



THE drum roll

Volume 30 288th Regular Meeting
Number 7 March 2, 2012

Old Stars, Spies, and Railroad Raids

Friday, March 2, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
500 North Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois

Mitchel's North Alabama Campaign



Jim Ogden

The plan which I propose for this force is . . . to strike at the points occupied by the enemy on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.”

That was the intent Army of the Ohio commander Don Carlos Buell had for his advance division in Middle Tennessee in late March 1862. Buell himself, with his main body, was under orders from his new boss, Major General Henry Halleck, to march southwest to join “Old Brain’s” main thrust massing on the banks of the Tennessee for the continued outflanking of the Rebel defenses on the Mississippi.

Buell could hardly have left those instructions with a more committed, aggressive, and impatient officer than Kentuckian Brigadier General Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel. In little more than a fortnight after being turned loose with those or-

ders, Mitchel was astride the Memphis and Charleston Railroad (something it would take his boss’s boss six weeks more to accomplish), was deeper into the Confederacy than any other Federal force, and before a second fortnight passed, was threatening the burgeoning “Gateway to the Deep South,” Chattanooga.

In achieving these successes, by seeking to accomplish a lot with a little, Mitchel also, in the end, sparked one of the most spectacular events of the war, Andrews’s Raid or the Great Locomotive Chase, often the only part of the Kentuckian’s operation not overshadowed by the bloodbath of Shiloh the week before.

On March 2, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park historian Jim Ogden will look at Buell’s and Mitchel’s perceptive thrust and the abortive raid they spawned that presaged the real campaign for Chattanooga a little more than a year in the future.

James (Jim) Ogden graduated from Frostburg State College with a degree in American history and began working with the National Park Service in 1982. In 1988, he became historian at the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Since 1986, he has conducted more than 400 U.S. Army staff rides (in-depth analyses of historical military events) at Chickamauga and Chattanooga. For a decade, his staff ride clients also included 200 to 600 officers annually from the British Army’s Joint Services Command and Staff College.

All who would like to join us for dinner with Jim Ogden at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on March 2 at Sam’s of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, should notify me at jallen5393@aol.com or (847) 516-6429 by Wednesday, February 29. — *Jerry Allen*

Craig Symonds will speak at the annual banquet on June 1

Too Late for Vindication?

By Tom DeFranco

Along with the postwar Sickles vs. Meade and Longstreet vs. Jubal Early/William Pendleton “sunrise orders” controversies at Gettysburg and the cashiering of Fitz John Porter for allegedly disobeying orders during the second Manassas campaign, the firing of Major General Gouverneur K. Warren was one of the most contentious squabbles of the postwar between erstwhile brothers-in-arms. It involved Major General Philip Sheridan’s allegation that Warren, then commanding the Federal Fifth Corps, did not act with sufficient alacrity in support of his cavalry forces at a road junction known as Five Forks. On February 3, 2012, Paula Walker addressed the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table regarding this controversy.

After building a good reputation on the heels of his Gettysburg activities, where he was credited with positioning Strong Vincent’s brigade on Little Round Top in a most dire emergency, Warren was eventually given command of the Army of the Potomac’s Fifth Corps. In this post, at the Battle of the Wilderness, Warren first ran afoul of the habitually impatient Lt. General Ulysses Grant.

An attack the Fifth Corps was supposed to begin at mid-morning of May 5 didn’t start until early afternoon. This delay, despite some extenuating circumstances and mitigating factors, lowered Warren’s esteem in the eyes of the new hierarchy of the eastern Union army. Meanwhile, Sheridan’s own past reveals a few blemishes in his career in the wartime army, thus far.

He arguably performed well at Perryville and Stones River. At Chickamauga, there was some question as to the whereabouts of his infantry di-

vision during the Confederate breakthrough that routed two-thirds of the Federal Army of the Cumberland. Two months later, at Chattanooga, he must have impressed Grant with his conduct during the charge up Missionary Ridge. This action led to Sheridan’s commanding all the cavalry in the eastern theater.

Again, his performance was mixed. He was not impressive at the Wilderness. He lost the Battle of Trevilian Station tactically (despite a numerical

superiority of approximately 9,300 horsemen to 6,800 Confederate cavalymen) and in his larger mission either to destroy the Virginia Central Railroad or to link up with David Hunter’s forces in the Shenandoah Valley. While facing Jubal Early’s army in the Valley he was generally successful, including a dramatic, but close-run victory at Cedar Creek in the autumn of 1864.

It is now the end of March, beginning of April 1865. The breakthrough ending the war’s longest siege is about to occur, with the possibility of finally ending four years of misery. Sheridan was

tasked by Grant to sever the connections between the South Side Railroad and the Army of Northern Virginia. The combination of nasty weather and a prompt response by Robert E. Lee checked Little Phil’s move. Grant promised him reinforcements in the form of the Fifth Corps.

Typical of warfare before the age of radios, a series of conflicting orders came into Warren’s headquarters. The net effect was that a specific division (Griffin’s) that Warren was ordered to send to Sheridan would have to move through two other divisions to get to its destination. Warren overrode the order, sending Ayres’s division, but



Major General Gouverneur K. Warren

they also encountered severe delays. Needless to say, an impatient, angry Sheridan would take great pains to get his way for the delay. The target of his wrath was Warren, who was relieved of command of the Fifth Corps by Sheridan.

The problem with this action is that it was not within Sheridan's jurisdiction to relieve a corps commander. Corps commanders and above were to be relieved only by members of the political administration. However, Sheridan had a lot of clout within the army chain of command, and Grant backed him. By January 1880 a Court of Inquiry convened — one that Warren eagerly sought to clear his name.

Three principal reasons were given for his having been relieved. The first was that Warren failed to act promptly on the night of March 31 to move to the Dinwiddie Court House. The second charge was that he had deployed too slowly on April 1 for the planned flank attack at Five Forks. The third was that he failed to exercise effective command control during the attack.

Finally, on November 21, 1882 (three years to the date that Warren had met with President Hays to request the proceedings), the findings of the court were published. The results were as follows: 1) It was not practicable for Warren to have marched his corps to Dinwiddie Court House in the time allotted by Sheridan (although Warren could have moved faster than he did); 2) there was no undue delay in deployment; and 3) Warren's leaving the one division (Ayres's) to direct Crawford's and Griffin's was justified. The sad irony in all this was that Gouverneur K. Warren would never see his name cleared. He died of liver failure on August 8, 1882.

I sincerely thank Paula Walker, on behalf of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table, for an enlightening presentation.

In Memoriam

Word has been received of the loss of two of our members. Former member William G. Grice passed away on Sunday, January 15, 2012, in Poteau, Oklahoma. John R. Herman, Sr., passed away Thursday, January 19, 2012, in Arlington Heights. Our condolences go out to their families.

March Events

March 7, Lake County Civil War Round Table.

Doug McFall will speak on the First Wisconsin Cavalry and Camp Harvey.

March 9, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.

David Wigers will speak on the Legacy of Lincoln in Wisconsin and Illinois, 12 noon. Free program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association.

March 9, Chicago Civil War Round Table. A.

Wilson Greene will give the Nevins-Freeman Address on the Bermuda Hundred Campaign.

March 13, McHenry County Civil War Round Table.

Ed Urban will speak on Pea Ridge.

March 16, Salt Creek Civil War Round Table.

Dan Van Haften will speak on Abraham Lincoln and the Structure of Reason.

March 17, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.

Russ Horton and Jeff Kollath from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum will speak on Wisconsin's Irish Regiment, 1 p.m. Free program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association.

March 20, Clarinda Cady chapter of Questers.

William Hinchliff will speak on the Civil War in Chicago at the Barrington Area Library, 10 a.m.; \$10 donation requested for the restoration of Cady Cemetery in Inverness. Coffee will be served at 9:30 a.m.

March 24, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Sec-

ond Annual Civil War Expo, 11 a.m.—4 p.m. Living history groups will offer information about their programs and interpretation. There will be living history presentations at various locations throughout the day. Free program presented in conjunction with the Historical Timekeepers.

March 25, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.

Mike Eckers will talk about the 2nd Wisconsin and 2nd Minnesota infantry regiments during the Civil War, 1 p.m. Free program sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table and the Iron Brigade Association.

March 27, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI.

Mark Pohlad, art history professor from DePaul University, Chicago, will discuss Abraham Lincoln's image in art and how it changed to reflect the nation's outlook, 6:30 p.m.; \$15, \$10 for the Friends of the Museums; advance registration required.



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February Raffle

The February raffle winners were Glenn Bridier, who won *Hallowed Ground* by Monro Mac-Closkey; Tom Gavigan, who won three paperback books; Jerry Allen, who won *God and General Longstreet* by Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows; Charles Brenneman, who won *Reveille in Washington: 1860–1865* by Margaret Leech; and Mellanie Fowler, who won *Lee and His Generals* by Captain William P. Snow, CSA, and *Decisive Battles of the Civil War* by William Swinton.

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

New recruits

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March 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 March 17, 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 Speakers

April 6, 2012. Rick Andresen will speak on Reconstruction, Part II.

May 4, 2012. Thomas Cartwright will speak on a subject to be determined.

June 1, 2012. Craig Symonds will speak on a subject to be determined.

To learn more about this Round Table call Sully Sullivan at (847) 259-5577