



General Orders

Harrington's Brigade

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DECEMBER, 2020 MEETING
Thursday, December 10, 2020, 7:00 pm

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
(please refer to article on page 3 of
September's newsletter for detailed
information regarding using Zoom)

The HCWRT Presents Steve Davis Speaking on:

"Hood's Great Attack East of Atlanta, July 22, 1864"

The Confederate attacking battle fought east of Atlanta on July 22, 1864 was the closest that Gen. John B. Hood came to an outright battlefield victory in his defense of Atlanta during the summer of 1864.

The Federal lines had been bent but were not broken, and the Southerners had to retire to their start-off positions. They suffered 5,500 casualties but inflicted 3,700, including Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, commander of the Army of the Tennessee. The Southerners rolled up a division-length of Union works and captured a dozen pieces of artillery. As a result, Hood sent Richmond a telegraph that allowed newspapers in the capital to headline, "FROM ATLANTA. GLORIOUS SUCCESS OF OUR ARMS."

Hood had planned his battle as a flank attack, aimed at sending Lt. Gen. William J. Hardee's corps into McPherson's flank and rear. Once Gen. William Sherman sent the cavalry division guarding McPherson's left on a railroad raid, Hood seized the opportunity to launch his flank attack.

The parallel between Hood's flank attack at Atlanta and Gen. Stonewall Jackson's at Chancellorsville has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Yet Hood's flank attack failed, while Jackson's attained legendary success.

In his upcoming presentation before the HCWRT, Steve Davis will assess why one flank attack succeeded and the other did not. Steve's assessment will address more than a dozen factors, including General Lee's experience as tactical planner and Hood's inexperience, understanding of and enthusiasm for the plan by the flanking column commander, and the working relationship between army commander and flanking column leader.

None of these factors, however, invokes Providence. "We have again to thank Almighty God for a great victory," Lee wrote President Davis after Chancellorsville. Unlike Lee, "Cump" Sherman was not known for expressions of religiosity. His telegram to Washington after the battle of July 22 concluded simply, "Hood fights his graybacks desperately."



Steve Davis

About Steve Davis

A Civil War enthusiast since elementary school, Steve Davis attended Emory University in Atlanta as an undergraduate. After earning a Master's degree in American History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Steve taught high school for a few years. He then returned to Emory for his Ph.D., where he studied under the acclaimed Civil War historian Bell Irvin Wiley and concentrated on the theme of the Civil War in Southern literature. Nowadays, Steve and his wife make their home in the Atlanta area.

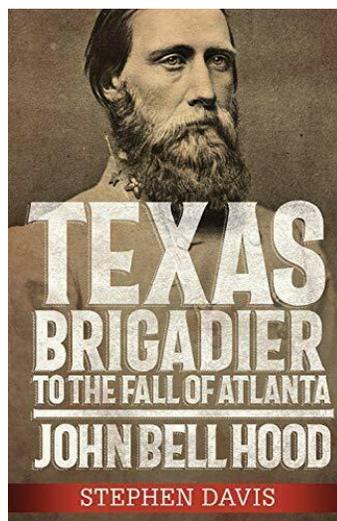
Some of you will recall that Steve served as Book Review Editor for *Blue & Gray Magazine* from 1984 to 2005. More recently, he served for several years in the same capacity at *The Civil War News*, where he also wrote a popular regular column, "Critic's Corner."

A prolific writer, Steve has authored more than a hundred articles for Civil War magazines and historical journals such as *Civil War Times Illustrated* and the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. For many years now, Steve has also been a popular speaker among Civil War Round Tables and historical societies around the country. Some of his talks have been broadcast on C-SPAN. Steve declares that addressing the annual meeting of the American Civil War Round Table (UK) in London several years ago ranks as the one of the highlights of his many speaking engagements.

Nobody among active Civil War historians knows more about the Atlanta Campaign than Dr. Davis. He is the author of multiple books on this campaign, including: *Atlanta Will Fall: Sherman, Joe Johnston and the Heavy Yankee Battalions* (2001); *What the Yankees Did to Us: Sherman's Bombardment and Wrecking of Atlanta* (2012); *A Long and Bloody Task: The Atlanta Campaign from Dalton through Kennesaw Mountain to the Chattahoochee River, May 5 - July 18, 1864* (2016); *All the Fighting They Want: The Atlanta Campaign from Peachtree Creek to the City's Surrender, July 18 - September 2, 1864* (2017); and *100 Significant Civil War Photographs - Atlanta Campaign* (2019).

During the past 12 months or so, Steve has published the first full-length biography of the controversial Confederate general, John Bell Hood, in a generation. Late last year, Mercer University Press brought out the first volume of Steve's two-volume study of General Hood under the title *Texas Brigadier to the Fall of Atlanta*. Mercer has just released the concluding volume, *Into Tennessee and Failure*.

Given his intimate knowledge of both the Atlanta Campaign and General Hood, Steve Davis is perhaps uniquely qualified to speak to us on the topic at our December meeting, "Hood's Great Attack East of Atlanta, July 22, 1864 (Or, Why Jackson's Flank Attack at Chancellorsville Succeeded and Hood's Did Not)."



COMMANDER'S CORNER

By Mike Harrington

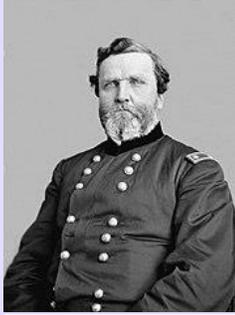
If you did not Zoom in to our November meeting, you missed a lively, entertaining talk by Brian Steel Wills, the winner of our 2020 Frank Vandiver Award of Merit. If you were among those who tuned in, you know what I'm talking about. Dr. Wills never ceases to entertain as well as enlighten us.

Ordinarily, the HCWRT meets on the third Thursday of each month between September and May. The exception is December, when we meet on the second Thursday (to minimize conflicts with the Christmas season). So set your clocks and calendars to 7:00 pm

on **Thursday, December 10**, when Dr. Steve Davis will be our keynote speaker.

I hope you had a truly joyous Thanksgiving holiday, and I wish you an early Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year!

KEY FIGURES OF THE CIVIL WAR: GEORGE HENRY THOMAS



Union General George Henry Thomas was one of the principal commanders in the Western Theater. Thomas served in the Mexican-American War and later chose to remain with the U. S. Army at the outbreak of the Civil War, despite his Virginia heritage. He won one of the first Union victories of the war, at Mill Springs in Kentucky, and served in important subordinate commands at Perryville and Stones River. Thomas' stout defense at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863 saved the Union army from being completely routed, thus earning him the nickname "the Rock of Chickamauga." He achieved a dramatic breakthrough on Missionary Ridge in the 1864 Battle of Chattanooga. In the Franklin-Nashville Campaign later that year, Thomas claimed one of the most decisive victories of the war, the destroying of Confederate General John Bell Hood, his former student at West point, at the Battle of Nashville.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Walker Agnew

Though I miss the HCWRT's "in-person" meetings and the one-on-one conversations, using the Zoom platform enables us to reach out to friends in the greater Houston area who might not travel to a normal meeting. Please consider inviting someone to join up for one of our great

presentations. A personal invitation is still the best way to get the word out!

Let me know of any ideas you may have for the membership committee. My email address is walkeragnew@comcast.net. If you have not paid your membership dues yet, please send in to Barry Brueggeman (the mailing address can be found on the return address page in this newsletter). Remember, only members who are current with their dues will receive the Zoom links for our upcoming meetings.



THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY

Dec. 3, 1863 – Siege of Knoxville, Tennessee concludes

Dec. 8, 1861 – CSS Sumter seizes Northern merchant ship *Eben Dodge* in the mid-Atlantic

Dec. 11 to 15, 1862 – Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia

Dec. 15, 1864 – Battle of Knoxville, Tennessee begins

Dec. 18, 1865 – The Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, becomes a part of the U. S. Constitution

Dec. 20, 1860 – South Carolina adopts an Ordinance of Secession

Dec. 31, 1862 – Battle of Parker's Cross Roads, Tennessee

Dec. 31, 1862 – Battle of Stones River near Murfreesboro, Tennessee



2020 - 2021 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

- Dec. 10, 2020 Stephen Davis: *"Hood's Great Attack East of Atlanta, July 22, 1864 (Or, Why Jackson's Flank Attack at Chancellorsville Succeeded and Hood's Did Not)"*
- Jan. 21, 2021 Danny Sessums: *"Arkansas Post"*
- Feb. 18, 2021 Lorien Foote: *"The Dogs of War"* (rescheduled from April 16, 2020)
- Mar. 18, 2021 Timothy B. Smith: *"The Real Horse Soldiers: Benjamin Grierson's Epic 1863 Civil War Raid Through Mississippi"*
- Apr. 15, 2021 Stephen Kinnaman: *"Merrimack: Biography of a Steam Frigate"* (rescheduled from March 19, 2020)
- May 20, 2021 Don Frazier: *"Tempest Over Texas"*

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Houston Civil War Round Table
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