Inscriptions on Separate Historic Markers Erected at Dunsville
Lowry's Point, May 4, 1981

Fort Lowry—Camp Byron

Here in 1861 Confederates constructed an eight gun "water battery" principally for the defense of Fredericksburg. The guns were manned by the 55th Infantry Regiment located 500 yards N.W. The cannons were moved and the fort abandoned March 1862 after Northern Neck troop withdrawal left unit defenseless. On April 14, 1862, six Union gun boats bombarded and burned the installation. Thereafter, the fort functioned in limited capacity until the war ended.

Fort Lowry

Located two miles N.E. on Rappahannock River at Lowry's Point was a Confederate eight gun "water battery" constructed in 1861. Here at Dunsville was located Camp Byron, home of Company F (Essex Light Dragoons), Ninth Cavalry, C.S.A.: the company moved to Fort Lowry in October 1861 to assist in the fort's defense and to conduct scouting missions.

Fort Lowry—Camp Byron*

by Carroll M. Garnett

One hundred and twenty years ago, next month, this Confederate camp was formed—right there—on the property of Doctor Richard S. Cauthorn. He had 76 acres there and called the homestead "Byron Park". With the flush of war clouds swirling over his beloved state, Dr. Cauthorn, although 45 years of age, gave up his medical practice and raised a company of volunteers. Quite appropriately, he was selected as captain by the troopers of the company and they were mustered into the Confederate Army as a unit on June 10, 1861 at Tappahannock, the oath being administered by Major William N. Ward, C.S.A., who was to become the commander of the military post at Fort Lowry, located on the south side of the Rappahannock, about two miles NE of Dunsville. These dragoons had to furnish their own horses but were given an evaluation upon entering the service and were reimbursed later. As an example, Captain Cauthorn's horse was valued at $175; and the equipment for riding, $57.50.

This new company of cavalry was designated the "Essex Light Dragoons" and was assigned on a temporary basis to "Major Ward's Essex and Middlesex Battalion", an infantry unit. The Light Dragoons wasted no time in setting up their selected camp which was given the official military name "Camp Byron": shanties were built of scrap plank (outsides) and log huts were erected; tents were raised and stables for the horses and mules were likewise built.

By the end of June, 1861, F Company had 64 troopers assigned but expected the complement to reach 70 within a few days; all troopers were not fully uniformed at this point because of the nonavailability of this dress. However, the County of Essex on July 15th gave the Dragoons $100 for the purchase of uniforms. They had no public arms but had 50 sabers with belts and 44 Navy revolvers which had also been furnished by the County of Essex. They were greatly in need of 25 revolvers with belt holsters, 20 sabers with belts, cartridge boxes, cap boxes, canteens and ammunition for seventy men.

Captain Cauthorn, assisted by fellow officers Lieutenants William L. Waring, William L. Oliver, William Latane, John H. Wilson, Waring Lewis, and John Latane, was involved daily with the drill of the Dragoons. The captain was well aware of the necessity for the company to reach a position of battle readiness as this was the only cavalry company on the south side of the lower Rappahannock and constant scouting parties were needed.

* Address delivered by Carroll M. Garnett on occasion of erection of State Historical Markers, Dunsville, Essex County, V.A., May 4, 1981.
from Middlesex County up to Fort Lowry. Troop F was daily receiving new recruits and the captain was forced to give increasing time to drill in order that the unit could be molded into a coordinated, hard hitting force.

The Essex Dragoons! what a pleasant sound that name has in the memory lanes of older natives of Dunsville; we have heard the oft told tales of the Dragoons mustering under the red oak tree near the church and this seemed to give a type of immortality to the huge oak as it appeared it would live forever, representing our link with the great war and the Essex Dragoons. Our hope for the tree's eternity was vanquished by a heavy storm in the winter of 1978 when the big red oak fell.

During this early period at Camp Byron, the Dragoons had 4 servants assigned to cook, launder, groom horses and conduct other numerous camp chores. In some respects the enlisted men fared no better than the servants since they were issued straw upon which to sleep; it was not quite as difficult as it sounds, though, since the men would stuff the straw into ticks to form mattresses.

The camp was able to profit by local citizens making available food supplies and other needed items: James A. Dunn on June 20, 1861 delivered to the Dragoons five bushels of corn for a total cost of $3.00; the estate of Winter Bray, being administered by John E. Trible, furnished 2320 pounds of blade fodder to the Dragoons for a total cost of $25.50; and the John S. Young Company furnished forty-two buckets to the Dragoons at .34¢ each as well as three tin cups at .12½¢ each.

Things began to happen by an unexpected nature at Camp Byron in July for the cavalry was considered an elite group and as such felt superior to the common infantryman. It was difficult for the Dragoons to believe but on July 17, 1861, Company D (Essex Davis Rifles), 55th Virginia Regiment of Infantry, under the command of Captain Gustavus Garnett Roy, another medical doctor, was mustered into Confederate service at Camp Byron, the oath being administered by Captain Roy himself; not only were they mustered at Camp Byron, they were to be quartered there for the next several months. And this was not all for Company G (Essex Grays), also of the 55th, was soon to arrive at Camp Byron with Captain George W. Street as its commander; he had entered his company into Confederate service as a unit at Center Cross on June 12, 1861.

In the mind's eye one can scan that field and envision the cavalry going through their paces, sabers flashing in the sun, dragoons wheeling right then left, hear the shouted commands! And then on the other side there is the infantry, the foot soldier, proud too, but they must walk while the aristocrats ride. However, both units, so separate and different, are still able to compete through good natured ribbing. In a manner of speaking this was competition between the medical profession as the commanders of the Essex Dragoons and the Davis Rifles are doctors. However, F Company, cavalry, now has D Company, infantry, outnumbered in that regard for on June 10, William Latane, age 28, a medical doctor, entered Confederate service as a private at Tappahannock and assigned to the Essex Dragoons. It was not long before his ability was recognized as he was promoted to 2nd lieutenant on July 1, 1861.

The Essex Light Dragoons were moved from Camp Byron in October, 1861 to encamp at Fort Lowry. Also, Company D of the 55th left Camp Byron on October 8th and marched to Urbanna to encamp at Camp Ashby. Company G of the 55th moved from Camp Byron on October 4th to Camp Sullivan, located about one mile from Fort Lowry. Camp Byron was by no means deserted during the remaining years of the war as passing units frequently would stay at the camp.

Company B of the Rappahannock District Reserve was organized about July 12, 1864, and in December, 1864, had its headquarters at Camp Byron with Captain Lawrence D. Roane as its commander. Roane, the son of a medical doctor from Tappahannock, had only been medically retired from Confederate service on November 15, 1864 when he suddenly surfaced as captain of this company of November 24, 1864. He is the principal of a fascinating true tale and some additional background information is indicated before we proceed further: he entered the Confederate army on July 17, 1861 at Dunnsville and was assigned to Company D, the Essex Davis Rifles. In time he became captain of the company but then medically discharged due to wounds received at Chancellorville.

On November 30, 1864, Commander Foxhall A. Parker, U.S.N., the commander of the Potomac Flotilla which had blockade responsibilities of the Potomac and Rappahannock, advised Gideon Welles, U.S. Secretary of the Navy as follows: "Sir: I regret to inform the Department that on the 24th instant Acting Master G. C. Schulze, commanding U.S.S. Yankee, while on shore with a party of his men on a reconnaissance near Fort Lowry, on the Rappahannock River, became in some way separated from his command and fell into the hands of the enemy, who captured him First-class Boy William Schwarzkopf. On the evening of the same day an impertinent note addressed to me was sent on board the Yankee from a certain Captain Roane, commanding Rappahannock District, which, with a copy of my reply, I enclose."

"To Commander F.A. Parker, Commanding Potomac Flotilla.

Sir: If any private property is destroyed by men of your command in the district which I have the honor to command the prisoners captured by me this evening will be made to suffer for it. Very respectfully, your obedient servant, L.D. Roane, Captain, Commanding Rappahannock District."

"U.S.S. Don, off Tappahannock, Va., November 30, 1864, to Captain L.D. Roane, Commanding Rappahannock District; from Foxhall A. Parker, Commanding Potomac Flotilla.

Sir: In reply to your communication of the 24th instant, just received, I have to inform you that the property of unoffending citizens on the rivers blockaded by the squadron under my command will continue to be respected by me in the future as it has been in the past.

"When, however, private dwellings are used by rebels as a shelter from which to fire at my boats, as was the case not long since in the Great Wicomico and on this river at a point not far below here, which I presume to be within the district which you have the honor to command, I shall, undeterred by your threat, burn them to the ground, well knowing that the Government will sustain me in so doing, and will not fail to retaliate upon the person of two prisoners in its possession, of equal rank and condition, any barbarities which inhumanity may prompt you to inflict, in consequence of my acts, upon Acting Master Schulze and the lad, William Schwarzkopf, now in your power; and on my own part, I do assure you that should any harm befall either of them through your instrumentality, I will not leave a house standing on either bank of this river from Port Royal to its mouth."

"In conclusion, you must pardon me for expressing the conviction that the fortunes of the Confederacy must be at a very low ebb, and its military in a most disorganized condition, when a captain in its service arrogates to
himself the right to dispose of its prisoners of war as in his judgment he may think proper.

"I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,
s/Foxhall A. Parker"

Camp Byron was also used by defense troops under the command of Captain J.T.T. Hundley which group was organized by him at Dunsville on December 12, 1863. Captain Hundley had previously served in the Confederate Army but had been improperly enrolled since he had been conducting a male school. He was accordingly discharged in March, 1862 and later formed this defense company.

In this area, as well as all along the lower Rappahannock, there is a rich lode of untouched history; it cries out to be found and then recognized. Here in Essex, we had not only Fort Lowry and Camp Byron but Camp Field, located outside of Tappahannock, Camp Sullivan located one mile from Fort Lowry, and Camp Essex, located on the Hundley farm near Center Cross. In Middlesex County, there were Camp Saluda, Camp Ashby at Urbanna and also Camp Harmony Village.

Let's allow our vision to drift once again to that field for here many famous trod that soil: Cauhorn, Latane, Roy, Street, Christian, Rice, Burke, Lawson, Fannterloy, Saunders, Haile, Rowdie, Pendleton, Fleet, Roane, Waring, Brockenhour, Garnett, Jett, Wright, Daingerfield, Rennolds, Mccou, and let's not forget Colonel Francis Mallory, commander of the 55th, not from this area, from Norfolk, but possessing great skill as a professional soldier: a VMI graduate, served for several years in the U.S. Army before resigning to enter Confederate service and being commissioned outright as a colonel and was the first commander of the regiment.

In all the research conducted in this mammoth project, one point seems to linger: the compelling force which produced the indomitable fighting spirit of Virginia's Confederate soldiers was the defense of their native state. General Lee, who was the guiding hand in establishing Fort Lowry, was against slavery, as were so many Southerners; he was against secession; but he could not bear arms against his native state. This overriding loyalty to state is well illustrated by a lesser known figure than Lee. His name was Lieutenant James Keith Boswell, a native of Fauquier County who, for a short time served as an engineer in charge of the construction at Fort Lowry. How dare one to place this soldier in the same category as Lee, one might ask? You have probably never heard of him. However, he is rather famous not because of what he did but how he died and where: after his Fort Lowry assignment, he was transferred to the Peninsula where he supervised the construction of additional batteries; he then resigned from the Provisional Army of Virginia but several months later re-entered the service, this time as an engineer in the Provisional Army, Confederate States (PACS) and was assigned to General Stonewall Jackson's staff. And so the threads of fate unite since Boswell was standing next to Jackson when the great general received his mortal wound; Boswell was killed instantly.

When Boswell first served at Fort Lowry he acted in a civilian capacity. On July 25, 1861, his commander of engineers for the State, Colonel Andrew Talcott, offered him the rank of 1st lieutenant of engineers in the Provisional Army of Virginia. Boswell by letter dated July 22, 1861, at Fort Lowry, stated in part: "I accept the position thus kindly offered with many misgivings as to my ability to perform the responsible duties which may devolve upon me but with a firm determination that during the continuance of this unjust war, my entire time and energies shall be devoted to the service of my native state regardless of all personal considerations".

The Commonwealth of Virginia as well as the Confederate States Army exploited this unbounded loyalty to State and county found within the hearts of most Virginians by accepting troops raised voluntarily from the same geographical area: a graphic example was here in Essex where were raised four such companies of infantry and one of cavalry, each being partially indentified with the name of their county: Essex Artillery; Essex Davis Rifles; Essex Sharpshooters; Essex Grays; and Essex Light Dragoons.

History can be a living thing. We are what our forebears have given us; their genes continue forever. So our lives are intrinsically connected to their lives. It holds that reverence of our ancestors is proper and of noble quality. We cannot overlook the past. As the inscription on the National Archives states, "What is past is prologue."

Each of us here, through our ancestors and otherwise, has been affected to some degree by the flags being flown here, symbolic of a multitude of events: the three separate flags of the Confederate States, of Virginia, and the Stars and Stripes. These waving banners stimulate the powerful chords of memory, activate the emotional senses: a quickening of the pulse, a feeling of joy, of sadness, even tears of pleasure, tears of pain. Our National flag now stands supreme, so symbolically representing our heritage and unified greatness.

It is proper to periodically hesitate and think, to recall, to record, and to encourage historical research. From the result of an assessment may be made and by application to the present keep the good and eliminate the bad. The presence of each of you here today reflects your acute interest in history and as such a loyalty to the Commonwealth of Virginia and your country as well. It is a noble calling for what is past is truly prologue.

For two and a half years I have been on a thrilling journey the likes of which I have never before experienced. It has been an adventure into our past— it has been a labor of love. Success in a massive investigative project which I have undertaken can only be attained through full cooperation of the citizens; the spirit of cooperation is clearly manifest everywhere and is truly reassuring.

The enigma which has been attached to Fort Lowry for over a hundred years no longer exists; the mystery has been solved through exhaustive research resulting in the location of proper documentation. Today the erection of these State markers is proof Fort Lowry has been launched into its rightful place in history: in the history of the County of Essex; in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia; and in the history of the nation as well for Fort Lowry has the distinction of being the only "water battery"—a permanent installation—on the Rappahannock during the war.

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**MINUTES OF THE SOCIETY**

The Essex County Historical Society met in the Court House at 3:00 p.m. in Tappahannock, Sunday, January 18, 1987. The meeting was called to order by our president, Mr. Hill B. Welford. The secretary made some announcements about historical sites open and notice from the Landmarks Historical Division about applications for property to be considered as historical sites.

Mr. Ludwell Smither, Treasurer, reported that there was a balance of $223.29 in our checking account; our
savings account and C.D.'s balance with interest was $1436.67; total balance $1659.96. Mr. Smither said that we had 93 single members, 34 couples, and 12 Life Memberships, two of whom have passed away.

Mr. Wellford then asked about the nominating committee and if there were any present who had served before and would volunteer. Since there were none present, Mr. Wellford will appoint one before the next meeting. Mr. Wellford then turned the meeting over to Mr. Carroll Garnett, Vice President, in charge of Programs, to introduce our guest speaker, Mr. Howard W. Reisinger. As Mr. Garnett said most of us know Mr. Reisinger better than he, because Howard came to Essex in 1933 from his native Washington, D.C. He formed the Reisinger Beverage Co., a soft drink production, until after the war started and he sold it. He said at this time that he was going to pursue next in his career something that he enjoyed. He bought property on Hoskins Creek in Tappahannock and opened a Marina called the "Haven" and he secured franchises for engines and boats etc. He built a lovely home on Jeannette Drive. He married Sally Chinn of Warsaw, and they still live and operate the "Haven" on Jeannette Drive. Howard developed Reisinger Yachts International and crossed the Atlantic 26 times to have his yachts built to specifications in Denmark, Holland, Norway, and Germany. He has sold them to numerous celebrities, two to Duponts, one to the Governor of California, and also to the Governor of Florida.

Mr. Reisinger was asked to speak today about "Stohlman's Confectionary Store and Ice Cream Parlor" as it was known in Georgetown for over 100 years. It is now a part of Americana housed in the Arts and Crafts Building of the Smithsonian. In mid 1957 all furniture and equipment of the original ice cream parlor was moved intact to make the exhibit. Mr. Reisinger gave a short history of Washington and Georgetown in the early days and told us that his grandmother, Sabina Stohlman's brother, William Stohlman founded Stohlman's Ice Cream Parlor on Wisconsin Avenue. It was to the Ice Cream Parlor, young couples strolled on dates. Miss Betty Wright, our oldest member, lived in Georgetown many years and frequently went to Stohlman's. She remembers it as one of the most popular places in Washington because it was famous for its delicious ice cream.

Howard said his family was also in the ice cream business, and even operated an ice cream parlor on "G" Street, their main business was wholesale. They sold to all the hotels, the steamboats, the railroads for their dining cars, and their most prestigious customer was the White House. He made specially molded ice cream, cookies and cakes for them to serve at receptions and other entertainments.

Mr. Wellford thanked Howard for his most interesting and informative talk and before adjourning for the social hour, thanked Mrs. Jeannette Ellis, Chairman, Mrs. Hill Wellford, Mrs. Ruby Payeure, Mrs. Daisy Gouldin, Miss Betsey Fleet, Mrs. Polly Taliaferro, Miss Elva Powers and Mrs. Ludwell Smither for the delicious refreshments to be enjoyed by all.

The Essex County Historical Society met on Sunday afternoon April 26, 1987 at the Court House in Tappahannock. Mr. Carroll Garnett, Vice President, presided in the absence of the president, Mr. Hill B. Wellford. Mrs. Wright, before reading the minutes, announced that refreshments would be at her home because the Woman's Club House which we usually use had been rented. She also thanked Miss Betsey Fleet who is chairman of the group today and has also served as overall chairman for the past year. Besides Miss Fleet, we want to thank Mrs. Lucile Andrews, Mrs. Lelia Canada, Mrs. Katharine Mann, Miss Mary Fleet and Mrs. Walters and her daughter, Betty Latane who were on the refreshment committee.

As many of you know, Mrs. Eleanor Ware Clark, sister-in-law of Mrs. Juliette Parker, died on Friday and will be buried at Farnham Episcopal Church this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. Since a large number of the Ware family are members of the Historical Society, we sadly miss this group of friends who will be attending the funeral today. I also learned this morning that Mr. Robert L. Ware died last night and his funeral will be a graveside service at 4:00 p.m. in Rappahannock Christian Church Cemetery tomorrow. Robert and his wife Madeleine are both members of our Society. We have lost two other members since our January meeting, Mr. S. Spottwood Taliaferro and Mrs. Sally W. Raines. These three members will be sorely missed.

Mrs. Wright, Secretary, read the minutes of our January meeting, and Mr. Smither, Treasurer, gave the report, stating we have a total of $1811.77 in both checking and savings accounts.

Mr. Garnett announced that our next meeting would be July 19, 1987 and it will be held at the historical home of Mr. Richard Reynolds on Water Lane in Tappahannock. Mr. Reynolds will also be the speaker. Mrs. Smither then introduced Mrs. Joan Parrish representing the Woman's Club who told about the restoration of a Civil War cannon which the Club had taken over and hoped to have ready for a dedication ceremony on Memorial Day.

Mrs. Parrish said they still lacked $200 of having enough money to pay for this restoration and asked for a donation from the Society or from individuals. Mr. Charles Warner moved and it was seconded by Mrs. Lelia Canada that the Historical Society donate $100 to the Woman's Club to help with this project. The motion carried and Mr. Smith was directed to five Mrs. Parrish a check in this amount.

Mr. Garnett then introduced our guest speaker, Mr. Nicholas Lucketti, an archaeologist from West Point, New York. Mr. Lucketti gave a very interesting talk on the 17th Century. We hope to have Mr. Lucketti again and at that time a full report of his talk will be given.

Mr. Garnett thanked Mr. Lucketti very much for his presentation and adjourned the meeting for a social hour at the home of Mrs. Wright.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary

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Officers of the Society

President ......................... Hill B. Wellford
Vice President .................... Carroll Garnett
Treasurer ........................ Ludwell Smither
Secretary ........................ Anne T. Wright

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
Charles W. H. Warner, Chairman
Mrs. William A. Wright, Mrs. J.M. Evans

Meetings are held quarterly in the Essex Court House, or in an historic home or church of the County. Dues are $5.00 per year. For copies of publications send $2.00 to Mrs. J. M. Evans, Box 8, Tappahannock, Virginia 22560.