



# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table

## The President's Corner by John Butler



Some random thoughts and news items...

Your BCWRT had another very successful October meeting. Colonel (Retired) Ed Gantt gave a outstanding presentation on Civil War Reconstruction. He received a rare standing ovation; interestingly he had also gotten a standing ovation in his first presentation in May 2024!

We also hit another milestone for the BCWRT. For the first time we now have 707 memberships and 1237 members. This is an amazing achievement and is due to the quality of our programs and the dedication of all our volunteers.

Get ready for another fabulous presentation by Dr. Chris Fonvielle at our November 4th meeting. He will also bring some of his great books for sale.

Make sure you check out the Sutler's Table; we have lots of new books and will be having an early Christmas sale.

If you have taken an interesting trip to a CW Battlefield or read a good CW book, write a short article and submit it to Jennifer Chapman our Editor of the Call to Arms newsletter. If you have any CW related pictures, send them to Jennifer, she is always looking for new material. Jennifer Chapman, [jennifer.chapman3@icloud.com](mailto:jennifer.chapman3@icloud.com).

If your dues are up to date and you want to skip the line, use the online registration link to register for the meeting and print a ticket. You can also do it for your spouse at the same time. The link is shown in the meeting announcements and in the Call to Arms newsletter for that month. We average about a 100 members taking advantage of this.

If you can't attend the meeting, consider watching it from the comfort of your home while enjoying a beverage. All you need is a web-enabled device such as a smart phone, iPad or smart TV. Make a party out of it and invite several friends. To use the Live Meeting link, you need to be a member. The link is given in the meeting announcements and the Call to Arms Newsletter.

Whether you attend the meeting or watch it live, two weeks afterwards you can watch the presentation using the YouTube tab on our website. It's free. Since the start of Covid, all of our meetings are available via YouTube.

*John*

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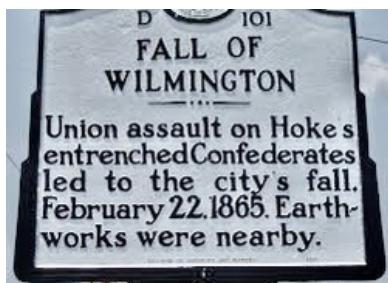
Muster Notes

# BCWRT Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, November 4, 2025 Program**

## **“A Town Turned Topsy-Turvy: Wilmington in the Civil War”**

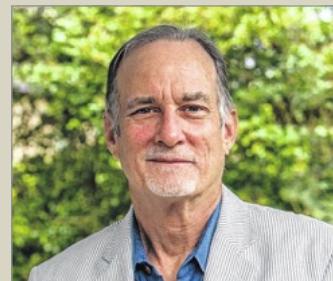
It was during the mid-1860s when Wilmington transformed from a thriving, prosperous Confederate port into a Union-occupied city struggling with the end of slavery and the turmoil of Reconstruction. “A Town Turned Topsy-Turvy” captures Wilmington’s dramatic reversal of fortune. In 1860, Wilmington was North Carolina’s busiest port and most populated city. By 1863, Wilmington continued to play a pivotal role during the Civil War because it also became the Confederacy’s busiest and most vital Atlantic seaport.



It was clearly a boomtown for blockade-runners smuggling luxury goods and military supplies to the Confederate army, so much so that Wilmington soon became known as the “Lifeline of the Confederacy.”

However, that reversal of fortune occurred when the Union army captured Fort Fisher in January, 1865, along with a victory at the Battle of Wilmington when Federal troops occupied the city on February 22, 1865, effectively sealing the Confederacy’s fate.

No historian knows this incredible period of Wilmington’s history better than popular local historian, Chris E. Fonvielle Jr., Ph.D. He is a native of Wilmington, and has a lifelong interest in the Civil War, North Carolina, and Cape Fear history. Chris is Professor Emeritus from the Department of History at UNC Wilmington, and recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine presented by Governor Roy Cooper. In addition he has published books and articles focusing on the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the history of Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear.



**See page 12 for Pre-Registering for the Meeting and the link to watch on YouTube.**

# October Meeting Review

## A Standing Ovation for Ed Gantt

by Chuck Roedema



The audience was captivated by the thought-provoking presentation by retired Navy Captain Edward W. Gantt at the Tuesday, October 7th meeting of the Brunswick Civil War Round Table. “*With Malice Toward None, with Charity for All?*” was the title of his presentation based on a phrase from President Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865.

Gantt’s focus questions that phrase during the period after 1865 when the war was finally over, and Reconstruction began. It is at this period in history that Gantt takes issue with many historians about the way they describe the outcome and subsequent events between 1865 and 1895.

Reconstruction was designed to rebuild the South, integrating Confederate states into the Union, and define the status of the nearly four million freed African Americans. During this period, there was clearly a lot of good, but also a lot of questionable or negative results. Gantt

went on to cover the 13th Amendment of the Constitution abolishing slavery, the 14th Amendment granting citizenship for all persons born in the United States, and the 15th Amendment ensuring every citizen’s right to vote. Also, on the positive side, was the establishment of HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and the Freedmen’s Bureau, a U.S. federal agency created to provide food, housing, medical care, education, and legal assistance to formerly enslaved people and poor whites in the South. Every effort employed achieved goals of freeing slaves and granting rights, but failed to establish true racial equality because of white supremacist backlash designed to restore white rule.

Gantt quoted from the book, *The Lost Cause*, by Edward Pollard, citing the war did not decide Negro equality. Then he referenced the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, passed at different periods in the South, to enforce racial segregation and curtail the power of Black voters; the Dunning School composed of historians who viewed Reconstruction as a corrupt failure imposed by vengeful Northerners on a helpless South; and, carpetbaggers described as Northerners who moved to the South seeking to exploit the war-torn South for their own gain. With a goal of seeking multiracial democracy, Gantt feels this topsy-turvy period in our history is perhaps still an ongoing work in progress. Following Gantt’s exceptional presentation, his audience thanked him with a standing ovation!

# Women and Food in the Civil War

## Laura Fair (1837 - 1919)



She was a fluffy Southern snowflake who left a trail of dead or injured husbands, Husband #1 came when she was 16; he died mysteriously within six months. Husband #2 ended in divorce after six months when he shot up the poultry in the yard and over the head of her bed. Number 3 left when she made it clear she preferred another man.

She met a San Francisco lawyer, Alexander Crittenden, and after six months agreed to marry him. He told her he was married but would divorce his wife. Seven years later she took matters into her own hands and shot him in the heart. Her sentence to hang was overturned because of insanity. Her supporters were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

*The Civil War Ladies' Department* by Charen Bishop Fink

Shared by Robbin Smith

## Hash

*The beef or "salt horse" supplied to the army was of very poor quality and the men would mix and fry it with other ingredients to make it edible. Butter is used in this recipe, but soldiers would have used any fat they could obtain.*

3 Tbsps butter or oil  
¾ pound beef, cubed  
1 large onion, diced  
1 pound potatoes, cooked and diced  
Salt and pepper  
Water

Heat the butter or oil and fry the beef and onion until the beef is well browned. Add the cooked potatoes, salt, and pepper. Add enough water to make a pliable mixture and stir, breaking up the potatoes. Form the mixture into balls and flatten until about an inch thick. Fry the rounds on both sides until golden brown.

From *The Civil War Cookbook* by William C. Davis.

Shared by Robbin Smith

## Cranberry Tarte Receipt



Take ½ pint of cranberries, pick them from the stems, and throw them into a saucepan with half a pound of white sugar and a spoonful of water; let them come to a boil, peel and cut up four large apples, put a rim of light paste around your dish, strew in the apples, pour the cranberries over them, cover with a lid of crust, and bake for an hour. For a pudding, proceed in the same manner with the fruit, and boil it in the basin or cloth.

*-Sarah Josepha Hale, Godfrey's Lady's Book, October 1866*

Included in *The Civil War Ladies' Department* by Charen Bishop Fink

Shared by Robbin Smith



**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 November meeting.

The tour will be capped at 40 people.

This tour is almost sold out.

## The Wilmington Campaign “Last Rays of Departing Hope”

### Blue & Gray Education Society

One-Day Seminar

February 12, 2026

Fort Fisher State Historic Site Visitor Center

9:30 am to 4:00 pm

Cost: \$25

Guest Speakers

Dr. Chris Fonvielle Jr.

Andrew Duppstadt / Jim McKee / Becky Sawyer / Wade Sokolosky

For more information, contact:

Wade Sokolosky

[BgesExDir@gmail.com](mailto:BgesExDir@gmail.com) / (434) 770-7325

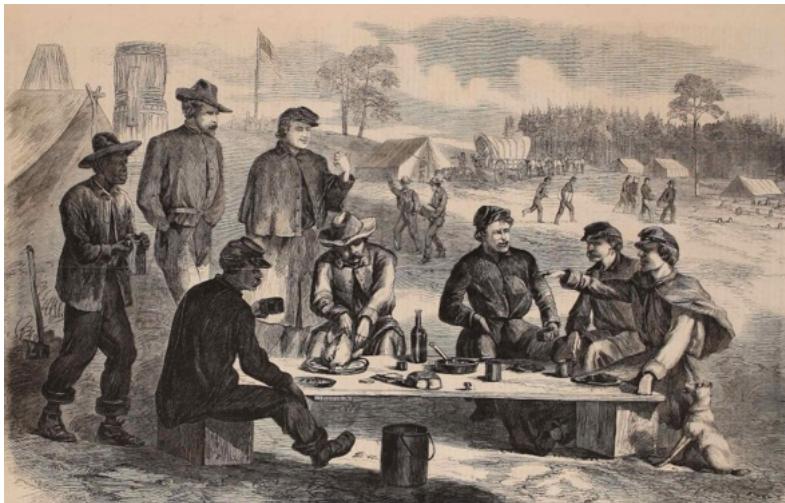
All Proceeds go to Battlefield Interpretation

# Thanksgiving

## Civil War Thanksgiving

*"It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens."*

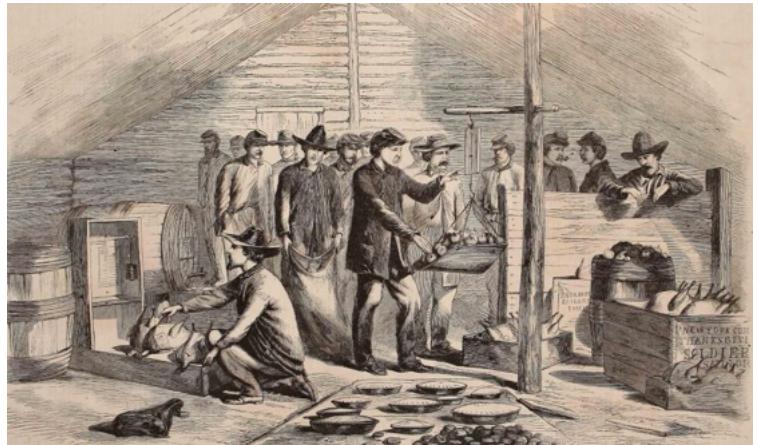
So wrote Abraham Lincoln in October 1863 in proclaiming a national Thanksgiving Day to be celebrated on the final Thursday in November. While days of Thanksgiving were celebrated in America since colonial times, it was Lincoln's proclamation that established the holiday as an annual event.



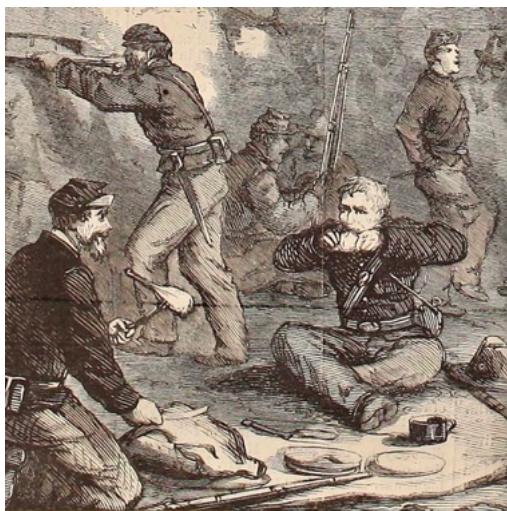
"The Soldiers' Thanksgiving Dinner in Camp," an illustration published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper on December 3, 1864.

Harper's Weekly published a number of illustrations depicting how Union troops celebrated Thanksgiving in 1864. Two of them are shown at right.

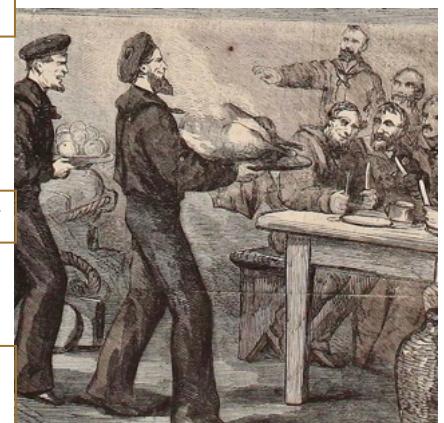
by The Civil War Monitor Nov 2023



Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper followed up its November 1864 coverage of Thanksgiving with this illustration in its December 24, 1864, issue: a depiction of Army of the Potomac sutlers processing "the people's gift"—"Thanksgiving viands"—for distribution to the army's V and IX Corps.



"In the Field"

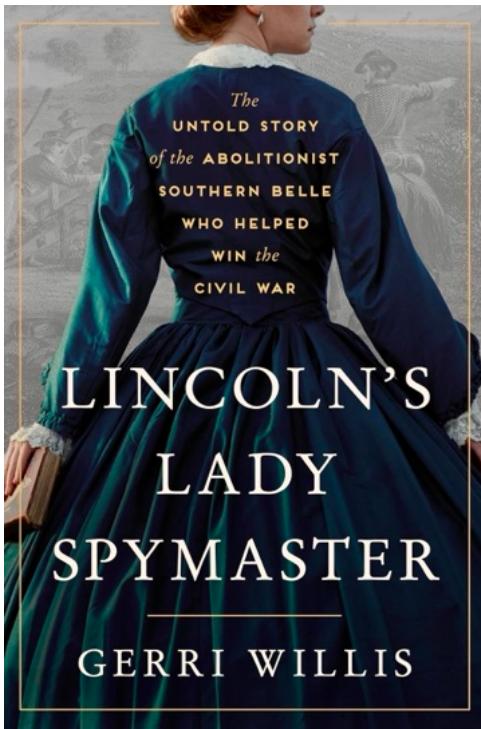


"On Board"

# Book Review

## **Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War**

By Sherita Bitikofer, October 14, 2025 in Emerging Civil War



*Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War*, written by news anchor Gerri Willis, is a simplistic biographical look into the life and wartime espionage efforts of Elizabeth Van Lew. Born in Richmond, Virginia in 1818, Elizabeth was the daughter of a prominent, slave-holding family with Yankee roots. Educated in the North, she adopted anti-slavery views, which contradicted those of her father. Though her father's will explicitly forbade the manumission of his enslaved property, Elizabeth and her mother acted upon their abolitionist ideals and attempted to provide a level of freedom for their servants.

As secessionist hostilities amplified in the South, Elizabeth and her household (she was unmarried, but resided at her family's estate on Church Hill in Richmond) were obliged to be reserved about their political opinions. However, after the commencement of the war and the first Union prisoners were ushered through the gates of Richmond, Elizabeth made daring decisions that would lead her to become one of the most notable women spies during the American Civil War. What began as humanitarian efforts to provide food and comfort for the prisoners evolved into assisting prisoner escapes and providing information to those in the Union high command.

Willis made every attempt to put Elizabeth's efforts within the greater context of the war's progression. The final chapter of the book details Elizabeth's successes and struggles as Richmond's postmaster during the Grant administration, as well as her numerous financial and sentimental losses. She continued to be unapologetic about her political views regarding equal rights for women and Blacks across the nation, sometimes drawing admiration or scorn from her contemporaries. She died in 1900, remembered as a woman who took innumerable risks to do what she believed was just for the cause of her country and community.

*Continued on Page 8*

# Book Review Continued

Willis takes a chronological approach to telling Van Lew's story, only deviating from Elizabeth's story to focus on other spies and historical figures such as Rose Greenhow, Mary Jane Richards, Ulysses S. Grant, Ulric Dahlgren, and John Wilkes Booth. Sometimes, these long-winded chapters dedicated to alternative topics and characters seem completely unrelated to Elizabeth's story. In fact, if you took out those chapters in which Elizabeth is not the main focus, about half of the book would be lost.

These endless detours from Elizabeth's story may be disappointing to readers looking for a more in-depth dive or the "untold story" as the title suggests. But the reader must imagine the book's structure as a giant tackboard with numerous red strings twisted and stretched to interconnecting points. The extra context Willis provides reveals how, even shallowly, Elizabeth was integrated into certain events that unfolded during the war. Willis goes so far as to make the bold assertion that Elizabeth's reports to Union officials swayed certain military decisions during the war, and that Elizabeth "wasn't just an important Union spy," but had become "its most important spy" by 1864 (183).

At its core, in this reviewer's opinion, Willis' book was written for the casual history buff or the layman not looking for a serious academic work. This is evident in the sweeping generalizations about complex historical issues, the narrative-like passages containing conjectures regarding the feelings and actions of historical figures for the sake of dramatization

without tangible verification, and the (surprising) lack of primary source citations when compared to other biographical works that have already been written about Elizabeth Van Lew. One such biographer is Elizabeth Varon, whom Willis cites frequently in her work and gives praise to in her acknowledgements as having written the "authoritative and excellent biography of Van Lew," and could be considered a follow-up read for those looking to learn more or experience a more comprehensive body of research (247).

*Lincoln's Lady Spymaster* may not add anything to the historiography of espionage during the Civil War or unveil any new information regarding Elizabeth's life, but it is an entertaining, light read that can spark an interest for the Civil War in those with only a basic knowledge of this period of American history. The book, most importantly, accomplishes what Willis set out to do during the COVID lockdown of 2020: "to introduce [young women] to women who had beaten back challenges and defied the odds."



# Meeting Photo Gallery

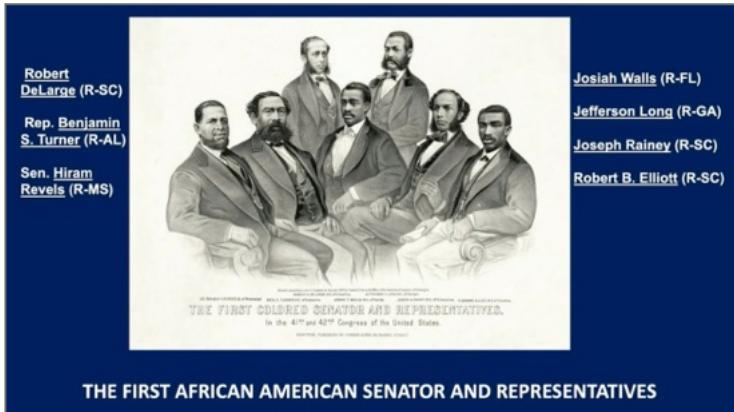
## Photos From October 2025 Meeting



“With Malice Toward None, With Charity For All?”



209,000 SERVED WITH THE US COLORED TROOPS FROM 1863 - 1866



THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES



*“Loved this presentation. Soooo many interesting facts. Really appreciate hearing a different perspective.*

*Sooo grateful that the meeting is available remotely.”* Kendra Maxwell

# Sutler's Table

## Book Sale

Through generous and large donations we find that we have more books on hand than we have room to store. We will be having a **Book Sale** at our November and December meetings.



We will have bags in two sizes containing pre-selected books.

Small Bag      \$5

Large Bag      \$10

The large size bag will include some premium books.



Other books will also be available for purchase as usual.

The Sutler's Table also has a variety of merchandise other than books. We have BCWRT shirts for both men and women as well as caps, our logo decal, and free tour maps.

Polo Shirts with embroidered logo      \$35

T-Shirts with printed logo      \$22

Caps with logo      \$18

Decal with logo      \$1



Shirts and caps are in a variety of colors and sizes.



Don't forget to get your 50/50 ticket.

# Local Events



## Discover Southport History

SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SECOND TUESDAY PROGRAM

### “Digging for the Future - Discovering and reconstructing Old Baldy’s Glacis Wall”

By Jake Grossman, Educator and Collections Coordinator, Old Baldy Foundation

Tuesday, November 4, 10 am Harper Library  
Reservations strongly suggested: 910.457.6237

*Drawing for two tickets for the Holiday Home Tour*

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

### “Fort Fisher Illustrated: Art of the Battle”

By Dr. Chris Fonvielle

Thursday, November 6, 6:30 pm Southport Community Building 223 E. Bay St.  
Light Refreshments will be served

Free and open to all but please RSVP:  
[info@southporthistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@southporthistoricalsociety.org) or  
910.477.3461

*Door Prize: two tickets for the Holiday Home Tour*

### SOUTHPORT HOLIDAY HOME TOUR

Saturday, December 13, 11 - 5 pm.  
Tickets will go on sale November 19 until sold out.

\$30 each, Online sales only.

See [southporthistoricalsociety.org](http://southporthistoricalsociety.org) for more information

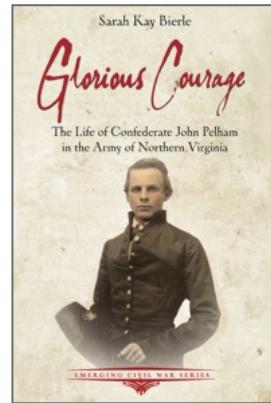
## Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

### “The Glorious Pelham”

presented by  
Sarah Bierle

Sarah reconsiders Pelham's extraordinary, if short, life by drawing on primary and secondary sources and her extensive knowledge of the Civil War battlefields where Maj. John Pelham made his reputation. Pelham's zest for living carried him from Alabama to the military academy at West Point, while his zeal in command of the Stuart Horse Artillery earned him well-deserved plaudits.

But like every other man who served the Confederate cause, the remarkable young officer was a human being with flaws. As Sarah has pointed out, “He deserves his place in history as he lived it, not varnished with the perspectives shoved upon him by later generations.”



The latest entry in Savas Beatie's enormously successful Emerging Civil War series, *Glorious Courage* provides a fresh interpretation of John Pelham.

Thursday, November 13, 2025,  
beginning at 6:30 pm

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

# BCWRT Notes

## Notes from the October 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

1. Our total memberships reached a record setting 703 with the October meeting. Ed Gantt received a standing ovation. There were 20 new memberships this month.
2. We have had so many books donated lately that it is difficult to find room to store all of them. We will have a Christmas sale of bags of books in November and December.
3. We are now members of the *Society of Women and the Civil War (SWCW)*.
4. Elections for Board members will be held in December. Skip Maxwell has volunteered to work on the nominations for this. Board members present at the last meeting indicated that they would continue for another year but a notice to all members will go out offering the opportunity to nominate others.
5. Our next BCWRT History Scholarship will be awarded in honor of E. Gifford Stack, a volunteer and Board member for many years.

*Our next Board meeting is Tuesday, November 11, 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 [jbutler2007@gmail.com](mailto:jbutler2007@gmail.com).*



## BCWRT BOARD ELECTIONS 2025

Elections for members of the BCWRT Board are conducted on a yearly basis and will next occur at the December 2025 meeting. The Board consists of five positions:

President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer.

At this time we are seeking nominations of members willing to further contribute their energy and skills for the continuing enhancement of BCWRT by serving on the Board.

If interested, or have any questions, please contact Skip Maxwell at [hmaxiii@gmail.com](mailto:hmaxiii@gmail.com).

## Pre-Register for the October Meeting

Starting Friday, October 17, and lasting until noon on Tuesday, November 4, 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/o48sfwaZuhQ?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.

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

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



# Muster Notes and Notables

**The November BCWRT meeting is Tuesday, November 4, 2025.  
Hatch Auditorium, NC Baptist Assembly, Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC.  
See page 12 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 Trzinski: 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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