

Williamsburg Civil War Roundtable
2022 Newsletter
September 2022 to May 2023



*Williamsburg Civil War
Roundtable*

Meeting Place

**Williamsburg Library Theatre
515 Scotland Street
Williamsburg, VA**

Volume LIII Number 1

September 27, 2022

**MONTHLY MEETING NOTICE
Tuesday, September 27, 2022, at 6:30 PM**

**Eric Wittenberg
“Six days of Awful Fighting: Cavalry on the Roads
to Cold Harbor”**

Please join us on Tuesday, September 27 for the meeting of the Williamsburg Civil War Roundtable, commencing at 6:30 PM in the Theater of the Williamsburg Regional Library. The library is located at 515 Scotland Street in Williamsburg.

The program will also be presented online via a Zoom link for our members and friends near and far. The details for the Zoom link will be provided by a follow-up announcement several days prior to meeting date.

Please welcome Eric Wittenberg as he returns to Williamsburg to present "Six Days of Awful Fighting: Cavalry on the Roads to Cold Harbor"

The period from May 27 - June 1, 1864, saw some of the hardest and most protracted cavalry fighting in the Eastern Theater of the Civil War.

War. This period was particularly important because it marked Wade Hampton's debut as the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia's Cavalry Corps. It also marked the first time that Brig. Gen. Matthew C. Butler's hard fighting brigade of South Carolina mounted infantrymen made their presence felt on the battlefield. The Union cavalry captured and held the Old Cold Harbor intersection long enough to permit Union infantry to arrive.

Eric J. Wittenberg is an award-winning author, tour guide, and battlefield preservationist. A native of southeastern Pennsylvania, he was educated at Dickinson College and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. He is the author of 22 published books and dozens of articles, with a focus on Union cavalry actions and on the Gettysburg Campaign. He serves on the board of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and is the board chairman of the Little Big Horn Associates, an organization devoted to the study of the life and times of George Armstrong Custer. Wittenberg also serves as the program coordinator for the Chambersburg Civil War Seminars and Tours. He is an attorney in private practice. Eric and his wife Susan reside in Columbus, Ohio.

Eric will have books available for sale both before and after his presentation.

2021-2022 Officers of WCWRT:

President: Bill Miller Vice-President: Lee Underwood
Secretary: Gene Danko Treasurer:

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to support the expenses associated with our programming. Please click [here](#) to access the membership form.

Please make every effort to remit your membership payment, preferably by mail, on or before the meeting on September 27.

Upcoming Meetings and Speakers

- **October 25, 2022** - Carson Hudson “Custer at Williamsburg”
- **November 22, 2022** - Michael Block: “The Battles of Rappahannock Station and Kelly’s Ford – November 7, 1863: ‘Only One Shout, Then a Terrible Silence’”
- **December 20, 2022** - Dr. Johnathan Noyalas: “Are We Traitors And Cowards? Unionists At Shenandoah Valley””
- **January 24, 2023** - Drew Gruber “The Siege of Yorktown”
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Other Notes:

Dining at “The Hound’s Tale”: Prior to our meetings, we treat our speakers to an early evening meal at “The Hound’s Tale.” The restaurant is located at 515 Prince George Street, only a block from the library. The food and service are both good, and the restaurant has earned our support. Consider joining our group for an early meal before the meeting. Park at the Library and stroll over to the restaurant. We gather at 4:30 for the early meal to return to the library by 6:00 PM for our meeting setup.

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Upcoming Outside Events

Williamsburg's Egger Tract purchase [details](#)

Visit the **Williamsburg Battlefield Association**

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October 25, 2022

**MONTHLY MEETING NOTICE
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**Carson Hudson
“Williamsburg: George Armstrong Custer’s “First
Stand”**

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at the Williamsburg Library Theater to learn the story of George Armstrong Custer's early activities and exploits as a young, commissioned officer in the Union Army of the Potomac. Please welcome our well-known local historian, Carson Hudson, as he returns to the Williamsburg Civil War Round Table to regale us with the adventures of young Custer as he made his mark here in the Williamsburg area during the Peninsula Campaign.

Carson Hudson is passionate about history. He holds a MA in Military History and a M.Ed. in Social Studies & Educational Technology. He is a practicing military and social historian, published author, Emmy Award-winning screenwriter, and circus fire-eater. He lectures regularly on a wide variety of subjects, but his particular interests are the Civil War and colonial witchcraft. In his spare time, he likes to sleep.

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Michael Block

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The maneuvering and fighting that took place in early November removed the Army of Northern Virginia from the Rappahannock River and Culpeper County and placing the Army of the Potomac on the Rapidan.

The fighting included a river crossing under fire, night fighting and eventually three Medals of Honor. Though the skies were clear, weather played an important role in this fight. Just how did the Army of Northern Virginia lose over 1500 men in less than 30 minutes and how did this brief action set the stage for the Overland Campaign, six months later?

Michael Block, a fellow Williamsburg Civil War Roundtable member, will discuss how the November fight was planned and executed, where Army of Potomac commander George Meade wanted to fight and Robert E. Lee's plan to counter any thrust across the Rappahannock.

Michael is a life-long student of the American Civil War, moved to southern Fauquier County in 2004, and developed a deep appreciation and love of Culpeper County and what transpired on that historic ground during the Civil War.

As a public historian, he has led battlefield tours and lectured for over two decades, focusing on the stirring events in Culpeper, Orange and Fauquier Counties. He also developed and led Civil War Staff Rides at Gettysburg for a government agency, with a focus on the intelligence and geospatial information available to the participants.

In January 2022, his first book, "The Carnage Was Fearful: The Battle of Cedar Mountain, August 9, 1862" was published by Savas Beatie. Additionally, Mike has had articles appear in Blue & Gray Magazine, Hallowed Ground Magazine, and North and South Magazine.

Michael presents at Civil War Roundtables, museums, historic groups and civic organizations on topics that include Cedar Mountain, Rappahannock Station, Brandy Station and Civil War Photography.

Michael is a past board member of both the Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield and the Brandy Station Foundation, and served on the Culpeper and Fauquier Counties Civil War Sesquicentennial Committees during the 150th anniversary celebrations. Mike continues to volunteer for the Friends of Cedar Mountain and has been a tour guide for Battlefield Tours of Virginia since 2021.

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Volume LIII Number 4

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“Are We Traitors and Cowards?” Unionists in the Shenandoah
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explore the various factors that prompted these unconditional Unionists to maintain loyalty to the United States, explore the myriad ways the Shenandoah's Unionists attempted to undermine the Confederate war effort in the Valley, and highlight the risks Valley Unionists confronted from Confederate civilians and soldiers.

Jonathan A. Noyalas is director of Shenandoah University's McCormick Civil War Institute and a history professor at Shenandoah University. He is the author or editor of fifteen books, founding editor of *Journal of the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War Era*, and has published more than 100 articles, essays, book chapters, and reviews in a variety of popular and scholarly publications including *Civil War Times*, *America's Civil War*, and *Civil War History*. In addition to teaching and writing Noyalas has consulted on a variety of public history projects with organizations such as the National Park Service, American Battlefield Trust, National Geographic, and the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. Noyalas has appeared on C-SPAN's *American History TV*, NPR, and PCN. Dr. Noyalas is the recipient of numerous awards for his teaching and scholarship including Shenandoah University's Exemplary Teaching Award for the First Year Seminar, Wilkins Award, and the highest honor that can ever be bestowed upon a professor teaching in Virginia—the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia's Outstanding Faculty Award.

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Volume LIII Number 5

January 24, 2023

**MONTHLY MEETING NOTICE
Tuesday, January 24, 2023, at 6:30 PM**

**Drew Gruber
“The Siege of Yorktown”**

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In the early Spring of 1862, the Union Army of the Potomac was transported from the Nation’s Capital area down the Chesapeake Bay to the lower Virginia Peninsula bounded by the James and York Rivers. The Union manpower of approximately 125,000 troops

marched up the Peninsula in early April until confronting an extensive Confederate defensive line established behind the Warwick River from Mulberry Island (present day Fort Eustis) across the Peninsula to Yorktown. The initial Confederate defensive force, numbering approximately 12,000 troops, brought the Union advance to a halt. As a consequence of overcoming such a formidable defensive obstacle, the Union high command chose to implement a siege.

Our speaker, Drew Gruber, will present details relating to the establishment of the Union siege works around the Yorktown area. In addition, Drew will offer new perspectives on the campaign, and address several pervasive myths related to the siege. Drew Gruber is the Executive Director of Civil War Trails, Inc. His duties have expanded to the coverage a six-state program of placement of interpretive Civil War signage. A resident of Williamsburg, Drew has been a tireless advocate for the preservation of the few remaining Civil War sites associated with the May 5, 1862 Battle of Williamsburg. His efforts have come to fruition with the recent preservation of approximately 250 acres of undeveloped property adjacent to the Colonia Parkway and I-64.

Drew Gruber is the Executive Director of Civil War Trails, Inc. which is a nonprofit which offers over 1,400 sites for visitors to explore across six states. He is also the interim Director for the Williamsburg Battlefield Association and previously sat on the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. He holds his M.A. in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University, a B.A. in Historic Preservation from Mary Washington College and was recently certified by Southeast Tourism Marketing College. He lives in Williamsburg with his wife Kate. He enjoyed brown spiritus liquors, cold, rainy days, books, and some peace & quiet.

In addition to Drew Gruber's program, we'll welcome a visit from Mike Movius. Mike is the President of the Civil War Round Table Congress, an organization tasked with the sustainability and growth of Civil War Round Tables throughout America and beyond. Mike will share a short video which outlines the education and networking

activities which the Congress offers to facilitate improvement of local Round Tables.

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*Williamsburg Civil War
Roundtable*

Meeting Place

**Williamsburg Library Theatre
515 Scotland Street
Williamsburg, VA**

Volume LIII Number 6

February 28, 2023

**MONTHLY MEETING NOTICE
Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at 6:30 PM**

**John J. Fox
“Fort Gregg - The Confederate Alamo”**

Please join us on Tuesday, February 28th for the meeting of the Williamsburg Civil War Roundtable, commencing at 6:30 PM in the Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre. The library is located at 515 Scotland Street in Williamsburg.

The program will also be presented online via a Zoom link for our members and friends near and far. The details for the Zoom link will be provided by a follow-up announcement several days prior to meeting date.

On Tuesday, February 28th, John J. Fox will present “Fort Gregg - *The Confederate Alamo*.”

The Confederate Alamo is the first book-length study ever written about the chaotic and bloody Battle of Fort Gregg. By April 2, 1865, General Ulysses S. Grant’s men had tightened their noose around the vital town of Petersburg, Virginia. Trapped on three sides with a

river at their back, the soldiers from General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had never faced such dire circumstances.

To give Lee time to craft an escape, a small motley group of threadbare Southerners made a suicidal last stand at a place called Fort Gregg. Famous Civil War historian Douglas Southall Freeman described this fight as "one of the most dramatic incidents of an overwhelming day." The venerable Union commander, Major General John Gibbon, observed, "[t]he struggle was one of the most desperate ever witnessed."

John J. Fox grew up in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from Washington & Lee University with a BA in U.S. History in 1981 and then served on active duty in the U.S. Army for seven years as an armor officer and aviator. His 2004 book, *Red Clay to Richmond: Trail of the 35th Georgia Infantry Regiment*, received the "2005 James I. Robertson Jr. Literary Prize for Confederate History" and a 2006 research award from the Georgia Secretary of State. His 2010 book, *The Confederate Alamo: Bloodbath at Petersburg's Fort Gregg on April 2, 1865*, received a 2011 IPPY Award for non-fiction. A third book, *Stuart's Finest Hour: The Ride Around McClellan, June 1862*, came out in 2013. He has written numerous articles for various Civil War magazines and newspapers. When he is not writing, Fox is a pilot for American Airlines. He lives in Winchester, Virginia.

Last Month

On Tuesday, January 24th, Drew Gruber present "The Siege of Yorktown".

In the early Spring of 1862, the Union Army of the Potomac was transported from the Nation's Capital area down the Chesapeake Bay to the lower Virginia Peninsula bounded by the James and York Rivers. The Union manpower of approximately 125,000 troops marched up the Peninsula in early April until confronting an extensive Confederate defensive line established behind the Warwick River from Mulberry Island (present day Fort Eustis) across the Peninsula to Yorktown. The initial Confederate defensive force, numbering approximately 12,000 troops, brought the Union advance to a halt. As

a consequence of overcoming such a formidable defensive obstacle, the Union high command chose to implement a siege.

Our speaker, Drew Gruber, will present details relating to the establishment of the Union siege works around the Yorktown area. In addition, Drew will offer new perspectives on the campaign, and address several pervasive myths related to the siege.

Drew Gruber is the Executive Director of Civil War Trails, Inc. His duties have expanded to the coverage a six-state program of placement of interpretive Civil War signage. A resident of Williamsburg, Drew has been a tireless advocate for the preservation of the few remaining Civil War sites associated with the May 5, 1862 Battle of Williamsburg. His efforts have come to fruition with the recent preservation of approximately 250 acres of undeveloped property adjacent to the Colonia Parkway and I-64.

Drew Gruber is the Executive Director of Civil War Trails, Inc. which is a nonprofit which offers over 1,400 sites for visitors to explore across six states. He is also the interim Director for the Williamsburg Battlefield Association and previously sat on the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. He holds his M.A. in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University, a B.A. in Historic Preservation from Mary Washington College and was recently certified by Southeast Tourism Marketing College. He lives in Williamsburg with his wife Kate. He enjoyed brown spiritus liquors, cold, rainy days, books, and some peace & quiet.

In addition to Drew Gruber's program, we'll welcome a visit from Mike Movius. Mike is the President of the Civil War Round Table Congress, an organization tasked with the sustainability and growth of Civil War Round Tables throughout America and beyond. Mike will share a short video which outlines the education and networking activities which the Congress offers to facilitate improvement of local Round Tables.

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Roundtable Membership: Although our programs are open to the public and free of charge, we encourage our patrons and guests to support our organization through the payment of an annual membership fee of \$30. The fee covers the events offered during the 2022 / 2023 season which spans from September 2022 through May of 2023. The membership fee provides our primary source of revenue to support the expenses associated with our programming. Please click [here](#) to access the membership form.

Upcoming Meetings and Speakers

- **March 28, 2023** - Michael Moore: "John Taylor Wood and The Rebel Horse Marine"
- **April 25, 2023** - Dr. Lorien Foote: "Union Soldiers on The Loose in The Confederacy"
- **May 23, 2023** - Dennis Frye: "Stonewall Jackson's Greatest Victory: Harper's"
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“John Taylor Wood and The Rebel Horse Marine”**

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Join historian J. Michael Moore for a lively discussion of John Taylor Wood's career and exploits as one of the most successful Confederate naval raiders. The Chesapeake Bay was a vital Union communication and supply link from Washington, D.C. to Fort Williamsburg Civil War Roundtable Newsletter

Monroe. With great ingenuity and incredible forethought, Wood developed the “boats on wheels” concept for attacking Union shipping. Wood earned the sobriquet of the Rebel Horse Marine with a naval raiding career that was something out of the action-adventure genre of fiction and foreshadowed the development of commando and special operations warfare in the twentieth century.”

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To give Lee time to craft an escape, a small motley group of threadbare Southerners made a suicidal last stand at a place called Fort Gregg. Famous Civil War historian Douglas Southall Freeman described this fight as “one of the most dramatic incidents of an overwhelming day.” The venerable Union commander, Major General John Gibbon, observed, “[t]he struggle was one of the most desperate ever witnessed.”

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- **May 23, 2023** - Dennis Frye: “Stonewall Jackson’s Greatest Victory: Harper’s
- **November 28, 2023** - Frank O'Reilly - "The Fredericksburg Battles ... of Course"

Upcoming Outside Events

- **March 25, 2023** - Williamsburg Battlefield Association sponsors "March of Valor" [details](#)
- **March 25, 2023** - the Kernstown Battlefield Association (KBA) will host a walking and driving tour of the First Battle of Kernstown. [details](#)
- **April 1, 2023** - West Virginia Troops in the Fall of Hatcher's Run Line [details](#)
- **April 7-12, 2023** - The 158th anniversary of Appomattox surrender. **April 7-9** Curt Fields as Grant and Thomas Jesse as Lee , with their special program, the Last 48 hours, the evening of April 8. [details](#)
- **April 13-15, 2023** - National Museum of the United States Army will host its annual Civil War Symposium. This year's topic is "**A New Birth of Freedom**": **Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War**. [details](#)
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Volume LIII Number 8

April 25, 2023

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**Dr. Lorien Foote
“Union Soldiers on the Loose in the Confederacy”**

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During the last winter of the Civil War, nearly 3,000 Union prisoners escaped from Confederate prisons in the Carolinas and fled toward Union army lines. Black and white southerners fed, hid, and guided the fugitives across hundreds of miles of dangerous terrain. Lorien

Williamsburg Civil War Roundtable Newsletter **Page 1 of 5**

Foote will share what the journey of escaped prisoners reveals about Union soldier's experiences in the final months of the war and the transformation of the home front to a battle front inside the Confederacy.

Dr. Lorien Foote is the Patricia & Bookman Peters Professor in History at Texas A&M University. She is the author of four books, editor of three volumes, and writer of numerous articles and essays on the cultural, intellectual, and military history of the American Civil War. Her most recent book is *Rites of Retaliation: Civilization, Soldiers, and Campaigns in the American Civil War* (2021), which won the Organization of American Historians Civil War and Reconstruction Book Award. She is the co-editor, with Earl J. Hess, of *The Oxford Handbook of the American Civil War*. She is the creator and principal investigator of a digital humanities project, which is mapping the escape and movement of 3000 Federal prisoners of war. The project includes contributions from undergraduate researchers at four universities. It can be explored online at: <https://sites.google.com/tamu.edu/fugitive-federals/the-project>. Foote received her B.A. from the University of Kansas and her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma. She is a ballroom dancer and a dog lover. Buzz, her eight-year-old Shih Tzu, is the mascot of the TAMU Study Abroad program and visits the office on campus regularly.

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Volume LIII Number 9

May 23, 2023

**MONTHLY MEETING NOTICE
Tuesday, May 23, 2023, at 6:30 PM**

**Dennis E. Frye:
“Stonewall Jackson’s Greatest Victory: Harper’s Ferry”**

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On Tuesday May 23rd Dennis Frye will present: “Stonewall Jackson’s Greatest Victory: Harper’s

General Lee had a problem - Harpers Ferry. He could not continue his proposed invasion into the United States with this strategic position in the hands of U.S. forces. Something must be done. Lee

devised a complex plan, perhaps his most complex of the war. He summoned his most aggressive lieutenant, Stonewall Jackson, to lead the sensitive mission. But soon much went wrong. Despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, coupled with the enemy's discovery of Lee's orders, Jackson in his final independent command of the war brought Lee victory - Stonewall's *most brilliant* battlefield victory.

Dennis E. Frye recently retired after 20 years as the Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. For his more than 3 decades of service with the National Park Service, Dennis earned the "Distinguished Service Award" - the highest honor of the Department of Interior. Dennis also received the American Battlefield Trust's highest honor, the "Shelby Foote Award," and was recognized with the "Nevins-Freeman Award" for his years of scholarship and his national leadership role in battlefield preservation. Dennis is a prominent Civil War historian as a writer, lecturer, preservationist and battlefield guide. Dennis has numerous appearances on PBS, The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, C-SPAN, A&E, and Voice of America as a guest historian. He helped produce Emmy award-winning television features on the Battle of Antietam, abolitionist John Brown, and Maryland during the Civil War. Dennis is respected as a national Civil War battlefield preservationist. He is co-founder and first president of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation, and he is co-founder and a former president of today's American Battlefield Trust. Dennis is a tour guide in demand, leading tours for the Smithsonian, National Geographic, The *New York Times*, and Civil War Round Tables and staff rides for US Army and Marine Corps leadership. Dennis also is a well-known author, with 107 articles and 11 books.

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Upcoming Meetings and Speakers

- **June – August** - no meetings
- **September 26, 2023** - Hampton Newsome "Gettysburg's Second Front: Union Opportunity and Failure at Richmond"

- **October 24, 2023** - Dr. Jonathan White (A presentation related to Dr. White's latest book publication)
- **November 28, 2023** – Frank O'Reilly - Fredericksburg: Barksdale's Brigade Delaying the Union River Crossing"
- **December 19, 2023** - Drew Gruber "John Bell Hood and the Battle at Eltham's Landing"
- **January 23, 2024** - Bruce Littell "The Submarine H. L. Hunley: Concept, Development, Deployment, Recovery, & Conservation"
- **February 27, 2024** - Scott Mingus "Confederate Calamity: JEB Stuart's Cavalry Ride through York County, PA"
- **March 26, 2024** - Jonathan Jones "Opium Slavery: Drug Dependency Among Civil War Veterans"
- **April 23, 2024** - Rob Orrison: *"Twice Baptized: Misconceptions & Unique Stories from the Manassas Battlefields"*
- **May 28, 2024** - Patrick Schroeder: *"Forgotten Friday: The April 7, 1865 Actions in Cumberland County, VA"*

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