

The Knapsack

Raleigh Civil War Round Table

The same rain falls on both friend and foe.

May 8th, 2023
Our 267th Issue



Volume 23
Number 5

<http://www.raleighcwrt.org>

May 8th, 2023, Meeting Features Tonia J. Smith Speaking on the Topic *Orton Williams*



Tonia J. Smith

The Raleigh Civil War Round Table's May 8th, 2023, in person/simultaneous Zoom meeting will feature Tonia J. Smith speaking on the topic *Orton Williams*.

The meeting will be held at the NC Museum of History's Daniels Auditorium. Entrance is available from Edenton St., across from the State Capitol building. The wearing of a mask is optional.

Please join us at 6:30 p.m. EDT for refreshments. The program starts at 7:00 p.m. This event will also be live-streamed on Zoom for those unable to attend in person. A video recording will be made available on <http://www.raleighcwrt.org>, our Raleigh Civil War Round Table website, following the event.

You should have already received an emailed invitation, including instructions and a link for joining online if you are unable to attend in person. Please send an email request to RaleighCWRT@Yahoo.com if you have not yet received an invitation.

Tonia J. Smith is a researcher of Civil War history for other authors as well as an author in her own right, having written many articles and given numerous presentations on a diverse range of Civil War topics.

She is a native Tar Heel, born in Oxford, NC, but, her dad being a career soldier, she was an army brat for the first thirteen years of her life. Her family did a couple of tours in Germany and was stationed stateside in a number of posts such as Fort Riley, KS, Fort Carson, CO, and her personal favorite, Fort Knox, KY.

She came back to North Carolina when she was in the 8th grade and, except for a two-year stay in Fredericksburg, VA, has been here ever since. She now resides in the golf capitol of North Carolina, Pinehurst, but has no interest in the sport.

In 2001, with the urging and support of some close friends, she founded the Rufus Barringer Civil War Round Table in Pinehurst. It began with fourteen members meeting in her sunroom and now has over eighty paid members, having used a number of meeting places.

Tonia still serves on the board of the RBCWRT and is its program director. Over the years she began doing research for various Civil War authors and eventually began writing articles herself. She also got involved in presenting Civil War programs at local schools and doing round table programs based on the articles she's written.

As related by Tonia in March 2010 to interviewer Harry Smeltzer in *Bull Runnings: A Journal of the Digitization of a Civil War Battle*, her father, a history buff himself, got her interested in the Civil War era as a child when he took her to visit the Stones River Battlefield, outside Murfreesboro, TN. He lifted her up so that she could touch a minie ball embedded in the trunk of a witness tree. What she remembered most was the cold, the mist, and the intense silence across the field. The weather that day was very apropos in that they visited the site in January and the battle, itself, was fought Dec. 31st, 1862 to Jan. 2nd, 1863.

Tonia then took about a thirty-five year hiatus from studying the war when she got involved in school, marriage and raising a family. In the mid-90s, she happened to see Ted Turner's movie *Gettysburg*. Intrigued, she bought and read the book upon which the movie was based, *The Killer Angels: A Novel of the Civil War*, by Michael Shaara. Completely hooked, she joined an online discussion group that was and still is dedicated to the study of the Gettysburg campaign. Her interest in the Civil War grew from there, with a focus on all things cavalry-related, but especially J.E.B. Stuart initially.

From there, Tonia realized that what attracted her most to the Civil War period was not the great leaders but the stories of everyday people caught up in the conflict. This included people such as Confederate nurse Abby House, or



Confederate Cousins Col. Orton Williams (l.) and Lt. Walter Peter

the Cape Fear Minutemen, or Confederates Col. Orton Williams and Lt. Walter G. Peter, both cousins of Mrs. Robert E. Lee. They were executed on June 9th, 1863, for spying at Franklin, Tennessee. In fact, it is the story of Orton Williams which is the topic of Tonia's presentation to the Raleigh CWRT on May 8th.

Tonia became a history researcher after a writer friend asked if she would mind checking out several history collections at the University of NC and Duke University since Tonia lived only an hour's drive away.

She immediately fell in love with "the hunt," but also found out that she had a knack for digging out the arcane tidbit. In addition, she found she was good at deciphering the flowery penmanship prevalent in Civil War era letters, diaries and journals.

Authors for which Tonia's provided research include:

- Eric J. Wittenberg, whom she's worked with the most - [*Glory Enough For All: Sheridan's Second Raid and The Battle of Trevilian Station*](#) (2001) and [*The Battle of Monroe's Crossroads: The Civil War's Last Campaign*](#) (2001).
- Dave Powell - [*Decisions at Chickamauga: The Twenty-Four Critical Decisions That Defined the Battle \(Command Decisions in America's Civil War\)*](#) (2018)
- Sheridan Barringer - [*Fighting for General Lee: Confederate General Rufus Barringer and the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade*](#) (2016)
- Stevan F. Meserve (editor) [*In The Shadow of the Enemy: The Civil War Journal of Ida Powell Dulany*](#) (2009).
- James. A. Morgan III, a favorite project - [*A Little Short of Boats: The Fights at Ball's Bluff and Edwards Ferry, October 21-22, 1861*](#) (2011).

As to published articles, Tonia's first one was titled [*Gentlemen, You Have Played This D___D Well*](#), published in the Sept. 2005 issue of [*North and South Magazine*](#). It chronicled the story of cousins Col. Orton Williams and Lt. Walter Peter, as mentioned above.

Since then she's had a number of articles published in [*America's Civil War*](#) magazine, her first three being:

- [*Eyewitness to War*](#) Dept., about a letter from J.E.B. Stuart to Custis Lee, seeking promotion (May 2007)
- [*Avenging Angel*](#), about Confederate nurse Abby House (Jan. 2008)

- [*In Defense of Jeb*](#), about Flora Cooke Stuart, widow of J.E.B. Stuart, who, following his death at Yellow Tavern in 1964, made it her life's mission to defend her husband's actions in the Gettysburg Campaign, and wore black mourning clothes for 59 years (Nov. 2011).

Tonia has also given a number of presentations based on the aforementioned articles:

- **Flora Stuart:** for the Loudoun County CWRT in Leesburg, VA; for the Eastern Loudoun County CWRT in Sterling, VA; for the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society in Richmond, VA; for the Tennessee Valley CWRT in Huntsville, AL; and, for various CWRTs in NC.
- **Aunt Abby House:** Confederate nurse.
- **Brig. Gen. Rufus Barringer:** captured and imprisoned, the only Confederate general in uniform that Abraham Lincoln ever met.
- **Col. Orton Williams and Lt. Walter G. Peter:** for a number of NC CWRTs, and, perhaps most prominently, at the 2009 Longwood University Civil War Seminar in Farmville, VA.

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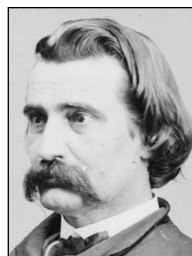
The History of Memorial Day

An abundance of rain has fallen across the NC Triangle during the past few weeks. This brings to mind the old adage "April showers bring May flowers." And that reminds us that the end of May has been observed for going on 155 years as a day to honor all those who gave their lives in the armed service of their country.

How do we honor these dead? Why, with parades and orations and gravestones decorated with flags, with wreaths, and, yes, with spring flowers. This being the month of May, this issue of *The Knapsack* is devoted to the history behind this annual nationwide event, which traces back to the end of the Civil War.

The Beginning

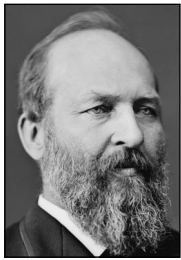
On May 5th, 1868, former Maj. Gen. John A. Logan, U.S. Senator from Illinois and 3rd Commander-in-Chief of an organization for Northern Civil War veterans, the Grand Army of the Republic, issued General Order No. 11, calling for a nationwide day of remembrance later that month. *"The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land,"* he proclaimed. It is believed that Logan selected this date for two reasons: first, it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle, and, second, it was the time of year when flowers would be in bloom all across the U.S.



John A. Logan

So it was that, as a war-ravaged United States faced the task of burying and honoring 600,000 to 800,000 Union

and Confederate soldiers who had died in the single most bloody military conflict in American history, the first national commemoration of Memorial Day was held in Arlington National Cemetery on May 30th, 1868, where both Union and Confederate soldiers are buried. *[Ed.: you, like I, may have been unaware that Confederate soldiers are also buried there.]*



*U.S. Rep.
James Garfield*

James Garfield, future U.S. President, who had attained the Union rank of Maj. Gen., resigned his commission at the end of 1863, becoming a House Representative from Ohio. He was given the honor of making a speech at this initial 1868 Decoration Day event at Arlington National Cemetery, with 5,000 participants decorating the graves of the 20,000 Civil War soldiers buried there.

Thus, Logan is regarded as the most important figure in the movement to recognize Memorial Day as an official federal holiday. Originally known as Decoration Day per his proclamation, it was celebrated from 1868 to 1970 each May 30th. By an act of Congress, it has been observed on the last Monday in May starting in 1971 and honors all Americans who died in American wars.

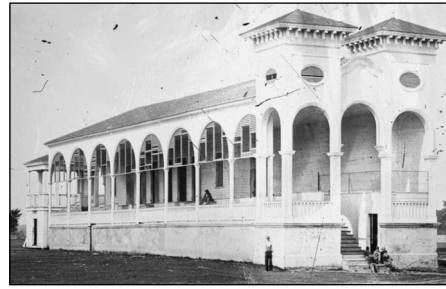
Many Northern states held similar commemorative events and reprised the tradition in subsequent years; by 1890 each Northern state had made Decoration Day an official state holiday.

Southern states, on the other hand, continued to honor their dead on separate days until after World War I. Since then, in addition to observing the federal Memorial Day, many Southern states also have their own days for honoring the Confederate dead. Mississippi celebrates Confederate Memorial Day on the last Monday of April, Alabama on the fourth Monday of April, and Georgia on April 26th. North and South Carolina observe it on May 10th, Louisiana on June 3rd and Tennessee calls that date Confederate Decoration Day. Texas celebrates Confederate Heroes Day January 19th and Virginia calls the last Monday in May Confederate Memorial Day.

Other Contenders

In addition to Logan, there are a number of other contenders for the crown of being first to honor their dead in this manner.

- **1864, Boalsburg, PA.** This village, in 1866, claimed Decoration Day had first been observed there two years earlier.
- **May 1st, 1865, Charleston, SC.** Toward the end of the Civil War, the Confederate army transformed the formerly posh Washington Race Course and Jockey Club into a makeshift prison for Union captives. More than 260 Union soldiers died from disease and exposure while being held in the race track's open-air infield. Their bodies were hastily buried in a mass grave behind the grandstands.



Charleston Racetrack Clubhouse

to give the fallen Union prisoners a proper burial. They exhumed the mass grave and reinterred the bodies in a new cemetery.

Then on May 1st, 1865, a crowd of 10,000 people, mostly freed slaves with some white missionaries, staged a parade around the race track. Three thousand Black schoolchildren carried bouquets of flowers and sang *John Brown's Body*. Members of the famed 54th Massachusetts and other Black Union regiments were in attendance and performed double-time marches. Black ministers recited verses from the Bible.

This event was reported in both *The New York Tribune* and *The Charleston Courier*, making it the earliest Memorial Day commemoration on record, occurring at least a year before other U.S. cities and three years before the first national observance.

It's the fact that this occurred in Charleston at a cemetery site for the Union dead in a city where the Civil war had begun, and that it was organized and done by African American former slaves is what gives it such poignancy wrote David Blight, a professor of American History at Yale University, in his book about the Civil War which he titled *Race and Reunion* (2001).

- **April 25th, 1866, Columbus, MS.** Southern women decorated the graves of soldiers even before the end of the Civil War. After the war, a women's memorial association in Columbus, Mississippi, put flowers on the graves of both Confederate and Union soldiers who had fallen in battle at Shiloh in 1862. They also sent notes of condolence to the northern soldiers' families. These acts of generosity inspired the poet Francis Miles Finch to write *The Blue and the Grey*, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* [see sidebar on p. 4].
- **April 29th, 1866, Carbondale, IL.** A stone in its cemetery carries the statement that the first Decoration Day ceremony took place there on that date. Interestingly, Carbondale was the wartime home of Maj. Gen. Logan.
- Also claiming the 1866 crown are **Macon, GA, Columbus, GA, and Richmond, VA.**

All told, some 25 places have been named in connection with the origin of Memorial Day, many of them in the South where most of the war dead were buried.

- **May 5th, 1866, Waterloo, NY.** In 1966, prior to knowledge of the existence of the Charleston, SC claim, Congress and President Lyndon Johnson de-

clared Waterloo, New York, as the official birthplace of Memorial Day. It was chosen because on that day businesses closed, residents flew flags at half-staff, and the graves of soldiers were decorated with flowers and flags. In addition, earlier observances in other places were said to be either informal, not community-wide, or were one-off events, whereas the event in Waterloo was formal, community-wide, and observed annually since then.

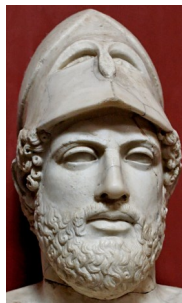
In 1873, New York became the first state to designate Memorial Day as a legal holiday.

After WW I, Memorial Day became an occasion for honoring those who died in all of America's wars and was then more widely established as a national holiday throughout the U.S.

These days, Memorial Day is commemorated at Arlington National Cemetery each year with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave. Traditionally, the President or Vice President lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. About 5,000 people attend the ceremony annually.

Honoring One's War Dead in Antiquity

The origins of special services to honor those who die in war extends back to antiquity. The Athenian leader Pericles offered a tribute to the fallen heroes of the Peloponnesian War over 24 centuries ago that could be applied today to the 1.1 million Americans who have died in the nation's wars: *Not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions, but there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men.*



Pericles

The Blue and The Gray



Francis Finch

Francis Miles Finch (June 9th, 1827 – July 31st, 1907) was an American judge, poet, and academic associated with the early years of Cornell University. One of his poems, *The Blue and the Gray*, is frequently reprinted to this day.

Hailed as a national classic from the moment of its publication in 1867, this poem is perhaps the most touching and expressive of all the "reconciliation poems" written after the War's end. It was inspired by the following brief news item, which appeared in the *New York Tribune*: "The women of Columbus, Mississippi, animated by nobler sentiments than many of their sisters, have shown themselves impartial in their offerings made to the memory of the dead. They strewed flowers alike on the graves of the Confederate and of the National soldiers."

The motto of the *Raleigh Civil War Round Table* is *The same rain falls on both friend and foe*. This sentiment is echoed in both a verse and a refrain of the poem, as highlighted in red:

The Blue And The Gray

*By the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead:*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the one, the Blue,
Under the other, the Gray.*

*These in the robings of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat,
All with the battle-blood gory,
In the dusk of eternity meet:*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day,
Under the laurel, the Blue,
Under the willow, the Gray.*

*From the silence of sorrowful hours
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers
Alike for the friend and the foe:*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day,
Under the roses, the Blue,
Under the lilies, the Gray.*

*So, with an equal splendor,
The morning sun-rays fall,
With a touch impartially tender,
On the blossoms blooming for all:*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day,
Brodered with gold, the Blue,
Mellowed with gold, the Gray.*

*So, when the summer calleth,
On forest and field of grain,
With an equal murmur falleth
The cooling drip of the rain:*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day,
Wet with the rain, the Blue,
Wet with the rain, the Gray.*

*Sadly, but not with upbraiding,
The generous deed was done,
In the storm of the years that are fading
No braver battle was won:*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day,
Under the blossoms, the Blue,
Under the garlands, the Gray.*

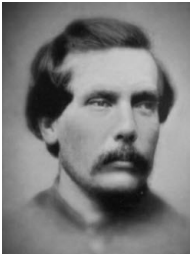
*No more shall the war cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red;
They banish our anger forever
When they laurel the graves of our dead!*

*Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day,
Love and tears for the Blue,
Tears and love for the Gray.*

Civil War Veteran Recently Buried at Arlington National Cemetery

The following story, which I came across at the end of April, prompted my research into the origins of Memorial Day as presented in this issue's preceding pages since Arlington National Cemetery is integral to both this story and to Memorial Day.

Arlington National Cemetery conducted a rare funeral service for a Civil War Union soldier last week, April 27th, 2023, providing full military funeral honors with funeral escort for Army Maj. Isaac Hart, 110 years after he passed away.



Maj. Isaac Hart

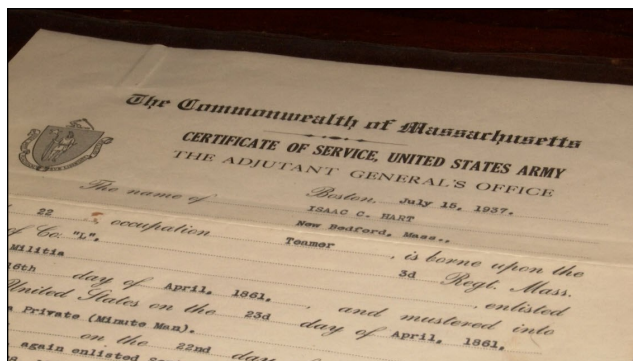
Hart, from New Bedford, MA, joined the U.S. Army on April 16th, 1861, eleven days after Confederates fired on Fort Sumter. He served in two different Massachusetts regiments, the 3rd and 23rd, before joining the U.S. Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.) 2nd Cavalry Regiment for the war's last year and a half. With that regiment, he helped to capture Bermuda Hundred (a strategic location) in Virginia and laid siege to Petersburg and Richmond. Leading a Black unit in the war took courage. The Confederate Congress had threatened to severely punish officers captured while leading Black troops.

After the war, Hart remained in the Army for more than a year and rose to the rank of brevet major. Meanwhile, he was a husband and a father of two. After Hart's first wife, Clementine, passed away, he married his second wife, Hanna. They later moved to Cincinnati, OH, where their marriage lasted until his own death in July 1913.

Yet Hart was never buried. His remains were placed in an urn on a shelf of unclaimed remains at a Cincinnati, Ohio, cemetery. They were recently discovered there by a man preparing to bury a family member. He researched Maj. Hart and found one of Hart's decedents living in Albion, IN. This was Hart's great-great niece Rachel Bender, who traveled with her husband to the Cincinnati cemetery to claim her ancestor's remains.



Urn containing Hart's remains



Maj. Hart's Certificate of Service

Mrs. Bender also acquired letters that mention President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and detail Hart's service. That includes a letter calling him *one of the first men from Massachusetts who in April, 1861, responded to the first call of the President for troops to defend the Capital City and the public property of the United States*. His certificate of service confirmed that he was at one point *commissioned Captain and assigned to Co. "B". 2nd U.S. Colored Cavalry*. Mrs. Bender and her family are proud to learn that their ancestor fought and was willing to die for equality. With this information in hand, she contacted Arlington National Cemetery and was able to arrange a proper burial for her ancestor.

On April 27th, a small crowd of about 17 people, including four Union Army reenactors and two National Park Service rangers, gathered to pay their final respects as members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) escorted Hart's remains to his burial section. *I know that Isaac was loved and that he will forever be missed*, Army Chaplain (Cpt.) John Ulrick told the gathering. With Hart's burial at Arlington National Cemetery, he added, *I also know that he will never be forgotten*.

After the chaplain's words, a U.S. Army firing party fired three volleys, followed by a bugler sounding Taps. Six soldiers then folded the flag they held over his urn, while an Army band played *America the Beautiful*. An officer



Mrs. Rachel Bender receives Maj. Hart's burial flag

then presented the tightly folded flag to Mrs. Bender. Maj. Hart had finally received a burial service commensurate with his service.

When the service ended, a Black park ranger walked up to Mrs. Bender and spoke quietly to her. His words brought tears to her eyes, and he put his arms around her. Maj. Isaac Hart, who sacrificed his own freedom so that others could become free, has still affected people today. Mrs. Bender later said she was proud to have helped her great-great uncle find his final resting place on hallowed ground.

Hart's marble headstone will include a carved image of a shield that is reserved specifically for soldiers who fought in the Civil War and the Spanish-American War.

News of the RCWRT



Upcoming 2023 RCWRT Meetings

The wearing of masks continues to be optional in the NC Museum of History, our monthly-meeting venue.

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
May 8 th , 2023	Tonia Smith	Orton Williams
June 12 th , 2023	Andrew Duppsstadt, M.A.	Francis Lyell Hoge (CSS Neuse)
Jul. 10 th , 2023	Harry Smeltzer, M.B.A.	The Battle of 1 st Manassas
Aug. 14 th , 2023	Kevin Shroyer, B.S.	Virginians in Blue
Sept. 11 th , 2023	Rob Orrison, M.A.	The Battle of Bristoe Station

Note: The Raleigh Civil War Round Table Field Trip to tour the Wyse Fork Battlefield near Kinston, NC on Saturday, April 29th, 2023, was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances and will be rescheduled at a later date.

Annual Memorial Day Remembrance Event



Saturday, May 27th, 2023, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
 Sunday, May 28th, 2023, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

[Bennett Place State Historic Site](#)
 4409 Bennett Memorial Road, Durham, NC

Cost: \$3.00 per adult and \$2.00 per child

CONTACT INFO

[Bennett Place State Historic Site](#)

Ryan Reed:
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The Knapsack

is the official newsletter of the RCWRT and is published around the 1st of each month.

(April 2023 Circulation: 402)

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Bob Graesser, Editor

Contributors

Griff Bartlett

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

RCWRT Board of Directors (2022-24)

Name	Position
Charlie Knight	President / Program Committee
Griff Bartlett	Secretary / Treasurer
Bob Graesser	Knapsack Newsletter Editor / Webmaster
Ted Kunstling	Member / President Emeritus
Jessica Hoover	Member
Lynda Turbeville	Member

Paying Memberships / Total Members: 104 / 124

We added no new members to the RCWRT in April.

Did You Know?

Since 1868, Doylestown, PA, has held an annual Memorial Day parade which it claims to be the nation's oldest continuously running. Grafton, WV, has also had an ongoing parade since 1868. However, the Memorial Day parade in Rochester, WI, predates both the Doylestown and the Grafton parades by one year (1867).

In 1915, following the Second Battle of Ypres, Lt. Col. John McCrae, a physician with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, wrote the poem, *In Flanders Fields*. Its opening lines refer to the fields of poppies that grew among the soldiers' graves in Flanders. In 1918, inspired by the poem, YWCA worker Moina Michael attended a YWCA Overseas War Secretaries' conference wearing a silk poppy pinned to her coat and distributed over two dozen more to others present. In 1920, the National American Legion adopted it as its official symbol of remembrance.

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

We meet on the second Monday of each month. 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 **Sept. 15th** each year.