

# Old Baldy Civil War Round Table of Philadelphia



March 2004, The One Hundred and Forty-Third Year of the Civil War

## March Meeting of 2004

### Note Change of meeting day and museum name change

The March 10th Meeting of the Old Baldy Civil War Round Table will start at 7:30 pm on Wednesday at the Civil War and Underground Railroad Museum at 1805 Pine Street in Philadelphia. The speaker will be **Bradley Gottfried**. Bradley's topic will be "*The Roads to Gettysburg*." Bradley is a noted Gettysburg historian and author.

**Bring a friend, neighbor and another Civil War buff to enjoy a fascinating subject and to support our speakers at Old Baldy.**

### "The day the war began"

At the February meeting **Robert Sprague** shared with us a fascinating look into "*The day the war began*" Doing a comparison of where we were and what we were doing on those days that had a profound effect on us and what the effects that day had on the average people and those who would lead and conduct the war. How some of them did not hear of that first shot that day and those who did and what they must have felt and imagined for the future. Lincoln going to the Army telegraph office that day and Grant working in a store in Ohio. Again a very fascinating presentation. Bob is now a retired high school teacher and president of the Brandywine Valley CWRT and has been a student of the Civil War for many years.



Photo - Pat Caldwell

## The President's Letter

Hi Everyone,

By now everyone has seen the new look of the Old Baldy newsletter. I'd like to say thanks again to member Don Wiles for a job well done. It is one of the best newsletters around. Very impressive!

And Congratulations are in order to **Steve Lieberum** our newly appointed secretary to the Old Baldy board!

Last month we listened to Brandywine RT president **Robert Sprague** who gave us some fascinating insight into what was happening on April 12th 1861 in the lives of some major players in the Civil War and in the cities and towns where some of the biggest battles would be fought, all unaware as to what would take place in the years to follow. It was interesting to see the effects it had on both.

This month we will have **Bradley Gottfried**, noted Gettysburg historian and author who will speak on the topic of his book "*The Roads to Gettysburg*". But please note that the date and time will be changed this month. Our meeting will be on *Wednesday, March 10th* to accommodate our speaker coordinator, **Mike Cavanaugh** who will be teaching a course on Petersburg for the Civil War Institute at Manor College. Why not join Mike for his course starting March 11 for three consecutive Thursdays? I'm sure it would be well worth it as Mike knows more than just about anyone on Petersburg and the Crater. Did you catch him on the History Channel that night??

So don't forget the date and come out and have a great night and hear another terrific speaker at 1805 Pine Street!

Hope to see you all there.

Nancy

## Members E-Mail List

We have maintained a list of the e-mail addresses for most of our members. This is important because we can notify you in the event that a meeting is canceled due to weather or some other emergency. Also, we can contact members if something needs to be acted on immediately. If we don't have your e-mail address please send it to Mike Cavanaugh at: **chief96pbi@juno.com**. Thank you.

**Schedule of  
Old Baldy CWRT Speakers for  
Winter/Spring/Summer  
2004**

March 10 - Wednesday  
(Note the change in meeting night)

**Bradley Gottfried**

Author and Gettysburg historian  
Topic: *The Roads to Gettysburg*

April 8 - Thursday

**Michael Dreese**

Author, Gettysburg Historian  
Topic: *Union and Confederate Battle Flags and  
Color Bearers at the Battle of Gettysburg*

May 5 - Wednesday **Special Program**

**Gordon Rhea**

Author  
The Topic: *The Battle of Cold Harbor*

May 13 - Thursday

**William M. Welsch**

Author  
Topic: *"General Samuel Cooper, CSA"*

June 10 - Thursday

**Edward Bonekemper**

Author  
Topic: *Was Ulysses Grant a Butcher?*

July 8 - Thursday

**Nancy Caldwell**

President Old Baldy CWRT  
Topic: *Civil War Horses*

August 21 - Saturday

**H. Wilson Greene**

Executive Director of Pamplin Park, Author, Historian  
Topic: *TBA*

**Annual Fund Raising Dinner  
Reservations Required  
Radisson Hotel, Route One, Trevoise, PA**

**All meetings, unless otherwise noted, begin  
at 7:30 PM at the  
Civil War Library and Museum,  
1805 Pine Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**Questions to Mike Cavanaugh at 215.725.3602 or  
chief96pbi@juno.com**



*Photo - Pat Caldwell*

**February 12 ...a birthday for two**

**Mr. Lincoln and our own Tina Newberry**

**From the Membership Chairman**

As you know almost 70% of Old Baldy CWRT memberships expire in January and February. Please check the address page of your newsletter to see when your membership expires. If it is 1/04 or 2/04 then your dues are due. We hope to have 100% renewals. We have a great lineup of speakers scheduled into the summer. Send your checks payable to the Old Baldy CWRT, 1805 Pine Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19103.

**Women's History Month**

**Elizabeth Masser Thorn**

Peter Thorn was born in Rukershausen, Germany, July 24, 1826 and sailed to America by himself in 1852 at the age of 26. His occupation in Germany was that of a minor. Elizabeth Moser Thorn was born in Eigelsdorf, Germany, December 28, 1832 and sailed to America in 1854 at the age of 22. She came with her parents, Johannes and Katharina Maser, leaving behind a man whom she loved very much.

*continued on next page*

**Old Baldy  
Civil War Round Table  
of Philadelphia  
1805 Pine Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103  
215.735.8196  
Founded January 1977**

**President: Nancy Caldwell  
Vice President: Pat Caldwell  
Treasurer: William George  
Secretary: Steve Lieberum**

**Annual Memberships  
Students: \$12.50  
Individuals: \$25.00  
Families: \$35.00**

### **The Gettysburg Civil War Women's Memorial**

*Honoring all the women who served in various capacities before, during, and following the Battle of Gettysburg.*

*Ron Tunison commissioned to sculpt the 7-foot bronze statue of a 6-month pregnant Elizabeth Thorn, who buried the first 91 soldiers from the Battle of Gettysburg in Evergreen Cemetery. The Memorial is placed 50 feet southwest of the historic cemetery gatehouse.*



Photos - Don Wiles

On the morning of September 1, 1855, services were held at the gatehouse for laying of the cornerstone with Dr. Simon Schmucker officiating. The same afternoon, Peter and Elizabeth Thorn were married in the St. James Lutheran Church in Gettysburg.

February 8th, 1856, Peter Thorn was appointed caretaker of the Ever Green cemetery with a salary of \$150.00 per year. The cemetery also provided living quarters in the gatehouse. The gatehouse was built in 1855.

Nell Thorn Baynham, of Martinsburg, West Virginia, a granddaughter of Mrs. Thorn tells of this man Elizabeth left in Germany, arriving at the gatehouse in 1856 and trying to persuade her to leave and go with him. She resisted and the man hearing her young son Frederick crying, decided not to interfere. She told Peter and he supposedly bought her a nice new dress for being loyal and faithful.

In 1862, Peter volunteered to serve in the 138th Penna. Vol., Co. B and was serving in Virginia at the time of the Battle of Gettysburg. Elizabeth and her father were doing the work at the cemetery, digging graves and what ever work had to be done.

In her diary, she tells of an encounter with some Confederate soldiers at the gatehouse June 30th, 1863. They asked her for food and she supplied them with bread, butter and buttermilk. At the time of the battle, the Thorns had three sons, Frederick, age 6, George, age 4 and John, age 2.

July 1st, 1863, General Howard arrived and some of his men ordered her to prepare a meal for General Howard, General Slocum and General Sickles. Mrs. Thorn told them she did not have enough food such as bread etc. but managed to prepare them a meal. General Howard asked Mrs. Thorn's father to show him the different roads leading into Gettysburg and

she insisted he was too old to go and said she would go. Some of the men thought it was too dangerous for a woman to do this but she went. When she was returning some of the men gave her a round of applause.

Upon their return to the Gatehouse, General Howard asked Mrs. Thorn to use her kitchen for a council of war. The three Union Generals held this meeting while the three sons ran around the kitchen table. The sons tell of General Howard swinging his empty sleeve about, being very nervous and pacing the floor in an excited manner. They ate their meal about midnight July 1st at which time General Howard ordered Mrs. Thorn to take her good possessions to the cellar. About 4 in the morning of July 2nd, General Howard ordered Mrs. Thorn to stay in the cellar. Two hours later, General Howard ordered the family to go down the Baltimore Pike as fast as they could go.

She and her father returned about midnight of the 2nd and found the gatehouse full of wounded men and bodies strewn about the gatehouse. After a short time she and her father went down the Baltimore Pike to be with her children and mother.

July 5th, she returned to the gatehouse and was met by David McConaughy the cemetery president. He ordered her to start burying the dead lying around the gatehouse. Mr. McConaughy repeatedly went to the town to get help for Mrs. Thorn. The men that come to help would not work long because of the stench conditions and the ugly sight of the bodies.

In a short period Mrs. Thorn buried 91 soldiers and 14 citizens of the town primarily with the help of her sons and father. July 15th, she buried 11 soldiers and the next day buried 13 soldiers starting with burials at 6 A.M. and ending at 8 P.M. Sometimes she would have to have a grave opened in two hours.

The incredible thing about Mrs. Thorn is that she was six months pregnant while having to undergo all these hardships. A daughter, Rosa Meade Thorn was born November 1st, 1863 and only lived 1 year and 8 months. She was named in honor of General George Meade. Mrs. Thorn spent most of her later years very sickly and weak.

In 1905, General Howard, General Slocum and General Sickles returned to Gettysburg and thanked Mrs. Thorn for her fine meal she prepared July 1st, 1863.

Peter Thorn died Jan 8, 1907, aged 80 years and Elizabeth Thorn died October 17, 1907 at the age of 74 years.



## "Cold Mountain" and the Battle of the Crater

Mike Cavanaugh  
Philadelphia, PA.

I finally had the opportunity to see the movie *Cold Mountain* this past weekend and thought I would give my take on, what I believe, the highlight of the movie, the battle of the Crater. I

have been studying the Crater battle for over twenty-five years and in 1989 I co-authored a book on the battle with historian William Marvel.

The battle occurred on July 30, 1864, outside Petersburg, Virginia, when the Union army exploded eight tons of black powder under Confederate works killing 278 men. The digging of the mine by the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry was a complete success but the ensuing assault by Ambrose Burnside's Ninth Army Corps was a total failure. U.S. Grant described it as the saddest affair he witnessed in the entire war.

In *Cold Mountain*, the movie opens with Confederate soldiers living in the trenches while the men of the 48th Pennsylvania were carrying in the black powder used to blow the mine under their works. The scene is realistic enough except the tunnel looks a lot larger than it was. The original tunnel was only four and one-half feet high. The diggers probably had to move about on their hands and knees. Right before the explosion we see Union soldiers laying on the ground waiting for the mine to blow. Two things are wrong here. The explosion itself takes place in full daylight. The real mine exploded at 4:45 A.M. when daylight was just breaking on the horizon. There was no flat ground to line up the Union soldiers for attack. The landscape in July 1864 in Petersburg was like the surface of the moon. It was nothing but a mass of trenches and covered ways. The explosion itself was very impressive and scenes of collapsing trenches, heaving ground, and men buried alive were very realistic and accurate. The fighting in the Crater was very vicious and bloody as shown. Pools of blood on

the ground from the vicious hand-to-hand combat and artillery fire were right on the mark. Two events that are not well known about the battle were portrayed and I was very impressed. One scene showed Confederate troops throwing muskets with bayonets attached over the rim of the Crater like harpoons. This was true. They also showed several African American soldiers in the fight. These would be black troops from the fourth division of the Ninth Corps who took the brunt of the Union casualties.

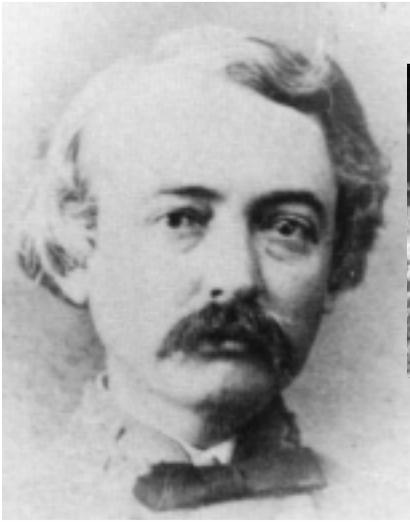
Some troubling scenes were the Confederates standing on the rim of the Crater firing into a mass of blue-coat Federals. This would have been suicide for the Confederates. Also, the explosion occurred under Richard Pegram's battery of four 12 pound Napoleons. Two were destroyed and two were recovered by New York troops and used against the Confederates. In the movie there were these huge guns (not Napoleons) being used against the Union troops. One scene also shows a 12-pound Coehorn mortar being dug out of the mud. All the Confederate mortars were well back (at least five hundreds yards or more) from the Crater. Two 12-pound Coehorns were brought to within fifty yards of the Crater and poured devastating fire into the mass of Union soldiers. The Confederate artillery ringed the Crater in a horse-shoe shape and not one gun was knocked out by Union artillery the entire day.

No one, I believe, can claim the film was pro-Union or pro-Confederate. There were enough bad guys to go around on both sides. There seemed to be a lot of U. S. flags, however, but not many Confederate. I thought I did see a Union heavy artillery flag which was a nice touch. That would have been the Second Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery who led the Union assault after the explosion. The lead character, William Inman, is a North Carolina soldier. There were no North Carolina troops, however, blown up in the explosion. They were all South Carolinians from General Stephen Elliott's brigade and Virginians from Captain Richard Pegram's battery.

All in all I enjoyed the movie very much. The acting was excellent along with the scenery which was, of course, Romania not North Carolina. I never read the book so I can't comment on how true it was to Charles Frazier's novel. The movie was very intense and, I believe, did a lot to portray the true horrors of the Civil War. Not only for the soldiers at the front but for all those souls left behind.



*At Petersburg, in the great hole known ever after as the Crater, the fiery little General William MaHone stands front and center, leaning on his cane. He helped repulse Yankee attacks here.*



Burial: Oakdale Cemetery  
Wilmington, North Carolina

## Today in Civil War History

**March 10, 1865**

### **General William H. C. Whiting dies**

Confederate General William Henry Chase Whiting dies in prison from wounds suffered during the fall of Fort Fisher, North Carolina.

Born in 1824 in Biloxi, Mississippi, Whiting was educated in Boston and at Georgetown College in Washington, where he graduated first in his class at age 16. He then entered the U.S. Military Academy, where in 1845 he again topped his graduating class. Whiting joined the Corps of Engineers and designed coastal fortifications in the West and South, including the defenses for the Cape Fear River in North Carolina. During this project, he got married and settled in Wilmington, North Carolina.

When the war began, Whiting offered his services to the new Confederate States of America. He was at Fort Sumter when the Union garrison surrendered at the start of the war. He returned to Wilmington in the summer of 1861 to supervise the construction of defenses for the city, and then moved to northern Virginia as chief engineer for the Confederate army forming there. Whiting was responsible for moving troops from the Shenandoah Valley to Manassas in time for the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21. His work was a vital component of the Confederate rout of Union troops there.

Whiting was given command of a division, and his leadership during the Seven Days' battles in June 1862 earned him the praise of the top Confederate leaders. In November 1862, he was given command of the District of Wilmington, allowing him to return to

his North Carolina home. He set about strengthening the city's defenses and constructing Fort Fisher at the Cape Fear River's mouth. Partly due to his efforts, Wilmington was one of the most important blockade running ports for the Confederates throughout the war. Whiting spent the rest of the war in Wilmington, with the exception of a few months in 1864 spent shoring up the defenses around Petersburg, Virginia.

Whiting's Fort Fisher was a formidable barrier to the Union capture of Wilmington. General Benjamin Butler led a Yankee force against Fort Fisher in December 1864, but the garrison fended off the attack. The next month, General Alfred Terry launched another assault; this time, Fort Fisher fell to the Yankees. Whiting was badly wounded and captured during the attack. He was able to write his report of the battle three days later, but his health failed when he was shipped to New York and confined in prison at Governor's Island. William H. C. Whiting died on March 10 at age 40.

## Civil War Events

### **Apr 3 - Apr 4 Pennsylvania Seminar**

10th Gettysburg National Military Park Seminar "This Has Been a Terrible Ordeal," The Gettysburg Campaign and the First Day of Battle." Fee.

For more information, contact: (717) 334-1124, ext. 447

### **Apr 16 - Apr 18 Pennsylvania Focus Weekend**

Gettysburg Focus Weekend featuring Licensed Battlefield Guides & "History Meets the Arts." Sponsored by the Blue and Gray Education Society. Fee.

For more information, contact: (888) 741-2437

### **Apr 24 - Apr 25 Pennsylvania Reenactment**

15th Annual Neshaminy Civil War Reenactment "Battle of Bethesda Church" Virginia Campaign 1864 at Neshaminy State Park, Bensalem.

For more information, contact: (215) 204-5452

### **Apr 25 - Apr 25 Pennsylvania Annual March**

Annual March for Gettysburg sponsored by the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, a fund-raising walk for battlefield preservation.

For more information, contact: (717) 334-0772

### **May 6 - May 9 Virginia Seminar**

"Footsteps of Jackson, Part 2—Stonewall in the Valley," seminar and tour based in Lexington. Historians Ted Alexander & Dennis Frye plus Robert Tanner, Ron Maxwell, Keith & Patricia Gibson, Holt Merchant, Frank O'Reilly, John Schildt, Mike Cavanaugh. Lectures, panel, walking tours to Lexington landmarks, full-day tour of 1862 Valley Campaign sites.

For more information, contact: (717) 264-7101

Chambersburg Civil War Seminars Chambersburg, PA

## The Civil War Institute at Manor College - Spring 2004 Schedule

Franklin & Nashville

3 Tuesdays - March 9, 16, and 23, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Jerry Carrier, Instructor \$40

Ulysses S. Grant

3 Wednesdays - March 10, 17, and 24, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Barbara Goll, Instructor \$40

Petersburg - The Nine Month Siege

3 Thursdays - March 11, 18 and 25, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Mike Cavanaugh, Instructor \$40

**Manor College**

**700 Fox Chase Road - Jenkintown, PA 19046**

**215-884-2218 Registration**

# What's News?

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