

# THE CHARGER



## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

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#### President's Message

Field Trip to Spring Hill/Franklin, Tennessee: September 18-20, 2014

This past September twenty-eight steadfast members of our Roundtable participated in our annual field trip. This year we toured the battlefields of Spring Hill and Franklin. True to form, we came, we saw, and we vastly expanded our knowledge of the events which occurred there on November 29-30, 1864.

Our program commenced on Thursday evening, September 18, when our very own Mel Maurer gave an excellent overview of Confederate General John Bell Hood's Tennessee Campaign of late 1864. Mel lived in Franklin in the early 90s' (that's 1990s, not 1890s) and he led our Roundtable on a field trip there in 2004. As expected, Mel expertly covered all the salient points. A bonus feature was his artistic impression of a breastwork.

Of course, every field trip depends on the guide and we had the best for Spring Hill/Franklin, namely, Thomas Cartwright. While not disguising his Southern lineage, Thomas scrupulously avoided going all "Moonlight and Magnolias" on us.

In fact, he wore his “125<sup>th</sup> Ohio Fighting Tigers” knit shirt under his authentic Confederate gray jacket (there you are, Thomas, your Buckeye bona fides are in the written record. You are welcome!). Thomas brought great passion and an unsurpassed depth of knowledge to the tour including wonderfully detailed stories of soldiers of all ranks, North and South.

We spent all day Friday touring the Spring Hill area. The complex maneuvering which occurred there on November 29, 1864 is virtually impossible to understand without walking the grounds. And without an understanding Spring Hill there is no comprehension as to why on the very next day the much greater Battle of Franklin occurred at a place which neither side (especially the Federals) expected to fight.

After all, the ultimate target to be attacked or defended was Nashville, not a charming but strategically unimportant village 18 miles to the south. And yet the Confederate charge (actually charges) at Franklin was more than twice as large, sustained far more casualties, and lasted much longer than the more famous Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg.

Modern day Franklin is now a booming, prosperous part of metropolitan Nashville. Indeed, Williamson County, where Franklin is the county seat, is the eleventh wealthiest county per capita in the country. Despite the urban sprawl and high real estate prices, the concerted efforts of several organizations have done wonders in reclaiming the battlefield and

upgrading existing Civil War attractions. One day is really not enough time to cover in depth Winstead Hill, the Carter House, Fort Granger, the Lotz House, the Carnton Mansion, the Confederate Cemetery, and the Eastern Flank Park. If you have not been to Franklin recently, you haven’t seen the half of it.

Among the other enjoyable features of our trip were the excellent hotel accommodations and the well-appointed chartered bus. However, no field trip is complete without glitches and on Friday Thomas had to battle a balky PA system on the bus. On Saturday he had to contend with a large orchestra practicing for the Heritage Ball that evening while he was telling poignant stories of soldiers buried in the Confederate Cemetery. At times like these we do well to remember the words of the English writer G. K. Chesterton: “Inconveniences are merely adventures wrongly considered.”

So, all and all a great trip, not the least of which was the comradery. Do yourself a favor and don’t miss the September 2015 Cleveland Civil War Roundtable field trip.

Patrick Bray



## Don't Miss the October Meeting

### CWRT TEAM TRIVIA CHALLENGE!

#### Official Rules

OCTOBER 8, 2014

#### *The Teams*

1. Each team will have between three and five members, and will sit together. Teams may include CWRT members and guests.
2. Teams are encouraged to have a mix of ages, levels of Civil War knowledge, and lengths of membership in the CWRT.
3. Each team will pick a team name.
4. Each team will give each member a turn as its spokesperson.
5. Each team may consult freely among its members before answering, but for no more than 30 seconds.

#### *The Panel*

6. The TTC Panel shall consist of Jean Rhodes, Dan Zeiser and William Vodrey.
7. Each member of the TTC Panel will generate at least 60 Civil War trivia questions ahead of time, 20 at each of three levels of difficulty: Level 1 - Easy, 2 - Hard, and 3 - Holy Crap, Nobody Knows That!
8. No questions or answers will be revealed to any CWRT member other than the TTC Panel members before the game.
9. All questions will be written down, and will cite a particular reputable written source, including page number.
10. Each TTC Panel member will bring three reputable Civil War history books with him or her to the meeting, in case additional questions are needed.

#### *Opening Round*

11. In the Opening Round, one question will be asked of each team at a time, with each team having a turn.
12. The first three questions to each team will be Level 1. The next three will be Level 2. The next three will be Level 3.

13. Additional Level 3 questions will then be asked until only two teams remain.

14. Challenges or disputes as to any answer, the determination of what level of difficulty a question is, or any necessary interpretations of these rules, will be decided by majority vote of the TTC Panel. All its decisions are final.

15. Three wrong answers during the course of the Opening Round will disqualify a team.

16. Other teams may provide unhelpful wrong answers, but no one not on your team should give or shout out correct answers.

17. This is a game of knowledge and recall, not research skills. No research - including from books, articles, phone calls or Internet access - of any kind is permitted during the game by anyone other than the TTC Panel. Doing so will result in immediate disqualification of that person's entire team.

18. After a single warning to any individual for violation of any other rule, his or her entire team may be disqualified by the TTC for any subsequent violation.

#### *Final Round / Sudden Death Round*

19. When only two teams remain, their previous wrong answers are forgiven, and the Final Round begins.

20. All questions in the Final Round will be Level 3.

21. No team will win unless it correctly answers the Level 3 question just missed by the other team, and then correctly answers another Level 3 question.

22. If the second team also incorrectly answers the question just missed by the other team, the first team remains in the game, and is asked a new Level 3 question. This may happen up to three times. If neither team can correctly answer two consecutive Level 3 questions in those three rounds, we'll go to the Sudden Death Round: one Level 3 question to each team at a time. The team to go first will be determined by a coin toss. The first team to then correctly answer a single Level 3 question wins the whole enchilada.

## Shelby Foote was Wrong!

By Dick Crews

Way back in the year 2000, when William Vodrey was President of our Roundtable, Shelby Foote was our big name speaker. You can argue that Ed Bearss or Bruce Catton are bigger name Cleveland CWRT speakers but Shelby Foote was by **far** the most expensive.

One theme Foote repeated frequently was that the American Civil War produced two geniuses: Abraham Lincoln and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Lincoln has stood the test of time but Forrest made one serious error, effecting the outcome of the Civil War, which has been ignored by history.

This summer I visited Fort Pillow, Tennessee. Fort Pillow is located 50 miles north of Memphis. The Fort was on the Mississippi River. The river has now moved two miles west.

The Fort itself was built as an outer defense for Memphis but when Island #10 in the Mississippi River was taken by Union Forces the fort was abandoned by the Confederates.

No important Civil War battles were fought at Fort Pillow. History treats the attack on the Fort by Nathan Bedford Forrest on April 12, 1864 as a racial act.

As there was no military reason for the attack and later Forrest founded the Ku Klux Klan after the war this conclusion seems to fit. History missed that the Fort Pillow attack was important to the outcome of the Civil War in eastern Tennessee.

Forest attacked Ft. Pillow on April 12, 1864. Three weeks later William T. Sherman left Chattanooga for Atlanta. Reading Sherman's autobiography will tell you that Sherman was very worried all during the Atlanta Campaign about Forrest cutting his single railroad supply line.

Sherman need not have worried as Forrest was at the other end of the State. Forrest had no military reason to attack Fort Pillow. Despite the ferocity of the attack, Fort Pillow was of little significance to the Confederate Army. Nathan Bedford Forrest's troops abandoned it within hours of the massacre. Letters at the Fort from his friends back in Memphis asked Forrest, *to teach the black troops at Fort Pillow a lesson.*

He did have a very important military reason to attack Sherman on his way to Atlanta. William T. Sherman captured Atlanta on September 2, 1864. Historians have said the capture of Atlanta was the number one that reason Abraham Lincoln was reelected in the November of 1864. The reelection of Lincoln ended any Southern hope for a negotiated settlement of the Civil War.

In mid-November, after Lincoln's reelection, Sherman started his famous *March to the Sea* and captured Savannah. In January of 1865, Sherman's Army moved north from Savannah. First he forced the Confederates to abandon Charleston. He then captured both capitals of South and North Carolina.



## Foote was wrong cont.

April 1, 1865, Sherman's now in North Carolina near the Virginia State border. He had a reinforced army of 90,000 men. He executed a plan devised between him and General Ulysses S. Grant. He was preparing to march north and trap Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia now in Petersburg and Richmond. Between both Union Armies, Robert E. Lee saw he was about to be caught in a vise and marched west. Ten days later Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House. The American Civil War was effectively over.

Sorry Shelby Foote, Nathan Bedford Forrest, who used his army for personal reasons when *The South* needed him at a critical time in the Civil War, **cannot** be called a genius.



## Battle of Cedar Creek

By Dennis Keating

This October 19 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Cedar Creek in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. It was one of the most dramatic events in the entire Civil War. Riding his horse Rienzi (memorialized in the stirring poem by Thomas Buchanan Read – "Sheridan's Ride, September 19, 1864), from Winchester, an inspiring Phil Sheridan re-organized and rallied his almost defeated Army of the Shenandoah in a few hours to defeat the rebel army of Jubal Early (Robert E. Lee's "Bad Old Man"), who had launched a successful surprise attack in the fog that morning in Sheridan's absence.

Months earlier Sheridan had been selected by Ulysses Grant, with President Lincoln's support, to clear out the Valley following Early's defeat of David Hunter's army and subsequent raid all the way to threaten Washington, D.C. in order to relieve pressure on Lee's besieged force in Petersburg. Sheridan's army consisted of the VI Corps from the Army of the Potomac, the XIX Corps from Louisiana, and George Crook's Army of West Virginia and cavalry commanded by Alford T. A. Torbert (with division commanders George Custer and Wesley Merritt). Sheridan and his fellow Ohioan Crook had been close friends at West Point. In his army Sheridan had many Ohioans: the Second Brigade of the Third Division of the VI Corps included the 110<sup>th</sup>, 122<sup>nd</sup>, and 126<sup>th</sup> Ohio regiments; the First Brigade of the First Division of Crook's small army included the 116<sup>th</sup> and 123<sup>rd</sup> Ohio regiments; the First Brigade of the Second Division (commanded by future U.S. President from Ohio Rutherford B. Hayes) included the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Ohio regiments; the Second Brigade included the 34<sup>th</sup> and 91<sup>st</sup> Ohio regiments and the 1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Light Battery L. In Sheridan's Cavalry Corps there were two Ohio regiments: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

Beginning with the Third battle of Winchester on September 19 and then at Fisher's Hill on September 22, Sheridan's army had smashed the heavily outnumbered Confederate Valley army (despite reinforcements sent by Lee). Sheridan's cavalry played key roles in both battles. On October 9 Custer led his cavalry against his West Point friend Tom Rosser's Laurel cavalry brigade. Custer's rout of Rosser at Toms Brook became known as the "Woodstock Races". Meanwhile, Sheridan's army carried out Grant's order to destroy the farms that were the granary supplying Lee's army. On October 10 Sheridan's army encamped near Middletown around the Valley Pike and the North Branch of the Shenandoah River. Early's defeated army remained close with a signal station atop Massanutten Mountain, overlooking the camps of Sheridan's army. Believing that Early was decisively defeated, Sheridan went off to Washington to confer about the future role of his army.

Despite being outnumbered both in infantry and cavalry (32,000 to 21,000), at Lee's urging, Early decided upon a bold move. Adopting a plan proposed by division commander John Gordon (aided by Stonewall Jackson's Valley topographer Jed Hotchkiss), Early decided to make a surprise early morning attack led by Gordon. It required his troops to cross the Shenandoah in order to attack Sheridan's left, comprised of Crook's army and the XIXth Corps

## **Cedar Creek cont.**

of William Emery (known as "Old Brick Top" because of his sandy hair). Gordon led his force through a thick fog along narrow trails and across the river to strike Crook's First Division led by Joseph Thoburn (one of ranking officers killed). The surprised Federal troops were quickly overwhelmed and Crook's army was routed. Leading a disorganized retreat was Hayes after his attempt at a stand with his division failed to stem the Confederate tide. Hayes was first injured when his horse was killed and then was stunned by a bullet to his head but he managed to escape when ordered to surrender. The divisions of Joseph Kershaw and Dodson Ramseur then rolled over the XIXth Corps, which conducted a fighting retreat. As the Federals retreated toward the VI Corps and headquarters at the Belle Grove estate, many of Early's soldiers, tattered in dress, many shoeless, and half-starved, stopped to loot the captured Federal camps and the many supplies that they contained. As to whether their looting was a major cause of Early's defeat became a major controversy.

The VI Corps turned to repel the attack from its east instead of the south and fought stubbornly to halt the rebel advance. Its commander Horatio Wright (in overall command in Sheridan's absence) was wounded and his temporary replacement as commander of the VI Corps James Ricketts was also wounded (for the sixth time in the war). On the Valley Pike near Middletown Union cavalry arrived to prevent a further advance north by the Confederates, while many of Sheridan's wagons and stragglers leaving the field back toward Winchester clogged the Pike. That morning Early believed that he had won a great victory but Gordon urged him to continue the assault. Instead, Early replied: "Well, Gordon, this is glory enough for one day". Gordon disputed that, claiming that the VI Corps could be destroyed but remembered that Early responded: "No use in that; they will all go directly". Gordon responded: "That is the Sixth Corps, General. It will not go unless we drive it from the field." Whether because of the state of his exhausted troops, abetted by those who dropped out to loot the captured camps, Early declined to continue the attack. Fatally, he did not realign his victorious troops into a more defensible position and left his left wing (Gordon's division) in a very vulnerable state.

Sheridan awakened in Winchester that morning. Being informed of firing to the south, he and others thought that this was only a reconnaissance. However, he was shortly informed that his army had been routed and was in retreat. Mounting his steed Rienzi, accompanied by his aides and a cavalry escort, Sheridan then headed south to rejoin his army. As they encountered

fleeing wagons and retreating soldiers, Sheridan urged his soldiers to join him, saying "Boys, if I had been with you this morning this would not have happened". Shouting his name, many did turn around and headed back to the battlefield. Cheers accompanied his arrival to greet George Getty, Ricketts' replacement and then Crook, whom he embraced. He then found the wounded Wright, who informed him that "We've done the best we could". Emery then arrived and informed Sheridan that his corps was ready to cover the retreat to Winchester, to which Sheridan replied: "Retreat, hell. We'll be back in our camps tonight". Sheridan then set to re-organize his army in order to counter-attack Early's army. At aide "Sandy" Forsyth's suggestion, Sheridan rode Rienzi along the lines to the resounding cheers of his rejuvenated troops to assure them of his return to lead them. Bruce Catton reported their reaction by the historian of the Vermont Brigade: "Such a scene as his presence produced and such emotions as it awoke cannot be realized once in a century".

By late afternoon, Sheridan was ready and ordered an attack along his whole line to the sound of blaring bugles. After initial resistance, eventually the Confederates gave way on their outflanked extreme left. This in turn led the other units to crumble and a wild retreat south began, with Sheridan's cavalry in pursuit. Sadly, Colonel Charles R. Lowell, Jr. was killed by a sharpshooter as he led the Reserve cavalry brigade. Trying to rally his division, Dodson Ramseur had two horses shot under him before being hit himself. A new father hoping to see his newborn child, Ramseur was taken to Belle Grove, where he was visited by his friend Custer. Ramseur died the next morning.

## **Aftermath**

It is generally agreed that Sheridan's victory, after the previous Federal victories at Atlanta and Mobile, assured Lincoln's re-election in November.

Sheridan's Horse: He was renamed "Winchester". He died in 1878 and was stuffed.

21 Union soldiers received the Medal of Honor.

Early: Lee recalled most of Early's surviving army. On March 2, 1865 at Waynesboro Custer's cavalry scattered his small remaining force. Early escaped to rejoin Lee but was in disgrace and sent home. After the war, he became a leading proponent of the "Lost Cause".

He and Gordon engaged in continued recriminations over responsibility for the defeat.

Gordon: He became a Corps commander and led the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox. He later became a member of the Klu Klux Klan and then a U.S. Senator from Georgia.

Sheridan: He won the battle of Five Forks, forcing Lee's retreat from Petersburg and then cornered his much reduced army at Appomattox. He and Crook engaged in a continuing dispute over credit for the victories in the Valley campaign. He became the Army commander-in-chief in 1883 following Sherman's retirement.

Rutherford B. Hayes: Elected governor of Ohio, he was then elected the 19<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, following Grant, in the controversial contested election of 1876.

Custer: He was prominent in the Appomattox campaign, was a postwar favorite of Sheridan, and gained glory/infamy with his defeat and death at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Crook: He too became a cavalry commander in the West. He resigned in a dispute with Sheridan and Nelson Miles over the treatment of the captured Apache chief Geronimo.

150<sup>th</sup> Commemoration: **October 18-20, 2014:** Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park.

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## Book Notes

### New Civil War novel: *Neverhome* (Little, Brown)

The opening line of Laird Hunt's new Civil War novel *Neverhome* is: "I was strong and he was not so it was me that went to war to defend the Republic."

Plain Dealer's Karen Long's September 9th review begins: "Laird Hunt's transfixing new novel *Neverhome* unspools in the voice of a Civil War soldier. It works upon the reader like a haunting. The narrator is Ash Thompson, a young woman passing as a man in the uniform of the Union".

Ron Charles' September 23rd review in the Washington Post begins:

"Ghosts crowd thick in Laird Hunt's Civil War novel, *Neverhome*, and they're not just shades of dead Blues and Grays. A host of literary allusions haunt this book, from *Cold Mountain* to *The Red Badge of Courage* and all the way back to Homer".

Submitted By Dennis Keating

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John C. Fazio wishes to announce that his book *Decapitation of the Union: Jefferson Davis, Judah Benjamin and the Plot to Assassinate Lincoln* has been accepted for publication. Release is expected early next year. John has spent the last five years researching the subject and writing the book. John advises that he will be given only ten copies for distribution without cost, so it will not be possible for him to make copies available to the membership without cost. However, he adds that all royalties earned by virtue of sales of the book to Roundtable members will be donated to the Roundtable. For additional information and/or to order the book, please contact the author at: [jcf@neohio.twcbc.com](mailto:jcf@neohio.twcbc.com).

## REMEMBER

**Our next meeting: Wednesday, October 8, 2014**

**Judson Manor**

**1890 East 107th St.**

**Cocktails: 6:00pm**

**Dinner: 6:30 pm**