

Banner

of the **Blue and Gray**

Newsletter of the Frederick County Civil War Roundtable
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<http://frederickcountycivilwarrrt.org>



212th Meeting

April 2012

Vol. 38 Issue 8

Sesquicentennial Diary

Shiloh, Bloody Shiloh

Why Did It Happen?

By Gail Stephens

Shiloh – even the name of this great battle fought on April 6 and 7, 1862, is haunting. At Shiloh, three great armies fought each other with a grim determination that resulted in almost 24,000 casualties and a profound revelation for both the Union and Confederacy: This war was no picnic; it was a bloodbath. The bloodshed associated with Shiloh has shrouded its significance. Why was there a fight in remote, southeastern Tennessee?

Shiloh was, in fact, part of the Union campaign to control the Mississippi Valley and split the Confederacy. Robert E. Lee understood its importance when he wrote in 1862 that if the Mississippi Valley was lost the “Atlantic states are ruined.”

The Union campaign began in February 1862 when an army led by Ulysses S. Grant and ships of the “brown water” Navy seized Forts Henry and Donelson, the two Confederate forts guarding the great Tennessee River and Cumberland River highways into the South. With his line of defense broken, the Confederate commander in the West, General Albert Sidney Johnston, retreated with his army to Corinth in northeastern Mississippi, where he joined General P.G.T. Beauregard and his force.

Corinth was a key point: the junction of the Mobile and Ohio and Memphis and Charleston railroads. Control of the Memphis and Charleston line was crucial; one Confederate secretary of war referred to it as the “vertebrae of the Confederacy.”

Union commanders also understood the importance of Corinth; and Major General Henry Halleck, Union commander in the West, sent Grant and his Army of the Tennessee to establish a foothold near Corinth. Halleck’s plan was to reinforce Grant with Major General Don Carlos Buell’s Army of the Ohio and himself lead the joint force of 66,000 men to take

(Continued on page 3, see **Shiloh**)



April Meeting

Thursday, April 19, 2012

7:30 PM

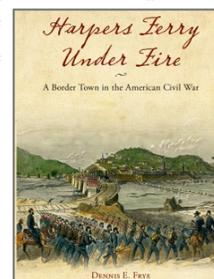
at the
**National Museum
of Civil War Medicine
48 East Patrick Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701**

**Speaker: Dennis E. Frye, Chief Historian
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park**

**Subject: *Harpers Ferry Under Fire:
A Border Town in the American Civil War***

Our Speaker

From the October night of John Brown’s raid in 1859 through the end of the Civil War in 1865, Harpers Ferry was deeply involved in the conflict. Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park will discuss his recently released book, *Harpers Ferry Under Fire*, which explores the impact of those tumultuous years on the scenic small town overlooking the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. Situated at the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley in what was then Virginia, Harpers Ferry occupied a strategic location on the Baltimore and Ohio



Railroad and endured the constant movement of Union and Confederate troops throughout the War.

Prior to the War, Harpers Ferry was a busy industrial center, home to a federal armory and arsenal, one of only two such facilities in the nation. From 1801 to 1861, the armory produced more than 600,000 weapons. But things changed dramatically for the town in April 1861. Virginia seceded from the Union and within 24 hours federal troops burned the armory and arsenal to prevent seizure by Confederates. Arms production at Harpers Ferry never resumed, and the town changed hands eight times during the course of the War.

Harpers Ferry Under Fire: A Border Town in the American Civil War is one of many books by Dennis



Harpers Ferry in 1865, looking east Frye. A lecturer and Civil War historian, Dennis has appeared on PBS, the History Channel, A&E and Discovery. He has helped to produce award-winning TV features on Antietam and John Brown and recruited and coordinated nearly 3,000 reenactors for the film, *Gods and Generals*.

Dennis also is a prominent Civil War battlefield preservationist. He is co-founder and first president of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation, as well as co-founder and former president of what is now the Civil War Trust, where he helped save battlefields in 12 states. In addition, Dennis serves as a historical tour guide for organizations such as the Smithsonian, National Geographic, many colleges and universities, and Civil War Round Tables.

Currently he is writing a book entitled *September Suspense: The Union Uncertain*, which is scheduled for release later this year to coincide with the anniversary of the first invasion of the North and the Maryland Campaign. Dennis and his wife Sylvia live near Antietam Battlefield, where they have restored the home that was used by General Burnside as his post-Antietam headquarters.

Next Month's Speaker

At our next meeting, May 17, 2012, at 7:30 pm, Dan Toomey, Curator of the B&O Railroad Museum will discuss the 50th and 75th Reunions of Civil War Veterans.

The Prez Sez



Members, this May brings an end to my term as FCCWRT President, as I have decided to leave the Board. I have held the position of President for seven years now and, although it has been a special personal pleasure to me, it's time to move along.

During these years, I have been pleased to see our Roundtable explode with active memberships! With your steadfast participation in all of our raffles, we have been able to donate in fine form to the Civil War Preservation Trust (now Civil War Trust); and they have been most grateful. We are now planning a local wayside marker, partial payment of which will come from the profits of our raffles and other fundraisers. Please do continue your generous support of all FCCWRT activities.

I'm ready for someone else to "take the helm" and am looking forward to seeing the new President continue our traditions, as did all those who have gone before me. It pleases me to know FCCWRT will continue to play a part in educating the public on our Civil War, which, I believe, is the most amazing period in our history.

The Banner will announce in next month's issue the new roster of Board members who will be up for your vote.

Donnie

Gail Stephens to give talk and tour in April



On Sat., April 14 at 1 pm, our very own Gail Stephens will present "Shiloh: The Devil's Own Day." She will delve into the commanders and their armies, the battle itself and the outcome. The

lecture will take place at the newly refurbished Thomas house at the Monocacy Battlefield. Gail is the author of *Shadow of Shiloh; Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*. **Reservations are required.**

On Sat., April 28, at 1 pm, Gail will lead a tour of the Monocacy Battlefield. She will examine Lew Wallace's finest hour and how in July 1864 the Confederates came so close to succeeding in their campaign to take Washington. The tour will take approximately 2½ to 3 hours.

For further information and reservations, contact the Monocacy Visitor Center, 301-662-3515.

Shiloh (continued from page 1)

Corinth. Control of these two crucial railroads would bring the Union one step closer to control of the Mississippi Valley. In mid-March, Grant's army occupied Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River, only 25 miles from Corinth by a good road. Pittsburg Landing, remote as it may

seem today, was in fact the transshipment point to and from Corinth for goods moved on the river.

Johnston and Beauregard, reinforced by troops from throughout the South, knew Grant's army was at Pittsburg Landing and knew Buell was marching overland to join him. Johnston determined to attack



General Grant

Grant with his 44,000-man Army of the Mississippi before Buell's arrival. Because Grant's army of 48,000 was divided, with one 6,000-man division camped at Crump's Landing some six miles north, Johnston would actually have numerical superiority. By the night of April 5, Johnston's army was in position, ready to attack the next day.

While Grant and his division commanders were extremely self-confident and did not anticipate a fight, one of his brigade commanders did and sent out an early morning patrol which ran right into the attacking Confederates. Had it not been for that firefight, Grant's army would have been totally surprised.



General Johnston

The remainder of the day was a slugfest between Grant and Johnston, which ended up with what was left of Grant's fighting force arrayed near the Landing in a compact line of 7,000-10,000, reinforced by 70 guns. Another 5,000-7000 of Grant's men were cowering at the Landing. They had seen the elephant and didn't like it.

A final few thousand men, surrounded and unable to retreat, had surrendered after fighting valiantly all afternoon in the Hornet's Nest. The rest were on the field, dead or wounded. However, Grant had hope. Buell's army was arriving on steamboats from Savannah and Lew Wallace's division was marching onto the field.



Beauregard's Confederate army was tired and severely mauled, and he suspended the attack about 6 p.m. The most severe blow of all was the mid-afternoon death of Johnston, probably killed by friendly fire. Beauregard did not know of Buell's arrival and judged that his men could deal the next day with the

remnants of Grant's forces, even reinforced by Wallace.

The next day, April 7, Grant and Buell attacked and pushed the Confederates off the field. Beauregard was forced to retreat to Corinth and await the next move in the chess game. The Confederates had lost the initiative and failed in an attempt to stop the advancing Union in its tracks.

However, the coming months would see the tide turn to the Confederacy.



Gail Stephens, FCCWRT member and guest contributor to the *Banner*, is the author of *Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*, which won the William Henry Seward Award for best Civil War biography of 2011.

[Calendar of Events](#)

April 14, Shiloh Lecture, 1 pm, Frederick MD

"Shiloh: The Devil's Own Day" by author Gail Stephens, at Monocacy National Battlefield. **Reservations required.** (Please see **Page 2** for additional details.)

April 20-22, Seminar, Tour, Hagerstown, MD

"Gray Ghosts, Raiders & Bushwackers: Partisan Warfare 1861-1865," Ramada Plaza Hotel. Tours, talks & panels. Saturday bus tour of Mosby's Confederacy. Information: 717-264-7101; www.chambersburgcivilwarseminars.org.

April 28, Living History, 9-3, Gettysburg, PA

"Voices of the Confederacy," at General Lee's Headquarters. Free. For information: 717-334-3141.

April 28, Battlefield Tour, 1 pm, Frederick MD

Monocacy National Battlefield Tour, led by author Gail Stephens. (Please see **Page 2** for additional details.)

May 5, Museum Opening, 11 am, Sharpsburg, MD

Season opening of Pry House Field Hospital and General McClellan's Headquarters, Antietam National Battlefield. Exhibits include barn field hospital and period herb garden. For information, National Museum of Civil War Medicine: 301-416-2395; www.civilwarmed.org.

Ramblings from the Raffle Table

Friends, Happy Easter, Happy Spring, happy, happy everything! We've got more fun for you in the 50-cent Raffle this month. Among the books and sundries available to you this month is *Uniforms of the Civil War* by Robin Smith and Ron Field.

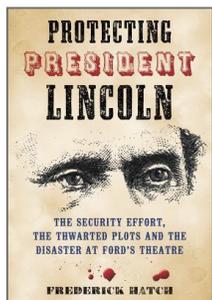
As you see in this month's "Prez Sez," Donnie is resigning from our Board. Well, as you may have guessed, I am going with him! We've had a great run on the Board, and I've had great fun organizing the Raffles each month. I'll be grooming a fellow member to assume the responsibilities of the Raffle Table, who, I am sure, will serve you well.

Come see me at the Raffle Table, and bring money!

Dottie

The Bookshelf

Protecting President Lincoln: The Security Effort, the Thwarted Plots and the Disaster at Ford's Theater, by Frederick Hatch. Illustrated, notes, 81 photos, appendices, bibliography, index, 208 pp, 2011, McFarland, Jefferson, NC.



Maryland resident, author, historian, and founder and publisher of the *Journal of the Lincoln Assassination*, Frederick Hatch has been studying Lincoln's assassination for more than 30 years. Using his journalistic skills and extensive knowledge of his subject, the author presents a riveting account of Lincoln's life and death in office and the unprecedented effort to protect the man

who was a target even before he was inaugurated. This thorough, intriguing study of the many overt threats to Lincoln's life and the successful plot to assassinate is not just for historians, scholars and Lincoln buffs, but for any armchair detective looking for new insight into the assassination and its aftermath.

Shadows of Blue & Gray, The Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce, edited by Brian M. Thomsen. Soft cover, 284 pp, 2003, Forge Books, Macmillan, New York, NY.

Best known for his biting definitions in *The Devil's Dictionary* and classic short stories such as "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," Ambrose Bierce enlisted in the Union Army at age 20 and fought many major battles, including Shiloh. In 1913, he vanished without a trace in Mexico at age 71.

This complete collection of Bierce's writings features all 27 Civil War short stories and six memoir pieces. His fiction has a dark and at times even mystical quality yet is grounded in the author's brutal war experiences. Included in his memoirs is "Four Days in Dixie," the author's account of his own imprisonment and escape from Confederates in Alabama.

Soldier, critic, journalist, satirist and writer, Bierce's unique depiction of war makes this a "must have" book for any library.

MISSION

TO cultivate and preserve Frederick County's Civil War heritage and broaden the understanding of the Civil War Era and its impact on our nation.

TO explore the many facets of the Civil War from the battlefield to first-person narratives, including guest lectures by writers and historians.

TO support historical projects and activities aimed at increasing public interest and appreciation of our Civil War history, both locally and nationally.

2011-2012 Board of Directors

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www.frederickcountycivilwarrrt.org

At last month's meeting . . .



Dean Herrin, Coordinator for the Catocin Center for Regional Studies and National Park Service Historian, gave us a fascinating preview of the rich historical content of the new *Crossroads of War* website, coming soon.

Banner of the Blue and Gray Editor: Nancy Enright