

November, 2005

427th Meeting

Vol. 27 #3

Tonight's

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

After the Civil War, George Pickett was asked his opinion regarding the failure of the assault he led at Gettysburg. In the typical fashion of the vanquished to refuse to bestow credit on the victors, the questioner expected Pickett to respond about some inescapable imbalance in materiel or some unavoidable happenstance as the determining factor. With the candor of someone who experienced the resolve of the enemy, Pickett dismissed the questioner with the terse remark, "I think the Union army had something to do with it." A paraphrase of this quote comes to mind in light of the topic for our November meeting. Many historians posit that slavery was not a cause of the Civil War and, on a theoretical level, this is true. However, those living in America at the time of the Civil War would likely say that they think slavery had something to do with it. Those who made the decisions leading to the Civil War were not concerned about theory. For them, the issues were visceral and irresolvable. When contemporary commentators pontificate that America has never been as polarized as it is in 2005, they forget the rancor regarding slavery prior to the Civil War. Although animosity prevailed during the last two presidential elections, there was no Bleeding Florida or Bleeding Ohio. Our speakers for November, Dr. Carol Lasser and Dr. Gary J. Kornblith, will remind us of the fervor surrounding slavery and inform us that these intense feelings existed in northeast Ohio. Not only was abolitionism present in Ohio, but this movement developed its own form within our state when it underwent "The Transformation of Abolitionism in War and Peace: Oberlin, Ohio as a Case Study."

Drs. Carol Lasser and Gary J. Kornblith

Our November speakers are Dr. Carol Lasser and Dr. Gary J. Kornblith, both of the Department of History, Oberlin College. Dr. Lasser's area of expertise is women and gender in nineteenth-century America. She has written on topics such as gender and self-sovereignty and African American women in antebellum Oberlin. Dr. Kornblith's area of expertise is social and political development between the American Revolution and the Civil War, and he is skilled in the application of computing to the study of history and to education.

Date: **Wednesday,
November 9, 2005**

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: **Chicken Italiano
or Vegetarian Dinner**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

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2005 Mel Maurer	1980 Charles Spiegle
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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
1991 Joe Tirpak	1966 Donald Hamill
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1965 Lester Swift
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1987 George Vourlojianis	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

OCTOBER, 2005

Hdqrs. Cvlnd. Civil War Rtbl.

November 9, 2005

To paraphrase a comment I heard from a Roundtable member after the October meeting, there's a reason why the renowned and in demand speakers are renowned and in demand. Those who attended the October meeting were treated to an excellent presentation by Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr, who informed us how the Civil War still lives. With examples of specific innovations (shoes designed for left and right feet, uniforms of different sizes, nutrition, and others) and anecdotes to portray the evolution of our nation and national identity, Dr. Robertson convincingly explained that the Civil War continues through current times. His presentation was insightful, thought provoking, scholarly, sprinkled with clever humor, and filled with emotion. His delivery was powerful and heartfelt. The combination of content and delivery made the presentation genuinely uplifting. We are fortunate that Dr. Robertson chose to visit the Roundtable. He mentioned that he has reduced his travel schedule, but that he decided to accept our invitation because he had visited our Roundtable many years ago (more than 20) and wanted to return out of a sense of nostalgia. I suspect that everyone who heard his presentation is grateful that he decided to include us on his schedule. Presentations such as his are why I come to the meetings.

On another subject, it is not too soon to start thinking about the 2006 Roundtable field trip. Before planning can begin, the destination has to be selected. Anyone who has thoughts about where we should visit next year should speak to John Fazio, so the Roundtable can decide the destination.

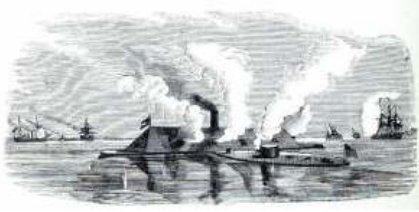
Very respy. your obt. srvt.

D.A. Carrino

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2004/2005 SCHEDULE**

September 14, 2005

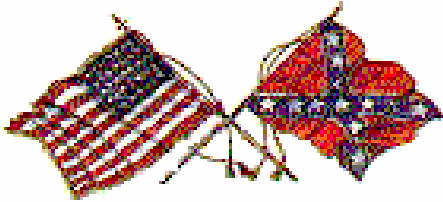
**T h e y
H a d
N a v i e s,
T o o???**



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

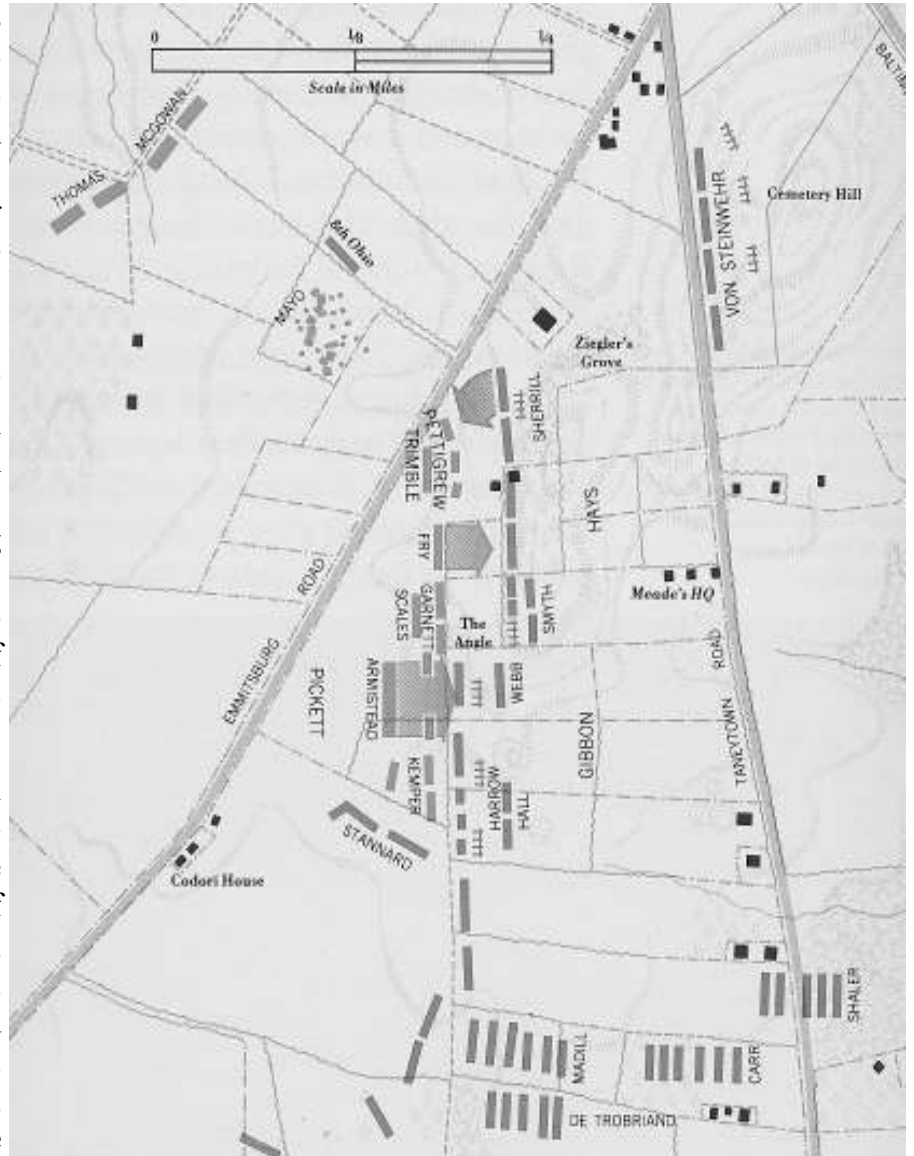
The Changes at Gettysburg

By Dick Crews

Civil War buffs such as ourselves like to argue about the most important battle of the Civil War. Tourists who vote with their feet and their dollars like Gettysburg by far. Gettysburg receives over 1,800,000 visitors per year. No other battlefield receives over million visitors per year.

Why is Gettysburg so popular? Certainly it has advantages, such as being close to the big cities on the east coast. Vicksburg, my favorite battlefield, is way out along the Louisiana-Mississippi border. However, Antietam is also close to the east coast and has less than half the number of yearly visitors as Gettysburg.

I believe it is because non-Civil War buffs can relate to the battlefield using the old childhood game of *king of the hill*. Stand on top of Little Round Top and holler, **“Rebs, come and take it if you can.”** Then stand at the Angle and holler, **“Listen, Mr. Confederate. If you want to cross that open field for a mile to attack me while I fire 100 cannon and 5,000 rifles at you, go right ahead.”**



Pickett's Charge, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 3, 1863

To test my theory, next time you visit Gettysburg, go to the west side of town. Note the number of people visiting the railroad cut and McPherson Woods. Except for the tour buses, you will find very few visitors to this the area, which is the first day of battle at Gettysburg. Why so few? I believe because it is so confusing. Union forces held the area in the morning of July 1, 1863, then the Confederates pushed them out, then more Union troops came at midday and pushed the Confederates back, then more Confederate troops arrived in the afternoon and pushed the Union troops back through the streets of Gettysburg and out to the hills east of town. You followed that, right?

This is too confusing to the non-Civil War buff. However, he understands *king of the hill* at the Angle and Little Round Top. Consequently, the average tourist takes the family to see the battle of Gettysburg at the Angle and Little Round Top. He goes home and tells his friends, “Oh yeah, I took the family to see the battle of Gettysburg.”

Dick Crews is a stock broker and a past President of the Cleveland CWRT.

Gettysburg is changing in ways the visitors can understand and in ways that relate to us Civil War buffs. First, tourists are supposed to have a new visitors center by 2009. The natives told me the center would cost 90 million dollars and they have 60 million now in hand so construction will start in the spring. The projected completion date is 2009. Well, we will see. This building has been controversial since its inception. The question, as usual, is who pays? In the beginning it was supposed to be 75% private money and 25% public funds. Now it looks like 75% public funds.

Your question might be why do we need a new visitors center? There are three reasons. First, the present building is seventy years old and looks it. Second, the present building is small and without the humidity and temperature controls needed to display many battlefield exhibits the Park Service now has in warehouses. Last, the Visitors Center, Cyclorama, and their parking lots are in the middle of the battlefield.

Now let's discuss what is happening for us Civil War buffs. First, the monument on *Pickett's Charge* for the 8th Ohio has been dignified. You might remember that the monument sat in the front yard of a seedy motel. The Park Service bought the motel and tore it down.

Second, the big change for us Civil War buffs are the trees the Park Service is removing around Little Round Top. People tend to think in 1860 the landscape was a large forest. It was just the opposite. With the average family using wood for heating and cooking, the landscape had few trees. The trees on Little Round Top had been cleared in 1860 and the wood sold to the federal government.

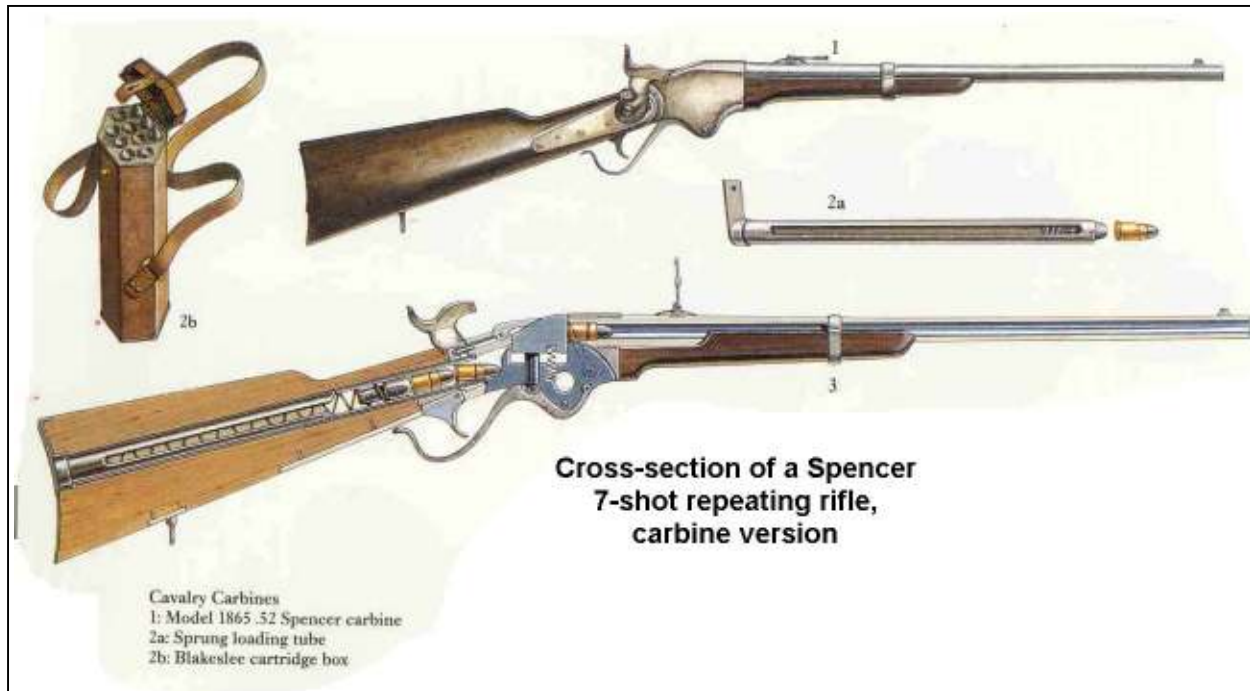
Now you can stand where Gouverneur Warren stood on Little Round top and see the Confederates approaching. How do you know? Because with no trees in the way, now you can see clearly the monuments to the Alabama and Texas units in the fields to the left. Looking the other way you can see all the way to the Angle. You can also see where Sickles moved the 3rd Corps. *Good grief, Dan Sickles, what were you doing way out there?*

The weekend tourists will not notice this small change, but you the Civil War enthusiast will enjoy this clear view immensely.

Dick Crews



Now we can see what Gouverneur Warren saw from Little Round Top on the second day at Gettysburg, July 2, 1863



Spencer Rifle

The Spencer rifle shares the spotlight with the Henry as the most technically advanced and effective small arm of the war. Invented by Christopher Spencer, a young Connecticut-born former Colt Firearms employee, the Spencer was an idea whose time had come. Because it took time to sell anyone in the U.S. Army or Navy on his new concept in firearms design, it was not until January 1863 that the first Spencer rifles were available and issued for field use. From that time on, however, the fire power of the Spencer wrote its own chapter in the history of warfare. This chapter foretold things to come in wars of the future.

Christopher Spencer's rifle featured a tubular fed magazine that held seven internally primed, metallic case, .56 caliber cartridges. This magazine was contained in the rifle's butt stock and was itself loaded through the butt plate. By means of lever action, the rifle's ingenious mechanism first ejected an empty cartridge case from a previously fired round and then fed a fresh cartridge into the chamber. The soldier had then only to cock the external hammer, aim, and shoot. The Spencer's rate of fire was limited only by the user's speed in firing.

The first to be armed with the Spencer rifle were the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Independent Companies of Ohio Sharpshooters. The first cavalry regiments were the 5th and a few of the 6th Michigan. The latter two regiments served with Custer's brigade at Gettysburg.

The first real combat test of the Spencer was the Battle of Hoover's Gap, Tennessee, on June 24, 1863 (part of Rosecrans's Tullahoma campaign). In this battle, a brigade of Union mounted infantry, consisting of the 17th and 72nd Indiana and the 92nd, 98th, and 123rd Illinois under the command of Colonel John T. Wilder, decimated a numerically superior Confederate infantry force. On this day, Wilder's brigade earned the nickname "The Lightning Brigade." Armed with their Spencer rifles, the brigade continued to live up to this name throughout the bloody campaigns of the Western theater of the war.

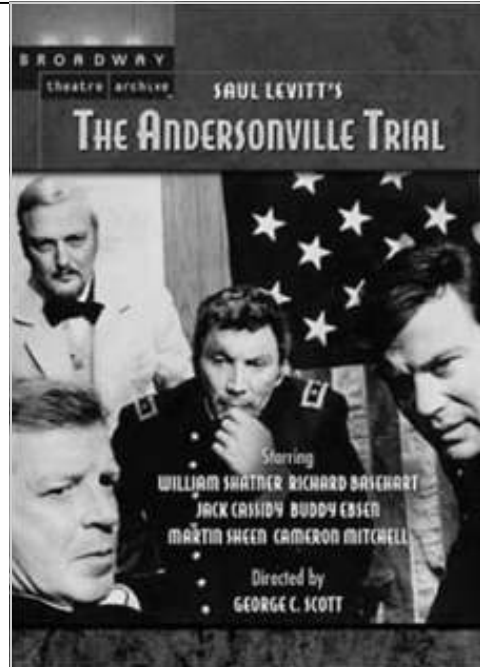
Adapted from *An Introduction to Civil War Small Arms*, by Earl J. Coates and Dean S. Thomas

General of the Month

John Thomas Wilder was born in Greene County, New York on January 31, 1830 and grew to be six feet two inches tall. In 1849, Wilder moved to Columbus, Ohio, and was hired as an apprentice in a foundry. Turning down an offer of ownership, Wilder moved to Greensburg, Indiana in 1857 to start his own foundry and millwright business. In four years Wilder became a nationally recognized expert in hydraulics and his business employed one hundred people in five states. When the Civil War erupted, Wilder immediately cast two six-pound cannons and raised a unit of men. Governor Oliver P. Morton appointed Wilder lieutenant colonel of the 17th Indiana Volunteer Infantry on June 4, 1861. Under Gen. J.J. Reynolds, his unit took part in the battles of Cheat Mountain and Greenbriar in West Virginia. On April 4, 1862, the 17th arrived too late for the battle at Shiloh, Tennessee, but was involved in the siege of Corinth, Mississippi. From September 14-17, at the crucial railroad junction in Munfordville, Ky., Wilder's outnumbered brigade held up a large part of Bragg's army under Buckner and thus helped Buell beat Bragg to Louisville. Wilder surrendered, but was later exchanged. He then unsuccessfully pursued Confederate cavalry general John Hunt Morgan, missing the battle of Murfreesboro. As a result of this experience Wilder sought and received permission to provide horses for his infantry. He planned to use the horses for transport with the men fighting on foot. It was a complete unit, building its own wagons and shoeing its own horses. Each man carried a hatchet with a two foot handle and, for that reason, was first called the "Hatchet Brigade." Wilder trained his men to fight from behind cover and, in the spring of 1863, he also equipped his men with Spencer repeating rifles. The brigade fought with distinction at Hoover's Gap, Tennessee, where his mounted infantry was instrumental in securing the gap and outflanking Hardee's corps, thus forcing Bragg's eventual withdrawal to Chattanooga, and earning the sobriquet "Lightning Brigade." At the battle of Chickamauga, Wilder's Brigade saved the Union Army from almost certain destruction on two occasions. On September 18 at Alexander's Bridge, the 17th Indiana, the 98th Illinois, and two sections of Lilly's Battery along with Minty's Cavalry made a valiant stand to hold off an entire Confederate Army corps under Cheatham, preventing Rosecrans from being cut off from Chattanooga. Two days later, his brigade was the only one on the Union right to not be driven from the field. While the rest of the right flank was fleeing to Chattanooga, the Lightning Brigade repulsed the charges of an entire Confederate infantry division and then counter attacked. Wilder was preparing to cut his way through to Thomas, but was told by the panicked assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana that Rosecrans was either captured or killed and he instructed Wilder to bring him back to Chattanooga. Wilder assigned some scouts to accompany Dana and slowly withdrew to Rossville, collecting material and stragglers. By retarding the beginning of Longstreet's attacks on Thomas, the brigade contributed to the success of Thomas' famous stand at Snodgrass Hill, where Thomas earned the name "The Rock of Chickamauga." Wilder withdrew only the next morning and was the last commander to leave the field. From October 1-10, Wilder, under Gen. Crook, harried Wheeler's cavalry, which was raiding middle Tennessee and, on the 7th, Wilder defeated Wheeler at the battle of Farmington. He led his brigade during parts of the Atlanta campaign and Thomas unsuccessfully tried to have him put in charge of the Union cavalry. On August 7, 1864, Wilder was brevetted brigadier general, but he was compelled to resign on October 4 because of recurring typhoid fever from which he had been suffering since the Corinth campaign. Other considerations were his dissatisfaction with the progress of his military career and the financial difficulties of his foundry back home. In 1866, Wilder moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee in search of a more healthful climate and because of the business opportunities the area offered. He founded the Roane Iron Works in 1867, then built and operated two blast furnaces, the first in the south, at Rockwood, Tennessee. In 1870, he established a rail mill in Chattanooga. From 1890 to 1892, he was active in the promotion and construction of the Charleston, Cincinnati & Chicago Railroad. He briefly served as mayor and then postmaster of Chattanooga, pension agent at Knoxville, and commissioner of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Park. Wilder died while vacationing in Jacksonville, Florida on October 20, 1917, and was buried in Forest Hills Cemetery in Chattanooga. At the Chickamauga battlefield there is a monument to him which consists of a white 85-foot tower. A spiral staircase leads to the top of the tower where visitors can view almost all of the field of battle.

CALL FOR THESPIANS

The meeting on March 8, 2006 will be a presentation of a play written by Roundtable member Dale Thomas. The play is a dramatization of the trial of Henry Wirz, the Commandant of Andersonville Prison, and the script is based on the actual trial. At the conclusion of the presentation, everyone in attendance at the March meeting will vote on the verdict. The cast of the play will consist of Roundtable members, who are interested in participating. If you are so interested, please contact Dale Thomas (e-mail: a-bell@adelphia.net; home phone: 440-779-6454). Regrettably, Captain Kirk will be unable to participate as he is currently occupied playing an attorney in another project.



DECEMBER, 2005

**THE SUPPLY FOR TOMORROW MUST NOT FAIL:
THE CIVIL WAR OF CAPTAIN SIMON J. PERKINS JR.,
A CIVIL WAR QUARTERMASTER**