



Confederate Incognito: The Civil War Reports of "Long Grabs," a.k.a. Murdoch John McSween, 26th and 35th North Carolina Infantry

Murdoch John McSween

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Winner, Willie Parker Peace Award--North Carolina Society of Historians. Award for Excellence in Publishing--The North Carolina Genealogical Society

Preferring anonymity, Murdoch John McSween wrote over 80 letters under the pseudonym "Long Grabs" to the Fayetteville Observer (North Carolina), serving as their unofficial war correspondent. For the first two full years of the war, 1862-1863, he was a sometimes drill master at Camp Mangum, in Raleigh, and a wanderer among the regiments in North Carolina and Virginia. What he wrote was varied--the fighting in eastern North Carolina and at Fredericksburg and Petersburg in Virginia, the conditions of the soldiers, the hardships of the civilians, the history of places he visited, and biographical sketches such as that of Jefferson Davis. In 1863, based on certain promises made by Colonel Matt Ransom, McSween joined the 35th Regiment. A bitter dispute soon developed over those promises with the result that McSween was court-martialed and sentenced to twelve months at hard labor. Released, he joins the 26th Regiment and is twice wounded at the Battle of Petersburg. After the war, he returns to Fayetteville where he edits and publishes The Eagle newspaper.



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