



The Signal Flag



BRANDYWINE VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Campaign # 25

Skirmish # 3

November 2011

From the Rear Ranks:

Yankees suffer a defeat at the Battle of Ball's Bluff

Oct 21, 1861:

On this day in 1861, Union troops suffer a devastating defeat in the second major engagement of the Civil War. The Battle of Ball's Bluff in Virginia produced the war's first martyr and led to the creation of a Congressional committee to monitor the conduct of the war. After the Battle of Bull Run, Virginia, on July 21, President Abraham Lincoln appointed General George McClellan to organize the defeated Federal Army of the Potomac. McClellan spent the fall assembling and training his force, but he was under pressure from Lincoln, the public, and Congress to take action against the Confederates, who were waiting just across the Potomac River. McClellan ordered General George McCall to make a reconnaissance across the river, and he instructed General Charles Stone to watch the nearby town of Leesburg, Virginia, while McCall's men were moving. Stone sent a detachment across the river on the night of October 20, and the inexperienced soldiers reported seeing a Rebel camp, which turned out to be shadows. Stone decided to move more men over until a force of 1,600, under the command of Colonel Edward Baker, was poised for an attack the next morning. Baker was a close friend of Lincoln, and the president had named his second son after him.

Baker placed his men in a dangerous position. They were in a clearing with their backs to the edge of Ball's Bluff, a 100-foot high cliff above the Potomac. They faced a wooded ridge that was rapidly filling with Southerners. The Confederates launched an attack that afternoon, and Baker's command was soon in trouble. Baker was killed, and many of his men jumped from the bluff to their deaths or scrambled down a narrow trail only to find their boats swamped in the river. Less than half made it back to the other side of the Potomac.

The Union suffered 49 killed, 158 wounded, and 714 missing and captured, while the Confederates suffered 33 killed, 115 wounded, and one missing. Lincoln was stunned by the loss of his friend Baker, who became a Northern martyr despite his ineptitude in conducting the battle. The political fallout was swift. Angry Republicans were highly suspicious of McClellan, a Democrat, and other generals. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was formed in December of that year. This group was stacked with Radical Republicans who favored tougher treatment of the South and slaveholders. The committee's first investigation was the disaster at Ball's Bluff, and General Stone became the scapegoat. He was arrested for treason soon after and jailed for six months.

Source: the History Channel's Civil War APP:

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard Charles Crowe Jr.,
President Brandywine Valley Civil War Roundtable



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302-429-6201

~ 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!

**We are wheelchair assessable*



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:

Welcome to the membership.





Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table
Come to our next meeting
November 2, 2011

Speaker: Dave Walter and Don Ernsberger
Topic: "The Battle of Ball's Bluff"
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: West Chester Borough Hall, Gay Street

This month speakers will be Don Ernsberger and our own Dave Walter. Dave, who has been a member of our Round Table for many years, serving on the Executive Board as our current Treasurer. Dave has had an interest in the Civil War for many years and introduced us to his co-speaker Don Ernsberger, who has spoken to our Round Table several times before, one being the "Great Charge at Gettysburg."

A High School and College instructor for 30 years in history and philosophy, Don Ernsberger, worked on Capitol Hill for seven years as a Deputy Chief of Staff. While in Washington DC he had access to the National Archives and the Library of Congress resources to research for his books. Some of Don's books are, "At the Wall; The 69th Pennsylvania at Gettysburg", "Paddy Owen's Regulars" and "Also For Glory: The Pettigrew – Trimble charge at Gettysburg July 3, 1863." Don has been a life long Civil War buff. He conducts battlefield tours and lecture on many civil war topics. He and his family are re-enactors with the 69th Pennsylvania "Irish Volunteers", where Don is the group's historian.

Pa. group hopes to get Civil War-era train rolling for Gettysburg Anniversary

by Ed Colimore from Temple website

Oct. 2, 2011, 2:32 p.m. EDT

York Daily Record YORK, Pa. (AP) — A replica of a Civil War-era train could be rolling through central Pennsylvania in time for the 150th anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg, if members of a York County nonprofit have their way. Steam into History Inc. says it will combine the history of the Northern Central Railway and the Civil War in York County. Co-chair Bill Simpson tells the York Daily Record/Sunday News (<http://bit.ly/o23lsr>) that he sees the train drawing railroad buffs and history enthusiasts from far and wide to the area. Board member Reed Anderson said a \$2 million locomotive is being built in Illinois, and the next step is to build railroad coaches that are as authentic as possible but meet today's design standards. Also planned are two turntables, an engine house, and track repair.

**Minutes of the October 5, 2011 Meeting
BVCWRT**

Submitted by Ted Pawlik

Chip Crowe – Presiding

Preservation Committee: (Bob Sprague)

Bob Sprague reported receipt of a letter from the Civil War Trust acknowledging our donation to preserve acreage at Second Manassas (Bull Run).

There was a report that the Phoenixville Civil War monument was struck by lightning and damaged. If anyone has information on restoration efforts, please contact a member of the Executive Committee.

Field Trip:

Due to the absence of Greg Buss, Chip Crowe reported that a guide for a tour of Culp's Hill in Gettysburg has been contacted. His name is Charlie Fennel. Tentative dates are either April 21 or 28, 2012. Final details will be forthcoming once things have been firmed up with the guide.

Treasurer's Report:

There was no treasurer's report due to the absence of Dave Walter.

Other Business:

Chip Crowe is still in the process of planning a field trip to Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia. The goal is to go mid to end of November. A count was taken of those interested so arrangements can be made.

Roger Arthur reported that he is presenting three programs at the Hankins Library in Ludwig's Corner. They all will deal with 1862. The programs are free and open to the public. Roger is to confirm the dates of October 27, November 3 and November 10 as well as the time.

Dan Cashin announced that St Paul's Cemetery on Wynnewood Rd in Wynnewood, Pa will be conducting a candle light tour on October 28 and 29th starting at 6:30 PM. This is the site where the last marine from the Civil War is buried. The cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Further information can be found at www.stpaulsardmore.org.

Program for the Evening:

Lou Caban: Lee's Retreat

Recreating Disaster 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Ball's Bluff

By DOUGLAS ULLMAN, JR.

obtained from Temple website

Civil War Trust staff member Douglas Ullman, Jr. recently participated in the 150th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Ball's Bluff. Doug shares his experience as a soldier in the Union army.

Douglas Ullman, Jr. at Ball's Bluff (Rob Shenk) We're standing in a wood not far from Leesburg, Virginia, atop a high bluff overlooking the Potomac. In front of me is an open expanse, perhaps one hundred yards long, at the end of which is a line of soldiers, clad in a hodgepodge of grays and browns. An occasional blue coat a hint that some of the boys over there were once our countrymen completes the picture of the ragtag band of Confederates that are now working to drive us back over the bluff and into the river.

They advance through a shroud of smoke, the black powder discharge that still hangs in the late October air. Between us and them are two small mountain howitzers, manned by a handful of cannoneers in red-trimmed blue coats. In the woods to my right, the 15th Massachusetts delivers a ragged volley of musketry into the flank of the Rebels, but it does little to slow their advance. Finally, I hear one the officers commanding the howitzers bark an order to fire solid shot. A man snaps the lanyard on the piece and the brass tube erupts with a cacophonous blast that echoes through the wooded space.

To Learn More

Battle Overview: The Battle of Ball's Bluff

Battle Maps: The Battle of Ball's Bluff

"The Accidental Battle of Ball's Bluff" by Jim Morgan "The Battle of Ball's Bluff: Then & Now" with Jim Morgan

Ball's Bluff Books

A Little Short of Boats: The Fights at Ball's Bluff and Edwards Ferry by Jim Morgan

Recommended Reading: Ball's Bluff; The only thing that seems out of place in this scene is the rather large crowd of spectators lining the road to my left that and the fact that not a single Reb went down after that howitzer blast. Otherwise, the battle reenactment unfolding at Ball's Bluff must look strikingly similar to the real battle that took place here 150 years ago. The opposing Federal and Confederate forces advance piecemeal as companies or regiments, fire a few volleys, and retire whence they came. To some measure, they're testing their opponent's strength. But, in a larger sense, they're also testing themselves as soldiers. At least that's what our officers tell us: "Remember, boys," says a major, "this is your first time in battle; it would be good to duck once in a while." A respectable number of my comrades heed this advice, adding an extra hint of authenticity to the overall scene.

It is especially gratifying to watch the battle unfold around me. A month prior to this event, I came out to Ball's Bluff to do a little scouting. From my own reading and from the interpretive signs on the field I could deduce where each regiment should have been. The 15th Massachusetts was in skirmish order in the woods west of the field, while Captain Frank Bartlett's company of the 20th Massachusetts waited in reserve atop the bluff. Baker's California Regiment stood in line of battle near the present location of the National Cemetery. To their credit, the park has done great work to restore the battlefield to its 1861 appearance, making it much easier to conceptualize the action that took place 150 years ago. But it is another thing entirely to turn around and see the Massachusetts troops complete with their state-issued red blankets standing exactly where I think they should be.

Reenactors portraying the 1st California advance through the open field at Ball's Bluff. (Rob Shenk)

For many reenactors, the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to commemorate the War Between the States by reliving it on a grand scale. Just as the Civil War Trust hopes the sesquicentennial will spark the public's interest in saving Civil War battlefields, so, too, do living historians across the county see this commemoration as a moment when they can capitalize on the heightened awareness of the war and educate people about more than just the great battles or the war's long-term repercussions. This battle reenactment is more than just a weekend of camping with guns and funny clothes; it is an opportunity to honor those who fought and died by educating the public about how they lived.

The 150th anniversary of Ball's Bluff is the perfect opportunity to do just that. Unlike some other major reenactment events, which are typically held away from the actual battlefields, we are standing where the soldiers fought in 1861. Event organizers have made an in-depth study of the battle and have recreated events as they actually occurred, on the actual ground where they occurred. So, while the actual Battle of Ball's Bluff resulted from the incompetence and confusion of the officers commanding, this reenactment owes its success to the preparedness and experience of the folks in charge. Each of the field officers carries a script a series of maps that outlines each phase of the battle and indicates which troops should be where. During one lull in the action, the major turns to us and says, "Everyone seems to be following the script which is rare." Everyone here wants to get it right.

The "California Regiment" makes it's way to the Ball's Bluff battlefield. (Rob Shenk) This level of preparedness trickles down into the ranks as well. The participating reenacting units are portraying troops that actually fought here. Thus, although the unit I am with typically portrays a company from the Irish Brigade, today we are part of the 1st California, and our officers call us Californians as we proudly march under a banner emblazoned with the words "The California Regiment." A good number of us have even gone so far as to roll up our blankets and carry them into battle, adhering to orders that were issued 150 years ago.

After a few more blasts from the howitzers, the major orders us to march to the left of the Federal position. As we march, we are told we are going to be right next to the spectators, and that any chatter in the ranks should be related to the battle and appropriate for the period. "No Monty Python," one man says. Kneeling at the edge of a tree line, we peer through the trees, trying to identify the moving forms of men. A few haphazard shots are taken, sending sheets of smoke into the darkening woods but with no result. In an instant, gray troops swarm out of the woods, forcing us back. At the same moment, the troops to my right also break for the rear, creating a confused vortex of humanity caught between instincts for fight or flight. Companies lose their cohesion in the face of the Rebel horde, and, very quickly, it's every man for himself as we reach the woods. There, however, we find even more confusion. Masses of blue are huddled at the top of the bluff, and even more Confederates are slipping in behind us. The battle, such as it was, is over.

Confederate reenactors surge toward the Federal line at the battle's climax. (Rob Shenk)

With the Civil War sesquicentennial underway, it's important to remember why we preserve these hallowed fields. It is so that others, both of this generation and the ones that come after, can truly appreciate the sacrifices made by our ancestors by standing where they stood. Living history programs, especially battle reenactments, are an important part of this education process. They offer the lure of excitement and spectacle of loud bangs and daring charges to encourage people who might otherwise not visit a small regional or state park to put down their books and walk the ground. Once there, they can experience the Civil War in a much more visceral way a way that will give them something else to ponder and dream about besides open fields and monuments. With its high level of authenticity, and emphasis on historical accuracy, the 150th Anniversary reenactment of Ball's Bluff is the kind of event we can hope to see more of in the coming years.

<http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/balls-bluff/recreating-disaster.html>

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Philadelphia Connection to a Civil War Ironclad Battle

Obtained from Temple Website from Dr Dan Rolph at the Historical Society of PA 10/25/2011

A Civil War Ironclad Battle

One of the most well-known and stirring battles of the American Civil War took place on Sunday, March 9, 1862, at Hampton Roads, Virginia, between two ironclad ships: the Monitor of the Union forces, and the Virginia (better known as the Merrimac) of the Confederate forces.

"The First Naval Conflict Between Iron Clad Vessels," March 9, 1862, lithograph from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania collection

Erroneously, this conflict between ironclads is often mentioned by historians as the first such battle in history. However, famed Korean admiral Yi Sun-Sin, in the last decade of the sixteenth century, had fought off a Japanese invasion in part with his famous geobukseon, or turtle-boats, ironclad vessels equipped with cannons. These vessels were an improvement of a ship purportedly invented in Korea as far back as the fourteenth century during the Joseon Dynasty.

(William Durst, image from the Philadelphia Record Photograph Morgue collection)

The last survivor of the Battle of Hampton Roads between the Monitor and the Merrimac was William Durst, an Austrian-Jewish immigrant, who died in Philadelphia on Tuesday, January 4, 1912. One of 57 men chosen from the Union navy to serve on the Monitor, Durst worked on board the ship from February 14, 1862, to November 6, 1862, having had enlisted as a coal passer. While literally upon his deathbed, he told family and friends his own recollection of what had transpired during the battle. Durst remarked:

"The fog was thick over the water, and we sighted the Merrimac so sudden- like that everybody on both boats were surprised...The two ships were pretty close together. The Merrimac opened fire-two shots-bang, bang: both fell short and splashed into the water...We let fly a broadside...Both ships began banging away at each other. We were at close range. ..The shells bounced off our armor like water off a duck's back..."

In the pilot house of the ship at the time of the battle, a shell exploded and pieces of iron hit Durst's commanding officer, John L. Worden, who was "struck in the face and blinded by splinters." The captain fell down the steps into Durst's arms, who carried him below decks to safety. Now disabled, the Monitor was forced to withdraw, and subsequently the Merrimac returned to Norfolk. However, Durst stated: "History books that say we ran into shallow water where the Merrimac couldn't follow us are wrong. We drove her and saved the Minnesota," another Union ship in the area.

Regardless, Durst's act of heroism earned him decorations for bravery and also prompted Rear Admiral Worden, U.S.N., to thank him personally years later with an autographed letter. Durst cited this letter as his most "treasured Souvenir" of the war.

William Durst had led a somewhat adventuresome life. As a young man, he had left his home and took to the sea. He traveled to the West Indies and eventually came to New York where he enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the New York Naval Yard in 1859. He served in the navy until the end of the Civil War, then moved to Philadelphia and began working at Cramps' Shipyard. Later, he obtained a position in the city's water department at the Spring Garden Pumping Station, where he worked for thirty-five years. At the age of seventy-three, Durst contracted pneumonia, which turned fatal. At the time of his passing, he left his widow Anna, one son, Louis, and one granddaughter.

Newspaper article from Forney's War Press on March 15, 1862, reporting on the Battle at Hampton Roads, Virginia, from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania collection.)

Here is a little tester give you an overview of the battle, I am sure Don and Dave will have a lot more to tell us.



Battle of Ball's Bluff

October 21, 1861

Though a small engagement with relatively few casualties, the rout of Union forces at the Battle of Ball's Bluff had political ramifications that would change the nature of the rest of the war.

Based on misunderstood orders from Maj. Gen. George McClellan, Brig. Gen. Charles Stone sent a small scouting party across the Potomac River in the vicinity of Leesburg, Virginia on the evening of October 20, 1861. In the darkness of night, the inexperienced head of the scouting

party, Captain Chase Phillbrick, mistook a tree line for a line of tents, and returned to Stone with a report of an unguarded camp. Stone decided to take advantage of this opportunity with a nighttime raid and sent about 300 men under Colonel Charles Devens back across the river. When Devens discovered that the line of trees was not, in fact, a campsite, in the early hours of the 21st, he decided to stay and wait for reinforcements, to attempt to reach Leesburg.

As dawn broke on the 21st, Mississippians under Colonel Nathan "Shanks" Evans encountered Devens' advanced units and a sharp skirmish began. Additional Union support or a timely retreat across the river could have ended the matter at this point. However, there were only three small boats available and attempts to use them to bring reinforcements resulted in a terrific bottleneck. Stone sent Col. Edward Baker, a U.S. Senator to take command of the field and assess the situation. Baker immediately began gathering troops to reinforce the men on the Virginia side of the river. When support finally arrived—four hours later—communications between the various Union commanders had been inefficient and often

misunderstood.

In the meantime, the delay gave Confederate commanders time to organize their forces, as well as for fresh units to come offer support. In the midafternoon, Evans led a spirited counter attack. Whatever resistance the Federals could have offered crumbled when Col. Baker fell with a mortal wound. A complete rout ensued and Evans' triumphant Mississippians drove the Yankees over the bluff and into the Potomac river, firing into the backs of those who attempted to swim for safety. Rather than risk escape, many Union soldiers chose to surrender. By the end of the day Evans' when had captured 553 prisoners. By comparison, the Confederates had suffered fewer than 200 total casualties

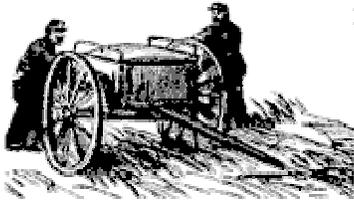
This minor Union defeat at the Battle of Ball's Bluff had severe political ramifications in Washington. The death of Baker, the only U.S. Senator ever to be killed in battle, was particularly shocking, as was the disparity in casualties. As a result, a concerned Congress established the Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, which would lead Union commanders to second-guess their decisions for the rest of the war.

From: <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/ballsbluff.html>



Edward Baker Monument at Ball's Bluff. Baker was likely killed 75 to 100 yards from this marker. (Photo: Rob Shenk)

From: <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/balls-bluff/balls-bluff-history/the-battle-of-balls-bluff.html>



2011-2012 Scheduled Speakers

- September 7, 2011 Dr. Sidney Copel "Civil War Entertainment"
- October 5, 2011 Louis Caban "Lee's Retreat"
- November 2, 2011 Dave Walter and Don Ernsberger "Battle of Ball's Bluff"
- December 7, 2011 Dan Cashin "Confederate Privateers"
- January 4, 2012 Hugh Boyle "Dan Sickles"
- February 1, 2012 Jack Lieberman, Capt USN (Ret) "Commodore Percival Drayton, USN"
- March 7, 2012 Charles Zahn "Musical Presentation" plus Annual Spring Social
- April 4, 2012 Flo Williams "The Postal Service"
- May 2, 2012 Carol Berkin "Civil War Women"
- May TBD Trip to Culps Hill, Gettysburg, PA is being planned by Greg Buss
- May 15, 2012 Annual Banquet – Dennis Frye, Chief Historian, Harpers Ferry National Park "Antietam"

Additional Trips planned possibly to an Exhibit at the Union League and a guided tour of Laurel Hill Cemetery

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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

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**BRANDYWINE VALLEY
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

*c/o Lynne Fulton
144 W. King Street
Malvern, PA 19355*

FIRST CLASS MAIL

