

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable.*

*March 2022*

*vol. # 46 # 7*

### *Executive Committee 2021/2022*

*President - Mark Porter*

*Vice President - Lily Korte*

*Past President - Steve Pettyjohn*

*Treasurer - Robert Pence*

*Secretary - Jimmy Markhaus*

*Dan Ursu—Historian*

*Ellen Connally—Director*

*Richard Hronek - Director*

*Hans Kuenzi - Director*

*Michael Wells - Director*

*Dan Zeiser—Director*

*Paul Burkholder - Webmaster*

*Website : [clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com](http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com)*

*E-mail: [m.wells@csuohio.edu](mailto:m.wells@csuohio.edu) or [w.keating@csuohio.edu](mailto:w.keating@csuohio.edu), The Charger editors*

*Editors: Dennis Keating, Michael Wells, Newsletter Design: Catherine Wells*

### **Presidents Message**

Fellow Roundtable Members:

I hope everyone enjoyed the presentation made by Lynn and Julianne Herman entitled “War in the West: Battle of Glorietta Pass” at our February 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. Lynn, ably assisted by Julianne’s technical skills, gave a detailed account of the battle. He also made the argument that Glorietta Pass should be considered as the “Gettysburg of the West.” Lynn pointed out that the action, while technically a Confederate victory, proved to be a Southern strategic defeat because it ended the possibility that the Confederate government would acquire neither access nor ore, from western gold, silver, or lead mines. It was a pleasure to hear about an action in the far West, as that Civil War theatre does not get nearly the amount of attention devoted to the eastern actions at Antietam and Gettysburg.

Our next meeting will be held both in-person at the Independence Holiday Inn and by Zoom on March 9, 2022. The meeting will feature a performance by Professor Derek Maxfield, entitled “Grant at City Point.” Professor Maxfield will take on the persona of General U.S. Grant at the time of the Petersburg siege and his actions to bring the Army of Northern Virginia to bay in late 1864- early 1865. It should be a fascinating evening!

If you haven’t yet made your reservations, please do so without delay! I look forward to seeing you at our March 9th meeting.

Best,  
Mark Porter

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

### **Field Trip – September 2021**

By Steve Pettyjohn

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable held its annual field trip from September 24-25, 2021, visiting the Chickamauga and Chattanooga battlefields. Under the leadership of Roundtable president Mark Porter, we had another outstanding field trip. We were able to spend Friday on the Chickamauga battlefield with guide Robert Carter, who walked us through one of the most



complex and confusing Civil War battlefields. He provided a series of very helpful maps to help us with understanding the various moves during the battle. Our dinner speaker that evening was Professor Andrew Bledsoe of Lee University, Cleveland, Tennessee. Dr. Bledsoe used an excellent set of maps to describe the Tullahoma Campaign and the opening moves of the Chickamauga Campaign. On Saturday we visited Lookout Mountain, Orchard Knob, and several sites on Missionary Ridge with legendary National Park Service guide James Ogden. His comments were supplemented by even more maps, as this more straightforward battle still had its complexities.

Because both of the lunches and dinners on Friday and Saturday were included in our fees, we were able to socialize on a more sustained basis with many of the 18 members who attended. It was a great time to meet new members and renew old acquaintances that had been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For those of us looking forward to future field trips, it looks like vice president Lily Korte and treasurer Bob Pence did some preliminary planning for their years as president, with Lily deciding on a much anticipated trip to the Shenandoah Valley in 2022 and Bob looking forward to a return to Gettysburg in 2023.

### **Reflections on the Field Trip**

As several members have said in the past, we always look forward to the field trips, and I am no exception. I have been on 7 or 8 and found all to have been fun and informative. I have learned something new on every trip, and this one was no exception. I was particularly delighted when Mark Porter announced that we were going to Chickamauga, and I looked at Chattanooga as icing on the cake. I had been to Chickamauga once on a family vacation and left about as confused as when I entered as far as my understanding of the battle. With this trip, I left with a much better understanding of this confusing battlefield. Apparently Chickamauga was a battle of confusion for everyone, from the commanding generals on down to the privates.

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

Chickamauga started as something of a meeting engagement where both commanding generals thought they had caught the other by surprise and wanted to spring a trap on the enemy. It devolved into a slugfest, with constant ebbs and flows along a very long and convoluted battle line, and the terrain allowing one side to outflank the other only to be followed by being outflanked by their enemy again. The Confederates won a crushing victory in large part due to luck and also due to confusion on the part of General William Rosecrans, commander of the Army of the Cumberland. The Confederate victory came about on the second day of fighting when Rosecrans created a hole in the center of his line several hundred yards in width. This allowed General James Longstreet to launch a devastating attack with 11 fresh brigades that plunged through the gap. The day was saved by George Thomas, who stood like a rock. The right wing of that rock was anchored by the 21st Ohio, which, with the help of Colt repeating rifles, frustrated waves of Confederate attackers who hoped to break the last remaining organized resistance and destroy the Army of the Cumberland in the field.

As we toured the Chickamauga battlefield, I had some thoughts that I hope you find of interest.

This was an Ohio battlefield from the commanding general and his staff to various unit commanders: army commander William Rosecrans; a young fellow named James Garfield, who was a brigadier general and chief of staff; XX corps commander Alexander McCook; division commander Philip Sheridan; brigade commander John Wilder and his Lightning Brigade; and regimental commander Henry Van Ness Boynton, 35th Ohio (co-founder of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park) just to name a few. Also, I have never seen so many Ohio regimental markers on any other Civil War battlefield.

Chickamauga was a modern battlefield. In comparison, Gettysburg could be considered one of the last Napoleonic battlefields. At Gettysburg, General George Meade could see at least 75% of the contested field from his horse on Cemetery Ridge or Cemetery Hill. By riding a few minutes in either direction, he could survey the battlefield and make decisions and take action. In contrast, neither William Rosecrans nor Braxton Bragg had a shred of a chance of seeing the bulk of the battlefield from one location. The terrain and topography of the area, with trees, rough terrain, the hills and mountain ranges, and also Chickamauga Creek and its tributaries, prevented that. The size of the battlefield is reflected in the size of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park with over 5,300 acres versus about 2,800 acres at Gettysburg.

This was a battle where communications broke down and command and control were lost after the first shots were fired. Both sides were crippled by the inability of 19th century techniques to provide effective communications. Messengers got lost in the confusing terrain, staffs were not up to the task of effectively transcribing orders that were understandable to their subordinates, and units and officers were routinely lost and unable to accomplish their missions. These problems were exacerbated for the Confederates, since they were



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*



on the offensive. It didn't help that James Longstreet, D.H. Hill, and John Bell Hood, newly dispatched to the Army of Tennessee, were unfamiliar with Bragg's command style, and that Bragg reorganized his army after the first day's fighting.

One thing that struck me in thinking about the considerable size of the battlefield was the fateful area held on the second day of the battle by General Thomas Wood with his division of less than 5,000 men. It is some 600 to 700 yards in length. Compared to the frontages at Gettysburg, this is a huge line for a single division to hold. When Rosecrans

mistakenly ordered Wood to leave this front and move to the north, it created a gap in the center of the Union line, and Longstreet's assault stormed through that gap to sever the Army of the Cumberland.

Finally, we come to the "Rosecrans Rule," which was coined by the U.S. Army General Staff School after their study of the campaign. William Rosecrans made the critical error of creating a hole in the center of his line when he mistakenly ordered Thomas Wood to move his division north to support George Thomas. However, a fresh division had moved there earlier in the day to support Thomas. Wood's division was not needed. When Wood went north, he left a 600- to 700-yard-wide gap that Longstreet's assault poured through. Rosecrans made this mistake because of fatigue and lack of sustenance. He had something like two hours of sleep over the prior two- to three-day time frame along with very little food. His ability to speak coherently had been severely compromised. To make matters worse, Garfield, Rosecrans' chief of staff, was swamped writing messages and did not write the order to Wood. It was composed by a less talented member of the staff. The "Rosecrans Rule" is a reminder that a commander has the duty to rest and eat, so that he has a fresh mind ready to make sound decisions.

A Chickamauga what-if: Could the Lightning Brigade have saved the day?

The 21st Ohio was not the only unit armed with repeating rifles at Chickamauga. The Lightning Brigade was led by Colonel John T. Wilder of Ohio. (Well, he lived in Columbus for a decade.) The brigade was composed of two regiments from Indiana and three from Illinois. It served as "mounted infantry" during the Tulahoma Campaign and the Chickamauga Campaign. Most of the men were armed with seven-shot repeating Spencer rifles, while some companies carried 16-shot Henry repeating rifles. The unit was nicknamed "The Lightning Brigade" and served as Rosecrans' troubleshooting fire brigade. They were on the left flank of Longstreet's assault column when it ruptured the Union line. Wilder launched a flank attack that disrupted the Confederates, captured over 200, and sent part of the attackers running back into the woods they had attacked from earlier. The noise of their repeating rifles had Longstreet wondering if there was an entire corps on his flank. Wilder was organizing a follow-up assault when Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana appeared, wildly riding a horse, claiming all was lost, and insisting that Wilder and his men escort him back to Chattanooga. This ended the organization of a further assault that Wilder, to his last days, contended would have destroyed the Confederate assault. We will never know.



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

**March. 2022**

**vol. 46 # 7**

Note

"Toward the end of the 19th century, Civil War veterans including the Society of the Army of the Cumberland and the Chickamauga Memorial Association rallied support for creating a national park to preserve the battlefield at Chickamauga as well as nearby sites at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Congressman Charles H. Grosvenor (who commanded the 18th Ohio at Chickamauga) introduced the bill in Congress in 1890; it was signed by President (and fellow Civil War veteran) Benjamin Harrison in August of that year. Dedicated on the Battle of Chickamauga's 32nd anniversary in 1895, the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park became the first such park established by the Federal government, followed by Shiloh, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Antietam."



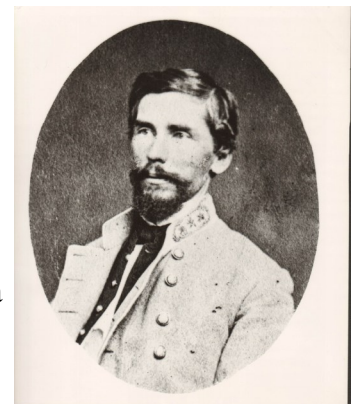
From The American Battlefield Trust Website  
Next month

We will review the rest of our trip. The second day of our trip focused on how Ulysses S. Grant reversed the disaster at Chickamauga and saved the Army of the Cumberland.

### **From Cork, Ireland to Franklin, Tennessee: Patrick Cleburne**

By Dennis Keating

Patrick Cleburne, Irish immigrant, became one of the Confederacy's most effective combat leaders. Wounded several times, he died in the ill-fated attack (opposed by Cleburne) by John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee on the entrenched Army of the Ohio at Franklin, Tennessee on November 30, 1864. Cleburne had Ohio connections: after his arrival in the United States, he spent a brief time in Cincinnati before he settled in Helena, Arkansas. More significantly, at the battle of Ringgold Gap on November 26, 1863, Cleburne's division's rearguard defense against Union forces under Joseph Hooker resulted in the deaths of two colonels who commanded the 7<sup>th</sup> Ohio Voluntary Infantry from Cleveland. This is Cleburne's story.



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

Patrick Ronayne Cleburne was born in March, 1828 in County Cork, Ireland. After the deaths of his mother and father, he was orphaned at age 15. Trying to follow in his physician father's footsteps, he applied for admission to the Trinity College of Medicine in Dublin but failed the entrance exam. He then enlisted in the British Army in 1846 and served in the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Foot stationed in Ireland, becoming a corporal. He grew disillusioned and bought his discharge.

In 1849 amidst the Irish potato famine that was forcing many Irish to emigrate, Cleburne emigrated to the United States with a sister and two brothers. Unlike most Irish immigrants to the United States, he was a Protestant, not a Catholic. He spent a short time in Cincinnati and then moved to Helena, Arkansas, where he worked as a pharmacist. Cleburne then became a lawyer, partnering with future fellow Confederate general Thomas C. Hindman and also becoming a joint owner of the local Democratic newspaper. In 1856, the two were ambushed after a political debate by members of the Know Nothing party. Cleburne was wounded but killed his assailant.

Cleburne became a U.S. citizen as the Civil War loomed. He joined the local Helena militia – the Yell Rifles. Upon Arkansas' secession, Cleburne participated in the Confederate capture of the U.S. arsenal in Little Rock and was named captain of the Yell Rifles, which became part of an amalgamated regiment in the force commanded by William Hardee. In March, 1862, Cleburne was named a brigadier general. At the battle of Shiloh, Cleburne's division suffered tremendous casualties and served as a rearguard in the Confederate retreat the second day and then in the defense of Corinth. In the Fall, Cleburne's division participated in the Confederate invasion of Kentucky. He was severely wounded in the face at the battle of Richmond on August 30, 1862, under Kirby Smith but recovered to join Braxton Bragg and Hardee at the battle of Perryville. Cleburne was unhorsed and wounded in the leg in that battle. At the battle of Stone River, Tennessee in December, Cleburne's division led the advance against the Army of the Cumberland before Bragg's army's retreat after January 2, 1863. Cleburne was promoted to Major General before that battle.

Cleburne's division again distinguished itself at the battle of Chickamauga in September, 1863, where 2/3 of its ranks were casualties. It again showed its mettle on November 25, 1863, when it held off William Sherman's attack at the North end of Missionary Ridge despite being heavily outnumbered by more than four to one.

The very next day, Cleburne was ordered by Bragg to lead the rearguard of the retreating defeated Confederates and hold off the Union army to save the rest of his army and its supply wagons. Cleburne's division of about 4,000 faced an attacking force of four Union brigades (including the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 2nd Division of the XII Corps) of about 12,000 men under Joe Hooker. Led by Cleveland William Creighton, the former commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> OVI then led by Cleveland Orrin Crane, the 7<sup>th</sup> OVI was part of the attack on Cleburne's defense of Ringgold Gap. In the battle, 13 of the 7<sup>th</sup> OVI's 14 officers were killed or wounded. The dead included its commander Orrin Crane. That was followed by the death of William Creighton, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. Hooker's attack failed and after several hours, Cleburne withdrew successfully and his defense was recognized by the Confederate Congress. Robert E. Lee who referred to Cleburne as "a meteor shining from a clouded sky."

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

The bodies of the two dead commanders of the 7<sup>th</sup> OVI were returned to Cleveland and lay in state at City Hall. Their funeral was held on December 8, 1863, attended by thousands of Cleveland mourners. Creighton and Crane are buried side by side in Cleveland's Woodland Cemetery.

Before the 1864 campaign in Georgia with Joe Johnston having replaced Braxton Bragg as head of the Army of Tennessee, Cleburne experienced two major events. First, he became engaged to Susan Tarleton of Mobile, Alabama. Second, on January 2, 1864, he made a monumental proposal. Cleburne realized that the South's armed forces were hopelessly outnumbered by Union forces. Not being wedded to the slavery system that had led to the South's secession, he proposed arming slaves in return for their emancipation to help to achieve Southern independence. This was in the face of the North's creation of the U.S. Colored Troops, largely composed of former slaves. Cleburne received almost no peer support and Confederate President Jefferson Davis ordered the proposal suppressed. Probably because of the rejection of his proposal and its controversy among his peers, Cleburne was later twice passed over for command of a corps in the Army of Tennessee. Then, in the waning months of the war, the Confederate Congress did authorize arming slaves to fight for the Confederacy.

In the Atlanta campaign, Cleburne's division fought valiantly against Sherman's forces at several places before Davis replaced Johnston with John Bell Hood. Hood's unsuccessful and costly attacks against Sherman culminated on August 31, 1864 with Hardee's forces, including Cleburne's division, launching a doomed attack against Sherman at Jonesboro. This defeat led to Hood's evacuation of Atlanta. It was a soldier in Cleburne's division who killed Ohioan General James McPherson at the battle of Atlanta.

Following the Union capture of this key city, Hood tried to rupture Sherman's railroad supply line before deciding to launch a campaign to invade western Tennessee and capture Nashville. Instead of pursuing Hood, Sherman ordered reinforcements, including John Schofield's Army of the Ohio, to reinforce George Thomas in defense of Nashville and then began his daring March to the Sea.

Hood launched his campaign with a much reduced army on November 20 by crossing the Tennessee River with the goal of first defeating Schofield's army. However, Schofield retreated, pursued by Hood. On November 29, one of the great mysteries of the Civil War occurred. Hood ordered Corps Commander Frank Cheatham and Patrick Cleburne to block the road at Spring Hill that led North to the village of Franklin, trapping Schofield's army coming from Columbia. Instead, throughout the night, the Union army with its wagons and artillery marched through Hood's army and reached the entrenched federal force at Franklin. At dawn on November 30, an enraged Hood awakened to learn of the escape of Schofield's army. After castigating his own generals for negligence, Hood ordered an assault on Franklin to prevent Schofield's further escape to join Thomas in Nashville.

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

***March. 2022***

***vol. 46 # 7***

Late that afternoon, despite the misgivings of Cleburne and others, Hood sent his army over a two-mile open plain to attack the entrenched Union army. Told by a fellow Arkansas general that not many of his fellow soldiers would likely return to Arkansas, Cleburne replied: “If we are to die, let us die like men.” In the ensuing blood-bath, Hood’s army was decimated with approximately 6,000 casualties. That included six dead generals including Cleburne. After two of his horses were shot, he continued to lead his troops on foot until he was shot dead and later found near the Union lines. Cleburne and the other dead generals were laid out on the porch of the nearby McGavock mansion. Hood would lead the crippled remnants of his army to attempt to lay siege to heavily defended Nashville. On December 15-16, Thomas attacked after being delayed by bad winter weather and decimated Hood’s remaining force and then pursued it as it retreated in disarray, ending with Hood’s resignation as the commander of the shattered remains of the Army of Tennessee.

Patrick Cleburne was first buried in a churchyard that he had admired during the advance to Franklin. In 1870, his corpse was disinterred and reburied in the Confederate cemetery in Helena, where in 1891 a memorial to him was dedicated. Cleburne was eulogized by his friend and mentor General William Hardee:

“Cleburne was an Irishman by birth, a Southerner by adoption and residence, a lawyer by profession, a soldier in the British army by accident, and a soldier in the Southern armies from patriotism and conviction of duty in his manhood.”

Cleburne has been portrayed in paintings by two well known modern Civil War artists:

Dan Troiani: “Cleburne: A Confederate Meteor” and “Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne”

Dale Gallon: “Cleburne at Franklin”

There is a battlefield monument to Cleburne in Franklin. Also, in 2009, a statue Cleburne was dedicated in Ringgold, Georgia.

An heroic figure in the South, it is sad that this brave Irish immigrant fought for the wrong side of the American Civil War.



of

Cleburne final burial site in  
Helena, Arkansas



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

**March. 2022**

**vol. 46 # 7**

One of the places named for Cleburne is a street that borders Texas Southern University (a HBCU) in Houston, a street which has recently been reconstructed. There is an effort to change the name. At nearby University of Houston, at the request of that university, on September 1, 2021, the Houston City Council removed the name of John C. Calhoun, the avid pro-slavery Senator from South Carolina, from a landmark road through its campus.

### **References**

Albert Castel. *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (1992)

Winston Groom. *Shrouds of Glory: From Atlanta to Nashville: The Last Great Campaign of the Civil War* (1995)

Wiley Sword. *Embrace An Angry Wind, The Confederacy's Last Hurrah, Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville* (1992)

Craig J. Symonds. *Stonewall of the West: Patrick Cleburne and the Civil War* (1997)

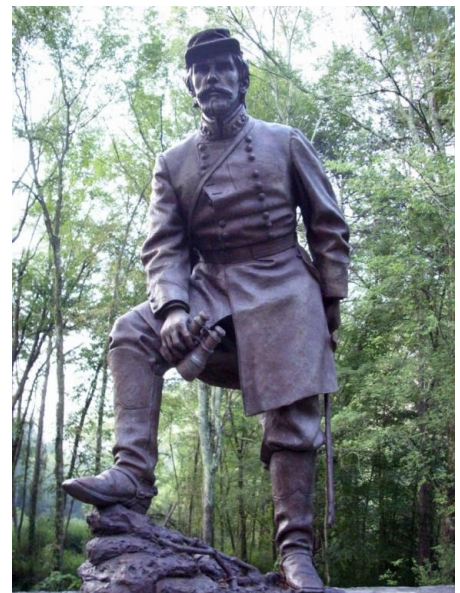
William Lee White. *Let Us Die Like Men: The Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864* (2019)

Steven E. Woodworth. *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (1999)



Troiana depiction of Cleburne  
at Chickmauga.

Cleburne statue at  
Ringgold, Georgia



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

The Contentious Colonels of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry

©Brian D. Kowell 2022

The Twenty-first Ohio Volunteer Infantry's claim to fame during the Civil War was its heroic stand on the slopes of Snodgrass Hill in September 1863. The regiment held off numerous Confederate attempts at taking the hill with their 5-shot Colt revolving rifles, until they were almost surrounded and a portion of the regiment forced to surrender. Their sacrifice allowed General George Thomas' troops to retreat safely to Rossville Gap.

The Twenty-first Ohio was organized and mustered as a three-month regiment after Lincoln's initial call for 75,000 troops to put down the rebellion following the Confederates firing on Fort Sumter. It was organized on April 27, 1861 at Camp Taylor in Cleveland, Ohio. Recruits hailed from Hancock, Defiance, Wood, Ottawa, Sandusky, and Putnum counties in northwest Ohio.

The officers who commanded the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio were not professional soldiers. Like most volunteer regiments, the officers were prominent men from their communities who helped raise the regiment and were elected to their positions by the men in the ranks. The regiment was led by 35-year-old Colonel Jesse S. Norton of Perrysburg, Ohio. Colonel Norton was born August 1, 1825 in New York and later moved to Perrysburg, Ohio, where he was a banker. Second in command was 36-year-old James M. Neibling of Findley, Ohio. Lieutenant Colonel Neibling was born April 11, 1827 in Lancaster, Ohio and moved to Findley where he became a successful merchant.

The Twenty-first Ohio, became part of General Jacob Cox's brigade and participated in the Battle of Scary Creek in western Virginia on July 17, 1861, where it lost nine men killed and seventeen wounded. One of those wounded was the regiment's Colonel. Jesse Norton had been wounded through both hips and was captured during the fighting. He was briefly detained by the Confederates, then paroled (with the anticipated exchange for CSA Colonel George S. Patton) and returned to Union lines. The Colonel soon after returned home to Perrysburg to recover. While recovering, Norton became embroiled in a controversy with a fellow officer, Colonel John Lowe of the Twelfth Ohio, over statements Norton made public regarding Lowe's actions at Scary Creek. Norton contended that the Union forces suffered the defeat because of the cowardice of Colonel Lowe in not supporting him properly.

With its enlistment term expired, the men of the Twenty-first re-organized in Findley, Ohio and re-enlisted for three years' service on September 19, 1861. In absentia, Jesse Norton was re-elected as colonel of the regiment along with his Lieutenant Colonel Neibling. As a result of the officers' inexperience, the discipline and drill of the 21<sup>st</sup> suffered. One soldier would later write that while some regiments drilled each morning, all that was required of the 21<sup>st</sup> was to fall in with arms and they were subsequently dismissed to quarters to enjoy some refreshing sleep.

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

that while some regiments drilled each morning, all that was required of the 21<sup>st</sup> was to fall in with arms and they were subsequently dismissed to quarters to enjoy some refreshing sleep.

The regiment joined General William Nelson's command in Kentucky and later was transferred to General Ormsby M. Mitchel's Third Division, part of General Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio. When General Buell captured Nashville, he was ordered by General Halleck to march west to re-enforce General U.S. Grant near Pittsburg Landing. Mitchel, whose relationship with Buell was rather cold, was ordered to move south towards Chattanooga, Tennessee and get control of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.

By April 4, 1862, the Twenty-first found itself deep in Dixie as they occupied Huntsville, Alabama. Colonel Norton had returned to command the regiment. He hadn't completely recovered from his wounds and it was still painful for him to walk or ride, but Norton had aspirations of brigade command and was disappointed when General Mitchel picked Colonel Joshua Sill over him for the command. Norton never forgave Mitchel for this action, perceiving it as a slight. Mitchel's soldiers had mixed feelings about the Huntsville area. Some thought "a decided Union sentiment" prevailed; others viewed the inhabitants as "full of prejudice against the Yankees." In Huntsville, Colonel Norton was offered to move his headquarters into a local planter's home which was outside the Union picket lines. The comfort of a soft bed for his aching hips and home cooked meals was enough enticement, and the Colonel moved in. Each morning he would ride to his regiment's camp and each night return to the planter's home. Colonel Norton was nominally in command but he left the day-to-day duties to Lieutenant Colonel Neibling and some days the men would not see him at all.

One day the planter had invited other neighboring planters along with Colonel Norton to a clambake on his property. As the men sat around eating clams, drinking and smoking and generally enjoying themselves, General Mitchel with a large escort conducting a reconnaissance rode up. Mitchel was irate and reprimanded Norton in severe terms in the presence of the Colonel's friends. Norton was reprimanded for being absent from his command and outside army lines without permission. Mitchel ordered the party broken up and Colonel Norton to return to his quarters with his regiment under arrest. This humiliation was the major cause of a personal grudge against Mitchel. As the regimental historian wrote, "...he never took an interest in his regiment afterwards. He bent his attention to forming acquaintances of the planters and laying plans for revenge on General Mitchel."

The U.S. administration's war policy at the time was to just restore the Union. Major General George B. McClellan, the Union Commander-in-Chief, argued for light measures ("soft war") against civilians and their property. President Lincoln initially agreed, wanting to keep the question of the slaves outside the war aims. It was hoped that by treating the southerners gently that they would soon return their allegiance to the Union. McClellan's instructions to General Don Carlos Buell, Mitchel's superior, was to "bear in mind that we are fighting only to preserve the integrity of the Union and to uphold the power of the General Government" and he should "religiously respect the Constitutional rights of all."

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

The regiment joined General William Nelson's command in Kentucky and later was transferred to General Ormsby M. Mitchel's Third Division, part of General Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio. When General Buell captured Nashville, he was ordered by General Halleck to march west to re-enforce General U.S. Grant near Pittsburg Landing. Mitchel, whose relationship with Buell was rather cold, was ordered to move south towards Chattanooga, Tennessee and get control of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.

By April 4, 1862, the Twenty-first found itself deep in Dixie as they occupied Huntsville, Alabama. Colonel Norton had returned to command the regiment. He hadn't completely recovered from his wounds and it was still painful for him to walk or ride, but Norton had aspirations of brigade command and was disappointed when General Mitchel picked Colonel Joshua Sill over him for the command. Norton never forgave Mitchel for this action, perceiving it as a slight. Mitchel's soldiers had mixed feelings about the Huntsville area. Some thought "a decided Union sentiment" prevailed; others viewed the inhabitants as "full of prejudice against the Yankees." In Huntsville, Colonel Norton was offered to move his headquarters into a local planter's home which was outside the Union picket lines. The comfort of a soft bed for his aching hips and home cooked meals was enough enticement, and the Colonel moved in. Each morning he would ride to his regiment's camp and each night return to the planter's home. Colonel Norton was nominally in command but he left the day-to-day duties to Lieutenant Colonel Neibling and some days the men would not see him at all.

One day the planter had invited other neighboring planters along with Colonel Norton to a clambake on his property. As the men sat around eating clams, drinking and smoking and generally enjoying themselves, General Mitchel with a large escort conducting a reconnaissance rode up. Mitchel was irate and reprimanded Norton in severe terms in the presence of the Colonel's friends. Norton was reprimanded for being absent from his command and outside army lines without permission. Mitchel ordered the party broken up and Colonel Norton to return to his quarters with his regiment under arrest. This humiliation was the major cause of a personal grudge against Mitchel. As the regimental historian wrote, "...he never took an interest in his regiment afterwards. He bent his attention to forming acquaintances of the planters and laying plans for revenge on General Mitchel."

The U.S. administration's war policy at the time was to just restore the Union. Major General George B. McClellan, the Union Commander-in-Chief, argued for light measures ("soft war") against civilians and their property. President Lincoln initially agreed, wanting to keep the question of the slaves outside the war aims. It was hoped that by treating the southerners gently that they would soon return their allegiance to the Union. McClellan's instructions to General Don Carlos Buell, Mitchel's superior, was to "bear in mind that we are fighting only to preserve the integrity of the Union and to uphold the power of the General Government" and he should "religiously respect the Constitutional rights of all."

In Northern Alabama, there were numerous incidents of bushwhacking. One day a company of the Twenty-first passing through by rail received sniper fire. The captain ordered the train to halt at the next station and marched his men back to the house where he was certain the shots originated. The woman of the house was questioned as to the whereabouts of the men of the house. She replied the men were away on business and didn't know when they would return.



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

While the captain chatted kindly to the woman, one of his sergeants disappeared ostensibly to search for weapons. After a while the woman smelled smoke, to which the captain remarked he could not smell anything. When smoke drifted into the room, the captain remarked nonchalantly, "I guess the house is on fire," and left with his men.

In the U.S. Senate there was a cry for stopping "kid glove warfare". Large number of slaves began appearing in Mitchel's camps with their owners coming to reclaim them. In some instances Mitchel's men refused and hid the blacks. Mitchel did not agree with the soft war policy, but Buell ordered Mitchel to "release and expel the Negroes from your camp and that no fugitive slave will be allowed to enter or remain in your lines." On July 17, 1862 Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act, freeing slaves who had masters in the Confederate army.

The 21<sup>st</sup> was moved to occupy the town of Athens, Alabama, after the men of Colonel John Turchin ransacked the town on May 2, 1862, in retaliation for aiding Confederate cavalry which surprised and routed one of his regiments posted there. For Turchin's conduct and Mitchel's complicity, General Buell was irate and determined to make an example of the two. While garrisoning Athens, Colonel Norton again took up residence with a planter north of the town and had little to do with his regiment south of the town, still being under arrest. Norton began to send communications directly to General Buell incriminating Mitchel and Turchin. Besides not complying with Buell's policies, Norton also accused his Division Commander with selling stolen cotton for his personal gain. As slaves from the surrounding area came into his lines, both Norton and Neibling were insistent that they follow army policy and have them returned to their owners. As the Regimental historian noted: "Lieutenant Colonel Neibling was a pronounced pro-slavery man and did not hesitate to voluntarily detain slaves in the county jail until their masters came for them."

The conflict between Buell and Mitchel began to escalate. With Mitchel threatening to resign and complaining to the War Department about working with Buell, the Secretary of War in early July requested Mitchel's transfer to Washington D.C. Mitchel beforehand had Colonel Norton relieved of his command on July 4, 1862 and ordered to his home. Irate, Norton left for Perrysburg shortly after. The Cincinnati Daily Commerce of July 15, 1862 reported:

"The eccentric colonel of the 21<sup>st</sup> OVI Sill's Brigade, J.W. Norton, showed up in Cincinnati in July with voluminous charges against Mitchel for, corrupt dealings in the sale of cotton. Mitchel denied the charges. Norton was arrested.

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

Still retaining his commission, and determined to clear his name and regain command, Jesse Norton, for the next month shuttled between his home and the Ohio State capital and the nation's capital trying to get a sympathetic ear to listen to the injustices heaped upon him. He made public statements in Louisville, Cincinnati, Columbus and Pittsburg before traveling to Washington to appear before the Committee on the Conduct of the War. Far from succeeding, his arguments made his situation worse. The War Department determined that Norton had gone A.W.O.L. and put out a warrant for his arrest. Norton soon got word and skedaddled back to Ohio.

The charges against Colonel Jesse Norton were three:

He had never been formally exchanged since his capture in July 1861 so his leadership of the 21<sup>st</sup> O.V.I. was in direct violation of his parole.

Brigadier General Ormsby M. Mitchel discovered him at a clambake with well-known Alabama secessionists outside Union lines without a pass. This was combined with accusations of stealing, then selling, government horses for personal profit.

He had spent several months A.W.O.L. shuttling between his home in Perrysburg, Ohio and the Capitols of Columbus and Washington D.C. trying to clear his name.

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, it was announced to the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio that their colonel was in camp. Several officers called on him but no particular attention was paid to him by most of the regiment. He left the next day and was the last any of the regiment saw of him during the war. His reputation in tatters, Colonel Jesse Norton resigned his commission on December 20, 1862 and returned to Perrysburg.

Tasked with protecting the property of southern planters who might be taking pot-shots at them behind the next tree, and the returning of runaway slaves seeking freedom, the men in Mitchel's army, and more specifically the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio, were divided in their feelings. While many of the runaways were held in the county jail, guarded by Union soldiers, until their masters came to claim them, some of the company officers had employed runaway slaves as paid servants. Some men in the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio cared little of the plight of the slaves, while others vowed that if "another man came into camp hunting slaves they would throw him into a slop hole." On May 23, a planter came into the camp of Company K and said that he had a slave in the camp and would the captain mind if he searched around. Captain Canfield replied "Not in the least. You will not consider me responsible for anything that happens." The planter thought better and went to see Lieutenant Colonel Neibling, now in command of the regiment.

The Colonel's orderly soon appeared before Captain Canfield with an order:

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

Headquarters 21<sup>st</sup> O.V.I

Athens, Ala, Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1862

Negro boy pat in your company is the property of ----- . You will deliver him outside camp lines to his master. Signed,

J.M. Neibling

Lieut. Col. Comdg. Regt.

Captain Canfield wrote an acknowledgement of receiving the order adding, "I respectfully decline to obey it." Despite the obvious insubordination to his written order, Neibling did nothing. Rumors circulated that Norton and Neibling were collecting a small fee from planters when they retrieved their slaves.

Captain Canfield was not done. He was determined to break up what he called the slave trade in the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio. He knew that the fugitive slaves in the jail had no criminal charges against them and reasoned that they had no legal reason to be held. The next day, as acting officer of the day and, after posting the regiments guards, Canfield with a non-commissioned officer and an escort of men, reported to Lieutenant Colonel Neibling for orders. He found Neibling sitting in the shade near the depot in the company of a number of the men from the town. Neibling said he had no further orders for the captain but asked why he had the escort. "I am going down to release the prisoners in the jail, against whom there are no criminal charges.

Sir, I order you not to do it' replied the Lieutenant Colonel.

The Captain said, "Colonel, will you be so good as to have charges preferred against them?"

Neibling, in a rage, told the captain that it was none of his damned business and ordered him to his quarters under arrest. As Canfield walked towards his quarters he was followed by the boisterous laughter and jeers of Colonel Neibling's companions.

Word spread through the regiment and Canfield's arrest caused a near mutiny. That evening the company officers met and prepared a petition demanding to prefer charges on eight counts if Lieutenant Colonel Neibling did not resign his commission. Neibling got wind of the meeting and before sundown he had all the jailed slaves set free and Canfield released from arrest thus diffusing the situation. Nothing further happened with the petition as Neibling and the 21<sup>st</sup> Ohio were moving north.

Neibling would earn his men's respect at Stones River. On January 2, with the Confederates charging across the river, "Colonel Jim" or "Big Jim", ordered his regiment to countercharge. He proved a tenacious fighter calling to his men to "Give 'em hell by the acre!" They would afterward present him with a beautiful sword in the spring of 1863 with those words engraved on the sword. It was also that spring when the regiment would receive their 5-shot Colt revolving rifles.

# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

Colonel Neibling missed the battles at Chickamauga and Chattanooga, but returned in 1864 for the campaign to take Atlanta. He would suffer a wound to his right arm at New Hope Church which would result in its amputation and lead to his honorable discharge on December 6, 1864. He returned to his mercantile business in Findley, Ohio where he would die five years later on February 21, 1869. He is buried there in Maple Grove Cemetery.

As for Jesse Norton, he moved to Toledo and became a railroad contractor and a hardware and produce merchant after the war. He would be a Lucas County Commissioner from 1867-1875 and die in Toledo on November, 2, 1886 at the age of 61 years. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Toledo, Ohio.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Canfield, S.S. *History of the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion*. Toledo, Ohio. Higginson Book Co. 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Reid, Ohio in the War. Pp146-152. Hunt, Roger D. *A Civil War Biographical Dictionary: Colonels in Blue: Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia*. Jefferson, N.C. & London. McFarland & Company, Inc. 2011. p.97

<sup>3</sup> Canfield. *History of the 21<sup>st</sup>*. p.70

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 52-53

<sup>7</sup> Stoker, Donald. *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War*. New York, NY. Oxford University Press. 2010. Letter from McClellan to Buell, November 12, 1861, in *McClellan Papers*. Pp.131-132.

<sup>8</sup> Canfield, *History of the 21<sup>st</sup> OVI*. P. 45

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 50, 54

<sup>10</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Commerce*, July 15, 1862

<sup>11</sup> Canfield. *History of the 21<sup>st</sup> OVI*. P. 70. *Index to the Civil War Letters of Hancock County, Ohio. Hancock Courier and Hancock Jeffersonian*. Hunt, *Colonels in Blue: Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia*. p. 97. Reid. *Ohio in the War Vol. 2*. Pp 146-152.

<sup>12</sup>, Canfield. Ibid. p.70

<sup>13</sup>. Ibid .

<sup>14</sup>. Ibid. p. 53

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid. p.55

<sup>16</sup>. [dan-master-civil-war.blogspot.com/2019/10/give-em-hell-by-acre-21<sup>st</sup>-ohio-earns.html](http://dan-master-civil-war.blogspot.com/2019/10/give-em-hell-by-acre-21st-ohio-earns.html).

<sup>17</sup>. [www.find-a-grave.com](http://www.find-a-grave.com)

<sup>18</sup>. Hunt. *Colonels in Blue*. P. 97. *Toledo Blade*, Obituary, November 4-5, 1886. [www.find-a-grave.com](http://www.find-a-grave.com)



# *The Charger*



## *The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable*

*March. 2022*

*vol. 46 # 7*

**Meeting March. 9th, 2022**

**Program: Performance by Professor Derek Maxfield, entitled , “Grant at City Point.”**

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

**Time: Social Hour 6 pm. Presentation 7pm**

**The talk will be both in-person and streamed live so that many Civil War enthusiasts can enjoy our program.**

**For reservations go to: [ccwrtreserve@gmail.com](mailto:ccwrtreserve@gmail.com) or call, 440-449-9311**

***[clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com/](http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com/)***

**Follow us on Twitter**

**<https://twitter.com/>**



**Like us on Facebook**

**[https://www.facebook.](https://www.facebook.com/)**

