



Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER - MIKE POWELL



The history community lost two towering figures last month: **Paul Laird** and **Ed Bearss**. Both a fine historian and great supporter of local history, Paul died September 12. He directed the Friends of Fort Fisher for years and

bore responsibility for the continued growth of the Fort Fisher State Park. If you enjoyed the 150th Anniversary events at Fort Fisher in 2015, thank Paul and his team for the success of the event. Since his retirement, Paul advised BCWRT and always provided sound advice based on his experience as an administrator and a historian. Survived by his wife Kathryn and two sons, Mathew and Benjamin, Paul's absence will touch the community, as well as his family.

As if 2020 could not get any worse, Ed Bearss passed away three days later. No one brought more history to more people than Ed Bearss. His influence and impact on *preserving* and *interpreting* Civil War history was unmatched. I cannot overstate his contributions to our understanding of the Civil War. He will be missed by many.

Turning to our first meeting of the 2020-21 season, I hope you enjoyed Will Greene's presentation, via Zoom, in September. As usual, he did a great job. On October 6, we will feature William C. "Jack" Davis. Jack Davis makes my list of top five Civil War historians every year. He will share the

panic and escape of the Confederate government from Richmond in 1865. Jack will clarify some of the myths surrounding Jefferson Davis' flight until his capture.

If you would like to participate in the Zoom meeting but are having any trouble with the instructions on page 2, please let me know and we can walk you through it. Also, do not forget that you can participate with audio only on your cell phone. We can tell you how to do that, too.

Please take the time to read the BCWRT position paper on the HR 7608, section 442, elsewhere in the newsletter. Passed by the House of Representatives, HR 7608 proposes the removal of Confederate presence from the battlefields of the National Parks Service.

Please believe me when I say that we did not arrive at this position without much discussion, much thought and some pain. We believe that a distinction must be made between monuments (sometimes offensive) on public property and erasing Confederate participation on the battlefields of the National Park Service. They are two, very different, issues and we believe that distinction is paramount to our position. The plaques and monuments in the National Parks represent the battle at that particular spot on the field. Their role is informative more than anything else.

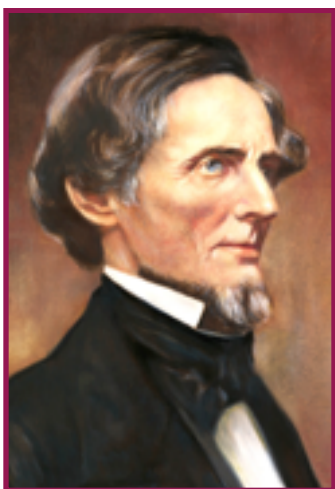
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OCTOBER MEETING FEATURES DAVIS ON DAVIS

Our second meeting of the 2020-21 season, once again via Zoom, will surely educate us on a facet of the Civil War most of us are unfamiliar with, delivered by a returning speaker we all admire.

William C. (Jack) Davis' presentation is titled, "Flight into Oblivion: the Escape of the Confederate Government April-May 1865." The meeting starts promptly at 7 p.m., Tuesday, October 6.

Following the fall of Richmond on April 2,



Jefferson Davis' Confederacy was a government on the move, trying first to link with Lee's retreating Army of Northern Virginia, and then with Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee in North Carolina. With pursuing Federals hard

on the Confederate's heels, Davis and his cabinet established one brief "capitol" after another as they proceeded to Danville, then into Salisbury, then Charlotte, and finally into South Carolina. Soon it became apparent that the government's retreat could not be sustained, recognizing all was lost once Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee surrendered. Davis's administration declared the Confederacy dissolved on May 5, 1865. The stories of those whose who finally gave up, and the hair-raising adventures of the few who actually escaped, is the little-known, and fascinating, stuff of classic adventure.

Jack Davis is a popular Civil War speaker, an award-winning American historian, a former professor of history at Virginia Tech, and the former Director of Programs at the school's Virginia Center for Civil War Studies. He has written more than 40 books on the Civil War, was the only three-time winner of the Jefferson Davis Prize for Confederate history, and was awarded the Jules and Frances Landry Award for Southern history.



Similar to our September meeting, you will need to open your Zoom app and enter the meeting ID and passcode. Alternately, you may simply click on the link below, then enter the meeting ID and passcode -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86223559157?pwd=bFhLU2xhMmtZQ3dac3A3bGU2YzIXQT09>

Meeting ID: 862 2355 9157

Passcode: 147915

Hope everyone can grab their favorite beverage and snack, wear the most comfortable clothes, leave the mask aside, and join us Tuesday, Oct 6, at 7 p.m., for an entertaining meeting.



THE FIRST PETERSBURG OFFENSIVE - *A review of Will*

Greene's September Presentation

By Jim Medeiros

Despite Grant's failure to take Petersburg with his brilliant subterfuge of crossing the James River on a 2,000-foot pontoon bridge (the largest bridge to that date) and a flotilla of river boats, **Will Greene**, in the fall's first Zoom meeting, assessed that the greatest reasonable explanation for the failure was the exhaustion of the Union troops after fighting their way to Richmond in nearly 60 days of battle.

In spite of his five to one advantage in force size, in spite of nearly 16,000 casualties suffered on both sides, in spite of the 125,000 men in gray and blue grappling over Petersburg, Grant would clash in eight more offensives over

Petersburg--months more of added war--due to his loss at First Petersburg.

Other questions begged by First Petersburg: Why, in spite of his surreptitious movement of Union troops across the James and Chickahominy Rivers, did Grant's armies fail at Petersburg? Was his choice as grand commander a fluke and was he really incompetent? Were Lee and his lieutenants inspired military leaders? Did the Virginia terrain beat the Union troops? Did the bluecoats beat themselves? Will Greene's answer seems transparent, that the 60,000 Union casualties suffered in near continuous fighting through the battles at the Wilderness, Cold Harbor and Spotsylvania had left them exhausted in the face of even opposition from old men and boys, General Beauregard's thin entrenchments and Lee's skepticism of Beauregard's bleats for help. Armies may march on their stomach, but

souls need rest and repair. But both Grant and Lee faced further bugaboos.

Union and rebels alike suffered from poor communications. Upon Union General Hancock's being called to support General Smith, he not only did not know where to go but also lost one unit on the roads.

Confederate Beauregard sent messages to

Lee where Lee was no longer. General Smith told to wait in place for provisions being sent from General Butler--provisions he did not need because he already had 3 days rations--suffered a useless six-hour delay awaiting the provisions that never arrived. Other Union generals called upon to advance their lines

often mistrusted troops guarding their flanks and failed to move. Even worse, Meade grew so frustrated with his various subordinate commanders' failure to advance as ordered that he angrily commanded each general to advance when their individual units were ready. The piecemeal stops and starts lead to the First Maine Heavy Artillery's charging rebel works so that 632 of its 900 men lay killed or wounded in a mere ten minutes, the largest unit loss of the entire war. General Beauregard kept pleading for Lee's reinforcements yet somehow his scouts repeatedly failed to locate the small matter of the 2,000-foot pontoon bridge.

For those who could not get enough of the long battle for Petersburg during our meeting, watch for the publication of Will Greene's definitive analysis.



Ladies' Department — *By Charen Fink*

Civil War Haunts

Mammy Wise lived in Tennessee and some say she was as old as the hills and mountains but could predict the future. She could cure a child of thrush, find a husband for a spinster or locate lost items. One thing she predicted was that the star in the northern sky would collide with the star in the southern sky causing trouble. Politicians did not take her warnings seriously. She felt bad about that one and from then on was careful about her predictions.

Oola and the War Comet. Comets for centuries were thought to presage catastrophes both natural and man-made. In 1861 one flew over Washington, D.C., amid conflicts between the North and South. It was the African-American population that took this seriously. A black slave, Oola, was known to have the Evil Eye and could conjure spells. She terrified everyone around her. Two of her predictions did come to pass; the war which followed the passing of the comet and the death of President Lincoln.

Julia Grant also had presentments and accurate intuitions.

“Ulys” and his men were departing the Battle of Belmont heading towards their ship in the



Missouri River. Grant held back to ascertain how close the Confederates were in pursuit of his troops. The men were already on board and away from the dock as “Ulys” spurred his horse quickly to reach the ship. While bullets flew pass barely missing him, he rode his horse into the water and up the narrow gangplank. Julia, meanwhile, while preparing to meet her husband, states she distinctly saw him a few

yards in front of her and called out to him. At that precise time, he verified that he had been in great peril.

The Mirror had Two Faces. Of all the Civil War ghosts, the one most frequently mentioned is that of Abraham Lincoln. He had premonitions, visions and many people reported having seen in various places. He vacillated between elation and gloom by the rent in the veil which hid the mortal view from what the future holds. While awaiting the election returns in 1860, he laid down to rest across from a nearly full-length



mirror. He saw his reflection appearing as a double image. He got up to inspect it, but it disappeared until he reclined once again. This time it became clearer and one of the faces was paler than the other. The incident caused pangs of anxiety, however, at another time he repeated the experiment with the same results. Wife Mary indicated that the pale image indicated he would die before the end of his second term in office. He had a long-held belief that he had a special destiny to fulfill, a testament to his moral courage. Another Lincoln vision was that of him hearing cries of mourning in the rotunda and seeing his body lying in state. He asked who died and was told Mr. Lincoln.

References

Coleman, Christopher. *Ghosts and Haunts of the Civil War*. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 1999, pgs. 12-13, 24-25, 31-34, 130-132.

Board Votes to Oppose Federal Bill Requiring Confederate Monument Removal in National Parks

Your Board of Directors recently voted to oppose section 442 of H.R. 7608. Below is the statement approved by the Board. After reading, we would ask each of you to contact Senators Burr and Tillis - by mail (see sample on next page), phone, or email - and ask them to vote no on H.R. 7608 as currently written. Thank you. *Board of Directors, BCWRT*

Bill H.R. 7608 passed the U. S. House of Representatives in July 2020, calling for the removal of all monuments, statues, plaques, and references to the Confederacy battling at Gettysburg, and all other National Battlefield Parks. BCWRT opposes the passage of section 442 of H.R. 7608. We consider the removal of Confederate history from the National Park Battlefields as an erasure of our country's history. This is unacceptable.

Removing battlefield monuments is not about justice; it *is* about erasing the *history* of the battles fought in the American Civil War. We want to be clear: our statement does not concern monuments on public property in the counties, towns and cities of America. Our opposition is to the removal of monuments, statues and informational plaques with Confederate connections on the battlefields of the National Park Service as spelled out in section 442 of H. R. 7608. We believe that we can learn lessons from the study of the Civil War in addition to those regarding slavery. Markers on a National Park Service battlefield serve a distinct purpose to provide a deeper understanding of the events that took place on the battlefields. They indicate the positions of troops and locations where important and decisive incidents took place. The National Parks Service does an excellent job in presenting the Civil War in a fair, academic and impartial way.

The Brunswick Civil War Round Table has donated thousands of dollars to highlight the role

of the African-American in the Civil War. We are sensitive to the problems caused by monuments that do not fully articulate the subject memorialized. However, the destruction of the history of the battlefields and impugning the role of the National Park Service as guardians of the accurate, truthful and unbiased history of the war should not be a target. If visitors, students or historians cannot go to the National Parks for an accurate account of events, where are they to go for truth on the battles of Antietam, Chickamauga, Petersburg, Vicksburg, Fort Sumter, Manassas, Chancellorsville, and many more? That elected officials are even talking about such a policy is scary. The fact that H.R. 7608 has passed the U.S. House of Representatives is a warning, just as the Licensed Gettysburg Guides recently wrote. To be silent is to consent to the possible erasure of our National Park Battlefield history.

We urge every BCWRT member to take a moment to write a letter (and/or an email or phone call) to their congressional representative expressing opposition to section 442 of H.R. 7608.

To find the address, phone number, and email of any US senator, simply click on this link: https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm. For the House of Representatives, use this link: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.

Sample Letter to NC Senators

Members may use this sample letter to voice their opposition to Section 442 of H.R.7608. Make two copies, one for Senator Tillis and the other for Senator Burr. In addition to your letter, you may also call or send an email to them expressing your concerns.

Date you are sending
Your address

Senator Richard Burr
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Thom Tillis
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Opposition to Section 442 of H.R. 7608

Dear Senators Burr and Tillis:

As a member of Brunswick Civil War Round Table, the largest one of its kind in the country, I am writing to express my opposition to recent legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 7608) that provides, in part (Section 442), for the removal of Confederate commemorative works by the National Parks Service.

I am opposed to Section 442 of H.R. 7608 because the removal of Confederate commemorative works, such as statues, monuments, sculptures, memorials, and plaques from our National Parks would permanently deprive us of educational markers of our country's history. Confederate monuments, particularly in our National Parks, provide informative details on the battles and stories of the Civil War. The removal of these monuments would erode our collective understanding of this crucial moment in our country's history. Although current political and social forces seek to remove these markers, Confederate monuments stand in our National Parks primarily as a reminder of where our country has been and as encouragement to create a better future. As a member of Brunswick Civil War Round Table, I cannot support legislation that would deprive us of the educational value these Confederate commemorative works provide.

I urge you to consider opposing H.R. 7608 as currently written so that we may preserve the monuments in our National Parks that contribute to our understanding of our country's history. Thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Printed Name

(Continued from page 1)

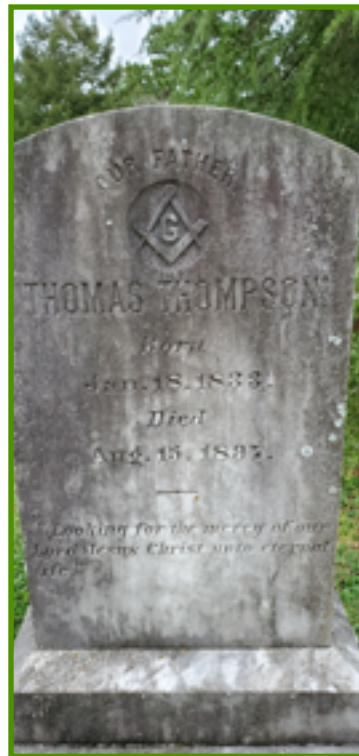
We will provide a copy of a sample letter and Senate addresses (see page 6) that we hope our members use to write to their Senators encouraging them to oppose section 442 of H. R. 7608, and how it deals with erasing the history of the war at the National Park Service Battlefields. We encourage folks to send an email or call their Senators, as well as sending the letter. We respect the opinions of those who oppose our stance. However, the BCWRT Board of Directors voted to oppose the bill as an organization, and our silence only consents to the bill as written.

I hope everyone who thought about joining our leadership team will step up now. BCWRT is experiencing some leadership changes. We are losing several fine folks, but we are also gaining some really talented individuals. What will not change is the dedication of the leadership team to produce the same high-quality product that we strive for every month. I very much look forward to getting back to meeting in person...and forgetting to do the 50/50 raffle.

Mike



Civil War Views



(From top left, clockwise) Member John Walsh did a NC road trip in September, visiting a memorial to Colored Union soldiers in Hertford, a gravestone at St. Paul's Church in Edenton, a marker for the now-submerged Ft. Ocracoke located on Ocracoke Island, and a memorial to Confederate Veterans, also on Ocracoke. *(Photos by Edie Day)*

Dues: What to Do?

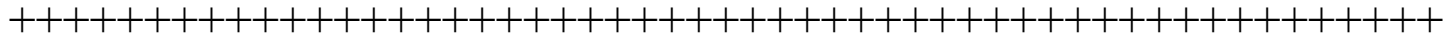
Several members have recently inquired, "What should I do about paying my BCWRT dues?" Here is the answer.

Since we are not meeting at Hatch, you have not been reminded when your dues are up for renewing. Additionally, we have temporarily lost our ability to send you a "friendly reminder" email, also letting you know when your dues are due. Until one or both of these helpful reminder activities are back in place, we are asking you send in your dues check for \$25 to our post office box: BCWRT, PO Box 10161, Southport, NC 28461. Your payment will be matched to your renewal month.

It may appear there are no expenses since we have not held in-person meetings for all these months. However, we still provide our Zoom

speakers with a fee, there is a cost for our level of Zoom meetings, and we have small administrative expenditures. Also, the leadership team desires sufficient reserves for our annual scholarship, as well as the yearly donations we make to promote, encourage, and support Civil War battlefield preservation.

Of note, our dues have not changed in the ten years since our founding. Hopefully, members still believe there is value in being a member, receiving newsletters filled with informative articles, having access to our Facebook page, and attending ten meetings throughout the year featuring leading historians and scholars.



November Meeting Date Changed to Tuesday, November 10
Please note that we have changed the date of our November meeting to Tuesday, November 10. We do not want to compete with the election. We encourage everyone to get out and vote...and await the returns! Our November speaker is Chris Mackowski, who ALWAYS gets a well deserved standing ovation. His topic: "Second Guessing Ewell" --- Confederate Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell's action at Gettysburg, particularly Culp's Hill.

UPDATE - NC Civil War & Reconstruction History Center. Member Wally Rueckel says Phase 1 of this unique site in Fayetteville was finished in September. Located on the grounds of the old Confederate Arsenal, the complex is transforming a regional museum into a first-class statewide history center. Phase 2 groundbreaking took place earlier this year. Funding for Phase 3, provided by the state, is on hold due to Covid-19 needs. Wally is one of three BCWRT members serving as advisors for the center. Joining him are Chris Fonvielle and Charen Fink. For more information on the unique complex, visit the center's recently revamped website: <http://nccivilwarcenter.org>.

REMEMBERING MEMBER PAUL LAIRD

Paul Laird passed away suddenly last month. As Mike mentioned in his comments, Paul led the Friends of Fort Fisher, and was responsible for all the good things visitors enjoyed at the most-visited state historic site. While only serving on our leadership team for several years, he made significant contributions to our round table, always in a friendly, constructive manner. We miss him already.

“I got to know Paul when I was a board member for the Friends of Fort Fisher, then again when he joined the BCWRT as an advisor. Paul’s background and knowledge of the Civil War and Fort Fisher made him a real asset to both organizations. He had a commitment and passion for American history. His congenial personality and friendly smile will be missed by all who knew him.”

Jim Johnson



“Maggie and I were so sad to read about Paul's sudden passing. We send our sincere condolences to his family. My acquaintance with Paul was rather brief. I know how much he contributed to Ft. Fisher, and I was delighted when he joined our BCWRT. He was a mover and a shaker, and always had a well thought out point-of-view when asked. He was a real asset to our Board as an

advisor, and knew he was destined for an even more important role looking ahead. His sudden death is a wake-up call to Maggie and me. It's a reminder of how precious life is, and how vital it is for all of us to come together in a positive way as we face the "new normal." Thank you Paul for the wake-up call. You are missed.” **Chuck Roedema**

“I first met Paul Laird after moving to Southport. Along with friends, we went to Fort Fisher and quickly realized the site was overwhelming. Luckily, Paul guided us throughout the museum and grounds for almost four hours, making the history of the fort come alive. My friends and I were exhausted when we left, but held an immense respect for Paul. I have returned many times since, always remembering Paul’s education lesson. By the time Paul retired he had overseen the huge growth in the site. He was instrumental in successfully running a major fundraiser to improve the fort, including repairs to the earthworks, expansion of the visitor center (shown inside with BCWRT member Kathy O’Donnell) and garnering national recognition of the site. Paul was a leader and a visionary. He was low key but sure made things happen.”



Wally Rueckel

An ardent supporter of round tables, Ed Bearss spoke at the BCWRT meetings for many, many years. His passion, knowledge, zeal, and penchant for details will be missed. These are photos from his visits.



MUSTER NOTES and NOTABLES

The Tuesday, October 6 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, 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.

2020 Officers, Directors, Advisors, and Liaisons

Mike Powell: President & Director

Gar Dowell: VP & Director

(Vacant): VP & Director

(Vacant): Secretary & Director

Gary Krupp: Treasurer & Director

John Butler: Director

Kathy O'Donnell: Director

Chuck Roedema: Director

E. Gifford Stack: Director

Peter Carmichael: Advisor

Jack Carpenter: Advisor & Ft. Anderson Liaison

Chris Fonvielle: Advisor

Tom Kehoe: Advisor

Jim McKee: Advisor

Roy Pender: Advisor

Leslie Rivers: Advisor

Wally Rueckel: Advisor

Dave Shultz: Advisor

Wade Sokolosky: Advisor

Peter Whalen: Advisor

Max Williams: Advisor Emeritus

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