

SELECTED LETTERS FROM
A CONFEDERATE OFFICER STATIONED
AT
CAMP JONES,
BRISTOE STATION
TO
HIS WIFE

Provided through the courtesy of
The Southern Historical Collection,
Wilson Library, University of North
Carolina at Chapel Hill.

On August 3, 1861, the Sixth Regiment* was marched to Camp Jones at Bristoe Station, a distance of eight miles from Manassas. Here the men settled down to the usual routine of Confederate soldiers stationed in a permanent camp. At daylight they rose to the sound of a drum. This was followed by a period of drill for an hour or two, part of it in double-time. After breakfast and more drill the officers went to "recitation" and studied "15 or 20" pages in Hardee's *Tactics*. Dinner and more drill occupied the rest of the day. There was no time to be idle in camp.

While the regiment was stationed at Camp Jones during August, 1861, it was faced with the necessity of getting a new commander to replace the lamented Fisher. William T. Dortch, the regiment's ex-lieutenant colonel, wrote to the Military Board on August 2 concerning the promotion of Captain Richard W. York of Company I to the rank of Major, "Presuming that Lt. Col. Lightfoot will be appointed Colonel & Major Webb, Lt. Col. of the 6th Regiment of State Troops. . . ." The officers of the regiment suggested that Lightfoot was not too popular by recommending some choices of their own—David Coleman, Esquire, from Buncombe County, "a thorough military officer," and Major Pride Jones of Hillsboro in Orange County. It was felt that a native North Carolinian would have more concern for the men because they were "far removed from home, exposed, under the most unfavorable circumstances, necessarily to many hardships & privations. . . ." The officers were careful to say that they didn't wish to dictate to the governor, nor did they wish to "reflect upon anyone." This petition was signed by every company commander in the regiment except Lieutenants Turner, Carter, and Walker who were "absent on furlough."

Clark solved the problem for the regiment on August 15 when he ordered Colonel William Dorsey Pender of the Third North Carolina Volunteer Infantry to assume command of the Sixth. The appointment was made "at the unanimous request of the officers."

Pender, born on February 6, 1834, in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, was the son of James and Sarah Routh Pender. He was a descendant of Edwin Pender of Virginia who came to the colonies in the reign of Charles II. After receiving his primary education in the "common schools" of Edgecombe County and clerking in his brother's store, Pender was appointed a cadet to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1854 with a standing of nineteen in a class of forty-six. He was commissioned brevet second lieutenant in the First Artillery, and was promoted to full second lieutenant in the Second Artillery in the same year. In 1855 Pender was transferred to the First Dragoons. He attained his first lieutenantcy in that regiment in 1858. In the period 1856-1860 he saw much active service, mostly Indian fighting, on the New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and California frontiers.

Pender was a handsome man, olive complexioned, and slightly below medium height. He wore a thick dark beard which made him look older than he actually was. Always honorable and faithful to the Confederacy, Pender had hoped that war could be averted, but when he saw that it could not, he did not hesitate to join with his native state in a common cause.

*Sixth North Carolina Regiment, CSA

Pender, William Dorsey. CSA b. Edgecomb Cty., N.C., 6 Feb. 1834. One of the few advantages that the Confederacy enjoyed was an abundance of excellent fighting generals

Pender was illustrative of that group. He entered West Point at age 16, graduating 19th of 46 in the class of 1854, famous because it produced so many officers who achieved high rank. He then served, mostly on the Pacific Coast, with the 1st U.S. Dragoons.

Pender was among the first Southerners to offer his sword to his homeland, resigning his army commission Mar. 1861 to become colonel of the 3d North Carolina Infantry. The young officer quickly gained a reputation as a hard-hitting commander. Gallant conduct in the PENINSULA CAMPAIGN, notably at SEVEN PINES, earned him a brigadier's rank as of 3 June 1862. As a brigade commander in Lt. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill's Light Division, Pender was in the thick of fighting at Cedar Mountain, Harpers Ferry, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville. 3 times he was wounded in action. On 27 May 1863 he was promoted to major general.

During the second day of combat at GETTYSBURG, Pender was reconnoitering when struck in the thigh by a 2-in.-sq shell fragment. He dismissed the injury as trivial and did not seek medical attention until Gen. R. E. Lee's army was back in Virginia. By then, massive infection had spread through his leg. Amputation followed, and Pender did not survive the surgery. The 29-year-old general died 8 July 1863 at Staunton, Va. His remains were interred at Tarborough, N.C.

A. P. Hill wrote of Pender: "No man fell during the bloody battle of Gettysburg more regretted than he, nor around whose youthful brow were clustered brighter rays of glory." The supreme compliment to Pender came from Robert E. Lee: "His promise and usefulness as an officer were only equaled by the purity and excellence of his private life." —JIR



From Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War, Patricia L. Faust (ed), © 1986, New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Camp Jones - Near Manassas
August 27th 1861

My beloved wife,

I find

the health of the Regt. terrible. Only about
two hundred & thirty fit for duty, &
great many of the sick desperately
ill. I fear we shall have great many
deaths before we get through. And
the accommodations are always
worse than on march. I shall do
all in my power to relieve the
poor fellows. I jump into hard
work & harrowing sights.

Camp Jones-Near Manassas

August 27th, 1861

My beloved wife,

. . . I find the health of the Regt. terrible. Only about two hundred
and thirty fit for duty & great many of the sick desperately ill.

I fear we shall [have] great many deaths before we get through. And
accommodations are adverse, worse than [on] march. I shall do
all in my power to relieve these poor fellows. I jump into hard
work & harrowing sights.

(B)

Camp Jones Va.
August 29th 1861

My dearest wife

As we ^{are} ordered to hold ourselves
in readiness to march at any moment I will
write to say that if you do not hear from
me in some days you must not feel uneasy. No
one knows our destination provided we
move, which the General thinks doubtful.
The General means our own, Gen. Whiting.
It is very discouraging here. I should not
be able to take more than three hundred men
if we were to go.

Camp Jones, Va.

August 29th 1861

My dearest Wife,

As we are ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to march at any moment I will write to say that if you do not hear from me in some days you must not feel uneasy. No one knows our destination provided we move, which the General thinks doubtful. The General means our Gen., Gen. Whiting. It is very discouraging here. I should not be able to take more than three hundred men if we were to go.

© [Mrs. W. D. Pender
Salem, N.C.]

Camp Jones Va.
Sept. 1st 1861

My precious Wife

We are improving quite rapidly in health & if the weather continues good most of the men will soon be well. I found men when I got here going about in the rain barefooted, and great many have no socks. I am going to write an appeal to the ladies of N.C. to send some socks & drawers to them.

Camp Jones, Va.
Sept. 1st 1861

My precious Wife

. . . We are improving quite rapidly in health & if the weather continues good most of the men will soon be well. I found men when I got here going about in the rain barefooted, and great many have no socks. I am going to write an appeal to the ladies of N.C. to send some socks and drawers.

Camp Jones Va.
Sept. 5th 1861

Page 1

My dear wife,

The morale of the Regt. is bad. They had gotten despondent & truly they had enough to make them so. I find it hard to keep up my spirits with so much sickness & so many deaths. We have had six in the last week & several more will die. But the health of the Regt. is much improved. I feel that my presence has been beneficial to the feeling of officers & men.

I read the burial service over a Comrade yesterday & to save me I could not help crying.

Camp Jones, Va.

Sept. 5th 1861

My dear Wife,

. . . The morale of the Regt. is bad. They had gotten despondent & truly they had enough to make them so. I find it hard to keep up my spirits with so much sickness and so many deaths. We have had six in the last week & several more will die. But the health of the Regt. is much improved. I feel that my presence has been beneficial to the feeling of officers and men.

. . . I read the burial service over a man yesterday & to save me I could not help crying.

I am horrified to see how white men calling themselves gentlemen neglect these poor helpless negroes in this camp. They have farm boys--in most cases forced from home--and in several cases when they get sick they are allowed to die without any care on the part of those who are responsible for their well being. Two have died here in the last four days & one more will certainly die before many days.

. . . I am horrified to see how white men calling themselves gentlemen neglect these poor helpless negroes in this camp. They have farm boys--in most cases forced from home--and in several cases when they get sick they are allowed to die without any care on the part of those who are responsible for their well being. Two have died here in the last four days & one more will certainly die before [many] more days.

Camp Jones Va.

Page 1

Sept 14th 1861

My dear Wife

The Regt. is gradually diminishing
We are to march to tomorrow & will not be able
to carry more than three hundred & thirty
or forty men fit for duty out of seven hundred
& ninety eight. We average about one per day in deaths. But few new cases
but the old ones are hard to get up. Still
I do not despair; the general health is much
better, and the spirits of the men are getting
more buoyant. I never saw such long
faces as when I came here. Together with
sickness & misdirected discipline one never
heard a good laugh or an attempt at a song.
The
sick were allowed to wallow in mud & to
shift for themselves.

Camp Jones, Va.

Sept. 14th 1861

My dear Wife,

. . . The Regt. is gradually diminishing. We are to march tomorrow & will not be able to carry more than **three** hundred & thirty or forty men fit for duty out of seven hundred & ninety eight. We **average** about one per day in deaths. But few new cases but the old ones are hard to get up. Still I do not despair; the general health is much better, and the spirits of the men are getting more buoyant. I saw some long faces as when I came here. Together with sickness and misdirected discipline one never heard a good laugh or an attempt at a song. . . . The sick were allowed to wallow in mud & to shift for themselves . . .

I
 was going round the Hospital this morning
 to see the sick, and I came upon one old
 man sitting by his son. Spectacles on--with
 a brush keeping off the flies. The poor boy
 pale & emaciated looking as if he had one
 foot in the grave. I sat down & commin-
 cated talking to the old man, he finally remarked
 "but I am forced to leave here in the
 morning".

They are quite com-
 fortable now. Fine tents & plenty of room, air
 like ours etc. When I came they were crowded
 in little tents that leaked when raining
 & was like ovens when the sun shown.
 The Lord have mercy upon them.

. . . I was going round the Hospital this morning to see the sick, and I came upon
 one old man sitting by his son--spectacles on--with a brush, keeping off the flies.
 The poor boy [was] pale & emaciated looking as if he had one foot in the grave.
 I sat down & commenced talking to this old man, he finally remarked "but I am
 forced to leave here in the morning."

. . . They are quite comfortable now. Fine tents & plenty of room . . . When I
 came they were crowded in little tents that leaked when raining & was like ovens
 when the sun shown. The Lord have mercy upon them.