



# THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

## Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

February 2015, Volume 12, Issue 2

**Speaker:** Daniel Davis  
**Topic:** "The Battle of Bentonville"  
**When:** Monday, February 9, 2015  
**Location:** Brock's Riverside Grill  
**Times:** Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

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### Abstract on Daniel Davis, our Scheduled Speaker for Monday, February 12, 2015

by Jim Smithfield

Our speaker on February 12, Daniel Davis, will present one of the most forgotten engagements of the American Civil War, i.e., the *Battle of Bentonville*. Ultimately this battle was fought near the end of the Civil War. Yet, this was the largest battle fought in North Carolina during the war and was overshadowed by those events at Petersburg and Appomattox. The *Battle of Bentonville* took place a few weeks after Appomattox. Mr. Davis will present the highlights, the mistakes, the miscarriages and the hard fighting in the battle. In his presentation, the *Battle of Bentonville*, Davis will discuss the armies and the commanders involved, the events leading up to Bentonville and the actual three day battle itself. Davis will also examine missed opportunities on both sides and he'll place the fighting in the overall context of the Carolinas Campaign.

Daniel Davis is the managing editor and chief historian of the *Emerging Civil War*. He is a graduate of Longwood University with a B.A. in Public History. Davis has worked as a historian at both the Appomattox Court House National Historic Site and at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He resides in Fredericksburg, Virginia, along with his wife Katy and their Beagle mix, Bayla.

Together along with January's speaker, Phillip Greenwalt, Daniel Davis is the co-author of *Bloody Autumn: The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864* and *Hurricane from the Heavens: The Battle of Cold Harbor*. Their next collaboration, *Calamity in Carolina: The Battles Averasboro and Bentonville* should be available at the end of February, 2015.

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### RVCWRT Members your 2015 Membership is Due

Guess what? It's that time of year once again, i.e., when we need to request that each member renew his or her yearly RVCWRT Membership. While other area organizations have of course, raised their membership dues to cover rising costs – we have not needed too. Individual yearly membership is still just \$30.00, family membership is only \$45.00 and our student membership remains \$7.50.

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## **"With Lee's Bad Old Man: 2nd Corps in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864"**

Presented by Phillip S. Greenwalt

Review of the January Program by Greg Mertz

After the Overland Campaign of May-June, 1864, Confederate General Robert E. Lee's best opportunity for a victory that might affect the war was Jubal Early's 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. Phillip Greenwalt asserted that Lee hoped that Early might duplicate the success of "Stonewall" Jackson in that same region just several years earlier. While the bulk of the Confederate army protected Petersburg and Richmond, Lee sent Early with what remained of Jackson's old 2nd Corps back to the Valley to threaten the "*back door*" of the Federal capitol.

Early first needed to head off a Federal threat to Lynchburg from General David Hunter, and the Confederates arrived to defend the city ahead of Hunter's army. After a small battle on June 17 and 18 Hunter withdrew. However, not into the Shenandoah Valley, but into West Virginia, effectively stepping out of Early's way. This gave Early the chance to advance all the way down the Valley and over to the defenses on the outskirts of Washington, DC. After testing Fort Stevens on July 11 and 12 and turning back, Early declared, "we haven't taken Washington, but we've scared Abe Lincoln like hell."

The Federals realized that much of Early's success could be attributed to Federal failures to unite the Federal forces along the way among the many different departments Early passed through enroute to Washington. Federal authorities decided to merge the several Federal departments into the Middle Military Division. While consolidating forces in or near the Shenandoah Valley was logical, it was not so obvious who to select as a commander. Grant proposed George B. McClellan, William B. Franklin and George G. Meade, before Lincoln accepted a fourth candidate Phillip H. Sheridan, the 33 year old commander of the Army of the Potomac's cavalry corps. With the presidential election coming in the fall of 1864, Sheridan was cautioned to avoid any negative press. In fact the most important thing was that he not lose. With the news of the fall of Atlanta to the Federals, and intelligence that said, part of Early's command had departed and returned to Richmond, Sheridan made his move.

The result was the *Third Battle of Winchester*, fought September 19, 1864. Early had one Confederate division east of Winchester, and Sheridan hoped that part of his cavalry could brush that division aside, but Early strengthened his line with two more divisions and the Federal horsemen failed. Sheridan brought up the remainder of the army, increasing the pressure in the fighting east of Winchester. Greenwalt advised us, that the outnumbered Early had to fight a perfect battle to succeed. While he had done quite well in the initial phases of the battle, Early transferred his infantry north of Winchester to reinforce the line east of the city. Just then Sheridan's other body of cavalry swept into the area north of Winchester which the Confederate infantry had just vacated, swept aside the Confederate cavalry and sliced into the Confederate rear. The routed Confederates retreated through Winchester.

The Confederates retreated about 25 miles south to a place called Fisher's Hill. The Confederate cavalry which had performed so poorly at Third Winchester were placed on the Confederate left, exactly where the main Federal attack landed on September 22. The Confederate flank was turned and their retreat continued, this time all the way up the Valley to near Waynesboro. With much of the Shenandoah Valley, the breadbasket of the Confederacy now in Federal hands, the blue-clad soldiers made sure that the fertile landscape would no longer benefit the Confederates. In just two weeks a 92-mile stretch of the Valley was burned. Food, fodder and anything that might contribute to the Confederacy, such as mills, were destroyed.

The Federals thought the campaign over, but Lee had other ideas. Reinforcing Early, the Confederates returned with the Southern horsemen harassing the Federal cavalry. Sheridan, irritated at the annoying enemy cavalry, ordered his cavalry under Alfred T. A. Torbert to "either whip the enemy, or get whipped yourself." With no fodder to be found in the area that had been burned, the Confederate horses were described as looking like "fence posts." The Confederate cavalry was no

match for the larger, well-equipped Federal Cavalry. In the October 9, Battle of Tom's Brook, the Confederates were overwhelmed and a derogatory name for the battle is the Woodstock Races.

Still believing the Confederates to be no further threat, Sheridan went to Washington to confer about his next mission. Upon his leaving the army was camped along the banks of Cedar Creek, about 15 miles south of Winchester.

Without the ability to draw food for their men or animals from the burnt out Valley, the Confederate Army could not stay in the Valley for long. Thus it had to strike as soon as they closed with the unsuspecting Federals. In a daring maneuver, the Confederates launched a surprise attack on the morning of October 19, 1864, and now it was the Federals turn to fall back in complete haste to survive. As hungry Confederates surged through the abandoned Federal camps, some stopped to look for food and other supplies. By mid-morning the Confederate advance had halted. Confederate General John B. Gordon, who had proposed the plan of attack, claimed that he advised against the halt but Early declared "we have won glory enough for one day." Gordon said he could not convince Early otherwise. Early's version later is that the loss in officers and disorganization, including his troops looting, were the reasons for the halt. Sheridan returning to his army that day, told his men "you will sleep in your own tents tonight" and launched an immediate counterattack. Once again the Confederate Army reeled back in complete retreat.

Mortally wounded in the action at Cedar Cheek was Confederate General S. Dodson Ramseur, and when he died at 10:27 a.m. on October 20, Greenwalt declared that Confederate chances in the Shenandoah Valley had died with him. The Confederate survivors of the Battle of Cedar Creek returned to Petersburg and there would never again be a Confederate presence in the Shenandoah Valley for the rest of the war.

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**Remember: Contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance**

To Confirm Your Reservations; Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail [3dognight@Bigplanet.Com](mailto:3dognight@Bigplanet.Com)

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**RVCWRT History Alert Program**

by Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT member Alan Zirkle, provides a totally free service, which notifies subscribers about any/all upcoming local history events in the Fredericksburg general area. This is done via subscribers recorded e-mail address, it concerns upcoming history-related events. RVCWRT members receive Alan's important messages. If you do not now, but would like to receive "*History Alerts*" please send your e-mail to Alan noting this fact @ [az@azirkle.com](mailto:az@azirkle.com).

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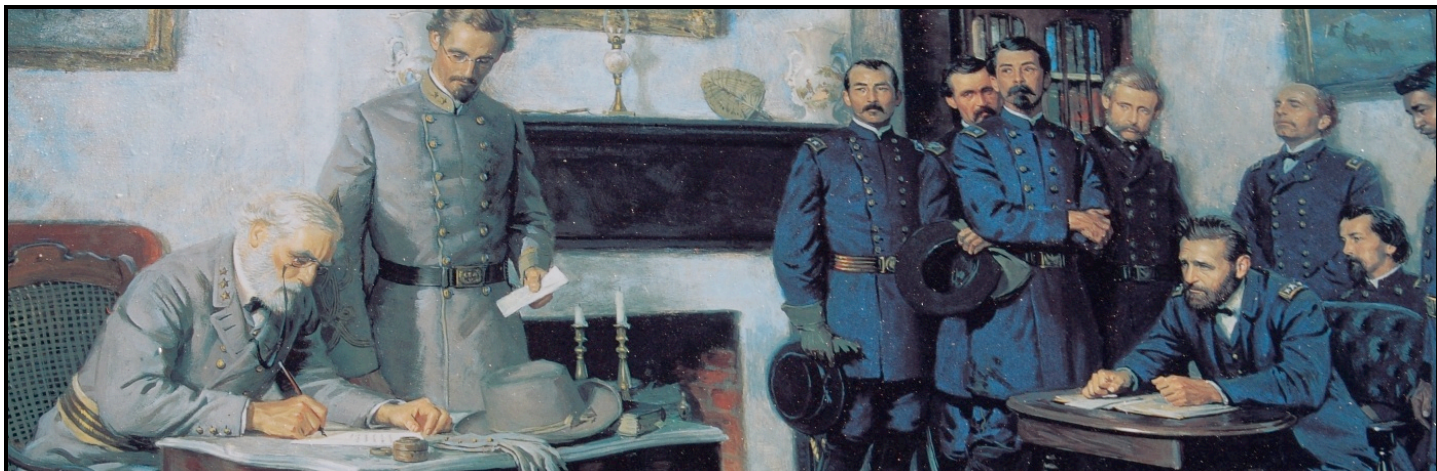
**Parking at Dinner Meetings . . .**

by Jim Smithfield

In recent *Survey Sheets* which all members are asked to complete at Dinner Meetings, several members noted their ongoing concern about *Available Parking* along with *Brocks Parking Lot Lighting* at our monthly Dinner Meetings. If the parking in Brocks lot or along the nearby street is unavailable, there are still other fairly close-by parking options. There is the *Parking Lots* for Train passengers (these lots are open to the public for parking after 6:00 pm daily). Of course, there is also, the downtown *Parking Garage* (just a short walk from across the street), and further along Sofia Street there is usually available on street parking . . .

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## “THE SUN SETS ON THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA”



### RVCWRT 2015 Bus Tour; Saturday & Sunday, April 25 & 26, 2015

#### 150th Anniversary visit to:

- Five Forks Battlefield (April 1, 1865)
- Sailor's Creek Battlefield (April 6, 1865)
- Appomattox Court House (April 8/9, 1865)
- The Museum of the Confederacy

Saturday: 7:30 a.m. — Bus departs Fredericksburg — Bus to Five Forks VC; Box Lunch; Bus to Sailor's Creek VC; Dinner in Farmville at Charley's Waterfront Cafe; Bus to Hampton Inn in Farmville.

Sunday: Breakfast will be at the Hampton Inn; Bus to Museum of the Confederacy; Lunch to be at the Babcock House.  
Bus to Appomattox Court House VC; Bus returns to Fredericksburg.

Cost Per Person: **\$295.00** (If you are sharing a room); **\$362.00** (If you use a single room).

Cost includes: Bus; Room; Fees & Donations; Box Lunch; Dinner; Breakfast; Lunch; Room and Meals for Tour Guide & Bus Driver; Handouts.

*Attendees are responsible for any alcoholic beverages, additional food and beverages, and any purchases made at the various on-site gift stores.*

Reservations: Contact Bob Jones at '3dognight@bigplanet.com' or telephone 540-399-1702

\$100.00 per person deposit required by NLT March 1, 2015.

Send your deposits to RVCWRT, Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404

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#### A Personal Thought

by Jim Smithfield

The above highlighted trip offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the noted battlefields and to visit Appomattox Court House and the McClain house.

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**CSA Colonel Santos Benavides**  
**(The Man and the Legend)**  
**by Jim Smithfield**

Prior to and during the Civil War, Mexican - Texans were known as *Tejanos*. One such Texan, was Santos Benavides. Benavides was born in Laredo, Texas, the seat of Webb County, Texas. Santos Benavides was a direct descendant of Don Tomas Sanchez de la Barrera y Garza, the founder of Laredo. As a young man Santos fought in *Mexico's Federalist-Centralist Wars*, which ravaged the Rio Grande Valley from 1838 through 1840. Benavides became a Texas Ranger and he also went on to become a local Merchant and Rancher. Then, in 1856 he became Mayor of Laredo and by the time of the Civil War, he'd become a leading politician as well as a financial figure in the Laredo area. In 1859, Benavides served as County Judge for Webb County. Upon his enlisting in the Confederate Army he was appointed Captain of the all *Tejano* (Mexican-Texans) unit. This unit was the Confederate 33rd Texas Cavalry, later in the war it was known as the Benavides Regiment. Benavides served as captain of the 33rd Texas until November of 1863, when he was promoted full Colonel of the 33rd Texas Cavalry Regiment.

During the Civil War Colonel Benavides, along with his two younger brothers, Cristobal and Refugio, who were both Captains in the 33rd Texas Cavalry, compiled a brilliant record of border defense. The Benavides brothers are today, still widely heralded as local heroes throughout many parts of south western Texas.

In early 1861, Benavides engaged the forces of the Mexican revolutionary leader *Juan Cortina* at the *Battle of Carrizo*, this occurred when Cortina's army invaded Zapata County, Texas. Then, on May 22 of 1861, at the battle of *Zapata*, Benavides engaged *Juan Cortina*, when he again invaded Texas and Zapata County. This battle is often referred to as the *Second Cortina War*. Santos Benavides and the 33rd drove Cortina back across the border into Mexico. It's interesting to note, that during the Civil War on three separate occasions Benavides with his 33rd Texas Cavalry invaded Mexico, each time it was in retaliation for Unionist-inspired guerilla raids into south western Texas.

Probably one of the greatest contributions that Santos Benavides and his 33rd Texas Cavalry made to the Confederate South was their securing the safe passage of Confederate cotton to Matamoros, Mexico, in 1863. On March 18, 1864, a force of well over two-hundred Union soldiers from the command of Federal Colonel Edmund J. Davis, a Florida native, arrived from Brownsville, Texas to destroy five thousand bales of cotton that were stacked at the San Agustin Plaza. Colonel Benavides, with only a partial command of just forty-two men from his 33rd Texas Cavalry repelled three separate Union attacks at *Zacate Creek* in what is known today as the *Battle of Laredo*. On March 19, 1864, Colonel Benavides forces again defended Laredo against the *Federal First Texas Cavalry*, again defeating the attacking Union forces, commanded by Colonel Davis. Colonel Davis had once offered Benavides a Union generalship if he would just surrender and of course change sides.

After the war, Benavides resumed his merchant business and continued his ranching activities. He continued to be active in local politics for most of the rest of his life. Santos Benavides, was born and died in Laredo, Texas and he is buried there along with his wife, Benavides lived until 1891. As a full Colonel Santos Benavides was the highest ranking officer of Hispanic heritage to serve in the Confederate army. Did you know that there were nearly 13,000 men of Hispanic heritage who fought for the Confederacy . . .

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**Who we are?**

The *Drum and Bugle Newsletter* is published monthly, by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Each month, The Drum and Bugle newsletter is also placed on our web-site, [www.RVCWRT.org](http://www.RVCWRT.org). Yearly membership dues are still just \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and it's still only \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the ongoing preservation of Civil War sites.

The RVCWRT Executive Committee:

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|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
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| Meeting Scribe:      | Greg Mertz        | Dinner Coordinator: | Bob Jones      |

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