

# RAPPAHANNOCK VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND



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## DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock  
Valley Civil War Round Table

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## Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table News July 2007, Volume 4, Issue 7

**Topic:** "The Perfect Steel Trap: Harpers Ferry—1859"  
**Speaker:** Bob O'Connor  
**When:** Monday, July 9, 2007  
**Location:** Brock's Riverside Grill

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### Program

Bob O'Connor will speak about his historical novel, "The Perfect Steel Trap Harpers Ferry"

novel, it is based on fact and relates the story of John Brown's ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry. The novel is about the men who actually took part in the raid.

Mr. Brown is with the Jefferson County (WV) Tourist and Convention Bureau. He is also a volunteer with the National Park Service at the Harpers Ferry Visitor Center.

### **A Friend is Gone**

It is with great sadness that I report here that our fellow Roundtable member and all-around good person has passed on.

The extra efforts that Pete Wilson made in order to participate in tours was evidence of his love for the Civil War. He once went on a special Chancellorsville anniversary hike from the visitor center to the Chancellorsville Inn, traversing over a mile of woodland trails. He rode on his scooter -- a small motor vehicle -- over tree roots and dismounting to have his scooter lifted onto several bridges. Such an effort discouraged many others from going through the trouble.

Pete also gave a very moving talk at the dedication of the Sunken Road restoration project at Fredericksburg, a descendant of a Federal soldier at the Battle of Fredericksburg.

He will be missed by all who knew him. Our sincere condolences to Lois.

### **“The Battle of Old Men and Young Boys” by Andy Talkov A review of the June 2007 Meeting by Greg Mertz**

Andrew Talkov, Director of Education and Interpretation at Pamplin Historical Park is a very good program by asking our membership how many of us had been to Petersburg -- many had. He also asked how many had visited the June 9, 1864 portion of the Petersburg battlefield and how many were lifted. The Crater clearly dominates our attention at Petersburg. Actions such as Fort Fisher and Fort Gregg are other less recognizable landmarks that many of us have visited. Petersburg is a National Park Service holding. But the June 9 battlefield of old men and boys is not well known.

As a hub of five rail lines and the “backdoor” to Richmond, Petersburg was of vital importance and much attention, however, until it became a Federal target in 1864. Prior to that, Petersburg was a Confederate officers of the eastern theater, according to Talkov. General officers such as Pickett, and P.G.T. Beauregard were responsible for protecting Petersburg.

Federal General Benjamin Butler launched the first real threat to Petersburg with his Army of the James in May, 1864. His goal was to cut the railroad between Richmond and Petersburg and force the Confederate forces to move against the Confederate capitol city. Butler captured City Point north of Petersburg and continued to advance westward on a peninsula between the Appomattox and James rivers.

managed to stop Butler by establishing a strong defensive position between the two rivers at a place known as Bermuda Hundred. Grant stated that Beauregard had succeeded in bottling up Butler "bottled up." By mid-May, 1864 it was clear that Butler would make no progress on the river. By June, significant portions of Butler's army had been sent to Grant at Cold Harbor east of Petersburg.

Butler selected Petersburg as a potential target, but with many of his troops stripped from the less ambitious mission of destroying the railroad between Petersburg and Richmond. At Bermuda Hundred, Butler intended to move swiftly and quietly across the Appomattox River on a pontoon bridge in a position to strike the rail line. But the Federals got lost enroute to the river, and were forced to march through a swamp. Blue clad soldiers also had to march through a freshly burned area. When they finally reached the bridge, they brushed off the soot with straw they found. To help them intended to muffle the sound of horses hoofs clapping against the wooden floor of the bridge. But because it was consumed for this unexpected purpose, the crossing was noisy, alerting Confederates to the Federal presence.

Former Virginia governor turned general, Henry Wise, was Beauregard's immediate superior. Wise spread his forces out in deteriorated earthworks that had been built two years earlier. They were not impressive and lightly defended, Butler's infantrymen had attacked defenses at Fort Mifflin and Charleston's awful Battery Wagner. The Federal foot-soldiers only moved to within 200 yards of the position and did not pose a serious threat.

Butler's cavalry, however, attacked with more vigor. They advanced against a fortified position at Battery 27 along the Jerusalem Plank Road. Battery 27 was held by about 150 militiamen, who were the available militia. Many of the members were either over 55 years of age or under 18 and carried old weapons – probably flintlocks. They had been in service just barely a year and were relaxed – many went home each night to sleep in their own beds.

A horseman alerted the old men and young boys of the Federal approach by yelling. The advancing foe was the 1<sup>st</sup> District of Columbia cavalry, well armed with 15-shot repeaters. They charged up the Jerusalem Plank Road toward the militia in a classic cavalry charge. The old men and young boys, with their antiquated weapons and only emptied one saddle, but the horse plunged, causing the militia to retreat.

Butler's cavalry commander, recently appointed Brig. Gen. August Kautz, arrived on the scene and ordered his horsemen to fight dismounted. Though the 150 old boys and young men held on for a while, they were no match for 1,300 veteran cavalrymen.

Although the militia at Battery 27 was through for the day, the battle was not over. The Federals failed their objective – the railroad. But the elderly and youthful Confederate soldiers had delayed the Federals long enough to allow other Confederates to get into position. Prisoners released from the hospital and Confederate cavalry positioned on a high hill known as Blanford overwhelmed the Federals. Kautz suspended their mission.

The price paid by the 150 senior citizens and boys in their delaying action was high. Sixty men were killed. Banister was hard of hearing and did not hear the order to retreat; he was shot in the head. A 70 year old Lawson Crowder went into action with two sons, John and William; none returned. Robertson's book on the battle lists 15 killed and mortally wounded, 18 wounded, and 40 captured out of no more than 150 men. The prisoners went to Point Lookout prison camp in Maryland.

held until November.

Talkov commented that since he had never been in the military, he felt that he can bet have been like for these civilians like himself to pick up arms than to try to imagine experienced. He also pondered the impact of these two hours worth of fighting by citizens have been if Kautz' cavalry had not been delayed for two hours at Battery 27 and had success between Petersburg and Richmond? Had these old men and young boys extended the war?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas Battlefield Tour  
With  
John Hennessy & Colonel Marc Thompson  
Saturday, September 15, 2007**

The Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table (RVCWRT), in conjunction with the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields, will offer an all day (9AM to 5PM) tour of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas Battlefield on Saturday, September 15, 2007. The tour will be co-lead by renowned National Park Historian John Hennessy, along with retired Air Force Colonel Marc Thompson and provide participants with the opportunity to visit several historically significant locations on this important Civil War battlefield. Locations include Manassas Junction, the Brawner Farm, Groveton Woods, Stuart Hill (Lee's Headquarters), Dogan and Chinn Ridges, as well as many locations on "Stonewall" Jackson's unfinished railroad bed. The tour will also include a special drill demonstration and presentation from the 5<sup>th</sup> New York "Duryee's Zouaves," focusing on the role of the "Zouaves" at 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas.

Cost of the tour will be \$60 per person for round table members and \$65 per person for non-members (after September 1, 2007). The price includes bus transportation, a box lunch, and a speaker to assist participants with interpretation of the battle. **All proceeds from this battle tour will go toward funding RVCWRT's 2008 College Scholarship Program**, making this an exceptional "first class" battlefield tour, while at the same time, providing valuable support to the next generation of American historians.

Bus seats for this tour are limited to 45 and are expected to go quickly, so all are highly encouraged to make reservations as soon as possible. To make reservations, e-mail [3dognight@bigplanet.com](mailto:3dognight@bigplanet.com) or call 399-1702 and leave a message on the answering machine. **Reservations will be taken on a first-come, first-serve basis, with a payment deadline of September 1, 2007.**

For more information on this event, please consult the RVCWRT web site at [www.rvcwrt.com](http://www.rvcwrt.com) or contact John Thompson at (703) 366-2939.

## **RT SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

The RVCWRT is pleased to announce the winner and the runner-up in our 2007 scholarship contest. Both winners each submitted outstanding essays which will be reprinted in our newsletter starting in October. They also underwent a comprehensive interview at Chatham by the Scholarship Committee.

The winner of the \$ 2500 scholarship is Katie Davis. She just graduated from Chancellor's College attending Christopher Newport University. Her essay topic was: "True Liberty and Fourteenth Amendment Redefined the Constitution."

The winner of the \$ 300 book stipend is Stacey Aylor. She just graduated from Massapoia High School and will be attending Mary Washington University. Her essay topic was: " Vicksburg: Division of t

Both Katie and Stacey and their parents will be our guests at the July 9th dinner meeting. They will give a brief 10 minute synopsis of their essay. Please plan to join us on July 9th to meet our outstanding young women, our scholarship winners.

### **TAPES OF SPEAKERS AVAILABLE!!!**

Thanks to Alan Zirkle, you can buy video tapes of past speakers from our meetings. If you want to call Alan at 540-373-6448 or e-mail him at [azirkle@earthlink.net](mailto:azirkle@earthlink.net).

### **HISTORY AT SUNSET—JULY PROGRAMS**

July 6, 7 p.m. *High Drama at a Bedraggled Place: A Walk in Widow Tapp's Field.* Eric Foner, author. Meet at the end of Hill-Ewell Drive, Wilderness Battlefield.

July 13, 7 p.m. *Stonewall's Supreme Moment: Voices from Jackson's Flank Attack.* S. G. Grant, author. Meet with historians. Meet at the Jackson Flank Attack tour stop, one mile west of Chancellorsville.

July 20, 7 p.m. *Forgotten Places on the Bloody Plain: Exploring a Lost Battlefield.* John Hennessy, author. Meet at Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center.

July 27, 7 p.m. *Caught in a Firestorm: May 3 and the Ordeal of the Chancellors.* Janice G. Smith, author. Meet on Hooker Drive, between Ely Ford's Road and River Road.

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 \$20 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 Bongiovi, Vice President and Treasurer; Bob Jones, Secretary; Barbara Stafford, Treasurer; Dan Augustine, Web Site & Newsletter Editor; John Graham, John Griffiths, Greg Mertz, Tom Quigley, Melanie Jordan, Marc Thibault, and Bob Pfile, Members of the Board of Directors

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