


# THE DRUM & BUGLE
## Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
**November 2026, Volume 23, Issue 11**

**Speaker:** Scott Patchan
**Topic:** "1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign"
**When:** November 9, 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

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### Scott Patchan "1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign"

Much has been written about the epic campaign between Confederate Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early and U.S. Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's fall campaign in the Shenandoah. However, Early waged a brilliant campaign in western Virginia from June 18, when he saved Lynchburg from capture, through Sept, 18, the day before his string of disastrous defeats, which began at Third Winchester and culminated at Cedar Creek on Oct. 19. Lost in the midst of

that epic and bloody campaign is Early's summer campaign that contributed mightily to the Confederacy's survival in 1864. By sending Early with 10,000 men to western Virginia in June, Gen. Robert E. Lee ultimately forced Grant to detach 30,000 fighting men, and his most aggressive commander, Sheridan, from the operations along the Richmond and Petersburg front. By focusing on military tactics and battle history, Scott C. Patchan uncovers the facts and actions of these little-understood battles and offers a first time perspective on Early's contributions to the Confederate war effort and the Union battle plans and overall strategy.

Scott C. Patchan was born and raised in Ohio and graduated from James Madison University. He has been researching, writing, and speaking on the Civil War for more than thirty years. He focuses on the 1864 Shenandoah Valley and 1862 Second Manassas campaigns. He has authored several books including *George Washington in the French and Indian War (2024); Worthy of a Higher Rank: The 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign Journal of Col. Joseph Thoburn (2021); The Last Battle of Winchester (2013); Second Manassas: Longstreet's Attack and the Struggle of Chinn Ridge (2011); Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign (2009);* and *The Forgotten Fury: The Battle of Piedmont, Virginia (1996)*. He has also written six "General's Tours" for *Blue and Gray Magazine* and is currently researching and writing for several ongoing book projects.

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## "Excavating Civil War Camp Life at Ferry Farm"
## by Judith Jobrack

### A Review of the October 2026 Program by Greg Mertz

As archaeologists searched for evidence of the house and George Washington's boyhood home, they also uncovered artifacts and features from the Federal army encampment on the site. Judy Jobrack, Co-Field Director and Staff Archaeologist with the George Washington Foundation Archaeology Team, explained that the Civil War encampment both changed the landscape and impacted the lives of those who lived on the old Washington farm at the time. She also shared with us some of the discoveries that help us better understand the camp life of the soldiers who camped at Ferry Farm.

In 1738 Augustine Washington, George's father, purchased the farm containing a commodious home and several outbuildings. It was not called "Ferry Farm," however, until the late 19th century. The Ferry Farm archaeologists have recently completed their work on one of those outbuildings that stood at the time Augustine acquired the farm – the kitchen. The family had moved to Fredericksburg from the farm that would subsequently be known as "Mount Vernon." Augustine was a managing partner of the Accokeek Iron Furnace and moved the family to Fredericksburg so he could be closer to the business and better able to manage its operations. In 1743, Augustine died, and 11-year-old George Washington inherited the farm, with his mother Mary managing the farm until George came of age. When George also inherited Mount Vernon from his half-brother Lawrence, he established residence there, leaving Ferry Farm to his mother's direction until 1776, when he sold it and moved his mother into a home in the city of Fredericksburg.

By the mid-1830s, the Washington era buildings were no longer prominent features of the farm, being in disrepair, torn down and/or replaced. In 1846, Winter Bray purchased 541 acres of what had been the Washington's farm.

In April, 1862 Federal forces first occupied Fredericksburg and Ferry Farm, with defenses and camp sites located all along the Stafford County side of the river. Engineers built a unique pontoon bridge made of canal boats across the Rappahannock River and the end of the Ferry Road on the Bray property. While no evidence has been found of the traditional soldier hut sites, photographs show tents on the property and research indicated that soldiers on Ferry Farm picketed the area and guarded the pontoon bridge.

On the eve of the Civil War, the Bray estate hired John Smither as their overseer, and he occupied Ferry Farm during this first Federal occupation. When Federal soldiers seized his hay, fence rails and livestock, Smither complained to Federal authorities, successfully demanding reimbursement and replacement. While the buildings at Ferry Farm were left largely intact, the enslaved seized the opportunity to escape. Bray submitted a claim to the Confederate government for compensation for 24 of the enslaved who obtained freedom within Federal lines. The first Federal occupation ended in August 1862.

A second Federal occupation began in November 1862, including the battle of Fredericksburg. This time, Ferry Farm suffered severely. Soldiers foraged at will, as the army no longer sought to spare the local civilians from seizure or destruction of their property. The entire Bray farmstead was torn down. Smither left the farm, joining the Confederate army. A defensive trench was built across where the Washington residence had once stood, extending over to where the Bray house had been, with the cellar of the Bray domicile used by Federal troops for added protection.

Artifacts in the Bray cellar show the extensive Federal occupation. Plaster fragments of the house contain evidence of soldier graffiti. Indication of soldiers passing the time by playing games include finding a dice and some gaming pieces fashioned from minnie balls. Music was another welcomed method of passing the time and archaeologists found examples of one of the more common types of jaw harps as well as a harmonica. The recovery of an ink bottle and pen nib likely verify the prominence of letter writing and communicating with loved ones back home.

Proof of the soldiers administering self-medication and practicing hygiene were also evident in the artifacts discovered. A double-sided bone comb was found, with one side used in grooming hair, and the other side with the finer teeth used to extract lice. A common medicine bottle was found, but upon testing the contents of what was inside the bottle, the archaeologists ascertained that it contained mercury. For decades mercury was perceived to be a healing metal that was rubbed on skin, vaporized and inhaled, or consumed orally. While mercury did not cure any medical ills, it did provoke an immediate response from the body, which convinced patients that it was purging their system in order to cure them. In fact, though, the body was trying to rid itself of the poison introduced to its organic structure.

A tiny hatchet was found, and was originally thought to be a pewter toy produced in 1932 to celebrate the 200$^{th}$ anniversary of George Washington's birth. The hatchet was symbolic of the story of George Washington chopping down a cherry tree. However, nothing from the strata in which it was found had any artifacts from the 20$^{th}$ century, nor either of the two strata above it. Upon closer examination, the hatched had no "mold seams" as would be found on a pewter toy. It had one smooth side and one textured side. They concluded that it was a one-of-a-kind, hand-made piece of "trench art,"

probably cast in a hand-carved wooden mold. Its composition was similar to that of minnie balls found in the same proximity. It was probably made by a soldier who was both aware that he was at Washington's boyhood home and was aware of the cherry tree story.

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## Mort Kunstler

Don't forget there will be a silent auction for the Mort Kunstler print of "Review at Moss Neck" at the next meeting.

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## 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. Park staff look forward to welcoming visitors to our upgraded facilities in spring and summer 2026!

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## 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

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## 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.cwrtf.org, and will be updated here. Below is the schedule starting in September 2026 and going to June 2027.

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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. 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.

**Newsletter Editor and Webmaster:** John Roos and Kelly Domerstad

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**The RVCWRT Executive Committee**

**President:** Rick Horner
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