



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
September 2022, Volume 19, Issue 9

Speaker: Steward Henderson
Topic: The Battle of New Market Heights
When: Monday September 12, 2022
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

Steward Henderson "The Battle of New Market Heights"

Steward T. Henderson is the Past President and Co-founder of the 23rd Regiment United States Colored Troops. Joining with other Civil War historians, he is an author with the Emerging Civil War. He is also a seasonal interpretive park ranger at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. Arriving at the park in February 2005, as a volunteer and becoming an interpretive park ranger in May 2007. He is now also a battlefield guide with Battlefield Tours of Virginia, formerly Fredericksburg

Tours. Other memberships include the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Co. B Reenactors, African American Civil War Memorial and Museum, American Battlefield Trust, and Central Virginia Battlefield Trust.

Steward retired in January 2005, as a Senior Vice President and Area Manager and for Retail Banking, at SunTrust Bank (now Truist Bank) Greater Washington Region, after a 35-year career in the financial services industry. Mr. Henderson attended the American Institute of Banking, and the Consumer Bankers Association Graduate School of Retail Bank Management (renamed Consumer Bankers Association Executive Banking School).

**“From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee’s Civil War, Day by Day, 1861-1865”
by Charlie Knight
A Review of the August 2022 Program by Greg Mertz**

Robert E. Lee is a familiar character to anyone with an interest in the Civil War – at least we are familiar with his role on major battlefields and his dealings with other prominent generals during his days as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. But when Charlie Knight compiled his book tracing Lee “day by day,” he examined the often-misunderstood role of Lee before he took command of the Confederacy’s most famous army, Lee’s activities between the famous battles, and his dealings with lesser known figures during the war. That was the focus of Knight’s talk to our round table.

The members of Lee’s staff proved to be great sources for tracing Lee during the war years, and through them we see a Lee who was not a “larger than life” figure. Lee had a sense of humor. Lee could be in a bad mood. Lee was difficult to work for. Lee flirted with young ladies. Knight’s favorite of Lee’s staff officers was Charles Venable, a genius with no social filter who blurted out whatever he thought, and was often at odds with Lee at various times throughout the war.

Early in the war, Lee was responsible for preparing to defend Virginia. From mid-May to early June, he inspected Norfolk, Manassas and the Peninsula, finding many deficiencies and often replaced commanders. The postings of G.T. Beauregard at Manassas and John B. Magruder on the Peninsula resulted from this period.

Lee went to western Virginia where on September 13, 1861 Knight felt that the reality of war struck Lee. His aide and tent mate Col. John A. Washington was killed, and his son "Rooney" had a close call. Lee was recalled to Richmond, and his time in the western part of the state was largely seen as being a failure. After a stint at Savannah, Georgia, during which time he visited his father's grave, he once more returned to Richmond. Lee was serving as Davis's military advisor, when army commander Gen. Joseph E. Johnston was severely wounded in the battle of Seven Pines, and Davis turned to Lee to "temporarily" take over that role until Johnston recovered.

Included among the lesser-known aspects of Lee's tenure as the army commander are some of his injuries. Lee went out to Jackson's skirmish line on a reconnaissance August 29, 1862 at Groveton on the Second Manassas battlefield and a sharpshooter's bullet grazed his cheek. During some type of accident involving his horse Traveller, Lee broke both of his wrists and had both arms in slings at the onset of the Sharpsburg or Antietam Campaign. Lee could not dress himself or feed himself, requiring a great deal of assistance.

Lee dealt with personal loss. On October 26, 1862 staff officer Walter Taylor walked into Lee's tent unannounced, as he was accustomed to doing, only to find Lee weeping with a letter in his hand announcing that his daughter Anne had died. She was just 23, and succumbed to typhoid fever. Later that year Lee's granddaughter and Rooney's daughter died just days before the December 1862 battle of Fredericksburg. Then one year later, Lee's daughter-in-law (with whom he was very close) and Rooney's wife Charlotte Carter Wickham Lee died unexpectedly December 26, 1863.

When Lee complained, he most frequently vented to his eldest son, Custis, serving as a top aide to President Jefferson Davis. One example is the February 12, 1863 letter grumbling that he was unable to fill vacancies in regimental command because politicians were too busy seeking highly desirable positions for their family members. Lee also unleashed his anger on his wife for drawing army rations for Lee's family while at the same time he had been protesting to Richmond that his army was not being properly fed.

Many are not aware that Gen. T.J. Jackson was in charge of the army from March 29 to April 16, 1863 while Lee recuperated from a heart attack. Lee's

health plagued him for the rest of the war. When Lee offered his resignation following the battle of Gettysburg, he cited two reasons: the feeling that the citizens of the Confederacy and the men of his army had lost confidence in him, and his poor health.

Lee had all but conceded that he would be forced to take command of the Army of the Tennessee, replacing Braxton Bragg. But somehow, Lee not only talked Davis out of making the transfer, but furthermore convinced him to place Joseph E. Johnston in command instead – an officer whom Davis despised.

On the North Anna battlefield, Lee had another close call on May 23, 1864, when a Union artillery projectile struck the porch of the Fox home, Ellington, but did not explode. When the Fox family invited Lee to have breakfast with them, he declined but said he would welcome a glass of buttermilk. Knight questions whether the buttermilk had spoiled, because Lee got sick that afternoon. With Lee ill, and none of the other subordinates capable of even temporarily stepping in to command, the army was effectively leaderless. In one of the more heated arguments between Lee and Charles Venable, the outspoken aide insisted that Lee needed to call Gen. G.T. Beauregard up from Richmond to take over, but Lee refused.

Another example of Lee's temper occurred during the battle of Fort Harrison, when he had announced to all that the headquarters would move at 2:00 am on October 7, 1864. Lee, however, swore that he had informed the staff to be ready to leave at 1:00 am, found none of the staff prepared to march at that earlier hour, and was in a horrible mood until the battle got underway.

When the army headquarters at Petersburg shifted to Edge Hill, the Turnbull home, Lee teased aide Walter Taylor for helping himself to the nicest room in the house. Lee would write that the door would not shut in his own room, and the pets of the Turnbull family all went into Lee's room at night, because it was the only fireplace in the house that winter to which the animals could gain access for warmth.

When Petersburg fell on April 2, 1865, Lee found it necessary to deal with a couple of irregular matters. His daughter Agnes had been visiting her father, so Lee was not only burdened with evacuating the army, but also anxious to arrange for Agnes to get back to Richmond (not knowing that Richmond would likewise become a chaotic place that day). At the same time Walter

Taylor asked Lee for permission to go to Richmond for the purpose of getting married, which the general granted.

CVBT Annual Conference for 2022

Please take note of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust 2022 Annual Conference "1862: The War Comes to Fredericksburg" September 30 - October 2. All-inclusive weekend tickets are \$195 and the Saturday night Banquet only ticket is \$95. Historian John Hennessy will be the Keynote Speaker, talking about the Union occupation of Fredericksburg in the summer of 1862. Details can be found at <http://www.cvbt.org>.

RVCWRT Bus Trip - Second Manassas

Our annual bus trip "Lee vs. Pope: The Battle of Second Manassas" is on Saturday, October 22, 2022. Marc Thompson will be the guide for this six hour tour, which includes a professional military analysis at nine battlefield sites, transportation, water, box lunch and a 20 page spiral-bound color handout. You can pay the \$90 trip cost through our website at www.rappvalleycivilwar.org/membership. You can use PayPal or pay directly with a credit card . You also have the option of mailing a check to RVCWRT, PO Box 7632, Fredericksburg VA 22404; or paying at a future dinner meeting. Attendance is limited to 40 people.

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.cwrftf.org. As with our round table, things are subject to change due to the ups and downs of Covid.

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. 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.

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