



THE LIGHT POST

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THE VALUE OF BYLAWS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE VALUE OF BYLAWS 1

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: ATTITUDE & THE SUSTAINABLE ROUND TABLE 2

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA – A REFLECTION 4

SURVEY SAYS! 5

THE IMPORTANT ROLE IN ADVANCING CIVIC 6

A YOUTHFUL ADDITION 7

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE YOUTH 8

SOUP'S ON! 9

CALVIN HAMILTON 10

By Carol VanOrnum

Minnesota is situated at the northern tip of Tornado Alley. Storms in the spring and summer and sub-zero temperatures in the winter dictate that homes are better built with basements. Having a basement foundation provides a stronger chance of survival if required to take refuge.

As a non-profit CWRT, it's essential that your organization be supported by a solid foundation of Bylaws. Bylaws provide the support to assure protection and guidance. They establish clear and consistent rules to manage your organization and protect it legally and internally. It's basically good governance.

The newly formed [Miami Valley CWRT](#) of Oakwood, Ohio, got a jump on their governance structure. They partnered with the Chaplain William Earnshaw Camp 89 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) which operates "by the book," according to MVCWRT President Allan Howey. "The SUVCW are regulation enthusiasts and strongly encouraged us to create Bylaws right away." They found a suitable format that fits their needs from Brunswick CWRT's example on the [CWRT Congress' resource page](#) and feel they are on their way to a solid foothold in the Civil War community.

And yet there are many CWRTs which operate without a solid structure underneath the day-to-day operations. Presidents preside for years, becoming exhausted, wishing to pass the baton, but no one's in line. Why should they? It's going well enough, right? It isn't until the threat of closing down the entire organization before someone steps up. We've seen it happen many times.

Before it's irrevocably damaged, though, there are some CWRTs that try to catch it and reverse course.

The [Cape Fear CWRT](#) of Wilmington, NC, was established in 1994 and developed a "tradition" of presidents serving for six consecutive years, according to past president Bill Jayne. There were no rules or Bylaws for the election of new officers. In 2017, Bill was recruited to serve as vice president. A year later, the president stepped down and Bill moved up to undertake the job. A steering committee was established in 2019 intending to create governing plans. However, little progress occurred until 2022 when the committee created a mission and purpose statement. The group was unable to agree on a Vision Statement.

In 2023, Bill formed a three-member nominating committee for new officers, but despite their efforts, no one stepped forward.

Frustrated, Bill declared he was stepping down as president in August. Not one to give up without a fight, Bill traveled to Gettysburg to attend the CWRT Congress' Sustainability Conference. It was there that he met and developed a friendship with Bob Pence and Steve Pettyjohn of the Cleveland CWRT. Cleveland had a highly developed set of Bylaws of their own, and the men held numerous discussions at the conference and beyond. Bill's group used the CWRT Congress's resources page to review other CWRT's Bylaws. Bill shared, "The resources on the Congress website were invaluable for the process of analyzing the problems of number and roles of officers, term limits, and methods of selection. I found that the Bylaws of Scottsdale's, Sacramento's, Harrisburg's, and Bull Run's Round Tables were quite helpful. I relied most heavily on Cleveland CWRT's."

(Continued on page 3)



The U.S. Capitol under construction, 1860 (National Archives Identifier 530494) www.loc.gov

ATTITUDE AND THE SUSTAINABLE ROUND TABLE

By Mike Movius, President

Sustainability means different things to different people. Some say it is the ability to find ways to continue doing what has been done in the past. Others say it is more like serving the needs of members including interesting programs, a great place for the community of enthusiasts to meet, and a sense of belonging. And still others talk about meeting current needs and the needs of future generations.

The CWRT Congress is surely interested in all those things, but with one important distinction. For a Civil War Round Table to be sustainable, we believe that it's all about the attitude of leaders. Dr. William James, the father of American psychology, once said, "Perhaps the greatest discovery of this century is that if you can change your attitude, you can change your life." That's not only true for individuals, but also for leaders seeking a sustainable organization.

Let's talk about attitudinal attributes. Having a vision is very important. If you don't know where you are going, you're probably already there. One of our board members, Dr. John Bamberl, took over the [Scottsdale CWRT](#) several years ago. Many of the members were deeply entrenched in stasis. John had a vision for a much more engaged and dynamic organization. He communicated his vision, and it wasn't long before he had a new, eager, and enthusiastic

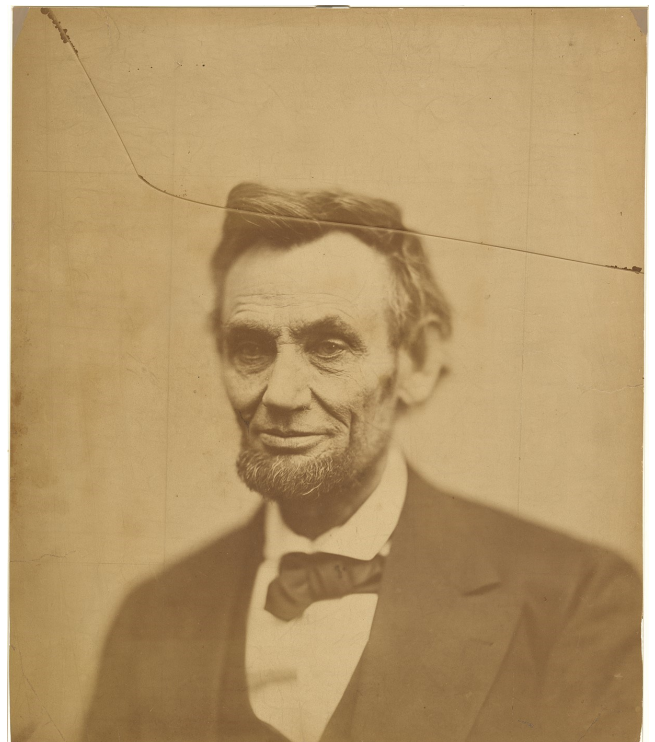
Board. They began to bring the best Civil War historians to their meetings. As their membership grew to over 400, they were able to donate thousands of dollars to battlefield preservation. None of that would have occurred without a dedicated leader with a vision.

Leaders who are curious about why and how certain things are done by successful organizations, who are brave enough to try them and who stand accountable for every decision will likely develop a sustainable organization. They will also understand the need to communicate with members and seek feedback about how the CWRT might be improved, about the appropriateness of out-of-meeting activities, about the meeting location, about program topics, about the storytelling skill of speakers, and a host of other issues.

Finally, leaders who are fearless believe that project failures are learning opportunities and that persistence will pay off in the long run are all part of the attitude that can translate to sustainability.

That's why we encourage Sister CWRTs, the Sustainability Challenge, and participation in transformative learning in a CWRTC conference, workshop, and/or a strategy development session. As Dr. James said, "The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives."

Abraham Lincoln
(1809–1865) / By
Alexander Gardner
(1821–1882) /
Albumen silver
print, 1865 / 17
11/16 x 15 3/16
in. (45 x 38.6
cm) / National
Portrait Gallery,
Smithsonian
Institution



IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

THE VALUE OF BYLAWS, CONTINUED

(Continued from Page 1)

There were several challenges that the Cape Fear CWRT faced in the implementation of Bylaws. Inertia was the first challenge. Some committee members were concerned whether becoming an official non-profit in the state would entail onerous record keeping and filing requirements. Others opposed direct elections by Round Table members, preferring election by Executive Committee members only. In addition, they had to identify what mattered most in creating their Bylaws. “By far the most important feature was a method of electing officers. It was also important to address governance between elections—in case someone moved, etc.—and also to address succession and duties of the officers and members of the Executive Committee. Term

limits were a very important topic as well. I was convinced that we needed to limit the terms of the president and vice president. Limiting the amount of time they could serve was intended to ensure that we would avoid stagnation by bringing in new ideas, new energy, and youth,” said Bill.

With a lot of hard work and discussion with open minds, the Cape Fear CWRT’s ad hoc “executive committee” met several times in 2023-24 to draft the Bylaws. Once the Bylaws were approved by the membership in May, an election was scheduled for August. Hurricane Florence delayed that election, so it became the first order of business in September and the officers and at-large executive

committee members were presented as a slate and approved by a unanimous vote.

Bill felt the relief was palpable. “The Bylaws have taken a great deal of uncertainty and concern off the table. We no longer have tiresome appeals for people to step forward and volunteer before “disaster” overtakes the Round Table. The new officers are bringing a great deal of energy and new ideas for fund raising, technical, and especially social activities.”

For the Cape Fear CWRT, their hard work to build a solid structure of Bylaws have saved the day and their storm has passed.

“The Bylaws have taken a great deal of uncertainty and concern off the table.”

**Bill Jayne
Cape Fear CWRT**

HARPERS FERRY (West Virginia) — Taken during the opening of the Harpers Ferry - Bolivar Olde Tyme Christmas Festival, A shot of St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church. This structure certainly stands out and is visible from most locations here. During the war, and as the town changed hands a number of times, the church's neutrality was emphasized with the flying of a British Union Jack flag.

Photo by Matthew Holzman, [Civil Warscapes](#) on Facebook



WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA—A REFLECTION

By Bill Miller

The initiative to honor the memory of our fallen warriors dates back to our founding as a nation. The sum of Civil War casualties far exceeds the combined totals of all other wars in America's history. The ladies of the Civil War era answered the call to pay tribute to the memory of their heroes, and their initiative led to the establishment of Memorial Day, a National Day of Remembrance, to honor the memory of all fallen warriors of all conflicts in our history.

A surplus of 5000 holiday wreaths in 1992 led to the formation of a new initiative to honor the fallen veterans. By 2007, the non-profit **Wreaths Across America** organization was established, and the placement of wreaths on the graves of fallen veterans this coming December will extend to over 4,600 locations in all 50 states. It is estimated that over two million volunteers will mobilize to place the wreaths at cemeteries throughout the land.

The photograph above announced the initiative to place wreaths at the Yorktown National Cemetery this past December. While most photographs of the wreath placement depict them leaning against crosses or marble plaques, the wreath placement at Yorktown is unique. The grave markers at this cemetery consist of engraved marble plaques embedded at ground level, with the wreaths laid flat at



each marker. The photograph of the wreaths presents a remarkable study of symmetry of the grave markers from the focal point of the camera.

In addition to the ground level markers, the location of the actual cemetery plot is unique. When the site was selected in 1866, it fell between the First and Second Revolutionary War Siege lines that had been established by the Continental Army in 1781. Although those 1781 trenches had been filled in after the surrender of the British forces, they were restored when the National Park Service established the Colonial Historic Park in the 20th century.

The Yorktown Cemetery served as a central location for the re-interment of Union casualties that had been initially buried within a fifty-mile radius. During

the time that the reburials were being made, First Lieutenant Bartholomew S. DeForest of the 81st New York Infantry Regiment recorded the following observation:

"I passed...the Union soldiers burial ground...laid out in avenues and enclosed by a Virginia rail fence; each grave having a headboard, neatly marked, telling the hero's name, his company and regiment...In this lonely resting place on the plains of Yorktown, sleeps many a noble boy, far from his home and kindred, with no kind friend to drop a tear, or sing a funeral requiem."

Lieutenant DeForest's iconic reflection serves as a reverent introduction to present day visitors as they enter the gate to the Yorktown National Cemetery.

Of the 2,183 Civil War soldiers resting "...in honored glory...", 1,436 are "...known but to God."

Today, with the newly established wreath placement initiated by **Wreaths Across America**, we are now blessed with the opportunity to place the flags on Memorial Day and to place the wreaths in December to honor the memory of those heroes who "...gave the last full measure of devotion."

Bill Miller
Williamsburg CWRT
CWRT Congress

SURVEY SAYS!

By Carol VanOrnum

The simple tool of polling your Round Table membership by utilizing surveys can produce a variety of benefits. From finding ways to grow your membership, to successful recruitment of your leadership team or volunteers, and to improving relationships between members and leaders, all are possible. You can also learn how satisfied your members are with respect to preferences in programs and activities.

Recently, the [Old Baldy CWRT](#) distributed a survey to its membership. Questions were focused upon members' interest in the OBCWRT's 2027 50th anniversary. How did they wish to celebrate? Suggestions included holding a luncheon or dinner, taking a bus tour, or enjoying a Civil War Picnic in the park. Members were also requested to indicate their degree of interest in volunteering for the event. And then there were a few additional questions regarding the length of their newsletter, an interest in establishing a book club, and about receiving other organizations' events, etc.

This survey sought to determine preferences as well as levels of interest and served as an "ask" to recruit volunteers for both planning and execution of the celebration. This request for feedback and input is an excellent way to express the leadership team's appreciation

of their members.

An effective survey must be well planned out. It must outline the purpose and intent of the inquiry. The questions should be clear and concise. And then prepare to follow through with the results.

One of Old Baldy's most successful surveys was conducted during the pandemic in the summer of 2020. At the conclusion of the isolation period, the Board requested members' views about how they were doing and their level of interest in returning to in-person meetings. The email survey was followed up with phone calls from Board members. Past President Dr. Rich Jankowski determined, "We had an 80% response rate. It also opened communications with the membership which continue today. It was from member feedback that we created our member roster. Based on other comments, we adjusted the newsletter, offered opportunities to serve, and established additional avenues to promote the Old Baldy Round Table."

Rich continued, "As a result of one suggestion, the membership team created a roster with each member's contact information. Program Director Dave Gilson created a spreadsheet with the contact information and added a column to display the tenure of each member. This helped with the establishment of membership pins and celebration of anniversary dates in an effort to

enhance member appreciation."

Several years ago, the [Twin Cities CWRT](#) of Minneapolis and St. Paul, which conducts a dinner/presentation meeting format, took a hard look at the rising menu prices of their event center's dining establishment. Could entrée portions be reduced and desserts eliminated? The TCCWRT conducted a survey with a short explanation of the choices, asking, "How would you feel if you were served a lunch size entrée portion rather than a dinner size?" Only one member balked at the reduction. Several members were dessert holdouts: the solution being an occasional dessert. All in all, the amiable members appreciated being asked and felt part of the decision-making process. The survey not only resolved the issue of meal cost escalation but also conveyed a sense of ownership to the members of the Round Table.

Members recognize the benefit of knowing that their leadership team has made member interests a priority.

CWRTs that survey their membership are in the minority. Those that do conduct surveys receive the benefit of knowing what's important to their members. In turn, members recognize the benefit of knowing that their leadership team has made member interests a priority.



Signal Point on Signal Mtn. was a CW signaling station.
Photo: NPS Chickamauga Chattanooga National Park

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF CWRTS IN ADVANCING CIVICS EDUCATION

By Andrew Mizsak

For many years, Civil War Round Tables have often been viewed as social organizations first, and then community-based organizations second. Civil War Round Tables, in many instances, have correctly focused upon their members by sharing knowledge in an insular manner instead of in an outward fashion with the community at large.

There is nothing wrong with focusing on our Round Tables as our priority. But there is also an opportunity to potentially grow our membership rolls, audiences, and footprint in our respective communities by considering a more inclusive shift in our outreach.

In 2024, the James A. Garfield CWRT received the Wallace L. Rueckel Innovation Award from the CWRT Congress for implementing the following priorities.

The Garfield leadership team increased the focus of public outreach and Civics Education. Whether participating in a public event or hosting the annual Garfield Symposium (2025 will be the 12th Annual), a concerted effort is being made to engage those with whom we interact with relevant and timely lessons in Civics Education.

Whether discussing the Elections of 1860 or 1864; the lead-up to the Civil War; the

Presidency; or other issues, we provide handouts, allocate time for Q&A, one-on-one discussions, and occasionally provide a book or pocket Constitution. Why? Because we know that an engaged citizenry will advance the mission of the Republic... and the issues related to outbreak of the Civil War is the perfect forum to discuss the topics related to American Government and History.

Take the namesake of my Round Table: James A. Garfield. If we were to focus upon Garfield during 1861, we could discuss his conversation with President-Elect Lincoln in February; his actions to support the war effort as a Member of the Ohio Senate; the spreading of the news of war breaking out; and the who, what, where, when, how, and why of all of it. In discussing all of this, an interested listener would learn about American Government, Ohio Government; and some great history lessons all in one.

Round Tables are in the catbird seat when it comes to providing lessons in Civics Education because they oftentimes include members with the academic or professional credentials to provide such lessons in a positive and effective manner, and because there are trusted voices with credible information within our ranks. Additionally, we oftentimes engage techniques to make these learning experiences enjoyable, entertaining, and memorable.

By expanding the outreach of our CWRT, and offering the high-quality education that we provide to our communities – especially students – we can solidify our roles as partners of the educational framework of our localities and as community anchors.

Andrew C.M. Mizsak serves on the Board of the CWRT Congress and is Vice Commander of the James A. Garfield CWRT.



Indianapolis Soldiers and Sailors Monument

A YOUTHFUL ADDITION AT THE CWRT OF WILMINGTON DELAWARE

By Carol VanOrnum with
Harrison Schneck

Like many Civil War history buffs, Harrison Schneck's fascination with American history began at a young age on the great battlefield of Gettysburg. So it was no surprise that he accepted the opportunity to attend, and eventually join the [CWRT of Wilmington](#), Delaware.

At age 14, Harrison is the youngest active member of the Wilmington Round Table. He's taken a special interest in military aviation, having visited the American Helicopter Museum in West Chester many times. But he also enjoys learning about battlefield tactics. "The tactics that military leaders used, whether it be a small skirmish or coordinating a large-scale operation, interests me very much," said Harrison. "In my view, the politics of the time and weaponry run second and third."

"If I could," Harrison continues, "I would like to have witnessed the battle at Hampton Roads, where the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia fought – the first battle of iron ships. My favorite story is about how the CSS Virginia was constructed. The USS Merrimack, one of the U.S Navy's best ships, was in the Norfolk Navy Yard when Virginia seceded. Confederates sunk tugboats in the channel, and the Merrimack could not sail out of the yard. The U.S. Navy burned the Merrimack

and sank it. Since they sunk it while it was burning, the hull of the ship was preserved. The Confederacy then utilized the salvaged hull to rebuild the Merrimack into the first steam-powered ironclad ship, the CSS Virginia.

Of the Civil War leaders that he's learned of, General Ulysses S. Grant leads the pack in Harrison's mind. "I would ask him about his life, the different tactics he used during the war, his experience in the war, and his time as President after the war."

Harrison feels strongly that there's not enough history being taught in schools, especially American history. "I have had

some great history teachers, and we should support all teachers in sharing their knowledge and love of the lessons of history."

He's excited to be a part of the CWRT of Wilmington. "I love being a member of the Civil War Round Table in Delaware. The Round Table has invited great lecturers for excellent presentations. I've learned a lot about the Civil War, and it's also a lot of fun. I encourage others to join us."

President Oremia Caimi shared, "We are so proud to have Harrison as a member of our Round Table. His enthusiasm for Civil War history is a pleasure to observe. I'd wager he could hold his own in a knowledge skirmish

against some of our group's more vintage members.

Huzzah, Harrison! Stay historic."



See Page 8 for

A Postscript to the Youthful Round Table Addition

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE YOUTHFUL ROUND TABLE ADDITION

By Bill Miller

This wonderful narrative about young Harrison triggered a memory from an earlier time. He is following in the footsteps of one of the pioneers in battlefield preservation as well as a storied career in the National Park Service.

Dennis Frye grew up in the shadows of Antietam Battlefield. As a six grader, he accompanied his father to a meeting of the [Hagerstown Civil War Round Table](#). His request to join the organization necessitated action by the Round Table Board to waive the minimum age requirement, and he became a member at the ripe young age of 12.

His early opportunity to gain exposure to Civil War history from his Round Table elders certainly served as a springboard to a lifelong career as a historian and esteemed member of the National Park Service. Dennis is one of the small group of historians and Park Service Rangers who formed the nascent organization that we now know as the American Battlefield Trust. Dennis is an author and excellent speaker. Although recently retired, he remains active with unique presentations to Civil War travelers near and far.



The success that Dennis Frye has realized as a result of his youthful beginnings in the studies of the Civil War serves as a guide and example for our current day Harrison to emulate.

Good luck young man!

Bill Miller
Williamsburg CWRT
CWRT Congress

His early opportunity... served as a springboard to a lifelong career as a historian and esteemed member of the National Park Service.



SOUP'S ON!

By Carol VanOrnum

Planning successful fundraising events can be challenging. It helps to offer a unique program to attract lucrative crowds. People tire of chicken dishes or sandwich buffets made from processed meats. Penny Gasbarre, Chair of the [Wayne County Civil War Round Table](#), decided that making homemade soups for their fundraiser would be unique and fun.

Walking into the Wayne County Historical Society Schoolhouse in Wooster, Ohio, on a cool October evening, members and guests were greeted with the pleasant aroma of at least seven different homemade soups, featuring such favorites as vegetable beef, ham and bean with cornbread, and homemade bread, all ready to warm the evening chill in the air for every attendee. The event, "A Soup and Salad Fundraiser," also offered items for a silent auction.

This was the second meal-based fundraiser that the Wayne County CWRT has hosted. Prior to Covid, Penny and husband Ed, served up a spaghetti dinner which sold out, in part due to presenters Jerry Payne portraying Lincoln and his wife, Marilyn as Mrs. Lincoln. In the past, the Wayne County CWRT has drawn large crowds due to the caliber of speakers. Since the October speaker was a local historian, Penny projected that the attendance would not be as large. Still for this event, they raised a very respectable \$650.

While the Wayne County CWRT doesn't schedule fundraising events every year, they learn from their efforts every time. Penny shared, "All in all, I think the attendees enjoyed the dinner and program. If I were to do this again, I would have it catered or even scheduled it at a restaurant. And the presenter would have to be of the caliber of a Lincoln or Grant. Also, my advice would be to engage more people to help. I need to learn to think smarter, not work harder."

"All in all, I think the attendees enjoyed the dinner and program."

**Penny Gasbarre
Chair of the
Wayne County
CWRT**



Local historian Van Young gave a presentation on Gettysburg—where to stay, eat, and what to see.

CALVIN HAMILTON: A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

By Jared Peatman, Ph.D.

Whenever I visit the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, I am always drawn to the gravesite of Calvin Hamilton. Hamilton is not one of the 3,512 Union soldiers who died in the battle, but rather one of the post-battle interments located just beyond those who were martyred in his hometown. Hamilton's biography weaves together threads from many different Gettysburg stories and offers a window into events before, during, and after the great battle.

Calvin was born on November 29, 1841, just outside of Gettysburg, one of eight children in a family that had roots in the area dating back to 1765. He attended Pennsylvania College (now Gettysburg College) before the Civil War. When the Civil War began, roughly 100 men from the area enlisted in Company K of the 1st Pennsylvania Reserves/30th Pennsylvania Infantry. Calvin joined the unit as a later recruit on September 4, 1862, giving up his college studies to do so.

Many Confederate soldiers had the experience of fighting in their hometowns during the four years of the war, but it was a rarity for Union soldiers. One of the few times it happened was on July 2, 1863, when Calvin Hamilton and the men of Company K found themselves posted on the north slope of Little Round Top. Late

in the day they were called into action to support the U.S. Regulars and advanced across Plum Run, over Houck's Ridge, and to the edge of the Wheatfield.

In this action one member of the unit – William McGrew – was mortally wounded, and another half-dozen suffered lesser wounds. Calvin Hamilton was among those hit by a Rebel bullet. A surgeon examining him in 1872 described the wound to his right leg: "The ball entered slightly above + 1 inch internal to spine of right Tibia, passed outwards + slightly downwards through the head of the bone, making its exit just in front of + slightly below the head of the Fibula."

Calvin recovered slowly from the wound, and was still in Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln delivered what we now call "The Gettysburg Address." Calvin was on crutches that day, and along with several other wounded soldiers was shepherded toward the stage. Surprisingly, Hamilton had already encountered Lincoln twice before – once at the Executive Mansion in 1861 and then during the President's review of the army after Antietam in 1862. In 1913 Hamilton said, "I was thrilled each time and at Gettysburg possibly more by his presence than by anything he said."

A week later Hamilton was taken

to a hospital in Baltimore to continue his rehabilitation, and then in early 1864 was transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps to finish out his term. His wound remained troublesome, with a doctor later noting his "inability to do much walking – the effort attended with pain about the knee joint."

Calvin returned to Pennsylvania after the war's conclusion and finished his education at the state normal school, then moved to Illinois where he taught school for roughly a decade. In 1876 he returned to Gettysburg, remaining there until his death in 1914. He was a renowned teacher and then principal. In 1883 he married Annie Hanaway of Baltimore, and six years later daughter Ruth was born.

In 1889 Hamilton became the assistant to the Superintendent of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, and two years later moved into the primary role, a position he held until his death 25 years later. One of his obituaries noted that "under his care the final resting place of the Nation's heroic dead has always been kept in the most immaculate condition."

With connections to pre-war Gettysburg, the battle, the Gettysburg Address, and the management of the park and Cemetery in the aftermath, Calvin Hamilton's story has it all. The next time you are at Gettysburg you can visit his gravesite, the



Calvin Hamilton

Company K monument on the town circle, or the 1st Reserves/30th Pennsylvania monument on the edge of the Wheatfield.

Jared Peatman, Ph.D., has recently completed a book on the 20th Maine that he began as a pre-teen. In his day job Jared is the founder of Four Score Consulting, a small company that provides history-themed leadership development events. He is a Board Director of the CWRT Congress.

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Photo: National Park Service

Cypress Swamp on the Natchez Trace Parkway, near the Battle of Tupelo