

# Old Baldy

## Civil War Round Table of Philadelphia



December 9, 2010, The One Hundred and Forty-Ninth Year of the Civil War

## “The Battle of Fredericksburg”

### “The Battle of Fredericksburg and Major General Burnside”

by Steve Wright and Mike Cavanaugh

Noted as being one of the most one-sided battles of the Civil War, the battle of Fredericksburg is also remarkable in that Union casualties were more than twice those suffered by the Confederates and the armies at Fredericksburg represented the largest number of armed men ever to confront each other for combat during the war.

Following the battle, both General Burnside and President Lincoln came under harsh criticism for the defeat at Fredericksburg. Radical Republican Senator Zachariah Chandler wrote, “The President is a weak man, too weak for the occasion, and those fool or traitor generals are wasting time and yet more precious blood in indecisive battles and delays.”

Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin visited President Lincoln after touring the ravaged battlefield. The period following the battle of Fredericksburg was one of the darkest for the sixteenth President. He said of it, “If there is a worse place than hell, I am in it.”

For this program, **Steven Wright** will present a short Power-point presentation on the Battle of Fredericksburg, which will be followed by another short program by **Michael A. Cavanaugh** putting forward author William Marvel's defense of Major General Ambrose Burnside as



Major General  
Ambrose Burnside

### Notes from the President...

The Holiday season is upon us as Hanukah has started and New Year's will be here before you know it. Thank you for your continued support of our Round Table. As the Sesquicentennial continues, next year will be even better. We continue to schedule interesting programs, be sure to come out and enjoy them. Come out on the 9th and welcome Craig back.

Those who joined us last month got to enjoy **Dr. Sid's** dry humor and learn about Civil War Spies and Guerillas. It was a very informative night. It was good to see **Shamele Jordan** and **Charlie Barrett** in attendance. The Civil War: Fresh Perspectives Symposium at the National Archives last month did not disappoint as it lived up to its billing. Look for a write up next month. Tell us about your Civil War adventures. This month **Steve Wright** will do a short presentation on the battle at Fredericksburg and then lead a discussion, so come prepared to debate your views.

Welcome new member **Dick Simpson**, and a reminder to get your dues into **Herb Kaufman**. We hope to have our Outreach position filled soon. We are looking for a Program Director to take over for Mike and Steve in March. If you want to have a say in what topics we discuss and cover next year let us know. Watch the newsletter and website for information on events in the Spring including Abraham Lincoln's speech to the New Jersey Assembly in February, and the re-enactment of the attack on Fort Sumter on April 15-17 at Fort Mott and Fort Delaware.

We will have our Facebook page set up soon and will be reaching out to the History Departments at local schools to let them know of our programs. Other projects we will be working on next month include the brochure and display board to be used at Fort Mott event and Neshaminy for our recruitment effort; and the historical marker at Logan Square for the Sanitary Fair. Let us know how you would like to assist.

Did you know the first shot of the Civil War was actually in January? John McGowan, born in Philadelphia, was sent by President Buchanan to resupply Fort Sumter in the Star

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The Old Baldy CWRT will meet at the Union League of Philadelphia at 7:30 PM, the second Thursday of the month. Members go out to a local restaurant for dinner at 6:00 PM, Applebees on 15th Street between Walnut and Locust. You're Welcome to Join Us!

Notice: Attire for Men at the Union League Jacket and tie would be preferred; otherwise collared shirts, long pants and jacket are recommended. For men and women, the following attire is never acceptable on the first or second floors of the League: jeans, denim wear, tee shirts, athletic wear, tank, halter, or jogging tops, shorts, baseball caps, sneakers, extremely casual or beach footwear. Current or historical military uniforms are appropriate.

**Parking... A \$2 coupon (off of parking) is available at the Union League front desk (through the side door on Sansom Street)**

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commander of the Army of the Potomac from his book on Burnside's. Afterwards, the floor will be open to members for a lively discussion and questions!

That's **Thursday, December 9th** starting at **7:30PM** in the 2nd Floor Library of the **Union League** at Broad & Sansom Streets. As always, you are welcome to join us at 6:00 at Applebee's for a bite to eat before the meeting. It's just a block south of the Union League on 15th Street.

Steve Wright,  
Program Chairman

## Battle of Fredericksburg

By Kennedy Hickman, *About.com Guide*  
<http://militaryhistory.about.com>

### Battle Summary

Having grown angry with Major General George B. McClellan's unwillingness to pursue General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia after the Battle of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln relieved him on November 5, 1862, and replaced him with Major General Ambrose Burnside two days later. Reluctantly assuming command, Burnside was pressured to undertake offensive operations by Lincoln and Union General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck. Planning a late fall offensive, Burnside intended to move into Virginia and feint towards Culpeper Court House or Gordonsville before quickly marching southeast to Fredericksburg.

Hoping to sidestep Lee's army, Burnside planned to cross the Rappahannock River and advance on Richmond via

**Union - Army of the Potomac**  
**Major General Ambrose E. Burnside**  
**100,007 men**

**Confederates - Army of Northern Virginia**  
**General Robert E. Lee**  
**72,497 men**

the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad. Requiring speed and guile, Burnside's plan was submitted to Halleck on November 9. Following a lengthy debate, it was approved by Lincoln five days later. Moving out on November 15, the lead elements of the Army of the Potomac reached Falmouth, VA, opposite Fredericksburg, two days later having successfully stolen a march on Lee.

This success was squandered when it was discovered that the pontoons needed to bridge the river had not arrived ahead of the army due to an administrative error. Major

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of the West. On the early hours of January 9th in Charleston harbor, a South Carolina battery manned by Citadel cadets on Morris Island fired at the ship commanded by McGowan. They returned to New York. McGowan also established life-saving "boathouses" on the New Jersey coast between Little Egg Harbor and Cape May.

The rest of this story and 149 others can be found in *New Jersey Goes to War*. These 150 biographies of New Jerseyans during the war make a great holiday gift.

Bring a friend when you join us on the 9th for a lively discussion. Please have a safe and joyous holiday season and Happy New Year.

*Join us for dinner at Applebee's if you can.*

*Rich Jankowski, President*

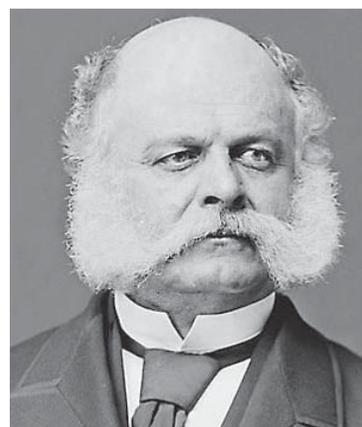
## Membership Report

We welcome new member **Dick Simpson** of Lancaster, PA, to the ranks. Remember you can help the round table bring in new members by telling your friends about the great programs we present each month. I have extra copies of back newsletters. Drop me a line and I'll send you several, or send me a name and address of someone you think might be interested and I'll send them a copy. I always have extra copies at the meeting.

We encourage all our members to receive their newsletters by email. This saves us money that can be used to obtain quality speakers and make generous donations to battlefield and historic preservation. Remember donations to the round table are always welcome and will be put to good use.

We also have several members that we have no email address listed. Even if you want to receive your newsletter by USPS, having your email address in our system is good for notifications of last minute meeting changes and situations that need to be acted on right away. If you wish to receive your newsletter by email or to add your email address to our list, contact: **Mike Cavanaugh** at [chief96pbi@rcn.com](mailto:chief96pbi@rcn.com) or call **484.225.3150**.

*Thank you, as always, for your support.*



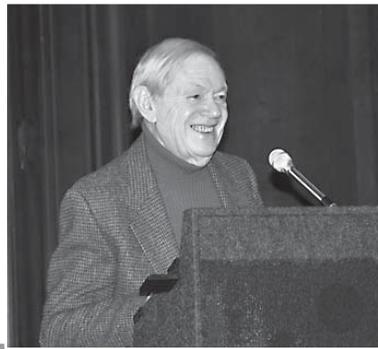
### "Burnside/ Sideburns"

Sideburns or sideboards are patches of facial hair grown on the sides of the face, extending from the hairline to below the ears and worn with an unbearded chin. The term "sideburns" is a 19th century corruption of the original burnside, named after

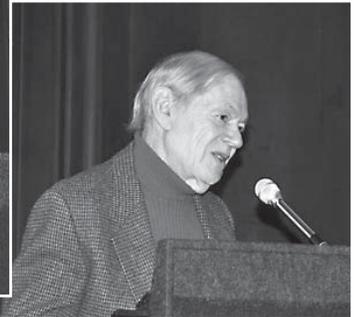
general Ambrose Burnside, a man known for his unusual facial hairstyle that connected thick sideburns by way of a moustache but left the chin clean-shaven.

**November 11th meeting**  
**“Civil War Spies & Guerillas”**

**Dr. Sydney Copel's** presentation on Spies and Guerillas in the Civil War was educational and entertaining. Sydney's style of humor made the subject even more interesting. He discussed "Crazy Beth" a Union Spy in Richmond and her maid who ended up in Jefferson Davis' home as a servant and spy for the Union. The guerilla action of Quantrill and several of his men becoming guerillas on their own, the James brothers, the Youngers and etc. The destruction and murder these people caused to the population. We heard how Union soldiers who tracked them down became criminals in their own way. The violent end that took many of the guerillas and the hunters. His program had many photos of these interesting people who fought the war in a different way. Sydney has been a friend of Old Baldy and is always welcome.



**Dr. Sydney Copel**



**On the Road with Rich...**  
**“Kenosha's Civil War Museum”**

*Article, Photos  
 by Rich Jankowski*

On our short ballpark tour right before Labor Day we stopped in Kenosha, WI to visit the Civil War Museum. It is located right on the shore of Lake Michigan. We had a great breakfast at Frank's Diner [seen on Diners, Drive-in's and Dives] before visiting the museum. The Museum addresses the war from a Mid-West perspective. The two-story 58,000 square foot Museum opened in 2008.

The 15,000 square feet permanent exhibit is the Fiery Trail. The Fiery Trail tells the personal stories of the men and women of the Upper Middle-West (Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Indiana, and Michigan). Through state-of-the-art museum technology, life-size dioramas and interactive engaging exhibits, the visitor travel back in history to the social, political and economic influences that contributed to the Civil War.

The chronological journey through the second half of the 19th century gives the visitor a sense of life before, during and following the war.



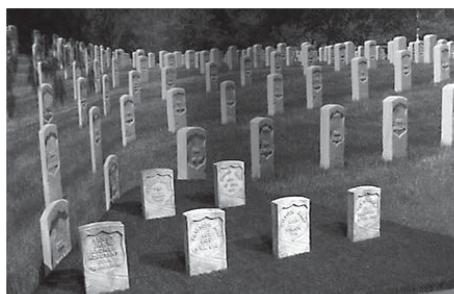
From the home front, to the railroad and waterways, to the battlefield and back home again, the Civil War is seen through the eyes of soldiers, nurses,

spouses, children, clergymen, slaves, tradesmen, and the others who lived it. Visitors experience the battlefield, the incredible logistics and resources that were required to mount the war effort, and the deep emotions that tore families apart.

It showcases significant Civil War artifacts important to the region and national Civil War story. It winds around to “Seeing the Elephant.” The 360-degree immersion exhibit has a battle laser map in the center. Surrounding are exhibit cases highlighting each state in the upper Midwest and their contribution and on the outer portion of the circle are weapons, supplies, uniforms, musical instruments and other tools of war. The exhibit exits to a memorial and cemetery dedicated to the many soldiers who lost their lives.



The parts of the exhibit I enjoyed were the display on the Civil War Navy and on Vicksburg. The mid-west perspective and the complete story [pre to post war] was a refreshing difference from other Civil War Museums we have visited. A total of 740,000 individuals fought from the upper Midwest covering much territory and engaging in many of the critical conflicts of the War. The Museum has Veterans Memorial Gallery



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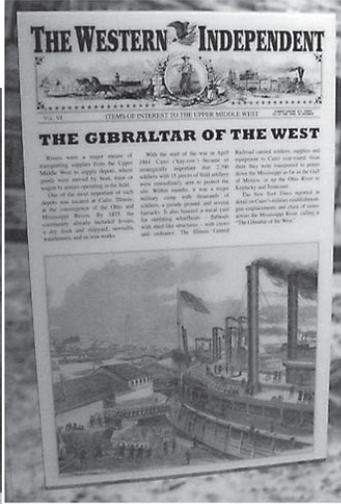
honoring soldiers of all wars that have affected the United States. A sculpture of Civil War soldiers around a campfire sits under a fiber optic sky surrounded by military memorabilia. Upstairs is a resources center for research and changing exhibits.



The Museum is open Tuesday-Saturday 9-5 and Sunday 12-5. Admission is \$7. It is located at 5400 First Avenue



in Kenosha. More information is available at [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org) Next door is the Kenosha Public Museum, which offers free admission for some local history and a look at a life-sized replica of a Woolly Mammoth excavated from Kenosha County.



## Today in Civil War History

### Monday December 9, 1861 Critical Congressional Committee Confirmed

There are few things a general hates more than a crowd of civilians hanging around, asking questions, and acting like it has the right to demand answers. That, essentially, is what the generals of the United States got today, as Congress passed legislation creating a body called the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Originally a creation of radical senators who were outraged by the disastrous Battle of Ball's Bluff and determined to find someone to blame for the fiasco, it would last for the length of the War. Hundreds of witnesses would be summoned to testify before this body over the course of the war. In some cases this proved to be an immense waste of time, with the praise and censure issued more on political grounds than military, but there was also generated a huge amount of testimony which explained in greater detail than the Official Reports, the planning and execution of many operations.

### Tuesday December 9, 1862 Burnside Brigades Brace for Battle

On the heights opposite Fredericksburg, Va., the Grand Divisions of the Army of the Potomac were being prepared for the strife to come. Orders were issued to the division

commanders today to supply their men with 60 rounds of ammunition apiece, and to prepare three days' supply of cooked-in-advance rations. Aside from these preparations there was little going on. The Confederate defenders had burned the bridges over the Rappahannock River, and the waterway was far too deep, not to mention cold, to wade across this time of year. Action had to wait on the arrival of pontoon bridges, which were on the way from Washington, but moving slowly.

### Wednesday December 9, 1863 Bitter Blacks Battle Belittlement

There was no question that racism was as rampant in the North as it ever was in the slaveholding south, and that certainly included a great many members of the United States military. There were few dedicated abolitionists like Robert Gould Shaw who were proud to command units of the United States Colored Troops, but many who found it mortifying. One of these latter was in command at Ft. Jackson, Louisiana, downriver from New Orleans. His loathing for this posting was translated into cruel and abusive treatment of the black soldiers under his command. Today they decided that this was behavior up with which they would no longer put, and they rose in mutiny. Other white officers at the installation managed to halt the uprising before blood was shed. This was not the first mutiny to happen at Ft. Jackson, but the last one was committed by Confederate troops after Farragut bypassed them to take New Orleans.

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## Friday December 9, 1864 Tardy Thomas Teetering Terribly

U.S. General George H. Thomas did not get his nickname of "Old Slow Trot" for nothing. It was not his decision making or command in battle that was slow, as reflected in his other nickname "The Rock of Chickamauga" commemorating his solid defense during that battle which allowed the rest of the Union force to retreat to Chattanooga and safety. But he was not going to attack before he was ready, in this case Hood's forces outside of Nashville. U.S. Grant had actually written out the orders relieving Thomas of command today and his replacement by Schofield. However, protocol required that Grant send this order through Gen. Halleck, while Halleck said it had to come straight from Grant. While this was being settled a heavy ice and sleet storm struck Nashville, making fighting impossible. Thomas' career remained in the balance.

*www.civilwarinteractive*

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## Case of the Missing Pontoons

*This article is from [www.Fredericksburg.com](http://www.Fredericksburg.com) It is one of thirty seven on the Battle of Fredericksburg by Donald Pfantz.*

*DONALD C. PFANZ is staff historian with Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He is author of "Abraham Lincoln at City Point" and "Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life".*

AT FREDERICKSBURG, military success hinged on pontoons, those ungainly 5-foot-wide, 21-foot-long wooden boats used to construct temporary, floating bridges. When Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside took command of the Union Army of the Potomac in November 1862, he determined to shift his massive, 115,000-man force from the vicinity of Warrenton to Fredericksburg. From there, he would advance toward Richmond, following the route of the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad (the modern Amtrak line), using the railroad and nearby navigable rivers to supply his army.

There was just one drawback to the plan: the Rappahannock River. As Burnside moved east, the Rappahannock broadened from a shallow stream to an unfordable river. By the time it reached Fredericksburg, it was 400 feet wide and impassable to troops. That's where the pontoons came in. If Burnside brought his own temporary bridges, he could cross the river quickly and seize Fredericksburg before Lee could march his army down from Culpeper to stop him.

Unfortunately, the pontoon boats and other bridging material (collectively known as the "pontoon train") had

been left back at Berlin, Md., near Harpers Ferry, when the Union army crossed the Potomac River a few weeks earlier. Burnside knew this and had made arrangements through his boss, Gen. in Chief Henry Halleck, to have the bridges sent from Berlin to Washington, and thence via Aquia Creek to Fredericksburg.

If all went according to schedule, the bridges would reach the Tidewater town at the same time as Burnside's army, enabling it to cross the river without delay.

But in life, things seldom go according to schedule. When the Army of the Potomac reached Fredericksburg on Nov. 17, 1862, the bridges were not there. In fact, as Burnside would soon learn, most of them were still back at Washington, more than 50 miles away. Until they arrived, his army could do nothing.

The delay was the result of bad communication, bad planning and bad weather. The engineers in charge of the pontoon train had to float dozens of heavy boats down the C&O Canal towpath 50 miles to Washington. Once there, they had to assemble transportation for the train, then take it overland another 50 miles to Fredericksburg. A second train would go by water. The engineers had less than one week from the time they received the order to complete the job. It would be a Herculean task under the best of circumstances.

Poor communication hindered the operation from the start. It was Halleck's job to order the pontoon train to Fredericksburg. President Abraham Lincoln had brought the general to Washington in July 1862 to provide unified leadership to the army's war effort. "Old Brains," however, proved to be a greater liability than an asset.

Although a good organizer and military theorist, Halleck had no aptitude for command and shunned responsibility of any kind. McClellan characterized him as "the most hopelessly stupid of all men in high position," while Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles confided to his diary that Halleck "originates nothing ... plans nothing, suggests nothing, is good for nothing."

In the case of the pontoons, Halleck issued orders for the pontoons to be sent to Aquia Creek, but he failed to impress upon the engineer in charge of operation the importance of speed. Having given the order, he washed his hands of the operation.

After Halleck, primary responsibility for getting the pontoon bridges to Fredericksburg on time fell to Gen. Daniel Woodbury, commander of the army's Engineer Brigade. Woodbury received Halleck's orders to send a pontoon train to Aquia Creek on Nov. 12. That same day, one of Woodbury's subordinates, Maj. Ira Spaulding of the 50th New York Engineers, received an order from the Army of the Potomac directing him



to ship the pontoons and bridging to Washington. The order had been written a week earlier.

After consulting Quartermaster Gen. Montgomery Meigs, Woodbury decided to send one pontoon train by land and the other by water. The water-borne train, led by Maj. J. A. Magruder, left Washington at 5 p.m., Nov. 16. Magruder lashed 48 pontoon boats together into a "raft" and towed them down the Potomac River behind a steamboat. Just below the capital, the steamer ran aground on a sandbar. Even so, Magruder and his train reached Aquia Creek on Nov. 18, just one day after Burnside's army.

Spaulding's train did not do so well. Before he set out, he had to secure transportation for the train, including dozens of special wagons, 270 horses and harnesses and teamsters. It all took time-lots of time. To make matters worse, when the horses arrived, Spaulding discovered that they had never been broken. Precious hours were spent assembling the harness gear and getting the horses accustomed to wearing it.

It was Nov. 19 before the land train was ready to go. Crossing the Potomac River via Long Bridge, Spaulding's pontoon train slowly wended its way south along the Telegraph Road amid a steady rain. Fifty miles away, on the Rappahannock River, the vanguard of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was marching into Fredericksburg.

For two days, Spaulding's train struggled south on Telegraph Road amid unrelenting rains. The heavy boats and the muddy roads made progress tortuously slow. Three days out of Washington Spaulding reached the Occoquan River, which recent rains had flooded. The major ordered his troops to unload the heavy boats and construct a bridge across the swollen stream. Another day was lost.

Spaulding was in a stew. By now, he realized that he was behind schedule and that the army was waiting for him. Rather than continue across country at his snaillike pace, he instead lashed his 58 pontoon boats together into a large raft and had a ship from Washington pull it down the Potomac River to Aquia Creek, as Magruder had done several days before. The horses and wagons continued to Aquia Creek by land, but, because they were now divested of their load, they were able to move more quickly.

Spaulding's flotilla reached the Fredericksburg area on Nov. 24; his horses and wagons arrived by land one day later. After two weeks of fighting treacherous sandbars, muddy roads, and swollen creeks, the engineers had finally delivered the bridges. Unfortunately, they had arrived too late to do much good. The Confederate army had reached Fredericksburg five days earlier and now stood ready to contest the crossing.

Burnside's campaign had foundered in the Virginia mud.

## The Gallant Pelham

*This article is from [www.Fredericksburg.com](http://www.Fredericksburg.com) It is one of thirty seven on the Battle of Fredericksburg by Donald Pfantz.*

DONALD C. PFANZ is staff historian with Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He is author of "Abraham Lincoln at City Point" and "Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life".

**THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG** produced many heroes, but none more celebrated than blond-haired, blue-eyed **Major John Pelham**. At age 24, Pelham commanded the Army of Northern Virginia's horse artillery, the light guns that traveled with the Confederate cavalry.

Young ladies liked Pelham because of his handsome features and winning personality; his fellow soldiers admired his bravery and modesty. Pelham was attending the U.S. Military Academy when the Civil War began. Leaving West Point, he traveled south and enlisted in a Confederate artillery battery. There, he caught the eye of J.E.B. Stuart, the Army of Northern Virginia's chief of cavalry.

Stuart took an instant liking to the young man (who was scarcely five years younger than himself) and appointed him to command the horse artillery. At the Seven Days Campaign, at Antietam, and at countless smaller actions in between, Pelham harassed the Union army with his cannons.

The young man's fame reached its zenith at Fredericksburg. Pelham was with Stuart on the far right of Lee's line, near Massaponax Creek, when the Union army began to deploy on the plain ahead. The troops belonged to Gen. George G. Meade's Pennsylvania Reserves. Earlier



**John Pelham**

*(September 7, 1838 - March 17, 1863) was an artillery officer who served with the Confederate cavalry under J.E.B. Stuart during the American Civil War. Dubbed "The Gallant Pelham" for his military prowess and personal courage, Pelham revolutionized the usage of light artillery as a mobile arm of the cavalry.*

in the day, Meade had received orders from his commander, Gen. John F. Reynolds, to attack Confederate forces occupying a wooded ridge south of town.

Meade led his division to a point opposite Smithfield plantation (now the Fredericksburg Country Club), then wheeled right to cross the Richmond Stage Road (now known as the Tidewater Trail). Thick hedgerows and deep drainage ditches bordered the road, delaying Meade's progress. Pioneers with shovels and axes quickly removed these impediments, however, and by 10 a.m., Meade was ready to begin his assault. His line stretched across the fields now occupied by the

General Motors Powertrain factory.

John Pelham watched the Union deployment with growing excitement. Meade's troops faced west, toward the wooded heights, placing Pelham directly on their left flank.

Seeing an opportunity to do the enemy some damage, Pelham received permission from Stuart to advance one

gun to the intersection of the Richmond Stage Road and the road that led to Hamilton's Crossing (modern Benchmark Road). Once there, he opened fire with solid shot. The iron projectiles bounded down the length of the line, creating havoc in the Union ranks.

One shot struck a Northern cannon; another exploded an ammunition chest. Meade's foot soldiers threw themselves face down in the muddy field for cover. One Pennsylvanian remembered "pressing down hard ... and flattening out that I might not interfere with any of the flying iron."

For a minute or two, Pelham had things his own way, but Northern artillerists quickly recovered from their surprise and fought back. Eighteen cannon on the plain showered the Confederate major with shot and shell. Across the Rappahannock River, Union cannon on Stafford Heights added their weight to the bombardment. Young Pelham had stirred up a hornet's nest.

Stuart sent a second gun forward to assist his young protege, but it no sooner joined the action than a solid shot struck it, knocking it out of action. Pelham would have to go it alone. That was just to the dashing young Alabamian's liking.

Pelham concealed his gun from sight by placing it behind intervening hedgerows. When Union cannons began zeroing in on his position, he would shift position and continue firing. Despite his dodging, the Union fire began to have its effect. Men and horses began to fall at a frightening rate.

Three times, Stuart sent couriers to Pelham, ordering him to retreat. Each time, the messages were ignored. "Tell the General I can hold my ground!" he gamely told one courier.

Finally, Pelham exhausted his ammunition and retired to the safety of his own lines. He had successfully fought against long odds, delaying Meade's assault by more than half an hour.

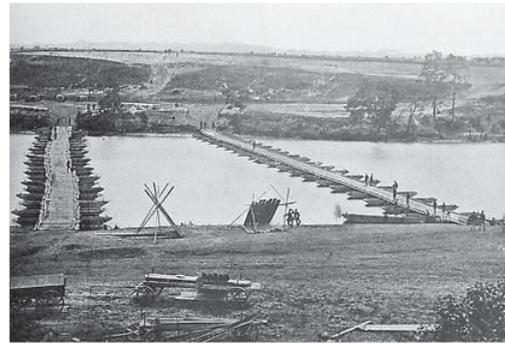
Witnessing Pelham's exploit from Prospect Hill, Gen. Robert E. Lee remarked: "It is glorious to see such courage in one so young!" Lee praised his brave subordinate in his report of the battle and recommended his promotion to lieutenant colonel.

Pelham's greatest praise, however, came from George Meade, who later insisted that he came under attack from an entire four-gun Confederate battery rather than Pelham's solitary piece. As a result of Pelham's actions, Gen. Reynolds detailed Gen. Abner Doubleday's division to guard his left flank, thus immobilizing 6,000 men that might have been used to advantage elsewhere.

Today, a state historic marker and a small granite monument at the intersection of the Tidewater Trail (Routes 2 and 17) and Benchmark Road mark the site of Pelham's gallant exploit. In addition, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has purchased a small plot of ground nearby in order to preserve it for future generations of Americans.

Pelham himself did not survive the war. He died on March 17, 1863, at Kelly's Ford, near Culpeper, impetuously leading a cavalry charge. It was a fitting, if tragic, end for the young man known throughout the army as the gallant Pelham.

<http://fredericksburg.com>



General Edwin V. Sumner, commanding the Right Grand Division (II Corps & IX Corps), pressed Burnside for permission to ford the

river and occupy Marye's Heights west of the town. Burnside refused fearing that the fall rains would cause the river to rise and that Sumner would be cut off. As the Union forces sat in Falmouth, Lt. General James Longstreet's corps arrived and began digging on the heights.

On November 25, the first pontoon bridges arrived, but Burnside refused to move, missing an opportunity to crush half of Lee's army before the other half arrived. By the end of the month, when the remaining bridges arrived, Lt. General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's corps had reached Fredericksburg and assumed a position south of Longstreet. Finally, on December 11, Union engineers began building six pontoon bridges opposite Fredericksburg. Under fire from Confederate snipers, Burnside was forced to send landing parties across the river to clear out the town.

Supported by artillery on Stafford Heights, the Union troops occupied Fredericksburg and looted the town. With the bridges completed, the bulk of Union forces began crossing the river and deploying for battle on December 11 and 12. Burnside's original plan for the battle called for the main attack to be executed to the south by Major General William B. Franklin's Left Grand Division (I Corps & VI Corps) against Jackson's position, with a smaller, supporting action against Marye's Heights.

Beginning at 8:30 AM on December 13, the assault was led by Major General George G. Meade's division, supported by those of Brigadier Generals Abner Doubleday and John Gibbon. While initially hampered by heavy fog, the Union attack gained momentum around 10:00 AM when it was able to exploit a gap in Jackson's lines. Meade's attack was eventually stopped by artillery fire, and around 1:30 PM a massive Confederate counterattack forced all three Union divisions to withdraw. To the north, the first assault on Marye's Heights had commenced at 11:00 AM and was led by the division of Major General William H. French.



The approach to the heights required the attacking force to cross a 400-yard open plain which was divided by a drainage ditch. To cross the ditch, Union troops were forced to file in columns over two small bridges. As in the south, the fog prevented Union artillery on Stafford Heights from pro-

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viding effective fire support. Moving forward, French's men were repulsed with heavy casualties. Burnside repeated the attack with the divisions of Brigadier Generals Winfield Scott Hancock and Oliver O. Howard with the same results. With the battle going poorly on Franklin's front, Burnside focused his attention on Marye's Heights.

Reinforced by Major General George Pickett's division, Longstreet's position proved impenetrable. The attack was renewed at 3:30 PM when Brigadier General Charles Griffin's division was sent forward and repulsed. Half an hour later, Brigadier General Andrew Humphrey's division charged with the same result. The battle concluded when Brigadier General George W. Getty's division attempted to attack the heights from the south with no success. All told, sixteen charges were made against the stone wall atop Marye's Heights, usually in brigade strength. Witnessing the carnage Gen. Lee commented, "It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it."

### Aftermath

One of the most one-sided battles of the Civil War, the Battle of Fredericksburg cost the Army of the Potomac 1,284 killed, 9,600 wounded, and 1,769 captured/missing. For the Confederates, casualties were 608 killed, 4,116 wounded, and 653 captured/missing. Of these only around 200 were suffered at Marye's Heights. As the battle ended, many Union troops, living and wounded, were forced to spend the freezing night of December 13/14 on the plain before the heights, pinned down by the Confederates. On the afternoon of the 14th, Burnside asked Lee for a truce to tend to his wounded which was granted.

Having removed his men from the field, Burnside withdrew the army back across the river to Stafford Heights. The following month, Burnside strived to save his reputation by attempting to move north around Lee's left flank. This plan bogged down when January rains reduced the roads to mud pits which prevented the army from moving. Dubbed the "Mud March," the movement was cancelled. Burnside was replaced by Major General Joseph Hooker on January 26, 1863.

## Upcoming Events

**Lincoln** will be speaking to the New Jersey assembly in February 2011, will have the date in the next Newsletter.

April 15-17, 2011 at **Fort Mott** Re-enact the bombing of Fort Sumter by firing at **Fort Delaware**. Details in future newsletters.

The **school of the soldier** event will be at Allaire State Park May 14-15, 2011

Registration for the **Virginia Signature Conference** is open  
<http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/>

**WEB Site:** <http://oldbaldycwrt.org>  
**Email:** [oldbaldycwrt@verizon.net](mailto:oldbaldycwrt@verizon.net)  
**Blog:** <http://oldbaldycwrt.blogspot.com/>

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### 1865 The Last Full Measure



The long awaited book, *New Jersey Goes to War: Biographies of 150 New Jerseyans during the War* edited by Joe Bilby is now available for purchase at \$20. It can be acquired on line at <http://www.njcivilwar.com/Booksstore.htm>. The New Jersey Civil War 150th hat is available in adjustable version with velcro back strap for \$16.00 or a "Flex-Fit" elastic sweatband for \$20. Shipping is \$5 for priority mail with delivery confirmation. Shirts are also available for \$30.00.

## Schedule of Old Baldy CWRT Speakers and Activities for 2010/2011

December 9 - Thursday  
**"The Battle of Fredericksburg"**  
**A Round Table discussion**  
Moderator Steve Wright

January 13 - Thursday  
**"The Session Crisis"**  
Historian Roger Arthur

February 10 - Thursday  
**"Abraham Lincoln Program"**  
Lincoln scholars: Steve Wright and Hugh Boyle

March 10 - Thursday  
**"The Battle of Wilson's Creek, - Missouri 1861"**  
Historian Dick Simpson

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, begin at 7:30 PM in the 2nd Floor Library of the UNION LEAGUE, Broad & Sansom Streets in Philadelphia. Questions to Steve Wright at 267-258-5943 or [maqua824@aol.com](mailto:maqua824@aol.com)

Members go out to a local restaurant for dinner at 6:00 P.M. Applebees on 15th Street between Walnut and Locust  
*You're Welcome to Join Us!*

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Founded January 1977

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