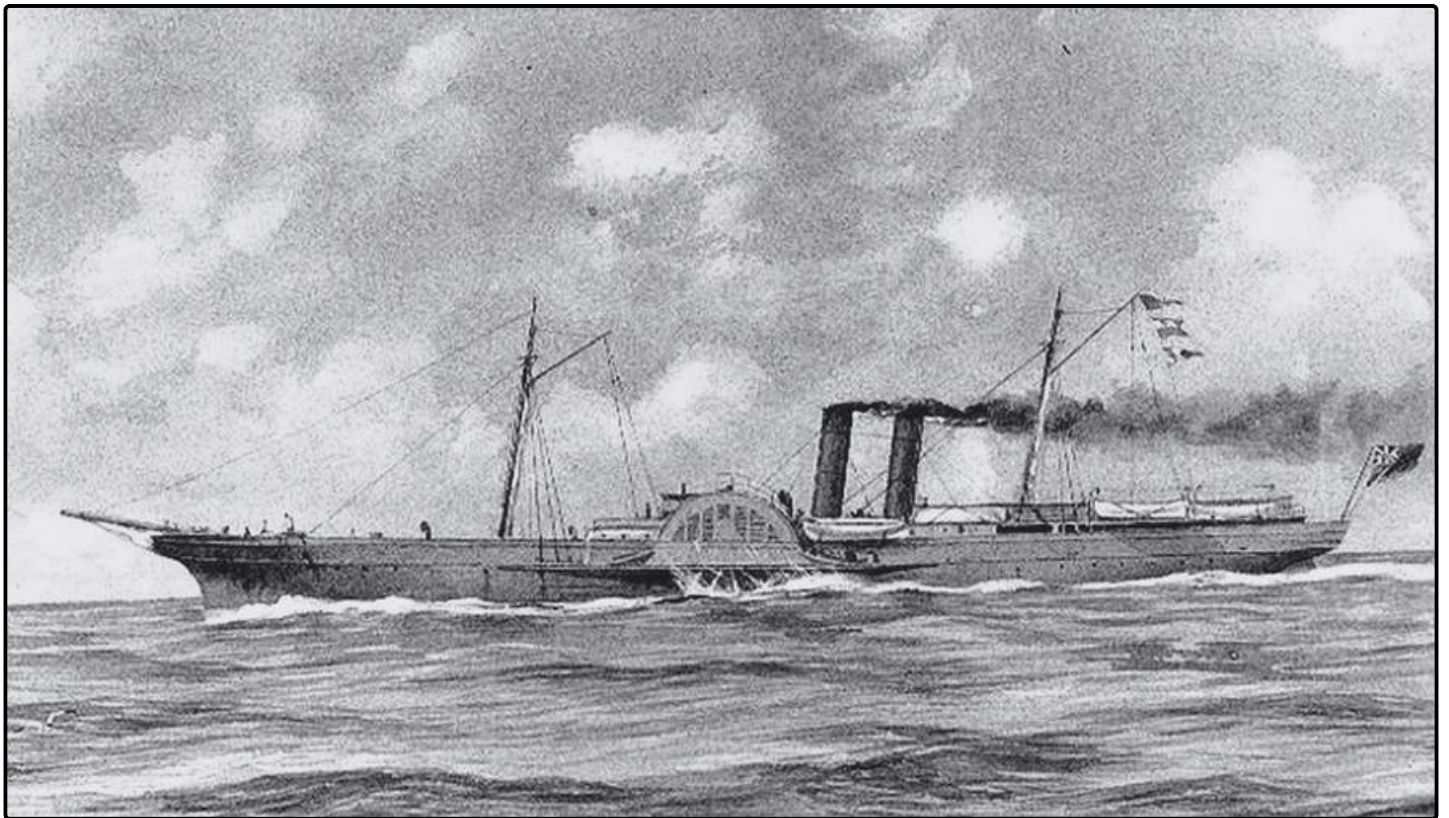


The Runner

The Official Newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table



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Letter from the Editor

As we welcome the arrival of March, we are reminded that history, like the changing of seasons, is never static. It is shaped by those who study it, interpret it, and share it with others. This month, as always, we continue our mission at the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table to explore the complexities of the war that shaped our nation, while also considering its lasting impact on our understanding of history today.

One of the greatest strengths of our group is the diversity of our perspectives. Whether we are analyzing battlefield tactics, political leadership, or the lives of civilians caught in the storm of war, each new insight enriches our collective knowledge. The Civil War was not a singular narrative but a vast tapestry of experiences, struggles, and consequences, many of which are still being uncovered.

As we gather this month, I encourage each of you to continue engaging with our shared history with the same curiosity and passion that defines this Round Table. Let us keep pushing the boundaries of what we know. After all, history is not just about the past, it is about how we interpret it in the present and preserve it for the future.

Thank you for being part of this journey. I look forward to another enlightening meeting and to hearing the insights that each of you brings to the table.

Best regards,

Matthew Howell
Editor

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table



President's Address

By Yelena Howell



Dear Cape Fear Civil War Round Table members and friends:

If a wave of a magic wand could transport us back to medieval Europe, you and I would find ourselves in the heyday of monarchical epithets. We would hear current news of William the Conqueror and Philip the Fair, Sviatopolk the Accursed and Manuel the Bibliophile, Louis the Debonaire (a drop of his blood lives on in my own children) and John The Lover of

Elegance, Etheldred the Unready and a host of other rulers whose character and destiny have been encapsulated in monikers they will truly never live down. Customs and conventions change, but human nature remains largely the same. Like the rulers of yore, each of us can be summed up in a word or two. While those anchor words may vary based on who describes us, each of us possesses salient qualities through which we consistently relate and contribute to the world around us. Civic organizations like CFCWRT run on a robust mix of individual strengths and interests. One person writes, another takes on audiovisual responsibilities; one enjoys fundraising while another keeps the books; one presents on topics of shared interest, yet another invites and takes care of presenters, and so on.

Each contributor to this living kaleidoscope could be playfully described as The Fair, The Scholar, The Adventurous, The Loyal, The Savvy, and so on. We all do best when we draw from our strengths. "Men must polish their particular way", counseled the legendary samurai Miyamoto Musashi in *The Book of Five Rings*. As you celebrate your unique gifts, please know that you have an evergreen invitation to explore a variety of options for closer engagement with our Round Table. We model shared leadership, progressive responsibility and appreciation for multiple ways of thinking and doing things. We also believe in a light touch: you are welcome to try a specific task or job and see if it is the right fit for you on an occasional, temporary or long-term basis. If your preferences change, we will cheerfully accommodate them: **CapeFearRT@gmail.com**

Thank you for journeying with us, and please enjoy the most beautiful season of "joy, awake, aglow" that is already overtaking us: **<https://allpoetry.com/the-lark-ascending>**

Springtime regards,

Yelena

Membership Report

By Kim Berger

The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table's February meeting was a great success, with 56 attendees and a warm welcome extended to 11 visitors! I've reached out to the guests who kindly left their contact information and look forward to hearing back from them. We are always excited to grow our community and share our passion for history!

Name Tags

Name tags are an amenity that facilitates communication among all attendees. Please be sure to return your badge at the end of each meeting or plan to bring it the next time you join us in person. If you need a new tag, just let me know.

Membership Renewals

Your renewal month is printed on your name tag. Please feel free to check with me in person or by email at CapeFearRT@gmail.com if you have a question about your renewal month. There are several easy ways to "reenlist":

- See membership options and renew online: <https://cfcwrt.org/>
- Mail a check to CFCWRT, 1008 Heron Run Dr, Leland, NC 28451
- See Ed Lestrangle at the next meeting with a check or cash.
- See Yelena Howell for Venmo.

Spread the Word

Remember, we are all ambassadors for the Round Table. Please invite your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to join us. We will ensure every guest feels welcome.

Sincerely yours,

Kim Berger
Membership Chair, Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

CFCWRT March Meeting

By Bill Jayne

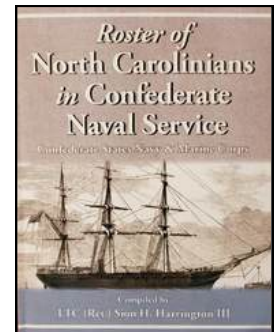


HISTORIAN COVERS THE SAGA OF NORTH CAROLINIANS IN THE CONFEDERATE NAVY

The next meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, now celebrating its 30th year of operation, is Thursday evening, March 13, 2025, at centrally located St. John's Episcopal Church in Midtown Wilmington near Independence Mall. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. Members and friends are welcome. Members of the round table, remember you are our best recruiters. Invite a friend. There is no admission charge.

Our speaker will be Sion Harrington III. Si is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel with service from 1970 to 2009. He had service on active duty, and in the reserves and National Guard, including assignments in Grenada and Bosnia. He is a graduate of UNC Chapel Hill and holds a masters in history from N.C. State. He worked as a teacher, ROTC instructor and military collection archivist with the NC Division Historical Resources. He is also the vice president of the N.C. Military Historical Society, which operates a very interesting and educational museum on the grounds of the Blakeslee Air Force Recreation Area in Kure Beach, near the Fort Fisher State Historic Site.

A native of Erwin, NC, a small town in Harnett County about half way between Raleigh and Fayetteville, Si is a lifelong student of history and has dedicated years of concentrated study and effort to documenting the history of the military in North Carolina and the history of Erwin and Harnett County, including the Civil War battle of Averasboro fought just before the battle of Bentonville. He is the author of numerous articles and the book-length *Roster of North Carolinians in Confederate Naval Service*.



Si has noted that “Perhaps the best way to describe this roster is by explaining what it is not. As hard as I tried to make it so, I cannot claim it is a comprehensive list of all North Carolinians who served the Confederacy on, or near, the water. It is this author’s humble attempt to document a group of men all too often under appreciated and superficially treated by historians of the conflict. North Carolina men and boys serving in the land forces were well documented by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources’ on-going multi-volume series *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. The fact that North Carolina naval personnel had no such annotated roster was sufficient justification for me to develop such a roster. It is my hope that by preserving and publishing the names and such service information as could be found that the Tar Heels who served the Confederate naval service may receive the recognition they so richly deserve.”

CFCWRT March Meeting Cont.

During the Civil War, the agricultural South faced a daunting opponent in the industrialized North, and nowhere was that more apparent than on water. The Confederacy began the war without a single warship to its name.

It was clear that to win, the Confederacy had to industrialize, which it was able to do...to some degree. In the effort to industrialize, the South took advantage of and initiated revolutionary changes that were occurring in naval warfare. The Confederacy would combat-test mines (torpedoes), submarines, semi-submersibles (Davids), and rifled cannon (Brooke guns) during the war. But the modern weapon in which the C.S. Navy initially placed its greatest faith was the armored ship, and by war's end it had commissioned and put into action a veritable fleet of ironclads, 23 in all, with five in North Carolina waters, including the CSN *Wilmington*.

The Confederate ironclads were neither the first commissioned, the first in battle, nor the most advanced. The concept of iron-armored ships was well known by naval officials. French ironclad floating batteries had engaged Russian shore batteries during the Crimean War. And both Great Britain and France had commissioned powerful armored warships by the time the American Civil War broke out.

Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, aware of the South's deficiencies in warship construction, attempted to obtain armored vessels in Europe. Despite efforts by various naval agents, only one—the *Stonewall*—reached Confederate hands, but the war ended before she saw any action. Hampered by chronic shortages of iron and a dearth of manufacturing facilities for steam power plants, Confederate ironclads were almost always underpowered and unfit for service on the high seas. They usually ended up being dedicated to harbor defense where they often played an important role.

The south's largest city in 1860 was the metropolitan entrepôt of New Orleans. With a population of about 168,000, it was the sixth largest city in the United States. Yet, New Orleans was an outlier, one of a kind. The second largest city in the states that would secede from the union was Charleston. With about 40,000 inhabitants, however, Charleston was only the 22nd largest city in the country. Richmond was 25th with about 38,000. So, of the 25 largest cities in the country, 22 were in the north. The 100th largest city in the country, Wilmington, was the largest city in North Carolina with almost 10,000 residents.

CFCWRT March Meeting Cont.

North Carolina had a total population of almost 1,000,000 people in 1860 but about 332,000 were enslaved African-Americans, many of whom escaped slavery during the Civil War and joined the U.S. Army or the U.S. Navy. Of all the states in 1860, North Carolina was 12th largest in population but it had a long coastline, the most extensive sounds anywhere in North America, and a strong maritime tradition. Some of the most intrepid and notable figures in Confederate naval history were from North Carolina. To hear more about their story, come join us as we listen to Si Harrington's presentation. His presentation will cover naval battles, strategy, commerce raiders, and ironclads as they relate to North Carolina and North Carolinians. Take advantage of the relaxed atmosphere of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table to ask questions and discuss his book with the author.

As usual, the meeting will be held in Elebash Hall in St. John's Episcopal Church. Enter at the rear of the church, which is located at 1219 Forest Hills Drive in Wilmington. The church parking lot, close to the entrance to the meeting room, is easily accessed via Park Avenue off of Independence Boulevard. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and there is ample time to talk to other members of the round table. Ask a friend to come along and find out more about the round table. There is no cost for admission.

For information about membership, go to our website at <http://cfewrt.org> and click on "Join".

See you there!



Si Harrington and Jim McKee, site manager of Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site

CFCWRT February Meeting

By Daniel J. Callaghan and Roman Berger



On February 13, 2025, the members of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table were treated to a tour de force presentation of the complicated and decisive Vicksburg Campaign by one of the premier Vicksburg experts in the country. Terrence J. Winschel is the retired chief historian of Vicksburg National Military Park and a highly respected author of several histories of the campaign and its constituent parts.

Following his retirement from the National Park Service, Terry became the historian of the U.S. Army Research and Development Center and authored an excellent 27-part overview of the Vicksburg Campaign focusing on The Engineers at Vicksburg , available online.

Terry's presentation, channeling the words of President Abraham Lincoln, was titled "Unvexed to the Sea" and he began with a powerful passage about the absolute importance of the Mississippi River to commerce, transportation and unifying the country. The great river was an artery for moving raw materials, finished products, staples such as cotton and wheat, and much more from Pittsburgh to St. Louis, to Memphis to New Orleans.

New Orleans was by far the biggest city in the south and one of the most important ports in the entire country. Moreover, control of the river was crucial to the Confederacy's ability to transfer men, supplies and communications to and from the western states of Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. And, as our former program leader Jim Gannon, put it, "Terry told the story concisely and interestingly."

CFCWRT February Meeting Cont.

Vicksburg was a fortress city perched high on a bluff overlooking Milliken's Bend, a natural bottleneck to navigation. Some 250 river miles south of Vicksburg, the Confederates held a smaller but similar fortress at Port Hudson, Louisiana. Between the two, the Red River fed into the Mississippi from the west, providing a highway for men and supplies. Both Vicksburg and Port Hudson were on the eastern side of the Mississippi. As long as the Confederates held the two fortresses, the Union was unable to interdict the flow across the "Father of Waters."

Confederate Major Samuel H. Lockett, chief of engineers, designed eight miles of fortifications around Vicksburg and mounted 172 guns to defend the place both from the river and from the land approach to the east. U.S. Navy efforts alone failed to defeat the Confederates and two major Army movements in late 1862 similarly failed.

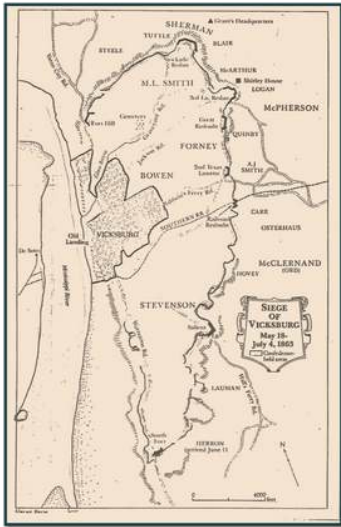


In early 1863, General U.S. Grant conceived a bold plan. He would move his Army south down the west bank of the Mississippi and cross over to the east side of the river and assault Vicksburg from the east. With the cooperation of the Navy's commander, Admiral David Dixon Porter, Grant presented the plan to his Army commanders. Every Army general who voiced an opinion opposed the plan. Undeterred, Grant moved ahead.

As the vanguard of the Union army marched south down the west side of the river, on the night of April 16, 1863, Admiral Porter steamed down river past the Vicksburg batteries. Although the ships were hit repeatedly, the big Confederate guns were emplaced too high on the bluff and couldn't depress their barrels low enough to hit the ships hugging the east bank.

With Navy transports south of the city, Grant would be able to move his army across to the east side. Bypassing the fortress at Grand Gulf, the vanguard of 17,000 men crossed the river at Bruinsburg on April 30. It was the largest amphibious operation in American military history until the Normandy invasion in 1944.

CFCWRT February Meeting Cont.



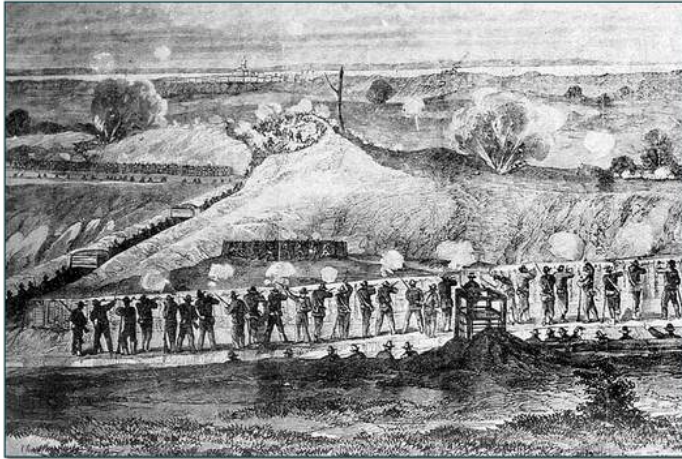
Once across the river, Grant moved east with lightening speed, winning a battle at Raymond on May 12 and, with part of his army, the capital of Jackson on May 14. Overall Confederate commander General Joseph Johnston indecisively remained east of Jackson and called on Vicksburg's commander General John C. Pemberton to leave his defenses at Vicksburg and attack Grant. Pemberton, however, had orders from Confederate President Jefferson Davis to hold Vicksburg. Jim Gannon again reports that "The campaign was decided at battle of Champion Hill on May 16. Confederate commander General John Pemberton only brought out three of his five divisions, and left two to defend Vicksburg. So he was well outnumbered at Champion Hill."

Driven back within their defenses at Vicksburg, Confederates were expected to be demoralized but two powerful Union assaults on May 19 and May 22 were thrown back with heavy losses. Grant then settled in to a classical siege. As troops dug "saps" perpendicular to the Confederate lines, others, including the "Lead Mine Men" of the 45th Illinois regiment, dug mines under the Confederate defenses. The Confederates knew the Union was mining and dug countermines to attempt to intercept the Union excavations. In the heat and humidity of the Mississippi summer, such work was taxing in the extreme but it went on relentlessly.

Meanwhile, the Union Navy maintained a heavy bombardment on the fortified city, driving civilians and soldiers alike underground. Some 2,500 to 3,000 civilians remained in the besieged city and there were about 100 civilian casualties. Terry related that for decades after the battle, children would discover the wartime caves and play in them. After several fatal cave-ins, the city undertook a public works project to fill in all the caves.



— CFCWRT February Meeting Cont. —



The Union exploded two mines with about a ton of explosives each in late June and early July but they failed to open the way for a decisive breakthrough. In the July 1 explosion, a black man named Abraham was blown 150 feet away landing within the Union lines unhurt. In fact, however, 13 mines were being dug and Grant decided to wait until all 13 were ready before the next attempt to break the Confederate defense.

In the meantime, hunger, illness and casualties had worn down the Confederate defenders to the point that their commanders believed the garrison was too weak to attempt to breakout through the Union cordon. There was only one alternative left: surrender.

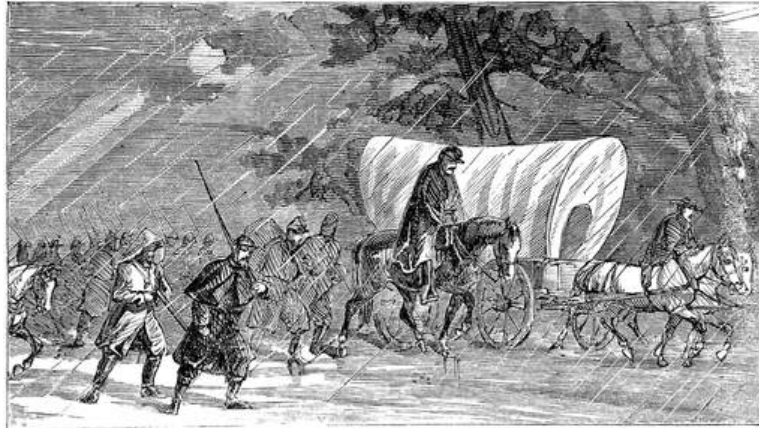
On July 4, 1863, a day after the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, Gen. John C. Pemberton surrendered 2,166 officers, 27,230 men, 172 cannon and about 60,000 rifles and muskets to General Grant. The prisoners were paroled, meaning they gave their word not to resume Confederate service until they were officially exchanged for Union prisoners held by the Confederates.

Once again, “the Father of Waters runs unvexed to the sea.”

Graciously, Terry Winschell answered many questions posed by the audience, including noted publisher Ted Savas whose company, Savas Beatie first published Terry’s history of the Vicksburg Campaign.

Continuing the Storm

By Matthew Howell



Charles Carleton Coffin *Drum-Beat of the Nation* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1915)

To My Fellow Round Table Members,

Our exploration of Brandon Carter’s *Coincidence or Chemistry: Civil War Combat and its Effects on Weather* continues with Part 4, expanding beyond the Civil War to examine post-combat precipitation in other conflicts. While previous discussions have centered on battles along the Mississippi and in Virginia, this installment broadens the scope to include Perryville, Gettysburg, and even engagements from the Mexican War and Napoleonic campaigns. The persistent pattern of rain following battle, regardless of time period or location, raises intriguing questions: Is this phenomenon merely an environmental coincidence, or could the smoke, artillery fire, and atmospheric disturbances of combat have a tangible meteorological effect?

This section also highlights how inclement weather shaped military outcomes. From the torrential rains that delayed Lee’s retreat after Gettysburg to the downpours that broke prolonged droughts in Kentucky and Mexico, precipitation has often played a decisive role in warfare. Notably, rain was not the only element to follow battle—snow and sleet also appeared in colder months, as seen after Stones River, Fort Donelson, and Franklin.

As we near the conclusion of Carter’s study, I encourage you to consider both the scientific skepticism and the historical accounts that make this theory so compelling. For a broader discussion of weather’s influence on war, I once again recommend Kenneth Noe’s *The Howling Storm: Weather, Climate, and the American Civil War*.

Enjoy this latest chapter in our discussion!

Matthew Howell, Editor, CFCWRT

Coincidence or Chemistry: Civil War Combat and its Effects on Weather

By Brandon Carter, Esq.; Serialized by Matthew Howell



Prang & Co. print of the painting, "Hancock at Gettysburg"
by Thure de Thulstrup.

Part 4: Post-Combat Rain Beyond the Civil War

The Battle of Perryville, Kentucky, also led to rain. The battle, part of General Braxton Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, was to coincide with Lee's thrust into Maryland. Bragg, like Lee, was turned back. The battle, on the 8th of October, 1862, occurred during a drought. Powers informs us that the atmosphere was not conducive to a large downpour. Many men wrote about the difficult dry conditions, as both soldier and animal were deprived of water. Yet the battle was followed by a significant rain. Here, a severe drought was ended after a large Civil War battle (Powers 40).

Not surprisingly, one of the greatest rains followed one of the greatest battles of the war. The Battle of Gettysburg was the culmination of Lee's last large offensive into northern territory. The battle, fought from July 1st through 3rd in 1863, cost America over 50,000 casualties. Rain began on the night of the 3rd and did not let up until the 5th. It was severe, and the Potomac River flooded. Lee reached the Potomac on July 7 and quickly realized that a crossing at that time would not be feasible. He deployed his army in a defensive position and waited for a Union attack. The Confederates were not able to cross for nearly a week, as they finally returned to the Old Dominion on the night of the 13th. Lee's army was at a low point. Jackson was gone, and the Confederates had just suffered one of the worst defeats that any of them could have imagined. Lee was lucky to cross into Virginia with his army intact. This Union inactiveness, along with more of the same a few months later at Mine Run, led to the decision to place Ulysses Grant above General George Meade to coordinate all Union armies (Furgurson 4-5). The rains following Gettysburg nearly claimed Lee's army and contributed to the decision to elevate Grant to U.S. general-in-chief.

War & Weather Cont.

Due to space constraints, I will conclude the examples of the weather's effects on Civil War battles with Gettysburg. The main idea should by now be clear, and to avoid redundancy we will continue our study with other wars. By noting Appendix A, one can see that the pattern continues in the second half of the Civil War. There appears to be no difference between the two halves.

Post-combat rain was not a phenomenon linked only to the Civil War. Powers was able to document the weather after some of the major battles of the Mexican War, along with a few of Napoleon's great fights. February is part of the Mexican dry season. The Battle of Buena Vista, fought on the 22nd and 23rd of February in the year 1847, broke the dry spell. There had apparently been no rain for several months prior to the battle. According to Major General Henry Benham, an engineer present at the battle, "About one or two hours after the severe cannonading between 8 and 10 A.M. . . . we had a most violent rain-fall for some ten or fifteen minutes" (Powers 159). Rain also followed Monterey, Contreras, Churubusco, Molino Del Rey, and the final fight at Chapultepec (Powers 159).

North America was not the only location to witness the effects of rain after combat. Powers drew information from correspondence and histories written about Napoleon's campaigns in Europe. Rain followed battles at Dresden, Ligny, Eylau, and Sedan (Powers 73-75). This should come as no surprise, as the powder used was similar to that of the Civil War, if not exactly the same. The climate of Europe also closely resembles that of North America.

Though it occurred most often, rain was not the only form of precipitation that followed combat. Snow, sleet, and freezing rain occurred in the colder months. Sleet came on January 2, 1862, after the Battle of Stones River or Murfreesboro. It did, however, change to rain by the next day (Cozzens 181). The battle for Fort Donelson lasted from February 13 until February 15 of 1862. The night of the 13th saw rain, sleet, and snow, while the evening of the 15th witnessed snow (Cooling 147, 200). According to Union General James Milroy, a freezing rain followed the bloody fight at Franklin, also in Tennessee, on November 30, 1864 (Powers 157). Precipitation was to fall after combat, no matter the temperature.

Notable Events in the Cape Fear Region

By Yelena Howell

Saturday, March 1, or Saturday, March 15, 8–9 pm. Latimer House Night Tour featuring a scholarly discussion of gaslight. 126 S. 3rd St., Wilmington; \$22: <https://latimerhouse.org/tours/#night>

Tuesday, March 4, doors open at 6 pm, program at 7 pm. Hatch Auditorium, Caswell Beach. Brunswick Civil War Round Table welcomes **Drs. Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver** with “Weaponizing Food: From Antietam to Vicksburg”. The visitor fee is \$10 and can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues, which can include a spouse. Info: <https://brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com/>

Friday, March 7, 3–4 pm. NHC Public Library, Oak Room at Northeast Branch, 1241 Military Cutoff Rd., Wilmington. Past Tense: Historical Fiction Book Club. Info: <https://libcal.nhc.gov.com/event/12795757>

Friday, March 7, 6–7:30 pm, CSS Neuse Civil War Museum, 100 N. Queen St., Kinston. Female Spy Dinner Theater with Emily Lapisardi as Rose Greenhow. Tickets are \$35 and include dinner: <https://tinyurl.com/MrsRoseG> Info: cssneusegba@gmail.com or (252) 526-9600, ext. 221.

Friday, March 7, 8–9 pm, Burgwin–Wright House, 224 Market St., Wilmington. Candlelit Night Tour of the museum. Tickets \$15 (+tax). Please call (910) 762-0570 to reserve your spot. The House is hosting a **Diaper Drive** throughout March: <https://tinyurl.com/giveBWH>

Saturday, March 8, 10 am–5 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. North Carolina Rice Festival. History/cultural presentations, tours, demonstrations, live entertainment, family fun, children’s stage, Gullah Geechee food vendors, and arts/crafts. Info: <https://www.northcarolinaricefestival.org/>

Saturday, March 8, 10 am–12 pm. Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. will lead a downtown walking Civil War Tour for **Wilmington True History Tours**. Tickets are \$25 for adults or \$22 for Veterans and First Responders: <https://tinyurl.com/Chris-mars25> Please vote for our gracious sponsor, Wilmington True History Tours, in the Best Sightseeing Tour category: <https://tinyurl.com/WtonBest>

Friday, March 15, 9–5 pm, and Saturday, March 16, 9–4 pm. Bentonville Battlefield. 5466 Harper House Rd., Four Oaks, NC. “A Terrible Storm”: **160th Anniversary Commemoration.** Over 2,000 reenactors, presentations by premier Civil War historians, and a reunion of friends from near and far. Tickets needed for some of the events. Info: <https://www.johnstoncountync.org/160th-bentonville-reenactment/>

Saturday, March 22, 2–4 pm. Federal Point Historic Preservation Society: <https://federal-point-history.org> **Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr.** will lead a tour of Sugar Loaf. Admission is \$10 per person. Reserve with the History Center by calling (910) 458-0502.

Thursday, March 27, 7–8 pm. Royal James Rummery, 109 E. Moore St., Southport, NC. Jim McKee presents *History with a Cocktail* focused on the rich history of **coastal rice**. Tickets are \$24.74 ea. and include a cocktail: <https://tinyurl.com/cheers2Jim>

Opinion

By Roman Berger

The Blue, The Grey, and the Emerald: The Irish Diaspora in the American Civil War

March 17th marks the annual celebration of Saint Patrick's Day, the prime occasion when Irish history, culture, and diaspora are celebrated around the world. My family lineage traces back to Ireland on my mother's side; accordingly, I have sought to learn more about one of my ancestral homelands, exploring everything from politics to pop culture and, of course, history. In that spirit, I recently read *When the Irish Invaded Canada* by Christopher Klein. The book details the various raids conducted by the Fenian Army—a militia of Irishmen settled in America—against British military encampments in what was then Canada, a British colony.

Reading this book piqued my interest in a tangentially related topic.

Today, it is easy to argue that America has done more to celebrate Ireland than any other nation in the world. But it was not always this way. While Klein's book primarily focuses on post-war raids, it sheds light on how Irish Americans became involved in the American Civil War—half a century before Ireland erupted in its own rebellion and inter-island conflict. Much of this involvement can be traced back to the discrimination the Irish faced early on in America's "great experiment."

The Irish were an early example of how immigration shaped the American experience and how American culture and politics, in turn, shaped the diaspora. During the first half of the 19th century, millions of men, women, and children fled Éire. The primary catalyst was the treatment of the Irish people by the United Kingdom's government, which ranged from aloof at best to explicitly hostile at worst. This was particularly true during the Great Famine (1845–1852), when the failure of the potato crop, coupled with the policies of Prime Minister Lord Russell, led to mass starvation across Ireland. Hundreds of thousands of Ireland's native sons and daughters abandoned a land where Catholics were systematically excluded from many aspects of the economy and government. A considerable percentage of these refugees sought a fresh start in America—a land that, perhaps not coincidentally, had freed itself from British control decades earlier.

Opinion Cont.

However, the reality in America was sobering. The experience of Irish immigrants was arduous. Honest work was difficult to secure, in part due to a language barrier that affected many newly arrived Irish. Housing was often confined to decrepit tenements shared with multiple other expatriates, allowing diseases to spread rapidly. Compounding these struggles was the sheer discrimination the Irish faced at every level of life in their new home. They were accused of attempting to impose Catholicism on a largely Protestant and Anglo-descended America, as well as exploiting American resources rather than embracing the nation's ideals of liberty—an ironic charge, in this writer's opinion. The anti-Irish sentiment was so pervasive that an entire political party, the Know-Nothing American Party, was founded on suppressing Catholicism. In 1856, former President Millard Fillmore ran on its ticket, securing 21% of the popular vote.

The Irish had hoped that America would be their Tír na nÓg, the mythical land of eternal youth and prosperity. Many found instead a different kind of hell.

Meanwhile, the nation itself was violently fracturing. The fight over civil rights and the economic upheavals that accompanied it provided the impetus for the split. The irony cannot be overstated—especially since Irish Americans would lay down their lives as active participants in the Civil War. In fact, the first blood spilled in the conflict came from across the Atlantic: two Union soldiers born in Ireland, Daniel Hough and Edward Galloway, were killed by an accidental explosion of cartridges at the surrender ceremony of Fort Sumter. They were the first of at least half a million war dead over the next four years.

Incredibly, 200,000 Irishmen fought for the Union military, including 20% of all sailors. They made up half of the regular army when the war began, including a majority of the soldiers serving at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. The Confederacy was not lacking in Irish representation either; 20,000 Irishmen and their descendants fought under the Rebel banner. The Irish diaspora was as divided as any other facet of American life during this great conflict.

Given their pre-war experiences, this division makes sense. Military service at least guaranteed a job, food, some form of shelter, and a paycheck—no matter how brutal, meager, temporary, or risky. Given the discrimination and hardships the Irish faced in their daily lives, these were practical reasons to enlist in the armies of the new world.

Opinion Cont.

But there were also emotional motivations. Despite its many faults, America had taken in Irish emigrants when the United Kingdom had effectively driven them out. Shedding blood for their adopted homeland was a way to prove their mettle—to show that they were just as American as anyone born in the country over the previous 85 years. Dying for a nation carries a sobering weight; it is the supreme sacrifice for something greater than oneself. If one is willing to shed blood in defense of a country, should that country not recognize them as equals?

For some Irish, however, their dedication was not to their new homeland—regardless of which side of the battlefield they fought on—but to their old one, still under the British Parliament's thumb. According to Klein, some Irishmen viewed their participation in the war as a means of gaining military training for a future revolution to liberate Ireland from British rule. However, Fenian Brotherhood leader John O'Mahony argued that such an approach would be counterproductive if Irish soldiers perished in the conflict. This raises the question: how could the Irish both prove their mettle in battle and transfer valuable combat tactics back to the Emerald Isle? Their efforts were aided by Britain's formal neutrality in the conflict, much to the chagrin of American politicians.

The Irish fighters in the war were proud of their heritage and made little effort to hide it. Most notable was the 69th New York Infantry, which fought in every major battle in the Eastern Theater and suffered the third-highest casualty rate of any unit in the war. Thomas Francis Meagher, who had escaped imprisonment for an attempted revolution in 1848 and found refuge in America, rose to lead the Irish Brigade as a general. His ascent exemplified the ideals of American meritocracy—that even in a nation with a history of prejudice, anyone could rise to the occasion and prove their worth against the social odds.

Unfortunately, the brigade's heavy losses took their toll. By June 1864, the unit was formally disbanded due to the sheer number of casualties. However, Irish soldiers continued to fight in other brigades for the final year of the war. The influence of these fighters endured beyond the battlefield. As Klein noted, O'Mahony later led the Fenian Raids against British North America in the late 1860s. Though these raids ultimately failed, they—along with earlier Irish-American war efforts—foreshadowed the Irish Revolution and Civil War of the early 20th century.

Opinion Cont.

It is easy to conclude that, whether their dedication lay on one side of the Atlantic or the other, the contributions of Ireland's sons to the Civil War and the Irish independence movement were invaluable. The cliché persists that the Irish are a passionate, romantic, and sometimes fierce people—stereotypes without context. But considering how many Irish Americans laid down their lives for both their new homeland and their old one in the Civil War—a war fought in a land where they had lived for barely a decade—it is easy to see why the trope of the Fighting Irish endures.

So this March 17th, whether you are watching a parade, enjoying some corned beef, making a cup of Barry's tea, having a pint of Guinness, or listening to Thin Lizzy or U2, remember the Irishmen who laid their lives on the line for their nation and their people. Reflect on how these men, who faced adversity in both their old and new homes, still fought in the greatest conflict to ever occur on American soil—and in doing so, helped shape the nation we are today.

Sláinte.



Roman Berger, a member of the CFCWRT Executive Committee, is the Audio-Visual Coordinator at the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. A lifelong American History buff, he possesses a Bachelor of Arts in History from Stony Brook University.

Bringing History to Life: The Story of George C. Beasley

By Matthew Howell



One of the most rewarding aspects of historical research is uncovering the lives of individuals who lived through extraordinary times, individuals whose stories may have faded from memory but whose experiences provide us with deeper insight into the past.

Recently, I had the opportunity to contribute my research on George C. Beasley to the North Carolina Civil War & Reconstruction History Center, where it was published as part of their ongoing effort to preserve and share the personal histories that shaped our state's Civil War experience. Beasley, a native of Cumberland County, was just 22 when he enlisted in Company F of the 1st North Carolina

Infantry in 1861. His service began with the occupation of the U.S. Arsenal in Fayetteville, a pivotal site that would later play a significant role in supplying Confederate forces. Shortly afterward, he saw combat at the Battle of Big Bethel, one of the first major engagements of the war. When his original regiment disbanded, Beasley did not return home. He reenlisted with the 2nd North Carolina Light Artillery, also known as Starr's Light Battery. His story came to an abrupt and tragic end in 1864 when he was killed in action at the Battle of Fort Harrison at just 25 years old.

In many ways, Beasley's story is both unique and representative of the larger experience of North Carolinians during the war. More than 40,000 soldiers from the state lost their lives, their names often reduced to entries in regimental records and forgotten headstones in cemeteries across the South. Yet each of these men had a life before the war, a family, a community, people who mourned them and histories that deserve to be remembered. By revisiting these personal narratives, we move beyond statistics and battlefield movements and begin to understand the war through the lens of those who lived it. Understanding the past is not just about studying military strategy or political decisions, it is about recognizing the individuals who were shaped by, and in turn shaped, these pivotal events.

Click the link below to read more about George C. Beasley's story. While you're there, explore the hundreds of other stories preserved in the North Carolina Civil War & Reconstruction History Center's digital archive. It is an invaluable resource for exploring the lives of people that shaped our state's history.

Read more here: <https://nccivilwarcenter.org/the-story-of-george-c-beasley/>

Emerging Civil War

One of the most valuable types of Civil War history are the hundreds of “regimental histories” published in the last half of the 19th Century. Many contemporary authors have published updated regimental histories based on newly uncovered sources.

Former-member JoAnna McDonald, Ph.D., is an author and a contributor to the *Emerging Civil War* blog. She recently published two items about the Pennsylvania “Bucktail” regiments. JoAnna and Chris Mackowski, co-founder and editor in chief of the blog, have generously given us permission to republish these articles. We will share these two articles over the next two issues of our newsletter, beginning on the next page.

Do you have a favorite regiment? Perhaps one in which an ancestor served or one that you think played an outsized role in a pivotal battle? Write up an article and send it in to *The Runner*. Maybe just a regiment with a colorful nickname. What’s stopping you?



JoAnna M. McDonald, Ph.D., is a historian, writer, and public speaker specializing in military history and strategic studies. Mentored by esteemed scholars Dr. Richard Sommers and Dr. Jay Luvaas, she studied at Dickinson College, earned a Master’s in History from Shippensburg University, and completed a Ph.D. at Morgan State University. She has worked in federal and state government, defense, and media, contributing to History Channel documentaries and serving as a historian for various institutions.

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*. A professor in the Jandoli School of Communication at St. Bonaventure University, he also serves as associate dean for undergraduate programs. He is historian-in-residence at Stevenson Ridge and has worked as a historian for the National Park Service at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. The author or co-author of nearly two dozen Civil War books, Chris has contributed extensively to major Civil War publications. He serves on multiple historical boards and has received several prestigious awards for his contributions to Civil War scholarship.



13th Pennsylvania Reserves, “Bucktails”: Forever Proud

By JoAnna McDonald



Bucktails, 13th PA Reserves

Deer season has come and gone in most states, I think. I grew up in rural Pennsylvania. Here, the white tail deer roam through the meadows, forests . . . and backyards. Even though I no longer live in the north, when I see hunters don their gear, I think of the Pennsylvania soldiers who wore bucktails on their kepis and other head gear. There were three regiments that did so. Here’s a look at the first “Bucktail” regiment, 13th Pennsylvania Reserves, and two of their toughest battles.



Marksmen Wanted



Colonel Kane

The call to arms went out to “marksmen” from several rural counties in April 1861. The woodsmen arrived at the recruiter’s office wearing buck tails on their hats. It was a great way to show their shooting expertise. The volunteers proudly wore their earned prizes on the front or side of their kepis. These were the first Bucktails.

Colonel Thomas L. Kane, a lawyer, organized and led the marksmen. The Bucktails saw action by the end of 1861. Colonel Kane was injured in the mouth at the battle of Dranesville, Virginia, on December 20, but stayed in the field. He was then wounded in the leg and captured at the battle of Harrisonburg, Virginia, June 6-7, 1862.

13th Pennsylvania Reserves, “Bucktails”: Forever Proud Cont.



13th PA Reserves, State Colors

Major Roy Stone took over the regiment and led the men through the Peninsula Campaign, June 25 to July 1, 1862. The 13th Pennsylvania Reserves were part of the 1st Brigade of Brig. Gen. George McCall’s division, Army of the Potomac. The Bucktail’s first large scale battle took place at the battle of Mechanicsville on June 26, 1862. With their sister Pennsylvania regiments, the division had roughly 7,000 men.

The 13th Pennsylvania Reserves deployed in a defensive position near Meadow Bridge across Beaver Dam Creek and waited tensely. Around 3:30 pm, June 26, 1862, Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill’s Confederate division smashed into the Union line. Hill counted 14,000 men in his division. The Louisiana and Georgia regiments led the attack.

One eyewitness recalled the fighting. “[S]o rapidly and so accurately did they [the Bucktails] ply their guns that the charging column halted, reeled back and sought shelter in the swamp.” The Confederates brought up more regiments. The Pennsylvanians poured the lead on and again repulsed the onslaught.

General Robert E. Lee got so frustrated that he ordered his divisions to concentrate their attack in another sector. The Pennsylvanians had a reprieve, but remained alert as the battle raged over on the Union left flank. The fighting lasted until nightfall, 9:00 p.m. Outnumbered and running out of ammunition, the entire line withdrew. The Bucktails took up the rear guard for McCall’s division.

The 13th Pennsylvania Reserves paid a heavy price during the Peninsula Campaign. The regiment participated in the battles of Mechanicsville, Gaines Mill and White Oak Swamp (Frayser’s Farm). Casualties amounted to 247 killed, wounded, or missing. Division commander Brig. Gen. McCall was wounded and captured near Frayser’s Farm. Their new division commander wrote a report on the men’s exemplary performance. “Men never behaved better; to their constancy and courage, after all, the good stand made against a greatly superior force is due, and Pennsylvania may forever be proud of the memories connected with deeds of her sons at Mechanicsville.”

13th Pennsylvania Reserves, “Bucktails”: Forever Proud Cont.



COL. CHARLES F. TAYLOR

Colonel Taylor, 13th PA Reserves, KIA
Gettysburg, near Devils Den

The next summer the deeds of the 13th Pennsylvania Reserves were immortalized on the fields of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1-3, 1863. The regiment and its division under Maj. Gen. Samuel Crawford waited anxiously behind Little Round Top on Thursday, July 2. Around 6:30 pm, the call to arms resounded through the ranks. “The moment was a critical one.”

Crawford seized the 13th’s flag and shouted, “Forward Reserves!” The division poured two volleys into the onrushing Georgians and South Carolinians, and, with a cheer, the line

charged forward at a run. The exhausted Confederates reeled and withdrew. Some made a brief stand at a stonewall but most had had enough. The Pennsylvanians had helped save Little Round Top.

The fighting, however, wasn’t over. Texas, Alabama, and Arkansas boys remained tucked into the Devil’s Den area to the left of the Pennsylvania reserves. The Confederates laid down a nasty enfilading fire. Two companies were sent out to reconnoiter from the 13th Pennsylvania Reserves on the morning of Friday, July 3.

The vicinity of Devil’s Den was admirably suited to the tactics employed by the Bucktails, as cover both of rocks and trees abounded. Possessing Sharps rifles, they were able to reload, when necessary, without exposing any portions of their bodies, an advantage not possessed by their opponents. Utilizing this advantage to the utmost, they poured in a hot fire. The fire in return immediately became severe, and as they crept nearer, of an intensity that plainly showed that the enemy was far too strong numerically to be routed by the small force sent against them. The Bucktails, therefore, stayed behind cover, devoting themselves to picking off their antagonists whenever chances offered. At this game they entirely outclassed the Confederates.

So, with a rebel yell, the Rebs leapt from their cover and drove the Pennsylvanians back to the stonewall. The Confederates were finally dislodged from Devils Den later that evening on July 3. The battle was over. The 13th Pennsylvania Reserves counted their casualties. Out of 349 men, 2 officers and 9 suffered mortal wounds, and their colonel was among the dead. In addition, there were 8 officers and 27 men wounded, and 2 men captured or missing.

13th Pennsylvania Reserves, “Bucktails”: Forever Proud Cont.



A GROUP OF BUCKTAIL SURVIVORS.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. William H. Rauch | 4. Firmin F. Kirk | 7. Thomas H. Ryan |
| 2. Henry H. Taggart | 5. Thomas Puriong | 8. Wallace W. Brewer |
| 3. J. Elliott Kratzer | 6. B. Frank Wright | 9. Cornelius J. Smith |

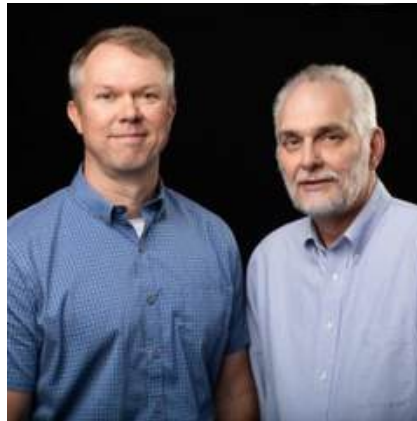
Survivors of the 13th PA Reserves

There would be no respite for the veteran Bucktails. For the next year, the regiment participated in all the major campaigns: Overland Campaign, battle of Wilderness, battle of Spotsylvania Court House, and skirmished at the battle of North Anna River. The regiment's last battle was Totopotomoy Creek (Bethesda Church), May 30-31, 1864.

Governor Curtin welcomed the Bucktails home at the capital in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

May you all find a happy welcome to your homes! May you ever be marked as brave men who served their country faithfully in times of great peril. May you never regret that you belonged to the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps, fighting on every battle-field of the Republic.

Brunswick Civil War Round Table



Weaponizing Food: From Antietam to Vicksburg A Program by Dr. Judkin Brown & Dr. Timothy Silver

During the Civil War, “weaponizing food” referred to the strategic use of food as a tool of war. This involved tactics aimed at disrupting the enemy’s food supply, thereby weakening their forces and undermining their war effort. Many tactical options became reality. Like simply cutting off enemy supply lines; foraging and raiding farms and businesses; using scorched earth tactics by destroying crops and livestock; or, surrounding cities or fortifications to cut off access to food supplies. In essence, weaponizing led to hunger, malnutrition and suffering, leading to overall deteriorating battle morale and effectiveness, on both sides. This brief description leads us to an even more interesting discussion when popular returning guest speakers Dr. Judkin Browning and Dr. Timothy Silver delve into their topic entitled, “Weaponizing Food: From Antietam to Vicksburg” at the Tuesday, March 4th meeting at Hatch Auditorium on Caswell Beach.

Registration begins at 6:15 PM, with the program starting at 7:00 PM. The visitor fee is \$10, which can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues.



For more information, email president John Butler at Brunswickcwrtable@gmail.com or call him at (404) 229-9425. Visit BCWRT online at <https://brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcivilwarroundtable>

Brunswick Civil War Round Table



CIVIL WAR LADIES' FORUM

The Forum (sponsored by the Brunswick Civil War Round Table) looks forward to its upcoming annual meeting on Monday, March 10th by greeting guest speaker Mary Duffy, widow and Smithville tavern owner during the 1800's. Actually Mary is Liz Fuller, president of the Southport Historical Society, who will portray Mary in her Civil War period dress. The meeting will be held in Murrow Hall at Trinity United Methodist Church in Southport.

Mary Duffy has a wealth of stories and some little known secrets to tell about life during the War of Southern Independence, and eager to share the spirit, resolve, and determination these women of Smithville experienced.

Liz Fuller is a popular local historian who is a frequent speaker at local historical and civic organizations on a wide variety of topics relating to Southport's history. She will be joined by Carolee Morris who will be reading a selection from Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, complementing Liz Fuller's presentation.

The program will take place from 6:00PM to 8:00PM. It is free to all women members of the Brunswick Civil War Round Table. There is a \$5 fee for guests, which can be applied toward the \$25 annual membership dues to the Round Table, and can include a spouse. For more information, or to make a reservation, please contact us at Brunswickcwrt@gmail.com.



For more information, email president John Butler at Brunswickcwrt@gmail.com or call him at (404) 229-9425. Visit BCWRT online at <https://brunswickcivilwarroundtable.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcivilwarroundtable>

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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our strategic partners, whose generous support through discounts and services sustains the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. Your ongoing contributions play an invaluable role in helping us preserve history, foster education, and connect our community. Thank you for standing with us in our mission!



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Yelena Howell, BSN, RN



Doctoral Candidate in Nursing

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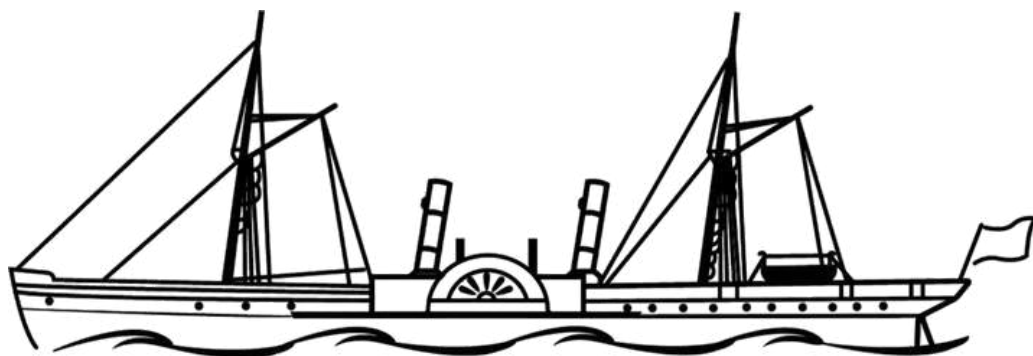
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CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table is a voluntary, not-for-profit association of people with a common interest in the history of the American Civil War and Reconstruction.

Based in Wilmington, our group is devoted to broadening the knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the era.



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You Are Invited!

Join us at our monthly meetings featuring acclaimed authors, esteemed professors, and passionate historians from sites like Fort Fisher.

Held at **St. John's Episcopal Church, 1219 Forest Hills Drive, Wilmington, NC**, these events are a chance to explore fascinating Civil War topics and connect with fellow enthusiasts.

Doors open at 6:30pm and the meetings start at 7pm.

3/13/25 - Lt. Col. Sion Harrington
"North Carolinians in the Confederate Navy"

4/10/25 - Col. Wade Sokolosky
"NC Confederate Hospitals Vol 2: 1864 to 1865"

5/8/25 - Dr. MaryBeth Allison & Christina Grazer

6/12/25 - Dr. Angela Zombek
"Civil War History of Fort Jefferson Florida"

7/10/25 - Civil War Fair

8/14/25 - Fred Claridge

9/11/25 - Dr. Robert M. Browning Jr.

10/9/25 - Clint Johnson
"A Vast & Fiendish Plot: The Confederate Attack on New York City"

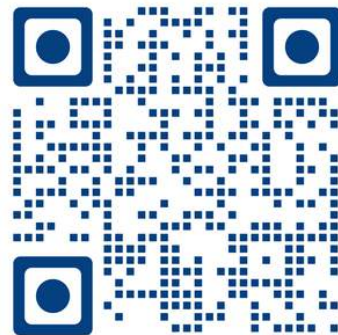
11/13/25 - Sarah Kay Bierle
"John Pelham: Trained at West Point but Aiming Artillery for the Confederacy"

12/11/25 - Brad Gottfried
"The Best & Worst Generals at Gettysburg"



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A Gun Crew at Fort Fisher (2024), James C. Horton, oil
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