



# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

## The President's Corner by John Butler



The BCWRT Board would like to thank the membership for their vote of confidence in re-electing 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 re-elected 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 Wade Sokolosky giving a presentation on Civil War hospitals. He is always very informative and entertaining. Next, we will have a night tour of Fort Fisher on January 15<sup>th</sup> with Chris Fonvielle. Sorry, the tour is sold out, but we are planning on making this an annual event. In February, Kevin Pawlak will discuss the Battle for Second Manassas. In March, we will bring back Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver to talk about Weaponizing Food. They gave a very funny and informative talk in February 2023 about environmental impacts of the Civil War. Also in March, Robbin Smith will be leading the Ladies' Forum. The speakers will be Liz Fuller doing an impersonation of Mrs. Mary Duffy, a tavern owner in Smithville during the 1800s. A second speaker will be Carolee Morris who will be discussing Mark Twain. In April, Sarah Bierle returns to talk about John Pelham, Confederate artillery officer. Our final program of the 2024-2025 year is May 6, featuring Bradley Gottfried discussing Antietam Painting by James Hope.

In May we will also be celebrating our 15th anniversary.

Remember, if you cannot come to a meeting personally, you can always find us on Zoom. 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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# BCWRT Upcoming Events

## Tuesday, January 7, 2025 Program

### North Carolina's Confederate Hospitals

As battles raged throughout the course of the Civil War, at least 600,000 soldiers died from wounds or sickness. The vast majority of these men were treated in both battlefield and general hospitals.

Clearly hospitals were essential to the survival and recovery of countless soldiers. They played a crucial role in treating the wounded, controlling disease, advancing medical knowledge, and providing even psychological support.

Despite their effectiveness and efficiency, they had serious limitations because of the lack of medical knowledge at the time, resulting in hospital stays lasting weeks or even months for



recovery. The downside meant unsanitary conditions because of overcrowding and a lack of clean water. Disease control was sporadic, resulting in the spread to other quarantined patients, poor hygiene practices prevailed, and poor ventilation complicated medical progress.

On the positive side, new surgical techniques, improved anesthesia, and better medical supplies such as bandages, splints, and surgical instruments created some hope of optimism.



Guest speaker **Wade Sokolosky** is highly qualified to discuss what he perceived as a forgotten yet crucial Civil War oversight by most other historians – the hospitals. He rectified this oversight, in part, with his book *North Carolina's Confederate Hospitals, Vol. I, 1861–1863*. Wade is a native of Beaufort, N.C., a graduate of East Carolina University, and a 25-year veteran of the U.S. Army. He has used his expertise in military affairs to produce a definitive study of North Carolina's significant involvement in the Civil War. He is one of North Carolina's leading experts in the 1865 Carolinas Campaign, and frequently leads tours of these battlefields. He also serves as a tour guide with the Friends of Bentonville Battlefield, and has been an advisor to the Brunswick Civil War Round Table for years.

You are encouraged to attend the meeting either in person or via Zoom.

**If participating via Zoom**, simply use the following link:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/83615350184?pwd=4H5uvznJ17aZa8Y8uPveULvbXs5UV4.1>

**Meeting ID: 836 1535 0184**

**Passcode: 246804**

# Christmas in the Civil War

Though this is the January issue of *Call to Arms*, in the spirit of the season as this is being sent, a touch of Christmas is included. JC

## Eggnog

The Confederates were not as well supplied as the Yankees and festive treats such as egg nog were not a common event. More often the men had to make due with a homemade whiskey distilled from tree-bough call “pine-top”.



The recipe below for egg not would have indeed been a special treat for a soldier even at Christmas. Unfortunately, they often had to make do with a far less rich mixture.

### Ingredients:

4 egg yolks  
2 Tbsps sugar  
1 cup cream (whipping)  
1 cup brandy  
1/4 cup wine  
4 egg whites.  
A little ground nutmeg

### Instructions:

Beat the egg yolks until light, then slowly beat in the sugar, cream, brandy, and wine.

Whip the egg whites separately and fold into the other ingredients.

Sprinkle with the nutmeg to serve.

Recipe from [The Civil War Cookbook](#) by Wm C. Davis shared by Robbin Smith

## The Eggnog Riot at West Point

Sylvanus Thayer, the commander of the United States Military Academy, prohibited the possession of alcohol and drunkenness with the threat of expulsion. However, by 1826 it seemed drinking was getting out of hand among the 260 cadets. On December 22, 1826 cadets brought in whiskey to be used in what they considered a traditional celebration that included gathering to enjoy some home-made eggnog. This led to more whiskey being brought in and then to a “party” that went out of control with two officers assaulted, banisters torn from stairways, smashed windows and dishes, and at least one shot fired.

Following the Eggnog Riot, 19 cadets were court marshaled and 6 resigned from the Academy.

Classmates, including Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis testified in the defense of some of the cadets. Jefferson Davis was himself confined to his quarters for more than a month.

## Civil War Christmas

During the Civil War, soldiers celebrated by decorating their camp Christmas trees with hard-tack and salt-pork and singing carols such as “Come All Ye Faithful” and “Silent Night.”

After General William Sherman captured Savannah in December of 1864, his soldiers dressed their horses up like reindeer by attaching branches to their headgear and delivered food and supplies to hungry families in Georgia.

Although some soldiers, especially Union soldiers in the beginning of the war, enjoyed special Christmas dinners of turkey, oysters and pies, other soldiers were not as lucky: *“And when I turned from these musings upon the bill of fare they would have at home to contemplate the dreary realities of my own possible dinner for that day - my oyster can full of coffee and a quarter ration of hard-tack and sow-belly comprised the menu”* wrote one soldier in a book titled [The Story of a Common Soldier of Army Life in the Civil War, 1861-1865](#).

President Abraham Lincoln and his family celebrated Christmas during the first year of the war by holding a Christmas party at the White House. During the Christmas season in 1862 and 1863, he visited injured soldiers in various hospitals.

Mary Todd Lincoln raised money for Christmas dinners and their son Tad sent gifts to wounded soldiers he met during this father’s holiday hospital visits.

One of the most famous Christmas gifts was when General Sherman captured the city of Savannah, Georgia in December of 1864, a significant military achievement that marked the beginning of the end of the war, and sent Abraham Lincoln a telegram that read: *“I beg to present you as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 100 and 50 guns and plenty of ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton.”*

From [TheCivilWarSaga.com](#) by Rebecca Beatrice Brooks



# Civil War Notes & views

## Hospitality for General Grant



John Walsh & U.S. Grant

BCWRT volunteer John Walsh hosted Curt Fields and his wife when they came to Southport for the January Meeting. They were interested in seeing the area and enjoyed a ferry ride to Fort Fisher for a tour of the earthworks and new visitor center.

Thank you for your hospitality, John.



## Albert Henry Woolson



Ann Birdsall, BCWRT VP of Programs, recently traveled to Duluth, Iowa where she found the grave of Albert Henry Woolson, the last known surviving member of the Civil War, who died in 1956 at the age of 106.

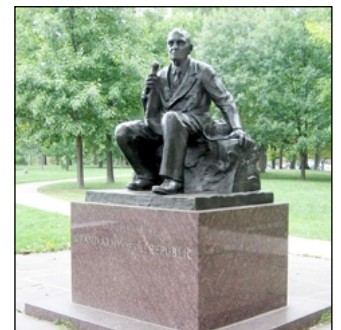
Woolson enlisted in the Union Army in October 1864 when he was 14 years old and became a drummer boy and bugler in Company C, First

Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment which served garrison duty in Chattanooga, TN until the fall of 1865.

Woolson was a member of the [Grand Army of the Republic](#), a fraternal organization founded in 1866

and made up of Union veterans of the Army, Navy, and Marines who served in the Civil War. It was dissolved in 1956 at the death of its last member, Albert Woolson. His funeral was attended by more than 1,500 people including honorary pallbearer Ulysses S. Grant III, General Grant's grandson.

In Gettysburg, **The Memorial of the Grand Army of the Republic** was dedicated on September 12, 1956 and depicts Albert Woolson, the last survivor of the GAR. The Woolson Monument, for which he modeled, was noted at the dedication that it "*symbolizes all the great virtues of the common, ordinary citizen, the citizen who becomes a soldier and then returns to ordinary life.*"



## Gordon B. Meldrum, Caledonia, NY



Caledonia and Mumford are two adjoining small towns in Western New York near Rochester. In the center of Caledonia is a traffic circle in its crossroads that contains a war memorial to those who have died in wars since the beginning of the Civil War. Atop the memorial stands a Civil War Union Army soldier. Through the years, many have tried to have the monument moved so that the intersection could be redesigned, but in the end this idea is never supported.

In the neighboring town of Mumford is a cemetery with another monument topped with a Civil War soldier in honor of a Caledonia resident, Gordon B. Meldrum. He enlisted in the Union Army on October 3, 1861 and was just 17 years old when he

died at notorious Libby Prison in VA. He was officially discharged on April 22, 1863, although he died the previous September. The inscription reads:

A loving tribute to the memory of

Gordon B. Meldrum  
Who was a member of Co. B  
100th NY Infantry Volunteers  
War of the Rebellion  
Born in Caledonia NY  
July 13th 1845  
Died in Libby Prison  
Richmond VA  
Sept. 1862  
His life for his country

*My brave lad he sleeps  
In his faded coat of blue  
In his lonely grave unknown  
Lies the heart that beat so true  
He sank, faint and hungry  
Among the famished brave  
And they laid him sad and lonely  
Within his nameless grave  
No more the bugle calls  
The weary one  
Rest noble spirit  
In thy grave unknown  
I shall find you and know you  
Among the good and true  
Where a robe of white is given  
For the faded coat of blue.*



Gordon Meldrum had two other brothers who were also born in Caledonia, John and Norman.

John W. Meldrum was born in 1843 and served with the 14th New York Heavy Artillery until September 1864. He was a trained wagon maker and carpenter and after moving to Colorado and then Wyoming had a varied career in Wyoming politics and became the first U.S. Commissioner in Yellowstone National Park, a position he held for 41 years (1894 - 1935).

The eldest brother, Norman H. Meldrum, was born in 1841 and served in the Civil War guarding the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad and he also became a politician. He was the Secretary of State of Colorado from 1879 to 1883. As lieutenant governor, Meldrum introduced the legislation for the founding of Colorado State University.

*Caledonia, NY is the town I lived in for 30 years before retiring and moving away in 2010 and where some of my family still reside. Jennifer Chapman, Editor*



# Meeting Photo Gallery





# Meeting Photo Gallery



I attended last night's meeting and just wanted to tell you that this was my absolute favorite guest presenter. I was very impressed with Dr. Fields' presentation and he honestly made me feel he was the "real" person.  
Thanks for all you and the CWRT do to bring the guest presenters to us each month.  
*Dan Murray*

Another fabulous meeting. This gentleman told some incredible stories and was just thoroughly entertaining & informative. Thanks you again for making this available on ZOOM. *Kendra Maxwell*



# Board Notes & Local Events

## Notes from the December 2024 Board of Directors Meeting

1. Our balance as of the end of November is \$7,157.
2. We had a total of 382 attend the meeting with Curt Fields as General U.S. Grant, 344 in person and 38 via Zoom.
3. The January Fort Fisher tour will have 48 people. A waitlist will be created if any openings occur because of people needing to cancel.
4. Training and cross training of registration volunteers is going well and ideas for improving and expediting the registration area are being implemented.
5. The Bentonville tour details are being worked on and we will be able to announce them soon.

*Our next Board meeting is Tuesday, January 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 at [jlbutler2007@gmail.com](mailto:jlbutler2007@gmail.com).*

## Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

### U.S. and Confederate Marines in North Carolina During the Civil War

Andrew Duppstadt is the guest speaker in January. His talk will take a brief look at the history of both the U.S. and Confederate Marine Corps in the Civil War and their involvement in actions in North Carolina. Both services were present in the Old North State, especially in the last year of the conflict, and both played crucial roles in the Second Battle of Fort Fisher in January 1865.

Andrew Duppstadt is currently the Education & Interpretation Supervisor of the NC Div. of State Historic Sites. He has worked at Fort Fisher State Historic Site, Tryon Palace Historic Sites and gardens, and the CSS Neuse State Historic Site, and serves as an Adjunct Instructor of History at UNC-Pembroke and Coastal Carolina Community College.

January 9, 2025, 7:00 pm

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

## Southport Historical Society Programs

### “1960 Bolivia Plane Crash”

Presented by Donald Sellers

Tuesday, January 14, 10-11 am, Harper Library

Join Southport's Donald Sellers as he recalls the 1960 Bolivia, NC Plane Crash. Sellers will share details about the crash that left wreckage covering twenty miles and shocked both local residents and aviation investigators alike. Sellers is an accomplished aviator who has had a varied career as a helicopter pilot in Viet Nam, a Menhaden fish spotter, and 20 years as a commercial pilot.

Free. Reservations suggested.

To reserve your spot, call 910-457-6237

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

Presented by Chris Fonvielle

Thursday, January 23, 2:30 pm, Southport Community Building, 223 E. Bay St.

In honor of the 160th anniversary of the fall of Fort Fisher on January 15, 1865, Dr. Chris Fonvielle will discuss his newly released book, Fort Fisher Illustrated: Art of the Battle. Americans came to understand Fort Fisher's great significance through art as well as the written word. Autographed copies of the book, co-authored with Dr. Robert M. Browning Jr. will be available for sale.

Free. Open to All.

**Door Prize:** 2 tickets to the 2025 Holiday tour of Homes, Dec. 13, 2025. Must be present to win.





# Muster Notes and Notables

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

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

**See page 2 for details to attend via Zoom.**

**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.

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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