

DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table



Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter December 2010, Volume 7, Issue 12

Speaker: Gail Stephens

Topic: Lew Wallace: Shiloh

When: Monday, December 13, 2010

Where: 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 December Dinner Program Speaker

By Jim Smithfield

Our speaker for the December Dinner Program will be Gail Stephens, whose new book; *The Shadow of Shiloh; Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War* was just published in October. Gail Stephens has been busy since then with signings and talks..

Gail has a Bachelor's Degree in International Politics from George Washington, and she's done graduate work at both Johns Hopkins and Harvard Universities. She worked for the Department of Defense for 26 years, retiring in 1994 as a member of the Department's Senior Executive Service. Upon her retirement, she began studying the American Civil War. Gail is a volunteer at Monocacy National Battlefield near Frederick, Maryland, she lectures on the Civil War and teaches courses at area colleges and provides battlefield tours. In 2002, she won the National Park Service's E.W. Peterkin award for her contributions to the public's understanding of Civil War history. Her book is about Major General Lew Wallace's Civil War service, *Shadow of Shiloh; Major General Lew Wallace*.

"Stonewall" Slept Here: Jackson in the Rappahannock Valley"

Presented by Frank O'Reilly

A Review of our November Program by Greg Mertz

As Frank O'Reilly's title implies "'Stonewall' Slept Here: Jackson in the Rappahannock Valley" covered various sites where Jackson was present. O'Reilly decided to share with us many of the modern images of the Confederate general depicted in some of his prominent scenes during the Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville Campaigns, from November 1862 to May 1863.

The crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains was the scene of a transformation. As Jackson's command passed from the Shenandoah Valley to the eastern side of the mountain range, the general declared that they were no longer his Army of the Valley. They were now the Second Corps of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Jackson marked the occasion with another change: he set aside his old uniform for an impressive new uniform given to him by cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart. The

re-designated force and the freshly donned commander were about to embark upon some of their greatest exploits.

The new grand campaign got off to an inauspicious start. Jackson witnessed what he considered to be excessive “straggling” in the rear of Jubal A. Early’s troops and he asked his division commander to explain. The reason for the “straggling” was because the men found several ‘Stills’ in the mountains and partook of the libations. Early was apparently under the influence of the potions himself when he responded to “Stonewall.” Early wrote to Jackson that he “...saw so many stragglers in rear of my division today, probably because he rode in the rear of my division.” According to O’Reilly Jackson was not amused, and the only thing that saved Early’s military career was that Jackson’s mood was permanently changed by the arrival of word that his daughter had been born and his wife was well.

When Jackson arrived in Fredericksburg, he met with Lee at his headquarters, and the army commander embraced his lieutenant. The location is marked just off of the Mine Road, but the actual site of the meeting was in a ravine a short distance behind the marker.

Jackson and his staff spent many of their days prior to the Battle of Fredericksburg in tents near Guinea Station on the Fairfield plantation of Thomas C. Chandler. O’Reilly described Mrs. Chandler as a “polished belle” who wanted her prominent guest inside of her home, rather than in her yard. When “Stonewall” continually declined Mrs. Chandler’s offers of hospitality, she tried to “outgeneral” him by sending out a large, sumptuous meal with a message that if he didn’t want it he should give it to someone who could appreciate it.

When Federal movements led to Jackson moving closer to Fredericksburg, he joined the army’s highest ranking generals on Lee’s Hill. Here he again wore the new uniform from Stuart, and was greeted by applause and laughter. Jackson then went to the anchor of his portion of the battlefield, Prospect Hill. O’Reilly pointed out that Jackson was the headliner of every battle that he was ever engaged in – except one – Fredericksburg, where he was ironically upstaged by another “stone wall” this one was along the base of Marye’s Heights. When Jackson observed 6,000 Federal soldiers begin a movement that he thought might be an effort to turn his flank, he left Prospect Hill to ride south toward the Massaponax Creek. When the main attack not only struck Prospect Hill but broke part of A.P. Hill’s command, O’Reilly reported that the fate of Jackson’s corps hinged upon the man in Jackson’s doghouse – Jubal Early. When Hill called upon Early for assistance, ‘Old Jube’ hesitated. O’Reilly noted that the sin of omission would be to do nothing and not help Hill, and the sin of commission would be to go to Hill’s aid even though he had not been ordered by Jackson to do so. He was in a no-win situation. Whatever he did would be wrong in the eyes of Jackson. Early reinforced Hill, saved Jackson’s line and did not experience Jackson’s wrath for doing so. Thus, Early emerged from the campaign as a man destined for greater responsibility.

Jackson visited many area churches in conjunction with the religious revival of that winter. A marker near the Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church proclaims that Jackson planned the battle on that corner on November 27 1862, but O’Reilly pointed out that Jackson didn’t even reach the area and meet with Lee until December 1 1862. Because attendance was low at services held in Grace Episcopal Church in Caroline County, Jackson personally attended the service, achieving the desired results – the church was soon full.

One of the most remarkable Jackson sites in the area is Moss Neck, the home of Richard Corbin, Not only is it among the grandest plantation manor homes in the area, but as O’Reilly noted, it was the scene of the best and worst of Jackson’s wartime experiences. Among the outstanding Jackson moments was an ostentatious 1862, Christmas Dinner, at which Stuart was the life of the party, as well as the moments the new, absentee father spent with his surrogate daughter Jane Corbin. The unhappiest moment was when little Jane contracted a disease and died – Jackson was inconsolable.

Lifting Jackson’s spirits, however, was a visit by his wife Mary Anna and their new daughter Julia at the Yerby House. While there, Jackson posed for a photograph, but a cold breeze blowing at the moment the image was taken caused Jackson to frown. Anna didn’t care for the image because to her, it didn’t look like her husband, but ironically it was a favorite of Jackson’s soldiers who said that it looked like their general. The visit was interrupted by the Chancellorsville Campaign.

Circumstance carried Jackson to Zoan Church, where he met with Lee to discuss the conduct of the first day’s battle, and to the site of the cracker-box conference where the two generals

discussed their plans for the second day of the battle. The Jackson Trail is the route "Stonewall" and his men followed as they maneuvered around the vulnerable Federal right flank. After launching one of the most successful attacks of the war, Jackson rode down the Mountain Road on a reconnaissance to determine the Federal troop positions in preparation for a planned night attack. Upon his return to his own lines, he was accidentally fired upon by his own men. Jackson was taken to a field hospital near the Wilderness Run where his left arm was amputated. His limb was buried in the nearby Ellwood family cemetery.

The route to the Richmond hospitals, Jackson's intended recovery location, led through Guinea Station, and Jackson once more found himself at the Chandler plantation. Once again, Jackson would not stay in the main house, but in the little office building nearby. O'Reilly feels that the busybody Mrs. Chandler often found a reason to enter into the office, including bringing over the clock that again ticks in Jackson's sickroom today. Mrs. Jackson and Julia were able to visit for the general's last days. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson died in the Chandler office on May 10, 1863, among his family and staff.

O'Reilly concluded, noting that Fredericksburg influenced Jackson, and Jackson influenced Fredericksburg. Some of the various Jackson sites are well preserved; some are gone and nearly forgotten. Some are privately owned and therefore seldom seen and many are marked and heavily visited. Whatever the status or popularity, these sites and local scenes have shaped our understanding of Jackson and his role in Civil War.

Celebrate a Nineteenth Century Christmas at *Ellwood* **By Alan Zirkle**

Saturday, December 18:

Celebrate a 19th Century Christmas at *Ellwood* on Saturday, December 18th: Many things have changed since the Lacy family sold Chatham and moved to "Dear Old *Ellwood*" after the Civil War. Christmas customs and the way the holiday was celebrated, from the home décor, to the types of toys and games that children wished for, to Good Old St. Nick himself, all have changed. Come out to *Ellwood* Manor on Saturday, December 18th. See Santa as he might have appeared to the Lacy children and their grandchildren in the late 1800's.

Costumed in his finest Victorian regalia, Santa, portrayed by Friends of Wilderness Battlefield Board of Directors member Dale Brown, will be at *Ellwood* from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on the 18th to talk with children, sit for photographs (bring your camera), and answer questions about how Christmas customs have changed since the Victorian era. There will be period activities for the children as they await their turn to visit with Santa.

From 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. visitors can enjoy historic interpretations of *Ellwood* at Christmas from 1861 to 1896. *Ellwood* will be decorated with traditional Victorian Christmas finery, courtesy of the Fawn Lake Garden Club. Friends of Wilderness Battlefield volunteers will be present to greet all visitors and to serve refreshments throughout the day!

Ellwood is on Virginia Route 20, about 0.6 miles from the intersection with Virginia Route 3.

Are you using *amazon.com* for your Holiday shopping? **By Jim Smithfield**

If you plan to use *amazon.com* this holiday season for any gifts, please remember that at the same time you can also be supporting a good cause without having spent an extra dime! So, keep in mind, that the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table (RVCWRT) has an ongoing agreement with *amazon.com*. Whenever you enter the *amazon.com* site through our RVCWRT web site, *amazon.com* then gives the RVCWRT a commission on your purchase! This is done at no cost to you. You see, *amazon* is donating some of their profits. The RVCWRT uses this money for Civil War battlefield preservation. Simply go to <http://www.rvcwrt.org/bookstore.html>, then select "Click Here to go to Amazon". Please note too, this is a year-round deal; so please consider to always use this link to get to *amazon.com*. *Thank you and please have a great Holiday!*

Civil War Media Reviews
By Joe Trugio - President, Phil Kearny CWRT

SICKLES AT GETTYSBURG by James Hessler

It has been fifty odd years since we've had a biography of Dan Sickles, not counting the monograph titled "I followed the Course" by Jeanne Knoop in 1998. With the amount of Civil War books published today, that is a long time. Well, it was worth the wait. Mr. Hessler has given us a thorough account of the life of one of the most controversial characters of the War. Right from the start we are presented with all the sordid details of this incredible life. The opening chapters relate to the beginnings of his persona. Mr. Hessler does not shy from showing the beginnings of his many affairs with women of ill repute.

We are then given inklings into his less-than-honest dealings in the Law and Politics. Emphasis is placed on his troubles with money and his disreputable actions as Secretary to the Ambassador to the Court of St. James, for President James Buchanan.

The author follows the course of Sickle's murder of Philip Barton Key, the son of Francis Scott Key, and the subsequent trial. Next on tap we journey through his military career, if one wishes to call it a career, including his near disastrous actions at Gettysburg and his villainous turn at the attempt to discredit his commander for his own short comings

Finally, we follow his descent in life amid more immoral and financial shenanigans to his ultimate death. All along this journey we are presented with verifiable facts. Mr. Hessler presents fact as fact and supposition as such, never veering from that point. Each statement is footnoted and corroborated. I could go on and on about the story but that would spoil your pleasure in reading this book. I much prefer to discuss the style and let you be the judge of substance, as the author wishes.

This is one of the best biographies to come down the road in some time. It is well written and well annotated. It is well researched and its greatest asset is-that it is not opinionated. I think the author has feelings for 'Ol Dan' but he never allows them to interfere with the story. He allows you, the reader, to come to your own conclusions. He uses numerous foot-notes to document his point, a tactic sorely lost in today's Civil War writings. The presentation is precise and easy to read. What Mr. Hessler achieves is in placing his own personality, of fairness and fullness of ease, on paper. This allows us to understand Sickles and makes this a most pleasurable experience.

Normally, I read several books simultaneously, jumping from one to the other. Not here. I read this one straight through, without distraction, savoring every moment. My copy is now yellowed with highlighting. There is much to learn here. In fact, I came away with a sense of renewed passion for Civil War History. It matters not what your opinion of Dan Sickles is, but that you follow the journey of his life in a fair and balanced treatment. More authors should take this approach. Potential authors should I read this book, just to learn how to present controversy. What is important here is not just your opinion but that it is an educated opinion. This book did not change my mind about Dan Sickles. It did, however, fulfill my quest for knowledge and it did so in a most entertaining manner.

Theater of the American South
By Jim Smithfield

This information came through Bob Jones from Gary Cole, Managing Director of the Theater of the American South. "We are a festival of Southern plays, food and culture located in Wilson, NC (about two hours south of Richmond off of I-95)." In recognition of the sesquicentennial of the start of the Civil War, plays in 2011 will be featuring the Civil War, In May of 2011, we offer two professionally produced plays, a speaker series, Southern cooking, and other cultural events over several weekends (May 12 to 29).

A summary of our day trip packages can be provided through our website, i.e., should your Round Table be interested in bringing a group. Overnight packages can be arranged as well. Also attached is a listing of all of our other 2011 events. We would appreciate it, if you could let your RVCWRT membership know about our 2011 festival. Additional information is available on our website, www.theateroftheamericansouth.org. *Thank you for considering the Theater of the American South...*

RVCWRT Ball Caps

By Conway Richardson

Reminder: There remain a few RVCWRT ball caps for sale. Cost is still only \$15.00 each. To reserve a ball cap, call Conway Richardson @ (540) 548-2112

Remember: Contact Bob Jones to Order Your Dinner in Advance and Save a Buck!

Note: Brocks meal cost has gone up! The cost is now \$25.00 for scheduled Dinners.

Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail 3dognight@bigplanet.com NLT 4 days prior to meeting date

Did You Know...

By Jim Smithfield

...that, retired Major Wilmer McLean could have said that the Civil War "...started in my front yard and ended in my parlor!" McLean retired in 1854, to his estate *Yorkshire* along Bull Run Creek and close to Manassas Junction. On July 18, 1861, Confederate and Union troops had gathered on or about *Yorkshire* to do battle. As General P.G.T. Beauregard left his Headquarters that morning and approached *Yorkshire*, a Union shell dropped down the chimney of McLean's house. It fell into the kitchen fireplace, exploding into a full kettle of stew...

...that, Beauregard stayed at *Yorkshire* for three days after the battle. McLean's house became a hospital, complete with a yellow hospital flag. McLean, who'd had enough of war, took his family and moved South to the out of the way little village of Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia. He was hoping to avoid the war there. However, the war caught up with McLean on Sunday, April 9, 1865. About noon of that day McLean was walking along a street in the village, when he was approached by a young Confederate officer. The officer was Lee's aide, Colonel Charles Marshall, wearing a worn and dirty gray Confederate uniform. Marshall asked, could McLean find a place where Generals Lee and Grant might meet that day. Poor McLean tried to interest Marshall in an empty brick building in the village. However, Marshall, declined the building with it's unfurnished interior, asking "Isn't there some other place?" McLean took him to his own home and the rest, as they say, is history...

...that, by 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 9, 1865, the McLean family was besieged by Union offers to buy souvenirs. Only General Sheridan openly paid for anything, buying the table on which the surrender was signed. This he gave to, Libby, the wife of General Custer! In less than an hour, the home was fairly stripped of it's furnishings by Union officers. Taking whatever they wished at will, although McLean protested loudly that he did not want to sell away his home. Several officers did press cash into McLean's hands after other officers asked to buy the chairs used in the meeting and when refused, they took them anyway...

Civil War Media Reviews

By Joe Truglio, President, Phil Kearny CWRT

LINCOLN REVISITED edited by John Y. Simon, Dawn Vogel, and Harold Holzer. (NF) This is a series of 18 essays written by an equal number of historians covering many of the aspects of Lincoln's career. This is the type of book that you can read at your leisure, one essay at a time. Each is excellent in its own right. For me it was the perfect volume: read an essay, reflect on it, seek out more information on the subject and then go on to the next in no particular order. I did just that and I found it fulfilling. So will you, i.e., if Lincoln is your cup of tea!

Who are we?

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.

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