



THE COURIER



Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



Tuesday, March 9th, 2010 Meeting #107

Dino's Restaurant at I90 & State Rt. 306 Willoughby, Ohio

Guest Speaker: Norton London

Topic: Lincoln and His Generals

Canteen at 6:00 pm

Dinner at 7:00pm

Guests are welcome

Reservations required Please call Steve Abbey

Phone 440 255 8375 e-Mail: abbeysr@yahoo.com

Norton London is the most ubiquitous member of the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table. Besides presenting classes on the American Civil War at Baldwin Wallace College's Institute for Learning in Retirement, Mr. London finds the energy and stamina to play tennis four times a week and listen to daily information updates from the Special Events Coordinator. He is a Founder and past president of the NEOCWRT and Norton is usually involved in the planning and scheduling of most of our Fall Field Trips. Not only has he visited most Civil War battlefield sites but he personally knows every major Civil War historian and battlefield guide in the lower 48. Are there any Civil War sites in Alaska?

Norton London is a 1957 graduate of Cleveland Heights High School and He attended Ohio State University. He and his wife Joni have three daughters: Kathy, Nancy and Debbie. They also have one son, Robert who probably did not have an easy time growing up with 3 sisters.

After college, Norton went into a commercial cleaning business with his father and formed *London Cleaners*. Norton worked for 30 years in commercial real estate before retiring. He still works as a commercial real estate consultant. Joni and Norton London have three granddaughters and one grandson and they look forward to spending time with their entire family.

President Lincoln and the Search for the right General

President Abraham Lincoln, like all Chief Executives of the United States was empowered by the Constitution to be the Commander in Chief of all the armed forces of the nation. As president, he sought to use his War Powers to force the seceded southern states back into the union. The Southern slave states refused to remain in the union after the election of Lincoln, a professed abolitionist. They feared the loss of their slave property and the continual erosion of their political power and influence in the Federal government. Lincoln asserted that he would not assail the southern states and that they must remain friends but he did in fact assail the southern Confederacy by prodding General Irwin McDowell into an ill advised attack on rebel forces at 1st Bull Run.

General Irwin McDowell was selected to command the first volunteer troops assembled near Washington. He urged President Lincoln to allow him more time to train his green troop but Lincoln insisted that the rebels were green too. They are all green! Lincoln was not against the use of armed force to bring the rebel states back into the union. At the 1st Battle of Bull Run, the Union suffered a terrible defeat. The problem was the Confederate troops were wearing the very same federal Government Issue blue uniforms that the Union forces were wearing. Chaos and confusion reigned that day. Confederate **General Joseph Johnston** managed to arrive with reinforcements by railroad at just the right moment to halt the Union attack and send the Yankee hirelings running for the safety of the Federal Capital.

General George McClellan came to Washington with all the credentials of a promising commanding general. He organized and trained the volunteer regiments of the State of Ohio and he managed to win some impressive minor victories in Western Virginia. The people of the Union were anxious for victories after the depressing defeat at Bull Run. McClellan came to Washington and won the support of President Lincoln and most of the Lincoln cabinet. However, the Radical Republicans of the U. S. Senate and the Lincoln cabinet grew impatient with McClellan. McClellan wanted to build and train a great army before he confronted the Confederate Army situated just 25 miles from Washington. McClellan was a devout student of Napoleon. Napoleon took 3 years to train his army before he set out to conquer Europe. Lincoln grew more impatient with McClellan and his cabinet questioned his loyalty to the Union. McClellan's Peninsula Campaign was judged a failure because he did not capture Richmond, the Confederate capital nor did he destroy Lee's Army. However, some of the blame must rest with Lincoln and his Secretary of War. The success of the Peninsula Campaign required the link up of McDowell's Corps with the other units of the Army of the Potomac at Mechanicsville, Virginia. Lincoln feared an attack on Washington by Stonewall Jackson and with held McDowell's troops from joining up with McClellan. McClellan's army was redeployed from the Peninsula and part of it arrived just in time to participate in **General John Pope's defeat** at 2nd Bull Run.

General Ambrose Burnside replaced McClellan in November of 1862 and developed a plan to outflank Robert E. Lee at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Burnside had a good plan but it required speed and the element of surprise in order to succeed. Burnside needed pontoon bridges in order to cross the Rappahannock River. The war department failed to send the pontoons in time. Lee was able establish a strong defensive position along Marye's Heights and halt any attack by Federal forces. Burnside should have cancelled the attack but he did not. Thousands of Union soldiers died in a useless waste of human life.

General Joseph Hooker replaced Burnside in January of 1863 and managed to instill esprit de corps in units of the Army of the Potomac. Hooker plotted against Burnside and did his best to help him fail. Lincoln selected him in spite of his boast to become the dictator. On May 1st, 1863, at Chancellorsville, Virginia, fighting Joe lost his nerve after a Rebel shell knocked him senseless and Stonewall Jackson's corps crushed his left flank.

General George Gordon Meade replaced Joe Hooker as commanding General of the Army of the Potomac on June 28, 1863. Although new to command, Meade used good judgment in selecting General Hancock to assume control of the Union forces on Cemetery Ridge on July 1, 1863. The Army of the Potomac under Meade won arguably the greatest battle of the Civil War. The Army of Northern Virginia would never again mount a large offensive campaign into northern soil. President Lincoln became frustrated with Meade's lack of aggressive warfare after the Battle of Gettysburg. Meade remained in command of the Army of the Potomac but Lincoln believed that he had a winner in **U.S. Grant**.

General Ulysses S. Grant was promoted to Lieutenant General and General of all the Union armies on March 12, 1864. Ten years earlier he had left the U.S. Army, homesick, and accused of being intoxicated while on duty. Grant elected to resign from the army rather than face a court martial. He basically failed at everything he tried in civilian life but the Civil War came and gave him an opportunity to show his mettle. Grant strung together an impressive list of victories in the Western theater from Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain. Lincoln said that "if Grant is a drunk then please send a case of whatever he is drinking to all my generals." Grant's Overland Campaign would result in a string of terrible loses for the Army of the Potomac. Grant lost more than 50,000 men in 6 weeks of fighting but he refused to retreat. R. E. Lee could not continue to trade high casualties with Grant and the end came at Appomattox Court House on April 12th, 1865. Lincoln found the right general and the union was restored.

CIVIL WAR MINUTES by Franco M. Sperrazzo Events Coordinator/Vice President

February 9, meeting: Member and friend **Dr. Phillip Price**, gave a fascinating presentation of Abraham Lincoln, from a view of religious faith, professional and political career perspective. We seriously considered postponing meeting #106 due to poor weather conditions, but **President Terry Reynolds** and some of the founders agreed to stay the course. We only cancelled once in February 2007, under **President, Mike Sears** watch. Dr. Phil’s vast knowledge of Lincoln was clearly evident as he personalized the depth of the man with his past experiences with our 16th President so effectively that it made the trek through the bad elements even more worthwhile. Phillip cited a recently published 2009 and 684 page plus index book for his expanded research called “A. Lincoln” by author Ronald C. White Jr. It retails for \$34.95 in hardcover so find a discount coupon. The usual bookstores all carry it. Update information tells me that a trade publication soft cover is slated for a May release for \$20.00. The book is well worth your time, as was our bonding with Phillip Price.

Membership Dues: Final Notice: Bring your check if you have not to the March 9th meeting for **\$55.00**. Present it separately to **Steve Abbey**, or mail it to **Treasurer Bill Wilson** at 9772 willow Lane, Concord OH 44060. Make check payable to **NEOCWRT!**

SAR George Washington Birthday: Based on the positive comments by **Hudson Fowler** and other members serving in both clubs, former Browns linebacker and Judge **Dick Ambrose** scored a winning game touchdown on Saturday February 20th at Shaker Heights Country Club to honor our 1st President and “Father of Our Country.” Perhaps we can consider him as a future speaker for one of our meetings.

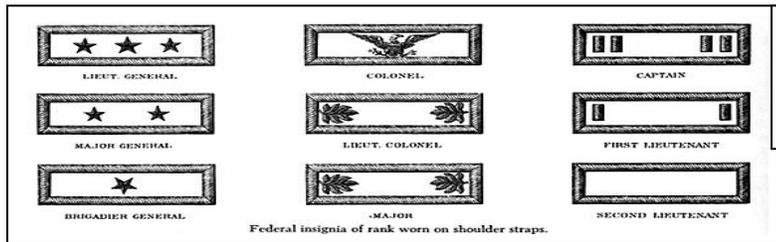
NEOCWRT History: Founder Joseph Tirpak has completed the earlier portion of our great clubs proud history which will be used in our membership packet per **Arlan Byrne’s** request. Step forward if you want to join Arlan on his crusade. **JET** really penned the chronological timetable of NEOCWRT’S growth in a tasteful manner. Joe is an eloquent writer.

Shelby Foote: The legendary author who passed away in 2005 at age 88, left us the gem titled “The Narrative.” The works were re-published in 1998 to celebrate the 40th Anniversary Edition including colored illustrations in a collection of 14 individual volumes. They can be found at the wonderful bargain Ollie’s Outlet Store located at the Broadway and Forbes exit off Interstate 271. Originally released at least \$20.00 each or more, cost was \$4.95! If you are interested they have a splendid discount book section.

Special Feature Story: During the early stages the recent snow storm I assisted Theo Karle in his transporting his Great Star Pattern Civil War flag to the **Erie Maritime Museum** for display. The 34 star silk flag is from Pete Hitchcock’s Company K of the 171st Ohio Regiment from Burton, Ohio. This was a “100 Day Regiment” comprised of older or married men who were recruited to serve in non-combative or guard duty. The men were from Geauga, Lake and Trumbull Counties. This freed up the younger men to serve at the front in the 1864 Union Campaigns. The regiment served as guards at the Federal Prison for Confederate officers on Johnson Island in Sandusky Bay Ohio. Most “100 Day Regiments” did not suffer casualties, but the 171st Ohio was an exception. They had 17 men killed and 54 wounded in a spirited fight with Confederate Major General John Morgan’s Calvary at Keller’s Bridge, Kentucky on June 11th, 1864. Seven of the regiments companies were forced to surrender. Company K also served at **Camp Dennison** in Ohio but was not at **Keller’s Bridge**. The flag will become part of the **USS Michigan** exhibit at the museum where it joins a number of Theo’s artifacts already on display. Our members visited the museum on May 17th, 2009 on our Spring Field Trip. This maritime palace houses Commodore Perry’s reconstructed flagship **USS Brig Niagara** which we boarded in the harbor. The museum features outstanding displays of the War of 1812, the **USS Michigan (aka Wolverine)** and maritime history. It is a great one tank destination. Not only did we travel from Cleveland East to West during terrible weather and have to handle an 8 foot wood framed mounted 150+ pound flag, we also spent some memorable minutes imprisoned in an inoperable elevator in this closed facility late at night. More details in person.

“I am not young enough to know everything!”.....Oscar Wilde

“Always do what you are afraid to do.”.....Ralph Waldo Emerson



NUTS & BOLTS OF THE CIVIL WAR

COMPILED BY CARL DODARO

After looking at hundreds of pictures of the Civil War, and in particular, portraits of mostly Union Soldiers, I realized that I couldn't tell the rank of

a man without it being mentioned somewhere in the picture. Since the military of both sides made an effort to show differences in rank by different uniforms, this month "Nuts & Bolts" will try to show you how to tell the rank of a Union Civil War soldier without having to ask him. The Confederate system, based on the Union system, and its differences are listed after the Union regulations.

All Union officers shall wear a frock-coat of dark blue cloth, the skirt to extend from two-thirds to three-fourths of the distance from the top of the hip to the bent of the knee.

For a Major-General Commanding the Army- double breasted coat – two rows of buttons on the breast, nine in each row, placed by threes; shoulder straps to have three stars of five rays, the center star to be larger than the outer stars.

For a Major-General – dbl. breasted coat - two rows of buttons on the breast, nine in each row, placed by threes; two stars on the shoulder strap.

For a Brigadier-General – dbl. breasted coat – two rows of eight buttons in each row on the breast, placed in pairs; shoulder straps to have one star and the center of the star to be equidistant from the outer edge of the embroidery on the ends of the strap .

For a Colonel— dbl. breasted coat - seven buttons in each row on the breast, placed at equal distances; shoulder straps have a silver-embroidered spread eagle on the center of the strap (giving the nickname "Bird Colonel"); two inches between the tips of the wings, having in its right talon an olive-branch, and in the left a bundle of arrows; an escutcheon on the breast, as represented in the arms of the United States. The cloth of the strap as follows: *For the General Staff and Staff Corps*--dark blue; for *Artillery*--scarlet; *Infantry*--light or sky blue; *Cavalry*--yellow.

For a Lieutenant-Colonel— dbl. breasted coat – seven buttons in each row on the breast, placed at equal distances; shoulder straps - a SILVER-embroidered LEAF at each end, each leaf extending seven-eighths of an inch from the end border of the strap, for color of cloth meaning see Colonel.

For a Major— dbl. breasted coat – seven buttons in each row on the breast, placed at equal distances; shoulder straps - GOLD-embroidered LEAF at each end, each leaf extending seven-eighths of an inch from the end border of the strap.

For a Captain— single breasted coat - one row of nine buttons on the breast, placed at equal distant; - shoulder straps - each end TWO GOLD-embroidered BARS of the same width as the border, placed parallel to the ends of the strap, at a distance from the border equal to its width.

For a First Lieutenant – single breasted coat – one row of nine buttons on the breast, placed equal distant; - shoulder straps - each end ONE GOLD-embroidered BAR of the same width as the border, placed parallel to the ends of the strap, at a distance from the border equal to its width.

For a Second Lieutenant – single breasted coat – one row of nine buttons on the breast, placed equal distant; - shoulder straps have no insignia, only colored embroidered edging.

Chevron - The rank of non-commissioned officers will be marked by Chevrons upon both sleeves of the uniform coat and overcoat, above the elbow, of silk or worsted binding one-half an inch wide, same color as the edging on the coat, points down.



For a Sergeant Major --three bars and an arc { three inverted "V"s with three curved lines connecting the tops of the "V"s }

For a Quartermaster Sergeant--three bars and a tie { three inverted "V"s with three

Straight lines connecting the tops of the "V"s. }

For a Ordnance Sergeant--three bars and a star { three inverted "V"s with a star in the center of the V }

For a First Sergeant--three bars and a lozenge {inverted "V"s with a square (point

down) in the center of the “V”s}

For a Sergeant- three bars {inverted “V”s}

For a Corporal- two bars {inverted “V”s }.

To Indicate Service - all non-commissioned officers, musicians and privates, who have served faithfully for the term of five years, will wear, as a mark of distinction, upon both sleeves of the uniform coat, below the elbow, a diagonal {or half} chevron, one-half an inch wide, extending from seam to seam, the front end nearest the cuff, and one-half an inch above the point of the cuff, to be of the same color as the edging on the coat. In like manner, an additional half chevron, above and parallel to the first, for every subsequent five years of faithful service. Service in war will be indicated by a light or sky blue stripe on each side of the chevron for Artillery, and a red stripe for all other corps, the stripe to be one-eighth of an inch wide.

CONFEDERATE UNIFORM DIFFERENCES



On the upright collar of Full Generals, Lieutenant Generals, Major Generals, and Brigadier Generals, three stars were stitched within a wreath, with the center star slightly larger than the other two. It was not possible to know which grade of general an officer was by their collar insignia. However, Major Generals and Lieutenant Generals wore three groups of buttons down the front, and Brigadiers wore eight buttons in groups of two each. Officers below brigadiers wore two rows of seven buttons equally spaced down their coats. Colonels wore three gold stars of the same size on their collar, the same as generals but without the wreath. While Lieutenant Colonels wore two stars on their collars, Majors wore one star, which was placed in the middle of the collar. Captains had three gold horizontal bars, First Lieutenants wore two gold bars and Second Lieutenants wore one gold bar. Confederate uniforms did not usually have shoulder straps. Non-coms were identical in chevrons in either military...

SOURCE : “REVISED 1861 U.S. ARMY UNIFORM REGULATIONS” PUBLISHED BY THE U.S. GOVT. PRINTING OFFICE – 1863 ----- AND “UNIFORMS OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES MILITARY FORCES” ON WIKIPEDIA ON THE INTERNET.

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

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THE BATTLE OF THE CRATER Part 3 "The Plan" by Arlan Byrne

" I shall never forget the terrible and magnificent sight. The earth around us trembled and heaved - so violently that I was lifted to my feet. Then the earth along the enemy's lines opened, and fire and smoke shot upward seventy-five or one hundred feet. The air was filled with earth, cannon, caissons, sandbags and living men, and with everything else within the exploded fort. One huge lump of clay as large as a haystack or small cottage was thrown out and left on top of the ground toward our own works." This was how Major Charles Houghton, who was serving in General Ledlies 1st Division preparing to lead the attack on the crater and closest to the blast, remembered the explosion.*

By mid July when it became apparent the Pennsylvania miners were going to complete their tunnel; it became time to plan the attack. Since the tunnel was in the IXth Corps sector, it was General Burnside's responsibility; and he was determined to change the way this attack was conducted from previous attacks in this campaign. This time, his troops would not charge across a barren no mans land in broad daylight straight into those hidden Confederate rifled muskets and murderous shrapnel firing cannon; as they had at the battles of Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, etc. This time the attack would be different.

So, according to the plan that was developed, as soon as the mine exploded, blowing up "Elliott's Salient", destroying those four man-killing cannon there, and causing panic in nearby Confederate troops; all the artillery in Burnside's sector, over 440 pieces, would open fire on the known Confederate artillery positions. This was more artillery than the Union army had possessed at the battle of Gettysburg, and it was hoped they would be able to suppress the nearby Confederate cannon fire, at least for a little while. Then, while the Confederate defenders were still confused and disorganized from the explosion and artillery barrage; the lead attack division would charge safely across no mans land directly at the huge crater where "Elliott's Salient" had been. But they would not enter the crater. Experience had shown in a similar situation in 1863 during the Siege of Vicksburg, that when Union troops had entered a crater, they had been trapped there and killed. That crater had become known as "the hole of death". So this time, when the lead division reached the crater, it would split in two; half going on one side of the crater and half going to the other side. Then the leading regiments of each side would wheel and attack up the Confederate trenches to the north and south; thus widening and sealing off the breach. The remaining regiments would continue straight ahead to the high ground behind "Elliott's Salient", which the Union Commanders had started calling 'Cemetery Hill'; and dig in. The other three IX Corps divisions following directly behind the lead division; would, hopefully, continue right on into Petersburg; thus splitting Lee's army in half. Meanwhile General Ord's Vth corps on the right of Burnside and General Warren's XVIIIth corps on the left, would attack and complete the breakthrough. Speed was essential. Burnside's IXth Corps troops must be through the Confederate trenchline, the trenches sealed off and Cemetery Hill fortified before the Confederates could get over their psychological shock, get those hated murderous cannon firing and organize a counter attack.

This preliminary plan was sent to General Meade's headquarters where it was approved by both General Meade and General Grant with these additions:

1. Burnside must provide a level exit place through his trenches and defensive obstacles, so that the attacking troops could move swiftly across no mans land in their unit formations.
2. A few days before the attack was scheduled to begin, General Grant would allow the Confederates to see him moving troops and supplies across the James River to the north side of the river as if preparing for an attack on Richmond from the Deep Bottom area. This would force Lee to also move most of his reserve forces to the north side of the river, leaving him with few reserve troops on the south side of the river for a counter attack in the crucial opening minutes of the battle.
3. General Meade, as commander of the Army of the Potomac, would assume command of the battle, with General Burnside second in command. All three Corps Commanders, Warren on the left, Burnside in the Center and Ord on the right, would be connected with Meade's headquarters by telegraph. Meade would control the battle by giving orders over the telegraph lines instead of by couriers. It was a new idea.

Now it was time for Burnside to choose the vitally important lead division. His IX Corps consisted of 4 divisions of troops, 3 white divisions and one colored division. The three white divisions had been in constant combat since the campaign began in the spring. They had participated in all the bloodbath battles of the campaign, Spotsylvania, Cold harbor, etc.; and for the last six weeks had been engaged in brutal trench warfare with the Confederates, losing between 30 and 60 men a day to snipers and mortars. They were understrength and battle weary and General Burnside knew they were in no condition to lead a successful attack.

That left the 4th Division USCT, [United States Colored Troops] which had been recruited in the early months of 1864. It was the only colored division in the Army of the Potomac and Burnside had specifically asked for it to be assigned to his Corps. At this time there was a widespread popular belief among the white soldiers and officers of the Union Army that colored troops would not stand and fight like white troops; but would panic and run away. This lack of confidence in the fighting ability of colored troops, plus the lack of training, was probably why Grant and Meade had assigned it to guard

ammunition wagons and build construction projects so far in the campaign.

But Burnside knew this was not true. He had had colored troops in his earlier North Carolina campaign and he knew that if they were well trained they would fight as well as any white troops. So he selected the 4th Division USCT to be his lead Division. It the largest division in the IXth Corps with over 4,300 men; and they were eager to prove to the rest of the army that a colored soldier was equal to any white soldier in battle. Since they had never been in a battle, they began an intensive two week course in combat training. Not only were they taught how to fight and where to go when the attack began; but they practiced it over and over until all the men and officers knew exactly what to do. It was one of the few times in the civil war when an attack was actually practiced before it began. There was another reason the 4th Division USCT was looking forward to the battle. Earlier in the war there had been instances when other USCT had tried to surrender, but had been massacred by the Confederates. Ex-slaves had even been returned to their masters. The men of the 4th Division were eager for revenge.

Then on July 26th, General Burnside was summoned to Meade's headquarters to go over the final plans of the attack. Meade agreed with everything until he heard about Burnside's lead division. The 4th Division USCT must not lead the attack, he said. If something went wrong and they suffered high casualties; opposition politicians in the north could accuse Grant and Meade of using the colored troops as 'cannon fodder' and the political repercussions would be great in a presidential election year. Another division must be chosen. An unspoken opposition to the 4th Division was probably that neither Meade nor Grant trusted the fighting abilities of USCT as the all-important lead division.

Burnside argued his side in vain:

1. His white divisions were too worn down and in no condition to lead the attack.
2. The 4th Division USCT was at full strength and eager to lead the attack. They were anxious to prove they were as good fighters as any white division, plus they wanted to avenge the earlier massacres of USCT .
3. They had been specially trained to avoid the crater and capture Cemetery Hill.
4. There was no time to train another division to replace the 4th division.

But nothing worked.

Finally, as General Burnside could see his battle plan disintegrating before his eyes; he prevailed upon General Meade to take his plan to General Grant for a final decision. He was sure Grant would see it his way.

At 10:30 AM on July 29th bad news arrived from Grants headquarters. Grant had refused to change Meade's decision. A white division must lead the attack. All at once, with Burnside's careful and well prepared battle plans in shambles, the old lethargic Burnside reappeared. All his energy and enthusiasm disappeared. He seemed to lose all interest in the attack project and to resign himself to defeat. He couldn't even bring himself to pick a new lead division. Finally, at 5:00 PM in the afternoon, after hours of agonizing discussion with the commanders of the three white divisions, he gave up trying to make a decision. He just threw three straws into his hat and let the division commanders chose the all important lead Division by chance. General James H. Ledlie, commander of the 1st Division drew the short straw. It was the worst choice that could have been made. General Ledlie had only been in command of the 1st Division for two months; and so it was not generally known that he was both a drunk and a coward. In fact, as soon as the battle actually began he got a bottle of rum and retired to the rear. He was not seen or heard from again until the battle was over.

In the remaining 12 hours until the attack was scheduled to begin, Burnside did nothing. He didn't even prepare the all-important attack ramp over the Union defense lines to provide an exit for his troops.

The next morning after "Elliott's Salient" had blown up and the Union artillery barrage was over; nothing happened. All the nearby Confederates not killed in the blast had fled, fearing the ground would blow up under them also. In the original plan it was estimated that without enemy troops in the way, it would take 20 minutes for the lead division to charge across no man's land, bypass the crater, occupy Cemetery Hill and dig in. But since Burnside had not made a level exit path through his trench line as the plan called for; there was no charge. The men filtered slowly through the defensive obstacles and drifted across no man's land individually and in small groups, losing all unit cohesion. It took 10 of the allotted 20 minutes before the first troops even arrived at "Elliott's Salient". Before them was a wall of loose dirt 12 feet high that covered the Southern Defense line. As the men climbed the wall and peered over the top, they saw a hole 200 feet long, 50 feet wide and 25 feet deep. The bottom of the hole was covered with debris including muskets, timber, huge boulders of clay, upside down cannon and half-buried squirming bodies. There was no firing from the Confederates yet, but the men feared there soon would be; and they had learned from experience that when the musket balls and canister started flying around, the safest place to be was in a hole in the ground. The deeper the **better. And right there before them was the biggest, deepest hole they had ever seen. Orders or no orders, they climbed right in.**

*** Major Houghton, along with 22 other Union Soldiers, including the first colored recipient, would earn the "United States Medal of Honor" this day.**

