



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

**Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter
September 2016, Volume 13, Issue 10**

Speaker: Beth Parnicza
Topic: "Such is War: The Looting of Fredericksburg"
When: Monday, September 12, 2016
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

Abstract on our Scheduled Speaker, Beth Parnicza, for Monday, September 12, 2016

Elizabeth "Beth" Parnicza is a National Park Historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Military Park. She also supervises the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitors Center. Beth is a 2011 graduate of West Virginia University; she joined the National Service and moved to the "other Virginia" to pursue her passion for Civil War History. Beth's ongoing research interests focus largely on the human aspects of the Civil War. This includes, the looting of Fredericksburg, the general movement toward a hard war, the experience of battle, and the early historians of the National Park.

The Union army marched into the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, on December 11, 1862, soldiers found the town rich with comforts and completely emptied of a civilian population, having fled the oncoming clash of armies. Soldiers broke into homes and took food, books, or various souvenirs. Some in search of a good time even donned women's dresses and paraded in the streets, creating a carnival-style atmosphere in the streets of downtown! What prompted this action by otherwise well-disciplined soldiers? What do their justifications tell us about the character of these soldiers and about the state of the war? These are just some of the facts and questions to be addressed in Beth's presentation.

RVCWRT Awards 2016 National Park Service Intern Academic Scholarship Winner "Jessica Sullivan"



Jessica Sullivan with her mother

At our August 8th dinner meeting, the round table recognized its 2016 National Park Service Intern Academic Scholarship winner, Jessica Sullivan. Jessica is a rising Senior at Mary Baldwin College (soon to be University) in Staunton, VA, where she is a double major in Anthropology/Sociology and Political Science. Jessica has worked as an intern at Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park since 2015, providing administrative support to the park's Law Enforcement Division. In this capacity, Jessica has done a yeoman's work in organizing and preserving valuable documentation related to the preservation of historic properties acquired by park.

Thanks to Jessica's efforts, important materials (some dating back to the park's establishment in 1927), can now be easily accessed and used to validate park ownership of historic sites associated with the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania, as well as the Jackson Shrine. An added benefit of Jessica's work has been the relief it provided to the park's law enforcement rangers from heavy administrative duties they would normally be forced to shoulder. Because Jessica was available to perform these administrative functions, Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania law enforcement rangers were able to devote more time to patrolling the nearly 8,000 acres of the park; Thereby ensuring the protection of this "*Hallowed Ground*" and the safety of its many visitors . . .

"The Governor Becomes a General: The Civil War Career of Henry A. Wise"

Presented by Adrian Brettle

Review of the August 2016 program by Greg Mertz

Governor Henry A. Wise was the last antebellum governor of Virginia, serving from 1855 to 1859. He is best known his role in putting down John Brown's raid and pursuing Brown's conviction and execution for treason. After his term as governor ended, Wise became actively involved in the many discussions and conventions regarding Virginia's role in the sectional differences between North and South. Wise wanted the Union to be saved but felt that a revolution was needed. Just as the colonists felt the need for a revolution against tyrannical England, so Wise felt that the Southern states needed to resist against the new tyranny of the radical abolitionists in New England.

Many in Virginia were not willing to secede from the Union on the basis of Lincoln's election of the presidency as the original Confederate States had done. Most Virginians adopted a "wait and see policy" toward the Lincoln administration and felt the state to be in a unique position to help negotiate a solution between the North and South. Wise however favored organizing an army, and believed that to Virginia fell the important role of capturing adjacent Washington DC and forcing the Republicans to recognize the demands of the South. He was under no delusion of the risks involved in what he advocates. Wise believed that those who were a party of the losing side would be found guilty of treason.

During the second Virginia secession convention in Richmond, held in the aftermath of the firing on Fort Sumter, Wise found himself in the minority of a group of delegates addressing the fine points of the U.S. Constitution. After a day of deliberating, Wise had an important conversation with a fellow future Confederate general, John Imboden, then an artillery commander in the Virginia militia. They discussed that movements were underway by United States forces to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and the Gosport Navy Yard in Norfolk, and that the Virginia militia already had plans to march to those places.

The next day, April 17, 1862, Wise strode into the secession convention invigorated with a new argumentative spirit. With a flair for the dramatic, he drew a large pistol from his belt and laid it upon a desk, then pulled out a pocket watch. With the skill of a great orator and the visual aid of his two props, he declared that the time for talking had already passed and they needed to stop the seemingly endless discussions. Wise felt that the delegates needed to wake up to the reality that war was already upon them. Whether stirred by the passion of

the talk or swayed by the logic of the argument, Wise led the convention to a vote in favor of secession. The citizenry of Virginia then needed to ratify this decision.

Wise envisioned that his future might follow the paths of George Washington and Andrew Jackson – both were successful citizen soldiers who went on to become president. Wise too would offer his services to the Confederacy in the hope that a grateful electorate would send him to the White House as well to make the necessary changes to the United States. Wise requested the highest rank that Confederate President Jefferson Davis could bestow upon him and suggested that with assistance from others who possessed the necessary military and technical skills, he might lead an independent command. Davis appreciated the importance of pacifying such an important man in Virginia politics at a time when the people of Virginia had not yet voted on the secession issue, and he then appointed Wise a brigadier general. Wise went about recruiting troops and the necessary provisioning of what would become known as "*Wise's Legion*."

Wise first saw service in western Virginia where he came up against a professional soldier, George B. McClellan. As Brettle described it, while Wise talked, McClellan acted. McClellan soon cut Wise's line of supplies and Wise had little choice but to utilize his line of retreat. If one politician turned general wasn't bad enough, a second was added to the mix resulting in disaster. Another former Virginia governor, John B. Floyd, asserted his seniority over Wise, who still clung to his opportunity for independent command. One familiar with the situation reasoned that they would each take pleasure in seeing the other being annihilated in battle. Things came to a head after Wise refused to reinforce Floyd in the Battle of Carnifax Ferry, September 10, 1861. Wise was soon recalled to Richmond.

In January of 1862, Wise received another command, serving on Roanoke Island, North Carolina, under Major General Benjamin Huger. Wise was under the impression that the Union Navy was trying to capture him personally and take him to Washington. Huger failed to properly assess the threat of Union troops under General Ambrose Burnside. On February 8th Burnside overwhelmed Wise's position. Wise's own son, Capt. O. Jennings Wise was among those killed. "My brave boy, you have died for me," the distraught general proclaimed when he directed the coffin to be opened and gazed upon the body of his son.

Wise was sent back to Richmond, with his command placed on the end of the line as far away from the action as possible during the Seven Days Battle in June and July, 1862. Following the battle he was placed on Chaffin's Bluff where the inactivity earned his command the nickname of "the Life Insurance Company."

In September of 1863, Wise was sent down to South Carolina, where General P.G.T. Beauregard commanded and gave Wise very specific instructions regarding the positioning of his troops. By the following spring, Wise accompanied Beauregard to Petersburg and participated in the last actions of Grant's Overland Campaign in June, 1864. Wise congratulated his men, overestimating the size of the opposing force, and claiming that they had saved both Richmond and Petersburg as well as the Confederacy. Meanwhile his much younger third wife argued that Wise should leave the fighting to the younger men and that the 58 year old Wise should come home. Wise protested that he had no means of providing an income, while also declaring that he could not depart from the army while his men were "bleeding in the trenches" of Petersburg even if he possessed the riches of Midas.

When Richmond fell in April of 1865, Wise and his brigade retreated along with the rest of Lee's army. Wise had to cut his way out at the Battle of Sailor's Creek. Along with 600 in his brigade, Wise surrendered at Appomattox Court House. The former governor and now former general criticized his men and told Union officers of his bravery. A broken and disheveled man, Wise took no care to clean chewing tobacco stains from his beard and his clothing. Being appointed to brigadier general early in the war to help assure that Virginia would join the Confederacy, but never promoted further because of his lack of military ability,

Brittle stated that Wise was both the oldest and longest serving brigadier general in the Confederate service.

George G. Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac knew Wise well. Wise had married Meade's sister-in-law. George provided Henry with some tea and an ambulance for transportation, and that is how the Civil War ended for Henry A. Wise . . .

(Due to an e-mail error the following article was omitted from the August Newsletter)

General Patrick R. Cleburne and Why He Never Rose to Corps Command

Presented by Edwin C. Bearss

A review of the July 2016 program by Greg Mertz

The academic community tends to frown upon military history, so when Ed Bearss pursued his master's degree he needed to figure out a way that he might obtain approval to write his thesis about a Civil War general. He gained the necessary consent to study Confederate Major General Patrick R. Cleburne, who based upon a controversial proposal which Cleburne made in January of 1864, that Bearss contends prevented the general from reaching corps command as less talented generals were promoted instead.

Confederate Major General Patrick Cleburne was born in Ireland on St. Patrick's Day and after serving three years in the British military, he purchased his way out of the army and came to America with several of his siblings, eventually settling in Helena, Arkansas. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Cleburne became colonel of a regiment seeing service in the boot-heel of Missouri until the Confederacy abandoned Columbus, Kentucky on the opposite side of the Mississippi River and concentrated all available troops to form an army at Corinth, Mississippi. Cleburne had been promoted to brigadier general in March of 1862, and commanded a brigade in the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee the following month. Cleburne's command fought well, though Bearss noted that one of the men in Cleburne's 6th Mississippi fired at and missed Union General William T. Sherman, killing the general's escort mounted right beside him instead.

Cleburne's next battle was at Richmond, Kentucky in August of 1862, where he led a division into action, helping to rout the Federal army from the field. He was shouting an order when a bullet entered his open mouth and broke six teeth in his lower left jaw. He recovered from his wound quickly and in October he commanded a brigade at the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky, where he was again wounded and again performed well.

Promoted to major general and placed back in command of a division in December, Cleburne once more displayed great talent as a soldier in the Battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Bearss said that Cleburne covered his division with glory on the banks of the Stones River.

After serving credibly at the Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia, in September of 1863, Cleburne and his division distinguished themselves again at the Battle of Missionary Ridge, Tennessee in November. Grant commanded the operations around Chattanooga and gave Sherman and his Army of the Tennessee the assignment to attack the Confederate right at Tunnel Hill, where Cleburne was posted. Despite being outnumbered four to one, Cleburne held his ground and Bearss stated that by 4 pm Sherman hadn't gained an inch against Cleburne's division. Finally the Army of the Cumberland stormed Missionary Ridge and overwhelmed the Confederate center, which caused the rest of the line to collapse. As the Confederate army fell apart, it had to pass through Ringgold Gap in order to escape. Cleburne skillfully held off the Federal pursuit by defending the gap and saving the army's artillery trains and ammunition trains.

After turning in a pair of the most impressive performances of any division in the Confederate army, Cleburne pondered the obvious manpower shortages faced by the Confederacy. As the Union army began to recruit black troops, Cleburne felt that the Confederacy should do the same. He drafted a proposal for the Confederacy to arm slaves

and showed it to his subordinates. Cleburne cited examples in military history where slaves had been successfully used in war. The feedback from the officers in his division was positive, so he passed Cleburne's suggestion on to army commander Major General Joseph E. Johnston, who in turn forwarded the idea on to Richmond. There the proposition was met with adamant opposition. To carry out Cleburne's plan was to go against the essence of what the Confederacy stood for – the stout protection of slavery – and there it quickly died. Not only would Cleburne's idea make no further progress, but neither would Cleburne's career. Bearss feels that the two are intricately connected.

As the Atlanta Campaign got underway, Confederate corps commander Leonidas Polk was killed at Pine Mountain. Although Cleburne had a stellar record at division command and was worthy of being promoted to corps command, he did not receive the advancement. The corps first went to W.W. Loring, and when he proved to be incapable, command was then given to A.P. Stewart. While Stewart was a capable officer, his record paled in comparison with that of Cleburne's. Still, Cleburne persisted in excelling at division command as the Atlanta Campaign continued. At Pickett's Mill, his division repelled assaults by two Federal divisions. When yet another corps command became available, Cleburne was once more overlooked as S.D. Lee – a soldier from outside of Johnston's army – was brought in to take control.

Johnston was replaced as army commander by Major General John B. Hood, who took the fighting back into Tennessee. After believing that he had trapped a Federal force at Spring Hill, Hood grew furious at Cleburne and others for not blocking a road and thus permitting the Federals to escape. When the Confederates made contact with the Federals once again on November 30, 1864, at Franklin, an angered Hood decided to launch a full frontal attack. Cleburne examined the ground over which the division was to advance along with his brigade commanders. Prospects for success did not look good. General Daniel C. Govan, also from Arkansas, remarked, *"there will not be many of us that will get back to Arkansas."* Patrick Cleburne was among those who would not return to Arkansas. In the initial charge a bullet struck him in the heart and killed him at the Battle of Franklin.

In January of 1865, in an effort by the Confederate Congress to express their dissatisfaction with President Jefferson Davis, they appointed Robert E. Lee to be the first and only Confederate General-in-Chief. Lee made three significant changes: he restored Joseph E. Johnston to command, he dismissed the Confederate Commissary General, and he authorized putting black troops into the Confederate ranks. Thus fourteen months after Cleburne's similar proposal was soundly rejected, the Confederacy was ready to adopt the idea of black Confederate soldiers. Both the timing and the prominence of the person forwarding the idea were significant. Ten years after Cleburne's death, Davis admitted that he had made a mistake in not supporting Cleburne's proposal. Instead the Confederacy harmed their cause by allowing Federal authorities to have exclusive access in the recruiting of black troops, and also by depriving themselves of the services of the best available candidate for Corps Commander . . .

Remember: Please to contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance
To Confirm Your Reservations: Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail cwrtddinner@yahoo.com

IN NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

We will continue the article by RVCWRT Historian Joyce Darr

"John Singleton Mosby's Civil War Years"

Along with printing the award winning Essay by our 2016 Winning Intern

"Jessica Sullivan"

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 still just \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and it's still 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.

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