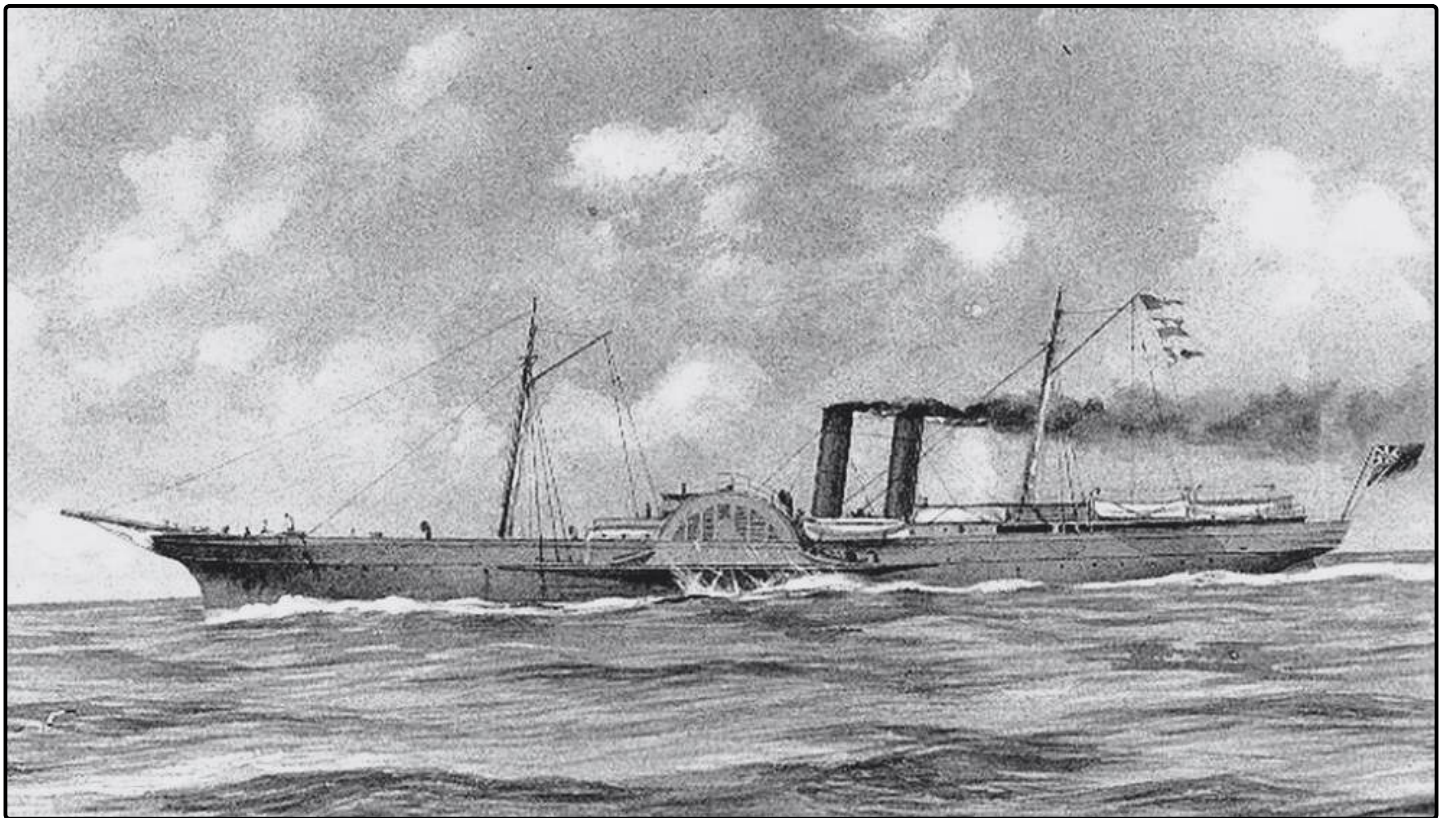


# The Runner

The Official Newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table



February 2025 | Volume 31 | Number 2

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## Letter from the Editor

Hello, Members and Friends of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table!

February brings another month of engaging discussions and shared learning at the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table. As we continue exploring history together, it's also a time to recognize how far we've come.

You may notice a change in our newsletter's volume number. When we re-envisioned *The Runner* a few years ago, we started fresh with a new count. But history matters, and after thoughtful consideration, we've decided to honor our full legacy by restoring the original numbering. That means we aren't in Volume 3—we're in Volume 31, reaching back to our first issue in 1995.

This adjustment may be small, but it reflects something bigger—the strength and longevity of our organization. For over three decades, our members have come together to share in the study of history, and we look forward to carrying that tradition forward.

See you at the next meeting!

Warm regards,

Matthew Howell

Editor

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table



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## President's Address

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By Yelena Howell



Dear members and friends,

Our winter 2025 concludes with another action-packed month ahead. Brunswick Town Fort Anderson State Historic Site and Cameron Art Museum will host special programs this February to mark the 160th anniversaries of the fall of Fort Anderson and the Battle of Forks Road (for details on those and more, please refer to p. 11 of the newsletter).

What do you think of when you reflect on the Wilmington Campaign? I can't help but think of courage, duty, suffering and jubilation, of families and communities drastically changed, of names and stories redeemed from oblivion by devoted historians—stories we keep alive with our own devotion to the appreciation of history. A new book may not have the sweeping impact of a music album release, but its impact is deep, permanent, real. A public history event may not command the crowds that a popular concert does, and yet it brings together diverse community members who are no less excited to be there.

If I could meet one historical figure, you would find me in the company of the French aviator and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900–1944). As I imagine gazing into his eyes and uttering a breathless bonjour, I am savoring these timeless lines from *Airman's Odyssey*: “Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.” My fellow history lovers, that is what binds us: we look outward in the same direction as we continue to share meaningful experiences. I hope to see you at our tour of Fort Fisher on February 8, at our next meeting on February 13, and at other events of interest that you will find listed here in *The Runner*.

Gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Yelena".

Tune in live to our next meeting at <https://www.youtube.com/@CapeFearCivilWarRoundTable>  
and view our archives anytime at <https://cfcwrt.org/>

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# Membership Report

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By Kim Berger

Despite the cold weather, the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table's January meeting had a strong turnout, with 41 members attending to learn about Confederate and U.S. Marines during the Civil War. The discussion covered Marine uniforms, major battles, and the loss of several ironclads, with thanks to Andrew Dupstadt for his informative presentation.

We welcomed three new members: Jeff Schoolcraft, originally from Gettysburg, who found us online and enjoys history, travel, and fishing. He has four adult daughters (ages 28 to 35) and works as a kitchen and bath remodeler. Clyde Parrish and Deborah Mosca joined after meeting Yelena at the Fort Fisher Anniversary Event on January 18. They relocated to Wilmington from San Diego in 2014 and are interested in local history and Civil War demonstrations. They have two adult sons, Josh (36) and Robbie (33). Clyde is retired, Deborah still works, and Robbie volunteers at Eden Village. Other interests they share include classic cars, food, and wine.

Let's be sure to make them feel welcome at February's meeting!

## **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](mailto: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, 8387 East Highcroft Dr NE, Leland, NC 28451
- See Mike McDonald 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

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## Money Matters

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By Michael McDonald & Yelena Howell

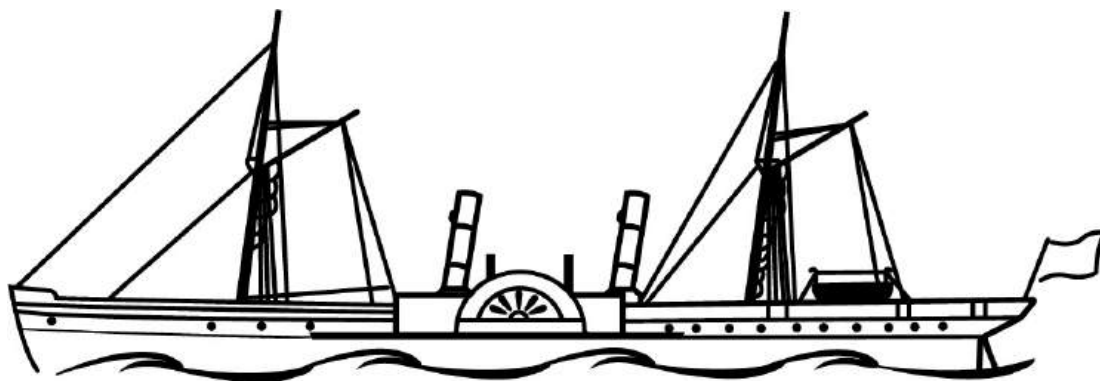
We have decided to include a snapshot of our active membership numbers and finances once a quarter and annually. For the fourth quarter of 2024:

- Our revenue was \$994.70, of which roughly 40% came from sponsors, 40% from Wreaths Across America, and 20% from membership dues and raffles.
- Our expenses were \$1,085.41

\*Please expect natural variation in income and expenses from quarter to quarter based on the number of renewals and our hosting costs that are lower during the summer months.

Thank you very much for joining us, renewing your memberships, and giving in numerous other ways that sustain our organization!

For additional details, please contact Treasurer Michael McDonald or President Yelena Howell, and we will be glad to address your questions.



# CAPE FEAR

## CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

# CFCWRT February Meeting

By Bill Jayne



## CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE FEATURES DISTINGUISHED VICKSBURG HISTORIAN

The next meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table, now celebrating its 30th year of operation, is Thursday evening, February 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.

The February program is titled "Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign" Our speaker is Terrence Winschel, the retired chief historian of the Vicksburg National Military Park.

Terry Winschel is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a graduate of The Pennsylvania State University. He also holds M.S.S. (Master of Social Science) and Ed.S. (Education Specialist) degrees from Mississippi College. Mr. Winschel retired in 2012 following a thirty-five-year-long career with the National Park Service, most of which time he served as Historian at Vicksburg National Military Park. He also served at Gettysburg National Military Park, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields National Military Park, and Valley Forge National Historic Park. In 2016, Mr. Winschel returned to work in a part-time capacity with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as Historian at the Engineer Research and Development Center and retired in 2023.

Terry has written 100 articles on the Civil War and is author of *Triumph & Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign, Vols. I and II*, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River*, *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier*, and *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*.

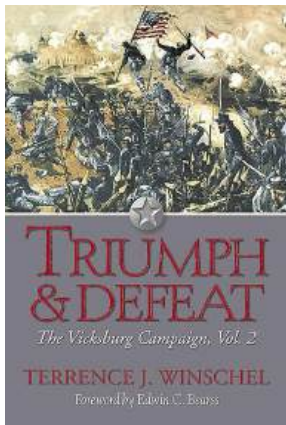
Control of the Mississippi River was vital to the economic and military interests of both the North and South during the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln considered it the "key to victory," and gathered in hand sizable land and naval forces to reclaim control of the lower Mississippi River Valley and thus split the South in two, achieve a major objective of the Anaconda Plan, and effectively seal the doom of Richmond.

## CFCWRT February Meeting Cont.

From Cairo, Illinois, south to the Gulf of Mexico, Union and Confederate land and naval forces struggled for control of the Mississippi River. By late summer of 1862 only Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Port Hudson, Louisiana, posed major obstacles to U.S. domination of the river. With the capture of these two posts in July 1863, the North reestablished control of the river. A joyous President Lincoln exclaimed, "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."

Mr. Winschel's presentation will detail the economic and military significance of the Mississippi River, cover the early military operations for control of the river, and focus on the climactic campaign which resulted in the fall of Vicksburg.

Was Antietam the bloodiest battle of the Civil War? Was Gettysburg the most pivotal battle of the Civil War? Was Spotsylvania the most bitterly fought? Most Civil War buffs tend to focus on the Eastern Theater and the titanic clashes of the Army of the Potomac versus the Army of Northern Virginia.



Nonetheless, the study of the Civil War in the Western Theater is more popular now than ever before, and the center of that interest is the months-long Vicksburg Campaign. Terry's book offers ten chapters of insights into what has been declared by many to have been the most decisive campaign of the Civil War.

The essays cover a wide range of topics, including military operations, naval engagements, leading personalities, and even a specific family caught up in the nightmarish 47-day siege that nearly cost them their

lives. Come to the meeting of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table to hear about this and more. **This month's meeting will be held in the sanctuary of St. John's Episcopal Church.** Enter at the rear.

The church parking lot 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.

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

See you there!

# Marines in Civil War North Carolina

By Marcus L. Crassus



On January 9, the Civil War Round Table rang in the new year with a presentation by Andrew Dupstadt on Confederate and U.S. Marines in North Carolina during the Civil War. Andrew is the Education and Interpretation Supervisor for the North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites. He is a native of eastern North Carolina and holder of bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. This was the eighth time Andrew has spoken to the round table. It was 23 years since his first appearance in January of 2002 when he talked about the *CSS Neuse*.

He first set the stage with "Some Important Numbers." Some 321 U.S. Navy and Marine Corps officers resigned at the beginning of the Civil War and "went South" to serve in the Confederate navy or Marine Corps. That number of 321 was significant in light of the fact that there was a total of just 2,234 officers in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, of which almost 15 percent joined the Confederacy. Andrew also pointed out that at the time of the Civil War the mission of the Marines was basically to serve onboard ships or Navy installations to maintain order.

Historically, Marines had made small-scale landings to seize enemy ships or sometimes to assault enemy forts but, primarily, their role was confined to shipboard duties. In this regard, he noted that by the end of the war, the U.S. Navy had approximately 670 ships while the Confederate total was approximately 130.

He then presented several interesting slides showing Marine uniforms. It was of note to see that the historic U.S. Marine uniforms displayed many similarities to contemporary U.S. Marine Corps uniforms. For example, an artistic depiction of the 1864 officer's uniform featured the same dark blue pants and Navy blue jacket. Most Marine uniforms, including the 1864 officer's uniform employed the frock coat, however.



## Marines in Civil War North Carolina Cont.

The depictions, including photographs of contemporary reenactors, were somewhat idealized with gleaming white crossed belts across the chest and, in many period photographs, the dress shako hat. In everyday use, the kepi replaced the shako and the belts were often stored away. White pants for summer were authorized. Andrew pointed out that Confederate uniforms were more often observed in the absence of uniform dress than in prescribed identical clothing. Some wore Navy uniforms, some wore captured U.S. clothing and, often, the men eschewed the prescribed gray clothing and, because of their nautical connections, sought out anything blue.

Marines played little role in North Carolina operations until the end of the war when Marines on both sides fought in the battles of Fort Fisher. An exception was the detachment of Confederate Marines under Captain Thomas S. Wilson who fought in the USS *Underwriter* expedition in February 1864. Confederate Marines also served on ships such as the CSS *Raleigh* and the CSS *North Carolina* based in the Cape Fear River, and, of course, U.S. Marines served onboard the many U.S. Navy ships involved in the blockade.

On May 6, 1864, the CSS *Raleigh* escorted blockade runners across the Cape Fear River bar and engaged the U.S. fleet. The heavy ship, however, ran aground and broke its keel on the return to the river. The CSS *North Carolina*, Andrew said, “was completely unseaworthy” due to damage from “worms” and sank near Southport.

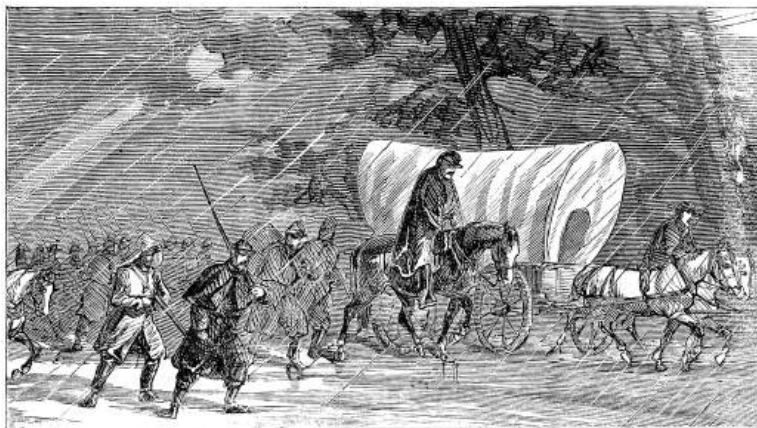
Confederate Marines manned artillery at Fort Fisher and Battery Buchanan in December 1864 and January 1865 with their numbers augmented by a detachment from Savannah who came to Confederate Point after the fall of Savannah to Union General William T. Sherman’s forces. Some 400 U.S. Marine volunteers from the U.S. fleet went ashore on January 15 and took part in the joint Navy/Marine Corps assault down the beach toward the Northeast Bastion. Poorly planned and executed, the assault was a tragic failure except for the fact that it distracted the Confederate defenders from the U.S. Army assault on the river side of the fort. The Marines were led by Captain Lucien L. Dawson, a Texan who did not resign his commission at the beginning of the war and remained loyal to the U.S. Of the approximately 400 Marines engaged, 61 became casualties.

Andrew heartily recommended several book-length studies of Civil War Marines, especially recommended the four-part study of the U.S. Marine Corps in the Civil War by David M. Sullivan. Our speaker graciously stayed to answer many questions from the audience and visit with attendees at the end of the meeting.

We all look forward to Andrew’s next visit to our round table!

# 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,

As we continue our exploration of Brandon Carter’s compelling essay, *Coincidence or Chemistry: Civil War Combat and its Effects on Weather*, Part 3 delves into the theories behind post-combat rain. Expanding on Edward Powers’ meticulous observations, Carter examines striking patterns along the Mississippi River, where nearly every engagement—from New Madrid to Vicksburg—was followed by rainfall. Even in Virginia, during the exceptionally wet spring of 1862, rain appeared to coincide with key battles, from McDowell and Cross Keys to the grueling Peninsula Campaign. Powers even suggested that the intensity of artillery fire influenced the amount of rain that followed.

This section also highlights how storms shaped crucial moments, such as the aftermath of Second Manassas, where relentless downpours stalled Confederate pursuit, mired supply wagons, and forced desperate tactical decisions. Was this an environmental coincidence, or did the violence of war truly have atmospheric consequences?

Enjoy this unique perspective on Civil War history! As you ponder absorbing questions of correlation and causation, please note a comprehensive 2020 resource, Kenneth Noe’s *The Howling Storm: Weather, Climate, and the American Civil War*, available at libraries and on Amazon at <https://www.tinyurl.com/ACWwx20>. Professor Noe characterized the belief that battle noise caused rain as a “myth.”

Matthew Howell, Editor, CFCWRT

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

By Brandon Carter, Esq.; Serialized by Matthew Howell



A hand painted lithograph by New York printmaking company Currier & Ives depicting the Confederate and Union forces fighting during the Battle of Second Manassas in August of 1862.

### Part 3: Theories on Post-Combat Rain

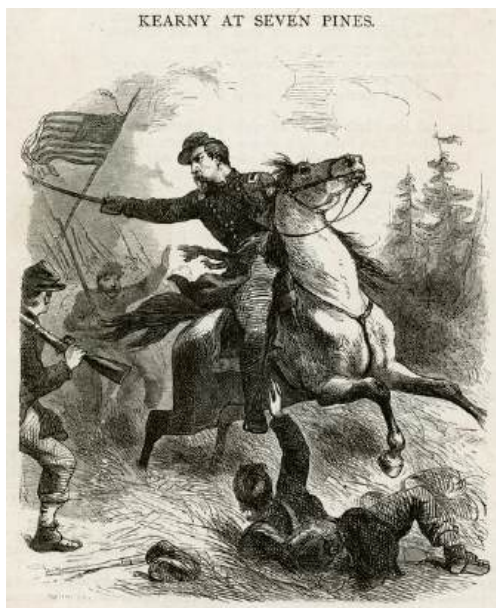
Powers found an extremely strong connection between combat and rain in action along the Mississippi River. He noted that nearly any fight of any size along its banks was followed by rain. Among these battles were New Madrid in Missouri, Forts Jackson and St. Philip near New Orleans, engagements near Vicksburg, and four separate occasions at Island No. 10 (Powers 23-30). Also fought in the Western Theater was the bloody battle of Shiloh. A Union soldier who remembered Shiloh, on the Tennessee River, wrote that “in this case, the theory was clearly demonstrated that great battles bring on copious rains, for it continued to rain for several days, although the general tendency of the weather had been clear and pleasant” (Miller 35). Confrontations in the Red River Campaign were also followed by precipitation.

The spring of 1862 was exceptionally wet in Virginia. That combat caused such a protracted rainy season extending over several months seems questionable, yet it did appear to influence it, triggering precipitation on specific days. This is visible in both Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley Campaign and McClellan’s fruitless adventure up the Virginia Peninsula. Captain N. J. Manning of the 23rd Ohio Volunteers noted rain after the battles at Cross Keys and McDowell. McDowell resulted in less than 900 combined casualties – not a large battle by any means. Manning also wrote that “the quantity of rain seemed to be in proportion to the amount of artillery firing” (Powers 187). Rain also followed Winchester and Port Republic. The Peninsula Campaign was dominated by poor weather. It started as early as the capture of Yorktown on May 2. The trend continued with the Battles of Williamsburg, Seven Pines, Savage’s Station, and of course, Malvern Hill. Roads were nearly impassable, and the armies made little, if any, daily progress.

## Coincidence or Chemistry Cont.

The rain that fell at the conclusion of the Second Battle of Manassas had huge implications for both sides. It began on the night of August 30, 1862, just as the hostilities were winding down. The rain ended any Confederate hope for a final blow to U.S. General John Pope's Army of Virginia (Robertson, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend*, 575). Lee ordered Jackson to undertake a roundabout pursuit of the defeated enemy. The steady downpour did not let up until 8 A.M. on the morning of September 1. Supply wagons were caught in the mud, and the men were desperate for food (Robertson, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend*, 579). Not long after 4:00 P.M., Confederates from A. P. Hill's division attacked the Union IX Corps near Ox Hill. The rain began anew, again in torrents. Powder was soaked. Hill ordered Brigadier General Lawrence Branch to hold the Union men off with the bayonet. Branch soon responded that his rifles could not be fired, and Hill relayed this information to Jackson. Stonewall merely replied that the Yankee ammunition was wet, too (Robertson, *General A. P. Hill: The Story of a Confederate Warrior*, 128). Then confusion set in. Men could barely see in front of them.

Union General Philip Kearny became overly excited and rode forward in the blinding rain. He crossed into the lines of the 55th Virginia and was called on to surrender. Instead, he turned his mount and pressed back to his lines as quickly as the horse could run. It was too late; he was killed in the saddle. Kearny was the second Union general to die that day. Even more confusion occurred in the Union lines after the deaths of their generals. They pulled back after nightfall, but the rain kept the Confederates from noticing (Robertson, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend*, 581). This was not the only disaster caused by the post-combat rain that day.



# Notable Events in the Cape Fear Region

By Yelena Howell

**Saturday, February 1, 8-9 pm. Latimer House Night Tour** featuring a scholarly discussion of gaslight. 126 S. 3rd St, Wilmington; \$20. Info and tickets: <https://latimerhouse.org/tours/>

**Tuesday, February 4, doors open at 6 pm, program at 7 pm. Hatch Auditorium, Caswell Beach.** Brunswick Civil War Round Table welcomes **Kevin Pawlak** with his gripping presentation on the Second Battle of Manassas (Bull Run). 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, February 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://tinyurl.com/ReadFx>

**Friday, February 7, 8-9 pm, Burgwin-Wright House, 224 Market St., Wilmington. Candlelit Night Tour of the museum.** Tickets \$15 (+tax) ea. Please call (910) 762-0570 to reserve your spot.

**Saturday, February 8, 4-6:30 pm. Fort Fisher State Historic Site.** 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd., Kure Beach. **Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr.** will lead us on the very best sunset tour of the new Visitor Center and grounds. Admission is \$20 per person. Advance reservations needed: email [CapeFearRT@gmail.com](mailto:CapeFearRT@gmail.com)

**Saturday, February 15, 10 am-3 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. The 160th Anniversary of the Fall of Fort Anderson.** A living history event for all ages with artillery and infantry demos throughout the day. Free of charge; donations graciously accepted. Info: <https://www.facebook.com/BrunswickTownFortAnderson/> or [brunswick@dncr.nc.gov](mailto:brunswick@dncr.nc.gov)

**Saturday, February 15, 6-7 pm. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. Plunging Shot and Screaming Shell: A Nighttime Bombardment.** Heavy artillery in action! \$10 for ages 16+; no charge for children 15 y.o. and younger. Info and tickets: <https://tinyurl.com/FebFire>

**Saturday, February 22, 10 am-5 pm. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Living History Day: 160th Anniversary of the Battle of Forks Road.** Info: <https://cameronartmuseum.org/event/living-history-day-160th-anniversary/> Suggested reading: <https://tinyurl.com/BattleForksRd>

**Wednesday, February 26, 9 am. NHC Senior Center, 2222 College Rd., Wilmington.**

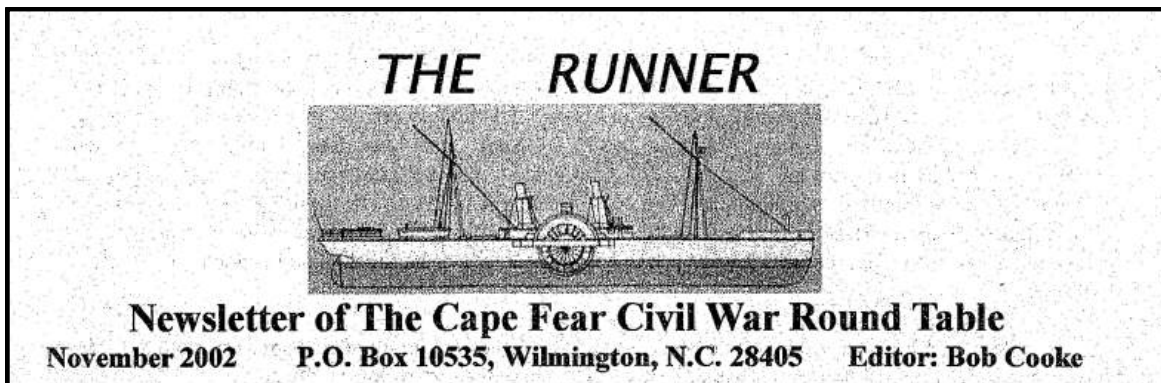
**Remembering Our Heroes (ROH) Army Style, SOS Breakfast.** Full catered breakfast featuring chipped beef on toast. \$8. **Ken Brooks** will present “**Churchill’s Commandoes**” at 10 am. Info: <https://tinyurl.com/ROHFeb>; reserve your spot with John Weisz at [hans52weisz@gmail.com](mailto:hans52weisz@gmail.com)  
Walk-ins welcome.

**Friday, February 28, 6-8 pm. Bellamy Mansion Museum.** 503 Market St., Wilmington. Artists' Reception with **BJ Grimmer** and **Ricardo Perez**. Their exhibition is open Thurs., 1/30/2025, 10:00 AM to Sun., 4/27/2025, 4:00 PM. To view it at no charge, stop by the Carriage House Visitor Center. Does require the ability to climb stairs to access the gallery space. Info: [info@bellamymansion.org](mailto:info@bellamymansion.org)

# Thirty Years of Newsletters

By Bill Jayne

We are lucky to have a record of most of our monthly newsletters going back to April 1995. George Slaton, our first president, was also the newsletter editor until September 2001 when Bob Cooke took over. Somewhere around November 2002, the newsletter acquired a name—*The Runner*—which it retains unto this day.



September 2005 was the last edition of *The Runner* to be printed and mailed out in “hard copy” via the U.S. Postal Service (snail mail). In September 2011 Tim Winstead took over the editor’s responsibility until 2018. Sherry Hewitt became editor in February 2019 and then Fred Claridge in April 2023. Matthew Howell has been our editor since September of 2024.

Our webmaster, Richard Buggeln, has scanned all the hard copies of past newsletters and uploaded them to the CFCWRT Website. We now have the complete collection on the Website from 1995 through the present.

They are presented by year and there is also a concatenated version that a user can look at. It is 140 megabytes (very large) but that file is a PDF, which is searchable and downloadable.



# Opinion

By Roman Berger

## **The Anonymous Fort Fisher: Why Does The Battle Feel Overlooked Outside of Cape Fear?**

On January 18, 2025, the Fort Fisher Visitors Center held an event to reintroduce locals and tourists to the newly rebuilt museum and adjoining battleground. Among the day's events was a talk by former CFCWRT President Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. on his book *Fort Fisher Illustrated*. The event coincided with the 160th anniversary of the Fort's capitulation to Union forces in the dying months of the Civil War. The Battle of Fort Fisher is one of the largest flashpoints in the region's history and a major focal point for many historians of the area, chief among them the aforementioned Dr. Fonvielle.

Yet I doubt the gravitas of this anniversary would be felt the same way if I spoke to, say, a history enthusiast on my native Long Island.

As a Northerner who took Advanced Placement History in high school and majored in History after four years in my state collegiate system, I can confirm that we learned nothing about Fort Fisher—neither the fort nor the battle. I imagine those who took official state history courses learned even less about the site and its history. This isn't too shocking; the New York U.S. History curriculum is inherently centered on the Empire State and its role in the national story. However, a cursory look reveals that the battle fades into the background on a nationwide scale. Some of the most prolific books on the conflict relegate discussions of the battle to a few pages. For example, *Battle Cry of Freedom* dedicates, at most, five pages to the conflict. While Shelby Foote's trilogy offers more detailed coverage, it's more suited for dedicated researchers looking for a full chronology of the war. To gain a complete picture, you would need to turn to scholarship focused specifically on the battle, such as Dr. Fonvielle's writings.

The January 1865 Second Battle of Fort Fisher seems to have fallen into relative obscurity outside of the Carolinas. Even as a history enthusiast, my knowledge of the battle was limited until I relocated here in 2023. Before then, the conflict simply didn't cross my mind. On one hand, this is understandable. Most scholarship contends that the Union victory was a *fait accompli* after the fall of Atlanta and Sherman's subsequent March to the Sea; this is often what casual readers take away. It's an understandable argument, but the fact that Wilmington—then the largest city in North Carolina—remained accessible to Confederate ships hinted that the Confederate government still had a faint lifeline. One could argue that it was Fort Fisher's fall and the closure of that lifeline that hastened the collapse of Jefferson Davis's government and cemented the timeline for the Confederacy's surrender.

## Opinion Cont.

It's worth noting that Fort Fisher's fall was no easy capitulation. During the three-day battle, Union casualties totaled over 1,000 out of nearly 12,000 men, while Confederate casualties numbered almost 2,000 from a force of 8,300. The fight was bloody, and its consequences were dramatic. The South was completely cut off from global trade and critical supplies. Any faint hope of international recognition evaporated, and Wilmington—the Carolinas' largest city, geographically closer to Washington than Atlanta—fell to Northern forces a month later. This further symbolic blow paved the way to Appomattox.

So why does this battle feel dwarfed outside the region?

Personally, I think media plays a significant role. *Gone with the Wind*, one of the cornerstones of American literature and cinema, centers on the fall of Atlanta. Inevitably, that event has become a key moment in public consciousness for those envisioning the Confederacy's defeat. Additionally, thirty-three years after Fort Fisher's fall, the Massacre of 1898 supplanted the fort's capitulation as the most significant historical event in Cape Fear history. The repercussions of that event relegated Wilmington to near-obscurity for much of the 20th century, as other Carolinian cities surpassed it in prominence.

Further, as mentioned earlier, Fort Fisher's fall served more as a nail in the coffin for the Confederate war effort than a decisive turning point. Casual observers of history tend to focus on grand, defining moments in the national story, and the Civil War offers no shortage of these: Bull Run, Gettysburg, Sherman's March, Antietam, and Vicksburg, to name a few. Even if Fort Fisher had remained in Confederate hands, it's difficult to imagine a scenario where the Union did not secure victory within months.

Still, it's worth pondering: What might have happened if Fort Fisher hadn't fallen? Could the Confederacy have held out longer? Might they have secured enough supplies to launch a desperate offensive, boosting morale? Could Lincoln have survived the bullet of an enraged John Wilkes Booth, and how would he have approached Reconstruction under such circumstances? How many men—whose postwar contributions helped shape the nation—might have died in extended conflict or even within the battle itself? These are questions we'll never truly answer.





## Opinion Cont.

But speculation is deeply compelling.

The Butterfly Effect is an intriguing theory: one small change can lead to profound, cascading consequences. Fort Fisher might serve as a fascinating case study of the Butterfly Effect that never was. From the leadership strategies employed to the long-term impact of the fort's fall, there's much to analyze about how this moment shaped the Carolinas and broader American history over the next century and a half.

Studying history involves more than recounting events; it's about analyzing strategies, drawing lessons, and, sometimes, imagining the possibilities of what might have been. These unknowns can provide new perspectives on the national and regional stories that continue to shape the United States.



*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.*

# 249th Anniversary Battle of Moores Creek Bridge



## Commemorate the 249th Anniversary of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge

Join us on the weekend of February 22nd and 23rd for a series of Living History events.

From 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM each day, you can:

- Tour battlefield encampments
- Watch historic weapons demonstrations
- Explore a variety of colonial demonstrations in the demonstration area

### Program Schedule for Saturday February 22:

- 10:00 am—Wreath Laying Ceremony Program Tent/Grady Monument
- 11:30 am – Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - Amphitheater
- 12:30 pm/3:30 pm—Battle Demonstration—Patriot Earthworks
- 1:00 pm/3:00 pm—Colonial Music—Tryon Palace Fife and Drum Corps Patriot Earthworks



Visit the Moores Creek National Battlefield website for updates and additional information regarding this event.

<https://tinyurl.com/2rhatwjw>

## Brunswick Civil War Round Table



### **“Never Such a Campaign: The Battle of Second Manassas” A Presentation by Kevin Pawlak**

The upcoming Brunswick Civil War Round Table meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, featuring guest historian Kevin Pawlak. He will present "Never Such A Campaign: The Battle of Second Manassas," discussing the brutal and decisive Confederate victory that allowed Gen. Robert E. Lee's army to cross into the North. The presentation will explore the battle's scale, tactics, and impact, including Stonewall Jackson's surprise attack and the Union's retreat. Pawlak, a respected battlefield guide and historian, has extensive experience in Civil War research and preservation.

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](mailto:Brunswickcwrtable@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**

# Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

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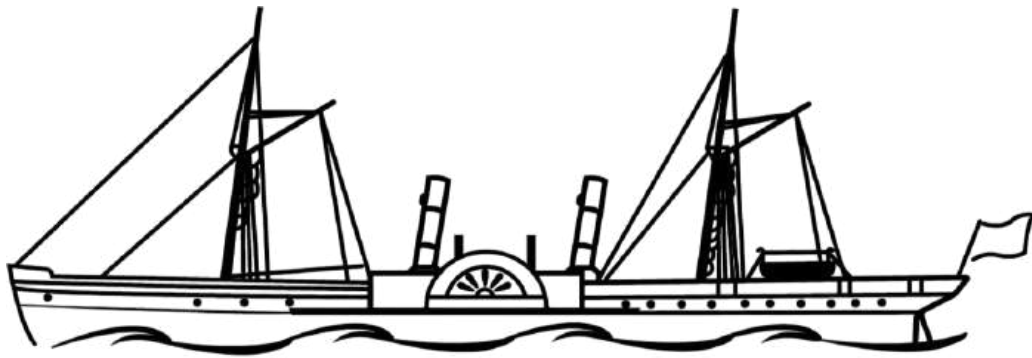
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## Editor

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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.**

**2/13/25 - Terrence J. Winschel**  
**"Triumph & Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign"**

**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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