



September 11, 2008

**"The Fight Between the Cheese Box and the Floating Barn"
by Bob Moulder**

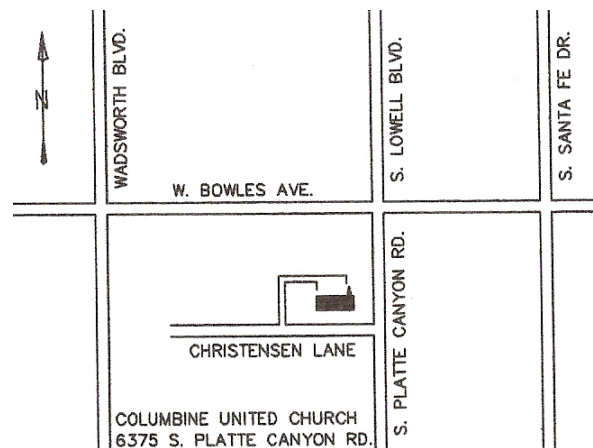
The Battle of Hampton Roads was famous for being the first fight between two ironclad ships, the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia (which had been the USS Merrimac). This two day fight (March 8 and 9, 1862) forever changed naval warfare. There had been ironclad ships before but this battle proved that the age of wooden ships and sails was over for good.

This month Bob Moulder will talk more about this battle and what it meant for naval warfare. Besides being the first two ironclads to engage in combat with each other these two ships were also famous for other reasons. The Virginia was built on the burned remains of the Merrimac that was left behind when the Union evacuated the navy yard at Hampton Roads. While it had an interesting design the Monitor was the scene stealer. The Monitor was a tremendous technical achievement of its day boasting several new patents. Its design truly was something special even if esthetically it looked like a cheese box on a raft.

The broad impact of the battle on naval thinking was summarized by Captain Levin M. Powell of USS Potomac writing later from Vera Cruz: "The news of the fight between the Monitor and the Merrimack has created the most profound sensation amongst the professional men in the allied fleet here. They recognize the fact, as much by silence as words, that the face of naval warfare looks the other way now and the superb frigates and ships of the line ... supposed capable a month ago, to destroy anything afloat in half an hour ... are very much diminished in their proportions, and the confidence once reposed in them fully shaken in the presence of these astounding facts." And as Captain Dahlgren phrased it: "Now comes the reign of iron and cased sloops are to take the place of wooden ships."

Members begin to gather at 6:00 PM for dinner and discussion about the "War Between the States." Buy plenty of tickets - Ian is sure to have some great books (as always) for this month's meeting. Everyone present will receive one free ticket and additional chances are available for 5 for \$1.00.

As always everyone is encouraged to bring in additional items to sweeten the pot. The drawing will take place at 6:45 PM just prior to the new business portion of the meeting. The presentation will begin promptly at 7:00 PM.



Upcoming Presentations

(Read ahead, share your viewpoints, the roundtable encourages discussion.)

Sept. 11 - "The fight between the Cheese Box and the Floating Barn." by Bob Moulder

October 9 - US Grant After the War, Part 2 by Richard DeTar

Nov. 13 - Close Quarter Combat by Tom Lux

December 11 - Aerial Gas Observation Balloons by George Vichot

January 11, 2009 - Causes of the Civil War by Mike Lang

February 12, 2009 - John Brown by Nick Kurtz

March 12, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

April 9, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

May 14, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

June 11, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

July 9, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

August 13, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

September 10, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

October 8, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

November 12, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

December 10, 2009 - NEED PRESENTER

President's Message:

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"The Greatest Armies of All Time" Part Eight – The Army of Northern Virginia

There were many great armies in the American Civil War, Sherman's Army in the west that marched to Atlanta and then to the sea. Nathan Bedford Forrest's Cavalry that ran roughshod over Union forces for almost the entire war. Jackson's Valley army of 1862 that kept thousands of Union forces busy and away from the Peninsula. Any one these could be

included in ranks of the great armies I have named on this list.

But I feel that Lee's Command was the far superior one. I suppose it was inevitable that I include Lee's army in this list since the one I am most familiar with and it's record is still the subject of much debate. I won't go through all of the AoNV's record, because you all know it well. But in order to substantiate my choice I will instead use my list of criteria to judge Lee and his Army.

Lee's victories were significant. I know there is a lot of evidence that claims that the war was won and lost in the Western Theatre and the Eastern Theatre was merrily a political sideshow. The one thing that these theorists fail to acknowledge is that the Civil War was and internal insurrection. And everyone from Karl Marx to John F. Kennedy would tell you that in an insurrection like this politics are everything. Lee's battles were fought between the two capitals and that fact alone made them significant. Lee never had a snow ball's chance in capturing Washington DC, but all he had to do was get his army within 30 miles of it and the entire Union was shaken to it's core.

Lee's victories are still studied today by professional soldiers. His victory at Chancellorsville is a classic example of the "Envelopment of a Single Flank" maneuver. But by dividing his army in the face of a superior foe Lee put his own personal touch on it. Textbooks point to it as one of the most brilliant victories of all time.

Lee faced, what was at that time, one of the largest and best equipped armed force in the world, and in every battle he fought he was outnumbered. There is little doubt that for most of the war Lee faced generals on the Union side that were average at best. But in my book a victory is a victory and in war you just don't wait around to see if the enemy can find a better commander. You fight the battles and opponents you are faced with.

What did Lee's Opponents say about him and his army? With the possible exception of Grant

he intimidated every general he faced. Lee and his army by the summer of 1863 had established a reputation of invincibility. And in every kind of contest how your opponent sees you is everything. Victory by intimidation is as old as civilization itself, and no one did it better than Robert E. Lee.

In the spring of 1864 Grant had just come from the west and a member of his staff was regaling an old veteran commander of the Army of the Potomac with stories of Grant's victories in the west. "That may be true," said the officer, "but Grant never met Bobby Lee."

To be continued...

Mike Lang

2009 Presentations:

I know its a bit early but now is the time to start thinking about next year's presentation schedule. Mike would like to incorporate some presentations on topics before the war. These could include Bleeding Kansas, the Nullification Crisis, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the various compromises Congress made in the years beforehand, the Mexican War, the Fugitive Slave Act among others. We might not do a whole year of these sort of presentations but for a change of pace we would like to do some. Our discussion meeting could be on the causes of the war. If you have any ideas for the 2009 schedule (pre-war or otherwise) please see Mike or Nick to let them know.

Calendars:

Now is the time to start thinking about ideas for our annual member created calendar. Annually we sell these calendars to create revenue for the treasury. This year we did a naval theme, past years have been leaders, battlefields and monuments. We need ideas, and volunteers to write the monthly features. Please see Mike if you have any ideas.

Glorietta Pass:

Roundtable member Fred Forman is working with the Civil War Preservation Trust to create a vista at Glorietta Pass explaining the role of the 1st Colorado in the battle. If you would like to help in this venture please contact Fred at flfbreck@yahoo.com or on his cell at 703-989-3475 (he lives part time in Virginia but is currently house bound in Breckinridge).

USS Monitor:

The following was submitted by Bob Huddleston

On December 30, 1862, the U.S.S. Monitor was about twenty miles south west of Cape Hatteras, being towed by the U.S.S. Rhode Island. The day had been pleasant when they left Hampton Roads on the twenty-ninth but the thirtieth found squalls and scattered rain, with a strong swell from the south. By sundown, the swell increased as did the wind. The ocean was breaking over the bow, passing clear over the pilot house and crashing against the turret. By eight P.M., the sea rose very rapidly, completely submerging the pilot house and washing over and into the turret. On the Rhode Island, the quartermaster of the watch recorded a steadily rising wind: force 4 at the changing of the watch at 8 P.M., force 6 at midnight, and force 7 by 2 A.M. on the thirty-first, where the wind remained though the day.

At 10:30 on the thirtieth-first, the Monitor's captain, Commander John P. Bankhead, U.S.N., signaled the Rhode Island that his ship was sinking. The Rhode Island manned her boats and for two hours they went back and forth, rescuing as many of the Monitor's crew as possible, although some were washed away. One of the Rhode Island's boats disappeared and Captain Trenchard feared the boat and her men were loss.

After midnight, Captain Bankhead left the Monitor in the last boat, along with Acting Master's Mate Louis Stodder and Quartermaster

Richard Anjier. Bankhead had ordered Anjier off earlier, but the quartermaster refused, remaining at the helm, after telling Bankhead, "No, sir, not until you go!"

As Bankhead climbed onto the deck of the Rhode Island, he turned and watched the world's first ironclad turreted warship sink below green waters.

On January 3, after what must have been a horrifying four days, Acting Master's Mate Rodney Browne and the crew of the missing life boat were picked up by a schooner, the A. Colby, fifty miles South of Hatteras.

The words of the Navy's Hymn remind us the greatest foe of the Sea Service is not human enemies, but rather the restless ocean:

Eternal Father, Strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bid'st the mighty Ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to thee,
for those in peril on the sea.

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word,
Who walked'st on the foaming deep,
and calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
Oh hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea!
(composed in 1860 by the English clergyman)

There is an old Naval tradition that those who are lost at sea remain on Eternal Patrol against their country's enemies.

So remember the sixteen men of the Monitor who are still on eternal patrol twenty miles or so South of Cape Hatteras:

Norman Atwater, acting ensign.
George Frederickson, acting ensign.
R. W. Hands, third assistant engineer.
Samuel A. Lewis, third assistant engineer.
John Stocking, boatswain's mate.
James Fenwick, quarter gunner.
William Bryan, yeoman.
Daniel Moore, officers' steward.

Robert Howard, officers' cook.
William Allen, landsman.
William Eagan, landsman.
Jacob Nickles, ordinary seaman.
Robert Cook, first-class boy.
Thomas Joice, first-class fireman.
Robert Williams, first-class fireman.
George Littlefield, coal heaver.

"O Eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens, and rulest the raging sea; who hast compassed the waters with bounds, until day and night come to an end; Be pleased to receive into thy almighty and most gracious protection, the persons of us, thy servants, and the Ship in which we serve. Preserve us from the dangers of the sea, and from the violence of the enemy; that we may be a safeguard unto the United States of America, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions; that the inhabitants of our land may in peace and quietness serve thee our God; and that we may return to in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruit of our labour; and, with a thankful remembrance of thy mercies, to praise and glorify thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

Forms of Prayer to be Used at Sea, The Book of Common Prayer

Book Review:

The Training Ground by Martin Dugard
Review by Gary Stuckey

The subtitle summarizes the topic of the book: Grant, Lee, Sherman, and Davis in the Mexican War, 1846 – 1848. Most of us are, to varying degrees, aware that many of the significant military and political figures of the Civil War fought as volunteers or regular army officers during the Mexican conflict. However, I, for one, had only acquired a smattering of knowledge about these leading figures' roles in that conflict. Quoting liberally from publications, most notably Grant's memoirs, and

personal letters, the author presents a vivid portrayal of his subjects' first or most notable exposure to warfare.

Despite the title, the coverage of Sherman is minimal, reflective of his posting to California after that territory had been "subdued" by its American settlers, aided by Fremont's and Kearney's expeditions. Sherman was as frustrated there as he had been during the Seminole War where he was always too late to participate in any actual battle. There is, however, substantial coverage of Longstreet and Jackson who had very active roles in the war.

The book amply demonstrates the close ties among civil war officers, regardless of which side they fought on. Most of these ties were initiated at West Point and solidified during postings to remote frontier posts, long patrols around the Great Plains, and pursuing Seminoles through the swamps of Florida.

More importantly, the book chronicles the experiences as Taylor and Scott invaded Mexico and pursued Santa Anna's army to Mexico City. Always outnumbered, the Americans never lost a significant engagement, in many cases thanks to the bravery of those who rose to prominence during the Civil War. In particular, Lee's reconnaissance for Winfield Scott paved the way for most of his victories. Reading the accounts of Lee's scouting and leadership, it is easy to understand why Scott held Lee to be the finest officer in the army.

Grant never achieved Lee's stature during the war but repeatedly showed himself a brave and resourceful officer. While serving as Quartermaster, Grant still found his way to the front and assumed leadership of commands. At Mexico City, it was Grant's movement of a cannon to a church belfry and bombardment of the defending troops that enabled the taking of the San Cosme Gate resulting in the capture of the City. I believe that his service as quartermaster imprinted the importance of supply and logistics into his strategy. He appreciated the importance of having the

necessary equipment and food available and that the commanding officer needed to pay close attention.

Jefferson Davis entered the War to further his political ambitions but proved his worth by making the First Mississippi (Mississippi Rifles) a premier volunteer regiment. It also helped that his first wife was Zachary Taylor's daughter and that he had served under Taylor previously. This gave him entry to Taylor's inner circle, despite his leading a volunteer regiment rather than being regular army.

The maps of the major engagements are helpful, though not elaborate. The Epilogue and Selected Notes and Biographies at the end are welcome additions, presenting additional information on the principals and minor figures of the War.

The only lack is an examination of what these young officers learned from their mentors. Grant and Lee have been cited as emulating Taylor and Scott, respectively, yet the author does not discuss the impacts of these older generals on the next generation, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. This book provides an excellent summary of the Civil War leaders' experiences that shaped and foreshadowed their performances in the greater conflict to come. It is well-written and researched, deserving of a reader's time and attention.

Symposium:

After some debate the symposium has been tentatively scheduled for early October 2009. This means either October 3rd, 10th or 17th. We need to finalize the date with the Community College of Aurora.

We have also received two confirmations for speakers for the event. Until the entire panel is finalized we do not want to publicize who has signed on but both are highly regarded authorities on their chosen topic.

Our theme will be "Lee Invades the North." This will cover the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. We will also try to mix in some human interest presenters. We are looking at a few different speakers so that this is not just a battle recap symposium.

Since there is not too much news to report yet we will likely wait until October to have our next symposium committee meeting. If you are interested in participating in this process please see Nick or Mike for more information.

Study Group:

We are nearly done with this year's study group; Jackson's Valley Campaign. Our last meeting will be September 18th at Bob Brazell's house for what has become a study group tradition. The meeting will be a little earlier than normal, 6 pm.

Mike Lang will discuss the battle of Port Republic and we will go over final travel details. The group will be in the Valley on October 1-5.

Directions to Bob's house can be obtained from him at the next roundtable meeting.

Editor's Message:

This is my 96th newsletter. As stated in the last few newsletters I am ready to step down. Its been fun but I currently do not have the time and energy the newsletter deserves. I think the newsletter is ready for a change, ready for a new editor to leave their mark on it. If you think you would like to be the new editor please let me know (there will be a writing sample competition, I'm joking of course).

--Nick Kurtz

Wilderness Wal-Mart:

The latest threat to the battlefields of

Spotsylvania County has cropped up near the Wilderness Tavern. Wal-Mart is looking to construct a supercenter along the Orange Turnpike. This is near Grant's headquarters for the beginning of the 1864 Overland Campaign.

Having been to Spotsylvania County I know it is just a matter of time before development destroys what is left of the battlefield. This area is just growing too fast for preservationists to keep pace with the developers.

Even if Wal-Mart is stopped here I'm sure they , or another big box store, will look at another parcel of land in the county that is also on hallowed ground. And the process to stop that store will begin anew. I'm not saying we should concede defeat I just am a little weary of Spotsylvania County being the focus of all this preservation activity. I worry that by the time the fight is over in Spotsylvania County we will have realized that we were so focused there that developers in Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky have stolen a march on us.

Reading List:

Presenters, please submit reading lists as soon as possible for inclusion in the newsletter.

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