

DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table



Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter March 2010, Volume 7, Issue 3

Speaker: Flint Whitlock

Topic: The Campaign in New Mexico

When: Monday, March 14, 2010

Location: Brock's Riverside Grill

Times: Social begins: 6:00 p.m., Dinner served: 6:45 p.m., Meeting begins: 7:30 p.m.

Abstract On Our March Dinner Program Speaker

By Jim Smithfield

Our Speaker for March is Flint Whitlock, who comes to us from Denver, Colorado. Flint is primarily a World War II historian and is a U.S. Army veteran, having spent five years on active duty including one year in Vietnam. He has had five books published on World War II, along with dozens of magazine articles, and he is the editor of "*WWII Quarterly*" a magazine published in Virginia. Living in Colorado, Flint heard many tales about Colorado's Civil War involvement and the battle of Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, and wanted to learn more about it. After ten years of research and writing about Colorado's Civil War role in that battle, he has uncovered a great deal of previously unknown and unpublished material. Flint has written a history on the war in the far West, entitled *Distant Bugles, Distant Drums*, published in 2006 by University Press of Colorado, and since its publication has received much praise.

The Humor of War: James M. Bailey of the 17th Connecticut by Laura Lawfer

A Review of our February Program by Greg Mertz

When Laura Lawfer was in graduate school, she approached her advisor looking for a project. He suggested that she transcribe the weekly letters written by a Connecticut soldier and published by his hometown newspaper during the war. Thus, Laura Lawfer "met" James Montgomery Bailey of the 17th Connecticut, and became enthralled with the manner in which he used humor to mask the horrors and boredom of war. She was also moved by his writings when humor could not help him cope with the death of his best friend in the Battle of Gettysburg.

Even the eulogy that Bailey's pastor presented at his funeral made reference to his humor in a post-war lecture with former soldiers and their families in the audience. During the war, infantrymen like Bailey, often chided cavalymen for not being in the thick of the fight by uttering the question... "Who ever saw a dead cavalryman?" In his speech Bailey was greeted with applause when he declared with apparent indignation, "I have seen a dead cavalryman." One

can only imagine the laughter that broke out when he shared “It was a long time after the war, but he was certainly dead.”

Bailey was 21 years old when the war began, and had only lived in Danbury, Connecticut for two years before he left the town to become a soldier. He had worked there as a newspaperman, where he got to know the people of the town and they got to know him.

Since Bailey wrote under a pseudonym, it was one of Laura’s tasks to figure out who he was. While it was obvious to which company he belonged, the letter writer indicated that a friend called him “Mont” which did not match up with any first names of men in the regiment, but James M. Bailey was a candidate. It was not until an 1865 letter in which Bailey was writing about the family of a man named Yeliab M. Semaj that Laura figured out that it was James M. Bailey spelled backwards.

Bailey’s letter writing apparently cost him a rank. In December of 1863, he was offered promotion to corporal but something that was published in the newspaper supposedly shocked his superiors and the promotion was withdrawn.

The 17th Connecticut was a part of the Union XI corps, which collapsed under the assault of “Stonewall” Jackson’s flank attack at Chancellorsville. The numbers of Confederates coming down on Bailey was so massive, that he wrote that they had been “reinforced by judgment day.” Bailey complained about the Germans as the “flying Dutch.” As Bailey was caught up in the retreat, he heard someone yell “rally, boys, rally!” Bailey concluded that the demand was not directed at him and kept going.

The regiment and the corps then moved up to Gettysburg, where they were once again swept from the field. While Bailey was retrieving water for use by men in a hospital, he was captured and sent to Belle Isle prison in Richmond. Bailey and a comrade fainted being sick and were released, soon rejoining their regiment.

Bailey’s first letter to the newspaper after his release was the only letter of the war in which Bailey did not resort to humor. Upon reuniting with some of his companions, he learned that his best friend had been mortally wounded at Gettysburg. Bailey poured out his soul, comparing how his feelings of despair while in prison paled with the realization of what had become of so many of the men who had served with him as a result of Gettysburg. He also wrote a eulogy of his best friend, Dick Taylor, and his last substantial interaction with him on the eve of the battle.

In his next letter, he not only resumed telling about the Battle of Gettysburg, but resumed allowing his humor to dominate. Bailey recalled with detail how he was startled by a woman in great despair and agony. As he approached her, Bailey asked, “What evil has befallen you?” “My poor, poor horse,” the woman bemoaned, “the rebels have stolen him.”

In 1864, Bailey wrote of his “candidate” for the presidency. Though he never mentioned whom he supported by name, it was obvious that he favored Lincoln. He noted that some had claimed that “his candidate” would ruin the country, but concluded that the “country has been ruined every four years since the age of Washington.”

After making her concluding remarks about Bailey using his humor as a shield and a means that enabled him to cope with experiences that were perhaps too painful to face, Laura ended with one more story of Bailey’s humor. The anecdote occurred on the march to Chancellorsville. After miles and miles of dredging along, a halt was called and the men fell out and began to prepare a refreshing cup of coffee. Bailey described each step in his preparations and his anticipation of the brew. This included how the coffee had come to a boil, how it had cooled off, how he had brought the cup to his lips, when at that very moment his regiment was called to fall in and resume their march.

After continuing the march, the men once again halted for a break, and Bailey once more went through the routine of preparing his coffee. Not to be deprived of a cup of coffee on this break, Bailey decided to forego the step of allowing the coffee to cool. Even though he felt he had to drink down the scalding, hissing coffee, he nonetheless expressed his satisfaction in being

able to finish the cup this time. Hearing a fellow soldier proclaim "Bully for us," Bailey inquired the reason for his comrade's joy. The soldier replied that they would be staying at that location for the night, and the realization set in that there had been no need to rush this time.

Remember: Contact Bob Jones to Order Your Dinner in Advance and Save a Buck!
Note: Brocks meal cost have gone up. Our cost is now \$25.00 for scheduled Dinners.
Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail 3dognight@bigplanet.com

19th Annual Civil War Weekend

Final prompt: The 'Civil War' weekend sponsored by Virginia Tech is being held March 12 through 14, 2010, at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. Registration fee is \$250.00 (\$180.00 for Saturday only), and includes the opening reception, meals, and necessary conference materials. A block of rooms are reserved at the Hotel Roanoke (1-866-594-4722) at \$96.00/single occupancy and \$116.00/double occupancy. Speakers include Bud Robertson, Jack Davis, Emory Thomas, Daniel Hurd and Bill Springer. More information and the agenda topics is available at www.alumni.vt.edu/cww.

Did You Know...

By Jim Smithfield

...that, the American Civil War was the last major conflict in which each regiment had it's own band and used music to inspire it's troops in combat...

...that, Robert Anderson taught P.T.G. Beauregard artillery at West Point, only to have the artillery of his former student turned on him in the bombardment of Fort Sumter...

...that, George Wythe Randolph, a grandson of Thomas Jefferson, born at Monticello, was a cabinet member under Jefferson Davis...

...that, Private John Gilleland of the elite Mitchell Thunderbolts had the idea to build a double barreled cannon, attaching a loose chain between the cannon balls to mow down the enemy. Legend has it that in it's one and only test firing, the two cannon balls, connected by a long chain, whizzed about in an erratic circle killing three of the Thunderbolt artillerymen...

Getting To Know Your RVCWRT Board Members

By Jim Smithfield

Frank Kasmer: Vice President

Born April 21, 1940, in Washington, D.C., Frank grew up in D.C. and attended Georgetown University from 1958 to 1960. He then attended the University of Maryland as a General Science major for two years. After the Univ. of MD, he attended Law School at The University of Baltimore receiving his JD Law Degree in 1968. In 1982, Frank received his Basic Criminal Investigator's Certificate from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Glynco, GA. Over the years Frank worked for various private Law Firms until 1972, when he began his career with The Office of the Inspector General. Throughout his career, he investigated and prosecuted assignments for a number of Federal Agencies until his retirement in 2000.

During his years of Government service, Frank taught several Continuing Education classes at FLETC in Glynco, GA. In addition, over the years he attended many courses at the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA. One of Frank's favorite cases involved the 'contractor' responsible for producing a telescope for NASA. The contractor would not allow NASA Engineers to inspect the mirror assembly of the telescope prior to it being sent into space. When the mirror assembly did NOT respond properly for NASA, a second space mission was necessary

to correct the problem. Frank's team forced the contractor to pay the entire cost of the second NASA space mission.

Frank has five children and until his retirement in 2000, he had little time to affect an interest in our Nation's Civil War. He states that all he ever really learned about the Civil War was that it had been fought to end slavery in America. He notes that history in preparatory schools and even higher education did not actually teach him much real history about the Civil War. Since 2000, Frank has come to realize that the current teaching in school is hardly any better.

Frank's message to the membership is that "There is so much information available in today's world, that learning about the Civil War is a door that must be maintained and kept open for America's future generations!" His feeling is that there is so much that he was unaware of and that a lot of things about the Civil War are only now making more sense to him. He also stated that he hopes he has enough time and mind left in his life to digest it and to understand it all.

Civil War Media Review

By Joe Truglio, President, Phil Kearny CWRT

BENEATH THE STARRY FLAG by Alan A. Siegal (NF) This book is about the state of New Jersey in the American Civil War. The author uses accounts from participants and newspaper reports in this short book which covers the four years of the Civil War. What I found most interesting was the recollections of the political climate of the Garden State, in particular, activities in Hudson and Bergen counties. There is also a chapter on the Lincoln Funeral Train as it passes through New Jersey. This is a different type of book than most Civil War books. It is, in fact, a respite from the usual battle volumes. It is a worthy effort and a treat to learn what was on the minds of the common folk and how they reacted during this most difficult time!

RVCWRT Ball Caps

By Conway Richardson

Reminder to members: There are still a few RVCWRT ball caps available. Remaining ball caps continue to be on sale at our monthly dinner meetings until sold. Cost remains only \$15.00 per ball cap. To reserve your ball cap, please contact Conway Richardson @ (540) 548-2112

Civil War Media Review

By Jim Smithfield

RANGER MOSBY: by Virgil Carrington Jones (NF); This book has been around since forever, and I bought a copy of the reprint, as it is the first time in paperback. The author lived on the edge of the Manassas battlefield, in Centreville, VA. He has written several additional books, which I'd like to acquire, as I enjoy his direct approach. His treatment of Mosby's guerrillas does not glorify Mosby, nor the exploits of his band of followers and it comes across more straight from the shoulder. It is remarkable though to read how Mosby captured and spanked a Union general in his own bed upon capturing him there. Then, he took him away a prisoner of war. It is still attention-grabbing to read how Mosby handled Marc's hero, George Custer and his retaliation for Custer's hanging of Mosby's men, his prisoner's. This is a book that I believe I first read over thirty-five or more years ago. It was well worth reading again and who knows if I'm around in another thirty-five years I may just read it all over again! It's only \$14.95 at any battlefield store...

Reminder on The Virginia Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission

Signature Conferences will be held annually through 2015. Plan to attend the next Conference in the Series.

2010 Signature Conference, September 24, 2010

Race, Slavery and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History and Memory

I Take My Pen In Hand – A Family’s Civil War Legacy

By Jim Smithfield

‘Hat’s’ letter this month is again written to his sister, Eliza, and as always, in reading his letters, spelling, capitalization and punctuation continue to be disconcerting. This month’s letter is interesting in that, ‘Hat’ closes his letter with a warning notation to his sister...“Don’t let any body see this!” In this letter, ‘Hat’ does relate to his sister, Eliza, the fact that troop movements concerning the upcoming attack on Port Hudson are occurring. It may have been that ‘Hat’ and the 6th Michigan had been ordered to keep the planned troop movements confidential? Having glanced through the remaining letters, I saw no other such notation?

*Camp Paripet La
March the 6 1863*

Dear Sister

I now take my pen to inform you how I am geting along I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same I received your kind and welcome leter yestorday it was of the 3rd we have orders for to be ready for to march at an hours notice we have got a hundred rounds of cartridges (each) to cary you may expect to hear some war news from here before a great while all the troops are leaving here and are going up to Batonrouge a hole brigade went up last night they are agoing to atack Port hudson in a few days since I commenced this the Colonel says we and one other Regiment is agoing to stay and hold the Paripet while the rest goes up and take Port hudson but if we do go you direct your leter the same as you have it is raining to day and I am going on guard at three Oclock Nathan Clark that lived to Chester Center is dead he died the 22 of march Miles hant very well to day all the men thare is here is 9 months men their time will be up in about 2 months I supose (they) will fall in love with some of them out thare is that boy that lives to Orrins going to stay till he is twenty one thare is about 50 thousand I had a leter from Toot I have wrote two letters to you since I got one from you I have got to (go) on guard now so I will not write any more now so good bye

Wm H Hat Bosworth

Don't let any body see this

Who we are?

The Drum and Bugle Newsletter is published monthly by the **Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Yearly dues are \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the ongoing preservation of Civil War sites.

The RVCWRT Executive Committee:

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Lecture

Sunday, March 21, 2010, at 2 p.m.

The Pavilion at Gari Melcher's Home and Studio at Belmont
224 Washington Street, Falmouth

Defying Convention: Women, Race, and Class in the Civil War South

Dr. Victoria Bynum

Professor of History at Texas State University, San Marcos

From her first book, *Unruly Women*, to her most recent publication, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War South*, Dr. Bynum has continued to stimulate the public with her close look at Southern dissenters: women who did not behave like "ladies"; whites who crossed the color line socially and sexually; African Americans who did not follow the Jim Crow rules; and those families that opposed secession and the Confederacy.

Dr. Bynum's lecture will focus on these Southern dissenters living in the American South – a subject of great interest to Moncure Conway himself and directly related to many individuals living in Falmouth and Stafford during the Antebellum period and throughout the Civil War. A reception will follow the lecture.

**Sponsored by the Moncure Conway Foundation and the National Park Service.
Free and open to the general public.**

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Post Office Box 7632
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404