



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
August 2026, Volume 23, Issue 8

Speaker: Sarah Bierle
Topic: “Glorious Courage: The Life of Confederate John Pelham in the Army of Northern Virginia”
When: August 10, 2026
Location: Brock’s Riverside Grill
Times: Social Time Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm
Our Website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org
Our Facebook: www.facebook.com/rvcwrt

Sarah Bierle “Glorious Courage: The Life of Confederate John Pelham in the Army of Northern Virginia”

On March 17, 1863, Major John Pelham—commander of the Stuart Horse Artillery—fell off his horse mortally wounded. That day at Kelly’s Ford marked the end of his short life and the beginning of his memory and influential legends. This presentation explores the experiences of the twenty-

four-year-old officer, his battlefield tactics and innovations, and how he rose to fame during his life and even more after his death.

Sarah Kay Bierle graduated from Thomas Edison State University with a BA in History and works in the Education Department at American Battlefield Trust. She has spent years exploring ways to share quality historical research in ways that will inform and inspire modern audiences, including school presentations, writing, battlefield tours, and speaking engagements. She continues to study the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley and has published seven books, including "Glorious Courage: John Pelham in the Civil War" (Savas Beatie, 2025) and "Decisions at Chancellorsville" (University of Tennessee Press, 2025).

"Crossroads of Conflict: Civil War Culpeper and the Culpeper National Cemetery"
by Jeff Joyce

A Review of the July 2026 Program by Greg Mertz

The 1860 census reported that Culpeper County had a population of 12,063, more than half of which were enslaved, but also including 1,046 free black residents. Among the prominent citizens of the different ethnic groups who lived in the county during at least a part of the war, Willis Madden was a free black owner of a Tavern in the eastern part of the county. His mother was a white indentured servant to the father of president James Madison. Ambrose Powell Hill was a West Point graduate who served as the initial colonel of the locally recruited 13th Virginia Infantry. His wife, Kitty, was the widowed sister of Confederate cavalry raider John Hunt Morgan, and she sewed the original flag of her husband's regiment. Hill would be killed on April 2, 1865, near Petersburg, during the waning days of the Confederacy.

The county would be the scene of more than 100 engagements, with the respective armies often using either the Rappahannock River on its northern boundary or the Rapidan River on its southern edge as barriers between the opposing forces and the Orange and Alexandria Railroad bringing supplies to each army.

One of the earliest battles fought in the county was also its largest. The August 9, 1862 battle of Cedar Mountain drew nurse Clara Barton to travel

to Culpeper with her medical supplies making her first appearance to aid wounded soldiers near the battlefields where they fell. The year 1863 brought opposing cavalymen to Culpeper, first for the fight known as the battle of Kelly's Ford on March 17, where Confederate artillery Maj. John Pelham was killed. Then the largest cavalry battle ever fought in the western hemisphere and the opening engagement of the Gettysburg Campaign was fought at Brandy Station on June 9. The ebb and flow of the war brought the opposing forces back to Culpeper for a fight through the streets of the town on September 13. Young Gen. George A. Custer was injured in the fight, and when he went home to Michigan to recuperate, the father of Libby Bacon finally gave his consent for the two to marry.

One more 1863 battle was an infantry fight on November 7 at Rappahannock Station, which not only included some unique tactics that would impact future Civil War battles, but resulted in the encampment of the entire Federal army in the county during the subsequent winter, turning the county into a "city of log huts." Another pair of prominent nurses, Cornelia Hancock and Walt Whitman, came to aid the soldiers that winter. George and Libby Custer spent their honeymoon in Clover Hill, renamed as "Camp Libby." Willis Madden's property was destroyed during the winter encampment, with the Federal government eventually reimbursing him \$879 in 1873 for the portion of the damage that the government acknowledged was the fault of its blue-clad soldiers.

The historic section of the Culpeper National Cemetery consists of six acres purchased from the older brother of A.P. Hill, Major Edward B. Hill. Officially, the remains of 1,355

Federal soldiers were interred in the cemetery, established in 1867. The cemetery annexed another 10 ½ acres in 1972, and 12 acres in 2001.

Among the more interesting burials with connections to the Civil War are the following, listed in order of the battle or military activity with which the soldier or dependent of a soldier is associated:

Capt. Ebenezer Butterworth of the 1st Michigan was wounded and captured on Henry Hill in the battle of 1st Manassas. The Confederates sent him to Charlottesville, where he died on August 17, 1861, and was originally mistakenly identified as "Betterworth."

James Savage, Jr. entered the battle of Cedar Mountain as the major of the 2nd Massachusetts. He was wounded, losing both a leg and an arm to amputation, and was captured as well. Though promoted to Lieut. Col., he never returned to his regiment to exercise the rank, dying two months after the battle, on October 22, 1862.

The only known Confederate, marked by the standard pointed Confederate tombstone, is Lieut. D.J.V. Martin. He served in the Palmetto Sharpshooters when mortally wounded at 2nd Manassas, and supposedly died on September 2, 1862 and buried on the battlefield at Groveton. His body was apparently misidentified as that of a Federal Pennsylvania cavalry soldier when he was originally interred in the cemetery.

Because the commander of the 1st New Jersey Cavalry was the senior officer of the brigade, Lieut. Col. Virgil Brodrick led his regiment into the battle of Brandy Station on June 9, 1863. He was unhorsed and killed in the fighting on Fleetwood Hill and is buried by the flagpole in the cemetery, while his family also has a cenotaph for him in New Jersey.

Private Lewis Pfeifer was born in Germany and became a United States citizen in 1856. He joined the 7th Maryland Infantry as one of the Federal soldiers to embark upon the winter encampment of 1863-64 in Culpeper County. He survived the ordeal less than two months, succumbing to disease on December 31, 1863.

The grave of the daughter of a Federal soldier with a connection to Fredericksburg was another of the internments that Joyce highlighted. Capt. William MacNulty lost his arm during the battle of Fredericksburg and was a member of the Invalid Corps. During Reconstruction, MacNulty was the Provost Marshall in Culpeper when his infant daughter May Morse MacNulty died and was buried in the National Cemetery.

Col. Gurden Chapin, was born in Lexington, Virginia and graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1851. His father-in-law was Union Brigadier General Gabriel R. Paul, who was blinded by wounds received during the battle of Gettysburg. As an example of a family divided by the Civil War, Gurden remained in the United States Army, serving in the southwest desert, while his younger brother Lieut. George Wise Chapin served the Confederacy in the 4th Virginia Infantry of the Stonewall Brigade.

George was killed during the Mine Run Campaign. Gurden retired in 1869, settling in Culpeper, where he died in 1875.

My Memory of John Griffiths

As most of us know, John Griffiths passed away a few weeks back. I just want to share a memory that I have John and another legend in the Civil War field. It was 2019 and my wife and I had just moved to the Fredericksburg area six months prior. I had been part of this roundtable when I was an intern, but now I was a member. I knew who John was, and my wife and I spoke to him several times. July 2019 was different though. It was my birthday when we had our meeting. This also marked Ed Bearss final visit to our roundtable. There was one moment when I noticed John was standing next to Ed. They weren't talking. In fact, Ed looked to be engaged with someone else. But I was able to snap that moment in time. I still have the picture, and being my birthday, it was a gift of a second I will have with me forever.

Important Information about the Park's Buildings

At this time, both Chatham Manor and the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Centers remain closed. The grounds are open, with park staff manning the bookstore in Fredericksburg, and offering talks at Chatham. Recent information looks like Chatham will reopen at some time in July, with the visitor center being later in the summer. We will keep you updated as information come into us. Chancellorsville is open, and Elwood will be opening up for the season in May.

To explore these locations independently, check out the self-guided audio tours of the Sunken Road and Chatham available on the NPS App and online at go.nps.gov/frsp-tours. Park staff look forward to welcoming visitors to our upgraded facilities in spring and summer 2026!

Friends of Central Virginia Battlefield Trust

As you know CVBT is a land trust. We focus on purchasing endangered battlefield properties. We do produce a large three-day annual conference, standalone events and need to interpret and maintain our lands, we need help in all of these. In the past, CVBT has had individuals from organizations assist us, and we are grateful, but now we would like to create an official volunteer group who would enjoy being part of CVBT's volunteer core.

We have created "**The Friends of CVBT.**" The intent is for this all-volunteer group is to be the "On Call" core of CVBT's volunteer group assisting in events and battlefield related needs. Active volunteer members will have the unique opportunity to be involved with events hosted by nationally acclaimed historians, assist in tours, and work on preserved battlefields. Participating volunteers will also be enrolled in the membership ranks of CVBT every year they contribute. CVBT will provide each volunteer with a CVBT volunteer staff shirt and CVBT official hat to wear at events or whenever wanted. We will be limiting this new group to 18 volunteers.

We would be honored to have you join the ranks of CVBT volunteers to help us further our mission of preserving our Nation's history.

If interested please email our Executive Director **Terry Rensel** at executivedirector@cvbt.org .
Office: 540-374-0900

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF FREDERICKSBURG (CWRTF)

CWRTF meets 9 times a year on designated Wednesdays at Mary Washington Jepson Alumni Executive Center, 1119 Hanover Street. They offer a buffet dinner followed by a Civil War-themed presentation. Reservations are required. Speaker/topic schedule can be found on their website at www.cwrtf.org, and will be updated here. Below is the schedule starting in September 2025 and going to June 2026.

June 17, 2026

Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Spy: John R. Kelso

Speaker: Christopher Grasso

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. The newsletter is available on our website at www.rappvalleycivilwar.org. Yearly membership dues are \$40 for individuals and \$50 for families. Students are free. Membership is open to anyone interested in the military, political and social history of the American Civil War.

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