

CONFEDERATE GAZETTE



Confederate Gazette

*Is a monthly publication
of the Major Robert M. White
Camp #1250
Sons of Confederate
Veterans*



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Preservation Seminar at Hill College

CLEBURNE SUBJECT OF 10TH ANNUAL SEMINAR

The Tenth Annual Texas Civil War Preservation Seminar will be held on Saturday, November 22, 2003 at Hill College in Hillsboro, Texas. Registration will be between 8:30 A.M. and 10:00 A.M. A breakfast will be available between 9:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

This years event will focus on the life of Confederate General Patrick Cleburne and will feature an all-star panel of speakers. The seminar is entitled "Meteor Brightly Shining: The Life of C.S.A. General Patrick Cleburne."

Speakers and their top-

ics include:

► Ed Bearss: "The Failure of the Meteor to Rise, Why Wasn't Cleburne Promoted?"

► Wiley Sword: "Cleburne: Tactical Mastermind"

► Jerry Russell: "A Life Well Lived: Cleburne, An Overview"

► Thomas Cartwright: "The Final Acts: Cleburne at Spring Hill and Franklin"

Proceeds from the seminar will go toward Civil

War battlefield preservation and to support the History Center at Hill College.

The seminar includes special activities for Patrons, such as breakfast and lunch with the speakers, tapes of the seminar and preferred seating.

Costs for the event :

- \$50 Regular Reservation
- \$125 Patron Reservation
- \$10 Preservation Breakfast*
- \$10 Preservation Lunch*
- \$15 Conference Audio

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Museum Displays Confederate Letters

Milam County Displays Collection

A collection of Confederate letters is now on special exhibit at the Milam County Historical Museum in Cameron. The new exhibit went on display on October 1st and is part of the museum's year long anniversary celebration.

The letters are from the William and Ruth Brown Collection and contain first hand accounts from the Seven Days battles, Second

Manassas, Sharpsburg, and other locations.

The collection includes 23 letters from, Pvt. William C. Sparks, Pvt. J. M. "Mike" Reed, both of Williamson County, Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson from Missouri, Brig. Gen. Jerome B. Robertson of Washington, and Maj. Carroll Rogers.

Major Rogers was from Milam County and in 1861 organized the "Milam

County Grays." The unit would become Company G of the 5th Texas Infantry.

Many of the early letters in the collection recount life in camp and the missing of loved ones back home. The letters from Gen. Thompson are to his wife and describe action in and around Jackson and Vicksburg, Mississippi. A letter dated in 1862 to Gen. Thompson's

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CONFEDERATE PROFILE

THE SWAMP FOX

By: John C. Perry

He was known as the Confederacy's "Swamp Fox." He was one of the most unique in an era of unique personalities. He was a prolific writer and a number of his letters home are currently on display at the Milam County Historical Museum in Cameron.

Meriwether "Jeff" Thompson was born in Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) on January 22, 1826. He was a son of the Harpers Ferry Arsenal's paymaster, Captain Meriwether Thompson and Nancy Slaughter Broadus, a distant relative of George Washington. When Thompson was 12 his mother died and the young boy was sent to Charleston, Virginia to military school. By age 17 Thompson had tried to enlist in the Republic of Texas Navy, but was turned down due to his young age. He also unsuccessfully sought an appointment to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point.

Not being able to find a military avocation he drifted westward, eventually ending up in St. Joseph, Missouri. The aggressive young man seemed to have a flair for business. He worked as a merchant, real estate agent, and county surveyor. The flamboyant and persuasive Thompson was elected mayor of St. Joseph at the young age of 22. He was quite successful in business serving as a railroad president, president of the gas

works, and the president of a Catholic benevolent society. In 1860, as the mayor of St. Joseph he welcomed the first Pony Express rider to the city. While in St. Joseph he was able to meet his military desires by serving as the colonel of a local militia unit.

Thompson was very active as a leader in the pro-

the Confederacy's "Swamp Fox" early on in the war as the result of his Missouri State Guard operations against the Federals in southeast Missouri. In one incident he led his troops in crossing Mingo Swamp in saddle deep water. He also used dugout canoes to move troops in operation against Union forces in the area.

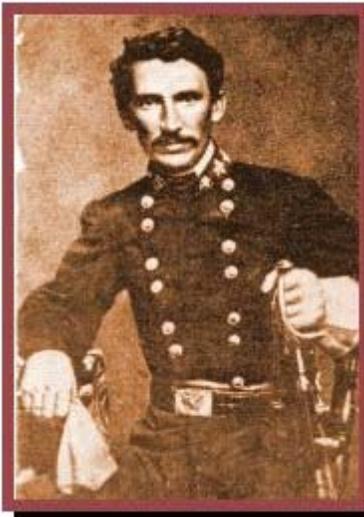
During these operations Thompson was operating only as an officer in the Missouri State Guards. He is often listed as a brigadier general in the Confederate Army, but this is incorrect, his rank was only in his state's militia.

Thompson was known as a man that enjoyed theatrical behavior and was fond of strong drink. One compatriot wrote of Thompson, "His efforts . . . were a combination of sense and bombast, of military shrewdness and personal buffoonery." By March of 1862 Thompson and his Missouri State Guard were largely driven out of their home state and operated in Arkansas, Tennessee, and even as far south as Louisiana.

While in Louisiana Thompson was operating near New Orleans. His job was to keep Federal forces defending New Orleans so they wouldn't be release to help with Union movements against Confederate forces. With just a handful of men he kept the Federals thinking that he had a much larger force. Some of General

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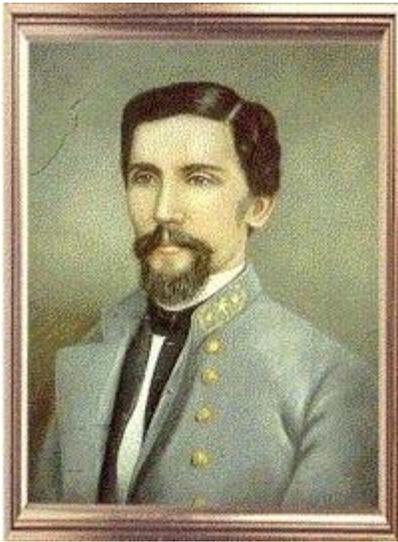
Some of Thompson's letters to home are currently on display at the Milam County Historical Museum in Cameron



M. Jeff Thompson, dressed in his Missouri State Guard uniform

secession effort in northeast Missouri, including lobbying at the state capitol for secession. When the War Between the States began, Thompson offered his services to the Confederacy; in fact he was on his way to Richmond, Virginia to see what role he could play in the new Confederate government when he was offered a position with the Missouri State Guard. He joined the Missouri State Guards at its inception, elected as a brigadier general. He earned the title of

Cleburne Seminar



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Tapes*
* Included with Patron Registration

Mail your payment for a reservation to: Harold B. Simpson History Center, P.O. Box 619, Hillsboro, TX 76645.

For more information, please contact the Harold B. Simpson History Center at (254) 582-2555, Ext. 258.

Painting of Patrick Cleburne

Camp Schedule

October 7th: Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup, Meet at 5:45 PM at the Belton McDonald's.

October 18th: Camp's Quarterly Dinner Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Chuck's Restaurant; Speaker: John C. Oeffinger, Editor of "A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Lafayette McLaws."

October 18-19th: Ogletree Gap Festival & Reenactment, Copperas Cove, TX

November 5th: Camp Executive Council Meeting, TBA.

November 11th: Regular Camp Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Doctor's Conference Room, Scott & White Hospital, Temple, TX. Speaker: Rocky Sprott, "The Battle of Palmito Ranch."

November 22nd: 10th Annual Texas Civil War Preservation Seminar, Hill College, Hillsboro, TX. Topic: "A Meteor Brightly Shining, The Life of Pat Cleburne."

December 3rd: Camp Executive Council Meeting, TBA.

December 9th: Camp's Southern Christmas Party, 7:00 P.M., TBA.

Next Camp Meeting:

October 18th
at 7:00 PM

Chuck's Restaurant
8205 West Adams
Temple, TX
Speaker: John C. Oeffinger

Camp Dinner Meeting At New Location

The Major Robert M. White Camp #1250 will hold its quarterly dinner meeting on Saturday October 18, 2003 at Chuck's Restaurant in Temple at 7:00 PM.

The meeting will feature author John C. Oeffinger who edited the book, *A Soldier's General, The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws* (Editors Note: See book review on page 4), published last year by the University of North Carolina Press. Oeffinger will talk about the life of McLaws.

This will be the first camp meeting at Chuck's Restaurant. The dinner meeting will be held in a private dining room adjacent to

the main restaurant.

The restaurant is located at 8205 West Adams Ave. in Temple. West Adams is FM2305 and is also know locally as the "Lake Road."

To reach Chucks coming to Temple from the north on I-35 take the Adams Ave exit off I-35. Travel west on Adams for about 6 miles. The restaurant will be on your left after you pass a fire station on your right.

If you are coming to Temple from the south on I-35 take the Adams Ave exit and go west on Adams. Follow the same directions as already listed.



Milam Museum

(Continued from page 1)

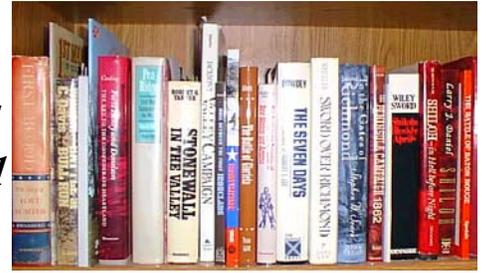
wife advised her that her husband had been captured and was a POW at Johnson Island Prison in Ohio.

Some period clothing will also be on display found in an old Cameron home.

The exhibit will be open from 8:00 AM to Noon Tuesday through Saturday at the Museum Annex on Main Street in Cameron.

“THE BOOK BIN”

A Soldier’s General, The Civil War Letters Of Major General Lafayette McLaws



Editor’s Note: Almost all of us read books on the War Between the States. Please share your thoughts on a book with your fellow camp members. The book can be old or new just write something up and send it to the editor.

By: John C. Perry

A Soldier’s General, The Civil War Letters Of Major General Lafayette McLaws, edited by John C. Oeffinger, University of North Carolina Press, illustrated, maps, footnotes, appendix, bibliography, index, 299 pp., 2002 hardbound, \$34.95.

Little known
McLaws is
exposed in
this book

Normally I am not a fan of books that are merely a collection of letters, unless I am doing specific research on a person or a topic. What we have with John C. Oeffinger’s book is just that a collection of 95 letters written by Confederate Major General Lafayette McLaws, but this book is different.

Many serious students of Confederate military history can tell you much about the commanders in the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV), but the one who they may well stumble on is McLaws. McLaws was a key player in the command structure of the ANV, being a division commander in James Longstreet’s Corp. In spite of that there have been no major biographies written on him and finding much information on McLaws is not an easy task.

Often a lack of historian writings are due to the death of the individual dur-

ing the war, or perhaps he left little in the way of writings. Such was not the case with McLaws. McLaws survived the war and did write often to his wife and many of those letters survived. So why the problem with McLaws?

Georgia and knew Longstreet while in Georgia. McLaws graduated from West Point in 1842 and then served in the U.S. Army. He was a captain of infantry for nearly ten years prior to the beginning of the War Between the States.

McLaws rose rapidly through the ranks once he entered the Confederate Army. He was a major in May of 1861, a colonel in the 10th Georgia Infantry by June of 1861 and a brigadier general by September 1861. In less than a year

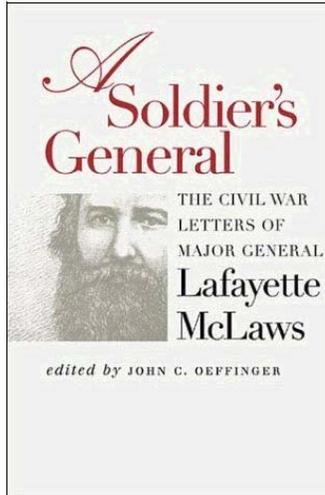
McLaws was a major general and a division commander.

He served in the Peninsula during the first part of the war seeing, action during the Seven Days fighting. He fought at

Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg.

McLaws is perhaps best know for earning the ire of Longstreet. Longstreet became displeased with McLaws at Fort Sanders and at Bean’s Station. McLaws was relieved of his command on December 17, 1863. Longstreet also brought charges against him of which McLaws was found guilty. President Jefferson Davis, however disapproved the findings and ordered

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Left: Book cover,
Below:
War time photo
of Major General Lafayette McLaws



Oeffinger may have stumbled on the reason why. Seems that McLaws had an atrocious handwriting style. It was so bad that much of what he wrote could not be deciphered until now. “McLaws has receded into history due in large part to his poor penmanship,” Oeffinger writes. Oeffinger accepted the challenge and “translated” McLaws letters.

Along with the research Oeffinger did on the life of McLaws this book tells McLaws’s story, with much of the story being told by McLaws himself.

McLaws’s was born in

The Swamp Fox

(Continued from page 2)

Benjamin Butler's officers felt that there were as many as 10,000 Confederates operating around New Orleans, when in fact Thompson had only a couple of hundred men. Often he and his men were surrounded by pursuing Federals but always seemed to be able to out maneuver



Grave of M. Jeff Thompson in St. Joseph, MO

them and escape, yet another reason for the title, "The Swamp Fox."

Thompson was captured by a Federal patrol near Pochontas, Arkansas on August 22, 1863. He spent time in prison in St. Louis, Ft. Delaware, before ending up at Johnson Island. He was exchanged almost a year later. Upon his release Thompson joined Sterling Price's forces operating in Arkansas. He, in an unlikely move, assumed command of Shelby's Brigade when Joseph Shelby was promoted to division commander. It was a curious move by Price as Thompson was not an officer in the Confederate military, only an officer in the Missouri State Guard, and he had been given command of

Confederate Gazette Quiz Questions

By George Ballentine

Confederate Gazette Quiz for October 2003 issue:

The First Shots

1. Aimed the first gun fired in defense of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina:

- a. Abner Doubleday
- b. Christopher Andrews
- c. Laurence Baker
- d. S. R. Curtis

2. South Carolina governor who thought it necessary to seize Fort Sumter no later than Mar. 4, 1861:

- a. William Gist
- b. Milledge Bonham
- c. Francis Pickens
- d. Robert Alston

3. Former Texas governor who appeared at Fort Sumter under a white flag to unofficially discuss surrender:

- a. E. V. Sumner
- b. Louis T. Wigfall
- c. Benjamin Kelley
- d. William Bell

4. Said of Fort Sumter, "Our Southern brethren have done grievously wrong ... They must be punished and brought back, but this necessity breaks my heart."

- a. Robert E. Lee
- b. Abraham Lincoln
- c. Nathaniel Banks
- d. Robert Anderson

5. According to legend, fired the first shot at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina:

- a. John Hughes
- b. Charles Zagonyi
- c. Edward Ruffin
- d. Stonewall Jackson

Answers: 1. A, 2. C, 3. B, 4. D, 5. C

one of Price's best units. Apparently Price held Thompson in very high regard.

Thompson performed well as a brigade commander at fights at Westport, Mine Creek, and Newtonia. For a period of time Thompson even assumed temporary command of Shelby's entire division. In February of 1865 Thompson was reassigned to command the Northern Sub-Division of Arkansas.

Thompson was one of the last Confederate commanders to surrender. He surrendered on May 11, 1865 in Jacksonport, Arkansas. After the war Thompson briefly resided in Memphis then relocated to New Orleans. In New Orleans he served as the state's chief engineer of the Board of

(Continued on page 6)

Confederate Memorial Hall To Stay

It appears that Confederate Memorial Hall Museum in New Orleans has won the right to stay where they have been for the past 112 years. The five year legal battle over ownership rights to the Hall have apparently been resolved.

The ownership of the Museum's Hall was challenged by the University of New Orleans Foundation. The agreement was helped by Louisiana Governor Mike Foster when in 2002 he weighed in on the side of the museum, saying "the museum would move over my dead body."

The museum houses the second largest collection of Confederate artifacts.

Confederate Memorial Hall in New Orleans To Remain!

Book Bin

(Continued from page 4)
him back to duty.

McLaws was sent to the Southern coast where he fought at Bentonville during the Carolinas Campaign against Sherman. After the war McLaws was in the insurance business, served as a tax collector, and as a postmaster.

McLaws' letters give the reader excellent insight in McLaws the man. We see a brave fighter's human side as he writes home longing for his family but staying committed to fulfilling his duty.

This is an interesting book, and all serious students of the Confederacy need this book to round out ones profiles on Confederate military leaders. Even if one is just a causal reader of War Between the States history I would recommend getting this book, you will enjoy it.

One interesting sideline is the book's website. Oeffinger has built an excellent website on the life of McLaws, indeed it is one of the best I have seen. It is well organized, chocked full of information, easy to maneuver, and attractive in appearance. Visit the site at, www.asolidersgeneral.com

Unfortunately, there is one major negative point about the website. Oeffinger has set the site up so that one cannot copy anything from it. I do a lot in web surfing on War Between the States sites and it is indeed rare to find one that has this restriction. I collect data on Confederates and if I find something interesting I like to copy it along with the source and put in my files. Forget it with this site, unless you are very computer savvy and know the way to beat his blocking codes, Oeffinger won't let you.

Let's all go out and buy the book so that Oeffinger doesn't feel compelled to block complete access to what really is a very well done website!

The Swamp Fox

(Continued from page 5)

Public Works. Poor health caused him to retire and he moved back to Missouri. He died there on September 5, 1876 in St. Joseph. He was buried in Mount Mora Cemetery in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Many Confederate sources list Thompson as a Confederate officer. He apparently never held any military position other than as a brigadier general in the Missouri State Guard. During the war Thompson repeatedly petitioned Jef-



Sketch of the CSS M. Jeff Thompson meeting its demise

erson Davis for a Confederate Army appointment, but Davis never approved the frequent requests.

Thompson was well known in his adopted state of Missouri. Mark Twain used Thompson as a prominent character in his novel, *The Gilded Age*. Thompson even had a Confederate naval vessel named for him. The CSS *M. Jeff Thompson* was an old side wheel river steamboat that was converted by the Confederacy into a "cottonclad" ram.

The ship was commissioned in April of 1862 and was assigned duty on the Mississippi River to join the River Defense Fleet. The CSS *M. Jeff Thompson* took part in the naval action off Fort Pillow in May and during the Battle of Memphis on June, 6, 1862. At that battle the ship was set afire by direct hits from Union gunboats, ran aground, and then blew up.



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Next Meeting:

Oct. 18th

Chuck's Restuarant

Temple, TX

7:00 PM