

Nashville Civil War Roundtable

Founded April, 2009 – Nashville, Tennessee

Visit our web site: www.nashvillecivilwarroundtable.wordpress.com

June 20th, 2023 – Our 148th meeting!! We continue our fourteenth year!

The next meeting of the Nashville (TN) Civil War Roundtable will be on Tuesday, June 20th, 2023, in the visitor's center of Ft. Negley Park, a unit of Metro Parks, Nashville, TN. This is located off I-65 just south of downtown between 4th Avenue South and 8th Avenue South on Edgehill Avenue/Chestnut Avenue. Take Exit 81, Wedgewood Avenue, off I-65 and follow the signs to the Science Museum.

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.

July is our fiscal year so please plan on paying your membership dues at this meeting if you missed that. Without dues we cannot get speakers and programs so please support the Nashville CWRT.

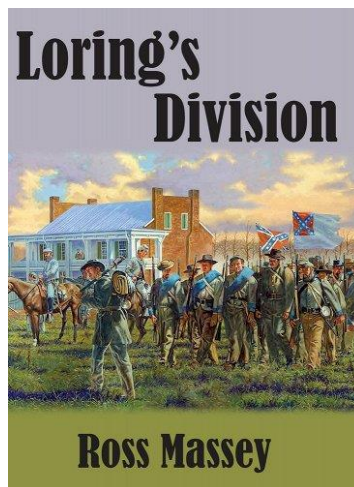
Our Speaker and Topic – *“General William Loring and His Division”*

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Biographies of generals focus on the general, as they should. They almost never give adequate credit to their men. It behooves us to include the soldiers, and most of them forgotten, who made the general's fame possible. William Wing Loring earned far too little fame for his sacrifices. A biography by James W. Raab did not surface until 1996. The purpose of this book is to remember Loring's Division, as a distinct organization.

Loring's Division did not have a reputation like Cleburne's Division. It was a latecomer to the Army of Tennessee in 1864. But Loring's didn't lack for aggressive fighting spirit. Loring's Division's breached the enemy's line at Peachtree Creek in the most successful charge in the Atlanta Campaign. Loring's had more buried in the McGavock Cemetery at Franklin than Cleburne's. No division commander was more colorful than was Loring. As a teenager William Wing Loring was fighting Seminoles in his native Florida. He left an arm in Mexico City in the Mexican War, and served in the U.S. Army in the western territories. He ran afoul of Stonewall Jackson in the War for Confederate Independence, but President Jefferson Davis was too wise to waste Loring's abilities, and promoted him.

A thorough history of Loring's Division could cover hundreds of pages. The battles alone could have been covered in greater detail. The purpose here is to give a good overview of the actions of Loring and his unit commanders, in order to appreciate the entire division. Biographies and battle narratives often only touch on brigade, regimental, and artillery commanders. These leaders deserve biographies of their own, yet they may never be written. A gap is thus left unfilled, but the Biographical Entries section partially fills it. The primary focus of this book is Loring's Division in the Army of Tennessee, where it made deadly charges, proving its valor was equal to any division.



General William Loring was born in North Carolina but moved to Florida when he was only four. As a teenager, Loring fought in the state militia against the Seminoles and by eighteen was promoted to lieutenant. Later he became a lawyer and state legislator. When the Army organized the Regiment of Mounted Rifles (later 3rd U.S. Cavalry), Loring was given a commission as a captain and fought in the Mexican War, rising to major and regimental command. He lost his arm at Chapultapec. He remained with the Mounted Rifles, rising to colonel, and commanded the unit during their famous cross-country march to Oregon. After service out West, in 1861 Loring resigned his colonel's commission (he was the youngest to hold that rank in the U.S. Army) and went to Virginia to join the Confederate Army also as a colonel but was promoted to Brigadier General in May.

His Confederate career began with the fighting in western Virginia where he would come under the command of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. The two officers butted heads constantly and Loring left that command with a Major General's commission and was sent west to Mississippi in November 1862. His division fought in the Vicksburg Campaign at Champion's Hill and escaped being taken with the garrison in July 1863. Loring and his division were sent to Georgia and fought in the Atlanta Campaign and through the Tennessee Campaign. His Civil War career ended in North Carolina in late April 1865.

After the war, Loring went to Egypt to serve as a Brigadier General in that army fighting in a major campaign and becoming Inspector General of that army. He was awarded the title of Pasha for his service. By 1879, Loring was back in the U.S. and was involved in business and finance but also in demand as a lecturer and gathered material for his proposed autobiography before his sudden death by pneumonia in December 1886 in New York. He is buried in St. Augustine, Florida where he grew up.

William Loring was one of the Civil War's more interesting commanders and our speaker this month, Ross Massey, will inform us of the division he commanded in the war. This is based on his new book, "*Loring's Division*," which he will have for sale at the meeting.

Ross Massey has been interested in all things Civil War but also deeply into the Battle of Nashville since 1964. In the years since he has helped find lost earthworks at Granbury's Lunette and at Bell's Bend and in 1991 became a founding member of the Battle of Nashville Preservation Society. He has appeared on the TV series "Civil War Journal," led numerous tours of the Mount Olivet Cemetery (which led to the preservation of a vault in the cemetery for which Ross received an award), and has written the guide book for touring Nashville's Civil War sites. He also published the biography of General William Bate. Ross is also an esteemed member of the Nashville Civil War Roundtable.

March 2023 meeting

We were indeed wowed by the excellent program of Dr. Curt Fields who is the nation's finest portrayer of Lt. Gen. U.S. Grant. Handling the affairs of the 1864 Wilderness Campaign, we were given a deep insight into Grant's thinking of the time and how he reacted to the bloody battles that were designed to get Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia out into the open for a fight that was designed to destroy it. Lee wisely kept his smaller army within the

Wilderness, a maze of roads and forests where he could strike Grant with local superiority of numbers.

Fields' terrific recall of the others involved and how Grant related to them at this time helped flesh out his excellent program. We were very fortunate to get Dr. Fields to speak to us as he is in high demand for his many portrayals of Grant. Thanks for coming to speak to us.

FUTURE PROGRAMS:

July 2023 – Walter Green, historian/author – *“The Nashville & Decatur Railroad in the Civil War”* – based on his recent book

August 2023 – Jim Ogden, historian, Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park – *“Rosecrans’ Campaign For Chattanooga, 160th Anniversary”*

September 2023 - Col. Ed Lowe (ret.) – *“James Longstreet’s East Tennessee Campaign”* – based on his forthcoming book

October 2023 – Philip Kemmerly, Historian, retired Austin Peay University professor – *“Logistics in U.S. Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign”*

November 2023 -

Some of our speakers are authors and bring books to sell at our meetings. Please support them by buying their books.

MEMBERS AND DUES – Due to Covid our fiscal year needed to change to the month when we first started back to regular meetings – so our fiscal year is now July. Please plan on taking care of your membership renewals at this meeting. The annual dues structure for the Nashville CWRT is as follows:

Single membership - \$20

Family - \$30

Military – Active duty and Veterans - \$15

Military Family – Active duty and Veterans - \$25

Student - \$10

Senior (age 60 plus) - \$15

Senior couple - \$20

Your dues for the 2022-2022 fiscal year will be due at this meeting if you have not paid as yet! Please plan on paying them at that month’s meeting if you have not already.

PLEASE PLAN ON PAYING YOUR DUES THIS MONTH SO WE CAN KEEP BRINGING IN GREAT SPEAKERS AND HELP SAVE CIVIL WAR SITES. If you cannot make a meeting then please drop off your check at Fort Negley. BOTTOM LINE FOLKS – without your dues we do not have programs so please support the efforts of the Nashville CWRT.

When your dues are paid you will be issued a new name badge with the fiscal year on it. If you do not have a name badge then you are not current.

Our dues go to paying for speakers as well as donations for Civil War preservation causes especially those of a local nature. Please be sure to pay your dues so we can offer the best programs possible for you! We also utilize donated items for sales each month to help add to the treasury. If you have something you would like to donate for these auctions, please bring them to the meetings. Books, art, or anything Civil War, works very well. Thanks very much to all of you who have made such donations!

CIVIL WAR NEWS AND EVENTS

Historic Travellers Rest Receives Grant For Repairs to the Overton House

Travellers Rest Historic House Museum recently received a \$500,000 appropriation from the State of Tennessee to repair and preserve this important historic building located in Nashville, TN. Built in 1799, the historic home of Judge John Overton is the centerpiece of a historic site where professional staff provide educational programs for both children and adults about nearly 1,000 years of Tennessee history from the time of the original native inhabitants through Twentieth Century urbanization.

“The historic house is in immediate need of preservation. We are very grateful to the elected officials who helped us secure the funds necessary to undertake this work,” says Katie O’Bryan, Ph.D., Executive Director of Travellers Rest Historic House Museum. The brick wall between the 1808 and 1828 addition is separating and needs to be repaired. The state funds will go towards this project. Work is expected to commence before the end of the year.

This is only the second time in its history that Travellers Rest has received support from the State of Tennessee. “Thanks to Governor Lee, his chief of staff Joseph Williams, our Crieve Hall State Representative Caleb Hemmer and Senator Heidi Campbell, and also Senators Bo Watson, Jack Johnson, Jeff Yarbro, and Representatives Bob Freeman and Johnny Garrett. Without their help this critical preservation work would not be possible,” says Board President Clinton J. Holloway.

The \$500,000 grant from the State is approximately half of what is necessary to meet the preservation needs of the historic house and will serve as a catalyst to raise the remainder of the funding for preservation work. “It has been almost thirty years since Travellers Rest last conducted a capital campaign,” says Board President-Elect Laura Roberts, “and the Board of Directors of Travellers Rest welcomes friends of the organization and the greater Middle Tennessee community to contribute to the future of this unique site that provides history education to children and adults of all ages.”

Travellers Rest Historic House Museum is owned by The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Tennessee and is part of the nationwide Great American Treasures Program. The site is operated by a non-profit community Board of Directors, Travellers Rest Historic House Museum, Inc. Travellers Rest recently launched a \$3 million capital campaign to preserve the house, develop a master site plan, and permanently endow educational staff positions.

If you wish to make a donation please do so. For more details, please visit their web site at - <https://www.historictravellersrest.org/>

Did Champ Ferguson Escape The Hangman's Noose? By Philip Duer (Courtesy of the Battle of Nashville Trust May 2023 newsletter)

After a two month trial before a U. S. military commission in Nashville, the final argument was delivered by Judge Advocate Blackman to defense counsel's plea for mercy on behalf of Champ Ferguson, the foremost guerilla leader of the upper Cumberland Plateau:

"The case to which you have listened so patiently for two months is but an incident of the great crime of rebellion. Though the incident discloses a series of crimes at which humanity shudders, and good men stand aghast, those scenes are but as the trickling rivulet to the great sea of blood which has deluged the land....."

Refuting Ferguson's argument of unfairness, that the real people responsible (the members of the Confederate government) were let go, and only he would be punished, Blackman implored the commission to consider the case on the law and evidence. Mercy was not in their purview and the issue of who was at fault for the war. The issues to consider were these: 1) was Champ Ferguson a guerilla; and 2) did Ferguson murder as set out in the twenty three specifications.

The Military Commission rendered its verdict and on October 10th, 1865, General Orders were issued by General Stoneman, the District Commander of Middle Tennessee at Murfreesboro approving and confirming the findings....Guilty. Champ Ferguson was to be executed by hanging, to be carried out on October 20th, 1865 in Nashville. The order was read that same day to Ferguson at the military prison in Nashville by Col. W. R. Shafter, Post Commandant. The execution would be within the walls of the prison and not be open to the public although some 300 passes were ultimately issued. Ferguson's wife, Martha Ferguson and their sixteen year old daughter, Ann, would be allowed to attend but before the actual execution, they were to be escorted out of the prison to an adjacent building to await the coffin. A detachment of the 15th USCT provided security at the entrance to the prison, a fact that according to author Thurman Sensing " must have irritated the Rebels of the city no little".

Champ Ferguson delivered a final statement at the prison on the day of his execution to one reporter that he designated. Ferguson justified his actions to the reporter and how he had been tricked out of the mountains to surrender relying on the Grant/Lee parole. In closing, Ferguson stated that "I die a Rebel out and out, and my last request is that my body be removed to White County, Tennessee, and be buried in good Rebel soil". Ferguson was then escorted to the gallows. While the verdict was again read to Ferguson reciting all twenty three specifications at the gallows, Ferguson either shook his head in denial or in affirmation, but when the charge of killing Elam Huddleston was read, Ferguson stated aloud "I can tell it better than that". At the end of the reading of the sentence, Col. Shafter stated to Ferguson " In accordance with the sentence I have read you, Champ Ferguson, I am going to have you executed". The Reverend Bunting thereupon delivered a prayer so beseeching Almighty God that Ferguson became emotional and asked Col. Shafter to retrieve a handkerchief to wipe the

tears from his face which Shafter did. And here is where the mystery began. Col. Shafter quietly and privately spoke to Ferguson while wiping his face and Ferguson's spirits became noticeably uplifted. Asked for a final remark by Col. Shafter, Ferguson pointed to the coffin and asked that it be turned over to his wife to be transported to White County. He again reiterated that he "did not want to be buried in soil such as this". A white cap was thereupon placed over his head, and as Col. Shafter demonstrated to the executioner, Ferguson cried out: "Lord have mercy on my soul" and the trap door fell.

Col. Shafter lived up to Ferguson's request. The coffin was turned over to Ferguson's widow who transported it to White County. Outside of Sparta on the Calfkiller Road where Ferguson, Bledsoe and others had ambushed a U.S. cavalry patrol years before, a crude native limestone marker was placed in a little graveyard. But is Ferguson actually buried there?

Thurman Sensing, Jr., the son of the author Thurman Sensing who wrote the work "Champ Ferguson, Confederate Guerilla, (original copyright 1942 by Vanderbilt University Press), wrote an "Afterword" in his father's work, which incidentally had been dedicated to his son. I quote the 'Afterword' in its entirety:

"I thought I'd found Champ back in 1941 when my father and I went looking for him in that old graveyard on the Calfkiller River. Maybe I was wrong. According to a story I read in the Cookeville Herald-Citizen, there was a conspiracy between Champ and the military. The theory is that the military felt Champ should not be hanged because many others as guilty as he had been paroled. The story is that the military enclosed the undersection of the scaffold and that a ring of soldiers [a detachment of the 16th U.S. Regmt.] completely encircled it. When the hangman cut the rope and Champ dropped through the trap door, they quickly untied the loose knot and placed Champ in the casket alive. The casket was then placed on a waiting wagon which Champ's wife and daughter drove out of town. When they were out of Nashville, Champ climbed out of the casket and the three rode all the way to Indian Territory in Oklahoma, where they took new names and took up farming and ranching for a living.

It's an interesting story. But if it's true, who is buried in the grave I found marked "Capt. C. Furguson"? Are we to assume that his wife Martha didn't know how to spell his name? Or that someone else in on the conspiracy misspelled it and put up a slab of limestone at a fake grave so that everybody would think that Champ Ferguson had really been hanged? What did Colonel Shafter whisper to Champ in a low undertone that made Champ's face light up noticeably? Did he tell him about the conspiracy and that he would be saved by the military?

We'll never know and the legend lives on".

Thurman Sensing, Jr.

In "Confederate Outlaw"(Copyright 2011, Louisiana State University Press) author Brian D. McKnight states this story is "demonstrably false" because Martha and Ann Ferguson returned to White County and lived there until 1871 (Ann marrying a successful farmer, George T. Metcalfe). In 1871 the family moved to Kansas. Mr. McKnight poses a possible theory as to Ann's 43 year old live in housekeeper named Martha who took the name Martha Bohannon.

Was she Ferguson's widow, attempting to disguise herself so as to protect herself from possible retribution during Reconstruction, even in territory where Confederate guerillas roamed, fought and sympathies still survived? No one knows.

And there is the unanswered question. Could Ferguson have gone to the western territories alone, later reuniting with his family upon their relocation to Kansas? Did Ferguson truly escape the hangman's noose with the help of Col. Shafter? Conspiracies are as old as civilization, usually bound in hope. Julius Caesar, a prolific author as well as a military leader, remarked in his work "The Conquest of Gaul"(translated by W. F. Long, 2005, Barnes & Noble New York) originally published in 49 BCE, that, "above all was the common weakness of human nature which readily believes what accords with its hopes". [At pg. 74] Some mountain people wanted it to be true.

Books Still Available at the Nashville CWRT This Month!

We appreciate those of you who bought from this great book selection last month! The CWRT needs funds to keep getting in speakers and the book sales go towards that so thank you! The prices for these great books - 50 per cent off or more off retail prices so there's some great deals here for your library! Please keep buying and supporting your CWRT!

We sold a good number of books last month - thank you to those that supported our CWRT!

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