

Gerald W. Thomas. *Destitute Patriots: Bertie County in the War of 1812*. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2012. 233 pp. \$15.00. ISBN 978-0-86526-412-0.

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In 1812, government officials in Bertie County, North Carolina paid close attention to the growing tensions between the United States government and Great Britain. Specifically, the practice of “impressment”, the forced removal of American sailors from their vessels and placement on British warships, was one contributing factor which led to the commencement of the War of 1812. When hostilities did erupt officially in 1812, North Carolina’s local or state officials expected men to sign up for military service. However, potential recruits did not see an urgent need to enlist initially since more crucial targets such as Wilmington or New Bern would be more susceptible to British attack. When a few Bertie County soldiers did join the United States Army and the North Carolina detached militia units, they encountered several logistical problems such as a lack of adequate clothing, munitions, or ample food. During the war, Bertie County soldiers escaped the major battles which plagued the U.S./Canadian border, but they did encounter harsh conditions while encamped at the Norfolk, Virginia barracks in 1814. In the end, the servicemen were “destitute” because they were never paid by the federal or North Carolina government until 1816, two years after the conclusion of the War of 1812.

The book was written in order to commemorate the War of 1812 bicentennial and is divided into five chapters: a “call to arms” by the North Carolina government once the war had started on June 18, 1812; the perceived need for the defense of eastern North Carolina against potential attacks by British naval forces; the slow enlistment of eligible Bertie County male residents into the state militia units or U.S. Army; increased anxiety of state and local officials over the battle readiness of Bertie County or state militia regiments for possible attacks by British forces; and the plight of Bertie County soldiers who were stationed at the Norfolk barracks in 1814. There are several illustrations included as well as maps and an extensive bibliography of both primary and secondary sources.

Gerald W. Thomas is originally from Bertie County, North Carolina and spent several years as a congressional auditor. Besides *Destitute Patriots*, he has written or co-authored other published books, including *Divided Allegiances: Bertie County during the Civil War* (1996) and *Bertie in Blue: Experiences of Bertie County’s Union Servicemen during the Civil War* (1998). Additionally, he co-wrote an article (with Weymouth T. Johnson, Jr.) in the *North Carolina Historical Review* (April 1995) entitled, “Massacre at Plymouth: April 20, 1864.”

This book depicts the struggles of both the Bertie County and state militia regiments during the War of 1812. Because of its specific scope and subject matter, this work would be a perfect addition to any academic, public, or special library with a state or regional history collection.

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