

1-2014

Bowling Green Civil War Round Table Newsletter (Jan. 2014)

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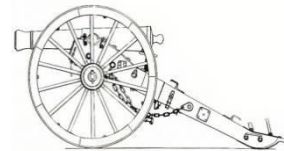
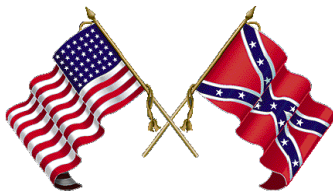
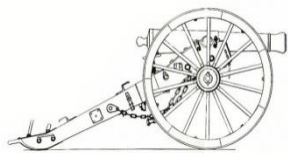


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Founded March 2011 – Bowling Green, Kentucky

Bowling Green Civil War Round Table

President - Dr Ron Hatcher; Vice President - Jonathan Jeffrey; Secretary/Newsletter - Tom Carr; Treasurer – Dr. Robert Dietle;
Advisors - Dr Glenn LaFantasie and Greg Biggs-(President - Clarksville CWRT)

The Bowling Green, KY Civil War Round Table meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month (except June, July, and December).

Email: BGCWRT@wku.edu

Join us on Facebook: [BGCivilWarRoundtable@groups.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/BGCivilWarRoundtable@groups.facebook.com) (Send email to this address and ask to join)

January 16th, 2014 – Our 25th meeting.

The 25th meeting of the Bowling Green Civil War Roundtable will be on Thursday, January 16th, 2014

Rm. 125, Cherry Hall, on the Campus of Western KY University.

The meeting begins at 7:00 pm and is always open to the public.

Members please bring a friend or two – new recruits are always welcomed.

President’s Note

(NOTE: I wanted to give you a second opportunity to read Dr. Hatcher’s November note. – Tom)

November, 2013

This is my next to last note as president of the BGCWRT and knowing that this is the last meeting for 2013 with the Holiday season fast approaching, I wanted to encourage all members to think ahead, not only about new officers, but also about what you wish for the future of the group. I raise the following items not as problems for “change”, but as “situations” that exist and that will continue to influence our success:

The 150th anniversary of the Civil War obviously ends in 2015. Are we sustainable beyond that time? What we do or attempt next year may well provide that answer. We would not exist without the support of the Western History Department—the original involvement of Dr. LaFantasie, the continued involvement of Dr. Dietle, the dependable core attendance of the Department itself and a place to meet have been vital. And yet . . . following the academic calendar by necessity has made each August and January almost like starting over—would a summer field trip be feasible? Or a picnic where you might bring your favorite artifact or book and have 5 minutes for Q & A’s from the group?

We are indebted to Gregg Biggs for serving as program chair and providing talented speakers at minimal cost. Meshing the schedule of the different roundtables with available presentations must be difficult, but I confess I would love to hear programs relevant to events occurring 150 years ago *that month*. Okay, that scenario isn’t realistic, but I’m asking you to think about your wishes for an *ideal* BGCWRT and perhaps some of those ideas can be implemented for the benefit of all.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as your president and particularly the occasion to *think out loud* with these notes. In my opinion our Nation's History will always influence our National Character and a better understanding of the past should insure a better future. - Ron Hatcher

President's Note
BGCWRT
January, 2014

I believe I will have exhausted tales to tell from my literary club program of this past Thursday when I relate a portion of the discussion that followed. We got around to causes of the War Between the States and how the constitutional issue of "States' Rights" was now perceived as no big deal in the narrative that "slavery" was the issue.

The fact that no one reading this thinks of themselves as a "Kentuckian" first and an "American" second today, doesn't mean that was so in 1861! We also got around to the fact that genuinely good people can have diametrically opposed opinions on topics of the day that will be treated as obvious moral rights or wrongs historically. The topic of gay marriage comes to mind as the best example of this to me and has further similarities in how this is currently legal in some states and not others and will obviously have an effect on interstate commerce until resolved. I don't mean to imply that it will divide the nation with actual warfare, but it might require several more years for some older folk and their ideas to pass away for national consensus.

On that note of the inevitability of "change" with time, I leave office of this historic-minded group. May we all learn and impart to the future the lessons of the past.

Ron Hatcher

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE AT THE JANUARY 2014 MEETING. WHEN YOU ARE CURRENT YOU WILL GET A NEW BGCWRT NAMETAG FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR.

We would love to have you join us! If you have friends interested in the Civil War, please bring them along. ***January is our fiscal year when dues for the current campaign are due.*** If you haven't paid your dues for this season yet please do so. Our dues help us get great speakers. With enough members we may also assist with historical preservation in the future. Annual dues are as follows:

- √ Student - \$10
- √ Single membership - \$20
- √ Family - \$30
- √ Military – Active duty and veterans - \$15
- √ Military family – Active duty, veterans, and family - \$25



OUR LAST MONTH'S MEETING (November)

Scott Sallee, who holds an M.A. in History from Western Kentucky University, has in the past served as assistant editor of "Blue & Gray" magazine. Scott is directly descended from both Union and Confederate veterans of the Civil War. He has published several articles on historical subjects, and "Joe Porters War" is his first book, which was his topic for our November meeting.

In the spring of 1862 Col. Joseph C. Porter was assigned to recruit in Union occupied NE Mo. Through the summer and fall of 1862 Porter stayed on the move in this sector, fighting the Federals and eventually recruiting 5,000 men for the

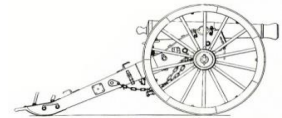
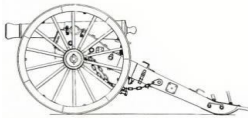
Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi army under Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman. Of especial note is the "Palmyra Massacre," where Union commander Col. John McNeil executed ten Confederate prisoners in retaliation for the kidnapping and supposed murder of a Union man who was serving as an informant against the Southerners, sparking international criticism. Porter died on Feb. 18, 1863 at Batesville, Arkansas, from wounds sustained at Hartville, Mo. on Jan. 11, 1863 while leading a brigade of cavalry in Brig. Gen. John S. Marmaduke's raid into southwest Missouri.

We wish to thank Scott for sharing his time and his detailed knowledge of the oft-times lesser known history of Missouri in the Civil War with us.

- Tom -



Our Program for January 2014



Rhea Cole, Middle TN CWRT

"Rosecrans's Secret Weapon: The US Signal Corps."

William Rosecrans Signal Corps in the Army of the Cumberland

Speaker Biography

My name is Rhea Cole. In good Southern tradition, I was given my Grannie's maiden name, which is pronounced Ray. While proud to be connected to a family tradition that goes back to the Battle of Kings Mountain and the founding of Tennessee, I could have done without people not being able to pronounce my name and be sure of my gender. Perhaps that is why I tend to analyze historic events from an out of the box perspective.

I have had a life-long fascination with history, with an emphasis on the kind you can lay your hands on. I am a National Park qualified gunner for Civil War artillery, a blacksmith, stone carver, furniture maker and carpenter. In 1996, I as a crewman on a Trans-Atlantic voyage of the Tall Ship Rose, a reproduction of the British 28 gun frigate Rose built in 1757. I have been a living history volunteer at Stones River National Battlefield for almost twenty years.

About ten years ago, we were inspired by David Bock to make signalizing a regular element of our programs. David is deeply knowledgeable about the operation of telegraphy, visual signals and the Beardslee repeating telegraph during the Civil War. During a training session, I questioned David about the Army of the Cumberland's signal corps. David's answer was, in so many words, that I was going to have to do that research myself. I approached Ranger Jim Lewis with a proposal to do the background research and write a signal corps program for the park. When Jim asked me how long it would take to write up a program, I said that it shouldn't take but a couple of months. After all, how hard could it be? Ignorant people do say the most ridiculous things; it took five years for us to put together our Signal Corps program.

Synopsis

If you read anything about the aftermath of the Stones River Campaign and the build up to the Tullahoma Campaign, without fail, the writer will editorialize about how Rosecrans was just piddling around, refusing to advance, not doing nothing for six whole months... William Stark Rosecrans had the personal energy of a squirrel. He could no more sit around... not doing nothing... than he could fly.

Between the time he arrived in Nashville during October of 1862 and the Army of the Cumberland started for Chattanooga in June of 1863, Rosecrans revolutionized the way the Civil War would be fought and created the template for all that followed. Under his command, George Thomas was allowed to create what we now call a modern army staff organization. Thomas' topographical setup was without peer in the world at that time. As

Rosecrans' chief of staff, James Garfield orchestrated the best intelligence organization of any army during the war.

Against all official pressure, John Wilder was allowed to arm his men with Spencer repeaters, replace their bayonets with axes and mount them. No infantry unit in the world could move so fast or survive a standup fight with the Lightning Brigade. Rosecrans created a combat engineer brigade and dedicated railroad regiments that revolutionized his logistics. While he was at it, he turned the Nashville, Readyville, Murfreesboro, Triune, Franklin, Nashville triangle into an unassailable fortress complex. The L&N was fortified all the way back to Louisville, securing his base.

As remarkable as this was, perhaps the most profound thing Rosecrans did was to embrace the Signal Corps. Everything his army did, command, control, intelligence, logistics, everything was interconnected by his Signal Corps. The Stones River Campaign, Tullahoma Campaign, Chickamauga-Chattanooga, Atlanta and the March to the Sea would not have happened without his Signal Corps. It was Rosecrans' secret war winning weapon.

I say secret weapon because few historians have any understanding of the ground breaking signal doctrine that Rosecrans embraced. Don't feel bad if you do not know anything about Rosecrans' Signal Corps, you are in good company. When Sherman's Army of the Tennessee approached Chattanooga, George Thomas sent a message that read, 'Where can I make contact with your Signal Corps?' Sherman's reply was, 'What is a Signal Corps?' As usual, Sherman went right to the heart of the matter. The answer to his question is that Rosecrans' Signal Corps was what made victory in the Western Theater of the Civil War possible.



~ UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS TO THE BGCWRT ~

- **January 2014** - Rhea Cole, Middle TN CWRT - "Rosecrans's Secret Weapon: The US Signal Corps." William Rosecrans Signal Corps in the Army of the Cumberland
- **February** - Glenn Lafantasia - "Abraham Lincoln and Ann Rutledge: Oh, No, Not that Again."
- **March** - Greg Biggs - The Atlanta Campaign part 1
- **April** - Jerry Wooten, Johnsonville State Park (TN) - Johnsonville and Forrest's Raid November 1864 (tentative)
- **May** - Michael Bradley - Raiding Winter: Confederate Cavalry Operations of KY and TN 1862/1863 (based on his new book)
- **August** - Greg Biggs - Atlanta Campaign Part 2



Suggested Civil War web sites:

Bowling Green Civil War Roundtable (BGCWRT): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BGCivilWarRoundtable/>

The American Civil War: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-American-Civil-War/127650407273823>

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