

THE FLAGBEARER

Greater New Bedford Ma Civil War Round Table

Tuesday March 26, 2019 7:00 pm

at the Fort Taber~Fort Rodman Military Museum

1000c Rodney French Blvd. New Bedford

Open to the public , no fees

....News from the New Bedford Civil War Round Table

For this issue of the Flagbearer, member Peter Rioux has researched and written an excellent essay on Col. Robert Gould Shaw. Space constraint does not allow for a complete A to Z story of Col. Shaw, but please take the time to reacquaint yourself with this historical biography.

...A hat's off to Professor Tom Nester of Bridgewater State University for an excellent presentation at our last meeting. It is a tribute to our region's contribution to the study of the American Civil War which allows us to draw on a deep reserve of individuals to appear before our Round Table. We have seen this before. When it comes to the study of New Bedford history, World War 1 history and World War 2 history, there are many excellent New England speakers willing to address groups like ours. However, we are always looking for additional speakers. Know someone? Call me.....Bob Lytle

Meet our March 26 speaker

Mar 26, 2019

Mark Mello , Park Ranger/Park Historian

Mark's presentation

"James Henry Gooding:

The 54th's Unsung Hero "



Mark Mello is the Park Ranger/Park Historian for the newly created position at the Blackstone Valley National Historical Park. Mark also is a New Bedford Civil War Round Table member and is on our Executive Board. He has been a speaker at our Round Table many times, and always impresses us with his knowledge, enthusiasm, and presentation skills. As you can see from the photos, he is a American Civil War Living Historian. We are fortunate to have Mark's time and knowledge as a speaker for our March 26th meeting.

SAVE THE DATE !!!!

Annual Memorial Day Service at Rural Cemetery, New Bedford

Saturday May 25th at 9:00 a.m.

Rural Cemetery

Civil War section



New Bedford Civil War Round Table Annual Book award for area high school students

Book Award applications for 2019 have been sent to eligible schools which include New Bedford High, Dartmouth High, Fairhaven High, Old Colony Regional Vocational, Apponequet Regional, Old Rochester Regional, New Bedford Vocational, and Bishop Stang High School. Applications must be received by Friday, March 29. The applications packets previously sent to the high schools include the address where the completed application must be sent. If you know of any graduating seniors from these schools, please encourage their interest in this Book Award opportunity.

2018-2019 Executive Board

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 - Martin Flinn—Treasurer
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 - Larry Roy—Board of Directors
 - Bob Lytle—Flagbearer
- Cell # 508-542-7630
bobbylee76@comcast.net

Going to Gettysburg soon? Here are some events and dates of upcoming programs.

...Beginning in April, the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center will offer extended hours and unique programming on the third Thursday of the month through October.

...Saturday November 23rd is Remembrance Illumination Day. This is a date change.

...June 29... "Great Conversations at Gettysburg". Free and open to the public. All events will take place at the Rupp House History Center on Baltimore Street.

...April 12,13,and 14, 2019 Spring Muster at Gettysburg. The Saturday night banquet will feature historian Craig L. Symonds as the keynote speaker.

To register for the weekend event call 717-339-2148

...The Spangler Farm Civil War Field Hospital opens for the 2019 season on June 7. The site is open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 10:00 to 3:00. Shuttles will be available from the Visitors Center.

Announcement for the 2019 Civil War Institute Summer Conference

The dates are June 14-19, 2019 . Highlights include:

- Gettysburg: A Staff Ride
- Stonewall Jackson at Fredericksburg
- Mosby's Confederacy: Part 11
- Treasures of the National Civil War Museum
- Voices at Antietam

Featured speakers are Gary Gallagher, Ed Ayers, Peter Carmichael, Earl Hess, Amy Murrell Taylor, and Patrick Breen

Register at www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference

June 29-30 Pennsylvania Civil War Show—300 tables of artifacts

Eisenhower Hotel and Conference Center. The Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association Artifacts and Collectors Show.

For more info , call 717-334-2350 or email info@gbpa.org

Spring 2019 Speaker Lineup

April 23, 2019

Chuck Veit returns

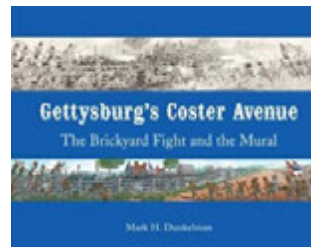
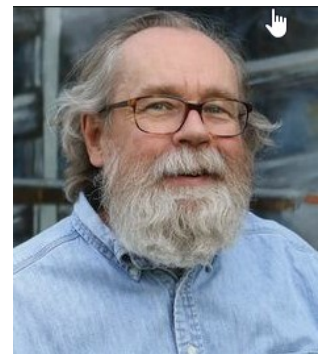


This time Chuck will cover how the Union Navy prevented World War 1. What's that you say? The Union Navy's successful blockade of the Southern States and rapid build up of war ships gave pause to the Colonial powers of Europe in their contemplation of recognizing the South as a country.

May 28, 2019

Mark H. Dunkelman

Mark's latest book on the fighting that took place near the end of the first day, July 1 , on Coster Avenue.



June 25, 2019

Annual Civil War Round Table Picnic. All are welcome, including family and guests.

6:00 p.m. At the Low Tide Yacht Club location next door to the Fort Taber~Fort Rodman Military Museum, This the same location as last year . We ask for a donation toward the catering expense, and we ask that you bring a dessert.



SPECIAL SPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENT

Craig L. Symonds will be coming to New Bedford this fall for a speaking engagement at the New Bedford Civil War Round Table.

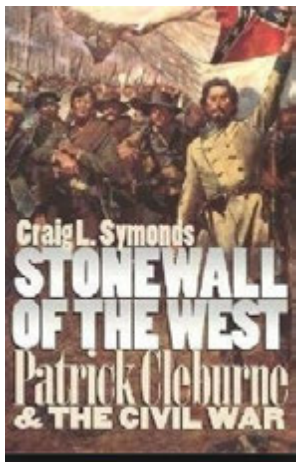
We are pleased to make the following announcement. Noted historian, author, Professor of History Emeritus at the U. S. Naval Academy, and until recently, Chief Historian of the U.S. Monitor Center at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia, will speak at the New Bedford Civil War Round Table.

He is the author of Lincoln and His Admirals, which won the 2009 Lincoln Prize, the culmination of three decades of study of the Civil War navies and the Union's admiral-in-chief.

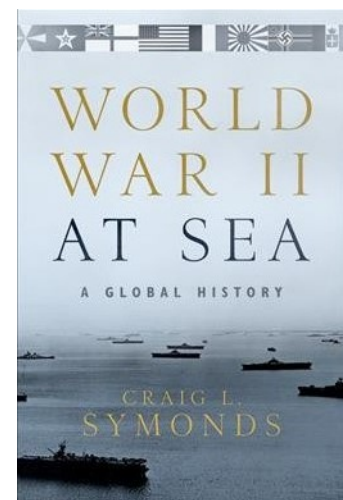
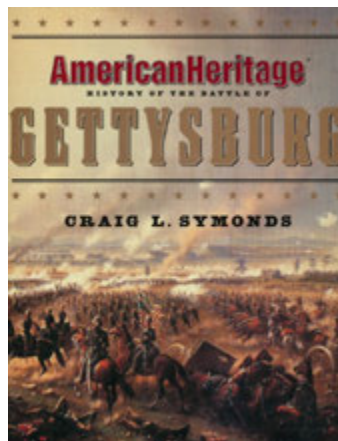
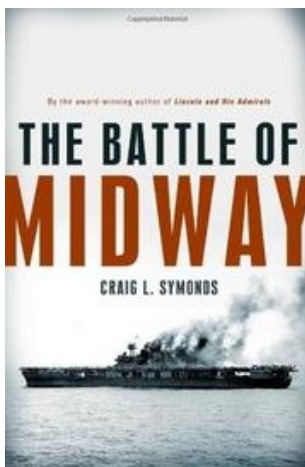
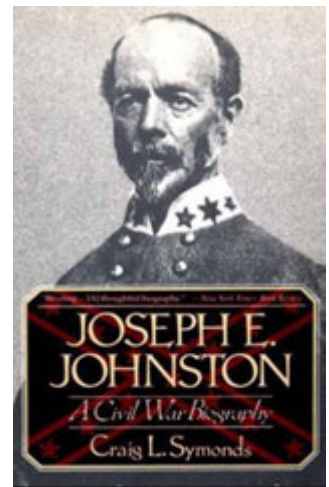
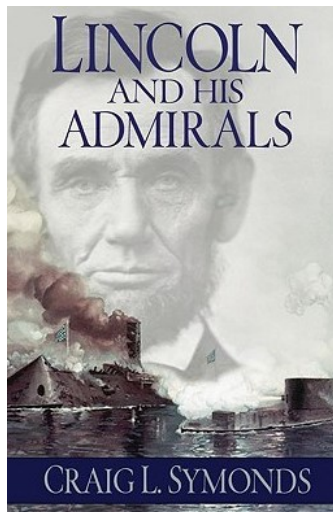
He is also the recipient of the Samuel Eliot Morrison Award for Naval Literature.



Craig L. Symonds.



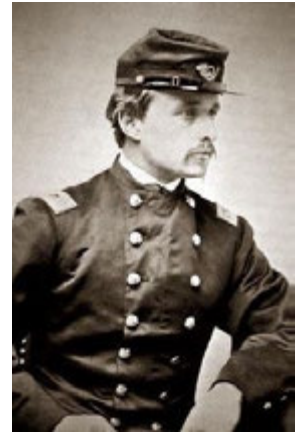
I have included some of his other books here for your informational background. We will add to his credentials as the year moves forward, but for now I simply wanted to share this great news with you. Bob Lytle



Colonel Robert Gould Shaw-
The Blue Eyed Son of Fortune, by Peter Rioux

He was not inspired by a strong abolitionist view, yet the courage of his command of the nation's first all-black regiment inspiring their own commitment and resolve to achieve their freedom and dignity has become one of the most honorably patriotic expressions in American history.

Robert Gould Shaw was born in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, in October 1837, the son of prominently philanthropic and ardently abolitionist parents. Their circle of friends included Emerson, Hawthorne, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. As a youth, his parents moved to Staten Island, where he attended St. John's School. He then furthered his studies in Switzerland and Germany. He attended Harvard College for two years. After ranking in the lower third of his class, he left to work at his uncle's mercantile company. However, this did not appeal to him, and not wanting to pursue another occupation, he chose to join the exclusive New York Seventh Regiment in April 1861, shortly after Fort Sumter. His purpose was to help restore national unity, not necessarily to achieve slave emancipation. When this regiment was dissolved, after performing guard patrol in Washington, D. C., he then joined the Second Massachusetts Regiment in May 1861, being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant.



While attached to this regiment, he fought at the Battles of Winchester, Cedar Mountain, and in September 1862, Antietam, where he was wounded in the neck from a shot having passed through another soldier. He vividly described his Antietam experience in a letter to his parents writing, "The crickets chirped, and the frogs croaked, just as if nothing unusual had happened all day long, and presently the stars as they came out brightly, and we lay down among the dead, and slept soundly until daylight. There were twenty dead bodies within a rod of me. Every battle makes me wish more and more that this war was over. It seems almost as if nothing could justify a battle like that of the seventeenth (September), and the horrors inseparable from it."

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 allowed Secretary of War Stanton, needing enhanced Union manpower, to issue his authorization on January 26, 1863, allowing blacks to enlist in the Union military, but not serve in any commanding position. Massachusetts Governor John Andrew, a strong abolitionist, wanted to establish an all-black regiment, and Shaw's father suggested that the Governor appoint his son to command this unit. Based upon Shaw's prior military experience and the abolitionist views of his family, the Governor advanced this offer on January 30 to Shaw in a letter delivered to him through his father. At first, Shaw refused the offer to the great disappointment of his parents. However, within two days, after consulting with friends, his wife, and his consideration of his lost comrades, he reconsidered and accepted the command responsibility.

Once Shaw accepted, he became fully committed to the creation of the Fifty-fourth Regiment despite the opposition that was strongly expressed from some quarters in the North regarding the ability and courage that such a regiment would lack. He wrote to his parents, "We have decided to go into training camp at Readville; as we think it best to plunge in without regard to outsiders. The result is sure to be good when a man takes a firm stand for what he thinks is right."

As the regiment recruitment advanced, primarily consisting of black freedmen, with the active participation and support of Frederick Douglass among others, training Camp Meigs was established. Among the early recruits were Douglass' sons, Lewis and Charles, and forty-six volunteers enrolled from New Bedford. The New Bedford recruiter stated to the enrollees, "They say you have not the courage to fight, that you are not manly enough. They lie, and you will prove it to them." Despite some ridicule, through Shaw's application of rigorous training, physical conditioning and discipline, the Fifty-fourth achieved full strength and strongly took shape in May 1863 earning Shaw's increasing respect. As Shaw expressed to his mother, "There is not the least doubt that we shall leave the State with as good a regiment as any that has marched." Shaw's pride in the recruits further grew, especially in the face of Jefferson Davis' edict that captured black soldiers would be enslaved and white officers executed.

In April, Shaw, at the age of twenty-five, was promoted to Colonel. Shaw, in turn, earned the respect of the men of the Fifty-fourth by strongly supporting and joining their protest and refusal to accept lesser monthly compensation than white troops.

On May 28, 1863, the deployment parade for the Fifty-fourth Regiment was held. One thousand men, with Shaw on horseback by their side, marched along Beacon Street in Boston. Douglass, abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and his parents cheered them on. The poet John Greenleaf Whittier, upon seeing Shaw march with his regiment, wrote, "The very flower of grace and chivalry. He seemed to me beautiful and awful, as an angel of God come down to lead the host of freedom to victory." They marched to Battery Wharf where they embarked on the ship "DeMolay" to be transported to Hilton, South Carolina.

The Fifty-fourth participated in the engagement in Darien, Georgia, being ordered to extensively burn town property. Shaw had vigorously protested this order for fear of harming women and children, and subsequently conveyed his objection in numerous letters to Union officials, and in a letter to his wife stating, "When it comes to being made the instrument of God's vengeance, I myself don't like it. It is revolting to wreck our vengeance upon the innocent and defenseless."

The Fifty-fourth was then transported to James Island to initiate the effort, along with white Union regiments, to capture the forts (such as Sumter) protecting Charleston Harbor and the city itself. After a battle with Confederate troops on James Island on July 16, 1863, the Fifty-fourth was transported to Cole's Island and then to Folly Island to begin their initial assault on Morris Island.

Their ultimate target, Fort Wagner, a large earthwork battery, was located at the northern end of this island's peninsula. While being transported to Folly Island, Shaw said to a friend, "I don't believe I will live through the next fight."

On July 18, after a day of Union cannon bombardment, the Fifty-fourth, at Shaw's request, led the twelve-hundred-yard assault on Fort Wagner with thirteen other Union regiments. They advanced with Vincent Creek to their west (left) and the Atlantic Ocean to their east (right). As the assault was about to commence, Shaw said to his troops, "I want you to prove yourself. The eyes of the world will be upon you tonight."

As Peter Burchard describes in his book One Gallant Rush, "Now the gunners appeared on the crest, firing their pieces down the angle of earth,

straight into the faces of the advancing men. Shaw, wet to the waist, scrambled up the rampart, his voice ringing in a moment of silence, his bright sword pointing toward the stars. His men saw him etched against the deep night sky, then caught in a flash of cannon fire. All at once he crumpled forward and pitched headlong into the fort." Shaw had been mortally felled by multiple shots to his chest.



The Union assault was successfully repulsed by the Confederate defenders of the fort with the attacking Union forces suffering enormous casualties (Union 1,515 out of 6,000 attacking troops compared to Confederate 181 out of 1,700 defenders). The Fifty-fourth suffered 272 casualties out of their 600-assault force. Confederate General Hayward ordered Shaw to be buried in a mass grave along with approximately 25 of his troops. Later, the Union disinterred Shaw and his men and reburied them together in Beaufort, South Carolina, at the National Cemetery. After asking his father if the family had wanted their son to be transported to Boston for burial, he said, "His remains are not to be disturbed. They buried him with his brave, devoted following who fell dead over him and around him. We can imagine no holier place than that which he is, none with him better company. What a bodyguard he has." Confederate officer Iredall Jones later wrote, "The Negroes fought gallantly and were headed by as brave a Colonel as ever lived." Among the forty poems eulogizing Colonel Shaw's passing, Emerson wrote, "So high as grandeur to our dust. So near to God is when duty whispers low - thou must. The youth replies, I can."



Seven weeks later, after heavy Union bombardment, the Confederacy abandoned Morris Island and Fort Wagner. Charleston was evacuated nineteen months later. At that time, remaining members of the Fifty-fourth Regiment victoriously marched through the city.

In the aftermath of his death, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw received numerous tributes. The GAR Post 146 in New Bedford was established in 1871 and named after him. He is listed on Harvard's Tablet of Honor, along with two cemetery memorials, and the naming of a junior high school in Washington, D.C.



The most significant and moving honor is the world renowned "Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty Fourth Regiment" completed by sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Fourteen years in the creation, this bronze relief monument to Shaw and his men, using photos of Shaw and live models for regiment soldiers, shown marching from Boston thirty-four years earlier, was dedicated on May 31, 1897. The English translation of the Memorial's Latin inscription reads, "He gave up everything to serve the Republic." The monument later received the grand prize at the Paris Exposition of 1900. Sixty-five living members of the Fifty-fourth Regiment marched past the memorial laying a large wreath in tribute to their fallen leader and comrades.

At this dedication, philosopher William James offered this tribute, "There they march, warm blooded champions of a better day for men. There on horseback among them in his very habit as he lived, sits the blue-eyed child of fortune, upon whose happy youth every divinity had smiled."

SOURCES:

- [One Gallant Rush](#), Peter Burchard.
- [Blue Eyed Child of Fortune](#), Compiled letters of Robert Gould Shaw
- [Where Death and Glory Meet](#), Russell Duncan
- [Civil War, A Narrative](#), Shelby Foote
- [Battle Cry of Freedom](#), James McPherson
- [History](#), "Assault on Battery Wagner Military.com
- "The Fifty-fourth Regiment," Civil War DVD
- Various You Tube documentaries

