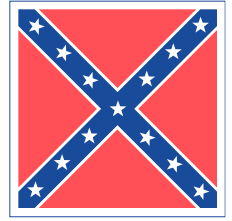


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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## Bob O'Neill *Cavalry During the Peninsula Campaign*



The contributions and sacrifices of the cavalry in the 1862 Peninsula Campaign are, generally, marginalized, if not ignored, in most campaign studies. Historians tend to focus on two events involving the cavalry - Brig. Gen. Jeb Stuart's "Ride around McClellan" and Brig. Gen. Philip St. George Cooke's cavalry charge at Gaines' Mill - while excluding other contributions. Stuart's Ride in mid-June catapulted Stuart and his cavalry into the national spotlight, and rightly so.

The information gathered by Stuart allowed Gen. Robert E. Lee to plan the strategy which drove Maj. Gen. George McClellan's Army of the Potomac from Richmond's doorstep. Stuart's escape humiliated the Union cavalry. Cooke's Charge at Gaines Mill, on June 27, only furthered the disdain directed at the Union troopers.

Focusing on aspects of the campaign which may not be covered during the spring tour, Bob O'Neill will highlight several lesser known challenges, events and locations, including Union cavalry storming fixed fortifications near Williamsburg, the occupation and later evacuation of White House, the advance to Richmond, the

Hanover Expedition, the Union cavalry's vital delaying actions on June 26, as well as the Union cavalry's amphibious operations and Stuart's battle with the U.S. Navy. He will also discuss how prewar animosity may have doomed Union cavalry efforts during Stuart's Ride as well as the battle of Gaines' Mill.

Bob O'Neill grew up in Detroit, Michigan, before moving to Northern Virginia in 1977. Bob has published two books - Small But Important Riots, The Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville in 1993 and Chasing Jeb Stuart and John Mosby, The Union Cavalry in Northern Virginia from Second Manassas to Gettysburg in 2012.

He has also published articles for Virginia Country's Civil War, Blue & Gray, North & South, Gettysburg Magazine and Little Big Horn Associates Research Review. He has guided numerous tours of the cavalry battlefields in the Loudoun Valley, as well as several Custer related tours in Montana, Wyoming and Kansas. Bob now runs a Civil War Cavalry Blog at [smallbutimportantriots.com](http://smallbutimportantriots.com)



### 759th REGULAR MEETING

★★★★★

Friday, February 10th

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN O'HARE

5615 N. CUMBERLAND, CHICAGO

*Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.*

*Dinner at 6:30 p.m.*

**\$50 - Members/Non-members**

**ENTRÉE  
CHICKEN TERIYAKI OR  
SALMON**

## CONGRESS APPROVES MAJOR EXPANSION OF PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

Legislation authorizes the expansion of Petersburg National Battlefield by more than 7,000 acres, potentially making the battlefield one of the largest national historical parks in the United States.

(Washington D.C.) – With a December 8, 2016 vote in the United States Senate today, Congress passed legislation to expand the boundary of Petersburg National Battlefield by 7,238 acres. The bill gives the site potential to become one of the largest historical parks in the nation. Although no properties will be immediately added to the existing park, the legislation authorizes the National Park Service to incorporate historic battlefield lands previously located outside the park boundary. Petersburg National Battlefield commemorates 18 separate battlegrounds associated with the 10-month siege of Petersburg, one of the most extensive and complex struggles of the Civil War.

The Civil War Trust, an organization devoted to the preservation of American battlefield land, has helped protect more than 2,500 acres of hallowed ground associated with the siege of Petersburg, nearly 2,000 of which could not be transferred to the National Park Service until today. With the boundary expansion, the lands preserved by the Trust—along with properties protected by other conservation organizations—can be seamlessly integrated into the park, to enhance the visitor and learning experience. Petersburg National Battlefield is an economic engine to the local community, bringing in more than \$ 10 million a year.

“We are grateful to the lawmakers and partner organizations who recognized the critical importance of preserving this historic Virginia landscape,” said Trust President James Lighthizer. “These

battlefields are living monuments—not just to the 70,000 men in blue and gray whose blood hallowed this ground—but to all of America’s veterans.”

The legislation was included in the National Defense Authorization Act, H. Report 114-840, S. Rept. 114-255, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on December 2. The bill was sponsored by Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, and U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott and Randy Forbes, all members of the Virginia congressional delegation.

“The Petersburg National Battlefield bore witness to the longest sustained siege in our nation’s military history and draws visitors from all across the country, injecting millions of dollars into the local economy every year.” Sen. Warner said in a statement. “Expanding the park will encourage tourism to the region while preserving this important piece of American history for future generations.”

“The NDAA ensures that the Petersburg National Battlefield will become the nation’s largest protected battlefield,” Sen. Kaine added. “This hallowed ground bears witness to one of the longest, hardest and most decisive contests of the Civil War. The stories of all the combatants—including more than 16,000 African-American troops—will now be more accessible to the current generation.”

Among the battlefields that will benefit from the bill are some of the most pivotal of the Civil War, including Five Forks, Peebles’ Farm, Ream’s Station, the Crater (where the Federals exploded a mine in an unsuccessful attempt to blow a gap in Confederate defenses), and the Petersburg Breakthrough (where a decisive Union breakthrough

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The only requirement for membership in The Civil War Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 1039 Hinswood, Darien, Illinois 60561, or editor@chicagocwrt.org.



led to the fall of the Confederate capital at Richmond). These battlefields were recognized as nationally significant historic resources in a landmark 1993 study on the status of the nation’s Civil War battlefields commissioned by Congress and updated by the National Park Service in 2010.

Petersburg National Battlefield currently comprises approximately 2,700 acres, and includes sites such as Gen. Ulysses S. Grant’s headquarters at City Point in Hopewell, as well as other land in Dinwiddie County and the City of Petersburg, such as Poplar Grove National Cemetery.

The Civil War Trust is America’s premier nonprofit battlefield preservation organization. Although primarily focused on the protection of Civil War battlefields, through its Campaign 1776 initiative, the Trust also seeks to save the battlefields connected to the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. To date, the Trust has preserved more than 44,000 acres of battlefield land in 23 states, including more than 23,000 acres in Virginia. Learn more at Civilwar.org.

From February *Civil War News*

## JANUARY MEETING

By Mark Matranga

Richard Sommers offered his expert insight into the longest operation of the Civil War to The Round Table at its 758th Regular Meeting on January 13, 2017, on “*Richmond Redeemed: Enduring Lessons in Leadership from the Siege of Petersburg.*” Located on the right bank of the Appomattox River, Petersburg was a vital logistics center. Railroads from all points of the compass ran into the ‘Cockade City.’ From there, a single railroad ran north, carrying vital foodstuffs, armaments, and reinforcements to the confederate capitol; another ran southwest connecting Richmond to the rest of the Confederacy. Defending Petersburg and its supply line was crucial; capturing the city would cripple the capitol.

Commencing in May 1864, Grant’s army carried the war to Richmond in 30 days of almost incessant fighting. He then crossed the James and attacked Petersburg, but after initial success a heroic defense led by P.G.T. Beauregard saved the city. Later assaults in June failed and the period of mobile warfare ended; operations stagnated thereafter.

Sommers argues that Petersburg was a siege at the operational, strategic and even grand strategical levels. Grant fixed the rebel army in place, denying Lee the operational and strategic initiative. Union forces closed on Confederate lines, launching nine offensives from secure camps against undermanned positions and vulnerable supply lines. Most were mobile battles in the open field, not assaults against well-defended fortifications: the fourth and fifth succeeded in closing the Weldon Railroad at Globe Tavern and almost capturing Richmond; the eighth

extended the union flank at Hatcher’s Run; and the ninth overwhelmed the last Confederate mobile reserve at Five Forks and forced Lee to abandon Richmond.

Grant was aware that the siege at Petersburg had assumed strategic dimensions by the end of 1864 when he wrote to Sherman, “...if the cause of the South is lost, [Lee] wants Richmond to be the last place to surrender.” He thus determined to fix Lee in Virginia and leave Sherman, Thomas, and Sheridan to destroy the rest of the Confederacy.

What were the operational and strategic lessons of Petersburg? Grant’s tenacity in fixing his adversary in place tactically, operationally, and strategically is a hallmark of his generalship. His calm conviction in ultimate victory despite temporary setbacks, a ‘military peace of mind’ which freed him from the doubt that had plagued other commanders, led him to success despite setbacks. He learned from experience, eschewing frontal assaults after the initial attack on Petersburg; when sequential attacks and then simultaneous assaults failed, he adjusted with massive ‘first strikes.’

Also tenacious, Lee understood the symbolic importance of holding Richmond. Despite losing the strategic initiative, he counter-attacked with fluid bold field maneuvers, challenging the Yankees for the tactical and operational initiative. He did not equate probable disadvantage with certain loss. He did not fall back, he fought back. Ironically, Sommers believes that Lee’s ultimate defeat was due, in part, to his holding on to Richmond too long. Unfortunately for Lee, the tactics that had served him well earlier in the war were no longer

applicable by mid-1864.

Sommers summarized the essential qualities of these generals: Grant would use the material at hand to ‘give it a try,’ an attitude Lincoln supported; Lee had always seized the strategic initiative or wrested it from his opponent, but by the siege of Petersburg could no longer do so.

Generals are not to be confused with the monuments, Sommers admonishes. We must not discount the human dimensions affecting leadership during a physically and psychologically exhausting campaign. But this is only one aspect: Perseverance, weaving tactical setbacks into strategic success, adapting flexibility of method to fixity of purpose, not yielding to threats but fighting back against the odds, displaying strategic vision, converting advantages into achievement, and functioning effectively within all dimensions of the chain of command, all are enduring lessons in leadership from the siege of Petersburg.

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### NEWBERRY SEMINAR ON CIVIL WAR ERA

The Newberry Library in Chicago is sponsoring a seminar entitled “Confirming our Continent: Canada, Mexico and the United States, 1857-67.” It will be held at the library 2-4 p.m., March 1 through April 12, and concentrate on the relationships between the three countries. Author Joseph Harrington is the seminar leader. For fees and other information, contact the Newberry at [www.newberry.org/WS17Continent](http://www.newberry.org/WS17Continent).

## GRAPESHOT



Leslie Goddard will portray Clara Barton March 23 at the Marshall, Illinois Public Library and March 19th at the Robert R. McCormick Museum, Cantigny.

The Civil War Museum in Kenosha has the following free events scheduled for February:

"Where Soldiers Fought and Slaves Slept: Civil War Student Adventures." Friday, February 10, 12pm, with Chris Lese and Students from Marquette University High School

"Abraham Lincoln Presidential Birthday Celebration," Sunday, February 12, 12-3pm, with George Buss portraying Abraham Lincoln.

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle." Civil War Medical Weekend with the 17th Corps Field Hospital, Saturday, February 20, 10-4 and Sunday, February 21, 12-4

"Ambrose Armitage's Diary," Saturday, February 18, 1:30pm, a first-person program with Mrs. Rita Dow

Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

Check the Announcements section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at [editor@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:editor@chicagocwrt.org) or (630) 297-8046.

### PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservations by Sunday, February 5, by emailing [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org), or calling 630 460-1865 with the names of your party and choice of entrée.

If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please email us at [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org) and/or call us at 630-460-1865.

We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:15 p.m., for a charge of \$10 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE.

### More Upcoming Civil War Events

- Feb. 1st, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Darlene Agnar on "Music of the Civil War"
- Feb. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Andy Waskie on "Major General George Meade"
- Feb. 9th, Lake County CWRT: Dave Oberg on "Moving Cannon at Shiloh"
- Feb. 9th, Milwaukee CWRT: Bob O'Neill on "Cavalry During the Peninsula Campaign"
- Feb. 17th, Salt Creek CWRT: Panel Discussion
- Feb. 17th-19th, Pheasant Run Resort: Military History and Re-enactor Fest
- Feb. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Dave Keller on "Camp Douglas-the Story in Artifacts"
- Feb. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Steve Buck on "DuPage County During the Civil War"
- Mar. 1-April 12, Newberry Library: Seminar on "Confirming our Continent: Canada, Mexico and the U.S., 1857-67"
- Mar. 1st, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Ray Wilson on "The Confederate Territory of Arizona"

## Bulletin Board



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn O'Hare, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

Mar. 10th: Paul Kahan on "Simon Cameron, Lincoln's First Secretary of War"

Apr. 14th: Diane Smith on "Command Conflict in the Overland Campaign"

May 12th: Connie Hansen presents a "First Person Portrayal of Jennie Wade's mother"

June 9th: Don Sender on "Custer and the Little Big Horn Campaign"

Sept. 8th: Ed Bonekemper on "False Remembrance of the Civil War, The Myth of the Lost Cause"

Oct. 13th: Dave Powell on "Chickamauga"

Nov. 10th: Tom Clemens on "Antietam"

Dec. 8th: David Dixon on "Lost Gettysburg Address"

### Abraham Lincoln Bookshop

Their next "Author's Voice" is 6-7 p.m. Feb. 9th, discussing The Ultimate Guide to the Gettysburg Address with authors David Hirsch and Dan Van Haften.

**Tour Reminder**—Sign up NOW for our CWRT's annual Battlefield Tour, covering the 1862 Peninsula Campaign. It will be held May 3-7, and as usual Ed Bearss is the head guide. See <http://www.chicagocwrt.org/battletour.html> for more information.