



The Scout's Report

Knoxville Civil War Roundtable

P. O. Box 52232

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KCWRT Website: kcwrtorg.wordpress.com

VOLUME XXXVII

JANUARY 2019

NO. 7

Tuesday, January 15, 2019

****Buffet at 6:30 PM****

****Speaker at 7:30 PM****

Dinner & Program

\$17.00 Members

\$20.00 Non-members

Program Only

\$5.00 Members

\$8.00 Non-members

**DINNER RESERVATIONS
MUST BE MADE OR
CANCELED BY 11AM,
MONDAY, JANUARY 14.
CALL (865) 671-9001 AND
LEAVE MESSAGE**

MENU

Beef Tips Over Noodles
Grilled Chicken
Garden Salad
Oven Roasted New Potatoes
Green Beans
Rolls
Beverages
Assorted Desserts

LOCATION

Bearden Banquet Hall
5806 Kingston Pike

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Due to scheduling conflicts, the January meeting will be January 15, 2019, which is the 3rd Tuesday of the month, rather than the 2nd Tuesday. After the January meeting, we will return to our usual and customary timetable.



Lightning Strikes at Chickamauga: Wilder's Mounted Infantry Brigade

“His command... merits the thanks of the country for its noble stand at the crossing of the Chickamauga...”, affirmed Major General William Rosecrans speaking of the role played by Col. John T. Wilder's vaunted “Lightning Brigade” in the opening act of the Battle of Chickamauga. Major General George Thomas was equally effusive in recommending Wilder for a promotion to brigadier citing his “ingenuity...in occupying the attention of the entire corps of the rebel army”, his “valor”, and “excellent service” ... “before and during the battle of Chickamauga.” Three stars clearly shone brightly in the dark of the Union disaster at Chickamauga. One was that of Old Pap Thomas whose heroic stand at Snodgrass Hill saved the Union army and garnered him the sobriquet of “Rock of Chickamauga.” The second was that of Gordon Granger who marched to the sound of the guns and, with Thomas, helped save the day. And the third was none other than that of an Indiana industrialist, now colonel, John Thomas Wilder. In the six months leading up to the battle, through scouting and raiding in Middle Tennessee and



giving battle at Hoover's Gap, Wilder had crafted and molded one of the most powerful and unique units of the Civil War. Come join us as Historian Jim Ogden relates the story of Wilder's famed Mounted Infantry Brigade and how they proved their mettle at Chickamauga. From a key role on the initial Union left to the application of deadly firepower on the Union's new right, Wilder's Brigade shaped the action wherever they were on the field. Famously armed with the Spencer Repeating Rifle, the Brigade's success was due not just to the new arm, but also to the leadership exercised by Wilder and his lieutenants and the character of the men under them. All of this and more will be a part of Ogden's talk, “Lightning Strikes at Chickamauga.” This is one you're not going to want to miss!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In my youth, The Atlanta Cyclorama was revered as a southern shrine to the “Lost Cause.” It was the fervent hope and desire of every southerner to visit the Cyclorama at least once during the course of their lifetime. The Cyclorama contained a huge, circular painting of the July 22, 1864, Battle Of Atlanta. The artwork was prepared by the American Panorama Company utilizing Wisconsin artists and the technical assistance of Confederate and Federal veterans as advisors. The battlefield was extensively photographed from wooden towers and the final product was prepared in a studio in 1885. Following a tour of various U.S. cities, the painting found a permanent home in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to its Atlanta opening, several artistic “alterations” were made to the painting to enhance its appeal in the South.

The painting was plagued with inaccuracies from its inception. The 8th Wisconsin Volunteers were prominently featured in the painting, as their famous eagle mascot “Honest Abe,” soared over the battlefield. Unfortunately, The 8th Wisconsin was in Mississippi at the time of the Battle Of Atlanta and never set foot in the State Of Georgia. In a misguided “stroke” of historical revision, Wisconsin artists chose to add the 8th Wisconsin to the canvas in order to honor their home state. Federal General John “Blackjack” Logan was also shown in the painting valiantly leading a troop of cavalry across the battlefield in an attempt to shore up his broken lines. Unfortunately, the artist’s depiction of his brave exploits may have been influenced by the fact that he was a major financial patron of the project, and his popularity and drawing power in the north could clearly be expected to bolster ticket sales. It must also be taken into account that he was running for Vice-President in 1884

and an inflated war record would serve as a huge attraction for prospective voters. In 1888, General Benjamin Harrison was the Republican nominee for President. He was not present at the Battle Of Atlanta, but a campaign worker convinced a company official to add Harrison’s image to one of the battlefield’s mounted figures. Despite the storm of controversy that ensued regarding the issue of stolen valor, Harrison’s image remained on the painting for the next 130 years. The painting has additional problems with its accuracy, but time does not permit a full recounting.

The Cyclorama’s history is a minefield virtually littered with evidence of misrepresentations, revisions and political intrigue. The truth regarding most of the painting’s misleading images has been known for 126 years, but few attempts have ever been made to correct the historical record. The painting is currently being restored at The Atlanta History Center. Hopefully, restoration efforts and a revised narrative will remove some of the historical “contaminants.”

I don’t envy the historian’s quest for “the truth.” The problem is that the true story does not always have the same degree of fascination as an embellished rendition of the same tale. As Mark Twain once eloquently stated: “Never let the truth get in the way of a good story.”

I love our organization. Our speakers don’t bombard us with biased perspectives unsupported by the data, but come to our meetings armed with an arsenal of research to support their conclusions. In January, we will hear another great speaker. I hope to see you then.

Jack Spiceland, President

WELCOME BACK TO YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME, JIM OGDEN!

“Lightning Strikes at Chickamauga: Wilder’s Mounted Infantry Brigade”

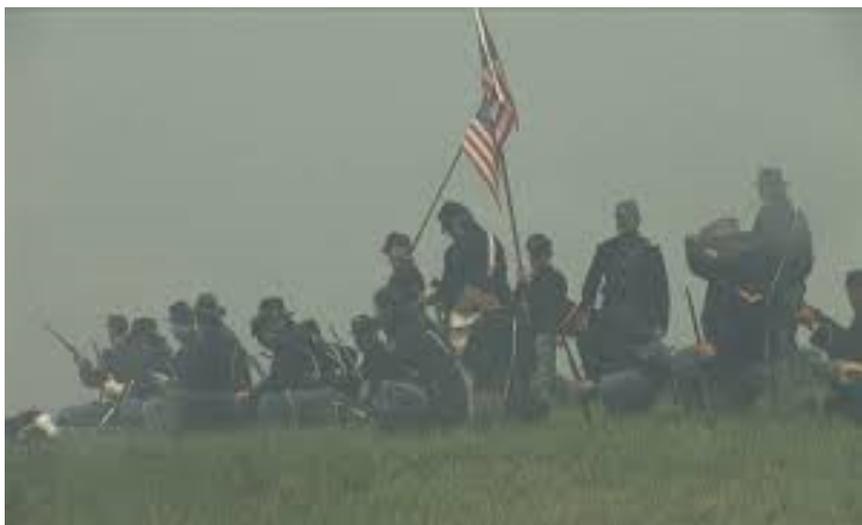
Jim Ogden, Chief Historian at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, is a historian, teacher, and tour guide par excellence. A frequent speaker at Round Tables and historical organizations across the U.S., Jim is a longtime friend of the KCWRT, our most visited speaker, and the first historian to be awarded with an honorary lifetime membership to our organization.

A native of St. Mary’s County, Maryland, Jim joined the National Park Service in 1982 and served at Chickamauga and Chattanooga, Russell Cave, and Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania before returning to Chickamauga and Chattanooga NMP in 1988 as historian, the position he now holds.

Jim has taught numerous history courses, led hundreds of tours and army staff rides, and written several articles on the Civil War. He also has appeared in several TV productions including “Civil War Journal”, “Civil War Combat”, and “History Detectives”. Over the years Jim has been the recipient of a host of awards for his scholarship, preservation and advocacy work.

His most recent awards include the United States Army Commander’s Award for Public Service and the Civil War Trust’s National Park Service Preservation Advocate Award, both bestowed in 2017.

Jim, his wife Lora, and their son Jamie (born on the 133rd anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg) live in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia near the Chickamauga Battlefield.



THE KNOXVILLE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
2019-2020 SPEAKERS SERIES

Jan 15--Jim Ogden, Historian, Chickamauga/Chattanooga NMP,
“Lightning Strikes at Chickamauga: Wilder’s Mounted Infantry Brigade”

Feb 12--Curt Fields, Living Historian,
“Forty Days in Hell: Grant’s Overland Campaign”

Mar 12—Nancy McEntee, Historian & Author, “Haversacks, Hardtack, and Unserviceable Mules”

Apr 9—Sam Elliott, Attorney, Historian & Author, “Tennessee’s General Alexander P. Stewart”

May 14--William J. Cooper Jr., Historian & Author, “Jefferson Davis”

Jun 11—Dan Feller, Historian, “The Coming of the Civil War”

Jul 9—Aaron Astor, Historian & Author, “Reconstruction & The Aftermath of the Civil War”

Aug 13—Brian Steel Wills, Historian & Author, “The Civil War in Cinema”

Sept 10—Chris Kolakowski, Historian & Author, “Perryville”

Oct 8—Chris Mackowski, Historian & Editor, ECW, “The Last Days of Stonewall Jackson”

Nov 12--Ed Bearss, Chief Historian Emeritus, NPS & Author, TBA

Dec 10--Jim Ogden, Historian, Chickamauga/Chattanooga NMP, “Starving Rosecrans: Wheeler’s Raid of October ‘63”

It Wasn't Supposed to End Like This...

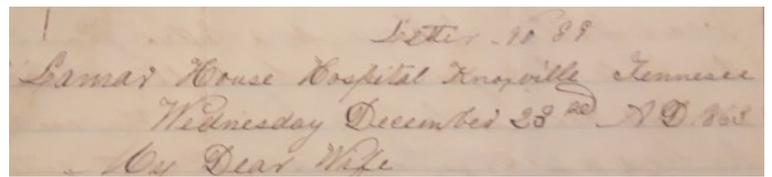
George Messer was a 30 year old musician in Company F, 107th Illinois Infantry, who wrote his wife from the Lamar House Hospital in Knoxville on December 23, 1863. He was hoping to be home on furlough for Christmas. But that is getting ahead of the story.

George was a carpenter from DeWitt County, IL, who was married but two years when he enlisted on Independence Day in 1862. In June 1860, he lived on a farm with his older brother and his mother. His father was absent from the home. His reasons for enlisting are unknown but given the date he enlisted perhaps patriotism after a rousing speech played a part. Maybe he enlisted as a musician so he would not have to carry a musket into combat. He may not have known that musicians were



used as stretcher bearers to evacuate the wounded during battle. Many times they were in the thick of the action. The regiment was mustered into Federal service on September 4 and trained at Camp Butler, east of Springfield IL, before they left for the front. That fall the 107th spent time chasing John Hunt Morgan around Kentucky. These escapades did not result in any casualties within the regiment.

George was a prolific letter writer to his wife Charlotte, whom he addressed as Lottie. Lottie was five years younger than he. His letter of December 23 was his 89th letter home. He numbered all his letters. George proved to be a sickly soldier, frequently writing about his intestinal diarrhea difficulties. As the regiment moved around, George spent most of his time in regimental hospitals. His letters indicate that he was sick more than he was well. He provided Lottie with news of the regiment and of those relatives and friends serving with him. He frequently sent money home. George offered Lottie advice on managing the farm. By September 25th the regiment was in Loudon, TN



and George was again sick in the hospital for the next two weeks. He did recover and reported himself "*well and hearty*" to Lottie on October 11. His recovery was short-lived as he wrote on October 26 that he was "*very poor and weak*" and weighing 135#.

The 107th arrived in Knoxville the next day (October 27) at which time George began his stay at the Lamar House hospital. His letter of October 30 (#83) provides an excellent description of the Lamar House as a hospital. He writes, "*the house that this hospital is in was a large hotel called the Lamar House and was owned by a Rebel and abandoned when our forces first came to this place. It is a splendid house and is well-suited for a hospital. There is now about two hundred & fifty patients in it. Some of them are pretty bad and some stout and hearty as men need be. There is about three deaths every twenty-four hours which is a very small average for a hospital of this size. I am way up on the third story and can have a view of over half the city from the window. [John] Minor Jolley [of Co. B] and myself are in a room with five others and we keep ourselves pretty comfortable.*" George's observations about the Lamar House provide some interesting information. We know the Lamar House had several additions built onto the original building especially on the north and west sides of the block. Being in a room with six others meant they were in quite a large room, perhaps even a corner room although he only mentions one window. Since he could view over half the city, he could have occupied a north facing room.

George remained in the Lamar House Hospital during November and he again wrote home from there on December 3. He commented that, "*I am very weak and I can't keep my diarrhea stopped long enough at a time to gain much strength...I don't think that I will get entirely well until I can get to come home where I can get proper diet and better care and nursing.*"

He tells Lottie of some “*sharp fighting*” that had occurred in November (Fort Sanders) in which one soldier was killed and four others of the 107th were wounded. He concludes by telling her of his efforts to get sent home to recuperate but says it is impossible to get anyone’s attention with all that is happening.

This brings the story to George’s letter of December 23 (#89). George was trying to get a furlough to come home for Christmas but the medical director told him that furloughs were not being granted as the railroad was not in running order to Chattanooga. He wrote Lottie that, “*I think that I am getting a little better and have been mending slowly since I wrote to you last. I am gaining strength but my feet and legs are so bloated and swelled and so stiff that I can hardly get up when I am down. But when I am up a little while, I can manage to walk a little from my room out into the hall and back. I have not been downstairs on the ground for four weeks. I would be able to go down now if I was not so stiff for when I do go down, I have three pairs of stairs to go down and up again which is considerable of a job for me even if I was not so stiff. But I think the Dr will give me something to help that in a few days. He is very attentive to me.*”

On the same sheet, George added additional information on Christmas Eve. He wrote, “*During the siege here at this place, I was considerable under the weather and the prospect at one time was doubtful whose hands we would fall into, so I went to work one day and destroyed all of your letters that I had as I did not wish for other Eyes to see what was never intended they should and I did not know but I would get down so I could not take care of them myself. I am sorry that I done so now but it is too late. You must not think hard of me for doing so. Those other keepsakes, the locks of hair of yourself and our Dear Child that sleeps beneath the sod, I keep close to me night and day and shall still continue to do so. I would get my Likeness taken and send to you but I am afraid it would scare you. But I dont look so very poor in my face for it is nearly covered with hair. and besides, being considerable bloated, I shal not send my Likeness for a little while untill I see whether I get to come home any ways soon which I think will be known in the next three weeks at farthest.*”

When George closed this letter, his words proved to be prophetic. “*My Darling Wife Good By from*



your Ever True and Loving Husband.”

Thirty year old George Messer died on December 30, 1863 without ever leaving the Lamar House. His family was first notified of his passing through a letter from Lottie’s nephew (Willy), a soldier in the same Company F as George, to Lottie’s parents. Willy and a

company lieutenant were able to recover some of George’s possessions and send them to Lottie. Some of his personal items and some of his money were stolen from his room after his death. Other items were sold to pay for what he owed the regiment.

Letters were written concerning returning his remains to DeWitt County in the spring for burial. This was never accomplished for today George Messer lies in Section A of the National Cemetery in Knoxville, six rows removed from the center flagpole.

As we give thanks for all of our many blessings this Christmas and Holiday Season, it would be well to remember George and all the other soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. It wasn’t supposed to end like this.

Sources: <https://messerweb.wordpress.com> and collection of Dennis Urban

December Meeting Attendance

There were 84 attendees at the December Meeting, 60 diners of which 53 were members, 24 lecture only of which 21 were members with 3 nonmembers.

— Treasurer Gene Akers

KCWRT HOLIDAY GATHERING

On December 11, 2018, Ms. Krista Castillo, Director of Nashville's Fort Negley Museum, presented a lecture to the KCWRT on "Santa Claus In The Trenches: Celebrating Christmas During The American Civil War." Following the lecture, the Roundtable held its Annual Christmas Party for the membership. Many members were kind enough to provide cookies, cakes, pies and other delectables for the occasion. The event was well attended and proved to be a great way to jumpstart and celebrate the approaching holiday season.



A 3x5 **Buffet Reminder Calling** card was attached to the Civil War Handouts at the Dec 2018 monthly meeting. These cards can be used to improve our head count given to Bearden Banquet Hall for those eating at the buffet. If we have an overcount, there might not be enough food for all. If we have an undercount, we must still pay for the head count we provided. We are almost always either over or under in our headcount. The cards can be used to remind you that you have called in for a given month. Some people forget to call in while others call in twice not remembering that they previously called in. For those who did not receive these cards, there will be additional cards available at the Guest sign-in table as you enter Bearden Banquet Hall. Please help us improve our headcount for the number of people eating at Bearden Banquet Hall.

The Scout's Report of the Knoxville Civil War Round Table

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The Knoxville Civil War Round Table welcomes any person who has an interest in the American Civil War.

New Members are always welcome.

For more information, please call 865-671-9001 or visit our website at <https://kcwrtorg.wordpress.com>.

1st Class Postage

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