



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

January 2016, Volume 13, Issue 1

Speaker: Ryan Quint

Topic: "The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of Lew Wallace"

When: Monday, January 11, 2016

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 for Monday, January, 11, 2016

By Jim Smithfield

Our speaker on Monday, January 11, 2016, will be Ryan Quint. Ryan grew up in Maine, and he moved to Virginia, in order to attend the *University of Mary Washington*. Ryan graduated with a B.A. in History; his senior thesis was about *Lew Wallace and the Battle of Monocacy*, he received the History Department's Joseph C. Vance Award for Excellence in Historical Research. This is "awarded to the graduating senior whose thesis is judged to be the best for that year."

Ryan is currently a National Park Service Historian for the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He is also a docent for the George Washington Foundation. Ryan is a contributing author to the blog *Emerging Civil War*, and he presently lives in Fredericksburg.

Synopsis of Ryan Quint's presentation:

Lew Wallace is best-known for his wildly successful novel, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, but Wallace himself spent his entire adult life trying to clear his Civil War reputation. Why? With no formal military education upon his promotion in March, 1862, Wallace became the youngest major general in the United States Army. Many expected great things from him, however, controversy erupted at the Battle of Shiloh, leading to political in-fighting and Wallace lost his command. From his highest point, Wallace later was to say that he had fallen so far down, that he "*could almost see bottom.*" Delegated to a command that no one expected anything of, Wallace instead found himself thrust into a dire situation – fighting along the banks of the Monocacy River, in Maryland to delay a Confederate invasion force being thrust straight towards Washington, D.C. Wallace's fight at Monocacy redeemed his reputation in the eyes of most, including Ulysses S. Grant . . .

Remember: Contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance

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

Frank Lee Kasmer
By Jim Smithfield

In the early morning hours of December 21, 2015, former RVCWRT Vice-president Frank Kasmer passed away at the Mary Washington Hospital. Frank was a friend to all of those he met and he's best remembered in the RVCWRT for his work in establishing our group's 501(c) plan. Prior to his retirement, Frank was an Attorney/Agent with the Justice Department.

"George Armstrong Custer: Combat Commander and Leader"
Presented by Marc Thompson
Review of the December 2015, Program by Greg Mertz

As with all of his Civil War presentations, Marc Thompson's 28 years in the Air Force was apparent in his assessment of one of his favorite subjects: George A. Custer. Marc began by reviewing studies of combat leadership, wrapping that section up by sharing the assessment template that he would be applying to Custer. He briefed us on Custer's career prior to becoming a general and then for the heart of the program analyzed Custer's performance in four battles before concluding with final observations.

Hundreds and perhaps thousands of combat leadership studies have been done. Thompson explained the salient points of four of them, including the army's Field Manual 6-22, which defines leadership as influencing people, providing direction and accomplishing the mission. The analysis that most influenced the template Thompson used, was from a study of 36 battles over several centuries by W. J. Wood, who concluded that courage, will and intellect were the most substantial characteristics of successful combat leaders.

When surveying Custer's career prior to being promoted to brigadier general, he had amassed an impressive amount of staff experience, serving generals in charge of brigade, division, corps and even army size military units. He saw first-hand how the generals he served made their decisions, and because of the way in which they utilized their staffs and delegated assignments. Custer also gained real, practical experience in managing large units. Likewise, Custer acquired substantial combat experience, whether being a courier, or performing reconnaissance duty, or serving as the commander's representative and making sure the commander's intent of his orders were understood, Custer could be found all over the battlefield carrying out dangerous assignments.

The representative battles that Thompson selected included two in which Custer was a brigade commander and two from when he was in charge of a division. The first was the Rummel Farm engagement of the Gettysburg Campaign on July 3, 1863. While Confederate infantry in Pickett's Charge assaulted the front of the Federal center, Confederate cavalry under J.E.B. Stuart was attempting to pass around the Federal right flank and strike the rear of the Federal center. Ideally these two attacks would strike both sides of the same portion of the Federal line at about the same time. David McM. Gregg's Federal cavalry division arrived to relieve Custer, just as Stuart's forces arrived.

Custer demonstrated two types of courage that afternoon. He exhibited great moral courage when he decided to stay at the Rummel Farm in support of Gregg with a Confederate threat at hand, even though his orders called for him to go elsewhere once relieved by Gregg. Custer also showed great physical courage in leading two different regimental charges across the Rummel Farm, when he didn't need to – he could have simply ordered the attacks and stayed back at a point where he might observe the effectiveness of the charges. Custer displayed two aspects of asserting his will as well: boldness in seizing the offensive against a Confederate force that outnumbered the Federal horsemen at hand, and tenacity by staying in support of Gregg until the mission was over and only then following the orders of his own division commander. Custer also demonstrated two elements of intellect: imagination in directing the unusual practice of ordering artillery to fire over the heads of charging cavalry, and flexibility as he modified the tactics to include cavalry fighting both mounted and dismounted, artillery firing alone, and artillery firing in conjunction with a cavalry attack.

Then nearly a year later, Custer as an experienced brigade commander fought on June 11, 1864, in the first day of the *battle of Trevilian Station*. Custer's brigade was detached to protect the Federal left as the cavalry advanced on the station for the purpose of breaking the railroad as well as distracting Confederate cavalry and drawing them away from the crossing of the James River by the main Federal army. As the Confederate troopers in front of Custer fell back, he discovered a road leading to the rear of the main Confederate cavalry position. Custer took the road and soon found his command amidst the Confederate supply wagons. Custer easily captured the wagons but could not hold them, as Confederate reserves, Confederates detached from the front line, and the Confederates that had originally confronted Custer all converged on his brigade. Custer held on until other Federal forces were able to come to his aid in what has been called by some as Custer's first last stand.

Custer showed intellect early in the battle, using imagination in finding a way into the vulnerable Confederate rear. But then he failed in another aspect of intellect when he exhibited poor judgement by not effectively controlling the attack force and allowing his troopers to get diverted into seizing the supply wagons rather than play havoc on the rear of the main Confederate battle line. He showed flexibility when he was able to transition from an offensive movement to the defensive. Though surrounded by the Confederates for nearly four hours, Custer held his command together by virtue of his will and multiple examples of personal physical courage.

Despite his struggles at *Trevilian Station*, Custer was promoted to division command and accompanied the cavalry corps to the Shenandoah Valley, where one of his engagements was the October 19, 1864 Battle of Cedar Creek. Custer was posted on the right end of the Federal line when Confederates launched a highly successful pre-dawn assault on Federal left flank. When Custer realized that something was terribly wrong on the other end of the line, he mounted his command and was immediately able to respond when ordered to the other side of the army where he effectively held open the Valley Pike -- the army's avenue of retreat. After the Federal army was able to regroup and army commander Philip Sheridan issued orders for a counterattack, Custer was returned to the Federal right and given orders to use his discretion in causing whatever mayhem he could. Custer found a way into the Confederate left flank and rear, greatly contributing to the collapse of the previously victorious Confederates.

When Custer was assigned to hold the Valley Pike, it was Custer's will and tenacity that bought time for the Federals to rally. Custer's role in the counterattack demonstrated moral courage as he received very little guidance on just how to use his division and his will and boldness enabled him to seize the opportunity to slice into the enemy flank.

During the April 1, 1865, Battle of Five Forks, Custer was assigned to demonstrate against the Confederate right flank while Federal infantry executed the main thrust against the enemy left. While ably doing his job of occupying the attention of the Confederates, Custer showed his military intellect of good judgement when he recognized the culminating point -- the moment when the Confederates in his front could hold on no longer -- and he cut into the flank and rear of the enemy, once again contributing to a rout.

Thompson concluded by sharing comments by historians, a Custer subordinate and one of Custer's enlisted men regarding his leadership qualities and impact. He noted that although the officers and men who had served under Custer during the Civil War were almost universally positive in their assessment of Custer, only about half the men who were with Custer during the Indian Wars sang his praises. Thompson concluded by observing that leadership was situational, and that the same techniques which, Custer had successfully employed during the Civil War were not as effective during the Indian Wars.

RVCWRT Bus Tour

“The Journey to Petersburg Goes Through Cold Harbor”

This trip is scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2016

Price is to be determined and will include the Admission Fees to both Cold Harbor and Petersburg, the Bus/Transportation Cost along with a box lunch.

RVCWRT History Alert Program

By Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT member Alan Zirkle, provides a totally free service to all RVCWRT members, which notifies his subscribers about any/all upcoming local history events in the Fredericksburg general area. This is done via the 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 "History Alerts" please just send your e-mail to Alan noting this fact @ az@azirkle.com.

Irish Confederates in the Civil War

Patrick Ronayne Cleburne

By Jim Smithfield



Patrick Cleburne was by far, the most popular Confederate division commander in the Civil War. He's often been called the "Stonewall of the West!" He was a native of County Cork, Ireland, and he was actually born on St. Patrick's Day. Cleburne was the only one out of a total of six Irish Confederate generals to become a major general.

As a young man in Ireland, Cleburne failed the language requirements for a druggist's degree, he then enlisted as a private with the British 41st Regiment of Foot. After various promotions, Cleburne went on to become an officer in the British Army. He served in that position for several years before determining to purchase his way out of the British Army and then to immigrate to America.

Upon his immigration to America, Cleburne did finally become a druggist. However, after studying law in Arkansas, Cleburne went on to become a very highly successful Property Attorney in his chosen Home State. In 1861, when war came to the South, i.e., after the Session of Southern States and Fort Sumter was fired on, Cleburne joined the Confederate army. He rose from the rank of Captain to become a major general.

Cleburne was among the first to answer the South's call to arms; he raised a rifle company. This rifle company was made up entirely of men from Yell County, Arkansas they were named the *Yell Rifles*. Then, he went on to join the 1st Arkansas, afterward they were to be known as the 15th Arkansas regiment, of which he was almost unanimously elected it's colonel. Then, his first campaign was with General Hardee in Missouri. At its close he went with Hardee to Bowling Green, Kentucky. During his short military service there, he so impressed his superiors that he was assigned to brigade command. Then, on March 4, 1862, Cleburne was commissioned as a brigadier general. During the battle of Shiloh he proved that his abilities were not overrated.

At Tupelo, in the reorganization of the army, he brought his brigade to a very high state of discipline and efficiency. He had that valuable combination of qualifications for command which enabled him to enforce discipline yet secure the esteem and confidence of his troops.

At Richmond, Kentucky, Cleburne commanded a division, whose impetuous charge had much to do with winning a magnificent victory over "Bull" Nelson's army. Painfully wounded, a few weeks later, Cleburne led his men in the fierce conflict at Perryville with his usual success. Then, on December 13, 1862, Cleburne was commissioned a major-general . . .

Cleburne took part in the memorable attack upon the right of the Federal army at the battle of *Murfreesboro*, his attack drove the Union lines until the front became too thick for any further penetration. Then, again at *Chickamauga* Cleburne made a charge, in which his men through their desperate valor won the day and held a position that had been assailed repeatedly without success. At *Missionary Ridge*, in command at the tunnel, his troops defeated Sherman, capturing flags and hundreds of prisoners. When he became involved in the general defeat, he made a heroic fight at *Ringgold Gap* and saved Bragg's artillery and wagon train. In their recognition, the Confederate Congress passed a joint resolution, that stated "Resolved, that the thanks of Congress are due, and are hereby tendered to Major General Patrick R. Cleburne, and the officers and men under his command, for the victory obtained by them over superior forces of the enemy at *Ringgold Gap* in the State of Georgia on the 27th day of November, 1863, by which the advance of the enemy was impeded, our wagon trains and most of our artillery saved, and a large number of the enemy killed and wounded."

One of the most brilliant episodes in the *Atlanta Campaign* of 1864, was Cleburne's victory at *Pickett's Mill* over Howard's corps of Sherman's army. During the awful carnage at the battle of *Franklin*, on November 30, 1864, Cleburne, the "*Stonewall Jackson of the West*," issued his last battle order. Within twenty paces of the Union line, pierced by three wounds, he fell on the battlefield and expired. His death was a disheartening blow to the Army of Tennessee, and to the South . . .



Cleburne Park, Franklin , TN

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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