



The Signal Flag

BRANDYWINE VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Campaign # 20

Skirmish # 9

May 2007

From the Rear Ranks:

“**LINCOLN’S SANCTUARY: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers’ Home**”

by Matthew Pinsker (Guest speaker for May 8, 2007 Banquet).

Forward by Gabor Boritt, 2/12/03, Farm by the Ford.

After the heartbreaking death of his son Willie, Abraham Lincoln and his family fled the gloom that hung over the White House, moving into a small cottage outside Washington, on the grounds of the Soldiers’ Home, a residence for disabled military veterans. In Lincoln’s Sanctuary, historian Matthew Pinsker offers a fascinating portrait of Lincoln’s stay in this cottage and tells the story of the president’s remarkable growth as a national leader and a private man.

Lincoln lived at the Soldiers’ Home for a quarter of his presidency, and for nearly half of the critical year of 1862, but most Americans (including many scholars) have not heard of the place. Indeed, this is the first volume to specifically connect this early “summer white house” to key wartime developments, including the Emancipation Proclamation, the firing of McClellan, the evolution of Lincoln’s “Father Abraham” image, the election of 1864, and the assassination conspiracy. Through a series of striking vignettes, the reader discovers a more accessible Lincoln, demonstrating what one visitor to the Soldiers’ Home describes as his remarkable “elasticity of spirits.”

At his secluded cottage, the president complained to his closest aides, recited poetry to his friends, reconnected with his wife and family, conducted secret meetings with his political enemies, and narrowly avoided assassination attempts. Perhaps most important, he forged key friendships that helped renew his flagging spirit. The cottage became a refuge from the pressures of the White House, a place of tranquility where Lincoln could refresh his mind.

“Pinsker... uses rarely researched sources to portray a more accessible Lincoln in a place that helped shape him and his presidency.” – Blue & Grey Magazine

“Thanks to this wholly original work, we may never be able to look at the Lincoln presidency in quite the same way.” – Civil War Times Illustrated

“Pinsker’s important and fascinating book tells for the first time the story of Lincoln’s summer White House, where so many of the major decisions of the Civil War were made. His research has been indefatigable, and Pinsler’s findings will be new even to Lincoln specialists.” – David Herbert Donald, author of “Lincoln”

I remain your most obedient servant,

Robert Sprague, President, BVCWRT



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Unsolicited articles from our members are welcome.
Please contact Lynne!

* Our meetings are handicap accessible *



What is the BVCWRT all about???

We were founded in 1987. According to our by-laws, "the purpose of the Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table shall be to provide a congenial medium through which persons having a common interest in the events of the American Civil War - its causes and effects, engagements, personages, units, armaments and other things pertaining thereto - may satisfy their interest and broaden individual knowledge through discussion, lectures, field trips and the exchange of books, paper and other data. The purposed is also to consider the preservation and protection of the battlefields, sites, landmarks, relics and collection of the period."

In plain English, we are an organization of diverse people brought together by our common interest in the American Civil War. This interest can range from the casual to the obsessive. We intend to tailor our activities and presentations to appeal to all our members, novice or expert.

Welcome New Members & Reenlistments

The Round Table welcomes our new members since our last meeting. Please welcome them and share your Civil War enthusiasm.

New Members:

Robert Terry





Editor's Note

I would like to dedicate this newsletter to the victims of the Virginia Tech Massacre. This event became real to me because my new manager lost a son in that tragedy. He was a senior with only a few weeks left before graduating and the whole world ahead of him. I cannot imagine the pain those families have gone through. My heart goes out to them and I pray that they can recover in due time this terrible event.

This is my farewell edition. It is hard to believe that this is ending my 7th year as Editor of the Signal Flag. It has been an interesting and a challenging journey. It is with a sad heart that I am stepping down as Secretary, Editor and Party Coordinator for this great organization. Due to the circumstances that I faced last year with losing my job of 27 years I am face with some enormous decisions that are going to require my full attention and I do not feel that I could devote my time fully to my duties as Secretary and Editor.

When I was first asked to take over the newsletter I had no idea what I was doing or what the members expected of me but through trial and error I managed to publish a newsletter which seemed to please the membership and I am greatly honored. I want to thank you all for your support and your contributions to our newsletter. It has meant a lot to me. I feel very fortunate that I was allowed to be part of such a great organization and work with such knowledgeable historians. I am sure that the next Editor will welcome your support and guidance like you have so graciously given me throughout these years. I hear the company call so I must bid my fond farewell to all.

The articles attached to this newsletter:

The final part of "The American Question Abroad in the Civil War", I do hope that you enjoyed this series.

"Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program" - Congressional Report

"Battle of Spotsylvania" - this I put in for those that are going to make this trip in May. Have fun!

"Early Years of the Brandywine Valley" – I thought you might all like a copy of this report given by Bob at last month's Show and Tell meeting.

Farewell
Lynne Fulton, Editor



Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table
Come to our next meeting
4 April 2007

Speaker: Roger Arthur
Topic: "97th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: West Chester Borough Hall, Gay Street

We are please to have one of our own members; Mr. Roger Arthur, who will tell us the story of Chester County's own regiment: the 97th Pennsylvania Volunteers. It began with the call to arms and ends with the mustering out in 1865. Three major battles will be discussed including the dramatic capture of Ft. Fisher in January 1865. Roger has spoken to us on many occasions in his 16 years as a member. Roger was born in Dayton, Ohio and as a small boy became interested in the American Civil War. He later became a History Teacher and taught in Cincinnati for five years. He worked in the Sales Marketing Department for Sunoco from (1970-2000). Now he is back teaching History again. I have taken a couple of Roger's courses through the Chester County Adult Night School. Roger has received many honors and recognitions from various Civil War groups, he is a member of many Round Tables in the area, does Battlefield walking tours and is an active member in the Boy Scouts of American.

Education: M.A. American History – West Chester University (2003)
Colloquium for History – "The "Copperhead" Vallandigham: Civil War, Civil Rights, and the Constitutional Conundrum – West Chester University (2003)
Public History – Rutgers University (1998)
American History – Miami University (1968-69)
B.S. History, Government & Speech – Bowling Green State University (1965)

About our Speaker for the Banquet

MATTHEW PINSKER is the Brian Pohanka Chair of Civil War History at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Matt graduated from Harvard University and received a D.Phil. degree in Modern History from the University of Oxford. He is the author of two books: *Abraham Lincoln* –a volume in the new *American Presidents Reference Series* from Congressional Quarterly Press (2002) and *Lincoln's Sanctuary: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home* (Oxford University Press, 2003). Pulitzer Prize-winner David Donald has called *Lincoln's Sanctuary* "an important and fascinating book" and reviewers in publications such as *The Washington Post* have hailed the effort as "marvelous" and "brimming with new information" –quite a feat for a book about Abraham Lincoln. Matt has published widely in the history of American politics, contributing to several leading academic journals and to newspapers such as *USA Today* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Matt was named as the 2006 Visiting Scholar at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where he taught a graduate course at the University of Pennsylvania and helped the center develop a national K-12 curriculum devoted to constitutional studies. He currently serves on the Advisory Boards of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, President Lincoln & Soldiers' Home National Monument and the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

Meeting Minutes - From April 4, 2007
Submitted by Lynne Fulton

The President's Report/Announcements: Bob asked Roger to announce the new banquet speaker, who will be Matthew Pinsker. He wrote "LINCOLN'S SANCTUARY: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home" Forward by Gabor Boritt, who was supposed to be our speaker. His book will be available at the banquet for purchase and signing. Bob mentioned about the upcoming election of Officers. The Offices of President and Secretary will be up for election plus we are looking for a new Editor of The Signal Flag Newsletter for next year.

Treasurer's Report: Dave Walter reported the following: The General Fund as of 4/3/07 was \$2,321.69. We have taken in \$646.00 in the book raffle. Dave announced there were 15 members signed up so far for our banquet. If you are going please get your reservations into Dave before May 2, 2007.

Book Raffle: Funds collected so far on the book raffles has been \$646.00. We still have some ways to go before we reach our goal. We have April, May and the banquet left to reach our Preservation goal. We appreciate all your contributions so far this year.

Website: You will find the newsletters, trip information, articles, book reviews, links to other sites and speaker information. Anything that you need relating to our Round Table can be found on our website. We would like to thank Jim Lawler, our webmaster, for his wonderful job of maintaining our webpage. If you still have not visited our webpage then you are missing a great resource for our Round Table. Take time to check it out.

Trips: The trip for Saturday, May 19 to Spotsylvania is now planned. We would like to thanks Susan Mahoney for all her efforts in making all the necessary arrangements for this trip. We wish all those going to have a wonderful time. Your guide, will be Mac Wycoff, who is a National Park Ranger Guide.

Special Events: April 16, Roger Arthur will be speaking at the Avon Grove Public Library in West Grove, PA at 6:30 - topic "Lincoln's Murder Case" at 6:30.
Dave Cashin - mentioned about the opening of Gov. Bacon Library in Delaware on Sunday, April 15. Mike Kochan summed up his visit to the Newport News Mariner Museum last month. Saw a replica of the Monitor. Reported that researcher now feel that the Hunley sank from its anchor hooking on something holding them in place.

Nominating Committee: John Whiteside announced the offices that are open for election, President and Secretary. Mike Liddy is nominated for President and Ted Pawlik for Secretary. We will need someone to step up and take over the Signal Flag for next year. If you are interested please see John Whiteside or any Executive Board member. People who are holding their office for next year will be Treasurer: Dave Walter, Vice President: John Walls, Speaker's Committee: Roger Arthur, Our Social Coordinator will now be Flo Williams.

Speaker: "Show and Tell" Thanks to all those who participated.

The American Question Abroad in the Civil War (Part 4)

In July, 1862, there steamed down the Mersey a powerful warship known as the *Enrica* or the "290." Not yet supplied with war equipment, the ship had left Liverpool supposedly on a "trial trip," but had headed for sea. Reaching an appointed rendezvous off the Azores this English-built vessel took on English-supplied arms, provisions, and coal, was boarded by Admiral Raphael Semmes, and, as the illustrious *Alabama*, launched upon her career as a Confederate cruiser specializing in commerce destruction.

The full story of the proceedings concerning this vessel and others like her offers one of the most serious chapters in Anglo-American diplomacy. England's neutrality law (the foreign enlistment act of 1819, modeled on the American neutrality law of 1818) was designed to prevent or punish unneutral activities within English jurisdiction. The law forbade the fitting out, equipping, or arming of vessels for warlike operations in a war in which England was neutral; but it was interpreted by a type of legerdemain which in American parlance would be termed a "joker." According to this attenuated interpretation the law was not contravened if the equipping and arming of the vessel were accomplished as distinct operations separate from the building, even though the whole procedure were planned and accomplished as a connected program involving English aid throughout. The building of the *Alabama*, along with other warships, had been promoted by Captain Bulloch of the Confederate navy, who was in England for the purpose; and so transparent was the concealment that there had never been any real mystery about the ship, whose character as a Confederate cruiser had been unmistakable. Nor was the *Alabama* an isolated case. In March of 1862 the *Oreto (Florida)* had been allowed to depart from Liverpool, had disappeared for a time, and was later to turn up at Nassau and receive her equipment and arms from English sources. Adams at London and Dudley, United States consul at Liverpool, had laid the evidence before the British ministry; but, on advice from the Queen's law officers that "sufficient proof" had not been presented, the government had neglected to seize or detain the ships. To legal evasion were added delay and circumlocution. While work went on swiftly on a project that threatened a break between England and the United States, and while Captain Bulloch was kept sufficiently in touch with developments to predict the attitude of the British government and choose his time for the flight of the *Alabama*, Russell meanwhile advising Adams with perfect truth that the matter had been referred to the "proper authorities," the papers in the case at the most critical stage of the proceedings lay in the home of one of the Queen's advocates whose nerves had so far given way as to incapacitate him for serious work. Adams persisted, however; and at length the proof became so irresistible that the law officers recommended the seizure of the vessel "without loss of time." On the basis of this advice Russell ordered *the Alabama* detained (July 31); but this order arrived too late to prevent departure of the ship, and under all the circumstances it was but natural that at the time the American authorities, with such vital interests at stake, should characterize the attitude of the British government as one of negligence, and even connivance.

Yet, viewing the question in the full light of historical evidence, it does not appear that the actual motives of the British ministry justified Northern resentment; indeed Confederate exultation was soon to give place to disappointment. By arrangements conducted by Bulloch two powerful ironclads had been contracted for with the Laird firm; and it was obvious that these ships would be ready for delivery in 1863. If these "Laird rams," intended to "raise the blockade... and thus secure for the Confederacy foreign recognition," had been allowed to depart, following upon the cases of the *Florida and Alabama*, then indeed a diplomatic break, not improbably followed by war, would have seemed inevitable. The seriousness of the matter appears in the advice of Assistant Secretary Fox of the Union navy to stop the rams "at all hazards," in the fear that the rams could "lay under contribution any of the loyal cities on the coast or could break the blockade at any point," and in Union anxiety concerning the destructiveness of the *Alabama*, then in full career. Fundamental in Seward's policy was the conviction that England dreaded a war with the United States; and in keeping with this divination of British motives he sent Adams the instruction (April 10, 1863) to inform Great Britain that the proceedings relative to the fitting out of ships for the Confederacy "complicate the relations between the two countries in such a manner as to render it difficult ... to preserve friendship between them...."

Another serious factor in the situation was the privateering bill passed by the United States Congress which was designed to offset the rams by providing a "flood of privateers" which, operating widely on the seas, might aid the blockade by seizing blockade-runners. If in so doing they committed indignities upon British ships, here was an ominous menace of war. In this situation much depended upon the temper and conduct of two men -- Adams and Russell. The fact that both were reasonable men and that in the main they spoke the same language was a factor of the greatest significance. An important step was taken on April 5, 1863, when the British government ordered the seizure of the *Alexandra* (a raider intended for the Confederacy), an act which has been described by E. D. Adams as a "face-about on declared policy." This seizure indicated a serious attempt by the British government to make effective its neutrality. As to the Laird rams, however, it still seemed possible that they might escape

on the pretext that they were intended for France or for the government of Egypt; and it was not until five months after the *Alexandra* seizure that the matter was disposed of. Within these months the Union victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg occurred; the Roebuck parliamentary motion for a recognition of the South came to naught; and, through it all, Adams kept presenting affidavits of the true intent of the rams, at the same time emphasizing the serious nature of the controversy as it affected Anglo-American relations. The matter was finally settled to the complete satisfaction of the United States government when, on September 9, the rams were placed under surveillance, to be seized in October and purchased by the British government.

To those who prefer to think in terms of heroics this compliance by the British government has been attributed to a famous letter of Adams to Russell under date of September 5, 1863. The letter was written on the eve of the expected departure of the rams, at a time when Adams had just been informed by Russell (September 1) that the government could not detain the ships on existing information, but would be ready to stop them if trustworthy evidence should show any proceeding contrary to statute. The crisp phrase which made this letter of Adams memorable was the statement: "It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is war." As a check upon the traditional heroics, however, it may be noted that if Earl Russell had been in London at the time the matter could have been easily settled by interview with Adams, that the affair was complicated by the writing of notes which crossed each other, and that in reality Russell and Adams were thinking alike. E. D. Adams has pointed out that Russell had moved in the direction of detaining the rams before receiving Adams's note of the 5th; that the foreign secretary had in fact arrived at his new policy in its essential aspects five months earlier in the *Alexandra* affair; and that Adams was under a misapprehension in supposing that this April policy had been abandoned. Stressing the friendliness of Seward (despite his official instructions), the same writer throws out a caution against the account traditionally given by American historians by the use of American sources, and states that the "correct understanding... is the recognition that Great Britain had in April given a pledge and performed an act which satisfied Seward and Adams that the Rams would not be permitted to escape." Later apprehension arose from a fear that the pledge might not be carried out; but this was due to lack of full knowledge as to the steps taken by Russell for the detention of the ships."

Though the international outlook of the North and South was mainly concerned with England and France, the attitude of Russia was of considerable significance. Baron de Stoeckl, Russian minister in Washington, had contempt for what he considered the demagoguery of American politicians, but a long-standing friendship had existed between Russia and the United States; and Prince Gortchakov, Russian foreign minister, was outspoken in his expressions of good will. The sending of Russian warships to American waters, though motivated by European considerations, had the effect of emphasizing this friendship. Several ships under Rear Admiral Lisovskii arrived at New York in September, 1863; in the following month a squadron under Rear Admiral Popov put into San Francisco harbor. Both squadrons were ordered home in April, 1864.

The European situation leading to these naval visits was bound up with the perennial Polish question, which (because of factors that cannot be detailed here) occasioned a joint remonstrance against Russia (April, 1863) by England, France, and Austria. Anticipating the possibility, of war, Russian statesmen considered it unwise to have their ships in home waters where they might be trapped by the British navy. A visit to some friendly neutral country was indicated; and American ports, in addition to other advantages, offered a point of departure for operations against enemy commerce in case war should break out, as well as for possible attacks upon enemy colonies. In addition it was hoped that such a placing of Russian ships would exercise a restraining influence upon war tendencies in England.

To speak of the American Civil War as the occasion of the sending of the Russian ships would be incorrect, and even at the time there were some Americans who suspected that more selfish motives were behind the Russian move. Yet, as Thomas A. Bailey has proved, "a majority of interested citizens at the time—and certainly an overwhelming majority later—appear to have accepted the visit of the fleets as primarily a gesture of friendship, with the strong possibility of an alliance and open assistance against common enemies." Americans made much of the Russian visitors; Welles extended the courtesies of the Brooklyn navy yard to Lisovskii; and Popov's assistance in extinguishing a fire at San Francisco ingratiated him with the people of that city. Indeed, since Popov was ready if necessary to act against Confederate cruisers, "Russia came very near becoming our active ally." Thus midway in the war the stakes of diplomacy had been won by the United States. The full effect, however, of Southern international failure was not yet evident, and future events in the foreign sphere would depend upon a combination of factors. While diplomatic maneuvers and the personal conduct of diplomats were never unimportant, the outcome abroad continually reflected events at home. Step by step the influence of Lincoln's emancipation policy and of Northern military advances was manifest abroad.

Source: "The Civil War and Reconstruction" (Chapter 20) by Randall and Donald.

CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Congressional Record – United States Senate S4670-S4671 - April 18, 2007

Mr. James H Webb Jr. a freshman Senator from Virginia, a Democrat, spoke to the Senate. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss an issue that has held a special place in my life for many years, the preservation of our Nation's civil war battlefields. Our historic battlefields--outdoor classrooms where visitors may walk in the very footsteps of heroes from past generations--are under threat. More than 200,000 acres of historically significant battlefield land remain unprotected and are threatened by development pressures. That is why I urge my colleagues to fully fund the Civil War Battlefield Protection Program. This arm of the National Park Service is an invaluable tool to preserve our Nation's history.

In 1990, Congress established the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, a blue-ribbon panel empowered to investigate the status of America's remaining Civil War battlefields. Congress also tasked the Commission with the mission of prioritizing these battlefields according to their historic importance and the threats to their survival. The Commission ultimately looked at the 10,000-plus battles and skirmishes of the Civil War and determined that 384 priority sites should be preserved. The results of the report were released in 1993 and they were not encouraging.

The 1993 Commission report recommended that Congress create a \$10 million-a-year emergency program to save threatened Civil War battlefield land. The result was the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program. To date, the Preservation Program, working with its partners, has saved 14,100 acres of land in 15 States.

The key to the success of the Preservation Program is that it achieves battlefield preservation through collaborative partnerships between State and local governments, the private sector and nonprofit organizations, such as the Civil War Preservation Trust. Matching grants provided by the program protect lands outside of the National Park Service boundaries and do not add to the Park Service's maintenance costs.

But for the Preservation Program and their partners with the Civil War Preservation Trust, we would have lost key sites from such national shrines at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg, Manassas, Harpers Ferry, Bentonville, Mansfield, and Champion Hill. Their names still haunt us to this day. Had the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program not intervened, the sites would have been lost forever to commercial and residential development. Now they have been protected for future generations to enjoy and learn about our Nation's history. They are islands of green space in a seemingly endless sea of commercial sprawl.

The need to protect our Nation's battlefields is far too great for any one well-intentioned Federal program. That is why the partnership with the Civil War Preservation Trust is so critical. This visionary preservation group is able to work with other foundations, State and local governments and their membership to match Federal funds by 100 percent. How often can we tout such an achievement with other Federal programs? The trust receives no financial gain from the Preservation Program and, working with their non-Federal partners, has raised more than \$30 million to secure key battlefield sites in 15 States. They are in this fight for all the right reasons. This partnership truly serves as a model in bringing all stakeholders to the table to tackle pressing national issues.

For me, these hallowed grounds, these living memorials to the 620,000 Americans who sacrificed their lives to fight in the Civil War, have special, personal significance. Ancestors of mine fought on both sides during the war, including William Jewell, who was wounded in the Battle of Cedar Mountain in Culpeper County, VA, wounded again at Antietam and was finally killed in action at Chancellorsville on May 3, 1863. It is not every day you can visit these battlefield sites and have an immediate, direct connection with your ancestors. We must preserve these sites so that future generations might see and touch the very places where so many sacrifices were made, by soldiers and civilians alike, to settle the unresolved issues from the American Revolution of slavery and sovereignty. We are a stronger, more diverse and genuinely free nation because of these sacrifices.

I would remind my colleagues that the Preservation Program has enjoyed bipartisan, bicameral support since its creation. In 2002, program funding was authorized through the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Act at the level recommended by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission--\$10 million a year. The clock is ticking against these threatened historical sites given the pace of commercial development. Just last month, the Civil War Preservation Trust released its list of the 10 most threatened battlefield sites. Among them: Gettysburg; Fort Morgan, Alabama; Marietta, Georgia and

three sites in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 5 years there may be little left to protect. That is why I am here today to urge my colleagues to join me in requesting the full, authorized amount for the Preservation Program. These Federal funds will leverage millions more in private and other charitable donations; thereby increasing the trust's ability to preserve more threatened battlefield sites.

When the "Soldiers' National Cemetery" was dedicated at the Gettysburg battlefield in November 1863, President Lincoln spoke eloquently of the imperative to honor those who had given their "last full measure of devotion" 4 months earlier. The Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program allows us to carry on Lincoln's vision. I urge my colleagues to join me in seeking full funding for the program this fiscal year.

SPOTSYLVANIA FIELD TRIP

Field Trip: Destination in Spotsylvania
Tour Guide will be Mac Wyckoff
When: May 19, 2007

Lodging and Reservation Info: Hotels information – website www.fredericksburgva.com

Tour: the tour will start from the Chancellorsville Visitor Center at 9:00AM on Saturday, May 19, and will end around 4:00PM. The total cost for the tour will be \$300. The amount will be divided among all participants. There will be dinner reservations for Saturday only. If you want to be included make sure that you tell Susan.

There will be a sign up sheet circulating the meetings for those interested in going. If you have any questions concerning the trip you can contact Susan Mahoney at sdd3@comcast.net

Battle of Spotsylvania

On May 8, 1864 the Union army seized initiative by moving from Wilderness to Spotsylvania Court House. That shift changed the course of the war as the armies began the road to Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. Near dawn on May 4, 1864, the leading division of the Army of the Potomac reached Germanna Ford, 18 miles west of Fredericksburg. The spring campaign was under way and it superficially mirrored the strategic situation prior to the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. A numerically superior Union force, well-supplied, in good spirits, and led by a new commander, moved south toward the Confederate capital. There, however, the similarities ended.

Ulysses S. Grant now directed the Army of the Potomac, although George Meade technically retained the authority he had inherited from Hooker just before the Battle of Gettysburg. In fact, Grant carried the new rank of lieutenant-general and bore responsibility for all Federal armies. The General-in-chief told Meade, "Lee's army will be your objective. Where he goes, there you will go also."

The Confederates also entered the 1864 campaign brimming with optimism and anxious to avenge their defeat at Gettysburg. As usual, the 62,000-man Army of Northern Virginia found itself vastly outgunned and scrambling for supplies, but based on past experience, these handicaps posed little concern. Confederate generalship in the post-Jackson era created more serious problems. Lee elevated both A. P. Hill and Richard S. Ewell to corps command following "Stonewall's" death, but neither officer performed particularly well. Only Longstreet provided Lee with experienced leadership at the highest army level.

Grant also reorganized his forces, consolidating the army into three corps led by Maj. Generals. Gouverneur K. Warren, John Sedgwick, and Winfield S. Hancock. Ambrose Burnside's independent Ninth Corps raised the total Union compliment to 120,000 men. The Bluecoats negotiated the Rapidan River on May 4. Lee easily spotted the Federal advance from his signal stations. He immediately ordered his forces to march east and strike their opponents in the familiar and foreboding Wilderness, where Grant's legions would be neutralized by the inhospitable terrain. Ewell moved via the Orange Turnpike and Hill utilized the parallel Orange Plank Road to the south. Longstreet's corps faced a longer trek than did its comrades, so Lee advised Ewell and Hill to avoid a general engagement until "Old Pete" could join them.

Grant, although anxious to confront Lee at the earliest good opportunity, preferred not to fight in the green hell of the Wilderness. On the morning of May 5, he directed his columns to push southeast through the tangled jungle and into open ground. Word arrived, however, that an unidentified body of Confederates approaching from the west on the Turnpike threatened the security of his advance. Warren dispatched a division to investigate the report.

The Confederates, of course, proved to be Ewell's entire corps. About noon, Warren's lead regiments discovered Ewell's position on the west edge of a clearing called Saunders Field and received an ungracious greeting. "The very moment we appeared," testified an officer in the 140th New York, "[they] gave us a volley at long range, but evidently with very deliberate aim, and with serious effect." The Battle of the Wilderness was on. Warren hustled additional troops toward Saunders Field from his headquarters at the Lacy House. The Unionists attacked on a front more than a mile wide, overlapping both ends of the clearing. The fighting ebbed and flowed often dissolving into isolated combat between small units confused by the bewildering forest, "bushwhacking on a grand scale," one participant called it. By nightfall a deadly stalemate settled over the Turnpike.

Three miles south along the Plank Road, another battle raged unrelated to the action on Ewell's front. Two of A.P. Hill's divisions pressed east toward the primary north-south avenue through the Wilderness: the Brock Road. If they could seize this intersection quickly, they would isolate Hancock's corps, south of the Plank Road, from the rest of the Union army. Grant recognized the peril and hurried one of Sedgwick's divisions to the vital crossroads. These Northerners arrived in the nick of time and later, in cooperation with Hancock began to drive Hill's overmatched brigades west through the forest. Fortunately for the Confederates, darkness closed the fighting for the day.

Lee expected Longstreet's corps to relieve Hill on the Plank Road that night. Hill, anticipating Longstreet's arrival, refused to redeploy his exhausted troops to meet renewed attacks in the morning. This miscalculation proved nearly disastrous to the Army of Northern Virginia. For a variety of reasons, Longstreet had fallen hours behind schedule. Hancock's 5:00 a.m. offensive on May 6 therefore pitted 23,000 Unionists against only Hill's unprepared divisions, and overwhelmed them. A single line of Southern artillery, posted on the western edge of the Widow Tapp's Farm, now provided the sole opposition to Hancock's surging masses. The guns could not survive long unsupported by infantry. Lee faced a crisis.

Just then a ragged line of soldiers emerged from the forest to the west. "What brigade is this?" inquired Lee. "The Texas brigade!" came the response. Lee knew the only Texans in his army belonged to the First Corps. Longstreet was up! These troops along with others from Arkansas, Georgia, and Alabama charged the blue ranks before them and halted Hancock's advance at the price of 50 percent casualties in several regiments. Longstreet took this chance to snatch the initiative. Utilizing the unfinished railroad (the same corridor on which Sickles had captured the Georgians at Chancellorsville), four Confederate brigades crept astride the Union left flank. The Southerners poured through the woods, rolling up Hancock's unwary troops "like a wet blanket." Union General James Wadsworth fell mortally wounded and the Federals streamed back toward the Brock Road. Longstreet trotted eastward on the Plank Road in the wake of this splendid achievement, intent upon pursuing the shaken Federals and throwing a knockout punch at his staggered opponents. Then shots rang out from south of the road. Longstreet reeled in his saddle, the victim of a volley fired by Confederate troops about five miles from where Jackson had met the same improbable fate the year before. Unlike "Stonewall," Longstreet would survive his wound, but the tragedy arrested the Rebels' impetus. Lee personally directed a resumption of the offensive a few hours later and briefly managed to puncture the Federal lines along the Brock Road. Hancock, however, expelled the intruders from his midst and maintained his position by the narrowest of margins.

Fighting along the Turnpike on May 6 had also been vicious if indecisive. Late in the day, Georgia brigadier received permission to assault Grant's unprotected right flank. Gordon struck near sunset, capturing two Union generals and routing the Federals. The effort began too late to exploit Gordon's success, however, and Grant reformed his battered brigades in the darkness. Both armies expected more combat on May 7, but neither side initiated hostilities. Fires blazed through the forest, sending hot, acrid smoke rolling into the air and searing the wounded trapped between the lines - a fitting conclusion to a grisly engagement.

The Battle of the Wilderness marked another tactical Confederate victory. Grant watched both of his flanks crumble on May 6 and lost more than twice as many soldiers (about 18,000 to 8,000) as did Lee. Veterans of the Army of the Potomac had seen this before: cross the river, get whipped, retreat -- the story of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville reprised. But Grant, not Burnside or Hooker, now called the shots. Late on May 7, the general-in-chief rode at the head of his army and approached a lonely junction in the Wilderness. A left turn would signal withdrawal toward the fords of the Rapidan and Rappahannock. To the right lay the highway to Richmond via Spotsylvania Court House. Grant pointed right. The soldiers cheered. There would be no turning back. Veterans of the Fifth Corps considered the night march of May 7-8 one of their worst military experiences. "The column would start, march probably one hundred yards, then halt, and just as the men were about to lie down, would start again, repeating this over and over..." In addition to this frustrating pace, Fitzhugh Lee and his gray troopers harassed the Federals along the route. They felled trees in the roadway, gobbled up stragglers, and orchestrated scores of little ambushes in the dark.

While this drama unfolded on the Brock Road at Todd's Tavern, Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson led a Confederate column on a parallel route a few miles to the west. Anderson assumed command of Longstreet's corps on May 7 and received orders to make for Spotsylvania Court House before dawn on the 8th. Lee had correctly deduced that the tiny county seat would be Grant's next objective because whoever controlled the Spotsylvania crossroads would enjoy the inside track to Richmond. Anderson searched for a bivouac where his men could rest before their grueling march south, but discovered that the fiery Wilderness offered no practical campsites. Consequently, he put his command in motion without sleep, a fateful decision that saved Spotsylvania for the Confederates.

Warren continued his advance and early on the morning of May 8 spied an open plateau in his front known later as Laurel Hill. The Federals saw only their nocturnal nemesis, Fitz Lee's pesky horsemen, defending the ridge-no match for infantry in a daylight fight. Warren called for an attack. The Maryland Brigade led the Yankee charge west of the Brock Road. They swept over the rolling fields with a cheer and approached to within 50 yards of the Confederate position when a roar from artillery and rifles dropped them where they stood. This was not dismounted cavalry but the lead units of Anderson's corps. The Confederates had won the race to Spotsylvania.

The armies flowed onto the battlefield the rest of the day, extending corresponding lines of earthworks east and west of the Brock Road. Ewell's corps filed in on Anderson's right and built their entrenchments in the dark to conform with elevated terrain along their front. First light revealed that Ewell's soldiers had concocted a huge salient, or bulge, in the Confederate line, pointing north in the direction of the Federals. The men called it the "Mule Shoe" because of its shape, but Southern engineers called it trouble. Salient's could be attacked not only in front but from both sides, and as a rule officers liked to avoid them. Lee, however, opted to retain the position trusting that his cannoneers could keep the "Mule Shoe" safe enough.

Grant probed both of Lee's flanks on May 9 and 10 to no avail. About 6:00 p.m., a 24-year-old colonel named Emory Upton formed 12 hand-picked regiments along a little woods path opposite the heart of Lee's defenses. Upton had received permission earlier in the day to assail the west face of the "Mule Shoe" using imaginative tactics designed to penetrate the salient, then exploit the breakthrough. The Yankees padded to the edge of the woods 200 yards from the Confederate line, then burst out of the forest with a yell. In 60 seconds, Upton's men closed with a startled brigade of Georgians. The Federals seized four guns, a reserve line of works, and almost reached the McCoull House in the center of the "Mule Shoe" before the Confederates recovered. Southern artillery at the top of the salient stymied Upton's expected support, and a counterattack eventually shoved the Bluecoats back to their starting points. But the boyish colonel's temporary success gave Grant an idea. If 12 regiments could break the "Mule Shoe," what might two corps accomplish?

Grant received his answer on May 12, a day remembered by soldiers from both sides as one of the darkest of the entire war. "I never expect to be fully believed when I tell of the horrors of Spotsylvania," wrote a Federal of his ghastly experience. "The battle of Thursday was one of the bloodiest that ever dyed God's footstool with human gore," echoed a North Carolinian.

The Confederates set the stage for this waking nightmare on the evening of May 11 when they removed their artillery from the "Mule Shoe" under the mistaken impression that Grant had quit Spotsylvania. In truth, Hancock's corps spent the rainy night sloshing into position to launch a massive stroke against the top of the salient. That attack began about dawn and succeeded in capturing most of the "Mule Shoe" and many of its defenders. Ironically, the sheer magnitude of Hancock's victory retarded his progress. Nearly 20,000 Yankees milled about the surrendered entrenchments gathering prizes, escorting captives to the rear, and generally losing their organization and drive. This delay provided Lee the opportunity he needed. The Confederate commander directed his counter offensive from near the McCoull House. Again he attempted to lead his troops in person, but John Gordon scolded him to the rear before the colorful Georgian plunged ahead himself. One by one, additional brigades joined Gordon, and by 9:30 a.m. they managed to restore all but a few hundred yards of the original Southern line.

The Union Sixth Corps now joined the fray, and for the next eighteen hours the most horrifying close-quarters combat ever witnessed on the continent spilled the lifeblood of numberless Americans. The fighting focused on a slight bend in the works west of the apex, known to history as the Bloody Angle. A shallow valley sliced close to the Confederate line at this point, providing crucial shelter for swarms of Union assailants. An appalling tactical pattern developed here throughout the day. Federals would leave the cover of the forest, cross the road leading to the Landrum House, and take refuge in the swale. From there they maintained a constant rifle fire and made periodic lunges onto the works at the Bloody Angle.

Two Southern brigades, one from Mississippi and one from South Carolina, bore the brunt of these attacks. They fought behind elaborate log barricades six feet high enhanced by perpendicular traverse walls at 20-foot intervals. The Confederate works resembled three-sided roofless log cabins and their design explains the miraculous endurance of their occupants - that and the heroic desperation of half crazed men whose world consisted of a tiny log pen filled with rain water and slippery with the mangled remains of comrades and enemies. The equally intrepid attackers varied their efforts to capture the Angle with an occasional innovation. A section of Union artillery advanced to practically point-blank range, blasting the works until all of its horses and all but three of its cannoneers had fallen. The men of a Michigan regiment crawled on their stomachs along the exterior of the trenches until, at a signal, they leapt over the logs and into a profitless meleé with the Rebels.

More often the assaults defied precise definition. The battle assumed an unspeakable character all its own, unrelated to strategy and tactics or even victory and defeat. "The horseshoe was a boiling, bubbling and hissing cauldron of death," wrote a Union officer. "Clubbed muskets, and bayonets were the modes of fighting for those who had used up their cartridges, and frenzy seemed to possess the yelling, demonic hordes on either side." This organized insanity continued past sunset and into the night. Finally about 2:00 a.m. May 13, whispered orders reached the front directing the battle-numbed defenders to fall back to a new position at the base of the "Mule Shoe." When the Bluecoats cautiously approached the quiet trenches at dawn, they found the Bloody Angle inhabited only by those who could not withdraw. "They were lying literally in heaps, hideous to look at. The writhing of the wounded and dying who lay beneath the dead bodies moved the whole mass..."

Completion of Lee's last line rendered control of the salient meaningless. Grant shifted his army to its left amidst days of heavy downpours, searching for a weak link in the Confederate chain. On May 18 he sent Hancock back to the "Mule Shoe" hoping to catch the enemy by surprise. The Southerners were not footed, however, and by midmorning Grant canceled the effort.

Clearly, the Federals could not gain an advantage at Spotsylvania and Grant broke the impasse on May 20 by detaching Hancock on a march south toward Guinea Station. The rest of the Union army followed on the 21st. Lee had no choice but to react to Grant's initiative by maneuvering his army between the Federals and Richmond.

Losses during the two weeks at Spotsylvania added 18,000 names to Union casualty lists; 10,000 to the Confederates'. Lee, though, suffered a disproportionate attrition among the highest levels of his command structure. Finding replacements for private soldiers proved hard enough; developing a new officer cadre proved impossible. The essence of Lee's incomparable martial machine disappeared in the woods and fields of Spotsylvania County and the Army of Northern Virginia never regained its historic efficiency.

Grant, however, played no callous game of human arithmetic at Spotsylvania. He sought a decisive battlefield victory that Lee's tenacious, skillful generalship denied him. But in the end, the Federals' constant hammering against the dwindling resources of their gallant opponents, a process begun in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania and continued at the North Anna River, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg, would drive the Confederacy into oblivion.

The text for this section was written by A. Wilson Green, former staff historian for Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. It is derived from a National Park Service training booklet.

In 2001, The Central Virginia Battlefield Trust purchased 20 acres of the Spotsylvania Battlefield south of the Po River to save the ground from eventual development. In August of 2002, a second 20 acre tract on the battlefield south of the Po River was purchased by Central Virginia Battlefield Trust. . The area is south of the Po River where General Winfield Scott Hancock's 2nd Corps crossed the Po River on May 9 and headed for the Confederate left flank. They stopped short of their goal that evening. During the night General Robert E. Lee pulled General Henry Heth's Division from his other flank and on May 10 these Confederates struck Hancock's men from the south. Hancock had to pull his men back north of the Po ending a major threat to Lee's flank.

On May 9, General John Sedgwick was killed by a sharpshooter at long range. Sedgwick was the highest United States officer killed in the Civil War and the second highest United States officer ever killed in combat.

		
<p>The spot where Union General Sedgwick was killed</p>	<p>Mule Shoe Reconstruction of Earthworks</p>	<p>Confederate Mule Shoe Defenders Ramseur, Daniel. Doles, Walker The other side honors the 6th Corp/Upton's Charge May 10</p>



“Mule Shoe”
Union Headquarters would have been in the distance

All Pictures by Linda Walcroft 2005

EARLY YEARS OF THE BRANDYWINE VALLEY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF WEST CHESTER, PA

(Sources: Financial Records and Newsletters of the BVCWRT)

- The Round Table was born in November of 1988 with 11 members.\
- The founders included John and Marion McIntyre.
- Our first deposit was for \$70.00 for dues paid.
- Dues were set at \$10.00 per person, per year.
- Field trips included: GAR Museum, Harper's Ferry and Antietam.
- The first Banquet was shared with Old Baldy CWRT; it was held at the West Chester Inn; the guest speaker was Gary Gallagher who spoke on E. Porter Alexander; the price was \$16.00; 40 people attended.
- Meetings were held at the CCHS; rent was \$20.00 per month.
- Membership cards were printed and given to each member;
- Marion McIntyre began the Signal Flag newsletter; it was composed of one sheet of paper and mailed to each member.
- By 1991/92, the Round Table had 58 members.
- Familiar names began to appear on the membership list: Arthur, Sprague, Stafford, Walls and Ward.
- That years field trips included: Laurel Hill Cemetery, the Civil War Library and Museum and Fort Mifflin.
- Dues were raised to \$15.00; first class postage was .29 cents; a rubber stamp was purchased for return address envelopes; the banquet cost \$16.00
- By 1994/95 memberships had increased to 75.
- Donations were made for preservation and land acquisition.
- In May 1995, the Executive Board voted to make a donation to the Chester County Historical Society of a Don Troiani print – "The Southern Cross." It depicted Chester County soldiers fighting over a battery at the site of Frazer's Farm during the Battle of Glendale.
- On February 14, 1995, the Association of Middle Atlantic Civil War Round Tables was formed. AMART. Brandywine Valley was one of the early members.
- In June of 1995, a social was held for the members in the Community Center in West Goshen; there was no banquet!



Scheduled Speakers for 2006 - 2007:

- Sep 6, 2006: Sid Copel - "Civil War Humor"
- Oct 4, 2006: Michael Kaufman - "American Brutus"
- Nov 1, 2006: Michael Werner - "Jewish Contribution to the War"
- Dec 6, 2006: Group Discussions of Selected Topics and Christmas Social
- Jan 3, 2007: Dave Kohler - "Henry Pleasants & Construction of the Petersburg Mine"
- Feb 7, 2007: Prof. James Hedtke - "Ely Parker, Grant's Secretary"
- Mar 7, 2007: Dennis Kelly - "Fort Pillow Controversy"
- Apr 4, 2007: BVCWRT Members - "Show and Tell"
- May 2, 2007: Roger Arthur - "The 97th PVI"
- May 8, 2007: Banquet: Matthew Pinsker "LINCOLN'S SANCTUARY: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home"

**Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table
Membership Application**

Application Type: New Renewal

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Note: Monthly newsletters are distributed by E-mail only.

Membership Type: Individual (\$25) Family (\$40): Student (\$15):

If family membership, please list other names: _____

Bring the completed form and a check payable to BVCWRT to a meeting or mail it to:
Dave Walter, Treasurer, 937 Thorne Drive, West Chester, PA 19382