

General Joseph “Fightin’ Joe” Wheeler

By Wil Elrick

September 10, 1836 was an ordinary day that saw the birth of an ordinary child in Augusta, Georgia. The boy was the youngest of four children born to Joseph and Julia Hull Wheeler. The name bestowed upon the ordinary child would go on to be known throughout the United States as that of an excellent soldier and statesman – that name was Joseph Wheeler.

In addition to an unremarkable birth, Joseph went through his early life in a similar ordinary state. Joseph senior was a merchant banker and landowner who had built for himself a small fortune only to see it all taken away in the bank failures and financial panic of 1837. Soon after the family’s fortune was lost, Julie unexpectedly passed away. Unable to raise the young boy on his own, Joseph senior sent Joseph to Connecticut to live with his two aunts and attend the Cheshire Academy boarding school in 1842.

There is little recorded about his time at Cheshire, but he did seem to be an average youth who enjoyed reading about wars and learning about history in school. He graduated from Cheshire in 1854 and then moved to New York City where he lived with his oldest sister who had moved from Georgia after her marriage. It was while he was living in New York City that he



**General
Joseph “Fightin’ Joe” Wheeler
(Wikipedia)**

received his appointment to West Point at the age of seventeen.

On July 1, 1854, Joseph Wheeler entered West Point which at the time was under Superintendent Robert E. Lee. While at West Point, Joseph Wheeler was once again considered unremarkable. He had very high scores in the subject of Department, but otherwise, he was in the bottom of his class during his five years at the military academy. During this time, he did earn a reputation for being both studious and persistent, and this was noticed by his instructors before he graduated in 1859 and given his first commission at Carlisle Parks, Pennsylvania.

Wheeler did not spend a lot of time in Pennsylvania. Soon he was transferred to Fort Craig, New Mexico under the command of Colonel W. W. Loring, who specialized in the relatively obscure mounted infantry concept. It was during his time in New Mexico that Wheeler earned his lifetime nickname. In June of 1860, he was ordered to escort duty for a wagon train traveling from Missouri to New Mexico. While the wagon train continued on, Wheeler found himself at the rear guarding an ambulance wagon containing a newborn baby, the mother, their surgeon, and the wagon driver. Because they were far behind the rest of the wagon train, the ambulance was attacked by a band of marauding Indians. During the attack, Wheeler shot one of the attacking Indians with his musket and then charged the group while firing away with his Colt pistol. His act of bravery turned away the Indians, and forever left him with the nickname of "Fightin' Joe."

January 9, 1861 was the day that Georgia seceded from the Union. By this time, Wheeler had already planned to follow the rest of the southern states and pledge his service to Georgia. He had been in contact with his brother William to notify Governor Joseph Brown that when Georgia's secession occurred, he would resign his commission in the U.S. Army and join Georgia's forming army. Wheeler was granted a commission as a Lieutenant in the provisional army, Confederate States of America before he was able to leave his post at Fort Craig.

Wheeler's first post in the Confederate Army was at Pensacola, Florida, under the command of General Braxton Bragg. Bragg, along with General William Hardee wanted to form an army in the Mobile and Pensacola areas, so Wheeler's experience was noticed and appreciated. It was this attention from Bragg and a friendship with Confederate politician Leroy Pope Walker that resulted in Wheeler being promoted to colonel in September of 1861. This promotion angered many of Wheeler's peers because a jump of four command levels was unheard of.

True to his meticulous nature, the new colonel in command of the 19th Alabama Regiment spent the winter months of 1861 training his new recruits and testing them with endless drilling and exercises. This paid off when his regiment was transferred with the rest of the army to Corinth, Mississippi under General Albert Johnston, who was prepping his forces for a battle against Union forces camped at Pittsburg Landing. The ensuing battle between Confederate forces under the command of Generals Johnston and Beauregard and Union forces under the command of Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Don Buell would famously become known as Shiloh.

An unknown colonel such as Joe Wheeler would not be expected to gain much attention in a battle the scale of Shiloh, and records indicate that while he was praised by his superiors, he did nothing to stand out amongst the other young officers leading their troops into battle. Once again, Joe Wheeler was seen as just

ordinary. That is, until the retreat from the battle was ordered and Wheeler was given orders to take a brigade of cavalry and cover the rear of the retreating army heading back to Corinth.

The task of guarding the retreat would have been challenging except that the Federal Army did not pursue the retreating Confederates. Therefore, Wheeler's duties consisted mostly of rounding up stragglers from the Southern army that had been lost during the fighting and salvaging any materials that could be found. More importantly though, this command was the start of Wheeler's cavalry career with the Confederate Army and the position to which he went from ordinary to extraordinary. Wheeler mapped routes, and covered retreats for the Army of Tennessee for every campaign from Shiloh to the army's surrender to General Sherman in 1865.

After Shiloh, General Braxton Bragg's plan was to move into Kentucky and attract supporters to join the Confederate cause. In advance of this campaign, Wheeler and his brigade of cavalry was sent into Western Kentucky to give the impression that the entire Army of Tennessee was moving in that direction. During his advance, Wheeler found that the Federal Army had abandoned the area, so he destroyed supply lines, train tracks, and telegraph lines that the Union Army might use. After several days of advance work, he returned to Tupelo, Mississippi only to find that Bragg had moved his army east and set up a new headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It was

from here that Bragg had really planned to advance into Kentucky.

Advancing from Chattanooga across the Tennessee River on August 28, 1862, General Bragg advanced 40,000 men in two parts, the left wing commanded by General Hardee and the right wing commanded by General Polk. During the movement, Wheeler commanded three regiments of cavalry and took the left wing. Wheeler moved his cavalry in front of the army attacking enemy outposts, and occasionally falling back to protect the army's flank. While the infantry had relatively easy travels with little Union resistance, this was not the case for the cavalry who was in daily and sometimes hourly contact with the enemy while advancing through Tennessee.

In Sparta, Tennessee, General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his cavalry regiments joined up with Bragg's army, and everyone expected him to be placed in charge of all the cavalry units. In a surprise move, General Bragg split up the cavalry forces and gave a division to Forrest and a division to Wheeler. This move served as a dividing line between Wheeler and Forrest that would continue throughout the war. Both of the men were now linked to the Army of Tennessee even though they would operate in very separate theaters.

History has shown us that Bragg understood the depths of his cavalry assignments because both Wheeler and Forrest were perfectly fitted for their new duties. Wheeler was efficient, faithful, unassuming, and followed orders to the letter while

Forrest was known to do his best work independent of direct command. Not long after the reUnion at Sparta, Forrest was sent back to middle Tennessee to continue direct operations against Union bases. It was this move that soon paved the way for Wheeler to receive yet another promotion.

Bragg's advance toward Louisville met with failure when U.S. General Buell arrived first to find fresh recruits and supplies waiting for him. With a reinvigorated army, Buell went on the hunt for Bragg's Army of Tennessee on September 30, 1862. It so happened that Wheeler and his division were in front of the army and observed Buell's movements and decided that the Union Army would need to be delayed while Bragg gathered and restructured his forces. This is where Wheeler advanced upon Buell's army with a then mostly unknown strategy. Wheeler would have his men dismount, ambush the enemy as infantry and fight until they would need to retreat at which time they would mount their horses and retreat. Performing this tactic over and over was quite successful in delaying the Union troops and allowing Bragg's forces to regroup. Historians and military critics have since called Wheeler's use of mounted infantry as a new contribution to the science of cavalry warfare.

Even with the Union Army delayed, it was inevitable that the Union forces would find the Confederate Army, and that day came on October 8 when the two armies met at Chaplin Creek in what would later be known as the

Battle of Perryville. Even though results of the battle were inconclusive, the Confederates opted to retreat, and this is where Wheeler once again found himself with an opportunity to shine. On October 13th, Wheeler was designated as "Chief of the Cavalry" which authorized him to give commands in the name of the commanding general. Along with this responsibility, Wheeler was again tasked with covering the army's retreat.

The Southern army's retreat was slow and hindered by many obstacles, but the line of retreat ran southeast from Kentucky to Cumberland Gap, Tennessee and then south through Knoxville on to Chattanooga. During the retreat, Wheeler varied his tactics against the following army allowing the Confederates to escape without losing any of their supplies. His troops fought during the day and obstructed the roads during the night until the Army of Tennessee was out of reach of their pursuers. For his actions, Wheeler was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General.

After the retreat from Kentucky, Bragg moved his forces to middle Tennessee where they set up camp in Murfreesboro. Meanwhile, in Nashville, General Buell had been replaced by General Rosecrans who spent his army's time and energy fortifying the city while he was making plans to advance on the Confederate stronghold of Atlanta. During the next couple of months, Wheeler and his men were stationed 20 miles closer to Union forces, so they spent time both training and

keeping a watchful eye westward toward Nashville for Union troop movements.

That movement came on December 26th when Wheeler notified Bragg that Union forces had begun to advance toward their position. Around lunchtime on December 30th the opposing forces were within sight of each other and the artillery battle began near the banks of Stone's River. The barrage ended at dark after both sides sustained heavy damage. The battle picked up the next morning and continued throughout the day ending with an almost Confederate victory that allowed Bragg to notify Richmond that "God had granted us a Happy New Year."

During the fighting, Wheeler was ordered behind enemy lines to disrupt their supply chain. His troops made their way to Jefferson where they destroyed a Union wagon train before striking the village of Lavergne, Tennessee where the Union forces had large stockpiles of supplies. Here, he took control of the supplies, captured more than 700 Union troops, and destroyed another Federal supply train. During his excursions, his troops had made an entire circuit of the enemy's rear where he destroyed many Union stockpiles and captured more than 800 Federal troops.

January of 1863 proved both successful and fruitful for Wheeler and General Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Wheeler was ordered to Ashland, Tennessee to destroy Union stockpiles that had been collected in the aftermath of the recent battle. In the late afternoon of

January 12th, Wheeler's troops opened fire on the steamer *Charter*, forcing her to swing into shore and surrender. Continuing on his river raids, Wheeler and his troops captured several more ships including - transports *Trio*, *Parthenia*, and *Hastings*. To complete his devastation, Wheeler captured and destroyed the gunboat *Slidell*.

Wheeler's raids and destruction gave the Union Army pause and was the major factor in General Rosecrans increasing his cavalry presence in order to deal with Wheeler's troops. On the other hand, General Braxton Bragg was proud of Wheeler and his accomplishments, and asked the Confederate Congress to promote him to Major General as a reward. The Confederate Congress went a little further than that even by passing a resolution honoring his achievements. That resolution read - "That the thanks of Congress are due and are hereby tendered to Brigadier General Wheeler and the officers and men of his command for his daring and successful attacks upon the enemy's gunboats and transports in the Cumberland River."

After Bragg's withdrawal to Tullahoma, the Confederate and Union Armies faced a period of down time to replenish themselves. Wheeler knew that without constant work, his men would grow bored and cantankerous and possibly even desert the army, so he devised a plan to keep his men busy. He asked Bragg and received permission to attack nearby Fort Donelson at the mouth of the

Cumberland River which only had a small garrison of Union defenders.

The plan to attack Fort Donelson was simple, but it required Wheeler to join forces with his cavalry counterpart General Forrest. Forrest did not like the idea of attacking the fort, complaining that his men were tired, they did not have enough ammunition for the battle, and that if the fort was taken, the Confederates would not be able to hold it for any length of time. Even with Forrest's disagreement and complaint, Wheeler continued planning the raid to be carried out in the beginning of February.

On February 3rd Wheeler was at the command of all cavalry forces as they approached Fort Donelson. He sent a letter of surrender to the garrison commander who refused and forced Wheeler to send his men in to battle positions. The right flank of the cavalry was under the command of General Wharton and the left flank was under the command of General Forrest. Both units were ordered to dismount and attack on foot. General Wharton's men were able to take the right side of the fort, but Forrest refused the order to dismount his men and they were turned away during his attack on the left flank. With the excessive battle, Forrest – as he feared – began to run low on ammo and ordered his men to retreat, even though the right flank of the fort had been captured. This of course caused Wheeler to call off the attack and slink back to Tullahoma.

Wheeler had incorrectly gauged the amount of supplies needed to win the day, and yes, Forrest had discounted orders causing the

retreat, but like every other battle, it is the commanding officer who must accept the responsibility for the defeat, and this he did. In his after action report, Wheeler took full responsibility for the fiasco of an attack on Fort Donelson. But, this did little to appease the growing separation between him and Forrest. After the battle, Forrest refused to ever serve under Wheeler again. Ironically, Bragg kept Wheeler as Chief of Cavalry, but Forrest did not have to report to him. Therefore, the Army of Tennessee faced 1863 with a major divide in its cavalry forces, and a feud between two of its best generals.

After the division of the cavalry, Forrest was sent to Alabama to contain the forces of Union General Albert Streight while Wheeler set about reordering his command and writing a book on cavalry tactics. The book became *A Revised System of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, C.S.A.* This book became the guideline of drill, discipline, and tactics for the Army of Tennessee. In the book, Wheeler advocated the use of mounted infantry over heavy cavalry. The current use of heavy cavalry was based upon the European system of cavalry, but it did not work well with the rough and wooded terrain where the Army of Tennessee mostly fought. Wheeler noted that a trooper that could ride in a charge or fight as an infantry soldier was much more useful in covering retreats, raids, and scouting parties, and therefore more desirable.

In late June of 1863, the Union Army moved into Nashville. General Bragg was not yet ready for a fight and opted to move his forces to Chattanooga. This move left most of Tennessee under the crippling control of the Union. While moving his troops, Bragg ordered Wheeler to stay behind and slow the advance of the Union Army, which was a task that Wheeler and his men were quite adept at. This allowed the Confederate forces to move and settle into Chattanooga without enemy harassment but, the stay would not last long.

On June 28th the Union Army was on the move from Nashville, heading toward Chattanooga. Wheeler's cavalry was on picket duty and spotted Federal troops. According to Wheeler's report, they were in every mountain cove southwest of Chattanooga. Bragg, still unsure of what actions to take, packed up his army and headed southeast into Chickamauga, Georgia. But, as history came to show, the move was a mistake.

Wheeler and his troopers fought in the Battle of Chickamauga, but nothing of their actions stood out any more than the other units involved. It was after the battle had ended that Wheeler was to become most valuable. On September 22nd Wheeler received orders to cross the Tennessee River, intercept, and destroy the Union's lines of communications. The Union Army at this time had pulled back into Chattanooga and had only two supply routes – the first being the Tennessee River, and the second being overland supply through the Sequatchie Valley. The Confederates

knew that if they could sever these two lines, they could starve the Union soldiers out of Chattanooga.

Generals Pope and Longstreet took positions on Lookout Mountain guarding the Tennessee River and Wheeler, who took control of the majority of The Army of Tennessee's cavalry troops, was to intercept and destroy the wagon trains on the overland supply route. It was here that he showcased what the mounted infantry was capable of. Even fighting against re-enforced Federal units, the amount of damage Wheeler's troopers inflicted was staggering. While it has been difficult to prove the extent of the Union losses, the most conservative of the estimates indicates 500 wagons, 1800 mules, 500 tons of food and almost 600 tons of ammunition were destroyed. Along with the physical destruction, Wheeler also tarnished the reputations of half a dozen Union Officers by besting them with a much smaller force.

These raids had the expected desired results on the Union forces holed up in Chattanooga. After more than a week without re-supply, the Union soldiers were set back to half rations which demoralized the imbedded force. After a few more days, the rations were reduced to a fourth further demoralizing the troops. Finally, a special boat from Bridgeport, Alabama was able to penetrate the line in an attempt to re-supply the starving Union forces, but while they did manage to break the line, they were not successful in bringing a large amount of supplies through. Therefore, the Union soldiers under siege in Chattanooga

were forced to endure until Longstreet's and Pope's forces were driven off the crest of Lookout Mountain.

Even when the Confederate forces were routed from the mountain, Wheeler and his cavalry continued to raid through Tennessee, first capturing McMinnville and then on to Shelbyville to find that it had been already been abandoned. It was in Shelbyville that Wheeler discovered his troops were being tailed by Union forces, so he decided to once again cross the Tennessee River and take his soldiers down into Muscle Shoals, Alabama and the relative safety that it offered.

The rest in Muscle Shoals would be quite short-lived for Wheeler and his cavalry troopers. Confederate President Jefferson Davis himself ordered Wheeler's troopers to leave North Alabama to reinforce General Bragg near Chattanooga. Rosecrans had been relieved of duty and replaced by General Ulysses Grant who had managed to open a supply line between Chattanooga and Bridgeport, Alabama, causing Bragg to fall back to Missionary Ridge and on the defensive.

Once Wheeler hooked up with Bragg's forces near Missionary Ridge, his forces, along with Longstreet's, were ordered to attack Union forces that had seized Knoxville, while Bragg kept his forces in opposition of Grant's army in Chattanooga. Once again, Wheeler and his mounted infantry were the point of the spear driving the Union Army into the city of Knoxville. Once this occurred, Wheeler's mounted infantry joined Longstreet's infantry in the trenches

surrounding the soldiers in Knoxville. Sadly, Knoxville proved too strong to be taken, and Wheeler's troopers were ordered back to Missionary Ridge to cover General Bragg's retreat from Grant's army. Wheeler arrived to find the Army of Tennessee in chaos with no one covering their retreat, and for the third time in a major campaign, placed himself and his men between his army and advancing Federal forces. It was the doggedness of Wheeler's forces that caused General Grant to halt his pursuit of the retreating Confederates into Ringgold, Georgia.

December 1, 1863 saw General Bragg resigning his commission as commander of the Army of Tennessee which resulted in General Joseph Johnston assuming command on December 16, 1863 with an approximate strength of 36,000. Of this number, 6,000 were cavalry and most were under Wheeler's command. Of this 6,000, only about 2,400 were fit for duty. In addition to the inadequate number of soldiers, Johnston found that Dalton, Georgia offered little in the way of a defensible position. Johnston decided to move his men, and ordered Wheeler to guard duty while the army moved. It so happened that Wheeler's soldiers met a detachment of Union forces who were attempting a two-pronged attack on Atlanta. Wheeler succeeded in delaying the Federals long enough so that General Grant called off a two-pronged attack on Atlanta. Grant then moved his troops north to Virginia while Union General Sherman occupied Chattanooga. This allowed Grant's

forces to cross the Rappahannock River in Virginia to place his army between Confederate General Robert E. Lee's forces and Fredericksburg, while Sherman placed his forces at Tunnel Hill, Georgia.

It was Wheeler's forces near Tunnel Hill that received the brunt of Sherman's attacks, but with his mounted cavalry tactics, his men were able to fend off the considerably larger Union forces and dwindle their cavalry forces, thus forcing Sherman to ask for cavalry reinforcements from Grant.

On May 14, 1864, Sherman caught up with Johnson's army in Resaca, Georgia where a three day battle began. During the battle, Wheeler dismounted his cavalry and placed them in the trenches fighting alongside the infantry soldiers. Inevitably, Johnston was unable to hold his position and began a retreat deeper into Georgia. The retreat gave reason for Wheeler to remount his troopers and do what they did best, delay the enemy. Sherman would later report that the Confederate cavalry was everywhere. His soldiers found roads barricaded and strategic positions defended by cavalry troopers. As soon as they would overtake their positions, they would pop up somewhere else a short distance down the road. This was only Wheeler demonstrating the ability of his mounted infantry to fully cover the retreat of the Army of Tennessee.

The Confederates continued their retreat by turning south towards Atlanta. Johnston ordered his men to fortify the slopes of Kennesaw Mountain near Adairsville, Georgia. On May 26, 1864, the Union

launched yet another assault on the tired Southern troops. On the first day of the attack, the Confederates were able to repulse their attackers, but lost some of their ground on the second day of fighting. With the Union Army outmanning the Southern forces, General Johnston could not afford to keep going toe to toe with the Union Army, so he devised a plan that he hoped would distract the Federals from their dogged attack. Wheeler would of course be called upon to once again go behind the enemy lines and cause chaos in the Federal line by tearing up railroad tracks and cutting Sherman's lines of communication. This plan helped to slow the Northern advance, but in reality did little for the cause.

Sherman was able to continue his raid into the South and in July, Johnston was replaced by John Bell Hood, who was tasked by the Confederate Government to press the attack on the Union Army, and after the fall of Atlanta, Hood turned his army to Nashville. Wheeler's cavalry did not continue with the rest of the army, but remained behind - effectively the only force left to oppose Sherman in his "March to the Sea." It was during this time that complaints against Wheeler and his cavalry began to rise. As a result, Wheeler lost his command to Wade Hampton, which did little to cull the complaints.

Wheeler continued hit and run engagements with Sherman's army into 1865. His forces won several victories, including a large victory at Aiken, South Carolina, but the days were numbered for the Confederacy as the Army of Tennessee was

crushed at Nashville. In the meantime, Grant's Army was slowly strangling the capitol at Richmond. These setbacks did not deter Wheeler from continuing the fight, as long as he possibly could.

Once Richmond and the Confederate Government fell, Wheeler took a band of his most trusted soldiers and tried to link up with President Davis to provide protection. He and his men were captured on May 11, 1865 near the town of Washington, Georgia. It was then that he met President Davis – on the prison boat that took Wheeler to Fort Delaware and Davis to Fort Monroe. Davis and his entourage had been captured the day before Wheeler. Wheeler was incarcerated at Fort Delaware before his parole in June, 1865.

The end of the Civil War brought about change for Wheeler, but it would also be a time that he would surpass all of his peers in the Confederate Army.

Once he was released from Fort Delaware on June 8, 1865, Wheeler returned to his home in Augusta, Georgia but he would not be there long. He moved from Augusta to New Orleans, Louisiana where after only a short time, he soon became a partner in a carriage company. During this time he proposed to his beloved Daniella whom he had met during the war.

Wheeler and Daniella Jones Sherrod were wed in February of 1886 and the couple lived in New Orleans while he continued to prosper in the carriage business. During this time, Daniella became homesick and the two moved to her inherited home known as *Pond*

Spring in Lawrence County, Alabama. Wheeler became a successful planter, before becoming a local attorney and entering into politics.

During their life together, Joseph and his wife produced a total of seven children. Five of the siblings were girls: Lucy, Annie, Ella, Julia, and Carrie, while the other two were boys: Joseph Jr. and Thomas.

His popularity in Lawrence County, along with his experience in the war, in farming, in business, and in the legal system, compelled Wheeler to run for government office. In November, 1880, Wheeler was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in what is still known as one of the most controversial elections in Alabama history.

Wheeler's opponent in the election of 1880 was William M. Lowe the incumbent for the seat. Wheeler was declared the winner of the campaign but Lowe challenged the win and the contested race went to court while Wheeler assumed the position of Congressman. After more than a year of contention, the 1880 vote was overturned and Lowe re-took the Congressional seat in early June of 1882, however he would only hold the position for four months before passing away from tuberculosis. This set the stage for an emergency election which Wheeler won, and he resumed his political role for the final few weeks of the two-year term.

Being weary from the legal battle for his Congressional post, Wheeler opted not to run again for the seat in the 1882 election. Instead, he chose to back candidate Luke Pryor. By the time the 1884 election came

around, Wheeler was again ready for the tribulations and won the seat. It was the start of a 16-year, eight election run before he resigned his post in 1900.

While in Congress, Wheeler was a popular statesman. He went above and beyond to help establish policies that would help rebuild the Southern states whose citizens still suffered many years after the war. During his tenure, he served on many committees, but two of the more important were Committee on Expenditures in the Department of the Treasury (of which he rose to chairman) and the Committee on Territories.

Wheeler was serving in Congress in April of 1898 when the government declared that a "state of war" existed between the United States and Spain over political movements on the island of Cuba. Wheeler thought he could do more good during the war as a soldier instead of a politician and petitioned for active service in the U.S. Army. President McKinley appointed him Major General of U.S. Volunteers.

This appointment made him second in command of the V Corps with his commander being General William Shafter. In June, 1898, Wheeler and his men (notably among them future president Theodore Roosevelt) sailed for Cuba with orders to scout in advance for a U.S. landing, but not to engage the enemy until U.S. forces had landed.

The plan to wait for the forces to land fell apart. On June 24th, Wheeler received reports from American troops that the Spanish Army was digging in with a large field gun to bombard the invading

army. At the same time, reports from Cuban allies told Wheeler that the Spaniards were actually preparing to abandon their position. Wheeler opted to attack the position and take the gun even though the Cuban units he asked for support denied his request. This battle, which was the first major engagement of the war, became known as the Battle of Las Guasimas.

The Battle of Las Guasimas was, at the most, a defeat for the U.S. and at the least, a standoff. The Americans were unable to overtake the Spaniards' positions, and were repelled on several different attacks. The end result was that the Spaniards followed their initial plan and fell back into the city of Santiago. A well-known legend says that, in the heat of combat, Wheeler supposedly yelled out to his men "Let's go boys, we've got the damn Yankees on the run again!"

Not long after Las Guasimas, Wheeler took ill and remained so during the majority of the military campaign in Cuba. He relinquished his command to General Samuel Sumner until July. At the onset of the famous Battle of San Juan Hill, Wheeler heard the artillery and had to join the battle, and that proved to be just what the army needed. Wheeler gave orders that captured the high ground, and his troops were able to hold the hill against the Spaniards. Wheeler's men actually held the city during the fourteen day "Siege of Santiago" which was a major United States victory in the very short war that for the most part, ended the fighting in Cuba.

Once the fighting ended, Wheeler played an instrumental part in peace negotiations with the Spaniards, and returned to the United States as both a hero and symbol of a nation healing from the wounds of the Civil War.

Immediately following the Spanish American War, the United States found itself involved in another conflict, this time in the Philippines against Filipino revolutionaries seeking freedom from the United States. Of course, if there was conflict, Wheeler wanted to be there.

Wheeler arrived in the theater in August, 1899, and was in command of the First Brigade of the Second Division under the command of General Arthur McArthur. He maintained this command until January, 1900. It was during this time that Wheeler was transferred from the Volunteer (or the V Corps) to the regular army where he was commissioned as a Brigadier General. He became the only individual in history to hold the position of Brigadier General in both the Confederate and Union Armies.

Just like his out-of-context order to fight the "damn Yankees," another legend surrounding Wheeler popped up during the Philippine-American War. It was reported that Wheeler came upon a marching soldier complaining about the heat and exhaustion. Upon hearing the soldier's complaints, Wheeler dismounted his horse, took the man's pack and rifle, and ordered the man to get on the horse while the General marched the rest of the way with the infantry (at the age of 63).

Wheeler left the fighting of the Philippine-American War in June, 1900 with his appointment to Brigadier General to assume command of the second iteration of the Department of the Lakes. He was over an administrative division which was subordinate to the Military Division of the Atlantic. He would only hold this position for about three months before he retired from the service and Congress in September, 1900. The Department of the Lakes would only be kept as a U.S. Military Command until 1910, at which time it was abolished.

Upon his retirement, Wheeler spent the next several years traveling around the country and keeping a rapid social schedule. In the winter of 1905, he went to stay with his sister in Brooklyn, New York where he spent almost every night attending dinners and social functions. The schedule routinely left him exhausted, but his family did not worry because Wheeler had spent his entire life pressing his endurance. In January, 1906, he was diagnosed with pleuropneumonia in both lungs. He passed away at the home of his sister, with his family surrounding him on the evening of January 25, 1906. A sub-header in a *New York Times* article about Wheelers death read "his illness was brought on by the strain of exacting social duties." Wheeler's funeral was held at St. Thomas's Episcopal Church in New York and he was interred at Arlington National Cemetery. He is only one of two Confederate Generals to be interred at the National Cemetery. All in all it was a

quiet, fitting, and eloquent end for a American history.
man that played a large part in our



The Narrative can be found in the TVCWRT book published in 2012 titled, *North Alabama Civil War Generals; 13 Wore Gray, the Rest Blue*. Complements of the TVCWRT.