



The Stone Wall

**Bull Run Civil War Round Table
September 1993 Newsletter**



**THE BATTLE OF OPEQUON CREEK
SEPTEMBER 19, 1864
(also know as 3rd Winchester)**

THE LARGEST AND BLOODIEST BATTLE FOUGHT IN THE SHENDANDOAH VALLEY

September's Meeting will feature BRCWRT's own VP, Scott C. Patchan who will speak on this bloody showdown between Phil Sheridan and Jubal Early in the lower Shenandoah Valley. Scott has researched this battle for more than 4 years and will share the knowledge he has attained through visits to institutions such as the Library of Congress, Carlisle Barracks and various other notable manuscript repositories. This research has led Scott to spend a significant amount of time on the battlefields around Winchester, Virginia.

Scott is a native of Cleveland, Ohio where he lived until moving to Salem, Virginia, in 1985. He graduated from James Madison University in Harrisonburg where he developed a strong interest in the Shenandoah Valley and its role in the Civil War. Mr. Patchan currently lives in Centreville with his wife Nancy and 4 year old son Andrew.

HEAR IT ALL AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING!!

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 1993 7:30 P. M.

MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD VISITOR CENTER

Welcome to New Members!

Gary and Nancy McCullough, Cindy Candenquist, Chuck Coburn,
Mike Dillon, George and Terry Clarke, James M. Browne, Rene' Boer, Joseph D.
Szwarcop, Emerson Proctor, Kevin McClellan,
David Passamaneck, Danny A. Jenkins, Oliver and Marie Jones,
Mark Hanley, Jan Congour, Fred and Allison Worrall,
Philip Terzian, Bron Wolf, Robert Lee Hadden and Jeff Thorpe

Rumor Mill...

Rumors have been floating around BRCWRT to the effect that certain members have been seen out after the monthly meetings carousing and having a generally good time at local restaurants and pubs. If anyone is interested in following up on this rumor they would be advised to wait around the visitors center after the meeting has ended.

1993-94 Bull Run Civil War Round Table Schedule

- September 9:** Scott C. Patchan, BRCWRT
"The Battle of Opequon Creek (3rd Winchester)"
- October 14:** Robert O'Niell
"Prelude to Gettysburg: The Cavalry Battles at Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville, June 1863"
- November 11** Al Howey, USAF Historian
"Technology for Tragedy"
- December 9** Frank O'Reilly, Fredericksburg National Battlefield
"The Federal Breakthrough at Fredericksburg"
- January 13** William J. Miller, Editor of the Peninsula Journal
"The Battle of Glendale"
- February 10** A. Wilson Greene, APCWS
"Stonewall Jackson"
- March 10** Noah Andre Trudeau, Author of *Bloody Roads South* and *The Last Citadel*
"The Two Battles of Five Forks"
- April 14** Alan Nolan, Author of *Lee Considered* and *The Iron Brigade*
To be announced
- May 12** Ed Bearss, Chief Historian, National Park Service
"Vicksburg"
- June 9** Gary Ecelbarger, BRCWRT
"The Battle of Kernstown, Stonewall's Only Defeat"
- July 14** Civil War Jeopardy
- August 11** Mike Litterst, Manassas National Battlefield
"Lincoln in Richmond, April 1865"

????Civil War Trivia????

The first person to answer each question correctly will receive a free ticket for the monthly book raffle.

What Confederate General was killed in combat on June 5, 1864 in Virginia?

Who took immediate command of the Federal troops at Gettysburg upon the death of Reynolds on July 1? Reply to:

BRCWRT P. O. Box 951 Manassas, Virginia 22111

FROM THE GENERAL COMMANDING

Headquarters - Dale City, Virginia

August 28, 1993

Members:

I take this pen in hand to welcome one and all to a new and exciting season at BRCWRT. This organization is now in its third year and is continuing to expand and improve. I would like to personally thank Armando Mancini and his staff for a job well done. Last year Mancini worked diligently to serve as President, Newsletter Editor, and Field Trip Chairman. Under his leadership we were entertained by a variety of excellent speakers, participated in two field trips, and witness a continually growing membership.

As the new President of the BRCWRT, I plan to continue to help elevate and expand our organization. With the help of my new and eager staff, I have plans to make this year at BRCWRT the best ever. Our season can initially be graded by the speakers we schedule. If one observes this year's speaking agenda (preceeding page), he or she will see that we are off to a great start. We will have a decent mix of noted authors (including Ed Bearss again), Park Historians, and an unprecedented four speeches provided by our own club members this year. We also plan to hold a second annual skirmish to test the knowlege of some of our Round Table members. Those who participated and watched the first skirmish last month to a man considered it a rousing success. No fewer than three (and hopefully four) field trips are planned for this year - two will be by the club-guided method that we enjoyed last year here at Manassas. The first one will be the last Saturday in October at Gettysburg. Look at this edition of "The Stone Wall" for more information concerning this tour and mark your calendars - it will be an entertaining as well as an informative excursion.

In addition to discussing the Civil War as a group, this organization was created with the intent to stimulate interest in this era by preservation and interpretation of sites and memorials connected with the war. This season I hope to become more proactive in the latter; but I can only do it with your help. There are preliminary plans to stimulate interest in the Civil War within local high schools, as well as intentions to donate money and manpower to foster preservation. I will announce the specifics of these plans when the details are worked out.

Finally, I would like to remind you that my staff and I are in place to serve you. Please feel free to contact any one of us in person, by phone, or by mail if there is any way that we can improve this organization. I like to consider the BRCWRT as more than a Round Table - we are a large group of friends from a variety of backgrounds that share a similar and vitally important interest. Your involvement will be appreciated; your concerns will be addressed if they are shared with us. I am looking forward to experiencing an exciting season at BRCWRT with each and every one of you.

I am Most Respectfully
Your Obedient Servant,

Kevin Leahy

In Memoriam: A Belated Tribute to Lt. Col. Joseph B. Mitchell
submitted by Bill Miller

Students of Civil War history lost a good friend on February 17, 1993, when Lt. Col. Joseph B. Mitchell, U.S. Army, retired, died of congestive heart failure in Fairfax, Virginia, at age 77. Members of our Round Table will recall that Joe addressed our group less than a year before he died, in March 1992, on "Rethinking Stonewall Jackson in the Seven Days."

Col. Mitchell devoted much of his life to the military and military history. He was an army brat, the son of Brig. Gen. William A. Mitchell, who had been graduated first in his class at the U.S. Military Academy in 1902. Joe was born at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and lived part of his youth at West Point and later entered the academy as a cadet. He was fond of telling the story of how his father asked a favor of him before the start of his plebe year. "He said it was too much to ask that I graduate first in my class too, but he did ask that I finish in the upper half. I did my best, but I at the end of four years I knew it was going to be close. I stood 147th out of 299. I didn't make it by much, but I made it."

After graduation with the class of 1937, Joe served in Europe during World War II. He was an artillery battalion commander and later division artillery operations officer in the 1st Infantry Division, and he earned a Bronze Star. He retired from active duty in 1955 as a lieutenant colonel, then served for 11 years as chief historian for the American Battle Monuments Commission until 1961.

Joe was well known to history students in northern Virginia, his home for more than 30 years. He was the founder and a past president of the Alexandria Civil War Round Table, and a past president of three other local organizations: the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia, the Alexandria Historical Society and the American Revolution Round Table. He also served as past national commander of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and as past chief of staff of the Military Order of the Stars and Bars. He was the first curator of Ford Ward Museum and Historic Site in Alexandria, serving in that post from 1964 to 1979. Under his leadership, Fort Ward evolved from a visitor center facility into the full-scale interpretive and research center that it is today.

Joe wrote several well-known and important books, including *Decisive Battles of the Civil War*, *Decisive Battles of the American Revolution*, *Military Leaders of the Civil War*, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, and a volume on the Medal of Honor and its recipients. Some of his books have been, and surely will be, reprinted many times.

Those of us who live in northern Virginia tend to number our Civil War assets in terms of battlefields and historic sites, but we too often overlook the wealth of fine people who work as historians in our region. Joe Mitchell was one of the best things about being a student of the Civil War in Virginia. He was a gentleman and a willing comrade who loved to talk about battles, books and generals. He was always ready and eager to speak with young historians or students who were anxious to keep history alive and growing. Tens of thousands of people read his books or heard him speak over the years, and those of us who own any of his volumes, or who were present to hear him know what a deep love he had for his country and her history. We are all richer for his example and poorer for his loss to us.

From the Recruiting Office

submitted by Bill Miller, Membership Chairman

• As we begin our third full campaign, we present a few statistics of interest. We have had 27 meetings -- 15 of our programs have been on battles or campaigns, 2 on generals (both Confederate), 3 on notable commands and 7 on places or on other subjects related to the war. Seven of our 27 programs (26%) have been presented by members. Members Jim Burgess and Bill Miller, and non-member Tom Evans, have all addressed the Round Table twice. This year alone, in a very heartening trend, five of our 12 programs will be presented by learned members of our company.

The attendance record for a single meeting was 127 at the May 1993 meeting when Ed Bearss spoke on "Grant vs. Lee, 1864-1865". The second highest total was 96 in January of this year to hear the talk on Jed Hotchkiss and Jackson's Valley Campaign, and the third highest attendance was in August 1991, when 80 listeners heard Jim Moyer and Tom Evans speak on Mosby's Confederacy.

• Now that more members are more involved in various aspects of running the Round Table, the Membership Committee will have more opportunity to seek out good books for our monthly book raffle, and we will make every effort to have first-quality books available. Here are a few titles you'll have a crack at in the months ahead: Warner's *Generals in Gray-Generals in Blue* (a classic, indispensable set), Hennessy's *Return to Bull Run*, Furgurson's new *Chancellorsville*, Sears's *To the Gates of Richmond*, Wills's new biography of N.B. Forrest, Williams's *P.G.T. Beauregard*, Wert's new biography of Longstreet, Priest's book on South Mountain, and many more.

• Also on the subject of books, and on a personal note, several members on the Round Table asked how they could obtain my new book on Jed Hotchkiss. I don't want to market the book among my friends, but if any member wishes a copy, I will gladly share my discount. I will have some copies at the next meeting. I will also have a few copies of a new journal *The Peninsula Campaign of 1862: Yorktown to the Seven Days*. This is the first volume in a projected eight-volume series and includes scholarly articles by Ed Bearss, Dick Sommers, Kevin Ruffner and others. The publisher, Ted Savas, who spoke to our Round Table in April of this year on Payne's Farm, sent me copies to make available to members of the Round Table. Come and take a look at it.

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FROM THE ADJUTANT'S DESK

Submitted by Gary Ecelbarger, Secretary

The Executive Committee of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table held two meetings in August. The first meeting was held on August 9 (131 anniversary of the Battle of Cedar Mountain). In this get-together, outgoing president Armando Mancini turned over all supplies to incoming president Kevin Leahy and his staff. Mancini offered helpful suggestions for the new officers. All enjoyed the friendly atmosphere in Mancini's palatial home.

The second meeting was held on August 26 (the 131 anniversary of the beginning of the campaign of Second Manassas) in the Conference Room of the Centreville Library. President Kevin Leahy announced the following as the new Executive Committee:

Kevin Leahy, Scott Patchan, Martha Hendley, Gary Ecelbarger, Armando Mancini, Bill Miller Joe Gray, Jay Corbalis, and Bron Wolf
President Leahy also announced the following Chairpersons:
Bill Miller (Constitution & Membership), Scott Patchan & Gary Ecelbarger (Newsletter) and Ralph & Renata Swanson (Preservation)

Two Chair Positions, Field Trip & Round Table Liaison, have yet to be filled. If anyone is interested or has questions about the functions of these positions, please see any of the above members for information.

Other new business topics included membership in organizations (including APCWS, Blue and Gray Association, Brandy Station) and promoting Civil War interest with local High Schools. Martha Hendley agreed to take charge of the latter issue and will update the Committee with her ideas in the next few meetings. New ideas for books to raffle were also discussed between the Committee members.

The Committee unanimously approved allocating \$25-\$30 each for commemorative plaques for our Round Table Speakers this year. President Leahy ended the meeting by advising the committee about areas in the Bull Run Battlefield Park that are in disrepair and could use volunteer help from our members as the Park Service is shorthanded to give the projects lasting attention. Leahy announced that he would inform the membership at our monthly meetings when he ironed out the details. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 and many of the members went out together for pizza and beer afterwards and to share stories and ideas among friends.

The Committee will meet every other month. Please address any topic/concern with the above listed members if you feel strongly about an issue that needs to be discussed at the following meeting.

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MARCHING ORDERS!

PREPARE RATIONS!

The BRCWRT is based within a relatively short driving distance to nearly all the major battles of the Eastern Theater of the Civil War. To take advantage of this prime location we will sponsor two Club-guided tours this season. Our first campaign will take us to Gettysburg. All are invited to attend.

The tour will take place on Saturday, October 30. All who plan to participate are to meet at the Manassas Battlefield (the picnic area on 234, about one-half mile north of the stone house) at 7:30 A.M. Transportation to Gettysburg will be provided. You can bring a bag lunch or purchase a meal at one of the fine five-star restaurants located near (and on) the field. Our planned return time should be no later than 6:00 P.M. Please mark your calendars and plan on having a great time while meeting members within the round table. After all, this is what this club is all about!

Ten strategic tour stops have been selected to cover the three days of this famous battle. Included will be two topics for debate *:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Topic</u>
July 1, 1863	
1. Reynolds Marker	Introduce armies, death of Reynolds
2. Railroad Cut	Action at R.R. Cut, McPherson's Ridge
3. Oak Ridge Tower	Confederate advance against 11th Corp
July 2, 1863	
4. N.C. Memorial	Confederate Strategy and Maneuvers
5. Pitzer's Woods Tower	Union Strategy and early Maneuvers
6. Little Round Top	Action on the hill
7. Devil's Den	Action at D.D & the "Valley of Death"
8. Wheatfield	Description of Bloody Fight
9. Peach Orchard	Confederate Route of Union 3rd Corp
July 3, 1863	
10. Cemetery Ridge	Pickett's Charge

- * Debate Topics : A. Stop 3 or 4 - "If Stonewall Jackson Was Here..."
 B. Stop 5 or 6 - "The Meade versus Sickles Controversy"

The Tour is designed to give broad coverage of all three days of the Battle of Gettysburg. Other important battlefield sites such as Culp's Hill, Eastern Cavalry Battlefield Site, and the National Cemetery have been omitted due to time constraints. Each stop has been planned with a thirty minute description/discussion/debate. It is possible that omitted areas of the field can be visited if some wish to stay later. A driving rainstorm on the morning of the 30th may force us to postpone the tour for one week.

The success of this campaign depends on the number of Round Table Members who participate. A sign-up list will be displayed at the September meeting for any members who wish to volunteer to speak at one of the Tour Stops. A separate list will be provided for those who wish to participate without presenting. An interesting and informative tour and an enjoyable autumn afternoon with a great group of people is guaranteed for all!

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"PERMISION TO SPEAK FREELY"

The following is the first contribution to a new feature of "The Stone Wall." This segment will introduce an issue to debate within the round table. In each successive month, a rebuttal to the previous essay will be published until no more contributions are received. At that time a new topic for debate will be introduced and the process will be repeated. The purpose of this segment is to foster debate on Civil War related issues and to show a variety of opinions that exist for any given topic. Member participation is critical, of course, and this feature allows you to have yourself heard if you feel strongly about a featured issue. Please limit your response to approximately one typed page and send it to the club secretary (Gary Ecelbarger/211 N. Cameron St/Sterling, VA 20164) by the 15th of the month. Our first topic for debate is **WHAT WAS THE MOST DECISIVE DAY OF THE CIVIL WAR?** To start the ball rolling, Ralph Swanson has contributed the following response:

The Most Decisive Day
by
Ralph G. Swanson

The most decisive day of the Civil War was, unquestionably, July 3, 1863. On that day the Confederacy was crippled militarily with the repulse of the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble charge at Gettysburg and the capitulation of Vicksburg. These two seminal military defeats broke the back of the Confederate army, thereby putting the political reality of secession forever beyond reach. While the war would continue for nearly two more bloody years, the outcome, after that day, was never seriously in doubt.

President Lincoln knew that the capture of Vicksburg was essential to final Union victory. "Vicksburg is the key," he said. "The war can never be brought to a close until the key is in our pocket." By July 1863, Vicksburg was the last redoubt of the Confederacy on the Mississippi River (save for insignificant Port Hudson north of New Orleans). Its capture would effect the last element of General Winfield Scott's original, and much dismissed, "Anaconda Plan" to encircle and squeeze the life force out of the upstart rebel republic. Grant's brilliant maneuvers to besiege the city had astonished the nation, and, after 47 days, the Confederate garrison was starved into submission. While the actual decision to surrender was taken by Confederate Gen. John Pemberton on July 2, and Grant did not enter the city until July 4, it was on July 3 that white flags went up all along the Confederate lines and it was clear to all that Vicksburg must fall. (Port Hudson peremptorily surrendered 5 days later.)

To the north, Gen. Lee had pounded the Army of the Potomac for two days at Gettysburg. On July 3rd he ordered a final push against the center of the line fully expecting to crack the union army. The odds, historically, were against an open field attack against entrenched forces. The advice of his military subordinates, notably Longstreet, was decidedly contrary. But after so many victories over this same hapless army, Lee felt they could not withstand such a blow. Most of all, Lee believed in his men; he believed they could accomplish anything he asked of them; he believed they were invincible. July 3, 1863, proved him only half right. The divisions of Pickett, Pettigrew and Trimble were willing to do anything Lee asked, but despite the bravest spectacle of military courage ever seen, they were not invincible. The Army of Northern Virginia was defeated and only through the luck of inclement weather and an ineffective pursuit by Meade, did it escape total destruction. General Lee knew he had done all he could over the preceding three years and failed, offering to resign leadership of the army shortly thereafter.

It was the military turning point. Lincoln understood that the defeat of the Confederate army was the main objective of the war. He had repeatedly admonished his Potomac Army generals to pursue and crush the rebel army, not the rebel capital. No other single event--not the capture of Richmond, not the frustration of foreign intervention, not even emancipation--could have so devastating an effect on the potential of the confederacy as the loss of its capacity to fight. That capacity was irretrievably broken, in both the east and the west, on July 3, 1863.

FROM THE RANKS..

This new feature of the "Stone Wall" will present rare letters and accounts from Civil War soldiers. The topic addressed will be specific for the month in which the event occurred (example: The Third Battle of Winchester in September). Featured will be the opposing words of those who were living witnesses to the subject discussed.

The Capture of a Rebel Cannon at 3rd Winchester by Lt. William H. Beach, 1st New York Cavalry

There was warm work along the front line. Bullets were flying thickly about, and every few seconds a shell came plunging through. To all these the general (General William Averell, commander of the 2nd Cavalry Division) seemed indifferent. He was watching intently the movements of the opposing lines, and the chances. Out in the open field was the gun with its support. The men of the squadron, ordered up to take that gun, gathered their reins, gripped their sabers, and fixed themselves firmly in their saddles. The impulse to rush forward for the gun was strong. But the general said, "Wait, wait, they are too many for you. Dismount your men and take them out along that stone wall and get a crossfire on them." Leaving as few as were necessary to hold the horses, the sergeant and the rest of the men made quick time in getting out along the wall which extended out to the right of the gun. Here at short range, with their carbines they poured so hot a fire into the flank of the enemy that in less than one minute the supporting cavalry began to waver. Another mounted force from Averell's line was now starting forward on the charge. Seeing this force coming, the dismounted men jumped over the stone wall and ran at the top of their speed toward the gun. The supports, seeing both bodies coming upon them, the one mounted in front and the other dismounted on the left, fired their last shots, then broke and fled. The dismounted men were at the captured cannon as soon as the mounted men were, and exultantly drew it in by hand.

With Carpenter's Battery by C. A. Fowenden, Carpenter's Virginia Battery

At one time, while on the left and some distance advanced to the front with our Napoleon section of two guns, the numerical strength of the company having been so reduced by casualties as to render it necessary to send the other section to the rear, we were charged by cavalry, which produced fearful destruction of life and disabling; more particularly of the enemy. They had emerged from a gorge, or hollow, between the hills unobserved and began their charge upon us at about 600 yards distance, being formed into close column of companies, and were of right adjustment for our canister fusillade, which was poured into them most effectually, thinning their ranks decidedly, but without thwarting their purpose. On they came gamely, grimly, and swiftly, while our only alternative was to give them repeated doses of double canister, or be captured or killed. When they were within twenty paces of our guns we hurled a charge of canister at them with deafening roar and that half gallon of ounce balls crashing and tearing throughout their ranks with telling effect threw them into momentary confusion, but they would not and dared not halt, as that would have meant more certain destruction, and so on they dashed (like this sentence) pouring in among our cannoneers, pell-mell, when surrender on our part seemed inevitable, but the great momentum they had acquired in that rush made it impossible for them to stop, their front ranks passing on through or by us and their ranks following. The moment they were passed another round of timely shots from our still smoking guns in addition to the scattering blows we had dealt them from hand spikes and sponge staffs during their quick passage through our battery were ready and most potent persuaders to keep them going. But almost simultaneously with the loud clear command of our undaunted captain, "Load with canister and fire to the rear," came also the stentorian voice of that Yankee Colonel (Charles R. Lowell leading a regiment of U. S. Regular Cavalry), "Halt! About face.--Charge!" and charge they did, too, with the most reckless intrepidity, just as our guns flew round to the rear, and the limbers and caissons flew out of the way, while our

ast charge of canister was rammed into place. At that critically breathless moment the Yankee colonel cried out again, "Forward, charge!" Starting only a hundred yards or less away and plunging on with the speed of the wind and the impetuosity of a stampeded herd of wild buffaloes to break through our cannoneers again, or slay us all, to regain their command, the opportune moment had arrived for our deadly execution. In quicker time than it can be told, our captain having shouted "Fire!" at the belching of our guns those heroic cavalymen quailed and fell into confusion. That death blow had parted their ranks into two columns which hastily passed us, the one on our right and the other on our left, to seek safety in retreat upon their main lines, which they had so recently and so bravely parted from to make that splendid but disastrous charge upon Carpenter's Battery. That, indeed, was a superb and noble charge of a squadron of cavalry, and the defense of that battery by its veteran officers and men was equally as glorious. At the ending of that frightful onslaught, those who were left of those brave cavalymen seemed to be glad enough to get away alive and still mounted, and probably no less glad and happy were we to ride ourselves of their unfriendly presence. Had our visitors known that that terrible volley of canister had exhausted our ammunition, in all likelihood they would have taken us and our guns along with them.



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