



NEWS

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MEMBER PROFILE OF THE MONTH

TARA HARL



Our member profile this month is Tara Harl (pronounced “terra” like the earth). She first joined the TCCWRT in the fall 2021. However, she was co-founder of the St. Cloud CWRT over a decade ago. In addition, her brother is past president of the Milwaukee CWRT. Tara raised her daughter in the CW Reenacting/Living History hobby and says she has a deep love for “The Boys in Blue.”

As a child, Tara lived in Virginia. Her parents took her and her siblings to the Shenandoah Valley and multiple battlefields on the east coast. While they did not know their family history then, she says, “My DNA has been haunting me ever since.”

“I have dozens of uncles/cousins from both sides that fought and died----a few that stand out is one Indiana grandpa who was in the light artillery, fought four years, was never hurt and never lost one piece of his equipment. Missouri grandfather hurt at Wilson’s Creek, his horse was killed, cousin who was a doctor with the Iron Brigade, cousin in 1st MN, one from New Orleans’ Washington Artillery----the opening guns at Pickett’s Charge---another cousin won the Medal of Honor in the Wheat Field at Gettysburg. Famous ancestors of mine are General Hood, General R. E. Lee, & Abraham



First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

Lincoln. The irony for me about that was how many places/events/historic moments my DNA tracks “attended” and tried to kill each other during that war---my family lines were truly ripped apart.”

Tara shares that while she has visited every major/minor CW battlefield in this country, “My soul is in the Shenandoah Valley and has always been haunted by the battle of Franklin’s Carnton Field Hospital.”

She was born on a military airfield, as her father was in the Surface Nuclear Navy for 26 years. She grew up from one end of this country to the next, and overseas. Tara’s parents were Iowa/Missouri farm kids, they planted her and her siblings on family farms in the summers to keep all the kids humble. Her brother and his wife are retired Air Force Colonels, and their daughter is an Air Force doctor. Tara’s daughter is a Navy Chaplain serving on a destroyer in Norfolk, so she lives her Navy/military career dreams vicariously through her and she makes sure Tara gets close access to aircraft carriers and her favorite creatures---fighter jets. Unfortunately for Tara, while she wanted to go to the Naval Academy and be a military pilot, she has animal induced asthma and a Naval flight surgeon said that would never happen.

Professionally, Tara’s had quite a career. “Post-Covid health challenges at the end of 2021 brought early retirement from a 42-year civilian aviation career. I am a pilot type-rated in corporate jets with international experience, have been a chief pilot and director of operations in corporate flight departments, have managed corporate airports, been a research consultant at the National Academies of Science, and worked in collegiate aviation, four years ago I became a Professor Emeritus from Kansas State University.”

What Tara most enjoys about being a member of TCCWRT is the affirmation and camaraderie of being with others who love to talk endlessly about the war years.

STEVEN SCHIER’S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What were some other common names for the Civil War?

(See page 9 for the answer)

OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING: SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

“Emancipation During the Civil War”– Amy Murrell Taylor



It’s one of the great moments of American history: Abraham Lincoln’s issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. But as monumental as that order was, it did not do the full work of destroying slavery and freeing enslaved people. This talk will reveal how different—and more complicated—the history of Emancipation seems when we bring the experiences of enslaved people closer into view. It will tell the largely untold story of the flight of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children away from slavery and into the lines of the Union army during the war — a mass migration that created a refugee crisis but also proved pivotal in destroying the

institution of slavery once and for all.



Amy Murrell Taylor is the T. Marshall Hahn Jr. Professor of History and African American Studies at the University of Kentucky. She is the author of a number of books and articles on the Civil War era, including *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (UNC Press, 2005), and *Embattled Freedom: Journeys Through the Civil War’s Slave Refugee Camps* (UNC Press, 2018), which won a number of national prizes including the Frederick Douglass Prize for the best book on the history of global slavery. In the summers, when she is not writing or researching about this era, she likes to vacation with family along the St. Croix River in Minnesota.

2022-2023 ROUND TABLE SPEAKER SCHEDULE

2022

- October 18: “Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery ...” – Richard Bell
- November 15: “The Louisiana Tigers” – Scott Mingus
- December 20: “Out to Work: Women and the Civil War ...” – Dr. Lisa Marie Rude

2023

- January 17: “The Turning Point: The Wilderness and Spotsylvania” – John C. Fazio
- February 21: “The Underground Railroad” – Chris Crutchfield
- March 21: “Clara Barton: Civil War Battlefield Nurse” – Leslie Goddard
- May 16: “The Yankee Plague: Escaped Union Prisoners ...” – Lorien Foote

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY –SEPTEMBER

- 9th 1863 – Union forces occupy Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- 15th 1862 – Confederate forces under Major General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson capture Harper’s Ferry, Virginia.
- 15th 1863 – President Lincoln suspends the Writ of Habeas Corpus throughout the Union.
- 17th 1862 – Confederate forces capture Munfordville, Kentucky.
- 19th 1862 – Battle of Iuka, Mississippi.

- 21st 1862 – The citizens of San Francisco contribute \$100,000 for the relief of wounded Federal soldiers.
- 22nd 1864 – Battle of Fischer’s Hill, Virginia.
- 26th 1861 – Union and Confederate forces skirmish in New Mexico Territory.

CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS – SEPTEMBER

- 6th 1797 – Major General William “Extra Billy” Smith C.S.
- 16th 1832 – Major General George Washington Custis Lee C.S.
- 20th 1809 – Major General Sterling Price C.S.
- 21st 1820 – Major General John Reynolds U.S.
- 27th 1809 – Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes C.S.

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A Seventh Cavalry Scandal

This month's story dates to just after the Civil War, and is the result of an interesting research project. Recently I found a stack of stereo cards in a house clean out. Stereos were paired images mounted on a card and used with an inexpensive, adjustable hand-held viewer. They gave the viewer a realistic 3D impression and were popular state of the art graphics through the Civil War and for years after. Many of the cards I found were early views of the Badlands and out to Colorado, some part of a series of Northern Pacific Railroad Views taken by their official



photographer F. Jay Haynes. Several of these were clearly military subjects, but minimally identified in pencil.

In the wake of the Great Sioux War, the army provided guards for construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad through the Badlands between 1879 and 1882. The area was part of the vast and sparsely

settled Department of Dakota, headquartered at Fort Snelling. Various small company sized units of cavalry and infantry rotated through several forts and short-term summer cantonments as the NPRR worked its way west. In the wake of the 1876 destruction of several companies of the 7th US Cavalry under Custer, the replenished regiment formed part of those summer guard details.

One of the stereo cards shows temporary quarters for officers. The half dozen officers, small number of quarters and ramshackle appearance eliminated most of the better built and documented army posts of around 1880. One post that did match had a lifespan of



only 1879 to 1882 and quarters for only one or two companies. But no photographs could be found in an internet search. Cantonment Badlands, near the crossing of the Little Missouri River outside modern Medora North Dakota, was the most likely candidate and the terrain seemed to match. A friend who's a top Indian Wars historian and author confirmed the presumption that this was indeed Cantonment Badlands, used as a base camp and supply depot for the railroad construction guard details further west.

In charge of one of the 1880 guard details was Captain James Montgomery Bell. He had commanded a Pennsylvania cavalry company through many Civil War battles before moving to the regular army in 1866. Fortunately on detached service during the Custer Battle, Lieutenant Bell was promoted captain of Company F following the death of its Captain Yates in that action. Bell continued to serve a long career, retiring as a brigadier general in 1901. He was even under consideration for a Congressional Medal of Honor at his death.



A second photo shows a group of variously clad officers and civilians in front of a conical Sibley tent shaded with a brush bower. The only identification was a pencil note *Capt Bill's Camp* on the reverse. The "Bill" name was a dead end, but when I looked through officers named "Bell" in Heitman's Historical Register and Dictionary of the U.S. Army only one officer had service and rank in the area and time of the photograph. James M. Bell is striking a jaunty pose just left of center. Identifying the others in the photo is an ongoing and challenging research project.

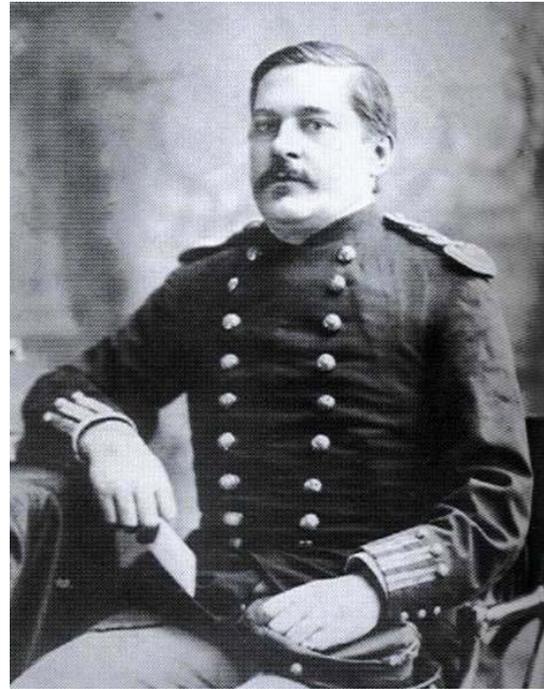
The third stereo card turned out to be a long-distance view of this same encampment with the soldiers of Company F, 7th Cavalry “standing to horse” in their shirt sleeves in the Dakota heat. The Civil War surplus tents behind them each slept a dozen or so men, with one or two reserved for the officers. Perhaps the ladies stayed in the smaller wall tent to the right. This picture is labeled as having been taken at Sentinel Butte, near the modern town of the same name and close to the route of the Northern Pacific. Railroad construction had reached that vicinity in 1880, and the troops spent the summer patrolling from that temporary encampment.



But back to Captain Bell and what turned out to be an intriguing story. The captain had taken a 21-year-old wife, some 13 years his junior, in 1872. English born Emily Mary Hones, youngest of the family, emigrated in 1857. Her father, soon to be widowed, quickly married their young, live-in servant girl and continued to add to the family. Emily, by newspaper accounts “a woman of more than ordinary beauty” and quite vivacious, was probably happy to leave home with the dashing Captain Bell. He had a reputation as one of the army’s best recruiters, and his Company F was known as the “band box company” thanks to its always sharp uniforms. But just a few years later Emily Bell would be embroiled in a controversial St. Paul court martial of her husband’s post commander at Fort Abercrombie, 41-year-old widower Marcus Reno.

Emily had followed her husband through various postings in the west, trying to make a home in the always rough and ready officers’ quarters at a number of forts. By 1876 this was Fort Abercrombie, located on the Red River on the northwest border of Minnesota. Captain Bell was on an emergency leave over the Christmas holidays attending an ailing father out east. Emily remained with the small closed military officer community on post. Petty jealousies, gossip,

rumor and vindictiveness was rampant in the old army. A minister visiting Fort Abercrombie was invited to stay in the Bell's quarters, and this set Reno off and led to his court martial. Reno (pictured on right) was already a controversial figure with few defenders after his questionable conduct on the Little Big Horn. His career would be forever tarnished and eventually shortened by the Battle and his own personal behavior.



Reno's 1877 court martial was for two charges of "Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and a Gentleman," each charge with specifications. The first specification of the first charge was that Reno took "improper and insulting liberties with the wife of the said Captain Bell, by taking both her hands in his own, and attempting to draw her person close up to his own. This to the scandal and disgrace of the military service, at Fort Abercrombie, Dakota, on or about the 18th day of December, 1876." The second specification was similar. Other specifications resulted from Reno's vindictiveness about the minister continuing to stay at the Bell's quarters, and Emily's refusal to invite him, post commander, to a New Year's party attended by all the other officers and wives – a serious and very pointed social snub.

Several of Reno's statements to others on post seriously impugned the reputation of Mrs. Bell; and testimony at the court martial seemed to indicate they had some common knowledge, if not validity. Still, a commanding officer by the social customs of the army, had absolutely no place in verbalizing opinions about the wife of a subaltern officer. The five additional specifications to the first charge dealt with Reno's purported statements about Emily's character, such as "it is like a spoiled egg, you cannot hurt it..." He even threatened to cancel a post church service if Mrs. Bell was allowed to play the organ as she had previously. The specification of the second charge was that Major Reno had attempted to bribe the Bell's African American servant into giving him favorable testimony.

The court convened for a week and eventually convicted Reno of the first charge and most of its specifications but failed to prove that he had said that "Mrs. Bell ought to know better than to make a fight with me; her character is too vulnerable, or words to that effect." Major Reno was found not guilty of the second "conduct unbecoming" charge and its specification of witness tampering. The court sentenced him to be dismissed from the service. But President Harrison, himself a former Civil War officer, reduced the sentence to two years suspension without pay based on Reno's previous 19 years of active service. The Secretary of War sternly wrote "Major Reno's conduct towards the wife of an absent officer, and in using the whole force of his power

as commanding officer of the post to gratify his resentment against her, cannot be too strongly condemned...”



Just two years later Reno was again in court on the same “conduct unbecoming” charges, with specifications of drunkenness, assault and even window peeping. This time he was dismissed from the service for good. His sad tale was much discussed at the time and has generated many articles and a couple of books to the present day.

The Bells remained married, though rumors of Emily’s questionable character continued. She finally passed away in 1940 at age 89 and what changes she must have seen in her lifetime.

So now the mystery: Is the attractive young woman in the right of the group photo of Captain Bell’s camp his 29-year-old wife Emily? Both women at that remote camp had to have been associated with the officers in the picture, and it seems unlikely one would not be the commanding officer’s wife.

Secondary sources on the Reno/Mrs. Bell affair state that no photographs of Emily Mary Hones Bell exist. I firmly believe one just surfaced out of a Richfield, Minnesota basement!

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

9/4 Blake Duerre
9/11 Chad Cox
9/17 Jim Hinderks
9/19 Nancy Harder
9/23 Brad Peterson
9/28 Charlotte Shover

STEVEN SCHIER’S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

The Civil War was known by more than 25 names, including “The Brothers War,” “The War to Suppress Yankee Arrogance,” “The War for the Union,” and “The War of the Rebellion.”

CONTACT US:

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Can you contribute to a future newsletter? Writers are wanted to submit Civil War related articles to this newsletter.

Please submit your drafts to Bruce Cooper: earlofbruce@hotmail.com