



# ***THE CHARGER***

**THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE**

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**May 2025**

**CCWRT Founded 1956**

**Vol. 49, No. 9**

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**PROGRAM** – “After Lee’s Surrender: A Country in Turmoil”

**SPEAKER** – Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant, portrayed by Dr. Curt Fields, the preeminent U.S. Grant living historian in the United States.

**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](mailto:ccwrtreserve@gmail.com). To ensure a dinner is reserved for you, the reservation must be made by Tuesday, May 6, 2025

**Website:**

<http://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>

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**MEETING** – May 14, 2025

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## *President's Message*

### **Fellow Roundtable Members:**

Can you believe it is already the month of May? We are greeted by the intoxicating scents of fresh blooms and the soft hum of spring in full swing. The air feels warmer, the sun lingers longer in the sky, and there is a whisper of summer ahead. It is a time that awakens our senses—flowers bursting with color, the fragrant smoke of barbecued delicacies, the earth alive with new growth, and the sound of birds singing their springtime symphony. May invites us to take a moment, breathe in the beauty around us, and embrace the renewal it brings. However, May also marked a season of further intensified action during the American Civil War, where the warmth of the season fueled the movement of troops and the ever-shifting tides of war. For those who lived through it, May was a time of upheaval, where change was constant, and the path forward was uncertain.

Throughout the Civil War, the month of May consistently marked pivotal moments, shaping the course of the conflict for both the Union and the Confederacy. In May 1861, Union forces occupied Alexandria, Virginia, while the Confederate Congress formally established the Confederate Army. At the same time, the Union began its blockade of Southern ports, aiming to sever critical supply lines in the South as part of the Anaconda Plan. A year later, May 1862 brought fierce clashes during the Peninsula Campaign, as the Army of the Potomac, under Major General George B. McClellan, advanced toward the Confederate capital of Richmond. This campaign included the Battles of Williamsburg and Seven Pines.

While General McClellan was ultimately stymied, Union victories at New Orleans and Fort Macon delivered heavy blows to the Confederacy. Nevertheless, Major General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson launched his legendary Shenandoah Valley Campaign, claiming a decisive victory at Front Royal. In May 1863, General Robert E. Lee scored a brilliant yet costly victory at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Despite the mortal wounding of General Jackson, this engagement set the stage for General Lee’s Second Invasion of the North. Meanwhile, Major General Ulysses S. Grant, commanding the Union Army of the Tennessee, began the Siege of Vicksburg on May 18, aiming to split the Confederacy and secure control of the Mississippi River.

As the war entered its bloodiest and most destructive phase, May 1864 marked the beginning of one of its most harrowing chapters. After his promotion to Lieutenant General, U.S. Grant, alongside General George G. Meade, launched the Overland Campaign. The Union Army of the Potomac engaged the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia in the tangled hellfire of what would come to be known as the Battle of the Wilderness. Later, they fought in the brutal, blood-and-rain-soaked trenches of Spotsylvania Court House. By the end of the month, the Battle of Cold Harbor had begun, foreshadowing even greater bloodshed in June. Meanwhile, in northern Georgia, Major General William T. Sherman opened the Atlanta Campaign, clashing with Confederate forces under General Joseph E. Johnston at Resaca as he pressed toward the South’s industrial heart. By May 1865, the war was finally in its “endgame.” On May 10, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured, signaling a decisive blow to the South’s leadership. Just days later, the Battle of Palmito Ranch, fought on May 12–13, became the war’s final land engagement.

From May 23–25, Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department, marking the last Confederate surrender in the Western Theater. These final surrenders sealed the fate of the Confederacy, bringing the war to a close and leaving the nation scarred but resolute, poised to face the uncertain and arduous road of Reconstruction.

Just as May marks both a time of renewal in nature and a period of intense transition in our nation's history, it also signals the end of my tenure as President of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. This journey has been a time of reflection and growth, much like the season itself, ushering in new beginnings while honoring what has come before. As we turn the page to a new chapter, I am deeply grateful for the incredible conversations, presentations, and shared history we have experienced together. While the calendar may mark the end of my term, the memories and connections we have made will continue to bloom in our hearts long after.

On April 9, 2025, the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable hosted an engaging and insightful presentation by Judge William F.B. Vodrey on “Lincoln’s Lawyers.” William took the audience on a deep dive into the roles of Edward Bates and James Speed, two U.S. Attorneys General who served under President Abraham Lincoln. Both Bates and Speed hailed from border states, Missouri and Kentucky, key areas that President Lincoln worked hard to keep loyal during the Civil War. William pointed out that the appointment of both men reflected Lincoln’s careful balancing of interests to maintain these critical states. Throughout the evening, William explored the distinct differences in their political ideologies and how their contributions were

crucial to shaping the Lincoln Administration.

William began by introducing Edward Bates, born in 1793 in Virginia. Bates had a long and varied political career, serving in the War of 1812 and as a U.S. Representative. He was involved with several political parties, including the Whigs and later the Republicans. As William explained, Bates was considered a potential Republican candidate for President in 1860, but he ultimately lost the Republican nomination to Lincoln. Bates’s more moderate stance on emancipation was contrasted with Lincoln’s evolving approach, but his legal opinions had a lasting impact. For instance, one significant moment during his tenure as Attorney General was his official legal opinion on Black citizenship. Bates’ opinion contradicted the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision, which had denied citizenship to African Americans. While Bates’s conservative views on emancipation often put him at odds with radical abolitionists, his legal opinion on Black citizenship became a crucial steppingstone in Lincoln’s broader legal strategy. This stance helped shape the administration's policies on slavery and civil rights. Following Bates’s resignation and Lincoln’s successful reelection in late 1864, the President sent for James Speed to succeed him as Attorney General.

James Speed, born in Kentucky in 1812, shared a strong personal connection with Lincoln. The new Attorney General was the older brother of Joshua Speed, Lincoln's closest friend from Springfield, Illinois. William noted how their intellectual bond, especially regarding slavery and emancipation, played a pivotal role in shaping Lincoln’s evolving views. James Speed (although not Joshua) was an advocate for emancipation, and his views

increasingly aligned with Lincoln's as the war progressed. Their relationship may have helped influence Lincoln's eventual shift toward stronger anti-slavery policies. Joshua Speed's personal support had also been significant in helping Lincoln through moments of deep depression before he ever ran for office; Lincoln is known to have experienced depression during the darkest days of the Civil War, too. Joshua Speed helped Lincoln with challenges he faced in his personal life, such as his relationship with his fiancée and later wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. Speed's guidance and steady friendship were invaluable during these difficult times.

After Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, Speed continued in his role under President Andrew Johnson. Over time, Speed's views aligned more closely with the Radical Republicans. He advocated for stronger measures to protect the newly freed African American population and to secure civil rights, although his stance remained more moderate than some of the party's more radical members. Speed's legal decisions, particularly those regarding wartime policies and civil rights, helped reinforce the Union's position on emancipation and the nation's post-war transformation. Yet, as William pointed out, Speed became increasingly disillusioned with Johnson's lenient policies toward the South, which ultimately led to his resignation in 1866. After stepping down, Speed remained an influential political figure in Kentucky, though his influence waned as ex-Confederates came to dominate the state in the post-Civil War era.

William concluded the presentation by discussing how Bates and Speed fit into the broader picture of Lincoln's Cabinet. This talk was part of a series in which William has been exploring the roles of key members of Lincoln's Administration: Vice Presidents

Hannibal Hamlin and Andrew Johnson, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. These figures, as William illustrated, played an essential role in shaping the nation's legal and political landscape during one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. History. The audience at the Roundtable appreciated William's thorough and engaging presentation, which deepened their understanding of the critical roles these individuals played in shaping the course of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

At our April meeting, we also took a moment to reflect on the loss of our dear friend and long-time member, Paul Seidel. I had the honor of speaking about Paul's many contributions to our group, his deep passion for preserving history, and his invaluable impact on both our Roundtable and the wider community. We shared memories of Paul, including his work with local organizations and his dedication to teaching others about Civil War history. For those who were unable to attend, I encourage you to read the full tribute in this month's newsletter, where we honor Paul's legacy and his continued influence on our group.

Looking ahead to our May meeting, we are honored to have Dr. Curt Fields, the preeminent living historian of Ulysses S. Grant, join us once again as our speaker for his third presentation with us. Dr. Fields will present 'After Lee's Surrender: A Country in Turmoil,' examining the turbulent weeks that followed General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House and highlighting Grant's pivotal leadership during these defining moments in one of the darkest times of our Republic. As someone who has portrayed General Grant in countless national settings, Dr. Fields brings a wealth

of knowledge and a remarkable personal connection to the history of this critical period.

While another remarkable program year draws to a close, it is the ideal moment to reflect on our journey and the exciting paths that lie ahead. I look forward to seeing you on May 14 for an unforgettable evening.

Your obedient servant,

Gene Claridge

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### *The Editor's Desk*



OLLO PODRIDA—a big word that I found in past issues of “The Charger.” It refers to a spicy Spanish stew of meat and vegetables but, more generally, means any miscellaneous assortment or collection, a hodgepodge. Earlier editors used the term as a title for a regular column which contained snippets on various subjects, including first-hand battle descriptions, news regarding modern Civil War battlefield preservation efforts, and just anything the editor believed would be of interest to CCWRT members. Ollo podrida aptly describes this month’s version of “The Editor’s Desk.”

First, we call your attention to the announcement in this issue submitted by Dave Carrino about the availability of past issues of “The Charger”

and earlier CCWRT newsletters in an archive on our website. Dave and Past President Bob Pence have done a yeoman’s job in gathering old copies of the publications, scanning them into PDF, and archiving and indexing them on the CCWRT website. There are some missing copies, however, and we ask our members, especially those who have been with us the longest, to review their personal files to see if they have any of the issues needed. I recently went through a file folder given me when I became editor, and I found five of the missing issues for Dave. There may still be more. This archive is important to preserve and expand as much as possible. These publications contain not only past research articles and book reviews by our members but also president messages, editorials, announcements, and news items that give some detail to CCWRT’s long traditions and history. Please take a few minutes to see if you have anything to fill the gaps.

Last month we published the last book review submitted to “The Charger” by our regular contributor, Paul Siedel. Paul was a careful scholar, and his book reviews and articles always contained a keen insight. Every month, I looked forward to reading and editing Paul’s work. It seems strange not to have an email from him containing a submission for the May edition. I will miss Paul, and his passing leaves a hole in our journalistic effort that will be difficult to fill. On the same note, I wish I had known John C. Fazio better. Another great CCWRT historian and writer, John passed away in early 2024 before I had the opportunity to truly get to know him. We shared some correspondence regarding some articles he submitted before he died. I have read two of his books on the Lincoln assassination, and I believe he had much more to contribute to the CCWRT and Civil War history in general. For the past year, as a memorial to John, we have been publishing his submissions, including one on John Wilkes Booth and the CSA secret service in last month’s “Charger.”



On a happier matter, we invite you to read the contribution in this month's edition by one of CCWRT's newest members, Francie Sorace, on the recent ceremonies at Appomattox Court House last month for the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lee's surrender. Francie and her son, Joey, who is also a new member, like to travel to Civil War sites and events. This year, they decided to travel to Appomattox. She supplied us with an excellent report of their trip along with some fantastic photographs. Take some time to read her article and let her know what you think.

Finally, this is President Gene Claridge's last meeting as president of the CCWRT. Gene has been very supportive of our efforts in publishing "The Charger" each month, and I thank him for all his assistance and kind words. I have totally enjoyed being of service to Gene and the members of CCWRT as editor of this outstanding publication, and I look forward to service under our incoming president, Judge Charles Patton.



**Issues of *The Charger* Going Back  
to the Beginning of Time  
Are Now on the Roundtable's  
Website!**

That title is somewhat hyperbolic, but the title is intended to grab people's attention. In reality, what has been uploaded onto the Roundtable's website are issues of *The Charger* that go back to the first year of the Roundtable's existence (1956-1957). Since that is the beginning of time as far as the Roundtable is concerned, it should count for something.

When Bob Pence was Roundtable president, in addition to all of the other outstanding things that he did, Bob was able to obtain hard copies of *The Charger* that go back to the first year of the Roundtable. For many years, *The Charger* existed only as hard copies, so Bob scanned all of those hard copies into PDFs in order to create electronic versions of those *Charger* issues. Those issues span the years 1956 to 2000. I then uploaded all of those PDFs onto the Roundtable's website and integrated them into the archive of previously uploaded issues of *The Charger*, which span the years 2001 to present. I should note that the Roundtable's newsletter was not always called *The Charger*, but for simplicity, throughout this article I refer to the newsletter as *The Charger*, even when the Roundtable's newsletter went by a different name.

Taken together, the older issues that Bob scanned into PDFs plus the more recent issues that had already been uploaded onto the website comprise almost 69 years of *Charger* issues, and all 69 years are now available on the website. Those 69 years of issues are organized into four web pages in order to make the entire archive more manageable. Each web page consists of links to the PDFs, and these links allow the PDFs to be opened and read. The issues of *The Charger* for each web page are as follows: November 1956-May 1981, September 1981-May 2001, September 2001-May 2021, and September 2021-Present. These ranges are indicated in the heading on each web page. As new issues of *The Charger* are published, they will be uploaded onto the September 2021-Present web page.

The PDFs of *The Charger* on the website are accessed via the "Charger" menu tab, which can be found at the top of all of the web pages on the website, such as the home page: <https://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com/>.

Clicking on the "Charger" menu tab opens the web page with the most recent issues of *The Charger* (i.e., September 2021-Present). On the

September 2021-Present web page, there are links to the three web pages that have the older issues. These links are in the text at the top of the web page. Each of the other three web pages also has links to the other web pages, which makes it possible to navigate to all of the issues from these web pages. Some of the old hard copy issues were, unfortunately, not saved, which means that these missing issues were not available for Bob to scan. Where issues are missing, this is indicated on the web pages in the list of *Charger* issues. The archive of *The Charger* that is now on the website is as complete as possible. Roundtable members (and for that matter anyone on planet Earth who has access to the internet) can now read issues of *The Charger* going back to the first year of the Roundtable. Because the May 2025 meeting is the last meeting for 2024-2025, current members who need a dose of the Roundtable during the summer while they await the September 2025 meeting can go on the website, open PDFs of old issues of *The Charger*, and read what their Roundtable predecessors were reading.

--Dave Carrino



### ***Honoring the Memory of Paul Seidel***

It is with deep respect and appreciation that we remember our dear friend and valued contributor, Paul Seidel, who passed away this past April. Paul was not only an active member of our Roundtable, but also a prolific writer for *The Charger* and our

website. His contributions enriched our discussions, deepened our understanding of Civil War history, and left an indelible mark on our community.

Paul's work extended far beyond the pages of our publications. His passion for preserving history, sharing knowledge, and engaging with others—whether through his insightful articles, his engaging talks, or his active participation in various historical organizations—made him a cornerstone of our group.

As a writer, Paul's articles were thoughtful, well researched, and always came from a place of genuine passion. His commitment to the study of history was evident in every piece he wrote, and his enthusiasm inspired many of us to explore more deeply the topics he loved.

In addition to his role as a writer, Paul's dedication to the preservation of history was evident in his work with local organizations such as the Northeast Ohio CWRT, the Quincy Gilmore CWRT, and the Woodlawn Cemetery Preservation Society. His legacy as a historian and advocate for historical preservation will continue to inspire us.

To honor Paul's memory in a way that reflects his lifelong commitment to historic preservation, our Roundtable has made a donation to the American Battlefield Trust in his name, in accordance with his wishes.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Paul's family and friends. His memory will live on through his words, his deeds, and the lasting impact he had on all of us. Let us continue to honor his work and the values he held dear, keeping his spirit alive in everything we do.



## *Sherman's March to the Sea*

by Dennis Keating

Sherman's 1864 March to the Sea from Atlanta to Savannah is one of the most written about campaigns of the Civil War. They mostly follow his army across Georgia for its military significance in hollowing out the Confederacy. I recently read Bennett Parten's 2025 book *Somewhere Toward Freedom* which takes a different approach to telling the history. He explains:

"[W]e've typically imagined the March as a military campaign and with few exceptions have treated it as a military history. One of the principal claims of this book, however, is that to understand Sherman's March is to reimagine its history by seeing it for what is truly a freedom movement. That was clearly how the enslaved people saw it." (p. 4)

Parten focuses on the experience of those enslaved people as they joined Sherman's army in its progress. He then recounts what happened to those former slaves once Sherman captured Savannah in December, 1864, and after his army headed to the Carolinas:

"This book tells a new story by bringing this history of the March's aftermath to the fore. In doing so, however, it actually revisits a venture that historians have been writing about for decades, a project known as the Port Royal Experiment. Based on a set of barrier islands surrounding a wide deepwater sound just north of Savannah, the Port Royal Experiment was an



early model...of Reconstruction. Its goal was to begin the transition from slavery to freedom by instituting a free labor regime on the region's abandoned plantations." (p. 5)

Parten follows Sherman's columns as they cross Georgia, followed by increasing numbers of slaves abandoning their masters and their plantations. Sherman, who was notably not as much taken with Lincoln's Emancipation policy as some others and rejected the recruitment of former male slaves into the USCT, whom he did not accept in his armies, this growing number of desperately poor Negroes was a burden. This was true even as they provided valuable information about trail routes, the location to Sherman's bumsers of valuables, food, and animals hidden by their White owners, and the location of Joe Wheeler's pursuing Confederate cavalry. While some became paid laborers for the army, most were desperately poor and needed to be fed and sheltered. Parten includes the most famous example of the callous attitude of some of Sherman's officers, most notably racist Corps commander Jefferson C. Davis. His order to his rear guard to remove pontoon bridges at Ebenezer Creek left hundreds of refugees stranded on the other side as Wheeler's troops approached. Rather than be re-enslaved, many attempted to swim across only to die in the effort despite the attempts of some of Sherman's soldiers to aid them (pp. 99-105).

This resulted later in the meeting in Savannah between Sherman and Black ministers arranged by a visiting Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War. Ex-slave Pastor Garrison Frazier spoke for them and argued that the only viable future for the thousands of Black refugees, including those already present in the Sea Islands north of the city, was land and its ownership (pp. 150-157). While this meeting would increase Sherman's enmity toward Stanton, soon afterward, Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15. It ordered the reservation of 400,000 acres of coastal land in South Carolina and Florida formerly owned by Confederates to be allocated to the ex-slaves in 40-acre parcels (pp. 157-159). This is the origin of the promise of 40 acres and a mule. It also rid Sherman and his army of even more ex-slave followers as they headed into the Carolinas to complete their historic military journey that began with the Atlanta campaign.

The second half of the book is about what happened to the Port Royal Experiment. With Northern missionaries and a Union commander sympathetic to the refugees, Parten sees this with Sherman's order as a precursor to the Congressional creation of the Freedmen's Bureau headed by General Oliver Otis Howard. However, with adequate supplies lacking and a labor system that was inadequate, the experiment foundered with the departure of the Union army. Then, Lincoln's successor as president Andrew Johnson awarded pardons to Confederates and in 1866 revoked Sherman's decision by ordering the return of any unsold land to its former owners.

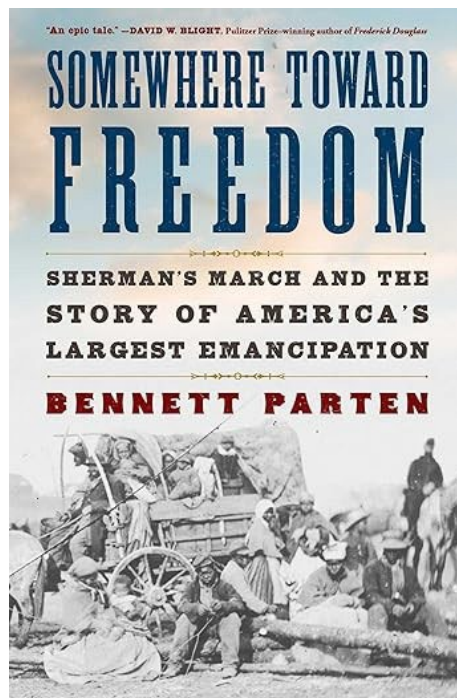
Parten concludes:

"[T]he story of the Georgia refugees ends with their making a long walk home. It's not that so many walked home that's so tragic, it's that they walked home perhaps alone, empty handed, and no more certain of freedom than they had been when they left. The great dream of one day owning land and the independence that would come with it ran aground on the beaches around Port Royal." (p. 200)

For those unfamiliar with this aspect of Sherman's Georgia campaign and its aftermath at Port Royal, I recommend this history of the March.

For another review of Parten's book, see this one by past Roundtable speaker Professor Brian Matthew Jordan: *Civil War Monitor* (March 5, 2025):

<https://www.civilwarmonitor.com/somewhere-toward-freedom-2025/>.



### References:

Bennett Parten. *Somewhere Toward Freedom: Sherman's March and the Story of America's Largest Emancipation* (2025)

Some other Historical accounts of the March:

Burke Davis. *Sherman's March* (1980)

E. L. Doctorow. *The March: A Novel* (2005)

Joseph T. Glatthaar. *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaign* (1995)

John F. Marszalek. *Sherman's March to the Sea* (2005)

Noah Andre Trudeau. *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* (2009)

Anne Sarah Rubin. *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (2014)

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Francie and her son, Joey, with Generals Grant and Lee

## *Appomattox 160: Compelled to Yield...*

By Francie Sorace

Ten years ago, we were glued to the TV watching C-Span's live coverage of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the surrender. It was both well done and very moving, so we wanted to be there to experience it in person this year. My son, Joey, and I were excited to make the trip to Appomattox Court House National Historic Park (ACHNHP) for the 160th anniversary on April 9, 2025.

We arrived late on Tuesday afternoon just in time to attend an excellent first-person campfire program by the Appomattox-Petersburg Preservation Society (APPS). This organization has acquired stewardship of the Appomattox Station Battlefield, April 8, 1865, on land that was saved by the American Battlefield Trust. Three living historians told the story of Custer's cavalry attempting to secure rail cars on the South Side Railroad while under attack by Walker's Confederate artillery. Denying General Lee access to this food and supplies influenced his decision to meet with General Grant the very next day.

Early Wednesday morning we headed to the National Park for all of the scheduled events. It was thrilling to see crowds gathering ready to commemorate the occasion and that really set the mood for the day. On hand to welcome visitors was Jim Bailey, Superintendent of ACHNHP and Booker T. Washington National Monument, who has a great connection to Civil War sites and preservation. We also had the chance to chat with Garry Adelman, Chief Historian of the American Battlefield Trust, who was visiting for just a few hours. General Grant (Curt Fields) and General Lee (Thomas Jessee) soon arrived with their respective staff, and many were discussing the events of the coming afternoon. Ranger Patrick Schroeder, Park Historian for over 20 years, started the Ranger Walks discussing the final Battle of Appomattox



Court House. Lee's last attempt to head south toward North Carolina was blocked by Sheridan's cavalry and infantry support from Gibbon and Griffin. Flags of truce were out after 11:00am and Lee sent a word to Grant that he will meet him to surrender the ANV.

Later that morning a brand-new trail was dedicated to honor the legacy of the United States Colored Troops that were part of the 5,000 Federal forces that slammed the door on the escape of Lee's army. On hand for the program was Ranger Steve Phan, Chief of Interpretation at Camp Nelson National Monument in Kentucky. Many USCTs that enlisted at Camp Nelson were a part of the Appomattox Campaign and ultimately helped to end the Civil War. Ranger Phan also presented an interesting program later in the week about the journey of the over 23,000 USCTs and the lives of the family they left behind in Kentucky.

At 1:00pm, visitors flowed into the yard of the McLean House to be "in the spot where it happened" and a constant line walked through the reconstructed parlor. We have been in that room before, but standing there, knowing what occurred at that moment in time, allows for a connection to our past. History can still speak, sometimes as a crescendo and sometimes quite reverently, as here in this small room. Rangers offered details of the historic meeting and then Grant and Lee recounted their first-person history of the event to crowds in the orchard. Contrary to a well-known myth, Lee did not surrender to Grant under an apple tree, although many soldiers chopped down an orchard north of the village to have a souvenir from the mistakenly legendary trees!



The commemorations continued early on April 10 with a program on a low bluff east of Appomattox CH. The Generals would have a second meeting on this spot. Grant had hoped to persuade Lee to hasten the surrender of all Confederate forces, but he refused and deferred to Jefferson Davis and other commanding generals. This lively discussion with Fields and Jessee offered more insight into this brief meeting which had also led to the decision to provide Confederate soldiers with parole passes to help them travel safely home. Over 28,000 paroles were issued at Appomattox which allowed the former Confederates access to federal rations and free passage on federally operated railroads and steamships, all done in good faith to

help with reunification. Inside the Clover Hill Tavern in Appomattox CH the sights, sounds, and smells of the printing presses cranking out parole passes as they had 160 years truly felt like time travel.

At 2:00pm there was a special dedication and ribbon cutting for the new Coleman House Trail. After years long archaeological work and research, the story of the last battle at Appomattox on the morning of April 9th is now interpreted for visitors. The trail cuts through the woods and over newly built bridges to the original site of the home, and noticeable chimney. Hannah Reynolds, who was enslaved by the Coleman family, was the only civilian casualty of the fighting near Appomattox. She was struck in the arm by a cannonball that tore through the house, and although receiving treatment from Federal surgeons, Hannah died three days later, a free woman. We were also honored to have a direct descendant of the Coleman family on the tour with us. She shared a story that her great grandmother often told about coming back to the family home after the battle and surrender. At the time she was a young child and always remembered having to go into the yard and “bury the arms and legs” which everyone assumed were the product of amputations. Later it was realized that there had been some terrible spring rains right after the surrender and bodies that had been crudely buried in the yard had begun to be exposed. The Coleman family, including the children, were reinterring the dead soldiers on their property. It was very emotional to walk the ground and hear this first-hand history of the events here. Also along the trail is a wayside at the spot of the brave charge of the 11<sup>th</sup> Maine directly into Confederate artillery, suffering 60 casualties, with many knowing that the war is now at its end. Ranger Schroeder and Superintendent Bailey are extremely proud that these stories are now available for visitors to explore.

That evening, Joey and I attended a fabulous presentation by our friend Chris Mackowski at the American Civil War Museum down the road from ACHNHP. The standing room only crowd was offered wonderful insight into the surrenders that took place after Appomattox, a series of events that are mostly overlooked. Even Gens. Grant and Lee were there to hear “the rest of the story!”

To be completely honest, Friday April 11 was a terribly cold, rainy day...which was confounding the locals who had seen 80° a few days before. Regularly scheduled events at the Park continued, under a large tent, then moved indoors to the film auditorium. A very interesting program about the unique life of Lt. Colonel Ely Parker, a full-blooded member of the Seneca Nation and Grant’s Military Secretary, was presented by Ranger David Wooldridge. His story was filled with challenges and successes, but he is most known for having been with General Grant at the surrender and transcribing the terms in “the best penmanship in the army.” His work is evident on a copy of those terms displayed in the visitor center, the original is at Stratford Hall, the birthplace of Robert E. Lee.

In the afternoon, Joey and I dodged the rain showers at the American Museum of the Civil War, which has a fine collection of rare artifacts that allow the story of the events from only two miles up the road to continue—Lee’s ceremonial sword and uniform worn (only once) during the surrender, Patrick Cleburne’s tattered uniform, and rare original flag staffs ranging from hand carved to tree branches were amazing to see, while personal letters and historic documents and photographs gave time for reflection on this complicated history.

We finished the day at Galilee Baptist Church, formed by freed African Americans of Appomattox County in 1866. The story of John Robinson, emancipated after Grant’s victory, was shared with the crowd attending by Ranger Wooldridge. He had worked as a cobbler in Appomattox Court House and helped to establish Galilee, later moving the Freedmen’s Bureau School there to thrive. Robinson was a



humble community member, property owner and voter in Appomattox County for 50 years. The evening ended with a fabulous performance by the New Beginnings Gospel Singers.

Saturday, April 12, was set to be a very exciting day. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and the U.S. Christian Commission Coffee Cart was steaming away! The Liberty Rifles, a group of living historians founded in 1999 who strive to accurately portray the common fighting men and civilian home front of the Civil War, and 1<sup>st</sup> Section, their authentic horse drawn artillery, were ready to start the events. Ranger Schroeder offered the details of General Joshua Chamberlain's role in the stacking of the Confederate arms, on the spot where it had happened exactly 160 years ago and discussed the fact and fiction that has evolved over the years. At 10am, the sounds of jingling chains and tackles could be heard as cannon and limbers rode across the gravel roads of the village. Three guns were brought into formation, unhitched, and fired with 19<sup>th</sup> century command and precision by men who research and train together for historical accuracy.



On a side note, the ACHNHP did an amazing job of welcoming families to this special weekend of events. There were large crowds of all ages engaging in the activities and many programs and hand-on opportunities were filled with curious young people. Keeping history alive and accessible for all generations is very refreshing and vitally important and the rangers and volunteers were ready to meet the challenge.

Also set up for the weekend was a camp of The Hannibal Guards, living historians from the eastern US who portray the USCTs. They shared stories and experiences of the men who had been fighting along the last campaign of the war and encouraged visitors to ask questions and participate in their camp. Many other programs throughout the weekend focused on how the end of the Civil War and emancipation changed Appomattox County and surrounding areas, sorting through the mire of legend and myth. University of Virginia Professor and author Caroline Janney offered a wonderful presentation covering the uncertain and lengthy end of the war that has been previously misunderstood and Brown University Associate Professor of History Michael Vorenberg discussed the ways the war continued despite the surrender at ACH. The life of John Robinson was also covered in depth outside of the home that he

purchased for \$300 at the east end of the village. His contributions to the African American population in the area and the accomplishments of his children, some of the first students to attend the Freedmen's Bureau School, have now become part of the continuing story of Appomattox. Possibly one of the most insightful presentations was given by Linda Crichlow White who revealed her Virginia roots. Her ancestors were among the enslaved people living at the McLean home at the wars end. She was joined by family members, one of whom had never walked the ground at Appomattox until that day. The details of their research and journey through genealogy was inspiring.

Another moment captured in time was the recreation of the formal Stacking of Arms done at 1:00pm. It was an incredibly solemn moment. The sound of hard leather shoes along the road was all that could be heard as the men slowly marched up, all with a sad look of disappointment mixed with a lifted burden of the past. Robert E. Lee's address, General Order No. 9, was read to the crowd and the Confederates left their arms and accoutrements for the Federal soldiers..."I bid you an affectionate farewell".

After the ceremonies were concluded many headed over to the camps as biscuits were baking, pork was sizzling, and daily activities were in full swing. The historians from 1<sup>st</sup> Section did a great program on the "Horse Power in the Civil War" filled with information that many do not consider when studying armies on the move. Spectators were also welcomed over for Stable Call, assisting with feeding and grooming the horses. Joey has known some of the men from The Liberty Rifles for a few years and had the privilege to march with them last year in Gettysburg for the Remembrance Day Parade. They are a wealth of knowledge regarding everyday soldiers, their daily life, food, and equipment, and they share all they can during public events and through online resources.

The Saturday evening weather was clear but remained chilly as we grabbed our chairs and joined the crowds in the yard of the McLean house. First, Curt Fields and Thomas Jessee performed their program "Final 48 Hours" from the front porch, and to hear the story retold by the two Generals was almost a surreal moment. At 7:00pm Grammy award winning musician Dom Flemons shared some thoughtful and entertaining songs and stories of celebration and freedom. His expertise on the banjo, guitar, harmonica, quills, rhythm bones and more was fascinating to say the least! And finally, as the sun went down over the quiet fields, the flickering light of 4,600 luminaries stretched along the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road, each one marked with the name of an enslaved person from Appomattox County that was freed by the surrender on April 9, 1865. There was a peace that filled the air as people walked along, reading the names, chatting with family and friends, contemplating the reason we all stand on this ground at this moment. The echoes of a distant time were heard that evening and many in attendance may have felt the past speaking to them in the breeze.

The following are links to websites and organizations mentioned here:

Appomattox Court House National Historic Park <https://www.nps.gov/apco/index.htm>

Appomattox-Petersburg Preservation Society <https://www.appomattoxpetersburg.org/>

American Battlefield Trust <https://www.battlefields.org/>

ABT YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/americanbattlefieldtrust>

Camp Nelson National Memorial <https://www.nps.gov/cane/index.htm>

Emerging Civil War <https://emergingcivilwar.com/>

The Liberty Rifles <https://www.libertyrifles.org/>



*[Editor's Note: Francie and Joey had such a great time and took so many pictures; we decided to include these montages.]*















Southern Unionists Swear Allegiance to the U.S. Flag

***“We’ll all die guerillas, I reckon . . . .”***

By Al Fonger

In 2016, Hollywood released “The Free State of Jones,” the story of Newton Knight, a Mississippi farmer whose beliefs and actions clashed with the Confederacy’s. Newton deserted from the Confederate army twice and led a group of likeminded in a fight to preserve the Union. Unfortunately, I have not seen the movie, only snippets and movie trailers available on YouTube. So, I cannot comment on the movie’s historical accuracy. Nonetheless, a yeoman farmer in Mississippi rallying friends and acquaintances to oppose the might of the Confederacy is intriguing. The antebellum South was a prosperous land of plantations, cotton, and slaves. But there were also white craftsmen and yeomen farmers such as Newton Knight who owned no slaves.

Newton’s grandfather, John “Jackie” Knight, had moved his family to the Piney Woods in Mississippi in 1815 or 1816 and became one of the richest men in the region, owning 680 acres of land and as many as 20 slaves by 1860. Jackie also made money in the slave trade. Martha Wheeler, a Knight family slave, said Jackie “never was a big slave owner but he made much money trafficking in slave.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 46).

Albert, Jackie’s eldest son and Newton’s father, was a shoemaker and a yeoman farmer. He had no desire to be a wealthy planter or own slaves. Albert may have spurned slave ownership out of pride or the influence of his wife, Mason Rainey. Martha Wheeler remembered that Mason “was compassionate, ‘quite a doctor,’ who tended the sick in ‘all the surrounding

country.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 47) Whatever the reason, none of Albert’s 12 children would own slaves either, likely influenced by Albert’s and Mason’s example.

Newton was born in 1837, the eighth of Albert’s and Mason’s 12 children. Newton grew to over six feet and was described as “... tough and straightlaced, a ruffian yet devout Christian, a fierce combatant when riled, but with a reputation for tenderness, a loner yet a generous neighbor whom others could count on for help.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, pages 60 - 61) Newt’s younger sister, Martha recalled, “He always meant business. When he was to do anything he did it in a nice, smooth way.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 61) In 1858, he married Serena Turner. They moved to neighboring Jasper County and established their homestead. They had three sons by 1860: George, and twins Thomas and William.

Farming and faith united the yeoman farmers. Many of them, including Newton, were Primitive Baptists, a simple faith stripped of formal trappings. Primitive Baptists received the sacraments outdoors and were baptized in muddy swamp water. They held to the teachings that “God is no respecter of persons,” and “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 52)

Lincoln’s victory in 1860 led to talk of secession. Newton’s feelings about secession were well known. His friend, George Ellzey, recalled, “He was strictly a union man, he lived and died a union.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 71) Delegates from each county in Mississippi gathered in Jackson in January 1861 to decide on secession. Jones County overwhelmingly voted against secession and sent John H. Powell to Jackson. However, seeing that Jackson was already celebrating Mississippi’s secession, Powell voted for secession anyway. The people in Jones County were outraged and burned an effigy of Powell. Fearing for his life, Powell remained in Jackson for a month until the Confederate States officially formed. Newton summed up events to Meigs Frost: “Fact is, Jones County never seceded from the Union into the Confederacy.... Her delegate seceded.” (Karst, 2016)

After secession passed, patriotic fervor engulfed Mississippi. Men rushed to volunteer. Unionists went into isolation as loyalty turned on its head. Presbyterian minister James Lyon continued to preach against slavery; in retribution, the Confederate authorities court-martialed his son and imprisoned him in Virginia. Another Unionist, John Hill Aughey, wrote Secretary of State William H. Seward: “Our property is confiscated and our families left destitute.... Heavy iron fetters are placed upon our limbs and daily some of us are led to the scaffold or to death by shooting. Many are forced into the army, instant death being the penalty in case of refusal....” (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 78).

Newton resisted the calls to enlist; but, after victory at the First Manassas, he gave in. He may have enlisted since it came with the provision that he would be furloughed until September 18, 1861. Most people thought the war would be over before harvest time. He may have felt coerced given that his home was mysteriously burnt to the ground. Whatever the reason, Newton joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Infantry, Company E.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Mississippi reported to Pensacola, Florida in October 1861. Newton’s stay in Pensacola was brief; on January 2, 1862, he received a special discharge to attend to urgent

family matters. His father was ill and on death's bed, which left no one to look after Newton's family. Also, his younger sister's new husband was terrorizing the family. "Morgan," as he was known, was reportedly a local criminal and Confederate informer. Morgan refused to leave after Newton returned home. Later, while sitting by the fire, Morgan was shot dead. Although never proven, Newton was believed to have killed him.

Newton's respite was short lived. The Confederacy's first Conscription Act was enacted in April 1862, drafting all men between 18 and 35. On May 13, Newton and 22 of his closest friends enlisted in Company F, 7<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Battalion. Newton did double duty as one of Company F's Sergeants and as a hospital orderly. About his enlistment, Newton remembered, "They just come around with a squad of soldiers 'n took you.... I told 'em I'd help nurse sick soldiers if they wanted," (Karst, 2016)

In the Fall, the 7<sup>th</sup> Mississippi marched toward Corinth with Gen. Earl Van Dorn's Confederate Army of the West. The difficult marching through the swamps and forests took its toll on the men as illness ravaged their ranks. As they approached Corinth, Company F mustered only 20 men and two officers. The men were tired of the marching and fed up with the poor rations. J. B. Shows of Company C, 7<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, wrote, "We are treated here worse than dogs." Another enlisted man wrote that officers treated the infantrymen "... as if they were a lot of negroes." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 16) Company F saw hard fighting at Corinth on October 3 and 4. After Corinth, Newton was promoted to Second Sergeant and assigned to a provost guard.

The horrors of Corinth coupled with the men's living conditions sowed dissent. Then the Confederate legislature passed the Twenty Negro Law on October 11 and pushed many of the men to the brink. The new law stipulated that each man who owned 20 or more slaves was exempted from service. Jasper Collins, one of Newton's friends, said, "This law... makes it a rich man's war and a poor man's fight." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 38) Collins soon after deserted after telling an officer, "I don't intend to shoot another gun here." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 38) Newton's neighbor, Ben Graves remembered Newton, "... felt that the law was not fair.... That it enabled the rich man to evade service and that it was not right to ask him to risk his life for people who rated themselves so far above him." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 39) Around this time, the Confederacy also passed the "tax-in-kind" law, giving officials the power to confiscate 10% of a farmer's stores. Newton's wife, Serena, complained to him that a Confederate cavalryman had seized her best horse and treated her poorly. Newton told Meigs Frost, "I felt like if they had a right to conscript me when I didn't want to fight the Union, I had a right to quit." (Karst, 2016) Newton was listed as "lost in retreat" near Abbeville in early November

Newton traveled 200 miles between Abbeville and home through swamps and forests, avoiding roads and civilization where he may encounter Confederate patrols. He encountered countless men on the run: escaped slaves, destitute civilians, and other deserters. Patrols with packs of hounds roamed the swamps and forests, hunting fugitives. John Hill Aughey remembered that a fugitive was "never for an hour out of the hearing of howling hounds or yelping dogs." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 87)

Newton returned to an impoverished Jones County. Conscription had stripped the county of able-bodied men, leaving the women to tend the farm as well as their families. Confederate officials seized most of the harvest and rounded up livestock as tax-in-kind. Newton's son, Tom, remembered his mother watched in tears as officials took the newly woven cloth she had made from home-spun cotton thread. Smith County farmer R.C. Stafford wrote to Governor Pettus: "If something is not done by the legislature to open the corn cribs that are now closed against the widow and orphan and soldiers families, who are destitute, I know that we are undone." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 93)

In late 1862, Confederate headquarters in Jackson became aware of the number of deserters in Jones County. John H. Powell, the local provost marshal, was ordered to round them up. Powell brought in most of the deserters. Those who came peacefully were treated as stragglers; the rest were dealt harsher punishment that ranged from public humiliation to public flogging and even death. Newton refused to surrender and had to be physically seized. He was taken to prison, where he was likely flogged, and given a choice: fight for the Confederacy or be executed. Newton agreed to return to his unit and appeared on the February 28, 1863 Company F muster as being present but under arrest.

Newton reunited with a Company F entrenched on Snyder's Bluff, one of the strong points in Vicksburg's defensive ring. They remained on Snyder's Bluff until May 17 when they withdrew into Vicksburg. For the next few weeks, Confederate soldiers and civilians hunkered down in besieged Vicksburg. How long Newton endured this misery is unknown; but he eventually deserted along with 39 other Company F men. Newton was listed as "absent without leave" for the June 30 to October 31 muster roll.

Deserters swarmed Mississippi after Vicksburg. Living conditions for the common soldier had become insufferable and disillusionment set in. With few if any comforts, the men endured senseless marching; chronic exposure; rancid food, thread-bare, lice ridden clothes; and worn-out shoes. One confederate wrote, "In this army, one hole in the set of the breeches indicates a captain, two holes a lieutenant, and the seat of the pants all out indicates that the individual is a private." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 125) The woods were so full of deserters that runaway slaves found there was no room for them.

The Confederate authorities offered deserters pardons if they returned and then bullets if not. When these failed, the Volunteer Conscription Bureau under Brig. Gen. Gideon Pillow was authorized to hunt down deserters and return them to their units. Pillow was particularly concerned with the Piney Woods; it had become a magnet for deserters. There were innumerable hiding places in the forests and swamps. Pillow sent in Major Amos McLemore with the 27<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, an old nemesis of Newton's.

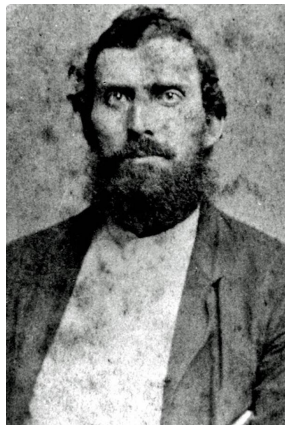
There was no love between Newton and McLemore. The two ominously taunted each other. Once, Newton sent word to McLemore "to leave their business alone;" McLemore replied, "I know my business... and I expect to attend to it." (Karsten, 2016) On the night of October 5, Newton and two fellow deserters ambushed McLemore in Ellisville at the home of Amos Deason. Who fired the shotgun that killed McLemore is uncertain, but it was believed that Newton pulled the trigger. The murder of a Confederate officer was a declaration of open

hostilities between the disaffected and the Confederacy. Newton had declared independence for Jones County; the Confederacy would have no authority there.

A week later, on October 13, fifty to sixty men from Jones, Jasper, Covington, and Smith Counties gathered in a trading post in Ellisville to declare their allegiance to the Union. They unanimously elected Newton as their captain. When asked years later on whose authority he had formed the company, he answered, “The people of Jones County.... It was thought necessary for the protection of the loyal people for their safety.” (Karsten, 2016)

Newton’s company, never numbering more than 125, dubbed themselves the Jones County Scouts. The company agreed to collectively work on and repair their farms while they prepared the county for resistance. They drilled regularly, established camp sites in the swamps, and traveled in groups of six to eight to avoid capture. A series of horn-blown signals alerted the company to various situations such as the presence of Confederates, the need to assemble, or the *all clear*. Newton told Meigs Frost (Karst, 2016) about the time Confederate cavalry rode up to a woman’s house looking for her son who was one of the Scouts. She told them she did not know where he was, but she could find out. She retrieved a horn and gave it a blast that was soon answered by a dozen others. The Confederate leader looked at his men and said, “Boys, I guess we’d better get out of here.”

After McLemore’s death, men from Company F, 26<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, streamed into town. They were joined by mounted vigilantes who came with wagons loaded with crates of dogs. Dogs were the most feared. In one account, a deserter in neighboring Covington County was cornered by eight hounds in a battle that lasted two hours. In the end, two dogs remained, but the man was so torn up that his own wife could not identify the body. Newton told Meigs Frost (Karst, 2016) about a time when Forrest’s cavalry came for Him and his company with 44 bloodhounds: “But 42 of them hounds just naturally died. They’s get hungry and some of the ladies, friends of ours, would feed ‘em. And they’d die. Strange, wasn’t it?” Then he smiled and added, “Them dogs certainly had a hard time of it. Some of ‘em died of lead poisoning too.” Despite the dogs, Company F and the vigilantes were unable to stop the guerrillas.



Newton Knight and his Second Wife, Rachel



Frost asked Newton about how many battles he'd fought. Newton said, "There was a lot of skirmishin' that you couldn't properly call battles.... But had 16 sizeable fights that I remember." One fight that Newton recounted to Frost he called a "right smart battle." One of his men, Alpheus King was getting married. A neighbor woman, no friend to Newton's company, alerted the Confederates in Ellisville. However, Newton was tipped off and stood guard at the river crossing near the wedding's location. Just after daybreak, he heard the rustling of chains and the stomping of hooves on a flat boat. "There was about 100 of 'em stomping on the flat. I had about a half mile to go to the house.... I made that half mile right fast," Newton told Frost (Karsten, 2016) When Newton arrived at the cabin, he alerted them of the approaching danger. One lady had a baby and could not travel fast. So, Newton carried the baby along with his shotgun. They had gone about 200 yards when about 20 Confederates rode up behind them. Newton gave the baby back to its mother, swung around, and shot a Confederate captain riding toward him from his horse. Newton then raised his voice and called on an imaginary battalion. The Confederates fell for the ruse and dashed off. Newton told Frost, "That wedding ended in a battle... Not that I aint' heard that lots of other weddings end up in battles, too."

Beginning in January 1864, the Jones County Scouts conducted a series of operations that eventually forced the Confederate authorities to act. They captured a wagon train loaded with corn, cotton, and wool. They raided a storehouse in Paulding filled with cornmeal intended for Confederate troops. With allies from neighboring Perry County, they attacked the New Augusta conscription station in broad daylight, liberating local slaves, and seizing government property.

Simultaneously, Newton and his men cleansed Jones County of Confederate loyalists. The tax-in-kind collector and the county sheriff were both killed, as were several other prominent citizens. Besides the murders, several other Confederate supporters were beaten and robbed. "These deserters brought terror into the hearts of the people who sympathized with the Confederacy," recalled J. C. Andrews of Jasper County. (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 165) Maddie Bush from Jones County remembered that there was no Confederate civil authority left as they had all fled, adding that "There was no sheriff, assessor, or tax collector." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 165)

Newton and his men were now a serious challenge to the Confederacy's authority. Gen. Dabney H. Maury in Mobile sent his cousin, Col. Henry Maurey, to take care of the miscreants in the Piney Woods. Col. Maury found that Jones, Perry, Greene, and Covington Counties were in open rebellion. Maury burned down the home of an unnamed guerrilla leader before announcing that any deserters who came in voluntarily would be paroled; the rest would be hanged. Maury's troops then scoured the swamps and forests on horseback. On March 12, Maury concluded his assignment, believing that he had neutralized the guerrillas. However, he had merely driven them deeper into the swamps. Once Maury was gone, Newton's and his company resumed their activities.

With the rebellion yet undone, the Confederates ordered two battle-hardened regiments, the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, to conduct a sweep of the lower Mississippi. Col. Robert Lowry of the 6<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, a native of the Piney Woods, led the operation. Lowry tore through the Jones's neighboring counties like a hurricane. He reinstated deposed sheriffs, hung or shot countless men on the run, and took a small army of deserters into custody. Lowry's juggernaut then entered Jones County on April 15.

Lowry's rampage hit Newton's family hard. They hanged Ben Knight, Sil Coleman and Sil's younger brother, Noble, all Newton's cousins. They deposited Ben's body on the porch at Albert Knight's old homestead. Their officer said to Serena, who was living there, "Here's your husband. You will be obliged to bury him." To which she answered, "My God man, that is not my husband. You've hung the wrong man." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 196) Two of Newton's nephews, Tom and Daniel Whitehead, were apprehended and summarily executed. Newton's younger brother, Franklin, was killed after a running gun battle. When Frost asked him about these, Newton assumed "... a look of bitterness that showed the fires of half a century ago were not all dead, cold ashes," and said to Frost, "He was rough beyond reason.... He hanged some of my company he had no right to hang." (Karst, 2016)

In his reign of terror, Lowry harassed women and children, kidnapped noncombatants, burned buildings, and impressed livestock. He kidnapped Newton's elderly uncle, William H. Knight and threatened to hang him if his son, William "Dickie" Knight did not surrender. A slave was sent with this message into the swamp. After receiving it, Dickie gave some thought to his answer and said to the slave, "You go back and tell the officer to just go ahead and hang Pap. He's getting to be an old man now, and they won't knock him out of many years. But they may knock me out of a good many." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 198) The slave returned home, and never relayed Dickie's message to Lowry's men; Lowry's men eventually released William Knight.

In April, Newton ambushed a party of Lowry's men who were on their way to Ellisville. He arrayed his men along Rocky Creek where the Confederates were likely to cross. When they heard the Confederates coming up the trail, Newton and his men rose up and fired a hailstorm into the rebels. The rebels retreated. Newton counted 15 wounded men and three dead horses in the road. Lowry now saw that he had to take drastic measures.

On April 25, Lowry mounted a large operation to sweep the swamps. His men stormed in with packs of hounds. Newton and his inner circle were nearly captured but escaped after being alerted by a watchman. Others were not so lucky. Thirty-two of Newton's men were killed, captured, or wounded; the rest were scattered throughout the swamps. Lowry concluded his operations on May 12, leaving a Piney Woods more miserable than before he unleashed his wrath. One of Lowry's officers, Col. William N. Brown, wrote, "We have changed the status of things in Jones, Perry, and Smith, and expect to reestablish in all South Mississippi a healthy loyalty to the to the powers that be." (Jenkins and Stauffer, page 204)

Within three weeks of Lowry's departure, however, Newton had re-constituted his company. By June, they were in full operation. There was little that the Confederates could do. Mississippi had been emptied of Confederate troops; they had been sent to oppose Sherman's advance into Georgia. Newton had become so powerful that he and his men intended to overthrow the Confederacy at the ballot box during the county election in October. However, when they emerged from the swamps, they found the polling places guarded by Confederate cavalry.

The war all but ended when Lee surrendered to Grant in April 1865, but it would be another month before hostilities formally ended in Mississippi when Confederate General Richard Taylor surrendered Biloxi on May 4. Newton surely celebrated the news, but any

euphoria must have been brief. Union authorities never fully acknowledged Newton's and his men's efforts. More troubling was that Confederate veterans were returning to a wasteland that was once their home. Those who opposed the Confederacy were traitors; chief among those traitors was Newton.

Newton's fortunes ebbed and flowed with the Federal government's level of commitment to reconstruction. After the war, Newton became prominent in local affairs. He was appointed "commissioner to procure relief for the destitute" shortly after hostilities ended, which allowed him to distribute supplies from federal depots to the starving citizens. He would also be appointed a U.S. marshal and a federal revenue tax collector. Newton championed the rights of newly freed slaves and facilitated the return of black children from defiant planters to their parents. However, his local standing and advocacy for blacks' rights only made Newton a bigger target for his enemies. He often worried about being assassinated, so much so that he shaved his beard off, started wearing store-bought shirts and never traveled unarmed.

As time progressed and support from the federal government evaporated, Newton became ever more isolated. He was blackballed by many of the whites in the area and ostracized by many in his own family. In addition to his Unionism and support of the rights of freed slaves, Newton had committed the unforgivable sin of miscegenation; he had taken an ex-slave as a wife. Her name was Rachel, and Newton likely met her before the war when she was one of Jackie Knight's slaves. The two developed a close relationship while Newton was fighting against the Confederates. Rachel became his ally, friend, comforter, and likely lover during this time.

After the war, Newton deeded Rachel 160 acres of land and built her a cabin. Newton's wife, Serena, stayed with him until after 1890 when she left him, possibly for Georgia. Newton had 12 children altogether with the two women: seven with Serena and five with Rachel. Census takers in 1880 struggled to get an accurate headcount of those who lived in the cabins that dotted the Knight land. Census takers in 1900 simply classified them all as "Black," even Newton.



Post-war Picture of Newton Knight and his Grandson,  
Howard Knight

Newton retreated to his farm in Jasper County after 1875. An early Jones County Historian summed up Newton: "His home is some distance from Ellisville, where he has lived in retirement since his dethronement.... He has lived in the midst of his enemies in defiance of their

threats, almost under the shadow of the revolver. His past is a sealed book with him, and nothing will induce him to talk of the war.” (Jenkins and Stauffer, pages 286 - 287) Frost wrote that Newton had, “... never ridden in a trolley car, used a telephone or seen electric lights at night. Annually he drives to Ellisville for his simple medical supplies of blue moss, castor oil and calomel.... He hunts for days, grows garden truck and sells to some friends the axe-helves he shaves from oak trees he cuts himself.” Newton told Frost, “We’ll all die guerillas, I reckon.” (Karst, 2016) Newton died in 1922, still ostracized by many but at peace in his own convictions.

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## UPCOMING CCWRT LOCAL FIELD TRIP

The CCWRT Local Field Trip Committee is pleased to announce:



At 10am on Sat. June 21, we've arranged for a guided tour of Lawnfield, President James A. Garfield's home in Mentor, Ohio. The tour will include information on his service in the 42nd Ohio during the Civil War, of course, among other things, including his promising but all-too-brief Presidency.

For more information: <https://www.nps.gov/jaga/index.htm>

If you'd like to go to either event, please let William Vodrey know by noon on the previous Thursday. His email is WFBVodrey at AOL dot com (broken up to avoid spam). Thanks!

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***FAREWELL ADDRESS BY CCWRT***  
***PRESIDENT GENE CLARIDGE***

As I write my final President's Message, it feels as though the year has passed in the blink of an eye. It seems like just yesterday we were planning, and now we find ourselves at the end of an unforgettable journey. Serving as your President has been a true privilege, and I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity.

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable is truly a special place, distinguished by the dedication of its members and the consistent commitment of our Officers and Executive Committee. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to each individual who contributed in any capacity, whether by volunteering, attending meetings, bringing a guest, or sharing their expertise. This group flourishes because of the collective efforts of individuals working together with a shared purpose: the preservation and discussion of history.

I am especially grateful to my fellow Officers: Vice President Judge Charles Patton, Treasurer John Syrone, and Secretary Gary Taylor. The success we achieved as a team is a direct result of your leadership and hard work. Judge Patton and Ernest Hendricks played a pivotal role in setting up the AV equipment for our gatherings. With the remarkable growth in membership, John managed the financials and communication with outstanding precision. Gary, ever dependable, ensured our reservations were timely and often stepped in to handle unexpected tasks, such as picking up the cake for the 600<sup>th</sup> Meeting, creating President Lincoln's 216<sup>th</sup> Birthday Card, or coordinating orders for the new Roundtable Gear.

My thanks also extend to the members of the Executive Committee, whose unwavering support has been invaluable to the success of our Roundtable. This dedicated team includes the Officers, as well as Dan Ursu, Dave Carrino, Hans Kuenzi, Lily Korte, Richard Hronek, Robert Pence, and Steve Pettyjohn. The work we accomplish together would not be possible without your continued engagement and reliability. I commend the Membership Committee, led by Steve Pettyjohn and Rich Hronek, for ensuring that new guests who attended our meetings felt welcome through personal introductions and follow-up outreach communications. Your efforts in fostering connections have made our meetings feel more like a community.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Dave Carrino, who has served as the Roundtable's Swiss Army knife. From posting updates on our website, assisting with event setups, or pitching in at the Front Table, Dave was always present when we needed him. I am also thankful for the behind-the-scenes contributions of Steve Pettyjohn, whose mentorship has been of immense value to me. His guidance, particularly regarding National History Day and the Grant Campaign, was critical throughout the year. I also wish to acknowledge Bob Pence for his outstanding leadership as Field Trip Coordinator for our Fall Trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. His role in making the outing a memorable success cannot be overstated. In addition, his consistent willingness to assist with tasks such as meeting preparations and financial review has been a significant asset.

I would like to recognize several others who have consistently gone above and beyond. Kent Fonner has ensured that our world-class newsletter, *The Charger*, remains vibrant and informative. Dave Carrino and Paul Burkholder have done an exceptional job maintaining our online presence, which continues to serve as a valuable resource for Civil War enthusiasts far and wide. Bill Frank's engaging quizzes have added a fun and educational dimension to our meetings. Dan Ursu's monthly History Briefs have sparked meaningful discussion and reflection. Don Iannone's new poetry reading segment has brought a new creative energy to our gatherings. I am also thankful to Ellen Connally, Dennis Keating, Mel Maurer, William Vodrey, and our dear, departed friend Paul Seidel for sharing local events with the group. Furthermore, I am grateful to William and Paul for their service on the Local Field Trip Committee. I would be remiss not to express particular appreciation to William for his continued encouragement and for his outstanding coordination and moderation of the Annual Dick Crews Memorial Debate. My deepest thanks extend to my good friend, Jose Esparza, for his dedicated assistance during our Fall Field Trip, the 600<sup>th</sup> Meeting, and many other moments throughout the year. From capturing memories as our photographer (a.k.a. Jose Brady) to stepping in as my Right-Hand Man, Jose's presence and support have meant a great deal to me. Finally, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my wife and First Lady, Briana, for her unwavering support. The many hours she spent reviewing messages such as this one and patiently waiting while I completed "just one more email," have not gone unnoticed. Her encouragement made all the difference.

Throughout this year, I have enjoyed reflecting on the history of our Roundtable and our shared legacy. It has been a joy to explore and share the stories of those who helped shape what we enjoy today. I look forward to continuing this work as an active member, confident that the values and spirit of this group will endure in the years ahead.

Before concluding, I am excited to share one final project, an in-depth report on the 2024 Field Trip, which was one of the highlights of our year together. Whether or not you joined us in Gettysburg, I encourage you to explore this thoughtfully crafted recap. It brings the experience to life with detailed reflections, key moments, and a curated collection of photographs that capture the spirit of our time together. The full report will be available on the Roundtable website after May 14. I hope it serves not only as a record of our journey, but also as an invitation to engage with the history we cherish and the camaraderie that defines this group.

As I step away from this role, I am filled with optimism for what lies ahead. The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable has a promising future, and I am confident that its legacy of education, fellowship, and historical preservation will continue to thrive. Thank you once again for making this year truly memorable. I look forward to continuing our journey together, not as your President, but as a fellow member—eager to learn, engage, and grow alongside each of you.

With gratitude and best wishes,

Gene Claridge

***FINIS!***