



WEST POINT TRUCE LINE



Waiting, Looting, and Shooting



C A R O L I N A S C A M P A I G N

The Carolinas Campaign began on February 1, 1865, when Union Gen. William T. Sherman led his army north from Savannah, Georgia, after the "March to the Sea." Sherman's objective was to join Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia to crush Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Scattered Confederate forces consolidated in North Carolina, the Confederacy's logistical lifeline, where Sherman defeated Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's last-ditch attack at Bentonville. After Sherman was reinforced at Goldsboro late in March, Johnston saw the futility of further resistance and surrendered on April 26, essentially ending the Civil War.

On April 19, 1865, Union Gen. William T. Sherman released Special Field Orders No. 58, suspending hostilities and identifying West Point as the northern end of a truce line separating his forces from those of Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston.

As the two commanders negotiated Confederate terms of surrender approximately seven miles southwest at James Bennett's farm, Union Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick positioned his cavalrymen here, near the West Point mill village, just uphill from the Eno River.



Gen. Kilpatrick
- Library of Congress

Despite the truce line, it was common for army stragglers and hungry civilians to



McCown-Mangum House - Courtesy of West Point on the Eno City Park

prowl the line in search of food, shelter, and vulnerable livestock. At one point, a Union patrol dispersed a group of looting Confederate strays. Federal soldiers were also noted for harassing West Point landowners and damaging private property, usually in search of food.

West Point was one of the most prominent mill villages in the region in 1865. During the war, the village had several dwellings, a gristmill, a blacksmith shop, a cotton gin, a general store,

and a post office for the 300 or so inhabitants. Local miller John Cabe McCown's Greek Revival-style farmhouse was a favorite target for



Union cavalrymen testing their marksmanship with their new, seven-shot Spencer repeating rifles, for which they traded their single-shot Burnside carbines late in March 1865. Today, West Point on the Eno City Park features a reconstructed 1778 gristmill, the historic McCown-Mangum House, the Hugh Mangum Museum of Photography, hiking trails, and an amphitheater.

The Eno and Occaneechi Native American tribes occupied the site of Durham until Scottish, Irish, and English settlers constructed several gristmills along the Eno River and other nearby watercourses. Durham is also thought to be the site of an ancient Native American village named Adshusheer, glowingly described by John Lawson in *A New Voyage to Carolina*, an account of his 1700-01 expedition through the Carolinas.