



## *John Winecoff - Civil War Reenacting*

John Winecoff will present a program on Civil War reenacting at the next meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, Thursday, October 10 at 6:30 p.m. John is president of the Wilmington Chapter of the North Carolina



*John Winecoff (right)*

Military Historical Society and a member of the Steering Committee of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. John served in the Army for 20 years; 3 in the Regular Army, 17 in the NC Army National Guard. He was a Wilmington Police Officer for 30 years, the last 12.5 as a Mounted teamed with his mount, Jubal Early. John was an original member of the WPD mounted unit.

Becoming interested in the Civil War since an early age, he became a reenactor with the Cape Fear Living History Society in 1983. He has reenacted infantry, cavalry, and artillery soldiers in both the Union and Confederate armies. He has also reenacted Generals Alfred Terry and John Schofield in the Union Army. He

*(Continued on page 2)*

## *John R. Scales - Nathan Bedford Forrest*



*John R. Scales addressing the CFCWRT*

John Scales presented us with an interesting evening of General Nathan Bedford Forrest' wartime activities and how his actions affected the war in the Western Theater.

### **NEXT PRESENTATION**

- ◆ Thursday, Oct. 10th
- ◆ **John Winecoff - Civil War Reenacting**
- ◆ 6:30 Social 7:00 Meeting
- ◆ Harbor UMC  
4853 Masonboro Loop  
Wilmington



### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

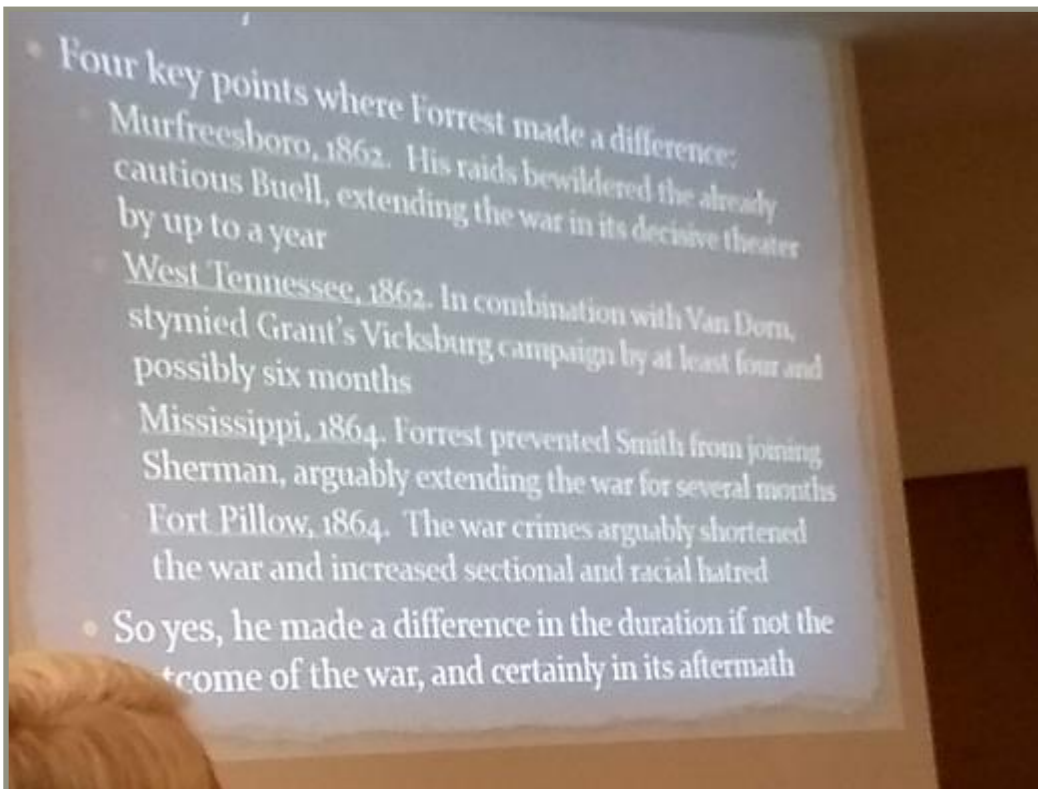
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## *John Winecoff - Civil War Reenacting, cont.*

was able to participate in several 125th anniversaries to include the First Manassas, Shiloh, Cedar Mountain, Gettysburg, Atlanta, and Bentonville. During this time he has acquired many uniforms and equipment. He will display and explain several different uniforms from both armies as well as weapons and accouterments.

This will be an informative and enjoyable learning experience. Don't miss it!

## *John R. Scales - Nathan Bedford Forrest, cont.*



*John Scales - sharing a humorous analogy*



*John Scales & Bruce Patterson, CFCWRT Secy.*



*John Scales signing his book for Bill Hewitt*

## *Secrets of Oakdale Cemetery by Bob Cooke*

### **William Murdoch Parsley (F-3)**

Born in Wilmington in 1840, he enlisted in April 1861 in the 3rd NC and was elected Captain of Co. F. His company was outfitted by his father, Oscar, and William, not yet 21, couldn't sign the contract for the company's equipment. Serving in Jackson's Corps, he fought in the Seven Days Battles in June of 1862 and was wounded at Malvern Hill on July 1, 1862 as Lee sought to prevent the escape of McClellan's Union army. A **Minié** ball entered just below Parsley's left ear and exited at the center of the back of his neck.

Sent home to recover, he married Eliza Nutt and returned to the regiment in September 1862. Upon his return he was promoted to Major, then to Lt. Colonel just before the battle of Chancellorsville. He then fought through the battles of Winchester and at Jordan Springs, was slightly wounded two times, once when a ball hit his coat button and glanced off.

Once again on furlough, he brought home the regimental flag which had been shot to pieces. Unable to repair it, a new one was made and *the old one was passed down and wound up in the collections of the Cape Fear Museum!*

When the 3rd's commander, Col. Thurston was wounded, Parsley assumed command until captured at Spotsylvania's "Bloody Angle". Placed in the Confederate line of fire at Hilton Head, he remained a POW until exchanged in August. Returning to his regiment, the unit remained in the trenches at Petersburg until April 1865. Colonel Parsley was killed on the retreat to Appomattox 3 days before the surrender of Lee's army.

His comrades in arms, Captain John Cowan and Captain James I. Metts, both of the Third North Carolina, would write of him:

"Who ever knew Willie Parsley, that did not love him? We write not the empty words of the mere panegyrist; we speak the words of candid soberness and truth. He so impressed all with whom he came in contact that no one who ever met him ever forgot him. He was the soul of honor. Without fear, he was without reproach."



## Upcoming Events

### October 4-5 - [Shenandoah 1864](#)

Living historians come together to hold a landmark reenactment to commemorate the 155th anniversary of two of the most important battles fought in the Valley - Third Winchester and Fisher's Hill.

### October 12th - [Lecture with Angela Zombek: Civil War Military Prisons](#)

Lecture with Angela Zombek at Federal Point History Center in Carolina Beach features the UNCW history professor talking about her book, *Penitentiaries, Punishment, and Military Prisons*, which includes the notorious Andersonville, and one located in Salisbury, NC.

## Wreaths Across America

The Round Table effort to join the community campaign to decorate the graves in our Wilmington National Cemetery (WNC) gets in gear at our October meeting.

With a modest goal of 60 wreaths (Civil War Round Table partnered with NC Military Historical Society) we can meet that goal in one evening.

Wreaths cost \$15 each and are shipped from Maine in time to arrive Wilmington by Saturday, 14 December. A Community-wide service will be held at WNC at noon on the 14th. Round Table members are invited to join in the community wreath laying.

Please make checks payable, in \$15 increments, to CFCWRT, memo line WAA (or wreaths) and join this community effort.



## *CFCWRT Upcoming events*

### **November 14th:**

*Jan Croon* - The War Outside My Window, The Civil War Diaries of LeRoy Wiley Gresham, 1860-1865

### **December 12th:**

*Lori Sandlin*, Mgr. Southport Maritime Museum - Finding Post-War Confederate Sailor, Captain H. S. Leppy, Blockade Runner and Privateer

NOTE: Our December meeting will be at the Cape Fear Museum.

## *Raffle Winners*

### **September Raffle Winners**



Ordeal by Fire - Mike McDonald

The Confederate Nation - Byron Hovey

Rock of Chickamauga - Jim Horton

Civil War Sourcebook - David Jordan

1400 Days and Generals South/Generals North - Sherry Hewitt

Illustrated History of the Civil War - Joe Steyer

If you have books, prints, or other items that you would like to donate to the raffle, contact Raffle Master [Ed Gibson](#) before our next meeting. The raffle is one of the components which the CFCWRT uses to fund our activities and our speakers. Please take part in our raffle by contributing items and/or purchasing tickets.



## *Escape from Libby Prison: The Largest Successful Prison Break in the Civil War*

On February 9, 1864, more than 100 Union prisoners tunneled their way to freedom in an audacious escape from Libby Prison in the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. More than half of the prisoners made their way to Union lines while others were recaptured and returned to the confines of Libby.

Libby Prison started as an old food warehouse on Tobacco Row along the James River. Captain Luther Libby, along with his son George W. Libby, leased the three-story brick building where they operated a ship chandlery and grocery business. In 1862, the Confederacy took over the building and turned it into a prison for Union officers. Colonel Thomas E. Rose, a Union officer from the 77th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, was captured during the Battle of Chickamauga and taken to Libby Prison. He found conditions appalling and immediately started plotting his escape. He devised an ambitious plan to dig a tunnel from the cellar of the prison to a tobacco shed that stood just outside the prison walls.



LIBBY PRISON

Rose revealed his plan to a few trusted accomplices and planning got underway. Life inside Libby Prison was miserable. Prisoners were held on the second and third floors of the building. Windows were barred but open, leaving inmates freezing in the winter and insufferably hot in summer. Overcrowding created constant stress and resulted in food shortages. The lack of sanitation led to disease and death. One father whose son was held at Libby prison desperately sought to have supplies delivered to the prison. He wrote, "He has been confined during the whole summer without a change of clothing...and is in a very destitute condition." Desperate for relief, it was not difficult for Rose to find prisoners willing to help with his plot.

Outside of Libby was a canal, and during wet weather, the prison's cellar flooded bringing hundreds of rats scurrying into the building. The putrid air in the cellar kept everyone away and helped it earn the nickname, Rat's Hell. The area was largely avoided by Confederate guards and provided Rose and his associates the perfect place to dig undetected.

Rose accessed Rat's Hell by removing bricks behind an old kitchen stove. He then shimmed down a chimney to the cellar. From there, Rose and his team scraped away at the hard dirt using crude makeshift tools. Much of the digging took place at night in the dark when the exterior was heavily guarded, but conditions inside the prison were somewhat relaxed.

Loads of earth were removed one bucket at a time, by packing an old spittoon with excavated dirt. The vermin-infested cellar, the rats, and the lack of oxygen made the work excruciating.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## THE RUNNER

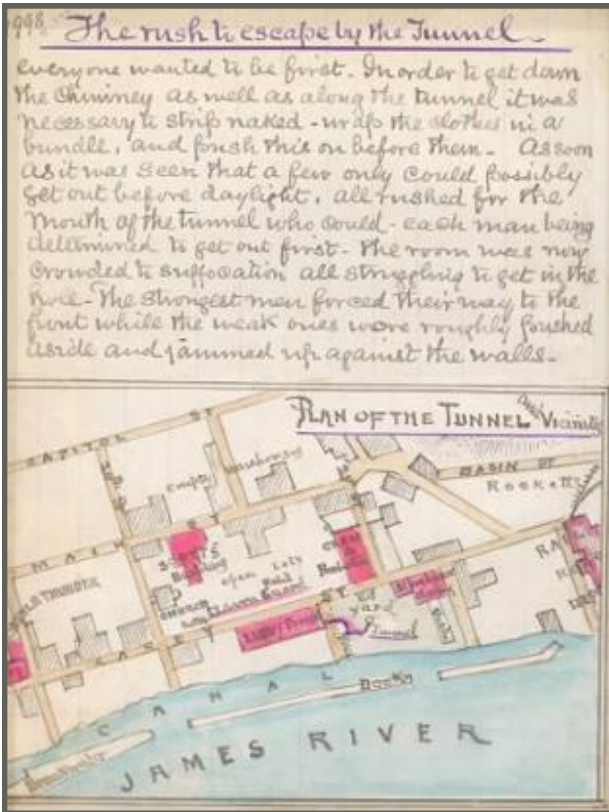
### *Escape from Libby Prison: The Largest Successful Prison Break of the Civil War, cont.*

At one point, after digging a tunnel nearly 60 feet long, the prisoners broke through the surface to find they were off by several feet. Hearing the voices of Confederate guards, the prisoners quickly hid the tunnel and readjusted the approach to the shed.

After weeks of digging, the prisoners managed to clear a tunnel that surfaced in the tobacco shed. One prisoner described the escape, “Everyone wanted to be first. In order to get down the chimney as well as long the tunnel, it was necessary to strip naked – wrap the clothes in a bundle, and push this on before them. As soon as it was seen that only a few could possibly get out before daylight, all rushed for the mouth of the tunnel who could – each man being determined to get out first. The room was now crowded to suffocation all struggling to get in the hole. The strongest men forced their way to the front while the weak ones were more roughly brushed aside and jammed up against the walls.”

The next morning at roll call, Confederate guards were shocked to find 109 prisoners missing, their escape route concealed by the remaining inmates. Of those 109 prisoners that escaped, 59 eventually reached Union lines, 48 were recaptured and two drowned in a river crossing.

*Jenny Ashcraft, Author, The Official Blog of Fold3, Sept. 9, 2019*



### *This Day in Civil War History - October 13, 1864*

Following the fall of Atlanta, Hood moved the Confederate army north toward Chattanooga, threatening Sherman’s supply line. On October 13, Hood seized Tunnel Hill including Dalton and Tilton, Ga. There was considerable skirmishing but Sherman’s main force stayed in Atlanta preparing to abandon his supply line and move cross country to Savannah. In Virginia Early’s Confederates were back on their old line at Fisher’s Hill while Sheridan was at nearby Cedar Creek. A skirmish along Cedar Creek resulted from Confederate probing. In the West action near Mullahla’s Stations, NE; on Elm Creek, TX; and a week of scouting in the Sacramento Mountains, NM Territory, pitted Federals against Indians. Federal troops operated until the 18th from Pine Bluff to Arkansas Post, AR.

Ranger Mosby and his men took up a section of the B & O rail tracks near Kearneysville, west of Harper’s Ferry. They wrecked a passenger train, seized \$173,000 - largely from two army paymasters, and then burned the train.

President Lincoln, still worried about the election despite the recent victories, made an estimate of the electoral vote, giving the “Supposed Copperhead Vote” 114 electoral votes, the “Union Vote” 120. He also was trying to see that as many soldiers as possible got home to vote, figuring he had strong support in the Army.

E.B. Long & Barbara Long. *The Civil War Day by Day - An Almanac 1861-1864* Doubleday 1971

*Civil War Reenactments Were a Thing Even During the Civil War*

Thousands of people participate in Civil War reenactments each year in the United States. They're sharing a tradition of reenactment that stretches back to the years of the war itself.

To herald Christmas 1861, a year when more than 4,000 fighting men had been killed in Civil War battles and the Union was in disarray, groups of citizens got together to fight mock battles simulating the conflicts raging on battlefields elsewhere. Writes Sue Eisenfeld for *The New York Times*, "We tend to think of Civil War reenactment as a modern phenomenon, a way for people in the 20th and 21st centuries to experience a taste of what the conflict was like. But in fact, staged battles began while the war was still underway. Known as 'sham battles,' 'mock battles' or 'mimic battles,' these battles were enacted for a variety of reasons: entertainment, practice, and to demonstrate to civilians back home what happened during the war."

Shams were especially popular during the holidays for entertainment, and they were mostly confined to the North. On December 5, 1861, the *Daily Nashville Patriot* published an article noting "the Yankees are great on shams," she writes. But they were also intended to accustom new soldiers to the pace of the battlefield and help them imagine themselves as fighters, rather than farmers, she writes: "Some places, like Fort Monroe, a Union outpost in Virginia, conducted sham battles daily."

As the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* records, Civil War reenacting was part of a longer tradition of shams fought with blank ammunition by American militias. Before the Civil War, town festivals often featured a pageant with costumed citizens dressing as Revolutionary War figures.

Directly after the war ended, Eisenfeld writes, veterans were commissioned to serve as reenactors of a conflict they themselves had fought in. "On April 21, 1865, the town of Massillon, Ohio, was right back into the business of luring crowds with sham battles as part of a day-long 'jubilation over the recent victory of the Federal armies and the surrender of Lee.'" The pageantry and drama of mock warfare offered great entertainment, even when the consequences of the real thing were so bloody.

Later, when public interest in the war revived in the 1880s, the tradition of the sham battle was revived, and many sham battles were conducted purely as entertainment, the *Encyclopedia* writes. "Although these sham battles were usually not attempts to re-create specific Civil War battles, they were conducted with strong undertones of both sectional pride and national unity."

The idea of reenacting stuck around, but modern Civil War reenactment was truly born in the early 1960s around the time of the war's centennial. The first big reenactment, of the First Battle of Bull Run, also known as First Manassas, took place on July 21-22, 1961.

By Kat Eschner, Author, *Smithsonian.com*





## *New York 115th Infantry Regiment - The Iron Hearted Regiment*

Under the command of Colonel Simeon Sammons, and composed of tough upstaters from the Mohawk Valley and its environs, the regiment was mustered into the service of the United States for three years on August 26, 1862. However, the regiment suffered an ignominious initiation into military service. During the Antietam campaign, and barely two weeks after its August 30, 1862 departure from New York, the regiment was stationed at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. When the town was surrounded by the Confederate Army, it surrendered, along with the remainder of the 12,000 Union garrison.

In December 1863, the regiment was transferred to Barton's Brigade for General Seymour's Florida Expedition. The regiment was anxious to prove itself in battle, and erase the blemish of the Harpers Ferry debacle. The 115th performed well at Olustee, but 296 New Yorkers were killed and wounded during the battle with nearly all the color-guard being shot down.

During the Florida campaign, Pvt. Benjamin Thackrah of Company H, originally born in Scotland, received the Medal of Honor for actions in April 1864, near Fort Gates, Florida. His citation reads:



Private Benjamin Thackrah

"On the morning of April 1, 1864, Private Benjamin Thackrah volunteered to join a party of twenty-five soldiers for an expedition up the river at Fort Gates, Florida, in search of a small enemy picket guard. On reaching the shore in a boat, the party proceeded through the swamps to locate and surround a small house believed to hold the picket guard. The twenty-five volunteers entered the house, surprising the enemy and quickly capturing the entire picket with its arms, horses, and supplies, and then returned through the swamps with their prisoners and placed them on a Union tug boat. For his heroism in this dangerous expedition, Private Thackrah was awarded the Medal of Honor."

The 115th was transferred to the newly formed 24th corps, in Ames' (2nd) division, with which it was ordered to North Carolina. It participated in the capture of Fort Fisher, fighting with Bell's (3rd) brigade, and sustaining a considerable part of its loss there by the explosion of the magazine the day after the fort was taken. Ten men lost their lives in that explosion. Subsequently it was present at Cape Fear, Fort Anderson, and Wilmington, and closed its active service in the campaign of the Carolinas. It was mustered out at Raleigh, NC, under Col. Johnson, June 17, 1865. Out of a total enrollment of 1,196, it lost 7 officers and 132 men; 191 men died of disease and other causes—total deaths, 330. The gallant 115th deserves its place among the three hundred fighting regiments of the war, accorded it by Col. Fox.

Do you have a favorite regimental nickname? Conversely, what was the nickname of your favorite regiment? **Submit your nominations** to the *Runner* Editor.

Further reading - full text for this book is available online thru this link:

[The Iron Hearted Regiment: An Account of the Battles, Marches and Gallant Deeds Performed by the 115th Regiment N Y VOLS.](#)

By James H. Clark, Late First Lieutenant, Company H, 115TH NY Volunteers

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## CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

YOU CAN FIND US ON THE WEB! [CFCWRT.ORG](http://CFCWRT.ORG)

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK: [CFCWRT](https://www.facebook.com/CFCWRT)

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### *Links*

[Wikipedia - American Civil War Portal](#) contains a variety of topics but is also in need of additional information, referencing, citations, supporting material, etc. If you are interested in sharing your knowledge or time, visit the [Task Force](#) link to see what you can do.

[Civil War Reenactment Events](#) 2019-2020 schedule of events and solicitations for enactors.

[University of Georgia](#) This library collection includes a variety of important documents and artifacts from the American Civil War.

[Civil War Librarian](#) The Civil War Librarian blog helps Civil War enthusiasts and academics stay current on Civil War news. The author is a Professor at Waynesburg University, Director of Eberly Library, and an adjunct instructor in US history.

### *Sponsor*



THE RUNNER is the official newsletter of the CFCWRT and is published monthly.

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.

### *Steering Committee—Officers*

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CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
PO Box 15750  
Wilmington, NC 28408

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](#)