

THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

September 2017, Volume 14, Issue 9

Speaker: John Hennessy
Topic: “Mercy Town: Fredericksburg, it’s Wounded, and the Men and Women Who Rushed to Help”
When: Monday, September 11, 2017
Location: Brock’s Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

Abstract on John Hennessy, our Scheduled Speaker for September 11, 2017

By Jim Smithfield

Our scheduled speaker for the September 11, 2017, *Dinner Meeting* will be an RVCWRT favorite, John Hennessy. John is the Chief Historian/Chief of Interpretation of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He brings a passion for both history and it’s interpretation. He is always looking for new and better ways to transfer the passion that he feels for history to the hearts and souls of visitors. John has written a couple of books, but most of his energy these days is devoted to developing new media and new programming for the park. Hennessy has worked for the NPS (National Park Service) for 25 years (starting at Manassas), with an intervening stint with the New York State Historic Preservation Office.

Hennessy’s topic for September 11th should be of interest to most RVCWRT members, as it deals with the town of Fredericksburg during seventeen days in May of 1864. During that period of more than 26,000 wounded soldiers passed through Fredericksburg. These were the human toll of the battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. The hospitals in Fredericksburg were more impromptu, more chaotic than the Mansion House Hospital, as portrayed in the PBS series “Mercy Street,” but the stories of the wounded and their caregivers are no less vivid. Hennessy is involved in almost all of the park’s social media ventures. John has pioneered much of the park’s initial blogging forays contributing to Facebook, and manages the park wide Twitter account.

RVCWRT 2017 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

By John Sapanara

Our winner of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table 2017, National Park Service Intern Scholarship is Ms. Abigail Carrier of Weare, New Hampshire. This \$2,000 award was available to a National Park Service (NPS) intern at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FSNMP) who has met certain educational and park service requirements. Ms. Carrier successfully navigated a rigorous screening process, including an essay requirement and a panel interview with the FSNMP Superintendent and the RVCWRT Executive Committee members.

Ms. Currier is a graduate of Gettysburg College and she will attend Indiana University - Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) in the fall. She is working toward a Masters degree in Library Sciences. She has spent the last three summers working at NPS sites in Maryland and Virginia, including this year's work as an interpreter at FSNMP

This year's essay (1,500 to 1,600 words) addressed the following topic: "FSNMP was established in 1927 with the mission of preserving for future generations, the land and stories of the people and events associated with the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania. As a park intern, you play an important role in accomplishing this mission. With this in mind, describe how you and your division at FSNMP contributes to this mission and why it is critical for this park to be preserved for future generations." Next month we plan to feature Ms. Currier's winning essay.

"I am Going to Whip Them or They Are Going to Whip Me"

The Second Day at Gettysburg

Presented by Kristopher White

A review of our August program by Greg Mertz

The bloodiest day of the Civil War's bloodiest battle began with a controversial reconnaissance by Confederate engineer Captain Samuel R. Johnston. Johnston spent three hours on the morning of July 2, 1863, riding over the terrain south of Gettysburg, including Big Round Top and Little Round Top. Johnston met with corps commander James Longstreet and army commander Robert E. Lee and explained that the Union left flank was vulnerable. Despite Longstreet's opinion that the Confederates should disengage with the Union army and take up a defensive position between the Union forces and its capitol, Lee disagreed and ordered Longstreet to attack the Union left. Specifically, Longstreet was instructed to advance north astride the Emmetsburg Road to thereby strike the Union's exposed southern end of the Union line.

Longstreet's men marched on the prescribed route with his men reaching the top of a hill from which they could see Union troops. These troops were on Little Round Top, and significantly the Union troops could see the Confederate's flanking maneuver. This was the first sign that Johnston's reconnaissance was flawed. Longstreet had little choice, but to countermarch and choose a different route. One that would utilize lower elevations and conceal their movements from the hills occupied by the Union forces.

As Longstreet's troops reached Pitzer's Woods on Seminary Ridge and neared the point where he anticipated deploying his troops, he was stunned to discover Union troops on the Emmitsburg Road in large numbers. These troops were positioned much further south than Johnston's reconnaissance had reported. An artillery duel erupted and the Confederate assault plan was in shambles. Many historians have concluded that Johnston could not have possibly been to the various landmarks he claimed to have visited during his reconnaissance; the area contained large numbers of Union troops in locations where Johnston observed a mere four horsemen.

The disagreement between Lee and Longstreet over the proper course of action escalated when the corps commander found the Union position to be dramatically different from what the orders of his army commander anticipated. Lee shunned Longstreet and issued orders directly to one of Longstreet's division commanders Lafayette McLaws. McLaws was to have the honor of leading the attack and was upset to learn that the other division in the attack, under John B. Hood would initiate the action and he refused to speak to Hood. Hood attacked under formal protest when he was not permitted to position his men further to the Confederate right. This was done so that his troops could flank the Union army. The entire high command on the Confederate right was in chaos.

Union chief engineer Gouverneur K. Warren had observed the Confederates from Little Round Top. The XII corps division, which should have been stationed on Little Round Top, had been sent to the Union right where army commander George G. Meade was assembling an attack force. At that moment, Little Round Top was undefended. Warren sought help and fortunately for the Union cause 26-year-old Colonel Strong Vincent responded to Warren's written plea for help intended for his superior by thus marching his brigade to the southern slope of Little Round Top.

Our speaker, Kris White, contends that Little Round Top was not one of the keys to the Union position and feels that the Union line would not have been doomed if the Confederate assault had taken the open knoll. While Vincent lost his life defending Little Round Top, and Major Holman S. Melcher of

the 20th Maine, on the extreme left flank of the army, launched a successful charge. Many attribute the successful defense of Little Round Top to the 20th Maine's Colonel Joshua L. Chamberlain. White pointed out that Chamberlain's very long life, his personal skills with prose, his oratory eloquence and his rather large ego combined to enable him to promote and enrich his personal role in the *Battle of Gettysburg*.

The key to the southern end of the battlefield, according to White, was the Wheatfield. The 20-acre field was like a magnet drawing troops into what White called a "whirlpool of death." The attack that broke the Union line was made by William Barksdale and his Mississippi brigade. Blamed by Jubal Early for the loss of Fredericksburg during the Chancellorsville Campaign, Barksdale was anxious to redeem the reputation of the brigade and its commander. Barksdale was struck three times and was mortally wounded in the attack. But then the Union II corps commander Winfield S. Hancock ordered the 1st Minnesota to sacrifice its regiment to buy time to patch together a position on Cemetery Ridge, which held on until the fight on July 2, ended.

The other key landmarks that White felt must be held were Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. White indicated that the Union army could stand to lose every other road radiating out from Gettysburg to the Confederates, except one, the Baltimore Pike. This road passed over Cemetery Hill and then ran behind Culp's Hill.

On the evening of July 2, Confederate division commander Edward Johnson attacked Culp's Hill with three of his brigades, while he was forced to leave one of his brigades to perform a role typically assigned to cavalry, and defend the Confederate right flank. His attack force was one brigade short of allowing him to seize the Baltimore Pike. Defending Culp's Hill was a Union brigade under George S. Greene. The regiment on the extreme right end of the Union line was the 137th New York commanded by David Ireland. The regiments on the flanks of the army each lost exactly the same number of casualties 137, and the role played by the 137th New York was just as significant as that of the 20th Maine, yet few appreciate the valiant stand made on the slopes of Culp's Hill. Ireland was not as gifted a writer, not as politically adept, and did not live as long (dying of dysentery during the Atlanta Campaign) than Chamberlain.

Both Longstreet and Johnson came up short of turning the respective flanks of the Union army at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863. Neither attack took or threatened the vital Baltimore Pike, that critical Union line of supply, communication and retreat. Instead as many as 20,000 soldiers fell in an action that saw the Union forces bend but not break. Another full day of fighting would be needed before a victor of the *Battle of Gettysburg* could be declared.

FSNMP Superintendent Thanks the RVCWRT

At the August 14th dinner meeting of the RCWRT, the National Park Service Superintendent of the FSNMP Ms. Kirsten Talken-Spaulding, addressed the members present, and she gave a short talk as noted:

Thank you for the time to briefly talk with you all. The RVCWRT was formed with the express purpose of being a place where anyone interested in learning about the CW and preserving the ground upon which soldiers fought could gather. The NPS, through the plethora of places and programs it manages endeavors to help the public engage with the natural and cultural resources of our nation. While we are a relatively small agency, we do more than one might think and that's because of partners like the RVCWRT.

Not only do you further the reach of education regarding the CW, but this RT in particular has been a major contributor to the park in the form of internships. This Round Table does two things for our interns: fist it sponsors the stipend for one of the interns that the park selects, and then the scholarship committee, which I was pleased to play a role on this year, selects one of our interns to be the scholarship recipient. I just wanted to take a quick moment to personally ensure you all heard, directly from me, how much the park and I appreciate the partnership.

The RVCWRT Bulletin Board

By Joyce Darr

It is my job to maintain the RVCWRT's special bulletin board. This 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 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" please send your e-mail address to Alan noting this fact to him at az@azirkle.com.

A Reminder

**Please contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance and to confirm reservations:
Call Bob @ 540-399-1702 or send an e-mail to cwrtldinner@yahoo.com or bobnpeg1954@gmail.com**

Did You Know?

By Jim Smithfield

Throughout the general research for my book "*Overlooked Confederates*," it seemed to me that no other ethnic group than the Irish could be so closely identified with America's Civil War, whether fighting either for the North or for the South. Yes, overall there were more Germans than any other ethnic group fighting in the Civil War. However, the overwhelming majority of the Germans fought for the Union and by comparison, very few fought for the South. Many of the Irish were enlisted just as they stepped off passenger ships landing in various Northern ports. There were more than 150,000 Irishmen who fought for the North and upwards of 40 to 50,000 Irishmen who fought for the Confederacy. Unfortunately, available statistics for the Confederacy are somewhat sketchy when concerning this subject.

It is interesting though that so many Irish units in the South were made up of mostly Irish Catholic soldiers, yet overall many of their officers were Irish Protestants? The fact is that much of the South was influenced by the Irish that you have but to listen carefully to the Southern accent to know this or to then hear the sort of tunes that Southern soldiers sang. Hearing the accent or the tunes sung should make you realize the overall influence that the Irish had on the South in general.

The largely white population of the Confederacy during the Civil War was more native born than immigrant. It appears that there was not much of a drive by the Confederacy to recognize heritage, it was only in the unit names, flags and uniforms of the individual regiments. However, most of the various units themselves maintained their Irish heritage.

Of course, the North had the legendary "Irish Brigade" founded and led by that flamboyant Irishman Thomas Meagher. A great many Northern, as well as, Southern Irish units went into battle carrying the same emerald green flag with the golden harp in the center. The emerald green flags of the Southern units had the same large golden harp as did Northern units. Each Federal or Confederate unit celebrated their Irish heritage proudly, even in the midst of certain death.

In the North, the main centers of Irish settlement were primarily located in Boston, New York City and Philadelphia, these cities had very sizeable Irish neighborhoods. During the major Irish immigration periods, during the 1830's, through the 1850's, the number of Irish steadily increased until, according to the 1860, U.S. Census, well over one and a half million Americans claimed to have been born in Ireland. The overall majority of these Irish American citizens lived in the North. Still there were cities along the Border States that had large Irish populations, one such city was St. Louis, Missouri, where many Irish Confederate soldiers were enlisted.

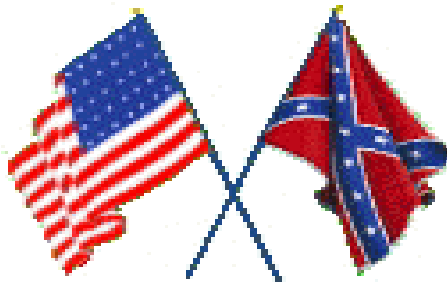
There were periods of severe economic difficulty before, during and after the Civil War for the Irish in America. During these economic difficulties the Irish were singled out for distrust and hatred by their fellow Americans. A frequently seen placard, sign or card displayed on the doors of factories,

shops, warehouses and even farm gates stated “*No Irish need apply.*” The Irish were chiefly distrusted because most were Catholic. In the North especially, there was, of course, major opposition to the Church of Rome. The general frustration from this open prejudice was a prime factor in the boil-over of tempers that erupted into the July 1863, New York City Draft Riots. When the first official Federal Draft was held in New York City, an angry crowd gathered, it was made up of mainly out of work Irish laborers. As the draft officials announced various individual names as they were being drawn, those not wealthy enough to purchase a substitute were required to join up. However, the crowd became a mob as the day went on and all Hell soon spread through the group. The situation quickly escalated into a full-scale riot, lasting three days and spreading to other Northern cities. In New York City, Boston and several other Northern cities an all out rampage of looting, burning and general destruction went on from the mostly frustrated Irish laborers. The biggest issue was that most of the rioters could not find work. The targets of the mob were first the draft officials and the blacks who the rioters felt got the jobs that they, the Irish were denied. It took the transferring of armed troops, brought to New York City directly from the fighting at Gettysburg to bring back peace and order to New York City. The riots did little to help the Irish image in America, as such events will tend to do.

After the Civil War a great many of the Irish soldiers came home only to find the same ugly bias, along with the exact same living conditions as prior to the Civil War. Still, other Irishmen went on to serve in America’s post-war army, mainly in the West. Even though the Germans outnumbered all other minorities, yet the Irish were very much the backbone of both Northern and Southern armies . . .

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 the meeting held on the third Wednesday of June 2017). Their Dinner Meetings are held at the MWW’s Jepson Center located at 1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA, the dinner cost is \$32.00 for each person. Advance reservations should be made by telephoning 540-361-2105. As noted below, their scheduled speaker for the scheduled September 27, 2017, meeting will be James R. (Bud) Robertson who will present “*Robert E. Lee and the Quest for Peace.*”



CWRTF’s Scheduled Speakers **For the 2017 Program Year**

Oct. 25, 2017 Eric Buckland – Mosby’s Men

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

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
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Secretary:	Ben Keller	Research/Historian:	Joyce Darr
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