



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter November 2017, Volume 14, Issue 11

Speaker: Chris Mackowski, Ph.D.
Topic: "The Battle of Mine Run"
When: Monday, November 13, 2017
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

Abstract on Chris Mackowski, our Scheduled Speaker for November 13th, 2017

By Jim Smithfield

Our speaker for November 13th, is scheduled to be Chris Mackowski, Ph.D. Chris is the editor-in-chief and co-founder of *Emerging Civil War*. He is the series editor of the award-winning *Emerging Civil War series*, published by Savas Beatie; Also, of the forthcoming *Engaging the Civil War series*, published in partnership with the Southern Illinois University Press. Chris Mackowski is a professor of Journalism and of Mass Communication at St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, NY. He is the historian-in-residence at *Stevenson Ridge*, a noted historic property located on the *Spotsylvania Battlefield* in central Virginia.

Chris has also worked as a historian for the National Park Service at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park, where he gives tours at four major Civil War battlefields (Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania), as well as, at the building where Stonewall Jackson died. Chris has authored or co-authored a dozen books on the Civil War, and his articles have appeared in all of the major Civil War magazines. He also serves on the National Advisory Board for the *Civil War Chaplains Museum* in Lynchburg, Virginia. On Monday November 13, 2017, Chris is scheduled to offer some new perspectives on the *Battle of Mine Run* and also on Major General George Gordon Meade.

"The Controversial Death of a Very Effective Officer"

(Brigadier General Elon J. Farnsworth)

Presented by Bob O'Neal

Review of the October 2017 program by Greg Mertz

Civil War cavalry authority Bob O'Neill challenged some of the long-accepted things that students of the war have been led to believe about Union cavalry General Elon J. Farnsworth. The manner in which Farnsworth was promoted, the dialogue between he and his superior Judson Kilpatrick on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg and the attack in that battle known as Farnsworth's Charge are among aspects of his interesting

career for which careful scrutiny of the sources causes the traditional interpretations to be questioned.

Three young company grade cavalry officers – Farnsworth along with Wesley Merritt and George A. Custer – received promotions to brigadier general just days before the Battle of Gettysburg. O'Neill shared the contents of a document which is often used to support the contention that the jump in rank from captains to brigadier generals – an unprecedented promotion at this phase of the war – was due to the impact of Elon's uncle, John F. Farnsworth, a former Union cavalry general himself, then seated in congress.

On June 23, 1863, Elon wrote to his uncle, requesting him to use his influence to have a cavalry division assigned to the defenses of Washington, to be transferred to the Army of the Potomac. In that letter, Elon also indicated that army cavalry corps commander Gen. Alfred Pleasonton was trying to obtain a promotion to brigadier general for him. Pleasonton was a friend of John Farnsworth and also wrote to the congressman on that same day regarding cavalry reorganization matters. It has long been presumed that the unusual promotions were the result of the political influence of Elon's uncle.

However, the decision to bestow a star on the younger Farnsworth occurred because of special authority granted to George G. Meade when he was placed in command of the army. He could appoint and remove any officers as he saw fit. Pleasonton's headquarters were right beside those of Meade, and he was quick to request and obtain the promotion of the three "boy" generals.

Young Farnsworth would make a failed cavalry attack in the vicinity of the Confederate left on the afternoon of July 3, 1863. Farnsworth's Charge was in conjunction with a planned counterattack in the wake of the Union repulse of Pickett's Charge. Arguably the most prominent account of the charge was written by Capt. Henry C. Parsons of the 1st Vermont Cavalry 25 years after the event. The edited account was published in the Century Magazine and reprinted in Battles and Leaders of the Civil War.

The order to make Farnsworth's Charge was issued by division commander Gen. Judson Kilpatrick. Parsons reported that Farnsworth and Kilpatrick argued the judiciousness of the attack of Union cavalry against Confederate infantry across boulder-strewn terrain. Parsons reported that when Farnsworth questioned whether Kilpatrick really intended him to attack under those conditions with the 1st Michigan detached, and with both the 1st Vermont and 1st West Virginia making the attack even though they had already "been fought half to pieces." Kilpatrick's biting reply was "If you are afraid to lead this charge, I will lead it." Farnsworth, demanded that Kilpatrick take it back. Kilpatrick indicated that he didn't mean it. Farnsworth concluded that if Kilpatrick ordered the attack, he would follow the orders.

The conversation as reported, contains several factual errors. The 1st Michigan was not in Farnsworth's brigade – it was part of *Custer's* brigade – and other aspects of the account regarding which units were present and which were detached are also not accurate. The 1st Vermont and 1st West Virginia, had yet to be seriously engaged at Gettysburg or elsewhere during the campaign, so were by no means cut to pieces. Surely Farnsworth would have been aware of the regiments making up his brigade and the degree to which they had been engaged.

By comparing the accounts with the terrain and considering the manner in which Civil War soldiers normally functioned, Gettysburg Battlefield Guide Andie Donahue has reached an interpretation of the troop positions and the tactics that were different from the traditional version largely based upon Parson's version of what happened. O'Neill believes that Donahue's conclusions are very logical. The conventional troop positions of the Union cavalry regiments on the southern end of the Gettysburg battlefield had a large gap between the 6th Pennsylvania regiment positioned on the Emmitsburg Road and the cluster of Farnsworth's regiments on a small, wooded knoll called Bushman's Hill near the base of Big Round Top. The new interpretation rationally has the regiments spread out and linking with one another, positioned all the way from the Emmitsburg Road to Bushman's Hill.

The marker on the battlefield indicating where Farnsworth fell is on a small knoll without boulders that was acquired by Capt. Parson's. But the surgeon who found Farnsworth's body indicated that it was recovered in a rocky ravine. Donahue pointed out to O'Neill a ravine of that description in the vicinity of where she positions the 1st Vermont, the unit Farnsworth was leading when he was killed.

O'Neill believes that Farnsworth and Kilpatrick may well have had a discussion about the attack, and pointed out that it would have been Farnsworth's duty to give his views on the attack to his superior, just as it would have also been his duty to carry out those orders if he could not persuade his commanding officer to follow a different course of action. Army commander George G. Meade intended Farnsworth's charge to be a diversion in favor of a counterattack of the VI Corps to follow the cavalry attack. Likely unknown to either officer at the time was that Meade decided against committing the VI Corps. With that decision, the cavalry attack had no purpose, but it was too late to recall the troopers.

By leading the 1st Vermont into the attack, Farnsworth may not have provided the necessary brigade level leadership that the other regiments in the unit required. Farnsworth had a horse shot out from underneath him. He procured another mount, which also went down, and Farnsworth's body was found near the second dead horse. His remains were sent back to St. Charles, Illinois, the home of his uncle, and he is now buried in Rockton.

It had been presumed by some that Kilpatrick was relieved of command after the battle because of his role in the disastrous charge. Kilpatrick left the army on July 23, 1863, but not because he had been dismissed, but go to New York to be with his wife, (who may have given birth to their child).

RVCWRT's Winning Essay for 2017
By Jim Smithfield

Our winner of the *Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table's 2017 National Park Service Intern Scholarship* was Ms. Abigail Currier. Ms. Currier, is a graduate of Gettysburg College and she is currently attending Indiana University - Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) this fall and working toward a Masters Degree in Library Sciences. She's spent the last three summers working at NPS sites in both Maryland and Virginia. She had worked this year as an Interpreter at FSNMP. The \$2,000.00 award was made available to a National Park Service (NPS) intern working at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FSNMP)m meeting certain educational and park service requirements. Ms. Currier successfully navigated through our rigorous screening process, including the

essay requirement and through a panel interview with the FSNMP Superintendent and our RVCWRT Executive Committee members.

Unfortunately, we were unable, as we had indicated last month, to place her essay into the newsletters allotted space. Again, our congratulations go out to Ms. Currier for her fine efforts and for having won this contest. The RVCWRT wishes Ms. Currier every success in the future.

The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg By Bob Jones

As a courtesy, the RVCWRT provides as a regular feature every month, the ongoing scheduled speakers for the CWRTF's 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). Their Dinner Meetings are held at the MWW's Jepson Center located at 1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA, their dinner cost is \$32.00 for each person. Advance reservations should be made by telephoning 540-361-2105. Their scheduled speaker for the October 25, 2017, meeting was Eric Buckland who presented "Mosby's Men."



CWRTF's Remaining Scheduled Speaker For the 2017 Program Year

November 15, 2017 Robert Lee Hodge – Filming the Civil War with Historical Accuracy, Part 2

An Ongoing Reminder By Bob Jones

Please contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance and to confirm your reservations
Call Bob @ 540-399-1702 or send your e-mail to cwrt dinner@yahoo.com or bohnpeg1954@gmail.com

The RVCWRT Bulletin Board By Joyce Darr

It is my job to maintain the RVCWRT's special bulletin board. This bulletin board is placed against the right side wall where in coming 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 articles are placed there to be requested by our membership for personal reading. Also, there will be 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 or borrowed by members to take home.

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 do not now, but would like to receive Alan Zirkle's "History Alerts" then please just transmit your e-mail address to Alan noting this fact to him at az@azirkle.com.

WEATHER POLICY FOR RVCWRT (Reminder To Our Membership)

We, of course, have the potential for bad weather during the winter time. Therefore, if due to inclement weather, you are concerned about attending the RVCWRT dinner, you will need to check to see if our dinner is still scheduled **prior** to and NLT 4:00 p.m., by calling Bob Jones at 540-399-1702. You may also call Brock's Restaurant **after** 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. At that point the Roundtable is committed to paying for our 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 or Brock's Restaurant by NLT 4 p.m. Please, do not just leave a message on an answering machine, since it may not be checked prior to the scheduled dinner. Also, 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 bill you, and your guests for payment of any uncancelled reservations . . .

Culpepper Virginia's Six Gritty Patton Brothers **By Jim Smithfield**

There were six brothers in the Patton family of Culpepper, Virginia, and each of these brothers served the Confederacy. Overall, there were a total of sixteen members of the Patton family, all of whom served in Confederate Armies. Oh, by the way, that total, of course, does not include any cousins or other kinfolk serving the South! There were three Patton's who gave their lives for the Confederacy during the Civil War, including; two of the six brothers. The subsequent dispersal of the six brothers within the Confederate ranks was an interesting use of their talents. There was brother George Smith Patton, a VMI Graduate, who was second in his VMI class of 1852. George had also taught at VMI along with Jonathon (Stonewall) Jackson. Originally George formed the *Kanawha Riflemen*, later to become *Company H* of the *Twenty-second Virginia*. Then, came brother Walter Tazewell "Taz" Patton (also a VMI Graduate), Taz had taken command of the *Culpepper Minutemen*, a Militia Unit originally founded in 1776 by a Patton family forebearer. Brother James, also a VMI Grad, served as brigade inspector in his brother George's brigade. Next, there was John (yep, another VMI Grad) who was colonel of the *Twenty-first Virginia Infantry*, until ill health forced him to resign. Brother Isaac, who had earlier moved to New Orleans, would become colonel of the *Twenty-second Louisiana Infantry*. Lastly, there was little brother Hugh, who served as a staff officer for Brigadier General John R. Cooke. Before the six brothers left for war, their mother gave them each a thoroughbred horse along with a personal "body servant" to attend to their care. George and Taz had the most notable combat service of the six Patton brothers. It was Taz who was the first to die for the South. This occurred at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, and it was there that Taz's *Seventh Virginia Infantry* was among the thirteen regiments in Pickett's Charge (Note: All thirteen regimental commanders were casualties on that day). One of those commanders was Colonel Taz, whose *Seventh Virginia* had advanced the farthest before being repulsed at the wall. Union officer, Lt. Henry T. Lee (what an ironic last name don't you think) saw two Confederate officers mounting the wall together holding hands in order to aid one another over the top of the wall. One of these officers was killed at the wall, he was a Patton cousin and Taz's regimental adjutant.. His cousin was dead, and Taz was gravely wounded in the face (his jaw was shattered) and it would be twenty-one days later when death finally took him. Taz painfully worked each day to scribble a letter off to his mother, telling her that he was soon to die.

George Smith Patton was colonel of the *Twenty-second Virginia* when he was shot in the stomach at the minor battle of *Giles Court House*. George sent his Regimental Surgeon away, certain that he was dying from his "belly" wound. However, another officer came by and asked to see George's wound. This officer then stuck a finger into the wound, wiggled around and withdrew a battered coin from the wound. George found it amusing, that he'd already written a farewell letter to his wife, Susan. George suffered a total of three severe wounds during the first several years of the Civil War. In fact, in 1861, George had refused to allow the proposed amputation of his arm when he was wounded and captured at the battle of *Scary Creek*, fought near today's St. Albans, West Virginia. He never fully regained the use of that arm though.

Four Patton's, along with various Patton kinfolk, fought in the battle of *New Market*. It was there, that George's *Twenty-second Virginia* came to the rescue of his cousin and close friend Colonel Hugh Smith, who's *Sixty-second Virginia* had become trapped in a ravine. It was in early September

1864, during the *Shenandoah Campaign*, that Colonel George found his brigade successfully standing off General Phil Sheridan's Union Cavalry attacks along his left flank.

The death blow to Colonel George Smith Patton came on September 19, 1864. This occurred during the battle of *Third Winchester*, George's luck had run out! How, it actually happened, is not fully known to this day, only that Patton's Brigade was attempting to defend against Union cavalry and they were crushed. Sheridan's cavalry captured over two-thousand Confederate soldiers that day and among those prisoners was the mortally wounded Colonel George Smith Patton. George lived until September 25, 1864, being cared for by, his cousin, Mary Williams, in her home before succumbing to fever and gangrene. George was only thirty-one years old.

George and his wife, Susan, had four children, including his namesake George Patton II. After the war, George's widow, Susan, married George's cousin, good friend and former VMI Classmate, George Hugh Smith. Smith raised George's four children as his own. The Patton family of George S. Patton, his widow, twenty-six year old, Susan, and her four children, including George Patton II moved to California, where he later raised his son, known to all, as "Little Georgie." Growing up, Little Georgie absorbed a background of the tales about Old Virginia, and of course, the Civil War, his grandfather and those obvious family legends of valor and courage! Little Georgie grew to be, of course, General George S. Patton Jr., who in WW I and WW II became the most famous Patton of them all.

It was in the 1870's, when both George and Tazwell Patton's bodies were dug up from their original gravesites and both bodies were secretly taken to Winchester, Virginia. Taz's casket came by way of a special train and George's casket was already there and waiting at the Railroad Station.

Risking arrest and imprisonment, a very large number of Confederate Veterans were on hand. That night. All were dressed in their full *Confederate uniforms* and they formed an honor guard for the two caskets as they marched them through the darkened streets of Winchester. The caskets were taken to *Winchester's Stonewall Cemetery* for immediate reburial, where the two brother's bodies remain to this day buried in a common grave. It was then, that VMI cadet, George Patton II, was on hand to assist, that as he was helping to lower the two caskets, Taz's body fell out of it's casket! Taz's body was of course, recovered and placed back into his casket and the burial continued. All of this, the Honor Guard and the burial occurred very late on a dark night.

Authors Note: In an effort to help everyone who's trying to keep straight the various descendants noted in my story, this may help you; The first George S. Patton (Civil War era) was the grandfather of the General George S. Patton Jr. of World War I and II fame. The George who came in between them was George S. Patton II, who was born on the eve of the Civil War. This George S. Patton was the son of the first George S. Patton and he was also the father of George S. Patton Jr., now I do sincerely hope that this will clear it all up for everyone . . .

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 individuals, \$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	Webmaster:	Dan Augustine
Vice President:	John Sapanara	Membership:	Ryan Quint
Secretary:	Ben Keller	Research/Historian:	Joyce Darr
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Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404