



THE drum roll

381st Regular Meeting Volume 39 Number 10 June 3, 2022

Tullahoma Campaign of 1863

Meeting starts at 7:00 pm ZOOM ONLY

Friday, June 3, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Via Zoom Only



The Union armies had a daunting challenge in front of them. They had to win enough victories to assure the public in the North that the war was being won and the Union would be preserved. If victories did come, they would convince foreign powers not to enter the war and throw their weight behind the Confederacy.

The civil war had some great campaigns which are still today studied by our military today. Grant's Vicksburg and Overland, the Gettysburg campaign, and Rosecrans' Tullahoma Campaign thru middle Tennessee are just a few that are studied. But the most overlooked campaign is the Middle Tennessee Campaign of 1863.

Dave Powell is a member of our roundtable and a graduate of VMI. He has published numerous articles for various magazines and has design simulations of many battles for the gaming industry.

He authored the three volume set on "The Chickamauga Campaign" and "Failure In The saddle" and few more titles about the Battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga.

Please welcome and log onto zoom Friday June 6 at 7:00 P.M. via zoom to hear his presentation on the Tullahoma Campaign thru Middle Tennessee.

Join Zoom Meeting

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Despite the incredible volumes of ink that have been spilled on the battle of Gettysburg, there are still perspectives that are less frequently represented in the story of that epic encounter. On May 6, Jonathan Sebastian presented a number of those to the Round Table.

Sebastian opened up with a person not usually considered as part of the Gettysburg story: George H. Sharpe, head of the Bureau of Military Information in the Army of the Potomac. Prior to the Civil War, there was no formal military intelligence branch in the U.S. Army. There had been a network of spies in the Revolution, and in the War with Mexico there were both scouts under Robert E. Lee and Mexican scouts that were allied with the Army, but these were informal. When George McClellan built the Army Of the Potomac, he brought in famed detective Allan Pinkerton to oversee military intelligence. Pinkerton may have been a fine private detective, but he was a failure at military work. His vast overestimates of Confederate strength played directly into McClellan's innate caution (Sebastian noted that whether Pinkerton genuinely believed those numbers or adjusted them to validate Little Mac's own predilections is uncertain). When Joseph Hooker took over the Potomac army in early 1863, he had Sharpe brought in and the Bureau created. Sharpe used more sophisticated methods (a set of standardized questions for deserters and prisoners, cavalry reports, Southern newspapers) to gain more accurate intelligence. This improvement first manifested in the Chancellorsville campaign, but although Hooker was eventually sent packing, Sharpe was not.

Sebastian contrasted the Union intelligence gathering with the inadequate knowledge Lee had of Union movements and strengths throughout the Gettysburg campaign, a topic intertwined with Jeb Stuart's absence in the

days before battle, and the question of whether Lee still had cavalry enough to be kept well-informed. Sebastian demonstrated why the horsemen Lee retained were inadequate to the task. Stuart took his three best (and, perhaps more important, most conventional) brigades with him on his attempted ride around the Army of the Potomac. The four brigades remaining with Lee (Albert Jenkins, Jerome Robertson, Grumble Jones, and John Imboden) were of less certain quality, not as well disciplined, and not nearly as experienced in the scouting/intelligence gathering at which Stuart excelled. Additionally, they all had duties that precluded extended intelligence gathering: Guarding wagons in the rear, guarding flanks and, in Jenkins' case, leading the march of the army in Pennsylvania. Stuart's absence did indeed create a military intelligence shortfall for the Army of Northern Virginia.

Nowhere was the intelligence gap more important than on Day One, July 1, 1863.

Sebastian noted that many people view the 1st As a preliminary to the main event on July 2-3; in actuality, it was its own sustained battle and should be considered on its own merits. The most often-cited contingency on that day is Richard Ewell's supposed failure to seize Cemetery Hill late in the day. However, the circumstances were not favorable for such a move by Ewell. His two divisions on the scene had had a long day of marching and fighting; they were disorganized and fatigued (as were A.P. Hill's two divisions that had seen action). Additionally, Lee was unfamiliar with the terrain in front of him, and what enemy might be masked behind the high ground, thanks to the lack of scouting. And Ewell had concerns passed on to him from his infantry about the presence of a large body of troops (Slocum's 12th Corps) beyond his left. Sebastian also suggested that a better possibility might have been to send Richard Anderson's newly arrived division to Cemetery Hill instead of Ewell – a possibility that, if Lee recognized it, he did not acknowledge in his reports.

Sebastian noted a couple of additional concerns that could have impacted a Confederate move against Cemetery Hill, or for that matter Culp's Hill. Once Slocum's 12th Corps moved to the vicinity of the battlefield, it in essence formed a new interior line, both guarding the assembling trains near Powers Hill and backing up the battered 1st and 11th Corps. Additionally, by the morning of July 2 elements of 5th Corps and the

cavalry arrived in the vicinity of Brinkerhoff Ridge; some of the horsemen skirmished with the Stonewall Brigade of Edward Johnson's newly-arrived division, keeping that brigade out of the efforts against Culp's Hill later that day.

With time running short, Sebastian was able to add one more often overlooked aspect of Gettysburg into the mix: the reconnaissance on the morning of July 2 undertaken by Captain Johnston of Lee's staff, with the purpose of establishing the Union strength and position on their southern flank. It was this flank that would be Lee's primary target (by two divisions of Longstreet's corps) that day. Without Stuart around to do the scouting, as he had done to set up Jackson's flank attack at Chancellorsville, it was left in the underwhelming hands of Johnston. (As on July 1, Lee's lack of intelligence on terrain and opposition was a hindrance). In the process of getting all the way to Little Round Top (or what he may have erroneously assumed was the soon to be famous hill), Johnston somehow missed the presence of a considerable number of Federal troops in the area; at the very least, how he entirely missed Andrew Humphreys' 3rd Corps division is inexplicable. When he returned from the scout and was asked specifically if he had penetrated to Little Round Top, he replied in the affirmative, and that the hill was empty. This intelligence affected Lee's plan for the attack, and the inaccuracy of the information (in combination with other factors) contributed to Longstreet's powerful assault not stepping off until 4 P.M.

Given that the presentation only reached the July 2 planning stages, no doubt the speaker had more underappreciated aspects available, had time allowed. On behalf of the Round Table, I thank John Sebastian for the ground he did cover in his fine presentation.

June Saturday Discussion

Saturday June 18, all members and guests are invited to participate in the session via zoom. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on the Roads to Gettysburg. It will start at 10:00 AM.

Join Zoom Meeting

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Appointed Positions

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Note The Time Change for Start of Meeting due to the Library Closing at 9:00 PM.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday June 14, McHenry County CWRT Jerry Allen will present Murphy's Law and the Peter Principle: The Holly Springs Raid at 7:00 pm at the Woodstock Public Library in the basement.

Friday June 10, The Chicago CWRT will present Dr. Thomas Carson on Lincoln as Moral Exemplar at 7:30 pm

Proposed Officers Slate for 22-23

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Elections will be held at the June Meeting. Anyone who wants to help the roundtable and run for an office position please contact Wayne Rhine.

As a note the board has decided not to collect dues for the 2022-23 year.