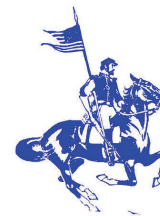


# THE CHARGER



## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

NOVEMBER 2014

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#### President's Message "Get up to Speed on Vicksburg"

At our monthly meeting this November 12<sup>th</sup> we will hear from last year's CCWRT debate winner, Steve Pettyjohn, who will give not simply an encore but an expanded version of his award-winning talk, "The Most Important Battle of the Civil War: Vicksburg."

Vicksburg? Don't you risk flunking conventional Civil War 101 if you assert that *any* battle was more important than Gettysburg? If we look at how the general public votes with its feet and spends its tourist dollars, Gettysburg is the clear winner hands down as it attracts far more attention than any other Civil War site, particularly out-of-the way Vicksburg. And in terms of books, movies, art, and collectibles, well, again it's no contest.

For those of us with more than a casual interest in the Civil War, we need to consider the case for Vicksburg, both the campaign and the siege. I suggest that by attending Steve's talk you will find no better—or more efficient-- way to dive deeply into the subject. Be prepared to enjoy "show and tell" at the highest level as his presentation features numerous photographs based on his 15 visits to the Vicksburg area.

One of the many eternal debates about the Civil War concerns which was the more important: the Eastern or Western theater of the war? For those who want to fortify their argument for the Western theater (and wouldn't most Ohioans naturally go for that?), Vicksburg is your ace. At a minimum you will learn from Steve how Vicksburg loomed far larger in 1863 to both sides than did Gettysburg.

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Of course, the preeminence of the Battle of Gettysburg was secured by Mr. Lincoln's "a few appropriate remarks" the following November. Less well known was his characterization of Vicksburg as "the key" and his further assessment that "The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." Come find out from Steve how the door to victory was unlocked.

Patrick Bray

### **A Rebuttal to "Shelby Foote Was Wrong," The Charger, October 2014**

By Greg Biggs, president, Clarksville TN CWRT

I read with interest the Dick Crews op-ed on how Shelby Foote got it wrong when he called Nathan Bedford Forrest one of the two geniuses of the Civil War. Forrest remains a controversial figure of the Civil War but he was, as Foote suggested, a true genius. With only some six months of any type of education, he rose from a private to lieutenant general by the end of his war career, only one of four American soldiers to do so. You simply do not get that high without some level of talent and, dare I say genius. The fact that many of his raids and campaigns are still studied by military colleges also attests to his military ability.

Mr. Crews focused on the Fort Pillow raid of April 1864, but left out quite a bit of context. First, Forrest simply could not go wherever he wanted without permission of his superior. At this time, Forrest was one of two cavalry commanders in the Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana, which was then commanded by Lt. General Leonidas Polk. Anything Forrest wanted to do had to be approved by Polk who authorized this raid. The main objectives were to disrupt Union supply lines, in particular the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, and to recruit. Forrest had already been very successful recruiting behind Union lines in West Tennessee. Thanks to this, he now had a cavalry corps of two divisions under James Chalmers and Abraham Buford (related to the Union Gen. John Buford).

In mid-March, Forrest, with Buford's Division moved again into West Tennessee but with an added objective: to deal with the sacking of Jackson, Tennessee (twice), by the 6<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry (U.S.) and Col. Fielding Hurst, a command whom Forrest termed, "renegade Tennesseans." As Forrest stated, "The whole of West Tennessee is overrun by bands and squads of robbers, horse thieves and unlawful appropriations of private property." Hurst's style of warfare not only angered Confederates but also members of the Union command who had Hurst arrested once and even threatened him with a court martial. Forrest had been exchanging letters with the Union commander at Memphis over these acts and the arrest of citizens without proper trials. Many of these locations and people were related to men of Forrest's command which angered them

Forrest often operated at the tail end of the Confederate supply line and this raid had one last objective: seize supplies from captured Union garrisons, a feat in which Forrest was quite adept. His raid underway, Forrest captured supplies and Union troops at Trenton and Union City, Tennessee (the 7<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry U.S. surrendering to the 7<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry C.S.). On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1864, Forrest was at Paducah, KY and sent in a surrender demand to its garrison. Stoutly held by Fort Anderson and protected by two Union gunboats, the commander refused. Forrest attacked forcing the Federals from their outer works into the safety of the fort. Keeping them under fire, Forrest's men then loaded up supplies and captured hundreds of horses to refit his command while fire from the gunboats smashed the town. After ten hours, Forrest withdrew his command heading back south.

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## Rebuttle cont.

Mr. Crews indicts Forrest for missing his chance to raid Sherman's lines of supply and accuses him of waging a personal war rather than playing as a team member of the Confederate Army. Nothing could be further from the truth. From his base in Mississippi, Forrest actually started on a raid into Middle Tennessee in early June 1864. He made it into Alabama linking up with units there before being recalled by his new boss, Lt. Gen. Stephen D. Lee. The Federals were on the move from Memphis and Forrest's cavalry corps was the primary defender of that department (the bulk of whose troops had been sent to Georgia in May under Polk) which was also a primary food and industrial region for the Confederacy. This led to the Battle of Brice's Crossroads on June 10th, where Forrest crushed the Union army in a fight that indeed showed true genius, as well as the later Battle of Tupelo and his raid on Memphis. Forrest won most of these fights costing Sherman far more men than he liked but it kept Forrest tied up exactly as planned.

The military reason to attack Fort Pillow, supplies and horses, is quite apparent. I refer the reader to an essay that I sent to this roundtable some time back about the racial aspects of Fort Pillow in detail that is found on your web site. Forrest supplied his troops mostly from captured Federal stocks as he would for most of the war and Fort Pillow had such stocks. Forrest was a team player who worked for superior officers and fought his command according to their will and plans. He indeed, with permission from his superiors, began a raid on Sherman's supply lines. It remains open to debate how effective Forrest would have been on these rail lines with the massive preparations that were in place for their defense and rebuilding (Col. William Wright's Railroad Brigade).

Lastly, Mr. Crews is completely wrong about Forrest starting the Ku Klux Klan. That organization began in Pulaski, Tennessee by six former Confederate soldiers, none of whom were named Forrest. There is a historical marker on the building where this took place in that town and the formation is accounted in at least two books on the KKK and its history. John Morton, Forrest's former chief of artillery, brought Forrest into the Klan later on as it had no charter and no leadership. Under Forrest, the Klan was anti-carpet bagger and dealt with the state government of William "Parson" Brownlow, who hated former Confederates with a passion (as well as President Andrew Johnson, a fellow Tennessean). One must understand the complexity of Tennessee politics at this time and the internecine warfare that had gone on. When the Klan turned racial in nature, Forrest ordered its disbandment and walked away. Every one of the considerable number of biographies on Forrest offers details of his Klan involvement and all of them say the same. Forrest was a control freak and he could not control the Klan.

Shelby Foote remains quite correct.

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## New Books

Biographies of two of the leading military figures of the Civil War have been published recently:

Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman. 2014. Random House.

In his blurb, James McPherson says: "To biographer Robert L. O'Connell [a visiting professor at the Naval Postgraduate School] William T. Sherman was the quintessential nineteenth century American: full of energy, constantly on the move, pragmatic, adaptable, determined to overcome all obstacles, a nationalist and a patriot who teamed with Grant and Lincoln to win the Civil War".

Rebel Yell: The Violence, Passion and Redemption of Stonewall Jackson. 2014. Scribner. Civil War historian Allen Guelzo in his review in the Wall Street Journal's Bookshelf said: "In 'Rebel Yell' S.C. Gwynne's easy loping style wraps itself effortlessly around the particulars of Stonewall Jackson's life, from his back-of-the-mountain upbringing to the outburst of military genius in the Civil War. The result is a narrative vivid with detail and insight but so frankly admiring that few of Jackson's foibles pass without rationalization and few of his failures without excuse". In an interview Gwynne, a journalist with a degree in history from Princeton, said: "What interested me most about Jackson was the idea of personal transformation-how an obscure, eccentric physics professor could, in 14 months, become the most famous military man in the world".

In the October 5 issue of the New York Times Book Review, Civil War historian James McPherson was interviewed in the By the Book section. Asked what was the greatest book ever written about the Civil War, he answered that it was the eight volume series published between 1947 to 1971 by Allan Nevins. He said that his favorite biography was "Grant" by Jean Edward Smith. Asked about the best military histories, McPherson stated "Craig L. Symonds's books on Civil War generals and

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## Books cont.

Admirals, (on naval history and on World War Two) entitle him to first rank among military historians. Stephen W. Sears and Gordon C. Rhea have written the best campaign and battle histories for the Civil War, while Gary W. Gallagher and Joseph T. Glatthaar have written the best studies of (Civil War) armies and commanders." As for his decades of teaching the Civil War era, McPherson cited these two books as his two constant favorites: *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northrup (slavery) and *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara (battle of Gettysburg).

Submitted by Dennis Keating

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### Vicksburg References by Dennis Keating and Steve Pettyjohn

The battles that led to Grant's pivotal capture of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863 have spawned many books. In addition to the insights from the Grant, Sherman and Grierson autobiographies and general Civil War military histories, here is a selection of specific titles to supplement Steven Pettyjohn's presentation on November 12:

#### HISTORY

Arnold, James R. *Grant Wins the War: Decision at Vicksburg.*

Grabeau, Warren E. *Ninety-Eight Days: A Geographer's View of the Vicksburg Campaign.*

Groom, Winston. *Vicksburg, 1863.*

Smith, Timothy B. *Champion Hill: Decisive Battle for Vicksburg.*

Walker, Peter F. *Vicksburg: A People at War.*

Wincshell, Terence J. *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar and Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign.*

[My Charger article on Grierson's 1863 Mississippi raid is archived on the Charger website]

#### FICTION

Shaara, Jeff. *A Blaze of Glory: A Novel of the Civil War.*

#### **TWO OF OUR OWN! BRIAN AND PETER ARE AUTHORS!**

Fans of George MacDonald Fraser's 12-volume *Harry Flashman* series of historical novels have long lamented the 'missing' book dealing with Flashman's exploits in the U.S. during the Civil War. Fraser himself said his reason for not writing that memoir was the comparative dullness of the Civil War.

Two of our own CCWRT members – Brian Kowell and Peter Holman - have filled the gap with a published novel that explains the real reason for such reticence. Flashman never participated in the Civil War at all! Instead, he suppressed an autobiographical manuscript from Snooks, an old Rugby school friend, and planned to appropriate the highlights into his own sordid career.

Collaborating as "Peter Brian", their novel *Snooks North and South* is a rollicking adventure of mistaken identity, cowardice, bedroom encounters and historical mysteries – how did Stonewall Jackson's fatal wounding come about? Who lost Gettysburg for Robert E. Lee? Who gave John Wilkes Booth the idea to shoot Lincoln in a theatre? Why is it NOT George Custer in the celebrated photograph of Lincoln and McLellan after Antietam?

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*Snooks North and South* (listed on Amazon at \$11.61 currently and Kindle for \$9.99) provides the answers and much more as Snooks travels east for England only to be dragged back west time after time by the likes of U.S. Grant, Earl Van Dorn, Wild Bill Hickok, Jeb Stuart, Robert E. Lee and an unnamed ship's captain working for Rhett Butler.

Brian explains that Snooks was a minor character in Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days*, banished by his family to Australia to avoid scandal. Escaping from debts to "gentlemen of the turf", Snooks tries to return to England via the USA in the midst of the Civil War and in a moment of panic appropriates the name of his old school pal Flashman whom he believes to be a genuine hero.

Currently Peter and Brian are working on the concluding volume of Snooks' Civil War difficulties which are compounded by Presidents Lincoln and Davis, Generals Sherman, Sheridan and Custer, cruel Southern prison camps and a determined assassin or two.

Brian was editor of *The Charger* for many years and is a past President of the club, while Peter has served as Treasurer and recently renewed his membership after a five year absence in South Africa.

Find out more at their website <http://majgenlmeade.wix.com/snooks> and look out for a CCWRT review of their book (for good



## REMEMBER

**Our next meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 2014**

**Judson Manor**

**1890 East 107th St.**

**Cocktails: 6:00pm**

**Dinner: 6:30 pm**

***Please send an email to [ccwrt1956@yahoo.com](mailto:ccwrt1956@yahoo.com) with your reservation***

