



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter**  
**April 2019, Volume 16, Issue 4**

**Speaker:** Michael Hardy  
**Topic:** "General Lee's Immortals: The Branch-Lane Brigade"  
**When:** Monday, April 8, 2019  
**Location:** Brock's Riverside Grill  
**Times:** Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

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**"General Lee's Immortals: The Branch-Lane Brigade" presented by Michael Hardy, April 8, 2019**

Michael C. Hardy is one of North Carolina's leading independent scholars of Civil War and Southern Appalachian history. The author of twenty books, Michael was honored as the North Carolina Historian of the Year by the North Carolina Society of Historians in 2010. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama. You can learn more about his background and work at his web page [www.michaelchardy.com](http://www.michaelchardy.com).

Two decades after the end of the Civil War, former Confederate officer Riddick Gatlin bewailed the lack of a history of the famous Branch-Lane Brigade, within which he had served. "Who has ever written a line to tell of the sacrifices, the suffering and the ending of these more than immortal men?" he said. "Why has the history of that brigade not been written?" With the publication of General Lee's Immortals: The Battles and Campaigns of the Branch-Lane Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865, Gatlin's long wait is finally over. This storied brigade, first led by Lawrence Branch until his death at Sharpsburg, and then James H. Lane, served with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during its entire existence. The names emblazoned on its battle flag read like a history of that army, beginning with the Seven Days' Battles and ending with the final roll call at Appomattox. Originally part of A. P. Hill's famous "Light" Division, the Branch-Lane Brigade earned spectacular plaudits for its disciplined defense, hard-hitting attacks, and incredible marching abilities. Its constant position at the front, however, resulted in devastating losses, so that its roll call of casualties by the end of the war far exceeded its number of survivors.

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“A Common-place Business Affair: Battlefield Burials in the Fredericksburg Area”

by Donald C. Pfanz – A Review of the March 2019 program by Greg Mertz

Civil War burials varied greatly depending upon circumstances. If a soldier fell within the battle lines of his own army, his fellow soldiers had a greater opportunity to devote more care and attention to the burial process than if the soldier's body was stranded in the no man's land between the opposing troop positions. If a solitary soldier died of disease while in bivouac between battles, he was more apt to receive a funeral or a coffin, than in the aftermath of battle when burial crews and chaplains were overwhelmed by hundreds and hundreds of dead. And if both armies immediately marched away from the battlefield after the fighting concluded, the battlefield dead could receive no attention at all. Our speaker, Donald Pfanz, shared with us some of his findings regarding Union soldier burials in Fredericksburg, covered in greater detail in his book, *Where Valor Proudly Sleeps*.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Fredericksburg, the Confederates were able to bury the relatively small number of their dead, most of whom fell within their battle lines. Union dead, however, mostly laid between the lines. On the southern end of the battlefield, Union General William B. Franklin requested a truce of Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson for the purpose of recovering his wounded and burying his dead. Jackson also supplied some of his troops to assist with the ghastly task. After one day's work, the men had buried 92 men, but had not finished the work. The next day the Confederates completed the task, placing the remaining Union dead in a ditch beside the RF&P railroad, and throwing dirt over the top of the bodies.

At the northern end of the battlefield, it was Confederate army commander General Robert E. Lee who suggested to Union army commander General Ambrose E. Burnside, that he dispatch a burial crew. On December 17 – four days after the battle ended -- the detail under Col. John R. Brooke of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, re-crossed the Rappahannock River and were escorted through the town by Confederates to the plain in front of Marye's Heights.

Shortly after the war, a citizen of Fredericksburg would explain to travelogue chronicler John Trowbridge how that plain had changed colors during the battle. Prior to the battle, the field was brown. When the battle concluded the field had turned blue from the uniforms of the wounded and dead Union soldiers that covered the plain. Then after the Confederate soldiers were able to leave their lines and strip the enemy dead of their clothes and equipment, the field had turned white, either from the underwear or from the flesh of those who had been stripped naked.

The weather had gotten warm during the battle and in the immediate aftermath of the fight, and many of the dead lay in the mud. By December 17, the temperature had dropped below freezing again and many of the dead had to be pried out of the frozen ground with picks and shovels. The collected bodies were carried to the location where two burial trenches were being dug. The work proved to be more than had been anticipated, and the following day – December 18 -- the burial detail was doubled in size so they could complete the task.

The most substantial burial plots were two trenches, each six feet wide, to cover the height of a man. One trench was about 140 yards east of the Sunken Road, extending north of the Stratton House (which still stands along Littlepage Street) for 60 yards to Hanover Street. This trench held 130 bodies. A second burial trench was located where Union soldiers had already dug an earthwork for protection during the battle. It was east of the other burial trench, was 100 yards long and evidently substantially deeper, because this trench held 609 dead soldiers. As many as 800 bodies were also thrown into the ice house on the property of Federal Hill (also still standing along Hanover Street) on the west edge of town. Of the men who were evacuated from the battlefield to the hospitals in the city and died there, it is said that every lot in town contained one to seven graves.

The Union soldiers who died during the winter encampment received the most respectful and complete funerals. Burials early in the winter often included coffins made from boxes and a rifle salute, though that would change to men simply being buried in blankets with no salute being fired. A band would play a dirge with an escort of soldiers carrying their guns reversed. Other soldiers carrying the body to a regimental cemetery outside of the camp lowered the body into the grave. The chaplain would say a prayer or a short sermon. The graves were marked with headboards.

One of the most elaborate and formal regimental cemeteries was that of the 107<sup>th</sup> New York at Hope Landing in Stafford County. The 32 soldiers of the regiment who died over the winter were buried in rows neatly separated by gravel walks and holly bushes, and surrounded by a wooden fence. A concern of the soldiers was that pro-Confederates would desecrate the graves, and they erected a stone monument (now displayed at Chatham) engraved with the plea "Disturb us not, we are at peace with all."

The immediate Fredericksburg area once again witnessed a large number of deaths in the aftermath of the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. Ordinarily all of the medical resources of an army were devoted to evacuating the wounded and then returned to the army in plenty of time for the next battle. But as the Union army advanced after both the slugfest in the Wilderness and again after the fighting at Spotsylvania, the vast majority of the ambulances and medical staff were needed to accompany the army. The evacuation of the wounded from those two battles was mainly done via wagons rather than ambulances, and with a small number of doctors accompanying them.

As the men reached Fredericksburg in the spring of 1864, with hopes of using the Rappahannock River or the RF&P railroad for evacuation to points further north, but finding both modes of transportation not yet available, Fredericksburg became a bottleneck. The wounded suffered severely and many died in Fredericksburg. Corporal Albert Downs, part of the 57<sup>th</sup> New York assigned to guard the city, was able to have five privates assigned to him to make up a burial crew, and arranged for the Christian Commission to conduct funerals. He established a large cemetery for Union dead in the block owned by John Chew, bordered by Prince Edward, Lewis, Winchester and Fauquier Streets. Many of the burials of Downs's detail were

documented in a series of photographs.

The carefully laid out and neatly maintained National Cemetery which became the final resting place of the Union dead originally buried in Frederickburg and surrounding areas, is a far cry from the typical hasty burials that most of the men received when they were first interred.

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### Ongoing Reminder

Please contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance or to confirm your dinner reservation. Please call Bob Jones @ 540-399-1702 or send him your e-mail at [cwrt dinner@yahoo.com](mailto:cwrt dinner@yahoo.com)

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### THE RVCWRT 2019 BUS TOUR

Saturday, May 18th

***“Lee’s Lexington and Jackson’s Homestead”***

**The VMI Museum, Jackson’s Cemetery, and the Lee Chapel and Museum**

Cost: Before May 5<sup>th</sup>: members and their guests - \$ 80; after May 5th - \$ 100  
Non-members - \$ 100

Includes bus, lunch at *Palms at Lexington*, site fees, a guided tour at the VMI Museum and Parade Grounds; a guided walking tour of the Jackson Cemetery; and a guided tour of the Lee Chapel and Museum on the Washington & Lee University campus.

The bus will depart the Gordon Road Commuter Lot at 7:30 a.m. on May 18th returning at 6 p.m.

Information & Reservations: contact Bob Jones at [cwrt dinner@yahoo.com](mailto:cwrt dinner@yahoo.com) ; [Bobnpeg1954@gmail.com](mailto:Bobnpeg1954@gmail.com); or 540-399-1702.

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## The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg

By Bob Jones

As a courtesy, the RVCWRT provides as a regular feature each month, the ongoing scheduled speakers for the CWRTF's 2018 Program Year. The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg normally meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except for one meeting held on the third Wednesday of June 2018). Dinner Meetings are held at the UMW's Jepson Center located at [1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA](http://www.1119hanoverstreet.com), dinner cost is \$32.00 per person. Advance reservations should be made by email: [dinner@cwrtf.org](mailto:dinner@cwrtf.org) or telephone: 540-361-2105.

### CWRTF's Scheduled Speakers for the 2019 Program Year:

April 24, 2019	Mark Tooley	"The 1861 Peace Conference"
May 22, 2019	Patrick Schroeder, NPS	"Zouaves: America's Forgotten Soldiers"
June 19, 2019	Dave Bastion	"The Vicksburg Canal"
Sept. 25, 2019	Brian E. Withrow	"Ulysses S. Grant in Character"
Oct. 23, 2019	Michael K. Shaffer	"In Memory of Self and Comrades: Thomas W. Colley's Recollection"

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### 2019 NPS Intern Scholarship

The Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table (RVCWRT) provides a \$2,000 scholarship to a National Park Service (NPS) intern serving at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. Under the provisions of this scholarship program, an intern will be defined as any individual who is, or will be, an undergraduate or graduate student at an accredited college or university; who has served at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park (beginning their service between July 2018 and July 2019) and who has completed a minimum of 350 hours of service to the park in good standing. For complete details, go to the website, [www.rvcwrt.org](http://www.rvcwrt.org)

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### Who we are

The Drum and Bugle Newsletter is published monthly, by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Each

month, The Drum and Bugle newsletter is also placed on our web-site, [www.RVCWRT.org](http://www.RVCWRT.org). Yearly membership dues are \$35.00 for an individual, \$45.00 for families, and only \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the ongoing preservation of Civil War sites.

**The RVCWRT Executive Committee:**

<b>President/Dinner Meeting:</b>	Bob Jones	<b>Membership:</b>	TBD
<b>Vice President:</b>	John Sapanara	<b>Member at Large:</b>	Robin Donato
<b>Secretary:</b>	Melanie Jordan	<b>Member at Large:</b>	John Griffiths
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Bob Pfile	<b>Member at Large:</b>	Barbara Stafford
<b>Assistant Treasurer:</b>	Ben Keller	<b>Media &amp; Events Coordinator:</b>	Paul Steir
<b>Meeting Scribe:</b>	Greg Mertz	<b>Past President:</b>	Marc Thompson
<b>Membership Chair:</b>	Paul Steir	<b>Newsletter Editor &amp; Webmaster:</b>	Dan Augustine

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