



THE CHARGER

THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

December 2025

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PROGRAM – “Bleeding Kansas: The War Before the Civil War”

SPEAKER – Andrew Mangels, Director of the Westlake Porter Public Library, Westlake, OH.

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 7:30 PM

For reservations email:

ccwrtreserve@gmail.com. To ensure a dinner is reserved for you, the reservation must be made by Tuesday, December 2, 2025

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MEETING – December 10, 2025

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President's Message

Fellow Roundtable Members:

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This month we continue with Part 2 of Judge Patton's remarks on the October CCWRT field trip to Oberlin.]

Oberlin's City Hall did not celebrate July 4th, but marked August 1st, the anniversary of Britain's abolition of slavery in its colonies. During the Civil War, John Mercer Langston read the Emancipation Proclamation to a large crowd in Oberlin and founded an aid society for newly freed people from the South. The event was known as a Jubilee celebration.

At the start of the war, this area served as a training ground. In 1861, Oberlin's first one hundred men joined the Chase Cadets at Camp Dennison for drills in marching and marksmanship. Local militia and students also trained here daily, regardless of weather. In 1862, when volunteers were needed to defend Cincinnati, eighty Oberlin students and sixty-eight nearby residents joined 1,500 Ohioans known as "the squirrel hunters." At that time, the Ohio regiments did not accept former slaves, though many from Ohio served in Massachusetts units. According to our guides, it is unlikely that any 54th Massachusetts members will be buried in Westwood Cemetery, Oberlin.

Our tour guide noted that several buildings in town resemble the Art Museum, including the lab school, Finny Chapel at the corner, and a small building set back further—all designed by architect Kat Gilbert, who built five structures in Oberlin. The smallest building mentioned is the tax and administration building. Jacob Fulton Cox, an Oberlin College graduate and notable figure, served as Major General and was recognized for his fair leadership. A biography even notes he never appeared brilliant but was respected. After the war he was governor of

Ohio. In 1866 he was Secretary of the Interior under President Grant for about a year and then he left that position. He was also the president of the Wabash Railroad, and he served as a representative to Congress. He married one of the daughters of Charles Manson; it is said he did well for himself.

We visited the post-Civil War residence of James Monroe, a prominent local politician, respected professor of Rhetoric at the College, and a committed abolitionist. Monroe was actively involved in recruiting some of the first one hundred men who enlisted, and he is held in such high regard within the community that the initial recruits for the 7th OVI named themselves in his honor. His influence is notable, as it is likely that he received significant support from voters throughout the county.

In September 1858, slave catcher Anderson Jennings arrived in Oberlin and recognized John, a former neighbor enslaved in Kentucky. He was aware of Oberlin's reputation for resisting slave catchers—locals would politely question and distract bounty hunters, making them uncomfortable enough to leave town. One frustrated bounty hunter reportedly left, asking, "Don't these confounded Oberliners ever sleep?"

Participating in this resistance to slave catchers was highly risky for these men. In the 1840s, Ohio enforced the Federal Black Codes, which meant escaped slaves were not recognized as U.S. citizens and could neither speak nor defend themselves in court against white individuals.

It was after the repeal of those laws and let us say through the adoption of the 1850 fugitive slave law, that they could go to jail for assisting a freedom seeker since this was considered a property law. They could literally be fined for a federal level of theft. Punishment included jail for up to six months and up to a \$1000 fine, which in today's money is like \$40,000. These are significant punishments but that was a well-

known tactic that was utilized here. Jennings, he has heard these stories, he knows that there has been no successful capture attempt to date. He is staying at a Tavern on the southern edge of town that is owned by a man named Chauncey Wack. After the civil war Wack would actually come to live in this house, this White House over here, and Wack you know would kind of you know tell the kids he was a little Wack. He's a bit of a villain of this, of the Oberlin Wellington rescue story. He was a man who was kind of antagonistic in this community. He was for a lot of things that the community was against, like gambling, dancing, drinking, and smoking. You could find that all at the Wack Tavern. He was pro slavery, and he put Jennings in contact with other pro slavery people in the community and with local law officials who are bound by the fugitive slave law. They produced a plan that this 10-year-old child is going to be paid \$10 to go to John and say, "Hey we have work on my father's farm, we need your help today." John followed the child to the outskirts of town and then, with no witnesses, the slave catchers rode up, captured John, and then they started heading South to Wellington, where they could get on board a southbound train and get out of the area as quickly as possible.

The plan works, but fortunately enroute to Wellington, they passed by some students and the students recognized the danger that John was in, rushed back to town, started spreading the word, and soon hundreds of people gathered in the middle of Tappan Square, swearing that they were going to get John Price freed.

Some of those men who arrived early on were members of some of the first families who arrived in Wellington, and they did not even wait for the crowds, including men like Wilson Bruce Evans, who built this house in Oberlin across the road. He and his brother were African American men who, with their families, came up from North Carolina just a few years prior. They were also agents of the underground railroads. This is a strongly suspected Underground

Railroad home. It is being restored currently with descendants of that family as well as community members here in Oberlin, they have formed their own nonprofits.

These men who have John Price, they are awaiting the train from a local Tavern at a hotel called the Wadsworth hotel in Wellington, and soon that hotel gets surrounded by hundreds of people from Oberlin and Wellington. They demand to have John Price free, they even offered to pay for his freedom, but the slave catcher said, "I have no qualms with the people of Ohio but the law's on my side and he shall be returned. The crowd does not take too kindly to that so they break into the hotel and John is able to get out in the fighting and confusion that is happening. He is brought back to Oberlin, and he goes on to Canada.

Some people are angry about these events and others are happy and celebrating. The following year there are thirty-seven members of the community who are indicted under the fugitive slave laws. Citizens of the community, have indictments, and have federal arrest warrants put out for them and out of those thirty-seven men twenty some of them refused to post bail and await their trials away from the comfort of their homes. They decided we are going to await our trials in downtown Cleveland at Cuyahoga County jail. They awaited their trials for 83 days. During that time, they welcome thousands of visitors to the jail. They get highly publicized.



They take this photo and I don't know if I have that exact photo with me here—yes, I do—they make friends with of course the jailer. This is him in this photo with the keys and the jailer gives them a printing press inside the jail. They print one edition of a newspaper called the Rescuer, they're doing pretty well in jail they're they're almost like welcome guests there.

They formed a literary society as well—yeah what are you gonna do exactly—and so this is another picture of them, here this is a difference hard to tell in these two pictures but about 7 or 8 of them are African Americans and then one of them, yes the one who's in the middle of that one with the cat in front of him and he's also this is Charles Langston, he actually is put on trial and he's found guilty, and he is given a reduced sentence.

I like to think that he had a way with words much like his grandson, Langston Hughes. He gives an immensely powerful speech like His grandson, Langston during his sentencing in court, that sways of the judge—and then another man was tried during that time. They mentioned their own charges against the slave catchers, citing that they did not have the proper documentation to take John Price in the first point, which was a requirement of the fugitive slave law. The defendants were alleging that they, the slave catchers, were in violation of law. Everything is this big, huge legal mess! The judge decided that the charges are going to get dropped all around.

The Residents of Oberlin know that they got away with this, unscathed. They know it could have been a lot worse, but Oberlin is facing threats during this time, people are threatening to burn the college to the ground, to come into this community and lay siege here. people who have connections, who live elsewhere for example a woman named Adelia Field Johnson, she was teaching in Tennessee.

She would not let anybody know that she had her mother still here in Oberlin that she had Oberlin connections that she went to Oberlin College she would write letters to. First she would mail them to another family member in Ohio who would then forward them on to Oberlin and vice versa because she just did not want anybody to know that she had these connections with Oberlin, from fear of her own safety. Oberlin tried a little bit to lay low for a while but about 3 1/2 months or so, after the release of the rescuers, the nation is rocked by **Harpers Ferry!**

John Brown's father served on Oberlin College's board of trustees, and sent his son to Oberlin, where John Mercer Langston introduced him to two locals, Louis Leary and Johnny Copeland. Both African American citizens joined Brown at Harpers Ferry; Leary was killed during the raid, while Copeland was arrested. Unlike the white abolitionists, Copeland was not considered a citizen due to his race and was tried for conspiracy instead of treason. But his fate was the same, he was found guilty and hung.

The community of Oberlin was horrified by this, it is a very violent event, at the same time they're like, oh no, people are going to start pointing at us again, we're gonna have a lot of problems coming out from this, but Copeland from jail starts writing letters to his family and his family his parents share these letters and they're very passionate in the sentiment of these letters. They are just incredible to read. He basically talks about why he did what he did, he would rather die for slavery than see slavery still exist. He would rather die to end slavery, than to see slavery exist. These letters are shared with the Oberlin community and that these individuals become Martyrdom to the cause of freedom.

During the tour, we saw the faded 1860s Obelisk, which features barely visible inscriptions of the names Shields Green, Copeland, and Leary—African American

citizens linked to Oberlin and John Brown. While it is unclear if Green lived in Oberlin, Copeland's family asked James Monroe to safely retrieve his body from Virginia, as it was extremely dangerous for an African American to do so at the time.



James Monroe goes to Harpers Ferry at first he is welcome, but then he goes to where the bodies are being kept, he is confused, and he sees bodies you cannot identify. the bodies of other African American men, and he says I cannot recognize Copeland's body. We are not exactly certain what happened in Virginia, at Charles Town where the trial was held for John Brown and his men, unfortunately neither man's bodies were ever returned to their families, to their homes. reading all the things that are spiraling people you are talking about the formation of the seven and you also think made by others as the praying companies because they're highest nature that they didn't gamble but they suffered massive casualties we'll talk about that in just a moment here.

Famous maybe because the statue as well but more famous civil wars years less part of the museum was built by his family in 1866, Shurtleff was one of those first one hundred men, he was a recent graduate of Oberlin. he is in the theology course at this point at the breakout of the war. He was also a tutor at the college. In this picture, these are the first one hundred mentioned this and he is a captain, he is a recruiter, he was elected Captain of Company C of the 7th OVI.

As there were several men from Company C who came back to Oberlin, he does not go back to the 7th OVI, he does some work with the ninth core for a few months and then his health really deteriorates he is having breathing problems. He receives an honorable discharge at this time, and he returns to Oberlin has to and this is around the time that the USCT is gaining speed and what happens is that by August governor Todd saying he will allow an Ohio Regiment. Langston convinced Shurtleff to join up with his regiment and become a Colonel with the 127th OVI which gets designated as the 5th USCT. He is a white officer of the segregated troops, and he and Langston petitioned to Abraham Lincoln to ensure equal pay for them for their soldiers.



He is buried in Westwood cemetery which is just down this road here this is Morgan St. here he comes back to Oberlin, and he has a pretty quiet life actually all things considered all the

things that he had experienced but he was a professor of Greek and Latin at the college.

Q~Was his health failing during his second enlistment?

He recruits yes so they thought he might have had smallpox, which is what the doctors suggested that he might have but he would have these big coughing fits. From March to August, he had that time to recover. it did not take a lot of convincing from Langston to get him to reenlist. What is that stone on the corner of the house there?

Bob Pence~Did the students from Oberlin go to camp Delaware to train?

Company C, yes they trained at Camp Delaware. We saw the reenactors at Hale Farm this year.

Judge Vodrey asked if Canadian authorities ever denied entry to fugitive slaves or forced them back to the US. Our guide said she knew of no cases where former slaves were refused entry or taken by slave catchers, who had no legal authority in Canada to forcibly return people to slavery.

~Charles L. Patton

The Editor's Desk



“[U]pon my word an’ honour, Sir,” she said, “there are no letters and papers in this trunk at all.” Possibly amused, Nannie Belle Maury’s

mother listened to her young daughter at play, repeating the same words the adult Maury had used to a Union guard on her way out of Fredericksburg just a few weeks earlier. At another time, little Nannie Belle, playing “ladies” with some of her playmates, complained, “I don’t feel very well this morning; all my [slaves] have run away and left me.” Thus, children during the Civil War era, like children in every generation, sought to understand the “grown-up” world through play.

I recently came across in my research a couple articles by Marquette University history professor, James Marten. One article, “Days of Misery and Uncertainty: Childhood in Wartime Virginia,” is included in William C. Davis and James I. Robertson, Jr.’s *Virginia at War 1863* (published in 2009). The second article, “Families in the Civil War,” is a Marquette University e-publication from 2019 (https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1288&context=hist_fac.) In our studies of Civil War politics, battles, and leaders, we often overlook how the war affected large segments of the civilian population. Of that civilian population, no doubt, one neglected group, as Professor Marten demonstrates, has been children.

Sue Chancellor often witnessed her family playing host to Confederate pickets. Seeking some relief from the stress of their duties, the soldiers would listen to the Chancellor girls play the piano while they sat in the parlor with a hand of cards. One visitor, J.E.B. Stuart, gave Sue’s sister Fannie a gold dollar in payment for the music. In May 1863, Sue’s home was commandeered as headquarters for Joseph Hooker and the Army of the Potomac. The family sheltered in the basement during the ensuing battle until the house caught fire. Fleeing the scene, the Chancellors eventually settled in Charlottesville, VA, where Sue was able to attend school and her mother worked in a hospital.

Mrs. R. Blazer of Tennessee remembered that her great-grandmother, after her husband joined the Confederate army, lost their only horse to a thief. After that, she hitched her two boys to a plow for the family's garden. At Harper's Ferry, meanwhile, eight-year-old Annie P. Marmion, experienced life as a constant search for something to eat, keeping out of the light by day and hiding the lamp at night so as not to draw musket fire from Union pickets. Cornelia Peake McDonald's children, in the vicinity of Winchester, witnessed two battles near their home. Two of her sons, sitting on a fence, while watching some of the fighting in 1862, came home "grave and saddened" after they saw a human head come rolling through. The next year, near Staunton, where the family had moved, the McDonald children played in the yard, ignoring artillery shells passing overhead, as they took "prisoner" any passing soldier who collapsed on the porch or in the yard. It became hard to find teachers, and schools closed as funds dried up or many male teachers enlisted or were drafted into the army. Children across the country were expected, at a young age, to take the place of absent fathers and brothers on the farms. Young girls often found work in factories or with town merchants.



Children playing near Sudley Ford, VA, stop to watch Union cavalry

So, to cope with this stress, as Cat Stevens once sang, the children played. John Steel, ten years old in 1863, had "battle class" in his school

where the students were drilled by the teacher. Almost every day he played "soldier" with the other boys. In Margaret Junkin Preston's home, her five-year-old son, George, marched and battled with paper soldiers, built hospitals with blocks and corn cobs, and made an ambulance out of chairs. Hobbling around the house on a stick, he told his mother that he had lost a leg at Second Manassas. George would regale his family with tales of cutting off Yankee heads and bayonetting them. One day he announced that his "furlough is out and he must go to his regiment again." In the meantime, George's three-year-old brother talked of killing "Lankees" and, along with his brother, made use of words such as "pickets," "cavalry," "cannon," and "ambulances." Once, while playing with some other children, the boys stopped a "paper doll" dance when imaginary Yankees appeared and the paper soldiers had to dash out to fight them off.

Charles Dickens famously wrote that it is good sometimes to be a child, especially at Christmas. When Christmas, 1863, arrived, however, John Steel and his sister Sarah Steel, aged twelve, living on a farm in no-man's land in northern Virginia, probably described in their joint diary the holiday for a lot of children, North and South. For Christmas that year they ate cake, fried doughnuts, and pies brought to their home by some Union soldiers. They scraped up the ingredients for eggnog and quietly shared it with a passing Confederate officer. On Christmas Day they attended a community exhibit or church. Although it had become a tradition by the 1860s, there were no presents.

*CCWRT Past President Dave Carrino
Promoted to Rank of Honorary
Captain of the Signal Corps*

The November Meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable included a very special ceremony in which long-time member Dave

Carrino was commissioned as an honorary captain of the Roundtable. This commission is reserved for members who have given sustained superior service to the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. In the case of Dave Carrino, it was noted in the commission citation that he had served as President [which requires service for a year each as Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and finally President], Historian, ongoing program and meeting support coordinator, and for the last five years as Website and Social Media Chair. The ceremony included comments and participation by current President Judge Charles Patton, past Presidents Gene Claridge and Steve Pettyjohn, along with the two other Captains, Bob Pence and Judge William Vodrey. Gene Claridge described Dave as “the Swiss Army Knife of the Roundtable



who is always ready to help out in any situation.” William Vodrey paid tribute to Dave saying: “David Carrino has been making the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable better for decades now, quietly, humbly and always with a smile. I’m very pleased that he’s now been named a Signal Corps captain of the Roundtable. Congratulations, Dave, and well done. Huzzah!” Steve Pettyjohn paid tribute to Dave’s service during the pandemic when he revived the website and helped steer the social media efforts of the club indicating “that without Dave and his tireless efforts we might not be here as a club as dozens of roundtables didn’t make it through the pandemic.” Dave received a framed certificate of commission indicating that he was promoted to “Captain, signal corps” along with a replica captain’s kepi of civil war



vintage. As special recognition for his work in club communications, he was also given an engraved replica telegraph key. Huzzah for Dave!

~Steve Pettyjohn



The Annual Dick Crews Memorial Debate

January 14, 2026

TOPIC: Other than Ohio, What Was the Most Important State, North or South, During the Civil War?

Contact Moderator, Judge William Vodrey, for details on participation. You are not expected to be experienced in debate or do you need any specialized historical training. Participate for the fun of it and, of course, as always, FABULOUS PRIZES!



2nd Ohio Cavalry battle General Stand Watie's CSA Cherokee Brigade

The 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry and Kansas

By Dennis Keating

The 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (OVC) from several counties was organized in Cleveland. Early in the Civil War, it served in the Western Theater, including Kansas. It arrived at Fort Scott, Kansas on March 3, 1862. In late May, it advanced against Cherokee General Stand Watie and his Confederate Native American force and drove it from its camp at Cowskin Prairie (Keating: p. 73). In August, 1862, for lack of enough horses, 152 of its regiment were detached to form the 25th Ohio Independent Light Artillery Battery. In September 1862, the two units left Kansas to join the Union advance into Missouri and Arkansas, culminating in a Union victory at Prairie Grove, Arkansas on December 3, 1862.

The regiment's last connection with Kansas occurred on March 5, 1863, in Columbus, Ohio. From its base at Camp Chase, many of the regiment's soldiers marched in a snowstorm to the office of *The Crisis* newspaper and wrecked it. Samuel Medary, the paper's owner and a Copperhead opposed to Lincoln, had published a fiery editorial denouncing his administration and those soldiers fighting for the Union. None of the regiment's soldiers were ever punished (Keating: p. 75) Medary emigrated from Pennsylvania to Ohio in 1825. He became a newspaper owner and was a Jacksonian Democrat. He was appointed the Governor of the Kansas Territory by President James Buchanan and served from December 1858 to December 1860. He settled in Columbus. In 1864, he was indicted for conspiracy against the government, but he died on November 7, 1864, before he could be tried.

References

Eugene H. Roseboom. "The Mobbing of the Crisis" Ohio History Journal, reprinted in the Ohio History Connection

W. Dennis Keating. *Cleveland and the Civil War* (History Press, 2022)

2nd Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Ohio Civil War)



Sgt. George B. Kennedy
And Unknown Comrade
Co. D, 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry



Star-spangled Santa in Camp



Wheeling, June 20, 1863: The Day a State Was Born

By Don Iannone

Morning breaks slowly over Wheeling, as if the sun itself hesitates before rising on this momentous day. A warm June mist hangs over the Ohio River, softening the edges of the Suspension Bridge, the chimneys, and the hills. The air carries familiar scents of coal smoke, damp earth, fresh-cut lumber, and the sweetness of early summer blossoms shaking out the night's dew.

The city stirs earlier than usual. Horses snort along Market Street, restless as wagons creak into motion. Boots strike the cobblestones, wheels clatter, and chickens call from the back lots behind boarding houses. These are the ordinary sounds of a Wheeling morning set against an extraordinary backdrop. Today is not just another day. Today, Wheeling becomes the capital of a new state. Today, West Virginia enters the Union.

A murmur spreads through downtown before full daylight, a low pulse of voices that moves through the streets like the first breaths of a storm. Men gather around the Custom House, some in rumpled Union

blue, others in work shirts still dusted with flour or coal from the morning's labor. A young newsboy weaves through the crowd waving a hand-printed announcement:

“June Twentieth. Statehood Day!”

Women in shawls and summer dresses move toward the center of town, children tugging on their sleeves and pointing at the flags that seem to bloom from windows and balconies. The church bells begin to ring, first one, then another, until the entire valley is filled with the sound. Their chimes echo across the river and circle back from the steep green slopes of Virginia's hills. Voices swell, and cheers rise from the crowd. Some shout with joy. Others shout with relief. Still others offer sounds filled with pride after long months of uncertainty.

For years these people have carried the weight of division. They lived on the edge of war, their loyalty questioned, their future unclear. They watched their home region break from eastern Virginia, argued with neighbors, sent their sons into the army, and heard the rails of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad rumble with the heavy business of war. The weariness shows in their faces, yet something new rises within them this morning. Hope gathers and lifts.

From the balconies overlooking the Custom House, the first official celebrations begin. “My fellow citizens!” a voice calls out. Governor Arthur Boreman, newly sworn in, stands before them with a steady hand raised to quiet the crowd. His words are nearly swallowed by another rising cheer, but the crowd hears enough to know the meaning. Today belongs to them. Today marks a beginning.

A breeze lifts the banners above the governor's head, and a lone man begins to sing. His voice is uncertain at first, then stronger as others join. “My Country, 'Tis of Thee...” The hymn carries through the crowd, some singing through tears they cannot hide. Grief and joy mingle in the same breath. Mothers sing for sons they have lost. Soldiers sing for the state that now carries their loyalty. Children sway beside their parents, waving small flags sewn from scraps of cloth.

The river breeze carries the sound to Wheeling Island, where families gather along fences to listen. Dogs bark as cannon salutes roar from the hill above the water. Each blast is a deep declaration that this new state stands firmly with the Union. Smoke rolls into the sky and mixes with the soot rising from the engines at the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad depot. A locomotive shrieks its whistle in the middle of the celebration, surprising the crowd into laughter. Even the train seems to join the festivities, its heavy iron body shaking the earth as it passes.

By late morning, the downtown streets are packed. Merchants open their shutters wide. A baker hands small sweet rolls to children. A blacksmith wipes soot from his brow and leans in to hear the governor's next words. Strangers shake hands. Old arguments lose their strength. The weight of war lifts, if only slightly, as the day's joy grows.

The mood is layered. Beneath the cheering lies awareness of the battles still being fought, the letters from loved ones that have not arrived, and the sorrow that lingers in every household touched by loss. A woman in a gray dress steps away from the noise to whisper a quiet prayer. A soldier turns his head to hide the emotion in his eyes. His brother did not live to see this day, and the mixture of pride and pain is almost too much.

Yet hope insists on rising.

Around midday, crowds spill onto the grassy slopes near the river. Children chase one another along the fences. Men gather in small clusters to talk about the war's progress. Women spread blankets and un-pack

loaves of bread, cold chicken, pickles, and the familiar scents of a summer meal. A young boy throws a stick for a dog near the shoreline as the breeze stirs the leaves above him.

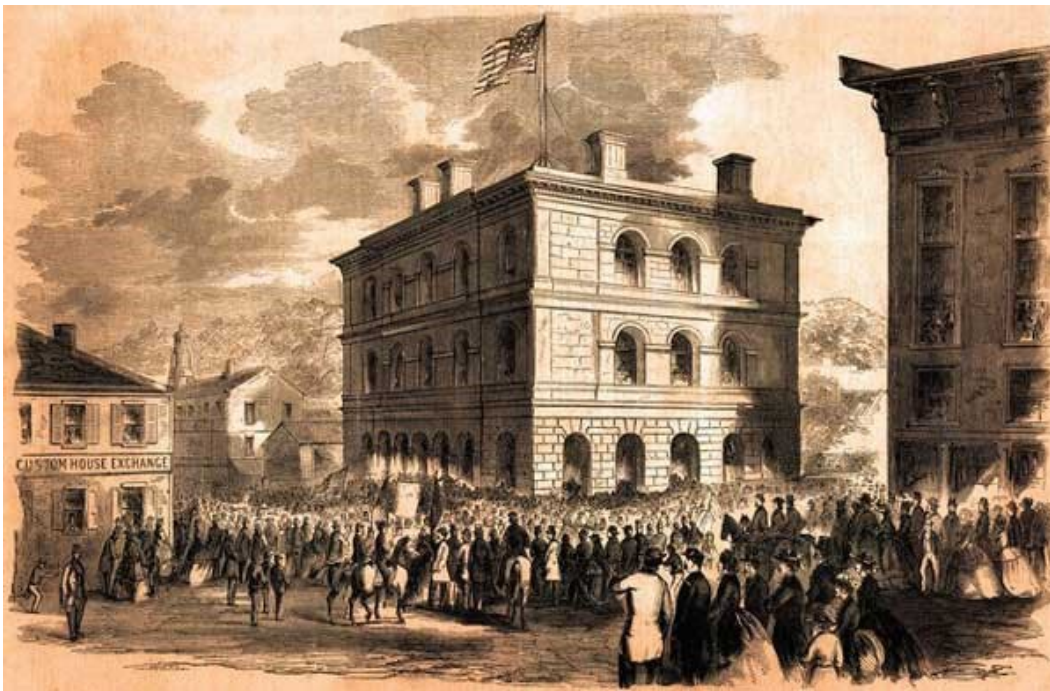
The afternoon brings more speeches, more music, more laughter, and a renewed sense of relief. The city feels lighter, as if it has shed a heavy coat that has been worn for too long. Flags wave above nearly every porch. Steeples gleam in the late sun. The hills glow with the deepening shadows of evening.

As dusk arrives, a soft rose-gold hue settles over the Ohio River. Wheeling stands quietly transformed. Not just in name, not simply by federal decree, but in spirit. The city that refused secession has forged a new identity. It has endured uncertainty and claimed its future. It has become the capital of the country's newest state.

People move homeward along the calmer streets. Lanterns flicker in windows. Voices soften into laughter and quiet conversations. The river carries the echoes of the day: cheers, hymns, sighs of relief, whispered prayers, and a collective rising of hope from a community that has lived too close to fear for far too long.

On June 20, 1863, Wheeling becomes a city reborn, a place where loyalty held fast, where courage found its voice, and where, in the heart of the Civil War, a people chose to celebrate the promise of a new beginning.

*[~Don Iannone is a writer in Greater Cleveland. He is a member of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. In 2024, he published *The Civil War Yesterday and Today*, a book combining historical analysis and poetry to retell the story of the Civil War. He grew up in Martins Ferry and St. Clairsville, across the Ohio River from Wheeling in the 1950s and 1960s. His maternal great-great-grandfather on his father's side from Monroe County, Ohio, served in the Union Army from 1864-1865.]*



West Virginia Independence Hall, Wheeling, WV



Francis Barlow and Arabella Barlow, John Brown Gordon and Rebecca Gordon
Susan Tarleton and Patrick Cleburne, Catherine Mary Hewitt and John Reynolds

Four Civil War Love Stories

By Dennis Keating

In my book *Cleveland and the Civil War* (pp. 43-44), I wrote about the passionate love affair between Cleveland lawyer, doctor and educator John J. Elwell and Clara Barton, volunteer nurse and postwar president of the American Red Cross, while both were stationed in South Carolina in 1863. I also published about this in the March 2025, issue of *The Charger*—“Clara Barton and Cleveland John J. Elwell: Civil War Romance.” Here are four more examples of prominent Civil War figures’ love stories. They include four generals (two Union and two Confederate), two of whom were killed in combat, and the wartime death of a wife.

Francis Barlow and Arabella Wharton Griffith Barlow

Francis (Frank) Channing Barlow was born in 1834 in Brooklyn, New York. When his father, a Unitarian minister, abandoned his family, Barlow was raised in the Utopian community of Brook Farm in Massachusetts. First in his class at Harvard, Barlow became a New York lawyer. Responding to Lincoln’s call for volunteers, Barlow enlisted. The next day, he married Arabella (Belle) Griffith. Ten years older than Barlow, George Templeton Strong described her:

“Certainly the most brilliant, cultivated, easy, graceful, effective talker of womankind, and (one who) has read, thought and observed as much and well.”

After serving his first 3-month term, Barlow joined the 61st New York Volunteer Infantry (the “Astor Regiment”) as its lieutenant colonel. It was part of the Union Second Corps, which fought in McClellan’s 1862 Peninsula campaign. Barlow was promoted to full Colonel.

When McClellan led the Army of the Potomac to confront Lee’s invading army in western Maryland, Arabella, having joined the United States Sanitary Commission, left Baltimore to join the army, arriving at Antietam the day of the battle on September 17, 1862. Barlow was twice wounded in the fight at the Sunken Lane/Bloody Lane. Arabella found him and nursed him back to health over several months. Meanwhile, Barlow was promoted to Brigadier General, and he rejoined the army just before the battle of Chancellorsville, where he commanded an XI Corps brigade attached to the III Corps.

At Gettysburg, Barlow commanded a division in General Howard’s XI Corps. Occupying the high ground at Blocher’s Knoll on the right of the Corps, he faced the assault of John Gordon’s troops of Early’s division. Trying to rally his men, Barlow was severely wounded, this time paralyzing him. John Gordon recounted coming across a prone Barlow and giving Barlow water and taking his request to tell Arabella of his death. It is much debated whether this ever happened. Welch (p. 86) is skeptical, while John Fazio firmly believed it. Arabella again reunited with her husband. Confederate surgeons believed that Barlow was mortally wounded but left him after the battle with his wife. Once again, Arabella nursed Barlow back to health. A monument to Barlow was dedicated on the Gettysburg battlefield on June 6, 1922.

He rejoined the army in time for the Overland campaign beginning in the Wilderness, where he commanded the First Division in Hancock’s Second Corps. At the battle of Spotsylvania Court House, Barlow led his troops in Emery Upton’s innovative attack on the Confederate salient of the Mule Shoe on May 12, 1864, only to be repulsed by the Confederate troops led by John Gordon. As the battles raged, Arabella was working in Union hospitals, mostly at Fredericksburg. She was known as “the Raider” for her locating supplies to care for the wounded. She and Barlow re-united at White House Landing on June 8, 1864. While working in a hospital at City Point, Arabella became ill, went to Washington City for care, and returned to City Point and her husband. She then returned to Washington City, where she died (probably of typhus) on July 27, 1864. Deeply affected by her death:

“His comrades saw grief’s effects, and his troops feared he would lose his mind. Belle had been his quiet strength and inspiration. She was the love of his early life. She saved him twice when medical authorities thought it wasn’t possible.” (Bierle)

After burying her, Barlow briefly returned to the army for the Deep Bottom campaign but was then confined to a military hospital, turned his command over to Nelson Miles, and left for Europe for an extended leave. He didn’t return to the army until a few days before the end of the Appomattox campaign and Lee’s surrender.

Postwar, Frank Barlow married Ellen Shaw, sister of Robert Gould Shaw, the slain commander of the 54th Massachusetts regiment. He resumed his law practice and was a founder of the American Bar Association. He was New York state’s Secretary of State and became Attorney General of New York state, prosecuting “Boss” Tweed’s corrupt Tammany Hall ring in New York City. He served on the 1876 post-federal presidential election commission. Barlow died in 1896. Unfortunately, Barlow’s last-minute hopes for a monument to celebrate the service of

Arabella and other loyal women of the war never reached fruition, with Southern members of Congress refusing to appropriate funds to help pay for it (Welch, p. 253).

John Brown Gordon and Rebecca Harralson Gordon

John Brown Gordon was the fourth of twelve children whose father was a Baptist preacher and plantation owner in Georgia. Brown was born in 1832. He graduated from the University of Georgia Law School in 1854 and joined a law firm in Atlanta. There, he met through a relative of one of the firm's partners Rebecca (Fanny) Harralson. She was the 17-year-old daughter of Congressman Hugh Harralson. The 22-year-old Gordon married Fanny on September 18 that year. When the war began the Gordons had two small children.

He enlisted as a private but was elected captain of a company he recruited known as the "Raccoon Roughs", which became part of the 6th Alabama Infantry. Unlike most wartime wives, Fanny announced that she intended to accompany him, leaving their young children with relatives. During the battle of Seven Pines in 1862 outside Richmond, Gordon temporarily assumed command of a brigade. In the Seven Days battle of Malvern Hill, Gordon was first wounded. He was next wounded at the battle of Antietam/Sharpsburg in September. Assigned to defend what became known as the "Bloody Lane," Gordon was wounded five times: he was twice wounded in his leg, then his arm and shoulder, and finally in his face. He might have died except for his blood flowing through a hole in his cap. Cared for by Fanny for seven months, Gordon survived these several wounds. He wrote: "Under God's providence, I owe my life to her incessant watchfulness night and day, and to her tender nursing through weary weeks and anxious months." When he returned to duty, he became commander of a brigade of Georgians in Jubal A. Early's division and was promoted to brigadier general.

In the Gettysburg campaign, Gordon's brigade was part of Early's attack on the Union XI Corps on the first day. This led to Gordon's tale of seeing a badly wounded Barlow on Blocher's Knoll, speaking to him, and directing medical aid for him. This story has been highly debated (see John Fazio's article in *The Charger*). During the Overland campaign, on May 14, 1864, Gordon famously ordered Lee to the rear and then led a counterattack at the Bloody Angle at Spotsylvania Court House to prevent a Union breakthrough. Promoted to major general, his division served in Early's Shenandoah Valley campaign, where he was wounded on August 25, 1864, at Shepherdstown, West Virginia. On September 19, 1864, the Confederate army evacuated the town of Winchester in the face of Phil Sheridan's attack. Gordon wrote:

"I saw Mrs. Gordon on the streets of Winchester, under fire, her soul aflame with patriotic ardor, appealing to retreating Confederates to halt and form a new line to resist the Union advance. She was so transported by her patriotic passion that she took no notice of the whizzing shot and shell, and seemed wholly unconscious of her great peril."

While Jubal Early was not favorable to wives following their officer husbands to war, he said of Fanny:

"General Gordon is a better soldier when you are close by him than when you are away, and so hereafter, when I issue orders that officers' wives must go to the rear, you may know that you are excepted."

Gordon organized the initially successful surprise attack at Cedar Creek on October 19, but which eventually resulted in a rout of Early's army. Ordered back to the defense of Petersburg, Gordon organized the failed attack on Fort Stedman on March 25, 1865, where he was once again wounded. At the end of Lee's retreat from Petersburg, Gordon led the last attempt of Lee's army to escape. On April 12, 1865, at Appomattox Court House, Gordon surrendered Confederate troops to Grant's army with Joshua Chamberlain accepting their surrender.

Postwar, Gordon had a mostly successful career. He was twice elected a U.S. Senator from Georgia, serving from 1873-1880 and from 1891-1897. He was also elected as Georgia's Governor and served two terms (1886-1890). He was the first Commander-in-Chief of the United Confederate Veterans after its organization in 1890. He published his memoir of the Civil War entitled *Reminiscences of the Civil War*. Gordon died at age 71 in 1904. Fanny survived him by 27 years, dying in 1931 at age 93.

Patrick Cleburne and Susan Tarleton

Patrick Cleburne, an Irish emigrant, became one of the Confederate army's best combat commanders. He was called "the Stonewall of the West" by Jefferson Davis. In January 1864, Cleburne attended the wedding in Alabama of his superior in the Army of Tennessee Lt. General William J. Hardee as his best man. There he met the 24-year-old Susan (Sue) Tarleton and was immediately attracted to her. Following the wedding, Cleburne went to Mobile and asked her to marry him. She hesitated but when he returned during a leave from the army in late February, she agreed and they became engaged. Their attempts to reunite that year were prevented by Cleburne's required presence in the defense against Sherman's campaign to capture Atlanta and then Hood's invasion of Tennessee. On November 30, 1864, Hood recklessly ordered his army to attack the entrenched Federal force in Franklin, Tennessee after failing previously at Spring Hill to prevent the retreat of the Army of Ohio. Opposed to this attack, Cleburne nevertheless led his troops forward and on foot after two horses were shot from under him. Amidst the thousands of Confederate casualties from this disastrous failed attack, Cleburne was one of six Confederate generals killed. Days later, Tarleton heard the news of Cleburne's death and fainted. So ended this ill-fated short romance. She spent the next year in secluded mourning. In 1867, Tarleton married a former Confederate officer but died later in childbirth.

John Reynolds and Catherine Mary Hewitt

John F. Reynolds was born in 1820 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was one of nine living children. He was a career soldier, serving in the Mexican War, then in many locations, and as Commandant of Cadets at West Point from September 1860 to June 1861. He became a Brigadier General in August 1861, and commanded a brigade in the 1862 Peninsular campaign, where he was captured. After being exchanged, he commanded the Pennsylvania Reserves Division and then succeeded Joe Hooker as commander of the First Corps of the Army of the Potomac.

Prior to the war, while serving in Northern California, Reynolds met Catherine (Kate) Mary Hewitt. She was an orphan who had emigrated from upper New York state to San Francisco in 1856. They met in 1860 on board a ship returning East from San Francisco. They became

secretly engaged. They agreed to keep it a secret until after the end of the war. He was Protestant while she converted to Catholicism. They agreed that if Reynolds was killed during the war, Kate would live a religious life. After Reynolds was killed at the beginning of the first day of the battle of Gettysburg, she did as agreed and entered the Sisters of Charity Convent in Emmitsburg, not far from Gettysburg. But, in 1868, she left the religious order, returned to New York state, eventually married, and died in 1895. John's family did not know her until she visited them after his death. An inscription on her gravestone means "May God watch over you until we are together again."

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The Battle-born Babe of Flint River

By Brian D Kowell, December 2025

I just finished reading Stephen Davis' book *The National Tribune Remembers the Atlanta Campaign: Battles, Skirmishes, Marches, and Camp Life as Recalled by the Union Veterans Themselves*, published by Savas Beatie. The *National Tribune*, one historian proclaimed, was "the premier newspaper published for Union veterans of the Civil War and their families." In its pages I came across a story that moved me. While the story takes place in August 1864, it reminded me of the Christmas Story. No, not the one about Ralphie and the Red Rider B-B gun that takes place in Cleveland, but the one about the baby Jesus that takes place in Bethlehem. As I read the article, I was overcome with sentiments of the Christmas Spirit – love, kindness, generosity, and good will toward men. I was also struck by the similarities between the two stories. Both stories have a child born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and visited by wise men bearing gifts. So, I thought it would make a nice story to read at Christmas-time¹

The story was written by Dr. Edward O. F. Roler, medical director in Maj. Gen. John A. "Black Jack" Logan's XV Corps as it marched toward the Flint River south of Atlanta in late August 1864:

"It was the Summer of 1864, and the army under Sherman had fallen back from its position before Atlanta and swept around Hood's rear, Gen. Logan leading the advance, I remember that the country was densely wooded, and that magnificent forests of pine, oak, and chestnut towered on either side of the road over which we

marched. We were not molested until we neared the Flint River. There the enemy had planted a masked battery and, as we approached, it enfiladed our line. You could scarce encounter more disagreeable travelers on that lonely road than shot and shell, and the boys were not long in taking to the shelter of the timber. But Gen. Logan at once ordered up field battery of brass "Napoleons," and presently accepted this challenge to an artillery duel. There was nothing to direct the fire of our gunners save the white puffs of smoke that could be seen rising above the foliage and the course of the enemy shots, but they nevertheless soon silenced the rebel cannon, and once more cleared the way for the column.

We then rode forward again, the writer in company with Dr. [John M.] Woodward, the medical inspector of Gen. Logan's staff, and until his death, some four years ago, the head of the Marine Hospital Service. Just as we turned a bend in the road we emerged suddenly into a small clearing. A rude log cabin, surrounded by evergreen shrubbery, stood in the clearing, and hanging from one of the bushes we noticed a yellow cloth.

As medical officers, it naturally occurred to us at once that this was an improvised hospital of some sort, and we rode up to inquire. At the door of the cabin, as we approached, an old woman, evidently of the familiar "cracker" type, presented herself, but on seeing that we were "Yankees," beat a hasty retreat. But we were not disposed to be so easily baffled, and calling her out again, began to ply her with questions.

She told us "there wa'n't no wounded men, thar," and when asked why she had put out a yellow flag there, she replied: "Waal, yer see, my gal is sick, and I reckoned ef I put out that yer hsp't'l rag you'uns wouldn't be pestern' round so much."

"What's the matter with your child?" said I; "we are medical officers and perhaps we can do something for her." "Waal, now," she quickly responded, "ef you'ns is real doctors, just look in and see what you'uns all done with your shellin'. Time my gal was sickest, two of yourn shells come clar through my cabin, and, I tell you, it was right skeery for a spell."

We accepted the old woman's invitation and walked in. It was as she said. The cabin, built of rough pine logs, afforded but one room, about twelve feet square. A small log meat-house (empty) was the only out-building – the cow-stable having been knocked to pieces by our shells, except a small bark-thatched "lean-to" at the rear in which we found a loom of the most primitive sort and constructed in the roughest fashion, containing a partially-completed web of coarse cotton "homespun." Aside from this loom, the only household articles visible were an old skillet, a rather dilapidated bed, two or three chairs without backs, and a queer collection of gourds. The shells had indeed played havoc with the interior. The roof had been badly shattered, and a stary shot had pierced the walls.

It had cut one of the logs entirely in two, forcing one jagged end out into the room so far that it hung threateningly over the bed upon which, to our astonishment, we saw lying a young girl, by whose side was a new-born babe with prints of the Creator's fingers fresh upon it. It was a strange yet touching spectacle. Here, in this lonely cabin, stripped by lawless stragglers of both armies of food and clothing and shattered by flying shells of our artillery, in a storm and fury of the battle had been born this sweet innocent. The mother, we learned, was the wife of a Confederate soldier whose blood had stained the "sacred soil" of Virginia but a few months after his marriage and conscription into the service, and the child was fatherless. The babe was still clad only in its own innocence, but the writer with his handy jack-knife cut from the unfinished web in the old loom a piece of coarse homespun, in which it was soon deftly swaddled. Fortunately, we had our hospital knapsacks with us, and our orderlies carried a little brandy, with a few medicines and a can of beef extract, and we at once did all that our limited stores permitted to relieve the wants of the young mother and child.

But by this time quite a number of officers and men, attracted by the sight of the yellow flag and our horses waiting at the door, had gathered about the cabin, and, while we were inside, they amused themselves by listening to the old lady's account of this stirring incident. One of the officers had given her some "store terbacker" with which she filled a cob-pipe, and the fact that she was spitting through her teeth with such accuracy as to hit a fly at ten paces, nine times out of ten, showed that she was enjoying herself after true "cracker" style. Presently some one suggested that the baby ought to be christened with full military honors, and it being duly explained to her that to "christen" was all the same as to "baptize," she replied with alacrity: "Oh, yes! Baptized, I reckon, if you'ns has got any preacher along."

This was all the boys wanted, and an orderly was at once sent back to the general commanding, with the compliments of the Surgeon and a request that a chaplain belonging to one of the regiments in the advance brigade might be allowed to return with the messenger to the cabin.

The general asked the orderly for what purpose a chaplain was wanted, and the orderly replied that the doctors (mentioning our names) were going to have a baptism.

Upon this, Gen. Logan (for he it was) significantly remarked, that the names mentioned were in themselves sufficient to satisfy him that some devilry was on hand, but that, nevertheless, the chaplain might go. Then, inviting the colonel, who happened to be riding with him at the time, he set out himself for the scene, spurring "Old John" to a gallop, and soon joined the party at the cabin.

"General," said the Doctor, as the former dismounted, "You are just the man we're after."

"For what?"

“For a godfather,” replied the Doctor.

“Godfather to what?” demanded the General.

The matter was explained to him, and, as the Doctor led the way into the house, the boys, who had gathered around the General in the expectation that the event would furnish an occasion for display of his characteristic humor, notice there was something in Black Jack’s face that they were not wont to see there, and that in his eyes there was a certain humid tenderness far from their usual flashing brightness. He stood for a moment silent, gazing at the unhappy mother and fatherless child, and their pitiful surroundings, and then, turning to those about him, said tersely:

“That looks ---- rough.”

Then glancing around at the ruins wrought by our shells, and addressing the men in the cabin, he called out: “I say, boys, can’t you straighten this up a little? Fix up that roof. There are plenty of ‘stakes’ around that old stable – and push back that log into place, and help the old lady to clear out the litter, and – I don’t think it would *hurt* you any to leave part of your rations!”

Prompt to heed the suggestion, the boys leaned their muskets against logs, and, while some of them cut brush, others swept up the splinters and pine knots that the shot and shell had strewn over the floor, and not one of them forgot to go to the corner of the cabin and empty his haversack! It made a pile of commissary stores, consisting of meat, coffee, sugar, hard-tack, and chickens (probably foraged from her next-door neighbor) surpassing any that this poor “cracker” woman had probably seen or possessed at one time.

This done, the next thing in order was the christening, and the chaplain now came forward to perform his sacred office.

“What are you going to give her for a name? I want suthin peart, now,” said the grandmother.

She was told that the name should be satisfactory, and forthwith she brought out the baptismal bowl – which on this occasion consisted of a gourd-ful of water fresh from the spring.

Gen. Logan now took the baby, wrapped in its swaddling clothes of coarse homespun, and held it while the chaplain went through with the ceremony. The latter was brief and characterized with due solemnity, the spectators behaving with becoming reverence, and thus the battle-born babe was christened “Shell-Ann.” I like to think that as the chaplain’s prayers were winging their way to heaven, the gory goddess who nurses a gorgon at her breast stayed with her red hand awhile!

The party now turned to leave the cabin and resume the march, when Gen. Logan, taking a gold coin from his pocket – a coin that he had carried as a pocket-piece for many a day – presented it to the old lady as a “christening gift” for his godchild, and

the officers and men, as they had recently drawn their pay, added one by one a “greenback,” until the sum was swelled to an amount greater than this brave-hearted “cracker” had ever handled. Before parting, the General cautioned her to put the money in a safe place, lest some “----bummer should steal it, in spite of everything,” and then, ordering a guard to be kept over her cabin until the last straggler had passed by, he rode away. The old lady’s good-bye was: “Waal! Them thar Yanks is the beatenist critters I ever seen!”

Ten days or so after this occurrence, the cabin being at that time within the enemy’s lines, the General, accompanied by the writer and 10 of his escort, rode back eight miles to see how our protégé was getting on and found both mother and child, in the language of grandma, “quite peart.” Whether Gen. Logan’s god-daughter is still alive or not I do not know, but five years after that visit word reached me that she then was. Certainly no one who witnessed that scene will ever forget the big-hearted soldier as he stood Sponsor – grim, yet gentle – for that poor little battle-born babe of Flint River.”²

Merry Christmas!

¹Davis, Stephen, *The National Tribune Remembers the Atlanta Campaign: Battles, Skirmishes, Marches, and Camp Life as Recalled by the Union Veterans Themselves*, El Dorado Hills, CA, Savas Beatie, 2025, pp. 265-269. Sauers, Richard A., “Introduction,” Sauers, ed. *The National Tribune Civil War Index: A Guide to the Weekly Newspaper Dedicated to Civil War Veterans, 1877-1943*, 3 vols., El Dorado Hills, CA, Savas Beatie, 2018, pp. 1, vii.

²“Fifteenth Corps” [Edward O. F. Roler] “The Battle-born Babe of Flint River: Little Shell-Anna,” *National Tribune*, July 10, 1884, pp.1-2.

