

The official newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

## March Meeting Features Emerging Civil War Historian’s Program on “From California to Gettysburg: The Hancock Family”

by Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

Our March 14 meeting features a presentation by Sarah Kay Bierle titled “From California to Gettysburg: The Hancock Family.” In 1858, Winfield and Almira Hancock and their two children moved to California. As a U.S. Army officer, Captain Winfield S. Hancock’s duties had taken the family to several remote outposts, but their time in California would be some of their most memorable days. The American Civil War began while the Hancocks were in California, and this conflict presented challenging choices. Their decision—made in California—would help keep the Golden State in the Union and also impact one of the great eastern battles of the war.



Sarah Kay Bierle is a native of California but she graduated from Thomas Edison State University in Trenton, N.J., with a BA in History, and now lives in Central Virginia within easy distance of several major battlefields of the Civil War. She serves as managing editor at [Emerging Civil War](#) (ECW). ECW is a public history-oriented platform for sharing original scholarship related to the American Civil War. ECW seeks to encourage a diversity of perspectives in the scholarship it

## Membership Report

By Bruce Patterson  
CFCWRT Secretary

Membership remains a key factor in the success of an organization such as ours. Every member is a recruiter. Please bring neighbors and friends to a meeting. We have ample seating capacity and convenient parking.

We gained one new member last month when Wilmington resident **Thomas Bello** joined our ranks. Welcome aboard Tom!

Check your name tag to determine your renewal month (or give me a call) and please try to remain current with your membership dues. They form the base for our annual budget. You can renew membership on-line <http://www.cfcwrt.org> or mail your check to Treasurer Mike McDonald at CFCWRT 8387 E. Highcroft NE, Leland, NC 28451. Better still, see Mike at the March 14th meeting.

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## Civil War Weekend Event

Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia will hold a Civil War Weekend event from Friday, March 22nd through Sunday, March 24th. The cost without lodging is \$429. This year's theme is "The Information War." A number of topics will be discussed. For more info, here is the link:  
[civilwar.vt.edu/civil-war-weekend-2024/](http://civilwar.vt.edu/civil-war-weekend-2024/)

presents. They work to identify and spotlight the next generation of Civil War historians and the fresh ideas they bring to the historical conversation.

Ms. Bierle also works in the Education Department at American Battlefield Trust. She has spent years exploring ways to share quality historical research in ways that will inform and inspire modern audiences, including school presentations, writing, and speaking engagements. Sarah has published three historical fiction books and her first nonfiction book, *Call Out the Cadets: The Battle of New Market*, is part of the Emerging Civil War series. She is currently working on a short biography of John Pelham for the ECW series.

Her presentation focusing on the Winfield Scott Hancock family fits within her interest in exploring the American Civil War era and seeking to better understand the multi-layered stories. She writes: "Military or civilian, enslaved or free, blue or gray... every story fits together to help us gain a deeper and more complete portrait of our past. It is vital to continue conversing about this era of history, remembering to strip away myths and seeing that people really lived, suffered, loved, and lost. I believe that discussion about history can take various forms, but that listening, conversing, and pursuing an informed, gracious understanding is most important."

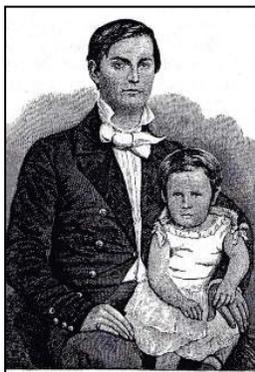
Capt. Hancock and his wife, Almira Russell Hancock, along with their two children, had served at several posts from St. Louis to Florida and then Kansas, Utah and California. An 1840 graduate of West Point, Hancock had distinguished himself in the Mexican War and served with many officers who would become notable leaders in the Civil War. In the Army's Department of the Pacific, one of the best friends of the Hancock family was Major Lewis A. Armistead, who chose to side with the Confederacy, while Hancock, a native of Pennsylvania remained loyal to the Union.

[continued on next page]

It might be said that in 1860, the professional officer corps of the U.S. Army, most of them graduates of West Point, were a family of sorts, and like many American families, they were split by the war. Research by Dick Crews of the Cleveland Civil War Round Table reveals that there were 977 graduates of the West Point classes of 1833 through 1861 alive at the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. Some 259 (26%) joined the Confederacy and 638 (65%) remained with the U.S. Army. Eight graduates didn't serve with either army in the war. Thirty-nine southerners, like General George H. Thomas, remained with the Union and 32 northerners, such as Gen. John C. Pemberton, served in the Confederate army. Ninety-five West Pointers were killed in the war, and 141 wounded.



Almira R. Hancock

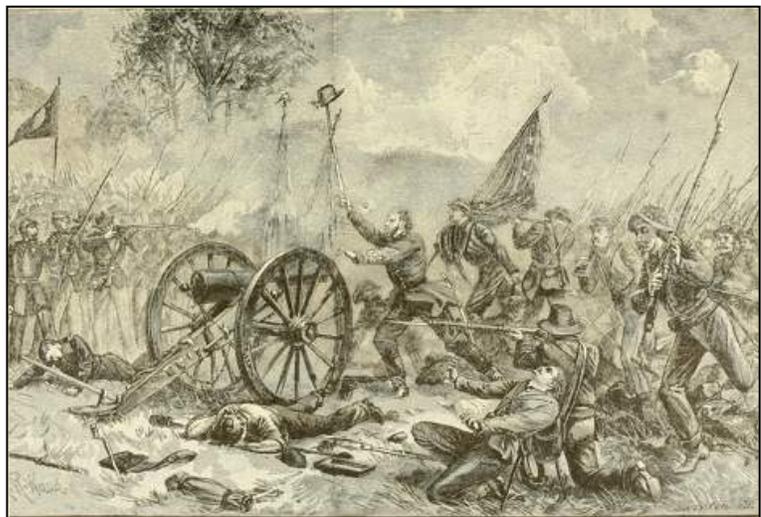


Captain Hancock and son Russell

In the war, both Hancock and Armistead rose to General rank and, at the climactic ending of the titanic Battle of Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, Armistead was killed leading his brigade in the assault against the center of the Union line commanded by Hancock. Hancock was badly wounded in the battle and although he recovered to once again lead troops in the war—and run unsuccessfully for president in 1880—his health was damaged by the wound and he died in 1886. His birthday, by the way, was February 14, 1824, and this most recently past Valentine's Day marks his 200th birthday.

In commenting on the Hancock family, Ms. Bierle notes that “It does not detract from General Hancock’s character to acknowledge that Almira helped make him a successful man. Her faithfulness, wisdom, determination, and domestic skills contributed to his respect among his superiors and peers. In the ancient Proverbs of Solomon, the writer questioned, ‘Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.’ Almira Russell Hancock’s life is a positive example of how one courageously faithful lady can stand beside a man of strong character and enhance his success.”

The meeting will take place on Thursday evening, March 14. 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, easily accessed via Park Avenue, off Independence Boulevard.



To the right, an illustration of Pickett’s Charge shows Armistead waving his hat from the tip of his sabre. (Image source: Wikimedia Commons)

## In search of Captain H. B. Middleton or: Why was a Future Italian Count in the Confederate Army?

By Jim Gannon, CFCWRT Program Director

Recently I visited Middleton Place historic site on the Ashley River near Charleston. Among the numerous artifacts on display in a cabinet, I noticed a document, a parole, issued at Appomattox to Captain H. B. Middleton of the 1st South Carolina Infantry. I was quite fascinated by it and wondered, “Who was this man? And what happened to him after the war?”

I started my inquiry with the National Park Service’s online data base of Civil War Soldiers. It turns out that there were two different regiments that bore the name of 1st South Carolina and there were quite a number of men from South Carolina named Middleton who served in the war. However, after some poking about, I found our Captain. He enlisted as a private and finished the war as a captain in a regiment known as Hagood’s 1st South Carolina. I would later learn that he was 18 years old at the start of the war and at first served in a signal unit and an artillery unit before serving with Hagood’s regiment in Northern Virginia. The unit participated in some of the war’s most famous battles such as Fredericksburg, Sharpsburg, The Wilderness, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg and suffered heavy casualties. The NPS data base lists 2,147 officers and men who served in the regiment at some point during the Civil War. Captain Middleton was among only 222 who were still in the ranks at Appomattox.



So, what happened next? I think we can assume that it was a dismal homecoming after Appomattox. The photo at left shows the heap of rubble which is all that is left today of the main plantation house of Middletown Place. The house was burned by the 46th New York late in the war and the remaining, load bearing brick walls, were toppled by a post war earthquake. (Another flanking large house was restored and is now a museum well worth visiting.) According to the docent at Middleton Place, the

family was heavily invested in Confederate bonds and most of the vast wealth of the family was gone at the end of war.

However, the 22-year-old H.B. still had some unique opportunities that most veterans didn’t. Poking around the internet I stumbled onto a self-described “genealogical document” published in 1900. I learned that Captain H. B. Middleton’s full name was Henry Bentivoglio Van Ness Middleton. H.B. was born in 1843 in Charleston but educated in Paris before attending the South Carolina Military Academy (a predecessor to the Citadel.) He came from a long line of extremely wealthy and politically active Middletons and his ancestors included a member of the Continental Congress, a signer of the



An 1860s Papal Zouave

Declaration of Independence, and diplomats to Russia and Spain. His mother was an Italian woman, Pauline, the Countess of Bentivoglio. So, soon after the war, H.B. moved permanently to Italy where he became a captain of the Papal Zouaves, a military unit which was part of the army of the Papal States. H.B., like his father, would marry an Italian Countess in 1869, and their son would grow up to be an officer in the Italian Navy.

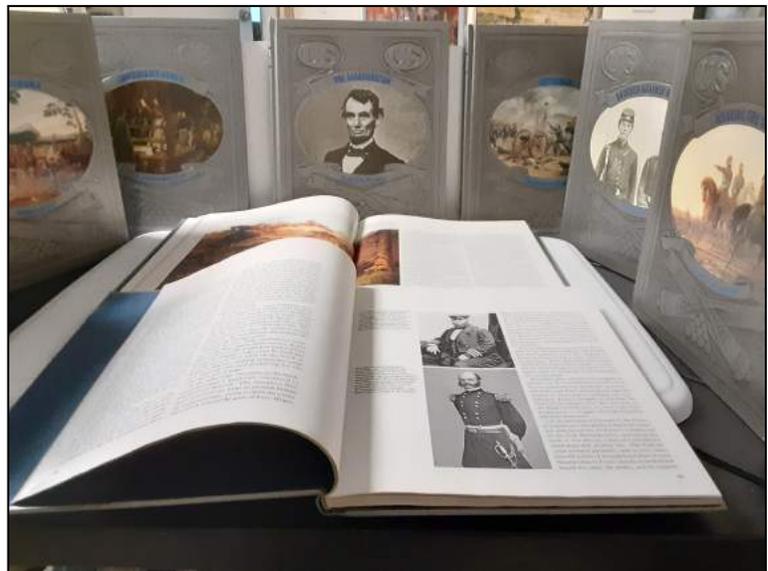
And eventually, in a world faraway from Appomattox, our veteran would become the Count of Bentivoglio, a title that was prominently intertwined with Italian history for hundreds of years.

## Beautiful Set of Time-Life Civil War Series Books Being Raffled

By Mike McDonald, CFCWRT Treasurer

The Round Table is auctioning off a beautiful set of the Time-Life Civil War Series books to benefit the Roundtable. This is a complete set of the famous Time-Life series, all 28 volumes, including a unique index that allows the reader to find the complete story of each important person, each battle, each significant building, and even horses! Book titles include:

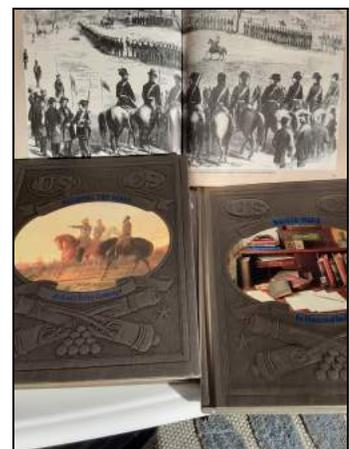
The War Begins  
 The Coastal War  
 Gettysburg  
 Sherman's March  
 War's Aftermath  
 Jackson's Valley Campaign  
 The Southern Home Front  
 Grant At Petersburg  
 The Assassination



And there are 19 other volumes, each with hundreds of little-known details, dozens of pictures, maps, charts, etc. that bring our nation's history to life.

This is not only an entertaining set of books, but also a reference work you will use for many years. You can go to the Roundtable's webpage <http://www.cfcwrt.org/> to get instructions on how to bid.

On March 16th, the Bentonville Battlefield will honor the 159th anniversary of the battle. The Museum of Civil War Medicine is going to be there for demonstrations. See the flyer on page 7.



## Area Historical Association Events

By Yelena Howell, Tours and Trips Committee

**The Local History Room at the New Hanover County Library** is a tremendous resource for professional and avocational researchers. Librarian Jennifer Finlay talks about it with Yelena: <http://tinyurl.com/JenFinl>

**Saturday, March 2, 10 am-5 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site**, 8884 St. Phillips Rd SE, Winnabow. **North Carolina Rice Festival**. History, cultural presentations, tours, demonstrations, live entertainment, family fun, children's stage, Gullah Geechee food vendors (wow!), and arts/crafts. This event and related activities: <http://tinyurl.com/Rice2024>

**Wednesday, March 6, 12 pm-5 pm. Cameron Art Museum**, 3201 South 17th St., Wilmington. **The Story of a Community Remembrance Project**. Co-chairs Tim Pinnick and Jim Downey will discuss their experiences with the project centered on honoring the victims of the 1898 coup. Pre-register here: <http://tinyurl.com/W1898> or contact CAM: (910) 395-5999.

**Friday, March 8, through Saturday, March 9. Wyse Fork Battlefield Tour**. A comprehensive weekend of history, fellowship and plentiful local food with Wade Sokolosky and Dennis Harper, all for \$150 per person. **All proceeds benefit the crucial initiative to save the battlefield:** <http://tinyurl.com/SaveWF>

**Tuesday, March 12, 630 pm-8 pm, Burgwin-Wright House**, 224 Market St., Wilmington. **Spring quarterly meeting of the Cape Fear Revolutionary War Round Table**. Join Dr. Chris & Mrs. Nancy Fonvielle, Christine Lambertson, Hunter Ingram and others for an outstanding guest history lecture and a bite of Death Fudge, and consider joining this worthy historical organization. Contact: [cfrwrt@gmail.com](mailto:cfrwrt@gmail.com)

**Saturday, March 16, 10 am- 4pm. Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site**. 5466 Harper House Rd, Four Oaks, NC. **"Always on Duty": Caring for the Wounded at Bentonville, 159<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Living History**, in collaboration with National Museum of Civil War Medicine. For updates: <http://tinyurl.com/CWMed2024>

**Tuesday, March 19, 6 pm-8 pm. CFWCRT Spring Fling! Bellamy Mansion Museum**, 503 Market St., Wilmington. A gentle reminder to join us for a tour and social evening with Exec. Dir. Gareth Evans and Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. presiding, wine and light hors-d'œuvre. \$20 admission supports our round table. Reservations: Yelena at [ybh2035@uncw.edu](mailto:ybh2035@uncw.edu) or (910) 431-6102.

**Saturday, March 30, 645 am-5 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site**, 8884 St Phillips Rd SE, Winnabow. **Eighteenth Century Easter Litany**. A deeply moving Anglican service in the ruins of St. Philips. Grounds open at 615 am with a brief sunrise service to commence at 645 am and grounds to remain open until 5 pm. Rain or shine; no cost. Bring a folding chair.

Throughout the month of March, staff of the **Burgwin-Wright House will be collecting donations of baby wipes, diapers, and disposable adult briefs for the Diaper Bank of NC**. For your convenience, Yelena Howell can accept any contributions at CFCWRT's March meeting.

# “ALWAYS ON DUTY”

159th Anniversary  
Living History Event

March 16,  
2024

10-4pm

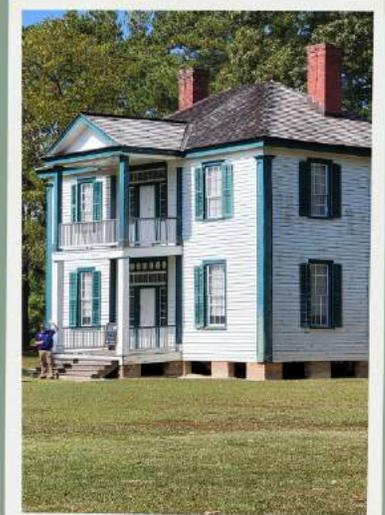
Join us for:  
Activities  
Demonstrations  
Talks and more!

Featuring:



National  
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BENTONVILLE  
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*Preserve - Educate - Explore*



## Additional Upcoming Events in March and April

Yelena Howell, our Tours and Trips Director, provides lyrical details on two more upcoming and fascinating opportunities.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,  
Now names, and men still housing here.  
—George Meredith, “The Lark Ascending” (1881)

Ladies and gentlemen:

We would like to invite you to two special events now that the exuberant joy of March returns to the Lower Cape Fear, with not a snowflake to our credit this passing winter. (In the mood for a stunning Victorian poem set to the music it inspired? Let George Meredith and Ralph Vaughan Williams take your breath away: <http://tinyurl.com/OnALark>)

In the mood, too, for a spring soir e at the Bellamy Mansion Museum? Join us for wine and light hors d'oeuvre on **Tuesday, March 19, from 6 until 8 p.m.** “Men we revere”, Executive Director Gareth Evans and Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr., will preside over a scholarly discussion of the history and architecture of the famous historic home that was completed in 1861 and served as Federal headquarters after the fall of Wilmington in February of 1865.



RSVP with your preference of red or white wine or soft drink and any food allergies to Yelena by email at [ybh2035@uncw.edu](mailto:ybh2035@uncw.edu) or text (910) 431-6102. Tickets are \$20 ea. Checks, PayPal, and Venmo

payments are appreciated and will remain refundable through 10 a.m. the day of the event. Cash payments are welcome at the next round table meeting on March 14.

**Please be advised of accessibility issues at the Museum that has not been modified with an elevator or ramp entry. There are stairs to climb and descend.**

The following month, we will be taking a private cruise down the Cape Fear River with Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. narrating and Capt. Ned Rhodes of Wilmington Water Tours at the helm. Join us on **Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, between 945 and 1145 a.m.** for a Civil War-themed excursion. Tickets are available now for \$45 ea. Invite a friend or your beau/belle and reserve your seats directly with Yelena (contact information above).

## Chris Mackowski's Tour d'force Presentation on the Battle of Jackson, Mississippi, May 14, 1863

By S.K. Zook, Runner Correspondent

Prof. Chris Mackowski, founder and editor-in-chief of the [Emerging Civil War](#) blog, gave one of the most memorable presentations our round table has received on February 8. Without notes to refer to, Mackowski wove an interesting story around the personalities of the leaders and the impressions of the soldiers as U.S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee, moved quickly and confidently to eliminate a threat to its rear as it moved to isolate the essential Confederate fortress of Vicksburg.



Mackowski quickly reviewed the record and biographical details of U.S. Grant, emphasizing his greatest strength; “He just wouldn’t give up,” we were told. Turned back in six or seven attempts to neutralize Vicksburg, Grant kept trying until he found the solution in the spring of 1863. Crossing the mighty Mississippi River below Vicksburg, he moved inland with the equivalent of a Civil War blitzkrieg so that he could attack Vicksburg from practicable ground east of the city.

We learned that one of the oft repeated cliches of the campaign—that Grant cut himself off from his supply line in order to achieve his goal—was a myth. It was only after the Battle of Raymond on May 12, about two weeks and 40 miles into the campaign, that Grant decided to abandon his supply line in order to move quickly against the growing threat of Confederate General Joseph Johnston’s force converging on the Mississippi state capital of Jackson.

Johnston, we heard, didn’t want to be there. Although he was the highest-ranking U.S. Army officer to resign his commission and shift his allegiance to the Confederacy, his seniority in the rebel army was below that of three men he had outranked before.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis, a West Point graduate and former U.S. Secretary of War, stated that Johnston’s position behind the other three was because Johnston’s last U.S. rank of brigadier general had been tied to his staff post as Quartermaster General and the U.S. Army recognized his grade as a line officer as lieutenant colonel, not brigadier general.



Wounded at the Battle of Fair Oaks a year before the Battle of Jackson, Johnston was replaced by Robert E. Lee and although Davis gave him the important command of the Department of the West, the feud between the two leaders was never resolved. We also learned that Johnston and Davis differed on strategy.



As president and commander in chief, Davis felt driven to defend territory. “With a dozen governors tugging at him...’What about me?’ ‘You must defend my state,” etc., as Mackowski put it, the political pressure was understandable.

Johnston, on the other hand, felt the way to victory meant the south had to conserve the power of its forces, maintaining the mobility of its armies. On the Peninsula of Virginia in 1862, however, that strategy had

led to the Union army’s advance to the gates of Richmond, as Johnston continually gave up ground.

Prof. Mackowski was extremely critical of Johnston for what seemed to be his reluctance to give his best to stopping Grant, but also for seeming to place the defense of his own reputation above his duty to defend Vicksburg.

The battle itself was full of interesting anecdotes, including the part played by “Old Abe,” the eagle mascot of the 8th Wisconsin in the “Live Eagle Brigade” of BG Joseph Mower. Perhaps predictably, Johnston directed his subordinates to fight a delaying action while he retreated away from Jackson—and Vicksburg. Tragically for his cause, he had commanded Lt. General John C. Pemberton, commander of the Vicksburg defenses, to move against Grant. President Davis had ordered Pemberton to hold Vicksburg. Pemberton sought to obey both conflicting orders and split his forces. Ultimately, he faced Grant’s superior Army at Champion Hill and was soundly defeated, losing more than 4,000 men who would be needed to defend the river fort.



Notable historians: L to R, Sam Hood, Ted Savas, Chris Mackowski, Angie Zombek, Chris Fonvielle



More than 50 members and friends attended the presentation including former Round Table president Chris Fonvielle, professor emeritus of history at UNCW, UNCW Asst. Professor of History Angela Zombek, Civil War publisher and author Ted Savas and author Sam Hood.

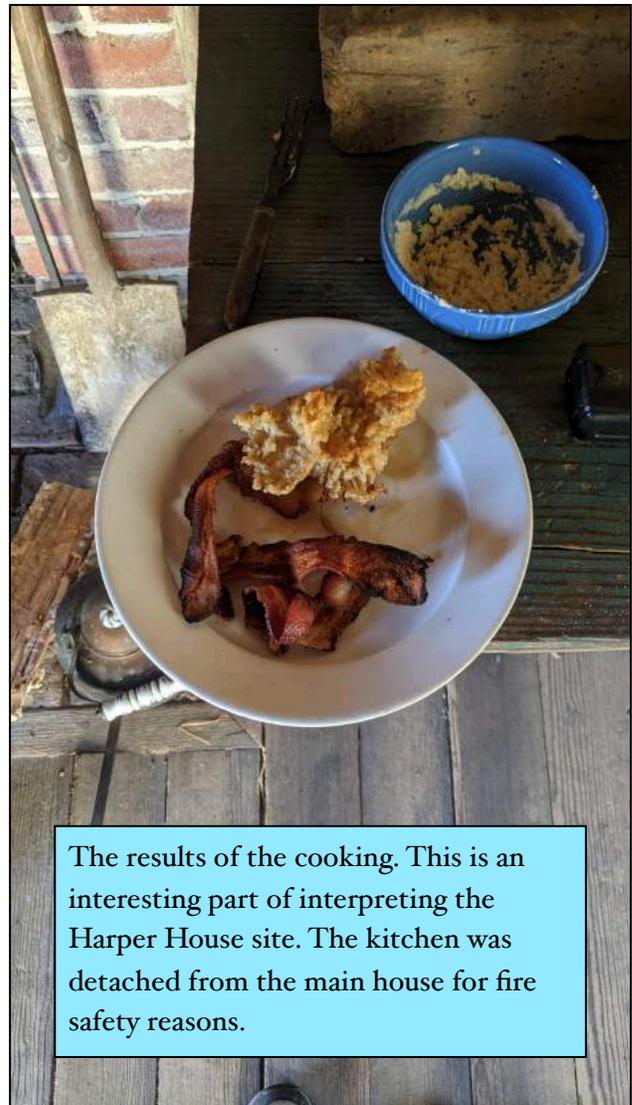
We welcomed new member Thomas Bello, who also won the special raffle of a custom line drawing created by Mason Jones with historically authentic, handmade quills and historic inks.

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## What's Cooking at Bentonville? Why ... Bacon and Hotcakes



Bentonville Battlefield Education Coordinator Anna Kulcsar cooks up bacon and hotcakes in the Harper House kitchen hearth much as it would have been done in the 1860s. See the next page.



The results of the cooking. This is an interesting part of interpreting the Harper House site. The kitchen was detached from the main house for fire safety reasons.

## Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

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**Cape Fear Round Table, you're invited**

# **Gettysburg Trip**

**September 19-22**

**Hosted by Cleveland CWRT**

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