



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter**  
**November 2018, Volume 15, Issue 11**

**Speaker:** Bruce Venter  
**Topic:** "General Insubordination: Custer vs. Kilpatrick in the Third Cavalry Division"  
**When:** Monday, November 12, 2018  
**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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**"General Insubordination: Custer vs. Kilpatrick in the Third Cavalry Division" Dr. Bruce Venter**

Dr. Bruce Venter is CEO of America's History, LLC, a historical tour company best known for its annual conference on the American Revolution. He is an experienced tour leader and is the author of "The Battle of Hubbardton: The Rear Guard Action that Saved America" and "Kill Jeff Davis: The Union Raid on Richmond, 1864." He lectures frequently on Civil War cavalry operations and is a past president of the Richmond Civil War Round Table. Dr. Venter spent 36 years in public education in school systems in New York, Virginia and Maryland. He holds a B.A. in history from Manhattan College and masters/doctorate degrees in education from the State University of New York in Albany.

Dr. Venter has a special interest in the career of Union brigadier general Judson Kilpatrick. His presentation deals with the stormy relationship between Kilpatrick and his subordinate George A. Custer in the Third Cavalry Division during the eventful summer of 1863.

Dr. Venter will have some books to sell.

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**"The Rock Hurler: George Crook and the Battle of Fisher's Hill"**  
**by Daniel T. Davis**

**A Review of the October 2018 Program by Greg Mertz**

Union General George Crook is widely remembered as a solid soldier. Crook probably deserves a stronger reputation, but the modest, unassuming officer did not publicly comment when he did not receive full credit for his Civil War contributions. One such battle in which Crook deserves more

accolades than he has been given is the September 21-22, 1864 Battle of Fisher's Hill in the Shenandoah Valley.

Crook graduated from West Point in 1852, a year before Philip Sheridan, who would be his superior in the Shenandoah Valley. Before the Civil War Crook served in the Pacific Northwest, and was wounded during the Pitt River Expedition. Our speaker Daniel Davis described Crook as a soldier who followed orders and did his duty, not touting his skills or seeking credit for his accomplishments. Crook's Civil War service took him to several different theaters. He initially commanded the 36<sup>th</sup> Ohio in western Virginia. Crook joined the Army of the Potomac leading a brigade at South Mountain and Antietam late in the summer of 1862. Next Crook was assigned to the Army of the Cumberland commanding an infantry brigade in the Tullahoma Campaign, and then a cavalry division at Chickamauga. Davis feels that one of Crook's finest military moments was breaking up Joseph Wheeler's Raid on Union lines during the Chattanooga Campaign. Crook returned to western Virginia, commanding a force known as the Army of West Virginia and as the VIII Corps.

When the Petersburg Campaign got underway in the summer of 1864, the Confederates were able to dispatch Jubal Early with a small army that advanced down the Shenandoah Valley, threatened the defenses of Washington and returned to the Valley. Early then set up a strong defensive position at a place called Fisher's Hill.

In August of 1864, Sheridan was assigned to take control of the Shenandoah Valley, with a command of three corps, one of which was under the control of George Crook. When Sheridan first confronted Fisher's Hill, he found no opportunity to attack the stronghold and fell back to Winchester, about 20 miles to the northeast.

The Union withdrawal steered Early to presume that Sheridan was a cautious soldier. Accordingly, Early sent part of his command back to Petersburg, and divided the remainder of his command between Winchester and Martinsburg. But Early has misread Sheridan, who sought to strike Early's divided troops before the Confederates could re-unite their forces. As Sheridan advanced on Winchester from the east, Union troops marched through the narrow Berryville canyon, where Confederates could take advantage of the terrain and buy time to consolidate their troops. Early was able to thwart the assaults of the first two Union corps during the September 19, 1864 Third Battle of Winchester. Then Crook arrived with the final Union corps. Though Crook too was initially repulsed, his attack enabled Sheridan to resume the initiative with an all-out offensive, when Crook's corps then turned the Confederate left flank. The Confederates made a precipitous retreat back to the Fisher's Hill bastion.

Fisher's Hill has been called the Gibraltar of the Shenandoah Valley. The four-mile long ridge blocked the valley, stretching between Little North Mountain on the Confederate left, to a steep hill overlooking the north fork of the Shenandoah River on the Confederate right flank opposite Massanutten Mountain. A stream called Tumbling Run functioned like a moat stretching across the Confederate front north of Fisher's Hill.

But the position was no longer as strong as it had been when Sheridan first encountered Early at Fisher's Hill. The Confederates no longer manned the position with the division that had been returned to Petersburg nor the men who had fallen at Winchester. From the standpoint of the terrain, the weakest point was a flat area next to Little North Mountain. Early defended that location with the cavalry of Lunsford Lomax – poor troops with weapons that would be inferior should they become embroiled in a fight with Union infantry.

Crook went on a reconnaissance and from Little North Mountain he could observe the vulnerable Confederate left. He reported his findings at a council of war, but his plan to attack that flank was not adopted. The gathering broke up without a decision being made. They did, however, conclude to reconvene again later in the afternoon.

At that second meeting of the Union high command, Crook brought along an officer with whom he had become well acquainted -- Col. Rutherford B. Hayes. Though Crook was a very good soldier, he did not possess the talent of persuasion. Crook recognized that the pre-war lawyer Hayes did have

the ability to convince Sheridan to adopt Crook's proposal. Crook assigned Hayes to be his spokesperson to argue for the flank attack he had earlier but ineffectively recommended. Horatio Wright, commanding the Union VI Corps was the senior corps commander, and insisted that he was entitled to lead the attack and select the location for the assault, but Hayes prevailed. Crook's men had to move into position undetected. Color-bearers were ordered to trail their brightly colored flags so they would not be observed. At one point along the flank maneuver, the men halted to secure any equipment that might clank and reveal the movement. The troops gained a new nickname as the "mountain creepers" as they moved into position.

At about 4:00 pm, Crook attacked. As Crook's men moved down Little North Mountain in the assault, one described it as a "living avalanche." Crook himself advanced in rear of his second line where any shirkers were pelted in the head with rocks hurled at them by their corps commander. Lomax's cavalry on the flank gave way. Dodson Ramseur's Confederate infantry was next in line. Though Ramseur had been warned of a Union force on his left, he did not adjust his line. As Crook's men moved down the Confederate flank, Union soldiers in the other two Union corps added pressure on the Confederate front. Crook's plan worked spectacularly and the Battle of Fisher's Hill was a decisive Union victory.

Some of Crook's subordinates took offense at Sheridan's official report and the account of the battle in his memoirs, feeling that Sheridan took credit for recognition that they felt belonged to Crook. But the humble Crook never publicly contested Sheridan's versions of the events and they continued to have a good working relationship during the Indian Wars.

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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 [cwrtedinner@yahoo.com](mailto:cwrtedinner@yahoo.com)

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### ATTENTION - The 2019 Membership Drive has Opened! - ATTENTION

Current, Past, and hopefully New Members of the RVCWRT,

We have just 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 Meetings on November 12th or 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.



**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](#), 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:**

November 14, 2018	Richard Lewis	"Confederate Generals' Uniforms"
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"

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**"A Discussion with Peter Carmichael" at the Nau Civil War Center at UVA**

On Thursday, November 15, the Nau Center will host a discussion with historian Peter Carmichael about his newest book, *The War for the Common Soldier: How Men Thought, Fought, and Survived in Civil War Armies* (UNC Press, 2018).

This event will be held at the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. It is free and open to the public and no advance registration is required. Paid parking is available nearby at the Central Grounds Parking Garage located near the UVA bookstore.

Copies of Professor Carmichael's book will be available for purchase and there will be a chance to meet the author and have your book signed after our event.

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## 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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