



CINCINNATI  
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
SERVING OHIO, KENTUCKY AND INDIANA SINCE 1956



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# THE CANISTER

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Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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

October, 2009 Issue

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Meeting Date: October 15, 2009

**Place: The Drake Center**

**(6:00) Sign-in and Social**

**(6:30) Dinner**

**(7:15) Business Meeting**

**(7:30) Speaker**

**Dinner Menu: Country Style Meatloaf; Whipped Mashed Potatoes; Green Beans;  
Green Salad with Raspberry Vinaigrette, German Chocolate Cake  
Coffee, Tea and Water**

**Vegetarian Option: Available upon request**

**Speaker: John Haas, Ohio Historical Society**

**Topic: To Battle for God and the Right:  
The Civil War Letter Books of Emerson Opdycke**

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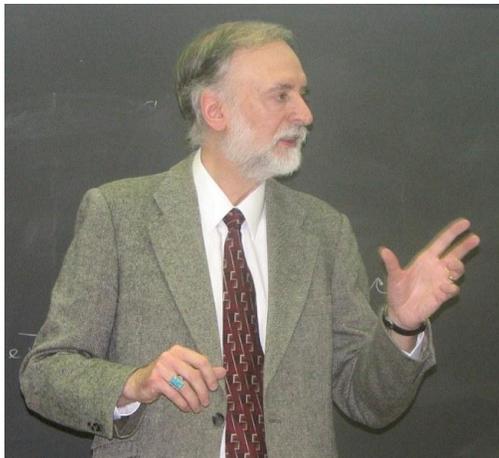
**Reservations:** If you do not have an Automatic Reservation, please remember to email your meeting reservation to [reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org](mailto:reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org); call it in to Pat Homan at 513-861-2057 (h); or email: [homanfamily@fuse.net](mailto:homanfamily@fuse.net). If you are making a reservation for more than yourself, please provide the names of the others. Please note that **all reservations must be in no later than 8:00 pm Wednesday, October 7th, 2009.**

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## About our October Speaker:

Author and historian **John Haas** from the Ohio Historical Society will be making his debut appearance at the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table in October. Although he is a native of Brooklyn, New York, John has lived in seven U.S. states as well as Japan, Okinawa, Labrador, and Newfoundland. John became interested in the Civil War during the Civil War Centennial period of 1961-1965 and has always maintained that interest. His undergraduate degree is from the University of Maryland, and he earned a Master of Arts in

History from the University of Arizona. John has worked at the Ohio Historical Society since 1989 in various capacities. He is now the Manuscript Curator at OHS in Columbus. For several years Mr. Haas worked with Glenn Longacre to transcribe, edit, and annotate over 300 letters that Union Brevet Major-General Emerson Opdycke sent home to his wife, Lucy Stevens Opdycke. Haas and Longacre published the letters in the book entitled *To Battle for God and the Right: The Civil War Letter Books of Emerson Opdycke* (2003), which was reprinted in 2007 due to its popularity.



The Opdycke letters span the entire length of the Civil War, during which time Emerson Opdycke rose from the rank of 2nd Lieutenant to a Brevet Major General. He served as an assistant company commander and full company commander in the 41<sup>st</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry before raising his own regiment, the famous “Opdycke Tigers” of the 125<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry, of which he was made the Colonel. Opdycke’s exemplary leadership in battle earned him a brigade and, eventually, a division command. He showed conspicuous gallantry and leadership at Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Franklin, where he and his men helped turned the tide of these critical Western Theater battles. Opdycke’s military actions also included Chattanooga, the East Tennessee campaign, the Atlanta Campaign, and the Nashville Campaign.

The Opdycke letters themselves are very revealing, entertaining, tragic, funny, and generally informative. They vary in length from a few lines to several pages and discuss camp life, training, troop movements, and discussions of battles, campaigns, personalities, and the war overall. At our meeting Mr. Haas will not only talk about this man and his letters in more detail, but he will also read to us some lines that Emerson Opdycke wrote to his wife during the war.

## Miscellaneous Announcements:

**The Museum of the Confederacy Selected as Dedicated Preservation Project:** As we indicated in last month’s Newsletter, the Round Table has selected to support The Museum of the Confederacy’s relocation into three satellite museums as its 2009 – 2010 Dedicated Preservation Project. To encourage members to donate to this important fund raising effort, the Preservation Fund will match all monies donated up to a total of \$500. Earlier projects of this type have resulted in contributions exceeding \$1,000 because of the generosity of our members. Contributions can be made at the check-in desk during monthly meetings, or by mailing your gift to Treasurer Jim Stewart 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 "The Museum of the Confederacy." The May, 2010 meeting is the deadline for all donations. A receipt will be provided as all contributions are tax deductible under our status as a 501 C3 organization.

**Ohio Civil War 150 Website is Live Online:** The 150th anniversary of the American Civil War is nearly upon us. The Civil War sesquicentennial (2011-2015) provides a fresh opportunity for Round Table members to rediscover the many ways in which Ohioans played a key role in the war and in which the war – “this mighty scourge,” as Lincoln described it – changed life in Ohio. The Civil War story in Ohio touches almost every community in the state, and this website is a place for those interested in its vast and fascinating history to come together around the anniversary of that time period. To visit the site, go to: [www.ohiocivilwar150.org](http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org). The site will be constantly updated, especially as we get closer to sesquicentennial events, so you’ll want to Bookmark it for future reference.

**Mort Kunstler Collectible Christmas Ornament Raffle:** During the October and November meetings we will be selling \$1.00 raffle tickets for a chance to win the 2009 Limited Edition issue of Kunstler's *Brief Encounter* ornament pictured here. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> in a series of ornaments, thirteen of which have been graced with artwork donated produced and issued exclusively by located in Winchester, VA serves disabled male students between the ages of ten and nineteen. The ornament was donated by member Timber Ridge School fund raising proceeds received from the raffle be with all collectibles there is a earlier issues have sold for hundreds of dollars. The Round Table thanks George for his kind contribution.



**ListServ Email Reminder:** When you receive a ListServ message from the Round Table, there are two appropriate ways to respond - if a response is required. If you want to correspond with only one or two Round Table members who received the message you need to type in their individual email address in the To... line at the top of your email form. Do Not Use the Reply button. *If you do indeed want to communicate with all 84 members who participate in our ListServ group, selecting the Reply button is the appropriate option.* Remember, whatever message you type after hitting Reply will be broadcast to every member on the ListServ list. We thank you in advance for your help in limiting what some members might see as the receipt of Round Table mail they would prefer not to receive.

**Donated Books Now Being Accepted:** It's time to replenish our inventory of books used to supply the Monthly Book Raffle and the Preservation Book Sale. Last year we deposited \$994 from the sale of book raffle tickets directly into the General Fund. Revenue flowing into the Preservation Fund from book table sales and silent auctions totaled \$420. This program has truly been a win-win situation for the Round Table. We thank you in advance for your support.

**Welcome New Members:** A hearty welcome to our newest members! The following persons were accepted as members during the September meeting: Jill Holt, Allen Satin, William Sherman, Mark Silbersack, and Andrew Simmons.

**Newsletter Deadlines:** To facilitate the printing and timely distribution of the monthly newsletter, items to be considered for inclusion in the November Canister should be submitted to the editor no later than **October 25.** Information may be emailed to: [Dan\\_Bauer@CINFIN.com](mailto:Dan_Bauer@CINFIN.com)

## September Presentation:

...submitted by Mike Rhein

Describing Confederate cavalry leader Nathan Bedford Forrest's commanding presence in one of his early battles at Bowling Green, Kentucky, author Shelby Foote writes, "Standing in the stirrups, swinging his sword and roaring 'Charge! Charge!' in a voice that rang like brass, the colonel personally accounted for three of the enemy officers, killing two and wounding one; he shot the first, sabered the second, and dislocated the shoulder of a third by knocking him off his horse." (The Civil War-A Narrative, Vol. 1)

In a vignette on Forrest (Two Flags Flying), author Donald J. Sobol paints a succinct picture of him: "Whether in person or by proxy, Nathan Bedford Forrest fought the Union forces in the West with the same

result: victory. A born soldier, he understood war with ruthless honesty. ‘War means fightin’ and fightin’ means killin’,” he said. “And no one ever fought and killed more efficiently than this one-time Memphis slave trader.”

Our September speaker, Brian Steel Wills, professor at the University of Virginia at Wise and author of several publications on the Civil War including two on Forrest including The Confederacy’s Greatest Cavalryman: Nathan Bedford Forrest (1998), delivered a presentation that focused mainly on Forrest’s characteristics which made him such a feared leader. Professor Wills described Forrest as a “man of action” who had 29 horses shot under him in the war and killed 30 opponents in “hand-to-hand combat.” He quoted noted Civil War scholar James McPherson’s description of Forrest’s tenacious combat style as a “killing machine.”



A recruiting advertisement early in the war, according to Mr. Wills, accentuated Forrest’s fighting nature and style when he emphasized a penchant for “shotguns and pistols” for cavalymen. The professor stressed a key point involving the character development of Forrest that led to his innate ability to lead fearlessly: “He was a product of the times in which he lived, a product of the frontier,” alluding to Forrest’s childhood in middle Tennessee (born in 1821). Mr. Wills used a quote from Forrest describing his rough formative years for the title of a publication, “Battle from the Start: The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest” (1993). He described Forrest as “self-reliant” in his youth, influenced by his mother who was also strong-willed. A hard worker, Forrest eventually accumulated wealth by the time he was 40 at the beginning of the Civil War through farming and slave trading.

With little formal education (“He taught himself English and math,” said Mr. Wills) and no military training before the war, Forrest enlisted as a private in the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry in 1861. However, he did not stay in this rank long. Through his natural leadership ability, sheer will, tenacity, he rose to lieutenant general by 1865. He was always at the front, leading his troops, sustaining wounds. Mr. Wills stressed that Forrest, with no tolerance for cowardice, “respected a man who didn’t back down.” One of his leadership characteristics, according to Mr. Wills, was that Forrest “focused on control and intimidation.”

Forrest, with fewer troopers and limited resources, managed to accomplish military wonders, even drawing praise from General R. E. Lee after the war. In referring to Lee’s laudatory comment, Mr. Wills said, “He did more with less.” Forrest’s relentless attacking style mixed with guile and ingenuity, frustrated many Union opponents in the field, even Gen. William Sherman who called Forrest “that devil.” Mr. Wills summed up Forrest’s military philosophy in his own words, such as “I want to do it rite,” “I want to fite” and “I got there first with the most.” He added more Forrest quotes describing his psychological approach in intimidating his foes, such as “Get the skeer in ‘em. Keep the skeer in ‘em.” Forrest finally succumbed to an overwhelming Union cavalry force, led by Gen. James Wilson, at Selma, Alabama, in April, 1865, but his exploits in the field, at times against seemingly impossible odds, stamped his legendary status then and ever since in our American military annals.

Mr. Wills mentioned that there were three controversies that marred Forrest's reputation: his slave trading career, his handling of the April, 1864 Fort Pillow, Tenn. "massacre," and his involvement in the Ku Klux Klan of which he was its first Grand Wizard. In the question-and-answer session, Mr. Wills gave a lengthy answer describing Forrest’s involvement in the Fort Pillow incident. According to Wills, "Forrest did not perpetrate the massacre; he lost control of the battle." His objective in attacking the fort was chiefly to take horses and equipment. He explained that Forrest arrived late to the attack and that once at the fort, he focused more on the nearby Union gunboat rather than the conduct of his troops. Mr. Wills added that Forrest

"turned over 80 prisoners, including a few blacks. Had Forrest intended to commit a massacre, there would have been no prisoners to turn over."

Mr. Wills' presentation effectively delineated Forrest's strong personality and fierce will as key factors in his natural capability to inspire his men to unbelievable feats and to instill fear in his foes, making him one of the greatest military leaders in American history.



## Book Review:

...Thomas L. Breiner

*The Battle of the Crater: A Complete History* by John F. Schmutz; McFarland & Company, Inc. Jefferson, NC 428 pages 2009 Hardcover \$75.00

*The Battle of the Crater: A Complete History* by John F. Schmutz is by far the most comprehensive work on this topic that I have ever encountered. In order to set the tone for this review, I will say that the author has done an excellent job of researching and making sense out of what otherwise is a complete fiasco. From the beginning, the author quickly identifies the primary problem in this project; the relationship between Major Generals George G. Meade and Ambrose E. Burnside. This relationship soured during the Fredericksburg Campaign of 1862 and neither party had work at improving their working relationship. The book does the required review of the 1864 Overland Campaign setting the stage for the siege of Petersburg. From there, our author develops all the details that encompass the digging of the mine, the strategic decisions connected with the planned assault and finally, the incidents of the actual battle and its aftermath.

John Schmutz, the author, does a wonderful job of telling the particulars of the mining project. He is quick to identify that Meade is a major impediment to the success of the project. His attitude is then coalesced within his staff. Why Meade ever authorized Burnside to proceed with the mining operation while never truly supporting it is ludicrous. Meade should have rejected the project from the start, if he was not willing to give it his complete support. Meade's attitude is reflected throughout his staff as Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pleasants of the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment request for mining equipment is continually denied. Meade has done his best to see that this project will not succeed. The fatal flaw comes when Meade rejects Burnside's plan of attack on the afternoon prior to exploding the mine and launching the assault. Burnside is not allowed to lead with the 4<sup>th</sup> Division which had been training specifically to handle the maneuvers required for the assault. This unit is made up of the USCT regiments. Unfortunately, Grant supported Meade's decision.

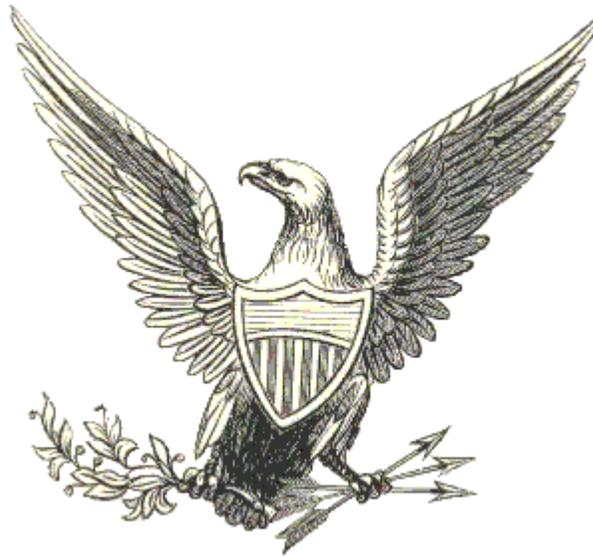
Through the eyes of the author, the reader sees a plan of attack that potentially could have ended the Civil War in the East come to a complete failure. Of course considering the actions of Brigadier General Edward Ferrero, Division Commander 4<sup>th</sup> Division 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, spending his time with Brigadier General James H. Ledlie, Division Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Division 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, in a bombproof sampling the commissary whiskey instead of guiding his division could have created the same problem that occurred with Ledlie's division. This will never be known.

While I was thrilled with the general quality of the author's research and the excellent writing of the work, there are several problems. The only significant flaw in his research, that I observed, was his identification of William Seward as the Secretary of the Treasury instead of Secretary of State. Next, the author seems so enamored with certain passages that he tends to repeat them. I found this practice to be very confusing at times. I thought maybe I had lost my place and I was re-reading the same material. It turns out that I was confused because the author was using the same quotes again. Finally, the maps provided with the text were

basically useless. The author describes the action in various trenches and covered ways around the crater, but the maps never provide an adequate picture of the area.

As far as the author's analysis of the project, I found his conclusions to be direct and to the point. He supports his conclusion with quality details. He identifies where the problems were created and who was responsible. The command structure from Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant on down to the division officers all failed in their responsibilities. There was no one in overall command on the scene, no division commanders were at the front and the plan of attack, even after Meade revised it, was not related to the appropriate brigade commanders. Even the other Corps commanders were at fault for failing to supply the support necessary.

In my opinion, the author has produced a complete history of the Battle of the Crater as promised. I highly recommend this read for all those with any interest in the Civil War and especially the Petersburg Campaign. For those inclined to purchase this work, the book can be ordered through the publisher's website [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com) or by calling 1-800-253-2187.



## September Quiz:

1. Robert E. Lee, at the time president of Washington College, while speaking with a visiting English military officer was overheard by 2 students as saying, “\_\_\_\_\_ was the greatest genius to have emerged during the war. He accomplished more with fewer troops than any other officer of either side.” To whom was Lee referring?

Answer: Nathan Bedford Forrest

2. Regarding Southern military insignia immediately after the war, what was the significance of the statement, “the buttons are in mourning?”

Answer: It was required that during the Federal occupation that all Confederate insignia must vanish including such markings on military buttons. Because buttons were in short supply, rather than removing them from apparel, they were covered with black cloth sewn around them.

3. How many Federal soldiers died during Rosecrans's campaign after the battle of Stone's River to his ousting of Bragg's army from Chattanooga?

Answer: Six

4. Which U.S. president became a member of the Confederate Congress?

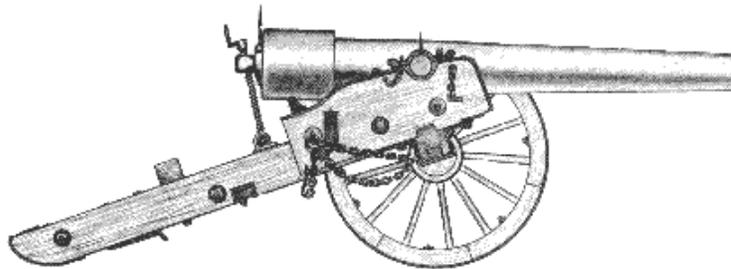
Answer: John Tyler (1841-1845), died as a Confederate congressman, 1862.

5. "Out of the way, you sons of bitches," was yelled out by a Federal captain to a pressing, loud, infuriated mob. Who was the person for whom the crowd was to make way?

Answer: Abraham Lincoln as he was being carried from Ford's theatre

6. General Liddell, describing General Braxton Bragg as being in a typically bad mood, paraphrased him as saying of one of his major subordinates, "I have not a single general officer fit for command. Look at \_\_\_\_\_; the man has allowed himself to be drawn off in a general rampage, capturing towns that are of no use whatever to me. The man is ignorant and does not know anything of cooperation." To whom was he referring?

Answer: Nathan Bedford Forrest



## Future Presentations:

November 19, 2009	Charles P. Roland, University of Kentucky <i>A Slave Owner Defends Slavery</i>	
January 21, 2010	Gary Q. Johnson, CCWRT <i>Monitor Class Ironclads – The Dawn of Industrialized Warfare</i>	
February 18, 2010	Michael Stevens, CCWRT <i>The Handsome Spaniard: Ambrosio Gonzales, Cuban Patriot &amp; Confederate Officer</i>	
March 18, 2010	Lois J. Lambert, CCWRT <i>Heroes of the Western Theater: 33rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry</i>	
April 15, 2010	John Fazio, Cleveland CWRT <i>Francis and Arabella Barlow; John and Fanny Gordon: Love and War</i>	
May 20, 2010	Peter Cozzens, Silver Springs, MD	Topic TBD
September 10, 2010	Robert E. L. Krick, Jr.	Topic TBD

## 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 for a Regular Membership. This fee helps cover operating costs which include this newsletter, as well as speaker expenses. A Sustaining Member level of membership is also available for \$50 (single) and \$85 (couple). The purpose of this membership category is to encourage and recognize members who make additional contributions of \$25 or more, in addition to their annual dues in any fiscal year, to the objectives and programs of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table. If you are joining for the first time, there is a one-time, lifetime, initiation fee of \$20.

**Dinner reservations** are required, and can be made prior to the reservations deadline either by an email to [reservations@cincinnatiwrt.org](mailto:reservations@cincinnatiwrt.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*). **Meals** currently cost \$27. Menu selection will change with each meeting. A vegetarian meal option is available, if requested prior to the reservations cut-off date.

**A Meeting Only Fee** of \$5.00 is assessed to members, visitors and guests who arrive after dinner to hear the speaker. The monies collected are used to help offset the expenses of the evening's activities.

**Late Reservations** and **Walk-ins without a reservation:** Our ability to be flexible for late reservations or walk-ins is now restricted by the fact that the Drake Center only prepares meals according to the reservation count called in. Therefore, **Late Reservations** (after the Wednesday by 8:00 pm which is eight days before the meeting) will be accepted conditionally, subject to the caterer's ability to honor a change in dinner count if received close to the meeting date. **Late Reservations** and **Walk-ins without a reservation** will only be able to have dinner if offset by cancellations or no-shows, or if the caterer determines that sufficient food is available.

**Late cancellations** may be made by email or phone. Since a cancellation after the Wednesday 8:00 pm deadline which is eight days before the meeting means that CCWRT has guaranteed payment to The Drake Center 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 the 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 will be billed for the meal. **Meetings** are held the third Thursday of the month, September – November and January – May at The Drake Center, 151 West Galbraith Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45216 (**Phone: 513-418-2500**). If traveling Interstate 75, exit at Galbraith Road (Exit 10) and go west one mile. If coming across the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway, take the Galbraith Road exit and go west two miles. Or, take the Galbraith/Winton exit and go east one mile. **Free parking** is available in the WEST PAVILION parking lot. The West Pavilion entrance will take you to the meeting rooms. To get to our meeting room enter the West Pavilion and take the elevators to your right to level A, go to your right and Motivation Meeting Room G is located at the end of the hallway.

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**Don't Forget to Bring a Friend!**