



# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table

## The President's Corner by John Butler



If you were able to get through the traffic nightmare on Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, then you were part of the BCWRT's largest program since COVID 19. Besides being the largest, it also happened to be our longest program to date. Thomas Jessee, as **General Robert E. Lee**, provided a wonderful performance and gave the audience many insights into the foundation of Lee's character.

We set many new records on attendance. They include having more than 440 people present at Hatch Auditorium and another 215 people watching via live stream. We also had a record number of 53 new members who signed up. Even the guest attendance of 17 set a new record.

Ann Birdsall, VP of Programs, is looking at all of the options to get a return performance by either General Lee or General Grant for the 2026-2027 season.

If you somehow missed General Lee, you can see him on our YouTube page. Just go to our website, click on the YouTube page, and watch on any internet connected device for free.

For October's meeting we have Ed Gantt returning to discuss the years after the Civil War titled, "With Malice Towards None, With Charity for All?"

Be prepared for another fantastic program.

*John*

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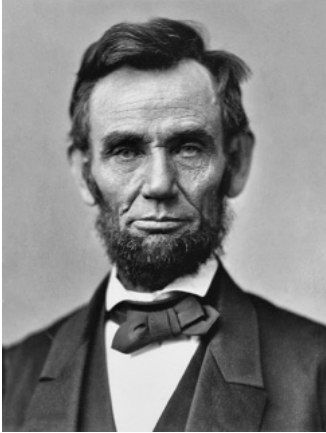
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Muster Notes

# BCWRT Upcoming Events

## Tuesday, October 7, 2025 Program

### “With Malice Towards None, With Charity For All?”



During his Second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, a speech of only 701 words and considered one of his greatest and most remembered, a re-elected President Abraham Lincoln wanted to unify a broken nation. With the end of the brutal four year Civil War within sight, many on both sides felt anger and frustration toward their fellow Americans. Lincoln attempted to rise above the divisiveness and start the process of healing. Within that speech, the powerful phrase, “*with malice toward none, with charity for all*” summarized the essence of Lincoln’s goal to heal.

Retired Navy Captain Edward W. Gantt believes Lincoln offered a hopeful national environment in that speech. However, Gantt turns Lincoln’s memorable phrase into a question because in his mind it just wasn’t to be. According to him, much of that sentiment died after Lincoln’s assassination six weeks later.

At the beginning of 1865, African Americans had a sense of optimism, and probably justifiably so. They watched their fathers and sons return to areas in the southern states wearing the blue uniforms of Confederate soldiers. They had heard the stories of Union victories in the eastern theater. Even the 13th Amendment had been passed by Congress, promising that their emancipation would have a sense of permanence under the law.



Something changed, however, and it changed dramatically.

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., **Ed Gantt** graduated from Howard University and the National Defense University. After retiring from 30 years in the military, which included service with both the Army and the Navy, he became a public high school teacher in Prince George’s County, MD, and Washington, D.C.

Passionate about telling underrepresented stories, he joined the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, and African American Civil War reenactment group, and also served with the 23rd USCT in Maryland. He is active with The African American in the Civil War Era Round Table, and serves as Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW).

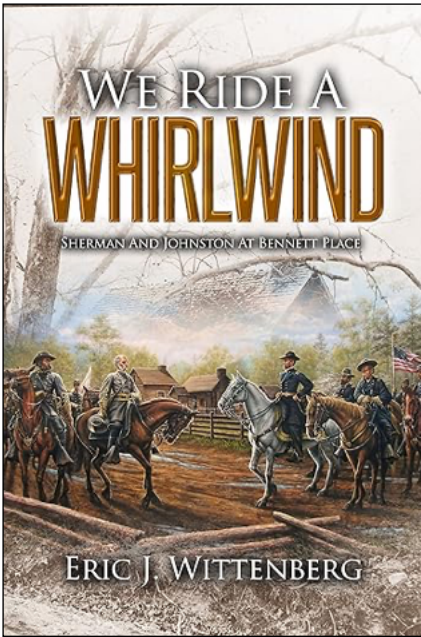


**See page 10 for Pre-Registering for the Meeting and the link to watch on YouTube.**

# Book Review

## We Ride a Whirlwind: Sherman and Johnston at Bennett Place

**Book Review by John Butler**



The events at Appomattox Court House in Virginia on April 9, 1865 have long been considered the end of the Civil War. However, there were still Confederate armies in the field. Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, commander of the Union armies operating in North Carolina, still faced a 31,000 man Confederate army led by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. In addition, another 60,000 Confederate soldiers remained under arms east of the Mississippi River.

The largest surrender of Confederate forces occurred at Bennett Place in Durham, NC on April 26, 1865 when Gen. Joe Johnston surrendered to Major General Sherman. For residents of NC this surrender is an important event you can study and actually visit the site in

Durham, NC. The Bennett Place site is a North Carolina state park with a museum, a replica of the Bennett House, and statues. Its is well worth a visit.

Author Eric Wittenberg does an excellent job of providing historical background to the battles leading up to the surrender and followed by the activities and the complexities of the negotiations.

If you have ever read anything by Eric Wittenberg, you know he provides you with lots of details, facts and supporting documentation of the events that occurred. In *We Ride a Whirlwind: Sherman and Johnston at Bennett Place*, Eric Wittenberg corrects the record, once and for all. Wittenberg brings the little-known story of Bennett Place to light, in a way that only he can. Wittenberg takes you from the side of Sherman, at ease with a cigar in his mouth, to the bivouac of Joe Johnston, careworn in his spotless uniform, and from the halls of the Federal government to the modest farmhouse of James Bennett.

Numerous photographs and maps accompany the narrative describing the end of the great American tragedy of the Civil War.

*We Ride a Whirlwind* belongs in every Civil War collection.



# The Ladies' Forum



## *The Ladies' Forum*

Monday, October 20, 2025, 6:00 - 8:00 pm  
Murrow Hall at Trinity United Methodist Church  
Nash St., Southport



*Emily Lapisardi portrays*

*Rose Greenhow*

*Civil War Diplomat and Spy*

Sign up to  
attend at the  
October 7  
meeting

First-person interpreter Emily Lapisardi portrays Rose Greenhow in a presentation drawn from primary sources including Greenhow's memoirs and correspondence, bringing her vividly and realistically to life through her own words. A native of Maryland, Rose Greenhow was a prominent antebellum society hostess in Washington, D.C. In 1861, Greenhow developed a network of Confederate agents which were credited by Jefferson Davis with ensuring the southern victory at the First Battle of Bull Run/Manassas.

Emily Lapisardi has portrayed Rose Greenhow at a range of venues including, among others, the International Spy Museum, Manassas Museum System, Manassas National Battlefield Park, the Lomas Center (Gettysburg, PA), and Petersburg National Battlefield Park. Emily is also the editor of Rose Greenhow's *My Imprisonment: An Annotated Edition*, which debuted as the highest-ranking new release in Amazon.com's U. S. Civil War Women's History category in the spring of 2021.

We are also pleased that our meeting will feature **Musette Steck** who is a Southport historian and Past President of the Southport Historical Society. Musette will be speaking about Elizabeth Keckley, the personal dressmaker and confidant of Mary Todd Lincoln as well as the author of *Behind the Scenes*, her story of slavery and insight into the lives of the Lincolns.

*The Ladies' Forum is for women only and is a free event each year for members of BCWRT. Guests are always welcome and pay only \$5. Light refreshments are served.*

*Reservations are strongly recommended.*

*Please contact BCWRT at [brunswickcwr@gmail.com](mailto:brunswickcwr@gmail.com) to sign up.*

*There will also be a sign-up table near the stage with Robbin Smith before the October meeting.*



# Women in the Civil War

## Dorothea Dix



Dorothea Dix is most well known for her activism in the United States against poor treatment of the criminally and medically insane and is also credited for the establishment of mental asylums in the States.

During the Civil War, however, she acted as the Superintendent of Army Nurses for the entire Union. Her independence and smarts made her a great pick for the job. One of her first acts was to set up strict guidelines for the nurses hired to work with the soldiers. They had to be on the older side for the time, at least older than 35, and had to be, as some put it, “plain.”

Her main goal was to avoid sending any attractive young women to the lines, who may be an object of harassment or assault for the men. She came up against opposition with many army doctors, who did not want female nurses on their staffs. However, she continued to fight and is now known for her fair care of both Union and Confederate soldiers in need of her medical help.

Despite her more extensive work, though, sometimes Dorothea Dix is overshadowed by Clara Barton, who earned the name the Angel of the Battlefield.

<https://www.warhistoryonline.com/american-civil-war/five-women-played-vital-roles-american-civil-war-xc.html>

Shared by Robbin Smith

## Female Nurses During the Civil War

Nurses also had to prepare beds for future battles. Prior to the Battle of the Wilderness, Emily Mason was directed to prepare 800 beds in a hospital outside of Fredericksburg for the incoming wounded. Another nurse in Fredericksburg in 1862 reported that “in one day she had singlehandedly cooked and served 926 rations of soup, farina (a cooked cereal), tea, and coffee”.

At the start of the Civil War, some women argued that the war “was as much a woman’s war as it was a man’s war”. Over 21,000 women served in Union military hospitals and a similar number is estimated for the Confederacy, with 10% of those women being African American. However,

because many Southerners nursed soldiers in local homes or churches, their service was never entered into the military service and so an exact number is unknown. Serving in the hospitals was one of the few ways that women could participate in the war and one of the ways they felt the most useful. One nurse, Ella Wolcott wrote:

*I have been a ‘female nurse’ since a year ago last October and only regret that I did not go in the beginning when a mistaken humility is all that withheld me...I went in with many misgivings—but now I KNOW that women are worth in the hospitals. It is no light thing to hear a man say he owes you his life and then to know that mother, wife, sister, or child bless you in their prayers.*

Excerpt from Female Nurses During the Civil War by Paige Gibbons Backus

# Civil War News - Battlefield Preservation

## Save Wyse Fork Battlefield

Facebook Post by Wade Sokolosky, August 28, 2025

Update for those concerned regarding the saving of the Wyse Fork Battlefield. The good news is that all parties have agreed to move the interchange to the east, back toward New Bern, which preserves the main Federal defensive line during the battle.

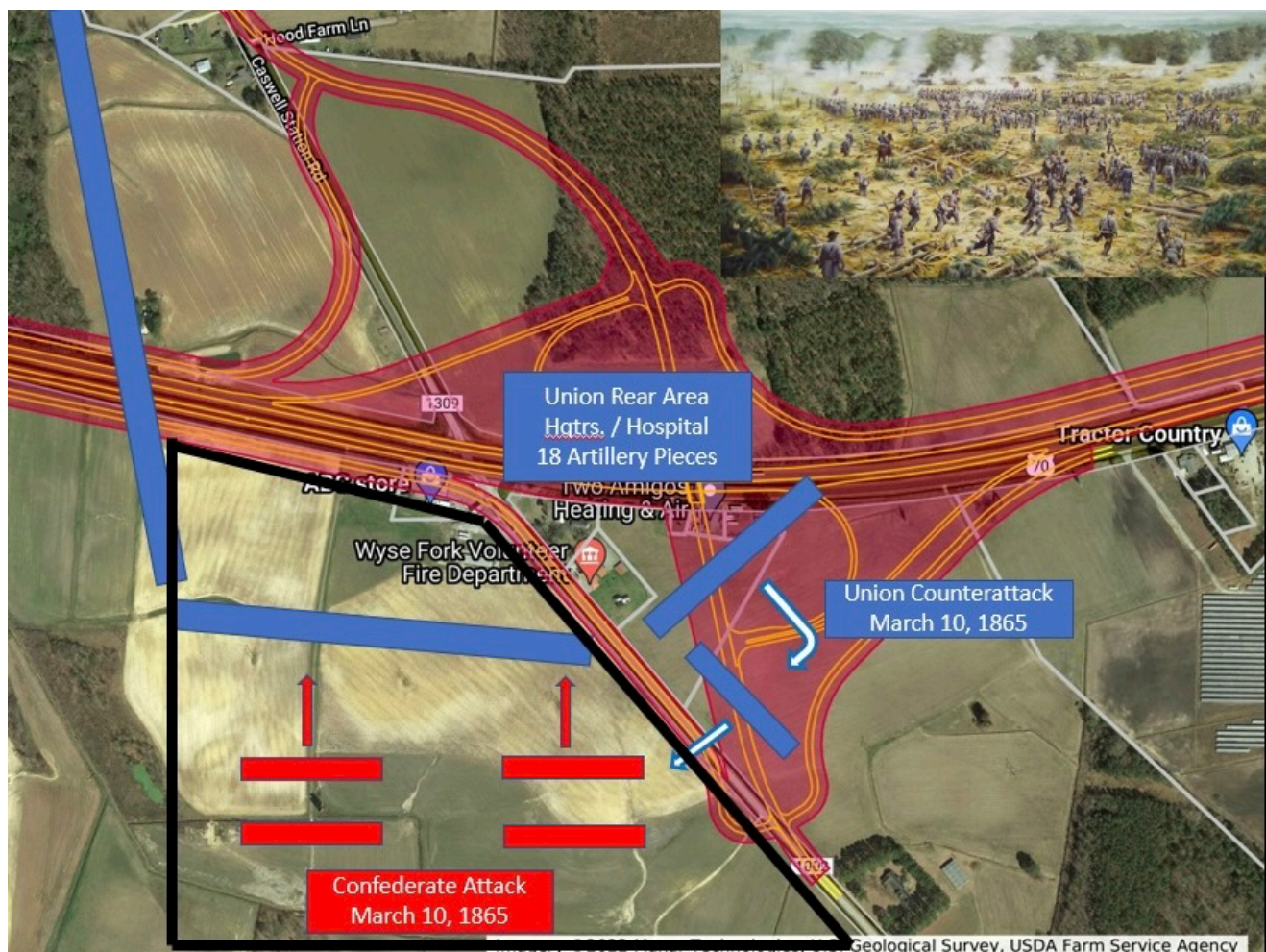
However, all this is for naught if we do not preserve approximately 55 acres of core battlefield land that encompasses the main Confederate attack on March 10, 1865 (see the area outlined by the bold black lines). Failure to do so would mean there is no proper interpretation of the battle's final day.

Fortunately, the premier battlefield preservationist organization, [American Battlefield Trust](#) (ABT), is

working to do so. I need all my fellow preservationists, especially those in North Carolina, to reach out to ABT and let them know that this is your top priority when it comes to how your donated dollars are spent.

Folks, as someone who has studied the 1865 Carolinas Campaign and led tours on this battlefield for almost three decades, if we fail to acquire this critical 55 acres, there will be no Wyse Fork Battlefield to lead future tours on.

Please, we are not done with the fight.





# BCWRT Tour & Local Events



**Join us for a tour of Fort Anderson  
led by Jim McKee, Site Manager**

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

\$15.00 per person

Sign-up will be after the October meeting.  
The tour will be capped at 40 people.



SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SECOND TUESDAY PROGRAM

**"Southport's Family Tree"  
by Henry Livingston**

Genealogist Henry Livingston has compiled a *Southport Family Tree of Southport* families, some with roots tracing back all the way to the Revolutionary War - both Patriots and Loyalists! Learn more about his fascinating findings which include over 11,000 ancestors!

Place: Harper Library

Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2025

Time: 10 am

Reservations Strongly Suggested:

910 457 6237

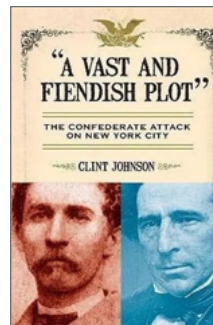


## Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

**"A Vast And Fiendish Plot"**  
presented by  
author Clint Johnson

Confederate President Jefferson Davis knew that the Confederacy could not hold out forever. He approved and put into motion a series of clandestine initiatives that, it was hoped, would undermine the resolve of the north and help defeat Lincoln at the polls.

Jefferson Davis, accordingly, felt it was worth the effort to establish a Confederate Secret Service, fund it with \$5 million and send operatives into Canada and the north to sow discord and disenchantment with the Lincoln government.



The stage was set for the "Vast and Fiendish Plot," a terrorist plot to set fires in New York City and burn the city down. By the time the plot began to unfold, Atlanta had fallen, Sherman was marching through Georgia and Lincoln had already won reelection. Nonetheless, the plot went forward.

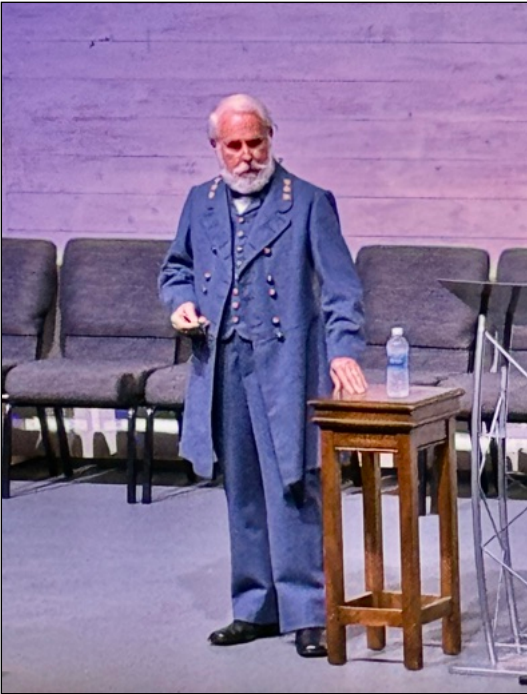
What happened? Come to the meeting of Wilmington's Cape Fear Civil War Round Table to hear the rest of this fascinating and little-known chapter of Civil War history.

Thursday, October 9, 2025,  
beginning at 6:30 pm

St John's Episcopal Church  
1219 Forest Hills Dr., Wilmington

# September Meeting Review

## Gen. Robert E. Lee Captivates Audience



The atmosphere was festive and upbeat as the audience filed in for the first meeting of our new season. The reason, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was in attendance.

Actually Gen. Lee was popular living historian, Thomas Jessee, in uniform. As he spoke, what made this appearance so special was his knack for sharing little known facts and events about himself and his life from early childhood through the time he decided to make the critical and very personal decision to resign his commission and commit his military career to the Confederacy.

Jessee's almost ninety minute conversation was so genuine; it was as if Gen. Lee was there in person, just telling it like it was to his audience.

His conversation was quite personal, emotionally talking about his early childhood, family members, a budding relationship and marriage to Mary Custis, and their seven dearly-loved children.

He went on about his education at West Point majoring in engineering, his various military assignments, including the Mexican-American War where he established close, long standing relationships with many fellow officers who he met once again years later on the Civil War battlefield.



One of the most interesting parts of Jessee's conversation involved southern states leaving the Union in 1861, and Lee's complicated decision not to go into battle against his fellow Virginians. This led to resigning his commission to join the Confederacy. For Lee, it was one of the most difficult events of his lifetime.

*By Chuck Roedema*



# Meeting Photo Gallery

## Photos From September 2025 Meeting

We had an amazing turnout for our first meeting of the season with 440 in attendance at Hatch Auditorium and another 215 who watched on YouTube.

Included in the turnout were 53 new members and 17 guests.



*"Oh my goodness what a fabulous speaker. Great history of the background and then amazing info in the questions & answers as well.*

*I am sooo grateful for the chance to see the meetings."* Kendra Maxwell



*"I was totally drawn in by the presentation of General Lee, I was caught spellbound."*

Matthew Lawrence



It wasn't easy to get to the meeting due to a huge traffic delay getting to Hatch Auditorium. We are grateful to everyone who managed to get through, including our wonderful volunteers. It was an unusual start to a great evening.

*Meeting photos by Chuck Roedema and Lynn Dean*

## Notes from the September 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

1. Our balance as of the end of August is \$6,469. The cost of liability insurance is being increased and various different companies are being looked at. The main expenditure in August was for replenishing shirts and hats for the Sutler's Table. The budget was approved.
2. The attendance at the September meeting with Thomas Jessee portraying Robert E. Lee is the largest that we have had since before Covid. We had 440 people attend at Hatch Auditorium and another 215 people watched using YouTube.
3. New signage for Fort Anderson will likely be done next year. This is a project that Wade Sokolosky of Blue & Gray Education Society had asked BCWRT for help in creating.
4. The first tour of the new season will be of Fort Anderson and led by Jim McKee.
5. Discussion was held about improving the front end before a meeting.

*Our next Board meeting is Tuesday, October 14, 2025. Meetings are held monthly to discuss items that will make our round table more interesting, run better, and keep our membership engaged. President John Butler leads the two-hour meeting that includes interested Advisors and members. The meetings are held at Trinity United Methodist Church in Southport one week following our gathering at Hatch and begin at 10:00 am. If you wish to attend or have suggestions for the Board, please contact John Butler at [jlbutter2007@gmail.com](mailto:jlbutter2007@gmail.com).*

## The Sutler's Table

We have a huge inventory of Civil War books now, thanks to very generous donations. You will certainly find something you will like from such a large selection.

We also just restocked our BCWRT shirts and hats. There is sure to be one in your size!

## Pre-Register for the October Meeting

*If attending in person, we encourage you to pre-register.*

Starting Friday, September 19, and lasting until noon on Tuesday, October 7, current members may log into the system - <https://olr.bcwrt-nc.org/> - to print a ticket (one each for yourself and your spouse) showing you've registered.

When you use the online system it will clearly show if you are current (dues paid)...and what to do if you are not up to date. It's that simple!



If you are unable to attend the meeting in person, you will be able to watch it via YouTube Live Streaming by using the following link:

[https://youtube.com/live/UGR\\_cL3mpaQ?feature=share](https://youtube.com/live/UGR_cL3mpaQ?feature=share)

To view at home on your TV, you can "cast" or "mirror" from your phone to your TV. If you are unfamiliar with this, click [here](#) for a link to instructions for how to do this.

This is the link to the **BCWRT YouTube Video Library** where you will find all of the videos that have been created:

<https://www.youtube.com/@brunswickcivilwarroundtabl4954/videos>



# Muster Notes and Notables

**The October BCWRT meeting is Tuesday, October 7, 2025.**

**Hatch Auditorium, NC Baptist Assembly, Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC.**

**See page 10 for details to attend via YouTube.**

**Registration begins at 6:15 pm and the meeting starts promptly at 7:00 pm.**

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

(Please include your current phone number, street address, and email.)

## 2025-2026 Officers, Directors, and Advisors

John Butler: President & Director

Ann Birdsall: VP & Director

Jim Dunn: VP & Director

Jennifer Chapman: Secretary & Director

Tom Kehoe: Treasurer & Director

Bruce Jordan: Director

Chuck Roedema: Director

Gar Dowell: Advisor

Charen Fink: Advisor

Chris Fonvielle: Advisor

Jim McKee: Advisor

Chris Mackowski: Advisor

Skip Maxwell: Advisor

Roy Pender: Advisor

Wally Rueckel: Advisor

Wade Sokolosky: Advisor

Robbin Smith: Advisor

Len Trizinski: Advisor

John Wall: Advisor

Angela Zombek: Advisor

## Connect with us



We Welcome Your Suggestions for our Speakers, Website, Meeting Procedures, Membership Retention, etc.

The Brunswick Civil War Round Table does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, creed, ancestry, disability or any other legally protected status in its educational programs, activities, or membership.

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

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