“A PERFECT HELL OF BLOOD;
THE BATTLE OF THE CRATER ”
A. WILSON GREENE
TUESDAY, June 12, 2018
BUGBEE SENIOR CENTER
WHITE RIVER JCT., VT

Reminder to the membership: PLEASE be sure to notify Gail if you will be having dinner at the meeting. Reservations are required so we can order adequate servings. In the past, we have accommodated those without reservations and unfortunately didn’t have enough to go around. We need a head count! Thanks for your understanding.

A Perfect Hell of Blood:
The Battle of the Crater

For many students of the Civil War, the Battle of the Crater is synonymous with the entire Petersburg Campaign. The story of the secret construction of a mine, the explosion of 8,000 pounds of black powder, and the disastrous attack of the Union Ninth Corps is reasonably well known. What is less well understood is the context of the Union strategy that precipitated this battle, the specific nature and conduct of the combat, and the reasons why such a promising gambit by the Federal army failed.

A. Wilson Greene, the author of a new study of the first six weeks of the action around Petersburg (A Campaign of Giants, University of North Carolina Press) will examine these topics and more during his presentation. In the process he will address the role of the United States Colored Troops in the planning and execution of the assault, the poisonous relationship between army commander George Gordon Meade and his responsible corps commander, Ambrose Burnside, and the degree of brutality that characterized the fighting—which for many soldiers was unprecedented in their experience.
How was the mine constructed and why was it not discovered by the suspicious Confederates? Were the black troops specially trained to make the attack and why weren’t they allowed to do so? What role did the Confederates play in limiting the initial opportunity presented by the explosion and why did they indulge in such horrific behavior during their counterattacks? Could the attack have succeeded?

These and other issues will be a part of Greene’s presentation.

A. Wilson Greene holds degrees in history from Florida State University and Louisiana State University. He worked at various Civil War sites for the National Park Service for sixteen years and then became the first executive director of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, now the Civil War Trust. In 1995 he became the founding director of Pamplin Historical Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier near Petersburg, where he served for 22 years before retiring in March 2017. Greene is the author of six books and more than twenty published articles. His latest book is *A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg*, which is the first of a projected three-volume study of the entire Petersburg Campaign. He lives with his wife in Walden, Tennessee on the site of a Union encampment during the Chattanooga Campaign.

Other Round Table Meetings and Happening

**June 8—CWRT OF NH ~ A. Wilson Greene (retired head of Pamplin Park Museum) - "A Perfect Hell of Blood: the Battle of the Crater."**

7:15 P.M., Epping Town Hall, 157 Main St, Epping, NH) [www.cwrt-nh.org](http://www.cwrt-nh.org

### GMCWRT BEGINNINGS

**From June 1994:**

**Program**

We are very fortunate to have Mr. Jeffry Wert as our featured speaker. Mr. Wert is one of the rising stars in American Civil War History. He is the author of “From Winchester to Cedar Creek, The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864” (1987), “Mosby’s Rangers” (1990), and has recently finished a biography of James Longstreet. Wert is a frequent contributor to a number of Civil War periodicals including "Civil War Times Illustrated", and he is a much sought after speaker for Round Tables and Civil War seminars and workshops throughout the country. Mr. Wert teaches history at Penns Valley High School in Pennsylvania and resides in Centre Hall, PA. Our thanks to Nick Picerno for arranging Jeff Wert’s visit to our Round Table.

**Announcements**

David Michlovitz will do the book review at our next meeting. And please remember to bring $2 for our book raffle. This month Belford Belles has generously offered to donate a volume; money from the raffle goes directly to the treasury for future charitable gifts.”

As mentioned at our last meeting, the GMCWRT is now a duly registered non-profit corporation, therefore dues and gifts to the group are fully tax deductible. Thanks again to Attorneys Tim Wells for taking care of this for the group.

**MAY ROUND TABLE**

**Peter Sinclair**

The meeting was well attended. We thanked Gail by applause for all the work she did making this years trip so successful. She hopes next year's trip will be to Brandy Station and Culpepper.

The theme of the night was "How I got interested in the civil war?" None of the speakers scheduled to speak attributed this to a civil war soldier in their family, although Whit, who volunteered to give his story, did talk about how his grandfather told how one of his ancestors passed the exam to become an officer in a Colored Troop regiment.

Peter Sinclair explained many common causes that did not apply to him. Rather he became interested because of his town in Vermont, Ryegate, being a granite town, made civil war monuments, as recorded in their 1913 town history. Subsequently the new Ryegate Historical Society invited Jack Anderson to give a talk on Vermont in the civil war and Jack invited him to attend meetings of the round table.

Bob Coburn told of growing up near a battlefield at a time when you were allowed to collect artifacts and this let to his interest. He lived in Virginia at the time. He took a picture of the Burnside Bridge under beautiful lighting which he showed us and which he has had for many years.

Jack Anderson attributed his interest to an inspiring high school history teacher. He read all the volumes produced by Bruce Catton that were published in the 50s and 60s as well as the American Heritage volume on the civil war that use Catton text but is highly illustrated.

John Mudge also attributed his interest to an inspiring high school teacher. He was assigned to work on a project on Antietam. He still has the report that he produced in 1959 as well as cards that he used in the oral report on the project. John also did a little presentation on the origin of the name of the U.S.S. Kearsage. Was it after a mountain near Warner, NH, or the one near Conway, NH? He concluded the former.

**Troiani Prints and Books**

Thanks to Kay Jorgensen, who donated the prints, and to Art Stacy for traveling to Tunbridge to pick them up, the Round Table has three fine prints by Don Troiani: *Bronze Guns and Iron Men; Rebel Yell - Lee’s Texans; and Grey Comanches* - all nicely framed. These will be used to raise
money for our treasury - just how has yet to be decided.
Thanks, Kay and Art!

June Treasurers Report

Starting Balance: $3496.17
Expenses:
Maple Street Catering: $375.20 (meals, tax, gratuity)
Paper Plates and forks: $10.00
Deposit: $409 (meals, donations, raffle, dues)
Petty Cash: $143
Ending Balance: $3662.97

WORLD WAR 1 GROUP

This group meets monthly on the 4th Monday of the month at 1 p.m. in the Veteran’s Administration hospital cafeteria. If you want to come or want more information, contact Peter Sinclair [802-584-3280] or David Curtin [802-633-2536]. PLEASE NOTE THE MEETING PLACE CHANGE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy Birthday to Round Table members
Susan Cuttings and Ed Miville who celebrate their birthdays in June.

CAMP LETTERMAN
GETTYSBURG

Update from Glen Hayes:

Working with the Vermont historian, Howard Coffin, he was able to get a joint resolution for the Vermont Legislature to S&A Homes calling on them to save the 17 acres of Camp Letterman. Howard said he is going to be on two local shows and being interviewed by the states largest newspaper.

From RT member John Dumville:

J.R.S. 59. Joint resolution supporting the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association’s effort to preserve the Camp Letterman hospital site.
Whereas, Vermonters honor the memory of Dr. Henry Janes, the Waterbury village physician and U.S. Army surgeon sent to Gettysburg immediately after the battle to take charge of all the wounded, and
Whereas, Doctor Janes established the main hospital, called Camp Letterman, east of the village of Gettysburg, and
Whereas, much of the site of Camp Letterman is part of a 191-acre parcel that the land developer S&A Homes owns and plans to develop for townhouses, and
Whereas, an extensive list of Civil War-related associations, historians, and historical societies have asked that the 17 key acres of Camp Letterman be preserved, and
Whereas, those precious acres include the area where the tents containing the wounded were located, and

Whereas, Vermont wounded were treated there, including members of the 1855 Second Vermont Brigade that broke the right flank of Pickett’s Charge, and
Whereas, the wounded Vermonters were among the 4,000 Union and Confederate soldiers who were patients at Camp Letterman, and not all of these patients survived, and
Whereas, if the 17 acres that were a part of Camp Letterman are not preserved, a major Civil War site, important to the Civil War history of Vermont, will be lost, and
Whereas, Vermonters have long rallied to the preservation of sites that are dear to our State’s and our nation’s history, now therefore be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives: That the General Assembly supports the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association’s effort to preserve the Camp Letterman hospital site and requests that S&A Homes preserve these 17 acres of historic ground, and be it further
Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association and to S&A Homes in State College, Pennsylvania

NEW HAMPSHIRE CIVIL WAR FLAGS

There was a nice Editor’s Note in the May NH Magazine regarding the NH Statehouse which has a “Hall of Flags.” As we have mentioned before, there are 88 Civil War blood-stained and battle-scarred flags that desperately need to be preserved. The editor, Rick Broussard, mentioned that the Hall is at the top of the NH Preservation Alliance’s “Seven to Save” list of endangered State properties and that the State is selling commemorative bottles of whiskey with proceeds going to this preservation effort. The bottles are decorated to look like a small section of the Hall of Flags. So, please consider purchasing one of these special bottles if you’re in New Hampshire.

2018 Green Mountain CWRT Journey
Gail Blake

Our journey began Thursday May 3rd with an early morning departure from WRJct. Smooth sailing along the way, no major traffic issues, and plenty of room and food on the bus for everyone. Best of all, Bob Spaulding was behind the wheel! Arrived at our hotel, the Fairfield Inn in Laurel MD with plenty of time to enjoy dinner and rest up for the next day.
Friday, we enjoyed breakfast at our hotel and headed off to spend the day in Annapolis MD. We finally found our way to the US Naval Academy Visitors Center and met our guide for a 75-minute tour of the grounds. Nearly two hours later, (our tour was excellent, just much longer than anticipated) we returned to the Visitor’s Center and met our guides from Watermark Tours for a walking tour of Civil War Annapolis. We split into two groups and headed out for a very, very informative walk around historic downtown Annapolis, including tales of James Waddell and the CSS Shenandoah.
We enjoyed a picnic lunch at the William Paca house and were treated to an excellent presentation on CW Annapolis and its parole camps. Then it was back to the hotel to
Freshen up, some folks stayed in Laurel for the evening and ten of us headed into DC to watch the Nationals take on the Phillies at Nationals Park. Despite a rain delay, and some not so tasty hot dogs, a good time was had by all. Saturday morning the breakfast staff at the hotel graciously opened early so we could fuel up for our adventures of the day. We headed off to meet our guide, Dave Taylor at Mount Olivet Cemetery in DC and began our look at the Lincoln Conspiracy and those involved. Can’t say enough good things about this incredible young man, he was absolutely terrific. Dave walked us around Mount Olivet, led us to Mary Surratt’s alleged gravesite and more. Then we were off to Fort McNair to visit Grant Hall, the site of the conspirator’s “trial.” We were greeted by none other than Dr. Mudd and Mary Surratt (who just happens to be Dave’s wife)! All of the reenactors shared stories and accounts of the trial, absolutely fascinating stuff. The courtroom has been restored to closely resemble its appearance in 1865. Many of the props, costumes, and furniture from the film, The Conspirator are in use and on display. Although a tennis court now covers most of the site of the gallows, there are marks on the court and the lawn nearby that indicate the location. Highly recommend that anyone at all interested in the assassination and trial take the time to visit. Grant Hall is open four times a year. Information can be found on the Fort McNair website. We enjoyed lunch at the Wok and Roll restaurant, otherwise known as Mary Surratt’s Boarding house. Not much on the inside to indicate that but it is well marked on the outside. We decided that should any of us win the lottery we would make the restaurant owners an offer they couldn’t refuse and have the building restored as it was in the 1860’s. After lunch we toured the National Museum of Health and Medicine, excellent exhibits there, including the bullet that killed Lincoln. Then we were off to the Congressional Cemetery for a look at a smattering of the graves of people somehow connected to the assassination. Dave has really done his homework and isn’t finished yet! We bid Dave a fond farewell and enjoyed dinner at the American Legion in Greenbelt MD, very nice folks there. Good food too!

Sunday, we traveled to Old Town Alexandria VA. Spent some time wandering around admiring the city before embarking on a CW walking tour of Old Town and some discussion related to the PBS series Mercy Street. Beautiful area and so much history. Then off to our picnic lunch at Fort Ward. Following lunch, we located the Fort Ward Museum, but only after a logistical blunder or two...I am not much of a navigator. Nice spot and great little museum. Then to DC and some free time before we dined at The Dubliner. Great company, excellent food, way too much food! Prior to returning to the hotel Bob treated us to a short driving tour of the city, then it was off to our hotel to prepare for our journey home.

Monday came all too soon as it usually does on our journeys. Our drive home went smoothly with talk of next year’s trip and of course, our annual “mileage contest.” We arrived back in WRJet on time and before dark! Amazing! Thanks to everyone for a wonderful trip and I look forward to traveling with you all again next year!

DUES ARE DUE! PLEASE BRING THEM TO OUR JUNE MEETING OR MAIL THEM TO GAIL BLAKE, 55 Orizzonto Road, White River, VT 05001. Thank you for supporting our Round Table.

If you haven’t paid by the end of June you risk not receiving future newsletters, either via e-mail or regular mail, as well as notifications of Civil War events, etc.

Green Mountain Civil War Round Table
March 2018—March 2019 Membership Rates

Name: ______________________________
Address: ____________________________
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Home Phone _________________________
Work Phone __________________________
E-mail address ____________________________

___ Single $20.00 (includes newsletter)
___ Student $10.00 (includes newsletter)
___ Two Person $35.00 (includes newsletter)
___ Family $50.00 (includes newsletter)
___ Newsletter subscription alone – 9 issues $10.00

Is this a new membership ___ renewal ___

Please make checks payable to: Green Mountain Civil War Round Table

This is our last meeting until September.
Have a wonderful summer!