

# THE CANISTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table



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Serving the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana since 1956

**March, 2019 Issue**

**Meeting Date: March 21, 2019**

**Place: The Drake Center**

**(6:00) Sign-in and Social**  
**(7:15) Business Meeting**

**(6:30) Dinner**  
**(7:30) Speaker**

**Dinner Menu:** Beef Burgundy w/ wine & mushroom sauce, apple pecan salad w/ vinaigrette dressing, au gratin potatoes, green bean casserole, carrot cake.



**Speaker:** Gary Dyson, Mount Airy, Maryland

**Topic:** The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith and the Battle on the Stono River

*USS Isaac Smith* was a Union gunboat ambushed by Confederate shore batteries and captured on the Stono River near Charleston, SC, on January 30, 1863. Although the U.S. Navy lost other ships during the war, the *Smith* was the only one captured by Confederate land forces and used against the Union. This presentation tells the history of the *Smith* leading up to its capture, and provides an account of the crew's captivity. It also touches on the lives of John Wyer Dicks, executive officer of the *Smith*, and Frederick Calvin Hills, its paymaster, as shipmates and as prisoners of war together, and after the war as in-laws when Frederick married John's daughter, Marianne.

Gary L. Dyson has a BS in Natural Resources Management from Oregon State University. He is retired as an environmental specialist for the city of Gaithersburg, MD, and is a Marine Corps veteran. The father of two adult children, Gary lives in Mount Airy, MD with his wife Emily. He owns Dyson Genealogy and Historical Research and is the author of "The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith, Family Ties and the Battle on the Stono, January 30, 1863," published through Lulu.com. And he is the editor of "A Civil War Correspondent in New Orleans, the Journals and Reports of Albert Gaius Hills of the Boston Journal," published by McFarland & Co., Inc. He is also a board member for the Frederick County Civil War Roundtable.

**Reservation Deadline:** Wednesday, March 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://cincinnaticwrt.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

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### **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.cincinnaticwrt.org](http://www.cincinnaticwrt.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.
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### **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!



### **President's Column**

*By Dave Stockdale*

Until I read Anne Diamond's article on [Smithsonianmag.com](http://Smithsonianmag.com) (Feb 4, 2019), about Amy S. Greenburg's newly published biography of Sarah Childress Polk, the widow of President James K. Polk, I did not know that Mrs. Polk lived in Nashville, Tennessee, during the entirety of the Civil War. As I write this, it is Presidents Day; and I began wondering: which other former presidents or first ladies were still living during the war, and how did they fare during the war. As it happened, there were five former U.S. presidents, and the widows of two others, who lived to see their country torn apart by the Civil War.

Our eighth president, Martin Van Buren, served from 1837 to 1841. An anti-slavery Democrat, he had been the presidential candidate of the Free Soil Party in 1848. Although he retired from politics after losing that election to Zachary Taylor, he continued his interest in national affairs. Returning to the Democratic Party, he supported Stephen A. Douglas in the 1860 election. Then, following Lincoln's election and the secession of several Southern states, he voiced support for a constitutional convention to avert a civil war. When war came, however, he expressed his full support for the Union. He died on July 24, 1862.

President William Henry Harrison died in 1841 after only a month in office. At the time of his death his wife, Anna Symmes Harrison, then 65, had yet to leave Ohio for her new home in The White

House. She would remain in North Bend, Ohio, for the rest of her life, devoting her time primarily to her local Presbyterian church. But she maintained a keen interest in national politics. A well-educated woman for her time, she carried on a substantial correspondence with the public. She was a staunch abolitionist and an enthusiastic supporter of the new Republican Party. When war came, she encouraged her grandsons, including future president Benjamin Harrison, to join the Union Army. Benjamin went on to command the 70<sup>th</sup> Indiana in the Atlanta Campaign and at the Battle of Nashville. Anna Harrison died February 25, 1864.

Vice-President John Tyler, who succeeded William Henry Harrison as President in 1841, might be called our only Confederate President. Jefferson Davis, after all, was President only of the Confederate States. A slave-holder and staunch supporter of States' Rights, Tyler was a sponsor and chairman of the Virginia Peace Convention, also known as the Peace Conference of 1861, held at the Willard Hotel in Washington in February after seven Deep South states had already voted to secede. The convention recommend to Congress a seven-part amendment to the Constitution designed to appease the slave-holding states and avoid war. Tyler did not believe the convention's resolutions went far enough to protect Southern interests and voted against all seven. At the same time he was selected as a delegate to the Virginia Secession Convention of 1861, where he voted for secession and chaired the committee that negotiated Virginia's entry into the Confederate States of America. The Convention unanimously elected him to the Provisional Confederate Congress, in which he served until shortly before his death. He was elected to the permanent Confederate States Congress in November of 1861 but died January 18, 1862, before he could take office. Because of his allegiance to the Confederacy, his death was never officially recognized in Washington, D.C. But the Confederate States afforded him an elaborate state funeral in Richmond. His coffin was draped with a Confederate flag; and he thus became the only U.S. President to be laid to rest under a flag other than that of the United States.

President Polk served from 1845 to 1849. At the end of his term he and Sarah Polk, retired to Tennessee, where they had a cotton plantation, and to their stately home, Polk Place, in Nashville. A few months later President Polk died. Sarah would remain at Polk Place for the next 42 years, until her death in 1891. During the war she received both Confederate and Union Generals in her home, depending on who controlled the city. As a former First Lady she demanded respect from both sides, maintaining that she was neutral in the conflict and that her property was neutral territory. While the Union commanders allowed her to travel freely, and to sell her cotton despite the embargo, they suspected that her sympathies were with the Confederacy. Mrs. Polk's biographer maintains that she was in fact a hard-core Confederate sympathizer who used her special station throughout the war to importune Military Governor Andrew Johnson on behalf of Confederate interests, to conceal valuable Confederate property in her home, and to provide financial aid to Confederate soldiers. *Lady First: The World of First Lady Sarah Polk*, Amy S. Greenburg, New York, NY, Alfred A. Knopf (2019).

Vice President Millard Fillmore became President on the death of Zachary Taylor in 1850, and served until 1853. After placing third in the 1856 election as the candidate of the "Know-Nothing" American Party, Fillmore retired to Buffalo, New York. He supported Stephen A. Douglas in the 1860 election, yet he led Buffalo's welcoming committee for Abraham Lincoln as the President-elect journeyed to Washington for the inauguration, hosting him in his mansion and taking him to church. During the war Fillmore, then in his 60s, commanded a corps of home guards, the Union Continentals, based in Upstate New York. Although he supported the Union war effort, he campaigned for George McClellan in the 1864 election, believing that the Democratic Party's platform offered a better chance of restoring the Union. Following Lincoln's assassination, Fillmore and his Union Continentals escorted the funeral train as it passed through Buffalo. After the war, he devoted his energies to philanthropic pursuits and remained an active member of the Union Continentals until his death in 1874.

Franklin Pierce, who served from 1853 to 1857, was opposed to secession, but was equally opposed to

the war. Following the fall of Ft. Sumter, he wrote to Martin Van Buren proposing that all of the former U.S. Presidents join together in an effort to negotiate an end to the war. But no one, including Pierce, was willing to take the lead, so the proposal came to naught. Pierce became an outspoken critic of Lincoln, publically opposing his suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, the arrest of Copperhead leader Clement Vallandigham, the institution of a draft, and the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Public sentiment turned against Pierce following the Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, and the revelation of some prewar correspondence with his close friend and former cabinet secretary, Jefferson Davis. After the death of his wife, Jane, in December of 1863, Pierce withdrew from public life, refusing to be considered for the Democratic nomination for President in 1864. He died October 8, 1869, of cirrhosis of the liver.

James Buchanan was, of course, Abraham Lincoln's immediate predecessor. In his view the Confederate States commenced war on the United States by attacking Ft. Sumter. He publically supported the Union cause and urged his fellow Democrats to do the same. But he spent the rest of the war defending himself from public blame for the war. After publishing his memoirs in 1866, in which he placed responsibility for the war on Republicans and abolitionists, he disengaged from public discourse. He passed the remainder of his life at his home outside Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he died June 1, 1868.

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## February Quiz

1. How old was Stonewall Jackson's Little Sorrel when the horse died?
2. A rebel general called his horse "Fancy." What did everybody else call him?
3. Mary Lincoln called \_\_\_\_\_ her best friend. He championed her petition to receive a congressional pension after the death of her husband.
4. What is the name of the town in Ohio which was the northernmost point organized rebel troops reached in the U.S. east of the Mississippi during the Civil War?
5. Fought on the Va. Peninsula, name the first land battle (a large skirmish) of the Civil War.
6. The battle of Baker's Creek is better known as the battle of \_\_\_\_\_.

*Submitted by Alan Berenson*

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## February Presentation

At our February meeting University of Cincinnati History Professor Wayne K. Durrill related the interesting story of Washington County, North Carolina, which he detailed in his book "War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion" (Oxford Univ. Press 1990). Washington County is in northeast North Carolina, on the southern shore of the Albemarle Sound. Its

principal town, Plymouth, lies near the mouth of the Roanoke River, where it empties into the sound.

The story centers on Somerset, one of the South's largest plantations, which was owned by Josiah Collins, the largest slave owner in North Carolina (350 in 1860) and one of the richest men in America, and on two neighboring plantations, one owned by Charles Pettigrew with 85 slaves, and the other by his brother, William Pettigrew, with 150 slaves. These were not Deep South plantations. They did not grow cotton. The land in Washington County is very fertile, but it is also covered by cypress swamps. The planters primarily grew corn for export to the sugar plantations in the Caribbean islands; and they harvested the cypress trees, cutting and splitting them into shingles for export to the North.

The social strata among the white population consisted of three classes. At the top were the planters, numbering perhaps 10 families, who possessed about 90 per cent of the wealth. Below them were the yeoman farmers who had no slaves, and owned between 10 and 20 acres on which they raised corn and hogs, and their own subsistence. At the bottom were the wage-earners: landless men who worked for the planters harvesting the cypress trees and cutting shingles.

The economy and the social structure of the county were disrupted when the North began implementing the Anaconda Plan. In order for the planters to get their products to market, they needed access to the sea. Goods were shipped from Plymouth over the Albemarle Sound to the Pamlico Sound, then out to sea through the Hatteras Inlet. Prior to the war, their access to the sea was hampered by the sand bar in the Hatteras Inlet. That access was made immeasurably more difficult in August of 1861 when combined forces of the Union Army and Navy captured Fort Hatteras. Then in February, 1862, Union troops under General Ambrose Burnside, accompanied by a Navy flotilla, occupied Roanoke Island, which controls the channels between the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds. From there, Union troops began occupying the coastal mainland, including Washington County.

White enlistments from Washington County were equally divided between the Union and Confederate armies: about 350 to each. Virtually all of the Union enlistees were from among the yeoman farmers who owned no slaves. While some of them went north to enlist, most of the Union enlistments occurred after Burnside began occupying the coastal areas.

With the coming of the Union Army, Unionists in Washington County took control of the government. But their hold was tenuous. They went to General Burnside and to his naval commander, Lt. Charles Flusser, and requested arms for themselves and the stationing of a Union gunboat at Plymouth. At the same time citizens loyal to the Confederacy went to the Confederate commander and asked for guerilla units to drive out the Unionists and restore the Confederate government. The Union Army occupied Plymouth in December, 1862, where they established Ft. Williams. In January, 1863, Lt. Flusser sent three gunboats to Plymouth. Guerilla warfare ensued. And Union troops began patrols up the Roanoke River scouting for Confederate guerillas. Each time the patrols returned they were followed by slaves fleeing their captivity, overwhelming the town of Plymouth.

It was at this same time that President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring all slaves then living in areas still in rebellion emancipated. As a result of frequent Union raids, the entire eastern third of the State of North Carolina became unsafe for slaveholders. The planters in Washington County and other coastal communities, in order to prevent their slaves from coming within Union lines and thereby losing them, moved them to the central part of the state, a process known as refugeeing. But simply moving them was insufficient: they had to be fed and sheltered as well. Josiah Collins fled inland behind Confederate lines with a portion of his slaves, leaving the rest at Somerset. Charles Pettigrew moved a substantial number of his slaves to his sister's plantation, but there was little work for them there. He tried renting them to other planters, but by mid-1863 central

North Carolina was so inundated with refugee slaves that displaced planters were lucky if they could find a planter who would take them for nothing and provide for their subsistence. Often they had to pay other planters to take them, even when those planters were able to employ the slaves full-time. A final option which Pettigrew tried was renting some of his slaves to the Confederate government to work on the North Carolina Rail Road. But he soon retrieved them when he discovered that the government was overworking their rented slaves while failing to properly feed or care for them.

In 1864 officers from Ft. Williams went to Somerset and told the remaining slaves that they were henceforth under U.S. Army protection and therefore free by virtue of the Emancipation Proclamation. The former slaves, who along with their predecessors had lived and toiled on the plantation for 70 years, considered it their land. They moved out of the tiny slave cabins and into the main house, which became like an apartment building, and divided the land into small farms. Meanwhile the yeoman farmers who had joined the First North Carolina Volunteers, viewing the plantation as no longer under the purview of the Confederate government, not property of the U.S. government, and certainly not the property of the former slaves, considered it available for the taking. And so they seized portions of it, which led to sometimes violent clashes between the white Unionists and the former slaves.

The Federal incursions 50 to 100 miles inland which had forced the planters out had, by 1864, also made those lands untenable for grazing. Virginia had run out of grassland for the Confederate Army's horses, and it was Robert E. Lee's plan to drive the Union forces out of eastern North Carolina and send his cavalry horses south to get them ready for the offensive that he was expecting from the Federals. Confederate General Hoke attempted to accomplish this objective through guerilla warfare, but his effort failed. Lee then ordered him to attack in force. Hoke's offensive resulted in the capture of Ft. Williams and the town of Plymouth. 350 soldiers from the First North Carolina Colored Volunteers who were part of the garrison at Ft. Williams put down their arms and attempted to escape into the countryside, but they were hunted down by Hoke's troops and executed. The Confederate Army had a standing order that declared all blacks who joined the Union Army traitors, subject to summary execution.

Following the war, the Pettigrews moved to South Carolina. The Collins family sold Somerset, which was divided into ten farms, to satisfy debts, and their former slaves moved away. Washington County went from being one of the country's wealthiest communities in 1860, to one of its poorest through the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Submitted by Dave Stockdale*

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## **Quiz Answers:**

1. 36 years old  
Ref.: Stonewall Jackson's Little Sorrel, S. Smith, C-SPAN3 14 Sep. 2017.
2. Little Sorrel  
Ref.: Stonewall Jackson's Little Sorrel, S. Smith, C-SPAN3 14 Sep. 2017.
3. Senator Charles Sumner

Ref.: "The Madness of Mary Lincoln," Jason Emerson (Southern Ill. Univ. Press. 2007), p.42.

4. Summitville

Ref.: "Morgan's Great Raid," David Mowery (The History Press. 2013), p.159.

5. Big Bethel

Ref.: "Lee's Lieutenants," Vol I, Freeman, p.17 - 18

6. Champion Hill

Ref.: Magazine of the American Civil War Museum, Winter 2016, Diaries of Brothers Who Fought on Opposite Sides of the War, Coski, pp.8 - 17

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### **Future Presentations**

March 21, 2019

Gary Dyson, Mt. Airy, Maryland

***The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith and the Battle on the Stono River***

April 18, 2019

David Finney, Louisville, KY

***Custer Meets the Wolverines***

May 16, 2019

Wayne Motts, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

***Pickett's Charge: A Battlefield Guide***

September 19, 2019

John Fazio, Cleveland Civil War Round Table

***The Emancipation Proclamation***

October 17, 2019

Scott Schroeder, Bloomington, Indiana

***Lee's Lost Orders in the Maryland Campaign***

November 21, 2019

Scott Mingus, York, Pennsylvania

***General William "Extra Billy" Smith***

January 16, 2020

Chris Burns, Cincinnati, Ohio

***Ulysses S. Grant***

February 20, 2020

Christina Hartlieb, Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Cincinnati

***Harriet Beecher Stowe***

March 19, 2020

David Deatrack, Louisville Kentucky Civil War Round Table

***General Lovell Rousseau***

## 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.

### TRUSTEES:

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