The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. Box 18900, Cleveland, Ohio 44118

NOVEMBER 1992 | 310th MEETING | VOL. 14 #3

DATE: Wednesday, November 11, 1992

PLACE: The Hermit Club

SUBJECT: Musings on the Re-enactments of History

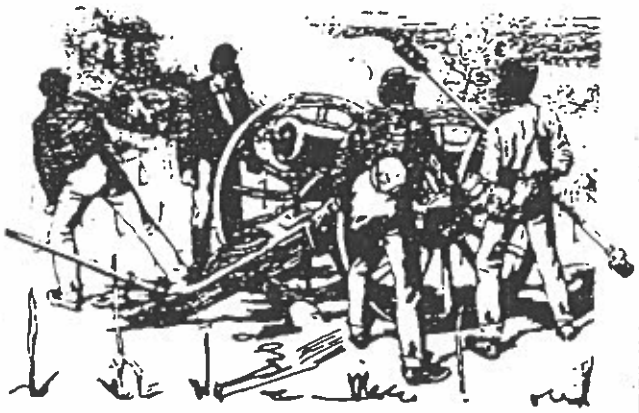
SPEAKER: George Woodling. Now retired, George has been a member of our Round Table for the past eight years and is a member of the Western Reserve Historical Society. George was fortunate enough to have attended the 200th re-enactment of the surrender of Cornwalis to Washington at Yorktown, Virginia, the 125th re-enactment at Gettysburg, and the 45th year anniversary of the Invasion at Normandy. He not only attended these events put captured them on film. These films he will share with us along with his comments on his experiences at each.

TIME: Drinks 6PM Dinner 7PM

RESERVATIONS: Please call Kevin Callahan at 321-3004 or 861-5393. RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST!

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

1957 * 1992



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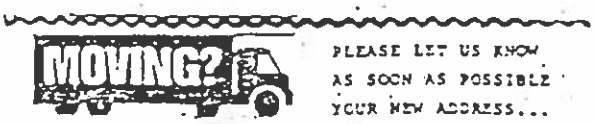


CONGRATULATIONS

To fellow-member and past-president NEIL EVANS who was recently installed as President of the Ohio Historical Society on September 26.

Last Month's Meeting

Nearly 2600 Confederate cavalrymen halt on the outskirts of Chambersburg, Pennsylvar on the morning of July 30,1864. Their commander, John McCausland, carried written orders from Jubal Early demanding from the citizens $100,000 in gold or $500,000 in greenbacks as compensation for the property destroyed in the Shennandoah Valley by Davic Hunter's Union troops. If the payment was nc made, Earlt directed that the town "be laid in ashes in retaliation." He said it was "Time to open the eyes of the people of the North in retaliation."

This was the topic of Ted Alexander, historian from Antietam National Military Park. Chambersburg was chosen because it was the largest accessable Northern town. Effort to intercept McClausland failed. This was du to the inept attempts of 3 different Union Department chiefs who argued over jurisdiction. Union Lt. Hancock McClean with 38 men did harass and slow the Confederate advance.

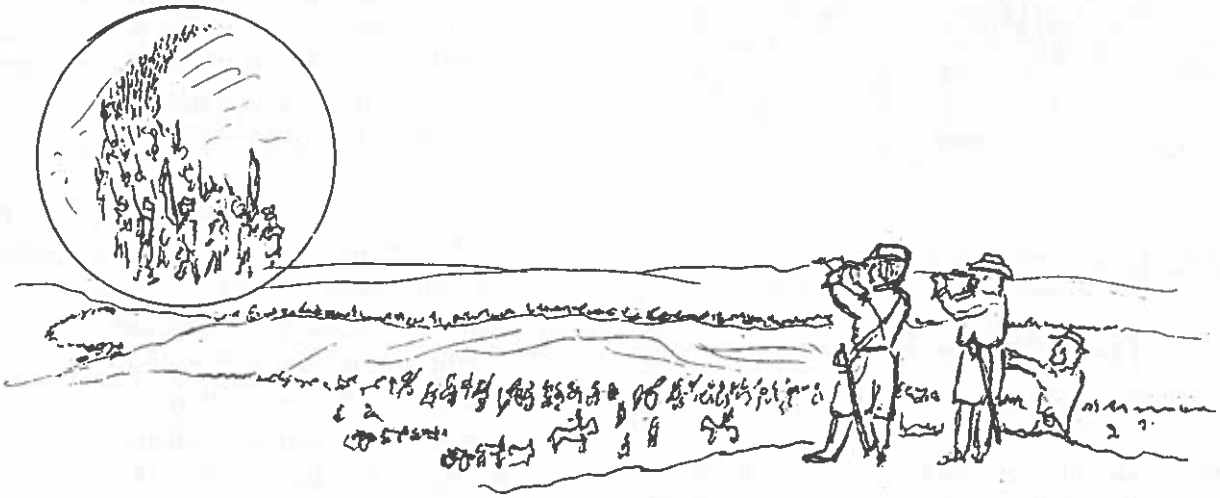
When the demand was made upon the citizer most thought that it was a bluff or joke. As Major Harry Gilmore related: "they refuse to raise the money, laughing at the prospect of the alternative."

Although one regiment (21st Va. under Col. Wm Peters) refused to participate, McClausland followed his orders. Fires were started in the center of town and soon discipline broke down among the Confederates Liquor stores were broken into and soon the gray troopers were a thieving mob setting torch to everything. Although no rapes were recorded many townswomen were insulted and robbed. Approximately 500 buildings were destroyed totalling nearly $1,500,000 in damages. Surprisingly, only one civilian became a casualty.

Pursuit was led by Gen. Averall and while it was aggressively made, his horseflesh was unequal to the task. Averall finally overtoc McClausland at Moorefield, W.Va., where he surprised the Confederates in there camp, killing 150 and capturing 400.

The Raid's results were: (1) it was reinforced that the Union Departments needed consolidation (2) it was the only Northern town burned by regular Confederate troops, and (3) Sheridan replaced Hunter, gets more troops and sacks Averall & Dufie who are replaced with Torbert, Custer, & Merritt.

SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



It was at the Battle of Manassas July 21, 1861, that General P.T. Beauregard, looking across the Warrenton Turnpike, which passed through the valley between the position of the Confederates and the elevation beyond occupied by the Federal line, saw a body of troops moving toward the Federal right. He was greatly concerned to know whether they were Confederate or Union. The similarity of uniforms and colors of the opposing armies along with the clouds of dust and battle smoke made it impossible to determine.

The colors carried by these troops drooped in the still air. Beauregard and his staff repeatedly used their spyglasses but to no avail. Messages to look-out posts and General Johnston positioned nearer to that end of the field were of no help. Whether to hold his ground or retreat, the creole general, in great anxiety could not decide. If the mysterious column should be Federal troops the day would be lost.

Suddenly a puff of wind spread the colors to the breeze and they were seen to be the Stars and Bars. Much relieved, Beauregard ordered an imediate advance of all Confederate units as the newly arrived column reached the extreme right of the Federal line. In an hour the field was cleared and the battle won.

The General then and there made up his mind to have the Confederate flag changed so that it would be less similar to the Stars and Stripes. Designs were submitted and discarded at headquarters. It was finally decided that henceforth the Confederate battle flag would have a red field, a blue St. Andrews cross, and white stars on the cross. The first flag, made from ladies' dresses, was presented to the troops by General Beauregard himself.

--- Civil War Treasury of Legends and Folklore by
B.A. Botkin, 1960
submitted and illustrated by Stu Cramer

PRESERVATION REPORT

CWRTA 1993 MEETINGS

Information on the Fifteenth Annual Confederate Historical Institute meeting, the Third Annual Southeast Civil War Conference, the 1993 Midwest Civil War Conference, Mid-Atlantic Civil War Conference, New England Civil War Conference, Deep Delta Civil War Symposium, or West Coast Civil War Conference is available from CWRTA, P.O. Box 7388, Little, Rock, Arkansas 72217.

ONE MORE BATTLE AT THE FORT? In order to preserve the remains of Fort Fisher at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, the Army Engineers and the NC Department of Cultural Resources proposed building a 13-foot-high rock wall to stop wave action from continuing to eat away five to fifteen feet of this popular and important historic site every year. North Carolina's regulations prohibit construction of sea walls to prevent erosion, since they shift it to adjacent areas and require extension of these structures to protect nearby beaches.

The largest and most powerful permanent Confederate coastal work, Fort Fisher kept the port of Wilmington open to blockade runners until the last few months of the war. An effort had been made to persuade the state's Division of Coastal Management to grant the fort an exception to the sea-wall regulations, without which the remaining traverses will be under water in a very short time.

In July the Coastal Resources Commission denied the request. Congressman Charlie Rose, an outspoken supporter of the effort to save the fort, held a press conference to express his disappointment, and indicated that all alternative approaches would be explored on both the state and Federal level.

The Confederate Turner

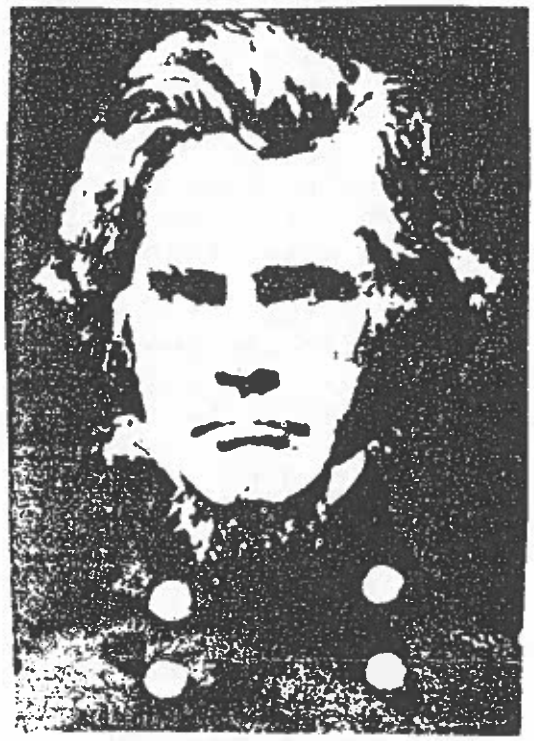
Associated Press

TED TURNER, dressed in a Confederate uniform, awaits cannon fire on the Gettysburg, Pa., set of "The Killer Angels" on Saturday. The Turner Network Television miniseries will be aired next summer. Turner makes a cameo appearance as a dying Col. Patton, the ancestor of World War II Gen. George Patton.

MORE THAN YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT

ORMSBY MacKNIGHT MITCHEL

(1809 - 1862)



Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel was born July 28, 1809, in a log cabin on the site of the present town of Morganfield, Kentucky. When Mitchel was an infant, his father died and his widowed mother moved to Lebanon, Ohio, where he obtained his early education and in turn began to support himself by clerking in a store in nearby Xenia. Mitchel would have been accounted an exceptionally bright student in any contemporary high school, and in 1825 secured an appointment to West Point. He graduated 15th in his class in 1829. He stayed on at West Point after graduation and for the next seven years he instructed mathematics, was married, studied law, and was admitted to the bar.

Resigning from the army in 1836, Mitchel returned to Ohio to teach mathematics, philosophy, and astronomy at Cincinnati College. While there he devoted some time to railroad projects, but it was as a popularizer and dedicated student of astronomy that Mitchel's main claim to fame rests. He was a charisamatic speaker, compellingly articulate on his favorite subject and aroused enthusiasm throughout the nation. He was recognized as the country's foremost authority on astronomy. He was acclaimed by the scientific community for his influence in establishing the Naval Observatory and the Harvard Observatory. He directed both the Cincinnati Observatory and the Dudley Observatory at Albany, New York. During the antebellum years he wrote two books based on his scientific studies and 1846-1848 published the "Sidereal Messenger", a magazine of popular astronomy.

In his search for competent military officers in the spring of 1861, Abraham Lincoln appointed Mitchel brigadier general on August 9,and assigned him to command the Department of the Ohio. This command was soon absorbed into General Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Cumberland.No major battles took place while Mitchel held this assignment. In February 1862, he accompanied Buell, descending from Kentucky to occupy Nashville. In March, Mitchel's command of about 8,000 men had been detached to secure central Tennessee, while the rest of the army marched west under Buell to join Ulysses S. Grant's advance on Corinth, Mississippi - by way of Shiloh.

Once his forces of occupation had taken a firm grip on central Tennessee, Mitchel found himself with time on his hands and a great deal of discreation. He discovered that as long as he sent reports to General Buell, he was free to take any action. Even though he was caught temporarily in a backwater of the war, Mitchel was not a man to idle away his time. The slender, wavy-haired general hatched a bold plot to

capture Chattanooga in East Tennessee. President Lincoln had expressed intense interest in freeing Union sympathizers there. Mitchel also fully understood the importance of the railroads in this area and that Chattanooga was vital to control of the rails. On April 8 General Mitchel moved from his base near Nashville south to seize Huntsville, Alabama, a town on the Memphis & Charleston line. From there he intended to push eastward and, if all went well, to take lightly defended Chattanooga and hold it until the main army arrived. It was at this time that Mitchel dispatched a spy named James J. Andrews along with volunteers from an Ohio regiment to seize a locomotive on the Western & Atlantic Railrod and race north, burning the bridges on the line between Atlanta and Chattanooga. Andrews attempt failed.

On April 11, Mitchel took Huntsville completely by surprise, seizing 200 prisoners, 15 locomotives, and a large number of cars. Then he used this rolling stock to occupy key positions along 70 miles of railroad in both directions, west to Decatur and east to Stevenson. Never one to understate his accomplishments, Mitchel reported to Buell's headquarters, "We have at length succeeded in cutting the great artery of railroad intercommunication between the southern states." Mitchel also began to send reports of his accomplishments and overemphasized burdens directly to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. While he had performed aggressively and well his self-promotion had its designated effect and he was promoted to Major General.

There were few Confederate troops in northern Alabama, but Mitchel's men were continually attacked by bands of guerillas. Soon his hands were full trying to maintain his hold on the stretch of railroad. Mitchel's men reacted harshly to these assaults. One of Mitchel's subordinates, Colonel John Basil Turchin, in reprisal for a guerilla attack on men of his 19th Illinois in Athens, Alabama, turned the town over to the regiment declaring,"I shut mine eyes for one hour." In that time the vengeful troops stripped the residents of watches, jewelry, and silver and raped a number of slave girls. In another instance, Colonel John Beatty of the 3rd Ohio, when his train was fired upon near the town of Paint Rock, set fire to the town. Discipline was quickly breaking down in Mitchel's command. He made a feeble attempt to deal with the discipline problem. He had complained to the Secretary of War that "the most terrible outrages - robberies, rapes, arsons, and plunderings - are being committed by lawless brigands and vagabonds connected with the army." Mitchel had even received the authority to sentence offenders to death, but he never used it.

At the end of April Mitchel led an expedition eastward beyond Stevenson and drove a small Confederate force away from Bridgeport; there he captured the railroad bridge over the Tennessee River and burned a smaller bridge beyond the town. On May 1 he wired Washington: "This campaign is now ended, and I can now occupy Huntsville in perfect security, while all of Alabama north of the Tennessee floats no flag but that of the Unuion." Stanton was pleased, and he sent word that his "spirited operations afford great satisfaction to the President."

Yet trouble lay in store for the boastful Mitchel. As Buell marched slowly eastward his troops bogged down at Decatur and he blamed Mitchel for not repairing the railroad and for burning bridges which Buell now had to rebuild. This along with low waters on the Tennessee caused Buell severe supply problems. Buell then heaped blame on Mitchel for not having assembled supplies for his army as ordered. When Buell joined Mitchel at Huntsville he leveled the charge that Mitchel had allowed his troops to run wild, that "imperfect discipline and an injudicious temper on the part of the commander of the troops had embittered even that

portion of the population that would have been friendly or passive." When Buell learned of Turchin's indiscretions and found that no offender had been punished, and that these incidents were not isolated, he wrote: "not only straggling individuals, but whole brigades, under the open authority of its commander, could engage in these acts." Many of Mitchel's troops , however, thought that Buell was going to the other extreme in protecting the rights of bushwackers. General Buell, who would be involved in bitter arguments with Mitchel, and about him for years, never did figure out quite what to make of his subordinate. "In spite of his peculiarities," Buell wrote after the War," General Mitchel was a valuable officer. He was not insubordinate, but was restless in ordinary service and ambitious in a ostentatious way."

Charges were never filed against General Mitchel. Bitter over Buell's rebuke, he tendered his resignation but it was not accepted. Angrily he demanded a transfer to escape Buell's authority, and on September 17, 1862 he was transferred to command of the miniscule Department of the South and the X Corps with headquarters at Hilton Head, South Carolina. Within a few weeks of his arrival he came down with yellow fever and died at Beaufort, October 30, 1862. He was buried in Green-Wood Cemetary in Brooklyn, New York.

--- The Struggle for Tennessee by James Street,Jr., Time-Life Books pp 8-17

---Encyclopedia of the Civil War by Patricia Faust

---Generals in Blue by Ezra J. Warner

Please Make Reservatio

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RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST!

General William T. Sherman's dislike of news correspondents was notorious. During the Vicksburg campaign, three reporters were blown out of the water while attempting to run the Vicksburg batteries. When told that the shelling had killed three reporters, Sherman allegedly responded:"Good! Now we'll have news from hell before breakfast."

--- America's Civil War Vol. 5 #5

In the early months of the war, many volunteer regiments, particularly from the peacetime militia, were partial to bright Zouave uniform designs based on the famous French colonial units. These featured, in various combinations, turbans, short jackets, baggy pantaloons, leggings, and sashes in a rainbow of colors. One day an old Regular, John W. Phelps, was riding through a training camp when he was saluted by one of these gaudy recruits. "Who are you?' Phelps said. A Zouave the man replied. "What is that?", Phelps asked. He was an officer in a Zouave regiment the man tried to explain. "An officer!" Phelps exclaimed. "I thought you were a circus clown!"

--- American Heritage Civil War Calender

By 1864 the area between Warrenton and Culpeper, Virginia had become a virtual no man's land due to the constant battles, skirmishing, and raiding in this area. The locals in this area had had their lands and property ravaged by both armies. The landscape had become dotted with fresh turned earth of new graves of fallen soldiers from both sides. Near Warrenton, over a grave of a Yankee soldier, the locals had inscribed the following:

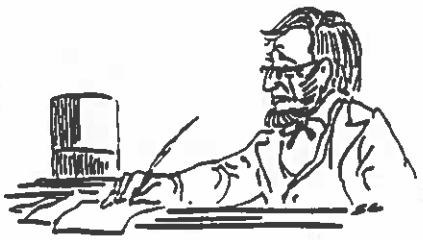
"The Yankees came in thousand bands
To ravage our Virginia lands,
This lonesome and secluded spot
Is all this Goddamned Yankee got."

--- JEB Stuart by John W. Thomason pp 326

General Grant received numerous ingeniuos and impracticable suggestions that were made to him almost daily as to best way of destroying the enemy. "The last plan proposed was to supply our men with bayonets just a foot longer than those of the enemy, and then charge them. When they met, our bayonets would go clear through the enemy, while theirs would not reach far enough to touch our men, and the war would be ended."

--- Witness to Appomattox by Richard Wheeler pp 56

From The President's Desk



Gentlemen;

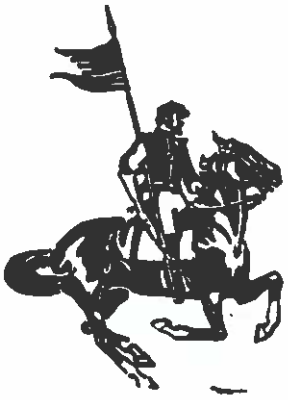
I hope everyone enjoyed our October meeting up in the "Great Room" of the Hermit Club - I felt it was a much warmer atmosphere for our meetings.

I am delighted to have one of our members, George Woodling, come forward and volunteer to speak to us for the November meeting, with film coverage of a few battle re-enactments.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming meeting.

Sincerely,

Kevin R. Callahan



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