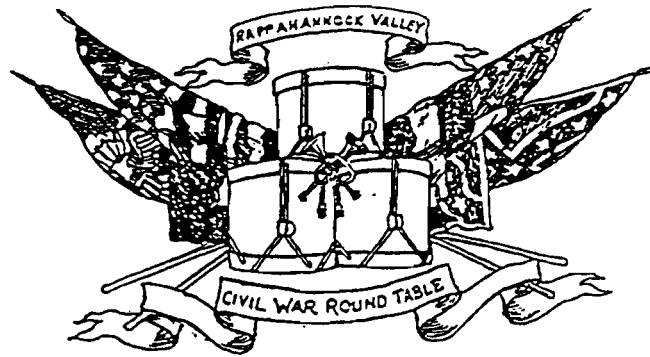


DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock
Valley Civil War Round Table



Vol. 14, No. 10

October 2003

Grant's Ending of Prisoner-of-War Exchanges: War Crime or Operational Necessity?

- Topic: **RVCWRT's Annual Discussion Meeting**
- When: **Monday, October 13, Social at 6:30 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m., meeting at 7:45 p.m.**
- Location: **Uncle Sam's Restaurant, in the Uptown section of Central Park**
- Dinner: **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED, AND MUST BE MADE BEFORE THURSDAY, October 9. Failure to make a reservation, or showing up unannounced, means you will NOT be served dinner, but are welcome to attend the meeting. Cost of the dinner is \$17. You are also welcome to eat dinner in the regular section of the restaurant. To make reservations, e-mail Dr. Mike Stevens at <drmste@aol.com> (preferred), call (540) 371-3115 between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, or send a fax to (540) 372-9860. If you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, please call as soon as possible to cancel. If you make a reservation and don't cancel, and this results in the Round Table paying for your meal, you will be billed for it.**

Our Topic

When Ulysses S. Grant came east in March 1864 to assume command of all Union land forces, he made the decision to end prisoner-of-war exchanges. Such exchanges were a practice long recognized as in accordance with the laws of war. However, over the previous 15 months, the Confederate response to the Union's employment of African Americans in the ranks of its armies had resulted in several interruptions of the exchange process. What Grant now proposed was a definite policy of denying the Confederate armies the return of men taken prisoner in order to weaken Richmond's war effort. Put more succinctly, every man removed from the Confederate ranks by whatever means, be it death, wounds, sickness, or capture, would make it that much more difficult for Richmond to maintain its armies in being. Generals Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and others would thus be hard put to fend off the multiple offensives that Grant and his subordinates would mount throughout the South in the spring of 1864. Of course, as in many wars before and since, no one thought about the consequences of this change in policy or made any plans in support of it. Surely no one dreamed of the misery that lay in store for those who became prisoners of war, North and South, in the last year of our nation's most devastating conflict. Of course, as Dr. Mike Stevens well knows, this was all Abraham Lincoln's fault. Come find out whether Lincoln receives the blame he so richly deserves on October 13.

ENOUGH ALREADY

A Heads Up and An Ultimatum from Your President

Dear Round Table member:

We continue to have problems with our dinner reservation system despite repeatedly explaining the rules both at meetings and in our newsletter. This is ONE FINAL EFFORT to clearly explain our dinner reservation system policy. If dinner reservation problems persist, the Round Table Board will be forced to change our meeting location to a facility that DOES NOT OFFER MEALS. You will be on your own for meals.

Please understand that we value your membership in our organization. We want you to come and enjoy socializing with your friends in our group and listen to the great speakers we have lined up. But the dinner reservation policy problems are of such a continuing magnitude that they must stop, one way or another.

DINNER RESERVATION POLICY

Dinner reservations MUST BE CALLED IN BEFORE 9 A.M. ON THE THURSDAY BEFORE EACH MEETING. There will be A NEW CONTACT PERSON for dinner reservations. EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, to make reservations e-mail me (Mike Stevens) at <drmste@aol.com>, or call 371-3115 between 9 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday, or fax the information to 372-9860. DO NOT call the restaurant directly and make your own reservations. AGAIN, THIS CONTACT MECHANISM IS A CHANGE AND IS TO TAKE EFFECT IMMEDIATELY.

You are responsible for making sure that I receive your reservation. E-mails will be acknowledged as soon as received (almost always within 24 hours), and if you haven't heard back from me by then, check with me. If you send a fax, you had better call the 371-3115 number and make sure it arrived. If you make a reservation and find that you cannot attend, please call as soon as possible to cancel. If you make a reservation and don't cancel, and this results in the Round Table having to pay for your meal, you will be billed for it.

Dinner reservations called in after the above-mentioned deadline will not be accepted. Please come and socialize and listen to the speaker, but eat dinner elsewhere. When you make dinner reservations, give the names of all the people you are making reservations for.

If having a nice dinner with your fellow Round Table members is important to you, PLEASE, PLEASE abide by these rules. Continued problems will force an immediate change to a different facility and a no-food policy.

Thanks, everyone, for your help in making sure that our present policy works and doesn't have to be changed!

Mike Stevens
RVCWRT
9/7/03

Andersonville: Storm Clouds Over the Confederacy
by Alan Marsh
September Program Reviewed by Mac Wyckoff

The name Andersonville Prison evokes a wide range of emotions. People have different perceptions of the prison. Alan Marsh, a historian at Andersonville National Historical Site, spoke at our meeting in September to clear up some of the misconceptions as part of the group's study of Civil War prisons and prison experiences.

Officially known as Camp Sumter, Andersonville became a prison in February 1864 on 16 acres in west central Georgia. It was later enlarged to 26 acres. The land was partly a sandy hill and partly a valley with a muddy stream running through the middle of the camp, surrounded by a 14-foot-high stockade. It was created to take pressure off the overcrowded conditions at Richmond's Belle Isle Prison. The large number of prisoners in Richmond was creating a shortage of food and supplies in the Confederate capital, and the detached soldiers on guard duty were needed on the battle lines. Andersonville, Georgia, was selected because of its isolated location well behind the Confederate lines in an agricultural area which had a railroad station.

At first, there were only about 500 Union prisoners at Andersonville, but in May, General Grant began a series of major battles in central Virginia, while General William T. Sherman advanced on Atlanta. To lessen the number of Confederates he was fighting, Grant ended the prisoner exchange program. Instead of a short incarceration, captured soldiers now remained in prison until the war ended, the prisoner signed an oath of allegiance not to take up arms (which most would not do), or he died. By July, the number of prisoners at Andersonville had swelled to 32,000 enlisted men. Officers were sent to a separate prison near Macon, Georgia. During its 14 months of use, 45,000 men served time in Andersonville.

Problems abounded in the sweltering Georgia heat and humidity. Inadequate shelter, bad sanitation, and lack of food and medicine made living conditions miserable. Some of the men built tents to shade themselves from the hot summer sun. Others lived in the open. The creek became polluted, resulting in severe stomach ailments. As food and supplies ran short, the guards and civilians in the outlying communities had first priority. Almost 13,000 prisoners died. The death rate was high, but all the prison camps suffered from the same problems. Andersonville's death rate was similar to that of the Union camp for Confederate prisoners-of-war at Elmira, New York.

Within Camp Sumter, gangs of ruffians called raiders terrorized their fellow prisoners. Intimidation, robbing, and killing became common. To end the violence, six gang leaders were hanged. They were buried separate from the other dead in the cemetery adjacent to the prison. Every Memorial Day, American flags are placed on each grave in the cemetery, except for those of the six disgraced gang leaders.

A dead line paralleled the interior of the stockade wall. At first, prisoners were simply told to get back if they ventured across the line. But in the summer of 1864, Captain Henry Wirz cracked down as rumors increased of an attempted mass escape. Anyone crossing the line was shot. Sometimes cold-hearted guards lured naive prisoners across the line with offers of food, only to shoot them dead.

In late July 1864, Union cavalry leader George Stoneman launched a raid to tear up railroad tracks west and south of Atlanta and free the men held at Andersonville. Some of Stoneman's troopers reached Andersonville, but as prisoners rather than freedom riders.

In the spring of 1865, most of the prisoners were sent elsewhere, mostly to Milledgeville,

Georgia, and Florence, South Carolina. With the war over, two things of importance happened. Captain Henry Wirz, the prison commandant, was arrested and charged with "impairing the health and destroying the lives of prisoners." Following what many consider an unfair trial, Wirz was sentenced to death and hanged in the yard of the Old Capitol Prison in Washington. Without doubt, conditions at Andersonville were horrible and Wirz was a rough, profane man, but his supporters argue that he did the best he could.

Marsh argued, and many historians agree, that Wirz became the scapegoat and victim of postwar hysteria. At the time, some political insiders regarded what happened to Wirz as a dress rehearsal for a possible show trial of former Confederate President Jefferson Davis, which was cancelled because of the adverse reaction to the deaths of Wirz and Mrs. Mary Surratt.

The second important thing to happen was the attempt to identify the dead. Lawrence Atwater, a prisoner at Andersonville, kept a record of the dead. His records were taken by the Federal government after the war. When the government denied him access to the records so he could publish them, he took back his records. He was charged with theft and sentenced to harsh labor. Clara Barton came to his rescue. With her strong political connections, she freed Atwater and collaborated with him in finding out what happened to the unaccounted-for prisoners. Remarkably, they were able to identify all but 400 of the 13,000 dead.

Andersonville remains a controversial topic. Marsh's excellent presentation cleared away many of the misconceptions and shed light on such controversies as Andersonville's high death rate and the trial of Captain Wirz. Today Andersonville National Historic Site consists of the prison site, the cemetery, and the National Prisoner of War Museum that commemorates American prisoners from all wars.

Announcement

I have been RVCWRT's newsletter editor for more years than I care to contemplate, and I basically think it's time for someone else to take over. According to our bylaws, the newsletter editor is an elected officer whose term runs through the January issue of any given year. I would be willing to finish out my term as editor. However, my successor, Lori Balis, has announced that I have decided to resign. This statement gives me the option of not doing this job any more, and her the option of taking over with the November issue, so that she can say that she has always been truthful to the readership. Lori will introduce an electronic format for the newsletter, and promises many creative opportunities for you all to contribute your time and talents. Please submit your suggestions, ideas, and information to Lori Balis, InTenebrisLux@aol.com, or write her at P.O. Box 2183, Spotsylvania, VA 22553.

Since this may be my last issue, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people who have helped to make the *Drum & Bugle* what it has been. First of all, I thank my wife, who has served as "publisher" for the last several years, taking care of getting each issue printed and in the mail to you. I again thank Milt and Betty Ford for performing those same duties prior to Sue's taking on the job. Mac Wyckoff has been a reliable contributor and a dependable source of support throughout my incumbency. Chuck Siegel has done his best to prod me into contemporary publishing practices; I wish him better luck with Lori. Dr. Mike, Greg Mertz, and the irrepressible Tim Quigley also come in for their share of thanks.

Lori credits me with much loftier future plans than I have yet contemplated. For what it's worth, you can expect me continue to ask questions at our monthly meetings, for the general purpose of getting at the truth of what happened in the Civil War era.

**Field Hospitals of the Army of the Potomac
In the Wilderness & Spotsylvania
A Mini-Tour
By Chuck Siegel**

Recommended Reading: Official Records Series I, Volume XXXVI Part I Report of Surgeon Thomas A. McParlin, U.S. Army Medical Director

1. **John Spotswood Farm ("Orange Grove")** – Site of home in Spotswood Park within the Lake of the Woods Development on west side of Route 3 in Orange County. This farm was the site of Sixth Corps Headquarters as well as the First Division Sixth Corps hospital on May 5. The site of the hospital was west of the house near Flat Run (now the main Lake of the development). It consisted of 24 tents set up by brigades. 34 hospital attendants were employed. This was typical for each Division.
2. **Wilderness Run/Wilderness Tavern** – On May 5 the Second Division, Sixth Corps hospital was located along northwest side of Wilderness Run near Woodville Mine. The Third Division, Sixth Corps hospital was on the northeast side of Wilderness Run opposite Wilderness Tavern. On May 5, "About 1,000 wounded were brought in during the day, the greater part from the Second Division."
3. **Luckett's Farm** – The Fifth Corps Division Hospitals were located "on a slope of open ground by a small creek which crosses the Fredericksburg pike 1 mile east of Old Wilderness Tavern." 1,235 wounded were cared for at this hospital on May 5. In the Wilderness, McParlin recorded Fifth Corps had 2,280 wounded. Of these, 71 died and 205 amputations were performed.
4. **Dowdall's Tavern** – On the night of May 6 the hospitals of the Sixth Corps were collected and moved "to the vicinity of Dowdall's Tavern on the Fredericksburg turnpike." May 5-7, McParlin recorded the Sixth Corps having 1,957 wounded treated, of these 53 died and 141 amputations were performed.
5. **Carpenter's Farm** – Second Corps' hospitals were located at Carpenter's Farm "...1 mile southeast of the junction of the Germanna Ford and Chancellorsville plank roads." The site is on the west side of route 600 just south of Cool Spring Creek (near present Waltonian Pond). According to McParlin, "The site was a good one, with good water, and two ambulance roads leading to the front, which was only a mile distant." 600 wounded were brought in during the day of May 5. On May 6, "... the influx of patients was so rapid and their numbers so great that it was not possible to record all of them." McParlin later placed the number for May 5-7 as 2,907 wounded, 83 dying in hospital and 207 amputations being performed.
6. **Todd's Tavern** – On May 8, four depots were "... located in the woods by the side of Todd's Tavern and Spotsylvania Court-House road, near the point of crossing of the Block house road." 1,300 wounded of the Fifth Corps were treated here. "A large portion of the wounds were slight in character, and about 100 were self-inflicted." There were also 150 wounded of the Second Corps and 100 wounded from Sixth Corps.
7. **The Brown House** – Site is one-half mile northeast of Todd's Tavern on the south side of route 612. 250 Union Cavalry were treated here on May 8 before being sent to hospitals in Fredericksburg.
8. **Lewis Farm** – On May 9 the Sixth Corps established their hospitals on the Lewis Farm..."in the pine woods on the Court-House and Piney Branch Church road, one-half mile north of the intersection of the Block house (Brock) road." Major General John Sedgwick's body was brought here after being killed at the front. About 200 wounded were treated here on May 10.
9. **Couse's Farm** – On the morning of May 9 the Fifth Corps established hospitals on the lawn of the Couse's farm, which still stands off route 627. The Second Corps hospitals were adjacent to the Fifth's "... in open ground on the south branch of the Ny (Ni) River." 1,100 wounded from both Corps were treated here on May 10. The Sixth Corps moved its hospitals here on May 11 and an additional 700 wounded were brought in. On May 12 the wounded "... began to pour into hospitals with great rapidity." 3,560 wounded were brought here that day. On the evening of the 14th Confederate Cavalry raided the hospitals (Rosser) removing 80 Confederate wounded and the rations for the Union wounded. On May 15, the Second Corps moved to the east, setting up a temporary hospital at the Armstrong Farm. The site is east of the Ni River on the south side of 627.
10. **Landrum's House** – This was the advance ambulance depot for the Second Corps on May 12.
11. **Beverly's Farm** – On the 15th the three corps moved their hospitals to the vicinity of the Beverly Farm.
12. **Massaponax Church Road** – On the evening of May 18 and morning of the 19th the three corps removed their hospitals to the Massaponax Church road (Rt. 628) north of the Anderson house. According to McParlin, total number of wounded treated during the Spotsylvania operations were about 10,531. Following treatment in the field hospitals, the wounded and sick were sent to Fredericksburg. From there, they were sent to Washington. Total wounded received in Washington from Fredericksburg (including Ninth Corps) was 26,191. Except for the Landrum house site and the Wilderness Tavern, none of this truly hallowed ground is protected.

Calendar

Thursday-Sunday, October 2-5 - 29th Annual Congress of Civil War Round Tables, featuring guided tours of the Seven Days Battlefields and the Overland Campaign from North Anna to Cold Harbor, led by Ed Bearss. For information, contact Jerry L. Russell, 501-225-3996.

Friday-Sunday, October 10-12 - Mosby Heritage Area Association conference on "Command and Control at Gettysburg," Middleburg, VA. Speakers include Robert K. Krick, Jeffrey Wert, Eric Wittenberg, Brooks Simpson, Gary Kross, Kim Holien and Charles Fennell. The format is two lectures on Friday afternoon and a full day of speakers for Saturday. Sunday is a full day of touring the ground over which Longstreet attacked on the second day. Conference cost is \$300. For information, email Childs Burden at <cburden338@aol.com>.

Monday, October 13 - Discussion of Grant's policy of ending prisoner-of-war exchanges.

Monday, November 10 - Ed Bearss speaks on "Comparing Treatment of the Wounded in the Civil War and World War II" at Fredericksburg Square. This special program requires advance reservations; contact Mac Wyckoff. The cost is \$29 per person.

Monday, December 8 - Robert K. Krick speaks on "Fredericksburg Civilians: Under War's Savage Heel."

Monday, January 12 - Terry Thoman speaks on "Researching a Civil War Artifact."

Monday, February 9 - Al Stratton speaks on "The Battle of New Orleans."

Monday, March 8 - Betsy Estilow speaks on an aspect of women in the Civil War. Exact topic to be determined at a later date.

Monday, April 12 - Dr. Steve Cushman speaks on "Thoughts on the Battle of the Wilderness."

Monday, May 10 - Tony O'Connor speaks on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

Monday, June 14 - Virginia Morton speaks on Civil War events in Culpeper.

Monday, August 9 - Deanne Blanton speaks on women soldiers in the Civil War.

Monday, September 13 - Rich DiNardo speaks on the Tullahoma Campaign.

Monday, October 11 - Eric Nelson speaks on topic to be determined later.

Monday, November 8 - Don Hakenson and Gregg Dudding speak on Mosby's operations in Fairfax County.

Monday, December 10 - Dr. Mike Stevens and Dane Hartgrove debate the pros and cons of Abraham Lincoln.

Drum and Bugle is published monthly by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Roundtable, P.O. Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Dues are \$20 per year for individuals, \$30 for families, and \$10 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the preservation of Civil War sites. Mike Stevens, President; Mac Wyckoff, Vice President; Brad Henderson, Secretary; Conway Richardson, Treasurer; Jack Barnes, Immediate Past President; Dane Hartgrove, Newsletter Editor; Joe Bongiovi, Dorothy Emery, John Graham, John Griffiths, Greg Mertz, Tom Quigley, and Chuck Siegel, Executive Committee members.

A Message from the Treasurer

The Treasurer can be paid in advance for the Monday, November 10, dinner at which former NPS Chief Historian Ed Bearss will speak at Fredericksburg Square. Please see Conway Richardson at the upcoming dinner meetings in September or October, or mail a check to Conway in care of RVCWRT, P.O. Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. The cost is \$29 per person. We also have copies of the biography of Ed Bearss by John C. Waugh, entitled *Edwin Cole Bearss, History's Pied Piper*; they will be on sale at the upcoming dinners for \$24.

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



Mac Wyckoff 2003
11610 Enchanted Woods Way
Fredericksburg, VA 22407-8674

Don't Forget: Dinner Meeting, Monday, October 13.
Contact Mike Stevens by noon on Thursday, October 9, for reservations at:
371-3115 (voice)/372-9860 (fax)/<drmste@aol.com> (e-mail)