



Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table

The President's Corner by John Butler



The BCWRT Board would like to thank the membership for their vote of confidence in reelecting the officers for another term. The officers will continue to lead the Round Table in providing quality and entertaining programs and being fiscally responsible.

The officers reelected were:

President: John Butler

Vice President: Jim Dunn

Vice President of Programs: Ann Birdsall

Treasurer: Tom Kehoe

Secretary: Jennifer Chapman

The board has a full schedule planned for the upcoming five months. We will start with the return of Neil Chatelain who will discuss the North and South's battles to control the gold and silver in the West. This little discussed topic was vital to paying for the war efforts of both sides.

Everyone was shocked by the passing of Wally Rueckel in December.

Wally co-started the BCWRT, growing it to the largest round table in the country. Your board will diligently strive to follow and build upon his legacy.

In May we will also be celebrating our 16th anniversary.

Remember if you cannot come to a meeting personally you can always watch it on live stream. Links are in the newsletter and meeting announcements.

If you miss a meeting, you can find it on our website by going to our YouTube tab two weeks after the presentation. We have all of our presentations since COVID on our YouTube page.

John

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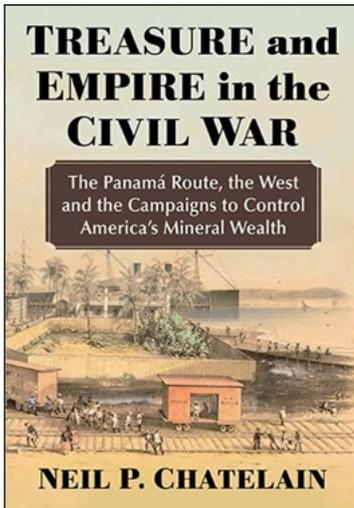
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BCWRT Upcoming Events

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

“Treasure and Empire in the Civil War”

The Battle for Gold Controlled the Battlefield



To enter any war both sides require huge budgets to pay for weapons, ammunition, equipment, and of course, food, clothing, and supplies for the troops. When it came to the Civil War, funding was a crucial issue. On the Union side, \$73 million was available. However, the Confederates could only muster \$500,000. Despite the difference, both sides desperately needed access to America’s mineral wealth to stabilize their wartime economies. The main focus was the desert Southwest regions, especially California.

So, what does the Panama Route have to do with the Civil War? Everything! The conflict extended beyond traditional battlefields to the American West and the high seas. California’s gold deposits, which were in abundance about that time, played a key role in financing the Civil War. For the Union, the question was how to

get extracted gold safely from California all the way to New York. The route stretched from San Francisco to Panama City. From there a relatively brief Panama Railroad journey across the narrow isthmus (no Panama Canal yet!) to the Atlantic port of Colon where ships then carried the gold to the port of New York.



The Confederate government attempted to stake its own claims to this “gold rush.” Confederate armies advanced to seize the West and its gold and silver reserves, while their warships steamed to intercept the Union’s Panama Route ships.

By Chuck Roedema

Neil Chatelain is a professor, historian, teacher, and author who specializes in researching, writing, and speaking on naval operations of the Civil War. He spent nine years as a U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Officer, both on active duty and in the Navy Reserve. He is an associate professor of history at Lone State College – North Harris, in the greater Houston area, and is the vice president and editorial board chair for the non-profit Emerging Civil War. A prolific author, Neil has written scores of articles in journals, magazines, books, and online forums, and speaks at dozens of conferences, museums, podcasts, and Civil War round tables.



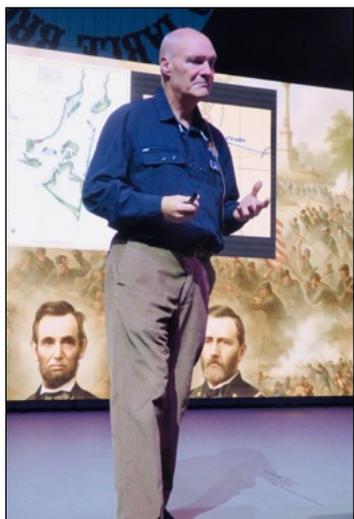
See page 7 for Pre-Registering for the Meeting and the link to watch on YouTube.

December Meeting Review

Little Known Facts About Blockade Running

by Chuck Roedema

The program entitled “**Runners and Raiders**” presented at the December 2nd meeting of the Brunswick Civil War Round Table clearly captivated the audience.



First, because it was presented by popular local historian Jim McKee, Site Manager at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson Historic Site, whose knowledge, enthusiasm, and use of visuals easily got everyone’s attention.

Second, his topic is seldom discussed, yet is so crucial, to the ongoing events and outcome of the Civil War.

And third, because the events involving blockade runners took place largely right here in southeast North Carolina where all who attended the meeting live!

Jim spoke about the importance of blockade runners to the Confederacy whose main port of call was Wilmington, carrying much needed civilian cargo such as pantaloons, alpaca umbrellas, and cream tartar, in addition to military supplies and equipment. Who were

these daring sea captains who risked survival for the riches their cargo brought them? For example, one round trip paid for their vessel, so subsequent trips were all profit. Blockade running was worth the risk! Their courage to navigate their sailing vessels or sleek and fast paddle wheelers enabled them to navigate the shallow New Inlet and the Cape Fear River, in part under the protection of Ft. Fisher. Then consider their navigation tactics to evade the Union Navy as they escaped under the cover of darkness. At the end of the war, only 12% of those vessels survived, many were sold for scrap, or for others less fortunate, joined the burial grounds off Smith’s Island and Frying Pan Shoals.



Holy Moly what a terrific way to end 2025. This speaker was outstanding. The topic was soooooo interesting. I had no idea that the blockade running ships were paddle wheelers. WOW. Also that only 12 % of the blockade runners survived, but that it was very lucrative.

Thanks for all you do to make this wonderful club one of a kind. Thanks for offering the lectures on YouTube --really appreciate it !!!

Happiest Holidays !!!!!

Kendra Maxwell

OBITUARY



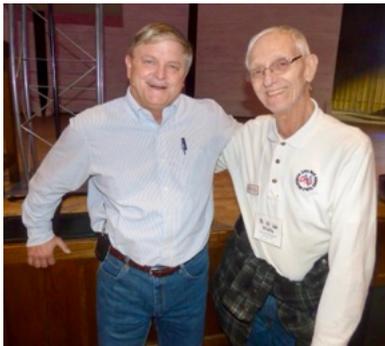
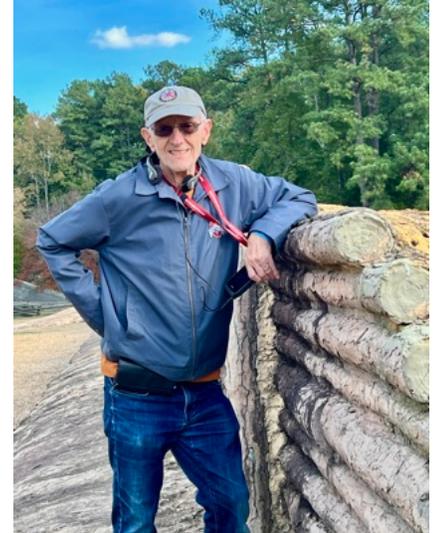
Wallace Lee Rueckel

FEBRUARY 23, 1944 – NOVEMBER 24, 2025

Wallace Lee Rueckel, born on February 23, 1944, in Columbus, Ohio, passed away on November 24, 2025, at the age of 81.

He was a resident of Southport, North Carolina (St. James Plantation).

The family of Mr. Rueckel will hold a Remembrance and Celebration of his life on February 20th, 2026 from 4:00 - 8:00 PM at the The Homer E. Wright Event Center - formerly named St. James Community Center.



Princess Agnes of Salm-Salm

Princess Agnes of Salm-Salm (née **Agnes Elisabeth Winona Leclerc Joy**; December 25, 1844 – December 21, 1912) was an American memoirist and socialite. She authored a book of memoirs titled *Ten Years of My Life*. She was married to Prince Felix zu Salm-Salm, a Prussian mercenary beside whom she played a role in the American Civil War, the Mexican Civil War between President Benito Juárez and the Austrian archduke Maximilian I of Mexico, and the Franco-Prussian War.

Family and childhood

She was born in Franklin, Vermont, the daughter of American general William Leclerc Joy (1793–c.1886) and his second wife, Julia Willard (died 1882). She was described as red-haired, strong willed, small, and dainty.

Little is known of the early life of Agnes Salm-Salm. Many scholars believe that she worked in a circus, then as an actress in Cuba. In 1861 she returned to the United States but soon left her home in Vermont to visit her sister in Washington, D.C. who was getting married. Agnes stayed around Washington when she met Prince Felix Salm-Salm, a soldier of fortune who was the youngest son of Florentin, 4th Prince of Salm-Salm, and a distant relation to the Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary.

She had been riding her horse one morning through the city when Felix first saw her and he made sure she was invited to a party that he would be attending. Soon Felix proposed to her and they were married on August 30, 1862, despite opposition from her family (he was Catholic and she was Protestant).

American Civil War

Prince Felix had a post as adjutant of Louis Blenker in the Army of the Potomac, and soon proceeded to the front. Agnes could not be apart from Felix for too long and eventually followed him to the battlefield. At his camp she would care for the sick and wounded soldiers although she had no previous knowledge of medicine.

For four years she traveled with the troops through war-torn Virginia. As the wife of a colonel she had access to supply wagons and luggage meant for the officers and would often steal supplies in order to care for the soldiers.

This sparked a controversy that President Abraham Lincoln eventually settled; the President also pinned a captain's star on



Agnes Elizabeth, Princess of Salm Salm, during the Civil War

her at the time. In January 1863 the troops were ordered to go to Aquia Creek, Virginia, and of course Agnes followed her husband. Here she made a bet that she would give President Lincoln three kisses within the next few days on his visit to the camp, and she succeeded in doing so.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agnes_Salm-Salm Shared by Robbin Smith

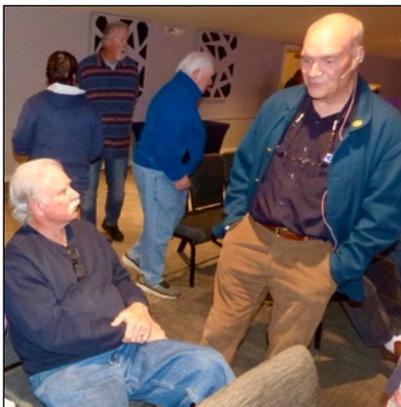
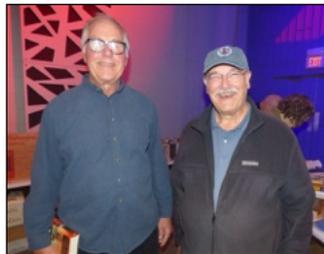
Meeting Photo Gallery

Photos From December 2025 Meeting



Jim McKee

*“Runners
and
Raiders”*



Meet **Carter Pack** from Fort Caswell Hatch Auditorium who handled both the audio and the visual for this meeting - and did an excellent job! He typically has one other technician to help handle the video.

Pictures by John Butler and Chuck Roedema

Book Sale

**BUY ONE
GET ONE
FREE**

Our “Bag of Books” sale has ended, but you can still stock up with some great books with our **Buy One Get One** sale!

Visit our Sutler’s Table at the January Meeting for our **new selection** of books.

Remember to check out the selection of men’s and women’s shirts, as well as hats and decals.

Our March 3 Meeting has been **Rescheduled**

Due to lack of availability of Hatch Auditorium in the beginning of March, 2026, it was necessary to change the date from March 3 to **March 17, 2026**.

Our program will remain as originally planned, with a very interesting topic by **Dean Calbreath**:

“The Sergeant: The Incredible Life of Nicholas Said: From Central Africa Through Czarist Russia to the Frontlines of the Civil War”

Pre-Register for the January Meeting

Starting Friday, December 13, and lasting until noon on Tuesday, January 6, current members may log into the system -<https://olr.bcwrtno.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!

BCWRT Tours

Fort Fisher - A tour of Fort Fisher is being planned for March, 2026. It will be led by Chris Fonvielle and once again will be an evening tour.

Fort Caswell - Tours of Fort Caswell are also being planned. These will be held in April and will be led by Jim McKee.

Details for these tours will be provided early in the new year.

You Tube™ Live

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/eAzoAGWGCYQ?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>

BCWRT Notes

Record Number of Memberships

We are very happy to announce that our December 2, 2025 meeting resulted in the BCWRT achieving a **record 729 memberships and 1,2871 members.**

This is the highest number of members since the BCWRT was founded in May 2010.

New Memberships: 14

New Members: 22

Guests: 6

Online registrations: 129

Live Meeting Attendance: 80

In-person Attendance: 365

Total Memberships: 729 (new record)

Total Members: 1,271 (new record)

In Memoriam: Wally Rueckel

Wally's efforts rippled out beyond Brunswick. He spearheaded an effort to encourage roundtables across North Carolina to coordinate on speakers, allowing them to share expenses and improve travel efficiency for presenters. He also encouraged roundtables to partner in other ways, such as working together on service projects and sharing busses and expenses for field trips.

That work, in turn, rippled out beyond the Tar Heel State. In 2020, Mike Movius led a group of organizers from around the country to found the Civil War Roundtable Congress, an organization dedicated to providing resources for roundtable management and leadership development. Wally was one of those organizers.

"His depth of experience about organizational success, human behavior, and the importance of teaching and learning about American history was profound," Mike told me. "Following his departure from the Board of Directors, we named an annual award after him, the Wallace L. Rueckel Innovation Award."

The above is a portion of Chris Mackowski's memoriam in the emerging Civil War, Nov. 25, 2025

Notes from the December 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

1. Our December meeting with Jim McKee had a good turnout and was very well received by the members.
2. The current Board was reelected for another year.
3. Hatch Auditorium is not available for the first two weeks in March and we need to change the date to March 17.
4. The date for the next Ladies' Forum has been set for October 19, 2026.
5. Tours of Fort Fisher in February and Fort Caswell in April are being planned.
6. Possibly having a plaque created in memory of Wally Rueckel was discussed.

Our next Board meeting is Tuesday, January 13, 2026. 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.

Local Events

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 - 4:30 pm

Cost: \$25

Guest Speakers

Dr. Chris Fonvielle Jr.

Andrew Dupstadt

Jim McKee

Becky Sawyer

Wade Sokolosky

For more information contact Wade Sokolosky

bgesExDir@gmail.com (434) 770-7325

All proceeds go to Battlefield Interpretation

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

“The Battle of Roanoke Island: Burnside and the Fight for North Carolina”

Michael P. Zatarga, the author of *The Battle of Roanoke Island: Burnside and the Fight for North Carolina* in The History Press Civil War Sesquicentennial Series. He will speak about the pivotal battle for control of North Carolina’s Outer Banks and the sound country.

Without a blockade of serious effectiveness, the Union would have faced a much greater risk of intervention by the European nations and also Confederate interference with troop movements by sea. Gaining control of the North Carolina sounds was key early in the war and the battle for Roanoke Island in February 1862 was vitally important.

Zatarga was the living history coordinator for the 150th anniversary commemoration of the Civil War on the Outer Banks: Flags Over Hatteras event.

Thursday, January 8, 7:00 pm

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

Southport Historical Society Programs

“Spirited Exertion in the Common Cause: The Cape Fear at War, July 1775 to January 1777”

Presented by John Moseley
Curator of Education and Outreach at the
NC Maritime Museum at Southport

Tuesday, January 13, 10:00 am, Harper Library

How political tension, militia activity, and conflict in the Lower Cape Fear helped shape North Carolina’s path to independence during the early years of the American Revolution.

Free. Reservations Required: 910-457-6237

“Professor Frank Gordon: 55 Years of Teaching”

Friday, February 6, 2026
Southport Community Building
223 E. Bay Street, Southport.

Written by Southport Historical Society President **Liz Fuller, Ph.D.**, this opening-night performance of the 3-day Brunswick County Black History Symposium tells the story of **Frank Gordon**, who was born enslaved and went on to educate generations of Brunswick County children during a 55-year teaching career.

Admission is free, but reservations are required. Doors open at 5:30 pm. Tickets may be reserved at www.southporthistoricalsociety.org.



Muster Notes and Notables

**The January BCWRT meeting is Tuesday, January 6, 2025.
Hatch Auditorium, NC Baptist Assembly, Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC.
See page 7 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	Jim McKee: Advisor
Ann Birdsall: VP & Director	Chris Mackowski: Advisor
Jim Dunn: VP & Director	Skip Maxwell: Advisor
Jennifer Chapman: Secretary & Director	Roy Pender: Advisor
Tom Kehoe: Treasurer & Director	Wally Rueckel: Advisor
Bruce Jordan: Director	Wade Sokolosky: Advisor
Chuck Roedema: Director	Robbin Smith: Advisor
Gar Dowell: Advisor	Len Trizinski: Advisor
Charen Fink: Advisor	John Wall: Advisor
Chris Fonvielle: 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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