

DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock
Valley Civil War Round Table



Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

November 2008, Volume 5, Issue 11

Speaker: Chris Kolokowski, Overall Director of the Perryville Battlefield
Topic: "Perryville: The Battle that Saved Kentucky"
When: Monday, November 10, 2008
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social: 6:30 p.m.; Dinner: 6:45 p.m.; Meeting begins: 7:30 p.m.

Abstract of our scheduled November Program

In 1862, Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and Edmund Kirby Smith set out to invade Kentucky in a two-pronged attack. Union General Don Carlos Buell rushed to Kentucky from Tennessee in an attempt to stop the Confederate invasion. These opposing forces came together at Perryville, Kentucky. The how and why will be explained by Chris Kolokowski on Monday November 10, 2008. Chris is an old friend of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table. He is also a native of Fredericksburg and he was, i.e., for a brief time, a National Park Service Historian at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. After earning his Master's Degree, Chris worked for a time with the Civil War Preservation Trust before accepting his current position of overall Director of the Perryville Battlefield. Join us at our November meeting to welcome back and to hear Chris tell us about "Perryville: The Battle that Saved Kentucky."

The 116th Ohio Regiment in Virginia: Important but not Prominent Service

A Review of the October Program by Greg Mertz

While all members of the Round Table share an interest in the Civil War, we have made connections with the war through a variety of means. For many, our connections include a link with ancestors who served during the war and with their regiments. At our October meeting, former president Greg Martin shared with us some of his thoughts about the 116th Ohio; the regiment in which his great-great-grandfather John Martin served.

Greg noted that the 116th Ohio was not a prominent regiment and did not appear in any of the marquee battles of the war. However, the unit participated in a significant number of important engagements though, and several aspects of their service provide us with interesting insights into soldier life.

Recruitment efforts in the summer of 1862 included the return of veteran soldiers to their homes to appear alongside local dignitaries in parades and fairs to stimulate enlistments. One such soldier returning to southeast Ohio that summer was Wilson Martin, who was able to recruit several relatives to join a new company – Company F of what would become the 116th Ohio. Four Martin brothers (including Greg's ancestor) and a brother-in-law joined this company.

Before the regiment had filled the ranks of its last two companies, the troops were summoned from their station at Camp Putnam, Ohio to oppose the Confederate raider Albert G. Jenkins. The new recruits had no uniforms or equipment. They were armed with old Belgium rifles. They had few officers with the experience or knowledge of military tactics necessary to know how to direct their men. But Jenkins was believed to be heading toward the railroad town of Parkersburg in what is now West Virginia, and the ill-equipped Ohio recruits were sent across the river on September 1, 1862. Troops arrived in Parkersburg with the rain coming down as they began their assignment guarding the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad depot. These men without tents reasoned that Jenkins could not burn the depot during the downpour, so they spent the night inside the building. The following morning, the depot chief arrived and erupted in anger after seeing that the soldiers had disturbed some of the cargo inside. After the depot chief knocked down a couple of soldiers who laughed at his temper tantrum, the soldiers tied him up and returned to camp. This was the regiment's first military foray.

The ranks of the regiment were not filled until October, 1862, in part because recruitment slowed as a reaction to the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation announced September 22. One member of the regiment referred to the span after the pronouncement as the "darkest and gloomiest period of the war." Many officers resigned, declaring that they would not participate in an abolitionist war.

When the regiment filled its ranks, it was sent from Parkersburg to Clarksburg by train on a very cold night. The cars had no means of heat, so a "council of war" was held in which the soldiers approved a plan of action. The wooden linings of the cars were stripped and used to build fires on top of the seats. When the fire came close to burning through a seat, it was moved to another seat. When the smoke had built up to the point that the men could no longer stand it, they opened the doors on both sides of the car.

The regiment was assigned to the Cheat Mountain Division under General Robert H. Milroy. When stationed at Romney, a soldier in the regiment approached headquarters requesting that he be assigned as a scout. When asked whether he would be able to deceive the Confederates regarding his true identity if captured, the soldier replied, "I guess I can; I have deceived everyone I ever had anything to do with so far in life." A short time later he was found utilizing the freedom allotted a scout to visit a girl. His status as a scout was revoked, but Greg noted that "his ability to deceive remained unquestioned ever afterwards."

While on a foraging party near Romney, without proper pickets to protect the main body, Confederate Partisan Ranger John Hanson McNeill attacked and captured many prisoners. McNeill issued his captors paroles, and the men were sent home until exchanged. Other soldiers in the regiment learned of the conditions of the paroles and concluded that it was a great way to get to visit home. It was well known that certain local rebel farmers had signed copies of paroles that they would gladly trade to Union soldiers in exchange for sugar or coffee. Headquarters eventually succeeded in getting the men to understand that such paroles were akin to the cowardly act of desertion. Greg shared the amusing fact that all four Martin brothers had each been paroled.

The 116th Ohio played a minor role in the Gettysburg Campaign, and otherwise saw very little action until the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. That spring, the regiment served under General Franz Sigel at the Battle of New Market, where it guarded wagon trains and destroyed a bridge to slow the pursuit of the successful Confederate forces. After David Hunter replaced Sigel, the regiment suffered its greatest loss of the war, 176 men killed and wounded, making two charges at the Battle of Piedmont. Among the casualties was Robert Martin, who was wounded and captured; he died in a prison camp in Florence, South Carolina ten days before Sherman liberated the prison.

The regiment was engaged in the valley during the fall of 1864, then serving under General George Crook, playing a key roll in the Battle of Fisher's Hill. During the phase of Sheridan's burning of the Shenandoah Valley, the town of Dayton was spared destruction through the intervention of Lt. Colonel Thomas Wildes. A monument at Dayton thanks Lt. Colonel Wildes and the 116th Ohio

Regiment for not burning the town. The regiment was then overrun by Jubal Early's Confederates at the Battle of Cedar Creek.

The next spring, the regiment was transferred to the Army of the James stationed at Petersburg. When the Confederate position collapsed in April, 1865, the 116th Ohio was part of a 5000 man assault on Fort Gregg, and two members of the regiment were awarded the Medal of Honor for their heroism on that day. As the command sought to cut off Lee's retreat, the regiment was called upon to march 38 miles in one day. The forced march enabled them to arrive at Appomattox Court House ahead of the Confederates. The 116th Ohio was one of the regiments supporting the Federal cavalry blocking the Confederate route, leaving Lee but one option – surrender...

LEE MOVES NORTH

by Michael A. Palmer

Media Review by Joe Truglio

This is yet another highly critical study dealing with the leadership style of General Robert E. Lee. The author claims his book is not intended to be a 'critique' of Lee, but rather a factual account of why certain things happened the way they did. To illustrate his point, the author delves into three of Lee's singularly failed campaigns: Antietam, Gettysburg, and Bristoe Station. Although, Mr. Palmer does not fully blame Lee in his book, he does take Lee's command style to task. In fact, Mr. Palmer actually places blame elsewhere at times, but in the end, the blame always falls back on Lee. This is a short book and an easy read! Go for it...

Reviewers Note: To a point, I would agree with the information as presented in this book. However, I am not a member of the popular 'Lee Myth' club! Personally, my belief is that Lee is not as guilty as he has often been presented, nor is he as blameless as many proponents of the 'Lost Cause' claim. This book is a worthy effort regardless of where you sit on the 'Lee fence' and it is better than some others I've read...

Civil War Authors Day

Saturday, November 15, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Hosted by Gray Ghost Vineyards, 14706 Lee Highway, Amissville, VA 20106. Call 540-937-4869 for additional information or go to www.grayghostvineyards.com on line. The event features holiday wines for the season, with renowned Civil War authors in attendance to autograph their books and help bring the Civil War to life! Enjoy vignettes throughout the day; this is a "must attend" event for history buffs. Admittance is free; authors will accept cash or checks.

Attending Authors

Charles Balch, Peter A. Brown, Eric W. Buckland,
Robert J. Driver, Jr., Gregg Dudding, Thomas J. Evans,
Clint Johnson, Don Hakenson, Chuck Mauro, Joseph W. McKinney,
Ed Trexler & The Hunter Mill Defense League

Slaves No More

by David Blight

Media Review by Joe Truglio

Presented here are the memoirs and lives of two escaped slaves during the Civil War. Mr. Blight presents the tales in the slaves own hand and gives comprehensive explanations of circumstances and events. The principals are two totally different men, who have extremely different adventures in escaping from the South. We are given this information and an excellent guide to understand their trials and tribulations. Overall, I was a bit disappointed with this book and it has nothing to do with the author's presentation. Information wise, I would have liked to have learned more about their lives

after they gained their freedom. The story really ends with their escape. We are given little about their lives and family after freedom. We are left to surmise their fates. This is a good book and it is one worthy of your time. Put this book on your read list...

Marc Thompson's "The Forgotten Cavalry Battles" Bus Tour

by Jim Smithfield

After several years of membership in RVCWRT, on October 4, 2008, I went on my first bus tour and it will not be my last! Those who didn't go on this tour really missed a great day, a marvelous tour and an occasion to intermingle with members of another Round Table! What a sunny, beautiful and perfect day we had! There were those of us on the bus, plus several individuals following along behind in personal vehicles. Our stops were well planned and the information Marc conveyed was both interesting and enlightening. Marc's obvious knowledge and personal enthusiasm for the subject matter discussed kept everyone's interest and left very little reason to ask questions. Visiting the site of an action with someone knowledgeable describing the events that occurred there, changes your perspective and enhances your understanding. The DC Round Table brought a lunch for all to share that would have met any dietary concern. Everyone on the tour repeatedly commented on how much they enjoyed the entire day, I know I certainly enjoyed it...

Mariner's Museum Bus Tour

by Jim Smithfield

On October 25, 2008 you missed another great tour and another great day, i.e., even though it was raining outside. A true highlight of our day was a special behind the scenes guided tour of the laboratory where restoration of the turret and other items from the USS Monitor continues daily, this was conducted by the Lab's Curator. Along with the turret there were nearly 4,000 other items recovered from the USS Monitor and these are all under conservation/restoration. The Mariner's Museum has on display the trusty lantern that glowed red for hours allowing Monitor survivors watching from the deck of the USS Rhode Island to see her last moment. Our entire tour was guided by a Museum Docent, whom we kept busy with questions while viewing the marvelous Crabtree Miniature Ships collection, the Age of Exploration, Admiral Nelson Touch, Defending the Seas, Great Hall of Steam, International Small Craft Center, and other notable exhibits.

During the ride down and back, Marc Thompson conducted brief seminars on the Battle of Hampton Roads, along with a review of associated Civil War land engagements and various political actions of this time period...

Remember to contact Bob Jones to order your dinner in advance and to save a buck!

Telephone 540 – 399 -1702 or e-mail 3dognight@bigplanet.com

The Drum and Bugle is published monthly by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Roundtable, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Yearly dues are \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the preservation of Civil War sites. Marc Thompson, President; Joe Bongiovi, Vice President and Program Chair; Bob Jones, Secretary; Bob Pfile, Treasurer; Dan Augustine, Web Site; Jim Smithfield, Newsletter Editor; John Graham, John Griffiths, Greg Martin, Greg Mertz and Tom Quigley, Members of the Board of Directors.