

THE INVINCIBLE TWELFTH



The 12th South Carolina Infantry
of the Gregg-McGowan Brigade,
Army of Northern Virginia

UNEDITED EXCERPT

BENJAMIN L. CWAYNA

Unedited Excerpt



Savas Beatie
California

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horrendous and unimaginable carnage in battle, and a singular focus on

continuing the struggle to gain independence at any cost and under

innumerable odds takes shape. Former Confederate Brigadier General

Samuel McGowan lauded the 12th South Carolina Infantry as "The finest of

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For my parents, Daniel and Patsy Cwayna, whose unending support for my passion for history is appreciated more than they could possibly know.

For my grandparents, Bud and Vera Apple, who fostered in me a way of life that harkened back to a simpler, more honorable time.

For Robert “Cap’n Bob” Helsel, whose zeal and knowledge of history inspired a young, impressionable mind.

And for my son, Grant Benjamin Cwayna,
who is the greatest joy in my life.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Ethan S. Rafuse	vii
Preface	x
Acknowledgments	xiv
Chapter One: Palmetto State Provenance	1
Chapter Two: Lowcountry Blues	21
Chapter Three: Baptism of Fire in Virginia	47
Chapter Four: Glory and Redemption at Manassas	67
Chapter Five: Slaughter Along a Stone Wall	93
Chapter Six: Reorganization, Rest, and Recrimination: The Battle of Fredericksburg	117
Chapter Seven: Winter and Spring on the Rappahannock	135
Chapter Eight: Witnesses to Defeat: The Battle of Gettysburg	161
Chapter Nine: Revival at Orange Court House	201
Chapter Ten: A Spring of Misery and Mud	221
Chapter Eleven: From Spotsylvania to Deep Bottom	247
Chapter Twelve: Showdowns on the Richmond-Petersburg Line	273
Chapter Thirteen: Final Resistance	295
Chapter Fourteen: Reunion and Remembrance	317
Bibliography	335
Index	341
About the Author	350

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Battle of Port Royal—Retreat of 12th SC, November 7–9, 1861	28
Map 2: Battle of Port Royal Ferry, January 1, 1862	39
Map 3: Battle of Gaines's Mill, June 27, 1862	59
Map 4: Battle of Second Manassas, 8–10 a.m., August 29, 1862	84
Map 5: A. P. Hill's March to Sharpsburg, September 17, 1862	106
Map 6: Battle of Sharpsburg, September 17, 1862	110
Map 7: Battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862	129
Map 8: March into Pennsylvania, June 1863	169
Map 9: Battle of Gettysburg, 4 p.m., July 1, 1863	180
Map 10: Battle of Gettysburg, Evening, July 2, 1863	191
Map 11: Battle of the Wilderness, Plank Road, May 5, 1864	229
Map 12: Battle of the Wilderness, 5 a.m., May 6, 1864	233
Map 13: Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, Mule Shoe, May 12, 1864	241
Map 14: Battle of North Anna, Jericho Mills, May 23, 1864	253

Photos have been placed throughout the text for the convenience of the reader.

Foreword

IT WAS WITH a heavy heart that Robert E. Lee exited the McLean House on April 9, 1865, after agreeing to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia. The men in Lee's celebrated army were no less dejected by the moment, although after nearly a year of having their ranks relentlessly truncated by Ulysses S. Grant's forces, finally watching the Confederate capital of Richmond fall, and finding a last-gasp escape route to North Carolina blocked, only the specific timing and circumstances of their defeat were much of a surprise. On April 10, Lee sought to salve his men's wounded pride with assurances that the enemy's "overwhelming numbers and resources" had precipitated this grievous outcome and not any shortcomings on their part in soldierly skill, courage, or commitment to southern independence.

Lee needed only to look at the thinned ranks of the 12th South Carolina to buttress the conviction he long held that his army "would be invincible if it could be properly organized and officered" and there "never were such men in an army before." Roughly 1,400 men total would serve in the 12th South Carolina during the Civil War. Yet, as Benjamin L. Cwayna notes in *The Invincible Twelfth*, the regiment counted only ten officers and 145 men in its ranks at the time of Lee's final Appomattox Court House surrender. In all, 414 men in the 12th South Carolina gave their lives in the pursuit of southern independence, its record as a hard-fighting unit notable by the higher number of casualties incurred in combat rather than disease, including three commanders.

Few Confederate regiments could say they had found themselves in more hot places on some of the hottest battlefields of the war than the 12th South Carolina.

After seeing action in minor operations along the Atlantic Coast, the regiment was called to Virginia and assigned to a unit that would secure ultimate fame as the Gregg–McGowan brigade, fighting alongside four other Palmetto State units in a new division led by Maj. Gen. Ambrose Powell Hill. Being part of Hill's so-called "Light Division"—steered as such by some of the most aggressive, and able, members of the command team Lee forged in 1862—ensured that the 12th South Carolina would find its eagerness for the fray gratified.

Under the command of Col. Dixon Barnes, the 12th began earning recognition as a fighting powerhouse during Lee's first Army of Northern Virginia victory at Gaines's Mill on June 27, 1862. At Second Manassas later that summer, the regiment lost more than half its number fighting off Union assaults near Sudley Church on August 29. After participating in Maryland campaign operations at Harpers Ferry that produced the greatest surrender of United States forces until 1942, the Light Division rushed to Sharpsburg, where the 12th South Carolina helped stave off an outright Confederate defeat by delivering a timely attack on the Union left, though it regrettably lost Colonel Barnes in the process. At Fredericksburg in December 1862, the courage and tactical skill of the regiment and its new commander, Col. Cadwallader Jones, were critical to the containment of a possibly catastrophic Union breakthrough near Prospect Hill.

With Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg's mortal wounding at Fredericksburg, the brigade passed into the capable hands of Brig. Gen. Samuel McGowan. After McGowan's wounding at Chancellorsville the following May, Brig. Gen. Abner Perrin took his place as, with Hill's elevation to corps command, the Light Division came under the direction of Maj. Gen. William Dorsey Pender. As a consequence, the 12th South Carolina, now under the reins of Col. John Miller, would find itself crossing Willoughby Run at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, to spearhead the assault that would produce the collapse of Union defenses on Seminary Ridge.

The opening of the 1864 campaign season found McGowan back in brigade command, but with the division now under Maj. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's aegis. What had not changed was the 12th South Carolina's talent for finding tough fighting. At the Wilderness, the South Carolinians lost Miller in brutal combat along the Orange Plank Road. At Spotsylvania, they participated in the counterattack that contained the Federal breakthrough at the Mule Shoe Salient on May 12, then found themselves locked in brutal combat for 18 hours at the Bloody Angle. After being roughly handled in fighting at Jericho Mill on May 23, the toll the operations had taken on the regiment were evident, as it would be led by a captain, Robert M. Kerr, until Lt. Col. Edwin F. Bookter returned from serious wounds suffered in the Wilderness to assume command. Bookter's tenure did not last long, though, as his name was among those added to the regiment's

list of fallen as a consequence of fighting south and west of Petersburg at the Jones Farm in September. In addition to further lengthening this list at Deep Bottom, Fussell's Mill, and the Jones Farm, the second half of 1864 saw the South Carolinians come face to face with African-American troops north of the James River—and respond in the spirit of Confederate comrades at Fort Pillow and the Crater in their treatment of black troops.

The final campaigns of 1865 began with the regiment once again under Captain Kerr. Although the end of the struggle for Virginia was clearly in view, the South Carolinians once again acquitted themselves well in final operations at Gravelly Run and Sutherland's Station before surrendering at Appomattox.

Given the regiment's outstanding and conspicuous history, it is remarkable that it took so long for it to be fully told. Undoubtedly, some of the explanation can be found in the declaration of one South Carolinian in 1862 that: "We do not object to giving praise where it is due, and there is no doubt [that] Virginians fought as bravely as any other State troops, but then, they did not do all the work themselves." As Cwayna's contribution to the impressive body of literature on the Army of Northern Virginia makes clear, they certainly did not. Readers will find in *The Invincible Twelfth* not only a provocative and engaging story, but also a comprehensive study that gives them a fuller understanding of the war that the great historian Charles P. Roland proclaimed the "American Iliad."

Ethan S. Rafuse

author of *From the Mountains to the Bay: The War in Virginia, January–May 1862* and *Robert E. Lee and the Fall of the Confederacy, 1863–1865*

CHAPTER ONE

Palmetto State Provenance

JOHN LOGAN BLACK was a busy man in late August 1861. A captain in the newly formed Provisional Army of the Confederate States of America, Black was the chief mustering officer at South Carolina's Lightwood Knot Springs, a Confederate military encampment four miles northeast of the state capital of Columbia. Since early July, throngs of fervent volunteers from across the Palmetto State, answering Confederate President Jefferson Davis's latest call for troops, had descended on the grounds of a popular antebellum recreational resort. In a war projected to be short but now in its fifth month, having troops ready to fight was no luxury. It was time to transition the 20 or so loosely assembled companies at Lightwood Knot Springs into formal regiments, a novel endeavor for which no one in the region had first-hand experience.

One can only wonder the patience the West Point-trained Black showed these raw recruits, particularly those from the state's more rural Piedmont region known as the Upcountry. A native of York, South Carolina, he was a stern man accustomed to being obeyed, and described by his biographer as "decided in his opinion, egotistical and determined." Black was eventually commissioned lieutenant colonel of the 1st South Carolina Cavalry, becoming its commanding officer in 1862 and serving until the end of the war. Now, however, he was the first official liaison between these novice soldiers and the burgeoning Confederate army. He needed to handle them with both a firm and delicate touch.

The first regiment Black mustered into service would eventually be designated the 12th South Carolina Volunteer Infantry. Until it was formally assigned that

designation in late September, however, the soldiers at the encampment referred to it simply as “the first Regiment.”¹ “First” would have been an appropriate alias, as by the end of the war the 12th had earned its place among the elite fighting units ever to represent the Palmetto State, beyond merely the Civil War.

The regiment’s 10 companies had mustered that summer in the wake of the April attack on Fort Sumter by South Carolina troops and US President Abraham Lincoln’s subsequent call for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the budding rebellion. The men hailed primarily from the Upcountry counties of York, Fairfield, Richland, Lancaster, and Pickens. One of the 12th’s first companies to organize in May called itself the “Campbell Rifles.” Electing local attorney John L. Miller as its captain and William S. Dunlop as first lieutenant, the 86 men from York County encamped in Yorkville and began a regimen of drill and other military exercises.²

Other companies in the region followed the Campbell Rifles’s lead. With more men in the county anxious to join the Confederate cause, a second York company—the “Palmer Guards”—was recruited in July and officially organized on August 7, electing William H. McCorkle as captain, Lewis M. Grist as first lieutenant, and John Parker and I. D. Witherspoon second and third lieutenants, respectively. Named in honor of Lt. Richard Palmer, a York County man killed at the first battle of Manassas that July, the Palmer Guards fielded approximately 96 men when formed. A third company from the county’s Rock Hill area formed, calling itself the “Indian Land Guards.” Commanded by Cadwallader Jones, it had 81 men.³

Pickens County, in the northwestern corner of the state, contributed two companies. The first, with 76 men, identified itself as the “Bonham Rifles.” Organized in the town of Pickens on July 11, the company elected A. D. Gaillard

1 Eleanor McSwain, ed., *Crumbling Defenses or Memoirs and Reminiscences of John Logan Black, Colonel C.S.A* (Macon, GA, 1960), 9, 37; L. M. G., “From Lightwood Knot,” *The Yorkville Enquirer*, Sept. 5, 1861, 1. (All newspaper references are to South Carolina unless otherwise noted.) Although John Logan Black served primarily in the Carolinas during the conflict, he was with the Army of Northern Virginia during the Gettysburg campaign. Leading an ad hoc detachment of 200–300 cavalymen (whom Black referred to as “game-legged cusses and wagon rats”) and a battery of artillery, Black reported to none other than Robert E. Lee the morning of July 2, 1863, and was assigned to Lt. Gen. James Longstreet to assist Longstreet’s Corps in reconnoitering the area southwest of Gettysburg. In an ironic crossing of paths, when Black reported that morning to Lee he witnessed a meeting between the commanding general, Longstreet, and Lt. Gen. A. P. Hill and was likely within earshot and eyesight of the bivouac of the 12th South Carolina on Seminary Ridge, featuring some of the same men he mustered into service two years earlier at Lightwood Knot Springs.

2 “The Campbell Rifles,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, June 5, 1861, 2; L. M. G., “From Lightwood Knot,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, Aug. 19, 1861, 1.

3 “The Palmer Guards,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, Aug. 8, 1861, 1; “The Campbell Rifles”; L. M. G., “From Lightwood Knot.”

as captain, John Moody as first lieutenant, and J. A. Ballinger and P. J. Dryman second and third lieutenants, respectively. The second Pickens County company, with reportedly up to 90 men, was known as the “Grisham Rifles,” commanded by Capt. L. B. Johnson.⁴

Men primarily from Fairfield County, just north of Columbia, constituted two companies. One organized as the “Cedar Creek Rifles” with 78 men, electing Henry C. Davis as captain. The second, commanded by Hayne McMeekin and fielding approximately as many soldiers as the Cedar Creek Rifles, was known as the “Means Light Infantry.” Richland County, in the middle of the state, contributed a company known as the “Richland Guards.” Its 77 men, under Capt. Edwin F. Bookter, came mostly from Columbia, with a spattering from surrounding Fairfield, Chester, Lexington, and Charleston counties.⁵

Later in the summer, Lancaster County, bordering North Carolina, produced three companies in short succession. The 84-man “Blair Guards” from the eastern portion of the county formed on August 14, electing C. F. Hinson as captain, T. F. Clyburn as first lieutenant, C. C. Welsh as second lieutenant, and Ransom Gardner as third lieutenant. J. T. Brasington, a local preacher, served as first sergeant.

Two smaller units consolidated in mid-August to form the county’s second company, the “Lancaster Hornets.” The 87 men of that command elected a well-known state legislator and planter, Dixon Barnes, as captain, and N. B. Valandingham, W. J. Stover, and J. C. Rollins as first, second, and third lieutenant, respectively. The third Lancaster company, 80 men under Capt. John Q. McManus, had a checkered beginning in August, though, and disbanded between September 4 and September 11 because of chronic absenteeism and “dissatisfaction” among the volunteers. Accordingly, it never mustered into the regiment. Consisting of Lancaster County men, it is likely, however, that some of the men in McManus’s company joined the Blair Guards or Lancaster Hornets.⁶

Black was methodical in preparing the muster rolls of all 10 companies, mobilizing companies from the same region on the same dates. The process would take three days, but August 28, 1861, was cited as the regiment’s official muster date. On the first day, the Palmer Guards became Company A, the Campbell Rifles Company B, and the Indian Land Guards Company H. William McCorkle

4 “The Bonham Rifles,” *Keowee Courier*, July 13, 1861, 2.

5 L. M. G., “From Lightwood Knot,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, Aug. 19, 1861, 1.

6 “The Lancaster Guards,” *Lancaster Ledger*, Aug. 14, 1861, 2; L. M. G., “From Lightwood Knot”; “Another Company,” *Lancaster Ledger*, Aug. 21, 1861, 2; “Still Another,” *Lancaster Ledger*, Sept. 11, 1861, 2; “Our Volunteers in Camp,” *Lancaster Ledger*, Sept. 11, 1861, 2; “We regret . . .,” *The Lancaster Ledger*, Sept 4, 1861, 2.

of the Palmer Guards became the regiment's senior captain, as determined by a random drawing of lots preceding the muster.

On August 29, Black assigned Bookter's Richland Guards as Company D, Gaillard's Bonham Rifles as Company G, and Johnson's Grisham Rifles as Company K. Black completed the muster on August 30, with Davis's Cedar Creek Rifles as Company C, Hinson's Blair Guards as Company E, and Barnes's Lancaster Hornets as Company I. McMeekin's Company F (the Means Light Infantry) mustered in after September 6, presumably as a replacement for McManus's disbanding company. Available records, however, do not indicate when it formally joined the regiment.

* * *

The regiment's initial muster listed more than 900 enlisted men and officers.⁷ Most of the companies had been at the camp for a few weeks, although Barnes's and Hinson's commands arrived just before the muster. Company I's journey south to Lightwood Knot Springs typified the patriotic fervor sweeping the Confederacy that summer: "All along the way . . . the company was enthusiastically cheered by the people," wrote one soldier. While marching through Chester en route to the rail line that would take them to Columbia, Barnes and his men enjoyed a picnic prepared by the locals. "The dinner was excellent and so pronounced by the Company and their friends the Company subsequently passed a resolution of thanks, showing their grateful appreciation of the kindness extended them," the soldier recalled. Nevertheless, the following evening was not so pleasant, as a rainstorm pelted the men while they attempted to sleep without tents in a field.

The companies that formed the 12th South Carolina arrived at Lightwood Knot Springs with at least a loosely elected organization and command staff, although that did not stop those seeking military rank from swarming the encampment from across the state. "You would be pleased (or perhaps disgusted) to see the great number of office seekers in camp," wrote a soldier from another regiment. "They seem almost as numerous as the privates. Some little men want very high offices, and some big men would be satisfied with any office whatever, just so they can serve their country and undergo no hardships."

While widespread in similar training camps both north and south that summer and fall, the practice of popular election for company officers at the encampment was, in hindsight, a mistake to at least one 12th South Carolina private: William J. Miller of Company H, who observed, "[W]e always vote for some favorite, having

⁷ *Supplement to OR*, part II, vol. 65:10–25.

no regard to the merits of the man as a tactician. Our officers were brave men but very often deficient of other qualifications.”⁸

On August 30, Richard Gill Mills Dunovant was elected the regiment’s colonel—his bona fides commendable, at least on paper. Born May 18, 1821, to a wealthy and established South Carolina family, Dunovant was married to the sister of South Carolina representative Preston Brooks, the cane-beating assailant of Charles Sumner in the U.S. Senate during the politically charged 1850s. A graduate of South Carolina College in Columbia, Dunovant practiced medicine in Texas prior to the Mexican War. When that war began in 1846, he returned to Chester, South Carolina, and raised a company of volunteers, eventually becoming colonel of the famed Palmetto Regiment. After the war Dunovant became a planter, and the state legislature eventually appointed him adjutant and inspector of the South Carolina State Militia, a post he held from 1855 to 1861.

Dunovant, an ardent secessionist, owned 47 slaves and was a delegate to the state’s secession convention in Charleston, at which he proudly signed the ordinance withdrawing South Carolina from the Union on December 20, 1860. Assigned command of troops in Charleston Harbor in January 1861, he was soon promoted to brigadier general of South Carolina state troops. Stationed at Fort Moultrie, Dunovant commanded two regiments on Sullivan’s Island during the April 12–14 bombardment of Fort Sumter. When the troops under his command mustered into formal Confederate service, however, Dunovant resigned his commission and waited for another opportunity to serve. A favorite of South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens, who praised Dunovant’s “noble self-abnegation” (unusual modesty in those times), his star was on the rise when “the first Regiment” was organized at Lightwood Knot Springs. Given that it was one of the first volunteer regiments raised in the state’s Provisional Confederate Army, it is not surprising Dunovant became its first colonel.⁹

Dixon Barnes, Company I’s 45-year-old captain, was elected the regiment’s lieutenant colonel. Born of Scotch-Irish ancestry in the Kershaw District outside Columbia in 1816, Barnes intermittently attended South Carolina College, finally graduating in 1838. He then studied law and was admitted to the state bar. Accounts vary, but in 1839 or 1840, he married Charlotte Rebecca Brown, three years

8 William Joseph Miller, “My Experience as a Soldier in the Confederate Army,” *UDC Recollections and Reminiscences* (Columbia, SC, 1992) 216. L. K., “Camp Correspondence,” *Carolina Spartan*, Sept. 5, 1861, 1; William S. Dunlop, “The Confederate War: Company B, Twelfth S.C.V. in Bivouac and Battles,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, Oct. 23, 1889, 1. Hereafter cited as *Bivouac and Battles (Part I)*; LOCAL, “Our Volunteers in Camp,” *Lancaster Ledger*, 1st ed., Sept. 4, 1861, 2.

9 Dunlop, *Bivouac and Battles (Part I)*, 2; Bruce Allardice, *More Generals in Gray* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1995), 83.



Richard Gill Mills Dunovant served as the first colonel of the 12th South Carolina Volunteer Infantry. *South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina*

younger, and established a plantation in Lancaster County. Charlotte passed in 1846 or 1847, leaving a young daughter, Mary, whom Barnes sent to live with his in-laws.

Before the war, Mary returned to live with her father and accompanied him to sessions while he served in the state legislature in Columbia. Barnes lived and breathed politics, becoming a dominating political force in the region. In 1844, just 28, he was elected a state representative and was easily reelected in 1846 before becoming a state senator in 1848. In 1860, two years after Barnes declined to run for reelection, voters urged him to run again, which he did unopposed.

Even as he led Lancaster County's husbands, sons, and brothers in uniform, Barnes continued to represent Lancaster in the state senate. With Abraham Lincoln's election, Barnes became an ardent proponent of secession and, like Dunovant, served as a delegate to the

secession convention in which he was "prominently forward in the measure which resulted in the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union."

At the outbreak of war, Barnes was, as expected, at the forefront. "No man among us has a larger hold upon the confidence of our people," wrote one admirer. He was unanimously elected captain of the first volunteer company raised in the Lancaster district and was then elected major of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment of state troops early in the conflict. Like Dunovant, when the transfer of state

troops into Confederate service left him without a command, Barnes returned to Lancaster and raised the Hornets. Again, he was unanimously elected captain, and then again elected unanimously lieutenant colonel during elections for field officers of the regiment.

As one would expect of a politician and southern gentleman, Barnes was, in the words of a contemporary, a man whose “manners were full of courtesy and refinement and through the whole ran a most pleasant vein of cheerfulness and humor.” One soldier described him as “a quiet gentlemen, with a long white beard,” which no doubt made him look older than his 45 years, and another soldier called him the epitome of a true “Carolina gentleman.” Despite his lack of formal military training, Barnes proved entirely capable of leading men in battle. Within a year, he was regarded among the best colonels in the entire Confederate army.¹⁰

The regiment’s major would be 48-year-old Cadwallader Jones, a native North Carolinian who had enjoyed a lengthy career in law and public service before relocating to South Carolina in 1857. Jones graduated from the University of North Carolina at the age of 19 and married Annie Isabella Iredell Jones in 1836. His family roots were steeped in American military tradition. His father (and namesake) was a naval officer in the War of 1812, and his grandfather, Maj. Cadwallader Jones, served as an aide-de-camp to Marquis de Lafayette during the Revolutionary War. Lafayette held the elder Jones in such high esteem that he presented him an ornate sword that remained in the family and, ironically, was now carried by his grandson attempting to break apart the nation his ancestors earnestly fought to create.

The impending war would be another family affair for the Jones clan. Jones’s son, Cadwallader Jones Jr., served in Company H, eventually promoted to first lieutenant and given command of the company at Gettysburg, just 16 years old. Major Jones’s brother, Capt. Robin Jones, organized and commanded Company H of the 1st South Carolina Cavalry.¹¹

* * *

The men whom Dunovant, Barnes, and Jones commanded came from all walks of life. Their rebellious bloodlines established well before 1776, they were used

10 *Lancaster Ledger*, Oct. 15, 1862, 1; “Personal,” *Lancaster Ledger*, July 31, 1861, 1; Caldwell, *The History of a Brigade of South Carolinians*, 79–80; Louise H. Daly, *Alexander Cheves Haskell: The Portrait of a Man* (Norwood, MA, 1934), 77; “Death of Col. Dixon Barnes,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, Oct. 8, 1862, 2.

11 “Colonel Cad Jones,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, Dec. 6, 1899, 2; Willie Jones, “Roll of Company H, 12th South Carolina Regiment,” in *Recollections and Reminiscences*, 11 vols. (Columbia, SC, 1916), 6:456.

to fending for themselves with little reliance on government. Coming primarily from the northern and western tier counties in South Carolina that lined the North Carolina border, their ancestors were primarily English and Scotch-Irish. Most of the men raised in and around Columbia were descendants of the English who landed on the coast in the early 17th century and moved west, following the region's rivers to establish settlements.

Most in the regiment were Upcountry boys, also of primarily Scotch-Irish lineage, the descendants of migrants from Pennsylvania and Virginia in the second half of the 18th century. According to one officer, they had settled the area with "the rifle, the axe and the Bible." Godfearing and tough, many of them were loyal to the crown of England prior to the Revolutionary War, yet their religious tenets stipulated that man-made laws should be consistent with the will of the Almighty. As such, as time progressed, these rough and hardscrabble frontiersmen came to believe firmly in many of the doctrines of republican government while remaining loyal British subjects. It is not surprising that when the founders finally decreed independence from England in 1776, many in the region were suspicious of the sentiment of "independence," initially resisting the call. Indeed, the region's yeomen were blissfully ignorant of or indifferent to many egregious acts by King George III that did not affect them directly, such as the 1765 Stamp Act and rigid restrictions on commerce—issues of the day that seriously impacted their fellow colonists in New England.

This mindset changed when British troops instituted brutal tactics in the Carolinas during the war, specifically the 1780 Waxhaws Massacre and subsequent demands by British commander Francis Lord Rawdon that citizens in the war's southern theater formally pledge not to participate in the fighting. Moreover, despite the loyalty of the Upcountry Carolinians to the monarchy, in many instances British authorities treated Upcountry citizens the same as the colonial rebels, burning their meeting houses and destroying bibles in churches that contained Scotch psalms. By the end of the Revolutionary War, an increasing number of Carolinians favored the bid for independence and proudly fought and spilled blood on behalf of the colonies. These were the ancestors of the men who enlisted in the 12th South Carolina, men who were later described as "the very best troops which marched under the leaves of the Palmetto." They were rebels again, only this time it was against the country their ancestors had created.¹²

12 Edward McCrady Jr., "Heroes of the Old Camden District, South Carolina, 1776–1861," in Robert Alonzo Brock, ed., *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 52 vols. (Richmond, 1888), 16:3–14. Hereafter cited as *SHSP*.

Not all who served the Confederacy were Anglo-Saxon, however. Inhabiting the area around Rock Hill near the North Carolina border was a small but proud population of Catawba Indians, a tribe that at one point represented the largest and most powerful native American population in the Piedmont region. Reduced to a population of about 100 or so by 1861, only a handful of Catawba males were of military age at the start of the war. Eleven would enlist in the 5th, 17th and 12th South Carolina, with five serving in Cadwallader Jones's original command, Company H (the Indian Land Guards): William Cantey, Nelson George, James Harris, John Harris, and Alexander Tims. James Harris may have been with the Army of Northern Virginia at its final surrender at Appomattox.¹³

No matter their ethnic roots, the men in the 12th South Carolina enjoyed varied backgrounds, education levels, and social status. Among the first to answer the call was William Miller, a 15-year-old from York who in June 1861 had recessed for summer break from his parochial school. "The entire class of which I was a member, and the youngest in the class, was going to volunteer," he would recall. Later that month, Miller and several neighbors and classmates joined a group of enthusiastic volunteers assembling in Yorkville under John Miller (no confirmed relation) and William Dunlop.

Within a few days, the volunteers headed to Lightwood Knot Springs where, the younger Miller noted, "we found several other Companies drilling." That July, instructors from the state's military school had arrived to take charge of the training. Although Miller initially joined Company B, he subsequently transferred to Company H for reasons never made clear. A straightforward and blunt storyteller, Miller would leave one of the richest reminiscences of his time in the regiment, titled "My Experience as a Soldier in the Confederate Army."¹⁴

Andrew Kohath Smith was another of the zealous young men who joined the Confederate ranks. He was a northerner by birth, from Abraham Lincoln's own state of Illinois, but his parents' roots were in South Carolina, and in 1844 they returned

13 Thomas Blummer, "Record of Catawba Indians' Confederate Service," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 96, no. 3 (July 1995): 222, 224–30. According to Catawba tradition, Franklyn Cantey—the brother of William Cantey—was killed in the war. He quite possibly was the sixth Catawba to serve in the regiment, although no available service records confirm this; *Ibid.*, 225. Blummer's article implies James Harris surrendered with the 12th at Appomattox; however, his name does not appear on the list of parolees for the 12th nor does it appear on the National Park Service's list of Appomattox parolees with the 12th. Three men named James Harris, however, are listed as being paroled from South Carolina regiments at Appomattox—two from the 2nd South Carolina Rifles and one from the 18th South Carolina. If James Harris, the Catawba Indian, did in fact surrender at Appomattox, perhaps he transferred to one of those regiments prior to the surrender or joined one during the chaotic retreat. Cf., *SHSP* 15:371–73 and <https://www.nps.gov/apco/learn/historyculture/upload/parolelist-h1.pdf>.

14 Miller, "My Experience," 226.

there to raise their son, now 7. Smith became a farmer near Rock Hill and after South Carolina seceded in 1860, he and others from the surrounding area began to drill in nearby Ebenezer. With war declared, Smith and his compatriots were asked to volunteer in Company H for the duration of the conflict. Their commanding officer, Cadwallader Jones, drew a line in the dirt with his heirloom Revolutionary War sword and, according to Company H lore, Smith was the first to cross that line, therefore making him the first York County man to volunteer officially for the Confederate army. Smith would serve as a sergeant in Company H as a comrade of William Miller and survived some of the war's most horrific fighting.¹⁵

Among notables to serve in Henry Davis's Company C were J. R. Boyles and Orastin D. Rawl. After the war, Boyles penned a thorough narrative of his time in the regiment titled *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, published in 1890. Seriously wounded twice, Boyles served as a sergeant and in 1863 was promoted to lieutenant. Rawl volunteered on August 10, 1861, and officially mustered into Company C on September 18. Serving under Boyle, he was one of the few men in the regiment to survive the war and surrender at Appomattox. Unfortunately, Rawl left no known account of his experiences in the regiment.¹⁶

Like Rawl, William R. Sims was there when the last of the guns were fired at Appomattox. Notably, he also experienced the first at Fort Sumter in 1861. A 20-year-old, born in Union County, South Carolina, Sims resided in Charleston that first April of the war, volunteering in a local militia company and serving on Morris Island during the bombardment of Fort Sumter. Following the fort's surrender, the company in which he was serving disbanded. On a trip to Yorkville that summer to visit his mother, Sims joined Company A under Captain McCorkle and served all four years "without a scratch or furlough," missing only the battle of Antietam in September 1862.¹⁷

York County product Thomas Jefferson Roach began the war with a volunteer company from Rock Hill that eventually joined the 5th South Carolina. When that unit disbanded, Roach enlisted in Company H of the 12th. Captured while with the Army of Northern Virginia in September 1862, Roach was paroled immediately and sent to Richmond, directed not to serve again until exchanged. Learning he had been exchanged when he arrived in Richmond, he returned to his regiment and would fight with it for the remainder of the war in the Eastern Theater.¹⁸

15 UDC *Recollections*, 9:542–43.

16 J. R. Boyles, *Reminiscences of The Civil War* (Columbia, SC, 1892), 3; UDC *Recollections*, 2:552.

17 UDC *Recollections*, 6:226.

18 Ibid., 221–222; UDC *Recollections*, 8:275–76.

Lancaster County native Benjamin M. Powell became perhaps the most celebrated of the regiment's enlisted men. Like many, Powell enlisted in the Lancaster Grays with the portent of civil war and served in Charleston during the bombardment of Fort Sumter. His company was later mustered into the 5th South Carolina and served on the Virginia Peninsula during the Seven Days' Campaign in June–July 1862, fighting at Gaines's Mill and Glendale/Fraser's Farm. That summer, however, Powell secured a transfer to Company I of the 12th South Carolina, with whom he served until the end of the war.

As a scout and sharpshooter, he was soon celebrated as one of the best shots in the Army of Northern Virginia and eventually received one of two Whitfield rifles distributed to his brigade. Though it has never been corroborated officially, Powell's prowess with the rifle purportedly wreaked havoc in the Federal high command at Spotsylvania Court House, credited by some for the long-range sniper shot that killed Union VI Corps commander Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick on May 9, 1864. Despite two offers of promotion to lieutenant in Company I, Powell chose to remain an enlisted man, joining a special battalion of sharpshooters featuring the army's top marksmen. In that role, he became one of only a handful of truly independent, roving sharpshooters and scouts to serve at the pleasure of the high command, generally allowed to operate at will to scout the enemy, gain information, and inflict damage.¹⁹

Near Powell's name in the regiment's roll book was another Lancaster County native, Jonas Plyler, a 20-year-old who enlisted with Barnes at Lancaster Court House in August 1861. Eventually he was joined by his brother, Ellison, who enlisted on May 15, 1862, just after the regiment arrived in Virginia. A third brother, Ransom, joined the regiment in 1864. By war's end, the three brothers had been wounded in combat, but all survived.²⁰

James Harris, the Catawba in Company H, survived some of the war's most horrific fighting and was wounded at least once in combat. Initially enlisting as a cook, Harris eventually served as an enlisted man in the ranks and fought at Antietam, Gettysburg, and in the 1863 Mine Run and 1864 Overland campaigns. Records are incomplete, but, as referenced above, it is possible he was among the 32 Company H men who surrendered at Appomattox. Described as a "brave soldier," James was wounded in the 40-acre cornfield at Antietam, as was his brother John, who would be captured. Exchanged at some point in 1863, John was eventually transferred to the Southern Invalid Corps, crippled for life. Contemporaries

19 Benjamin Powell to Wife, Nov. 21, 1907, in "The Westchester Civil War Round Table Newsletter," Croton Falls, NY, 1980.

20 Bob Helsel, personal interview, Aug. 27, 1994.

described both men as “good soldiers” with “great courage and fidelity”—proud members of the Indian Land Guards. Both James and John survived the war, though James died in 1874 at the age of 40. In 1869–71, John became chief of the Catawba Tribe.²¹

The Rev. J. Monroe Anderson served as the 12th South Carolina’s dedicated chaplain. Described as “pious, energetic, and kind,” he was a pillar of the regiment from the beginning of the war until he resigned because of health issues in November 1863. Anderson ministered to the men both spiritually and physically. When supplies such as shoes, socks, and blankets became scarce, he routinely returned home to make patriotic pleas to citizens to donate to the troops, making the rounds in person if necessary. Anderson seemed everywhere the first two years of the war and even witnessed the mortal wounding of Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg at the battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, caring for the Columbia native on the field and accompanying him to his death bed (he would die December 15).

Anderson’s compassion, faith, service, and philanthropy cannot be understated. His presence on the field and his actions off the field made him perhaps the regiment’s most indispensable and important individual. He almost single-handedly kept the regiment’s spirits high during difficult times when faith in a higher power seemed to be all that the men had to sustain themselves. Religion became a recurring theme the soldiers embraced when they were not on campaign, and Anderson’s influence in making religious services accessible and understandable to the veterans was indispensable.²²

A world away from Anderson’s quiet piety was the hard-fighting William Dunlop, a dependable, aggressive fighter who became an influential historian and proponent of the regiment after the war. Elected first lieutenant of Company B in 1861, Dunlop became its captain, fought in most of the regiment’s battles, and eventually was promoted to major, commanding an elite battalion of sharpshooters in 1864–65. Dunlop authored a book on his experiences as the commander of that unit, *Lee’s Sharpshooters*, and kept readers of the *Yorkville Enquirer* informed with his “Bivouac and Battles” series during the 1880s. A riveting and descriptive writer, Dunlop’s descriptions of the 12th’s camps, marches, and battles offer fascinating and detailed glimpses into not only the horror of war but also its tranquil side.

D. J. Carter was in his early 20s when he enlisted in Company I several months after the initial muster. A musician, he survived the war and kept a detailed diary of his service focusing on the minutiae of the soldier’s life. Carter’s

21 Blummer, “Record of Catawba Indians’ Service,” 225–26, 228–29.

22 LOCAL, “For the Lancaster Ledger,” *Lancaster Ledger*, Nov. 25, 1863, 2.

recollections on nearly a weekly basis provided an excellent and informative road map of the regiment's endeavors in 1862–63. He also routinely kept readers of the *Lancaster Ledger* newspaper updated through editorials and updates, using the pseudonym, "LOCAL." After the war, Carter became an influential surrogate for the survivor's association of the regiment and was instrumental in organizing many of its reunions.

Brothers Joseph and William Templeton, privates in Company B, were among those to survive the conflict. The elder Joseph joined the company in 1861, William a year later. Despite specifically enlisting in the 12th at Lightwood Knot Springs in August 1862, William was assigned duty in the 5th South Carolina when he and other new recruits slated to join the 12th arrived too late to catch the regiment in Richmond as it headed north with Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill's "Light Division" during the Second Manassas campaign. Together, the Templeton brothers wrote 115 letters home during the conflict and posed together proudly for one of the only known photographs of enlisted men in the regiment wearing standard-issue Confederate uniforms. The Templetons were simple, yeomen Upcountry farmers, classic representatives of the rank-and-file not only of the 12th South Carolina but also the Army of Northern Virginia as a whole. Barely literate, they could read and write but only in rough rudimentary terms. Their letters to family members show more concern about news from home, the state of the crops, and mundane routines in camp rather than describe in any detail the momentous campaigns and battles in which they were engaged. Despite the letters' lack of detail regarding the fighting, the Templeton letters ably filled gaps with their consistent reports on rations, camp duties, and the regiment's overall health.²³

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End of Unedited Excerpt

23 "Introduction" to "The Civil War Letters of Joseph and William Templeton," transcribed by The South Caroliniana Library, 1994, 1.