

2017 CWI Conference Retrospective



We hope you enjoyed your experience at the 2017 Civil War Institute! In departing from previous years' theme-based conference structure, we were able to explore the Civil War era from numerous angles, with lecture topics ranging from antebellum politics and social life in Washington, D.C. to the presidency of Abraham Lincoln; from myths and realities of battlefield tactics, the experiences of Union prisoners of war, Clara Barton's Missing Soldiers' Office, and soldiers' dreams; to the contested legacy of the Confederate flag in Civil War memory. First-time CWI speakers, Rachel Shelden, Fiona Deans Halloran, Jonathan White, Amelia Grabowski, Earl Hess, and Lorien Foote joined returning favorites, Brooks Simpson, Harold Holzer, and Scott Hartwig for engaging discussions on new scholarship and questions in the field of Civil War history. We also heard two fascinating lectures by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, T.J. Stiles on legendary Americans, George Armstrong Custer and Jesse James that challenged the often simplistic and romantic narratives of these complex individuals.

Additionally, we had the opportunity to explore not only the iconic battlefields of Gettysburg, Antietam, and Chancellorsville with the ever-popular Carol Reardon, Christian Keller, Jennifer Murray, and Christopher Gwinn, but also the lesser-known actions at Mine Run, Cedar Mountain, and in northern Virginia's "Mosby Country" with first-rate historians Eric Mink, Greg Mertz, Dennis Frye, and Richard Gillespie. In both the lecture hall and the dining hall, on the battlefield and in nearby National Parks--in large-scale Q&A sessions and in small-group discussions over dinner--we shared insights and debated the relevance of a wide variety of Civil War topics to contemporary society with over 300 attendees hailing from 38 states and 4 countries!

We were joined by 8 outstanding teachers and public historians from across the country who were the recipients of this year's Robert G. Glass and Scott Hartwig scholarships, as well as by 10 terrific high school scholarship students from 8 states and even as far away as the Netherlands! In addition to participating in a majority of the regular conference programming, these students also had the opportunity to explore the Gettysburg battlefield with special tours led by CWI Director Pete Carmichael and high school scholarship program lead, Jared Peatman, and delve more deeply into topics such as Lincoln and the press and antebellum politics and social life in Washington, D.C. in small-group discussions led by Harold Holzer and Rachel Shelden. They also explored the complex causes and consequences of the 1863 New York City Draft Riots in a 3.5 hour workshop and historical simulation led by CWT's incoming Assistant Director, Ashley Whitehead Luskey. In adopting the characters of a diverse array of the 1863 rioters, ranging from impoverished Irish factory workers, to African American laborers, to members of the Democratic Tammany Hall

political machine, to soldiers and Republican aristocrats from New York City's Union League, the students passionately debated each other while working through the complexity and chaos of this often overlooked Civil War era uprising. In doing so, the students also learned some of the intricacies of the historians' craft and were able to use the 1863 riots as a jumping-off point to discuss contemporary issues of civil unrest.

C-SPAN and PCN Coverage

If you happened to miss a main-stage lecture or two—or if you would like to relive your CWI experience through film—be sure to watch for the recorded lectures airing on C-SPAN and locally on PCN: Pennsylvania Cable Network. Please check their websites for television schedules, or watch the sessions online through their video libraries, or at <http://www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference/past-conferences/>. Photos and suggestions for further reading can also be found on this page.

Lost and Found

Missing any personal items from conference week? We still have several items in our Lost-and-Found that we recovered from the CUB ballroom, classrooms, dining hall, and tour buses. Please contact us and let us know if you are missing something!

Thank you again for your attendance at our 2017 CWI summer conference and for choosing to spend a week of your summer with us, exploring and debating Civil War history! Your enthusiasm, curiosity, and passion, and excitement for learning about the Civil War era has, once again, made for a successful conference and a truly rewarding experience for all of our staff members! Have a wonderful rest of your summer, and we hope to see you in Gettysburg next June!

Sincerely,

The Civil War Institute Staff