



HFCWRT Monthly Newsletter

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- DATE:** Wednesday, January 13th, 2016
- TIME:** Dinner 7:00 PM; Program 8:00
- PLACE:** Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV
- SPEAKER:** Dan Vermilya
- SUBJECT:** James Garfield and the Civil War: For Ohio and the Union

The Speaker:

Daniel Vermilya is a Civil War historian who currently works as a park ranger at Gettysburg National Military Park. He has previously worked at Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland. In 2012, he was awarded the first Joseph L. Harsh Memorial Scholar Award by the Save Historic Antietam Foundation. A native of Kirtland, Ohio, Vermilya has previously done volunteer work for the James A. Garfield National Historic Site. He is also the author of *The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain*, published in 2014 by The History Press.

The Subject

Just as the war transformed the United States, it also transformed the men who would go on to lead the nation afterward as president. James Garfield saw service in many different capacities during the war, and it was his wartime experience that catapulted him into national politics and helped to pave the way for his election to the presidency twenty years later. Although most know the tragic manner in which James Garfield died by the hands of an assassin, the heroic and little-told story of his Civil War service is a remarkable example of a man serving his country in its hour of need and in the process emerging as a leader.

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 made no later than Sunday, January 10th**, with Kyle Wichtendahl at kfwichtendahl@gmail.com or 301-639-8855. The meal will consist of Sliced Baked Ham with Raisin Sauce, Escalloped Potatoes, Buttered Peas & Pearl Onions, Iced Tea, Coffee, Rolls, Butter & Dessert.

Death Not by Assassination

On a July day in 1881, President James Garfield arrived at a Washington, D.C., train depot. Two shots rang out. The newly elected president was struck in the arm and the back, targeted by a disgruntled lawyer. But what actually killed President Garfield began with the doctors who first treated him and the care he received leading up to his death two months later.

Immediately after the shooting, doctors began probing Garfield's wound looking for the bullet, but neglected a step vitally important in medicine today. They didn't bother washing their hands or the instruments they used, leaving the president vulnerable to fatal infection.

After determining the bullet wasn't in a fatal spot, they moved the president to the White House where an incompetent physician, Dr. Doctor Willard Bliss (who was a physician but whose given name was also "Doctor"), took over. He delayed surgery and forced Garfield to eat rich meals and drink a great deal of alcohol.

Since the X-ray had not been invented yet, Bliss continued to manually probe the wound several times a day looking for the bullet, but never disinfecting his hands first. Bliss was aware of the importance of hand washing because for years an English surgeon, Joseph Lister, had urged doctors to adopt this simple practice to prevent infection. Yet, American doctors resisted this "as too much trouble."

Soon the President developed a fever and began vomiting. The once strong man lingered in agony until his death from a massive infection on September nineteenth, eighteen-eighty-one. Sadly, an autopsy showed the bullet was not in a fatal spot.

Though the shooter was hung [sic], it was an incompetent physician that ultimately killed President Garfield. (Excerpted from *Medical Discovery News*)

The 116: The True Story of Abraham Lincoln's Lost Guard by James P. Muehlberger (Ankerwycke, 2015).

Most Civil War readers have at least heard of the Frontier Guard, the self-appointed gang of early 1861 Lincoln bodyguards made up of rugged Westerners led by Kansas Jayhawker and U.S. Senator Jim Lane. Muehlberger's *The 116* tells the group's unique story. Appendix I includes transcriptions of the unit roll and other documents while the extensive Appendix II (comprising close to 1/3 of the book) offers biographical timelines for each member, including their pre and postwar lives. "Based on more than 500 original sources discovered at the Library of Congress, *The 116* delves into the lives of these 116 men and their charismatic leader—Kansas "free state" advocate and lawyer Jim Lane. It paints a provocative portrait of the 'civil war' between Free-State and Pro-Slavery forces that tore Missouri and the Kansas Territory apart in the 1850s, and gives a vivid picture of the legal battles pertaining to the protection and abolition of slavery that riled Congress on both a federal and state level, eventually leading to the eruption of war in 1861."

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SEEKING COMMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE TRAILS PLAN FOR GETTYSBURG AND EISENHOWER PARK

GETTYSBURG, Pa. – The National Park Service (NPS) proposes to develop a Comprehensive Trails Plan for Gettysburg National Military Park (NMP) and Eisenhower National Historic Site (NHS). The purpose of the Comprehensive Trails Plan is to improve visitor access, convenience, safety, and opportunities for understanding and appreciation of the historic battlefield and the landscape of the Eisenhower site.

The NPS proposes to enhance and expand the trail network so visitors can experience more of the battlefield without vehicles; consider multi-modal uses of commemorative park avenues to improve safety and accessibility; establish additional bike routes; expand opportunities for visitor access to Eisenhower NHS; evaluate hiker/biker shuttle opportunities; and assess the expansion of equestrian trails if inclusion of horses is appropriate to the story of the battle and if resources are not adversely impacted.

New trails would follow historic alignments such as avenues, lanes, railways (where appropriate), tree lines and fence lines in place at the time of the Battle of Gettysburg.

For more specifics related to the development of a Comprehensive Trails Plan, the NPS has prepared a newsletter that is available at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/TrailsPlan>.

The NPS seeks the public's participation in the planning process for the Comprehensive Trails Plan. We are now accepting written suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the proposal, which can be submitted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/TrailsPlan>. Comments are requested by January 30, 2016. Members of the public are also invited to attend a public open house on Thursday, January 21, 2016 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Gettysburg NMP Museum and Visitor Center, Ford Education Center, 1195 Baltimore Pike, Gettysburg, to learn more about the proposal. The NPS will also be accepting comments at the open house. (Excerpted from <http://www.civilwar.com/component/content/article.html?id=277825>)