

THE CANISTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table



PO Box 621082 • Cincinnati, OH 45262 • www.cincinnatiwrt.org
Serving the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana since 1956

February, 2019 Issue

Meeting Date: February 21, 2019

Place: The Drake Center

(6:00) Sign-in and Social

(7:15) Business Meeting

(6:30) Dinner

(7:30) Speaker

Dinner Menu: Chicken piccata, Caesar salad, macaroni & cheese, fresh asparagus, tiramisu.



Speaker: Wayne K. Durrill, University of Cincinnati

Topic: War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion

Wayne K. Durrill is Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati. He received his B.A. in 1975 from Northwestern University and his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina in 1987. Professor Durrill's talk will describe in graphic detail the disintegration, during the Civil War, of Southern plantation society in a North Carolina coastal county. He will detail the struggles among planters, slaves, yeoman farmers, and landless white laborers, as well as a guerrilla war and a clash between two armies that, in the end, destroyed all that remained of the county's social structure. He will examine the failure of a planter-yeoman alliance, and discusses how yeoman farmers and landless white laborers allied themselves against planters, but to no avail. He will also show how slaves, having refuged upcountry, tried unsuccessfully to reestablish their prerogatives—a subsistence, as well as protection from violence—owed them as a minimal condition of their servitude.

Prof. Durrill's principal publications in American history include *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (Oxford University Press, 1990), plus several articles on nineteenth century American social history in *Nineteenth Century American History* (2008), *Journal of Social History* (2006, 2002), *Journal of Southern History* (2004, 1999), *Slavery and Abolition* (1995, 1992), *Prologue* (1988), and the *Journal of American History* (1985).

Reservation Deadline: Wednesday, February 13, 2019, at 8:00 p.m.

If you do not have an Automatic Reservation, please remember to submit your meeting reservation to the web site at <http://cincinnatiwrt.org/wordpress/contact/rsvp/> or call it in to Esly Caldwell at 513-607-6598. Leave a message, if necessary. If you are making a reservation for more than yourself, please provide the names of the others.

Book Review

Custer: The Making of a Young General, by Edward G. Longacre, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, NY 10018 (2018), 276 pp., hardcover \$24.99.

Custer: The Making of a Young General by Edward Longacre is the first volume of a two volume biography of George Armstrong Custer. This book covers the period from his birth on December 5, 1839 through his proposal to Elizabeth "Libbie" Clift Bacon in the autumn of 1863.

Our author, Edward Longacre, has provided the reader with a well-researched and well-written biography. His approach is factual and he is quick to point out where other biographers have too often relied on the stories surrounding Custer and not always checked the facts. He is willing to explain where, due to inconsistent or missing records, there are disconnects in the data concerning several issues in Custer's life, starting with where precisely he was born. It is up to the reader to determine whether it is important to know in exactly which dwelling he was born, and if it was located within or outside the village of New Rumley, Ohio.

The author also points out where there are gaps in the Custer story due to a lack of reports from superiors or where Custer never addressed an issue in any of his correspondence. I found George Custer's time at West Point very interesting. He decided early on that he was going to finish last in his class because the last to graduate had more fun than the cadet that finished first. The author shows how finishing last is just as difficult as finishing first.

Another issue where confusion arises concerns his introduction to the petite, brown-haired, blue-eyed beauty, Elizabeth Clift Bacon, who eventually became his wife. The information on this issue is obscure. There seems to be a lack of information concerning the entire meeting and courtship. We do know that Libbie's father did not approve of the young Custer due to his politics and reputation. He was seen intoxicated in Monroe, Michigan and his family members were Democrats.

As for his military career, Custer was initially handicapped by being too closely associated with Major General George B. McClellan. Fortunately he was able to overcome his service as a member of McClellan's staff to earn a promotion from Captain to Brigadier General under Alfred Pleasonton and become the youngest general officer in the army. Custer was enthralled by battle. While he desired peace for the country, he wrote his cousin Augusta that for himself he would be willing to see a battle every day of his life.

I found the work to be very readable and interesting. At times you wished there were more information on Custer's activities, but the author cannot be faulted for the lack of reliable information. Edward Longacre has produced another superb tome that continues to display his outstanding knowledge of the U.S. Cavalry during the Civil War. If you have any interest in George A. Custer, I highly recommend this work.

Submitted by Thomas L. Breiner

Inclement Weather Plan

Winter is upon us, so there is the possibility that the weather will turn bad, and the streets will become difficult to travel. The President and Vice-President will make the decision on the status of the meeting by noon the day of the meeting. The decision will be based on the condition of the roads, the safety of our members, the status of the speaker and the Drake Meeting Center's ability to serve us. You can check the following sources to determine if the meeting is still on or if it has been cancelled:

1. Check the home page on our web site at www.cincinnatiwrt.org. We will post a simple update informing the membership on the status of the meeting.
2. Check your email for an update.
3. Call Esly Caldwell, Vice-President at 513-607-6598.
4. Call Dave Stockdale, President, at 513-310-9553.

Online? Follow Us on Facebook and Twitter



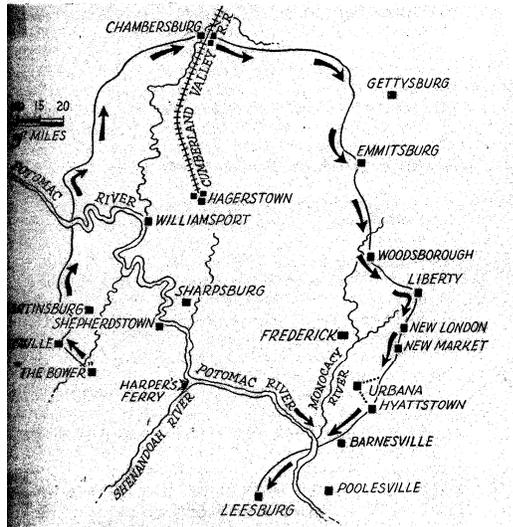
Be certain to Like our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CincinnatiCWRT>) and follow us on our new Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/CwrtCincinnati>). Yet another way to stay connected with your round table!



January Quiz

1. Re the treason case against Jefferson Davis: who advised Davis's lawyer, Charles O'Connor, that he should not concede any "disputable point" in the trial and that should the case get to the U.S. Supreme Court that a judicial decision in his favor, a reasonable possibility, "would furnish a magnificent chapter in our history."?
2. Henry Highland Garnett, George Lawrence, Martin Delaney, James Holly, Wm. Willis Brown, H. Ford Douglas, Willis Menard, J.B. Smith and James Redpath were in the 1850s and early '60s all leaders in the pro-colonization movement. What country were they promoting as an ideal destination for free blacks?
3. What distinguished James Redpath from the others?
4. Mary Lincoln's entry into a mental health facility was initiated by a (choose one)
a. inquest; b. physician referral; c. commitment document
d. jury trial; e. voluntary choice
5. Born in Maryland, orphaned in my early teens, I followed my family's tradition by joining the U.S. Navy, becoming a successful but irregularly employed officer. To supplement my insufficient income I became a lawyer practicing for several years in Cincinnati where I married Amy Elizabeth Spencer. After rejoining the navy I resigned my commission at the start of the Civil War signing up with the rebels and becoming not only a rear admiral but a brigadier general. After the war I returned to the law, practicing in Mobile until my death in 1877. My name is _____.

6. To what 1862 military event does the map adjacent pertain?



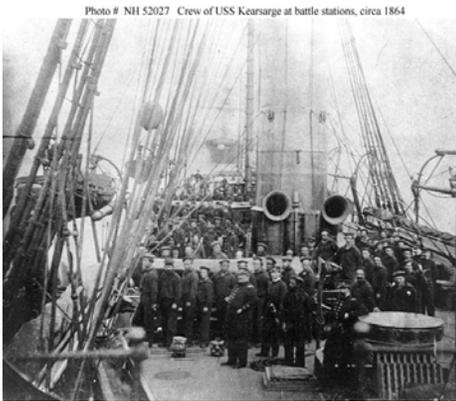
BONUS QUESTION: He was a dedicated abolitionist and as a lawyer defended “so many escaped slaves as to be given the informal title of ‘attorney for the runaways.’ ”

His name: _____

Submitted by Alan Berenson

January Presentation

A Sailor’s Life for Me: How Sailing Differs from Soldiering



The January Round Table welcomed our own Gary Johnson on his sixth trip to the podium, this time to talk about how Sailing in the U.S. Navy differed from soldiering in the Union Army. As we have come to expect, Gary’s presentation was loaded with facts and figures, and scores of photos and charts. One difference between the services is apparent just in the way the topic is phrased. While the Union Army was composed of both

Regular Army units and state Volunteer units, the Navy had no state units, crews or vessels. States had no naval militia units that could be called up. One simply joined the Regular Navy. And Navy enlistment offices would purposely split up those who attempted to join as a group. Sailors did not serve alongside other men from home. Throughout the war the Navy was much smaller than the Army. It grew from 7,500 officers and men at the beginning of the war to 55,000 by the war’s end, although some 118,000 passed through the ranks during those four years. Ohio contributed about 3,200 men to the Navy, 80% of them from Cincinnati.

Navy enlistees tended to come from the working poor; and saw their service more as a job than a patriotic undertaking. They were less literate than their Army counterparts. Forty-two percent were foreign-born and approximately 15% were African-American. Unlike the Army, the Navy had been racially integrated since the 1830s. There was generally no segregation on ships. Black sailors received

the same pay as white sailors; but they were subject to discrimination in their advancement. There were few African-American petty officers (non-commissioned officers), and no commissioned officers. The Navy was not burdened, as was the Army, by officers who had gained their positions through political connections. Naval officers were appointed based upon their technical abilities. President Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, even had prior service in the Navy Department, having served as Chief of the Bureau of Provisions and Clothing in the Polk administration. And as Welles's Assistant Secretary, Lincoln appointed Gustavus Fox, who had extensive prior service as a Navy officer, and was thus familiar with most of the officers.

There were essentially two U.S. Navies: a Saltwater Navy and a River Navy. The River Navy consisted of steam powered, paddle-wheel river boats of various designs. Built for shallow water, they were of weaker construction than ocean-going vessels. And they were not heavily armored, as the added weight would ground them; hence the name "tin-clad." Its missions were to conduct joint operations with the Army to reduce and capture river fortifications, and to transport supplies. The Saltwater Navy consisted of sloops and frigates: tall-masted sailing ships, usually powered also by steam engines. Its missions were to enforce a 3,500 miles-long blockade of the South, to work with the Army in joint amphibious operations to capture ports and coastal forts, and to capture and destroy Confederate commerce raiders on the high seas.

Enlistees who served in the Saltwater Navy, about three-quarters of all sailors, would enter a strange and unsettled set of living conditions. Even when not underway, ships at sea were in perpetual motion from the action of the wind, waves and currents, making sea sickness a common problem. Seamen had to climb 220 foot masts via rope ladders to furl and unfurl the sails by hand, without the benefit of safety harnesses. Their environment was always damp. There was no ventilation below decks, no insulation, and no heat. And it was very crowded. For example, the USS Minnesota, a 264 foot-long wooden steam frigate, carried a crew of 646 officers and men. Sailors were required to purchase their own uniforms, for which the Navy docked their pay. They were furnished a horse hair mattress and a couple of blankets, which they would throw onto the hammocks in which they slept.

Each sailor was required to stand a four hour watch on a rotating basis in addition to his regular duties and drills. This meant that he did not have the same sleep period every day. Thus while sleep deprivation was a problem for soldiers when the Army was on the move or otherwise engaged, it was a perpetual problem for sailors on ships that were continuously at sea.

Because of the need to compete with the merchant marine, the Navy had somewhat higher pay scales than the Army. An enlistee with no prior sailing experience entered the Navy as a Landsman at \$12 per month. An Ordinary Seaman, one with two years' experience, earned \$14 per month. And an Able Seaman, one with 4 years' experience, earned \$16 per month. These sailors were equivalent to privates in the Army. Petty officers, the equivalent of Army corporals and sergeants, were paid according to their ratings, which were in turn determined by each ship's captain. These included, among others, Yeoman, Carpenter's Mate, Quartermaster's Mate, Gunner's Mate, Boatswain's Mate, Coxswain, and Cooper. These non-commissioned officers were paid anywhere from \$22 to \$35 per month.

As an additional enticement, the Navy offered an opportunity for prize money. When an enemy ship or blockade runner was captured, the "prize" was taken to a Northern port where its value was determined by an admiralty court. Half of the money went to the Navy's pension fund, while the balance was divided among the officers and crew of the capturing vessel according to rank, with the captain getting the largest share at 10%. Over the course of the War, the Navy paid out between \$25 and \$35 million in prize money. Admiral Samuel P. Lee, a third cousin of Gen. Robert E. Lee, received a total of \$125,000 of those funds. Lt. William Cushing's use of a steam launch to sink the CSS

Albamarle resulted in a \$283,000 prize. His crew only numbered 14. The share of the lowest ranking member, an Ordinary Seaman making \$14 per month, was \$4,000.

Steam engines that functioned well when placed securely on solid ground were not as reliable on a ship being tossed about on the high seas. The sole job of the engineering crew was to keep them running. Sailors in the engineering section were on a slightly higher pay scale because they had to work in such a hot and dangerous environment. The crews worked four hours on and eight hours off as temperatures in the engine room could reach 120°F to 140°F. Asphyxiation was a hazard if the ventilation system malfunctioned. Carbon monoxide poisoning could result if there were a back draft from the combustion. And an explosion could occur from a buildup of methane gas in the coal bunker. There was also the constant risk of steam burns from leaking pipes or gauges, not to mention that of a boiler explosion. If the pressure in a boiler were suddenly released, each pound of water would instantly become a pound of steam, which occupies 1600 times the space of the water.

The Navy had good medical facilities in port, including their own pharmacy. And sailors ate pretty well. The blockading squadrons were regularly resupplied. Supply ships arrived with sides of beef packed in ice. Among other things, the Navy provisioned their ships with cans of Van Camp's Pork & Beans, which had made its debut in the market in 1859.

The combat experience of sailors in the Saltwater Navy differed markedly from that of soldiers. Sailors did not see dead comrades or enemy very often and thought that soldiers, who saw them all too often, were rather callous toward death. Most naval combat occurred between the ship and a fort. Many of the Navy's casualties were from splinters thrown by cannon balls crashing into the ship. Thirty-nine Union war ships were sunk by torpedoes (mines), which was the Confederacy's most effective weapon. And as most sailors could not swim, many lost their lives by drowning. The greatest loss of life in a naval engagement occurred March 8, 1862, when the CSS Virginia sank both the USS Cumberland (121 men from a crew of 400) and the USS Congress (116 from a crew of 480).

In addition to shore batteries, the River Navy had to contend with snipers, including partisans. Pilots were particularly vulnerable. The worst technological disaster in naval combat occurred on the White River in Arkansas, when chance shot pierced the steam drum, a manifold sitting atop the five boilers on the USS Mound City. The resulting explosion killed more than half of the 175 man crew, and scalded many others.

Ships of the four blockading squadrons had to be wary of torpedo boat attacks, including submersible attacks, originating from the ports being blockaded. But blockade runners were generally unarmed. The Union blockade deployed 90-Day gunboats, each armed with five or six cannons. While the gunboats were not as fast as the blockade runners, their armament was usually sufficient to convince a ship to stop and not attempt a run.

Combat between ships was rare. Fifty Navy warships were employed chasing ten Confederate commerce raiders during the War; but other than the engagement between USS Kearsarge and CSS Alabama, there were few instances of ships fighting each other.

Gary entertained us with many more facts, figures, and anecdotes than we have included here. And his presentation was certainly enlightening. One can only hope that he will return to the podium again in the near future to talk about some other naval aspect of the Civil War.

Submitted by Dave Stockdale

Quiz Answers:

1. Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Salmon Chase
Ref.: Jefferson Davis, Cooper, p.582
2. Haiti
Ref.: The Negro's Civil War, McPherson, p. 80-87
3. He was white (British born)
Ref.: ibid
4. Jury trial
Ref.: The Madness of Mary Lincoln, Emerson, p. 58
5. Raphael Semmes,
Ref.: Raphael Semmes, The Philosophical Mariner, Spencer
6. Jeb Stuart's 2nd ride around McClellan 9 - 12 Oct. 1862
Ref.: Lee's Lieutenants Vol.II, Freeman, p. 286 - 309, map p. 291

BONUS QUESTION: Salmon Chase.

Ref.: Answer & Quotation from Lincoln's Virtues, Miller, p.243

Future Presentations

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| February 21, 2019 | Wayne K. Durrill, University of Cincinnati
<i>War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion</i> |
| March 21, 2019 | Eric Wittenburg, Central Ohio Civil War Round Table
<i>Second Winchester</i> |
| April 18, 2019 | Gary Dyson, Mt. Airy, Maryland
<i>The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith and the Battle on the Stono River</i> |
| May 16, 2019 | Wayne Motts, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
<i>Pickett's Charge: A Battlefield Guide</i> |
| September 19, 2019 | John Fazio, Cleveland Civil War Round Table
<i>The Emancipation Proclamation</i> |
| October 17, 2019 | Scott Schroeder, Bloomington, Indiana
<i>Lee's Lost Orders in the Maryland Campaign</i> |
| November 21, 2019 | Scott Mingus, York, Pennsylvania
<i>General William "Extra Billy" Smith</i> |
| January 16, 2020 | Chris Burns, Cincinnati, Ohio
<i>Ulysses S. Grant</i> |
| February 20, 2020 | Christina Hartlieb, Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati
<i>Harriet Beecher Stowe</i> |

ABOUT THE CINCINNATI CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Membership in the Cincinnati CWRT is open to anyone with an active interest in the American Civil War. Annual dues (prorated throughout the year to new members) are \$25 (single) and \$35 (couple) for a **Regular Membership**. This fee helps cover operating costs which include our meeting location as well as speaker expenses. A **Sustaining Member** level of membership is also available for \$50 (single) and \$85 (couple). The purpose of this membership category is to encourage and recognize members who make additional contributions of \$25 or more, in addition to their annual dues in any fiscal year, to the objectives and programs of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table. Students enrolled full time in any recognized secondary or higher institute of learning can use a **Student Membership**, which applies a discount of \$10 to each of the above dues rates.

Dinner reservations are required, and can be made prior to the reservations deadline either by the web site <http://cincinnatiwrt.org/wordpress/contact/rsvp/> or by a phone call to the officer taking reservations for the meeting (whose name and number is listed on the header of the current **Canister**). **Meals** currently cost \$20. Menu selection will change with each meeting. A vegetarian meal option is available, if requested prior to the reservations cut-off date.

A Meeting Only Fee of \$5.00 is assessed to members, visitors and guests who arrive after dinner to hear the speaker. *No reservation is necessary.* The monies collected are used to help offset the expenses of the evening's activities.

Late Reservations and Walk-ins Without a Reservation: Our ability to be flexible for late reservations or walk-ins is now restricted by the fact that the Drake Center only prepares meals according to the reservation count called in.

Therefore, **Late Reservations** (after the Wednesday by 8:00 p.m. which is eight days before the meeting) will be accepted conditionally, subject to the caterer's ability to honor a change in dinner count if received close to the meeting date. **Late Reservations** and **Walk-ins Without a Reservation** will only be able to have dinner if offset by cancellations or no-shows, or if the caterer determines that sufficient food is available.

Late cancellations may be made by email or phone. Since a cancellation after the Wednesday 8:00 p.m. deadline which is eight days before the meeting means that CCWRT has guaranteed payment to The Drake Center for the reserved number of meals, the Treasurer will review the number of late cancellations and late reservations for every meeting. If a late cancellation results in the CCWRT being required to pay for an extra meal, the person making the late cancellation will be expected to pay for the dinner. **No-shows** who have a dinner reservation but do not attend will be billed for the meal.

Meetings are held the third Thursday of the month, September – November and January – May at The Drake Center, 151 West Galbraith Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45216 (**Phone: 513-418-2500**). If traveling Interstate 75, exit at Galbraith Road (Exit 10) and go west one mile. If coming across the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway, take the Galbraith Road exit and go west two miles. Or, take the Galbraith/Winton exit and go east one mile. **Free parking** is available in the WEST PAVILION parking lot. The West Pavilion entrance will take you to the meeting rooms. **To get to our meeting room**, enter the West Pavilion main entrance and go to the left side of the gift shop found opposite the entryway; the meeting room is located at the far end of the cafeteria hallway.

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