



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

February 2016, Volume 13, Issue 2

Speaker: Eric Mink
Topic: "God grant a speedy end to the war is the prayer of everyone here . . ."
When: Monday, February 8, 2015
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

Abstract on Eric Mink, our Scheduled Speaker for Monday February 11, 2016

Our speaker for this month is Eric J. Mink, National Park Service (NPS) Historian. Eric is a graduate of Mary Washington College, earning a B.A. in Historic Preservation and American Studies there. Eric has spent his entire career working for the NPS at many Civil War Battlefields, including Gettysburg National Military Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, and Richmond National Battlefield Park. For more than ten years, Eric has worked as historian and cultural resources manager at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Parks . . .

Synopsis of Mr. Mink's Presentation:

"God grant a speedy end to the war is the prayer of everyone here . . ."

Morale, Command and the Army of the Potomac during the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House

The Army of the Potomac that had crossed the James River on June 14, 1864, was not the same army that it had been when it crossed the Rapidan River only 42 days earlier. Sustained combat during the *Overland Campaign*, had cost the army nearly 40,000 casualties. This had sapped the army of its strength, its leadership and had taken its toll on morale of the troops. Eric will look at this period of the war in Virginia and discuss new scholarship on how the intensified horrors of combat in the spring of 1864 affected the Union army and influenced its change in tactics and its understanding of army management and administration.

Remember: Contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance

To Confirm Your Reservations; Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail 3dognight@Bigplanet.Com

RVCWRT MEMBERS" YOUR 2016 MEMBERSHIP IS PAST DUE

Individual yearly membership is still \$30.00, family \$45.00 and student membership remains \$7.50 . . .

“The Rise, Fall and Redemption of Lew Wallace”

Presented by Ryan Quint

Review of the January 2016 program by Greg Mertz

Most people today recognize Lew Wallace as the author of his best-selling novel that was turned into an Academy Award winning movie, titled *Ben Hur*. But Lew Wallace was also a Civil War general whose reputation was tarnished early in the war. New round table board member Ryan Quint explained Wallace’s rise to prominence, the battle and subsequent actions that caused him to fall, and the battle that delivered redemption to General Wallace.

Wallace was a native of Indiana, whose mother died when he was only seven years old. His father held the time consuming post of the lieutenant governor of Indiana at the time of the death of Lew’s mother, and went on to become the governor, so the young Wallace learned to be very self-reliant. At the age of 19 Wallace was a lieutenant in the Mexican War, and while he saw no combat while garrisoning Monterrey, he embraced the military lifestyle. Wallace went on to practice law and at the outbreak of the Civil War was asked to take charge of mobilizing the Indiana state troops and recruiting volunteers to join the army.

By February of 1862, Wallace was a 34 year old division commander and the youngest major general in all of Federal service. Because the Federal naval commander, Admiral Andrew H. Foote, had been wounded in the Battle of Fort Donelson, army commander U.S. Grant had to go to Foote to confer and thus he was absent from the army when fighting resumed on February 15, 1862. Grant issued orders for each of his three division commanders not to initiate an action while he was away but to hold their positions. Confederates attacked the division to the right of Wallace and its commander, General John A. McClernand, requested help from Wallace’s division. His first reaction was to follow his orders and hold his position, a response that West Point graduate General Charles F. Smith also supported when Wallace consulted him. But as the self-reliant person Wallace had been since a boy, he eventually counterattacked and the Confederates fell back into their defenses. The Confederates surrendered the following day.

Then came Shiloh. While the remainder of the army was camped at Pittsburg Landing, Wallace’s division was five miles further north at Crump’s Landing. Making precautions in case one force was needed to reinforce the other, Wallace had become acquainted with a road called the Shunpike, linking the westernmost, outlying portions of the respective forces. Another road called the River Road connected the rear of the two Federal forces.

On April 6, 1862 Confederate forces attacked the Federals. Wallace received a message to march his command to the aid of the main army. The message was lost so the exact wording is not known and that was the first of several things to occur that would contribute to the downfall of Wallace. Wallace claimed that he was ordered to march to the Federal right, and he was aware that the Shunpike led to the Federal right posted near Shiloh Meeting House, so he marched in that direction. Grant would forever claim that the order indeed told Wallace to form on the right, but that it specified to march via the River Road. Staff officers of Grant eventually caught up with Wallace and informed him that the Federals had been driven back and were no longer at the Shiloh chapel – that if Wallace continued his march along the Shunpike, he would wind up isolated in the rear of the Confederate army. Wallace was astonished.

Wallace made his second mistake when he decided not to simply turn his column around but to keep his veteran brigades at the front of his column and countermarched instead. Those units in the rear tried to move out of the road the best they could, but Wallace’s decision clogged the road and cost him a valuable two hours. Wallace’s men did not make it to the battlefield until the first day’s fighting was over. What Grant had intended to be a five mile march had taken Wallace seven hours to travel. Wallace participated in the second day of the battle and his troops played a significant role, but the damage had been done. Wallace’s career was in a downfall.

Department commander Henry W. Halleck blamed the heavy casualties on the non-West Point officers, of whom Wallace was one, and Grant directly informed Wallace that he either didn't understand or purposely disregarded orders. Wallace left the army and when he voluntarily testified in front of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War he made yet another series of mistakes by criticizing Grant and proclaiming that when he discovered the panicked condition of the main army that he would have been justified in disobeying his orders and marching back to Crump's Landing. Then when Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton asked Wallace to make some speeches to help recruit troops in Democratic-leaning counties, he further compromised his standing by criticizing the Lincoln administration. Wallace had the poor timing of requesting a court of inquiry against both Halleck and Grant in July 1863, just days after Grant's huge Vicksburg victory.

Wallace could not get a coveted combat assignment, but was sent to a department in the rear echelon headquartered in Baltimore instead. In the summer of 1864, when Confederate Gen. Jubal Early was marching north through the Shenandoah Valley, Grant had already stripped the defenses of Washington to reinforce the army confronting Lee, plus he refused to believe that Early was really in the valley. But B&O railroad executive John Garrett was convinced that Early was for real and challenged Wallace to do something about it. Wallace took the meager 2500 men he had out to the Monocacy River near Frederick, Maryland. Grant finally heeded the threat and sent veteran soldiers from the army at Petersburg to defend Washington, with 5,000 of them joining Wallace on the banks of the Monocacy. Wallace knew that he could not stop Early's 15,000 Confederates, but he could certainly slow them down. When the Battle of Monocacy was fought on July 9, Wallace made his most substantial stand to delay the Confederate access to the Georgetown Pike – this was the direct road to Washington – before retreating.

By the time Early regrouped and continued on to Washington, minus his 700 casualties that he had suffered at Monocacy, he had lost one entire day. The delay that Wallace had coordinated bought time for more veteran troops from Petersburg to file into the defenses of Washington. Early's exhausted troops could only mount a minor skirmish in front of Fort Stevens on July 11. Wallace had saved the capital and he had achieved redemption. When Grant wrote his memoirs in 1885, he acknowledged that Wallace accomplished more in defeat at Monocacy than many had achieved in their victories. When a dying Wallace wrote his own autobiography, he seemingly willed himself to hang on long enough to complete his writing about Monocacy and his wife had to complete the book.

RVCWRT Bus Tour

“The Journey to Petersburg Goes Through Cold Harbor”

This tour/trip is scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2016

Price is determined at \$100.00 per person

**This tour/trip includes Admission Fees to both Cold Harbor NMP and Petersburg NMP,
And the Bus/Transportation Cost along with a box lunch**

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Note: There is need to hurry on locking in this one, as the number required to meet the bus minimum is just fifteen persons and the tour will soon be opened to other Virginia Round Tables and DC

RVCWRT History Alert Program

By Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT member Alan Zirkle, provides a totally free service to RVCWRT members, which notifies subscribers about any/all upcoming local history events in the Fredericksburg general area. This is done via subscribers recorded e-mail address, it concerns upcoming history-related events. RVCWRT members receive Alan's important messages. If you do not now, but would like to receive Alan Zirkle's "History Alerts" please send your e-mail address to Alan noting this fact @ az@azirkle.com.

The Confederate Irish in the Civil War

(Continued)

By Jim Smithfield

Father John B. Bannon

(Known to History as *The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain*)



Father John B. Bannon

Born in Ireland, Father John B. Bannon was ordained as a Priest in 1853. Upon Father Bannon being ordained, he was immediately sent to St. Louis, Missouri to serve that city. In a relatively short period of time, Father Bannon became exceptionally loved by the entire city of St. Louis. In 1861, the city of St. Louis had the second largest Irish population of any of the Southern border states in the United States.

When America's Civil War erupted, Father Bannon enlisted to become the official Chaplain for the First Missouri Confederate Brigade. Shortly after our Civil War, one Confederate veteran described Father Bannon in battle as follows; During an early lull in the first days fighting at the *Battle of Pea Ridge*, Father Bannon was met on the battlefield by an outraged and incredibly angry General Earl Van Dorn. There was Father Bannon out in front of the Confederate lines ministering to the many wounded. General Van Dorn came upon him and completely lost his temper ordering Father Bannon to leave the field of battle immediately and to go the field hospitals at the rear of the Confederate lines to serve. A very calm Father Bannon refused Van Dorn's order to move, even after Van Dorn had made repeated threats of arrest. Father Bannon very calmly responded to the threats " . . . I can attend to those who are back there later. For now though, I must attend to those who are not able to be removed from this field." In fact Father Bannon further stated to Van Dorn; "Sir, I am doing God's work, and my God has no use for cowards or for sculkers. A Catholic Priest must do his duty and never consider the time or the place. If I am killed, I am to be killed, I am not afraid to meet my fate! I am here in Gods keeping. His *Holy Will* shall be done." General Van Dorn is said to have just sat there on his horse staring red faced and speechless at the still very calm Father Bannon for a long while, then turning his horse, he just rode off just shaking his head in total disbelief!

General Sterling Price is quoted as having said of Father Bannon, " . . . that the greatest soldier that I have ever seen was Father Bannon. In the midst of the fray he would stop and take up a fallen soldier. If the man were a Catholic, he would give him the *Last Rites of the Church*. However, if the wounded soldier were Protestant, and if that man desired it, Father Bannon would baptize him.

"While his mission was one of peace, Father Bannon was noted for his bravery in the field, attending to the wounded and the dying in very exposed places. Both a pious and a practical man, he became a ministering angel wherever broken and bruised humanity needed help or consolation."



Battle Flag of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade

Battle History of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade

- December, 1861, Organized in Osceola, Missouri
- March 7-8, 1862, Battle of Elk Horn Tavern (Pea Ridge)
- April 1862, Missouri Brigade transfers to the east side of the Mississippi River
- June 1862, General Little placed in command of the Army of the West's First Division. Colonel Elijah P. Gates takes command.
- Sept. 1, 1862, Brigade reorganized in Saltillo, MS
- September 19, 1862, Battle of Iuka, General Little killed.
- October 3-4, 1862, Battle of Corinth.
- April 29, 1863, Battle of Grand Gulf--Bowen defeats Grant.
- May 1, 1863, Battle of Port Gibson, Cockrell in command of the Missouri Brigade.
- May 16, 1863, Battle of Champion Hills.
- May 17, 1863, Battle of Big Black River.
- May 17 - July 3, 1863, Siege of Vicksburg (Brigade surrendered).
- January 8, 1864, Men of the Missouri Brigade reenlist for 40 years.
- May 6, 1864, After being exchanged, the Missouri Brigade is ordered to support General Johnston. The Brigade marches 275 miles in 11 days, only 75 of which were by train. Jackson's foot cavalry never made time that fast.
- June 18, 1864, Battle of Lattimer House, Georgia
- June 27, 1864, Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia
- July, 1864, Battles of Atlanta, Georgia
- October 5, 1864, Battle of Alatoona, Georgia
- November 30, 1864, Battle of Franklin, TN. Of 82 officers leading the Missourians at Franklin, 19 were killed, 31 wounded, and 13 captured. Of 614 enlisted men, 79 were killed, 198 wounded, and another 79 were captured.
- April 9, 1865, battle of Blakely, Alabama & May 4, 1865, final surrender.

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 still just \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and it's still 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.

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