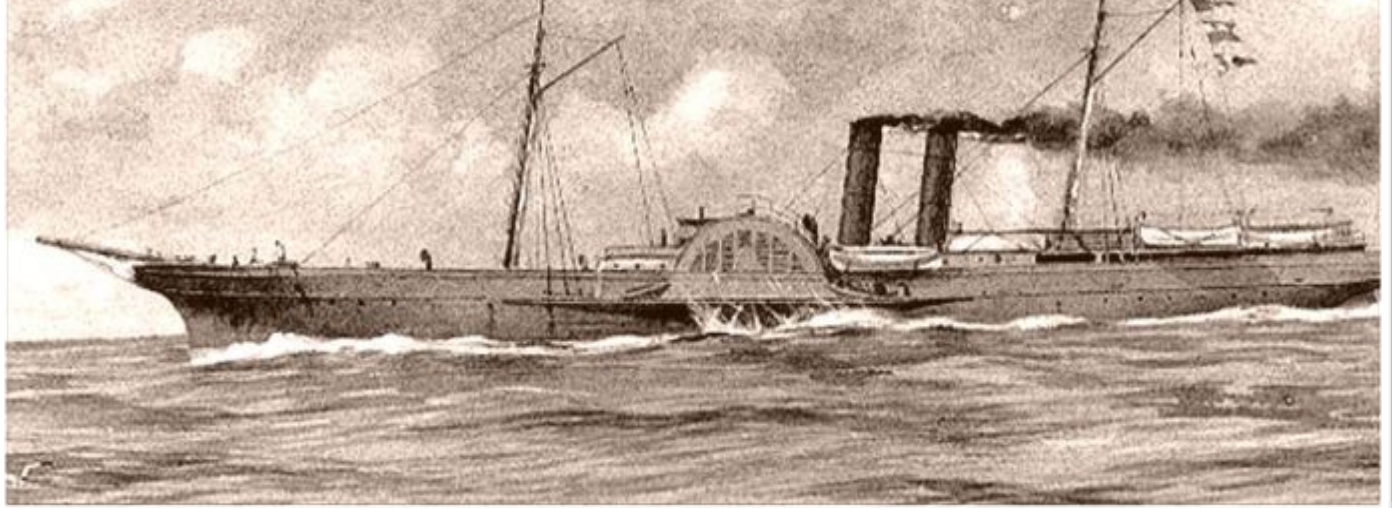


# THE RUNNER



The official newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

## February Program to Feature Battle of Jackson, 1863

By Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

Our February meeting features a presentation by Prof. Chris Mackowski, one of the most engaging and energetic speakers on the national Civil War circuit. He will focus on the subject of one of his recent books, *The Battle of Jackson: May 14, 1863*, published in 2022. The presentation is scheduled for Thursday evening, February 8, at centrally located St. John's Episcopal Church in Midtown Wilmington near Independence Mall. Doors open at 6:30 and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m.

Chris Mackowski, Ph.D., is the editor-in-chief and co-founder of Emerging Civil War and the series editor of the award-winning **Emerging Civil War Series**, published by Savas Beatie. Chris is a writing professor in the Jandoli School of Communication at St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, NY, where he also serves as associate dean for undergraduate programs. Chris is also historian-in-residence at **Stevenson Ridge**, a historic property on the Spotsylvania battlefield in central Virginia. He has worked as a historian for the National Park Service at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park, where he gives tours at four major Civil War battlefields (Fredericksburg,



## Membership Report

By Bruce Patterson  
CFCWRT Secretary

2024 got off to a great start with a most informative and interesting discussion by *Fort Fisher Site Manager, Jim Steele* during which he detailed the progress on new site development and the new museum building construction. It was quite a process to get the project through to fruition, taking many years and a lot of hard work by many people. We departed the meeting that evening, as excited as our speaker, anticipating a project completion by early fall.

We were also very pleased to welcome two new members, **Raoul Rebillard** and **Alex Efir**, both residing in Wilmington. Gentlemen, welcome aboard!

Lastly, if your membership was due for renewal in January (or February for that matter) you may renew by mailing your check to **CFCWRT, 8387 East Highcroft, NE, Leland, NC 28451**. You may also join or renew online or (best option) bring to our February 8th meeting and give it to our friendly Treasurer, Mike McDonald. He will be the distinguished gentlemen who doubles as the Round Table haberdasher who can also fit you to a new logo polo shirt or cap.

Recall please, that your month of membership renewal is printed on your name tag.

Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania), as well as at the building where Stonewall Jackson died.

Chris has authored or co-authored more than 25 books and edited a half-dozen essay collections on the Civil War, and his articles have appeared in all the major Civil War magazines. Chris serves as vice president on the board of directors for the **Central Virginia Battlefields Trust**, he serves on the advisory board of the **Civil War Roundtable Congress**. He is also a member of the Antietam Institute and the U. S. Grant Homestead Association. In 2023, he was honored with the Houston Civil War Round Table's Frank Vandiver Award and also selected as the **Copie Hill Fellow at the American Battlefield Trust**.

Although Chris grew up in northwestern Pennsylvania and earned his bachelors' degree in communications at the University of Pittsburgh, he describes himself as a "Stonewall Jackson fanboy," and says that his fascination with the acclaimed Confederate general was his doorway into study of the Civil War. His book about the Battle of Jackson is dedicated to his eldest son, Jackson.

He also notes "I am a huge believer in the idea that battlefields teach us something about our history that we can't learn in any other way, so preserving those battlefields is vital." Unfortunately, as Dr. Mackowski notes in his book, the National Park Service assessment of Jackson's core battlefield areas overlays atop a busy state capital, with virtually no preserved space.

Jackson, Mississippi, was the third Confederate state capital to fall to Union forces. When Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant captured the important rail junction in May 1863, however, he did so almost as an afterthought. Drawing on dozens of primary sources, contextualized by the latest scholarship on Grant's Vicksburg campaign, *The Battle of Jackson, Mississippi, May 14, 1863*, offers the most comprehensive account ever published on the fall of

the Magnolia State's capital during Grant's inexorable march on Vicksburg.

General Grant had his eyes set not on Jackson but on Vicksburg, the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy," strategically located on the Mississippi River the invaluable prize that had eluded him for the better part of a year. Vicksburg is located about half-way between Memphis, Tennessee, to the north, and New Orleans to the south. To get at Vicksburg, Grant finally



marched south on the far side of the Mississippi River and crossed onto Mississippi soil to approach Vicksburg by land from the east. As he drove a wedge between Confederate General John Pemberton to the west, a chance encounter with Confederates at Raymond alerted him to a potential threat massing farther east in Jackson under the leadership of General Joseph E. Johnston, one of the Confederacy's most respected field officers. Jackson is about 40 miles east of Vicksburg.

Mississippi was also the home of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. In addition to being the state capital, Jackson was a vital transportation and communications hub and a major Confederate industrial center, and its fall removed vital logistical support for the Southern army holding Vicksburg. "It is hard to understand why most works on the Vicksburg campaign devote

but few pages to the battle of Jackson,” Terrence Winschel retired historian of Vicksburg National Military Park, has written.

Grant turned on a dime and made for Jackson to confront the growing danger. He had no way of knowing that Johnston was already planning to abandon the vital state capital. The Southern general’s behavior has long puzzled historians, and some believe his stint in Jackson was the nadir of his long career. The loss of Jackson isolated Vicksburg and helped set up a major confrontation between Federal and Confederate forces a few days later at Champion Hill in one



Various treatments of the same photograph of General Grant after Vicksburg.

of the most decisive battles of the war. The capital’s fall demonstrated that Grant could march into Jefferson Davis’ home state and move about with impunity, and not even an acclaimed military leader like Joe Johnston could stop him.

Most people interested in Civil War military history focus their attention on the titanic contest between the Union’s Army of the Potomac and the Confederacy’s Army of Northern Virginia in the Eastern Theater, but Grant’s Vicksburg campaign, especially the movement of his army from the crossing of the Mississippi River to the gates of Vicksburg is often viewed as the most “bold and masterly” in the Civil War, according to one of his opposing generals, Stephen Dill Lee. Historian Donald L. Miller in his volume on Vicksburg, wrote: “It was a Civil War blitzkrieg. In eighteen days, Grant’s army had marched nearly two hundred miles; won five battles—four in six days; inflicted a loss of 5,787 killed, wounded, and missing; compelled the abandonment of two Confederate strongholds...captured the capital of Mississippi,” and pushed the opposing army into a confined space where a siege would result in an inevitable victory for the Union.

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. See you there! 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."

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## 2024 Member Forum Coming Up in July - We Need RT Speakers

By Jim Gannon, CFCWRT Program Director

Next summer will feature another member forum to give an opportunity to our own Round Table members to share a short (10-20 minute) presentation on some aspect of the Civil War that they personally find interesting and that they feel would be of interest to the Round Table.

This could be the story of an ancestor, something about a particular soldier or sailor, an event, an incident or anecdote, a little-known fact, or something about uniforms, equipment or technology. It could also be something involving local civil war sites or people. The presentations should be factual, accurate and of general interest. If you elect to use a visual presentation, the usual computer and A/V equipment will be available.

Please contact Jim Gannon at 910-789-0069 or [ljimgannon@gmail.com](mailto:ljimgannon@gmail.com) if you would like to make a presentation.

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Painting continues on the Harper House at the Bentonville Battlefield. It looks good!



## Area Historical Association Events

By Yelena Howell, Tours and Trips Committee

**Drew Gruber, Executive Director of Civil War Trails, Inc.**, indulged Yelena in a great video interview this January. View it here: <http://tinyurl.com/CWTrailsTalk>

**Thursday, February 1, 7-8:45 pm. Cameron Art Museum**, 3201 South 17th St., Wilmington. **Jazz @CAM: Sean Higgins Trio.** Higgins is an internationally renowned pianist and composer who got his start as a UNCW graduate. Tickets are \$35 for CAM members, \$55 for not-yet-members: <http://tinyurl.com/SeanHigg> Contact CAM: (910) 395-5999.

**Saturday, February 3, 8 pm to Sunday, February 4, 2 am. Bellamy Mansion Museum**, 503 Market St., Wilmington. If you have ever wanted to see the Bellamy at night and/or hunt for ghosts in the mansion, now is your chance! Join Haunted Rooms America on an overnight investigation. Visit <https://www.hauntedrooms.com/> with questions, for more information and to register.

**Friday, February 9, 9-10:30 am, Burgwin-Wright House**, 224 Market St., Wilmington. **Hunter Ingram** presents his “**Outlander**” in the **Cape Fear Walking Tour**, an exploration of downtown Wilmington through the events of the book and TV series "Outlander." Tickets \$20 (+tax) ea. Please call (910) 762-0570 to reserve your spot.

**Wednesday, February 14, 9 am-until. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site**, 8884 St Phillips Rd SE, Winnabow. **Day of Caring.** Be a part of community engagement and share love through acts of service by helping build a fence at the historic site. Register: <http://tinyurl.com/BuildwithLove>

**Saturday, February 17, 10 am-4 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site**, 8884 St Phillips Rd SE, Winnabow. **Living History: 159<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fall of Fort Anderson.** Artillery and infantry demonstrations throughout the day. Cost: free.

**Saturday, February 17, 9 am-12 pm and 1pm-4 pm. Bentonville Battlefield Walking Tour.** **Col. Wade Sokolosky (Ret.) of NC Historical Tours** will highlight the U.S. Army breastworks, the Last Grand Charge of the Army of Tennessee, Hoke’s Division, etc. Cost: \$40 per person for both tours. Contact Wade directly to sign up: (252) 646-5553 or [nchistoricaltours@gmail.com](mailto:nchistoricaltours@gmail.com)

**Saturday, February 24, 9 am-3 pm, Moores Creek National Battlefield**, 40 Patriots Hall Dr. Currie. **248<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge.** A full day of commemorative activities and living history. Monitor details here: <http://tinyurl.com/RevWarNC>

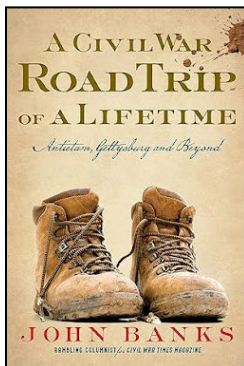
**As we approach the best season of all, please save the date for CFCWRT’s very own Spring Fling at the Bellamy Mansion on Tuesday, March 19, 6-8 pm!**

[Continued on next page.]

We will enjoy a **social evening** at the Museum with Executive Director Gareth Evans, staff, and our inimitable Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr. offering their scholarly perspectives. The round table will serve wines, soft drinks and light hors d'œuvres. Yelena will open up **admissions (\$20 ea.) on March 1**. For now, thank you for taking note!

## Brunswick Civil War Roundtable Event To Be Held February 6th

Fayetteville, NC played a significant role near the close of the Civil War following Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's March to the Sea. This is the topic of returning guest speaker, Col. Wade Sokolosky (Ret.). He is a renowned historian, prolific author, tour guide, and popular lecturer. His presentation is entitled, "A Great Race Between Two Rivers: Sherman's March Toward Fayetteville." The meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at Hatch Auditorium on Caswell Beach. Registration begins 6:15PM. The program starts at 7:00PM. The guest fee is \$10 and can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues which can include a spouse. For information, contact President John Butler at [Brunswickcwr@gmail.com](mailto:Brunswickcwr@gmail.com), or call him at (404) 229-9425. Or visit the website at [Brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com](http://Brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com) or Facebook page.



If you've never seen it, John Banks maintains an excellent Civil War blog site. He's also written a book. Here's how he describes it: "Over more than a year, I crisscrossed the country exploring battlefields, historic houses, forts and more. Join me for a road trip like no other." Banks is a long time journalist who has a very readable and enjoyable writing style. He mixes a lot of history, some personal reflections, and even some humor into his postings and in the book. His work has appeared in the New York Times and just about every major Civil War magazine and journal. Give him a try if you're looking for a good read.

## Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

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## January Program Features Jim Steele, Fort Fisher Site Manager, on the Long Road to the Development of the New Visitors Center

By Paul R. Revere, Special Correspondent

Our first meeting of 2024, our 30th year of continuous operation, featured Jim Steele, site manager of the Ft. Fisher State Historic Site, who, with masterly command of the details, gave our members an insider's view of the evolution and development of the magnificent project now under construction at Ft. Fisher.

The \$25 million plus project includes a new, 22,219 square foot, two-story visitors center with greatly expanded exhibit space, staff workspace, gift shop, multipurpose room, catering kitchen and multiple seating areas. It also includes a new Underwater Archaeology building, and perhaps the greatest improvement of all, the reconstruction of several traverses, or mounds, that



were demolished by the Army in WWII to build an airstrip for training purposes. The replica traverses will provide underground areas that visitors will be able to access safely to gain an understanding of the kinds of facilities the fort's defenders actually used.

Jim, a U.S. Navy veteran who earned his Masters Degree in History at the University of South Carolina, has been at Ft. Fisher for 16 years and he explained that he began working on the new visitors center project almost immediately because the existing facility, built in the 1960s for an estimated 25,000 visitors per year has been woefully inadequate for decades. Preparation for the project began with several false starts that involved in-depth planning that was extremely time consuming but failed to advance the project.



Ultimately, legislative support pushed the project to the forefront and allowed for the hiring of design professionals to prepare the plans for a project that will professionally serve the more than one million visitors who currently access the site every year. A “soft opening” is scheduled to occur late this summer followed by the full opening soon after.



More than 40 members attended and enjoyed the program along with an enhanced raffle that featured a guided tour of the Aversasboro battlefield as well as the choice of several high-quality Civil War books. Thanks to William Jordan for the Aversasboro tour and also to Karen and Mike Budziszewski for refreshments.

We also welcomed new members Alex Efird, Jr., and Raoul “Reb” Rebillard.



Jim Steele presented on the many challenges faced by planners in making the new visitor center a reality. It took patience and a “long view” to get to the point where ground was finally broken. Financing took several legislative sessions, and a lot of hard work by people dedicated to providing a great learning experience about the fort and its history.



## Not Originally a Tarheel, But He is One Now Forever

By Ed Gibson, CFCWRT Member/Audio-Visual Manager

[Editor's Note: Some language is included in the quoted passage which some members may find objectionable, but it was left in place as it is a passage taken directly from a published diary.]

One morning while sitting at coffee with several of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable members, I heard President Bill Jayne mention that there was a member of the 147<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania buried at the Wilmington National Cemetery. Bill was stationed at the cemetery for several years and knows a lot of the history of the place. I asked him to repeat what he had said because my great-grandfather was a member of that unit. Bill explained that Isaac Whitmer had been killed by friendly fire when Sherman's troops occupied Fayetteville in March of 1865 and was later interred at Wilmington National Cemetery.

I proceeded to do some Internet research into Isaac Whitmer after visiting his grave at the cemetery. Whitmer was the Sergeant Major of the regiment and had been recommended for promotion to Lieutenant but was never sworn in as an officer. I also found a diary written by M. S. Schroyer who was a member of Company G of the regiment. The following is from Schroyer's diary:

*The four corps and cavalry crossed Cape Fear River at this place, having only one pontoon bridge. General Joe Johnson was now in command of the Rebel forces and we had more or less skirmishing every day. Late in the afternoon of March 13, Monday, we were marched into the town of Fayetteville.*

### CHAPTER LXVIII

*At this time the regiment was about ready to move and the boys were scattered around town. All were ordered to report at once. Sergeant Major Witmer had been sent over on the opposite side of the square where part of the regiment had been, previously detailed to help extinguish the fire. On his way back he passed General Beard's headquarters of the 14th corps when two citizens from the opposite side of the street accused the Sergeant of being one who helped steal a barrel of flour. The guard called out Halt! When Witmer replied that he was a member of the 20th army corps, that he had nothing to do with the flour. For some reason unknown to any of us, Witmer did not stop. The guard again called Halt! but he passed on, when the guard raised his gun and fired, the ball entering the back part of his head, passing thru and coming out just back of the forehead. (The guard who shot him was a member of the 105th Ohio regiment, Beard's brigade, 14th army corps.) The boys of the regiment were so worked up and fearing a riot the Colonel moved the regiment across the river, leaving a detail to take charge of the corpse and give him a decent burial.*

*The funeral took place on the night of the 13th, or rather early on the morning of*

*the 14th. The detail was as follows: Lieutenant B. T. Parks, Sergeant A. M. Eby, George D. Griggs, Jacob Garman, and the writer. We had a good deal of trouble in getting material for making a box. Thirty-two pieces of boards were used to construct it. We had been refused hatchet, nails, etc., by the citizens, but we took the liberty of looking for what we needed. When finished, a small bunch of hay was put in the box upon which to lay the head, a web of muslin was secured, and several layers were put into the box, then the corpse was tenderly lifted off the ground, where he had been lying since he was shot, then several sheets of muslin was spread over him. This was the first and only corpse the writer ever prepared for burial and we did the best we could. This was all done in the dark hours of the night.*

*After taking a last sad look upon our dear friend and comrade. the box was nailed shut and we waited for the morning. When at last dawn appeared, we inquired of two darkies, who were passing, whether they knew where the cemetery was and they said they did. We told them we wanted them to go with us to the burying ground, but they said they had business for their master and could not go.*

*We told them they must. We saw a buggy in an alley but could not use it, as the box would not fit either way we might fix it. The only way we had was to tear off the top and place the box on the springs; then with a darkey in the shafts and the other pushing we moved out to the cemetery. When there the colored fellows left us, and we dug a grave. After depositing the corpse, Sergeant Eby placed a headboard and upon it inscribed the deceased's name, and the regiment, rank and company to which he belonged.*

*While we were digging the grave a little boy came, sat down and watched us. A new grave had just been made near the one we had dug. When this little fellow said: "You bury your man better than this one right here was buried." We asked him why, and he said: "You put yours in a box, the other was just thrown into the hole like a brute."*

*The guard who shot Witmer was relieved at once and another placed on his post. Later he was tried by military court martial and acquitted. After the burial the detail left the cemetery, crossed the river and marched hard to catch up to the regiment.*

Whitmer mustered in with the 147<sup>th</sup> Regiment in 1862. He had been commissioned as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1864, in Company I but never mustered in as a Lieutenant before he was killed. His body was reburied in Wilmington National Cemetery.

Sergeant Major Whitmer may not have been born a Tarheel, but he is one now forever.

Many people enjoyed the movie "Lincoln" directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Daniel Day Lewis who did a phenomenal job portraying Mr. Lincoln. But you may not know about an older movie titled "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" - a 1940 biographical drama starring Raymond Massey. It follows Lincoln from Kentucky to his election as president. It's been on TCM, and you may find it online. Well worth a look.

## Lucky Raffle Winners from Last Month's Meeting

By William Jordan, CFCWRT Member

Congratulations to CFCWRT member John Moore! John won January's grand prize: two spots for Colonel Wade Sokolosky's tour of Averagesboro in February.

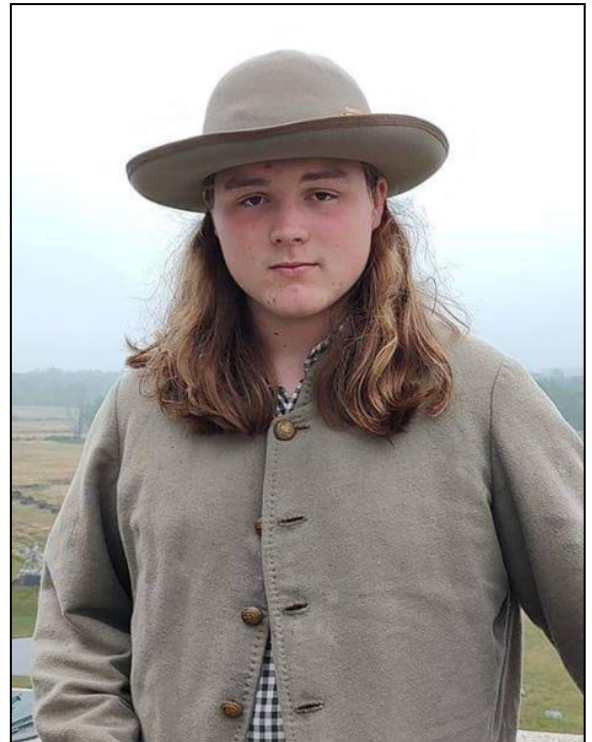
If you didn't win there are a few spots remaining for Wade's Averagesboro tour. He is also offering a revamped and expanded tour of the Bentonville battlefield. Please contact him at [nchistoricaltours@gmail.com](mailto:nchistoricaltours@gmail.com) to reserve your spots!

Our next grand prize will be a custom line ink drawing by historical artist Mason Jones.

Mason, from Kinston, North Carolina, creates unique pieces of art using his own handmade quills and historic inks. Mason will discuss what YOU want him to draw and will deliver up to an 8x10 image. You will own the original!

Mason is an avid historian and is dedicated to helping preserve the threatened parts of the Kinston battlefield. He regularly reenacts with the 7th North Carolina State Troops as well as volunteering at the CSS Neuse II and Tryon Palace.

Thank you for supporting the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. Raffle proceeds benefit the Roundtable directly and are an important source of income for us. We try to get some good prizes that make our members appreciative.



Artist Mason Jones above. Raffle winners at the January meeting (l to r), John Moore, winner of the guided tour of the Averagesboro Battlefield; Jack Berry, Mike Budziszewski, and Milton Krivokuca, winners of the book raffle. Congratulations! (Photo of raffle winners by Kim Jordan.)

# “ALWAYS ON DUTY”

159th Anniversary  
Living History Event

March 16,  
2024

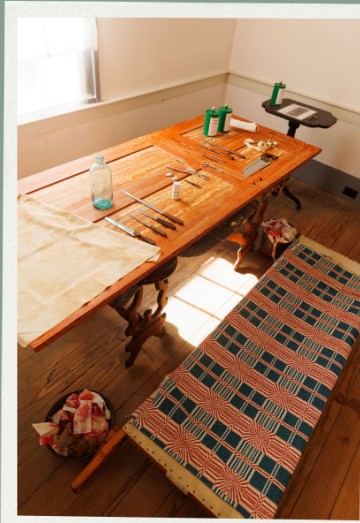
10-4pm

Join us for:  
Activities  
Demonstrations  
Talks and more!

Featuring:



**BENTONVILLE  
BATTLEFIELD**  
*Preserve - Educate - Explore*





Cape Fear Round Table, you're invited

# Gettysburg Trip

September 19-22

Hosted by Cleveland CWRT

Stay tuned for more information about this upcoming trip to Gettysburg.

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



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