

THE CHARGER



The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

March 2025

CCWRT Founded 1956

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PROGRAM – “The Battlefield at Franklin and Memory”

SPEAKER – Joseph Ricci, Historian for Battle of Franklin Trust.

LOCATION: The Holiday Inn Independence at 6001 Rockside Road, Independence, Ohio 44131, off US Interstate 77

TIME: Social Hour at 6:00 PM and Presentation at 7:00 PM

For reservations email:

ccwrtreserve@gmail.com. To ensure a dinner is reserved for you, the reservation must be made by Tuesday, March 4, 2025

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MEETING – March 12, 2025

President's Message

Fellow Roundtable Members:

March officially marks the welcome arrival of spring, as we bid farewell to Old Man Winter's nasty icy grip and embrace the promise of renewal. This winter has been punishing in terms of cold and harsh weather, so warmer temperatures will be a welcome sight here in Northeast Ohio. The days grow longer, the chill begins to fade, and soon the first signs of budding trees and blooming flowers will remind us that another season of change is upon us. Just as nature transitions, so too does our Roundtable, as we reflect on the milestones we have reached and look ahead to the engaging discussions yet to come.

Among the highlights of March, in addition to the changing season, is St. Patrick's Day, a celebration of Irish culture, heritage, and the spirit of togetherness. Whether you are attending the parade in your best green outfit, enjoying a hearty Reuben with a pint of Guinness, or listening to your favorite Irish tunes, it is a time to embrace the joy and warmth of the season. May your day be filled with good food, great company, and a little bit of Irish magic—complete with a lucky shamrock or two!

Our February meeting was one for the history books, as we marked not just one, but three significant occasions in a single night. We gathered to celebrate the 600th official meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable, a milestone that speaks to the passion and dedication of our members over the decades. At the same time, the calendar aligned perfectly for us to honor two other historic occasions: President Abraham Lincoln's 216th birthday and Presidents' Day. With these three powerful themes converging, the evening became a perfect blend of tribute, reflection, and celebration.

Fittingly, our 600th Meeting fell on the 216th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's birth. We all wished President Lincoln a hearty birthday and even signed a Lincoln-themed birthday card. The physical card, along with a letter, was sent to the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield, IL. Additionally, scanned copies were sent to the following locations: Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, and The Lincoln Memorial.

To pay tribute to Presidents' Day, we also had a special display thanks to Rich Hronek featuring Ohio Presidents with Civil War connections. The table contained various items highlighting figures like Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley, telling an engaging story about Ohio's role in the Civil War. The display drew considerable interest from attendees, sparking discussions about these leaders' wartime service and their post-war presidencies. It was a fitting tribute to Ohio's significant contributions to both the Civil War and the nation's leadership in the years that followed.

The 600th Meeting milestone offered us an opportunity to honor the rich history of our organization, from its humble beginnings in 1957 to the thriving and vibrant group we are today. During the Cocktail Hour and Dinner, a photo slideshow showcased memorable moments from our Roundtable's history. I had the honor of delivering a special speech and toast, reflecting on the journey of our group. In doing my research to prepare for the evening, I found that at the very first meeting, the Ten Founders decided to "go slowly in adding to our roster." 68

years later, we have grown to more than 120 members, a new Roundtable record. One of our new members, Jose Esparza, assumed the role of our Mathew Brady for the event and captured a number of shots including our group photo. This photo will be printed and brought to future meetings to be signed by attendees of the 600th meeting. It will then be added to the Time Capsule, preserving this milestone for future generations. If you were present at our 600th meeting, you may recall the favor I asked during the evening's celebration: to share your personal thoughts on the significance of the Roundtable. If you would like to participate, please send your submissions to clecwr@gmail.com. We look forward to including these stories in our Time Capsule and future editions of *The Charger*. Finally, in honor of the occasion and to follow the tradition set at the 500th Meeting, a custom cake from Stick To Your Buns Bakery in Westlake was served, courtesy of Roundtable Secretary Gary Taylor. The night was one of reflection and celebration, honoring all who have contributed to the Roundtable's enduring legacy.

The February meeting was further enriched by our outstanding speaker, Dr. Chris Mackowski, who delivered a compelling presentation on one of the Civil War's most enduring "what-ifs": how the Battle of Gettysburg might have unfolded had Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson been present. To set the stage, Chris first took us through a vivid retelling of the Battle of Chancellorsville and the mortal wounding of "Stonewall" Jackson during the night of May 2, 1863. His storytelling was brought to life through an interactive demonstration, with members of the audience acting as props to illustrate key strategic troop movements. Chris challenged the group to think about the immediate ramifications of Jackson's severe wounding

on the Battle of Chancellorsville. Did his wounding actually prevent disaster? Jackson had planned to continue his night assault, pushing his exhausted men deeper into the Wilderness toward the U.S. Ford, where he hoped to cut off the Union retreat. However, this route would have led him straight into the path of the Union First and Fifth Corps, both of which were fresh, well-positioned, and ready to counterattack. Had he pressed forward as planned, he might have inadvertently walked his troops into a dangerous confrontation, possibly leading to a major Confederate setback. Chris stated, "Jackson died at what I call his 'Jimi Hendrix moment.' He was at the absolute peak of his powers, at the height of his fame."

Chris explored several intriguing scenarios surrounding Jackson's severe wounding, whether he could have been available for the Gettysburg campaign, and what kind of leader he would have been afterward. In addition to being shot three times—resulting in the amputation of his left arm—Jackson also suffered from pneumonia, which ultimately led to his death. This fact even came up as the answer to Bill Frank's clever quiz question that evening. Chris pointed out that if Jackson had not been shot that fateful night, he still might have missed the campaign due to the time required to recover from pneumonia. He further noted that, even with the amputation of his arm, Jackson would likely have missed Gettysburg due to the long recovery process. Finally, Chris raised a compelling question: if Jackson had somehow survived both pneumonia and the amputation, would he have returned as the same aggressive and capable leader who had shaped so many pivotal battles? Many other generals struggled to regain their effectiveness after being wounded.

Chris then examined the broader strategic implications after Jackson's mortal wounding. For instance, Jackson's death gave General Robert E. Lee the opportunity to reorganize his Army of Northern Virginia into three corps. If Jackson had survived, would Lee have still reorganized his army into three corps? Furthermore, if Lee kept the army structure the way it was Chancellorsville, the troop movements leading up to the Battle of Gettysburg could have unfolded quite differently, potentially altering the Confederate Second Corps' role. In the final segment of his presentation, Chris speculated on a scenario in which Jackson entered Gettysburg at full strength, with the same pre-battle conditions and troop movements that led to the retreat of Union forces on the afternoon of July 1st, 1863. While Jackson's leadership could have influenced specific moments near Culp's Hill, Chris concluded that the overall outcome of the battle was unlikely to have been dramatically different. He argued that many of the exaggerated "what-ifs" surrounding Jackson's impact at Gettysburg may not align with a realistic assessment of the situation. Chris's thoughtful analysis and engaging storytelling captivated the audience, sparking a lively discussion that continued well into the evening. Our sincerest thanks to Chris for providing such a thought-provoking and insightful presentation.

As we turn the page to March, our next meeting promises another engaging and insightful event. We are thrilled to welcome Joseph Ricci, former Historian for the Battle of Franklin Trust, as our next distinguished speaker. Joseph's presentation will guide us through the evolving preservation and remembrance of the Battle of Franklin, which took place on November 30, 1864. The Battle of Franklin occupies a curious place in Civil War history, only receiving

devoted attention in the last four decades. Joseph will explore how the battlefield has been preserved and the significant transformation of the land from commercial development to a revered site of memory. Franklin serves as an inspiration to historic preservationists across the nation, and we look forward to hearing Joseph's insights on how we preserve and honor the past.

As always, we encourage all members to attend, engage in discussion, and continue the tradition of spirited conversation that makes our Roundtable so special. With spring soon upon us, I look forward to seeing you all very soon. Until then, may the warming days and the promise of renewal bring you joy and inspiration.

Your obedient servant,

Gene Claridge

The Editor's Desk



Last month, the CCWRT held its 600th meeting on Lincoln's Birthday, February 12, 2025. The event is a true milestone in the

history of the organization. As part of the celebration, current members were invited at that meeting to write testimonials of how their membership has affected their lives. I was unable to attend that meeting, but certainly I can testify that the CCWRT has given me opportunities to advance my study of the American Civil War that I would not have otherwise. We have some great members who are quite knowledgeable about the subject and who enjoy sharing that knowledge with anyone who cares to listen and/or discuss the topic. Editing this publication brings me in contact with many of these scholars on a regular basis. I find it to be a privilege that I completely enjoy. I look forward each month to the articles and book reviews that are submitted. I especially enjoy the articles of members who can relate personal stories of ancestors who lived during the conflict and how it affected their family history. Millions of individuals lived at that time in the United States and each of them have a story to tell. I am happy to publish some of the members' testimonials in this edition of "The Charger:"

CCWRT Testimonials for 600th Meeting

I became a member about 7 years ago. As a complete novice on the Civil War, but with a strong interest in history, I found the meetings educational. Unlike most of the members everything I heard was new. I still am on the lower end of the learning curve, but I look forward to learning more.

- Alan Goodman

Michael Wells, past president, past editor of The Charger, joined CCWRT 2009, first Dick Crews Debate 2009. Then Dennis Keating got me interested in the Roundtable, although I have been interested in the Civil War since I was a kid. In the CCWRT I found an organization of Civil War historians who can organize interesting meetings and field trips and who themselves are interesting and bring to our fellowship a wealth of knowledge in many areas. I am proud to be a member of this diverse and inclusive society.

- Michael Wells

My name is Brian D. Kowell and I have been a member of the Cleveland Civil War Round Table since 1975. This year marks my 50-year anniversary with the club. I have been president as well as a newsletter editor of our "Charger" during those years and have loved every minute of it.

The Round Table has provided me with many new friends with a similar passion about the American Civil War. I have learned an awful lot from each of them. The knowledge of our members is one of the strongest attributes of the Round Table. I always look forward to our monthly meetings and re-connecting with everyone.

I have particularly enjoyed the comradery on our annual fieldtrips which has provided me with an opportunity to visit many Civil War battlefields and sites on a guided tour with experts. I have met many historians, authors, and have heard great speakers on a variety of Civil War subjects, which always rekindles my interest and makes me want to learn more.

I have many fond memories of meetings, fieldtrips, discussions and debates with my fellow Round Table members. It's been a blast!

- Brian Kowell

Greetings, my fellow Cleveland Civil War Roundtable members. My wish for you is to have the same comradery with your members, such as we have in 2025. Learning ever more about the Civil War and its people in the company of good friends is what has made our Roundtable a success as we celebrated our 600th meeting this year. Coincidentally on Lincoln's birthday.

- Mel Maurer (1998), Past President.



David F. Parchem. I became a member in the Fall of 2023. My best memory is that I discovered that I could join the Roundtable without having to be an expert on the Civil War and take a qualifying test.

- David Parchem



National History Day

We want to thank all our members who served as National History Day CCWRT Judges at the WRHS Cleveland History Center on Saturday, March 1, 2025. Thanks to your help we were able to evaluate over twice as many entries as last year and to award five prizes to student entries. We appreciate the thought and effort that all of you gave to the judging process. Let's hope we have helped inspire some future historians and spread the word about our Roundtable and its mission.



Pictures of some of our judges hard at work.



Clara Barton and Cleveland John J. Elwell: A Civil War Romance

By Dennis Keating

In my book *Cleveland and the Civil War*, I mention the relationship formed in 1863 between Clara Barton and Cleveland John J. Elwell (pp. 43-44). Born in Massachusetts, she moved to Washington City and was employed in the U.S. Patent Office. When the Civil War broke out, she volunteered with the Union Army, bringing medical supplies first after battles beginning with First Bull Run and then also nursing wounded soldiers at Second Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. She became known as “The Angel of the Battlefields” but she did not join the official Union nurses corps headed by Dorothea Dix. In 1863, she went to Hilton Head, South Carolina, where she met her brother David, a quartermaster.

She then met John J. Elwell, another Union quartermaster. Born in Warren, Ohio in 1820, he was first a doctor and then a lawyer (and medical law professor) and served in the Ohio Legislature. When the Civil War began, he became the quartermaster for the 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (OVC) from Cleveland and the 3rd OVC from Huron County. He then went to South Carolina, where he became the Chief Quartermaster of the Department of the South. Elwell had broken a leg in an accident and when Barton arrived, she helped to care for his recovery. Living next to his quarter in a Union camp, when Elwell contracted yellow fever, Barton nursed him back to health.

According to historian Stephen B. Oates:

“He [Elwell] is my friend’, she wrote...’I could not tell you in a day all the good noble manly Christian qualities he possesses; the rare combination of intellect, scholarship, business talent, spirit and gentleness, firm like a man and tender like a girl.’ “If anything, Elwell cared even more deeply for Clara. Yes, he was married and had children [in Cleveland]. And yes he mentioned

how devoted his wife [Nancy] was to him. But alone, far away from her on this tropical island, he fell in love with Clara Barton.” (p. 148)

According to Oates, their friendship became a love affair: “At some point that spring, they began expressing their passion physically...So much the proper lady in other respects, she refused to be a prude about sexual matters, as long as they were handled discreetly.” (pp. 148-149) Oates further says:

“He and Clara wrote one another intimate notes, and he called her ‘Birdie’ and ‘My Pet’ and asked if he might visit her ‘nest.’ The notes suggest that they would spend part of the night together, whether in Clara’s ‘nest’ or his. Since his room was next door to hers, they had no trouble being discreet.” (p. 149)

In his new book *A Day in September: The Battle of Antietam and the World It Left Behind*, author Stephen Budiansky writes:

“In South Carolina that spring she (Barton) had the first and only true romance of her life, a passionate affair with a married officer (Elwell) that she knew would not last but swept her off her feet.” (p. 205)

While these two Civil War historians believe that Clara and John did have this love affair there, not all agree.

In July 1863, they went to Charleston harbor in advance of a coming Union army attempt by the command of Ohioan General Quincy A. Gillmore (on whose staff Elwell then served) to capture the city. On July 18, Gillmore’s force, including the Black Massachusetts 54th, assaulted Battery Wagner. Seeing the Union troops in trouble, Elwell rode to them, only to have his horse shot and him wounded. Clara then came to his rescue. (Oates, p. 173)

Returning to Hilton Head and a hospitalized Elwell in August, Barton herself became seriously ill but recovered. She continued to work with friends for freed Blacks on the Sea Islands but when she returned to the Charleston islands, General Gillmore informed her that her services were no longer needed there and she returned to Hilton Head. By December, Barton decided to return to Washington City:

“[Elwell] was brave and gracious about her decision to leave, even though it hurt him, Clara Barton was the great love of his life, and he would always cherish his memories of her and their time together, their carriage and horseback rides, their conversations and laughter, and their lovemaking.” (Oates, p. 207)

According to “Life stories of Civil War Heroes”:

“Albeit unconventional in her thought and demeanor, as a realist Clara knew that their relationship could not last and did not wish to break up Elwell’s marriage, so neither pursued the other once their work was terminated, although they would always remain fond of each other.”

Clara was appointed the head of hospitals for the Army of the James by its commander Ben Butler. A major contribution that Clara made came after the war when she participated in an

expedition to the site of the notorious Andersonville prison camp to try to identify as many as possible Union soldiers who had died there (as well as other missing dead Union soldiers). She went on to found and head the American Red Cross.

Elwell was breveted four times for gallantry in battle during the war. He returned to Cleveland and practiced law. He died in 1900 and is buried in Cleveland's Woodland Cemetery (Section 7, Lot 2).

Clara and John after their parting continued to exchange letters and some may be found in the Western Reserve Historical Society and the Library of Congress.

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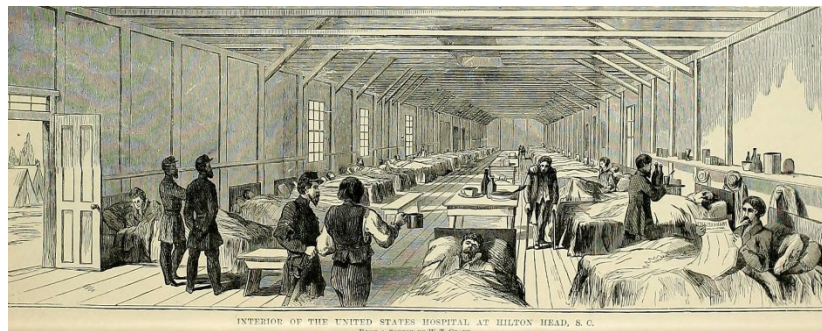
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[Editor's note: Clara Barton apparently won the hearts of many other young men during the war. On August 11, 1863, Marquis Lafayette Gordon, 85th Pennsylvania Volunteers, from Morris Island, South Carolina, wrote to his Uncle William Gordon:

“Away in the night Miss Barton (who is the Florence Nightingale of this department) came in and went round among the wounded, talking to them in such a *nice* way, that I could hardly repress the mental ‘God bless you!’ that came to my lips, and if I had followed the prompting of my heart would have went up & *kissed her* right there *before them all.*”]

***More on Major General Mortimer Leggett
And the 78th OVI***

By Kent Fonner

Last month we published an article by Dennis Keating on Major General Mortimer D. Leggett and the 78th O.V.I. The article evoked an e-mail from Dr. Tom Harvey from Florida whose great-great-uncle, Captain George Washington Porter, served as a member of General Leggett's staff. Porter also served with the 78th OVI. Porter enlisted in the 78th Ohio with Dr. Harvey's great-grandfather, Thomas S. Armstrong and his brother, Wilbur. All of them were well-acquainted with Leggett. About thirty years ago, Dr. Harvey published a trilogy of books containing 250 letters written by Porter and Thomas Armstrong titled *The Armstrong Family in the Civil War*. Along with his kind words regarding Dennis Keating's article, he also sent a copy of a picture of General Leggett and his staff, including his great-great-uncle, Captain Porter. The original of this photograph is in The Huntington Digital Library, and you see it here.



From left to right: Capt. R.H. Evans, Leggett, Capt. George W. Porter of the 78th OVI, Asst. Adj. General Major John C. Douglas, and 1st Lt. Archibald Stewart of the 78th OVI



Hubert Dilger and Battery I, 1st Ohio Light Artillery

By Dennis Keating

As I was re-reading Noah Andre Trudeau's history of the Gettysburg campaign, I was struck in his account of Day One of the battle when I read about Captain Hubert Dilger's Battery I, one of those of the 1st Ohio Light Artillery commanded by Cleveland James Barnett, in action. Attached to the Eleventh Corps of the Army of the Potomac, his battery supported the Union defenders against the attack of Robert Rodes' division. Trudeau writes:

"The unit he commanded in the advance of the Eleventh Corps this day was arguably the best trained of its kind, and Dilger, in the words of an observer, 'one of the bravest, coolest and most clear headed of battery commanders in the Civil War' ". (pp. 208-209)

Dilger has been credited with directing a shot which spiked a Confederate gun on Oak Hill. However, Harry Pfanz disputes this:

"According to an infantryman, Dilger soon exacted revenge [against Confederate shells]. His first shot at the Rebel battery was high, and the Confederates yelled in derision. Dilger sighted the piece himself, and the second shot dismounted the targeted gun and killed some of its horses. Col. Philip P. Brown of the 157th New York shouted: 'What effect Captain Dilger?' Dilger studied the targeted gun through his 'glass' for a moment and replied: 'I have spiked a gun for them, plugging it into the muzzle'. This story is nonsense. Dilger did not claim such a lucky hit in his report, and a skeptic would wonder if Dilger could have even seen the damage through the smoky air even with a 'glass'." (Pfanz, pp.220-221)

Yet, reading more about Dilger and his battery, his career was still worthy of this recognition by Trudeau.

Dilger was born in 1836 in Engen, Konstanz, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, Germany. He served in the Grand Duke's Horse Artillery. Learning of the American Civil War, he took a leave of absence to join the Union army, after relocating to Cincinnati. At the Second battle of Bull Run, Dilger's battery served under the command of fellow German General Carl Schurz. Dilger became known as "Leatherbreeches" for wearing doeskin pants.

Following that battle, Dilger's action at the battle of Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, earned him the Medal of Honor. While he failed to be able to communicate his warning to his superiors of the impending flank attack by Stonewall Jackson's force which routed the Eleventh Corps, one of Dilger's battery's gun under his command held back alone the Confederates as Howard's heavily German-American corps retreated:

"Jackson's attack began and Dilger's battery soon found itself amidst the maelstrom of the collapsing 11th Corps. The subsequent conduct of Captain Hubert Dilger in fighting his battery during the retreat of the 11th Corps at Chancellorsville proved one of the few bright spots in the 11th Corps that disastrous day, and eventually won him the Medal of Honor in 1893...His horse was shot from under him, as well as the two wheel horses and one lead horse of one of his guns...Captain Dilger had sent his battery towards Chancellorsville, keeping one piece with him which he brought several times into action with very good success during the retreat of the corps." (Masters, 2022)

According to Corporal Sidney S. Allen:

"We retreated down the road slowly firing at nearly every step and no infantry to support us...After the other corps came up and checked the Rebels, General Carl Schurz came up and inquired what gun came down the road. Captain Dilger told him and he came and shook hands with all the men. He said he never saw such determined bravery in all his life and did not know men could work a gun under such fire." (*Portage County Democrat*, 1863)

Dilger's Medal of Honor citation read:

"Fought his guns until the enemy were upon him, then with one gun hauled in the road by hand he formed the rear guard and kept the enemy at bay by the rapidity of his fire and was the last man in the retreat."

After Gettysburg, Dilger's battery went West under Joe Hooker. In the 1864 Atlanta campaign, his Battery I was assigned to the First Division of the Fourteenth Army Corps:

"He was one of the most skillful and plucky officers in the Union service. In all the battles which occurred with the Army of the Cumberland during the Atlanta campaign, Captain Dilger was on hand. He was the first to open fire on the eve of a battle, taking his guns nearly up to the skirmish line." (Owens, 1884)

It was on June 14, 1864, that Dilger's Battery I made its most famous shot. When General Sherman spotted a group of Confederate officers on Pine Mountain near Marietta, Georgia, he

ordered nearby artillery batteries to fire at them. Dilger's Battery I has been credited with the long range shot that killed Confederate General Leonidas Polk. For example, Eric Wittenberg cited this claim but warned:

“Some recent scholarship has suggested that Dilger did not fire that shot. It would be a real shame if it wasn't Dilger, who is one of my very favorite figures of the Civil War.”

Instead, Captain Peter Simonson, commander of the 5th Indiana Battery and Chief of Artillery of the First Division of the Fourteenth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland is credited by some for this amazing fatal shot. Simonson was himself killed by a sharpshooter two days after Polk's death (White, 2014).

Battery I's wartime service began in Virginia in early 1862 and its combat experience ended after the 1864 Atlanta campaign. During the war, it had one officer and thirteen enlisted men killed. At the battle of Gettysburg, it had thirteen men wounded.

After the war, Dilger farmed in Ohio, before moving to another farm in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia.

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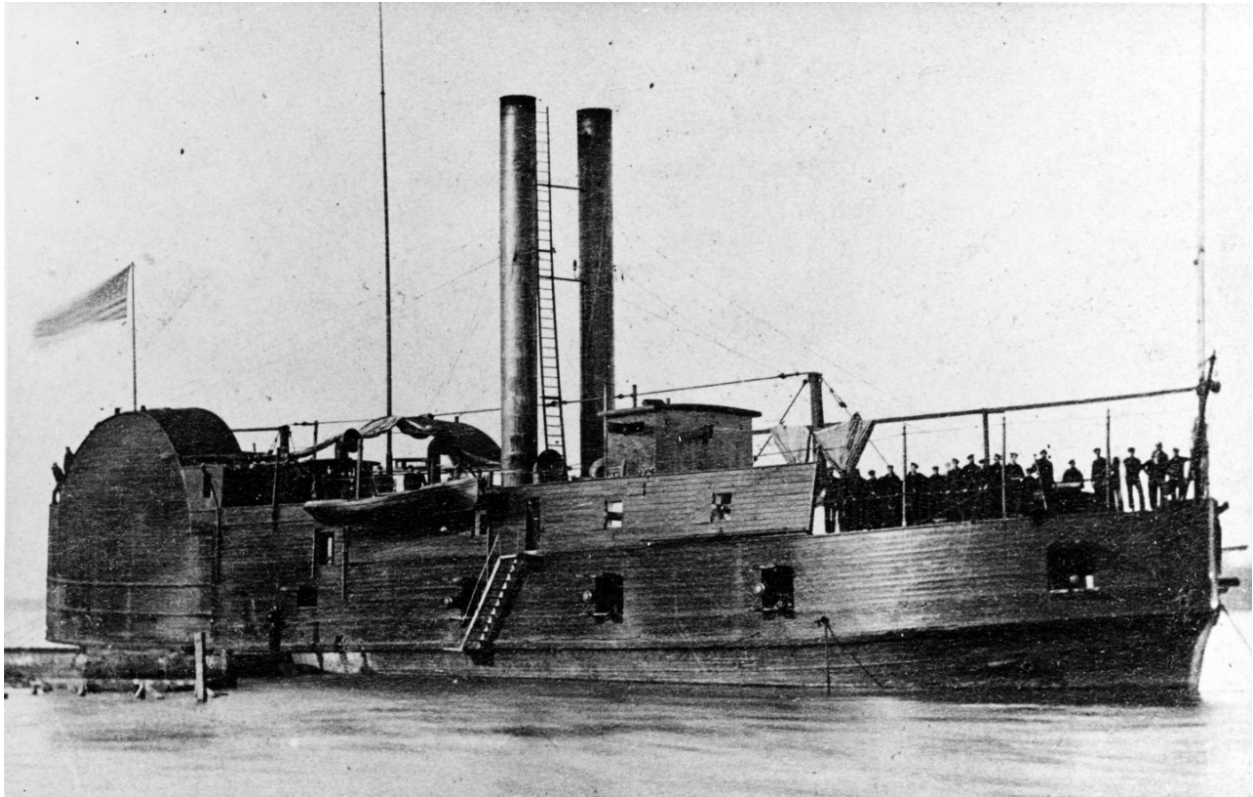
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There is also a Battery I Marker in the Gettysburg National Cemetery (The Civil War in the East)



Captain Dilger at Resaca, GA, May 1864



The United States Timberclad Gunboat, The Conestoga

The U.S. Navy Cowed at Island No. 10

©Brian D. Kowell January 11, 2024

At 1 p.m. on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1862, Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote of the U. S. Navy steamed down the Mississippi River toward the Confederate fortifications at Island Number 10. With black smoke escaping their chimneys, three ironclad gunboats lashed together approached to within 2000 yards and opened fire. Supported by Union mortar boats lashed to the Missouri bank, they bombarded the rebels for over 3 long hours. When the Western Flotilla retired that night, they did so without doing significant damage to the rebel stronghold. Foote would later report to Secretary of Navy Gideon Welles that "this place is stronger and even better adapted for defense than Columbus has ever been; each fortification commands the one above it." One modern historian stated that the reason for the failure was "the complete ineffectiveness of long-range shelling."¹

Reluctant to risk his fleet in further close encounters, Foote settled down to a slow siege, occasionally firing a shot or two from long range. Soon army officers and newspaper reporters began ridiculing Foote's efforts as "Bombarding the state of Tennessee at long range."²

Despite the ensuing boredom, sailors remained tense as false alarms of Confederate boat attacks or shore raids began to circulate.

Well after dark, on March 19, the fleet heard musket fire and the sound of cannon from upstream where the Union supply transports were anchored. Lieutenant Joshua Bishop, the executive officer of the USS *Benton*, was sent by the alarmed Foote in one of the *Benton's* tugs to investigate while the rest of the fleet prepared for action.

Earlier that Wednesday, a number of "suspicious looking" skiffs "laden with butternut natives" was seen in the vicinity of the transports, resulting in the Union sailors being put on heightened alert. Later that night, the lookouts of the munitions boat *Judge Torrence*, thought they saw suspicious movements along the darkened shoreline. The jumpy sailors were convinced that an attack was imminent and sounded the alert. More than a dozen muskets were discharged by the crew of the *Judge Torrence* into the gloomy forest along the shoreline. Lieutenant LeRoy Fitch, commander of the *Judge Torrence*, ordered the cables slipped from shore and got underway toward the safety of the middle of the river.

Meantime, Lieutenant George M. Blodgett of the timberclad gunboat *Conestoga* moved in and ordered his portside cannons open fire, pelting the shoreline with grape and canister. In the light of this cannon fire, newspaper reporter Franc Wilkie "could see one of the ship's boys – a suckling tar of about 12 years of age apparently – blazing away into the swamp with a revolver as fast as he could cock it and pull the trigger."³

By the time Bishop arrived all was quiet, and the *Judge Torrence* had returned to her anchorage. Bishop met with the two ships' commanders and determined that "nobody knew anything." After questioning both, Bishop deduced that "No one had seen or heard an enemy, no one had the remotest idea of what he was firing for or who or what he was firing at."⁴

The next day a search was conducted. According to Wilkie, a body of a cow was found riddled with grapeshot. "It was she, wading through the water that had excited the challenge and alarm of the sentinel." The poor animal was solely responsible for "the fierce resistance of the gallant *Conestoga* and a commotion which affected the entire fleet."⁵

And that is how the U. S. Navy was cowed at Island Number 10.

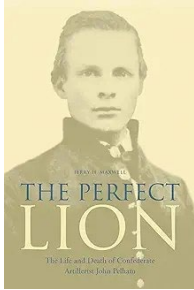
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² Smith, *The Old Warhorse*, p.92

³ Smith, *The Old Warhorse*, p. 90. *New York Times*, March 25, April 1, 1862

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid.

BOOK REVIEW

Maxwell, Jerry, *The Perfect Lion: The Life and Death of Confederate Artillerist John Pelham*, 2011, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. 35487.

ISBN # 978-0-8173-8548-4 (hard cover)

Every now and then while reading through lives of people who have lived and died long before any of us became a reality, one wonders, whatever became of this or that person or he or she was so brilliant what would have happened if they had lived longer. I've asked myself that very question many times concerning Major John Pelham. Born in 1838 in Alabama, Pelham was the son of Atkinson Pelham, a country doctor and Martha Clay a distant relative of Henry Clay. John Pelham was often referred to as the "Boy Major" among his friends. He was a typical boy while spending his youth in Alabama but with the help of Jefferson Davis he was admitted to West Point in March of 1856. His military education was, however, cut short when he quit West Point in 1861 and went south to join the Confederate forces then around Harpers Ferry, Virginia. John worked his way up through the ranks until he was commanding The Horse Artillery Battalion Cavalry Division in the Army of Northern Virginia and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in August 1862. Back in 1837 the family had moved from rural Kentucky to Jacksonville, Alabama where John was born in 1838. The Pelham Family eventually was made up of six children Charles, William, John, Eliza, Samuel, and Thomas. All of the Pelham sons eventually went on to serve the Confederacy during the Civil War. John's father Dr. Pelham eventually relinquished his medical practice and enlarged the family land holdings called "Mahler" where they came up with that name no-one seems to know. As the family and the plantation grew the Pelhams became increasingly dependent on the labor of enslaved people. Although nothing was ever written about them two of the Pelham slaves accompanied John to the front in 1861 and stayed with him until his death. John took part in the Battles of First and Second Manassas, the Seven Days Campaign, Cedar Mountain, and Antietam after which he took part in the Cavalry sojourn at "The Bower" near Charlestown, Virginia. Here he took part with Stuart's Cavalry in all the revelry that took place at that estate and consequently fell in love with Sally Dandridge and formed a lasting friendship with his West Point classmate Tom Rosser. At Fredericksburg he took two pieces of artillery and blocked the advance of General Burnside's right wing. He blazed away at Meade's left and finally with just one gun left, he withdrew backwards to the heights above. Lee reportedly said at this point. "It's glorious to see such courage in one so young". He was one of Stuart's favorites. It was in March of 1863 that Stuart received word that General William Averell had advanced with a 3,000-man force of cavalry toward Kelley's Ford, Virginia. Stuart along with Pelham's artillery met the Federals on March 17, 1863, at a place called Kelley's Ford near Culpeper, Virginia. Pelham, who was away from his battalion at the time joined the fray with the cavalry and began moving them toward the front. All at once a shell exploded overhead and Pelham was hit. He fell to the ground, everyone thought he was dead. His body was placed across a horse, no-one knew he was still alive and could have been helped if they had only known that. They took him to Culpepper, Virginia where he died shortly afterwards. Speculation is that if he had been treated sooner, he

may have lived. His body was taken to Richmond where it lay in state and later was transferred to Jacksonville, Alabama. Where he lies today. John Pelham is one of those characters that may have been an outstanding individual if he had lived instead of dying at age twenty five, but we'll never know.

The Perfect Lion is well written and well researched. The book itself brings to light the life of a rather obscure individual who, as brilliant as he was, had died too young to stand out in the conflict. Mr. Jerry Maxwell does a great job of portraying Pelham as a vigorous and enthusiastic young soldier who's life and military career were cut short and one wonders what would have happened if he had lived long enough to serve the county he loved.

I don't believe this book is out of print and can be ordered either online or from your favorite book store.

--Paul Siedel



CCWRT Members Present at the 600th Meeting, 12 February 2025 (photo by Jose Esparza)

FINIS!