

# Civil War

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Brockenbrough's guns drew the fire of Union artillery batteries on the plain ahead, and soon the Confederate guns were under intense fire from enemy sharpshooters and cannon alike. Brockenbrough fell with a crippling wound to the arm, and one of his battery commanders was hit in the thigh.

With casualties mounting, the battered battalion withdrew from its exposed position east of the railroad and fell back behind Davidson's guns to the safety of the woods.

Convinced that he had silenced most of the enemy's cannons, Union Gen. George G. Meade ordered his division to attack the heights. Supporting Meade, on the right, was Gen. John Gibbon's division. Altogether the two divisions numbered approximately 8,000 men. Meade's division had the good fortune to find a 600-yard hole in Jackson's line. Pushing through the gap, it routed a South Carolina brigade and seized a military road that ran along the crest of the hill.

Gibbon found the going tougher. The 35-year-old Pennsylvanian steered his division toward the woods on Meade's right. His course brought him into direct collision with Lane's North Carolinians, who held a strong position behind the railroad embankment.

Lane initially held his own, driving back two of Gibbon's three brigades. But as Meade's men poured through the gap and begin filtering into the woods on Lane's right flank, the North Carolina line began to unravel. Sensing victory, Gibbon's men surged forward for a third time. Cascading down the slope and over the railroad embankment, they engaged Lane's men in hand-to-hand combat. One hundred eighty Confederates threw down their arms in surrender; the rest fell back through the woods and formed a new line 100 yards to the rear.

## During the Battle of Fredericksburg, Bernard's Cabins became an important Confederate artillery position on 'Stonewall' Jackson's end of the line.

Having seized the railroad, some Union soldiers made a dash for Davidson's nine guns, now just a few hundred yards away. The North Carolina captain waited until the Federals were within easy range, then let loose with a deadly storm of canister.

"The head of the column went down like wheat before the reaper," he wrote with satisfaction. "Another and another volley in quick succession completed the work. The Yankees broke, took to their heels and you never saw such a stampede in your life."

The slave cabins and a small pine grove had stood between Davidson and his Yankee assailants, but no more. By the time he stopped shooting, the cabins were in ruins and the grove had been reduced to kindling.

Gibbon reformed his division along the railroad. By then, he was under pressure from all sides. On the left, Meade's division had given way, exposing Gibbon's flank to attack. In the center, Lane's brigade—heavily reinforced—was pushing forward in an effort to retake the railroad. On the right, Davidson's guns continued to pour shot and shell into the ragged Union line.

When Gibbon had to leave the field with an

injured hand, his successor, Gen. Nelson Taylor, wisely ordered a retreat. Jackson had repaired the break in his line.

Gen. William B. Franklin was in overall command of the Union troops below Fredericksburg. No sooner had Meade's and Gibbon's men returned to their starting point on the Richmond Stage Road (modern Routes 2 and 17), than Union commander Ambrose E. Burnside ordered Franklin to renew the attacks. Franklin said he'd try, but it was a hollow promise. He had no stomach for frontal assaults, and with his grand division beaten and bloody, his only concern was keeping open his line of retreat.

"Stonewall" Jackson was not so timid. Not content to simply repulse Franklin's attacks, Jackson planned a crushing counterattack that would drive the Union army into the Rappahannock River. At sunset, his artillery rolled forward in an effort to soften up the Union position for the attack. Franklin's guns responded with a vengeance.

At Bernard's Cabins, Union shot ignited one of Davidson's ammunition chests, causing a terrific explosion. Fifteen or 20 shells caught fire and exploded, blackening the ground and stampeding the battery horses. One shell cut a Confederate gunner in two and threw his blackened clothing into a nearby tree; another took off the leg of an officer just above the knee. At one gun alone, five artillerymen were injured. Jackson witnessed the vigor of the Union response and wisely canceled the attack. South of town, at least, the killing was over.

Next week: Edwin Sumner begins his assault

**DONALD C. PFANZ** is staff historian with Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He is author of "Abraham Lincoln at City Point" and "Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life."

## Civil War Calendar

**Living-history programs**, Museum of the Confederacy, visitors can interact with costumed historians portraying 19th-century characters and discussing their Civil War experiences. Summer-long program continues through Sept. 3, Mondays through Fridays, noon, 1 and 2 p.m.; Saturdays, noon, 1, 2 and 3 p.m.; Sundays, 1, 2 and 3 p.m. 804/649-1861 or [www.moc.org](http://www.moc.org).

**Confederate Memorial Service**, Today, 10 a.m., Confederate Monument, Fairview Cemetery, Culpeper, presented by Culpeper Chapter 73 of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Culpeper Historical Society President Thomas O'Halloran will speak.

**Civil War encampment**, Today and tomorrow, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Stratford Hall Plantation, Westmoreland County. Regular admission charged. 804/493-8371.

**Civil War walking tour of Culpeper**, today, 10 a.m., Culpeper Visitor Center in the Depot, an education program of Friends of Wilderness Battlefield. Virginia Morton, author of the Civil War novel, "Marching through Culpeper," will narrate the tour. Participants should arrive 15 minutes early to purchase tickets. Cost is \$8 for adults, free for children under 18. Proceeds benefit the Museum

of Culpeper History. 540/829-6434; e-mail at [zminer@summit.net](mailto:zminer@summit.net); or Web site, [fowb.org](http://fowb.org).

**Richmond National Battlefield Park**, anniversary of the Battle of Cold Harbor, today, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., tomorrow, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Volunteers demonstrating Confederate artillery at 11 a.m. and 1 and 3 p.m. each day, followed by rifle-firing demonstrations. Re-enactors will portray soldiers' lives. Period music by Southern Horizon at 8 tonight, followed by candlelight walking tours of the battlefield. Cold Harbor is 7 miles east of Mechanicsville on State Route 156. Call 804/226-1981.

**Book discussion**, Tuesday, June 5, 7 p.m. at Borders in Central Park. Historian Jan Winik discusses his new book on the Civil War, "April 1865: The Month That Saved America."

**Barn dance**, June 9, 7 p.m. to midnight, The Inn at Kelly's Ford, off U.S. 29 just below Remington. Fund-raiser for the John S. Mosby Foundation. Tickets \$20 per person; period attire recommended, but not required. Light refreshments and entertainment by Potomac Thunder, a Civil War-period band. Tickets available at the Fauquier Bank, Fauquier County Visitor Center, the Old Jail Museum in Warrenton or The Inn at Kelly's Ford.

540/351-1600.

**"The 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign,"** June 11, monthly meeting of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, open to the public. Historian Frank O'Reilly will speak. Social gathering begins at 6:30 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m. and the meeting at 7:45 p.m.. The group will meet at a new facility, the Church of the Rock in downtown Stafford. Dinner reservations must be made before June 4 by calling Dr. Mike Stevens at 371-3115.

**"African-Americans in Fredericksburg-area Battlefields,"** Thursday, June 14, 7-9 p.m., Central Rappahannock Regional Library, 1201 Caroline St., Fredericksburg, education program of the Friends of Fredericksburg Area Battlefields, open to the public. Jim Bryant, a National Park Service historian, will speak. 972-9954.

**Museum of the Confederacy**, June 14, 11 a.m., presentation about Confederate flags and the museum's collection; 1 p.m., "Lee, His men and Their Flags." 1201 Clay St., Richmond. 804/649-1861.

Send items for the Civil War Calendar by mail to Gwen Woolf at The Free Lance-Star, 616 Amelia St., Fredericksburg, Va. 22401; by fax to 373-8455; or by e-mail to [gwoolf@freelancestar.com](mailto:gwoolf@freelancestar.com).



REZA MARVASHTI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Members of the Fredericksburg Civil War Round Table: President Al Conner, Past President Kin Glover, Edward Thornton and Wallace Mann, both charter members. Chatham, the park service headquarters, is in the background.

# Captivated by the p

**A**FTER ROBERT E. LEE'S surrender, they didn't set up a round table at the McLean House in Appomattox to debate James Longstreet's conduct at Gettysburg or the timing of the Emancipation Proclamation or any other hot topic of the previous four years.

Civil War round tables don't go back *that* far.

Which surprises some people. After all, constant, often impassioned analysis of the war began the moment the fighting stopped.

Most of that early debate went on at reunions of war veterans and among history buffs and scholars of the period.

The first Civil War round table wasn't organized until nearly 100 years after Appomattox. The group—the Civil War Round Table, then and now—made its start in the back room of a Lincoln bookstore in Chicago.

Other round tables sprang up shortly after the last Civil War veterans died, said Gregory Mertz, supervisor of historians at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park, who is a founder of the local Rappahannock Valley Round Table.

"Round tables were a different way to pass

on information about the war," Mertz said.

Today, there are hundreds of such groups in the United States and overseas. There's never been a shortage of topics for these groups to discuss, or of enthusiastic, well-read people to join in the debate.

Nowhere is this tradition of remembrance stronger than in Fredericksburg. There are two round tables here (Fredericksburg, Rappahannock Valley); several educational/preservationist societies (including the Friends of Fredericksburg Area Battlefields, and of Wilderness Battlefield); and the preservationist Central Virginia Battlefields Trust.

Cleveland, Ohio, of all Civil War byways, comes closest to matching Fredericksburg's interest with its three round tables.

Fredericksburg "is a natural place [for high interest] because of our location," said Wallace Mann, a charter member of the Fredericksburg Round Table, founded in 1957. "Four major battles were fought here."

The battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House were all significant in their own way. Lesser battles were fought here, too. And even when the Union and Confederate armies maneuvered themselves out of the Washington-Richmond corridor, they didn't go far. Big guns used during the battles at

Manassas, for instance, could be heard in Fredericksburg.

The war never really left Fredericksburg. Troops from both sides were always coming or going or occupying the place.

Today, you can't walk far in the woods without having to sidestep zig-zagging earthworks dug by Civil War soldiers.

"When you walk these grounds and then read firsthand accounts of what happened here, that's something special," said Dr. Michael Stevens, treasurer of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table.

Connecting with the past is a shared experience for many in the area. More than anything else, curiosity about how things were created spurred the growth of the local round tables and preservationist groups.

National Park Service historian Mac Wyckoff, another Rappahannock Valley founder, is amazed at the knowledge held by the group's rank-and-file membership.

"It's incredible what people know. I'd like to get everyone up to the podium for five minutes to discuss some aspect of the war that interests them."

The Fredericksburg Round Table already was in business when interest in the Civil War revived during centennial commem-

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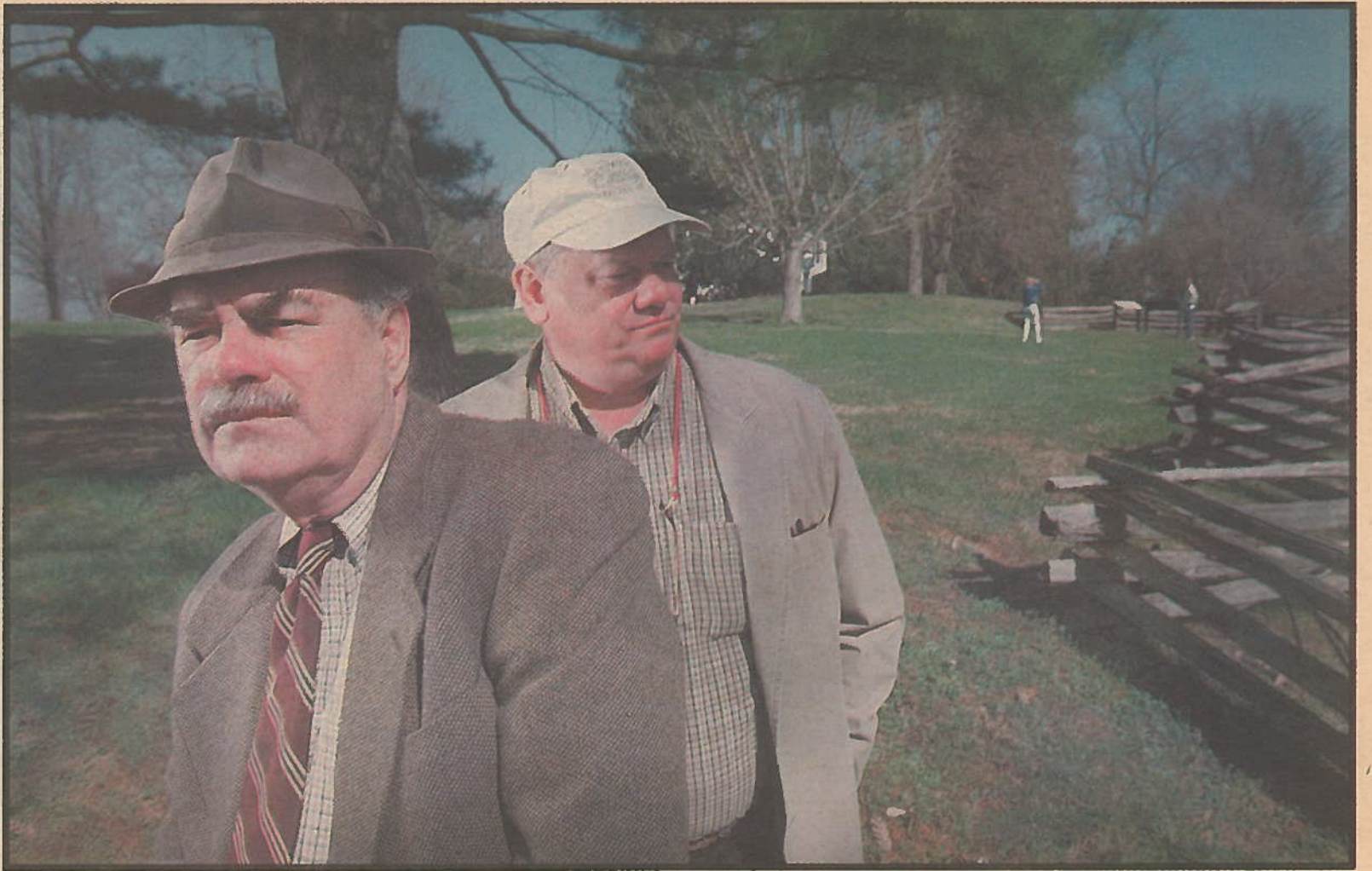
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**Enos Richardson (left) and John Mitchell are key figures in the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, which raises funds to purchase former battlefield sites, including Willis Hill in Fredericksburg where they stand.**

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**Members of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Roundtable, gathered at the National Cemetery, are (from left): Gregory Mertz, Mac Wyckoff, Melanie Jordan, Elsa Lohman and Dane Hartgrove.**

## Cover Story



ROBERT A. MARTIN / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Members and guests of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table tour Redoubt No. 2, a defense post near Aquia Creek, east of Stafford Courthouse. They are (from left) Joanne Huff, Dane Hartgrove, Sue Hartgrove, Mac Wyckoff and Marcus Lawrence.

## KEN BURNS' SERIES BOOSTED INTEREST IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY . . .

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most active members.

Last year, a proposed rules change that would have opened the round table to women was narrowly defeated.

A similar motion "probably will be brought up again," said Kin Glover, past president of the group and a supporter of the change.

The Rappahannock Valley group was founded in 1989. It took the group a couple of years to establish itself in the area. One early meeting, at an out-of-the-way location, attracted the guest speaker and only two embarrassed round table officers.

Later, when the group moved its meetings to centrally located restaurants and added dinner to its programs, attendance soared.

"At our first meetings at the Chancellorsville Visitors Center, we had theater seating," said Wyckoff. "People would come and listen to the lectures, but they didn't get to know each other."

"I think everyone wanted more social interaction. That's one of the reasons why it took us awhile to get off the ground."

Also boosting turnout was the acclaimed Ken Burns' PBS television series on the Civil War and the Hollywood production "Gettysburg." The Rappahannock Valley group had to keep moving to larger restaurants to accommodate the crowds. Today, it meets at Fredericksburg Square, as does the Fredericksburg Round Table.

Many retired government employees who now reside in area lake communities have become members of the Rappahannock Valley Round Table. About 35 percent of its members are women.

"We have a number of women who bring their husbands along to our meetings, rather than the other way around," said Wyckoff. These women "are more interested in the personalities of the war than the strategy and they're very interested in battlefield preservation."

Both round tables and the educational/preservationist groups hope to involve more young people in their activities in the future. They realize that unless a link is made to the next generation, in a few decades the Civil War could become a historical footnote, like the Spanish Inquisition or Oliver Cromwell's wart.

Efforts along these lines have produced mixed results.

The Fredericksburg Round Table once sponsored an essay-writing contest on the Civil War for juniors at James Monroe High School. That program lapsed, however, when the history teacher supervising it retired.

"We've been bringing our sons and grandsons to meetings to encourage participation," said Mann, who's hopeful about this alternative approach.

Widespread youth indifference to history "is a challenge and crisis we're going to have to address," said Stevens.

The Friends of Wilderness Battlefield (established in 1995) and Friends of Fredericksburg

Area Battlefields (1997) are making a push to interest young people in the period. The latter group's junior ranger program is open to youngsters between the ages of 9 and 12. Plans are also in the works for history-related activities geared toward younger children.

"We saw a need for education and interpretation" at area battlefields, said Robert Williams, founder of both friends groups here.

The Wilderness battlefield group was founded, in part, out of concern over proposed cuts in government funding for national history parks. Since then, members have helped with the upkeep of the Wilderness battlefield, where Lee and U.S. Grant clashed for the first time during the Overland Campaign.

Said Mertz: "They're a very hands-on group of people. You always see them out there with their paint brushes."

The group's top priority remains the Ellwood House, a Confederate field hospital during the Battle of Chancellorsville and the headquarters of Union Gen. Gouverneur Warren a year later during the Battle of the Wilderness. Members have touched up the house and grounds and plan to raise \$300,000 for a six-year renovation of the place.

Volunteers have built 30-foot bridges on the Wilderness battlefield with grant money from Georgia Pacific Corp. They also organize a half-dozen or so education programs per year.

Williams' Friends of Fredericksburg Area Battlefields is one of the busiest groups around. The organization sponsors several bus tours a

# Cover Story



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The view from the rampart of Redoubt No. 2, a Civil War defense post near Aquia Creek. A Union encampment has been re-created on the privately owned site.

year, has taken over the summer-evening walking tours started by the Rappahannock Valley Round Table—now associated with the Friends—and has produced brochures on lesser-known area battlefields.

The group handles insurance and tax-exemption issues for smaller groups such as Friends of Mine Run Battlefield and of Clara Barton.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, around since 1996, has the largest membership of all: 900-plus. Focused almost exclusively on preservationist issues, it meets every year in early May.

"We're in the land-acquisition business, which makes us unique" among the local organizations, said Enos Richardson, a CVBT founder and director. "Some other [area] groups have easements, but no one else owns property like we do."

The group has bought about 150 acres in five years, donating some of it to the park service while administering other tracts itself.

The CVBT-held tracts are not yet open to the public. Richardson said his group "doesn't have the funds and facilities" to interpret the land for guests, but might be in a position to do so "somewhere down the line."

More than 60 percent of the money raised by the nationally publicized CVBT comes from out of state.

The history groups here all do their own thing, and when projects overlap, everyone's happy for the extra help.

"There's been no fighting among us," said Stevens, who'd be in a fix if there was. He belongs to several of the area groups.

"We all pitch in for the common good of saving battlefield land and then interpreting it," he said.

## Area Civil War-related groups

### Fredericksburg Civil War Round Table

Founded: 1957  
 Membership: 100  
 Meetings: Dinners and lectures on the fourth Monday of the month.  
 Fees: \$15 per year and \$18 per dinner meeting

mail robwilliams@erols.com

### Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

Founded: 1996  
 Membership: 900  
 Fees: \$35 per individual; \$10,000 for life patron  
 Information: www.cvbt.org or phone 374-0900

### Rappahannock Valley Round Table

Founded: 1989  
 Membership: 125  
 Meetings: Dinners and lectures on the second Monday of the month. Spring and fall trips  
 Fees: \$7.50 for students; \$15 for individuals; \$25 for families. \$17 for dinners  
 Information: Box 7632, Fredericksburg, Va. 22404

### Other groups in the region

#### Trevilian Station Battlefield Foundation:

Ed Crebbs, Box 124, Trevilians, Va. 23170; 540/832-2708

#### The Friends of Mine Run: Keith A. Walters,

14408 Catharpin Road, Mine Run, Va, 22568; 540/854-6461

#### The Friends of Clara Barton: Box 139,

Glen Echo, Md. 20812-0139

#### Spotsylvania Battlefield Education

Association: Box 1964, Spotsylvania, Va. 22553

#### Fauquier County Civil War Round:

Table: Jim Flanagan, 540/349-3549

#### The John S. Mosby Foundation: Box 146,

Warrenton, Va. 20188; Dave Goetz, 540/937-5512

### Friends of Wilderness Battlefield

Founded: 1995  
 Membership: 240  
 Fees: \$15 to \$50 for individuals; corporate membership to \$1,000  
 Information: Box 576, Locust Grove, Va. 22508 or e-mail wildrnesatfbs.net

### Friends of Fredericksburg Area Battlefields

Founded: 1997  
 Membership: 225  
 Fees: \$10 per family  
 Information: 13100 Wilderness Park Drive, Spotsylvania, Va. 22553; phone 972-9454; or e-