



Founded at Fort Harrison
on February 8, 1951

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RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

SEPTEMBER 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

SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

7:30 p.m.

**St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
6000 Grove Avenue
Richmond, VA 23226**

**(From the parking lot, enter the church
through the double glass doors and follow
signs to the Large Fellowship Hall)**

DR. LESLEY GORDON

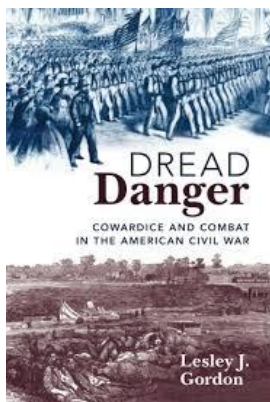
**"COWARDICE AND COMBAT
IN THE CIVIL WAR"**



In battle, Civil War soldiers were expected to overcome the dread of oncoming danger with feats of valor. The 11th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment (the Fire Zouaves) and the 2nd Texas Infantry Regiment went to war with high expectations that they would perform bravely; both had experienced commanders at their helm and enthusiastic community support. How could they possibly fail?

Yet falter they did, facing humiliating charges of cowardice that cast a lingering shadow on them, despite their best efforts at redemption. In time, however, these charges mostly vanished, replaced with the jingoistic rhetoric of martial heroism – a legacy that led many, including historians, to insist that all Civil War soldiers were heroes.

At our September meeting, Dr. Lesley J. Gordon, the Charles G. Summersell Chair of Southern History at the University of Alabama, will discuss her new book, *Dread Danger: Cowardice and Combat in the American Civil War*, and the ways in which the experiences of these two regiments help us gain a fuller understanding of the Civil War soldier experience. *Dread Danger*, published earlier this year by Cambridge University Press, was a finalist for the 2025



Gilder-Lehrman Lincoln Prize at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Gordon earned her bachelor's degree just down the road at the College of William and Mary, then went on to receive her master's degree and doctorate in American History from the University of Georgia. She is also the author of *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend*

(University of North Carolina Press, 1998) and *A Broken Regiment: The 16th Connecticut's Civil War* (Louisiana State University Press, 2014). Additionally, she has co-edited four volumes of essays and authored multiple book chapters and articles.

From 2010 to 2015, Gordon was the editor of the academic journal *Civil War History* (2010-2015). A past president of the Society of Civil War History, 2022-2024, she presently chairs the Editorial Board for the University of Alabama Press.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Doug Crenshaw's first presidential term was probably one of the most unique in Richmond Civil War Round Table history. He summed up his most memorable experience as president with one word – "Covid." The year was 2020 and the board had to quickly come up with a plan of action. Meeting in person was not possible, so ZOOM became the best option. He remembers that 1st V.P., Ulli Baumann, and the board were instrumental in creating a smooth transition to the new format for members and speakers. With so much still up in the air in 2021, the entire slate of officers volunteered to serve in their same office for a second year.

Doug's interest in the Civil War started as a six-year-old when his Uncle Mike took him to explore Cold Harbor Battlefield. Every Christmas that same uncle gave him a Civil War book. Uncle Mike continued that tradition for the next ten years until his untimely death. Doug's dad also encouraged his son's interest with a trip to Gettysburg when he was ten years old. Fifty years ago, his father gifted him an 1854 Austrian musket complete with a bayonet in pristine condition. It

continues as Doug's most prized Civil War possession.

His family has several family connections to the war. He had three great-great-uncles that served in the 4th Virginia Cavalry. I had family in the 4th VA Cavalry, so I pulled out my Regimental Histories Book and found Doug's family members:

Sydnor, George Bowdman: (Co. G), while scouting for Gen. Hampton June 1864 captured twelve Federals and four horses; paroled 4/9/1865 Appomattox C.H.

Sydnor, John Lincoln: (Co. G), wounded right leg 10/15/1862; retired 11/18/1864 disability, assigned to Invalid Corps 11/18/1864.

Sydnor, Thomas White: (Co. G), appointed Quartermaster Sgt. 9/21/1861; elected 2nd Lt. 4/25/1862; promoted 1st Lt. 10/11/1863; wounded right thigh 8/13/1864; wounded left hand August 1864; paroled 4/17/1865 Richmond.

During the war his family had three houses on the Beaverdam Creek Battlefield. A 13-year-old boy in the Sydnor family wrote a story about the Yankees being on their property. Later, General Longstreet passed by their home by way of the road to Gaines's Mill.

Doug had several favorite speakers during his term as President: "Chris Mackowski did an outstanding presentation on Stonewall Jackson. One of the best presentations I've ever seen. Frank O'Reilly is another favorite who gave a great talk on Malvern Hill."

But when it came to the most impressive historian he has ever met, it was an easy answer: Bobby Krick! He explained, "I've met a lot of world class historians over the years, including Gary Gallagher, but Bobby Krick is just the best. He is generous to a fault, always helping others with their research, he has no ego whatsoever and he knows so much and has done so much for battlefield preservation. I think a lot of him as a

historian and as a person. I would give an honorable mention to Dick Sommers. A fine historian and a real gentleman."

Doug finds the Civil War personalities of Lee and Grant the most interesting. "In 1862, Lee took over the command of the army and had a semi-rough start but he completely turned the war around. Grant was smart and stubborn. Both men were just what their country needed."

Doug's book recommendations include: "Extraordinary Circumstances – The Seven Days Battles" by Brian K. Burton, and anything by Bruce Catton. He just has a great writing style."

But the book Doug is reading currently is his new favorite: "The Battle of Gaines's Mill, Vol. 1" by Robert E.L. Krick. Doug reviews the book stating "the research is outstanding, there is a huge amount of primary sources, his prose is excellent and the maps are not complicated, easy to understand." Doug is not surprised that the book is available only through a donation to the American Battlefield Trust. "Bobby has been a big preservationist for a long time."

Doug is very optimistic about the future of the RCWRT. "I like working with the people currently serving on the board and we have good people coming up. We have good attendance and sound finances."

Thank you so much Doug for talking with me and it was cool to find that we both had family serving in the 4th Virginia Cavalry.

Billie

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBERS:

BOB SHERMAN
BILL YOUNG

**FIELD TRIP TO BRANDY
STATION/CEDAR MOUNTAIN
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18**

On Saturday, October 18, we will be taking a field trip to three Civil War sites in Culpeper County. Our guide will be Greg Mertz, who is the Vice President of the Brandy Station Foundation after 40 years working as a historian and interpreter with the National Park Service.

We will begin by visiting key sites on two battlefields where the Federal army launched unexpected attacks on two of the Confederate's most celebrated generals – J.E.B. Stuart and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. Both generals turned the tide and each were victorious in their respective battles.



We will first visit the landmarks of St. James Church and Fleetwood Hill, where

Stuart met not just one, but two surprise attacks during the June 9, 1863 Battle of Brandy Station. This opening engagement of the Gettysburg Campaign was also the largest cavalry battle ever fought during the Civil War.

After lunch, we will take a walking tour of the August 9, 1862 Battle of Cedar Mountain. Often considered the first battle of the Second Manassas Campaign, it is also Jackson's last battle as an independent commander. We will examine some advice offered to Jackson by General Robert E. Lee, and to what degree Cedar Mountain may have been a critical test to demonstrate whether Jackson was capable of higher command.

The day will conclude with a tour of the Graffiti House. The historic structure in the town of Brandy Station contains signatures, drawings and messages

scrawled by soldiers from both armies throughout the war.

The rough itinerary will be:

8:00 a.m.: Depart Lowe's parking lot, 8001 Brook Road, 23227 (at Staples Mill Road)
10:00 a.m.: Arrive at the Graffiti House and pick up our guide, Greg Mertz
10:05 – 10:40 a.m.: St. James Church, Brandy Station Battlefield
10:45 – 11:20 a.m.: Fleetwood Hill, Brandy Station Battlefield
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Lunch (Chipotle, Chick-fil-a, or Panera)
12:45 – 2:00 p.m.: Walking tour of Cedar Mountain Battlefield
2:15 – 3:30 p.m.: Graffiti House
3:45 p.m.: Return to Richmond with estimated arrival time of 6:00 p.m.

The cost for the tour is \$35 per person and you may register now by giving your check, made out to Richmond CWRT, to Art Wingo at the meeting, or mailing it to him at 1414 Patriot Circle, Glen Allen, VA 23059.

***FAMOUS CIVIL WAR QUOTES
WHO SAID IT?***

1. "The strong and salutary characteristics of both Lee and Grant should live in history as an inspiration to coming generations. Posterity will find nobler and more wholesome incentives in their high attributes as men than in their brilliant careers as warriors."
2. "The time for compromise has now passed, and the South is determined to maintain her position, and make all who oppose her smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel."
3. "I never knew what to do with a paper except to put it in a side pocket or pass it to a clerk who understood it better than I did."
4. "I thought [Lee] at that moment the grandest specimen of manhood I ever beheld. He looked as though he

ought to have been, and was, the monarch of the world.”

5. “The legitimate object of war is a more perfect peace.”

Answers on page 6

**RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD
ANNOUNCES ITS FALL PROGRAMS**

Saturday, September 6, 11:00 a.m.: Cold Harbor, “Surviving the Conflict.” Join a ranger for a talk exploring the challenges of resource scarcity during the Civil War.

Saturday, September 20, 11:00 a.m.: Rural Plains, “Bearing the People’s Love.” Join a ranger for a talk about how the US Sanitary Commission cared for the multitudes of wounded soldiers during the 1864 Overland Campaign.

Saturday, October 18, 11:00 a.m.: Drewry’s Bluff, “Beyond The River’s Edge.” Join a ranger for a one-hour, one-mile guided tour of Drewry’s Bluff, site of a May, 1862 battle and a Confederate campsite and training ground.

Saturday, October 25, 10:00 a.m.: Rural Plains, “Rural Plains Through the Ages.” Join a ranger for an overview of 300 years of history at Rural Plains.

Saturday, November 1, 10:00 a.m.: Fort Harrison, “The 5th USCT Votes at Fort Harrison.” This walking tour will highlight the first documented Black soldier voting in the US Army.

Saturday, November 15, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.: Fort Harrison, “The Last Winter of the War.” This special event will explore camp life at Fort Harrison with special programs on soldier morale, Colored Troops, civilian perspectives, children’s activities, and more.

More information may be found at:
www.nps.gov/rich.

**ANNUAL DINNER MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025
6:00 P.M.
WILLOW OAKS COUNTRY CLUB
6228 FOREST HILL AVE.
RICHMOND**

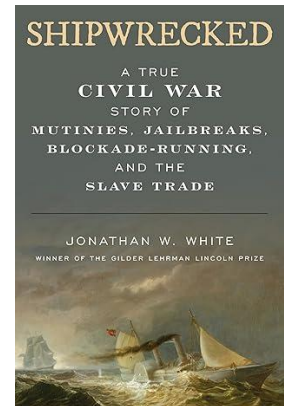
Hey there you land-lubbers! Get ready to take to the high seas at our annual banquet in November when we welcome **Dr. Jonathan W. White** and “Shipwrecked: A True Civil War Story of Mutinies, Jailbreaks, Blockade-Running, and the Slave Trade.”

White’s talk, based on the title of his 2023 book, will explore the extraordinary lengths the Lincoln Administration went to destroy the illegal transatlantic slave trade during the Civil War.

Using the previously unknown story of a nineteenth-century sailor named Appleton Oaksmith as a lens, White will show the various steps that Abraham Lincoln and his secretary of state, William H. Seward, took to forever stop illegal slavers – including using the suspension of habeas corpus, the use of civil courts, and an international kidnapping scheme.

A professor of American Studies at Christopher Newport University, White is the author or editor of 21 books that cover a variety of topics related to Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War. In addition to *Shipwrecked*, White’s books include: *A House Built by Slaves: African American Visitors to the Lincoln White House* (2022), which was co-winner of the Gilder-Lehrman Lincoln Prize with Jon Meacham; *A Great and Good Man: Rare First-hand Accounts and Observations of Abraham Lincoln* (2024); a children’s book, *My Day with Abe Lincoln* (2024); and *Measuring the Man: The Writings of Frederick Douglass on Abraham Lincoln* (2025).

The menu for the evening will be: House Salad with Balsamic and Ranch dressings;



Chicken Marsala; Herb Roasted Salmon with Dill Mustard Sauce; Roasted Creamer Potatoes; Buttered French Beans with Blistered Tomatoes; Freshly Baked Rolls and Butter; Dessert; Coffee or Tea. A Chef's Choice vegan meal also will be offered. Cocktails will be from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with cash bar service.

The cost this year is \$44 per person, a slight but unavoidable increase from 2024. Susan Birkhead, the club's director of catering and events, is helping us keep the costs lower by grandfathering us into buffet lunch pricing, which they no longer offer for groups.

Because not as many members attended last year's banquet, we will hold this year's event in The Commonwealth Room, which seats a maximum of 60 people. So, make sure you get a seat for this exciting, swashbuckling presentation by registering ASAP with Art Wingo. You can register with him at this month's meeting or by sending a check to him (made out to Richmond CWRT) at 1414 Patriot Circle, Glen Allen, VA 23059. Registration deadline is October 28.

Answers to "Famous Civil War Quotes"

1. General John B. Gordon
2. Jefferson Davis
3. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant
4. Col. William C. Oates
5. Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman

From the Round Table Archives **RCWRT BULLETIN** **Volume II, Issue 3** **March 1959**

A Note on the Use of the Term "Civil War"

"With no argument intended, your editor calls attention to a letter written by General Lee in August 1869 in which he referred to the War of 1861-1865 as having left "marks of Civil Strife" which he believed were better "obliterated" than recalled "by enduring memorials of granite."

Though he did not expressly use the words "Civil War," the South's most honored military leader could hardly have felt that there was any obnoxious or adverse

connotation in the use of this term. If he had felt so he would not have written the words "Civil Strife." Does the editor hear any murmurs? For those who doubt, a photostat of the aforementioned letter is in our files. The original is in the library of Gettysburg College, to which city his letter was addressed in declining an invitation of the Gettysburg Memorial Association to attend a meeting for the purpose of marking the battleground."

ROUND TABLE LOGO ITEMS

For those who are interested in purchasing shirts and/or baseball caps with the Round Table's logo, following is the information:

Logo Advantage, 8007 Mechanicsville Tpke, Mechanicsville, 23111. Tel: 804-730-5008.

The cost is \$15 for customer supplied garments (which is what I did). If you purchase a garment at the store, the cost is \$9 per item plus the cost of the shirt or hat. Available items may be selected at www.companycasuals2.com. Email Evelyn at Logo Advantage with your selection and she will check for availability (orders@logoadvantage.com), or just go to the store with your own garment.

Ulli

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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, "Loyalty and Dissent in the Civil War Era: The Strange Careers of Elizabeth Van Lew, Joseph T. Wilson, and James Longstreet"

Attendance at August Meeting: 66

We now have 4,676 Followers on Facebook.