

This issue of the Flagbearer

...October meeting is a Zoom meeting, Oct 27 7:00 p.m.

...Speaker is David A. Kelly Jr., Ph.D. U.S. Naval War College

...The story of the Sultana tragedy

...Have you submitted your dues renewal for the new program year? Looking for 22 past members to renew your membership

...Story of William Powell, Union Surgeon, born in New Bedford

...Civil War descendants in World War II

...October 1861 Civil War timeline

...Two new book releases

...Hunter Holmes McGuire, M.D.

...Command structure of the U.S. Union Army

...Essay by Peter Rioux. General George Thomas

...In lieu of a Dec Holiday dinner we have arranged a special Zoom speaker for December

...Town of Mattapoisett G.A.R. photo

...Don't forget to "Like" us on Facebook

...How do I join October's Zoom meeting?

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THE FLAGBEARER

Greater New Bedford Civil War Round Table

New Bedford, Massachusetts

October 27, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

ZOOM Meeting

Zoom Meeting October 27, 2020 7:00 p.m.

David A. Kelly Jr. Ph. D

Associate Professor, Joint Military Operations Program Manager, Graduate Degree Education College of Distance Education U.S. Naval War College Newport, R.I.

Subject: "The Sultana Tragedy" October 27th

The Sultana was a Mississippi River side-wheel steamboat that exploded April 27, 1865. Constructed of wood in 1863 in Cincinnati, she was meant for the cotton trade on a regular route between St. Louis and New Orleans. She normally carried a crew of 85. She was designed with a capacity of only 376 passengers, but was carrying 2,137 on 4 decks when 3 of the boat's 4 boilers exploded. There were about 750 survivors, a terrible tragedy. Events were overshadowed by the news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the chase for John Wilkes Booth. Hear this very interesting story by Assoc. Professor David A. Kelly Jr, Ph D from the U.S. Naval War College, Newport, on Zoom.



How do I join in to the Zoom call ?

If you were with us on the Megan Kate Nelson Zoom meeting, in September, you do not need to do anything. I will be using that email list for the Oct Zoom meeting. If you were not with us in September, then you will need to send me an email asking to be included for the October meeting. I will respond with a Zoom link and instructions.

When you send me your request, be sure to include your name along with your email address.

Bob Lytle bobbylee76@comcast.net 508-542-7630

William P. Powell Jr, African American Civil War Physician from New Bedford, MA

Most of you know this story , but every so often it bears repeating.

There were approximately 180,000 African Americans fighting for the Union, some born free, some escaped slaves. 13 African Americans tended to the wounded as surgeons, William P. Powell was one of them.

He was free born of a black father and a Native American mother. In 1834 , in New Bedford.

He was later raised in New York City and as a teenager worked as a pharmacist. Powell later moved his family to England to avoid racism. There, he helped his father who ran a hotel for seaman and fugitive slaves. He later went on to study medicine in London.

When Powell returned to the United States, he worked as a contract assistant surgeon with the Union Army in 1863. He was late hired as an assistant surgeon at the Contraband Hospital in Washington D.C., a facility that cared for emancipated slaves.

After leaving the Contraband Hospital Powell continued his work as a surgeon. He practiced as a civilian and by 1891 he retired from the profession due to poor health and a disability. He died in 1915 at the age of 81, after spending his last years in a home for the aged and infirmed.



From the National Library of Medicine

.....The Civil War timeline October 1861

In the east, both North and South wondered why there was no action planned. There was fine fall weather , but no advancing of the armies. McClellan was busy organizing his army, but he was having difficulties with Congress, Lincoln, and General of the Armies , Winfield Scott. The Confederates were hoping for foreign recognition. Skirmishes were taking place throughout Missouri.

... October 8 Brig. General William T. Sherman was named to command the Army of the Cumberland.

October 11 Brig. General William Rosecrans assumed command of the Army of West Virginia

...October 19 The U.S.S. Massachusetts and the C.S.A. Florida exchanged fire in an enagement near Ship Island in Mississippi Sound off the state of Mississippi.

...October 21 The Battle of Ball's Bluff or Leesburg, Virginia. This was a debacle for the Union Army. Brig. General Charles P. Stone , in command of the Union forces was accused of treason by the press and put in prison, although later returned to service.

...October 24 The Transcontinental Telegraph is completed by Western Union. The people of western Virginia vote in overwhelming numbers to form a new state.

...October 25 The keel of the ironclad U.S.S. Monitor is laid in Greenpoint, Long Island. General Fremont, in St. Louis, is beginning to realize his days in command are numbered.

... October 29 A huge combined land and sea expedition, under the command of Brig. General Thomas T. Sherman and Flag Officer Samuel F. Du Pont, left Hampton Roads, Virginia, for the Carolina coast and Port Royal, north of Savannah. There were 77 vessels, and 12,000 troops.

...October 31 President Lincoln received a formal request from General-in-Chief Winfield Scott to retire from his post. The elderly Scott was unable to cope with the heavy duties of his post, and was press by the ambitious McClellan who believed Scott was unfir to command.

Upcoming Fall Speakers

Paul R. Prentiss, CM

Retired Navy Captain, Chief Scientist of a national science and technology company, and currently a Trustee of the Old Baldy Civil War Civil War Round Table, Philadelphia.

Subject: "Damn the Torpedoes! Full Steam ahead. Admiral David Farragut and the Battle of Mobile Bay August 5, 1864

Paul will Zoom with us November 17th.



New Bedford Civil War Round Table

2020-2021 Membership Form

Program Year July 1, 2020 to June 30,2021

Please fill out this form and make check payable to "New Bedford CWRT"

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Thank you for being a member of the New Bedford Civil War Round Table

General George Thomas
The Union's Most Underrated Commander, by Peter Rioux

How was it possible for a man to consistently refuse promotion in rank opportunities when he felt undeserving, refrain from seeking any personal self-advancement, prepare no postwar memoirs to cast his military experiences and accomplishments in a most favorable light, suffer shunning by his family and fellow citizens of Virginia and still achieve such pervasive respect for his leadership and consistently demonstrated military success?

George Henry Thomas is viewed by most Civil War historians and fellow military leaders as one of the top three Union generals; someone who, while in command, never lost a battle or his portion of a battle, achieved the complete and total defeat of two Confederate armies, saved two Union armies from destruction, engaged in an uninterrupted thirty year military career during the entirety of his adult life, and the first to use the combat services of black troops.

He was born in Newsoms, Virginia in July 1816, one of six children and raised on a farm of 625 acres worked by twenty-four slaves. Against his father's fervent wishes, George taught many of the farm's slave population to read and write. When he was thirteen years old, his father was killed in a farm accident. Two years later, he was forced to flee his homestead with his family during the slave rebellion led by Nat Turner, which had the effect of inspiring his sympathy for the plight of slaves.



George received an appointment to West Point in 1836 at the age of twenty, becoming close friends and roommates with William Sherman, earning the nickname "Old Tom," helping to stop underclassmen hazing, achieving a class ranking of twelve out of forty cadets, and graduating in 1840 as a Second Lieutenant. Upon graduation, he served in various military posts in New Orleans and Baltimore before being assigned to Texas, pending the outbreak of the Mexican War. During this military experience in which he served with future Confederate General and opponent Braxton Bragg, he led a gun crew and received commendations from General Zachary Taylor.

Subsequent to this war's end, he returned to West Point as an artillery instructor for five years, establishing a close relationship with Robert E. Lee and providing instruction to future Confederate commanders Jeb Stuart and Fitzhugh Lee. After being promoted to captain in 1853, he was transferred to California the following year serving on court martial circuit duty. In 1857, he assumed command of a cavalry regiment and was wounded by an arrow in the chest from a Comanche warrior during an expedition in 1860

At the outbreak of the Civil War, after the attack on Fort Sumter, Captain Thomas, as a Virginian, was offered the Chief of Ordnance position by the Governor of Virginia, a position which he refused, choosing to remain loyal to his oath to the Union becoming the only Union Commander with a Southern birth. Jeb Stuart, Thomas' former student at West Point, expressed his desire to see Thomas hanged as a traitor for his "betrayal" to the Confederacy. His own family disowned him, destroying all of the letters he had written to them.

George Henry Thomas



United States Military Academy ground...

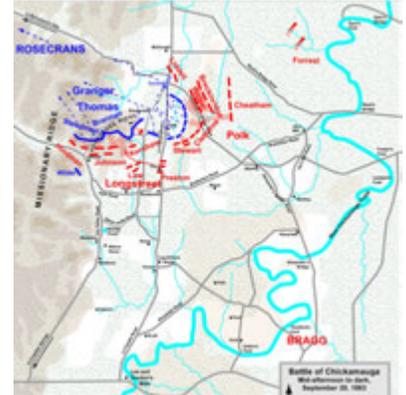
Thomas' Civil War experiences were marked by several major achievements:

Mill Springs, in January 1862, where he repulsed with four thousand troops a Confederate attack in eastern Kentucky

Perryville, Kentucky, in the fall of 1862, where he served as second in command, after refusing overall command, halting a Confederate advance under Braxton Bragg into Kentucky compelling the Confederates to withdraw to Tennessee

Stones River, where he commanded the center wing under General Rosecrans holding this center against the Confederacy led by Bragg

At Chickamauga, in September 1863, Thomas was able to hold a strong V-shaped defense for eleven hours at Horseshoe Ridge with forty thousand Union troops (Confederacy had one hundred thousand) preventing Bragg from pursuing the retreating Union Army and further advancing to the west. Thomas only retreated after being ordered by Rosecrans and being threatened with a court martial. This defensive hold by Thomas earned him the nickname "Rock of Chickamauga."



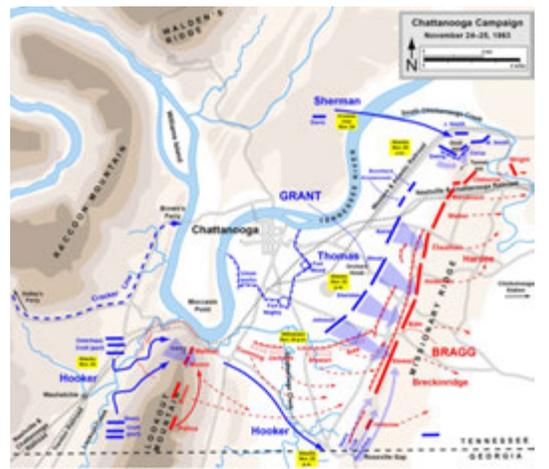
At Chattanooga, in November 1863, the Confederacy had formed a semi-circle around the city placing Rosecrans' army on the defensive. After Lincoln ordered Grant to replace Rosecrans, Grant appointed Thomas ordering him to hold the city. Grant was then able to successfully re-supply Thomas' army, allowing it to break out of the city to capture Lookout Mountain, further proceeding to capture Missionary Ridge, defeating the retreating Confederate Army and opening the Union's Road into Georgia.

At Nashville, in December 1864, Confederate General John Bell Hood's objective was to capture this city and then move into Virginia to assist Lee's eastern effort. However, Thomas' army of 50,000 was waiting patiently until clear weather developed, and then he launched a vigorous and complete attack that overwhelmingly defeated the Confederate Army in two days, reducing it from 57,000 to 3,000. Thomas' huge success drove Hood out of Tennessee and prevented the Confederacy from achieving any further success west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Ironically, Grant had grown frustrated with Thomas' hesitancy and was actually in the process of replacing him with John Logan when Thomas, after establishing his army's readiness, undertook this pivotally successful attack. Thomas earned a congressional commendation and another nickname, "The Sledge of Nashville."



What were the features of Thomas' leadership style that contributed to his continuing success? He was widely respected by the troops under his command, never engaging in reckless military attacks. He was an outstanding defensively positioning commander with a very methodical and detailed offensive approach that was consistently successful. When he was ready, he attacked vigorously, avoiding any major blunders. He was always well prepared, never being surprised. He remained persistently calm, even under the most intensive battle situations. He was personally very highly organized, efficient, and a master of military logistics. His battle approach was aggressive, but not unduly punishing.

Historian Bruce Catton had written that “Thomas liked to make sure that everything was ready before he moved, but when he did, somebody had to get out of the way. He never had a bad day. Perhaps this man actually was the best of them all. Whatever a general could do, he did.”



After the war, in October of 1865, he was promoted to Major General and commanded the Department of Kentucky and Tennessee. During Reconstruction, he led the military effort to protect the rights of Freedmen, and defended them from attacks by the Klan, and prosecuted racist whites for such acts through military tribunals. However, he refused to accept President Johnson's nomination as Lieutenant General to replace General Grant. In 1869, he commanded the military division of the Pacific in San Francisco. While serving in this assignment in 1870, he suffered a fatal stroke while in the process of writing a response to written criticism expressed by General John Schofield. He was fifty-three years old.

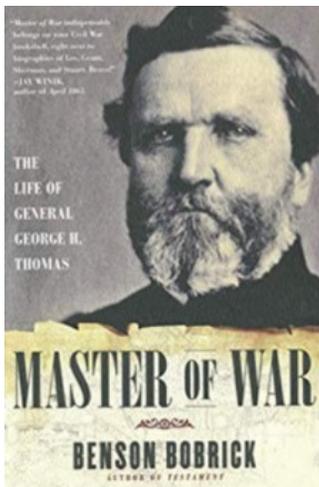
General George Thomas was buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, New York. His funeral was attended by President Grant and Generals Sherman, Meade, and Hooker along with ten thousand other mourners. President Grant ordered flags to be flown at half-mast throughout the nation. None of Thomas' Virginia blood relations attended the service.



General Sherman felt that a monument should be built in his honor, “like Wellington and Nelson in London.” True to Sherman's wish, Thomas' statue is located at Thomas Circle located in Washington, D.C. Fort Thomas in Kentucky is named after him as is Thomas County located in Kansas and Nebraska. A bust of Thomas is located at Grant's tomb. James Garfield honored him by saying, “Thomas was the best General since Washington.”

True to his self-effacing nature, George Thomas destroyed all of his private papers to retain the confidentiality of his war experiences and to prevent any, although deserving, self-proclaim. That would be the responsibility of those who best knew him and his significant contribution to the preservation of the Union.

By Peter Rioux, New Bedford Civil War Round Table



Want to know more about the Rock of Chickamauga? Here is a recommended book.

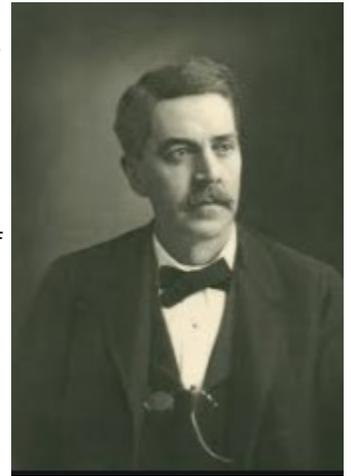
Master of War: The Life of General George H. Thomas, by historian Benson Bobrick.

From the parade grounds of West Point to the bloody Battle of Chattanooga, this book covers it all.

Hunter Holmes McGuire, M.D.

Hunter Holmes McGuire, M.D. Most of you know him as a surgeon in the Confederate Army attached to Stonewall Jackson’s command. It was McGuire that amputated Jackson’s left arm. He had also amputated General Richard Ewell’s leg after the Battle of Groveton.

He continued to serve in the Army of Northern Virginia after Jackson’s death. After the war he started several medical schools which later became the Medical College of Richmond. He was later president of the American Medical Association. In Richmond the VA Hospital is named after him.



However, here is what he contributed to military medicine. In May 1862 when Jackson’s army captured prisoners in Winchester, Va (his hometown), there were seven surgeons among the prisoners. Dr. McGuire convinced General Jackson to release captured surgeons, and with Jackson’s approval , Dr. McGuire drafted an agreement which afterwards was known as the “Winchester Accord”, which the Federal surgeons signed.

Here is the agreement. “We surgeons and assistant surgeons, United States Army, now prisoners of war, do give our parole of honor on being unconditionally released to report in person, singly or collectively to the Secretary of War in Washington City as such and that we will use our best efforts that the same number of medical officers of the Confederate States Army now prisoners or may hereafter be taken be released on the same terms. And furthermore we will on our honor use our best efforts to have this principle established—the unconditional release of all medical officers taken prisoners of war hereafter”

The released prisoners honored their agreement to take the message to Washington and almost immediately it had the desired effect. On June 6, 1862, the United States immediately and unconditionally released all Confederate surgeons being held as prisoners of war. Thereafter, for the remainder of the war, all captured medical personnel were immediately released so as not to impede their life saving work, saving an untold number of lives. After the war, he contributed to the original Geneva Conventions. Dr. McGuire’s legacy is marred by his Lost Cause views. He remains controversial to this day. . He died in September 19, 1900. His name and stature will mostly be removed from buildings and public property in Richmond. *Source—Wikipedia and internet*

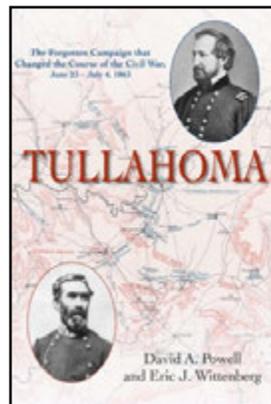
New Book Release

Tullahoma: The Forgotten Campaign that Changed the Civil War, June 23–July 4, 1863

By David A. Powell and Eric J. Wittenberg

July 1863 saw Vicksburg and Gettysburg victories, but few know of Rosecrans driving Bragg out of Middle Tennessee

Here is the book that rectifies that error.



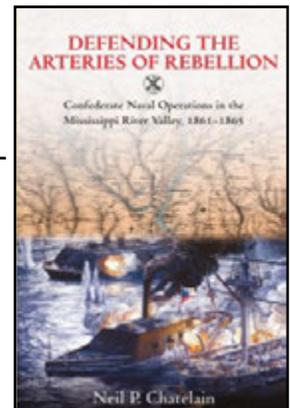
New Book Release

Defending the Arteries of the Rebellion

By Neil P. Chatelain

Confederate Naval Operations in the Mississippi River Valley, 1861-1865

The first modern full length treatment of inland naval operations from the Confederate perspective



Civil War to World War II



Simon Bolivar Buckner



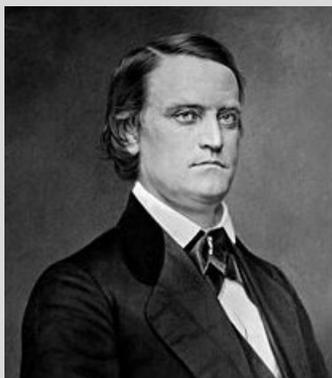
Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr.



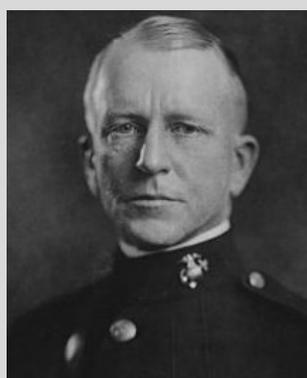
Arthur MacArthur Jr.



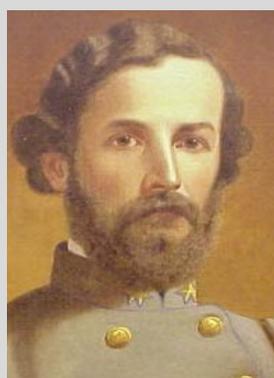
Douglas MacArthur



James C. Breckenridge



James C. Breckenridge



George S. Patton Sr.



George S. Patton Jr.



Stonewall Jackson



Col. Thomas Jackson
Christian Jr.



Maj. John Puller



Chesty Puller



Samuel Ealy Johnson Sr.



Lydon Baines Johnson

Command Structure of the Union Army

Some of you are new to the history of the Civil War. You have perhaps just started reading about the Union Army. This small explanation may help you in understanding of how the army was organized.

When asked what unit a soldier was with, he most likely gave the name of his regiment. The regiment was the primary fighting unit and usually carried the name of the state and the chronological number of the creation of that regiment, e.g. the 20th Mass Vol. Inf.



A regiment was often composed of men from the same region and frequently the men knew each other from home or were relatives. A regiment contained about 1,000 officers and enlisted men. A regiment was made up of 10 companies, each made up of 97 men and 3 officers. Companies were commanded by a captain and the companies were designated with the letters A-K (the letter 'J' was omitted because it looked like an 'I'). A colonel commanded the regiment, followed by a lieutenant colonel and a major. The actual number of men during the war varied as a result of battle losses, disease, and desertion.



A brigade was generally made up of 2 to 6 regiments, but commonly was made up of 4 regiments. A brigade was commanded by a brigadier general who reported to a division commander. Union brigades were identified by numbers, eg "the fourth brigade", but during the war carried nicknames, such as the "Iron Brigade".

A Civil War Division contained between three and five brigades, and was commanded by a major general. A corps was made up of two to 4 divisions, commanded by a major general. A corps had a badge or insignia, and within that corps each division had a color. Here is the First Corps insignia with Division designations. An Army was a fighting force made up of two or more corps and was commanded by a general. During the war the Union named its armies after rivers or waterways, e.g. the Army of the Potomac, the Army of the Cumberland, and so on. So let's give you an example of the chain of command. First Corps under Joe Hooker.



6th Wisconsin Regiment—Lt Col. Edward S. Bragg

Fourth "Iron" Brigade—Brig. General John Gibbon

First Division—Brig. General John P. Hatch

I Corps Commander—Major General Joe Hooker

Commander of the Army of the Potomac—Maj. General George B. McClellan

General in Chief of the Armies—Henry Halleck

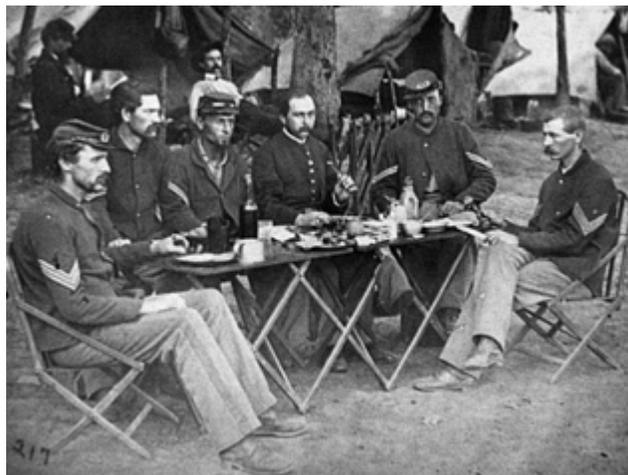
Secretary of War—Edwin Stanton

President—Abraham Lincoln

And how did the food taste ?



This picture says a lot.



The Town of Mattapoisett Ma celebrates it's 50th Anniversary as a town in 1907



In August of 1907 the town came out to celebrate Old Home Week. Highlights included a Grand Ball. Residents celebrated with trolley rides, fireworks, clambakes, ball games, boat races. And steamboat excursions across the bay. A lavish parade was held with decorative floats featuring themes of business, industry, and patriotism. In the this float are Civil War veterans. I suspect that the photo includes Round Table member Bob Randall's grandfather. These fellows are sporting their Grand Army of the Republic hats, medals, and badges.

Credit to the New Bedford Public Library and to Round Table member Nancy Jordan for submitting this photo

