

Reserve Troops ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 2006

See also: [North Carolina's Youngest Soldiers: The Junior Reserves \(From Tar Heel Junior Historian\)](#) ^[2]; [Battle of Bentonville](#) ^[3]; [Battle of Aversboro](#) ^[4]; [Battle of Wyse Fork](#) ^[5]



Bentonville, the morning after the battle. From the General Negative Collection, North Carolina State Archives, call #: N_97_5_116.

^[6]Reserve troops, by the spring of 1864, were regarded as essential to North Carolina's ongoing contribution to the [Confederacy](#) ^[7]. Heavy losses due to combat, disease, and desertion took a toll on manpower. Faced with a looming crisis, on 17 Feb. 1864 the [Confederate Congress](#) ^[8] had extended the age of military [conscription](#) ^[9] (with only limited exceptions) to males from 17 to 50 (originally 18 to 45). Initially slated for rear-echelon duty, some reserve units served on the front line during the final months of the war. In North Carolina, three regiments composed largely of 17-year-olds were raised and organized as the Junior Reserves Brigade. In March 1865 the [Junior Reserves](#) ^[2] fought in the [Battles of Wyse Fork](#) ^[5] and [Bentonville](#) ^[3]. At Bentonville, the Junior Reserves comprised the largest brigade in Gen. [Joseph E. Johnston's](#) ^[10] Army of the South. At the other end of the age spectrum were the five regiments of reserves between 45 and 50-the Senior Reserves. The 7th Senior Reserves participated in the [Battles of Aversboro](#) ^[4] and [Bentonville](#) ^[3].

Among Junior Reserves recruits was [Fabius Busbee](#) ^[11], just a few days past his seventeenth birthday when he was mustered in. Soon afterward, Busbee was promoted to second lieutenant, making him one of the youngest commissioned officers in the Confederate army. One of the Junior Reserves' field officers was Maj. [Walter Clark](#) ^[12], the future chief justice of the North Carolina [Supreme Court](#) ^[13]. Clark was just 18 years old in March 1865 when he commanded the Junior Reserves' skirmishers at Bentonville, yet he was a veteran of the 1862 Battles of Sharpsburg (Antietam) and Fredericksburg.

Additional Resources:

Letter, February 8, 1865 (In Which Fabius H. Busbee States that He is Enclosing an Autograph of Andrew Jackson and Robert E. Lee and that He is Having the Autograph of Jefferson Davis Sent Later) Busbee, Fabius H., DocSouth, UNC Libraries: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/unc/unc09-82/unc09-82.html> ^[11] (accessed October 12, 2012).

North Carolina Troops Roster, NC Publications, NC Office of Archives & History:
http://www.ncpublications.com/nc_rostr/default.htm ^[14]

North Carolina Troops, North Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial: <http://www.nccivilwar150.com/troops/nctroops.htm> ^[15]

Image Credit:

Bentonville, the morning after the battle. From the General Negative Collection, North Carolina State Archives, call #: N_97_5_116. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/4289914347/> ^[6] (accessed October 12, 2012).

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Authors:

[Powell, William S.](#) ^[19]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[20]

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Links

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