

PEIRCE, W. W. Maj. & Chief QM, NC

The National Archives files for W. W. Peirce contain 219 documents and are found on Fold3.com in the Confederate file for Officers under the mis-spelled name of "W. W. Pierce"; this misspelling is also seen on the covers of vouchers and invoices written in clerical hands. The genuine signatures are written in a clear script and leave no ambiguity of the intended spelling of "Peirce."

Although no career summary exists for Peirce, it is clear that he served most, if not all, of his career at Raleigh, North Carolina. His documents mostly consist of the transfer of goods between his post at Raleigh and other quartermasters. In a letter of February 4th, 1865, at Raleigh, North Carolina, Peirce's letterhead displayed the title of "Chief Quartermaster for the State of North Carolina."

1861

On June 12th, 1861, Peirce signed a freight document as an "Ordnance Officer." A Special Requisition of October 18th, 1861, listed a tent issued by Peirce to the quartermaster of the 8th Regiment North Carolina Troops at Norfolk.

1862

In a letter dated May 10th, 1862, at Raleigh, North Carolina, Peirce wrote Col. A. C. Myers, Quartermaster General, offering his services to the government. Citing the Conscription Act and the official end of North Carolina State service on the 18th, along with his current service as the Quarter Master for North Carolina State Regiments, he suggested his offices in Raleigh as the site of his newly proposed service to the Confederate

government in Richmond. Vouchers with the letterhead of "The State of North Carolina" and signed by Peirce show that he worked for both state and central government entities in 1863.

National Archives summary cards noted that Peirce was appointed on May 21st, 1862, as Capt. & QM reporting to the QM General, taking rank retroactively on May 17th, and confirmed on September 30th of the same year. Pierce was promoted and confirmed on October 7th, 1862, as Maj. & QM reporting to the QM General, taking rank on August 30th, 1862

Capt. Peirce, AQM, traveled from Raleigh to Richmond and back during May 25th to May 28th, 1862, on Special Order No. 151 of May 24th by Gen'l Winder "...to collect money due the State by the Confederate States on account of clothing and equipment." A pay voucher dated June 30th, 1862, interestingly described Peirce as a "Capt. & A.A.G." Peirce sent a telegram from Raleigh to A. C. Myers, QM General in Richmond on December 19th, 1862, complaining that "Bad management blocks the NCRR, can nothing be done to alter it? Troops, provisions and all military stores are stopped." It is noteworthy that on December 14th Union forces attacked the Wilmington & Weldon RR at Goldsboro and overcame Confederate defenders at the Kinston bridge. On December 17th the Union forces were destroying tracks at the Goldsboro Bridge.

1863

January 30th, 1863, found Peirce in Kinston, North Carolina. Peirce rarely traveled; virtually all of his documents are signed in Raleigh. A letter of June 6th, 1863, from Peirce, using a manuscript letterhead of "Quarter Masters Department, Raleigh NC," to Maj. Downer, Superintendant of Armories at Richmond, spoke of the need for a Store Keeper and Ordnance Agent in Raleigh.



Grayson_Walford
163742 X
5 Jan 1863
images: Adamek

1864

A National Archives summary card noted from a report of quartermasters in the Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina that Pierce reported to Gen'l Beauregard's command on June 29th, 1864.

June 6th, 1864, Raleigh, North Carolina; Peirce had a discussion of having clothing made in North Carolina rather than shipping the wool cloth to the Clothing Bureau at Richmond. Abstract L, dated June 30th, 1864, contains a printed letterhead which confirms the spelling of the name "Maj. W. W. PEIRCE"; this abstract details the proceeds of a public auction of large quantities of clothing, some of which was purchased by Capt. H. A. Dowd, QM. This is an interesting document which implies that Capt. Dowd purchased these items privately on speculation rather than having them transferred on a normal voucher to his account.

On April 26th, 1864, Peirce made the trip to Richmond, Virginia. And on September 6th and 28th, 1864, Peirce signed vouchers for transfers of stores at Petersburg, Virginia. Vouchers after this date are signed in Raleigh.

1865

On January 1st, 1865, Peirce wrote a detailed description of his duties as a response to a circular. His response is by far the most vague and arrogant of any quartermaster seen by the author:

Quarter Masters Department C.S.A.
Raleigh NC Jany 1st 1865

Capt. T. H. Hall
A. I. G. Raleigh NC

Captain,

I have the honour to reply to your circular of the 22nd ultimo. Numbering as you require my answers in correspondence with your questions.

1. May 21/ 62 I was assigned to duty here as Post Quartermaster by Col. Myers Quarter Master General. Aug.^t 30/ 62 promoted to Brigade Quarter Master and assigned to duty here and by Circular March 24th/ 63 I was appointed Chief Quarter Master for the District of North Carolina.

2. The accompanying lists N. 1. 2. 3. & 4. & 5 embodied the information called for as to the Employees both white & Black.

3. All my offices and stores are in the building known as G(illegible) Hotel, occupied in common by the Assistant Quarter Master of the Post, and by the

Adjutant General of the State of N. Carolina with his Staff composed of several Assistant Adjutant Generals Paymasters. Ordnance officers, Quartermasters & Commissaries. From whom rented, as well as to the terms conditions etc., I respectfully refer you to the report of the Assistant Quarter Master of this Post. In connection with which I herewith lay before you the original (sic) lease. One building on the East Side of Fayetteville Street a few doors South of Williams & Haywood Drug Store, represented by Mr. Ruffin Williams, is occupied by my department by no positive or direct authority, but to meet the requirement of the service, with a due regard to economy as in duty bound virtue of my office as Chief Quartermaster. It is occupied as a Government Shoe Shop at a cost last year of fifty dollars per month. The rent for the present year had not been agreed upon.

4. The work done in my District and under my direction is all done under contract with the exception of the manufactures of shoes to a limited extent in the building above referred to, occupied as a Shoe Shop, which was regularly established on the 1st of November 1864, with no other authority than that derived from the general scope and purposes of my office. This Shop is now operated by twenty-three detailed and light-duty men assigned as set forth in list No. 5 above referred to. For the amount of weekly productions I beg leave to refer you to a copy of the last weekly report herewith submitted Endorsed "Weekly report of work done in Government Shop for the Week ending December 31st 1864." The object of this Shop is for the manufacture of Soldier's Shoes. But the repairing of Officer's and Soldier's Shoes is permitted and in some instances the manufacture of Boots and Shoes for Officers is allowed in accordance with the accompanying "Schedule of Prices." The production of this Shop is now small and is not remunerative, but as fast as they can be obtained it is proposed to increase the number of shoemakers to Seventy or to such a number as will ensure economy in the production. The work done by contract is exhibited in the accompanying list of Contractors Marked No. (illegible blob of ink). The number of detailed men as set forth in the Employment of the contractors is not entirely accurate, owing to may (sic) application being in Suspence

(sic) and the incomplete returns of the Contractors as to the requirements of Army Regulations Art 40 paragraphs 944, 945, & 946 in regard to contracts. I have to say that the contracts have only been made in duplicates, one given to the contractor and one filed in this office.

In compliance with paragraph 945, — with a very few exceptions, bonds have been required and given by the contractors. Paragraph 946 (illegible due to a paper fold) instance been complied with.

5. Office hours are from 9 A.M. to 2 P. M. but for unfinished business the clerks when necessary are required to be in at 4 P. M. and are sometimes Employed until 9 or 10 O. Clock. Hours in the issuing (sic) Department are from 9 until dark.

Respectfully submitted

WW Peirce

Major & Chief Quarter Master

Col. Jno. Withers of the Adjutant & Inspector General's Office in Richmond brought charges against Major Peirce on January 10th, 1865, Special Order No. 7, XIII, "...in regard to his conduct in certain transactions with a certain Joseph Boxbaun of Charlotte North Carolina or his agents, and in regard to the reception by said Major Pierce of presents or bribes from the said Joseph Boxbaun or others." A National Archives summary card noted that Peirce was relieved of his command on January 24th, 1865, Special Order 19/32.

A letter of February 4th, 1865, from Peirce at Raleigh to Gen'l S. Cooper, Adjutant & Inspector General in Richmond is reproduced in full:

I respectfully request that Special Orders No. 7 for the detail of a court to enquire into certain and perticular (sic) matters, touching my dealings with Buxboam and other contractors, be so amended and enlarged, as to embrace a full enquiry into my official conduct as Chief Quarter Master for the State of North Carolina, or such subjects as I may submit for the investigation of the Court, to the end that I may be afforded the opportunity of vindicating myself from foul aspersions afloat, effecting (sic) not only myself but including the general question of responsibility and liability of disbursing agents of the government.

I am General very respectfully
your obedient servant

W W Peirce

Major & Chf Q.M.

Major Peirce and his son embodied the very definition of graft and corruption. Harold S. Wilson, in his book *Confederate Industry*, p. 75, noted that "...an inquiry was ordered by the War Department. An investigating quartermaster from Richmond 'was greatly embarrassed & his report delayed, by the disinclination of this officer [Peirce] to submit his affairs to inspection; by his habits, which render it impossible to transact business with him with any degree of satisfaction; and, by the confusion and want of system that pervade his affairs.' Peirce held agreements with 106 contractors, mostly 'able-bodied men,' and yet 'no copies of his contracts have ever been forwarded to this department, and no list of names or numbers of contractors were kept in the office.' Pierce's son, the clerk, 'was but 21 years of age, without business experience, capacity, training, or habits.' In expenditures that were 'unauthorized and extravagant,' ...the younger Peirce...erected 'a guard house at a cost of \$2,680' for which there were no guards, but it was occupied by a brigadier general without authority. ...He employed numerous clerks and ninety-one of his own slaves on public payroll."

Peirce was paroled as a citizen, not an officer, on May 10th, 1865, at Raleigh, North Carolina; he listed his residence as Wilmington, North Carolina.

1866

A letter in Peirce's file:

Head Quarters Military Command of NC

Raleigh, June 5th, 1866

Col. E. A. Carr

5th U. S. Cavalry

Commanding Post

Raleigh NC

Colonel,

The Com'd'g Gen'l desires you to send an officer to be present at the examination of the safe of Mr. W. W. Peirce, late Rebel QM Gen'l of the State of North Carolina. If any of the papers belong to the late Rebel (illegible) the officer will take possession of them.

Very respectfully
(illegible)

J. K. Campbell
Asst. Adj. General

McNeil

W. W. Peirce's signatures from the National Archives.

The earliest known example, signed on June 12th, 1861, at an unknown location, as "Ordnance Officer."

W. W. Peirce
Ordnance Officer

Signed on September 24th, 1862, on letterhead of the State of North Carolina, and signing as "Capt. & AQM CSA" for the Confederate States at the bottom of the form.

No. 12.
The State of North Carolina, Capt. W. W. Peirce
Confederate States

Signed on December 7th, 1863, at Raleigh, North Carolina, as "Quartermaster." Note the correct spelling of his printed last name in the letterhead.

[No. 27.]
List of Quartermaster's Stores, &c., forwarded by Maj. W. W. Peirce,
W. W. Peirce Quartermaster.

Signed on February 4th, 1865, at Raleigh, North Carolina, as "Major & Chf Q.M." Note the formal letterhead description of his office.

Office Chf Quartermaster
District North Carolina
Raleigh, Feby 4th 65
W. W. Peirce
Major & chf Q.M.

W. W. Peirce
April 27/63

images: Fold3.com

No. _____

PROVOST MARSHAL'S OFFICE,
RALEIGH, N. C., May 10th 1865.

I, W. W. Peirce, aged 50 years,
residing in Wilmington, County of New Hanover,
State of North Carolina, do solemnly swear that I hereby renounce
all countenance, support and allegiance to the so-called Confederate States of America, and to any Government, authority power or constitution whatsoever within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto; and I do further swear that, to the best of my knowledge and ability I will defend and support the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will perform with fidelity all duties whatsoever that may have been, or may hereafter be, imposed upon good and loyal citizens; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation, or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge its claims. So help me God.

W. W. Peirce
Sworn and subscribed to before me, this 10th day of May 1865,
at RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA.

P. C. Hayes
Provost Marshal General,
Army of the Ohio.

W. W. Peirce's parole at Raleigh, North Carolina, on May 10th, 1865. Note the inscription in the left margin which describes him as a citizen.

image: Fold3.com