



Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Hopefully everyone had a chance to celebrate this past Thanksgiving holiday closer to normal with family gatherings, turkey dinners, some football and maybe a few well-deserved afternoon naps.

As we learned in elementary school, Thanksgiving started with the Pilgrims and the Indians in 1621 at Plymouth Rock. It was a feast to celebrate their first harvest in their new home. They invited the Wampanoag Indians, who had helped them adapt and survive.

In the 1800s, Thanksgiving was celebrated regionally, but was not considered a national holiday like Christmas, George Washington's Birthday or Fourth of July. In 1863, Thanksgiving became a national holiday when President Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November "as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise." This was partly done to honor the Northern successes in the war that year, and recognize Sarah Josepha Hale's 35-plus year campaign to make Thanksgiving a national holiday.



Mrs. Hale is best known as the author of *Mary Had a Little Lamb*. Starting in 1827, as editor of *Boston's Ladies' Magazine*, and then in 1847 as the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, Mrs. Hale wrote essays and launched a letter-writing campaign to support her cause. On September 28, 1863, she wrote directly to President Lincoln, asking him to use his powers to create the holiday.

Every year since Mr. Lincoln's 1863 proclamation, the United States has celebrated Thanksgiving Day. The date varied until 1941 when Thanksgiving was approved by Congress as a legal holiday on the fourth Thursday in November.

The idea of a Thanksgiving holiday and its celebration varied by regions. In the North it was celebrated with feasts and family celebrations. To the extent that Thanksgiving was celebrated across the South, it was mostly as a religious holiday, with Southerners closing businesses and attending church to hear ministers' sermons versus feasts and celebrations.

(Continued on page 10)

THE FORT CASWELL YOU'VE NEVER SEEN

Thanks to Jim McKee, the featured speaker at our Tuesday, December 7 meeting, we are in for a rare treat: through archival photographs and drawings we'll see and hear what the fort was like during and immediately after the Civil War.



We all might know the fort supported blockade runners and protected the mouth of the Cape Fear River from the Union navy. However, few documents survive to show us the fort's appearance and operation during the mid-nineteenth century. Jim's unique presentation paints a complete picture.

Our returning guest speaker formerly worked for the National Park Service and the NC Maritime Museum in Southport. He currently manages Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. He has led several sold-out, up-close tours of Fort Caswell for BCWRT members in recent years.



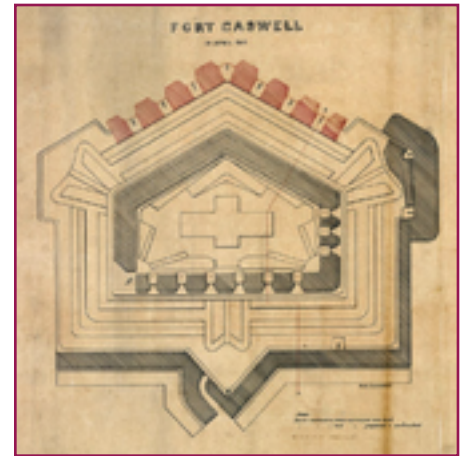
Once again, joining the meeting via Zoom is an option. Simply use the following:

Link - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86454983766?pwd=ZVdXVWErS0Vkb1E5ODZRSHFHdXh5Zz09>

Meeting ID - 864 5498 3766 Passcode - 721226

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

If you used this convenient process for any of our first three meetings this year, you must pre-register again as a meeting



ticket is only good that (one) month. Starting Friday, November 26, and lasting until noon on Tuesday, December 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. Bring the ticket to Hatch and enter through the special door on the far right. (Please do not go to the registration tables.) 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!

The Tuesday, December 7 meeting takes place at Hatch Auditorium on the grounds of Fort Caswell. Registration begins at 6:15 p.m. and the program starts promptly at 7 p.m. The guest admission fee is \$10, and can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues.

Please note: The BCWRT Leadership Team is asking all members and guests to wear a mask while inside Hatch Auditorium. We appreciate your cooperation.

TOP TEN TURNING POINTS OF THE CIVIL WAR

A review of Jay Jorgensen's November Presentation By Jim Medeiros

1) The first **Battle of Bull Run** remains pivotal because it smashed the fantasies on both sides that the war would come to a speedy resolution. By the time of the battle, Lincoln's first levy of 90-day volunteers was nearly done and were desperately needed to renew their commitment.

2) Although **George McClellan took command**, he begs criticism for constant delays and exaggerations of the enemy he faced. Nonetheless, he lent important professionalism to the ragtag army which began with 90-day volunteers. His talent for organization assembled forty-eight forts and strongpoints around Washington, gathered over 160,000 men and built esprit de corps.

3) The **death of Albert Sydney Johnson** at the Battle of Shiloh proved a severe blow to the southern cause. In the Confederacy he garnered great respect.

4) **Lee's command of the Army of Virginia** improved its organization, improved its leadership, and gave it focus (becoming the Army of Northern Virginia thus declaring to all his place in the field), all of which he delivered with audacity.

5) The **Battle of Antietam** not only created the largest number of a single-day's dead (22,000), but McClellan's hesitant leadership in pursuit of the retreating Lee led to McClellan's replacement. The technical Union victory is often cited as the final impetus for the Emancipation Proclamation, changing the character of the war from a focus on Union to the dissolution of slavery. Finally enjoying victory for the Union also scared off European intervention.



6) The **death of Stonewall Jackson** had outsized influence on Confederate morale as evinced by his formal burial from of Confederate capital. Though a lousy teacher, Jackson's audacity and effective use of terrain inspired his troops.

7) The month of July 1863, with its **Union victories in Gettysburg and Vicksburg** meant the end of all European intervention which had allowed supplies to flow to the Confederacy.

8) **Confederate infrastructure failed** in terms of both poor industrialization and its dependency on a single crop: cotton. Not only

did the South depend on a single export, but its lack of attention to industry, especially railroads, left them vulnerable to the more organized North. The South boasted 730 locomotives to the North's 4,000, 9,000 miles of track to the Yankees 20,000, 11 different gauges of track, and an average speed of 20 mph which degenerated to walking speed by the

end of the war.

9) **Ulysses S. Grant took command** with defeats ultimately of both Lee's and Albert Sydney Johnson's armies. Historians have repeatedly cited Lincoln's confidence, "I can't spare this man—he fights."

10) Many people overlook **the fall of Atlanta**. The city served as the Confederacy's storehouse. As poor as the South's railroads appeared, Atlanta remained a track and transportation center. Its fall marked the further disorganization of a land already broken by its decidedly rural nature.

Taking a page from Jay Jorgensen, **send us your choice** for the top ten turning points of the Civil War. We will try to print as many as we can in future newsletters. Email your list to the editor at: egstack44@gmail.com.

Ladies' Department – *By Charen Fink*

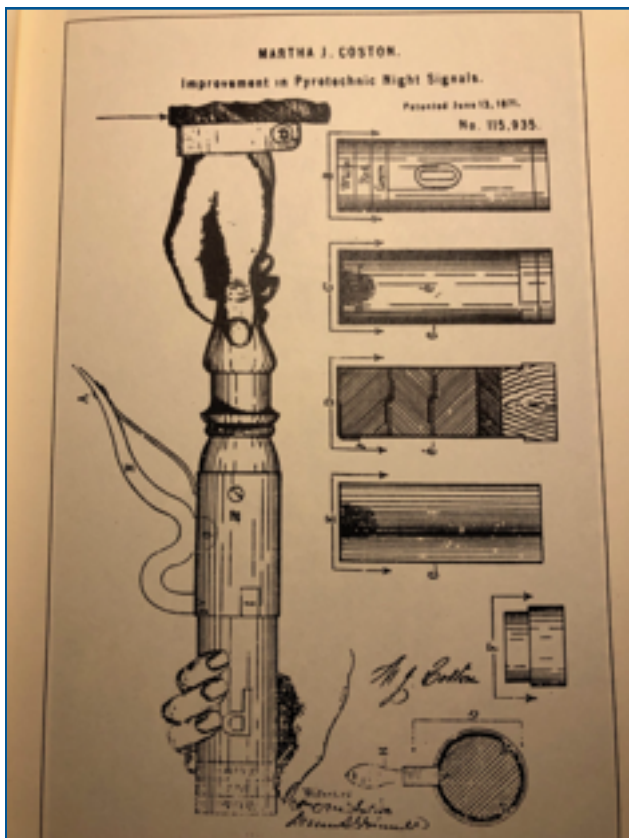
Women Inventors

By 1809, an American woman succeeded in obtaining a patent in her own name. She was Mary Kies. But Sybilla Masters was actually the first woman to invent a new way “for cleaning and curing the Indian corn growing in several colonies in America,” however, the patent was issued in her husband’s name. That’s the way it was in 1715.

Sarah Mather improved upon her own 1845 invention of a submarine telescope for locating and studying underwater objects.

Temperance P. Edson invented a “self-inflator” for raising sunken vessels.

Martha Coston, of Hampton Roads, Virginia, perfected the Pyrotechnic Night Signals (patent drawing shown) which her husband invented, but she perfected and put into practice after her husband died. It was coded so that senders and receivers could communicate between distant points.



Christmas During the Civil War

In the United States, the widespread customs of Christmas cards, carols, and trees date back to the 1850s. The Christmas tree was a beloved symbol of the American family Christmas. Queen Victoria’s husband, Prince Albert, brought the custom to England from his native country, Germany.

Cartoon artist, Thomas Nast, created many visuals and

is credited with the first images of Santa Claus taken from his native German portrait of St. Nicholas in a red, white and blue suit with stars. When toys were not available



during the blockade in the South, mothers told their children Santa would not be able to run the blockade or that he had already been shot by the Yankees.

In Georgia, General Sherman dressed his mules as reindeer and loaded wagons with gifts, food and supplies for the destitute Southerners.

Carols, such as silent Night, were sung in homes and camps by homesick soldiers during the war.

Although Christmas was celebrated in both the United States and the Confederate States of America, the day was not recognized until 1870, when President Ulysses S. Grant made Christmas an official federal holiday in an attempt to unite the North and South.

TOUR OF SUGAR LOAF LINE A WINNER

You know a BCWRT tour is a success when feedback from participants include these comments: “I want to sign up now for Chris’ next tour!” “Enthusiasm, enthusiasm, enthusiasm.” “Make sure Chris’ positive love of what he does is stated!” “Outstanding day.” “I learned so much!” “Amazed to learn how much of the earth works still exist.”

Kudos to member John Walsh for organizing another excellent tour enjoyed by over 30 members and guests on October 23 , led by BCWRT Advisor and Civil War historian extraordinaire Chris Fonveuille.



LADIES' FORUM RETURNS AND IT'S A SUCCESS!

Charen Fink, a BCWRT Advisor and head of the Ladies' Forum, said the first such meeting since the pandemic began was another huge success. Held on October 25 at the Trinity United Methodist Church, the gathering attracted 88 women attendees. "It was an overwhelming hit thanks to everyone involved including the many volunteers, the church, BCWRT, and the wonderful attendees," Charen noted.

Rhonda Florian returned to speak about the Woman Divided, describing the many items used by women in the home and personal items important to the women of the day. These included a gutta percha mirror, small framed pictures, and a soldier's housewife (a sewing kit made by the women and given to a soldier).

During the break, refreshments, made by some of the volunteers, were served including Sally Lunn bread, pound cake, molasses cookies and applesauce cookies, all made from period recipes.

Marion Martin reprised her history of Civil War era quilts with a vast array of those she had quilted, some of which were for sale. She presented stories of her ancestors who fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War.

The evening concluded with a Civil War book given to each participant. An announcement was made concerning next year's forum to be held the last Monday of October 2022.



WHAT TOOK PLACE AFTERWARDS ON THE GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD?

A Review of George Sheldon's Book By Bruce Jordan

The famous Battle of Gettysburg was fought from July 1-3, 1863. Did you ever wonder what was the aftermath of the largest Civil War battle on a small Pennsylvania town? What took place there for the next several months? Journalist George Sheldon tries to answer those questions in his 2003 book **When the Smoke Cleared at Gettysburg: The Tragic Aftermath of the Bloodiest Battle of the Civil War**.

In the summer of 1863, the town of Gettysburg, located seven miles above the Mason-Dixon Line, had about 2,400 citizens. It was in the center of the road network for Adams County, one of the main reasons the battle was fought there. (The battlefield was 25 square miles.) Over the three days of the battle 85,000 Union soldiers fought 75,000 Confederate troops. When the fighting was over, there were 7,655 deaths, 33,280 wounded, and 10,615 missing or captured. While Lee took roughly 8,000 wounded soldiers with his retreating army, he left over 6,800 wounded soldiers to be cared for by the Union medical teams. Of the 33,280 wounded, approximately ten percent died of their wounds. On top of the human casualties, there were slightly more than 5,000 horse and mule carcasses on the battlefield. There are no estimates of how much equipment lay strewn across the terrain.

Very little of the actual battle and tactics are covered in this book. Instead, Sheldon tells the

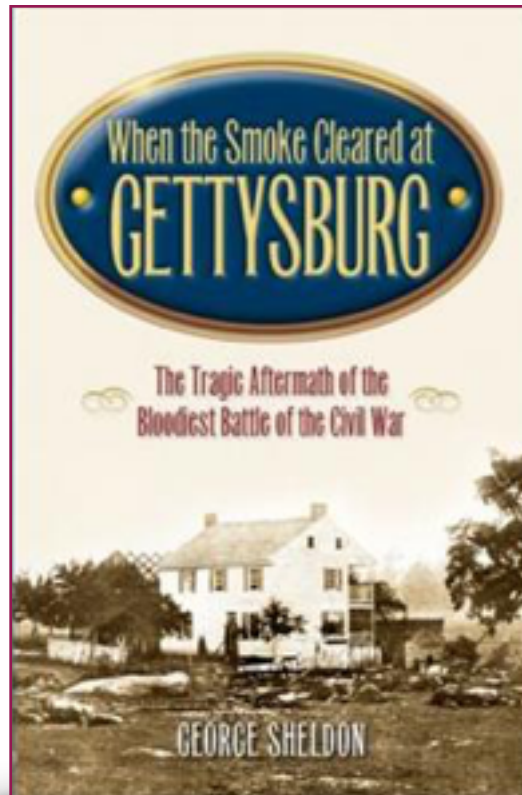
battle from the personal recollections and writings of the citizens of Gettysburg. He focuses on how they fed Southern troops, tried to minimize their looting of homes, avoided sharpshooters during the battle, and turned their homes and buildings into impromptu field hospitals to handle the rapidly growing numbers of wounded. Sheldon fills his chapters with quotations of local recollections of the battle and its aftermath, giving the reader a strong sense of the personal impact upon the community. For

example, Nellie Aughinbough recalled, "We could not open our windows for weeks because of the horrible stench" due to the rotting unburied human bodies and animal carcasses, and the summer heat. Sheldon has chapters on the wounded, getting aftermath help for the town, burying the dead, military medical care, and life as a nurse.

Sheldon's book is best as an overview of these topics, rather than a detailed examination. It is a good starting point for future research. I felt his chapters on creating a National Park and

Gettysburg today were a bit rushed and could have used a bit more detail.

Roughly 30,000 books have been written about the battle and campaign of Gettysburg. Very few of them have explained the battle's aftermath. George Sheldon's book does an excellent job highlighting the rarely covered battle's impact on the community where the conflict took place.



EXCELLENT SPEAKERS CONTINUE FOR 2022

Our five speakers for the remainder of the 2021-22 program year are all Civil War historians of note.

January - Phillip S. Greenwalt's talk, "*If this Valley is Lost...*," examines the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864 which some say was a microcosm of the entire war.

February - A continual member favorite, Wade Sokolosky's talk, "*To Prepare for Sherman's Coming: 1865 Operations on the North Carolina Coast*," focuses on how the Confederate forces got ready to face Sherman's march.

March - Peter Carmichael, head of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, returns to present, "*The War for the Common Soldier*," addressing how Civil War soldiers endured the brutal and unpredictable existence of army life during the conflict.

April - Civil War author and Assistant Professor at UNCW Angie Zombek, examines "*The Duty of the Prisoner to Escape: POWs' Attempts, Plots and Ideological Flight*." She will cover all forms - contemplated, attempted, pulled off...and punished.

May - Our season-closing speaker is JoAnna McDonald, a historian, writer, and respected speaker. Her topic is, "*R. E. Lee's Quest for a Decisive Victory: Maryland, My Maryland, September 1862, Critiquing His First Strategically Unsound Campaign*."

If you have a suggestion for a future topic or speaker, please contact our Program Coordinator, Gar Dowell, with your ideas. Reach Gar at gardow46@yahoo.com.

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A MEA CULPA...and PLANNED FIX

President John Butler recently released the following statement. "As most of you know, Jay Jorgensen, our speaker for November, had an auto accident and was unable to make his presentation in person.

Because it occurred within only a few hours of the start of our meeting, we did not have time to get a replacement. Rather, we quickly got Jay up to speed on Zoom. The good news: all members who saw his presentation via Zoom received it perfectly. On the other hand, for the folks at Hatch, we attempted to transmit his Zoom talk onto the big screen... and it failed due to inferior audio quality, which unfortunately could not be fixed.

The hundred-plus members and guests who came to Hatch were sent an email 48 hours later apologizing for the snafu. We also provided the YouTube site featuring Jay's Zoom presentation - <https://youtu.be/c03sbU-tR4U>.

Thankfully, these types of unforeseen emergencies involving our scheduled speakers are very uncommon. The BCWRT Board of Directors is working on a backup speaker system just in case a similar situation occurs. Should an emergency occur in the future, we hope to have local quality speakers prepared to step in - with minimal notice - to make a quality presentation. The Board's goal is to provide you an informative and entertaining program for each of our meetings."

THE PRESIDENT’S CORNER - (Continued from page 1)

Celebrations for the soldiers during the first Thanksgiving holiday in 1863 varied widely. For Northern soldiers it was mainly a day of relaxation and simple celebrations for those not in combat. Southern soldiers did not celebrate Thanksgiving as it was viewed as a Union holiday. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, did issue several proclamations during the war asking for various dates to be set aside as a day of national humiliation and prayer or prayer and thanksgiving to Almighty God, but none of these were viewed as a Thanksgiving holiday.

In 1864, when President Lincoln again issued a Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, a major effort was started to provide a more traditional holiday feast for all soldiers and sailors. George Blunt a

member of the Union League Club of New York City led an effort to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for Union soldiers and sailors. It became a national effort and raised vast sums of money and food. This effort combined with local cities and towns hosting celebrations for soldiers stationed nearby provided most of the Union troops with a Thanksgiving feast. One appreciative soldier saw the deeper meaning, writing that, “It isn’t the turkey, but the idea that we care for.”

Today our Armed Forces continue this tradition. No matter where they are deployed, no effort is spared in providing a traditional Thanksgiving meal of turkey with all the trimmings to each and every service member.

John



The Brunswick Civil War Round Table Leadership Team wishes you and your family Happy Holidays and a safe New Year.



HONORING US COLORED TROOPS

BCWRT Attends Dedication



US Colored Troops who fought at the Battle of Forks Road in 1865 were memorialized with a 2,500 pound bronze sculpture dedicated at the Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington last month. BCWRT donated \$5,000 to the memorial titled "Boundless." John Butler, President of the BCWRT attended the event, and noted that re-enactors were on hand to help tell the USCT story. For their service during the Battle of Forks Road, three members of the USCT were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. *(All photos by John Butler)*

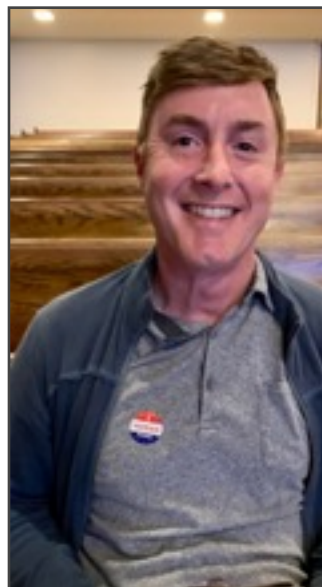


Pictured at our November Meeting

Speaker Jay Jorgensen spoke via Zoom to nearly 100 registered members, while another 100 members attended the meeting at Hatch (including nine new members and one guest). Some of the Hatch participants paused for our camera. *(Photos by E. Gifford Stack)*



Pictured at our November Meeting - Continued



MUSTER NOTES and NOTABLES

The December BCWRT meeting is Tuesday, December 7, 2021. The meeting will be held at Hatch Auditorium, NC Baptist Assembly, Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC. See page 2 for attending via Zoom.

Registration begins at 6:15 p.m., and the meeting starts promptly 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, 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/>. The YouTube BCWRT site is located at: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=brunswick+civil+war+round+table. Contact us at brunswickcwr@gmail.com.

Mail Dues Checks to: BCWRT, PO Box 10161, Southport, NC 28461 (Please include your current phone number and email address.)

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Wade Sokolosky: Advisor
Peter Whelan: Advisor

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