



Founded on February 8, 1951

RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

February 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

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February 9, 2021

7:30 p.m.

“Lincoln, Antietam and a Northern Lost Cause” by Gene Schmiel

**Please note: This will be a Zoom meeting!
For instructions on how to download the
free Zoom App, the meeting number and
pass code please see page 2.**

What, if even after the Union had won the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, slavery had remained legal in the United States? In this thought-provoking speculative history, written in a “you are there” style using the words of the participants themselves, award-winning Civil War historian Gene Schmiel shows exactly how that ironic and tragic series of events could have happened. He describes how one changed decision at the Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, could have created a “Civil War butterfly effect” and irrevocably changed American history.

Most people don’t know that Lincoln saw the Emancipation Proclamation as

giving the Confederate states one more chance to re-join the Union, whether or not they abolished slavery. This book will explain how, as a result, slavery might not have ended despite an overwhelming Union victory at Antietam and the surrender of Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia.

To some in the North, the failure to abolish slavery would have become “the Northern lost cause” noted in the title. Abolitionists and black leaders would have been bitter that despite the bloodshed, victory had not brought the cherished goal of destroying slavery.



Gene Schmiel with the late Ed Bearss

Gene Schmiel is a student of the Civil War whose book, *Citizen General: Jacob Dolson Cox and the Civil War Era*, was published in 2014 by Ohio University Press. The book, a History Book Club selection, was deemed “best biography of the year” by *Civil War Books and Authors*.

Subsequently, Gene has written seven more books on the war: *Lincoln, Antietam and a Northern Lost Cause; Ohio Heroes of the Battle of Franklin; Civil War Trailblazers and Troublemakers; Civil War Rogues, Rascals, and Rapsallions; Civil War Political Generals of the Blue and the Grey; Civil War Women: Underestimated and*

Indispensable; and Civil War Unsung Heroes. The last five books are part of a series called “Civil War Personalities, 50 at a Time.” His next book in the series is *The Civil War in Statuary Hall*. It will be the first book to look at the history of the relationship between the war and Congress’ Statuary Hall, a topic which is particularly lively today.

Gene hails from Cleveland, Ohio, and he holds a Ph.D. degree from Ohio State University. He was an assistant professor of History at St. Francis University (PA) before becoming a Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State. He and his wife Kathryn live in Gainesville, Virginia, just next to the Manassas battlefields.

ZOOM SIGN ON INFORMATION

By Andy Keller

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83471506220?pwd=Sy9jYlZDenVabTVld1d0WTE1UHNnUT09>

Or <https://tinyurl.com/RCWRT2021>

For Audio only call +1 301 715 8592. Long Distance Rates may apply

Meeting ID: 834 7150 220

Passcode: 481366

To participate in a Zoom session, your computer will need a camera function, standard for most laptops, Smart Phones and tablets. I would suggest reviewing the camera function before that time. We recommend that you join 5 - 10 minutes before the meeting starts, to be sure that your equipment is working and review some of the features. You will be unmuted on admittance during that time for socializing, but you should mute yourself when requested. We hope to record the meeting so if you are unable to attend please send a request for the recording to Secretary.RCWRT@gmail.com.

A Word From The President

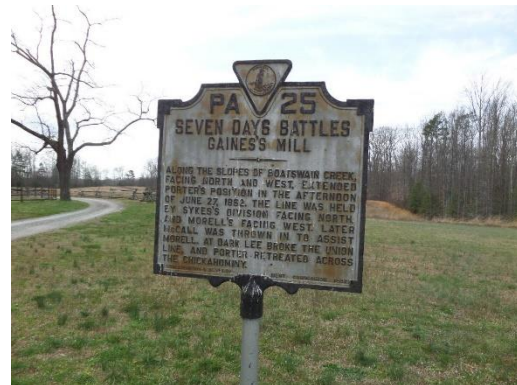
Thoughts on Preservation

Just twenty years ago the Richmond National Battlefield Park was only a fraction of the size it is today. It's simply amazing to look back on what has been accomplished. The most obvious efforts have been at Cold Harbor and Gaines' Mill. At Cold Harbor, a number of significant tracts have been preserved: the RBA purchased land across from Beulah Church that saw important action on both June 1 and 3, 1864. The American Battlefield Trust added parcels in the area, including Fletcher's Redoubt, the site of the Cold Harbor Tavern and adjacent acreage that was significant in 1862 and 1864, and now they have embarked on a campaign to save what is probably the most important unpreserved land in America. At Gaines' Mill the RBA and Trust have acquired hundreds of acres, including the land over which Hood and Longstreet attacked. Other parcels there have also been saved.

Hundreds of acres have been preserved at North Anna, Malvern Hill and Glendale. More has been acquired at First and Second Deep Bottom, Fort Harrison, as well as Beaver Dam Creek. Totopotomoy Creek has been preserved through the RNBP's efforts with a developer. The list goes on. Bernie Fisher and the RBA have done great, the contributions of the American Battlefield Trust have been amazing (and we can't forget the efforts of Bobby Krick, who has worked with these organizations all the way, and has even preserved land that is not on the battlefield and few know about it). All of this has been possible through the generous donations of people like you. Land that seemed lost to development has been saved. Let's keep up the good work and support preservation... future generations will be grateful.

"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."

Gary Gallagher



Secretary's Report

By Andy Keller

The postponed 2020 Annual Business meeting was held via Zoom on January 12, 2021. The membership unanimously voted to not charge any dues for this year and reelected all officers, except the Second Vice President who did not stand for reelection. Nicholas Carico was then elected Second Vice President.

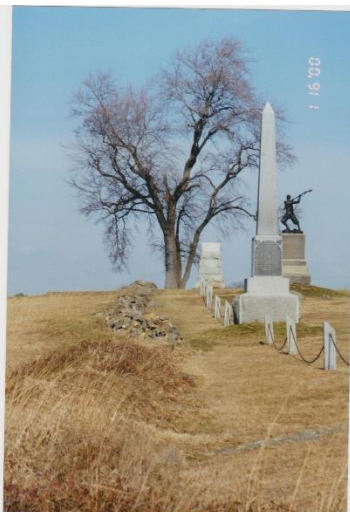
A \$500 contribution to the Battlefield Trust for Cold Harbor/Gaines' Mill was approved in memory of Gary Cowardin.

The links to the February 9 Zoom meeting remain the same as last month: see page 2 for the links and information on how to join the meeting.

My Favorite Battlefield Story by Art Wingo

My favorite battlefield story takes place at Gettysburg National Military Park. Many years ago a former bank customer of mine, who was a Boy Scout Troop leader from Charlottesville, asked me to be a trail guide at the battlefield for his troop. The trail we selected was the Johnny Reb and Billy Yank trail which involved over ten miles of hiking through the Wheatfield, Devil's Den, Little Round Top and Big Round Top to the Lee Monument.

For much of the walk the boys enjoyed themselves as only young boys will. We arrived at the beginning of Pickett's Charge. I requested the chaperones to remain back and I aligned the boys in battlefield formation and requested them to not speak a word as we crossed this sacred field. I hollered, "Forward March!" and across Pickett's Charge we went. While marching across the battlefield, I read from "A Diary of a Veteran of Pickett's Charge." Upon reaching the stonewall, the boys sat on the wall, many with emotion, and none spoke a word but just looked upon the field of honor they had just crossed. A moment I will never forget.



For future newsletters we welcome your articles, such as book reviews, and stories about your favorite Civil War personality, your memorable battlefield visits, or your Civil War ancestor.
ullib1101@gmail.com

We are looking for someone to fill the position of Webmaster. If interested, please let any of the Board members know.

This Month In Civil War History

February 9, 1861: Jefferson Davis of Mississippi is elected president of the Confederacy; Alexander Stephens of Georgia is vice-president. Montgomery becomes the capital of the Confederacy.

February 11, 1861: The train carrying Abraham Lincoln to Washington leaves Springfield, Illinois.

February 16, 1862: General Ulysses S. Grant lays down terms for the Confederates besieged at Fort Donelson, Tennessee. "No terms except unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works." The Confederates do surrender and he becomes known as "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

February 22, 1862: Jefferson Davis is inaugurated as President of the Confederate States.

February 25, 1863: Major General Daniel Harvey Hill takes command of all North Carolina forces.

During this month the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory reverses its position on both secession and slavery, swinging support to the Union.

February 4, 1864: In Richmond, J.B.Jones notes in his diary, "Eighteen car loads of coffee went up to the army today. I have not tasted coffee or tea for more than a year."

February 9, 1864: After 4 days of digging a tunnel, 109 Union officers escape from the Confederate Libby Prison in Richmond. Although 48 escapees are recaptured, it is still the largest prison break of the war.

February 17, 1864: In the world's first successful submarine attack on a warship, the Confederate ship *Hunley* sinks the *USS Housatonic* off Charleston, S.C. and then sinks herself on the way back.



February 3, 1865: President Lincoln meets with Confederate representatives aboard a ship anchored at Hampton Roads, Virginia to talk about peace. No agreement is reached and the conflict continues.

February 6, 1865: President Jefferson Davis turns over command of all Confederate armies to Robert E. Lee. Until now, Davis has been the commander.

Source: Gaston County Public Library

Upcoming Meetings

(Until further notice, all meetings will be via Zoom)

March 9: Dr. Peter Carmichael, "The War for the Common Soldier"

April 13: Hampton Newsome, "The Fight for the Old North State"

May 11: Jim Hessler, "Gettysburg's Peach Orchard: Longstreet, Sickles, and the Bloody Fight for the 'Commanding Ground' along the Emmitsburg Road"

June 8: Nathan Hall, "The Spies of Richmond"

July 13: Jim Gindlesperger, "Fire on the Water: The USS Kearsarge and the CSS Alabama"

August 10: Dr. Charles Fennell, "The Battle of Culp's Hill on July 3, 1863"

September 14: Douglas Waller, "Lincoln's Spies: Their Secret War to Save a Nation"

October 12: Victor Vignola, "The May 31, 1862 Battle of Fair Oaks: The Struggle for the Adams House, Bull Sumner's Glory Day"

November 9 (tentative dinner meeting): Janet Croon, "The War Outside my Window: The Civil War Diary of LeRoy Wiley Gresham 1860-1865"

December 14: Scott Mingus, "The Battle of Second Winchester: The Confederate Victory that Opened the Door to Gettysburg"

Please note: Savas Beatie has offered a discount on any books by their published authors at this year's meetings. There are three on our schedule: Jim Hessler, Janet Croon, and Scott Mingus. Savas Beatie has also expressed an interest in publishing Vic Vignola's book (October speaker).

February is Black History Month

Arguably the best known Black regiment in the Civil War is the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, due in no small part to the 1989 film “Glory.”

The Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment was the first military unit consisting of black soldiers to be raised in the North during the Civil War. Prior to 1863, no concerted effort was made to recruit black troops as Union soldiers. The adoption of the Emancipation Proclamation in December of 1862 provided the impetus for the use of free black men as soldiers and, at a time when state governors were responsible for the raising of regiments for federal service, Massachusetts was the first to respond with the formation of the Fifty-fourth Regiment.

The formation of the regiment was a matter of controversy and public attention from its inception. Questions were raised as to the black man’s ability to fight in the “white man’s war.” Although Massachusetts governor John A. Andrew believed that black men were capable of leadership, others felt that commissioning blacks as officers was simply too controversial; Andrew needed all the support he could get. The commissioned officers, then, were white and the enlisted men black. Any black officers up to the rank of lieutenant were non-commissioned and reached their positions by moving up through the ranks. On 28 May 1863, upon the presentation of the unit’s colors by the governor and a parade through the streets of Boston, spectators lined the streets with the hopes of viewing this experimental unit. The regiment then departed Boston on the transport *De Molay* for the coast of South Carolina.

Source: Massachusetts Historical Society
masshist.org



The monument to Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment in Boston, sculpted by Augustus Saint Gaudens, 1884

And finally...

Last year’s events unfortunately resulted in the removal of most of Richmond’s beautiful Civil War monuments. One that has survived (so far) is the A.P. Hill monument at the intersection of Laburnum Avenue and Hermitage Road, unique in that it is also the general’s final resting place

The sculptor was William L. Sheppard; the monument was unveiled on May 30, 1892.



Contributed by Dan Balf