hard tac and water...."[40]

Sometimes the blacks would serve as objects of practical jokes. One soldier, who collected buttons as a hobby, saw a particular button on the coat of a "shade" which he desired. He then stopped him and cut it off, stating that he was not allowed to wear that kind of button. The black "went on his way elated at not being taken to the guard house for the supposed offense," thinking the soldier to be a provost guard.[41]

Shortly after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, Secretary of War Stanton authorized Colonel Edward A. Wild of Boston to recruit blacks for the Union army in North Carolina. These black soldiers known as the "African Brigade" consisted of three regiments from North

Carolina, and the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts (also a black regiment). It was originally planned that these soldiers would be used for garrison duty. However, with the shortage of recruits they were later utilized in combat.[42]

Regardless of whether the blacks were civilians or soldiers, they were still looked on with feelings of prejudice by the northern troops. A soldier wrote to his mother that General Wilde of the "African Brigade" arrived and set up headquarters in the city. He brought a "colored surgeon" with him "who wears the uniform of a major" and was of course to be "obeyed and respected accordingly." He went on to state: "I wonder how the nice young men of Boston, the ladies pets, the 'gallant' 44th, will like the idea of presenting arms, the most respectable salute they can make to a negro."[43]

The Union invaders also expressed amazement at the fervor of the blacks' religious meetings. Lucius Thomas of the Forty-third Massachusetts Regiment wrote that as he was passing a Negro church meeting: "I never heard such noise in any meeting as their was there, I should think they were trying to see how much noise they could make."[44]

William F. Draper, Signal Officer of the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts Regiment wrote this concerning the negro meetings: "I will say nothing more than they exceed our Methodist meetings in religious fervor and excitement...but

their dances must be seen to be appreciated. The performances of the so-called negro minstrels are as nothing to them."[45]

As the number of blacks increased in New Bern, General Burnside appointed Vincent Colyer (an abolitionist minister and an agent of the YMCA of Brooklyn, NY) to be superintendent of the poor.[46] On March 29, 1862, Colyer placed a notice into the Progress that "All idle colored people, can find permanent employment in the service of the U.S. government." He also listed his location as being opposite the Academy Hospital.[47] Colyer helped the blacks by providing food, clothing, shelter and schools for them which would later bring him into conflict with Governor Stanley.

In references to these destitute people, Colyer wrote:

> The freed people came into my yard from the neighboring plantations, sometimes as many as one hundred at a time, leaving with joy their plows in the field, and their old homes, to follow our soldiers when returning from their frequent raids; the women carrying their pickaninnies and the men huge bundles of bedding and clothing, occasionally with a cart or old wagon, with a mule drawing their household stuff. They were immediately provided with food and hot coffee, which they seemingly relished highly, for they were usually both hungry and tired from their oftentimes long journeys and fastings. Their names were once registered in the books; and after one night's rest, they would find habitation in the deserted town, and be industriously at work, the men for the government and the women for themselves....They obtained quarters in the outhouses, kitchens and poorer classes of buildings, deserted by the citizens on the taking of New Bern. They attended our free schools and churches regularly and with eagerness.[48]

Colyer's term lasted only four months when in the fall of 1862 he left to be with General Burnside when the latter was transferred to the army of the Potomac. Upon Colyer's departure, General Foster appointed the Reverend James Means as superintendent of the poor.[49] Means held that position for a short time until he died of yellow fever.[50]

In January of 1863, Foster appointed the Reverend Horace James to fill the vacancy. By that time the growing number of blacks had reached such alarming levels that James' position was modified and given a new title: Superintendent of Negro Affairs.

James was well qualified for that position and during the remaining years of the war, he provided many destitute blacks with education, food, and shelter. He also established three refugee camps by which he could carry out his proposals. The most important of these camps was located one and one-half miles south of New Bern at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers. This land had once been part of the prosperous Peter G. Evans plantation which had been seized by Federal authorities after the fall of New Bern. This camp was then known as the Trent River settlement. The other two camps were located outside the vicinity of New Bern. Since their location was prone to Confederate attack, they were abandoned and those blacks were moved to the Trent River settlement.

By January of 1865, this settlement consisted of at

least 800 houses, a school, a blacksmith shop, a hospital, and several churches. It also contained the headquarters of the Freedmen's Bureau which by March 1865 James served as assistant commissioner. The Trent River settlement was later renamed James City, a name by which this subdivision of New Bern is known today.[51]

While eastern North Carolina was secure in Union hands, many soldiers sent home for their wives to come to New Bern.[52] Since army rations were not furnished the wives, it became quite expensive for many men to keep their wives there. It was reported to have cost one captain over one-hundred dollars to keep his wife in New Bern.[53]

By February, 1863 so many officers had their wives in town that it prompted one disgruntled recruit to write: "New Bern is the vilest southern hole to be imagined. It is full of officer wives just now, low wretches, generally like their husbands."[54]

While these women had the privilege of staying with their husbands, the same was not true for the wives of the privates. These ladies were housed in separate quarters far from the barracks. One reason for this was that the barracks were generally four feet apart and would prevent privacy for the ladies as well as the soldiers. The outdoor priveys or "sinks" as they were more commonly known in the military, were located not far from the regimental barracks.

According to one soldier, if a lady happen to pass by, "it would be a novel sight to see 15 or 20 butts all on a pale doing their business."[55]

For the wives who could not travel to New Bern to be with their husbands, many of them sent boxes of goods to New Bern by steamer.[56] These boxes would consist of clothing and food especially home cooked pies which many of the soldiers would share with their comrades. One soldier even received a box of maple sugar from his sister, which was "quite a help in getting down army rations."[57] However on many occasions, the food would be spoiled and some of the boxes would be damaged by rough seas.[58]

Some of the wives would also send their husbands money. Many of the soldiers unfortunately would take the money and have a night on the town. Drunkenness would be the result. A soldier recorded in his diary of May 30, 1862, that many soldiers had been arrested during the night for drunkenness. The result was, "the guard house for the night."[59] By January, 1864 the North Carolina Times reported that the Provost Marshal had resolved that all liquors be sold by the glass. "Citizens are not always honest," stated the Times, "and many bottles of liquor sold to them finds its way into channels, thereby filling the Guard House and reducing the number of enlisted men for duty."[60]

Some soldiers would even take the money their wives

sent them and spend it on houses of ill repute. During these troublesome times with the economic conditions being as they were, prostitution was rampant within New Bern. Henry J. H. Thompson of the Tenth Connecticut wrote to his wife stating that New Bern was the worst place "by double" than any place the Federal soldiers ever encountered.[61] On one visit to the town he encountered so many women "looking around" for men, that he assured his wife that he got out of the place as quick as he could.[62] The same soldier also wrote that "the bad wimen [sic]" were so thick in town that the General had ordered one of the houses burned.[63]

These women often visited the camps of regiments, in an attempt to entice customers to patronize them. At night the Provost guards would search certain houses of these women and find officers with white women and some with black "wenches." Thompson also stated that at least sixty men had contracted some type of venereal disease which he referred to as "the bad disorder."[64] He furthermore stated that many of the married men have women "waiting on them." He often wondered that if some of the wives knew how their husbands were conducting themselves, they would probably burn up their houses with their husbands in them.[65] Thompson was also quite self righteous in his letters to his wife, and was always careful to remind her that he did not "deal in the article."[66]

Certainly not all the women were like those previously mentioned. In order to clarify himself, Thompson wrote that while he was walking through town, he noticed many ladies standing at the windows and walking the streets, "the majority of them looked very nice and respectable."[67] He also wrote that while he was attending a meeting at the Methodist Church, he noticed that the ladies were "dressed very stylish." He therefore added, "I should judge by their looks and dress that they were all wealthy, or [their] parents were...."[68]

By December, 1864, many soldiers were marrying local women. These actions, however, were not considered acceptable by some. One soldier voiced his disagreement about such a marriage: "It is a great pity that Prescott Ward is about to marry a southern girl. We shall conquer the South, but the Southern people will never be reconciled to us or we to them...they and we are essentially a different people."[69]

Another soldier wrote, concerning yet another comparison:

> Their was one laughable habit which has afflicted the women here, that is snuff taking. But the manner of taking snuff - which is different from the Northern fashion. Instead of seizing it with their fingers and snuffing it into their nose, and they have a box about 3 inches deep which is filled by means of a swab made of a stick with a piece of a sponge attached on the end having wet it, they dip it into the snuff and chew it the same as men do tobacco we call A "Rub & Dip."[70]

The Federals took many precautions to fortify the town against enemy attack but there was one enemy they were not fortified against, and that was disease. It has been estimated that after the Federals captured New Bern, twice as many soldiers died of illnesses rather than from wounds as a result of the Battle of New Bern.[71]

A soldier wrote to his wife in the summer of 1862, "Our Regiment is perhaps as healthy as any other yet we loose [sic] a man almost every day by disease...." He furthermore stated that when they started on this expedition to North Carolina, they had in their regiment around 800 or 900 men. However by June of 1862 they had lost over half, mostly by sickness.[72] In fact, disease was so prevalent that this same soldier wrote a few weeks later: "I fear disease more than powder and ball...."[73]

The most common illness suffered by the soldiers was a gastrointestinal virus resulting from poor nutrition and the improper sanitation of crowded camps.[74] In most cases this sickness was not usually fatal, and with the proper medication available a person could regain his health. One soldier even wrote to his mother asking her to send him some of the "excellent diarrhea medicine" that according to him was sold only up North.[75]

Typhoid fever was the most common fatal illness suffered by the soldiers at New Bern. Other diseases were also prevalent, such as malaria, measles, yellow fever, and

small pox.[76] Malaria was subdued by the giving of quinine and whiskey each morning to the infected person. Measles was reported to have occurred in camp as early as spring, 1863.[77]

An epidemic of yellow fever occurred in the fall of 1864, and small pox was reported to have broken out in the winter of 1864 and 1865.[78]

Smallpox proved more fatal to the blacks than the whites.[79] According to Horace James, Superintendent of Negro Affairs:

> It was difficult to make them [the blacks] report new cases. They would frequently conceal those attacked with it under blankets and beds, and hide them in their houses, even after dissolution had taken place, so gregarious are they, as they burrow together in their filthy cabins, so ignorant are they of the value of skillful medicinal treatment....[80]

The North Carolina Times even reported on January 23, 1864 that while an officer of the Provost Marshal was looking for stolen property, he entered a house of a black family that had been infected by small pox. Upon further search he discovered a dead Negro man hidden between the feather mattress and the "straw bed."[81]

Yellow fever, however, was more deadly to the whites. The first cases occurred around the first of September, 1864, and those infected died six days later. The first victim was reported to have been John A. Taylor who was one of the owners of the principal drug store in town.[82] While

the number of victims were increasing daily, Dr. W. S. Hand, chief surgeon, refused to diagnose the disease as yellow fever. Even the North Carolina Times, of September 9, 1864, reported that "congestive fever" was raging in the city and that the citizens should not be alarmed. The Times furthermore stated that people could help themselves by "avoiding the hot scorching sun of midday and exposure to damp malarious air as well as excesses of living."[83] With new cases being reported each day, a soldier wrote to his sister that the sickness kept the well on duty practically all the time.[84] It is uncertain when the Federal authorities actually acknowledged the disease as yellow fever; however, by late September many persons were convinced that yellow fever was indeed in New Bern.[85]

A female observer wrote, "Fevers are now sweeping off our people at a rapid rate. Our streets are nearly deserted and the citizens are quite panic stricken."[86] The Union authorities had noted that the disease was initially confined to a two block section of the town bordering along the Trent and Neuse Rivers. The fever did not spread to the outskirts of the town and to the army camps. All of the citizens who had taken the oath of allegiance could leave; those who did not take the oath were compelled to stay. Many of the citizens traveled to Beaufort where the cooler temperatures of the coast seemed to ensure a more healthy place than New Bern.

As the fever progressed it even became necessary to transport the soldiers out of the city. The Fifteenth Connecticut had the misfortune of serving on provost duty during the epidemic. One observer wrote:

> ...there was scarcely a day in which one or more numbers (frequently four or five) of the 15th did not give up their lives to the terrible scourge. On the 4th of October, the regiment had become so weakened that it was relieved from provost duty by the 1st NC (colored).[87]

It was during that time, between the 1st and the 15th, that the plague was at its height. However, a soldier recorded in his diary on October 9 that it was much cooler that day and he anticipated an end to the disease.[88] The end did not come until the last death occurred on November 6, 1864.[89] During the epidemic it was estimated that at least 1,500 people died out of a population of 4,000.[90]

As one observer wrote, "...the disease made sad havoc among the citizens, they died off like sheep." This same observer wrote: "There was a time when you could not step outside without seeing one or more funeral processions."[91] Still another observer recorded that while he was riding through town, he passed eleven streets and a funeral procession in everyone.[92]

A soldier of the Fifteenth Connecticut wrote,

> The scenes that were witnessed in the streets of New Berne were simply awful. Many times was I called upon to enter a house where the scourge had taken away some member of the household and in several instances, where everyone of the family lay dead upon his bed, or on the

> floor of the house; many times was I obliged to send one of the guard for the customary pine box to convey the remains to the place of burial.[93]

W. S. Benjamin, a civilian who contracted the disease and lived, wrote: "The silent, solemn travel of hearse after hearse, with no accompanying friend, save the zealous, fearless minister of God, leading the way...pronouncing the solitary service o'er the departed."[94] The minister mentioned was the Post Chaplain, the Reverend J. Hill Rouse; Benjamin referred to him as being "the ideal Christian, the beau-ideal of God's noblest work."[95] Benjamin also reported burials each day would be as much as twenty to twenty-five persons; however, another contemporary wrote that on some days they were known to bury 100 people.[96]

Among the most notable to have died during the epidemic was a prominent lawyer James Bryan and his wife. Also the Chief Provost Marshal, Major Henry T. Lawson of the Second Massachusetts Heavy Artillery succumbed to the fatal disease.[97] Assisting the Reverend Rouse was the "Dead Corps," a group of ten "courageous, devoted men" who not only helped in the burial of the dead, but also administered comfort to the sick. These were often referred to as "Good Samaritans" and "self-sacrificing men" who "heroically faced death with all its terrors." From their number only half died of the contagion.[98]

As the disease reached epidemic proportions in New Bern, Federal authorities tried to prevent the spread by

dispensing lime throughout the town, burning of tar and turpentine on almost every corner to purify the air, and also burning contaminated buildings which might cause the spread of the contagion.[99]

W. S. Benjamin wrote: "The appearance of New Bern at this time was sombre in the extreme; with the fading shade of each evening, the kindled fires at every corner, emitting heavy columns of the densest and blackest smoke, enveloped the city in a funeral pall...."[100] As these kindled fires of tar and turpentine were kept burning night and day, one soldier reported: "I got out of the city as soon as I could for I didn't like the stinch [sic] of the city..."[101]

Another observer noted:

> Many houses had been burned in an effort to stop the spread of the disease, leaving the chimneys to mark their former existence, while the remaining houses were black from the smoke of fumigation. Even the trees showed the effect of fumigation, being blackened and leafless, and everyone seemed in despair.[102]

With the onset of cooler weather, the disease subsided, but not until it had left its mark upon almost every house. Lieutenant Giles Ward, aide de camp to the Commander General at New Bern, was one of the few who survived after contracting the disease. "We have certainly had a horrible time, and it seems now like the awakening from some terrible dream," wrote Ward. "It does not seem possible that such things could be."[103]

Although it is now known that yellow fever was

transmitted by mosquitoes, most people during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries believed that stagnant water and unsanitary conditions caused the disease. Some believed that the epidemic in New Bern originated from a ditch at the foot of Craven Street which had been filled with manure and rotten beef. Others believed that it originated from underneath storehouses along the Craven Street wharf, where pools of stagnant water had been located.[104]

After the epidemic, Major General Benjamin F. Butler, Commander of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, arrived in New Bern to inspect sanitation conditions.

> "When I got within two miles of the place I met an awful stench, as of the unclean and uncovered filth of camps. I rode around the town, a circle of three miles and better, and I found the whole town encircled with the remains and debris of the camps of the regiments that had been located around it...I found that the ditches had never been filled up, but when they got unbearable the colonel would move his camp.[105]

Although filth and unsanitary conditions were not the cause of yellow fever as was previously thought, these conditions, however, prompted hoards of flies, that would crawl over food spreading germs and disease throughout the camps.[106]

To assist the number of soldiers stricken by disease and wounded, hospitals were established within New Bern and on the outskirts of town. The most prominent ones were located in the New Bern Academy, St. John's Masonic Lodge building, and the Stanley Hospital. The latter consisted of

houses and other buildings located within the block bordering Middle Broad, Craven, and New Streets.[107] Each hospital was under the command of a Chief Surgeon who was also assisted by soldiers, members of the Invalid Corps, freed blacks, who were employed by the government and female volunteers who were probably Union sympathizers. Another group of ladies that offered their services as well as spiritual comforts were a group of nuns from the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in New York City.[108] Their quarters were located in the house that once belonged to the famous Revolutionary War patriot, John Wright Stanley. This house, which at that time was located across from the Stanley Hospital, was chosen by General Burnside as his first headquarters.

Many Union soldiers wrote letters back home commenting on their stay in these hospitals. As one soldier wrote: "Thank God I am out of the hospital. I have been there 12 days and almost starved to death. I am very weak not from sickness alone, but for something to eat...all I got in the hospital was a piece of toast 3 times a day about as big as 3 fingers."[109]

For those soldiers that survived the sickness and disease, most considered themselves fortunate. Lieutenant William Henry Snow of the Second Massachusetts recorded that "...scores of men in this place are sick with the shakes and

swamp fevers...." He went on to write:

> I did feel a little unwell during hot weather while the yellow fever was at its height, and I tell you that the heat and air and water were awful here at one time I did not know what was coming. I used to think that perhaps my wife would be a widow in spite of all I could do about the matter. We had 40 men in the Hospital two only died of yellow fever; the remainder were sick with a sort of congestive chills and typhoid fever.[110]

Even though sickness and death took its toll upon the Union soldiers stationed in and around New Bern, many were convinced that they were fighting to preserve the Union. This was so clearly evident in the caption of Union stationary. Such captions as "The Union Now and Forever" and "Not a Staff Must Fall" were ever constant reminders to the Union soldiers and to their families, that they were fighting for a noble cause. Even the North Carolina Times published from New Bern had as its heading, "Liberty and Union--Now and Forever--One and Inseparable". Many soldiers were spurred by these patriotic sentiments, as one soldier wrote: "I think that in this the darkest hour of country's need...one life seems little to offer to my country."[111]

Others were not as patriotic, however, for as one soldier wrote: "It will take more money than their is in this country to make me enter the service again."[112] He later concluded that nine months was long enough for him to stay in the "butchering business."[113]

As the war continued, the once proud South was being humbled. Newspapers were filled with reports of battles being lost by Southern armies and famine that plagued many once-prosperous Southern cities. While the North had hoped to starve the South into submission, bread riots occurred in cities throughout North Carolina and the rest of Dixie. Even in Wilmington, ladies armed with knives and axes attacked government storehouses and took flour by force.[114] Not only was bread scarce, but meat was also lacking from the Southerner's table. Many resorted to the killing of mules, household pets, and even rats to supply the meat deficiency. A report had surfaced that President Davis approved of the use of rat meat because they were "as good as squirrels."[115]

Lieutenant Giles Ward of the Ninety-second New York wrote his sister sympathetically stating, "Oh! if you could see the poor people starving, it would break your heart."[116] He also wrote his mother commenting about the citizens of New Bern:

> ...I see so much distress and suffering among the poor inhabitants here that it makes my heartache, I was talking to some of them yesterday, and speaking about the War, and its consequences, she told me that her greatest suffering, and anxiety was the poor soldiers, and that for that alone, she wished this war over, and then she asked me if I had a mother and talked to me as if I were a friend or one of their own soldiers, instead of an enemy.

Ward, with feelings of longing to be back home with his

family then concluded by writing, "Oh! how I wish I could see my dear Mother tonight, and give her one good night kiss."[117] Unfortunately for Ward and many other soldiers, the war became a death sentence. While some soldiers died on the field of battle, or by disease, Ward was accidentally shot by a member of his own troops on January 29, 1865, less than three months before the war's end.[118]

While Grant's army was battling against Lee's army in Virginia, another military strategy was being planned against the South. Major General William T. Sherman was to lead a force of 60,000 soldiers through the heart of the deep South with such destructive force, that it has been remembered as one of the most horrible episodes of the Civil War.[119]

By September 1864, the South's most important rail center, Atlanta, fell to Sherman's forces. This was a tremendous boost to the North and helped pave the way for the re-election of Lincoln in November. While the South was lingering on, the final days of the war were approaching.[120]

Conclusion

The Civil War had a tremendous effect on many people in the South. In New Bern, as well as other areas of the South, the war marked the end of a way of life. The initial chapter of this thesis explained that New Bern was a prosperous town before the war. Merchant ships carried on a thriving trade with the West Indies and the Northern states. While goods were being imported, products such as lumber, naval stores, cotton, rice, and other goods found an acceptable market in Northern ports. After North Carolina seceded, the Union blockade had a very minor effect at first upon the economy of the town. This was due mostly to the treacherous waters off the North Carolina coast and to the blockade runners that successfully brought supplies into eastern North Carolina. Chapter One also explained that between the time North Carolina seceded and just months prior to New Bern's capture, the town was bustling with activity from Confederate soldiers stationed in and around New Bern. While merchants enjoyed a certain amount of prosperity, farmers were being warned to plant more corn and raise more hogs or cattle; thus foretelling of shortages yet to come.

The major effect for New Bernians came about as a result of Burnside's capture of the town on March 14, 1862. Many of the town's prosperous citizens fled towards Kinston,

Goldsboro, and even as far west as High Point to escape the advancing Federals. Many Federal soldiers had expected to see a thriving town when they entered, but instead found Negroes and poor whites pillaging the stores and dwellings. While the Federal authorities beckoned merchants to return, some Northerners established businesses within the town. One such person was a dentist, Dr. B.F. Wright, who advertised in the Daily Progress that he was a graduate of the New York College for Dental Surgery. He furthermore advertised the use of the Electro-Magnetic Machine for the extraction of teeth. The advertisement went on to state: "By its use the pain in most cases in comparatively nothing, the attention being called off in such a manner that the tooth is taken out before the patient is hardly aware of it...."[1] Obviously this device was a new invention to New Bernians.

The preceding chapters have also explained that the war had an effect upon the social institutions of the town. While most of the citizens had fled before Burnside's invasion, the town was bombarded with former slaves fleeing to freedom behind the Union lines. As a result hospitals, schools, and settlements were established to accommodate this large segment of the population. Another group of people who were in need were the poor whites, including widows and orphans. The Federal government established for them a "House of Refuge" along with thirty acres of land

located on the outskirts of town. Thus for the first time in New Bern's history, the Federal government was accepting responsibility for the freedmen and less fortunate ones of society.[2]

The war also had an effect upon the town politically. After the capture of the town, New Bern became the military base and capital of the Department of North Carolina. Thus the government of the town was no longer in the hands of the civilians, but in the hands of the military. Throughout the remaining years of the war, Federal authorities endeavored to keep the town well fortified and to perform much needed city improvements. One particular improvement concerned the repairing of the sidewalks along Middle Streets between Pollock and South Front Streets (Tryon Palace Drive). It was later reported in the North Carolina Times that "a sober man" could travel over it by day and not "break his neck."[3]

Another improvement was the establishment of street signs throughout the town. This was established to assist non-citizens to better find their way and was probably the first time any such signs were ever used in New Bern.[4]

Finally, the Civil War had a psychological effect upon New Bernians. Many citizens could hardly bear the thought of "Yankees" invading their town and forcing their institutions upon it. This was not only the case in New Bern, but in many parts of the South. It has been said that

the Civil War "conferred a unique legacy upon southerners: they became the only Americans ever to lose a war and suffer military occupation by the enemy."[5] Fortunately for New Bernians, this psychological factor was not an enduring one. As the war ended, many of New Bern's citizens returned to their homes (or what was left of their homes) and to their professions.

It is not the intent of this thesis to discuss Reconstruction and how it affected New Bern, but simply to emphasize that the Civil War was the ultimate dividing line in the history of our nation. For it not only marked the deaths of thousands of Americans, but it also marked the end of the old America, and the emergence of the new.

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[21]Letter from _____, December 6, 1862, New Bern Occupation Papers.

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[3]Letter from Henry Clay Pardee to Father, March 28, 1862, Henry Clay Pardee Papers.

[4]Letter from Lucius Thomas to Mother, March 4, 1863, Lucius Thomas Papers.

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[91]Letter from William H. Jackson to "Friend George," October 28, 1864, Geroge A. Root Papers.

[92]Letter from Giles F. Ward to Mother, October 25, 1864, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[93]Thorpe, 234-235, as found in Thornton typescripts, 92-93.

[94]Benjamin, Great Epidemic, 11.

[95]Benjamin, Great Epidemic, 12, 14.

[96]Benjamin, Great Epidemic, 9 and Letter from Giles Ward to Mother, October 25, 1864, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[97]Benjamin, Great Epidemic, 9.

[98]Benjamin, Great Epidemic, 10-11.

[99]King, "Yellow Fever", 4.

[100]Benjamin, Great Epidemic, 6-7.

[101]Letter from Henry J.H. Thompson to wife, October 16, 1864, Henry J.H. Thompson Papers.

[102]King, "Yellow Fever" 6.

[103]Letter from Giles F. Ward to "My Dear Mother," November 2, 1864, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[104]King, "Yellow Fever", 3.

[105]Benjamin F. Butler, Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences, pp. 411-412, as found in Thornton typescripts, 97.

[106]Bell I. Wiley, "The Common Soldier of the Civil War," Civil War Times Illustrated, (Harrisburg: Historical Times, Inc., 1973), Republished by Eastern Acorn Press, 1984, 54.

[107]King, "Medical Aspects," 1.

[108]King, "Medical Aspects," 2.

[109]Letter from Henry J.H. Thompson to wife, September, 7, 1864, Henry J.H. Thompson Papers.

[110]Letter from William Henry Snow, December 4, 1864, William Henry Snow Papers.

[111]Letter from Giles Ward to "My Dear Mother," June 28, 1863, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[112]Letter from Eben T. Hale to Dear Mother," February 6, 1863, Eben Thomas Hales Papers.

[113]Letter from Eben T. Hale to "Dear Mother," February 25, 1863, Eben Thomas Hale Papers.

[114]Letter from Giles F. Ward to "My Dear Father," May 10, 1863, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[115]Maury Klein, Life in Civil War America, (Harrisburg: Historical Times, Inc., National Park Visitors' Series, 1984), Republished by Eastern Acorn Press, 1984, 22, hereinafter cited as Klein, Life in Civil War America.

[116]Letter from Giles F. Ward to "My Dear Sister," June 29, 1863, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[117]Letter from Giles F. Ward to "My Dear Mother," June 28, 1863, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[118]"Particulars of the Death of Lieut. Giles F. Ward" as related by Captain John W. Horn, March 1, 1865, Giles Frederick Ward, Jr. Papers.

[119]James I. Robertson, Jr. The Concise Illustrated History of the Civil War, (Harrisburg: The National Historical Society, 1979) Republished by Eastern Acorn Press, 1981, 45-48, hereinafter cited as Robertson, History of the Civil War.

[120]Robertson, History of the Civil War, 47.

Footnotes

Conclusion

[1]Daily Progress, January 2, 1864.

[2]North Carolina Times (New Bern), January 23, 1864.

[3]North Carolina Times (New Bern), March 9, 1864.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Maury Klein, Life in Civil War America, (Harrisburg: Historical Times, Inc., National Park Visitors' Series, 1984), Republished by Eastern Acorn Press, 1984, 14.

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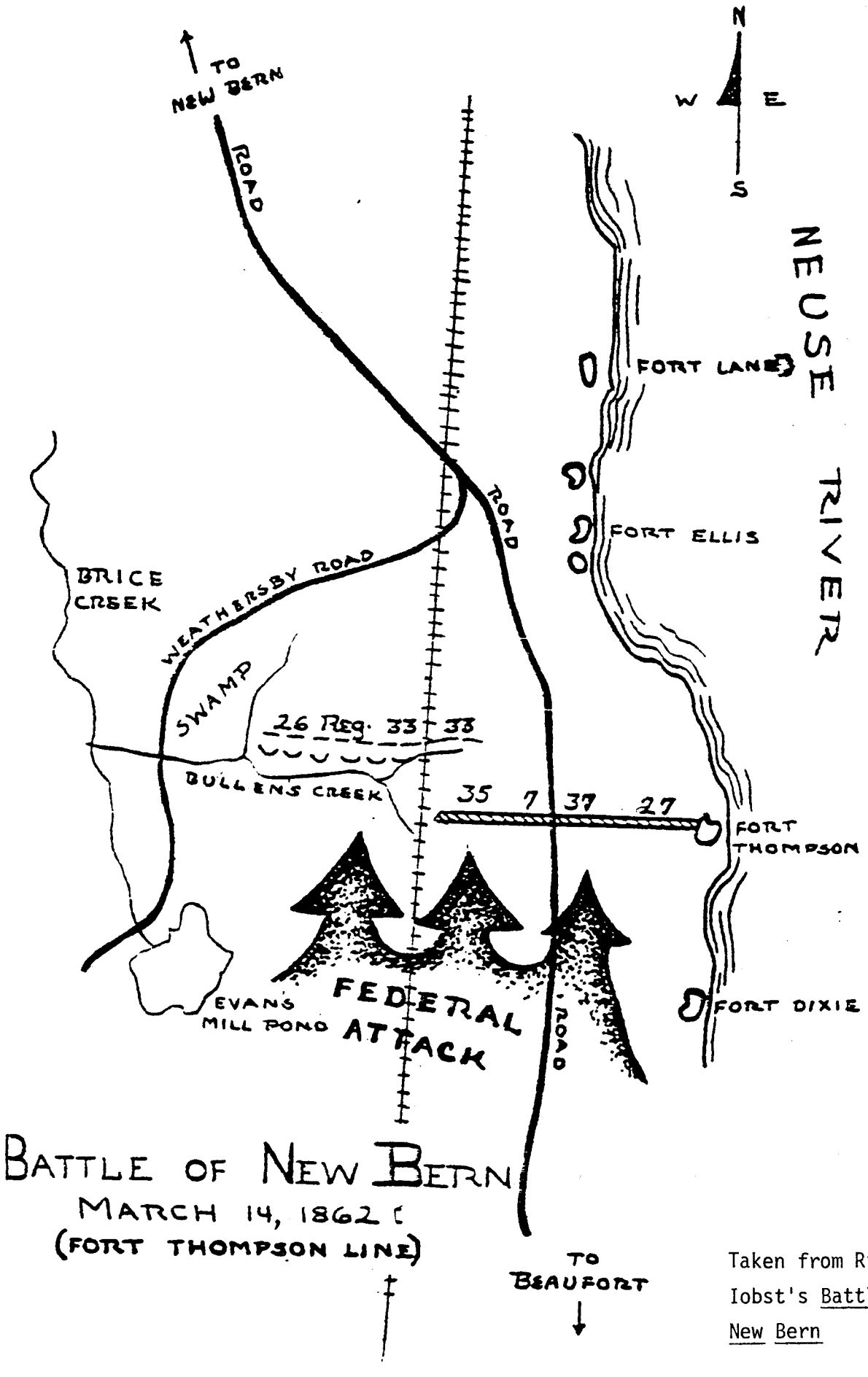
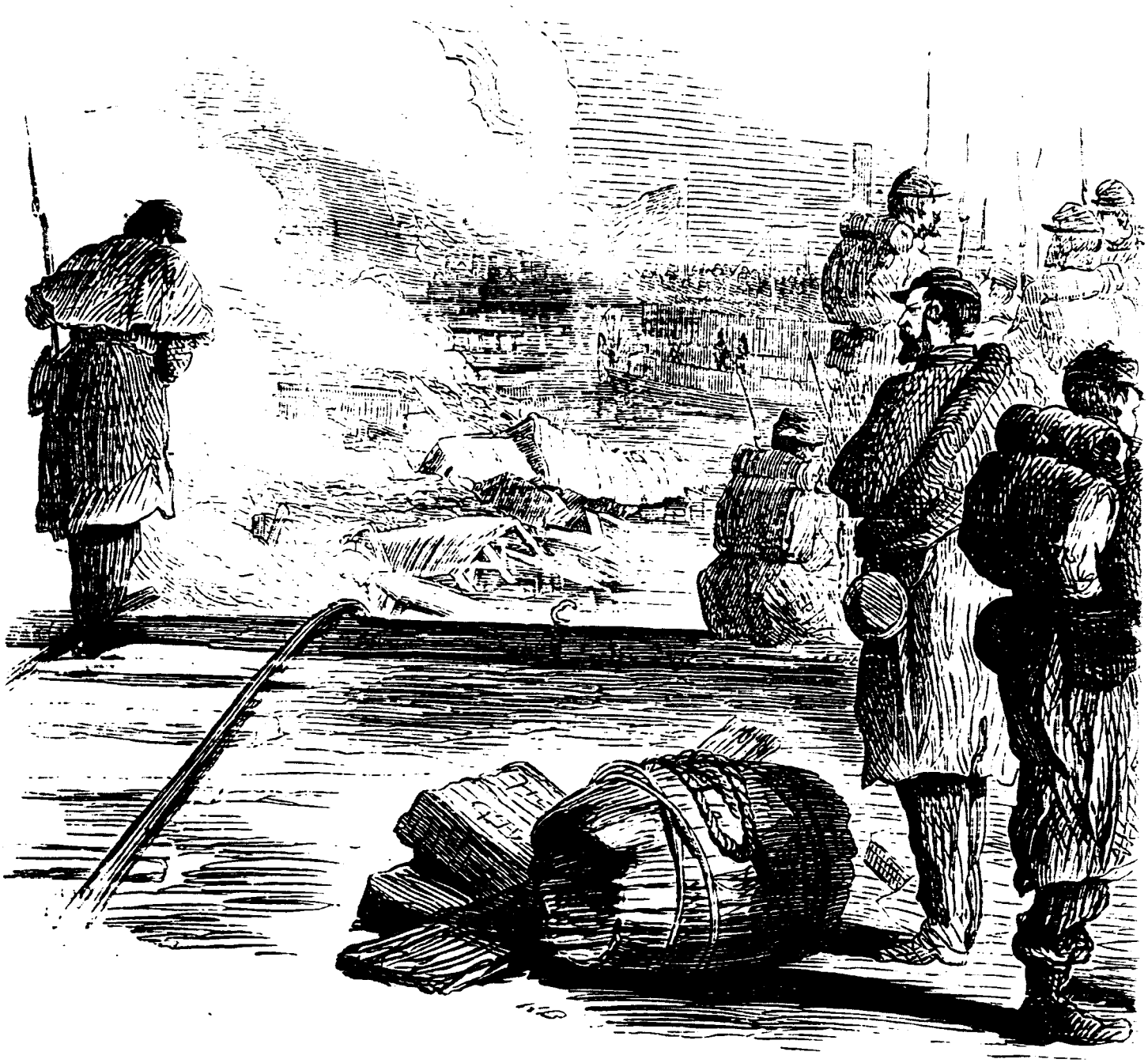


BATTLE OF NEW BERN

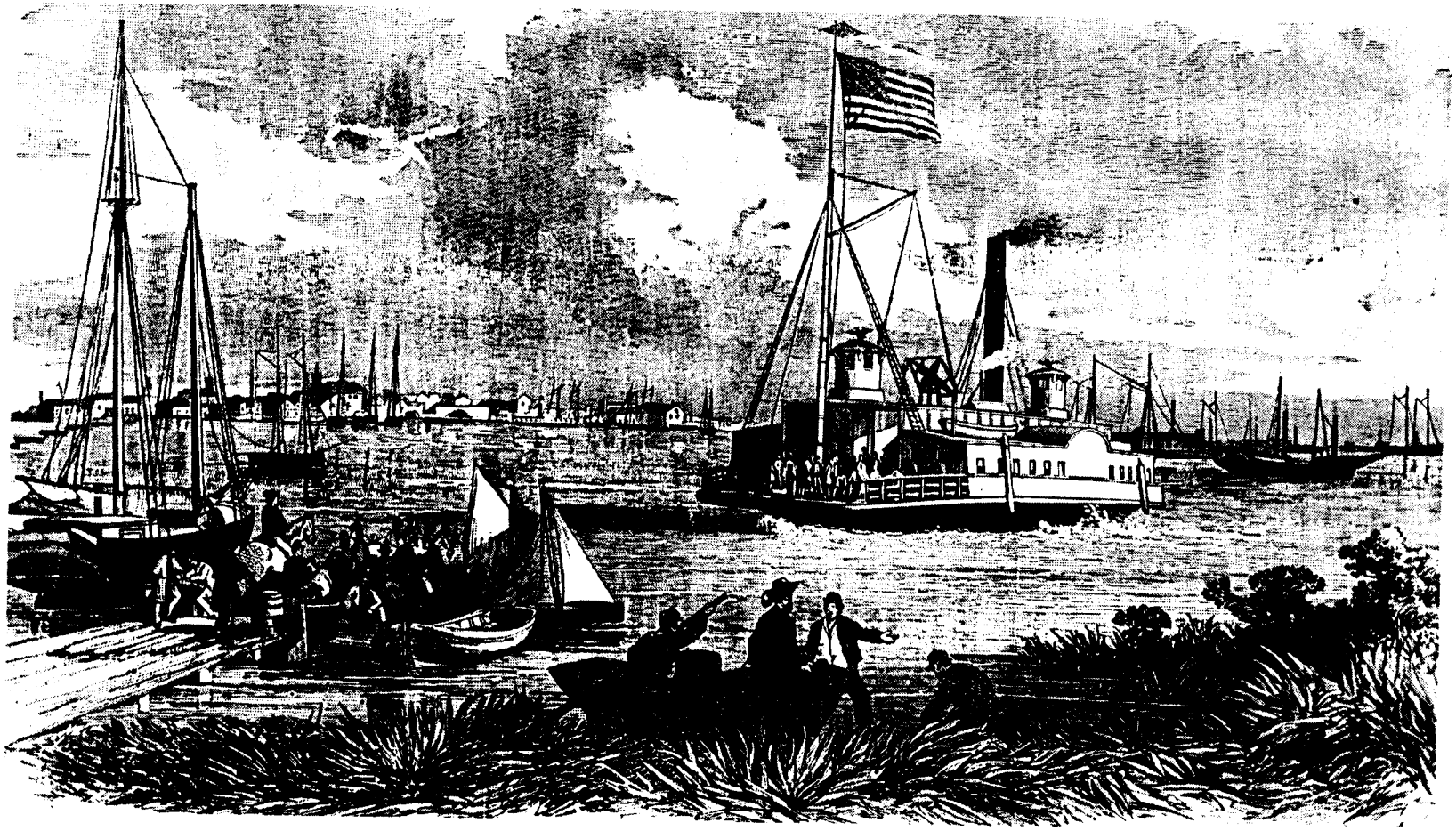
MARCH 14, 1862

(FORT THOMPSON LINE)

Taken from Richard Iobst's Battle of New Bern

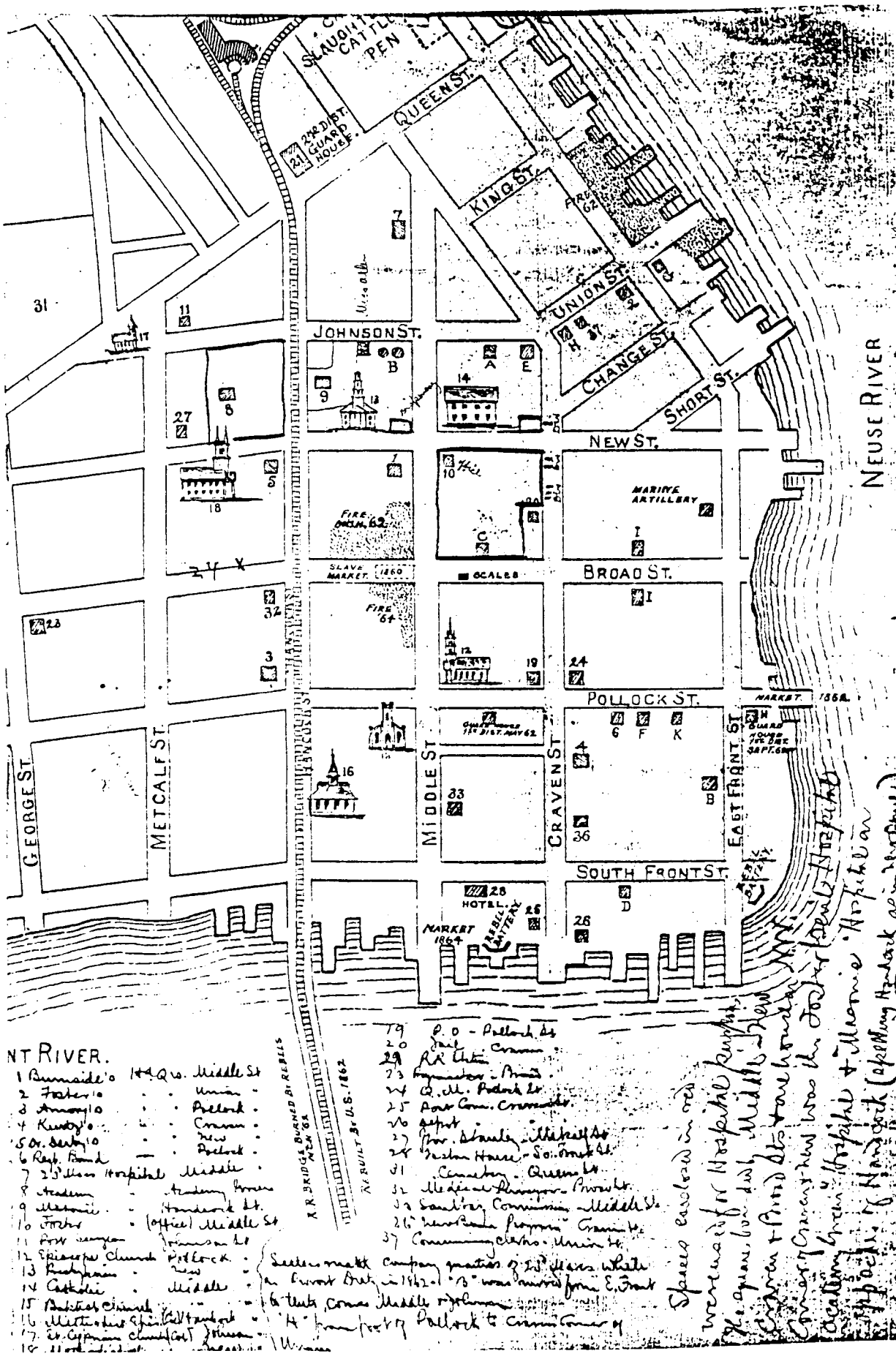


Confederates setting fire to the Trent River Railroad bridge upon their retreat, March 14, 1862.



View of the City of New Bern, North Carolina, from the Bank of the Neuse River - The Tenth Connecticut Regiment awaiting transportation by the flagship "Delaware."

(Taken from Richard Iobst's Battle of New Bern)



Map of New Bern drawn by a Union soldier during the occupation.

St. John's Masonic Lodge and theater taken ca. 1862. While the second floor contained the Lodge room and Lowthrop Hall, the first floor contained the New Bern Theater. This building was used as a hospital during the years of Federal occupation.

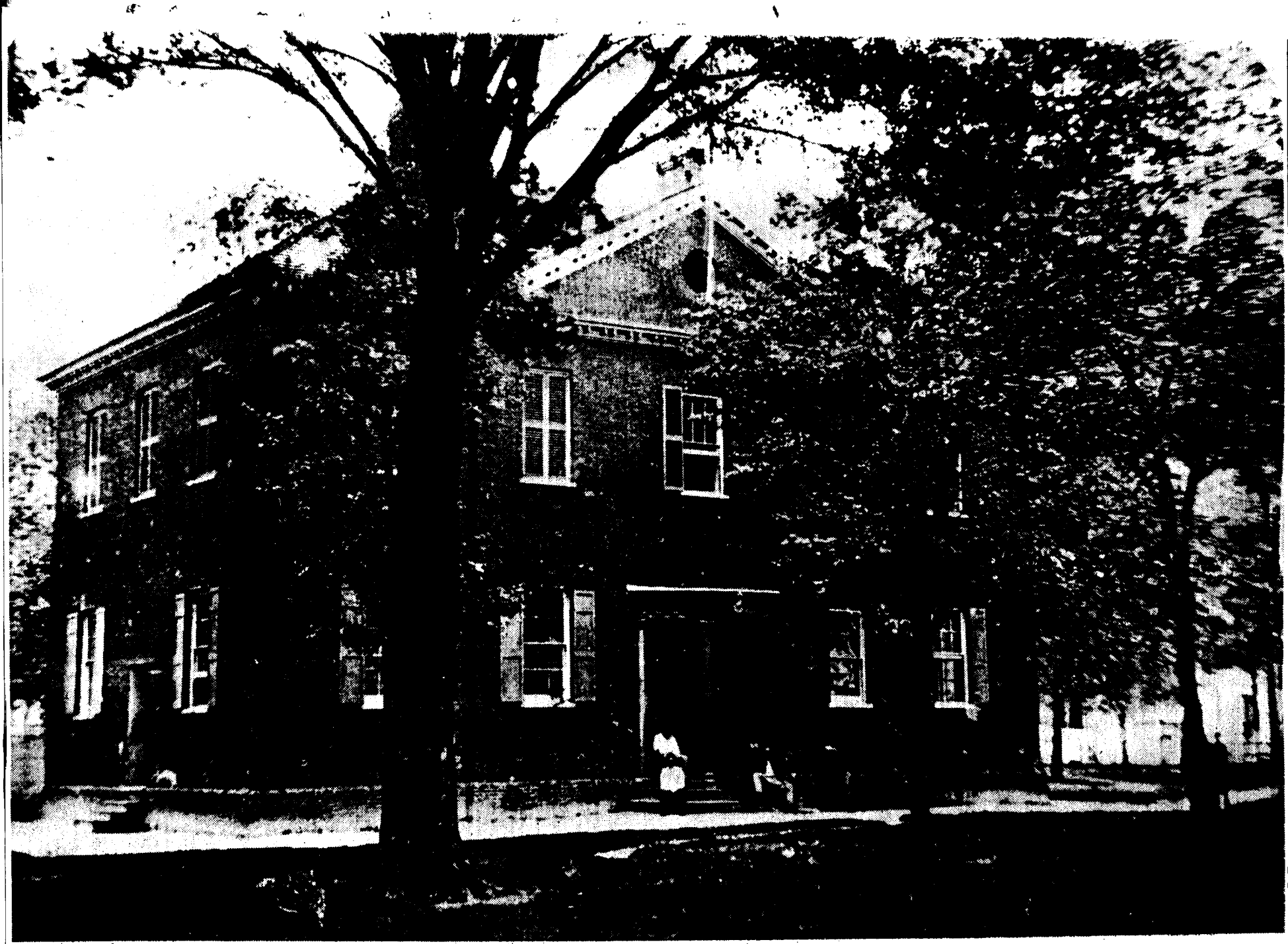


Photo courtesy of the New Bern Academy Historical Commission

A LOOK AT THE PAST — This reprint of a photo taken around 1862 by a Massachusetts soldier named William Lewis Welch shows the academy as it looked while it was in use as a hospital for Union troops during the Civil War.