



North Central Texas Civil War Round Table

<http://www.ncentexcwrt.com/>

Granbury, Texas

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Meeting Schedule

May 5 Dr. Curt Fields, PhD,
The preeminent US Grant
living historian .

Jun-Aug no programs

Sep 8 BRIAN MATTHEW
JORDAN, Ph.D.

Next Meeting: 5 May at Spring Creek BBQ Program starts at 6:30
Dr. Curt Fields will speak about:
"5 Days in October" about the siege and relief of Chattanooga.

Our Guest Speaker : Dr. Curt Fields



Dr. Fields is the National Park Service representative for General U. S. Grant. He has portrayed the commanding general of the Union Army in films, posters and re-enactments. He has a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Curriculum from Michigan State University. He spent eight years at the Junior and Senior high school levels teaching before serving 25 years as a high school administrator. He teaches as an adjunct Sociology

professor at the University of Memphis and in Education for Belhaven University, Memphis campus. He is now an Educational consultant and a living Historian. He was selected to portray General Grant at the 150th anniversary of Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, in 2015. He was featured as General Grant, and as a Grant authority, in the Discovery Channel three-part documentary series "How Booze built America." Dr. Fields is the same height and body style as the General Grant and represents a true-to-life image of the man as he would have looked, as well as researches extensively in order to share an accurate portrayal. His presentations are in first person, quoting from General Grant's memoirs; articles and letters the general wrote, statements he made in interviews and first-person accounts of people who knew the General or were with him and witnessed him during events.

His program about the "Five Days in October" concerns the relief of the siege of Chattanooga and the breakout.

Following Union general William Rosecrans's defeat at Chickamauga on September 18–20, 1863, the Army of the Cumberland fell back to the high ground and rail hub at Chattanooga, Tennessee. Confederate general Braxton Bragg chose to besiege the Union forces entrenched around the city, hoping to starve them into surrender.

In October, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant was given command of all Union forces in the west and replaced Rosecrans with Maj. Gen. George Thomas. After securing the vital "Cracker Line" to feed his starving army and defeating the Confederate counterattack at Wauhatchie, Grant turned his focus to a Union breakout.

The three-day Battles of Chattanooga resulted in one of the most dramatic turnabouts in American military history. When the fighting stopped on November 25, 1863, Union forces had driven Confederate troops away from Chattanooga, Tennessee, into Georgia, clearing the way for Union general William T. Sherman's March to the Sea a year later. Sherman wreaked havoc as his troops blazed a path of destruction, burning towns between Atlanta and Savannah in an effort to cripple the South.

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Our purpose is education and information. From our inception we have kept a calculated balance mixing subjects, people, events and battles so as to appeal to all interests. If you examine our schedule of past speakers which is available on this website you will find this to be true. Speakers have included authors, professors, lecturers, dramatists, curators, and others who have some expertise in the subject of the Civil War.

Did You Know

Before Grant arrived at Chattanooga, the Army of the Cumberland was starving. In September 1863, the Union Army of the Cumberland was soundly defeated by Confederate General Braxton Bragg at the Battle of Chickamauga. The Army of the Cumberland fled to the nearby Chattanooga. Bragg followed Rosecrans and took positions on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, blocking and interdicting the Union supply lines. The lack of supply quickly began to take its toll on the Union army. Many of their horses and mules began to die from starvation. A soldier's ration was four cakes of hard bread and a quarter pound of pork every three days.

Chattanooga Campaign

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/10-facts-battles-chattanooga>

On October 10, 1863, a month before the Battles for Chattanooga, General Ulysses S. Grant met with a secretary from the War Department and was given two nearly identical orders and told to choose one. Both orders gave him command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, a new Union Military Division that would bring together all of the armies in the West. However, one order would keep General William S. Rosecrans in charge of the Army of the Cumberland and the other would replace Rosecrans with General George H. Thomas. Grant chose the latter and instructed General Thomas to hold Chattanooga, to which he responded with "We will hold the town till we starve."

Upon arriving in Chattanooga, Grant's first move was to open a more reliable supply line dubbed "The Cracker Line".

Immediately after arriving in Chattanooga, General Grant was approached by the Chief Engineer of the Army of the Cumberland, Brig. Gen. William "Baldy" Smith, who had devised a plan to open a reliable supply line to the beleaguered troops of the Army of the Cumberland. The plan was to seize Brown's Ferry which crossed the Tennessee River at Moccasin Point, a location that could easily be reached by Union supply boats. After taking this position, the Army of the Cumberland could connect with the incoming divisions under General Joseph Hooker. On October 27, the Union forces easily seized Brown's Ferry, quickly repulsing a counter attack from the 15th Alabama. Federal supplies began to reach the starving Army of the Cumberland soon after.

Bragg's forces were severely weakened by sending troops to Knoxville.

On November 3, Gen. Bragg announced that he would be sending General James Longstreet and his two divisions to Knoxville, Tennessee to check the movements of Union forces under General Ambrose Burnside. This movement severely weakened the Confederate siege line. Bragg further weakened his line on November 22 by sending troops under General Simon Bolivar Buckner and General Patrick Cleburne—his best division commander—to aid Longstreet. However, when Grant began his movements, Bragg called Cleburne back to his line to help defend against the Union offensive.

The Battle of Chattanooga consisted of three separate battles that occurred over the course of three days in November 1863. The three battles were the Battle of Orchard Knob, The Battle of Lookout Mountain, and the Battle of Missionary Ridge. However, had everything gone according to Grant's plan, the fighting over the last two days would have occurred in a single concentrated attack against the entire Confederate line.

The charge up Missionary Ridge was supposed to be a feint but nobody told the troops and they did the rest.



Patrick Falci Visited the North Central Texas Civil War Round Table Steering Committee 16 April 2024

The Saga of Grant's Sword

March 13, 2025

By Joe Walker



General Grant is supposed to have received a presentation sword in the Spring of 1864 by "His friends in Kentucky" upon being promoted to "General in Chief" of the armies of the United States. The story is in "North South Trader" magazine from Christmas of 1995, and from a book titled "Civil War Army Swords" by John Thillmann. Included are photos of the sword that Ray Richey acquired at auction (Heritage Auctions) in 2007 for a reported \$1.6 million dollars from Don Tharpe. The sword was reportedly made by H. Folsom of St Louis. This is what Heritage Auctions said about the "chain of Custody" (provenance) prior to Richey:

Provenance:

1. Ulysses S. Grant - 1864 (sword presented to him by citizens of Kentucky) - 1885 (his death)
2. Grant Family - 1885-1960s
3. Jay Altmeyer - 1960s-1989 (Altmeyer was a charter member of the American Society of Arms Collectors; the sword sold in 1989 for a then-world record price)
4. Donald Tharpe - 1989-present (Since 1989, the sword has been part of the Tharpe Collection of American Military History)

In the North-South Trader magazine, the history of the sword stated that Grant had used the sword as collateral in a failed business adventure after serving as president. The sword was then presumed to have wound up with a favorite aide of his during the War, General William Hillyer, which Heritage does not list. Grant gave Mrs. Hillyer his military

sack coat and some other mementos, giving some credence to the story about Hillyer receiving the sword in the same fashion.

Whether the sword stayed in either the Hillyer family for many years or the Grant family for many years, the exact lengths of time are not known. The most reliable history is when it went up for auction in 1989 by Jay Altmeyer who claimed he acquired it sometime in the 1860's and won by Don Tharpe, a well known sword collector and recognized expert on authenticity as well. In 2007 the sword went up for auction again via Heritage Auctions, and that is when Richey won it. In 2023 Richey decided to put it up for auction, reportedly to help keep his museum in Fort Worth, Texas, called "The Texas Civil War Museum" in operation. Heritage Auctions set the reserve at \$300,000 which shocked many collectors wondering why so low? There was only one bidder, and they retracted their bid. Shortly after the auction, in January, 2024, the news in the collector world was that it had been discovered as being faked which killed all the interest in it. The current rumor is that there was something amiss with an oval plate on the scabbard with the inscription that caused the doubt about being Grant's sword. The Richey family has since donated the sword to the Texas Division of the UDC.

From the time Grant lost possession of his sword by dying, selling it, giving it to an old army friend, to settle a debt, or it simply passing to his survivors, much anything could have happened to it. Photos of the sword prior to Altmeyer's obtaining it have not been discovered.