

THE COURIER

Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



Date: October 14th 2008 Meeting # 93

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

Canteen: 6PM Rations: 7PM

Speaker: Tom Horvath

Topic: "The Andrews Raid"

Reservations required Please call Steve Abbey

Phone 440 255 8375

Tom Horvath will present a talk on the Andrews Raid- the action that included the men first awarded the Medal of Honor. Tom was born and raised in Lorain where he graduated from Lorain High School. He earned his B.A. in Mathematics from the Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. After college, Tom married Barbara, his wife of 44 years. They moved to Poughkeepsie, New York where Tom learned to program mainframe computers that measured their capacity in Ks (1000s). He has worked with computers ever since. In 1967, Tom and Barb moved back to the Mentor on the Lake area, where they've lived ever since, and raising four children. Both Tom and Barb are retired.

Tom first learned about the Andrews Raid as a youngster in the 1950's when Walt Disney produced *The Great Locomotive Chase*, and his family acquired an O scale model of the *General*. This past April on the anniversary of the raid, Tom and Barb visited the site of the raid in north Georgia. They met with a noted expert on the raid, viewed the *General* and the *Texas* and followed the path of the raid. Tom is in his third year as a member of the NEOCWRT.

Ups and Downs of a Confederate Soldier

Second of a two-part book review and perspective by John Krouse

In his book “Ups and Downs of a Confederate Soldier,” James Huffman gives a first-hand account of his experiences as a private in Company 1, 10th Virginia Infantry Regiment of the Confederate States Army, from the First Battle of Bull Run in July 1861 to the Battle of Spotsylvania in May 1864 when he was wounded and captured.

After the battle, Huffman and many other Confederate prisoners were held for a time and then taken by Federal soldiers on a long march north. “To the rear, the whole earth seemed to be alive with Yankees. The road, creeks and branches were a thin loblolly of mud and slush through which we were forced, sometimes up to our knees, while there was crossing on the side of the road.”



Confederate prisoners captured in the Shenandoah Valley

From National Archives

After several days of marching with his wounded leg, he wrote that prisoners were put on a boat and taken down the Potomac to a camp on a barren peninsula of the Chesapeake Bay called Point Lookout, Maryland – the largest Union prison camp established after the battle of Gettysburg to incarcerate Confederate prisoners. “Here I was reminded of a large flock of sheep, taken from a ranch and put in a pen, standing around looking at each other not knowing what to do.” Finding themselves in this

situation, the men soon organized into companies and divisions, and even established a school in a large building with books donated from the surrounding area.

Huffman and the others detested being under the control of Union guards he described as heartless, ignorant brutes and he said the drinking water was contaminated and the food covered with maggots. He also recalled the irony of being guarded by Negro soldiers. “Many times while on the top of the wall or fence, they would recognize their former masters and talked to them saying, “The bottom rail on top now.”

After three months at Point Lookout, he and a large group of fellow prisoners were transferred to a camp in Elmira, New York. The Elmira Prison was a 45-acre camp on the banks of the Susquehanna River, with grass, green trees and adjacent mountains that softened the landscape. The prison was well organized, with barracks, hospital wards and a large cookhouse.

“This camp, at first sight, seemed a very healthy place, but it proved to be sickly for our men. The death rate was much higher than in the army during active hostilities. Half of us Virginians and I think three-quarters of all Southerners died here in eight to ten months. The well water looked pure but was deadly poison to our men, with thousands having chronic diarrhea and all kinds of bowel and kidney trouble, from which they died,” he wrote.

Of the prisoners that escaped disease, many died just wasting away. “There were lots of drones or lifeless, do-less persons who moped about, pining away for want of sufficient food to eat, losing their humanity, eating almost anything – rats, gangrene poultices and the like. They were known by their pallid color and lifeless movements. Most of them died there, growing so lean that they seemed to have no flesh at all before their spirits finally left their bodies.”

Huffman said some of the more industrious and resourceful prisoners soon realized that it was no good to be mopping around doing nothing, so they would craft jewelry and other small items out of scrap wood, metal, bone, and horsehair. Guards would buy these items and re-sell them as souvenirs to townspeople. For his tools, Huffman drove a big six-inch spike through a stick for a hammer, made a pair of pincers from some other filed-down nails, and made a small drill made with broken sewing needles fastened to a rod twirled around by a “bow and sweep.” With these tools and part of a broken pocket knife, he made rings and carved picture albums that sold for 75 cents to \$1.25. He said half the men at Elmira had some kind of business like this going on, not only providing them with extra money for food and supplies but also making them feel productive and occupying their time.



Wooden picture album carved by Huffman at Elmira Prison Camp

From Huffman's book

With this in mind, Huffman had some wise advice that applies even today. “Here is one of the most important lessons of life. Have confidence and patience. If at first you don’t succeed, try again and put the whole mind, being and soul into your work. Have faith and confidence in yourself, even under the most unfavorable circumstances. In this way, mind says to nerves and muscles “Get a move on and try.”

This attitude got him through his ordeal as a prisoner of war, and prepared him for still more challenges he faced as the war ended and Southern soldiers returned home to find their towns, farms and countryside laid waste. Homes and buildings were burned, fields bare, crops destroyed, livestock confiscated, fences burned by troops for firewood. Roads, bridges and railroads were decimated. Confederate currency was worthless, companies were bankrupt, and entire villages were without young men to do the hard work of reconstruction. “Hopes were blighted, fortunes ruined, plans frustrated and all now subjected to the swarm of hungry carpetbaggers that came south to devour what little the war had left,” he wrote.

In spite of the war's destruction and the aftermath of reconstruction, Huffman got the home place working again, with former slaves all staying on the land and working for the family doing much the same jobs they had before they were freed. Huffman married Mary Henton on March 8, 1866, and they raised nine children at Naked Creek.



James and Mary Huffman shortly after their marriage

From Huffman's book

Huffman wrote the book when he was 72 years old as a family record. It's amazingly well-written, considering that his education consisted of only a few months in a country school for several years, where he learned to read and write and, as he states, "do a little ciphering." The balance of his education came later in life from reading newspapers, periodicals and the Bible. A portion of the original manuscript was published after his death in the April 1939 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine under the title "Prisoner of War – a Confederate Soldier's Story." He died at Naked Creek in 1922 at age 82 and is buried in the Confederate section of Arlington National Cemetery beside a bronze monument erected by the Daughters of the Confederacy.



**The Courier is the monthly newsletter of the
Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table**

John Sandy.....Editor

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The Solitary Man on a Black Horse by John Sandy Part Two

On May 9, 1862 Confederate forces evacuated Norfolk and Portsmouth and set fire to the dry docks and warehouses. The iron-clad Merrimac, (a.k.a the C.S.S. Virginia), the terror of the Virginia coast was scuttled and sunk off Hampton Roads in order to prevent its capture by the Union fleet. General McClellan sent a telegram to Secretary of War Stanton requesting that the Navy send gun boats up the James River to clear the river of Rebel forts and heavy gun emplacements. On May 15, 1862 a Union Naval attack force led by **Commander John Rogers** attempted to silence the Confederate heavy guns at **Fort Darling** on Drewry's Bluff. Located just seven miles below Richmond at a point where the river is narrow and protected by a stone cliff more than 90 feet high, Fort Darling proved to be impregnable to the Federal gun boats Monitor and the Galena. The Confederates sank old wooden boats and barges in the deep narrow bend of the river. In addition they strung a heavy iron chain across the width of the river to further prevent its passage by the enemy. A joint Army and Naval assault on Fort Darling might have succeeded but General McClellan believed that he could not spare the units necessary for the attack.

Panic gripped the city of Richmond as thousands of citizens including Jefferson Davis's own family prepared to evacuate the besieged capital. Confederate gold and silver was loaded on to railroad cars to preserve it from the pending Yankee invasion. Private homes were converted into hospitals to care for the anticipated wounded Confederate soldiers. It continued to rain and the rivers were swollen.



Major General Irvin McDowell and a force of some 40,000 troops were ordered by Secretary of War Stanton, on May 17, 1862 to move south and join General McClellan's operations against Richmond. The Secretary of War further ordered General McClellan to extend the right wing of his army across the Chickahominy River in order to facilitate the link up with McDowell's forces. McClellan ordered the Union Fifth Corps under newly appointed commander Fitz John Porter to advance across the Chickahominy. McClellan then established a gigantic supply base at **White House Landing** on the Pamunkey River.

White House was the plantation home of William "Rooney" Lee, son of General Robert E. Lee. The plantation was historically important because it was originally owned by Martha Custis. George Washington courted Martha Custis at White House
(White House Landing Library of Congress photo)

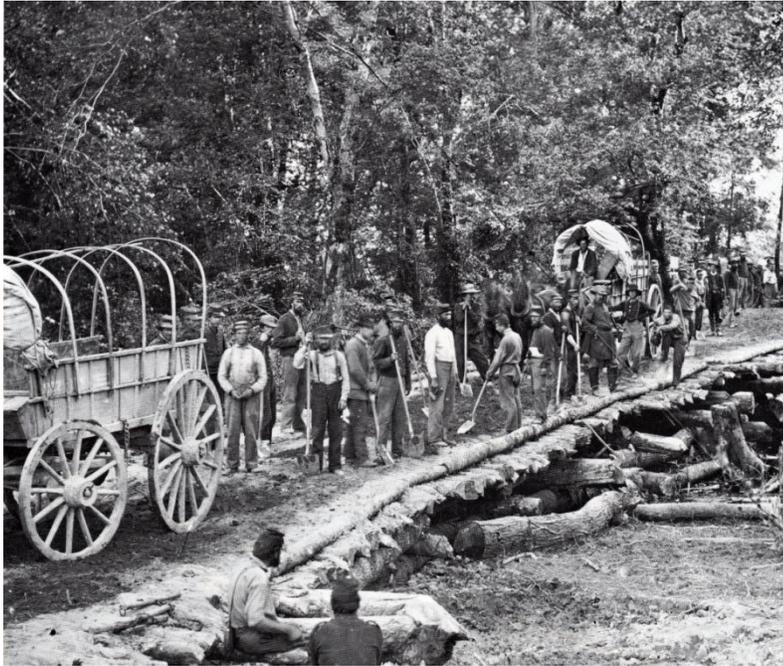
plantation and Mrs. Robert E. Lee was the granddaughter of Martha Custis.

McClellan had chosen the White House Landing location because of its close proximity to the West Point and Richmond railroad line nearby. The problem with the White House landing location was that it required McClellan to stretch his army across the Chickahominy River in order to protect his base of supply. McClellan realized that this was not a proper supply location because it was basically indefensible from a flank attack by the Confederate Army. However, the Secretary of War had ordered him to extend his right wing to join up with McDowell. Then on May 24, 2008, President Lincoln rescinded General McDowell's order to move south and link up with McClellan's Army of the Potomac.

Confederate **General Stonewall Jackson** and his 17,000 man "Army of the Valley" held three Federal armies at bay in the Shenandoah Valley and convinced President Lincoln that an attack on Washington was eminent.

General Robert E. Lee acting as Confederate President Jefferson Davis's military advisor and acting "chief of staff," directed General Jackson's movements in the hope of preventing the link-up of McDowell's forces with McClellan's Army of the Potomac. The ploy worked to perfection.

At **Hanover Court House** located northeast of Richmond a joint operation by infantry units from the Union Fifth Corps along with Union cavalry attacked the Confederate lines on May 27, 1862. The Union force command by General Fitz John Porter drove off the rebels and captured 700 prisoners.



Confederate General Joseph Johnston continually retreated from his defensive positions on the Virginia Peninsula. General Johnston realized that McClellan intended to use siege warfare and heavy artillery to force the Confederate Army of Virginia into a great battle or risk the surrender of their capital. General Lee insisted that Richmond must not be surrendered and that Johnston must attack McClellan while his forces are stretched across the Chickahominy River. On May 27th 1862 Johnston learned that Union General McDowell's forces were no

longer marching south to join up with McClellan. Johnston therefore decided to attack the Union Third and Fourth Corps that were situated on the south bank of the Chickahominy River. General Johnston

(Road and bridge work at White Oak Swamp, Library of Congress photograph)

believed that they were isolated and that an all out attack might trap the two Federal corps.

On May 31st 1862 Johnston ordered an all out attack by some 51,000 Confederate troops against the Federal positions at **Seven Pines** in the middle of a down pour. The attack was disjointed. Some of the Confederate units became lost because they had faulty maps. The attacks failed to dislodge the Federal units and General Joseph Johnston was badly wounded attempting to direct his front line forces. Johnston was replaced by **General Gustavus Woodson Smith**, who tried to renew the Confederate attack on June 1, 1862 but to no avail. President Davis replaced General Smith on June 2nd with General Robert E. Lee. The Battle of Seven Pines resulted in 11,000 combined casualties and was second only to Shiloh in its carnage up to that time.

General Fitz John Porter aligned his Fifth Corps behind a strong defensive position along **Beaver Dam Creek** just east of Mechanicsville. Porter was charged with protecting the Union supply base at White House Landing and the nearby railroad until McDowell arrived with his Union reinforcements from the Fredericksburg area. But McDowell was not coming and the newly appointed Commanding General of the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee learned that Porter's right flank was "in the air" and vulnerable to a flank or rear attack. JEB Stuart provided this information to Lee after he managed to ride around the Army of the Potomac and gather valuable intelligence.

In the afternoon of June 26, 1862, Confederate forces launched a series of uncoordinated attacks on the Union Fifth Corps. The attacks were delayed while waiting for Stonewall Jackson's Army of the Valley to arrive and attack the Union rear. When McClellan learned that Stonewall Jackson was preparing to attack the rear of the Fifth

Corps he decided to abandon the Union supply base at White House Landing and prepare a new supply base at Harrison's Landing on the James River.

On June 27, 1862 Porter establishes a new defensive line on a plateau above **Boatswain Swamp** just north of the Chickahominy River. The defensive line was laid out in a semi-circle and charged with holding the Confederate units back until the major part of the Fifth Corps could be "redeployed" south of the Chickahominy. The Union line above the Boatswain Swamp broke after repeated assaults by Longstreet's units. The Battle of Gaines Mill was the only decisive Confederate victory of the Seven Days Battles but it was purchased at a high cost. The Confederates suffered more than 9,000 casualties.

General McClellan had insisted that Secretary of War Stanton send him reinforcement soon or the entire Army of the Potomac was endangered. Disease and battle casualties had depleted the ranks of McClellan's Army. He now had less than 85,000 able bodied men while Robert E. Lee had massed nearly 200,000 Confederate troops against him. The 200,000 Confederate troops count was provided by McClellan's own military intelligence source, Allan Pinkerton. The actual Confederate manpower figure is estimated to have been 95,000. General Lee believed that his forces should have trapped and destroyed Porter's Fifth Corps at Gaines Mill but the attacks were not coordinated. Therefore, on June 29, 1862, Lee ordered an all out Confederate attack on the Union positions at **Savage's Station** south of the Chickahominy River.

The Confederate attacks around Savage's Station failed to overrun the Union positions and the Army of the Potomac was able to move further south across White Oak Swamp. McClellan decided that he did not have enough time to move all of his wounded and instead choose to leave 2,500 of those who could not be moved to the care and compassion of the Army of Northern Virginia. Once again, Stonewall Jackson failed to arrive at the battle in time to participate. His men spent most of the day rebuilding bridges across White Oak Swamp.

In Washington, D.C. all kinds of rumors were making the rounds. "McClellan was concentrating near Richmond" was the most widely mentioned. President Lincoln was growing more concerned for the safety of the Army of the Potomac because he had not heard from McClellan on the status of his army.

On June 30, 1862 General Lee concluded that he could trap McClellan's army and defeat it at a cross roads called **Glendale**. The Army of the Potomac attempted to burn tons of food and supplies as it retreated south from Savage's Station. McClellan and most of his troops had little if any sleep the previous 3 days but there was not a sense of panic among the officers and enlisted men. Lee's attack on the Union line near Willis Church penetrated the position held by George McCall's division. General McCall was captured but the Union line was reinforced by the divisions of George Hooker and Philip Kearny. The Union line held and once again Lee is frustrated by the lack of coordination in the Confederate attack. This only served to incite Confederate General Robert E. Lee into making one of the worst decisions of his career.

While the rear guard of the Army of the Potomac held off the Confederate attack at Glendale, General McClellan was establishing a new defensive position on **Malvern Hill**. McClellan, the consummate engineer laid out the locations for his artillery and left General Fitz John Porter in charge while he proceeded to Harrison's Landing to inspect the progress of his new base of supply. The Confederates attacked the Union position on Malvern Hill only to be driven back by the murderous Federal artillery and small arms fire. General McClellan was on board the Galena during the attack on Malvern Hill. The Radical Republicans said he was having wine with his dinner while his army fought for its survival. General McClellan was actually directing the naval guns of the Galena in their support of the Union position on Malvern Hill.

The Army of Northern Virginia suffered 5,300 casualties in the senseless frontal assaults. After crushing the Confederate attack on Malvern Hill some of officers of Army of the Potomac insisted on attacking Lee's army but McClellan believed that he was vastly outnumbered. McClellan felt he was fortunate to save the army. He would wait for more reinforcement and resume the offensive on another day. The reinforcement would not come for President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton were building another Army near Manassas, Virginia under

General John Pope. The units of the Army of the Potomac were ordered to report to Pope’s command and George McClellan was ordered to return to Washington and await further orders.

For the last hundred years McClellan has been judged to be a general that lacked the fighting spirit and a man who could organize and train an army but he was not a strategist like General Lee, Stonewall Jackson or Grant. There is a paradox with this analysis; for after the Civil War General Lee was asked which Union general was his best opponent. General Robert E. Lee said that George McClellan was the best of the Union generals.



“I had some problems with one of my generals too”.....

Only in America a Look at our Politicians and Leaders of the Past

“The buck stops here.....if you can’t stand the heat get out of the kitchen” Harry Truman

“Things are more like they are now than they have ever been.”.....Gerald Ford

“Facts are stupid things.”...Ronald Regan misquoting John Adams in a speech to the GOP Convention

“When the President does it that means that it’s not illegal.”..... Richard Nixon

“I never drink coffee at lunch; I find that it keeps me awake for the afternoon.”President Ronald Regan.

“I don’t want to be invited to the family hunting party,” upon learning that

Vice President Dick Chaney is his 8th cousin.....Barack Obama.

“Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.”.....President Lincoln

“I am mindful not only of preserving executive powers for myself, but for predecessors as well.”..... ‘I want to thank the Canadian people who came out to wave-all 5 fingers for their hospitality’.....President George W. Bush.
(From Political Jokes on Line)

(Harry Truman photo from the National Archives)