

THE COURIER

Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



April 2008 Meeting #90

Date: April 8th, 2008

Place: Dino's I90 & Rte. 306 exit Mentor, Ohio

Canteen: 6PM Rations: 7PM

Speaker: Ted Karle

Topic: "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"

Reservations required please Call Steve Abbey phone 440 255 8375

E-mail: abbeysr@webtv.net

On Tuesday April 8th 2008 our own Courier Columnist and resident historian Ted Karle will be presenting a program entitled: "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." This is the heart-warming story of one Payton Farquhar and his attempt to burn the bridge that was spanning Owl Creek. Ted insists that this is a story that you are not soon to forget!

In part two of our April meeting Ted will be presenting the details for our forthcoming NEOCWRT Spring Field Trip to Erie County Pennsylvania on Saturday May 17, 2008.

Civil War Minutes: by Franco Sperrazzo

During our February 12th meeting, member **Dr. Daniel Cudnick** offered a power point presentation on Civil War medicine and the different means that casualties occurred during the long conflict. The material was informative and conjured up numerous questions. Ted Karle wanted to know about infectious puss; Hudson Fowler inquired about how influenza was treated. Dr. Dan was precise and articulate as always. I asked what might be disclosed by comparing his first talk to his present one. We both concluded that he had a full beard a few years back and is now clean shaven.

On March 11th we were treated to a presentation of Civil War trivia. We were blessed to have an outstanding program orchestrated by **Brian Kowell**, dedicated tennis instructor and pharmaceutical sales rep. along with **Peter Holman**, devoted George Meade scholar and raconteur. The wit of Brian and Peter provided comical interaction with contestants Baucher, London, President Meissner, Bill Wilson and Joe Abazzio. Several members spoke of the time consuming effort both Peter and Brian put forth to make "Who wants to be a Millionaire, American History Edition" so successful. We also want to thank both presenters for providing the prizes from their personal collections.

I had the pleasure of traveling with historian and newsletter contributor Ted Karle to the **Erie Maritime Museum** in Western Pennsylvania. We first went on a cold mid January day but were able to get a personal tour of the **U.S.S. Brig Niagara**. Twenty years ago this replica ship was created to commemorate the 1813 Battle of Lake Erie, led by Commander Oliver Hazzard Perry. On March 20th, Ted and Franco returned to formulate plans for our spring one day trip with museum director of Education and Curator Mark T. Weber. We also visited other historical sites in nearby Waterford, Pa. Captain Ted will reveal more details and the itinerary of the May 17th event. This one day trip will include spouses or guests. Please let either Ted or Franco know if you plan to join this journey.

Norty London will report on the progress he has made with our relocated member Brent Morgan who now resides in the Richmond Virginia area. Our 11th annual Fall Field Trip is tentatively slated for September 18 – 21, 2008. A speaker for our September 9th monthly meeting has been secured. The title is the Battles of the Seven Days. This excursion is shared by members and guests. Member Ron Morgan and I will assist with the preparations. We welcome others members who wish to volunteer their talents and skills.

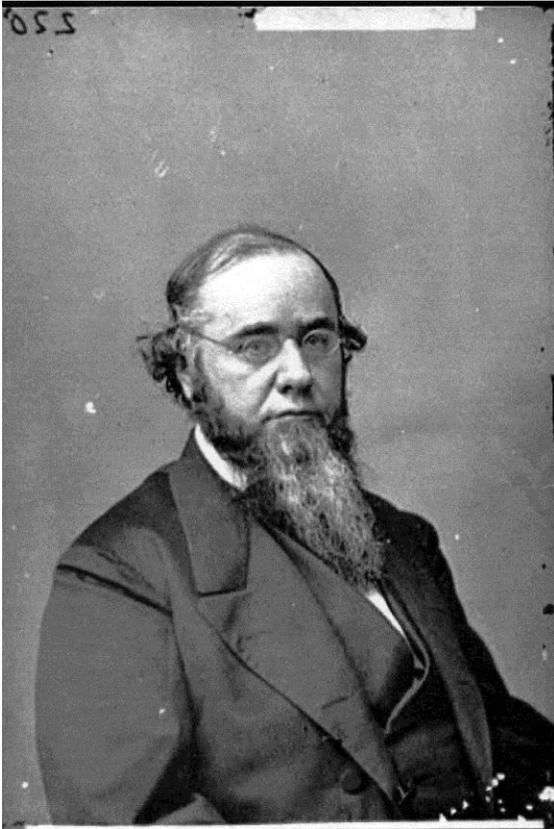
Watch for member **Arlan Byrne** to unveil information regarding our 4th annual NEOCWRT picnic at his 70 acre plantation in Middlefield, Ohio. **The July 13th** outdoor event includes a scheduled appearance by the 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry Company B. Details are being made by the wonderful collaboration of Arlan and his gracious wife Pat.

The NEOCWRT Book Club will convene on Tuesday, **April 15, 7:30pm** at the Borders Beachwood Store. The book for April is **American Brutus** by Michael W. Kauffman, copyright 2004, Random House publishers. John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln conspiracies. See Norty London or Bruce Beale if you are interested in attending.

Did Lincoln Order the Dahlgren Raid to Kill Jefferson Davis?

By John Sandy

The Army of the Potomac commanded by Major General George Gordon Meade saw little action following the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. Meade became more cautious and reluctant to engage Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia much to the consternation of President Lincoln and the Radical Republicans. General Meade thus gave Lee the time he needed to replenish his tired and wounded legions. Meade's Army spent the winter of 1863 – 1864 encamped on the North bank of the Rapidan River. The Confederate government refused to exchange captured black soldiers of the Union Army and the new General of the Union Armies, Ulysses S. Grant was opposed to prisoner exchanges because he believed they only served to benefit the rebels who were short of man-power. President Lincoln and the



Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Library of Congress photograph

Federal government became increasingly concerned with the fate of the more than 15,000 Union prisoners of war being held in Confederate prison sites around Richmond, Virginia. The Federal Bureau of Military Intelligence reported that scores of Union prisoners being held at Belle Isle and Libby prisons were dying each day from disease and mal-nutrition. Major General Benjamin Butler, who commanded the Union garrison at Fortress Monroe, proposed a raid on Richmond to destroy the Tredegar Irons Works and free the Union prisoners held at Belle Isle and Libby prisons. Both President Lincoln and Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton approved General Butler's plan. However, Confederate intelligence agents learned of Butler's plan and his assault was stopped on February 7, 1864.

General Judson Kilpatrick believed that he had a better plan to free the Union prisoners of war and reap damage on Richmond's railroads and military supply warehouses. Kilpatrick met with President Lincoln and War Secretary Stanton and obtained their approval for a raid on the Confederate capital. On February 16, 1864 Kilpatrick met with Edwin Stanton and formulated the objectives of the raid. In addition to freeing the Union prisoners of war and destroying Confederate supply and

communications, the Federal raiders would distribute amnesty proclamation leaflets throughout the Richmond area. Confederate soldiers and citizens alike would be "welcomed back to the Union" and granted amnesty if they would lay down their arms and take an oath of allegiance to the Federal Government.

Army of the Potomac Commander Meade did not like Judson Kilpatrick. Meade found him to be both reckless and ruthless in his command of other officers and troopers of the Third Cavalry Division. His non de guerre: "Kill-cavalry" was well deserved. The troopers that rode in his command did not expect to survive the experience and most of his men acquired a "hell for leather" attitude. In his capacity as Commander of the Army of the Potomac General Meade had to review Kilpatrick's plan. Meade approved it, but he did so with reluctance. Meade thought the plan too risky and he distrusted Kilpatrick's resolve to see it succeed.

However, Kilpatrick's plan carried the approval of President Lincoln and the secretary of war. Union

Cavalry Corps Commander Alfred Pleasanton went on record as opposing the raid. General Grant would replace General Pleasanton with Phil Sheridan as Union Cavalry Corps Commander in March 1864. Pleasanton would be reassigned to the Department of the Missouri to command General William Rosecrans's cavalry forces.

Colonel Ulric Dahlgren was the twenty one years old son of Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren, commander of the South Atlantic Blockade Squadron, and Naval Ordnance Development Command. Admiral Dahlgren became a close friend of President Lincoln after their meeting at a Washington wedding reception for a mutual friend. The President would often visit Admiral Dahlgren and became interested in the progress and development of smooth bore versus rifled naval cannon.

Ulric Dahlgren studied law and civil engineering before the outbreak of the Civil War. He secured a commission as a lieutenant and served as an aide-de-camp to General Franz Siegel in May of 1862. Dahlgren served as Siegel's chief of artillery at Second Bull Run and he later became an aide to Ambrose Burnside during the Battle of Fredericksburg. He served on Joseph Hooker's staff at Chancellorsville and under General Meade during the Gettysburg campaign. Promoted to captain, Dahlgren was seriously wounded in a cavalry fight on July 6th 1863 near Hagerstown Maryland. His left leg became infected and required amputation. Union doctors feared that he would die from the infection but he survived and was promoted to the rank of colonel at lofty age to twenty-one. Dahlgren was fitted with a prosthesis for his left leg and spent the next five months regaining his strength.



(Judson Kilpatrick and staff at Rose Hall. Library of Congress photograph)

Judson Kilpatrick selected Ulric Dahlgren to be part of his cavalry raid on Richmond because of the young colonel's close ties and influence with President Lincoln. Kilpatrick reminded the President that Richmond had been "lightly defended" during his raid on the Confederate capital in May 1863 during the Chancellorsville campaign. In February 1864, the Bureau of Military Intelligence reported that its agents saw limited troop movements and little change to the defenses of the rebel city.

The raid began on February 28, 1864 with Kilpatrick leading a force of 3500 troopers across the Rapidan River and south for Richmond. At Mt. Pleasant the cavalry expedition split into two attack groups. Kilpatrick's group of 3000 trooper would try to create a diversion by attacking the northern defenses of

Richmond while Colonel Dahlgren and some 500 riders would cross the James River and free the prisoners at Belle Isle and Libby prisons. Heavy rains, muddy roads and cold winter winds hampered the troopers' progress. It also affected their ability to communicate and coordinate their movements.

Ulric Dahlgren may have been a colonel but the handsome, young officer displayed a lack of maturity and good judgment when he stopped to share a bottle of blackberry wine with Mrs. Sally Sedden, wife of the Confederate Secretary of State. Virginia cavalry and homeland guards were alerted by Dahlgren's lack of speed and secrecy. Dahlgren's men looted smoke houses and private homes collecting food and useless booty. They managed to reach the outer defenses of Richmond before being forced to retreat. Ulric Dahlgren was killed in an ambush on the road near King and Queen Courthouse. Most of the troopers in Dahlgren's group were captured although a few did manage to escape.

A 13 year old lad searching Dahlgren's body recovered a watch, notebook and cigar case. The cigar case contained 2 pages written on official U.S. Third Cavalry stationery that detailed Dahlgren's mission to free the prisoners at Belle Isle and Libby prison. It further disclosed that the freed Union prisoners were to burn the city of Richmond while Colonel Dahlgren and his men were to assassinate Jefferson Davis and his cabinet. The Confederate government and Richmond newspapers were understandably upset at this disclosure. The Union and President Lincoln had resorted to the "black flag," while the South used civilized methods of waging war.

Official Washington and the Lincoln administration denied the rebel charges and insisted that the papers found on Colonel Dahlgren must be a forgery. The Confederate government hired a British company to make lithographs of the papers found on Dahlgren. The lithographs were published in a number of Southern newspapers which only served to enrage the South's will to fight on and continue the war.

In November of 1865 Secretary of War Stanton ordered all the Confederate records dealing with the Dahlgren raid to be brought to his office. All the papers and records of the raid were officially destroyed but why? Was he trying to protect the memory of President Lincoln or was he merely protecting himself from the responsibility for the failed mission? We do know that some ranking official either the President or the Secretary of War would have to have approved of the operation. It is unlikely that the young Colonel would have improvised his own written orders. Most Civil War historians have believed that Kilpatrick ordered Dahlgren to kill Jefferson Davis and his cabinet. Recently a group of hand writing experts from the National Archives using computer assisted electromagnetic imagery has determined that the signature on the lithographic copy of the Dahlgren papers is in fact that of Colonel Ulric Dahlgren.

References for Did Lincoln order Dahlgren Raid:

The Dahlgren Papers Revisited by Steven Sears, Columbiad, Summer of 1999

The Dahlgren Affair by Duane Schultz, W.W. Norton & Co. New York

The History Channel On Line Information Source, March 2008

Richmond Sentinel, March 4th, 5th and 8th, 1864 editions

Richmond Whig, March 8th, 17th, and 21st, 1864 editions

The Lucky Campaigner

A youth seeks glory on the battlefield and finds more than he envisioned by Ted Karle

William Lawrence did not heed the old admonition, “Be careful of what you wish for, your wish might come true.” The 21-year old youthful shoemaker “wanted action.” He reasoned an escape from his small hometown of Tionesta, Pennsylvania was his ticket to adventure. The Civil War had just begun. Enlistment in the newly forming militia unit called the “Erie Regiment” seemed like the best way to satisfy his longings

Time worked against him and his new militia comrades. The regiment’s three-month term of service expired before it could be mustered into Federal service. Added to this disappointment, the battle of First Bull Run was now history. There was only one thing to do. He and the fellows re-enlisted for three years becoming core members of the 83rd Pennsylvania Volunteers. Little did Lawrence know when he yearned, that his new unit would fight in more battles and sustain more battle casualties than any other Pennsylvania regiment. In fact, its record ranked second in the entire Union army. Unfortunately, Lawrence contributed to these regimental numbers.

Lawrence’s initial contribution came in the regiment’s first major action at Gaines Mill, Virginia in June of 1862. Lawrence was in the thick of the action. The 83rd’s fighting front changed three times. The regiment suffered 267 casualties. Sure enough, the unlucky Lawrence was counted among its wounded. A minie’ ball struck his left hip and passed down his leg. As if this unlucky hit was not enough, the ball added further indignity and potentially life-long complications. The projectile exited through his left testicle... truly a cruel wound for the young soldier. His new ticket took him to Ascension Church Hospital in Washington DC for recovery.

In October, certainly a less proud, but healed Lawrence returned to the 83rd in time for December’s Battle of Fredricksburg. His luck held...he emerged unscathed.

Combat is not the only thing a soldier has to endure. Lawrence revealed an un-wished for personal problem to his sister in a letter. “Most all the Boys in our Co. are complaining of the same thing & we can’t get One single thing here to cure the itch. I’m looking every day for something from Home. I will have patience till it comes. If you can’t get anything from Old Bush on the Hill or Dr. Hunter got to Sam Maslet and two Boxes of Pearsons Ointment and send them by mail...Do not put it off one day & you will do me a great favor.”

Elsewhere in that January letter, upon learning of his Captain being feted at a ball in their hometown, he reflected his unlucky circumstances. “When I think back to where I came from that small village of Ti (Tionesta) which I very often do and how the folks carried on it grieves me, we have to stay here from day to day in snow & indure all manner of hardships and go into Battle, while Others can enjoy themselves at home and live in Happynis. Its hard to think of but may God speed the right. I sometimes think this war will be an everlasting one. I can’t see the least sign of it ending.” It was evident he was now missing the “party action” on the home front.

Lawrence's luck changed again in that March of 1863; he was promoted to Corporal. His entire horoscope, however, was not so sanguine. He and the 83rd were headed for destiny on a hillside known as Little Round Top. There, the hapless Lawrence was hit by rifled musket fire on his right

tibia. The ball fractured his leg above the knee. The "good news" was that his shattered leg could be saved. The "bad news" was, he would limp for the remainder of his life. Lawrence was dispatched to Satterlee Hospital in West Philadelphia for treatment. The further "good news" was that the limp was not so severe as to cause his discharge from the service. He returned to the 83rd in January of 1864, just in time for Grant's bloody Overland Campaign.

That spring however, Lawrence apparently found time to test the functioning of his earlier testicular "war wound." This action involved "getting lucky"...a draw from Fate's deck that proved really stupid. His war records indicate that he entered an Alexandria, Virginia hospital in May of 1864, for treatment of syphilis requiring five months to control. His hospital stay was a fortunate event because it removed him from harm's way on the battlefield. While he recuperated, the 83rd charged at Saunders Field (in the Wilderness) sustaining 109 casualties, then at Laurel Hill Spotsylvania with 167 more casualties. New engagements at North Anna, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg followed. Given Lawrence's propensity for attracting Confederate bullets, it is likely that he would still be on one of those fields. In this respect, a social disease is considered a blessing!

In September of 1864, mercifully, Lawrence's term of enlistment expired. A grateful and wiser Lawrence wished to return once again to the now slower action at Tionesta. He declined a tempting bonus by not re-enlisting.



Lawrence was not really a loser when one considers what his wishes "for action" had brought. He returned home having fought in three of the War's major battles. He survived two severe wounds and received three life long disabilities (no left testicle, a limp, and the 'clap'). It didn't matter that he probably never would be able to fully answer the question, "What did you do in the War?" So, what became of him?

William Lawrence, the former shoemaker/soldier opened a lumber business (he was good with wood) in Tionesta. He received a veteran disability pension beginning in 1877. Luck continued to smile upon him.

He lived a long a productive life. His good fortune finally ended in 1919, when he succumbed to throat cancer. He is buried at Tionesta in his home county where he rests in peace.

So, my dear reader, the next time you make a wish, remember Corporal William Lawrence of the 83rd. Be careful of what you wish for, your wish might be more than abundantly fulfilled. Keep wishing!

SPRING FIELD TRIP “A DAY OF HISTORY”
SATURDAY MAY 17, 2008
Members, Wives, Ladies and Guests Welcome

Itinerary:

- Visit:** Fort LeBoeuf Museum at Waterford, PA... a French & Indian War Fort. Learn of Geo. Washington’s historic mission to the fort in 1753.
- Lunch:** Dine at the historic Eagle Hotel (Built in 1826) featuring Amish cuisine.
- Tour:** The Eric Maritine Museum featuring videos and exhibits on the War of 1812, Perry’s Victory at Battle of Lake Erie, early Erie, and the *USS Michigan* (1st Iron hulled steamer in the US Navy.) Admission Charge: \$5.00 each.
- Board:** The tall ship *Brig Niagara*, Commodore Perry’s flagship 1813.
- RSVP:** Contact: Franko at: (440) 442- 4824 leave a message or sign-up.

