



APRIL 2021

# THE RUNNER



VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4



## *April Presentation on Blockade Running*

Our April presentation will be “*Lifeline of the Confederacy*” by Stephen R. Wise, the recognized expert on blockade running in the Civil War.

Stephen R. Wise is the director of the Parris Island Museum and the Cultural Resources Manager for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, S.C. A native of Toledo, Ohio, he received his bachelor’s degree from Wittenberg University, his master’s from Bowling Green State University and his doctorate in history from the University of South Carolina at Columbia. In addition to his duties aboard MCRD Parris Island, he is also an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina at Beaufort.



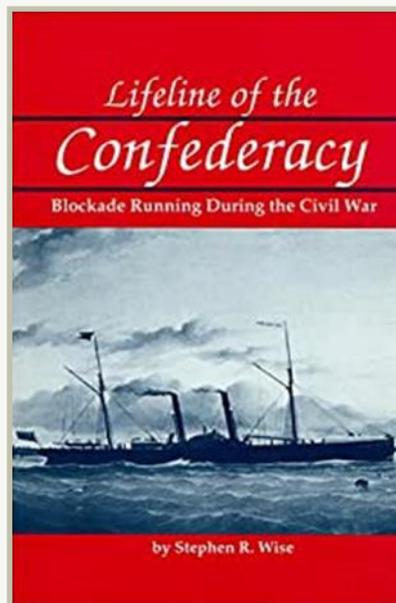
**Stephen R. Wise**

He is the author of *Gate of Hell: Campaign for Charleston Harbor 1863*, and *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War*. Both scholarly books were published by the University of South Carolina press.

The “Journal of Southern History” wrote of *Lifeline* that “No previous work has offered a comprehensive and analytical look at this topic until now.” The History Book Club said “no overall and encompassing work on this exciting episode in Civil War history has come forth until now.”

Wilmington became the last and most vital link in the supply line that brought ordnance, medical supplies, manufactured war materiel and other necessary items to the Confederate war effort, most notably the Army of Northern Virginia. If you ever had any questions about blockade running, this is your opportunity to learn from the expert.

Tune in on Zoom at 7 p.m. on April 10 to hear Steve Wise on “The Lifeline of the Confederacy.”



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### *Biographer of Lincoln's Cabinet Members to Preview Newest Book on Salmon Chase*



**Walter Stahr**

Volumes have been written about Abraham Lincoln's conduct of the Civil War and all of them, to some degree, attempt to analyze the potentially explosive mixture of personalities, personal histories, political leanings, ambition and abilities that comprised his cabinet. Cabinet members were the tools Lincoln worked with on the political front, and they were powerful but dangerous, prone to detonate if not handled properly.

Most of those volumes, however, fail to analyze the men of that "Team of Rivals" in full and satisfactory detail. Walter Stahr is in the process of remedying that situation. His 2012 biography of William Henry Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, tells an illuminating American story of "Lincoln's Indispensable Man" (the subtitle of Stahr's biography).

Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning *Team of Rivals*, says, "This magnificent biography finally provides what William Henry Seward so justly deserves—a full, terrific and complex portrait of his endlessly fascinating life."

Five years later, suggesting the care and scholarly rigor with which Stahr writes, he published *Stanton: Lincoln's War Secretary*.

Amanda Foreman, author of *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War*, wrote: "Walter Stahr's *Stanton* offers a masterly account of one of the great characters of the Civil War. The Secretary of War from 1862-1865 was irascible, autocratic, and vengeful, but also steadfast, punctilious, and practical. This fascinating biography reveals how such a complex and unlikely figure came to play such a vital role at the country's hour of peril."

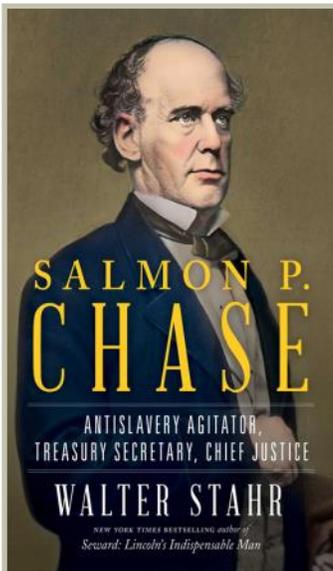
And now, soon to be published, comes, *Salmon P. Chase: Antislavery Agitator, Treasury Secretary, Chief Justice*. Salmon Chase was among the most influential Americans of his century. Chase was governor of Ohio, an outspoken U.S. senator, and nationally renowned defense attorney for fugitives escaping slavery. He played a key role in the establishment of the Republican Party. Without Chase's groundwork, Lincoln could never have been elected president in 1860, states Stahr's publisher, Simon and Schuster.

Tapped by Lincoln as his Secretary of the Treasury, Chase not only brilliantly funded the Civil War effort—marketing bonds directly to the public when northern banks balked—but also modernized the country's financial institutions, pushing legislation through Congress to create the first national bank and a single national currency. Once considered a rival for the presidency in 1864, he would soon find himself appointed by Lincoln to lead the Supreme Court, where he continued his advocacy for black rights during the first decade of Reconstruction.

"Drawing on previously overlooked sources, Walter Stahr sheds new light on this complex and fascinating political figure, as well as on the pivotal events of the Civil War and its aftermath. *Salmon P. Chase* tells the story of a man at the center of the fight for racial justice in America," the publisher writes.

Walter Stahr was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1957, grew up in Arcadia, California, and went away for high school, to the Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. Then it was back west, to Stanford University, then back east, to Harvard, where he studied law and public policy.

After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1982, Stahr worked in international law for several years, including a posting to Hong Kong. He then spent time working in the Securi-



## *Biographer of Lincoln's Cabinet Members to Preview Newest Book on Salmon Chase, cont.*

ties and Exchange Commission before returning to international law on behalf of investment companies.

In 2008, he and his family, including two children, moved to Exeter, New Hampshire, where he began working on his Civil War biographies while his wife taught mathematics. In 2014 they once again moved to southern California, and we are lucky to be able to bring Walter Stahr to our audience via Zoom.

Walter Stahr is a very accomplished and entertaining speaker, as you can see from the videos posted on his [website](#).

I've read both his biographies on Seward and Stanton and I look forward to reading Chase.

Join us on the evening of **May 13** for a Zoom presentation by Walter Stahr on "Chase and Lincoln."

## *The Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign ~ An Overlooked Aspect of the Battle*

A dedicated audience of Cape Fear Civil War Round Table members and friends tuned in to Zoom on Thursday evening, March, 11, to hear Brad Gottfried discuss the "Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign." Thanks to Ed Gibson, the presentation went off flawlessly. The bad news is that we are still prevented from meeting in person as we normally do, but the good news is that we're mastering the virtual technology.

Brad moved quickly and surely through the long, difficult and complex campaign that saw the Confederate cavalry of J.E.B. Stuart face off against the Union cavalry of Alfred Pleasanton. From Brandy Station on June 9, 1863, the largest cavalry battle ever fought in North America, to Falling Waters on July 14, 1863—the denouement of the Gettysburg campaign—we followed the campaign in a series of dozens of maps that added immeasurably to understanding the complexity of the campaign.

The presentation was based on Dr. Gottfried's latest in his series of atlases, *The Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign*. For information about the book, check out the [publisher's page](#).

Or, go to [Brad Gottfried's website](#) and order it directly from the author. Let him know that you learned about the book through our round table, and you'll get an autographed copy.

Brad's presentation ended with an in-depth discussion of the battles around Falling Waters as Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, encumbered with huge wagon trains, thousands of wounded, and depleted regiments, barely eluded destruction as the Union cavalry moved to pin them against the high waters of the Potomac. A lively Q&A followed.



**Brad Gottfried**



## *Joannes Wyllie of the Steamer Ad-Vance ~ by John F. Messner*

A Scottish blockade runner of the American Civil War

- ◆ The untold story of Joannes Wyllie, son of a gardener of Fife, one of the most successful blockade runners of the Civil War
- ◆ Features his life of adventure and action; he was once declared dead, survived shipwrecks and shark attack, and successfully commanded ships across the globe
- ◆ The most comprehensive history of the Ad-Vance is provided, from departing Glasgow until capture off the Carolina coast
- ◆ Outlines the impact of the Civil War on Scottish mariners, ship-building and ship owners

*In association with Glasgow Museums*

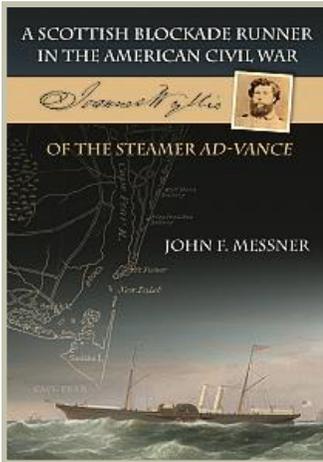
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Order in the US from NBN Books, [www.nbnbooks.com](http://www.nbnbooks.com) ~ available in the US in August 2021

Born in 1828 near Kelso in the Scottish Borders, Wyllie went to sea as an apprentice seaman in 1852 and quickly rose through the ranks. By 1862 he had gained his masters certificate in Liverpool, and there he took command of his first vessel, the Bonita. He sailed for Nassau, then a booming port involved in running contraband through the Union blockade of the Confederate States, at that time fighting in the American Civil War. Sailors from Britain rushed to man these vessels as great fortunes could be made if a successful run was made into a Confederate port.

Two agents of the State of North Carolina, Thomas Crossan and John White, were travelling to Britain on the orders of Governor Zebulon Vance to purchase ships to run the blockade. This set Wyllie's career as a blockade runner on course. White and Crossan arranged the purchase of the Clyde-built paddle steamer Lord Clyde and, just five months after docking in Liverpool as commander of the Bonita, Wyllie took command of the Lord Clyde, renamed the Ad-Vance.

Two more commands of blockade runners followed; he was captured again and then evaded the American authorities through an ingenious, and at sometimes unbelievable, escape to Scotland. The role that Wyllie played during the Civil War is explored in depth and reveals that he was a constant face, and force, in the crew of the steamer with his actions and abilities being greatly appreciated by both crew and owners alike.

The most comprehensive history of the Ad-Vance is provided, from the day she left Glasgow until her capture off the Carolina coast. Many fascinating contemporary passenger diaries, personal recollections from crew, letters and telegrams between Wyllie and Governor Vance, official records of the war and newspaper reports are included.



*Park Day at Fort Fisher State Historic Site*

**When:** Saturday, April 10th at 8:30am

**Where:** 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd South  
Kure Beach, NC

For more info contact: [John Moseley](#)



**Event Details**

Meeting Place

Visitor Center parking lot

Planned Activities

This year’s activities focus on painting the numerous artillery guns and carriages around the site. Groups will be needed to assist in cleaning brush, leaves, and debris from various locations on-site; picking up trash, weeding, and trimming bushes in front of the Visitor’s Center; and placing cedar chips around the Museum’s Walk of Honor.

Planned Low-Impact Activities

Cleaning exhibit cases

History or Educational Activities

Tour of the site and a musket demonstration

Should I bring any tools or supplies?

Work gloves, sunscreen, insect repellent, and a rake (If you have one).

No rain date.

*Online Presentations*

**CWRT Congress - [All sessions start at 7pm Eastern](#)**

April 7th - Gene Salecker: Disaster on the Mississippi

April 14th - Robert Girardi: The Murder of “Bull” Nelson

April 21st - Lisa Samia - Nameless & Faceless Women of the Civil War

April 28th - Robert E May - Southern Jews, Slavery’s Expansion South & the Coming Civil War



***Arming the Confederacy: Virginia's Mineral Contributions to the Confederate War Effort***  
by Robert C. Whisonant



The American Civil War is often seen as the first truly industrialized total war, one that consumed enormous amounts of human and material resources. But the two opponents were not evenly matched; the North had a preponderant share of raw materials, manufacturing ability, and population. On the eve of battle in April 1861, most of the mines, forges, and foundries in America were located in Union states. Some 90 per cent of the manufacturing capacity resided there—their factories made 97 per cent of the firearms, 94 per cent of the cloth, 93 per cent of the pig iron, and over 90 per cent of the boots and shoes. The disparity in the capability to make items necessary to the conduct of hostilities rested primarily on the North's possession of more mineral riches, most particularly iron and coal, the foundation of heavy industry.

Within the Confederacy, Virginia had long been the foremost mineral producer. The greatest concentration of this natural wealth lay in the mountainous southwestern quarter of the state where large deposits of saltpeter, lead, salt, iron, and coal had been exploited for over a century. In addition, mines in the region yielded some copper, zinc, gold, and silver from time to time. To be sure, other parts of the South had mineral resources, notably Alabama with important iron and coal operations; none, however, rivaled the richness and variety of the troves in Southwest Virginia. This did not go unnoticed by Federal strategists intent on bringing down the Confederate war machine.

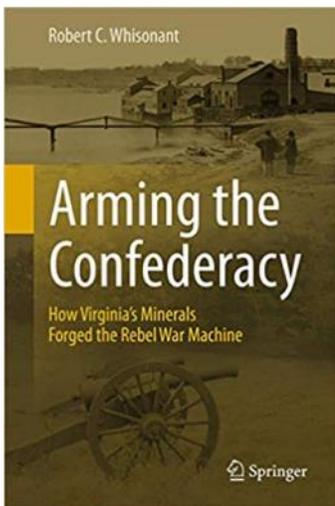
### Part I ~ Saltpeter

One of the natural resources most crucial to waging war in the Civil War era was an organic substance called saltpeter, known more commonly to the Confederates as niter. Potassium nitrate refined from niter provided the explosive power in the black gunpowder then used by the world's armies and navies. Each powder grain had 75 per cent nitrate, 15 per cent charcoal, and 10 per cent sulfur. Niter had been mined in the United States since the earliest days of settlement, yet by 1860 most was imported, owing to decreased need in the long antebellum years of peace. The Confederacy continued to import saltpeter and gunpowder throughout the struggle, but the ever-tightening Union blockade of Southern ports soon proved the need for a stable home-grown niter and powder industry.

Once the opening shots thundered at Fort Sumter, the South acted quickly to ensure a steady supply of niter for the new powder mills being built. In April 1862, the Richmond government passed legislation to establish a Niter Corps within the Ordnance Department. A year later the government made the Niter Corps an independent agency and renamed it the Niter and Mining Bureau. This action enlarged the Bureau's staff while handing it the responsibility for acquiring not just nitrates but also iron, copper, lead, coal, and zinc. An extremely able manager, Colonel Isaac Munroe St. John, headed the Bureau for the war's duration. Despite increasing labor shortages and Federal capture of geographic areas harboring the saltpeter resources, St. John managed to expand niter production almost to the end of fighting.

The South had three domestic niter sources: cave sediments, the most plentiful; "dirt" under old buildings such as outhouses, barns, and stables; and nitriaries, or artificial niter beds. Caverns in the limestone belts of the Appalachian Mountains held immense volumes of high quality niter. This saltpeter is not primarily due to bat guano, as is commonly believed, but in fact occurs when underground waters dissolve nitrate in deciduous forest soils, then carry it into caverns where the nitrate precipitates in the cave sediments. The conditions of soil, wa-

(Continued on page 7)



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ter, and temperature necessary to generate the resource are best developed in the southeastern United States. Consequently, the mountain states of the old Confederacy had most of the niter caves in North America, from which excellent gunpowder, as good as any that could be imported, was derived.

To make that powder, impurities had to be removed from the raw niter. The first steps usually took place at the extraction site where workmen placed the saltpeter in tubs or barrels, then mixed it with water and potassium salts obtained by soaking wood ashes. Next came boiling in cast iron kettles until the crystals of potassium nitrate appeared. The ultimate destination of this crudely processed niter was the gunpowder mill where further refining by washing and boiling took place. Mill workers added sulfur and charcoal to the enriched nitrate, making the resultant compound highly explosive. Final processing dampened the mixture and pressed it into solid cakes. Vibrating wire screens separated the grains into different sizes – smaller ones for muskets and pistols and bigger ones for cannon.

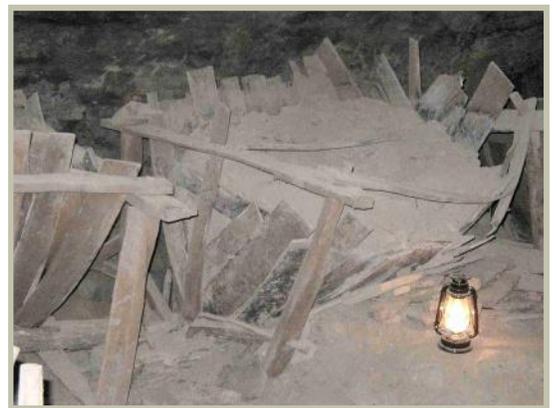
Early in the war, nitrieries composed of a variety of human, animal, and vegetable waste were set up, usually near major cities. Workmen tended these “nitrate gardens” assiduously, wetting them down with urine from time to time, then turning the decomposing compost over to generate thin layers of saltpeter. The war years saw at least 13 nitrieries established, including some near Richmond; at Selma and Mobile, Alabama; at Charleston, South Carolina; and at Savannah and Macon, Georgia. Although a reliable source, the artificial beds needed months of cultivation before generating usable quantities of niter. Ultimately, most had not had enough time to yield significant nitrate crops before the close of combat in 1865.

Caves contributed the bulk of the Confederate domestic niter supply. Virginia, with an abundance of saltpeter caverns in the western highlands, led all other states by providing nearly 30 per cent of the total. The dispersed nature of the cave installations and their location in remote sections kept them relatively safe from Union raiders. With a dependable internal supply of niter and ongoing (albeit limited) importation, gunpowder shortages were generally not a problem for Rebel armies. In fact, when peace came, the Augusta Powder Works alone had 70,000 pounds on hand. The United States Artillery School used the leftover Augusta powder for gunnery practice at Fortress Monroe owing to its superb quality.

*Next month's  
issue will share  
Part II ~ Lead.*



**Organ Cave, Virginia during the Civil War**



**Saltpeter Vats ~ By USG -  
National Park Service**

## Explore Military Leadership of the Civil War

Join The National Museum of the US Army, Civil War Week examines Civil War military leadership through a series of virtual events including presentations by top historians, a curator discussion of select Museum artifacts, and educational activities.



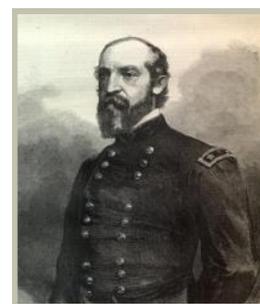
Choose what interests you and register to attend one, or all, of the scheduled events. All events are **virtual, FREE and open to the public.** [Click on title for registration link.](#)

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#### Monday, April 5, 2021

##### History Talk – [“Meade: The Price of Victory”](#) 7:00 – 8:00 pm (EDT)

John Selby of Roanoke College examines Union general George Meade. Meade’s performance during his two-year tenure as commander of the Army of the Potomac was overshadowed by his successor: Ulysses S. Grant. Selby characterizes Meade as a more active, thoughtful, and enterprising commander than has been assumed, bringing him into focus as one of the war’s more effective Union generals. A member of the faculty of Roanoke College since 1986, Selby is well-known in the Roanoke Valley for the history tours he leads for students and adults.

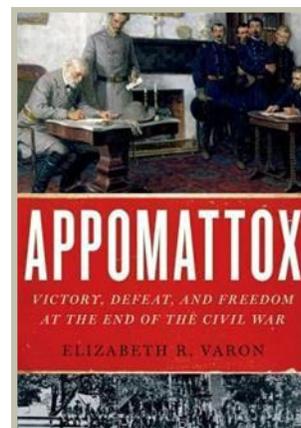


General George Mead

#### Tuesday, April 6, 2021

##### History Talk – [“U.S. Grant at Appomattox: Ending the Union’s War of Deliverance”](#) 7:00 – 8:00 pm (EDT)

Elizabeth Varon of the University of Virginia discusses the Civil War’s last eastern campaign. Varon argues that the theme of deliverance was essential in mobilizing a Unionist coalition of Northerners and anti-Confederate Southerners. Interweaving military and social history, she offers a new perspective on a major battle. Varon is the author of several books including *“Appomattox: Victory, Defeat and Freedom at the End of the Civil War”* (2013), which received several awards and was named one of Civil War Monitor’s Best Books of 2014.



##### Battle Brief – [“Battle of the Wilderness”](#) 12:00 – 1:00 pm (EDT)

Take a look at the hard-fought Battle of the Wilderness in early May 1864 – the first face-off between generals Grant and Lee in war-torn Virginia.

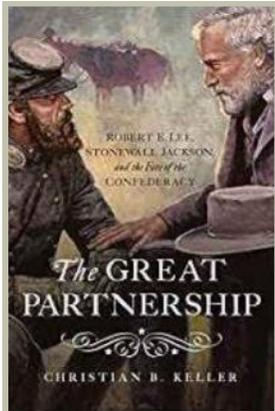
#### Wednesday, April 7, 2021

##### Field Trip – [“The Soldier’s Load”](#) 10:00 – 10:45 am (EDT)

Join a Museum educator to explore the gear, weapons, and personal items that made up a Civil War Soldier’s Load. Tens of thousands of Soldiers endured hardships and challenges to carry out the Army’s military mission to preserve the Union. The items Soldiers carried into the field were invaluable to performing their duty. During this field trip, students will engage with the Army’s history through artifacts, primary sources, and Soldiers’ Stories.

Program content appropriate for participants 4th grade through adult.

*Explore Military Leadership of the Civil War, cont.*



**History Talk – [“Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Confederate Strategy in the East, 1862-1863”](#) 7:00 to 8:00 pm (EDT)**

Christian B. Keller, author of *“The Great Partnership: Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and the Fate of the Confederacy,”* examines the Confederate leadership in the bloody conflict’s eastern theater with a discussion of the world-renowned, audacious generals Lee and Jackson, and their aggressive campaigns in Virginia and Maryland. Keller’s current research focuses on Confederate strategies and examining why the Confederacy failed. Keller is the Dwight D. Eisenhower Chair of National Security and a professor of history in the Department of National Security and Strategy at the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

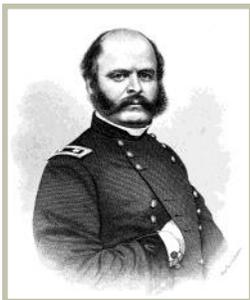
**Thursday, April 8, 2021**

**Teacher Workshop – “Using the Lessons of Civil War Leaders in the Classroom”**  
4:00 – 5:00 pm (EDT)

Leadership is at the core of the United States Army. To be successful, leaders must inspire and influence others to accomplish the goal. In this virtual workshop, Museum educators explore the importance of personal courage, humility and trust in shaping a leader; and examine the influence of leadership on larger organizational success and failure. Museum Educators share online resources, artifact spotlights, Soldier stories and primary sources and discuss teaching Civil War history through the lens of leadership. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and share ideas for integrating leadership themes into curriculum.

**History Talk – [“The Military Career of Ambrose Burnside”](#) 7:00 – 8:00 pm (EDT)**

National Park Service historian Frank O’Reilly of the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Parks looks at Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside, the Union commander at the Battle of Fredericksburg. As a Union Army general in the American Civil War, Burnside conducted successful campaigns in North Carolina and East Tennessee but suffered defeats at the Battle of Fredericksburg and Battle of the Crater. O’Reilly examines an officer who’s fair and trusting nature set him up to be a scapegoat for military disaster. O’Reilly is the author of *“The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock,”* which received a 2003 nomination for the Pulitzer Prize in Letters.



Major General  
Ambrose Burnside

**Friday, April 9, 2021**

**Gallery Talk – “Preserving the Nation”** 12:15 – 12:45 pm (EDT)

Chief Curator, Paul Morando shares select artifacts on display in the Museum’s “Preserving the Nation Gallery”, which includes Civil War exhibits. This tour highlights interesting artifacts from the Museum’s collection as well as individual Soldier stories from the Civil War era – revealing themes of personal courage and leadership from throughout the Army’s ranks. This livestream event includes opportunities for audience questions.



*After the end of the Civil War whatever happened to...?*

**Union Major General George Gordon Meade**

Meade remained in the U.S. Army after the end of the Civil War and served as the commanding officer of the Division of the Atlantic, headquartered in Pennsylvania. In 1868 Meade briefly served in Atlanta as the governor of the Third Military District, a temporary government that controlled Georgia, Alabama and Florida during Reconstruction. As commander of the 3rd Military District in the south, Meade was noted for his firm justice, which helped to make the Reconstruction period following the war less painful.

After the war, he returned to Philadelphia and his native state as Military commander taking up residence in Philadelphia while engaged in many civic activities, including founding Fairmount Park, the Lincoln Institution for the orphans of veterans, and supporting many cultural institutions.

Having long suffered from complications caused by his war wounds, Meade died from the complications of his battle wound in 1872 at the age of 56, while still on active duty in the army, mourned by the entire nation. He was buried with great pomp and ceremony in Historic Laurel Hill Cemetery in his hometown of Philadelphia.

**Nickname:** Old Snapping Turtle

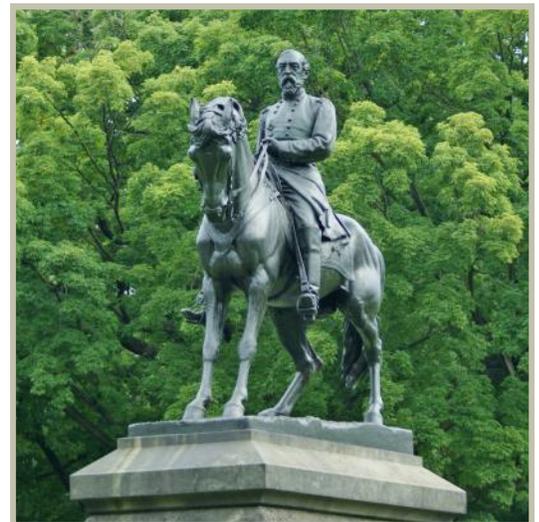
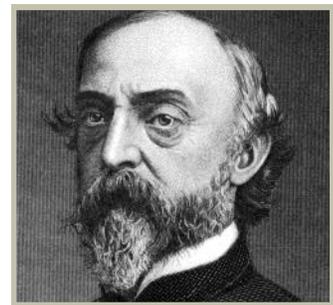
**Legacy:**

There are statues memorializing Meade throughout the United States, including statues at Gettysburg National Military Park, the George Gordon Meade Memorial statue by Charles Grafly, in Washington DC, and one atop the Smith Memorial Arch in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia by Daniel Chester French. The United States Army's Fort George G. Meade in Fort Meade, Maryland, is named for him, as are Meade County, Kansas, and Meade County, South Dakota. The Old Baldy Civil War Round Table in Philadelphia is named in honor of Meade's horse during the war. In World War II, the United States liberty ship SS George G. Meade was named in his honor.

One-thousand-dollar Treasury notes, also called Coin notes, of the Series 1890 and 1891, feature portraits of Meade on the obverse. The 1890 Series note is called the Grand Watermelon Note by collectors, because the large zeroes on the reverse resemble the pattern on a watermelon.



**Maj Gen George Meade**



**Major General George Gordon Meade**  
~ Fairmont Park

## Civil War Phrases

**French leave** ~ An unauthorized furlough. The term was often used in the expressions *to take a French* and *to take French leave*. The expression came from the eighteenth century French custom of going away from a social gathering without bothering to take leave of the host or hostess: *French leave* was recorded in this social sense as early as 1771.

**Fresh fish** ~ A new recruit in the service or a new prisoner in a prisoner-of-war camp.

**Ghost** ~ A white horse.

**Gopher** ~ A playful nickname soldiers gave each other because each man spent so much of his time digging, or huddled up in, a *gopher hole*.

to **Grab a root** ~ To eat.

*From Civil War Wordbook by Darryl Lyman*

## Steering Committee—Officers

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## CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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Wilmington, NC 28408

You can find us on the Web! [Cfcwrt.org](http://Cfcwrt.org)

Visit us on Facebook: [CFCWRT](#)

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](#)

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