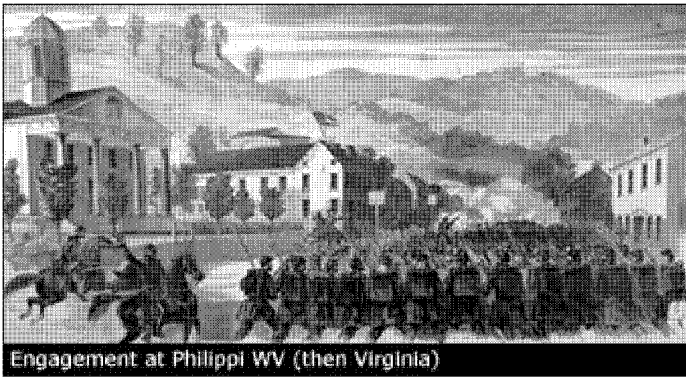


150th Anniversary of the Civil War



Engagement at Philippi WV (then Virginia)

Cape May County Civil War Round Table May 2011 Newsletter

If you end up missing a copy of the newsletter, or the post office tears your copy up, digital copies are posted on the Round Table website (cmccwrt.com).

2011 Meeting Schedule

19 May: Presentation by Eddie O'Malley. **Refreshments:** David Check

16 June: Presentation by Herb Kaufman on the subject of Medical Practices during the Civil War. **Refreshments:** Mike & Barbara Golla; Bev Linn

21 July: Park Ranger Laura Lee from Fort Delaware will be making a presentation on the Fort and its importance in the Civil War. She will be bringing along artifacts from the Fort for the membership to experience.

18 August: Hank Heacock will be telling us about the Presidential Election of 1860, and discussing all the cross currents that were factors in the outbreak of the Civil War.

15 September

20 October

17 November

December date to be determined

CMCCWRT Officers for 2010 - 2011

President: Andy Lolli
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Email: andylolli@comcast.net

1st Vice President: Suzanne Gibson
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Or James.Marshall@prufoxroach.com

Reminder:

***Dues are Due. Mail them to Jim Marshall.
\$20 individual, \$25 families***

Minutes of the Business Meeting of the Cape May Civil War Round Table 21 April 2011

The meeting was opened by President Lolli. We saluted the flag and held a moment of silence in honor of those serving our country, past and present. President Lolli then called the meeting to order.

Treasurer Marshall gave an abbreviated Treasurer's Report. Motion made, seconded and approved to accept the report and file for audit.

The Cape May County Historical and Genealogy Society is presenting a series of free lectures on New Jersey in the Civil War. All lectures will be on Wednesday evenings at 7pm at the Museum. Remaining lectures will be:

May 11th: Military historian Joe Bilby on New Jersey's African American Civil War troops.

May 18th: Bobbie Babbitt (member of the CMCCWRT) will present on Cape May County son William Thompson, who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Civil War.

Reminder that DUES ARE DUE. The April newsletter will be the last one to be mailed out to members who have not paid 2011 dues.

The 2011 Civil War stamps by the US Postal Service are now out. The twin stamps honor the battles at Ft. Sumter and First Bull Run. The first of the "America the Beautiful" quarters that are Civil War related is now out; the Gettysburg quarter was the first one released this year. Others due later this year will commemorate Vicksburg and Chickasaw. Further quarters in the series in 2012 and beyond that have Civil War connections include Perry's Victory, Mt. Rushmore, Shenandoah, Harper's Ferry, Ft. Moultrie, and Frederick Douglass.

We still need people to sign up on the Refreshments list. It's best if we have two people per month.

The Round Table would like to put out an updated member list including current addresses and phone numbers. Please contact Jim Marshall or Pat Munson-Siter with this information.

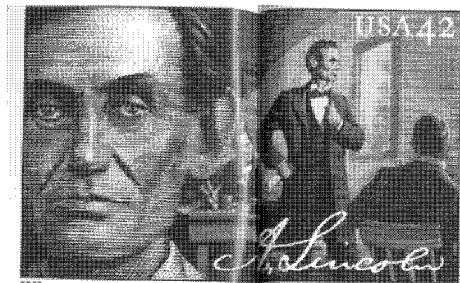
The new movie about the Lincoln Assassination will not be shown in the local area. Member David Check contacted other theaters and discovered that the closest theater that will show the movie is up in Egg Harbor.

There will be a special ceremony on the anniversary of the Manassas/Bull Run battle this year, with a keynote address by Dr. Ed Ayers and music by the US Marine Corps band. Date will be 21 June and will be located at the visitor center near Henry Hill. The area will reopen to the general public after noon.

There being no more business to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned so the presentation could begin.

Respectfully,

Pat Munson-Siter
Secretary, CMCCWRT



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1861

- 3 Battle at Philippi (now WV)
- 10 Battle at Big Bethel (VA)
- 11 Western Virginia counties create separate government

1862

- 1 Lee takes command of Confederate army in Richmond
- 6 Union forces occupy Memphis
- 8 Battle of Cross Keys (VA)
- 9 Battle of Port Republic (VA)
- 26 Battle of Mechanicsville (VA)
- 27 Battle of Gaines' Mill (VA)
- 29 Battle of Savage's Station (VA)
- 30 Battle of Glendale (VA)

1863

- 9 Battle of Brandy Station (VA)
- 15 Second Battle of Winchester
- 20 West Virginia admitted to Union as 35th state

1864

- 1-14 Battle of Cold Harbor (VA)
- 10 Battle of Brice's Crossroads (MS)
- 11-12 Battle of Trevilian Station (VA)
- 15 Initial Union attacks at Petersburg
- 18 Battle of Lynchburg (VA)
- 27 Battle of Kennesaw Mountain (GA)



Current Civil War Related Events

- 1 ★ 150 VA Fairfax Court House Skirmish Commemoration and lecture at Historic Fairfax Courthouse, 4000 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. 6-9 pm. Free. Seating limited. Call 703-591-0560 for more information.
- 1 VA Ranger talk, "The Importance of Arlington House During the American Civil War," at Arlington House in Arlington National Cemetery. 11 am-1 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/arho.
- 3 VA Walking tour, guided Civil War tour of downtown Winchester. Meets at 2 N Cameron St at 6 pm. \$5. 540-542-1326.
- 3 MD Civil War Tea at the Gambrill Mansion on the Monocacy National Battlefield. 1 pm. Reservations required: 301-662-3515.
- 3-5 ★ 150 VA Living history seminar, "Gathering of Civil War Eagles," at the Old Court House Museum in Winchester. This year's event focus is on 1861 and the "Gathering Storm" with speeches by Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Abraham Lincoln and other historical figures. www.civilwargatheringofeagles.com or www.civilwarmuseum.org.
- 3-5 VA Living history, exhibits and more at the Manassas Heritage Railway Festival & Civil War Weekend in downtown Manassas. 10 am-4 pm. Outside activities free, \$1 admission to the Manassas Museum. 703-361-6599.
- 4 VA Civil War living history included in "Court and Market Day" in Harrisonburg. 9 am-2 pm. Free. 540-432-8935.
- 4 VA Living history mounted tour, "Mosby Ride," of the Brandy Station battlefield north of Culpeper. \$100. 10 am-2 pm. 540-687-6681 or www.mosbyheritagearea.org.

- 4 **VA** Walking tour, "City Point and the Civil War," at the Grant's Headquarters unit of the Petersburg National Battlefield in Hopewell. 6 pm. Reservations: 804-732-3531 extension 222 or www.nps.gov/pete.
- 4 **DE** Lecture, "To Hell and Back: The First State in Blue and Gray," at the Delaware Public Archives, 121 Duke of York St, Dover. 10:30 am. Free. www.archives.delaware.gov.
- 4 **PA** "An Evening with the Painting," special look at the Cyclorama at the Gettysburg National Military Park visitor center. 5-6:30 pm. \$30. Reservations: 877-874-2478 or www.gettysburgfoundation.org.
- 4-5 **PA** Reenactment, "Civil War Reunion," at Pennypacker Mills, 5 Haldeman Road, Schwenksville. Living history camps, music and demonstrations daily. Battles each afternoon. Saturday evening lantern tours. Free (donations welcome). www.civilwarreunion.org or 610-287-9349.
- 4-5 **PA** Living history, camps and demonstrations at several locations in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett or 717-334-3460 extension 8023.
- 4-5 **MD** Living history, "Artillery Weekend" at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Camps and demonstrations. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti.
- 4-5 **VA** Living history, "Sailors and Marines at City Point," camps and demonstrations at the Grant's Headquarters unit of the Petersburg National Battlefield in Hopewell. 10 am-5 pm Saturday, 9 am-3:30 pm Sunday. Free. 804-732-3531 extension 205 or www.nps.gov/pete.
- 4-5 **VA** Anniversary living history, ranger-guided tours and "History Hunt" for kids at Cold Harbor, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. Living history camps, ranger-led tours and demonstrations all weekend. Candlelight tour with period music Saturday night. Free. www.nps.gov/rich.
- 5 **VA** Tour, "Fort Marcy: Occupied Virginia," at Fort Marcy (parking off the northbound George Washington Memorial Parkway in McLean). Free. www.nps.gov/cwdw.
- 5 **VA** Living history, infantry demonstrations at the Manassas National Battlefield Park (Henry Hill). 11 am-2 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/mana or 703-261-1339.
- 6 **VA** Living history, "Confederate Memorial Day," camp and demonstrations at the Stonewall Jackson Museum in Winchester. 10 am-4 pm. 540-662-6550.
- 7 **VA** Video, "Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance," session one covers the early war at Hanover Tavern, 13181 Hanover Courthouse Road (Route 301) 7-9




pm. \$3 donation. www.hanover tavern.org.

- 8 **VA** Ranger talk, "The Importance of Arlington House During the American Civil War," at Arlington House in Arlington National Cemetery. 11 am-1 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/arho.
- 8 **VA** "Civil War Conversation: Divided Loyalties" at Baine's Books and Coffee, 205 Main St, Appomattox. 12:15 pm. Free. 804-649-1861 or www.moc.org.
- 9 **VA** Lecture, "The Battle of Big Bethel," at the Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive, Centreville. 7 pm. Free. 703-830-2223.
- 9 **VA** Lecture, "Stafford Goes to War," at the England Run Branch Library, 806 Lyons Blvd, Stafford (north of Fredericksburg). 7 pm. Free. 540-899-1703.
- 9 **VA** Tour, "Ninth of June Remembrance Walk," commemorating the battle of old men and boys in Petersburg, at Blandford Cemetery, 111 Rochelle Lane, Petersburg. 3:30 pm. Free. 804-733-2396.
- 10 **VA** Lecture and book signing, "The Battle of Big Bethel," with John V. Quarstein at the Hampton History Museum in Hampton. 7-9 pm. 757-727-1610.
- 10 **VA** Walking tour, "Fredericksburg 1861." Meets at Market Square downtown. 7 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/frsp or 540-373-6122.
- 10-12 **PA** Living history, "The Battle of Chamber's Ridge," at the VFW, Route 45 West, in Mifflinburg. Friday evening revival, camps and demonstrations all weekend. Free. 570-966-5052.
- 11 **VA** Park dedication, 150th anniversary dedication of the Big Bethel Battlefield Park, 1701 Big Bethel Road, Hampton. 10-11:30 am. Free. 757-879-3420.
- 11 **VA** Walking tour, guided tour of the Kernstown Battlefield begins at visitor center, 610 Battle Park Drive, south of Winchester just off Route 11. 11 am. Free. www.kernstownbattle.org.
- 11 **VA** Movie, "Lincoln," with historical discussion at the Eastern Front visitor center, Petersburg National Battlefield. 6:30 pm. www.nps.gov/pete.
- 11 **VA** Car-caravan tour, "Battle of Brandy Station (Kelly's Ford & Stevensburg)" begins at the Graffiti House Visitor Center, 19484 Brandy Road, Brandy Station. 10 am. \$10. www.brandystationfoundation.com.

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| <p>11 VA Adult's Night Out: Civil War living history, music, wine and more at the Chapman/Beverly Mill near Haymarket. 7-10 pm. \$15. Reservations: www.chapmansmill.org or 540-253-5888.</p> <p>11 PA "An Evening with the Painting," special look at the Cyclorama at the Gettysburg National Military Park visitor center. 5-6:30 pm. \$30. Reservations: 877-874-2478 or www.gettysburgfoundation.org.</p> <p>11-12 MD Living history, "Artillery Weekend," at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Free with park admission. Special free talk and night firing 8:30 pm Saturday. www.nps.gov/anti.</p> <p>11-12 MD Living history, "Blue-Grey Days" at Point Lookout State Park near Scotland. Prisoner, civilian and guard life demonstrations. 10 am-4 pm Saturday, 11 am-3 pm Sunday. Park fee. 301-872-5688.</p> <p>11-12 PA Reenactment, "Lehigh Valley Civil War Days" at the Whitehall Parkway Recreation Area in Whitehall. Camps, music, living history, skirmishes and battles each day. Free. www.campgeiger.org.</p> <p>11-12 PA Living history, camps and demonstrations at several locations in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett or 717-334-3460 extension 8023.</p> <p>11-12 VA ★ 150 "Into the Abyss: Virginia Goes to War, Chatham," living history scenarios, music at Chatham, a Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP site across the river from downtown Fredericksburg. 9 am-8:30 pm Saturday, 10 am-5 pm Sunday. Free. www.nps.gov/frsp for complete schedule.</p> <p>11-12 VA Walking tours, "Bristoe Station Battlefields," at the battlefield park, 10708 Bristow Road, Bristow (near Manassas). 11 am-3 pm. \$5/adult. 703-792-5546.</p> <p>12 MD Ranger talk, "Fort Foote: Ironclads and Aircraft Carriers," at Fort Foote, 8915 Fort Foote Road, Fort Washington. 1 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/cwdw.</p> <p>12 PA Walking tour, "Buried in the Land of Strangers: The Confederates of Laurel Hill Cemetery," at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia. 2 pm. \$15. www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org.</p> <p>12 VA Ranger program, "The Flags of Five Forks," at the Five Forks visitor center, part of the Petersburg National Battlefield. 2 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/pete or 804-732-3531 extension 218.</p> <p>12 VA Book talk, "The Maps of First Bull Run," at the Manassas</p> | <p>Museum. 2 pm. Free. 703-368-1873.</p> <p>14 VA Video, "Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance," session two covers mid-late war at Hanover Tavern, 13181 Hanover Courthouse Road (Route 301) 7-9 pm. \$3 donation. www.hanovertavern.org.</p> <p>15 PA Lecture, "West Pointers in the Civil War," in Ridgeway Hall, US Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle. 7:15 pm. Free. 717-245-3803.</p> <p>15 VA Ranger talk, "The Importance of Arlington House During the American Civil War," at Arlington House in Arlington National Cemetery. 11 am-1 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/arho.</p> <p>15 VA Gallery Walk, "The Civil War in Virginia: The Role of African Americans," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. Noon. \$6/adult. www.vahistorical.org.</p> <p>17 VA Walking tour, guided Civil War tour of downtown Winchester. Meets at 2 N Cameron St at 6 pm. \$5. 540-542-1326.</p> <p>17 VA Walking tour, "Seeking Death Everywhere: Jackson's Attack to the Buschbeck Line." Meets at the Jackson Flank Attack tour stop, Chancellorsville. 7 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/frsp or 540-373-6122.</p> <p>17-18 VA ★ 150 Living history and reenactment, "1861 Battle of Vienna," at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St SE, Vienna. Camp, music and storytelling Friday evening, demonstrations all day Saturday, and reenactment of the battle Saturday evening. Free. 703-255-6356 or www.viennava.gov.</p> <p>17-18 VA Lecture, and tour of the Ball's Bluff battlefield near Leesburg. Lecture Friday night, tour Saturday. Based in and near Middleburg. www.mosbyheritagearea.org.</p> <p>18 VA ★ 150 Van tour, "Campaign of First Manassas," includes Blackburn's Mill, Centreville, McLean House site, Signal Hill and much more. Leaves from the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Center near Manassas. 8:30 am-5 pm. \$85. Reservations required: 703-365-7895.</p> <p>18 VA Walking tour, "Middletown in the Civil War," NPS ranger-guided tour begins at the Farmer's Market 11 am. Free. www.nps.gov/cebe or 540-860-3051.</p> <p>18 VA Virginia State Parks 75th anniversary celebration at the Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park between Amelia and Farmville. Free cake, interpretive hikes (1 pm and 3 pm). Open 10 am-4 pm. 804-561-7510.</p> |
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- 25 **MD** Living history, "Ship's Company," see Union seamen at work on the USS Constellation in Baltimore Harbor. 10 am-4 pm Free with admission. www.historicships.org.
- 25 **MD** Living history, "Confederate Surgeon," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick. 11 am-4 pm. Free with admission. www.civilwarmed.org.
- 25 **MD** Car-caravan tour of the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Begins at the visitor center 6 pm. www.nps.gov/anti.
- 25 **MD** Concert: Early American Banjo at the Pry House Field Hospital Museum (part of the Antietam National Battlefield) near Keedysville. 5 pm. \$5/adult. www.civilwarmed.org.
- 25 **PA** "Stories and Songs of a Civil War Hospital," a candlelight program at Christ Church, 30 Chambersburg St, Gettysburg. 8 pm. Free. 717-334-5212.
- 25 **VA** Living history, "Brady's Michigan Sharpshooters," at Fort Ward in Alexandria. 10 am-3 pm. Free. 703-746-4848.
- 25 **VA** Living history, "Mosby: Scout Along the Turnpike," special programs along Route 50 between Atoka and Aldie. Noon-5 pm. www.mosbyheritagearea.org.
- 25 **VA** Car-caravan tour, "Battle of Brandy Station (Fleetwood Hill)" begins at the Graffiti House Visitor Center, 19484 Brandy Road, Brandy Station. 10 am. \$10. www.brandystationfoundation.com.
- 25-26 **PA** Civil War Collectors Show at the AllStar Events Complex, 2638 Emmitsburg Road, Gettysburg. Tables of artifacts, books and more for sale. Fee charged. www.uniondb.com.
- 25-26 **PA** Reenactment, "March to Destiny," in Shippensburg. Camps, demonstrations and more. www.marchtodestiny.org.
- 25-26 **PA** Living history, "The North Carolina Experience of Monterey Pass," at the Rolando Woods Lions Club Park, 14701 Charmian Road, near Blue Ridge Summit. Tours, talks also. www.emmitsburg.net/montereypass.
- 25-26 **PA** Civil War Photographic Conference, "Understanding War Through Imagery: The Civil War in American Memory," at the US Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle. \$60. More info: carl_civilwarconf@conus.army.mil. Registration, directions etc: www.usahec.org.
- 25-26 **PA** Living history, camps and demonstrations at several locations in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett or 717-334-3460 extension 8023.

- 25-26 **MD** Civil War Music Weekend at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Banjo, fiddle and brass band. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti.
- 25-26 **MD** Living history, walking tours, music and more during "Corbit's Charge" commemoration in downtown Westminster. 10 am-4 pm. Free. www.pccwrt.org or 410-848-5294.
- 25-26 **VA** Anniversary living history, tours and more at Gaines' Mill, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. Camps, demonstrations and ranger-led tours 10 am-5 pm Saturday, 10 am-3 pm Sunday. Free. www.nps.gov/rich.
- 25-26 **VA** Living history, infantry demonstrations at the Manassas National Battlefield Park (Henry Hill). 11 am-2 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/mana or 703-261-1339.
- 25-26 **VA** Walking tours, "Bristoe Station Battlefields," at the battlefield park, 10708 Bristow Road, Bristow (near Manassas). 11 am-3 pm. \$5/adult. 703-792-5546.
- 26  **DC** Ranger talk, "Fort Dupont: The Weeks Before First Manassas," at Fort Dupont, 4160 Alabama Ave SE. 1 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/cwdw.
- 26 **VA** Lecture, "The Crossing of the Potomac – Edwards Ferry, June 24-28, 1863," at the Graffiti House Visitor Center, 19484 Brandy Road, Brandy Station. 2 pm. Free (donations welcome). www.brandystationfoundation.com.
- 26-July 1  **PA** Conference, "Mobilizing for War and the Battle of First Manassas/Bull Run" workshops, lectures, tours and more at the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. www.gettysburg.edu/civilwar/institute/annual_conference.
- 30  **VA** Lecture, "United States Marines at First Manassas," at the Old Manassas Courthouse, 9248 Lee Ave, Manassas. 7 pm. Free. 703-367-7872.

Women at War

By ELIZABETH R. VARON (from the Washington Post)

What do women have to do with the origins of the Civil War? Growing up in Virginia in the 1970s, I often heard this answer: nothing.

Much has changed since then. A new generation of scholars has rediscovered the Civil War as a drama in which women, and gender tensions, figure prominently. Thanks to new research into diaries, letters, newspapers and state and local records, we now know that women were on the front lines of the literary and rhetorical war over slavery long before the shooting war began. They were integral to the

slave resistance and flight that destabilized the border between North and South. And they were recruited by both secessionists and Unionists to join a partisan army, with each side claiming that the “ladies,” with their reputation for moral purity, had chosen it over its rivals. So what do women have to do with the origins of the war? The answer is: everything.



Clifton Walker Barrett Collection, University of Virginia Title page from Mary H. Eastman's novel "Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life as It Is," a proslavery response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

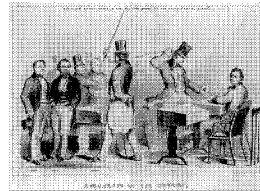
Some of the women most involved in these political developments are well known to scholars and the general public. But countless others are still obscure. For example, we all know about Harriet Beecher Stowe's contribution, with her best-selling 1852 novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin," to the antislavery cause. But how many Americans know that Stowe's book escalated a long-standing literary war over slavery? "Uncle Tom's Cabin" not only inflamed the proslavery press in the South, but it also prompted a concerted response from white Southern women writers like Mary Eastman and Louisa McCord, who countered Stowe with their own rose-colored fantasies about the purported gentility and harmony of plantation life. Works like Eastman's "Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life As It Is," published the same year as Stowe's book, were widely hailed in the proslavery press, and are the literary antecedents to that most enduring volley in the ongoing literary war over slavery, Margaret Mitchell's 1936 revival of the plantation-fiction genre, "Gone with the Wind."

We all know the name of Harriet Tubman, and recognize her role in leading the Underground Railroad in the 1850s. She was a remarkable, heroic individual. But she was not alone: new work in the historical record permits us to recover the names and stories of scores of female fugitives from slavery and of female Underground Railroad operatives, white and black, Northern and Southern, who fought their own campaign along the border of the free and slave states.

Their stories may be forgotten today, but they were national news back then. When the slave Jane Johnson was rescued from her master (a prominent Southern politician) by the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia in 1855, her case became a national cause célèbre. To the antislavery press, she represented the slave's natural yearning for freedom, and the courage and dignity of enslaved women. To the proslavery press, she represented the faithlessness of Northerners, who, in defiance of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, refused to act as slave catchers.

Moreover, gender tensions over competing definitions of manly and womanly comportment, worked to escalate the sectional conflict. Attacks on the manhood and womanhood of one's political opponents — the charge that they were not “true” men and women — were a staple of antebellum politics, and such attacks, which became more pointed in the 1850s, greatly eroded the trust between the North and South. Indeed, by the eve of war, many Northerners and Southerners had come to believe that the gender conventions of the two regions were antagonistic and incompatible.

Defenders of slavery and “Southern rights” charged that Northern society, with its bent for social reform, was fundamentally hostile to the hierarchical, patriarchal social order of the slave South. As the proslavery Richmond Enquirer put it in 1856, in a typical accusation, antislavery Northerners who supported the new Republican party threatened all of the pillars of traditional society: they were “at war with religion, female virtue, private property, and distinctions of race.”



Library of Congress A portrayal of the attack of Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner by Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina.

Gender politics made it into Congress as well. In 1856 Preston Brooks, a representative from South Carolina, savagely beat Sen. Charles Sumner on the floor of the Senate with a cane after Sumner insulted the “honor” of the South with a speech on slavery in Kansas. On its face, this seems the perfect illustration of the maxim that politics was a man's world. But when put in its context, the incident illustrates how gender aspersions and images of women were central to the slavery debates. Sumner's speech had dubbed the forceful incursions by Southern settlers in the West, and their bid to establish a proslavery regime, as the “rape of a virgin territory.” Such sexualized imagery fueled the abolitionist critique of Southern men as rapacious and uncivilized, and of Southern society as saturated by violence against women. The “bully Brooks,” the Northern press charged, had “disgraced the name of *man*”; “there is no chivalry in a brute,” as a Boston newspaper put it, succinctly.

Proslavery forces who rallied around Brooks, by contrast, claimed that Sumner's defenseless capitulation to Brooks's blows proved that Northern men were weak and submissive, slave-like in their subservience. This fueled the proslavery critique of the North as a world turned upside down, in which “strong-minded” abolitionist women and radical free blacks had raised the specter of social equality and effected the erosion of the patriarchal family and of male authority.

Even as they imputed gender transgressions to their opponents, antebellum politicians routinely called on women to join the ranks of political parties and movements. Of course, women could not yet vote; nonetheless, elite and middle-class women — to whom Victorian culture ascribed a penchant for piety and virtue — had a distinct role to play in electoral politics, both in influencing and mobilizing male voters and in lending an aura of moral sanctity to political causes.

It is no wonder then that during the secession crisis, champions of Union and of Southern nationalism alike claimed the “ladies” were on their side. During the election campaign of 1860 and the subsequent secession convention debates in the South, women attended speeches, rallies and processions; contributed their own polemics to the partisan press; and, fortunately for historians, left a treasure trove of firsthand accounts of the deepening crisis. These accounts — letters, diaries, memoirs, poems and stories — furnish moving and astute analyses of the agonies of secession.

Such sources are the most powerful argument for recognizing the centrality of women to the story of the war's causes. For example, there is no more chilling account of how it felt to be a Southern Unionist in

the midst of secession fever than that of Elizabeth Van Lew of Richmond, Va. Van Lew was a native-born white Southerner, but one who harbored a loathing for slavery and a belief that her state, as the mother of the Union, should represent moderation and compromise. As she watched a secessionist procession snake through the streets of Richmond in the wake of Virginia's vote to join the Confederacy, she knew the time for compromise had passed. "Such a sight!" Van Lew wrote. "The multitude, the mob, the whooping, the tin-pan music, and the fierceness of a surging, swelling revolution. This I witnessed. I thought of France and as the procession passed, I fell upon my knees under the angry heavens, clasped my hands and prayed, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"



Virginia Historical Society, 2002.689.1 Elizabeth Van Lew

For Van Lew, secession was a kind of collective madness that had descended on the South. She chose to stay in Richmond during the war, although she could have easily sought refuge in the North, so that she could put her political principles on the line as the leading Union spy in the Confederacy. Her Richmond home was the nerve center of an elaborate interracial espionage ring that funneled critical information to Grant's army.

Cape May County Civil War Round Table
www.cmccwrt.com

Like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Harriet Tubman, Van Lew was remarkable — but not anomalous. The nation's archives and attics contain the stories of countless other such women, who offer eloquent testimony on the war's causes and meaning.

The challenge that remains for scholars working in this field is to popularize the notion, among general readers and some skeptics in the ranks of academic historians, that women and gender were central, not merely tangential, to the story of the sectional alienation and strife. The stakes are high: the better we understand how women figured in antebellum politics, the better we'll understand the wartime relationship between homefront and battlefield, and the tangled process by which Americans have defined patriotism and citizenship ever since.

Sources: Stephen W. Berry, "[All that Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South](#)"; Stephanie M.H. Camp, "[Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South](#)"; Thavolia Glymph, "[Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household](#)"; Amy Greenberg, "[Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum Empire](#)"; Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel, "[Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas](#)"; Michael D. Pierson, "[Free Hearts and Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics](#)"; Nina Silber, "[Gender and the Sectional Conflict](#)."

