



General Orders

Franty's Texas Brigade

Vol. 20
No. 2
Oct, 2008

www.houstoncivilwar.com

NEW INSTRUCTIONS!

MEETING – THURS, Oct 16, 2008

Briar Club
2603 Timmons Lane @ Westheimer
6:00 Cash Bar
7:00 Dinner & Meeting

E-Mail drzuckero@sbcglobal.net
OR call him at (281) 479-1232 to Reserve
by Monday 6 PM Prior to Oct 16 -
Dinner \$30; Lecture Only \$5

E-Mail Reservation is Preferred;
No Need to Reserve for Lecture Only

GREGG CLEMMER AND CONFEDERATE GENERAL “OLD ALLEGHANY” JOHNSON



Gregg S. Clemmer

Ed Johnson is one of the “wickedest men I ever heard of,” wrote a member of the Stonewall Brigade. Declared another, he is a “large and rather rough looking man on horseback....

whom the men jeered.” Others recalled him as an “irascible character who “always carried a big hickory club or cane, and when he got mad could work his ears like a mule.”

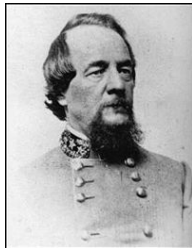
Modern historians have eagerly reverted to such scurrilous remarks to embellish their accounts of Jackson’s Valley Campaign, Gettysburg’s Culp’s Hill, and Spotsylvania’s Mule Shoe. Douglas Southall Freeman found Johnson “a curious, uncouth, and strangely fascinating man.” Bud Robertson wrote that Johnson “boasted a strong personality and loud voice that commanded attention where physical good looks did not.” And Gettysburg’s distinguished historian Harry Pfanz declared Johnson “a character in an army that had more than its full share of eccentric general officers.”

But is history’s assessment of this soldier whom his men tagged with a dozen colorful sobriquets—including *Fence Rail*, *Old Clubby*, and *Brute*—accurate and fair? Certainly few students of the war know that this Virginian was Thomas Jefferson’s first cousin, twice removed. Even fewer know of the recently discovered data from his shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico that indicated he was brevetted twice for extraordinary bravery during the Mexican War. And what of his controversial report on the tragic 1854 Grattan Massacre outside Ft. Laramie, still buried in the dusty archives of the War Department along with the details of his stalwart struggle to prevent widespread genocide in northern California five years later?

Parodied for his careless dress and uninviting appearance, for his deafness, nervous eye tic, and gargantuan ears that “would brush the flies off the back of his head” when he became angry, Ed Johnson could hardly be obscured in an army that counted no fewer than eight *Johnsons* or *Johnstons* as general officers. Yet he never married, had no descendants, and left no large cache of papers. He died during Reconstruction when a foundering South could only

momentarily acknowledge his passing. Even his grave in Richmond's hallowed Hollywood Cemetery has been lost.

Yet when surveyed against the full measure of contemporaries, "Old Alleghany" emerges as much more than the gruff, laughable caricature of popular history. Stonewall Jackson praised his "high qualities as a soldier." Dick Ewell called him "brave almost to a fault." And Robert E. Lee pleaded for Richmond to press "any prospect" for the imprisoned Johnson's exchange from the enemy.



Gen. Ed Johnson, CSA

And yet Johnson's highest accolades emanate from subordinates who followed him into battle. They are legion, but perhaps are best summarized in the words of artilleryman William P. Carter. "No bolder soldier ever donned the Southern Gray or followed the storm-tossed colors of the immortal Lee."

A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Gregg Clemmer is a native of Augusta County, Virginia and a graduate of Virginia Tech. He is a past Historian-in-Chief of the sons of Confederate Veterans and also a former president of the Montgomery County (Maryland) CWRT. Active in several other hereditary and patriotic organizations including the Aztec Club of 1847 and the Society of the Cincinnati, Gregg numbers fourteen Confederates in his ancestry including members of the Armistead and Stonewall brigades.

Gregg is also an ardent cave explorer and mapper, being a Life Member and Fellow of the National Speleological Society as well as tour leader for the Smithsonian's Resident Associates Program.

Our speaker is the author of four books including the acclaimed *Valor in Gray: The Recipients of the Confederate Medal of Honor*. His recently released biography, *Old Alleghany: The Life and Wars of General Ed Johnson*, won the 2005 Douglas Southall Freeman History Award as the book of highest merit published in Southern history for that year. He has just finished his first historical novel, *A Turn for Home*.

Listen and learn with us on the evening of Thursday, October 16, as Gregg instructs us as he entertains us with the story of this unforgettable character from the ranks of Southern generals.



Marsha Franty, President

Marsha's
Muster
Call

"Better late than never," my mother always said! So, having survived Ike, we'll gather this month to kick-off the 2008-2009 campaign. Hopefully, we'll all have functioning utilities and normal driving conditions so that we can look forward to an evening of fellowship and to an excellent speaker. We have promised Don Reynolds, our scheduled September speaker, a place on next year's roster, and we will look forward to his presentation.

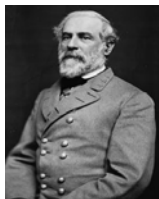
During those first few post-Ike days, I took advantage of the time off from school to catch up on some reading. One of the books I had purchased on my trip this summer is *Struggle for a Vast Future* (edited by Aaron Sheehan-Dean, foreword by James McPherson). It is a very well-written and well-illustrated collection of essays on the War and a title to be enjoyed by any casual or novice student of the Civil War. For a more focused interest, *Stand Firm ye Boys from Maine: the 20th Maine and the Gettysburg Campaign*, by Thomas DesJardin, is an engrossing account of this regiment's engagement at Little Round Top. Desjardin's account is largely based on primary sources and

reflects his extensive knowledge of the events at Gettysburg where he has worked as an interpreter for the National Park Service. Appendices offer details about the men who served in this famous regiment.

My travels this summer took me to many historic sites and battlefields. Nearly every place I visited reconfirmed for me the value of the NPS and its dedicated, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic employees. Visiting Civil War sites, I was repeatedly reminded of the invaluable work of the Civil War Preservation Trust and other local preservationist groups. It is due to their efforts that the saving of these special places is attainable for us and our descendents. They need our support, so do urge your Congressman and Senator to fund the NPS; given our current fiscal situation, their budget will be even more constrained. Please remember to help the CWPT and similar organizations; they are grateful for even small contributions and often are able to match your dollars with additional dollars from other sources both public and private. In granting funding to applicants, regulatory authorities consider the number of their members and donors in these groups, so please do contribute and be counted!

Your membership and attendance at our meetings are greatly appreciated! Please encourage your friends and acquaintances to join us....you are our best recruiters!

FREDERICKSBURG AND CHANCELLORSVILLE FALL FIELD TRIP REMINDERS by *Tony Matt*



R. E. Lee



T. J. Jackson



Joseph Hooker

I want to remind our field trippers once again that we will be flying out of Intercontinental on Continental and that flight times are subject to change. So please check the departure info yourself prior to leaving for the airport. The

departure flight is Thursday, October 23 on Flight 358 at 10:58 AM, arriving at 2:56 PM. The return flight is Sunday, October 26 on Flight 1859 at 3:45 PM, arriving at 6:05 PM. Call me at (281) 277-2003 if you need further details or, if you prefer, you may email me. My email address is t94matt@aol.com.

HCWRT SPEAKERS 2008 – 2009 CAMPAIGN

Oct 16	Gregg S. Clemmer
Nov 20	Stacy Humphreys
Dec 18	John Lundberg
Jan 15	Ed Bearss
Feb 19	Parker Hills
Mar 19	Patrick Falci
Apr 16	Anthony Waskie
May 21	William M. S. Rasmussen

OCTOBER BOOK RAFFLE by *Mike Pierce*

October book raffle offerings are: *Conquering the Valley* by Robert Krick, *Sheridan in the Shenandoah* by Edward Stackpole, *Fredericksburg* by George Rable, and *Lee's Young Artillerist: William Pegram* by Peter Carmichael, all of which are donated by our esteemed former President Jim Godlove; and *Embattled Confederates: An Illustrated History of Southerners at War* by Bell Irvin Wiley, donated by Norm Lewis. Also, I will have on the registration table some of the many audiotapes that I have on a driving tour of the Battle of Lynchburg.

If you have books, audios, videotapes, magazines, or DVDs to contribute to our book raffle, please let me know. You can contact me at mpiercePC@comcast.net or see me at one of our meetings.



OCTOBER QUIZ QUESTION by Jim Godlove

While leading the Stonewall Division, Edward "Alleghany" Johnson was captured during which battle?

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Houston Civil War Round Table is dedicated to the study of the civilian, military, and cultural aspects of United States history during the period of 1861 – 1865 and to the preservation of historical sites and artifacts.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone No _____

How did you Hear About us? _____

Email Address _____

Mail To: **Houston Civil War Round Table**
P. O. Box 4215
Houston, TX 77210-4215

NEW MEMBER

\$40 – Individual joining in Apr – Dec
\$20 – Individual Joining in Jan – Mar
\$45 – Family joining in Apr – Dec
\$22 – Family joining in Jan – Mar
\$15 – Student or Out-of-State

RENEWAL

\$40 – Individual
\$45 – Family
\$15 – Student or Out-of-State

UPCOMING EVENTS

Marsha Franty and Don Zuckero remind us that the Pearce Collections Museum at Navarro College in **Corsicana** will initiate its **Distinguished Lecture Series** on **Saturday, October 18 with Ed Bearss** as the event speaker. The seminar focus will be Vicksburg.

Museum exhibits open at 9 AM, and the lecture begins at 10:30 AM. Admission cost is \$25 per person. Lunch following the lecture is available through preregistration only; the cost for that is \$10. The Navarro Jr. College campus is located on 41st Street off 7th Avenue in Corsicana, Exit Business 45. The seminar will be held in the Albritton Building, and the museum is in the Cook Center, both on the same street. Please visit www.pearcecollections.us or call (800) 988-5317 for (903) 875-7655 for more information or to reserve lunch.

Secondly, don't forget the symposium **1861 – 1865: Texas in the War** scheduled on Saturday, November 1 in Austin at the Texas General Land Office, Stephen F. Austin Bldg, Room 170, 1700 N. Congress Avenue. Scheduled speakers are **Thomas Cutrer, Robert Jones, Jr., Donald Frazier, Richard McCaslin, and Charles Grear**. Participants will have an opportunity on Friday evening, October 31, to attend a VIP reception with the authors at the Lt. Governor's Reception Room, located on the 3rd floor of the east wing of the State Capital. A \$50 or more donation is requested to benefit Hood's Texas Brigade Association, the event sponsor. This price includes lunch on Saturday. Registration deadline is October 15. You may email m.hartzog@mail.utexas.edu or call her at (512) 447-3881 for more details. You will recall that last month we emailed the copy of the registration form to all HCWRT members for whom we have email addresses.

Thirdly, Charlie Mitchell has emailed your editor about an interesting website which may be of interest to some of our members. The site is VirtualBookSigning.net. You are encouraged to sign on at 6:00 PM CST on October 17 as **Harold Holzer** talks about his new book *Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter of 1860-1861*. Then, on October 25 at 12 Noon CST, tune in as **Craig Symonds** discusses his book *Lincoln and his Admirals* and **Andrew Jampoler** talks about his book, *The Last Lincoln Conspirator: John Surrat's Flight from the Gallows*. On November 10 at 6 PM, the site will welcome **James McPherson** as he discusses his book *Tried by War*.

Lastly, Marsha announces that she has purchased duplicates of NPS Stamp series for 1987, 2000 and 2005 and that if you need one

of these sets for your NPS Passport, kindly let her know. She would be happy for you to have them.

OCTOBER PROFILE: RAPHAEL SEMMES AND THE C.S.S. ALABAMA by Karen Stone



Captain Raphael Semmes

Maryland-born in 1809, Raphael Semmes was orphaned at an early age and reared by an uncle in the Washington D.C. area. Appointed a midshipman in the U.S. Navy on Apr 1, 1826, Raphael entered into studies at the Naval School in Norfolk, VA and then performed extensive service on the southern coast of the U.S. Commissioned a lieutenant on February 9, 1837, Raphael studied law during frequent shore duty and was admitted to the bar in 1834.

At the outbreak of the Mexican War, Semmes was given command of the brig *Somers*, and he earned a commendation for saving much of his crew when the ship unexpectedly sank in a storm in December, 1846. Following this loss, he served with the naval forces assigned to shore duty in Mexico, participating in the campaigns against Vera Cruz and Mexico City and earning several citations for bravery. At the close of Mexican hostilities, he returned to duty on the Gulf Coast, settling in Mobile, Alabama.

When the Civil War broke out in April, 1861, Semmes was assigned to disrupt the Northern economy by attacking merchant vessels on the high seas, a perfectly legal practice that was even employed during our Revolutionary War.

After he converted the *Havana* into the *Sumter*, Raphael steamed out of New Orleans on June 30 and quickly captured twelve U.S. vessels in the Caribbean, followed by another six as he traversed the Atlantic. Promoted to Captain, Semmes put into port at Gibraltar for repairs, and his vessel was quickly trapped by a Union warship blockade, forcing Semmes to sell the boat in port and discharge his crew.

Ordered to take command of a new commerce raider, the C.S.S. *Alabama*, that had just been constructed for him, Raphael began his new command off the Azores on August 24, 1862. Sailing into the Mid-Atlantic, he captured ten whalers and then headed toward the American coast, where he raided a total of 45 ships over the next several months, including the U.S. Navy gunboat *Hatteras*. Altogether the *Alabama* took, burned, sank or destroyed 69 ships on its 23-month cruise, attacking the crossroads of shipping lanes to and from the Pacific, Europe, and the Americas.

Semmes tried to arrange for an overhaul of his vessel in Cherbourg, France, but while awaiting permission to enter the harbor, he was challenged by the Union sloop *U.S.S. Kearsarge*. The two ships met in battle within sight of land on June 19, 1864. Taking on water, the *Alabama* sank stern-first some two and one-half hours after the action began.



The U.S.S. Kearsarge Challenges the C.S.S. Alabama

Raphael did not surrender with his ship, opting to fight the larger Federal gunboat rather than abandon his ship. He was subsequently rescued by a British vessel and thus avoided capture by officers on the *Kearsarge*. He returned

to the Confederacy and was promoted to Rear Admiral and assigned command of the naval forces protecting Richmond. When the capital fell on April 2, Raphael scuttled his ship and organized his sailors as a foot soldier brigade. Commissioned Brig. General by Jefferson Davis, he led his troops into North Carolina and surrendered with Johnston's command on April 26.

Semmes was subsequently arrested on charges of piracy but was released without trial after four months. Pressured post-war for money at several occupations, he tried the professions of college professor and editor of the *Memphis Daily Bulletin*. Succumbing to the rigors of Reconstruction, he finally settled into a legal career until his death in Mobile on August 30, 1877. His *Memoirs of Service Afloat during the War Between the States* was published in 1869.

Six years after the War ended, the British government expressed regret in the Treaty of Washington for the escape of Confederate ships built or fitted out in English ports. In 1872, the Geneva Tribunal of Arbitration decided that Great Britain had failed in its obligations of neutrality by encouraging Confederate privateers and was required to reimburse the U. S.

\$15.5 million for damages inflicted on northern shipping by the *Alabama* and other raiders. If our readers are interested in reading more about Semmes and the C.S.S. *Alabama*, your editor refers you to an excellent book on the subject by Stephen Fox entitled *Wolf of the Deep: Raphael Semmes and the Notorious Confederate Raider C.S.S. Alabama* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).



Raphael Semmes on the C.S.S. Alabama

Houston Civil War Round Table
P. O. Box 4215
Houston, TX 77210-4215