

THE CHARGER



The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

August 2026

CCWRT Founded 1956

Vol. 51, No. 1

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President – John Syroney
Vice President – Gary Taylor
Past President – Charles Patton
Treasurer – Rich Gilmore
Secretary – Emily Dickinson
Historian - Dan Ursu
Director – Gene Claridge
Director - Richard Hronek
Director – Robert Pence
Director – Steve Pettyjohn
Director – Dave Carrino

Webmaster - Paul Burkholder

Website:

[http://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.co
m](http://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com)

Editor: D. Kent Fonner
E-mail Editor at dkfonner@gmail.com

2026-2027 MEETING PROGRAMS

September 9, 2026 – “A Civil War Road
Trip of a Lifetime”
SPEAKER: John Banks

October 14, 2026 – “The Dawes Brothers”
SPEAKER: Steve Magnusen

November 11, 2026 – “After Gettysburg:
Race to the Potomac—Meade’s Pursuit and
Lee’s Retreat”
SPEAKER: Brad Gottfried

December 9, 2026 – “Civil War Horses”
SPEAKER: Brian Kowell

January 13, 2027 – The Annual Dick Crews
Memorial Debate
TOPIC: “Who is Considered the Worst
General in the Civil War?”
MODERATOR: Judge William F. B.
Vodrey

February 10, 2027 – “WikiTree Civil War Project”

SPEAKER: Dave Ressler

March 10, 2027 – “Vermont Brigade: The Attic Story”

SPEAKER: Carleton Young

April 14, 2027 – “Civil War Music: Songs of the North and the South”

SPEAKER: Musicians Terry McHale and Anthony Salem

May 12, 2027 – “From Old Bald Head to ‘Lee’s Bad Old Man’”

SPEAKER: Phillip Greenwalt

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

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

For reservations email:

ccwrtreserve@gmail.com. To ensure a dinner is reserved for you, the reservation must be made by Wednesday, seven days before the meeting.

Website:

<http://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>

Like us on FACEBOOK!



September 17-20, 2026

Annual Field Trip – Shenandoah Valley: Jackson’s 1862 Valley Campaign

The 2026 field trip is to the Shanandoah Valley to study General “Stonewall” Jackson’s 1862 Valley Campaign, including the Battles of Kernstown, Front Royal, Winchester, Cross Keys, and Port Republic. Dates include travel time.

A downloadable PDF containing information about the hotel, the tentative itinerary, and information about signing up for the field trip can be found by clicking on [this link](#).

President's Message

Fellow Roundtable Members:

As we look ahead to the 2026–2027 program year, I am excited to share some highlights of our upcoming season with you. Our upcoming Speaker Series will continue the tradition of presenting a lineup with nationally known historians, writers, educators, and local musicians whose work explores the people, decisions, and events that shaped the Civil War. Throughout the year, we will explore military strategy, personal stories of bravery and sacrifice, social history, and the common experiences of soldiers, horses and civilians. Each presentation is designed to explore the challenges our country confronted, broaden perspectives and spark lively conversations and discussion – exactly what our Roundtable is known for.

We open our Speaker's Program on September 9 with author John Banks and his presentation, "A Civil War Road Trip of a Lifetime" that explores his journeys across our nation exploring battlefields, historic houses, forts and more. His work has been featured in the New York Times, Civil War Monitor, Civil War News, and America's Civil War and Military Images. About a week later, we embark on our annual Field Trip to the Shenandoah Valley to explore the 1862 Valley Campaign led by renowned author and historian Gary Ecelbarger. If you are interested, please reach out to me since we still have spots available for you and any guests to attend. I have included [this link](#) for those still interested in attending with all the information.

This year's trip, September 17–20, takes us straight into the Shenandoah Valley to walk the fields where the two armies clashed in the Spring of 1862. We will visit the 1st Battle of Kernstown, Port Royal, 1st Winchester, Cross Keys, and Port Republic. Seeing the terrain firsthand always brings new insight and understanding for all who attend. I hope many

of you will join us — these trips are one of the best parts of our Roundtable.

There are a few changes as we embark on a new year. First, we have made a change in our pricing for our dinners. The new price will be \$40 per dinner. This is the first time in 7 years that a price change has been introduced. Secondly, the Executive Committee has generously allowed me to make a purchase of a Civil War Print that will be raffled off at the final meeting of the year on May 12, 2027. The print was created by the famous Civil War artist, Keith Rocco, and is titled, *The Struggle for the Coaling at Port Republic*. Tickets for the print will be \$10 per ticket and members can purchase as many tickets as you desire. The winner of the raffle drawing does not need to be present on May 12th.

Dues for the upcoming year will remain the same as in the past. If you are so inclined, you can send your due payment before the 1st meeting in September. The cost of the dues is \$60 for an individual, \$80 for a family, and \$20 for students. You can send your check made out to The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable to my address at

John Syrone

7014 Arlington Street

Brecksville, Ohio 44141

We have been so fortunate to have increased the membership of our organization over the last few years. Our past leaders and Executive Committee have demonstrated great care in continuing the legacy of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. I want to continue this path of success over the next year. I encourage our members to reach out to friends and family members this year. Consider bringing them to a meeting and seeing what we are all about. This is how we continue to sustain ourselves with conversations among our families, friends, and outside organizations. Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm. I'm looking forward to another great year together – in our

meetings, on the field trip, and in the conversations that make this Civil War Roundtable such a special and enduring community in our area.

Warm regards,

John Syrone

The Editor's Desk



As we begin a new volume/year of *The Charger*, we want to take time to remind and encourage all the members of CCWRT that this is your publication to share research, books, pictures, documents, and your thoughts with the other members. The Roundtable has adopted guidelines for submissions for publication. These can be found on the CCWRT website, but for convenience's sake, we are posting them here:

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Guidelines for Publication in *The Charger*

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable has established the following guidelines for articles to be considered for publication in its monthly newsletter, *The Charger*.

1. Any and all topics on the Civil War or Civil War-related articles are welcome (battles, leaders, politics, Reconstruction, etc.)
2. All work must be original by the submitting author. Any other authors or works should be cited.
3. Articles should be written to be enjoyed by the general audience of Civil War enthusiasts.
4. Article submissions should include a brief biographical sketch of the author. A few simple sentences should suffice.
5. Previously published work is acceptable so long as the author owns the copyright. Previously published submissions must be identified as such at the time of submission.
6. Any photos should be identified and include captions and photo credits.
7. Submissions must be professional in nature. No inflammatory, derogatory, or incendiary language will be permitted. Any foul language, unless a direct quote, will be edited out.
8. While articles on political topics are encouraged, articles should not promote

any particular political viewpoint.

9. Submissions or posts are the viewpoint of the author or authors only. They do not reflect the opinion of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable.
10. The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable does not pay for article submissions, nor does it pay when articles are published in *The Charger*.
11. Submissions or posts are subject to modification and editorial board review, with the editors having final approval. The Roundtable reserves the right to make any and all editorial decisions.

Editorial Board Guidelines Publications and Posts

1. Any topics related to the Civil War or Civil War-related articles should be considered — e.g., battles, leaders, politics, Reconstruction, etc.
2. All work must be original work of the author. Any other authors or works are to be cited by the author submitting the article, the Facebook or Twitter posts, or posts onto any other platform used by the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. Should the editorial board learn that a submission or a substantial portion of a submission has been plagiarized, it will not be published or posted.
3. Articles or posts should appeal to a broad audience of Civil War enthusiasts. Articles for *The Charger* should not be of such a narrow scope or subject that they appeal to a small readership of

Civil War enthusiasts.

4. Submissions or posts must be written in a professional manner. No inflammatory, derogatory, or incendiary language is permitted. Any foul language, unless a direct quote, should be edited out.
5. Articles or posts that are written solely to promote a particular political viewpoint or position, or solely to inflame, insult, or incite will not be published.
6. Submissions or posts are the opinion of the author or authors only and do not reflect the opinion of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable.

(These publication guidelines were adopted March 24, 2021.)

Our only request, in addition to compliance with these guidelines, is that authors keep the length of submissions reasonable. We would like to be able to include a variety of material in *The Charger*, but that is difficult if someone submits a piece that requires ten to fifteen pages, or more, for printing in one issue. Try to shorten the article in question or break it into no more than two parts. Articles, book reviews, etc., limited to 1000 to 2000 words are best.

Please do not hesitate, however, to submit your thoughts and research for inclusion in future issues. We look forward to hearing from everyone this year.



Cleveland, Ohio, in 1860. Superior Street looking toward Public Square

Cleveland in the Civil War: The City War Remade

By Don Iannone

This essay continues the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable's longstanding interest in Cleveland's role in the Civil War. It follows past president Dick Crews's earlier Charger essay, "Cleveland Fights the Civil War," and W. Dennis Keating's 2022 book, *Cleveland and the Civil War*. Keating, a recognized Civil War scholar and a past Roundtable president, offered a panoramic account of Cleveland before, during, and after the conflict, emphasizing the city's abolitionist heritage, military service, civic mobilization, and wartime emergence as a manufacturing power. The present essay joins that continuing Roundtable conversation by looking beyond the battlefield to the city itself: its people, immigrants, camps, industries, aid societies, political tensions, infrastructure strains, and wartime transformation from a lake-and-canal commercial town into a rapidly industrializing city. Its central question is how the Civil War entered Cleveland's streets, households, institutions, and economy, and how the conflict helped turn a regional port into a modern urban center.¹

When the Civil War began in April 1861, Cleveland was not yet the industrial city later generations would recognize. It was growing quickly, but it was still primarily a lake-and-canal town, a commercial place of rail depots, warehouses, mills, shipyards, church steeples, foundries, muddy roads, and a harbor opening northward toward Lake Erie and Canada. The 1860 census placed Cleveland's population at 43,417. By 1866, the city had grown to more than 67,500, and by 1870 it reached 92,829. The war did not simply interrupt Cleveland's growth; it accelerated and redirected it. Historian Crisfield

Johnson's summary still holds: the war found Cleveland largely a commercial city and left it with a far more pronounced manufacturing character.²

But those numbers raise an important question: where did all those people come from?

Cleveland's wartime and immediate postwar growth came from several directions at once. Some newcomers were native-born migrants from Ohio and the eastern states, drawn by work, railroads, lake shipping, shops, trades, and the possibility of advancement in a city on the rise. Others came from across the Atlantic. By 1870, Cleveland had roughly 38,800 foreign-born residents out of a total population of 92,829, meaning that about two-fifths of the city had been born outside the United States. This was not yet the later Cleveland of massive Southern and Eastern European immigration, but it was already an immigrant city. Germans formed the largest foreign-born group, followed by the Irish, English, Canadians, Austrians, Bohemians, Scots, Swiss, and others.³

That immigrant story mattered to the war. Germans had been arriving in significant numbers since the 1830s and 1840s. After the failed European revolutions of 1848 and 1849, many German political refugees came to Cleveland. They were often educated, freedom-minded, antislavery, and strongly supportive of the Union cause. Irish immigrants had a different path into the city. Many arrived earlier as laborers on the Ohio & Erie Canal or came later in the years following the potato famine. By 1870, Cleveland's Irish population was commonly estimated at nearly 10,000. Many worked on the docks, in rail yards, in mills, and along the Cuyahoga River.⁴

So Cleveland's Civil War story was also a migration story. People were arriving from farms, eastern states, canal towns, German principalities, Irish counties, Canadian towns, British ports, and other places. They came into a city where opportunity was growing faster than the streets, houses, sewers, schools, police protection, fire protection, and public health systems needed to sustain it. Cleveland did not merely grow. It swelled.

That growth made the city more energetic, but also harder to govern. Cleveland had begun building public infrastructure before the war. A city water system was created in the 1850s to provide a more dependable supply of fresh water for public health, fire protection, and business growth. But nineteenth-century urban systems were always catching up. Lake Erie served as both a source of drinking water and a dumping place for household and industrial waste. Culverts originally built to drain ground water became health hazards when they were used as sewers. Private solid-waste collection began in 1860, chiefly in commercial districts, but sanitation remained an enormous problem.⁵

Housing pressure is harder to measure precisely, but it is easy to understand. A city that more than doubled in population between 1860 and 1870 had to absorb thousands of people into boardinghouses, rented rooms, small homes, immigrant neighborhoods, and expanding working-class districts near factories, docks, rail lines, and the river. The same war that helped make Cleveland more prosperous also made it more crowded. The city had to house, move, educate, police, protect, employ, and supply tens of thousands of new residents while its public systems were still young and incomplete.

Cleveland entered the war with conviction, but not with one mind. The Western Reserve had a strong antislavery tradition, and Cleveland's location made it important in the geography of freedom. Yet the city was also practical, partisan, commercial, and divided. The Cleveland Leader and Cleveland Herald and Gazette leaned Republican and pro-Union. The Democratic Plain Dealer was often more cautious, more skeptical, and at times sharply critical of Lincoln and the Republicans. In the 1860 presidential election, Lincoln carried nine of Cleveland's eleven wards and won 58 percent of the city vote. That tells us something important, but not everything. Many Clevelanders opposed the expansion of

slavery because they believed in free labor and the Union, not necessarily because they embraced racial equality.⁶

Still, Cleveland had already earned an important place in the story of freedom before Fort Sumter. The city sat on Lake Erie, facing Canada. The Ohio & Erie Canal, completed to Cleveland in 1832, increased the city's commercial importance and made it useful to people moving north in secret. In Underground Railroad memory, Cleveland was known as "Hope" or "Station Hope," one of the last stops before crossing the lake. St. John's Episcopal Church in Ohio City remains one of the city's most evocative antislavery landmarks. Cleveland's record was not pure, but it was real. Black residents, church networks, and white antislavery allies helped keep the cause of freedom alive even when formal abolitionism did not command a citywide majority.⁷

Once war came, Cleveland's arguments did not disappear, but a working Union consensus formed. Pro-war Democrats and Republicans joined in support of Lincoln's war effort. Soldiers leaving for the front became public events. Regiments marched toward Union Depot. Bands played. Crowds lined the streets. The locally famous "Secesh Cannon," a captured Confederate gun used for patriotic salutes, boomed. Cleveland was not a battlefield city, but the war entered its streets, newspapers, churches, homes, hospitals, banks, factories, docks, immigrant neighborhoods, and cemeteries.

The human numbers were striking. Over 9,000 men from Cuyahoga County served in the military. Contemporary estimates suggested that this represented a very large share of those formally enrolled or otherwise eligible for service at the time. About 1,700 died during the war, and many more returned wounded, disabled, or permanently affected by their service. These numbers remind us that the war was not distant from Cleveland. It reached into workshops, churches, farms, offices, family businesses, boardinghouses, and neighborhoods where English, German, Irish, and other languages could be heard in daily life. It took sons, brothers, husbands, clerks, mechanics, farmers, students, laborers, and immigrants from ordinary life and sent them into extraordinary danger.⁸

The Cleveland Grays were among the first to answer Ohio Governor William Dennison Jr.'s call, leaving within sixty hours and becoming Company E of the 1st Ohio Infantry. Other units carried Cleveland and Western Reserve men into the conflict, including the 7th Ohio, the first Civil War regiment rendezvoused and organized in Cleveland; the 8th Ohio; the 23rd Ohio; the 41st Ohio; the 103rd Ohio; the 107th Ohio, known as the "5th German Regiment"; and the 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, which included hundreds of Cleveland men.⁹

Cleveland also became a city of camps. In 1861, temporary military camps appeared quickly, including Camp Taylor near what is now East 30th Street and Woodland Avenue, Camp Wood near East 37th Street, Camp Brown near East 46th Street and Euclid Avenue, Camp Tod along Woodland Avenue, and Camp Wade in Tremont. These were not ceremonial patriotic spaces. They were places of mustering, training, waiting, discipline, illness, boredom, departure, return, and sometimes death. The war took familiar local geography and gave it military purpose.¹⁰

Camp Cleveland became the most important of these sites. Located in what is now northeast Tremont, it was the largest and best-developed Civil War camp in the Cleveland area and the only one to remain open for the duration of the war. Organized in July 1862 on roughly thirty-five acres, Camp Cleveland trained on the order of 15,000 officers and men, amounting to almost five percent of all troops raised in Ohio during the war. At the war's end, more than 11,000 troops were paid off and discharged there.¹¹

One detail many Clevelanders may not know is how intensely physical Camp Cleveland was. This was not merely a patriotic name on an old map. Soldiers slept in wooden barracks on rough bunks,

with straw mattresses and often their knapsacks for pillows. The camp included headquarters buildings, an arsenal, a guardhouse, a chapel, wells, springs, and rows of barracks. Nearby stood the United States General Hospital Cleveland, which served Union soldiers but remained administratively separate from Camp Cleveland. The war's suffering had a specific address in Cleveland: the ridge above the Flats.¹²

The home front mattered just as much. Cleveland women organized almost immediately. The Soldiers' Aid Society of Northern Ohio began as the Ladies Aid Society on April 20, 1861, only five days after Lincoln's first call for troops. Its first work included a "blanket raid" to gather quilts and blankets for soldiers being mustered at Camp Taylor. Later, as part of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, the society collected clothing, medical supplies, hospital furniture, food, and other necessities. It cared for the sick and wounded, provided ambulance and hospital service, sent supplies to soldiers in the field, and operated from a distribution center at 95 Bank Street, now West 6th Street.¹³

The society's work became highly visible in the Northern Ohio Sanitary Fair, held from February 22 to March 10, 1864, in a specially constructed building on Public Square. The fair raised at least \$78,000 for soldier relief, with one broader account placing the total at just over \$100,000. Either way, the scale was remarkable. Thousands of Cleveland women participated in this aid effort. They did not merely "support" the war in a sentimental sense. They organized logistics, raised money, managed supplies, staffed relief operations, and helped build a new model of civic mobilization.¹⁴

War also changed Cleveland's economy. The city had been hurt by the Panic of 1857, which increased unemployment, but military contracts and wartime demand brought a powerful upswing. Local firms produced railroad iron, gun-carriage axles, caissons, gun carriages, revenue cutters, uniforms, and other goods needed by the war economy. Cleveland was becoming an iron, shipping, rail, and oil-refining city.

The war also found a young John D. Rockefeller still very much a Cleveland businessman. Born in Richford, New York in 1839, Rockefeller moved with his family to the Cleveland area in 1853, entered business here in 1859, and built his first oil refinery in the Flats in 1863. During the war, he and Maurice B. Clark profited from selling grain, meat, and produce for government use. In 1860, their consignment firm made a \$4,000 profit. By the end of 1861, profits had risen to \$17,000. Rockefeller's later move to New York belonged to the postwar expansion of Standard Oil. During the Civil War, however, he was still part of Cleveland's rising commercial and industrial world.¹⁵

The larger economic transformation was even more striking. By 1865, Cleveland banks held \$2.25 million in capital and \$3.7 million in deposits. The number of incorporated iron companies rose from three to twelve. By 1865, the city had about thirty oil refineries. The value of locally produced products reached \$39 million, compared with less than \$7 million for all of Cuyahoga County in 1860.¹⁶

The lake mattered as much as the factory floor. During 1864 and 1865, a very large share of the ore mined around Lake Superior, by some contemporary accounts more than half, was shipped into Cleveland. In 1863, Cleveland built a significant proportion of all ships constructed for Great Lakes use, with local figures putting the city's share at about 22 percent; by 1865, that share had risen to roughly 44 percent. The Civil War helped teach Cleveland what its geography meant: ore from the upper lakes, coal from the south, railroads converging, ships in the harbor, money in the banks, and manufacturers ready to turn raw materials into war supplies and peacetime fortunes.¹⁷

Prosperity, however, had its shadows. Inflation roughly doubled between 1860 and 1864, while wages rose only about half as much. Wealthier men could avoid service for a time by paying the \$300 commutation fee or by hiring substitutes. Working men in less prosperous districts had fewer choices.

Cleveland supported the Union, but not every Cleveland household carried the same burden. The war was a moral struggle, a military crisis, a business opportunity, a civic test, and a human wound all at once.¹⁸

There was also a sharper edge to local patriotism than we sometimes remember. In March 1862, seventy-five men of the 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, including Clevelanders, destroyed the office and presses of *The Crisis*, an anti-Lincoln newspaper in Columbus, while wintering there. That incident does not fit easily into a simple story of noble Unionism. It reminds us that wartime loyalty could become coercive, that political feeling ran hot, and that Cleveland soldiers were not detached observers of home-front politics. They understood the war as a fight over words as well as territory.¹⁹

By the time Lincoln's funeral train came through Cleveland in April 1865, the city had changed. On April 28, Lincoln's body lay in a pagoda-style catafalque on Public Square. It rained throughout the day, sometimes heavily. By 6:00 p.m., an estimated 90,000 people had filed past the coffin. They came not only to mourn Lincoln, but to stand inside the meaning of what had happened to the nation and to their own city. Cleveland had sent men to war, nursed the sick, supplied armies, aided fugitives, buried its dead, absorbed thousands of newcomers, and, in the process, discovered the outlines of its industrial future.²⁰

Keating's book treats Cleveland panoramically, tracing the city's place in the national conflict from Lincoln's visits and the abolitionist movement through military service, wartime politics, relief work, economic growth, and the funeral train. Crews' essay gives particular attention to the regiments, camps, soldiers, and military participation through which Cleveland fought the war. This essay builds on both accounts by placing those military and civic stories within the experience of urban transformation: immigration and population growth, housing and sanitation pressures, unequal wartime burdens, transportation and industrial expansion, and the ways national crisis entered ordinary streets, workplaces, and households. It is offered not as a replacement for those earlier works, but as another contribution to the Roundtable's ongoing effort to understand what the Civil War meant for Cleveland and what Cleveland's experience adds to our understanding of the war.²¹

The Civil War did not create Cleveland from nothing. It revealed what Cleveland was becoming: a place where moral argument, immigration, lake commerce, railroads, manufacturing, public health problems, reform, ambition, and grief all met at the mouth of the Cuyahoga. That may be the most important local lesson. Cleveland's Civil War story was not only about soldiers marching south. It was also about a city looking into the furnace of national crisis and emerging larger, harder, more crowded, more capable, and more modern than it had been before.

Notes

1. W. Dennis Keating, *Cleveland and the Civil War* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2022); "Cleveland and the Civil War," Cleveland State University EngagedScholarship, accessed July 10, 2026.
2. William C. Stark, "Civil War," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 10, 2026; "Cleveland: An Historical Overview," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 10, 2026.
3. "Foreign Born Population, Cleveland and Cuyahoga County," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 3, 2026.
4. "Germans," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 8, 2026; "Irish," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 3, 2026.
5. "Water System," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 8, 2026; "Sanitation," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 1, 2026.

6. Stark, "Civil War."
7. "Abolitionism," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 8, 2026.
8. Stark, "Civil War."
9. Dick Crews, "Cleveland Fights the Civil War," The Charger, winter 2002, republished by the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable, 2008; "7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 4, 2026; "107th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 8, 2026; "2d Ohio Volunteer Cavalry," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 5, 2026.
10. "Civil War Camps in Cleveland," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 1, 2026.
11. "Civil War Camps in Cleveland"; "Camp Cleveland," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 1, 2026.
12. "Camp Cleveland"; "Civil War Camps in Cleveland."
13. "Soldiers' Aid Society of Northern Ohio," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 7, 2026; "U.S. Sanitary Commission," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 7, 2026.
14. "Northern Ohio Sanitary Fair," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 8, 2026; "Soldiers' Aid Society of Northern Ohio"; Stark, "Civil War"; "Women," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed July 1, 2026.
15. Stark, "Civil War"; "Rockefeller, John D.," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 14, 2026.
16. Stark, "Civil War."
17. Stark, "Civil War"; "Economy," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 14, 2026.
18. Stark, "Civil War."
19. Stark, "Civil War"; "2d Ohio Volunteer Cavalry."
20. "Abraham Lincoln's Funeral," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, Case Western Reserve University, accessed June 18, 2026; Stark, "Civil War."
21. Keating, Cleveland and the Civil War; Dick Crews, "Cleveland Fights the Civil War," The Charger, winter 2002, republished by the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable, 2008.

~ Don Iannone is a Cleveland writer and poet whose work explores landscape, history, moral complexity, belonging, humor, and the interior dimensions of lived experience. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and teaches at Transcontinental University. He is the author of six nonfiction books, two works of fiction, and twelve poetry collections, including his 2024 book Civil War Yesterday and Today in Poetry. His essay "Poetry as Civil War Dispatch: Verse, News, and Grief in a Nation at War" was published in the June 2026 issue of Emerging Civil War. He has also written several essays for the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable's Charger Journal. His email is diannone@gmail.com.



Johnson's Island Prison Camp with the USS Michigan (the double side-wheeler) Patrolling the Waters.

Johnson's Island Prison Camp (Sandusky Bay, Ohio)

By Dennis Keating

Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay was chosen in 1861 as the 300-acre site for a prison camp to hold up to 2,500 captured Confederate officers. It would eventually hold several other kinds of prisoners, including political prisoners and civilian guerillas. The federal government leased half the island from its owner. Opened in early 1862, a 14-foot-high stockade surrounded prisoner barracks, a hospital, latrines and wells, and mess halls. Outside the walls there were numerous buildings including barracks for the guards, barns and stables. The 128th Ohio Voluntary Infantry regiment guarded the prison. Until it closed in September 1865, after the war's end, over 15,000 prisoners were held there. Among them were Confederate generals James J. Archer, Edward "Allegheny" Johnson, John S. Marmaduke, and Isaac R. Trimble. As in many other Civil War POW camps, conditions were poor, with minimal rations, contaminated water, and inadequate bedding (especially in the winter months adjacent to Lake Erie). After the war, most of the buildings were sold and there were few remains of the prison. On June 8, 1910, the statue Southern (or the Lookout), a monument to the Confederate prisoners was unveiled. In 1990, Johnson's Island was designated a National Historic Landmark. 235 Confederate prisoners are buried in the cemetery. In 2002, The Friends and Descendants of Johnson Island's Civil War Prison was formed to preserve, protect, and research the prison site there.

Not surprisingly, there were escape attempts but only 12 were successful. Shortly after his arrival in September 1863, Captain Charles H. Cole of Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry was one of the few examples of an individual's successful escape. Part of a prisoner party sent to a steamer to retrieve straw for bunks, Cole hid in the straw and when the ship landed in Sandusky, he was able to pose as a civilian worker and escape to Canada. Unsuccessful attempts included these two examples. Shortly before Christmas, 1863, Confederate General James J. Archer bribed a guard with \$200 and a gold watch to let him and a few others through the gate, only to find that the thin ice was too dangerous to try to make it to the town of Sandusky three miles away. Upon returning to the prison, Archer demanded his money and watch be returned but the guard refused. Captain Walter M. Boyd of the 19th Virginia cavalry scaled the wall under horrible weather conditions on February 1, 1864. A winter storm raged at 20 degrees below zero (and wind chill twice that cold) with the guards on short shifts not expecting any Confederate to brave that weather. Boyd was soon recaptured. But, his attempt inspired five others to try to escape despite the weather conditions.

The five were: Major John Winston of the 45th North Carolina Infantry; and Captains Charles C. Robinson, 9th Virginia Cavalry, Thomas H. Davies, 1st Virginia Infantry, John E. Stakes, 40th Virginia Infantry, and N.W. McConnell, 11th Kentucky Infantry. Dressed in civilian clothing, the five used a bench converted into a ladder to scale a wall without being seen by guards except for Stakes, the last escapee, who managed to fade into the woods amidst the raging storm. The ladder was then retrieved by a fellow prisoner without being spotted by any guard. However, Stakes became separated from the other four. The group of four headed for the narrow channel between Johnson's Island and the Marblehead Peninsula. They headed West toward Port Clinton. From a farm, they "borrowed" two plow horses and proceeded two to a horse for awhile until McConnell was too cold to continue. They then stopped at a farmhouse posing as land speculators caught in the storm. He fed them while Davis and Robinson, who had Northern experiences in Vermont and New York, did the talking for the group. Meanwhile, Stakes had difficulty with inadequate clothing and difficulty making his way in the snow. Posing as a sailor who missed his ship, he gained an overnight stay with a farm family, only to be discovered by a Union patrol the next morning and was returned to the prison. After refusing to talk about the escape, Stakes was put in a cold cell for two days until he would talk. He lost several fingers and toes to gangrene.

The other four continued on through what the locals called Black Swamp, sleeping one night on an Irishman's hearth but next being turned away by a Dutchman farmer's wife. Stopping briefly at a pub, they marched West, avoiding roads with Union patrols. Unable to continue, McConnell stayed behind and attempted to catch a train. After selling his watch for a ticket, he was caught by a suspicious railroad detective and returned to the prison. The remaining three headed for Toledo, stopping enroute at houses asking for food. Only one family (with nine children) responded and fed them a meal. At midnight on January 3, a man did answer their request and allowed them to sleep overnight but they feared being discovered and they soon left and arrived in Toledo the morning of January 4, haggard, exhausted and hungry after walking 60 miles through the wintry weather. As they reached Monroe, Michigan, about a dozen miles North of Toledo, a French-Canadian gave them temporary shelter. But, soon after departing, Robinson

discovered that he had dropped his prison identity papers back at the house of the Canadian. He had to return where his “host” returned his papers. Amidst a new snowstorm, they received a meal on January 5 from a friendly woman and then sought directions from an 80-year old man, who asked about their Southern accents.

Quickly departing and avoiding a likely guarded border post, they sought a way to cross the Detroit River into Canada. First, crossing Grosse Isle, Robinson fell on the frozen ice, Stunned, he continued. But, next at the shipping lane, he stumbled on an ice flow and fell into the river before his companions pulled him back out of the water. They somehow managed to cross over the final barrier into Canada. Winston estimated that they had traveled 125 miles since their escape with only a few hours of sleep, a couple of meals and some small snacks. That night on January 5, they found the cabin of a half-French, half-Native woman named Mrs. Warrior, who fed them and offered them shelter. Looking back at the river the next morning, Winston later recalled that the crossing “was the severest of my experience. In the pitched battles we are generally in action; there is an enthusiasm and sometimes exhilaration. But, on the bobbing ice that desperate night, the warmth of our very nature was chilled. No sight or sound cheered us, dark clouds obscured the stars, and all was death-like stillness, save the whisking of the freezing winds among the sharply broken ice floes.”

On a borrowed sleigh, the three then rode into Windsor, Ontario and were given free rooms by a hotel owner after hearing their escape story. Also impressed with their incredible tale was guest Clement L. Vallandigham, a former Ohio Congressman and Copperhead leader, who himself had a lengthy journey from the south where President Lincoln had exiled him after he had been tried and convicted of treason. Receiving funds from a friend of Winston in New York, the three then traveled 550 miles East to Montreal. There, they become celebrities for their escape. Winston sent a letter to his former roommate Captain Boyd at the Johnson Island prison camp informing him of the trio’s escape to Canada. After 10 days, their journey took them by train to the East Nova Scotia seaport of Halifax. Boarding the mail carrier Alpha, they reached St. George Bermuda, where they then took passage on the Confederate blockade-runner Advance, which carried them back to the Confederacy at Wilmington, North Carolina and Fort Fisher.

All three returned to the Confederate service. Davis rejoined the 1st Virginia. During Lee’s retreat from Richmond in April 1865, Davis was captured at the battle of Saylor’s Creek and returned to Johnson’s Island. When he arrived on April 19, a clerk noted his return with the word “back” over his name in the prison ledger. Released on June 19, he headed West and was killed two years later in San Antonio. Robinson returned to his cavalry regiment, but his later experience was unknown. Of the two recaptured escapees, Captain Stakes, suffering from frostbite, was eventually sent home. McConnell was released after the war’s end. Winston had the most interesting time. After he rejoined the 45th North Carolina, he discovered that during his imprisonment he had been promoted to Colonel. He led the regiment from the Battle of the Wilderness through Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, suffering several wounds. He died in 1888.

The Beall Conspiracy

On September 19, 1864, John Y. Beall led a daring raid to capture the gunboat USS Michigan and free the Confederates imprisoned on Johnson's Island. Beall, a Virginia lawyer and manager of his family farm after his father's death, with his state's secession, he enlisted in the 2nd Virginia Infantry, part of the Stonewall Brigade. In 1862, Beall was seriously wounded.

While recuperating, he conceived a plan to liberate the Confederates being held on Johnson's Island. Beall presented his plan, a raid from Canada to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who rejected it for fear that it might antagonize Great Britain. Davis did commission Beall as a naval officer to carry out his alternate plan to recruit rangers to harass Federal shipping in the Chesapeake Bay. With only two small boats known as "Beall's Birds", Beall became known as the Mosby of the Chesapeake.

In 1864, Beall revived his plan and won the approval of the Secretary of the Confederate Navy and the chief of the Bureau of Secret Service. Davis also approved Beall's plan this time. It was to be a raid across from Canada to seize the 14-gun USS Michigan while it was guarding the prison camp, turning its guns on the Federal guarding force, then collecting enough boats in the Bay to carry the prisoners East to Cleveland and escape to the South. Beall would then command the Michigan to raid Lake Erie cities from Toledo to Buffalo.

After meeting in Montreal with Jacob Thompson, in charge of Confederate operations from Canada, Beall recruited 20 men to join him in his planned raid. He then traveled to Sandusky to meet with Charles Cole. Cole had escaped from the prison and now volunteered to play a key role in Beall's plot. He was to pretend to be a rich visitor and ingratiate himself with the officers of the Michigan. He successfully did this. He was to dine with the ship's officers and drug them as Beall and his company arrived to seize the vessel and liberate the camp. A cannon shot from the ship would signal the release of the prisoners.

Even before the plot unfolded, the Navy Department warned the Michigan's commander of a project from Canada to rescue the Johnson Island prisoners. On the night of September 18, 1864, Beall's second in command Bennett Burley boarded the passenger ferry steamer Philo Parsons at a Detroit wharf. He persuaded the captain to make an unscheduled stop at the Canadian lakefront town of Sandwich. There, three men, including Beall, came aboard. The next day at the stop at Amherstburgh, Ontario, 16 more men boarded the ship with a trunk carrying the supplies needed to attack the Michigan. Five miles off Sandusky, Beall drew a pistol and declared: "I take possession of this boat in the name of the Confederate States. Resist at your peril." Burley and other raiders also drew their pistols and herded the 80 passengers and the boat's co-owner into the captain's cabin.

Beall ordered the crew to sail the ship to Middle Bass Island, 10 miles from Johnson's Island and the Michigan, to take on fuel. There, the passengers were released and "paroled" on condition of not taking any action for at least the next 48 hours. Then, a ship named the Island Queen also in need of fuel arrived and docked along side the Philo Parsons. It carried 25-30 unarmed soldiers of the 130th Ohio from Toledo going to be mustered out of the Union army, forcing Beall to also "parole" them and the ship's crew under the same conditions. Five miles from Middle Bass, Beal

scuttled the second ship and headed for the Michigan, flying a Confederate flag. When he arrived, there was no messenger from Cole to proceed. Beall's plan had been compromised by an unknown informer and Cole had been arrested. Beall waited until he decided to try to board the Michigan and its crew of 106. But, almost all of Beall's party refused to follow him and he was forced to head for Canada. The 17 mutineers signed a statement praising Beall for his leadership. Upon landing at Sandwich, Beall scuttled the Philo Parsons, only a few hours ahead of the pursuing Michigan, which had been ready to repel an attack. It returned to Johnson's Island in time to encounter a hurricane, which caused considerable damage. Thinking that instead it was damage from Beall's capture and the Michigan's heavy guns, the prisoners attempted an escape but were quickly re-imprisoned.

Still undeterred, Beall next joined an attempt to derail trains carrying Confederate prisoners to Johnson's Island. On December 16, 1864, he was captured near Niagara Falls. He was tried on January 5, 1865, by a military tribunal and was convicted on charges of planning the Johnson's Island raid, spying, and attempting to wreck trains carrying civilians. He was sentenced to be hanged. Efforts were made to President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton to pardon him, including a petition signed by 92 members of the U. S. Congress. They failed and Beall was hanged on February 24, 1865. His last words were: 'I protest this execution. It is absolute murder. I die in the service and defense of my country.'

References:

Roger Long. "Out of a Frozen Hell" The History Net (9/23/1998)

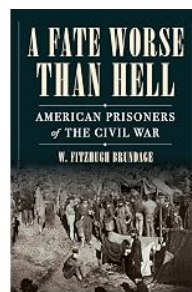
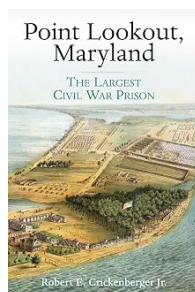
Ron Soodalter. "Last Raid of a Rebel Pirate" History Net (3/15/2018)

Dale Thomas. "Johnson's Island" *The Charger* (CCWRT) (March 2002)

[EDITOR'S NOTE] –Dennis Keating, in addition to the references included above, wants to bring to the reader's attention two new books on Civil War military prisons published recently:

Robert E. Crickenberger, Jr. *Point Lookout, Maryland: The Largest Civil War Prison* (Savas Beatie, 2026)

W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *A Fate Worse than Hell: American Prisoners of the Civil War* (W. Norton & Co., 2026).





United States Cavalry on the March

Custer's Camouflage

By Brian Kowell

Wednesday, June 17, 1863, was a sweltering day in Northern Virginia. By 2 p.m. the thermometer registered in the mid-90s.[\[1\]](#)

Through the heat, the Army of the Potomac's Second Cavalry Division was marching west on the Little River Turnpike in search of Robert E. Lee's army. The Confederates were rumored to be moving north in the Shenandoah Valley, screened by the Blue Ridge Mountains. Brig. Gen. David M. Gregg pushed his men west through the Bull Run Mountains toward the little village of Aldie. Spearheading Gregg's column was the brigade of newly promoted Brig. Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick.

As the column approached Aldie, the air was "intolerable; [making it] absolutely difficult to breathe." Billowing clouds of dust were kicked up from the moving column. The horses' shoes and the wheels of the wagons and horse artillery passing over the inches-thick dust in the road created a thick, brown cloud. The dust stuck to the sweaty troopers and their mounts and obscured their vision. One cavalryman complained that he could not see beyond the set of fours in front of him.[\[2\]](#)



Custer, left, and Alfred Pleasonton in the Spring, 1863.

Kilpatrick's brigade soon encountered Confederate resistance just west of Aldie where the Snickersville Pike diverges from the Little River or Ashby Gap Turnpike. Both roads lead to gaps in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The sounds of cannon and small arms fire echoed back along the Yankee column to where Gregg and his staff had halted east of Aldie. Among Gregg's staff was Brevet-Captain George Armstrong Custer. Custer, a member of cavalry chief Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton's staff was riding with Gregg as a liaison between Gregg and his commander.

Taking advantage of the temporary halt, members of Gregg's staff watered their horses and filled their canteens by a stream beside the road. "Custer at once attracted the attention of the entire command," wrote 19-year-old Henry Coddington Meyer of Gregg's staff. "On that day he was dressed like an ordinary enlisted man, his trousers tucked in a pair of short-legged government boots, his horse equipment being those of an ordinary wagon master. He rode with a little rawhide whip stuck in his bootleg, and had long yellow curls down to his shoulders, his face ruddy and good-natured." In addition, he wore a wide brimmed, non-regulation hat against the blazing sun.[\[3\]](#)



Reenactors of the 1st Maine Cavalry. Photo by Ken Doyon.

Mounted on his large, black horse, “Harry,” Custer crossed the stream to reach the undisturbed water on the far side away from the rest of Gregg’s staff. “He did not know how deep the water was; and after his horse was satisfied, instead of turning by the way he went in, concluded to cross the stream and come out on the other side.” When Custer urged “Harry” to climb out, the horse slipped on the steep, slippery bank. Horse and rider fell backwards, plunging into the water, disappearing beneath the surface. In an instant Custer “was on his feet and he and the horse struggled out amid the shouts [and laughter] of the spectators.” They all watched as, chagrined and soaking wet, Custer sheepishly rejoined the staff. As the column proceeded, the “dust settled on his wet clothes and wet hair, Custer was an object that one can better imagine than I can describe,” recalled Meyer.[\[4\]](#)

With the firing ahead unabated, Gregg sent a courier to bring up Col. Calvin Douty’s 1st Maine Regiment. Gregg ordered Douty to reinforce Kilpatrick, and Custer was to accompany them. As they trotted along the dusty road, Custer’s appearance changed. Historian Robert F. O’Neill wrote: “Custer’s blue tunic and pants quickly took on the color of the road as the dust clung to his wet uniform like iron shavings to a magnet.”[\[5\]](#)

With a swarm of rebel horsemen charging down the Snickersville Pike toward and his exposed horse artillery, Kilpatrick spotted the lead squadron of the 1st Maine Cavalry. Without waiting for the rest of the regiment to arrive, Kilpatrick, standing in his stirrups, implored the men of Maine to charge. Capt. Andrew Sprurling ordered his squadron to draw sabers, and they dashed forward. The resulting clash of blue and gray horsemen resulted in a melee with many saddles on both sides emptied before they disengaged.[\[6\]](#)

With the Confederates withdrawing uphill to the safety of the stone walls near Furr’s farm, Kilpatrick had Douty deploy the rest of the 1st Maine in preparation to charge after the retreating rebels. Legend has it that Custer, “waving his broad-brimmed hat,” rode up to join Kilpatrick and Douty in front of the line, shouting, “Three cheers for General Kilpatrick!”[\[7\]](#) Seeing what was about to take place, Custer couldn’t keep himself out of the fight.

As light was beginning to fade and the Mainers starting forward, Custer dug his spurs into Harry’s flanks and shouted, “Come on boys!” In the charge, Kilpatrick’s horse was killed - shot through the neck sending both horse and rider sprawling in the dust. Custer was soon ahead of the formation and in amongst the fleeing rebels. One Confederate swiveled and fired his revolver at the captain but missed. Custer swung his blade, striking the man and almost cutting his arm off. Another galloped behind Custer with sword in hand. Custer reined to a stop, only to have the man speed past. Custer spurred after him and caught up to the Confederate, who tried unsuccessfully to parry Custer’s saber blows and was cut down.[\[8\]](#)



Custer, Kilpatrick & Douty at Aldie by Alfred Waud for Harpers Weekly

The Maine troopers following, drew up at the Confederate line, posted behind a stone wall supported by cannons. A rebel volley greeted them, and Col. Douty was shot out of the saddle, killed instantly. Custer's horse must have been spooked as he "suddenly bolted carrying his powerless owner at breakneck speed" through the ranks of Confederates to their rear. In the dusty darkness "it was scarcely possible to distinguish friend from foe," wrote a Maine trooper.^[9]

Custer regained control of his horse and was surprised to find himself in the midst of the enemy. He was equally surprised that none of them recognized him as an enemy. He turned and started for an opening in the enemy ranks to escape. In a letter written to his sister on June 25, Custer explained:

"I was surrounded by rebels, and cut off from my own men, but I made my way out safely, and all owing to my hat, which is a large broad brim, exactly like that worn by the rebels. Everyone tells me that I look like a rebel more than our own men. The rebels at first thought I was one of their own men, and did not attack me, except one, who rushed at me with his sabre, but I struck him across the face with my sabre, knocking him off his horse. I then put spurs to 'Harry' and made my escape."^[10] Custer made no mention of how his dirty brown-stained uniform helped to camouflage that he was a Union officer.

Historian Edward Longacre wrote that word of Custer's exploit "got back to Kilpatrick, Gregg," and Pleasonton. "If he had been looking to make an impression on those who could promote a soldier's career," Longacre wrote, "he seems to have achieved his purpose." E.A. Paul, *The New York Times* correspondent, wrote about Custer's heroic exploit, and Michigan newspapers, including the *Monroe Commercial*, lauded Custer's actions. The story prompted noted Civil War artist Alfred Waud to sketch a drawing for *Harper's Weekly* illustrating Custer leading the charge while Kilpatrick and Douty were falling. Twelve days later Custer was promoted from brevet captain to brigadier general.^[11]

When you read the accounts of the exploits, some things don't make sense. First, why would Custer ride with the fleeing rebels all the way through the Confederate lines and into their rear unless his horse had bolted and he had lost control of the animal? In Whitaker's account and the account in the Michigan newspaper quoted in Merington's book, Custer knocks one enemy from

the saddle and then pulls the reigns in on Harry so a second assailant chasing him dashes by. If the horse had taken the bit in its teeth and was bolting, how did Custer manage this? And, if he did gain control before the Confederate line, why did he continue into mortal danger behind their lines surrounded by foes? Of course, it wouldn't be the last time Custer found himself surrounded by foes, like at Trevellian Station and the Little Bighorn[12]

Custer was ambitious and had goals to achieve. The first was to be promoted and get a command of his own. He had been trying to pull strings to get command of a Michigan cavalry regiment, but was unsuccessful.[13] He attached his hopes to Pleasonton's success. Pleasonton liked Custer, and Custer thought that if Pleasonton was promoted, he would be too. The cavalry chief wanted to get rid of ineffective cavalry officers (many of whom were foreigners) and wanted aggressive officers "with the proper dash to command cavalry," and Custer fit the bill.[14] It was not unusual for ambitious staff officers to try and prove their worth and competence to gain a promotion or field command. Much like in the corporate world many young executives hitch their star to the success of their superior in hopes of being raised along with them. Pleasonton was promoted to major general and that general's patronage and Custer's publicized exploits at Aldie got him his promotion.

Custer was also trying to win the hand of Elizabeth Bacon [pictured], whose father thought Custer not suitable. On July 5, after Aldie and Gettysburg, Libbie received a huge envelope containing favorable press clippings about Custer and the picture from *Harper's*. By Christmas, Custer and Libbie were engaged.[15]



Custer had ample motivation to embellish his actions on June 17 to achieve these two goals. Most modern historians are skeptical of the extent of Custer's exploits that day. While members of the 1st Maine saw Custer on that hot summer day, none could substantiate or refute the story of his wild ride. Other than being at the head of the line with Kilpatrick and Douty, and dashing up the Snickersville Road, none saw him penetrate the rebel line. They were too much pre-occupied with their own fights to watch a staff officer. Cavalry expert Edward Longacre would say that, "Over time, Custer's wild ride would be deemed so improbable that historians would consider it stuff of fiction." Jeffery Wert in his Custer book thought "the account seems dubious," and historian Jay Monaghan said, "the records fail to substantiate it . . . the only basis for the spectacular charge is in the accounts printed in *The New York Times*, Michigan newspapers," and Custer's own letter to his sister. Interestingly, that letter does not exist in the book of letters between Custer and his wife edited by Marguerite Merington. In fact, Longacre claims that the letter cited was in the Elizabeth Bacon Custer Collection repositied at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in Montana. However, upon his examination of the file, the letter could not be located. It is unknown what if anything newsman E.A. Paul witnessed of Custer's escapades. He was behind the lines with Gregg's staff. It is questionable how much he

could see of the action around the Furr house due to the distance, the fading light, and the dust and gun smoke. Maybe he got his facts from Custer himself. There was no mention of Custer in Tobie's *History of the First Maine Cavalry* or in the *Official Records* of that regiment. Moreover, the official reports of Pleasonton, Gregg, and Kilpatrick in the *OR* likewise make no mention of Custer either.^[16]

We may never know what really happened. We can only rely on Custer's account, and he was never one to hide his light under a bushel. Maybe it was just part of the Custer legend or Custer's luck. Whatever the case, as the slogan goes, never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

[1] Krick, Robert K., *Civil War Weather in Virginia*, Tuscaloosa, AL. The University of Alabama Press, 2007, p. 101.

[2] O'Neill, Robert F., *Small but Important Riots: The Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville*, Lincoln, NB, Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2023, p. 61. Meyer, Henry Coddington, *Civil War Experiences Under Bayard, Gregg, Kilpatrick, Custer, Raulston, and Newberry, 1862, 1863, 1864*, New York, NY, privately printed by Knickerbocker Press, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911, p. 34. [The Project Gutenberg eBook of Civil War Experiences, by Henry C. Meyer.](#)

[3] Meyer, *Civil War Experiences*, pp. 33-36. Custer's own account states he was wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, but others thought it was a soft-felt hat in the Confederate style.

[4] Ibid. pp. 33-34.

[5] O'Neill, *Small but Important Riots*, p. 91.

[6] *Reunions of the First Maine Cavalry, 1879-1880*, Augusta, ME, 1881, p. 79. *Maine Bugle*, July 1894, pp. 260-262. Tobie, Edward P., *History of the First Maine Cavalry, 1861-1865*, Published by the First Maine Cavalry Association, Boston, MA, Press of Emery & Hughes, 1887, p.161.

[7] Merington, Marguerite (Ed.) 1950, *The Custer Story: The Life and Intimate Letters of General Custer and His Wife Elizabeth*, New York, NY, The Devin-Adair Company, p. 55. The passage is a quote from a June edition of a Michigan newspaper for which the editor does not give a more detailed reference.

[8] Stiles, T.J., *Custer's Trials: A Life on the Frontier of a New America*, New York, NY, Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, p. 91. Longacre, Edward G., *Custer: The Making of a Young General*, New York, NY, Skyhorse Publishing, 2018, p. 142. Frederick Whittaker, *A Complete Life of General George A. Custer, Vol. 1: Through the Civil War*, reprint Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1993, p.159. Originally published by Sheldon & Company, New York, a Bison Book edition.

[9] Tobie, *History of the First Maine Cavalry*, pp. 161-164. *The New York Times*, June 20, 1863, article written by correspondent E.A. Paul.

[10] Stiles, *Custer's Trials*, pp. 91-92. Longacre, *Custer*, pp. 142-143. Whittaker, *Complete Life of Custer, Vol. 1*, p. 159.

[11] Longacre, *Custer*, pp. 196-197. Alfredd Pleasonton to John F. Farnsworth, June 18, 23, 1863, Pleasonton MSS, Library of Congress.

[12] Whittaker, *Complete Life of Custer*, p. 158-159. Merington, *The Custer Story*, p. 55-56.

[13] Stiles, *Custer's Trials*, p. 84-85. Harris, Samuel, *Personal Reminiscences of Samuel Harris*, Chicago, IL, The Robertson Press, 1897, pp. 17, 23-24. Urwin, Gregory J.W., *Custer Victorious: The Civil War Battles of General George Armstrong Custer*, Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1983, p. 53.

[14] Whittaker, *Complete Life of Custer*, Vol. 1, p. 160.

[15] Leckie, Shirley A., *Elizabeth Bacon Custer and the Making of a Myth*, Norman, OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, pp. 30-31.

[16] Longacre, *Custer*, pp. 142 -143, & endnote 32, p. 235. Wert, Jeffery D., *Custer: The Controversial Life of George Armstrong Custer*, New York, NY, Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 80. Monaghan, Jay, *Custer: The Life of George Armstrong Custer*, Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1959, pp. 130-131. Whittaker, *Complete Life of Custer*, p. 159. The letter to his sister is quoted in Whittaker's book who is an unabashed promoter of Custer. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 4 series, 128 vols., Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1880-1901. Vol. 27, series 1, pt.1, pp. 906-908, 913, 952-955, 979-980. [#1006 - The War of the Rebellion : a compilation of the official ... ser.1:v.27:pt.1:Reports. - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library](#)



HALE FARM AND VILLAGE

Civil War Weekend

August 8 and 9, 2026

See the Hale Farm and Village website at <https://www.wrhs.org/plan-visit/places-to-visit/hale-farm-village> for details. If anyone is interested in helping the CCWRT with its display at this event, please contact CCWRT President John Syrone.

FINIS!