

Courage, honor, sacrifice... all could be found in the 55th regiment

By ALAN HODGE
Special to the Herald

The month of April marked the 135th anniversary of the end of the American Civil War. A tragic struggle that saw over 600,000 men die for the causes they believed in, the Civil War still holds us in its grip through movies, books, videos and reenactments.

North Carolina played a vital role in the Confederacy. During the years 1861-1865 over 123,000 Tar Heels served in the Confederate military. Of this number, 40,000 would die from disease or wounds. North Carolina contributed more men to the Southern armies than any other state—and lost more as well. North Carolina's 20,000 combat deaths were more than the states of Virginia and South Carolina combined.

Men from Cleveland County also shouldered their share of muskets during the Civil War. Of the companies raised in Cleveland County during the war, Companies "C" and "D" of the 55th North Carolina would go on to make history in a way that many people today are not even aware of. These two companies, named the



"Cleveland Grays" and the "Cleveland Farmers" respectively, can truly claim to be the high tide of the Confederate army at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Reading a roster of the Grays and Farmers is like looking at a who's who of the present day families in Cleveland County. Surnames that appear on the company

lists include Hamrick, Bridges, Cabaniss, Mooney, (Mauney), Moss, Hendrick and Lovelace. As evidence of the sacrifices Cleveland County boys made at Gettysburg, an account states that at least one dozen men with surname Hamrick were killed or wounded during the battle.

Fought on the first three

days of July 1863, Gettysburg has had more written about it than any other battle in American history. Each year, hundreds of thousands of tourists visit the hallowed fields in that Pennsylvania town in hopes of somehow connecting with the past. In 1998, over 20,000 Civil War reenactors fought a three-day replay of the battle that included a full-scale Pickett's Charge on Sunday afternoon.

Raised at Camp Mangum near Raleigh in May 1862, the 55th regiment N.C. Troops had already seen hard service in Eastern North Carolina and Virginia before it began its long march toward Gettysburg in June, 1863, as part of Davis' Brigade, Heth's Division, A. P. Hill's Army of Northern Virginia.

The first day of battle at Gettysburg, July 1, 1863, saw the 55th and other members of Heth's Division engaged along the Chambersburg Pike just west of town. During this first day of fighting the 55th and Davis' Brigade almost

ceased to exist. After engaging federal troops of the 6th Wisconsin, the 55th and other units in Davis' command were suddenly overwhelmed by Yankee reinforcements and retreated to a nearby railroad gully for cover.

Going for the railroad cut was a fatal mistake. Instead of protection, the cut made the 55th like fish in a barrel. Mercifully, the federals that stood at the top of the ditch ordered Davis' men to throw down their muskets and took them prisoner in a situation that could have been a bloodbath. At least 200 Confederates were captured in the cut, the rest escaping.

After a day of rest on July 2, 1863, the 55th was called upon that afternoon of July 3 to take part in the legendary "Pickett's Charge." The idea was to break the federal lines on Cemetery Ridge south of Gettysburg with a massive frontal assault by over 12,000 Confederates. In this action, the Southerners would have to cross over a mile of open ground under musket and artillery fire

from Union soldiers poised behind a stone wall.

Following an hour-long artillery bombardment by Confederate cannons, the 41 rebel regiments stepped off to immortality. Under fire almost the entire 1,300 yards, the Confederates would lose over one-third of their men in the failed attack.

For its part in Pickett's Charge, the 55th would have to wait over 130 years to get the credit they deserved. For many decades it was assumed that the 26th North Carolina Regiment had penetrated the Union lines farthest that fateful day before falling back. Indeed, the saying that North Carolinians were "farthest to the front at Gettysburg" was based on the 26th claim. Now, new evidence has shown that it was actually the 55th, including boys from Cleveland County who can claim that honor.

In her recently published book, "Pickett's Charge in History and Memory" author Carol Reardon has uncovered evidence that supports the 55th right to be called the "high tide" of the Confederacy at Gettysburg. Reardon's research shows that the location of several dead Confederates farthest across the stone wall were members of the 55th.

Though they made history at Gettysburg, the Cleveland Grays and Cleveland Farmers suffered with the rest of the 55th and their fellow rebels. During the battle, the 55th lost over 400 men killed, captured or wounded. Total rebel losses exceeded 28,000.

Though the Civil War was a heartbreaking affair for all involved, it was also a time when words like courage, honor, and sacrifice were the code by which men lived. Residents of Cleveland County today, and especially those who had ancestors in the 55th North Carolina, can be proud of the bravery those boys in gray displayed on the green fields of Pennsylvania so long ago.

City, county seats up for grabs

Filing for all Cleveland County offices, municipalities, board of education and water district begins Friday, July 5 at noon and ends at noon Friday, July 19.

Locally, three seats are open on the Kings Mountain City Council. Four-year terms of Mike Butler, Ward 2, Tommy Hawkins, Ward 3, and At-Large commissioner Dean Spears are expiring in November.

In Grover, three seats on town council are

up for grabs. Jackie Bennett, Cindy O'Brian and Shane Davis face voters in November for four-year terms.

Terms of four members of the county board of election are up this year. They include Philip Glover, Kathy Falls, Dale Oliver, and George Litton.

Candidates file at the Cleveland County Board of Elections, 215 Patton Drive, in Shelby.

The Cleveland County Chamber sponsored a Business After Hours reception at Kings Mountain Internal Medicine. Just as Dr. Kish and staff were being introduced, the power went out in a severe thunderstorm. Nonetheless, the food and fun continued, including door prizes donated by area businesses. At right: Tammy Truett and Chrissy Thomas greeted guests and presented them with goody bags, compliments of KM Internal Medicine.

photo by BETH BROCK



HONORED FOR SERVICE – Monty Thornburg, Director of the City of Kings Mountain Aging Program, was honored for 30 years' service with the city at the recent city council meeting. Mayor Rick Murphy, left, makes a presentation to Thornburg. A number of members of the Senior Citizens program at the Senior Center were present to applaud their director for long service.

Photo by ELLIS NOELL

No dance classes

Evening line dance classes on Tuesday nights have been suspended for the summer at the H. Lawrence Patrick Senior Life & Conference Center. The classes will resume Sept. 3 from 6-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday nights.

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Vanilla Chocolate Fruit Gourmet
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There is a \$5 entry fee for the Crank-Off. Entrants are required to bring one (1) gallon of their ice cream for tasting by the public. This is IN ADDITION to the one (1) gallon required for judging.

Registration will be from 11 a.m. to noon Saturday, July 20 at Patriots Park, downtown Kings Mountain. Judging and public tasting begin at 1 p.m. Bring your own table, paper towels, etc. Tasting cups & spoons provided.

Entries pre-registered by July 12 receive Ice Cream Crank-Off apron. All entries must be received by July 17. To pre-register, fax this form to 704-739-0611 or email to wendy@greenbanana project.org

Entrants may sign below to release their winning recipe, if they are chosen, to be the Green Banana Ice Cream Specialty of the Year, which allows it to be used to create ice cream products for the benefit of Green Banana Project fundraising. Signature is not required to participate.

***No unpasteurized products or raw eggs may be used in the recipes.**

Kings Mountain Weekend Weather

<p>Thursday July 4</p> <p>Scattered T'Storms - 79' 60% Chance of precipitation Night time Low 69'</p>	<p>Friday July 5</p> <p>Partly Cloudy - 87' 50% Chance of precipitation Night time Low 69'</p>	<p>Saturday July 6</p> <p>Partly Cloudy - 88' 20% Chance of precipitation Night time Low 69'</p>	<p>Sunday July 7</p> <p>Partly Cloudy - 88' 20% Chance of precipitation Night time Low 70'</p>
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