



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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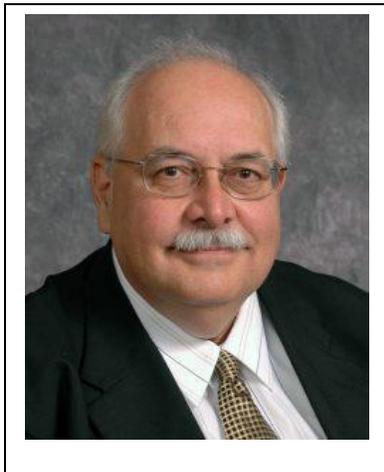
809th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## *James Pula on*

# *"The Eleventh Corps at Gettysburg: a Reappraisal"*

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: May 13th, 2022, 07:30 PM CST**

**Zoom Option ID 898 4099 2845; No Passcode needed**



The twin disasters that befell the XI Corps at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg have cast a long shadow over the memory of the brave men who served and suffered in that unit.

James Pula focuses on the decisions of commanders and on the experience of common soldiers in telling a more balanced tale. Pula will maintain that, far from being the "Flying Dutchmen" of popular belief, the men of the XI Corps were good soldiers unworthy of the stigma that has haunted them to this day.

James S. Pula is a professor of history at Purdue University North Central. He was twice awarded the Polish American Historical Association's prestigious Oskar Halecki Prize for outstanding books on Polonia as well as the Mieczyslaw Haiman Award for contributions to the study of Polonia. His Civil War books include For Liberty and Justice: A Biography of Brigadier General Włodzimierz B. Krzyzanowski, 1824-1887; The Sigel Regiment: A History of the Twenty-Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers; and Under the Crescent Moon: With the XI Corps in the Civil War. He is the past editor of Gettysburg Magazine.

## **Battlefield Preservation**

### **Save 48 Acres at Cedar Mountain and Cedar Creek**

Combined, these 48 acres of hallowed ground at Cedar Creek and Cedar Mountain in Virginia have a transaction value of \$939,153 — nearly \$1 million. Thanks to a combination of state and federal grants and major gifts, each \$1 you give will be multiplied by a factor of \$29!

The first tract consists of **3 acres at Cedar Creek**, in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the site of the savage, bloody battle that Confederate and Federal troops both won and lost in the same day. It's also one of the most threatened battlefields in America.

The second tract is **45 acres at Cedar Mountain**, in the Virginia piedmont, where Confederate General Stonewall Jackson rode into the heart of the battle to rally his faltering troops ... and when his rusted saber refused to come out of the scabbard, Jackson wielded it, scabbard and all, to turn the tide of battle.

Cedar Creek is one of the most highly threatened Civil War battlefields in America. This is because an international mining company owns more than 500 acres of pristine battlefield land that will be destroyed over time by mining activity.

The 45 acres we hope to save at Cedar Mountain include the site of the brutal, hour-long artillery duel that ended the battle with infantry positioned there. These acres — as you can see on your enclosed battle map — add significantly to both interpretive opportunities of the land already preserved at this crucial site, and also go a long way toward substantially completing this battlefield, a major goal of the Trust over the next five years.

*The American Battlefield Trust*

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## **April Meeting**

**By Mark Matranga**

The April 8, 2022, Civil War Round Table 809<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting featured **Jeffrey William Hunt** and “Meade and Lee at Rappahannock Station.” Hunt described the situation in Virginia in autumn 1863, between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia after they had maneuvered and fought for months after the Battle of Gettysburg. Each sought to lure the other into a mistake, and although General

Meade's forces achieved a victory at Rappahannock Station and Kelly's Ford the parties remained at a stalemate in early November.

Following Lee's July 14 crossing of the Potomac, the armies skirmished for weeks as the Confederates retreated up the Shenandoah Valley and crossed into central Virginia. Both armies had been gravely damaged and degraded after the long campaign into Pennsylvania and in need of repair. Both were replenished by the end of August and at strength; however, each lost parts of its forces as the war's focus moved west in September. First, two of Longstreet's divisions were transferred to Bragg's army, which Meade surmised after the September 13 battle at Culpeper Court House. Lincoln, of a mind that Meade would not attack Lee despite having a numerical advantage, sent the Army of the Potomac's 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Corps to reinforce Rosecrans at Chattanooga. In addition, Meade was required to keep troops available to guard his railroad supply line back to Washington and to keep forces available in case further violence should erupt against the unpopular draft.

These developments caused Meade to break contact and withdraw from Culpeper County toward Centreville on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad. Sensing an opportunity, Lee attacked at Bristoe Station in mid-October and was repulsed. At the same time, there were several major cavalry engagements north and south of the Rappahannock in October, most notably at Brandy Station and Buckland Mills. The administration was irritated with Meade for failing to destroy Lee at Falling Waters and was not enamored by what it considered a retrograde movement. Chief of Staff Halleck continued to send Meade mixed signals, simultaneously goading him to attack but refusing to issue direct orders. And when Meade proposed to shift his base to Fredericksburg, the administration summarily refused.

Now late in October at Warrenton, Meade was faced with a dilemma: Compelled to move against Lee, he found the railroad destroyed by the enemy as it retreated across the Rappahannock; this dictated a slow pursuit to permit repair of tracks vital for the army's supply. Lee determined to stand on the defensive at the Rappahannock fords which presented the best option for offensive action and kept the army in position for upcoming spring operations. A complex of redoubts and connecting trenches was constructed at Rappahannock Station where a pontoon bridge remained as the sole river crossing. The trenches were manned by a storied brigade, Harry Hays' Louisiana Tigers. All other fords were guarded on the steep southern banks, including Kelly's Ford, five miles downstream from Rappahannock Station, where Ramseur's Brigade was posted.

Meade proposed to attack on November 7 with three corps: William French's II Corps would attack Kelly's while George Sykes' V and Horatio Wright's VI Corps would assault the trenches at Rappahannock Station. French pushed a substantial force across the river at Kelly's Ford by late afternoon. The fight at Rappahannock Station developed

later in the day – despite having overwhelming numerical superiority, Wright denied Howe’s request to attack the entrenchments with his division but later approved Russell’s limited night attack. Due to confusion, more units of the division and Upton’s Brigade assaulted and the Tigers were flanked and overwhelmed; despite having been reinforced by Hoke’s Brigade, over 1,600 Confederates surrendered. A total of 1,939 rebels were reported missing in both actions.

Despite having smashed two veteran brigades, Meade could have accomplished more with little cost, in Hunt’s opinion. He considers Meade overall an effective manager but one who hesitated at critical points and surrendered the initiative. His entire force could have been across the river at Rappahannock Station earlier in the day when “enormous potential” awaited. As it was, Lee retreated the over the Rapidan where he would regroup and prepare for the final act of the 1863 campaign at Mine Run.

Hunt’s grasp of the tactical details of these engagements is impressive. More impressive is that he provides a fuller picture of the armies after the retreat from Gettysburg. Multiple skirmishes, many cavalry actions, substantial casualties that earlier in the war would have been shocking, marked this period. Anyone who thinks ‘nothing happened’ after Gettysburg should read Jeffrey Hunt.



*Our in-person meetings are held at:*

**Holiday Inn O'Hare**

5615 N. Cumberland, Chicago, IL 60631

*Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE*

Dinner \$40.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

## **BULLETIN BOARD**

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is putting on the following in-person/zoom programs:

Friday, May 13, noon

### **Michigan Civil War Sites and Stories**

Though no Civil War battles were fought in Michigan, there are countless sites to see and visit, and fascinating stories to tell connected to that time period in the Wolverine state.

Dave Ingall's program will cover interesting people, markers, monuments, museum exhibits, period buildings, forts, and cemeteries contained in the Wolverine State.

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** has archived a series of virtual Civil War Lectures by some of the nation's leading historians. Visit <https://www.cwrtcongress.org/videos/lectures.html> The website **Civil War Talk** is sponsoring a series of lectures on zoom. For more, see <https://civilwartalk.com/>.

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**Leslie Goddard** will present "Louisa May Alcott's Civil War" May 11, at 6:30 p.m., in the Prairie Fox Books, Ottawa, and May 25<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m., at the Glencoe Public Library. She will also present "Clara Barton, Civil War Nurse" at the St. Charles History Museum, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. For more information, visit <http://www.lesliegoddard.info/calendar.html>

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**Bruce Allardice's** article "Baseball: The Confederacy's National Pastime" appeared in the Emerging Civil War website April 16<sup>th</sup>. Visit <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2022/04/16/baseball-the-confederacys-national-pastime/>.

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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.

May 2nd, Rock Valley (Rockford) CWRT: Chris Mackowski on "The Furious Struggle: Chancellorsville and the High Tide of the Confederacy"

May 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: **Jon Sebastian** on "Turning Points at Gettysburg"

May 10th, McHenry County CWRT: Fred Reczkowicz on "The Battle of Ball's Bluff"

May 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: James Pula on "The Eleventh Corps at Gettysburg: A Reappraisal"

May 14th, Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake: Paula Walker on "Warren at Five Forks"

May 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Brian Conroy on "Irish in the Civil War"

May 19th, South Suburban CWRT: Brian Conroy on "Little Egypt's Civil War"

May 21st, Salt Creek CWRT: Father **Bob Miller** on "Jeremiah Tracy, Civil War Chaplain"

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## Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

June 10th: Lauren Szady on *Politicians in Petticoats: Women in the Civil War*

Sept. 9th: Sean Michael Chick on *Grant's Left Hook: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign*

Oct. 14th: Charlie Knight on *Robert E. Lee*

Nov. 11th: Mary Abroe, *The Nevins-Freeman Address*. Topic TBA

Dec. 9th: Garry Adelman on TBA

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**Zoom notice:** For the remainder of the 2021-22 year, a recurring zoom meeting has been set up. The Zoom option for viewing the presentation will use the same ID each time, and no passcode will be required.

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## West Virginia Battlefield Tour

Our annual battlefield tour is June 15-19 this year (a little later than usual), and will visit an area we've never been to before as a group—the battlefields of West Virginia. Tour information is on the CWRT's website.

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On May 24<sup>th</sup>, at 3:30 CST, the **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** "House Divided" series of facebook interviews will feature Elizabeth Leonard talking about her new book, [Benjamin Franklin Butler](#). For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/a-house-divided-upcoming-shows/>

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An **Ed Bearss memorial event** will be held at Gettysburg June 26<sup>th</sup>. See <https://www.battlefields.org/events/ed-bearss-memorial-event> for more.