



# The Signal Flag



## BRANDYWINE VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Campaign # 21

Skirmish # 5

January 2008

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### From the Rear Ranks:

*Part of Dr. McPherson's Analysis of the Battle of 1<sup>st</sup>. Manassas  
(Reader: Note the interesting reference to the City of Philadelphia)*

*Perhaps the most profound consequences of the battle were psychological. But these consequences were full of paradox. The South's gleeful celebration generated the cockiness heedless of the Biblical injunction that pride goeth before the fall. Manassas was "one of the decisive battles of the world", wrote political leader Thomas R.R. Cobb of Georgia. It "has secured our independence." Edmund Ruffin considered "this hard fought battle virtually the close of the war." He thought Beauregard's next step should be "a dash upon Philadelphia and laying it in the ashes....as full settlement & acquittance for the past northern outrages." The Mobile Register predicted that the Union Army would "never again advance beyond cannon shot of Washington." The Richmond Whig went even further: "The breakdown of the Yankee race, their unfitness for empire, forces dominion on the South. We are compelled to take the scepter of power. We must adapt ourselves to our new destiny."*

*Taken from Battle Cry of Freedom – The Civil War Era,*

*Dr. James M. McPherson*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Mike Liddy, President*

*Brandywine Valley Civil War Roundtable*



*~ Officers ~*

**President:** Mike Liddy  
**Vice President:** John Walls  
**Secretary:** Ted Pawlik  
**Treasurer:** Dave Walter

*~ Committee Members ~*

**Preservation:** John Walls, Bob Sprague  
**Nominating / Speakers Committee:**  
Vince Carosella, John Whiteside  
**Speakers:** Roger Arthur, Joe Lehman  
**Monthly Scribe / Trips:** Susan Mahoney  
**Credentials:** Bill Sitman  
**Greeter:** Loretta Thomas  
**Publicity:** Harriett Mueller  
**Historians:** Bill Sitman  
**Our Social:** Flo Williams

*~ Members at Large ~*

David Hoffritz, James Lawler

*~ Official Suttler ~*

Bob Sprague: Books / Periodicals  
610-644-0353

*~ Annual Membership ~*

Individual \$25.00; Family \$40.00; Student \$15.00  
(Full time student up to age 23)

**? Questions ? Contact:**

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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:**

*Happy New Year to All Members!!!*





*Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table*  
*Come to our next meeting*  
*5 September 2007*

**Speaker:** Dennis Kelly  
**Topic:** "The First Battle of Manassas  
The Civil War"  
**Time:** 7:00 PM  
**Place:** West Chester Borough Hall, Gay Street

This month's program will be presented by Denny Kelly, who became a Round Table member a decade ago and has been a yearly speaker ever since. His previous topics were generally focused on the Civil War's western campaigns. This year, for a change, Kelly will move eastward and start from the beginning, to July 1861, when a major Union Army got itself beaten by a combined Confederate force defending a Virginia Creek named Bull Run.

Geography surrounding the railroad junction of Manassas made this clash inevitable. Whether one big battle could extinguish an armed rebellion before it expanded into a major war was an open question. Both North and South had their own expectations. The fighting between two highly motivated but untrained and sadly undisciplined armies lasted from morning till dusk, and when it ended in a Union route, all of America would never be quite the same. This event had consequences.

For five years, starting in 1975, Manassas National Battlefield Park was Kelly's workplace. He began a 20-year National Park Service career there as tour guide, later becoming historian at Stone River, Tennessee, and Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia. He attended Temple University, and before that Kelly was a US Paratrooper who fought in the 1965 Dominican Republic intervention, being awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge. He is a member of VFW Post # 928, and the Philadelphia Chapter of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association.

Submitted by Dennis Kelly

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## **President Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers Home to open in Feb '08**

**From William Vosseler, Union League Civil War Round Table - December 21, 2007**

<http://www.lincolncottage.org/>

*"Our Southern brethrens have done grievously; they have rebelled and have attacked their father's house and their loyal brothers. They must be punished and brought back, but this necessity breaks my heart."*

*R. Anderson, Major, USA April 1961.*



## *Editor's Note*

Happy New Year to all the membership!! I trust that you had a nice holiday season and you are ready to face those cold winter months with all the new Civil War Books that family and friends gave you. Perhaps you received gift cards to Barnes and Nobel where you will find plenty of good books out there to read over those long winter months. I hope that you are also enjoying all the good information that is being sent by Bob Sprague in his "Round Table Telegram".

Although the December meeting was welcomed by nasty weather we had a pretty good turn out for our meeting and Christmas Social. On behalf of the membership we want to thank Florence Williams and those members who help put together the refreshments for our Social.

**Dues:** For those of you who have not paid their dues please bring your check and membership application which is attached at the back of this newsletter to the next meeting. Please give this to Dave Walter, our Treasurer.

**Speaker:** We are happy to have Dennis Kelly again this year talk with us about First Manassas. Dennis served as a tour guide at Manassas Battlefield and was part of the National Park Services for 20 – years. Dennis does his research and his talks are always full of interesting information.

**Meeting Minutes:** submitted by Ted Pawlik

**Lincoln's Summer Cottage:** Is to be open this February. Lincoln liked to get himself and his family out of the summer pestilences of the Washington area into the fresh air of the county. He found the Soldiers' Home located outside of Washington the perfect place to get away too. Living in an adjacent cottage he found comfort and companions among the guards at the Soldiers' Home. For more information about Lincoln's time at the Soldiers' Home you can read the book, by Matthew Pinsker called, "Lincoln's Sanctuary – Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home". Mr. Pinsker as you remember was our substitute banquet speaker last May.

**The Military – Telegraph Service:** I saw this article on the Temple website and thought that you might find it interesting. We have never had a speaker talk about the Telegraph system used during the Civil War but as you will find in this article it was certainly very vital for the maneuvering of troops and supplies. What I did not know was the operators were private citizens and not affiliated with the military other than sending their decoded messages. Therefore, these operators would not reap the benefits as would a soldier if injured or killed.

**Freedom Just Ahead: The War Within the Civil War :** Article submitted by Harriett Mueller

**"Tennessee takes steps to recapture Civil War history", "Third caught relic hunter gets 2 years", Shining Civil War spotlight on Hanover on July 3, 2008":** These three articles I found on the Temple website. Thought you might like to also read them.

*Happy New Year!!  
Lynne Fulton, Editor*

**Minutes of the December 5, 2007  
BVCWRT  
Submitted by Ted Pawlik**

**The President's Report/Announcements (Mike Liddy)**

- The Round Table received 2 letters from Dave Duncan, Director of Membership and Development of the Civil War Preservation Trust acknowledging and thanking us for the \$1000.00 donation.
- On December 15, 2007, Ted Pawlik, Roger Arthur, and Mike Liddy will attend a meeting with Sharon Smith, Executive Director of the Civil War/Underground Railroad Museum. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the Museum's pending move to the historic area of Philadelphia.
- Mike Liddy confirmed May 17, 2008 as the date for the field trip to the Wilderness Battlefield. Matt Wyckoff from the National Park Service will serve as tour guide.
- Anyone who has any suggestions or ideas to improve the Round Table is asked to see any member of the Executive Committee.
- Anyone interested in serving on the Executive Board or any Committee for the next campaign is asked to see Mike Liddy, Vince Carosella, or John Whiteside.
- All those who have not paid their dues for the year are asked to do so. Newsletters will not be sent to those who have not paid their annual dues.
- Bob Sprague has available a pamphlet which gives a history of BVCWRT for the last 20 years.
- Anyone not receiving the Round Table Telegram is asked to contact Bob Sprague to insure he has the correct e-mail address. Bob's e-mail address is novacsa@comcast.net.

**Treasurer's Report (Dave Walter)**

- To date we have 87 members
- Financial Report: Balance as of 11/01/07 = \$3067.59. Total Receipts = \$547.00. Expenditures = \$146.44. Net Revenue for the month = \$400.56. Balance as of 12/01/07 = \$3468.15.

**Preservation Committee (Bob Sprague)**

- The Civil War Preservation Trust informed us of an opportunity to make a donation that will be matched 5 to 1. This opportunity is for the preservation of the following specific battlefield sites: Aversboro, NC (March 16, 1865), the Battle of Fisher's Hill, VA on September 22, 1864, the Battle of Brice's Cross Roads, MS (June 10, 1864) and the Battle of the Crater, Petersburg, VA (July 30, 1864).
- Bob Sprague made a motion that \$500.00 be donated to take advantage of this opportunity.
- The motion was seconded and accepted by a vote of the membership.

Speaker for the evening was Elizabeth Brown Pryor author of "Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee; Through His Private Letters". Her topic for the evening was Robert Lee's decision to resign from the army in 1861. Following the discussion was a spirited question and answer session.

Following the presentation, the Annual Holiday Social was held. Florence Williams organized this event.

## THE MILITARY-TELEGRAPH SERVICE

*From: Andy Waskie -Temple Education website 12/18/07*

The exigencies and experiences of the Civil War demonstrated, among other theorems, the vast utility and indispensable importance of the electric telegraph both as an administrative agent and as a tactical factor in military operations. In addition to the utilization of existing commercial systems, there were built and operated more than fifteen thousand miles of lines for military purposes only.

Serving under the anomalous status of quartermaster's employees, often under conditions of personal danger, and with no definite official standing, the operators of the military telegraph service performed work of most vital import to the army in particular and to the country in general. They fully merited the gratitude of the Nation for their efficiency, fidelity, and patriotism, yet their services have never been practically recognized by the Government or appreciated by the people.

For instance, during the war there occurred in the line of duty more than three hundred casualties among the operators -from disease, death in battle, wounds, or capture. Scores of these unfortunate victims left families dependent upon charity, as the United States neither extended aid to their destitute families nor admitted needy survivors to a pensionable status.

The telegraph service had neither definite personnel nor corps organization. It was simply a civilian bureau attached to the Quartermaster's Department, in which a few of its favored members received commissions. The men who performed the dangerous work in the field were mere employees-mostly underpaid, and often treated with scant consideration. The inherent defects of such a nondescript organization made it impossible for it to adjust and adapt itself to the varying demands and imperative needs of great and independent armies such as were employed in the Civil War.

Moreover, the chief, Colonel Anson Stager, was stationed in Cleveland, Ohio, while an active subordinate, Major Thomas T. Eckert was associated with the great war secretary, who held the service in his iron grasp. Not only were its commissioned officers free from other authority than that of the Secretary of War, but operators, engaged in active campaigning thousands of miles from Washington, were independent of the generals under whom they were serving. As will appear later, operators suffered from the natural impatience of military commanders, who resented the abnormal relations which inevitably led to distrust and contention. While such irritations and distrusts were rarely justified, none the less they proved detrimental to the best interests of the United States.

On the one hand, the operators were ordered to report to, and obey only, the corporation representatives who dominated the War Department, while on the other their lot was cast with military associates, who frequently regarded them with a certain contempt or hostility. Thus, the life of the field-operator was hard, indeed, and it is to the lasting credit of the men, as a class, that their intelligence and patriotism were equal to the situation and won final confidence.

Emergent conditions in 1861 caused the seizure of the commercial systems around Washington, and Assistant Secretary of War Thomas A. Scott was made general manager of all such lines. He secured the cooperation of E. S. Sanford, of the American Telegraph Company, who imposed much needed restrictions as to cipher messages, information, and so forth on all operators. The scope of the work was much increased by an act of Congress, in 1862, authorizing the seizure of any or all lines, in connection with which Sanford was appointed censor.

Through Andrew Carnegie was obtained the force which opened the War Department Telegraph Office; which speedily attained national importance by its remarkable work, and with which the memory of Abraham Lincoln must be inseparably associated. It was fortunate for the success of the telegraphic policy of the Government that it was entrusted to men of such administrative ability as Colonel Anson Stager, E. S. Sanford, and Major Thomas T. Eckert. The selection of operators for the War Office was surprisingly fortunate, including, as it did, three cipher-operators-D. H. Bates, A. B. Chandler, and C. A. Tinker-of high character, rare skill, and unusual discretion.

The military exigencies brought Sanford as censor and Eckert as assistant general manager, who otherwise performed their difficult duties with great efficiency; it must be added that at times they were inclined to display a striking disregard of proprieties and most unwarrantedly to enlarge the scope of their already extended authority. An interesting instance of the conflict of telegraphic and military authority was shown when Sanford mutilated McClellan's passionate dispatch to Stanton, dated Savage's Station, June 29, 1862, in the midst of the Seven Days Battles.\*

Eckert also withheld from President Lincoln the dispatch announcing the Federal defeat at Ball's Bluff. The suppression by Eckert of Grant's order for the removal of Thomas \*By cutting out of the message the last two sentences, reading: "If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or to any other person in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army", finds support only in the splendid victory of that great soldier at Nashville, and that only under the maxim that

the end justifies the means. Eckert's narrow escape from summary dismissal by Stanton shows that, equally with the President and the commanding general, the war secretary was sometimes treated disrespectfully by his own subordinates.

One phase of life in the telegraph-room of the War Department—it is surprising that the White House had no telegraph office during the war - was Lincoln's daily visit thereto, and the long hours spent by him in the cipher-room, whose quiet seclusion made it a favorite retreat both for rest and also for important work requiring undisturbed thought and undivided attention.

There Lincoln turned over with methodical exactness and anxious expectation the office-file of recent messages. There he awaited patiently the translation of ciphers which forecasted promising plans for coming campaigns, told tales of unexpected defeat, recited the story of victorious battles, conveyed impossible demands, or suggested inexpedient policies. Masking anxiety by quaint phrases, impassively accepting criticism, harmonizing conflicting conditions, he patiently pondered over situations—both political and military—swayed in his solutions only by considerations of public good. For in this room were held conferences of vital national interest, with cabinet officers, generals, congressmen, and others. But his greatest task done here was that which required many days, during which was written the original draft of the memorable proclamation of emancipation.

Especially important was the technical work of Bates, Chandler and Tinker enciphering and deciphering important messages to and from the great contending armies, which was done by code. Stager devised the first cipher, which was so improved by the cipher-operators that it remained untranslatable by the Confederates to the end of the war. An example of the method in general use, given by Plum in his "History of the Military Telegraph", is Lincoln's dispatch to ex-Secretary Cameron when with Meade south of Gettysburg.

Brilliant and conspicuous service was rendered by the cipher-operators of the War Department in translating Confederate cipher messages which fell into Union hands. A notable incident in the field was the translation of General Joseph E. Johnston's cipher message to Pemberton, captured by Grant before Vicksburg and forwarded to Washington. More important were the two cipher dispatches from the Secretary of War at Richmond, in December, 1863, which led to a cabinet meeting and culminated in the arrest of Confederate conspirators in New York city, and to the capture of contraband shipments of arms and ammunition. Other intercepted and translated ciphers revealed plans of Confederate agents for raiding Northern towns near the border. Most important of all were the cipher messages disclosing the plot for the wholesale incendiarism of leading hotels in New York, which barely failed of success on November 25, 1864.

Beneficial and desirable as were the civil cooperation and management of the telegraph service in Washington, its forced extension to armies in the field was a mistaken policy. Patterson, in the Valley of Virginia, was five days without word from the War Department, and when he sent a dispatch, July 20th, that Johnston had started to reinforce Beauregard with 35,200 men, this vital message was not sent to McDowell with whom touch was kept by a service half-telegraphic and half-courier.

The necessity of efficient field-telegraphs at once impressed military commanders. In the West, Fremont immediately acted, and in August, 1861, ordered the formation of a telegraph battalion of three companies along lines in accord with modern military practice. Major Myer had already made similar suggestions in Washington, without success. While the commercial companies placed their personnel and material freely at the Government's disposal, they viewed with marked disfavor any military organization, and their recommendations were potent with Secretary of War Cameron. Fremont was ordered to disband his battalion, and a purely civil bureau was substituted, though legal authority and funds were equally lacking. Efforts to transfer quartermaster's funds and property to this bureau were successfully resisted, owing to the manifest illegality of such action.

Indirect methods were then adopted, and Stager was commissioned as a captain in the Quartermaster's Department, and his operators given the status of employees. He was appointed general manager of United States telegraph lines, November 25, 1861, and six days later, through some unknown influence, the Secretary of War reported (incorrectly, be it known), "that under an appropriation for that purpose at the last session of Congress, a telegraph bureau was established." Stager was later made a colonel, Eckert a major, and a few others captains, and so eligible for pensions, but the men in lesser positions remained employees, non-pensionable and subject to draft.

Repeated efforts by petitions and recommendations for giving a military status were made by the men in the field later in the war. The Secretary of War disapproved, saying that such a course would place them under the orders of superior officers, which he was most anxious to avoid.

With corporation influence and corps rivalries so rampant in Washington, there existed a spirit of patriotic solidarity in the face of the foe in the field that ensured hearty cooperation and efficient service. While the operators began with a sense of individual independence that caused them often to resent any

control by commanding officers, from which they were free under the secretary's orders, yet their common sense speedily led them to comply with every request from commanders that was not absolutely incompatible with loyalty to their chief.

Especially in the public eye was the work connected with the operations in the armies which covered Washington and attacked Richmond, where McClellan first used the telegraph for tactical purposes. Illustrative of the courage and resourcefulness of operators was the action of Jesse Bunnell, attached to General Porter's headquarters. Finding himself on the fighting line, with the Federal troops hard pressed, Bunnell, without orders, cut the wire and opened communication with McClellan's headquarters. Superior Confederate forces were then threatening defeat to the invaders, but this battle-office enabled McClellan to keep in touch with the situation and ensure Porter's position by sending the commands of French, Meagher, and Slocum to his relief. Operator Nichols opened an emergency office at Savage's Station on Stimmer's request, maintaining it under fire as long as it was needed.

One of the great feats of the war was the transfer, under the supervision of Thomas A. Scott, of two Federal army corps from Virginia to Tennessee, consequent on the Chickamauga disaster to the Union arms. By this phenomenal transfer, which would have been impossible without the military telegraph, twenty-three thousand soldiers, with provisions and baggage, were transported a distance of 1,233 miles in eleven and a half days, from Bristoe Station, Virginia, to Chattanooga, Tennessee. The troops had completed half their journey before the news of the proposed movement reached Richmond.

While most valuable elsewhere, the military telegraph was absolutely essential to successful operations in the valleys of the Cumberland and of the Tennessee, where very long lines of communication obtained, with consequent great distances between its separate armies. Apart from train-dispatching, which was absolutely essential to transporting army supplies for hundreds of thousands of men over a single-track railway of several hundred of miles in length, an enormous number of messages for the control and cooperation of separate armies and detached commands were sent over the wires. Skill and patience were necessary for efficient telegraph work, especially when lines were frequently destroyed by Confederate incursions or through hostile inhabitants of the country.

Of great importance and of intense interest are many of the cipher dispatches sent over these lines. Few, however, exceed the ringing messages of October 19, 1863, when Grant, from Louisville, Kentucky, bid Thomas, "to hold Chattanooga at all hazards," and received the laconic reply in a few hours; I will hold the town till we starve." Here, as elsewhere, appeared the anomalous conditions of the service.

While telegraph duties were performed with efficiency, troubles were often precipitated by divided authority. When Superintendent Stager ordered a civilian, who was engaged in building lines, out of Halleck's department, the general ordered him back, saying, "There must be one good head of telegraph lines in my department, not two, and that head must be under me." Though Stager protested to Secretary of War Stanton, the latter thought it best to yield in that case.

When General Grant found it expedient to appoint an aide as general manager of lines in his army, the civilian chief, J. C. Van Duzer, reported it to Stager, who had Grant called to account by the War Department. Grant promptly put Van Duzer under close confinement in the guardhouse, and later sent him out of the department, under guard. As an outcome, the operators planned a strike, which Grant quelled by telegraphic orders to confine closely every man resigning or guilty, of contumacious conduct. Stager's efforts to dominate Grant failed through Stanton's fear that pressure would cause Grant to ask for relief from his command.

Stager's administration culminated in an order by his assistant, dated Cleveland, November 4, 1862; strictly requiring the operators to retain "the original copy of every telegram sent by any military or other Government officer and mailed to the War Department." Grant answered, "Colonel Stager has no authority to demand the original of military dispatches, and cannot have them." The order was never enforced, at least with Grant.

If similar experiences did not change the policy in Washington, it produced better conditions in the field and ensured harmonious cooperation. Of Van Duzer, it is to be said that he later returned to the army and performed conspicuous service. At the battle of Chattanooga, he installed and operated lines on or near the firing-line during the two fateful days, November 24-25, 1863, often under heavy fire. Always sharing the dangers of his men, Van Duzer, through his coolness and activity under fire, has been mentioned as the only fighting officer of the Federal telegraph service.

Other than telegraphic espionage, the most dangerous service was the repair of lines, which often was done under fire and more frequently in a guerilla-infested country. Many men were captured or shot from ambush while thus engaged. Two of Clowry's men in Arkansas were not only murdered, but were frightfully mutilated. In Tennessee, conditions were sometimes so bad that no lineman would venture out save under heavy escort. Three repair men were killed on the Fort Donelson line alone. W. R. Plum, in



his "Military Telegraph," says that "about one in twelve of the operators engaged in the service were killed, wounded, captured, or died in the service from exposure."

Telegraphic duties at military headquarters yielded little in brilliancy and interest compared to those of desperate daring associated with tapping the opponent's wires. At times, offices were seized so quickly as to prevent telegraphic warnings. General Mitchel captured two large Confederate railway trains by sending false messages from the Huntsville, Alabama, office, and General Seymour similarly seized a train near Jacksonville, Florida.

While scouting, Operator William Forster obtained valuable dispatches by tapping the line along the Charleston-Savannah railway for two days. Discovered, he was pursued by bloodhounds into a swamp, where he was captured up to his armpits in mire. Later, the telegrapher died in prison.

In 1863, General Rosecrans deemed it most important to learn whether Bragg was detaching troops to reinforce the garrison at Vicksburg or for other purposes. The only certain method seemed to be by tapping the wires along the Chattanooga railroad, near Knoxville, Tennessee. For this most dangerous duty, two daring members of the telegraph service volunteered—F.S. Van Valkenbergh and Patrick Mullarkev. The latter afterward was captured by Morgan, in Ohio. With four Tennesseans, they entered the hostile country and, selecting a wooded eminence, tapped the line fifteen miles from Knoxville, and for a week listened to all passing dispatches. Twice escaping detection, they heard a message going over the wire which ordered the scouring of the district to capture Union spies. They at once decamped, barely in time to escape the patrol. Hunted by cavalry, attacked by guerillas, approached by Confederate spies, they found aid from Union mountaineers, to whom they owed their safety. Struggling on, with capture and death in daily prospect, they finally fell in with Union pickets—being then half starved, clothed in rags, and with naked, bleeding feet. They had been thirty-three days within the Confederate lines, and their stirring adventures make a story rarely equaled in thrilling interest.

Confederate wires were often tapped during Sherman's march to the sea, a warning of General Wheeler's coming raid being thus obtained. Operator Lonergan copied important dispatches from Hardee, in Savannah, giving Bragg's movements in the rear of Sherman, with reports on cavalry and rations.

Wiretapping was also practiced by the Confederates, who usually worked in, a sympathetic community. Despite their daring skill the net results were often small, owing to the Union system of enciphering all important messages. Their most audacious and persistent telegraphic scout was Ellsworth, Morgan's operator, whose skill, courage, and resourcefulness contributed largely to the success of his daring commander. Ellsworth was an expert in obtaining dispatches, and especially in disseminating misleading information by bogus messages.

In the East, an interloper from Lee's army tapped the wire between the War Department and Burnside's headquarters at Aquia Creek, and remained undetected for probably several days. With fraternal frankness, the Union operators advised him to leave.

The most prolonged and successful wiretapping was that by C. A. Gaston, Lee's confidential operator. Gaston entered the Union lines near City Point, while Richmond and Petersburg were besieged, with several men to keep watch for him, and for six weeks he remained undisturbed in the woods, reading all messages which passed over Grant's wire. Though unable to read the ciphers, he gained much from the dispatches in plain text. One message reported that 2,586 beeves were to be landed at Coggins' Point on a certain day. This information enabled Wade Hampton to make a timely raid and capture the entire herd.

It seems astounding that Grant, Sherman, Thomas, and Meade, commanding armies of hundreds of thousands and working out the destiny of the Republic, should have been debarred from the control of their own ciphers and the keys thereto. Yet, in 1864, the Secretary of War issued an order forbidding commanding generals to interfere with even their own cipher-operators and absolutely restricting the use of cipher-books to civilian "telegraph experts, approved and appointed by the Secretary of War." One mortifying experience with a dispatch untranslatable for lack of facilities constrained Grant to order his cipher-operator, Beckwith, to reveal the key to Colonel Comstock, his aide, which was done under protest. Stager at once dismissed Beckwith, but on Grant's request and insistence of his own responsibility, Beckwith was restored.

The cipher-operators with the various armies were men of rare skill, unswerving integrity, and unflinching loyalty. Caldwell, as chief operator, accompanied the Army of the Potomac on every march and in every siege, contributing also to the efficiency of the field-telegraphs. Beckwith was Grant's cipher-operator to the end of the war, and was the man who tapped a wire and reported the hiding-place of Wilkes Booth. Another operator, Richard O'Brien, in 1863 refused a princely bribe to forge a telegraphic reprieve, and later won distinction with Butler on the James and with Schofield in North Carolina. W. R. Plum, who wrote "History of the Military Telegraph in the Civil War," also rendered efficient service as

chief operator to Thomas, and at Atlanta. It is regrettable that such men were denied the glory and benefits of a military service, which they actually, though not officially, gave.

The bitter contest, which lasted several years, over field-telegraphs ended in March, 1864, when the Signal Corps transferred its field-trains to the civilian bureau. In Sherman's advance on Atlanta, Van Duzer distinguished himself by bringing up the field-line from the rear nearly every night. At Big Shanty, Georgia, the whole battle-front was covered by working field-lines which enabled Sherman to communicate at all times with his fighting and reserve commands. Hamlev considers the constant use of field-telegraphs in the flanking operations by Sherman in Georgia as showing the overwhelming value of the service. This duty was often done under fire and other dangerous conditions.

In Virginia, in 1864-65, Major Eckert made great and successful efforts to provide Meade's army with ample facilities. A well-equipped train of thirty or more battery-wagons, wire-reels, and construction carts were brought together under Doren, a skilled builder and energetic man. While offices were occasionally located in battery-wagons, they were usually under tent-flies next to the headquarters of Meade or Grant. Through the efforts of Doren and Caldwell, all important commands were kept within control of either Meade or Grant—even during engagements. Operators were often under fire, and at Spotsylvania Court House telegraphers, telegraph cable, and battery-wagons were temporarily within the Confederate lines. From these trains was sent the ringing dispatch from the Wilderness, by which Grant inspired the North, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." THE MILITARY-TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

During siege operations at Petersburg, a system of lines connected the various headquarters, depots, entrenchments, and even some picket lines. Cannonading and sharpshooting were so insistent that operators were often driven to bombproof offices—especially during artillery duels and impending assaults. Nerve-racking were the sounds and uncomfortably dangerous the situations, yet the operators held their posts. Under the terrible conditions of a night assault, the last despairing attempt to break through the encircling Federal forces at Petersburg, hurried orders and urgent appeals were sent. At dawn of March 25, 1865, General Gordon carried Fort Stedman with desperate gallantry, and cut the wire to City Point. The Federals speedily sent the message of disaster, "The enemy has broken our right, taken Stedman, and are moving on City Point." Assuming command, General Parke ordered a counter-attack and recaptured the fort. Promptly the City Point wire was restored, and Meade, controlling the whole army by telegraph, made a combined attack by several corps, capturing the entrenched picket line of the Confederates.

First of all of the great commanders, Grant used the military telegraph both for grand tactics and for strategy in its broadest sense. From his headquarters with Meade's army in Virginia, May, 1864, he daily gave orders and received reports regarding the operations of Meade in Virginia, Sherman in Georgia, Sigel in West Virginia, and Butler on the James River. Later he kept under direct control military forces exceeding half a million of soldiers, operating over a territory of eight hundred thousand square miles in area. Through concerted action and timely movements, Grant prevented the reinforcement of Lee's army and so shortened the war. Sherman said, "The value of the telegraph cannot be exaggerated, as illustrated by the perfect accord of action of the armies of Virginia and Georgia."

**Source: *Photographic History of the Civil War, Volume IV, article by A. W. Greely, Major-General, United States Army***

NYT  
12/5/07

SUBMITTED BY: HARRIETT MUELLER

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2007

# Freedom Just Ahead: The War Within the Civil War

The chaos of Civil War meant only one thing to America's four million slaves: hope. With armies on the march, and the old social order crumbling, men like

**WILLIAM GRIMES**

**BOOKS OF THE TIMES**

John Washington and Wallace Turnage seized the moment and made a break for freedom, issuing their own emancipation proclamations before the fact. They were "quiet heroes of a war within the war to destroy slavery," as David W. Blight puts it in "A Slave No More."

Both Washington and Turnage, near contemporaries, wrote vivid accounts of their lives as slaves and the bold bids for freedom that took them across Confederate lines and into the waiting arms of Union soldiers. Recently discovered, both texts have been reproduced by Mr. Blight as written, with misspellings and grammatical errors intact.

Mr. Blight, a professor of American history at Yale and the author of "Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory," has also provided an extended preface that provides historical context, fills in biographical gaps and extends the life stories of both men past the Civil War, when their manuscripts break off abruptly, to their deaths in the early 20th century. Two remarkable lives, previously lost, emerge with startling clarity, largely through the words of the principal actors themselves.

Washington, born in 1838, grew up in Fredericksburg, Va., and stayed there, in servitude to the widow of his master, after being separated from his mother and four younger siblings at 12. Unlike Turnage, who labored on an Alabama plantation and suffered constant whippings, Washington lived a town life, running errands or enduring hours of enforced idleness and staring longingly out the window.

In 1861 he was hired out to a tobacco factory in Richmond and got his first glimpse of Confederate troops, so many, he wrote, "that it appeared to be an impossibility, to us, colored people, that they could ever be conquered." Soon, though, he began hearing of slaves making their way to the Union lines and freedom. Once back in Fredericksburg, where he worked as a hotel steward and barkeep, he decided to join their number.

Washington's narrative cap-

## A Slave No More

Two Men Who Escaped to Freedom, Including Their Own Narratives of Emancipation

By David W. Blight

Illustrated, 307 pages, Harcourt, \$25

tures both turmoil and nervous excitement as Union forces closed in on Fredericksburg, bayonets glinting across the Rappahannock River, their movements eagerly watched by black residents. Washington, in a characteristically sardonic aside, notes: "No one could be seen on the street but the colored people, and every one of them seemed to be in the best of humors."

In the confusion Washington escaped to the Union lines. "I told them I was most happy to see them all that I had been looking for them for a long time," he writes. When a Union soldier asks if he wants to be free, Washington answers simply, "by all means."

In Alabama, Turnage met his oppressors with open defiance. He fought with whip-wielding overseers, suffered repeated whippings and beatings and lit out for freedom repeatedly. Running for miles across creeks and through fields, cleverly talking his way out of tight spots and, more than once, fighting off enraged dogs, Turnage, a mere teenager, evaded pursuers for weeks at a time, enduring ex-



PAMELA LEO

trême deprivation.

"I went as long as four days without anything to eat but one hickory nut that the squirrels did not get," he writes of one escape.

Among other things, Turnage's testimony sheds light on the support network among slaves, nearly all more than willing to feed or conceal a runaway, or provide information on how to evade capture on the road ahead. "They gloried in my spunk," Turnage writes of a group of slaves who hid him at one plantation.

His final flight, from Mobile to the Union ships anchored offshore, caps his thrilling tale. After nonchalantly walking straight through a Confederate camp and wading barefoot through snake-infested swamps, he reaches an impasse, with Confederate pickets behind him and a broad expanse of water ahead of him.

## ONLINE: 'A SLAVE NO MORE'

An excerpt from the new book by David W. Blight: [nytimes.com/books](http://nytimes.com/books)

"It was death to go back and it was death to stay there and freedom was before me," he writes. He pressed forward and, by luck, found a rickety little boat on the shore.

"I Now dreaded the gun, and handcuffs and pistols no more," he writes of his moment of deliverance, when Yankee sailors plucked him from Mobile Bay. "Nor the blowing of horns and the running of hounds; nor the threats of death from the rebel's authority. I could now speak my opinion to men of all grades and colors, and no one to question my right to speak."

Washington made his way to Washington, where he and his wife, whom he took from Fredericksburg, rose to middle-class prosperity. He died in 1918.

Turnage worked, at various times, as a janitor, sign painter, watchman and glass blower in New York. Eventually he moved to Jersey City, where he died in 1916.

By that time, slavery and the war were distant memories. In their all-too-brief narratives, Washington and Turnage, as Mr. Blight notes, offer a precious commodity: "unfiltered access to the process and the moment of emancipation."

## Tennessee takes steps to recapture Civil War history

From: Temple website

"Two Flags Over Tennessee" program Tennessee takes steps to recapture Civil War history by Brent Carney 12/18/2007

BLOUNTVILLE, Tenn. – The last time Confederate and Union flags flew simultaneously over this Sullivan County town, the courthouse burned to the ground. Nearly 150 years later, the symbols were together again – this time flying side by side as part of a campaign aimed at preserving Civil War battlegrounds in Tennessee.

The replicated 1861 versions of the flags used by both the North and the South stopped in Blountville Friday as part of the "Two Flags Over Tennessee" program. The flags are being displayed at 39 battle sites across the state in hopes of raising awareness about the vast Civil War history in Tennessee.

"When people are aware and begin to understand how important Tennessee is [in Civil War history], that will at least help foster preservation goals and efforts that you're not going to get if people don't know what's in their own backyard," said Mary Ann Peckham, executive director of the Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association.

Tennessee is second only to Virginia in the number of battles fought on its soil. According to the Preservation Association, more than 3,000 documented engagements occurred in Tennessee between Union and Confederate forces. One of the most significant, albeit brief, battles happened in Blountville.

"The union artillery was up on one hill, the Confederate artillery was up in [an opposite] direction and the city was right in the middle of it, citizens and all," David Roberts, commander lieutenant of the Robert D. Powell Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, said.

The four-hour skirmish ended when rebel forces retreated towards reinforcements stationed outside of the city. The battle left 42 soldiers dead and the courthouse in flames. The flags fluttered in the breeze on Friday outside the current courthouse, which was built in the same spot as the previous one. Today's fight now centers around preserving Tennessee's Civil War heritage through increased accessibility to land where battles were fought. The Preservation Association reports that 90 percent of Tennessee's battlefields are privately owned.

According to Peckham, insuring that these areas will be maintained and preserved relies on greater awareness, which she hopes will be helped by displayed the flags. Bringing about the awareness, she says, is not only important to the heritage of Tennessee but to the history of our country.

## Third caught relic hunter gets 2 years

From: Temple website 12/12/07

By RUSTY DENNEN [ November 9, 2007]

The last of three men caught illegally relic hunting on Spotsylvania Court House battlefield has been sentenced in federal court.

Jeremy Burroughs, 30, of Spotsylvania, was sentenced Monday in U.S. District Court in Richmond. He received two years in jail, a year of supervised probation, and was ordered to pay \$28,600 in restitution to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. In March, Burroughs and two other Spotsylvania men, Fenton E. Terembes Jr., 28, and Vincent E. Williams, 37, were caught by a park ranger who saw them digging in the national park on a Sunday, during the day. Their metal detectors and the relics they unearthed were confiscated. Among the items recovered were bullets, and a Confederate belt buckle. According to evidence in the case, the men had found the buckle during an earlier foray into the park and had sold it for \$3,300. The buckle was recovered and is now in the park's collection.

"These are public property and owned by future generations. Once these artifacts are gone and in private collections, they cannot be replaced," said Keith Kelly, military park's chief ranger.

"If someone is poaching deer or cutting trees, those can be replaced. With Civil War artifacts, once every bullet is removed there's no way we can have that back." Terembes was sentenced on Sept. 24. He received two years in jail, one year of supervised probation, and ordered to pay \$28,600 in restitution. Williams, who authorities said had a lesser role, was ordered to pay \$1,400 in restitution. The men were charged with felonies under the Archaeological Resource Protection Act. It's a federal crime to damage archaeological sites on or remove property from federal lands. It is illegal to collect or search for artifacts on federal land without permission. Violators can be fined up to \$250,000 and sentenced to two years in prison.

A week after Burroughs, Terembes and Williams were caught, two juveniles were caught metal detecting in the Hill-Ewell Drive area of the Wilderness battlefield. They were from Orange and Spotsylvania and pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges in federal court in Charlottesville. The 16- and 17-year-olds were sentenced to community service and ordered to pay restitution.

The Fredericksburg area is home to some of the nation's most significant Civil War sites. The park commemorates four battles—Spotsylvania Court House, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Fredericksburg—and encompasses more than 8,000 acres.

## Shining Civil War spotlight on Hanover on July 3, 2008

*From Evening Sun 12/20/2007*

This coming summer about 200 men with all manner of unkempt facial hair will come to town. These guys are "out there," too - so much, in fact, they choose to wear wool in the summertime and use horses for transportation. And as we see it, it would be a huge mistake not to welcome them with open arms.

We're talking, of course, about the group of cavalry re-enactors who on July 3 will recreate Confederate Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's 1863 ride from Union Mills, Md., to Hanover, then set up camp at the Sheppard Farm off Westminster Road and act out the clash between Stuart's forces and Union Brig. Gen. Elon Farnsworth's brigade. All by itself, the one-day event might not seem like much. Especially when compared to larger re-enactments, like the three-day affair in Gettysburg that often features more than 10,000 re-enactors. Those of you who never quite understood the lure of re-enactments - or who might judge re-enactors as unusually enthusiastic if not just unusual - probably will view the event as even less important.

But mark our words, people will go. They always do. (And scheduling the Hanover re-enactment a day prior to the one near Gettysburg - and on the front end of a holiday weekend, to boot - won't hurt attendance either.) If a Hanover re-enactment catches on in that time slot, it could go a long way toward bringing Hanover a bigger slice of Civil War tourism - something for which the borough and the businesses within it have been yearning. Even if that perk of perks never materializes, a successful Hanover re-enactment is easy to root for, if only for the fact its proceeds will benefit the Land Conservancy of Adams County - a group that has preserved nearly 5,000 acres. But the event probably won't need a cheering section to succeed. Piggy-backing on the Gettysburg event could make all the difference. And when it comes down to it, Hanover might deserve more credit for the role it played in the outcome at Gettysburg, and ultimately the Civil War.

While casualties were comparably light (only about 30 were killed), the unexpected skirmish Stuart encountered in the borough pushed him and his wagon caravan eastward and stalled by days his arrival at Gettysburg. Some credit that delay with swinging the result of the battle. That fact alone prompts some Gettysburg tourists to travel the 14 miles of countryside to come and see Hanover. More will come if Hanover's role and reputation is better promoted. The re-enactment can do that. And there's room for the event to grow in coming years, said Charlie Dutt, who leads the re-enactment group that will trace the hoof prints laid down by Stuart's cavalry.

Dutt admitted the 200 horses planned for the July 3 re-enactment represent only a "minuscule part of what was actually involved" in the Battle of Hanover. But he hinted even more people than estimated could show up, saying the event presents a "tremendous opportunity if you're a cavalryman." Even 200 horses will go a long way in displaying what actually happened there, he said. And for some who attend, that might cast the borough - as it is now and as it was in 1863 - in a new light. Maybe they'll come back a second time to get a better look.



*Scheduled Speakers for 2007 - 2008:*

- Sep 5, 2007:** Dan Cashin - "Ben Butler"
- Oct 3, 2007:** Ed Bonekemper - "McClellan: The Failed General"
- Nov 7, 2007:** Dave Kohler - "Whatever Happened to our Favorite Civil War Heroes"
- Dec 5, 2007:** Elizabeth Brown Pryor - "Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters", plus our Christmas Social
- Jan 2, 2008:** Dennis Kelly - Topic is to be announced
- Feb 6, 2008:** Chip Crowe - "General George Thomas"
- Mar 5, 2008:** BVCWRT Members - "Show and Tell", plus our Spring Social
- Apr 2, 2008:** Jean Baker - "Mary Todd Lincoln"
- May 7, 2008:** Roger Arthur - "The Importance of John Brown"
- May 13, 2008:** (Annual Banquet): Jean Edward Smith - "U. S. Grant"

**Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table  
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Membership Type: Individual (\$25)  Family (\$40):  Student (\$15):

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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**