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RICHMOND

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

DECEMBER 2021

“The Civil War is the crux of our history. You cannot understand any part of our past, from the convening of the Constitutional Convention, down to this morning, without eventually arriving at the Civil War.”

Bernard de Voto

December 14, 2021

7:30 p.m.

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

**“The Battle of Second Winchester: The
Confederate Victory That Opened The
Door To Gettysburg”
By Scott Mingus**



In the summer of 1863, as Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia began pushing north toward Pennsylvania, only one significant force stood in the way -- Union Major General Robert H. Milroy's division of the Eighth Army Corps in the vicinity of Winchester and Berryville. Milroy stubbornly defied repeated instructions to withdraw to safety, believing the enemy action to be merely a cavalry raid or feint. His controversial decision put his outnumbered, largely inexperienced men on a path to disaster. Milroy lost half his force and routed ingloriously from the battlefield. Many Union soldiers who fought at Second Winchester, however, believed their three-day resistance delayed the Rebels from entering Pennsylvania long enough to buy time for the Army of the Potomac to arrive and defeat Lee at Gettysburg.

Scott Mingus is a retired scientist and executive in the global pulp & paper industry. The Ohio native was part of the research team that developed the first commercially successful self-adhesive U.S. postage stamps and he was a pioneer in the bar code labels. He has written 25 Civil War and Underground Railroad books. His biography of General William "Extra Billy" Smith won multiple awards, including the Dr. James I. Robertson Jr. Literary Prize for Confederate History. He has also written numerous articles for *Gettysburg Magazine* and other historical journals. Scott has appeared on C-SPAN, C-SPAN3, PCN, and other TV networks.

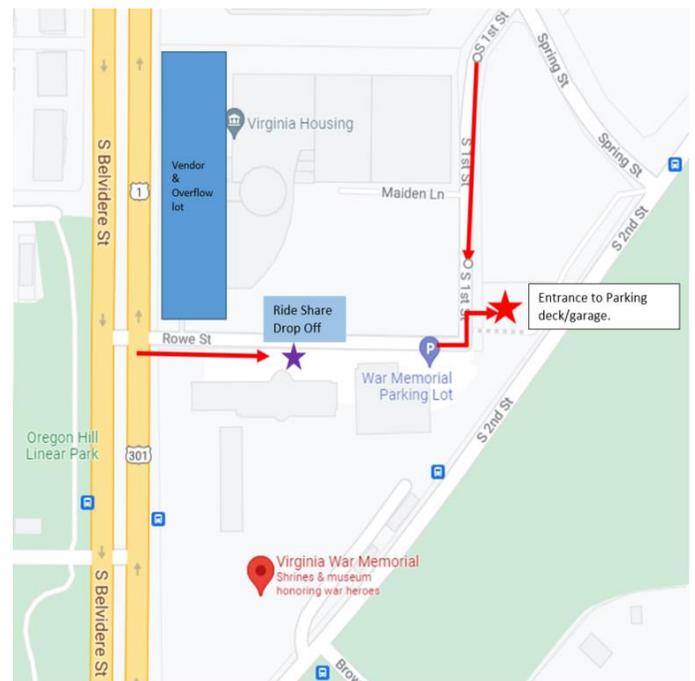
Mingus and his wife Debi live in York County, PA. For more than a decade, he has written a blog on the Civil War and Underground Railroad history of York County (www.yorkblog.com/cannonball). He has also written six scenario books for Civil War miniature wargaming. A maternal great-great-grandfather was a 15-year-old

drummer and rifleman in the 51st Ohio in the Western Theater, and a paternal great-great-grandfather marched with Sherman in the 183rd Ohio. Other family members fought at Antietam and Gettysburg in the 7th West Virginia of the Army of the Potomac.

*****Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to wear face coverings inside the Virginia War Memorial. Those who are not vaccinated are required to wear face coverings and are encouraged to maintain social distancing.*****

Virginia War Memorial Foundation is not a sponsor of this event.

Please park in the parking garage (see map below) and take the elevator to the main lobby where a security guard will direct you to the VMI Alumni Hall of Honor.



*A Word from the
President*

I can't believe four years have gone by so quickly! While I have definitely enjoyed serving various offices, I can't say we didn't have challenges. Covid was tough.... but thanks to members of the Executive Team we kept things going. We have turned the corner and next year looks very promising. The speaker lineup looks great!

If you haven't been attending during the pandemic, please consider it. The War Memorial is a beautiful and very appropriate venue and I think you would really enjoy it. Also, I need to mention that we are in search of a 2nd V.P. If you haven't served yet, please consider it.

Next year you will have Ulli as president, and she will do a wonderful job. She is dedicated, conscientious and talented, and she has done so much for us as V.P. Serving with her will be Waite, who will also do a great job. I look forward to next year with a great sense of optimism. Let's have some fun!

Annual Elections at December Meeting

Ballots will be handed out and the three directors positions will be voted on. The completed ballots will be placed in a ballot box located on a table outside the meeting room.

ANNUAL DUES NOTICE

Dues shall be paid to the Secretary by February 15, 2022.

Individual dues shall remain at \$35, and Couples at \$45, unless changed by the membership at the December meeting.

They may now be paid without including a membership form.

**THE 'NEW' CULP'S HILL
By Waite Rawls**

I think all of us have visited Gettysburg many times, and we viewed Culp's Hill as densely covered in trees. Forbes' famous painting, however, shows it only thinly covered. In recent months, the NPS has been thinning out the trees to a condition more like that in 1863. I took my two nephews to Gettysburg last week to see the difference. From the road along the Confederate position near Rock Creek, you see very little difference. But at the top of the hill, along Greene's line, you can see a big difference, with a view through the trees down to some of the famous boulders.

Good job, NPS. Keep cutting.



PRESERVATION NEWS

Don't forget the opportunity to play a part in preserving the "intersection" at the heart of both Cold Harbor and Gaines' Mill battlefields!

Gaines' Mill (June 27, 1862) and Cold Harbor (May 31-June 12, 1864) represent Robert E. Lee's last major victories of the Civil War. One property, spanning nearly one-square mile, is the key to substantially completing the preservation of both battlefields.

Robert E.L. Krick said, “Scarcely any ground remains in America that falls, as this one does, within the heart of two critical battles... Preserving this landscape will be a great triumph for everyone who cares about the battlefields.”

And Gary Gallagher noted, “If pressed to select the single most desirable tract on any battlefield, I would, without hesitation, select the ground essential to protecting both Gaines’ Mill and Cold Harbor. Nowhere else does a single piece of land offer so much relating to a pair of major battles, one, the bloodiest action of the strategically seismic Seven Days, and the other a critical episode of the blood-soaked Overland Campaign.”

To contribute, go to:
www.battlefields.org/GMCH2021

CIVIL WAR TRIVIA

(from the October issue of *Civil War News*)

1. Ironclad warship guarding Wilmington, N.C.
2. Union corps commander killed July 1, 1863
3. Battle on Grant’s march toward Vicksburg
4. Heavy Union fortification cannon
5. Man in charge of Confederate torpedoes and other infernal devices
6. Tugboat that was towing the *Monitor* when it sank
7. Home on First Manassas battlefield
8. First U.S. foothold in North Carolina, site of Chickamacomico Races
9. C.S. Navy Yard in Richmond was at this place
10. Class of Confederate ironclads initially on James River

[Answers on page 6](#)

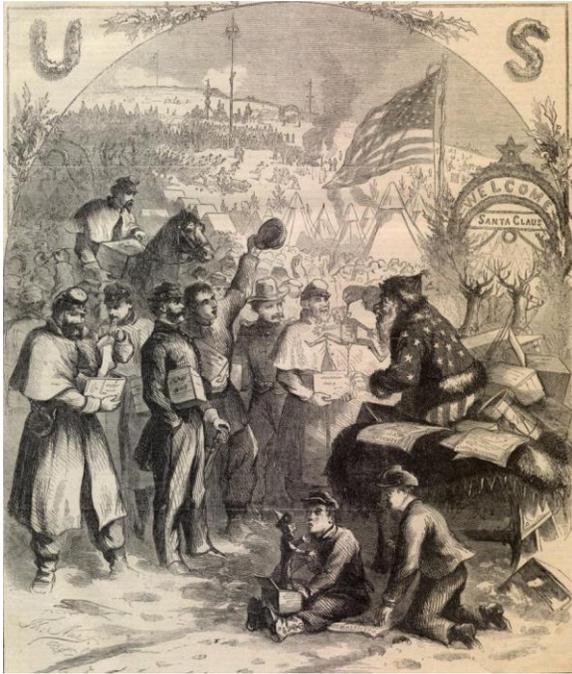
Christmas During the Civil War

It can be difficult to relate to the men and women of the Civil War era. Despite the extraordinarily different circumstances in which they found themselves, however, we can connect with our forebears in traditions such as the celebration of Christmas. By the mid-19th century, most of today’s familiar Christmas trappings – Christmas carols, gift giving and tree decoration – were already in place. Charles Dickens had published “A Christmas Carol” in 1843 and indeed, the Civil War saw the first introductions to the modern image of a jolly and portly Santa Claus through the drawings of Thomas Nast, a German-speaking immigrant.

Civil War soldiers in camp and their families at home drew comfort from the same sorts of traditions that characterize Christmas today. Alfred Bellard of the 5th New Jersey noted, “In order to make it look much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack and pork, in lieu of cakes and oranges, etc.” John Haley, of the 17th Maine, wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve that, “It is rumored that there are sundry boxes and mysterious parcels over at Stoneman’s Station directed to us. We retire to sleep with feelings akin to those of children expecting Santa Claus.”

In one amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: “A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid of... DISAPPOINTMENT! The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water... and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical

joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended.”



For many, the holiday was a reminder of the profound melancholy that had settled over the entire nation. Southern parents warned their children that Santa might not make it through the blockade, and soldiers in bleak winter quarters were reminded, more acutely than ever, of the domestic bliss they had left behind. Robert Gould Shaw, who would later earn glory as the commander of the 54th Massachusetts, recorded in his diary, “It is Christmas morning and I hope a happy and merry one for you all, though it looks so stormy for our poor country, one can hardly be in merry humor.” On the Confederate home front, Sallie Brock Putnam of Richmond echoed Shaw’s sentiment: “Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned upon us... We had neither the heart nor inclination to make the week merry with joyousness when such a sad calamity hovered over us.” For the

people of Fredericksburg, Virginia, which had been battered only a matter of days before Christmas, or Savannah, Georgia, which General Sherman had presented to President Lincoln as a gift, the holiday season brought the war to their very doorsteps.

Christmas during the Civil War served both as an escape from and a reminder of the awful conflict rending the country in two. Soldiers looked forward to a day of rest and relative relaxation, but had their moods tempered by the thought of separation from their loved ones. At home, families did their best to celebrate the holiday, but wondered when the vacant chair would again be filled.

Adapted from the website of the
Battlefield Trust
www.battlefields.org



OPPOSING VIEWS AFTER GAINES' MILL

“Never, never did men, since the world began, fight like ours. The Duke of Somerset, who seemingly laughed when he saw our ragged, dirty, barefooted soldiers – “Mostly beardless boys,” as he said – took off his hat in reverence when he saw them fight.”

**George Pickett in a letter to his
Future wife, Sally,
July 15, 1862**

“I have lost this battle because my force is too small. The Government must not and cannot hold me responsible for the result... If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or to any other persons in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army.”

Gen. George McClellan in a telegram to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, June 28, 1862

UPCOMING MEETINGS

2022

January 11: Dr. Caroline Janney, “Ends of War: The Unfinished Fight of Lee’s Army after Appomattox”

February 8: Kevin Pawlak, “Water to His Front, Water to His Rear: Robert E. Lee Defends the Confederate High Water Mark at Sharpsburg”

March 8: Gregg Clemmer, “Why the Civil War Still Lives”

April 12: Gordon Rhea, Esq., Topic TBA

May 10: Brendan Synnamon, “The Union Drummer Boy: A Love of History and Historical Preservation as Experienced by One of America’s Foremost Civil War Militaria Shops”

June 14: Col. Keith Gibson, “Thomas J. Jackson: Lexington, The Institute, and a Legacy”

July 12: Dr. Jennifer M. Murray, “Meade at War”

August 9: Michael C. Hardy, “Feeding the Army of Northern Virginia”

September 13: Dr. Gary Gallagher, Topic TBA

October 11: David Keller, “Military Prisons of the Civil War, A Comparative Study”

November 8: Annual Members Dinner
William C. “Jack” Davis, Topic TBA

December 13: Frank O’Reilly, “The Battle of Fredericksburg and Christmas Along the Rappahannock”

EVENT OF INTEREST

January 4-11, 2022: Online Seminar. Join Professor Jonathan A. Noyalas for a three-part online seminar via Zoom examining various aspects of the Civil War era in the Shenandoah Valley. January 4, “Kindred Will all be Divided: The Eastern Panhandle on the Eve of the Civil War;” January 6, “An Expression of Helplessness: Sigel, Hunter, and the Lower Valley’s Civilians in May 1864;” and, January 11, “That This War May Soon Come to an End: Perspectives on the Meaning of Union Victory in the Shenandoah Valley, Autumn 1864.” All sessions begin at 7 p.m. EST.

Although FREE (donations appreciated), registration is required. Email jnoyalas01@su.edu to register.

Trivia Answers:

1. CSS *Raleigh*
2. General John F. Reynolds
3. Raymond, Miss
4. Rodman
5. General Gabriel J. Rains
6. USS *Rhode Island*
7. Robinson House
8. Roanoke Island, NC
9. Rocketts
10. CSS *Richmond*