

# Old Baldy Civil War Round Table of Philadelphia

Kevin M. Hale Award  
for  
best Historical Newsletter  
in New Jersey

November 14, 2019 The Civil War: April 12, 1861 - August 20, 1866

## “Targeted Tracks: The Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War”

Cooper Wingert



Join us at **7:15 PM** on **Thursday, November 14th**, at **Camden County College**. This month's topic is **“Targeted Tracks: The Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War”**

The Civil War was the first conflict in which railroads played a major role. Although much has been written about their role in general, little has been written about specific lines. The Cumberland Valley Railroad, for example, played an important strategic role by connecting Hagerstown, Maryland to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Its location enhanced its importance during some of the Civil War's most critical campaigns. Despite the line's significance to the Union war effort, its remarkable story remains little known.

Cooper Wingert is the author of 12 books on the American Civil War and slavery, including *Slavery and the Underground Railroad in South Central Pennsylvania*, *Abolitionists of South Central Pennsylvania*, *The Confederate Approach on Harrisburg: The Gettysburg Campaign's Northernmost Reaches*, and *Harrisburg and the Civil War: Defending the Keystone of the Union*. He is the recipient of the 2012 Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr. Literary Award for Confederate History, and has appeared on C-SPAN Book TV and Pennsylvania Cable Network. He is a student at Dickinson College, in Carlisle, Pa.

Scott L. Mingus, Sr. is an author, tour guide, multiple award-winning miniature wargamer, patented scientist, and history buff based near York, Pennsylvania.

Scott Mingus



### Notes from the President...

Welcome to November with less daylight and cooler temperatures. We are very grateful for the progress the Round Table has made this year, with the assistance of our members. Continue to share our message and invite folks to visit us and enjoy our hospitality. Welcome to our new members and guests who are checking us out.

Last month **Chuck Veit** finally was able to share his “African Americans in the Union Navy” presentation that he had planned to give at our Symposium last year. It was enjoyed by all in attendance including **Bonny Beth Elwell** of the Camden County History Alliance, as the presentation was one of the County's History Month events. This month we will learn about the “Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War.” Thank you to **Dave Gilson** for the variety of outstanding programs he has scheduled for our meetings.

Last month, we had a successful time talking to folks about our Round Table at both the Civil War weekend at Mullica Hill and the train station in Glassboro. We saw some old friends and made new ones. Thank you to those who came to staff our table. Hope to see some of our new friends at a future meeting. We are putting together a list of events for next year where we will be setting up our display. If you are aware of any local events, please let us know.

The Board has started an Outreach Program to visit other Round Tables. Last month we ventured up to the Col Ryerson CWRT to hear **Chuck Veit** present on the Battle of New Orleans. This month we will attend the Phi Kearney CWRT meeting. Next month up to Reading for the First Defenders CWRT. It is an opportunity to connect and share the OBCWRT message. There has been positive progress in the planning for our Civil War Naval Symposium in May 2021 as well as the 2020 Civil War Round Table Congress to be held in our area. Let us know how you would like to assist us on these or other projects our Round Table is currently working to advance our mission.

Thank you to all the members who sold Boscov passes, we raised over \$300 for the Round Table.

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We welcome back Vice President **Kathy Clark** and **Paul and Susan Prentiss** from their adventures overseas. Flat Old Baldy accompanied them on their trips and we look forward to hearing of their adventures. With the upcoming Holiday season, be sure to make your purchases through our Amazon Smiles account so the Round Table can get a piece of the action. We are planning a trip to the GAR Museum on December 1st to visit **Old Baldy** and hear **Walt Lafty** on the Battle of Stones River. We will carpool on that Sunday. There will be a signup sheet at the meeting for those interested in making the trip. Please let us know if you want participate.

Have a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving weekend with your families.

Join us for a pre-meeting meal with our speakers

**Rich Jankowski, President**

## Today in Civil War History

### 1861 Thursday, November 14

#### **The North**

McClellan, writing to General Halleck, expresses dissatisfaction at Frémont's handling of the Department of the West. "You will have extraordinary duties . . . Chaos must be reduced to order . . . staff personnel will have to be changed . . . a system of reckless expenditure and fraud, perhaps unheard of before in the history of the world, will have to be reduced to the limits of an economy consistent with the interests and necessities of the state." This last is a calumny, possibly motivated by McClellan's dislike of Frémont; there is no evidence that Frémont's command was in any way more corrupt than those nearer to Washington.

### 1862 Friday, November 14

#### **Eastern Theater**

Burnside reorganizes the Army of the Potomac before setting off for Fredricksburg. He divides the army into three Grand Divisions. Sumner's Grand Division, the "Right," comprises Couch's II Corps and Wilcox's IX Corps, formerly Burnside's command. Hooker's Grand Division, the "Center," has Sherman's III Corps and Butterfield's V Corps. This had been Fitz John Porter's command until he was removed. Franklin's Grand Division, the "Left," takes in Reynold's I Corps (Hooker's old corps) and W.F. Smith's VI Corps, which had previously been commanded by Franklin. Burnside also has XI Corps near Manassas Junction and XII Corps guarding Harper's Ferry.

### 1863 Saturday, November 14

#### **Western Theater**

Sherman arrives in Bridgeport at the head of 17,000 men. His troops have covered 675 miles by boat, rail, and foot in the last two weeks. Grant briefs him on the situation at Chattanooga, explaining that nothing much can be expected from the Army of the Cumberland. In Grant's opinion, they

will be reluctant to leave their trenches, so the men from Vicksburg will have to lead the way.

#### **The South**

The Confederate Government threatens to use force and confiscate property to collect taxes from the farmers of North Carolina. The whole episode illustrates the central weakness of the Confederacy: the self-sufficient agrarian economy can only sustain a limited burden of taxation. With few banks and little capital to work with, the government's resources are quite inadequate for this prolonged struggle.

### 1864 Monday, November 14

#### **The North**

President Lincoln accepts the resignation of Major-General George B. McClellan and appoints Sheridan to the rank of major-general.

#### **Western Theater**

Major-General Schofield reaches Pulaski, Tennessee, with his leading division. There are now 18,000 Union troops concentrated there, with another 5000 men nearby. Bedford Forrest joins Hood at Florence. Judson Kilpatrick leaves Atlanta at the head of Sherman's cavalry vanguard. Slocum leads XX Corps to Decatur, tearing up the railroad.

## BGES Antietam Tour

by Jim Heenehan, OBCWRT Member

I was on the Blue and Gray Education Society's Antietam tour in late October. The tour was led by Scott Hartwig and Tom Clemens. Scott authored *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of 1862*, and is currently writing a book on the battle itself. Tom edited Ezra Carman's multi-volume *The Maryland Campaign*. Both are excellent historians and tour guides. This tour followed up previous BGES outings to South Mountain in 2017 and Harpers Ferry last year.

Things got off to an ominous start as weather reports called for rain Saturday afternoon through Sunday evening. Fortunately, except for a couple of hours of light drizzle, Saturday was overcast but dry.

In addition to the battlefield highlights, Scott and Tom took us to places many of us had never visited. Our first stop was the Pry House which Tom noted is incorrectly listed as McClellan's HQ. While McClellan used it at times as a forward observation post, Tom has documented through dispatch orders and other information that his HQ was actually in Keedysville.

We then drove over to the East Woods, following the route of the XII Corps. We continued over to the Joseph Poffenberger Farm and the North Woods where our guides gave us an overview of the battle's morning phase. McClellan was worried he faced 100,000 Rebels and established a strong artillery line to aid Hooker's morning attack and to protect his right flank. We then marched down into the Cornfield where Tom pointed out where General Mansfield fell in the adjoining East Woods and discussed Hooker's advance to the West Woods and Hood's counterattack. Scott suggested that the battle's turning point may have been the wounding



of Hooker which elevated the incompetent "Bull" Sumner to command of McClellan's right wing. Up until then, Scott thought Hooker had managed the Union attack fairly well.

We then hiked over to the West Woods, following the route of Sedgwick's division. Sumner ordered Sedgwick to close up his three brigades and advance into the woods, despite the latter's reservations about such a dense formation. Fortunately for Lee, McLaw's division had just arrived from Harper's Ferry after an all-night march. Following a brief rest, they were sent to the West Woods where they and other Rebel units hit Sedgwick's left flank, routing his division.

Tom and Scott now took us through the West Woods and across the Sharpsburg Pike to Hauser Ridge where the Confederates had established a strong artillery position. This artillery hammered Union advances into the woods. Hauser Ridge opened to the public just two years ago. The strength of this position is only apparent after crossing the road and climbing the ridge. This would have been Lee's fall-back position had his men been forced from the West Woods. Scott pointed out yet another ridgeline closer to town that Lee also could have retreated to if needed.

Saturday ended with a group dinner and then back to the hotel. When we arose Sunday, the weather looked ominous as it was raining hard. But surprisingly, things worked out. We started at the Antietam Visitor's Center observation deck for an orientation. Just as we finished, the rain stopped and we were treated to a beautiful 75 degree day.

We started with a drive to the Mumma Farm where we followed the march route of the Irish Brigade to the Sunken Lane past the Roulette Farm. The Union advance was done without skirmishers. The failure to use skirmishers may, in part, have been due to the large number of inexperienced Union troops - almost 20% of McClellan's army. Some units had been in the army less than three weeks.

When the Union II Corps crested the ridge overlooking the Confederates in the Sunken Lane, they were silhouetted against the sky and easy targets. Yet, as Tom and Scott pointed out, the position was not good for Rebs. They were pinned down in the road with little ability to maneuver. D. H. Hill moved his men into the road to avoid being stampeded by retreating troops from the East Woods and to avoid Union artillery fire. Ultimately, Union Colonel Barlow outflanked the line with his 61st/64th New York just as a confusion in orders caused Gordon's 6th Alabama to give way from where they were caught in a cross-fire. Tom said the story that General Porter cautioned McClellan against rein-

forcing the breakthrough with the V Corps never happened. The incident concerns a different part of the battlefield when a reporter saw Porter give McClellan a "look" which he reinterpreted as the cautionary words.

We then headed up to Tidball's Battery on the ridge just past the Middle Bridge. The Boonsboro Pike runs over the bridge on up to the tree-covered "Cemetery Hill" and Sharpsburg itself. The Sunken Lane is to the right and a farm path to Burnside's Bridge is visible to the left. McClellan posted several artillery batteries on the ridge and massed his cavalry behind it. Yet only infantry skirmisher units were here to guard the artillery. An aggressive union commander actually advanced the skirmishers and got a lodgment in Cemetery Hill. He requested reinforcements to secure the hill but was told to return to the guns (the source of the above Porter story).

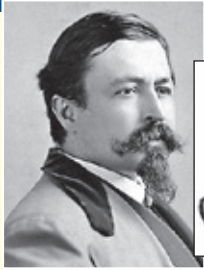
We finished our tour with the fighting at Burnside's Bridge and subsequent 3pm Union advance following the bridge's capture. The Federal troops marched across fields to the Rebel positions on the ridge just outside of town. Burnside's 8,000 men were ready to sweep away the weakened Confederate defenses (most of the troops on Lee's right had long since been recalled to other sections of the battlefield). However, at the last moment, General A.P. Hill's 3,500 men completed a forced march from Harper's Ferry, and caught Burnside's left flank in a 40-acre cornfield of 8-foot high corn. The 16th CT posted on the extreme left flank had only been mustered into the army in late August. They had no drill, barely knew how to fire their guns and could not see through the corn. Hill swept them away and rolled up Burnside's flank. Col. Harrison Fairchild's brigade suffered 48% casualties - the highest casualties of any Union brigade at Antietam.

We ended up at the cemetery guarded by "Old Simon." The cemetery refused to bury any Confederates on its grounds. However, it was sobering to find out that black WWI and WWII veterans are buried in a segregated section of the cemetery.

On my way home from Frederick, MD, I stopped at the town's Mt. Olivet graveyard to pay my respects to Francis Scott Key and Barbara Fritchie who are buried there. All in all, a very nice weekend.



## Thomas Nast Collection



from James Lewis  
Head of the North Jersey  
History and Genealogy  
Center  
Morristown and Morris  
Township Library  
1 Miller Rd.  
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I noticed that Old Baldy Civil War Round Table's upcoming program is about Thomas Nast. We have one of 8 remaining panels from his Grand Caricaturama and ours happens to be Swinging 'round the Circle in which Nast pokes fun of Andrew Johnson's disparaging remarks about reconstruction while campaigning for re-election. The Grand Caricaturama pieces are 8 x 12 ft! Library of Congress has 5, nearby Macculloch Hall has two but doesn't have the space to display them. We also have a big collection of original work by Thomas Nast and books about his work. We have also digitized the Journal of the Thomas Nast Society and have posted them to our website. For more information on our Thomas Nast digital collection see: <https://cdm16100.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15387coll2>.

I hope you will share this information with the members of the Old Baldy Civil War Round Table. If you or any of your members are in the area I will be happy to show you and them the Grand Caricaturama and our Thomas Nast collections.

## "Farragut's Passage Of The Forts"

by Chuck Veit



by Kathy Clark, OBCWRT Member

A week later, Rich, Frank and myself visited the Col. Henry Ryerson Civil War RoundTable as representatives of Old Blady CWRT. We had never visited this roundtable and were anxious to meet the group and introduce ourselves. We also wanted to hear Chuck again with his topic on Admiral Farragut and the battle to capture New Orleans. Chuck believes that this battle is a more important battle if the Civil War then Gettysburg. Major General, Mansfield Lovell, confederate commander, defender of New Orleans, and William C. Whittle, commander of the Navy yard along with commander, John K. Mitchell was helping William Whittle take care of the Confederate Naval Vessels. The Confederate fleet consisted of three ironclads, two gunboats and two launches. Mitchell was commander of the CSS Manassas when it was launched first in the Louisiana and then Mississippi rivers.

Gideon Welles told Lincoln that the Union Navy was an obvious target for the Confederacy in this area. Admiral Farragut, as commander, became a part of the Union squadron with David Dixon Porter's mortar schooners and support vessels. Between the Union Navy and Army, commanded by Benjamin F. Butler there were 18,000 soldiers, 3000 sailors and 192 guns in the Navy. On April 18th, the Navy mortars opened fire!

General Benjamin Butler and Gideon Welles persuaded Lincoln to let the campaign continue. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavus V. Fox was encouraging the expansion of the US Navy, wanting to attack New Orleans. The fleet then goes upriver to continue the attack but makes a critical mistake by taking brush and trees away for a clearer sight. They seemed to forget that the Confederate forces also had a clear sight of them. Not a good way to protect the US Navy. Farragut continued to secure his forces and vessels by using chain armor on his ships, sandbagging engines, rope ladders with anti-bombing nets. Grape nets were used to control fire, rafts, medical supplies to help the wounded. They coated the outside of the ships with mud and whitewashed the decks.

Farragut forms his squad! On the night of April 24th, with a starlet night and crescent moon, fire begins at 3am. It was a vision of hell, keeping the bow of the boat straight, although, the gun smoke was causing a visibility problem. Farragut had to get beyond the smoke so climbed the mast, almost getting killed in the process. There was fire all around and Farragut was losing his cool. CSS Mosher attacks the USS Hartford as the CSS Manassas rammed the USS Mississippi and USS Brooklyn but were not disabled. Above the forts, the first division breaks through and started attacking the Confederate ships. USS Varuna rammed the CSS Governor Morris; in turn the CSS Stone-wall Jackson rammed the Varuna and it sank. In all the attacking of both the Union ships and Confederate ships, Farragut, by 8am on April 24th the Union Navy lost one vessel and the Confederates lost twelve. This was the cost of getting past the forts and getting closer to New Orleans. Farragut goes into New Orleans as the CSS Mississippi was being towed up river and eventually destroyed. The surrender was very civilized with volunteers going ashore to talk to the Mayor of New Orleans about a surrender. No civilian homes were occupied. The Federal buildings were occupied and the state flag was taken down. With the forts surrendering, Farragut declared that he won the war of the rebellion. The confederacy lost foreign recognition, especially France, who was no longer willing to go it alone with the Confederacy. The confederacy lost Texas beef and Louisiana salt (used for preserving food items). They had two foundries and lost one. Richmond had the only foundry left. Port Hudson was the last to fall.

This was another informative presentation given by Chuck Veit. There are always other topics of interest in the Civil War both in the Brown and Blue Navies. Chuck brings them to the forefront as we gain many more aspects of Naval activity that many of us know little about. We will see Chuck again I am sure, for our symposium in the near future will bring Chuck back to speak again. Rich, Frank and I were glad we made the trip to Newton, New Jersey to hear Chuck and be introduced to the Col. Henry Ryerson CWRT. We enjoyed the ride! This was another opportunity for our roundtable to expand our range and partnership with other Civil War groups.

## Former slave Elizabeth Keckley



One of the many peculiarities of the Civil War is a black woman and former slave who worked for Varina Howell Davis, the wife of the Confederate president and Mary Todd Lincoln, the Northern president's wife. This unusual situation occurred as a result of sheer determination.

According to her memoir, "Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House," written in 1868, slave parents gave birth

to Elizabeth Keckley in Dinwiddie Court House, Va. As a child, she experienced the tragedy of her father sold off and separated from Elizabeth and her mother never to see each other again.

Surviving the cruelty of slavery, including multiple beatings and continual labor, in August 1855 at age 37, Elizabeth managed to purchase her freedom with the support of white friends and acquaintances and headed to Baltimore and Washington, D.C. She brought with her a 16-year old "almost white" son fathered by a man who forced himself upon her repeatedly in her younger days, and sad memories of a later marriage to a lazy, unmotivated black man she left behind.

In Washington, Elizabeth learned that Varina Davis, the wife of Sen. Jefferson Davis, was in need of a dressmaker, and went to work for her in November 1860— a few months before the outbreak of our four-year long national trauma. Because war with the North was imminent, Mrs. Davis offered to take Elizabeth back into the South with her, but, with unspeakable experiences as a slave still fresh in her mind, she wisely declined.

A woman she worked for in Washington recommended Elizabeth to Mary Lincoln, whose husband was about to be inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States. During the interview with Mrs. Lincoln, Elizabeth learned that hiring her as a dressmaker depended on her prices, because Mary confessed, "We are just from the west, and are poor."

They agreed to terms, and Elizabeth made a beautiful rose-colored moire-antique dress for Mary to wear to the Inaugural Ball. Despite malicious reports in opposition newspapers of Mary Lincoln's "low life, ignorance and vulgarity," Elizabeth remembered, "No queen, accustomed to the usages of royalty all her life, could not have comported herself with more calmness and dignity than did the wife of the president."

As Mary Lincoln's modiste or dressmaker, Elizabeth witnessed the lives of the Lincoln family in the White House up close. This included the sad passing of beloved son Willie Lincoln who succumbed to typhoid fever at age eleven, causing Mary considerable mental anguish.

Observing the large numbers of destitute freedmen flock-

ing to Washington from Maryland and Virginia, Elizabeth helped organize fundraisers to ease their burden and transition from slavery. The Contraband Relief Association evolved from these efforts, and Mary Lincoln contributed to the cause.

As the war drew to a close and assassination of the President Lincoln brought loyal countrymen to their knees in grief, Mary Lincoln sent for Elizabeth to come to the White House. While there, Elizabeth viewed the president's body as it lay in state in the Guest's Room as members of the Cabinet and high-ranking military officers were on the scene.

Elizabeth went to live with Mary Lincoln in Chicago in 1865 where a crowd gathered at a charity fair to observe a wax figure of Confederate President Jefferson Davis portrayed with a "dress" over his other garments when captured in Georgia while attempting to escape. Elizabeth claimed the dress was a "chintz wrapper" she had once made for Varina Davis.

Elizabeth published her memoirs describing her life in good times and in bad, and how she became Varina Davis' dressmaker and Mary Lincoln's confidante. Her friendship with Mary soured, however, when she revealed aspects of the Lincolns' private lives in her memoirs.

Through innate talent and determination, a slave of a Southern family had endured the privations and cruelty of servitude, and managed to gain her freedom. Her cordial manner and skill as a dressmaker led to the unusual relationship with the wives of two Civil War presidents.

## Elizabeth Bacon "Libbie" Custer



The unfortunate first encounter of a beautiful, talented, and well-bred young lady from Monroe, MI and her future husband was when this inebriated young man passed by her home while carousing with a friend. George Armstrong Custer's embarrassment upon learning the woman who was to become the love of his life had seen him in this condition, led him to take the pledge of abstinence.

As with other fathers whose daughters wished to marry men in a military uniform, Judge Daniel Bacon was reluctant to give Elizabeth, known as "Libbie," away to a West Point graduate serving in the Union army. However, when the army accelerated George's rank from captain to brigadier general in June 1863 for his performance on the battlefield and appointed him commander of the Michigan Cavalry Brigade, Mr. Bacon relented and gave Libbie permission to marry "Autie" Custer in 1864.

The love of this young couple (he 23, and she 21) was such that Libbie traveled with George whenever possible throughout the remainder of the Civil War, and during post-war military assignments in isolated Western frontier posts. His

desire to keep Libbie close was a natural reaction when she confessed during their honeymoon spent at West Point that cadets escorted the attractive and vivacious bride alone down Lovers' Walk, and a "Methuselah" professor had kissed her.

As Shirley A. Leckie wrote in "The Civil War Partnership of Elizabeth and George A. Custer (Bleser and Gordon, "Military Commanders and Their Wives"), the ambitious Autie learned to rely on Libbie's wise judgment which "offset his tendency to act impulsively." Yet, Libbie soon experienced the trauma of a military officer's wife during wartime when Custer conducted an isolated cavalry raid into Confederate territory, and was fortunate to make it back alive.

Libbie was delighted to learn sketch artist Alfred Waud's drawing of Custer leading his men on the dangerous raid to Charlottesville, Va. appeared on the front page of Harper's Weekly and enhanced her spouse's fame. After Custer received congratulations on the floor of the House of Representatives (with Libbie in the balcony) and met President Abraham Lincoln, Libbie wrote to her parents, "I find it very agreeable to be the wife of a man so generally known and respected."

Not satisfied to bask in Autie's reflected glory, Libbie socialized with Republican politicians and their wives at dinner parties. These powerful members of the Washington circuit welcomed the attention of a charming and beautiful young woman.

During Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's "Overland Campaign" into the Wilderness area of Virginia in 1864, a rumor circulated that George Armstrong Custer had been killed. Libbie was overcome with grief until word arrived that the report had been in error.

Libbie experienced loneliness when Autie was away campaigning with the army. Nonetheless, she informed her parents, "I am prouder far to be his wife than I would be to be Mrs. Lincoln or a queen."

When Grant defeated Gen. Robert E. Lee's army in April 1865 and the Civil War came to an end, the surrender took place at Appomattox Court House, Va. Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan, who attended the ceremony, purchased the table upon which Grant wrote out the surrender terms and later presented it to Libbie. Sheridan explained "there is scarcely an individual in our service who has contributed more to bring about this desirable result than your very gallant husband."

When assigned out West following the war, Custer's reckless and immature behavior strained their marriage. Despite these problems, following his death in a battle with Sioux Indians at the Little Big Horn River in present-day Montana in 1876, Libbie defended her husband's reputation and spent the next 57 years as a widow memorializing his deeds.

During this period, Libbie published books describing Custer, as "a devoted family man and exemplary commander." Not unlike Sallie Pickett who embellished her husband George's reputation as a Confederate general following his death, Libbie insured that George Armstrong Custer would be remembered by future generations as an American hero both during and after the Civil War.

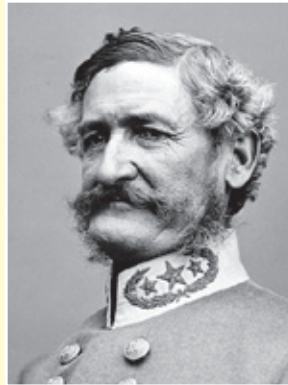
Elizabeth "Libbie" Bacon Custer died at age 90 in 1933. Author Leckie quotes Frederic Van de Water who wrote,

"The love his wife bore him and he bore her may be George Armstrong Custer's most intrinsically sound fame."

\*Tom Ryan is the author of the award-winning "Spies, Scouts & Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign"; available at Bethany Beach Books, Browseabout Books in Rehoboth, and Cardsmart in Milford. His latest book, "Lee is Trapped, and Must Be Taken: Eleven Fateful Days after Gettysburg, July 4-14, 1863" is due out in August 2019, and can be pre-ordered on Amazon.com. Contact him at pennmardel@mchsi.com or visit his website at [www.tomryan-civil-war.com](http://www.tomryan-civil-war.com).

## Sibley's Tent

by Les Jensen, CWT, January 1982



The Civil War career of Confederate Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley is not particularly memorable. Beset by problems caused by alcohol and his own mediocrity, his expedition to capture New Mexico ended in defeat at Valverde and Glorieta Pass in 1862, and his drinking later resulted in charges being preferred against him by his department commander, E. Kirby Smith. At the end of the war, Sibley was without a command and was

listed as not being on duty. While he regained some prestige as a colonel of artillery in the Khedive's army in Egypt from 1869 to 1873, he returned to this country to die in near-poverty in Fredericksburg, Virginia in August of 1886. Such a career would seem to assure that Sibley remain essentially obscure, yet virtually every Civil War soldier knew his name. Unfortunately for Sibley's self esteem, such fame rested not on his talents as a military strategist or tactician, but on something far more mundane; a tent he had patented in 1856 which saw extensive use in the armies.

Prior to 1861, Henry Sibley had shown a good deal of promise, in contrast to his dreary performance during the war itself. Born in Natchitoches, Louisiana on May 25, 1816, Sibley graduated from West Point in 1838, was brevetted for gallantry in Mexico and had reached the Regular Army rank of major in the 1st Dragoons when he resigned in May 1861 to join the Confederacy. During those years with the army he had seen service against the Seminoles in Florida, Santa Anna's army in Mexico, and the Mormons in Utah. Perhaps most importantly for his own immortality, Sibley had also spent some time observing the Plains Indian tribes. It was no accident that the tent he patented on April 22, 1856



looked very much like a white man's teepee. It had the same general shape as the Indian version, which Sibley described as the "frustum of a cone," and his new tent incorporated a triangular hood attached to the top to allow for ventilation, for like the Plains teepee, the Sibley tent was



**Union Troops  
in Front  
of Sibley Tents**

meant to have a fire inside. In fact, it might be easy to conclude that Sibley simply stole the idea from the Indians and patented it as his own.

In fact, however, Sibley never patented the Indian features of his tent. The reason is quite simple; he could not. While it is doubtful that anyone in the Patent Office in 1856 was a zealous protector of Indian rights, the fact remains that the cone-shaped tent was already in common use in several of the world's armies. Small, conical "bell tents," suitably waterproofed, had seen service in the 18th century as a place to stack arms in wet weather, and sleeping tents in this same shape were developed not long after. Both the French and British armies used them extensively in the Crimea, and while the U.S. Army during this period was a shameless copier of European arms, uniforms, and equipment: the actual patenting of one of these items would have been a bit much.

Thus, what Sibley actually patented was not the tent itself, but instead two features intended to increase the efficiency of the conical tent; the pole system and the ventilating system. It should be remembered that the Plains Indians pitched their teepees over a frame of perhaps twenty poles tied together at the top. When the camps were moving, the teepee poles formed the travois which carried much of the camp gear. Modern 19th-century armies could not afford that much extra impedimenta, however, and most of the European tents were pitched with a rigid central pole. The only problem with that device was that it allowed for no adjustment if the tents were pitched on sloping or uneven ground. Sibley's solution to the problem was an adjustable iron tripod with a cup at the top to receive a rigid pole. The tripod could be adjusted to tighten or loosen the tent and its wide leg spread allowed a place for a fire to be built underneath it at the center of the tent floor. Holes were drilled in the legs of the tripod for spits to cook meat over the fire, and a chain and hook were suspended from the cup to hang a pot over the flames. Allowing a fire in a tent was a truly unusual feature, but this in turn required the second part of the patent, a ventilation system to get the smoke out.

The teepees Sibley had seen generally had fires built in them, and the Indians left the top of the teepee somewhat open to allow the smoke to escape. However, since the rest of the teepee remained basically closed, Indian teepees were notoriously smoky inside. Sibley solved the problem by creating a draft. His tent door, made like the fly on a pair of trousers, could be opened for that purpose, and a second "half door" at the rear of the tent could also be used to regulate the draft. The hood at the top of the tent was adjustable and was intended to help the escape of smoke in windy weather. When used in conjunction with the two doors, the tent remained reasonably smoke free.

As finally patented and manufactured, the Sibley tent stood 12 feet high, was 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter, and was made of white canvas. It weighed in at a total of 73 pounds for the canvas and pole, compared to 67 pounds for the French bell tent and 87 pounds for the American wall tent. Although the French tent was lighter than the Sibley, it took two men seven minutes to pitch it, compared to five minutes for the Sibley. The American wall tent could not even compare, since it took at least four men to pitch it in any reasonable amount of time. Sibley's tent could accommodate as many as thirty-two men lying down, with a fire in the center, although Sibley felt that twenty men to a tent with arms and accoutrements would be more comfortable. The French tent could take only 14 men. All things considered, Sibley had a successful invention. His tent had a minimum of parts, was reasonably light, easily pitched, could accommodate a large number of men, and could be heated and cooked in. On the strength of all this, the U.S. Army adopted the Sibley tent and it saw considerable service during the Civil War. Roughly 43,000 of them were used on the Union side, and some Sibleys saw Confederate use.

In general, the troops who used the tents seem to have been satisfied with them. There were, of course, the inevitable problems. When stoves were used in these tents, the top of the tent would sometimes catch fire from an overheated stove pipe. John Billings in *Hardtack and Coffee* remembered that ". . . In cold or rainy weather, when every opening is closed, they are most unwholesome tenements, and to enter one of them on a rainy morning and encounter the night's accumulation of nauseating exhalations from the bodies of twelve men (differing widely in their habits of personal cleanliness) was an experience which no old soldier has ever been known to recall with any enthusiasm." Still, Billings went on to note that the tents were ventilated during the day by raising the bottoms, and that when placed on four-foot stockades they made spacious winter quarters.

Only one feature of the tent caused real problems, and that was its weight and bulk. In the pre-war period, when tents were generally large anyway, this was something armies lived with. But the general movement towards lighter equipment in the field during the war, particularly the introduction of the shelter tent, suddenly made the Sibley seem a bit gargantuan. In the eastern theater, at least, the Sibley seems to have been retired from active field service in 1862, although it continued in extensive use in permanent camps. It continued to see service in the west, primarily in garrisons, although 4,350 of them were issued from the Nashville Depot to the armies operating in Tennessee and Georgia between November 1863 and September 1864. The tent remained in service in the U.S. Army until it was finally phased out in the 1890's. The Sibley tent thus outlasted the man who had invented it.

# The Hidden War

by Kim Murphy

"He took out his revolver and said... 'I will force you to do it.'" He cocked his revolver. He said he would blow me to pieces if I didn't let him do it." Susan, a black woman, a slave, and nine months pregnant at the time of the assault, was raped by Private Adolph Bork of the 183rd Ohio Infantry. Private Bork, also accused of maliciously assaulting and shooting another private, was sentenced to be shot with musketry. The death penalty was mitigated to hard labor for five years.

Few historians have mentioned the subject of rape, much less studied the topic in any detail. Those who have referenced the issue frequently claimed the Civil War was a "lowrape" war, or that Victorian mores somehow imposed gentlemanly restraint. Such claims are based on romanticism, not historical fact.

Throughout history, rape has been regarded as an incident of war. Not until 1996 during the Bosnian war was it prosecuted as a crime of war. Few historians would argue against the premise that rape during wartime is common. Rape as a war tactic is not restricted to any particular army, country, or political system. Yet, Civil War historians often conclude that few rapes were reported because few rapes occurred.

According to modern data from the U.S. Department of Justice, more than two-thirds of the rape/sexual assaults go unreported during peacetime. Wartime statistics are more challenging to confirm because they are often used for propaganda purposes. In addition to the emotional anguish and blame associated with rape, victims during wartime fear for their family's lives as well as rejection from their partners and communities, making disclosure far less likely than during peacetime.

Union Major General Rosecrans wrote about wartime conditions in his report from Tennessee to Secretary of War E.M. Stanton in 1863:

The crimes of spying, murder, arson, rape, and others... are increasing, and the power to check them by inflicting the penalty of death is a nullity, for the delays necessary to get them a regular trial by general courtmartial, and holding them until the matter is reviewed and approved by the President, such a time elapses that the troops are relieved and the culprit escapes. This ought to be remedied.

Nearly thirty U.S. Soldiers are documented to have been executed for rape or attempt of rape during the Civil War. More than half of those who received death sentences were black. Black soldiers comprised only 10 percent of Union soldiers. Of the remaining twelve men executed, eight soldiers were guilty of other crimes. Four white soldiers were executed for the crime of rape alone. One raped the wife of a fellow Union cavalry member, and in another case, male witnesses corroborated the women's testimonies. The remaining two soldiers had a long history of trouble making. In reality, few soldiers received the death penalty for a crime that was considered a capital crime in the nineteenth century.

In 1862 Missouri, three Union soldiers came to Susan Ward's house, where she lived with her four children and widowed mother. Her married daughter, Rebecca Mitchell, lived nearby and was visiting at the time. The men claimed they would serve as guards for their protection. One man insisted Rebecca return home and he would accompany her.

Two guards remained behind. Private William Evans of the 59th Illinois Infantry admitted his intent to Susan and raped her in front of her mother and children. Afterward, Evans's comrade raped Susan, while Evans moved onto her eighty-year-old mother. Throughout the night, the two men took turns raping the two women in front of the children.

Meanwhile, at the Mitchell household, Private Benjamin Davis of the 1st Missouri Cavalry raped Rebecca Mitchell twice. Privates William Evans and Benjamin Davis were found guilty of rape. The third man was either never found or the transcripts have been lost. The sentence for the two privates was to have their heads shaved and to be drummed out of the service to the tune of the Rogue's March in front of the Division. Their buttons were to be cut off, they would forfeit all pay, and if they were found within military lines again, they would be shot.

Even if Privates Evans and Davis's cases are dismissed as an isolated incident, what may have been regarded as a lowrape war for white women was not necessarily true for black women. In December 1864, Union Brigadier Saxton reported to Secretary of War Stanton:

The women were held as the legitimate prey of lust, and as they had been taught it was a crime to resist a white man they had not learned to dare to defend their chastity. Licentiousness was widespread; the morals of the old plantation life seemed revived in the army of occupation.

Contrary to popular belief, it was not during the Civil War that a black woman had first successfully accused a white man of rape in a court of law. However, it was during the Civil War that an enslaved woman was first successful in achieving a conviction of a white man. Prior to the war, both the North and the South did not regard the sexual assault of black women as rape. A few court rulings suggested that noncapital punishments were possible, but generally black women's voices went unheard.

Regardless of race, a woman had to make immediate disclosure, preferably to a father or husband to help validate their charges, to make a charge of rape. She also had to call for help, show evidence of being violently attacked, and been doing nothing questionable. If any circumstance raised doubts, then it was assumed she had given her consent. Legal decisions revolved around a woman's consent, which did not equate to how much force a man used, but the degree of the woman's resistance. Therefore, if a woman submitted due to threats of violence or because the man held a weapon, no rape had taken place she had given her consent. Most states established the age of consent at ten years. Kentucky, Virginia, Indiana, and Iowa differed by setting the age at twelve. Only Arkansas set the age at the "onset of menses."

In May 1863, Private Eden Hill of the 10th Missouri Infantry stopped at the home of Isa Parish in search of Parish's stepson a deserter. Hill ordered ten year old Sarah that she must



aid him in his search for her brother. He pointed his pistol at Sarah, and once halfway across a field, he told her to lie down under a tree. Sarah stated that he threatened to shoot her if she did not do as he asked. "He hurt me... so then I screamed..." After the assault, they continued their search for Sarah's brother. "He told me if I didn't wipe the blood off my legs he would shoot me."

A doctor testified that he feared Sarah might die from blood loss. In the end, in spite of overwhelming evidence against Hill, the rape charge was dropped on a technicality. He was, however, found guilty of burglary, theft, and ironically, desertion. He was sentenced to be shot, but while waiting for execution, Hill deserted yet again.

Approximately 450 Union courtmartial for rape or attempted rape have been uncovered. Most convictions took place during times of occupation, not under actual battle conditions. Courtmartial were generally held near the location of the crime. Soldiers had more time on their hands during occupation, as did the military authorities, who would have been responsible for gathering the necessary five to thirteen officers to convene a court. At times of heavy fighting, circumstances would have challenged authorities in locating the required number of officers for judges. Also, a woman who had been raped would have had difficulty finding the appropriate official to report the crime.

Less evidence is available about the Confederate Army due to the fact that most of the records were lost or destroyed. Confederate rapists did exist. Many of the surviving records are from the areas where guerrilla tactics were common, and from the few times Confederate soldiers had traveled north. Because so few records exist, few conclusions can be drawn. However, similarities to Union records do exist. A woman had to prove she had been raped, and black women were considered little more than chattel.

A Union prisoner of war, Louis F. Kakuske, relayed his experience in his memoirs. On his journey to a makeshift prison, his three captors kept their carbines nearby. At one house, the farmers served them a meal, and afterward, they rested on the lawn. A middleaged black woman came outside and the Confederates eyed her. Kakuske described her as "a bit buxom" but "not unattractive."

The Confederates called her over. Since she was a slave, she obeyed. Kakuske watched in horror as each man took his turn raping the woman. Afterward, one turned to him and said, "Now, Yank, it's your turn." Kakuske refused to take part, and the Confederate threatened him to take his turn or be shot. Again, Kakuske said no. The men released the woman, saying that slaves were only good for two things: "work and to serve as concubines."

In modern day wars, rape is rarely reported due to shame and a lack of faith in the justice system. The same held true during the Civil War. Soldiers were frequently pardoned for rape. A "good soldier" was considered more valuable than any claim of rape. The official records and courtmartial merely skim the surface of the number of rapes committed. Any assertion that Victorian mores somehow imposed gentlemanly restraint during wartime is preposterous. Rape is a crime of violence, not sexual desire. Few on either side viewed the sexual assaults of black women as a crime, and white women who dared make an admission of being raped were systematically ostracized. As in modern warfare, fear

would have been a powerful incentive for rape survivors to remain silent.

For far too long, women's claims of rape have been dismissed as hearsay and propaganda. War is dirty, and rape follows its history. The Civil War was no exception.

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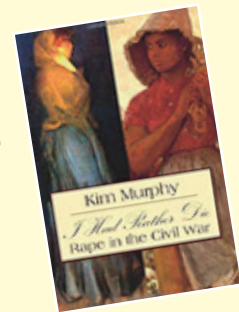
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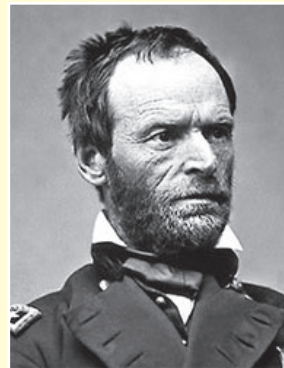
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Kim Murphy is the Author  
of the book  
**"I Had Rather Die:  
Rape in the Civil War**



## Sherman on West Point



Four years after his graduation from West Point, William T. Sherman wrote to a young friend then contemplating entering the Academy, describing it as he remembered it. Sherman's friend, Hugh B. Ewing, was apparently impressed, for he graduated from the Academy and later became a major general during the Civil War, serving for a time under Sherman.

This letter is in the William T. Sherman Collection. Ohio Historical Society, Columbus. and is printed with their kind permission. Out thanks are due to Mr. John F. Marszalek for bringing this letter to our attention.

Fort Moultrie. S.C.  
January 25. 1844

My Dear Friend. (Hugh Boyle Ewing)

Since receiving your last letter. I have cast about me to see whether I could not get a "Regulations for the US. Military Academy" which would best answer your purposes. I have obtained one used in my time. but the academy has un-



dergone some changes since I left. although its principal features are still the same —I have therefore torn off the cover. divided it into two parts and sent it to you —I can also advise you to consult the October 1843 number of the North American Review published at New York which contains a long and minute description of the Academy and its discipline —If your father does not subscribe by inquiry of Mr. Hunter. Reese. Brasee or other literarygentlemen of Lancaster (Ohio). you can doubtless borrow a copy to read.

I can again repeat to you however. that if you are still intent upon going to West Point. that a habit of close study and application is worth an actual knowledge of half the studies pursued at the Academy for I could tell you of more than a dozen of my own class. who at first sailed along with flying colors. presuming upon knowledge previously acquired. who in the end were far outstripped by plodding students who at first could boast only of untiring energy and resolution not to fail(.)

When a cadet first lands on the wharf at West Point. the first thing he sees is a soldier with his dress & sword and slate in his hand whereon he records the name of every person who lands—he then toils up a winding road that mounts to the plain whereon are arranged the Barracks and the professors buildings- to the former he bends his steps and of the first person he meets. he inquires for the "Adjutant's Office(.)"

This is a magnificent stone building beyond the Barracks on the second floor of which is the office sought. he knocks, enters and sees a fat individual with some clerks around. To the fat man (now Mc-Dowell whose father lives in Columbus Ohio 8: is the cousin to Bill Irwin) he makes known that he is a new cadet(.) Then his credentials & appointment are shown and his name. age. place. where born & are recorded.

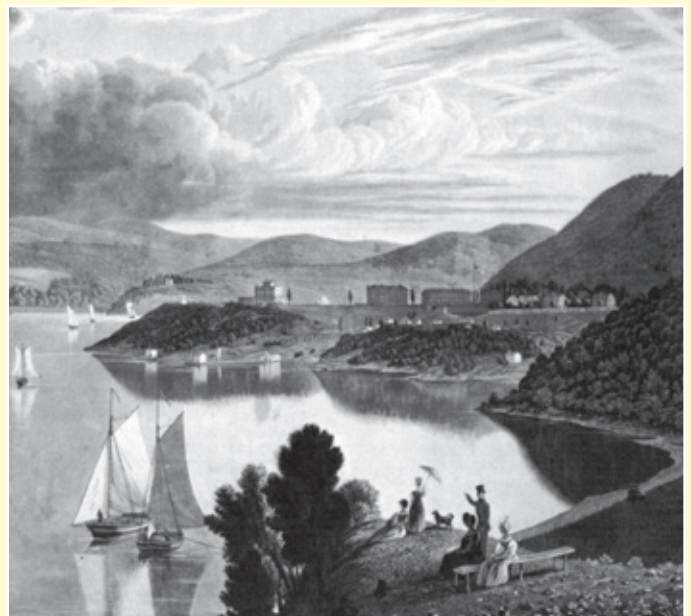
Then the new fledged cadet is shown to the Treasurers Office where his spare cash is deposited and a book with a receipt in it given—he is then shown to the Barracks and thrust in along with half a dozen others like himself into a room not half as large as your office & without a blanket and anything else whereon to lay his head. The next step is the Superintendentwho is king, yea Emperor in those dominions. He will write in the book got at the treasurers office. an order for 1 Arithmetic (Davis) 1 lamp. 1 bucket. 1 broom and a pair of blankets. which book being presented at Store will buy the articles named therein. They form the sum total of a P/ebes estate whereon he has to build his fortune. All this occurs on the first day of his entrance. Say during the afternoon ofthe 12th of June 184-(.) It is very probable that the moment he has transported his effects to his room he will consult his Regulations until aroused by the Rattling drum—& hear the command "Turn out New Cadets." He tumbles out of his room runs down

stairs and first meets his comrades for life. (illegible) 81 country boys from Maine to Louisiana and from Iowa to Florida—he has hardly a chance to observe these things well before he hears the word to "Fall in" which he obeys instinctively—along with the rest and is marched round the corner of the South Barracks to view for the first time the Evening parade(.)

Then he will feel the beauty of Military parade and Show the fine music—the old cadets marching by companies. stepping as one maniall forming in line—he hears the echo of some commands. hears the roar of the evening gun & sees the flag fall and the parade dismissed—then his highest ambition is to be and old cadet. He is then marched to Supper. fares badly, is ordered to rise and marched back to be again incarcerated. The next day he is assigned to a Section to recite in Arithmetic. Every day till the last of June. when he is examined by a board of Army officers in full uniform. At the same time he is drilled as a soldier. soon after daylight at 10 oclock and 4 PM each day by a cadet corporal who has lost all idea of the pain and torture he received from the same process the year before. All this while he is kept in his room day and night with the exception of a few minutes after each meal.—is marched to every meal and watched by Sentinels at every turn all which added to the trials played by those who have been accustomed to the life. make up a series of grievances such as no man, probably excepting the famous Job(.) even experienced. At last the Examination comes and the cadet is surprised how easily he was admitted. He is then marched to the Tailors and equipped in a full suit of gray cloth. with short tail and bell bottoms—he is then an independent plebe(.)

During the later part of June. all of July & August the corps encamp—plebes and cadets indiscriminately—so all you do at present IS study Arithmetic hard. learn to write correctly & read aloud with the proper pauses and accent—you will have time enough for else here(.)

Three or 4 days ago I received (sic) an unexpected letter from Colonel Church saying he had applied for me to assist him in settling some old "claims" in Tennessee. Georgia & Alabama which will take till Summer. I am now awaiting an order to that effect from Washington. Continue to write as heretofore until I tell you other wise—Love to all—Sherman.



## Terror: 1860s Style

**As Confederate resources began to wither, Davis realized that something had to be done to wear down the resolve of the Northern people.**

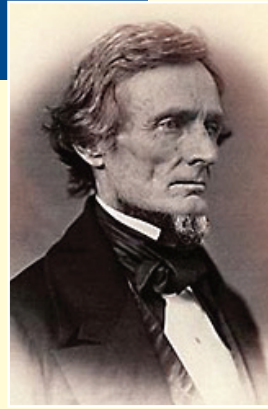
by Edward Steers, Jr., N&S, May 2002

**FOR THE FIRST TWO YEARS** of the Civil War the Confederacy contested the North's military efforts with mixed success. In the East matters were encouraging for Jefferson Davis and his armies; in the West things were not as hopeful. However, in the summer of 1863 the South's prospects of gaining independence darkened. As serious as the military setbacks of Gettysburg and Vicksburg were, Davis had come to the realization that it was not Union generals who stood in the way of Southern independence; it was Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's pen and un-wavering will to wage war had done more damage to the Confederate cause than all his generals combined. Lincoln was determined to prosecute the war, no matter how many Confederate battlefield victories there were, or how costly the war became in terms of money or human carnage. In June 1862 he stated his position in a letter to his secretary of state, William Henry Seward: "I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsake me." It was the latter that eventually became the focus of Confederate hopes: if Northern morale could be sufficiently eroded, Lincoln might well be forsaken by the country.

Among Lincoln's greatest sins in the eyes of Confederate leaders was the Emancipation Proclamation. While the proclamation dampened Confederate hopes of European recognition, its effect went well beyond the diplomatic. More than any other action on the president's part, it aroused Southern hatred and fear of Lincoln beyond all previous levels. Southerners viewed the call for emancipation as a call to murder, a license sanctioning slave insurrection, an act outside the bounds of civilized warfare. Jefferson Davis described the proclamation as the "most execrable measure recorded in the history of guilty man."

Emancipation, however, was only one edge of the sword Lincoln thrust at the Confederacy's heart in 1863. There was also his call to enlist blacks into the Union army. Southerners reacted virulently to this. To the Southern mind, the arming of blacks exceeded even emancipation in criminal intent. The South's original fears about Lincoln and his policies appeared all too true—he was now seen as a man without moral restraint, and as such undeserving of the protection afforded by the civilized rules of warfare.

As black troops took the field, incidents of Confederate atrocities against them began to filter north. Captured black troops were often summarily executed or forced into slavery.<sup>7</sup> Nor was this simply a matter of spontaneous excess. In a letter to Confederate General Richard Taylor, General Kirby Smith's assistant adjutant general, S. S. Anderson, in answering what disposition should be made of black soldiers, wrote: "No quarter should be shown them. If taken prisoners, however, they should be turned over to the executive authorities of the States in which they may



be captured, in obedience to the proclamation of the President of the Confederate States." On hearing that Taylor's troops had taken black soldiers prisoner, Kirby Smith wrote to Richard Taylor: "I hope this may not be so, and that your subordinates who have been in command of capturing parties may have recognized the propriety of giving no quarter to armed Negroes and their officers. In this way we may be relieved from a disagreeable dilemma."

Word of the "disagreeable dilemma"

soon reached Lincoln, who responded by issuing an "Order of Retaliation," which stated in part:

*The government of the United States will give the same protection to all its soldiers, and if the enemy shall sell or enslave anyone because of his color, the offense shall be punished by retaliation upon the enemy's prisoners in our possession.*

*It is therefore ordered that for every [black] soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed; and for everyone enslaved by the enemy or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on the public works and continued at such labor until the other shall be released and receive the treatment due to a prisoner of war.'*

Neither Davis nor Lincoln acted upon these threats. Nevertheless, as the war progressed both sides began to act in ways that, at both personal and governmental levels, fell under the concept of black flag warfare. By the winter of 1864 the burdens of a cruel war began to bear heavily on Davis and Lincoln, both of whom began to consider broader strategies. As Confederate resources began to wither, Davis realized that something had to be done to wear down the resolve of the Northern people. A demoralized citizenry might well destroy Lincoln's quest for reelection, and result in the victory of a "peace candidate" willing to negotiate Southern independence. Benjamin H. Hill, state senator from Georgia, said in March 1864: "The presidential election... is the event which must determine the issue of peace or war.... I say we can control that election."<sup>7</sup> To achieve this the Confederates needed to persuade sufficient numbers of voters that reelecting Lincoln would only prolong misery and death.

Then in February 1864 an event occurred that reinforced, in Southern eyes, the justification of Lincoln's removal from power, by whatever means. A Union cavalry force under Judson Kilpatrick undertook a raid against Richmond, a two-pronged effort designed to free Union prisoners being held at Belle Isle prison camp. Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, son of Admiral John Dahlgren, commanded one prong. Dahlgren was ambushed and killed, and papers were found on his body that shocked Confederate leaders and raised hatred of Lincoln to a new level. The papers were operational plans for the raid, and included instructions for the burning of the city and the assassination of Jefferson Davis and members of his cabinet. To Confederates the Dahlgren Raid, as it came to be known, was simply one more example of Abraham Lincoln's lack of moral restraint. His own actions had made him a legitimate target.

Within days of Dahlgren's disastrous raid, Jefferson Davis embarked on a bold initiative, establishing a group of agents in Canada whose purpose was to disrupt the war effort throughout the North and bring about Lincoln's defeat in the upcoming election. Included in Davis' initiative was a plan to free Confederate prisoners held in Northern prison camps located near the Canadian border. As with the Union prisoners held at Belle Isle, once freed, the prisoners would be armed and marched south to rejoin the Confederate army, destroying anything or anyone that came in their path.



**Thomas H. Hines**

Thomas H. Hines, a Kentuckian who had served in John Hunt Morgan's cavalry, was dispatched by Davis to Toronto, where he was instructed to undertake an attempt to free Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas near Chicago. Seven weeks later Davis sent several more agents to Toronto, including Jacob Thompson and Clement C.

Clay, who were to oversee the Canadian operations.



**Jacob Thompson**

Thompson and Clay carried with them a draft for one million dollars in Confederate gold" and a letter from President Jefferson Davis that read in part: *I hereby direct you to proceed at once to Canada, there to carry out such instructions as you have received from me verbally, in such manner as shall seem most likely to be conducive*

*to the furtherance of the interests*

*of the Confederate States of America which have been entrusted to you.*



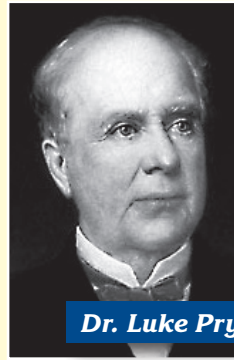
**Clement C. Clay**

It was Thompson and Clay's charge to wreak as much havoc throughout the northern states as they could. In part, this was to take the form of attacks against the civilian population, including the burning of major cities, the bombing of

manufactories and ships, and the

spread of infectious diseases. Such attacks can only be described as terrorist in nature.

The first terrorist effort to be mounted from Canada was a plot to infect thousands of civilians with yellow fever. Key to this operation was Dr. Luke Pryor Blackburn, a physician from Kentucky. Blackburn's plot was initiated in April 1864 shortly after Thompson set up his operation in Canada, and at the time a major yellow fever epidemic had hit the Island of Bermuda. Blackburn left Halifax in Nova Scotia and arrived in Bermuda, where he offered his medical skills to the government. He then set about carefully collecting the clothing and bedding of victims who had died from yellow fever, packed them into eight large trunks, and had them shipped back to Halifax. Before leaving for Bermuda in April, Blackburn had enlisted Godfrey



**Dr. Luke Pryor Blackburn**

Joseph Hyams, a Confederate agent working in Canada, to take charge of the trunks and smuggle them into the United States. Blackburn instructed Hyams to take the trunks to Washington, Norfolk, and New Bern, and arrange for the clothing to be sold at auction, thus gaining the widest possible distribution.

**Blackburn was put In charge of burning Boston.** Among

Blackburn's targets was Abraham Lincoln. Blackburn prepared a small black valise containing several expensive dress shirts that he had previously exposed to contaminated clothing. He then instructed Hyams to take the valise, along with a letter, to President Lincoln as a special gift by an anonymous benefactor. Blackburn believed that, even if Lincoln did not choose to wear the shirts, their mere presence would infect him with the deadly disease. Hyams, apparently afraid of the risk of taking such a "gift" to the White House, declined. The trunks, however, were another matter and he agreed to arrange for their transport. Using the alias of J.W. Harris he shipped five of the trunks through Boston to Washington, where he contracted with the auction house of W.L. Wall and Company to dispose of the infected clothing. Because Norfolk and New Bern were within the military lines of the Union army, Hyams had to utilize the services of an army sutler to dispose of the infected clothing in those two cities.

His initial effort at spreading disease accomplished, Blackburn returned to Bermuda on July 15 and again offered his services to the island government. Welcomed again, Blackburn set about securing another supply of infected clothing, this time filling three trunks, which he intended to ship to New York.

Blackburn's motive, and that of his superiors, seems clear. They attempted to unleash biological warfare against civilian populations as a terror tactic. Their ignorance of infectious disease in no way mitigates their guilt. Indeed, they believed that the trunks of infected clothing that had reached New Bern were responsible for a yellow fever epidemic that killed over two thousand people. Blackburn's intended gift of infected shirts to Lincoln demonstrates that the president was indeed targeted for assassination by the Confederate Secret Service.

Blackburn also plotted with Robert Martin to poison the Croton Reservoir that supplied New York City with its drinking water. The plan was aborted only when Jacob Thompson concluded that the large quantities of poison needed could not be accumulated without detection. Like the yellow fever plot, the poisoning of New York's water supply would have killed indiscriminately.

Blackburn's plot was exposed in April 1865 when Hyams, disgruntled at not being paid for his work, walked into the United States Consul's office in Toronto and offered to blow the whistle on several of the Confederacy's clandestine operations.

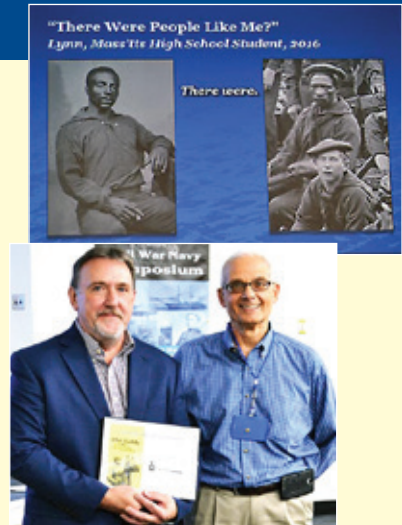
**Continued in the December issue.....**

## October 10th Meeting

### “African-Americans In The Union Navy”



Chuck Veit



#### presentation by Chuck Veit

by Kathy Clark, Member OBCWRT

The African-American sailor was very much a part of the Union Navy during the Civil War. Being equal to the white sailor was another matter as they signed on with lower pay, sometimes delayed pay and having to buy their own clothing. These were aspects of a white sailor's navy that he did not concern himself with when he enlisted. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, encouraged African-American recruits beginning in 1862 until 1865 with an increase of men each year. No matter the color of their skin all that was asked of the men was, "Can you fight?". Before the Civil War, the army had African-American men from serving in the Navy. But that changed when the Civil War began and the Navy desperately needed men, but could not get enough white men to serve. The African-American sailor stepped up to enlist not only to be part of the Navy during this time but also to get a steady job. There were no color lines in the Navy with Welles enlisting over 900 black sailors.

The African-American sailors were northern freemen, with 63% of the free Black recruits having experience at sea. There were Southern "Contraband" with less or no experience who were watched more carefully by the officers for fear they may try to escape. All were enlisted as "boys". The first all-black Navy crew was the March, 1862, contraband crew of the USS Arago, nine months before the Emancipation Proclamation.

Then came an influx of volunteer officers from the Merchant Marines which were racially mixed. Yes, there were individual racism, but no institutional bias. As an example of integrated and equal was the crew of the USS Mystic who altogether captured and destroyed four blockade runners off the coast of North Carolina. The ship was employed in the Chesapeake Bay until the war's end. As the war continued some clothing allotment, food rations, medical care, pay and bonuses were given to the African-American sailor. As an example, the Navy hospital in New Bern, North Carolina half of the sailors in the hospital were black.

At the Battle of the Crater the army hesitated to use black soldiers for fear they would lose the battle. It was the Black Soldier who knew how to fight during this battle and subsequent battles, they were not going to be pulled out of harm's way. There was an additional danger to the

black soldier or sailor being captured resulting in being hung or immediately shot. Seven African-American men got the medal of honor during their wartime experiences. Thankfully the African-American sailor was always loyal and would come back to help even though they were not always treated fairly.

After the Civil War it seemed the contributions of the African-American sailor in the Civil War Navy became overlooked and their ability to do their job questioned. This attitude was a downward trend until World War II. Before this time, they were treated as mess attendants but the pressure of war changed the Navy's thinking. The enlistment was opened to ALL qualified personal and in 1944 the Navy commissioned its first-ever African-American officers.

Other notable African-Americans were William H. Powell who's art work "Perry's Victory on Lake Erie" was such a powerful painting that he was asked to paint a copy for the capitol stairway. He later became the chairman of the National Academy of Design. Martyl Schweig, part of the WPA, painted a mural called "Wheat Workers". This mural portrayed people in the field during the transition from hard work to a more mechanized harvest. In the background were derricks of Western Kansas. By 2013, the US Postal Service had a number of African-American postal workers with 21% of all workers African-American.

African-American soldiers and sailors have gained some strides in the 20th century but more needs to be done to recognize and except the contributions of our African-American neighbors. When a group of school children listened to Chuck as he gave his presentation of the African-American Navy, a picture came up of a black sailor on the screen. One African-American boy looked at the photo and declared, "He looks just like me!" It is time to bring the African-American story to our younger group of children, Black or White.

Thank You Chuck for starting a discussion of how important the African-American sailors were to our US Navy. It is a look at a Civil War Navy story that gets overlooked in the study of Civil War Naval History and Naval History in general. With anticipation of Chuck's presentation, the Old Baldy CWRT was not disappointed. We hope to see more of Chuck in the future. His presentations are always thought provoking and inspiring.



## Society for Women and the Civil War

The Society for Women and the Civil War is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to recognizing the lives and efforts of women who lived through or participated in the American Civil War, and to connect with those who research, reenact or otherwise honor these women of the past. The Society sponsors the annual Conference on Women and the Civil War, and publishes a quarterly e-journal and monthly e-newsletter. For more information about the Society, please visit their website at [www.swcw.org](http://www.swcw.org).

### THE CIVIL WAR INSTITUTE AT MANOR COLLEGE IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE DELAWARE VALLEY CWRT – AND THE BRAND NEW “MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE”

The Civil War Institute is a personal enrichment program that brings courses in Civil War History to the Delaware Valley in a non-stress, adult environment at Manor College. The Academic Building at Manor, also known as the Mother of Perpetual Help Building, is equipped with an elevator, and a ramp from the parking lot.

Manor College is located at 700 Fox Chase Road in Jenkintown, PA. Call (215) 884-2218 to register or for an application for the certificate program, or online <http://manor.edu/academics/adult-continuing-education/civil-war-institute/>

#### CIVIL WAR INSTITUTE CLASSES FALL SEMESTER

**\*\*“Riding the Rails to Victory” – NEW – 1 night (2 hrs)**  
Instructor: Walt Lafty  
Fee: \$30  
Monday December 9

#### MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE CLASSES FALL SEMESTER

**A Fast Ship in Harm’s Way: U.S.S. Indianapolis – NEW – 1 night (2 hrs)**  
Instructor: Hugh Boyle  
Fee: \$30  
Thursday, November 21

**Patriots vs. Loyalists – NEW – 1 night (2 hrs)** Instructor: Herb Kaufman  
Fee: \$30  
Monday, November 25

**Victory or Death: Washington’s Crossing and the Battle of Trenton – NEW – 1 night (2 hrs) –**  
Instructor: Mike Jesberger  
Fee: \$30  
Thursday, December 5

## Generate funding for our Round Table "Amazon Smile"

Would you like your everyday Amazon purchases benefit Old Baldy CWRT? Amazon has a giving program that donates 0.5% of your purchases to a non-profit of your choice. All you need to do is log into your account via <https://smile.amazon.com/> and make purchases as you regularly do. It is that easy. Remember to add the new link in your favorites and overwrite your amazon.com as you need to enter via the smile portal. You are in smile when the upper left-hand logo indicates amazonsmile.

To direct your giving to Old Baldy:

1. Sign in to **smile.amazon.com** on your desktop or mobile phone browser.
2. From your desktop, go to your **Account & Lists** from the navigation bar at the top of any page, halfway down the list select Your **AmazonSmile** tab then select the radio button **Change Charity. ...**
3. Type in **Old Baldy** and Select **Old Baldy Civil War Round Table Of Philadelphia** as your new charitable organization to support.

That's it! Now 0.5% of your Amazon purchases will donated to Old Baldy.

WEB Site: <http://oldbaldycwrt.org>  
Email: [oldbaldycwrt@verizon.net](mailto:oldbaldycwrt@verizon.net)  
Face Book: Old Baldy Civil War Round Table

### Schedule of Old Baldy CWRT Speakers and Activities for 2019/2020

**December 12 – Thursday**  
Krista Castillo

**“The Illustrations of Thomas Nast: Reconstruction, Politics, and Popular Consciousness”**

**January 9, 2020 – Thursday**  
"Member Sharing Night"

Questions to  
Dave Gilson - 856-323-6484 - [dgilson404@gmail.com](mailto:dgilson404@gmail.com).

Old Baldy Civil War Round Table of Philadelphia  
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Blackwood Campus - Connector Building  
Room 101 Forum, Civic Hall, Atrium

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