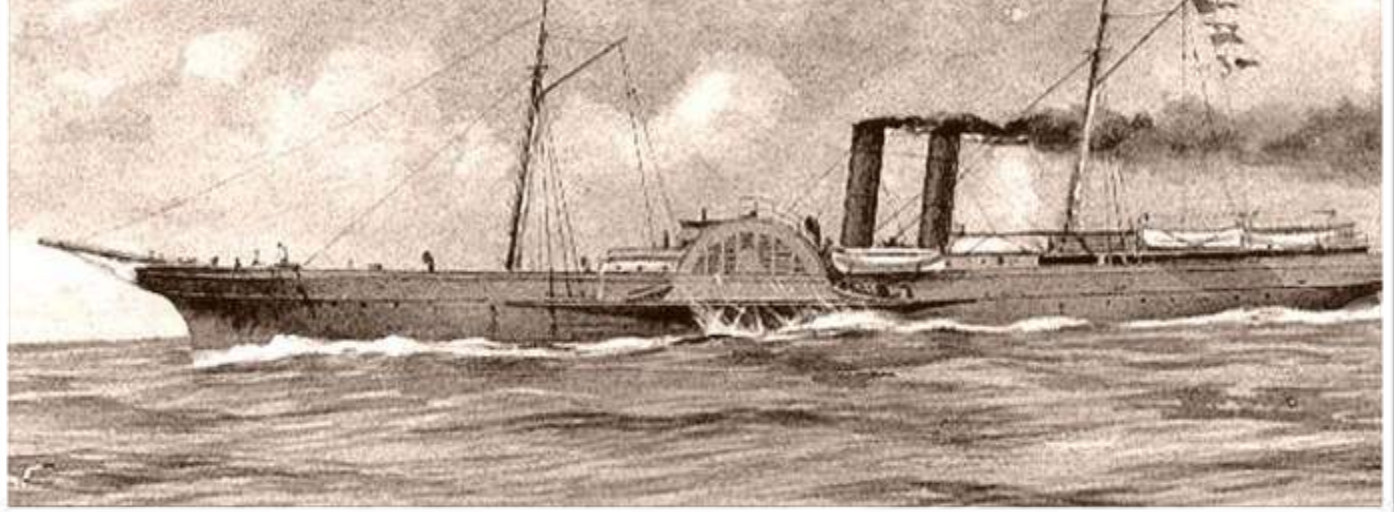


THE RUNNER



The official newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable

UNCW Professor Angela Zombek to Speak on Key West in the Civil War: Union Stronghold Was No Tropical Paradise

by Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

Our May 9 meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table features a presentation by Dr. Angela Zombek, Ph.D., associate professor of history at UNCW. Dr. Zombek, an expert on the prisoner of war experience in the Civil War, will talk about the strategic Union outpost of Key West, including the use of Fort Zachary Taylor as a prison for blockade runners, Confederate sympathizers and Union miscreants. It was no “Margaritaville.”

Fort Taylor, on the southwest tip of Key West, overlooks the watery pass where the waters of the Gulf of Mexico blend into the Atlantic Ocean. Cruise ships pass, and fade into the background as beachgoers soak up sun, swim, snorkel, and witness magnificent sunsets, but it was much different from 1861 to 1865.

Today, Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park is one of the most sought-after attractions in Key West and in the Florida Park System, but during the Civil War, Fort Taylor was the “Gibraltar”



Membership Report

By Bruce Patterson
CFCWRT Secretary

The Membership Chair is pleased to welcome **Will Murray** to our membership rolls. **Will**, who hails from Wallace, is a full-time firefighter with the NHC Fire Department (Federal Point Station) but he finds (or makes) time to also serve as a volunteer firefighter in Wallace and is an active re-enactor aboard the *USS North Carolina* and rounds out his community service as a *World War I* and *Civil War* re-enactor as well.

Recall please that your re-enlistment month is printed on the face of your name tag. If your membership anniversary is May, please make your membership payment online or complete the process by computer, check or cash at our 9 May meeting. If in arrears for the current year, please play catch up that evening as well.

If you prefer to pay the good, old-fashioned way, please mail your check to **CFCWRT, 8387 East Highcroft NE, Leland, NC 28451**.

As always, we thank you for your active participation and monetary support.

And please see page 5 for a thoughtful memorial by President Bill Jayne to our Ed Gibson, who passed away on April 3rd.

of the Gulf,” defending U.S. interests against European powers in the Western Hemisphere, and headquartering the Union Navy’s East Gulf Blockading Squadron. According to the American Battlefield Trust, “Union seamen brought 299 captured blockade runners, their crews, and tons of supplies to Key West, which contributed to the Union victory as supplies in the Confederacy became scarce. U.S. authorities auctioned off captured vessels and cargo and held blockade runners and disloyal civilians – from Key West and elsewhere – in Fort Taylor.”

Before the war, Americans North and South recognized Key West’s significance. In 1856, the Key West newspaper *Key of the Gulf* contended that Forts Taylor and Jefferson on the tiny island of the Dry Tortugas west of Key West would, in any maritime struggle, “constitute the most important rallying points for all the commerce of the Gulf of Mexico” since the waters between the Florida Keys, Cuba, and the Bahamas would be an attractive theater for naval warfare. Fort Taylor guarded these waters and oversaw the “entire cotton crop of the country” on its way to market.

Dr. Zombek (PhD University of Florida) is an historian of the Civil War Era and is Associate Professor of History at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She is also coordinator of the Masters Program in History at UNCW and the managing editor of “Interpreting the Civil War” series at Kent State University. She is the author of *Penitentiaries, Punishment, and Military Prisons: Familiar Responses to an Extraordinary Crisis during the America Civil War* (Kent State University Press). Her current book project, *Stronghold of the Union: Key West Under Martial Law*, is under contract with The University Press of Florida.

She is a native of Ohio and holds an MA from the University of Akron and a Ph.D. from the University of Florida. She recalls a visit to the Camp Chase historic site in Columbus, Ohio, as the spark that

ignited her interest in Civil War history, especially the history of incarceration in the war. Camp Chase became a prison for captured Confederates, and many died there. More than 400,000 soldiers—about 194,000 Union and 214,000 Confederate—were captured over the course of the



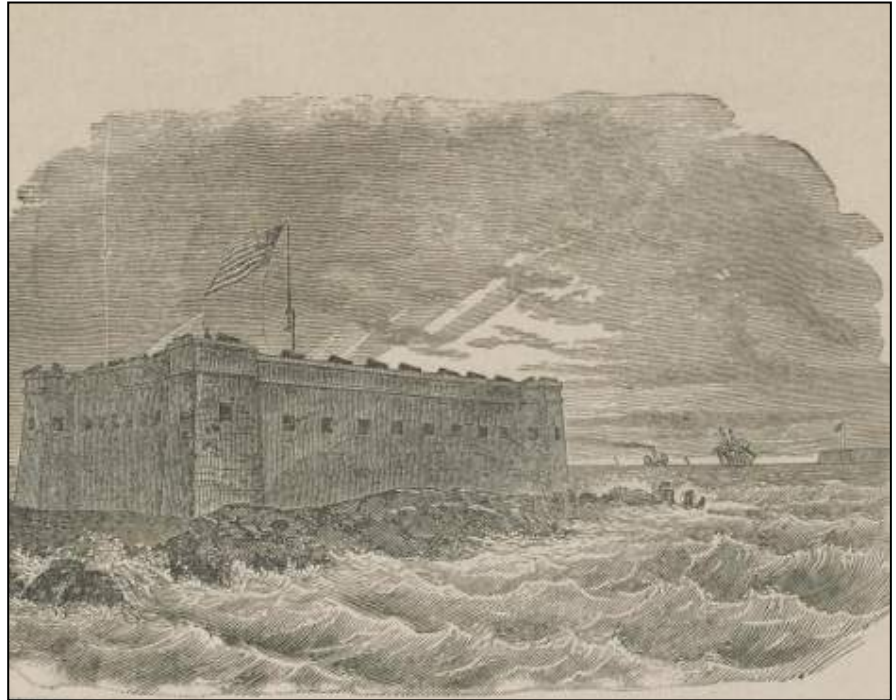
war. Prison conditions were brutal with approximately 30,000 Union soldiers and 26,000 Confederates dying while imprisoned. Deaths occurred most often because of medical conditions including infectious diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, yellow fever, malaria, etc. Many also died because of malnutrition and exposure to the elements.

But Professor Zombek’s talk will go beyond the topic of incarceration. “The Civil War looks different from Key West,” she notes. Despite Florida’s secession, Union troops secured and occupied Key West, a strategic military and economic outpost, for the U.S. throughout the entire Civil War. The Union garrison, including the 2nd United States Colored Infantry come 1864, fortified Key West against potential Confederate and foreign attacks, confronted civilians with Confederate sympathies, and enforced both confiscation policy and the Emancipation Proclamation, from which Key West was not exempt despite the fact that it remained under U.S. control.

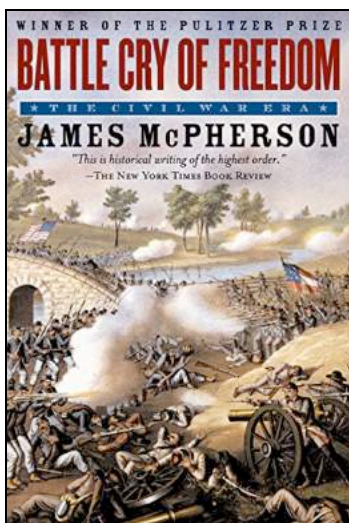
To maintain control, Union martial law cracked down on Confederate sympathizers, blockade runners, smugglers and even Union malcontents, including some draft protesters from New York City. At least one British citizen was held when he was captured trying to run the blockade. Most blockade running ships were built in the United Kingdom and British citizens often served on the ships. Cotton from the south escaped through the blockade and the small, fast ships “ran”

to neutral harbors like the Bahamas and Havana, Cuba, where the cotton was loaded onto larger ships bound for Europe. In Europe, the cotton was sold, and the Confederacy bought weapons and other military supplies (and private blockade runners bought scarce consumer goods such as coffee, luxury clothing and so forth) to be carried back to the intermediate ports where they were loaded onto the blockade runners for the dangerous voyage into the blockaded south. By 1864 most Confederate ports were closed to significant blockade running and only Wilmington remained to supply essential supplies to the beleaguered Confederate armies.

Make plans to come and hear this fascinating story about a little known aspect of the Civil War. The meeting will take place on Thursday evening, May 9, 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 Church 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!



Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West - "The Gibraltar of the Gulf."



[Have you read this book? If so, consider writing us a review!](#)

“This riveting history of the Civil War dives into the political, social, and military events that led up to the war and the battles, personalities, and politics that shaped it. With fresh interpretations and insights, the author challenges old myths and sheds light on new ones. The book touches on topics such as the Dred Scott decision, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, and the North's eventual adoption of a policy of emancipation. Through this fast-paced narrative, readers will gain a deep understanding of this transformative period in American history.” - Goodreads review of 4.4 out of 5 stars



Edward Charles “Hoot” Gibson, 64

By Bill Jayne, CFCWRT President

We of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, and indeed all those in the wider community of



history lovers in Eastern North Carolina, were stunned to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of our friend Ed Gibson on Wednesday, April 3, 2024.

Edward Charles “Hoot” Gibson 64, passed away peacefully at home of natural causes. He leaves a great hole in this world, for his family, friends and all that knew him.

Ed was a charter member of the round table and was an intensely loyal and supportive member of the group. When we were struck by the twin scourges of Hurricane Florence and the COVID phenomenon, Ed was always there to provide whatever help and support that was needed. He was our ever-reliable

audiovisual guru and also brought his encyclopedic memory to bear in presentations at Oakdale Cemetery and at other events.

Ed was born July 20, 1959 on base at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina to Elwood and Elizabeth (Dieterle) Gibson. He received his bachelor’s degree from UNCW and had Certificates of training from NC State. Ed spent his life in service of others through his work with the City of Wilmington Police Department, the City of Burgaw Police Department, and as a

Magistrate for North Carolina District 5. He also served as a reservist in the United States Coast Guard.

Ed had a passion for history, which led him to be involved with many groups in addition to the round table, including the North Carolina Military History Society and the Sons of the Union Veterans, where he served as commander of the General Ruger Camp of the SUV. He also loved to read, geocache and smoke a fine cigar. Ed traveled to most of the states of the country. He loved looking for hidden caches and made many friends along the way on his adventures.



A Celebration of Ed's Life will be held 2:00 PM Saturday May 11, 2024 at North Topsail Shores Baptist Church, 808 Old Folkstone Road Sneads Ferry, NC 28460.

The family will have a time of Visitation one hour prior to the service at the Church, also will be broadcast on the churches Facebook Livestream. In lieu of flowers please make donations to North Topsail Shores Baptist Church. 808 Old Folkstone Rd, Sneads Ferry, NC 28460.

Brunswick Civil War Roundtable Event May 7th

U.S. Navy Captain Edward W. Gantt (Ret.) will be the guest speaker at its Tuesday, May 7th meeting. His presentation is entitled, "Contributions of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War." This meeting will also mark this organization's 14th anniversary. The meeting will be held at Hatch Auditorium on Caswell Beach at 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome.

The United States Colored Troops played a critical role in the war. Over 180,000 African Americans enlisted, accounting for roughly 10% of the Union Army. Their regiments fought with courage and distinction, challenging racist notions about their fighting ability.

Capt. Gantt has had a celebrated career. U.S. Army Airborne and Ranger schools. Helicopter door gunner and crew chief in South Vietnam. Naval Aviation Officer Candidate School where he received his Naval Flight Officer "Wings of Gold." Career duty included over 2,000 hours flying time. Upon retirement, he became a teacher and is an active re-enactor.

The guest fee is \$10, and can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues, which can include a spouse. For more information, email Brunswickcwrtable@gmail.com. Or you may visit their website at Brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com or their Facebook page.

Area Historical Association Events

By Yelena Howell, Tours and Trips Committee

Thursday, May 2, 6-8 pm. CSS Neuse Museum, 100 North Queen St., Kinston. Clara Barton Dinner Theater. Tickets are \$15, incl. dinner; free for current/retired nurses and nursing students. Pre-registration required: <https://tinyurl.com/NurseBarton> Info: (252) 526-9600, ext. 222.

Friday, May 3, 1-1:30 pm. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th St., Wilmington. Public Tour of Boundless, a sculpture by NC artist Stephen Hayes commemorating the United States Colored Troops and their fight for freedom. Free with museum admission. Daniel Jones will lead this tour on **multiple other May dates as well.** CAM: (910) 395-5999.

Saturday, May 4, 10 am- 3 pm. CSS Neuse Museum, 100 North Queen St., Kinston. Medicine and Diseases in the Civil War. Join Andy Bennett to learn about period medicine, including field wounds, procedures, and diseases. **The Clara Barton: Angel of the Battlefield Traveling Exhibit** will also be on display on the mezzanine. Cost: free. Info: (252) 526-9600, ext. 222.

Saturday, May 4, 5:30-7:15 pm. Wilmington True History Tours. Wilmington Dark History Tour. Local educator Alex will lead a ¾ mile walk through downtown and factual, but engaging conversation about pirates, yellow fever, fires, spies, etc. Tickets are \$25 for ages 14+, \$22 for Veterans/First Responders: <https://tinyurl.com/TruHx>

Friday, May 10, 9-10:30 am, Burgwin-Wright House, 224 Market St., Wilmington. Outlander in the Cape Fear Walking Tour. Learn about the Colonial Wilmington that real Scottish Highlanders like Outlander characters Claire and Jamie found when they arrived in America in the 1770. Tickets are \$20 + tax: (910) 762-0570.

Saturday, May 11, 9-10:30 am. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Wilmington and the American Civil War Walking Tour. \$20, advance tickets needed: <https://tinyurl.com/cwwnc> Info: (910) 251-3700.

Sunday, May 12, 10-11:30 am, Burgwin-Wright House, 224 Market St., Wilmington. Outlander in the Cape Fear River Cruise. A Wilmington Water Tours cruise themed to the "Burgwin-Wright Presents... Outlander in the Cape Fear" podcast. Tickets are \$35 + tax: <https://wilmingtonwatertours.net/> or (910) 762-0570.

Saturday, May 18, 10 am-4 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, 8884 St. Phillips Rd SE, Winnabow. Women of the Port. Fun for all ages. Cost: free. Info: (910) 371-6613

Friday, May 24, 6-8 pm. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Meet and Greet: CAM Watercolor Artists. Come enjoy the Bellamy, mingle and chat with artists and art lovers, and let your heart be light. Info: (910) 251-3700. [continued on next page]

Wednesday, May 29, 11 am-3 pm (drop in). North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport. 204 E. Moore St., Southport. Anchors Aweigh. **Got the Blues? Indigo Production on the Cape Fear River.** Hands-on activities for the whole family. Cost: free; donations appreciated. Info: (910) 477-5151.

Victor Vignola Contrasts Differences in Command At Pivotal 1862 Battle of Fair Oaks/Seven Pines

By T. Jonathan Jackson, CFCWRT Correspondent

Award winning author Victor Vignola traveled from Upstate New York's Hudson Valley to far-off Wilmington to address our round table at the April 11 meeting. Vic noted that his car has over 300,000 miles on it, so long-distance road trips aren't unusual for him. His topic was *Contrasts in Command: The Battle of Fair Oaks, May 31-June 1, 1862.*

His many trips to the battlefields of Virginia engendered interest in the battle of Fair Oaks/Seven Pines (two phases of the same battle) on May 31 and June 1, 1862. McClellan led the Army of the Potomac up the Peninsula between the James and the York rivers to the outskirts of Richmond, the Confederate capital. His march had been slowed by abysmal weather, Union fears for the security of Washington City, and McClellan's inherent caution and lack of audacity. The Confederate army under Joe Johnston had also been cautious and reluctant to engage the larger Union army, but Confederate ingenuity and intrepidity had also served to slow McClellan's progress. With the armies less than 10 miles from Richmond, Johnston had run out of room to retreat.

Finally, McClellan made a move that left his army vulnerable because it was divided by the flooded Chickahominy, a river that Vignola said is "best described as the Rodney Dangerfield of rivers; it gets no respect...it's a swamp!" Easily forded in dry periods, it was now a flooded tangle of undergrowth, trees, mud and flowing



water hundreds of yards wide. One corps, to be followed by another was south of the river while the rest of the Army of the Potomac was north of the Chickahominy, now a formidable barrier.

Vignola, with extensive and welcome cooperation and guidance from National Park Service historian Robert E. L. “Bobby” Krick, poured over the primary sources related to the battle and



also visited the places where the battle took place. Unfortunately, most of the battlefield had been “developed” with houses, light commercial buildings and the nearby Richmond International Airport and Interstate 64. Maybe we feel a need these days to move fast because we have destroyed so much of our root structure (just a thought from your diligent correspondent).



Focusing on the remaining 12 acres of the Adams farm, Vic rediscovered what happened when nearly 200,000 men clashed with the fate of the Confederate capital in the balance.

As Bobby Krick wrote in the foreword to *Contrasts in Command*, “No truly accurate unraveling of the Fair Oaks portion of the May 31 fight existed until now. Nearly everything in the following pages is fresh and convincing. Author

Vignola even has reoriented the traditional alignment of the combatants by nearly 90 degrees. His work has reconfigured the boundaries of the Fair Oaks action and shows that room remains for original research and new discoveries.”

About 40 members and guests heard Vignola present the entire story of Fair Oaks with hardly a reference to his notes. His command of the subject matter and his energetic and engaging style was entertaining and enlightening. Many questions ensued, enlarging the enjoyment of the audience.



The after event presentation.

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

