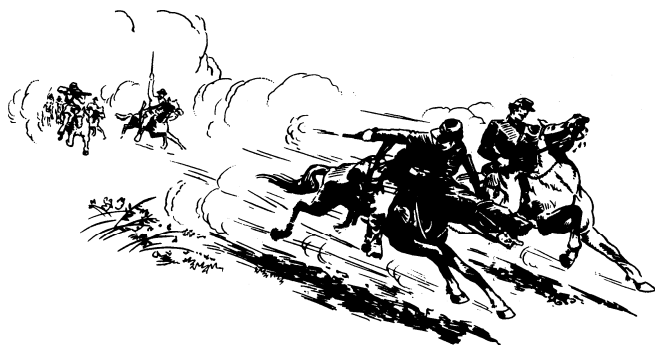


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



## *News Letter*

November 2008  
Volume 58, Number 3

### **The North Anna Battles**

**T**he year 1864 represents a major turning point for military operations in the Civil War's Eastern theater, with a host of its significant battles becoming a part of the War's chronology. The Wilderness, Spotsylvania and The Crater are all well known to students of the war, but they are only part of the total story that was Grant's Overland Campaign. One often neglected portion of this campaign has been a series of engagements known as The North Anna Battles (May 21-25, 1864). Taking place between the high profile actions at Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor, The North Anna Battles have

been largely ignored, because of their low casualty figures and lack of enduring results. Yet, because of the possibilities they provided to both Grant and Lee, along with the impact they would have on subsequent operations at Cold Harbor, these battles do merit attention. Our November speaker, Colonel Marc Thompson, will provide us with an in-depth look at these important transitional battles of the Overland Campaign, placing them in proper context to what might have been and what would actually happen.

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### **November 2008 Meeting**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Wednesday, November 12, 2008</b>	<b>Place:</b>	Officers' Club
<b>Price:</b>	Dinner \$29.00 per person Lecture only \$5.00		Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, DC
<b>Agenda:</b>	6:00 pm Social Hour:	Cash Bar	
	6:45 pm Dinner:	Roast Chicken Vegetable of the Day (Vegetarian meals are available upon request in advance.) Roast Red Potatoes Chocolate Cake	
	8:00 pm Speaker:	Marc Thompson	
	Topic:	The North Anna Battles	

Guests are always welcome to attend our meetings.

The deadline for reservations is Monday, November 10, 2008. Please send them to:

Mr. John Restall  
3324 Glenmore Dr.  
Falls Church, VA 22041-3317

Phone: 703-578-1942  
Email: [restall@joimail.com](mailto:restall@joimail.com)  
If reserving a dinner by email, make such you receive a confirmation email.

As the Round Table must pay for all meals ordered, members and guests are obligated to pay for the meal in the event they do not attend.

**PLEASE NOTE IMPORTANT SECURITY NOTICE ON PAGE 2**

## Officers and Board of Governors for 2008-2009

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**M**embership in the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia is open to anyone interested in the study of the American Civil War or American history. Our program year runs from September through June of the following year. Dues are \$30.00 per year (\$15 if you join after January 31, 2009) and should be mailed with a membership application form (available on our web site or from the address below) to:

CWRT of DC Membership Committee  
Kenneth R. Rice  
4110 N. 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Arlington, VA 22207-3005

Checks should be made out to **The CWRT of DC**. Membership includes a subscription to the monthly newsletter which contains notice of dinner meeting dates, speakers, and topics; information on field trips, and various Civil War related articles. Dinner meetings are held from September through June on the second Tuesday of each month at the Fort Leslie J. McNair Officer's Club in Washington, DC. Guests are always welcome at our meetings.

For further information about the Round Table, to submit a newsletter article, or present a program to the Round Table, please contact the newsletter editor.

## IMPORTANT SECURITY NOTICE

**W**e have been entering and leaving through the P Street gate. Please be prepared for a short delay getting through the gate when you arrive. This is for both vehicles and pedestrians. They will ask for a picture ID, search bags, and cars without a current DOD sticker.

## Newsletter by Email

**T**his newsletter is now available by email as an alternative to US mail. All recipients of this newsletter are requested to choose the email version of the newsletter. This will reduce newsletter expenses and allow the money to be used for things like battlefield preservation. To receive this newsletter by email, please indicate so on your membership form, or email the newsletter editor. The newsletter is published on our web site listed below. The newsletter editor's address is:

Kenneth R. Rice  
4110 N. 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Arlington, VA 22207-3005  
Email: kennrice@erols.com  
Phone: 703-527-0077

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Visit our web site at: <http://users.erols.com/kennrice/cwrtdc.htm>

## President's Column by Tom Devaney The Civil War - Part II

**A**braham Lincoln, who for many Americans is the very embodiment of the wisdom of the common man, urged in an 1837 speech that reverence for the law must become the political religion of the nation. He then saw the American experiment in republicanism spiral out of control. In 1861, William T. Sherman, the future Union general, concluded that the real problem was not agitation over slavery but "the democratic spirit, which substitutes mere opinions for the law." Our country, Sherman complained, had become so democratic that "the mere popular opinion of any town or village rises above the law. Men have ceased to look to the constitution and law books for their guides, but have studied popular opinion in barrooms and village newspapers."

Once the war broke out, the Union possessed only a tiny professional army. It would have to depend on the volunteer forces raised, officered and manned by civilians. Since the government lacked the institutions required to impose discipline, the volunteers had to impose discipline on themselves, finding in themselves the civic virtue to save the republic that had been so signally lacking in the political environment of the previous 25 years.

Fortunately, they accomplished this feat, fusing republican ideology with Victorian ideas about manliness. This is the interpretation of the Civil War that we emphasize today, memorializing their patriotism and self-sacrifice. The Civil War tested whether a nation based on liberty and equality could long endure. But focusing too much on the fact that it did and finding reassurance in that answer makes it easy for us to overlook the failures of 19th-century Americans that led to the war.

It is impossible to revisit the Civil War without reaching disquieting conclusions about our values and ourselves. What we believe about a war that took place almost 150 years ago exerts a profound influence on what we believe about ourselves today. In teaching the Civil War, we face a choice between reinforcing the American civil religion by emphasizing the necessity and justice of the struggle and the soldiers' valor, or tacitly questioning that religion by emphasizing that the war's commencement reflects the breakdown of American democracy.

We must remember the fragility of our democracy. It failed once, and that failure was retrieved only by the sacrifice of 620,000 Americans. At any given time, our democracy is only a generation away from failing again. Thus every generation is responsible for maintaining, protecting, and promoting our republic.

### The Forgotten Cavalry Battles of Gettysburg

**O**n June 23, 1863, Confederate General J. E. B. Stuart received orders from his commander, Robert E. Lee, to head for Pennsylvania, take a position on General Ewell's right to guard that flank, keep General Lee informed, and collect supplies for the Army of Northern Virginia. Those orders are at the heart of the debate that still swirls around Stuart's 1863 Maryland raid. Some say his absence the first two days of the battle at Gettysburg cost Lee the victory there.

Pursuant to these orders and oblivious to the storm of controversy to come, Stuart and his best three brigades set out at 1 a.m. on June 25. He was behind schedule almost from the start. To pass around the Union army in Virginia, he had to swing wider than planned and cross into Maryland at Rowser's Ford. On June 28, he

rode into Rockville. After destroying the telegraph lines, chance brought an encounter with a Union wagon train. More time was lost to capture it, parole the prisoners and flirt with the young ladies of the Rockville Female Academy.

The Round Table's October 4 tour, with guide Marc Thompson, picked up J. E. B. Stuart and his troopers' trail at Veirs Mill Road juncture with Georgia Avenue. Seven members of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table joined the tour, whose first stop was the site of Hood's Mill. Confederate cavalry arrived here about daybreak on June 29. After doing what damage they could to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks, they rode on to Westminster, Maryland, as did the tour.

At Westminster later on June 29, Stuart's vanguard engaged elements of the Union First Delaware Cavalry. Though thoroughly green and vastly outnumbered, companies C and D bravely rode to meet the head of the Rebel column. The brisk cavalry skirmish at the junction of Main Street and the Washington Road has come to be known as Corbit's Charge, after the commander of the union troopers. During the action, two Confederate lieutenants (one of whom was Lt. William Murray of the 4th Virginia Cavalry) were killed and more were wounded on both sides. Our additional stops in Westminster were the site of Baughman's blacksmith shop where members of the Delaware cavalry were having their horses shod when surprised by the appearance of Stuart's men. We also paid our respects at Ascension Episcopal Church cemetery where Lt. Murray still lies at rest. The action at Westminster, though a Confederate victory, helped to further impede the junction of J. E. B. Stuart's troopers with Lee's army in Pennsylvania.

The tour and Stuart's cavalry moved on to Union Mills where they caught a few hours rest at this bucolic 1797 homestead and mill the night of June 29. Shortly afterwards, the Union Fifth Corps would also camp here on their way to Gettysburg. The Shriver's of Union Mills were a locally prominent family, whose property on the Westminster-Gettysburg road served as a base for various entrepreneurial and political activities. At the time of the Civil War, ownership was divided between William Shriver, who managed the mill, and his brother Andrew. Though he held no slaves, William was a Southern sympathizer and four of his sons actively served the Confederacy. His brother, Andrew, was an ardent Unionist.

On the evening of June 29, Stuart learned that General Judson Kilpatrick's Union Cavalry Division was at Littlestown, Pennsylvania, only a few miles away. On the advice of William Shriver, Stuart turned his troops to a more eastern route towards Hanover, Pennsylvania, hoping to meet General Jubal Early in the vicinity of York. The morning of June 30, Stuart and his staff breakfasted at William Shriver's home and his seventeen-year-old son, Herbert, was recruited by Stuart to guide him via the back roads to Hanover. As reward, Stuart promised Herbert an appointment to the Virginia Military Institute. Shriver accepted and remained with Stuart through the Gettysburg campaign and into early August. Following this episode, Herbert did secure an appointment to VMI, though largely through the influence of his cousin Jacob Shriver, a West Point graduate.

Stuart's movements were hampered by the wagon train he had captured in Rockville. Kilpatrick, on his way back toward Gettysburg, got his own troops moving very early and arrived at the vital crossroads in Hanover barely an hour ahead of Stuart. Here, a major, nearly day long, battle involving several engagements

was fought. Kilpatrick was the victor and Stuart, who was nearly captured by the Wolverines of newly promoted General George Armstrong Custer's brigade, was forced to go further to the north in his quest to find Ewell's Division. This movement consumed more time for Stuart and resulted in his missing Early who, as noted above, was in the vicinity of York. The tour stopped in Hanover three times to review the various locations and phases of the battle. Stops included Pennville, the Centre Square and Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Having avoided Kilpatrick, Stuart ran into Custer again on July 2 at Hunterstown, Pennsylvania, also known as the North Cavalry Battlefield. Significant troop concentrations here resulted in a fairly major engagement. Stuart won that fight and Custer almost got himself killed by Hampton's men. But once again, Stuart was delayed and forced to detour. We made an interpretive stop at the Felty Farm to review the action.

Stuart finally arrived at Gettysburg late in the day on July 2. Incredibly, Stuart had been either fighting or marching non-stop since Brandy Station on June 9. During that period, there were the following major battles involving Stuart's command: Brandy Station, Aldie, Middleburg, Upperville, the ride, Hanover and Hunterstown. All of this was hard, unrelenting marching and fighting.

The tour's final destination, the East Cavalry Battlefield, is often overlooked by visitors to Gettysburg. On July 2, Lee ordered Stuart to hold General Ewell's left. On July 3, those responsibilities would send Stuart on a collision course with General David Gregg's Federal Cavalry. Gregg received orders on July 2 to relocate his troops from the junction of Low Dutch Road and the Hanover Road. Fearing this would expose the Union's right flank, Gregg

sent a protest to his commander, General Alfred Pleasanton, and waited for a reply. The orders were reaffirmed, but Gregg was allowed to detach a brigade from Kilpatrick to cover the critical junction. An aide on the way to inform Kilpatrick of the order stumbled upon Custer who was on his way to rejoin Kilpatrick as ordered. Custer agreed to stay once Gregg assured him that he would take responsibility for Custer's disobedience to Kilpatrick's orders. Before Gregg vacated the area, he received a report from Pleasanton that a large body of Confederate Cavalry was seen moving in his direction. Thus, the stage was set for the cavalry battle between the Hanover and York Roads east of Gettysburg.

Stuart hid his men in the woods along Cress Ridge and on the Rummel Farm. He then ordered a single cannon to fire in each direction of the compass. The reason for this action remains a mystery. The tour leader suggested there was speculation that it was to signal Lee that he was in place behind the main Union line of Cemetery Ridge and Lee could now send Longstreet's Assault forward. The Union guns replied and soon the dismounted phase of the battle was joined. A Confederate Officer with the Virginia Cavalry would describe the fierce fighting that followed as "hand to hand, blow for blow, cut for cut, and oath for oath."

After two hours of mostly dismounted fighting, which included the initial artillery duel, a mounted sortie by a Confederate brigade accidentally initiated a grand charge. A ferocious mounted counterattack, lead by Custer, blunted the Confederate thrust and brought an end to the day's fighting. Neither side gained an advantage but Stuart's men were kept from gaining access to the potentially vulnerable rear of the Union lines, allowing the Federal infantry to focus all of their efforts on repulsing Pickett's Charge. The tour made stops

at Cress Ridge, Little's Run and the Michigan Brigade Monument before calling it a day.

It was another terrific tour by Marc Thompson. Marc brings his years of experience as a professional soldier and officer, to his historical interpretation. He relies heavily on using the U.S. Principles of War to describe and analyze the tactics of battle and decisions of the officers. He also brings his military briefing expertise to his analysis of the "players" in the campaigns. As one tour participant said, "He's good. We should have him do more tours for us."

### **Confederate Seal Press Salvaged In Bermuda**

By Virgil C. (Pat) Jones (member)  
(From our November 1958 Newsletter)

**H**ow Bermuda was converted almost overnight from "a quiet, sleepy, quaint colony" to a thriving blockade point, with people sleeping in its streets and its basements and warehouses filled with hardware and other vital materials to be sneaked into the Confederacy, was told with rare British humor by Sir Stanley Spurling at the October (1958) meeting of the Round Table.

Seventy-nine years old and known as Bermuda's "unofficial premier," Sir Stanley was the second non-American to face the Washington group.

One of his major contributions in his talk was a discussion of the seal of the Confederacy. This seal, it is generally accepted in Bermuda, he revealed, was made by J. S. Lyon, seal maker to the Queen of England. It was ordered by Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin through James Mason, Confederate agent in London, and was shipped from England via Bermuda on July 6, 1864, in the trust of an officer. Three

times this officer tried unsuccessfully to get the seal and a press through the blockade. Finally, leaving the press with John Tudor Bourne, consul for the Confederacy at Bermuda, he managed to get into Wilmington with the seal in his pocket.

What happened to the seal and press in the decades immediately following the war remains a mystery. At Bourne's death in 1867, the press was sold at public auction, and then it went into obscurity. Some years later, John Samuel Darrell bought a curious iron device encrusted with rust at a junk sale. After considerable scraping, he recognized the old seal press of the Confederacy. It now, with a duplicate of the seal, is in the possession of His Honor Sir John Cox, C. B. E., Speaker of Bermuda's House of Assembly.

The seal itself remained out of sight for even a longer period. In 1912, Gallaird Hunt, the historian, discovered the original seal and encouraged its purchase by a group of Richmond citizens. It now is on display in the Confederate Museum there.

Sir Stanley, who revealed he had spent many an hour as a young man listening to some of the old blockade runner captains recall their experiences, told in some detail of the sleek, swift mystery ships that stole into Bermuda to unload their cargoes, and he also related the predicament of Major Norman Walker, sent to Bermuda as a representative of the Confederate Government. Mrs. Walker was expecting, and the major wanted the child to be born on Confederate soil and under the Confederate flag, but he did not want her exposed to the dangers of running the blockade. He solved his problem by raising a Confederate flag over her bed and by importing a barrel of Southern soil to spread beneath it.

**Marc Thompson**

**M**arc Thompson is an associate with Booz Allen Hamilton, who works as a consultant to the Operations Directorate (J-3) of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. He is a retired USAF Colonel, with 28 years service as an intelligence officer. Marc is the current President of the Rappahannock Civil War Round Table in Fredericksburg, Virginia, has worked as a volunteer tour guide and historian with the National Park Service at Chancellorsville Battlefield for over 10 years, and was also President of the Omaha Civil War Round Table. He has addressed Civil War Round Table organizations in several states and led battlefield bus tours throughout Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Membership for Women in the CWRT of DC**

**T**his month marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War Round Table of DC voting to admit women to the membership. A vote was taken on November 8, 1983, to amend our Constitution and By-Laws to make both men and women eligible for membership effective November 9. The measure passed by more than a two-thirds vote.

**25 Years Ago**

**D**r. Richard M. McMurray spoke to the Round table on November 8, 1983. His topic was "A Look AT John Bell Hood." Dr. McMurray was a professor at the North Carolina University in Raleigh, and the author of the award winning book **John Bell Hood And The War For Southern Independence.**

**50 Years Ago**

**O**n November 11, 1958, Bruce Catton, past president of the CWRT of DC and former editor of this newsletter, spoke to the Round Table about "Why Study the Civil War – What Does The Centennial Mean To You."

That evening was designated "Centennial Night." Mr. William S. Paley, President of CBS and a member of the Civil War Centennial Commission, introduced Mr. Catton and discussed plans and activities of the Centennial. An interesting feature of the program was a special photographic exhibit arranged by National Park Service Officials, showing battlefield areas which will become the focal point for tourists during the centennial years.

**Dinner Reservation Form For Wednesday, November 12, 2008.**

The deadline for reservations is Monday, November 10, 2008.

The cost is \$29.00 per person. Please make your check payable to CWRT of DC.

Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of people: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Cost of dinners: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to Edwin C. Bearss Award: \$\_\_\_\_\_  
 (Please see the description on the opposite side of this form.)

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Needed in case the meeting must be cancelled .)

Total enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form and your check to: Mr. John Restall  
 3324 Glenmore Dr.  
 Falls Church, VA 22041-3317

### **Get Serious about Preservation!**

This past June, the DC Round Table awarded its annual Ed Bearss Preservation Award to the Friends of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. The award, totaling \$1000, was given to the group at the request of the man himself – Ed Bearss. As all of you know, this is something the Round Table does every year to honor Ed and to repay him, in some small way, for speaking to us and leading our field trip for free – yes, without compensation.

We're not alone. Ed donates his time to many groups in order to spark interest in the Civil War and to build momentum to preserve the Civil War landscape. This is an important time, because more of that landscape is disappearing every year. Therefore, now is the time to save it.

Your dinner reservation form has a spot to make a contribution. In addition, the Bearss' Bear, to collect money for the same purpose, is on the table at every meeting. Think what five or ten dollars from each of you every month would add up to at the end of the year. Added to the monies that we manage to set aside from book raffles, etc., we could contribute more than \$1000 to battlefield preservation.

There are many deserving Civil War preservation efforts out there, some large like the Civil War Preservation Trust, and some small like the Friends of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. Ed manages every year to choose those who are most deserving, so let's help him out and help out a good cause. Literally, we are the people who can help save history.