

# Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association  
2015 – Edition 4 – March

## Upcoming Events

More information will be added later.

### WVRA Sponsored Events

**Rich Mountain** – July 10-12

*On line registration coming*

**Droop Mountain** – October 9-11

**Droop Clean-up** – August 8

### Events Recommended by WVRA members

**Bentonville**, March 20-22

**Appomattox** – April 10-12

<http://www.appomattoxhistoricalsociety.org/150th.htm>

**Grand Review** – May 17<sup>th</sup>

<http://grandreviewparade.org>

**Hurricane Bridge/Scary Creek**

March 26-29

<http://www.putnamcountyparks.net/special-events.html>

**Beverly** – March 21

Winter Raids Symposium

**Lantern Tour** – May 22, 8:30 pm, Grafton

National Cemetery, see Mark Tennant

**Philippi** – May 29-31 304-457-4265

**Old Bedford Village** – June 12-14 (USV

supported

event <http://www.oldbedfordvillage.com/events.php>

**McConnellsville, Ohio** – July 10-12 (Contact

Ralph McCready for more information)

**Bulltown Heritage Days** – July 26. (Contact

Sam Krafft for more information)

**Fort Mulligan Day** – August 15, Petersburg,

WV

**Dry Creek** – August 14-16, White Sulphur

Springs

**Carnifex Ferry** – Sept. 11-13 (FULL

IMMERSION EVENT)

**Zoar** – Sept. 19-20

**Locust Grove** – October 23-25, Walkersville,

Va. (ANV max effort event)

<http://www.oldbedfordvillage.com/events.php>

**Guyandotte** – Oct. 30-Nov. 1

### Other events

**Gilbert, W. Va.** – April 24-26

**Barboursville, W. Va.** – May 1-3

**Matewan, W. Va.** – June 19-21

**St. Marys, W. Va.** – Sept. 4-6

**Logan State Park** – Sept. 25-27

## Next Meeting

March 21<sup>st</sup> at the Beverly (W. Va.) Heritage Center following the Winter Raid Symposium. Approximate time 4 pm. The February 21 meeting was canceled because of the weather.

## Rich Mountain

The WVRA and the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation will team up to host the Rich Mountain reenactment the weekend after Independence Day weekend, July 10-12. Discussions about this year's event are underway. Spread the word. See the at WVRA.org

## Droop Mountain

Droop will be held at it's normal weekend October 9th through the 11<sup>th</sup>, while the leaves are in their full glory in the Greenbriar Valley. The WVRA voted overwhelmingly to hold the event, so please overwhelmingly support and volunteer to help the event.

## Winter Raids Symposium

Our Friends at the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation will sponsor a symposium on the various raids through West Virginia on March 21, at the Beverly Heritage Center.

*The scheduled speakers are:*

- 12-12:30 pm – Registration
- 12:30 – 1:15 – “The Great Cavalry Feat of the War, The Salem Raid” presented by Beth White
- 1:15 – 2 pm - “The October 1864 Raid” presented by Richard Armstrong
- 2-2:15 – Break
- 2:15 – 3 pm – “Rosser’s Raid on Beverly: One Last Frolic for the Confederacy – Hunter Lesser
- 3 – 3:45 – “one of the most thrilling incidents of the entire war” The Capture of Generals Crook and Kelly – Richard Wolfe

Contact Beverly Heritage Center at either 304-637-7424 or [info@beverlyheritagecenter.org](mailto:info@beverlyheritagecenter.org) or Rick Wolfe at 304-592-5851 or [ra-wolfe@msn.com](mailto:ra-wolfe@msn.com) to register or more information.

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## Grand Review

All parade participants will meet at 7:00 am on Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at RFK Stadium, just outside of Washington. Registration and all inspections will take place there. Participants will be given IDs and all weapons and horses will be inspected. Due to the security concerns and prohibitions against moving in the city with such weapons, troops will form and be loaded into shuttle busses, by unit, for transport to the parade start. It is the same approach used for all inaugural parades. Cav and artillery horses will be inspected at RFK as will invited artillery guns. Once inspected, horse and gun trailers will proceed as directed into DC to unload and – having unloaded – move to the pick-up points. **NO AMMUNITION/LOADS, MUZZLE LOADING WAPONS, NO PISTOLS**  
Overall, this is a parade of 10 city blocks down Pennsylvania Ave- about 1 mile.  
Registration email address in the Upcoming Events on page 1. Presently I have verbals from about 10 WVRA members stating an interest.

## They Said It

Memorable lines from some of my recent readings.

*“The almost wilderness character of the intervening country...the weary miles of steep mountain-roads becoming impassable in rainy weather, and the total absence of forage for animals...all ignored or greatly underestimated. It was easy, sitting at one’s office table, to sweep the hand over a few inches of chart showing next to nothing of the topography, and to say, ‘We will march from here to here’; but...one general after another had to find apologies for failing to accomplish what ought never have been undertaken.”* From Jacob Dolson Cox’s “Military Reminiscences” in describing his early commands in then Western Virginia and now the state of West Virginia.

When Abraham Lincoln asked his Attorney General if the bill before the Senate to create the state of West Virginia was constitutional Bates replied that the “*bill in question is*

*unconstitutional; and also by its own demerits, highly inexpedient.”*

He added

*“...no reflecting man will seriously affirm the ‘legislature of Virginia’ which, at Wheeling, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 1862, gave its consent (not the consent of Virginia) to the dismemberment of the Old Commonwealth, was, in truth and honesty, such legislature of Virginia as the Constitution speaks of...”* Attorney General Edward Bates

Lincoln’s later famous lines:

*“It is said that the admission of West Virginia, is secession, and tolerated only because it is our secession...Well, if we call it by that name, there is still the difference enough between secession against the constitution, and secession in favor of the constitution.”*

One of my favorite authors, Rice C. Bull of Company D, 123<sup>rd</sup> New York – “*After the night was gone, our Brigade Bugler would sound the Reveille, followed by our Regimental drum corps beating morning call. Immediately the Army awoke, men stiff from yesterday’s march. Without waiting for roll call (we did not have it on the march) the men crowded around the fire for warmth before they began the work of preparing the morning meal and packing up....Each group of men who had formed a mess began their labors; one took the canteens and went for water, another acted as cook and prepared breakfast, the remaining man pulled own the tent and packed up. As our tents only held three, that number was the limit of the mess, that was equipped with a hatchet, frying pan and coffee pot; so each carried an extra article in addition to their plate, knife, and fork and spoon. Our table furnishings were not extensive but were all we could carry and they answered our needs.”* – From *Soldiering* – The Civil War Diary of Rice C. Bull.

## Book Review

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## Jeff Shaara Goes West

In the past few months I have read Jeff Shaara's most recent Civil War novels, both set in the Western theatre of operations and the second and third in a series of four novels about the Civil War on the other side of the Appalachians. *A Chain of Thunder – A Novel of the Siege of Vicksburg* and *The Smoke at Dawn – A Novel of the Civil War* continued the Western series that started with *A Blaze of Glory*.

"*Blaze*" started the story at Shiloh and used the same style that Shaara has made so popular, writing from the minds of the participants in the war. Not only do the most famous speak through Shaara, but he includes enlisted men and company level officers. In "*Thunder*" he starts with a young lady, living in Vicksburg and weaves her story and suffering into the military story. He continues the saga of Private Fritz "Dutchie" Bauer, a young man from Milwaukee, serving in a Wisconsin regiment throughout the campaign that climaxes in the miserable, hot trenches at the Siege of Vicksburg. At the leadership level, he writes through Grant, Sherman and the tragic John Pemberton on the Confederate side. We also get a brief appearance from Joe Johnston, and with him, his side of the story. Shaara tries to explain through Pemberton's own thoughts, how he became trapped in Vicksburg rather than abandon the inevitable siege to fight again another day. Sherman and Grant come across as two officers with a single-minded focus to defeat the enemy. Grant's decision to abandon his supply line, the Mississippi River, and march on Jackson and then Vicksburg is explored, again through the thoughts and voices of Grant and Sherman as Shaara interprets those thoughts. It's evident that there is little heroism in any of the story. Just Shaara's vision of the reality of the story.

In "*Thunder*" the most powerful part of the story is life in the trenches and life in the hillside shelters filled with Vicksburg residents. Those events are explored through both principal characters, Private Bauer and civilian Lucy Spence as the Federal army starves the defenders and residents of Vicksburg.

His latest book, *The Smoke at Dawn*, explores the events after Chickamauga leading up to battles around Chattanooga in late fall of 1863. In this book, he tells the story through Grant, Sherman and Bauer again on the Federal side and Patrick Cleburne and Braxton Bragg on the Confederate side. Add to that list, chapters dedicated to George Thomas and Nathan Bedford Forrest, with short appearances from President, Jefferson Davis, William Hardee, William Starke Rosecrans and Pete Longstreet.

On the Confederate side, this book dwells a lot on Braxton Bragg and his constant obsession with subordinate officers who he feels are out to have him replaced. Shaara paints a picture of a general whose judgment is heavily influenced by his fear of being undermined by his subordinates. It begins the night after Chickamauga with Nathan Bedford Forrest and culminates at Missionary Ridge. The chapters on Patrick Cleburne show a competent commander trying to survive amidst the constant conflict amongst the Confederate Command structure.

Fritz Bauer's story continues in "*Smoke*," but he is not the central character in this book, as he was in the preceding book. Bauer has managed a transfer into the US Regular Infantry and he is part of the charge to the foot of Missionary Ridge and then up the Ridge. The combat sequences are interesting as always in Shaara's books. The rest of the

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Federal story covers a lot of territory, including: Grant's assumption of command, Sherman's journey to Chattanooga, Rosecrans' unraveling, supply issues, impatience from Washington, etc. or the whole Federal side of the story at Chattanooga from September through November of 1863.

I was looking forward to "Smoke" for a number of reasons, one large one being, his treatment of George H. Thomas - the Rock of Chickamauga. I have two direct relatives that fought in the Army of the Cumberland and many cousins who fought and died fighting under Thomas. Heck, my 3-great-grandfather, Captain Charles H. Coe was serving in Thomas' headquarters guard at Chattanooga. But beyond the personal connection, Thomas is a somewhat unknown character in this war. Described by some as an inflexible old warrior, whose armies won battles in spite of his leadership. And by some as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important general in the Federal effort behind Sherman and Grant and ahead of others like Sheridan. But Shaara sheds little light into Thomas' character. I should not be surprised. After all, there is not much surviving of his papers, etc. and historians have had a hard time getting a read on the man.

I would recommend both books, especially to those fans of Shaara's series of Civil War novels. The Western books don't seem to develop the characters quite as much as the first three from Michael and Jeff Shaara did in the Eastern trilogy. At times I think he is heavily influenced by his 20<sup>th</sup> century novels. All that said, I still enjoyed the books a lot and recommend them.

-- Chuck Critchfield

## WVRA Officers 2015

President - Mark Tennant  
Vice President - Bill Brisendine  
Treasurer - Tim Glaser  
Secretary - Jack Rush  
Newsletter editor - Chuck Critchfield\*  
Website - Peter Baxter\*  
1<sup>st</sup> W. Va. Rep - Chuck Critchfield  
25<sup>th</sup> Va. Rep - Chris Johnson  
1<sup>st</sup> Va. Cavalry - John Brasuk  
Artillery - Sam and Connie Krafft  
TASAS - TBD

\* Non-voting member of executive board

## Registration Fees - WVRA Events

By vote of the membership, the WVRA will pay for any member, who registers for a WVRA sponsored event. The WVRA will reimburse at the EARLY registration rate. Members will be responsible for any amount over and above the EARLY registration rate. Members must register to be eligible.

## Editor's Corner

Thanks to Chris Johnson for the list of events in West Virginia. It continues to boggle my mind at the number of events in West Virginia. The 25<sup>th</sup> Virginia is now officially part of the Army of Northern Virginia. Mark Tennant tells me the Lantern Tour is scheduled this year at the National Cemetery, May 22.

As always, if anyone has anything for the Dispatch, send it along.

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The views expressed here are not necessarily the  
views of the WVRA

WVRA website - [wvra.org](http://wvra.org)

*Facebook - WVRA-TransAllegheny Soldiers  
Aid Society*

Chuck Critchfield - editor

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# Winter Raids SYMPOSIUM

sponsored by  
Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation

**MARCH 21, 2015**  
**BEVERLY HERITAGE CENTER**



- 12:00-12:30** Registration
- 12:30-1:15** "'The Great Cavalry Feat of the War:'  
The Salem Raid"- **Beth White**
- 1:15-2:00** The October 1864 Raid -  
**Richard Armstrong**
- 2:00-2:15** Break
- 2:15-3:00** Rosser's Raid on Beverly: One Last Frolic for the  
Confederacy—**Hunter Lesser**
- 3:00-3:45** "one of the most thrilling incidents of the entire  
war:" The Capture of Generals Crook and Kelley -  
**Richard A. Wolfe**

*Civil War Exhibits will be available for participants.  
Light refreshments will be provided.*



Cost is \$25.00

Advanced payment is not  
required but a call or email to  
reserve your place is requested  
to assist our planning.

For information contact Beverly Heritage Center at  
**304 637-7424** ( [info@beverlyheritagecenter.org](mailto:info@beverlyheritagecenter.org) ) or  
Richard Wolfe at **304 592-5851** ( [ra\\_wolfe@msn.com](mailto:ra_wolfe@msn.com) )