

# Jubal Early Chapter 553 Newsletter



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## Chapter News

Fourteen members and one prospective member were present at the April meeting of the Jubal Early Chapter which was held at the Franklin County Library. Ms. Trea Burwell is completing her application, and will be joining under her ancestor, Creed Holland.

The Nominating Committee presented their slate of prospective officers for the Jubal Early Chapter 2016 - 2018 term and they are as follows:

|                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| President -            | Beverly Woody  |
| Vice Pres. -           | Janet West     |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> V.P. - | Martha Hubbard |
| Secretary -            | Shirley Dent   |
| Treasurer -            | Arlene Cundiff |
| Registrar -            | Linda Nezbeth  |

Anyone interested in running for an Office, please contact Linda N. prior to the May meeting. Nominees will be voted on at that meeting and new officers are to be installed at the June meeting by First District Chairman, Ms. Lynn Reed.

Five members will be attending the First District Conference on April 30<sup>th</sup> in Dublin: Cheryl, Linda N., Arlene, Judy and Beverly. The Capt. Milton Hall Harmon Chapter will be hosting the event, and the subject of re-districting of Division Chapters will be the main topic of discussion.

Division Minutes will be distributed to the Chapters at this time. The cost of the Minutes is \$5.00 each. They will be available to members at our May meeting.

An Iron Cross Dedication will be held for Pvt. Fletcher Mitchell on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:30 pm. Cemetery is located behind the Redwood Post Office.

Second Vice President, Lois Brown indicated that she has received seven applications for the Hazel Holland Davis Memorial Scholarship. A committee will review the applicants and submit their recommendation at the May meeting.

## Other News

The Franklin County Historical Society is planning a Wreath Laying ceremony at the Court House on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

The Museum will also be hosting a Veteran's Memorial Day on the Court House lawn June 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. Guest speaker to be Del. Charles Poindexter. Period dress is requested.

Our friends from New York, the 57<sup>th</sup> Va. Infantry, Co. B will once again be holding Living History program at the museum on June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Period dress is requested.

## Upcoming Events

|                                  |   |  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| April 30 <sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m. | - | 1 <sup>st</sup> District Conference<br>Dublin, Va. |
| April 30 <sup>th</sup> 1:30 p.m. | - | Iron Cross Dedication<br>Redwood                   |
| May 23 <sup>rd</sup> 1:00 p.m.   | - | Wreath Laying Ceremony<br>Franklin Co. Court House |
| June 4 <sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m.  | - | Veteran's Day Program<br>Franklin Co. Court House  |

**May Meeting**  
**Sat., May 14<sup>th</sup> – 10:30 a.m.**  
**Franklin County Library**  
**Rocky Mount**

# Confederate Ancestor of the Month

Each month the Jubal Early Chapter of the UDC features a Confederate Ancestor. The "Ancestor of the Month" for April 2016 is Silas Jenkins Bird. The Jubal Early Chapter is proud to present his story.

## Silas Jenkins Bird

Silas was born in Franklin County on 9 December 1844, the second child of Thomas Alexander and his first wife, Emily Jane Oxley. His siblings were: Samuel William, born in 1843; Benjamin Franklin, born in 1846; John Walker, born in 1848; Creed Meadows, born in 1850; Jennings born in 1852; and Nathaniel Callihille, born in 1854.

On 1 June 1861, Silas' brother Samuel traveled to Richmond to enlist in Co. K, 10th Va. Cavalry. His service record indicates he was issued clothing on 30 September 1864. Silas also enlisted in Richmond on 13 February 1863 as a Private in Co. K, 10th Va. Cavalry. His service records indicate he was issued clothing on 31 December 1864. There is no further record of either brother.

Sometime after the war, the family moved to Mercer County, West Virginia. Silas met and married Mary Jane Carpenter there on 12 March 1867. They would have eleven children. It is unknown when Mary Jane died, but Silas married second in Putnam County, West Virginia to Lovey Lawson on 9 September 1891. It is unknown if there were any children.

The exact date of death for Silas is unknown, but believed to be in 1912 in Putnam County, West Virginia.



## Edmund Ruffin

Born into a planter lifestyle along the James River in southern Virginia, Edmund Ruffin was expelled from William and Mary College just before the War of 1812. He served in the Army during the war, but did not see any action. His inability to study (mostly due to alcohol and the charms of a young lady named Susan Travis) did not indicate an inability to learn - he read vociferously about agriculture, favoring English theory. After his father died, Ruffin inherited an estate at Coggin's Bluff and married Miss Travis.

In 1823 he was elected a Virginia senator, resigning after serving three years of a four-year term. During the Election of 1824 Ruffin expressed displeasure with each candidate running, Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, John C. Calhoun and William Crawford for expanding the power of the government through advocating tariffs, internal improvement, or federal banks. Unhappy with political life, he returned to farming and writing, publishing a book on the value of marl in 1832, then starting the *Farmer's Register* in 1833.

Edmund Ruffin moved into the forefront of the Southern nationalistic movement following the death of his friend John C. Calhoun in 1850, although he was not a national politician. Ruffin was a writer with a dramatic flair who turned to paper and pencil and an evangelistic speaking style to make his pro-slavery case. In Debow's review, *Agricultural, commercial, industrial progress and resources*, Ruffin was a frequent contributor, both for his agricultural expertise and his pro-slavery sentiment.

Before the Nashville Convention Ruffin championed the cause of an independent South, along with other Virginia extremists like M. R. H. Garnett, James Mason and Beverly Tucker. Virginia would be the only Upper South state to send delegates to the convention.

Following the Compromise of 1850 his radical talk abated and he returned to advocating the advancement of the introduction of new technologies and old fashion learning to increase yields on Virginia farms. He advocated the use of marl, better plowing techniques to reduce soil runoff and crop rotation. For the depleted tobacco farms of southeastern Virginia he helped introduce guano, lime, bone and superphosphates to replenish the soil.

By 1856, though, his writings had returned to avocation of an independent southern nation and a defense of slavery:

Slavery is not intrinsically right, it is only circumstantially right under a set state of circumstances. The right rule is freedom, but slavery is an exception to that rule; and if right, right as all exceptions are, according to the circumstances which surround it.

Unlike many of the Southern extremists, Ruffin was realistic. When the Lecompton Constitution came up before Congress, Ruffin admitted the document was the work of a minority and the slavery clause would be "repealed within a year." At the time, pro-Union feelings were running high in Virginia - former Whigs H. H. Stuart and John M. Botts had been organizing Unionists in the state under the guidance of Alexander Stevens. It was during this time that Ruffin became convinced that the South could not depend on the Democratic party to protect its "rights."

In 1858 Ruffin founded the "League of United Southerners," which backed the concept of an independent southern nation. William Yancey, another fire-eater, is sometimes given credit as a "co-founder" - this is wrong. Even Yancey referred to it as "Ruffin's League." In 1859, Ruffin rushed to Harper's Ferry when talk of additional revolt arose. He took 15 of the pikes that Brown intended to use to arm the slaves and sent them to the Southern governors with the label "Sample of the favors designed for us by our Northern brethren."

In June, 1860 Edmond Ruffin published a futuristic novel, *Anticipations of the Future, to Serve as Lesson for the Present Time* correctly predicting Abraham Lincoln winning the election of 1860, followed by Republican William Seward in 1864. The potential reelection of Seward in 1868 brings secession, then a war that takes place in Virginia. The North enlists "Negro armies," and violence racks Northern cities before a truce leaves an independent South. At the end of the book Ruffin offers a second outcome. The South secedes immediately and "the great cities of Boston, New York and Philadelphia... (are) sacked and burnt, and their wealthiest inhabitants massacred, by their own destitute, vicious and desperate population..."

Convinced that Lincoln would win the election, Ruffin began a heavy schedule of pro-Secession speeches in October, 1860, including a noted speech in the South Carolina statehouse in Columbia that included the following statement:

I have studied the question now before the country for years. It has been the one great idea of my life. The defense of the South, I verily believe, is only to be secured through the lead of South Carolina. Old as I am, I have come here to join her in that lead. I wish Virginia was as ready as South Carolina, but, unfortunately, she is not. But the first drop of blood spilled on the soil of South Carolina will bring Virginia and every other Southern State to her side.

As war approached, Ruffin returned to Charleston, this time to serve in the Army at the age of 74. When asked what unit he belonged to he responded, "The one with a vacancy." He was added to South Carolina's Palmetto Guards and is generally believed to have fired the first shot at Fort Sumter, although this is questioned. From the Official Records, P. G. T. Beauregard said:

The venerable and gallant Edmund Ruffin, of Virginia, was at the Iron battery, and fired many guns, undergoing every fatigue and sharing the hardships at the battery with the youngest of the Palmettoes.

Captain G. B. Cuthbert, who was in direct command of the Palmetto Guards on Morris Island, spelled out Edmund Ruffin's role in the battle:

The mortar battery at Cummings Point opened fire on Fort Sumter in its turn, after the signal shell from Fort Johnson, having been preceded by the mortar batteries on Sullivan's Island and the mortar battery of the Marion Artillery.

At the dawn of day the Iron battery commenced its work of demolition. The first shell from columbiad No. 1, fired by the venerable Edmund Ruffin, of Virginia, burst directly upon the parapet of the southwest angle of the fort.

Cuthbert, in a later report at the battle of Manassas, makes the following statement:

Many of the soldiers threw their arms into the creek, and everything indicated the greatest possible panic. The venerable Edmund Ruffin, who fired the first gun at Fort Sumter, who, as a volunteer in the Palmetto Guard, shared the fatigues and dangers of the retreat from Fairfax Court-House, and gallantly fought through the day at Manassas fired the first gun at the retreating column of the enemy, which resulted in this extraordinary capture.

The historic discrepancy comes over the "signal shot" from Johnson Island and from Cuthbert's statement, "...having been preceded by the mortar batteries on Sullivan's Island and the mortar battery of the Marion Artillery." South Carolina had an interest in Ruffin firing the first shot since he was from Virginia and they had not yet seceded. So, was Ruffin's the first shot or not? You decide.

After the battle was over, in a surrender negotiated by fellow fire-eater Louis Trezevant Wigfall, Edmund Ruffin led the Palmetto Guards into the fort as color-bearer. Local papers rang the praise of Virginia's son claiming, "That ball fired at Sumter by Edmund Ruffin will do more for the cause of secession in Virginia than volumes of stump speeches." The gun Ruffin fired has been known as the secession gun ever since.

After returning to Richmond, Ruffin addressed the Virginia congress, one of two speakers rallying the body to vote for secession. While he did not get what he wanted (Virginia voted to hold a popular vote on the secession document), his powerful sermon-like speech did sway votes for secession.

As tensions began to build in western Virginia and elsewhere, Ruffin rejoined the Palmetto Guard at Fairfax Courthouse. He sent the following to Jefferson Davis in the new capital of Richmond, Virginia:

RICHMOND, VA., May 16, 1861.

President DAVIS:

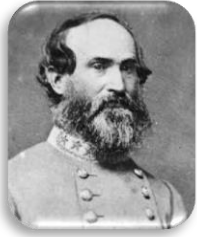
For salvation of our cause come immediately and assume military command.

EDMUND RUFFIN.

Ruffin did participate in the withdrawal from Fairfax Courthouse as Irvin McDowell advanced. During the battle of First Bull Run - First Manassas he is credited with firing the gun that turned the Union retreat into a stampede, but Ruffin quickly ended his practice of going into battle. He returned to Danville, Virginia. With the Surrender at Appomattox, Northern forces began occupying the South.

The Union Army destroyed his property at Coggin's Point and his beloved estate on the Pamulkey River, Marlbourne. On Saturday, June 17th, 1865, Ruffin ate breakfast, visited with some guests, then went upstairs and committed suicide using his gun and a forked stick. His suicide note said, "I cannot survive the liberties of my country."

His son, Edmund Ruffin, Jr., returned to Marlbourne following his father's death where he grew oats, wheat and corn and built a new house. In 1866 he began raising cotton. - *Blue and Gray Trail*



*Jubal Early Chapter 553  
Newsletter  
Rocky Mount, Virginia*



Love, Live, Pray, Think, Dare

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**Editor**  
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