

Franconia Man William Connery Writes Book About Northern Virginia Torn Apart by War

Will Sommer
December 1, 2011



Author and local resident William Connery discusses his book on Northern Virginia during the Civil War.

William Connery's interest in history started the day he was born

When the Civil War began, residents in Northern Virginia were caught in the middle.

"The people here felt like they were being invaded," says William Connery, a Franconia man who has just written a book about Northern Virginia during the war.

The book, *Civil War Northern Virginia 1861*, is part of History Press's sesquicentennial series and was published last month. Connery looks at how the lives of Northern Virginians caught between Washington and Richmond were changed and what role events in the area played in the war.

"I tried to give both sides impartially, as if I was looking at it from France, or Germany, or Russia," Connery said.

Connery didn't have to travel far to do his research. During the war, Confederate soldiers under John Mosby raided the area, once coming to Rose Hill to arrest the lieutenant governor of the Union-controlled portions of Virginia—with help from the lieutenant governor's own son, who had joined the Confederacy.

Connery's book portrays a Northern Virginia very different from the one current residents know.

"Van Dorn Street was somebody's cow pasture," Connery said.

Many residents of the area fled to Richmond when the war began, but others, like two sisters who lived at what is now the intersection of Telegraph Road and Franconia, stayed behind. Connery's book includes a portion of the sisters' impressions of Union soldiers.

Connery, a 20-year resident of the area, developed his love for history growing up in Baltimore. He also thinks his birthday—Jan. 19—played a role. He shares it with Robert E. Lee, general of the Confederate Army and author Edgar Allan Poe. He thinks he gets his writing inspiration from Poe and his interest in history from Lee.

"I used to tell people my birthday is a holiday in five southern states," Connery said.