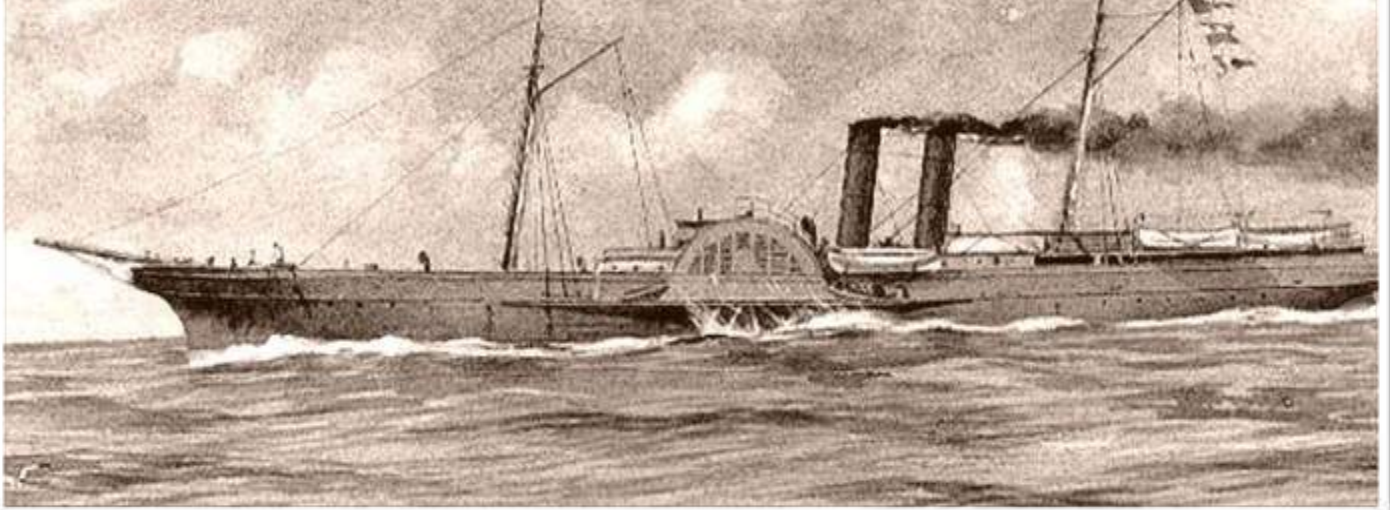


# THE RUNNER



The official newsletter of the Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable.

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## July Round Table Discussion will be "Victory from the Jaws of Defeat"

By Bill Jayne, President

As part of our expanded summer program, the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table will host a true "round table" discussion about the battle of Cedar Creek in October 1864.

The fall of 1864 was, of course, a pivotal time of political decision making. In the United States, the National Union Party of Abraham Lincoln ran against the Democratic Party standard bearer, former Union General George B. McClellan.

The summer of 1864 was a terrible time of trial for the North. Grant and Meade drove the Union armies of the east to Petersburg and Richmond,

(continued on next page)

## Membership Report

By Bruce Patterson, Secretary

Thanks in part to superb programs, **Bob Browning** in April and **Ed Gantt** in May for example, plus a very welcoming venue at *St. John's Episcopal Church*, our membership remains steady with a net gain of one for a total paid membership of 87 which includes remote and associate members.

Attendance at the May meeting was 52 and we can thus claim a very respectable 60% per capita attendance. Thankfully, we return to *St. Johns* for the balance of the year and have ample room to accommodate a larger audience as the *Cape Fear Museum* is limited as to capacity.

Renewing members may send their \$30 annual membership fee to **CFCWRT, 8387 East Highcroft NE, Leland, NC 28451** or bring your check to our June 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. You may also pay on-line at <http://www.cfcwrt.org> or by credit card at our monthly meeting. Membership renewal notices are sent, via email, during the first week of your renewal month. Meeting attendees may have noticed that your new name tag reflects the month of your membership renewal.

Please attend our monthly meetings during the summer months and bring a neighbor or friend. We have room to grow. We're lucky to have so many people in our area interested in the Civil War.

inflicting terrible losses on the Army of Northern Virginia but absorbing astronomical casualties themselves.

Sherman drove the Confederate Army of Tennessee back onto the defenses of Atlanta, but the pace of advance seemed glacial and a decisive victory still much in doubt.

Close to home for Lincoln and the political leaders of the north, a small but ferocious army under Confederate Lieutenant General Jubal Early arrived at the gates of the Federal City itself like some reincarnation of the "barbarians" assaulting Rome as the empire decayed.

In August, Lincoln received some political visitors to the White House to discuss the upcoming election and they ventured the opinion that the sitting president would lose the election. Lincoln responded, "You think I don't know I am going to be beaten, but I do and unless some great change takes place badly beaten."

Finally, the tide turned. Farragut damned the torpedoes and closed Mobile Bay, Sherman cut the Confederate supply line and drove the Army of Tennessee out of Atlanta, and Grant detailed Major General Philip Sheridan to the Shenandoah Valley to dispose of Early's Army of the Valley.

Sheridan won resounding victories at Winchester and Fisher's Hill and by October all seemed well. On October 16, Sheridan departed the valley heading for Washington City and a conference, leaving his army of about 31,000 men under the command of Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright, commander of the

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stalwart VI Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Camped on the north side of Cedar Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the Shenandoah, the situation seemed secure.



Gen. Early's army of about 21,000 was south of the creek but connected to Richmond by good roads and rail. The Union intercepted a Confederate message suggesting that Gen. Robert E. Lee was about to send reinforcements to Early. It was a planted message and very unlikely, but, even so, Sheridan cautioned Wright to look carefully to his defenses. Sheridan also ordered the very powerful Union Cavalry Corps back to Cedar Creek.

With a deep creek to their front and an even more forbidding river gorge to their left (east), the Union put their strongest forces on the right (west) and middle, blocking the Valley Pike running north to south.

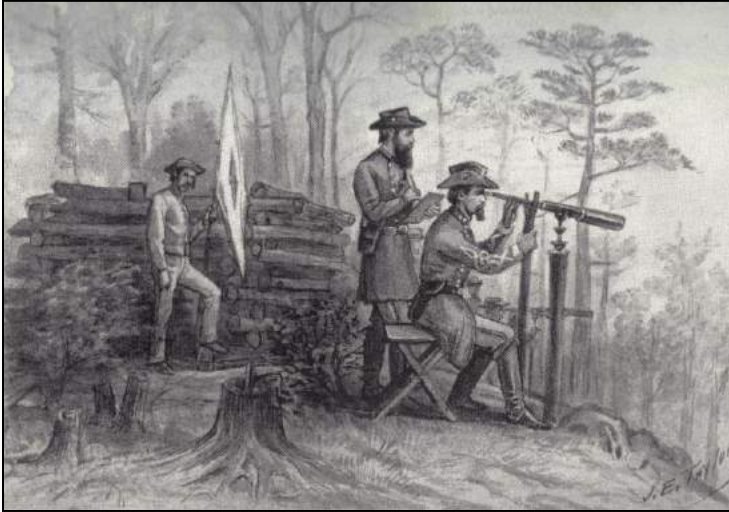
The relative weakness of the Union left, gave Early an opportunity to mount a risky surprise attack. At dawn on October 19, 1864, Kershaw's Confederate division crossed the creek at a ford to attack the Union left. Another division crossed the Valley Pike bridge and added its weight to the surprise attack and then, Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon's division, after crossing the Shenandoah at a ford, attacked the left flank and rear of the Union forces.

The initial assaults were spectacularly successful for the Confederates and although Union troops fought doggedly in spots, the army gave ground for miles, fighting at Belle Grove Plantation, around the village of Middletown and by late morning, the Confederate attack ran out of steam.

(continued on next page)



In a famous ride on his famous horse Rienzi, Sheridan turned back from Winchester and hurried to the battlefield. He helped rally the Union forces and then planned a counterattack that proved crushingly successful.



CSA General John Gordon reconnoitering Union lines from the Confederate signal station on Signal Knob on the north end of Massanutten Mountain in the Shenandoah Valley.

The discussion will focus on the Confederate pause. Gen. Gordon urged Early to continue the assault against the unbroken Union VI Corps, but Early seemed confident they would retire. Writing later, Early seemed to say that Confederate troops, stopping to pillage Union camps, led to disorganization and weakness that prevented further attacks.

By late mid-afternoon, Sheridan had rallied the Union forces and positioned them for a counterattack. The powerful Union cavalry turned

the counterattack into a crushing defeat for the Confederates, a defeat that finally drove them from the Shenandoah Valley and gave a significant boost to Lincoln's reelection campaign.

More will be forthcoming, but there is plenty of time to read about the battle and form your opinions so you can participate in the discussion on July 13.

Was it a case of Sheridan snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, or Early snatching defeat from the jaws of victory?

### Battle of Winchester

This is a painting of the final charge at the Battle of Winchester, prior to Cedar Creek. It shows the powerful Union cavalry overrunning Confederate lines.



FRIENDS OF BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD AND THE  
BENNETT PLACE SUPPORT FUND PRESENT:

# BENTONVILLE BENNETT PLACE & BEYOND

THE CIVIL WAR'S CONCLUSION IN NORTH CAROLINA  
**SYMPOSIUM**

SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1, 2023

**FEATURING:**

GARRY ADELMAN • SUZY BARILE • MARK BRADLEY  
AL BREDENBERG • ERNEST DOLLAR • CHRIS FONVIELLE  
CHRIS HARTLEY • CHRIS MEEKINS • WADE SOKOLOSKY  
ERIC WITTENBERG • ANGIE ZOMBEK • AND MORE!

**VISIT:**

BENNETT PLACE • BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD  
DOROTHEA DIX PARK • MORDECAI HISTORIC PARK  
NC MUSEUM OF HISTORY • OAKWOOD CEMETERY

FOR MORE INFO:

REGISTRATION OPENS  
JUNE 1ST!



## Area Historic Association Events

By Yelena Howell, Tours and Trips Committee

**Friday, June 2, 2023, 2-4 pm. New Hanover County Public Library, Main Branch, Harnett Room. Senior Game Day.** Board games and refreshments. Ages 50+. Cost: free. Registration encouraged. Contact: Frances (910) 798-6347.

**Thursday, June 8, 2023, 6:30 pm-8 pm (doors open at 6 pm): Bellamy Mansion.** Jay Killman Quartet kicks off the Summer Jazz Series. Proceeds benefit the musicians, the Bellamy Museum, and the Cape Fear Jazz Society. Tickets sold at the door (no pre-sales). Cost: **\$25.00** general admission; **\$20.00** member and volunteer; **\$15.00** student/active Military (please bring ID). Subject to fair weather. Contact: (910) 251-3700.

**Sat, Jun 17, 2023, 10am - 2pm: Fort Fisher State Historic Site.** Youth program for “junior reservists” to master various crew positions and steps of loading and firing a Civil War cannon. In the event of adverse weather, an alternative indoor activity will take place in the Visitor Center. Cost: free, but donations always appreciated. Contact: Kaitlin O’Connor, (910) 251-7347 or [kaitlin.oconnor@ncdcr.gov](mailto:kaitlin.oconnor@ncdcr.gov)

**Sat, Jun 24, 2023, 10am - 2pm: Fort Fisher State Historic Site.** Town Ball. All ages are welcome to try their hand at the 19-century precursor to baseball. In the event of adverse weather, an alternative indoor activity will take place in the Visitor Center. Cost: free, but donations always appreciated. Contact: Kaitlin O’Connor, (910) 251-7347 or [kaitlin.oconnor@ncdcr.gov](mailto:kaitlin.oconnor@ncdcr.gov)

For additional events of interest, be sure to follow Cape Fear Civil War Round Table on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1696952227331256>

We strive to update our public page frequently and appreciate your participation.



Bill Jayne, John Walsh, tours director for Brunswick CWRT, and Gifford Stack, newsletter editor of Brunswick CWRT. Bill visited the Brunswick CWRT back in April.



## CFCWRT Summer 2023 Programs

### 6/8/23: A Double Feature Member Forum!

#### *Bill Jordan: Civil War Cooking*

There was a whole lot more to Civil War Cooking than salt pork and hardtack crackers. Civil War era cooks used different ingredients than we usually do in order to achieve some very good meals. Bill will dispel the myth that the food was always unpalatable. (Bill might even bring a sample.)

#### *Charles Ewell: Civil War Anesthesia*

Although anesthesia was "discovered" less than two decades before the civil war, any controversy about the benefits was settled early in this conflict. Charles will summarize the milestones that led to general anesthesia and focus on the details of its use in civil war surgery. There are some misconceptions about surgery during the civil war which probably arose from depictions in the movies. Charles will dispel these and try to put the successful organization of anesthesia services into the context of the rapid transformation of surgery from the barber shop to something resembling what we have now. Charles's role as an anesthesiologist brings an interesting and different perspective to his subject.



### 7/13/23: A Round Table discussion led by CFCWRT President Bill Jayne

#### *Victory Snatched from the Jaws of Defeat...or Vice Versa?*

The initial Confederate assaults at the battle of Cedar Creek, October, 1864, came while Sheridan was away, and were spectacularly successful. However, by afternoon, the Confederate attack ran out of steam. In his famous ride, Sheridan turned back from Winchester and hurried to the battlefield, helped rally the Union forces, and ordered a counterattack that proved crushingly successful. The Round Table discussion will focus on the Confederate pause that afternoon. Gen. Gordon urged Early to continue the assault against the stalwart Union VI Corps, but Early seemed confident they would retire. Writing later, Early seemed to lay the blame for the defeat upon the Confederate troops, who, by stopping to pillage Union camps, became too disorganized for further attacks. More will be forthcoming before our meeting, but there is plenty of time to read about the battle and form your opinions before our discussion.



### 8/10/23: Audience Participation

#### *"A War Game of Sorts" led by John Weisz*

The game will focus upon the options available to Major General John Buford leading a division of US cavalry and searching for the main Confederate force which has invaded southern Pennsylvania and Maryland. The audience will play the role of General Buford and will be presented four possible courses of action available to Buford. After our audience discussion we will poll the participants and then review the actual decision made by Buford and why he made that choice. If you were John Buford what would you do?



## CFCWRT Fall 2023 Programs

By James Gannon, Programs Committee

**9/14/23 John Quarstein**

***CSS Albemarle and the actions at Edenton, Plymouth and New Bern***

John V. Quarstein is a nationally known speaker and an award-winning historian, preservationist, and author. John served as the director of the Virginia War Museum until his retirement and is now Director Emeritus of the USS Monitor Center at The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia. He has authored 18 books and has served as an adjunct professor at the College of William & Mary. John is an expert on the Naval War and will speak to us about the Civil War actions that occurred along North Carolina's inland waterways.

**10/12/23 Chris Bryan**

***Author of "Cedar Mountain to Antietam:  
A Civil War Campaign History of the Union XII Corps, July - September 1862"***

Chris Bryan's book is both a unit history and a leadership and character assessment. It is a compelling story of a little studied yet consequential corps and fills a long standing gap in the history of the civil war. It is the story of how this often luckless command began as part of MG John Pope's Army of Virginia in June 1862, endured defeat after coming within a whisker of defeating MG Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain, suffered through the hardships of the campaigns before and after Second Manassas, but despite it all, found its resurgence in Maryland as part of the rebuilt Army of the Potomac. Chris Bryan is a former naval aviator and USNA graduate, and is active with historic preservation and architectural investigations.

**11/9/23 Ed Lowe**

***Author of "A Fine Opportunity Lost:  
Longstreet's East Tennessee Campaign, November 1863 - April 1864"***

Confederate General Longstreet's First Corps and Union General Burnside's IX Corps had already shared battlefields at Second Manassas, South Mountain, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. Unexpectedly, these two old foes from the Eastern Theater now found themselves transplanted to the Western Theater —familiar adversaries on unfamiliar ground. The fate of East Tennessee hung in the balance, and new reputations could be won or lost. General James Longstreet's deployment to East Tennessee gave him the chance for an independent command. For his Union opponent, Major General Ambrose Burnside, the Western Theater offered an opportunity for redemption from past failures. Colonel Ed Lowe USA (Ret) tells the story of how this was "a fine opportunity lost" for both men.

Did you know that Carl Sandburg spent fifteen years researching his biography of Abraham Lincoln? The biography, when complete came in at six volumes and won a Pulitzer Prize. One of Sandburg's prize possessions was a table made from wood from the White House ceiling from Lincoln's time there.





Editor's Note: Bentonville Battlefield has an interesting blog - From the Trenches. The Runner will occasionally reproduce (with permission) some of the posts on that blog. This month, we feature a post by your intrepid newsletter editor (and volunteer at the battlefield) Fred Claridge. To see the post as it was originally published, go to [bentonvillefromthetrenches.wordpress.com](http://bentonvillefromthetrenches.wordpress.com).

You should also check out the Friends of Bentonville Battlefield page at <https://fobb.net/> when you get a chance.

## Alfred Nugent and His Amputated Arm

By Fred Claridge, Newsletter Editor

Whenever we give a tour of the Harper House Field Hospital Site, we usually try to include some information about individual wounded soldiers who were treated there. Sometimes, we talk about the surgeons who performed the operations and cared for those wounded. We believe adding those personal stories gives our visitors a better feel for what it was like in this small but very busy hospital site during the battle. We see that as our mission - to make the important history that happened here come alive and to be meaningful for our visitors.



The Harper House Field Hospital Site at Bentonville.

One of the wounded we talk about is a young 17-year-old private from the state of Wisconsin named Alfred Nugent. He was only 15 when he enlisted in 1864. Alfred was severely wounded in his right arm on the first day of the battle, the bones in his arm completely shattered - as was often the case with the type of bullets used at the time. He was transported by horse-drawn ambulance to the front yard of the Harper House where an Assistant Surgeon examined him and made him a priority 1 casualty. He required a quick amputation to save his life, so would have been taken inside promptly for surgery. After being put to sleep with chloroform poured on a sponge by Surgeon James T. Reeve, the amputation took approximately ten to fifteen minutes. Surgeons didn't have the luxury of spending hours on one patient. There were simply too many wounded. And back then, if you were wounded in the head, chest or abdomen, you were prioritized as a low priority, since there was very little that could be done for you. Alfred received his amputation and was taken to the recovery area.

For several years, we told Alfred's story a certain way - based on the best information we had available. Stories from that time period tend to morph a bit over time. It was the team's belief that when Alfred was recovering after his surgery the next day, he found his own arm in the pile of arms and legs outside a window of the amputation room. He recognized it because one of the fingers on his right hand was deformed. Visitors tend to be fascinated by that story. Kids love it.

For almost four years, staff at the battlefield have been conducting extensive research to confirm the details of Alfred's story. We never stop researching here. That's what we do. We want to present as accurate a representation of what happened here as we can. Recently, Colby Lipscomb, the Battlefield's Education Coordinator, found a letter to the editor from an 1886 newspaper (12/15/1886) from a gentleman named J. Max Clark. Apparently, Clark was a buddy of Alfred's who recounted an experience he had at the Bentonville battlefield. The letter had originally been sent to Alfred and was reprinted. That letter provided us with some much-needed detail about the "legend" of Alfred's arm. As a result, we've changed our presentation of that story. The biggest change is that J. Max found the arm, not Alfred. It's still a cool story.



The "Amputation Room" at the Harper House. It was the house parlor before the battle. Note the door in use.

Clark's letter is typical of the writing of the time. It's very wordy and full of hyperbole. There's also a fair amount of self-aggrandizement. The section that we find most interesting is the paragraph (a long one) where he describes his encounter with Alfred at the Harper House. That paragraph is included in its entirety here:

*"I remember probably more of you in fact than you do of me. Let me recall to your mind an incident which will prove that I do. On the morning after the fight at Bentonville, I went over to the hospital to visit you. I found you sitting jauntily head up on a pillow looking just as saucy and plucky as you had always done, and the first thing you asked me to do was to fill your pipe and light it. I was afraid it was not best to let you smoke, but you said the doctor told you you might, so I went into the backyard to light it, after having filled it from your old jacket pocket which was near at hand. When I got to the backyard, I had to put a coal in the pipe to light it, and then to keep it from going out, had to pull where I went into the ward where you were, when I went to your bedside I was so sick I could hardly stand and had to sit down on the bunk to keep from falling, but I never smoked, and the few whiffs were too much for me. You were wounded if I remember correctly on the skirmish line just at the time or a little before our line gave way the first time in the afternoon and before we went to look you up the next morning the first thing that surely proved that you were inside the hospital was your arm in the pile of limbs on the outside with the crippled finger and thumb sticking out from the ghastly heap."*

So, there it was. Alfred didn't find his arm, but someone did. And the owner of the arm was recognized because of the deformed finger. Since most of the enlisted men were taken out the back door of the house to recover under the stars, we're a little unsure about what Clark means by going out to the "backyard" from "inside" the hospital. It's possible Alfred was inside the house for a time or Clark is talking about one of the tents we believe were set up out back. At any rate, we had most of the story right. As an aside, we also learned that J. Max had a tough time with his first inhalations of tobacco. We know that Alfred would have been moved out from around the Harper House with the rest of the Union wounded on the last day of the battle. Most likely, he was transferred to a general hospital in New Bern for further treatment. He mustered



Surgeon James T. Reeve  
who performed Alfred's  
right arm amputation.

out of the Army on May 16th, slightly less than two months after the battle. He lived for several more decades. He went back to Wisconsin and started a family. He was one of the many wounded of the battle who survived because they received a timely amputation by a skilled surgeon.

When I think about Alfred, I try to imagine what it must have been like for a 17-year-old boy to go through what he did. The searing pain and heat when a bullet tears into his right arm. The bumpy ambulance ride as he's rushed to the Harper House field hospital. Soon after arriving in the front yard of the house, Alfred is placed on a canvas stretcher and carried inside the house for his surgery. He's then placed on a door which serves as an operating table. A tired looking surgeon in a bloody apron stands over him. He tells Alfred that he has

sustained a serious injury to his arm and that it will have to be amputated. Alfred watches nervously as the surgeon pours liquid from a green tin onto a sponge; the surgeon tells him to breathe deeply as the sponge is held over his nose and mouth. Alfred's vision becomes blurry as he begins to feel dizzy and sleepy. Then blackness. When he awakens, Alfred is outside laying under a tree. When he looks where his right arm used to be he sees a stump just below the shoulder covered by a bloody bandage. There are other wounded laying all around him. He will lay under that tree for two days before he is loaded into an ambulance wagon for the trip that will begin his long road home. For Alfred, the war is over. But his new life is just beginning ...

Alfred's story may change again someday. As could any story we tell here. That's how history works. More research leads to more insight and harder facts. But the important thing is that we have a good understanding of what happened here to a young soldier, seriously wounded in battle. It's those individual stories, that added together, make for the grand sweep of important historical events. And we owe it to men like Alfred to tell their stories.

Notes: The full letter can be found on [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Unfortunately, we've never been able to find a picture of Alfred Nugent. He must have looked very young at the time of the battle. If you happen upon one in your research travels, please let us know about it at the battlefield. It would mean a lot to us to be able to put a face to his story.



## Our May Events with Ed Gantt on United States Colored Troops

[Thanks to all the members who submitted photos of the events for the newsletter.]







Wilmington National Cemetery.

Captain Ed Gantt helped our roundtable with two events in May - a presentation to the Roundtable on Thursday night and a public event at the Wilmington National Cemetery on the following Friday afternoon. He talked about the research he's been doing since retiring fifteen years ago after a distinguished military career.

There were over 209,000 USCTs between 1863 - 1865. Over 5,000 came from North Carolina. He described the history of how the units were formed and talked about the many battles they played an important role in. Many of those battles were fought in our area - including at Fort Fisher.

Perhaps most moving was his statement at the end of his presentation on Friday at the cemetery when he said that he had found four Gantts who served in the USCT, and that it felt like one or more of them may be ancestors giving him a little push from behind to find them. We certainly wish him luck in that endeavor. Thanks Captain Gantt.





*North Carolina Naval History in the  
Age of Sail and Steam Symposium*



*June 23-24, 2023*

Hosted by Friends of the CSS *Neuse* Museum

For more information on the symposium contact:

**Keith Hayes**

Friends of the CSS Neuse Museum  
252-526-9600, ext. 222  
cssneusegba@gmail.com

This conference will be held here in Kinston on Friday and Saturday, June 23 and 24. Friday evening we will have a dinner and keynote speaker, Hampton Newsome, at the CSS Neuse Museum. The program on Saturday will be held in Briley Auditorium on the campus of Lenoir Community College.

Ticket prices: \$50- Full registration

\$35- Friday night only

\$30- Saturday only

**The deadline to register is June 10th!**



## **Symposium Schedule**

### **Friday, June 23**

5:15 pm-6:00 pm- Check-in and Explore the CSS Neuse Museum

6:00-6:45 pm - Dinner

7:00-8:00 pm - The Battle of Plymouth and the Civil War in Eastern North Carolina, Spring 1864  
-Hampton Newsome

### **Saturday, June 24**

8:00-8:45 am - Check-in at the CSS Neuse Museum

8:45-9:00 am- Welcome and Introduction-Keith Hayes and Matthew Young

9:00-9:45 am - The Spanish Attacks on Brunswick Town and Beaufort in the War of Jenkins Ear, 1741 - Jim McKee

10:00-10:45 am - HMS Cruizer and British Naval Activity in the Lower Cape Fear Region, 1775-1776 - Stephen Atkinson

11:00-11:45 am - The War of 1812 on the Waters of North Carolina - Jim Greathouse

12:00-1:30 pm - Lunch on your own (list of local restaurants provided at check in)

1:45-2:00 pm-Welcome and Introduction for Afternoon Speakers- Andrew Duppsstadt

2:00-2:45 pm - “It is the Most Grand, Sublime Scene I Ever Could Think of Seeing:” The Letters of Sidney Stockbridge Office, USS Pawtuxet. 1864-1865 - Becky Sawyer

3:00-3:45 pm – The Exploits of US Naval Officer William B. Cushing - Dr. Chris Fonvielle

4:00 pm - Program Ends

Book Sales: Books by some of our speakers and other authors will be available for sale in the lobby throughout the day. If you have any questions, please contact Keith at [cssneusegba@gmail.com](mailto:cssneusegba@gmail.com).

“History does not usually make real sense until long afterward.” Bruce Catton - noted historian

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## **Cape Fear Civil War Roundtable**

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