



The Newsletter of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table — Vol. XXIII, Issue 10, DECEMBER 2016/JANUARY 2017

**HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR  
DWIGHT HUGHES SPEAKS ON  
"THE CSS SHENANDOAH" AT THE  
DECEMBER 8<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

The *CSS Shenandoah* was an iron-framed, teak-planked, full-rigged ship with auxiliary steam power, captained by Confederate States Navy Lieutenant Commander James Waddell, a North Carolinian with 20 years of prior service in the U.S. Navy. The *Shenandoah*, launched on August 17, 1863, would become one of the most feared commerce raiders in the Confederate Navy. She surrendered on the River Mersey, Liverpool, England, on November 6, 1865, seven months after Gen. R. E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, VA. Her flag was the last sovereign Confederate flag to be officially furled. Her "rest of the story" will be presented by Dwight Hughes on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

Dwight Sturtevant Hughes graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1967 and served 20 years as a Navy surface warfare officer on most of the world's oceans, in ships ranging from destroyers to aircraft carriers; he also drew duty with river forces in Vietnam (receiving a Bronze Star for Meritorious Service and Purple Heart). Lt Cmdr. Hughes taught Naval ROTC at the University of Rochester (NY), earning an MA in Political Science; he later earned an MS in Information Systems Management from USC. In his final sea tour, he planned and conducted convoy exercises with over 20 ships of the Maritime Prepositioned Force.

Dwight's second career was software engineering, primarily in geographic feature naming data and electronic mapping under contract for the U.S. Geological Survey. A ridge in Antarctica is named for him in recognition of contributions to Antarctic databases and information services. His current calling builds

**MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

**7 p.m. Centreville Library**

**THURSDAY, December 8, 2016**

**GUEST SPEAKER:**

**HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR  
DWIGHT HUGHES**

**TOPIC:**

**"THE CSS SHENANDOAH"**

**THURSDAY, January 12, 2016**

**GUEST SPEAKER:**

**HISTORIAN AND GENERAL ROBERT  
E. LEE REENACTOR AL STONE**

**TOPIC:**

**"LEE'S DECISION TO RESIGN  
FROM THE U.S. ARMY"**

on a lifetime of study in naval history, with the desire to translate a love of the sea and ships into an understanding of our naval heritage, and to communicate that heritage in an educational and entertaining manner.

Dwight is a guest author at the Emerging Civil War blog. He is a life member of the U.S. Naval Institute, the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association and the Historic Naval Ships Association. He is a member of the Naval Historical Foundation and the National Maritime Historical Society.

Dwight Hughes lives near Manassas, VA, with his wife Judi, a former Air Force officer and Electronics/Communications Engineer.

Come on out at 5 p.m. and meet Dwight for dinner at Carrabba's Italian Restaurant, 5805

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## BULL RUN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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 The Bull Run Civil War Round Table publishes the *Stone Wall*.

**General Membership meetings** are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at:

**Centreville Regional Library**  
**14200 St. Germain Drive**  
**Centreville, VA 20121-2255**  
**703.830.2223**

For specific meeting dates and information, please visit the Web site: <http://bullruncwrt.org>

### NEWSLETTER ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINE

For the **February 2017 issue**, e-mail articles by 9 a.m., Monday, January 25, to Nadine Mironchuk at: [nadine1861@hotmail.com](mailto:nadine1861@hotmail.com)

### NEWSLETTER ADVERTISEMENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE

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**Support the BRCWRT in its important mission to educate and to commemorate the battles and events of the Civil War**

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**December 8, 2016** - Dwight Hughes - "CSS Shenandoah"

**January 12th, 2017** - Al Stone - "Lee's Decision to Resign from the U.S. Army"

**February 9th, 2017** - Jenee L. Lindner - "Clara Barton in the Civil War"

**March 9, 2017** - Gary Ecelbarger - "Slaughter at the Chapel: The Battle of Ezra Church"

**April 13th, 2017** - U.S. Army Col. John Biemeck (Ret.) - "Civil War Artillery Projectiles and Fuzes"

**May 11th, 2017** - Gordon Dammann - "General Civil War Medicine"

**June 8th, 2017** - NPS Historian Emeritus Edward Bearss - "Gettysburg - Day 3"

**July 13th, 2017** - Drew Gruber - "Battle of Williamsburg, VA"

**August 10th, 2017** - David Powell - "Battle of Chickamauga, GA"

**September 14th, 2017** - Kevin Pawlak - "The Jewels of War: Robert E. Lee, George B. McClellan, and the Battle of Antietam"

**October 12th, 2017** - William Backus and Robert Orrison - "The Potomac River Blockade 1861-62"

**November 9th, 2017** - Wayne Motts - "Fighting the Civil War: Historical Treasures of the Conflict in the Collection of the National Civil War Museum"

**December 14th, 2017** - John Quarstein - "CSS Albermarle"

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## The President's Column

By Mark A. Trbovich

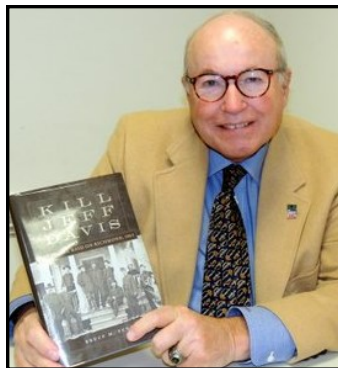
Bull Run Civil War Round Table Members,

It's the 2016/2017 holiday season, when good friends and families gather to bring in the Christmas and New Year's holidays with warm fire-place chats about all that has been accomplished, and to contemplate hoped-for blessings in 2017. This year was a tremendous one for the BRCWRT, as we celebrated our 25-year anniversary with many memorable events. I told my Executive Committee that I didn't know how we could ever top 2016, but we are going to try to do just that in 2017 - and in future years. We have accomplished many things at our round table in the past 25 years, but - as always - our work is never done.

It has been my pleasure to have served as your president for the past seven years, and I look forward to my eighth year as such with all of you. The BRCWRT is committed to continue bringing you outstanding Civil War speakers, tours and presentations throughout 2017. We are proud to be an outstanding group of dedicated folks who look forward with excitement to the next 25 years of honoring and preserving our honorable Civil War past.

Our November speaker, Dr. Bruce Venter, presented "Kill Jeff Davis - The Kirkpatrick & Dahlgren Richmond Raid" lecture to a packed house. Bruce presented a day-by-day layout of the famous 1864 raid that many of us may have had only a slight knowledge about previously.

The raid's progression was unfolded by Dr. Venter as a "doomed-from-the-start" undertaking and he highlighted how untimely events crushed any successful chances of its mission to free 13,000 Federal prisoners and kill or capture Confederate President Davis.



Dr. Bruce Venter was kind enough to autograph his recent book for members of the BRCWRT when he spoke at November's meeting.

Photo by Janet Greentree

Venter's book was a very popular-selling item that night, and we hope to see Bruce again in future years at the Round Table. Our December 2016 and January 2017 lecture presentations will surely begin our year on a high note, so you will not want to miss them.

December is also the third and final month of our process for the 2017 BCWRT election of officers, according to our by-laws. Voting on the 2017 BRCWRT roster of officers will take place at the December 8th meeting. Thank you so much, John De Pue and Ed Wenzel, for heading up our nominating committee this year. Our 2017 membership drive will begin again in January, concluding at the end of April. I encourage everyone to bring new folks to join the Round Table either at our Web site or at the next meeting. I am always encouraging a "youth movement" for the BRCWRT, as a future generation of Civil War historians and preservationists will continue our proud traditions here in Centreville, VA.

I would like to thank all of the 2016 BRCWRT officers and Executive Committee members for this outstanding year; I eagerly look forward to again working well together in 2017.

Thanks all the volunteers who worked at our events and you, the membership; without you, we would not be the renowned round table we are today. Tours and trips sponsored by the BRCWRT have been exceptional this year, and I know there will be even more great touring opportunities in 2017.

The BRCWRT has many ongoing preservation and consulting efforts about which our excellent preservation lead, Blake Myers, is keeping everyone updated at the meetings and in this wonderful newsletter. Included in his agenda are: the proposed new cell phone tower near the Signal Hill memorial in Manassas Park; working with the Alexandria's Advisory Group on Confederate Memorials and Street Names preservation initiative; working with George Mason University's history department on campus preservation sites; and the Featherbed Lane VDOT study upon which we are now a consulting group for preservation efforts on the Manassas Battlefield. There will be more information to come as we move forward on

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## THE BOOK CORNER



### Ralph G. Swanson

If you are going to take on Custer, you need to take on the whole man. You cannot comprehend the Civil War general or the Plains Indian fighter without knowing the indifferent West Point cadet. You must take the audacious cavalryman in battle along with the poor officer in peacetime. You must follow the entire trajectory of his career to grasp the whole George Armstrong Custer. There are many books published on Custer (he even wrote one himself). Now, a new biography by T.J. Stiles, *Custer's Trials: A Life on the Frontier of a New America* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2015) resets the "Gold Standard" for biographical literature on the Boy General.

If you have studied Custer, if you think you know Custer's story - fine. T.J. Stiles will further enrich your understanding with one of those rare books you will rush home from wherever you are to continue reading. Custer's short life was exciting, packed with the adventure of our Civil War and the westward expansion of our nation. Stiles brings it all to life again with detail, analysis and comprehension unlike any author before him.

There is so much more to Custer than the battle at the Little Bighorn River. Read Stiles with a discerning eye to some larger questions: How did one so young, finishing at the bottom of his West Point class (34th out of 34), achieve (brevet) General rank so quickly (age 23)? The Civil War, yes, but surely there were many more deserving officers.

Why did the Army tolerate his career-long arrogance and insubordination? True, he was convicted at courts marshal twice, but he enjoyed lenient punishment, and high ranking favoritism. Why? He wasn't born to wealth; he wasn't connected politically.

He was a careless cadet, meaning that he seemed to care less whether he stayed at West Point. Many of his demerits were for "trifling" conduct such as talking in class or "swinging his arms"

while marching. How difficult could it be to keep your mouth shut and act like a soldier? He barely graduated, just eight demerits short of mandatory expulsion.

The cavalry, ridiculed by the rank and file of the army, was the destination for West Point's poorest graduates. There, he surely would have been forgotten to history. But there was a war on, and cavalry was the indispensable eyes of an army at war.

Custer was not a complex man, nor a particularly accomplished one. He was very much a man of his times, ineptly grasping for fortune and power, subscribing to all the standard racist views on American blacks and Indians. He had no real talent for anything other than war. In that, however, he was remarkably lucky. The term "Custer luck," derived from his contemporaries, not later historians. He himself spoke of it often, relied on it frequently. Perhaps that is the answer to our questions: he was just plain lucky, until he wasn't.

He was surely one other thing, however: exceedingly brave. He led charges - at the head of his men - in the major cavalry battles of the eastern theater. He was wounded twice. He performed heroically at Gettysburg as a newly breveted Brigadier, possibly saving the Union right flank on Day 3. That action brought him national acclaim as the "Boy General."

Custer's Trials is not a cavalry study, and that may disappoint some readers. Did Custer disobey orders at Gettysburg and blunder significantly at Trevilian Station? Stiles offers enough of the cavalry action to encourage readers toward a more detailed study of Custer's battlefield prowess.

Stiles may be the first to explore the intimate side of Custer's life, revealed through a considerable archive of letters between the General and wife, Libby. Custer was a fan of the sexual double entendre in what was obviously a very playful marriage. In other areas - Custer's relationships with other women: Stiles possibly stretches a bit too much, reaching a little too hard for the sensational. But read it for yourself, and you decide.

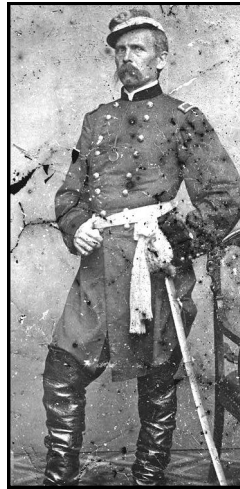
Custer prosecuted the Plains Indian wars with cruelty and duplicity towards Native Americans that

(con't on page 13)

# The Luckless Rear Guard Colonel

by Karl Reiner

Col. Louis Blenker commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the Union Army of Northeastern Virginia's 5th Division. About daybreak on July 21, 1861, the brigade moved to positions on the heights east of Centreville, VA. Regiments were placed on both sides of the road running from Centreville to Fairfax Court House. A third was positioned at a right angle to the other two, facing south. Some of the troops were detached to guard the headquarters and hospital in Centreville; others were sent to take control the road running from Union Mills. The brigade's artillery unlimbered at various points along the line.



Col. Louis Blenker

Around 4 p.m., Col. Blenker received a startling order to quickly move to a new position on the road running from Centreville to Warrenton, the Warrenton Turnpike. The movement was difficult, because the road was becoming choked with civilians, soldiers and wagons, all beating a hasty retreat toward Washington, once the conflict that became 1<sup>st</sup> Bull Run kicked into high gear. Blenker pushed his troops through Centreville. About a mile-and-a-half beyond the village, he halted. His regiments

went into a line on both sides of the turnpike, stacked one behind the other for mutual support. Blenker stated in his report on the battle that fleeing Union troops continued to pass his position until about 9 p.m. Sometime thereafter, several squadrons of Confederate cavalry advanced on his position and skirmishing began as shots were exchanged. Around midnight, Col. Blenker received an order from Gen. McDowell to withdraw to Washington. The brigade fell back in good order through Fairfax Court House, Annandale, and into Washington.

Two Union battle flags discarded by other retreating units were recovered during the bleak 19-hour trudge back to the capital. During the clashes with Confederate cavalry, nine Union prisoners were freed. The brigade's losses during the rear guard action totaled 118, the majority listed as missing.

Louis Blenker was born in 1812 in Worms, in what is now Germany. Having been a participant in the failed European revolution of 1848, he migrated  
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## BRCWRT Member Keeps Honor of Gen. Gibbon in Sight



BRCWRT notable Harlan Lenius performed living history as Union General John Gibbon at the recent annual Remembrance Day activities in Gettysburg, PA. He is shown here in front of the Gettysburg Heritage Center, where many reenactors walked forward to introduce themselves and commend him for his portrayal of the commander of the legendary Iron Brigade. Following the bombardment of Fort Sumter in April 1861, Gibbon, in spite of the fact that his father was a slaveholder and three of his brothers and his cousin [J. Johnston Pettigrew] went on to fight for the Confederacy, upheld his oath to the United States and reported to Washington for assignment. In June, 1864, Gibbon was promoted to Major General and in January of the following year was given command of the XXIV Corps in the Army of the James. Rufus Dawes of the Iron Brigade, on learning of Gibbon's promotion, wrote "His honors are fairly won. He is one of the bravest of men. He was with us on every battle field." At the conclusion of the Appomattox campaign that spring, Gibbon served as one of the surrender commissioners when the Army of Northern Virginia finally succumbed to defeat.

Photo by Janet Greentree

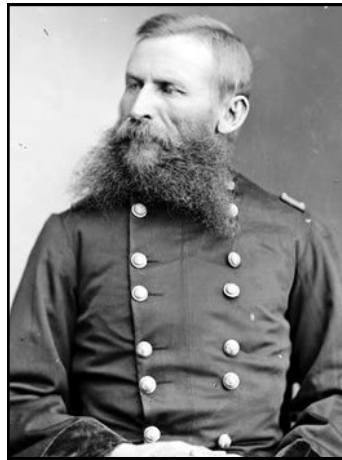


## CIVIL WAR TRAVELS WITH MS. REBELLE

### Major General George R. Crook, USA

By Janet Greentree

In addition to being a career Army officer for 38 years, Maj. Gen. George R. Crook had the most interesting beard I've seen featured during the Civil War... and he liked mules and pith helmets. His beard parted on either side of his chin, forming two triangles. I can't be sure he trimmed the middle part to affect this beard, but that is how it is pictured in his images. He was over 6 feet tall, but not a big man; very athletic, had blue-gray eyes, and very closely cropped hair. He had a favorite mule that he called Apache.



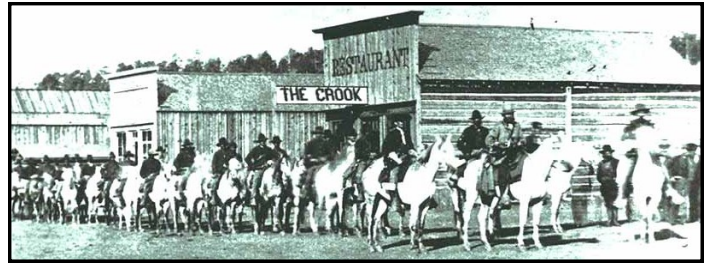
Maj. Gen. George R. Crook and his distinctive beard.

During the northwest Indian campaigns, he stressed how important it was to have healthy pack mules and horses. He was always asking questions about the mules, whether they were healthy, or had peculiarities about them. He would often spend an hour a day with the mules and their handlers, teaching them to pack scientifically, and how to check on the mule's physical health. Perhaps if he had been able to get to Custer during Little Big Horn, his pack mules may have made a difference in the outcome.



Gen. Crook aboard his mule Apache.

George Crook was born on September 8, 1830,



Crook's column — 1876.

near Dayton, Ohio, to Thomas and Elizabeth Matthews Cook. George's father was a farmer in Montgomery County, Ohio. Crook had five siblings. He was nominated to West Point by Congressman Robert Schenck, graduating in 1852. He was only five spots away from being the 'goat' of the class, being ranked 38<sup>th</sup> out of a class of '43. Graduating West Point with the rank of a brevet second lieutenant of the 4th U.S. Cavalry, he was stationed in the Northwest fighting Indians.

In 1857, during the Pitt River Expedition, he was severely wounded by an arrow. Most of his time as an Army officer was in the northwest of the United States. Like Custer, he honed his hunting skills there. He established Fort Ter-Waw in northern California, in what is now known as Klamath Glen, California. He married Mary Tapscott Dailey, who hailed from Virginia. They had no children.

In 1861, he was ordered east and became colonel of the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry regiment. He was wounded at Lewisburg, WV, in the spring of 1862. In September 1862, he was promoted to brigadier general of the Kanawha District. Crook developed a lifelong friendship with one of his subordinates at the battle of Antietam — future President Rutherford B. Hayes. In July of 1864, he was promoted to major general of the Cavalry Division of the Army of the Cumberland. During the Civil War, he fought in the battles of South Mountain, Antietam, Hoover's Gap, Chickamauga, Cloyd's Mountain, 2nd Kernstown, Opequon, Fisher's Hill, Cedar Creek, Five Forks, Sailor's Creek, and Appomattox Courthouse.

General U. S. Grant met with him personally at City Point in 1864, where he ordered Crook's command to destroy railroads, the railroad bridge over the New River, and also to destroy the salt

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## Ms. Rebelle – (con't from page 6)

works in Saltville, Virginia. His command style was to never tell his troops what the plan was, but they seemed to know when something serious was imminent. He had 6,500 men with him when, near Dublin, VA, he ran into Confederate Generals John McCausland and Albert Gallatin Jenkins. The Confederate troop strength was 2,400 men. A fight ensued, with the Confederates retreating back to Dublin. Gen. Jenkins was captured, after being wounded. When Crook got to Dublin, he requisitioned all the military stores, tore up the tracks and burned the railroad ties. He then destroyed the New River Bridge; both he and Gen. McCausland watched the bridge fall into the river.

Crook was appointed as a replacement for Gen. David Hunter after his death at Kernstown. In February 1865, Crook was captured in Cumberland, MD, and held prisoner in Richmond. He was exchanged in March of 1865. He participated in all the battles leading up to Appomattox – Dinwiddie Court House, Five Forks, Amelia Springs, Sailor's Creek, and Appomattox. He was brevetted a major general at the end of the Civil War but his rank reverted back to major after the war.

Crook fought in the Snake Wars of 1864-68 and took command in Boise City, Idaho on December 11, 1866. After studying the patterns of the Indians for gathering food in the spring, fall, and early winter, he attacked in the winter. He fought in the Yavapai War in the Arizona Territory. In 1873, he achieved the rank of brigadier general.

In 1875-1888 he was head of the Department of the Platte, making his headquarters in Fort Omaha,



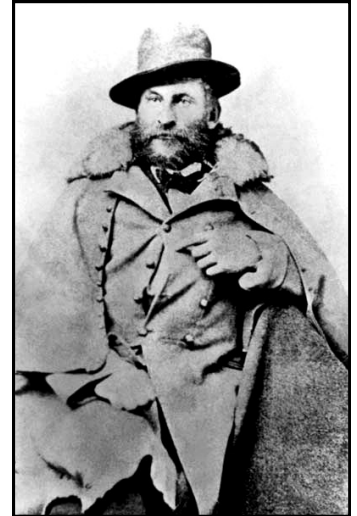
Nebraska. Later, a house was built for him at Ft. Omaha. (See photo at left). There is also a seated statue of



Above, Gen. Crook's statue at Ft. Omaha, NB. At right, Crook dressed in old canvas hunting outfit; below, he can be seen in front, center, in his white pith helmet, seated with his staff and interpreters in 1886.

him there. He was the only head of the Department of the Platte to live there.

On May 28, 1876, Crook took charge of the Bighorn and Yellowstone Expedition at Fort



Fetterman. Crook was dressed in an old canvas hunting outfit, with a pith helmet on his head. He carried a rifle across the pommel of his saddle.

When the column left Fort Fetterman, he had 15 companies, totaling 1,051 men. He ordered a quick march; each man was to only carry one blanket, 100 rounds of ammunition and four days' rations. The infantry was to be mounted on pack mules. On June 17th, they marched to Rosebud Creek. The Lakota attacked, but Crook had to use ammo that was meant for later in the

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## Ms. Rebelle – (con't from page 7)

campaign. Crook returned to Fort Fetterman. This is where Crook may have been able to help Custer at Little Big Horn, were he not attacked that day at the Rosebud.

He fought at the battle of Slim Buttes against the Oglala Lakota leader Crazy Horse. While he was head of the Department of Arizona, he forced some of the Apache to surrender. Geronimo evaded capture, though. It was during this time that the Apache nicknamed him "Nantan Lupan," which means Grey Wolf.

Geronimo and Crook went into negotiations in the Sierra Madre Mountains about 86 miles from Fort Bowie on March 27, 1886. The bas relief of Geronimo depicted on Crook's tombstone in Arlington National Cemetery was created from an



Tombstone image of Crook in talks with Geronimo.

Photo by Janet Greentree

image by photographer C.S. Fly. This picture (and one other) are the only known photographs of an American Indian taken while still at war with the United States. Crook obtained Geronimo's surrender twice, after promising to deal with their grievances. Unfortunately, Geronimo slipped away during the night, which cost Crook his command. Gen. Nelson Miles replaced him.

In 1888, President Grover Cleveland placed him in command of the Military Division of the Missouri. Crook again served as commander of the Department of the Platte from 1886-1888. His last years were spent speaking out about the mistreatment of the Indians.

The general died suddenly of a heart attack at 7:15 a.m. on March 21st, 1890, while staying in

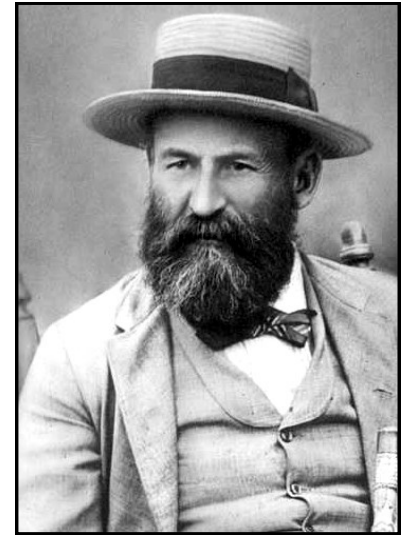
Chicago at the Grand Pacific Hotel. The proprietor of the hotel, John Drake, a personal friend of Crook's, said the following to the Associated Press: "General Crook arose shortly after 7 a.m. this morning, apparently in his usual health, and in accordance with his custom, began exercising with weights and pulleys, connected to an apparatus which he kept

in his room. After exercising for a few minutes, he stopped and went to lay down on a lounge, saying he felt difficulty in breathing. A few minutes later he called out to his wife, "Oh Mary, Mary, I need some help. I can't get my breath." Dr. Hurlburt was called, but Crook died before the doctor was able to get there. His wife and her sister were the only two family members present when he died. He had complained of a bearing down on his chest after coming back from the Northwest. He never complained or said much about his sufferings."

Upon hearing of Crook's passing, General Sherman stated: "George Crook was always a man who we could depend. He was the most successful man we had dealing with the Indians that the United States ever had in its service..... During my 15 years as commander-in-chief of the army, I had ample opportunity to find out Crook's good traits, and I never found anything but a man who could be depended on in every emergency."

Rutherford B. Hayes said of him: "He was always a favorite of the men and officers in his command. The Old Kanawha Division knew him like a book and loved him like a brother. He never sought or seemed to care about popularity but it came to

(con't on page 13)



In his later years, Crook's loyal service to his superiors did not keep him from speaking out about the unforgivable treatment of Native Americans before and at the turn of the 19th century.

# BRCWRT Members Lead George Mason Students on “Farr’s Crossroads” Trek Through History

by Brian McEnany, Jim Lewis, Blake Myers



Features in the landscape at George Mason University property shows the placement of a Redoubt.

Photo courtesy of Jim Lewis



George Mason students being introduced to the topic of corduroy roads artifacts and history recently confirmed as being directly associated with the campus property.

Photo courtesy of Jim Lewis



Brian McEnany, left, describes the location of parts of the corduroy road artifacts related to the George Mason University property to GMU students.

Photo courtesy of Jim Lewis

Since the 1700s, the area known locally as Farr’s Crossroads (now the intersection of Braddock Road and Route 123/Ox Road) has had a significant influence on the development and history of Northern Virginia. During the Civil War the crossroads and the surrounding area, including the land upon which George Mason University and the University Mall now sit, was occupied and controlled at various times by both Confederate and Union forces. Both marched through and fought skirmishes there during the early days of the Civil War. Later on, Confederate and Union cavalry pickets, seeking to provide early warning of the advance of enemy forces, occupied the area and secured the crossroads.

On November 7, Brian McEnany, Jim Lewis and Blake Myers presented a Civil War history class to 17 George Mason History Department students. Their instructor - Dr. Chris Hamner and the head of the History Department, Dr. Brian Platt - were also present. The local history included a tour of a Civil War redoubt that exists on the GMU campus, a short history of the roads that border the campus - Braddock and Ox roads (Rte. 123) - and the corduroy logs found during a VDOT construction project along

Ox Road. The weather was perfect for viewing historic sites in wooded areas.

**Confederate Redoubt:** Brian led the small group into the wooded area to the location of the redoubt, long unseen and the subject of discussion with GMU about its preservation. He discussed what military redoubts, forts, or earthworks were used for and what events prompted their construction at this particular location. He covered the location of the original Farr family residence, the owner of the property, and the stories surrounding its destruction, pointing out the most likely location for the house

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## GMU Corduroy Roads – (con't from page 9)

prior to the war. The military history of the site included its initial construction by the 5<sup>th</sup> Alabama Volunteer Infantry under the command of Col. Robert Rodes in June 1861. Union troops of Col. Miles' Fifth Division occupied the site just prior to the First Battle of Manassas. Stonewall Jackson's brigade camped here in later 1861 before moving closer to Washington. At one point during the Battle of Second Manassas (August 1862), the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Cavalry occupied the site. For the most part, after Confederate forces left Northern Virginia in March 1862, Union forces occupied and controlled the area.

The site was initially located in 1979 during a Fairfax County campaign to discover prominent and historic Civil War positions. It was officially recorded in a Civil War Database, created by Fairfax County in 2002. The Preservation and Archeological reports identified that artifact hunters had searched the site in the 1970s and found some items relating to both Confederate and Union units. The 2002 effort was



The recent discovery of a corduroy road at the GMU property was an exciting "find" for local historians and Civil War preservationists.

Photo courtesy of Jim Lewis



GMU students pay close attention to Jim Lewis during his remarks about the impact placement of the Corduroy Roads had on both Union and Confederate operations in the area during the Civil War.

Photo courtesy of Jim Lewis

supported by members of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table (a working group under John MacAnaw) in researching and locating other Civil War sites. The site was also the subject of joint a GMU student and History Department professor detailed Archaeological Assessment paper written in 2008.

**Historic Roads:** Jim Lewis then discussed the

historic roads that bordered the wooded site. Pointing out the two roads through the trees, he noted that the intersection dated back to colonial times. This portion of today's Ox Road was a spur off the original path and was known as the "Road to the 1st Courthouse" (c.1742). It served those living in the southern portion of Fairfax County. Construction of the original Ox Road began in 1728 via Robert "King" Carter (powerful land agent for Thomas Fairfax). Carter, initially thwarted by Thomas Lee (who controlled access to the Potomac River), opted to construct a path from his supposed copper mine in the village of Floris (near today's Herndon) to a seaport (Occoquan), enabling transport overseas. To facilitate the effort, Carter built a wharf and warehouse. The road was named after the width of two oxen pulling tobacco "hogsheads." The route through Fairfax was persevered because of superior topology (sitting atop a ridge) and it because it passed by the courthouse. It was subsequently renamed (aka the Chain Bridge Rd., as it approached D.C.)

The other bordering road, Braddock Road, also had colonial roots; however, Jim stated, Gen. Braddock never traveled that road (it was renamed following the failed 1755 British expedition

(con't on page 11)

## GMU Corduroy Roads – (con't from page 10)

attempting to capture French Fort Duquesne in Pennsylvania). It remained one of two primary roads from the seaport of Alexandria to the Shenandoah Valley. The other road being roughly today's Route 7 – the Leesburg Pike.

**History of Corduroy Roads:** Ox Road was used heavily between Fairfax Court House and Fairfax Station during the Civil War. Traffic significantly increased, particularly for the Union forces, after the completion of the O&A Rail Road and the depot at Fairfax Station (1854) brought soldiers, arms, and supplies to the area. Rainy weather quickly turned the roadway into a muddy quagmire, making travel difficult. The condition of the road was so bad, that the county legislature authorized the construction of a corduroy road between Fairfax Court House and Fairfax Station just before the Civil War broke out in 1861. The road was also corduroyed from Fairfax Station down to Wolf Run Shoals by soldiers of the 2nd Vermont Infantry Brigade during the winter of 1862. Corduroy roads, of course, refers to the placing of wooden planking or foraged tree logs laid out to produce a road surface that could accommodate heavy military traffic in any weather conditions.

Linking with Ox Road was Wolf Run Shoals Road (nine miles south) which became a major supply route south over the Occoquan River during the war. The Occoquan became the de facto Mason-Dixon Line in the early years of the Civil War, and the ford itself was a strategic crossing point. Union forces, the XI and XII Corps, occupying the area around Fairfax Court House and Fairfax Station, were ordered south over the structured byway to join the Army of the Potomac around Fredericksburg. Later in June of 1863, the II and VI Corps and the Artillery Reserve traveled over it to move on to Gettysburg. It also played an important “delaying” role in J.E.B. Stuart's controversial ride to Gettysburg during the Battle of Fairfax Station (June 27, 1863).

Jim handed a piece of one of the corduroy road logs initially found by the Virginia Department of Transportation in 2014 to the students to pass around. As mentioned above, Jim noted that logs

such as that one were laid perpendicular to roadway across swampy areas. They were typically cedar (hardest) and were covered with dirt in order to soften the ride. However, not all the effort worked well. Jim cited two quotations from members of Union units that described their experiences in constructing and riding over the Ox Road in 1863. Quotes were read from Alonzo H. Quint (Chaplain), of the II Mass. Inf. (Dec. 62') on his way to the Battle of Fredericksburg, and Henry B. Meigs (Pvt.) 13<sup>th</sup> VT Bde. (Oct. 9, 1902)- one of (42) vets making a pilgrimage back to Fairfax C.H. and their old campsite at Wolf Run Shoals.

In 2015, VDOT uncovered another section of the corduroy road and this time, Fairfax County archeologist Chris Sperling designed a much better process for preserving the logs. The logs were numbered, treated and reburied under the existing road. The discovery prompted BRCWRT and Fairfax County Historical Commission member Jenee Lindner to investigate the use of group funding to pay for a dendrochronologist (one who uses a scientific method of dating based on comparative analysis of patterns of individual tree growth rings), to date the logs found under the road. The analysis typically requires a minimum of 60 rings to run a valid analysis.

Unfortunately, the logs had insufficient rings to make a valid analysis. This left the date of the construction up in the air; however, the documented corduroying of the road was affirmed. Period newspaper articles dated in 1850s addressed the condition of the road between Fairfax Court House and Fairfax Station and allocated Wolf Run Shoal Road was known to have been corduroyed in 1863 by the 2nd Vermont from the Occoquan to Fairfax Station.

**Summary:** Brian led the group back to Parking Lot K and ended the class with a discussion of how a portion of the Farr property was used to create the original GMU campus. The property was bought from the Farr family by Fairfax and then transferred to the University of Virginia in 1958. Ten years later,

(con't on page 12)

## GMU Corduroy Roads – (con't from page 11)

the rest of the property and other tracts were bound together to form the remainder of today's GMU campus.

Brian, Jim and Blake thanked Dr. Platt for offering the opportunity to conduct the class and suggested that it could be the beginning of a good relationship

between BRCWRT and the History Department. After the class was dismissed, Dr. Platt and Dr. Hamner thanked us for providing such a detailed look at part of GMU history. Later emails from students found them interested and engaged about

## Luckless Colonel – (con't from page 5)

to the United States in 1849, settling in the state of New York. When the Civil War began, he raised a two-year regiment, becoming its colonel in May 1861. His 8th New York Volunteer Infantry was an outfit composed of German immigrants, the first German-American regiment to be mustered into Union service. In an era of large scale immigration into the United States, the foreign born would make up about 20% of the total number of soldiers serving in the Union armies.

The regiment arrived in Washington on June 4, was incorporated into Gen. McDowell's forces, and Blenker become a brigade commander. In the literature of the times, Col. Blenker was described as brave, a good organizer and an efficient commander. In those early war days, his regiment was described as being a model unit.

Initially held in reserve at Centreville, Blenker's troops were thrust into their unenviable rear guard role as McDowell's forces collapsed on the fields of Manassas. To their credit, they held their ground in formation, covering the retreat to Washington in good order. The brigade's actions may have had an inhibiting effect on the Confederate night advance because the cavalry reported that not all of the Union units had bolted. For his gallant work in covering the routed army's rapid retirement, Blenker was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers.

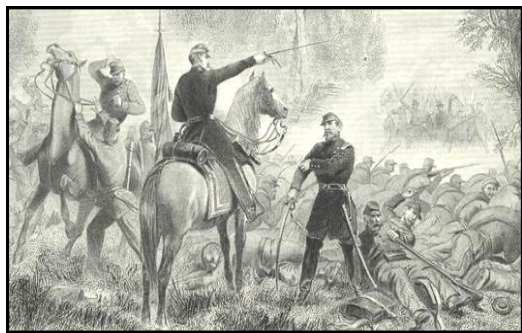


Image at left showing Col. Blenker Issuing order to cover the retreat of the Union Army as it flees the field at 1<sup>st</sup> Manassas..

When Gen. George B. McClellan assumed command and organized the Army of the Potomac, the German units were formed into a division, with command being given to Gen. Blenker. During a late season snow storm near Warrenton on April 7, 1862, Gen. Blenker's horse slipped and fell on him. The severe internal injuries he suffered ruined his health.

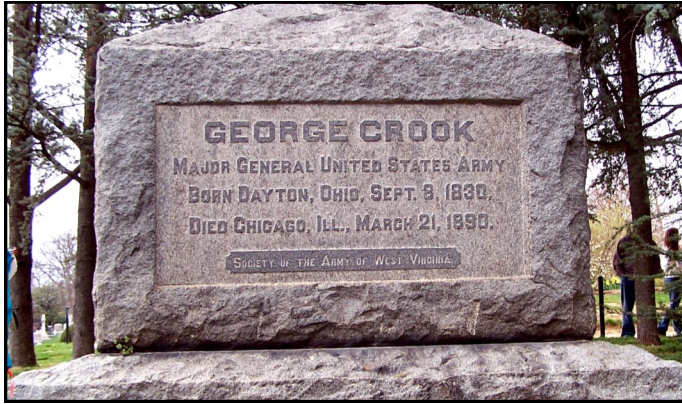
President Abraham Lincoln detached the division from McClellan's army, sending it to western Virginia. The move was very poorly organized. It involved a miserable march with no tents and experiencing a severe shortage of supplies. After struggling through snow storms, becoming lost on bad roads and being forced to seize local food in order to survive, the frazzled division reached Gen. John C. Fremont's encampment in early May.

After the chaotic and disheartening march, Gen. Blenker's name gained a degree of notoriety in military circles. For the remainder of war, the term "Blenkered" was applied to items taken or appropriated by soldiers as they struggled to maintain themselves in the field.

Gen. Fremont's forces joined the Union effort to trap Stonewall Jackson's fast moving troops in the Shenandoah Valley. The attempt failed. Fremont was defeated at the battle of Cross Keys in June of 1862. Gen. Blenker's division suffered heavy losses during the battle.

Relieved from command during the summer of 1862, Blenker was transferred to Washington, where he remained until mustering out of the army in March 1863. He died on October 31, 1863, at his farm in Rockland County, New York. His death was a result of the injuries suffered during the fall with his horse. He was survived by his wife, a son, and three daughters.

## Ms. Rebelle – (con't from page 8)



Gen. George R. Crook's tombstone in Arlington National Cemetery.

Photo by Janet Greentree

him naturally because it was due him.”

The Indians at Fort Apache formed a large circle after hearing of his death. They bent their heads

and Red Cloud said: “His words gave the people hope. He died. Their hope died again.”

Crook had earlier instructed that there be no pomp or ceremony at his funeral. His remains were put into a special Pullman Company car and left for Oakland, MD, on the B&O Line. He was later disinterred and moved to Arlington National Cemetery and reburied in Section 2, Site 974, on September 11, 1898. His grave is located on Crook Walk, named for him, which runs in front of Mary Lee's Rose Garden.

**NOTE:** *Ms. Rebelle's hobby is traveling the country finding and honoring the graves of our 1,008 Civil War generals. So far, she has located and photographed 412 - 169 Confederate and 243 Union. You may contact her at [jlgrtree@erols.com](mailto:jlgrtree@erols.com).*

## Book Corner – (con't from page 4)

is indefensible today, but was consistent with contemporary western attitudes. His disregard for military authority and reckless disdain for his troops was returned in full measure by his officers and men. Perhaps having skipped the lower ranks, he never learned a proper regard for army regulations, chain of command, or command at all.

Stiles offers only a brief treatment of the Little Big Horn battle, and then only in terms of the 1879 Court of Inquiry into the conduct of Major Marcus Reno who had endured allegations of cowardice and dereliction of duty in that fight. There is much excellent literature elsewhere to engage students of the Little Bighorn. The single best book on the battle itself is *Son of the Morning Star*, by Evan S. Connell. Perhaps Stiles' abbreviated coverage of Custer's ignominious end is a fitting homage to

Connell's own outstanding scholarship.

One last question: Why do the myths of Custer's life and the mysteries of his death retain such a strong hold on us? Stiles cannot quite answer despite a mountain of evidence. But then, objective analysis of evidence will never get us there. We will never know what really happened to Custer at the Little Bighorn and that is at least part of the mystique. Custer had achieved romantic hero status in his own time. No other subordinate officer was as well-known or popular in the public mind. Custer's brutal death in 1876 was a shock to America's psyche. Despite his many failings he was, by his death alone, ushered into the pantheon of our immortal heroes, never to be forgotten.

Until next time, keep reading.

### The Bull Run Civil War Round Table's Newest Recruits!

Here's a grateful "Huzzah!" for those who have recently joined the BRCWRT:

◆ James Saunders

◆ Pamela Tilson

◆ Edward Gill, Jr.

◆ Bill Backus

## Upcoming Speakers – (con't from page 1)

Trinity Pkwy., Centreville, VA 20120: (703) 266-9755.

### **HISTORIAN AND GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE REENACTOR AL STONE SPEAKS ON "LEE'S DECISION TO RESIGN FROM THE U.S. ARMY" AT THE JANUARY 12th MEETING**

After the Fall of Fort Sumter at Charleston, SC, on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1861, Robert E. Lee was placed in a difficult position. His former commander, Gen Winfield Scott, offered him command of the army of volunteers being raised to suppress the rebellion; that same day, Virginia voted in favor of secession. Lee did not support secession, but he would not fight against his native state. He resigned his officer's commission, wrote Scott a personal message of thanks and regret, and became a major general of Virginia troops, commanding all military forces of the state. Al Stone will present his portrayal of General Lee's major life decision for us at the January 12th meeting.

Al Stone is a lifelong student of the Civil War. As the color of his hair and beard changed from brown to white, Al began to assume the role of a

Confederate officer, which later developed into portraying one of history's greatest generals. He has portrayed the general in classroom settings, at award ceremonies, church gatherings, reenactments, Chautauqua sessions, on theater stages, and other special occasions and venues. Selected to portray Gen. Lee in the documentary titled "*April 1865*" for the History Channel, as well as numerous other films, he has been described by Civil War re-enactors and historians alike as presenting the "most accurate impression of General Lee in the country today."

Al was also given this designation by Robert E. Lee, IV, and other family members while visiting with them during the celebration of the General's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2007. Al portrayed General Lee at the annual reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg for eight years, with his last appearance there in July 2013 – the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that engagement. Come on out at 5 p.m. and meet Al for dinner at Carrabba's Italian Restaurant, 5805 Trinity Pkwy., Centreville, VA 20120: (703) 266-9755.

## President's Column – (con't from page 3)

these, and more, initiatives in 2017.

Again this month, and every month in 2017, we will be selling Ed Wenzel's "Chronology of the Civil War of Fairfax County." This book is the perfect Christmas gift for the Civil War enthusiast on your shopping list. Six years in the making, I believe it is the greatest Fairfax County Civil War reference book ever written, or that ever *will* be written. You can purchase the book at the meetings, or online. Ed Bearss wrote the Foreword, saying this book is a "gold

mine of information...." We believe it will be the perfect Christmas gift!! Also, the BRCWRT 25-year anniversary book will be on sale at the meeting and on the Web site. Again, another great gift idea!

I wholeheartedly wish for you to have a wonderful holiday season. Let us bring in the New Year with joy, knowing our 2017 year will be even more successful.

Let us never forget the people who served, and what they did for us. God Bless all of you.

### **Get Your Copy of the BRCWRT 25th Anniversary Commemorative Book!**



Now available - the 25th anniversary of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table is here, and this Commemorative Publication will be a "keeper" souvenir of this milestone event!

The book is a trip down *Memory Lane*, featuring the many great accomplishments and events that have been shared by members over the years. Not only will you reminisce about the many wonderful people you've met and enjoyed being with as we all learn so much about history, but you will be proud to see the highlights of all the preservation and education the dedicated members of the BRCWRT have put forward year after year. Copies are \$15 - visit our Web site ([www.bullruncwrt.org](http://www.bullruncwrt.org)) for details regarding online ordering.

## Fairfax County History Conference Honors BRCWRT Author/Historians



The Fairfax County Historical Commission recently held its annual History Conference, and two of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table members were honored for their contributions to FFX County history. At top left, Ed Wenzel (center) is recognized for the monumental publication of *The Chronology of the Civil War of Fairfax County*, which details the Civil War action that took place in our historic area. The book and attendant Appendices containing a stunning amount of data on each entry is a treasure. National Parks Historian Emeritus Ed Bears supplied the Foreward, so significant is this publication. Shown awarding Nan Neatheron Achievement Award to Ed are: (left) Cong. Gerry Connolly and (right) Commission Chair Sharon Bulova. Behind podium is Lynne Garvey-Hodge, Commission member and emcee for the day.



At left below, Gregory P. Wilson (center) receives the Neatheron Achievement Award for his latest publication on Col. John Mosby's pre-Rangers Civil War service: *Private John S. Mosby, First Virginia Cavalry: Picketing Fairfax County before Becoming the Confederacy's "Gray Ghost."* Shown presenting this award are: Cong. Gerry Connolly (left) and History Commission Chair Sharon Bulova (right).



BRCWRT Members attending the 12th annual Fairfax County Historical Commission's Conference are (front, left to right): Jon Vrana, Tim Duskin, Mary Shine, Gwen Wytenbach, Lynne Garvey-Hodge, Nancy Anwyll, Nancy Olds, and Janet Greentree. Behind, left to right: Mark Whittenton, Debbie Whittenton, Chuck Mauro, Ed Wenzel, Charlie Balch, Nadine Mironchuk, Bill Carritte, Pam Unger, Gregory Wilson, and Don Hakenson. Not shown in photo: Rob Airaghi, Janee Lindner and Susan Gray.

Photo courtesy of Janet Greentree

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## **BULL RUN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

***The Stone Wall***

**P.O. Box 2147**

**Centreville, VA 20122**

### **2016 Bull Run Civil War Round Table — MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**We are delighted that you are interested in joining our organization and look forward to seeing you at our next meeting and at our upcoming events!**

**Annual dues are:**

**Individual—\$20. Family—\$25. Student (age 22 and under)—FREE.**

**Make checks payable to: BRCWRT (Bull Run Civil War Round Table). This form may be given to the Treasurer at the General Membership meeting, or mail it to:**

**Mark Knowles, BRCWRT Treasurer, 169 Applegate Drive, Sterling, VA 20164**

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