

My Fellow Roundtable Members: We have a special treat next month. Our meeting on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 7 pm will be held at **Motts Military Museum**, 5075 South Hamilton Road, Groveport, Ohio 43125. Please come early and enjoy the great museum that our fellow Roundtable member Warren Motts has created. Please see www.mottsmilitarymuseum.org for more information.

Our Speaker will be Dan Masters, who will speak about the 21st Ohio Infantry at the Battle of Stones River. Dan is a very interesting guy, please check out his full biography on our website at www.centralohiocwrt.wordpress.com. Dan is 43, married, with 6 children; and works as a supply chain and planning manager for Materion Corp. in Elmore, Ohio. Dan is a 1994 graduate of Bowsher High School in Toledo, and a 2002 graduate of the University of Toledo with a bachelor's degree in communications. Dan is pursuing a masters' degree in American History at Bowling Green State University. He owns and operates Columbian Arsenal Press, a small publishing firm that focuses on putting into print first hand narratives of the Civil War from Ohio soldiers. Check out Dan's really cool website at: www.columbianarsenal.com

I have attached Tom Ayres' report on our January Meeting, where Tom gives us a very interesting interpretation on our debate about George McClellan.

Here is our Treasurer's Report from Dave Delisio:

Treasurer's Report for January 2019

Beginning checking account balance 1/1/2019 = \$1673.93

January receipts = \$487.00 from January meeting book raffle and dues payments

January expenses = \$0

Ending checking account balance 1/31/2019 = \$2160.93

Please pay your 2019 dues to Dave or me at the next meeting! And keep participating in the book raffle.

Speaking on a new Roundtable year, please let me know if anyone is interested as serving as an officer. I would love to get a newsletter editor, and a tour coordinator. In addition, if anyone wants to serve as Treasurer or Secretary, please let me know (as I am sure Dave or Tom would welcome the break). Of course, if anyone wants to be President, please let me know and I will graciously yield the gavel. Mike Peters pointed out that I had failed to include him on this list of officers, and I told him that I did so intentionally because I consider him irreplaceable. However, if anyone would like to take over the task of finding speakers for the Roundtable, please let me know.

Speaking of battlefield tours, Dale Beck has stepped forward and put together a proposed itinerary for a trip to follow the Morgan's Raid Trail through Ohio over two weekends. If you are interested in going, please reach out to Dale or me, and we'll begin to select some dates and look into hotels etc.

Please remember that the February meeting is being held at Motts Military Museum in Groveport. Check out www.mottsmilitarymuseum.org.

Little Mac:

McClellan, George Brinton. Union gen. 1826-85. Pa. USMA 1846 (2/59); Engrs. Hailed at the beginning of the war as the "Young Napoleon," McClellan proved to be a brilliant military organizer, administrator, and trainer of men but an officer totally lacking in the essential qualities of successful command of large forces in battle...He started the war as a Maj. Gen. of Ohio volunteers and was soon made a Maj. Gen. of the R.A. and given command of the Dept. of Ohio. He was then 35 years old.

His success in the minor victory at Rich Mountain, W.Va., just 10 days before the Federal disaster at Bull Run, put him in the public eye at a critical time. Given command of the armies around Washington (Div. of the Potomac) and later succeeding General (Winfield) Scott as C. in C. of the army, he undertook with marked success the complex task of organizing and training the Union armies.

His failure in the Peninsula campaign led (Henry) Halleck to give (John) Pope command of the next major operation. After the latter's defeat at the 2nd Battle of Bull Run, McClellan resumed his former role. The administration became increasingly dissatisfied with his reluctance to march against the enemy. After Antietam, when McClellan delayed in pursuing Lee, Lincoln finally lost patience and ordered Burnside to take command of the Army of the Potomac.

His (posthumous) autobiography, *McClellan's Own Story*, (1887) is a convincing defense of his military record. Still a military enigma, a brilliant administrator, and a man possessing much good strategic sense, there is ample evidence to support the theory of his admirers that he was never given a fair chance. But the record shows that he was a commander who consistently overestimated the strength of his adversary and who always demanded more men and supplies before taking offensive action. "Sending reinforcements to McClellan is like shoveling flies across a barn," Lincoln is alleged to have said in final despair.

The sketch above about McClellan above appears on page 524 of *The Civil War Dictionary* by Mark M. Boatner III (1991 edition). An Army brat and one of six brothers who graduated from West Point, Boatner (1921-2006) was a combat infantryman who fought in Italy and Korea. He completed the book while a professor of military history at West Point.

The excerpt from Boatner certainly expresses the conventional wisdom on McClellan — good on the parade ground; weak on the battle field. And if Boatner expressed his own considered judgment rather than merely representing the prevailing opinion of a long line of historians, he has the background and credibility to do so.

McClellan's fall from military grace was cemented for the ages by President Abraham Lincoln when he dismissed McClellan on November 9 after the battle of Antietam in 1862 and buttressed by more than 100 years of scholarship. Among the multitude of McClellan detractors are such notables as T. Harry Williams, Bruce Catton, James McPherson and Joseph Glatthaar, graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University, later a professor of history at OWU and now on the history faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

But does this appraisal of McClellan square with the general's actual performance on the battle field? The Roundtable considered the record of McClellan at its annual open discussion session in January.

Presenting a stout defense of the general, before a skeptical audience, were Jamie Ryan, Mike Peters and Tim Maurice, all long-time leaders of the Roundtable. The centerpiece of their case for the general is his performance during the Maryland campaign in 1862, including driving Robert E. Lee off South Mountain and culminating in the battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862. While considered a draw by many (not by the three presenters), Lee's horrific losses convinced him to withdraw across the Potomac into Virginia.

In his favor, McClellan inherited an amalgam of five armies after the second disaster at Bull Run on August 28-30, 1862. He would have a mere fortnight to prepare a bedraggled and somewhat inexperienced Union force to meet Lee at Antietam Creek. Twenty-nine percent of McClellan's brigade commanders had no battle experience, Ryan pointed out. Of his six corps commanders, McClellan had confidence in only two — Joseph Hooker, who was wounded in the foot early in the battle, and Fitz John Porter. Joseph Mansfield was new to command, and McClellan held Edwin Sumner, William Franklin and Ambrose Burnside (also new to command) in low regard.

McClellan also received inept direction from Washington. His only real guidance from Halleck was to protect the capital. Yet, McClellan moved with uncommon speed after driving Lee off the mountain passes to Antietam Creek to do battle.

The tidal wave of scorn for McClellan turned somewhat in 1973 when historian Joseph Harsh (1941-2010; Harsh died on September 14, one day after the 148th anniversary of the battle of South Mountain in 1862) published his long essay "On the McClellan-Go-Round." In this piece Harsh cites critics and admirers of McClellan, concluding at one point, "Yet, when the sound and fury are pierced, the core of McClellan historiography is

mostly empty." Harsh would go to publish a definitive trilogy on the Maryland campaign.

Peters expertly surveyed the "pro-Mac" literature that has been published since Harsh issued his challenge to historians. Maurice explained the impact of Catton and Stephen Sears on his thinking about McClellan and how his review of more recent scholarship has altered those views.

Alas, the assessment of McClellan continues to be negative. The American Battlefield Trust website account of McClellan's performance at Antietam features a long critique by Sears, author of "Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam" and a withering critic of McClellan. Sears opens with this sentence, "Colonel Ezra Carman, who survived that bloody field and later wrote the most detailed tactical study of the fighting there, had it right when he observed that on September 17, 1862, 'more errors were committed by the Union commander than in any other battle of the war.' "

Despite Carman's biting criticism, McClellan achieved a costly victory, blunted Lee's advance into Union territory and drove the Confederates back into Virginia.

Members of the Roundtable may have come to the debate agreeing with Sears, but it seemed as though many left the debate with a willingness to rethink their position.

SUGGESTED CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD TOUR

FOLLOWING ROUTE OF JOHN HUNT MORGAN'S RAIDERS

WEEKEND #1 Day #1

DRIVE TO HARRISON OHIO

FOLLOW HERITAGE TRAIL TO CHILLICOTHE OHIO

STAY OVER NIGHT THERE

WEEKEND #1 Day #2

FOLLOW TRAIL TO BUFFINGTON ISLAND, TO BELLEVILLE WV, TO COAL HILL, TO HOCKINGPORT.

RETURN HOME

WEEKEND #2 Day #1

DRIVE TO NELSONVILLE

FOLLOW TRAIL TO MUSKINGUM RIVER CROSSING AT ROKEBY DAM, TO EAGLES PORT,
TO OLD WASHINGTON, OVERNIGHT IN STEUBENVILLE.

WEEKEND #2 DAY #2

DRIVE TO NEW LISBON OHIO AND WEST POINT, BATTLE OF SALINEVILLE (LAST BATTLE
AND CAPTURE)

DRIVE HOME

Dale Beck January 16, 2019 Revised Jan 17, 2019

