



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
August 2022, Volume 19, Issue 8

Speaker: Charlie Knight
Topic: From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee's Civil War, Day by Day, 1861-1865
When: Monday August 8, 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

Charlie Knight: "From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee's Civil War, Day by Day, 1861-1865"

Douglas S. Freeman's Pulitzer Prize-winning three-volume biography of Robert E. Lee is a masterful reconstruction of the man's life. So exhaustive was Freeman's research that he often boasted he could account for every hour of Lee's life from West Point until his death. Freeman's Lee is thorough, but it isn't THAT thorough. Often neglected in Freeman's *Lee* and other

studies of the general or of his various battles and campaigns is what Lee was doing when he wasn't in the spotlight. Charles Knight's new *From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee's Civil War Day by Day, 1861-1865* recreates those four years of Lee's life – at least as much as is possible at 150+ years distance. It is often forgotten that in addition to his duties as a general, Lee was still a husband, father, and friend. He lost a daughter, sister, two grandchildren, daughter-in-law, and his home during the war. In this presentation Knight shares some of the results of years of research into Lee's actions during the war years; previously unknown sources, inconsistencies that confused Freeman and dozens of other historians over the years, memorable anecdotes of Lee's daily life, and other historical “nuggets” that came to light in his research.

Charles Knight is native of Richmond, VA, where he developed a love of history at an early age. He has worked at museums and historic sites for more than 20 years in Virginia – including as Curator of the MacArthur Memorial, Arizona, and North Carolina, and has given historical presentations to audiences across the country. He is the author of *Valley Thunder: The Battle of New Market* (Savas Beatie, 2010), *From Arlington to Appomattox: Robert E. Lee's Civil War Day by Day* (Savas Beatie, 2021), as well as numerous magazine and journal articles, and was a historical advisor on the 2014 film *Field of Lost Shoes*, about the Battle of New Market. Knight is currently working on a biography of Confederate general and railroad magnate William Mahone; a history of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Honor Guard company; and editing the memoirs and papers of Gen. R.E. Lee's aide Charles Venable. Knight is the curator of military history at the NC Museum of History in Raleigh and resides in Holly Springs, NC, with his wife and children.

“The Fall of 1863: The Most Important Unknown Time of the Civil War”

by John Roos

A Review of the July 2022 Program by Greg Mertz

The Fall of 1863 is largely forgotten because it is a misunderstood period of the Civil War, according to our speaker, John Roos. One of the reasons is because many focus on the big stories, looking at the Federal victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in July as a high point, then focusing on how

Federal Gen. U. S. Grant offset the Confederate victory at Chickamauga, Georgia in September, with his victory at Chattanooga, Tennessee in November, and finally jumping over the winter months to Wilderness in May 1864. In such an assessment, it looks as if nothing happened in the east between Gettysburg and Wilderness, but several small-scale but significant actions occurred from the end of the Gettysburg Campaign until the start of the winter encampment.

Army of the Potomac commander Gen. George G. Meade led a force that was different from the one he took to Gettysburg. Because of the New York City draft riots, veteran troops from Meade's army had to be sent to various cities to enforce the drafts and prevent further violence. The strength of Meade's army was not only down, but some of the troops sent to bring up the numbers were conscripts – new troops who had not willingly joined the ranks.

In the west, Federal forces in Tennessee had continued to rack up successes. Gen. Ambrose Burnside took Knoxville, and Gen. William Rosecrans forced Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg out of Chattanooga. The Confederate response included Gen. James Longstreet departing from Lee's army with a sizeable force on September 14, 1863 to reinforce Bragg. Meade received reports of Confederate movements, but could not verify which pieces of conflicting information were accurate, and he was unsure just what his army was facing. And since Meade had not undertaken any offensive operations since Gettysburg, Lincoln decided to counter the Confederate shift by sending the XI and XII corps west – troops that would never return to the Army of the Potomac. Roos argues that in doing so, Meade also lost his most seasoned corps commanders – generals O. O. Howard and Henry Slocum.

With Meade weakened, Lee initiated a turning movement to commence the Bristoe Campaign, that nearly mirrored Jackson's flank march in the Second Manassas Campaign the year before. Lee wanted to interpose his troops between Meade and Washington, while Confederate cavalry under Gen. J.E.B. Stuart tried to hold Meade's attention. When Meade realized his predicament, he elected to retreat down the Orange & Alexandria Railroad with the objective of reaching the defenses of Centreville. As the Confederate horsemen reconnoitered the fleeing blue-clad troops, Roos called the

ensuing fight at Auburn on October 13-14, 1863 “one of the most intense moments for J.E.B. Stuart of the entire war.” After Stuart engaged with the Union III Corps, he realized that the best troops in the Union army were approaching -- the II Corps under Gen. G. K. Warren. Stuart concealed his men in a patch of woods as the II Corps marched nearby, while also getting a message explaining his quandary to Lee, who sent Gen. Richard Ewell to his assistance. Stuart was able to escape from being surrounded, while Warren was also able to get away from Ewell’s threat.

Further ahead in the Federal marching column on October 14, 1863, V Corps commander Gen. George Sykes was at Bristoe Station with orders to hold that location until Warren arrived. When troops appeared in sight, Sykes presumed they were Warren’s men and resumed the march. It turned out to be Gen. A.P. Hill’s Confederates, who concluded that Sykes constituted the Federal rear and pursued the V Corps. Warren, consequently in danger of being cut off from the rest of the Federal army, advanced in a hurry. Hill then noticed the II Corps troops approaching and recklessly turned on them as they filed into a strong position along the railroad embankment, easily repulsing Hill’s attacks and inflicting horrific losses. Roos surmised that if Ewell had not been sent to aid Stuart at Auburn, he would have been with Hill at Bristoe Station and the Confederates might have been able to surround Warren. But Warren was able to escape and join Meade at the Centreville earthworks.

Finding the Centreville line too strong, Lee began withdrawing back down the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. In order to slow down any Federal pursuit, Lee positioned his cavalry on his flanks. Starting near the town of Buckland Mills on October 19, 1863, Stuart retreated along the Warrenton Turnpike in such a way as to bait the Federal cavalry to pursue so aggressively that they might fail to notice Fitzhugh Lee’s cavalry moving over from the other wing of the Confederate army to cut off the blue horsemen. Federal Col. Henry E. Davies suspected a trap, and began to pull his brigade away from Stuart, heading back toward Centreville, as did Gen. George A. Custer behind Davies. Federal infantry halted the Confederate cavalry pursuit.

Meade was under immense pressure to take the offensive, and at Rappahannock Station on November 7, 1863, the Federal VI Corps suffered

light casualties while routing two Confederate brigades. Lincoln was pleased, and Meade was encouraged to launch another offensive.

The Mine Run Campaign was initiated by intense fighting at Payne's Farm on November 27, 1863, after which Confederates positioned themselves behind the namesake of the operation. Scouts reported to Warren, who had done so well at both Auburn and Bristoe Station that the Confederate right flank was not as daunting as the rest of the position and the II Corps commander proposed to attack that point. But when the sun rose on the day for which the assault had been scheduled, November 30, 1863, what Warren saw stunned him. Confederates had shifted troops overnight and extended the right of their line further south, confronting Warren, and Gen. Wade Hampton's gray-clad cavalry threatened the Federal left flank. Warren sent a message to Meade informing him that he was not attacking. Meade was furious at first, but upon meeting with Warren and considering the terrain agreed with Warren, cancelling the attacks and going into winter quarters.

Roos feels that this was the most consequential decision of Meade's career. Meade's act of conceding that the attack should not be made at Mine Run, coincided with Grant achieving victories at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge at Chattanooga. Despite making the proper decision at Mine Run, Roos argued, Meade's choice resulted in Grant's promotion to general-in-chief.

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>.

8th Annual Emerging Civil War Symposium at Stevenson Ride - August 5-7, 2022

Theme: **Great "What Ifs?" of the Civil War**

Keynote Speaker: Gary Adelman: "Speculation Run Amok: Fun with Gettysburg's What If's."

Visit <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2022-symposium> to learn more

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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