



Founded at Fort Harrison
on February 8, 1951

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RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

JANUARY 2025

"The Civil War was the biggest thing that ever happened to us. It was our Iliad and our Odyssey – and it remains our least understood war."
Bruce Catton

**JANUARY 14, 2025
7:30 p.m.**

**VIA ZOOM and at
First Presbyterian Church
4602 Cary Street Road
Richmond, VA 23226**
(The parking lot is behind the church; go up the
steps to fellowship hall on the left)

MEGAN KATE NELSON

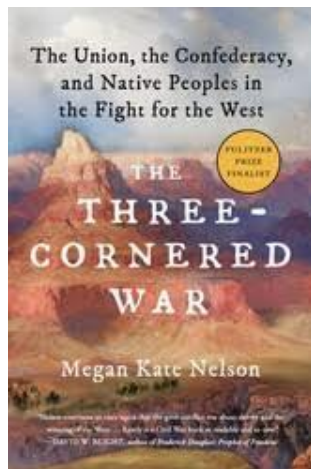
**"THE THREE-CORNERED WAR:
THE UNION, THE CONFEDERACY,
AND NATIVE PEOPLES IN THE FIGHT
FOR THE WEST"**



We will be heading west of the Mississippi in January for our first round table meeting of 2025.

Writer and historian Megan Kate Nelson will join us via Zoom to entertain and enlighten us with tales from her Pulitzer Prize nominated book, *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West*. The book explores connections among westward expansion, the Civil War, and the Indian Wars, while using a series of battles as a backdrop to tell how “nine charismatic individuals fought for self-determination and control of the region.”

The individuals Nelson will highlight include: the famous frontiersman Kit Carson, who led a regiment of Union volunteers against Comanches, Kiowas, Navajos, and Texans; Bill Davidson, a Confederate soldier who fought in the major battles in New Mexico; Louisa Canby, a Union army wife who nursed Confederate soldiers in Santa Fe; Mangas Coloradas, a Chiricahua Apache chief who helped expand his people’s territory in New Mexico; and Alonzo Ickis, a gold miner from Iowa who fought for the Union.



In a *Civil War Monitor* review of her book, historian Benjamin Park wrote that Nelson “is a lucid writer with an eye for plot, character development, and suspense. Her

accounts of the battlefield are as moving as her descriptions of domestic life during the war are vivid... Written in an accessible way, I hope it forces historians and general

readers alike to rethink the place of the ‘West’ during the Civil War and beyond.”

In addition to being nominated for a Pulitzer, *The Three-Cornered War* won the Emerging Civil War Book Award and the Fort Worth, Texas Civil War Roundtable’s Pate Award in 2021, and was honored by both *Smithsonian Magazine* and the *Civil War Monitor* as one of their top history and Civil War history books of 2020.

Nelson will be speaking to us from California, where she is the 2024-2025 Rogers Distinguished Fellow in 19th Century American History at the Huntington Library in San Marino. Before becoming a full-time writer in 2014, she taught U.S. History and American Studies at Texas Tech, Cal State Fullerton, Harvard, and Brown. She holds a BA in History and Literature from Harvard and a PhD in American Studies from the University of Iowa. She also is the author of *Saving Yellowstone: Exploration and Preservation in Reconstruction America* and articles on the Civil War, the U.S. West, and popular culture in *Smithsonian Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Slate*.

You can learn more about Nelson by visiting her website:

www.megankatenelson.com.

The Three-Cornered War can be purchased on Amazon in hardcover, paperback, and Kindle formats, and for free on Audiobook with a membership.

ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS

Please Note:

ZOOM INFORMATION IS NOT COMPLETE YET BUT WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE BEFORE THE MEETING.

LOOK FOR A SEPARATE EMAIL DURING THE WEEK OF JANUARY 6.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

**“Don’t be afraid to try something new.
It might be the best thing you ever do.”**

– Unknown

October 12, 2021, I attended my first Richmond CWRT meeting as the guest of Donald Currin. We met the previous Saturday at Beaverdam Heritage Day. Donald was firing a cannon when I walked up and announced that John Pelham was my favorite artillerist. With my interest in the Civil War, he invited my girlfriend and me to come to the next week’s RCWRT meeting. Scott Mingus gave a lively talk on the Battle of Second Winchester and I was hooked. I have not missed a meeting since that first evening.

The February 2022 RCWRT newsletter included an appeal for someone to take on the position of 2nd Vice President. I don’t know where I got the nerve but I offered to help out. I had worked for the City of Richmond for 30 years so I followed the directive it is easier to apologize than to ask permission. My first act as 2nd VP was to get rid of the old name tags with those tricky pin hooks. Handing out the new simpler clip name tags was my introduction to the membership. Luckily everyone approved the upgrade.

The real work began when it was decided each officer would keep their office for an additional year. I was a bit overwhelmed at the thought of setting up the 2024 speaker schedule. But once I enlisted Jeffry Wert, the author of my favorite JEB

Stuart book, “Cavalryman of the Lost Cause,” I was off to the races. I got wonderful speaker suggestions from then President Ulli Baumann, among others. I discovered pretty quickly that all I had to do was mention it was an opportunity to speak to the “Richmond Roundtable” and authors said an immediate “Yes!”

It was my honor as 1st VP to make accommodations for each of my speakers. Just to have the opportunity to sit and talk with them over dinner helped build lasting friendships. It was a wonderful experience and accomplishment of which I am truly proud.

So, back to the opening quote. Try something new. Step up and get involved. I’m certainly no scholar and I am not a polished speaker but what I can bring is enthusiasm. Coming to the first RCWRT meeting three years ago and accepting the challenge to help out was one of the best things I have ever done for myself. I highly recommend the experience.

Billie

**A WARM WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBERS:**

**DOUGLAS RAMSEY
FRANCIS TELEGADAS**

ANNUAL DUES NOTICE

Dues are now due and should be paid to the Secretary by February 15, 2025. The annual dues structure was voted on in December and remains the same at \$35 for single membership and \$45 for couples.

You may pay your dues in person to Andy at the meeting or send a check – made out to Richmond CWRT – to Andy Keller,

9701 Fireside Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23060. As an added convenience you may also pay your dues via Venmo this year. **Leroy-Keller-3** is the User Name.

Please note: Since the January and February meetings are via Zoom and if you won't be attending in person, you may pay your dues at the March meeting without penalty.

ANNUAL ELECTIONS

At the December 2024 meeting our annual elections were held and the results for 2025 are as follows:

President: Billie Raines
 First Vice President: Dale Harter
 Second Vice President: Ulli Baumann
 Treasurer: Art Wingo
 Secretary: Andy Keller

Board of Directors:

Waite Rawls
 Doug Crenshaw
 Jack Mountcastle
 Danny Witt

A NON-COMBATANT DEATH AT GAINES'S MILL

By Robert E.L. Krick

Ask a Civil War enthusiast to discuss non-combatant deaths related to the war's great battles and they'll almost certainly begin by invoking the name of the Widow Henry, famously killed atop the hill that bears her name at First Manassas. From there they might move on to Jenny Wade at Gettysburg, and for most of us that would exhaust our knowledge, at least for specific names. But we do have one local example, and probably two, though they never receive mention.

Inadequate documentation prevents certainty in the story of a man caught between the lines and killed at Gaines's Mill on June 27, 1862. If true, the victim likely was named Boze, also spelled Bowles, Booze, and Boaz, all

standard Hanover County surnames in the 19th century. Until better evidence surfaces, if it ever does, this tale must be considered tentative.

There is no question about the other case. Three days after Gaines's Mill, as the Federal army moved south toward the James River, two divisions halted to defend the primary crossing at White Oak Swamp in southeastern Henrico County, several miles north of Frayser's Farm. Israel Richardson's division of the 2nd Corps crowned the heights west of the road. East of that road, William F. "Baldy" Smith deployed his 6th Corps division. The two divisions represented the northeastern most edge of a crescent-shaped perimeter intended to keep Confederate pursuers at a manageable distance from the Frayser's Farm/Glendale/Riddle's Shop crossroads.

In the morning hours of the 30th, before any action bloomed, a house some 800 yards south of the swamp and just 200 yards east of the road caught Baldy Smith's eye. Four days of continuous operations had left his portly frame in need of a bath. The building he chose for a headquarters and spa belonged to a gray-haired merchant named James H. Britton. One Union soldier described the place as an "old and rather respectable farm-house," its overall appearance enhanced by a piazza that fronted an attractive lawn. Another passing soldier remembered it as "an old fashioned wooden house."

Two years earlier Mr. Britton had been living in Richmond on Franklin Street between 19th and 20th. In his younger years he had operated a stall at the First Market on Main Street before expanding into a more substantial dry goods business with a partner, their store being on Franklin only two blocks west of Britton's house. The census taker in 1860 recorded Mr. Britton's age as 46; his wife Selina was only 22; and they were the parents of a one-year old daughter.

By 1862 Britton had retired from the city to his country home on the heights above White Oak Swamp. The Brittons were there when the first elements of the retreating Union army arrived. Their household already had increased by two more children since 1860. Many years

later, Baldy Smith remembered James Britton as an "old man," and Selina Britton as his "young and good looking wife." Mr. Britton escorted Selina and the babies to a neighbor's house in an effort (as she later wrote), "to avoid being frightened to death" by the soldiers. Mr. Britton harbored fears of a different sort. He anticipated the worst for his unattended property, and with ample cause, so he hastened back to protect his home and belongings from the U.S. Army. That turned out to be a fatal decision.

While General Smith loafed in the Britton family bathtub in a small outbuilding near the main residence, less than a mile away Stonewall Jackson amassed 20 to 30 Confederate cannon, his maneuvers unobserved by two entire divisions of inattentive Yankees. Smith had just emerged dripping at around noon when Jackson opened up from across the swamp with an unexpected barrage. Smith managed to don his uniform and get to his horse, but he reportedly left behind his watch, his sword, and other personal items. At some point during that sequence Mr. Britton imprudently went outdoors into his shell-swept yard, perhaps aiming for a kitchen that stood nearby. An incoming Confederate round got him. Sources vary on the exact nature of his injury but General Smith, who should have known, wrote that Britton "had the fleshy part of his leg carried away so as to have the bone exposed."

Selina Britton never knew the exact facts, but the neighbors told her that most of the kitchen building had been destroyed and that "the greater part of his body burnt up" with it. One Union general suggested that Britton's death was a case of "sacrificing his life for his poultry," while a New York officer thought that Britton being hit by a Confederate shell was "a sort of equitable proceeding," because he suspected Britton had informed the Southern cannons of the Union position, which he surely had not done.

Both widowed and homeless, Selina Britton moved with her three children back into the city, where she lived at her father's house. She petitioned the Confederate congress for compensation in 1863, enumerating exactly 100

items lost in the conflagration, a list that ran the gamut from the mundane (parlor spittoons) to the poignant ("Little Girl's Hat, trimmed"). She estimated her loss at \$2,771, and beseeched the legislators "to take cognizance of her forlorn and distressed condition." The lawmakers tabled the matter and – to the best of my knowledge – nothing ever came of it. Mrs. Britton was living in the city as late as 1873. The ashes of her husband, if buried at all, probably still occupy the hilltop south of White Oak Swamp. A gloomy story for certain, but one worth knowing and remembering.

**Our sincere thanks to Bobby Krick
for his contribution**

ADOPT-A-MONUMENT

As you may be aware, the Richmond CWRT has adopted the 2nd Connecticut Heavy Artillery monument at Cold Harbor as part of Richmond National Battlefield Park's Adopt-A-Monument program.



Members of the Round Table have been taking care of the monument on a monthly basis. The duties include: Looking over the wayside and monument for damage; Picking up litter;

Pulling weeds; Cleaning up wayside with water and a rag; Reporting back to the park on conditions and anything that needs attention. Several members have already volunteered. They are: Bill Parkhurst, Danny Witt, Doug Crenshaw, George Walker, Dale Harter. If you are interested in participating, please contact me at ullib1101@gmail.com and let me know which month you would like to take. I will be coordinating the schedule and I will keep Bert informed. Thank you!

EVENTS OF INTEREST

February 1, 2025: Twenty-sixth Annual Appomattox Court House National Historical Park and Longwood University Free Civil War Seminar – ***Act 5: The Final Curtain***. This seminar is in the Jarman Auditorium at Longwood University in Farmville, VA.

Doors open at 8:30 a.m. and speakers include: Hampton Newsome (Richmond Must Fall: The Richmond-Petersburg Campaign October 1864); Mike Gorman (Richmond Again Taken: The Frontiers of Digital Imagery); Patrick O'Donnell (The Unvanquished: Jesse Scouts in the Appomattox Campaign); Joshua Lindamood (Last Stand of the Savannah Volunteer Guards at Sailor's Creek); and Bert Dunkerly (To the Bitter End: The Surrenders After Appomattox).

No reservations necessary. For directions to the campus go to www.longwood.edu. For more information contact Dr. David Coles at 434-395-2220, or Patrick Schroeder at 434-352-8987 ext. 232, or Patrick_schroeder@nps.gov.

February 21 and 22, 2025: 20th Annual Symposium of the American Civil War Museum, 500 Tredegar Street, Richmond, ***On the Battlefield***.

This Symposium will feature esteemed scholars discussing the course of the Civil War as part of the ACWM initiative "The Civil War & Remaking America." Speakers include Dr. Andrew Bledsoe, Dr. Anthony J. Cade, II, Dr. Shauna Devine, and Dr. Wayne Hsieh. The moderator is Dr. Caroline Janney.

Tickets include a reception with the speakers and a special program 'Tools of Battle' discussing artifacts in the ACWM collection, entry to the 2025 Symposium, and a boxed lunch. Check-in and registration at The Foundry from 8:45 am to 9:30 am.

For more information go to www.acwm.org.

March 8, 2025: Symposium in celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Petersburg Battlefields Foundation, ***Why Did War Come To Petersburg?***

The Symposium is from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at Petersburg's Historic Union Station and will feature five presentations covering topics of Revolutionary War Petersburg; Petersburg as a center of supply, industry, and transportation; the defense of Petersburg during the Civil War; and unique relics from the collections of the Petersburg National Battlefield and local historians. Check www.petebattlefields.org for more information.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

February 11:* Keven Walker, "Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation"

March 11: Steven Longenecker, "Pulpits of the Lost Cause: The Faith and Politics of Former Confederate Chaplains During Reconstruction"

April 8: Phil Stone, "Lincoln's Virginia Family"

May 13: Joe Stahl and Matt Borders, "Faces of Union Soldiers at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Culp's Hill"

June 10: Clayton Butler, "True Blue: White Unionists in the Deep South During the Civil War and Reconstruction"

July 8: Barton Myers, "Lincoln's Commanders from the Old Dominion"

August 12: Peter Luebke, "Death Loves a Shining Mark: St. Joseph Tucker Randolph's Civil War"

September 9: Dr. Lesley Gordon, "Cowardice and Combat in the Civil War"

October 14: Mike Gorman, "What's New in Civil War Richmond History"

November 11 (annual dinner meeting): Jonathan White, "Shipwrecked: A True Civil War Story of Mutinies, Jailbreaks, Blockade-Running, and the Slave Trade"

December 9: Dr. Elizabeth Varon, topic to be determined

***February meeting via Zoom**

Attendance at December meeting: 86