



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 30 December 2010 No. 04

DATE: Wednesday, December 8th, 2010

TIME: Dinner 7:00 PM; Program 8:00

PLACE: Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

SPEAKER: John Stealey

SUBJECT: West Virginia's Constitutional Critique of Virginia.

The Speaker:

Dr. Stealey holds a Ph. D. in history from West Virginia University and serves as Distinguished Professor of History at Shepherd University. He has instructed at Shepherd for forty-two years. Dr. Stealey has written four books that have or will be published by peer-reviewed university/academic presses; the latest to appear in 2012 is a 1,500 pp. work entitled "West Virginia's Civil War Era Constitution: Loyal Revolution, Confederate Counter-Revolution, and the Convention of 1872." He has published over sixty articles and reviews in a wide array of academic journals and frequently writes op-ed pieces addressing constitutional controversies for the *Charleston Gazette*. A forthcoming article will appear in April 2010 in *Civil War History*.

The Subject

Dr. Stealey presents western Virginia's many reasons for remaining loyal to the Union and revolting against the Commonwealth's secession. The rationale evolves quite clearly in West Virginia's first constitutional convention in 1861-1863 when loyalists can without political hindrance address a half century of Virginia's undemocratic governance.

The Meal

A family-style meal will be served at 7:00 PM prior to the program. The cost of the meal is \$15.00 per person. Reservations for the meal **must be phoned in no later than Sunday, November 7th**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can email her at alsdorf@comcast.net The meal will be Sliced Roast Pork, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Sauerkraut, Iced Tea, Rolls, Butter and Dessert.

On this day, Thursday, December 11th, 1862

On a foggy December morning, Burnside's Federals began constructing five pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock to Fredericksburg. Sharpshooters from a Confederate brigade under William Barksdale drove the builders away time after time. In midmorning Federal guns on the east side of the river opened on the city, but the sharpshooters remained. By noon two bridges were laid. A four-regiment Federal force crossed in boats, drove out the Confederates, and the other three bridges were laid. On the Federal left, troops under William B. Franklin began crossing in the afternoon, and a division of E. V. Sumner's corps occupied Fredericksburg by nightfall. Jackson was a few miles back at Guiney's Station with his divisions at Yerby's and on the lower crossings of the Rappahannock. He was ready to move wherever needed to aid Longstreet's defending corps. The main question was just where Burnside would strike. (Excerpted from *The Civil War Day by Day*, E. B. Long, published by Doubleday)

Dana B. Shoaf Appointed to Washington Post Sesquicentennial Advisory Panel

By kholland [Civil War Times](#) | Published: November 04, 2010

Weider History Group is pleased to announce that Dana B. Shoaf, editor of *Civil War Times*, has been selected as a member of the *Washington Post's* advisory panel for the Civil War Sesquicentennial. Shoaf joins an illustrious panel that includes historians such as Ken Burns, Harold Holzer, Gary Gallagher, Ed Ayres, Edna Greene Medford and Stephanie McCurry, among others. Look for Shoaf's contributions on the Post's Civil War blog, [A House Divided](#). He, along with the other panelists, will be answering questions about the conflict and its critical events throughout the four-year 150th commemoration of the war. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/artsandliving/civilwar/>

Pre Civil War Peace Conference

By Harold Holzer | [America's Civil War](#) | [Online Bonus](#) | Published: November 08, 2010

Give Peace a Chance: As secession fever spreads through the South, political patriarchs try to avert war—but at what price?

With the results of the bitter 1860 election in the books, a nation turned its anxious eyes and ears to the new president-elect, hoping for words that might prevent secession and war. But Abraham Lincoln instead adopted a policy of "masterly inactivity," an impregnable public silence designed to incite as few people as possible. For the next four months, he would venture no assurances to anyone.

Into the resulting void marched (or rather hobbled) an ancient former president—John Tyler, the last public official any American expected would play a role in the current crisis.

As an accidental president two decades earlier, the pro-slavery Virginian could count few accomplishments save for validating the law of succession by becoming the first vice president to replace a dead chief executive. Now 70, he re-emerged onto the national stage to support compromise even as states of the Deep South began to leave the Union and Kentuckian John J. Crittenden's compromise plan flamed out in the U.S. Senate.

On January 19, 1861 (the same day Georgia became the fifth state to secede), Tyler convinced Virginia to authorize a last-ditch effort to preserve the Union, calling for a national peace conference that would meet in Washington "to consider and, if practical, agree on some suitable adjustment" to national policies. The idea presumptuously ignored the reality that America's voters had already chosen to "adjust" policy by electing Lincoln. And it was from the outset a case of too little, too late. Nonetheless the proposal won quick approval in the Old Dominion, which still harbored strong pro-Union sentiments. Other states agreed to send delegations, some reluctantly: Progressives in Massachusetts, for example, opposed ceding "one hair's breadth" to slavery.

To no one's surprise, Tyler was named one of Virginia's five peace commissioners. Sounding little like a conciliator, he thereupon warned his fellow Southerners that if the conference failed, "the conqueror will walk at every step over smouldering [sic] ashes and beneath crumbling columns." Such warnings inspired émigré writer Adam Gurowski to nervously brand the forthcoming peace conference a "Southern plot."

Cedar Mountain buys key Civil War property

The Friends of [Cedar](#) Mountain Battlefield need the community's help in continuing its efforts to preserve [Civil War](#) history. On Friday, the community-based, non-profit group used [\\$52,000](#) of grant money to acquire two acres of wooded property known as the "bloody wheat field" during the four-year battle. Located on Dove Hill Road, the newly purchased land, which sold for [\\$65,000](#), is also surrounded by 152 preserved acres of the battlefield owned by the [Civil War Preservation Trust](#).

"This purchase culminates over two years of work by the FCMB board to utilize a [transportation enhancement grant](#) for the purchase," said [local historian and author Virginia Morton](#), vice-president of the FCMB. "We are excited to have preserved this critical parcel of hallowed ground. It belongs to the people of [Culpeper](#)."