



# THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter**  
May 2016, Volume 13, Issue 5

**Speaker:** Elizabeth “Beth” Parnicza  
**Topic:** "Stonewall Jackson’s Last Map”  
**When:** Monday, May 9, 2016  
**Location:** Brock’s Riverside Grill  
**Times:** Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

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## **Abstract on Beth Parnicza, our Scheduled Speaker for Monday, May 9, 2016**

**By Jim Smithfield**

Elizabeth “Beth” Parnicza is a National Park Historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Military Park, where she also supervises the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitors Center. Beth is a 2011 graduate of West Virginia University; she joined the National Service and moved to the “other Virginia” to pursue her passion for Civil War History. Beth’s ongoing research interests focus largely on the human aspects of the Civil War including, the looting of Fredericksburg, the general movement toward a hard war, the experience of battle, and the early historians of the National Park.

### **About the Topic “Jackson’s Last Map”**

It was Robert E. Lee himself, who carefully preserved “Stonewall Jackson’s” last hand-drawn map of the *Chancellorsville Battlefield*, by pasting the relic into his own copy of the first biography of Jackson. What can this map tell us about Jackson’s knowledge of the Chancellorsville area as the battle develops? What does its use and preservation reveal about the relationship between Lee and Jackson?

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## **"Rooney Lee: Too Big to be a Man; Too Small to be a Horse”**

**By Robert E. L. Krick**

**Review of the April 2016 program by Greg Mertz**

Civil War Round Table program themes often consider their subject to have been underestimated or underappreciated. Robert Krick indicated that such was not the case regarding Rooney Lee. His skill had always been appreciated at the time he was appointed a major general in the Confederate army. Rooney Lee was the youngest such officer at that

grade, serving in the cavalry -- a branch of the army that had long been considered as being more successful than their Federal counterparts.

The reasons why Robert Krick feels that Rooney Lee's career should be considered were because he was an important member of the most famous family of the Confederacy and because he was a high ranking officer in the most successful Confederate army. He also believes that what is most memorable about his life is how tragic that life was . . .

Rooney was the second son of Robert E. Lee. He was named William Henry Fitzhugh after a friend of the family. The nickname "Rooney" is apparently "darling" in Gaelic, and the family began to call him Rooney within the first three months of his life. He was noted as being a mischievous child, Rooney did not heed being banned from the stable and as an 8-year old he had an accident with a hay cutter, cutting off the tips of his fingers on his left hand.

He always wanted to be a soldier like his father, but since his older brother Custis was admitted into West Point, it was highly improbable that another member of the same family would be granted that same privilege and he was unable to get accepted. So, he instead went to Harvard, being president of the freshman class. But his father called him "thoughtless and impulsive," perhaps reinforced by Rooney's decision to leave the prestigious school after completing three years of study when he was able to obtain a commission in the 6th U.S. Infantry, only to stay in the army for a mere two years.

Rooney married a cousin, Charlotte Wickham, with his groomsmen including John Pegram (a future Confederate general killed on February 6, 1865, at Hatcher's Run). Frank Mallory (eventual colonel of the 55th Virginia killed at Chancellorsville) and Samuel Ferguson (who became a Confederate general in the western theatre). Rooney took up farming on the fertile plantation located at White House Landing on the Pamunkey River, which he inherited from his grandfather. Rooney and Charlotte began their family with Robert E. Lee, Jr. – the first grandchild in a new generation of Lees.

When the Civil War broke out, Rooney raised a company of cavalry called "Lee's Rangers" and eventually became colonel of the 9th Virginia Cavalry. His first real combat was a skirmish at Falmouth on April 18, 1862, the Good Friday when the Union army first occupied Fredericksburg. In June, Rooney participated in Stuart's Ride Around McClellan leading up to the Seven Days Battles. On the ride, Rooney swam back and forth across the Chickahominy River to see if a particular point was shallow enough to cross – it was not.

Coinciding with the Seven Days Battles was the start of a tragic eighteen month period of disaster for Rooney and his family. On June 29, the Federal army burned Rooney's home White House Plantation, and he could see the smoke of his burning residence. The next day his two year old son, Robert E. Lee, Jr. died; June 30 was also the wedding anniversary of the toddler's soon to be famous grandfather. But Charlotte was pregnant at the time of her son's death, giving birth in October to a daughter, Charlotte Carter Lee, who lived only six weeks. Because of the active campaigning around Richmond and then Fredericksburg, Rooney was unable to attend the funeral of either of his children.

That summer, fall and winter, Lee was involved in several small-scale but important actions at Catlett Station, Boonsboro, Chambersburg and Dumfries where his skill was rewarded with promotion to brigadier general. One of the benefits was the expansion of his staff, and the opportunity to add his younger brother Rob (Robert E. Lee, Jr.) as his aide. This undoubtedly pleased their mother, who had unsuccessfully tried to get their father to transfer Rob from the front lines in the Rockbridge Artillery to the army commander's staff.

Rooney did exceeding well in some of the hardest fighting he had been involved in during the war at *Brandy Station* on June 9, 1863. He made a determined defense followed

by an aggressive and timely counterattack in which he was wounded. Taken to the home of relatives near Richmond to recuperate during the subsequent Gettysburg Campaign, he was captured on June 26, 1863, by Union cavalry taking advantage of the Confederate movement into Pennsylvania by launching a raid on the Confederate capital city in what became known as the Blackberry Raid. Imprisoned in Fort Monroe, Rooney was still held captive when his wife died of consumption on either the day before or the day after Christmas 1863.

Not until March of 1864, was Rooney Lee exchanged for Union General Neal Dow. He saw action in many raids during the Petersburg Campaign, including the Kautz-Wilson Raid, the Beefsteak Raid, and the Hicksford Raid. Lee was apparently flirting with one of the Gilliam women when the fighting erupted at the *Battle of Five Forks*; he procured an ambulance for her escape. The wagon was loaded down with many of her possessions including a harp which was strapped onto the top of the wagon. Lee played an important role defending the Confederate right while the left end of the line collapsed. During the retreat to Appomattox Court House, it was Rooney who had to deliver the bad news to his father that the road to Jetersville and North Carolina was blocked, and the Confederates had to select a different route heading west.

After the war. Rooney and Rob went to White House Plantation and built a cabin, there resuming farming using labor saving machinery. In 1867 Rooney married Mary Bolling, and once again tried to start a family. Three of their five children died in infancy. Like his father, Rooney had heart trouble and died at the still young age of 54.

While it has been said that Rooney Lee was “too big to be a man; too small to be a horse,” he was 6’ 3” weighing 175 pounds while at Harvard and he had been a still slim 220 pounds in 1861.



William Henry Fitzhugh (Rooney) Lee  
May 31, 1837 – October 15, 1891

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**Remember: Contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance**

To Confirm Your Reservations; Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail [3dognight@Bigplanet.Com](mailto:3dognight@Bigplanet.Com)

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**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](http://www.RVCWRT.org). Yearly membership dues are still just \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and it's still 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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Post Office Box 7632  
Fredericksburg, irginia 22404