



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
May 2024, Volume 21, Issue 5

Speaker: Kris White
Topic: “The Ides of May: The Wounding of James Longstreet”
When: Monday May 13, 2024
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

Kris White “The Ides of May: The Wounding of James Longstreet”

Kristopher White is the deputy director of education at the American Battlefield Trust. White is a graduate of Norwich University with an M.A. in Military History, as well as a graduate of California University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in History. For nearly five years, he served as a ranger-historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. White is the co-founder and founding chief historian of Emerging Civil War and is also the co-creator of the Engaging the Civil War Series. An award-winning speaker

and editor, White has authored, co-authored, or edited nearly two-dozen books. He frequently leads tours in the United States and abroad.

"The Ides of May: The Wounding of James Longstreet,": "Old Pete," Lee's second-in-command, was a stalwart that the "Gray Fox" relied on as the 1864 campaigns opened. However, just hours after Longstreet saved Lee's army along the Orange Plank Road in the Wilderness, tragedy struck. While riding along the road during an audacious and successful flank attack, Longstreet, like Stonewall Jackson, was accidentally shot by his own men, less than three miles from the spot of Jackson's fateful wounding. Longstreet's wounding, like Jackson's, forever changed the face of the Army of Northern Virginia.

"Intelligence in the Shiloh Campaign"
by Gregory Elder
A Review of the April 2024 Program by Greg Mertz

"I do not apprehend anything like an attack upon our position." That is the message sent by Gen. William T. Sherman, one of the six division commanders in the Federal army encamped around Shiloh church, Tennessee to army commander Gen. Ulysses S. Grant on the eve of battle. Sherman was the only West Point graduate among Grant's division commanders, and Grant relied upon Sherman's observations and advice. It was Sherman who had selected the site of the camp at Shiloh, where streams protected the flanks of the army from enemy attack – the only way Confederates could get at Grant's army was via a frontal assault.

The Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston and his Army of Mississippi was gathering at Corinth, Mississippi, 22 miles from Shiloh. Despite the church being along the only reasonable avenue of advance for the Confederate army, standing beside the main road between Corinth and the Federal supply base on the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing, the Federal army did not make any preparations along their front.

The Federal army constructed no defensive works; fighting in the open would make the inexperienced soldiers tough. Despite three of the six Federal divisions possessing combat experience, the two divisions that Sherman placed on the outskirts of the camp, closest to the Confederates were the two most recently organized, green divisions. Although it would have been

reasonable to send out regular cavalry patrols, the Federal cavalry had been momentarily stripped from the divisions for a reorganization that was to take place on April 6, 1862 – which turned out to be the first day of the battle of Shiloh. And instead of pushing pickets several miles from the outskirts of the camp to provide plenty of advanced warning of a Confederate movement, the pickets were immediately in front of the Federal camps. The Federal soldiers would not be able to discover the presence of Confederate soldiers any sooner than the point of attack.

Our speaker, Greg Elder, declared that early in the Civil War, many things that had been attributed to failures in intelligence, were actually failures in leadership. The issues affecting the Confederate surprise attack on Grant and Sherman are largely factors of their leadership and can largely be summed up in a Sherman quote about Grant: *“He don't care a damn for what the enemy does out of his sight but it scares me like hell.”* On the surface it may sound like the two generals complimented each other, but at Shiloh, Sherman's realization that he had a tendency to worry too much about the enemy had nearly disastrous consequences.

Sherman fought at the battle of First Bull Run, and despite the Federal defeat, Sherman did quite well. He became the commander of the Department of the Ohio, where he overestimated the strength of the enemy, was accused of being crazy and was relieved of command. Sherman then thrived under less pressure in a staff position in St. Louis, before returning to the field taking the new division in Grant's army. This time, Sherman would be determined not to overreact to enemy threats. “If I took more precautions,” Sherman reasoned, “they'd call me crazy again.” Elder indicated that Sherman was terrified at being labeled a coward.

In the western theater at that phase of the war, spies for the Federal army often sold the exact same intelligence information to each of the different division commanders, rather than it being sold only once and having that information disseminated among all of the other army commanders. By the time Grant approached the Mississippi border, he had outpaced his spy network, and had no more money to establish a new spy network.

Confederates sent fake deserters into Federal lines reporting Confederate strength at 80,000 – nearly double the 45,000 troops Johnston would be able to assemble – and reported that morale in the army was low. Grant was

willing to accept that the Confederates were discouraged by their defeats in the west, and were unlikely to take the initiative, predicting that the fall of Corinth would be an even easier victory than the fall of Fort Donelson.

Grant lacked empathy -- the ability to put himself in the shoes of his opponent and consider what he would do if he were in command of the opposing army. And while Grant received conflicting reports regarding the Confederate strength, he never considered the possibility that they might outnumber his 48,000 men or that any of his assessments could be wrong. The knowledge that a second Federal army under Gen. Don C. Buell was on the verge of joining Grant and swelling the blue-clad ranks, only served to make Grant even more comfortable that the Confederates would not be attacking him.

On April 4, two days before the battle, Federal pickets reported Confederates in large numbers. Instead of the news being welcomed, the soldier was instead placed under arrest by Sherman for reporting false information. Elder referred to this as "porcupine leadership," when a leader declares that he doesn't want any input from subordinates. Multiple sightings of the Confederates occurred on April 5, including a report of Col. Jesse Appler of the 53rd Ohio, the unit closest to the Confederates, who was told by the porcupine Sherman to "*Take your damned regiment back to Ohio. There is no enemy nearer than Corinth!*"

Not until one of the first shots of the battle struck Sherman's finger in the camp of the 53rd Ohio did he realize that the army was under attack. The Federal army was able to hold on with Buell's army arriving the evening of the first day of the fight and providing reinforcements needed to drive the Confederates back off of the battlefield on the second day of the battle.

Sherman and Grant both made gross miscalculations that resulted in many of their troops being ill-prepared and suffering horrific casualties for the mistake. Grant felt that the Confederates were on the verge of collapse, and while it would have been logical for the Confederates to make the Federals drive them from their Corinth defenses, he was wrong to assume there was no possibility that Johnston would attack. The biases that Sherman and Grant possessed shaped the manner in which they viewed the intelligence information brought to them and their lack of empathy for their enemy did not allow them to consider what the Confederates might do.

Friends of Central Virginia Battlefield Trust

As you know CVBT is a land trust. We focus on purchasing endangered battlefield properties. We do produce a large three-day annual conference, standalone events and need to interpret and maintain our lands, we need help in all of these. In the past, CVBT has had individuals from organizations assist us, and we are grateful, but now we would like to create an official volunteer group who would enjoy being part of CVBT's volunteer core.

We have created "**The Friends of CVBT.**" The intent is for this all-volunteer group is to be the "On Call" core of CVBT's volunteer group assisting in events and battlefield related needs. Active volunteer members will have the unique opportunity to be involved with events hosted by nationally acclaimed historians, assist in tours, and work on preserved battlefields. Participating volunteers will also be enrolled in the membership ranks of CVBT every year they contribute. CVBT will provide each volunteer with a CVBT volunteer staff shirt and CVBT official hat to wear at events or whenever wanted. We will be limiting this new group to 18 volunteers.

CVBT is now beginning our 27th year of preserving our local battlefields, the very battlefields you study and walk upon. We would be honored to have you join the ranks of CVBT volunteers to help us further our mission of preserving our Nation's history.

If interested please email our Executive Director **Terry Rensel** at executivedirector@cvbt.org .

Office: 540-374-0900

Wilderness Crossing Development

Below is a link with information about an upcoming meeting led by the CVBT about the controversial Wilderness Crossing Development that is threatening the Wilderness Battlefield. The event will be on May 1, 2024 at 10 A.M. The meeting will be at Wilderness Run Vineyards. The address is 11109 Plank Road Spotsylvania, VA 22508. You must RSVP to attend. The link below will contain more information about the history of the site and the event.

Please click the link: https://www.battlefields.org/events/news-conference-about-controversial-wilderness-crossing-development?utm_campaign=email&utm_medium=update&utm_source=042224&ms=emailwildevent240422&emci=07cd5b7b-5000-ef11-aaf0-7c1e52017038&emdi=4289cf8a-da00-ef11-aaf0-7c1e52017038&ceid=380085

Or email RSVP@battlefields.org

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.cwrta.org, as well as below.

CWRTF Schedule

May 22, 2024 – Gary Gallagher, PATHWAYS TO NEW NATIONAL LOYALTY

June 19, 2024 – Paul Brueske, THE LAST SIEGE: THE 1865 MOBILE CAMPAIGN

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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