



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

July 2018, Volume 15, Issue 7

Speaker: Ed Bearss
Topic: “Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Fort Pillow”
When: Monday, July 9, 2018
Location: Brock’s Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

Nathan Bedford Forrest and Controversy at Fort Pillow

Since the summer of 2011, our round table has sponsored the Edwin Cole Bearss internship, and for the past several July meetings, most of the park interns have had the opportunity to have dinner with Bearss and see why he has been called a “National Treasure.” Just a couple of weeks before speaking to us, Bearss will turn 95 years old. A large birthday party is thrown for him every year, but Bearss only consents to allow a party in his honor if instead of personal gifts, attendees donate to a cause of his choosing. In 2018 Bearss has elected to support Appomattox National Historical Park and the annual conference they sponsor with Longwood University. Bearss has no plans on slowing down. He recently booked a tour of the Chancellorsville Battlefield for the Civil War Round Table in Chicago in April, 2021 when he will be 97. One of the most powerful Memorial Day programs held in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery was the year Bearss recalled the battle of the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion at Suicide Creek, New Britain in World War II. While Corporal Bearss survived being severely wounded by Japanese machine gun fire, he recalled those who fell on the same day that he did only that they died from their wounds. Bearss not only has an amazing memory of what he reads, but also what he has experienced, and his recall about his comrades at Suicide Creek is just as vibrant as any aspect of history that he shares with his audiences.

Bearss will speak with us about Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Fort Pillow, Tennessee, April 12, 1864. An alternate name for this controversial engagement is the Fort Pillow Massacre. Forrest had demanded the surrender of the fort, promising to treat the garrison as prisoners of war, but then warned that if the Union commander refused to surrender, he would not be held responsible for the fate of the Union force once his men overwhelmed the fort. When the fighting ended most of the United States Colored Troops making up half of the Union garrison were killed. Bearss will share with us some of the various views of what happened at Fort Pillow and why.

“Whatever Happened to Pemberton? The Life and Times of John C.”
by Gary Castellino

A Review of the June 2018 Program by Greg Mertz

Perhaps no other man was more hated in the South after the Civil War than John C. Pemberton. The Philadelphia-born soldier abandoned his northern roots and became the Confederate general who

surrendered nearly 30,000 soldiers of the Vicksburg, Mississippi garrison on July 4, 1863. His loyalty to the Confederate cause was challenged and many Southerners wondered if he was a traitor. Pemberton's family were associates of William Penn and the future general corresponded with Andrew Jackson regarding his appointment to West Point. Pemberton was in the same class as Joseph Hooker, Braxton Bragg, Jubal Early, and became good friends with classmate Lloyd Tilghman and fellow Philadelphian George G. Meade, who was two years ahead of him.

Pemberton was well-liked by his fellow cadets, and he graduated in the middle of his class. Though his ranking meant he was likely to enter into the cavalry or infantry, his family's connections enabled him to go into the more prestigious artillery.

Our speaker, Gary Castellino, indicated that Pemberton has a weakness for attractive women. When he once courted a young lady but indicated he had no interest in a marriage to the woman, her brother challenged Pemberton to a duel for dishonoring his sister. But when stationed at Fort Monroe in 1844-45, Pemberton fell for Martha "Pattie" Thompson of Norfolk, VA. During the Mexican War, Pemberton met both Ulysses S. Grant and Jefferson Davis, and he received brevet promotions to captain and major for gallantry.

After the war, Pemberton and Pattie married in 1848. Pemberton changed from being a womanizer to a devoted husband, but he changed in other ways as well. Though he had been born into an anti-slavery Quaker family, his familiarity with the South and likely Pattie's family caused him to write: "the more I see of slavery the better I think of it."

When the Civil War erupted, Pemberton faced a crucial decision. A brother wrote to Pemberton that if he resigned his commission in the United States Army, he would never be able to return home again. After the Commonwealth of Virginia seceded, Pattie wrote to her husband why he was not "with us" and "why do you stay (in the U.S. Army)?" On April 24, 1861, Pemberton resigned his commission.

One of his early war assignments was at Charleston, SC, where he advised abandoning a site he considered to be indefensible. Robert E. Lee rebuffed Pemberton, and he was relieved by P.G.T. Beauregard and ordered to Mississippi instead. He launched a successful raid against Union General U.S. Grant's supply base at Holly Springs and thwarted a joint Union army-navy expedition on the Yazoo River.

But Pemberton had four specific problems during the Vicksburg Campaign of the spring and summer of 1863. The first problem was that President Jefferson Davis ordered Pemberton to hold Vicksburg at all hazards. The second problem was that Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston and Pemberton's superior, ordered Pemberton to abandon Vicksburg and join forces with him. Rather than try to convince Davis to change his orders to Pemberton, Johnston instead sought to persuade Pemberton to disobey his orders. The third problem was Pemberton subordinate William W. Loring. While serving under Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson earlier in the war, Loring had sought to undermine Jackson's authority, prompting Jackson to request being reassigned back to VMI. Loring would also fail to give Pemberton the support he deserved. The fourth problem was that one of his couriers was actually a Union spy.

Loring had claimed that it would be beneficial for Pemberton to lose a battle if it resulted in his removal. At the Battle of Champion Hill, Pemberton ordered Loring to support the troops of John S. Bowen, but Loring refused. Then when Pemberton was forced to retreat due to Loring's recalcitrance, he marched his men to link up with Johnston rather than stay with Pemberton's army. Pemberton occupied the Vicksburg defenses as the commander-in-chief had ordered, and after a 47-day siege, he surrendered the garrison.

A staff member of Johnson blamed the loss on Pemberton. Davis always supported Pemberton's efforts to hold on to Vicksburg, but could not give Pemberton another command because the people of the South had lost confidence in him. When Pemberton was exchanged as a prisoner of war, he resigned his commission as a lieutenant general, offering his services as a lieutenant colonel instead. Pemberton served the artillery of the Richmond Defense Battalion.

With the war's end, Pemberton was despised by both sides. Pemberton's northern family was forgiving, however, assisting him to acquire a farm placed in his wife's maiden name. After a couple of dry summers with low yields, he began teaching to supplement his income. It is also at this time that Egypt is recruiting mercenaries, and while William T. Sherman as general in chief of the army had provided recommendations for several former Confederate officers for service in the Egyptian army, Sherman refuses to put in a good word for the northern U.S. Army officer turned Confederate. Pemberton never seems to be able to acquire a significant job.

Pemberton died on July 13, 1881 at the age of 66. His family planned to bury him in Philadelphia's prominent Laurel Hill Cemetery, but the family of Pemberton's West Point friend George G. Meade protested. The Pemberton family still had enough connections to overcome the opposition from the Meades and others, and he was buried in the far corner of the cemetery.

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 cwrtedinner@yahoo.com

Executive Committee Bios

Each month this newsletter will feature a short biography of one of our Executive Committee members. This month we feature Marc Thompson

Colonel Marcum L. Thompson USAF Retired, Past President

Colonel Marcum L. Thompson, USAF Retired, served 28 years in the United States Air Force as an Air Intelligence Officer with assignments to the Joint Staff, Air Staff, United States European Command and United States Strategic Command. He commanded the 692nd Information Operations Group, at Hickam AFB, Hawaii (2000-2002), served as Director of Intelligence for Combined Joint Task Force OPERATIONS NORTHERN WATCH at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey (2002) and concluded his career as Assistant Deputy Chief, Central Security Service with the National Security Agency at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. Following active duty, he worked as an Information Operations policy consultant to the Joint Staff Directorate of Operations (2004-2014). Over the years, he has been a member of numerous Civil War Round Table organizations, serving as president of both the *Sentry Civil War Round Table of Omaha* in Nebraska and the *Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table* in Fredericksburg, Virginia. For more than seventeen years, he volunteered as a historian and tour guide with the National Park Service at the Chancellorsville Battlefield and has addressed Civil War Roundtables across the United States. He has also led several Civil War battlefield bus tours and Staff Rides throughout Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.



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](http://1119HanoverStreet, Fredericksburg, VA), dinner cost is \$32.00 per person. Advance reservations should be made by email: dinner@cwrtf.org or telephone: 540-361-2105.

CWRTF's Scheduled Speakers for the 2018 and 2019 Program Year:

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|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| September 26, 2018 | Frank Orlando | "Gen. and Mrs. Robert E. Lee in Character" |
| October 24, 2018 | Gordon Rhea | "The Generalship of Lee and Grant in the Overland Campaign" |
| November 14, 2018 | Richard Lewis | "Confederate Generals' Uniforms" |
| January 23, 2019 | Robert Dunkerly | "Civil War Railroads" |
| February 27, 2019 | Dr. Bradley Gottfried | "Maps of the Battle of Fredericksburg" |
| March 27, 2019 | Bob O'Connor | "James Hanger and the Hanger Company" |
| April 24, 2019 | Mark Tooley | "The 1861 Peace Conference" |
| May 22, 2019 | Patrick Schroeder, NPS | "Zouaves: America's Forgotten Soldiers" |
| June 19, 2019 | Dave Bastion | "The Vicksburg Canal" |

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:

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|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| President/Dinner Meeting: | Bob Jones | Membership: | Ryan Quint |
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| Secretary: | Melanie Jordan | Member at Large: | John Griffiths |
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Past President: Marc Thompson

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