

# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER - MIKE POWELL



At our next meeting Noah Trudeau will talk on Lincoln at City Point. We are sharing him with the Cape Fear CWRT, so if you cannot join us on Tuesday you can catch him in Wilmington Thursday night. In April, Dick Sommers will return to talk

on "Thucydides And the American Civil War". For those not up on their ancient Greek history, Thucydides, a classic model historian and Athenian general in the war, wrote a history of the fifth century BC Peloponnesian War. Can't wait to watch Dick make connections between wars separated by over 2000 years and half a planet. MASONBORO PARLOR will perform before Dick speaks that night. I'll bet we are the only Civil War Round Table with a band!

Because of prior commitments at Hatch Auditorium, we must move our June meeting to May 29. We will meet the first Tuesday and the last Tuesday, in May. Steve Davis will talk about Hood in the Atlanta Campaign, on May I. A BCWRT favorite, Susannah Ural, will talk on Hood, on May 29. Looks like May will be John Bell Hood month at BCWRT!

The first of the interpretive plaques for Fort Caswell has arrived and will be installed shortly. It looks really good as you can see on page 5. We hope to have the other plaques ready this spring.

With so much talk these days about "fake news" and bad Internet sources, the time is right to discuss historiography and historical In its basic usage, historiography studies the sources of a particular topic and how they have affected the writing and interpretation of that topic. In 1800, Mason Locke Weems, known as Parson Weems, wrote a famous biography of George Washington. It was here that the famous apocryphal story of Washington chopping down the cherry tree got its start. The 6-year-old George, with a new hatchet, supposedly chopped down his father's prized cherry tree. When questioned, the young man could not lie and told his father of his sorry deed. This story was passed down from generation to generation, each historian retelling the story, with Weems as the source. Today, historians see the anecdote for what it is: a good story, but of doubtful veracity.

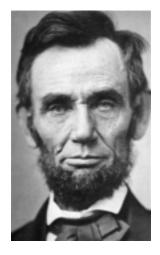
Henry Sibourne wrote one of the earliest histories of the Battle of Waterloo. If that were the only history of the battle, you would think that the great victory was due entirely to the Duke of Wellington and the British Army with the Prussians hardly having any place in the battle. However, look a little deeper and you will see that Mr. Sibourne was commissioned and paid by the British army to write his history, or should I say, their history of that battle. Again, generations of historians followed Sibourne's lead.

(Continued on page 5)

## 16 DAYS THAT CHANGED LINCOLN'S PRESIDENCY

One of the least examined periods of Abraham Lincoln's life covered the three weeks prior to his assassination. Thanks to our Tuesday, March 6 speaker, Noah Andre Trudeau, we'll get a great insight into this

critical period in Lincoln's presidency.



With his wife, son, and a small staff, the president journeyed to City Point (now Hopewell) Virginia in March and April 1865 to be with his soldiers, sailors, and commanders, and to

touch the face of war. During his 16-day trip he visited the just fallen Rebel citadels of Petersburg and Richmond.

He had left Washington as a war president, but returned as a reconstruction president. Trudeau will talk about the story behind the story, and how many fascinating new details about Lincoln's visit came to light. All of this and much more is discussed at length in his latest book of the same title, "Lincoln's Greatest Journey."

Most telling, as noted by one book reviewer, the visit, "Changed the president in a way that was reflected in his evolving policy on how to deal with the Confederates after imminent surrender. His Reconstruction policy was also evolving during this time..."

Trudeau is an award-winning author of numerous military history articles and eight Civil War history books, including *The Last Citadel*, covering the entire siege of Petersburg. *Southern Storm*, is a history of Sherman's march through Georgia, and *Gettysburg: A Testing of Courage*, offers a fresh history of the iconic battle. He is also a frequent guest on C-Span and writes for various Civil War periodicals. He was formerly an executive producer at National Public Radio.



As usual, the Tuesday, March 6 meeting takes place at Hatch Auditorium on the grounds of Fort Caswell. Registration and refreshments begin at 6:15 p.m. with the program starting promptly at 7 p.m. The visitor fee is \$10, and may be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues.

For more information about the meeting, contact president Mike Powell at (910) 2 7 8 - 3 5 4 5, or e m a i l t o mikepowell260@gmail.com. Our website is brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com. You can also visit our Facebook page for interesting facts, comments and updates.

## **Braxton Bragg Enlightenment**

Review of Chris Fonvielle's February 6 Presentation — By Dan Fink

Our roundtable is soooo honored to have those of you who have been with us since the start. You were our second guest speaker. We met in an "adequate" size room at the Methodist Church in Southport. Now we are again bursting at the seams. Almost 450 members came to hear you! Awesome. Now with your

fourth visit you must and should feel like a proud parent. We have switched from milk to solid food as we chew and thoroughly digest your thoughts on a much maligned but irascible North Carolina native son -- Braxton Bragg. Chris, you brought us a fresh picture both literally and figuratively of Bragg.

Ya just had to be there to see the recently discovered picture of a young Braxton Bragg. It was an unveiling.

Chris started his commentary with the much known concerning Braxton, then offered thoughts that might change our minds from "carved in stone," to

"slowly curing cement." Determination, irascibility and tenaciousness placed him 5<sup>th</sup> out of 50 in his West Point class of 1837.

He became a proud and lifelong friend of Jefferson Davis (a man who was known to NEVER let go of a friendship). This may explain a lot.

The war with Mexico made Bragg's star shine but contracting malaria while

there tarnished him for the rest of his life. He was strict but treated his men very well. More than once his nature (or was it a malarial flare-up?) found him arguing publicly with his superiors.

His military "wins?" in the Civil War became "juicy generalizations."

He became known for his ability to

snatch failure from the jaws of victory. The only exception on this slippery slide to insignificance was Chickamauga. Did the timely arrival of James Longstreet's Corps make a difference?

Many books have and are currently being written which "fan the flame" or "salute the famous" about Bragg. Chris contends ultimately, the final stamp was Braggs' defeat at Wilmington, NC. He is still thought by most to be the worst general of the war. Some would say, with tongue in cheek, "He was the best general the North ever had!!!!"

Chris correctly

reminds us of Braxton's attributes of a good commander. He was intelligent and had great organizational skills, but his disputatious personality was so strong he would even stoop to quarreling with himself. Having many high-ranking enemies is never healthy. He ultimately lost his plantation and his health. He died of a stroke at age 59 in 1876.



## Ladies' Department — By Charen Fink

## Rape in the American Civil War

This article may be somewhat controversial, but in light of current events involving today's women and the Me Too movement, it fits in well with the subject of rape during the Civil War.

Women faced fears then of not being believed, bodily harm or even death, and loss of reputation. The burden of proof fell on the woman as the victim whether she was or was not raped; there were many factors that helped determine if she was telling the truth. Today, women are seldom believed, thus she bears the burden of facts. But this is now changing.

Euphemisms for nineteenth century for rape

will be used, the most likely victims, the perpetrators, and their punishment. The reader can, therefore, do the comparisons between inappropriate sexual behavior of the Civil War era and the current downfall of sexual predators across all sections of our society. Why did it take so many years for women to be This information heard?

comes from books and articles and does not reflect my opinions; I am just the messenger.

Most of the men indicated to their potential victims just what they wanted to do to them by use of the following terms: give a diddle, answer his pleasure, make a connection, submit to his wishes or give him what he wants. The women victims described the verbal insults, attempted rape and actual assault: outrage, violate, ravish, connection submitting to his

wishes, doing "it," the affair, frig, defiled and carnal knowledge.

Rape was more prevalent than previously recorded. In the antebellum period, "Rape meant, by definition, rape of white women for no such crime as rape of a black women existed in law."

"Colored" female slaves were expected to remain invisible in the legal system, and

> because they were unable to legally marry, all of their sexual relations were suspect, thus, in law the crime of rape of black women did not exist.

During any war rapes are anticipated. Federal records reveal over thirty court martial trials were held due to instances of rape. We hear a great deal about the Union soldiers because of better record keeping. Many

Confederate records were lost during and after the war. The Union was the invading army. Slave women and Indian women were raped because they had no rights or considered free game by soldiers because of their race. The majority of rapes took place from 1863-1865 when the Confederate army went north (there were also assaults made on Union women). Finally, some soldiers sought revenge.

(To be continued next month)



## (President's Corner continued from page 1)

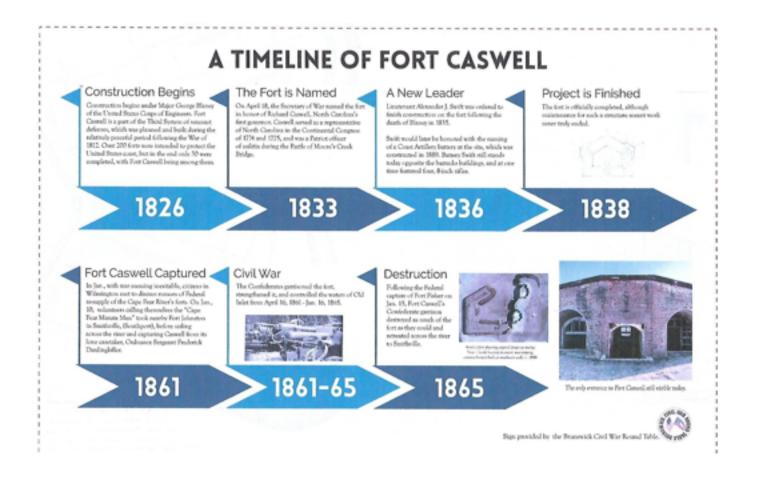
An early biographer, William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner in Springfield, also influenced the legend of the dark side of the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary. His biography was highly critical of Mary and set her reputation, mental stability and their marriage on a dark path that would endure for generations. Herndon portrayed Mary as the sole source of Lincoln's melancholy. For sure, Mary was a troubled soul, but most now agree that Herndon went too far due to his bias against Mary Todd. His assessment of their marriage was passed down from historian to historian.

Today, with the Internet and thousands of books, it is difficult to gauge the accuracy and motivation of authors. Before you read a book, take a few minutes and learn something of the author writing it. A Southerner, who was born, raised and studied in the South, and had relatives that fought in Lee's army is going to produce a different history of the

war than a Northerner with similar influences only rooted in the North. Today, the generational and political divides seem even more extreme at times. Take the time to try to determine the motivations of the authors you read. Today, the quality of research, by historians, is far better. Most seek impartiality and many achieve it. But, even today, historians use the same sources as everyone else though they interpret them differently. It is worth the time to try to determine why. Source evaluation becomes even more important when using Internet and television news sources.

In closing, we want to send get-well wishes to some of our team. Jim Johnson, Maggie Roedema, Roy Pender and Ken Keast are on the DL (disabled list), but are recovering well. We look forward to having them back in the lineup. See you at our meeting on March 6!

Mike



### **BCWRT VOLUNTEERS TO RECEIVE THANKS AT PICNIC**

**T**he numerous volunteers who help make our round table run so smoothly will soon get the thank you they so justly deserve.

"We will host volunteers and their families at a picnic at Fort Anderson on Saturday, May 19, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m." announced Mike Powell, BCWRT President. "Details are still ongoing, but we know the event will include tours, tasty food, activities, and perhaps a few surprises. This is a small way to say thanks to these folks for all they do for our round table."

Volunteers should receive details from their team leaders in the coming weeks, according to Mike.

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO LORI SANDERLIN!**

Lori Sanderlin, a member and Advisor with our round table, was recently promoted to the head of the Southport Maritime Museum. Mike Powell saluted Lori at our February meeting and wished her all the best in her new position.

Over the past several years, she has worked with the BCWRT to create museum programs for the younger folks involving Civil War education.

The Southport Maritime Museum, voted one of the preeminent attractions in Southport by newcomers and frequent vacationers alike, is located at 204 E. Moore Street. The museum is open Tues-Sat from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and there is no charge for admission.





If anyone has any experience with historic collections, cataloguing, inventorying and the care of such items, and would like to take part in a project working in this area, please contact Mike Powell (mikepowell260@gmail.com or 910-278-3545).

## WADE SOKOLOSKY NEW BCWRT ADVISOR

**A**t the February BCWRT Board meeting, Wade Sokolosky was elected as an Advisor to the round table.

Wade is very familiar to our organization having spoken numerous times at our meetings. He is THE expert on the Battle of Wyse Fork near Kinston. Added President Mike Powell, "Wade is a true gentleman and his expertise will be of great service to our round table."



## **BCWRT POLO SHIRT OFFERED AGAIN**

Responding to numerous requests, the



B C W R T Board is once again offering members the opportunity to purchase a polo shirt blazoned with the BCWRT logo.

"Obviously the shirts are popular items," according to E. Gifford Stack, coordinator for the project and a BCWRT Board member. He stated 29 of the garments were purchased during last year's campaign. "We're also

adding something new for 2018 and that's a long sleeve version of the shirt."

The price remains at \$25 (includes tax) for the short sleeve polo, while the long sleeve will sell for \$35. The three color options are white, gray, and blue. Unfortunately, there is no gray in the lady's long sleeve polo. All shirts must be pre-ordered and pre-paid, similar to the 2017 guidelines. There are no exchanges or returns.

An email with complete details and instructions was recently sent to all members. The shirts must be ordered by Tuesday, April 10, with distribution made at the May 1 meeting.

## **PROGRAM SPEAKERS FOR 2017-18**

**Tuesday, March 6:** Noah Andre Trudeau, author of numerous military history articles and eight Civil War history books including the Revolutionary War, the Mexican-American War, the Spanish Civil War, and World War I and II. The title of his presentation is, "Lincoln's Greatest Journey."

**Tuesday, April 3:** Dr. Richard J. (Dick) Sommers, award-winning historian and prolific author of over 100 books, articles, chapters, entries, and reviews on the Civil War. His topic: "Thucydidies and the coming of the Civil War." Thucydidies was an Athenian historian and general during the Peloponnes War, a civil war between Greeks which took place between 431 – 404. Sommers compares this war with the American Civil War. **PLUS THE** 

## MASONBORO PARLOR BAND WILL ENTERTAIN!!!!!!

**Tuesday, May 1**: Steve Davis, renowned Civil War historian, prolific author, Book Review Editor for Blue & Gray magazine, speaker and consultant for TV documentaries, and popular speaker at numerous Civil War round tables and historical societies. His topic: "The Atlanta Campaign and Confederate General John Bell Hood."

**Tuesday, May 29:** Susannah Ural, Ph.D., Distinguished Alumni Professor of the Humanities, and co-director of the Dale Center for the Study of War & Society in the history department at the University of Southern Mississippi. Her topic: "Letters of Hood's Texas Brigade."

### **POST-SPEAKER PROCEDURE**

Immediately following our speaker's presentation, members and guests who wish to leave may do so. Once they have exited, the speaker will gladly conduct a 10-15 minute Q&A for members who appreciate the opportunity to learn more.

## SEPTEMBER KINSTON TRIP SURE TO SELL OUT

The finishing touches are nearly complete on what will certainly be a thoroughly entertaining and educational visit to the historic Kinston area, on Saturday, September 15.

The trip, organized for BCWRT by member John Walsh whose previous tours have all sold out, will include comfortable bus transportation up and back, a tour of the Wyse Fork Battlefield - led by <u>THE</u> expert on the battle - Wade Sokolosky, admission and tour of the CSS Neuse

Civil War Interpretive Center, and a close-up look at the CSS Neuse replica located in downtown Kinston. A no-host lunch is also planned.

"We are almost ready to release all the detailed information, including the price," John stated. "For now, I'd strongly suggest members who are interested mark their calendars, and get ready to respond quickly when the sign-up form comes out."





## MORE CIVIL WAR RIVER CRUISES

**I**n September 2017, the BCWRT hosted a very successful Cape Fear River Tour, led by our own Dr. Chris Fonvielle. This sold out event was highly praised by all who attended. We couldn't



accommodate all of our members who wanted to take this cruise — but now you have another chance!

While <u>NOT</u> sponsored by BCWRT, Chris will be partnering with Wilmington Water Tours to do four similar tours during 2018. These are all three-hour tours, leaving from the Wilmington waterfront to various parts of the Cape Fear River. The dates are April 22, May 20, August 12, and September 16 - all Sunday mornings with boarding at 8:30 a.m. Tickets are \$50 for adults, \$25 for children 12 and under.

For tickets or more details call Wilmington Water Tours at 910 338-3134 or go online to <u>wilmingtonwatertours.net</u>

## **Cookies & Sound System, Thanks to Our Volunteers**

Those delicious cookies, the refreshing cup of coffee, and the quality lights and audio at our meetings do not just magically happen. It is all thanks to our volunteers.

The refreshment duty is actually split between two couples - **Ginny and Rich Largent,** and **Frank and Deb Benvenour**. According to Ginny, she spent several meetings learning the ropes from long-time volunteers Maggie and Chuck Roedema, eventually taking over in May



of last year. "We alternate months with Frank and Deb, so it is really a team effort," she noted. For every meeting, approximately 480 cookies are purchased (in

Wilmington), and 200 cups of coffee brewed. "We usually get to Hatch Auditorium around 4:30 p.m. to get things set up and going," said Ginny. "We begin the clean-up just after 7 p.m. when the

meeting starts."

Frank says he and Deb joined BCWRT two-and-a-half years and finds the talks extremely interesting. "We volunteered to do our part to



help the round table and it requires limited commitment," he added.

Both couples are appreciative of the donations members make for the beverages and cookies. The contributions just about cover the cost of refreshments and supplies. Ginny says she and Rich have been members of BCWRT for four years. "The funny thing is, I don't drink coffee and Rich doesn't eat cookies!"

**Nathan Sloan** grew up about 15 minutes from the Bentonville Battlefield, visiting the site often and

getting
hooked on
the Civil
War. He
serves as the
Fort Caswell
Baptist
Assembly's
Marketing
Coordinator,
speaking
across the



state at events to promote the conference center's programs. He is also responsible for their social media presence, website, email marketing, program marketing design. Somehow Nathan finds the time to also lead history tours around the fort, and head up program history events, such as the upcoming Cape Fear History Symposium, August 24-25.

He obtained his start at the Baptist conference center when, as a 17-year-old student, he got a summer job at the urging of his sister. The rest, as they say, is history. He enjoys a great commute — he and his wife live on the grounds of Fort Caswell.

We know Nathan primarily from the excellent job he does running the audio and visuals at Hatch. When asked what he liked best about volunteering for BCWRT, he replied, "It's refreshing to see a group of people, unaffiliated with academia, coming together to create a venue for these experts to share their knowledge all for the pure, simple joy of learning. As a Civil War fan myself, it's definitely a part of the job I don't mind."

## MEMBERS' SWORD PURCHASE HELPS BCWRT

Carlton and Judy Bryant recently became the proud owners of a piece of Civil War history. Just as significant, they also aided the general fund of our round table.

The Bryants, originally from Boone and BCWRT members since early 2016, heard that an anonymous round table member was donating a Union sword. They stepped up and offered to procure the artifact and donate their purchase price to the BCWRT.

We are grateful to the Bryants for their generosity and thoughtfulness," noted BCWRT co-founder Wally Rueckel. "Our admiration also goes out to the member who donated the sword."

The weapon is an Ames Model 1840 Light Artillery Saber with 32-inch blade with scabbard. It was manufactured by Ames Manufacturing Co in Chicopee, Mass., in either 1863 or 1864.

Making the sword even more of interest, the Bryants' relatives fought in the Civil War. (*Photo by Wally Rueckel*)



## LOOKING FOR CIVIL WAR BOOKS



Our Sutler's Table has a problem that perhaps you can help rectify: they are running low on books!

According to Peter Whalen, head of the Sutler's Table activity, "More folks are buying than donating. We like that members are interested in reading about the Civl War, but the diminishing number of tomes is worrisome."

If you have any Civil War volumes that you are finished with, why not donate them to the Sutler's Table, giving others the opportunity to also appreciate a good read. Simply bring your books to a meeting and see Peter at the front of the auditorium. If you desire, a letter of donation can be given.

All monies we make from the Sutler's Table are used for our speaker programs and preservation projects.

**The Things He Carried.** After President Abraham Lincoln died, on April 15, 1865, his leather wallet was found to contain a \$5 Confederate bill, imprinted with the image of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Lincoln may have gotten the bill when he visited Petersburg and Richmond earlier in the month. (Quoted in "The Civil War 8 Obscure Facts," smithsonianmag.com 2011)

## **BCWRT MEMBERS RECOGNIZE CW RELATIVES**

There are probably numerous BCWRT members whose relatives fought in the Civil War, but for Art and Cathy McCormick, their connection to the conflict is rather unique. Through diligent research, each found they have a great-great-grandfather who fought for the Union.

In Cathy's case, it was Joseph M. Brackett who enlisted in the 1st Connecticut Cavalry on November 3, 1861. He saw action in West Virginia, Grant's Overland Campaign, and Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign. He was captured on November 7, 1864, at Cedar Creek, VA. In February 1865, he was transferred from Libby Prison in Richmond and sent on a truce ship to Annapolis. He died en route, leaving behind a wife and five children in Connecticut.

For Art, he learned his relative Patrick Reagan had immigrated from Ireland and settled in Yonkers, NY. He enlisted in the 6th NY Heavy Artillery on March 18, 1864. Within 12 weeks of enlisting, he was sent to Virginia and participated in the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and North Anna River. He was shot and captured near Cold Harbor on May 30 and taken to Confederate Military Hospital #21 in Richmond where he died June 8, leaving his wife and six children in Yonkers.

Armed with this information, Art and Cathy contacted the National Archives, battlefield administrators, and the Veterans Administration grave index, but all organizations were unable to identify a gravesite for either of their fallen relatives.

During a tour of Andersonville Prison in July 2012, Art learned that headstones could be erected, bearing the words "In Memory Of" for deceased military members whose remains were never recovered. This lead to conversations with officials of the National Cemetery system where he learned only Quantico and Culpeper in Virginia had new headstone spots available. The supervisor at the Culpeper Cemetery coordinated the placement of markers for each relative in October 2012.

On Veteran's Day 2013, Benjamin Batson of Marietta, GA, Art and Cathy's grandson, placed an American flag next to the headstone of each of his great-great-great-great-grand fathers who proudly served in the Civil War.







### PLANS PROGRESSING FOR FT. CASWELL SYMPOSIUM

If you are one of the BCWRT members who either doesn't know about or appreciate the history of America's coast defense, this summer is your opportunity to fill in the gaps.



On August 24-25, Fort Caswell is hosting a symposium, "Focus on Forts," that will cover the two types of coast defense structure present at Fort Caswell, the original construction (brick and mortar) through the additional concrete batteries devised in the mid-1880s.

According to Nathan Sloan, a BCWRT Advisor and organizer of the event, "Together, the two systems of defense at Fort Caswell tell an often overlooked story, not just of military concern on Oak Island, but of a young United States, realizing its need for defense, and

grappling with the best method to achieve it." Nathan said nationally acclaimed experts will be featured, including keynote speaker John R. Weaver, a recognized authority and author on masonry coastal defenses.

There will be three lectures, plus a choice of two breakout sessions from four



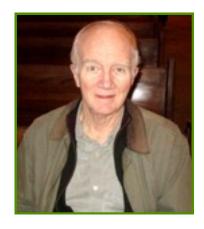
options. Meals, snack breaks, and program fees are included in two pricing categories: commuter \$115; and overnight participant — single occupancy room \$171 or double occupancy \$156 per person.

Call Fort Caswell's main office at (910) 278-9501, for more information and to register.

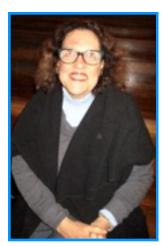
"During the Civil War, diarrhea (Greek, meaning "I flow away") was the most common and deadly disease. More Civil War soldiers died from diarrhea than were killed in battle. About 1 in 40 cases was fatal. Death came from dehydration, exhaustion, or the rupture of the intestinal wall."

From 101 Interesting Facts about the Civil War, FactRetriever, January 6, 2017

**Pictured at Our February Meeting**Chris Fonvielle and 446 members and guests attended our February meeting, including the happy attendees shown here. (*Photos E. Gifford Stack*)





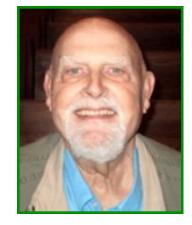
















## **MUSTER NOTES and NOTEABLES**

The next meeting of the BCWRT is Tuesday, March 6, 2018. The meeting will be held at Hatch Auditorium, NC Baptist Assembly, Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC.

Registration and refreshments begin at 6:15 p.m. and the program starts at 7 p.m.

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, <u>brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com</u>, contains helpful information and is available to everyone, no user name or password required. Our Facebook page is at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcivilwarroundtable/">https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcivilwarroundtable/</a>. Visit both sites to learn of future speakers, trips, and interesting Civil War information.

## 2018 Officers, Directors, Advisors, and Liaisons

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Call to Arms co-editors: Charen Fink and E. Gifford Stack

