

OCCUPATION OF TARBORO



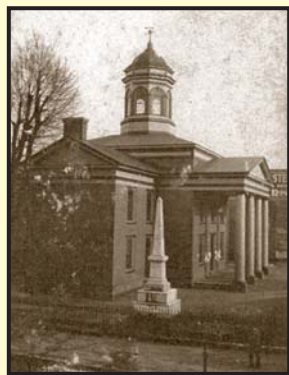
“All were burned ...”



POTTER'S RAID

On July 18, 1863, Union Gen. Edward E. Potter led infantry and cavalry from New Bern to destroy the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad bridge at Rocky Mount. The infantry feinted toward Kinston and returned to New Bern. Potter raided Greenville, then sent part of his cavalry to Rocky Mount and occupied Tarboro. The raiders damaged or destroyed bridges, trains, munitions, and mills before returning to New Bern on July 23, but the Confederates restored rail service by Aug. 1.

On July 20, 1863, after bivouacking in the village of Sparta south of here, Gen. Edward E. Potter occupied Tarboro with a battalion of New York cavalrymen. A wealthy Tar River town and trading center surrounded by productive plantations,



Civil War-era Edgecombe Courthouse, demolished 1963 – Courtesy Edgecombe Co. Memorial Library

Tarboro played a pivotal role in providing foodstuffs, medicine, and military supplies to Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Potter later reported that he “found an iron-clad on the stocks and two steamboats on the river. The iron-clad

[similar to the ram *Albemarle*] was of the *Merri-mac* model, and her frame was very heavy and solid. All were burned, together with some railroad cars, 100 bales of cotton, [and] quartermaster's subsistence, and ordnance stores.” Soldiers plundered private homes, the Masonic Lodge,

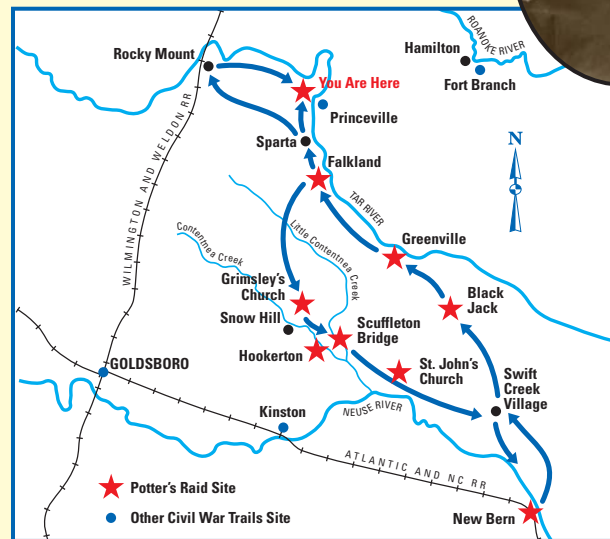


the Bank of Tarboro, and other businesses for valuables. The Federals marched south in the evening back through Sparta toward New

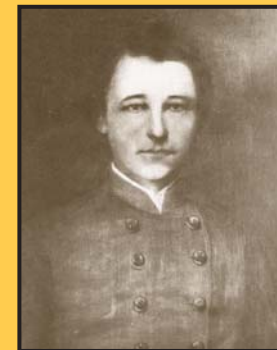
Bern after the engagement at Daniel's Schoolhouse a few miles east of here.

They set the Tar River bridge afire behind them, but townspeople extinguished it before it sustained extensive damage.

Gen. Edward E. Potter
Courtesy U.S. Army Military History Institute



Potter's Raid from New Bern to Rocky Mount and Tarboro



Henry Lawson Wyatt
Courtesy North Carolina State Library

The historic town common was laid out when Tarboro was incorporated in 1760. During the Civil War, two Confederate hospitals stood here in the old Male and Female Academies, as well as a Confederate prison stockade for Union soldiers captured at the Battle of Plymouth in April 1864. The Wyatt Fountain here was erected after the war in honor of Pvt. Henry Lawson Wyatt, a Tarboro resident. Killed at the Battle of Big Bethel on June 10, 1861, he became the first North Carolinian known to have died in battle during the war.