

The War Correspondent

Newsletter of the Ray Fawcett Chapter of the Central Ohio Civil War Roundtable

September 2011

Vol. 21, No. 9

<http://centralohiocwrt.wordpress.com>



General-in-Chief's Report by Tim Maurice

Hello, Everyone,

As I write this, the weather has cooled off quite a bit since the hot days of summer. This time of year offers a good opportunity to reset our clocks to a less hectic fall activity schedule, which means you should be sure to come out and support your roundtable and the speakers that visit us.

Mike Peters will be addressing us for a few moments this coming Wednesday with an update on our future lineup. I think you will find it to be outstanding with a number of well-respected veterans of the roundtable speaker circuit joining us in the coming months.

This month we will be welcoming Greg Biggs, our most prolific presenter, so I hope to see everyone on the 14th for Greg's sure-to-be interesting talk.

Answer to the August Puzzler

Puzzler: Who was the first recipient of the Medal of Honor?

Answer: Private Jacob Parrott of the 33rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry for his 1862 role in Andrews' Raid during which the *General* locomotive was seized



Adjutant General's Report August 10, 2011 by Sheryl Taylor

Jim Hessler is the kind of speaker who demonstrates there's always more to learn about the Civil War, that there's always the other side of the story. After hearing it, you may continue to hold your original beliefs, but Jim is such an engaging orator, you find yourself compelled to at least listen to what he has to say.

Jim is passionate about Dan Sickles. And he wants people to know Dan Sickles was more than a man who got away with murder and who disobeyed orders at Gettysburg. Sickles was a man who had the uncanny ability to bounce back from adversity and create a new life for himself. In other words, he made lemonade out of lemons time and time again.

Sickles was born in New York and became an attorney. In 1856, when

(continued on page 2)

THIS MONTH'S MEETING

DATE:

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

TIME:

7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

Ohio Health Building
300 Polaris Parkway
Westerville, OH 43082

SPEAKER/TOPIC:

Greg Biggs—Nashville: The Siren's Song of the Western Confederacy

he was in his early thirties, he was elected to Congress. Sickles and his young wife moved to Washington, D.C., where he met and became friends with Philip Barton Key. However, after Sickles learned his wife and Key had been having an affair, one day Sickles saw Key near the White House, shot, and killed him. One of Sickles's attorneys, Edwin M. Stanton, argued "temporary insanity" during the trial, and Sickles was acquitted. This was the first time such a plea was used in a United States courtroom. The public rallied behind Sickles, believing he was justified in shooting his wife's lover, but they turned against him when he decided to stay married to her. Within a short time, he saw he could no longer run for Congress and began practicing law on his own. Fortunately for Sickles, the Civil War came along at the



opportune moment to provide him with a much needed career change.

And at the beginning of the war, he performed well. Sickles was a political general, rather than being a

product of West Point. He began as a brigadier general and won the support of his men. In the Seven Days Battles he proved he could lead a brigade. But soon his lack of military training and experience began to show, perhaps most clearly at the Battle of Gettysburg.

When most of us hear the name Dan Sickles, we think of the Peach Orchard, when on Day 2 of the Battle of Gettysburg, Sickles advanced his 3rd Corps in to the Peach Orchard, a position about a half or three quarters of a mile in front of where he was supposed to be. No one will ever know why Sickles made this move, but Jim encouraged us to speculate . . .

- Meade ordered Sickles to hold the left flank, and Sickles saw the forward position as the best place to execute this order
- Sickles claimed he was confused by Meade's orders
- Sickles disliked the low ground north of Little Round Top
- Sickles didn't have space in which to maneuver his batteries
- Sickles claimed he lacked the manpower to cover the line
- in later political spin from Sickles himself, he claimed he brought on the battle to prevent Meade from retreating from Gettysburg

We also suggested reasons Sickles's move was a poor idea . . .

- it left the flank hanging in the air
- Sickles didn't have enough man to handle the new position, which was double the ground of the old
- the new position was much farther from the interior lines of support and reinforcement

Regardless of the reason(s), the results stand. Longstreet attacked, taking Devil's Den and driving Sickles's 3rd Corps out of the Wheatfield and Peach Orchard. But what did Longstreet actually gain? Useless casualties and no ground of value, except perhaps for artillery positions that encouraged fighting on the Third Day. Jim called what Sickles did the "speed bump" defense—to move ahead of where you're supposed to be to slow down the enemy by forcing him to waste men and ammunition for no real gain.

For Sickles, one casualty of the battle was not insignificant, and that was the loss of his right leg. It was hit by an artillery shell late in the afternoon and was amputated, thus effectively ending his military career. But because Sickles was resilient and relied again on his talent for bouncing back from adversary, he used his injury to help him design another career path, beginning with that of the one-legged war hero.

Briefly Sickles served as U.S. minister to Spain but found diplomacy not in his skill set. By the late 1880s he was back in the United States and became chairman of the New York Monuments Commission. As a congressman in 1895, he introduced legislation that established Gettysburg National Military Park. Sickles campaigned to have numerous military monuments erected, and in New York alone, eighty-eight were placed on battlefields under his guidance. He dedicated monuments and spoke to veterans groups. They loved the colorful old war hero.

In the later years of his life, Sickles and Longstreet became

(continued on page 3

friends and met at Civil War reunions. The fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg was to be Sickles's last, but he was still signing autographs at age ninety-five. He died shortly after the reunion. There's no monument to Sickles at Gettysburg, but the long Sickles Avenue stretches across much of his old line of battle.

Thank you, Jim, for introducing us to the Dan Sickles whose passion for battlefield preservation is a greater legacy than his antics on the battlefield itself.



Raffle

With your support, we raised \$43 from the August book raffle! Thank you!

2011 COCWRT CALENDAR

October 12, 2011

★ **John Hoptak**—Battle of South Mountain

November 12, 2011

★ **Gail Stephens**—The Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War



Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at **7:00 P.M.** at the Ohio Health Building, 300 Polaris Parkway, Westerville, OH 43082.

Dates and speakers are subject to change.

Forgotten Zouaves

by

Mike Peters

One of my favorite World War II officers is Lt. Col. John J. Toffey III. Rick Atkinson, author of *The Day of Battle*, a book on the Italian Campaign, introduced me. Lt. Col. Toffey, an up and comer, was killed by a tank round at Palestrina. His is an interesting pedigree and one with a Civil War and Ohio State connection.

The original John J. Toffey was a 1st lieutenant in the 33rd New Jersey Infantry, aka Mindil's Zouaves. He received a Medal of Honor on September 10, 1897, for action on November 23, 1863. The citation reads as follows:

"Although excused from duty on account of sickness, went to the front in command of a storming party and with conspicuous gallantry participated in the assault of Missionary Ridge; was here wounded and permanently disabled."

As if that wasn't enough, Toffey was at Ford's Theater when President Lincoln was assassinated. Toffey didn't care about the play but was hoping to see "those great men"—Lincoln and possibly General Grant. Toffey testified at the trial of the conspirators and witnessed their hangings.

The second John J. Toffey, called Jack Sr. by the family, fought in the Spanish-American War and with Pershing against Pancho Villa. In 1917 his outfit, the 329th Infantry, was ordered overseas as part of the American Expeditionary Force of

World War I. Before leaving, Jack Sr. was promoted to colonel and sent to Camp Pike in Arkansas. He never did see action in France, retired a general, and was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

John J. Toffey IV fought in Korea, became an educator, and wrote *Jack Toffey's War: A Son's Memoir* about the lieutenant colonel.

The Ohio State connection? I'm getting to that.

John J. IV was the only son of John J. III and Helen Howard. While



John J. Toffey

John J. III was in Europe, the family, including daughter Anne, lived on E. Long Street in Columbus, Ohio. After her husband's death, Helen taught at the Columbus School for Girls in nearby Bexley. Helen's father, Homer Howard, played quarterback for The Ohio State University in the 1890s. When Homer died, one of his pall bearers was Woody Hayes, the most famous Buckeye of them all and, like Homer's son-in-law, a veteran of World War II.

The Civil War and Ohio State football! I can picture our own Pete Zuhars, with Yuengling held high, toasting the connection with a "It don't get much better than that."

Historian General's Report

by
Mike Peters

Our speaker for the September 14, 2011, meeting is Greg Biggs. Greg is president and program chair of the of the Clarksville, Tennessee, Civil War Roundtable and program chair of the Tennessee Civil War Round Table. In addition, he is a member of the Clarksville Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission.

Greg is considered a leading authority on Confederate flags and is a flag consultant to various state museums including Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio, Alabama, North Carolina, and the Texas Civil War Museum.

Greg is the text editor of Flags Of The Confederacy website, has contributed numerous articles to *Blue & Gray Magazine* and *Civil War News*, and is in the process of writing a new book, *Volunteer Banners: Tennessee's Civil War Flags*.

The title of Greg's presentation is "Nashville: The Siren's Song of the Western Confederacy." In December 1864, the Confederate Army of Tennessee laid siege to the massive Union fortifications and garrison of Nashville. In a two-day fight, that army was all but destroyed. Their arrival at the city's door was the culmination of Confederate strategy that began when the city was captured by Union forces in February 1862.

Nashville, thereafter, became the "siren's song" for Confederate strategy in the west, luring Confederate offensives no less than

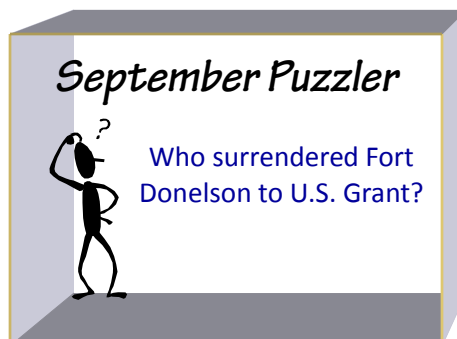
five times. Greg's program will detail the city's importance and each of the five attempts to retake it.

Speakers in Stark County

The Stark County District Library invites the public to two upcoming speaking engagements. On September 20, Barbara A. Lyons, from the University of Mount Union, will present a program based on the book *Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and The Underground Railroad* by Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, PhD. This event will be held at the Lake Branch of the Stark County District Library, located at 11955 Market Ave. N., Hartsville, Ohio.

On November 5, you are invited to meet Wilma Snyder-Casenhiser, who portrays Dr. Mary Walker, the only woman to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for her service during the Civil War. This event is at the Stark County District Library-Jackson Branch, located at 7487 Fulton Drive NW, Massillon.

For more information about either event, go to <http://www.starklibrary.org>, or contact Marianna DiGiacomo at mdigiacomo@starklibrary.org.



THE CENTRAL OHIO



CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
-A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION - FOUNDED 1989-

The War Correspondent

Sheryl Taylor, Editor

Roundtable Officers

Tim Maurice

General-in-Chief

614-361-7313

Tim.Maurice@cardinalhealth.com

Pete Zuhars

Inspector General

740-363-9542

zeteman@yahoo.com

Sheryl Taylor

Adjutant General

614-263-6815

sheryl_taylor@mcgraw-hill.com

Mike Peters

Historian General

614-866-6766

npeters102@aol.com

Patty Barker

Chief of Signal Corps

614-985-3353

patricia.barker@chase.com

War Council Members

Brian Hall

War Council Commander

Ed Chapdelaine

Wendy Peters

Greg Drakulich

Lowell Fauver