



Founded at Fort Harrison
on February 8, 1951

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RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

MAY 2026

“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

MAY 12, 2026

7:30 p.m.

**Virginia War Memorial
621 S. Belvidere Street
Richmond, VA 23220**

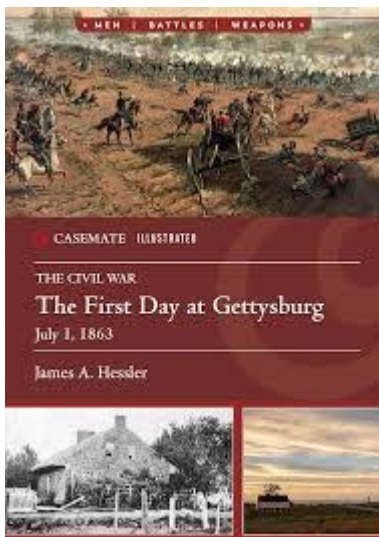
JAMES HESSLER

**“Lee’s Other Lieutenants:
Richard Ewell and A.P. Hill
On July 1 at Gettysburg”**



Confederate generals James Longstreet and Jeb Stuart received much scrutiny from historians when examining Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the Gettysburg campaign. Yet, Lee's two most recently promoted corps commanders, Richard Ewell and Ambrose Powell Hill, both played pivotal roles in opening the Battle of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863.

Join Gettysburg Licensed Battlefield Guide and author James Hessler as we discuss some pivotal decisions made by Ewell, Hill, and their subordinates on



Gettysburg's first day. Did Hill's men disobey Lee's orders to avoid a "general engagement?" Was Ewell timid and indecisive in failing to assault Cemetery Hill? We will discuss these and other topics from Hessler's recent book,

The First Day at Gettysburg (Casemate, 2025). James Hessler is a historian, author, and Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg National Military Park, where he has been interpreting the battle since 2003. He is the author or co-author of four books on the Gettysburg campaign: *Sickles at Gettysburg* (2009), *Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg* (2015, with Wayne Motts), *Gettysburg's Peach Orchard* (2019, with Britt Isenberg), and his most recent release, *The First Day at Gettysburg* (2025). His work has earned several distinguished book awards. He has also published articles in outlets such as *Gettysburg Magazine*.

Beyond his publications, Hessler co-created and hosts the popular *Battle of Gettysburg Podcast*, reaching a global audience of history enthusiasts. He has

appeared as a public historian in major media such as the History Channel, NPR, Travel Channel, PCN-TV, and in programs and content development with the American Battlefield Trust.

Hessler is a frequent speaker at Civil War Round Tables and other historical organizations nationwide. His willingness to tackle controversial subjects continues to spark discussion and deepen understanding of Gettysburg's enduring story. Besides Gettysburg, Hessler has led battlefield tours at numerous sites across the country. He currently serves in a board or advisory capacity for Gettysburg History (Adams County Historical Society), Gettysburg Museum of History, and the Little Bighorn Associates.

From the parking garage, take the elevator to the main lobby where a security guard will direct you to VMI Alumni Hall of Honor.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

In March I attended the Virginia Forum, which was held this year at Shenandoah University, in Winchester. If you enjoy all aspects of Virginia history, including the Civil War, you might want to attend next year's conference (date and place to be announced). In addition to the lecture sessions, the event included table displays hosted by local and state history organizations, including the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. You can learn more about the forum at their website, www.virginia-forum.org.

At the SVBF table, I met Jack Owens, their Land Preservation Projects Manager. I learned that Jack is a Frederick County-Winchester native who fell in love with the Civil War as a youngster, like many of us. He got involved with the SVBF in 2012 as a volunteer at Star Fort, one of the remaining forts that Confederate and Union forces used to defend Winchester.

He became a part-time museum associate at the Shenandoah Valley Civil War Museum in 2017, a resource management associate in 2019, a park ranger in 2022, and moved into his current position in 2024.

At the SVBF, and according to their website, Jack's work "focuses on preserving, protecting, and interpreting some of the Valley's most significant historic landscapes." But during our conversation, I learned about a more non-traditional way in which he promotes Civil War history through a podcast called "Battlefields & Bourbon." Although I didn't know about it at the time, I have quickly become a fan.

Jack co-hosts the podcast with fellow bourbon lover and archaeologist Elijah Filbert. Since their inaugural episode in July 2023, they have produced 48 biweekly podcasts. Each podcast, which averages about one hour, begins with a tasting of bourbon, many of which are produced in Virginia. They frequently are joined by Aaron Siever, owner of Aaron's Civil War Travels. Other guests have included: Jonathan Noyales, history professor at Shenandoah University; Graham Osborne, president of the Brice's Crossroads Foundation; Will Eichler, filmmaker and creator of Civil War Digital Digest; the late Civil War historian and preservationist Nick Picerno; and various distillery owners.

I've listened to five episodes so far, featuring the following battles: Second Winchester; Brandy Station; Aldie, Upperville, and Middleburg; First Kernstown; and Harrisonburg, Cross Keys, and Port Republic. And, I've learned about five bourbons: Eagle Rare 10 Year, Blanton's Single Barrel, Old Volstead's, Catoctin Creek Ragnarok Rye, and Isaac Bowman Port Barrel. They usually spend the first seven to ten minutes tasting and talking about the bourbon and introducing any guests. The rest of time is all Civil

War, so you don't have to enjoy bourbon to enjoy the podcast.

Although the episodes I've listened to all deal with Virginia battles, they have covered a wide range of topics since July 2023, including: the 19th Indiana Infantry at Gettysburg; metal detecting, archaeology, and how they help us interpret the war; Fort Henry and Fort Donelson; Pea Ridge; death in the war; Kilpatrick's Raid; Canadians at war; and Phil Sheridan (their most recent episode). Jack and Elijah are both extremely knowledgeable about the war, as are their guests. If you want to take a road trip, you can see them broadcast live on Friday evening, May 8, as part of a "Winchester Civil War Weekend." (www.visitwinchesterva.com/event/winchester-civil-war-weekend)

To listen to and learn more about Battlefields & Bourbon, check out their show on your preferred podcast app (I use Apple Podcasts), their YouTube channel, or their Facebook page. I think they will be around for a long time, unless they run out of bourbons to taste or Civil War topics to cover. My bet is they run out of bourbon before they run out of the Civil War.

Dale

CIVIL WAR QUOTES WHO SAID IT?

1. "How I wish I could say the battle [of Seven Pines] ended all battles and that the last shot that will ever be heard was fired on June first, 1862."
2. "I have been up to the [Confederate] Congress and they do not seem to be able to do anything except to eat peanuts and chew tobacco, while my army is starving."
3. "While a battle is raging one can see his enemy mowed down by the thousand, or the ten thousand, with great composure; but after the battle these scenes are distressing, and one is naturally disposed to do as much to

alleviate the suffering of an enemy as a friend.”

4. “The striking fact is thus established that we had more men killed and wounded in the first six months of Grant’s campaign than Lee had at any one period of it in his whole army. The hammering business had been hard on the hammer.”
5. “At half-past four, the heavy booming of a cannon. I sprang out of bed. And on my knees – prostate – I prayed as I never prayed before.”

Answers on Page 6

EVENT OF INTEREST

May 16, 6:00 p.m.: History at Sunset: “STEAM comes to City Point.” The supply depot at City Point was the driving force behind the 9 ½ month Petersburg Campaign. It served as a center of technology and innovation as well. Explore City Point through a S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) lens.

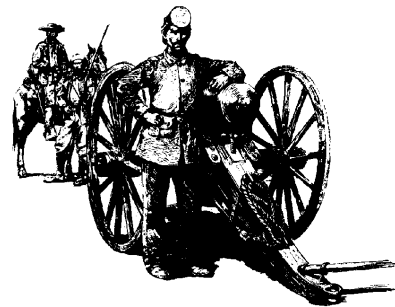
Meet at the entrance gate to Grant’s Headquarters, 1001 Pecan Avenue, Hopewell. This program is free and is presented as part of a partnership between Petersburg National Battlefield and Petersburg Battlefields Foundation. Questions: Call 804-732-3531.

WAR TIME NEWS **MAY 28, 1864**

Virginia and the Four Years of War

The curtain of the stage of war in the New World has once more been raised before us, the audience, and the bloody drama of this ill-fated war has begun again with new, gory scenes. Virginia once more plays the starring role in this chilling drama. The beautiful fields of this state are once again devastated and overrun by an insolent enemy; its traditional manners and customs, even its most sacred institutions, are trampled underfoot by the enemy’s

brutality, which borders on barbarism, and helpless old men, women, and children are once again exposed to the venality of a vengeful enemy. Nevertheless, the people of Virginia are calm and composed, and they remain bravely defiant of the enemy’s great superiority, and they are ready to continue the struggle, alongside the brave citizens of our sister states; the prize for winning this struggle will be our freedom and our long-standing self-governance.



As they did in the first years of this war, once more do the heroic sons of Virginia

cover themselves with undying glory. As on the battlefields of those earlier years, once more they are throwing themselves, cool and resolute, brave and death-defying, into the face of the foe, and Grant’s hordes have been forced to halt their bloody march against Richmond while they wait for reinforcements to fill the gaps in their ranks, caused by the sons of Virginia, and all of the South. Death has already reaped a bloody harvest amongst our enemies as the fourth act of this drama of war begins, but he has also swept up many a brave and good man from our ranks.

But with such heroism, with such self-sacrifice, can there still be any doubt as to the final outcome of this unfortunate war? We say no! For if such a nation wishes to be free and united, and if it is so full of patriotism and enthusiasm, and if the nation sacrifices everything to those goals, such a nation cannot be subjugated and will, in the end, achieve the goals toward which it has striven for many years, decades even.

If, on the other hand, we look at the opponents of our freedom fighting sons, we see mostly rascals who fight without patriotism, who fight only for money, who try to avoid danger, and who fear death at every moment. The difference in the moral courage of these two hostile armies is so great and so obvious that our army remains a match for the stronger enemy, and we therefore need not to worry about the final, happy conclusion of this struggle. Even should our forces experience some individual reversals, we shall fortunately overcome them, just as we have already overcome so many reversals thus far. But, if at the end of this year, the enemy finds himself denied in his great efforts to subjugate the South, he will, out of necessity, reach out his hand to us in peace. Then shall a grateful South bear witness to our state, and to her brave sons, that we have done the most – and suffered the most – in this struggle for liberation.

From *The Richmond Advertiser*
Thank you, Bert Dunkerly

WHO FOUGHT?

Many of the soldiers in both the Union and the Confederate armies came from ethnic groups. Soldiers often formed into regiments made up wholly or largely of troops from the same ethnic background.

Germans: About a million Germans lived in the United States when the Civil War broke out, about half of them having arrived since the German Revolution of 1848. These immigrants made their homes mostly in the large urban



Carl Schurz

areas of Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and St. Louis (although significant numbers also settled in southern Texas). By 1860, the country had twenty-eight German-language newspapers in fifteen cities. Because of the areas they occupied, Germans were widely represented in the Union military forces and much less in the Confederate forces.

Several all-German regiments served in the Union forces, many in the XI Corps, and there were also a number of German artillery units. Germans who fought for the Union included generals Franz Sigel, August von Kautz, Godfrey Weitzel, and Carl Schurz, whose career as a professor at the University of Bonn was dashed by his role in the German Revolution. Among the most famous Germans to fight for the South were Capt. Justus Scheibert and Maj. Johann August Heinrich Heros von Borcke, both of whom served as Confederate staff officers.



Heros von Borcke

Irish: In 1846, the Irish Potato Famine caused a mass exodus of people from Ireland and, by 1860, more than 1.5 million Irish immigrants lived in America, as well as many people of Irish descent. Large numbers of Irish fought on both sides during the war, more than 150,000 of them for the North, which fielded a number of Irish regiments and an entire Irish brigade. An uncertain number of Irishmen fought for the South, which was home to fewer Irish immigrants, and, as a result, colorful all-Irish units are a phenomenon associated with the



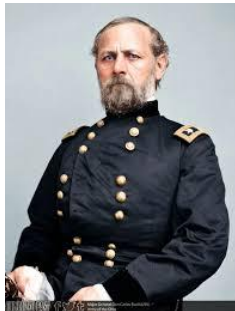
Thomas Francis Meagher

Union armies. A famous Irishman to fight for the North was Thomas Francis Meagher, and for the South Patrick Cleburne.



Patrick Cleburne

Hispanics: About ten thousand Americans of Spanish descent fought on both sides of the Civil War. In the Southwest, many Tejanos, Hispanic natives of Texas, fought in most of the ninety-or-so actions fought in Texas. It is uncertain if there were any non-Tejano all-Hispanic regiments, but there probably were not. A number of individual Hispanic soldiers became prominent during the war, among them Union generals Don Carlos Buell and Edward Ferrero.



Don Carlos Buell

Italians: Italians were one of the smaller European minorities in America at the time of the Civil War (although millions immigrated to the United States in the decades following the war). Nonetheless, Italians – many of them followers of Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi – fought on both sides during the war, especially for the North.

Many of these former republican revolutionaries identified with the Union cause, and some of them joined the 39th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. It was known as the Garibaldi Guard for its large number of Italian soldiers and was distinguished by red shirts similar to the ones they had worn when fighting tyranny in Italy.

From *Life in Civil War America*
Michael O. Varhola

Answers to “Civil War Quotes”

1. Maj.Gen. George E. Pickett, in a letter to his future wife Sally
2. Gen. Robert E. Lee, to his son Custis
3. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs, Vol. I*
4. Maj.Gen. Joshua L. Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies*
5. Diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut, April 12, 1861

UPCOMING MEETINGS

June 9: Cory Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: The Allure and Endurance of the “Lee Intended” Arguments*

July 14: Frank O’Reilly, *Retreat from Victory: The Battle of Malvern Hill and the End of the Seven Days, July 1, 1862*

August 11: Dr. Charles Fennell, *The Restoration of Culp’s Hill: The Sad State of Historical Preservation at Gettysburg National Military Park*

September 8: Melissa Winn, *Grant’s Conscience: The Unique Camaraderie Between Ulysses S. Grant and his Chief of Staff John Rawlins*

October 13: Troy Harman, *How Did Technology Shape North and South in the Lead-up to War as well as Shape Wartime Strategies*

November 10: (Annual Dinner Meeting) Dr. William C. “Jack” Davis, *Jefferson Davis and R.E. Lee, A Model Relationship?*

December 8: Hampton Newsome, *Gettysburg’s Southern Front: Opportunity and Failure at Richmond*

Attendance at April Meeting: 52

