



General Orders

Harrington's Brigade

Vol. 32
No. 8
March
2021

www.HoustonCivilWar.com



MARCH, 2021 MEETING
Thursday, March 18, 7:00 pm
Fellowship Period from 6:30 to 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 Eugene D. Schmiel Speaking on:

“Jacob Dolson Cox, Citizen-General and Unsung Hero of the Battle of Franklin”

The saying, "Victory has many fathers, but defeat is an orphan," can certainly be applied to the Union Army at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee. That battle on November 30, 1864, was a key event leading to ultimate Union victory in the West. Not surprisingly, Union Commanding General John Schofield, 4th Corps commander David Stanley, Colonel Emerson Opdycke, and others claimed credit for this Union victory.

While all those men played a role, it was General Jacob Cox more than anyone else who was the Union hero of the Battle of Franklin. He was in command on the field throughout the battle; he created the Union defensive line; he rose to the occasion to stem the break in the line at a critical time; and he oversaw the efficient withdrawal after the battle toward Nashville.

Unlike many of his fellow Generals, Cox did not brag about or seek publicity for his achievements. Even in his 1882 book about this campaign, he only mentioned his own name a

couple of times. Eventually, Cox realized that he was being forgotten, and his 1897 book about the Battle of Franklin became the definitive text for many years. In this later book, he finally underscored his key role, while still crediting others.

But the historical die had been cast, and Jacob Cox became an unsung hero. Modern history, including Gene Schmiel's book about Cox, has helped correct the record.



Gene Schmiel and the late Ed Bearss

Gene's presentation will include biographical information about Cox, a former theology student who became, unexpectedly, one of the best "Political Generals" of the Union. Cox played a key role in securing "West Virginia" for the Union; he commanded the left flank at the Battle of Antietam; his taking of the Macon and Western Railroad forced the Confederate withdrawal from Atlanta, and he was Schofield's key deputy during the Franklin-Nashville campaign. After the war, he became Governor of Ohio; Secretary of the Interior; President of

the Wabash Railway and the University of Cincinnati; and the author of several books about the Civil War which still today are cited by historians as objective analyses.



About Gene Schmiel

Gene Schmiel is a student of the Civil War whose book, *Citizen-General: Jacob Dolson Cox and the Civil War Era*, was published in 2014 by Ohio University Press. The book, a History Book Club selection, was deemed "best biography of the year" by *Civil War Books and Authors*.

Schmiel's second book, *Lincoln, Antietam, and a Northern Lost Cause*, was a speculative history about the Battle of Antietam and how an overwhelming Union victory there ironically could have resulted in the preservation of slavery. His third book, *Ohio Heroes of the Battle of Franklin*, was a study of three Ohio citizen generals, Jacob Cox, Emerson Opdycke, and Jack Casement and their critical roles in "saving the day" at this important battle.

During 2020 and 2021, Gene has written six books in a series entitled, "Civil War Personalities, Fifty at a Time." Each book has a specific theme, with short biographies of both well-known and obscure, yet important personages. For example, his book, *Civil War Women: Underestimated and Indispensable*, features not only Harriet Tubman and Clara Barton, but also nurse Mary

Bickerdyke, soldier Kady Brownlow, and educator Susie King Taylor.

Gene holds a Ph. D. degree from The Ohio State University and was an Assistant Professor of History at St. Francis University (PA) before becoming a Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State. He resides in Gainesville, Virginia with his wife Bonnie Kathryn. His books are available through Amazon.com.



COMMANDER'S CORNER

By Mike Harrington

If you are anything like me, then the last-minute cancellation of our February 18 meeting due to the effects of the Deep Freeze left you muttering to yourself: "What else can go wrong this year?"

Let's pray that question will remain unanswered.

On a happier note, I am delighted to report that Dr. Lorien Foote has kindly agreed to speak to us at a special meeting on June 17, 2021. Historically, each of our annual campaigns has concluded with the May meeting, so this extension of the 2020-2021 campaign into June marks a first in (at least the recent) history of the Houston Civil War Round Table.

Our Board is scheduled to convene before our March 18 meeting. High on the agenda for that meeting is a resumption of our efforts to locate a suitable venue for resuming in-person meetings, hopefully beginning with the September 2021 meeting that will kick off our next campaign. I am optimistic that our search for a new venue will succeed in time to brief you



Table in combating the extremes of cancel culture through our continuing commitment to the principles on which our organization was chartered more than 65 years ago: namely, the nonpartisan “study and discussion of the history, battles, personalities and significant events of the War Between the States.”



on the details no later than the summer 2021 edition of this newsletter.

In the meantime, if you have any suggestions as to a new venue, please feel free to share them with one of our officers. We value your input.

The February 20-21 weekend edition of the *Wall Street Journal* includes a small news item headed “Military Base Renaming.” The item mentions that a commission will soon be at work to “select new monikers for bases named for Confederates.” Personally, I view this renaming exercise as part of the on-going “cancel culture” movement that troubles American society. As the movement relates to the Civil War, it miscasts the war as strictly a war on slavery, ignoring the fact that four slave states remained in the Union and only a small fraction of Northerners were abolitionists.

If it succeeds, cancel culture may eventually preclude the serious study of the Civil War era, one that recognizes the primacy of slavery in the coming of the war but also rejects (what has been called) the New England view of the war as a 19th Century morality play pitting Yankee saints against Southern sinners. Heaven forbid that we, as a nation, may reach a time when any book, movie or other public presentation on the war that casts a Confederate in a positive light, no matter the degree of his military prowess or heroism, is subject to shaming as un-PC, if not downright racist or white supremacist.

I would like to think that there’s a role, small as it may be, for our Houston Civil War Round

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Walker Agnew

We want to remind you that we still have some excellent speakers for the remainder of our programs lined up this year. Be sure to reach out to your friends who are interested in learning more about this time in American history! Even with so much already written, there is new information still being published and researched on a continuing basis! I believe this is one reason the Civil War is so fascinating.

Be sure to log in early to the March 18th meeting for our “social time”. See you then!

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.



HCWRT members during 2016 field trip to Franklin

2020 - 2021 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

- Mar. 18, 2021 Eugene D. Schmiel: *“Jacob Dolson Cox, Citizen-General and Unsung Hero of the Battle of Franklin”*
- Apr. 15, 2021 Stephen Kinnaman: *“Merrimack: Biography of a Steam Frigate”*
(rescheduled from March 19, 2020)
- May 20, 2021 Don Frazier: *“Tempest Over Texas”*
- June 17, 2021 Lorien Foote: *“The Dogs of War”* (rescheduled from February 18, 2021)

www.HoustonCivilWar.com



Houston Civil War Round Table
c/o Barry G. Brueggeman
3706 Lonnie Wood Drive
Houston, TX 77059

