

The Charger



The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Dec. 2021

vol. #45 # 4

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'President's Message

Fellow Roundtable Members:

The Roundtable thanks Professor Mary DeCredico, one of the U.S. Naval Academy's foremost faculty members, for her excellent presentation on Jefferson Davis's role in leading the Confederate war effort. Professor DeCredico pointed out the daunting task Davis faced following his inauguration as the first, and only, President of the Confederate States. In addition, while he had significant military experience (far more than Lincoln), Davis's tendency to favor generals based more on friendship than performance hindered the Confederate war effort throughout the conflict. Professor DeCredico also answered a multitude of questions from the audience. We are glad she could present by Zoom, and hope she will come to Cleveland at some point in the coming years to address our group again.

Our next presenter, on December 8th, will be Eric Wittenberg, Esq. He is a prominent attorney in the Columbus, Ohio, area. When not trying cases to juries or judges, Mr. Wittenberg has devoted a considerable amount of time to the study of Civil War cavalry tactics and the performance of troopers in both blue and gray. He will be addressing the controversy surrounding Confederate General J.E.B Stuart's actions during

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the Gettysburg campaign, and offer his analysis as to the extent Stuart's absence impacted the Confederate invasion into Pennsylvania.

Finally, we have 3 debaters so far for the Dick Crews debate in January. Two more debaters are needed! If you have an interest in advocating for one of the many general or flag officers disciplined in some way during the conflict, please contact me and William Vodrey to sign up. Otherwise, you may be subjected to my advocacy for Braxton Bragg or George McClellan as the most unfairly treated general officer in the war!

I look forward to seeing you at our December 8th meeting.

Best,

Mark Porter

REMINDER
DEBATERS NEEDED!

The Dick Crews Annual Debate, January 12, 2022

Our topic this year is "Fired But Not Forgotten: Of all the Civil War generals and flag officers relieved of command, subjected to a court-martial or otherwise disciplined by superiors, which of them least deserved his fate?" William Vodrey will again be our moderator. Debaters will be able to pick their own top officer (first come, first served); possible candidates include Irwin McDowell, Joe Johnston, Samuel F. Du Pont, Braxton Bragg, William Franklin, Don Carlos Buell, Gouverneur K. Warren, Fitz John Porter and others (U.S. Grant and W.T. Sherman are excluded). Debaters should expect to speak for five minutes, then take questions from the membership for another five, and finally to take part in a general discussion/rebuttal opportunity with the other debaters. It's a lot of fun, and no particular expertise is either required or expected; younger and newer members of the Roundtable are warmly encouraged to take part. The debate winner, chosen by vote of the membership, will, as always, receive fabulous prizes.

If you'd like to be one of our debaters, please let William know (being sure to name the officer you'd like to speak about) by noon on Weds. Dec. 1 at wfbvodrey@aol.com.

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The Sound and the Fury:

William Faulkner's Great-Grandfather

©Brian D. Kowell

April 21, 2021



"I want to be a writer like my great-granddaddy."

William Faulkner

William Clark Falkner was a lawyer, farmer, businessman, politician, soldier, poet and great-grandfather to one of the greatest writers in American literary history. Born September 25, 1897 in New Albany, Mississippi, the writer William Faulkner never knew his great-grandfather. The young Faulkner spent his boyhood listening to stories told by his elders about the Civil War, slavery, the Ku Klux Klan and the Falkner family. Faulkner's grandfather also told him about the exploits of William's great-grandfather William Clark Falkner – or as the family referred to him – the "Old Colonel."

William Clark Falkner was born in Knox County, Tennessee on July 6, 1825 or 1826. His family moved to Missouri and at age 17, William moved to Ripley, Mississippi. He married Holland Pearce, but she died in 1849 a year after giving birth to their first child. In 1851 Falkner married Elizabeth Houston Vance and together the couple had eight children. One of those was John Wesley Thompson Falkner who later fathered Murray Cuthbert Falkner. It was Murray's oldest son who would become Noble Laureate author William Faulkner. (He added the "u" to the last name.) Faulkner was born after his great-granddaddy had died but listened closely to the stories told about him. As a result William Clark Falkner would serve as inspiration for his great-grandson's character Colonel John Sartoris in his novels Flags in the Dust and The Unvanquished.

William Clark Falkner was an imposing, self-made man with big ambitions. He was determined to accomplish whatever he set out to do, and nothing would stand in his way. He had a quick temper which often made him enemies.

In 1845, he helped capture an ax murderer and single-handily prevented the mob from lynching the man. He used this incident to write a pamphlet entitled "The Life and Confession of A.J. MacCannon: Murderer of the Adcock Family."

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With the War with Mexico, William volunteered in the 2nd Regiment of Mississippi Volunteers and was elected 1st lieutenant. His unit saw no real action. Despite this, after the war he petitioned the War Department for a pension for wounds received while in Northern Mexico. He claimed to have sustained the wounds when he was ambushed by Mexican guerillas. However, when later in life he was running for public office, some of his enemies advised the War Department that Falkner's injuries were the result of a drunken brawl with Mexican civilians while he was AWOL from his company. Nevertheless, Falkner received and continued to receive his Mexican War pension.

Returning from Mexico he practiced law and was involved with business and civic organizations. In 1849 Holland died. That same year he was involved in an altercation with Robert Hindman, the brother of future Confederate General Thomas Hindman. Robert Hindman accused Falkner of slandering his name and attacked Falkner by drawing a gun and shooting at him twice – missing both times. The two men grappled and Falkner managed to draw his pocket knife and stabbed Hindman to death. Indicted on murder charges, the jury acquitted him on self-defense. After the trial Thomas Hindman was his sworn enemy, but it was a friend of Robert's by the name of Erasmus Morris who challenged Falkner to a duel in his friend's honor. Falkner accepted and killed Morris. Arrested and tried, he was again acquitted on self-defense.

When things settled down in his life, he married his second wife Elizabeth Vance in 1851. He also wrote poems, a play, and books. His best known novel is a murder mystery titled The White Rose of Memphis.

When the Civil War erupted in 1861, Falkner raised a company from Tippah County which he named the Magnolia Guards. This company was incorporated into the 2nd Mississippi Volunteer Infantry with Falkner elected as Colonel. The regiment was sent to Virginia and, combined with the 11th Mississippi and 4th Alabama, became Brigadier General Bernard Bee's Brigade in General Joseph Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah. Falkner was anxious to earn his star and became a strict disciplinarian. His men came to resent him, but Johnston wrote of him: "Col. Wm C. Falkner ... is one of the most distinguished volunteer officers now at the seat of war. He has his regiment in the most perfect drill, and though exceedingly strict with his men, is universally popular." When Johnston's army set out from the Shenandoah Valley to reinforce Beauregard at Bull Run, Falkner's regiment was on the first train to arrive.

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On July 21st the Bee's Brigade along with Colonel Francis S. Bartow's Brigade moved from a position near the Henry House to reinforce General Nathaniel G. Evans's Brigade on Mathew's Hill against the Union flanking column. Bee's Brigade was sandwiched between Evans and Bartow with the 4th Alabama on the left, 2nd Mississippi in the center and the 11th Mississippi on the right. Facing them was Colonel Ambrose Burnside's Brigade with support from Captain William Reynold's and Captain Charles Griffin's batteries.

The firing was hot between the green troops. Bee soon spotted another Federal Brigade moving down the Manassas-Sudley Road (Colonel Andrew Porter's Brigade) flanking their position and this, along with the arrival of Major George Sykes' eight company battalion of Regulars on his other flank spelled doom for the Confederate line. As his line began to waver – first men leaving the ranks individually then in small groups – Bee tried to convince them to stay, but with the mounting pressure he ordered his Brigade to fall back.

General Bee found Brigadier General Thomas J. Jackson's Brigade on Henry House Hill and wanted Jackson to move to his support, but Jackson refused and his Brigade stayed like a stone wall as Bee's men fell back to rally on Jackson's right flank. His men were disorganized as the Federals followed and Bee was killed. Falkner, his regiment maintaining their organization, was ordered to move to Jackson's left flank with parts of the 11th Mississippi. With the 6th North Carolina on their left, his men helped support 4th Virginia as they pushed back the 14th Brooklyn and 1st Minnesota, taking Griffin's guns. Falkner advanced against the 1st Minnesota but the 1st Minnesota along with men from the 1st Michigan and 11th New York responded and forced the Mississippians back, capturing the 2nd's Lt. Colonel Bartley. When Colonels Arnold Elzey and Jubal A. Early arrived and attacked the Federal flank from Chinn Ridge the day belonged to the Confederates. Falkner's men maintained their position on Henry House Hill.

After Bull Run Falkner and the 2nd Mississippi were sent west. Their term of enlistment up, most of the men re-enlisted for three years. In the re-organization, when electing new officers, Falkner was voted out in favor of Colonel John M. Stone of Iuka. (Stone would later become a governor of Mississippi.) Demoted and still wanting his star, Falkner resigned his commission and formed a cavalry company which he designated as the 1st Mississippi Partisan Rangers. Falkner led his partisans against the Federals' lines of communication - destroying tracks, telegraph lines and supplies.

On August 26, 1862, with an estimated 800 men Colonel Falkner tore into Colonel Philip Sheridan's camp near Rienzi, thinking the camp weakly defended. The day was excessively hot, "one of those sultry debilitating days" as Sheridan recorded. Most of his men were lounging or sleeping in their tents. At the first sound of shots, like bees from a hive, Sheridan's men swarmed

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from their tents armed and firing. This firing and the shots from Captain Henry Hescok's battery, soon repulsed Falkner's men. Sheridan then sent Colonel Edward Hatch's and Colonel Albert L. Lee's veteran cavalry and a section of artillery to pursue the Partisans, causing such a precipitous retreat that many of the Confederates lost their hats, including Colonel Falkner. Falkner rallied his men in a line at Newland's store near Hernando, Mississippi, but his men soon panicked "and ran in the wildest disorder in a mad rush" to escape. The chase went on and the demoralized rebels discarded guns and coats and blankets and fled to the woods where they were hunted down until dark. Falkner, now without a command, made his way back home to Ripley. He soon after resigned his commission and the war was over for him.

After the war he built a large law practice with another attorney, Richard J. Thurmond. He owned and operated a 2000 acre farm near Ripley and helped to rebuild northern Mississippi railroads and re-establish Stonewall College. He was known around the area as Colonel Falkner or just "The Old Colonel."

In 1889 he won a seat in the Mississippi State Legislature on the Democratic ticket. He had an acrimonious falling out with his law partner and on November 5, Election Day, Falkner was confronted by Thurmond on the Ripley Courthouse Square. After heated words, Thurmond drew a pistol and shot Falkner in the neck. Falkner lingered for one day until the swelling in his throat cut off his air supply. He died November 6, 1889 at 64 years of age. Thurmond was later acquitted of manslaughter. Today there is a tombstone and a statue of Colonel William Clark Falkner in Ripley, Mississippi.

The "Old Colonel and the tales he heard of the Civil War had a profound influence on his great-grandson's writings. Forty-three years after the "Old Colonel's" death, William Faulkner would publish The Sound and the Fury ranked #6 on a list of the 100 Best English Language Novels of the 20th Century. In 1948 he would write a classic passage of every Southern boy's dream in his novel Intruder in the Dust :

"For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but

whenever he wants it, there is an instant when it's still not
yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades
are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready
in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break
out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in
one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill

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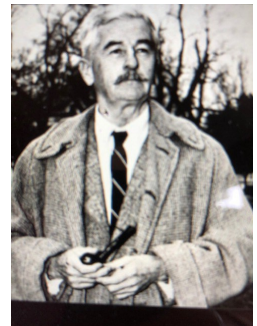
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waiting for Longstreet to give word and it's all in balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun but there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances which made more men than Garnett and Kemper and Armistead and Wilcox look grave yet it's going to begin, we all know that, we have come too far with too much at stake and at that moment doesn't need even a fourteen-year-old boy to think, This time. Maybe this time...."

A year later in 1949 William Faulkner won the Nobel Prize for Literature and later two Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction.



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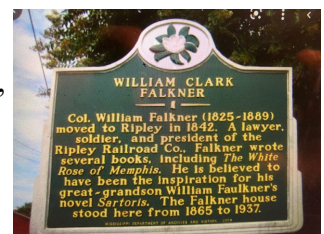
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Ulysses S. Grant's Musings about Edwin M. Stanton

by David A. Carrino

December is the month in which Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, who, in the Gospel of Matthew, proclaimed, "Full authority has been given to me, both in heaven and on earth." December is also the birth month of Edwin M. Stanton, a prominent Civil War individual, who, according to another prominent Civil War individual, Ulysses S. Grant, harbored much the same opinion about his own authority. Edwin Stanton was born on December 19, 1814 in Steubenville, Ohio and also died in December in 1869 on the day before the traditional celebration of the birth of Jesus. Because Edwin Stanton was born in December and also died in December, it is appropriate this month to recall what Ulysses Grant wrote in his *Memoirs* about Stanton.

In his *Memoirs*, Ulysses Grant generally and with only a few exceptions was not overly critical of others who labored on the side of the Union in the Civil War. One exception is Gouverneur K. Warren in Chapter LXIV of Grant's *Memoirs*, in which Grant characterized Warren as "slow in moving" and "late in getting up." Grant further stated that he was "much dissatisfied with Warren's dilatory movements" and that he had "discovered a defect" in Warren that precluded Warren's "usefulness in emergencies."



Similarly, Ulysses Grant leveled some harsh criticism at Edwin Stanton, specifically about Stanton's exercising of his authority. In Chapter LXVIII of his *Memoirs*, Grant wrote the following about Stanton. "He (Stanton) was a man who never questioned his own authority, and who always did in war time what he wanted to do. He was an able constitutional lawyer and jurist; but the Constitution was not an impediment to him while the war lasted."

In Chapter LXX of his *Memoirs* Grant related his comparison of Stanton to Abraham Lincoln regarding how they used their authority to make subordinates carry out their wishes. "It may not be out of place to again allude to President Lincoln and the Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton, who were the great conspicuous figures in the executive branch of the government. There is no great difference of opinion now, in the public mind, as to the characteristics of the President. With Mr. Stanton the case is different. They were the very opposite of each other in almost every particular, except that each possessed great ability. Mr. Lincoln gained influence over men by making them feel that it was a pleasure to serve him. He preferred yielding his own wish to gratify others, rather than to insist upon having his own way. It distressed him to disappoint others. In matters of public duty, however, he had what he wished, but in the least offensive way. Mr. Stanton never questioned his own authority to command, unless resisted. He cared nothing for the feeling of others. In fact it seemed to be pleasanter to him to disappoint than to gratify. He felt no hesitation in assuming the functions of the executive, or in acting without advising with him..."

"Mr. Lincoln was not timid, and he was willing to trust his generals in making and executing their plans. The Secretary was very timid, and it was impossible for him to avoid interfering with the armies covering the capital...The enemy would not have been in danger if Mr. Stanton had been in the field."

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To put Grant's comments about Stanton in context, Grant wrote these words 16 years after Stanton died, in other words, at a time when Grant knew for certain that Stanton would have no chance to personally respond to Grant's blistering comments. Perhaps Grant was correct about how Stanton overstepped his authority. But correct or not, Grant was not shy about making clear to the American public how he viewed Stanton's exercising of his authority. Asserting that Stanton felt that "the Constitution was not an impediment to him," that he "never questioned his own authority," and that he "cared nothing for the feelings of others" are certainly strong statements that portray Stanton as an imperious and supercilious person. Moreover, Grant's claim that "The enemy would not have been in danger if Mr. Stanton had been in the field" calls into question Stanton's capability to carry out his role as the civilian executive who was in charge of the conduct of the Civil War. Because Stanton was dead at the time that these strong statements were made, he had no opportunity to respond and give his side of the story. Whatever was Grant's motivation for making known his harsh opinion of Stanton, Grant did it in a very effective and one-sided manner, and he did it in a way that was guaranteed to become widely known throughout the country. So happy birthday, Secretary of War Stanton, from General in Chief Grant. And rest in peace.

Source: Ulysses S. Grant. 1885. *The Complete Personal Memoirs of General Ulysses S. Grant*

Second Ohio Volunteer Cavalry

by Dennis Keating

The 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (OVC) was organized in Cleveland. 317 Clevelanders would serve in the regiment. Its wartime experience would take it to the far western theaters of Kansas and Indian Territory, where it chased Confederate General Chief Stand Watie. There, it learned the Native game called "LaCrosse" from pro-Union Indians. It also learned the Indian war whoop, which became its signature in battle and was known as the "2nd Ohio yell." In Missouri, it fought the infamous (Ohio born) guerilla William Quantrill. After also serving in Kentucky and East Tennessee, it came east to serve in the Army of the Potomac. Captain Henry Chester remembered:

"[on] June 1, 1864 [during Grant's Overland campaign] in one of the charges, we captured a rebel lieutenant who asked: 'To whom he had the honor of surrendering?' '2nd Ohio was the reply. 'Great heavens! I fought that regiment in the Indian Territory, in Kentucky, in Tennessee and now they have got me in Virginia'."

It served under Phil Sheridan in his 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign in the cavalry division led by (Ohio born) George Armstrong Custer. In April, 1865, under Sheridan and Custer it pursued Lee's retreating Army of Northern Virginia until its surrender at Appomattox Court House.

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Previously, it joined in the pursuit and defeat of John Hunt Morgan's raiders in southern Ohio in the summer of 1863. While at Camp Chase in Columbus on March 5, 1863, the men of the 2nd OVC had a memorable adventure there in a snowstorm. Enraged by the anti-war statements by the editor of the *Crisis*, a "Copperhead" newspaper, a large party of the regiment descended on its office and wrecked it despite a police presence. No soldier was ever charged or disciplined.

Altogether, the 2nd OVI fought in eight battles and thirty skirmishes and lost 83 (including 7 officers) in combat and 184 (including 5 officers) to disease during the war. Six of its members received the Medal of Honor (five for the capture of Confederate battle flags at the battle of Sailor's Creek on April 6, 1865, the last fought during Lee's retreat). At that battle, Chester suffered a bullet wound to his head, as described by a fellow officer:

"[s]uddenly a man steps behind a tree, takes deliberate aim and fires. Capt. Chester falls from his horse to the ground and the man throws down his musket and pleads for quarter...The coward is permitted to live and may repent of his dastardly deed. Captain Tenney, a comrade of Chester's at Oberlin College, gathers the fallen man in his arms, while others dress his wound, and are overjoyed to find that the ball has struck his forehead and glanced and stunned but not killed one of the bravest and worthiest men that ever sought reputation at the cannon's mouth."

Chester had escaped capture by Confederates at a skirmish in November, 1864.

Earlier, at the battle of Five Forks on April 1, Tenney's brother was killed. The 2nd OVC, led by Custer, participated in the Grand Review of the Armies on May 23, 1865 and was mustered out on October 12.

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The Greatest Escape

By Douglas Miller.

Book Review by Paul Siedel

Browsing through the Chautauqua book store in upstate New York last summer a new book in the history section caught my eye. It was a new publication on an old topic that I thought I'd already knew about. The name of the book is "The Greatest Escape" by Douglas Miller. It is the story of the mass escape of 109 U.S. Officers who left Libby Prison in Richmond in February 1864

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Not only does the book discuss the actual escape but goes into the construction of the prison formerly a tobacco warehouse, and why the prisoners decided to escape the way they did.

The story begins in Chicago where in 1888 a group of investors purchased the old warehouse and brought it to Wabash Ave. in that city, where they opened it as a museum for the Chicago Worlds Fair in 1893. It contained thousands of artifacts relating to the War, such as bullet ridden tree trunks taken from different battlefields and letters from Jefferson Davis to his wife, and the very table upon which the surrender at Appomattox was signed. The museum at first was a huge success, prospered for a while but finally closed in 1898. The book opens by going into the life each prisoner featured in the text and how and where they were captured. It traces them through the confinement and eventual escape. All were U.S. officers. It was decided by a very small group of the men to burrow down through the prison kitchen and then go through the back wall of a fireplace and into the prison cellar which was dubbed “rat hell” and “the black whole”. This is where the prison was most vulnerable and discovery was less of a threat. The digging of the tunnels was tortuous to say the least, cave ins, lack of fresh air, and discovery were constant threats. The first attempt to escape was aborted when they miscalculated and the escape hatch came up in the middle of the street directly in front of the prison. The second one was successful; the men left one by one and eventually emerged across the street in a vacant lot; they then scattered throughout the city and into eastern Virginia. Of the 109 who escaped sixty one made it to Union lines and forty eight were recaptured and returned to prison.

Several chapters go into other aspects of prison life such as the help they received from Elizabeth Van Lew the spy who lived a short distance from the actual prison. Because of her help in this and other areas President Grant made her postmistress of Richmond after the war. Another guard who the prisoners called “Little Ross” because of his short stature was responsible for calling the roll each morning but in reality was really a Union spy. Several African-Americans played a major role during the war years when they carried messages from the prison to Van Lew and other Union sympathizers throughout the city.

Hospital facilities were horrible to say the least. Prisoners who were released reported back to Washington, that they thought that about fifty prisoners died each day and 1,500 died each month from disease, malnutrition or depression.

After the War several prisoners went on to claim distinguished careers. One became curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; another went on the fight with Garibaldi in Italy; another became a major figure in the Cuban revolution and assisted in the U.S. victory in 1898.

All in all the book was a delightful read and one which at least gave me much more information on Libby Prison and the escape which took place in February of 1864. It is well organized and researched although it confuses Alexander Stephens with Thaddeus Stephens once or twice the rest of his research seems to be very well done. The book, as mentioned before, covers more than just the escape and even goes into civilian life in Richmond during the War. A current publication it can be purchased at any bookstore and of course on Amazon or American Book Exchange or other on line locations. Well worth reading and fulfills a long needed perspective into this very interesting aspect of America’s most bloody conflict.

Miller, Douglas, “The Greatest Escape”, 287 pages, Lyons Press, Guildford, Conn. 2021.

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Meeting Dec. 8, 2021

Program : Confederate General J.E.B Stuart's actions during the Gettysburg campaign,

Speaker: Eric Wittenberg, Esq , Attorney , Columbus, Ohio, area.

Location: The Holiday Inn Independence at Rockside Road just off I-77

Time: 6pm

The talk will be both in-person and streamed live so that as many Civil War enthusiasts can enjoy Dan's presentation.

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