

Victor Vignola – “Seven Pines - Fair Oaks” The Battle for Richmond

(May 31 - June 1, 1862) “Contrasts of Command”

For many students of the Civil War, there is but one notable event from the fighting at Seven Pines and Fair Oaks, which has attracted their attention. Confederate Maj. Gen. Joseph Johnston, while observing the fighting occurring near Fair Oaks Station during the evening hours of May 31, suffered wounds that rendered him unable to continue with command of his army. Prompted by Johnston’s wounding, President Jefferson Davis appointed General Robert E. Lee to command the Army of Northern Virginia, thus propelling Lee into legendary status.

Victor will explore how on May 31, 1862, Confederate forces overwhelmed the exposed IV Corps of the Army of the Potomac near a small crossroad known as Seven Pines. The fighting occurred in fields flooded by torrential rains, also causing the Chickahominy River to flood its banks. The Federal's situation grew more dire later that afternoon when a Confederate division of 11,200 men, under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston, advanced toward the Federal flank. All that stood in Johnston’s way to deliver a coup de grâce was a small isolated force of approximately 2,000 Union soldiers at a small railroad depot known as Fair Oaks Station.

Victor’s presentation will describe the golden opportunity McClellan presented Confederate leadership with at Seven Pines/Fair Oaks on May 31, 1862. A day that developed into one of contrasts regarding leadership and command decisions made by Johnston, Sumner, and others.



About our Speaker:

Victor is a lifelong student of the Civil War, has written articles for publication in North and South Magazine and also delivers tours at various Civil War sites. Due to supply related issues publication of his book, *The Battle of Fair Oaks – Contrasts of Command (Savas-Beatie)*, is delayed until mid-2023. Mr. Vignola lives with his family in Orange County, New York, home of the 124th New York ‘Orange Blossoms’ Regiment. A graduate of SUNY-New Paltz, with a degree in business and economics, Mr. Vignola’s career included executive level labor and inter-agency relations for the New York State Office of Mental Health.