work "buoyed up and assisted by the fresh enthusiasm of the younger association." They were made the Memorial Committee of the Daughters of the Confederacy, and some of them still assist in placing the fresh laurel wreaths on Memorial Day.

Besides the five hundred and fifty graves in the Confederate lot, there are scattered about Oakdale three hundred and eighty graves, and in Bellevue, the Roman Catholic Cemetery, and private burial grounds about one hundred more. These are all marked with stone markers and, as far as possible, are adorned with a laurel wreath upon each recurring 10th of May.

A CAPTURE BEFORE THE WAR.[1]

By John L. Cantwell.

The fact that the State of North Carolina was slow to follow the secession movement of her more southern sister States was the cause of much chafing among her people in the eastern counties, and especially along the seacoast, where it was urged that the Federal Government was likely, at any moment, to garrison the forts commanding Cape Fear River and Beaufort Harbor.

The people of Wilmington were particularly exercised over the possibility of such a step being taken, and it is likely that the knowledge of this strong feeling, and the impression that it would be regarded as an act of coercion, alone deterred the Washington Government from sending down strong garrisons and ample munitions of war.

Fort Caswell, commanding the main entrance to Cape Fear River, was a bastioned, masonry fort of great strength and in thorough order, but without mounted guns. Once occupied and armed, it would have been impossible for the Confederates, without command of the sea, to have retaken it, and the port which afterwards proved of such inestimable value to them would have been effectually sealed. The Federal fleets having free entrance there, would have held the shores on either side of the river for some distance up, and commanded, from a safe interior base, the entrance through New Inlet, for the defense of which Fort Fisher was afterwards built, and that historic and epoch-making earthwork would probably never have been constructed.

[1]From Clark's *Regimental Histories.*

In the State at large the Union sentiment was at this time slightly in the ascendant. In the Lower Cape Fear the secessionists were probably in the majority. These regarded delays as dangerous, and anticipated with forebodings the occupation of the forts by the Union forces.

Early in January, 1861, alarmed by the condition of affairs in Charleston Harbor, they determined to risk no longer delays. A meeting of the citizens of Wilmington was held in the courthouse, at which Robert G. Rankin, Esq., who afterwards gave his life for the cause on the battlefield of Bentonville, presided. A Committee of Safety was formed, and a call made for volunteers to be enrolled for instant service under the name of "Cape Fear Minute Men." The organization was speedily effected, John J. Hedrick being chosen commander.

On the 10th of January Major Hedrick and his men embarked on a small schooner with provisions for one week, the Committee of Safety guaranteeing continued support and supplies, each man carrying such private weapons as he possessed. Arriving at Smithville at 3 p. m., they took possession of the United States barracks known as Fort Johnston, and such stores as were there in charge of United States Ord. Sergt. James Reilly, later captain of Reilly's battery. The same afternoon Major Hedrick took twenty men of his command, reinforced by Capt. S. D. Thurston, commander of the Smithville Guards, and a number of his men and citizens of Smithville, but all acting as individuals only, and proceeded to Fort Caswell, three miles across the bay, where they demanded, and obtained, surrender of the fort from the United States sergeant in charge.

Major Hedrick assumed command and prepared to make his position as secure as possible. About twenty-five strong, armed only with shotguns, but sure of ample reinforcements should occasion arise, these brave men determined to hold Fort Caswell at all hazards. In bitter cold weather, they stood guard on the ramparts and patrolled the beaches, reckoning not that, unsustained even by State authority, their action was treasonable rebellion, jeopardizing their lives and property. There were only two 24-pounder guns mounted, one on the sea face and one on the inner face, both carriages being too decayed to withstand their own recoil; but, such as they were, with them they determined to defy the United States Army and Navy. The smoke of an approaching steamer being once descried below the horizon, the alarm was signaled, and, believing it to be a man-of-war, the