



## A. Wilson Greene on

# ***"We Have Done all that is Possible and Must be Resigned: The First Petersburg Offensive"***

**Zoom Meeting. Time: June 11, 2021 07:30 PM CST**

**Zoom Meeting ID: 815 6664 1584. Passcode: 123459**



The epic contest between Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee wound its way from the Rapidan River to Cold Harbor in May and early June 1864. Stymied in his effort to either destroy Lee's army or capture Richmond, Grant decided on a bold move. He would shift George Meade's Army of the Potomac and elements of Benjamin Butler's Army of the James across the James River to target Petersburg, the Confederate capital's logistical and transportation hub. Grant executed these challenging logistics brilliantly, in effect freezing most of Lee's forces north of the James while negotiating an uncontested crossing of the

mighty James. By dawn of June 15, the Federals were poised to overrun the vastly outnumbered Confederates around Petersburg commanded by P.G.T. Beauregard. Four days later, after fighting that claimed some 15,000 casualties, Beauregard still held Petersburg and the Army of Northern Virginia dug in to defend the city for the next nine months.

The story of Grant's almost flawless movement to and across the James and the Confederates' shockingly successful defense of Petersburg will be the subject of Will Greene's talk. It is based on chapters from his most recent book [A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg](#), Volume 1.

A. Wilson "Will" Greene was born in Chicago and grew up in Wheaton. He holds degrees in history from Florida State University and Louisiana State University, where he studied under the renowned T. Harry Williams. Greene served sixteen years in the National Park Service, was the first executive director of what is now the American Battlefield Trust, and was the founding director of Pamplin Historical Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier. Greene is the author of seven books and more than twenty published articles on Civil War history. His latest book, *A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018) is the first of a projected three volumes on the Petersburg Campaign and won numerous awards including best book on American Military History from the Society of Military History. Greene retired in 2017 and lives in Walden, Tennessee.

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## Battlefield Preservation

*“... the largest, bloodiest, and most significant action of the Vicksburg campaign.”*

That’s how author and retired Chief Historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, Terry Winschel, describes the importance of the fight on Champion Hill.

**Today, we have a challenge of our own—the chance to purchase outright the entire 144-acre tract that includes Champion Hill and a portion of what is known as the Crossroads.**

**With your support**, we can acquire this important property from the Champion family, which has stewarded the property for generations.

Champion Hill and the Crossroads was where the some of the hardest fighting of the entire war occurred. Over the course of seven to eight hours, the Union army suffered nearly 2,500 casualties and the Confederates lost almost 4,300 men. The Southern army was forced to retreat to Vicksburg. 47 days later, they surrendered, and Vicksburg fell to Union forces, a decisive victory that changed the course of the Civil War.

*“The fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell,”* according to General Grant. And the fate of this hallowed ground is in your hands as we work to secure 144 acres that can eventually be added to the Vicksburg National Military Park.

As a result of donations we received for the Ed Bearss Memorial Fund, we only need \$107,000 (that’s a paltry *1.7 cents per square foot*) to purchase the land. We’re asking you for a gift of only \$63 as a tribute to the Champion Hill battle year (1863).

Our deadline to purchase Champion Hill is June 30th. Please don't let this exceptional opportunity pass us by.

'Til the battle is won,

David N. Duncan  
President  
American Battlefield Trust

P.S. When you contribute \$63 to our campaign, we will send you Terry Winschel's special Preservation edition of the acclaimed *Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign*. Please make a gift to help us meet our \$107,000 goal by June 30th. Thank you.

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## **May Meeting**

### **By Mark Matranga**

**Michael Hardy** addressed The Civil War Round Table at its 802<sup>nd</sup> Regular Meeting on May 14, 2021, on "General Lee's Immortals: The Battles and Campaigns of the Branch-Lane Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865," a fascinating study of men from the Tar Heel State who fought under Lee's command from the Seven Days to Appomattox. Made up of five regiments - the 7<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 33<sup>rd</sup>, and 37<sup>th</sup> North Carolina – from all regions of the state, the brigade contributed to the army's most significant victories but also experienced wrenching loss.

The brigade's first leader, Brig. General Lawrence O'Bryan Branch, came from a prominent family. An 1835 graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), he had practiced law and was a successful railroad executive. He eventually was elected to Congress in 1855 and was twice reelected; a reluctant secessionist, he did not resign until shortly before the Fort Sumter crisis in early April 1861. Many thought Branch undeserving of brigade command, preferring Reuben Campbell, a West Point graduate with Mexican War experience. Campbell was elected to command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

After Branch's death at Antietam, he was succeeded by James Lane, Colonel of the 28<sup>th</sup> NC. A Virginian, Lane was an 1854 VMI graduate who studied under Stonewall Jackson and later taught at the Institute and was teaching at the North Carolina Military Institute at the outbreak of the war. Although somewhat unknown in the state, Lane had led the 1st North Carolina Volunteers at Big Bethel prior to the formation of the 28<sup>th</sup> NC.

Branch's brigade baptism of fire was at New Bern in March 1862 when three of its regiments were routed by a superior force. Transported by rail to north of Richmond in May and assigned to A.P. Hill's Division, the brigade was matched against a Federal corps at Hanover Court House and suffered accordingly. However, it was in the forefront at Gaines Mill and Frayser's Farm during the Seven Days in late June when regimental commanders Campbell and Charles C. Lee (37<sup>th</sup> NC) were killed. Lee, a West Pointer, class of 1856, also taught at the North Carolina Military Institute; he was Lt. Colonel in the 1<sup>st</sup> NC at Big Bethel.

Next, at Cedar Mountain on August 9, 1862, Jackson saluted the unit as it stabilized the line after working through a demoralized portion of his namesake brigade. Branch expressed pride in his men as they drove the Federals "back with terrible slaughter... at the critical phase of the battle." The brigade then held Jackson's far left at Second Manassas, defending against multiple attempts to turn Lee's flank on August 29. The brigade then tramped after the Federals in the rain in the abortive affair at Ox Hill.

Lee's first invasion north found Branch's brigade with Jackson besieging Harper's Ferry. When the garrison surrendered, Branch noted the Federals were "the best-dressed and best-provided soldiers I ever expected to see...[yet] they don't fight like our men." After the surrender, the Carolinians marched to Sharpsburg, plunging into the flank of the Federal assault and helping save Lee's army. As the battle neared its close, an enemy bullet struck Branch in the right cheek and passed out behind his left ear, killing him instantly. Lane and others thought Branch was felled by a stray bullet; Hardy considers it more likely a Federal soldier aimed at "clump of officers in the dusk," and took Branch down with a timely shot.

Hill's division, with Lane's brigade, formed the right of Lee's line at Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862; it held until forced to retire when flanked by several regiments of the Pennsylvania Reserves and then assaulted by Gibbon's division. The brigade fought well but was overwhelmed. The brigade was an integral component of the Flank March at Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, but gained infamy due to unforeseen circumstances when its troops wounded Generals Jackson and Hill who had moved out in front of their line in the dark to scout enemy lines and were not identified upon their return.

The brigade was engaged all three days at Gettysburg. Criticized for its performance on July 1, it fought well the next albeit lightly engaged. On the left of the Pickett-Pettigrew formation on July 3, it fell short of its goal due to a combination of factors: adjoining units peeled away, leaving Lane exposed, and part of the brigade veered toward the Union line while the remainder faced flanking fire from the 8<sup>th</sup> Ohio.

On May 5, 1864, the brigade returned to the tangled woods where Lee sought to stop Grant's move through the Wilderness. That day, and again on the next, Lane's men met brutal attacks, suffering substantial casualties. But this paled in comparison the events of May 12 at Spotsylvania where the most savage fighting of the war took place. At a critical moment, Lane led the brigade outside the trenches, flanked Willcox's division, and blunted the Union assault. Hardy believes Burnside would have broken Lee's line absent Lane's bold maneuver.

Lane's brigade fought in the trenches at Cold Harbor and in the long campaign at Petersburg, eventually succumbing to the massive 6<sup>th</sup> Corps assault on April 2, 1865. Upon surrender at Appomattox a week later, the brigade numbered 579 plus Lane and 4 staff officers. The 7<sup>th</sup> NC, sent home to search for deserters, surrendered later with Johnston's army; in its ranks were 139 men and 7 officers.

The Branch-Lane brigade saw triumph and tragedy and left many a man on many fields. Michael Hardy tells the story of their "sacrifices and suffering" as one of their former officers, Riddick Gatlin, long ago lamented, might never be chronicled.



## **BULLETIN BOARD**

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is putting on programs which can be watched on facebook:

**Friday, June 11 | Noon | Presenter: Dr. Barbara Krauthamer**

Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery.

Dr. Krauthamer's presentation draws upon her work on the history of African American photography in the Civil War era. By looking at historical images and understanding the circumstances under which they were produced, we can better understand the lives and aspirations of African American women and men in the 19th Century United States. This talk will feature both works by African American photographers and images of African American subjects to illuminate the intellectual and artistic richness of African American communities in the 19th Century.

For more on programs at the museum, visit <https://museums.kenosha.org/civilwar/events/>

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The **Congress of Civil War Round Tables** is sponsoring a series of virtual Civil War Lectures by some of the nation's leading historians. Visit <http://www.cwrtcongress.org/lectures.html> to view the complete schedule and register

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On June 9, 7 p.m. EST, **Leslie Goddard** will portray “Clara Barton: Civil War Nurse”—a zoom presentation to the Congress of Civil War Round Tables.

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On July 13<sup>th</sup> **Rob Girardi** will present “The Changing Memory of the Civil War” at the Maine Township Town Hall.

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On July 14<sup>th</sup> **Bruce Allardice** will present “Baseball and the Civil War” to the Congress of Civil War Round Tables. On August 11<sup>th</sup> he’ll present “Confederate Colonels” to CivilWarTalk.com. Both are zoom. Visit [www.civilwarbruce.com](http://www.civilwarbruce.com) for events schedule.

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On June 5<sup>th</sup> the **Abraham Lincoln Bookshop**’s “House Divided” series will feature an interview with author Timothy Smith, discussing his latest book, The Siege at Vicksburg. On July 1<sup>st</sup> the interview will be with Brian Matthew Jordan, author of A Thousand May Fall. Both events start at 3:30 p.m. CST. Visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/> for more.

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### **More Upcoming Local Civil War Events**

Due to government-ordered shutdowns, CWRT events are being cancelled or going online on an ad hoc basis. Contact the sponsoring organization for up-to-date details. Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT’s website for additional coming events.

June 2nd, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Pizza Party

June 4th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Curt Fields portrays “General Grant”

June 8th, McHenry CWRT: **Bruce Allardice** on "Poltroons, Patriots and Politicians: Civil War Generals"

June 15th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Ron Kirkwood on "Too Much for Human Endurance: the Spangler Farm Civil War Hospital"

July 20th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: **Rob Girardi**, topic TBD

Aug. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Sam Hood, topic TBD

Aug. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: Phil Angelo on "The Battle for Fort Donelson"

### **Future Chicago CWRT Meetings**

Sept. 10th: Eric Wittenberg on TBD

Oct. 8th: David Dixon on *August Willich*

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Nov. 12th: Tom Clemens on *Joseph K. Mansfield*

Dec. 10th: Dennis Doyle on *Illinois Regiments at Gettysburg*

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### **CWRT Elections in June**

The CWRT will be holding its annual election for officers at the June meeting. The meeting, and thus the election, will be via zoom. The CWRT's Nominating Committee will present a list of prospective officers at that meeting. As always, members are welcome to make additional nominations at the meeting.

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### **Battlefield Tour**

The annual CWRT battlefield tour will take place this August 18-22. We'll be visiting the Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville battlefields. The tour itinerary, registration form, and other information, can be visited at <https://chicagocwrt.org/battletour.html>. A form to donate to the Ed Bearss Fund (our CWRT's annual gift to battlefield preservation, in Ed's name) is attached.

Sign up soon!

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The following letter of thanks is from the family of our friend **Marshall Krolick**:

“The Chicago Civil War Round Table,

Thanks so much for your kindness at this difficult time. We are grateful for your calls, cards, emails, text messages and chats with words of support and sympathy.

We appreciate your contribution to Friends of Gettysburg Foundation.”

And from the **Friends of Gettysburg Foundation**:

“Chicago Civil War Round Table

On behalf of Gettysburg Foundation we thank you for your March 1, 2001 donation of \$500.00 in memory of Marshall Krolick. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to join with you in honoring someone of Great importance to you. We're so grateful for your continued support.....

Sincerely,

Elle Lamboy, Vice president of Philanthropy”

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A core component of the mission of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago is battlefield preservation. Preservation of the sites themselves is paramount to remembering and learning from the history which contributed to shaping the country. Additionally, the Round Table has taken donations for this cause specifically in regard to the annual battlefield tour. Traditionally, this donation has been referred to as the Ed Bearss Fund, named in honor of the longtime Chief Historian of the National Park Service, recognized scholar of the Civil War, and guide for the Chicago Round Table Battlefield Tours. The opportunity to donate in honor of Ed Bearss for the purpose of battlefield preservation will be continued.

A donation can be made for this purpose by sending it to the address listed below.

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Name

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Donation Amount

Make check payable to "The Civil War Round Table" or simply "CWRT of Chicago."

Mail To:

Mark Matranga  
201 N. Elmwood Ave.  
Oak Park, IL 60302



Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville  
70<sup>th</sup> Battlefield Tour  
Wednesday, August 18 – Sunday, August 22, 2021

**COST OF THE TOUR** \$925.00 per person, double occupancy; \$1,025.00 per person, single occupancy  
Cost includes: lodging at hotel Wednesday evening through Sunday morning; Thursday, Friday, and Saturday lunches and dinners; motor coach services; outstanding NPS historian tour guides; and a comprehensive Tour Kit. A cash-bar will be available at each dinner. Dinner on Wednesday evening and all breakfasts are on your own.

**Base Hotel** Hilton Garden Inn Fredericksburg  
1060 Hospitality Lane, Fredericksburg, VA 22401  
(540)548-8822

**Transportation** Direct flights are available from Chicago O’Hare International Airport to Reagan National Airport

**Non-Members** An additional \$100 fee is in addition to cost of tour  
Membership dues information can be found at [www.chicagocwrt.org](http://www.chicagocwrt.org). Print out the membership form and submit with dues.

**Roommates** Please indicate the name of the person with whom you wish to share a room. If you would like help in finding a roommate, please check “Need a roommate.”

**Buses** Boarding and seating on the bus is on a first-come, day-to-day basis. Once seated for the day on a specific bus, please do not change your bus or seat for the remainder of the day. This is necessary for an accurate count. Please do not leave anything on busses overnight.

**Physical Limitations** Please make certain that you are physically able to meet the challenges of our tour stops and activities. The CWRT of Chicago is not responsible for illnesses or injuries that may incur.

**Unforeseen Circumstances** Should unforeseen circumstances occur, the CWRT of Chicago reserves the right to cancel or alter any or all of the planned activities.

Send this registration form with your payment in full, or a \$250.00 deposit. Payment in full is due on or before July 1, 2021.

PLEASE PRINT

Badge names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Plan to share a room? NO \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ Roommate’s name \_\_\_\_\_ Drive ♦ or Fly ♦ Airline and Flight Number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I need a roommate; please help

\_\_\_\_\_ The CWRT does not ensure the suitability of any roommate matches. ↔ Send this registration form with your check payable to “The Civil War Round Table” or simply “CWRT of Chicago.”

MAIL TO: Jonathan Sebastian 4N224 Hawthorne Ave.  
Bensenville, IL 60106