
THE CANISTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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

MARCH, 2005 Issue

MEETING INFORMATION FOR March, 2005

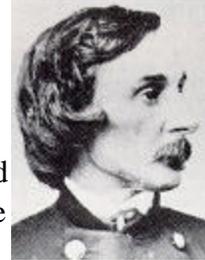
Meeting Date: March 17, 2005
Meeting Place: Quality Hotel and Suites
Time: (6:00) Refreshments
(6:45) Dinner

Speaker: March 17, 2005, Jim Epperson, Ann Arbor CWRT, “
Topic: Sheridan, Warren and the Battle of Five Forks”



IMPORTANT NOTE: If you do not have an Automatic Reservation, please remember to email your meeting reservation to reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org or call it in to Dan Reigle at 513-777-9255.

The Battle of Five Forks is best remembered for three things: Finally turning Lee out of the Petersburg lines; the infamous shad bake attended by Pickett, Fitz Lee, and Rosser; and the controversy over the firing of Union Major General G. K. Warren by Phil Sheridan. In his presentation titled “Warren and Sheridan at Five Forks,” Jim Epperson will touch on all three issues, with some emphasis on Warren's relief: How it came about, was it justified, the postwar controversy and Court of Inquiry. As with most controversies of this sort, no one comes out totally clean.



Trained as a mathematician at the University of Michigan and Carnegie-Mellon, JFE has had a life-long interest in Civil War history. He has published two articles in Civil War magazines, maintains three websites on the Civil War, and has a contract with the University of Alabama Press for a book on the POW exchange cartel. He is an active participant in numerous online discussion groups. He works as an editor for the American Mathematical Society in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he lives with his wife, two children, and two Border Collies.

Quiz--February, 2005

1. Three significant military events occurred on February 17th during the war: the sinking of the USS *Housatonic* by the submarine, CSS *H.L. Hunley*, the capture of Columbia, SC, by Union forces, and the evacuation of Charleston, SC, by Confederate forces. In which year did each

of these events occur?

2. In his discussion of the Chattanooga and Knoxville campaigns in 1863 in his *Personal Memoirs*, General Grant makes this statement: “On several occasions during the war, he came to the relief of the Union army by means of his *superior military genius* (emphasis in original text)”. Of whom was Grant speaking?
3. Name the historian whose biography of Henry Halleck led to an offer from Dwight Eisenhower to write his biography.
4. What are the names of the four streams that converge to become the Mattaponi River near Spotsylvania and Guinea Station, VA?
5. Name the corps commander described by Grant as “besides being a most capable soldier, was an experienced railroad builder.” Using only the skills of men within his command such as millers, blacksmiths, axemen, and car builders, he rebuilt 102 miles of the Nashville & Decatur Railroad, including 182 bridges, in forty days in late 1863. His railroad career would continue after the war, initially as chief engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad. Who was he?
6. Historian Charles Roland stated in *The Confederacy* that “Possibly no other man accomplished as much for the Southern cause overseas as did Henry Hotze.” Hotze was a native of Switzerland who came to America before the war and worked for the *Mobile Register*. What was his mission in Europe?

February Presentation by Albert Hallenberg

For the February, 2005 Round Table talk, former President and current Program Chair/Webmaster Dave Smith continued his analysis of Civil War generals with unusual quirks. In a previous presentation, Dave had discussed the sometimes irrational behavior of Confederate general Braxton Bragg. But, with Henry Halleck, Dave found an even odder specimen, hence the title of the talk.

Dave decided, however, not to devote his talk in comparing Halleck with Bragg, but rather with two Union counterparts, General George McClellan and General John Pope. Dave’s comparison of the three worked out well as they all would eventually heavily play in the disastrous Union defeat at Second Manassas. Halleck, McClellan, and Pope arrived in the War as something similar to “all-stars.” Dave indicated how all three had performed with distinction in the Mexican-American War. All three were considered highly intelligent (Halleck had earned the nickname “Old Brains”). Many considered Halleck a prize scholar in the field of military tactics, as he had written several well-received books on the topic. Dave related how Halleck seemed to begin very well commanding the Western Theater, and had to his credit the captures of Forts Henry and Donelson, as well as a victory at Shiloh.

But when called east to command all the Union forces there, Dave noted how Halleck’s weaknesses were exposed. It quickly became apparent that more vigorous generals such as Ulysses Grant truly earned the victories in the West. Dave noted Halleck was best suited as an administrator and not a commander. He could advise and suggest, but not command and give

orders. And John Pope needed more than advice to avert the inevitable defeat at Second Manassas. But the personality flaws of Pope and McClellan also played a role. Dave noted that Pope's bombastic and rash behaviors in attacking when he should not have and McClellan's now legendary slowness in bringing his huge army to link with Pope's all led to a bad day for the Union.

Dave interestingly lent his extensive management experience to analyze the players during this battle. In this case the linear mindsets unable to think outside the box, such as Halleck, Pope and McClellan, were pitted against far more intuitive thinkers such as Lee, Longstreet and Jackson who were very skilled at creating opportunities for victory even within the jaws of defeat.

This talk was Dave's ninth to the Round Table and, as usual, he combined thorough research with excellent analysis in showing how the management style and personality traits of a military commander may have more consequence than any actual tactics on the field.

Our dedicated Preservation Project for the 2004 – 2005

Johnson's Island Preservation Project: Johnson's Island Preservation Project Update: As of February 19, we are now \$180 away from reaching our Round Table goal of donating \$1000 (which includes the \$250 match from the Preservation Fund) to the non-profit 501c3 organization Friends of Johnson's Island. This group is preserving 17 acres of the core land where Johnson's Island Prison once stood on Sandusky Bay. As a recap, the donations we have received so far have come as follows:

- ? \$150 donation from the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table's General Operation Fund in memoriam of one of our long-standing members, Dave Helmbock.

- ? \$419 in donations from the following persons, whom the Round Table would very much like to thank for their contributions. They have graciously given us permission to print their names here: Ruth Carter; Albert Hallenberg ; Bob Limoseth; George & Sally McIlveen; David & Dawn Mowery; Dan Reigle; Vic Sandfross; Jack Simon; Dave Smith; Richard Swigert; Harriette Weatherbee.

We are progressing quite well, but we can't finish it without you. We would like to thank you all for considering the preservation of Johnson's Island, Ohio, in your charitable plans. There is still plenty of time for you to help in the cause. The CCWRT will be collecting donations up to the May 19th meeting, so please keep Johnson's Island in your thoughts!

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 the "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 C3 organization.

2005 Central Kentucky Civil War Heritage Trail

July 18-24, 2005

1-888-332-1862

The 2005 Central Kentucky Civil War Heritage Trail will be held July 18-24, 2005

More details to follow:

Book Review: *Fanatics & Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War.*

By Lorman A. Ratner and Dwight L. Teeter, Jr. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003. (First paperback edition, 2004). 119 pages. Reviewed by Dan Reigle, CCWRT.

In this book, a professor of history and a professor of journalism merge their disciplines to examine how newspapers reported and analyzed critical events as the sectional crisis deteriorated into the Civil War. To do so, the authors selected the following six events from the five-year period before the start of the war: (1) the Brooks-Sumner caning incident of May, 1856; (2) the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision in March, 1857; (3) the U.S. Senate's decision on the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution for Kansas in December, 1857; (4) John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in October, 1859; (5) Lincoln's election in November, 1860; and (6) Fort Sumter in April, 1861.

The newspapers cited go beyond the well-known New York *Tribune* or Charleston *Mercury* to include over sixty different publications that are intended to represent the fissures in political and social opinion: north, south, west, border, Democrat, Whig, Republican, abolitionist, pro-slavery, secessionist, unionist, etc. This breadth provides an important supplement to the analyses of newspaper political alignments found in John C. Waugh's excellent summary of New York and Chicago papers in *Reelecting Lincoln* and Charles P. Roland's discussion of Richmond and Charleston papers in *The Confederacy*.

The book's first chapter, "The Emergence of a Democratic Press", by itself makes the book worth reading. It describes the development of newspapers from 1840 to 1860 into mass media as a result of the impact of steam-driven presses for newspaper production, the telegraph system for rapid gathering of news, and the railroad system for distribution of newspapers. By 1860, the daily newspapers in the cities and the weekly newspapers in the rural areas (sometimes condensed versions of the daily papers) combined for an annual circulation of 888 million copies, 28.2 copies per capita. During that period, steam-driven and rotary presses increased the number of four-page papers that could be printed in an hour from 4000 to 20,000; the telegraph went from no lines in service to 50,000 miles of lines; and railroads increased their miles in service from under 3000 to more than 36,000. As a result, the investment required to operate a newspaper also increased dramatically, introducing a higher level of competition for readers. In turn, competition led to increased dramatization and sensationalization of the news to attract readers.

Coverage of political developments was inevitably a part of the competition. Newspapers that were supported almost entirely by office-holders or office-seekers were disappearing, but 80% of newspapers were still "political in their character", according to the 1860 census (Brayton Harris, *Blue & Gray in Black & White*, p. 15). Professors Ratman and Teeter provide several examples of the differing points of view of newspapers on each of the six events, including the subject matter choices, the words and labels used, and the images evoked by various papers. A clear conclusion from this book is that the emotion-laden tone of the newspaper coverage of these events contributed to the escalation of the sectional crisis into war. "Newspapers, strutting and posturing, chose to exaggerate in order to excite the passions of readers" (p. 118). Many of the examples illustrate that each of the interest groups (north, south, abolitionist, secessionist, etc.) saw themselves as the defenders of the Republic, and saw the other side as those who would destroy the heritage of the American Revolution. In this context, epithets were used widely to paint an image of the opponent: abolitionists were described as *fanatics* who would destroy the Republic in order to eliminate slavery; southerners were described as *fire-eaters* who would destroy the Republic in order to preserve slavery. As the situation deteriorated, these epithets began to be applied to entire societies, not just to radical minorities within the north or south. "As the press described them, these events provided evidence that in the public mind, slavery, pro or con, was the cause of one part of American society

believing the other to be diseased” (p. 70). Inevitably, the unfortunate result was the wrong discussion: “When they discussed the Kansas trouble, neither southern nor northern newspapers spent time debating the virtues or vices of slavery” (p. 70). One newspaper that mourned the deterioration of the public debate observed that “The vocabulary of abuse has been exhausted in order to furnish invective for the gratification of partisan spite and animosity, insomuch that the current disrespect for the obligations of truth has been equaled by an impudent contempt for the rules of common decency” (Washington, D.C. *National Intelligencer*, 30 March 1861, quoted on p. 89).

My only regret about this book is its small scope. This study could be extended, for example, to include a more thorough comparative analysis of the impact of newspapers in the north and south, given that different rates of telegraph and railroad development made the north more “communication rich” and the south more “communication poor” (p. 17). Further, this analytical approach could be extended to the time period within the war, to newspaper coverage *within* the loyal states and *within* the Confederate states on issues such as the Copperheads, the Davis/Johnston feuds, states’ rights within the Confederacy, the draft within both sections, and the issue of emancipation. However, given its scope, this book is efficiently written; it packs substantial information and analysis into a relatively small size. For example, the brief explanations of each of the six events are in themselves clear and useful summaries of very complex issues. I recommend this book for students of the political, economic, and social aspects of the Civil War era in general, but most definitely for anyone interested in the role and development of newspapers during that period.

(This book is available through CCWRT’s online bookstore at <<http://www.cincinnatiwrt.org>>.)

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:

April newsletter, March 18th, 2005

May newsletter, April 22nd, 2005

Information may be emailed to waldbill@xavier.edu

Quiz answers:

1. *Hunley and Housatonic* in 1864; *Columbia and Charleston* in 1865. (Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865*, pp. 465, 639-640.)
2. President Jefferson F. Davis. (Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 344.)
3. Stephen Ambrose. (In the author biography on the 1990 edition of Halleck: Lincoln’s Chief of Staff, 1962, 1990, LSU Press.)
4. The Mat, the Ta, the Po, and the Ni Rivers. (Foote, *The Civil War*, Vol III, pp. 225, 266).
5. Grenville M. Dodge. (Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, pp. 322-323; Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 127-128.)
6. Roland called him the “master propagandist of the Confederacy”. His mission from the C.S. Secretary of State was “to lay the cause of the Confederacy before the people of Europe.” He did so by establishing a newspaper in London, the *Index*, a journal of news and comment on the Confederacy and the war. “The *Index* was held in high repute, for its tone was one of poise and dignity, and not of vituperation.” (Roland, *The Confederacy*, pp. 108-109.)



FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

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 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.

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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.