



# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

What's better than a president of the Brunswick Civil War Round Table?

Due to numerous extenuating circumstances, the largest round table in the country will have five "acting presidents" from January to the end of the 2020-21 program year on May 31.

Despite an aggressive campaign by the nominating committee, no candidate could be found to take over from Mike Powell, who served as our president for five years. At their December meeting, the Board of Directors agreed to rotate the presidency each month. Each board member filling the acting position will be responsible for coordinating the organization's activities for the month, including running the monthly meeting, answering queries from members and the general public, and conducting the bi-monthly board meetings.

Assuming the officer slate is voted in during our January meeting, here are the acting presidents for the remainder of the program year:

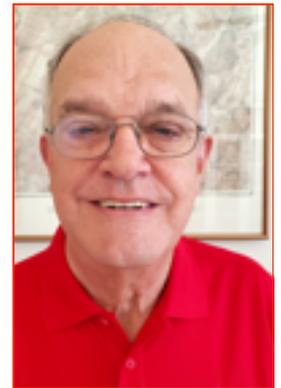
January	- Gar Dowell
February	- Cin Brochure
March	- E. Gifford Stack
April	- Jim Kane
May	- John Butler

The board believes this unique – some might say creative – leadership effort should have little impact on the BCWRT. Each person temporarily heading the organization will have the complete support of the other seven board members,

thereby sustaining the smooth operations of our round table. Members should not notice any difference from the previous several years...except Mike's picture will no longer adorn page 1 of this newsletter.

Here is a look at January's Acting President, **Gar Dowell**.

Gar (a name he has used since college days at SUNY Albany is derived from his middle name, Garland) currently is one of BCWRT's two Vice Presidents. He got hooked on the Civil War around age ten when his parents took the family to Gettysburg. This led him to buying his first Civil War book, *They Met at Gettysburg*. Later when he and his wife moved to Baltimore, they visited a host of other Civil War sites from Bull Run to Antietam.



His professional career was primarily spent in software development management. He joined BCWRT almost five years ago and resides in St. James. In addition to volunteering with BCWRT, he spends time with golf, online bridge with friends, reading, and watching British murder mysteries. And his Civil War library has definitely grown beyond that first book. "I currently have over 200 Civil War books, published between the 1860s to the present," he notes.

# Local Historian and Author to Regale North Carolina's Involvement in the Civil War

Members are in for a special treat at our first meeting of the New Year (January 5) when we will hear a most informative and provocative presentation by featured guest speaker, local historian, and award-winning author, **Philip Gerard**. His presentation is entitled, "The Last Battleground: Understanding the Civil War through the experience of North Carolina." Gerard's presentation is based on the actual title of his most recent book, *The Last Battleground: The Civil War Comes to North Carolina*.

His presentation looks at how the Civil War affected ordinary North Carolinians. Back during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War, Gerard, a professor of creative writing at UNCW, wrote a monthly column for *Our State* magazine.

Each column took a North Carolina topic, focusing more on the experiences of ordinary people during the Civil War, rather than generals or politicians. He tells about the common soldier's life, another column is about the "greatest hit songs" of the war (one was "Aura Lee," a sweetheart ballad later recycled as Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender").

As part of his presentation, Gerard will talk about his research and writing, and the discoveries that made North Carolina the perfect lens through which to view the whole war. North Carolina was both home front and battleground, a place for divided loyalties, and played a crucial role in both armies. "A lot of the war happened here," Gerard says. "Some of the best battles of the war were fought here. Appomattox ended the whole thing. And, the Confederate government-



in-exile passed through on their way south," he continued.

Gerard has written three novels and nine books of nonfiction, including *Down the Wild Cape Fear*. His novel *Cape Fear Rising* has been reissued in a special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition with a forward by Randell Kenan. He has also written eleven documentary television scripts, numerous radio essays, several magazine series, and an award-winning radio drama. He has appeared on National Public Radio's Weekend edition, CNN, and C-SPAN, and was a regular commentator on the History Channel.

There are two ways to join our 7 p.m. Zoom meeting. The easiest is to connect directly by clicking on this link which already contains the meeting ID and passcode: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89448012112?pwd=VURBeVRiVUhhYlplNHFHFL25Xb3JmUT09>

Or, if you have the Zoom app installed, the meeting ID is: 894 4801 2112; and the passcode is: 405002. Please keep these methods to join in a handy spot, and kindly do not send emails to the round table asking for the information once again. Regardless of the method you choose, you will be placed in a 'waiting room.'

You are encouraged to sign in early. Starting about 6:50, we will begin admitting people from the waiting room to the meeting. It takes several minutes to admit all attendees. Signing in early also reduces potential frustration wrestling with those untimely and annoying computer issues!

# Curt Field Voices Grant from the Field

A review of Dr. Curt Fields' December Presentation By Jim Medeiros

Conducting an effective program via Zoom is no summer lark. Keeping your place in your



material, pushing all the right magic buttons, somehow maintaining eye contact and intimacy through the looking glass, and, in the case of our round table experience, effectively using maps,

all give our speakers just one more opportunity to excel. **Dr. E.C.(Curt) Fields, Jr.**, excelled at our December Zoom meeting.

Although we have hosted Grant imitators before (See “Now We Stand by Each Other Always” in our March 2020 *Call to Arms*), Dr. Fields singularly mastered the mimicry. Grant looked appropriately grizzled in beard and rumpled uniform, a cigar clamped in one fist. He carried the cadence of nineteenth century American English in phrases such as, “I was most gratified with the surrender,” commenting on the victory at Ft. Donelson. Instead of happy excitement, Grant avers laconically, “Johnston gave up on Donelson before I’d taken it. He had told Davis he expected it to fall.” We could almost be reading his Grant’s memoirs, and yet that pace set us nicely in the mind of this military man.

For here lies Dr. Curt’s strength, capturing the heart of a man at war, with all the expectations of a soldier at the work of war. Concentrating on Grant’s service in the Western Theater, Mr. Fields tasted Grant’s victories at Ft. Henry, Ft. Donelson and Shiloh, as well as the ghost of his tippler’s curse following him forevermore. Grant’s victories in the West served bracing tonic to the Union cause which had suffered so much in the Potomac with 1<sup>st</sup> Manassas, but politics

and stubborn men dragged at Grant. A soldier depends on actually fighting wars for his advancement and pay, so being placed on the shelf frustrates him. Mr. Field’s voicing of Grant amiably portrayed the General’s distress when, after the capture of Donelson, General Halleck removed all troops from Grant’s command while threatening Grant with a court martial.

Commiserating as a general without troops, Mr. Fields shared Grant’s bitterness that Halleck adjudged, “Grant has returned to his old habits” of the bottle.

Eventually, Halleck, promoted to Washington, left, returning Grant to his men. Grant fought the bloody battle of Shiloh with the help of Buell the second day. Ultimately, Grant prevails but the insights he shares may be the greatest success in Mr. Fields portrayal. Answering questions about his insistence on Buell’s men, Grant tells us, “When attacking entrenched men you need three to one on the attack.” Other insights tell us of both sides. Of General Albert Sidney Johnston’s army, he said, “His army is as green as mine.” But then Buell did not make good use of his men, a dangerous failure with Grant noting, “I don’t think General Buell ever distinguished between a regular soldier and a volunteer.” Most of the men in both armies were career civilians and not career military. “After all,” Grant told us, “A wet cigar does not smoke well.” Leaning into the camera conspiratorially Dr. Curt reported, “Engage him and fight him.” In spite of the fact Halleck contemplated calling a court martial, Grant’s appeal to Lincoln for support provokes the defense with Lincoln’s comment, “I can’t spare this man, he fights.” “Signed: A. Lincoln.”

Being of like mind, I could conclude of Dr. Fields, “I like this historian; he acts well.”

## Board of Director Meeting Notes

**Presidency** - As mentioned above, at their December 9 meeting the Board of Directors agreed to rotate the presidency for the remainder of the program year. It is hoped that during the summer months the Board will identify a member who will hold the presidency for the remainder of 2021, and hopefully the following year as well.

**End of Free Zoom Meetings** - The Board also agreed to end the free admission to our meetings for non-members. For several months anyone who wanted to join our Zoom meetings could do so, absolutely free, in the hopes they would be interested enough to join “the country’s largest Civil War round table.” Starting with this month’s meeting, anyone Zooming must be a member.

**Delay in Posting Meeting Video** - Along this same line, the Board decided that the video of meetings will now be posted one week following the event. Thus, non-members will need to wait seven days before watching our speakers’ presentations. (Please refer to the December issue of *Call to Arms* regarding three ways you are able to view a meeting video.)

**Dues** - Hopefully members will mail their dues around the time they believe their membership expires. If the dues are received after the member’s anniversary date, the Board agreed to adjust the anniversary date to the day/month the dues are received. It was mentioned again that our \$25 dues have not been raised since our founding, and the BCWRT membership is a wonderful bargain considering the quality of speakers, newsletters, and activities (somewhat on hold due to the pandemic). See page 8 for BCWRT’s mailing address.

## **Do You Know How to Edit Zoom Recordings?**

BCWRT is looking for someone to help edit Zoom videos, and then provide the program to the three round table members who will post them to FaceBook, YouTube, and our website. If you’re able to help with our Zooming needs, please contact Gar Dowell at [gardow46@yahoo.com](mailto:gardow46@yahoo.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

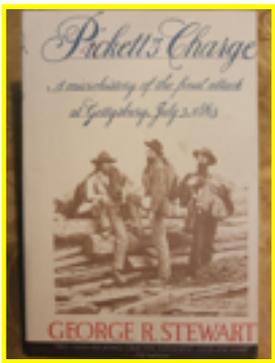
## **NAVAL HISTORY of a MORE MODERN KIND**

BCWRT member Ron Henderson believes some members interest in naval history may also extend beyond the Civil War era. The Battleship North Carolina has scheduled a series of engaging Zoom presentations for the first-quarter of 2021. To learn more about each of the 30-45 minute presentations, visit: <http://www.battleshipnc.com/meet-the-showboat>. For information regarding other public events or general queries about the famous battleship docked in Wilmington, contact Ron at [ronaldh211@aol.com](mailto:ronaldh211@aol.com). Aye aye.

# THE SUTLER'S TABLE - By Peter Whalen

During the Civil War, a 'sutler' was a merchant who would sell supplies to soldiers in camp or even travel with the armies in the field. One of the benefits to membership in the Brunswick Civil War Round Table is access to the Sutler's Table. Members who have attended our monthly meetings already know that we sell Civil War books that have been donated by other members.

The BCWRT Sutler's Table has over 250 books on a variety of topics relating to the Civil War. While some are gently used, others are nearly brand new, and the vast majority are in good condition. Our collection covers the spectrum from highly academic to the highly readable. While some offer a broad survey on the Civil War from

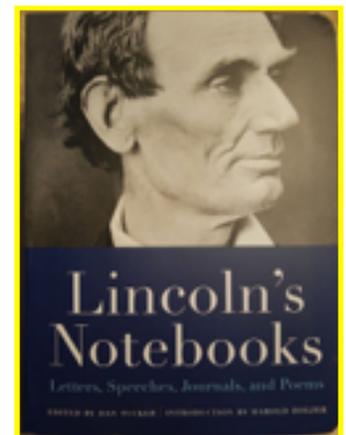


many aspects, others focus on a particular battle or campaign. We also have many biographies of notable generals or other important persons.

While the monthly meetings at Hatch Auditorium are on hiatus, we want to offer some excellent books for reading or collecting at very reasonable prices. For anyone interested in diving into some great Civil War reading, the "book brigade" has got you covered. Below is a sampling of the titles we are spotlighting this month. (We also have a limited supply of brand new BCWRT baseball caps for \$15 each.)

If you are interested in purchasing any item, please contact me via email at [apotcb@gmail.com](mailto:apotcb@gmail.com), or call and leave a message at (910) 368-5738. I will definitely reply to you and gladly arrange a mutually convenient time and place to meet in the Southport-Oak Island area. Please pay by cash or check payable to BCWRT.

1. Battlefields of the Civil War Hardcover, fair condition \$5.
2. Sherman (A Soldier's Life) by Lee Kennett. Hardcover. Good Condition. \$5.
3. Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer by James L.C. Swanson \$5.
4. Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency. By William C. Harris. Hardcover. Fair condition. \$5.
5. Receding Tide: Vicksburg and Gettysburg. The Campaigns that Changed the Civil War by Edwin C. Bearss with J. Parker Hill. Hardcover. Fair condition \$5.
6. Civil War: Fort Sumter to Appomattox by Gary Gallagher, et al. Hardcover Fair condition. \$5.
7. Lincoln's Notebooks (Letters, Speeches, Journals and Poems) Edited by Dan Tucker. Paperback. Good condition. \$5.
8. Failure in the Saddle: Nathan Bedford Forrest, Joe Wheeler, and the Confederate Cavalry in the Chickamauga Campaign by David A Powell. Hardcover. Fair condition. \$5.
9. Why the South Lost the Civil War by Richard E. Berringer, et al. Paperback. Good condition. \$5.
10. Pickett's Charge (A Micro-history of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863) by George R. Stewart. Paperback. Good condition. \$5.
11. Dear Mr. Lincoln (Letters to the President) by Harold Holzer. Paperback. Good condition. \$5.
12. Nothing But Victory (The Army of the Tennessee 1861-1865) by Steven E. Woodworth. Hardcover. Good condition. \$5.



# CIVIL WAR VIEWS

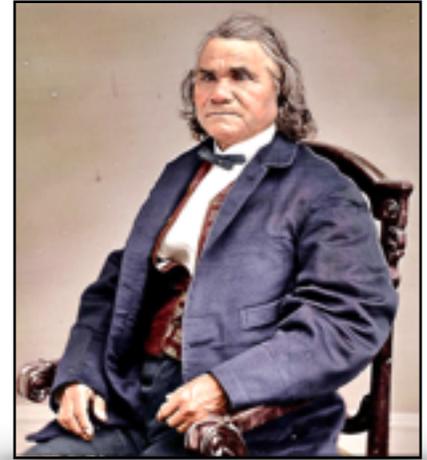


In September, member E. Gifford Stack visited Georgia's Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, examining (top left) the tunnel Union soldiers hoped to dig under Confederate troops; the Illinois monument on Cheatham Hill is the battlefield's largest. Another stop was Chattanooga where grandson Thomas Swanson examined cannon replicas on Missionary Ridge, near his home. *(Photos by S. Swanson)*

# WHO WAS THE LAST CONFEDERATE GENERAL TO SURRENDER?

Thanks to member John Walsh for digging up this question. Did you know the answer?

The last Confederate general to surrender in the Civil War was Cherokee Chief Stand Watie, on June 23, 1865, 75 days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Stand Watie was born in present day Georgia. He was a slave-owner and successful planter who assisted in negotiating a treaty with the U.S. Government to relocate to Oklahoma prior to the Trail of Tears. Only a minority of the Cherokee agreed with this, setting off major internal strife and violence within the tribe that he barely survived. He was the only Native American to achieve the rank of Brigadier General on either side of the Civil War and had a storied life before, during and after the war.



## Taps History

The origins of “Taps,” the distinctive bugle melody played at U.S. military funerals and memorials and as a lights-out signal to soldiers at night, date back to the American Civil War. In July 1862, U.S. General Daniel Butterfield and his brigade were camped at Harrison’s Landing, Virginia, recuperating after the Seven Days Battles near Richmond. Dissatisfied with the standard bugle call employed by the Army to indicate to troops it was time to go to sleep, and thinking the call should sound more melodious, Butterfield reworked an existing bugle call used to signal the end of the day. After he had his brigade bugler played it for the men, buglers from other units became interested in the 24-note tune and it quickly

spread throughout the Army, and even caught on with the Confederates.

Not long after Butterfield created “Taps,” it was played for the first time at a military funeral, for a Union cannoner killed in action. The man’s commanding officer decided the bugle call would be safer than the traditional firing of three rifle volleys over the soldier’s grave, a move which couldn’t be confused by the nearby enemy as an attack.

As for the name “Taps,” the most likely explanation is that it comes from the fact that prior to Butterfield’s bugle call, the lights-out call was followed by three drum beats, dubbed the “Drum Taps,” as well as “The Taps” and then simply “Taps.” (Reprinted from [history.com](http://history.com) and suggested by member John Walsh.)



# MUSTER NOTES and NOTABLES

**The Tuesday, January 5 meeting of the BCWRT will be conducted via Zoom - See page 2.**

BCWRT is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, co-founded by Tom O'Donnell and Wally Rueckel, and organized in May 2010.

The BCWRT website, [brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com](http://brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com), contains helpful information and is available to everyone, no user name or password required. Our Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcivilwarroundtable/>. Visit both sites to learn of future speakers, trips, and interesting Civil War information. Contact us at [brunswickcwr@gmail.com](mailto:brunswickcwr@gmail.com)

Mail Dues Checks to: BCWRT, PO Box 10161, Southport, NC 28461

## 2021 Officers, Directors, Advisors, and Liaisons (Assumes Slate is Elected at January Meeting)

(Vacant): President & Director  
Cin Brochure: VP & Director  
Gar Dowell: VP & Director  
Jim Kane: Secretary & Director  
Gary Krupp: Treasurer & Director  
John Butler: Director  
Kathy O'Donnell: Director  
Chuck Roedema: Director  
E. Gifford Stack: Director

Peter Carmichael: Advisor  
Chris Fonvielle: Advisor  
Tom Kehoe: Advisor  
Jim McKee: Advisor  
Roy Pender: Advisor  
Leslie Rivers: Advisor  
Wally Rueckel: Advisor  
Wade Sokolosky: Advisor  
Peter Whalen: Advisor

Max Williams: Advisor Emeritus

\*\*\*\*\*

**Call to Arms editor:**  
**E. Gifford Stack ([egstack44@gmail.com](mailto:egstack44@gmail.com))**

