

The War Correspondent

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

January 2012

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General-in-Chief's Report by Tim Maurice

Hello, Everyone,

A new year brings new possibilities, and that is always exciting. As I review our progress and look into my crystal ball, I see a vibrant active roundtable that is moving into the future in a positive, creative way, and I thank you, the members, for making this roundtable what it is today. Let's keep the momentum going in 2012!



Discussion Topic for January

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.

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—How
Important Was the Civil War?

Top 10 Events of 1862

by
Jamie Ryan

10 Little Mac Gets the Boot.
On November 7, President Lincoln dismissed George McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac (in the same order that dismissed Fitz-John Porter as the Fifth Corps commander). This decision marked a crossing of the Rubicon for the Union war effort, ending the early war policy that the "erring sister" states could be lured back into the Union through reconciliation and beginning the trail to a "hard" war policy that would reach its logical conclusion in the burning of Columbia, South Carolina, and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, the virtual starvation of prisoners, and the destruction of vast swaths of the infrastructure of the Southern states. In addition, the dismissal of Porter and his subsequent court martial and cashiering from the service exemplified the beginning of the ascent of the Radical Republican

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influence in the GOP which would come to dominate the politics of the United States for much of the next fifteen years.

9 The Dix-Hill Cartel. This agreement established the familiar arrangement whereby prisoners would sign a parole, which is a promise to not serve in the armed services until properly exchanged for an enemy prisoner of equal rank. The Cartel was signed on July 22, 1862, largely due to the tremendous logistical resources being absorbed in the North by the Confederate prisoners captured at Fort Donelson in February. The Cartel would ensure the humane treatment of prisoners and their quick return to their homes and own armies through the remainder of 1862 and all of 1863.

8 Antietam-Perryville-Iuka-Corinth. Okay, I am cheating by putting four battles together in one place but, what the heck—write your own column if you don't like it! However, these four fights (Antietam: September 17; Iuka: September 19; Corinth: October 3–4; and Perryville: October 8) in a period of three weeks sealed the fate of the sole multi-theater coordinated Confederate offensive of the war. All of the fights bear striking resemblances to each other from a tactical perspective, as the brutal killing machine that was the trained Civil War army began to hit its full operational stride. In each battle, a Confederate force that is unequal to the logistical challenges of sustaining offensive operations met a strong Northern blocking force, and in each

case the Confederates managed to fight to a stalemate but decided to retreat and try again on another day. But, as we know with hindsight, there would never be another day when the confluence of events across the continent would allow the CSA forces that type of opportunity.

7 The Wounding of Joseph Eggleston Johnston at Seven Pines. Near the close of the day on May 31, Joseph Johnston, Commander of the Confederate Army of the Potomac, rode out onto the field to accompany the division of W.H.C. Whiting as it attempted to crack the Federal line near Seven Pines, Virginia. It was the end of a long frustrating day for Johnston, full of bungled communications, delays, and snafus; in other words, a perfectly normal day for an army attempting to attack in the Civil War. Ironically, Johnston was one of the many early war commanders who recognized the problems inherent in moving masses of volunteers with officers who had less than a year of training, and he had avoided this moment until the political pressure to save Richmond became too strong to resist any longer.

A Federal artillery shell knocked Johnston from his horse, and he was forced to turn over command. Of course, President Davis appointed Robert E. Lee to replace Johnston, and the army was promptly renamed the Army of Northern Virginia. Of his wounding Johnston wrote, "The shot that struck me down was the best ever fired for the Confederacy, for I possessed in no degree the confidence of the government, and now a man who

does enjoy it will succeed me and be able to accomplish what I never could."

6 Capture of New Orleans. From April 18 to April 28, Flag Officer David G. Farragut and the West Gulf Blockading Squadron looped the next coil of the Anaconda Plan by destroying a Confederate flotilla, battering their way past Fort Jackson and Fort St. Phillip near the mouth of the Mississippi River and then capturing the Crescent City without a shot. This action displayed the fine professionalism of the U.S. Navy, as the CSA naval forces were driven away with ease, leaving the forts to be inevitably reduced. "Self-destruction, lack of cooperation, cowardice of untrained officers, and the murderous fire of the Federal gunboats reduced the fleet to a demoralized shambles" according to a historian of the campaign. Farragut's victory would deprive the South of its largest city, but more importantly it denied the cotton from the southern fields of Mississippi and Louisiana the easiest way to market, and it forced supplies for the bastions along the Mississippi River to be transported overland from far distant ports such as Mobile, Wilmington, and Galveston.

5 The Fall of Forts Henry and Donelson and the Rise of Ulysses S. Grant. The strategic implications of the capture of these twin bastions, doomed in their dual roles of protecting the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers without violating Kentucky's neutrality, were

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enormous. Kentucky was forever lost as a potential CSA state; western Tennessee and Nashville fell into Federal hands for the remainder of the war; and the front moved from the Ohio River to the northern boundary of Mississippi and Alabama. The success of the combined army/navy operation was even more important. It provided the blueprint for what would follow at Island #10 and New Madrid; at Vicksburg; at Port Hudson; at Baton Rouge and during the Red River Campaign. The failure of Nathaniel Banks in 1864 in my last example illuminates the final, and most important part, of the Henry/Donelson saga—the incredible strategic insight, tactical toughness, and administrative superiority of Ulysses S. Grant, who handled this brilliant Winter campaign less than a year removed from serving as a clerk in his father’s livery stable in Galena, Illinois. The North had found its Scipio, who would swallow two other Confederate armies whole during the conflict, making the box score in Battles of Destruction U. S. Grant: 3, Every Other Commander in the War: 0.

4 **Stones River.** The final six months of 1862 were, from a Federal perspective, a series of dizzying falls from the highs of the first half of the year, when success at Henry/Donelson, on the Peninsula, at Shiloh and Corinth, and at New Orleans seemed to portend the early end of the rebellion. Even after the temporary respite bought by the hard-fought victories of late September and early October (see Event #8), the defeat of Republicans in the fall elections,

the disaster of Fredericksburg, and the defeat of Grant’s first thrust at Vicksburg (Holly Springs and Chickasaw Bayou) sent Northern morale, markets, and fortunes lower still. Then, at the very end of the year, William Starke Rosecrans sent his reformed (and renamed) Army of the Cumberland out from Nashville and struck a blow at Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee.

The fight, which lasted from December 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863, provided a hard-won but indisputable victory for Federal arms when Bragg retreated from the field and fell back behind the Duck River, surrendering a huge swath of central Tennessee to the central Ohio born and bred general. The battle was very important to Union morale, as evidenced by a letter sent by President Lincoln to General Rosecrans: “You gave us a hard-earned victory, which had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over.” Perhaps more importantly, central Tennessee would be lost to the South for the remainder of the conflict, and Rosecrans would have the perfect platform from which to launch a drive to split the Eastern Confederacy by seizing Chattanooga and then Atlanta.

3 **The Peninsula Campaign.** The North American continent had never seen anything on the scale of the military operation launched by George McClellan and the Army of the Potomac in the early spring of 1862. Actually, that is a lie. The Campaign of the “Virginia Creeper,” the man who was accused by Lincoln of having “the slows,”

started on March 17, which is during the winter, much earlier than the Eastern campaigns of 1863 (April 30), 1864 (May 1), and 1865 (March 30). McClellan eschewed attempting the overland route to Richmond, which he forecast would produce casualties that would be unacceptable to the Northern populace in 1862, in favor of a deft move by river to the Peninsula between the York and James Rivers, where none of the southeast flowing rivers of Virginia would bar his path to the Confederate capitol. The movement of the Army of the Potomac from Washington, D.C., to the Peninsula was the largest amphibious operation by the U.S. Army until Operation Torch in November of 1942. McClellan’s army broke the Confederate line at Yorktown, smacked the CSA rearguard at Williamsburg and defeated Joe Johnston’s counterattack at Seven Pines as it moved up the Peninsula.

However, the bumbling incompetence of the War Department and the ceaseless meddling of President Lincoln deprived McClellan of the 30,000-strong First Corps that was to have marched overland and approached Richmond from the North, thus securing the vulnerable right flank of the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln and William Stanton, distracted by Stonewall Jackson’s sideshow in the Shenandoah Valley like rubes in a game of three-card monte who watch what the card sharp wants them to watch, not only deprived the Army of the Potomac of promised forces and failed to eliminate Jackson, but also allowed Stonewall to rejoin Robert E. Lee in

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Richmond while the Federal forces that should have reinforced the Army of the Potomac were quiescent, many miles away from the theater of action.

Lee seized upon this vulnerability forced upon the Army of the Potomac by Washington and launched a series of attacks in late June and early July that would force McClellan to abandon his base at White House on the York River and establish a new base on the James River. The Seven Days Battles saw some of the fiercest fighting of the war, with the Confederate tactical victories at Gaines Mills, Glendale, White Oak Swamp, and Savage's Station balanced against the Federal dominance at Beaver Dam Creek and Malvern Hill. Strategically, the Army of the Potomac had stymied Lee's attempt to destroy it as a fighting force, and had ended up on the James, where McClellan wanted to be all along, with the flexibility to approach Richmond from either bank (as Grant would do in 1864–65).

Lee's Confederates suffered far more casualties than the Federals, and (since the CSA government had drained the country of reserves to give Lee the largest force he would ever command) could not easily replace them. Many reserves were available to reinforce the Army of the Potomac—three entire corps had recently been formed into the Army of Virginia under John Pope in northern Virginia. Lincoln, Stanton, and their hand-picked general-in-chief Henry Halleck compounded all their previous errors by deciding to withdraw the Army of the Potomac from Harrison's Landing, a spot the Federal forces would not reoccupy

until two years elapsed and the blood of 125,000+ boys in blue was spilled.

2 **Shiloh.** The battle of April 6 and 7 along the banks of the Tennessee River in southwest Tennessee forever changed America. Union casualties were 13,047 (1,754 killed, 8,408 wounded, and 2,885 missing). Confederate casualties were 10,699 (1,728 killed, 8,012 wounded, and 959 missing or captured). Not only were there more casualties on those two days than during ALL the previous wars involving United States troops combined, but also the reality of modern warfare struck the home front throughout the country with a vengeance. Entire towns in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi lost a generation of young men in forty-eight hours. The medical services of both forces were completely overwhelmed with the scope of the casualties, and many soldiers lost their lives or their limbs because no one could care for them in a timely manner. Doctors who served with the Union armies worked endlessly for weeks but were haunted for the rest of their lives by the specters of the men they could not attend. The notions of a quick war that would end in ninety days were dashed at Bull Run in July of 1861, but the reality that the war would require more than six hundred thousand soldiers lives began to sink in after Shiloh.

The tactical and strategic implications of Shiloh were almost equally as astounding. The Confederacy would never again unite its disparate Western armies

into a single fighting force; Albert Sidney Johnston was lost to the Confederate cause; U. S. Grant barely survived the civilian backlash caused by the horrific casualties; the cautious Henry Halleck rose to the top of the Lincoln administration's preference list; and the railroad junction at Corinth was doomed to be lost by the Confederacy.

1 **Second Manassas.** Neither Gettysburg nor Antietam was the true high-water mark for the Confederacy in the Civil War. The closest the CSA ever came to achieving a battlefield victory decisive enough to threaten the federal capitol and to cause the Lincoln administration to sue for peace came on August 30 on the plains west of the Henry House plateau as James Longstreet's four divisions surged forward to capture the Stone Bridge over Bull Run Creek and were denied by the desperate fighting of Federal troops on Chinn Ridge and Henry House Hill. Wilmer McLean's Ohio Brigade, the New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians of Zealous Tower's and John Koltes' brigades, the Regular Division of the Fifth Corps, John Reynold's Pennsylvania Reserves, Wladimir Kryzanowski's Germans, Robert Milroy's western Virginians (and the 82nd Ohio), and a smattering of other forces saved the United States of America.

But this was only the final act in a drama that had played out over the previous three weeks, when Robert E. Lee boldly risked everything on an offensive when he learned that the Army of the Potomac had begun to leave Harrison's Landing on August 4. Lee expertly lured John Pope's

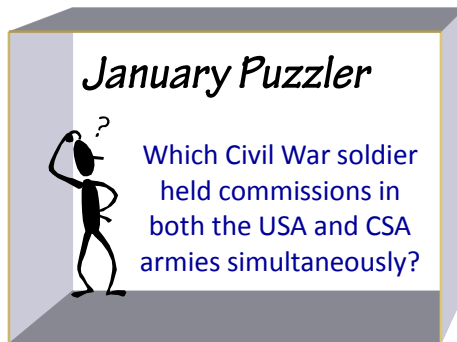
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Army of Virginia west from Washington, fighting at Cedar Mountain near Culpepper on August 9 and then entering into a deadly race to destroy Pope before the Army of the Potomac and Ambrose Burnside's North Carolina expeditionary force could sail north, disembark, and march west from the coast. Pope, sensing he was too far west, withdrew behind the Rapidan River. But then Lee sent Stonewall Jackson on an epic end-run around the Army of Virginia and cut off its lifeline and captured its supply base at Manassas Junction. Pope refused to learn his lesson and tarried west of Bull Run Creek in an attempt to annihilate Jackson while elements of Federal reinforcements streamed north and west to bolster his force. From August 27 to August 29, a series of battles were fought at Kettle Run, Broad Run, Brawner's Farm, and along the line of an abandoned railroad west of Manassas Junction. On the 30th, Lee launched his *coup de grace* under the direction of Longstreet and crushed Pope's army (and career).

The scope of the Confederate victory was astonishing: the Army of Northern Virginia had moved from the defense of Richmond's suburbs to marching through Frederick, Maryland, in less than a month. But the Confederate success obscured a fact about the Second Manassas battles that would become quite clear at South Mountain on September 14 and along Antietam Creek on September 17—the soldiery of the Federal Eastern armies had learned to fight with tenacity and grit, and (given competent leadership) they could match their Southern counterparts blow-for-blow.

Honorable Mentions

1. Emancipation Proclamation
2. Battle of Pea Ridge
3. Battle of Fredericksburg
4. The New Mexico Campaign
5. Jackson's Valley Campaign



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2012 COCWRT CALENDAR

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 8, 2012

★ **Martin Stewart**—71st Ohio Volunteer Infantry



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.