



JUNE 2020

# THE RUNNER



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 6



## *Last Person to Receive a Civil War Pension Dies*

Irene Triplett, the last person receiving a pension from the U.S. Civil War, has died at the age of 90.

Ms. Triplett's father, Mose Triplett, started fighting in the war for the Confederacy when he was just 16 years old. Pvt. Triplett enlisted in the 53rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment in May 1862, then transferred to the 26th North Carolina Infantry Regiment early the following year, according to Confederate records. He fell ill as his regiment marched north toward Gettysburg and remained behind in a Virginia military hospital.



Irene Triplett

Our June 11th round table discussion—Battle of Cedar Creek, has been canceled due to the pandemic. It is re-scheduled for August 14th, 2020.

He ran away from the hospital, records show, while his unit suffered devastating losses at Gettysburg. Of the 800 men in the 26th North Carolina, 734 were killed, wounded or captured in the battle Pvt. Triplett missed. After he recovered from his illness, he deserted the Confederate Army, made his way to Tennessee in 1864 and enlisted in a Union regiment, the 3rd North Carolina Mounted Infantry. Known as Kirk's Raiders, the 3rd North Carolina carried out a campaign of sabotage against Confederate targets in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina. The unit was named after Tennessee-born commander Col. George Washington Kirk. It might seem bizarre, but it actually wasn't uncommon for soldiers to switch sides mid-war during the Civil War.

After Triplett's first wife, Mary, passed away he married Elida Hall in 1924. Elida was 50 years his junior. She was 34 when Irene was born in 1930; he was 83. Such an age difference wasn't rare, especially later, during the Great

Depression, when Civil War veterans found themselves with both a pension and a growing need for care.

Pvt. Triplett died in 1938, days after attending a reunion of Civil War veterans, attended by President Franklin Roosevelt, on the fields of Gettysburg.



*Civil War veteran, Mose Triplett (second from the right), pictured with wife Mary, granddaughter Oma Walker and greatgrandchildren Blanche and Gurney Walker. Circa 1890*



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*Last Person to Receive a Civil War Pension Dies, cont.*

Mose Triplett put in enough time with the Union Army to earn a pension, so the government sent him a check for \$73.13 every month until his death in 1938 at the age of 92. After that, the pension check went to his widow, Elida, and upon her death, to his only surviving child, Irene. Irene received a pension check from government for her father's service--- and yes, the amount of each check was still \$73.13. When Irene died, the government officially stop issuing pension checks for the Civil War, which ended 154 years ago.

Both mother and daughter suffered from mental disabilities. Irene Triplett recalled a tough childhood isolated in the North Carolina mountains, beaten by teachers at school and parents at home.

"I didn't care for neither one of them, to tell you the truth about it," she told The Wall Street Journal in 2014. "I wanted to get away from both of them. I wanted to get me a house and crawl in it all by myself."

Ms. Triplett and her mother lived for years in the Wilkes County poorhouse. Irene later moved through a number of care homes, her costs covered by Medicaid and her tiny VA pension.

She saw little of her relatives. But a pair of Civil War buffs visited and sent her money to spend on Dr Pepper and chewing tobacco, a habit she picked up in the first grade.

"She's a part of history," said Dennis St. Andrew, one of Irene's supporters and a past commander of the North Carolina Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. "You're talking to somebody whose father was in the Civil War, which is mind-bending." She was the last of what the North Carolina Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War call true sons and daughters of Civil War soldiers.



*All About War Horses by Bruce Patterson*

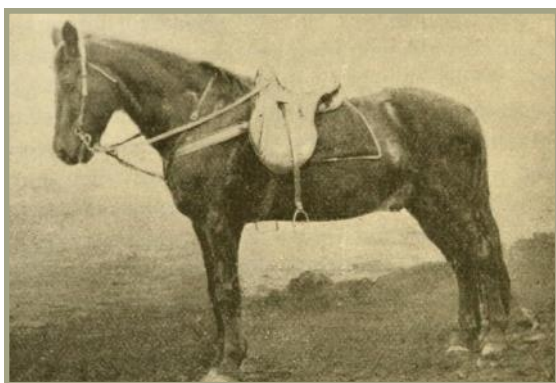
Strangely, we Civil War Historians (or Civil War Historians want-a-be's) seem to have a fascination about the horses that accompanied many of the key generals on the battlefield.

**General Philip Sheridan's mount Rienzi** (named after a town in Mississippi) was Sheridan's primary mount for over three years, through 45 engagements and 19 major battles. Following Sheridan's victory at Cedar Creek, Rienzi was renamed Winchester.



Rienzi was a Morgan Trotter—16 hands tall. Rienzi was presented to General Sheridan by the officers of the 2nd Michigan Calvary in 1862. Winchester was even present at Appomattox Courthouse in April 1865 for the official surrender of the Confederate Army. Despite being wounded in battle several times, Winchester lived to be almost 20 years old. He died October 1878.

**General Stonewall Jackson's mount was named Little Sorrel.** The horse was described as undersized and dumpy but was Jackson's favorite mount because he (Jackson) appreciated this chunky charger's toughness, smooth gait and intelligence. Little Sorrel was eleven years old when Jackson was mortally wounded at Chancellorsville.



Little Sorrel was a Morgan Trotter, known for their endurance as well as being quick and agile. He was 15 hands tall. Originally purchased for his wife, Jackson found the animal's gait so pleasing he remarked, "A seat on him is like being rocked in a cradle." He decided to keep the horse for himself.

The War Horses of both Generals Grant and Lee demand more complete descriptions. Both were magnificent animals, both survived years of combat. Both were revered by the public to the point where both appeared to have "bobbed tails" because civilians (mostly ladies) continually cut off small portions of the tails as souvenirs.

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*All About War Horses by Bruce Patterson, cont.*

**General Lee rode an American Saddlebred named Traveller.** Traveller was a gray gelding that Lee purchased in 1862 for \$200. Traveler stood 16 hands (64") and had been named Jeff Davis before Lee purchased him. Perfectly proportioned, it was said that he would inspire the poet and the artist. Traveller responded to every wish of his rider and seemed to understand the long night marches, the heat, hunger, thirst and danger through which he passed with Lee aboard. Traveller was to accompany Lee to Lexington and was to be Lee's favorite mount until he was put down, in 1871, after developing tetanus from stepping on a nail.



Traveller was a horse of great stamina and was usually a good horse in battle because he was difficult to frighten. Sometimes he became nervous and spirited. At the Second Battle of Bull Run, while General Lee was at the front reconnoitering, dismounted and holding Traveller by the bridle, the horse became frightened at some movement of the enemy and, plunging, pulled Lee down on a stump, breaking both of his hands. Lee went through the remainder of that campaign chiefly in an ambulance. When he rode on horseback, a courier rode in front leading his horse.

**General Grant's favorite mount was named Cincinnati,** aka Cincinnatus. Before the battle of Chattanooga, Grant rode several horses and seemed to not have a favorite. Following Chattanooga, he was given the gift of a Thoroughbred, a chestnut stallion that stood at 17 hands (68"). Cincinnati soon became Grant's favorite. Grant, an avid and skilled horseman, was heard to say that is he was "the finest horse he had ever seen". In quietude, this horse seemed gentle and spiritless but battle sounds stirred him with enthusiasm. Grant rode Cincinnati throughout the Overland Campaign and seldom allowed anyone else to ride him, the exception being President Lincoln, who rode Cincinnati daily during his (Lincoln's) visit to City Point. This magnificent horse was at Appomattox and finally died of old age on a farm of an old friend of Grant's in Maryland in 1878.



Many casts and statues of Grant depict him riding Cincinnati, and in fact very few others were allowed to even mount the famous horse. The only 2 people ever to ride Cincinnati other than Grant himself were a boyhood friend Admiral Daniel Ammen and President Abraham Lincoln.

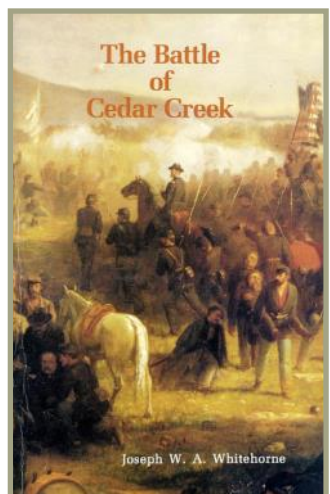
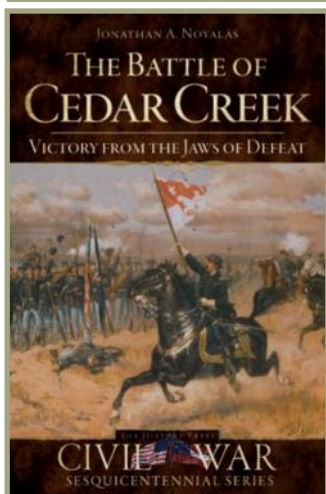
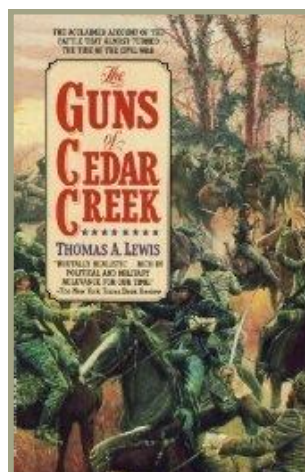
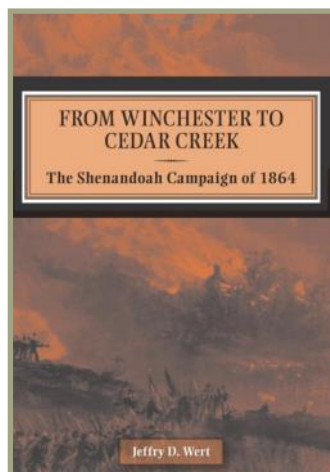
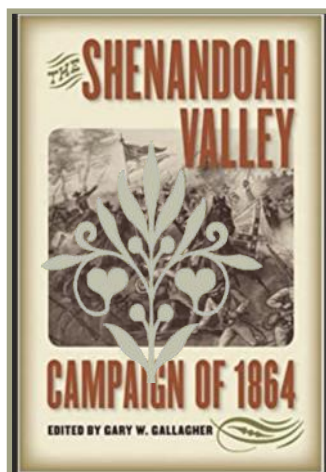
Three of these four mounts were either stuffed or "re-framed" and are viewed by tourists and historians at the Smithsonian (Winchester) and Lexington, VA (Traveller & Little Sorrel). Cincinnati was buried on that farm in Maryland. War horses all.

## *Battle of Cedar Creek*

The round table discussion on the Battle of Cedar Creek has been postponed until August 13th because of the Coronavirus pandemic. It's hoped that by August we will be able to hold the discussion in a seminar style, classroom arrangement rather than the auditorium style arrangement of the Harbor Church sanctuary.

The good news is that there's more time for you, our members, to read up on this fascinating battle in which either "victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat," or "defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory," depending on your perspective.

Here are a few books to give you some detail. **The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864**, edited by the renowned historian Gary W. Gallagher, is an excellent thematic overview of the context of the Battle of Cedar Creek and includes two very enlightening chapters on Cedar Creek itself. A very important chapter by Joseph T. Glatthaar looks at the campaign through the lens of General U.S. Grant's strategy. **From Winchester to Cedar Creek** by Jeffrey D. Wert is a more straightforward, chronological battle history that provides much useful information about the three Confederate defeats that occurred before the Battle of Cedar Creek. **The Guns of Cedar Creek** by Thomas A. Lewis is a battle history that focuses more on Cedar Creek. **The Battle of Cedar Creek** by Jonathan A. Noyalas is a more recent battle history prepared for the Civil War Sesquicentennial Series. A book I have found very useful is a self-guided tour of the battlefield by Col. Joseph W. A. Whitehorne, U.S. Army (ret.).



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## *Battle of Cedar Creek, cont.*

The powerful and fascinating personalities who guided and moved this dramatic battle are worth reading about either in their own memoirs, biographies or anthologized writings in books like **Battles and Leaders**. Their personalities are central to analysis of the battle. Union General Philip Sheridan, was an 1853 graduate of West Point from Ohio. An Irish Catholic, he was an under-sized and very aggressive leader who rose to the pinnacle of his profession as the commanding general of the U.S. Army in the 1880s. Grant sent Maj. Gen. Sheridan to the Shenandoah Valley as commander of the newly consolidated Middle Division of the Army. Known as the Army of the Shenandoah, Sheridan brought unified, focused command to a large, extremely powerful force of three infantry corps plus a provisional division and a superbly equipped cavalry corps of more than 8,000 men. He commanded a total force of about 31,600 effectives at Cedar Creek, including 1,856 artillerymen serving 90 guns, according to Col. Whitehorse.



General Gordon at Signal Knob reconnoitering the Union lines.

Much older than Sheridan, Lt. Gen. Jubal Early, graduated West Point in 1837. He was a Virginia native connected to many of the most prominent FFVs (First Families of Virginia). He left the Army after brief service in the Seminole War and then studied law and rose to political prominence in Virginia. He volunteered for the state militia in the War with Mexico but his unit arrived in Mexico too late to see combat. His aggressive style of leadership brought him to the attention of Robert E. Lee and he soon rose through the command structure as attrition removed leaders such as Thomas J. Jackson and Richard S. Ewell. By 1864, Lt. Gen. Early commanded the “Army of the Valley,” composed primarily of the redoubtable II Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Col. Whitehorse estimates his strength as approximately 21,000 at Cedar Creek including 5,300 cavalry and 1,100 artillerymen serving more than 40 guns. He notes, however, that some estimate Confederate strength as low as 12,780. The National Park Service estimates the size of the Army of the Valley as “14,000-15,000 men.”

Some other personalities are also of great interest and importance to the conduct of the battle. On the Confederate side, Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon of Georgia was crucial. Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright played an important role in Sheridan’s army but many other generals such as Crook, Geary, and Custer added to the complexity of the engagement. Col. Rutherford B. Hayes (yes, that Rutherford B. Hayes who later became president of the United States) commanded a brigade caught up in the initial surprise of the Confederate assault.



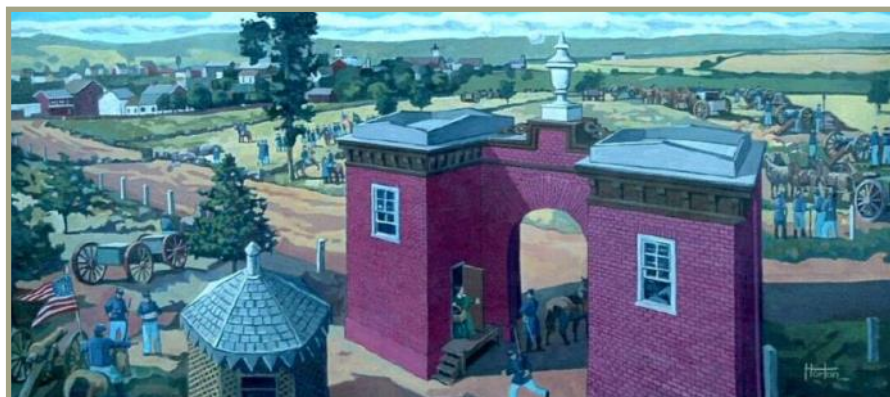
The weather also played a role in the battle. Typical of autumn in the Shenandoah Valley, the weather was generally dry with warm days and cool nights. However, the battlefield is enveloped by the Shenandoah River and Cedar Creek and overshadowed by the imposing land form of Masanutten Mountain. In the crucial hours around dawn on October 19, 1864, fog prevailed over much of the battlefield.

Contemporary photograph of the view of the Shenandoah Valley from Signal Knob. This is the view General Gordon would have seen.

### *Silent Auction*

The Round Table is running a silent auction with donated items such as books, prints, memorabilia, etc. to raise money specifically to help fund the travel costs of our speakers.

A great example of the items being offered is a print by Jim Horton, a member of our round table. Jim is an outstanding artist who specializes in historical subjects and exhibits locally often. The item is a limited edition 24" by 10" giclée print of the Gate at Cemetery Hill in Gettysburg signed by the artist. Contact Ed Gibson to put in your bid.



### *Online Civil War Presentations*

#### **The History Channel - Civil War**

As the [Civil War](#) rages on, the formidable Confederate army cannot match the Union's mastery of technology; railroads, supply lines and the telegram become new weapons in a modern war. A 44-minute video about the Union's mastery of technology.

#### **Central Virginia Battlefield Trust - At Ease**

At the beginning of April 2020, they launched a new, interactive program called "[At Ease](#)." It is free to join. You'll get a weekly email on Thursday with a one-question survey about a historical topic, the results and fun facts related to the previous week's survey discussion, and a short video with some history, battlefield views, or other surprises.

#### **Civil War Round Table Congress**

Free online lecture series. All lectures start at 7:00 EDT. Registration is required. Donations accepted.

June 8th - Interview with Savas Beatie with **Ted Savas**

June 9th - Raising the White Flag with **David Silkenat**

June 11th - The Battle of Drewry's Bluff with **John V. Quarstein**

June 15th - Longstreet's East Tennessee Campaign with **Ed Lowe**

June 16th - The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant with **Paul Kahan**

June 18th - The Tale Untwisted: George McClellan and the Discovery of Lee's Lost Orders with **Gene Thorp**

## *J. Ryder Lewis Civil War Park - Sugar Loaf Earthworks*

We, Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, are funding one of the interpretive panels for the Sugar Loaf Earthworks preservation in J. Ryder Lewis Civil War Park. The panel will include our logo and give credit to The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. Please consider making a donation to the round table to help offset the cost of this project. Thanks.

## *Member News*

### ***CFCWRT Upcoming Events***

**July 9, 2020**                      ***Members Forum*** Jim Gannon (Moderator)

#### **David Jordan - To Play the Star-Spangled Banner**

- ◆ CFCWRT member David is our Round Table's Drummer Boy.

#### **JoAnna McDonald - "Be not afraid" Panic, cowardice and courage among Civil War soldiers**

- ◆ JoAnna M. McDonald, Ph.D., is a historian, writer, blogger and public speaker. She is featured on the Emerging Civil War web site and the author of eleven books on the Civil War and WWII, as well as numerous journal and newsletter articles regarding U.S. Marine Corps history. JoAnna's next book is *R. E. Lee's Grand Strategy & Strategic Leadership: Caught in a Paradoxical Paradigm*.

#### **Jim Horton - "Forgotten Soldier" - My discovery of a civil war ancestor and his regiments, and my search to find him.**

- ◆ Jim Horton is a professional artist who paints Civil War, as well as other, themes. Jim was a member of the Pittsburgh, Pa. Civil War Round table before moving to Wilmington.

#### **Tom Christianson - "Firepower and Mobility" The impact of mounted infantry with repeating rifles at Chickamauga**

- ◆ Lt. Col. Tom Christianson, U. S. A. (Retired) taught history at West Point and at the Army Command and General Staff College. He has participated in the "staff rides" for military leadership classes studying the battles and battlefields of the Civil War.

#### **Lance Bevins - Infantry Brigades and Regiments of the Army of Northern Virginia: July 1-3 1863**

- ◆ Lance Bevins is a 1963 graduate of VMI and retired Major of Marines. Lance has spent the greater part of his life in NC and lived in Wilmington since 1983.

**August 13, 2020**                      ***Battle of Cedar Creek*** Bill Jayne (Moderator)

**September 10, 2020**                      ***Dwight Hughes*** (Author): CSS Shenandoah



## *Civil War Organizations*

### [Civil War Round Table Congress:](#)

The mission of the CWRT Congress is to provide new and existing Civil War Round Tables with time-tested tools to help them expand their membership, reduce operating costs, have effective governance structures, develop meaningful partnerships and raise sufficient funds for quality programs and historic preservation. These elements should assist CWRTs to become sustainable organizations and to avoid actions that could damage their integrity, effectiveness and efficiency.

## *Sponsors*



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THE RUNNER is the official monthly newsletter of the CFCWRT.

If you have member news or news about Civil War events that you think would be of interest to the CFCWRT membership, send an email with the details to the editor, [Sherry Hewitt](#). Thank you.

**The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table is a non-profit organization made up of men and women who have a common interest in the history of the Civil War. The meetings include a speaker each month covering some aspect of the Civil War. This serves our purpose of encouraging education and research into that historical conflict.**

Click here for membership information: [Membership Application](#)

## *Steering Committee—Officers*

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