



# MASON-DIXON LEDGER

Newsletter of the West Virginia Mason-Dixon Round Table  
Morgantown, West Virginia

645 Sylvan Place  
Morgantown, WV 26505

Volume XXIII, Issue 3

March 2024

## Our Next Meeting

***The Second Battle of Winchester, The Confederate Victory That Opened the Door to Gettysburg: Account of the fighting in the early stages of the Gettysburg Campaign at Winchester, Martinsburg, Berryville, Bunker Hill, and Locke's Ford.***

**Scott Mingus**

**7pm, March 19, 2024**

Our speaker, Scott Mingus, maintains that "Second Winchester" was one of the Union army's most lopsided defeats in the entire war. However, he asserts, the battle has been all but forgotten. He will correct this error.

Scott has written 28 Civil War and Underground Railroad books. His biography of Confederate General William "Extra Billy" Smith was nominated for or won multiple awards, including the Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr. Literary Prize. He also wrote several articles for *Gettysburg Magazine* and other journals. Scott maintains a blog on the Civil War history of York County PA ([www.yorkblog.com/cannonball](http://www.yorkblog.com/cannonball)) He received the Heritage Profile Award from the York County History Center for his many contributions to local Civil War history. His great-great-grandfather was a 15-year-old drummer boy in the 51st Ohio Infantry. Other family members fought in the Army of the Potomac at Antietam and Gettysburg. Scott also has written six scenario books on miniature wargaming and was elected to the hobby's prestigious Legion of Honor. Now a retired scientist and executive in the global pulp & paper industry, Scott holds patents in self-adhesive postage stamps and bar code labels, and was part of the research team that developed the first commercially successful self-adhesive U.S. postage stamps.



## Where We'll Meet

Our March meeting will be at the usual site, Suncrest United Methodist Church, 479 Van Voorhis Road. We will be meeting in Old Drummond Chapel. We are requested not to park in numbered slots of the church parking lot. Meetings start at 7:00 p.m., with the Executive Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m. (As always, keep an eye out for additions and/or changes!)

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual dues are \$30 for an individual membership and \$50 for a family. If you have not yet done so, please renew your membership. Please include the following information: Name, Address, City, State, Zip, and Email address. Please communicate this information with your dues to our Treasurer:

Clarke Ridgway  
4009 Morningside Way  
Morgantown WV 26505

As always, guests and Civil War enthusiasts are welcome to our meetings, regardless of membership status. Interested students are automatically included as members free of charge.



## OUR LAST MEETING

***The Dividing “Lin’ fer de North and South”: The Creation of a Border and the Continuation of a Borderland between Slavery and Freedom in Washington, D.C.***

**Rachael Barbara Nicholas**

**February 16, 2024**

The third time was indeed lucky: we were finally able to hear Ms Nicholas’s talk after a global pandemic and food poisoning put paid to

our earlier efforts. Early on, Rachel made a clear distinction between borders, which were fixed lines, and borderlands, which were places of interaction and often violence. In that context, Washinton DC was a true borderland, an ill-defined dividing line between slavery (in border-state Maryland and Confederate Virginia) and freedom, at least in principle, within the District and further north. "Ill-defined" because the District still propagated the practice of "hiring out," where slaves were put to work on construction jobs (with slave salaries being paid to their masters) alongside free black people to build, for example, the Executive Mansion (later known as the White House). "[I]n principle" because conservatives and slave-owners tried to get the authorities to arrest erstwhile slaves fleeing from Maryland. Further clouding the issue was the fact that slavery was not always a permanent condition: some owners manumitted their slaves "for diverse good reasons" if the owners could certify that those freed could earn their own living. Also, freed people could be arrested on flimsy charges and thrown in the DC jail, the infamous Blue Jug, until they could prove that they were indeed free. Official papers were not always accepted in this regard, and so a more-likely outcome (as documented by Allan Pinkerton's report) was that they would be assumed to be slaves. They would then be sold as such, with the proceeds used to pay off fines and other jailing expenses. This led to phenomena such as the Reverse Underground Railroad, where freed blacks in Northern states were kidnapped and brought to DC to be sold in the neighboring slave states. (But some "slave-stealers did get caught and fined, even jailed.)

Some fleeing slaves did manage to get the protection of sympathetic Union soldiers, who were often provided with free labor in return. Those soldiers considered fleeing slaves as "contraband of war", so not returning them was equivalent to diminishing the Confederate war effort. Freed slaves in the District erected schools and churches. In turn, the churches helped newer fleeing slaves. The freed peoples built communities, working as laundresses and laborers. One member of President Lincoln's household even established a cooperative society where those who could afford it helped poorer members. On the other hand, perhaps as part of a balancing act to keep border states from leaving the Union, Lincoln encouraged his personal bodyguard Ward Hill Lamon to arrest and detain possible fleeing slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act. This continued even after the passage of the Compensated Emancipation Act, whereby slaveowners in DC freed their slaves in exchange for \$300.

## ITEMS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Committee noted with regret the passing of Margaret Atkins, wife of long-time member John Atkins, in Houston TX on January 8. Services will be held at Suncrest United Methodist Church, in Morgantown, at 11 a.m. on May 4.

With the March meeting as described above, members are reminded that the April meeting will be replaced, as is customary, by the all-day Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation Symposium. Organized by Meeting Program Chair Rick Wolfe, this is scheduled on April 6<sup>th</sup>; see the flyer below. Tickets should be obtained in advance using the website or phone number noted on the flyer. The symposium will be held on the campus of Davis and Elkins College, the same as last year. The excellent program is outlined in the flyer. Rick points out that attendees will be spared the quarter-mile hike to the college cafeteria, as lunch will be served in the conference area.

President Matt Lively reported on the success of *The American Civil War 101*, the maiden OLLI lecture from our group given by him. The organizers were enthusiastic about expanding the offering to a multi-lecture series. Some members agreed to speak. The entire membership is solicited for additional speakers.

Plans are underway to have the July picnic move from Joan Gibson's garden to Mason-Dixon Park. The date remains as the third Tuesday, July 16<sup>th</sup> this year.

## FROM THE CWRT CONGRESS

### ***CWRT Congress Speaker Series***

Special events are all scheduled on Fridays. Register for any of these at <https://www.cwrtcongress.org/events.html>

### March 2024 Speakers

Curtis Older, HOOD'S DEFEAT NEAR FOX'S GAP: PRELUDE TO EMANCIPATION, Friday March 1 at 7pm. This is an exceptional analysis of John Bell Hood's troop movements during the battle of South Mountain. For the past 160 years, all other authors misplaced Hood's troop positions on the Fox's Gap battlefield by approximately a half-mile. The actual location of Hood's attack reconfigures the

entire placement of the competing forces and, thus, the conclusions about the struggle. The failure to understand the topographical characteristics of the battlefield led others to make false assumptions. Before Older's book, the battle for Fox's Gap and South Mountain was never accurately reported or understood.

Sarah Kay Bierle, *CALL OUT THE CADETS*, Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Virginia's Shenandoah Valley had seen years of fighting by the spring of 1864. Union Major General Franz Siegel prepared to lead a new invasion force into the Valley, operating on the far right flank of Grant's Overland Campaign. Confederate Major General John Breckinridge scrambled to organize a defense. He included the young VMI cadets who rushed into the battle when ordered...an opportunity for fame and glory. In *Call Out the Cadets*, Sarah Kay Bierle traces the history of this May 15, 1864, battle. She not only discusses the military aspects, but also follows the history of individuals whose lives or military careers were changed because of the fight. (Battle of New Market 160th Anniversary – 5/15/2024)

#### April 2024 Speakers

John L. Hopkins, *THE WORLD WILL NEVER SEE THE LIKE: GETTYSBURG REUNION OF 1913*, Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. It was front-page news throughout the country—the largest gathering of Union and Confederate veterans ever held. The 1913 Gettysburg reunion is a story of 53,000 old comrades and former foes reunited, and of the tension, even half a century later, between competing narratives of reconciliation and remembrance. John L. Hopkins fills his marvelous account with detail from the letters, diaries, and published accounts of Union and Confederate veterans, the extensive archival records of the reunion's organizers, and the daily stories filed by the scores of reporters who covered it. This is the first full story of this extraordinary event's genesis and planning, the obstacles overcome on the way to making it a reality.

Richard Hatcher, III, *THUNDER IN THE HARBOR – FORT SUMTER AND THE CIVIL WAR*, Friday April 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Fort Sumter, Charleston. April 12, 1861. The bombardment and surrender of Sumter was only the beginning of the story. Both sides understood the military significance of the fort and the busy seaport, which played host to one of the longest and most complicated and fascinating campaigns of the entire Civil War. Richard Hatcher's presentation entitled, *Thunder in the Harbor - Fort Sumter, and the Civil War*, is the first modern study to document the fort from its origins through the war and up to the present. (Notice that the presentation is on the 163rd anniversary of the bombardment.)

## May 2024 Speakers

Fergus Bordewich, *KLAN WAR: ULYSSES S. GRANT AND THE BATTLE TO SAVE RECONSTRUCTION*, Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Author/Historian Fergus Bordewich defines the KKK as “the first organized terrorist movement in American history.” *Klan War* reveals the bloody, Reconstruction-era roots of present-day battles to protect the ballot box and stamp out resurgent white supremacist ideologies. To repel that virulent tidal wave of violence, President Ulysses S. Grant waged a two-term battle against both armed Southern enemies of Reconstruction and Northern politicians seduced by visions of postwar conciliation, testing the limits of the federal government in determining the extent of states’ rights.

### **THE BRICKYARD FIGHT AND MURAL**

This YouTube video recently came to our attention from friend and colleague Mark Dunkelman. [WATCH HERE!](#)



From *THE LIGHT POST* (Volume 4, Issue 2)

### **JONATHAN TAYLOR’S SWORD COMES HOME TO BETHLEHEM**

By Mike Campbell, Bucks County CWRT, & Ed Root, CWRT of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Captain Jonathan Taylor died in Georgetown D.C. on March 28, 1863, 105 days after he was mortally wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg. He was just 20 years of age. A beloved son of

Bethlehem, PA, Jonty, as his family called him, was shot through the chest while leading the men of the 129th PA in a twilight charge up Marye's Heights. The entire community buckled under the loss. Taylor was their hero, and he had suffered nobly to no avail. To watch his life slip away from afar, only in the form of letters and the news, knocked Bethlehem flat. Their wish and his hope was for a homecoming, if not to recover, then a chance to say a proper goodbye. Those who knew him, including his comrades, never forgot that.

Unfortunately, the rest of us did. Years passed. Life moved on, and the Taylors moved away. Worst of all, Taylor's sword, a gift from friends and admirers presented to him in the summer of 1862, also went missing. A piece of history gone forever.

Gone that is until a group of CWRT volunteers got involved and set in motion a chain of events that brought Taylor's sword back home. Ed Root of the CWRT of Eastern PA headed up the search project. Acting upon information given to him by NPS Ranger and Bethlehem native Peter Maugle, Root contacted the owner of the sword, a collector from South Carolina. He agreed to sell the sword to Root after hearing of Root's plan to return the artifact to Bethlehem and display it publicly in a place of honor. They chose the Nitschmann Middle School, which is located across the street from the Bethlehem Civil War Memorial. The project quickly picked up steam.

A fundraising campaign was launched, and local charities under the leadership of Historic Bethlehem ([historicbethlehem.org](http://historicbethlehem.org)), offered to curate the exhibit. The Curriculum Supervisor for the Bethlehem Area School District, Dr. Joseph Anthes, took notice. Enthusiasm grew, and the press took note. Herb Kaufman of the G.A.R. Museum in Philadelphia signed on as a researcher, and ultimately the G.A.R. Museum was selected to take custody of the sword in the event of a sale, on the condition that it be put on permanent loan at Nitschmann. All that was left was to secure financing, which was provided to the tune of \$9,400, primarily by the CWRT of Eastern PA. The deal was done. After 161 years, Captain Jonathan Taylor's sword was coming home. The only thing missing were the details of Taylor's service, lost along with the sword for more than a century.

Lost, that is, until the Bucks County CWRT got involved. As it turned out, the Taylors had moved to Bucks County in 1871. Though the family had long since vanished from the public record, in 1982 a family friend approached the Bucks County Historical Society and offered a collection of documents. Included were 21 letters from Jonathan Taylor's parents dated December 1862 - March 1863, all detailing



Taylor's suffering and death from his bedside in Georgetown. Also included were two letters from Taylor himself, and most importantly, five letters from Taylor's older brother Joseph, a Corporal in the same company as Jonathan. One of the vexing questions that Root had long confronted during his research was whether Taylor was holding his sword when he was struck down by the fatal blow at Fredericksburg. Though he had searched valiantly, the research trail had long gone cold, and as the date of the sword's return approached, Root had all but given up hope of finding a definitive answer.

And then miraculously, just a few days before the ribbon cutting ceremony at Nitschmann, Root was contacted by Mike Campbell of the Bucks County CWRT. Campbell had found the mothballed Taylor family papers in the BCHS archives while working on a different project and transcribed most of the letters. Many questions were answered, but many more remained. The question of the sword took priority. Time was running out. Mere hours before the ceremony, Campbell located the sought after records in a December 16, 1862, letter. Jonathan Taylor was indeed holding his sword when he was struck. In fact, "while cheering on his men he was half turned round, waving his sword," when struck. Incredible! A fairy tale ending.

The reaction was euphoric. The ribbon cutting ceremony at Nitschmann was full of proverbial high fives and chest bumps, a grand display which culminated with District Superintendent Jack Silva reenacting the old Union rally cry of "Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!" Herb Kaufman, channeling his inner Jonathan Taylor, shouted "Follow me men!" during his speech, tucking his head and raising his arm as if he were stepping up the slope of Marye's Heights. Everyone felt that we had made history.

And so we did!

*Mike Campbell is the President of the Bucks County CWRT Library and Museum, located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Ed Root is Past Brigade Commander of the Board of the CWRT of Eastern Pennsylvania located in Breinigsville, Pennsylvania.*





**FROM *THE CALLING CARD*, THE MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER OF *THE SOCIETY FOR WOMEN AND  
THE CIVIL WAR***

<http://www.swcw.org>

Do you want to become a member of the Society for Women and the Civil War (SWCW)? Just visit their website: <http://www.swcw.org/join-the-society.html>



**Woman of the Month**

**Henrietta Cordelia Ray**

Poet, Teacher, Activist

Born January 14, 1850 in New York City

Died January 5, 1916 in Brooklyn

Buried in Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn



On April 14, 1876, the eleventh anniversary of President Lincoln's assassination, an impressive ceremony was held in Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C. to unveil the Freedman's Memorial Monument to Abraham Lincoln. Charlotte Scott, a formerly enslaved woman, initiated the effort to build a monument to honor President Lincoln, immediately after he was assassinated. She made the first donation towards its construction. The total cost of the monument was financed by Freedmen, including many who were former U.S. Colored Troops.

John Mercer Langston, an African American, plus noted professor, lawyer and politician, was chairman of the National Unveiling Arrangements committee. At the request of the committee, Congress passed a joint resolution to make April 14, 1876 a general holiday so all government employees in the District of Columbia could attend the unveiling ceremony. Attendees at the celebration included President Ulysses Grant, Justices of the Supreme Court, cabinet members, congressmen, additional luminaries and 25,000 audience members.

The festivities included the sounding of chimes from Metropolitan M.E. Church; the booming of cannons; a grand parade to Lincoln Park with several bands, numerous African American organizations, prominent dignitaries in decorated carriages; and much more. By special request, all flags were flown at half-mast. The program included musical compositions, various prayers, grand oratory and a special poem in honor of President Lincoln that Henrietta Cordelia Ray was commissioned to write.

Miss Ray was an accomplished African American poet, a successful school teacher, and a committed activist. Her father, Charles Ray, initially a blacksmith, served as a Congregational minister after receiving training at the Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts. In addition, he was also an editor and owner of the abolitionist newspaper *Colored American*. Her mother, while managing six children, was co-founder of the African Dorcas Association, a support group for the free African schools, and the first president of the New York Female Literary Society (originally known as the Colored Ladies Literary Society.) The family's home functioned as a station on the Underground Railroad.

At a time when doing so was uncommon, Miss Ray's parents provided intellectual opportunities for their daughters as well as their sons. She graduated from the University of the City of New York (now New York University) with a master's degree in pedagogy. She was one of only three African American graduates in her class. Her academic endeavors included the study of French, Greek, Latin and German at the Sauveur School of Languages where she earned a teaching certificate. She used her teaching skills at regional and national

conferences for African American teachers and was active in community building, being especially noted for amassing funds to support the New York Colored Orphan Asylum.

Miss Ray's poems appeared regularly in African American publications such as the *AME Review* and the *Woman's Era*. Eventually, she compiled and published a collection of her poems, *Sonnets*, which received a flurry of reviews and high praise.

Samples:

- Hallie Q. Brown wrote in *Homespun Heroines* that she "may be likened to the quaint, touching music a shell murmuring of the sea, a faint yet clear note sounding all the pathos and beauty of undying life."
- Gertrude Bustill Mossell in *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* asserted that she has, "won for herself a place in the front rank of our literary workers."
- Victoria Earle Matthews in a *Woman's Era* editorial called her, "our sweet-voiced poetess."

The praise from prominent African American women activist and writers, plus various commendations from literary circles was instrumental in the rise to prominence of her poetry.

But Miss Ray was most well known for her Lincoln poem. Various newspapers reprinted or excerpted it, facilitating its popularity. Numerous pamphlets were also printed to provide a full account of the celebratory day's proceedings. In addition to honoring Lincoln, her commemorative poems also honor Civil War era notables such as Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Sumner, Robert G. Shaw, Toussaint

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L'Ouverture, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and her father, Rev.  
Charles Bennet Ray.

Despite being acclaimed with much public recognition during her lifetime, her work, regrettably, fell into obscurity. Her ode to Lincoln was read after President Grant unveiled the Freedmen's Monument. February, the month wherein we celebrate Black History as well as Lincoln's birthday, is an appropriate time to unveil and remember Henrietta Cordelia Ray's tribute to President Abraham Lincoln.

It begins:

*To-day, O martyred chief, beneath the sun  
We would unveil thy form; to thee who won  
Th' applause of nations for thy soul sincere,  
A loving tribute we would offer here.  
'T was thine not worlds to conquer, but men's hearts;  
To change to balm the sting of slavery's darts;  
In lowly charity thy joy to find,  
And open "gates of mercy on mankind."  
And so they come, the freed, with grateful gift,  
From whose sad path the shadows thou didst lift.*

Henrietta Cordelia Ray's contribution to the unveiling celebration was indeed wonderful!

**-- Lavonda Broadnax**

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To read Miss Ray's complete poem, click here: [Lincoln; written for the occasion of the unveiling of the freedmen's monument in memory of Abraham Lincoln](#)

# **Preserving the Civil War: Sites, Symbols and Battlefields as Classrooms**

Davis and Elkins College &  
The Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation  
Present  
A Civil War Symposium



**Saturday April 6, 2024**

**At Davis and Elkins College  
Senate Commons  
in the Myles Center for the Arts**

**9:00 am:** Registration and Refreshments  
**10:00 am:** "The Land Protection Process - Camp Bartow Case Study." Ashton Berdine  
**11:00 am:** "Preserving West Virginia's History." Kyle Warmack  
**12:00 n:** Lunch Break – Lunch provided on site.  
**1:00 pm:** "Preserving Antietam" Dr. Tom Clemens  
**2:00 pm:** "Fort Scammon: Preserving Charleston's Forgotten Citadel." Dr. Billy Joe Peyton  
**3:00 pm:** Panel Discussion

Symposium Tickets: Cost \$30; Students with ID \$5

For Information and reservations, visit:

[beverlyheritagecenter.org/rich-mountain-battlefield/](http://beverlyheritagecenter.org/rich-mountain-battlefield/)

or call: 304-637-7424



**SAVE THE DATE**  
2024 CIVIL WAR REENACTMENT & ENCAMPMENT



**JULY 19TH & 20TH**  
ZANESVILLE, OHIO

**Mason-Dixon Ledger**

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