

Parker, Francis Marion ^[1]

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by Ralph Hardee Rives, 1994

21 Sept. 1827–18 Jan. 1905

Francis Marion Parker, Confederate officer, was one of nine children of Theophilus Parker (1775–1849), an Edgecombe County ^[2] merchant, planter, and president of the Bank of Tarboro, and Mary Irwin Toole Parker (1787–1858). He was a descendant of John Haywood, surveyor for Lord Granville.

Parker was educated at the Lovejoy Academy ^[3] in Raleigh ^[4], the Caldwell Institute ^[5], and a private school in Valle Crucis. On 17 Dec. 1851 he married Sally Tartt Philips (22 Mar. 1835–22 Sept. 1906), daughter of Dr. James J. Philips, a prominent Edgecombe County physician, and Harriet Burt Philips. Following his marriage, Parker began running a plantation in the Glenview Community in Halifax County ^[6], between Enfield and Whitakers. Through his association with his kinsman, Governor Henry Toole Clark ^[7], and with Colonel Michael Hoke, Parker became active in the Democratic party ^[8].

In the fall of 1859, in the aftermath of the John Brown Raid, Parker helped to organize a local military company, the Enfield Blues, later known (following the Battle of Bethel) as the Bethel Regiment. The company was enrolled for active duty in April 1861, after President Abraham Lincoln called on North Carolina to provide troops to coerce the seceded states; it eventually became Company I, First North Carolina Regiment. Parker enlisted on 19 April and was appointed second lieutenant; on 1 September he was promoted to the rank of captain. Six weeks later, he was appointed colonel of the newly organized Thirtieth North Carolina Regiment of Volunteers.

On 31 May 1862 the Thirtieth Regiment fought in the Battle of Seven Pines and afterwards in the Seven Days' Battle around Richmond. Parker participated in the Battle of South Mountain and, on 17 Sept. 1862, distinguished himself in the Battle of Bloody Lane at Sharpsburg, where he was temporarily disabled by a minié ball in his head.

Parker saw duty in the Battle of Fredericksburg, and at Chancellorsville he merited recognition for his dramatic advance on the field and capture of a large number of prisoners. The Thirtieth Regiment accompanied General Robert E. Lee in the invasion of Pennsylvania and advanced farther northwards than any other Confederate regiment; it occupied the Federal barracks at Carlisle. Parker was again wounded in the Battle of Gettysburg but was able to participate in the Battle of the Wilderness and in the charge of Ramseur's Brigade at Spottsylvania, where he received a wound that disqualified him from further active service. He was placed in command of the Confederate post in Raleigh and remained there until the end of the war.

One of his superior officers referred to Parker as "the courteous and refined colonel of the regiment . . . a brave, cool, and excellent officer . . . ever observant of his duties to the cause and to his command. He was severely wounded in nearly every important engagement in which he participated."

After the war Parker, whose health had been greatly affected by his wounds on the battlefield, operated his plantation and reared nine children: Mary (Mrs. John Battle; 1853–1935), James Philips (1855–1942), Theophilus (1857–1920), Harriet Burt (Mrs. Peter A. Spruill; 1860–1926), Haywood (1864–1945), Francis Marion, Jr. (1867–1914), Sally Philips (1870–1964), Kate Drane (1873–1962), and Dr. Frederick Marshall (1875–1939).

Colonel Parker was named a brigadier general of the North Carolina Division of the United Confederate Veterans. The Frank M. Parker Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), No. 1096, in Enfield, chartered on 24 Aug. 1907, was named in honor of the area's most distinguished Confederate soldier. His daughters, Sally and Kate, were charter members of the UDC chapter. On the day following Parker's death, members of the North Carolina legislature heard several eulogies on his life and career and adjourned in honor jointly of his memory and the birthday anniversary of General Lee.

Parker was a member of the Protestant Episcopal church and a Mason. He was buried in the Calvary Episcopal Church Cemetery, Tarboro ^[9].

References:

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Louis H. Manarin, comp., *North Carolina Troops, 1861–1865: A Roster*, vol. 3 (1971).

Helen Parker to Ralph Hardee Rives, 13 Dec. 1978.

The (Enfield) Pointer, 10 Feb. 1905.

The (Enfield) Progress, 13 June 1913.

Records and papers of the Frank M. Parker Chapter, No. 1096 (United Daughters of the Confederacy, Enfield).

Additional Resources:

Francis M. Parker Papers, 1861-1949. The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/p/Parker,Francis_M.html ^[12] (accessed September 9, 2014).

United Daughters of the Confederacy. North Carolina Division. *Minutes of the ... annual convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy: [serial] North Carolina Division*. Raleigh, N.C.: Capital Printing Co. 1910. <https://archive.org/details/minutesofannualc113unit> ^[13] (accessed September 9, 2014).

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