



**CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF
FREDERICKSBURG, INC.
HARDTACK**



APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER

April 23, 2025 Meeting

PROGRAM: THE BATTLE OF BRISTOE STATION

On October 14, 1863, A.P. Hill's corps stumbled upon two corps of the retreating Union army at Bristoe Station and attacked without proper reconnaissance. Union soldiers of the II Corps, posted behind the Orange & Alexandria Railroad embankment, mauled two brigades of Henry Heth's division and captured a battery of artillery. Hill reinforced his line but could make little headway against the determined defenders.

After this victory, the Federals continued their withdrawal to Centreville unmolested. Lee's Bristoe offensive sputtered to a premature halt. After minor skirmishing near Manassas and Centreville, the Confederates retired slowly to Rappahannock River destroying the Orange & Alexandria Railroad as they went. At Bristoe Station, Hill lost standing in the eyes of Lee, who angrily ordered him to bury his dead and say no more about it. In his presentation, historian Kevin Pawlak will explore the details of this significant campaign,



SPEAKER: KEVIN PAWLAK

Kevin Pawlak is a Historic Site Manager for the Prince William County Historic Preservation Division and works as a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Antietam National Battlefield. Kevin also sits on the Board of Directors of the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association, the Save Historic Antietam Foundation, and the Antietam Institute. Previously, Kevin has worked or completed internships at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, The Papers of Abraham Lincoln at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and the Mosby Heritage Area Association. He is the author of seven books on the American Civil War.



A special thanks to Harry Farley for his sponsorship of this month's program. Please consider sponsoring a program. It's a great way to support our Round Table.

MARCH MEETING REVIEW

Sometimes the lesser-known figures of the Civil War are the most interesting. During the March meeting, Dr. John Coski artfully described one such individual. Hunter Davidson was a very complex, innovative sailor who served in six Navies. Even though he served on a variety of ships, Davidson's major contribution was in the field of electronic torpedoes, culminating with the sinking of the Union ship Commodore Jones. Particularly interesting was Dr. Coski's discussion of Davidson's career following the Civil War. Like many other Confederate sailors, he offered his services to foreign countries, moving among several countries in search of employment. Later in his life, Davidson crossed swords with several individuals, most notable Jefferson Davis, defending his role in development of mine warfare. He died in obscurity in Paraguay. Coski's comprehensive discussion provided insights into the career of one of the little-known pioneers of naval technology.



UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS

The Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg, Inc.

- May 28, 2025** The Grand Old Man of the Army: General Winfield Scott's Unionism and the Secession Crisis
Speaker: Barton Myers
- June 18, 2025** Forgotten Friday: The April 7, 1865 Actions in Cumberland County, VA
Speaker: Patrick Schroeder

For a complete list of presentations see: <http://www.cwrtf.org/Program-Year-2024-2025>

The Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

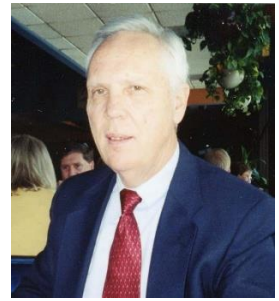
- May 12, 2025** Contrasts in Command: Battle of Fair Oaks
Speaker: Vic Vignola
- June 9, 2025** The Union's Most Infamous Civil War Prison Camp – Elmira, NY
Speaker: Derick Maxfield

For other lectures, meetings, and other civil war events please see our website calendar, <http://www.cwrtf.org/view-calendar>.

MESSAGE FROM A MEMBER

Over the years our Round Table has provided a forum for education, fellowship, and camaraderie. Each month we would like to feature a member in our newsletter so that we can all become more familiar with one another. This month's feature is James (Jim) Conway, providing insight into his background and how our group has made a positive impact on his life. Please consider submitting a short bio so we may feature you in coming newsletters. Submit to info@cwrtf.org.

I grew up in Spotsylvania in the early 1950s and attended Chancellor Elementary School, which is only 10 miles from the Chancellor Battlefield. My elementary school teachers all had a southern bias, and I loved it. My favorite generals were Stonewall Jackson, JEB Stuart, AP Hill, and a first cousin of mine – Turner Ashby.



During my years at James Monroe High School, I learned that not all my elementary school teachers had told me was true. I learned the real tragedies and outcomes of the war and my heroes weren't heroes anymore. I took it so hard that I was no longer interested in talking about the war for nearly 20 years. When I was in the Army, men from Philadelphia and New Jersey would ridicule me and laugh about beating us dumb southerners and I hated it.

In 2019 I met Bob LaChance, in the Outer Banks of North Carolina and we struck up a conversation about our lives and careers. I was impressed with his accomplishments and commented that I had met a pretty good Yankee after he told me he was from Connecticut. He then replied he was actually more interested in the Confederacy and ever since he was a young boy he looked up to the same generals that were my heroes. It was hard for me to believe.

A few months later, I visited his home in Salem Church. His living room was adorned with southern paraphernalia, complete with a picture of Stonewall Jackson behind one recliner and Robert E. Lee behind another. During this visit he asked me to attend the Civil War Round Table.

When I went to the meeting, I was impressed with how many educated people were there from both sides of the aisle and with everything that was said. I have respect for and appreciate the input of everyone involved. I was fortunate to be reunited with some high school friends: Paul Scott, his brother David, and Charles McDaniel. I enjoyed hearing talks from authors and park rangers about the battles fought in Virginia, North

Carolina, and Tennessee. In hearing these talks, I was saddened by the losses of life and property on both sides, and was touched by acts of humanity and brotherhood, such as stories of helping enemies. For example, after one battle, one of the Confederate soldiers, who was known as the Angel of Marye's Heights, heard the cries of the Union soldiers on the Fredericksburg Battlefield and gathered his men's canteens to give to the wounded soldiers and thought nothing of it.

So, in closing, I appreciate the people I have met and have enjoyed the atmosphere and comradery of the Round Table. I will always be thankful for Mr. LaChance for introducing me to the group.

James (Jim) Ashby Conway

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

April 2025

Good day to our great members,

This year is moving along rapidly for the CWRT, and we have just 3 more meetings until our final '24/'25 dinner/presentation in June.

I am very grateful to our members for giving us the excellent number of attendees for every dinner/meeting for the year, to date. For an organization which numbers a little more than one hundred and eight paid members, we continuously exceed 75 attendees at every dinner/presentation. Thank you very much for your continued support.

At our March '25 Silent Auction Event, we realized better than \$400.00, which helps our treasury. While not quite as profitable as last year's Silent Auction Event, it still provided the Round Table with funds that can be put to good use. Again, my sincere thanks to Mr. Chip Willis, our VP, for hosting this event.

As always, I encourage every member to seek out and invite a guest(s) to attend our April dinner/presentation as detailed in Dr. Jerre Wilson's description of our guest speaker and his presentation in this Newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you and your guests at the April dinner/presentation. It is a privilege and an honor to serve as the President of the Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg.

Sincerely,

Bruce H. "Doc" Norton – President CWRT of Fredericksburg

In Memory:

William “Bill” Jamerson

Long-time Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg member Bill Jamerson died March 31 following heart surgery. Bill enjoyed many things – old cars, his second home in North Carolina where he spent summer vacations with his family, his church, football and history. He especially enjoyed Civil War history, touring battlefields and attending Round Table dinners. Flo, Bill’s wife of 60 years called to make Bill a dinner reservation for February 26. Surgery was scheduled for March and Bill attended the February dinner.

Bill graduated from Old Dominion University and retired from Verizon in 1999 after working there for 36 years. In addition to, Flo, who often attended dinners with Bill, he is survived by a son, a daughter and four grandchildren.

Bill was interred on April 4, 2025, at the Salem Baptist Church Cemetery, where he served as overseer.

MEETINGS & RESERVATIONS

Meetings are held at the Jepson Alumni Executive Center, University of Mary Washington, 1119 Hanover St., Fredericksburg, VA. Cocktails start at 5:30 pm, dinner at 6:30 pm, and presentations at 7:30 pm. Please make your reservations by calling (540) 729-0260, emailing elizabethdaly@juno.com, or visiting our website at www.cwrt.org. If you must cancel, please do so by noon of the Monday prior to the meeting. Otherwise, you will be responsible for payment.

MEMBERSHIP MINUTE

Please welcome our new members!

William Daly
Drew Calhoun
Stephanie Bianchi

Please make an effort to meet these new members and introduce yourself. With the addition of these new members, our ranks swell to 109 with an additional three honorary members. Welcome William, Drew, and Stephanie!

As a newly-minted Board Member of the Civil War Roundtable Congress (CWRTC), I was confronted with the very distressing news of several impending closures of longstanding roundtables across the country. I won't go into detail here as to the specific cases, but needless to say, we should all feel sad at this news. As advocates for the history of the Civil War in their communities, their demise strikes a blow for keeping the memory alive of the great struggle and those who fought in it.

Attributing a single reason for the "health crisis" of our sister roundtables is impossible, but I narrowed the casual factors down to three:

- aging membership
- lack of vigorous recruiting efforts on the part of the RT to bring in younger and more active members.
- lack of outreach to the community on the benefit of educating both oneself and one's community on American Civil War history.

Hard to imagine a community that neglects or gives up on promoting the understanding of the crucial series of historical events that saved the union. This issue brings up another ponderable: whose responsibility is it to advocate for study and education of the Civil War among the citizenry?

Whilst we that live in Central Virginia are blessed with an abundance of historical education opportunities, other communities are not so fortunate. That said, stretching the imagination to include the talents of local amateur historians, academics, graduate students, professional living historians, etc., is not beyond the pale. Gathering for a discussion on a new or old book in another idea.

I might add to the list of implied duties of a community, contribute to the education, task and purpose on understanding Civil War History among school age children. All this suggests that community CW roundtables are greater than the sum of their parts.

Will our RT end up in such a sad state? Your Board of Directors works vigorously to avoid such a fate!

What are your ideas on how the CWRTF can invigorate our organization with fresh initiatives?

Turning now to the topic of history, we are approaching the 160th Anniversary of the surrender at Appomattox. If you haven't yet, check out the Appomattox NHP website as beginning next week, the Park will feature a host of entertaining and educational events to commemorate the event. The Park is going all out this year to observe and remember what Bruce Catton captured in his book, "Stillness at Appomattox."

As we ponder the significance, impact and observance of the anniversary, it remains fascinating how emerging scholarship continues to bring new and interesting history to the fore. There is a constant stream of new material on Civil War History for us to consume! A veritable feast of stories!

Things may have been different on April 4th of 1865 had Ulysses Grant been killed riding in the dark to confer with Sheridan on the current operational situation. Sheridan wanted to attack, sensing Lee was weak and vulnerable. He messaged Grant directly as Meade that day had fallen ill, that he wished to review his (Sheridan's) tactical advantage. As described in a recent Emerging Civil War (ECW) post by Kevin Donovan (found here): <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2025/04/02/stacking-arms-what-ifs-episode-ii-what-if-grant-had-shared-stonewall-jacksons-fate-during-grants-own-risky-nighttime-ride-during-the-a/>

“Grant later described his harrowing experience: “I had to make such a detour round the rebel lines that I rode at least thirty miles before reaching [Sheridan]. I remember being challenged by pickets, and sometimes I had great difficulty in getting through the lines. I remember picking my way through the sleeping soldiers, bivouacked in the open field. I reached Sheridan about midnight. Grant conferred with both Sheridan and Meade and soon had the pursuit of Lee back well in hand. The next day, April 6, Lee would be brought to battle at Sailor’s Creek, losing a quarter of his army. Grant’s risky nighttime ride had paid off handsomely. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant’s risky April 5, 1865 ride to confer with Sheridan could have ended badly. But the excursion could just as well have ended badly, not only for Grant personally but for the entire U.S. cause. What if Grant had in fact blundered into the nearby Confederate lines? Or what if roving rebel cavalry, the signs of which Porter had observed, had come upon Grant’s little group? Finally, as Grant’s mounted party approached Union lines, it faced the same risk that another lieutenant general and his escort had faced during their own moonlight ride some two years before. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s ride ended in his wounding and eventual death at the hands of his own men. Like Jackson, Grant was moving towards friendly lines, but from a direction only the enemy would be expected at that hour.”

Had Grant been captured, wounded, or killed by Confederates, or wounded or killed by his own men that fateful day, history may have been different. Irrespective of this counterfactual, if Grant was “taken out of action” the dogged pursuit of Lee might have taken an unfortunate turn.

Such are the great moments of Civil War history we all know and love.

As usual, I would be interested in your views. **What are your suggestions to aid in the preservation of Civil War history?** How do we ensure the CWRTF survives? I would welcome your ideas and thoughts. Hit me up with your musings at historyCWRTF@gmail.com.

Reminder: the CWRTF will be represented at the Northern Virginia Relic Hunters Association's annual Civil War Show held 9-10 May. Please stop by our recruiting table and say hi!

Rack cards will continue to be available at the entranceway to the dining room. Please feel free to pick some up and pass along to friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others who may be interested in Civil War history. *The best recruitment tool we have is you--our members--reaching out to acquaintances/neighbors/friends.* **A rack card slipped into the hand of a guest along with an invitation to join from a member is better than paid advertisements.**

Until next month, *may love of country lead you.*

David Hamon, Membership Chair

Write to:
historyCWRTF@gmail.com

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-- CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF FREDERICKSBURG, INC.--

Membership Application

Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Home/Cell Phone Number: _____
Email: _____
Occupation: _____
Areas of Civil War Interests: _____
Other Civil War Round Table Memberships: _____

Membership Categories:

Individual	\$ 60.00	\$ _____
Individual (dual Round Table Member):	\$ 50.00	\$ _____
Family (all persons of the same household):	\$110.00	\$ _____
Family (dual Round Table Member):	\$100.00	\$ _____
Sponsoring Member:	\$120.00	
Student/NMPS Intern:	No Charge	\$ _____
	Total Enclosed:	\$ _____

Consider a Donation to be the Sponsor of a Guest Speaker for \$250.00