



**Founded on February 8, 1951**

# RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

JUNE 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

**June 8, 2021**

**7:30 p.m.**

## **“The Richmond Resistance” by Nathan Hall**

**Please note: This is a Zoom Meeting**

Our June program will provide a fascinating look into the “Richmond Resistance” during the war years. Nathan Hall will discuss the men, women and children, black and white, enslaved and free, who secretly fought the Civil War from inside the Confederate capital. New research will reveal insights into the actions of Union operatives of Richmond and the relationships that led a diverse group of civilians to risk their freedom, property, and their lives in the service of the United States.

Nathan Hall is a Park Ranger at Richmond National Battlefield Park and the Maggie Walker National Historic Site. He is a native of the Richmond area, and an award-winning filmmaker. He received his master’s degree in history from Louisiana State University in 2011, where he specialized in the history of American law.

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His present research is devoted extensively to the development of Richmond's Civil War espionage network, with particular attention to Mary Jane Richards, a.k.a. "Mary Bowser."



### **ZOOM SIGN ON INFORMATION**

By Andy Keller

<https://tinyurl.com/RCWRT2021>

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

**Meeting ID: 834 7150 6220**

**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](mailto:Secretary.RCWRT@gmail.com).**

## *A Word from the President*

by Doug Crenshaw

Recently, Bert Dunkerly and I made a two-day trip to the Manassas battlefields. First Manassas is pristine. The Battlefield Park visitor center is nicely done, but unfortunately, due to COVID, the film was not accessible. Hopefully, it soon will be. Standing on Henry Hill, you can get a real sense of the climax of the battle, but to me the most interesting view was from Matthews Hill. There you can see the sweep of the Federal attack across it and up Henry Hill. Magnificent.

While First Manassas probably captures the interest of most visitors, I was more taken by the field of Second Manassas. Here Jackson held out against Federal assaults until Longstreet arrived and launched his crushing flank attack. While Chancellorsville lays claim as Lee's greatest victory, a strong case can be made that this really might have been it. Here he had a chance to destroy Pope's army. Visiting the railroad cut where Jackson made his stand is a powerful view, but even more interesting is walking the Union attack at the Deep Cut and imagining what the men thought as they marched up to Jackson's position. Longstreet's attack across Dogan and Chinn ridges is interesting, and the sites are very well preserved.

A trip to Manassas is not complete without visiting "Old Town." The site of the Manassas junction depot stands just a hundred yards or so south of the current station (you will need a little imagination to compare it to the period images). With a little effort, you can find the site of the

McLean house, and the action at Blackburn's Ford..... and after a long day, Old Town has some great bars and restaurants. If you haven't already seen all of these sites, they should definitely be on your list. Enjoy the Spring weather before the heat arrives. Get out and visit some of the incredible historic sites available in our area. Have a great month!



**"Stonewall" Jackson on the  
Manassas Battlefield**

## **Preservation News**

At our round table meeting in January, Jimmy Price gave a talk on the Battle of New Market Heights on September 29, 1864.

Black Union soldiers (USCT) attacked a heavily fortified Confederate position on the outskirts of Richmond and distinguished themselves in a few hours of desperate fighting. Fourteen USCT soldiers earned the Medal of Honor that day – more than half of such honors presented to Black men for valor during the entire Civil War. Two white

officers of USCT units were also awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions that day.

To honor their bravery, the American Battlefield Trust is working to preserve land and to create a battlefield park, an effort recently boosted by the acquisition of a 22-acre property that otherwise could have been targeted for development. Thanks to donor contributions and federal and state matching grants, the Trust has now protected five properties totaling 88 acres at New Market Heights.

"The incredible bravery and sacrifice at New Market Heights should be common knowledge for all Americans, but sadly, this is not the case," said Battlefield Trust president David Duncan. "Preservation can help correct this historical oversight. By saving this land, we honor the memory of these warriors and tell their story for new generations."

For more information on this and other preservation projects, go to:

[www.battlefields.org](http://www.battlefields.org)

Adapted from the Spring issue of  
*Hallowed Ground*

For more information on the battle, or to make a donation, go to the website of the "Battle of New Market Heights Memorial and Education Association:"

[www.battleofnewmarketheights.org](http://www.battleofnewmarketheights.org)

***Editor's Note:*** Jimmy Price's book, "The Battle of New Market Heights: Freedom Will Be Theirs By The Sword," is available on Amazon.

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**Former member, Stephen Romaine, author of "Secret Army Behind Enemy Lines: The Back Story of How Grant Took Richmond," sent us a link to a free Kindle e-book version of the book:**  
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07X754TXL/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?encoding=UTF8&btkr=1>

## **This Month in Civil War History**

### **1861**

**June 3:** The Battle of Philippi (now in West Virginia) is the first organized land action in the war. It is sometimes described as a “skirmish” rather than a “battle.” A Union attack, ordered by Major General George B. McClellan, on sleeping Confederate forces results in a Confederate flight with relatively few casualties.

This minor action has some interesting consequences. It gives McClellan a reputation and aids in his promotion to commander of the Union armies.

Also, one of the wounded is James E. Hanger, an 18-year old college student, whose leg is amputated. After recovering, he makes an artificial leg for himself from barrel staves with a hinge at the knee. Hanger patents his device in 1863 and founds what is still today the Hanger Orthopedic Group, Inc., a leading manufacturer of prosthetics.

### **1862**

**June 1:** At the Battle of Seven Pines (also known as Fair Oaks) in Virginia, Thaddeus Lowe, the U. S. Army’s balloon commander, manages to get a balloon, the *Intrepid*, into the air despite many problems. Desperate to inflate a balloon more quickly than in the hour needed by his hydrogen generators, he uses a camp kettle with its bottom cut out as a pipe to move gas from another balloon to the *Intrepid*. This takes only 15 minutes which he later values at “a million dollars a minute.” His observations of the enemy’s movements keep the isolated army of General Samuel P. Heintzelman from being cut off.

During the battle, Colonel William Dorsey Pender of the 6<sup>th</sup> North Carolina realizes that his troops are about to be cut off and by an adroit series of orders is able

to maneuver them to safety and then to charge. Seeing this, President Jefferson Davis who is on the field, rides up to Pender and says, “General Pender, I salute you.” Pender County, North Carolina, is named for the general.

Robert E. Lee is appointed commander of the Army of Northern Virginia to replace Joseph E. Johnston who has been badly wounded in the battle.

***Editor’s note:*** *Our October speaker, Victor Vignola, will speak on the Battle of Fair Oaks, subject of his upcoming book.*

### **1863**

**June 9:** The Battle of Brandy Station, Virginia, is the largest cavalry battle ever fought on the North American continent. Of the 20,000 soldiers involved, about 17,000 are of the mounted branch. Brandy Station is also the first battle of the war’s most famous campaign – Gettysburg.

**June 28:** At 3 o’clock in the morning a messenger from Lincoln awakens General George Meade to inform him that he is now the commander of the Army of the Potomac. Although he has no way to know what lies in store, he has only three days to prepare his army for one of the most famous battles in history.

### **1864**

**June 3:** Today is the heaviest day of fighting in the 13 day battle at Cold Harbor. Lee wins his last major victory over Union troops, defeating a vastly larger force. However, once again, the Union can replace lost troops and Lee is less and less able to do the same.

**June 14:** In eight hours 450 Union engineers build a pontoon bridge across the James River, enabling Grant’s forces to cross the

river and move towards Petersburg. At 2100 feet this is the longest pontoon bridge ever used in war.

June 19: Off the coast of France in front of a crowd of spectators, the *USS Kearsarge* sinks the famous raider, *CSS Alabama*. Inspired by the accounts of the spectators, artist Edouard Manet painted "Battle of the USS Kearsarge and the CSS Alabama."



**Editor's Note:** Next month, author James Gindlesperger will speak on this battle, subject of his book, "Fire on the Water."

### **1865**

June 22: The Confederate cruiser *Shenandoah* attacks a fleet of whalers in the Bering Straits. The encounter brings her total of ships captured or destroyed to 38 and of men taken to more than 1,000; she has done more than 1 million dollars in damage in her eight month career. The shot she fires across a whaler's bow is considered to be the last shot of the war. Her captain, James Iredell Waddell of North Carolina has

seen a paper a few days earlier reporting Lee's surrender, but also printing a defiant statement from Jefferson Davis urging Confederates to keep fighting.

On November 6, 1865, the *CSS Shenandoah* lowered the Confederate flag and James I. Waddell surrendered command of the vessel to British authorities in Liverpool. The surrender came a full six months after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox. In that time, Waddell had led his men on the only circumnavigation of the world by a Confederate ship.

Waddell received official word of the Confederate defeat while approaching San Francisco in August 1865. Directing his ship southward to avoid American retribution for unintentional acts of piracy, he rounded Cape Horn and sailed for England during the fall of 1865, where he surrendered in Liverpool.

Source: Gaston County Public Library

## **Upcoming Meetings**

**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 (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"

If you were unable to attend last month's meeting with Jim Hessler, following is a link to the Zoom meeting (the video may only be available for a short time):

<https://tinyurl.com/Peach-Orchard>

## **Virginia's Most Endangered Places**

Virginia's long and diverse history is evident in the Commonwealth's historic buildings, sites and landscapes. However, far too many of these places are vulnerable to damage and demolition caused by neglect, insufficient resources, inappropriate development and insensitive public policies. For more than twenty years, the Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Places program has advocated for these locations and helped to find solutions for their preservation. The intent of the list is to bring attention to threatened historic places in the Commonwealth, and to encourage residents, localities and organizations to support preservation and revitalization efforts.

Following are some of the sites being threatened from the current list:

### **St. Mary's/Samaria Church Battlefield**

Located in Charles City County. The battle was part of Grant's Overland Campaign and took place on June 24, 1864. As with the Battle of New Market Heights, many USCT fought in this battle. The battlefield is directly threatened by the proposed expansion of an existing waste disposal site. The current landfill, as well as the area being considered for expansion, falls within the battlefield's core area as defined by the American Battlefield Protection Program, an arm of the National Park Service.

### **Conner House**

The Conner House, a 19<sup>th</sup> century stone house in Manassas Park, is the last known extant historic building in the Manassas Park city limits. The house, important to the history of Manassas Park, Prince William County and all of Virginia, was almost certainly built by enslaved people using locally quarried stone. The Conner House also played a significant role during the Civil War as headquarters for both Union and Confederate troops, and as the site of a field hospital.

The house is currently planned for demolition due to a project to build a new city hall, and residential and commercial buildings.

### **Fort Wool**

Fort Wool, a 15-acre, human-made, fortified island, located near the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, was constructed and modified over time between 1819 and 1945. Fort Wool was held and used extensively by the United States during the Civil War, notably during the attack on Norfolk, and the sea battle between the CSS Virginia and the USS Monitor. Aside from its military history, Fort Wool was also used as a retreat by several U.S. presidents, and it has significant history as a waypoint for enslaved people seeking freedom.

Deferred maintenance and rising sea levels threaten this already fragile island, resulting in this Virginia landmark to be closed to the public.

For more information, go to:

[www.preservationvirginia.org](http://www.preservationvirginia.org)

Contributed by Elaine Duckworth