



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter March 2017, Volume 14, Issue 3

***** Speaker: Dr. Bruce M. Venter, CEO of America's History, LLC**
Topic: "Kill Jeff Davis: The Union Raid on Richmond, 1864"
When: Monday, March 13, 2017
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

Abstract on our Scheduled Speaker, Dr. Bruce M. Venter, CEO of America's History, LLC

Our scheduled speaker for the March 13, 2017, dinner will be Dr. Bruce M. Venter, CEO of America's History, LLC, a historical tour company best known for its annual conference on the American Revolution. Dr. Venter is an experienced tour leader and is the author of *"The Battle of Hubbardton: The Rear Guard Action that Saved America"* as well as articles in *Blue and Gray*, *Civil War* and *Washington Times*. Dr. Venter has a BA in History from Manhattan College and Masters/Doctorate Degrees from the *State University of New York at Albany, NY*. He spent many years as an educator in both the New York and Virginia public school systems. His main Civil War interest is cavalry, the focus of his latest book *"Kill Jeff Davis: The Union Raid on Richmond, 1864."*

Reminder: Please contact Bob Jones to order dinner in advance
To confirm reservations: Telephone Bob Jones @ 540-399-1702 or send an e-mail to
cwrtddinner@yahoo.com or bobnpeg1954@gmail.com

THE RVCWRT 2017 BUS TOUR

Saturday, May 20th, 2017

Determined to Stand and Fight: *The Battle of Monocacy*
and

The National Museum of Civil War Medicine

Tour Cost: Prior to May 1st, for members and their guests the cost is reduced to \$ 90.00 each

Tour Cost: After May 1st, for members and their guests the cost will be \$100.00 each

Bus Tour includes; lunch, necessary site fees at *Monocacy Battlefield*, handouts and a scholarly lecture in Frederick, MD at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine titled *"Mythbusters" The True Story of Civil War Medicine*.

Ryan Quint and Marc Thompson will be our Tour Guides for this trip.

Bus departure from the Gordon Road Commuter Lot at 8 a.m. on May 20th, returning at 6:00 p.m.

• For information/reservations contact Bob Jones @ bobnpeg1954@gmail.com or call 540-399-1702

“Fire in the Bay: The Battle of Portland Harbor”
Presented by RVCWRT member Ryan Quint
A Review of our February 2017 program by Greg Mertz

One of the northernmost conflicts during the Civil War to be fought either on land or in the coastal waters of the United States, occurred on June 27, 1863, in the sounds of Portland, Maine. This action was initiated by Confederate Navy Lieutenant Charles Read. The Mississippian was appointed to the United States Naval Academy, where he struggled academically, graduating last in his class of 1860. He particularly toiled with languages, acquiring the nickname of “Savvy” – one of the few French words which he grasped, meaning “to know.” Read served briefly in the United States Navy before resigning his commission at the outbreak of Civil War. In the spring of 1863, he was a member of the crew on the CSS Florida, where his commanding officer declared Read to be “*daring beyond the point of marshal prudence.*”

The voyage that would lead Read and his crew into Portland Harbor actually had its origins off the coast of Brazil in May, 1863. There the *CSS Florida* captured the *Clarence* carrying a cargo of coffee. Read suggested to his superior that he and twenty men from the crew of the *CSS Florida* should take the *Clarence* north to Hampton Roads. Read reasoned that a ship with proper papers and such a tiny crew would not appear to be a threat and might just slip past Fort Monroe, where they could capture a gunboat and slip back out into the Atlantic. The plan was approved, with Read being given one small cannon, so that he might capture other ships along the way.

Augmenting his real artillery piece with some wooden “Quaker guns,” Read captured 22 ships, burning or bonding (a ransom of sorts to be paid by the ship owner only if the Confederacy won the war). Information obtained from interrogating the captured crews, Reid learned that only ships bringing in Union supplies were permitted to enter Hampton Roads, and even then all ships were very closely observed. The reckless officer decided to abandon his original plan and go to the rich targets on the Massachusetts coast.

On June 12, 1863, Read captured the *Tacony*, a faster ship than the *Clarence*. The crew took over the *Tacony* and burned the *Clarence*. After wreaking havoc in Massachusetts waters, 20 Union gunboats were sent to hunt down the *Tacony*. Read felt the need to switch ships again, taking over the *Archer* on June 25, and destroying the *Tacony*. Thus, any gunboats looking for the *Tacony* would be chasing after a ship that no longer existed.

When Read reached the coast of Maine, he had chartered blindly into unfamiliar waters. Two unlucky lobstermen ended up playing key roles in helping guide Read into Portland Harbor. According to Read, the lobstermen thought that the Confederate sailors were fishermen who got lost during the night of June 26. The lobsterman claimed that they were coerced to help Read with the point of guns aimed at their heads. Either way, Read was guided through the Portland sounds.

Though Read desired to capture a Union gunboat with which to bombard Portland, the closest thing that he could find was a revenue cutter, inspection ship with one cannon called the *Caleb Cushing*. It was also relatively easy to capture because half of its crew was on shore, either on liberty or in order to make arrangements for the burial of their captain, who had just died from a heart attack. Reid placed his crew in two row boats, approached the *Caleb Cushing* and climbed on board. The lookout called out three times, asking “*who goes there*” after which he discovered a pistol aimed at his head. The *Caleb Cushing* was captured without a shot fired at about 1:30 a.m. on June 27. Since the *Caleb Cushing* was powered by sails rather than steam engines, and the winds were calm, Read had to slowly pull the boat out toward the ocean using his two row boats!

While navigating out of the Portland waters, a passenger boat running between Portland and Boston named the *Forest City*, was entering the harbor. Coincidentally the new captain of *Caleb Cushing*, Lt. James H. Merryman, was onboard the *Forest City* and recognized the ship he was to command heading out to sea without him, and instantly realized something was amiss. Though the skipper of the *Forest City* was more interested in making sure his passengers caught the train scheduled to be leaving Portland, than in chasing after the *Caleb Cushing*, Merryman sounded the alarm when the *Forest City* landed. About the same time that the crew of the *Caleb Cushing* which had been on shore realized their ship had set sail without them and they also

spread the word that their ship had been stolen. Throughout the area, church bells and fire hall bells rang, announcing the emergency.

Fort Preble, a masonry sister fort to Fort Sumter, guarded Portland Harbor. It was garrisoned by the 17th United States Infantry Regiment. This regiment's Captain Nathaniel Prime, with about 30 men with two cannon boarded the *Forest City* demanding it begin the pursuit. The 7th Maine, recruiting in Portland, joined the chase in the *Chesapeake*. A ship named *Casco* was occupied by civilians who were "mad as hornets." A tug, sent out to pull the *Caleb Cushing* back into the port, was the final entity of the four boat flotilla going after the Confederates.

Read located but five rounds which could be fired from the cannon of the *Caleb Cushing*, the captain and owner of the *Forest City* was not about to have his ship damaged by cannon fire and dropped back when Read opened fire. When the rounds had been expended, he proceeded to use his ample powder to fire blanks, but the pursuing ships soon realized that they were safe and closed in on the Confederates. Read loaded his men in rowboats and set the *Caleb Cushing* on fire. All of the Confederates were captured and rescued before a concealed ammunition magazine on the *Caleb Cushing* exploded, causing the most dramatic moment of the battle. In the battle no one was killed, no one was wounded, and the only casualties were the captured Read and his command.

The Confederates were imprisoned at Fort Preble, but the fort was accessible by land and the angry citizens of Portland approached the stronghold intent on having a lynching. Bloodshed related to the Battle of Portland was still a real possibility, so the Federal authorities had the prisoners quietly sent to Fort Warren in Boston.

While the three hour Battle of Portland did not have any significant or even negligible impact on the course of the Civil War, it is notable as one of the many ways that the Civil War had a huge impact on the lives of its citizens. The Civil War affected everyone living everywhere throughout the North and South, with the respective countries being filled with smaller obscure stories that are important for us to recognize and to truly grasp the full scope of our countries far-reaching Civil War.

Is your RVCWRT membership past due? It was, as of December 31, 2016.

By Bob Pfile

Have you remembered to renew your RVCWRT membership? In 2016 we had 142 paid members, to date we have 97 paid members, this includes 21 paid family memberships. The new approved cost of membership is only \$35.00. This price is for individual membership and \$45.00 is for a family membership. The cost for student membership is just \$7.50 each. Please note, all membership payments were due by NLT than the end of December 2016. So if you have not paid your membership dues, please do so ASAP.

The RVCWRT Bulletin Board

By Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT maintains a special bulletin board that is placed against the right side wall where guests enter the dining room. This Bulletin Board is utilized during each of our dinner meetings. Members will find many different articles about the Civil War placed there. These are there to be requested by members for personal reading. Also, there is information posted on the bulletin board on upcoming Civil War related events, along with various items of interest. Along with the various posted announcements, Civil War articles and related material will be placed there. These items may each be requested and borrowed to take home to read.

The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg

By Bob Jones

As a courtesy the RVCWRT is providing as a regular feature every month, the ongoing scheduled speakers for the CWRTF's Program Year. The *Civil War Round Table of*

Fredericksburg normally meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except for the meeting being held on the third Wednesday in June 2017). Their Dinner Meetings are held at the MWW's Jepson Center located at 1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA, dinner cost is \$32.00 for each person. Reservations should be made by telephoning 540-361-2105. As noted below, the scheduled speaker for March 22, 2017, will be Fred Ray. He will be presenting *Sharpshooter: Eugene Blackford, CSA*.



**CWRTF's Scheduled Speakers
For the 2017 Program Year**

MAR. 22, 2017 FRED RAY – *Sharpshooter: Eugene Blackford, CSA*

APR. 26, 2017 TERESA ROANE – Minorities in the Confederate Army

MAY 24, 2017 PATRICK A. SCHROEDER, NPS - Pardons and the Amnesty Oath and The Oath of Allegiance of Confederate Soldiers

JUN 21, 2017* SHANNON. PRITCHARD – Collecting the Confederacy

(*This date occurs on the 3rd Wednesday during the month of June)

**Moments from the Battlefield and the Homefront
An All-Encompassing Civil War Living History Event**

Students of the American Civil War:

On the weekend of May 6 – 7, 2017, our *National Park Service*, in conjunction with multiple *Living Historian Organization*, will present to the public a full spectrum event that will cover unique aspects of the *Battle of the Wilderness*.

Having never been brought together into a single location, these interactive activities will allow for a new understanding of what occurred here before, during, and after the battle. Taking place at *Ellwood* and the *Tapp Farm Field* the public will be able to take advantage of the NPS interpretive programs and the in-depth *Living History* presentations to learn what happened.

Each month a new article will be posted that will highlight a different *Living History Organization* who will participate in this event. The presented information will allow the public to have a better understanding of what will be made available to them when they arrive on either day. These multiple programs are perfect for the serious student or someone who is new to the area and wants to learn something about our Civil War. Regardless of how much they knew before they arrived, it is hoped that upon departure all participants will have a better appreciation of what occurred on this sacred ground.

As promised, the first featured unit will be *Company K, 1st South Carolina Infantry, Provisional, "Irish Volunteers"*. On both days of this event you will find the Irish Volunteers out at the *Tapp Farm* where they will participate in multiple NPS led maneuver and firing demonstrations. To learn more about them, please continue to read on.

Company K, 1st South Carolina Infantry, Provisional, was a unit whose members came mostly from the Charleston area. The unit was known as the *Irish Volunteers* and it was originally formed in 1787, as a militia unit. The *Irish Volunteers* remained a State Militia unit up until the *Spanish – American War*.

This unit was organized into the Confederate service on June 25, 1861, and fought in almost all major battles in the Eastern Theatre with the *Army of Northern Virginia*. It was led by such notable commanders as Maxey Gregg, Samuel McGowan, Edward McCrady, and C.W. McCreary. The unit distinguished itself at the *Battle of Gaines Mill* on June 27, 1862, and again at the *Battle of Spotsylvania* on May 12, 1864.

The original Civil War unit had a total of 2,120 men serving in its ranks during the four years of civil war and had a total of 18 officers and 101 men surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

The mission of today's Irish Volunteers is: To preserve and protect the memory of those men who served in the company from 1861 – 1865 and those who fought and died for South Carolina and *The Confederate States of America*. As civilians of the company, to portray the families of those men who served, to honor preserve, protect, and honor the memory of all those who fought on both sides in the War for Southern Independence. Preserve and honor their memories and ensure that the families, too, are not forgotten. To accurately portray the trades, occupations, and pastimes of the period. Aid in the preservation of battlefields and all other sites and objects relevant to the War for Southern Independence.



Participating Units

CWCS – Civil War Civilians of Spotsylvania – Elaine Sturgeon, miselaineus@yahoo.com

CWIA – Civil War Impressionist Association – Brian Withrow, bnwithrow@outlook.com

1st S.C. Infantry “Irish Volunteers” – Troy Fallon, jtfmaf@embarqmail.com

2nd U.S. Cavalry “Dragoons” – David Michel, usdragoons@aol.com

3rd U.S. Infantry “Buffsticks” – Paul Stier, stierdog@hotmail.com

NPS – Artillery Crew – Peter Maugle, peter_maugle@nps.gov

26th Annual Civil War Weekend

March 17 – 19, 2017

(Note: There is still time to Register)

Location: The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center

901 Price's Fork Road, Blacksburg, Virginia

To Register call: 540-231-8000 – 877-200-3360 or e-mail www.innatvirginiatech.com

Civil War Weekend Speakers

William C. (Jack) Davis	Editor of over 50 books in Civil War and Southern History
Angela Esco Elder	2016 – 2017 Center for Civil War Studies postdoctoral fellow at Virginia Tech
David T. Gleeson	Professor of American History at North Umbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, England
A. Wilson Greene	Executive director, Pamplin Historical Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier
Christian B. Keller	Professor of History in Department of National Security & Strategy at U.S. Army War College
Paul Quiley	Associate Professor of Civil War Studies and Director of the VA Center for Civil War Studies
James I. (Bud) Robertson	Alumni Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Virginia Tech
Amy Murreli Taylor	Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky

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. Yearly membership dues are \$35.00 for individuals, \$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:

President/Dinner Meetings:	Bob Jones	Webmaster:	Dan Augustine
<i>Vice President:</i>	John Sapanara	Membership:	Ryan Quint
Secretary:	Mike Burns	Research and Historian:	Joyce Darr
Treasurer:	Bob Pfile	Member at Large:	John Griffiths
Assistant Treasurer:	Barbara Stafford	Member at Large:	Conway Richardson
Meeting Scribe:	Greg Mertz	Member at Large:	Paul Stier
Newsletter Editor:	Jim Smithfield	Past President:	Marc Thompson

Rappahannock **V**alley **C**ivil **W**ar **R**ound **T**able
Post Office Box 7632
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404