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# THE CANISTER

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Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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Cincinnati CWRT PO Box 621082 Cincinnati, Ohio 45262 <http://www.cincinnati-cwrt.org>

FEBRUARY, 2005 Issue

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## MEETING INFORMATION FOR February, 2005

Meeting Date: February 17, 2005

Meeting Place: Quality Hotel and Suites

Time: (6:00) Refreshments

(6:45) Dinner

Speaker: Dave Smith, Cincinnati CWRT

Topic: "Stranger Than Braxton Bragg—Henry Halleck"

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**IMPORTANT NOTE: If you do not have an Automatic Reservation, please remember to email your meeting reservation to [reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org](mailto:reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org) or call it in to John Linnenberg at (h) 513-922-3999 (cell) 607-4002 (has voice mail)**

In spite of some challenging winter weather for the January meeting, we had a hardy group of twenty-five turn out to hear Tom Breiner educate and entertain us on the travails of the C. S. S. Shenandoah. Unfortunately, the Round Table had to pay for TEN no show/cancelled late meals because of the smaller turnout. If you were unable to make the January meeting, and you made a dinner reservation, we ask that you please pay for your January meal at the February 17th meeting, or, mail a check for \$20.00 to Treasurer Bob Limoseh at Cincinnati CWRT, P. O. Box 621082, Cincinnati, OH 45262 with January Meal noted on the memo line. THANK YOU

He had nearly everything George B. McClellan had going for him - outstanding prewar record, known to an outstanding intellectual in terms of modern military warfare. Arriving late, in terms of the start of the war, he nevertheless compiled an impressive record in command of the western theater - including the capture of Forts Henry and Donelson, the victory at Shiloh, and the capture of Corinth, Mississippi.

Called east to command all of the Union armies, he was perhaps the consummate disappointment of the Civil War in terms of performance by a Union general, outdoing even the egotistical McClellan. How did a man known as "Old Brains" - and a 40-ish "Old Brains" at that - come to be seen as a glorified clerk who hindered the Union effort more than he moved it forward?

Dave Smith, twice a former president of the Cincinnati CWRT, will explore the enigma of Henry Halleck in his February presentation. Dave has been a member of the Round Table since 1986, serves as Webmaster and Program Chair, and served over ten years as newsletter editor. Having spent nearly twenty years at Cincinnati Bell, he is now Dean of Academic Affairs at Brown Mackie College Northern Kentucky. This will be Dave's ninth presentation to the Cincinnati CWRT over the years.



**Book Review by Thomas L. Breiner**

Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of Henry W. Halleck by John F. Marzalek, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2004, 324 pages, Hard cover \$29.95.

The book Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of Henry W. Halleck by John F. Marzalek will probably not change your opinion of Henry Halleck, but most likely will reinforce it. Our author has done a magnificent job of researching Henry Halleck's background in order to shed some light on why one of the Union's senior military men, considered a genius by his peers, was a poor performer as a military commander. In his youth, Henry thirsted for knowledge. He was so adamant in his drive to be educated that he ran away from his family's farm in Westernville, NY when he was 17 in order to get an education. He was fortunate enough to have an understanding Grandfather Henry Wager and a bachelor Uncle David Wager who allowed him to fulfill his goal. Besides the desire to be educated, he was running away from his strict father, a man Henry never spoke to after his departure. His entire life would be guided by the desire to be better than his father. Henry's dislike of his father was so strong that when the elder Halleck died, Henry's family would not tell him.

His father and teachers, Dr. Nott at Union College and Dennis Hart Mahan at West Point, influenced Henry Halleck most. Our author weaves the influence of these three men into an understanding of why Henry Halleck became the man we know. He was an individual who never had close friends. With his graduation from West Point in 1839, Henry Halleck was assigned to the elite Corps of Engineers. He would spend his early career working on fortifications, mainly in the area around the New York harbor. From his contact with Dennis Hart Mahan, Halleck was convinced that he must visit France and learn for the best. For Halleck, this required a leave of absence from the Army to accomplish this goal. He was not fortunate enough to have the Army send him to Europe.

Henry's greatest accomplishments were his writings on military theory, international law and land litigation and his efforts to develop California. It was in California that Halleck made his fortune. He was sent to California during the Mexican War and ended up becoming extremely influential in the development of the state constitution. Beside his military duties, Halleck was able to study law and partnered in a highly successful law practice. He invested wisely and accumulated wealth.

Halleck considered himself to be successful as the Commander of the Armies. He takes full credit for the development of his two subordinates, U. S. Grant and W. T. Sherman. This was despite the fact that he had a long-standing quarrel with Sherman from their days together in California and that he considered Grant to be a drunk. Fortunately, Halleck supported Sherman when the Press was calling him crazy and he failed in his attempts to remove Grant after Fort Donelson and again after Shiloh. Henry Halleck believed he was the commander who allowed them to succeed, by allowing them to develop on their own with his advice to guide them. He never ordered any field commander to do anything. Halleck firmly believed that the commander on the scene was better able to judge what needed to be accomplished than he was from his desk in Washington. Of course, this meant that Halleck would not go into the field to gather information in order to guide his subordinates. He refused to do so on numerous occasions. Halleck was never happier than when Grant was promoted to commander and he was permitted to become Grant's Chief of Staff. Now he could be the administrator that he desired with none of the responsibilities of command. Here he was in his element.

Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A life of Henry W. Halleck is a well-researched and written work. The author does exactly what he set out to accomplish. John Marzalek wanted to provide the reader with an understanding of Henry Halleck. He was not trying to change anyone's opinion of the man just let you know why Halleck developed into the commander who refused to command. Halleck was strongly influenced by his father and his teachers. By certain standards, he was a success; however, when it came to being the leader that Lincoln needed during the Civil War, Halleck was a failure. In the words of then Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, "Halleck originates nothing, anticipates nothing, ..., takes no responsibility, plans nothing, suggests nothing, is good for nothing." Here is a book that I truly recommend to anyone interested in understanding the people that significantly influenced our American Civil War. Whether you admire Henry Halleck or not he was a key player in the conflict. We do need to be thankful for one idea that Henry W. Halleck had. In 1863, he proposed the preservation and printing of military records. In late April 1865, he set aside space to collect all the papers, books, manuscripts, and maps that were in Richmond and order the 81 boxes of material (10 tons) captured by Major General Schofield set to Washington. Halleck can be truly called the Father of the *Official Records*.

For those interested, there is a monument to Henry W. Halleck located in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, which is generally ignored by the locals.

### Quiz---January, 2005

1. Name the historian who served as the research director for Bruce Catton's *Centennial History of the Civil War*. Catton indicated that this work took nine years of full-time study, compiling nine million words of notes (now in the Library of Congress), and said "It is no exaggeration whatever to say that this man knows more facts about the Civil War than any other man who ever lived." Of whom was he speaking?
2. On January 15, 1865, Union General Alfred Terry and Rear Admiral David D. Porter succeeded where General Benjamin Butler had failed, causing the end of Butler's military career. What was the objective?
3. During the cold winter months in North Georgia following his strong performance at Chattanooga, General Patrick Cleburne got into some extremely hot water with an "unthinkable" proposal. He made his case in a meeting, at his request, of all corps and division commanders and their newly-arrived commander, General Joseph Johnston. What was his proposal?
4. (With credit to Jamie Ryan.) Fitz-John Porter broke with five generations of family service in the navy when he attended the U.S. Military Academy and later served as a general in the Army of the Potomac. How was he related to Admiral David Dixon Porter?
5. James D. Bulloch had over 20 years of service in the U.S. Navy when the war began, and he offered his experience and services to the Confederate Navy. (His nephew would later become President of the U.S. in 1901.) In what capacity did Bulloch serve the Confederate Navy?
6. Daniel McCallum, superintendent of the Erie Railroad prior to the war, managed the largest railroad in the world by the end of the war, with 24,965 employees, 419 engines, 6330 cars, and 2105 miles of track. What was the name of this railroad?

#### **CCWRT Member David Helmbock**

David Helmbock, a member of CCWRT for several years, passed away on December 14<sup>th</sup> due to complications of a stroke and diabetes. Dave was a native of Evansville, Indiana, where he and CCWRT member Walt Stroud were in the same class at Bosse High School. He worked for Cosco Graphics and was a Boy Scout leader in Cincinnati for 49 years. Dave's wife, Kathy, has donated to the CCWRT book raffle several books that she had recently purchased for Dave. We have valued the books at \$150, and CCWRT will make a contribution of that amount in Dave's memory to our Johnson's Island preservation project this year. We appreciate Kathy's contribution of these books to CCWRT, and we are pleased to make them part of our Johnson Island effort as a contribution in Dave's memory

#### **January Presentation by Albert Hallenberg**

It has been awhile since the Round Table hosted a talk on Civil War naval operations, but long-time member and former Round Table president Tom Breiner got us back into the seas with January's presentation on the Confederate cruiser *CSS Shenandoah*.

Cleverly tying in the *Shenandoah*'s sea journey with the *Gilligan's Island* theme song, Tom pointed out the cruiser's commission was indeed longer than a "three hour cruise", yet probably few naval vessels in history have experienced quite as many adventures in such a short time period (a little over nine months). Looking for a swift and deadly raider of the open seas, the Confederate government secretly purchased a British merchant vessel. The ship, known as the *Sea King*, experienced a transformation in October 1864, when a British steamer carrying guns and passengers met her around the Madeira Islands off Portugal. Within hours, the *Sea King* became the *Shenandoah* and began the preparations to prey on Northern commercial vessels. Tom related how under the command of Captain James I Waddell, the raider had immediate success, capturing and burning several Northern ships. After docking in Melbourne, Australia (January, 1865) to replenish men and supplies, the *Shenandoah* raged through the Pacific from February - June, 1865, culminating in virtual decimation of the New Bedford whaling fleet (25 whalers taken) in the Bering Sea.

Of course, as Tom noted, there was one catch to Waddell's actions. Communications the way they were, Waddell had no way to know the War had ended in April of that year. In July, he learned Richmond had fallen from a newspaper taken from a captured ship. In August, a British ship confirmed the War's end. Fearing his post-war actions would label him a pirate and subject to hanging, Waddell backtracked the *Shenandoah* 17,000 miles to England where he surrendered the raider on November 5, 1865. The military career of the *Shenandoah* was over, but it had rendered substantial damage to Northern commercial whalers (without a single life lost on either side) and was the only Confederate ship to circumnavigate the globe (about 58,000 miles).

Tom's research included many primary resources: ship's logs; crew diaries; Waddell's own published account; and newspaper articles from the time courtesy of an Australian Civil War Round Table member. As a Naval Academy graduate and retired captain of the Naval Reserve, Tom also brought his own expertise

(including a thorough knowledge of nautical terms). All members who braved the wintry weather that night very much enjoyed this fascinating sea adventure.

**Book Review: *A Bohemian Brigade: The Civil War Correspondents—Mostly Rough, Sometimes Ready.***

James M. Perry. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000. Paperback, 305 pages. Reviewed by Dan Reigle, CCWRT.

James Perry brings forty years of relevant professional experience as a newspaper reporter to this effort to introduce us to the first war correspondents in American history. His focus is on the reporters in the field, not the better known editor-proprietors such as Greeley, Bennett, and Raymond, and his focus is almost exclusively on reporters for the Northern newspapers although he does include several European reporters who covered the war from the Confederacy.

Perry does not attempt either an exhaustive cataloging of the reporters and their newspapers or a systematic chronological description of the correspondents' work as the war proceeded. Rather, he devotes each of his fifteen chapters to a specific reporter or group of reporters, and their work during a particular period or event. For example, he introduces "The World's Greatest War Correspondent" in 1861, William Howard Russell of the London *Times* in the first chapter, then details Russell's coverage of the disorganized Union retreat after the battle and Edmund Clarence Stedman's more comprehensive and accurate description of the events in the *New York World*. Frank Bangs Wilke, working for the *Dubuque Herald* and later the *New York Times*, was on the battlefield during the fighting at Wilson's Creek, and collected the names of dead and wounded, filing the casualty lists with his stories on the fighting and initiating an important service when the military had not yet developed any formal systems for notification of the next of kin of men killed and wounded. Bradley Sillick Osbon, who had gone to sea at age 13, one of the more intriguing characters in the book, actually served in the dual positions of reporter for the *New York World* and part-time naval officer, filling temporary needs such as David Farragut's clerk and signal officer on his flagship *Hartford* during the battle of New Orleans. Other chapters deal with Sherman's distrust and hatred of reporters, the "cruel misstatements" published about him by the *Cincinnati Commercial*, and his court-martial of a civilian, reporter Thomas Knox of the *New York Herald*. Two reporters from the *New York Tribune*, Albert Richardson and Junius Browne, were captured near Vicksburg and survived twenty months in seven different Confederate prisons before escaping from Salisbury, N.C. Sylvanus Cadwallader of the *Chicago Times* developed a close personal friendship with Grant, and later developed the *New York Herald's* efficient field organization in Virginia, including an independent mess and an elaborate messenger system to get their dispatches hand-carried to Baltimore without reliance on the military telegraph. Henry Wing, a young Connecticut veteran severely wounded at Fredericksburg, returned to the field as a reporter for the *New York Tribune* and was with the Army of the Potomac on the first day in the Wilderness. Carrying a personal message from Grant for Lincoln in addition to dispatches for his newspaper back to Washington (70 perilous miles), Wing survived multiple encounters with Confederate patrols and U.S. suspicions that he was a spy. Perry recounts the amazing series of events that led Wing not only to safety, but to a 2:00 AM interview with the President to deliver Grant's message in person that "there will be no turning back".

*Bohemian Brigade* is a worthwhile book for students of the Civil War. It contains information and perspectives that I have not found in other reading. Further, Perry does not overuse his professional credentials, but brings his experience to bear at specific points in ways that increased my appreciation for the difficulties that had to be overcome by the reporters to be able to function with any degree of effectiveness. He does not overlook or excuse the incompetent and unethical "rogues", but builds enough perspective to enable the reader to see that many reporters "were simply trying to do a very difficult job under harsh working conditions".

Within the context of my recommendation, I would offer two concerns about the book. First, in a comment that I initially thought was intended to be humorous, the author offers reasons for the more thorough newspaper coverage of the war in the Eastern Theater than the West, including its more compact geography, its proximity to major newspaper offices, and "not least of all, it was the more crucial of the two". There is no acknowledgment of the argumentative nature of the statement, or the degree to which such a statement has been subjected to serious debate over the past 140 years. Fortunately, I do not believe that this opinion detracted from the author's treatment of the book's subject, but I must admit that it shook my confidence in the research and perspective underlying the book.

Second, the author is too quick to accept Sylvanus Cadwallader's account of Grant's alleged drinking spree on a steamboat ride up the Yazoo River on 6 June 1863. Perry acknowledges that Cadwallader's memoirs, written in 1896 and published in 1955, "have caused something of a stir among Civil War historians ever

since”, but then seems to put great weight on Cadwallader’s account (and therefore, his importance to Grant’s career), concluding that “Grant was lucky; he found an understanding reporter when he needed one desperately.” *A Bohemian Brigade* was published in 2000, the same year that Brooks Simpson published *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph over Adversity, 1822-1865*, so Simpson’s analysis in that book of Cadwallader’s account was perhaps not available to Perry at the time he was writing. However, the second publication of Cadwallader’s memoirs in 1996 included an introduction by Simpson, in which he analyzed the Yazoo incident in some depth; from Perry’s bibliography, it appears that he did not consult that edition, but used the 1955 edition of Cadwallader’s memoirs. Although Perry might not accept Simpson’s conclusion that the Cadwallader account is a “fable” or “a story hard to reconcile with the available evidence”, it is too important to this book’s subject to be ignored or dismissed.

With the proviso that my reading of this book was bothered by these two concerns, I am still quite comfortable with recommending the book as a well-written book about an important subject: a group of men who influenced how their readers perceived the war, and in so doing, still have some influence on what we know about the war today; and who first confronted the major issues of the purpose, role, and standards of the newsmedia during war that are still relevant in the era of satellite television and worldwide telecommunications.

(*A Bohemian Brigade* is available through CCWRT’s online bookstore at <<http://www.cincinnatiwrt.org>>. Also available is *Three Years with Grant*, Sylvanus Cadwallader, Bison Books Edition, University of Nebraska Press, 1996.)

#### ***Rebels on Lake Erie* Charles E. Frohman Author**

"The story of Johnson's Island prison in Lake Erie where 2500 Confederate officers were incarcerated during the Civil War. Frohman uses diaries, letters, official records and newspaper accounts to describe the prisoners' lives and the history of the prison."

**Johnson’s Island Preservation Project:** Our dedicated Preservation Project for the 2004 – 2005 campaign year is the Johnson’s Island Preservation Project. We hope you will support the Round Table in its efforts to raise \$750.00 from the membership, with the first \$250.00 being matched from the General Fund, for a total preservation gift of \$1,000.00. Contributions can be made at the check-in desk during monthly meetings or by mailing your gift to Treasurer Bob Limoseth at Cincinnati CWRT, P. O. Box 621082, Cincinnati, OH 45262. Checks should be made out to Cincinnati CWRT and the memo line should indicate Johnson’s Island Preservation Project. A receipt will be provided as all contributions are tax deductible under our status as a 501 C 3 organization. Contributions will be received until May 19, the date of our last monthly meeting before the summer break

#### **NEWSLETTER DEADLINES**

To facilitate the printing and timely distribution of the monthly newsletter, information for it should be submitted to the editor no later than the following dates:

March newsletter, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005

April newsletter, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005

May newsletter, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005

**Information may be emailed to [waldbill@xavier.edu](mailto:waldbill@xavier.edu)**

#### **Quiz answers:**

1. E. B. (Pete) Long, author with his wife, Barbara, of *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865*. New York: DaCapo Press, 1971. From “Forward” by Bruce Catton in that book.
2. The capture of Fort Fisher, defending Wilmington, NC. (Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*, pp. 321.)
3. He proposed training slaves for military service, with the promise of freedom for every slave remaining loyal to the Confederacy. The proposal was squashed immediately by President Davis, although it was later enacted into law by the Confederate Congress in March, 1865. (Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*, p. 35; Symonds, *Stonewall of the West*, pp. 181-195.)
4. Cousins. Their fathers, John and David, both high-ranking U.S. Navy officers, were brothers and sons of Revolutionary War veteran David Porter. (Anders, *Injustice on Trial; Appleton’s Cyclopedia of American Biography*, online at <<http://www.virtualology.com/davidporter1/>>.)
5. Bulloch was a civilian agent for the Confederate government in Liverpool, Great Britain, for the entire war, responsible for procuring ships for the Confederacy without violating Great Britain’s neutrality. (Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*, p. 575; Bulloch, *The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe*.)
6. The U.S. Military Railroad (USMRR), created by the War Department in February 1862 to build, rebuild, and operate railroads in Union-controlled territory in the seceded states. (Clark, *Railroads in the Civil War*, 62-63.)



### FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

March 17, 2005, Jim Epperson, Ann Arbor CWRT, "Sheridan, Warren and the Battle of Five Forks"  
April 21, 2005, Dr. George Rable, University of Alabama, "Religion and the Civil War"  
May 19, 2005, Dr. Brooks Simpson, Arizona State; "Enemies to the Rear: Ulysses S. Grant, 1861-1863."  
September 15, 2005, Dr. Stephen Engle, Florida Atlantic University, "Don Carlos Buell and the Western Theater"  
October 20, 2005, Mike Grimes, Berea, Kentucky, "Music and its Impact on the Civil War"

### ABOUT THE CINCINNATI CWRT

**Membership** in the Cincinnati CWRT is open to anyone with an active interest in the American Civil War. Annual dues (prorated throughout the year to new members) are \$25, and help cover operating costs including this newsletter, as well as speaker expenses. If you are joining for the first time, there is a one-time initiation fee of \$20.

**Meetings** are held the third Thursday of the month at the Quality Hotel and Suites, 4747 Montgomery Road, Norwood, Ohio (**telephone 513-351-6000**). If traveling Interstate 75, exit at Ohio 562 (The Norwood Lateral) and travel east to the Montgomery Road exit. Exit south, and the Quality is on the right. If coming from Interstate 71, also exit at Ohio 562 (The Norwood Lateral) and go west. As before, exit at Montgomery Road and go south. There is plenty of free parking.

**Dinner reservations** are required, and can be made prior to the reservations deadline either by an email to [reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org](mailto:reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org) or by a phone call to the officer taking reservations for the meeting (whose name and number is listed on the header of the current *Canister*). **Late reservations** (after Sunday prior to the meeting) will be accepted, but will cause an adjustment of arrangements with the Quality, and may require an alternate meal selection, depending on total attendance. **Walk-ins without a reservation** will be able to have dinner if available based on total attendance. **Late cancellations** may be made by email or phone. Since a cancellation after the Sunday deadline means that CCWRT has guaranteed payment to the Quality for the reserved number of meals, the Treasurer will review the number of late cancellations and late reservations for every meeting. If a late cancellation results in CCWRT being required to pay for an extra meal, the person making the late cancellation will be expected to pay for the dinner. **No-shows** who have a dinner reservation but do not attend or cancel will be expected to pay for the dinner. **Meals** currently cost \$20. Menu selection will change with each meeting.

#### **CINCINNATI CWRT OFFICERS:**

President: Dan Reigle, (h) 513-777-9255 [DReigle@cinci.rr.com](mailto:DReigle@cinci.rr.com)

Vice President: John W. Linnenberg, (h) 513-922-3999 [jw.linnenberg@gte.net](mailto:jw.linnenberg@gte.net)  
(cell) 607-4002 (has voice mail)

Treasurer: Bob Limoseth, (h) 513-777-2160 [rlimo@fuse.net](mailto:rlimo@fuse.net)

Secretary: Albert Hallenberg, (h) 859-441-0385 [Alberthallenberg@zoomtown.com](mailto:Alberthallenberg@zoomtown.com)  
(w) 369-6909 [albert.hallenberg@cincinnati-library.org](mailto:albert.hallenberg@cincinnati-library.org)

Program Chair: Dave Smith, (h) 859 331-5558 [Dmsmith001@aol.com](mailto:Dmsmith001@aol.com) (w) [dmsmith@amedcts.com](mailto:dmsmith@amedcts.com)

Newsletter Editor: Patricia Waldbillig, (h) 513-271-5766 (w) 513-745-3531 [waldbill@xavier.edu](mailto:waldbill@xavier.edu)

Membership & Publicity Chair: Jack Simon, (h) 513-574-0017 [JackPSimon@aol.com](mailto:JackPSimon@aol.com)

Trustee (2004-2005): Dawn Mowery, (h) 513-774-9544 [dmowery11@fuse.net](mailto:dmowery11@fuse.net)

Trustee (2004-2006): Dr. Paul Busam, (h) 513-931-1516

#### **Committees:**

Preservation Projects: David Mowery, (h) 513-774-9544 [dmowery11@fuse.net](mailto:dmowery11@fuse.net)

Webmaster: Dave Smith, (h) 859 331-5558 [Dmsmith001@aol.com](mailto:Dmsmith001@aol.com) (w) [dmsmith@amedcts.com](mailto:dmsmith@amedcts.com)

### Important Message:

To all members, Round Tables and friends of the CCWRT who receive this Newsletter!

Effective immediately we have a new mailing address.

Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

P. O. Box 621082

Cincinnati, OH 45262

Please change your records to reflect this change.