

The Knapsack

Raleigh Civil War Round Table

The same rain falls on both friend and foe.

November 9, 2020
Our 237th Issue



Volume 20
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<http://www.raleighcwrt.org>

Nov. 9, 2020 Event Features Michael P. Rucker Speaking on The Meanest and "Damnest" Job: Being the Civil War Exploits and Civilian Accomplishments of Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker During and After the War

Our upcoming meeting will be on Monday, November 9, 2020. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, we will **NOT** be meeting at the NC Museum of History in Raleigh. **Instead, we will meet remotely via an online web session using the application Zoom.**

November's meeting will feature a presentation by Michael P. Rucker. His presentation will be on his book ***The Meanest and "Damnest" Job: Being the Civil War Exploits and Civilian Accomplishments of Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker During and After the War.***

As has been part of the new normal for the past several months, our new Raleigh CWRT President, Josie Walker, will email an invitation to you for the Zoom event along with instructions and a link for joining the online meeting. **Please contact Josie at RaleighCWRT@Yahoo.com if you do not receive this invitation by November 2nd.**

Michael Rucker's interest in the Civil War began during his high school days in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He and his brother Henry formed a tour guide service to take visitors to the many Civil War sites in that area. Mike began to study Edmund Winchester Rucker—a distant relative—at this time and became fascinated with his history. It required fifteen years of research to accumulate all the necessary information about this fascinating personality as portrayed in ***The Meanest and 'Damnest' Job.***



Mike has published one previous book on Civil War history: ***Bridge Burner: The Full and Factual Story of Dr. William Parks Rucker, Slave-Owning Union Partisan.***

As we will see, Mike is a lecturer on the War Between the States. He is also the author of 20 children's books.

Mike calls Virginia his home despite residing in Peoria, Illinois, for much of his adult life. He was married to a Rucker family fourth cousin, Harriet, who passed away November 2016 after 42 years of beautiful marriage. His son Derek and his daughter-in-law Diane live with their three daughters—Brianna, Fiona, and Sabrina—in Apple Valley, Minnesota.

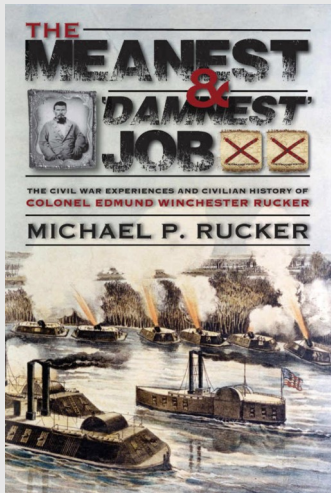


The image above shows Mike at Columbus/Belmont State Park, Kentucky, where his ancestor, Edmund Rucker, installed and commanded large guns.

The Meanest and 'Damnest' Job (NewSouth Books; August 15, 2019; ISBN-10: 1588383822; ISBN-13: 978-1588383822). This book is available in hardcover at Quail Ridge Books in Raleigh, NC, as well as at other bookstores. It is available in hardcover, paperback, and Kindle ebook format at Amazon.com. It is also available through his publisher, <http://www.newsouthbooks.com>. Finally, Mike's entire line of books is available on his own website, <https://www.mikeruckerbooks.com/>.

The Meanest and "Damnest" Job: Being the Civil War Exploits and Civilian Accomplishments of Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker During and After the War

Michael P. Rucker is the author of the book *The Meanest and "Damnest" Job: Being the Civil War Exploits and Civilian Accomplishments of Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker During and After the War*. In it, the first



in-depth biography on the life of Edmund Rucker, his descendant Michael Rucker examines, at a fast-moving pace, the military and business accomplishments of this outstanding Confederate leader who left his mark on both the Civil War and Southern industry of the time.

Editorial Reviews

*"The Civil War community has long needed a book on Edmund Winchester Rucker, and at last, it has one. Aside from some very brief biographies, little has been written about this outstanding Confederate officer, excepting his dashing charges at Brice's Crossroads. **The Meanest and 'Damnest' Job** covers the man's life extensively, and in a most readable style, while discussing the events that influenced Edmund Rucker's calls to duty. Any Civil War enthusiast will enjoy this work. Any Civil War library will be improved by its addition."*

— Brig. Gen. Parker Hills, Ret.



Edmund Winchester Rucker

***The Meanest and 'Damnest' Job** brings to life Edmund Winchester Rucker's participation in the Civil War and his involvement in post-war Alabama railroad construction and Birmingham industry, where he played a significant role in transforming the Sloss Furnace Company into the newly formed chartered Sloss Iron and Steel Company. The book is a lively account, painstakingly researched, that recovers for a new generation of readers the fascinating story of Rucker's life. It serves as an interesting character study, but also usefully fills in the blanks of our understanding about an important but lesser-known Civil War leader.*

— Karen R. Utz, curator and historian, Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark

An extraordinary and detailed seminal biography that is an unreservedly recommended addition to the growing library of Civil War histories and biographies.

— Midwest Book Review

Current Status of the Coronavirus Pandemic

As of a month ago, 10-01-2020, there were 7,233,042 reported cases and 206,832 reported deaths in the U.S. caused by the novel coronavirus. Those figures, as of 11-01-2020, have increased to 9,130,482 reported cases (+26.0%) and 230,586 reported deaths (+11.5%), respectively.

Compared to the current world-wide reported totals of 46,196,087 cases and 1,197,194 deaths, the U.S. has 19.8% of all reported cases compared to 21% a month ago and 19.3% of all reported deaths compared to 20% a month ago.

As we head into Fall 2020, with people spending more time indoors, the predicted second wave of coronavirus infections has begun to surge. The U.S., on Friday, October 30th, posted a record number of cases for a single day, 99,321, and a record 551,167 cases for a week.

In Europe, many countries are back to square one, having had to reinstitute lockdowns in the face of the resurgent virus.

Please continue to follow medical and governmental guidelines of social distancing, washing hands frequently, and wearing a mask.

How Thanksgiving Became an Annual National Holiday

On October 3, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln announced that the nation would celebrate a day of thanksgiving on November 26, 1863 to express gratitude for the crucial Union victory at Gettysburg the previous July. Furthermore, his proclamation stated that henceforth, this Thanksgiving Day would be celebrated annually on the fourth Thursday of each November.

Although Secretary of State William Seward drafted the proclamation and Lincoln issued it, much of the credit for making Thanksgiving an annual national holiday goes to Sarah Josepha Hale. A prominent writer and editor, Hale is mainly noted today for having authored the children's poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Lincoln had first called for a day of thanksgiving shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg. This was to be a one-off. On September 28, 1863, Hale wrote to both Lincoln and Seward, urging them to declare this day of national thanksgiving to be "permanent, an American custom and institution." A week later, Lincoln issued his Thanksgiving Day proclamation as, indeed, being annual and permanent.

The facing page shows Harper Weekly's etching by famed cartoonist Thomas Nash honoring the November 26, 1863 Thanksgiving Day.



THANKSGIVING-DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1863.

American Civil War Corps Badges

By Bob Graesser, Editor

The idea of corps badges is said to have originated with U.S. Maj. Gen. Philip Kearny, who ordered the men in his division to sew a two-inch square of red cloth on their hats to avoid confusion on the battlefield. This idea was adopted by Maj. Gen. "Fighting Joe" Hooker after he assumed command of the Army of the Potomac on January 26, 1863. Hooker gave his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Daniel Butterfield, the assignment of designing distinctive shapes for corps badges so any soldier could be identified at a distance. These badges, depending on the unit, were sewn on the top of a soldier's kepi, i.e., forage cap, on the left side of their hat, or over the left breast of their uniform.

Butterfield had a talent for creativity for he is also credited with writing the bugle-call for burials, "Taps". In other Butterfield trivia, he was awarded the Medal of Honor and his father was a co-founder of the American Express Company. Finally, as chief of staff, his lax enforcement of rules against "camp followers" was indirectly responsible for their acquisition of the sobriquet "Hooker's".

Not only did Butterfield come up with the distinctive shapes to differentiate the various corps but he also had the brilliant idea to provide these shapes with distinctive colors to identify their division within a corps. The first three division badges were colored as follows:

- Red** — first division of corps
- White** — second division of corps
- Blue** — third division of corps.

Although not stated in the literature on this subject, it appears that Butterfield may have used a mnemonic in choosing the order of the colors based on the order of the colors used in describing "Old Glory".





Butterfield's identification system, although originally designed for the Army of the Potomac, spread to other Union armies, although not universally. Furthermore, the color designations were only standardized for the first three divisions within a corps. The system broke down for divisions beyond three within a given corps. Nonetheless, the corps/division "shorthand" system was a brilliant solution both in and out of battle.

It might be thought that in the chaos and fog-of-war of battle, the shape of a soldier's badge would only be identifiable at a relatively close range. For this reason, each corps and division also used the same shape/color system for their unit's flag.

Badge/flag corps shapes ranged from I Corps to XXV Corps, although each army had only a subset of these numbered corps. There was one missing exception: for some unknown reason, perhaps superstition, the XIII Corps, which participated in the Western Theater, had no corps badge.

The following is a list of all Union Army corps badges:

Each column: image, corps #, Army, date adopted.

			
1 st Potomac 03-21-1863	2 nd Potomac 03-21-1863	3 rd Potomac 03-21-1863	4 th Cumberland 04-26-1864
			
5 th Potomac 03-21-1863	6 th Potomac 03-21-1863	7 th Dept. of AR 06-01-1865	8 th Middle Dept. 1864
			
9 th Dept. of OH 04-10-1864	10 th Dept. of South 07-26-1864	11 th Potomac 03-21-1863	12 th Potomac 03-21-1863
			
14 th Cumberland 04-26-1864	15 th Tennessee 02-14-1865	16 th Military Div. of West MS 1865	17 th Dept. of the TN 03-25-1865
			
18 th James 06-07-1864	19 th Middle Mil. Div. 11-17-1864	20 th Cumberland 04-26-1864	21 st Cumberland 01-09-1863
			
22 nd Dept. of WA <i>circa</i> 1864	23 rd Dept. of OH / Dept. of NC 09-25-1864	24 th Dept. of VA 03-18-1865	25 th James / Dept. of TX 02-20-1865

News of the RCWRT



Upcoming 2020-21 RCWRT Meetings

Note: until further notice, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, RCWRT meetings will be held remotely via use of Zoom software.

Date	Speaker	Topic
Nov. 9, 2020	Mike Rucker	Confederate Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker
Dec. 14, 2020	Michael Brantley	Galvanized - The Odyssey of a Reluctant Carolina Confederate
Jan. 11, 2021	Leonard Fullenkamp	Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in the Western Theater
Feb. 8, 2021	Curt Fields	Gen. Ulysses S. Grant - role playing/reenactment

Did You Know?

- One of every 65 Federals and 1 of every 45 Confederates was killed in action during the Civil War.
- A Civil War soldier had about a 3-in-4 chance of surviving the war.
- Per the Emancipation Proclamation, since Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri hadn't rebelled against the Union, they were allowed to keep their slaves (until passage of the 13th Amendment).
- Civil War soldiers had an unwritten code of honor not to shoot anyone caught in the act of defecating.
- More Civil War soldiers died from diarrhea than were killed in battle.
- There are more black men in prison today than there were black male slaves in 1850.
- The last Civil War battle, Palmito Ranch in TX, was a Rebel victory.



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ***

The American Battlefield Trust doesn't just acquire historic land. It also seeks to restore these battlefields to their wartime condition. Civil War battlefields at two TN locations are in need of your support toward restoration. The goal is to raise \$75,000. A \$53-to-\$1 donation match is being offered. The battlefields include 301 acres at the "Battle Above the Clouds" at Lookout Mountain and 2 acres at the Franklin Battlefield. For more information, go to <https://www.battlefields.org/give/save-battlefields/save-303-critical-acres-tennessee?>

The Raleigh Civil War Round Table was formed on March 12, 2001 and is a 501(c)(3) "tax exempt organization."

We meet on the second Monday of most months at 6:30 pm, at the N.C. Museum of History (located at 5 Edenton Street, across from the State Capitol). The programs begin at 7:00 p.m. Check the RCWRT website (<http://www.raleighcwr.org>) for program dates and timing.

Annual membership dues are \$30 (individual and family) and \$10 for teachers. Student membership is free. Half-year memberships are available March through May for \$20. Dues should be submitted to Griff Bartlett, Treasurer, 908 Kinsdale Drive, Raleigh, NC 27615-1117 by **September 15** each year.



The Knapsack

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Staff

Bob Graesser, Editor

Contributors

Griff Bartlett, Josie Walker

Readers are encouraged to submit photos, events, & articles for publication to Bob Graesser, Editor (RaleighCWR@Yahoo.com; 919-244-9041)

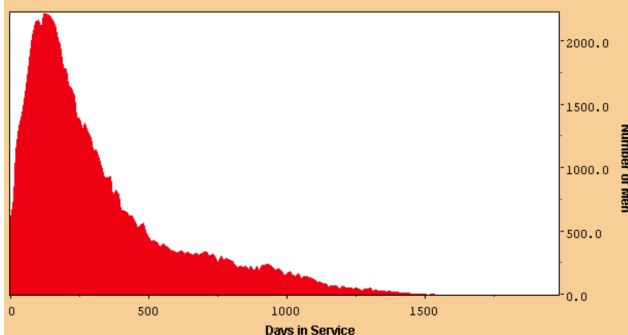
RCWRT Board of Directors (2020-22)

Name	Position
Josie Walker	President / Program Committee
Ted Kunstling	Past President
John Wood	Vice President / Program Committee
Griff Bartlett	Secretary / Treasurer
Pattie Smith	Program Committee
Bob Graesser	Knapsack Editor / Webmaster
Wayne Shore	Member
Lloyd Townsend	Member

Paying Memberships / Total Members: 73 / 89

New members during October 2020: None.

Death by Disease Analysis



This chart analyzes Union soldier death by disease, plotting days in service on the X axis and number of deaths on the Y axis. It shows that during a soldier's first 5 or 6 months of Civil War service he was especially vulnerable to dying by disease. Why was this?

The most likely reason is that the armies were comprised largely of Caucasian males who grew up in relative isolation on farms. Not having experienced the common dis-eases of childhood, the new soldiers fell prey to them as adults, an age where the disease effects were severe and increased the susceptibility to other diseases as well.

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