



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter**  
**March 2019, Volume 16, Issue 3**

**Speaker:** Don Pfanzen  
**Topic:** “A Common-place Business Affair: Battlefield Burials in the Fredericksburg Area”

**When:** Monday, March 11, 2019  
**Location:** Brock’s Riverside Grill  
**Times:** Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

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**“A Common-place Business Affair: Battlefield Burials in the Fredericksburg Area” presented by Don Pfanzen, March 11, 2019**

Don Pfanzen is a retired National Park Service (NPS) staff historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He graduated from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in 1980 and then began his NPS career. He also served at Petersburg National Battlefield and Fort Sumter National Monument. Don has written several well-regarded books, including *Abraham Lincoln at City Point* and *Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier’s Life*.

Don will discuss wartime burials from Fredericksburg area battlefields, a topic covered in his latest book *Where Valor Sleeps: A History of Fredericksburg National Cemetery 1866-1933*. This is one of the few works that investigate what happened to the remains of those who made the ultimate sacrifice, both on an immediate and long-term basis. Don describes the origins of the National Cemetery System and explains how soldier remains were identified, collected and interred.

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**“Tale of Two Councils of War: The Army of the Potomac at War with Itself” by Frank O’Reilly**

**Review of the February 2019 program by Greg Mertz**

There is a maxim that whenever soldiers convene a formal council of war, inevitably the conclusion is that the army will not fight. The Union Army of the Potomac held two

councils of war in 1863. Our speaker Frank O'Reilly noted that these two gatherings not only challenged the standard adage, but ironically one of them promoted an unexpected facet of fighting – fighting among the council of war participants themselves.

The council of war was held in the middle of the night. The army commander was not an active participant. Chief of staff Daniel Butterfield drafted specific questions that the participants were to address. The third corps commander ached from a minor wound while the chief engineer Gouverneur K. Warren napped. While that might be recognized as a description of the prominent council of war held on July 2, 1863 at Gettysburg, it also holds true for the council of war of May 5, 1863 at Chancellorsville. Being held less than two months apart, the two councils of war not only had some of the same participants, but had several other aspects in common.

At Chancellorsville, the silent Union army commander was Joseph Hooker, who by May 5 had been outsmarted and outfought by Robert E. Lee in every respect, after the Confederates turned the tide on May 1. But the May 5 meeting was not only concerned with Lee and his army, but with a nor'easter that struck on that day with its driving rain. The rising Rappahannock River and the threat to sweep away the pontoon bridge spanning the river in the army's rear, offered Hooker an excuse to end the campaign with a hastily retreat across the Rappahannock for a reason other than the success of Lee's army. Hooker hoped that his subordinates would support a retreat as something of a necessity to save the army.

Though the six corps commanders on the battlefield of Chancellorsville proper were summoned to be at the meeting Hooker grew tired of waiting for XII corps commander Henry W. Slocum and began the discussion without him. Hooker commenced by reminding his subordinates that the primary mission of the army was to protect the capitol. He then informed his corps commanders that the army had two options. One was a to stay south of the river and risk a "desperate" move against the Confederates. The other was to retreat and save the army to fight another day. To II corps commander Darius Couch it was obvious that Hooker wanted to retreat.

The V corps commander George G. Meade asked if the gathering was a council of war. Hooker responded that it was not; that he simply wanted to know their opinions. Meade responded that seeking the opinions of subordinates for the record *is* a council of war. Hooker then conceded that it *was* a council of war and requested their opinions. Meade then insisted that the formalities of a council of war be followed, meaning that the subordinates were to be allowed to freely discuss matters among themselves, and both Hooker and Butterfield must vacate the very meeting they had called. At last all were reunited and the opinions of the generals were tallied, starting with the most junior officer present to the most senior.

When it became Meade's turn to indicate whether they should stay or retreat, he replied that Hooker was asking the wrong question. They *had* to stay, and it was a matter of whether they should attack, and Meade favored an attack. Meade felt that the risk of retreating was greater than what was at risk by attacking Lee. The tally was three favoring to stay, two favoring retreat. Hooker then announced that the army

would retreat within the hour. Hooker's gamble that his subordinates would vote to retreat and that he could blame the retrograde movement on them had backfired. Hooker had a new rival. Meade's fellow corps commanders were impressed with him at the council of war, and felt that Meade would make a superb army commander. Meade shared with Pennsylvania Governor Curtin that he was disappointed with Hooker, which was shared with Lincoln, who in turn shared it with Hooker himself. Hooker confronted Meade, giving him the opportunity to retract his statement, but Meade stood his ground. Hooker later told Meade that it was the V corps commander who convinced him that the army should retreat – that Meade had only argued to attack because he felt that the raging Rappahannock made it impractical to retreat, and Hooker knew that retreat was indeed possible. Meade sent out a circular to those present at the council of war to get their recollections of what he had said to refute Hooker.

When Lt. Col. James A. Hardie of the War Department woke up Meade in the middle of the night on June 28, 1863, the general was not surprised. Meade figured out that his open war with Hooker had resulted in his being placed under arrest. A flabbergasted Meade instead learned that he had been appointed commander of the army, replacing Hooker.

Four days later, on July 2, 1863 another council of war was held. Meade was well aware of the discord that the May 5 council of war had caused. Now that he was the army commander, why would he risk calling a council of war that had the potential to have similar results? At 8 pm, an hour before the gathering of his subordinates had convened, Meade had already informed the War Department that he would stay at Gettysburg on July 3. What Meade was unsure of was whether the army would attack or defend. After the generals had deliberated the situation for a while, Butterfield converted the discussion into a council of war. By midnight the group had decided they wanted to stay at Gettysburg and wanted to fight defensively.

Four hours after Meade had informed Washington that he would stay at Gettysburg, he had developed a consensus of that among his subordinates. The Gettysburg council of war went counter to the adage that council of wars do not fight. But it also went counter to the consequences of Hooker's Chancellorsville council of war – it did not produce massive discord and infighting among the Union high command but instead built solidarity.

O'Reilly concluded that Hooker made a mistake by asking his subordinates to answer a question when he did not know what their answers would be. On the other hand, Meade would not allow the question to be asked until he knew how his subordinates would answer. Hooker's purpose for calling his council of war was to deflect blame from himself onto his subordinates. Meade's purpose for allowing a council of war to take place was to build unanimity among his subordinates. As Warren observed, Meade's Gettysburg council of war did not decide what should be done, but rather affirmed what Meade had already decided to do.

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## Ongoing Reminder

Please contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance or to confirm your dinner reservation. Please call Bob Jones @ 540-399-1702 or send him your e-mail at [cwrt dinner@yahoo.com](mailto:cwrt dinner@yahoo.com)

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### **THE RVCWRT 2019 BUS TOUR**

Saturday, May 18th

***“Lee’s Lexington and Jackson’s Homestead”***

**The VMI Museum, Jackson’s Cemetery, and the Lee Chapel and Museum**

Cost: Before May 5<sup>th</sup>: members and their guests - \$ 80; after May 5th - \$ 100  
Non-members - \$ 100

Includes bus, lunch at *Palms at Lexington*, site fees, a guided tour at the VMI Museum and Parade Grounds; a guided walking tour of the Jackson Cemetery; and a guided tour of the Lee Chapel and Museum on the Washington & Lee University campus.

The bus will depart the Gordon Road Commuter Lot at 7:30 a.m. on May 18th returning at 6 p.m.

Information & Reservations: contact Bob Jones at [cwrt dinner@yahoo.com](mailto:cwrt dinner@yahoo.com) ; [Bobnpeg1954@gmail.com](mailto:Bobnpeg1954@gmail.com); or 540-399-1702.

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**The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg  
By Bob Jones**

As a courtesy, the RVCWRT provides as a regular feature each month, the ongoing scheduled speakers for the CWRTF's 2018 Program Year. The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg normally meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except for one meeting held on the third Wednesday of June 2018). Dinner Meetings are held at the UMW's Jepson Center located at [1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA](http://1119HanoverStreet.com), dinner cost is \$32.00 per person. Advance reservations should be made by email: [dinner@cwrtf.org](mailto:dinner@cwrtf.org) or telephone: 540-361-2105.

**CWRTF's Scheduled Speakers for the 2018 and 2019 Program Year:**

March 27, 2019	Bob O'Connor	"James Hanger and the Hanger Company"
April 24, 2019	Mark Tooley	"The 1861 Peace Conference"
May 22, 2019	Patrick Schroeder, NPS	"Zouaves: America's Forgotten Soldiers"
June 19, 2019	Dave Bastion	"The Vicksburg Canal"
Sept. 25, 2019	Brian E. Withrow	"Ulysses S. Grant in Character"
Oct. 23, 2019	Michael K. Shaffer	"In Memory of Self and Comrades: Thomas W. Colley's Recollection"

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**Letter from Robert E. Lee to the brother of General Thomas R.R. Cobb**

CAMP NEAR FREDERICKSBURG, VA., *December 18, 1862.*

General H. COBB:

GENERAL: I beg leave to express my sympathy in your great sorrow. Your noble and gallant brother has met a soldier's death, and God grant that this army and our country may never be called upon again to mourn so great a sacrifice. Of his merits, his lofty intellect, his genius, his accomplishments, his professional fame, and above all his true Christian character, I need not speak to you, who knew him so intimately and well. But as a patriot and soldier, his death has left a gap in the army which his military aptitude and skill renders it hard to fill. In the battle of Fredericksburg he won an immortal name for himself and his brigade. Hour after hour he held his position in front of our batteries, while division after division of the enemy was hurled against him. He announced the determination of himself and his men never to leave their post until the enemy was beaten back, and, with unshaken courage and fortitude, he kept his promise. May God give consolation to his afflicted family, and may the name and fame of the Christian statesman and soldier be cherished as a bright example and holy remembrance.

With great esteem, your obedient servant,

**R. E. LEE,**

*General.*

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The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park is pleased to announce that Madelyn K. Shiflett has accepted the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table sponsored Edwin Cole Bearss internship at the park for the summer of 2019.

Maddie is from Quinton, in New Kent County, Virginia. She is currently a sophomore enrolled in the honors program at the University of Mary Washington. Maddie is a double major studying History and Historic Preservation. She plans to earn a master's degree as well.

Her interest in the Civil War began when she read *The Killer Angels*. She has enjoyed attending reenactments and other activities during the Sesquicentennial. Her interest in the Civil War was a major influence in her decision to attend college in Fredericksburg.

The park extended its thanks to the round table for our continued support of their internship program and for providing Maddie with the opportunity to work with the park staff this summer..



**Maddie Shiflett**

## 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 \$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:

<b>President/Dinner Meeting:</b>	Bob Jones	<b>Membership:</b>	TBD
<b>Vice President:</b>	John Sapanara	<b>Member at Large:</b>	Robin Donato
<b>Secretary:</b>	Melanie Jordan	<b>Member at Large:</b>	John Griffiths
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Bob Pfile	<b>Member at Large:</b>	Barbara Stafford
<b>Assistant Treasurer:</b>	Ben Keller	<b>Media &amp; Events Coordinator:</b>	Paul Steir
<b>Meeting Scribe:</b>	Greg Mertz	<b>Past President:</b>	Marc Thompson
<b>Membership Chair:</b>	Paul Steir	<b>Newsletter Editor &amp; Webmaster:</b>	Dan Augustine

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