



MASON-DIXON LEDGER

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

645 Sylvan Place
Morgantown, WV 26505

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May 2024

Our Next Meeting

Recent Additions To My Collection

Ron Rittenhouse

7pm, May 21, 2024

Our next speaker is no stranger to the group. Ron Rittenhouse has shared items from his collection on several occasions, and this time promises to be just as tantalizing. He plans to bring an original Currier And Ives print of the 54th Massachusetts, a photograph of Stonewall Jackson's cook, a discharge medal of the 25th West Virginia United States Colored Troops (USCT), and a cavalry sword.

Ron is, of course, the Chief Photographer of the Dominion Post newspaper. He will have worked for them for 55 years around the time of his talk. He writes, "I began collecting in 1969, bought what I could afford, and never looked back."

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.



Where We'll Meet

Our 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!)



OUR LAST MEETING

Davis & Elkins College & Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation Symposium: Preserving the Civil War: Sites, Symbols and Battlefields as Classrooms in West Virginia

April 6, 2024

The Foundation continued to save those of us in Morgantown the extra six miles to Beverly by once again locating their annual symposium at the Senate Commons in the Myles Center for the Arts on the campus of Davis & Elkins College, in Elkins WV. The RMBF was ably represented at the registration by Americorp representatives David Piazza and Josie Shaver. Other RMBF officers and members were recognized by Rick in his introduction, including Marisa Terwilliger (Executive Director) and Arden Swecker (Treasurer).

Ashton Berdine, the first speaker, has impressive credentials as the current WV director of the Conservation Fund, but the work he described was during his outstanding tenure with the WV Land Trust. His talk, entitled "The Land Protection Process: Camp Bartow Case Study," showed the step-by-step process of protecting for posterity Traveller's Repose, the historic inn and farm close to Elkins. Early in the 19th century, the then-owner, Andrew Yeager, had predicted devastation in the area during a conflict, as it was at the junction of several major roads. His prediction came true, and the farm was the site of a confederate encampment and several battles during the Civil War. Traveller's Repose was burned to the ground, but was rebuilt after the war by Yeager's grandson. Our speaker's formula for protection of a site in general was deceptively simple: find a site; buy the site; put in interpretive signs; and make a parking lot. The requirements were also straightforward: a passionate landowner, a historian, a willing community, and a non-profit organization which could

buy the site and transfer it to the government. Ms Jesse Powell filled the first slot; it was her dearest wish that her property be protected after she was gone. Our own Hunter Lesser was the historian. He fired up our own Rick Wolfe and others into action as the community. They started with a Transportation Grant. They hoped to buy the entire site when it was up for auction, but their funds were inadequate and the site was sold in 5 parcels. The Land Trust, as the non-profit, was eventually able to acquire the most significant parcel, with the help of additional funds from First Energy, the WV Humanities Council, and others. Don Teeter (who had made a presentation in Morgantown in May 2023) contributed his surveying skills in a very time-sensitive operation, and others contributed livestock fencing and decorative fencing to complete the project. In the discussion period, Don gave credit to Hunter and Rick for doing all the grunt work during the survey to get it finished in time.

In “Learning About Memory From Battlefield Monuments”, Dr. Kathleen Logothetis Thompson concentrated on monuments at Gettysburg, who put them up, and why. There are over thirteen hundred monuments, with the most recent erected in the 21st century. They can be divided into four periods, with the first being very soon after the end of the war. There are very few of those. Statues in the second period, 1890 to the mid-1900s, are mainly Union statues, while those in the third period are more Confederate. The reason for the large number of monuments at Gettysburg can be traced to artist John Bachelder. He was too ill to fulfill his aim of painting the One Great Battle of the Civil War, but communicated with veterans (mainly Union) and convinced himself it was at Gettysburg, with the “high water mark” in front of the “Copse of Trees”. The monument there consists of a Book Of History with the names of those units which repelled Pickett’s Charge. The first monument erected at Gettysburg is a stone dedicated to Col. Strong Vincent; the first regimental memorial is to the 2nd Massachusetts; the first statue is that of Gouverneur Warren. Later, regulations governed who could erect monuments, their size and their location. These led to disagreements which in some cases had to be settled by the PA Supreme Court. Some modern monuments can be traced to the popularity of the regiments in the movie, “Gettysburg”: some claim that Longstreet’s statue looks like the movie actor and not Longstreet himself. As a finale, Kathleen presented two series of time-lapse graphs by location and separated by Union and Confederate affiliations.

Our first speaker after lunch, Dr Tom Clemens, was able to present through the magic of Zoom. Dr Clemens is a founder of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF) and his talk, entitled “Antietam: Preserving a Battlefield,” started with a history lesson. In the 1890’s, Congress started saving the battlefields. At first, that was not advantageous for Antietam, as it was administered along with Gettysburg, with the latter getting the lion’s share of resources. Brevet Brig. Ezra Carmen was appointed the official historian of Antietam, and he succeeded in making it better known – he erected 400 tablets when the government wanted 200 and constructed 14 sequence maps when only 8 were intended. Of the early monuments, that of Maryland was the first to be dedicated to soldiers on both sides. In 1933, control was transferred from the Department of War (Defense) to the

National Park Service (NPS). There was bad feeling between the citizenry and NPS administration: the government resented farmers driving tractors through the battlefield, and the farmers protested the damage done to their crops. By 1980, the park area had expanded from the original 33 acres to 1200 acres. There have been gains and losses with developers. The house where Lincoln met McClelland and its surroundings were rezoned, but the Foundation was able to buy the important 40 acres. Approximately 50% of the land within the battlefield is now owned by NPS. Finally, the Foundation was able to buy several houses on battlefield land; the houses were demolished, and Dr. Clemens showed several photographs of the battlefield before and after demolition.

Dr. Billy Joe Peyton served as the final speaker of the day, with "Preserving Fort Scammon: Charleston's Forgotten Citadel." He started with a present-day photograph from the air; the earthworks from the time of the Civil War were barely discernable. Before the Civil War, Charleston occupied a strategic and commercial position, with connections from the Ohio to the James rivers, four turnpikes and 57 brine furnaces. The Battle of Charleston in September 1862 pitted Union Lt Col Josph Lightburn against Confederate General William Loring. The Union army retreated to Point Pleasant and the Confederates occupied Charleston for about six weeks. Later Union General Eliakin Scammon's troops took back Charleston and established Camp White across the river from the main city. Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley, who served with Scammon, recognized this was a vulnerable location. Accordingly, in April 1863, the 23rd Ohio Valley Infantry built Fort Scammon on high ground. This redoubt overlooked both the Elk and Kanawha rivers, the four turnpikes, a bridge and a ferry crossing. The fort bolstered defense in the valley and prevented any further hostilities. After the Civil War, the US Geological Survey established a triangulation station inside the fort, and this continues in use to the present day. In 1920, the Fort Hill Development Company started selling houses in the area. Some years later, schoolchildren led a move to prevent development, due to the area's association with Hayes and McKinley. In 1970, the city tried to establish a park, but a portion of the fort had earlier been destroyed during the construction of an interstate interchange. In 1976, the area was listed on the National Register. Since 1979, the city has taken over maintenance of the area, but bird houses, gnome gardens and other extraneous structures have found their way there. In 1985, a historical and archaeological survey was started. West Virginia State University students of Dr Peyton have started digging in 2016.

The final item on the program was a panel discussion, involving the speakers present on site as well as RMBF founder Phyllis Baxter, and moderated by Rick Wolfe. A variety of topics were covered, including the proposed data centers at Manassas, Disney's America ("Experience Slavery"), and the use of AI for battlefield experiences. All in all, it was a full and fulfilling day.

THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR

[Ed: we expect that most of us received the link from Emerging Civil War that our member Sue Miles sent us from her travels. She was asked to write a bit more and she graciously complied. For completeness, below is the link that started it all: <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2014/05/31/exploring-totopotomoy/>]

Cold Harbor, a Civil War battle part of Union General Ulysses S. Grant and the Army of the Potomac's Overland Campaign, was a battle for the vital crossroads within ten miles of the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. Confederate General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia fought to defend the road leading into Richmond and prevent Grant from capturing the capital. Grant needed control of the crossroads for access to supplies and an easy way into Richmond. Confederate forces had the strategic advantage, causing high casualties to the Union army. Grant ultimately pulled back and crossed the James River heading south. The Confederates declared victory at the Battle of Cold Harbor.

Cold Harbor Background

In 1864 President Lincoln was up for re-election. His performance in the war was the main issue of the election. Heavy losses for the Union army increased public opinion that the war should be over. The country was war-weary. In a final push to defeat the Confederate armies, Lincoln appointed Ulysses S. Grant to command the Union armies. Grant had much success in the west at the battles of Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and Fort Donelson. Lincoln needed a callous approach if he was going to win the war.

After reviewing the major battles of the war, Grant felt his predecessors were too cautious and unorganized; they did not function as a whole but rather as independent armies, thus giving the enemy the tactical advantage. He held a different approach. His goal was to decimate the Confederate army by restricting their ability to move troops and supplies, restricting their ability to wage war.

Grant's major objective quickly became the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee. The Army of Northern Virginia was the most successful of the Confederate armies. They controlled most of the fighting in the eastern theater of the war and were considered a strong fighting force. Grant reasoned that if Lee's army were defeated, the Confederacy would fall. He began his assault on the Army of Northern Virginia in May of 1864 through a series of battles known as the Overland Campaign.

The Overland Campaign

In the Spring of 1864, the Union army went on the offensive. Grant wanted to weaken Lee's army and overtake the Confederate capital of Richmond. Grant held the numerical advantage with some 108,000 troops. Lee's numbers were much smaller, around 60,000 troops. Grant's greatest disadvantage was the terrain. The Confederate army was fighting in

familiar terrain while most Union forces were unfamiliar with the area.

On May 5, 1864, Confederate and Union troops from the Fifth Corps met on the Orange Turnpike in what is often referred to as Wilderness due to the dense forest the troops fought in. Ordered by General Mead, the Fifth Corps led by General Warren advanced on the Confederates. Warren protested, maintaining that the thick forest would make holding the lines difficult but was ordered to attack. For two days, the battle raged with heavy Union casualties. Upon learning of Confederate troop movements, Grant orders a retreat to pull forward towards Spotsylvania Court House.

Spotsylvania Court House, a small village located at the intersection of roads that lead to Richmond and Fredericksburg, is where Grant hoped to gain the tactical advantage and pull Lee's forces out in the open. Grant's army was stronger in size, and in an open battle, Lee's army would be destroyed. However, Lee moved his troops parallel to Grant's and obtained the high ground before Grant could get to Spotsylvania. Lee entrenched himself on Laurel Hill. For twelve days, the Union Army probed the Confederate defenses, but whenever Grant moved, Lee countered. The fighting was the most costly of the Overland Campaign, with an estimated 30,000 casualties combined. Lee's forces of 60,000 were able to hold back Grant's 100,000 troops.

On May 20-21, both sides began moving their forces toward the North Anna River. Lee had established entrenchments on the south side of the river. Utilizing the area's terrain, Lee was able to form an inverted "V" defensive line. The line forced Grant to split his army to attack. After several failed attacks, Grant moved his troops further downstream towards Totopotomoy Creek.

Totopotomoy Creek was not a major battle but rather a series of small skirmishes between the two armies. The Confederates, once again, held the strategic advantage with entrenchments on the south side and control of the steep hills. Confederate reinforcements from the Shenandoah Valley led by General John C. Breckinridge arrived on the scene to further inhibit Union advances. On May 31, General Grant made a sweeping effort to engage Confederate troops. Realizing that they were well fortified and further back from the creek than he thought, he moved his army towards Cold Harbor. At this point in the fighting, Union forces numbered around 108,000, while Confederate forces were estimated at 62,000.

Events at Cold Harbor

Grant was not disheartened, nor were his troops by the high casualties sustained at Spotsylvania Court House and the other battles thus far in the Overland Campaign. Grant pushed towards the strategic crossroads of Cold Harbor. Capturing Cold Harbor would ensure the safety of Union supply lines and lead to Richmond. General Phillip Sheridan's Cavalry was ordered to take the vital crossroads.

General Lee's forces, running parallel to Grant's, had been able to slow down the Union advance on Richmond but had not been able to stop

them. The Union army had the numerical advantage with double the number of fighting forces and was better supplied. Confederate troops had been able to gain the upper hand in the fighting due to securing better positions. The Battle of Cold Harbor would change one of Grant's primary objectives.

Initial Union Attacks at Cold Harbor

On May 31, Confederate cavalry under Major General Fitzhugh Lee engaged Union General Sheridan's troops at the intersection of Old Cold Harbor Road. Sheridan's troops pushed back the Confederates. General Robert Hoke's division of infantry reinforced the Confederates. Sheridan's troops gained control of the intersection, but Confederate forces began to fortify their positions by digging trenches. Grant received news that General Lee was extending his line for several miles to the James River. In his desire to overpower Lee and come between the Confederates and Richmond, Grant extended his left flank.

By June 1, both armies had their lines organized; the Confederates were entrenched using an intricate detail of mazes. General Lee wanted to retake the crossroad of Cold Harbor and sent two divisions commanded by General Joseph Kershaw and General Robert Hoke. The attack was uncoordinated and was pushed back by General Sheridan's men. Grant ordered up more forces to prepare for another attack later in the day. Union General William "Baldy" Smith's Eighteenth Corps and General Horatio Wright's Sixth Corps are ordered to relieve Sheridan and strike the Confederate defenses. The attack is delayed due to confusion and bad roads. At 5 pm, the attack began. Initially, they were successful and broke through Confederate lines. However, the Confederate counterattack sealed those lines causing Union troops to be pushed back. Later in the night, Confederates reinforced the line. The Union was unsuccessful with their attack.

Meade's Attack at Cold Harbor

Predawn on the morning of June 3, 1864, Union troops began their assault on the entrenched Confederates. General Meade was ordered to send three corps, the Second, Sixth, and Eighteenth, to attack Confederate forces. This proved to be disastrous. The dense fog made the terrain difficult to navigate, and the troops got lost. The Confederates had dug an intricate maze of entrenchments and fortifications in which they could gain protection while inflicting devastation on Union soldiers. Within the first few minutes of the attack, an estimated 7,000 Union soldiers were wounded or killed. Still, Union forces attempted their attack.

The Second Corps managed a breakthrough but only momentarily. As the Corps made their way forward, they were pushed back into a ravine allowing Confederate forces to mow them down. They could neither advance nor retreat. Many Union troops took to digging makeshift trenches with any tools they could find. By afternoon, General Grant was advised to call off the assault. The battle proved to be a bloodbath for Union troops. The casualties were so great that one Confederate general said, "This was

not war. It was murder."

Standoff at the Cold Harbor Battlefield

From June 4-12, the two armies had settled into their fortifications and began siege warfare. For four days, wounded Union troops lay in the hot Virginia summer sun, trapped or too injured to retreat. Lee and Grant negotiated a small truce allowing forces to gather their wounded and dead. Minor attacks and rounds of fire still occurred, but nothing equal to the devastation on June 3. The Union army had not achieved any advantage with their assault. When news of the loss reached those in the north, sentiment for ending the war grew louder. Grant realized the stubbornness of the Confederates and their resolve to fight to the bitter end. He changed his plan and withdrew his troops from Cold Harbor on the night of June 12, 1864. He crossed the James River and headed towards Petersburg, his new target.

Who won the Battle of Cold Harbor?

Was Cold Harbor a decisive victory for the Confederates? Grant withdrew his troops after seeing that the tight defenses of the Confederates were not weakening. Thousands of Union soldiers died in a single day of fighting, and many more were wounded. Overall, an estimated 13,000 Union soldiers were reported killed, wounded, missing, or captured. The Confederates were considered the victors due to Grant's moving his army to Petersburg, but also felt the losses of the battle. Roughly 5,000 Confederate soldiers were killed, wounded, missing, or captured.

Confederate forces were able to repel repeated Union attacks and ultimately protect Richmond from Grant's invasion. The Confederates did not gain anything from the victory; rather, they had lost much of Virginia's Northern Territory but were able to thwart Grant's plans to capture Richmond. Part of Grant's objective was to decimate Lee's troops, he succeeded in part in that goal, but Lee's army was not finished.

The Significance of the Battle of Cold Harbor

The Battle of Cold Harbor was the final offensive in General Grant's Overland Campaign to capture Richmond and defeat the Army of Northern Virginia. The defeat was one of the worst of the war for the Union army. The loss caused many in the Northern states to call for an end to the war. Strategically, both Generals were equally matched in skill and planning. Lee's use of trench warfare changed the way wars were fought for decades to come. Lee's use of his natural surroundings and barriers as defensive markers shows his brilliance in planning. In addition, Lee's ability to overcome the Union forces while fighting with half the number of troops shows the resolve of the Confederate army. Grant was aware of Lee's military genius, and he experienced the ability of the Army of Northern Virginia with the losses of the battles fought in the Overland Campaign.

Lesson Summary

On June 1, 1864, Union Cavalry forces and Confederate Cavalry forces clashed with each other at the crossroads of Cold Harbor, resulting in the two-week Battle of Cold Harbor. Cold Harbor, Virginia, was critical to the

Union army because of its location on main roads that provided easy access to Richmond, Virginia, the Confederate capital. The Civil War battle was brutal for the Union forces, with an overwhelming defeat. The carnage was so great that after seeing the number of dead littering the battlefield, one Confederate general remarked, "This was not war. It was murder." Contributing to the victory of the Confederate troops was the intricate maze of fortifications that protected them. It made their defenses seemingly impenetrable. The Union defeat hurt the morale of the north, and it also increased calls for the war to come to an end.

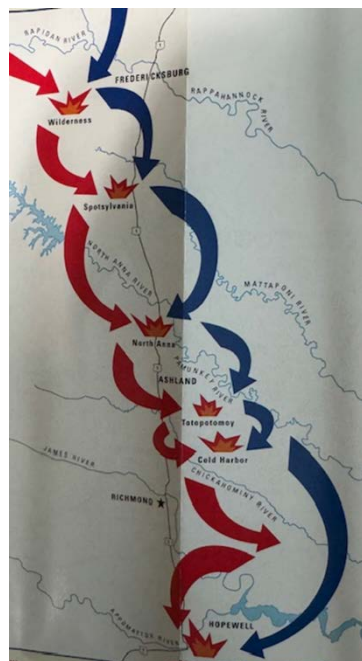
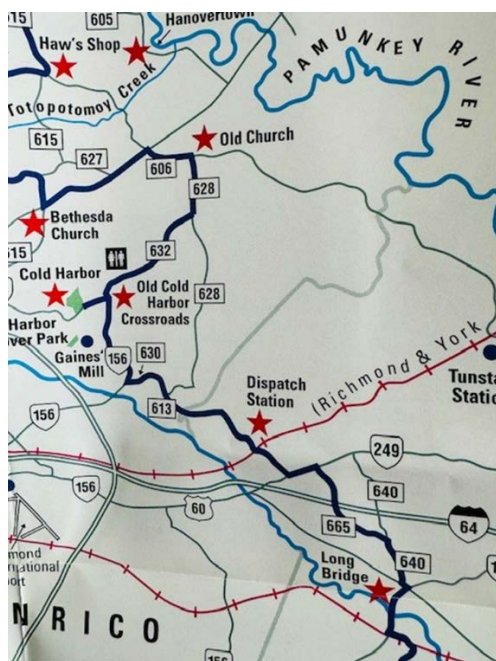
Primary References

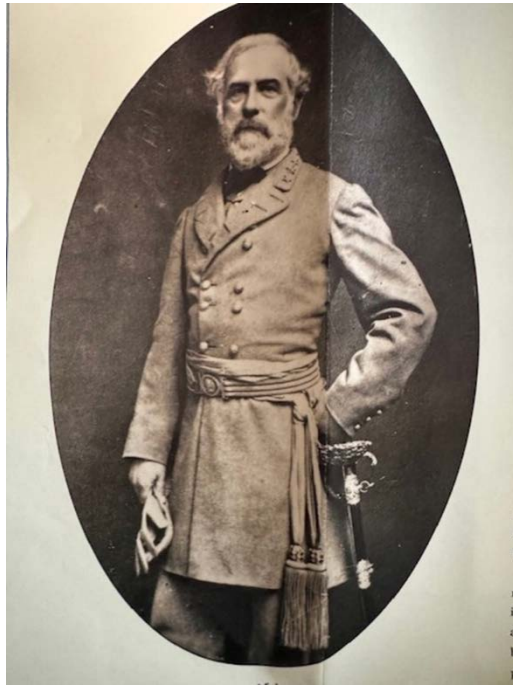
Phillips, Cindy. *History 106: The Civil War and Reconstruction*

The Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 30, 1864

-- Contributed by Sue Miles

[Postlude: We flatter ourselves that Sue was inspired to write by our account of the museum at Harrisburg, PA. In the hope that lightning may strike more than once, we ask that you please consider this an open invitation to write about CW-related travels which you have undertaken.]





FROM NATIONAL PARKS MAGAZINE

[Ed: A development of potential interest at the Gettysburg Visitors Center]

A Muted Morning

How one Civil War site is dialing back the noise — and light — to provide a more inclusive park experience.

A hush tends to settle over Gettysburg National Military Park in the winter months. By then, the busloads of students and caravans of history-loving vacationers have dwindled. Dipping temperatures and bitter winds also tend to curb the enthusiasm of day-trippers. In wintertime, it's the truly hardy who venture out to the snow-frosted pastoral Pennsylvania landscape to learn about a Civil War battle where more than 50,000 men were killed, wounded, captured or pronounced missing.

On a recent Saturday morning, however, the park's museum and visitor center were even quieter than usual. Small clusters of people wandered from display to display, whispering to their friends and loved ones. The lights were dim, and all visible screens — from the waist-high interactive stations to the overhead projectors to the wall-sized screens nestled in alcoves — were dark. No historical narration or bugle reveille filtered out of the mounted speakers. The contemplative atmosphere could have been the result of a technical glitch, but in fact, it was intentional.

Starting last year, park and Gettysburg Foundation staff have held occasional “sensory-friendly” hours, during which visitors who crave a pared-back experience can explore the museum and famous Cyclorama exhibit free of sounds — and free of charge. The



ILLUSTRATION BY FABIO CONSOLI

effort is just one of many being piloted by the park's small, but growing, education staff to make Gettysburg more welcoming to all. Barbara Sanders, the park's supervisory education specialist, said her team frequently fields special requests, such as providing battlefield tours and programs using American Sign Language interpreters. These inquiries have underscored a need for more accessible offerings, so they developed a 75-minute virtual tour of the park for those who can't visit in person and began hosting outreach events for people with limited vision or hearing.

This year, they're adding to the lineup with programs for English-language learners, using local college students as translators.

“It's absolutely necessary for us to speak to ever-widening circles of visitors,” said Sanders, who has been at the park for 25 years. To succeed on this front, Sanders said, means thinking about the experience of first-time visitors and those who learn and experience the world differently. She knows Gettysburg, with its heavy subject matter, poses an even greater barrier to entry for the average visitor.

“The history of it, the specifics of it, the gravity of it,” she said, “can be intimidating.” And while the Gettysburg grounds, complete with rolling hills, woods and monuments, can provide opportunities for quiet reflection, the museum isn’t set up for that. “There’s just too much going on,” Sanders said. “You can burn out quickly with all the stimulation. Any person can.”

Hence this winter’s sensory-friendly hours. Visitors with autism, post-traumatic stress disorder or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder — and their families and travel companions — are natural audiences for this kind of offering, but many other folks stand to benefit, too. Uma Srivastava, executive director of KultureCity, a nonprofit that focuses on sensory accessibility and inclusion, explained how anyone can experience changes and shifts in their senses throughout their life because of chemotherapy, epilepsy, stroke, illness or injury. “Often you don’t even need a diagnosis,” Srivastava said. Just look at how home-quarantining during COVID changed our comfort levels with crowds and public spaces, she said. “As we started going back into our typical environments — whether it’s concerts, restaurants — a lot of us were apprehensive,” she said. “A lot of us were anxious.”

Gettysburg is not the first venue to offer sensory-friendly activities. In 2011, Smithsonian museums in Washington, D.C., became some of the first to host events for neurodiverse audiences with their “Morning at the Museum.” Since then, countless other facilities have organized similar events. Over the last decade, KultureCity has certified more than 1,800 venues, from animal shelters to sporting arenas, as sensory inclusive. Initiatives like Gettysburg’s quiet hours, Srivastava said, help people see

opportunity rather than impossibility when conceiving of a park visit. “Maybe they love that part of American history, but they’ve never really had the chance to go because they just didn’t know what the environment would be like,” she said. “It allows a family to say, ‘Hey, let’s plan a road trip,’” she said.

While welcoming new families to the park is a priority, Sanders knew over-advertising these particular events would be counterproductive. “It’s a sensory-friendly day,” she said. “You don’t want crowds and crowds of people.” And so, they alerted area schools and put out a couple of press releases but didn’t go overboard.

During the visitor center’s quiet hours on Jan. 13, a pair of young boys excitedly questioned volunteer Tyrone Cornbower, who was staffing a “Hands on History” cart topped with sample cannon shells. Across the room, a family explored another cart draped in soldiers’ clothing. A sign encouraged visitors to touch and try on the pieces, and two of the children immediately began strapping on canteens and belts. In the museum, couples and small groups of friends chatted sotto voce while wandering from exhibit to exhibit. Inès de Cacqueray, who’d traveled from New York for the long weekend, was enjoying the dimly lit displays and the silent monitors. “The museum is so well set up,” de Cacqueray said. “I don’t feel like I’m missing anything.”

The only place with the occasional bottleneck was at the Cyclorama, French artist Paul Philippoteaux’s depiction of the pivotal third day of the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg. Even there, though, people calmly made way for one another as individuals and groups circled the interior of the 360-degree painting of Pickett’s Charge, pausing frequently to examine the horses and soldiers, fields

and buildings that span the 377-foot-long and 42-foot-high work. Typically, the Cyclorama auditorium echoes with the sounds of rifle and cannon fire, designed to mimic the battlefield experience, while special lighting effects direct visitor attention to specific areas of the painting. While many people find value in the immersive display, others find it jarring. In an email, Christopher Gwinn, chief of interpretation and education at the park, went so far as to say the exhibit in its regular format “completely alienates” some visitors.

Those who showed up during this January’s quiet hours were free to simply marvel. Chris, a Pennsylvania native, was preparing to visit the painting with Eric, a fellow college student. (Both men declined to share their last names.) Chris, who is autistic, had seen the Cyclorama during previous visits to the park. “It can be a lot,” he said, before making an exploding gesture with his hand near his ear. He was looking forward to “just getting to view it all,” he said, without all the extra bells and whistles.

Most visitors, even those not aware of the sensory-friendly hours, appreciated the relaxed experience, but not everyone was a fan. One man said the museum felt “weird.” He and his family are members of the Gettysburg Foundation and regular visitors to the park. He admired the park for this initiative, but said, “I probably wouldn’t have come if I’d known.”

Luckily for him, at 11:05, as more families, a Boy Scout troop, and a woman in jogging gear arrived and prepared to enter the visitor center, a park staff member picked up a remote, pointed it at a TV and pressed the power button. Quiet hours — at least for that day — had officially ended.

—KATHERINE DEGROFF

Story by Katherine DeGross; Reprinted with permission by National Parks Magazine, a publication of National Parks Conservation Association

FROM THE CWRT CONGRESS

CWRT Congress Annual Report

The Annual Report can be found at :

<https://www.cwrtcongress.org/PDF/Annual/Annual%20Report%202023.pdf>

Executive Committee members especially are invited to browse through the list of awards offered by the Congress.

Or watch the video:

[http://www.cwrtcongress.org/PDF/Annual/2023 ANNUAL REPORT.mp4](http://www.cwrtcongress.org/PDF/Annual/2023%20ANNUAL%20REPORT.mp4)

CWRT Congress Speaker Series

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

May 2024 Speakers

Adolfo Ovies, *THE BOY GENERALS: CUSTER, MERRITT & THE CAVALRY OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC*, Friday, May 3rd at 7pm. Historian Al Ovies's second book in a trilogy about the Boy Generals covers tumultuous events for the Federal cavalry both on and off the field with significant change at the top command level. Once south of the Potomac, the cavalry raced down the east side of the Blue Ridge but were unable to prevent Lee from reaching the relative safety of Culpeper. The balance of 1863 was a series of maneuvers and raids and the near destruction of the Michigan Cavalry Brigade. Pleasanton's command ended abruptly when replaced by Sheridan whose combustible personality intensified the burning animosity between the audacious George Custer and the more traditional Wesley Merritt. Learn how their "spirited rivalry" erupted in their official reports and how their fortunes fared when tasked with The Burning in the Shenandoah Valley.

Daniel Masters, *ECHOES OF BATTLE: ANNALS OF OHIO'S SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865. VOLUME 2: FREDERICKSBURG TO FORT SANDERS*, Friday, May 10th at 7pm. The latest in a three-part series compiled and edited by Dan Masters and Larry Strayer presents 109 firsthand battle accounts written by Ohioans during the Civil War covering the critical middle period of the war from December 1862 through November 1863.

Fergus Bordewich, *KLAN WAR: ULYSSES S. GRANT AND THE BATTLE TO SAVE RECONSTRUCTION*, Friday, May 17th 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.

Laura Davis, *NEW BIRTH OF THIS STRUGGLE: DOUGLAS FRENCH FOREST, REBEL DEFEAT & THE CONFEDERATE COLONY OF NEW VIRGINIA*, Friday, May 24 at 7pm. Author/Historian Laura Davis will tell how ex-Confederates planned to colonize Central Mexico following their defeat in the Civil War. One of the issues they faced was their inability to bring slaves to their colony as slavery had been banned under Mexican law. Despite that obstacle, Confederate generals “Fighting” Jo Shelby, Edmund Kirby Smith, John B. Magruder, Sterling Price, Thomas Hindman and Alexander Terrell made their way to Mexico after the war.

Scott Mingus, Sr., *WILLIAM “EXTRA BILLY” SMITH: FROM STATEHOUSE TO SCAPEGOAT*, Friday, May 31st at 7pm. Scott Mingus, Sr. returns to the CWRTC zoom stage with his presentation about General William “Extra Billy” Smith. Smith, the oldest and one of the most controversial Confederate generals on the field at Gettysburg, was also one of the most colorful and charismatic characters of the Old South and the Civil War. Despite a life full of drama, politics, and adventure, his story has largely been untold. Known nationally as Extra Billy because of his prewar penchant for finding loopholes in government postal contracts, Smith served as Virginia’s governor during both the War with Mexico and the Civil War, served five terms in the U S Congress, and was one of Virginia’s leading spokesmen for slavery and States’ Rights. Extra Billy’s extra-long speeches and wry sense of humor were legendary among his peers. A lawyer during the heady Gold Rush days, Smith made a fortune in California and, like his income earned from stagecoaches, quickly lost it. You won’t want to miss Extra Billy’s fascinating story.

June 2024 Speakers

Jeffrey W. Hunt, *THE LAST BATTLE OF THE CIVIL WAR: PALMETTO RANCH*, Friday June 14 at 7pm. Historian Jeffrey Hunt draws on previously unstudied letters and court martial records to offer a full and accurate account of the battle of Palmetto Ranch. As he recreates the events of the fighting that pitted the United States’ 62nd Colored Troops and the 34th Indiana Veteran Volunteer Infantry against Texas cavalry and artillery battalions commanded by Colonel John S. “Rip” Ford, Hunt lays to rest many misconceptions about the battle. In particular, he reveals that the Texans were fully aware of events in the East—and still willing to fight for Southern independence. He also demonstrates that, far from fleeing the battle in a panic as some have asserted, the African American troops

played a vital role in preventing the Union defeat from becoming a rout.

Cory M. Pfarr, "TO MAKE A DEMONSTRATION, TO THE LETTTER": SEVEN DISTINCT MAPS OF LONGSTREET'S GETTYSBURG PERFORMANCE, Friday June 21st at 7pm. In a February 1887 article, while addressing continued criticisms of his performance at the Battle of Gettysburg, former Confederate Lieutenant General James Longstreet advanced a curious suggestion, heretofore unexplored, which was to produce a "volume of distinct maps" of key points in the battle that would combat these allegations and other falsehoods that had emerged in the postwar years. Unfortunately for the historical record, several inaccuracies of Longstreet's time have persisted into modern-day studies and the collective consciousness of historical memory. This presentation will examine seven distinct battle maps covering all three days of the battle, using them as tools to thoroughly address some of the most persistent misrepresentations of Longstreet's performance.

Gene Schmiel, SEARCHING FOR IRVIN MCDOWELL: THE CIVIL WAR'S FORGOTTEN GENERAL, Friday,, June 28 at 7pm. Irvin McDowell was a prominent figure during the early months of the Civil War. With so much at stake, he was called upon to lead the Union's largest Eastern Theater army. Pressed by the media and Lincoln to move into Virginia to defeat the Confederates, McDowell led his neophyte army out to the plains of Manassas and was soundly defeated. Following that disaster, he held an independent command in northern Virginia during the Peninsula Campaign and served under General John Pope during Second Bull Run. Historian Gene Schmiel and his co-author Frank Simione, Jr. used available sources to create a synthesis of the man and his career to fill in the sizeable gap in the historiography. Find out what became of this enigmatic Civil War figure.

July 2024 Speakers

Joseph McGill & Herb Frazier, SLEEPING WITH THE ANCESTORS: HOW I FOLLOWED THE FOOTPRINT OF SLAVERY, Friday, July 12 at 7pm. *Sleeping with the Ancestors* focuses on all the key sites preservationist and Civil War reenactor Joseph McGill has visited in his ongoing Slave Dwelling Project and digs deeper into the actual history of each location. His account uses his own experience and conversations with the community to enhance those original stories. This is an enlightening personal account in which one man tells the story of his groundbreaking project to sleep overnight in former slave dwellings that still stand across the country— revealing the fascinating history behind these sites and shedding light on larger issues of race in America. McGill and coauthor Herb Frazier provide an important unexpected immersion into the history of slavery, and especially the obscured and ignored aspects of that history.

Terry A. Pierce, THUNDERING COURAGE: GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER, THE UNION CAVALRY BOY GENERALS, AND JUSTIFIED DEFIANCE ATA GETTYSBURG, Friday July 19 at 7pm. "Promotions or a

coffin!" To George Armstrong Custer, war is the Devil's own fun. And his luck—"Custer Luck"—peaks during the Civil War, keeping him alive against all odds. Yet, for the first two years of the war, Custer luck has not earned him a command—until, three days before a brewing battle at Gettysburg, Captain George Custer is promoted to brigadier general. Possessed with raw courage, rare gallantry, and reckless heroism, Custer becomes the youngest general in the Union army. Hugely spirited, tactically flexible, and fiercely ambitious, Custer, on July 3, 1863, trots in front of the First Michigan cavalry regiment, grips his sheathed saber, and pulls. The blade swishes from its metal scabbard with the sleekness of a swooping hawk. "Come on, You Wolverines!" he yells. And the 23-year-old leads one of the greatest cavalry charges in the annals of warfare.

August 2024 Speakers

Timothy B. Smith, THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN, Friday August 9 at 7pm. This presentation will be a treat for those interested in Grant's Vicksburg Campaign. Attendees should be prepared to ask this noted scholar and expert on the campaign their burning questions about the many challenges, noted failures and how it resulted in the surrender of Confederates on July 4, 1863. Dr. Timothy B. Smith, a former NPS ranger at Shiloh, teaches history at the University of Tennessee at Martin. He is the author of numerous books about Vicksburg including *Early Struggles for Vicksburg: The Mississippi Central Campaign and Chickasaw Bayou, October 25–December 31, 1862*; *Bayou Battles for Vicksburg: The Swamp and River Expeditions, January 1-April 30, 1863*; *The Inland Campaign for Vicksburg: Five Battles in Seventeen Days, May 1-17, 1863*; *The Union Assaults at Vicksburg: Grant Attacks Pemberton, May 17–22, 1863*; and *The Siege of Vicksburg: Climax of the Campaign to Open the Mississippi River, May 23–July 4, 1863*; all published by the University Press of Kansas.

Sean Michael Chick, DREAMS OF VICTORY: GENERAL PVT BEAUREGARD IN THE CIVIL WAR, Friday, August 23rd at 7pm. Few Civil War generals attracted as much debate and controversy as Pierre Gustav Beauregard. He combined brilliance and charisma with arrogance and histrionics. He was a Catholic Creole in a society dominated by white Protestants, which made him appear exotic compared with others. He was reviled by Jefferson Davis and often mocked by diarist Mary Chesnut. Yet, he was popular with his officers and men. Outside of Lee, he was the South's most consistently successful commander. But he lived his life in the shadow of his one major defeat: Shiloh.

Ryan Quint, DRANESVILLE: A NORTHERN VIRGINIA TOWN IN THE CROSSFIRE OF A FORGOTTEN BATTLE, DECEMBER 20, 1861, Friday, August 30, 7pm. This is the first full history of that narrow but critically important slice of the war. No one knew what was coming, but for the first time in a long while civilians (sympathetic to both sides) were thrown into a spreading Civil War of their own as neighbor turned on neighbor. In time, this style of warfare, both on the home front and on the battlefield, came for the small town of Dranesville in Fairfax County.



An excerpt from *Cordial Combatants: Fraternization on the Rappahannock*

Cordial Combatants - Introduction

Captain A. C. Jones of the 3rd Arkansas Infantry (Hood's Brigade) remembered years later an incident that became fairly common between the belligerents following the Battle of Fredericksburg. After the Federals crossed the Rappahannock River back into Stafford County, both sides placed pickets along the stream's banks to watch each other and ensure that no surprise attacks occurred. Jones recalled what happened while he was stationed near Mannsfield, the Arthur Bernard House: "On reaching the edge of the bluff [of the river bank], I had a plain view of everything beyond and soon discovered a Yankee sentinel about eighty yards distant (the river being about seventy-five yards wide) trying to conceal himself behind a fringe of bushes on the river bank." After taking a few seconds to think about what he should do, Jones cried out, "Hello there, Mr. Yank," to which he quickly responded, "Hello, yourself." Jones yelled back, "I want to know if it is peace or war." Back came the reply, "If you won't shoot, I won't." The captain then sought to strike a deal. He said, "I wish to make a bargain with you. I intend to place a line of pickets on this side of the river. If you will not fire upon them, we will agree to keep the peace." "All right," the Federal answered, and included a "thank you." Jones then "moved the men up and proceeded to place the pickets about two hundred yards apart on a half-mile front."

Over the next few months, opportunities arose for men who were so recently such bitter enemies on the battlefield to find some humanity in each other. Breaking conventions (and often regulations) they reached out to one another for a few fleeting moments of peaceful existence, and occasionally friendly interaction.

In this CVBT History Wire, we will examine a number of these exchanges that soldiers recorded either at the time or remembered later. In doing so, it helps remind us that the soldiers fighting and seeking to survive on central Virginia's battlefields and in their camps were not just calloused machines following orders but were in fact human beings who also had needs that the enemy could sometimes meet and a commonness that war could not completely erase.

Read the complete article at:

https://cvbt.dm.networkforgood.com/emails/3205082?recipient_id=uVnYBVyIFtnh57SmG4r3wQ%7C%7CbWirZUBjd3J0Y29uZ3Jlc3Mub3Jn



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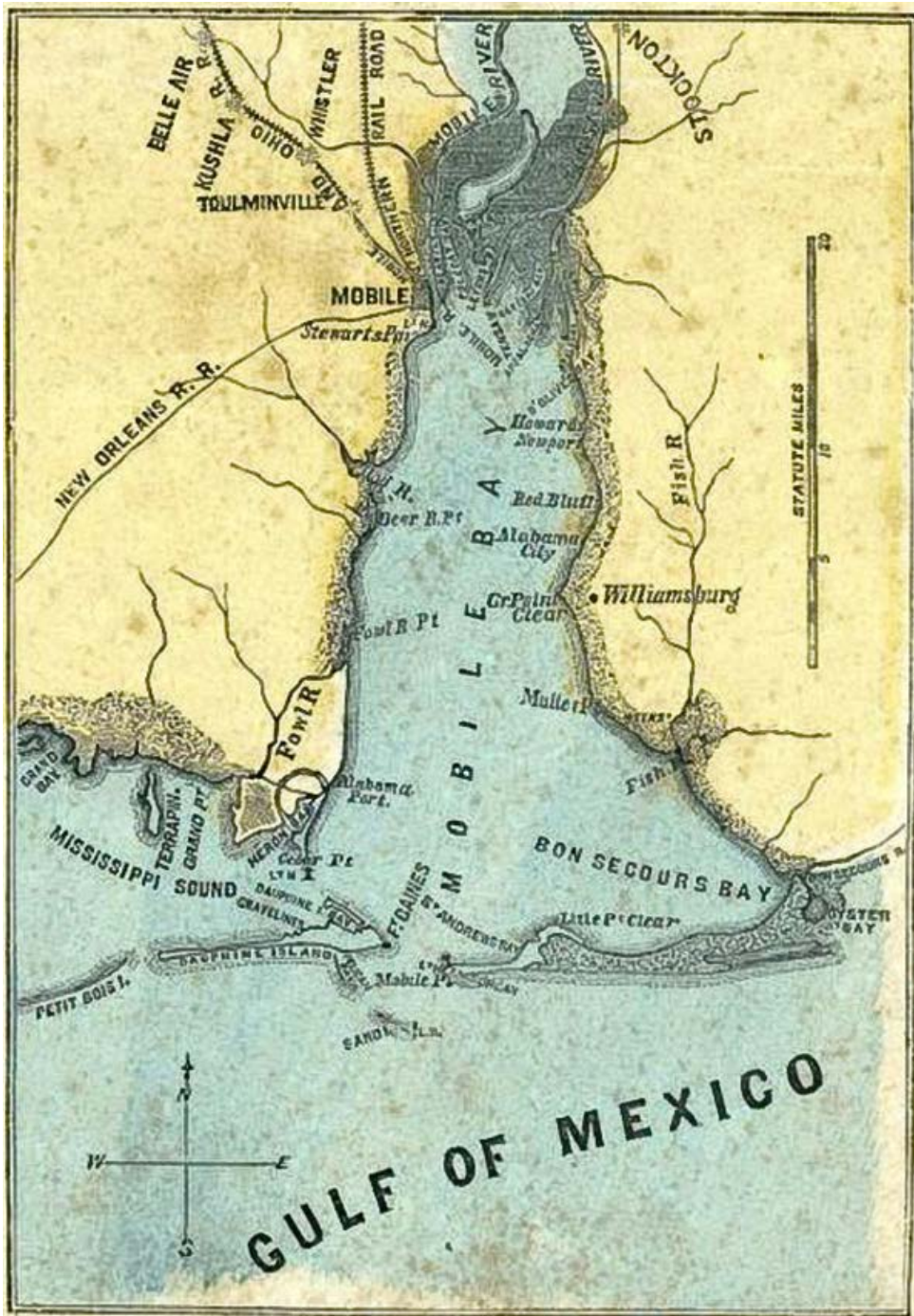
Mobile Bay: Touchstone of American Military History

Mike Bunn, April 8, 2024, blueandgrayeducation.org



For most of the thousands of tourists who annually visit the scenic shores of Mobile Bay, Alabama, the region conjures up images of a rich maritime landscape and bountiful natural environment that serve as a backdrop for numerous recreational activities. Yet the bay area is also one of the nation's most historic regions, with a unique heritage spanning centuries of occupation in which it has figured prominently in multiple military conflicts. Its principal city, Mobile, was founded in 1702, and over its more than three centuries of development, three different European powers have claimed it, as well as the United States, and the Confederacy. During the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War, Mobile and the larger bay region assumed special significance as primary targets for competing armies and navies.

...



The Battle of Mobile Bay, fought on August 5, 1864, proved to be one of the Civil War's largest naval battles. In it, Union admiral David Farragut—who may or may not have precisely said “Damn the Torpedoes”—forced his fleet past the guns of Fort Morgan, ending Mobile’s days as a rebel seaport. Days later, both Fort Morgan and its sister installation across the mouth of the bay, Fort Gaines, had fallen. Yet the city of Mobile, the fourth largest urban center in the Confederacy at the beginning of the war, still lay in Confederate

hands.

Mobile would be the object of the combined-forces action known as the Campaign for Mobile in one of the war's closing operations in the spring of 1865. The most substantial operations on land and water to occur along the Gulf Coast during the Civil War, the affair involved over 55,000 troops and more than 40 warships. The sites associated with the Mobile Campaign are a revelation to many visitors to the region. Sieges of the Confederate positions at Spanish Fort and Fort Blakeley resulted in weeks of pitched fighting before the climactic charge of some 16,000 troops in a front stretching 3 miles in length that resulted in the capture of Fort Blakeley just hours after Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox. The fall of Mobile occurred just a few days later.

Mobile Bay, of course, has many more chapters to tell in its rich and diverse past. But its robust military heritage, often overlooked and awaiting discovery, may be among its most compelling. These and other episodes in its colorful past await those who seek to learn more about our nation's incredible military heritage.

Mike Bunn is the director of Historic Blakeley State Park, Spanish Fort, Alabama



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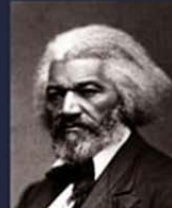
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