

**Tennessee Valley Civil War
Round Table
June 2024 Newsletter/Journal**



**To Inform and Educate
Since 1993**

The Round Table meets at the Elks Lodge at 725 Franklin St @ 6:30pm the 2nd Thursday of each month except December (Chicken Buffet is available). The Lodge will be smoke free from 11 June 2024.

Announcements;

2. Thursday, June 13, former Vice President **Cheryl McAuley: “Who was Thaddeus Lowe, and Did He Make a Difference in the Civil War?”**
2. Chickamauga excursion is scheduled for September. More details included.
2. Kent Wright Honored by the Little Round Table with a Unique Civil War Navy Flag

3. Board Reports

TVCWRT Feature;

5. When Egnog Sparked a Riot at West Point: by Christopher Cline
6. Little Round Table; June 27, “Chickamauga – Deep Dive Part I, Elks Lodge, 6:30 – 8:00 pm.

Announcement: Thursday 13 June: Former TVCWRT Vice President Cheryl McAuley: “Who was Thaddeus Lowe, and Did He Make a Difference in the Civil War?”

This presentation highlights unique inventions introduced by TSC Lowe, whose vision for a Balloon Corps was received enthusiastically by some and rejected by others. His creativity and perseverance were admirable!

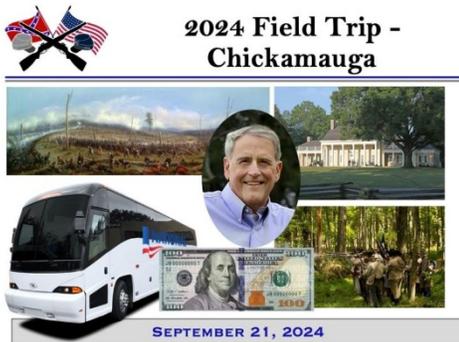


Former TVCWRT
Vice President
Dr. Cheryl McAuley

Dr. Cheryl McAuley (left) grew up in Baltimore County, Maryland and moved to Huntsville 18.5 years ago. Her undergraduate degree from West Chester University, PA is a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance (1975). She is a retired Army Reservist and DoD Civilian. Her Master's degrees are from George Mason University (1996) in Public Administration, and the U.S. Army War College (2005) in Strategic Studies. After she deployed to Djibouti, Horn of Africa 2004, she volunteered for a one-year tour in Baghdad, Iraq 2009-2010. She used her VA Education benefits to earn a Doctorate of Management in Organizational Leadership (D.M.) from the University of Phoenix (2016). She served as VP of the TVCWRT 2010-2012.

Her first published book, *Asante Sana: Life Lessons from Kili* (2019) on Kindle, Audible, and Paperback, chronicles the McAuley's 2017 journey to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa. She has been married to John McAuley, (Retired CW5, US Army) for 38.5 fantastic years. They enjoy traveling the world and golfing together. Their rescue beagle mix (Mwenzi – (which is Swahili for “companion”) is a joyful addition in their home. Cheryl has a wide array of interests and enjoys serving others when opportunities become available. She previously served as Vice President of the Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table.

2024, TVCWRT Field Trip to Chickamauga: September 21.



June 13 is the last chance for members to pay for the trip in person. On June 15th, we will offer available seats to the general public. Let's get comfortable and fill a 55-passenger bus. We'll depart from the Space and Rocket Center and return before (well, almost before) dark. We will be accepting participants on our website www.tvcwrt.org on June 15th and at the membership table on Thursday night. Let's do this (members have had a link emailed to them).

Kent Wright Honored By The Little Round Table With A Unique Civil War Navy Flag

The Navy infantry battalion flag dates back to the late 19th century, when it was adopted as a battalion color for ships' landing parties ashore. A memorandum in the collections of the Navy Department Library speculates that it may have originated in an order by Rear Admiral John Dahlgren in 1864, issuing "distinguishing pennants for the battalions of the fleet brigade . . . marked with an anchor." The flag that first appeared officially in Navy

signal books in the late 1800s eventually came to be used to represent both landing party battalions as well as the Navy as a whole until the adoption of the Navy flag in 1959. The use of the infantry battalion flag is now limited to battalions of ship's landing parties and for battalion organizations of naval shore activities in operations, ceremonies, and street parades. (SecNavInst 10520.2D) It is perhaps most widely seen at training installations and as the battalion color of construction battalions of the well-known Seabees. The battalion flag is 61 5/8 inches by 78 inches and mounted on a staff with a battle-ax finial. Units are authorized to inscribe their designation and location in white block letters above and below the diamond. <https://www.seaflags.us/parade/colors.html>



Members of the Little Round Table presented long-time TVCWRT member, Kent Wright, (above left) our resident Navy veteran and expert, with a 1864 Navy “Battalion Flag” for his continued outstanding presentations on War Between the States naval topics.

Blue & Gray Education Society (BGES): Check out what is going on in the BGES; [Blue and Gray Education Society – America's Premier Civil War Education Organization](#)



The Civil War Round Table Congress (CWRT): offers a speaker online each month. Check out their website for the authors, speakers, topics you would like to learn about. [Check out the free lectures and education opportunities scheduled for this month.](#)



We have expanded our Social Media formats; check these out! <https://gab.com/groups/22961>



<https://www.facebook.com/tvcwrt> Share the TVCWRT Facebook notifications with your friends.

Board Reports; Join the Board and make a difference in our Round Table.

Technology Officer, Michael Acosta: Live streaming of our Round Table sessions to members via internet is offered through Discord at no charge. Be aware streaming can be

limited because of the facility Wi-Fi limitation. All dues-paying members that are interested should email our Tech/Website rep, Michael Acosta at michaelacosta1836@gmail.com He will send instructions on how to set up an account on Discord and get rolling. **The RT is looking for a backup Discord manager.**

Membership Chair, Kevin Rodriguez: In May we had 1 renewal and added 2 new members. We currently have 77 paid memberships, 2 lifetime members, 1 complimentary membership (Elk's Lodge President) and 34 spouses/significant others for a total of 114 members.

Board Vacancies: Vice President and Projectionist

Programs Chair, Art Helms: The 2025 calendar is filling up. It's looking like another stellar year for the Round Table.

- **July 11: Nancy Rohr: "Rascality in Huntsville, 1861-1862; Union Spies in Huntsville"**
- **August 8: Curt Fields, aka General Grant and Thomas Jesse, aka General Lee, "Grant and Lee after the War"**
- **September: Jeff Ewing, "Ft. Oglethorpe and the Chickamauga Battlefield."**
- **October 10: Kellee Blake, "INTREPID HAZARD: The Civil War Adventures of General Hazard Stevens"**
- **November 14: Kent Wright, "Instant Navies"**
- **No meeting in December.**

Many Thanks to Teresa Roane for sharing her research on the Jefferson Davis family to, once again, a full house of members and guests.



(Left) William Goss, president of the Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table, presenting Teresa Roan another miniature masterpiece, by Art Helms, for her presentation on Jefferson Davis's experiences with the African American Community.

(Center) Art Helms masterpiece reads; "The patriot volunteer, fighting for country and his rights, makes the most reliable soldier on earth," Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.

(Right) Teresa Roane is admiring Art Helms' masterpiece.

TVCWRT Feature:

When Egnog Sparked a Riot at West Point

Think the office holiday party got a little out of control? That was nothing compared to the alcohol-fueled Christmas celebration at West Point 190 years ago that turned into a riot.

On the night before Christmas in 1826, Captain Ethan Allen Hitchcock turned in shortly before midnight. Visions of sugar plums may not have been dancing in the head of the U.S. Military Academy faculty member, but dreams of a silent night likely were. Although the academy's superintendent, Colonel Sylvanus Thayer, had warned Hitchcock that the cadets inside his dormitory might attempt to throw their traditional Christmas drinking party overnight, all was quiet in West Point, New York, as Thayer drifted asleep snug in his bed inside the North Barracks.

Unbeknownst to Hitchcock, however, a party had already started. Cadets had been secretly smuggling liquor into their barracks for days as Christmas approached, a risky venture that could have resulted in their expulsions because for an Army man, Thayer ran a tight ship. Since the colonel took charge of the academy in 1817, his strict discipline had transformed it from a school in disarray into an elite institution. A West Point graduate himself, Thayer prohibited everything from playing cards to tobacco to even novels. In a bit of leniency, "The Father of West Point" had allowed alcohol on the Fourth of July and Christmas. That changed, however, following a rowdy celebration on July 4, 1825, when cadets engaged in a "snake dance" and hoisted the school's commandant, William Worth, on their shoulders and carried him back to their barracks.

Thayer's outright ban on the possession of "any spirituous or intoxicating liquor" meant the biggest party of 1826—the celebration of the country's 50th birthday on the Fourth of July—remained dry at West Point. Some of the cadets vowed, however, that the superintendent's rigid alcohol policy would not prevent them from celebrating a Christmas tradition in which they imbibed the holiday spirit by adding some spirits to homemade eggnog. To prepare for their Yuletide drinking party, cadets snuck in gallons of whiskey, brandy, rum and wine they had procured from local grog shops. Three students even secreted across the Hudson River in a boat to buy whiskey from a tavern on



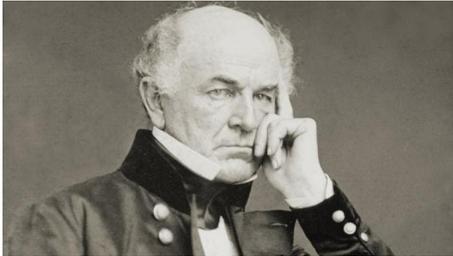
PORTRAIT OF SYLVANUS THAYER
Public Domain

the opposite bank.

Among the party animals was one teenage cadet, Jefferson Davis, who from the start of his tenure at West Point in 1824 had exhibited a fondness for booze and a rebellious streak that foreshadowed his later role as president of the Confederacy. During his first year at the Military Academy, Hitchcock had caught Davis at the notorious tavern run just off campus by Benny Havens, whom future cadet Edgar Allan Poe would call "the sole congenial soul in the entire God-forsaken place." A court-martial found Davis guilty, but his prior good conduct saved him from expulsion. In August 1826, Davis endured a lengthy hospitalization after falling down a 60-foot ravine while hurrying back to campus from Havens' tavern after hearing that a superior was enroute.

The future Confederate president was among the first participants in the party, which swelled in size as the night grew longer. At 4 A.M., the noise pouring through the floorboards was so loud that it stirred Hitchcock from his sleep. He left his room and wandered the halls “to ascertain if there was any disorder in the barrack” and found 13 partying cadets in room number five.

Exhibiting the poorest of timings, a drunken Davis burst through the doorway to warn his friends, “Put away the grog, Captain Hitchcock is coming!” The captain, of course, was already there. Hitchcock arrested Davis, ordered him to his room and then read the cadets the Riot Act, which declared any group of 12 or more to be unlawfully assembled.



General Ethan A. Hitchcock
Public Domain

The cadets, however, decided to wreak vengeance against the perceived party pooper. They threw sticks of wood against Hitchcock’s door and tossed rocks through his windows. Dozens of cadets ran through the halls with swords, muskets and bayonets. One fired a pistol as Hitchcock attempted to break down a door. Two superior officers were assaulted in the ensuing melee, which Davis missed because he was either passed out in his room or had

the good sense not to leave it. The riotous behavior did not abate until Worth arrived.

When the reveille sounded at 6:05 A.M. on Christmas morning, the sober cadets who had rested well inside the South Barracks arose with military discipline. The North Barracks, however, exhibited quite a hangover. The disheveled dormitory sported broken windows, smashed furniture, banisters ripped from stairways and shattered plates, dishes and cups. The cadets who participated in what became known as the “Eggnog Riot” didn’t look much better as dawn broke.

Nearly one-third of the academy’s 260 cadets were involved in the free-for-all. Since expelling all of them would have been a crippling blow to the academy, still in its relative infancy, 22 of the cadets most deeply involved in the Eggnog Riot, including Davis, were placed under house arrest on the day after Christmas.

Following weeks of investigation, court-martial proceedings began on January 26, 1827, against 19 cadets and one soldier. Davis was spared, possibly for his immediate compliance with Hitchcock’s orders, and eventually released from house arrest after six weeks’ confinement. For more than a month, a tribunal of professors and soldiers heard testimony from 167 witnesses, including from cadet Robert E. Lee, who didn’t partake in any of the mischief but spoke in defense of some of his classmates.

The courts-martial lasted until mid-March. All 19 defendants were found guilty and sentenced to be dismissed. Eight, however, were saved by a recommendation of clemency, and five ended up graduating from West Point. Fifty-three cadets received lesser punishments.

Christopher Klein; is the author of four books, including *When the Irish Invaded Canada: The Incredible True Story of the Civil War Veterans Who Fought for Ireland’s Freedom* and *Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan*. His work has appeared in numerous publications, including *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and *National Geographic Traveler*. Follow Chris at [@historyauthor](#).

Little Round Table

- **Next UP:** June 27, 2024, Chickamauga – Deep Dive I: Fred Forst.

LRT Programs for 2024: (Subject to change)

- July 25, 2024, Chickamauga – Deep Dive II: **T/B/D**.
- August 22, 2024, Chickamauga – Deep Dive III: John Scales.
- September 26, 2024, Chickamauga – Post-Tour Reactions-Photos, Open Discussion.
- October 24, 2024, John Breckenridge: Emil Posey.
- *November no scheduled meeting.*
- December 12, 2024, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, What It's like to be on an Invasion Route: Jeff Ewing.

Recommendations for topics to Jeffery Ewing Jr., fusionewing@gmail.com

Member Honor Roll

Life Members

Carol Codori
Ed Kennedy

Patron

Emil Posey
William Goss

Sustaining Member

Kent & Elizabeth Wright

Supporting Members

Daryl Carpenter
Terry Clevenger

Rick Dreisbach

Harry Gatzke

William Goss

Art & Robin Helms

Robert Hennessee

Rick Jaramillo

John & Cheryl McAuley

Larry & Connie Parke

Kevin & Judy Rodriguez

Alan & Diana Ruzicka

John Scales

The TVCWRT Management Team

OFFICERS (Elected)

- *William Goss, President*
- *Vice President (Vacant – No experience necessary!)*
- *Robert Hennessee, Secretary*
- *Sallyanne Cos, Treasurer*

BOARD MEMBERS (Appointed)

- *Michael Acosta, Technology Officer*
- *Art Helms, Programs Officer*
- *Preservation Officer, Alan Ruzicka*
- *Communications Officer, Robert Hennessee*
- *Arley McCormick, Newsletter Editor*
- *Kevin Rodriguez, Membership Officer*

COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Appointed)

- *Jeffry Ewing, Little Round Table Coordinator*
- *Harry Gatzke, Facebook Coordinator*
- *Marjorie Reeves, Reception Coordinator*
- *John Scales, Field Trip Coordinator(Former President)*
- *Emil Posey, Elks Liaison*

GRAY BEARDS

- *John A. Allen, Former President and Founder of the Little Round Table*
- *Mark Hubbs, Former Preservation Officer and Co-founder*
- *Kent Wright, Former Programs Officer*

STAGE CREW

- *Vacant, Master of the Sound System*