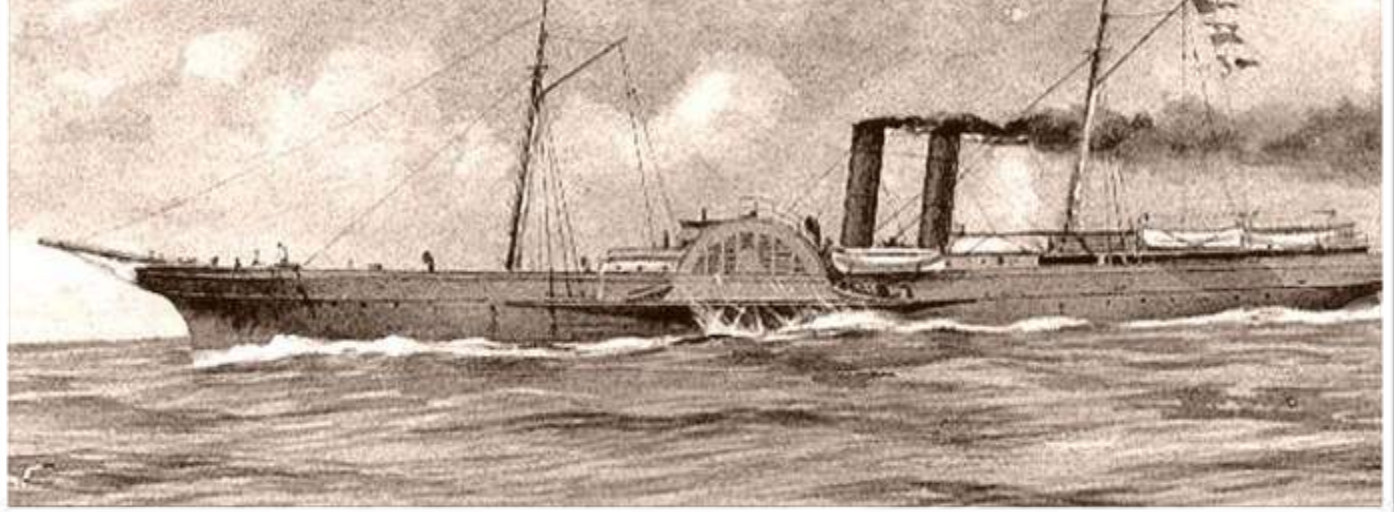


THE RUNNER

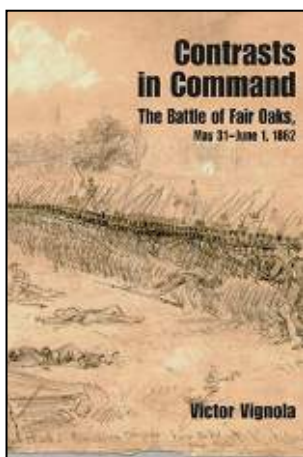


The official newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

Award-Winning Story Tells How Contrasting Command Decisions Led to Confederate Misstep at Battle of Fair Oaks

by Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

Our April 11 meeting features a presentation by Victor Vignola on the battle of Fair Oaks, Virginia, on May 31 and June 1, 1862. The presentation is based on first-time author Vignola's award-winning study of the large, important but generally overlooked battle.



On March 17, 1862, Union Major General George B. McClellan landed at Ft. Monroe near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. By the end of May, he had slowly but surely moved the huge Army of the Potomac, with over 100,000 men, up the peninsula between the James and the York Rivers. Now, he was poised on the doorstep of the Confederate capital of Richmond. It was a crucial time as the Confederacy had suffered the loss of New Orleans, the south's largest city and most important port, and several strategic locations on the Atlantic Coast. Perhaps the end was near. The only bright spot was the Shenandoah Valley where Confederate Lt. General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson had won a series of improbable victories and caused a certain amount of panic on the part of the U.S. government in Washington, D.C.

Membership Report

By Bruce Patterson
CFCWRT Secretary

We are pleased to welcome new members **Thomas Piech**, residing in Livingston, Tennessee and **Steven Rauschkolb** hailing from Leland to our Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable.

New members as well as membership renewals, remain the key to successful, non-profit volunteer organizations such as ours. Please check you name tag as it reflects your individual renewal month. You may renew online or in person at our next meeting. If you prefer to mail your membership fee, just mail it to **CFCWRT, 8387 E. Highcroft NE, Leland NC 28451**.

Remember please that **every member is a recruiter** and that our CWRT needs your active recruiting amongst your network of neighbors and friends. A great way to introduce member candidates is to bring them to the next meeting or better still invite them to join us on our April 27th Historical Cape Fear River Cruise.

One of our members passed away recently - Ed Gibson. Please see the memoriam on page 5. We will get more information out to our members as it becomes available. Fair winds and following seas Ed. We will miss you.

Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston (shown) had skillfully retreated with his outnumbered army but now he was out of room. Reinforced to about 85,000 men, the Confederates looked for the opportunity to strike. In a spring notable for historic rainfalls across the country, Johnston saw a golden opportunity when McClellan moved about a quarter of his army across the rain-swollen Chickahominy River.



Johnston reacted quickly with a plan to defeat the isolated Union force, a victory that would certainly force McClellan to either retreat or fight with an army that was actually outnumbered.

Victor Vignola is a lifelong history student who, upon retirement from New York State government, devoted



his energy and formidable skills to researching the overlooked battle of Fair Oaks/Seven Pines. He is a graduate of the State University of New York at New Paltz and a resident of the Hudson Valley's Orange County, an area steeped in rich history including

George Washington's headquarters at Newburgh.

Fair Oaks and Seven Pines aren't like the tandem identifiers of Manassas/Bull Run and Sharpsburg/Antietam. That is, those well-known battles were given different names by the contending forces; the southerners naming the engagements for nearby towns and the northerners naming them for water courses that dominated the two battlefields. Fair

Oaks and Seven Pines were two different sectors of the same battle. In spite of the fact that more than 70,000 soldiers were engaged and more than 11,000 became casualties—including the Confederate commander, General Joseph E. Johnston—the battle has attracted little scholarly attention.

One reason for the lack of attention is the battle is considered a draw, a deadly but indecisive clash that resulted in little but damage to both armies. Perhaps we have an illogical or indefensible tendency to “keep score,” and see battles as wins or losses, like a sporting contest,



*“The Army of the Potomac - Furious attack of the rebels on Kirby’s battery at Fair Oaks. Sketch by Mr. Mead. Source: Illustration from **Harper’s Weekly**, July 5, 1862, page 428.*

rather than a point on a continuum, part of a campaign. At Fair Oaks and Seven Pines, the Union army suffered a loss of momentum, and perhaps confidence, while the Confederates experienced an obvious failure to destroy almost a third of the threatening force. The Confederates also “lost” the services of Gen. Johnston who was badly wounded. The quotation marks around “lost” refer to the fact that General Robert E. Lee was given command of the Confederate army in Virginia and the rest, as they say, is history. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia wrote an amazing record of martial prowess and prolonged the war for three more years. Gen. Johnston, never a favorite of Confederate President Jefferson Davis was given a command in the Western Theater, relieved twice, brought back twice and ultimately surrendered to Maj. General William T. Sherman at Bennett Place, N.C., about a week after Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox.

Another reason for the lack of attention is that, sadly, almost the entire battlefield has been lost to development. Sandwiched between the Richmond International Airport and Interstate 64, close to the urban center of Richmond, almost none of the land where the battle was fought has been preserved. Vignola’s book became the catalyst for the preservation of 12 key acres of the Fair Oaks portion of the fight by the American Battlefield Trust. Unable to view the site of a battle, a contemporary student faces a much more difficult task to unravel the various movements of units and explicate the decisions of commanders.

It's likely that Fair Oaks/Seven Pines will be overlooked no longer. Not only has Vic Vignola's book led to the signal accomplishment of preservation of the last remaining part of the battlefield, it has garnered the prestigious Fletcher Pratt Award for the best non-fiction book on the Civil War published during the year. The award is presented by the Civil War Round Table of New York City. Previous winners include famous authors such as Dr. James M. McPherson, Ron Chernow, Ed Bearss and many other prestigious authors.

Vignola's work is also a finalist for the American Battlefield Trust's first annual prize for history. The trust announced that the "prize will be made annually to a work of military history or biography that underscores the essential role of the nation's military conflicts on the founding, formation and perpetuation of our exceptional country. In creating this award, sponsored entirely by a generous donor, the Trust is encouraging authors to create works that showcase the rich research potential of historic battlefields."

Vignola's work not only brings to light a forgotten battlefield, it shines a bright beam on the personalities and "Contrasts in Command" that led to the result of this momentous clash.

The meeting will take place on Thursday evening, April 11, beginning at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6:30. As usual, the meeting will be held in Elebash Hall at the rear of St. John's Episcopal at 1219 Forest Hills Drive in Wilmington. The church parking lot and entrance to the meeting room is easily accessed via Park Avenue off of Independence Boulevard. Bring a friend! For more information about membership in the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, go to <http://www.cfcwrt.org> and pick "Join/Rejoin." See you there!

Successful "Spring Fling" Held at the Bellamy Mansion

By Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

More than 20 attended the Round Table's "Spring Fling" at the Bellamy Mansion Museum at 5th and Market in historic downtown Wilmington. Bellamy Executive Director Gareth Evans and Dr. Chris Fonvielle, Ph.D., presented an informal and insight-packed look at the history of the house and what took place there during the Civil War and its immediate aftermath. Thanks is too small a word for Yelena Howell and all that she did to put the outing together and ensure it was a convivial and informational event. We were especially pleased to see Mr. and Mrs. Gannon, Mr. and Mrs. Buggeln, Mr. and Mrs. Burger, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, and, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Howell. Sign up now for the Civil War Round Table cruise on the Cape Fear River with Dr. Fonvielle: Saturday, April 27, at 9:45 a.m.



[See next page for more photos of the "Spring Fling" event.]

More pictures from the “Spring Fling” at the Bellamy Mansion



The Bellamy Mansion was built between 1859 and 1861 so predates the Civil War. It includes several architectural styles in its design. It has twenty-two rooms and was built by both enslaved and free craftsmen. It was built for Dr. John D. Bellamy, a physician and plantation owner.



In Memoriam

Edward C. Gibson, 64, passed away unexpectedly on April 3. He was a charter member of Cape Fear Civil War Round Table and



remained a strong supporter of the group. He regularly ran the audio-visual operation for our meetings. Ed was a descendant of a soldier in the 147th Pennsylvania Infantry. He was commander of the Major General Thomas Ruger Camp #1 of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. He was known for his encyclopedic memory and can-do spirit. Ed will be greatly missed.



Area Historical Association Events

By Yelena Howell, Tours and Trips Committee

Old Baldy Lighthouse and Smith Island Museum of History are now open for the season. Meet public historian Jake Grossman, Education and Collections Coordinator: <https://tinyurl.com/OlBaldy>

Friday, April 12, 9-10:30 am, Burgwin-Wright House, 224 Market St., Wilmington. **Cape Fear Legends and Lore Walking Tour** will include stories of the tunnels underneath Wilmington, the legend of Lord Cornwallis' Revolutionary War visit to town, the time Yellow Fever turned the city into a ghost town, and the rebellious age of Prohibition. Tickets are \$20 + tax: (910) 762-0570.

Saturday, April 13, 9 am-3 pm, Burgwin-Wright House, 224 Market St., Wilmington. **Spring Craft Market**. Multiple vendors, including Dram Tree Books with Jack Fryar and Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. The house, jail, visitor center, and art gallery will remain open 10-4.

Thursday, April 18, 6-7 pm. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th St., Wilmington. **Boundless Lecture & Conversation Series: Tyanna West**. "Healing Backwards: The Journey of Tracing My Roots". West is a public historian and first-year PhD student at NC State whose work is informed by her proud Gullah Geechee ancestry. Free with museum admission. CAM: (910) 395-5999.

Saturday, April 20, 10 am-4 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, 8884 St. Phillips Rd SE, Winnabow. **Living History: Tar, Pitch, and Turpentine: Oh My!** Tar production will begin around 11am, with second round at 1:30pm. Visitors will get a chance to learn about the components of naval stores and their importance to the area. Cost: free.

Saturday, April 20, 8 pm-Sunday, April 21, 2 am. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Haunted Rooms America paranormal investigation. More of a light-hearted repeat event that helps support the Museum. Info: <https://www.hauntedrooms.com/>

Saturday, April 27, 10 am- 4pm. Bennett Place State Historic Site. 4409 Bennett Memorial Rd, Durham, NC 27705. **159th Anniversary Daytime Program** commemorating Gen. Jos. Johnston's 1865 surrender of almost 90K troops to Maj. Gen. W. T. Sherman. Info: (919) 383-4345 or bennett@dncr.nc.gov

Saturday, April 27, 7-9 pm. Bennett Place State Historic Site. 4409 Bennett Memorial Rd, Durham, NC 27705. **"The Day Had Come": Emancipation & Bennett Place**. 331 luminaries will dot the historic Hillsboro Road to honor 331,000 enslaved North Carolinians, free at last 159 years ago. Commemorative ceremony at 7:45 pm. Info: (919) 383-4345 or bennett@dncr.nc.gov

[Thanks to Yelena Howell for providing these events every month without fail.]

Sarah Kay Bierle’s Presentation on the Hancock Family Emphasizes that “History is About People”

By Marty Green, CFCWRT Correspondent

Sarah Kay Bierle, managing editor-of the [Emerging Civil War](#) blog, presented an engaging and insight-filled talk about the family of Union General Winfield Scott Hancock - “From California to Gettysburg,” and indeed before and after.

Sarah’s personable approach made the family come alive, particularly Almira Russell Hancock, the wife of the general. As the young wife of a junior officer she was reluctant to follow the paths laid out in the pre-Civil War army, full of postings to primitive and uncomfortable places on the various frontiers of the



growing republic. Yet, she reported that a comment from then U.S. Army Colonel Robert E. Lee made a powerful impact on her and she went on to graciously and courageously share the hardships of the frontier army with her husband and, soon, two young children.



[At left, members of the Roundtable listen intently to Ms. Bierle’s presentation. Her point about the war being about people is often forgotten.]

Approximately 40 members and friends attended the presentation including visitor Dan Hickman, retired Army Brigadier General and author of *A Thousand Chances: A Memoir of Life and Death in the Air Cavalry During the Pivotal Year of the Vietnam War*. In addition to his service as a combat helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War,

General Hickman commanded the 30th Heavy Separate Brigade (Armored) of the NC National Guard in Iraq. We also welcomed two new members, Steve Rauschkolb and Tom Piech. Steve is a director of the Civil War Round Table Congress.

We need more contributors to the Runner newsletter. We’re looking for book reviews, short pieces about trips you’ve taken to a historic Civil War site (like Jim Gannon’s in this issue), a brief bit of history other members might find interesting, or your experiences with the Roundtable itself. This newsletter belongs to you - the members of the Roundtable. Let’s all take more of an active part.

A Brief History of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

By Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table (CFCWRT) was established in 1994 and our first president was George Slaton who led the organization until the year 2000.

George, who now lives in the Davidson, NC, area, recalls that an organization called the Civil War Round Table Associates met in Wilmington in the summer of 1993. The organization was founded and led by legendary battlefield preservationist and Civil War activist, Jerry Russell, and their primary purpose was to encourage Civil War Round Tables to get involved in battlefield preservation.

The Wilmington event included a workshop on “How to Start a Civil War Round Table.” That workshop motivated George and others to establish a round table in Wilmington. Contributing to the momentum was Civil War publisher Ted Savas and prospective authors Chris Fonvielle and Mark Bradley. Ted, then leading the publishing company of Savas Woodbury, first published Chris Fonvielle’s *The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope*, and Mark Bradley’s *The Battle of Bentonville: Last Stand in the Carolinas*. George noted “It was a momentous weekend!”

It took some time to get rolling and the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table first met at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW) in October 1994. The first speaker was Chris Fonvielle, who later joined the faculty of UNCW. Professor Fonvielle, now retired, is the premier historian of the Lower Cape Fear from Colonial times through the Civil War. Following George Slaton, Professor Fonvielle led the CFCWRT from 2000 through 2006. The meeting site changed from UNCW to St. John’s Episcopal Church and then to St. Andrew’s on the Sound Episcopal Church. Under the leadership of David Norris (2006-10) and Bob Cooke (2010 to 2018), the organization grew steadily and many nationally known speakers and authors spoke to the group as well as accomplished local historians.

From 1997 through 2005 the organization featured tours to locations such as Richmond and its vicinity, Sharpsburg, Md., and Spotsylvania County, Va. From 2006 through 2011 tours were shortened to locations in North Carolina that could be reached within a day rather than requiring overnight travel. Today, the round table features opportunities focused on local attractions such as the Wilmington Railroad Museum, a great attraction that preserves the history of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, the lifeline that connected the south’s last blockade running port with the Army of Northern Virginia.

Dr. Fonvielle has led many tours for the round table including a hike through the maritime forest to discover the earthworks of the “Sugar Loaf Line,” a boat tour on the Cape Fear River and an evening tour of Ft. Fisher that ended well after dark looking out on the ocean as “friendly enemies,” heroes of the 1865 battle, Col. William Lamb, CSA, and Brigadier General Newton Martin Curtis, USA, did in 1893.

The CFCWRT is actively involved in supporting Fort Fisher and Fort Anderson, the NC Historical Sites in the area, the J. Ryder Lewis historical park in Carolina Beach, as well as the NC Maritime Museum in Southport. We have also featured speakers from the Latimer House, the museum of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, in Wilmington.

Beginning in 2018, the Round Table the round table moved to Harbor Church in Wilmington and then back to St. John's Episcopal Church in midtown Wilmington. Bill Jayne has been president of the club since 2018 and has seen it through the devastating Hurricane Florence in 2018 and the COVID phenomenon. As of 2024, the round table has more members than it did in 2018.

We now present a summer program featuring "member forums". in which members present short programs (approximately 15 minutes) on specific topics of their choosing. We have also offered seminar-style round table discussions on specific topics such as the failure of Confederate forces to attack the Union landing force before its assault on Fort Fisher.

Bentonville Battlefield Commemorates 159th Anniversary

By Fred Claridge, Newsletter Editor

Bentonville Battlefield commemorated the 159th Anniversary of the battle at an all day event on March 16. The weather cooperated; it was a beautiful sunny day. A major theme of this year's event was Civil War medicine. Several re-enactors portrayed Civil War surgeons, including one re-enactor who portrayed a surgeon who was actually at the battle. Another re-enactor displayed a surgical kit actually used by his three-times great uncle - Dr. Bleeker Hovey - during the war. A highlight was the participation of the National Museum of Civil War medicine. Museum staff came down from their home base of Frederick, Maryland to give several presentations and to display a canvas stretcher that was actually used at the Battle of Bentonville. It carried bloodstains from soldiers who were wounded there. Quite a sight to see for visitors and the public alike. Several organizations were also represented at the event, and a number of tours were given. The battlefield is lucky to have the Harper House which served as a field hospital during the battle open to the public. Roundtable members are encouraged to visit the battlefield someday if you haven't made it up that way. It's an important part of Civil War and North Carolina history. Pictures of the event can be seen below and on the following page.





Medical equipment on display in Bentonville.

The Hunley Submarine is Still Hard to Find But a Visit Excels

By Jim Gannon, Program Director

It took over 130 years for scientists to locate the wreck of the Confederate submarine, the *CSS Hunley*. Using my GPS on a recent visit to Charleston, I found the Hunley was still hard to find because my GPS insisted we should go down a road that is closed for reconstruction. However, our persistence in finding a more circuitous route was well rewarded. Our visit far exceeded expectations.

The Hunley sank in Charleston's outer harbor on 17 February 1864 after sinking the *USS Housatonic*, a Union ship on blockade duty. The Hunley thus became the first combat submarine in world history to sink a ship. However, the Hunley never returned after the attack and the exact location of the wreck was unknown until 1995. The ship was raised in 2000, and despite study by many experts, uncertainty remains regarding her final moments and the cause of her sinking.



The ship alone would be the worth the visit. It is both fascinating and humbling to see her resting in her preservative pool and appreciate the courage of the men who were willing to take this experimental contraption into battle against real Naval ships of war. However, there is an outstanding museum there as well that tells the whole story of the building of the ship, the experience of the crew, and the final voyage. In particular, the facial recreations of the crew members are haunting.

The museum also includes a recreation of the ship's crew compartment that was built for a movie. It is available for visitors to sit in and appreciate the cramped positions of the crew, as illustrated in the photo showing me at a crewman's station at the crank which turned the ship's propeller. Note, as squeezed as I was, the movie prop is actually a little more spacious than the ship.



Special mention must be made of the outstanding docents. The day we went we were able to see two different and outstanding presentations both similar in quality and duration to the presentations that we have at our own Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. One in particular focused on the research that has been done regarding what may have happened to the Hunley and its crew during and after the attack, and what could have caused the vessel to sink.

If you have the opportunity, your own search for the *CSS Hunley* will be the worth the effort.



A model of the Chimborazo Hospital at the Richmond Battlefield Visitors Center in Richmond, Virginia.

Richmond had a number of Confederate hospitals, but Chimborazo was by far the largest and best equipped of all the Confederate hospitals across the south. At its busiest times, the hospital housed nearly 4,000 patients. Compare that to most hospitals today which may have 250 to 350 beds. Approximately 75,000 wounded were treated at this hospital during its time of operation. None of the original hospital exists unfortunately, but the small museum is fascinating.

Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

President: Bill Jayne jayne.bill@gmail.com (910) 386-9203

Vice President: Al Turner allanturner67@gmail.com (703) 967-9667

Secretary: Bruce Patterson brucepatterson7338@gmail.com
(910) 794-8905

Treasurer: Mike McDonald rmassoc8@gmail.com (414) 708-9794

Program Director: Jim Gannon 1jimgannon@gmail.com

Tours/trips: Yelena Howell ybh2035@uncw.edu

Audio/Visual Manager: Ed Gibson egibson759@gmail.com

Webmaster: Richard Buggeln rbuggeln@gmail.com

Newsletter: Fred Claridge frdclar@gmail.com



We thank our sponsors, who make it possible for us to thrive as an organization. It would be much harder without their support!



We find and develop outstanding original military and general history manuscripts and bring them to you in the form of quality books you will be proud to read, own, and keep for a lifetime.

Savas Beatie



SPECIALIZING IN REGIONAL AMERICAN SEA-FOOD, SIGNATURE DISHES, HAND CUT FISH, STEAKS AND CHICKEN ALONG WITH FRESHLY MADE DESSERTS. WE PRIDE OURSELVES IN USING THE FRESHEST POSSIBLE INGREDIENTS AND PREPARING THEM WITH LOVE.