



SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS

Lt. John T. Bullock Camp #2205



Volume 2, Issue 8

August 2012

Camp News

Next Meeting

When:

Tuesday, August 7 at 5:30PM

Where:

Bob's Barbecue in Creedmoor, NC

At our August 7 meeting we have author Keith Jones giving us an informative and captivating program on his newest book: *Boys of Diamond Hill: The Lives and Civil War Letters of the Boyd Family of Abbeville County, South Carolina*

J. Keith Jones is a native of Georgia who now lives in Graham, North Carolina with his wife. As well as fiction he also studies and writes about history. A graduate of the University of South



Carolina, he has spent a number of years in the computer industry. His desire to write was sparked by the encouragement of his first English professor in college. *In Due Time* is his first published novel.

His latest book is a biography of a family of soldiers from Abbeville County, South Carolina. In April 1861, brothers Daniel and Pressley Boyd left their farm in Abbeville County, South Carolina, to join the Confederate army. The Civil War soon swept their other brothers, William, Thomas and Andrew, as well as brother-in-law Fenton Hall into service. By the war's end, only Daniel survived. The extensive collection of letters the Boyds left behind, assembled for the first time, details their experiences across almost every theater of the war and offers commentary on many aspects of soldier life--from illness, death, and religion to friendly fire, desertion, and politics. Few families sacrificed as much to the Confederate cause as did the Boyds. Their letters remain a testament to their commitment and reveal the profound human impact of war.

Mr. Jones will also be selling signed copies of his book for a \$10.00 discount. The price of the book will be \$35.00.

Last Meeting

Camp 2205 did not have a meeting for the month of July. Instead the members of the Lt. John T. Bullock Camp decided to have a family day cookout. The get together took place on Saturday July 21, 2012. Some of us weren't fortunate enough to be present, but I have been assured that those who made it to the cookout had a great time. There isn't much to report other than it was a great opportunity for camp members and their families to hange out and enjoy each other's company. What can be better? Good food, good conversation, and great friends. That's the life!

And for those of us who couldn't make it, camp member Frank Keller was gracious enough to snap a few pictures for us to share in this month's newsletter. The following pages will just have to fill the void for those of us who couldn't make it.



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Cookout Photos





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More Cookout Photos





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THIN GRAY LINE OF TAR HEELS

John G. Young, of Winston, N. C., sends the following account of the fight at Winchester, Va., by Gen. Bradley T. Johnston, of the Maryland Line. It is introduced as an incident in the battle of Winchester, Va., that surpasses the Ninety-Third Regiment's famous stand on the morning of Balaklava—how Gen. Robert D. Johnston repelled repeated charges of Yankee cavalry far outnumbering his attenuated brigade—as told by Gen. Bradley Johnston:

At the battle of Balaklava occurred an incident which Kinglike 'has painted in words, and thus immortalized. The Highland Brigade, the Forty-Second, the Black Watch, the Cold Stream Guards, the Grenadiers, and the Ninety-Third (Sir Colin Campbell's old regiment) were in position which threw the Ninety-Third just along the crest of a slight rise of the ground. The Russian Artillery had been annoying, and the Ninety-Third lay down just behind the crest, where they were better sheltered and concealed. A division of Russian horse was moving to the left of Sir Colin's whole line and its head of column nearly with the British, when at once four squadrons of Russians (four hundred men) swung quickly out of column and struck a gallop toward the English position. Instantly the Highlanders rose from the ground, and with their tall forms and towering black plumes looked like a line of giants. The Ninety-Third was not in touch with either of the other battalions of the brigade, so they stood and took it, and when the Russians got within three hundred yards of them opened fire upon them and drove them back. They never repeated the charge. This scene has been celebrated in song and story as "Sir Colin Campbell's Thin Red Line." It was witnessed by the allied armies—English, French, and Turkish—and simply astounded the Russians, for both sides saw it.

But I myself, with thousands of others, saw Johnston's North Carolina Brigade (First North Carolina Battalion Sharpshooters, Fifth, Twelfth, Twentieth, and Twenty-Third Regiments) do a thing on September 19, 1864, which far excelled in gallantry, in firmness, and in heroism this feat of the "Thin Red Line." I have never seen a description of it in print, and I do not think it was referred to in the reports. I am sure Bob Johnston did not, for he was as modest as he was handsome and brave.

In September, 1864, Early's army was lying about Winchester. We had been through Maryland, and terrified Washington into

fits, and had gotten safely back into Virginia with thousands of horses, cattle, medical stores, and hundreds of wagonloads of edibles of every kind. I had a cavalry brigade of wild, Southwestern Virginian horsemen, as brave and as undisciplined as the Virginia Rangers Col. Washington surrendered at Fort Necessity, or Andrews fought Cornstalk with at Point Pleasant. I was bivouacked; we had no tents. About three miles north of Winchester, on the valley pike, and picketed from the valley pike to the Berryville pike, running east from Winchester, Gen. Robert D. Johnston, of North Carolina, had a brigade of from eight to ten hundred muskets on the Berryville pike, on the top of the ridge running across the road. My pickets were a mile in advance of his in Ashe Hollow. Sheridan, with forty-five thousand infantry and ten thousand cavalry, lay eight to fifteen miles beyond our picket lines, from Berryville and Ripon to Charlestown and Halldown, in Clark and Jefferson Counties, Va. Now, every morning the Yankee cavalry would rush my pickets in on Johnston's posts. He would stop them until I got up, and then I'd drive the Yankees back and reestablish my original picket posts. This done, I would send my command back to camp.

I had about eight hundred mounted men, and I'd ride up to Bob Johnston's headquarters, which was a wagon under a tree, one camp stool, and a frying pan sizzling with bacon, and a pot of rye coffee and sorghum. I'd get my breakfast. But after a week of this proceeding it either became monotonous or my appetite showed no signs of weakening. I don't know which. One morning I dismounted after my usual morning call to boots and saddle, and swung myself very comfortably into Johnston's single and only camp stool. I smelled the bacon and sniffed the coffee, and waited. In a few moments the cook handed me a chip for a plate and a tin cup of red-hot coffee—so hot I had to set the cup on the grass, when Bob spoke, saying: "Bradley, you let those Yankees do you too bad. You have got so scared of them that you all run the very first dash they make at you."

"Is that so, Robert?" said I. "That's a pity, but I don't know how to help it. I do the best I can. How many Yankee cavalry do you think you are good for?"

"Well," said he, "I've got eight hundred muskets present for duty. By a week's time, as the boys get back from the hospital, I'll have one thousand. Well, with one thousand muskets, I think I can



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THIN GRAY LINE OF TAR HEELS...cont'd.

take care of five thousand Yanks on horseback.”

“All right,” said I, “wait and see. I hope you can.”

So I got my breakfast and went off mightily tickled at the conceit of the Tarheel; for Sheridan's Cavalry, with Custer, Torbett, and Devens, were about as good soldiers as ever took horse or drew saber. We had drilled them so that in three years we had taught them to ride. They were always drilled enough to fight, and they learned the use of the saber from necessity.

Well, things went on as usual. Every morning Sheridan would send a regiment out to feel Early—to drive in his pickets—so as to make sure where he was, and to know where to find him; and every morning I would ride over to the Berryville road, reestablish my lines, and get my breakfast off of Johnston.

By daylight the 19th of September, a scared cavalry man of my own command nearly rode over me, as I lay asleep on the grass, and reported that the Yankees were advancing with a heavy force of infantry, artillery, and cavalry, up the Berryville road. Early was up toward Stephenson's depot, and Johnston and I were responsible for keeping Sheridan out of Winchester, and protecting the Confederate line of retreat and of communication up the valley. In two minutes my command was mounted (we always saddled up and fed an hour before dawn) and moving at a trot across the open fields to the Berryville road and to Johnston's assistance. There was not a fence nor a house nor a bush nor a tree to obscure the view. Away off, more than two miles, we could see the crest of the hill covered with a cloud of Yankee cavalry, and in front of them (five hundred yards in front) was a thin gray line moving off in retreat solidly, and with perfect coolness and self-possession. As soon as I got to realize what was going on I quickened our gait, and when within a mile broke into a gallop. The scene was as plain as day. A regiment of cavalry would deploy into line, and then their bugles would sound the charge and they would swoop down on the thin gray line of North Carolinians. The instant the Yankee bugle sounded, North Carolina would halt, face to the rear rank, and wait until the horses got within one hundred yards, and then fire as deliberately and coolly as if firing volleys on parade drill. The cavalry would break and scamper back, and North Carolina would “about face” and continue her march in retreat as solemnly, stubbornly, and with as much discipline and

dignity as if marching in review. But we got there just in time. Cavalry aids the Tarheels. Certainly half a dozen charges had been made at the retreating thin gray line, and each and every time the Charging squadrons had been driven back, when the enemy sent their line with a rush at the brigade of Tarheels, and one squadron overlapped the infantry line, and was just passing it when we got up. In another minute they would have been behind the line, sabering the men from the rear while they were held by the fight in front. But we struck a headlong strain and went through the Yankees by the flank of the North Carolina, and carried their adversaries back to the crest of the hill, back through the guns of their battery, clear back to their infantry lines. In a moment they rallied, and were charging us in front and on both flanks; and back we went in a hurry, but the thin gray line of old North Carolina was safe. They had gotten back to the rest of the infantry and formed lines at right angles to the pike west of Winchester.

I rode up to Bob Johnston, very “pert,” as we say in North Carolina, and said: “Pretty close call that Mr. Johnston. What do you think now of the Yankee cavalry's fighting qualities?” And the rest of the day we enjoyed ourselves. We could see everything that was going on for miles around. The country was entirely open. The day was beautiful, clear, and bright—September 19. They would form for a forward movement—three lines, one after another—march sedately along until they got within touch of our lines, then raise a hurrah and rush in a charge, and in two minutes the field would be covered with running, flying Yankees. There were 45,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 3,000 mounted gunmen. The thing began at daylight and kept up till dark, when, flanked and worn out, Early retreated to escape being surrounded.

This is the story of the “Thin Gray Line of North Carolina” and the cavalry charge, a feat of arms before which that of Sir Colin Campbell's Highlanders fades into insignificance.

Comrade Young mentions as some of his fellow-soldiers in the battle of Winchester Maj. R. E. Wilson, Capt. T. E. Gilmer, of Winston, and Dr. H. T. Bahnson, of Salem.