

THE CANISTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table



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September 17, 2026 Program

The Battle of Big Bethel

Presented by

Erick Bush



The Cincinnati Civil War Round Table welcomes Erick Bush on Thursday, September 17. Erick Bush is an Alabama based military historian with twenty-two years of experience conducting lectures, battlefield studies, and historical writing. Much of his Civil War work concentrates on Central Alabama and the Virginia Peninsula. He has lectured, led military staff rides/battlefield tours for Civil War Round Table groups, military history societies and military units in the United States and Europe. His areas of focus in Virginia include the Battle of Big Bethel, the role of intelligence and artillery in the Peninsula Campaign, the development of ironclad technology, and aspects of irregular warfare. He has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from the University of Alabama, a Master of Arts Degree in Public Administration from Troy University and a Master of Science Degree in Strategic Studies from Air University. He retired last year after a 33-year military career.

Erick Bush will examine the key elements of the first planned land battle of the Civil War. The Battle of Big Bethel was fought on the Virginia Peninsula on June 10, 1861, over five weeks before the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run). This lecture explores the critical aspects of the Battle of Big Bethel to include leadership, intelligence, infantry, artillery, fortifications, and planning. Key future Confederate and Union leaders involved at Big Bethel include John Bankhead Magruder, Daniel Harvey Hill, Gouverneur Warren, Judson Kilpatrick, Robert Hoke, George Wythe Randolph, Ben Butler, and Abram Duryee, among others. This early Civil War battle sets the stage for future operations in the Peninsula Campaign in 1862.

*Submitted by Dan Bauer,
Program Chair*

President's Letter

Welcome to our 2026 – 2027 season.

Last May, in our final meeting of last term, the officers and trustees for our organization for the coming year were determined. I am returning as President. Jeff Mikutis, Dave Stockdale, Dan Bauer, Kate Johantgen, and Eric Gutttag will continue as Vice President, Treasurer, Program Chair, Newsletter Editor, and Membership and Publicity Chair, respectively. Keith Young will serve his second year as Trustee, and Esly Cardwell II will begin a new two-year Trustee term. The Secretary position remains vacant, so anyone interested in devoting a few hours to our round table is welcome.

Our September speaker will be Erick Bush. He is a military historian specializing in events in the Civil War that occurred in Virginia and Alabama. He is an expert with respect to intelligence matters in the war as well as the development of ironclads. Another of his focus areas is the Battle of Big Bethel, fought on 10 June 1861, one of the earliest planned land battles of the conflict. The battle occurred in present day York County, Virginia, and I am particularly interested in hearing his lecture because for many years I lived in York County, virtually adjacent to the battle site. Please join us for what promises to be an interesting presentation of a subject not widely known.

Interesting Civil War-related events that occurred in September:

- 3 September 1861 – Maj. Gen. Leonidas Polk (pictured), commander of the Confederacy's First Geographical Division of Department No. 2, which included parts of western Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky, ordered rebel troops to Columbus,



Kentucky, effectively ending that state's professed neutrality. He did so, supposing that Union forces would soon attempt to

take control of Kentucky. In response, on 6 September Brig. Gen. Ulysses Grant moved Union forces to Paducah, Kentucky, the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio Rivers. Grant's move provoked no fighting and proved to be strategically important in obtaining a base for future Union drives.

- 29 September 1862 – Union Brig. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis fatally shot Union Maj. Gen. William Nelson at the Galt House in Louisville, Kentucky. On 18 September, Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright, Dept. of Ohio commander, ordered Davis, who had been at his home in Indiana on convalesce leave, to report to Nelson, then a division commander in General Don Carlos Buell's Army of Ohio. The reason for this assignment was that Confederate forces had



invaded Kentucky and were threatening Louisville and Cincinnati, and Wright thought that Davis, a career Army officer, could be of assistance to Nelson, who had been a career Navy officer before obtaining his Army commission.

Within a few days, Davis thought he had been treated poorly by Nelson and asked for an apology. Nelson refused, fired Davis, and expelled him from the city. Several days later, Wright ordered Davis back to Louisville, but this time to work directly for Buell. Wright apparently believed this command arrangement would avoid friction between Davis and Nelson, but he was wrong. On 29 September the two met at breakfast at the Galt House, and Davis again asked Nelson for an apology for perceived slights. Nelson refused and slapped Davis in the face. Davis was enraged, went looking for a pistol, found one, and went back to the hotel and shot Nelson in the chest. Nelson died within an hour. Although Buell reported the incident

to Washington and began steps to prosecute Davis, no courts-martial ever occurred. Davis was never disciplined for killing Nelson and soon returned to duty. He later commanded the XIV Corps in the Atlanta Campaign and the March to the Sea.

- 5 September 1863 – Charles Francis Adams, U.S. Minister to England, told British Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell that if



the Laird Rams were released to the Confederacy, “it would be superfluous for me to point out to your Lordship that this is war.”

Previously, in April 1862, British shipbuilder Laird & Son Co. began construction of two advanced ironclad

warships, each with four heavy guns in two rotating turrets plus a solid ram on the bow. The ships were ordered by Confederate agent Captain James Bulloch (pictured), who was Theodore Roosevelt’s uncle. Bulloch’s cover story was that the rams were to be delivered to Egypt. When that rationalization weakened, however, he transferred ownership to some French bankers, nominally on behalf of the Egyptian government, but with the intention of transferring them to the Confederacy once they were at sea. After receiving Adams’ ultimatum, Lord Russell queried the Egyptian government and confirmed that Bulloch’s representations were a subterfuge to disguise the true ownership of the ships. The British then seized the vessels. The ships were completed and assigned to the Royal Navy as *HMS Scorpion* and *HMS Wivern*. John Bulloch and his brother, Irvine, who also functioned as a Confederate agent in England, were not included in the general amnesty ordered by President Andrew Johnson after the war; they stayed in Britain and were quite successful as cotton importers and brokers.

- 4 September 1864 – Confederate raider, Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan is killed. Union troops, commanded by Brig. Gen.



Alvan Gillem (later breveted to major general), surrounded Morgan and his men as they bivouacked

near Greenville, Tennessee. A 12-year-old boy from the Greenville area rode 18 miles to a Union cavalry encampment to report the rebel troopers’ location. After ignoring repeated commands to halt and surrender, Morgan was fatally shot by Private Andrew Campbell of the 13th Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry (U.S. Army) as the general tried to flee. Campbell immigrated from Ireland in 1861 and at the start of the war enlisted in the Confederate Army in Arkansas. He fought for the rebels in the Battle of Stones River and rose to the rank of sergeant but deserted and later joined the Union Army. 100 of Morgan’s men were also killed and another 75 taken prisoner.

- 26 September 1865 – Confederate guerilla Champ Ferguson’s trial by a military court ends with his conviction on 53 counts of murder. Ferguson, living in White County, Tennessee (east of Nashville) at the start of the war, organized a guerilla company and began attacking any civilians he believed supported the Union. At various times, Ferguson cooperated with



Confederate military units led by Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan and Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler. It is unclear whether he officially became part of the Confederate military, although some evidence suggests Morgan may have commissioned him as a captain of partisan rangers. In any event, Ferguson’s

men were seldom subject to military discipline and often violated rules of war. At war's end Ferguson disbanded his men and returned home, but Union troops took him into custody. The charges against him included killing wounded Union men and prisoners after the Battle of Saltville; some were murdered in their hospital beds. These victims were members of the 5th U.S Colored Cavalry and their white officers. After his conviction, Ferguson was hanged on 20 October 1865. He was one of three men executed for war crimes after the conflict. The others were Henry Wirz, commandant of the Andersonville prisoner of war camp and Henry Magruder, a Confederate guerilla convicted of eight murders.

Please join us at our next meeting on September 17 for what promises to be an interesting presentation about a battle (Big Bethel) that has not received a great deal of attention.

Submitted by Tom Robisch, President



CCWRT's First Ever Book Swap!!!

For the October meeting I am proposing a book swap! We all have plenty of Civil War books on our shelves at home. Some are valuable reference books, some are of special interest to us, etc. Then there are those books that we have read and know we will probably never look at again. It is those latter books that I am proposing that we could "swap" with other members in order to "thin" our shelves a bit and gain new reading material. It would work like this: In October come early to the meeting and bring a book that you no longer need in your collection. Place the book on the swap table and pick up a voucher for a different book. **Find an interesting book from others on the swap** table and *Voila* you have a new book!

Important note: This swapping will not take the place of our meeting raffles. We still have plenty of books to raffle off. And these monthly raffles play an important part in our yearly budget. Keep buying those raffle tickets!

But this swapping has a threefold benefit: 1) we can thin out our libraries at home, 2) we can find new books that interest us, and 3) it is another way for members to come together and intermingle and share our knowledge of the Civil War. Should we give it a try? I'll ask for your input at the September meeting.

Start searching for those books you will never read again!

Submitted by Keith Young, Trustee

Cincinnati CWRT Meeting Details

Location	Raffel's Evendale Banquet Center, 10160 Reading Rd., Evendale, OH 45241
Date	Thursday, September 17, 2026
Time	5:30 Sign-in and Social 6:30 Buffet Dinner 7:15 Business Meeting 7:30 Speaker
Reservations	You MUST make a reservation if you would like Dinner . Please Email reservations to: CinCWRTreservations@ gmail.com Or Call, or text Jeff Mikutis, Vice President: 937-623-4879 Reservation Deadline Sunday, Sept. 13, 2026
Cost	Dinner, meeting and speaker – \$30.00 Meeting and speaker only – \$7.00 . No reservations are required.
Cancellations	We are charged for the number of dinners called in to Raffel's after the deadline. You will be charged if you do not cancel by the reservation deadline, unless a late- comer can be substituted.

Future Speakers for Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

October 15, 2026 **Burnside's East
Tennessee and Knoxville Campaigns**,
by Steve Phan, NPS

November 19, 2026 **The Battles of
Vaught's Hill and Snow Hill**, by Kevin
McCray

January 21, 2027 **Clermont County, Ohio
in the Civil War**, by Gary Knepp

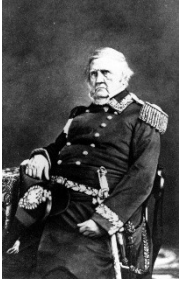
February 18, 2027 **Across the River:
Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, and
the Enduring Legacy of the Civil War**,
Cordell George, Cincinnati Museum Center

March 15, 2027 Speaker TBD

April 15, 2027 **Sherman and the Law of
War**, Tom Robisch (*date may be changed*)

May 20, 2027 Annual Business Meeting,
Speaker TBD

Quiz



1. General Winfield Scott Hancock received his nickname "Hancock the Superb" after what battle?

2. Following on question #1, who gave Hancock the nickname?

3. Franklin Buchanan commanded the ironclad *CSS Virginia* (the *Merrimac*) during the Battle of Hampton Roads in 1862. Name the other famous ironclad he commanded in 1864?



4. J.E.B. Stuart died May 12, 1864, having been mortally wounded the previous day in what battle?

5. Who succeeded J.E.B. Stuart as commander of the

Army of Northern Virginia's cavalry corps?

6. Who was George B. McClellan's running mate in the 1864 presidential election?

7. Thomas Ewing, Jr., son of a U.S. Senator, left college to become private secretary to President Zachary Taylor 1849-1850. He



lived in Cincinnati from 1852 to 1856, graduating from the Cincinnati Law School in 1855 and briefly practicing law here. He then moved to Kansas where, after helping defeat the pro-slavery Lecompton

Constitution, he was elected the first chief justice of the Kansas Supreme Court in 1861. The following year he resigned his judgeship, organized the 11th Kansas

Infantry, and was elected its colonel. In 1863 he was promoted to brigadier general and given command of the District of the [Missouri-Kansas] Border. His General Order No. 11, issued in retaliation for Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Kansas, effected the removal of any local citizen who did not pledge loyalty to the United States. Despite his personal friendship with President Lincoln, he defended accused assassination conspirators Dr. Samuel Mudd, Samuel Arnold, and Edmund Spangler at their trial and assisted in obtaining pardons for them from President Johnson. Who was Ewing's famous brother-in-law?

8. George W. Randolph was the Confederate Secretary of War in 1862, between stints as a general. Who was his grandfather?

9. Cincinnatians William J. Reardon, J. Louis Warm, Roger W. Parry, Thomas E. Holt, John C. Varelmann, Joseph S. Stern, Jr., Charles S. Adams, Dr. John W. Miller, and Frederick A. Breyer, had a unique connection with the Civil War. What was it?

Book Review

The Last Citadel: Petersburg, June 1864-April 1865

by Noah Andre Trudeau, 2014, 519 pages, paperback (as low as \$12.35), hardcover (as low as \$18.51)

From my prior book reviews, you may have noticed a pattern: many of them are about the almost ten month-long military campaign at Petersburg (also known as the Cockade City). That's not an accident as there are numerous volumes (including significant portions of mine still being written) which describe the ferocious fighting there from June 1864 to April 1865.



Noah Andre Trudeau should also be a familiar name (as well as face as he is often on TV) to many who follow the American Civil War. Unsurprisingly, Trudeau has written his own tome, *The Last Citadel*, on the campaign at Petersburg. It was originally published in 1991 (to be republished just over two decades later in 2014 with additional material). It is also the sequel to his earlier book (*Bloody Road South*) that describes the prior (and equally bloody) Overland Campaign.

As Trudeau accurately states in his preface to *The Last Citadel*: “No campaign of the Civil War equaled the siege at Petersburg.” (What happened at Petersburg was also technically not a “siege” as the Union forces failed to

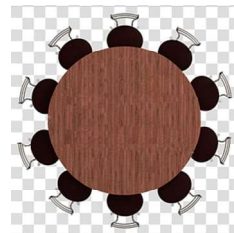
surround the city until almost when it fell in April 1865).

Like his book *Bloody Road South*, Trudeau's *The Last Citadel* is a detailed account of this important campaign in the American Civil War whose end led to the evacuation of the Confederate capital by Lee's army. As with any other Trudeau book, it is extremely well-researched, yet quite readable. Definitely one tome to include in your American Civil War library!

Submitted by Eric W. Guttag
Publicity and Membership Officer

Quiz Answers

1. The Battle of Williamsburg during the Peninsula Campaign of 1862.
2. Gen. George B. McClellan in his telegram to Washington following the battle.
3. The *CSS Tennessee* during the Battle of Mobile Bay, 1864.
4. The Battle of Yellow Tavern in the Overland Campaign, 1864.
5. Gen. Wade Hampton.
6. Congressman George Pendleton of Cincinnati.
7. General Ewing's sister Eleanor (Ellen) was married to Gen. William T. Sherman.
8. President Thomas Jefferson.
9. They were the founding officers and trustees of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table (1956).



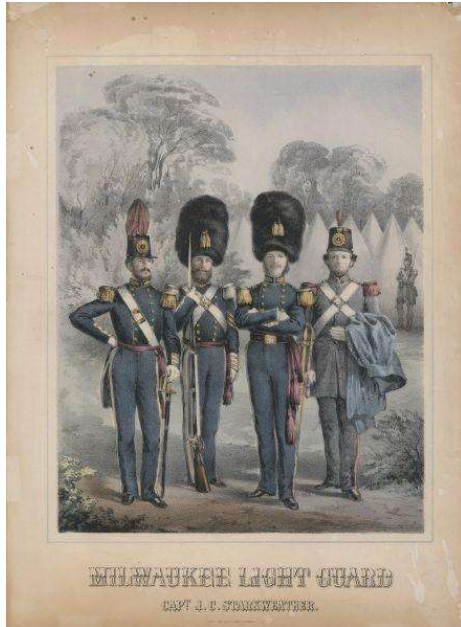
The Quiz and the Quiz Answers
Submitted by Dave Stockdale



The 1st Wisconsin Infantry and Its Connection to the Revolutionary War

*By Christopher L. Kolakowski, Director,
Wisconsin Veterans Museum
August 24, 2026
Blueandgrayeducation.org*

Often, when people think of Wisconsin regiments in the Civil War, the three Iron Brigade regiments—the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin Infantry—come to mind first. But to contemporary eyes, the 1st Wisconsin enjoyed an equally prominent, if not greater, reputation.



The 1st Wisconsin Infantry served from 1861 to 1864. Initially organized for three months, it later mustered again for a three-year enlistment. Because Wisconsin had become a state only in 1848, the 1st Wisconsin was the

very first military unit the state ever sent into United States service.

The regiment's origins trace back before the Civil War, to the Wisconsin state militia. In 1861, several militia companies—primarily from Milwaukee, with additional companies from Madison—were combined to form the regiment for 90 days of service. (A similar process created the 2nd Wisconsin Infantry in Madison.) Like the 2nd Wisconsin, the regiment entered the war wearing the official gray uniform of the Wisconsin militia.

John C. Starkweather, commander of the Milwaukee Light Guard, was named colonel. A



New Yorker by birth, Starkweather had moved to Milwaukee in the 1850s to pursue a law career. He became prominent in the local militia and made the Light Guard the best militia outfit in the city.

Starkweather was a natural choice for

Governor Alexander Randall to appoint to this important command.

Starkweather was the grandson of a veteran of the Battle of Bunker Hill, while the regiment's color sergeant, John Day Putnam, was a descendent of General Israel Putnam, who fought in that battle. Yet the regiment had another, even more tangible, connection to the Revolution. The regiment's first flag incorporated a direct tie to the War of Independence.

"In the name of Col. H.W. Gunnison," read a regimental order in May 1861, quoting the Mayor of Kenosha, "I have the pleasure of presenting to you a small relic of the first great struggle for American freedom, a piece of the flag borne by the Body Guard of General Washington upon the battle fields of the Revolution. The same shall be wedded to our

colors and will invest them with the most hallowed associations of our Country's history."

The 1st Wisconsin served in Major General Robert Patterson's army at Falling Waters, Virginia (now West Virginia). There, on July 2, 1861, the regiment suffered the loss of the first Badger killed in action during the Civil War, underscoring the state's early contribution to the Union war effort. After expiration of its term, the regiment returned to Madison, reorganized, and reentered Federal service on October 8, 1861.

The reorganized regiment fought with great distinction at Perryville, Stones River, Tullahoma, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and in the campaign to Atlanta before returning home. Quite a few veterans of both editions of the 1st Wisconsin became famous in other Wisconsin units in the Civil War. The regiment's colors were returned to the State of Wisconsin and are preserved by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison. Today, the legacy of the 1st Wisconsin Infantry is perpetuated by the 127th and 128th Infantry Regiments of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

This Civil War Dispatch has been brought to you by the courtesy of the Blue and Gray Education Society, a non-profit 501-3C educational organization. Please visit them at

www.blueandgrayeducation.org

Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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*The **CANISTER** is regularly published eight times per year, in January, February, March, April, May, September, October, and November; sometimes more often, if we have a lot to say to our members.*