Issue 4 December 2025

The Courier

President Dale H. Fellows
Quality, Education, Fellowship
December Holiday Meeting #247

Northeast Ohio Civil War Roundtable

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

"A Holiday Evening with Mark Twain"

as portrayed by Mark Dawidziak



Returning for our holiday dinner program is noted Mark Twain portrayer, Mark Dawidziak. Mark D. has been delighting audiences for 40+ years as he introduces them to Samuel Clemens/Mark Twain. Mr. Dawidziak, a native New Yorker, earned his journalism degree from George Washington University. The start of his 43-year journalism career was in Washington, DC with Knight-Ridder Newspapers and the Associated Press, then as editor of arts and entertainment in Bristol, Virginia and Kingsport, Tennessee. Moving to Akron, OH he was the TV critic, film critic, and critic-at-large for the Akron Beacon Journal. In 1999, Mark became The Cleveland Plain Dealer's well known television critic. In 2015, he was honored to be inducted into the Press Club of Cleveland Journalism's Hall of Fame. He is an author/editor of 25 books and at Kent State University for 10+ years as an adjunct professor. As of 2020, Mark retired from The Plain Dealer to write full-time. He has pursued a love of acting, appearing as Mark Twain and Edgar Alan Poe. In 1981, Mark met his future wife, actress and storyteller, Sara Showman, when they performed in a production of Neil Simon's The Good Doctor. In 2002, the couple founded the literacy, literature, live theater touring troupe, Largely Literary Theater Company. Mark, Sara and daughter Becky call Cuyahoga Falls home.

The well known home to Mark Twain lovers was built in Hartford, CT in 1874. Now a Twain museum, the Samuel Clemens 25-room family mansion was designed by Edward Tuckerman Potter. As young marrieds, Samuel and Olivia (Livy) Clemens were living in Buffalo, NY. Livy had suffered the death of her father, Jervis Langdon, due to stomach cancer, had nursed her friend, Emma Nye, who would ultimately die from typhoid fever, given birth to the Twains' first child, son Langdon, and then she herself became ill with typhoid fever. It was decided to move from Buffalo to the better climate in Hartford, CT. Next door neighbors of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the family would live there from 1874-1891, when the Twains would move to Europe due to financial difficulties. Tonight we'll share a holiday evening with Samuel Clemens/Mark Twain and hear stories on a cold winter night. Please invite a guest to a very special December evening.

Evening Schedule

Doors open - 5:45 p.m.
Social - 6:00 p.m. Dinner - 6:35 p.m. Program - 7:30 p.m.
Dinner & Program
Members - $30.00 Non Members - $40.00
Guests Welcome

RSVP is Required by Friday, December 5, 2025

RSVP Contact - Event Coordinator, Franco
(440) 567-2414 Email: francomichael2414@yahoo.com



Our Venue

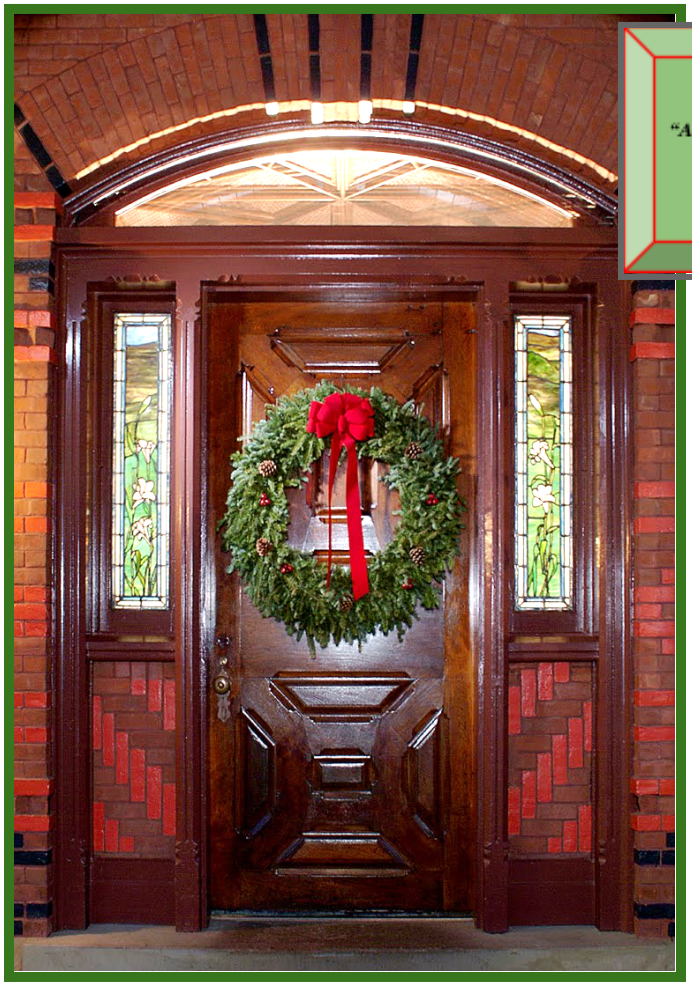
Pine Ridge Country Club
30601 Pine Ridge Rd.
Wickliffe, OH

Northeast Ohio Civil War Roundtable

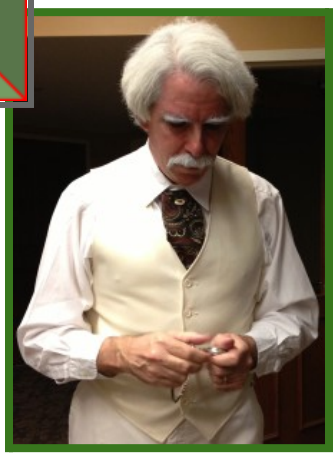
You Are Invited to Open the Door

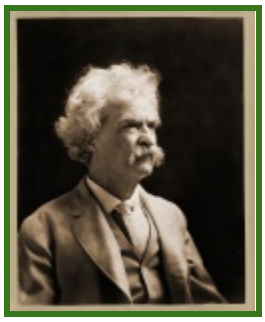
"A Holiday Evening with Mark Twain"

Tuesday, December 9, 2025



Open the Door
"A Holiday Evening with Mark Twain"
as portrayed by
Mark Dawidziak





Guests Welcome - RSVP Required

Evening Cost Includes

Dinner & Program

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Our Venue
Pine Ridge Country Club
30601 Pine Ridge Rd.
Wickliffe, OH

President Dale Fellows
December 2025



Hello everyone,

I hope you all had a Happy Thanksgiving!

We had a big turnout for our November meeting and heard two superb presenters: retired Judge C. Ellen Connally about General Douglas MacArthur and retired Professor David Goldberg on the Korean War. We all learned a lot about both subjects!

December will be a real treat as we will hear from Mark Twain!

This is our annual holiday dinner meeting so please bring your spouses or significant others and enjoy the presentation after a special dinner.

Since our last Courier, we had a wonderful tour of Lake View Cemetery with our own, Dave Lintern, as our guide. It was extremely informative.

Our Williamsburg trip is only 4 months away. If anyone else would like to join us, please let me know ASAP… 216-299-2330.

Hope you all have a joyous and safe holiday season, and we look forward to seeing you at our dinner meeting on Tuesday, December 9th.



Mount Vernon



George Washington at Valley Forge, 1780
Portrait by Charles Willson Peale
Wikimedia Commons

Gallery of the Twain Family

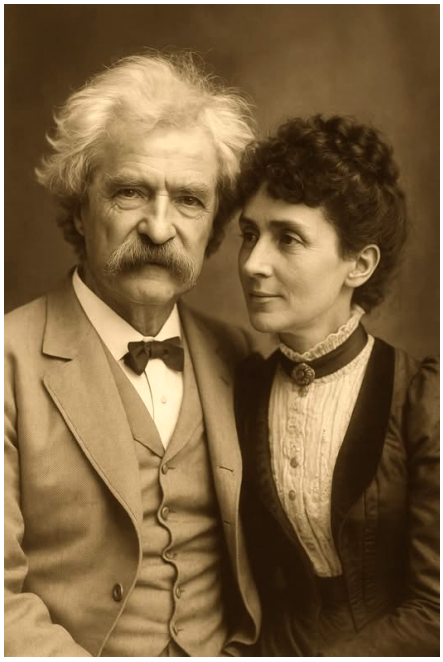


Olivia Louise Langdon
(ca. 1869)
Courtesy of the Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

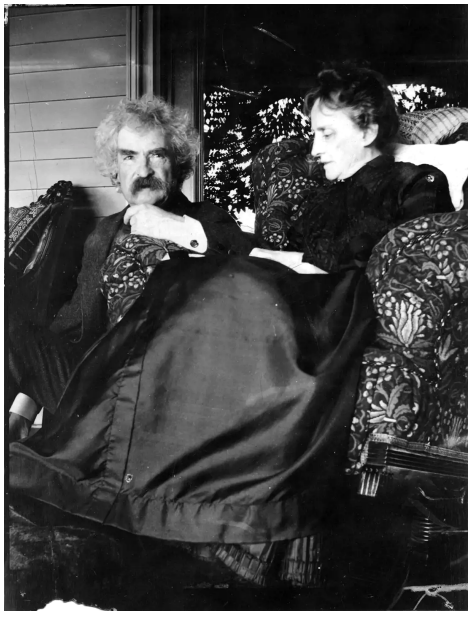
"I take as much pride in her brains as I do in her beauty." Mark Twain quote about wife, Livy



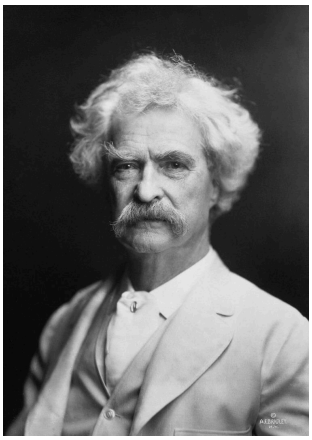
Samuel Clemens, age 15, holding metal type in a composing stick that spells out his first name, Sam



When Mark Twain married Olivia (Livy) Langdon he was 32. He told a friend, "If I'd known how happy married life would make me, I'd have married 30 years earlier—skipping the whole business of growing teeth."



Samuel Clemens & Olivia Langdon Clemens at Quarry Farm Elmira, NY (1903) Courtesy of the Mark Twain House and Museum, Hartford CT



Mark Twain (1907) portrait by A. F. Bradley New York



Olivia Langdon Clemens (1884) Courtesy of the Mark Twain House and Museum, Hartford, CT

Samuel Langhorne Clemens
Born: November 30, 1835 Florida, Missouri
Married: February 2, 1870 Elmira, NY
Died: April 21, 1910 Redding, CT, heart attack
Buried: Woodlawn Cemetery, Elmira, NY

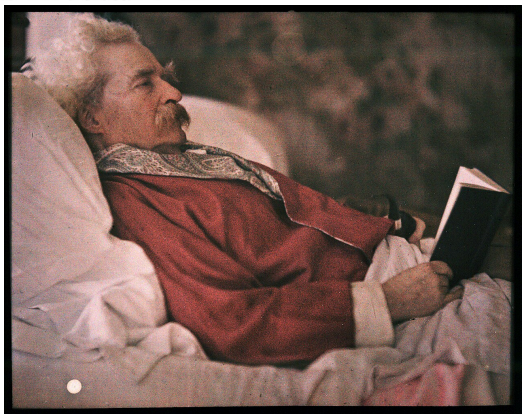
Olivia (Livy) Louise Langdon Clemens
Born: November 27, 1845 Elmira, NY
Married: February 2, 1870 Elmira, NY
Died: June 5, 1904 Florence Italy, heart failure
Buried: July 14, 1904 Woodlawn Cemetery, Elmira, NY



left to right: Clara Clemens, Olivia (Livy) Langdon Clemens, Susy Clemens, Jean Clemens at their home in Hartford, CT (ca. 1884) Courtesy of the Mark Twain House and Museum, Hartford, CT



Mark Twain's wife Olivia with daughter Clara Photo by Faulk Sydney, Australia November 27, 1895 Photo from THE SKETCH



Twain (1908) via the Autochrome Lumiere process



Clemens family at their Hartford House (1884) left to right: Susy Clemens, Sam Clemens, Jean Clemens, Olivia Clemens, & Clara Clemens Courtesy of the Mark Twain House and Museum, Hartford, CT





left to right: Clara Clemens, Olivia Langdon Clemens, Samuel Clemens at Dollis Hill, England (ca. 1900) Courtesy of the Mark Twain House and Museum, Hartford, CT

Samuel Clemens with 14-year-old Helen Allen, daughter of his Bermuda host, U.S. Vice-Consul William H. Allen Bermuda National Trust Collection

Samuel & Olivia Clemens Children

"What is a home without a child?" Mark Twain



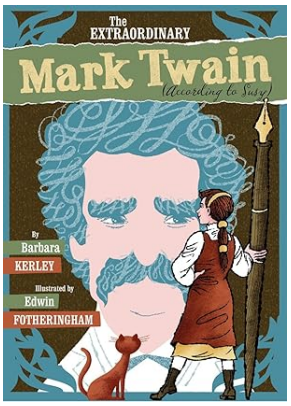
Langdon Clemens
November 7, 1870 - June 2, 1872
first born, only son
born prematurely
died of diphtheria age 19 months



Susy Clemens
(ca. 1885)



Olivia Susan Clemens (Susy)
March 19, 1872 - August 18, 1896



The Twains' second child, oldest of three daughters, was a baby when brother Langdon died. Her parents naturally doted on her, creating a close bond throughout her life. The Twain sisters would be educated at home by their mother or tutors. Samuel Clemens wanted his daughters to read German books before English ones and their German nurse only spoke German so they would quickly learn the language at their young age. A creative child, Olivia, nicknamed Susy, began writing a journal biography of her father at age 13 to help set the record straight about her father no matter whether he was good or bad. The book "The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According to Susy) by Barbara Kerley (available on Amazon) gives an interesting perspective from Twain's oldest daughter. Bouts of depression and illness would affect Susy's life. She did attend Bryn Mawr for a brief period but Mark Twain's financial burdens, loss of the sisters' beloved grandmothers, and Susy's homesickness must have contributed to what was a brief period at the women's college in Pennsylvania. The Twain family would travel and live in Europe as Clemens' tried to ease their financial debts by lecturing, focusing on his writing, while also seeking help with family illnesses. In 1895, Susy and sister Jane would remain in Elmira, NY with their aunt and uncle, Susan and Theodore Crane at the Langdon family's Quarry Farm. The following year 1896, Susy suffered her final illness, ultimately losing her eyesight. Before her mother could return from Europe, Susy died at their Hartford home from spinal meningitis at the age of 24. After Susy's death, the devastated family, upon Olivia's insistence, would never live in their Hartford home again, selling it in 1903.



Susy Clemens
at Bryn Mawr
1890–91



Clara Langdon Clemens
June 8, 1874 - November 19, 1962



Clara Clemens
Circa 1907

Nicknamed Bay, due to sister Susy's toddler pronunciation of baby, Clara was two years younger, sharing a similar upbringing homeschooled by their mother and tutors, enjoying a childhood in an upper middle class family. She was adventurous, prone to mishaps, such as breaking her ankle sledding on the steep slope at their Hartford home. In 1895-1896 she experienced a round-the-world trip with her parents. The most independent of the Clemens sisters, she was an accomplished pianist. In 1899 she studied under Theodor Leschetizky, a former pupil of Carl Czerny, where she met fellow student and future husband, Ossip Gabrilowitsch. Talented Clara performed as a contralto concert singer, but her dream of becoming an opera star would remain unfulfilled. Instead Clara's life was filled with challenges trying to manage the Clemens family. Clara's mother and sister, both seriously ill, were under doctor's orders to avoid stress and excitement. Clara had the difficult task to keep upsetting news, concerning each of them, away from both! As the years progressed, Clara was dealing with her mother's declining health, the ill health and death of older sister Susy, younger sister Jean's now diagnosed epilepsy, and all the while trying to pursue her own musical career. An aging Samuel Clemens struggled also dealing with the same family crises and ultimately could not be of much help to Clara. Following the death of her mother, Clara suffered a nervous breakdown spending a year in a Connecticut sanitarium recovering. Clara would marry twice. She and first husband, concert pianist, composer Ossip Gabrilowitsch, married on October 6, 1909 at her father's Stormfield home. The couple were part of Detroit's high society as the talented Ossip from 1918-1936 was the conductor of the trendsetter Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Threatening to quit, Ossip was the driving force in the building of Detroit's 1919 Orchestra Hall. In 1936, Ossip would unfortunately die from stomach cancer. Clara and Ossip's only child and Samuel Clemens only grandchild, Nina, was born August 19, 1910, several months after Clemens death. She was Clemens/Twain's last direct descendant, never marrying partner, artist Carl Roters or having children. Unsuccessful as a career photographer, Nina faced her own demons. She lived on a trust fund from her mother and royalties from her grandfather's writings. A drug abuser and alcoholic, she died at age 55 of a barbiturates overdose on January 16, 1966 in a Los Angeles hotel. Clara would remarry at age 70 on May 11, 1944. Second husband, Russian born composer and conductor, Jacques Samossoud, was 20 years her junior. He was a ne'er-do-well who proceeded to work his way through her fortunes. Clara, a published author, penned biographies of her father and first husband, Ossip was living in California when she died at age 88 in San Diego. She is buried in the family plot at Woodlawn Cemetery in Elmira, NY.



Ossip Gabrilowitsch
Clara's first husband



Happier Days
Nina Gabrilowitsch (center) with her parents, Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch & Ossip Gabrilowitsch



October 6, 1909 at the wedding of Clara Clemens and Ossip Gabrilowitsch
From left: Mark Twain, Jervis Langdon Jr., Clara Clemens, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Jean Clemens, Rev. Dr. Joseph Twichell
Photo by Frank J. Sprague



Despised by the Langdon family, Clara's 2nd husband, Jacques Samossoud, (1894-1966) is buried next to the Twain family plot in an unmarked grave in Elmira, NY.
A gambler, including horsebetting, went through hundreds of thousands of Clara's assets by the time of her death.
He would not allow the Langdon family to visit a declining Clara.



Nina Clemens Gabrilowitsch
Clara & Ossip's daughter



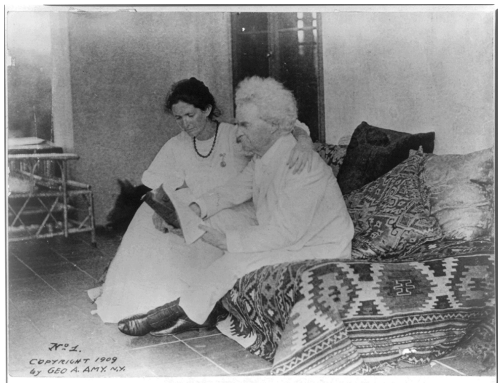


Jane Lampton Clemens
July 26, 1880 - December 24, 1909

Jane, always called Jean, was the youngest of the Clemens children and their third daughter. She, like her sisters, was born at the Langdon Quarry Farm in Elmira, NY. In 1880, her father wrote to his sister, "Jean is as fat as a watermelon, & just as sweet, & good, & often just as wet." Athletic, loving the outdoors, enjoying wildlife, she ice skated, enjoyed skiing, hiking, loved horseback riding, played squash, and tennis. Our modern day would call her an animal rights activist. She became a member of the Humane Society and was involved in working, founding numerous societies for animal protection. She would be thrilled knowing her hometown of Redding, CT would years later purchase more than 160 acres of the Twains' original property for $575,000, of which 4 miles are hiking trails open to the public.

In 1896, Jean was diagnosed at age 15/16 with epilepsy when she suffered a severe seizure while attending school in Elmira. Her father felt the epilepsy stemmed from a head injury she suffered when 10 or 11 years old. Mood swings and erratic behavior Twain also felt were due to her uncontrolled epilepsy. Scholars feel sister Susy's death in August 1896 was a turning point for the Clemens' with both traumas impacting the family. Medical treatment for epilepsy, at that time, was the patient should be kept calm, as excitement and worry caused more frequent seizures. Jean sadly would not experience the childhood of her sisters, with the family spending many years traveling seeking cures abroad in Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, England and the United States. There were times of remission but also frequent frightening episodes of grand mal seizures with loss of consciousness among the symptoms. A strict diet, sedatives, fresh air, and exercise were prescribed. When Jean had her "spells" her mother, with her own declining health, would be with her night and day. Growing into a young woman under constant joint parental supervision must have been a difficult strain for the loving family. Society's stigma attached to epilepsy must have created its own challenges.

In 1904, Livy's death in Florence, Italy from heart failure was devastating. Samuel struggled to go on after the death of his wife of 34 years. Daughter Clara and he would now need to help Jean manage her illness. In 1906 Isabel Lyon, Twain's secretary since 1902, would claim Jean was violent, physically attacking, wanting to kill the Clemens' maid, Katy Leary. Historian Karen Lystra cast doubts on the claim in her 2004 Twain biography suggesting Lyons was creating issues between father and daughter as Lyon wanted to marry him. At age 26 on October 25, 1906, Jean was admitted to the epilepsy sanitarium, Hillbourne Farms in Katonah, NY to live. She wanted to return home but Twain refused since he didn't know if he could provide her care. In April 1909, Isabel Lyon was fired by Twain and she and new husband, Twain business associate Ralph Ashcroft, moved to Canada. They divorced in 1927 with Isabel moving to New York working as a secretary. Surprisingly she would meet regularly with actor Hal Holbrook as he created his one-man show "Mark Twain Tonight."



Jane (Jean) Clemens and Mark Twain
(December 26, 1909)
photo in the Philadelphia Inquirer

Living at Hillbourne until April 1909, Jean returned to Connecticut reuniting with her father to spend the remaining short time of her young life with him. In 1909, her father purchased a farm for her near his home. Now his secretary after Isabel Lyon's firing, Jean was staying at Stormfield to decorate for Christmas. The morning of Christmas Eve Day, December 24, 1909 she had not appeared for breakfast. A maid discovered her partly submerged body, with little water in her lungs, in the bathtub. At age 29, the cause of Jean's death, possible heart attack, after suffering an epileptic seizure. That day a heartbroken father poured out his feelings in "The Death of Jean." He showed it to Albert Bigelow Paine two days after completion and requested, "...if you think it worthy, some day—at the proper time—it can end my autobiography. It is the final chapter." In 1910, Twain would travel to Bermuda staying 95 days trying to ease his own failing health. Unwell, returning to Stormfield April 12, 1910, he died April 21, 1910 almost four months to the day after daughter Jean's death.

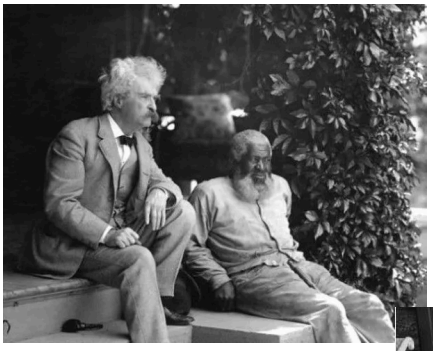


Stormfield (1914 photo)
Mark Twain's final home from June 1908 until his death in April 1910

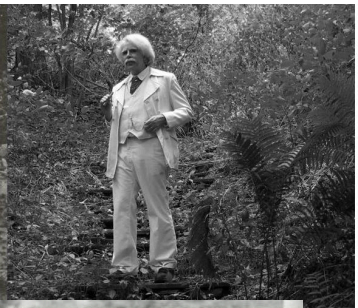
The following appeared in Wikipedia, Mark Twain's final home, "Stormfield"....

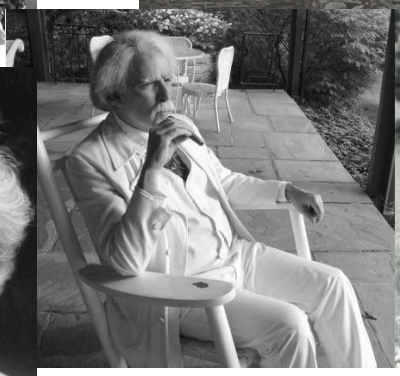
Two burglars broke into the house in September 1908 and stole silver; they also exchanged shots with a deputy sheriff who was wounded. They were later apprehended aboard a train in Bethel, Connecticut and sentenced to prison. Twain briefly met the men while they were in custody and subsequently posted a note on the front door of Stormfield addressed "To the next Burglar", advising them that the house contained "nothing but plated ware" which they could find "in that brass thing" by a basket of kittens; to make no noise to disturb the family; and to leave the kittens. He also added an entry in his guest book to note the burglars' arrival "without permission."

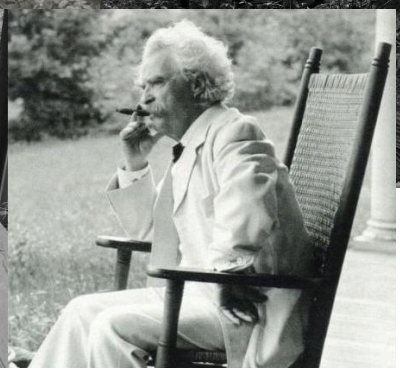
Mark Twain and John T. Lewis, friend and neighbor, on the Quarry Farm Porch (1903)

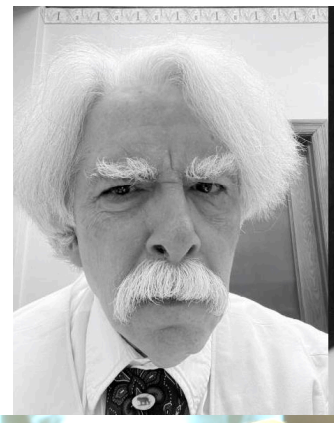


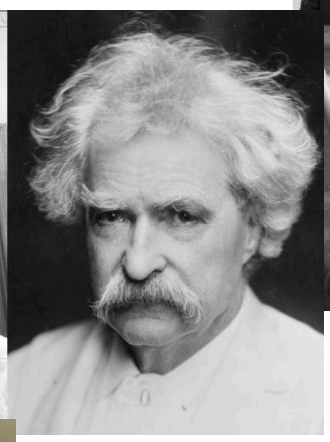












The two Marks



Friends Mark Dawidziak & the late Hal Holbrook shared a love of Mark Twain. In 1959, a young Hal Holbrook met Mark Twain's daughter, Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch Samossoud.
Hal would perform as Mark Twain for 63 years, longer than Samuel Clemens himself performed the superstar Mark Twain

Twain/Clemens References



A young Jean Clemens with mother, Olivia Langdon Clemens, and older sisters, Susy and Clara Clemens

De Bruxelles, Simon - "Cricket, a poem and precious girls: Twain in his paradise before death," March 1, 2014, GMT The Times

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Facebook This Date in History, Sports & Culture, August 29, 2025
Facebook TommyAdagio

Find a Grave, Jacques Aleandria Samossoud
Find a Grave, Jean Lampton Clemens
Gunderman, Richard, The Conversation, "For Mark Twain, It Was Love At First Sight," February 13, 2018

Larson, Thomas, "I Am Your Loving Daughter, Clara Clemens," San Diego Read, May 8, 2003

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https://marktwainstudies.com "Olivia Langdon Clemens"
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Wikipedias on the following: "Carl Roters," "Clara Clemens," "Isabel Lyon," "Jean Clemens," "Mark Twain," "Ossip Gabrilowitsch," "Quarry Farm," "Stormfield," "Susy Clemens

WikiTree, Nina Clemens Gabrilowitsch

Editor's Note: In researching the Twain Family through articles and the treasure trove of pictures, it was a history journey to discover a family blessed with beauty, talent, and love but at times shocking to discover their overwhelming amount of tragedies.



God's blessings to each and everyone during this Joyous Hanukkah and Christmas Season

Courier Editor, Tena Kegg
December 2025

Fall 2025 - Spring 2026 Speaker Schedule

President, Dale H. Fellows

*****

September 9, 2025
Tom McMillan - author
"From Rebellion to Independence, 1775-1776
The Year That Made America"

October 14, 2025
Speaker - Mel Maurer
Past President CCWRT
"An Evening with President Abraham Lincoln"

November 11, 2025
Speakers - C. Ellen Connally
retired judge, Cleveland Municipal Court
David J. Goldberg
retired professor of History, Cleveland State
"Life of General Douglas MacArthur"

December 9, 2025
Mark Dawidziak
"A Holiday Evening with Mark Twain"

January 13, 2026
Speaker - Judge William Vodrey
"Lincoln's Commando:
William Cushing and the Sinking of the CSS Albemarle"

February 10, 2026
First Ladies
Martha Washington - Nancy Fellows
Mary Lincoln - Marian King
Lucretia Garfield - Debbie Weinkamer

March 10, 2026
Speaker - Phillip M. Seyfrit
Curator for the Battle of Richmond Visitors Center
"Battle of Richmond"

April 14, 2026
Kit (Chris) Whipple
Cleveland Historian
"Civil War - Camp Cleveland"

May 12, 2026
Brian Kowell
Member - Cleveland Civil War Roundtable
"Horses of the Civil War"

June 9, 2026
American 250 Celebration
and
Christopher Long - Roosevelt's D-Day Prayer

Presidents
1998 - 2026
*****

1998 - Joe Tirpak (1)
1999 - Rob Bayless (2)
2000 - Norty London (3)
2001 - Bob Baucher (4)
2002 - Bob Battisti (5)
2003 - Frank Yannucci (6)
2004 - Ted Karle (7)
2005 - John Sandy (8)
2006 - Brent Morgan (9)
2007 - Mike Sears (10)
2008 - Bill Meissner (11)
2009 - Arlan Byrne (12)
2010 - Terry Reynolds (13)
2011 - Franco Sperrazzo (14)
2012 - Steve Abbey (15)
2013 - Tom Horvath (16)
2014 - Carl Dodaro (17)
2015 - Bernie Taub (18)
2016 - Bill Wilson (19)
2017 - Hudson Fowler (20)
2018 - David Lintern (21)
2019 - Kenny Godnavec (22)
2020 - 2021 - Tom Horvath, Jr. (23)
2021 - 2022 - Scott Hagara (24)
2022 - 2023 - Paul Siedel (25)
2023 - 2024 - Tena Kegg (26)
2024 - 2025 - Darrell Schneider (27)
2025 - 2026 - Dale H. Fellows (28)

Executive Board
2025-2026

Founders - Joseph Tirpak, Norton London
President - Dale H. Fellows
Vice President - Cherie Godnavec
Secretary - Mike Driscoll
Treasurer - George Maier
Past Presidents -
Darrell Schneider, Tena Kegg, Scott Hagara
Event Coordinator - Franco Sperrazzo
Sergeant at Arms -
Mike Driscoll, John Kegg
Courier Editor, Publicity - Tena Kegg
Membership Chairman - Kenny Godnavec
Members at Large -
Dave Lintern, Bob Tribby

1998 Charters
Joe Abazzio, Dale Fellows, Ted Karle
Bill Meissner, John Sandy, Franco Sperrazzo



December Birthdays

December 10 - Errol Savage
December 17 - Nick Barich
December 31 - Tom Harvey

Welcome to new member
Jerry Grindle



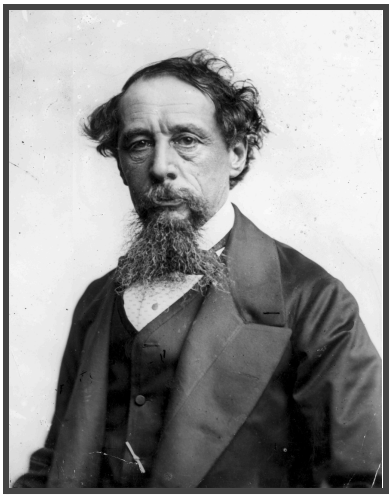


November 25, 2025 Executive Board Happenings



Thank you Michelle Day
once again for
satisfying our cookie sweet tooth

1. ***Pine Ridge Doors - Open 5:45 p.m. Dinner served - 6:30 p.m.***
2. ***Please read this month's Courier article on the local Smith Family/Chardon Road Cemetery by Linda O'Brien. We are looking into supporting the effort to honor Civil War soldier, Ransom William White, by contributing to his new marker.***
3. ***You are invited to attend the Williamsburg March 26-30, 2026 field trip. Contact President Dale Fellows ASAP at (216) 299-2330 to allow for enough rooms to be available at the discounted rate quoted on the flyer in this month's Courier.***
4. ***Grow your Roundtable - Invite History Loving Family and Friends, encouraging them to become a member of our Roundtable.***



"Reflect upon your present blessings of which every man has many - not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."
Charles Dickens





If you have not done so, NOW IS THE TIME to support your 2025-2026 Roundtable with payment by renewing your yearly membership. Your annual membership dues supports NEOCWRT and enables us to continue to welcome and enjoy quality speakers at our monthly dinner programs. Treasurer George Maier will accept your payment in Cash or Check at the Welcome Table, Tuesday, December 9, 2025. If paying by check…please write a separate check for membership and a separate check for dinner.

Important Notice 2025-2026 Annual Membership Dues…..

Annual Membership dues should have been paid no later than November 30, 2025

Renewing your annual membership,
Enjoy a member $30.00 dinner cost,
Avoiding increase to a non member $40.00 dinner cost
which goes into effect Tuesday, December 9, 2025
2025-2026 Annual Renewal of Membership Dues
Single - $55.00 Couple - $75.00

Important Note regarding any 2024-2025 Inactive Member

Dues/Dinner Cost Clarification - If you were an Inactive Member (did not pay annual membership dues) in 2024-2025, you remain an Inactive Member for 2025-2026 until receipt of your 2025-2026 dues. Until then your dinner cost is $40.00.



Northeast Ohio Civil War Roundtable

Celebrate Our Nation's

250th Semiquincentennial Birthday

In Beautiful Historic

Colonial Williamsburg

March 26 - 30, 2026

Register ASAP





We have been relocated from the originally booked Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel and Suites due to maintenance work

<u>Our New Hotel</u>
Williamsburg Lodge
310 South England St. Williamsburg, VA 23185
1 - (757) 220 - 7976
closer location in walking/shuttle bus distance to Colonial Williamsburg's Historic District
room group rate remains: $149.00 + tax + an additional $20.00 resort fee
includes breakfast + (2) complimentary historic area tickets per room

Mentor Library

8215 Mentor Ave
Mentor, Ohio 44060

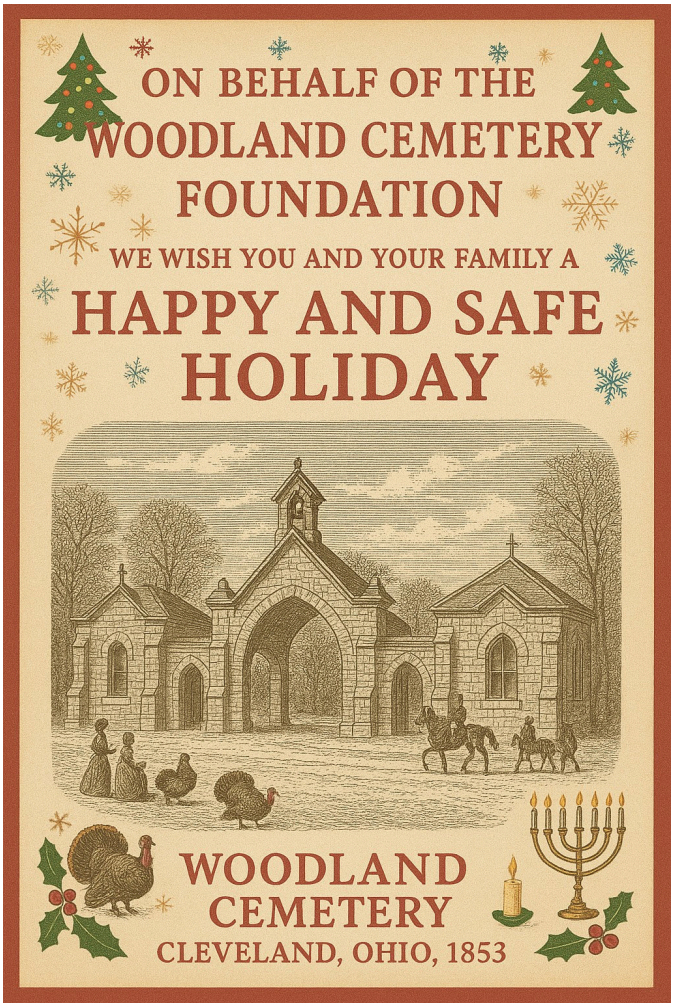
Monday University: Santa in the Trenches @ Main

Monday, December 8, 2025
6:30pm – 7:30pm

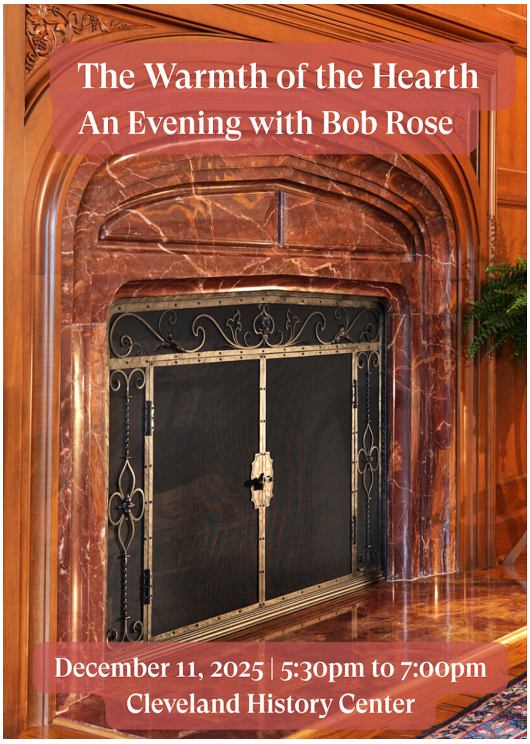


In the summer of 1861, thousands of men, North and South, marched off to war expecting to be home again by Christmas. By the following winter, most were painfully aware that many Christmases might pass before the armies resolved the conflict. Between 1861 and 1865, soldiers, civilians and slaves, experienced a variety of emotions associated with celebrating or simply surviving Christmas. Primary sources reveal homesickness and loneliness but also a remarkable ability to adapt. Christmas images and articles published in "Harper's Weekly," sometimes enhanced with political undertones only add another layer of complexity.

This program aims to explore not only how people spent the holidays but also how our modern interpretation of Christmas emerged from an era of conflict and war. This program is free and open to the public. The program will be held in the lower level of the Main Library in the Village Room. Call the library at 440.255.8811, ext. 247 for more information or register online. Registration for Santa in the Trenches began November 24, 2025.



A NEOCWRT member benefit we enjoy is use of a free pass which includes parking to visit the wonderful Western Reserve Historical Society. The pass can be obtained from Franco Sperrazzo and then MUST BE RETURNED to him after you've enjoyed your visit.



Western Reserve Historical Society

10825 East Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44106
December 11, 2025
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Please join us for a special evening with Bob Rose, President of Rose Iron Works, Inc., at the WRHS Cleveland History Center in University Circle. Bob is the third generation of the Rose Family to lead this storied decorative metal manufacturer founded in Cleveland in 1904 by his grandfather, Martin Rose.

As we enjoy the winter holiday season, we, at times, find ourselves gathered with family and friends around the warmth of the fireplace and decorative hearth. During this special program, Bob Rose will share a survey of screens and other decorative tools used for the fireplace designed and produced by his family business over the past 100 years. The program will feature sketches, drawings, and finished products.

Through the early 1950s, Rose Iron Works was led by Martin Rose and was one of the nation's leading designers and creators of ornamental and functional works in wrought iron, stainless steel, aluminum, copper alloys, and glass. The company created objects for homes, stores, restaurants, and public buildings. Their work won many awards, including the Cleveland Museum of Art's May Shows. Martin Rose died in 1955, and his sons Melvin, Stephen, and Milton continued his work. During and after the war periods, industrial work, such as fabricated equipment for thermal processing and industrial hand tools made up the majority of the company's work. The company remained in the Rose family, with Bob Rose, grandson of the founder, named president in 1995.

Today, Rose Iron Works continues to enjoy a reputation of excellence among Cleveland's arts, culture and architectural communities. In fact, Rose Iron Works' work can be found in homes and in numerous public and religious institutions around the city, state and country. This year, the Cleveland Museum of Art hosted a spectacular exhibit about the company, "Rose Iron Works and Art Deco." During this special fireside conversation, Bob shares stories about his family and the business of metalworking in the 21st century.

Bob will also provide a glimpse into the 17th World Congress on Art Deco, which recently took place in Paris and at which he was invited to lecture.

Courier contributor John Sandy continues with Part III of his series highlighting the area of our Roundtable's March 26-30, 2026 field trip…

The Army of the Potomac at Harrison's Landing

Part III - "They Could Hear the Church Bells in Richmond"

By John Sandy



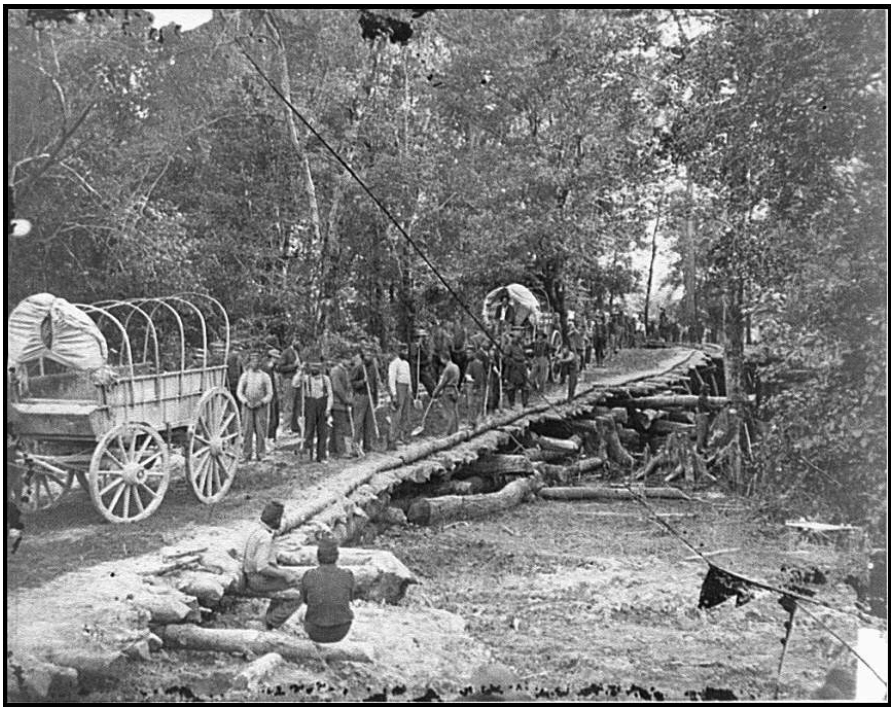
Photo of J. E. B. Stuart
Virginia Military Institute Collection

On June 12, 1862, General Lee ordered General J.E.B. Stuart, the army's cavalry commander, to conduct a reconnaissance around the Army of the Potomac. Stuart was to determine whether the Federal army's right flank was "in the air," i.e., exposed—and not secured by a strong, defendable geographic feature. General Lee wanted precise information regarding the Federals' troop deployment so he could plan future operations for the Army of Northern Virginia against McClellan. Lee's orders directed Stuart to ride around the Federal army, engage the Union army's pickets, and dispatch foraging parties to obtain much needed grain and cattle for the Confederate forces. McClellan's planned siege of Richmond would impose severe food, ammunition, and supply shortages on the Confederacy. Stuart was to return to the Confederate lines promptly.

General Lee cautioned Stuart not to engage in any unnecessary endeavors that might endanger his command and the completion of his assigned mission. General Stuart and a cavalry force of 1200 troopers left Richmond early on the morning of June 12, 1862, crossed the Chickahominy River, and proceeded east. The Rebel cavalry force moved swiftly past the Federal pickets and guard posts.

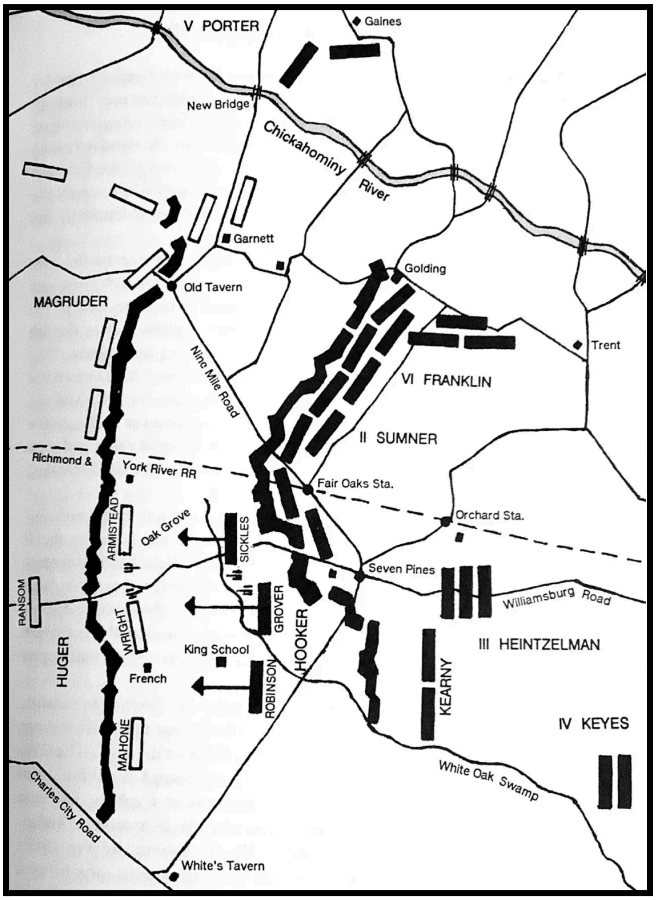
The Union's 5th Corps commander, General Fitz John Porter had extended his lines to facilitate a planned link up with Major General Irvin McDowell's 40,000-man Federal 1st Corps who were ordered to move overland from Fredericksburg, Virginia. McClellan had pleaded with the Secretary of War to restore the 1st Corps to his command because he feared the entire Peninsula Campaign would be in jeopardy without it. McClellan reasoned that without the 1st Corps, he could not protect his supply base at White House Landing. He needed the Richmond and York River Railroad to move his heavy siege cannons and supplies, and he could not assault Richmond and protect his supply base without the added strength of the 1st Corps. President Lincoln, fearful of a Rebel attack on Washington, held back the 1st Corps and deployed it on the bank of the Rappahannock River opposite Fredericksburg.

President Lincoln was growing more frustrated by McClellan's lack of progress in his assault on Richmond. Secretary of War Stanton met with Republican Senators Wade and Chandler who repeated their call for McClellan's removal from command of the Federal army. President Lincoln ordered Stanton to begin staffing and supplying the new Federal Army of Virginia under Major General John Pope.



Grapevine Bridge photo from The Library of Congress

McClellan originally planned to assault Richmond in early June, but heavy spring downpours, muddy roads, and the swollen Chickahominy River disrupted his schedule. The roads and bridges over White Oak Swamp required constant repair. The Yankee army's engineers and work details had to corduroy the roads and makeshift bridges with logs, stones, and rope. White Oak swamp and the streams that empty into it posed a serious problem for maneuverability and deployment for McClellan. The Confederates wasted little time taking advantage of it.



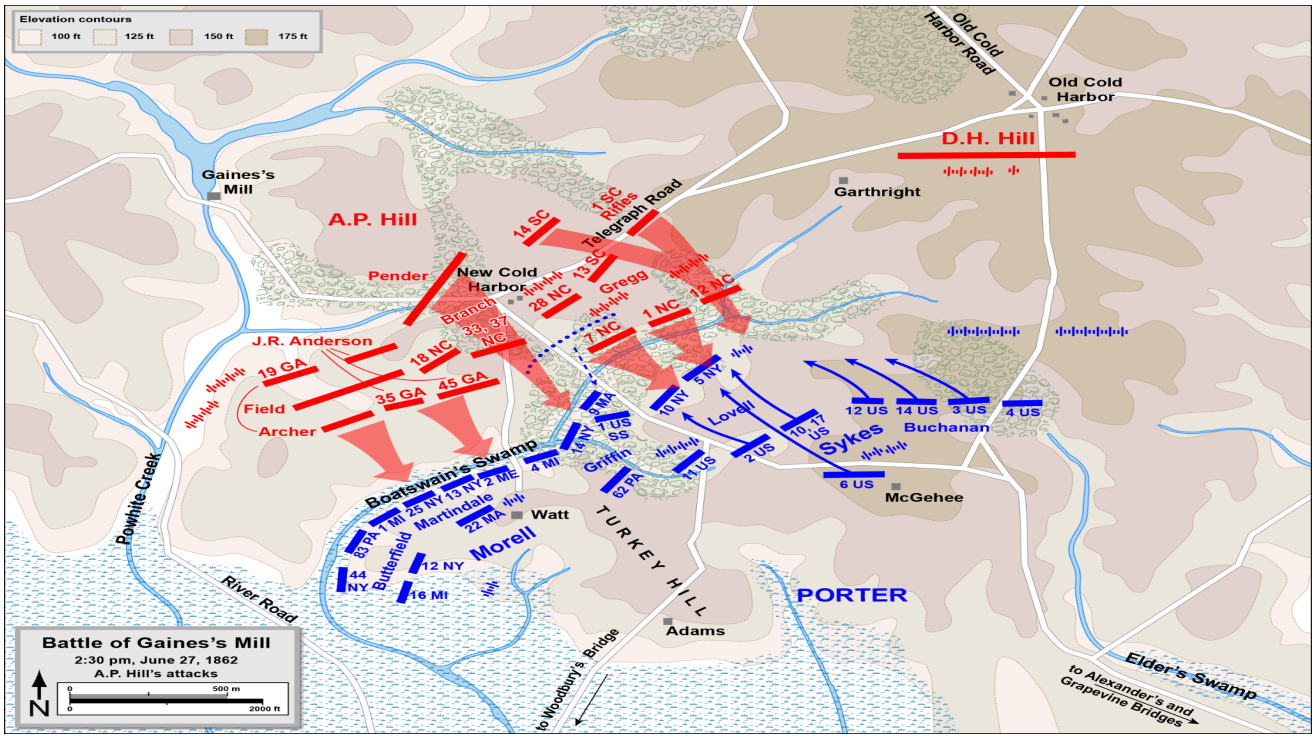
Map of the Battle of Oak Grove
from Civil War Traveler

The sweltering summer heat and frequent rain made ideal conditions for the breeding of Malaria carrying mosquitoes. Contaminated drinking water and the improper disposal of human and animal waste resulted in thousands of Federal soldiers getting infected with dysentery, chronic diarrhea, Typhus and Malaria. A steady diet of salt pork, salted beef, and hard tack resulted in the outbreak of scurvy. McClellan contracted Malaria and was bedridden during the month of June, a period that saw little movement by the Army of the Potomac. McClellan's cavalry reported that the Confederates were preparing for an attack on the Federals camped east of Richmond. Federal pickets also reported that Stonewall Jackson's command was moving southeast from the Shenandoah Valley for what might be a flanking movement on the US's 5th Corps. On June 25, 1862, McClellan, though bedridden and still recovering from Malaria, ordered a reconnaissance in force by units from Major Generals Heintzelman's 3rd Corps, Edwin Sumner's 2nd Corps, and Franklin's 6th Corps along Williamsburg Road, west of Seven Pines. Their objective was the village of Oak Grove, located 1.5 miles west of Seven Pines.

McClellan needed suitable ground for the placement of his heavy siege artillery for the planned siege of Richmond. General Phil Kearny's division encountered swampy ground and stiff resistance from Rebel skirmishers on the Union left. The Federals were attacked by Rebel infantry and artillery commanded by General Benjamin Huger, near French's farm. The Rebels counterattacked and drove the Federals back to their original lines. McClellan tried to manage the operation by telegraph with little success, so he rode to the Union front. At 1 p.m. he ordered a new attack. The Federals battled Huger's men until sundown and gained 600 yards but at a cost of 626 casualties.

McClellan prepared for a general assault on the Army of the Potomac. He sent reinforcements to Porter's 5th Corps, who prepared a strong line of defense behind Beaver Dam Creek, a tributary of the Chickahominy. On June 26, 1682, Porter's brigades repulsed the uncoordinated attacks by Lee's forces. This battle is called the Battle of Mechanicsville by the south. On this same date, June 26th, President Lincoln cancelled the planned reinforcement of McClellan by the Federal 1st Corps. General Lee's repeated assaults against Porter made it clear to McClellan that he could not defend the supply base at White House Landing and conduct offensive operations against Richmond. He decided then to move his supply base to the James River. This required McClellan to burn any supplies and equipment he could not move to the new base at Harrison's Landing. Millions of dollars' worth of supplies and equipment, (in today's money) were put to the torch, rather than risk their capture by Lee's army.

McClellan came to believe the Rebels outnumbered his army because he relied on enemy troop estimates from Allan Pinkerton and his detective service. McClellan trusted Pinkerton because of their business affiliation before the Civil War. McClellan was the Illinois Central Railroad's chief of engineering, and he hired Pinkerton to investigate theft from their rail yards. Pinkerton had no training in intelligence gathering, and his enemy troop estimates were based on counting the regimental flags. Pinkerton would then estimate the number of troops in the Rebel regiments. McClellan also relied on the often faulty intelligence gathering of his cavalry, commanded by General Alfred Pleasanton. Pleasanton's Rebel troop strength estimates and movements were often wrong.



Map of the Battle of Gaines' Mill by Hal Jaspersen

On June 27, 1862, at Gaines' Mill, General Porter wanted to improve his defenses against the threat of another Rebel attack, so he deployed his Union 5th Corps on a high ridge called "Turkey Hill" overlooking Boatswain Swamp. Porter's 34,000 troops were placed in three lines of battle extending 2-miles from the Sarah Watt farm on the Union left to Old Cold Harbor on the right. Meanwhile, General Lee ordered a new attack on Porter's 5th Corps anchored north of the Chickahominy River. This time, Lee planned to destroy the Federal army by unleashing a well-planned and coordinated force of 58,000 Confederates against the Yankee defenders. Porter's men were able to repulse the Rebel attacks throughout the day until around 7 pm in the evening, when the Federal line began to break in several locations. D.H. Hill and Richard Ewell's men attacked Sykes on the Federal right, while Longstreet's brigades had difficulty maneuvering through Boatswain Swamp and the thick undergrowth before hitting the Union left. John Bell Hood and Evander Law's men were on Longstreet's left. Hood's charge broke the first line of Porter's defenders. The first line of Porter's men fell back to join the 2nd and 3rd lines. The 2nd and 3rd lines of Union defenders could not fire on the attacking Rebels without hitting their own men. As a result, all three lines of Union defenders were overrun. The Confederates were able to capture 14 smooth bore Union cannons deployed on Turkey Hill.



The 5th US Cavalry at Gaines' Mill, Numbered Print, By W.T. Trego; Department of the Army, United States Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas

General Porter placed the 5th U.S. Cavalry in the rear on the Union left. The 234 troopers and officers of the 5th Cavalry charged the Rebels on Turkey Hill in an effort to retake the Federal guns. The troopers of the 5th Cavalry rode into a maelstrom of Confederate musket fire and lead that quickly unhorsed riders from their mounts and broke the 5th's gallant charge. Porter's 5th Corps was forced to retreat. The Confederate assault at Gaines Mill was one of the largest frontal attacks of the Civil War and although it was celebrated as General Lee's first victory, it was won at a terrible cost in human life. The Confederates suffered 7993 casualties, with 1483 killed in action. The Southern Confederacy could ill afford such high losses before attrition would deplete their ranks, and their ability to wage a war. The Federals had 6837 casualties, and 894 killed in action.

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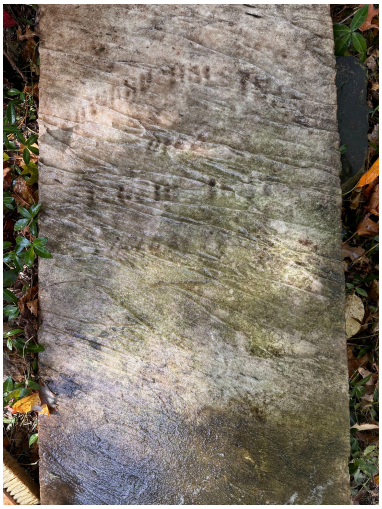
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Smith Family/Chardon Road Cemetery
by Linda O'Brien

As the Founder and Director of Liberty Camp USA, a reenactment day camp for kids where campers come as Time Travelers to learn about America's founding days, I am often asked period related questions. In early Summer 2023 I was asked to visit a cemetery in Willoughby Hills, Ohio where the headstones "look ancient." I was shocked when I saw a small cemetery where the grass was knee-high and the headstones were broken, unreadable, leaning against trees and strewn across the ground. The overgrowth was dense and stones that lay on the ground were completely covered. As I walked the property a young fawn surprised me when it jumped out of the deep grass just a few feet in front of me.

I was told, and quickly realized that those interred were founders of the area, people of the middle 1700's and 1800's. Who were these people? Who does this cemetery belong to? I had a lot of unanswered questions.



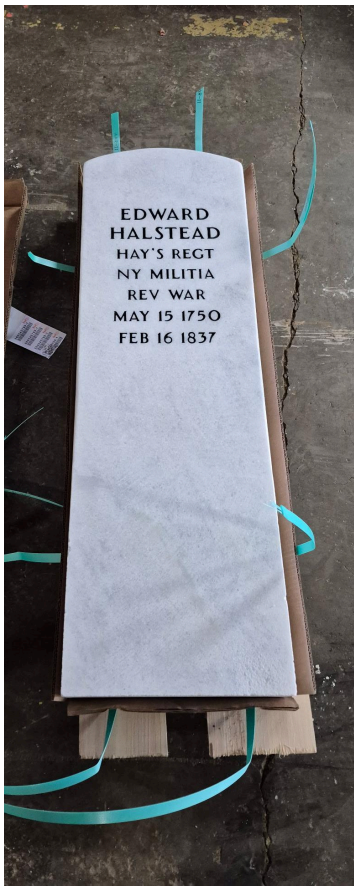
Deplorable condition of Revolutionary War soldier Edward Halstead's marker before it was cleaned

I quickly sought the help of Becky Lynch, the Lake County Recorder. Becky provided documents showing that the property was owned by the City of Willoughby Hills. Over the years the property name changed from the Smith Family Cemetery to the Shram Cemetery and ultimately to the Chardon Road Cemetery. Most burials occurred in the last half of the 1800's with a few in the early 1900's. Carla Smith was the last to be buried there in 1953.

During an Independence Day celebration members of the SAR told me that the cemetery had a Revolutionary War soldier buried there. Locating Edward Halstead's headstone required the help of Becky Lynch again and some stone cleaning. Cynthia Turk, head of the Lake County Genealogical Society, provided Mr. Halstead's personal information indicating that he was a private in the 3rd

New York Regiment who was a guard on the Hudson River charged with guarding New York's interior and preventing British forces from securing a decisive logistical advantage. After his wife's passing he moved to Ohio with his children. I contacted Troy Bailey, Ohio SAR Area Director, and shared the cemetery story. Troy provided additional information and requested a replacement headstone from the VA.

Talking with locals I learned that Edward Halstead's great grandson, William White, was also among those buried in the cemetery. Records showed William to be 4 plots from Edward in the same row. The recorded history stated "In his country's service far away from home and friends. Aged 18 years 6 months." I located pieces of a small, flat stone broken with pieces missing yet there was enough evidence to know that I had located the site for William White. I contacted Troy Bailey again and asked for his help. This time the challenge was greater and information on William could not be found in the Civil War records. Troy persevered and continued to unravel the mystery. It wasn't until the Fall of 2025 that the missing piece to the puzzle was uncovered. William was a middle name – his registered first name was Ransom – Ransom William White!



When fund goal of $2,400.00 is reached, Civil War Veteran, Ransom William White's grave marker will match the pictured Edward Halstead grave marker

With the new information Cynthia Turk provided a copy of a letter sent to the Painesville Telegraph printed in the September 11, 1862 edition stating that Ransom had been found on the battlefield of Bull Run and "in a faint whisper told me he belonged to an Ohio Regiment, Willoughby, and that his name was Ransom White." The writer stated that he carried Ransom to shelter and he was taken to the Washington Hospital. The writer went on and stated "he barely survived his journey, brave young heart – he died far away from his native home – but among friends. He has passed on to that peaceful land upon whose shores never break to storms of war." Ransom was buried at the US Soldiers and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

Donations have been collected to cover the costs of restoration of the headstones in the Smith Family/Chardon Road Cemetery. Additionally, there is now a fundraiser to cover costs of approximately $2,400 to provide a memorial stone for Civil War hero, Ransom William White according to the plot reserved for him at the Smith Family Cemetery records. Men of Honor, a Lake County organization, handles donated money for the cause through its' 501c3 foundation.
Tax deductible donations can be made to: The Men of Honor Foundation.

Contact Tim Hickey at tim@patchops.com to make a donation. 440-567-9264.

Special thanks to The Men of Honor, Lake County Recorder Becky Lynch, Troy Bailey, and Cynthia Turk. Without their help this project would never happen, and two American patriots would never be known!