

## One of our great American Specialties

Here is a subject philatelists have been enthralled with for over 100 years.



# The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

## Private Noah Deaton – One of Lee’s Tarheels, Army of Northern Virginia



The illustrated cover (above, left) is small and irregular, making the desirable large oval Point Lookout prison examined marking of Provost Marshal J(oab). N. Patterson look even larger than it already is. The cover is franked with a Confederate 10¢ blue type II steel-engraved issue and a U.S. 3¢ rose pink tied together by strikes of a Washington, D.C. Dec 15 [1863] double circle, target and Richmond circular date stamp. At lower left is the manuscript routing “Prisoners letter By Flag of Truce” and the cover is addressed to “Mr. Wm. Deaton, Caledonia, Moore County, N.C.” It is canceled Washington instead of Point Lookout because from August 1863 to December 1863, prisoner mail was forwarded to Washington to be posted after being examined at Point Lookout.

Prisoner Noah Deaton was in Company H of the North Carolina 26th Infantry, captured at Bristoe Station, Virginia on October

14, 1863, after surviving Gettysburg with Heth, a Pickett’s Charge regiment. He was confined at Old Capitol Prison in Washington and then transferred to Point Lookout. He was eventually paroled from Aiken’s Landing, Virginia.

The 26th North Carolina was the oldest and most experienced regiment of Pettigrew’s Brigade. It was organized on August 27, 1861 at Camp Crabtree, near Raleigh. The men came from eight different counties almost evenly divided between two geographic areas: the heartland of North Carolina, where the coastal plain met the Piedmont, and the mountainous western side of the State. The regiment served at Fort Macon on Bogue Island, North Carolina, then fought at New Bern. During the war, it was assigned to General R. Ransom’s, Pettigrew’s, Kirkland’s, and MacRae’s Brigade. It saw action in the Seven Days’ Battles and later in the conflicts at Rawls’ Mills and Goldsboro.

The 26th went on to fight with the Army of Northern Virginia from Gettysburg to Cold Harbor, took its place in the entrenchments south of the James River, and was involved in the final campaign at Appomattox. It lost 87 killed or wounded at New Bern, had 6 killed and 40 wounded during the Seven Days' Battles, and of the 843 engaged at Gettysburg, more than eighty to eighty-five percent were disabled, depending upon the source you credit. The greatest loss sustained by any regiment, North or South, during the war was the 26th N.C. Infantry on July 4, 1863. Their action is legendary, lining up against the Union's famous Iron Brigade, and also being the unit that could claim the farthest penetration into enemy territory on day three.

At Bristoe Station, Virginia on October 14, 1863, where Deaton was captured, it is reported that 19 were killed, 76 wounded, and 84 taken prisoner with losses of 179 – second only to Gettysburg for the regiment in losses. Again, the exact data is conflicting.

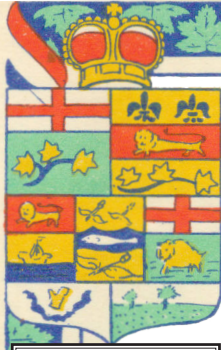
Noah Deaton was quoted in *Lee's Tar Heels: The Pettigrew-Kirkland-MacRae Brigade* by Earl J. Hess, condemning cowards who refused to enlist:

*"[T]here are a great many young fellows that have no cares to keep them from going out in defense of their country but are such cowards that they would suffer subjugation rather than fight and I trust the ladies will not countenance such fellows."* Deaton had the perfect remedy for anyone who was offended by his opinion, let them *"take up arms to defend their homes and not wait for others to do what they should do."*

In his book *Covered with Glory: The 26th North Carolina Infantry at the Battle of Gettysburg*, award-winning historian Rod Gragg told of Col. John Randolph Lane of the 26th NC who spoke at the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.


*"When Lane spoke, the crowd hushed. Looking down into the faces of his audience, he saw many who had witnessed the excitement, tragedy and horror of those unforgettable fields of fire. There too were many who could never imagine what he described; they were a new generation for whom those three days were merely history. "I was once a soldier ...", he began, and then spoke at length ... an old man telling a young man's story of smoke and fire and death. He tried to tell them about the shouts and volleys, about brave enemies in Black hats, about dressed lines and fallen color-bearers... He tried to tell them what it was like to look into the face of a twenty-one-year-old when the boyish light in his eyes was fading. He spoke of exhilarating victory and searing losses. "On the third day," he told them, "the remnant with colors flying stepped out, with hearts of oak, to take part in that memorable third day's charge." He gave them brutal numbers and awful statistics of bloody subtraction: 800 young and healthy men with homes and families and futures reduced to so few and then reduced again to nearly nothing.*

*Always, he came back to his men. "Your valor is coming to be regarded as the common heritage of the American nation," he told them. "It no longer belongs to your State alone; it no longer belongs to the South; it is the high-water mark of what Americans have done and can do." He wept. In front of everyone and without apology, the old warrior looked at the tiny, aged remnant of the 26th North Carolina and he wept. "I give you the highest tribute," he told them, "... a comrade's tears." A blue uniformed band of Pennsylvania veterans then broke into a spirited rendition of "Dixie," and the audience ... Northerners, Southerners, Americans all ... erupted in cheers. ☐*




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