

# Banner

## of the **Blue and Gray**

Newsletter of the Frederick County Civil War Roundtable  
Frederick, Maryland  
Founded January 30, 1989

<http://frederickcountycivilwarrrt.org>



207th Meeting

November 2011

Vol. 38 Issue 3

### Sesquicentennial Diary

#### **The Trent Affair: 'One war at a time'**



The Trent and San Jacinto by Berlin artist Isodor Rocca

**November 1861** — As the nights turned cold and soldiers had their first taste of the coming winter, military activity declined. But one week into the month, Lincoln suddenly found himself in the midst of a tense international crisis that brought the Union and Great Britain to the very brink of war.

The Confederacy, still fresh from winning Bull Run, had high hopes for all-out victory and sought to bolster its strength by enlisting the support of cotton-hungry England, which was already feeling the effects of the Union blockade. In October, two emissaries, James Mason and John Slidell left Charleston on a diplomatic mission to garner British and French support for the Southern cause. The mission was no secret and intelligence reports kept the Union abreast of the emissaries' movements.

After changing ships several times, Mason and Slidell set out from Havana on November 7 aboard the unarmed British mail ship, the *Trent*, bound for England. The next day, acting on his own initiative, Capt. Charles Wilkes, commanding the Union warship *San Jacinto*, steamed into position in the Bahama Channel and waited for the *Trent*. Firing shots across the bow, he halted the ship, boarded, and seized Mason and Slidell as prisoners. The headstrong Wilkes defended his unauthorized actions by maintaining that the two Confederates fit the international definition of

(Continued on Page 4, See *Trent Affair*)

## Happy Thanksgiving

### **November Meeting**

**Thursday, November 17, 2011**

**7:30 PM**

*at the*

**National Museum  
of Civil War Medicine**

**48 East Patrick Street  
Frederick, Maryland 21701**

**Speaker: Jeff Goodson**

**Subject: *Agents and Activities of the Union  
Secret and Signal Services in Maryland  
1861-1865***

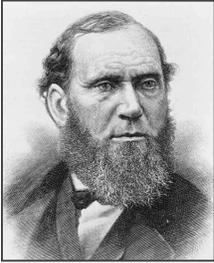
### **Our Speaker**

**J**eff Goodson, history professor and retired Army Intelligence Special Agent, will delve into some of history's mysteries of the Civil War in Maryland and discuss intriguing, little-known facts such as how newspapers facilitated intelligence for both sides during the Civil War, and how they still serve as an excellent source of intelligence, as well as a means to communicate with agents in the field.



Jeff will also explore the role of renowned Chicago detective Allan J. Pinkerton, founder of the well-known Pinkerton National Detective Agency, in thwarting a rumored plot to assassinate the President-elect. On Feb. 11, 1861, Lincoln set out from his home in Springfield, IL, on a 12-day eastbound train trip with

whistle stops in 70 cities en route to Washington and his inauguration. Railroad officials, concerned for Lincoln's safety, hired Pinkerton to provide security along the route. When Pinkerton got wind of a possible plot to assassinate Lincoln on his journey through Baltimore, he took dramatic steps and, despite Lincoln's reluctance, successfully whisked the President-elect in disguise under cover of night through the city and into Washington.



Above, Allan Pinkerton;  
below, Harriet Tubman



Whether a plot actually existed is still debated, and Lincoln was widely criticized, satirized in editorial cartoons, and accused of cowardice for sneaking into Washington. Nevertheless, he arrived safely, ready to take his oath of office.

Jeff will also discuss how Union intelligence disrupted the Confederate "Secret Line" through Maryland, where the Union Signal & Observation Towers are located in Maryland and the role of Harriet Tubman, a fugitive slave from Dorchester County, MD, who rescued hundreds of slaves through the Underground Railroad, and became a nurse and spy for the Union.

A specialist in Maryland history, Jeff is an Adjunct Professor of History, Senior Institute, at Community College of Baltimore County and Carroll Community College. He has developed and taught several courses on Maryland history and has a special interest in Maryland railroads during the Civil War. He has lectured on Civil War and military history at numerous roundtables and seminars throughout the state. Jeff has also served the USO as tour group historian and leader, and researched and conducted tour groups to historical sites in Europe including famous battlefield sites.



### Next Month's Meeting

National Museum of Civil War Medicine Director George Wunderlich will entertain us with banjo Christmas music from the Civil War Era at our annual Christmas party, Thurs., Dec. 15, at 7:30 PM. Refreshments will be served and we will have a special Silent Auction.

### The Prez Sez



Members, I want to personally thank John Fieseler for the gracious hospitality extended to our Roundtable last month. We had a really good turnout for his lecture, which was enlightening and enjoyable.

Frederick's new Visitor Center is a star in our city's crown. If you were not able to attend the meeting, stop by the Center and take a look. Thanks again, John. We think Frederick is lucky to have you.

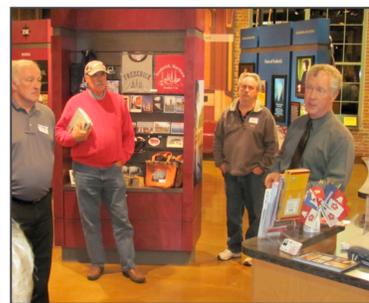
I want to mention here too our hardworking Editor of the FCCWRT *Banner*, Nancy Enright (wife of Board member Jim Enright). Nancy has taken our *Banner* to new heights! Her talent and professionalism spill over into our *Banner*, and we are so happy to have her on board.

Thanks are also due to our hardworking Board members. I highlight here especially Jim Enright and Jack Brennan for publicity they bring to the FCCWRT through their notices in local publications and on our website.

I say again, the success of our Roundtable is the result of the efforts of all of us. We are grateful to all our members and friends for your continuing interest, support and participation in FCCWRT activities.

**Donnie**

### At last month's meeting . . .

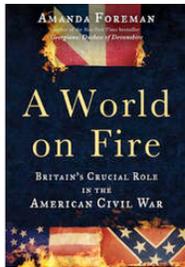


FCCWRT members turned out in full force to enjoy John Fieseler's tour of the new Visitor Center followed by a fascinating lecture on the Civil War Trails program in Frederick.



## The Bookshelf

***A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War***, by Amanda Foreman. Hardcover, illustrations, plates, maps, index, 1008 pp., 2011, Random House, New York, NY.



With more than 800 pages of text alone, Amanda Foreman's book on Anglo-American relations during the Civil War may seem daunting at first, but the *New York Times* best-selling author's style is so compelling that you could almost call it a page-turner. The daughter of an Oscar-winning screenwriter, Foreman was born in

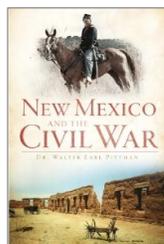
England, raised in America and educated at Oxford, which gives her a unique perspective in telling the story.

Packed with colorful details that heighten the drama, Foreman's book explores the rift between Union and Confederate supporters in England and, most importantly, the delicate diplomatic dance between the Lincoln administration and London's lords and ministers throughout the war. Except for the *Trent* Affair (*see p.1*) in late 1861 when taking up arms against the Union was a true threat, England stayed neutral, speaking softly yet always wielding the club of possibly supporting the South.

While Foreman's focus is primarily on diplomacy, her immense scope covers every angle, from the battlefields and the British journalists covering the war who were mostly Confederate supporters to the key players such as Secretary of State Seward and British Foreign Secretary Lord Russell. In the sea of Civil War literature, this book stands out as a brilliant, artfully constructed, and insightful contribution.

***New Mexico and the Civil War***, by Dr. Walter Earl Pittman. Soft cover, photos, maps, index, 128 pp., The History Press, Charleston, SC.

When you think of the Civil War, you automatically picture the hills of Pennsylvania or dusty roads of Georgia but, as this book reminds us, the battle raged throughout the land. In 1861, the Confederates mounted a strong campaign designed to capture the mountain and desert territory of the Southwest that eventually would become New Mexico and Arizona.



Dr. Walter Pittman, a retired lieutenant colonel and Civil War historian who has authored five books, writes a gripping account of the New Mexico campaign, including the 1862 Battles of Valverde and Glorieta Pass, the decisive battle often referred to as the "Gettysburg of the West." Although the Confederates pushed the Union forces back at Glorieta Pass, the destruction of their supply

(Continued on Page 4, See **New Mexico**)

## Calendar of Events

### **Nov. 11, 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events, Northern VA**

150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of President Lincoln's Grand Review of Troops in Bailey's Crossroads. Free conference, "At the Crossroads of History: Bailey's Through the Centuries," at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), 8:30am-3:30pm; Grand Concert of Civil War music, NOVA, 7-9pm; and, Grand Civil War Ball, Hilton Hotel Alexandria Mark Center 10pm-midnight. Information, 703-820-1904, [meschacknies@latcra.org](mailto:meschacknies@latcra.org).

### **Nov. 12, Grand Review Reenactment, Northern VA**

Sesquicentennial Grand Review reenactment of Lincoln's November 1861 Grand Review of Army of Potomac troops at Bailey's Crossroads. Parade along Route 7/Leesburg Pike. Five Divisions with reenactors, active military, veterans, scouts, patriotic groups. Sponsored by the Lincoln at the Crossroads Alliance (LATCRA). Information, [www.latcra.org](http://www.latcra.org).

### **Nov. 16-19, Lincoln Forum, Gettysburg, PA**

16<sup>th</sup> Annual Lincoln Forum, Wyndham Hotel, focusing on Washington in 1861 & the Lincolns at war and home. Keynote speaker Ed Bearss. Also Broadway & film star Stephen Lang performs highlights from his one-man piece, "Beyond Glory." Information: [www.thelincolnforum.org](http://www.thelincolnforum.org).

### **Nov. 19, Dedication Day, Gettysburg, PA**

148<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gettysburg Address services, Soldiers' National Cemetery. Wreath-laying: 9:30 am; Broadway & film star Stephen Lang will give keynote speech at 9:45. Information: 717-337-6590; [www.gettysburg.edu/civilwar/institute](http://www.gettysburg.edu/civilwar/institute).

### **Nov. 19, Battlefield Illumination, Gettysburg, PA**

Remembrance Illumination with a candle on every Civil War grave at Gettysburg Soldiers' National Cemetery. Free, but donations will be accepted. Further information: The Gettysburg Foundation, [www.gettysburgfoundation.org/calendar.htm](http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org/calendar.htm).

### **Dec. 1-31, Living History, Gettysburg, PA**

Holiday celebrations of the 1860s at the new David Wills House museum, where Lincoln spent the night before giving the Gettysburg address. Educational program included with general admission. Information: 866-486-5735, [www.davidwills.house.org](http://www.davidwills.house.org).

### **Dec. 3, Battlefield Illumination, Antietam, MD**

Antietam National Battlefield Illumination, 6pm. Pry House Field Hospital & General McClellan's Headquarters open 11-5 for living history exhibits. For information: National Museum of Civil War Medicine. 301-695-1864, [www.civilwarmed.org](http://www.civilwarmed.org).

## Ramblings from the Raffle Table

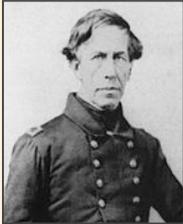
Friends, it seems everyone enjoyed our expanded 3/\$1 Raffle in September, so we are doing it again this month. There are more fun selections, so join in. ALWAYS visit the Raffle Table before our lectures!

Also, to give you all another "heads up" – there will be special purchase opportunities at our December Christmas Party. Along with our 3/\$1 and Special Raffles, the Board will be adding a silent auction as was mentioned last month. More specific information on these will be described in our December *Banner*.

Reminder: FCCWRT's current mission is to place a Wayside Marker commemorating that part of the Battle of the Monocacy which occurred on the west side of Frederick, when Confederate troops came over Braddock Mountain and skirmished with the Federals. You will be helping with this goal by your participation in our Raffles and auction, and we thank you for that!

**Dottie**

### **Trent Affair** (continued from Page 1)



**Capt. Charles Wilkes** Secretary Welles warned that the event should not become a precedent, and newspaper editors took a closer, more skeptical look at the affair. It seemed to echo the kind of unlawful oppression the country had fought against since the days of the Revolution.

Britain was outraged at the incident and it became apparent by month's end that the Union would have to back down and release the prisoners — or face war. Lincoln described the issue: "We must stick to American principles concerning the rights of neutrals. We fought Great Britain [in 1812] for insisting, by theory and practice, on the right to do precisely what Captain Wilkes has done." He cautioned Secretary of State Seward, "One war at a time."

On December 26, Seward apologized to the British government for Captain Wilkes' unauthorized actions against the *Trent*. On January 1, Mason and Slidell were released and permitted to carry on with their mission.

The *Trent* affair was ended, and Lincoln once again turned his attention to his divided nation at home.

## 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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**FCCWRT**

**P.O. Box 3232, Frederick MD 21705-3232**

[www.frederickcountycivilwarrrt.org](http://www.frederickcountycivilwarrrt.org)

### **New Mexico** (continued from Page 3)

train signaled the end of their advance. They retreated to Albuquerque and eventually withdrew from the New Mexico Territory. Of particular interest is Dr. Pittman's narrative of the unique three-sided war in New Mexico: Confederates vs. Union and both sides fighting off raiding parties of Navajo, Apache, and other frontier Indians.

Dr. Pittman's clear prose, geared toward a general rather than scholarly audience, makes this a valuable entrée to the battles of the Southwest that are unheralded but crucial to the overall outcome of the war. If New Mexico had fallen to the Confederates, the silver and gold of Colorado and California could follow – and the Confederates could have won the war.

*Banner of the Blue and Gray* Editor: Nancy Enright