

Youthful Gates Corporal Became General: Two Companies of R-C Troopers In Service With Famed 19th Cavalry

Roanoke - Chowan men in the spring of 1861 wanted to be cavalrymen with the newly-forming Confederate army.
Many did, and fought as horse soldiers for the entire war with one of North Carolina's most famous cavalry units—the 19th Regiment (Second Cavalry).



GEN. W. P. ROBERTS

Two companies—one composed of men from Gates and Hertford, another of men from Northampton and Bertie—joined other horsemen from throughout North Carolina gathered near Raleigh in the summer of 1861.

John Booth of Gates County was captain of Company C, made up of Gates and Hertford men. John Randolph of Northampton commanded the men of Company H, mostly Northampton troopers, a few from Bertie.

Among the youngsters of Company H, William P. Roberts, not yet 20 years old, was proudly wearing the stripes of First Sergeant. Young John Wheeler Moore, scion of a famous Hertford family, was a captain and was named commissary officer for the regiment. Col. Samuel P. Sprull of Bertie was commanding officer of the regiment.

Lacking many accoutrements of battle, the regiment wasn't fully organized until September. In October, its companies were divided, and the Roanoke-Chowan men were sent as a tiny command guarding the approaches to New Bern.

In March, 1862, federal forces seized the town, and for more months, the tiny units of ill-armored horsemen patrolled the outposts of the federal army, watching for signs of Union activity.

By midsummer, 1862, the regiment was receiving enough equipment to join the armies in Virginia. The Gates-Hertford men were detailed with another company to protect their home county, stationed at Hamilton on the Roanoke River.

The other companies moved north as Col. Sprull retired his command to Col. Lee Williams.

First Blood
Then came first blood as the regiment participated in the Battle at Fredericksburg in December 1862. A few days later the Northampton-Bertie men marched north with a force commanded by famed Cavalryman Jeb Stuart, bent on raiding Union depots in Maryland.

Meanwhile, men of Company H had seen battle with federal cavalry in the summer of 1861, near Washington, N. C. Captain Booth was severely wounded. The command fell on Captain James M. Wynns of Hertford. W. P. Roberts became a lieutenant. Abram Harrell and L. R. Cowper were junior lieutenants.

The two-company unit fought some more as it served on picket duty around Petersburg. In March, 1863, it went on a foraging sweep with Confederate forces in the Suffolk area. The supplies would be used for the Army of Northern Virginia as it moved northward in a summer invasion of Pennsylvania.

Finally, on May 20, 1863, the Northampton-Bertie unit joined the main part of the 19th at Culpeper, Virginia. General Stuart

was preparing to move north, screening the movement of General Lee's gray-clad columns.

The North Carolina cavalrymen did not have long to see action against the crack cavalrymen of the Union army. On June 9, the Confederate horsemen fought a bitter battle at Brandy Station as the Union forces sought to halt

the southern advance. George Roundtree of Gates County was mortally wounded. James H. Bunch of Bertie died with a Union carbine bullet in his body.

Col. Williams was hit in the head, and died almost immediately. Depleted, the regiment was to see worse action as the rebel cavalry column crossed the Potomac into Maryland.

On June 21, after several days of continual skirmishing, the 19th met its bloodbath at a Virginia town named Upperville.

Captain Miles Eure of Gates County, who had been serving as captain of Company G, was another who fell wounded at Hanover. He was captured and was to spend the rest of the war in northern prison camps.

Already, a day before at Middleburg, James Blythe of Hertford had been killed. Joseph Baddy and Simeon Been of Northampton had seen shot down.

Assistant Regimental Surgeon C. E. Worrell of Hertford already had his hands full.
But then came Upperville. Union troops behind a stone wall decimated Confederate ranks. Young W. P. Roberts was cited for bravery as he rallied a portion of his unit to fight off a Union attack that threatened the CSA artillery train.

C. W. Smith and Hiram Lassiter of Northampton fell dead. Others fell wounded. Some were made prisoners.

Die In Prison
On June 30, more than half of the regiment was made prisoner as it fought a rearguard action near Hanover, Pa. Isaac Peel of Northampton died in the confused action. So did John B. Jordan of Gates.

Captured were W. H. Grant, J. B. Foster and W. H. Sumner of Northampton. All were to die in a Union prison camp.

The battered remnants of the regiment joined Lee's army on the second day of the battle of Gettysburg, and returned with the defeated Confederates to Virginia.

In August, reorganization took place.
Young Roberts, now 21 years old, was named captain of Company H, replacing Captain Wynns, who had returned to Hertford County to raise cavalrymen to serve in North Carolina.

The tiny regiment was still fighting action in the exciting summer of 1863, working with the battered cavalry column of the Army of Northern Virginia as it guarded the retreat of that army. At Jack's Shop in Virginia, W. B. McCabe of Hertford was killed in action.

During the winter of 1863-4, the regiment continued its picketing duties as the Army of Northern Virginia gathered its strength for another year of campaigning.

As the spring came, another reorganization. Roberts became major. Abram Harrell of Gates became commander of little Company C. Samuel N. Buxton took command of Company H as Captain Randolph retired his commission.

As the Union Army of Grant closed with the southerners under Lee in early spring, 1864, cavalrymen clashed in skirmishes. Roberts was wounded in the head at little Haws's Shop. Captain Harrell was wounded, and young L. R. Cowper, who had risen from the ranks of Gates County men, became commanding officer of Company C.

In a series of actions, the regiment saw full service, until it was routed at an action near Hanover in May.
Roberts admits he was "in rout with the rest." When a brave private handed him the regimental flag, the youthful major said "damn the flag, Ramsey, I don't want it."

But the courageous enlisted man was adamant. Roberts seized the standard and was able to rally a few troopers. His act established him as the regiment's leader, despite his youth.

In action at Black and White's a few days later, Sergeant Nicholas Harrell of Hertford, first sergeant of Company C, displayed great bravery in hand-to-hand combat, killing six Union troopers in one day's action.

In August, young Roberts, just turned his 23rd birthday, was named colonel of the little regiment upon the death of the Colonel.

The fast pace of cavalry skirmishing did not let up.
Cowper Killed
In October, the regiment barely escaped another wholesale capture near White Oak Swamp. In the confused fighting, Captain Cowper died.

Roberts mourned him: "he and I had left home together, had been noncoms together, he was my personal friend; always jolly and in splendid humor."
For young men, it was a time of mourning as the shadow of defeat fell across an exhausted southern army.

Captain Harrell returned to command the battered remnant of Company G. Captain Buxton rallied his few Northampton men in Company H.
On December 8, near Belfield south of Petersburg, the 19th fought its final skirmish of the long year.

Captain Harrell led his men in a final wild charge.

In winter quarters, the regiment counted only handfuls of men left. On February 21, 1865, young Roberts, only 23 years old, was promoted to brigadier-general. His entire brigade was smaller than the regiment had been a few years before.

The end was soon near. As Union forces broke the Confederate lines, and the Army of Northern Virginia gathered for its final march, the 19th Regiment, made a final charge.

On the morning of the Appomattox surrender, the little brigade captured four Union cannons blocking a forlorn escape route of the southern army.

A few hours later, the horse soldiers laid down their arms, and struggled for home, riding their bony mounts which Union General Grant had allowed them to keep in order to break ground for crops in a new - prostrate south.

UNITS

(Continued from Page 1)

1864, of men previously under age for service.

12th BATTALION OF CAVALRY—Company B composed of Hertford and Bertie men. Known as Wheeler's Cavalry. Companies organized independently in 1862, into battalion in summer of 1863. Later transferred to 59th Regiment (Fourth Cavalry).

FIFTH REGIMENT—Companies H and B from Gates County. Organized July, 1861.

19th REGIMENT (Second Cavalry)—Company C from Gates and Hertford. Organized summer of 1861. W. P. Roberts captain of one company, later colonel of regiment and brigadier-general.

33rd REGIMENT—Company E from Gates County. Organized in September, 1861.

52nd REGIMENT—Company C from Gates and Chowan counties. Organized spring of 1862.

68th REGIMENT—Company I from Gates. Organized in summer of 1863 when federal invasion threatened to erupt from eastern North Carolina bases.

Northampton County FIRST NORTH CAROLINA REGIMENT—Company F composed of Northampton County men and some from Hertford. Organized spring, 1861.

NINTH REGIMENT (First Cavalry)—Company B from Northampton. Organized spring, 1861.

15th REGIMENT—Company A from Northampton. Organized summer, 1861, as Fifth Volunteers. Later reorganized as 15th Regiment.

19th REGIMENT (Second Cavalry)—Company H from Bertie and Northampton (mostly Northampton). Organized summer, 1861.

32nd REGIMENT—Company C and Company D from Northampton. Organized into independent battalion in summer, 1861. Into regiment in summer, 1862.

54th REGIMENT—Company D from Northampton. Organized May, 1862.

59th REGIMENT—Company E from Northampton. Paul F. Faison of Northampton was commanding colonel. Organized in summer, 1862.

70th REGIMENT (First Junior Reserves)—Company K had some Northampton men. Composed of underage youngsters. Organized in May, 1864.

THIRD BATTALION OF LIGHT ARTILLERY—Company A from Northampton. Organized summer of 1861.

12th BATTALION OF CAVALRY—Company A and Company C from Northampton. Organized as "Wheeler's Cavalry" in 1863. Companies organized independently year before. Later assigned to 59th Regiment (Fourth Cavalry).

15th BATTALION OF CAVALRY—Known as "Wynns's Cavalry"—Organized in summer of 1863. Other Northampton men served in some southside Virginia cavalry companies. One company of 10th Virginia Cavalry Regiment composed of Northampton men.

FIFTH

(Continued from Page 1)

By now, the Fifth was little more than a company. More than 100 Roanoke-Chowan men of its original number had been killed in action.

For the next 12 months, this tiny band continued to serve in the thick of action with the dwindling Army of Northern Virginia.

When Lee's army laid down its arm at Appomattox in April, two men of Company B, Lt. George Parker of Company H, four privates of Company F, and seven privates of Company H were men from the Roanoke-Chowan who received paroles from the Army of Northern Virginia. They were the remnants of more than 300 men, mostly from Gates County, who had joined the Confederate forces four years earlier.



GENERAL MATT RANSOM

Matt Whitaker Ransom was by all odds the Roanoke-Chowan's most noted contribution to the Confederate army, and to North Carolina politics of a later day.

Thirty-five years old when war began, Ransom was already an important leader in the state.

Born in Warrenton, educated at the University of North Carolina, he was named state attorney-general by the Democratic Party in 1852, at the age of 26. The next year, he married Martha Anne Exum, daughter of a Northampton County planter.

In 1856, he resigned from the state post and came back to Verona, the Northampton plantation, and settled to the life of a country squire.

When war drums sounded, Ransom went to the colors. He was elected Lt. Colonel of the First North Carolina Regiment and marched, in July, 1861, to Richmond.

Service in northern Virginia followed. In the spring of 1862, the regiment returned to North Carolina and Ransom was named Colonel of the 35th regiment, a unit which had been badly mauled at the battle of New Bern, when federal troops had seized the town.

Ransom, a citizen-soldier, was brigaded in a brigade under the command of his brother, Robert Ransom, a West Pointer and later Major General in the Confederate army.

As Colonel, Ransom led his men in the bloody Seven Days Battles around Richmond in 1862, and at even-more-bloody Antietam in September—the self-trained Colonel was in temporary command of his brother's brigade.

Ransom became general of the

Mostly from Northampton:

1st Cavalry Had R-C Men

A proud troop of eastern North Carolinians marched in the summer of 1861 to join North Carolina's First Regiment of Cavalry.

Company B included many Northampton horsemen, others from Hertford, Gates, Bertie. As it marched to join other companies of the regiment, formed in Warren County, more horsemen, from Wake and Granville counties, added to the ranks.

Captain John H. Whitaker was a Northampton planter, Lt. John Peele was another. Under their command was the finest flower of young eastern North Carolina manhood, men who had sworn to be Confederate soldiers for the duration of the coming war.

Few thought the road would be as hard, the story as dismal, as it was to be.

The proud regiment which the Northampton men joined was one of the best cavalry units organized in the Confederacy. Its colonel, Robert Ransom, was a former United States cavalryman. So was his Lt. Colonel, L. S. Baker, a Gates County native, graduate of West Point.

First Sergeant James P. Lassiter of Northampton was one of the young men of Company B who were in high spirits as the mounted unit marched to already famous Manassas Junction in northern Virginia. It was October, 1861, and already the South had won the war's first major battle at that junction. The First Cavalry (Ninth North Carolina Regiment) was detailed to guard huge piles of stores captured in that fight of the previous spring.

Under Stuart
The regiment became part of the famous cavalry column of General Jeb Stuart, the South's dashing cavalier.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Baker had become commander of the regiment in June 1863, was promoted to brigadier.

From then until the end of the war, Ransom led the brigade.

It fought in North Carolina, helping the recapture of Plymouth in the spring of 1864. It fought at Boone's Mill, within sight of Verona. It fought in the lines around Petersburg in the waning months of the Confederacy. It surrendered at Appomattox.

Ransom went on to be long-time United States Senator from North Carolina. The soldier-farmer-politician's death came in 1904.

ment, as Col. Ransom took rank as a brigadier-general, and commander of an infantry brigade.

The regiment was ready for war.

It went back to North Carolina for its first taste.

In the spring of 1862, federal forces had seized Roanoke Island, moved to capture other North Carolina coastal strong points.

The regiment came back to join the pocket line in front of small North Carolina forces retreating from battles which saw New Bern and Washington fall to the enemy.

In June, the regiment was again with Stuart's command, just in time to participate as the eyes and ears of the Confederate army in the Seven Days' Battle around Richmond, a summer fight that saved the southern capital, stopped the mighty Union army of McClellan, and saw Robert E. Lee take command of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Then, the Stuart horsemen headed north, helping Lee's army maneuver toward the northern homeland. The gray-clad columns fought continual skirmishes with Union pickets, Union cavalry guards.

In early September, the regiment participated in the capture of Harper's Ferry as the Confederate army prepared for the bloody battle at Antietam Creek.

After the carnage of that drawn fight, Stuart's cavalry guarded the retreat of the Confederate forces, fought again at Fredericksburg in December, and spent a winter of patrolling and picketing.

In the spring of 1863, Stuart turned his legions north from the battled-of Chancellorsville and headed again for Maryland.

The North Carolina horsemen were in the column which first had to batter itself past Union horsemen at the river crossing of Beverly's Ford.

From there, the gray horsemen kept steadily north, fighting continual actions with Union troopers covering their march.

Major John Whitaker (he had risen in rank before the regiment moved out for the northern march) was busy commanding picket units. In a confused fight near Upperville, a Union bullet found him, penetrating his lungs. The youthful Northampton cavalry officer died on July 1, 1863, as the Confederate cavalry rode toward the town of Gettysburg where the North and South were preparing to lock in arms in a fateful battle.

Captain A. B. Andrews, who had led Company B in its famous "battle with the gunboats" the previous summer, took command of the unit.

Col. Baker was another who was soon wounded, hit in the arm as the regiment fought at Brandy Station on the retreat from Gettysburg.

Peele Killed
The regiment went into winter quarters in the winter of 1863 with many of its companies depleted from continual action.

Among the names missing from the rolls of Company B were those of brave young Lt. Peele, killed at Raccoon Ford along with Lt. William Williams on September 16.

Captain Andrews had suffered wounds in the same action.

As spring came in 1864, Stuart's horsemen marched out to meet a cavalry army of 12,000 bluecoats, commanded by crack General Phil Sheridan. For the next month, the depleted Confederate horse units fought continually as Grant's mighty army sought to destroy Lee.

The regiment lost another colonel, more men fell.

For the next year, the small force of Confederate horsemen fought continually as the ever-increasing might of the Union army drove the Army of Northern Virginia into the trenches around Richmond and Petersburg.

It was a time of despair, especially among the horsemen of the Confederacy. Their famous commander was killed. Horses became gaunt, equipment was no match for the excellent carbine of the Union cavalry.

As the fateful spring of 1865 began, the regiment, reduced to only a few score troopers, joined in the covering force guarding the remnant of Lee's army as it moved out of the Richmond lines and started its final retreat toward the little courthouse village of Appomattox.

Less than a dozen Northampton men of Company B were on hand as the Confederate army laid down its arms. Captain Andrews, who was to go on to be president of one of the state's great railroads, traveled with some of the Northampton men as they made their way back to their home county. He stopped in Granville County to reunite with his loved ones.

The war was finished for the gay young horsemen who had ridden away from their plantation homes in the gay summer of 1861.

1934-1959



We Celebrate a Milestone, too . . . OUR 25th YEAR IN AHOSKIE

Since June 1934 our store has been growing with Ahoskie and Hertford County. As the county celebrates its 200th Anniversary we want to thank the folks of the Roanoke-Chowan for making our 25 years here happy, friendly and successful. We are proud to be a part of the Roanoke-Chowan.

ROSE'S

5-10-25

Stores