

At nearly 5:00 P.M. on April 6, 1862, thousands of Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee fled wildly from the onrushing Confederates at Shiloh battlefield. Running frantically, many leaped headlong into the Tennessee River in order to escape. Suddenly the vanguard of Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio, under William "Bull" Nelson, emerged on the opposite bank. "I blush to describe it," wrote one youth of the 6th Ohio. "The entire bank of the river, for a mile up and down, was crowded with cowardly poltroons....." Nelson commandeered a steamboat and led the first 200 men across the congested water in order to help save the remainder of Grant's army. Nelson estimated that between 7000 and 10,000 men "frantic with fright and utterly demoralized" cowered along the riverbank. Some of the terrified men were officers, identified by their shoulder straps—and a few of Nelson's men had to be restrained from shooting them. "Such looks of terror, such confusion, I never saw before," wrote a disgusted onlooker, "and do not wish to see again."

As the steamboat neared the opposite shore, the ship captain rang the bell to stop. When Nelson angrily asked why the vessel halted, the captain replied that he was afraid of running over the men in the water. The 6-foot, 300-pound Nelson exploded with rage and ordered the boat to proceed. As the prow touched the shore, the first company splashed into the water clearing a small space with their bayonets. "Bull" Nelson, astride his huge horse, Ned, looked contemptuously at the retreating Federals. Turning to his escort, Nelson shouted, "Gentlemen, draw your sabers and trample these bastards into the mud! Charge!" The officers knifed their way through the mass of fugitives, while Nelson violently screamed: "Damn your souls, if you won't fight, get out of the way, and let men come here who will!" The skulkers trampled over each other in terror as Nelson's soldiers, shouting "Buell!" to encourage Grant's disheartened men, dashed up the steep hillside. Soon Grant, Buell, and Nelson held a hasty conference. A six-pounder ball suddenly decapitated one of Grant's aides, splattering Grant with blood and brains, but the commanding general kept his composure.

Buell later referred to the arrival of his Army of the Ohio as "critical," believing this crucial moment had saved Grant's army. One of Nelson's aides concurred: "If we hadn't come to [Grant's] relief when we did, his entire army would have been taken prisoner." Grant, however, denied the desperation of the situation, stating that by 6:00 the enemy's momentum had "spent its force."

This month, Dr. Gerald J. Prokopowicz will present "All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862." Dr. Prokopowicz is the Lincoln Scholar and Director of Public Programs at The Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He has authored numerous books and articles and holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University. His latest book, *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862*, has received rave reviews and copies will be on sale at our meeting. Historian James McPherson writes, "This book fills an important niche in the history of Civil War armies. Lurid and lively, [it] shows how recruitment, training, and combat forged the bonds of comradeship that sustained morale and fighting power. It is a book that students of the Civil War will want to read."

You'll want to be in attendance for this program. Mark your calendar now—**MONDAY, APRIL 29.**

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FALL FIELD TRIP: Our trip to Shiloh, scheduled for Saturday/Sunday, October 19-20, will be discussed at this month's meeting. Come get some further details.

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The MRRT offers thanks to last month's speaker, Bob Zaetta, for his presentation, "The 24th Michigan and the Brave Boys of Company C."

QUIZ: April 6 and 7 marked the 140th anniversary of the Battle of Shiloh. All questions pertain to that bloody battle.

1. In which town and house was Ulysses S. Grant having breakfast about the time the battle began?
2. Which two Federal generals later died in this same house?
3. What was the name of Albert Sidney Johnston's horse, and which governor of Tennessee tended to Johnston as he lay dying?
4. Which four Michigan units were at this battle?
5. Who led Albert Sidney Johnston's four army corps in the attack on Grant's army?
6. Which steamboat brought Grant to the battlefield along the Tennessee River? Also, which Federal general, stationed near Crump's Landing, took the wrong road and arrived too late to help Grant on the first day of fighting?
7. What was the official name of Johnston's army, and who replaced him when he died?
8. Which Confederate general ordered 62 cannons to concentrate heavy fire on a solid Union line and what name was later given to this sunken road area?
9. Which 2 of these battlefield areas are not associated with Shiloh battlefield? Purdy Road, Round Forest, Fallen Timbers, Fraley Field, Manse George Cabin, Lafayette Road, Woolf Field
10. Which 2 Federal gunboats shelled Confederates all night on April 6 and into the next morning?

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On Sunday morning, April 6, 1862, 40,000 Confederate soldiers under the command of General Albert Sidney Johnston completed a march northeast from Corinth, Mississippi toward Ulysses S. Grant's army encamped along the Tennessee River. The 23-mile march had taken the inexperienced Rebels three days to complete, yet they were about to pull off a major surprise attack on the unsuspecting Federals. Certain conditions existed to enhance the element of surprise. On the morning of the attack a thick fog had settled in patches over the battlefield which conspired to conceal the approaching enemy as well as muffle the sounds of the battle. Indeed, some bluecoats merely three-quarters of a mile from the intense musketry were either sound asleep or blithely preparing their breakfasts. Further enhancing the Rebel fortunes that morning, the Federal high command, expecting no onslaught, had dug no entrenchments nor posted the usual guards. Some complacent Union generals had also ignored the reports of a few conscientious soldiers that actually saw the Confederates approaching. Members of the 53rd Ohio Volunteers, for instance, attempted to alarm William T. Sherman of the Rebels as early as April 5. It was the third such warning from this unit, and Sherman was in no mood for their nervousness. "Take your damned regiment [back] to Ohio," he reportedly shouted in rage, "There is no enemy nearer than Corinth!"

One of the Federal colonels who attempted to warn his superiors was Everett Peabody. Unfortunately, his advice went unheeded, and Peabody lost his life on the first day of the fighting. The 31-year-old Colonel Peabody was the descendant of a prominent Springfield, Massachusetts family and a Harvard graduate with a degree in Engineering. From the time he graduated in 1849 he had spent ten years constructing Western railroads. When he settled in Missouri shortly before the war to build the Platte County Railroad, Peabody had become known as the "best field engineer in the West." When the Civil War broke out, he was given command of the 13th Missouri Infantry in the Western Theater. During the siege of Lexington, Missouri in September, 1861, Peabody was struck in the chest by a spent musket ball. Paralyzed by the blow, Peabody was placed on a stretcher, and his men attempted to remove him to a hospital. On the way a Rebel bullet struck Peabody's ankle and he fell into Confederate hands. Unable to walk without crutches for three months, he was finally paroled. Now he commanded Benjamin Prentiss' 1st Brigade in Grant's army in Tennessee.

Standing over six feet tall and weighing 240 pounds, Peabody made an impressive appearance. A bit outspoken and too short-tempered, Peabody often found difficulty with his superiors. His men, however, adored and trusted him. He, in turn, trusted them. When some of his subordinate officers came to him with the warning that Confederates were approaching, he went out to see for himself. Convinced that the Rebels were advancing in force, Peabody sought out General Prentiss on the night of April 5. Prentiss, however, “hooted” at the notion and refused to take Peabody’s warning seriously. Long before daylight Peabody on his own initiative sent out three companies of Missouri soldiers to reconnoiter. By 5:00 A.M. shots were fired and the Battle of Shiloh had begun.

Later that morning Prentiss arrived at brigade headquarters and demanded to know what the shooting was about. When Peabody informed him that he had ordered the reconnaissance, Prentiss shouted, “Colonel Peabody, I will hold you personally responsible for bringing on this engagement.” Peabody replied, “If I brought on the fight, I am to lead the van,” mounted his horse and rode to his men. Prentiss never forgave him. As the morning hours passed, Peabody’s forces found themselves in a whirlwind of battle and were forced to retreat. Peabody desperately needed reinforcements and artillery. Unfortunately Prentiss had refused to allow artillery to be parked in front of his brigade the night before. Peabody continued to search for Prentiss in the confusion, but he couldn’t be found. Peabody returned to his brigade and found them in chaos and on the verge of collapse. Already bleeding from four wounds—in the hand, thigh, neck, and body—Peabody stood in the stirrups to challenge his men. Suddenly a musket ball struck him in the upper lip and passed out the back of his head, killing him instantly. His body tumbled backward and came to rest, his legs across a log and his head and shoulders on the ground. Confederate soldiers quickly overran the area as the Federals fled.

The following day Peabody’s men found his body. All the buttons and shoulder straps had been cut from his uniform, and his sword and pistols were gone. His officers buried him in a gun box that night, marking the spot with a single board upon which they scrawled: “A braver man ne’er died upon the field.” Within three weeks his body was re-interred in the family cemetery in Springfield, Massachusetts. Although he was denied much of the recognition due him, Peabody’s men long remembered his important contribution. In fact had Peabody not sent out the scouting party that morning, the Confederate surprise attack might have been even more devastating, possibly rendering a Confederate victory.

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QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Savannah, Tennessee and the Cherry Mansion
2. Charles F. Smith and William H.L. Wallace
3. “Fire-eater” and Isham G. Harris
4. 1st Michigan Light Artillery and the 12th, 13th, and 15th Michigan Infantries
5. Leonidas Polk, Braxton Bragg, William Hardee, and John Breckinridge
6. *Tigress* and Lew Wallace
7. Army of the Mississippi and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard
8. Dan Ruggles and the “Hornet’s Nest”
9. Round Forest (at Stones River) and Lafayette Road (at Chickamauga)
10. *Tyler* and *Lexington*

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Reminder of this month’s meeting—Dr. Gerald J. Prokopowicz will present, “All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862.” Our meeting site remains the same: Farmington Public Library near Grand River and Farmington Road. Meeting time begins at 7:30 P.M. Circle the date—**MONDAY, APRIL 29.**

Remember to check out our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.