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## HARPERS FERRY

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### CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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**PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425**

Vol. 30 November 2010 No. 03

DATE: Wednesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010

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

PLACE: Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

SPEAKER: Kevin Levin

SUBJECT: Was the Battle of the Crater a Slave Rebellion?

#### The Speaker:

Mr. Kevin Levin is a history instructor and department chair at the St. Anne's - Belfield School in Charlottesville, Virginia. Over the past few years he has published articles in both popular magazines and scholarly journals and recently completed his first book manuscript entitled *Remembering Murder as War: The Battle of the Crater*. He is currently researching a new book, which is tentatively entitled *Searching for Black Confederates in History and Memory*. Mr. Levin is the author of the blog: Civil War Memory: [www.cwmemory.com](http://www.cwmemory.com)

#### The Subject

The Army of the Potomac detonated 8,000 pounds of gunpowder beneath Confederate lines on July 30, 1864. Following the explosion, Maj. General Ambrose Burnside's IX Corps, including a division of U.S. Colored Troops under Brig. General Edward Ferrero, advanced in hopes of taking the heights around Blandford Cemetery. From the start

nothing went right for Burnside's men, who wasted time gazing at the destruction wrought by the mine. They lost more time uncovering members of Brig. General Stephen Elliott's brigade, who had been positioned above the mine. By 7 a.m. three Union divisions were crammed within the crater or bogged down in traverses and bomb-proofs. They made several attempts to push forward, and did secure some ground. But the rebels, including well positioned artillery, rallied to prevent a breakout. By the time Burnside ordered his "colored" 4th Division into battle around 8 a.m., it was clear to many the day was lost. Scattered regiments of Ferrero's division moved into forward positions to launch a final advance. Any opportunity for a concerted Union push was lost when Brig. General William Mahone arrived around 9 a.m. with his division and ordered Brig. General David Weisiger's brigade into battle. Close-quarters fighting ensued before the rebels retook the salient. Ferrero's division was hit hard, including an official tally of 209 killed or mortally wounded and perhaps 227 more who died in battle or thereafter. (Excerpted from the October *Civil War Times* article *Until Every Negro Has Been Slaughtered* by Kevin M. Levin)

## 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 7<sup>th</sup>**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can email her at [alsdorf@comcast.net](mailto:alsdorf@comcast.net) The meal will be Fried chicken, Asian Slaw, baked beans, Iced Tea, Rolls, Butter & Dessert.

## "I am heartily tired of hearing about what Lee is going to do..."

With this powerful retort, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant sent a nervous subordinate back to the ranks with the command to find a way to wrest the initiative away from Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia.

Grant's iron resolve was exactly what the Union Army of the Potomac needed that day in the Wilderness of Virginia. Two days of stumbling, savage combat in the second growth thickets of Virginia had produced enormous casualties. But unlike previous Union commanders, Grant was not about to let one battle drive him back above the Rappahannock.

CWPT is proud to announce a new campaign to save 49 acres at the center of the Wilderness Battlefield. Historian Gordon Rhea says that this new tract at the famed Saunders Field is a property that "witnessed some of the Wilderness' most brutal combat."

- [Donate Now »](#)
- Supremely important, must-have hallowed ground!

## The Wilderness

May 5-7, 1864

The opening battle of Grant's sustained offensive against the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, known as the Overland Campaign, was fought at the Wilderness, May 5-7. On the morning of May 5, 1864, the Union V Corps attacked Ewell's Corps on the Orange Turnpike, while A.P. Hill's corps during the afternoon encountered Getty's Division (VI Corps) and Hancock's II Corps on the Plank Road. Fighting was fierce but inconclusive as both sides attempted to maneuver in the dense woods. Darkness halted the fighting, and both sides rushed forward reinforcements. At dawn on May 6, Hancock attacked along the Plank Road, driving Hill's Corps back in confusion. Longstreet's Corps arrived in time to prevent the collapse of the Confederate right flank. At noon, a devastating Confederate flank attack in Hamilton's Thicket sputtered out when Lt. Gen. James Longstreet was wounded by his own men. The IX Corps (Burnside) moved against the Confederate center, but was repulsed. Union generals James S. Wadsworth and Alexander Hays were killed. Confederate generals John M. Jones, Micah Jenkins, and Leroy A. Stafford were killed. The battle was a tactical draw. Grant, however, did not retreat as had the other Union generals before him. On May 7, the Federals advanced by the left flank toward the crossroads of Spotsylvania Courthouse.

## November, 1862

Little but memory was left of the three Confederate thrusts of late summer and early fall. Lee was back in Virginia and McClellan's Army of the Potomac had begun to move again, though slowly and with numerous delays. Bragg was gone from Kentucky, his Army of Tennessee not much injured. The new Federal commander, Rosencrans, still had a formidable enemy to contend with. In northern Mississippi Van Dorn had failed to do much against the Corinth area except to sustain losses, and Grant was preparing an overland campaign down the north-south railroad, aimed at Vicksburg. News of the successful Confederate sea raider *Alabama* was seeping in, but the blockade was still there and continually tightening. For the South, the faint hope of foreign recognition seemed further away than ever. In the North there was scattered resistance to the draft. The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was still a subject of controversy. But at least the immediate threats of Confederate invasion were gone. At the moment, in fact, the war seemed to be dragging. (Excerpted from *Civil War by Day*, E. B Long)

The Jefferson County Historical Society

and

The Harpers Ferry Foundation

Presents

On Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m., at the Camp Hill Methodist Church, historian and Harpers Ferry mayor Jim Addy will be speaking on the impact of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. The admission is free and there is a public reception beginning at 6:00 p.m.