



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 31 May 2012 No. 09

- DATE:** Wednesday, May 9th, 2012
- TIME:** Dinner 7:00 PM; Program 8:00
- PLACE:** Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV
- SPEAKER:** Arthur Candenquist
- SUBJECT:** The Confederates Construct the World's First
Military Railroad

The Speaker:

Was Amtrak's Manager, Emergency Preparedness; he retired after almost 33 years of railroad service on February 1st, 2007. He began working for the railroad in 1974 as a signal tower operator before being promoted to train dispatcher and assistant chief train dispatcher. He was appointed a safety engineer in 1986, and later was promoted to Manager of Safety & Environmental Control for Amtrak's Washington Division before being appointed to his last position at Amtrak's corporate headquarters in Washington, DC. His area of responsibility covered the 46 states where Amtrak operates. His duties included formulating and implementing system-wide life safety emergency policies and procedures; developing and conducting emergency life-safety training for public safety emergency response agencies; performing life-safety inspections to ensure compliance with industry standards, federal, state, and local regulations; and conducting railroad accident investigations.

He attended Temple University and has a B.S. in Communications. After college he served with the U.S. Air Force for six years, including service in Vietnam. He was a professional member of the American Society of Safety Engineers and the National Fire Protection Association, and is a member of the International Association of Emergency Managers. He was appointed Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator of Rappahannock County, Virginia, in November, 2006.

Mr. Candenquist has been a serious scholar of the War Between the States since 1956, and focuses his attention on the more unusual and lesser-known aspects of the War. He has published two articles on keeping time during the War (there was no Standard Time during the 1860s); an article on Stonewall Jackson's appropriation of the B&O Railroad equipment in 1861; and two articles on the world's first military railroad---the Centreville Military Railroad, constructed in 1861 between Manassas Jct. and Centreville, VA. He conducts field trips on various aspects of the War, and has lectured extensively on wartime railroads; the War in the Southwest in 1862; the role of Masons during the War; the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid on Richmond; and the War in Virginia. He is currently working on a biography on the Confederacy's railroad mastermind, Capt. Thomas R. Sharp.

He is a member of a number of historical organizations including the CW Preservation Trust; a life member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans; a life member of the Summers-Koontz Camp m 490 SCV in Luray, VA; Commander of the of Turner Ashby Camp 1567, S.C.V., in Winchester, VA; a life member of the Surratt Society; a Boiard member of the Brandy Station Foundation; Virginia Historical Society; Confederate Military Lodge of Research; C.W. Lodge of Research m 1865 (two Masonic organizations); Museum of the Confederacy; Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia; Society of Civil War Surgeons; Civil War Education Association; the Titanic Historical Society; and a number of others historical organizations. He is also a 321 Mason, and currently serves his 2nd year as Master of Washington Lodge No. 78 in Washington, VA.

When not dabbling in history, Mr. Candenquist serves his community as a volunteer firefighter with 50 years of fire/rescue service. He currently serves as Safety Officer with the rank of Captain, and administratively as Vice-President. He lives near Amissville, Rappahannock County, Virginia.

The Subject

In the wretched winter of 1861-1862, the Confederate Army of the Potomac, under joint command of Generals P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston, went into winter quarters around Centreville, Fairfax County, Virginia. Supplies for the army reached the front from Richmond by rail to Manassas Junction. From there, wagons laden with forage and the necessities for daily life slogged their way over six miles of bad roads, made increasingly worse by never-ending wet weather. Facing mud on the roads that was as much as two feet deep in places, the horses, mules, and oxen pulling the wagons were consuming as much or more in food than they were delivering. Moreover, the increasing numbers of sick and wounded were unable to be transported to the trains for movement to general hospitals. The Confederate commanders and the army were faced with the prospect of slowly starving to death, and the sick and wounded would die from lack of adequate medical attention. The alternatives were to retreat to more favorable conditions,

or find a way to circumvent the impassible roads. The result was the Centreville Military Railroad.

In the presentation which includes both narration and slides that Arthur Candenuist provides, in the persona of Capt. Thomas R. Sharp, Asst. Quartermaster, Confederate States Army, who engineered and supervised the final construction of the CMRR, we will examine the events that led up to the construction of what was to be the first railroad in history built exclusively for military purposes. We will look at the principle personalities in this endeavor, and see how the race against time was won by a mere six weeks, when, in March, 1862, the army withdrew from Centreville to more defensible positions in anticipation of the spring campaigns. The little railroad was pressed into service one final time, to evacuate supplies and the sick and wounded. The Centreville Military Railroad was then abandoned, and soon all traces of it, including common knowledge of the CMRR, disappeared.

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, May 8th**, to Kyle Wichtendahl at 301-639-8855 or you can email him at kfwichtendahl@gmail.com The meal will consist Sliced Roast Pork, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Green Beans or Sauerkraut, Iced Tea, Rolls, Butter, Dessert

Harpers Ferry Civil War Roundtable Speakers

Mike Musick has been getting wonderfully knowledgeable speakers for our roundtable for years. He has assisted numerous writers with research guidance when at his former position at the National Archives, and I own a number of remarkable books on the Civil War whose authors gratefully acknowledge Mike for his timely assistance. Mike has often drawn from that group of writers when selecting speakers: members of our group with special knowledge; people whom he has heard speak; and those with widely-known reputations. Novelists have not been forbidden but have not usually been selected. The sources for speakers are unlimited. If any member would like to take charge of arranging for our speakers, please let us know. Mike would be happy to assist, if requested, whoever might succeed to that position.

On This Day, Sunday, May 11th, 1862 Loss of the CSS Merrimack

Merrimack was no more. Scuttled off captured Norfolk, VA, by the Confederates, the noble antagonist of the Monitor went down. There was no place she could be taken for safety, so destruction was a galling necessity forced by land warfare. President Lincoln returned from Fort Monroe to Washington and heard the news on the way. The President wired General Halleck, “ Norfolk in our possession, Merrimac blown up, & Monitor & other boats going up James River to Richmond. Be very sure to sustain no reverse in your Department [sic].” (Excerpted from *The Civil War by Day*, E. B. Long)