



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter**  
**May 2019, Volume 16, Issue 5**

**Speaker:** Geoff White  
**Topic:** “Ex Uno Disce Omnia –The Wartime Experience of Orson W. Bennett.”  
**When:** Monday, May 13, 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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**“Ex Uno Disce Omnia –The Wartime Experience of Orson W. Bennett.”**  
**Presented by Geoff White**

Geoff is an administrator at Radford University, Radford, Virginia. He presented his research on Orson W. Bennett at the Big South Undergraduate Research Symposium at Campbell University, Buies Creek, North Carolina, in April 2015. White is a living historian who has portrayed General George McClellan and is currently the First Sergeant of the 3rd US Infantry Re-enactors.

Orson W. Bennett, a young man from Iowa, rose from the rank of private to Captain during the Civil War. His experiences took him riding or marching through 14 states. Bennett began the Civil War as a member of the Governor’s Grays, in the 1st Iowa Volunteers. He was wounded at the Battle of Wilsons Creek, Missouri, in 1861. When recovered, he joined the 12th Wisconsin Volunteers and participated in the Siege of Vicksburg. In 1863, he took the examination to become an officer of black soldiers and was appointed a Lieutenant in the 102nd US Colored Troops. Bennett served in a brigade under his brother and went on to be promoted to Captain for actions while commanding a company at the Battle of Honey Hill, South Carolina, November 1864. Later he was awarded the Metal of Honor for his actions during that battle. An in-depth investigation into Bennett’s wartime experiences provides a unique look at the world of the common Civil War soldier. This includes popular music of the day, blistering heat, bone-chilling cold, bullet wounds, supply shortages, and starvation. Bennett’s wartime recollections will give fresh perspective to both well-known and obscure battles, famous generals and how their actions trickled down to the enlisted

men, and the controversial introduction of black soldiers.

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**"General Lee's Immortals: The Branch-Lane Brigade"**  
**by Michael C. Hardy – A Review of the April 2019 program by Greg Mertz**

A former captain of the 33<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina, a regiment serving in the brigade commanded by Lawrence O. Branch and James H. Lane, wrote to a newspaper in 1887, protesting: "Why has the history of that brigade not been written?" Some 150 years after their war story ended, our speaker, Michael Hardy, accomplished that task. Branch, a Princeton graduate and politician, was not well-liked by his subordinates. Col. Reuben P. Campbell, commanding the brigade's 7<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, was a West Point graduate. At least one in the brigade felt it an injustice that Campbell was not appointed as the brigade's general. Some of the regimental officers corresponded with each other regarding their poor opinions of Branch, and those sentiments trickled down to the men in the ranks. Even though the Confederate forces were badly outnumbered in their maiden battle – the May 27, 1862 battle of Hanover Court House – the press was highly critical of Branch, and some of his men writing home blamed the defeat on the mismanagement of the engagement by their own general.

But the brigade would soon earn a reputation for danger and often found that it went into action on some of the hottest places on the field of battle, starting with Gaines' Mill in the Seven Days battle while attached to A.P. Hill's division. Two color bearers of the 7<sup>th</sup> North Carolina had fallen when Col. Campbell seized the flag. With the colors in one hand and his sword in the other, Campbell admonished his men not to stop and fire, but to follow him forward. When in point blank range of the enemy line, a bullet instantly killed Campbell, and the lieutenant who next grabbed the fallen flag was likewise killed.

Just days later, Branch's brigade was ordered to charge a battery at Frazier's Farm. Two of the guns of the batteries were captured, but Col. Charles C. Lee, commanding the 37<sup>th</sup> Virginia, was struck by canister and died in the arms of his adjutant.

In August of 1862, the brigade had its first of several engagements in which the troops arrived upon the field at a critical moment and playing a key role in turning the tide of battle. During the August 1862 battle at Cedar Mountain, Jackson drew his sabre (rusted into its scabbard) to rally his broken troops, when Branch's brigade arrived upon the field. Branch was suffering from dysentery, and crawled out of a wagon to take command, when Jackson ordered him to push right ahead. Branch's men spearheaded a counterattack that threw the Federal troops into retreat.

Later that same month, Jackson's troops were positioned along an unfinished railroad bed during the battle of Second Manassas. Branch's brigade was in a secondary position near the left end of the Confederate line, when the gray-clad men in the front ranks were hard pressed and in dire need of reinforcements. A portion of Branch's brigade was sent in to plug the breach. The situation was so desperate that it was said that Branch had to physically hold his men in place, but the line held.

In September 1862, Branch's command was one of two brigades engaged at Ox Hill or Chantilly – a battle fought in a pouring rain. When the men protested that their ammunition was wet, Jackson instructed the men to give the enemy the bayonet. In mid-September, Hill's division had been left behind at Harper's Ferry to deal with the prisoners and military materiel captured there, when Jackson instructed Hill to endure a forced march to Sharpsburg. The rest of the army was heavily engaged at Sharpsburg, where the center of the Confederate line and already broken and Burnside's Federals were driving in the Confederate right. Hill's men, including a portion of Branch's brigade, arrived on the Federal flank at just the right time. During the successful Confederate attack, Branch was looking through his field glasses to determine of the identity of some troops on his left, when a bullet struck him in his right cheek, exiting at his left ear. Branch's dented field glasses are often on display at the North Carolina Museum of History.

The new brigade commander was James H. Lane, a VMI graduate and colonel of the 28<sup>th</sup> North Carolina. His first battle after being promoted was at Fredericksburg, where a 600-yard gap in the Confederate line loomed off of Lane's right flank. The void was a swampy, thickly wooded area thought to be impassable by organized troops, yet Federal troops entered into the breach and Lane was forced back, only to counterattack along with Confederate reinforcements.

No battle haunted Lane like Chancellorsville. Once again Lane's troops arrived at the front while that battle was already in progress and was given a difficult assignment. Lane's forces were assigned to take over the advance of Jackson's successful May 2 flank attack in a rare night attack. As Lane's men were getting into position, Jackson decided to ride in front of Lane's lines to conduct a reconnaissance. Upon Jackson's attempt to pass back through his own lines, he was mortally wounded by Lane's 18<sup>th</sup> North Carolina. On May 3, Lane's brigade lost half of its men, including Lane's own brother.

One year after Chancellorsville, Lane's brigade played a key role in saving Lee's army twice on the same day – May 12, 1864 at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. Positioned to the right of the Mule Shoe salient, Lane was pressured on his front by Burnside's Federal troops while the soldiers in blue who had caved in the east side of the Mule Shoe advanced on Lane's left flank. Lane refused his left, successfully repelling attacks on two fronts while helping to check the deepest incursion the Federals made into the breach of the Confederate line.

Later in the day, Lane was shifted to an area known as Heth's Salient, and assigned to knock out a Union battery that was harassing the Confederate line. While he was doing so, Burnside once again attacked, moving toward a weak point on the Confederate line, but exposing the left flank of the attack force to Lane's venture in advance of the main line. The Confederates drove the Union attack back, capturing four battle flags, but during the attack, supporting troops of Billy Mahone's brigade fired into Lane's men, and when Lane withdrew to regroup, Mahone accused the Carolinians of abandoning his Virginians.

At Appomattox Court House, Lane surrendered 584 men, while another 152 men of the 7<sup>th</sup> North Carolina that had been sent back to their home state to deal with deserters and other issues, surrendered in Lexington. Of the 8975 men to serve in the brigade, at least 3151 died – 35% of their numbers – and of those deaths, 1197 were killed or mortally wounded on the field of battle.

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**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Roundtable**  
**Member at Large**  
**Robin Donato**

Robin Donato has served as Member at Large since January 2018. She discovered her passion for Civil War history after attending numerous National Park Service events commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Battle of the Wilderness. She now volunteers for the National Park Service at Chatham Manor, as well as the visitor centers at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

A native of New Jersey, Robin attended Princeton University and Boston University School of Law. She is presently serving on a three-year active duty tour at Joint Base Andrews as a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps. She is married to Dr. Michael Donato (a local podiatric surgeon) and has two wonderful sons, Michael (21) and Brian (20). Michael works as an interpreter for the Park Service at Oxon Hill Farm in Maryland and is getting his Masters in Public Administration at night. Brian is a Sophomore at Virginia Tech. In her spare time, Robin interviews students for admission to Princeton University and is on the Executive Board of American Legion Post 320 in Spotsylvania.

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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 [cwrtedinner@yahoo.com](mailto:cwrtedinner@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](#), 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 2019 Program Year:**

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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## 2019 NPS Intern Scholarship

The Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table (RVCWRT) provides a \$2,000 scholarship to a National Park Service (NPS) intern serving at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. Under the provisions of this scholarship program, an intern will be defined as any individual who is, or will be, an undergraduate or graduate student at an accredited college or university; who has served at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park (beginning their service between July 2018 and July 2019) and who has completed a minimum of 350 hours of service to the park in good standing. For complete details, go to the website, [www.rvcwrt.org](http://www.rvcwrt.org)

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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>	Travis Wakeman	<b>Newsletter Editor &amp; Webmaster:</b>	Dan Augustine



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