



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

March 2015, Volume 12, Issue 3

Speaker: Eric Mink
Topic: "Chancellorsville: The Preservation of a Battlefield"
When: Monday, March 9, 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, March 9, 2015

by Jim Smithfield

Our scheduled speaker for March 9th is National Park Service (NPS) Historian, Eric J. Mink. Eric is a graduate of Mary Washington College, where he earned a B.A. in Historic Preservation and American Studies. Eric has spent his career working for the NPS at many of America's Civil War Battlefields, including Gettysburg National Military Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, and Richmond National Battlefield Park. For the past fourteen years, Eric has worked as historian and cultural resources manager at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. Eric's presentation on March 9th *Evolution of a Battlefield Park - Chancellorsville* will take a look at Chancellorsville not just as a battlefield, but as a preserve within the larger local military park. Chancellorsville was one of the largest campaigns of the Civil War with armies totaling more than those involved at Gettysburg, Chickamauga, and Antietam. The battle was, at its time, the bloodiest engagement of the Civil War and was only eclipsed in numbers of casualties by Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Spotsylvania Court House. As a major battle, the story of its preservation is less impressive. Late in the 19th century local and regional attempts at preservation had all met with failure. Congress did not designate Chancellorsville as a preserve until 1927, decades after other federally managed battlefield parks had been established elsewhere. Today, *Chancellorsville* battlefield park totals just over 2,000 acres. Eric will look at the many preservation triumphs and failures as he traces the history of *Chancellorsville* as a battlefield park.

BUY YOUR TICKETS FOR THE RVCWRT's 2015 BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION RAFFLE

Only a limited number of raffle tickets are still available for this raffle supporting the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT). Up for grabs is a full 6 ft. x 6 ft. multi-colored hand sewn quilt honoring those heroes of the Civil Wars Underground Railroad. This lovely, authentic quilt was crafted and donated by members of the Zion Methodist Church in Spotsylvania, VA, and has an estimated value of \$2,000.00. Cost per ticket is just \$20.00 with a maximum of 100 tickets being sold. Every penny of the proceeds will go directly to CVBT in support of their ongoing preservation efforts. The scheduled drawing will be held at the scheduled RVCWRT dinner meeting on Monday, April 13, 2015. Tickets will be available during our March and April dinner meetings, if not already sold out by then. If you can't make either of these meetings, arrangements to reserve a ticket can also be made via



e-mail through John Sapanara, RVCWRT Secretary, at sapa6789@aol.com.

RVCWRT MEMBERS YOUR 2015 MEMBERSHIP IS DUE

Guess what? It's that time of year once again, i.e., when we need to request that each member renew his or her yearly RVCWRT Membership. While other area organizations have of course, raised their membership dues to cover rising costs – the RVCWRT has not needed too. Individual yearly membership is still just \$30.00, family membership is only \$45.00 and our student membership remains \$7.50.

"The Battle of Bentonville"

Presented by Daniel Davis

Review of the RVCWRT's February Program by Greg Mertz

Federal General William T. Sherman had completed his *March to the Sea*, arriving in Savannah, Georgia, in time to present the city to President Abraham Lincoln as an 1864 Christmas present. In the dead of winter, on February 1, 1865, Sherman was ready to continue marching with his 60,000 man army across the Carolinas. As with the march across Georgia, Sherman's Federal soldiers would live off of the land. In order to glean sufficient supplies for so many troops, the army had to disperse. The Army of Georgia, under Henry W. Slocum marched on roads about ten miles distance from the other Federal force, the *Army of the Tennessee* under Oliver O. Howard. The armies fared well enough gathering food as they ransacked South Carolina, taking out their frustration on the state they blamed for causing the war. The North Carolina countryside was not so heavily populated and netted far less amounts of foodstuff. Sherman anticipated receiving the supplies that the Federal navy had delivered to railheads on the North Carolina coast and were transported further inland to Fayetteville. But rather than finding the welcomed food that Sherman needed, the soldiers who had not done any substantive fighting since leaving Savannah, found ammunition and uniforms instead. Sherman continued his march toward the next point where Federal supplies, including food, would await him. His next destination was Goldsboro, about 100 miles northeast of Fayetteville.

Robert E. Lee had been named General-in-Chief of all Confederate armies on January 31, 1865. Lee turned to General Joseph E. Johnston to deal with Sherman once again. The two generals had squared off against each other in the spring and summer of 1864 during the opening stages of the Atlanta Campaign before Johnston was replaced as army commander. Johnston's new assignment was not to assume command of an army – there was none to be had in North Carolina. Johnston had to patch together an army first. The remnants of his former *Army of Tennessee* under A. P. Stewart then in northern Mississippi, men from the coastal defenses under William J. Hardee, a division from Lee's Army of Northern Virginia under Robert Hoke, along with cavalry under Wade Hampton forged Johnston's 20,000 man army. Johnston concentrated these forces at *Smithfield, North Carolina*, with the mission of driving Sherman back. Johnston decided to attack the wing of Sherman's army that was advancing closest to Johnston – Slocum's *Army of Georgia*.

On March 16, 1865, Hardee's Confederates engaged Slocum at *Averasboro*. This delaying action gave Johnston time to assemble his army at a point near *Bentonville*, where Confederates marching on the road from *Smithfield* could intercept Slocum's column marching on the road from *Averasboro* to *Goldsboro*. Johnston used Hoke's division to block Slocum's advance, while Stewart's army, lay concealed in the woods, waiting to strike Slocum's flank.

March 19th was the first day of the three-day *Battle of Bentonville*. Slocum moved against what he believed was only a small Confederate force on his front, but as the Confederate resistance stiffened, the Federals halted to wait for the rear of the column to catch up and some Federals dug in. Then suddenly at 2:45 pm, Hardee crashed into Slocum's left flank and drove into the Federal rear. The troops of James D. Morgan's Federal division had to jump on the opposite side of the earthworks they had constructed to halt the Confederate attack from their rear.

Among the collection of soldiers who made up this conglomeration of Confederate forces, were several high ranking generals, including former *Army of Tennessee* commander Braxton Bragg. For some unknown reason, Bragg did not order Hoke to pressure Slocum's front while Hardee played havoc in the Federal rear. Other uncoordinated Confederate support attacks were piecemeal and thus repulsed by Slocum's men. The Confederates had missed a grand opportunity to do serious harm to an isolated portion of Sherman's army on the first day's battle.

The Confederate troops of Evander Law fought to delay the portion of Sherman's forces under O.O. Howard, and Johnston realized that he was between each of Sherman's armies -- Slocum's *Army of Georgia* was to the west and Howard's *Army of the Tennessee* was to the east. Johnston positioned his army in a large U-shaped salient, with his right facing Slocum and his left facing Howard. Johnston hoped that Sherman might attack his strong defensive position as he had in the disastrous assaults at *Kennesaw Mountain* during the *Atlanta Campaign*.

Johnston also faced criticism for staying on the field; once Sherman consolidated his armies, the Confederates were outnumbered three to one. The second day of the battle, March 20th, only entailed skirmishing.

The battle took a dramatic turn on the afternoon of March 21st. Joseph A. Mower, with a reputation of being the most aggressive division commander in the *Army of the Tennessee*, attacked the Confederate left and overran Johnston's headquarters. Mower threatened to cut the Confederate lifeline, i.e., the bridge over Mill Creek, but neither Mower nor Sherman appreciated the advantage of the advanced Federal position. At the time, Sherman thought that Mower had been too rash, and ordered him to pull back to within the close support of the rest of the army. Johnston hastened Mower's withdrawal by ordering any troops that could be spared to counterattack.

Later, when Sherman recorded his memoirs, he realized that he had missed an opportunity to inflict substantial damage to Johnston's army. Sherman was anxious to continue his advance on to *Goldsboro* and to draw his much needed supplies, and was content to allow Johnston to retreat. Johnston appreciated that he had stayed too long upon the battlefield and had placed his tiny army in peril. The Confederates were all too happy to return to their base at *Smithfield* without being further harassed.

Davis noted that even though the *Battle of Bentonville* was the largest Civil War battle ever fought in North Carolina, it has been overshadowed by other events occurring just a few weeks later. The fall of Richmond and the surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox Court House have contributed to this battle being nearly forgotten. The Civil War Trust has been actively preserving the battlefield and the state park that operates the battlefield are developing three more tour stops and hope to add two more before the end of the year to help visitors remember and better understand this important action.

“THE SUN SETS ON THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA”



RVCWRT 2015 Bus Tour; Saturday & Sunday, April 25 & 26, 2015

150th Anniversary visit to:

- Five Forks Battlefield (April 1, 1865)
- Sailor's Creek Battlefield (April 6, 1865)
- Appomattox Court House (April 8/9, 1865)
- The Museum of the Confederacy

Saturday: 7:30 a.m. – Bus departs Fredericksburg – Bus to Five Forks Visitor Center; Box Lunch; Bus to Sailor's Creek Visitor Center; Dinner in Farmville at Charley's Waterfront Cafe; Bus to Hampton Inn in Farmville.

Sunday: Breakfast will be at the Hampton Inn; Bus to Museum of the Confederacy; Lunch to be at the Babcock House. Bus to Appomattox Court House Visitor Center; Bus returns to Fredericksburg.

Cost Per Person: **\$295.00** (If you share a room); **\$362.00** (If you use a single room).

Cost includes: Bus; Room; Fees & Donations; Box Lunch; Dinner; Breakfast; Lunch; Room and Meals for Tour Guide & Bus Driver; Handouts.

Attendees are responsible for any alcoholic beverages, additional food and beverages, and any purchases made at the various on-site gift stores.

Reservations: Contact Bob Jones at '3dognight@bigplanet.com' or telephone 540-399-1702
Send your deposits to RVCWRT, Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404

A Personal Thought by Jim Smithfield

The above highlighted trip to Appomattox offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the noted battlefields and to visit Appomattox Court House and the McClain house.

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 History Alert Program

by Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT member Alan Zirkle, provides a totally free service, 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.

Parking at RVCWRT Dinner Meetings . . .

by Jim Smithfield

In recent *Survey Sheets* that our members are asked to complete at Dinner Meetings, several members have noted their ongoing concern about *Available Parking* along with *Brocks Parking Lot Lighting* for our monthly Dinner Meetings. If the parking in Brocks lot or along the nearby street is unavailable, there are still other fairly close-by parking options. There is the *Parking Lots* for Train passengers (these lots are open to the public for parking after 6:00 p.m. daily). Of course, there is also, the nearby downtown *Parking Garage* (just a short walk across the street), and further along Sofia Street there is usually available on street parking . . .



CSA Colonel Santos Benavides

(The Man and his Legend)

by Jim Smithfield

Prior to and during America's Civil War, Mexican Texans were known as *Tejanos*. One such Tejano was CSA Colonel Santos Benavides. Benavides was born in Laredo, Texas, the seat of Webb County, Texas. He was a direct descendant of Don Tomas Sanchez de la Barrera y Garza, the founder of Laredo. As a young man Santos crossed the Mexican border and fought in *Mexico's Federalist-Centralist Wars*, that ravaged the Rio Grande Valley from 1838 through 1840. Benavides became a Texas Ranger and he went on to become a local Merchant and Rancher. Then, in 1856 he was elected the Mayor of Laredo, Texas, and by the time of the Civil War, Benavides had become a leading local politician, as well as, a major financial figure in the Laredo area. In 1859, Benavides served as the County Judge for Webb County. Upon his enlistment in the Confederate Army, Benavides was appointed the captain of the all *Tejano* (Mexican Texans) unit. This unit was the Confederate *33rd Texas Cavalry*, later in the Civil War it was known only as the Benavides Regiment. Benavides served as captain of the 33rd Texas until November 1863, when he was promoted to full colonel of the *33rd Texas Cavalry Regiment*.

During the Civil War Colonel Benavides, along with his two younger brothers, Cristobal and Refugio, who were both captains in the *33rd Texas Cavalry*, compiled a brilliant record of border defense. The Benavides brothers are today, still widely heralded as local heroes throughout many parts of the south western Texas area.

In early 1861, Benavides engaged the forces of the Mexican revolutionary leader *Juan Cortina* at the *Battle of Carrizo*, this occurred when Cortina's army invaded Zapata County, Texas. Then, on May 22, 1861, at the battle of *Zapata*, Benavides again engaged *Juan Cortina*, when he invaded Texas and Zapata County. This battle is often referred to as the *Second Cortina War*. Santos Benavides and the 33rd drove Cortina back across the border into

Mexico. It's interesting to note, that during the Civil War on three separate occasions Benavides with his *33rd Texas Cavalry* invaded Mexico, each time it was in retaliation for Unionist inspired guerilla raids into south western Texas.

On March 18, 1864, a force of well over two-hundred Union soldiers from the command of Federal Colonel Edmund J. Davis, a Florida native, arrived from *Brownsville, Texas* to destroy some five thousand bales of cotton stacked and stored at the San Agustin Plaza. Colonel Santos Benavides, with only a partial command of just forty-two men from his *33rd Texas Cavalry* repelled three separate Union attacks at *Zacate Creek* in what is known to this day in Texas history, as the *Battle of Laredo*. Then, on March 19, 1864, Colonel Benavides forces again defended Laredo against the *Federal First Texas Cavalry*, again defeating the attacking Union forces, commanded by Colonel Davis. Federal Colonel Davis had once offered Benavides a Union generalship if he would just surrender his entire command and of course change sides.

After the Civil War, Benavides resumed his merchant business in Laredo and continued his ranching activities. Benavides continued to be very active in local politics for most of the rest of his life? Santos Benavides, was born and died in Laredo, Texas, and he is today buried there along with his wife. Colonel Benavides lived life to the fullest until he died at his home on November 9, 1891.

Did you know . . .
by Jim Smithfield

- . . . that there were nearly 13,000 men (and women) of Hispanic heritage who fought for the Confederacy during the American Civil War?
- . . . that Santos Benavides as a full Confederate colonel was the highest ranking officer of Hispanic heritage to have served in the Confederate army?
- . . . that Confederate General Ambrose P. Hill, in a personal message written to the many Hispanic Confederate soldiers who served under him began his message stating: *"My rough, tattered and brave Lions of Providence . . ."*?
- . . . that one of the most significant contributions which Colonel Santos Benavides along with his *33rd Texas Cavalry* made to the Confederate South was the securing of safe passage of Texas/Confederate cotton to the town of Matamoros, Mexico, in 1863?
- . . . that Santos Benavides served three full terms in the Texas State Legislature from 1879 to 1885?
- . . . that today, there's a Colonel Santos Benavides Elementary School located in the Winfield, Texas subdivision located just outside of Laredo, Texas?
- . . . that in late May of 1865, Colonel Benavides' and his *33rd Texas Cavalry Regiment* participated in the last battle of the Civil War, i.e., *the Battle of Palmito Ranch*?
- . . . that Santos Benavides' personal leadership built Democratic support among Hispanics in Webb County and contributed greatly to the eclipse of the Republican party in the Webb County region of Texas?
- . . . that Santos Benavides' political affiliations indicated his continued belief in regional independence from National Authority and Benavides's friendship with the followers of *Benito Juárez* and his kinship ties to Manuel Gonzales prompted Porfirio Díaz to select him as the envoy to the United States during the reciprocity controversy of 1880?
- . . . that in recognition of his many political achievements, Santos Benavides was appointed as the Texas delegate to the *World Cotton Exposition* in 1884?
- . . . that between 1846 and 1961, only nineteen Hispanic politicians were elected or named to represent their districts in the Texas, state legislature and Santos Benavides was one of them?
- . . . that when Santos Benavides was a member of the Texas legislature he always spoke using an interpreter, yet Benavides was well respected by the non-Hispanic members for his "directness of statement and his broad statesmanship"?

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.

The RVCWRT Executive Committee:

President:	Marc Thompson	Newsletter Editor:	Jim Smithfield
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