



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter
December 2018, Volume 15, Issue 12

Speaker: Michelle Hamilton
Topic: "I Would Still Be Drowned in Tears - Spiritualism in the Lincoln White House"
When: Monday, December 10, 2018
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

"I Would Still Be Drowned in Tears - Spiritualism in the Lincoln White House"
Michelle Hamilton

Michelle Hamilton is an independent historian and the current manager of the Mary Washington House in Fredericksburg. She holds a Masters Degree in History from San Diego State University. She spent several years as a docent at the haunted Whaley House in Old Town San Diego and participated in historical events around California as a Civil War living historian before moving to Virginia. Hamilton is the author of "I Would Still be Drowned in Tears: Spiritualism in Abraham Lincoln's White House."

In 1862, in the midst of a bloody civil war, President Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary suffered unspeakable heartache when their young son died. To combat her grief, First Lady Mary Lincoln became a devotee of Spiritualism, making the White House a center for Washington DC's Spiritualist community. For decades, historians have maintained that President Lincoln only attended a few seances in an attempt to protect his mentally unstable wife. This narrative is incorrect. Using a host of previously neglected primary sources, historian Michelle Hamilton documents the numerous séances President Lincoln attended and the personal interest he had in the religion of Spiritualism.

**“General Insubordination: Custer vs. Kilpatrick in the Third Cavalry Division”
by Dr. Bruce Venter
A Review of the November 2018 Program by Greg Mertz**

Being aware that George A. Custer typically has a much stronger reputation among students of the Civil War than Judson Kilpatrick, Dr. Bruce Venter began his program by sharing with the audience various quotes from soldiers who served under either of the two officers and asked members of the round table to guess which cavalry commander the quote described. The quotes were all highly complimentary and the first point Venter made was that a large number of Kilpatrick’s men thought that their commander was just as brave, daring and talented as Custer’s men felt about their commander.

The reputation of Kilpatrick is often attributed to a few accounts, mainly the published accounts that are easily found. Perhaps the most quoted caricature of Kilpatrick comes from Gen. George G. Meade staff officer Theodore Lyman, who called him “a frothy braggart without brains.” Charles Francis Adams, a captain in the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry wrote, “Kilpatrick is a brave, injudicious boy, much given to blowing and surely will come to grief.” Yet neither of these men actually served under Kilpatrick; the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry served in divisions commanded by William W. Averill, Alfred Duffie and David McM. Gregg in 1863 – the year in which Kilpatrick commanded a division in the Army of the Potomac. The book by James H. Kidd of Custer’s 6th Michigan is full of praise for his brigade commander, and criticizing Kilpatrick serves to further elevate George A. Custer.

One of the more popular statements about him was attributed to William T. Sherman, under whom Kilpatrick served after the February, 1864 failed Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid. James H. Wilson wrote in his memoirs that Sherman supposedly said, “I know that Kilpatrick is a hell of a damned fool, but I want just that sort of man to command my cavalry on this expedition.” But Venter reported that when the memoirs were published, Sherman wrote a letter to the New York Times in 1876, claiming he never said such a thing. Only by digging beyond the easily found published accounts and looking at the letters and diaries of those who served under Kilpatrick can we find accounts that put Kilpatrick in a better light.

Kilpatrick was born in New Jersey. When attending West Point, at five feet, five inches tall, he was known as “Little Kil.” Even though during the Civil War he was nicknamed “Kill cavalry” -- allegedly because of his disregard for the welfare of his horses, and perhaps also attributed to his recklessness regarding his men -- he was most often called by his West Point nickname or as “Old Kil” by his men during the war. He graduated 17th in the May class of 1861 and became a captain in the 5th New York Infantry. Kilpatrick received his first of three wounds in the war at the June 10, 1861 Battle of Big Bethel.

Kilpatrick moved over to the cavalry with the help of his connections with the prominent Davies family of New York, and became the Lieutenant Colonel of the 2nd New York

Cavalry. From February to late June of 1863 Kilpatrick led a brigade. Then in the cavalry reorganization just before the Battle of Gettysburg, he was assigned to lead a division. His division comprised the brigades commanded by two of the “boy generals” -- Custer and Elon J. Farnsworth. Kilpatrick has been criticized for the charge at Gettysburg resulting in the death of Farnsworth, but Venter pointed out that he was carrying out an order from corps commander Pleasonton when doing so. In addition to being engaged in many actions of the Gettysburg Campaign, Kilpatrick also led his division in multiple encounters with the enemy in the Bristoe Campaign over the fall of 1863. His wife Alice died in November of 1863, followed by the death of his one-year old son Judson in December. Then after the failed Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid on Richmond in February of 1864, he was transferred to serve under Sherman for the remainder of the war. In November of 1865 Kilpatrick was named minister to Chile, where he met and married his second wife Luisa. He died of Bright’s Disease at the age of 43 and is buried at West Point.

Custer and Kilpatrick had a contentious association. Venter believes that they were too similar and were akin to being rivals. Both were in their 20’s -- Kilpatrick 27 and Custer 23 when Custer was assigned to Kilpatrick’s division. Both were physically flamboyant with conspicuous hair – Kilpatrick’s whiskers and Custer’s curly locks. Both wore non-standard military uniforms, were War-Democrats, were known for their strong sex drives, had dashing qualities, and rose rapidly through the ranks, becoming major generals by war’s end. Venter felt they were the antithesis of John Buford and David McM. Gregg – cavalry division commanders in their 30’s who did not clash with one another.

Some of Custer’s biographers felt that the start of their dispute stemmed from the Buckland Mills engagement during the end of the Bristoe Station Campaign – an action also derogatorily called the “Buckland Races” as Custer’s brigade rode into an ambush and tried to escape in great haste with Confederate cavalry chasing after them. But Venter thought that the young Union cavalry officers argued from the very beginning of their association. As a former staff officer of Cavalry Corps commander Alfred Pleasonton, Custer went over Kilpatrick’s head and communicated directly with Pleasonton. When Kilpatrick ordered Custer to investigate an accusation against a lieutenant in his command, Custer instead provided his superior with his assessment of the officer and did not carry out an inquest. Custer was remiss in filing his after-action reports.

Kilpatrick reacted in a manner that would be the most insulting to Custer – being deprived of an opportunity to participate in an engagement deep in enemy territory. In Kilpatrick’s final expedition with the Army of the Potomac – the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid of February, 1864, Custer was not on the raid, even though a portion of his brigade participated in it. Instead, Custer was assigned to conduct a demonstration against Charlottesville – too far from Richmond to have any real impact on Confederate reaction to Kilpatrick’s movement. Custer’s absence was the crowning piece of evidence that he had completely fallen out of favor with Kilpatrick.

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There will be an auction at the December dinner meeting of the 2018 Mort Kunstler Christmas Tree Ornament. The ornament is being donated by June Brown, and the proceeds will be donated to the CVBT for their Myer's Hill preservation fund.

2019 membership fees are due by January 1st and may be paid by cash, check, or credit card.

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

ATTENTION - The 2019 Membership Drive has Opened! - ATTENTION

Current, Past, and hopefully New Members of the RVCWRT,
We have started our 2019 Membership Drive.

Between your reading this notification to 31 December 2018 you will have numerous opportunities to renew your membership with a great organization of like-minded historians.

1. In person at our upcoming Dinner Meeting on December 10th.
2. Visit our website at <http://www.rvcwrt.org/membership.pdf> to download the membership form.
3. Print, complete the form; mailing it, along with your renewal fee to: **RVCWRT
P.O. Box 7632; Fredericksburg, VA 22404**

After 31 December 2018, if we have not received your membership renewal then regretfully the next time that we see you in 2019 you will be charged full price for participation in one of our Dinner Meetings, Bus Tours, or other special activities. Also, until we have received your renewal you will no longer receive any of our e-mail notifications.

That being stated, there is a silver lining within this potential bad news. The next time that we happily see you in 2019 you will have the opportunity to on-the-spot, renew your membership and therefore be able to continue to enjoy the privileges that are currently afforded to you.

Don't delay, renew your membership **Now**.

National Park Service Announces Special Programs for the 156th Anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg

On Saturday, December 8th and Sunday, December 9th, join the National Park Service in commemorating the 156th Anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg with historian-led programs.

Saturday, December 8th

9 a.m.: Crossing the Rappahannock. This program will look at the dramatic events of December 11, 1862, as the Union army struggled to get across the Rappahannock. We will take the same view of the event as thousands of soldiers did, watching from the heights of Chatham, above the crossing. With John Hennessy. 60 minutes. Meet at Chatham (120 Chatham Lane, Fredericksburg)

10:30 a.m.: Fighting in the Streets. Join Frank O'Reilly as he walks the streets that witnessed the first major urban combat in American History on December 11, 1862. 90 minutes.

Gather at the upper pontoon crossing at Sophia and Hawke Streets (GPS Coordinates: 38.307868, -77.460916). On-street parking available nearby.

2:00 p.m.: "Men fell like leaves in autumn:" The Fight for Prospect Hill. Join Greg Mertz to explore the Southern end of the Fredericksburg Battlefield, the only place where Union troops were able to penetrate the Confederate line. 90 minutes.

Meet at Tour Stop 6, Prospect Hill (GPS Coordinates: 38.248090, -77.435651)

Sunday, December 9th

11:30 a.m.: In the Footsteps of the Irish Brigade

Join Frank O'Reilly for what has become a legendary walk through the streets of Fredericksburg to the Sunken Road. Two hours.

Meet at the City Dock, 201 Sophia Street. Note: plan for a walk back to your car after the program.

2:00 p.m.: 156th Anniversary Remembrance Walk

Join Elizabeth Parnicza for a walk of reflection and remembrance along the Sunken Road. 60 minutes.

Park at the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center, 1013 Lafayette Boulevard, 22401.

Weather in the Fredericksburg region during December can be unpredictable. Check the forecast in the days leading up to the programs, and keep an eye on the park's Facebook page for weather updates. Warm or layered clothing and comfortable, sturdy footwear is recommended for all programs.

For additional information, visit the NPS website at www.nps.gov/frsp, check the NPS Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FredericksburgSpotsylvaniaNMP>, or call the park at 540-693-3200.



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://www.1119hanoverstreet.com), dinner cost is \$32.00 per person. Advance reservations should be made by email: dinner@cwrtf.org or telephone: 540-361-2105.

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

January 23, 2019	Robert Dunkerly	"Civil War Railroads"
February 27, 2019	Dr. Bradley Gottfried	"Maps of the Battle of Fredericksburg"
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"

Executive Committee Bios

Each month this newsletter will feature a short biography of one of our Executive Committee members. This month we feature Bob Jones

Mr. Robert L. Jones

A native of Ohio, (Solon), he received his undergraduate degree from Hiram College (Ohio) and a Master's Degree from Syracuse University (N.Y.). He joined IBM as an Applied Science Systems Engineer, and then joined the faculty at the University of Maryland directing medical computing. Following that career in Baltimore, he was a

Data Center Director for the State of Virginia in Richmond, then he joined the faculty at Virginia Tech as Associate Director of Academic Computing.

He returned to IBM as a Senior Program Administrator in Connecticut and retired in 2002 from a position as a staff accountant for IBM-World Trade. In retirement, he returned to Virginia as a resident of Orange County.

His interest in the Civil War stems from his grandfather, a corporal in the 115th Illinois, and his cousin, a Lt. Colonel with the 12th Indiana Cavalry.

He serves as a volunteer historian for the National Park Service at Chancellorsville, a guide at Graffiti House in Brandy Station, a Past-President of the Brandy Station Foundation, a Past-President of his home owners association, and now President (second consecutive term) of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, and is an Interpretive Guide at Montpelier. Any infrequent spare time finds him on some local golf course.

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

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