

DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table



Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter December, Volume 3, Issue 12

Topic: Winter of Discontent: Springtime of Change: The Army of the Potomac, Joseph Hooker, and the Prelude to Chancellorsville

Speaker: John Hennessy

When: Monday, December 11, 2006. Social hour begins at 6:00, dinner at 6:45, business meeting at 7:30, Program/Speaker 8:00, Adjournment 9:00 pm

Location: Uncle Sam's Restaurant in the Uptown section of Central Park

Dinner Reservations

We meet at Uncle Sam's Restaurant in the Central Park area of Fredericksburg, Virginia. You may attend the meeting only. If you come for dinner, you must make advanced reservations following these rules. Reservations are required for dinner, and **MUST BE MADE BEFORE NOON ON THURSDAY, December 7, 2006**. The cost of the dinner is \$17. To make reservation, e-mail Bob Jones at 3dognight@bigplanet.com (preferred) or call (540) 399-1702 and leave a message on the answering machine. You will be **BILLED** for any reservation not canceled.



Review of the November Meeting by Greg Mertz

At the November meeting, roundtable members heard Kris White speak about a pair of soldiers embroiled in a conflict near Petersburg in 1865. Kris pointed out that the clash was not between Grant and Lee, nor between any other pair of adversaries in the opposing armies. Instead, the controversy he addressed was between two Union soldiers: Gouverneur K. Warren and Phillip H. Sheridan. The battle was not fought with bullets, but with words. The issue was not ending slavery or preserving the Union

but one of egos and of whether or not Warren acted in a reasonable way to Sheridan's orders. Kris explained the nuances of the argument that has become known as the "Five Forks Controversy."

Five Forks is the name of a battle fought on April 1, 1865. Located west of Petersburg, the Federal victory on the battlefield enabled them to take the last remaining rail line bringing supplies to the Confederates at Petersburg and effectively complete the siege they had been embarked upon for some nine months. Federal attacks on the following day broke the Confederate lines and Richmond was abandoned. The surrender at Appomattox Court House occurred just a week later.

An important prelude to Five Forks took place on March 25, 1865. Lee attacked the Federal position at Fort Stedman on the Petersburg line, in an attempt to break the siege and join another Confederate force under Joseph E. Johnston in North Carolina. When the assault was repulsed, Grant realized that the Confederates were desperate and the timing was right for the Federals to launch an attack of their own. A body of 12,000 cavalymen had just joined Grant following service in the Shenandoah Valley, and he determined that these men should compose his strike force. The cavalymen were commanded by Sheridan. In conjunction with his plans to attack with Sheridan's men, Grant also shifted his troops along their 35 mile line to extend the position further to the west.

Lee noticed the movements and grasped the meaning. He responded by shifting some 10,000 men under George E. Pickett and his nephew Fitzhugh Lee to counter the Federals. Sheridan requested infantry support for his mission against Pickett and desired the VI Corps, which had served with him in the Shenandoah Valley, but they were too far away to join him promptly. The troops on the extreme left or western flank of the Federal army were assigned the task instead. These soldiers were in the V Corps commanded by Warren.

Sheridan and his cavalry had a history with Warren and his troops as well, but unlike their association with the VI Corps, this one was not pleasant. In the Wilderness on May 5, 1864, Sheridan's cavalry had failed to properly picket the front of the V Corps and Warren suddenly learned that Confederates confronted him while the majority of his troops were not in position, but on the march. Three days later Sheridan's cavalry again failed Warren's men by being unable to clear the way to Spotsylvania Court House. The subsequent fighting following each of these cavalry shortcomings resulted in the defeat of Warren's men.

Sheridan's troops were poised at Dinwiddie Court House, five miles south of Five Forks, while Warren battled with Pickett's men and struggled with muddy roads and streams that required bridging while moving to link with Sheridan. On March 31, Sheridan decided to advance toward Five Forks without waiting for the aid of Warren. Both forces were engaged, but Sheridan's troopers were thrown back. Sheridan blamed Warren for being late in coming to his support.

Sheridan and Warren then met to develop the plan for the Battle of Five Forks. Sheridan's men had supposedly scouted the Confederate position and located the left flank of Pickett's force; Warren was ordered to attack it. As the afternoon passed with no evidence that Warren had attacked, the hot tempered Sheridan surmised that Warren was delaying until darkness made it too late to attack. But at 4:15 p.m. Warren advanced, and almost immediately experienced a problem – the Confederate flank was not where Sheridan indicated it would be. Some of Warren's troops under the division of Samuel W. Crawford marched beyond the Confederate flank. While they had missed their target, Crawford nonetheless occupied an excellent position from which to swing into the rear of Pickett's men.

As other elements of Warren's command had located and engaged Pickett's flank, Warren went in search of Crawford. He was so occupied when Sheridan sought out Warren. Though Warren's horse was shot, requiring him to be on foot, and he was in the thick of the fight waving a flag, he was in the Confederate rear and not with the portion of his command engaged on the Confederate flank. Since Sheridan could not find Warren, he reached a conclusion. Sheridan told a member of Warren's staff to tell Warren that he was not at the front and that he was relieved of command.

Kris pointed out some ironic aspects of the situation. The reason Warren was not where Sheridan expected him to be was a direct result of the poor intelligence Sheridan had provided to Warren. In the battle that Sheridan is perhaps most closely associated with – Cedar Creek – Sheridan was absent from the army himself while his troops were struggling in combat.

When Warren later reached Sheridan, he asked him to reconsider his decision. "Hell, I don't reconsider," was Sheridan's reply. As the Federal army embarked upon the final campaign that for all practicality brought an end to the war, Warren awaited orders. Warren stayed in the post-war army, and after much effort eventually succeeded in obtaining a court of inquiry to clear his name.

Among the charges, Warren was accused of being slow in coming to join Sheridan at Dinwiddie Court House, but the finding was that it was not practical for him to have been up earlier than when he arrived. Warren was also accused of not inspiring his troops and devoting too much attention to Crawford's command. The finding was that Warren was at the right place on the battlefield, but he did spend too much time with that one division. But about three months before the court's findings were published, Warren died and he never learned that his name would be cleared.

But Warren's reputation continued to rise as the veterans of his command begin to write of how Little Round Top was the key to the Battle of Gettysburg and how Warren was the hero of Little Round Top. In August of 1888, six years after Warren's death, the first bronze statue to any soldier was erected at Gettysburg, and his men succeed in fully restoring Warren's good name.

Civil War Media Reviews **By Joe Truglio, VP, Phil Kearny CRT**

***Gettysburg* by Stephen Sears (NF)**

Once again, I re-review a book from a different perspective. I have recently listened to Stephen Sears' *Gettysburg* on CD. This was an unabridged version of 20 discs. It took the better part of three weeks to hear it all and it was worth every minute. Listening to the story put me in a frame of mind with the author. It gave me a sense of being there, a part of the event. I relearned things I missed or forgot. I found this time spent a valuable tool in my continuing study. Although I read the printed version first, this is not necessary to enjoy the CD version. This CD comes highly recommended by this student. You will glean much of Mr. Sears's insights listening to this book, as I did. So, boys and girls, put this on your list for Santa. 3 ½ Bugles

***More Generals In Gray* by Bruce Allardice (NF)**

Well, we end the year with a wonderful set of reference books that are fun reads. First is *More Generals in Gray* by Bruce Allardice. This is a companion to *Generals in Gray* by Ezra Warner. It consists of capsule biographies of 137 men who claim generalcy but were never confirmed by the Confederate Congress. Some are well known but most were lost to history. I enjoyed this book. I leave it in

conspicuous places and peruse whenever I have a few spare moments. Filled with information, it is a treasure trove for us buffs. I wonder if Mr. Allardice will do one on Union Generals. 2 ½ *Bugles*

***Rebels from West Point* by Gerald Patterson (NF)**

This book was published in 1987 and is the story of the 306 West Point grads that went South. Written more as a narrative history than a capsule biography makes this an easy read. It is filled with information of the effect these men had on the Confederate effort. The book includes a roster by class and standing. The central theme is that these men are the reason the South was able to wage war for four years against the materially superior North. I think that a large portion of the Civil War community is in agreement with this premise. Overall, this is a good read. 2 *Bugles*

***Glory Enough for All* by Duane Schultz (F)**

Glory Enough for All is the story of the battle of the crater in novelized form. Using real characters along with a few fictional ones, Mr. Schultz tells the tale of the event as it may have happened. The action is historical, the dialogue may be invented. You get a great feel for the personalities involved, some of which are unsavory at best. Published in 1993, it's an easy read and worth the effort. If you are pressed for time and not inclined to dig too deeply into this most complicated undertaking in the War, this is the book for you. 2 *Bugles*

***Last Full Measure* by Jeff Shaara (F)**

Well, I am hooked on Audio books! I have found this a great way to read (listen to) all the books I don't have the time for. I listen at work instead of talk radio. I listen in the car on trips and commutes. That said, I listened to *Last Full Measure*. I found it much better than *Gods and Generals*. Written more as history than fictional recount. I listened on cassette. It's short, to the point and should make a better film than *Gods and Generals*....if Warner Bros. ever recovers from Ron Maxwell's poor effort with the last film. Hopefully, it will get done! If not, try the tapes, you won't be disappointed. 2 *Bugles*

***McClellan's War* by Ethan Refuse (NF)**

Refuse's book is not really about what McClellan did during his time with the Army of the Potomac, but why he did it. This is a very well-written and researched book on the formation of his personality and its effect on the waging of war. As you are aware, I am not a fan of McClellan, but I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It gives great insight into the formation of his psyche, his family history, and his days at West Point. We learn of the beginnings of his paranoia, the start of his arrogant elitism, and its influence on his decision making process. It also details his political beginnings. This is an excellent volume and worthy of the time spent. I came away not liking McClellan any better, but now I can understand and appreciate more fully his reasoning and actions. If you read only one McClellan book, this is it.....3½ *Bugles*

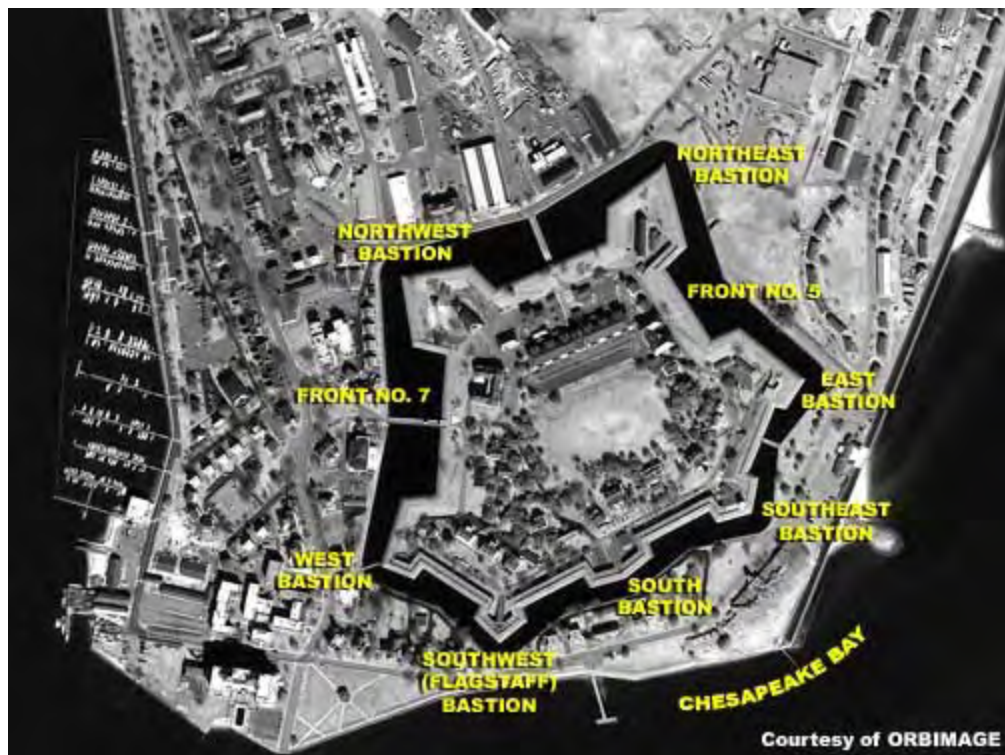
***General John Buford* by Edward Longacre (NF)**

Edward Longacre is one of the most prolific historians today. His expertise is cavalry and its participants. I have read several of his books. I recently completed his biography of John Buford. As with his other works, this is a thoroughly researched and presented volume. Although there is little written by Buford that survives, Mr. Longacre fleshes out the information to give a fine presentation. As one of my favorite officers, I eagerly read this relatively short volume. I was not disappointed, but surprised in that Mr. Longacre takes Buford to task for his conduct at Gettysburg on July 2 and 3. He presents facts unknown to me that have altered my outlook to some degree. Overall, this is a fine book and fast reading. I have heard that a new biography is in the works and hopefully it will be more detailed. Until that time, this volume will have to suffice. 2 *Bugles*

IS IT A FORT OR A FORTRESS? (From “Tales of Old Fort Monroe,” a handout from The Casemate Museum, Fort Monroe, Virginia)

Why is *Fort Monroe* often called Fortress Monroe? What is the difference between a fort and a fortress? These questions are asked over and over. To answer the first question we must delve into history. Fort Monroe was designed by Brigadier General Simon Bernard, noted French military engineer and former aide to the Emperor Napoleon I. Construction was begun in 1819 and virtually completed in 1834. At first it was called Fortress Monroe. Then on February 1, 1832, the following order was issued: “It is the order of the Secretary of War that ... the work at Old Point Comfort be called Fort Monroe, and not Fortress Monroe.”

But the name “Fortress Monroe” was not so easily vanquished. During the Civil War, it was the name used by the newspaper correspondents. The *New York Herald* and other newspapers had a regular column headed, “News from Fortress Monroe.” The term “Fortress Monroe” even crept back into some of the military orders. For instance, of two orders issued by Major General John E. Wool in March 1862, on the same day, one was dated at “Fort Monroe” and the other at “Fortress Monroe.” New life was given to the old name when, in 1880, the Post Office Department changed the name of its office from Old Point Comfort to Fortress Monroe. In 1885 Senator William Mahone, doubtless acting for some of his constituents, attempted to get the name changed back to Old Point Comfort. The military authorities objected to this change and pointed out that the correct name of the fortification was Fort Monroe, not Fortress Monroe. As a result, no change whatsoever was made.



The office continued to be known as Fortress Monroe until November 15, 1941, when the Post Office Department put an end to the confusion by changing the name to Fort Monroe to agree with the official name of the fort. So it is not surprising that the fort is often called Fortress Monroe to this very day. Quite apart from all this, many people say that they like the word *Fortress*, that it sounds better to them. This preference no doubt derives from their recollection of figures of speech in the Bible and in

literature: “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.” 2 Samuel XXII, 2. “This fortress built by Nature for herself.” Shakespeare, *King Richard II*.

And now to answer the second question: What is the difference between a fort and a fortress? A *fort* is a fortification containing a garrison (body of troops). A *fortress* is a fortification enclosing a town within its walls. This latter type of fortification was quite common in Europe and was brought to its highest development by Marshal Sebastien Vauban in the time of Louis XIV. The city of Luxembourg, capital of the country of the same name, is an excellent example of a fortress. In World War I days, the term *fortress* was applied to a town defended by a series of detached forts distributed around it. Such was the Fortress of Verdun whose heroic defense in 1916 was epitomized by the words, “On ne passe pas!”

Fort Monroe is very large. Its area, including the moat, is sixty-three acres. Even in this modern age accustomed to bigness, visitors to the fort are overwhelmed by its vast size. Perhaps this is why it was called Fortress Monroe during the first years of its existence. However, the fort does not enclose and never has enclosed a town. The vanished village of Old Point Comfort was *outside* the walls of the fort. It is therefore obvious that Fort Monroe is, according to the definitions given above, a *fort* and not a fortress. And that is why the War Department has ever since 1832 insisted that the fortification on Old Point Comfort be called *Fort* Monroe and not Fortress Monroe.

The fort is encircled by a *moat* which is one and one-quarter miles in circumference. Its width ranges from 150 feet at the Main Sallyport to sixty feet at the East Gate. This moat is eight feet deep at high tide. It is connected by a sluice With Mill Creek, which is an inlet of Hampton Roads. The fort is built in the shape of a *hexagon* (six-sided polygon). The pointed projections are called *bastions*. A bastion has a salient angle (the point) and two shoulder angles. The surfaces between the salient angle and the shoulder angles are called the faces. The surfaces between the shoulder angles and the junction of the bastion with the main work are called flanks. The purpose of a bastion is to furnish flank and cross fire in conjunction with the direct fire of the main work. This insures that all ground within range of the guns of the fort is protected by columns of fire.

The portion of the wall between two bastions is called a *front*. The seven fronts of Fort Monroe are numbered counterclockwise. Front No.1 contains the Casemate Museum. The Main Sallyport is in Front No 7. The granite wall is banked with earth, forming a *rampart*. The top of the rampart is leveled off to form a gun platform (*terreplein*). There is an additional elevation of the wall to protect the gunners. This is called a *parapet*. Guns were not only mounted on the terreplein (*en barbette*), but in the casemates also. The *casemates* are chambers in the wall of the fort. The casemate guns were fired through openings in the wall known as *embrasures*. The total number of cannons in September 1861 was 182. The external elevation of the wall is known as the *scarp*. The inner elevation is called the *parade face*, because it is toward the parade, or the level enclosure within the fort. One ascends to the top of the rampart by slopes known as *ramps*. The seven bastions are designated according to the points of the compass: Southwest Bastion, South, Southeast, East, Northeast, Northwest and West. In the bastions are spaces designed for storage of munitions and supplies. Because the flagstaff is atop the Southwest Bastion, it is often called the Flagstaff Bastion. From 1871 to 1959, it was the site of the so-called Casemate Club (officers' club).

Fort Monroe is the largest enclosed fortification in this country. Designed and built after the War of 1812 and at the close of the Napoleonic wars, it represents the highest development in the art of seacoast defense at a time when masonry works were still resistant to gunfire. The fort stands on the tip of Old Point Comfort, a flat sand spit some two and one-half miles long, which projects southward from the mainland. Separated from the mainland by Mill Creek, Old Point Comfort was easily defended and dif-

difficult to approach. Close to the Point on its seaward side passes the main channel from Chesapeake Bay into Hampton Roads. This channel is controlled by Fort Monroe. Hence, the designation “the Gibraltar of Chesapeake Bay,” which has been applied to Fort Monroe in the past.

2007 Calendars Available Proceeds support the RVCWRT Scholarship Fund

The RVCWRT is selling 2007 calendars containing scenes of the Fredericksburg area Civil War battlefields. The pictures are from those available for purchase from Steven Thompson that were shown at our RT dinners.

All proceeds from the calendar sales will go to support the recently announced \$ 2500 scholarship to be awarded to a local area high school senior in 2007.

Calendar prices are: \$ 20 each; \$ 35 for 2; and \$ 50 for 3.

Calendars will be available at the December 11th RT dinner meeting or contact:

Scott Walker 540-760-4249 or
Bob Jones 540-399-1702

These calendars make wonderful holiday gifts for family and friends !



COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED

A \$2500 competitive college scholarship in history, archaeology, or preservation will be offered by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Roundtable for the 2006-20007 school year.

Prospective applicants should visit the website WWW.RVCWRT.ORG for information about the scholarship, application forms, and the sponsoring organization (RVCWRT). The deadline for scholarship application is February 1, 2007. You may want to contact your guidance office for additional information.

The Drum and Bugle is published monthly by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Roundtable, P.O. Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Dues are \$30 for individuals, \$40 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. Greg Martin is President; Joe Bonjiovi, Vice President; Bob Jones, Secretary; Barbara Stafford, Treasurer; Lois Wilson, Newsletter Editor; John Graham, John Griffiths, Greg Mertz, Tom Quigley, Melanie Jordan, Greg Martin, Terry Matthews, Marc Thompson, Bob Pfile, and Dan Augustine, Members of the Board of Directors