

Organized When Federals Hit Area:

Five Companies of R-C Soldiers Served in 68th, Guarded Homeland

Five companies of Roanoke-Chowan men, mostly from Hertford, were organized in the electric summer of 1863 for the protection of their home counties from the serious Union attempt to drive through the area to Weldon and cut the railroad that was known as the "Lifeline of the Confederacy."

But these units were soon to leave their home county and take up duties elsewhere in North Carolina, doing the odd jobs of the Confederate army.

The 68th regiment was one of two hastily-organized infantry units thrown together in eastern North Carolina in July, 1863.

Far to the north, in Pennsylvania, the army of General Lee was falling back from Gettysburg. Federal commanders in southeastern Virginia and eastern North Carolina thought they saw a chance to smash the Confederacy while Lee was far away.

Determined federal cavalry columns stabbed into the Roanoke-Chowan, landing at Winton, moving toward Weldon and the vital Wilmington-to-Richmond railroad.

The 68th regiment was not formally organized until the winter of 1863.

But its component companies gathered hastily that summer to guard the homeland of the soldiers.

Companies D, E, and K were organized in Hertford County. Company F was composed of Bertie men, and Company I was organized from Gates County men who had braved federal control of their county to cross the Chowan River and enlist in the new companies forming in Hertford and Bertie villages.

Company D of the regiment was organized at Bethlehem Church near Harrellsville. Hilary Taylor became its commander. Levi Aske was a lieutenant.

Capt. Langley Taylor of Hertford commanded the unit that was to become Company E. Ben William of Bertie and John Britt of Hertford were elected lieutenants.

John T. Mebane was captain of the Bertie unit that was to become Company F.

These three units bivouacked at Colerain under the command of Major Joseph J. Edwards of Hertford. From the bluffs there, the green soldiers exchanged rifle

shots with Union soldiers on board big gunboats which plied the river.

Night Action

In the late summer, the unit had its first fight, a confused night action at Harrellsville when federal troops landed to destroy large stores of supplies which had been gathered at the village.

(Harrellsville was an important store point for food supplies gathered from the area and destined for the camp stores of the Army of Northern Virginia.)

Soon after this battle on their home soil, the small units marched to Jackson, where they went into winter quarters. Here two new Roanoke-Chowan companies joined others to form the 68th regiment.

Company I of Gates organized, with Capt. R. H. L. Bond in command. Company K, mostly Hertford and Northampton men, was organized, commanded by Capt. George Thompson of Hertford.

In the next year, the regiment was to see service from one end of North Carolina to the other.

For a while, it picketed the Roanoke River around Weldon.

To Morganton

Then, in July, 1864, the unit was ordered to Morganton to guard the western community against attacks by guerrilla fighters of "Kirk's Army." Later, the easterners marched all the way to East Tennessee in pursuit of the irregular force of Union sympathizers which had struck terror in western North Carolina.

During this March, Lt. W. P. Taylor of Company D was wounded in the thigh. In the fall of 1864, the regiment was ordered to Salisbury, assigned to guard the sprawling prison camp where thousands of Union prisoners of war languished.

Here, many of the officers and men of the regiment resigned, or slipped quietly away to return to their eastern home.

Capt. Taylor of Company D had already resigned in the spring. So had Major Edwards. Capt. Langley Taylor of Company E resigned in November. John T. Mebane had resigned in June, to be replaced as Company F commander by William M. Sutton.

James Leary and Nehemiah Bunch had become Company F lieutenants.

Capt. Bond of Company I resigned in November, to be replaced by William M. Daughtry.

Back East

Then, in early December, the regiment came back east. On December 12, it saw action, fighting at Butler's Bridge in Martin County against a federal force bent on capturing the important Roanoke River fort upstream at Rainbow Banks.

In March, 1865, the unit engaged with the enemy near Goldsboro, in one of the many tiny actions that

preceded the surrender of the Confederate forces in North Carolina.

Then, the regiment moved slowly northeastward, men dropped out and headed home as the first days of April 1, 1865, came. Some were ordered home to seek horses as the Confederate commander sought for a cavalry force to watch for the advancing federals.

The surrender at Appomattox found most of the men of the 68th already in their home counties, having served for two years within the borders of North Carolina.

Many Captured at Hatteras

First Hertford Unit Was in 17th

The spring of 1861 came warm and happy to the banks of the Chowan River and the little town of Winton.

On one of those bright spring days, several score Hertford County men arrived in their county seat village to muster into the county's first volunteer company for the Confederate army.

They called themselves the "Hertford Light Infantry." They were well equipped, with uniforms and guns purchased by a county bond issue.

Their officers were local gentlemen. Thomas H. Sharp was elected captain. William B. Wise, Jesse Perry and Julian Moore were elected lieutenants.

R. T. Barnes was first sergeant of the unit, and under him served more than 100 Hertford men. The organization was complete down to a musician, one W. C. Weed.

The unit marched off to Raleigh, where it became Company C of the 17th North Carolina regiment.

Hertford's contribution to the army of the Confederacy had begun.

Four months later, most of the Hertford men were prisoners of war, victims of the first battle action on North Carolina soil.

The regiment was assigned to the incomplete Confederate defenses on North Carolina's Outer Banks.

In August, a giant federal naval task force landed a powerful striking unit which quickly overran the southern defenders of Fort Hatteras on the Banks.

In the sand-walled fort were the men of Company C.

After a brief exchange with the huge landing party, the tiny garrison of untrained Confederates laid down their arms.

For the next year, Hertford's first volunteers were to stay in Union prisoner-of-war stockades.

Unit Reorganized

Finally, in the spring of 1862, the men were paroled. A few weeks later, the 17th was reorganized at Camp Mangum near Raleigh.

Captain Sharp was given a new task, he became a major. Lt. Wise moved up to the captaincy. Lis. Perry and Moore had transferred to another regiment. William J. Lattimer and William Cary Parker were promoted to lieutenant.

Lattimer died two months later, and John Q. Thomas, a member of a Hertford family which had been active in military affairs, was given his officer's bars.

After reorganization, the 17th was assigned to the small force of Confederates guarding North Carolina's eastern counties from federal forces stationed in captured coastal towns.

As such, Hertford men of the 17th often got a chance to see home as they marched and coun-

R-C History: War of 1812

Eight companies of Roanoke-Chowan men served in the War of 1812, the conflict which once and for all settled the United States' ascendancy in the Western Hemisphere.

In the First Regiment of North Carolina troops called to fight the war, the 7th company was commanded by Captain Thomas Freeman. Many of its 72 men were from Gates County.

The 8th company of the regiment was from Hertford County, commanded by Captain Erwin Jenkins. There were 85 men in the company.

In the Third Regiment, the 3rd company was from Northampton County. It was commanded by Captain James C. Harrison and there were 113 men in the company.

Bertie County contributed the 3rd company of the Artillery Corps. Captain Joseph H. Bryan

was in command and there were 108 men in the unit.

Each county of the Roanoke-Chowan contributed one company to the detached militia units which were called into action in 1814, the final year of the war.

They included four companies in the First Regiment of militia. Henry Pugh of Gates commanded a company of 73 men. Captain Jenkins commanded the Hertford Company of 75 men. Captain Jonathan H. Jacobs commanded a Bertie company of 103 men, and Captain John F. Walker commanded the Northampton company of 105 men.

These companies were called up in September, 1814, and saw no action. The war ended shortly thereafter.

A Murfreesboro man, militia Brigadier-General Joseph F. Dickenson, was in command of militia troops guarding Norfolk during the early years of the war.



HENRY KING BURGWIN

Col. Henry King Burgwyn of Northampton County was one of the youngest high-ranking officers of the Confederate army. He attended West Point for several years before the war, later fought against his old teacher in action with his 26th North Carolina Regiment.

He died at 21 on the first day of the assault at Gettysburg, shot through the lungs as his regiment charged Union lines. The 26th suffered more casualties in the charge than in any Confederate regiment.

Son of a famous Northampton planter family, Burgwyn was the epitome of the young southern aristocrat who officered Confederate units. Yet, he was born in New England, the home of his mother.

He is buried now in Raleigh. His sword and uniform are in the Hall of History in Raleigh. A portrait of Burgwyn, Governor Zeb Vance (war governor of North Carolina) and Burgwyn's successor as commander of the 26th, also is hung there. Burgwyn served as Lt. Colonel of the 26th under Vance until the mountain man was elected governor early in the war.

largest action fought on North Carolina soil.

The regiment joined in the retreat of the CSA army, and with other members of the force, surrendered to Sherman at Centre Church in Randolph County.

Many Hertford men had already peeled off, heading for home they had left four years before to become their county's first Civil War combatants.

SOLDIERS

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of a defense force along the upper Blackwater River.

During that time, Captain Pipkin led a four-company expedition against a federal raiding party which not only stopped the attack, but burned the gunboat headquarters of federal General Benjamin Butler.

As spring of 1864 came to Virginia in May, the giant Union armies of General Grant closed on Richmond, and the 31st became engaged in the fierce struggles of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The regiment participated in the battle at Drewry's Bluff, south of Richmond, as General Butler tried unsuccessfully to smash the Confederate right flank while Grant advanced from the north.

Then a few days later, the regiment was shifted to the northern part of the front to join the main Confederate army as it fought off Grant in the bloody battles of May-June, 1864.

Men Die

The 31st was in the main defense line at the battle of Second Cold Harbor, when thousands of Union troops assaulted the rebel lines. R. S. Baker was wounded. Thomas Doughtie died in the holocaust of lead.

Sergeant James J. Johns also went down. Walter McFarland, a young Hertford boy who served as company musician, was another who lost his life in the fearful fighting.

This bloody fighting was the start of real hardship for the Hertford men of Company G. From these battles, the battered regiment took post in the defenses of Petersburg, fought there throughout the winter of 1864. In early 1865, the unit, now reduced to half its size, was ordered to Wilmington. There, it watched helplessly as federal troops finally took that great Confederate seacoast bastion, fought rearguard actions north of the city.

Finally, as Sherman's great army advanced from the south into North Carolina, Captain Pipkin's unit was called on for its last action—the battle of Bentonville, largest action fought on North Carolina soil.

Reduced to a hand full, the company joined the final retreat of the Confederate army of General Joseph Johnston, and surrendered at Bush Hill, two miles from High Point, on May 1, 1865.

Captain Pipkin returned home to become longtime sheriff of his county.



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