



TRAVELLER



The official publication of the General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640

Sons of Confederate Veterans, Germantown, Tennessee

Duty, Honor, Integrity, Chivalry

Deo Vindici

January 2012

**CAMP MEETING
Monday January 9, 2012**

Speaker: Dr. Douglas Cupples

**Topic: The Common Soldier of the
Confederacy**

7:00 p.m. at the Pickering Center

Confederate Engineers in the American Civil War

by First Lieutenant Shaun Martin

On 6 March 1861, after the South seceded from the United States, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America passed "an act for the establishment and organization of the (Confederate) Army." Among other provisions, it called for the establishment of the Confederate Corps of Engineers.

In 1863, the Confederate Congress passed legislation assigning a company of engineer troops to every division in the field. The troops were to be drawn from each division and selected based on their experience in the mining or construction trades. Each company consisted of 100 men commanded by a captain and three lieutenants. The newly formed companies (4,000 soldiers, who were dedicated to engineer operations) were superior to the Union Army's ad hoc system, which relied on employing soldiers as engineers as needed.

By 1865, the Confederate Army had many more engineer officers in the field than the Union Army. The Confederate Engineer Corps had 13 regular officers, 115 provisional officers drawn mostly from civilian engineers, and an additional 188 non-engineer officers assigned to engineer troops. The engineer troops of the Confederacy were generally

committed to constructing and improving field fortifications deployed to the coastal and interior defenses, and it was in this capacity that they were superior to their Union counterparts. The creative use of the resources available was what set the Confederacy apart from the Union. Another lasting contribution of the Confederate engineers was the development of new weapons systems.

The innovations employed by the Confederate engineer units during the Civil War were remarkable. Field fortifications dominated the Confederate defensive operations and were extensively employed in their offensive operations.



**Petersburg, Virginia Confederate Fortifications
with Chevaux-de-Frise Beyond**

Field Fortifications

Union Captain Orlando Poe, General William T. Sherman's chief engineer, admired one particular engineering innovation he had observed—the "head log," which was invented to cope with the deadly accuracy of sharpshooters. The head log was described as "a stout log, of hardwood if possible, which is cut as long as possible and laid upon blocks

placed on the superior slope for a foot or two outside the interior crest. The blocks supporting the head log raise it sufficiently from the parapet to allow the musket to pass through underneath it and steady aim to be taken, while the log covers the head from the enemy's fire. Frequently, the blocks are replaced by skids which rest on the ground in the rear of the trench so that if the head log is knocked off the parapet by artillery fire, it rolls along these skids to the rear without injuring anyone."

The Confederate Army often demonstrated its skill at strategic defenses in the tactics used by General Joseph Johnston. His troops would construct as many as three lines of fieldworks, including one to their rear. Johnston attended, with meticulous detail, to the general organization and detail of the entrenchment, while the engineer officer of each unit was in charge of the entrenchment, selecting the lines and placing each unit in position.

The Union was slow to appreciate the effectiveness of the Confederate defensive tactics. In June 1862, the defense of Vicksburg, Mississippi, under the command of General John Pemberton, was under way. The Confederates threw up two circular fieldworks that were connected by rifle trenches. The Union Army's General Ulysses S. Grant failed to entrench his offensive line or even to entrench his camps. The Union forces staged three assaults, the first on 29 December 1862 with forces commanded by General Sherman. The second and third assaults by Grant's forces were on 19 and 21 May 1863, this time after a six-hour artillery bombardment by land and from the river. Grant captured a few works but could not hold them. On 4 July 1863, Pemberton, who was short of food and ammunition, surrendered after defending for 213 days. Grant had employed 220 artillery pieces, while the defenders hardly used any artillery. Pemberton had defended Vicksburg with a force of 18,500 men and lost about 800 during the siege. Grant had engaged about 30,000 men, and his force was almost decimated.

The Confederacy pursued a strategy of waging a defensive war but, in the offense, its engineer forces were both innovative and highly effective. One

especially successful technique involved creating a skirmish line that moved increasingly closer to the enemy's works. The line protected itself by digging individual rifle pits. Working parties then joined the chain of pits into an ordinary rifle trench, which they later strengthened. By this means, entire earthworks could end up within 200 feet of each other.

A number of items for use in the offense were invented out of necessity. One such innovation was the sap roller, a large cylindrical basket that was closed at both ends and filled with rocks and soil. "Sappers" would roll the basket until they were directly in front of the Union positions. The advantage to this was that troops could move onto enemy defensive works while under fire and prepare a rifle trench almost on top of the enemy and be relatively free of the murderous fire the enemy could deliver.

Besides field fortifications and trench warfare, engineers were responsible for the rail systems that provided transportation for supplies needed by the armies. The Confederate forces often made good use of the rail resources available to them throughout the duration of the war.

Lee understood the importance of the rail system during the war and had employed his engineers in the system's maintenance and expansion. Although Lee

did not have the use of the waterways that the Union enjoyed, he still needed to move troops and materials. At his disposal, Lee had the Orange, the Alexandria, and the Virginia Central Railroads. The combined system extended from Richmond to within 40 miles of Washington, D.C.

Confederate engineers contributed to pioneering uses of the railroad. For example, they adopted an effective railroad mobilization strategy. In the spring of 1862, Grant threatened the town of Corinth, Mississippi. A significant feature of this battle was the Confederacy's ability to quickly move troops to contest Grant's presence. In an unprecedented rapid concentration of troops, the rail system brought several armies to Corinth, plus newly mobilized regiments from other states. The Confederates lost



**Matthew Brady Photo of Fascine Trench
Breastworks, Petersburg, Va.**

the battle for Corinth, but they had shown the importance of the rail system in delivering troops to battle.

Weapons Systems

Confederate engineers were also employed in developing new weapons in hopes of gaining an advantage on the battlefield. Among these was the introduction of a railroad artillery battery. During the Peninsular Campaign of 1862, General Lee suggested that a railroad battery be built for the Confederates. It would be used on the York River Railroad to halt the advance of General George B. McClellan along this line.

On 5 June 1862, Lee wrote his chief engineer, Major W. Stevens, and suggested that the Confederate engineers "construct a railroad ... plated and protected with a heavy gun." He also suggested that mortars be used in a similar manner. Lee hoped the gun would be in action by 6 June; however, it was not available until 22 June. The 32-pound gun was rifled and banded and weighed 5,700 pounds. Mounted on a railroad flatcar, it was protected in front by a sloping iron-plated shield through which a porthole had been cut for the muzzle of the gun. The sides of the car were protected with timbered walls that were lined with iron. The basic ammunition load consisted of 200 rounds, including a number of 15-inch solid bolt shot. The gun was first used at Savage's Station, Virginia, on 29 June during the Seven Day's Battles. The gun, under command of Lieutenant James E. Barry, was pushed near a rail bridge near the depot. He was to clear an obstruction emplaced by the Union troops and rake the infantry in the valley below with fire. He accomplished his mission with a terrible effect. The Union infantry's attempted assault on the gun was repulsed, and the Union suffered heavy losses.

Conclusion

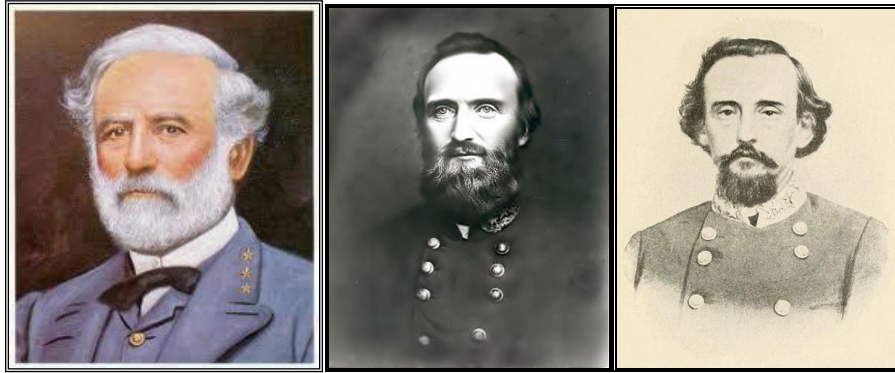
The Confederacy was never able to gain dominance in rail transportation and the new breed of weapons and tactics introduced by the ill-fated nation's engineers did not provide the edge they needed to win the Civil War. However, the Confederate engineers' battlefield tactics changed the face of warfare, forever allowing commanders to mass and redeploy troops and transport supplies with previously unimagined rapidity and effectiveness. On the battlefield, the engineers demonstrated with gory clarity the contributions they could make. The innovations they introduced were the foundation of warfare of the future.

(First Lieutenant Martin is a support platoon leader with the 162d Engineer Company, Oregon Army National Guard. A mechanical engineer, he is pursuing an advanced degree in design at Oregon State University.)



Captain Arthur Gloster, Engineer with the Army of Tennessee. He and Nathan Bedford Forrest were sworn in together in the Cavalry Company of Captain White of Memphis at Randolph, Tennessee in May of 1861...Their hands together on the same Bible.

Captain Gloster was at Island No. 10, Shiloh, Corinth and many other fields of battles and skirmishes before being captured when Vicksburg fell. He was exchanged the following October at Demopolis, Alabama and ordered to Missionary Ridge where he was placed in command of Company C of the 3rd Regiment Engineers. He later was sent to Atlanta to build wagons and boats for the pontoon trains of the Army. He remained in command of this train, building bridges over the streams crossed by the Army of Tennessee until the end of the War. After the War, Captain Gloster was engaged in locating and constructing some of the most important railroad lines in the South. He built a railroad line in Mississippi which produced the Town of Gloster, Mississippi so named in his honor.



Lee-Jackson-Chalmers Banquet
&
Candlelight Memorial Service



Sons of Confederate Veterans
Memphis, Tennessee
Saturday, January 21, 2012
6:00 P.M.

Ridgeway Country Club
9800 Poplar Ave,
Collierville, TN.

Cost: \$30.00 single tickets
\$25.00 additional tickets

Checks payable to: Lee-Jackson-Chalmers Banquet
Contact: Tarry Beasley

Come to the Lee-Jackson-Chalmers Banquet

For the first time in many, many years all of the Memphis SCV camps are joining to present one of the premier events of the Sesquicentennial in Memphis, Tennessee. This event will be recognized by the State of Tennessee and the City of Memphis as a key event celebrating the heroes of the War for Southern Independence.

The speaker will be none other than Mrs. Ruth McAlester, the direct descendent of Sam Watkins, of Co. Aytch. "The Side Show to the Big Show" fame. Mrs. Ruth Hill McAlister will be presenting a new edition of the book, featuring Sam's side notes. This will kick off the new year right!

A Candle light Memorial Service Commemorating YOUR ancestor will be held. This is one of the most stirring and heartfelt events you will ever attend.

A silent auction will be held prior to the event. Any moneys remaining after expenditures for rental, food and speaker will go to the Forrest Home. Contact Tarry Beasley for ticket information.

Commander's Corner

Gentlemen,

Thank you for the honor of once again being your Commander. Obviously I do not "command" you to do anything but I am here to help you and our Camp reach the goals that you want to accomplish.

I know from talking with many of you that one of the objectives is to increase our size in membership and attendance. We currently have 81 on our camp rolls of which 59 have renewed their dues and are current for national purposes. Our attendance has run about 32 or 34 at each meeting which means that we are missing a great number of you both as to attendance and to dues being paid current. Dues are: National \$30.00, TN Division \$5.00 and Camp \$25.00 total of \$60.00 if paid by November. If not then a reinstatement fee is due of \$5.00 for a current total of \$65.00. At Monday's meeting I will be announcing a new incentive for you to bring in new members. You will love this.

New Officers will be appointed in the next few months. If you would like to serve in any capacity please let Mark or I know. If the Camp is to do what you want and go where you want it to YOU need to be involved in a manner that suits you best, so let us know how you want to help before you are "volunteered".

I would personally like to thank Steve McIntyre and Mark Buchanan for their service to the Camp for the last two years in their respective capacities of Editor and Commander. They have each done a great job and we have benefited from their service. Several other members will be honored and recognized at our January meeting and you should plan on attending - - You might be one of the recipient's.

LEE, JACKSON CHALMERS BANQUET occurs this month on the 21st at the Ridgeway Country Club beginning at 6:00 and All the Camps in the Shelby County area are coming. We need a BIG representation by our Camp. Tickets are \$30.00 for the 1st ticket and \$25.00 for each additional one you bring to the dinner and excellent talk. This is for members, wives, girlfriends, and all your friends, but we have to have your money for the tickets Monday night the 9th so that the head count can be assured. This will be a fantastic evening and the speaker is the great-granddaughter of the diarists who wrote COMPANY AYTCH the phenomenal diary of a soldier's life in the Army of Tennessee. You have got to be there to hear this!

There are lots of new things coming up this year so come to the meeting Monday (Jan. 9th) to find out about them.

Tarry Beasley, Commander



Adjunct Assistant Professor of History at CBU. He joined the SCV in 1975 and has held every elected office in the James R. Chalmers Camp 1312. He is a member of the MOS&B and was twice Division commander.

Dr. Cupples will be speaking on the Common Soldier of the Confederacy.

Our speaker on January 9 will be Dr. Douglas Cupples. Dr. Cupples has a M.A. in Political Science/International Relations and a Ph.D. in American History. He is an alumnus of the U.S. Army War College National Security Seminar and the Army's Command and General Staff College's Military History Instructor's Class. He recently taught at The University of Memphis and is an

SCV LIFE MEMBERS ROSTER

T. Tarry Beasley II	T. Tarry Beasley III
Winston Blackley	John Cole
James Anthony Davis	Hubert Dellinger Jr., MD
H. Clark Doan	Eugene Forrester
Robert Freeman	Donald Harrison
Frank Holeman	William P Hunter, Jr
Bobby Lessel	Jerry C. Lunsford
Frank M. McCroskey	Arthur Oliver
Charles Wendell Park	Bill Simmons
Larry J. Spiller, Sr.	Osborn Turner, IV
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Traveller is the monthly newsletter of:

The General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640
Sons of Confederate Veterans
and
The Mary Custis Lee Chapter,
Order of the Confederate Rose
P.O. Box 171251
Memphis, Tennessee 38187

Steve M. McIntyre, Editor



Next Camp Meeting ** January 9, 2012
Germantown Pickering Center, 7771 Old Poplar Pike, Germantown, TN