

VILLAGE OF DEEP CREEK



The Dismal Swamp Rangers



The Village of Deep Creek, c. 1890.

Before you is the Deep Creek Lock of the Great Dismal Swamp Canal. The canal was an important thoroughfare, connecting the North Carolina Sounds with Hampton Roads and the Chesapeake Bay.

The Dismal Swamp Canal is the oldest operating artificial waterway in the United States. Construc-

tion was authorized by the Virginia legislature in 1787 and subsequently by North Carolina in 1790. Both Union and Confederate strategists recognized the canal's importance and sought to control the waterway.

One commercial center that grew along the canal during the antebellum era is the Village of Deep Creek. By 1850 Deep Creek had become a village of about fifty houses and served as the main depot for the lumber taken from the Dismal Swamp.

Even though Deep Creek was thinly populated, local patriotism for the Southern rights prompted the organization of a militia company known as the Dismal Swamp Rangers in 1856. When Virginia left the Union, the Rangers rushed to Portsmouth to occupy the Gosport Navy Yard and then the Portsmouth Naval Hospital. The unit was mustered into Confederate service shortly thereafter as Company A, Third Virginia Regiment. After building batteries to defend Norfolk and Portsmouth, the company was sent

to Fort Boykin on Burwell's Bay until it crossed the James River to serve in the Confederate Warwick River defenses. The Peninsula Campaign took a toll on this small company of 68 men. At the Battle of Frazer's Farm (Glendale) on June 30, 1862, it suffered 22 killed and wounded. One soldier, Private Maurice Liverman, was mortally wounded during the battle, yet turned to his comrades and said, "Boys, I can't live much longer, so hold me up so that I can fire one more shot and kill one more Yankee before I die, to get even with them for my own death." His fellow soldiers complied.

The Dismal Swamp Rangers continued to serve in the Army of Northern Virginia after the Peninsula Campaign. The unit fought at Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Dinwiddie Court House, and Five Forks. Two members of the Rangers surrendered at Appomattox.

Passage of Union boats through the Dismal Swamp Canal.

