

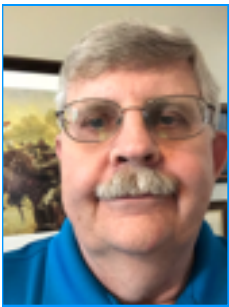


# Call to Arms

Brunswick Civil War Round Table Newsletter

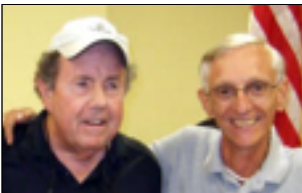
## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*(BCWRT Board members continue to serve as Acting President for a month until a permanent President is elected. John Butler, shown below, is Acting President for May.)*



With everything going on, we need to take a few minutes and celebrate the eleventh anniversary of the Brunswick Civil War Round Table, one of 13 such organizations in North Carolina. So take a moment, strap into your

seat, and enjoy this interesting ride through our history.



\* The BCWRT was founded by Tom O'Donnell and Wally Rueckel (no hat) at a New Years Eve party in 2009. Tom and

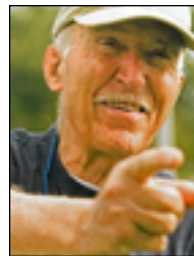
Wally did not know each other; they were introduced by their wives who knew they had a mutual interest in the Civil War. They had travelled to round tables in Wilmington and Raleigh but wanted something closer to home. So they took their business savvy and love of Civil War history and started the BCWRT. Tom O'Donnell was the first President and then was succeeded by Wally in Oct 2010. Mike Powell became the third President in January 2016.

\* Our first meeting was on May 4, 2010, with Black Jack Travis as the speaker, and took place upstairs at Trinity United

Methodist Church. He spoke about artillery in his Civil War uniform. There were about 80 attendees. Chris Fonvielle, a UNCW Civil War history professor at the time, was one of our BCWRT founders. He was also our second guest speaker.

\* By the September 2010 meeting, BCWRT had increased to 127 members! By April 2016, we had grown to over a 1,000 members. Today, there are over 1,200 members, and we are the largest Civil War round table in the country!

\* Refreshments at those first several meetings consisted of a pot of coffee and a package of Oreos. Over the years we went from a single coffee pot, to a 50-cup urn, to a single 100-cup urn, to two 100-cup urns. The single package of Oreos expanded to approximately twenty packages (18-count) chocolate chip cookies from COSTCO!



\* Ed Bearss appeared as guest speaker eight times, starting in January of 2011, and each year he was responsible for adding new members due to his popularity and reputation. Ed's January 2016 talk, "Lincoln and His Cabinet," added a record 50 new members.

\* Our first female speaker was our own Charen Fink in February of 2011, talking about "Civil War Women."

*(Continued on page 7)*

# FORMER CONFEDERATES - THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

## AFTER THE WAR

Finally, on April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, and the Civil War was officially over! The battlefields were empty. What happened to the defeated Confederates? Where did they go? What did they do? And, how was their adjustment to civilian life after a long and bloody war which claimed the lives of over 700,000 men? When it ended, former opponents worked together to rebuild their reunited nation, moving toward the future together. This is the fascinating account guest speaker and award-winning author **Stephen M. “Sam” Hood** will share during our ZOOM meeting on Tuesday, May 4, at 7 p.m. — our eleventh anniversary!

Drawing from his recently published book entitled, *Patriots Twice: Former Confederates and the Building of America after the Civil War*, Sam will share the fascinating stories drawn from three hundred former Confederate soldiers, sailors, and government officials who reintegrated into American society and

attained positions of authority and influence in the federal government, the United States military, academia, science, commerce, and industry. Their contributions had a long lasting and positive influence on the country we live in today.

Some of their stories might be hard to fully comprehend. Like ten post-Civil War presidents appointed former Confederates to serve the reunited nation as Supreme Court justices,

secretaries of the U.S. Navy, attorneys general, and a secretary of the interior. Former soldiers were named U.S. ambassadors and consuls, and eight were appointed generals who had commanded U.S. Army troops during the Spanish-American War. Others were elected mayors of major cities around the country, served as governors of non-Confederate states and territories, and became presidents of national professional societies including the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association.

Sam Hood is a celebrated author and speaker who is active in numerous national historical organizations related to the Civil War. He is also a distant relative of Confederate General John Bell Hood.

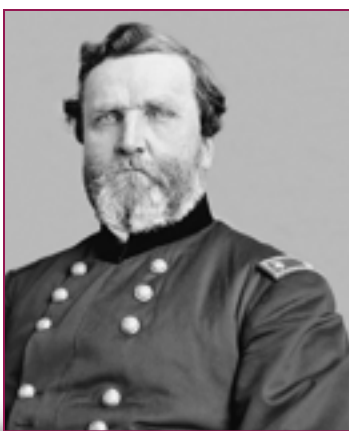


There are two ways to join the 7 p.m. meeting. The easiest is to connect directly to this link which contains the meeting ID and Passcode: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85091964169?pwd=U0c3eFpUVWIwSHRySkhtNE5LNDRV6QT09>. Or, if you have the Zoom app installed, the meeting ID is: 850 9196 4169 and the passcode is: 003560. Please keep this link in a handy spot, and kindly do not send emails to the round table asking for the information again. Once you join the meeting, you will be placed in a ‘waiting room.’ You are encouraged to sign in early. Starting about 6:50 p.m., we will begin admitting people from the waiting room to the meeting. It takes several minutes to admit all attendees. Signing in early also reduces potential frustration wrestling with those untimely and annoying computer issues!

# GENERAL GEORGE THOMAS, AS TRUE AS STEEL

*A review of Brian Steele Wills' April Presentation* By Jim Medeiros

While some historians consider General George Henry Thomas the most winning Union general of the Civil War, others consider him slow. He lacked fire in his belly. Per Brian S. Wills, our April speaker, Grant and Lincoln worried he lacked enthusiasm for the Union cause (a native of Southampton County, Virginia, Thomas' family disowned him when he sided with the North). His reticence during public talks, either when receiving awards from home or lecturing at West Point, helped raised his legend, spelling shyness to some. He made his place among the other generals due partly to his greater age (twenty upon admission to West Point), the same seniority often cited as the cause of a deliberation due to timidity. For Wills, traits others criticized weighed little in the face of Thomas' personality portrayed through his nicknames and the plethora of quotes attributed to him. Wills rescues Thomas from the threat of obscurity.



**Old Slow Trot** - Pithy nicknames capture a man's essence. Thomas earned "Old Slow Trot" at West Point by telling cavalry classes to slow their mounts to a trot in confined arenas. The sobriquet carried over nicely to his methodical approach in everything he did. Plans need completion before an attack. Staff positions begged for filling so every eventuality of terrain, supply, enemy positions, morale, reinforcements received consideration before battle. What other people see as micromanaging Wills calls good preparation. Thomas himself embraced his reputation averring that in the Mexican War he had indeed been slow in his service to Bragg's artillery because he was

"slow" to give up his position. Perhaps Sherman's comment best illustrates the importance of stability: "Thomas may be slow but he is true as steel."

**The Rock of Chickamauga** - At Stones River, Thomas gave backbone to the Union cause, easing the sting to Rosecrans' army. "This army can't retreat," Thomas proclaimed. Certainly, slow to move his army from harm's way, he said, "There is no better place to die than here." His calm demeanor and determination later earned him "The Rock of Chickamauga" mantle. Unable to retreat, he thought, "It will ruin the army to withdraw now." In fact, eventually at Chattanooga Thomas' troops carried Missionary Ridge from the Confederacy in a charge up the mountainside that Sherman's men could not make. The fastidious care Thomas' men took with their kit from the base of the ridge struck watchers as tricked out for a parade rather than fierce battle.

**Old Pap** - Known for his slam at Nashville (thus earning him "The Sledge of Nashville"), Thomas then and repeatedly showed that his steady reliable speed served him on both offense and defense. In spite of his fussy insistence that troops prepare and rest before battle, that his line serve properly scouted, and his careful planning, Thomas embraced a fatherly laurel from his men who called him "Old Pap." Though never guilty of braggadocio, self-promotion or playing the political games of other generals, Thomas may have missed out on faster promotions accordingly. Nonetheless as Brian Wills insists, an undefeated general deserves his laurels.

## Ladies' Department – *By Charen Fink*

There have been many inquiries about the Ladies' Forum. This was a group designed for the women members of the BCWRT and guests. Back in late 2012, following a regular round table meeting, President Wally Rueckel invited any interested persons to join him for a discussion of the speaker's program. At the first meeting there were just a handful of participants. Next month there were fewer members present. At that time I asked Wally if I could organize a forum for women, with a program that was directed only to women. It was designed to replicate a mid-nineteenth century ladies' tea.

Wally was all for it, but I suspected he had his doubts. He encouraged me to keep it for women only – a good move. The format was organized and our first meeting was on a Tuesday evening, April 13, 2013, at Trinity United Methodist Church, from 6-8 p.m. in a classroom (shown below). BCWRT female



members had signed up during regular BCWRT meetings. Chuck Roedema, our publicist, advertised in several local newspapers resulting in a fairly good response from non-BCWRT women. I set up the room with all my gowns and artifacts, and it took on the characteristic of a department store. Forty-five women attended that first night. The program was free for BCWRT women, and guests were charged \$5 (an arrangement that has not changed).

Two round tables were set with lace tables cloths, china and silverware, silver tea set, and floral centerpieces. Connie Hendrix helped with the planning of refreshments and she continued to do so

until 2019. There were homemade period cakes, jams, jellies, fruit, coffee and tea. Flowers graced the tables. The program consisted of a demonstration of all the layers of clothing a Civil War-era woman would wear, and was shown on my antique manikin, Lizzie.

For the first several years, programs were scheduled in April and October. The October program in 2013 was Ed and Nancy Ovsenik, reenacting a funeral director (Ed) and Nancy as the official mourner, replete with coffin. The only other man to be a presenter was Chris Fonvielle, Civil War professor at UNCW, speaking on "Sex in the Civil War." Suffice it to say he had a very attentive audience! (Here is a picture of Chris and me before his presentation.)



There were other Ladies' Forum presentations about Courtship and Marriage, Death and Mourning Customs, Letters To and From the Battlefields, Education, Music by Carolyn Williams, Southern Women by Rhonda Florian, Teej Smith, Quilts by Marion Martin, a Portrayal of Mary Lincoln - by yours truly – on the day of Mary's husband's assassination. Civil War era music was played before the programs and during the refreshments.

After the first forum, the attendance every year increased until it reached 120. Refreshments served expanded to cover more varieties of food, all period correct. *(Continued on page 9)*

# CANNON SHOTS!



Acting President for May John Butler says the North Carolina Baptist Assembly will open Hatch Auditorium at Fort Caswell this summer! This means BCWRT will be back - live! - at this venue starting in September. Obviously, many details need to be worked out regarding any appropriate federal and state coronavirus guidelines, and will be shared as they become available. "The most helpful thing at this point is for every member to pay their dues to assist with their September registration," John noted. Members should send in their \$25 dues check (along with any change to email or phone number) to: BCWRT, PO Box 10161, Southport, NC 28461.

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Vice President Gar Dowell is our new head of Programs. "I hope to continue bringing the very best local, state, and national speakers to address our membership," he said. "The line-up for the beginning of our 2021-22 program year is outstanding, starting with Chris Mackowski on September 7, 'Simply Murder: The Battle of Gettysburg.' Then on October 5, George Table presents, 'Believer, Skeptic, or Something Else?' Our November 2 speaker is Jay Jorgensen whose topic, 'Ten Top Turning Points in the Civil War' will surely enlighten us. Then on December 7, our own Jim McKee talks about 'The Fort Caswell You Never See.'" If members have a speaker suggestion, please contact Gar at [gardow46@yahoo.com](mailto:gardow46@yahoo.com).

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**AmazonSmile** reminder. BCWRT members (and family/friends) who shop using the AmazonSmile program, contribute 0.5% of their purchases on eligible products to BCWRT. To participate, members should log on to the AmazonSmiles website (<https://smile.amazon.com>) and follow the easy steps to begin shopping (our name for the program is **Brunswick Civil War Roundtable**), giving a percentage of their sales to our organization. All monies go towards BCWRT program services.



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**John Walsh**, BCWRT's Trip Coordinator, is planning a very unique experience for this October - a visit to the Sugar Loaf line of Confederate defenses in present day Carolina Beach. "In January and February of 1865 Federals, including regiments of U.S. Colored Troops, attacked this strong position, capturing it after heavy fighting on their way to Wilmington. Significant portions of trenches and the battlefield have been preserved in the new Sugar Loaf Park, supported by donations from BCWRT."

"The expert on these battles is Dr. Chris Fonvielle, a BCWRT advisor who has spoken at our meetings several times. He will lead us on a comprehensive tour of the area — history comes alive when explained by Dr. Fonvielle!"

The exact date and details are being finalized. Watch for more information coming soon.

## FATHER, DAUGHTER VISIT HISTORIC CW SITE...AND ELVIS' HOME!

Member **Rob Clarke** and his daughter, **Erin**, stopped at the Tupelo, Miss. National Battlefield as part of their April cross-country odyssey to Arizona...and back. The Tupelo battle took place on July 14-15, 1864, and was a resounding defeat for the Confederates. The southerners made three attempts - right, center and left - to breach the Federal lines, all were unsuccessful. The action ensured that the rail line supplying Sherman's march toward Atlanta would be protected from significant disruptions. Further east, Lee was fairing no better, having become entrenched at Petersburg in a stalemate he must have known he could not win.

According to Rob, "We were deeply disappointed that there was so little to see." He opined that given the outcome however, "It is no wonder that the people of Mississippi have done so little to preserve the grounds."

The monument below, which sits on an otherwise nondescript one-acre site, is all that remains. "There are no maps or brochures or much of anything interesting to see about the battle."

It seems, Rob conjectured, that Tupelo would much rather be remembered as the birthplace of Elvis Presley. "There is a museum there, complete with statues and the car his family used to move from Tupelo to Memphis in 1948, when Elvis was 13."

Rob, a former BCWRT Vice President, has visited dozens of Civil War sites and recommends, "BCWRT members traveling in that area would be better advised to visit the Corinth, Miss. or Shiloh, Tenn. battlefields which had much more significant engagements, and today offer more engaging displays, artifacts, and information, including visitor centers and museums."



Clockwise, top left - Rob at Tupelo Monument; with daughter Erin; Elvis statue; the King's early home; and the Presley family car. (All photos by Rob Clarke)



## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

\* Our second female speaker was Susannah Ural in June, 2011. She has spoken at several subsequent yearly meetings.

\* During the early meetings it was noted that we had a large number of women attending (approximately 40%). In fact, we usually had more women attend our meetings that most other round tables had as their full attendance.

\* Based on this female interest, the first Ladies' Forum was scheduled on April 13, 2013, spearheaded by Charen Fink. Over 40 women attended. Our plan is to restart these meetings after we return to live meetings at Hatch Auditorium.

\* The best impromptu meeting in our eleven year history: the late Max Williams substituted for a no-show speaker in May, 2013, our third anniversary meeting! Max's topic: "King Cotton," and after doing the presentation from memory, received a rousing standing ovation!

\* Entertaining guest speaker portrayals have been very popular: Patrick Falci in May, 2014 spoke in uniform as Gen. A.P. Hill; James Hayney in December, 2016 came as President Lincoln; Carolyn Evens in November, 2019 as Harriet Tubman which added 55 new members that evening and was our largest attendance ever - 660 members and guests; and, Derek Maxfield and Tracy Ford in March, 2020 appeared as Generals Grant and Sherman.

\* The first of several appearances by John Bennett's Masonboro Parlor Band took place on February, 2017, playing Civil War music. It was quite festive, including a sing-along and dancing.

\* Singer Cassie McKee



*(continued from page 1)*

made her debut at speaker Lori Sanderlin's meeting in February, 2019. Cassie was invited back at another meeting to sing the Star-Spangled Banner.

\* The Coastal Harmonizers sang for the speaker Lawrence Hewitt meeting in October, 2019. It was another crowd pleaser!

\* Due to the ever-expanding size of our meetings and fire marshal regulations, we needed to relocate several meetings from Trinity United Methodist Church to St. James Community Center. In December of 2014 we moved to our current location - Hatch Auditorium on Fort Caswell.

\* The BCWRT has created a UNCW scholarship for the post-graduate study of Civil War history. The first BCWRT scholarship (2019) was awarded to Matthew Poirer of Chesapeake, VA, and was given in Tom O'Donnell's name. Our 2020 scholarship was presented in the name of Ed Bearss. For 2021, we will donate in Max Williams' name.

\* The round table has attracted members from as far away as Kennebunk, Maine (1,200 miles) and Durango, Colorado (2,700 miles).

\* The round table has donated \$59,000 to various Civil War historic preservation efforts over the past 11 years. These include monies to Fort Fisher, Fort Anderson, the Goldsborough Bridge Battlefield, the Bentonville Battlefield, NC Maritime Museums at Southport and Hatteras, Fort Caswell, and nineteen other organizations.

\* The BCWRT conducted educational tours for members to Fort Caswell, Bentonville Battlefield, Fort Anderson, Fort Fisher, and Civil War sites along the Cape Fear River.

**\* And here's to the next eleven years!**

## Rueckel's Reminiscing - By Wally Rueckel

(From time-to-time, BCWRT co-founder Wally Rueckel writes about a slice of our round table's history. This month's column involves the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum on Hatteras Island.)



In 2014, Mike Powell, an advisor at that time, was approached by the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum on Hatteras Island, NC. The museum asked if BCWRT would make a financial donation to complete the restoration of the museum's battle flag from the USS *Monticello*, one of only three silk ensign flags from this period to exist.

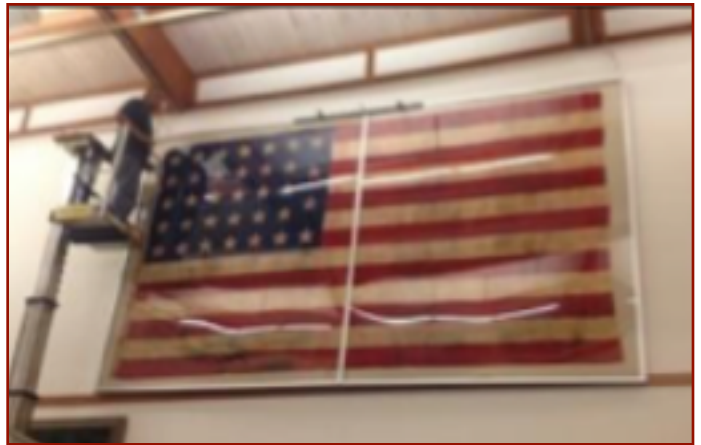
The USS *Monticello* achieved numerous Civil War accolades, including destructive engagements of batteries at New Inlet on the Cape Fear River, capturing the blockade running British schooner *Revere* off Frying Pan Shoals, participating in the expedition to Smithville (Southport), assisting in the attacks on Fort Fisher, and accepting the surrender of Fort Caswell.

Mike brought the donation request to BCWRT's Board of Directors who approved

\$3,000 for the flag restoration project, which was successfully accomplished.

The museum leadership held a special invitation only ceremony on June 30, 2014, to thank those involved with the restoration. Mike, Charen Fink, Connie Hendrix and I were asked to participate. The flag raising was - literally - more that we expected.

The four of us, along with four others, were asked to manually hoist the mounted 10 x 6 foot flag approximately 25 feet up, then required to hold the flag in position while



the banner was stabilized and secured. I will speculate this was one of the most rigorous, official activities ever undertaken by BCWRT members! But what we accomplished, albeit with sore muscles later, was to preserve the Civil War history of the USS *Monticello* that had such a colorful past.

I would encourage you to visit the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum on Hatteras Island... but do not volunteer to raise any ensign flags!

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**Civil War Fast Fact** - There is no living descendant of Abraham Lincoln. The last surviving member of the line was great-grandson Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith, who died in 1985.

(Cited in Thomas Flagel's "The History Buff's Guide to the Civil War.")





# CIVIL WAR VIEWS



Member - and intrepid traveler - **John Walsh**, on his way to visit family up north in April, stopped by the Fredericksburg Battlefield and Chatham Manor in Virginia, two venues often described as part of “America’s battleground, where the Civil War roared to its bloody climax.” Clockwise from top left — the historic Chatham Manor used by Union forces and where Lincoln (and Washington before him) visited; cannon on the Chatham grounds; information signage for the Fredericksburg Battlefield; the Innis house located on the infamous “Sunken Road”; and a park service sign describing the house’s use...and severe battle damage! *(All photos by John Walsh)*

# **MUSTER NOTES and NOTABLES**

**The Tuesday, May 4 meeting of the BCWRT will be conducted via Zoom - See page 2.**

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](http://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](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=brunswick+civil+war+round+table).

Contact us at [brunswickcwrt@gmail.com](mailto:brunswickcwrt@gmail.com)

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

## **2021 Officers, Directors, and Advisors**

(Vacant): President & Director  
Cindy Brochure: VP & Director  
Gar Dowell: VP & Director  
Jim Kane: Secretary & Director  
Gary Krupp: Treasurer & Director  
John Butler: Director  
Kathy O'Donnell: Director  
Chuck Roedema: Director  
E. Gifford Stack: Director  
Ann Birdsall: Advisor

Peter Carmichael: Advisor  
Charen Fink: Advisor  
Chris Fonvielle: Advisor  
Tom Kehoe: Advisor  
Jim McKee: Advisor  
Roy Pender: Advisor  
Leslie Rivers: Advisor  
Wally Rueckel: Advisor  
Wade Sokolosky: Advisor  
Peter Whelan: Advisor

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