



The Newsletter of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table — Vol. XX, Issue 13, MAY 2014

## RENOWNED HISTORIAN EDWIN C. BEARSS SPEAKS ON "BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS - MAY 1864" ON BRCWRT'S 23rd ANNIVERSARY

By Mark Trbovich

Happy Anniversary BRCWRT! You have been going strong for 23 years, serving the Northern Virginia region, unmatched, in Civil War education and preservation.

It wouldn't be May without another outstanding lecture by NPS Historian Emeritus Ed



NPS Historian Emeritus Ed Bearss, the May speaker at the BRCWRT.

Bearss. I don't have to tell you that our guest speaker is a matchless Civil War historian, lecturer, tour guide and preservationist. It is so wonderful to see Ed every year, and – 90 years young now - this is quite an achievement.

This meeting also gives us the opportunity to look forward to and celebrate Ed's birthday, slightly ahead of the event. This June, Ed will be 91, and still going strong. What a milestone for Ed, as he still speaks to audiences around the world on a wide variety of historical battles and events. We are indeed fortunate to have an American legend as a friend of the BRCWRT.

This month, Ed will be speaking on the 150th anniversary of the "Battle of the Wilderness," which was the beginning of the Overland Campaign, the bloodiest military campaign in American history, and the turning point in the war in the Eastern Theater. This is an 1864/2014 Civil War Sesquicentennial event you won't want to miss!

## MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

**THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2014**

**7 P.M. Centreville Library**

**GUEST SPEAKER:**

**HISTORIAN EDWIN C. BEARSS**

**TOPIC:**

**"BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS - MAY 1864"**

During World War II, Ed served with distinction in the U.S. Marine Corps, first with the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion, commanded by Col. Harry "The Horse" Leversedge, and then with the 7th Marine Regiment. While serving with the latter unit, he was severely wounded at Cape Gloucester on the island of New Britain. Following a convalescent period of 26 months, he entered Georgetown University. After earning an undergraduate degree at that institution, Ed spent three years working at the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office in Suitland, MD. He then enrolled at Indiana University, where he received a Master's Degree in History.

In 1955, Ed joined the National Park Service (NPS) and worked his way up the promotion ladder to become its chief historian. In that position, he gained the respect of innumerable congressmen and members of the Executive Branch. Following his retirement in 1998, Ed became a much sought-after guest speaker and tour guide to battlefields where Americans have fought, spanning the French and Indian War through World War II - both the European and Pacific theaters of operation.

We anticipate a large turnout for Ed's presentation on May 8th. Members are encouraged to come early, meet Ed at the Coyote Grill

(con't on page 4)

## BULL RUN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE Executive Committee

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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 the  
**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 **June-July 2014 issue**, e-mail articles by 9 a.m., Thursday, May 29, to Nadine Mironchuk at: [nadine1861@hotmail.com](mailto:nadine1861@hotmail.com).

### NEWSLETTER ADVERTISEMENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE

For the **June-July 2014 issue**, advertisers should please click on "Instructions for Advertisers" at <http://bullruncwrt.org> and e-mail ads by noon, May 19, to Charlie Balch at [BRCWRTads@gmail.com](mailto:BRCWRTads@gmail.com).

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

**- place your advertisement in the *Stone Wall* -**

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**June 12, 2014** - Dr. Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III - "Battle of Fort Stevens, July 1864"

**July 10, 2014** - NPS Ranger Robert Dunkerly - "Battle of Cold Harbor: June 1864"

**August 14, 2014** - NPS Ranger Emmanuel Dabney - "Battle of the Crater/Petersburg: July 1864"

**September 11, 2014** - Scott Patchen - "Sheridan at Opequon Creek: September 1864"

**October 9, 2014** - James Price - "Battle of New Market Heights/Chaffin's Farm: September 1864"

**November 13, 2014** - Gene Schmiel and Ron Mayer - "Citizen-General: Jacob Dolson Cox and the Civil War Era, Battle of Franklin, TN: November 1864"

**December 18, 2014** - David Goetz - "Hell is Being a Republican in Virginia: The Postwar Relationship Between John Singleton Mosby and Ulysses S. Grant"

**January 8, 2015** - John Coski - "Confederate Navy, James River Campaign: 1862/1865"

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## The President's Column By Mark Trbovich

Bull Run Civil War Round Table Members,

Greetings and Happy Anniversary to the BRCWRT for 23 years of outstanding leadership in this region, providing the best in Civil War tours, education and preservation. I am so honored to serve as your President (my fifth year), and to watch the BRCWRT continue as a beacon of Civil War knowledge and base camp of the Civil War in the Northern Virginia region. It certainly enjoys the respect of its many peers throughout this great region and country. Together, there is so much more we can do. I again want to thank you for your membership support in 2014. We will never rest on our laurels but will continue to strive to bring this region high-quality 1864 Civil War Sesquicentennial



Historian Al Smith spoke to the BRCWRT in April about new perspectives on the Gettysburg Address.

lectures and tours; our fine newsletter, and continued support of the various local Civil War events and preservation efforts.

May has finally brought warmer weather, and spring is here in full bloom. Our May meeting will surely be

memorable with Ed Bearss featured.

But first, a big "thank you" to historian Al Smith, coming all the way from Boston, Mass., who spoke to us on a new look at Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. That was an excellent presentation, and I'll never forget how passionately Al read the Gettysburg Address. That was one of the very few times, during a lecture, that I have ever seen folks clapping! Never knew there were so many versions of the address, and good to know what the official one was. Thank you so much, Al, and hope to see you in the future when you are in town.

Again, addressing a local preservation issue at our April meeting, John DePue and I updated members on the section of the Bristoe Station Battlefield that is in preservation danger at the present time. This issue has been an ongoing project with the Executive Committee for about a year now and just recently drew added attention as the preservation property in question, *NC Brig. Gen. Kirkland's Charge*, east of Rte. 619 (Bristow Road) has been under discussion for change.

Chapel Springs Assembly of God (formerly Manassas Assembly), the property owner of the area in question, petitioned the PWC Board of Supervisors in February for a rezoning Comprehensive Planning Amendment (CPA) for turning Kirkland's Charge (51 acres) into a for-profit cemetery. Even though the church has pulled the CPA out of consideration at the present time, we feel that this is no reason to stop voicing our opposition. Please continue to read future issues of this newsletter for further information that will be furnished as events unfold.

Please remember that April was the last month to receive your free BRCWRT newsletter, concluding our 2014 Membership drive. We will do one more outreach via email/phone in May to those members who were signed up for 2013, but who are as yet unsigned as members for the upcoming year. Please renew as soon as you can; you don't want to miss receiving any issues of the BRCWRT *Stone Wall*.

As you may know, 1864 was a tremendous year of fighting/battles, and you will not want to miss all the information and stories about that turbulent time that is presented in our wonderful newsletter. Please make every effort to sign up at the meeting, mail your check in, or sign up online at our Web site.

We are so pleased to have narrowed the 2014 BRCWRT Scholarship candidates' field. Our Scholarship Committee, headed by Nancy Anwyll, will determine the winner through a process of screening that includes academic excellence, content of the written document presented, and an individual interview process.

I am very much looking forward to an update



## The Wilderness - Marching Orders

Saturday, May 17 is the date for Rob Orrison and John De Pue's tour of the Wilderness Battlefield, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the battle; attending this tour will help you visualize Ed Bearss' discussion of the battle during the preceding May 8th meeting.

Folks will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Route 234 commuter lot between US Routes 95 and 1 in Prince William County. To get to the lot, take I-95 South to exit 152A toward Dumfries. The lot is on Route 234 opposite the MacDonald's. From there, attendees will carpool south on I-95 to Exit 130B and take Route 3 South to its intersection with Route 20.

Those on tour will stop at the Sheetz/MacDonald shopping center at about 8:30 a.m., where anyone wishing to meet up at that location, rather than at the Route 234 lot, can join in. As parking space within the park is at a premium, the group will attempt to minimize the number of vehicles in the caravan by further reducing the number of vehicles continuing from that point.

The morning's tour will embrace the Ewell/Warren fight along the Orange Turnpike, Sanders Field and the Chewning Farm. The initial stop will be at the visitor's shelter along Route

20. It will be followed by a hike along LTG Ewell's trench line. The morning portion of the tour may terminate at Elwood, MG G. K. Warren's V Corps headquarters.

You can bring a noonday meal or return to the McDonald's shopping center for lunch. After lunch we will travel down the Brock Road to its intersection with the Orange Plank Road and, from that vantage point, discuss the Hancock/Hill/Longstreet fight. We will plan to terminate the tour between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m.

Dress according to the weather and be sure to wear a hat and comfortable hiking boots. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen, and bottled water. In the event of REALLY inclement weather, phone John De Pue at home: (703) 791-3389 or cell: (703) 994-9023 to determine whether the tour has been canceled. You may sign-up for the tour at the May 8th meeting, or e-mail John at [jfdepue@comcast.net](mailto:jfdepue@comcast.net). Please include a phone number, if you sign-up by e-mail.

In preparation, you may want to read Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battle of the Wilderness May 5-6 1864*; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Wilderness Campaign*; or Edward Steere, *The Wilderness Campaign*.

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

from Nancy at our upcoming meeting.

We now have 188 folks who "Like" our new Facebook site at <https://www.facebook.com/bullruncwrt>. You can receive future real-time pictures of Civil War events, updates, local and regional information, and BRCWRT information that should enhance your Civil War experience and knowledge. You can also SHARE your BRCWRT FB page with your friends, so that many of them can sign up too.

Please continue to spread the word to your family and friends, younger folks and potential members, that the BRCWRT is the Northern Virginia hub for Civil War information and preservation, and is a great organization to join.

Again, come join us as we welcome Ed Bearss to the May meeting (our 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary

celebration), which includes refreshments! As always, if you can't make the dinner at Coyote Canyon (in the mall across from the Library), come to the meeting at 7 p.m. to enjoy fellowship, buy some books and get ready for another excellent lecture.

Let us never forget the soldiers and what they did for us. God Bless all of you.

### Next Meeting — (con't from page 1)

for dinner at 5 p.m., and enjoy supper and some fellowship. If, unfortunately, you can't make the dinner, please come early to the Centreville Library for fellowship and to enjoy some cake, cookies and beverages at our pre-meeting celebration. Hope to see you there.

## BRCWRT Members at Historic Blenheim for Fairfax Civil War Day

Story and photos by Gwen Wyttenbach

Fairfax City celebrated its 14th Fairfax Civil War Day on Saturday, April 26th, with several Bull Run Civil War Round Table members in attendance: Mark Whintenton (in the Confederate uniform of a Private in the 17th Virginia Fairfax Rifles) with Gwen Wyttenbach and Janet Greentree among the spectators.

Historic Blenheim is a brick farmhouse built by Albert Willcoxon (c. 1859) just prior to the Civil War (1861-65). It is nationally significant for the more than 120 signatures, art, games, thoughts, and poetry left on the house walls done in pencil or charcoal by Union soldiers during their occupation of the Fairfax Court House area in 1862-63.

This is one of the most extensive and best-preserved examples of Civil War graffiti in the nation, a so called "diary on walls," providing insight into typical soldier life during the Civil War, as well as the effect of the war on local Fairfax residents such as the pro-Confederate Willcoxon family.



Blenheim, built in 1859, is now a historic museum and the site of many Civil War programs.



Above (l to r) - l. to r.) Col. Mosby, Gen. Cooper, Gen. Longstreet and Gen. Lee; below (l to r) - General Cooper, Gwen Wyttenbach and Gen. Longstreet.



Above, BRCWRT member Mark Whintenton is pictured between two very fierce Confederate soldiers.



At right, General Robert E. Lee explains the Civil War to visitors at Historic Blenheim House.





## CIVIL WAR TRAVELS WITH MS. REBELLE

### Union General John Frederick Hartranft

General John F. Hartranft is interesting to me for three reasons: He read the order sentencing the Lincoln conspirators to be hanged; he led the charge over Burnside Bridge at Antietam, and his cemetery marker in Montgomery Cemetery in Norristown, Pennsylvania, is riddled with bullet holes. Hartranft shares space in Montgomery Cemetery with three



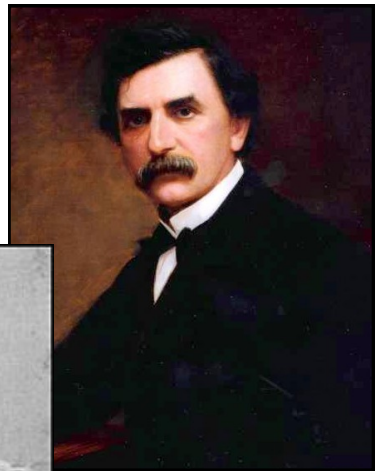
The monument at Gen. John F. Hartranft's grave in Norristown, PA. On one side is a bas relief of the general, and on another (below) is a list of his accomplishments, including receiving the Medal of Honor.

Photos by Janet Greentree



other Civil War Generals: Winfield Scott Hancock, Adam Slemmer, and Samuel Zook. Unfortunately, there are bullet holes in other markers, as well, and the top of Gen. Slemmer's marker has been knocked over. Sadly, Hancock's mausoleum has a chain link fence around it. The late Brian Pohanka was

Two portraits of Gen. John F. Hartranft, as a civilian and as a General. Clearly displayed on his uniform is the Medal of Honor, which he received for having volunteered to continue his service after his regiment's 90-day enlistment was up, on the eve of 1st Manassas.



instrumental in cleaning up the cemetery, and a small garden dedicated to him is just inside the gate.

Hartranft was born in Fagleysville, New Hanover Township, PA, on December 16, 1830, the only child of Samuel and Lydia Hartranft. He attended Marshall College in Mercersburg, PA and then transferred to Union College in Schenectady, NY, receiving a degree in civil engineering in 1853. He returned home to Norristown after working for a short time for the railroad to assist his father in his stagecoach, inn, and real estate businesses. He was elected deputy sheriff of Norristown in 1854. He also worked for the Norristown Fire Company, and was admitted to the bar in 1860. He married Sallie Douglas Sebring. They had six children, with only three surviving to adulthood.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Hartranft raised a regiment of 90-day volunteers, and served as colonel of the 4<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania. The unit's 90 days were up on the night before July 21, 1861, in Manassas, where they refused to fight, walked off the field, and returned home to Norristown to the deep embarrassment of Hartranft. He stayed in Manassas and volunteered to fight with fellow Pennsylvanian William Buell Franklin. For his efforts, he was awarded the Medal of Honor on August 26, 1886. His citation reads as follows: "Voluntarily served as aide and participated in

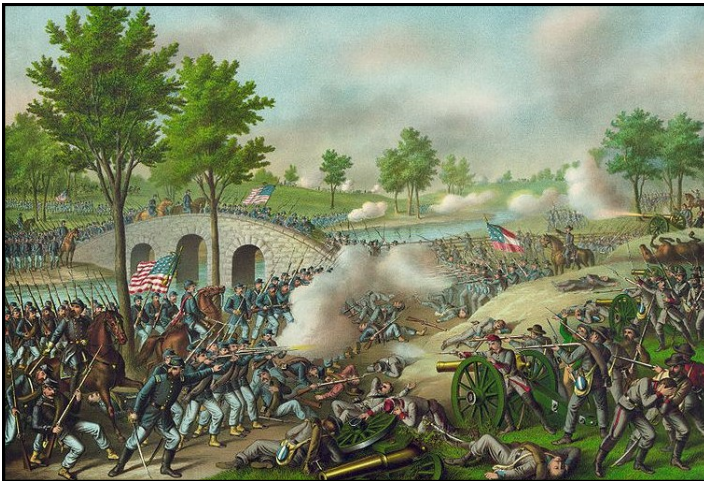
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## Ms. Rebelle - (con't from page 6)

the battle after expiration of his term of service, distinguishing himself in rallying several regiments which had been thrown in confusion."



Gen. John F. Hartranft (middle, front row) and his staff at the Arsenal Penitentiary where Lincoln conspirators were executed. L-R (front row) - Capt. R.A. Watts, Lt. Col. Wm. H.H. McCall, General Hartranft, Col. L.A. Dodd, & Capt. Christian Roth (executioner); . L-R (back row) - Lt. Col. George W. Frederick, Lt. D.H. Geissing, Asst. Surgeon George L. Porter .



Fighting at Burnside's Bridge at Antietam.

He then raised a three-year regiment, the 51<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, and served as its colonel. His men called him "Old Johnny," even though he was only in his thirties. He drilled his men incessantly, but also played baseball with them. When their enlistment was up, Hartranft gave a stirring speech about the Union cause, and many of the men signed up again. His unit fought at Roanoke Island, New Bern, Newport News, and joined up with Burnside's IX Corps, where they fought at 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas and South Mountain.

Hartranft led the charge across Burnside

Bridge at Antietam, losing 120 men in the fight against the Confederate right flank. The 51<sup>st</sup> was transferred to the Western Theatre, seeing action at Vicksburg, Campbell's Station and Knoxville. His unit then went back to the Eastern Theater and the Overland Campaign fighting at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania. His unit was one of the few to fight in both the Eastern and Western theaters.

He was promoted to brigadier general on May 12, 1864. Commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the IX Corps, his unit saw action at Peebles Farm, Richmond and Petersburg. His last battle was Fort Stedman, where his unit captured the fort. Hartranft lived by his words: "The more I have made of myself, the better I can help my fellows."

After the war ended, Hartranft was in charge of the Old Capitol Prison and was provost marshal at the Lincoln assassination trial. He was especially kind to Mrs. Mary Surratt,



Hartranft reads the execution orders for some of the Lincoln conspirators, including Mary Surratt.

the first woman ever executed by the federal government. He personally led the four accused to the gallows. The above picture shows General Hartranft reading the order of execution for Mrs. Surratt, Lewis Paine, Davy

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## Ms. Rebelle - (con't from page 7)

Herold, and George Atzerodt. He also read last rites to them before they were hanged.

Also, see August/September, 2009, *Stone Wall* article about Lt. Colonel William Henry Harrison McCall, who was an aide to General Hartranft and who stood just behind Hartranft, to the left, on the gallows. The picture of Hartranft and his staff was taken at the Washington Arsenal. The gentleman on the far right was the executioner of the four Lincoln conspirators, Captain Christian Rath. He can be identified as the man in the white coat on the gallows.

Hartranft returned to Norristown after the war and served as Auditor General from 1867-1873. In 1872, after becoming a Republican, he was elected the 17<sup>th</sup> Governor of Pennsylvania, serving two terms, until 1879. He was preceded by General John Geary as governor. During his administration, he was a strong advocate of education, banking regulation, commerce and industry, National Guard reorganization, African American suffrage, the workingman's rights, and fought the Simon Cameron political machine and the Molly Maguires. He also revised the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Constitution in 1873. One obscure fact I found was that Hartranft's inauguration in 1873 cost the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania \$4,974.19.

He served as the 5<sup>th</sup> commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, from 1875-1877. In June 1876, at the Republican National Convention, he was almost nominated for president, but the nomination instead went to Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes served in the same corps with Hartranft during the Civil War.

After his term as governor ended, Hartranft was appointed Postmaster of Philadelphia and Collector for the Port of Philadelphia. He also served as commander of the Pennsylvania National Guard.

The general died at his home in Norristown on January 21, 1879, a victim of the kidney disease from which he had suffered since 1873. The Pennsylvania National Guard pro-

vided the obelisk for his grave. On the south side of the Capitol in Harrisburg is a large equestrian statue of the general. The street



Hartranft statue on horseback is located at the Pennsylvania statehouse in Harrisburg.

leading to Montgomery Cemetery is named Hartranft Avenue, although the street address for the cemetery is 1654 Dekalb Street. A section in North Philadelphia is known as the Hartranft section, a street in South Philadelphia is named for him (as well as a residence hall at Penn State University), and also a street in Pittsburgh.

New BRCWRT member Sam Laudenslager, is the 2nd great grandson of General Hartranft on his mother's side. He also tells me that many of Hartranft's 51<sup>st</sup> Regiment are buried in Montgomery Cemetery too.

Teaser alert: Ms. Rebelle is going to Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio in late September to find more of her generals. General Hooker has been on her list for a long time, and he is buried in Cincinnati.

*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 385...169 Confederate and 216 Union. You may contact her at [jlqtree@erols.com](mailto:jlqtree@erols.com).*



## NOAA Says Ship Remains May be Those of Seized Steamer “*The Planter*”

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA — Bruce Terrell of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries’ Maritime Heritage Program announced that the *Planter*, a ship commandeered in Charleston Harbor by a 23-year-old enslaved man named Robert Smalls, may have been found buried in ten feet of silt with scanning sonar and a magnetometer.

Smalls and other African-American crewmembers took control of the transport steamer, picked up Smalls’ wife and children, and headed to the Union blockade in 1862. He then surrendered the vessel, which was transformed into a Union gunboat with Smalls as its captain. The *Planter* eventually sank off Cape Romain in 1876.

“We have probed down. We know there’s wood there and we know there’s metal there, but we don’t know absolutely whether it is or is not the *Planter*,” Gordon Watts of Tidewater Atlantic Research Inc. told [Greenville Online](#).



### 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Mosby Civil War Bus Tour Saturday, June 21, 2014

Sponsored by the Stuart - Mosby Historical Society

**Tour Leaders:** Don Hakenson, Gregg Dudding & Eric Buckland, with special guest Tom Evans joining us in the morning!

#### Tour Agenda:

The bus will leave Truro Parish (10520 Main Street, Fairfax City) promptly at 8:30a.m., and return around 5:30p.m. We will be visiting Green Springs (The home of Fount Beattie), The City of Alexandria, The Robert E. Lee Camp Hall Museum, The grave of Ranger Albert Minor, the site of the Rose Hill Manor House, The Broder’s Site & Cemetery and much more! We will be stopping for lunch, but it is not a part of the fee. You will be responsible for your own lunch!

**Cost for Stuart-Mosby Historical Society members is \$65**

**Non Members is \$75!**

**Please arrive before 8 a.m. to sign in.**

Reserve your seat by sending us your name, address and phone number and contact Don Hakenson at: [dhakenson@verizon.net](mailto:dhakenson@verizon.net). Or Contact Don at: 703-971-4984

Reservations are not complete until we receive your check. Make checks payable to: Don Hakenson and send it to:

4708 Lillian Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22310  
Also visit [www.stuart-mosby.com](http://www.stuart-mosby.com) and [www.hmshistory.com](http://www.hmshistory.com).  
Sorry, no refunds after June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014!



**We are proud to proclaim that this tour is the longest  
continuously-running Mosby Tour conducted in America today!**

## May is a Great Time to Enjoy Many Historical Programs

Ben Lomond, Brentsville Courthouse and Rippon Lodge are open for regular tours now. These sites are open Thursday – Monday, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you have questions or would like to arrange a tour for large groups, please call the site you are interested in seeing.

### May 8

#### Lecture: The 1846 War with Mexico

*7 p.m.: Free, donations accepted*

The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) marked the first U.S. armed conflict chiefly fought on foreign soil. It pitted a politically divided and militarily unprepared Mexico against the expansionist-minded United States. A border skirmish along the Rio Grande started the fighting and was followed by a series of U.S. victories. Young officers like U.S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Jackson, and others who would later lead armies against one another in the Civil War had their first combat experience in Mexico. Join historian Ron Mayer for an overview of this historic period using maps, illustrations, and pictures to help explain the “who, what, when, and why” of the conflict.

Old Manassas Courthouse, 9248 Lee Avenue, Manassas VA, 703-792-4754.

### May 9

#### Rippon Lodge Family Night at the Movies

*8 p.m.; FREE*

Bring a blanket and the family for a family friendly movie classic on the lawn. Movie admission is free. Popcorn and snacks available for sale. House tours available from 6-8pm. Movie cancelled in the event of rain. Please call for more details.

Rippon Lodge Historic Site, 15520 Blackburn Road, Woodbridge, VA 22192, 703-499-9812.

### May 10, 11, 24, 25

#### Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park Tours

*11 a.m.-3 p.m.; Tours leave on the hour – donations encouraged.*

Bristoe Station Battlefield staff and volunteers will provide guided tours of the hallowed grounds that contain camps, cemeteries, and battlefields. Learn about Camp Jones and the two battles that took place in 1862 and 1863. Tours begin on the hour and depart from the kiosk in the parking lot on Iron Brigade Unit Avenue. The last tour leaves at 3 p.m. Please dress for the weather and wear comfortable walking shoes. Insect repellent is advised. No pets, please. Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park, located off of Iron Brigade Unit Ave., Bristow, VA. 703-366-3049.

### May 10-11

#### Mother's Day Tours at all Prince William County HPD Sites

*11 a.m. - 4 p.m.; \$5.00 per person, free for children under six, MOTHERS FREE*

In honor of Mother's Day, all mothers that visit Rippon Lodge on Mother's Day weekend will experience a complimentary tour of the site. If your mom likes history or some stories that would give television drama a run for their money, treat Mom to a visit of Ben Lomond Historic Site, Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre or Rippon Lodge Historic Site.

[www.pwcgov.org/historicpreservation](http://www.pwcgov.org/historicpreservation)

### May 10

#### Potomac River Blockade Boat Tour

*\$40.00 per person, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., includes lunch, reservations required.*

Cruise along the Potomac River shoreline and view sites that were critical to the Confederate successful blockade of Washington D.C. from September 1861 through March 1862. The cruise will include the preserved batteries at Freestone Point and Possum Nose, as well as Evansport and Shipping Point. Tours include lunch and departs from Leesylvania State Park in Woodbridge. For reservations, call 703-792-4754.

### May 17

#### Joseph McGill Slave Quarter Project

*11 a.m.-4 p.m.; \$7 per person, children six and under free*

Since 2000, Mr. Joseph McGill, Jr. of the National Trust of Historic Preservation has traveled all across the county sleeping in and interpreting original slave quarters to raise awareness for these priceless buildings. Ben Lomond Historic Site is pleased to announce that Mr. McGill will include the original slave quarters to his project. Mr. McGill will be on site to discuss his project as well as costumed historians to interpret enslaved life in Prince William County prior to the Civil War.

Ben Lomond Historic Site, 10321 Sudley Manor Dr., Manassas, VA. 703-367-7872.

(con't on page 10)



## May Events - (con't from page 9)

### May 22

#### Lecture: August 24, 1814 Washington in Flames

*7 p.m.: Free, donations accepted*

America's new capitol built along the Potomac River in the middle of swampland and forests seemed to many an unlikely target for an enemy invasion. They were wrong. Even though there were warnings of an impending attack, the government was unprepared for the disaster of August 24, 1814. The destruction by British forces of the nation's capitol was a very small part of the War of 1812, but its significance to the country was tremendous. The torching of Washington rallied the people. Join author and historian, Carole L. Herrick, for a detailed look into the events of August 1814. Mrs. Herrick will have copies of her book available for sale. Old Manassas Courthouse, 9248 Lee Avenue, Manassas VA. 703-792-4754.

### May 24

#### Ben Lomond Antique Rose Garden and Tea

*1 p.m. – 3 p.m.; \$30 per person*

Celebrate the arrival of spring by spending a wonderful afternoon in the antique rose garden at Ben Lomond enjoying historic tea. Price of admission includes tea, light refreshments, and a special talk about roses and spring flowers in one of the largest antique rose gardens in the Washington D.C. metro area. Reservations required. Spaces are limited and will fill up fast. The main house will be open to tours after tea.

Ben Lomond Historic Site, 10321 Sudley Manor Dr., Manassas, VA. 703-367-7872.

### May 24

#### Brentsville Car Show

*11 a.m.- 4 p.m., \$10 per person, children free under six*

Join the Brentsville community for a day filled with fun for all ages. Come see antique cars and trucks in a truly historic setting. Clubs include the Quantico Marauders and many more. Tours of the historic buildings will be given throughout the day with family friendly games and activities.

Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, 12229 Bristow Rd., Bristow, VA. 703-365-7895

### May 25

#### Historic Sundays at Brentsville Union Church

*11 a.m.-noon FREE*

Brentsville Union Church was built in 1870 and served the Brentsville community for more than 100 years. Today, the country church has been restored and serves as a glimpse into life of the 19th century. Come learn about the practices of faith that were once held here and how the importance of churches were to society and local communities. Program conducted in partnership with Historic Faith Ministries, a non-profit living history organization focusing on Victorian period customs and spirituality. Program begins at 11a.m. and is FREE to the public. Tours offered after the program for \$5.00.

Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, 12229 Bristow Rd., Bristow, VA. 703-365-7895

### May 31

#### Wildlife Walk at Bristoe Station Battlefield

*9 a.m. – 11 a.m.; \$5 per person*

Bristoe Station Battlefield is home to a complex meadow ecosystem. Join outdoor experts on a guided walk of the battlefield. Learn about the beneficial wildlife, especially the birds and butterflies that call this ecosystem home. Learn to identify the plants that these birds and butterflies need for food and shelter. Bring binoculars. The tour departs from the kiosk in the parking lot at Iron Brigade Unit Ave. and 10th Alabama Way. Wear comfortable walking shoes and dress for the weather. No pets, please. Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park. The parking lot is located off Iron Brigade Unit Ave., Bristow, VA. 703-366-3049.

For More Information on Historic Preservation in Prince William County including; rentals, summer camps, and volunteering, please contact us at 703-792-4754 or via e-mail at [historicpreservation@pwcgov.org](mailto:historicpreservation@pwcgov.org)

Or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pwhistoric](http://www.facebook.com/pwhistoric) or on Twitter @PWHPF.

**The Bull Run Civil War Round Table's Newest Recruit!**

**Here's a grateful "shout out" to John Butler, who has recently joined the BRCWRT**

## Spindle Place - a Hidden Gem of History

by Nadine Mironchuk

Whenever I visit Virginia from Yankeeland, I know I can depend on my rag-tag Company of “Irregulars” to provide me with a historical tour that is catered to my very specific interests – Blackburn’s Ford, Goose Creek Bridge, the stuffed cabbage on the menu at the Chutzpah Delicatessen in Fairfax City....

BRCWRT members Janet Greentree, Nancy Anwyll, Lynne Garvey-Hodge, and Gwen Wyttenbach are the soldiers who answer the call when I get the urge to visit my “second home” – Virginia.

This past visit in April brought us together again as our friend, Al Smith, and I traveled South so that Al could speak at the BRCWRT about his favorite (and, I suspect, the South’s least favorite) topic – Abraham Lincoln. He must have done well, as he received an unprecedented round of applause after performing his stirring rendition of the Gettysburg Address! It warmed his heart, to be sure, that everyone was so genuinely responsive to his talk.

The next day, Al spent time with his family touring D.C., and the *Blue/Gray Irregulars* set out to take me to a historic house I had been wanting to see for several years – Spindle Place, in Amissville. It’s not to be confused with the Spindle House in Centreville, a house known popularly for being a Sears Catalogue-built home mail-ordered and put in place in 1934.



Built in 1860 by William Spindle, Spindle Place served three years later as the headquarters of Brigadier General George A. Custer, from July 21st to July 31st, as Confederate troops were making their way back out of Pennsylvania following their stunning defeat at Get-



Spindle Place in Amissville was the headquarters of Gen. George A. Custer for 10 days following the battle of Gettysburg.

Photos by Janet Greentree

tsburg. At that time, Custer commanded the 3rd Division of the Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac, which consisted of approximately 1,500 Union cavalrymen. His orders were to oversee operations in the vicinity of the Rappahannock River and to harass the enemy during their retreat as well as could be accomplished.

From this house, Custer directed his men to attack Confederate troops retreating from the Battle of Gettysburg, a task that could be considered foolhardy, in lieu of the greatly superior number of troops he was to engage. Moving south on the Richmond Road (present-day Route 729) toward Culpeper, Confederate troops under Lieut. General A. P. Hill were surprised by Custer and his riders at the foot of Battle Mountain on July 24, 1863.

Longstreet's corps and Gen. A. P. Hill's corps were retreating from Pennsylvania through the Chester Gap and south on the Richmond Road towards Culpeper. Custer and his troops traveled from their headquarters at Spindle Place and attacked with cavalry and artillery from the southern slope of Battle Mountain, about five miles southwest of Amissville, but his forces were vast-

(con't on page 13)



**Spindle Place — (con't from page 12)**

ly outnumbered and after a brisk and severe fight, was forced to retreat north and east over Battle Mountain back to Amissville.

Two of Custer's men were awarded the Medal of Honor in 1893 for their part in capturing Confederate artillery at Battle Mountain. Battle Mountain and Little Battle Mountain were named not for the military engagement but for the Bataille family which lived near the two elevations in the 1700s. Bataille was later corrupted to Battle Mountain and Little Battle Mountain, the names they bear today.

Just four days after this battle, Custer took some time to write a letter from this house to Isaac Peckham Christiancy, associate justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. In this four-page signed letter (recently sold at auction and fetching a price of \$18,750), Custer discussed the aftermath of the Gettysburg battle and the criticism launched at Gen. George Meade for not pursuing and annihilating Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The letter reads, in part:

"Amissville [Virginia],  
July 28, 1863

Gen. Meade was strongly in favor of attacking Lee at once on the north bank of the Potomac but was deterred from doing so by the vote of his oldest Corp Commanders. The account given in the papers of the council of war which decided not to attack is substantially correct. I was happy to know that Gen [Alfred] Pleasonton, (my chief) among others used every argument in his power favoring an immediate attack. I knew at the time that a golden opportunity was being lost, and repeat-

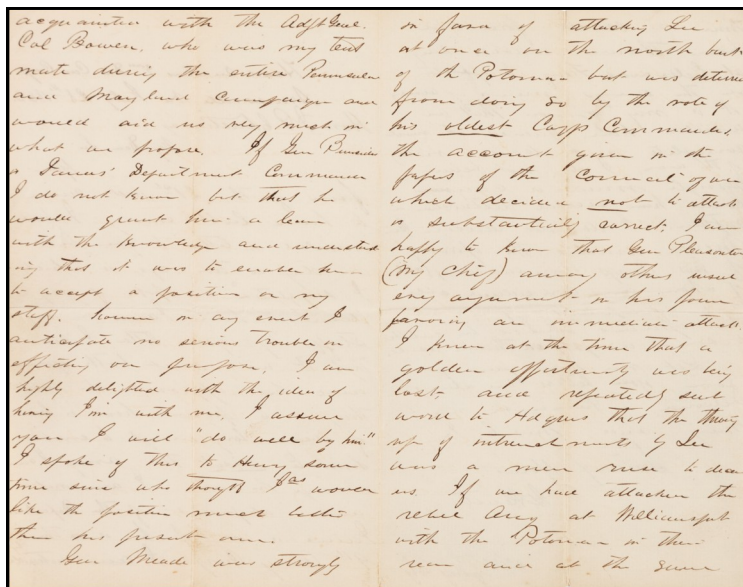
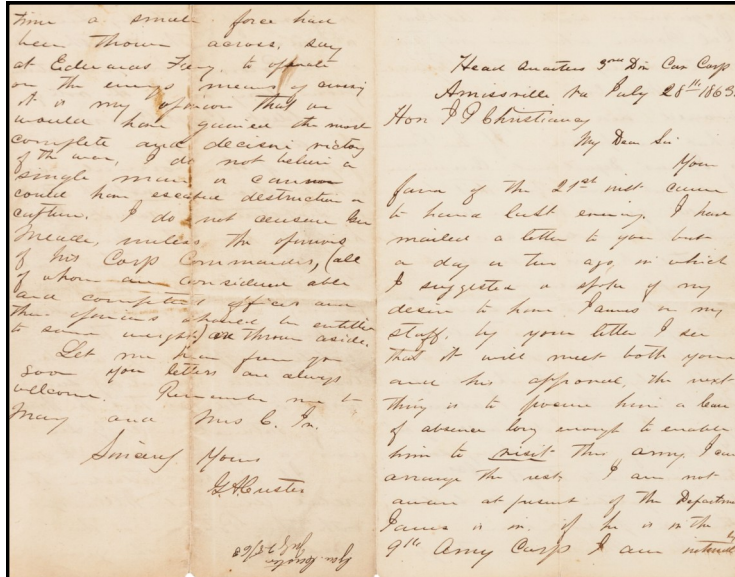
edly sent word to Hdqrs that the throwing up of intrenchments [sic] by Lee was a mere ruse to deceive us. If we had attacked the rebel Army at Williamsport with the Potomac in their rear and at the same time a small force had been thrown across, say at Edwards Ferry, to operate on the enemys [sic] means of crossing it is my opinion that we would have gained

the most complete and decisive victory of the war. I do not believe a single man or cannon could have escaped destruction or capture. I do not censure Gen Meade, unless the opinions of his Corp Commanders, (all of whom are considered able and competent officers and their opinions should be entitled to some weight) are thrown aside."

Other communications sent by Custer when headquartered at Spindle Place were dispatches to Major General Pleasonton, Commander of the Cavalry Corps, describing the activity leading up to the clash at Battle Mountain. On the evening of July 23rd Custer writes:

"HEADQUARTERS  
THIRD DIVISION,  
CAVALRY CORPS,  
Amissville, Va., July  
23, 1863--8.30 p.m.

The regiment I sent in the direction of Gaines' Cross-Roads encountered the skirmishers of the enemy (infantry) about 1 ½ miles from this place, and drove them to within 1 mile of the cross-roads, where they [Found the] enemy in force, and in such position as prevented our farther advance. We sustained a loss of 6 or 7 wounded. The regiment now holds its advanced



## Spindle Place — (con't from page 13)

*position, which is within 1 mile of Gaines' Cross-Roads. Since dark, a contraband has come in from Newby's Cross-Roads with very reliable information. He reports the enemy moving hurriedly by Newby's Cross-Roads on the Culpeper road. They have been moving in a continuous column all day, and the rebel soldiers told him their troops would be passing all night. Their column consists of infantry and artillery; no cavalry, and but few wagons. The negro says it is Hill's corps. The enemy seemed to be dreading an attack from our forces, and are making a forced march. Several of the enemy inquired of the contraband if that was the right road to Culpeper and the distance to that point. I do not expect to obtain any more information to-night. I will endeavor to annoy the enemy to-morrow morning as much as it is in my power to do.*

*I shall keep you informed of what transpires in this vicinity.*

*Very respectfully,  
G. A. CUSTER,  
Brigadier-General,  
Commanding."*

Custer updates Pleasonton the next afternoon, describing the battle, which took place thusly:

*"HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION, CAVALRY CORPS,*

*Amissville, Va., July 24, 1863--2 p.m.*

*I have just returned with my command from the vicinity of Newby's Cross-Roads. I started this morning about daylight with five regiment and two batteries, leaving one regiment on the road to Gaines' Cross-Roads. I have had a very severe engagement, with a loss not exceeding 15 men. I met with no resistance until the head of my column had arrived within one mile and a half of Newby's Cross-Roads, when I took 2 men belonging to Longstreet, who reported that Longstreet's corps was on the road at the cross-roads. I pushed forward with but three regiments and one battery (Pennington's), sending the other battery and two regiments of cavalry back to re-enforce the regiment stationed on the road to Gaines' Cross-Roads, as I had received a note from the commanding officer of the regiment informing me that three regiments of cavalry, one battery, and a considerable force of infantry were in position on his front. When within 1 mile of Newby's Cross-Roads, my advance guard met the enemy's skirmishers (infantry), and drove them back on the main*

*body, strongly posted on a ridge. From a prisoner taken on the ground, I learned that a citizen of this place had gone early this morning to the enemy and informed him that the Yankees had a force of 20,000 at Amissville, and were marching to attack Longstreet's column. This story I now know to have been credited by Longstreet, and he made his dispositions accordingly. I opened upon them with my battery, to which they replied with infantry and artillery, they showing no cavalry. As soon as I ascertained that I could advance no farther, and that an overwhelming force was advancing upon me, I prepared to retire on Amissville. I withdrew one regiment and four guns, leaving two regiments and two guns in advance. Before a position could be obtained for my retiring guns, the enemy burst upon us with a heavy column of infantry, and succeeded in getting between the two advanced regiments with the two guns and the remainder of my command, thus completely cutting off the two regiments and two guns. No road was left to escape by. I placed my four guns in position, supported with but one regiment. With these I managed to check the enemy's advance in the direction of Amissville, but their attention was now directed against the rear guard, now completely cut off and surrounded by infantry and artillery on three sides.*

*By a circuitous route I managed to convey a message to them, and succeeded in cutting a road through a dense woods, to enable the artillery to retire. The enemy had a line of battle formed for miles on my left. This line kept advancing, and, I having no force to check him, time was everything. Taking advantage of a temporary check in our immediate front, I succeeded in uniting my command, and withdrew deliberately and in excellent order to Amissville, with a loss not exceeding 15. There is not a doubt but that an entire corps was in line of battle and advancing upon me. We have a prisoner from Hill's corps, who was taken in the fight, who states that a part of his corps was there also. Longstreet was convinced that 20,000 men were attacking him. Within one mile and a half of Newby's Cross-Roads we captured a servant of Jeb Stuart's medical director. He is very intelligent and communicative. He ran away from the rebels at 9 p.m. last evening. He saw General Stuart and staff at that time at Gaines Cross-Roads, where he had just arrived with his column. He heard General Stuart give Fitz. Lee orders to take his brigade and occupy Amissville. (One of my regiments met his advance, and drove it to within one mile and a half of Gaines' Cross-*

(con't on page 15)



## Spindle Place — (con't from page 14)

*Roads.) Upon arriving at Gaines' Cross-Roads, General Stuart remarked that he would rest awhile. The contraband states that Stuart's force has been marching every night for one week, with not over an hour's rest each night. Stuart proposed pushing on to Culpeper last night. I learned to-day that a force of cavalry had been seen marching in that direction. The horses and men are completely worn out and have nothing to eat. The enemy had fears of being cut off from Culpeper. The regiment which I have between here and Gaines Cross-Roads have seen a continuous line of troops pass since yesterday; also an immense train of wagons. The latter were moving on a more distant road, probably the Sperryville road. This agrees also with the statement of the contraband. Ewell's corps is also reported by a prisoner to be passing. I am convinced that the rebel army is moving to Culpeper as rapidly as it can march. About one corps and most of Stuart's cavalry have already passed; the other corps are still in real.*

*A family has just applied to me for a pass to go to Warrenton, intending to go from there to Washington. They left Culpeper yesterday, and report no rebel troops of any consequence at that point, and met none yesterday on the road. This shows that the rebel army has not reached that point yet.*

*My horses are greatly in need of forage. My supplies are exhausted. I will send for my train to join me loaded as soon as possible.*

*I think our position to-day the most critical I was ever in.*

*Very respectfully, &c.,*

*G. A. CUSTER,*

*Brigadier-General, Commanding.*

*Major-General PLEASANTON.*

*[P. S.]--I sent you two dispatches last night, but my messengers have not reported yet."*

Custer may only have been there 10 days, and fought a relatively minor clash launched from this site, but the house is truly a gripping reminder of the past. It seems virtually untouched from the time that Custer last adjusted his spurs, took the reins of his horse and led his men off to Warrenton in late July of 1863.

It's a treat to stump my extremely knowledgeable camp-mates, who had not heard of the property or its history, and believe me, that doesn't happen very often! I have to figure that the site is so ignored (historically



Gen. George Armstrong Custer

speaking) because it only has an association with a *Union* general – although he is certainly one of the most colorful and ill-fated figures in the great American saga.

The house first came to my attention when I was browsing websites that feature historical properties – some being for sale, as this one was at the time I stumbled across it. I try to keep up with preservation efforts in other states (mine being Massachusetts), to see what is successfully preserved and what is in danger of being lost to the ages. The primitive state of this property, which has no electrical service, no heating (other than what might have been a fireplace and then stove), no sewerage accommodation, and no extra land into which a septic tank can be seated, is certainly unusual. It's right adjacent to a trailer park and other modest homes, but like Brigadoon, seemingly coming up out of the mist of time.

To inhabit the home now, one would have to live as Custer did then – by candlelight, and using a chamber pot!

I'm sure there are historians and preservationists who dither when coming upon a structure that is abandoned, mulling whether to get a "closer look" at the interior, as well as inspecting its outer circumstance. I won't say whether I have qualms about going inside a wonderfully historic property that is conveniently left open for viewing, but I do believe there is some value in seeing the place that someone like Custer would have called home for 10 days, knowing it could disappear under a bulldozer at any time, and being left with the memory of what he saw while he was building his legend.

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**BULL RUN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

***The Stone Wall***

**P.O. Box 2147**

**Centreville, VA 20122**

**2014 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)—\$10.**

**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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