



# THE LIGHT POST

FEBRUARY 2024



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North Jersey CWRT's Facebook page

## THE ZOOMING COLLABORATIONS OF THE NORTH JERSEY CWRT

By Carol VanOrnum

During the pandemic, many CWRTs switched to online programs rather than close down completely. The CWRT Congress played an important role in that effort. Post-pandemic, many Round Tables were relieved to return to in-person meetings. Some embraced the Zoom technology to provide both in-person and online meetings (Old Baldy CWRT, for example). And there are a few who stayed with Zoom exclusively. The North Jersey CWRT is one of them.

President Rich Rosenthal saw a chance to survive and thrive by continuing to utilize Zoom. "Two to three years ago, our Round Table was dying. As we went forward and remained Zooming, we found that other Round Tables were listening in."

They found a friend in Bucks County CWRT, creating a co-sponsorship with them. According to Rosenthal, Bucks County does a terrific job of notifying their members of future programs, as does Old Baldy. "A rising tide raises all boats," Rosenthal muses.

Just last September and October,

the NJCWRT co-sponsored a two-part series with Bucks County entitled, "The Autumn of General Grant Lecture Series." The Zoom invitation was sent to North Jersey, Bucks County, Old Baldy, and Williamsburg. With all those mailing lists utilized, they had 117 viewers at the September meeting and 95 in October. Eighteen states were represented, as well as international viewers.

Rosenthal believes that the exclusive use of Zoom was the right way to go for their Round Table. Night driving is difficult, and having a mere eight or ten members show up in person is embarrassing. Now, they have the highest rate of member retention ever, with new members originating from 11 states and Australia. More people are donating (rounding up \$39 membership dues to \$50), and the speakers love the larger crowds. With the money they save on travel costs, hotels, and meals, they can offer \$200 honoraria. They're also able to get the finest authors and academics, as well as increasing their presentation standards to offer programs that are on a more global scale. Rosenthal understands that someone tuning in from

another state may not find interest in the day the 7<sup>th</sup> New Jersey fought on the front. So they no longer focus on local topics, and instead have expanded to areas of interest for everyone.

Rosenthal also realizes that they need to compensate for the lack of personal social interaction. They make a point of starting meetings with introductions and camaraderie. They've added trivia contests and book groups (where even non-readers can attend and just listen!) in addition to their regular programming.

One observation Rosenthal shared is that having a "series," like the two-part Grant programming, seems to draw more people in, as if it's of greater importance to invest one's time. To that point, the next series is in the planning stages to be held in January, February, and March of 2024. "The Winter of General Meade II" will be co-hosted by North Jersey, Old Baldy, and the General Meade Society, and co-sponsored by Bucks County. Watch for details!

## CWRTS AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

By Mike Movius, President

During the last half of 2023, the CWRT Congress has had several interesting and exciting conversations with individuals who are interested in starting a new Civil War Round Table. For us, that really goes against the grain of what many CWRTs have been facing over the last decade. In fact, it has excited our development juices and rejuvenated our belief that American history is important to the future of our country.

One of the requests came from a couple of history teachers in Ohio. They are interested in initiating a CWRT in their school. Wow! Yes, indeed. They want to have their students learn why the war occurred, the development of sectional differences, and how they played out politically, economically,

and militarily. They are also interested in how slavery was viewed, what inspired young men to enlist on both sides, the decisions leaders faced, and the aftermath of the war.

Obviously, that could become a partnership between the school and a local CWRT. But, for that to happen, local CWRT leaders would need to be welcoming. It could easily become untenable if Round Table leadership became or if school leaders sought to insert a political agenda or somehow sanitize local programming.

And yet, that could become an excellent opportunity to develop life-long Civil War enthusiasm, open the door to more youthful CWRT leadership, and pitch a much larger history tent in the community.

The two other inquiries were more

of a traditional nature. One was from Mississippi, near a large metropolitan area that has recently been rocked by local violence. The other was from a more rural community in Massachusetts. Both leaders and their teams face the all too familiar challenges current CWRTs face: small, aging groups, a culture of reticence to join, and developing programs that inspire others. Our approach is to provide a generic framework in which to make organizational decisions, to meet with them online, and to answer their pressing questions.

All in all, these developments are important to every CWRT for several reasons. First, others outside the CWRT community are interested in the War Between the States.



### IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

Second, there are opportunities for your CWRT to become a partner/mentor to a new Round Table. And third, despite removal of statues and monuments, the counter rhetoric of erasing history, and the inevitable backlash from both sides, there are those who wish to join our ranks. BRAVO!!



#### *Jeremy's Run Jewel*

Along one of Shenandoah's most pleasant mountain streams is this scenic waterfall on Jeremy's Run.

## THE HISTORY DISCUSSION GROUP A SUCCESS AT THE SCOTTSDALE CWRT

*By Richard Cox, Scottsdale CWRT*

The Scottsdale CWRT has established a History Discussion Group as an adjunct to our regular monthly speaker presentations, and we believe that our program may be unique among the CWRT community.

Prior to my joining the SCWRT in 2010, the Round Table already had a History Discussion Group. However, it met infrequently and had gone dormant by 2013. In an effort to restore that initiative, John Bamberl posted an appeal to challenge our membership to revive the History Discussion Group. I responded to John's appeal and have been serving as the chairman of the committee since 2014.

Our format is simple. We meet a week after the monthly speaker presentations. I establish a series of discussion topics that are related to the speaker's presentation. Either

one of our members or myself present the topics and moderates the conversation. I'm always on the lookout for volunteers to moderate a topic with which they're familiar. The moderator's most difficult effort is to focus the discussion on topic. Although we don't have rules or guidelines, it is most helpful to pose provocative questions for the purpose of engaging everyone to weigh in with their views, and to keep the discussion focused. Our meetings are usually 1-1/2 hours in length, and are casual in nature. We welcome a discussion audience of both informed and novices as well as members and non-members.

Our History Discussion Group attendance was slow to recover after COVID. In addition, the Scottsdale main library assigned an early meeting time which hampered the ability for our

working members to attend.

We've currently moved to a local restaurant and our attendance is slowly improving. Before COVID we had 18 to 20 people at our meetings, and lately we've been averaging 10 to 12.

Our Board is committed to supporting the outreach and success of the History Discussion Group. We believe that it's an important opportunity for members to feel more connected with the mission of our Round Table. Although we don't emphasize the History Discussion Group as a marketing opportunity, we do encourage our new members to join our casual setting for the opportunity to learn more of the most recent speaker's presentation.

**"The moderator's most difficult effort is to focus the discussion on topic."**

*Richard Cox is Vice President, Editor of The Grapeshot newsletter, and Chair of the History Discussion Group.*



### **Artistic Enshroud**

On a crisp October morning, layers of fog work over a series of hills and hollows.

© Matthew Holzman Photography  
<https://matthewholzman.picfair.com>  
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## THE NEW NORTHWEST INDIANA CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

By Carol VanOrnum

Just south of Chicago, across the Indiana state line, a new Civil War Round Table has been making its presence known. The town of Crown Point is now the home of the Northwest Indiana CWRT.

Rick Zarr and Steve Rudzinski's start-up CWRT began three years ago in an antique store uniquely named "Two Old Goats." Progress stalled, however, when the store moved and the Pandemic hit, leaving them without a meeting place. Determined to keep the Round Table moving forward, Steve eventually approached the Crown Point Library. The caveat, however, was the Library's rule of only accepting 501(c)3 organizations into their program roster. Our founders were successful however in convincing the Library that they could provide valuable programs to offer to the community. Erika Wagner, Crown Point's Programming and Outreach Librarian, shared their enthusiasm. "When we met with Steve and Rick to consider the prospect of the CWRT meeting here, we were happy to partner with them and offer space for their meetings. We pride ourselves on offering programs to meet a variety of interests, and history programming is a nice addition for our patrons. Additionally, it is a great compliment to our library's robust non-fiction collection and Indiana Room,

which houses lots of history on Indiana."

The demographics of the region dictated strong considerations for the Round Table founders. Located in an area which once housed a thriving industry of steel mills and oil refineries, the current economy was affected by the complicated balancing act of increased technology versus a less-skilled labor force which resulted in higher unemployment. The Round Table founders knew that the marginal economy meant money would be tight for most, so their first decision was to forego the requirement for dues. Rick and Steve are most grateful for the collaboration with the Library. Their meetings are held on Sunday afternoons at the Library when children are home from school and families are together. The space is free, and the Library provides free advertising – flyers in the Library, notices on the Library website and its newsletters. As a bonus, the Library will compensate the Round Table's speakers \$25 for gas, provided they are not local and they're not selling books. And even though there are other Round Tables in nearby Illinois, this Round Table's location makes it easier for local people to get to, avoiding Chicago traffic and toll roads.

Steve shared that NWICWRT's first goal is to build ties within the community.- Steve and Rick have established a wide network from which to draw speakers willing to donate their time.

Contacts with the Lake County and Newton County Historical Society, Friends of the Library, a group named the History and Mystery Group, the American Legion, the VFW, and the local college history departments provide an excellent source of word-of-mouth referrals for speakers and for outreach to prospective members. In addition, Steve maintains their Facebook page and connects with other Round Table Facebook pages.

The Round Table had its first official meeting in September 2023 with 37 attendees. The October meeting had 35, and 34 attended in November. They took Christmas off but look forward to new opportunities that 2024 will bring. Rick shared, "Steve and I have been brainstorming with the Lake County Park District about having a Civil War Encampment or History Encampment at the Bucley Homestead in Lowell, Indiana." Their hopes became

a reality when the Lake County Park District agreed and set the date of June 15, 2024, to hold a one-day encampment and living history day. While there will be no battle reenactments, they will have 60 reenactors, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan, whose members will offer a glimpse of life in a Civil War camp. The NWICWRT will also present several speakers and authors in the program, and they're currently looking for a sutler or two.

The NWICWRT is confident in its ability to provide education to their community and are committed to doing so. They believe that this is an opportune time for families of all ages to attend their events and learn about the American Civil War. If you'd like more information, contact Steve Rudzinski at (219) 293-1606 or visit their Facebook page [HERE](#).

\*\*\*  
NORTHWEST INDIANA  
**CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE**  
Meeting at the Crown Point Library Second Sunday of each month at 2 p.m.  
**FREE LECTURES - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

★ January 14 - 2 p.m.  
**30 FLAGS OVER AMERICA**  
Presented by Historian Don DeFrance

★ February 11 - 2 p.m.  
**LIFE AND EQUIPMENT OF A CIVIL WAR SOLDIER**  
Presented by Speaker and Reenactor William Horn

March 10 - 2 p.m.  
**WHO THE HECK WAS ABNER DOUBLEDAY?  
BASEBALL AND THE CIVIL WAR**  
Presented by Professor Bruce Allardice

April 14 - 2 p.m.  
**LINCOLN AND THE STRUCTURE OF REASON**  
Presented by Author Dan Van Halten

May 19 - 2 p.m.  
**IF A COLLECTION COULD TALK**  
Presented by Kenosha Civil War Museum Curator Doug Dammann

Crown Point Community  
**LIBRARY**  
CROWN POINT • INDIANA

## JONATHAN TAYLOR'S SWORD COMES HOME TO BETHLEHEM

By Mike Campbell Bucks County CWRT & Ed Root, CWRT of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Captain Jonathan Taylor died in Georgetown D.C. on March 28, 1863, 105 days after he was mortally wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg. He was just 20 years of age. A beloved son of Bethlehem, PA, *Jonty*, as his family called him, was shot through the chest while leading the men of the 129th PA in a twilight charge up Marye's Heights. The entire community buckled under the loss. Taylor was their hero, and he had suffered nobly to no avail. To watch his life slip away from afar, only in the form of letters and the news, knocked Bethlehem flat. Their wish and his hope was for a homecoming, if not to recover, then a chance to say a proper goodbye. Those who knew him, including his comrades, never forgot that.

Unfortunately, the rest of us did. Years passed. Life moved on, and the Taylors moved away. Worst of all, Taylor's sword, a gift from friends and admirers presented to him in the summer of 1862, also went missing. A piece of history gone forever.

Gone that is until a group of CWRT volunteers got involved and set in motion a chain of events that brought Taylor's sword back home. Ed Root of the CWRT of Eastern PA headed up the search project. Acting upon information given to him by NPS Ranger and Bethlehem native Peter Maugle, Root contacted the owner of the sword, a collector from South Carolina. He agreed to sell the sword to Root after hearing of Root's plan to return the artifact to Bethlehem and display it publicly in a place of honor. They chose the Nitschmann Middle School, which is located across the street from the Bethlehem Civil War Memorial. The project quickly picked up steam.



A fundraising campaign was launched, and local charities under the leadership of Historic Bethlehem ([historicbethlehem.org](http://historicbethlehem.org)), offered to curate the exhibit. The Curriculum Supervisor for the Bethlehem Area School District, Dr. Joseph Anthes, took notice. Enthusiasm grew, and the press took note. Herb Kaufman of the G.A.R. Museum in Philadelphia signed on as a researcher, and ultimately the G.A.R. Museum was selected to take custody of the sword in the event of a sale, on the condition that it be put on

permanent loan at Nitschmann. All that was left was to secure financing, which was provided to the tune of \$9,400, primarily by the CWRT of Eastern PA. The deal was done. After 161 years, Captain Jonathan Taylor's sword was coming home. The only thing missing were the details of Taylor's service, lost along with the sword for more than a century.

Lost, that is, until the Bucks County CWRT got involved. As it turned out, the Taylors had moved to Bucks County in 1871. Though the family had long since vanished from the public record, in 1982 a family friend approached the Bucks County Historical Society and offered a collection of documents. Included were 21 letters from Jonathan Taylor's parents dated December 1862 - March 1863, all detailing Taylor's suffering and death from his bedside in Georgetown. Also included were two letters from Taylor himself, and most importantly, five letters from Taylor's older brother

(Continued on Page 6)



## JONATHAN TAYLOR'S SWORD COMES HOME (CONTINUED)

Joseph, a Corporal in the same company as Jonathan. One of the vexing questions that Root had long confronted during his research was whether Taylor was holding his sword when he was struck down by the fatal blow at Fredericksburg. Though he had searched valiantly, the research trail had long gone cold, and as the date of the sword's return approached, Root had all but given up hope of finding a definitive answer. And then miraculously, just a few days before the ribbon cutting ceremony at Nitschmann, Root was contacted by Mike Campbell of the Bucks County CWRT. Campbell had found the mothballed Taylor family papers in the BCHS archives while working on a different project and transcribed most of the letters. Many questions were answered, but many more

remained. The question of the sword took priority. Time was running out. Mere hours before the ceremony, Campbell located the sought after records in a December 16, 1862, letter. Jonathan

Taylor was indeed holding his sword when he was struck. In fact, "while cheering on his men he was half turned round, waving his sword," when struck. Incredible! A fairy tale ending.

The reaction was euphoric. The ribbon cutting ceremony at Nitschmann was full of proverbial high fives and chest bumps, a grand display which culminated with District Superintendent Jack Silva reenacting the old Union rally cry of "Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!" Herb Kaufman, channeling his inner Jonathan Taylor, shouted "Follow me men!" during his speech, tucking his head and raising his arm as if he were stepping up the slope of Marye's Heights. Everyone felt that we had made history.

And so we did!

*Mike Campbell is the President of the Bucks County CWRT Library and Museum, located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Ed Root is Past Brigade Commander of the Board of the CWRT of Eastern Pennsylvania located in Breinigsville, Pennsylvania.*



District Superintendent Jack Silva (left) and Ed Root (right)



Herb Kaufman—"Follow me men!"

## THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF MATTHEW HOLZMAN

We came upon Matthew Holzman's Facebook page, [Civil Warscapes](#), and thought his photographs were beautiful. Matthew A. Holzman received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Shepherd University in West Virginia. Stemming from his education and interests, he worked as a Park Ranger at Arlington House and The Robert E. Lee Memorial. *Civil Warscapes* showcases photos of American Civil War battlefields and sites. He has graciously given us permission to share some of his photos of the Shenandoah Valley.

More photographs can be found on his website [HERE](#).

Right: *Morning Majesty*

Below: *Enchanting Descent*



### The Shenandoah Valley in the Civil War

Throughout the Civil War, the Shenandoah Valley proved strategically significant to both Union and Confederate forces. In addition to serving as a significant source of provender for Confederate forces operating in Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley served as an avenue of invasion into the North for Confederate armies and a point from which Confederate troops could threaten Washington, D.C. Furthermore, at various points during the Civil War, most notably during the spring of 1862 and summer of 1864, the Confederacy utilized the Shenandoah as a diversionary theater of war to alleviate pressure on Richmond. For the Union, the Shenandoah Valley served as a point from which to block an invasion of the North and safeguard the national capital. In short, control of the Shenandoah Valley was critical to winning the war in Virginia.

Jonathan A. Noyalas

Director, Shenandoah University's McCormick Civil War Institute

Editor, *Journal of the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War Era*

Fulbright Program Adviser

**THE PRINCE WILLIAM GATEWAY AND PROPOSED DATA CENTERS**

By Blake Myers, Bull Run CWRT

The Prince William Digital Gateway (PWDG) project proposes construction of 34 data centers on 2,100 acres of rural land located in Prince William County, Virginia, that borders Manassas National Battlefield Park (MNBP) and Conway Robinson State Forest.



Proposed PW Digital Gateway (courtesy of Piedmont Environmental Council)

After eighteen months of study, public information meetings and hearings, and despite significant objections raised by County residents, the National Park Service (NPS), Manassas National Battleground Park (MNBP), historical preservation groups, including the Prince William County Historical Commission (PWHC) and the Bull Run CWRT, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) APPROVED the PWDG Comprehensive Plan Amendment on November 2, 2022.

In spite of significant objections submitted by County residents, the NPS and MNBP, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and multiple historical preservation organizations, including the American Battlefield Trust (ABT) and the Bull Run CWRT, the rezoning applications moved to Prince William County's Planning Commission (PWPC) and the BOCS for consideration, along with the County Planning Staff's recommendation to DENY the applications.

Following a 23-hour public hearing beginning on Nov 8, 2023, the PWPC voted 6-2 to recommend DENIAL of all three rezoning applications for the proposed PWDG Data Centers.

At the conclusion of a 27-hour session commencing on December 12, 2023, the BOCS voted 4-3, with one abstention, to APPROVE each of the rezoning applications. The organizational speakers all recommended denial of the rezoning applications, included MNBP, the Prince William Conservation Alliance, the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, Bull Run CWRT, NPCA, and ABT.

The BOCS's APPROVAL of the PWDG rezoning applications came despite recommendations from the PWC Planning Office and PWC Planning Commission to deny the applications!

Meanwhile, ongoing and recently filed legal actions are challenging the BOCS's PWDG actions. On January 12, 2024, two lawsuits were filed seeking to overturn the BOCS approval of the PWDG rezoning applications.

One lawsuit provides a detailed history of the area and the two Civil War battles fought there, and cites the previously expressed objections, including overburdening the region's power grid due to PWDG's high electrical demand, the loss of green and public spaces, and significant environmental impacts to air quality, clean water and the Occoquan Watershed Reservoir, and noise pollution.

The second lawsuit stipulates that the BOCS ignored the County's established requirements for data center developments, ignored specific PWDG CPA requirements, ignored the County's Planning Staff and Planning Commission recommendations, and was dismissive of objections by County residents, the NPS, MNBP, and historic preservation groups.

In a related initiative, nonprofit organizations, homeowner groups, and residents throughout Virginia have joined forces calling

for industry-wide data center reform. The Virginia Data Center Reform Coalition consists of more than 20 environmental, conservation, historic preservation, and climate advocacy groups, combined with representatives of communities and neighborhoods statewide.

The Coalition is seeking state government intervention — to require more transparency around land use decisions affecting Virginians and the significant implications of energy and water usage for local communities and the Commonwealth.

Several bills addressing data centers in Virginia have been submitted in the current 2024 Virginia legislative session, requiring data center operators to meet certain energy efficiency standards, and to disclose data center water and power demands, the impacts on the electrical grid, carbon emissions, local agricultural, historical, and cultural resources.

So, stay informed and support the data center reform efforts where you can. The way ahead for the PWDG promises to be a tenuous undertaking.

To read more, click on Bull Run CWRT's newsletter Stone Wall [HERE](#) and go to Page 15.





## FROM LITTLE ROUND TOP TO A GUN BATTLE WITH A NOTORIOUS DESPERADO: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE 20TH MAINE'S ALBERT TITUS

By Jared Peatman

While we all yearn to know more about the wartime experiences of Civil War soldiers, their postwar exploits often contain even more compelling stories. Such is the case with Albert Titus, a soldier serving in the Twentieth Maine who survived his unit's defense of Little Round Top at Gettysburg only to be gunned down four years later by a notorious desperado.

A seventeen-year-old farmer from Waldoboro, Titus enlisted in the summer of 1862 and was mustered into the Twentieth Maine. The ninth of fifteen children born to Weston and Sarah Titus between 1833 and 1856, Albert had already suffered the death of five siblings. Father Weston "had been disqualified for labor for more than ten years on account of long continued and excessive intemperance," while neighbors reported he had "neglected to provide for his wife and family." Service in the Civil War may have been both a way for young Albert to escape an unpleasant home life and provide economic support for his mother and siblings.

Albert thrived in his service with the Twentieth Maine, with promotions to Corporal on January 1, 1863, to Sergeant on July 1, 1864, First Sergeant on October 22, 1864, and

Second Lieutenant on April 26, 1865. He managed to avoid wounding, capture, or significant disease and returned home upon mustering out on June 4, 1865. He returned to farming again, while living at home. On January 7, 1867, Titus reentered the Army, enlisting as a Private in Company C of the 20<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry. Whether returning to a place where he had previously excelled or escaping from an unpleasant home life, or a little of both, is difficult to ascertain.

Titus was posted to east Texas where many of the Army's efforts supported the operations of the Freedman's Bureau, an organization created to assist African Americans in the aftermath of slavery's demise and to oversee fair labor contracts between Freedmen and their new employers. In June of 1867, Freedman's Bureau Agent William Kirkman learned of the murder of an African



American man on his farm by Cullen Baker, a notorious gang leader. This particular incident was just one of the many instances that Baker and his gang killed African Americans, Freedman's Bureau Agents, or anyone who employed the formerly enslaved. Though romanticized by some as the inventor of the fast draw, Baker was little more than a ruthless murderer who most often killed unsuspecting opponents with a shotgun.

Agent Kirkman gathered soldiers of Company C to search for Baker without success. Baker sent a note to Kirkman cheekily demanding the surrender of the entire garrison, while awaiting their return by "refresh[ing] himself with a couple of cans of oysters and a few drinks of whiskey at a grocery hard by." Titus' commanding officer later reported him as "one of a party of soldiers sent to arrest a desperado named Baker at Boston Texas." Baker opened fire upon the soldiers as they entered the town, and with their return fire, the soldiers left thirty bullet holes in the building where Baker was

hiding. In the exchange of fire Baker got a clear shot at Albert Titus and unloaded a shotgun round into the Mainer's heart, killing him instantly. Freedman's Bureau Agent Kirkman wounded Baker, but the wound did not prove mortal, and Baker continued to terrorize the region for another eighteen months before meeting his end in January 1869.

An excellent soldier who had made it through nearly three years of the Civil War as a survivor of some of the century's bloodiest battles, Albert Titus deserved a better end than his untimely death at the hands of such a lawless renegade.

*Jared Peatman, Ph.D., is nearing completion of a book on the 20th Maine that he began as a pre-teen. In his day job Jared is the founder of Four Score Consulting, a small company that provides history-themed leadership development events. He is the newest Board Director of the CWRT Congress.*

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8379202/cullen-montgomery-baker>:

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*Historical Publications* gave the CWRT Congress Sustainability Conference in Gettysburg a most generous review in their December 13, 2023, online article. Click [HERE](#) to read.