



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

January 2018, Volume 15, Issue 1

Speaker: Geoff White
Topic: “*En Uno Disce Omnia – The Wartime Experience of Orson W. Bennett*”
When: Monday, January 8, 2018
Location: Brock’s Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

Abstract on Geoff White, our Scheduled Speaker for January 8, 2018

By Jim Smithfield

The scheduled speaker for our January 8th Dinner Meeting will be Geoff White. His topic will be “*En Uno Disce Omnia – The Wartime Experience of Orson W. Bennett.*” Geoff is an administrator at Radford University, Radford, Virginia. He presented his research on Orson W. Bennett at the Big South Undergraduate Research Symposium at Campbell University, Buies Creek, North Carolina, in April of 2015. White is a living historian who has portrayed General George McClellan, and he is currently the First Sergeant of the 3rd US Infantry Re-enactors.

White’s presentation on the 8th will center on the Civil War experiences of Oscar W. Bennett, a young man from Iowa, who rose from the rank of private to Captain during the Civil War. Bennett’s experiences take him riding or marching through 14 states, he began the Civil War as a member of the Governor’s Grays, in the 1st Iowa Volunteers. He was then wounded at the *Battle of Wilsons Creek*, Missouri, in 1861. When recovered, he then joined the 12th Wisconsin Volunteers and participated in the *Siege of Vicksburg*. In 1863, he took the examination to become an officer of black soldiers and was appointed a Lieutenant in the 102nd U.S. Colored Troops. He served in a brigade under his brother and he went on to be promoted to the rank of Captain. This was for his actions while commanding a company at the *Battle of Honey Hill*, South Carolina, November 1864. Later he was awarded the Metal of Honor for his actions during that battle.

An in-depth investigation into Bennett’s wartime experiences provide a unique look at the world of the common Civil War soldier. This includes popular music of the day, blistering heat, bone chilling cold, bullet wounds, supply shortages, and starvation. Bennett’s wartime recollections will give fresh perspective to well-known and to obscure battles, famous generals and how their actions trickled down to the enlisted men, and the controversial introduction of black soldiers into what had begun as a white man’s war for state’s rights and against slavery.

RVCWRT Holiday Auction

By Bob Jones

The Holiday Auction held at our December 11th Dinner Meeting produced \$523.50 to go CVBT, for battlefield preservation projects. Auctioned were framed prints, ornaments and signed books. We had numerous bidders in both the silent and live auctions, along with lots of fun and laughter !!!

“Fort Monroe – The Making of a Park”

By Kirsten Talken-Spaulding

A Review of our December 2017 Program by Greg Mertz

Yellowstone National Park was the first ever national park. It began as the result of an act of Congress, signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1872. But another process for adding units to the National Park System became law via the Antiquities Act of 1906 signed by President Theodore Roosevelt. The act declared that park units called “National Monuments” could be carved out of any federally controlled lands by a proclamation of the president of the United States. The same year that the act came into being, Roosevelt created the first National Monument at Devils Tower, in Wyoming.

Then in 1916, an agency called the National Park Service (NPS) was established to manage the units in the National Park System. These units were to be “conserved” – an important word choice conveying the concept that the parks should be used in such a manner that a substantial portion of their resources would always be available. The parks were to be conserved for the “enjoyment” of the American public, as Talken-Spaulding pointed out that the NPS is the only federal agency with the mandate to have fun.

When the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990 recommended the closure of Fort Monroe in 2005, local citizens in Hampton, Virginia, led a grass-roots effort to make the fort a national park. The NPS was asked to conduct a study addressing specific criteria, starting with an assessment of whether or not the site was nationally significant.

The piece of land extending into the Chesapeake Bay was a wetland that provided Native Americans with a great deal of food. The tip of the land was named Point Comfort in 1607, by John Smith, who visited there before he continued on to settle Jamestown. Only two years later the colonists established Fort Algernonne at Point Comfort. Then in 1619, the first enslaved Africans ever forced to go to British colonies in America, landed at Point Comfort.

A permanent lighthouse was built in 1802. Today, the Old Point Comfort lighthouse is the oldest continually operating lighthouse providing navigational services on the Chesapeake Bay. Though forts on the site burned or were allowed to become dilapidated, it was not until after the War of 1812 that the United States government decided to construct a masonry fortification on the site to protect the bay.

The star-shaped fort was named Fort Monroe. In 1831, a 2nd Lieutenant who had recently graduated from West Point was sent to apply his engineering skills to the construction of Fort Monroe. The young officer was Robert E. Lee. His quarters still stand and his first son Custis, also destined to be a Confederate general, was born there. Throughout the Civil War, the Confederacy never attacked Fort Monroe. Talken-Spaulding has contemplated whether it was because of Lee’s intimate familiarity with the fort that perhaps he advised against the Confederacy ever attempting to take the fort.

Abraham Lincoln was at Fort Monroe in May of 1862. He met with army and naval commanders planning an attack at Norfolk, Virginia. This was the last time that Lincoln was in a battle zone, engaged in formulating battle plans.

Union General Benjamin Butler, a lawyer and politician, commanded at Fort Monroe that same spring when three enslaved workers, after learning that they were going to be sent further south, escaped their master, pilfered a rowboat and came within Federal lines at night, seeking protection. The owner sought to have his slaves returned under the terms of the Fugitive Slave Law. But Butler declared that since the state of Virginia had seceded from the United States, they were no longer a party to the Fugitive Slave Law. Butler also noted that since the enslaved were employed at digging Confederate defenses and since slave owners considered the enslaved to be property, Butler declared the three men seeking protection to be “contraband” of war just as if any other property that could be used to aid the war effort were to be captured. So, the site of Fort Monroe was where slavery began in 1619, and it was where slavery began to end in 1862.

After the Civil War, Fort Monroe became a training area for coastal defense. The NPS study concluded that Fort Monroe was historically significant. The report also concluded that the National Park System did not contain another unit that already told the same story, that Fort Monroe was not only significant but unique.

The NPS study was also to determine whether Fort Monroe was economically feasible to operate as a park. But there was not enough data available to answer that question and the NPS analysis concluded that the agency could not recommend adding it into their system.

Bills to make Fort Monroe a park were submitted in 2009, 2010 and 2011, but failed. But since the fort was federal property, it should be eligible to be made a National Monument without an act of Congress. But a provision in the establishment of Fort Monroe stated that if it was not being used for defense of the nation, that it should revert back to the ownership of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Governor McDonnell, however, offered to donate the land back to the federal government. Thus on September 15, 2011, Fort Monroe was deactivated and the lawyers went to work to turn the property over to the state of Virginia, and for the state to donate it back to the federal government.

A local group, including a group of school children wearing green shirts, held signs saying "Make Fort Monroe a National Park". This was along a route that President Barack Obama was to travel. When the mayor of Hampton met the president and she began to explain what she wanted, Obama interrupted and said, "I know, I know, make Fort Monroe a National Park." The president indeed used the Antiquities Act, creating the Fort Monroe National Monument.

Ongoing Reminder

Please contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance or to confirm your dinner reservation. Please call Bob Jones @ 540-399-1702 or send him your e-mail at cwrtdinner@yahoo.com or bobnpeg1954@gmail.com

Your RVCWRT Membership is due

It is now the beginning of 2018 and it's time that we all re-new our RVCWRT membership. You are welcome to pay your 2018 dues when you check-in at the front table at our upcoming January Dinner Meeting.

As a reminder, 2018 dues are:

\$45.00 for a family membership

\$35.00 for an individual membership

\$7.50 for a student membership

The RVCWRT Bulletin Board

By Joyce Darr

It is my job to maintain the RVCWRT's special bulletin board. This board is placed against the right side wall where dinner guests enter Brock's upstairs dining room. This Bulletin Board is utilized during each of our dinner meetings. Members will find many different articles about the Civil War placed there. These are there to be requested by members for personal reading. Also, there is information posted on the bulletin board about upcoming Civil War related events, along with various items of interest. Along with the various posted announcements, Civil War articles and related material will be placed there. These items may each be requested and borrowed by our RVCVRT members to take home.

Weather Policy for RVCWRT

(Reminder To Our Membership)

By Jim Smithfield

We do, of course, have the potential for bad weather during coming winter months. Therefore, if due to inclement weather, you are concerned about attending our RVCWRT dinner, you'll need to check to see if our dinner is still scheduled by calling Bob Jones at 540-399-1702. You may also call Brock's Restaurant 4:00 p.m. at 540-370-1820.

A determination of the number of dinner reservations is required by Brock's and these reservations must be communicated to Brock's Restaurant no later than 4:00 p.m. on the day of our dinner. After 4:00 p.m. the Roundtable is committed to paying for our the reported number of guests. If you should decide that you do not want to travel to the dinner due to inclement weather and you need to cancel your reservation(s), please call Bob Jones NLT 4 p.m. or Brock's Restaurant after 4:00 p.m. on that day. Please, do not just leave a message on an answering machine, since this may not be

checked prior to our scheduled dinner. Also, remember if you have invited guests, please make sure that they are aware of this requirement for cancellation. Note: If however, you do not cancel by 4:00 p.m., we must then bill you, and your guests for payment of any un-cancelled reservations . . .

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 can receive Alan's important messages. If you would like to receive Alan's "History Alerts" just transmit your e-mail address to Alan noting this fact to him at az@azirkle.com.

The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg **By Bob Jones**



As a courtesy, the RVCWRT provides as a regular feature each month, the ongoing scheduled speakers for the CWRTF's 2018 Program Year. The *Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg* normally meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except for one meeting held on the third Wednesday of June 2018). Dinner Meetings are held at the UMW's Jepson Center located at 1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA, dinner cost is \$32.00 per person. Advance reservations should be made by telephoning 540-361-2105.

CWRTF's Scheduled Speakers for the 2018 Program Year

Jan. 24, 2018	James R. "Rusty" Neal	<i>Civil War Prisoners of War</i>
Feb. 28, 2018	Clint Van Zandt	<i>"Ten Year Old Gilbert Van Zandt - Youngest Soldier in the Civil War"</i>
Mar. 28, 2028	Pamela Grainger Tilson	<i>"Order No. 11 and Bleeding Missouri: The Legacy of Concentrating Civilians"</i>
Apr. 25, 2018	Bruce Venter	<i>"Kill Jeff Davis and the Dahlgren – Kilpatrick Raid"</i>
May 23, 2018	Rob Orrison/Bill Backus	<i>"War on the Potomac"</i>
June 20, 2018	Ryan Quint, NPS	<i>"The Battle of Portland Harbor"</i>

Untold Stories of a Search for Freedom **"Secret Codes, A Chatham Slave, and the Reverend Turner – Moments in Black History"**

"Witness" three untold stories of African Americans during and after the Civil War as they searched for freedom and civil rights. Join in commemorating Black History Month by participating in a living history event presenting three different vignettes at three historic churches in downtown Fredericksburg. These scenes from the lives of enslaved persons as well as new freedmen during the Civil War era will take place on Friday, February 9, from 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

Tours start at the Fredericksburg United Methodist Church, at 308 Hanover Street, in Fredericksburg. Visitors will find parking behind the church in the church parking lot on Charlotte Street, as well as, any available on street parking. Please use the entrance on the Charlotte Street side of the church, which is where all tours will originate.

Where: Fredericksburg United Methodist Church,
308 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Contact: Kim Harmon, 217-299-1102 or Kimrharmon@excite.com

Event Date: Friday, February 9, 2018

Event Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. contact Kim Harmon for specific tour times.
Cost: Suggested donation of \$5.00 per person

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 \$35.00 for an individual, \$45.00 for families, and 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/Dinner Meeting:	Bob Jones	Membership:	Ryan Quint
Vice President:	John Sapanara	Research/Historian:	Joyce Darr
Secretary:	Ben Keller	Member at Large:	Robin Donato
Treasurer:	Bob Pfile	Member at Large:	John Griffiths
Assistant Treasurer:	Barbara Stafford	Member at Large:	Melanie Jordan
Meeting Scribe:	Greg Mertz	Member at Large:	Paul Stier
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