

# The War Correspondent

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

November 2011

Vol. 21, No. 11

<http://centralohiocwrt.wordpress.com>



## General-in-Chief's Report by Tim Maurice

Hello, Everyone,

The upcoming meeting will be our last of 2011 because we do not meet in December. The roundtable has had a very successful year with well-attended meetings and outstanding speakers. It is a credit to all our officers for the smooth flow and function of our meetings and the vision they provide that is guiding our organization forward. I thank them all. It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to serve as president of this fine roundtable. I look forward to seeing everyone in November.

## Added to the Ranks

Welcome, new roundtable members

Glen Gardner  
Don Sandoval  
Christopher Zimmer  
Michael Gray



## Historian General's Report by Mike Peters

The roundtable welcomes Gail Stephens as our speaker in October. Stephens has a bachelor's degree in International Politics from George Washington University in Washington D.C. and has done graduate work at Johns Hopkins and Harvard Universities. She worked for the Department of Defense for twenty-six years, retiring in 1994 as a member of the department's Senior Executive Service.

Upon retirement, she began to study the American Civil War. She volunteers at Monocacy National Battlefield near Frederick, Maryland, lectures on the Civil War, teaches courses at area colleges, and gives battlefield tours. In 2002 she won the National Park Service's E. W. Peterkin award for her contributions to public understanding of Civil War history. Her book about Major General Lew Wallace's Civil War service, *Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*, was published in October 2010 by the Indiana Historical Society Press.

Stephens will be speaking to us about Major General Lew Wallace. In the spring of 1862, Major General Lew Wallace was a Union military hero. At the age of thirty-five, he was the youngest major general in the Union army, rising to that rank from colonel in eleven short months. Devoted to the Union, he was also a romantic about war, pursuing honor, fame, and glory in combat. Then in early April 1862, though only a short distance away, Wallace and his division mysteriously failed to appear on the bloody battlefield of

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### THIS MONTH'S MEETING

**DATE:**

Wednesday, November 9, 2011

**TIME:**

7:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:**

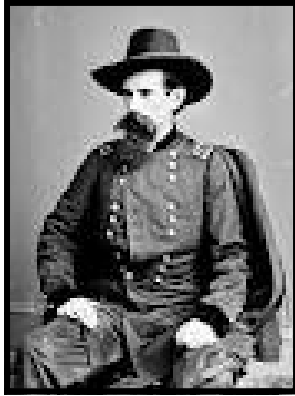
Ohio Health Building  
300 Polaris Parkway  
Westerville, OH 43082

**SPEAKER/TOPIC:**

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

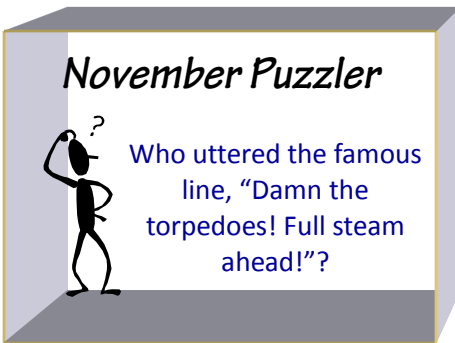
Shiloh until the end of the first day of that battle.

The common perception is that this was a death blow to his career until Lincoln decided to give him



another chance, assigning him to command in Maryland. There in the summer of 1864, with his army vastly outnumbered, Wallace fought the Battle of Monocacy, “the battle that saved Washington,” restoring his fighting reputation.

The truth, however, is never that simple. Wallace was a genuine hero, but he made mistakes, and he was a scapegoat for the mistakes of others. The story of Lew Wallace and the Civil War is fascinating and complex, highlighting some important truths about battles fought within the Union army as well as those with the Confederates.



## Random Musings

by  
*Jamie Ryan*

I recently returned from a trip to Gettysburg with our president, Tim Maurice, and his thirteen-year-old son, Austin. We enjoyed a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon with a four-hour tour of the battlefield with Licensed Battlefield Guide Mark Troup. This tour was designed to provide an overview of the battle for Austin. Afterward, Tim and I took Austin for a drive through the East Cavalry Field and over portions of the 11th Corps line on the First Day’s Field that we did not cover with Mark. As the sun set, we took Austin to the North Carolina monument and the Virginia monument on Seminary Ridge. All told, we probably spent six hours on the battlefield, along with a of couple hours in the Visitor’s Center in the late morning touring the museum and the Cyclorama and seeing the Park Service film on the battle.

This was a lot of information for a thirteen year old to absorb, and I was proud of Austin for doing so well. In addition, I was proud of the job Tim and I did in describing the type of tour we wanted Mark to provide: a basic overview that did not get bogged down in minutia but that told interesting stories and human interest events and showed Austin some of the cool physical aspects of the battlefield. Mark came through with flying colors, showing us battle-damaged homes in town, providing us with views of Cemetery Hill that have been recently opened through clearing of trees, pointing out witness trees on

Culps Hill, and uncovering neat engravings on the stones in the ground on top of Little Round Top marking the site where Charles Hazlett was killed.



But as we stood on LRT in the late afternoon, enjoying the view as Mark described the general pattern of battle to Austin, Tim and I noticed another type of Gettysburg learning experience. A high-school teacher had dragged a class to the top of the eminence and was droning on in minute detail about the evolutions of various regiments as they fought for the ground. Many of his students were more interested in the swarming ladybugs that were landing everywhere on the hill at that time of day, and suddenly, in exasperation, the teacher shouted, “Well, I don’t know what it says about you guys that you’re more interested in a bunch of ladybugs than the most important battle in American history!”

Well, I AM SURE what it says about that teacher. Anyone who can make Gettysburg and the drama of Little Round Top more boring than ladybugs frankly shouldn’t be taking our youth out on battlefield tours. We, as adults who have an interest in the Civil War, need to take seriously our obligation to introduce the next generation to this great

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American conflict. We must avoid burying teenagers in detail; in names, dates and places; in an endless loop of the 125th This and So & So's Battery and the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble-Ryan-Maurice Charge, etc. Of course many of us love this level of detail because it allows us to feel that we know the individuals involved in the conflict. However, I doubt if any of us got our initial crush on the Civil War based on these types of microtactical details.

I think we need to think about the books, maps, and other items that initially sparked our interest in the Civil War, and then we need to put these tools into the hands of our youth. Personally, I loved the American Heritage one-volume history of the war, with those great animated maps showing little soldiers dashing up wooded trails and engaging in furious firefights. Accurate? Of course not; interesting and compelling to a young boy? You bet. Another big catalyst for me was



the Avalon Hill board game *Gettysburg*. I moved those die-cut pieces of cardboard

endlessly around that grided map, cursing those 4- and 5-strength Confederate Divisions of Early and Pender as they crushed poor Romeyn Ayres 2-strength Regulars.

As I matriculated into high school and college, I became enraptured by the prose of Bruce Catton. As a newspaper writer, his style was engaging and accessible. Rarely does he delve into details below corps level. Yet he tells the story vividly

and in a way that I still can recall.

I am sure each one of us has similar stories. Let's think about these "gateway drugs" to our peculiar obsession, and let's figure out a way to get them into the hands of our youth, so they will become hooked on history in the same way as we junkies.



### *Grant's HQ Preserved*

On November 2, 2011, the Civil War Trust announced that efforts to protect the site of Ulysses S. Grant's daytime headquarters at the Battle of the Wilderness were successful. A combination of private donations to the Civil War Trust and matching funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia, including a \$108,000 Transportation Enhancement Grant, enabled the site to be saved.

The property is small, only 1.4 acres, but its size doesn't diminish its historical significance. It was here during the Battle of the Wilderness that Generals Ulysses Grant and George Meade spent their daylight hours during the battle, making decisions that affected the outcome of that campaign and the lives of the thousands of men who fought in it.

## 2011-2012 COCWRT CALENDAR

### December 14, 2011

No meeting

### January 11, 2012

COCWRT Discussion

### February 8, 2012

★ **Harold George**—Custer's Last Stand

### March 14, 2012

★ **Chris Kolakowski** — Tullahoma Campaign

### April 12, 2012

★ **Frank O'Reilly**—Malvern Hill

### May 9, 2012

★ **Peter Cozzens**—1862 Valley Campaign

### June 13, 2012

★ **Eric Wittenberg**—Battle of White Sulphur Springs

### July 11, 2012

★ **Clark "Bud" Hall**—Emergence of the Federal Cavalry as an Offensive Force of the Army of the Potomac

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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.*

# Adjutant General's Report

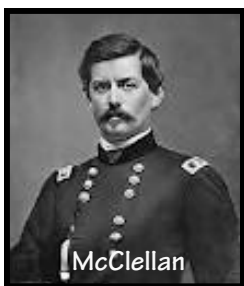
October 12, 2011

by

Sheryl Taylor

If you missed October's meeting, you missed a terrific presentation by John Hoptek. With clear narration, an animated map, and colorful war stories, he brought to life the oft-overlooked Battle of South Mountain. Five thousand casualties marked it as a significant battle, especially so early in the war, but because it took place on September 14, 1862, it falls in the shadows of Antietam, which was fought three days later.

John looks at South Mountain as though Antietam never happened, and in that light, South Mountain was a victory both for the Union and for General George McClellan. Lee had taken command on June 1, 1862. Although Lee had a number of victories under his belt from his Northern Virginia Campaign and his army seemed unable to fail, by early

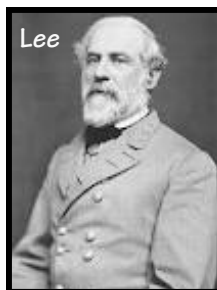


north and take the war to Maryland. He knew Jefferson Davis wanted to hear the Confederate army would be freeing the Marylanders from northern oppression, but in truth, Lee went to Maryland to pick a fight with the Union army.

September his men were tired and he had a choice to make. Should they attack Washington? Fall back? Lee chose to move

But the Maryland Campaign proved nothing but disaster for Lee. One major problem that plagued his army was the high number of stragglers. Confederate soldiers who were sick, feeble, cowardly, or shoeless left the army in droves and reduced Lee's army by one-third on the march through Maryland. The other big problem Lee faced in Maryland was George McClellan himself. McClellan led a new army, the Army of the Potomac, in Maryland. While often accused of sluggishness, in Maryland, McClellan moved his new army with alacrity. He also orchestrated three major offensive actions (South Mountain, Antietam, Shepherdstown) within a week of each other. McClellan seemed to know what Lee had planned—the destruction of the Federal army. But unlike McClellan and uncharacteristically, Lee did not read his opponent well during the Maryland campaign.

By September 9, two days after leaving Washington, McClellan was almost halfway to Frederick, Maryland, but Lee didn't know McClellan was there. Lee crossed the Potomac River to Frederick and then moved his army to South Mountain, an extension of the Blue Ridge. Lee knew that ten thousand Union troops were stationed at Harpers Ferry at the southern end of the mountain range, but in another miscalculation, Lee expected them to pull out as soon as they were threatened. What Lee didn't know



was these Federal troops had been ordered to hold until the last. In a risky maneuver, Lee split his army over twenty miles of unfriendly territory because he thought he had time to do so. He didn't know the Federals were so close, plus he knew McClellan was in charge—again—and assumed he would be as slow as usual to spur his army to action.

Lee issued Special Order 191 to explain troop movements to D. H. Hill, who commanded from Boonesboro, about 15 miles north of Harpers Ferry. In yet one more glitch during the Maryland Campaign, this order was misplaced and found its way into McClellan's hands. Order 191 gave McClellan an edge, but it didn't contain Lee's entire battle plan, nor did it tell whether Lee's army was still divided. In addition, the order didn't tell how many men were involved, so McClellan (incorrectly) assumed that if Lee could split his army over such a distance and over mountain ranges, he must have a large number of troops.

When Lee discovered McClellan's proximity, Lee moved quickly from the offense to defense. He told Longstreet the army would defend the gaps and mountain tops. Longstreet disagreed and said they should leave the area, but Lee insisted the army stay and defend the ground.

Lee, being in position in the valley behind the mountain range to the east, placed troops at mountain gaps from north to south—Frostown, Turner's, Fox's, and Cranston's, a few miles farther south. On September 14, from their position east of the mountains, Burnside's 9th Corps, commanded

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by General Jesse Reno, marched south and west toward Fox's Gap because they had heard Confederate troops were at Turner's Gap. Fighting at Fox's Gap raged from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., but by nightfall, the 9th prevailed and took the gap.

Hooker's 1st Corps marched north and west to the Frostown Gap, and although the Confederates had tremendous defensive advantages the Union troops took this gap too.

Union General Franklin had orders to take his 6th Corps to Cranston's Gap but delayed four hours because he thought he was outnumbered. He finally moved, but then after a ninety-minute battle during which Franklin said the gap couldn't be taken, Federal troops did



control the gap. Confederate General McClaws had set up only a thin line of defense that separated Franklin from claiming the southern valley for the Union, but he refused to pursue the defeated Confederates toward Harpers Ferry and gained only tactical control of the valley by nightfall.

Late on the 14th Lee heard the news that most of the gaps were in Federal control, so he decided to retreat west toward Sharpsburg and the Potomac River.

The Battle of South Mountain was the first time the brand-new Army of the Potomac fought—and won—together. And the pride and momentum from this victory very likely helped them narrowly escape defeat at Antietam.



## Raffle

With your support, we raised \$50 from the October book raffle! Thank you!

## Rise of Custer

Continuing the Custer Memorial Association's observance of General Custer's birthday and the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, "The Rise of George Armstrong Custer, 1861–1865" will be the program for the Custer Birthday celebration. The evening will start with a dinner meal served at the New Rumley United Methodist Church in Harrison County. Following dinner, Professor Gregory J.W. Urwin, history professor at Temple University, will speak in the Custer Museum and Center. Urwin is the author or editor of nine books, including *Custer Victorious: The Civil War Battles of General George Armstrong Custer*; *The United States Cavalry: An Illustrated History*; and *Custer and His Times: Book III*. In addition to lecturing nationwide, Urwin has appeared in numerous documentaries on the History Channel, A&E, and PBS, including *Civil War Journal*, *Wake Island—Alamo of the Pacific*, *The Last Days of World War II*, and *Washington, the Warrior*.

This program will be held on December 3, 2011, from 5:30 P.M. until 8:30 P.M. Reservations are required. For more information, please contact Charles Conrad, 740-945-6415 or George Haney, 740-945-5215 or go to [www.ohiocivilwar150.org](http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org).

THE CENTRAL OHIO



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

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