



**THE DRUM & BUGLE**  
**Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**  
**January 2024, Volume 21, Issue 1**

**Speaker:** Dwight Hughes  
**Topic:** “The Naval Civil War in Theaters Bear and Far”  
**When:** Monday January 8, 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](http://www.rappvalleycivilwar.org)  
**Our Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/rvcwrt](http://www.facebook.com/rvcwrt)

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**Dwight Hughes “The Naval Civil War in Theaters Near and Far”**

Dwight Hughes is a public historian, author, and speaker in Civil War naval history. Dwight graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1967 with a major in History and Government. He served twenty years as a Navy surface warfare officer on most of the world’s oceans in ships ranging from destroyer to aircraft carrier and with river forces in Vietnam (Bronze Star for Meritorious Service, Purple Heart). Lieutenant Commander Hughes taught Naval ROTC at the University of Rochester, earning an MA in Political Science. He later

earned an MS in Information Systems Management from USC. In his final sea tour, Commander Hughes planned and conducted convoy exercises with over twenty ships of the Maritime Prepositioned Force, Diego Garcia, and Indian Ocean. Dwight's second career was software engineering, primarily in geographic feature naming data and electronic mapping under contract for the U.S. Geological Survey. A ridge in Antarctica is named after him in recognition of contributions to Antarctic databases and information services. Dwight's current calling melds a love of the sea and ships with a lifetime study of naval history. His commitment is to advance the understanding of our Civil War naval heritage and to communicate that heritage in an educational and entertaining manner especially for new generations.

In his classic treatise of strategy, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz discussed "different factors of space, mass, and time" related to battle including the "theater of operations," which he defined as "a sector of the total war area which has protected boundaries and so a certain degree of independence." Combat theaters of the Civil War are identified as the Eastern, the Western, and the Trans-Mississippi. However, the naval side of the war also can be defined in terms of theaters, which interact with but are distinct from military counterparts. They are the Wide Oceans, the Offshore Blockade, Peripheral Coasts and Harbors, and Heartland Rivers. Bounded primarily by land-water interfaces, some of the wet theaters overlay terrestrial counterparts while others extended far beyond familiar battlefields to the far side of the world. Each demonstrated unique characteristics and posed unique challenges to both navies. This presentation discusses distinctive strategic, tactical, technological, and command characteristics of naval theaters and their contributions to land campaigns. Based on an essay in *The Civil War on the Water: Favorite Stories and Fresh Perspectives from the Historians at Emerging Civil War* (Savas Beatie, 2023).

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**"Call Out the Cadets: The Battle of New Market, May 15, 1864"**

**by Sarah Kay Bierle**

**A Review of the December 2023 Program by Greg Mertz**

Our speaker, Sarah Bierle is a native of California, and as she developed an interest in the battle of New Market in the Shenandoah Valley, she sought a California connection with the fight. Her program began with an overview of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and the battle. Her talk concluded with

biographies of the lives of eight VMI cadets who fought at New Market and later moved to California.

VMI was founded in 1839 for the dual purpose of providing a force to guard the state arsenal in Lexington, and to do so with students at a school that would train its pupils to become militia officers in their home towns. Their mission was centered on the idea that the nation relied upon the citizen-soldier. While initially attended by only Virginia residents, by the time of the Civil War VMI had also accepted students from other states, with some cadets from North Carolina engaged at New Market.

VMI had operated for a couple of decades by the time of the Civil War, and many of its graduates fulfilled the school's purpose by becoming officers in volunteer units recruited for the war. Among the many former VMI professors and alumni who would play prominent roles in the war, were Thomas J. Jackson, Elijah F. Paxton, Gabriel Wharton, Billy Mahone, Stapleton Crutchfield, Joseph Latimer and George S. Patton (ancestor of the famous World War II general).

The school operated during the Civil War, and the cadets went into the field on several occasions prior to the May 15, 1864 battle at New Market, but they had never actually been engaged in combat on any of their other excursions. Even when they ventured to join Gen. John Breckinridge's troops in the Shenandoah Valley, it was hoped that they would be used to guard baggage or perform some other task that would free up the maximum number of some 4,000 troops to fight in the battle. In May of 1864, the cadets ranged in age from 15-25 years. Many of the cadets did not want to be at VMI; they were sent to the school by their families to keep them out of the war. Studying was not as exciting, they thought, as if they were allowed to join the military.

At New Market, Federal Gen. Franz Sigel sent his 6,000 men into battle in a piecemeal manner. The outnumbered Confederates drove the Federals back from three different positions, the final one on the Bushong farm. When a gap materialized in the Confederate line on the Bushong farm, Breckinridge reluctantly plugged the breach with the cadets. Ten VMI cadets were killed and some fifty were wounded. The Federals retreated from the field but were able to burn a bridge behind them which effectively stopped the Confederate pursuit.

In the aftermath, the cadets were briefly sent to Richmond, where veterans of the Stonewall Brigade had heard of their role at New Market, and the story of the cadets in the battle began to build. Many of the cadets wrote of their experiences, reflecting on New Market and the importance of what they had done. Bierle said that for many of these cadets, New Market was a threshold moment between boyhood and manhood. Bierle also felt that those men who survived New Market were very driven to do something special with their lives, and such would be the case for the lives of eight of the New Market cadets who went west to California after the war.

Eskine Mayo Ross, from the class of 1865 was born in Culpeper in 1845 and died in Los Angeles in 1928. Ross was in and out of VMI in the early years of the war, leaving the institute to join and fight in his uncle's command, then returning to school in 1862. He helped to form a fraternity at VMI in 1865. An uncle invited Ross to join him in California in 1868, where he studied law and became a lawyer and a judge. Ross twice won election to be a justice of the California Supreme Court, before returning to the practice of law in Los Angeles, when he was appointed by President Grover Cleveland to be a judge of a U.S. district court and then a Circuit Court of Appeals. With pistol in hand, Ross faced down an anti-Chinese riot and he helped to found the city of Glendale. In his will he gave \$100,000 to the American Bar Association, \$40,000 to VMI and \$20,000 to the children's hospital in Los Angeles, and \$5,000 to the Salvation Army of Los Angeles.

After attending several other schools, James Andrew Brown joined the corps of cadets in April, 1864, so had been at VMI a very short time before marching off to New Market as part of the class of 1867. After the war, Brown lived in Kentucky and then to California for a brief time before coming back to the Old Dominion to study at the Medical College of Virginia and becoming a physician. It is not clear why Brown went to California; he may have gone feeling the climate would be good for his health.

James T. Douglas was from the class of 1865. He served in the Stonewall Brigade at the start of the war before being sent to study at VMI in 1862. After New Market, Douglas rejoined the Confederate army, was captured in August 1864. Federal authorities thought that Douglas might be a spy, but ended up sending him to the Camp Chase, Ohio prisoner of war camp until the end of the war. In September 1865 he became an assistant professor

and commandant at the Maryland Military Institute. Douglas followed that with teaching for a few years near Memphis, Tennessee. He opened a school in Liberty, Virginia and began studying law. He became a San Francisco lawyer and was injured in a 1906 earthquake.

James Maurice Hill was in the class of 1867 and was engaged in farming and canning after the war. When he retired, he moved to California.

George Washington Gretter was born in North Carolina, and graduated eleventh out of the fourteen in the class of 1864. He became a teacher and then moved to Stockton, California to try his hand at farming for five years. Though staying in the state, Gretter switched back to teaching and also became a principal. He was the captain of the guard that fired the last salute over the grave of Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

Levi Welch went to war with the Kanawha Rifles with his brother, who was killed early in the war. He then went to VMI and was part of the class of 1864. Welch was a cadet 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in command of a cannon at New Market. After the war, he was a bookkeeper in Kentucky, a cattle rancher in California, and he returned to West Virginia for the final eleven years of his life.

George Edward Raum witnessed the hanging of John Brown on the eve of the war and was a scout for Gen. Joseph E. Johnston before starting his studies at VMI in February 1864 as part of the class of 1867. After New Market, Raum served as one of Mosby's Rangers. After the war he claimed to have taken a 20-year world tour that included studying art in Paris, having an audience with the Pope, attending the coronation of the Czar of Russia and as an archaeologist in Africa. When in California, his collection was displayed in a San Francisco museum.

Oliver Perry Evans played a unique role in the battle of New Market. Standing six foot two inches tall, Evans was the color bearer for the corps of cadets. When the cadets had been ordered to drop to the ground, Evans stood upright alone, proudly displaying the colors. Then Cadet Henry Wise shouted for them to stand up and charge a Federal battery. Evans mounted the top of a captured Federal artillery caisson, waving his flag. After the war, Evans attended Lexington's other higher institution, Washington College,

where he studied law. He went to San Francisco where he practiced law, served as a professor and as a California Supreme Court justice.

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## **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](mailto:executivedirector@cvbt.org) .

Office: 540-374-0900

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## **More from the CVBT**

The Central Virginia Battlefield Trust (CVBT) will be hosting a seminar in the spring. The event will take place on March 9, 2024. Some speakers will include Kevin Pawlak, Ted Savas, and John Hennessy. Information for the event can be found at the website provided.

<https://www.cvbt.org/2024springseminar>

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## **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.cwrftf.org](http://www.cwrftf.org), as well as below.

### CWRTF Schedule

January 24, 2024 – Bert Dunkerly, *THE BROWN'S ISLAND EXPLOSION*

February 28, 2024 – Scott Boyd, *THE HUNLEY*

March 27, 2024 – Christian Keller, *SOUTHERN STRATEGIES*

April 24, 2024 – Doug Crenshaw, *RICHMOND SHALL NOT BE GIVEN UP*

May 22, 2024 – Gary Gallagher, *PATHWAYS TO NEW NATIONAL LOYALTY*

June 19, 2024 – Paul Brueske, *THE LAST SIEGE: THE 1865 MOBILE CAMPAIGN*

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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. The newsletter is available on our website at [www.rappvalleycivilwar.org](http://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.

**Newsletter Editor and Webmaster:** John Roos

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## **The RVCWRT Executive Committee**

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