



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
August 2021, Volume 18, Issue 8

A Tribute to Bob Jones

Robert Lee “Bob” Jones was a valued member of RVCWRT for nearly two decades. Bob, who passed away unexpectedly in late June, served in a variety of elected and volunteer positions – including multiple terms as our President. He was our meeting coordinator since 2003, responsible for planning and overseeing every dinner meeting, special event, picnic, and bus trip. He was the guiding light and co-founder of our Scholarship Fund, which has been designated as the Robert Lee Jones Memorial Scholarship Fund in his honor. He forged valuable relationships with our restaurant hosts, Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and other historic organization partners.

Bob was, without question, the lifeblood of our organization. Beyond that, he was a truly fine and generous person who always made everyone, newcomers and old hands alike, feel welcome at RVCWRT. We will miss him and treasure all the memories and good works he left behind.

An Administrative Reminder

The new email address for dinner meeting reservations and other RVCWRT events is rappcwevents21@gmail.com. Please make a note of it and be sure any automatic reply settings on your computer are updated.

We are again able to accommodate non-dinner attendees/spectators at our meetings. Interested visitors can view our presentations at no cost. It is requested that spectators arrive shortly before 7:30 PM and sit in a specially designated section.

Please make a dinner reservation through John Sapanara via email rappcwevents21@gmail.com or by phone 540-479-1299. John will contact you with confirmation. If you wish to be placed on the “permanent reservation” list, please advise John when you make your August reservation. Members on this list do not need to make reservations every month – their attendance is assumed unless they cancel beforehand. Member dinner price for 2021 is **\$30**. This price also applies to non-member attendees who join at the meeting. Non-member dinner price is \$35.

“SEVEN DAYS” BUS TRIP ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2021

Sign up for our bus trip to sites associated with the Seven Days Battles. Cost is \$90 for members and guests until October 1. Cost includes bus transportation to five sites, lunch, site fees and guided tours throughout the day. Sign up now through John Sapanara via email to rappcwevents21@gmail.com or by phone 540-479-1299.

Speaker: Darrell Cochran
Topic: The 3rd US Infantry in the Civil War
When: Monday August 9, 2021
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
Our Facebook: www.facebook.com/rvcwrt

“Darrell Cochran: The 3rd US Infantry in the Civil War”

Darrell Cochran has been reenacting, researching, and writing about the Civil War for more than 40 years. He is a founding member and past president of the Third U.S. Regular Infantry Reenactors, and his articles about the War have been published in America's Civil War and Civil War Times.

Remember that you can watch all ten previous RVCWRT virtual programs in their entirety by searching "RVCWRT" on YouTube. Our speaker lineup for 2021 is now available on our new website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org.

“Personal and Battlefield Leadership: John C. Breckenridge, Franz Sigel and the Battle of New Market”

by Sarah Kay Bierle

A Review of the July 2021 Program by Greg Mertz

Starting with a quote on leadership from John Quincy Adams, Sarah Bierle set the foundation for her talk and an assessment of the army commanders at the May 15, 1864 Battle of New Market. Our country's sixth president declared, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

John C. Breckinridge was a lawyer and politician, who was the youngest vice president in the nation's history, holding that post in the administration of James Buchanan just prior to the Civil War when only thirty-five years old. The Kentuckian owned slaves and supported legislation protecting and expanding slavery, though he also claimed to loathe the institution. When running for president of the United States on the Southern Democrat ticket in the 1860 election – a time when individual candidates did not personally campaign in the same manner we are accustomed to today – Breckinridge's campaign managers inaccurately portrayed him as a secessionist.

After Breckinridge lost the presidential election, the state of Kentucky appointed him to represent the state in the U.S. Senate. When the Civil War broke out and Kentucky declared neutrality, Breckinridge was in an awkward position. He was not a strong enough secessionist to please the pro-Confederates, nor did he support Lincoln's efforts to restore the Union. Learning U.S. authorities were about to place him under arrest, he joined the

Confederate army in the fall of 1861. Though Breckinridge was a major during the Mexican War, he saw no combat, yet he was appointed a general in Confederate service. He proved to be a competent military leader, participating in all of the major battles of the Army of Tennessee, and was said to possess what Bierle characterized as “charisma with the skill to back it.” But he was one of several generals to come in conflict with army commander Braxton Bragg, and was reassigned. By the spring of 1864, Breckinridge led the Trans-Allegheny Department that included a portion of the Shenandoah Valley. This assignment would bring him to command the Confederate forces at New Market.

The Union commander in the battle, Franz Sigel, had a dramatically different background than Breckinridge. Whereas Breckinridge had deep family roots in America, Sigel was an immigrant who stepped off the boat in New York City on May 15, 1852 – exactly twelve years before the battle of New Market. Unlike his opponent, Sigel was a trained and experienced pre-Civil War military officer. Sigel graduated from the Karlsruhe Military Academy in his native Baden (Germany), and had led troops in the 1848 revolution. Although Sigel was defeated and forced to flee his homeland, many Germans felt that he failed only because he was outnumbered, and when he fled to America, German-Americans held Sigel in high esteem.

Valuing education, Sigel became a superintendent of schools in St. Louis and was there at the outbreak of war. He was very effective in recruiting German-Americans to the Union war effort, and became the colonel of the 3rd Missouri. Though defeated at the battle of Carthage, Missouri, the loss stimulated enlistments. Despite having problems executing his role in the battle of Wilson’s Creek, he demonstrated the ability to skillfully withdraw his troops from the battlefield intact. He effectively commanded two divisions in the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas contributing to that victory. Sigel then came east, performing poorly at Second Manassas, and resigning just prior to Chancellorsville. Since 1864 was an election year, and Lincoln needed the German-American vote, it was deemed that a new role needed to be found for Sigel, and he was assigned to command in the Shenandoah Valley that spring.

Sigel presumed that the valley contained no substantial Confederate forces, and was given an assignment to move south, up the valley to the rail junction

at Staunton. Union forces there could threaten Confederate supply lines and Lee's extended left flank as he was positioned behind the Rapidan River. But Sigel moved very slowly toward his target, and as someone who valued education and training, he devoted several days to conducting war games. That attempt at drilling his troops backfired however, as he lost one of his units and his regimental commanders lost any confidence they may have had in his leadership. Union troops captured a Confederate telegraph office at Woodstock, gaining confirmation that no sizeable body of enemy forces were in the valley. Yet Sigel once again delayed the march on Staunton; this time due to rain.

But Lee had correctly surmised Sigel's objective in issuing instructions to Breckinridge, and by May 8, the Confederate valley commander was assembling troops in Staunton, with the VMI cadets on their way to serve as a reserve. Advance elements of both armies clashed near New Market, and Confederate cavalrymen advised Breckinridge to fight on the high ground there. Sigel's troops were strung out, and he arrived at the front just as Breckinridge put his troops in motion on May 15, 1864. Confederates pushed the Union army from hilltop to hilltop with the final Union position posted on the Bushong farm.

A gap developed in the Confederate line and Breckinridge needed help from his reserve. He had to choose between the untrained older men and young boys of the Augusta home guard, or the trained students of VMI. "Put the boys in, and may God forgive me for the order," Breckinridge declared as he sent the cadets forward.

As the Union line waivered, Sigel became agitated to a point of being unable to issue his orders in English, and his men did not understand his instructions spoken in German. With the help of Union artillery under Henry DuPont, and with the Confederate cavalry being unable to pursue as it encountered an unfordable stream, Sigel executed another masterful retreat. Sigel indicated that he would rather have died on the battlefield than endure the shame of the defeat. Breckinridge had saved the valley and with it void of Union troops for the moment, he was able to link up with Lee and help repulse Grant's attacks at Cold Harbor.

Both generals succeeded in some aspects of leadership and failed in others. Sigel recognized the importance of organization and training, but he devoted

too much time doing so with his valley forces and allowed it to interfere with critical decisions. He should have foregone the war games and marched to Staunton while the way was open. Breckinridge was decisive and thoroughly dedicated to carrying out his decisions, committing all of his troops to the attack, except for his reserves. He acted boldly despite the odds.

Excerpts from the First Issue of "The Confederate Veteran" in 1893

The first volume of "The Confederate Veteran" was published in Nashville, Tennessee in January 1893. Price was five cents a copy, with a yearly subscription rate of 50 cents.

From Page 1 of the first issue: "The Confederate Veteran is intended as an organ of communication between Confederate soldiers and those who are interested in them and their affairs, and its purpose is to furnish a volume of information which will be acceptable to the public, even to those who fought on the other side...The commendation of the Confederate Veteran from extremes of the South and from our friends in the North gives an immediate promise of usefulness and influence which should enlist the pride of every Southerner and the respect of all others."

The Confederate Veteran actively sought donations to build a memorial to Jefferson Davis. It also featured many anecdotes and first-hand accounts from soldiers and other Civil War participants. The following letter from Mrs. M. Louise Myrick of Americus, Georgia offers a fascinating insight into the spirit of moral responsibility and conciliatory tenor of the time:

"To my thinking, nothing is too good for the old soldier. He should be crowned with every available honor, and if there are any soft places in the ranks of business, gratefully bestow them upon him. Whether they wore the blue or the gray, true soldiers deserve to be honored by this generation, who now live in peace and prosperity...To the dead we owe a more sacred duty. Their memory should ever be kept fresh and green. The noble women of this broad land will remain faithful to this trust. They will teach their children to perpetuate the beautiful memorial custom. When the faithful of this age are silent in death, generations yet unborn will be found ready to don the mantle of patriotism so honorably worn by their mothers and grandmothers."

**My Personal Reflection of Bob Jones
By John Roos**

The first time I met Bob was as an intern in 2016. He came up to myself and another intern and just told us to spread out to different tables. Fast forward to 2019, my girlfriend, now wife, Sarah and I moved to Fredericksburg and joined the round table. Bob did not miss a beat and remembered me as if I never left. We talked and laughed and just enjoyed being together. A few meetings later Bob came up to me and asked if I was in school. This moment stands out to me because at Bob's remembrance, his passion for education was discussed. It did not matter I was in graduate school, or that I was 39 at the time, Bob turned right to Sarah and asked if she would be the new newsletter editor. Bob wanted me to focus on school.

The funniest thing Bob ever did with us was one evening before dinner, Bob saw Sarah, Jason, and myself by a small table. He asked what was going on and we told him we are getting married here and we were checking out linens. During the opening meeting announcements Bob said there will be a wedding in this room next October, Sarah and John's wedding. As all of you clapped, Bob made the announcement that all the round table was invited. We did not have the big wedding as the pandemic made us have a smaller wedding. Yet, that moment Bob made that announcement will be with Sarah and me forever.

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.rappvalleycivilwar.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:

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