

The Sentinel

Franklin: The Worst Five Hours of the War

Bob Willey, member of the Roundtable and friend of our parent organization, the Monroe County History Center, spoke about his favorite battle and venue of the entire war, Franklin, Tennessee. This crucial November 30, 1864, encounter between some 18,000 Union troops under Major General John Schofield and a superior force (at least in numbers) of about 24,000 Confederates under General John Bell Hood eventually became the swan song for the South in the western theater.

Rather than detail the specifics of the battle, which Bob did admirably in his talk, suffice it to say that the Confederate forces were pursuing the enemy northward toward Nashville from Spring Hill, Tennessee, and the small town of Franklin, some 13 miles south of the Tennessee capitol, became the point at which the two finally became engaged. Union troops had dug in along an east-west line running through the property of one Fountain Branch Carter, a staunch Confederate supporter who had sent two sons to war, one of whom was home on a prisoner exchange “forced” furlough, and the other was soon to come home with a tragic end.

Hood had gathered his forces near Winstead Hill, a prominence a little more than a mile south of this line which overlooked a wide, open field with little or no cover in it. With a division still to arrive, Hood sent his troops across this field and into the face of withering Union fire from the

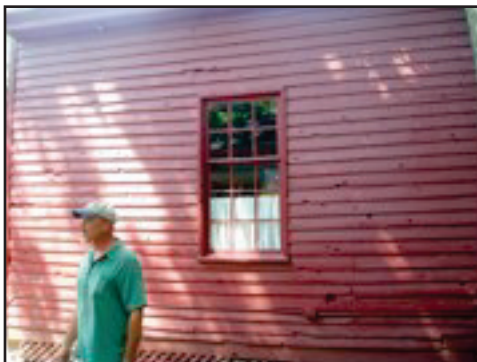


Carter House, on the south side of Franklin, became the focus of fighting...and of death...on the afternoon of the battle.

Lee sent his forces, about 12,000-13,000 in all, across an open field only about three-quarters of a mile wide which consisted of undulating ground that actually allowed the soldiers to “disappear” in it at times. Here, at Franklin, the wide flat field gave no cover for the 24,000 men who would attempt to cross it and gain the breastworks of the Union forces. And they would do this for, perhaps, five times as long as Pickett’s brigade took. It was, in a word, slaughter.

The most poignant irony of the battle was that Tod Carter, native of Franklin and the son of Fountain Branch Carter, was wounded near his own home while engaged with other Tennessee forces and was carried to his house, a home which he had not seen in three years. He died there two days later.

Today, Franklin is a quiet and peaceful suburb of Nashville, but on the last day of November, 1864, it was Hell on



Thomas Cartwright, curator of Carter House, gives a talk in front of the bullet-riddled rear wall of the Carter office.



The rear porch of the Carnton plantation where four Confederate generals lay in death after the battle.

dug-in soldiers at the Carter House and on both sides of it.

The ferocity of this battle can best be understood when compared, as Bob did, to another and much better known encounter, Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg. At Gettysburg,

Earth for many young men. Those who take the time to stop will see the futility of Hood’s assault and will see why the South would *not* rise again in Tennessee or the West.

Annual Holiday Gathering Needs Help!

While last year's "share-a-story and dine" evening was a great success, the meat that was purchased by the Roundtable was very expensive. Hospitality chair Deborah Cronin would like at least two volunteers to help in the purchase and preparation of some authentic Civil War meat dishes to offset this large expense and save our budget for other purposes. If you, or anyone you know (a spouse, maybe?) would like to help, please call Deborah at 323-9615. Deborah had been a trooper with the refreshments at meetings, but she needs help here. Please volunteer!

Roundtable to be at Christmas Market

More volunteers are needed to represent the group at the Annual Christmas Market, in the same location as the summer farmers' market next to the Showers Building (City Hall), the last Saturday of November. The Roundtable will be simply handing out information about the group to "recruit," just chatting with folks and perhaps taking that one last shot at a subscription to *Civil War Historian* as a holiday gift. Call Deborah and sign up for just an hour to help out. Deborah also hopes to set up a table in the mall at Christmas, so chip in there, as well, if you can.

Do You Have a Story to Share?

Did you have a great Civil War trip this summer? How about that latest book you have read and thought was excellent...or maybe awful!? Perhaps there's a relative in your family history that has a CW related story. Send these types of things or anything CW related to your shy and retiring president, Steve Rolfe, at rolfe@indiana.edu and we will try to slip them in to future newsletters. This is an organization to share common interests and we sometimes get so tied up in programs and announcements at the meetings we forget to just chat. Keep it brief, two or three short paragraphs, and we'll see how it works. The nice thing about e-newsletters is they are free no matter how long you make them. No guarantees, but we'll see what happens!



The Confederate cemetery at Carnton Plantation just south of Franklin. Carrie McGavock, mistress of Carnton at the time of the battle, made it a personal obligation to create and care for this cemetery for almost thirty years after the war.

Unique Fund-raiser for the Roundtable

Civil War Historian, a relatively new and unique magazine on the war, specializes in not only strategy, tactics, battles, dates, etc. but also on the home front. It publishes six times a year and the regular subscription rate is \$28.95, but until the end of November, the roundtable will get \$14 *back* for our treasury for every subscription sold. If you want a subscription for yourself or for a friend (a great holiday gift!), contact Deborah Cronin at the number listed at 323-9615 to order. All sales must go through her for the Roundtable to receive its "share".

Upcoming Class on Indiana in the Civil War

Professor Dawn Bakken of IU Continuing Studies Program will lecture on **Indiana in the Civil War** on three consecutive Mondays in October, the 15th, 22nd and 29th, from 7:00-8:30 pm each night at the Monroe County History Center. The cost is \$55. The course will include looks at letters, diaries and accounts of wives, families and children of Hoosier soldiers, why they fought, and what the results back home were.

Contacts

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Or on the web at <http://mypage.iu.edu/~rawatson/roundtable/>.