

\*\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*

For Immediate Release

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**RANDOLPH, VA –**

### **Kautz Descendant to Speak at Battle Commemoration**

The Historic Staunton River Foundation in conjunction with the Halifax Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy will host a Commemoration of the Battle of Staunton River Bridge with a weekend full of activities beginning Friday night, June 19, and the revelry will continue with daytime events on Saturday, June 20 at the Staunton River Battlefield State Park.

The focal point of this year's Commemoration on Saturday, June 20 will be a presentation and lecture given by Dr. Lawrence G. Kautz, a kinsman of Union General August Valentine Kautz, whose namesake has made a lasting impression upon the infamous Wilson-Kautz Raid upon Southside Virginia that reached its climaxing moment at on a hot day in June 1864 at the Staunton River Bridge. Dr. Kautz is the author of *August Valentine Kautz, USA: Biography of a Civil War General*. This biography, relying heavily on detailed journals kept by Union General August Kautz for 43 years, covers Union General Kautz's early experiences and his time in the turbulent Pacific Northwest, where he was involved in Indian affairs and the Rogue River War. As with so many American military men of the time, however, the defining event in his career was the Civil War.

In June of 1864, Union cavalry under the command of General James H. Wilson and August V. Kautz were making a raid through Southside Virginia, leaving a trail of destruction behind them. Their intention was to cut off the last remaining Confederate supply line. Their main objective was the destruction of the railroad bridge over the Staunton River between Charlotte and Halifax Counties. Fighting against a force of over 5,000 men and far superior artillery, the bridge was saved through the gallant efforts of 296 Confederate troops and 492 "old men and young boys" who gathered at the bridge to defend it from the advancing Federals. This June 25 marks the 145th anniversary of this vital, but less well-known, battle – the Battle for Staunton River Bridge.

Several years ago, Dr. Kautz, a retired physician and an American history buff with a great interest in the American Civil War, came across a Union Army Officer who bore the same surname as he. He took research into this subject and found that Union officer August Valentine Kautz was a relative; therefore, he made a great effort in learning and accumulating as much information as he could about this distinguished Civil War hero. His studies led him to the

discovery of a book entitled *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* by Richard J. Sommers. It provided its reader with a detailed and well-researched report of one of the Union attempts to capture Richmond, the Confederate capital, in 1864.

August V. Kautz took part in the effort, but was unsuccessful in carrying out the mission assigned him during the offensive and therefore Sommers concluded with three words that Kautz not only “performed poorly” in operations to take Richmond, but also was marked with “disingenuousness.” Dr. Kautz’s attention was drawn to this statement, and became resolute to set his forbearer’s record straight. He found August V. Kautz to be “a man far too complex to accurately describe in just a few words.” With dozens of books, journals, and periodicals, that together numbered in excess of 5,000 pages, Dr. Kautz laid out a “fair biography of August Valentine Kautz without being excessively judgmental” and upon reading his book, *August Valentine Kautz, USA: Biography of a Civil War General*, the reader is left to “form his or her own opinion of the man.” Dr. Kautz and his wife, Nancy, reside in West Jefferson, North Carolina.

The Historic Staunton River Foundation and the Staunton River Battlefield State Park is pleased to host Dr. Lawrence Kautz during this year’s Battle Commemoration to mark the 145<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Staunton River Bridge - the impetus of the Wilson-Kautz Raid. Dr. Kautz will present a lecture with a slideshow presentation on Saturday, June 20 at 12:30 PM in the Clover Visitors Center Conference Room at Staunton River Battlefield State Park. A book signing will follow. The event is free and open to the public.

For more information of the Battle Commemoration and upcoming events, please visit the Foundation’s website at [www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org](http://www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org), email [info@stauntonriverbattlefield.org](mailto:info@stauntonriverbattlefield.org), or call the Staunton River Battlefield State Park at 434-454-4312.