

My Fellow Roundtable Members: Our next meeting is on Wednesday, August 8, 2018 at 7 pm at La Navona, 154 North Hamilton Road, Gahanna, Ohio 43230. Our speaker will be Michael Block, and he will discuss the battle of Cedar Mountain on the eve of its 156<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Mr. Block is the Vice-President of the Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield. Since 2012, Mike has served on its Board of Directors. He also served on the Board of the Brandy Station Foundation and on both the Culpeper and Fauquier counties Civil War Sesquicentennial Committees. In the Spring of 2016, Mike authored the primary article in *Blue and Gray* magazine, the first published study on the Battle of Cedar Mountain in nearly 25 years. He is now has a book in edit on that same topic, "The Carnage was Fearful," for the Emerging Civil War Series. Mike retired from the United States Air Force in 2001; serving in Europe, Asia and the United States. He continues to support the U.S. Government as a Lead Associate for the consulting firm, Booz Allen Hamilton. Part of his work is as a Gettysburg Staff Ride Instructor for Government Intelligence Analysts, focusing on the geospatial and intelligence aspects of the battle. Please see our website <https://centralohiocwrt.wordpress.com> for more information on Mr. Block.

I have attached Tom Ayres' Report of Jim Pula's presentation at our June meeting. Thanks tom for all your hard work.

Here is our Treasurer's Report from Dave Delisio (who also works hard at this thankless job):

Treasurer's Report for July 2018

Beginning checking account balance 7/1/2018 = \$2,607.93

July receipts = \$185.00 (\$35.00 from dues; \$150.00 from book raffle)

July expenses = \$280.00 ( \$150.00 to James Pula for speaker fee; \$130.00 to Mike Peters for speaker expenses)

Ending checking account balance 7/31/2018 = \$2,512.93

Finally, I have attached a PDF of a great conference scheduled for Fremont, Ohio at the Hayes Library on October 13, 2018, which includes our own Eric Wittenberg as one of the five outstanding speakers. If you have never been to the Hayes home, library and museum, they are worthy on their own of a trip north; with this outstanding panel of speakers, there is almost no reason not to go. Ohio State hosts Minnesota that day, so you're not going to be missing anything exciting in Columbus.

I look forward to seeing everyone on August 8.

Jamie Ryan

President, Central Ohio Civil War Roundtable

Tom Ayres' Report of Jim Pula's presentation

## XI Corps at Chancellorsville

It's a given that Robert E. Lee earned his greatest victory at Chancellorsville, in the Spotsylvania Wilderness south of the Rapidan River, in early May 1863.

But it was an extremely costly victory. Greatly outnumbered by "Fighting Joe" Hooker's Army of the Potomac, some twenty per cent of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia suffered casualties. Plus he lost the indispensable Stonewall Jackson. Lee could ill afford to "win" many more such victories.

Success at Chancellorsville emboldened Lee to cross the Potomac and take the war to Pennsylvania, where he suffered his greatest defeat at Gettysburg in July.

James Pula, a professor of history at Purdue University North Central, president of the Polish-American Historical Association and published Civil War author, spoke to the Roundtable in July about Chancellorsville and the failed leadership of Hooker and XI Corps commander Oliver O. Howard.

Specifically, Pula concentrated on the actions of Howard's heavily Germanic corps and its enduring reputation as the "Flying Dutchmen." The reputation is hardly deserved, Pula contends, and speaks more to failings of command leadership.

Hooker took command of the demoralized Army of the Potomac on January 25, 1863, after its sound defeat at Fredericksburg in December and humiliating mud march under Ambrose Burnside, who was shunted to Cincinnati.

Hooker started off stunningly, reorganizing cavalry and infantry and restoring morale.

After a strategic cavalry raid by George Stoneman deep into northern Virginia failed, President Lincoln, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Army Commander in Chief Henry Halleck met with Hooker at Aquia near Alexandria to devise a second plan to attack Lee.

The resulting plan was vast, sprawling and complex, with some 134,000 infantry and cavalry at Hooker's command. Lee, by comparison, had a relatively few 28,000 under Jackson and two divisions under Lafayette McLaws and Robert Anderson. But this was Lee's doing. In a monumental blunder, Lee had sent James Longstreet, with John Bell Hood and George

Pickett, 130 miles away to Tidewater Virginia and Suffolk to oppose Union forces west of Norfolk. This deprived Lee of critical manpower.

The new plan had 42,000 infantry in V Corps (George Meade), XI Corps (Howard) and XII Corps (Henry Slocum) cross the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers and concentrate at the Chancellorsville crossroads of the Orange Plank Road and Orange Turnpike. A second force would push Lee off the south bank of the Rappahannock, and the VI Corps under John Sedgwick would attack Jackson on the rebel right flank.

By May 1 Hooker had some 70,000 men at Chancellorsville. His initial plan was to move east and attack Lee, rather than stay in the tangled undergrowth of the Wilderness, which would blunt his numerical advantage.

Actually, Hooker all along intended to fight a defensive battle and annihilate an aggressive Lee with far fewer men. The first shots were fired about 11:20 a.m. on May 1. Despite success, Hooker had some of his forces withdraw, ceding the initiative to Lee. Meade and Darius Couch (II Corps) were furious.

On May 2 the Union left under Meade and the Union center were entrenched and virtually impregnable. But the right flank, occupied by XI Corps, on the Orange Turnpike was hanging in the air, vulnerable.

XI Corps was much maligned by its peers, having amassed a spotty record at best. This corps was formed in the spring of 1862 by the merger of Louis Blenker's division and John C. Fremont's Mountain Department in West Virginia. When the XI came under the overall command of John Pope in the summer, Fremont resigned. Corps command passed to Franz Sigel, who resigned in March 1863 when his requests for more men was denied. Enter Howard, a Bible-toting, abolitionist from Maine. Of the 27 regiments in the XI, eight had never seen action and the remainder had never won a battle.

For these reasons the XI was stuck out of the way on the right flank in the thick woods, a position that was thought to be safe from attack.

Hooker recognized the predicament of the XI and at 1:55 a.m. May 2 ordered John Reynolds's I Corps to shore up the XI's position. Through poor communications and ignorance of Reynolds's position, the order did not reach Reynolds until hours later. He was still marching by mid-afternoon, far from his destination.

Meanwhile, Jackson took off at 7 a.m. on May 2 to march some 12 miles to assail the vulnerable XI. His famous march was hardly a thing of beauty or stealth. David Birney's batteries fired on him. Numerous pickets spotted his

army on the move and reported their sightings. Jackson was retreating was the common high command response.

Hooker did send word to Howard at 9:30 a.m. that the enemy was moving

to the Union right and to advance pickets. At 10:50 a.m. Howard said he was taking measures to resist an attack from the west.

On the field at Hazel Grove by that time Dan Sickles (III Corps) was told that his men had been observing Jackson for three hours. He ordered an attack by Birney and some sharpshooters. But it was too late. The bulk of Jackson's army had passed, and Birney had to fight the rearguard 23rd Georgia, protecting Jackson's rear.

By 3 p.m. the XI was resting unaware of Jackson's march. Howard had failed to protect against a surprise attack, despite Hooker's order. The XI was also still unanchored.

Colonel Leopold von Gilsa, brigade commander in Charles Devens's division, rode to Howard's headquarters to warn of an imminent all-out attack. Howard thought this was impossible as no army could move through the thick woods.

Even more alarming, Captain Hubert Dilger of Battery 1 of the First Ohio Artillery, who fought heroically in the ensuing battle, rode out to reconnoiter, narrowly escaping capture. He rode frantically to report his sightings to Hooker but was denied access. On to Howard. Brushed off, told the rebels were retreating.

By 5:30 p.m. the XI was stretched out when Jackson's men rushed forward, having marched two miles farther north to avoid frontal exposure to the XI, and sent the men of the XI flying in retreat. The rebels met scattered resistance. Some units, Carl Schurz's, for example, held off the onslaught for 20 minutes or so.

By the next day May 3 Hooker had formed his army into a salient. Lee launched attack and after attack, suffering heaving losses. In fact, in all the various actions, casualties were surprisingly similar in numbers, except missing and captured. Rebels lost 1,665 killed, 9,081 wounded and 2,018 captured or missing. Union: 1,606 killed, 9,762 wounded, 5,919 captured or missing.

These were losses Lee could ill afford.

