

Hearts Torn Asunder

Trauma in the Civil War's Final Campaign in North Carolina

Presentation for the
Chatham County Historical Association
By Ernest Dollar
Sunday, October 9, 2022
2-4 pm
Historic Chatham County Courthouse
Pittsboro

At this program, author and local historian Ernest A. Dollar will talk about the topic of his new book, *Hearts Torn Asunder: Trauma in the Civil War's Final Campaign in North Carolina*.

Mr. Dollar will describe what happened in North Carolina during the little-written-about days after Appomattox, when, he says, the war was far from over. Using personal accounts from diaries and letters, he will explore the psychological experiences of soldiers and civilians during this dark time and how these experiences changed lives forever.

The program is free and all are invited.

About the Book

In the popular memory, the end of the Civil War arrived at Appomattox with handshakes and amicable banter between Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant—an honorable ceremony amongst noble warriors. And so it has been remembered to this day. But the war was not over. A larger and arguably more important surrender had yet to take place in North Carolina. This story occupies but little space in the vast annals of Civil War literature. As author Ernest A. Dollar Jr. ably explains in *Hearts Torn Asunder: Trauma in the Civil War's Final Campaign in North Carolina*, the lens of modern science may reveal why.

This war's final campaign in North Carolina began on April 10, 1865, a day after Appomattox. More than 120,000 Union and Confederate soldiers were still in the field bringing war with them as they moved across North Carolina's heartland. Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman was still out to destroy the South's ability and moral stamina to make war. His unstoppable Union troops faced Maj. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's demoralized but still dangerous Confederate Army of Tennessee. Thousands of paroled Rebels, desperate, distraught, and destitute, added to the chaos by streaming into the state from Virginia. Grief-stricken civilians struggling to survive in a collapsing world were caught in the middle. The collision of these groups formed a perfect storm long ignored by those wielding pens.

Hearts Torn Asunder explores the psychological experience of these soldiers and civilians during the chaotic closing weeks of the war. Their letters, diaries, and accounts reveal just how deeply the killing, suffering, and loss had hurt and impacted these people by the spring of 1865. The author deftly recounts the experience of men, women, and children who endured intense emotional, physical, and moral stress during the war's dramatic climax. Their emotional, irrational, and often uncontrollable reactions mirror symptoms associated with trauma victims today, all of which combined to shape memory of the war's end. Once the armies left North Carolina after the surrender, their stories faded with each passing decade, neither side looked back and believed there was much that was honorable to celebrate. *Hearts Torn Asunder* recounts at a very personal level what happened during those closing days that made a memory so painful that few wanted to celebrate, but none could forget.

Reviews

"Ernest A. Dollar Jr.'s *Hearts Torn Asunder* does a moving job of capturing the horror of that Hobbesian time, when the conflict degenerated into a war of all against all. Confederate commanders deployed their troops against marauders from other Rebel units. Federal soldiers seeking revenge for the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on April 15 marched on

Raleigh, N.C., only to be deterred by Federal cannons loaded with flesh-shredding double-canister shells. White civilians were terrified of all soldiers, and with good reason. Confederate troops murdered enslaved Black men seeking freedom for the sheer hell of it." – *New York Times*

About the Author

Durham, North Carolina native Ernest A. Dollar Jr. graduated from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro with B.A. in History and B.F.A. in Design in 1993 and M.A. in Public History from North Carolina State in 2006. He served in the U.S. Army Reserve/North Carolina National Guard from 1993-1999. Ernest has worked in several historic parks in both North and South Carolina, including as executive director of the Orange County Historical Museum, Preservation Chapel Hill. He currently serves as the director of the City of Raleigh Museum and Dr. M. T. Pope House Museum. He lives in Durham with his wife, Suzie, and their sons Elijah and Kilby.