



OCTOBER 2021

THE RUNNER



VOLUME 3 ISSUE 9



*October Presentation: Robert M. Browning, Jr. -
The Blockade of Wilmington and
the Challenges Associated With the Effort*

***Cape Fear Round Table Features Historian of the Blockade
“How did Naval power contribute to the winning of the war?”***



Robert Browning, Jr.

Wilmington’s Cape Fear Civil War Round Table invites you to attend a “hybrid” live and virtual Zoom presentation at Harbor United Methodist Church, 4853 Masonboro Loop, on Thursday evening, October 14. Our speaker will be Robert M. Browning, Jr., Ph.D., talking about the Union blockade. Dr. Browning, retired chief historian of the U.S. Coast Guard, is the acknowledged expert of the blockade.

President Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of the 3,500-mile coastline on April 19, 1861, soon after the fall of Ft. Sumter. In all the years since, the role of the U.S. Navy in putting down the rebellion has received little attention compared to the monumental clashes of the armies at places like Gettysburg and Chickamauga.

Yet, the role of the navy was crucial to victory. When the blockade was proclaimed, there were only three armed vessels ready for service on the Atlantic coast. By the end of the war, however, the U.S. Navy comprised 671 ships of all kinds from the revolutionary new ironclad monitors to shallow draft wooden gunboats. Enforcement of the blockade was never airtight but by 1864 only custom-built blockade running ships could effectively evade the noose that was strangling the Confederate economy. In addition, the navy provided essential logistical, transport and gunfire support for army operations.



USS Onondaga, a twin turret monitor

(Continued on page 2)

October Meeting
Thursday, Oct 14, 2021

Presenter:
Robert M. Browning, Jr.
Union Blockade

6:30 Social 7:00 Meeting

Harbor UMC, Rm. 226
4853 Masonboro Loop
Wilmington
(See map on [website](#))



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*October Presentation: Robert M. Browning, Jr. -
The Blockade of Wilmington and
the Challenges Associated With the Effort , cont.*

In 1993 Dr. Browning published *From Cape Charles to the Cape Fear*, which chronicles the establishment of the crucial blockade from the entrance to Chesapeake Bay south to the mouth of the Cape Fear River. It was crucial to control this stretch of the coast and the inland waters of Chesapeake Bay, James River and the North Carolina sound country.

In 2002, he added *Success is All That Was Expected*, a history of the South Atlantic squadron that sailed the coast from the Cape Fear to Florida. This story covers the harrowing engagements between ships and forts, daring amphibious assaults, and the evolution of submarine warfare in the form of the CSS Hunley. In Lincoln's Trident, he continued his magisterial series to chronicle the squadron that operated in the Gulf of Mexico.

Knowing the Navy's role in isolating the Confederate economy and preventing the movement of troops and supplies within the South is crucial to understanding of the outcomes of the Civil War, as well as the importance of naval power in military conflicts.

The meeting will be held in Room 226, at the right rear of the church complex. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. For information about Zoom and membership in the round table, go to our [website](#) and click on "Join."



**Cutting off a Confederate Dispatch
on the Potomac River**



**USS Nippon, a ship that patrolled a
30-mile arc at sea off the bar at the
mouth of the Cape Fear**



**USS Agawam, a double-ender—a ship that had
a rudder at each end to facilitate movement
in narrow waters.**



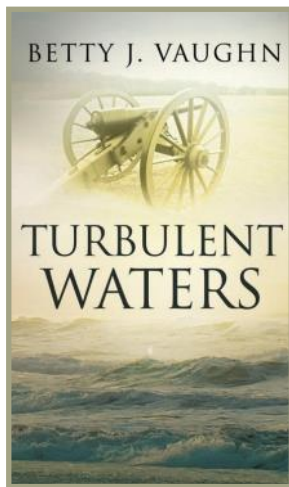
Naval battle of New Orleans, 1862



November Presentation: Betty Vaughn, *Christmas in the Civil War*



Our featured speaker for November is Betty Vaughn, an artist, teacher and writer of historical fiction. Scheduled for November 11, Veterans Day, Ms. Vaughn will narrate a Power-Point presentation giving a comprehensive history of the traditions of Christmas going to their European origins and continuing to the evolution of customs in this country. She explains the differences in celebration between those in the North and the South and the underlying causes for the disparity between them. In the north it tended to be a quiet religious celebration in the home...after a day of work. The South followed more liberal English customs. The Dutch in New York were responsible for several of our traditions. The original Dutch customs will be explained, as well as the way they would eventually be adapted and popularized. There was no notable distinction between Catholic and Protestant celebrations in the South. Thomas Nast, the famous German-born cartoonist who grew up in New York around the time of the Civil War, was responsible for many of our iconic symbols of Christmas. It is interesting to note Thanksgiving was declared a national holiday years before Christmas! The program discusses the Christmas hymns that were sung by our soldiers as they huddled by their campfires. The food, decorations, candy, cookies, and religious observations of the period will be traced to their origin with an explanation of why and how they changed. The use of period photos and imagery are enhanced with automation and music where appropriate. While we have all celebrated the holiday, few of us know how our customs evolved. It is particularly noteworthy that many songs and customs date to this period in history.



Betty Vaughn is well known for her novels, especially those belonging to the genre of historical fiction. She has received numerous awards from the NC Society of Historians for the following historical novels set in the Civil War Period: **The Man in the Chimney**, **Turbulent Waters**, **The Intrepid Miss LaRoque**, and **Run, Cissy, Run**. Each of these books feature actual people living in the area at the time and factual events, fictionalizing only the main characters.

The Mystery of Sarah Slater, a biography, explores the mysterious courier who lived in North Carolina during the war and disappeared while carrying messages and gold to the Confederate outpost in Montreal just after the fall of Richmond. This book was also an award winner due to the extensive research presented. She was sought by investigators who wanted to question her in connection to the Lincoln assassination, but they could not find her.



Mrs. Vaughn received awards for writing while in school and afterwards. Graduating from East Carolina University, the prize-winning watercolorist pursued a career in teaching AP art history and painting. Later she took up writing full time. Her first novel, a contemporary fiction, is **Yesterday's Magnolia**.

You are certain to fall in love with her characters and her ability to keep you enthralled. Described as a seasoned writer by critics, Mrs. Vaughn uses issues faced by people in everyday life making it easy to relate to her well-delineated characters. However, the beauty of her work remains in her mastery of literary technique, which enables her to use words in a way that does not sound superficial, farfetched, or boring. Her ability to keep the readers interested in the story to the very end bears testimony to her expertise as a writer.

Who Wants To Go On A Trip?

The Round Table is considering a trip to the **New Bern Battlefield Park** on a Saturday in early December. The park is more than 30 acres and in superb fashion interprets the March 14, 1862 battle that secured New Bern as a base for the Union throughout the war.

Some of you may recall Brian Kraus's excellent presentation on the battle at a meeting a couple of years ago. Brian has agreed to be our guide for a visit.

The park is owned and maintained by the New Bern Historical Society and its volunteers. An impressive feature of the park are the many period earthworks preserved on the grounds. It also includes a "unique 20 foot diameter color ground map and signage that provides an overview of the battle and a starting point for tours."

More information about the park is contained at this [website](#). If you're interested, please contact either party below and let us know:

Yelena Howell at ybh2035@uncw.edu, or (865) 919-6206 (call or text)

Bill Jayne at jayne.bill@gmail.com.



Trivia Questions

1. When riding his horse, what general had to hold the reins between his teeth because his left arm was missing?
2. What former Indian fighter was the highest ranking officer captured during the war?
3. What member of the West Point class of 1822 would take off his hat to reveal his long white hair when riding among his men?
4. Whose name was omitted from all future newspaper stories in retaliation for his having expelled a reporter from the Army of the Potomac?
5. Who formed an African Brigade from former North Carolina slaves and made them part of the force that occupied Richmond?

Answers of Page 7



NC Maritime History Council Conference



2021 Annual Conference

Hidden Histories of Maritime Carolina

November 4-6, 2021

Southport, North Carolina

[Main Page](#)

[Agenda](#)

[Registration](#)

(Click above links for information.)

North Carolina Maritime History Council was incorporated with the mission to identify and encourage historical and educational projects that have as their purpose the enhancement and preservation of the state's maritime history and culture, and that create public awareness of that heritage.

Over the years the NC Maritime History Council has supported a variety of projects and programs to help encourage advancement and awareness of maritime history. Currently these projects include the annual NC Maritime History Council's annual conference, the NC historic vessel registry, and the annual publication of Tributaries.

Wreaths Across America



It's October and time to turn our attention towards Christmas activities.

During the months of October and November, the citizens of Wilmington (and surrounding environs) will be raising funds with which to cover the graves in our National Cemetery, with Christmas wreaths. Wreaths Across America will once again, honor all veterans with an appropriate wreath to be placed, with ceremony, on 18 December.

Our Round Table has traditionally supported this community effort with individual contributions, in increments of \$15, with a generous contribution, last year exceeding 70 wreaths. As an incentive, WAA returns to the sponsoring organizations (CFCWRT) five dollars (\$5) which we apply to our speaker's fund.



Contributing is very simple, especially this year. Just write a check (in \$15 increments) to Wreaths Across America. Mail to PO Box 15750, Wilmington, NC 28408 or give to any Committee member or Bruce Patterson at the next meeting. Checks will be bundled and sent directly to WAA. If you prefer, you may contribute by credit card, by simply visiting the WAA web site, click the red **Sponsor Wreath** button, designate the Wilmington National Cemetery, and apply the CFCWRT code (**NC0240P**). All contributions are tax deductible (if you itemize) and gratefully appreciated by our community and this organization.

*2019 Wilmington
National Cemetery*

Book Review: *The Boy Generals: George Custer, Wesley Merritt, and the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac*

Reviewed by Doug Crenshaw

By Adolfo Ovies
Savas Beatie, 2021

Adolfo Ovies has undertaken a massive project in writing a three-volume history of the relationship between George Armstrong Custer and Wesley Merritt. *The Boy Generals* is the first book of that study. Ovies spends considerable time separately discussing the backgrounds of each man, from their early years at West Point through their work as staff officers during the Peninsula Campaign. While both men enjoyed the perks of their positions, each eagerly sought a more active role in leading troops in combat.

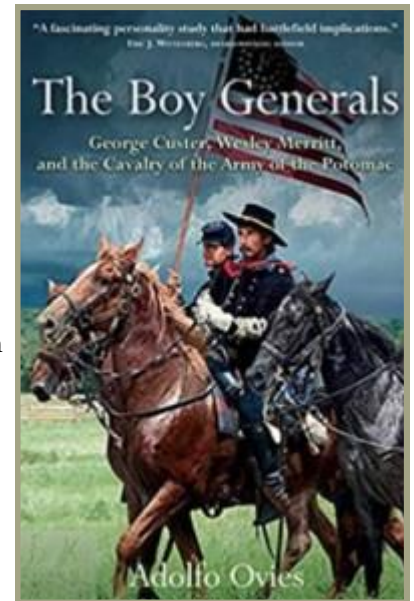
The book doesn't get too far into their interpersonal relationship; that will likely be revealed in upcoming volumes. It does develop their characters: Custer is the flamboyant type, while Merritt is more reserved. But more than that, Ovies shows the transition in cavalry tactics through his study of each man. As Eric Wittenberg says in the foreword, "their personal relationship was a microcosm of the tension between the hussars and the dragoons." Custer was the "hussar" who preferred the shock and glory of the saber charge. However, with the advent of more modern weapons, the days of the charging hussar were numbered. Merritt was a "dragoon," a cavalryman who would dismount and use the repeating rifle to good effect.

Ovies' work is also more than a story about Custer and Merritt. It goes into detail about the development of the Federal cavalry, particularly during the Brandy Station to Gettysburg period. He also delves into the lack of effectiveness of leaders such as Philip St. George Cooke and Alfred Pleasonton.

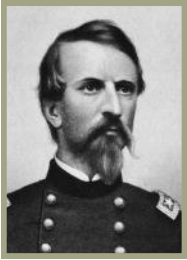
The book is well-written and engaging; at times it's difficult to put down. The story of Brandy Station, Aldie, etc. are of interest, but it's Gettysburg where Ovies' writing really shines. There Merritt's role is disappointing. On July 3 Judson Kilpatrick ordered Merritt's and Elon Farnsworth's troopers to attack the Confederate right flank. Unfortunately, the attacks were not properly timed and were ineffective.

Custer's experience that day was quite different. While he had been ordered to move to the South field, David Gregg, a solid cavalry commander, countermanded the order and told him to stay on the East field. There they met J.E.B. Stuart's massed attack behind the Federal lines. Custer displayed his trademark personal bravery and hussar style, and the blue-coats stopped the Confederate attack. Ovies' writing on the actions of this day is riveting.

If you are interested in the story of the Federal cavalry, this book is for you. Following the development of the Federal cavalry will be interesting, as will the relationship between Merritt and Custer. I know I am eagerly waiting for the second volume.



Trivia Answers



Maj Gen Philip Kearny



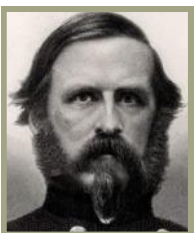
Maj Gen George Crook



Brig Gen Joseph
Mansfield



Maj Gen George Meade



Brig Gen Edward Wild

1. **Major General Philip Kearny** - known as “The One Armed Devil” and called “the bravest man I ever knew” by LTG Winfield Scott, lived a life that not only straddled continents, but also the line between genius and insanity. In 1847 during the Battle of Churubusco Kearny’s badly wounded left arm was amputated. He rehabilitated himself by re-learning to ride a horse by holding the reins with his teeth and his sword in his right hand.
2. **Major General George Crook** - He was assigned to the 4th US infantry as brevet second lieutenant, serving in California from 1852 to 1861. He served in Oregon and northern California, fighting against several Native American tribes. He was promoted to captain in 1860 and ordered east in 1861. With the beginning of the Civil War, he was made colonel of the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. In February 1865, Crook was captured by Confederate raiders at Cumberland, Maryland, and held as a prisoner until exchanged on March 20th. After the Civil War, Crook was assigned to the 23rd US Infantry, on frontier duty in the Pacific Northwest, and served with distinction through the Indian Wars. He fought the Paiute in the rugged desert of eastern Oregon, pacifying the region within a year. When President Ulysses S. Grant sent him to Arizona to fight the Apache, he reorganized his command, employed Indian scouts, and put constant pressure on the roving war parties. In two years most of the Apache were on reservations. General William Sherman said the greatest Indian fighter of them all was General Crook.
3. **Brigadier General Joseph King Fenno Mansfield** - He was appointed to the U. S. military academy, where during part of the fourth year he acted as assistant professor of natural philosophy, and was graduated in 1822, standing second in a class of forty. At the battle of Antietam he fell mortally wounded early in the day while cheering on his troops in a charge.
4. **Major General George Gordon Meade** - Meade was a perfectionist with a volatile temper. His men gave him the nickname the “Old Snapping Turtle”. All of the major Northern newspapers sent war correspondents to cover the Army of the Potomac. But when one Philadelphia Inquirer reporter published rumors that Meade had wanted to retreat after the Battle of the Wilderness, the outraged general expelled the offending journalist from camp. Stinging from the rebuke of one of their own, several other newsmen conspired to write only negative stories about Meade. Henceforth, Grant would get the credit for the Army of Potomac’s victories while Meade’s name only appeared in articles where reporters could blame him for defeats.
5. **Brigadier General Edward Augustus Wild** - When President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Massachusetts Governor John Andrew called for the creation of an African American regiment, forming the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. Inspired by the success of the 54th, Andrew pushed for the creation of an entire brigade of United State Colored Troops to be led by the newly promoted Brigadier General Edward A. Wild. In April 1863 the “African Brigade” made its way to North Carolina to recruit local freedmen. While recruiting, Wild liberated hundreds of slaves from plantations. The Brigade’s remarkable success in the Carolinas showcased the efficiency of United States Colored Troops to the nation. In early 1865, Wild's men performed picket duty along the Appomattox River. They were a part of the large force of black troops under Godfrey Weitzel that occupied the former Confederate national capital, Richmond, Virginia, holding that city through the end of the war. Wild's men were among those troops who witnessed the historic visit of President Abraham Lincoln to Richmond following the city's fall to the Union forces

Trivia questions and answers from the *Civil War Trivia and Fact Book* by Webb Garrison.

After the end of the Civil War whatever happened to...?

Admiral Raphael Semmes

Although Semmes originally was paroled with the rest of the army, he was later arrested and imprisoned at the New York City Navy Yard. Charges of treason, piracy, and ill-treatment of prisoners proved groundless, however, and Semmes was released after three months without having been brought to trial. After a good deal of behind-the-scenes political machinations, all charges were eventually dropped, and he was finally released on April 7, 1866. He was elected probate judge of Mobile County in May 1866 but prohibited from taking office by U.S. authorities. After Semmes's release, he worked as a professor of philosophy and literature at Louisiana State Seminary (now Louisiana State University). After brief employment as a professor he worked as the editor of the *Memphis Daily Bulletin*. Later, Semmes returned to Mobile, where he practiced law, delivered lectures, and wrote *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*.

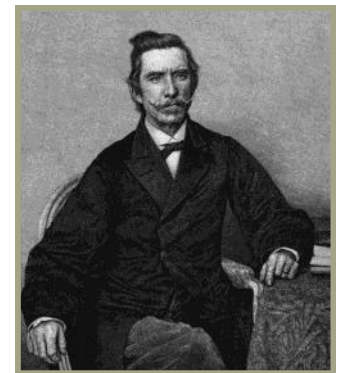
He enjoyed Point Clear on Mobile Bay as often as he could, spending long summers there. He and the Catholic Bishop raced sailboats – theirs was naturally named ALABAMA and naturally they won – against the young Jesuit candidates for the priesthood, summering at Loyola Villa on Mobile Bay. He helped to start raising money to build the lovely heart pine summer church on Mobile Bay at Battles Wharf, Sacred Heart.

He died at Point Clear on August 30, 1877, after contracting food poisoning, and was buried in that city's Catholic Cemetery. Southerners in search of heroes of their "Lost Cause" found Raphael Semmes well suited to the role. The cavalier officer had inflicted considerable harm to the enemy, had fought a gallant duel, and after the war gained sympathy for his imprisonment by the federal government. A bronze statue of Semmes was dedicated in Mobile on June 27, 1900, to honor his contributions to the Confederate cause.

able harm to the enemy, had fought a gallant duel, and after the war gained sympathy for his imprisonment by the federal government. A bronze statue of Semmes was dedicated in Mobile on June 27, 1900, to honor his contributions to the Confederate cause.

Statue of Admiral Raphael Semmes erected in Mobile, Alabama in June 1900. It was removed in June 2020 during the protests.

Admiral Raphael Semmes, The picture that became a U.S. postage stamp - issued in 1995



Civil War Phrases

Acoustic shadow: A phenomenon in which the sounds of battle cannot be heard by people nearby, but are clearly audible many miles away. Pockets of silence are created by a variety of factors, such as thick woods and unusual atmospheric conditions. Aka *silent battle*.

Agnew: A type of attire worn by Sanitary Commission nurses. It was a man's army shirt (the prototype was borrowed from a doctor named Agnew) - with the collar open, the sleeves rolled up, and the shirttails out - worn over a full skirt without hoops.

Alert club: An organization of Northern children who collected food and money to help the Union soldiers. Many communities had alert clubs.

From Civil War Wordbook by Darryl Lyman

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CAPE FEAR CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 15750

Wilmington, NC 28408

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THE RUNNER is the official monthly newsletter of the CFCWRT. If you have member news or news about Civil War events that you think would be of interest to the CFCWRT membership, send an email with the details to the editor, [Sherry Hewitt](#). Thank you.

The **Cape Fear Civil War Round Table** is a non-profit organization made up of men and women who have a common interest in the history of the Civil War. The meetings include a speaker each month covering some aspect of the Civil War. This serves our purpose of encouraging education and research into that historical conflict.

Click here for membership information: [Membership Application](#)

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