



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
June 2024, Volume 21, Issue 6

Speaker: Hampton Newsome
Topic: “Gettysburg’s Southern Front: Opportunity and Failure at Richmond”
When: Monday June 10, 2024
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

Hampton Newsome “Gettysburg’s Southern Front: Opportunity and Failure at Richmond”

Hampton Newsome lives in Charlottesville and is author of several books on the Civil War including -- Richmond Must Fall: The Richmond-Petersburg Campaign, October 1864, which was published by Kent State University Press in 2012 and recognized as a best book of the year by the Civil War Monitor magazine; and The Fight for the Old North State: The Civil War in

North Carolina, January-May 1864, published in 2019 by the University Press of Kansas and recipient of the Emerging Civil War Book Award and the Richard Barksdale Harwell Award from the Atlanta Roundtable. His most recent title is Gettysburg's Southern Front: Opportunity and Failure at Richmond was also published by University of Kansas Press and received the Edwin C. Bearss Book Award for Outstanding Scholarship from the Chicago Civil War Roundtable as well as the Emerging Civil War 2023 Book of the Year.

The presentation covers the little-known Federal offensive against Richmond during the Gettysburg Campaign – the subject of Mr. Newsome's book Gettysburg's Southern Front. Sometimes referred to as the Blackberry Raid, the operation was led by General John Dix and provided a significant opportunity by U.S. forces to threaten the Confederate capital and damage Lee's operation in Pennsylvania.

“The Ides of May: the Wounding of James Longstreet”

by Kris White

A Review of the May 2024 Program by Greg Mertz

During two of the battles in the Fredericksburg area, Confederate Army of Northern Virginia Commander Robert E. Lee lost his most senior subordinate on the field under similar circumstances. Both Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson at Chancellorsville and James Longstreet in the Wilderness, were accidentally shot by their own men under disconcertingly similar circumstances. Our speaker, Deputy Director of Education at the American Battlefield Trust, Kris White, noted that the Lee-Jackson relationship has received a great deal more consideration than the Lee-Longstreet association. White's talk explored some of the reasons why, concluding that Longstreet's wounding was more important and had a more immediate impact than that of Jackson.

Going into the Wilderness Campaign in the spring of 1864, Longstreet had most recently served in the western theater. When his army returned to the Army of Northern Virginia, it had experienced some significant changes from when he had left.

The two divisions Longstreet took west had been commanded by John B. Hood and Lafayette McLaws. Hood had been wounded at Chickamauga

and reassigned to Joseph Johnston's army moving against Atlanta. Conflict arose between McLaws and Longstreet at Knoxville resulting in another division commander being reassigned. Hood's replacement was Charles Field, who had spent many months recovering from his 2nd Manassas wounds performing court-martial duties. McLaws was replaced by Joseph Kershaw, a lawyer turned citizen-soldier described by G.T. Beauregard as a "militia idiot," but turned out to be a competent commander. Longstreet led these two divisions into the Wilderness, while Richard S. Ewell, and A.P. Hill directed the other two corps in the army.

On April 29, 1864, shortly after Longstreet's men had returned to Virginia, Lee reviewed his First Corps. One of Longstreet's men called it "the most imposing pageant he ever witnessed." Four days later the Federal forces moved into the Wilderness in an effort to pass by the Confederate right flank, and Lee reacted by shifting all three of his corps east. Longstreet had the longest march – 43 miles. Lee hoped he could delay fighting a battle until Longstreet arrived. When that did not happen, some Confederates unfairly claimed that Longstreet marched too slowly to the battlefield.

On May 5, 1864, Ewell fought in the woods and fields near the Orange Turnpike on the Confederate left. The two divisions that A.P. Hill had on the battlefield of the first day of the Wilderness, were heavily engaged along the Orange Plank Road on the Confederate right. When the fighting ended on the initial day of the battle, the Confederates experienced what White described as "a leadership failure." White indicated that Hill had proved to be a "terrible corps commander" who could not explain the situation that he had gotten the army into on July 1, 1863 at Gettysburg, and aggressively attacked without reconnoitering at Bristoe Station in October, 1863. In the Wilderness he did not organize his troops, straighten his line or dig in on the evening of May 5. When Federal Gen. Winfield S. Hancock attacked Hill on the morning of May 6, the Confederate line crumbled.

Longstreet had allowed his men to rest after marching cross country for 36 hours, but by dawn of May 6 were marching again to the relief of Hill. When they reached the Orange Plank Road, Longstreet's troops saw Hill's men fleeing -- a sight they had never witnessed among troops in the Army of Northern Virginia. Longstreet's men chastised them as being worse than Braxton Bragg's men.

Suddenly Lee noticed an organized brigade being led by a general he did not recognize. He asked its identity and was excited to learn that they were the Texas brigade – the only men from that state were part of Longstreet's corps. Lee's "Old War Horse" had arrived at the right place, at the right time. In the subsequent attack across the Tapp Field, the Texans sent Lee to the rear and Longstreet had stabilized the line, rescuing the Confederate army from Hill's mistake.

During the Tapp Field assault, the Confederates realized that an unfinished railroad bed gave them an opportunity to advance a force to a point where they could launch a flank attack on the Federal left. As with Jackson's attack a year earlier and three miles away, Longstreet's attack was a complete surprise, driving the Federals back to the Brock Road.

One of the brigades in the flank movement was commanded by William Mahone, and as they approached the Orange Plank Road his right regiment, the 12th Virginia, veered around a forest fire and lost connection with the troops on their left. As the 12th wheeled to the left, they came face to face with the 41st Virginia at the very moment Longstreet approached that same point while leading Michah Jenkins' South Carolina brigade into the fray. Shots rang out. One year earlier Jackson was fired at while surrounded by staff officers and couriers. In the Wilderness, four generals were huddled together, with Jenkins being mortally wounded as Longstreet was wounded in the right shoulder blade and neck. As Longstreet was taken to the rear, his hat was placed over his face to shade his eyes from the sun, and the general heard his men comment that he was dead, so using his good left arm, he lifted his hat as his men responded with a cheer.

Longstreet had fallen at a critical moment during the early phase of the Overland Campaign when the Confederates were driving the Federals, and Lee was deprived of his best offensive general at a time when he depended upon Longstreet's skill set. Longstreet returned to the army in October, 1864 while it was bogged down at Petersburg, where the army could not maximize his skills in that static campaign.

Jackson died of his wounds at the height of his popularity, taking him down the path of martyrdom. Longstreet survived his wounds to make decisions affecting his legacy, including supporting Grant and the Republican Party after the war, leading black troops during an insurrection in New Orleans,

becoming a Catholic, and questioning Robert E. Lee, taking him down a path of criticism from his fellow Confederates.

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.

CVBT is now beginning our 27th year of preserving our local battlefields, the very battlefields you study and walk upon. 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.cwrftf.org, as well as below.

CWRTF Schedule

June 19, 2024 – Paul Brueske, THE LAST SIEGE: THE 1865 MOBILE CAMPAIGN

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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