



The Stone Wall

Bull Run Civil War Round Table

June 1994 Newsletter

KERNSTOWN REVISITED



"I do not recollect of ever having heard such a roar of musketry," wrote Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson a few days after the battle of Kernstown, fought on March 23, 1862. His young adjutant, Sandie Pendleton, described this engagement as "a harder fight than Manassas." Colonel Nathan Kimball, who commanded the division that opposed Jackson, described the infantry fire at Kernstown as "heavier and deadlier than in but few battles of modern times." Although this two-division, 10,000-man battle is considered small when compared to later campaigns of the Civil War, there can be no disputing that after the first Battle of Bull Run, Kernstown represented the largest engagement in the eastern theater for the next nine months of the war!

Surprisingly, little is known about the strategy and tactics of this fight. All of the secondary accounts of this engagement that exist fail in their attempts to interpret the actions that occurred at Kernstown, while all primary sources only tell a portion of the story of this battle. The majority of the battlefield sits on private property, making a comprehensive understanding of Kernstown a difficult process.

On June 9, Gary Ecelbarger will provide the Bull Run Civil War Round Table with the most complete and accurate account of the first battle of Kernstown to date. By utilizing rare and revealing first-hand accounts, and by receiving special permission to study the ground where brave men fought and fell, Mr. Ecelbarger has pieced together a dramatic saga of sacrifice and courage -- including the story of two opposing colonels who fought here to salvage their reputations, as well as the events that led to a decision by a brigadier general to save his troops from annihilation - a decision that resulted in his arrest. We will also learn how the demagoguery of a non-participant at Kernstown helped to launch one of the most famous campaigns in military history.

Gary Ecelbarger has been a member of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table for over two years and has studied Kernstown since visiting the battlefield for the first time early in 1992. He was raised along the banks of the Niagara River in western New York and became a Civil War enthusiast while he was obtaining his Master's degree at the University of Wisconsin. Gary currently resides in Sterling with his wife, Carolyn and four-month-old son, Daniel. We look forward to having him present the battle of Kernstown to us.

HEAR IT ALL AT THE JUNE MEETING!!!

Thursday, June 9, 1994 - 7:30 pm

Manassas National Battlefield Park Visitor Center

FROM THE GENERAL COMMANDING

Headquarters - Dale City
May 30, 1994

Dear Members:

After being away from you for several months, I cannot tell you what a thrill it is to be back at the Bull Run Civil War Round Table to complete my term as this organization's third president. Scott Patchan, our VP, covered all meeting and business aspects of the round table and has done a great job in my absence. Thank you Scott for all your work and help!

Some major preservation issues have hit the forefront during the past few months. An important date for all of us to consider is June 7, 1994 (the Tuesday before our June meeting). On this date the Prince William County Board of Supervisors will decide the fate of the Bristoe Station battlefield. I encourage everyone, particularly Prince William County residents, to make the time to attend this meeting and show your support for preservation of a piece of our history. Please refer to the details of this pending meeting in this issue of the newsletter.

We had two successful tours this spring -- the Seven Days Campaign and, most recently, the Western Maryland Campaign of 1862. Gary Ecelbarger has submitted his official report of the latter tour and it is published in this newsletter as well. Plans are in the works for a very rare tour of the 1862 and 1864 battles of Kernstown (two battles in one tour) sometime this autumn. We have included a short questionnaire on the last page of this newsletter to hear your opinions about preferences for future tours. We would like to run three tours per year. Please take the two minutes required to complete it and mail it to our PO Box or bring it to the June meeting.

Our Executive Committee will meet in June to nominate our 1994-1995 officers. The nominees will be announced in the July newsletter and we will take a vote in our July meeting. We have several positions in our organization that need to be filled. Scott Patchan and Gary Ecelbarger will be our Field Trip Chairmen but will step aside if one of you would like to handle this duty. Gary Ecelbarger has also agreed to continue as our newsletter editor but he emphatically tells me he needs some help this coming year. If anyone would like to volunteer to assist him, please call him (406-4933) or meet with him during one of our summer meetings. Additionally, if anyone would like to assist in the running of this organization in anyway (especially secretarial duties), your help would be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact one of us for details on how you can assist in keeping the BRCWRT number one.

Finally, I would like to remind you that our Round Table is one of the few in the country that runs meetings throughout the summer. It certainly helps to have the inimitable Ed Bearss launch us into the summer season by speaking in May to a packed crowd of over 70 people. This summer we will hear presentations of the Battle of Kernstown (June), the Battle of Franklin (July), and Abraham Lincoln in Richmond (August). All meetings are on the second Thursday of the month. Please mark your calendars and I'll see you at the Visitor Center.

I am Most Respectfully
Your Obedient Servant,

Kevin Leahy, BRCWRT President

OFFICIAL REPORT: 1994 MARYLAND CAMPAIGN

Headquarters near Alexandria and Leesburg Road
Sterling, Virginia; Sunday May 15, 1994

His Excellency, the President:

Yesterday was the most propitious time since the commencement of the war for the Bull Run Civil War Round Table to enter Maryland. Despite an unknown enemy that attempted to hinder our campaign with a leaky tire, a little road construction, and a lot of tourists at the battlefield visitor center, I am pleased to announce to you that our campaign to and at Antietam Creek was a brilliant success. The principal factors responsible for that success were: incredibly beautiful weather (sunny and 75 degrees), knowledgeable volunteer tour guides within our organization, and a spirited group of 22 round table members who helped to make this trip a wonderful experience.

We left in a caravan of five vehicles from Manassas and met two others at our first stop at Whites Ford. With the taped music of "Maryland My Maryland" playing in the background, we were able to take ourselves back 132 years to a similar morning when the Army of Northern Virginia crossed the ford and entered Maryland. We then travelled forward to Sharpsburg through the beautiful hilly landscape of Loudoun County. At Harpers Ferry we repeated A. P. Hill's desperate march to Sharpsburg along the same West VA roads his 3000 men used, and we stopped at another rare tour stop - Boteler's Ford - the only way to enter Sharpsburg from western Virginia (or escape from it) in September, 1862. By 10:30 AM we were amidst a throng of visitors at the Antietam Battlefield Visitor Center (where did all these people come from!?!) and felt extremely fortunate that we had avoided the crowds for this long.

Our good fortune continued throughout the rest of the morning and into the afternoon. We were able to isolate ourselves from every other park visitor for the next four hours. This included other rare stops: McClellan's headquarters at the Phillip Pry house east of Antietam Creek, the route of the 1st and 12th Union Corps across the Upper Bridge, traditional Cornfield and East Woods stops, but a rare (and better) location for the West Woods stop that removed us from the traditional drive tour. Comrade Joe Kelley, one of our new recruits, performed admirably under his first fire as a tour guide at the West Woods stop. Using a handful of volunteers to represent brigades, he described Early's and McLaws's flank attack on Sumner and Sedgwick more clearly and succinctly than a portfolio of reports and maps could have come close to accomplishing. Kelly has earned his brevets for ingenuity.

After a peaceful isolated picnic lunch, John P. McAnaw and Ralph Swanson (who always knew where the Potomac River was) completed our tour with excellent descriptions of Bloody Lane and Burnside's Bridge. By this time other battlefield visitors had somewhat mingled with our group to hear these interpretations. They all seemed impressed with our descriptions of the battle; in fact, one young soldier in the Sunken Road Observation Tower thought Mr. McAnaw was an NPS historian as he asked him questions about the age of the tower!

Many thanks to our volunteer guides (and the weather) for making this \$2 tour a memorable event. We all left a little bit sunburned, but much more knowledgeable about the personalities, strategy, and drama associated with the bloodiest day in American history.

Yours Respectfully,
Gary L. Ecelbarger

FROM THE BOOK SUTLER

Since our June meeting concerns a Valley Campaign battle, it is the best time to offer a personally autographed copy of Fletcher Pratt Award winning author Bill Miller's book, *Mapping for Stonewall: The Civil War Service of Jed Hotchkiss*. It is a fitting complement to the Battle of Kernstown because, although Hotchkiss was not present at the battle, Stonewall Jackson employed him as his personal mapmaker just a few days after the fight. This critically acclaimed account is valued at \$30, but it can be yours for a couple of bucks and a little luck. We will also offer Joseph Glathaar's work, *Partners in Command*. Visit our raffle table prior to the June meeting and take a chance at two good books!

BATTLE TOUR

If you would like to see the sites of the June 1863 cavalry battles of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville, led by author Robert F. O'Neill, Jr., we have a tour for you. The Goose Creek Association is sponsoring a bus tour for these sites on Saturday, June 25, beginning in Aldie at 12:30 p.m. and ending at the Briar Patch with a picnic at 5:00 p.m. Send \$35 to the Goose Creek Association/Rt. 1, Box 36-C/The Plains, VA/22171. To make your reservations or for more information, call Redmond Manierre at (703)687-4124 between 7 and 9:00 p.m.

BRCWRT PRESERVATION DONATION

On Saturday, May 21, Bull Run Civil War Round Table Vice President Scott Patchan personally provided a \$150 check to Rebecca Ebert, Archivist at the Handley Library in Winchester, Virginia. The money was approved by a unanimous vote by our membership at the May meeting and will be used for the preservation of manuscripts in the Library's Archives room. Many of the manuscripts are diaries and letters from Jackson's Division of the Army of Northern Virginia - particularly from members of the famous Stonewall Brigade. Other manuscripts are revealing wartime journals from Winchester's citizens. Exerpts of some of the manuscript material are featured in *Defend the Valley* - a new and critically acclaimed Civil War book documenting the activities of a Shenandoah Valley family during the War.

This was the BRCWRT's third annual preservation donation. The executive committee is always interested in members' opinions concerning future donations. Please feel free to contact any of us before or after our monthly meetings to share your suggestions.

PRESERVATION UPDATE

Submitted by Ralph and Renata Swanson

Bristoe Station

The Prince William County Board of Supervisors voted to defer action on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment for Bristoe Station battlefield until their June 7 meeting to allow consideration of a new alternative that would designate a large portion of land as a battlefield preserve. This offer comes from a major landowner in the area who desires to sell their remaining lands for residential development.

The Preservation Committee has been meeting with members of the Board of Supervisors to clarify several important issues regarding the alternative. We are concerned about the form and timing of land conveyances, the patterns of development expected adjacent to the preserved land, and the opinions of other landowners within the designated preservation area. In addition, we are attempting to secure as much information about the existence of soldier graves--primarily Confederate--believed to exist throughout the area so they may be included within the preserve or otherwise protected.

A number of BRCWRT members are assisting in this issue and we are working closely with the Prince William County Historical Commission. It is important that Round Table members from Prince William County appear at the Board Meeting to speak in favor of battlefield preservation. The meeting will be at 7:30 pm, June 7, at the Prince William County Government Center.

Malvern Hill/Glendale Tops Goal

The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites collected more than \$531,000 last year toward the largest private sector Civil War battlefield preservation project ever attempted. This far exceeded their first payment obligation of \$288,000, but still is only about a quarter of the way toward their total requirement of \$2.3 million to purchase 535 acres of key combat areas in the Seven Days campaign. Additional fund raising activities are planned for this year. If you missed our terrific bus tour of those battlefields, APCWS will sponsor another--hosted by Mr Ed Bearss--in October.

Gettysburg Railroad Controversy Gets Congressional Hearing

Following persistent criticism from Gettysburg area Civil War historians, Congressman Mike Synar (D-OK) recently convened a hearing on Capital Hill to review the Federal land exchange actions that resulted in excavations on Seminary Ridge to relocate a section of railroad track.

While National Park Service Director Roger Kennedy defended the 1990 land swap between Gettysburg College and the Park, he admitted that the Park Service erred by letting the deal go through without a more detailed review. In moving the tracks, the College also built a rail spur and bulldozed tons of earth, slicing off a piece of Oak Ridge in an important, although not prominently known, battle area. College officials and top NPS administrators knew the rail tracks would cut into Seminary Ridge, but neither the public nor NPS historians were told. None of the construction

plans outlined the full extent of damage to the land. Subsequent erosion of the steep cut has been so severe that a retaining wall was needed to prevent further losses of adjacent Park land. The Synar committee will consider whether the land swap should be reversed and whether restoration of the landscape is warranted.

CURRENT EVENTS

Submitted by Ralph Swanson

June 5 - Rededication of Confederate Monument - Arlington National Cemetery. Dr. James I. Robertson, speaker. 3 pm. Free.

June 7 - Bristoe Station - Prince William County Board of Supervisors Meeting. See Preservation Update for details.

June 10-12 - Seminar - "Cemetery and Culp's Hills, Gettysburg's Neglected Battles" Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg. Call for information. 717/334-0772.

June 18-19 - Artillery at Antietam - Demonstrations, ranger walks with a focus on artillery. A fitting follow-up to those who participated in our May tour. 301/432-5124. \$2.

June 27-July 1 - Historical Play - "The Anvil" Courtroom drama of John Brown's trial. Harper's Ferry National Park. Play times and ticket information: 304/535-6223.

July 1-3 - Gettysburg Relic Gun and Book Shows - The big weekend at Gettysburg is again upon us. Relics on display and for sale at the Ramada Inn, 4 miles south of town on Bus Route 15. Friday - Sunday. Book Show at the Junior High School, off Baltimore Street. Fri. and Sat. only. Admission to both shows. 717/334-6274.

July 1-4 - Civil War Gun Shows - Two Gettysburg sites: Holiday Inn and Stonehenge Inn, Rte. 97. 9-5 daily. 717/334-4564. Admission.

PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY

by Scott C. Patchan

Winfield Scott Hancock: Most Overrated Union Commander

Without question Hancock is the most overrated officer in the entire Union army. His well known sobriquet "Hancock the Superb" was earned as Hancock was a favorite of McClellan, who did not want to give credit to General Kearney for **Kearney's** superb performance at Williamsburg. At Antietam, Hancock played a very minor role in the battle. At Fredericksburg, Hancock led his men to certain defeat in the futile attack on Marye's Heights. At Chancellorsville, Hancock performed as any competent Union general would fighting a rear guard action and did nothing out of the ordinary. Gettysburg was Hancock's moment in the sun. Because his moment of glory came at Gettysburg, an indecisive battle which became so popular because it was the only clear-cut victory the Army of the Potomac won in the war and because southerners constantly wrote and spoke about the might have beens at Gettysburg. Historians have long assumed that because Hancock performed at such a high level at Gettysburg, the "mother of all battles" in the eyes of many, Hancock must be a great general. Hancock's subsequent performance shows him to be very unsuperb. After Grant essentially took command of the Army of the Potomac, Hancock's performance was lackadaisical and indecisive. He performed poorly in both the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania, where he failed to provide his division commanders with any guidance after their initial attacks offered the opportunity to destroy Lee's army. Had Hancock been on hand to control the timing of reinforcing divisions entering the "Mule Shoe" early on the morning of May 12, Lee's army would have been ripped in two. Hancock's greatest failure though came in mid June of 1864. Hancock had the opportunity to overrun a weak Confederate line (whose defenders had been constantly pushed back by Baldy Smith's men all day) and capture Petersburg and perhaps end the war in the summer of '64. Hancock's last performance in the battle of Hatcher's Run showed Hancock to be a petty and snipping individual. After having failed to successfully execute a flank movement, Hancock's troops were counterattacked and roughed up by the Confederates. Hancock pulled out with the bulk of his 2nd Corps and left an old 3rd Corps division under Regis de Troibrand to save itself. The 3rd Corps troops showed their mettle and fought the Confederates off on their own. Hancock had the gall to report that units from the original 2nd Corps had saved the day, thereby slandering the old 3rd Corp veterans. The statements were overlooked as this was Hancock's last fight with the Army of the Potomac, and the "Hero of Gettysburg" was allowed to retire on a high point in the official reports as he had not done so in reality. Hancock had one good day, but when his entire career is scrutinized he is hardly superb.

Joseph Thoburn: Most Underrated Union Commander

Joe Thoburn began his military career as the regimental surgeon for the 1st Virginia (loyal) Infantry Regiment organized for 3 months service. Upon reorganization of the regiment for 3 years service, Thoburn ascended to the Colonelcy of the 1st Virginia Infantry. At the battle of Kernstown, Thoburn put his hat on his sword and led his regiment forward before suffering a severe wound. He returned to duty in time to command a brigade during the northern Virginia campaign of late summer 1864 where he had little opportunity to display his talents. Thoburn spent the next year and a half campaigning in Western Virginia. He did not return to a major theater of war until May of 1864. At Franz Sigel's defeat at New Market, Thoburn's brigade held the field while

the rest of the army fled. Three weeks later at Piedmont, Thoburn carried out the flank movement which routed the Confederate Army and killed Grumble Jones. Thoburn continued to perform capably throughout the summer of 1864 in the Shenandoah Valley. At Third Winchester, Thoburn commanded the division which broke the Confederate left flank and turned the fortunes of that battle. At Fisher's Hill, Thoburn's division led the Union sweep and route of the Confederate forces. On October 19, 1864, Thoburn's men were attacked by the Confederates while they slept in camp at Cedar Creek. Thoburn managed to organize some of his men and offer resistance which allowed the army's wagon train to get away. Thoburn stayed at the front attempting to rally retreating troops when a rebel bullet mortally wounded him. Unlike Colonels with political connections, Thoburn received no posthumous promotion to Brigadier General. Had Thoburn served in the Army of the Potomac, he undoubtedly would have received the rank of General.

FROM THE RANKS

On June 5, 1864, 7,500 Union troops under the command of Major General "Black Dave" Hunter engaged 5,600 Confederates commanded by Brigadier General "Grumble" Jones at the Battle of Piedmont. After holding out against numerous Union attacks, Jones' army fell victim to a flank attack led by Colonel Joseph Thoburn of the 1st West Virginia Infantry. The Federals lost over 850 men killed and wounded and inflicted casualties of over 500 rebels killed and wounded and captured 1,000 prisoners and 3 Confederate battle flags.

Lt. Colonel Thomas F. Wildes 116th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

We marched but a short distance in the direction of Staunton, when we met considerable numbers of the enemy. Before advancing very far we formed line of battle, and advanced behind skirmishers, driving the enemy before us, until we reached Piedmont, where we found the enemy in force, well protected behind rail and log breastworks. We reached their lines about 10 A. M. Without waiting for Thoburn, who was, as we understood it, coming up on their flank, Moore's and Wynkoop's brigades charged and drove the enemy behind his works. Our men advanced on a charge nearly up to the works, but were there repulsed with severe loss. Re-forming our lines, in a few minutes we made a second charge, meeting with a second repulse and with even greater loss than before. Falling back to a slight cover of a rise of ground, we halted and lay down to await Thoburn's coming as we ought to have done in the first place. We were still within short rifle range of the enemy's works, and a sharp fire of musketry and artillery was kept up on both sides constantly for over two hours. A battery of 12 pound pieces came on to the infantry line on the right, shortly after we fell back from the second charge, which did terrible execution, with solid shot thrown into the enemy's rail breastworks. The demoralization which every shot created in their ranks could be plainly seen, crowds of the enemy fleeing from the spot where a shot struck the rails, when our infantry would open fire upon them the moment they showed themselves, the guns of the battery also saluting them at the same time with grape and canister. About 3 P. M. Colonel Thoburn appeared on their right flank, having moved across a ravine by

a long and tedious detour. As soon as he was seen charging on their flank, Moore and Wynkoop rose, and with a yell charged across the ground we had charged twice before which was covered with our dead and wounded. This time we scaled their works, capturing 1,500 prisoners and completely routing the rest. We captured, besides, three pieces of artillery, about 300, stand of small arms and a number of wagons and ambulances. General Jones, the rebel commander, was killed. We saw his body in the woods a short distance behind the works, with a bullet hole through his forehead. This was the most desperate and stubbornly contested battle we were ever engaged in, and tried the mettle of our regiment most thoroughly. The 116th lost 181 men killed and wounded, 41 being killed and 13 afterwards dying of their wounds. Every color bearer and every one of the color guard were wounded and some of them very seriously.

Sgt. E. G. Barnum
Thomas Legion (NC Infantry)

Sunday June 5th, 1864: Left our encampment early this morning and left the pike in the direction of Port Republic. We had not marched far before we came in contact with the enemy in considerable force. We repulsed them three successive times, but the enemy finally made a flank movement, immediately on our right. The 60th Virginia was advanced to meet them, but failing to hold their position, they stampeded right through our regiment and compelled us all to take care of ourselves. We had 4 wounded and one said to be killed and 4 missing. I know that the enemy's loss is as heavy or heavier than ours. Our Genl. Wm. E. Jones was killed. The Yankees claim to have captured (700) of our forces and (52) commissioned officers. We or a part of our command arrived at Staunton at night. Here we had a great time. Such a mixed multitude of different commands. I thought "Houst" and "Cracker" had gone up.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Bull Run Civil War Round Table would like to base its activities and speaker schedule upon the interest of its members. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions and return it to our PO Box below, or bring it to one of our summer meetings and give it to BRCWRT secretary Gary Ecelbarger. Use the back of this page if additional space is needed.

1. What do you like best about this round table?
THE SPEAKERS
2. What would you like to see improved within this organization?
3. What Civil War topic(s) would you like to see presented at future meetings?
4. What battlefield(s) would you like this round table to tour?

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