



Founded at Fort Harrison
on February 8, 1951

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RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

JULY 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

July 8, 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. BARTON A. MYERS

**“LINCOLN’S COMMANDERS
FROM THE OLD DOMINION”**



For our July meeting, we will welcome Dr. Barton A. Myers, the Martin and Brooke Stein Professor of History at Washington and Lee University.

Dr. Myers will regale us with tales of the Virginia-born generals and admirals who fought in the Union Army and Navy during the Civil War. His presentation is part of a larger project examining the lives and contributions of all Southern-born Union Army generals and admirals.

Myers teaches a wide range of American history and military history courses at W & L, including the Civil War, the U.S. South, and public history. Before he became an academic, he worked as a historian for the National Park Service at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. In addition to scores of scholarly articles and book chapters, Myers is the author or editor of three books on the war: *The Guerrilla Hunters: Irregular Conflicts during the Civil War* (co-edited with Brian D. McKnight, 2017); *Rebels against the Confederacy: North Carolina's Unionists* (2014); and *Executing Daniel Bright: Race,*



REBELS AGAINST THE CONFEDERACY

North Carolina's Unionists

BARTON A. MYERS

radio programs, including the acclaimed HISTORY Channel documentary series

Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community, 1861-1865 (2009).

In recent years, Dr. Myers has served as a historian and consultant for a number of television and

GRANT, produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, as well as the HISTORY Channel miniseries event ABRAHAM LINCOLN, produced by historian Doris Kearns Goodwin.

To learn more about him and his work, check out his website: <https://bartonamyers.com/>

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

2007 RCWRT President, Bernie Fisher, credits his father for sparking his interest in the Civil War. "I've always loved history, but growing up in West Virginia, I didn't get much exposure to the Civil War in school." That changed around 6th grade, when his dad took him camping at Gettysburg, where a musket demonstration left a lasting impression. "I actually started college as a history major but ended up in biochemistry." Years later, his father passed on his personal copy of Bruce Catton's "The Army of the Potomac" trilogy. Recently married and living in Richmond's Fan District, Bernie devoured the first two volumes over a summer. He was nearing the end of the final book at a laundromat when, with just ten pages left, someone stole it! Undeterred, Bernie made a trip to the library later that week to finally finish the trilogy.

Through ancestry.com Bernie discovered a second great-uncle, Paul Bernet, who emigrated from Germany at age five and served three years with the 117th NY Infantry. On a sad note, the aging veteran, nearly blind and suffering from failing health, hung himself in his barn. His obituary highlighted his role in the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Bernie explained that it was a powerful veterans' association that advocated for benefits and pensions for former Union soldiers. As First Vice President, Bernie invited

retired Wall Street journalist, James Perry, to speak to the Round Table on his book "Touched with Fire: Five Presidents and the Civil War Battles that Made Them," which highlighted the role of military service in late 19th century presidential politics.

In the late 1990s, Bernie attended a Civil War Trust meeting, where he met Bill Welsch, who later became the 2016 RCWRT President. Bill told him about the Robert E. Lee Round Table in Central New Jersey and encouraged him to join the local Round Table in Richmond. Bernie reached out and asked Danny Witt to sponsor him. It was on his first RCWRT field trip that Bernie learned about the early 20th century Freeman Markers, which were catalogued by the RCWRT in the 1950s. Intrigued, Bernie enlisted the help of his son and daughter to document the markers and created a website highlighting them. Next year will mark the 100th anniversary of the Freeman Markers.

In 2005, Bernie attended his son's track meet where Shep Parson's son was also competing. Bernie and Shep spent the entire time talking about the Civil War. Bernie felt completely out of his comfort zone, but Shep persuaded him to take on the duties of 2nd VP. He was surprised how much he enjoyed lining up his speakers and as 1st VP getting to know each author over the traditional dinner prior to their Round Table presentation. Bernie recalled how pleased UVA professor and poet, Stephen Cushman, was to be invited to our Round Table to talk about "Bloody Promenade," his book on the Wilderness. Bernie said, "I spent hours walking battlefields with Chris Kolakowski and was pleased to have him speak about Perryville. Also, Mike Gorman's deep dive into Richmond Civil War photography was a real treat." He also remembered asking NPR producer, Andy Trudeau, to return to Richmond as a presenter. Andy looked at Bernie and simply said, "Richmond Civil

War Round Table? Dingy basement? OK, I'll do it." Evidently Andy's original trip to Richmond and the meeting room in the Boulevard church basement made a lasting impression.

Bernie organized a memorable bus and boat tour of Fort Monroe and the Battle of Hampton Roads. He was fortunate to have John Quarstein who lived at Fort Monroe when his father was stationed there. After the tour of the fort, members boarded a boat for John's presentation on the water where the famous naval battle took place.

Grant is Bernie's favorite Civil War personality and Antietam is his favorite battlefield. He and his wife toured the entire battlefield through an NPS "Bike with a Ranger" program. He recommends Stephen Sears' "Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam" for its vivid account.

Gary Gallagher is once again selected by a former RCWRT President as the most impressive historian they've encountered. Bernie admires Gallagher's academic rigor and his ability to connect with any audience, adeptly fielding questions from all.

Bernie's thoughts on the future of the RCWRT: "There will always be people interested in the Civil War, especially in a city like Richmond. We offer a great lecture series in a concise time period. Our Zoom meetings give us an opportunity to hear speakers from the western part of the country that otherwise could not present. I am concerned that declining memberships might not sustain Round Tables in smaller communities, which will be unfortunate."

In closing, Bernie encourages members to get involved and serve on the Board. "If I could do it, anyone can!"

Thank you, Bernie, for a most informative interview.

Billie

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

1. "It is well that war is so terrible! We should grow too fond of it."
2. "I am very thankful that God who withholds no good thing from me (though I am so utterly unworthy and ungrateful) for making me a Major General."
3. "A military life had no charms for me, and I had not the faintest idea of staying in the army if I should be graduated, which I did not expect."
4. "The inspiration of a noble cause involving human interests wide and far, enables men to do things they did not dream themselves capable of before, and which they were not capable of alone."
5. "I have just read your dispatch about sore tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg) that fatigue anything?"

Answers on page 6

PLEASE NOTE:

THE DATE FOR THE FIELD TRIP HAS BEEN CHANGED TO SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18. DETAILS AND MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW IN THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER.

HISTORY AT SUNSET EVENT

July 19, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm: "Believed They Would Capture the Whole Brigade" – Join us to learn about Weisiger's Virginia Brigade during the Second Battle for the Weldon Railroad. After a successful flank attack by Mahone's improvised division on August 19, 1864, Weisiger's brigade faced the imminent threat of being surrounded by Union reinforcements from the IX Corps. Discover whether Weisiger's rearguard was able to hold long enough for Mahone to withdraw his troops.

Flank Road Athletic Field at 1555 Flank Road, Petersburg.

This program is free and is the result of a partnership between Petersburg National Battlefield and the Petersburg Battlefields Foundation. Questions, call: 804-732-3531.

WHO WAS HE?



Kentucky-born Union general (shown above in a postwar illustration) whose Civil War career was dealt a fatal blow after a decisive battlefield defeat in the conflict's eastern theater.

(Look for the answer on page 6)

FAMILY STORIES OF GENERAL DUFFIE'S 1864 NELSON COUNTY RAID
by Andy Keller

My mother, Maria Nelson Gantt Keller, was born and raised until age 18 in Roseland, Nelson County, Virginia on a farm that had been carved out of the old Blue Rock Massie Plantation, but she maintained a lifelong connection to the County. Her two great grandmothers and their families each passed down stories about a Union raid into Nelson County, but she did not include any dates or explanation as to what Yankees were doing in such a rural location between Charlottesville and Lynchburg. I wondered if there was any validity to her stories, so I began to research the history behind them.

I found that they related to Union General David Hunter's infamous Valley Campaign in June of 1864. This campaign included a side incursion by General Alfred Duffie into Nelson County which took place between June 11-12, 1864 and, other than Sheridan's 1865 raid, was the only time the war came to peaceful Nelson County. The 1864 dates were also the dates of the battle of Trevilian Station in Louisa County which lay between Charlottesville and Richmond. Some say that Sheridan was attempting to reach Hunter to instruct him to come east over the Blue Ridge so that he could cut the Confederates off from using the Orange and Alexandria railroad to protect Lynchburg. Union forces were prevented from doing so, thus Hunter continued by the Valley.

The first remembrance was told to family historian, Mrs. Noland Bowling, by Susan Jacobs Bowling Mahone, my mother's maternal great grandmother, about an incident at the post office in Massies Mill, VA run by her father, Wyatt Bowling. At the time she was 21 years old.

Susan Jacobs Bowling was a woman of strong personality, kind to everyone and loved by all. She acquired a good education and was a schoolteacher for a number of years. She also assisted her father as deputy Post Mistress whenever his business made it necessary for him to have her assistance. During the War Between the States, she was on duty one day when an unexpected event proved her fearlessness, her devotion to duty, service to others, and the courage that were her overwhelming characteristics during her life. An account of it was given to the compiler in the summer of 1918 (she died 4 September 1918) when both were present at a gathering of some of the family members. During the conversation someone brought up the subject of the invasion of Nelson County by General Hunter's troops. That happened in [June 11-12], 1864 when the Northern troops marched from the Valley of Virginia through Nelson County and came by Clay Pool, Rose

Union Church and Rose's Mill and not far from Massies Mill, Virginia.

The older men who were at home received warning that the Northern troops were headed toward Massies Mill, and they went out to block the roads as a safeguard

to protect the citizens, their homes, cattle and horses. Wyatt Bowling was on such a mission, and he left his



Susan Jacobs Bowling as a young woman

daughter, Susan, in charge of the Post Office. At that point in the conversation, she turned to the compiler and told her about her experience on that occasion. Since it is a true historical fact, it is included here.

She was alone in the Post Office and was expecting the mail that was due to be brought by a boy on horseback that day. It happened that the United States Army scouts came upon the boy who had the mail pouch and gave him a chase. He knew the short cuts through the woods and hills and was able to elude and outdistance the scouts. Susan heard the galloping horse and went outside to meet the rider. He threw the mail pouch and dashed away yelling, "The Yankees are coming." He raced on into the hills to hide the horse and escape capture.

She opened the bag and quickly hid the letters in the deep pocket of her wide full skirt. She knew the letters would be from soldiers in the Confederate Army to their wives, sweethearts, and relatives. She had

no time to hide the newspapers. Seeing no letters, the officer asked for them. She replied, "Only over my dead body will you get the letters." He sat down and glanced quickly through the newspapers and then asked again for the letters. She repeated, "Only over my dead body will you get the letters." He threatened to have the building burned, and still she refused to give up the letters.

At this point the officer gave instructions for the fire to be started in a corner of the building. He went inside to look around and passed through the Post Office to the room beyond which was the tailor shop. There he observed patterns which had been purchased from his father in Baltimore, Maryland. He hastened out and commanded the soldiers to extinguish the fire as quickly as possible. Turning to Susan, he said, "I see you are my father's customers."

He asked once more for the letters, but she did not hand them over. The officer and his men rode away. At the age of 75 years, Susan was still happy that she had been able to save the mail and deliver those letters to the families waiting to hear from their loved ones. That afternoon in 1918 she laughed and said, "He had no idea those letters were in my pocket and no idea I had such a pocket." His sword could easily have ripped open the pocket and released the letters.

The fire had been extinguished in time to save the building, but Wyatt Bowling's desk was damaged by the flames. That charred desk was a keepsake in the home of his son Robert Perkins Bowling and remained there from the time of his death in 1919 until the hurricane Camille flooded Massies Mill in 1969.

*To be continued
in the August Newsletter*

Attendance at May meeting: 52

ANSWER TO "Who Was He" from page 4



JOHN POPE

Pope moved east in June 1862 to take command of the newly formed Union Army of Virginia, which was charged with defeating Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia after George McClellan had failed to do so during the Peninsula Campaign. Upon his arrival, Pope boasted to his eastern soldiers, "Let us understand each other. I have come to you from the West, where we have always seen the backs of our enemies; from an army whose business it has been to seek the adversary and to beat him when he was found; whose policy has been attack and not defense. I presume that I have been called here to pursue the same system and to lead you against the enemy."

Answers to "Famous Civil War Quotes"

1. Robert E. Lee
2. "Stonewall" Jackson
3. Ulysses S. Grant
4. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain
5. Abraham Lincoln

UPCOMING MEETINGS

August 12: Peter Luebke, "Death Loves a Shining Mark: St. Joseph Tucker Randolph's Civil War"

September 9: Dr. Lesley Gordon, "Cowardice and Combat in the Civil War"

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"