



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
October 2024, Volume 21, Issue 10

Speaker: Chris Mackowski
Topic: “Moments of Contingency and the Rise of Grant”
When: Monday October 14, 2024
Location: Brock’s Riverside Grill
Times: Social Time Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm
Our Website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org
Our Facebook: www.facebook.com/rvcwrt

Chris Mackowski “Moments of Contingency and the Rise of Grant”

Chris Mackowski, Ph.D., is a Copie Hill Civil War Fellow at the American Battlefield Trust and the editor-in-chief and co-founder of Emerging Civil War. He is the series editor of the award-winning Emerging Civil War Series, and author, co-author, or editor of more than twenty-five books. Chris is a professor of journalism and mass communication in the Jandoli School of Communication at St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, NY, and historian-

in-residence at Stevenson Ridge, a historic property on the Spotsylvania battlefield in central Virginia.

Momentous events surrounded Ulysses S. Grant's life. During the Civil War, Grant earned President Abraham Lincoln's complete confidence. The general made his fair share of mistakes during the Civil War, but he was a great wartime leader. He learned from his mistakes, listening to and asking questions of his advisors.

Momentous events during a president's term, and his response thereto, define his legacy. Theodore Roosevelt acknowledged this fact, as he said, "*a man has to take advantage of his opportunities; but the opportunities have to come. If there is not the war, you don't get the great general; if there is not a great occasion you don't get the great statesman; if Lincoln had lived in times of peace no one would have known his name now.*" That the circumstances of a presidency define the president in the eyes of future generations is exemplified by our nation's collective memory of Ulysses S. Grant.

**"I Did Not Lose One Inch of Ground": Assessing the Union Defense of
Longstreet's Attack at Second Manassas
by T.J. Bradley
A Review of the September 2024 Program by Greg Mertz**

The Battle of Second Manassas is arguably Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's most impressive victory. Even though Lee would eventually inflict a lopsided defeat upon the Federal army at Fredericksburg and would overcome an extreme disadvantage in numbers to achieve a victory at Chancellorsville, neither triumph altered the strategic situation. But Second Manassas was a decisive battlefield conquest that not only took Gen. John Pope's army out of the field, but also opened the way for Lee to make his first invasion of the north where he had the potential to fight a battle that could well have been a war altering battle bringing some level of foreign recognition for the Confederacy.

Our speaker, T.J. Bradley, maintained that we should challenge some of the assumptions that have been made about the battle. While Lee's conquest at Second Manassas was extraordinary, Bradley argued that the degree of

the Confederate success has been exaggerated and therefore, the battle is misunderstood. As early as the day after the battle, high ranking officers on both sides spread inaccurate information about the condition of Pope's army when the fighting ended.

Lee's own report stated that the Confederates were "driving the enemy with great carnage from each successive position until 10 p.m., when darkness put an end to the battle and the pursuit." Federal Gen. George B. McClellan forwarded information to Washington that one of his aides claimed Pope's army was so badly beaten that it had become a rout and 20,000 of its soldiers were stragglers. Several units from McClellan's had been stripped from his army and given to Pope, so he had a vested interest in providing evidence showing that he and not Pope deserved to command the largest Federal army in the field.

Bradley addressed just what the Confederates were actually doing when it got dark and whether darkness was the reason why the action came to a halt. He also discussed to what degree of discipline the Federal army maintained in the retreat.

Even Pope's actions reflected the belief that his army had disintegrated. He ordered one of his corps commanders, Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks to destroy a stockpile of Federal supplies that he felt might fall into Confederate hands. Another corps leader, Gen. William B. Franklin, was ordered to place his VI corps in the defenses at Centreville to repulse a Confederate pursuit. But Pope had overreacted, and Franklin's troops did not fire a single shot at any Confederates in pursuit of Pope's men.

On the last day of the August 28-30, 1862 battle of Second Manassas, the Federal left had just failed in their attack against the Deep Cut, when the Confederates unleashed some 25,000 men under Confederate Gen. James Longstreet against the Federal left and rear. The Federal reaction to Longstreet's attack, coincidentally confronted the assault with a "defense in depth." Longstreet struck four different Federal positions, one right behind the other. The troops in each position presented a greater degree of resistance than the previous one. Besides inflicting losses on the attackers, each successive position slowed down the Confederate attack, buying time for troops in subsequent lines to form or receive reinforcements. The second and third positions were posted on Chinn Ridge, forcing the Confederates to

change their axis of attack, which in turn cut off four Confederate brigades from participating in the subsequent phases of the assault.

The stand made at the first three positions enabled the Federal army to create a very formidable fourth and final line in the road cut of the Sudley Road as it crossed the western slope of Henry Hill. Confederate Gen. G.T. Anderson assaulted the Federal Sudley Road position, and even though he had just fought in the horrific conflict at the West Woods at Antietam before writing his report of Second Manassas, he declared the Federal resistance on Henry Hill to be “the most murderous fire I ever witnessed.”

While the Confederates would turn the left flank of the Sudley Road position, Federals launched counterattacks to regain the ground, and at times even harassed the Confederate right. Capt. Robert Buchanan, commanding a brigade of U.S. Regulars on Henry Hill, wrote, “I did not lose one inch of ground” – which Bradley selected as the title of the program.

The fighting by the Federals opposing Longstreet’s flank attack inflicted more casualties on those men in four hours than Jackson suffered in his two days of fighting at Second Manassas. Longstreet’s advance was not stopped by darkness. It did not halt because of any Confederate failure or mistake. It was stopped by the tenacity of the Federal soldiers who had patched together a last line on Henry Hill along the Sudley Road, holding it until after darkness.

Not only did the blue-clad soldiers stop Longstreet’s men, but they prevented them from reaching their objective of Henry Hill. In doing so, Pope’s men deprived the Confederates of the position they felt would deliver them a complete victory. The Union army posted on Henry Hill meant that Confederates could not use that same eminence to shell them as they crossed Bull Run in their retreat.

Federal forces secured both the Stone Bridge over the Bull Run and nearby Farm Ford until after midnight. The Federal retreat across the stream was orderly, and soon Bull Run was an obstacle to any Confederate pursuit, which would also need to take place in the dark. The Confederates did not pursue Pope’s defeated army and did not do any damage that could have caused a rout.

It was the abilities of Pope's soldiers that brought Longstreet's flank attack to a halt, prevented a Confederate pursuit and prevented Lee from gaining a complete victory.

Friends of Central Virginia Battlefield Trust

As you know CVBT is a land trust. We focus on purchasing endangered battlefield properties. We do produce a large three-day annual conference, standalone events and need to interpret and maintain our lands, we need help in all of these. In the past, CVBT has had individuals from organizations assist us, and we are grateful, but now we would like to create an official volunteer group who would enjoy being part of CVBT's volunteer core.

We have created "**The Friends of CVBT.**" The intent is for this all-volunteer group is to be the "On Call" core of CVBT's volunteer group assisting in events and battlefield related needs. Active volunteer members will have the unique opportunity to be involved with events hosted by nationally acclaimed historians, assist in tours, and work on preserved battlefields. Participating volunteers will also be enrolled in the membership ranks of CVBT every year they contribute. CVBT will provide each volunteer with a CVBT volunteer staff shirt and CVBT official hat to wear at events or whenever wanted. We will be limiting this new group to 18 volunteers.

CVBT is now beginning our 27th year of preserving our local battlefields, the very battlefields you study and walk upon. We would be honored to have you join the ranks of CVBT volunteers to help us further our mission of preserving our Nation's history.

If interested please email our Executive Director **Terry**

Rensel at executivedirector@cvbt.org .

Office: 540-374-0900

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF FREDERICKSBURG (CWRTF)

CWRTF meets 9 times a year on designated Wednesdays at Mary Washington Jepson Alumni Executive Center, 1119 Hanover Street. They offer a buffet dinner followed by a Civil War-themed presentation. Reservations are required. Speaker/topic schedule can be found on their

website at www.cwrwf.org, and will be updated here when the schedule is released for 2025.

October 23, 2024 Clay Mountcastle - Confederate Guerillas

November 20, 2024 Frank O'Reilly - Ambrose Burnside's Military Career

January 22, 2025 Charlie McDaniel – Witness to History: The Sentry
Box House

February 26, 2025 Zachery Fry – A Republic in the Ranks: Loyalty and
Dissent in the Army of the Republic

March 26, 2025 John Coski – Hunter Davidson (CSN)

April 23, 2025 Kevin Pawlak – Bristoe Station

May 26, 2025 Barton Myers – General Winfield Scott

June 18, 2025 Patrick Schroeder - Forgotten Friday: April 7, 1865
Actions in Cumberland County VA

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. The newsletter is available on our website at www.rappvalleycivilwar.org. Yearly membership dues are \$40 for individuals and \$50 for families. Students are free. Membership is open to anyone interested in the military, political and social history of the American Civil War.

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