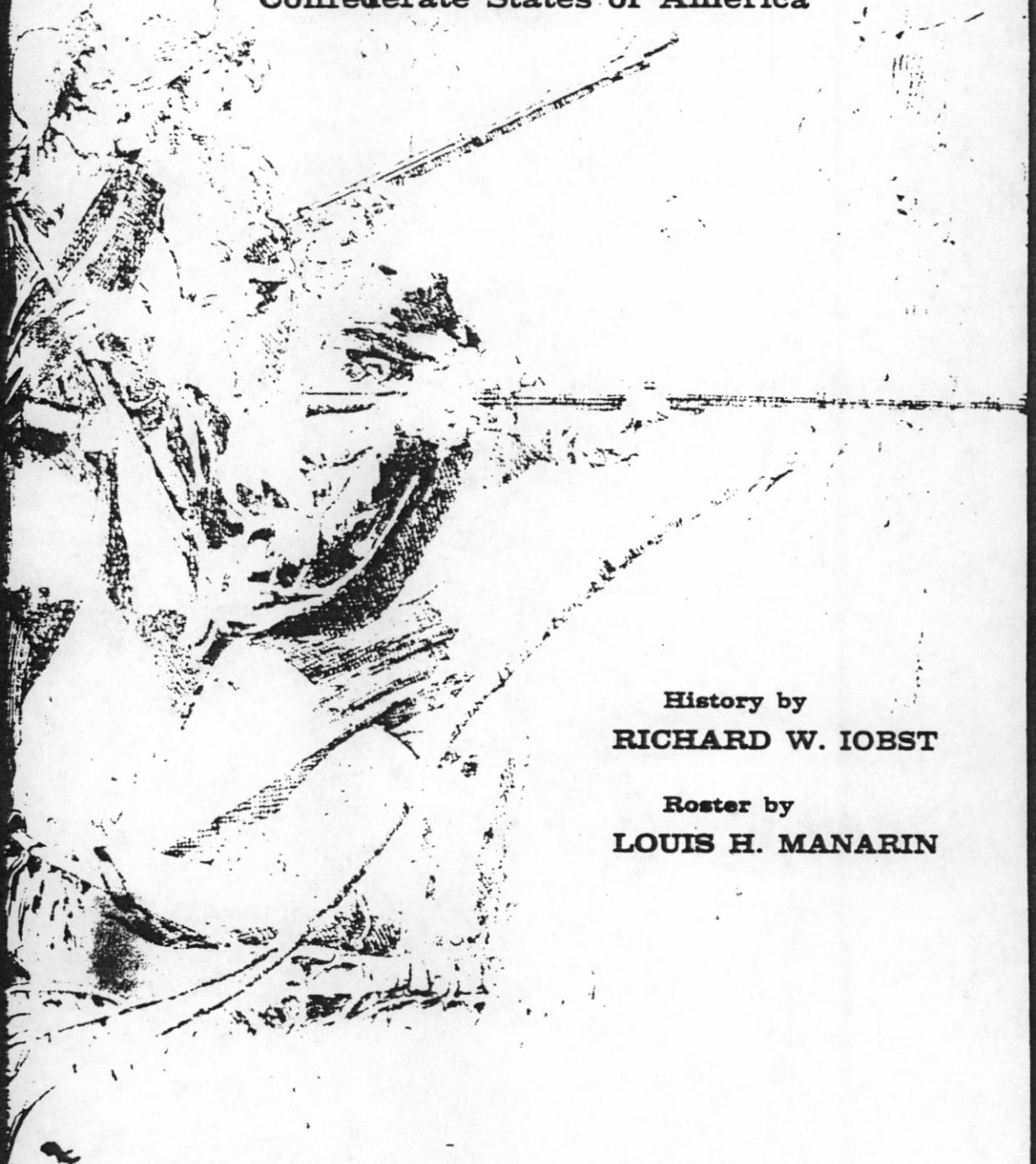


The Bloody Sixth

The Sixth North Carolina Regiment
Confederate States of America



History by
RICHARD W. IOBST

Roster by
LOUIS H. MANARIN

IV

A New Colonel Takes Command

"I have the honor to state that I reached here last evening and have assumed command of the Regt."

WILLIAM D. PENDER TO HENRY T. CLARK, AUGUST 27, 1861.

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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 "rely upon anyone." This petition was signed by every company commander in the regiment except Lieutenants Turner, Carter, and Walker who were "absent on furlough."

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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.

On March 3, 1859, Pender married Mary Frances, daughter of ex-Congressman Augustine H. Shepperd of near Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The couple had three sons: Samuel Turner; William D.; and Stephen Lee. He was made adjutant of the First Dragoons in 1860, but returned to the East on recruiting duty in 1861.

When Pender threw in his lot with the South in the spring of 1861, he was given a commission as captain of artillery in the Provisional Army of the Confederate States, and sent to Baltimore on recruiting duty. He returned to North Carolina in May, 1861, and was assigned by Governor Ellis as an instructor of volunteers at Camp Mangum near Raleigh, and later, of troops being drilled at Garysburg, on the Petersburg and Weldon Railroad. He was elected Colonel of the Third North Carolina Volunteers on May 15, 1861, and soon made many friends. When he was notified of his appointment to command the Sixth he wrote,

I have not made up my mind as to what I shall do about Fisher's Regt. but expect to remain where I am. I should like very much to go up where it is, but dislike to leave the 3rd.

On August 26 Pender arrived at his new command. His arrival was received with much enthusiasm by the men, possibly because of

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Lieutenant Colonel Lightfoot's evident unpopularity with the regiment. Pender found the regiment's camp "in excellent order." Indeed, General William H. C. Whiting, new commander of the Third Brigade, rated the Sixth's camp as "the best camp in his Brigade." There was still sickness among the men; only 284 privates were fit for duty, a number less than half of the men in the regiment. Many were without shoes, even at this early stage of the war. When he saw his men drilling barefooted Pender promptly ordered seven hospital tents forwarded from Norfolk, "as there is but one tent for the sick in the Regt." This would alleviate conditions among the sick, especially since most of the men had to lie in company tents "which leak badly." The young colonel appealed to Governor Clark to send provisions and equipment to the regiment, especially shoes:

Could you not sir come to our assistance and send us some. Every one says the Regt. has suffered terribly & rendered the most efficient service. Gen. Whiting does not hesitate to say that it is the best of the five Regts. in his Brigade.

Pender was not afraid to ask a personal favor of the governor: Would Governor Clark please appoint "my brother-in-law Jacob Shepperd" to a second lieutenancy in Company G, Captain Craige's company?

To his wife, Pender could unburden the innermost secrets of his heart. He was determined to do his best for his men, even though he feared "we shall (have) great many deaths before we get through." It was a sad regiment that Pender came to command—possibly the situation was made even worse by the fact that this was the young commander's first experience with a command fresh from the horrors of a Civil War battle. Even so, there was time for pleasantries of a sort:

I had the honor of taking tea with Gen. Johnston last-night. Mrs. Johnston is with him, and charming lady she is. They recolected me from Leavenworth, and treated me very kindly. Old officers have an enormous advantage. What I have seen of Whiting I like very much.

It must have saddened Pender to see Lightfoot's wife in camp with her two children. There was a war to be fought, a war which left little time for women or children.

The Sixth was faced with many troubles throughout the month of August, 1861. While no battle was fought, there were many false alarms. On the 26th of July heavy cannonading was heard in the direction of Acquia Creek, too "far for us to have any hand in the engagement if there was an engagement."

The fact that the various Confederate regiments were camped separate from one another did not alleviate the problem of sickness.

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The situation became so serious that Charles E. Johnson, North Carolina Surgeon General, became deeply concerned. He urged that more surgeons be added to the regiments, "to be paid by the state," as two surgeons were not deemed sufficient. It is known that typhoid fever accounted for at least some of the deaths, although some suffered from battle wounds. It is certain that lack of adequate clothing was a cause of much suffering among the men. The situation deteriorated to the point where the ladies of Hillsboro were asked to knit the men "a supply of substantial stockings." The fact that the men had not been paid only compounded their difficulties. Many of them were "poor men with dependent families." They needed money to keep up their morale. Adolphus W. Mangum of Salisbury wrote Governor Clark on August 19:

If they are neglected thus (not being paid), they will become disheartened and will not feel like fighting and suffering for the careless and ungrateful. . . . I'm sure your good judgement will agree that if men are expected to suffer & fight they must be kept in fighting plight & fighting spirits.

Mangum emphasized, "They cannot be kept so unless they are *paid*." The hardships met with in August caused men to wish for "water millions" and "cidar" and "whiskey." Homesickness haunted many of the men, although some of them hoped that their loved ones would come from North Carolina to visit them. This feeling was not confined to enlisted men. Pender wanted eatables from home, as well as visits from friends. The eternal soldier's lament for forgotten articles of clothing is reflected in Pender's statement that,

On looking over my trunk I find that I left all my handkerchiefs & most of my drawers & some socks & shirts at Camp Ruffin.

While the regiment was haunted by sickness and official neglect, Captain Samuel McDowell Tate was faced with the unpleasant task of settling the accounts of the deceased Colonel Fisher. These accounts were made by Fisher in supplying the regiment during the preceding spring, and were left unsettled at his death. Bills for meat (steaks, shanks, roasts, beef, etc.), various kinds of uniform material, and other supplies were settled by Fisher's estate. R. A. Caldwell of Salisbury, a friend of Fisher, asked if the dead officer owed any notes or bonds in two of the leading banks of central North Carolina. Fortunately, the replies were in the negative. In at least two instances the Confederate government assumed the obligation of paying debts incurred by Fisher in equipping the regiment. One of these involved uniform coats, pants, capes, shirts, blankets, and "66 pair shoes" costing a total of \$960.90. The other case involved "fifty-

two pair of shoes" costing \$88.60. In both cases the problem of repayment was solved by putting the supplies on the regiment's August payrolls and charging them to the Confederate government.

The regiment waited, in the closing days of August, for a possible movement to a secret destination. Although there were 803 men and officers on the regimental morning report for August 31, only "three hundred men" were fit for duty. This number increased as the weather improved about September 1. Pender wrote his wife:

. . . I long for the 3rd. (regiment). Between us there is not such a Reg!—in the service. This does not compare with it: & I fear never will. But still I can bring it out a great deal, and have already done something towards it.

One of the things Pender did for his men was to write an appeal to the "ladies of N. C." to prepare socks and underwear for them. This was promptly done by numerous women in piedmont North Carolina. Captain Craige's company received ninety pairs of socks and four blankets from "the ladies of Franklin Church and vicinity" (near Salisbury). These welcome items were received at the end of September, "and you may be sure much appreciated by all." An appeal was made to the ladies of Hillsboro for articles of clothing and other "comforts" for the sick in the regiment. When these articles were sent John A. McMannen of Hillsboro wrote,

. . . the remembrance of which (the articles sent) will be ever fresh and green in their minds, and will be treasured up in their hearts as long as life lasts.

McMannen urged that future shipments of goods should be sent in strong boxes, "hooped and nailed at the ends." No cooked meats were to be sent; but bread, cake, potatoes, onions, beets, dry beef, ham, pickles, preserves, wines, and cordials were in great demand. Clothing "of all kinds" was badly needed along with light cotton comforts which "will answer for bed and blanket." Money was also sent, especially for special groups of particularly destitute soldiers. Citizens of Hillsboro collected \$80.00 for destitute Irish families of men in Captain James W. Wilson's Rowan Company F. In sending the money a friend of the donors explained,

By this act of liberality they mean no reflection upon your portion of the State, but as an expression of their willingness to assist those who have shown their loyalty by battling for our rights and liberties, no matter who they are, or from what country they have come.

All these shortages and worries tended to make the men sad and despondent. Morale was low, probably because of the number

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of deaths from disease. Pender reported "six in the last week & several more will die." Food was also very scarce at Camp Jones. There was a great shortage of such commodities as butter, preserves, pickles, lard, and hams. Candles, tea, coffee, sugar, and matches were more plentiful. Among those who suffered were the "poor helpless negroes" belonging to some of the officers and men. Some of these servants were, according to Pender, "allowed to die without any care on the part of those who are responsible for their well being." The regiment had lost two Negro servants recently, and possibly a third would soon die. The nights were extremely cold, Pender had four blankets "& sleep cold every night." He summed up his feelings about his regiment in terse language:

. . . This between us is not the Regt that I had before. The men are not as good a class & the officers are nothing like as intelligent. This is strictly confidential. And the morale of the Regt. is bad. . . . I find it hard to keep up my spirits with so much sickness & so many deaths. . . . I read the burial service over a man yesterday & to save me I could not help crying. . . . We have not moved yet & according to all appearances no more likely to move than a week ago. Our troops are so badly crippled by sickness that I do not see how we could well (move)

In spite of this statement Pender did feel that his presence was proving "beneficial" to both the officers and men.

The young colonel could not solve one persistent problem which remained with his men as summer turned into early fall. This was the lack of pay. Some of the men hadn't even received their bounty money "which should have been promptly paid at their enlistment." The hardship was made more serious by the fact that many of the regiments camped around the Sixth had received their pay "two or three weeks ago." It seemed to many of the men that they had been slighted. Hadn't they done their full duty? Hadn't they taken Rickett's and Griffin's batteries at Manassas, opening the way for a Confederate victory? Many of their families were already suffering from "need of money." Committees, appointed by state authority to provide for soldiers' families, hadn't done their duty. Several families, "whose children now want bread," hadn't even been visited. It was hard for the men to understand these things, harder still for them to remain where they were without doing something about this unbearable situation. W. H. Alexander, assistant commissary sergeant to the regiment, had feelings in this matter which were fairly typical. He wrote directly to Governor Clark in early September:

I have been in service of the war since the 23rd day of April by appointment first of Col. Fisher, next by the authorities at Raleigh, and lastly by a commission of L. P. Walker. I left a

family of children who required nearly all the money I had to subsist upon until I returned & being here and having to feed myself at very exorbitant prices I feel discouraged that I cannot receive some money. Must I resign & go home for a support or is it likely that the paymaster will soon make his appearance. There are 500 or more in this glorious Regt. who have not a cent of money; I loaned and borrowed until the thing is out.

Alexander saw and felt the lack of money. He wondered "who pays" and when. Would he be paid for his six-weeks service prior to the date of "my first commission for service rendered"? These were things which came close to the men; conditions which they hoped would be soon alleviated. Alexander ended his letter on a note of sadness: "Our men continue to die daily."

Pender was anxious to complete the organization of his regimental staff while the regiment was still encamped in the vicinity of Manassas. On September 4 he wrote Governor Clark requesting that a chaplain be sent to join the regiment. P. A. Holt had been transferred to the regiment on August 6 as surgeon. Nathaniel Scales, the regimental quartermaster, had a high reputation in Pender's eyes. He was "very highly spoken of. I like him very well." Gradually the staff was "shaping up," even though Lieutenant Colonel Lightfoot was proving himself pompous and unlikeable. Pender felt that "I shall be annoyed by him." In spite of this annoyance, Pender felt that life was continuing on an even balance for him. He wrote his wife that she needn't worry about him. There was no danger that he would soon fall in battle "for the chances as I wrote you before, are that we will be in reserve."

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Camp Fisher

"We have just moved over to our new Quarters. . . . Some of our houses are very fine and tasty. . . ."

ROBERT F. WEBB TO LUCY MANGUM, DECEMBER 31, 1861.

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For some time it had become evident that the regiment would be moved to the area along the Potomac River. Although this didn't please Colonel Pender since it would take the regiment out of the field of active operations, there was good reason for it. A defensive work on the Potomac at Evansport and near Dumfries was under construction in early September. General Whiting was ordered to go there and direct the "mounting of the guns." He was also directed to determine how many men would be needed to defend the position "& the time they should be expected to hold out." Union forces had been moving in a threatening manner in the direction of the Occoquan River, some twenty-five miles below Washington. There was also some reason to suspect that a Union force might land in the vicinity of Dumfries and thus flank the Confederate position at Manassas. It would be necessary for the Confederates "to take a position some where in the vicinity of Bacon Race Church" below the Occoquan to intercept such a movement. The right flank of the Confederate line, based at Wolf Run Shoals on the Occoquan, was a particularly sensitive spot. Confederate cavalry under Colonel Wade Hampton was stationed there, but a force of infantry would obviously be necessary to hold the position. General Joseph E. Johnston, commanding all Confederate forces in northern Virginia, was extremely anxious for Whiting to determine how many infantry troops would be necessary "for the observation of the Occoquan, & success of Evansport."

By mid-September Whiting had decided to move his brigade, consisting of the Fourth Alabama, First Tennessee, Second Mississippi, Eleventh Mississippi, Sixth North Carolina, and Imboden's battery,

to the vicinity of Dumfries. Orders were prepared for the march, to begin on the morning of September 18.

As the men prepared to march, Pender's fears were rejuvenated. He felt that he couldn't move more than "three hundred & thirty or forty men" when the time came to go. This was a sad figure out of a total of 798 men on the regimental roster. The regimental health was improving, but men were still dying. According to Pender,

They 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 bouyant. I never saw such long faces as when I came here. Together with sickness & misdirected discipline (an obvious slap at Lightfoot) one never heard a good laugh or a (n) attempt at a song.

Indeed, the lieutenant colonel had been a strict disciplinarian, trying to teach the men his "Military-School-notions." Lightfoot wouldn't alleviate his discipline by anything, not even a single "kind word or act." Friction was revealed on the regimental staff by Pender's sharp criticism of Lightfoot, a statement worth repeating:

The sick were allowed to wallow in mud & to shift for themselves. They had an asst. surgeon who had never done anything but compound medicines, and Lightfoot seemed to make no effort to get any others. In fact he seemed to be totally ignorant of their wants, or totally indifferent. He talked incessantly of disorganisation &c. without one single effort . . . to remedy it . . . these conceited military school teachers, are worse than good men ignorant of the first principles of drill. The more I see the more I am disgusted with the idea that to know how to drill entitles a man to any position. If he has sense it helps him but if not, it (is) even better for him & those who have the misfortune to be under him that he did not know right face from left.

The young colonel continued with an exposition of Lightfoot's good points. He was a gentleman, would obey orders, and was a good assistant. Pender had been forced to reprimand Lightfoot for the latter's pompous attitude. As Pender explained, "I am Colonel 'de facto' as well as 'de jure.'" Lightfoot was hated throughout the regiment, Major Webb was "a fine man," Adjutant Smith was a "good boy" who showed great respect to his colonel. Pender revealed his sympathy for the sufferings of his men when he wrote,

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Pender recalled one incident when he was visiting the regimental hospital to see the sick. He came upon a bespectacled elderly man who was sitting by his son with a brush to keep the flies off the boy's face. The soldier was "pale & emaciated," looking very ill. Pender sat down and began talking to the father, who finally remarked, "but I am forced to leave him in the morning." The young colonel was doing everything he could for his men—providing clean tents with plenty of room, good attention, and the knowledge that his officers cared for their welfare.

Early in the morning of September 18 the men were roused out of bed to begin their long march to Dumfries. Mrs. Scales, wife of the regimental quartermaster, accompanied the regiment. Although the regiment would be out of the reach of "much fighting," there was no spirit to get into a fight. As Pender said, "I shall be content if it happens to be my luck, not to be in a fight. If it comes I shall be ready & willing to meet it." Battles could wait; the suffering of the past month had been too much to wish for the additional test of battle at this time.

On the night of the 18th the men filed across Powell's Run and went into a temporary camp. The next morning the men were marched half a mile and pitched tents. This new camp was named "Camp Hill," for obvious reasons. The camp was situated in an area of rolling hills, averaging about 250 feet in height, with excellent streams nearby. Only 350 officers and men marched to the new campground. The sick had been left at Camp Jones under Lightfoot to follow on September 20. Even as the regiment marched from Camp Jones the lieutenant colonel was preparing "a long letter about drills parades &c." As Pender expressed it, "Did you ever hear of such a thing?" It seemed that the old animosity between the two highest-ranking officers in the regiment was still alive. It was only a matter of time until other incidents would occur, to the possible detriment of the men in the regiment.

The town near which the regiment found itself encamped was an old Virginia river port, founded in the early Eighteenth Century. The main road, or Telegraph Road, between Washington and Richmond passes through its center, giving an atmosphere of importance to the community. There were some elegant brick buildings in the town, but in 1861 most of these had fallen into ruin. Now the area was the scene of extensive military activity. As if to emphasize Dumfries' new importance as a military center General Whiting issued orders appointing a provost marshal and provost guards to maintain order in the town. The provost marshal would imprison all "officers

of governor's papers used in this study. The outgoing correspondence of the governors is included in a series of letter books. Those used here are the Governor Henry T. Clark Letter Book, 1861-1862 and the Governor Zebulon B. Vance Letter Books for 1862-1863 and 1863-1865. All these collections are in NCDAAH. Other manuscript collections in the NCDAAH which relate to the Sixth Regiment are the Governor Henry Toole Clark Scrapbook 1861-1865, a collection of newspaper clippings which relate to North Carolina's role in the Civil War; the Miscellaneous Collection of Confederate Records, a varied collection of letters and military records; the Adjutant General's Roll of Honor Scrapbook, very similar to the Governor Henry T. Clark Scrapbook, and the Oscar W. Blacknall Memoir, a collection of the letters of Blacknall's father, Colonel Charles C. Blacknall, with a connecting narrative.

Several large collections of manuscript materials were used at the SHC. These include the Charles F. Fisher Papers, an excellent account of the organization of the Sixth Regiment; the Peter Hairston Papers, a collection of letters written by Hairston, a volunteer aide to General Jubal A. Early, to his wife in North Carolina; the Peter W. Hairston War Diary, November-December, 1863, which presents a lucid account of conditions in Early's division in the fall of 1863; the Adolphus Williamson Mangum Papers, a series of letters from Mangum, chaplain to the Sixth Regiment for a brief period in the fall of 1861; the William Gaston Lewis Papers, a collection of letters written by Lewis to his wife; the **William Dorsey Pender Papers, an important series of letters written by Pender to his wife during the period 1861-1863;** the **Ruffin-Roulhac-Hamilton Papers;** the **William A. Graham Papers;** the Christian Thomas Pfohl Papers (on microfilm); and the Stephen D. Ramseur Papers, an interesting collection of letters from Ramseur to his wife, especially valuable for their information about the valley campaign of 1864.

Those collections which were used at DU include Stephen B. Weeks's "Sketch of Col. Charles F. Fisher," in the Van Noppen Mss.; Archibald Henderson's "Charles Fisher," in United Confederate Veteran Mss.; the Isham Sims Upchurch Papers, an interesting series of letters from various soldiers in the Sixth Regiment to Upchurch who was a resident of Chatham County, North Carolina; M. J. Solomon's Scrapbook; and the John Kerr Walker Papers, an extensive collection of letters written by Walker, a member of the Sixth Regiment from Alamance County, North Carolina, to his family.

The NA in Washington, D. C. contains the War Department **Collection, Confederate Records Group 109, Compiled Military Service Records of the various Union and Confederate Regiments and William H. C. Whiting Military Papers in the War Department Collection.** The Whiting Military Papers contain order books, letters,

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