



RUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock
Valley Civil War Round Table

December 1993

Vol. 4, No. 12

RVCWRT'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY BANQUET

Speaker: Al Harris

Topic: The Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864

Location: Aunt Sarah's Restaurant, on Route 3, west of I-95

When: Saturday, December 4, 1993. Social at 6:30 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m., program at 8:00 p.m. Call Betty Ford, 659-0128, for dinner reservations. Please indicate your choice of chicken parmigiana or seafood platter.

Last December we had Greg Biggs speak on the Atlanta Campaign. This year Al Harris, who is with the City of Portsmouth's museums, will tell us about another action that took place in the Western Theater in 1864, the Battle of Franklin. The principal feature of that affray was a massed charge across open ground against an entrenched enemy present in large numbers -- in other words, the same situation Lee faced at Malvern Hill and at Gettysburg (third day). The Army of Tennessee prevailed at Franklin, but at the cost of inflicting a virtually mortal wound upon itself. The ratio of Confederate to Union casualties was higher than five to two, plus which Hood lost five experienced generals, among them the Stonewall Jackson of the West, Patrick Cleburne, and corresponding proportions of other officer ranks. The stage was set for the Army's virtual destruction at Nashville and in the ensuing retreat across the Tennessee River. Come hear about one of the saddest chapters of the war in the West, which we shall endeavor to assuage with holiday cheer!

It's that time again. Yep, another year of RVCWRT programs and newsletters is drawing to a close. And that means that you should pay your dues now to preserve your status as an RVCWRT member. Treasurer Mac Wyckoff will be more than happy to take your cash or check in the appropriate amount (individual -- \$15, family -- \$25, student -- \$7.50) at our December meeting. Or you can send your check, made payable to RVCWRT, to P.O. Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. There will be other reminders, but those who re-enlist in December get the satisfaction of not having to worry about it in January or February.

As you know, RVCWRT elects its officers each year at the January meeting. The following have been nominated for next year's officers: Milt Ford, president; Mark Stephens, vice-president; Mac Wyckoff, treasurer; Melanie Jordan, secretary; Dane Hartgrove, newsletter editor; Betty Ford, assistant newsletter editor; Lou Allahut, Greg Mertz, Frank O'Reilly, Tom Quigley, and Elsa Schemmer -- executive committee members. Additional nominations for all officers and for Executive Committee members may be made from the floor.

Drum & Bugle is published monthly by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, P.O. Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. RVCWRT dues are \$15 per year for individuals, \$25 for families, and \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the preservation of Civil War sites. Milt Ford, president; Mark Stephens, vice-president; Mac Wyckoff, treasurer; Betty Ford, secretary; Dane Hartgrove, newsletter editor; Lou Allahut, Greg Mertz, Frank O'Reilly, Tom Quigley, and Elsa Schemmer -- executive committee members.

BATTLE FLAGS OF THE CONFEDERACY

An extremely large turn-out virtually filled our meeting room at Aunt Sarah's on November 8 to hear Greg Biggs speak on "Ragged Rags: Battleflags of the Confederate Army." An engaging speaker, Greg cleared the air of any "politically correct" insinuations at the outset by observing that the current imbroglio over display of the so-called Confederate battleflag (a red square or rectangle bearing a blue St. Andrew's cross) trivializes the many facets of the study of the Civil War today. Besides which, the majority of Confederate troops did not fight under that particular flag.

Greg explained that, given the gunsmoke that obscured any battlefield in the 1860s, battle flags were important in providing command, control, and coordination of troops in action. The enemy accordingly made it a point to shoot color-bearers, e.g., the 26th North Carolina lost 14 such men on the first day at Gettysburg.

The so-called Lone Star Flag (a single white star on a blue field), dating back to the Republic of West Florida in 1810, became the Bonnie Blue Flag of the Civil War when a song of that name became the South's unofficial anthem. Many regimental flags had a blue field, especially those from the original 13 States, based on Revolutionary War ties. Many Southerners considered the Civil War the Second American Revolution, which reinforced this tie to blue battle flags. In the West, Hardee's Corps carried a battle flag that displayed a white moon on a blue field, while the flag of Polk's Corps had a red St. George's cross mounting 11 white stars on a blue field. To add an additional element of confusion, the blue sometimes faded to green.

In the East, General P.G.T. Beauregard adopted South Carolina fire-eater William Porcher Miles' design for the Army of Northern Virginia battleflag after First Manassas, where it had proved difficult to distinguish between the U.S. flag and the Stars and Bars in combat. The ANV design (blue St. Andrew's cross with white fimbriation on square red field, the cross bearing 12 or 13 five-pointed stars) was pretty much standardized in Virginia, but there were interesting variations throughout the Confederacy. At Shiloh, Bragg's Corps carried the ANV design, but with 12 six-pointed stars. Most Texas battle flags had 13 stars, with the central star larger. In the Trans-Mississippi, the ANV design became rectangular. In 1864, Joe Johnston issued a battle flag of rectangular ANV design to all units within the Army of Tennessee (this design was adopted by the United Confederate Veterans in 1890). However, Pat Cleburne's Division refused to accept the new flag, and received a special dispensation to continue carrying their blue battleflags with the white moon.

Some Confederate battle flags differed considerably from these patterns. The Van Dorn battle flag had a red field with a white border, a white half-moon, and thirteen white stars. Some Alabama units carried a battle flag having a white St. George's cross on a blue field, with no stars. Some Kentucky and Missouri flags had a Latin cross on a blue field, perhaps signifying that to them the war was a holy crusade.

The use of battle honors (painting or sewing the names of battles in which the unit had been engaged on its battle flag) varied with the army, corps, and division in question. In the Army of Northern Virginia, only four divisions -- those of D.H. Hill, A.P. Hill, Stonewall Jackson, and Henry Heth -- followed this practice.

The first Confederate national flag, a field composed of two red and one white bars, with a blue canton bearing seven white stars, came into use while the new government was in Montgomery, AL, but was never formally adopted by the Confederate Congress. Known as the Stars and Bars, it was used throughout the war, but confusion with the U.S. flag caused the Confederacy to adopt a second national flag in early 1863. Known as the Stainless Banner, it had a white field with the ANV battle flag as canton. One of its first uses was to drape Stonewall Jackson's coffin when it lay in state in Richmond in May 1863, for which reason it is also known as the Jackson Flag. This banner was especially popular in the western Confederacy. A third national flag, which added a red strip at the end of the white field of the Stainless Banner to eliminate confusion with surrender flags and flags of truce, was proposed in December 1864 and adopted in March 1865. Gordon's men carried this flag at Appomattox. Many thanks to Greg Biggs for a fascinating presentation!

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFS

With the year's campaign over and the troops settling into winter quarters, there's really not a lot going on out there, friends, but here goes anyway. ... Word has it that would-be Formula One racetrack builder James Lazor has failed to disclose lists of investors or clients, his business background, or racetrack-construction experience to Culpeper County citizens or officials. Many of the officials apparently could care less, however, as the Culpeper County Planning Commission (question: how far ahead do you have to look to qualify as a Culpeper County planning commissioner?) seems likely to grant the project a conditional use permit. The Brandy Station Battlefield is zoned for light industry. In August, Culpeper County supervisors amended the county's official definition of light industry to include racetracks. (Carrying that reasoning a bit further, NASCAR great Richard Petty would qualify as president of the National Association of Manufacturers.) ... On a more pleasant note, there are plans to build a National Prisoner of War Museum at Andersonville National Historic Site in Georgia. Construction will be funded by a public-private match system, with the public sector scheduled to put up \$2.5 million. Donations may be made to Andersonville Museum Fund, Dept. C, Andersonville, GA 31711. ... West Sand & Gravel of Richmond has allowed its excavation permit for a portion of the Malvern Hill Battlefield to expire. The company could apply for another permit, but has no plans to do so soon. APCWS's acquisition of 750 acres on the other side of the NPS Malvern Hill facility may have been a factor in the gravel company's decision not to go ahead with mining there at this time. ... If you haven't sent APCWS a check for its Malvern Hill/Glendale Campaign, you might want to do so as an end-of-the-year tax write-off. Make checks payable to APCWS, marked "Malvern Hill/Glendale," and mail to P.O. Box 1862, Fredericksburg, VA 22402. ... NPS Deputy Director John Reynolds recently surprised the preservation community by suggesting that the bill to create the Shenandoah Valley National Battlefields should be deferred pending creation of a "partnership preservation plan." In case Mr. Reynolds hasn't noticed (or perhaps his staff failed to inform him), APCWS and related organizations in the Valley have been working on just such a plan for several years now. Why waste time on another study when the information is already at hand? Congress should pass the bill now, while the economy (and land prices in the Valley) are still down. ... Former RVCWRT Executive Committee member Mike Vice has assumed the post of museum curator at Gettysburg National Military Park. While some here have expressed concern that Vice left his previous position in North Carolina without having changed the name of Fort Bragg to Fort D.H. Hill, we all join in wishing Mike more success at Gettysburg than previous Southern visitors. ... The annual holiday music program at Salem Church will be held on Monday, December 6, at 7:30 p.m. Please use the parking lot at New Salem Church if you plan to attend. ... A reenactment of the beginning of the Battle of Fredericksburg will be held on Saturday, December 11, starting near Hawke St. around 9:00 a.m., and including a march through town. ... The annual commemoration of the Battle of Fredericksburg will take place on Sunday, December 12, at 2:00 p.m. at the Kirkland Monument near the NPS Fredericksburg Visitor Center. RVCWRT member Erik Nelson will be the speaker. ... RVCWRT's annual preservation conference will be held March 26-27, 1994, with Saturday's sessions again at the Sheraton and Sunday's bus tour, of the Wilderness, with Bob Krick. ... Next spring's bus tour will be on Saturday, May 21, to Sharpsburg, aka Antietam. ... How about the Walt Disney Company's announcement about Disney's America, to be built on 1,200 acres of a 3,000-acre tract near Haymarket! Disney bills the planned park as "the ideal complement to our nation's leading historical museums, monuments and landmarks in Washington, D.C." and "a celebration of the diversity of America, the plurality of this nation and the conflicts that have defined us as a people." The Civil War portion of the park will reportedly feature a recreation of the battle between C.S.S. Virginia and U.S.S. Monitor, plus a structure that resembles Fort Sumter. Despite the proximity to Manassas, the new park apparently threatens no historic sites. Who knows, maybe the folks that brought us Epcot Center can even be persuaded to invest in a little battlefield preservation in the area. Word has it that Milt Ford is already lobbying to have Burnside portrayed by Goofy.

THE CIVIL WAR, FOREVER TEACHING NEW LESSONS
by Bailey Thomson, Associate Editor, Mobile Press Register

Current events illustrate how deeply ingrained is the Civil War in the American imagination. First there was news that rare photographs had surfaced. The images of the Battle of Antietam, where Union forces suffered their bloodiest single day, added little to what is already a rich and varied photographic archive -- but buffs were thrilled nonetheless to learn of their discovery. And now "Gettysburg" has opened in movie theaters. More than 5000 extras helped to re-enact the war's greatest battle, bringing to life Michael Shaara's Pulitzer-winning novel The Killer Angels. Not since D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" -- another Civil War story -- has America seen a production on this scale, according to press agents.

There appears to be no bottom to the public's interest in this conflict that ended 128 years ago. If anything, that interest has seemed to grow, particularly since Ken Burns produced his exhaustive documentary about the war for public television. To their credit, re-enactors and serious students of the war insist on accuracy, thereby putting film-makers on notice that they will be laughed off the screen if they offer an inauthentic story. Indeed, movies about the war have been getting better of late. They've also become more democratic. "Glory," for example, acknowledged black soldiers' considerable contribution to the North's victory. It also emphasized that the color of one's skin has nothing to do with the quality of one's courage.

Perhaps one reason the war retains its hold is that it seems forever capable of teaching new lessons -- or perhaps repackaging old ones in ways we haven't thought about before. Certainly, anyone who has studied the war -- including all those wonderful photographs from Matthew Brady's studio -- has some appreciation for the horror of combat. There is nothing sweet and glorious about a .58-calibre minie bullet tearing through flesh at close range. Only pain, agony and the terror of surviving long enough to have some drunken surgeon saw off a limb.

Like many Southerners, I have my own personal attachment to the war. My mother's grandfather left Fayette County in 1862 to fight with the Army of Tennessee. He was a simple man of the hill country who owned no slaves. He was wounded at Murfreesboro and returned to finish the war as a cavalryman in North Alabama. My grandfather, who lived past 100 and delighted in telling his grandchildren stories, insisted that principle drove his father to fight. I suspect conscription also had something to do with it. The South needed every man it could find, and the Confederate government resorted early in the war to the draft. For such reasons, the complaint quickly arose about a rich man's war and a poor man's fight.

Chances of seeing combat were good, as my ancestor discovered. But my grandfather never tried to glorify what his father had done. The soldier had simply gone off to war and survived. That was enough. Moreover, the son had lain around the family's hearth on many nights and listened as visiting veterans quietly recounted to his father what they had endured in battles such as Seven Pines, where blood covered the ground, causing men to slip as they moved up to take their places in the line.

As a boy, I dreamed of fighting those battles, in part because our town was celebrating the war's centennial and I saw my neighbors dressed up in uniforms and long dresses. In those days too, the war's memory was resurrected to steel white Southerners' resolve to resist integration. Confederate symbols were everywhere, it seemed, and just the sound of "Dixie" could bring impressionable young people screaming to their feet at ball games.

Nowadays, we are less likely to associate the war with Southern resistance; instead, we see the conflict more as an American epic that helps define our national character. To think that our young nation fielded such magnificent and courageous armies so that Americans might kill one another astounds us, even as we devour the details of how and where they fought. The war has become a shared American experience -- one to be treasured and even, in the case of some traditional college all-star games, re-enacted on mock battlefields of sport. However we wish to commemorate it, the Civil War belongs to all of us. It provides a backdrop against which we continue to define ourselves as a people.

Book Review
by
Dane Hartgrove

Harry Turtledove. The Guns of the South. New York: Ballantine Del Rey Paperbacks, 1993. 561 pp. \$5.99.

The guys who design the covers of mass-market paperbacks really should get more attention. This book's cover is basic black, with the title and the author's name in stark white outlined in red, prefiguring what's to come. For an illustration, we have that portrait of Robert E. Lee we've all seen scores of times, the one taken just after Appomattox in a rented Richmond house. Except here Lee doesn't look as though he's grieving for all the South's dead sons, and in his hands is an AK-47.

Got your attention now? Well, The Guns of the South is an exercise in what's called alternate history, a branch of science fiction in which historical personages become fictional characters after some pivotal event that switches history onto the track of what-might-have-been. In this case, the South gets a little help from the future in the late winter of 1864, when a group of mysterious men dressed in camouflage (which the Confederates think of as muddy brown suits) show up with 100,000 "repeaters" they're willing to sell at rock-bottom prices -- in Confederate paper money.

Needless to say, the 1864 overland campaign takes quite a different course, as does Sherman's invasion of Georgia. The South's mysterious benefactors show up with other little gifts at appropriate points, like nitroglycerine tablets when Robert E. Lee admits to having chest pains, and rifle grenades when the victorious Confederates go up against fortifications. But it gradually becomes apparent that the camouflaged helpers have a very different agenda from that of the Confederate government. To put it mildly, they have a real thing about keeping blacks "in their place," and they're willing to spend large amounts of gold -- worth a fortune in the specie-starved South -- to ensure that slavery lives long and prospers (to borrow an expression from a well-known sci-fi character). To place the novel in true perspective, it's a study of what race relations might have been like in the South after a Confederate victory.

The principal historical characters are Robert E. Lee and Nathan Bedford Forrest, with a supporting cast that includes Jefferson Davis, Judah P. Benjamin, Senator Albert Gallatin Brown of Mississippi, and Senator Louis T. Wigfall of Texas. The author switches back and forth between these exalted figures and a group of men drawn from the ranks of the 47th North Carolina Infantry. Turtledove has done his homework; these characters too are historical personages, drawn from North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster. There are also a number of references to standard historical works on the Civil War, including a quite complimentary reference to Bob Krick's Lee's Colonels. In a cover blurb, Professor James M. McPherson pontificates: "As a Civil War historian, I literally could not put The Guns of the South down. It is absolutely unique -- without question the most fascinating Civil War novel I have ever read.... It is must reading for every Civil War student."

Truth to tell, I found it hard to get interested in the book to start with. There was a little too much stage-setting going on in the first few chapters for somebody with an idea of what was happening in the winter of 1864. But once history gets derailed and the author has to come up with a plausible fictional narrative to support a Confederate victory and its aftermath, the book becomes a darn good read. Try it for the holidays!

COMING EVENTS

Dec. 6 -- Salem Church Holiday Music Program, 7:30 p.m. Please park in New Salem Church lot.

Dec. 11 -- Reenactment of the start of the Battle of Fredericksburg, Hawke St., ca. 9:00 a.m., continuing with a march through town.

Dec. 12 -- Annual commemoration of the Battle of Fredericksburg, Kirkland Monument near NPS Fredericksburg Visitor Center, 2:00 p.m.

Dec. 19 -- Civil War military collectible show and sale, Quality Inn/Johnny Appleseed, New Market, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For information, (703) 740-3577.

Jan. 8-9 -- Civil War Spectacular, The Showplace, Richmond. Saturday 10-6, Sunday 12-5. For information, (804) 730-8501.

Jan. 10 -- Pete Carmichael speaks to RVCWRT on "Col. Willie Pegram, Confederate Artillerist," Aunt Sarah's.

Feb. 14 -- RVCWRT meeting, Aunt Sarah's. "Women and the Civil War: A Local Perspective"

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
P.O. Box 7632
Fredericksburg, VA 22404

MAC WYCKOFF (93)
11610 ENCHANTED WOODS WAY
FREDERICKSBURG VA 22407

