



Founded at Fort Harrison
on February 8, 1951

RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

MAY 2023

“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

www.richmondcwrt.org

Ulli Baumann, President
804-789-9844
ullib1101@gmail.com

Waite Rawls, First VP
804-501-8436
waiterawls@gmail.com

Billie Raines, Second VP
804-291-6300
b.raines@live.com

Art Wingo, Treasurer
804-516-7508
[Art and Diane@comcast.net](mailto:Art_and_Diane@comcast.net)

Andy Keller, Secretary
804-382-6605
secretary.rcwrt@gmail.com

Board of Directors (2023):
Doug Crenshaw
Elaine Duckworth
Jack Mountcastle
Danny Witt

Editor/Webmaster: Ulli Baumann
ullib1101@gmail.com

Follow us on Facebook:
[@richmondcwrt](https://www.facebook.com/richmondcwrt)

May 9, 2023

7:30 p.m.

**At First Presbyterian Church
4602 Cary Street Road
Richmond, VA 23226**
(The parking lot is behind the church; go up the steps to fellowship hall on the left)

ROBIN SNYDER

**“The Job of a Battlefield
Park Superintendent”**



Robin Snyder was recently selected as the new deputy superintendent for Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site and Wright Brothers National Memorial (Outer Banks Group). She was previously the superintendent of Appomattox Court House National Historical Park and Booker T. Washington National Monument. In her 27-year career with the National Park Service, she has served in a variety of roles at different parks, including New River Gorge National River, Petersburg National Battlefield, Gauley River National Recreation Area and Bluestone National Scenic River.

Robin is a native of Appomattox, Virginia. She attended the University of Virginia, where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts in American History and a Master of Teaching.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ireland is on my mind this month. Soon we'll be visiting the Emerald Isle again. The gorgeous countryside, the amazing coastline, the music, the friendly – and fun! – people, history, it all speaks to me.

Our own history has strong links to the Irish, especially when it comes to the Civil War. The Irish were the second largest foreign contingent in both the Union and Confederate armies (behind the Germans). According to Ella Lonn (“Foreigners in the Confederacy” and “Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy”), in 1860 about 84,763 Irish were living in the Southern States, and about 1,526,541 in the Northern States, the majority, no doubt, coming to America because of the famine in their homeland in the 1840s. It is estimated that about

150,000 Irish fought in the Union Army and about 30,000 for the Confederacy.

In the past I tried to include in our schedule at least one visit to a site with links to a Civil War personality. In Waterford we visited the birthplace of Thomas Francis Meagher, who was born into a wealthy merchant family in a grand home that today is the elegant Granville Hotel. Meagher joined the rebellion with the Young Ireland Movement and after the failure of the movement, he was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania). Incredibly, he made his escape and eventually ended up in America where he led the Fighting 69th NY of the Irish Brigade during the Civil War. After the war, he was appointed as the first acting governor of Montana. A beautiful equestrian statue of him is in front of the capitol in Helena. In 1867, he drowned in the Missouri River and his body was never found.



However, he left a legacy to his home country: The Irish national flag still in

use today was designed by him and officially recognized in 1937.

Another time we ventured into Northern Ireland and the little town of Dungannon in County Tyrone where the ancestral homestead of Ulysses Grant is located. It is the home of Grant’s maternal great-



grandfather, John Simpson, who emigrated to Ohio in 1760, and his wife Hannah. The homestead is beautifully preserved in several buildings and a big part is dedicated to the Simpson's famous descendant and his Civil War career. After his presidency, Grant visited the homestead once.

This year a look at the little town of Ovens in County Cork is planned. There is the home of Patrick Cleburne, "Stonewall of the West," who distinguished himself as Major General in the Confederate army and who was killed during the Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864, leading an assault on the Union lines. I look forward to getting a look at his Ireland home.

Ulli

FIELD TRIP UPDATE

Saturday, October 28, 2023

BY Billie Raines

The Richmond Civil War Round Table is pleased to announce a Civil War educational tour of Grant's second attempt to capture the Petersburg and Weldon Railroad, part of the Fourth Offensive of the Petersburg Campaign, August 18-21, 1864. In reviewing travel bus estimates, the Board has decided it would be best to carpool for the tour. Anyone that would be willing to drive a group of members will have their \$15 tour cost covered. Please contact Billie Raines if you would be willing to be a driver for this club event.

The tour focuses on the Fight for the Weldon Railroad, a supply line running from Wilmington to Weldon, North Carolina, and then from Weldon on into the City of Petersburg. This vital railroad line carried supplies from the last seaport of the Confederacy to forces of General Robert E. Lee and the beleaguered cities of Petersburg and Richmond. This tour, led by RCWRT

members Jerry Netherland and Mark Jacobson, will also showcase two core battlefield properties recently saved by the American Battlefield Trust and the Petersburg Battlefields Foundation. The tour will visit public, National Park Service, and private sites. You will not want to miss this opportunity!

More details will follow in future newsletters.

WORKING WITH A LEGEND:

The re-release of Chris Calkins'

The Battles of Appomattox Station and Appomattox Court House

By Bert Dunkerly

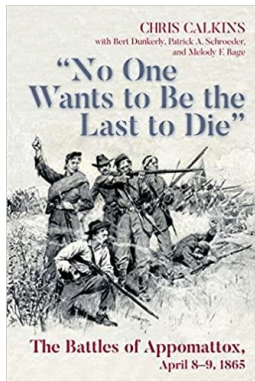
I first met Chris Calkins in 2007, after taking a position at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. Everyone in the Civil War world knows who Chris Calkins is, especially if you are in Virginia or study the war in this state. Chris was well known to me, having been at Appomattox long before me and also worked at Petersburg National Battlefield, and authored many articles and books. When I met Chris he had left the National Park Service and was getting Sailor's Creek Battlefield State Park off the ground. From land acquisition to exhibit design, building stabilization, interpretive markers, and landscape restoration, Chris did it all, and transformed a neglected site into a premiere Civil War park.

He enthusiastically showed off the park and the progress they were making whenever I stopped by Sailor's Creek. He was so proud of what Sailor's Creek had become and rightly so. State of the art museum, environmentally friendly building, land acquisition, new trails, historic markers, and stabilization and interpretation of a key landmark: the Hillsman House. I had been through the park a decade before, there was little to see and the house was vacant and closed up. It now was a major

feature: open for tours and furnished to represent its use as a hospital.

Those of us who work and live in the Civil War world know the giants who preceded us. They have created exhibits, written the standard histories, produced the films, and saved the land. That generation of historians laid the groundwork for what we have. Chris is among them.

I think one of Chris's most important achievements are the books *The Battles of Appomattox Station and Appomattox Court House*, and *The Final Bivouac*. He did pioneering research: finding eyewitness accounts, investigating local traditions, and ground truthing the evidence on site. These two books filled a gap in our understanding of the final engagements of the campaign, and the surrender's immediate aftermath. Going forward, any future historians will build on what Chris did. Therefore, it was an



absolute pleasure and honor to assist Chris in revising and republishing these two works. We began with the first book, *The Battles*.

I regularly visited Chris at his Petersburg home and was amazed by his sharp memory. I brought notes and a list of questions for him. I was editing the book to correct grammar and clarify the writing, but also to add proper footnotes and ensure citations were correct. It was tedious, but oh so rewarding. I could ask Chris anything... where did this quote come from?, what was this book that you used?, what unit was this?, etc. Anything. He'd know. He would tell me the source, book, or location.

Gradually we worked through the list of questions and trouble spots and edited the book for republishing. It was an absolute pleasure. It rekindled my own interest in the campaign, dormant since I'd left Appomattox a decade earlier.

It stands as one of the most rewarding things I've ever done, editing Chris's books with him. Generations from now, when we're gone, the places he saved, the artifacts he collected and donated, and the stories he preserved, will be here for others to enjoy, learn from, and be inspired by. That's why all of us do history.

Chris's revised book, *No One Wants To Be The Last To Die*, is published by Savas Beatie and is available here:

<https://www.savasbeatie.com/no-one-wants-to-be-the-last-to-die-the-battles-of-appomattox-april-8-9-1865/>

EVENTS OF INTEREST

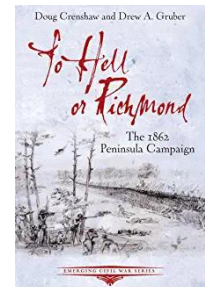
Thursday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.: Hanover

Tavern Speaker Series.

Authors Doug Crenshaw and Drew Gruber will speak on their book, *To Hell or Richmond: The 1862 Peninsula Campaign*.

The talk is free, register at

www.eventbrite.com/e/596831929367.



August 25-27: CWRT Congress 2023 Sustainability Conference, Gettysburg. Co-hosted by the Gettysburg Foundation, Seminary Ridge Museum, Adams County Historical Society, and the Gettysburg CWRT. Conference Theme: Membership Expansion & Retention. For more information and to register:

www.cwrtcongress.org/2023.html.

HISTORY AT SUNSET TOURS RETURN

Petersburg National Battlefield and Petersburg Battlefields Foundation are co-sponsoring four tours again this spring and summer, as follows:

May 20: "Lincoln at City Point"

June 17: "No Nobler Effort: USCT in the Opening Assaults"

July 15: “Tunneling Under the Enemy”

August 19: “Stories within the Story: The Battle for the Weldon Railroad and Fort Wadsworth”

All tours are free and begin at 6:00 p.m.. For questions, please call 804-732-3531, ext. 200., or see the flyer attached to this newsletter.



THE CONFEDERATE CONGRESS

By Jim Wudarczyk

In the April 1968 issue of *Civil War Times Illustrated*, Bell I. Wiley made several interesting observations regarding the Confederate Congress. Wiley wrote, “Composed of average politicians with extraordinary handicaps and meager resources, it accomplished more than is generally believed.” The author credits the first of the three Congresses as being the most important because it established a provisional government, elected Provisional President Jefferson Davis and Vice President Alexander Stephens, drew up a constitution, and enacted laws necessary for mobilizing, equipping, and maintaining the South’s land and sea forces for the first year of the war.

Perhaps what is incredible about what this Congress was able to accomplish was that between February 4, 1861 and February 17, 1862, this legislative body only met for five sessions. Three of the sessions lasted one month, one only lasted a day, and the last ran almost three months. All the representatives to the Provisional Congress were selected by the state legislatures, with

Virginia sending sixteen delegates. The most distinguished of the Virginia delegates was former President John Tyler, who died on January 18, 1862.

Interesting to note is that the members of the Provisional Congress were men of breeding, well educated, had considerable legislative experience, and were financially well off.

Christopher Bates sheds additional light on the role of the Provisional Congress. According to Bates, the Congress spent the first month writing the Constitution, which mirrored the United States Constitution, “except that it explicitly protected slavery and affirmed the sovereignty of the states.” Bates also noted that the second concern of the Provisional Government was the raising and financing of an army. Initially, the Provisional Congress believed that they only needed a relatively small army of 100,000 men, which could be financed with a low tariff. Like the North, they mistakenly assumed that it would be a relatively short war. After the firing upon Fort Sumter, their view of the war radically changed, and the Provisional Government authorized the issuing of \$20 million in Treasury notes and \$50 million in bonds. Also, they had to raise the tariff to 15 percent, which hampered growth in the private sector of the economy.

Let’s take a brief look at the men who comprised the new Confederate government. As noted, the man who stood out the most was John Tyler. Tyler was raised on a plantation and brought into his political life a strong support for the institution of slavery and states’ rights. While he considered himself a Democrat, he frequently found himself in opposition with President Andrew Jackson, especially when Jackson opted to use executive power at the expense of the states. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, Tyler held a number of

prominent positions both at the state and national level.

In 1820, there was only one major political party in the country, and that was the Democratic-Republicans. Political bickering led to a split and the disintegration of the Democratic-Republicans into the Democrats and the Whigs. While Tyler always felt that he was a Democrat, he found himself aligning with the Whig Party.

During the election of 1840, the Whigs nominated William Henry Harrison for president and chose John Tyler as his running mate. The choice of Tyler was one of political expediency. To defeat incumbent president Martin Van Buren, the Whigs picked Tyler because he was a slave holder and could draw votes in the South. Ironically, the Whigs did not have a platform, and they won the election by bashing Van Buren and the Democrats for the economic panic. Harrison and Tyler carried 53 percent of the popular vote and won the Electoral College by a vote of 234 to 60.

No one expected that the Harrison presidency would only last 32 days, before he became the first president to die in office. A new precedent was set when John Tyler was sworn in as president.

It wasn't long before Tyler and the Whigs were at odds. He vetoed the national bank, sought a higher tariff to reduce the national deficit of \$11 million while still wishing to stay within the limits of the 20 percent rate established by the Compromise of 1833, advocated expansion policies toward the Pacific, and authorized without Congressional approval an investigation into corruption in the New York Customs House. In retaliation, the Whigs refused to allocate funds to repair the White House, even though it was in dire need of renovations. As a result of Tyler's alienation from the Democrats and his open warfare with the

Whigs, he was denied the opportunity to seek the presidency in the Election of 1844.

Tyler eventually returned to the Democratic Party. On the eve of the Civil War, Tyler re-entered public life as the presiding officer of the 1861 Washington Peace Conference, which sought to avert the pending war. In the end, he opposed all seven proposals submitted by the Peace Conference on the grounds they did not protect the rights of slave owners in the territories and the proposals would do little to bring back the states that had already left the Union.

In addition to John Tyler, other prominent members of the Congress included Howell Cobb, Robert Toombs, Benjamin H. Hill, and Alexander H. Stephens.

...to be continued

Reprinted from "The Arsenal," newsletter of the Greater Pittsburgh CWRT, with permission by the author, Jim Wudarczyk

UPCOMING MEETINGS

June 13: Clay Mountcastle, "Confederate Guerrillas and Union Generals who Hated Them"

July 11: James Hessler, "The Fight at East Cavalry Field"

August 8: Emmanuel Dabney, "Broader Recruitment Training of USCT"

September 12: Jonathan Jones, "Veteran Addictions"

October 10: Rob Havers, "Anticipation of War in U.S. Military Society in the Antebellum Period"

November 14: Annual Dinner Meeting, Garry Adelman, "Preservation Accomplishments in the Richmond Area & Future Plans"

December 12: Jake Wynn, "Civil War Medicine"

Attendance at April Meeting: 81