



THE LIGHT POST

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LINCOLN'S TOP 5 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLES

BASED ON MY TAKE-AWAYS FROM THE CWRT CONGRESS' 2023 SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

By Curt DeSoto, Immediate Past President CWRTPDC

President Lincoln's message in his Gettysburg Address ... "for us ... to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced ..." did not directly refer to the establishment of Civil War Round Tables. But beginning about four score and seven years after that battle, several Round Tables were founded across the country with the mission, at least in part, to take Lincoln's advice to heart. Although Chicago founded the first, many others soon followed, including ours, the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia, in 1951. The introductions to the 1952 talk at Gettysburg College by one of the CWRTPDC's founders, Bruce Catton, delightfully describes the history of the formation of various Round Tables and related organizations at that time.

But over the years, and especially during the recent Pandemic, Round Tables and related groups faced serious existential crises, becoming dormant or dissolving. The 2011-2015 Sesquicentennial

commemorative events helped sustainment, but only marginally.

So, I was excited and elated when I learned that the CWRT Congress, founded and led by Mike Movius, had launched an annual conference, supplemented by online classrooms, to develop and offer tools to Round Tables to address their organizational needs. Not since Matthew Borowick's efforts in his articles in the *Civil War Times*, culminating in the 2010 publication of *The Civil War Round Table Handbook*, had Round Tables had such support. Moreover, the efforts of the CWRT Congress addresses more contemporaneous issues, such as those involving the use of the Internet and social media.

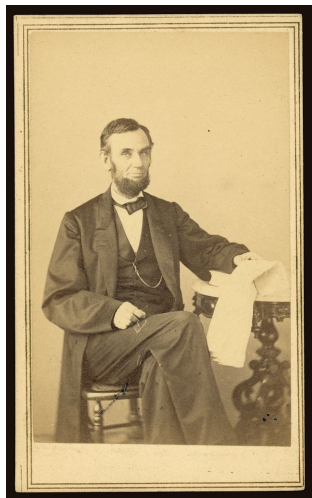
The latest CWRT Congress "Sustainability Conference" was held on August 25-27, 2023, in Gettysburg with special access to the Seminary Ridge Museum & Education Center (and the Cupola), the Adams County Historical Society offices, the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center, and the George Spangler Farm.

On Friday night after a warm welcome reception, Chris Mackowski – co-founder of the Emerging Civil War writers forum and a prolific author – opened the conference with a spell-binding presentation about what would have happened if Stonewall had been at Gettysburg.

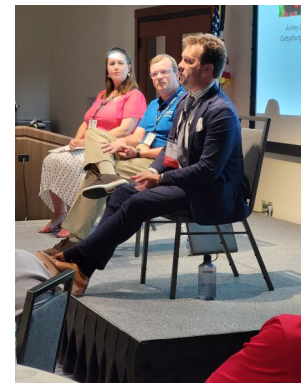
On Saturday, the Congress sponsored four key panel discussions:

Twin Cities CWRT Secretary/Treasurer and CWRT Congress Vice President Carol VanOrnum led a panel to explore the best practices used by various Round Tables to survive and emerge from

(Continued on Page 3)



Library of Congress



CWRT LEADERSHIP: IN CRISIS OR OTHERWISE?

By Mike Movius, President

Over the course of several years, we have become friends with a great number of CWRT leaders. Many of them lament that there is a dearth of members who will step forward, that they are getting “burned out,” and that although they love the camaraderie and friendships they have developed, they don’t know how to proceed. This was a common theme we heard at the Sustainability Conference.

There are indeed costs to leadership. Leaders are tasked to make hard decisions that can negatively affect people they care about. Some become disliked despite their best attempts to do the best for the most. Many are misunderstood without the opportunity to defend themselves.

And then there is the lack of support they require to carry on.

And yet, they do carry on. Most gladly take the responsibility for what happens on their watch whether their CWRT is good, bad, or ugly. They understand that blaming or finger pointing is a sign of immaturity and at worst demonstrates a lack of integrity. However, a majority have long discovered that apathy rules in their world.

CWRT leaders want to serve others and do whatever is required of them to satisfy the people they lead well. Sacrifice and suffering are requirements in their leadership journey, and that “service” is the only motivation they need. CWRT leaders take on the challenge, and although it isn’t without elements of personal

gratification, rewards are not the point for them.

That’s not to say that leadership isn’t without the reward of status, power, and fame...perhaps mostly within their circle or even their own mind. (Chuckle now.) So, what happens when a well-possessed leader decides to hang up the gavel and move to the back of the room? Who will don the mantle of leadership?

Most CWRTs do not have a succession plan. They have a small cadre of individuals who share the passion for history and the burden of leadership. When those few men and women sit down, who will stand in their place?



IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

Every CWRT shares this issue, but perhaps for different reasons and circumstances. We have some ideas about how to ameliorate this problem. But our purpose today is to acknowledge the men and women who lead our CWRTs for their example, their dedication, and their fortitude in the face of adversity. THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL!!



LINCOLN'S TOP 5 RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

the Pandemic, in many cases stronger and with more widespread membership.

President Mike Movius, introduced the second panel, which presented and described the hidden benefits of developing partnerships not only with other Civil War Round Tables, but also with other organizations, such as libraries, universities, and non-history focused groups.

John Bamberl, immediate past President of the Scottsdale CWRT and a founding member and Vice President of the Congress, asked the third set of panelists to describe the benefits they experienced in taking the Congress' "Sustainability Challenge," which includes modules covering, among other things:

- Membership Recruiting, Retention, Engagement, and Education
- Meeting Experience, Venues, and Speaker Scheduling
- CWRT Public Image and the Use of Social Media
- CWRT Partnerships and Philanthropy
- Leadership, Management and Legal Compliance

The last panel, led by Mike, focused on how to interest and recruit younger members. Drew Gruber, Executive Director of the Civil War Trails, shared how his interest in the Civil War stemmed from his research at a young age about the need for shoes during the war.



Band, playing period instruments and dressed in period uniforms.

On Sunday, conference attendees were welcomed to the George Spangler Farm with private tours by Wayne Motts, President of the Gettysburg Foundation, and Carol Reardon, renowned historian and Gettysburg author.

The day closed with Dr. Curt Fields, our living historian portraying General Grant, serving as the Master of Ceremonies of a wonderful dinner and an awards ceremony at the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center. The evening event also included an exclusive tour of the Cyclorama and a delightful musical performance by the George Mason University 8th Green Machine Regiment



And so, as promised, I'm presenting what I believe would be Lincoln's top five recommendations to Civil War Round Tables, if he had taken questions after his speech. Some would believe he had an innate ability to foresee the future, possibly including the formation of Round Tables.

1. Save the date for the next CWRT Congress Sustainability Conference and send your representatives.
2. Read and implement the CWRT Congress **Sustainability Challenge**.
3. Review the archived online classrooms about issues relevant to Round Tables posted on the CWRT Congress website at www.cwrtcongress.org.
4. Register your Round Table or organization and upload a description of its history by emailing mike@cwrtcongress.org.
5. Support the CWRT Congress by volunteering to assist with its events and/or by donating to support its mission.

OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS— AN INVESTMENT IN HISTORY'S FUTURE

By Carol VanOrnum

The national trend of ignoring or avoiding the study of American history is very disturbing to Civil War enthusiasts. How do you find ways to keep an interest of history alive, engage youth, and reverse that trend?

The Bull Run CWRT has developed a scholarship program to accomplish just that. Commencing in 2002, the BRCWRT of Centreville, Virginia, has awarded \$1,000 (recently raised to \$2,000) to one deserving senior high school student each year. As stated on the Instruction sheet within the [Scholarship portal](#) of the BRCWRT's website, "The goal of our scholarship is to increase interest and knowledge of American history with special emphasis on the Civil War as it happened in the local area and how it affected armies and civilians for both sides of the war." The program is administered by John Carter, a BRCWRT member with over 40 years' experience in college and university admissions, including managing academic scholarship programs and conducting student interviews. He and three other members comprise the scholarship review committee. The committee uses a decision matrix plus a series of interview questions as the selection criteria.

John explained the process. "I

have a list of 51 public and private high schools in Fairfax and Prince William counties. We concentrate only on those counties. We do not go to the schools, nor contact the counselors directly. We mail scholarship notices in November consisting of a letter and a poster to the Guidance offices and Career Centers to inform them of the scholarship program and the application process for it. In the last two years we have received 12 scholarship applications, all of the highest academic quality. Most everyone has a high-A average and AP/IB courses in their junior and senior years."



"The entire scholarship application process is run through the scholarship portal on the BRCWRT website. Students must submit an application, have their high school transcripts sent to the portal, along with an essay and a recommendation. The deadline for submitting the documents will be April 3, 2024. All students are required to submit an essay on a local

historical site of their choosing, and use at least one primary resource (e.g., Civil War Official Records, letters or materials from archives).

"We meet when all of the applications are received after the deadline. We have written criteria for reviewing the applicants, and we select between two to four as finalists, who will be contacted for a Zoom interview. We utilize a set of standard questions, which we divide up among the committee members to present to the applicants during the interview. The interview is just as important as the essay. The Committee members seek to gauge the student's level of interest, learn more about the student presents himself or herself in person. We also utilize a matrix which we use for making decisions on all of the applicants. The winner is notified by mid-April and invited with their parents to attend the next Round Table meeting in June for the award presentation."

President Mark Whinton is proud of the work the Committee has performed. "Our offer of a \$2,000 scholarship has been important in order to attract top-flight applicants. Under John's leadership, we have been fortunate to be able to award our annual scholarships to really outstanding students.

"In the last two years we have received 12 scholarship applications."

"Our scholarship program has become much more successful in attracting top candidates when we began not only to increase the breadth of high schools contacted, but, perhaps more importantly, to increase the dollar amount of the award from \$1,000 to \$2,000. That increase seems to have made a notable difference for many potential applicants. As a Round Table with low dues, we have been successful in providing adequate funds for the scholarship each year through individual donations. Fortunately, those donations are tax deductible, since we are a qualified 501(c)(3) organization."

The scholarship program that the Bull Run Civil War Round Table created and developed is an incredible accomplishment and can be found [HERE](#). Should your Round Table have the financial means, there is no need for anyone to reinvent the wheel when the BRCWRT has developed the format and created the template. They are happy to share their knowledge. Thank you, BRCWRT!

A PARTICIPANT'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE FROM THE CWRTC 2023 SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

By Steve Magnusen,
Indianapolis CWRT

I received a request from Mike Movius and Carol VanOrnum to participate in a panel discussion at the 2023 Gettysburg Sustainability Conference. Based upon my positive experience from the 2019 St. Louis conference, there was no hesitation but to reply — YES!

Why? First, the venue. Who does not feel emotions when visiting Gettysburg? Second, the opportunity to represent my Indianapolis CWRT, established by co-founder Alan Nolan in 1955. And most important, the unique learning opportunities sure to be experienced.

So what will benefit my Indy CWRT, and possibly yours? Here's a brief summary:

1. Our panel included Steve Smith of Harrisburg, Bill Jayne of Cape Fear, and Steve Pettyjohn of Cleveland. It was a pleasure meeting and learning



from these leaders during our planning and while at Gettysburg. Our "Pandemic Challenges" topic was first on the Saturday agenda.

2. As a presenter myself, my role was to convey issues faced by speakers. Pandemic meeting cancellations, Zoom and hybrid meeting technology, and reduced audience sizes – issues that sometimes did not go well! Excellent presenters with interesting topics are especially important, but so are policies that take good care of speakers.

3. Conference ideas either being implemented or considered by our CWRT include local agency partnering, a written speaker agreement, membership and recruiting improvements, promotion and fundraising ideas, and others. In short, let's use the CWRT Congress Best Practices for better long-term sustainability.

4. Perhaps the most helpful aspect was learning from fellow CWRT colleagues and conference speakers. There is nothing better than personal conversations.

The schedule and venues did not disappoint! The Friday reception at the Seminary Ridge Museum, the focused Saturday topics with vibrant speakers at the new Adams County Historical Society Center, the evening dinner at the Visitor Center, and the Sunday tour at the Spangler Farm. All with open access to exhibits, the cupola, the cyclorama. Terrific!

Steve serves as Program Chair, and is Past President, Author and Speaker.

"In short, let's use the CWRTC Best Practices for better long-term sustainability."



THE PARTNERSHIPS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY CWRT LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

By Mike Campbell,
Bucks County CWRT

If one were to accept the premise that the Civil War is the defining event in American history, then it would follow that the Civil War generation is the defining generation in American history. Here at the Bucks County CWRT, we certainly think so. Although the war lasted only four years, the generations of men and women who survived the war stretched from the 1790s to the 1950s. They left their mark on everything they touched; therefore, everything we touch still bears these marks. It is this partnership - between past and present, between the living and the dead - that drives our mission here at the BCCWRT.

For example, in Bucks County we are known for our historic Moravian Castles (www.mercermuseum.org) built by the archaeologist Henry Chapman Mercer (1856-1930). Too young to fight,



nevertheless some of Mercer's first memories were of October 1861. Standing outside his grandfather's house in Doylestown, as a boy all of five years old, Mercer watched the 104th PA Infantry parade through town on their way to the train station, and ultimately, the battlefields of Virginia. "I can still see the early morning light," Mercer remembered 50 years later, "and still hear the tune the band played as they marched away."

Henry Mercer's grandfather's house still stands today and is currently the headquarters of the James-Lorah Memorial Home (JLMH). A marvel of post-Federal architecture, the 17 room, three-story mansion is the perfect venue for bringing the Civil War generation to life again. It is with this in mind that we team up with the JLMH every October for a Halloween Extravaganza, held jointly at their museum, and at ours, the Bucks County CWRT Library and Museum. With flickering candles and stained-glass windows, dimly lit parlors and creaky floorboards, the JLMH is the perfect venue for holding a Victorian style wake, which we celebrate every year in honor of Lt. Ira Gensel, a Doylestown native mortally wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Guests are transfixed by Victorian funeral customs and superstitions, all brought to life by local guides.



Just as Henry Mercer watched the Doylestown boys march off to war in 1861, guests today are afterwards guided to the Civil War Museum by local reenactors. Here we hold a "haunted" Civil War field hospital, complete with weeping widows, Doctor Sawbones, and the ghost of Mother Mary Bickerdyke. It is a celebration of Victorian America of which Henry Mercer would be proud, as well as testament to the legacy and influence of the Civil War generation. As a matter of fact, along with local Civil War veteran General W.W.H. Davis, Henry Mercer would grow up to co-found the Bucks County Historical Society in 1880. Together they founded Mercer Museum and are known today as the "Fathers" of Doylestown. The James-Lorah Memorial Home would go on to become the Headquarters of the Doylestown Village Improvement Association,

which in 1923 established the first all-female run hospital in the country - Doylestown Hospital - which itself grew out of the practice of Dr. Frank Swartzlander, a surgeon in the 74th PA Infantry.

Here in Doylestown, the Civil War generation still lives in everything we do. At the Bucks County CWRT Library and Museum, we embrace this heritage and the many partnerships that flow from it. It is a responsibility and honor that we see as a defining element of our Round Table mission.

Mike Campbell is the President of the Bucks County CWRT Library and Museum, located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. He can be reached at www.civilwarmuseumdoylestown.org.

THE CAPE FEAR CWRT'S PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Jayne, President of the Cape Fear CWRT

(Reprinted with permission from the Oct. *The Runner*. Edited for length.)

Upon being asked to serve as a panelist, I grasped the pleasant opportunity to travel to Gettysburg for the CWRT Congress "Sustainability Conference" from August 25-27. It was energizing to share an intensive conference experience with dozens of others from around the country who are dedicated to the Round Table movement. About 88 attendees represented approximately 35 Round Tables from as far away as Puget Sound, Washington. Plus, many organizations such as Civil War Trails, American Battlefield Trust and Central Virginia Battlefield Trust were represented.

The conference began on Friday evening with a reception at the Seminary Ridge Museum and Education Center. The evening ended with Chris Mackowski's tour d'force presentation titled "What if Stonewall Had Been at Gettysburg."

The meat of the conference was concentrated on the Saturday



session at the beautiful Adams County Historical Society building.

I had been asked to participate in the first panel titled "Emerging from the Pandemic." Every member of the Cape Fear Civil War Round Table should be proud that our club went from a low of less than 40 members in January 2021 to more than 90 members today. We survived the COVID phenomenon and we are stronger now than we were before it. I shared the stage with Carol VanOrnum, CWRT Congress Vice President and three great representatives of the Round Table movement from Indianapolis, Cleveland, and Harrisburg.

My presentation focused on how we emphasized speaker quality, fundraising, and diversified outreach to bring membership levels back up to a healthy level. In addition, we added value to the Round Table experience with popular tours and special events. We also, like most successful Round Tables, ultimately decided to use Zoom to maintain connection with our members during the months when we were unable to meet in person.

Next was the "Community Partnership Panel" where Round Tables talked about the potential for strengthening the club by means of partnering with agencies and organizations involved in historic



preservation, education, and planning. We have a strong historic preservation community in the Wilmington area and we can do a lot more in terms of partnering with them. For example, we can schedule joint meetings. Scholarships and awards can help build relationships with educational agencies. We can schedule joint trips to battlefields and other attractions. Outreach at public events — "tabling" as it's called — can be expanded beyond what we now do with Fort Fisher once a year.

The next panel talked about the CWRT Congress' "Sustainability Challenge," a formal plan with ten modules for improving sustainability. Finally, a high-powered panel of young historians and history professionals talked about "Target Marketing Younger Members." "Go where they are!" was one strong message. One young historian, Jonathan Noyalas from Shenandoah University, pointed out that "Facebook is for old people," according to his students.

After years of hard work — thank you, Yelena Howell — we have a good Facebook group page but now it looks like we may have to develop an additional social media channel.

So, what's next? I've empaneled a committee of leaders, including our officers, to develop a set of bylaws for our club. We're starting our 30th year but we don't have a written set of rules for governing the Round Table. Historically, our presidents have served for an average of six years.

In this day and age, the challenges are too great for just naming a "president for life" and hoping that he or she will hang in there for six years before leaving this mortal coil or just walking away. So, I will step down in August 2024 and we will have some bylaws to govern the choice of our next president and slate of officers.

It's gonna be great! Wait and see.

GENERAL GRANT COMMISSIONS A VETERAN ROUND TABLE MEMBER

By William Miller, President,
Williamsburg CWRT

"In great deeds, something abides, on great fields, something stays..." Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's evocative words have served as marching orders for Civil War travelers for over a century and half. And among our current generation of travelers, the Williamsburg VA Round Table's Peggy Vogtsberger has established an exemplary record. Joining the Round Table shortly after its formation, she has dedicated over 45 years of membership, study, and travel to Civil War sites both near and far. She has researched and presented a diversity of programs, including "The Gallant Pelham," The Battles of Franklin and Nashville, Patrick Cleburne, as well the all-German 32nd Indiana Regiment, where her ancestor served. Her most recent program, entitled "A Damn Failure - The Battle of Dam No. 1," saw her travel to Vermont to review historical records of the Vermont troops engaged in that fight.

In April 2015, Peggy traveled out to Appomattox for the sesquicentennial commemoration, and had the pleasure of making acquaintances of Curt Fields and Tom Jessee. As everyone is aware, Curt and Tom are preeminent living historians. Curt reprises the role of General Ulysses S. Grant, and Tom portrays General Robert E. Lee.

On the afternoon of April 9, 2015, the Generals met at the MacLean House to recreate "the surrender meeting." At the conclusion of the program, the entire group of reenactors assembled on the porch steps of the MacLean House for photographs. Peggy seized the moment, and was granted the opportunity to stand between the two Generals to record her moment of history. Her iconic photograph is viewed below.



Fast forward now to April 2022. After their annual Appomattox commemoration visit, our Generals traveled to Williamsburg to present their "Appomattox - The Last Two Days" program to our Round Table. Prior to the presentation, our Executive Committee honored Peggy's long service by presenting her with a plaque that included her iconic photograph with the Generals at Appomattox. At our invitation, both Curt and Tom...oops...General Grant and General Lee, stood with us on the stage to participate in the presentation ceremony. And then, in a completely unscripted moment, General Grant announced that he would commission Peggy to be a Colonel on his staff in order to

honor her service in promoting the history of the Civil War.

Well, as we all know, Generals do get immersed with campaign details and other myriad duties. As was the case during the Civil War, so is the case in the present day. Curt Fields, our living historian, maintains a robust schedule of appearances that carry him to all points of the compass. That notwithstanding, and true to his word, our

modern-day General Grant forwarded the official document which attests to the Commission of our Peggy Vogtsberger as a Colonel, to serve as a special assistant to his staff. The ceremony of the presentation, which occurred at our September 26 Round Table meeting is noted by the photo below.



Peggy Vogtsberger and
President William Miller

**"In great deeds,
something
abides,
On great fields,
something
stays..."**

In closing, there are two lessons to be learned. First and foremost, there are many good folks like Peggy Vogtsberger who deserve recognition for all that they do to promote the legacy of our Civil War. Moreover, there are numerous educators and living historians like our good friend Curt Fields who take a personal interest in recognizing the special efforts of those travelers whom they encounter.

Huzzah to Peggy!

Huzzah to Curt!

AWARDS GRANTED AT THE 2023 CWRT CONGRESS' SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

By Carol VanOrnum

Among the highlights of the Saturday evening dinner event was the opportunity to present several awards for outstanding service to Round Tables and friends.

Wallace L. Rueckel Innovation Award

The Wallace L. Rueckel Innovation Award recognizes a CWRT for creative, effective, and inventive programs that provide value to their members. The 2023 Innovation Award conferred to the Bull Run CWRT. Blake Myers, Preservation Committee Chair, explained what they did. "In implementing recommendations provided by a Special Ad Hoc Committee to effectively return to in-person member involvement and participation, we focused on enhanced member outreach and engagement through surveys, focused communications via email, social media, our newsletter, and our webpage, and a new pre-meeting social and information hour to inform, educate, and engage our members about programs, committees, projects and activities -- and our efforts succeeded!"



Blake Myers and Mike



Rich Jankowski, John Bamberl, and Mike Movius

The Sustainability Challenge

Both the Old Baldy CWRT and the Scottsdale CWRT completed the Sustainability Challenge. Rich Jankowski, President of Old Baldy, and John Bamberl, President Emeritus of Scottsdale, accepted the certificates on behalf of their Round Tables.

Matthew Borowick Marketing Award

The Matthew Borowick Marketing Award recognizes a local CWRT for presenting itself to members, enthusiasts, community partners, potential supporters, and others by using a variety of methods and channels. This 2023 award was presented to the Scottsdale CWRT, which John Bamberl accepted. "We reached our marketing goals by reaching out and partnering with other historical groups in the greater Phoenix area. We used these partnerships to market our new partners and ourselves."



John Bamberl and Mike



Wayne Motts and Mike

Friend of the CWRT Congress

An award of appreciation was given to Wayne Motts, President and CEO of the Gettysburg Foundation, for his dedication to helping CWRTs.

A Special Congratulations to All Recipients!

CWRT PROJECT OPPORTUNITY

By Mike Movius

We are inexorably marching toward July 4, 2026. On that date, everyone in America is invited to join the 250th anniversary of the founding of our great country. We are not only invited to the celebration but invited to share stories of our history and the hopes and dreams for America's future.

In this, Civil War Round Tables have a unique opportunity not only in the planning process but sharing the stage with community members and their organizations. At the 2023 Sustainability Conference, we learned about community partnerships, targeted marketing, Sister CWRTs, and a host of other ideas aimed at sustainability.



America 250 is an unprecedented chance to become known in our communities, to partner with other great civic-minded entities, to share the spotlight with neighboring and distant CWRTs, and marketing to those we wish to join us.

Consider those who will be

celebrating the sacrifices of veterans. Who might they be? The American Legion, AMVETS, the American Red Cross, Academy of United States Veterans, Air Force Association, American Ex-Prisoners of War, American G. I. Forum, American Veterans Committee, American Veterans for Equal Rights, Army and Navy Union, and the

America 250 is an unprecedented chance to become known in our communities.

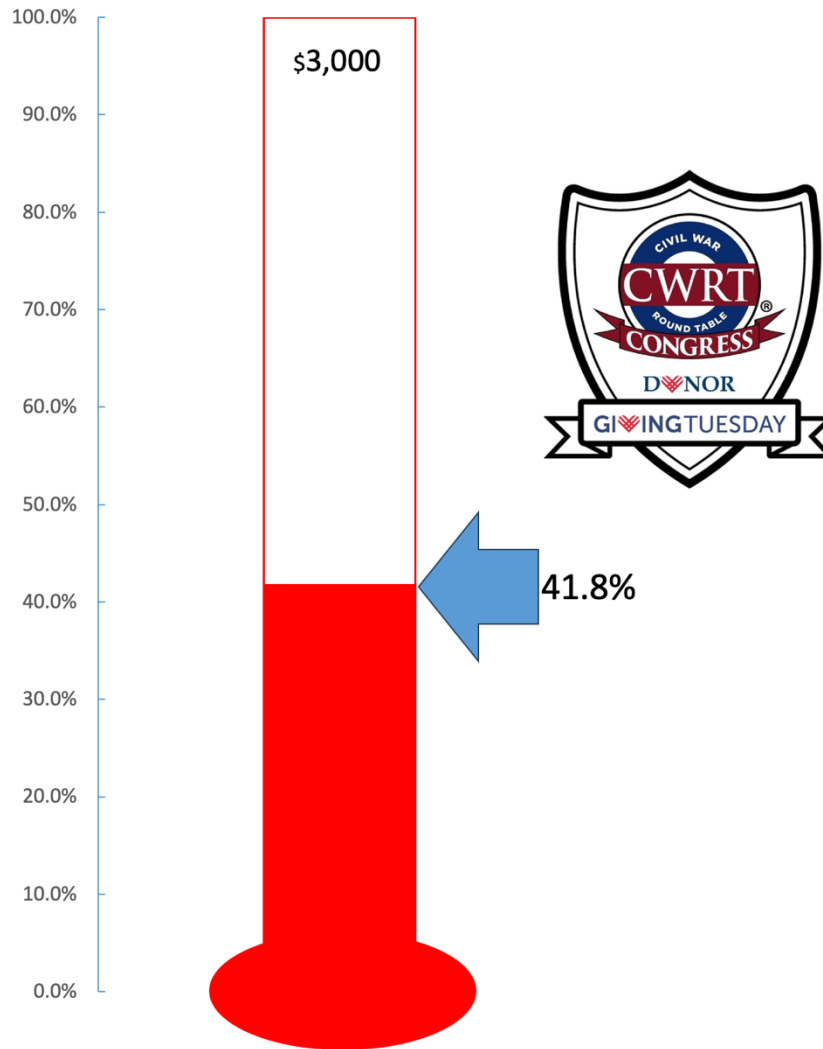
Association of the United States Army. That's just the A's!!

And then there are the museums, the service clubs, the places of worship, and the long-standing community-focused organizations. The possibilities are endless. It will take leadership, vision, dedication, and perseverance. Is your CWRT up to the challenge, or will this be just another opportunity lost?

Learn more: [America250](https://America250.org)



GIVING TUESDAY UPDATE



One of the more important things that we do as Civil War enthusiasts is to preserve hallowed ground. Each year, the CWRT Congress partners with the American Battlefield Trust to restore and interpret newly acquired battlefields. As of November 1st, we are at 42% of our \$3,000 goal. Please consider joining us by contributing to this meaningful effort.

<http://www.cwrtcongress.org/giving-tuesday.html>

FIELD TRIP!! THE CATOCTIN FURNACE

By Carol VanOrnum

Taking a break from preparations for the 2023 Sustainability Conference in Gettysburg, Mike Movius, John Bamberl, and I took a short road trip to visit the site of the Catoctin Furnace village. Located at the base of the Catoctin Mountains in northern Frederick County, MD, it was once a thriving community whose sole purpose was to make iron. The rich ore banks at the mountain's base provided material to smelt in the furnaces and cast as raw pig iron and iron implements of all kinds. Pig iron is the product of smelting the iron ore with a high-carbon fuel, like a blast furnace, and reductant. Shortly after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Catoctin Furnace received a large order for munitions, some of which can be linked to the siege at Yorktown.

It was a large community with all the amenities to make it sustainable and independent. In the early days, the labor force consisted of African American slaves, who were skilled in not only the furnace work but other positions within the community. Eventually they were replaced with European immigrants, as it was cheaper to pay wages versus providing food and housing.

By 1903 the Catoctin Furnace shut down because of its unprofitability. And now it is part of the Catoctin Mountain Park (NPS), with interpretive trails and several structures.



References: International Iron Metallics Association, www.metallics.org
Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc., www.catoctinfurnace.org

THE CATOCTIN FURNACE— A POSTSCRIPT

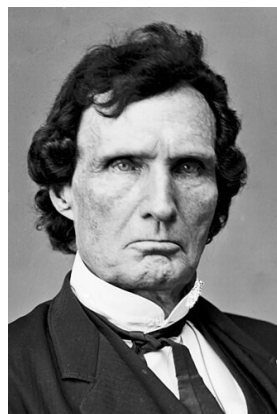
By William Miller

Postscript: Carol's narrative of the visit to the site of the Catoctin Furnace serves as a reflection of a millennia of iron making. The process of manufacturing iron was imported into the Americas with European settlement. The earliest settlers at Jamestown needed iron for tools, implements, and even nails. Iron furnaces like that at Catoctin were established throughout colonial America wherever ore deposits were discovered. The Catoctin Furnace was one of many to serve the needs of an expanding nation, and several had an impact, either direct or indirect, on military actions during the Civil War.

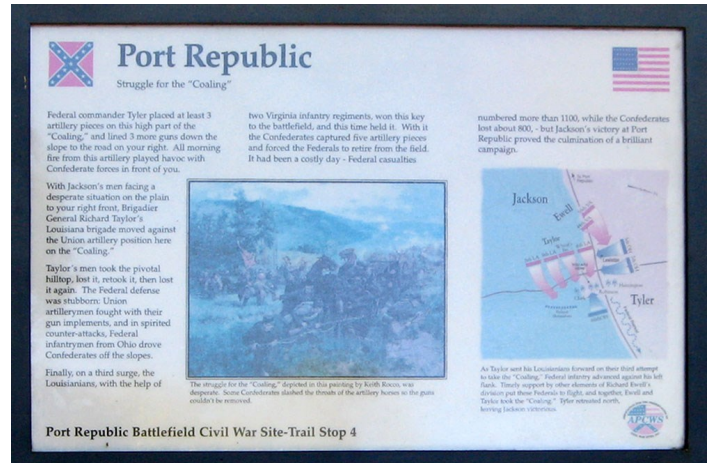
Had our intrepid explorers traveled west from Gettysburg, they would have passed the ruins of the Caledonia Furnace and Ironworks on the western slope of South Mountain. In June of 1863, this furnace was in full production under the ownership of Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, an outspoken radical Republican and avowed abolitionist. The Caledonia Furnace serves as the example of the military significance of iron furnaces throughout the areas of conflict during the Civil War. General Jubal Early, a division commander in the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, had the Furnace and

Ironworks burned as his division advanced toward the Susquehanna River. He deemed his action as retribution to similar Union transgressions to the Confederacy.

Iron furnaces served as the nexus of other military actions. At the Battle of Port Republic in June of 1862, a Union artillery battery established a strong position on the western slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains at a place called "The Coaling." The Coaling was established to produce charcoal for iron furnaces in the Shenandoah Valley. The Union artillery created havoc among the Confederate soldiers of Stonewall Jackson's Army of the Valley until successive attacks chased the Yankees off. The Coaling is preserved today, and visitors can visit and marvel at this formidable artillery position.



Thaddeus Stevens
Portrait by Brady-Handy, c. 1860-1868
www.wikipedia.com



<https://www.stonesentinels.com/less-known/port-republic/struggle-for-the-coaling-wm/>

There was also a significant presence of iron production in the Fredericksburg area. Germanna Ford on the Rapidan River takes its name from early German settlers experienced in the production of iron. A significant area west of Fredericksburg became known as "The Wilderness" at the time of the Civil War. The Wilderness had been logged over to provide fuel for the local iron furnaces, and subsequent second growth timber created a near impenetrable morass of vegetation. The Union Army of the Potomac learned a hard lesson about moving through the Wilderness in May of 1864. A year earlier, the Catherine Furnace was in operation when the Army of the Potomac advanced through the Chancellorsville crossroads. Union and Confederate soldiers clashed around the Furnace until the real fighting gravitated to the

crossroad area.

The Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond was dependent upon the production of pig iron from numerous furnaces throughout Virginia. Remarkably, it was still in operation in early April when Union forces occupied the city.

Iron Furnaces like Catoctin, Caledonia, Catherine, and others throughout America survived the Civil War but not the advent of industrialization. The signage at Catoctin Furnace not only signals the demise of that individual operation but portends the end of the era of local iron production.

William Miller is President of the Williamsburg CWRT and Treasurer for the CWRT Congress.

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There was the devil to pay—but not on this fine day.
View from the Cupola.

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