
THE CANISTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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

NOVEMBER, 2004 Issue

MEETING INFORMATION FOR NOVEMBER, 2004

Meeting Date: November 18th, 2004

Meeting Place: Quality Hotel and Suites

Time: (6:00) Refreshments

(6:45) Dinner

Speaker: Larry Emley, Cincinnati CWRT

Topic: Turner Ashby



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 John Linnenberg at (h) 513-922-3999 (cell) 607-4002 (has voice mail)

Turner Ashby had the reputation as a romantic figure, cut down in the early part of the Civil War. Dead in his early 30's, a planter and successful grain dealer from Virginia, he cut a swath through the popular imagination of Virginians until his death in 1862.

Larry Emley, long-time member of the Cincinnati CWRT, returns to the podium with a biographical sketch titled "Turner Ashby." Colonel of the famous 7th Virginia Cavalry, promoted to brigade command during Stonewall Jackson's Valley campaign, he was appointed brigadier general in May of 1862, just weeks before he was killed in a rear guard action near Harrisonburg. Was Ashby the first coming of J.E.B. Stuart, or more of an undisciplined cavalry commander? These questions and more will be pondered by member Larry Emley. Larry has made several presentations to the Round Table, is a retired businessman currently involved in a Western Hills wine store. Larry has done wonderful work here in Cincinnati in conjunction with the University of Cincinnati as well. Be sure to get your reservations in early for Larry's presentation on November 18.



Book Review by Tom Breiner

Lincoln's War: The Untold Story of America's Greatest President as Commander in Chief by Geoffrey Perret, Random House, New York, NY, 2004, 470 pages, \$35.00 Hardcover.

Lincoln's War by Geoffrey Perret was a major disappointment. When I first found this work, I had great expectations of a well-researched and scholarly book on the decisions made by Lincoln as he learned how to be a commander in chief. He was developing a new area of the President's responsibilities. There were no clear guidelines to follow. Lincoln had a very limited military experience. His brief participation in the Black Hawk War had provided him with some insight into the life and mind of the citizen-soldier. He would draw in this knowledge to develop his approach to handling a large mainly volunteer military. Here was a topic that was ripe for the talents of a historian of Perret's renown.

Unfortunately, our author failed early and often. His basic knowledge of the America Civil War has to be very suspect. Such poor research leaves you with major questions concerning the quality of the entire work. Anyone who is going to attempt to write on any Civil War topic, let alone one as central to the war as Lincoln's Presidency, has to show that they have a firm grasp of the basic facts. These are the areas that are easily researched due to the large volumes of material available. Geoffrey Perret missed too many of these basics to suit me. During the advance on Manassas in July 1861, leading to the First Battle of Manassas or Bull Run, our diligent author has Stonewall Jackson advancing from the northern outskirts of Richmond instead of the advancing with General Joe Johnston from the Shenandoah Valley. Even allowing for using the nickname "Stonewall" prematurely, Jackson's approach from the Valley is a basic fact of this early campaign. A fact easily checked.

On a lesser note, the author refers to Lincoln being abashed in the presence of generals and admirals in April 1861. There were no admirals in the United States Navy until the rank was created in 1862 and awarded to David Farragut for his capture of New Orleans in April 1862. Concerning Jackson's Valley Campaign of 1862 somehow Perret missed the fact that Jackson lost his first battle at Kernstown. He also has General Lee losing all the battles of the Seven Days, even though the Battle of Gaines Mill was a decided Confederate victory. During Halleck's advance on Corinth, Mississippi following the Battle of Shiloh, he has Halleck's command as over 60,000 strong, and then later he adjusts the figure to the more correct amount of 100,000.

According to our author only 19,000 Union soldiers were on hand for the Battle of Perryville in October of 1862, when Buell had over 60,000 men on the scene. Bragg retreated when he realized that he was facing the better part of three Union Corps and not just an isolated part of the Union army.

Perret has Jubal Early as the Confederate commander who defeated Franz Sigel in the Valley instead of John Breckenridge and then using the defeat of Sigel as the opening of the door to Washington. Early's antagonist for his Valley campaign was David Hunter.

The one area that is of particularly insightful in the work is Lincoln's interest in the development of new weaponry. Being the only President to ever hold a patent, Lincoln was highly fascinated by inventor and inventions. Lincoln's drive for innovation allows for the introduction of the Spencer repeating rifle and other new ideas in military hardware. Without Lincoln's push the balloons of Dr. Thaddeus Lowe would have never, to use a bad phrase, "have gotten off the ground" and been tested in combat situations. Here is an area in which I feel at least some agreement with the author.

In summary, the only reason that I would consider this work is as entertainment to find all the inconsistencies in the writer's research. The book fails in its original intention to provide us with a definitive understanding of Lincoln's role as Commander in Chief. There are too many areas where the facts are either wrong or are misrepresented. For this reason, I cannot recommend this book to anyone with a serious interest in the Civil War or in the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. We'll have to continue to look elsewhere for meaningful information on this topic.

CCWRT Preservation Projects Alert: Johnson's Island Prison Site

From David Mowery Chair, Preservation Projects

At the November meeting, we intend to bring before the membership a recommendation to initiate a matching fundraiser in support of the purchase of 17 acres of land containing a significant portion of the Johnson's Island Prison compound, as well as the remains of Fort Johnson. The Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island, a non-profit 501(c)(3) group, is collecting donations to pay off the \$356,228 mortgage on the 17 acres. They must pay off the mortgage in full by October 2005 in order to achieve their goal to save this hallowed land for archaeological research and preservation. The Johnson's Island prisoner-of-war camp was established near Sandusky, Ohio, in 1861 and was designated as a place of confinement for Confederate officers. Brigadier-General Basil Duke and Brigadier-General Jeff Thompson were among the seven generals who served time in Johnson's Island Prison during the war. Today, Johnson's Island is a National Historic Landmark, and it ranks amongst Ohio's most important archaeological sites. It is certainly one of the best preserved Civil War prison camps in the nation -- at least for the moment. Development is encroaching upon the prison site. The proposal we will vote upon is the following: To allow the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table's Preservation Fund to contribute **\$1.00 to match** every \$1.00 that an individual donates to the CCWRT Preservation Fund earmarked for the Johnson's Island project. The maximum matching fund total will be no more than \$250.00.

How it would work: We intend to make Johnson's Island our focal preservation project for the entire campaign year to encourage your on-going support. Multiple gifts can be made, of any size, if you so desire. Receipts will be provided to document your contribution. Payment can be made at the check-in table prior to each meeting or you can mail your contribution to our mailing address at Cincinnati CWRT, P. O. Box 621082, Cincinnati, OH 45262. Simply give, or send, a check or other form of funding, payable to the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table, to Treasurer Bob Limoseth. Note on the memo line "Johnson's Island." Our minimum goal set for member giving is \$250 and that is why we've established the \$250.00 one-for-one match. We would, however, like to raise a good deal more (how about \$750 with a \$250 match?) so that future generations will see that our Round Table helped save one of Ohio's greatest Civil War sites. You may find out more about the prison and about the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island by going to their web site at www.johnsonsisland.com. Please be prepared to discuss and vote on this proposal at the November meeting.

Longstreet's Spy, Henry T. Harrison, Buried in Fort Mitchell

The current (November 2004) issue of *America's Civil War* magazine has a feature article "A Man Called Harrison", the supposed actor who brought vital intelligence to Longstreet during the Confederate move into Pennsylvania in 1863. Harrison became known, not entirely

accurately, as a result of his role in *The Killer Angels* and the movie *Gettysburg*. Bernie Becker, author of this article, has been researching Harrison for over 15 years, correcting and expanding the information known about his great-grandfather. This article is also of local interest, because Harrison lived in Cincinnati and Covington from the 1890's until his death in 1923, and is buried in the Highland Cemetery in Fort Mitchell.

Quiz---October, 2004

1. The Ohio delegation in the 39th U.S. Congress, elected in October, 1864, included two future Presidents. Who were they?
2. On this date (October 21) in 1861, E. B. Long's entry in *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865* indicates that "In Washington the grief-stricken President wrote Catholic Archbishop Hughes for names of those suitable to be appointed chaplains for hospitals". What was the cause of the President's grief that day?
3. General Montgomery C. Meigs became Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army on 15 May 1861 and served in that capacity throughout the war. Whom did he replace as Quartermaster General?
4. The subject of September's talk, John Hunt Morgan, elicited comments from many circles: One Union officer wrote in May, 1862: "Morgan is certainly a gallant gentleman—A man quite after my own heart." However, his admiration had a limit: in July, 1863, he wrote: "The news of Jno Morgans raid in Ohio reached us yesterday.It will be an indelible stigma on Ohio if he is not cut to pieces. If there are not men enough in Ohio to do it I shall feel ashamed of my State and hope Morgan will take her with him into the confederacy". And two weeks later, he wrote: "I am glad Jno Morgan tripped up in Ohio. I had bet \$20 to \$1---that he would never get out." Who was the letter writer?
5. The former postmaster of Wooster, Ohio, Thomas Eckert served on McClellan's staff and then as Major in the Quartermaster Department for the remainder of the war. After the war, he became Assistant Secretary of War and later vice-president of the Western Union Telegraph Company. What was his primary military duty in the Quartermaster Department?
6. One Civil War military figure, in his memoirs, said that his experience had taught him two things: "first, that things are seen plainer after the events have occurred; second, that the most confident critics are generally those who know the least about the matter criticized." Who wrote these words?

October Presentation by Albert Hallenberg

The October CWRT meeting hosted the conclusion of Mike Rhein's "quartet" on the famous Cincinnati William Haines Lytle. Mike originally began his four part discussion on the Civil War general in 1997. Since then, we have followed Lytle's career from attorney and politician to poet and heroic soldier. General Lytle's death fit his legendary status. He bravely led his brigade in defending the Union center against a powerful Confederate offensive spearheaded by James Longstreet on the second day at the battle of Chickamauga (September 20, 1863). Though gravely wounded, Lytle refused to leave the battlefield. Not only his courage, but also Lytle's genuine chivalry and generosity struck a chord with his Confederate counterparts. Mike noted, interestingly, that when Lytle's body was transported through Confederate lines, his enemy provided an honor guard, perhaps the only instance this action was taken for an opponent during the War. It is believed as many as 10,000 attended his funeral service in Cincinnati, perhaps the largest number ever to attend such an event in the local area.

Mike enhanced his presentation with a slide show of his personal visit to the battlefield, particularly concentrating on Lytle Hill where a monument now stands commemorating Lytle and his brigade. Mike's presentations have proven infinitely valuable as, amazingly, no one has published a full-length biography on this local personage. Mike proved certainly one is in order as Lytle was truly a Renaissance man – politician, poet, soldier and a great credit to Cincinnati history.

It is Time for Membership Renewals If you have not yet paid your annual dues, please send your membership renewal check (\$25 single, \$35 couple) to Cincinnati CWRT, PO. Box 621082, Cincinnati, OH 45262

Books Added to the CCWRT online bookstore. (You can access the bookstore at our website.)

- Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory.*
- Holzer, Harold. *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech that made Abraham Lincoln President.* (Reviewed by Tom Breiner in the September, 2004, *Canister.*)
- Pope, Thomas E. *The Weary Boys: Colonel J. Warren Keifer and the 110th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.*
- Schultz, Jane E. *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America.*
- Engle, Stephen Douglas. *Struggle for the Heartland: The Campaigns from Fort Henry to Corinth.* (*Great Campaigns of the Civil War*). (Our CCWRT speaker next September.)
- Saunders, Lisa. *Ever True: Civil War Letters of Seward's New York 9th Heavy Artillery of Wayne and Cuyuga Counties Between a Soldier, His Wife and His Canadian Family.* (See article in October *Canister.*)

WELCOME NEW MEMBER:

The Round Table welcomed Millie Henley into membership at the October meeting.

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:

January newsletter, December 10th, 2004

February newsletter, January 21st, 2005

March newsletter, February 18th, 2005

April newsletter, March 18th, 2005

May newsletter, April 22nd, 2005

Information may be emailed to waldbill@xavier.edu

Quiz answers:

1. James Garfield and Rutherford B. Hayes. (*Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch>.)
2. The death of his close friend, Senator Edward Baker, killed in action as a Colonel at Ball's Bluff, near Leesburg, VA. (Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865*, p. 129-130.)
3. Joseph E. Johnston, who resigned on 22 April 1861 to join the Confederacy. (Faust, *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the CW*, pp. 400, 485.)
4. Gen. William H. Lytle. (Carter, *For Honor, Glory & Union*, pp. 115, 183-184, 190.)
5. He established the military telegraph headquarters in the War Department. (Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, p. 260; Duff, *History of North Central Ohio*, p. 545; Bates, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office.*)

6. U. S. Grant. (Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 83



FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

January 20, 2005 - Tom Breiner, Cinti CWRT, "The C.S.S. Shenandoah"
February 17, 2005: Dave Smith, Cincinnati CWRT, "Stranger Than Braxton Bragg – Henry Halleck"
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 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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