



# THE drum roll

Volume 30 291st Regular Meeting  
Number 10 June 1, 2012

*A genius who used strategic withdrawal effectively?*

Friday, June 1, 2012, 6:00 p.m.

Concorde Banquets  
20922 North Rand Road, Kildeer, Illinois

## Retreatin' Joe A Gifted, but Flawed, General

**A**t many of our discussions we have talked about Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston. Some of us have referred to him as "Retreatin' Joe"; others have disagreed and called him a military genius who used strategic withdrawal effectively. He didn't take huge casualties to defend geographic locations that could be retaken. His men loved him. On the other hand, some say that he lacked the will to fight, just like George B. McClellan. He certainly wasn't a political general, as he was continually on the outs with President Jefferson Davis. So who is right?

Johnston is certainly one of the more controversial Confederate generals. History has been mixed and not always kind to him. William Tecumseh Sherman wrote that Johnston was "the equal in all the elements of generalship to Lee." The Encyclopedia Britannica says that he was a "Confederate general who never suffered a direct defeat during the American Civil War."

Although he had some victories in battle, he was often criticized for a lack of aggressiveness, and his campaigns were not successful. Even though he was the senior Confederate commander at Bull Run in 1861, credit is usually given to his subordinate, General P. G. T. Beauregard. Some blame Johnston's lack of decisive victories on the



Craig Symonds

strained relationship he had with Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Mary Chesnut wrote, "We thought this was a struggle for independence. Now it seems it is only a fight between Joe Johnston and Jeff Davis."

So Johnston ended up with the reputation of having never lost and never really won. Craig Symonds in his book *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography*, sifted through the hullabaloo and presented a balanced portrayal of this enigmatic general.

On Friday, June 1, 2012, Symonds will present his views on "Old Joe." He might also tell us how he became the model for Tom Clancy's fictional character Jack Ryan, who also was a civilian history professor at the Naval Academy.

Dr. Craig L. Symonds is currently the Class of 1957 Distinguished Professor of American Naval History at the U.S. Naval Academy. The first person to win both the Naval Academy's Excellence in Teaching award and its Excellence in Research award, he also served as History Department chair from 1988 to 1992 and received the Department of the Navy's Superior Civilian Service medal at Newport, Rhode Island, and at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, England.

Symonds is the author or editor of 25 books, including prize-winning biographies of Joseph E. Johnston, Patrick Cleburne, and Franklin Buchanan, as well as *The American Heritage History of the Battle of Gettysburg*. *Decision at Sea: Five Naval Battles That Shaped American History*,

**Get your banquet reservations to Tom DeFranco by May 28**

won the Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt Prize for Naval History in 2006. His 2008 book, *Lincoln and His Admirals: Abraham Lincoln, the U.S. Navy, and the Civil War*, won the Baroness Prize, the Laney Prize, the Lyman Prize, the Lincoln Prize, and the Abraham Lincoln Institute

Book Award. He also won the Nevins-Freeman Prize in 2009. His latest work is *The Battle of Midway*, published by Oxford University Press in October 2011.

He and his wife Marylou live in Annapolis, MD. They have one son and two grandchildren.

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## Birth of the Shining Meteor

By Tom DeFranco

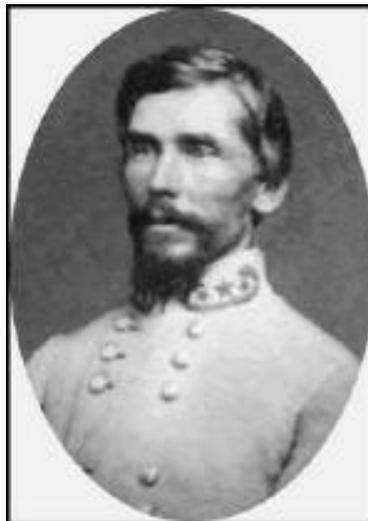
Perhaps one of the best division commanders of the entire Civil War on either side was Patrick Ronayne Cleburne of County Cork, Ireland. He served in the British army and moved to the United States during the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s. He made his way to Helena, Arkansas, and became an American citizen and an attorney, dabbling in local Democratic politics. As with many of the officers and men who fought on both sides on April 6 and 7, 1862, Shiloh would be his proving ground. On May 4 Thomas Cartwright presented his story to the Round Table about Cleburne and his brigade at the Battle of Shiloh.

It started near a Tennessee River landing named Pittsburg, about 20 miles north of the Tennessee/Mississippi border. The reason for the concentration of troops was the proximity of the rail crossroads at Corinth, MS. The North planned to capture them and cut off Confederate supplies and communications.

The Confederacy had a bad time of it in the winter of 1862. In January, at Logan's Crossroads, Union General George Thomas defeated his Confederate opposite number, Felix Zollicoffer. That secured the Eastern half of Kentucky from the Confederates. Then in February, General Ulysses Grant found a seam in the Confederate defenses at the confluence of the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers with the Ohio. Forts Henry and Donelson were supposed to guard that avenue to the South, but were captured that month.

In an act of desperation, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston gathered troops from many heretofore quiet sectors of the Confederacy. Troops posted along the Gulf Coast merged with troops who were refugees from the battles at the

forts. Cleburne's regiment, the Yell Rifles (also known as the 15th Arkansas) made the trek from central Kentucky, missing Forts Henry and Donelson. They would not miss the battle at Shiloh, however. A month before the battle, Cleburne was promoted to brigadier general and took command of five other regiments along with his Arkansas boys. He now had the 6th Mississippi and the 2nd, 5th, 23rd, and 24th Tennessee regiments as well and was assigned to General William Hardee's Third Corps.



General Patrick Cleburne

The Federal troops at Pittsburg Landing were there for one reason

only. They were to train for the upcoming capture of Corinth and points south. They, like the Confederates, were very green. Refusing to believe that the Confederates were in any condition or mood to attack, Generals Grant and Sherman were disinclined to build fortifications. As far as they were concerned, the upcoming battle would start when their men were ready to move and not a moment sooner, and it would occur at Corinth, not at their encampment.

The Confederate plan of attack as conceived by Johnston called for sweeping the Union forces away from the crossing toward a marshy area near Owl Creek, west of the river. This action would

serve the dual purpose of placing the backs of the Federal troops against a creek with a swamp behind that while also precluding any linkup with General Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio. Then the Confederates could effectively defeat the Yankees in detail by maintaining the central position. As usual with war, the plans went awry quickly. Poor initial deployment by Confederate second-in-command, General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, hunger, horrendously wet spring weather, lack of effective reconnaissance of the Federal camps, and the friction of battle all played a part in fouling up the Confederate attack plan.

Cleburne's brigade was involved in some of the earliest fighting of the battle. Cleburne's skirmishers (15th Arkansas and 6th Mississippi) engaged skirmishers posted by Union brigade commander General Jesse Hildebrand of Sherman's division. Not believing reports from subordinates of the impending attack, Sherman went to see for himself and was wounded in the hand, and his orderly, Thomas Holliday, was killed. Meanwhile, the right of Cleburne's brigade started veering away from the rest of the brigade. When Hildebrand's brigade broke and retreated, they unmasked their well-placed and sited artillery support, which proved very costly to Cleburne's men. When the Federals retreated, the general direction of the retreat was toward the landing and not away from it. Unit disorganization soon hampered the efforts of leaders of both sides to maintain control. This situation was exacerbated by

Beauregard's poor deployment, which created too long a front, making the lines difficult to control and eventually causing comingling of different corps.

In Cleburne's sector of the fighting, near the Shiloh Church and Water Oaks Pond, the fighting started to seesaw. General John A. McClernand's division launched what amounted to a spoiling attack at a crossroads on the Union right flank. On the eastern end of the field, Confederate movement was stymied by elements of three Union divisions positioned in a farm lane concealed by thickets to its front. General Johnston was killed in this area. Eventually, the Confederate attack completely bogged down. By early evening, only the Confederate brigades of Generals John Jackson and James Chalmers were in any shape to renew an attack. Beauregard had to end the day's action.

Tremendous casualties at Shiloh showed that Patrick Cleburne had much to learn (47 percent of his brigade became casualties). In the future, he would need to personally reconnoiter enemy positions. He would need to control some artillery to bring it to bear on the enemy, and he would need to deploy sharpshooters to harass enemy strongholds. This would serve him well in battles at Richmond, KY, Perryville, Stones River, and Chattanooga.

I extend thanks to Thomas Cartwright for an in-depth presentation of the battle that introduced the Stonewall of the West to the Civil War landscape.

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## June Events

**June 8, Chicago Civil War Round Table.** Dennis Frye will speak on Antietam.

**June 9–10, Civil War Museum,** Kenosha, WI. Anniversary program includes living history, music, performances, special displays. Jerry Allen will portray George H. Thomas Saturday at 2:30 p.m.

**June 12, McHenry County Civil War Round Table.** Fred Freczkowicz will speak on the 11th Corps at Chancellorsville.

**June 15, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.** Ed Bearss will present Personal Milestones Along the Way: 50 Years of Civil War Round Tables.

*drum roll*, June 2012

## June Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held in the Zimmerman Room at the Barrington Area Library, 505 North Northwest Highway, Barrington, on June 9, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. The discussion of the events of 1862 will continue. The discussion will be led by second vice president Denise Limburg.

These discussions are generally held on the third Saturday of the month from September through June. They are held to generate and foster a free exchange of ideas on events that transpired during the Civil War.



## 2011–2012 Officers and Trustees

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## May Raffle

The May raffle winners were Anna Strelka, who won *The Long Surrender* by Burke Davis, and Mark Ostrand, who won *The St. Albans Raiders* by Daniel S. Rush and E. Gale Pewitt, both donated by Ed Stipulin; Tim Atchison, who won *The Battle of Franklin* by James R. Knight, donated by Mary Abroe; Marybeth Foley, who won *The Gettysburg Campaign* by Albert A. Nofi; and Jackie Wilson, who won *The Confederate Reader*, edited by Richard B. Harwell.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors. If you would like to donate Civil War–related books or items, please contact Charlie Banks.

## Roster Changes

### Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee will meet at the Allens' home on Saturday, June 30, 2012, starting with breakfast at 9:00 a.m. The address is 755 Fox Trail Terrace, Cary. Any member can attend; all who plan to attend should notify Jerry Allen at (847) 516-6429 (home) or (847) 508-9974 (cell) or jallen5393@aol.com.

### Reenlistment

Ms. Jackie Wilson  
822 Seward Street, #1C  
Evanston, Illinois 60202-2829  
(847) 814-7064  
e-mail jawcwr@comcast.net

### New e-mail address

David Sullivan  
e-mail hapwrl@aol.com

## 2012–2013 Speakers

September 7	Frank Crawford	The Shenandoah Valley
October 5	Leslie Goddard	Mary Chesnut
November 2	William Furry	To be announced
December 7	Father Robert Miller	Lincoln's Faith
January 4	Tom DeFranco	The Pipe Creek Plan and Its Effect on the Battle at Gettysburg
February 1	Bruce Allardice	Chicago in the Civil War
March 1	Rob Girardi	To be announced
April 5	Tom Clemens	Antietam (tentative)
May 3	Gloria Swift	To be announced
June 7	George Buss and Tim Connor	Lincoln–Douglas (tentative)

To learn more about this Round Table call Sully Sullivan at (847) 259-5577  
or visit our website at <http://northernilcwr.org/index.html>