

The War Correspondent

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

December 2011

Vol. 21, No. 12

<http://centralohiocwrt.wordpress.com>



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

Hello, Everyone,

The roundtable does not meet this month as we pause from our Civil War pursuits to spend time with our families and those we love. I wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year, and I look forward to the time we will get to spend together this coming year.



Answer to the November Puzzler

Puzzler: Who uttered the famous line, "Damn the torpedoes! Full steam ahead!"?

Answer: Admiral David G. Farragut.



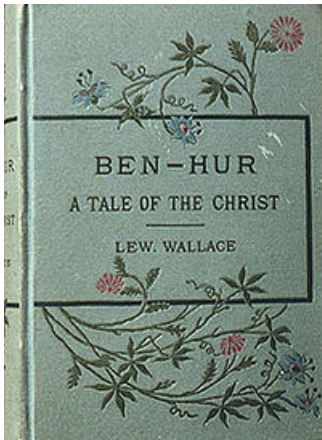
Adjutant General's Report *October 12, 2011* by *Sheryl Taylor*

To most people, Union General Lew Wallace had a good career after the Civil War. Author of *Ben-Hur*, he became a millionaire after it was published; he was appointed governor of the New Mexico territory; and he lived to be seventy-seven years old. Wallace's military career wasn't too shabby either. After all, by age thirty-four, he was the youngest major general in the Union army. Wallace and his 11th Illinois Zouaves had become famous for action they saw while guarding the railroads in Cumberland, Maryland, and in Virginia at Romney and Patterson's Creek.

When Grant was at Fort Donelson on the Tennessee River, he left Wallace in command at nearby Fort Henry. On February 14,
(continued on page 2)

THIS MONTH'S MEETING

DATE:
Wednesday, January 11, 2012
TIME:
7:00 P.M.
LOCATION:
Ohio Health Building
300 Polaris Parkway
Westerville, OH 43082
SPEAKER/TOPIC:
COCWRT Discussion



Wallace was ordered to aid the rest of the army at Fort Donelson. He took up position in the center of Grant's line. The Confederates attacked the Union right and seized the road to Nashville. Union General McClernand, who was to Wallace's right, moved behind Wallace's men, along with all the wounded. Wallace move his division forward to form a roadblock to the Confederate position and then joined with McClernand's forces and attacked. They moved the Confederates off the road to Nashville. Wallace was promoted for this action.

To the people of Cincinnati and the midwest, Wallace was an unsung hero. When Confederates Bragg and Smith invaded Kentucky and threatened to move north to Cincinnati, in a mere eight days, Wallace completed a defense of the city so intimidating that after one look, the rebel forces turned around without firing a shot.

Yet to Lew Wallace, one shadow remained over his successes—the accusation of being late to the battle of Shiloh.

Following the Union victories at Forts Henry and Donelson, Maj. General Henry Halleck, Grant's superior, sent Grant's army to

Corinth, Mississippi, the only direct rail line between Richmond and the Mississippi River. Grant waited at Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River for Buell's Army of the Ohio to join his forces, but Confederate General Albert S. Johnston took Grant by surprise and attacked before Buell's men arrived.

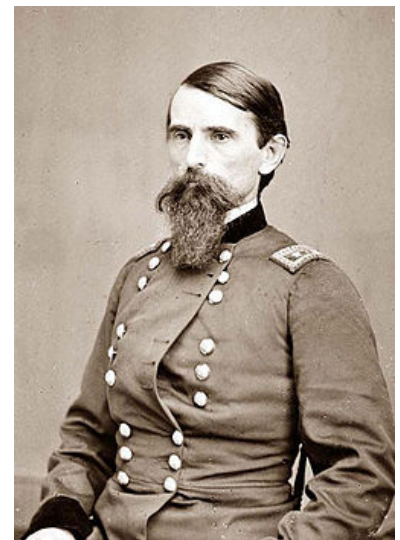
Historic floods that year raised water levels on the Tennessee River and its tributaries, including Snake Creek, which in April 1862 had become a raging torrent and the land around it a swamp. Lew Wallace was in position several miles north of Pittsburgh Landing and had scouted the area. He determined that using the Shunpike Road to go around the swamp was better than taking the River Road that crossed Snake Creek. Taking the River Road would have forced them to build a bridge to cross the creek because the water was so high.

When Johnston attacked, Grant sent an aide to tell Wallace to join the rest of the army near Pittsburgh Landing, but Grant never gave a written order. Wallace said he was ordered to the Union right, which meant taking the Shunpike Road; Grant said he ordered Wallace to the Union left, or down the River Road. It took hours for Wallace to move all his artillery and 55,000 men to their new position. The roads and farmland they traveled through were a muddy, swampy quagmire. Wallace left at noon on April 6 and didn't join Grant until seven that evening. Grant was furious and accused Wallace of being late and slow and blamed him for the "intolerable delay." Grant was so angry, in fact, that even though he approved the report of the battle

Wallace submitted (in which he claimed he was ordered to the right), later Grant added a note to the report saying he ordered Wallace to the left and that he disagreed with other details in the report.

It is this blemish on Lew Wallace's record that Civil War enthusiasts probably associate most with Wallace. But was Wallace actually late? Did Grant send him to the left? Would Wallace's arrival on the field of battle earlier on April 6 have changed the outcome of the day?

Our speaker, Gail Stephens, and a group of colleagues put the question of Wallace's lateness to the test. They walked the 16.75 miles from Wallace's first position and followed his route to his final location. On dry ground and without carrying soldier's gear, the journey took



seven hours and fifteen minutes. Wallace's men, under much more difficult conditions, completed the march in less time.

Did Wallace deliberately disobey Grant's order by positioning his troops to the right? Grant's initial

(continued on page 3)

reaction was to blame Wallace for going the wrong way, but Grant may have relied too much on the opinions of his staff. Two months before Grant died, he received a letter that he included in his memoirs. The letter had been taken from a Union soldier who had died at Shiloh. In it he describes the poor conditions of the roads with such detail and verisimilitude that Grant modified what he said about Wallace at Shiloh. The letter explained to Grant why Wallace chose the Shunpike Road. In addition, Grant never got off the steamboat that brought him to Pittsburgh Landing, so he didn't have a clear understanding of the roads. In his memoirs, Grant also admits that because his order was verbal, he couldn't be sure which order Wallace actually received.

If Wallace's troops had been engaged on the first day, we can only speculate as to whether the Battle of Shiloh would have ended a day early, but it seems unlikely. The arrival of Buell's army during the night of April 6 seems a more noteworthy turning point for the Union.

Thank you, Gail, for bringing Lew Wallace out from behind his shadow and for reminding us there's often more to a man than his reputation.



Raffle

With your support, we raised \$55 from the November book raffle! Thank you!

How Important Was the Civil War?

At our annual roundtable discussion in January, we will compare and contrast the Civil War's importance relative to other American wars. We will attempt to rank the importance of all the American wars and determine whether the Civil War was the most important of all the American wars.

You have some time to think about this topic, so please come ready to share your thoughts with the group in January. We always have a lively discussion, so you won't want to miss out on our first meeting of the new year!

The War Correspondent

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War Council Commander

Ed Chapdelaine

Wendy Peters

Greg Drakulich

Lowell Fauver

2012 COCWRT CALENDAR

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

August 14, 2012

★ **Lois Lambert**—33rd OVI

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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.