



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
July 2024, Volume 21, Issue 7

Speaker: Stephen Evangelista
Topic: “Our Story: *The Lives and Legacy of Those Who Served in Battery B First Rhode Island Light Artillery*”
When: Monday July 8, 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

Stephen Evangelista “Our Story: *The Lives and Legacy of Those Who Served in Battery B First Rhode Island Light Artillery*”

Stephen is an alumna of Providence College where he graduated valedictorian as well as having attended the Harvard Extension School in Boston. Stephen is a living historian and historical interpreter. He is a member of Battery B First Rhode Island Light Artillery Inc. and serves as one of its executive officers.

Stephen is also an American Civil War historian and author. Stephen's book, *Our Story: The Lives and Legacy of Those Who Served in Battery B First Rhode Island Light Artillery*, has been widely received and acclaimed since its publication. It has been accepted into the Gettysburg National Park Library and Research Center and has been endorsed and promoted by the Rhode Island Publications Society, The Adams County Historical Society, the Heritage Harbor Foundation, and the Rupp House History Center in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

In addition to his distinguished federal career, and status as a self-published author, he is also an accomplished musician and singer/songwriter with more than 15 copyrighted musical works including an original work that is part of the permanent collection at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Though a native Rhode Islander, Stephen lives in Eldersburg, Maryland with his wife and two children.

Our Story: The Lives and Legacy of Those Who Served In Battery B First Rhode Island Light Artillery takes a close look at the individual lives of the brave and heroic soldiers who served with Rhode Island's Battery B. These men were ordinary people who lived during the extraordinary time of the American Civil War. Learn who they were as fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands. Enter the past, meet them face to face, and discover how their story is our story too. All proceeds from the sale of this book will support educational programs provided by the modern-day Battery B First Rhode Island Light Artillery Inc.

**“Gettysburg’s Southern Front: Opportunity and Failure at Richmond”
by Hampton Newsome**

A Review of the June 2024 Program by Greg Mertz

Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's offensive and the reactions of Federal Generals Joseph Hooker and George G. Meade, culminating in the Battle of Gettysburg, are very well known and often written about. But just what forces were left behind in Virginia and what, if anything, did they do? Hampton Newsome's book, and his talk to us, addressed that question, as well as surmising under what circumstances those operations could have had a significant impact on Lee's campaign in Pennsylvania.

Ironically, when Hooker realized that Lee was heading north, his initial reaction was to move on Richmond with the main army. Lincoln rejected the proposal on June 5, 1863, using one of his many quaint analogies involving farm animals: "I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river, like an ox jumped half over a fence, and liable to be torn by dogs, front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other." Instead, the movement against Richmond would entail some of the 30,000 Federal soldiers from the Department of Virginia, commanded by Gen. John A. Dix, headquartered at Fort Monroe.

Richmond was defended by three rings of earthworks. The Chickahominy was a significant barrier protecting the capitol city. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill was responsible for defending Richmond. Besides militia and heavy artillery units, the veteran brigades of Generals Robert Ransom, Jr., John R. Cooke, Micah Jenkins and Montgomery Corse were in the vicinity of Richmond or at Hanover Junction

The targets of Dix's command would not be the Confederate capitol, but the tenuous Confederate supply line. Supplies departing Richmond were transported by rail west to Staunton, and then north via wagons through the Shenandoah Valley enroute to Pennsylvania. Federal general-in-chief Henry W. Halleck realized the vulnerability of the Confederate line of supplies and initially played an active role in the planning of Dix's actions.

Targets were the Weldon Railroad in North Carolina, the rail line connecting Tennessee and Virginia in West Virginia, and the bridges of both the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac and Virginia Central Railroads over the North Anna and South Anna Rivers. The Richmond portion of the plan was a three-pronged operation using about 20,000 infantrymen from the IV and VII Corps and 1,000 cavalrymen under Col. Samuel P. Spear.

Spear's cavalry brigade set out to destroy the Virginia Central Railroad bridge across the South Anna, when an enslaved person pointed out another tempting target along the way. On June 25, the horsemen were informed of the location of a plantation where the Confederate army commander's son, W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee, was recovering from a wound received in the battle of Brandy Station earlier that month. Lee was captured and would spend the next several months in prison. Federal accounts indicate that the enslaved people encountered along the way provided the blue-clad troopers with

assistance throughout the raid, and they attached themselves to the Federal columns, freeing themselves as the soldiers neared the plantations where they were forced to toil.

When Spear's men reached the South Anna River, they encountered a guard-house and a company of the 44th North Carolina under Lt. Col. Tazewell Lee Hargrove, part of Gen. J.J. Pettigrew's brigade. During the skirmish on June 26, after a few Federal frontal attacks failed, a flank attack enabled Spear's troopers to reach the guard-house. Intense hand to hand combat ensued for some 20-25 minutes, and another company of Confederates reinforced the small garrison. The Federal cavalrymen successfully burned the bridge and were supposed to proceed to the RF&P bridge over the same river, but it was getting dark and more Confederate reinforcements were believed to be heading that way.

Besides the cavalry foray, two infantry expeditions also got underway in the Richmond area. Gen. Erasmus Keyes proceeded half way to his target at Bottom's Bridge on the Chickahominy River when he halted. D.H. Hill responded by sending some of his veteran troops to strike Keyes in a fight at Crump's Crossroads on July 2, 1863 – the same day as the fight at Gettysburg's Little Round Top. Keyes was stopped cold by an inferior force, and was dismissed by Dix.

Gen. George W. Getty was to strike the second bridge that Spear was supposed to destroy -- the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac bridge over the South Anna River. Getty practiced what Newsome called a "bread crumb strategy," leaving significant detachments of his men at numerous posts along the way, frittering away his strength to such a degree that he lacked sufficient troops to accomplish his objective. Getty, himself dropped out of the column, perhaps suffering from the intense heat. Although the Federal force that approached the bridge numbered 3,000 men, the officer in charge sent only two companies forward on the evening of July 4 to attempt to take and destroy the bridge. The effort failed. The expedition, known as the Blackberry Raid because of the many accounts of the soldiers harvesting the wild fruit, was also noted for the extreme heat and the many heatstroke casualties.

The North Carolina and West Virginia portions of the Gettysburg Campaign's southern front did not even get underway until after the battle of Gettysburg.

Once the main armies came in close contact and the battle of Gettysburg began, Halleck understandably saw helping new army commander Gen. George G. Meade as his top priority and his coordination of the campaign's southern front was lacking.

The destruction of the Virginia Central bridge over the South Anna did result in the disruption of trains for a period of time. If Lee had stayed in Pennsylvania longer and would have been in need of a greater amount of supplies, the Federal operations on the campaign's southern front might have had an impact on the campaign. But as it was, the effect of the Federal operations on the Confederate supply line was negligible. D.H. Hill indicated that the Federal designs on Richmond were "not a feint, but a faint."

Friends of the Wilderness

The Friends of the Wilderness are now offering tours of Payne's Farm on the Mine Run Battlefield. Fought from November 26-December 2, 1863, Mine Run is a largely forgotten campaign. The truth is the battle was, in some ways, a dress rehearsal for the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864. Take advantage of the opportunity to get an expert tour of a field many don't know exists. Information can be found at <https://www.fowb.org/post/payne-s-farms-2024-summer-hours>.

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

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.cwrft.org, and will be updated here when the schedule is released for 2025.

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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