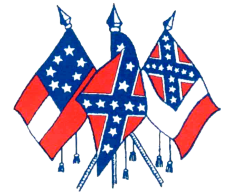


THE OFFICIAL RECORDS

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



MAY 2, 2011 MEETING

Woodbridge Public Library, 7 pm

BATTLE OF BIG BETHEL

Speaker: John Quarstein



Duryea's Zouaves at Big Bethel

The 10 June 1861 engagement at Big Bethel Church is the Civil War's first battle. There, along the banks of Brick Kiln Creek, 4400 Union soldiers and 1400 Confederate soldiers fought for almost four hours. Big Bethel was a disaster for the Union and made it clear that the war would require a serious commitment to ensure that the Union would be preserved. The Confederate victory at Big Bethel raised enthusiasm for the war and reinforced the myth that one Southerner could defeat at least four Northerners. Consequently, they felt that they could indeed win the war.

Even though Big Bethel would retain its status as the war's first battle, it was merely a skirmish and would be overshadowed by bloody and decisive battles like First Manassas. Nevertheless, there are several Civil War firsts that occurred during the engagement including the death of the first Confederate infantryman in battle, first battlefield amputation, death of the first West Point graduate in battle and the first friendly fire incident. Big Bethel made all its participants realize that the war would not be over by Christmas; instead it would be a vicious contest that would decide the fate of the nation

Our speaker this month is John V. Quarstein, an award-winning preservationist, author, and historian. He presently serves as Historian for the City of Hampton. Quarstein previously served 30 years (1978-2008) as the Director of the Virginia War Museum, during which time he helped to preserve important Civil War sites such as Lee Hall Mansion and Lee's Mill Battlefield, as well as serving as Historian for the U.S.S. *Monitor* Center Project.

Quarstein is the author of 10 books, including *Fort Monroe: The Key to the South*, *C.S.S. Virginia: Mistress of Hampton Roads*, and *A History of Ironclads*. He has written and narrated five PBS documentaries such as *Battle of Ironclads* and *1862 Peninsula Campaign*.

John Quarstein serves on several national boards including Virginia Civil War Trails and the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority. Our speaker is an avid decoy collector and duck hunter. He lives at his family's Eastern Shore farm and on historic Fort Monroe, Virginia.

NEWS AND NOTES

* This month's regular raffle book is *Edward Porter Alexander, Confederate Cannoneer* by Jay Jorgensen. The preservation raffle book is *Sealed With Their Lives: The Battle for Crampton's Gap* by Timothy Reese.

* Congratulations once again to Jim Hessler for his outstanding presentation on Daniel Sickles at the April meeting. The 90 members and guests present thoroughly enjoyed Jim's talk!

* In the April 14, 2011 edition of *The Huntsville Times* newspaper in Alabama, this story line was prominent: "Here's all you need to know about the phenomenon that is Civil War Round Tables: There is a Robert E. Lee Round Table. It's located in central New Jersey!"

* Peter Dundee was a member of the Robert E. Lee Civil War Round Table when he died almost 10 years ago. Shortly after his death his wife Kathy made a most generous donation of many of Peter's Civil War books to our Civil War Library & Research Center. Recently she has contacted the Round Table with an offer to sell Peter's Civil War prints. She has available for sale the following prints by Mort Kunstler: *Commanders of Manassas*, *Lee's Old War Horse*, and *Wayside Farewell*. They are signed/numbered and museum mounted with frames. She also has 2 smaller prints: *Stonewall* and *Until We Meet Again*. There is also a print by G. Harvey, signed/numbered and framed called *Hope for the Confederacy*. In addition, she has full set, mint, Civil War trading cards, possibly from the 50s, along with Confederate currency. If anybody is interested in purchasing any or all of these items you can email Kathy Dundee at Kath364@yahoo.com.

* 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 our newsletter editor Chris Luzhak at CLuzhak@aol.com or you can mail it to the R.E. Lee CWRT, 1162 St. George Avenue, Suite 194, Avenel NJ 07001.

* **Quote of the Month, submitted by Mike Lawrence:** "Well my dearest one, Virginia has severed her connection with the northern hive of abolitionists, and takes her stand as a sovereign state."

—Former U.S. President and Virginian John Tyler to his wife

* **Fact of the Month, submitted by Mike Lawrence:** On April 19, 1861, the first serious bloodshed of the war occurred between the 6th Massachusetts and civilians, known as the Baltimore riots.

President's Message

By Bill Bork

Spring is trying to break out and April 12 marked the beginning of our Civil War. Many events and reenactments are planned throughout the next 4 years including our own in August. Please plan to take advantage by taking yourselves, children and grandchildren to learn more of this turning point in history.

Great news has also come from Gettysburg that the Casino was turned down and will not be built.

Congratulations to Kelly McVey and Gene Sletvold, our book winners. Our \$100 donation to the Proprietary House at our last meeting through Stan Renick will help toward a much-needed renovation to a building of our Revolutionary past.



Bill Bork, Stan Renick, and a \$100 donation!

Jim Hessler gave a fine presentation of Stickles at Gettysburg and was attended by 90 of us. Thanks again. I assure you will not be disappointed on May 2, when John Quarstein talks on the battle of Big Bethel. You don't want to miss it. I will not be at our next meeting. Bruce Form will be filling in. I will see you in June.



April speaker Jim Hessler explores the controversial life and career of General Dan Sickles

Book Review

By Larry Korczyk

Libby Prison Breakout: The Daring Escape from the Notorious Civil War Prison, written by Joseph Wheelan

On the evening of 9 February 1864, just as darkness shrouded the Confederate capital of Richmond, 109 emaciated, ragged, and haggard officers of the Union army escaped through a makeshift tunnel from the infamous Libby Prison and disappeared into the night. The event, which would become known as “the great escape,” captured the imagination of Northerners and Southerners alike. However, author Joseph Wheelan’s book *Libby Prison Breakout: The Daring Escape from the Notorious Civil War Prison*, is not just the story of the famous escape but an assessment of the POW story in the Civil War, the ultimate breakdown of the prisoner exchange cartel, and the extraordinary circumstances and people who lived and gave us this remarkable story.

The genesis for the collapse of the prisoner exchange cartel and the ultimate imprisonment of thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers was the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863 and the subsequent enlistment of thousands of African Americans in the Union Army. The Confederate reaction, which was swift and immediate, declared that captured white commanders of black units would face summary execution for the advocating of servile insurrection and the black soldiers would be sent into bondage. The Northern response, measured but definitive, was to suspend the Union’s participation in the exchange cartel until the South recognized African Americans and their white officers as legitimate prisoners of war. Therefore, with the collapse of prisoner exchanges, the stage would be set for the overcrowding and appalling prison conditions and the prisoner’s desperate attempts to escape from them.

The two principal officers responsible for the “great escape” were Colonel Thomas Rose, a Pittsburgh schoolteacher, of the 77th Pennsylvania and Major A.G. Hamilton, a Kentucky homebuilder, of the 12th Kentucky cavalry. The two men agreed for the need to “breakout” and after careful deliberation came up with an ingenious plan to use the prison’s kitchen fireplace as a passageway to the east cellar to tunnel to freedom.

Along the way during the tunneling, these men would endure attacks of the legendary Libby Prison rats, hours of digging in suffocating, filthy conditions, and the overwhelming stench of the prison cellar. However, despite these hardships, they endured, with the aid of additional prisoners enlisted in the project, to perform an incredible feat and daring escape.

Joseph Wheelan has written a suspenseful and finely detailed account of the Libby Prison escape. He utilizes extensive primary source material including letters, journals, and prison records to bring this little-known but significant historical event to life.

Ultimately, the escape of the Union soldiers and their harrowing flight to Union lines enabled them to testify to the horrid conditions of the POW prisons and led to the reprisals against Rebel captives. Although Libby Prison no longer stands, the far-reaching consequences of the treatment of prisoners of war during the Civil War still haunt the American conscience.

PARKER PRESS NEWS

By Mira Form

Each year at the Parker Press Civil War Living History event we are fortunate to have a good selection of sutlers—merchants who sell various items.

Even though we are a small event, we have sutlers who sell a multitude of items including wood products, children's toys, ladies and men's accessories, history-related tee shirts, as well as soldiers' clothing and accessories and Civil War books. We also have a period photographer who can take your picture at the event so you can have a tintype for a keepsake.

This year we will again have a representative from the New Jersey 150th Committee selling newly published books about New Jersey and the Civil War as well as assorted 150th items. We will, as always, also have our very popular Civil War Library Book Sale with a wide range of books at very reasonable prices.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATES: AUGUST 6th AND 7th. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT PARKER PRESS.

Genealogy Group Meeting, April 11, 2011:

Guest Speaker, Richard Watson Shares Family Genealogy and Civil War Research Experiences

By Bruce Form

Monday evening, April 11, 2011, at the Civil War Library and Research Center was the site of a fun and fact filled talk given by Robert E. Lee Civil War Round Table Member, Richard Watson. He shared his experiences and gave out Civil War genealogy research “tips” to all present. Richard and his cousin have been researching their family’s history for many years. In this quest they have uncovered over 100 ancestors who were involved in the Civil War.

The evening was spent going through “hands-on” fact sheets and photocopies of documents that gave members a packet of resource material for each to use. Richard also donated two books on Genealogy and a copy of the research he had completed on his Civil War ancestors. These will become permanent additions to our Library and Research center’s collections.



Richard Watson meets with the Genealogy Group

The Genealogy Group meets the second Monday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Civil War Library and Research Center, 94 Green St., Woodbridge. The group is open to all Round Table members. If you are interested or have any questions about the genealogy group contact Bruce Form or Mike Lawrence at the next meeting.

Who Am I?

I was born in Camden County, Georgia, October 12, 1815, and was graduated from West Point in 1838. I was twice brevetted for gallantry in Mexico. Afterwards I served as commandant of cadets at the Military Academy and wrote the standard textbook, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* (1853-55; published in 1861).

When Georgia seceded from the Union I resigned my lieutenant colonelcy, January 31, 1861, and was appointed brigadier general on June 17, and major general on October 7, 1861.

Early in the war I organized a brigade of Arkansas regiments and operated in that state until I was summoned to join General A. S. Johnston just

before the battle of Shiloh. Subsequently I commanded a wing of the Army of Tennessee in Bragg's Kentucky campaign and at Murfreesboro, and was promoted lieutenant general to rank from October 10, 1862. I commanded a corps at Chattanooga and served under J. E. Johnston in the Atlanta campaign.

After yielding Savannah and Charleston to Sherman's army, I finally surrendered in North Carolina in April 1865. I declined command of the Army of Tennessee after the Chattanooga campaign, but my lack of confidence in John Bell Hood caused me to request transfer after the battle of Jonesboro with the remark that his first refusal of command was not for all time.

Along with Stonewall Jackson and Longstreet, I was recognized as one of the outstanding corps commanders in Confederate service. After the war I was a planter at Selma, Alabama. I died, while on a trip, at Wytheville, Virginia, on November 6, 1873, and am buried at Salem. Who am I?

—Submitted by John DiNuzzo

Last month's answer: Gouverneur Kemble Warren, USA

Civil War Quiz

1. What beloved general's body was taken to the Richmond Capitol for viewing on May 12, 1863?
2. What cavalry wizard finally met his match in Selma, Alabama, in the war's closing days?
3. What honor fell to Private John Huff of the 5th Michigan Cavalry?
4. What general uttered the famous words, "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall?"
5. What Virginia general had the daunting assignment as General Jackson's successor leading the Stonewall Brigade?

—Submitted by John DiNuzzo

Last month's answers: 1. Alfred Thomas Torbert 2. The 13th Amendment 3. A Union battery contained 6 cannon, a Confederate battery, 4 4. "Love Me Tender" 5. Grant and Rosecrans 6. 14 months

This Month in the Civil War 1861:

5/6/61: Confederacy recognizes state of war with United States

5/13/61: US troops occupy Baltimore

5/20/61: North Carolina secedes

5/24/61: Federal troops capture Alexandria, Virginia

2011 Speaker Schedule:

June 6: Larry Korczyk "Battle of the Crater: History vs. Hollywood"

July 7: Steve Glazer "Discover your Community's Civil War Heritage"

August 4: Scott Mingus "The Louisiana Tigers at Gettysburg"



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

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