

DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock
Valley Civil War Round Table



Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

December 2007, Volume 4, Issue 12

Topic: Artillery at Fredericksburg
Speaker: Major Robert A. Creedon II, USMC (Retired)
When: Monday, December 10, 2007
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social 6:30, Dinner 7:00, Meeting 7:30

Program

Major Robert A. Creedon II, USMC (Retired), a former Commanding Officer of Field Artillery, will discuss artillery at Fredericksburg.

Comparing and contrasting such factors as; Organization, Chain of Command, and Tactics of both Armies, indicating in his opinion why the result was preordained prior to Pickett's Charge.

Did McClellan Try to Lose the Civil War? A review of the November program by Greg Mertz

In a word "yes" – McClellan tried to lose the Civil War according to Ed Bonekemper, our November speaker. He followed up by explaining how he came to write about George B. McClellan, gave examples of how the hapless Federal general developed his military leadership style and illustrated the decisions he made during the Civil War that were detrimental to the Federal cause.

Bonekemper's first book addressed how Robert E. Lee lost the Civil War. In assessing Lee, he found that those who had glorified Lee often elevated him by denigrating Ulysses S. Grant. That in turn led to his second book denouncing many of the criticisms of Grant as unfounded. He also discovered that Grant received little credit for his early war successes while excuses were made for McClellan's early war defeats. Bonekemper said that the line of reasoning followed that poor McClellan was at a disadvantage because he commanded an army early in the war and couldn't be expected to know what to do with such a large number of troops. The argument fails to appreciate that *before* McClellan fought his first battle of the spring 1862 Peninsula Campaign, Grant who also had to learn how to command an army had already received the surrender of some 14,000 Confederates at Fort Donelson in February, 1862. So a book assessing McClellan seemed to flow naturally in Bonekemper's succession of writings.

Bonekemper believes that Grant realized what had to be done to win the war, but he feels that McClellan's military style made him the "perfect patsy" for Lee. McClellan was a talented organizer, and Bonekemper stated that he would have been a great second in command, but when facing an opponent such as Lee, McClellan's methods were blueprints on how the Federals should fight if they wanted to lose the war.

McClellan graduated 2nd in the West Point class of 1846. Whereas Grant had an opportunity to serve in the Mexican War under the contrasting leadership styles of both “Rough and Ready” Zachary Taylor and “Fuss and Feathers” Winfield Scott, all of McClellan’s service in that war was under Scott. McClellan was unable to witness the advantages of the quick assessments made by Taylor, and only experienced the success of Scott’s very deliberate, by the book movements.

As a top cadet, McClellan was given some coveted assignments. He was sent to observe the weapons and tactics being utilized during the armies fighting the Crimean War. At Sebastopol he witnessed the failure of bloody attacks, and the success of the siege tactics. Bonekemper surmises that McClellan departed the Crimean War with a “siege warfare mentality” which he carried with him into the Civil War.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, McClellan became a Major General in command of Ohio volunteers that campaigned in western Virginia early in the war. Though his soldiers were successful, the victories were due to the efforts of McClellan’s subordinates, but Little Mac took credit for battles – even those battles where he was absent. McClellan was on the battlefield of Rich Mountain, but that fight was won despite his passive decisions. The successful maneuvers of the battle were made by William S. Rosecrans, while McClellan’s wing failed to provide any support. Yet after the disaster at Bull Run in July of 1861, the young war clamored for a successful general to take command and McClellan’s subordinates had enabled him to amass just the resume for the job. When Scott later resigned as general-in-chief, McClellan assumed that mantle as well.

As the commander of all armies, McClellan gave no substantial leadership to Burnside in North Carolina, Farragut operating against New Orleans, or Grant in Tennessee. While these three Federal officers were directing successful campaigns, McClellan was calling for more forces for his Army of the Potomac – he wanted a force of 300,000. He dreamed of amassing such a huge army that the Confederates could not possibly hope to resist and thus obtain a bloodless victories and a reunification of the nation.

When McClellan shifted the army from northern Virginia to the peninsula east of Richmond, he did not leave sufficient forces to defend the capitol and Lincoln withheld one of his corps (here in Fredericksburg) that was supposed to join him. When McClellan failed to take the Confederate capitol, he had a ready-made excuse -- Lincoln didn’t give him enough troops to do the job. As in the case of most of the battles in western Virginia, McClellan was never on any of the battlefields of the Seven Days, and spent the last two days on a gunboat looking for a place to retreat.

Lincoln appointed John Pope to command a new army in Virginia, and Pope advocated a type of warfare approaching the “total war” concept. When McClellan was ordered to assist Pope in the summer of 1862, it would have required him to participate in a type of warfare he was opposed to, and his response was to delay his march by two weeks and to tramp less than half the distance per day that his veterans were capable of marching. The subsequent defeat of Pope at Second Bull Run was due in part because 25,000 of McClellan’s troops that had been posted in Alexandria which never moved to Pope’s aid despite six orders for Little Mac to send them.

After this disaster, Bonekemper pointed out that Lincoln rose above his personal frustration with McClellan. Realizing that the troops were loyal to McClellan and that he was a supreme organizer, Lincoln returned him to command of the army. As the opposing forces maneuvered in Maryland, a copy of Lee’s Special Orders 191 outlining Confederate movements, fell into McClellan’s hands. McClellan declared that if he couldn’t defeat the Confederates with that advantage, he should be sent home. As Bonekemper succinctly stated “He didn’t and he was.” Bonekemper criticized McClellan’s delays in bringing Lee to battle. Our speaker calculated that the Federal forces had a numerical advantage of 4 to 1 on September 15, and 3 to 1 on September 16, but McClellan waited until September 17 to attack with an advantage that had dwindled to 2 to 1. The attacks at Antietam were piecemeal and when the Confederate army was near the breaking point in the mid-day phase at the Bloody Lane, McClellan withheld his 25,000 men in reserve. When the action came to a close, McClellan still had more men in his army who had not been engaged than Lee had in his entire fought-out army.

Bonekemper also pointed out what he considered to be McClellan’s finest hour. When the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was announced in the aftermath of Antietam and some soldiers who were opposed to a war that had added the ending of slavery as an aim of the Federal army, they called upon McClellan to

march on Washington and have the military take over the government. As much as McClellan despised Lincoln, he respected the propriety of the elected civilian representatives and leaders, and flatly rejected the proposal.

But most of McClellan's actions were detrimental to the Federal cause. McClellan sought to undermine the efforts of John Pope. He lacked the moral courage to use his army to achieve victory when presented with opportunities at Antietam. And he failed to appreciate the need for an all-out war that recognized the value of destroying private property and disrupting slavery. In the final analysis McClellan's military leadership was a "tragic failure."

"Crossroads of the Civil War"

Spotsylvania Historical Lecture Series

Jan 11: Col. Keith Gibson Jackson before the War

Feb 8: Ms. Nora Brooks Woman behind "Stonewall" Jackson

Mar 10: Mr. Jay Vogel Portraying General Longstreet

Time : 7:00pm FREE

Spotsylvania Middle School Auditorium 8801 Courthouse Road Spotsylvania, VA 22553

***For more information call:
540-507-7210***

Presented by Spotsylvania County Department of Economic Development

SCHOLARSHIP FUND CHALLENGE GRANT ANNOUNCED.

Roundtable members Dave and Elaine Rowley have generously offered the RT to match the first \$500 in donations to the 2008 scholarship fund. Two of our RT members have already come forward with donation checks toward this matching grant.

As a result of this wonderful action on the part of Dave and Elaine, the 2008 scholarship is now fully funded, and all additional donations will go toward the 2009 scholarship.

Brandy Station Foundation Holiday Party

The Brandy Station Foundation invites all members of the RVCWRT to their annual Holiday Party on Saturday, December 8th, from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Graffiti House at 19484 Brandy Road in Brandy Station. Come see the additional graffiti recently uncovered; and enjoy food and refreshments.

HOLIDAY MUSIC AT OLD SALEM CHURCH

The National Park Service cordially invites the public to attend the twenty-third annual holiday music program at Old Salem Church on Sunday evening, December 2, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. The church, built in 1844 to serve the growing population west of Fredericksburg, survived a Civil War battle in May 1863 that scarred its walls and woodwork with the marks of bullets and shells. The National Park Service restored the old building during the 1970's, but much of the battle damage remains visible.

The decorated and candle-lit church will come alive again with choral music in a program sponsored by the congregation from the new Salem Baptist Church. The choir's program will include music performed in the old church during the holidays for more than a century, before the congregation donated the historic building to the National Park Service.

Old Salem Church is located at the intersection of Rt. 3 and Rt. 639, just west of Fredericksburg. Parking will be at the adjacent new Salem Baptist Church, which is only accessible via the eastbound lanes of Rt. 3. The program is free of charge. For additional information, call 540-373-6122 or 540-786-2880.

Santa Claus is Coming to...Chatham December 15, 2007, 1 p.m – 4 p.m.

The National Park Service has announced that its annual holiday open house at historic Chatham will be on Saturday, December 15, 2007, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The event will feature living historian Kevin Rawlings, who will appear as Civil War-era Santa Claus, based on Thomas Nast's 1860s representation of the then-emerging Christmas icon. Children, especially, are invited to visit with Santa. The musical group "Evergreen Shade" will also perform period songs appropriate for the Christmas season.

Kevin Rawlings has received wide acclaim for his portrayal of Santa Clause, circa 1862. He has been praised for both his geniality and historical accuracy—he's widely considered to be the nation's foremost expert on Christmas during the Civil War. His attire will be noticeably different from what is worn by Santa Claus today. Greenery and candles will adorn Chatham in traditional form.

At 1 p.m., Rawlings will present a program for a target audience of adults and older children addressing the background and history of Santa Claus and how he has changed over the years. Then from 2-4 p.m. he will give more frequent, shorter programs for children of all ages, briefly explaining why the Civil War era suit of clothes he has chosen to wear on this day is different from what he normally wears today. Children will also be invited to visit one-on-one with Santa after each presentation.

To reach Chatham from downtown Fredericksburg, travel east on Business Route 3 or William Street, and take the Chatham Bridge across the Rappahannock River. At the first traffic light turn left from the left-most lane onto Route 218 or Chatham Heights Road. Travel one block and turn left at the brown sign for Chatham. For further information, please call one of the park visitor centers at 540-373-6122 or 540-786-2880. In case of inclement weather and potential cancellations please call the weather closing information line at 540-654-5532.

Living History, Special Tours, and Annual Ceremony to Mark the 145th Anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park will observe the 145th anniversary of the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg with a weekend of living history, special tours, and commemorative events December 8-9, 2007.

Throughout the weekend, living history Confederate soldiers will be available to talk to visitors and, at appointed times, be part of programs that will include firing demonstrations with muskets and cannon. Park historians will also present three special programs. On Saturday at 1:00 p.m., historians Frank O'Reilly and Kris White will take visitors in the footsteps of the Union attack and Confederate counterattack across the Slaughter Pen Farm. At 6:00, 6:15 and 6:30 p.m. the staff will conduct lantern lit tours along the Sunken Road sharing accounts from the night after the battle and how soldiers and civilians alike coped with the death and destruction in the aftermath of battle. On Sunday at noon, historian Frank O'Reilly will lead visitors through town and up to the Sunken Road, following the footsteps of the Union Irish Brigade.

Sunday at 2:00 p.m. the annual anniversary program at the Kirkland Memorial honors the troops of both sides. The keynote speaker will be park historian Mac Wyckoff. This will be Mac's last anniversary of the battle before he retires, and he will be reflecting upon his more than two decades of service at Fredericksburg.

Visitors are also encouraged to note the many other activities taking place in Fredericksburg that weekend including the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation candlelight tour of historic structures (contact (540) 371-4504 or office@hffi.org), and the reenactments of the battle (see <http://www.28thmasscob.org/fredericksburg.html>).

All park events are free and open to the public. See below for a schedule of National Park Service events. For additional information call 54-373-6122 or go to www.nps.gov/frsp.

145th Anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg
Schedule of Events
December 8-9, 2007

Saturday, December 8, 2007

9:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m.: "Minie Balls and Bayonets": Infantry Program and Firing Demonstration in the Sunken Road (30 minutes)

-Meet the men of the 2nd South Carolina Infantry and hear the story of their defense of the Sunken Road and stone wall during the Battle of Fredericksburg.

10:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m.: "Thunder on the Heights": Artillery Program and Firing Demonstration on Marye's Heights (30 minutes)

--Meet the men of the Washington Artillery of New Orleans and hear their story of the defense of Marye's Heights

11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.: "Witness to Battle": Historic Innis House open to the Public

-Hear the tale of a house caught between the Union and Confederate battle lines and see the bullet holes that still remain in the walls.

1:00 p.m. "In the Vortex: A Walk Through the Slaughter Pen" (2 hours)

-Join Park Historians Frank O'Reilly and Kris White as they recount the stories of Union and Confederate soldiers who clashed on the southern portion of the battlefield. Tour provides a unique opportunity to walk across the preserved battlefield called "the heart and soul" of the Fredericksburg Battlefield. Follow VA 2/US Bus. 17 south of Fredericksburg and look for Slaughter Pen Farm sign about ¾ mile south of Rt. 638/Lansdowne Road.

6:00, 6:15 and 6:30 p.m.: "The Devastation of Battle: A Lantern Tour of the Sunken Road" (2 hours)

- Hear of how the soldiers and civilians dealt and coped with the dead, wounded and destruction in the aftermath of the Battle of Fredericksburg. Historic Innis House will be open to the public as part of this tour.

Sunday, December 9, 2008

10:00 a.m.: "Minie Balls and Bayonets": Infantry Program and Firing Demonstration in the Sunken Road (30 minutes)

-Meet the men of the 2nd South Carolina Infantry and hear the story of their defense the Sunken Road and Stonewall during the Battle of Fredericksburg.

11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.: "Thunder on the Heights": Artillery Program and Firing Demonstration on Marye's Heights (30 minutes)

--Meet the men of the Washington Artillery of New Orleans and hear their story of the defense of Marye's Heights

11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.: "Witness to Battle": Historic Innis House open to the Public

-Hear the tale of a house caught between the Union and Confederate battle lines and see the bullet holes that still remain in the walls.

12:00 p.m.: "The Attack of the Irish Brigade" (2 hours)

-Join Park Historian Frank O'Reilly as he retraces the steps of the soldiers of the Irish Brigade as they fought through the streets of Fredericksburg and attacked Marye's Heights. Meet at City Dock off of Sophia Street in Downtown Fredericksburg. Program ends at the site of the 2:00 p.m. ceremony.

2:00 p.m.: 145th Anniversary Ceremony of the Battle of Fredericksburg at the Kirkland Memorial on the Sunken Road (30 minutes)

-the battle is commemorated with Park Historian Mac Wyckoff as the keynote speaker, the presentation of wreaths and the playing of Taps.

HANGING CAPTAIN GORDON by Ron Soodalter
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A Review by Joseph Truglio, President, Phil Kearny CWRT

All of us know that the first African natives were brought to these shores under duress, against their will, and packed like perishable cargo on ships. What many of us do not know is the process involved in this enterprise. Well, this information is now readily available to you in this book. This volume, although relatively short, is one of the most complete descriptions of the workings of the slave trade in nineteenth century America.

Mr. Soodalter begins with a background of Nathaniel Gordon, the subject of the book. We learn of his character; adventures; motivations; and ultimately, his ignominious fate.

The author delves into minute detail of how a slave journey is organized, financed, and carried out. One cannot fathom the amount of stealth and effort that is required to bring this 'business' to fruition. This reader was fascinated from first page to last. This is a well documented and annotated tale, and as a bonus, Mr. Soodalter provides a detailed account of the present day slave trade. Yes, it is still a thriving business. This is not only the story of the only slaver executed in American history, but also an indictment to the ineptitude, corruption, and collusion that occurred in America concerning this heinous practice. Those of you who believe the slave trade was only the business of the South will be astounded to learn of the involvement of the North, particularly that of New York City, its politicians, scions of the business community, and its immense shipping industry. In the nineteenth century New York City was considered the capitol of the slave trade. If you only read one book this year, you should consider this one. It will open your eyes to a most shameful practice that has gone undiscovered for too long. You will, as was I, be absolutely amazed at the machinations of this most disgraceful activity of nineteenth century America.....**4 BUGLES**

<p>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 Bongiovi, Vice President and Program Chair; Bob Jones, Secretary; Barbara Stafford, Treasurer; Dan Augustine, Web Site & Newsletter Editor; John Graham, John Griffiths, Greg Mertz, Tom Quigley, Marc Thompson, and Bob Pfile, Members of the Board of Directors</p>
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