



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**May 2023, Volume 20, Issue 5**

**Speaker:** Gregg Clemmer  
**Topic:** "Who the He\*# is Old Alleghany?"  
**When:** Monday May 8, 2023  
**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](http://www.rappvalleycivilwar.org)  
**Our Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/rvcwrt](http://www.facebook.com/rvcwrt)

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**Gregg Clemmer "Who the He\*# was Old Alleghany"**

Gregg is a native of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and a graduate of Virginia Tech, with a Master's degree in military history from Norwich University. A former president of the Montgomery County (MD) Civil War Round Table, He numbers two Union generals and 14 "in-the-trenches" Confederates in his ancestry, including members of Armistead's and the Stonewall brigades.

Gregg has been a study leader for the Smithsonian Associates since 1988, specializing in caves as well as Civil War and Revolutionary War tours. A former professor of history at Carroll Community College in Westminster, MD, Gregg has also been an onboard lecturer for American Cruise Lines, specializing in the histories of the Columbia and Mississippi Rivers.

Ed Johnson is "one of the wickedest men I ever heard of," wrote a member of the Stonewall Brigade. Declared another, he is "a large and rather rough looking man on horseback...whom the men jeered." Others recalled Johnson as an irascible character who "always carried a big hickory club or cane, and when he got mad could work his ears like a mule." Still, Johnson's highest accolades shine from subordinates who followed him into battle. They are legion, but perhaps summarized best in the words of artilleryman William P. Carter: "No bolder soldier ever donned the Southern gray, or followed the storm-tossed colors of the immortal Lee."

Despite warnings from several nationally known historians that few primary sources existed, Clemmer's diligent research over a dozen years discovered two notable caches of Johnson letters and a treasure trove of primary records. As a result, Clemmer's biography of Ed Johnson won the Douglas Southall Freeman History Award as the book of highest merit in the field of Southern history.

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### **“Texans at Chickamauga”**

**by Scott Mingus**

#### **A Review of the April 2023 Program by Greg Mertz**

Even though the only battle of the Civil War to witness more casualties than Chickamauga was the battle of Gettysburg, the disparity of the written word between the battles was obvious to our speaker, Scott Mingus. By co-authoring the book, “Unceasing Fury: Texans at the Battle of Chickamauga, September 18-20, 1863” Mingus not only highlighted the actions of several small units in the battle, but because Texans were on every portion of the battlefield, he could also tell the story of the entire battle by sharing the role played by the men from Texas.

While the Gettysburg and Vicksburg Campaigns climaxed during the summer of 1863, Federal Gen. William S. Rosecrans outmaneuvered Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg in the Tullahoma Campaign of central

Tennessee. Bragg gave up the important rail junction at Chattanooga without a fight and pleaded for more troops.

With Confederate reinforcements on the way to Bragg and with an isolated part of Rosecrans' army entering a cul-de-sac at McLemore's Cove, 20 miles south of Chattanooga, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was able to prod Bragg into ordering an attack September 10-11, 1863. Despite Bragg's intentions, a major assault never developed. The most substantial attack involved a Texas brigade in hard-fighting Gen. Patrick Cleburne's division under an Alabama native, West Point graduate and professional soldier James Deshler. When the Confederates surrendered the garrison of Arkansas Post in January, 1863, Deshler and the men in a Texas brigade became prisoners. When the troops were exchanged, they were unfairly considered to be cowards by some, but not by Deshler, and the men welcomed him as their new commander. The Federal soldiers targeted by Deshler realized they were too spread out and vulnerable, so they decided to pull back toward Chattanooga.

Bragg's ranks swelled to 65,000 with the arrival of Longstreet's corps from the Army of Northern Virginia. But due to issues with the varying railroad gauges along the route of Longstreet's men from Virginia to Georgia, none of his artillery and five of his brigades would not arrive in time to participate in the battle. Hood's Texas Brigade, under Gen. Jerome B. Robertson, would be among Longstreet's troops to be engaged. Robertson's men had been issued new uniforms from the Richmond Depot made of blue jean material, which resulted in them being subjected to some friendly fire in the battle.

After the affair at McLemore's Cove concluded, Mingus described the opposing forces coming together from north to south like the closing of a zipper. Bragg planned to cross Chickamauga Creek at Reed's Bridge (about 11 miles south of Chattanooga), and crossing further south at Alexander's Bridge, and Lee and Gordon's Mill, then assault the Federal army. The efforts to get across the Chickamauga began on September 18.

The Battle of Chickamauga began with the fight at Reed's Bridge, which involved a Confederate brigade with some Texans commanded by John Gregg. Standing 6 foot 4 inches, Gregg was a natural leader who Mingus indicated had charisma, magnetism and swagger. He would be killed near

Richmond in October of 1864. Gregg benefited from having a brilliant subordinate commanding his 7<sup>th</sup> Texas in Hiram Granbury, who would become a general and be killed in the battle of Franklin. Granbury's regiment did most of the fighting at this crossing, as Gregg always used the 7<sup>th</sup> Texas as his shock troops, which succeeded in taking Reed's Bridge.

That night, Gregg's men engaged Wilder's famed brigade armed with Spencer repeating rifles near Alexander's Bridge. That evening was also one of the coldest September days on record, with the temperature at Chickamauga dipping to 28 degrees with snow flurries, and with Chicago experiencing a blizzard.

On the morning of September 19, Matthew Ector's brigade of Texans attacked two Union brigades, with the famed Confederate general Nathan B. Forrest in support. Ector was a Georgia native, a lawyer and politician, who liked to engage in drinking and dancing, and was a poor soldier. Ector broke contact with Forrest and was routed, then regrouped, went back into action, and was routed a second time.

During the afternoon, John B. Hood's troops were engaged in heavy fighting at the southern end of the battlefield at Viniard Farm. Having suffered a severe wound in an arm at Gettysburg, Hood's men were surprised to see him back on the field just two months after being shot, and were also amazed that he looked so good. Inspired by their leader, Hood's troops carried the day and killed Federal brigade commander Col. Hans Heg. Hood's men came under intense artillery fire from a battery commanded by Capt. Eli Lilly – the same man who would form the pharmaceutical company of that name -- in part to aid the pain of his fellow Civil War veterans. Lilly stopped Hood's final attack by firing double canister.

Entering the battle at dusk, and fighting into the night illuminated by the burning tops of pine trees, Cleburne's men, including Deshler's brigade, were engaged in some of the most horrific fighting of the battle. A cabin filled with wounded Federal soldiers burned the ground, killing all of the wounded trapped inside.

Mingus described the final day of the battle, on September 20, as a "soldier's battle" and a day when both Rosecrans and Bragg lost control of their armies. On that day, in his first battle as a general, James Deshler was crawling among his men checking to see if they had enough ammunition, and even

bringing rounds to his men, when he was killed instantly by an artillery shell that struck him in the chest. Robert E. Lee cried when he was informed of Deshler's death, and called him one of the bravest men to ever fall for the Confederacy. J.E.B. Stuart was also shaken by word that Deshler had fallen.

A Federal mistake resulted in a substantial gap in their line, which the Confederates of Longstreet's command were quick to exploit. As Longstreet's men advanced into north Dyer Field, his troops waived and Hood came forward, only to receive a wound that would result in his leg being amputated.

At this point, Rosecrans departed the Chickamauga battlefield and headed for Chattanooga to prepare for its defense, leaving Gen. George Thomas as the senior officer on the field at Snodgrass Hill. Longstreet put in all of the troops he could find, but Thomas – the Rock of Chickamauga – held firm until dark. Federal losses in their defeat numbered 16,000 men. It was a costly Confederate victory at 18,500 casualties.

Bragg proceeded to lay siege to the Federals in Chattanooga, but Gen. Ulysses S. Grant brought Gen. William T. Sherman with him, and the Army of the Potomac sent the XI and XII corps under Gen. Joseph Hooker to Chattanooga to help lift the siege in November, 1863. Bragg would be replaced by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston after the Confederates were forced back from Chattanooga.

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## **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.

CVBT is now beginning our 27th year of preserving our local battlefields, the very battlefields you study and walk upon. 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](mailto:executivedirector@cvbt.org) .

Office: 540-374-0900

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## **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.cwrft.org](http://www.cwrft.org), as well as below. As with our round table, things are subject to change due to the ups and downs of Covid.

### CWRTF Schedule

May 24, 2023 - Stephen Cushman, THE GENERAL'S CIVIL WAR: WHAT THEIR MEMOIRS CAN TEACH US TODAY

June 21, 2023 - Paul Brueske, THE LAST SIEGE - 1865 MOBILE CAMPAIGN

September 27, 2023 - John Vagnetti, THE CIVIL WAR, A POSTAL SYSTEM DIVIDED

October 25, 2023 - Sarah Kay Bierle, THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK

November 15, 2023 - Ken Rutherford, AMERICA'S BURIED HISTORY: LANDMINES IN THE CIVIL WAR

March 27, 2024 - Christian Keller, SOUTHERN STRATEGIES

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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. The newsletter is available on our website at [www.rappvalleycivilwar.org](http://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.

**Newsletter Editor and Webmaster:** John Roos

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## **The RVCWRT Executive Committee**

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