

My fellow roundtable Members: Our next meeting is on Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at 7 pm at La Navona, 154 North Hamilton Road, Gahanna, Ohio 43230. Our speaker will be Daniel Welch. His topic is "William Child and the Smoketown Hospital as our speaker. Dan will share the stories and challenges of the longest operated field hospital at Antietam, through the letters and diary entries of William Child, Assistant Surgeon of the 5th New Hampshire, we will hear of the next fight for the many wounded left in the battle's wake, survival. Please see our website <https://centralohiocwrt.wordpress.com> for more information on Mr. Welch.

I have attached Tom Ayres' Report of Dr. Bud Robertson's presentation at the March meeting.

Here is our Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer's Report for March 2018

Beginning checking account balance 3/1/2018 = \$3252.93

March receipts = \$360.00 (\$255.00 from dues; \$105.00 from book raffle)

March expenses = \$388.00 (\$303.00 for Dr. Robertson speaker fee; \$60.00 for rental car for speaker, \$25.00 for state renewal of non-profit entity registration).

Ending checking account balance 3/31/2018 = \$3224.93

January started a new fiscal year for the Roundtable, so dues are once again due. Our dues are:

- *Single* \$25.00
- *Family* \$35.00
- *Student* \$15.00

We have not raised our dues for many years, and I have no plans to do so in 2018. Please continue to support our book raffle. Once again, I will match raffle sales up to \$50 if everyone at the meeting buys at least one ticket. Please make a point of getting your dues in to Dave DeLisio or me as soon as possible; don't make me channel my debt collection attorney doppelganger!

Battlefield Tour Report: Unfortunately, no one has stepped forward to coordinate the battlefield trip to Chickamauga, so I have decided to cancel the trip. I will regroup with those of you who have expressed an interest in going and we will organize a trip for 2019.

Greg Biggs, our speaker last September, did some follow up research on questions he was asked at our meeting and sent Mike Peters and me the following message:

Hi Mike and Jamie:

I Hope all's well with you both. With regards to my program at your CWRT this past September on Sherman's logistics in the Atlanta Campaign, I wanted to respond to one comment and answer a question for which, at the time, I did not have the figures at hand.

First off, I mentioned a problem that Sherman had with the railroad gauges of the tracks in Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia (all five foot gauge) and the tracks of railroads north of the Ohio River, which ran up to six different gauges (compared to only four in the South). I took Sherman to task about something in his memoirs, as has another historian, where he found it amusing to see cars with various Northern railroad company names on tracks south of the Ohio River, when, most likely, many of them would not have fit the tracks.

I mentioned that there was a process at the time, although not by name, to lift the cars and alter the gauge of their under-carriages but that this was not a safe method of solving the problem. In doing more research on this, the system was called the Charles Tisdale System and it was patented in June, 1863. It did cause some accidents however so it was not widely used and would not have worked for the demands that Sherman would place on the railroads in getting him his needed supplies per day into Chattanooga from as far back as Louisville and Nashville. These modified undercarriages were not as solid as those built to the gauge.

I also found a system for this called the John Imboden Gauge Change System. I could not find when this was used however so I don't know if it was wartime or post-war. One of your members mentioned the Ramsey Transfer Process and in doing research on that I found that it was not patented until 1876, after the Civil War was long over. So this system could not have been used. It also was not used long as the movement to standardize the nation's railroads to 4 feet 8 1/2 inches was beginning mostly by relaying tracks on existing lines which went much faster than building them from scratch. New lines were built to this new standard gauge.

The answer for the cars and locomotives used is found in the massive report written by Bvt. Brig. Gen. Daniel C. McCallum, U.S. Military Railroads, of the success this line had during the war. In it he notes, as I did in my program, that it came down to the War Department going to northern locomotive and car manufacturers and getting them to massively ramp up production of both to the five foot gauge standard, and this they did. For the Military Division of the Mississippi, which was commanded by Sherman, in 1864 alone they purchased 154 new locomotives and captured seventeen more. For cars, they purchased 1081 from their makers. No need to move locomotives and cars from north of the river when most would not fit when you could just make more to a safer standard of construction. The USMRR also used, as I mentioned, locomotives and cars from railroads in Kentucky as these were of the five foot gauge. This added 21 locomotives and 195 cars. Jamie then asked how much did all of this cost and in looking through the McCallum report he stated that for the Military Division of the Mississippi the total cost was \$29,662,142.55 for labor and materials. This translates to \$441,810,258.54 in today's dollars - a pretty massive undertaking for the rebuilding of tracks, new water towers and wood stations, new sidings, new bridges and much more over the winter of 1863-1864 and then making repairs as the campaign began and carried forward.

Hope this helps clear up things and answer a question that I did not have the answer for at the time. McCallum's report (United States Military Railroads) can be ordered off

Amazon as a reprint for less than \$15 and it makes fascinating reading. The copy that I worked with when doing the program was not as clear and so I missed some things which have been added into the program now. All of the massive undertaking is simply amazing even by today's standards.

Greg Biggs

Finally, I have attached hereto the schedule for the Sherman roundtable in Lancaster. That trivia night sounds like a good idea; we may have to treat it as contraband of war and apply it to our own meetings one of these days!

Jamie Ryan

President Central Ohio Civil War Roundtable

Water: Forgotten Element of the Civil War

Under the protection of Union Rear Admiral David G. Farragut's ships, 1,500 soldiers detached from the 77th Illinois, 34th Iowa, 96th Ohio and 3rd Maryland cavalry regiments landed August 3, 1864, on Dauphin Island at the entrance to Mobile Bay. The next day the men, under General Gordon Granger, marched some 15 miles to within a half mile of Fort Gaines on the eastern tip of the barrier island. Thus began the siege of the fort and the invasion of Mobile Bay.

Since the fall of New Orleans in April 1862, Mobile had become the principal port for blockade runners east of the Mississippi River. Farragut had long desired to capture Mobile, but operations on the Mississippi to capture Vicksburg had occupied him. When Vicksburg fell to Ulysses S. Grant in July 1863, the admiral could devote more attention to the Alabama port. On August 5 Farragut ("Damn the torpedoes") launched his assault with 18 vessels, including four ironclads, through the mined (but marked by buoys) channel between Dauphin and Gulf Shores barrier islands. Fort Morgan guarded the eastern side of the channel.

The federal ironclad Tecumseh mistakenly sailed through the minefield, instead of a clear gap, struck a mine and sank within three minutes, taking the lives of 93 of 114 crewmen. The rest of Farragut's flotilla made it through the mines and devastated the small Confederate "fleet" of three gunboats and the ironclad ram CSS Tennessee. The ram was rammed itself and battered, rendered a motionless hulk. With the rebel boats neutralized, Farragut and Granger concentrated on the three unprotected forts (Fort Powell was the third), where morale was reportedly abysmal, and captured some 1,500 rebel defenders.

While Farragut never took Mobile itself due to the inability to clear a shallow sandbar (it would not fall until the war's end in 1865), the Union navy controlled the lower bay and blocked the port to runners.

It was fitting that eminent Civil War scholar James "Bud" Robertson told the Roundtable in March that Farragut's successful invasion of Mobile Bay was the "high water mark" of the

Confederacy. Not Gettysburg nor the fall of Vicksburg to Grant's siege in July 1863, as the war raged on for nearly two more years. The theme of his talk was water, in all its forms, and how it affected the war and its participants.

Prior to the taking of Mobile Bay, however, the Union's grand strategy was stuck in the mud and public morale was low as Grant's overland campaign produced appalling casualties...until the taking of Mobile Bay and General William Tecumseh Sherman's taking of Atlanta in September 1864 as John Bell Hood fled the wrecked city for north Alabama.

Robertson, born in 1930 in Danville, Virginia, the great-grandson of a Confederate soldier, spoke of the importance of water in the war, as a source of movement on the rivers, bays and high seas, as an impediment to armies on the move and as a source of life and death to common soldiers.

Robertson, who retired from his teaching position at Virginia Tech in June 2011 after 40 years at the lectern, was designated Alumni Distinguished Professor Emeritus by the college's board of visitors. He is rightly acknowledged as the leading authority on Stonewall Jackson and a prolific author and speaker in person and on TV and radio. Now well into his eighth decade, he told the Roundtable that he is cutting back on his travels and lecturing.

Robertson likened the Confederacy, at least its eight states of the Mississippi, to an island bounded, of course, by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, and by the Mississippi, Ohio and Potomac rivers. And by the important interior rivers of the Cumberland and Tennessee. As Grant and William Rosecrans secured the Cumberland and Tennessee and Stones rivers, respectively, the South's ground for maneuver in the West was constricted.

Union General George G. Meade complained that the rivers of Virginia, the Rappahannock, the Rapidan, North Anna, York and James, flowed in the wrong direction — west to east — and thus restricted the easy movement of Union forces south to Richmond. As a result of all the river and creek crossings, Union engineers and builders became experts in bridge building and repair and pontoon bridge erection.

It fits nicely into Robertson's theme that the war began on water as Confederate shore batteries bombarded Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor in April 1861. The first major battle in the East was on Bull Run at Manassas, Virginia. And the final battle for Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was a decisive defeat in a running series of engagements known as Sailor's Creek on April 6, 1865, just east of Farmville, Virginia. From a hillside Lee witnessed the surrender of many of his bedraggled troops. This convinced him that further combat was hopeless, and he surrendered to Grant three days later at Appomattox.

Water played a role in virtually every battle in the war, either as part of the topography or weather (rain or drought) or availability and quality of drinking water.

Robertson displayed a photo taken by Alexander Gardner in May 1864 of 12 Union soldiers bathing and relaxing in the North Anna River. Likely, the river was horribly polluted from the 100,000 men and 30,000 horses and mules nearby.

Robertson asked members to consider the disastrous environmental impact of 150,000 men and thousands of horses and mules that descended on the village of Gettysburg in July 1863. The village had three creeks flowing around it. They were ruined, especially when heavy rains soaked the area on July 4 as Lee's army and long wagon train of wounded departed the town.

Disease decimated the ranks on both sides, usually due to bacteria and poor hygiene and the lack of medical knowledge, medicine and antidotes. Common maladies included typhoid fever or salmonella from contaminated food and water, camp fever or epidemic typhus spread by human body louse and dysentery or inflammatory bowel infection.

Interestingly, the soldiers who made coffee from boiled water fared much better than their brethren who were non-coffee drinkers. It was a good way to start the day, even some 160 years ago.

Tom Ayres

