



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
June 2021, Volume 18, Issue 6

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT DINNER MEETINGS

We are planning our first "live" dinner meeting of 2021 (the first in 15 months) on Monday, June 14. State and local requirements regarding number of attendees, seating and social distancing are still in flux, so we need to implement (at least for the time being) a few dinner policy changes. As of right now, attendance is limited to members, guests or potential members with confirmed dinner reservations. We are not able to accommodate non-dinner attendees at this time. Please make a dinner reservation through Bob Jones via email to rappcwevents@gmail.com or by phone 540-399-1702. Bob will contact you with confirmation. This applies to everyone, including those on the pre-COVID "permanent reservation list" (which has been suspended until further notice). Member dinner price for 2021 is \$30. This price also applies to those who attend and join at the meeting. Non-member dinner price is \$35. These costs will remain in effect through at least the end of 2022.

Please bear with us as we navigate toward some degree of "normalcy." We have several exciting announcements coming in the next few weeks. Our

guided Seven Days bus trip has been rescheduled for Saturday, October 16, 2021. We are also holding a raffle fundraiser (winners to be drawn at the September meeting) with multiple prizes, including framed prints, homemade quilts, gift certificates, signed books and more. Details will follow shortly.

Speaker: David Welker
Topic: The Battle of Chantilly (or Ox Hill)
When: Monday June 14, 2021
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Beings 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:00 pm
Our Website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org
Our Facebook: www.facebook.com/rvcwrt

“David Welker: The Battle of Chantilly (or Ox Hill)”

David A. Welker is the author of the recently released The Cornfield: Antietam's Bloody Turning Point. His previous publications include Tempest at Ox Hill: The Battle of Chantilly and A Keystone Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Joseph Garey, as well as numerous magazine and newspaper articles on the war. He currently serves as a historian and military analyst with the US Government, a post he has held for over 35 years. David holds a master's degree in international affairs from American University and a bachelor's degree in history and political science from Westminster College in Pennsylvania. He lives in Centreville, Virginia with his wife.

The 1 September 1862 Battle of Chantilly--or Ox Hill, as the South knows it--is a battle that has largely been lost to history. Being sandwiched between the much larger battles of Second Manassas and Antietam, to the extent it has been remembered Chantilly has long been known as the "battle fought in a terrific thunder and lightning storm." Nonetheless, this small battle cost the lives of two of the Union's most promising fighting generals and its implications resonated throughout the war's course in late 1862. Join author David Welker, who will reveal the story of this ignored action, the experiences

of those who fought and died there, and how this action continues echoing today in our own age.

Remember that you can watch all seven previous RVCWRT virtual programs in their entirety by searching "RVCWRT" on YouTube. Our speaker lineup for 2021 is now available on our new website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org.

"The Disaster at Ball's Bluff: The Civilian's Point of View"
by Joseph Gillespie
A Review of the April 2021 Program by Greg Mertz

The October 21, 1861 Battle of Ball's Bluff was a small battle with a big impact. That was the main point of Joseph Gillespie's talk, focusing on how the action impacted the federal government and the understanding that civilians had on the high casualties suffered and coping with the meaning of their loss.

The Civil War challenged the belief in the "good death" associated with the Great Awakening – one of several periods in American Christian history marked by evangelical enthusiasm. The "good death" was considered the ideal way to die – at home, among loved ones, amid conversations of faith in Christ and the confidence that the family would be reunited in heaven. The large numbers of Civil War casualties who did not experience anything close to resembling the "good death" troubled civilians who often turned to pastors, newspapers and politicians to help them understand and make sense of what they were experiencing.

The politicians established the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War to explain the disasters of 1st Bull Run and Ball's Bluff and to attribute blame. An examination of the military factors was not their sole criteria. Politics played an important role in the committee's assessment. Although some interpretations of the war had indicated that the United States entered the war for purposes of restoring the Union and that it was not until January 1, 1863 with the release of the Emancipation Proclamation that the abolition of slavery became a second goal for the war, Gillespie cited other scholarship supporting the claim that both Union and slavery were integral parts of the United States war effort from the start.

The first Confiscation Act, passed August 6, 1861, allowed federal forces to seize any slaves being used to assist the Confederacy. Such Union officers as General John C. Fremont in Missouri overstepped the intent of the law, calling for an overall emancipation policy, and openly clashing with Abraham Lincoln. Democrat officers, such as General George B. McClellan, felt the opposite, including the belief that the Confiscation Act was the wrong political tactic to use if trying to entice the Confederates to rejoin the Union.

Union General Charles P. Stone was another officer who had issues with the Confiscation Act. A rising star in the Union army, Stone would be in command of a division of troops that included the troops engaged at Ball's Bluff. On September 23, 1861 – just a month before the fight at Ball's Bluff – Stone issued General Order #16, stating that he had observed some soldiers encouraging the enslaved to engage in actions that would result in violation of the Confiscation Act and enable Union troops to remove the enslaved from their Confederate owners. This order would play a key role in the fate of Gen. Stone.

One of Stone's subordinates, who disagreed with Stone's confiscation policy was Col. Edward Baker. A close friend of Abraham Lincoln and U.S. Senator from the state of Oregon, Baker was the ranking Union officer on the Ball's Bluff battlefield.

On the evening of Sunday, October 20, 1861 Union troops were sent on a night reconnaissance to verify a report indicating the location of a Confederate camp. The Union troops discovered the site of the supposed Rebel camp to be only a grove of trees, but they continued their advance until making contact with the enemy. Stone authorized Baker to use his discretion to reinforce the reconnaissance party or withdraw the troops as he saw fit.

At 3:00 pm the Confederates attacked and the two-hour Battle of Ball's Bluff ensued. Baker was killed in the battle, becoming the only sitting Senator to ever be killed in combat. The Federals were forced to retreat, and were caught in exceedingly vulnerable positions both in falling back down a steep slope to the Potomac River in their rear, as well as in trying to cross the stream, overcrowding the insufficient number of boats available. An estimated 50-200 Union soldiers drowned in the mishap.

In the aftermath of the battle, some escaped slaves entered Stone's Maryland camps, and the general ordered several to be returned to their masters, asserting that he was following the laws of the state. Many of Stone's Massachusetts troops informed their governor John A. Andrew of the offending practice. Stone in turn complained of civilian interference in military affairs.

The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War intimated that Stone returned slaves to secessionists several times. The committee asked leading questions of the witnesses to produce the testimony they desired. They concluded that it was Stone who carelessly ordered the crossing and he was depicted as a disloyal secessionist who failed to provide enough troops for the mission and sufficient transportation for recrossing the river. Stone was placed under arrest. Though he repeatedly requested a trial, he never received one. After being held in Fort Lafayette for six months, he was released. Senator and Colonel Baker, conversely, was seen as a martyred hero by the committee.

The Battle of Bull Run began with a Union attack on Sunday, July 21 and Ball's Bluff was initiated by a Union reconnaissance on Sunday, October 20. Some believed that besides Union forces not properly honoring the Sabbath, they also relied upon their leaders, their larger numbers of troops and their superior equipment for victory, when they should have turned to God instead. This explanation was critical to understanding why so many Union soldiers were deprived of a "good death" and the melancholy experienced by their survivors.

Greg Mertz Retires

Greg Mertz, a founding member of our round table and its first president, recently retired from the National Park Service. He served for four decades and had a profound influence on the Civil War historical community, especially here in the Fredericksburg area. In 2018, Greg received the first Thomas Greeley Stevenson Award, given by Emerging Civil War (a highly-respected website and blog presenting original scholarship about the Civil War) to the person or organization that has made a major contribution to

ECW's success. At the time, ECW Editor-in-Chief Chris Mackowski commented "The hundreds of historians he has trained have, in turn, influenced millions of battlefield visitors. In that way, he has had a monumental impact on the Civil War community and most people don't even realize it."

You can read more about Greg and his award on the ECW website at:

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2018/08/23/ecw-honors-greg-mertz-with-stevenson-award/>

ECW also hosted a recent podcast about Greg and his illustrious career:

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/?s=mertz>

We all wish Greg well as he turns the page and starts a new chapter in life!

**The Center of Gravity Lies at Ox Ford
By Nathan Provost**

Grant's Overland Campaign in Virginia is one of the most critical campaigns of the war. The first three phases of the Overland Campaign occurred right here in our area. Starting with the Wilderness on May 5-6, 1864, and continuing at Spotsylvania Court House on May 8-21, 1864. The third phase of the campaign however has become a forgotten aspect of this crucial period. Nathan Provost of Emerging Civil War lends his insight into the importance of the Battle of North Anna. This is the third in a series Nathan wrote. The links to the other two articles are at the top of this current article.

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2021/05/23/a-comprehensive-view-of-the-overland-campaign-part-3/>

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.rappvalleycivilwar.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:	John Sapanara	Member at Large:	Robin Donato
Vice President:	Paul Stier	Member at Large:	John Griffiths
Secretary:	Melanie Jordan	Member at Large:	Barbara Stafford
Treasurer:	Ben Keller	Media & Events Coordinator:	Paul Stier
Asst. Treasurer:	Jay Oakley	Past President:	Bob Jones
Scribe:	Greg Mertz	Newsletter Editor & Webmaster:	John Roos