

April, 2004

414 Meeting

Vol. 25 #8

Tonight's Program:

General George Brinton McClellan



George B. McClellan was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on December 3, 1826. He was the third of five children born to Dr. George and Elizabeth (Brinton) McClellan. His family moved within the upper ranks of Philadelphia society.

Young George entered school at the age of 5. He attended private schools and a prep school before entering the Military Academy at West Point in 1842, to become part of the famous class of 1846. At the age of 15, he was the youngest of the West Point arrivals. In 1846, he had earned the distinction of graduating second in his class of 59. The class of 1846 contributed 20 generals to the Union and Confederate armies.

In the Mexican War, he won brevets of 1st Lieutenant and Captain for his zeal, gallantry, and ability in constructing roads and bridges.

McClellan's other early accomplishments include surveyor of possible transcontinental railroad routes. He was sent abroad to observe the Crimean War. George McClellan had also proven himself to be an efficient organizer which would be his claim to fame in the Civil War.

Tonight's Speaker:

Thomas J. Rowland

Thomas J. Rowland is an instructor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. He is here to discuss his book, *George B. McClelland and Civil War History: In the Shadow of Grant and Sherman*.

"McClellan can scarcely be elevated to the ranks of the great captains of war," Mr. Rowland avows, "but he was hardly the worst that [the Civil War] dragged onto center stage."

Date: **Wednesday,
April 14, 2004**

Place: **The Cleveland
Playhouse Club
8501 Carnegie Ave.**

Time: **Drinks 6 PM
Dinner 7 PM**

Reservations: **Please Call
JAC Communications
(216) 861-5588**

Meal choice: **Pork Loin or
Brisket of Beef**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

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Editor_ THE CHARGER- Dick Crews

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable is open to anyone with an interest in the American Civil War. The 128 members of the Roundtable, whose membership varies from 14 to 90 years old, share a belief that the American Civil War was the **defining** event in United States history.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE— APRIL, 2004

It is hard to believe that there are only two more meetings in this year's roundtable program. Maybe it would feel more like spring if I wasn't still shoveling snow! Anyway, we had a great meeting in March if not great weather. Kelly O'Grady gave a fine presentation on the Army of Northern Virginia's Irish contingent. I learned quite a lot from this talk and I hope the rest of those in attendance did as well. This month, Dr. Thomas Rowland of the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh will give us a different perspective of General George McClellan. I enjoyed his book and am looking forward to Dr. Rowland's presentation.

If you are interested in a guided day trip to Johnson's Island, please contact William Vodrey. Dr. Bush has agreed to show us around the island.

Get your dinner reservations in early and I will see you next month.

Warren McClelland

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2003 Maynard Bauer	1980 Charles Spiegle
2002 Bill McGrath	1979 William Bates
2001 William Vodrey	1978 Richard McCrae
2000 Bob Boyda	1977 James Chapman
1999 Dick Crews	1976 Milton Holmes
1998 John Moore	1975 Thomas Gretter
1997 Dan Zeiser	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1996 John Sutula	1973 Arthur Jordan
1995 Norton London	1972 Bernard Drews
1994 Robert Battisti	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1993 Kevin Callahan	1970 Frank Schuhle
1992 Bob Baucher	1969 Donald Heckaman
1991 Joe Tirpak	1968 Frank Moran
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1967 William Schlesinger
1989 Neil Glaser	1966 Donald Hamill
1988 Martin Graham	1965 Lester Swift
1987 George Vourlojanis	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1986 Tim Beatty	1963 Paul Guenther
1985 Brian Kowell	1962 Edward Downer
1984 Neil Evans	1961 Charles Clarke
1983 William Victory	1960 Howard Preston
1982 John Harkness	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1981 Thomas Geschke	1958 George Farr, Jr.
	1957 Kenneth Grant



**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2003/2004 SCHEDULE**

September 10, 2003



Lee vs. Burnside

**Fredericks
-burg**

**Frank
O'Reilly**

October 8, 2003



Grays
on
Public Square
1839

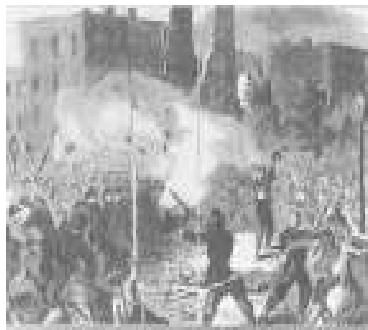
Painting by Joseph Parker
Courtesy of the Western Reserve
Historical Society

**The Cleveland Grays
George Vourlojanis**

November 12, 2003

**New York
Draft Riots**

**William
Vodrey**



December 10, 2003



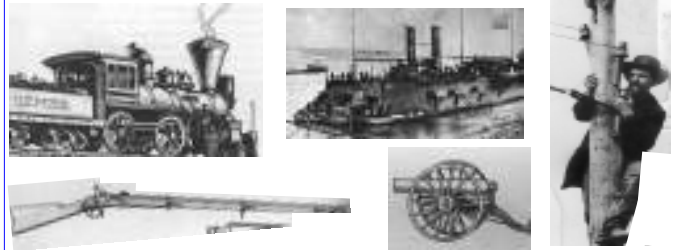
Clara Barton

**Carol
Starre-Kmiecik**

January 14, 2004

The Great Debate: What equipment or innovation had the most effect on the Civil War?

Moderator: Dick Crews



February 11, 2004

Johnson's Island

David Bush



March 10, 2004

**Irish
in the
Army of Northern Virginia**

Kelly O'Grady



April 14, 2004

**George B.
McClellan**

Thomas Rowland



May 12, 2004



**Lincoln
and His Generals**

Norty London



USS Abraham Lincoln

Today's Navy and the Civil War

by William F.B. Vodrey

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The United States Navy, steeped in tradition and history, honors its remarkable service in the Civil War through the names of many of its ships today.

First and foremost is the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, a *Nimitz*-class aircraft carrier commissioned in 1989. One of the largest warships in the world, the "Abe" is named after the sixteenth President, during whose administration the Navy grew to unprecedented size and played a vital role in the Union war effort. Returning to her homeport of San Diego after a lengthy deployment to the Middle East, the supercarrier was the scene of President Bush's controversial "Mission Accomplished" photo op on May 1, 2003.

Most *Ticonderoga*-class guided missile cruisers are named after great battles of American history. Quite a few bear proud names from the Civil War, including the USS *Mobile Bay*, the *Antietam* (which historian Shelby Foote once toured, remarking afterwards, "Anyone who takes on the U.S. Navy has got to be crazy"), as well as the *Chancellorsville*, *Gettysburg*, *Shiloh*, *Vicksburg*, and *Port Royal*. The *Ticonderoga*-class ships have the sophisticated AEGIS sensor system, and are often components of carrier battle groups, providing surface-to-air defenses against enemy attack. Many of these ships display blue and gray in their insignia, commemorating the Civil War history behind their names.

The *Spruance*-class destroyer USS *Cushing* honors William Barker Cushing, one of the great naval heroes of the Civil War, celebrated for leading the daring mission which sank the Confederate ironclad CSS *Albemarle* on October 28, 1864. The *Cushing*, commissioned in 1979, has been in the news in recent years for her patrol duties in the Persian Gulf, enforcing UN Security Council sanctions against Iraq before Gulf War II. The *Arleigh Burke*-class guided missile destroyer USS *David Glasgow Farragut*, named after the first admiral of the U.S. Navy and the hero of Mobile Bay, is now being built and is expected to be commissioned in 2006. She will be the fifth Navy ship to bear the name.

Nuclear attack submarines (SSNs) of the *Los Angeles* class are usually named after prominent American cities. Several bear the names of cities with Civil War significance, although not necessarily for that reason. Among them are the USS *Memphis*, *Norfolk*, *Louisville*, *Alexandria*, *Asheville*, *Annapolis*, *Hampton*, and *Columbia*. The USS *Hartford*, commissioned in 1994, honors both the Connecticut state capital and Admiral Farragut's flagship.

William Vodrey is a Cleveland Magistrate and past President of the Cleveland CWRT.



USS Hartford (SSN768) Los Angeles-class submarine



Admiral David Farragut's flagship
USS Hartford

Strategic missile submarines (SSBNs) of the *Ohio* class carry Trident or Trident II ballistic missiles and are usually named, as traditionally were battleships, after American states. Perhaps most notable among these for its Civil War significance (after *Ohio*, of course!) is the USS *Alabama*, commissioned in 1885. The CSS *Alabama* was one of the Confederacy's most celebrated (or hated, depending on your allegiance) commerce raiders. She preyed on Union shipping for almost two years under the command of the flamboyant Capt. Raphael Semmes, before being sunk by the steam sloop-of-war USS *Kearsarge* in a dramatic naval duel off the coast of Cherbourg, France, on June 19, 1864. (Semmes himself was honored with a destroyer during World War II, as was his opponent, Capt. John A. Winslow of the *Kearsarge*). Movie buffs will remember the submarine USS *Alabama* from the 1995 Gene Hackman-Denzel Washington thriller, "Crimson Tide."

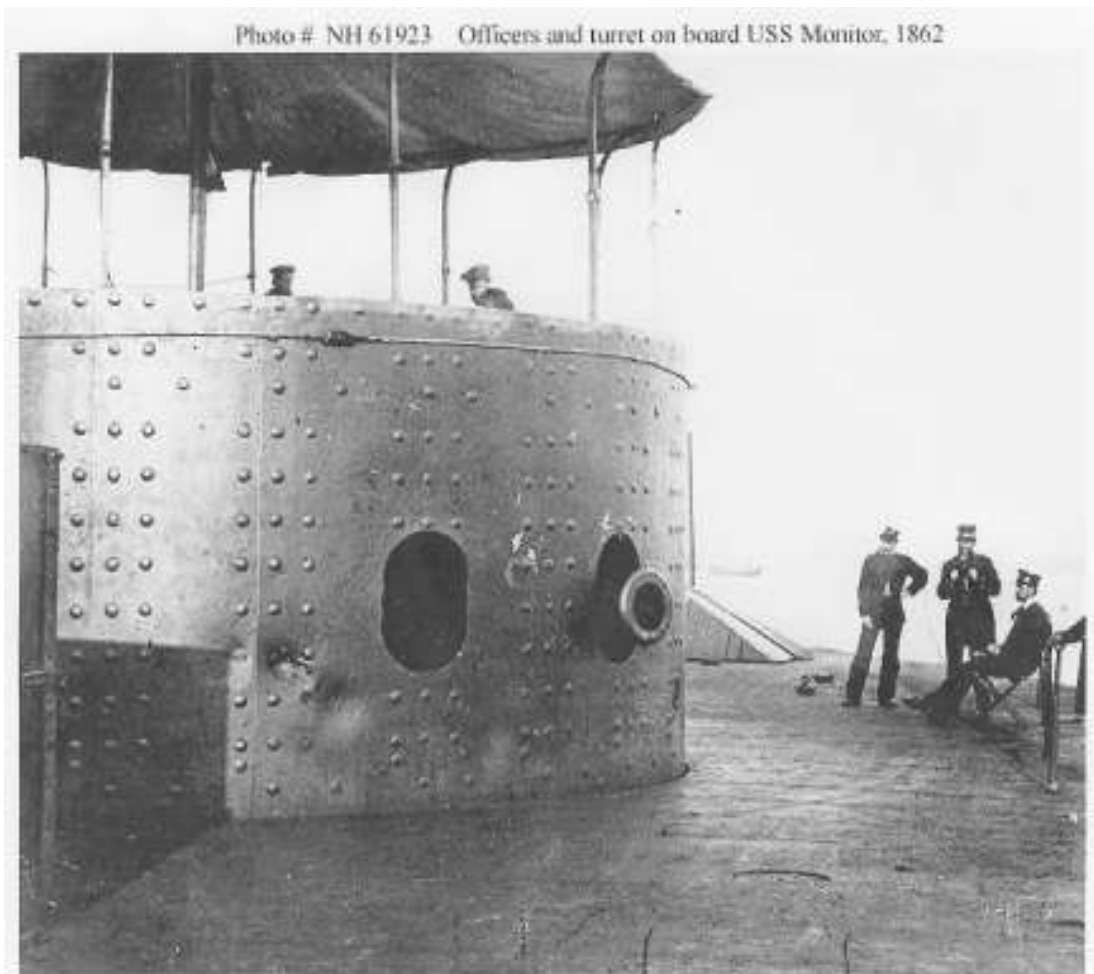
The legacy of the USS *Kearsarge* lives on as a *Wasp*-class amphibious warfare carrier; she is the fifth Navy warship to bear the name. Then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell spoke at her 1992 launching in Pascagoula, Miss., deep in the heart of Dixie. Gen. Powell honored her namesake's Civil War service while tactfully omitting any mention that she'd sunk one of the Confederacy's most famous ships. The modern *Kearsarge* is perhaps best known for her role in rescuing U.S. Air Force fighter pilot Scott O'Grady, downed over Bosnia in June 1995. Her AV-8B Harrier II fighter jets are flown by Marine aviators, echoing the role played by Marine gunners aboard the original *Kearsarge*.

The USS *Virginia*, first of a new class of attack submarines, is to be commissioned this June. Other planned ships in the class are the *Texas*, *Hawaii*, and *North Carolina* (two of which, at least, have a Civil War story behind them). It's a little odd that these subs will be named after states when the *Ohio*-class Trident submarines already hold that distinction, but the Navy in recent years has unfortunately departed from its longstanding custom of naming all ships in a class after the same subject (i.e. states, battles, cities, noted admirals, etc.) Since there is to be a USS *Virginia*, commemorating the most famous Confederate ironclad, I thought it only appropriate that one of the ships in the class (30 are planned) be named the USS *Monitor*. I've written some letters, but must admit that I haven't made much headway in persuading either Congress or the Navy to honor the "cheesebox on a raft" which so famously fought the CSS *Virginia* to a draw at Hampton Roads, Va. on March 9, 1862. The last USS *Monitor* was a transport ship which served in the Pacific during and just after World War II.

The *Whidbey Island*-class cargo dock landing ship *USS Harpers Ferry*, commissioned in 1995, honors the Virginia town (now in West Virginia) where John Brown's abortive October 1859 anti-slavery raid set the stage for the Civil War. The names of two amphibious transport dock ships also recall important Civil War sites. The *Austin*-class *USS Nashville* honors both the Tennessee state capital and the December 15-16, 1864 battle which shattered Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee. The *San Antonio*-class *USS New Orleans*'s name honors the Crescent City of Louisiana, Andrew Jackson's great 1815 victory over the British, and Admiral Farragut's 1862 capture of the Confederacy's largest city.

President Lincoln fully recognized the Navy's vital role in securing a Union victory during the Civil War. He sent a letter to political supporters in Illinois in August 1863, noting the recent victorious efforts of the Federal armies at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and went on to write, "Nor must Uncle Sam's web-feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins [the Navy's men and ships] have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been, and made their tracks. Thanks to all."

As a nation, we remain grateful still.



***The U.S. Navy has so far failed to name a modern ship
the USS "Cheesebox on a Raft."***

A Visit to Johnson's Island

Written by Dale Thomas © 2004



Confederate Cemetery—Johnson Island

206 Confederates are buried under white Georgia marble headstones installed in 1890.

Last year on a beautiful early autumn day, I talked my wife, Lea, into a brief trip to Johnson's Island. Actually, I was bringing her back home from her sister's farm near Huron, and she had no choice in the matter. We exited off Route 2, taking a wrong turn onto Route 163 which took us to the north, instead of the south, side of Marblehead Peninsula. At that moment in time, a huge yacht was being transported to off season storage, and I had no way of passing the flatbed truck as it traveled down the narrow road at a snail's pace. Finally, the truck turned off, and our next challenge was finding the causeway to the island.

The information center in Marblehead was closed for the year, and we did not see any signs on Bayshore Road that pointed the way to our destination. Fortunately, we saw a woman at her mail box and stopped to ask directions. Laughing,

she told us the Islanders dislike outsiders disturbing their privacy, but a historical marker, placed away from the road, was back the other way towards Marblehead. At the corner of Gaydos Drive, we found the plaque which was put there, in spite of the Islanders' paranoia, by the Ottawa County and Ohio Historical Societies.

JOHNSON'S ISLAND MILITARY PRISON CAMP

In 1861 the United States Army established a prisoner of war camp on Johnson's Island, approximately 1 mile south of this point. The camp, which housed captured Confederate officers, was maintained until 1865 when it was dismantled. The camp cemetery contains the graves of 206 men who died as a result of disease, wounds or by execution while incarcerated.

Expecting to see an armed guard on duty, we drove up to a toll gate which was automated and paid the dollar required of those who were not Islanders. (Since they were glad to get rid of us, we did not have to pay another dollar returning to the main land.) We traveled across the barely-two-lane causeway, glad it was not winter with snow storms blowing off Lake Erie and into Sandusky Bay. Once on the island, one felt like an un-welcomed stranger being watched by eyes behind curtained windows.

Johnson's Island is quiet and secluded, and one can appreciate why the Islanders want to keep it that way, but these people chose to live in a place of historical significance, and therefore, like it or not, they have to share the site with the outside world. The building of a community center immediately adjacent to the Confederate cemetery showed a lack of sensitivity for the dead of our nation's costliest war. For years there was speculation that some graves were unmarked and even located beyond the cemetery fence. Non-evasive thermal imagery in 2000 and 2002 confirmed this assumption. There is no way of telling if other unknown burials were destroyed during the building of the community center.

In June of 2003, the United Daughters of the Confederacy dedicated two monuments, one of which showed the unmarked graves. The association will be holding Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies at noon on April 24, 2004. For more information see the CCWRT website (clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com) for the link to the Johnson's Island Memorial Project website. Also see the CCWRT website for the link to Professor David R. Bush's continuing work on the prison's history. He needs volunteers and donations.

Dale Thomas is a retired history teacher and Historian of the Cleveland CWRT.

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**One of the most controversial figures of the
American Civil War**

George B. McClellan

Wednesday, April 14, 2004

