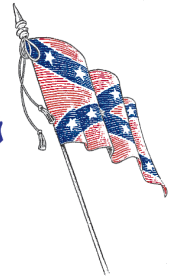




# THE OFFICIAL RECORDS

OF THE ROBERT E. LEE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF CENTRAL NJ



## JANUARY 13, 2020 MEETING

*NEW LOCATION: This month's meeting will be held at the Iselin Public Library, 1081 Green Street, Iselin, NJ*

### THE RIVER CROSSING DURING BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

*Speaker: Bobby Jorgensen*

**B**y December 1862, Major General Ambrose Burnside's winter campaign in Virginia was stalled. When he was installed as commander-in-chief of the Army of the Potomac the prior month, he was tasked with conducting swift and strong action against Lee's army. He decided to conduct a deliberate river crossing at Fredericksburg. The city sits on the bank of the Rappahannock River, and Burnside's army was on the east side of the river, while the Army of Northern Virginia was on the west side. Burnside's plan of attack called for crossing his army at three bridge sites. The Volunteer Engineer Brigade, commanded by General Daniel Woodbury, and the Army Engineer Battalion, led by Lieutenant Charles Cross, were tasked with the construction of those bridges. It would not be an easy job. In fact, the bridge crossing would be the first time in military annals that engineers directly supported an army's assault. This month's presentation will focus on that achievement.

Our speaker this month is Bobby Jorgensen. He has been involved with our CWRT from its inception. Upon his graduation from Fordham University, he entered the United States Marine Corps and served as commander of a combat engineer bridge platoon in Afghanistan. After his active duty was concluded, he received his MBA from the Stern Business School in New York University. Currently on active reserve with the Corps, Major Jorgensen works as a bonds trader in New York City.

### NEWS AND NOTES

\* **DUES ARE DUE!** Attached is the 2019-2020 dues flyer.

\* We want to hear from you! Any member who has recently taken an interesting Civil War related trip, or has read a good Civil War book should consider sharing the information with the rest of the RE Lee CWRT members. You can e-mail the information to newsletter editor Chris Luzhak at [CJLuzhak@gmail.com](mailto:CJLuzhak@gmail.com) or you can mail it in to the Round Table at R.E. Lee CWRT, 1162 St. George Avenue, Suite 194, Avenel, NJ 07001.

## President's Column

I hope all of you enjoyed the holidays with family and friends. Another year is in the books. Hopefully, 2020 will be a happier, healthier and more prosperous year for everyone.

A raffle for the Don Troiani print, *The Irish Brigade at Gettysburg* continues. You may purchase a chance at \$10 each from Jim Donovan at one of our meetings. We hope to close out this raffle soon, so purchase your tickets ASAP.

We are still liquidating our Library collection and hope to close the facility before the end of January. So, if you haven't stopped by yet to peruse our collection, do so soon. There are still great books and prints to be purchased at reasonable prices.

As a special holiday gift, the first 30 attendees at our January 13 meeting will receive a ticket for a free Civil War book from our Library. I'll be displaying the books at 6:30 PM, so come early to avail yourself of the best possible choice.

Garden Historian Lesley Parness will speak on "Medicinal Plants of the Civil War" on Tuesday, January 14, 2020 at the Cranford Community Center at 7 PM. Learn how important plants were in every aspect of the conflict on battlefields and home fronts of the North and South. The community center is located at 220 Walnut Avenue in Cranford.

On a more somber note, there will be a tribute to Dr. James I. "Bud" Robertson from March 27-29, 2020 at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, Blacksburg, Virginia. For more information, visit [www.cpe.vt.edu/cww](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/cww).

Our next meeting will be on Monday, February 3 at 7 PM at the Woodbridge Main Branch Library. Our speaker for the evening will be member Rick Trimble who will talk to us about "The Curious Life of John C. Fremont." Until then, pray that the groundhog doesn't see his shadow, remember your sweetheart on Valentine's Day, and enjoy a relaxing President's Day.

—Tom Kuzma

## This Month in Civil War

- |                 |                                                   |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1/9/61:</b>  | Mississippi becomes the second state to secede    |
| <b>1/15/62:</b> | Confirmation of Edwin Stanton as Secretary of War |
| <b>1/1/63:</b>  | Emancipation Proclamation                         |
| <b>1/22/63:</b> | Failure of Burnside's "Mud March"                 |
| <b>1/15/65:</b> | Capture of Fort Fisher by Federals                |

### GRAVE OF THE MONTH

## James Buchanan and William Rufus King

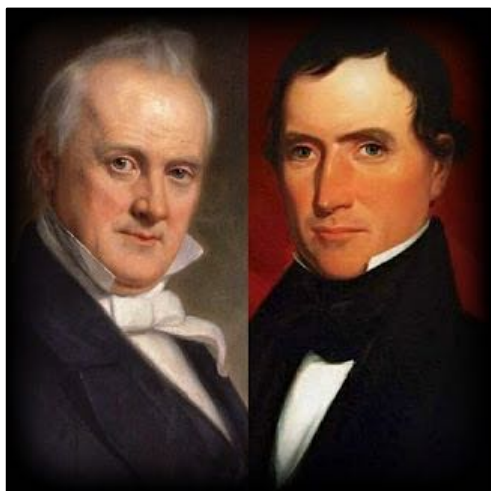
*By Judith Breistein*

William Rufus DeVane King was born into a family of wealthy planters on April 17, 1786 in North Carolina. He attended elite prep schools and entered the University of North Carolina when he was 12 years old. He left early to apprentice to a lawyer but very soon turned his attention to politics. By 1810, at the age of 25, he was elected to Congress. Six years later, he was sent as Secretary of Legation to the American Embassy in St. Petersburg, Russia. He took advantage of his appointment, traveling extensively and soaking up the sights of foreign lands. Some insinuated that his flamboyant dress and gossipy manners stemmed from his time abroad.

On King's return from Russia, he took the advice of his older brother to move south where there were untold opportunities and cheap land. King was one of the original leaders of the movement to make Alabama the 22nd state. He purchased 750 acres of land and built a plantation he named Chestnut Hill. It was "staffed" by close to 500 slaves. He urged for improvements in services, communications and roadways. He helped give the capitol its name,

Selma. For his efforts, he became the first elected senator to be sent to Congress from the brand-new state of Alabama.

King's terms in Congress overlapped with that of James Buchanan, a young Congressman, and later senator, from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. They struck up a warm friendship though they didn't appear to have much in common. King was five years older than Buchanan. Buchanan was broad shouldered, sturdily built and handsome. A critic of King's called him a "tall, prim, wig-topped mediocrity." King was a Democrat and Buchanan a Federalist. The two men came from different parts of the country and were born into vastly different socio-economic backgrounds.



*James Buchanan and William Rufus King*

They were soon inseparable. Buchanan called their relationship "a communion." They shared a room at Mrs. Ironsides's Boarding House on 10th and F Street in Washington, DC. They were both old enough and wealthy enough to afford private rooms but so great was their conviviality that they continued to share a home for most of the next fifteen years. They were often seen strolling the streets of Washington arm in arm.

Newspapers printed that King was known for "his fastidious habits." Buchanan began to adopt many of King's Southern manners. They both loved fine dining, gossiping with friends, brightly colored silk handkerchiefs and expensive silk stockings.

When invited to a dinner or dance in the Capitol, they chose to wear identical outfits. Buchanan also started to champion some of King's political views.

There were countless jokes at their expense. Buchanan was widely known as "Granny Buck" and King became known as "his better half." Andrew Jackson called William King "Miss Nancy" and James Buchanan "Aunt Fancy." Postmaster General James Campbell called them "Buchanan and his wife." They were famously known as, "The Siamese Twins" and "The Nancy Boys," 19th century slang for gay couples. Aaron Brown, a law partner of President James Polk, wrote to Polk's wife, "...politicians mock Buchanan and King to their faces about their effeminate temperaments."

The Nancy Boys didn't seem to care. They were beloved friends, colleagues, confidantes and partners in every sense of the word.

Lovers? Perhaps. Or perhaps not.

King served in the Senate from 1819 until 1844 when President John Tyler chose him to be the U.S. minister to France. He wrote from France to James, "I am selfish enough to hope you will not be able to procure an associate who will cause you to feel no regret at our separation." About this time, Buchanan wrote a friend, "I am now solitary and alone, having no companion in the house with me. I have gone a wooing to several gentlemen, but have not succeeded with any of them. I feel that it is not good for man to be alone; and should not be astonished to find myself married to some old maid who can nurse me when I am sick, provide some good dinners for me when I am well, and not expect from me any very ardent or romantic affection."

In 1848, being assured that France would not interfere with the U.S. annexation of Texas from Mexico, King returned home and took up his Senate seat again. President Zachary Taylor had died and his vice president, Millard Fillmore, was now president. There was no official vice president. William King was chosen to be the president pro tem of the Senate and was now first in line to become president if Fillmore died.

In 1852, Franklin Pierce, instead of the newly moderate democrat, James Buchanan, was chosen by the Democratic Party to run for president. The vice-presidential nomination was offered to King.

Buchanan urged King to accept. King accepted but he was ill. He began to decline all social invitations and soon disappeared from society. Diagnosed with tuberculosis, he resigned from the Senate and sailed to Havana hoping the warm climate would restore his health. When he left, his friends described him as “looking like a skeleton.”

When the Pierce/King ticket won, King was too ill to get back to Washington in time for the March 4 inauguration. Congress passed a special dispensation allowing him to be sworn in on foreign soil. On March 24, 1853, two U.S. soldiers held him up while he recited the oath of allegiance and became 13th vice president of the United States.

King started home from Cuba but his ship was delayed several times. Barely alive, he arrived at Chestnut Hill on April 17, 1853 and died the following day. He was vice president for 45 days, the shortest term ever served by any vice president. He is buried in Live Oak Cemetery, in Selma, Alabama.



*King's grave, Selma Alabama*

After King's death, Buchanan always kept “a likeness of the late Vice-President King, whom he loved” nearby. He also kept a large portrait of Ann Coleman over his fireplace, his fiancé who was rumored to have committed suicide after she had broken off their engagement in 1819.

After the deaths of both King and Buchanan, as stipulated in their wills, all their correspondence was destroyed by Harriet Lane, the niece who had

served as Buchanan's First Lady, and Catherine Ellis, a niece of William King.

James Buchanan had served in the House of Representatives from 1821-1831 and in the Senate from 1834-1845. He was Secretary of State from 1845-1849. He began his Presidential term under the dark shadow of the financial panic of 1857.

Southern born William King had played a significant role in shaping Buchanan's policies. Buchanan shrugged off the Dred Scott decision. He believed slavery morally wrong, but was against emancipation. He didn't stop the brutality in Bloody Kansas. John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry came to its bloody conclusion under his administration. His Cabinet was riddled with Southerners who were allowed to arm themselves with ammunition from the Federal arsenal. Fort Sumter was seized on his watch.

On the day he left office, he told incoming President Abraham Lincoln, “If you are as happy, dear sir, on entering this house as I am in leaving...you are the happiest man in the country.”

Buchanan died on June 1, 1868 and is buried at Woodward Hills Cemetery in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



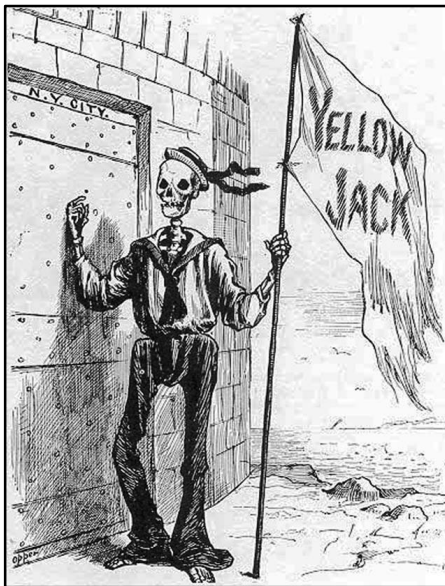
*Buchanan's grave, Lancaster, Pennsylvania*

# Who Am I?

I was born on June 16, 1816 in Kentucky, the fourth of 13 children. My family was wealthy and wished me to enter politics but I chose to make my future in the medical field. I graduated with a medical degree from Transylvania University in March 1835.

Eight months later, I married my cousin, Ella Gist Boswell. Her father, Dr. Joseph Boswell, had died the previous year during a yellow fever epidemic. Our only child was born in 1837. I started volunteering my time working to save lives during the recurrent fever outbreaks in our area.

In 1848, we moved to Natchez, Mississippi. I was able to stop the spread of a “yellow jack” outbreak by instituting a strict quarantine. With my own funds, I built a hospital for Mississippi River boatmen who were suffering from this plague. I soon came to be known as an expert in the field of this deadly disease. In 1853, 9000 people died of this scourge in New Orleans, which was nine percent of their population.



*Yellow Fever, a.k.a. "Yellow Jack"*

Yellow fever traditionally begins with high fever alternating with chills. Aching joints, nausea, dizziness and heart arrhythmia come next. Often there is a respite of several days before jaundice turns the skin a dark yellow. Liver and kidney failure follow accompanied by “black vomit.” Internal hemorrhaging and bloody stools make the patient suffer intensely. Hallucinations and delirium are followed by coma and death within ten days.

I was making a good living in the doctoring field. By 1850, I owned 17 slaves. By 1860, my brother and I owned another 74. I charged two dollars for a patient to visit my office. In the hospital, I charged one dollar for blacks and a dollar and a half for whites.

In 1856, I took my son, Cary Bell, to Philadelphia to try and get him an apprenticeship with the world-famous surgeon and teacher, Dr. Samuel Gross. While there, the Mayor of New York begged me to advise authorities in Long Island on how to stop the yellow fever outbreak that was killing scores there every day. The trip was successful. I halted the spread of the epidemic and Cary was accepted by Dr. Gross to begin his apprenticeship immediately. I returned home to find my wife prostrate with a nervous condition, congestive heart failure and neuralgia. She died a month later, on November 11, 1856, aged 39. I was desolate.

My friends advised me to tour Europe to ease my depression. I traveled through England, Scotland, France and Germany, visiting all their hospitals and observing their methods. While there I met 27-year-old Julia M. Churchill who was taking the grand tour with her sister. Though I was 40, I still felt like a young man. It was love at first sight for both of us. We cut our journeys short and rushed home to be married on November 17, 1857. Julia came from a large family and was the youngest of 16 children. She found it difficult to conceive. We had only one child, our little Abby, who died as a tiny infant in June 1860.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, I felt that I was too old to enlist in the Confederate Army. Instead I served in a civilian medical advisory capacity, aiding the governments of Kentucky and Mississippi. I volunteered my services as a doctor but soon became involved with helping Confederate blockade



runners reach Canada. From there, they would return south with supplies for our army.

Once in Canada, I met an English transplant Arkansas shoemaker, Godfrey Joseph Hyams. Together we devised an “infallible way...to create death.” We would steal infected clothing and linens of dead yellow fever victims and ship them north. I told Hyams, “It will kill them (Union soldiers) at 60 yards.”

To put our plan into effect, I traveled to Bermuda, the capital of the blockade operations. I fought the epidemic that was threatening to halt the flow of goods to the south. While there I quietly amassed a collection of contaminated linens and blood soaked clothing from the stricken. In July, I returned to Canada with trunks teeming with infection. I mixed the soiled items with clean shirts and fresh new sheets.

I told Hyams to take the trunks north and auction them off anywhere northern troops were stationed. I cautioned him to wear gloves and not breathe in the effluvia. Hyams returned saying that he had auctioned off every trunk, the last one in Washington, DC but he showed me no proof. He demanded to be paid \$100,000. I gave him 50 bucks.

Disgruntled, Hyams went straight to the U.S. consulate in Toronto. He was granted full immunity for testifying against me. I was arrested in May 1865 and charged with attempted murder. The charges were eventually changed to “violating the nations’ neutrality agreement.” The *Montreal Gazette* called our plot “an outrage against humanity.” Though nurses and orderlies testified against me, I was acquitted. The trunks were gone and Hyams, a shady character at best, had disappeared.

At home, they had dubbed me “Dr. Black Vomit” and “The Yellow Fever Fiend.”

I wrote to President Johnson begging for leniency and offering to work in areas where yellow fever was rampant but my letter went unanswered. I could not go home.

In 1867, I quietly went to New Orleans to assist in an epidemic that had already killed 3000 citizens. In 1873, I went home to Kentucky. No one arrested me and I was never prosecuted. I took up doctoring again.

My success in stopping the spread of yellow fever eclipsed my notoriety. Quietly I was able to resume my affairs. I chose never to speak of the plot nor answer questions posed by northern reporters.

I ran for governor of Kentucky in 1879, taking time off during the campaign to doctor during another severe epidemic. I won the election. I dedicated my time to improving conditions in the prisons, earning myself the derogatory nickname “Lenient Luke.”

In 1900, Walter Reed proved that yellow jack was caused by the bite of a mosquito...not through contact.

But by then I’d been dead 13 years. I died on September 14, 1887 and am buried in Frankfurt Cemetery, Frankfurt, Kentucky, next to my first wife, Ella. Who am I?

—Submitted by Judith Breistein

*Last month’s answer: John Milton Hay*

## *Civil War Quiz*

1. Which southern commander kept a chicken as a pet?
2. Which southern lady’s grandfather was elected governor of New Jersey eight times?
3. What do visitors place on the unmarked grave of John Wilkes Booth?
4. Which New York U.S. senator, appointed Collector of Customs by Abraham Lincoln, killed himself by loading his pockets with bullets and jumping from the ferry boat between New York and Hoboken?
5. How many layers of clothing did a proper Civil War era woman wear under her dress?

—Submitted by Judith Breistein

*Last month's answers: 1. Jefferson Davis 2. Ellen Shaw, sister of Colonel Robert Shaw of the 54th Mass 3. General Joseph E. Johnston 4. Due to the shortage of metal, none could be made during the Civil War 5. Frederick Douglass*



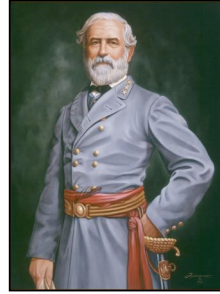
**NOTE: NEW MEETING LOCATION THIS MONTH!** Our January 2020 meeting will be held at the **Iselin Public Library**, 1081 Green St., Iselin.

### Vision Statement

With the Civil War being a defining event in the history of the United States and a continuing influence on our society in general, the Robert E. Lee Civil War Round Table of Central New Jersey is dedicated to preserving and expanding knowledge about — and understanding of — this seminal event.

### Mission Statement

Our mission is to serve our members by striving to reach, with resources available, the goals set forward in the Vision Statement. This would be achieved, as finances allow, by: holding meetings, seminars and round tables; offering speakers who are experts in some aspect of the Civil War; encouraging nonpartisan, nonpolitical discussion and dialogue while honoring all those involved in the conflict; contributing toward the preservation of battlefields and important historical sites for future generations; providing eyes-on/hands-on/feet-on first-hand experiences by arranging field trips to battlefields and historical sites; and enhancing communication by publishing a newsletter and maintaining a website.



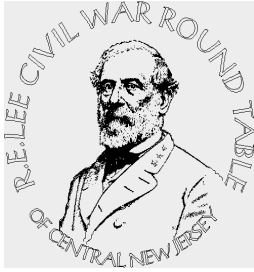
*The Official Records* is the monthly newsletter of the RE LEE CWRT of Central New Jersey.

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# THE ROBERT E. LEE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

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## SCHEDULE FOR 2019–2020

9-5-19	Allen Thompson: Capt. Johnston's 7/2/63 Reconnaissance
10-7-19	Mike Smith: General John Buford
11-4-19	Paul Martin: TBD
12-2-19	Pat Schuber: The 1862 Sioux Uprising
1-13-20	Bob Jorgensen: Federal River Crossing at Fredericksburg
2-3-20	Rick Trimble: The Curious Life of John C. Frémont
3-2-20	Paul Bretzger: Hancock at Gettysburg
4-6-20	Joel Craig: The Anaconda Plan
5-4-20	Paul Lubrecht: Carl Schurz
6-1-20	TBD
7-2-20	Members' Night
8-6-20	Ed Root: Remember Me!

### DUES:

**Regular Member: \$35**

**Associate Member: \$25** (*reside 75 or more miles from Woodbridge, NJ*)

**Student Member: \$20** (*must be a registered, full-time student*)

*Fill in your info, cut along the line and send in with your dues check to the address below.*

-----Cut along this line-----

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed are my dues of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ plus an optional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

**Total enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Make checks payable to: R.E. Lee Civil War Round Table**

**Send to: R.E. Lee CWRT 1162 St. George Avenue Suite #194 Avenel, NJ 07001**