



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter
December 2019, Volume 16, Issue 12

Speaker: Greg Mertz
Topic: "Defeated Victory: Albert Sidney Johnston's Death at Shiloh"
When: Monday, December 9, 2019
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

Greg Mertz: "Defeated Victory: Albert Sidney Johnston's Death at Shiloh"

Greg Mertz has worked for the National Park Service for 39 years and is currently the supervisory historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. Raised in what is now Wildwood, Missouri, his interest in the Civil War grew from annual visits to the Shiloh battlefield and hiking one

of the six trails with his Boy Scout troop. Greg has written a book titled, *Attack at Daylight and Whip Them: The Battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, 1862* in the Emerging Civil War Series. He has also written an essay "Defeated Victory: Albert Sidney Johnston's Death at Shiloh" for the book *Turning Points of the American Civil War*.

Named as the Confederacy's ranking field general, Albert Sidney Johnston had made mistakes early in the war, resulting in the loss of 12,000 veteran soldiers captured at Fort Donelson in February, 1862. The subsequent evacuation of most of western Tennessee had many Southerners clamoring for his removal. But Confederate President Jefferson Davis stuck by the man he had known so well, including time together as West Point cadets.

The execution of Johnston's plan for the battle of Shiloh was riddled with obstacles, and on the very eve of battle, Johnston's key subordinates advised the campaign be aborted. Johnston insisted that the army would attack at daylight, directed the battle from the front, and after achieving a substantial degree of success, fell in battle as the famous "Hornets' Nest" Union position fell. Confederate attacks against Union General U.S. Grant's final line, made as daylight was waning, were not successful.

Johnston's fall before the battle ended, left the Confederate people and Civil War historians to forever ponder whether Johnston's reputation as the top Confederate soldier was deserved. Our December program will assess the role of Johnston directing nine hours of a battle that would result in more casualties than those who fell in all wars previous to the Civil War, and how he responded to as severe a test as any American general had ever been subjected.

**"Hell Comes to Southern Maryland: The Point Lookout POW Camp"
by Dr. Bradley Gottfried**

A Review of the November 2019 program by Greg Mertz

Point Lookout State Park at the junction of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay is the site of the largest prison camp for Confederate prisoners of war in the North. Originally constructed as a 1400-bed hospital for sick and wounded Union soldiers, the location, and the existing

infrastructure components including wharfs and warehouses, made it a logical place for a prison.

Early in the war, both sides typically paroled the soldier they captured, with the soldiers agreeing not to pick up arms until properly exchanged. The Union forces were hesitant to negotiate with the Confederacy because it could be construed as recognition of the Confederacy as a sovereign state. Not until July of 1862 was a cartel exchange agreement reached between the two sides.

The cartel broke down when the Union army raised United States Colored Troops and the Confederacy refused to recognize black soldiers or their white officers as prisoners to be treated according to the terms of the cartel. Union General U.S. Grant's desire to wage a war of attrition also contributed to the Union army's desire to cease the prisoner exchange. The result was an increased demand for prison space.

Point Lookout was built to hold 10,000 prisoners. Two pens were constructed with twelve-foot-high stockades. A twenty-acre pen was for enlisted men, and a ten acres enclosure was meant to be for officers, but the smaller area soon became the hospital.

It was the only camp for Confederate prisoners of war that housed the soldiers in tents. The other Northern camps had wooden barracks.

The suspension of the prisoner exchange coincided with the large number of Confederates captured in the Gettysburg Campaign. The Point Lookout prison population grew from 136 prisoners in July, 1863 to 7,585 in October, 1863. Another surge occurred from the start of the Overland Campaign in the spring of 1864, as the number of prisoners increased from 6,268 to 14,747. The prison reached its peak population during the last month of the war, when it held twice as many prisoners as it was designed to hold, as 20,110 prisoners crowded into Point Lookout in April 1865.

One attempt to alleviate the crowded conditions came in January of 1864. Prisoners who took the oath of allegiance and agreed to join the Union army were sent to fight Indians in the Dakotas and patrol the frontier. Other prisoners whose homes were in solid control of the Union army could also be released by taking the oath. Very few Confederate soldiers agreed to these conditions, however, and sustained the horrid conditions of the camp instead.

Some of the Union prison guards were from veteran units that had suffered severely and had been sent to Point Lookout as an easier duty to recuperate to a degree. These guards had a level of respect for their combat hardened prisoners and treated the Confederate soldiers well. Such was not the case when United States Colored Troops were assigned to guard duty. As the guards patrolled along a walkway lining the stockade, they were supposed to give warning when a prisoner crossed the “deadline.” Some black guards shot before giving the notice, and some discharged their guns into the tents of the prisoners – at times indiscriminately, and at other times deliberately shooting into certain tents. The guards shot about fifty times, with 13 killed, 28 wounded, and with very few of the guards being prosecuted.

Originally the prison consisted of just the stockade with no defenses. In the summer of 1864, as General Jubal Early entered Maryland and threatened Washington, a smaller force under General Bradley Johnson and Major Harry Gilmor was assigned to launch a raid on Point Lookout, with plans for a boat from Richmond with guns to rendezvous with them. The raid never got close to the prison, but in its aftermath the Union addressed the vulnerability of Point Lookout by constructing fortifications on the north end of the camp.

The supplies provided for the prisoners left the men, sick, hungry and cold. An inspection found 1/3 of the tents were unfit for use. The same inspection showed that only one in 3 men had the one blanket each prisoner should be allowed to have. Wood for heat was only provided from mid-November to February, and each prisoner was allowed to receive a piece of wood every other day. Soldiers were allowed only one shirt and if a prisoner’s family sent a box with clothing or blankets, the men were not permitted to keep any extra items. The food rations were cut back over the tenure of the prison, with evidence that food was purposely withheld in retaliation for the treatment of Union prisoners at Andersonville.

Though wells were dug, the water contained iron sulphate, and quartermaster Montgomery Meigs eventually had fresh water towed in. The sinks and latrines were built on planks over the Potomac River for daytime use, and at night the men relieved themselves in tubs that were emptied into the river in the morning. Men suffering from diarrhea could not make it to the tubs or sinks, and the stench of the camp was horrific.

At its worst, ten prisoners died every day. Officially 2950 prisoners died, but a Confederate monument outside of the state park indicates that 3384 soldiers died at Point Lookout. The conditions at all prison camps got so bad that

Grant eventually pushed for the resumption of the cartel, with the prisoners who were the sickest to be exchanged first.

Even though the last major surrender of Confederate forces occurred on April 26, 1865, for some reason the prison camp continued to function and it was not officially closed until August 2, 1865. The horrible conditions of the camp were due to poor leaders, supply and logistical issues, and an insensitivity rooted in the fact that neither side wanted to detain enemy prisoners.

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 cwrtdinner@yahoo.com

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 2020. Dinner Meetings are held at the UMW's Jepson Center located at:

[1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA](http://1119HanoverStreet.com)

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 2019 Program Year:

Jan. 22, 2020	Ryan Longfellow	“Grant and the Battle of the Wilderness”
Feb. 26, 2020	Chris Kolakowski	“Perryville and the Kentucky Campaign”
Mar. 25, 2020	Dr. Caroline E. Janney	“Burying the Dead, But Not the Past. The Ladies Memorial Association”
Apr. 22, 2020	Gordon Rhea	“The Generalship of Lee and Grant in the Overland Campaign”
May 27, 2020	John Biemeck	“Civil War Ordnance”
Jun. 17, 2020	Paul Kahan	“The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant: Preserving the Civil War’s Legacy”



From the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS)- Massachusetts Photograph Collection.

Stafford County in the Civil War

Stafford County played a major role in the Union Army's efforts in Virginia. A few bullets about Stafford County before and during the Civil War:

- Stafford County's White Oak area is the ancestral home of the Potowamac (or Potomac) Indians, many of whom still inhabit the White Oak area.
- George Washington was raised in Stafford County. This is where he supposedly chopped down the cherry tree (untrue) and where he tossed a coin across a river (not a silver dollar, which did not exist, and not the Potomac, which ranges up to two miles wide.)
- Some of the earliest shots of the Civil War were in Stafford County. In May, 1861, Union warships on the Potomac River fired on Confederate batteries set up on the shore in Stafford County. No casualties on either side.
- Stafford County contains the only building known to have been visited by both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln – Chatham Manor, which today is headquarters for the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. During the Civil War, it was known as the Lacey house, after Horace Lacey, who ran a plantation there with about 150 slaves.
- Lincoln visited Stafford County six times during 1862 and 1863. His visits were to the approximately 135,000 Union troops who were stationed there.
- Aquia Landing, at the confluence of Aquia Creek and the Potomac River was a major supply depot for the Union Army, and a major conduit for escaping slaves. North-bound slaves, once they crossed the Rappahannock River into Stafford County were safe. They could then stroll north a few miles to Aquia Landing, hop an empty supply ship, and be brought north. With 135,000 Union soldiers in the county, the slaves did not fear the slave patrols that were common south of the Rappahannock.

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:

President/Dinner Meeting:	Bob Jones	Member at Large:	Robin Donato
Vice President:	John Sapanara	Member at Large:	John Griffiths
Secretary:	Melanie Jordan	Member at Large:	Barbara Stafford
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