

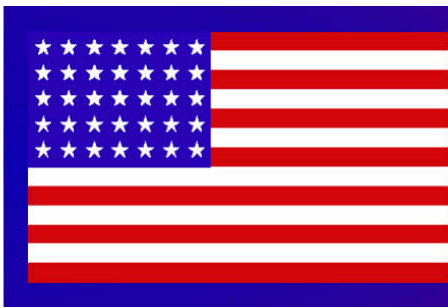
In early December 1862, two massive armies converged on opposite sides of the Rappahannock River at the quaint, historic town of Fredericksburg, Virginia. On the eastern bank of the river, Ambrose Burnside, newly appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac, had been thrust into leadership against his wishes. His army of more than 113,000 men was formidable and confident, but many severely questioned Burnside's ability. On the opposite shore Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia numbered 75,000. Lee, who was given command six months earlier, had performed admirably in defeating Federal generals mostly through his audacity and offensive moves. Unlike earlier campaigns, however, Lee had chosen to defend rather than attack. Lee's seemingly impregnable line stretched approximately seven miles with James Longstreet's corps anchored on Lee's left atop Marye's Heights and Stonewall Jackson's corps along the right stretching to Hamilton's Crossing. Lee's assumption that Burnside would take the bait and cross the Rappahannock to initiate the battle proved correct. A Federal move against Longstreet's front appeared suicidal; only Jackson's position offered weaknesses which could be exploited by Burnside's army.

At 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, December 13, Burnside's army began its attack against Jackson. Before the day and the battle ended, Burnside would also assail Longstreet's position in a series of advances. In a totally forgettable day Burnside, who wept at the battle's results, had forfeited 12,653 in killed, wounded, missing, and captured. Lee's aggregate losses stood at 5377. A Northern newspaper correspondent reported to his readers: "*It can hardly be in human nature for men to show more valor, or generals to manifest less judgment.*" A writer for the **London Times** was more graphic as he referred to Fredericksburg as "*a continuous charnel-house. Death, nothing but death everywhere, great masses of bodies tossed out of the churches as the sufferers expired; layers of corpses stretched in the balconies of houses as though taking a siesta. In one yard a surgeon's block for operating was still standing, and, more appalling to look at even than the bodies of the dead, piles of arms and legs, amputated as soon as their owners had been carried off the field, were heaped in a corner. There were said to be houses literally crammed with the dead; but into them, horrified and aghast at what I saw, I could not look.*"

Burial of the dead, especially during the wintry weather, proved a superhuman chore. At one point a joint burial was held as surviving Confederate and Union soldiers worked side by side to deliver the human remains into the ground. Confederate Major W. Roy Mason, a resident of Fredericksburg, described what he saw that day and after the war.

That day I witnessed with pain the burial of many thousands of Federal dead....The night before, the thermometer must have fallen to zero, and the bodies of the slain had frozen to the ground....and it was necessary to use pick-axes. Trenches were dug....and the dead collected and laid in line for burial....But the most sickening sight of all was when they threw the dead, some four or five hundred in number, into [farmer] Wallace's empty icehouse, where they were found—a hecatomb of skeletons—after the war. In 1865-66 some shrewd Yankee contractors obtained government sanction to disinter all the Federal dead on the battlefields of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania....They were to be paid per capita. When I went out to see the skeletons taken from the icehouse, I found the contractor provided with unpainted boxes of common pine about six feet long and twelve inches wide; but I soon saw that this scoundrel was dividing the remains so as to make as much by his contract as possible. I at once reported what I had seen....I afterward heard that the contract was taken away from the fellow and given to more reliable parties.

On **MONDAY, JUNE 27**, MRRT member **Jerry Maxwell** will present a brand-new program: "***I Am Glad the Yankees Are Coming': Fighting on the Confederate Right at Fredericksburg.***" Hopefully you'll mark this one on your calendar.



Last month we had a unique program as **David Duncan**, the Director of Membership and Development for the Civil War Preservation Trust, spoke on the successes and failures of preserving Civil War battlefield sites, especially those in Spotsylvania County, Virginia—particularly Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House. Numerous questions came from the audience as David explained what the mission of Round Tables should be in this effort.

ODDS & ENDS:

- **FALL FIELD TRIP**—49 folks have signed up for the October 22-23 venture to Harpers Ferry/Antietam. That's great! However, 14 people still owe a \$75 check for the bus deposit. PLEASE have this check ready to give to Jerry Maxwell at this month's meeting.
Also, a list will be passed around this month to determine if you will be attending the Saturday night dinner and/or participating in the box lunches for Saturday and Sunday. [A check for these meals will be collected NEXT MONTH.]
- **YEARLY DUES**—Please check your MRRT newsletter envelope for a possible RED DOT at the lower left. This is a friendly reminder that your yearly dues are overdue. Long-lost Treasurer Carroll Tietz will be in attendance to receive your check.

QUIZ: Two heroes of the Battle of Fredericksburg were James Longstreet and George Meade. Answer the following questions—5 on each of them:

1. Longstreet was born on January 8, 1821, in: A) Georgia B) North Carolina C) South Carolina D) Virginia E) Alabama
2. He married Maria Louisa Garland on March 8, 1848. She was a cousin of: A) Julia Dent [Mrs. Grant] B) Flora Cooke [Mrs. Stuart] C) Elinor Junkin [Mrs. Jackson] D) Ellen Ewing [Mrs. Sherman]
3. At which Mexican War battle was he wounded in the thigh while carrying the regimental flag? A) Monterrey B) Buena Vista C) Chapultepec D) Molino del Rey E) Churubusco
4. Longstreet married a second time in September 1897, when he was 76 and his bride was 34. Name his second wife who lived until 1962: A) Helen Dortch B) Mary Jenkins C) Sarah Holliday Fitch D) Anna Mayberry E) Dorothy Stasser
5. Longstreet's favorite wartime horse was named: A) Sir Galahad B) Lightning C) Fire-Eater D) Hero E) Old Dan
6. Meade was born on December 31, 1815, in: A) Chalon, France B) Vienna, Austria C) Liverpool, England D) Potsdam, Germany E) Cadiz, Spain
7. He graduated number 19 of 56 in the unimpressive West Point class of 1835. Which of these future Civil War personalities DID NOT come out of that class? A) Montgomery Blair B) Jubal Early C) Herman Haupt D) Marsena Patrick
8. Meade married Margaretta Sergeant on December 31, 1840. Her sister was the wife of which Confederate general/politician? A) Henry A. Wise [Gov. of Virginia] B) Robert Toombs [Georgia Congressman] C) Leroy Pope Walker [Confederate Sec. of War] D) Howell Cobb [Georgia Congressman and Gov.] E) John C. Breckinridge [Confederate Sec. of War]
9. Meade was severely wounded twice in the same battle, a gunshot wound in the right forearm and a wound in the right side of his back which possibly went through a kidney. At which battle did this occur? A) Fredericksburg B) Chancellorsville C) Glendale D) First Bull Run E) Antietam
10. Meade's favorite wartime horse was named: A) Red Terror B) Old Virgil C) Stellar D) Old Baldy E) Clementine



Thirty-nine-year-old Confederate Brigadier General Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb stood at the Sunken Road and Stone Fence below Marye's Heights on the afternoon of December 13, 1862. The brilliant, but mercurial, Cobb was a native Georgian who had graduated first in his class at Franklin College (now the University of Georgia) and became an attorney before his nineteenth birthday. Never one to mince words, Cobb had been highly critical of Robert E. Lee, calling him "*haughty and boorish and supercilious in his bearing and is especially so towards me.*" After gaining the rank of brigadier general, Cobb, however, softened his opinion, stating that Lee was "*exceedingly kind and complimentary.*" Extremely confident of the position his men held at Fredericksburg, Cobb had earlier written to his wife: "*I think my Brigade can whip ten thousand of them attacking us in the front. We have a magnificent position, the best perhaps on the line.*" Now as the Federals began their movement toward his brigade, Cobb removed his hat, waved it over his head, and shouted, "*Get ready Boys here they come!*" It would be his first and only battle at the rank of general.

At the time of Cobb's mortal wounding he was standing in the yard of his headquarters at the Stevens House with a group of officers—Brig. Gen. John Rogers Cooke, two junior officers of Cobb's staff (Capt. Walter Brewster and Capt. John McPherson Berrien), and Capt. Henry A. Butler, a staff officer to Cooke. As these five men watched the battle progress on their front, Cooke went down from a bullet striking him over the left eye, fracturing his skull. He would survive but be out of combat for the next four months. Moments later an errant Federal projectile passed through the Stevens House and exploded. Fragments of the shell killed Captain Brewster and mortally wounded Captain Berrien and General Cobb. Cobb's father-in-law, Joseph Henry Lumpkin, an eyewitness to the wounding, wrote: "*A piece of shell [grazed] the right thigh and struck the left where it lodged, breaking the bone and severing the femoral artery.*" Captain John Cobb Rutherford, the general's cousin and aide, was the first to reach him. General Cobb calmly asked Rutherford for a tourniquet to stop the gushing blood. Rutherford sent for Dr. E.J. Eldridge who attempted to treat Cobb's wound, but it soon became apparent that even a tourniquet could not stop the effusion of blood.

Stretcher bearers were brought forward to remove Cobb from the battlefield. William Montgomery later wrote his aunt: "*I shall never forget [Cobb's] last look as they laid him on the litter to bear him from the field. His last words to his men were—'I am only wounded, boys, hold your ground like brave men.'*" Cobb was transported to a divisional hospital behind Telegraph Hill where his situation remained hopeless. As Reverend R.K. Porter cradled Cobb's head in his arms, the general cried out repeatedly, "*Porter, it is very painful!*" Cobb soon faded into unconsciousness and died around 2:00 P.M. Porter later eulogized, "*the glorious light went out forever.*" The body, taken to Athens, Georgia and was buried on December 19 at Oconee Hill Cemetery.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. C) South Carolina
2. A) Julia Dent [Mrs. Grant]
3. C) Chapultepec
4. A) Helen Dortch
5. D) Hero
6. E) Cadiz, Spain
7. B) Jubal Early [Class of 1837]
8. A) Henry A. Wise [Gov. of Virginia]
9. C) Glendale
10. D) Old Baldy

A last reminder for this month's meeting....**Jerry Maxwell** will present: "*I Am Glad the Yankees Are Coming*': Fighting on the Confederate Right at Fredericksburg." That's **MONDAY, JUNE 27** at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). The meeting begins at 6:30 P.M. Hope to see you there....

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