



THE DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter

December 2015, Volume 12, Issue 12

Speaker: Mark Thompson
Topic: "George Armstrong Custer: Combat Commander and Leader"
When: Monday, December 14, 2015
Location: Brock's Riverside Grill
Times: Social Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm

Abstract on Mark Thompson, our Scheduled Speaker Monday, December 14, 2015 By Jim Smithfield

Our speaker for the December 2015 meeting will be Mark Thompson, current President of the RVCWRT. Marc is currently in the last month of his two year term as our president. Colonel Marc Thompson served 28 years in the United States Air Force as an Air Intelligence Officer with assignments to the Joint Staff, Air Staff, United States European Command and United States Strategic Command. Marc commanded the 692nd Information Operations Group, at Hickam AFB, Hawaii (2000-2002). He served as Director of Intelligence for Combined Joint Task Force OPERATIONS NORTHERN WATCH at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey (2002). He concluded his military career as Assistant Deputy Chief, Central Security Service with the National Security Agency at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. Over the years Marc has been a member of numerous Civil War Round Table organizations and has served as president of both the Sentry Civil War Round Table of Omaha and the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table. Marc's Presentation on December 14th will be about his favorite Civil War Commander Entitled:

George Armstrong Custer: Combat Commander and Leader

One of the most controversial figures in American history is General George Armstrong Custer. From among the many controversies surrounding this intriguing figure, perhaps none are greater than those regarding the quality of his generalship during our Civil War. Our December speaker, Colonel Marc Thompson, USAF retired, will take on this controversy, assessing General *George Armstrong Custer: Combat Commander and Leader*. Marc Thompson's presentation will begin with a quick review of some of the major academic and professional military studies on combat leadership and Marc will

use a combination of these methodologies to create an assessment template for successful combat command and leadership. He will then use this template to evaluate General George Armstrong Custer's performance at brigade - and at division-level command during several major combat actions between the years 1863 to 1865.

“After Gettysburg: The Bristoe Station Campaign”

Presented by Bradley Gottfried

A Review of our November Presentation by John Sapenero

(This review was not available at press time)

RVCWRT History Alert Program

By Jim Smithfield

RVCWRT member Alan Zirkle, provides a totally free service, which notifies his subscribers about any/all upcoming local history events in the Fredericksburg general area. This is done via the subscribers recorded e-mail address, it concerns upcoming history-related events. RVCWRT members receive Alan's important messages. If you do not now, but would like to receive "*History Alerts*" please just send your e-mail to Alan noting this fact @ az@azirkle.com.

Remember: Contact Bob Jones to order your Dinner in advance

To Confirm Your Reservations; Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail

3dognight@Bigplanet.Com

A Simple Reminder to RVCWRT Members

The RVCWRT maintains an Amazon link that has gotten very little use by our members. So, if you want to make to make a Christmas purchase using the Internet, think about using our RVCWRT site . . .

Did you know . . .

. . . that out of 425 Confederate Generals in the Civil War, there were only six general officers who were Irish!

. . . that many of the Union's Irish soldiers were killed in battle at the hands of their Irish brethren, the Confederate Irish. In fact, at the battle of Fredericksburg, Union troops of the famed Irish Brigade are said to not have known that they were facing the Irish of the 24th Georgia, who were holding "the wall" against them. However, the Irishmen of the 24th Georgia certainly knew who it was that they were facing. At one point near the end of that fight, the 24th Georgia are said to have all stood up and given their Union counterparts three roaring cheers!

The Irish at Fredericksburg:

It was December 11th, 1862, when the Union's proud Irish Brigade stepped off to advance up the hill to Marye's Heights. There were men in gray crouched behind the long

stone wall to their front. These men in gray knew full well who it was that was marching into their rifle sights. The brigade of General Thomas Cobb, included the 24th Georgia Infantry along with the Phillips Legion. The 24th was commanded by Colonel Robert McMillan and they were almost all Irishmen.

The Phillips Legion included an Irish company known as the *Lochrane Guards*. The entire company was from Macon, Georgia. Their captain was from another company in the Phillips Legion. His name was Joseph Hamilton, a native of County Tyrone, Ireland, He would command the entire Legion when its high-ranking officers fell during the coming battle.

These Irish Confederates were positioned along the foot of Marye's Heights, where in later years the fighting became legend. In truth the Union army came closest to victory in its assault on the Confederate right flank and again Irishmen were prominent in the fighting there.

The 19th Georgia's Irish color company, the *Jackson Guards*, was more prominent than its men would have liked. Placed in an exposed position on the left of Archer's brigade, the regiment was nearly surrounded and captured. Then the 19th broke rather quickly under the onslaught of the 7th Pennsylvania Reserves in its front, and the 2nd Pennsylvania Reserves at its left flank and rear. However, their casualty figures of 87 killed and 107 captured contradict any idea that the men broke without a fight.

Troubling to the men of the *Jackson Guards* was the fact that theirs were the only Confederate colors lost on that day. The company's commander, Irish-born Captain John Keely, claimed that they had been overrun by "*Meagher's Brigade of Irish troops*." They were not, of course, but it made Keely and his men feel better to think that they had been overrun by other Irishmen . . .

Overall the Confederacy's Irish sons fully supported the Confederacy and generally they did so in more comparable numbers to the Irish population throughout the South. It is noteworthy to remember that many of the Irish in the North enlisted in exchange for a promise of citizenship. In fact, many of the Irish fighting for the North were enlisted almost directly off of the boat.

It is also noteworthy point out that the majority of the Irish fighting for the South were Catholic. In fact the largest amounts of Irish troops came from primarily the states of; Missouri, Louisiana, and Texas. Other States with somewhat smaller Irish populations, such as Georgia and Tennessee, nevertheless came forth with all Irish units. After all, they were fighting for their new country's independence!

The Irish units and individuals mentioned below have not been selected necessarily because of their importance to the South's war effort! Instead, to me it was more that they had led interesting lives or that they were part of significant actions or events! Some of these individuals and units highlighted include, Father John Bannon; known to history as "The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain" or another noted individual was Brigadier General James McIntosh, killed at Pea Ridge on the exact spot where his Commander and good friend, General Ben McCulloch was killed just fifteen minutes earlier. Of course, there are those Irishmen whose lives were truly notable, such as, Major General Patrick Cleburne. Had he lived, Cleburne might have very well have affected the outcome of the Civil War and American history . . .

The story of the Irish Confederates is mostly a well-known fact to Civil War buffs! However, one notable issue, which I found to be interesting, is that Irish Catholics appear not to have been as persecuted throughout the South, as they were in the North? This probably was due in part, to the smaller numbers of Irish living in the South. However, it may also be

due to the fact that many so called elite Southern plantation owners were Irish and Catholic, especially in states like Louisiana and Missouri!. Confederate Irish units were involved in almost every major campaign throughout the Civil War. The Irish were right out there leading the fight in most major battles of the Civil War, both for the South and for the North.

The overwhelming majority of Irish living in the South lived in several states. Of course, the Irish were not limited to being just Catholic. Many of the Irish were of course Protestant. Still, most Irish in the South were in fact, Catholic, most, were poorly educated and thus forced by circumstances to live somewhat unsuccessful lives. The Civil War brought with it, an opportunity to improve their lot in life.

Author Phillip Thomas Tucker's book, *Irish Confederates: The Civil War's Forgotten Soldiers*, summarizes the Irish experience in America. He references the Irish in his book as "Forgotten Soldiers": In Tucker's book, he covers a varied assortment of much of what I've found through my own research. The fact is, that while the South's Irish may well have been forgotten, they were certainly not alone! So many other ethnic minority groups have been ignored as to have their contributions to the Confederacy openly minimized. Over the years, even the actual numbers of *Ethnic Minorities* fighting for the South have been reduced by some writers. Yet, like so many other Americans of that day, the South's various *Ethnic Minorities* took up arms in defense of their country. Overall they truly believed in the dream of *Southern Independence* and they too, fought for this cause, making it their own . . .

Various historians have reported that over 200,000 Irishmen fought in America's Civil War. Federal army records do indicate that more than 150,000 Irishmen fought for the Union. So, if we use these same figures, it would then indicate that the Confederacy had approximately 40,000 to 50,000 or more Irishmen fighting for the Southern cause.

In many of the all Irish Confederate units, more often than not, their officers were Irish Protestant, while the majority of the rank and file Irish troops were Catholic. This month's highlighted Irishman is:

Confederate Brigadier General James McIntosh
Commander, McIntosh's Cavalry Brigade
By Jim Smithfield



Confederate Brigadier General James McIntosh, (Killed at the battle of Pea Ridge) was a Florida native. He was the son of a United States Army colonel killed during America's war with Mexico! James McIntosh had been an extremely poor student while attending West Point. In fact, McIntosh graduated last in the class of 1849. Graduating from West Point,

McIntosh served in the United States Cavalry along the frontier and when Civil War broke out McIntosh was stationed at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and everyone there knew who he would support in a Civil War.

Upon resigning his United States commission, McIntosh was assigned to command of the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles. Then, later on, McIntosh was assigned to the command of his good friend General Ben McCulloch's cavalry. McIntosh was known to be quite courageous; however, he was more than just a little too daring. Yet, as an individual, he was also very rash in his thinking. This was to prove to be an unacceptable combination. On the first day of the fighting at the battle of Pea Ridge, his Division Commander and friend, General Ben McCulloch was killed. McIntosh then found himself in command of a whole division. Immediately McIntosh led an uncalled for advance toward the Union lines. McIntosh was leading only his former regiment, the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles.

It is undetermined to this day, as to just how suited McIntosh really was for such a high ranking command position? Within fifteen minutes of his gaining the command of McCulloch's division, McIntosh was shot dead by the enemy. In fact, he was killed at almost the exact same spot as his friend General McCulloch. His troops were facing only a few Union skirmishers from the 36th Illinois and after only a brief exchange of light musketry, McIntosh was dead.

McIntosh's death appears to be a still somewhat unclear event even to this day. It is not known whether or not McIntosh was really just trying to recover the body of his friend *General McCulloch* or if he was attempting to scout out the forward Union lines for himself? It's really anybody's guess . . .

. . . that being impulsive and rash, Confederate Brigadier General James McIntosh, was killed at Pea Ridge? Yet, I find it interesting to also note that McIntosh's brother, Federal Second Lieutenant John McIntosh, fought against brother James for the Union side at Pea Ridge . . .

Who we are?

The *Drum and Bugle Newsletter* is published monthly, by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Each month, The Drum and Bugle newsletter is also placed on our web-site at www.RVCWRT.org. Yearly membership dues are still just \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and it's still only \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the ongoing preservation of Civil War sites.

The RVCWRT Executive Committee:

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