



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
July 2026, Volume 23, Issue 7

Speaker: Jeff Joyce
Topic: "Crossroads of Conflict: Civil War Culpeper and Culpeper"
When: July 13, 2026
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Time Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm
Our Website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org
Our Facebook: www.facebook.com/rvcwrt

Jeff Joyce "Crossroads of Conflict: Civil War Culpeper and Culpeper"

Culpeper has been referred to as the Civil War's "most marched upon, camped upon" county. Local historian Jeff Joyce describes how the Civil War impacted Culpeper County, from major battles like Cedar Mountain and Brandy Station to the 1863-64 winter encampment of the Army of the Potomac. He also discusses the establishment of Culpeper National

Cemetery after the war and shares the stories of several Civil War soldiers buried there.

Jeff Joyce is an Air Force veteran and retired Defense contractor who lives in Manassas. He is a volunteer historian at Culpeper National Cemetery, supporting the Wreaths Across America program. In addition, Jeff is a Docent at the National Air and Space Museum, a volunteer with the Honor Flight Program, a battlefield guide at Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park in Prince William County and a member of the living history team at Manassas National Battlefield.

**“The Battles of Cross Keys and Port Republic”
by Aaron Siever**

A Review of the June 2026 Program by Greg Mertz

The United States Army had escalated the mobilization and employment of its forces early in 1862. Over the first six months of the year, the Confederates could point to precious few examples of military success. The lone signs of Confederate optimism came from Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. While most historians would name the March 1862 battle of Kernstown as the start of the 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign, our speaker, Aaron Siever, feels that Jackson’s campaign actually started in December, 1861 with the battle of Dam Number Five, and the January, 1862 Romney Expedition.

Though some 17,000 soldiers served under Jackson in the 1862 Valley Campaign, the greatest number of troops that he had at any one time was about 14,000. While the Federal soldiers opposing Jackson numbered about 50,000 men, they were in three different departments that were never able to coordinate their efforts and amass a force at any one place that might overwhelm Jackson.

During the time span just prior to the June 8 battle of Cross Keys and the June 9 battle of Port Republic, two Federal armies were attempting to converge on Jackson, and his challenge was to utilize the South Fork of the Shenandoah River to keep those armies separated. The task, arguably became more difficult when Jackson’s rear guard under cavalryman Turner Ashby was killed on June 6 in a fight near Harrisonburg. Ashby’s body was

laid out beside a window of the Kemper House in Port Republic, and soldiers filed by, looking through the window panes to pay their respects.

Richard S. Ewell's 5,500-man Confederate division was assigned to hold off the Federal army of 11,000 men under John C. Fremont. Ewell selected a strong position at Cross Keys, setting up on a ridge overlooking Mill Creek, with Port Republic to his rear. The 15th Alabama were involved in every phase of the battle, including the opening shots in the Union Church Cemetery, taking place while a worship service was being held inside of the building on that Sunday morning.

Isaac Trimble, commanding a brigade on Ewell's right requested permission to advance across Mill Creek and occupy the higher ground known as Schoolhouse Ridge. Though Trimble's men had repositioned to a higher elevation, the ground was a salient, protruding out in advance of the rest of the Confederate line where it was potentially vulnerable to Federal fire from multiple directions. But due to the contours of the terrain, the Confederates observed the initial Federal attack on Trimble's line first. The 8th New York was decimated, and a battalion of the Pennsylvania Bucktails attacked and retreated. A Confederate counterattack turned the Federal left flank, threatening the Yankee artillery, and Fremont ordered a retreat. Federal losses were twice as large as the Confederate casualties.

Trimble sought permission to pursue, but Ewell instead went in the opposite direction, to Port Republic. With Fremont's withdrawal, Jackson chose to concentrate his troops against the other Federal army in the vicinity, part of a division commanded by James Shields, on the opposite side of the South Fork.

The village of Port Republic is situated where the North River and South River converge to form the South Fork of the Shenandoah River as the waters flow to the north. On June 8, the same morning that Ewell was opening the battle of Cross Keys, Jackson was in Port Republic. Demoralized Confederate troopers who were supposedly picketing the stream separating Jackson from Shields' force, failed to stop Federal cavalry that suddenly appeared in the town. Jackson escaped across a covered bridge to the side of the river network containing Ewell's troops. Jackson was shouting across the river for gunners from what he presumed to be a Confederate battery to cross the river and join him. Instead, these Federal

gunners, who acknowledged seeing a Confederate officer calling out to them, fired into the bridge.

Confederates eventually secured Port Republic once again and the plans to focus on Shields were developed. Jackson saw an opportunity to crush the lead elements of Shields' division under Erastus Tyler.

While Jackson intended to attack Tyler at 4:00 am, a rickety bridge of submerged wagons was relied upon to cross over the South River from the village of Port Republic to the Federal side of the stream, made the trek exceedingly slow going. The first Confederated didn't even reach the battlefield until 6 am. The key to the battlefield was a knoll upon which the Federals posted artillery that had been the site of a coaling, where wood was converted into charcoal.

A portion of the Stonewall Brigade and some of Richard Taylor's Louisiana troops assaulted the coaling and were repulsed. Finally, Maj. Roberdeau Wheat's special battalion of the Louisiana Tigers, before making their third attack on the coaling, climbed up a wooded ridge and flanked the position. The Tigers used their Bowie knives to slit the throats of the artillery horses, so only one cannon on the coaling was able to escape. With the fall of the coaling, the Federal line collapsed and Tyler's men retreated.

While Jackson inflicted about 1,000 casualties on the Federals at Port Republic, the attacks on the coaling proved costly, with Confederates losing more than 800 men in their victory. The battle of Port Republic concluded the 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. By the end of June, Jackson's men would have been with Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia for six days of the Seven Days Battles east of Richmond.

Siever noted that Jackson did not take his mapmaker, Jedediah Hotchkiss along with him to Richmond, where on occasion Jackson struggled to get his men where they were supposed to be on time, and at other times had difficulty figuring out just where the proper place for his troops was located. Perhaps Jackson would have had less difficulty maneuvering around the Richmond environs if Hotchkiss was present to assist.

2026 Fredericksburg National Cemetery Luminaria

If you are like my wife and I, Saturday of Memorial Day weekend has one thing penciled in every year, The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park's annual National Cemetery Luminaria. As a teacher, I follow weather closely (snow days are a teacher's best friend). It was obvious that the luminaria was not going to happen. One of my students is a scout that participates in placing the baggies with the candles. She showed me the email from her scout leader about the cancelation. While many of us were upset about it not happening this year, it is not the only time. Please enjoy this video from 2020, when during the pandemic, the luminary did not happen, but John Hennessey was interviewed and spoke about the importance of this event.

https://youtu.be/L_0-L_du-M8?si=RzSbwmAIF-Dm6UEw

Important Information about the Park's Buildings

At this time, both Chatham Manor and the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Centers remain closed. The grounds are open, with park staff manning the bookstore in Fredericksburg, and offering talks at Chatham. Recent information looks like Chatham will reopen at some time in July, with the visitor center being later in the summer. We will keep you updated as information come into us. Chancellorsville is open, and Elwood will be opening up for the season in May.

To explore these locations independently, check out the self-guided audio tours of the Sunken Road and Chatham available on the NPS App and online at [go.nps.gov/frsp-tours](https://www.nps.gov/frsp-tours). Park staff look forward to welcoming visitors to our upgraded facilities in spring and summer 2026!

Friends of Central Virginia Battlefield Trust

As you know CVBT is a land trust. We focus on purchasing endangered battlefield properties. We do produce a large three-day annual conference,

standalone events and need to interpret and maintain our lands, we need help in all of these. In the past, CVBT has had individuals from organizations assist us, and we are grateful, but now we would like to create an official volunteer group who would enjoy being part of CVBT's volunteer core.

We have created "**The Friends of CVBT.**" The intent is for this all-volunteer group is to be the "On Call" core of CVBT's volunteer group assisting in events and battlefield related needs. Active volunteer members will have the unique opportunity to be involved with events hosted by nationally acclaimed historians, assist in tours, and work on preserved battlefields. Participating volunteers will also be enrolled in the membership ranks of CVBT every year they contribute. CVBT will provide each volunteer with a CVBT volunteer staff shirt and CVBT official hat to wear at events or whenever wanted. We will be limiting this new group to 18 volunteers.

We would be honored to have you join the ranks of CVBT volunteers to help us further our mission of preserving our Nation's history.

If interested please email our Executive Director **Terry Rensel** at executivedirector@cvbt.org .
Office: 540-374-0900

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF FREDERICKSBURG (CWRTF)

CWRTF meets 9 times a year on designated Wednesdays at Mary Washington Jepson Alumni Executive Center, 1119 Hanover Street. They offer a buffet dinner followed by a Civil War-themed presentation. Reservations are required. Speaker/topic schedule can be found on their website at www.cwrtof.org, and will be updated here. Below is the schedule starting in September 2025 and going to June 2026.

June 17, 2026

Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Spy: John R. Kelso

Speaker: Christopher Grasso

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. The newsletter is available on our website at www.rappvalleycivilwar.org. Yearly membership dues are \$40 for individuals and \$50 for families. Students are free. Membership is open to anyone interested in the military, political and social history of the American Civil War.

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