



Founded at Fort Harrison
on February 8, 1951

RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

OCTOBER 2024

"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."

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OCTOBER 8, 2024

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)

ROBERT E.L. "BOBBY" KRICK

***"Too big to be a man and too small
to be a horse" A Biographical
Overview of Confederate General
WILLIAM H.F. 'ROONEY' LEE"***



General R.E. Lee and his wife produced seven children: four daughters and three sons. All three males served in the Army of Northern Virginia. One of them, William Henry Fitzhugh “Rooney” Lee, raised a company of cavalry in King William County in 1861 and rose through the ranks, his ascension definitely founded on merit more than on the Lee name. He commanded a regiment of cavalry under J.E.B. Stuart, and became a protégé of that famous cavalier. Lee led a brigade of cavalry in mid-war, and eventually a division of cavalry by war’s end.

Whatever advantages “Rooney” might have enjoyed by being a Lee in Virginia in the 1860s were offset by a long string of personal misfortunes that began as a child and reached their unhappy zenith in 1863 and 1864. In between the various tragedies that plagued his life, “Rooney” earned the



William H.F. “Rooney” Lee

respect of his men and his peers, and built a solid record as a combat leader during the Civil War. Always large, “Rooney” ballooned after the war, a condition that provoked the

memorable quote that is the title of this talk. In his later years he continued to serve the Old Dominion off the battlefield, and died at an early age (54), felled by a variety of the same heart disease that had proved fatal to his father in 1870.

Robert E.L. Krick is a recently retired historian who served on the staff at Richmond National Battlefield Park for

nearly 33 years. Early in his career he worked at Custer Battlefield National Monument and Manassas National Battlefield, among other places. He has been a member of the Richmond CWRT since 1991 and, like almost everyone else, served a term as roundtable president long ago.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Last month, I admitted that I’m “a book guy.” So this month I’ll comment on what I have learned about reading books; because, when I started reading Civil War books, I actually believed everything I read to be “fair and balanced.” Now I know better. Early in my business career, I had a boss who was really smart, and he had a surplus of one-liner pieces of advice. When hearing someone give their opinion about a co-worker, he would say, “Rate the rater.” Simple sentence. Great advice. Think about who was giving an opinion. Are they smart? Knowledgeable? Should they be believed or not?

So, my advice about reading Civil War books is “Rate the writer.” When did they write and what was the world like at that time? Is it a soldier’s diary or letter, when the writer didn’t know what was going to happen next week? Or is it a memoir, when the writer is spinning history in order to get it to fit into the public narrative of the time? Or spinning history to make themselves look good and a rival look bad. Let me give a couple of examples. I read John Gordon’s memoir about 40 years ago, and I thought it was a great statement about why the war was

fought. It was written in 1903, and now I know to read it with a great deal of skepticism because it was a classic “Lost Cause” statement, not great history of the war itself. Or I read Joe Johnston’s memoir followed by reading John Bell Hood’s. Wow! Johnston said that he did everything right in the western theater in 1864, and Hood had really screwed up. Hood, of course, blamed all of the mistakes on Johnston. Maybe those two guys’ opinions of the other should be read in the context of their rivalry.

The same can be said of the Civil War authors of our lifetime, because most of them put a little (or maybe a lot) of slant into their interpretations of the events of a century and a half ago. There are a few who I would call “centrists.” I believe what I read in their books or hear at their talks at the Civil War Roundtable or a symposium. In my opinion (and remember to rate me when you read this), Gary Gallagher would be my definition of a centrist. Our great friend Bud Robertson would be a little “right” of center, and Ed Ayers would be a good bit left of center. Bud had a much greater emphasis on the individual soldier, and Ed would deal much more with the political scene. But their interpretation of the events is swayed by the central themes of their thinking.

Another good illustration came from a talk given by a British scholar, Brian Holden Reid, whose biography of Lee, *Robert E. Lee, Icon for a Nation*, came out in 2005. It was 2007, and John Coski and I wanted to do something a little different during Lee’s 200th birthday year. So we invited Reid to come to talk about “a

Brit’s opinion.” He gave a terrific historiography of 140 years of British historians who had made critical examinations of Lee. He emphasized how their opinions changed with time by reflecting their current environment. A British author writing just after World War I thought differently about military tactics, having just witnessed the horrors of trench warfare, than did an author writing before the turn of the century. Another case came from that wonderful friend, Elizabeth Brown Pryor, when she spoke at our annual dinner meeting shortly after writing her book on Lee, *Reading the Man*. One of our members asked, with a tone of criticism in his voice, “What would Douglass Southall Freeman say if he had read your book?” The questioner was basically saying, “I love Lee, Freeman loved Lee. How can you criticize Freeman by criticizing Lee?” She smiled and said something like, “Freeman would say that he wished that he could have been able to read the primary documents that I did.” So we should rate the writer here by knowing what she knew and what Freeman could not know. A final example came from an answer from Gary Gallagher to the great question, “Who is your favorite Civil War author?” He said, and I think this is a direct quote, “If you can forgive him for his love affair with Robert E. Lee, I would say Clifford Dowdey.” Well, the audience was surprised at his selection, but look at what he did with his answer. He “rated the writer.”

Waite

ANNUAL DINNER MEETING**November 12, 2024****6:00 p.m.****At Willow Oaks Country Club
6228 Forest Hill Avenue, Richmond****ROBERT HANCOCK****"THE SLAUGHTERS OF LYNCHBURG:
WHERE NORTH MEETS SOUTH"**

We are excited to welcome to this year's dinner meeting Robert Hancock as our speaker. Robert is the Director of Collections & Senior Curator at the American Civil War Museum. He oversees the continuing preservation of the museum's diverse collection including the maintenance and interpretation of the museum's historic house, the White House of the Confederacy. Robert will talk about his discovery of the Slaughter family and his subsequent research into this unusual union of a slaveholding Virginian and a Quaker woman from New Jersey.

The menu for the evening will be House Salad with Balsamic and Ranch dressings; Chicken Marsala; Herb Roasted Salmon with Dill Mustard Sauce; Roasted Creamer Potatoes; Buttered French Beans with Blistered Tomatoes; Freshly Baked Rolls and Butter; Dessert; Coffee or Tea.

Cocktails will be from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with cash bar service. The cost this year remains at \$40 per person.

You may register now with Art at the meeting, or by sending a check to Art Wingo, 1414 Patriot Circle, Glen Allen, VA 23059. Deadline to register is October 29, 2024.

EVENT OF INTEREST

November 2, 2024: "The Battle of Burgess' Mill" – Part of Grant's Sixth Offensive, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (8:30 a.m. check-in)

This will be a multi-stop tour of Battlefield lands of the American Battlefield Trust and private lands.

Tickets are \$30 per person and are available via Eventbrite in October: PETEBATTLEFIELDS.ORG.

Registration deadline is October 31, space is limited. The tour details will be emailed after tickets are purchased.



**From the Round Table Archives
**RCWRT BULLETIN –
Volume 1, Issue 9,
September 1958****

Why Was General A.P. Hill Buried on Hermitage Road?

Lee's "Forgotten General" is perhaps the only officer of the War Between the States whose remains lie buried in the middle of a thoroughfare. Each day thousands of automobiles swerve past on either side of the monument erected to his memory at the intersection of Hermitage Road and Laburnum Avenue in North Richmond. Not one in a thousand who pass by the

erect figure whose face looks toward the South knows that it marks the grave as well as the memory of the commander of the Light Division.

Historian George Rogers explains that in 1892 Hill's remains were disinterred for a second time and carried to their present resting place through the efforts of his surviving fellow officers and soldiers, who wished to do his memory greater justice than had been accorded him in Hollywood Cemetery. The place



selected, says Mr.

Rogers, "is within a few paces of the spot where Hill received

his commission as a brigadier-general, February 26, 1862, on the eve of the Peninsular Campaign."

This version of the reason for Hill's present resting place is more acceptable than the spuriously stated reason that the selection was made to stimulate a promotional scheme engineered by aspiring real estate developers.

Editor's Note: On January 21, 2023, A.P. Hill's remains were re-interred for a final time in Fairview Cemetery, Culpeper, VA, his hometown.

Horse Artillery and the American Civil War

While it is true that horses hauled most cannons to, on, and off battlefields, the designation "horse artillery" is most specific. It's actually rooted in European tactics and organization.

While horse artillery gained popularity on European battlefields in the late 18th Century, it reached its height of power during the Napoleonic Era around the turn of the 19th Century. Under Napoleon, horse artillery formed part of the cavalry and was highly organized to perform its rapid, close-quarter mission. The Napoleonic tactics became the inspiration for American Civil War commanders, but different terrain and changing military tactics created challenges.

The United States military had experimented with horse artillery prior to the Civil War. During the Mexican American War (1846-1848), units had taken decisive roles in several of the more open-field battles.

During the Civil War, both sides organized horse artillery, though the Federals often referred to it simply as "light artillery." Since the terrain of the Civil War battlefields usually limited the role of cavalry to scouting, shielding, and raids (not typically "grand Napoleonic cavalry charges"), horse artillery morphed its tactics as well, often acting as cover for retreats or occasionally setting up an ambush or supporting infantry in an advance.

The Stuart Horse Artillery had been organized during the winter of 1861-1862 under the command of Captain John Pelham. During the campaigns of 1862, Pelham and his gunners had sharpened their skills and become a daring unit, pulling cannons to exposed positions to fire and then retire, adapting well to the terrain and needs of the over-all battle, raid, or campaign. Pelham was mortally wounded at the Battle of Kelly's Ford in March 1863 and General J.E.B. Stuart selected Major Robert F. Beckham to take command of the unit.

At Chancellorsville, Beckham wheeled guns into a covering position on

May 1, taking serious losses. On May 2, 1863, he positioned cannon on the Orange Turnpike beyond the right flank of the Union XI Corps; here, he spent the day watching the road and waiting for "Stonewall" Jackson to complete the famed infantry flank march. Beckham sent two cannon into action during that late afternoon flank attack, blasting down the turnpike and keeping pace with the running infantry. With his two guns, he used classic horse artillery tactics in support of the Confederate infantry and helped to secure the road.

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Battlefields Trust*

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP **Saturday, October 26, 2024**



Fort Monroe

On Saturday, October 26, we will be traveling to Fort Monroe and Lee Hall Mansion for our annual field trip. We are planning to leave Richmond by 8:30 a.m. and arrive at Fort Monroe by 10:00 a.m.

At the fort, we will be given a tour by Dr. Francoise Bonnell, Director of Museums, Education, and Interpretation for the Fort Monroe Authority. Bonnell is the former director of the U.S. Army Women's Museum at Fort Gregg-Adams (Fort Lee) and a retired Army lieutenant colonel with more than 20 years of active and reserve experience. She has promised us a comprehensive, Civil War-

focused tour that will include behind-the-scenes experiences taking us into areas



Lee Hall Mansion

of the fort which most visitors are normally not able to see. We also will have

time to explore the facility on our own, to include the Visitor and Education Center and the Casemate Museum.

After lunch and on our return trip to Richmond, we will stop at Lee Hall Mansion, which served as headquarters for both Maj. Gen. John Bankhead Magruder and General Joseph E. Johnston during April and May 1862 and was the site of an 1862 skirmish. At Lee Hall, we will visit their Peninsula Campaign Gallery and take a guided tour of the mansion.

If you are planning on participating, please let Dale Harter know ASAP by emailing him at harterdf@gmail.com. The deadline to register is Tuesday, October 8, 2024, the day of our meeting.

All the details regarding transportation, meeting time and place, and cost will be sent out via email within the next few weeks.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

November 12: Annual Dinner Meeting

Robert Hancock, "The Slaughters of Lynchburg: Where North Meets South"

December 10: Sarah Bierle, "John Pelham: His Five Years at West Point"

Attendance at September Meeting: 57