



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

August 2017, Volume 14, Issue 8

Speaker: Kristopher White
Topic: "I Am Going to Whip Them or They Are Going to Whip Me: - The Second Day at Gettysburg"
When: Monday, August 14, 2017
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 p.m.

Abstract on Kristopher White, our Scheduled Speaker for August 14, 2017

As noted, our scheduled speaker for the August dinner meeting will be Kristopher White. He is one of the co-founders of "*Emerging Civil War*." Kris is editor emeritus of the *Emerging Civil War* Series. He is also the series editor for the forthcoming resurrection of *Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the American Civil War*. Kris is a graduate of Norwich University with a M.A. in Military History, as well as a graduate of California University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in History. He works as a historian for the Penn-Trafford Recreation Board and a continuing education instructor for the Community College of Allegheny County near Pittsburgh, PA. For nearly five years Kris served as a staff military historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, where he still volunteers his services. For a short time he was a member of the Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides at Gettysburg.

Kristopher White has spoken to more than fifty roundtables and historical societies and he is the author and co-author of numerous articles that have appeared in *America's Civil War*, *Blue & Gray Magazine*, *Hallowed Ground*, and *Civil War Times*. Kris has co-authored a number of books with his longtime friend Chris Mackowski; together they are currently working on a follow-up to their acclaimed book "*Chancellorsville's Forgotten Front: The Battle of Second Fredericksburg and Salem Church, May 3, 1863*," which will be a micro-tactical study of the battle for the Chancellorsville Crossroads on May 3, 1863.

Emerging Civil War Symposium to be held at Stevenson Ridge **"Great Defenses of the Civil War"** **August 4th through 6th, 2017**

Keynote Address by Dr. Brian Matthew Jordan
Pulitzer Prize Finalist
"The Battle of South Mountain"

Sunday Morning Tour of Brandy Station
Daniel T. Davis & Eric Writenberg
Co-authors of "Out Flew the Sabres"

Cost \$125.00 per person
Register at www.emergingcivilwar.com

"Hardluck Ironclad"
The Sinking and Recovery of the USS Cairo
Presented by Ed Bearss
A review of our July program by Greg Mertz

Ed Bearss, who was intimately involved with researching, finding and raising the USS Cairo and then getting it and its artifacts placed on display at the Vicksburg National Military Park, explained to us that fascinating story. Bearss described the sinking of the Cairo as a *"clash of new technology."* The new technology employed by Union forces was an ironclad gunboat with a shallow draft enabling it to navigate many inland waters. The Confederates countered with their own new technology called *"torpedoes"* by the Confederates, *"infernal machines"* by the Union, or what we would today call *"mines"*. The Confederates had at least twenty-six successful attempts at damaging or sinking Union gunboats with infernal machines during the Civil War, one of which was the USS Cairo on December 12, 1862.

Naval operations became a prominent aspect of the Union strategy early in the war with the implementation of General Winfield Scott's *"Anaconda Plan."* It called for a blockade of the Southern coast and then to take advantage of the rivers whose orientation offered Union forces avenues of advance through the heart of the Confederacy.

James Buchannan Eads, who ran a very successful operation salvaging ships on the Mississippi and its tributaries, offered the United States suggestions on how to win the war on the inland waters. Though proposals for the construction of ironclad ships was only open to boat builders. Eads was engaged in only salvaging boats, he utilized political connections to enable him to compete. Eads submitted the lowest bid and was contracted to build seven ironclad gunboats for \$69,000.00 per vessel. Each was named after a city located on the Mississippi, Ohio and Missouri Rivers. This included the one named for Cairo, Illinois, located at the confluence of the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers.

On December 11, 1862, two *"tinclad"* boats (Marmora and Signal) were sent up the Yazoo to reconnoiter for Confederate infernal machines. When about twenty miles from Vicksburg, Mississippi, the Confederates electronically detonated two torpedoes that did no damage, but alarmed the officers in charge of the vessels, who turned around and went back downstream.

Then on the next day a flotilla of five ships returned to the scene. The two tinclads were accompanied by the ram Queen of the West and two ironclads, Cairo and Pittsburgh. Their orders were to find and remove infernal machines from the Yazoo, but not to expose the heavy vessels to the torpedoes. As a small boat from the Marmora set to work dragging for infernal machines, something happened that caused Lieutenant Commander Thomas O. Selfridge Jr. to lose his temper and order the pilot of the Cairo to bring his gunboat to the front and head into waters which had not yet been reconnoitered. Two infernal machines were detonated, blowing holes in the unarmored hull below the waterline of the Cairo and in twelve minutes the Cairo was on the bottom of the Yazoo. The explosions caused no deaths, and because the Cairo pulled up to the bank of the river before it sank, all of the crew escaped. Bearss reported that a couple of fellows who were *"old salts in the navy"* indicated that Selfridge *"removed two torpedoes by placing [his gunboat] over the top of them."*

The Union forces hoped to salvage the thirteen cannons and some of the iron plating but Confederate sharpshooting made that impractical. They were only able to remove the smokestacks that were sticking out of the water to make it difficult for the Confederates to locate it and to recover the materials themselves.

As the centennial of the Civil War approached, the superintendent of the Vicksburg National Military Park called a meeting for the purpose of discussing the idea of investigating to see if the Cairo still existed and whether it could be located and salvaged. Bearss discerned from Selfridge's report that the gunboat went down One and one half miles above Blake's Lower Plantation, and since the Yazoo River has not changed course in more than 10,000 years, Bearss had a good estimate of where the Cairo rested.

The reports also showed that no one died in the incident. That was particularly significant because sunken ships containing dead sailors are viewed as tombs. The salvage of such ships would be viewed as a desecration of graves. The project would most likely not have progressed any further if the Cairo was believed to contain human remains.

After Bearss completed his research, some local residents indicated that they knew exactly where the Cairo was located. When they showed Bearss the alleged location, it was at a point where the Confederates had positioned batteries. Bearss commented that since the Cairo was not under artillery fire when it was sunk, the sunken boat that the locals had seen at that location had to be a Confederate raft, not the Cairo. Bearss was told that he was just a Yankee Historian who didn't know what he was talking about.

Bearss then turned to a simple piece of equipment as the team continued their search, a World War II compass. Knowing that the Cairo had landed on a bank of the Yazoo, enabling the crew to escape, Bearss and his colleagues floated along the river, 30 yards from the bank, when they discovered that the compass spun around. They had clearly passed over a mass of ferrous metal. Probes into the silt striking metal also encouraged them that they had found what remained of the Cairo.

Further work in bringing up enough of the ship to prove that they had indeed found the USS Cairo would first require money. The mayor of Vicksburg provided some funds and then Bearss won \$20,000.00 prize on a quiz show. Bearss was also able to obtain the use of some essential equipment as a favor for keeping the secret of a neighbor who had, had a dalliance with a prominent local figure, when that person accidentally hit Bearss' car.

The raising of the pilot house and one of the cannons from the Cairo both proved that the elusive gunboat had been found, and catapulted the effort to raise the ship. Dredging around the boat leaving it sit upon a pedestal of mud was done twice. Publicity for the project ironically came from reporters with all three of the major television networks as they were awaiting breaking news on the murders of three Civil Rights workers occurring at the same time as the work of raising the Cairo. Lessons were learned as to how NOT to raise a gunboat and the first attempt to lift it with 3-inch cables instead sliced through the boat. But eventually the gunboat, along with all of its artifacts, was salvaged and is now on display at the Vicksburg National Military Park, thanks predominantly due to the effort of Edwin C. Bearss.

Ecco's of the Civil War He Lost His Leg Here! By Jim Smithfield

Along with his wife, he attended church services being held in the very same Baptist Church, where in December of 1862, his amputation occurred. After the *Battle of Fredericksburg* in December of 1862, the Baptist church was being used as a hospital.

Upon arriving in Fredericksburg on their return trip home from Florida on Monday, March 26, 1906, Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Kelsey, of Jamestown, New York, spent several days in the Fredericksburg area. Mr. Kelsey had fought in the *Battle of Fredericksburg*, in December of 1862, under Union General Ambrose Burnside. In that battle he lost his leg by amputation. Kelsey was carried from the battlefield to the local Baptist church, where his leg was amputated. During the Kelsey's visit to Fredericksburg in 1906, they attended church services at the same Baptist church on Sunday, the 1st of April. Throughout the service, Kelsey is said to have spent much of his time just viewing the inside of the church with a very unusual interest.

Ed Bearss Awarded Honorary Membership By Bob Jones

During the RVCWRT, July 10th Dinner Meeting, our speaker, Edwin C. Bearss, was presented a Certificate Of Recognition, given in appreciation and recognition of his time, talents, and services in the sharing of the *Historical Legacy of America*. The RVWRT thereby awarded an Honorary Lifetime Membership to Edwin C. Bearss

The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg

By Bob Jones

As a courtesy, the RVCWRT provides as a regular feature every month, the ongoing scheduled speakers for the CWRTF's Program Year. The *Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg* normally meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month (except for the meeting held on the third Wednesday of June 2017). Their Dinner Meetings are held at the MWW's Jepson Center located at 1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA, the dinner cost is \$32.00 for each person. Advance reservations should be made by telephoning 540-361-2105. As noted below, their scheduled speaker for the scheduled September 27, 2017, meeting will be James R. (Bud) Robertson who will present "Robert E. Lee and the Quest for Peace."



CWRTF's Scheduled Speakers For the 2017 Program Year

Sept. 27, 2017 James R. (Bud) Robertson – Robert E. Lee and the Quest for Peace

Oct. 25, 2017 Eric Buckland – Mosby's Men

Nov. 15, 2017 Robert Lee Hodge – Filming the Civil War with Historical Accuracy, Part 2

The RVCWRT Bulletin Board

By Joyce Darr

It is my job to maintain the RVCWRT's special bulletin board. It is placed against the right side wall where dinner guests enter Brock's upstairs dining room. This Bulletin Board is utilized during each of our dinner meetings. Members will find many different articles about the Civil War placed there. These are there to be requested by members for personal reading. Also, there is information posted on the bulletin board about upcoming Civil War related events, along with various items of interest. Along with the various posted announcements, Civil War articles and related material will be placed there. These items may each be requested or borrowed by members to take home.

RVCWRT History Alert Program

by Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT member Alan Zirkle, provides a totally free service, which notifies subscribers about any/all upcoming local history events, in the Fredericksburg general area. This is done via subscribers recorded e-mail address, it concerns upcoming history-related events. RVCWRT members can receive Alan's important messages. If you do not now, but would like to receive Alan Zirkle's "History Alerts" please send your e-mail address to Alan noting this fact to him at az@azirkle.com.

**Reminder: Contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance and to confirm reservations:
Call Bob Jones @ 540-399-1702 or send e-mail to cwrttdinner@yahoo.com or bohnpeg1954@gmail.com**

Did You Know?

By Jim Smithfield

Did You Know . . . that Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart's Father-in-Law, was Union General Philip St. George Cooke, who in 1862, attempted to catch or stop his Son-In-Law's Cavalry as they circled the Union's Army of the Potomac? Cooke was commanding Reserve Union Cavalry when during the Peninsula Campaign, his Son-In-Law, General J.E.B. Stuart leading his cavalry, rode around General McClellan's entire Union Army and gained necessary reconnaissance in the process. Embarrassed and humiliated Cooke was unable to catch or to stop Stuart's ride around the Army of the Potomac. After Stuart's ride, General Philip St. George Cooke left active field service for the remainder of the Civil War.

Did You Know . . . that there is a new book released on *Civil War Preservation*, entitled "*Fighting the Second Civil War: A History of Battlefield Preservation and the Emergence of the Civil War Trust*". This book shares many stories from the past 30 years of *Saving Civil War Battlefields*. It is being billed as the comprehensive history of the modern preservation movement and it was published in coordination with the Civil War Trust's 30th Anniversary Celebration.

"Colonel" The Union horse that survived 18 Bloody Civil War battles

By Jim Smithfield



Just prior to the start of the Civil War, while stationed in Charlestown, South Carolina, Lieutenant Norman J. Hall of the 4th United States Artillery purchased a large gray saddle horse, Hall named his new horse, *Colonel*. For the next several years, *Colonel* would carry Hall through some of the bloodiest engagements of the Civil War. These engagements included the Seven Days Battles, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. Hall went on to become the Commander of the 7th Michigan Infantry in July 1862.

It is no secret to any of us that a great many horses and mules were killed during the Civil War, in fact over one million horses and mules were lost during the war. *Colonel* was wounded twice in battle, once in his left front shoulder and once in his left hip.

Shortly after Gettysburg, Hall received a new position, which for him to accept, required that he part ways with the 7th Michigan and with *Colonel*, his horse. *Colonel* was then left with the regiment's quartermaster, W. W. Wade, who at war's end took *Colonel* home with him to Hillsdale County, Michigan. After Wade's death the local veteran's organization cared for *Colonel* and celebrated his survival to all. It is recorded that upon his death, *Colonel* was secretly buried one late night in the military section of the local cemetery, which forbade the interment of any animal.

Note: The latest total for our RVCWRT membership currently reflects a total of 121 members.

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 individuals, \$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	Webmaster:	Dan Augustine
Vice President:	John Sapanara	Membership:	Ryan Quint
Secretary:	Ben Keller	Research/Historian:	Joyce Darr
Treasurer:	Bob Pfile	Member at Large:	John Griffiths
Assistant Treasurer:	Barbara Stafford	Member at Large:	Conway Richardson
Meeting Scribe:	Greg Mertz	Member at Large:	Paul Stier
Newsletter Editor:	Jim Smithfield	Past President:	Marc Thompson

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