



GEORGE TYLER MOORE
CENTER FOR THE
STUDY OF THE CIVIL WAR
At Shepherd University



GEORGE TYLER MOORE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE CIVIL WAR *Newsletter*

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Sam Levitan

Online Programming

Because the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact in-person programming, the George Tyler Moore Center is offering online virtual programming. For the year 2020, the George Tyler Moore Center hosted or took part in 40 virtual programs. This programming has covered a wide range of topics with participants from across the history community. With the emergency approval of a COVID-19 vaccine and vaccination efforts ramping up, hope springs eternal that we will soon be able to meet in-person and take visits to some of our favorite historic sites in the region.

In the meantime, our virtual programs will continue to take place. We have an exciting upcoming slate of programs scheduled and we encourage our friends to join us on our [Facebook page](#) for our live programming. The content will also be available to watch on our [YouTube page](#), in the days after the live event.

Here is a sampling of some of our programming during the latter part of 2020:

- **In the Shadow of Slavery: Letters to Dora Jackson, 1912-1914:** Dr. James Broomall had a discussion with Shepherd alumna Melanie Garvey about her research and work at the Clarke County Historical Association (CCHA). Melanie serves as the archivist at the CCHA and is currently working on a large letter collection that focuses on early 20th-century African American life.
- **Reassessing the Life and Legacy of Gen. George McClellan:** Hosted by The Tattooed Historian, John Heckman. Dr. Broomall joined a panel of historians including Shepherd alumnus Kevin Pawlak, Park Ranger Brian Baracz, Dr. Tom Clemens, and Dr. Ethan Refuse to discuss George B. McClellan, a general beloved by his soldiers yet despised by his critics.

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Dr. James J. Broomall

Director of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War and Associate Professor of History

136 W. German Street
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Hours of Operation:
Thursday-Friday
8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Phone: 304-876-5429
Fax: 304-876-5079
Email: gtmcweb@shepherd.edu

From the Director

I have heard the words of Abraham Lincoln invoked a lot recently. Whether because the speakers consider the message timely or the sentiments remain timeless, it is a refreshing signal of the past's importance. Rather than distant events, history can live and breathe in the present. The George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War (GTM Center) is dedicated to delivering educational programming and conducting research to demonstrate the relevancy of the past. Although we continue to experience unprecedented events, history can often serve as an enlightening guide.

We continue to be incredibly busy with online programming. Since June 2020, the GTM Center has delivered more than 20 programs through social media that have received more than 20,000 views. We have partnered with a host of talented academic and public historians as well as organizations such as Civil War Trails, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, *Civil War Times*, the Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area, and the Tattooed Historian. The winter months are providing further opportunities for the development of more exciting content—stay tuned!

Change is inevitable, and Catherine Oliver left the GTM Center in fall 2020 for a new opportunity. We are quite fortunate to welcome Tim Ware

as our new administrative assistant. Tim is a dedicated public historian with years of experience both at state and National Park Service historic sites. Most recently he worked at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park where he developed and delivered robust online content. Tim is a proud alumnus of Shepherd University and a graduate of our Civil War and Nineteenth Century America concentration. He maintains the blog, *Bloody Prelude: The Battle of South Mountain*, and is very knowledgeable about 18th- and 19th-century American history. Please join me in welcoming Tim.

Tim and I are pleased to announce that our postponed 2020 seminar is now set for 7-10 October 2021. Cavalry's Crucible: Civil War Comes to Horse and Hunt Country will take audiences across Loudoun County, Virginia, to explore cavalry action in 1863 and 1864. This year guest scholars Dennis Frye and Richard Gillespie will lead the tours. Anne Marie Chirieleison and Travis Shaw will start the seminar with a program on Thursday evening. Although the bucolic landscape remains visually stirring, it bore witness to intense fighting during the Civil War and offers a host of deeply significant historic sites.

I am extremely proud of the GTM Center and our



Cecelia Mason

James J. Broomall, Ph.D.

Ray and Madeline Johnston
Endowed Chair in American History
and Director, George Tyler Moore
Center for the Study of the Civil War

accomplishments. We are nevertheless successful because of your support. I therefore want to thank each of you for believing in us, which helps advance our mission of programming, teaching, and research.

With warmest regards,
Dr. James J. Broomall

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- **“My Voice, my Pen, my Vote”: Interpreting African American History during the Civil War Era:** In partnership with *Civil War Times*, Dr. Broomall hosted a panel discussion focused on the interpretation of African American history during the Civil War era. Several public historians joined the panel to discuss the advantages of how living history interpretation provides an opportunity to spark productive and engaging conversations especially when dealing with the legacies of racism and slavery.
- **The Cost of Gettysburg: Death Burials and Memory:** In conjunction with The Tattooed Historian, John Heckman, Dr. Broomall took to the battlefield at Gettysburg to discuss the famous photographs taken on the field in the aftermath of the July 1863 battle. They also discussed how burial crews interacted with

the dead, the creation of a cemetery, and how memory shaped the landscape.

- **Black Huntington and Beyond: Race and Appalachia:** Dr. Broomall led a discussion with Dr. Benjamin Bankhurst of Shepherd University and Dr. Cicero M. Fain III, College of Southern Maryland, about African American life and community in Huntington, West Virginia. Dr. Fain presented on his book, *Black Huntington: An Appalachian Story*, addressing the legacies of race and racism in Appalachia and how black history is often excluded from the region's story.
- **Monuments in Parks and Public Spaces:** Dr. Broomall, in conjunction with the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education, led a discussion about the divided nature of the debate covering the memorialization and commemoration of figures and events from

the Civil War era. The panel included Shepherd alumnus Dennis Frye, Kevin Levin, Sarah Hempel Irani, and Alan Spears.

- **African Americans and the American Revolution in History and Memory:** Dr. Broomall led a panel discussion about the African American experience during the American Revolution and how that experience had been largely marginalized and forgotten. Panelists included Marvin-Alonzo Greer, John U. Rees, and Travis Shaw.
- **Wizard Clip: Legend and Legacy:** The legend of Wizard Clip has become a staple of the folklore of the Lower Shenandoah Valley and especially so in Jefferson County, West Virginia. Our panelist discussed the legend itself and how its story has changed over the last 200 years. ■

Major General Jesse L. Reno

“A gallant soldier, an able general, endeared to his troops and associates”—The Life of Major General Jesse L. Reno

By Tim Ware, George Tyler Moore Center Administrative Assistant

“Quickly an orderly comes back leading several horses. To my inquiring ‘what happened?’ he answered, ‘Reno’s shot.’ Immediately men bearing the General on a blanket follow. They pause as they meet me, and are glad of a little assistance in carrying the middle of the blanket on the right side, which duty fell to me. It was too dark to see Reno’s face at all closely. He seemed pale but perfectly composed. No one of us spoke. We bore our beloved commander silently, slowly, tenderly.”

—Captain Gabriel Campbell, 17th Michigan Infantry to Ezra Carmen, 1899

Major General Jesse Lee Reno, a native of Virginia, came from humble beginnings in Wheeling, Virginia, today West Virginia. An 1846 graduate of West Point, Reno was a career U.S. Army officer rising to the rank of major general before meeting his demise on the slopes of South Mountain in September 1862. In their respective official reports, Confederate General Daniel H. Hill describes Reno as a “renegade Virginian” and Major General Ambrose Burnside lamented that the country lost “one of its most devoted patriots.” Largely forgotten except by the most dedicated students of the Civil War, who was Jesse Reno?

Early Years and Pre-Civil War

On June 20, 1823, in Wheeling, Virginia, Lewis Thomas and Rebecca Reno welcomed into the world their third child, a boy, and named him Jesse Lee Reno. With a few years of his birth, the Reno family will move to Franklin, Pennsylvania, in the northwestern part of the state where Lewis Reno will open a hotel to take advantage the economic boom that started with an extension of the Erie Canal into the area. Spending his formative years in Pennsylvania, the young Jesse Reno will excel in school. His school accomplishments, and a little luck, garner Reno an opportunity of a lifetime. In 1842, Jesse Reno receives an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point and graduates in 1846 eighth in a class of 59 that included future Civil War generals Darius Couch, Samuel D. Sturgis, Thomas J. Jackson, George Pickett, and George B. McClellan.

Upon graduation, Reno is commissioned as a brevet second lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps. His first assignment is as an assistant ordnance officer at the Watervliet Arsenal in

New York. However, war with Mexico means this assignment is short-lived and Reno is given command of a rocketry and mountain howitzer battery. Fighting in Mexico with General Winfield Scott’s army, Reno will be cited twice for “gallant and meritorious conduct” for actions at the Battles of Cerro Gordo and Chapultepec. Following the American victory in Mexico, Reno is given leave and returns to Erie, Pennsylvania, to recover from wounds received at the Battle of Chapultepec.

Following the war with Mexico, the early 1850s prove to be quite eventful for Reno. In his professional career with the United States Army, he will serve in various assignments teaching for a period of time at West Point and serving as a member of various ordnance boards including as assistant to the Ordnance Board in Washington, D.C., conducting a topographical survey for a road from the Big Sioux River to Mendota, Minnesota. Personally, it was during this time, while serving in Washington, D.C., that Lieutenant Reno met his wife Mary Cross. The couple will marry on November 1, 1853 at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. In 1854, the young Reno and his wife move to the Philadelphia where he had been assigned as the assistant ordnance officer at the Frankford Arsenal where he will serve until 1857 when he is ordered to join Albert Sidney Johnston’s Utah Expedition. Reno will serve in Utah until 1858 when he returns to the Frankford Arsenal.

While Lieutenant Reno was experiencing growth in his professional career and in his personal life, the country he is serving finds itself unable to prevent a sectional crisis. Various legislative actions will look to prevent the crisis but each only buys time for a hopeful compromise. In 1859, on the eve of an incredibly consequential presidential election, Reno is given command of the Mount Vernon Arsenal in Alabama.

The Civil War

Arriving at the Mount Vernon Arsenal in Alabama, Reno, newly promoted to captain, took command of the small but important post. The arsenal served as the point where manufactured parts shipped to the arsenal were assembled into functioning weapons and stored. The storage of these weapons of war will make the arsenal a target in the secession crisis. On December 20, 1860, David F. Jamison, president of the



South Carolina Secession Convention declared, “The Ordinance of Secession has been signed and ratified, and I proclaim the State of South Carolina an Independent Commonwealth.” News of South Carolina’s secession spread across the landscape and other southern states began contemplating their own secession. In Alabama, Governor Andrew B. Moore ordered state troops to seize the arsenal. On the morning of January 4, 1861, four companies of Alabama troops scaled the walls of the arsenal and captured the arsenal. The capture of the arsenal was such a surprise that Reno later reports, “they had scaled the walls and taken possession before I knew anything about the movement.”

Following the loss of his post at Mount Vernon, Reno is ordered to Leavenworth Arsenal at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He will remain at this post until the fall of 1861 when he will be promoted to brigadier general and assigned to Ambrose Burnside’s command that was forming for an attack on the North Carolina coast. Taking command of a brigade of men from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts, Reno will participate in northern victories at the Battles of Roanoke Island and New Bern and he will lead an unsuccessful raid on the Dismal Swamp Canal. Overall, the expedition was a success and in July 1862 Reno will be promoted to major general. In August, two divisions of Burnside’s command, now christened as the 9th Corps, will be dispatched to John Pope’s Army of Virginia in northern Virginia. These two divisions are placed under the command of Jesse Reno and will take part in the

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Second Battle of Manassas in late August 1862.

Entering into the battle on August 29, battering the Confederate forces of Stonewall Jackson in his sector, and meeting some success, Reno's divisions will provide cover for retreating Union forces following the devastating flank attack by James Longstreet's Confederates on August 30. Reno was clearly in his element, providing a sense of calm and steadfastness in a sea of chaos. As one of his subordinates, Orlando Willcox, remarked two decades after the battle:

"Look upon the picture, I pray you, for a moment. A man shorter than Grant, about the height of

Sheridan, with whom he was most comparable in stature and equally unpretending, quietly sitting on horseback on the hill around which the battle rages. The last rays of the sun shines upon his calm, determined face. Nothing but the flash of his eye and a few sharp phrases falling from his lips denote the man of action and concentration of force. Right and left troops are giving way and batteries limbering up and fleeing, by him unnoticed, his attention fixed upon his own command. The enemy is surging over the field like waves of the sea, yet Reno sits like a rock, and there the proud waves are stayed."

With Pope's army in retreat toward Washington,

Reno will lead a skillful rearguard action at Manassas and again at Chantilly. By early September 1862, Reno is back in Washington, D.C., waiting with the rest of the Union Army to get back at the victorious Confederates. He will not wait long. ■

To read the full article, including Reno's participation in the 1862 Maryland Campaign, please visit the research section of the GTMC website at www.shepherd.edu/civilwar/civil-war-research.



124th Pennsylvania Infantry Monument at Antietam



132nd Pennsylvania Monument at Antietam

Scenes of Social Distancing

The director and staff of the George Tyler Moore Center have turned often during this time of physical distancing to the majestic and historic scenery of our neighborhood. Antietam has provided healthy opportunities for responsible, essential exercise and safe space for peaceful contemplation. We hope you enjoy some of the views that have been so dear to us in these past months. ■



Cannon at Antietam



Sunrise over the Roulette Farm



Fence on a foggy morning



Winter in National Cemetery

Alumni Spotlight with Kevin Pawlak

What have you been doing since graduation?

Thankfully upon graduation, I was lucky enough to have a job with the National Park Service at Harpers Ferry for the first few months out of college. Eventually, my term there ran out so I worked for three and a half years as the director of education for the Mosby Heritage Area Association. Now, I'm site manager of Ben Lomond Historic Site and Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park for Prince William County. In the meantime, I still work (if you can call it that) as an Antietam Battlefield Guide and have written three books since graduating from Shepherd.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I really enjoy the public interaction that comes with being a public historian, whether that's interacting with individual people or large groups of visitors during programs held at both sites. It's exciting to see people's real-time reactions to stories from the past. I got interested in history as a nine-year-old visiting a historic site; it's never too late to spark someone's interest in history and trying to create that spark for people is one of the joys of my job.

How did our program help you prepare your career path?

Shepherd University and the GTMC are ideally situated to allow its students to flourish in the history field. It's so close to many different historic sites that covered a wide swath of American history, giving students an opportunity to sink their teeth into the history field. The GTMC in particular served for me, as it has done for many others, as an excellent place to research the American Civil War era and aided me in becoming vastly more familiar with that era of history and the field of history in general as I sought to begin my own career.

Why does history matter?

One could argue that history has hardly ever been more relevant than it is now. To me, and I hope for others, history shows a complex—and at times, dark, past—but it also demonstrates to us where perseverance can carry the human spirit. History gives us countless examples of humans overcoming immense odds to achieve great things. That's a great lesson for anyone today: no matter how tough the road in front of us looks, we can look back and see real people



Kevin Pawlak

who have conquered just as substantial if not worse odds to make an impact, no matter how small or large. ■

Save the Date

CAVALRY'S CRUCIBLE

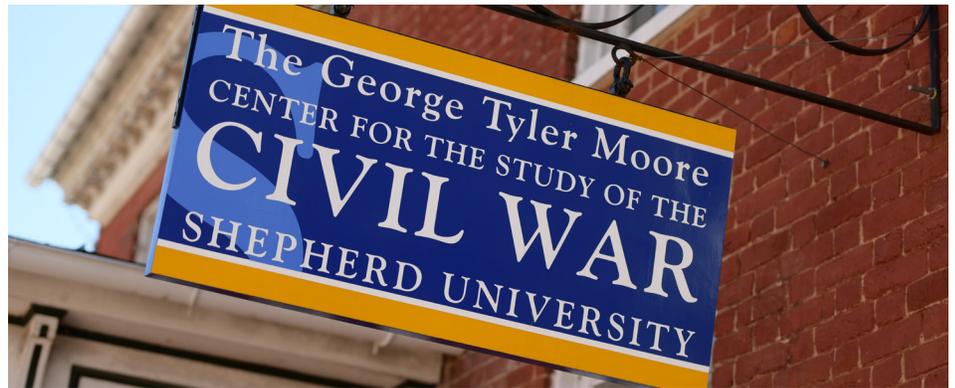
Civil War Comes to Horse and Hunt Country

October 7-10, 2021

The annual civil war and american society seminar: Join us on an exciting journey through the historic landscape of Virginia's horse and hunt country as we examine Union and Confederate cavalry action in 1863 and 1864.

Guest Scholars

- Dennis Frye, renowned public historian and retired Chief Historian, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
- Richard Gillespie, award winning teacher and public historian, retired Executive Director, Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area
- Anne Marie Chirieleison, Director of Education, Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area
- Travis Shaw, Public Programs Coordinator, Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area



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