

April, 2006

432nd Meeting

Vol. 27 #8

Tonight's Program:

A New Framework for Civil War Military History

Richard McMurry

According to an old saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." For the April Roundtable meeting, this saying should be reversed to, "The more things stay the same, the more they change." Everyone agrees that the events of the Civil War are history and, as such, cannot change. However, the perception and interpretation of these events are constantly re-evaluated by historians. This is what makes history a dynamic field and not the stagnant pursuit some people incorrectly ascribe to it. The April Roundtable speaker, Richard M. McMurry, will focus his historian's perspective on the military aspect of the Civil War and share his insight regarding how we should rethink Civil War military history. Perhaps nothing else in American history has been written about more than the Civil War, and much of this writing has been devoted to the war's military activities. Like all military activities, those of the Civil War inspire awe and sorrow, but, on a higher level, have a more profound significance for our nation. In this context, the Civil War helped shape our nation in ways that continue to affect our country. While the issues of the Civil War continue to simmer, and the decisions regarding these issues, once thought to be final, continue to be transformed, the military events of the war continue to be viewed in the new light of our ever changing contemporary perspective. It is with this mindset that Richard McMurry will reveal to us a "New Framework for Civil War Military History."

Tonight's Speaker:

Richard M. McMurry

Richard M. McMurry, a native of Atlanta, is a freelance writer and speaker. He received a B.A. in history from the Virginia Military Institute. After two years of service in the U.S. Army, he received his M.A. and Ph.D. from Emory University. Richard has taught history at the college level and authored numerous articles and books in his more than twenty years as a freelance writer. He has spoken to many Civil War groups, schools, and colleges and has served as a guide/historian for many tour groups.

***Date:* Wednesday,
April 12, 2006**

***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:* Grilled Sirloin or
Vegetarian Dinner**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Dave Carrino** (440) 843-9088
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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2005 Mel Maurer	1980 Charles Spiegle
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2003 Maynard Bauer	1978 Richard McCrae
2002 Bill McGrath	1977 James Chapman
2001 William Vodrey	1976 Milton Holmes
2000 Bob Boyda	1975 Thomas Gretter
1999 Dick Crews	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1998 John Moore	1973 Arthur Jordan
1997 Dan Zeiser	1972 Bernard Drews
1996 John Sutula	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1995 Norton London	1970 Frank Schuhle
1994 Robert Battisti	1969 Donald Heckaman
1993 Kevin Callahan	1968 Frank Moran
1992 Bob Baucher	1967 William Schlesinger
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1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1965 Lester Swift
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1988 Martin Graham	1963 Paul Guenther
1987 George Vourlojanis	1962 Edward Downer
1986 Tim Beatty	1961 Charles Clarke
1985 Brian Kowell	1960 Howard Preston
1984 Neil Evans	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1983 William Victory	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1982 John Harkness	1957 Kenneth Grant
1981 Thomas Geschke	

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

APRIL, 2006

Hdqrs. Cvlnd. Civil War Rtbl.
April 12, 2006

The March Roundtable meeting brought a return to a sweltering courtroom in the summer of 1865. The heat came not only from the ambient temperature, but from the searing proceedings taking place. Henry Wirz was on trial for the atrocities that occurred at Andersonville Prison while he was commandant. The March meeting recreated the court-martial of Henry Wirz thanks to the stellar efforts of fifteen members of the Roundtable. Based on actual testimony, it was superbly done and brought to a climax through the testimony of witnesses until Wirz, himself, took the stand in his own defense. The interplay between defendant Henry Wirz, defense counsel Otis Baker, and judge advocate Norton Chipman was thoroughly engrossing, as were the summations by Baker and Chipman. In the end, the Roundtable members voted for acquittal by the narrow margin of 30 to 27. My thanks to Dale Thomas for an excellent script and all of the Roundtable members who brought the court-martial to life. Everyone who participated in this endeavor is to be congratulated for an outstanding performance.

At the April Roundtable meeting, the winning ticket will be drawn for the Mort Künstler print, "Morgan's Ohio Raid." The April meeting will be the final opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for the Künstler print. The April meeting will also be the initial opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for a print of the *Monitor* and the *Virginia*, which has been generously donated by William Vodrey. Tickets for this print will also be sold at the May meeting, when the winning ticket will be drawn.

Very respy. your obt. srvt.
D.A. Carrino

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2005/2006 SCHEDULE**

September 14, 2005

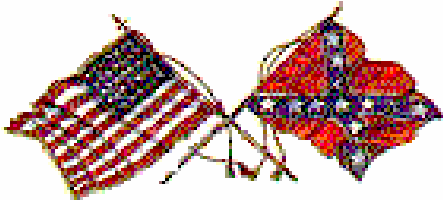
**T h e y
H a d
N a v i e s,
T o o???**



Bruce Smith

October 12, 2005

How the Civil War Still Lives



James I. Robertson Jr.

November 9, 2005

**The Transformation of
Abolitionism in War and
Peace: Oberlin, Ohio as a Case
Study**

**Carol Lasser and Gary J.
Kornblith, Oberlin College**

December 14, 2005

**The Supply for Tomorrow
Must Not Fail: The Civil War of
Captain Simon J. Perkins Jr., a
Civil War Quartermaster**

**Lennette Taylor
Summit County Historical Society**

January 11, 20056

The Great Debate

*The Most Overrated Leader
(Military or Political) of the
Civil War*

Moderator: William Vodrey

February 8, 2006

**Joshua Lawrence
Chamberlain:
Scholar, Citizen,
Soldier
William F. B. Vodrey**



March 8, 2006

**The Trial of Henry
Wirz
A Play by
Dale Thomas**



April 12, 2006

**A New Framework for Civil
War Military History**

Richard McMurry

May 10, 2006

**Union Jacks:
Yankee Sailors
In the Civil
War**



Michael Bennett

JOHN AND FANNY

John Fazio, CWRT Vice President, Last in a Series

At Gettysburg, on the first day, John, ordered to stem the advance of Howard's corps against the Confederate left, overwhelmed the line posted to protect the Union right. During the melee that ensued, on what became known as Blocher's Knoll, but which is now known as Barlow's Knoll, he saw Frances C. Barlow, who was trying to rally his men, fall. With the knoll largely cleared of the enemy and now littered with Union dead, John rode up and saw Barlow lying on his back, the last thin reeds of life apparently slipping from his grasp. He dismounted to attend to his dying foe. But let us hear him tell it:

Riding forward with my rapidly advancing lines, I discovered that brave officer lying upon his back, with the July sun pouring its rays into his pale face. He was surrounded by the Union dead, and his own life seemed to be rapidly ebbing out. Quickly dismounting and lifting his head, I gave him water from my canteen, asked his name and the character of his wounds. He was Major-General Francis C. Barlow, of New York, and of Howard's corps. The ball had entered his body in front and passed out of his spinal cord, paralyzing him in legs and arms. Neither of us had the remotest thought that he could possibly survive many hours. I summoned several soldiers who were looking after the wounded, and directed them to place him upon a litter and carry him to the shade in the rear. Before parting, he asked me to take from his pocket a package of letters and destroy them. They were from his wife. He had but one request to make of me. That request was that if I should live to the end of the war and should ever meet Mrs. Barlow, I would tell her of our meeting on the field of Gettysburg and of his thoughts of her in his last moments. He wished me to assure her that he died doing his duty at the front, that he was willing to give his life for his country, and that his deepest regret was that he must die without looking upon her face again. I learned that Mrs. Barlow was with the Union Army, and near the battle-field. When it is remembered how closely Mrs. Gordon followed me, it will not be difficult to realize that my sympathies were especially stirred by the announcement that his wife was so near him. Passing through the day's battle unhurt, I despatched at its close, under flag of truce, the promised message to Mrs. Barlow. I assured her that if she wished to come through the lines she should have safe escort to her husband's side. In the desperate encounters of the two succeeding days, and the retreat of Lee's army, I thought no more of Barlow, except to number him with the noble dead of the two armies who had so gloriously met their fate.

With the help of John's safe passage, other Confederate officers, and General Howard, she made her way through the lines. And, despite the doomful prognostications of Confederate doctors and at least one captured Union surgeon, all of whom examined him and predicted his imminent demise, she saved her husband from oblivion. Another angel of mercy. For reasons that are not clear from the record, Barlow was returned to Union control. Arabella took him to Somerville, New Jersey, her original home, where he completed his recuperation, returning to service in January, 1864. John forgot all about him, assuming that he had not survived, little

realizing that he would soon be facing him again without knowing it.

In the Wilderness, John led his Georgians in an attack that was said to be critical to Confederate success. Again he escaped unscathed, despite the ferocity of the combat and the frightful losses on both sides, many of whom burned to death when the woods caught fire. At Spotsylvania John knew, perhaps, his finest hour. Grant ordered a concentrated charge against the apex of the Mule Shoe, giving the job to Hancock's corps (i.e., division commanders Barlow, Birney, Mott and Gibbon). On May 12, they struck, overrunning almost a mile of Confederate lines with a blue tide that one Confederate soldier described as being like a "torrent over a broken mill dam." The Federals, led by Barlow, Birney and Mott, with Gibbon in reserve, captured between 3000 and 4000 prisoners, 18 or 20 guns, 30 flags and threatened to tear Lee's defenses wide open. Lee and Gordon saw the danger. Lee wanted to lead the counterattack himself, but Gordon, with the help of his veterans, would not allow it. With cries of "General Lee to the rear," John, on his coal black charger, led his veterans into the breach, exhorting them, with his booming voice, to drive the enemy back. They did, all the way to the original line of Confederate entrenchments, where the men in blue held, thus forcing the men in gray to form a new interior line of defense and precipitating a twenty hour slugfest that surpassed in ferocity anything in the war. Again, despite the intensity of the struggle and the appalling casualties on both sides, John left the field unhurt and moved with Lee's army to check Grant's advance on the North Anna River and Cold Harbor.

After the latter bloody clash of arms, in which the Army of the Potomac lost 7,000 men in a doomed twenty minute frontal assault that Grant later acknowledged was a serious error, John was detached from Lee's command and put under the command of General Early in the Valley. Their purposes were to harass Washington, thereby drawing Federal troops away from Lee's front, and neutralize, to the extent possible, Sheridan's attempt to deprive the Confederacy of one of its principal larders by laying it waste. In so doing, John participated in major engagements at Monocacy, Third Winchester, Fisher's Mill, and Cedar Creek.

Unbeknownst to John, Fanny followed him when, on June 14, 1864, he began his Valley campaign with Early. At one point, her carriage broke down and she was almost captured, but, with the help of men from the command of Robert Rodes, she continued her pursuit unmolested. At Winchester, she took to the street to rally retreating Confederates. With bullets flying all around her, she shouted at them: "Go back to the front lines, you cowards. Turn around and fight." John, witnessing this spectacle, was horrified. Fortunately, no harm came to either of them. General Early had made known his opposition to wives following their husbands around and was said to have remarked, about Fanny, that he wished the Yankees

would capture her and hold her until the war was over. If he said it, he said it in jest, because it was known that he admired her pluck (who could do otherwise?). In fact, it was reported that Early said to her that, when he issued orders that officers' wives had to go to the rear, she was excepted, inasmuch as John was so much a better soldier when she was around. So she followed him and her presence on and near battlefields became so well known that the men in gray were said to remark that when she was seen going to the rear, they could be sure that the sparks were about to fly. In fact, Early was said to have remarked, upon learning of her presence in Winchester, "Well, I'll be! If my men would keep up as well as she does, I'd never issue another order against straggling." The campaign in the Valley failed, of course. The little cavalryman, with the ridiculous hat, from Somerset, Ohio turned it into a moonscape, thereby depriving Confederate armies of the sustenance they had been taking from it, mostly grain.

After the failure of the Valley campaign, John rejoined Lee at Petersburg and stayed and fought with him there and in the engagements leading inexorably to Appomattox. There, he was appointed by Lee to preside over the stacking of Confederate arms and standards. His Union counterpart was Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who had survived about as many scrapes as John had. Let us hear Chamberlain describe the scene and the behavior of the erstwhile combatants:

Instructions had been given; and when the head of each division column comes opposite our group, our bugle sounds the signal and instantly our whole line from right to left, regiment by regiment in succession, gives the soldier's salutation, from the "order arms" to the old "carry" – the marching salute. Gordon at the head of the column, riding with heavy spirit and downcast face, catches the sound of shifting arms, looks up, and taking the meaning, wheels superbly, making with himself and his horse one uplifted figure, with profound salutation as he drops the point of his sword to the boot toe; then facing to his own command, gives word for his successive brigades to pass us with the same position of the manual -- honor answering honor. On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer, nor word nor whisper of vain-glorying, nor motion of man standing again at the order, but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead!



John B. Gordon as U.S. Senator

The war was over for John and Fanny and for a torn and bereaved nation.

After the war, John went into business and then politics. He served in the United States Senate from 1873-1880 and 1891-1896, and served as Governor of Georgia from 1886-1890. In 1889, the United Confederate Veterans were

organized and John became the first President. Fanny never left his side.

It needs to be said too, sadly, that John played a major role in the founding of the Ku Klux Klan. He prepared the Prescripts (Rules and Regulations) for the fledgling organization and presented them at a convention held in Nashville in April, 1867. It was at this convention that Nathan Bedford Forrest was named the first Grand Wizard of the KKK and John was named Grand Dragon (leader) of the KKK in Georgia. All of this childish nonsense was a serious error of judgment on John's part and unquestionably diminishes his record, his reputation, and his accomplishments. But it does not erase them.

Three months before his death, he published *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, said by those who have read it to be one of the most charming, lively, completely inoffensive, detailed, and compelling first person accounts of the war. On Saturday, January 9, 1904, at 10:05 p.m., at Miami-Biscayne, Florida, with Fanny at his side, he died. Despite his extremely debilitated state, poised as he was between works and rewards, he managed a last look, a smile, and a touch for the one who had loved him and been loved by him almost from the day their eyes met, who had been with him in body and in spirit for half a century and who had been all things to him.



Photo: Ed Jackson

Statue of John B. Gordon at the Georgia capitol in Atlanta. Located on the northwest corner, it was unveiled on May 25, 1907. Reportedly, it is the only equestrian statue in Atlanta.

Fanny soldiered on without him for another twenty-seven years, but her life was a pale copy of the one she knew with the knight known as John Brown Gordon, who, it was said, was the only Civil War commander who was never defeated or repulsed when he led a charge or was in command.

Clevelanders and the Civil War

Presented by Marjorie Wilson

Tuesday, April 25, 7:30 p.m.

Bertram Wood Branch of the Shaker Heights Public Library

Ms. Wilson will tell the stories of Clevelanders who fought in the Civil War. She has been an interpretive guide at the Garfield Memorial for the past five years.

This is part of the library's Healthy, Wealthy and Wise programming for the year 2006 in honor of the 300th anniversary of Ben Franklin's birth.

COLT-ROOT MODEL 1855 PERCUSSION REPEATING RIFLE



The Colt repeating rifle was a large version of the Colt revolver, but it never operated as well nor became as popular. It was initially produced in 1855 and came in calibers ranging from .40 to .64. It fired a conical bullet that came with an attached paper cartridge that had to be firmly seated into its cylinder by means of a lever-action ramrod. Cylinders came in five and six shot models and all rounds could be fired as quickly as the soldier could cock the hammer and pull the trigger. During the Civil War the War Dept purchased only 4,712 weapons -- a relatively small number. Though the rifle could be fired rapidly, it was much slower to load than other breech-loading weapons and it had the unfortunate tendency to fire all of its cylinders at one time, often removing fingers from the rifleman's forward hand. Although a few Southern units were equipped with this weapon at the beginning of the war, it is best remembered for its use by Union troops. The first weapon issued to Berdan's Sharpshooters were Colt Repeaters, but were soon replaced with Sharps rifles.

NEXT MONTH

UNION JACKS: YANKEE SAILORS IN THE CIVIL WAR

MICHAEL BENNETT