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General Orders

Franty's Brigade

Vol. 28
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Dec.
2016

DECEMBER 2016 MEETING
Thursday, December 8th, 2016

The HESS Club
5430 Westheimer Rd @ Westheimer Way
6:00 Cash Bar
6:45 Dinner & Meeting - 7:30 Program Begins

E-Mail Reservation is Preferred;
Email Don Zuckero at drzuckero@sbcglobal.net,
or call (281) 479-1232
by 6 pm Monday, December 5th, 2016
Dinner \$30; Lecture Only \$10

***** Reservations are Required *****
FOR BOTH DINNER and LECTURE ONLY

The HCWRT Presents
Donald S. Frazier
Speaking on:

***"Blood on the Bayou: Vicksburg,
Port Hudson, and the
Trans-Mississippi"***

"See what a lot of land these fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key!" wrote Abraham Lincoln. "The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket. We can take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can defy us from Vicksburg." Many Civil War historians assume that the physical occupation of the Confederacy was what Lincoln had in mind. However, by looking at operations on the west bank of the Mississippi, observers may see another picture emerge. Vicksburg was a key, to be sure, but Port Hudson may have actually been more important. In addition, the occupation of Confederate territory may have been important, but the control of the Confederacy's population

— in particular its enslaved population — may have been even more critical. Dr. Don Frazier examines the role of the Trans-Mississippi in the great Mississippi Valley Campaign and takes a fresh look at the role the immense population of African-Americans in the region may have played in forming Union strategy.



About Donald S. Frazier

Dr. Donald S. Frazier is professor of history at McMurry University in Abilene, Texas. A graduate of The University of Texas at Arlington and Texas Christian University, Frazier is also the award-winning author of four books on the Civil War including *Blood and Treasure*, *Cottonclads*, *Fire in the Cane Field*, and *Thunder Across the Swamp*. He released his latest book, *Blood on the Bayou*, in spring, 2015. His other work includes serving as co-author of *Frontier Texas*, *Historic Abilene*, and *The Texas You Expect*, as well as general editor of *The*

U.S. and Mexico at War and a collection of letters published as *Love and War: The Civil War Letter and Medicinal Book of Augustus V. Ball*. In addition to his teaching duties, Frazier has been very involved in work on Civil War and frontier heritage trails in Texas, New Mexico, and Louisiana, and work on historical projects in Europe and Mexico. He is the writer and director for the video *Our Home, Our Rights: Texas and Texans in the Civil War*, a winner of the Mitchell Wilder Award for Excellence in Publications and Media Design from the Texas Association of Museums. Dr. Frazier is an elected member of the prestigious Philosophical Society of Texas, the oldest learned organization in the state, a Fellow of the Texas State Historical Association, and a board member of the Texas Historical Foundation.

COMMANDER'S CORNER ***By Marsha Franty***

With the approach of the holidays and following Susannah Ural's stirring account of the return of some of the Hood's Texas Brigade soldiers, I decided to revisit some of the diaries and journals of Civil War soldiers. * I wanted to learn what they were experiencing at Christmas time.

David F. Ritchie of the First New York Light Artillery was in Washington, D. C., for the holiday in 1861. He wrote, "We were not without cheer. By some sleight of hand all the members of the Empire Battery had a bit of turkey and a modicum of mince pie, which perhaps served to remind them of the festal board at home." One year later, after a "limited part" in the Fredericksburg battle, he wrote, on 26 December, that "Christmas was very dull here...(we) passed most of the day...loafing about. The night before Christmas all the troops here were kept in arms in expectation of an attack and tonight we are all under arms, but I hardly apprehend an attack." His letter further indicates that he was more concerned with the fact that his best friend's regiment was being sent to North Carolina. On 24 December 1863, he and his comrades found themselves marching twelve miles to Culpeper. In very cold weather, they pitched camp there for the night

and built a big log fire in front of their tent. Near midnight, Ritchie was awakened by someone shouting that the tent was on fire. He escaped "...clad only in my pantaloons, vest, and socks...nearly all my blankets, my cap, my boots, rubber coat and blanket, etc., were burned up." Fellow soldiers provided him with enough kit to sleep under and to wear for a few days. "Christmas had come and we hailed each other with the customary salutation and made our bed as best we could till morning."

That same Christmas of 1863, Private Charles Barber of the 104th New York Volunteer Infantry found himself in winter quarters at Mitchell's Station, Virginia, on the Rapidan River. In a letter home, he wrote, "We have been on short rations again. My Christmas day's rations was (*sic*) only three crackers, two oz. of meat and coffee with salt in it instead of sugar. I thought of the happy Christmas I had at home two years ago, with my family and the good hearty victuals and the good supper we had..." The remainder of the letter is devoted to more mundane remarks about his pay, general comments on the progress of the war, and inquiries about family and friends at home.

Elisha Hunt Rhodes of Rhode Island served throughout the war. His diaries and letters were featured in Ken Burns' well-known PBS series on the war. Christmas 1862 found him in camp near Falmouth, Va. "We have passed a very quiet day and except that we have been excused from drill, the day has been like others. My brother-in-law Colville D. Brown came today from Washington and made me a call. In the evening, Lt. Col. Goff (Nathan, Jr.) of our Regiment and other officers came to my tent and we had a sing. I should like to be at home on this Christmas night." One year later, he records that he is at Camp Sedgwick, Va., and that has a new horse whom he believes to be "one of the finest horses in the Army." He goes on to relate that he "...gave a dinner to a party of officers, and we tried to celebrate Christmas in a becoming manner." The holiday of 1864 found him in the Petersburg area. Once again, he and other officers celebrated the occasion with singing and fellowship on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Day, he records that "...we held our usual inspection, and then I took a ride and dined with some friends. It does not seem much

like Sunday or Christmas, for the men are hauling logs to build huts. This is a work of necessity, for the quarters we have been using are not warm enough. This is my fourth Christmas in the Army. I wonder if it will be my last."

How fortunate we are to be at home surrounded by family and friends, supplied with copious amounts of delicious food, and safely entrenched with our books and other sources of both joy and merriment!

Please make your reservation by Monday, 5 December, and join us on Thursday, 8 December, to hear Don Frazier once again.

*Citations available upon request.

DECEMBER BOOK RAFFLE

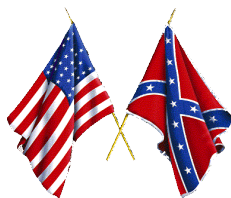
By Donnie Stowe



For our December book raffle, we begin with **A WORLD ON FIRE** by Amanda Foreman. This book describes the role Britain played in the American Civil War. Next up is **GRANT – A Biography** by William S. McFeely and is a donation from James Godlove (past president HCWRT). Third in the raffle is **THE LIFE OF BILLY YANK – The Common Soldier of the Union** by Bell Irvin Wiley and donated by Ed T. Cotham Jr. (also past president of HCWRT). A fourth selection this month is **ORDEAL OF THE UNION: A House Dividing 1852-1857** by Allan Nevins. The final book selection this month is **GRANT TAKES COMMAND** by Bruce Catton and also donated by Ed Cotham.

With Christmas just around the corner, I want to wish everyone a joyous and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And just in case jolly old St. Nick brings you a book or two that you already have, please remember the Raffle.

Without your help with donated books and magazines; this raffle wouldn't be the same.



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Emily Ryan

December is known for its holidays and its gift giving. CWRT is like all those other entities you hear from, asking for donations (Christmas Seals, Heifer Intl., Star of Hope), but we don't need money, although that's always nice. What we do need, is a continual supply of **new members**. And an appropriate gift, and an inexpensive one, too, for the CWRT is a new member.

Please reach out to your friends and neighbors and contribute a **new member** in the New Year. We want our Round Table to continue to be strong and not just survive, but to prosper, and the only way that can happen is through the efforts of you, our current members.

LOUISIANA SECESSION TOUR

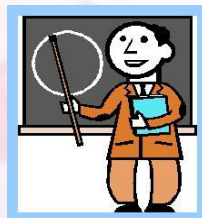
On Saturday, 21 January 2017, Civil War Tours of Louisiana LLC is offering a guided bus tour from New Orleans to Baton Rouge to explore the events surrounding Louisiana's secession from the Union. More details are available at www.bit.ly/secessiontour. The group is owned and operated by Nic Clark.

DECEMBER QUIZ

By Jim Godlove

According to Boatner's The Civil War Dictionary a legion is a "military organization that includes infantry, artillery and cavalry." A Texas legion was organized in May 1862, at Brenham.

Stripped of its artillery and cavalry components, the two infantry battalions took part in the siege of Vicksburg. On May 22, 1863, they took part in re-capturing the railroad redoubt.



Who was the native North Carolinian and wealthy Gonzales lawyer-planter who raised the Texas legion and was its first colonel?

THE HOUSTON CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE 2016 - 2017 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN – THE HESS CLUB

- Dec. 8, 2016 Donald S. Frazier:
“*Blood on the Bayou: Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and the Trans-Mississippi*”
- Jan. 19, 2017 Edwin C. Bearss: “*The Camden Expedition and Battle of Jenkin’s Ferry, AR*”
- Feb. 16, 2017 Edward H. Bonekemper III: “*The Myth of the Lost Cause*”
- Mar. 16, 2017 Brian Steel Wills: “*George Thomas at Nashville*”
- Apr. 20, 2017 Elizabeth R. Varon:
“*Legacies of Appomattox: Lee’s Surrender in History and Memory*”
- May 18, 2017 To Be Determined - Holding for 2017 Vandiver Award recipient

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Houston Civil War Round Table
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3706 Lonnie Wood Drive
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