



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**April 2026, Volume 23, Issue 4**

**Speaker:** Dr. Brad Gottfried  
**Topic:** “Race to the Potomac: Meade and Lee After Gettysburg”  
**When:** April 13, 2026  
**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](http://www.rappvalleycivilwar.org)  
**Our Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/rvcwrt](http://www.facebook.com/rvcwrt)

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**Dr. Brad Gottfried “Race to the Potomac: Meade and Lee After Gettysburg”**

Even before the guns fell silent at Gettysburg, Robert E. Lee was preparing for the arduous task of getting his defeated Confederate army back safely into northern Virginia. It was an enormous, complex, and exceedingly dangerous undertaking—all in a pouring rainstorm and all under the shadow of a possible attack from the Federal Army of the Potomac. The victor of Gettysburg, George Meade, remained unsure of Lee’s next

move and dispatched Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick's VI Corps on a reconnaissance-in-force. The thrust found the Confederate army in full retreat: Lee was heading back to Virginia. The encounters that followed—including several engagements with Jeb Stuart's horsemen—resulted in the loss of hundreds of vehicles, the capture of large numbers of wounded, and the seizure of tons of valuable supplies. Even as Meade hurriedly pursued Lee, he sought opportunities to launch an attack that might crush Lee's army—and even end the war—once and for all.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Brad Gottfried earned his Ph.D. in Zoology from Miami University and spent the four decades as an educator in higher education. He has served as a full-time faculty member, department head, campus dean, chief academic officer and president. Before retiring in 2017, he served as President of Sussex County Community College (NJ) and College of Southern Maryland for the past 17 years. His interest in the Civil War began at an early age and was rekindled when he returned to an administrative position in the Philadelphia area. His fourteenth book was recently published. His early writing primarily centered on the Battle of Gettysburg, and he wrote five books on this topic. He has also written two brigade-level histories. His current "niche" is map books, where he thoroughly describes campaigns through the use of maps. Seven books have been published in this series. He is also working on a variety of other Civil War related projects. In addition to writing, Brad is an Antietam Certified Battlefield Guide and a Gettysburg Licensed Town Guide. Brad is married to his wife, Linda and between them they have four grown children and six grandchildren.

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**"Clara Barton and the Missing Soldiers Office"**  
**by Madeleine Thompson**

**A Review of the March 2026 Program by Greg Mertz**

Clara Barton frequently did the unexpected. When just seventeen years old, she taught in what is believed to be the first public school in New Jersey. Starting with six students, within a year she had 200 students attending class on a rotating schedule. When a new school was constructed and she was not offered the job as its principal, she went to Washington where she became the first female to work in the U. S. Patent Office. She lived on the

third floor of a boarding house. That floor was also destined to accommodate the Missing Soldiers Office late in the Civil War.

Barton's best-known Civil War activities involve her services as a nurse. When a riot broke out on April 19, 1861 as some Massachusetts soldiers were walking through the streets of Baltimore from one train station to another, and about 50 men were wounded. Barton fed them as they recovered in the capitol building. Federal casualties from First Manassas were taken to her office, then converted into a hospital. Barton collected supplies that she stored in the boarding house as well as three storage units.

The first battlefield that Barton appeared upon as a nurse was the Cedar Mountain battlefield, although she arrived too late to be of help. At Antietam she was given the sobriquet of the "Angel of the Battlefield." During the battle of Fredericksburg, Barton is documented to have been at Chatham in the kitchen building.

By 1865, Barton received permission from Abraham Lincoln to open a Missing Soldiers Office. The task of notifying families regarding loved ones who had died became too overwhelming for the army. Barton accepted inquiries from families regarding soldiers with whom they had lost contact. Barton published her list of names of missing soldiers in just about every newspaper, asking that anyone who know something about any of the soldiers to write to her. Barton would in turn send back a form letter to the families of any soldier for which she had information.

Some 60,000 letters had been received by Barton, from families seeking to learn the fate of a soldier. She was able to provide feedback to about 23,000 families regarding soldiers about whom she had found something. The single most helpful contact was Andersonville prisoner Dorence Atwater, who had kept a secret ledger of some 13,000 soldiers who had died in the prison camp. Most of the soldiers that the office had found, were not alive. The Missing Soldiers Office ran from 1865 to 1868, with a staff of 21 people helping Barton.

In 1868 Clara Barton went on a trip to Europe. Barton's landlord at the Missing Soldiers Office in the boarding house was Edward Shaw. He packed away her things in the attic, and Barton never returned to the building. While in Europe, Barton was exposed to the Red Cross. When she came back to the United States, her passion was to teach First Aid. The Clara Barton

National Historic Site in Glen Echo, Maryland was built to be a storage unit for Red Cross supplies. Clara Barton died in 1912 at the age of 90.

The building that housed the Missing Soldiers Office had a change of address, from 488 ½ to 437 7<sup>th</sup> Street NW. Plans had been made to tear the building down, and the change of address hampered any potential to identify it as a historic structure of some significance. While performing an inspection, Richard Lyons saw a letter hanging down from the ceiling of the third floor, enticing him to explore the attic. There he found a treasure trove of material, with a sign stating “MISSING SOLDIERS. OFFICE. 3d. STORY. ROOM 9. MISS CLARA BARTON” as the most revealing piece of evidence he had rediscovered.

Historians and journalists were invited to spread the word of the find. The General Services Administration was convinced to restore the building, including the original door of room 9 with its home-made mail slot through which some 63,000 letters had been delivered with hopes of the sender receiving good news about a loved one in return.

Our speaker, Madeleine Thompson, is the Site Administrator of the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum and historic site in Washington, DC. It is a part of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine headquartered in Frederick, Maryland.

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### **Important Information about the Park's Buildings**

I would like to thank Alan Zirkle for putting this message out with his History Alert emails. If you are not subscribed to Alan's emails, here is some important maintenance and hours information for the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center and Chatham Manor. Upcoming maintenance projects will cause Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center and Chatham to close on August 4, 2025. Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center will close for 6 to 7 months while the building undergoes multiple construction projects including the installation of a fire suppression system, a waterline upgrade project, and an electrical system upgrade. The Park Store next to the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center will remain open daily, 9 am-5 pm, and park staff will be available to provide education and orientation to the battlefield through mid-October, after which park staff will be available

on a reduced schedule.

The Chatham gate will remain open 9 am-5 pm through the duration of the project. Chatham will close for about a year for an interior rehabilitation project that will include lead paint encapsulation, new carpet, and plaster repair. Chatham underwent a fire suppression system installation this past year, but it has been partially open throughout the summer for increased visitation in the interim between these two large projects.

To explore these locations independently, check out the self-guided audio tours of the Sunken Road and Chatham available on the NPS App and online at [go.nps.gov/frsp-tours](https://www.nps.gov/frsp-tours). Park staff look forward to welcoming visitors to our upgraded facilities in spring and summer 2026!

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## **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](mailto:executivedirector@cvbt.org) .  
Office: 540-374-0900

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## **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.cwrta.org](http://www.cwrta.org), and will be updated here. Below is the schedule starting in September 2025 and going to June 2026.

April 22, 2026

**John Brown: Igniting the Keg**

Speaker: Dennis Frye

May 27, 2026

**The Appomattox Campaign**

Speaker: Hampton Newsome

June 17, 2026

**Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Spy: John R. Kelso**

Speaker: Christopher Grasso

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## **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](http://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.

**Newsletter Editor and Webmaster:** John Roos

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**The RVCWRT Executive Committee**

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