



THE LIGHT POST

NOVEMBER 2025



WHODUNIT?!?!?

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By Carol VanOrnum

The Wayne County CWRT and the Wayne County Historical Society of Ohio teamed up to create a unique fundraiser on October 25, 2025. It was advertised as a specialized *CLUE* game, inviting the public to “Step through the doors of Wooster’s oldest home, where secrets linger in shadowed halls and every creaking floor-board holds a story.”

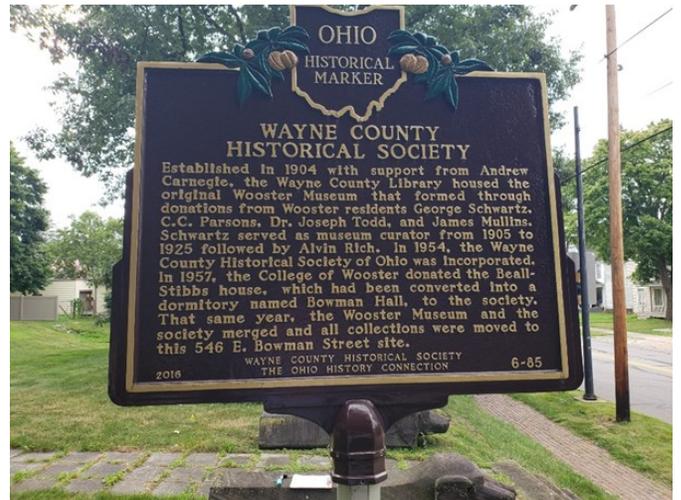
The Beall-Stibbs House was built during 1816-1820 by General Reasin Beall. After enlisting in the military in 1790, he was promoted to battalion quartermaster in 1803. He then served in the Thirteenth United States Congress and remained politically active for most of

his life.

Penny Gasbarre, Chair of the Wayne County CWRT, helped create the game’s clues. “I took a page from Wooster’s history and walked through the cemetery to find characters. We had seven rooms, seven suspects, and seven weapons.”

The idea for *Clue* is to figure out the answer of whodunit based on questions given to the suspects – then it’s a matter of elimination.”

First prize was a “big basket of items from the historical society”; others received four \$25 gift cards from local sponsors. All in all, it was considered to be a great success with 31 participants and \$300 raised for future programs. For more information on how to create your own Round Table’s *Clue* fundraiser, contact Penny Gasbarre at pennygasbarre@gmail.com.



Photos: Wayne County Historical Society of Ohio



The Beall-Stibbs House

EASING INTO CHANGE WITH COLLABORATION

By Mike Movius, President

Have you heard the phrase, “Change is the bread and butter for the enlightened leader.”? Neither have we. Change, although constant, is often dealt with poorly. Most often leaders throw up their arms when an idea is tendered and announce that they will quit or that the purveyor of the idea is now responsible for its implementation. Either way, the idea dies, and the organization loses out or the member leaves or both. That begs the question: How often do CWRT leaders seek the advice/consent of their members?

Recently, I had a conversation with a CWRT leader about the health of his once thriving organization. He candidly said that some of his members were desirous of returning to dinner meetings and that membership had dwindled. By way of background, this CWRT lost their meeting place when the restaurant permanently closed during Covid. The CWRT eventually moved to another restaurant, but the dearth of parking and the cost of meals drove them to retreat to a local college. At the college, parking and the meeting room were close to ideal. However, scheduling changes and other annoying issues posed some

compatibility problems.

One of the near universal truths that CWRT leaders intuitively know is that whenever a change of venue occurs, the Round Table loses members. When there are multiple such moves, it can become an existential threat to the CWRT. So, how should Round Table leaders respond?

You would think that most responsible leaders would ask their members for advice and/or assistance. But that is probably not most often the case for several reasons we won't get into.



IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

Leaders with a problem before them usually seek the most expedient solution. And that's the rub. If leaders were to ask for and receive the advice of their members, they might discover that it is only a small segment that wants to move. Or, if the majority advise a change, the task may not become so onerous.

Either way, it is always a good idea to inquire of members. Who knows? They may have an idea or two that resolves more than one problem.



GIVING TUESDAY 2025

By CWRT Congress

The Civil War Round Table Congress will once again be participating along with the [American Battlefield Trust](#) in Giving Tuesday scheduled for December 2, 2025.

The purpose of Giving Tuesday is to encourage people and organizations to transform their communities. That is why the CWRT Congress has teamed up with the Trust to assist them in restoring and interpreting battlefield land that they have acquired through your donations. Restoration and interpretation are equally important as it converts property into hallowed ground.

Our goal this year is to raise \$5,000. The monies raised by the CWRT Congress will be equally split between the CWRT Congress and the American Battlefield Trust. Our Board of Directors believe that both organizations perform important tasks as stewards of our nation's Civil War history, and that both

organizations have established records of maximizing the dollars they receive.

This year, we have offered three fascinating presentations for a voluntary donation:

1. September 23, 2025, by General Ulysses S. Grant and General P.G.T. Beauregard
2. October 14, 2025, by General Ulysses S. Grant and General John C. Pemberton, and
3. November 4, 2025, by General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee. To register click [HERE](#).

Help ensure the preservation of public history by donating to our Giving Tuesday campaign. Your contribution, no matter the size, is important. Donations can be made [HERE](#).

If you have any questions, or would like more information about Giving Tuesday, please ask us at info@cwrtcongress.org.



Grant and Lee as portrayed by Curt Fields and Thomas Jessee



Grant and Beauregard as portrayed by Curt Fields and Larry McCluney

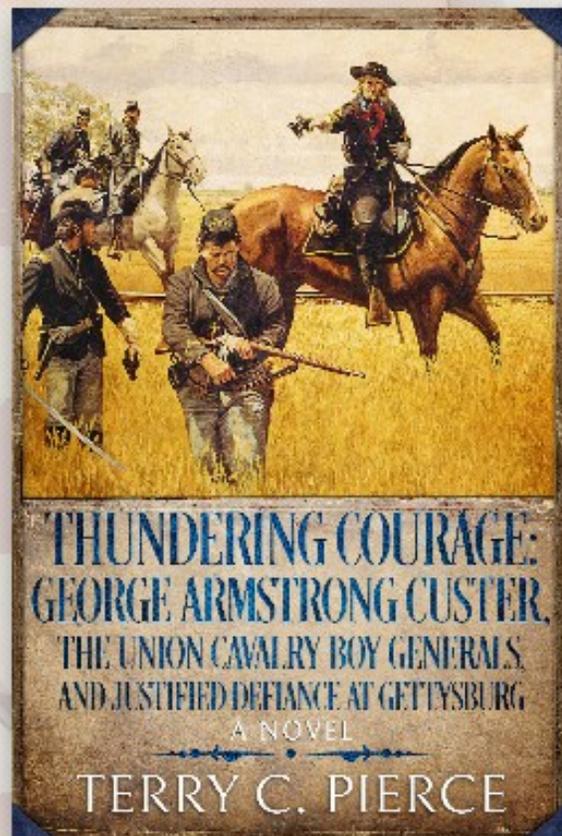
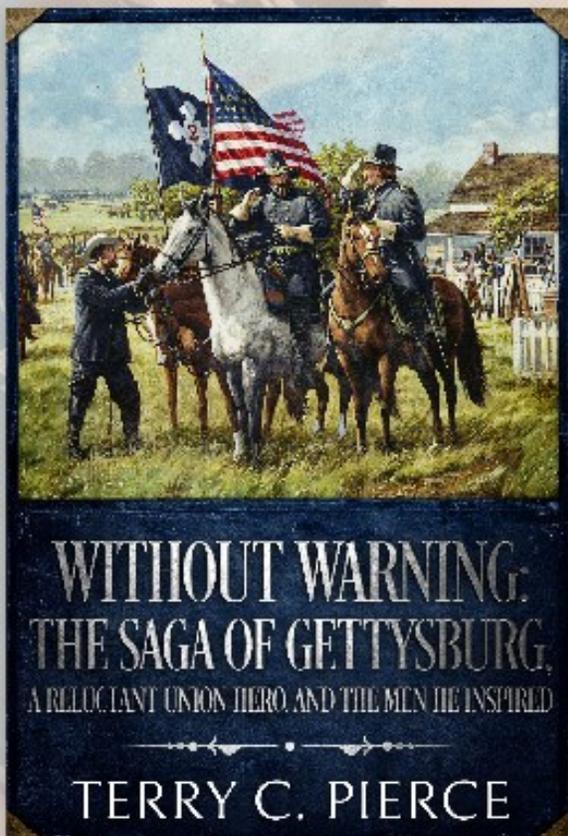


Grant and Pemberton as portrayed by Curt Fields and Morgan Gates. Photo: Buddy Secor.

Why is "*character*" the heart & soul of leadership?

How do you respond to a "*Without Warning*" moment?

Can a battlefield order ever be "*Justifably Defied*?"



To learn the answer to these thought-provoking questions, read the first two novels of Dr. Terry C. Pierce's (Captain USN, retired) Gettysburg Trilogy. Both meticulously researched works examines the battle through the lens of the character and leadership displayed by the key Union soldiers and officers during this pivotal battle.

To reach Terry Pierce or arrange for him to speak at your CWRT email him at: PierceTerryC@gmail.com or at:

www.terrycpierce.com

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. CURT FIELDS

By Carol VanOrnum

We recently had the pleasure of talking with Living Historian Dr. Curt Fields, portrayer of General Ulysses S. Grant. This is Part I of our conversation.

CWRT CONGRESS: At what age, and how, did you become interested in the Civil War?

Curt Fields: The Civil War has always been a passion for me. I can't remember when I became enamored. I have always been blessed with the ability to read and enjoy reading. My parents were heavy readers. I grew up in a lower socioeconomic home, but we had one thing in our home that no one else in the neighborhood had. We were the only people that I knew of, of my peers, who had a bookcase in our house. It was a three-foot-by-three-foot bookcase in the house. My parents never emphasized that I should read Civil War books, they were just pleased that I read a lot.

CWRT CONGRESS: Did you have ancestors who fought in the War?

Curt Fields: Yes, I have several ancestors who fought, but I only know the details of one: Thomas Paul Stewart. He fought for the 12th Mississippi Infantry, Co. H. Did you know that I am the only Grant living historian who is a member of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans? I got into SCV before I ever did any reenacting. But I'm also a member of the Sons of Union

Veterans. They allow any male to join whether your ancestor fought for the Union or not. You can even hold every office in the SUV up to Deputy Commander in Chief – just not the National Commander in Chief. Being able to join both organizations embodies the ecumenical approach when I do presentations.

CWRT CONGRESS: When did you determine that you had a resemblance to General Grant? How did that vocation/hobby unfold or manifest itself?

Curt Fields: My wife, Lena, and I went to the 145th Anniversary of the Battle of Chickamauga in 2008 on a SVC bus tour. I



had no beard at the time. We got off the bus in Chattanooga and I met Robert E. Lee, Jeb Stewart, and James Longstreet. I have since worked with them all. Then I met President Lincoln and asked, "Could I have an

'image' with you?" President Lincoln put his arm around my shoulders. Lena took the picture. It was then that I had an epiphany that I might be able to portray Grant. I realized that I had the same height, build, weight, and body type as Grant. If I grew a beard and put on a uniform, could I? I thought, "Where did that come from?"

As a fun fact, did you know that there are 450 photographs of Grant in existence, the most of any Civil War person? Frederick Douglass is the second most photographed, and Lincoln comes in third. But there is not one photo in existence of them together.

At first, having grown up in Memphis, I felt I should also portray General Patrick Claybourne, but I quickly realized that in order to do it right, I needed to focus on one or the other. I read everything I could find that Grant said. And then I read what others said to him so he could respond to them. So, between 2008 and 2009 I studied Grant. There are three reasons why I focused on Grant. One, when I realized how much effort it took to read and study Grant enough to be able to speak without notes and to be deeply knowledgeable for presentations and Q&As, there was no way I could divide my time studying Clayborne. The second reason was that in order to look authentic, I needed to purchase the uniform, and I couldn't afford to buy both. Finally, I adopted the motto "Do one thing and do it

well." My first actual presentation was at Fort Donelson in February of 2010.

"It was then that I had an epiphany that I might be able to portray Grant. I thought, 'Where did that come from?'"

One year I went to the U.S. Grant Association conference. There were a number of descendants in attendance. After a while, one of them, Ulysses Grant Dietz came over to me and asked, "Who are you?" I told him, "Curt Fields." He asked, "Have we met?" "No." "Are you a descendant of Grant?" "No." Then he explained that he had been staring at me for the last two hours from across the room, wondering if I was an ancestor of Grant that he didn't know about. He told me I looked just like him. Needless to say, I was pleased to hear that.

Since I've been doing Grant over the years, I've come to like the man very much. He
(Continued on Page 6)

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. CURT FIELDS (CONTINUED)

(Continued from Page 5)

was a really nice guy. He could be the life of the party and behind closed doors he loved to talk, tell jokes. He had a tremendous sense of humor. As I've studied him, I'm surprised at the diamonds I pick up about Grant's humor. This was a surprise for me. He could be hell on the battlefield, but he was a devoted family man and good with his kids. During the Siege of Vicksburg, the Grant family came to visit. He'd roll and wrestle with the kids, but when the latest battle reports came in, he'd have to peel them off to listen to his aides.

But I'm a Grant enthusiast, not a Grant apologist. He loved so deeply and so well. He liked people longer than he should and trusted people for too long. They took advantage of him.

CWRT CONGRESS: How often do you speak? Tell me about your schedule.

Curt Fields: I average about 40 to 50 events a year, each one lasting one to four days. In 2024 I did 38 events. I mostly drive, which allows me to bring all my uniform and accessories.

CWRT CONGRESS: Do you still study Grant's military life, or are you confident that your breadth of knowledge is complete?

Curt Fields: I study almost daily and would never feel like I have

total command of the man. And I always read and study in preparation for my upcoming event.

CWRT CONGRESS: What do you find most rewarding as a living historian?

Curt Fields: The countenance on faces when I present a fact that they're unaware of. I know I have fulfilled my mission, to tell them the little things. In those days, it was common to treat notable folks as celebrities by cutting a button off their coat. Julia groused that she was always having to replace Grant's buttons. I have a missing button on the back of my coat. When I get feedback, I know I've done my job. I strive to be the best I can and provide the most believable portrayal of Grant in the moment and place.

CWRT CONGRESS: In your role as Ambassador for the CWRT Congress, what do you hope to accomplish with the CWRTs you visit?

Curt Fields: I want them to get to sustain themselves primarily to stay in existence. I believe how they do that is by having good and informative speakers, of which I'm always suggesting names. But I also let them know they are not alone in the Round Table universe. I encourage them to reach out and connect with others and just know that others are going through some hard times as well.



To reach Dr. Fields directly, email curtfields@generalgrantbyhimself.com.

FRAMING THE PAST: WHERE LEGENDS STOOD

By Melissa Winn

People often ask me, “What’s your favorite battlefield?” As an enthusiastic traveler, observer, and wanderer, it might surprise many to know that it’s the one closest to my home: Manassas National Battlefield Park. I’m so fortunate to live within 10 minutes of it in nearby Centreville, VA.

And because I do, my experiences with this battlefield are much more recurrent and often

personal. Seeking respite from the cacophony of the Washington, D.C.-metro area, I’ve turned many times to the trails here and tucked myself away on a field or ridge to catch my breath. I’ve hiked the field’s 40 miles of trail too many times to count, often with battle maps in hand; given lectures; taken the family Xmas card photos here; watched my children sled Buck Hill; brought countless friends and relatives for afternoon leisure; trained for

the Marine Corps Marathon running on its winding paths, and sometimes, when the sky on my drive home is too tempting in its beauty to ignore, I’ve passed home and driven straight to the battlefield to capture it on photo.

Such was the case with this image, when a recent night sky promised a possible glimpse of the Northern Lights in our neck of the woods, I parked atop Henry Hill and waited. The Aurora

Borealis appeared so faintly in shades of green and purple, it felt like a bust for photo-ops, until I glanced over and saw Jackson, “standing there like a stone wall.” The halo of the night sky delivered a perfect complement.

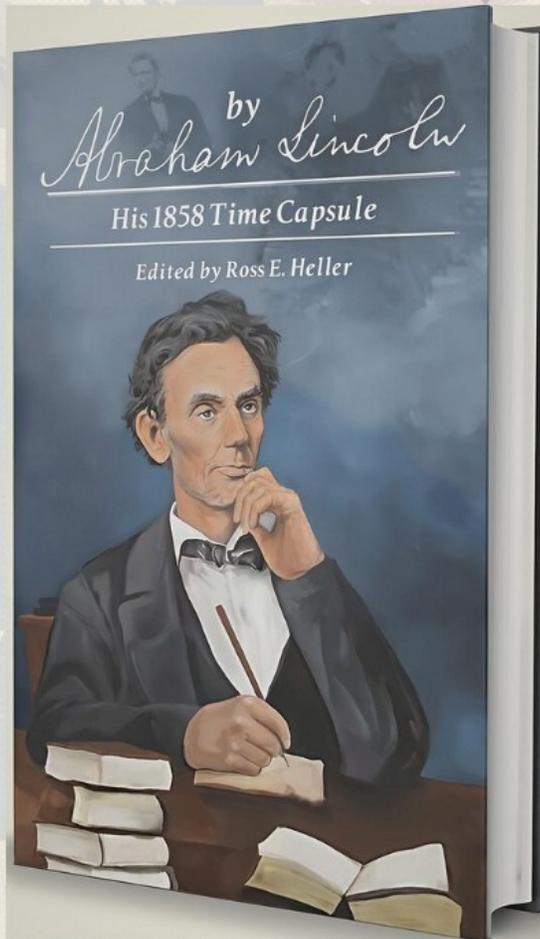
Melissa A. Winn is the Director of Marketing and Communications for the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the CWRT Congress and President of the Bull Run CWRT.



Manassas Henry Hill - Originally published in *Emerging Civil War* 8/20/24. Reprinted with permission.

Discover Lincoln's 1858 Time Capsule

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He can be reached at info@byabrahamlincolnbook.com.

MIGHTY OAKS (AND PRESERVED BATTLEFIELDS) FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

By Janet Whaley

In 2004, facing a plethora of Civil War book donations, the [Pasadena Civil War Round Table](#) began a tradition of holding a short “book auction” at the beginning of every meeting. With the unmatched auctioneering skills of our President, Nick Smith, we began to whittle down the many books which we had accumulated.

Somehow, with an “auction” setting, our members were encouraged to bid and outbid each other in a lively competition. Sometimes lovely coffee table tomes went for a mere \$5. But most often, books would go for \$20 to \$50, far above their retail price, because members were caught up in the thrill of the chase (I guess that’s why eBay has been so successful). With his career in the Pasadena Public Library, our president Nick served as the ideal bibliophile to introduce each offering, describing the book, author, and historical story to get folks excited about bidding on both rare and mundane titles.

Now we had another conundrum – what to do with the money we were raising each month. At first, it went into our General Fund to pay for normal expenses. Then our board of directors hit upon the brilliant idea of specifying that monies raised from the monthly auctions would go to our new Battlefield Preservation Fund. This encouraged our attendees in their bidding, knowing that the proceeds would be funding various Civil War preservation efforts and helped us to fulfill the historic preservation aspect of our CWRT’s mission.

As Treasurer, I’ve been tasked with tracking the results of these wildly successful monthly auctions. Since its inception in 2004, our Battlefield Preservation Fund has made over \$15,000 in donations (as well as many multiple donations) to 15 separate, non-profit preservation and educational organizations, among them Civil War Trails, CWRT Congress, various National Park battlefields, the Sultana Disaster Museum, and the Cattaraugus County (NY) Civil War Memorial Building. We

haven’t neglected our own Southern California Civil War institutions – donating annually to both the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum in Wilmington and The Lincoln Shrine in Redlands.

By far, our most frequent beneficiary has been the American Battlefield Trust (formerly the Civil War Trust). We will often gather several months’ worth of auction proceeds and donate to the ABT when a larger match of funds is available. With a donation in August of \$500 for their Petersburg Pamplin Park campaign, we reached a significant benchmark – since 2004, we have donated over \$10,000 to the Civil War Trust/American Battlefield Trust!!

It was a humble beginning, but it has been very successful in promoting the cause of Civil War battlefield and historic preservation.

Janet Whaley is the Treasurer of the Pasadena CWRT, California.

Books would go for far above their retail price because members were caught up in the thrill of the chase.

Photo: NPS.gov



CWRT CONGRESS AWARDS

KNOXVILLE CWRT RECEIVES THE WALLACE L. RUECKEL INNOVATION AWARD

By Carol VanOrnum

The [Knoxville CWRT](#) was presented with the Innovation Award on September 9, 2025. Presiding over the meeting was President Tim Vane. CWRT Congress Vice President Carol VanOrnum's remarks commended the Round Table's ability to create the groundwork necessary, i.e., establish goals, objectives, and action plans, to use as a base for implementing several committees and ensuring their success. One example is their Community Outreach Coordination which created a partnership with community organizations to

further enhance their ability to do cemetery maintenance and other Civil War community enhancements. They are in the early stages of working with the City of Knoxville to assist in the interpretation and preservation of the Battlefield of Armstrong Hill, a uniquely undeveloped Civil War site which was part of the Siege of Knoxville led by Generals Braxton Bragg and James Longstreet. The CWRT Congress congratulates the Knoxville CWRT for its innovative, creative, and effective efforts.

Pictured (left to right) is President Tim Vane, Carol VanOrnum, and Past President Tammie Borroughs



SUN CITIES / SURPRISE CWRT RECEIVES THE JOHN A. BAMBERL PHOENIX AWARD



Pictured (left to right) is Judy Blaison, Secretary, Mike Movius, Dan Lookabill, President, and Dick Cox, Vice President.

By Mike Movius

[Sun Cities / Surprise CWRT](#)

was presented with the Dr. John A. Bamberl Phoenix Award by CWRT Congress President Mike Movius on October 7, 2025. The Round Table suffered devastation loss when their beloved president passed away. The Phoenix Award recognizes a local CWRT for recreating itself after a period of stagnancy or extinction. The process of recreating a formerly vibrant organization that lost its way is one that requires dedicated leaders, members who understand the

value of public history and a vision of the future. The program achieves success through commitment, adaptability, and community. The CWRT Congress congratulates the Sun Cities / Surprise CWRT!

SHIPPENSBURG, CUMBERLAND VALLEY, AND HAGERSTOWN CWRTS JOIN FORCES

By Carol VanOrnum

The Sister Civil War Round Tables of Shippensburg Area, Cumberland Valley, and Hagerstown spent the summer sharing activities which made for some interesting and fun experiences. Their "On the Field" tours included: 1) The Artillery at Antietam Part I, led by James Rosebrock, 2) The 1864 Burning of Chambersburg, led by Tracy Baer, and 3) The Historic Battle of Gettysburg Electric Map, led by Mark Charisse.

The electric map is located in Hanover, PA. A Hagerstown participant said, "Many of us remember it from the old National Civil War Museum and later the NPS Visitor Center, both now removed from the Gettysburg landscape." Another participant thought "it was a blast from the past" that they all enjoyed. Their only disappointment was "the 'retreat and pursuit' phase of the campaign was represented by turning off all of the Confederate light bulbs on July 4, 1863!"



Credit: Save Falling Waters 1863 Battlefield in Maryland and Hagerstown CWRT Facebook pages.

AMERICA250 AND THE CIVIL WAR

By David Hamon

Those of you who have been following the weekly posts of the Civil War Round Table Congress are aware of the Semiquincentennial observances scheduled in 2026 to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation.

A cursory glance of the commemorative events featured on the America250 website focus upon numerous topics, some of which are unrelated to the history of the American Revolution. Regardless of the type of event, all of our readers are encouraged to get involved with your local communities to participate in and reflect upon the significance of the Semiquincentennial celebration.

I have written earlier to urge local Round Tables to use the America250 occasion to remind

your communities that the valiant efforts of the Union soldiers, the relentless generalship of Ulysses S. Grant, and the wisdom and leadership of President Abraham Lincoln, were an integral part of the preservation of our nation.

Not to put too fine a point on the above, but the 250th Anniversary provides an excellent opportunity for Civil War Round Tables to recruit new members by marketing this milestone as an invitation to study and learn about the Civil War.

Here is an idea: For one of your 2026 meetings, organize an event designed in part to invite new and younger members to your Round Table. With skillful planning and forethought, spotlight an America250 commemorative event by featuring a local/regional/nationally known



historian (or perhaps an academic from the local college or university) to deliver a short lecture on the topic. Adding in creativity to your “challenge and choices” and voila! You have the makings of great recruiting drive!

Consider these additional suggestions for a 250th Anniversary-themed evening:

- A facilitated panel presentation consisting of your speaker, a couple of community leaders, a teacher or two, and a local student (perhaps a returning college student/graduate?) to speak to the relevance of: “Why should we remember the Civil War during America250?”
- Highlight accomplishments of your Round Table’s contributions to battlefield preservation, monument restoration, cemetery restorations, student scholarships, education efforts, etc. as part of a meeting to focus the Round Table’s outreach as a marketing opportunity.

- Combine the America250 theme with a “Membership Appreciation” night.
- Select a book on Lincoln. Establish the meeting as a book discussion night and ask the attendees, in addition to discussing the merits of the book/critique of the author, to speculate upon the impact to the country if Lincoln had not been reelected.

As you can see, the possibilities are endless! Hit us up here with your ideas and questions and let’s initiate a discussion on this topic!

David Hamon is Membership Chair and serves on the Program Committee on the Board of [CWRT of Fredericksburg](#) and is also on the Board of the CWRT Congress.



JUSTIFIED DEFIANCE AT GETTYSBURG

By Dr. Terry C. Pierce, Captain
USN ret.

What if I told you that one thing nearly lost the Battle of Gettysburg, and the same thing saved it? It was justified defiance. Five Union officers faced moments when they believed obeying orders would be disastrous. So, they disobeyed them. One general caused a bloodbath. Another disobeyed orders twice. Two defiant officers received the Medal of Honor. When is disobeying a direct order justified?

Gettysburg was not the first battle where a disobedient officer won a victory. Admiral Horatio Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen received a signal to retreat. Holding his telescope to his blind eye Nelson said, "I really don't see the signal." Then he pressed the attack and won. But it's hard to recall any other battle in which five officers claimed justified defiance and did not face repercussions.

What made justified defiance at Gettysburg even more unlikely was the newly-appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac, General George Meade, a strict disciplinarian with a temper. His aide said, "I never saw a man in my life who was so characterized by straightforward truthfulness as he is...and woe to those, no matter who they are, who do not do it right!" Why didn't Meade court-martial any of the disobedient

officers?

Three days before the battle, Lincoln ordered Meade to assume command of the 93,659-man army, and Meade reluctantly accepted. With battle imminent, he needed officers who were leaders of character. Unfortunately, General Daniel Sickles's strengths were neither strong character nor military judgment. Meade disdained Sickles but the political general was President Lincoln's friend and could not be relieved. As a Congressman, Sickles shot and killed his wife's lover in Lafayette Square. In the first test of the temporary insanity defense, the jury found him not guilty. Lawyer and diarist George Templeton Strong wrote, "One might as well try to spoil a rotten egg as to damage Dan's character."

On the second day of the battle, Meade ordered Sickles to occupy Little Round Top, a 1,200-foot mount anchoring the army's left flank. After scheming for hours, Sickles, true to his egomaniacal character, defied orders. Leaving the mount undefended, he took a reckless gambit. He advanced his Third Corps one-half mile beyond the Union defensive line into the Peach Orchard. Sickles didn't grasp that the Peach Orchard was an indefensible island floating in no-man's-land. The Confederates attacked. The butcher's bill for Sickles's disobedience was his corps suffering forty percent losses and his right leg amputated.

Justifiable defiance usually comes

with a "without-warning" moment—the jagged pause between disbelief and fear when the unexpected happens. Sickles didn't face a "without-warning" moment. The other four officers did. What determines how officers respond to a without-warning moment? Character.

George Armstrong Custer, the 23-year-old boy general, had a checkered past—and a paradoxical character. He was a fierce warrior capturing America's heroic imagination. He graduated last in his West Point class, partying frequently at the off-limits Benny Havens Tavern. As a cadet, he wrote, "I am as full of mischief as ever." He barely survived a court-martial trial upon graduation.

When Custer defied orders, he reported to General David Gregg, a leader of character, commanding Second Cavalry Division. Gregg knew of Custer's impulsive nature and had witnessed Custer's love for leading cavalry charges. Gregg kept the swashbuckling general on a short leash, moving him around the battlefield like a chess piece.

On the morning of July 3, Gregg was guarding the rear of Meade's army with one available brigade. Fearing the Confederate cavalry would occupy the strategic intersection on the army's right flank, he requested one of General Judson Kilpatrick's brigades to

Justifiable defiance usually comes with a "without-warning" moment—the jagged pause between disbelief and fear when the unexpected happens.

guard the critical crossroads. Custer, Brigade commander under Kilpatrick, intercepted Gregg's message, executed Gregg's request without his superior's approval, and moved his brigade to the intersection. Ordered not to attack the enemy when they arrived, Custer informed Gregg when J.E.B. Stuart's 6,600-man cavalry division appeared. Gregg's 1,300 troopers joined Custer's brigade of 1,900 to stop Stuart. Kilpatrick was furious. Gregg received orders to return Custer's brigade, but as Custer was departing, Rebel batteries started firing. If they obeyed the order, Gregg's brigade would be facing a Rebel division that could easily crush them. Gregg and Custer claimed justified defiance and disobeyed the order.

(Continued on Page 14)

JUSTIFIED DEFIANCE AT GETTYSBURG, CONTINUED

(Continued from Page 13)

Gregg ordered Custer's 450 Seventh Michigan troopers to charge the Confederate batteries. Custer raced to the front and led the charge, nearly reaching the enemy batteries. Gregg then ordered the First Michigan to counterattack a Rebel brigade thundering toward the strategic intersection. Custer took the lead, and his 600 troopers split the middle of 1,800 charging Rebels in one of the greatest cavalry charges in military history.

Captain William Miller and his company watched Custer's outnumbered force cut deep into the Rebel line and disappear like an axe buried into a tree. Miller was a leader of character. Facing a without-warning moment, he disobeyed orders to guard a strategic intersection road and attacked the exposed Rebel flank, checking the enemy attack. Years later, Miller received the first Medal of Honor for disobeying an order.

Lieutenant James Chester was an artillery commander defending the strategic intersection. As

the Rebels charged Chester's battery, Gregg sent a messenger ordering Chester to retreat. "Tell the General to go to Hell!" Chester said. He held his ground, and his guns were not captured. The four cavalry officers' defiance ensured the Union's right flank held.

Meade had authorized instant death for anyone failing to do his duty including insubordination. So, it's astonishing that justified defiance played such a big role in nearly losing the battle and then helping to win a victory. Undoubtedly, the defiant officers risked repercussions, and Meade had every right to court-martial them. But he didn't. Arguably, if Meade had lost the battle, or if Lincoln had given him more than three days in command to cultivate his unforgiving ethos of strict order obedience, Meade would have axed the five deviant officers.

Meade should have court-martialed Sickles. The acquitted murderer and longest-living Union corps general was a fiendish rhetorician, using words like a carving knife and gutting opponents. He conducted a smear campaign against Meade. He

claimed himself the hero of Gettysburg, saying his defiance had forced Meade to fight instead of retreating. Thirty-four years later, Sickles received the Medal of Honor. But you won't find a statue of Sickles at Gettysburg. His despicable character was exposed again when an arrest order was issued for embezzlement from New York's Monuments Commission.

We learn at Gettysburg the how and why of justified defiance came down to character. It took one act of defiance, by a person with vile character whose only concern was himself, to cause his corps 4,500 casualties and nearly lose the Civil War. But it took *four* acts of justifiable defiance by people of character to help save the battle and turn the tide of the war.

Justified defiance was an anomaly at Gettysburg and should be as rare in future battles as the return of Halley's comet. Strong character reminds leaders that if they are disobedient, they shouldn't expect forgiveness like the Gettysburg's officers. Most importantly, if they act with

justified defiance, their character willingly accepts the consequences, either in victory or defeat.

Terry C. Pierce is a retired Captain of the USN and has written two historical novels:

Without Warning: The Saga of Gettysburg, A Reluctant Union Hero, and The Men He Inspired and

Thundering Courage: George Armstrong Custer, The Union Cavalry Boy Generals, and Justified Defiance at Gettysburg.

www.TerryCPierce.com

Photo: Panorama of Gregg Avenue with the Michigan Cavalry Brigade Monument visible in the distance. NPS.gov





Ulysses S. Grant

Portrayed by
E.C. Fields, Jr., Ph.D.

HQ:  generalgrantbyhimself.com

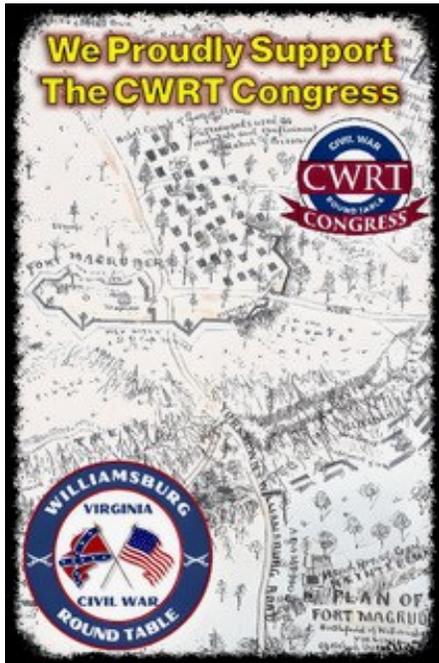
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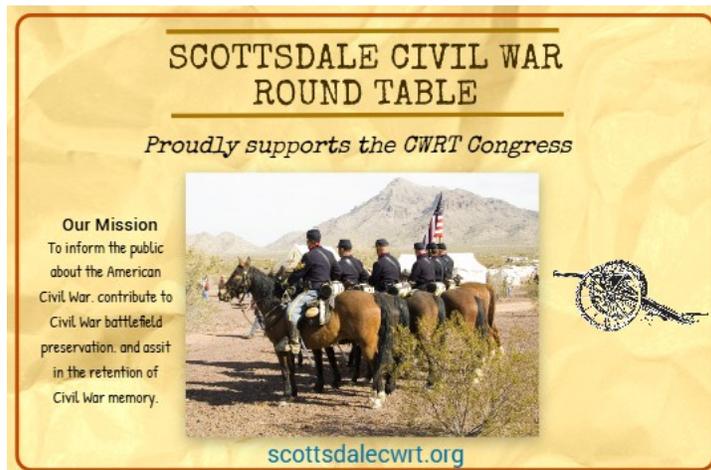
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Photo by Melissa Winn.

Civil War Round Table Congress Director Melissa Winn (far right) recreates the famous 1863 photograph of three Confederate prisoners at Gettysburg taken by Civil War-era photographer Mathew Brady. She posed playfully for the photograph in Gettysburg at the Center for Civil War Photography's 2024 Image of War Seminar. She is pictured with CCWP Vice President and American Battlefield Trust Chief Historian Garry Adelman (left) and conference attendee Melissa Espinoza (center).