



IMPORTANT NOTICE: This month only we will meet one week early—**MONDAY, MAY 23.**

Our special guest speaker this month is **David Duncan**, the Director of Membership and Development for the Civil War Preservation Trust. Mr. Duncan has the bottom line responsibility for raising the funds needed to save battlefield land, as well as increasing the membership, which currently stands at 70,000 nationwide. David left a successful 14-year career in political direct mail fundraising to pursue his passion, Civil War battlefield preservation. He has been employed by the CWPT since March of 2000, and his team has raised more than \$20 million and has tripled the CWPT's membership in that time.

David can trace three Confederate ancestors, two who served in the same regiment with the Army of Tennessee (54th Virginia Infantry) and one that served with the 57th Virginia in the Army of Northern Virginia.

His presentation will focus on the current dire state of many of America's most important Civil War sites, specifically, the "perfect storm" of events that is threatening to obliterate key sites in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, associated with the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House. David stresses that his presentation is NOT a fundraising event. He hopes it will serve, instead, as an educational experience in the ominous struggle we all face today with battlefield preservation.

As David has traveled around the nation speaking to Round Tables, he has found that some of the best discussions on preserving our historical battlefield sites have come from participant questions, so a significant portion of his program will be dedicated to Questions & Answers. So, please come prepared to ask any question you may have about the work of the CWPT or preservation in general. If David cannot answer your question, he'll point you in the direction of those who can.

Make sure you attend this meeting to discuss a subject that is critical to all of us—**MONDAY, MAY 23.**

QUIZ: All questions pertain to events that happened in the month of May.....

1. On May 21, 1861, the oldest active Federal warship, a veteran of the War of 1812, captured a slave ship off the mouth of the Congo. Name this historic vessel. And, three days later on May 24 which former U.S. Army captain offered his services to the Union but received no reply?
2. On May 27, 1861, Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that the military arrest of a Maryland citizen had violated the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and ordered his release. Name the case and which Federal Major General did the Court declare in contempt for not producing a prisoner for trial when directed to do so?
3. Where did Stonewall Jackson obtain his first victory in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign on May 8, 1862? And, whose forces did Jackson defeat? [Extra Credit: Give another name for this battle.]
4. What bill did President Lincoln officially sign into law on May 20, 1862, that gave virtual free land in the West? And, what were the provisions of this law?
5. Which Federal general captured Corinth, Mississippi on May 30, 1862? And, what was unusual about this capture?
6. Which landmark did Stonewall Jackson's men march past on May 2, 1863, on their way through the Wilderness toward Chancellorsville? And, which Federal general and corps did Jackson's men attack at 5:15 P.M. that day?
7. Which Confederate general was assassinated on May 7, 1863, at Spring Hill, Tennessee? And, who killed him and why?



8. Where did the Confederates suffer a severe defeat on May 17, 1863, as General John Pemberton pulled his defeated forces inside the city of Vicksburg? And, how long did the siege of Vicksburg last and what day did it surrender?
9. Which Union general was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter, armed with an “elephant gun,” on May 9, 1864? And, who replaced this general as head of the VI Corps?
10. On May 1, 1865, President Andrew Johnson named nine army officers to make up the military commission to try the accused Lincoln assassination conspirators. Which general headed the commission and which Federal general would help defend accused conspirator Dr. Samuel Mudd?

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A big thank you is extended by the MRRT to last month’s speaker, **Julia A. Cramer** for her fascinating program, “*Across the Bloody Chasm: The Legacy of Lyman George Willcox.*” Presenting the story through the eyes and words of Lyman’s wife, Azubah, Julia added to the luster of the program by singing two of her original Civil War songs.

FALL FIELD TRIP: We now have 48 folks signed up for the October 22-23 trek to Harper’s Ferry and Antietam. Please bring a check in the amount of \$75 [made out to either Jerry Maxwell or Carroll Tietz—NOT the MRRT]. If you are not at this month’s meeting, you can mail a check to Jerry at 1952 Tiley Cir. Commerce 48382. Room is still available on the bus for others to sign up.

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Official military records state that Union General Thomas Williams was shot to death by a Confederate bullet while defending Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Some of Williams’ own soldiers, however, started a rumor that they killed him by holding his head in front of one of his own cannons.

Williams was born on January 10, 1815, in Albany, New York. His father, one of Detroit’s earliest settlers, moved the family to Albany during the War of 1812 and later served as a veteran of the Black Hawk War. Appointed to West Point from the state of Michigan, Williams graduated in 1837 (number 12 of 50) along with other future illustrious cadets from his class including Jubal Early, John Sedgwick, Braxton Bragg, John Pemberton, and Joseph Hooker. Following his graduation Williams fought against the Seminole Indians in Florida, became an instructor at West Point, and served as an aide-de-camp to General Winfield Scott from 1844 to 1850. In between those years Williams won brevet ranks of captain and major in the Mexican War.

Appointed a major of artillery at the outbreak of the Civil War, Williams took part in the early Union victories in North Carolina. It was also in that state that soldiers learned to hate him. Once Fort Clark and Fort Hatteras were captured in the summer of 1861, Williams put his men to work in the broiling sun building the sand walls of Fort Clark higher. His weary soldiers believed the work to be a form of punishment since Confederate threats had ended along that part of the coast. One Union laborer penned in his diary: “*It is only the infernal foolishness of the thing that makes it irksome.*”

Williams’ soldiers disliked him so much that they dug pitfalls for him outside the fort, covering the holes with brush. Followed by an aide who mimicked the general’s walk to the amusement of watching soldiers, Williams fell into one trap. Pulled out, he promptly fell into another. Within a few days, another of his men took a potshot at Williams. Things got so out of hand that even Williams’ subordinate officers avoided him.

Finally, the War Department saw fit to transfer Williams to Benjamin Butler’s command in New Orleans—as much for convenience as to possibly save Williams’ life. Later he was sent to the Vicksburg area where his responsibilities included digging a canal that would divert the Mississippi River away from the cannons protecting the city. Williams



now pushed his unhappy soldiers to dig. Again, hostility grew toward the martinet. By the summer of 1862, the canal scheme had been abandoned and Williams was stationed at Baton Rouge. August 5 would be Williams' last day of life. That day the Confederate forces of John C. Breckinridge attempted to retake the town's defenses. It was a confusing battle fought in the fog, and soldiers from both sides mistakenly fired at their own men. The extreme heat, poor food and water, and swampland that bred millions of mosquitoes caused fevers that afflicted the armies of both sides. Yet, these ill men were pressed into service through necessity.

The Federals were forced back through the outskirts of Baton Rouge, where Williams demanded that his men make a stand. Williams soon fell with a bullet through his heart, according to official records, while rallying his men to counterattack. Unofficially, the rumor mill said that his men finally got even with their bullying commander by grabbing him by both arms and holding him in front of a cannon, which was then fired. One rumor further stated that he was decapitated. Whatever happened, Williams was the second Union general killed in combat to that date.

The truth of Williams' death was never determined. Certainly, if murdered by his own soldiers, the War Department would have special reason to state otherwise. In another odd twist on the final fate of Thomas Williams, the transport ship carrying his body back down to New Orleans collided with a gunboat and sank. His coffin was found the following day and sent to his family. Three weeks later Williams was buried in the family plot at Elmwood Cemetery in Detroit.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. U.S.S. Constellation and Ulysses S. Grant
2. Ex Parte Merryman and George Cadwalader
3. Battle of McDowell and Brigadier General Robert C. Schenck (of John Fremont's command) [Extra Credit: Bull Pasture Mountain]
4. Homestead Act and 160 acres was given to a settler for a promise to occupy and improve the land for 5 years and pay a \$10 registration fee
5. Henry Halleck and no shots were fired as Confederate General PGT Beauregard had retreated the previous day
6. Catherine's Furnace and Oliver Otis Howard of the Eleventh Corps
7. Earl Van Dorn and Dr. George B. Peters who suspected Van Dorn had "violated the sanctity of my home" by dallying with his wife, Jessie
8. Battle of the Big Black River Bridge and 47 days, surrendering on July 4, 1863
9. John Sedgwick and Horatio G. Wright
10. David Hunter and Thomas Ewing

Please be sure to mark your calendars a week early for this month's meeting—**MONDAY, MAY 23**. You'll want to be in attendance to hear **David Duncan** speak on the critical subject of Battlefield Preservation. Join us at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road) at 6:30 P.M.

Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.