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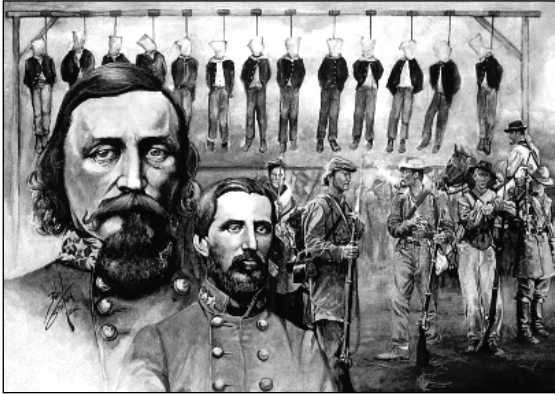
October 11, 2004

Kinston, North Carolina

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Story of Civil War hangings goes international

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In the wee hours of Feb. 2, 1864, Confederate forces captured 53 men who had deserted the Stars and Bars and currently wore the uniform of those serving the Stars and Stripes. These men comprised nearly the entire roster of Company F of the Second North Carolina Volunteer Union Infantry.

Within four months of capture, nearly all were dead. Many became victims of diseases after they were sent to southern prisoner of war camps. Some were branded with a “D” for

“deserter” on their hips.

However, 22 of these men were publicly hanged in Kinston.

The story of these hangings, once the stuff of local legend, entered this summer into the arena of international study thanks to the efforts of Dr. Donald Collins, a retired history professor from East Carolina University.

His account of these ill-fated men appeared in the **June issue of the CHAB News. CHAB stands for the Confederate Historical Association of Belgium.**

The publication is a popular Civil War magazine, similar to the Civil War Times Illustrated published in the United States.

“During the past two years, interest in the story of the Kinston hangings has expanded nationally and internationally,” Collins said. *“Northerners visiting the South are often dumbfounded by the interest of Southerners in the Civil War.”*

“They would be more surprised at the intense interest our war has generated throughout the world.”

Germans, Austrians, Australians, Frenchmen, **Belgians** and other Europeans hold round-table discussions, and European re-enactor groups, fighting as both Federals and Confederates, recreate the battles of Chancellorsville, Cold Harbor and Antietam, Collins explained. The First North Carolina Cavalry has a German branch that has ridden into action for the past 12 years.

Even the Internet offers evidence of the interest people world-wide have in the American Civil War. One website’s greeting reads, *“Willkommen auf des Homepages des Union und Confederate Reenactors International”*, while another says *“Bienvenue sur le site du Club Confédéré et Fédéral de France.”*

Dr. Collins' article in CHAB News, titled "General George Pickett and the Mass Execution of Deserters in Civil War Kinston, North Carolina," is just the latest chapter in the story of this professor's personal quest.

"I became interested in this topic many years ago while doing genealogical research on my great-grandfather, Richard Louis R.L. Collins, who was the husband of Elsy Becton of Lenoir County. R.L. Collins owned a tailor shop next to the Pollock Hotel across from the courthouse before the Civil War," Collins said.

"He lost his shop at the beginning of the war when he refused to make a Confederate flag. He even refused to sell the material to make Confederate flags."

Collins said when he learned that his great-grandfather's death occurred around the time of the Kinston hangings, he suspected that his Union-sympathizing ancestor was possibly one of those who ended up at the end of a rope. R.L. Collins was 31 at the time of his death.

As the professor meticulously examined documents from that historical period, he pieced together the story of the captured deserters and the Kinston hangings. Major General George Pickett was in command of Confederate forces in the Kinston and Goldsboro areas at the time of the hangings.

"I never did find out how my great-grandfather died, but being a historian, I decided to write the most detailed story of the hangings possible," Collins explained. *"After I completed the article, it took years to get it into print."*

Since the story's first appearance in print, Collins has published an expanded version of the article in *The Human Tradition in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, published by Scholarly Resources, Inc.

In Jan. 2003, Collins told the story of the Kinston hangings to the Pickett Society in Richmond, Va., at the annual commemoration of Pickett's birthday.

Professor Collins has no kind words for Gerard A. Patterson's book, *"Justice or Atrocity : General George E. Pickett and the Kinston, N.C. Hangings"*.

"I have great disdain for Patterson's book for two reasons. First, he took a subject too short for book-length treatment and padded it with Pickett's love story," Collins said.

"Even worse, he padded the text with statements that are just outright wrong. He makes mistakes page after page. The courts-martial did not take place at the courthouse but at Pickett's headquarters, first in Kinston and then in Goldsboro. His claims to know the location of the hangings is incorrect because no one knows with certainty just where the hangings took place."

The retired ECU scholar is in the final stages of completed his latest book. *"The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis"* is scheduled for release in May 2005.

