



NEWS

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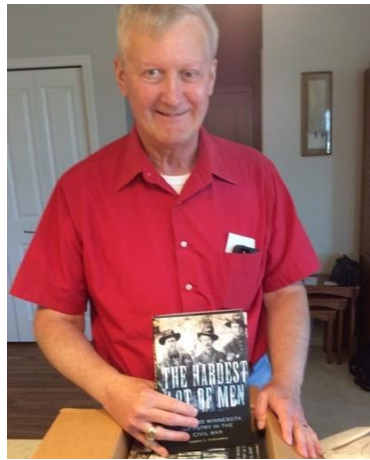
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MEMBER PROFILE OF THE MONTH

JOE FITZHARRIS

BY LANA BLUMHOEFER



Joe Fitzharris's interest in the Civil War developed slowly. While teaching at the University of St. Thomas, he had to focus on a temporal era as well as a geographic region, and all American history up to 1914. He gradually focused on the Civil War era from 1810 to 1914. Quoting Carol Reardon from Penn

State, "All good military historians do at least two wars." World War II became his second focus.

"Civil War round tables were a well-kept secret until John Uldrich bought in a dentist, the founder of the Civil War Medicine Museum in Frederick, MD, to speak on wartime medicine. Uldrich contacted me to speak to my Civil War seminar," Joe shared. After that, Roger Johnson invited Joe to speak on the human and financial costs of the Dakota Uprising. Joe joined the TCCWRT in 1993 and has served as Vice President, President, and Director. He's done much research on the Third Minnesota Infantry, which has led to many presentations here and there. In 2019, his book "The Hardest Lot of Men" was published.

He recalls the many locations the TCCWRT called home, fondly remembering the Normandy Inn's



First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

popovers, the Officers' Club bar, and the current KOC's "pretty darned good food." But what keeps him coming back is the people and the camaraderie.

Joe knows that there were 11 Fitzharrises who served in the Union forces, and one or two of them might be direct ancestors. His areas of interest are several: the soldiers, their morale, unit cohesion, and experiences, 2) counter-and anti-guerrilla operations, and 3) logistics.

However, his favorite Civil War campaign where "the war was won and lost in the west," is Rosecrans' vastly underrated Tullahoma Campaign. "Pushing Bragg out of Tennessee and taking Chattanooga was more important than taking Vicksburg, and vastly more important than Meade's holding action in Pennsylvania. However, Rosecrans' failure at Chickamauga helped to obscure the value of his prior campaigning."

One thing most people don't know about Joe is that he was a Visiting Associate Professor of Soil Science at the U of M, studying meteorology and climatology as part of a long-term study of Minnesota Agricultural productivity.

Throughout his career in teaching, both at St. Thomas University and the Senior Center for Senior Citizen Education (now call the Selin Center within St. Thomas), he values the friendships he made with the students who came back year after year to learn from his courses.

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

This months guest "Triva Master", Yours truly, The Editor

A Civil War "Love Triangle"

Name the two prominent Civil War generals, one Union and one Confederate, who were engaged to the same women (not at the same time of course).

(See page 9 for the answer)

OUR DECEMBER MEETING: DECEMBER 19, 2023

"General Grant as Commander-in-Chief of the Union Armies"

By Christopher L. Kolakowski

Ulysses S. Grant became a Lieutenant General and Commander of the U.S. Army in 1864. In contemporary eyes, this was a major moment in the war. This talk will examine that appointment, what went into it, and what came of it.

Christopher L. Kolakowski is Director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, a position he has held since January 6, 2020. He was born and raised in Fredericksburg, Va, but his mother's family has very deep roots in the Badger State. Chris received his BA in History and Mass Communications from Emory & Henry College, and his MA in Public History from the State University of New York at Albany.

Chris has spent his career interpreting and preserving American military history with the National Park Service, New York State government, the Rensselaer County (NY) Historical Society, the Civil War Preservation Trust, Kentucky State Parks, the U.S. Army, and the MacArthur Memorial. He has written and spoken extensively on various aspects of military history and leadership from 1775 to the present, and was the inaugural Director of the General George Patton Museum and Center of Leadership at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Chris has published three books on the Civil War and two on World War II in the Pacific. He is a reviewer and contributor to the Air Force Journal of Indo-Pacific Studies and a Senior Fellow at the Consortium of Indo-Pacific Researchers. His latest book, titled Nations in the Balance and released March of 2022, is about the 1944 India-Burma battles.



OUR 2024 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| January 16 th | “Civil War Ciphers & Codes Wartime Evolution”
Derek Lee |
| February 20 th | “The Concept of “Cowardice” in the Civil War”
Dr. Lesley Gordon |
| March 19 th | “Food and Hunger During the Civil War”
Prof. Anne Rubin |
| May 21 st | “U.S. Colored Troops at War”
Dr. David Wright Falade |

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY – DECEMBER

- 5th 1862 – Union forces under Colonel T. Lyle Dickey are defeated by Confederate forces at the Battle of Coffeeville, Mississippi.
- 6th 1865 – 13th Amendment is ratified, officially abolishing slavery.
- 12th 1862 – USS Cairo sinks on Yazoo River, Mississippi
- 13th 1862 – Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia
- 14th 1863 – General James Longstreet leads Confederate forces at the Battle of Bean’s Station, Tennessee. Part of the Knoxville campaign.
- 20th 1864 – Confederate forces evacuate Savannah, Georgia.
- 24th 1869 – Edwin Stanton, Lincoln’s second Secretary of War dies at the age of 55 in Washington, D.C.
- 28th 1861 – Battle of Mount Zion church in Boones County, Missouri

CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS – NOVEMBER

- 2nd 1837 – Brig. General Charles Garrison Harker U.S.
- 3rd 1826 – Gen. George B. McClellan U.S.
- 7th 1808 – Hugh McCulloch, Secretary of the Treasury under Lincoln and Johnson.
- 16th 1830 – Brig. General John F. Hartranft U.S.
- 25th 1821 – Clara Barton
- 29th 1808 – Andrew Johnson, Lincoln’s second Vice President.
- 31st 1815 – Gen. George Meade U.S.

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------|------------------|
| 12/4 | Mark Jensen | 12/9 | Rolf Westby |
| 12/12 | Ron Whitehead | 12/28 | Craig Macintosh |
| 12/14 | Willfred Williams | 12/29 | Larry Pearson |
| 12/17 | Philip Baker | 12/31 | Kathryn Williams |
| 12/21 | Jerry Ogdahl | | |

A Relic of the Jefferson Davis/Sarah Taylor Elopement?

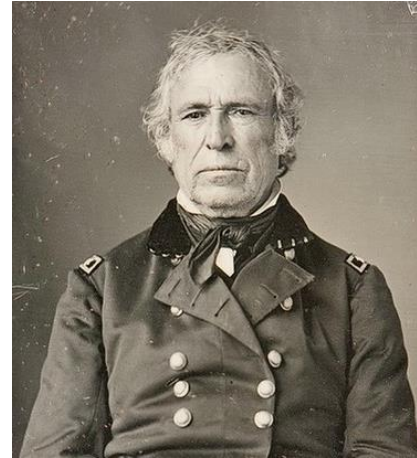
I've attended the Civil War collectors' show in Wheaton Illinois for over 40 years. This year my single discovery and its subsequent purchase was *specifically* to write this article! A Cincinnati dealer friend mentioned a unique artifact he had in his car and was planning on putting on his sales table. It never made it there, and was soon on its way to Minnesota. The small piece of window sill was removed from one of the buildings of the Second Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chein, built in 1828 and razed after the Civil War. It retains traces of white lead and Spanish brown paint used in early buildings. Today a reconstruction of the Fort's hospital houses a museum on the site of the former military post.



But it is the accompanying old descriptive tag that gives special meaning to the piece of window sill and recalls a famous historical incident in regional and national history.

Walnut Window Sill
Taken from Old Fort
Crawford - Prairie du Chein.
Carpenter said it came
from the window used
by the Commanders daughter
when she eloped with
Jefferson Davis.

Colonel Zachary Taylor of Kentucky commanded the First Regiment of US Infantry, posted to the Upper Mississippi. Companies were at Fort Snelling, Fort Crawford, Fort Howard at Green Bay, Fort Winnebago near Portage and Fort Armstrong at Rock Island. Taylor moved his headquarters around the various posts, and spent the winter of 1828 at Fort Snelling where the Kentuckian reportedly grumbled that the wilderness surrounding the post would never amount to anything. The First Infantry had been raised in Kentucky, and many of its officers were slave holders, more so than the officers of the Fifth Infantry that had built Fort Snelling and had been raised in the east. Taylor had a distinguished career in the War of 1812, Seminole Wars and the War with Mexico. His spectacular victories there led to his nomination as the Whig Party winning candidate for president in 1848. He tragically succumbed to cholera in 1850.



Zachary Taylor brought his family with him to the frontier, but was hesitant to allow his several daughters to marry into the army. His oldest had married Surgeon Robert C. Wood and was raising three children at Fort Snelling, far from cultural and educational opportunities. Their son would eventually serve in the Confederate Navy. Taylor's youngest child and only son, Richard, would become a Confederate general. But it was the Taylor's second daughter Sarah Knox, painted here at age 16 and nicknamed "Knoxie", who is the subject of this tragic story. She had been born at Fort Knox near Vincennes, Indiana in 1814 and was raised on a number of army posts. Anecdotal accounts say she was Taylor's favorite child. By 1832 she was sharing the commanding officer's quarters at Fort Crawford with her parents and younger siblings.



Second in command at Fort Crawford was none other than the dashing Second Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, an 1828 West Point graduate posted in the future Wisconsin since 1829. Despite Colonel Taylor's disapproval the young couple became inseparable. Lieutenant Davis saw active service during the 1832 Black Hawk War, as did Captain Abraham Lincoln of the Illinois Militia. After escorting the captive Black Hawk to St. Louis, Davis was promoted to First Lieutenant in the new Regiment of United States



Dragoons and posted to Fort Gibson in 1834.¹ His romance with Knoxie continued via passionate letters, such as this December 1834 missive, part of which mentions their planned wedding:

...I approve entirely of your preference to a meeting elsewhere than at Prairie-du-Chien and your desire to avoid any embarrassment might widen the breach made already cannot be greater than my own, did I know when you would be at St. Louis, I could meet you there. At all events we meet in Kentucky. Shall we not soon meet Sarah to part no more? oh! how I long to lay my head upon that breast which beats in unison with my own, to turn from the sickening sights of worldly duplicity and look in those eyes so eloquent of purity and love. Do you remember the "hearts ease" you gave me, it is bright as ever--how very gravely you ask leave to ask me a question. My dear girl I have no secrets from you, have a right to ask me any question without an apology...

My lines like the beggars' days are dwindling to the shortest span. Write to me immediately My dear Sarah My betrothed No formality is proper between us. Adieu Ma chere tres chere amie adieu au Recrire Jeffn.²

Lieutenant Davis pondered his future career as a Dragoon officer on the western plains and understandably imagined life as a plantation owner and married to his true love a better option. Many have speculated that he resigned his commission in April 1835, effective 30 June, for love, and to gain the approval of Colonel Taylor with whom he had an ongoing dispute of some sort and unrelated to Knoxie. Whatever the reasons, Davis married Knoxie on June 17, 1835 at Beechland, the home of Sarah's aunt Elizabeth, near Louisville, Kentucky. Later that summer the newlyweds traveled south to Locust Grove near St. Francisville, Louisiana and home to Davis' older sister. The Taylors had lost a young child to disease in that area years earlier and so the young bride assured her parents "Do you make yourself uneasy about me, the country is quite healthy." Within days, however, Jefferson and Knoxie both contracted severe cases of malaria. That disease took Knoxie's life on September 15, 1835, barely three months after her marriage.



Davis was himself deathly ill for weeks, and suffered recurring symptoms the rest of his life. The young widower was distraught at the death of the love of his life, and worshiped her memory for the next decade as he developed his cotton plantation, read extensively and dabbled in politics. A chance meeting in 1845 with Taylor mended their disputes in shared grief and regret. Colonel Davis of the Mississippi Rifles went on to serve under General Taylor during the Mexican War.

¹ The US Dragoons were horse mounted but fought on foot. The First Regiment was raised in 1833 and a Second Regiment in 1836. Their mission was to explore the west and establish strategic military posts in the advance of eventual settlement. Lieutenant Davis was the First Regiments adjutant until his resignation.

² The only surviving letter between Jefferson and Knoxie was part of a packet of letters carried off from Davis' plantation in an 1863 raid by Union soldiers. While the original letter is privately owned, a transcript is among the published papers of Jefferson Davis.

The intriguing tale of Sarah Knox Taylor climbing out of a window to elope with Jefferson Davis has circulated since 1835, is repeated in countless publications and is still present in numerous internet references. It's just too good of a story to let go, and was certainly accepted as gospel when that section of Fort Crawford window sill was labeled over a century ago. The Taylors did not attend the wedding, but there is some evidence that the Colonel was then unable to travel due to military duty. A fuller explanation of the romance and wedding is found in a 1906 newspaper article published in Maryland and reprinted in the New York Times. Sarah Knox's surviving sister, Mrs. Phillip Pendleton Dandridge (Mary Elizabeth, born 1824) passionately defends her family and refutes much of the mythology that survives to this day.

...Many absurd misrepresentations of General Taylor's family have long been unrefuted, and this perhaps the most annoying....The relatives to this day refer to them as "ideal lovers." General Taylor for some time objected to Mr. Davis's suit. He did not wish his daughters to marry army men; he had seen his wife calmly and cheerfully meeting hardship and discomfort; he had seen the effect on her health, and dreaded such a life for his girls. Also there had once been some little friction between Lieutenant Davis, which left a slight prejudice in his mind. His daughter told him she would never disobey him, but she would never marry anyone but Lieutenant Davis, and she said, "The time will come when you will see, as I do, all his rare qualities."



For a time, Mr. Davis was not allowed to go to the house, but Miss Taylor, with her mother's consent and her father's knowledge, met him occasionally. She would take the two little children, Betty and Dick, who were nearest in age, always together, out to walk. Mr. Davis would soon join them and the two children would be told by their sister that they might play a little while as the lovers talked....

After an engagement of two years General Taylor entirely withdrew his opposition. There was never any estrangement between General Taylor and his daughter. He was then at the Falls of St. Anthony on an expedition against Indians, and could not return, as it would have involved a journey of weeks, the mode of travel being in Mackinaw boats, rowed by soldiers...

The article describes Jefferson and Knoxie suffering malaria in separate rooms in September 1835. *He was too ill to be told of her peril and delirium saved her from anxiety about him. Soon after the fever set in, she succumbed to it, and, hearing her voice sing loud and clear a favorite song, "Fairy Bells"³, he struggled up and reached her bedside to find her dying. Davis, finally*

³ The Fairy Bells was a popular romantic ballad about love and marriage, published in London in 1830. While the music and words are available on the internet, no performance of the piece could be found to link in this article.

recovered in Havana Cuba, returned to his Brierfield Plantation and *for eight years led a life of seclusion, seeing no visitors, his life entirely changed by his great sorrow.*

Knoxie's sister recalled her as *extremely pretty, small, with dark eyes, had great vivacity and charm of manner; winning everyone who knew her.*⁴

So, although my section of Fort Crawford window sill may not have been what was claimed, it demonstrates the power of persistent historical myth. And I wonder how Jefferson Davis' military and political career might have been much different were it not for a fateful mosquito bite on his honeymoon.

⁴ "Mr. Davis' First Marriage", The Maryland Sun, October 25, 1906.

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS



Left to right: Paul DeMuth and Thurl Quigley. Not Pictured: Clark Griffith

STEVEN SCHIER'S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

The two generals were A. P. Hill and George B. McClellan. Both were engaged to Mary Ellen Marcy who later married McClellan.

CONTACT US:

Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable

info@tccwrt.com

<https://tccwrt.com/>

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: earlofbuce@hotmail.com