

THE CHARGER

December, 2002

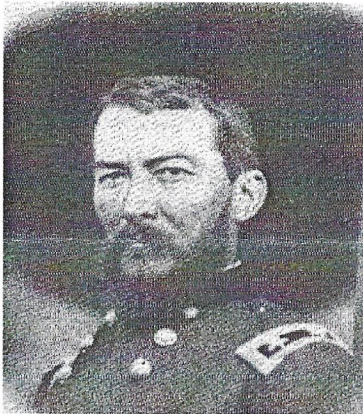
401 Meeting

Vol. 24 #4

Tonight's Program:

PHIL SHERIDAN

Phil Sheridan was raised in the small central Ohio town of Somerset. In 1848 Congressman Thomas Ritchie, who knew both Phil and his father, obtained an appointment to West Point for Phil. In 1851, his third year at the Point, he was suspended for a year for fighting with a fellow cadet, William Terrill. Who would later be a general. Phil graduated 34th in a class of 52 in July, 1853.



After the start of the Civil War, Phil was promoted to Captain. In September of 1861, Sheridan was assigned to supply under Gen. Halleck. He eventually convinced Halleck that he would be of better service in the field. He was reassigned to Gen. Curtis who was preparing to drive the Confederates out of southern Missouri. At this point Sheridan, who had met up with General William T. Sherman, was recommended by Sherman to be given command of one of Ohio's volunteer regiments but was turned down. Then Gen. Gordon Granger requested Sheridan be given command of the 2nd Michigan Cavalry vacated by Granger's promotion. He was accepted and jumped from Captain to Colonel overnight.

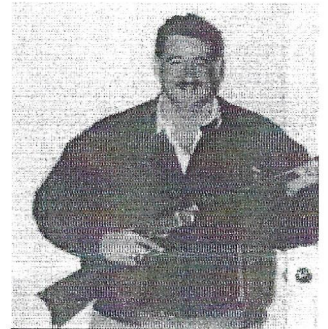
On March 12, 1864 Gen. Grant was appointed General-in-Chief of the Union Armies, he soon called Phil to join him in Washington. Grant appointed Sheridan Chief of Cavalry, Army of the Potomac.

Sheridan was now the right man at the right time.

Tonight's speaker:

ERIC WITTENBERG

Eric Wittenberg is a practicing Columbus, Ohio attorney. He is also a prize winning Civil War historian. Eric has written several books and articles on the Civil War.



Eric is holding General Jno. Buford's personal Henry Rifle.

Eric is here to discuss his latest book, *A reassessment of the Civil War Leadership of General Phillip Sheridan.*

**Date: Wednesday,
December 11, 2002**

**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: Rib Eye Parmesan
Crab Meat Stuffed Trout*

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Maynard Bauer** - (440) 835-3081

Vice President: **Warren McClelland** - (216) 751-8564

Secretary: **Mel Maurer** - (440) 808-1249

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Ty Sommershield

William F.B. Vodrey

Kirk Hinman

Bill McGrath

Website: <http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>
email: a-bell@msn.com

Editor: THE CHARGER— Dick Crews

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable is open to anyone with an interest in the American Civil War. The 120 members of the Roundtable, who's membership varies from 12 to 90 years old, share a belief that the American Civil War was the **defining** event in United States history.

The Roundtable normally meets on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May, at a private club of the Cleveland Playhouse, 8501 Carnegie Ave., next to the Cleveland Clinic.

Yearly Dues: \$40.00

Dinner: \$20.00

Dues: Maureen Goodyear

5906 Hodgman Drive

Parma Hts., OH 44130

(440)888-3814

Check to: Cleveland CWRT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER, 2002

Our last meeting was our 400th meeting and with the help of our anniversary committee it was duly and joyfully celebrated. The committee consisting of Marilyn De Baltzo, John Fazio, Jean Solyan, Ty Sommershield, Dale Thomas and William Vodrey produced a memory book of history of the club, a poem by John Fazio, and a musing of memories by club members. A highlight of the meeting was a report by veteran member Dr. Paul Schildt on his memories of the club's activities since its earliest days. It sounds like we have always been a lively group with good fellowship a requirement of the operation.

The last edition of the "Civil War Times" has a book review on the recent publication of Cold Harbor by Gordon C. Rhea. **Jeffrey D. Wert**, our guide on last Falls' field trip to the battle of Cedar Creek, as the author of the review. He cited it "as a splendid book delightful to read and rich in detail."

This past summer I joined some of our other members at Lake Chataqua to hear Jay Winik talk about his book April 1865. We enjoyed the presentation and I purchased his book and am reading now. Winik does an excellent job of analyzing the reasons for the conflict and the progress of the war up to April 1865. He brings new insights to the end of the war that are overlooked by those who do not recognize other ways the issues might have evolved.

Maynard

NEW POLICY OF CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR

"It shall be the policy of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable to use the balance of funds available at the end of each fiscal year in excess of \$1500 for the acquisition, preservation, enhancement and restoration of significant Civil War sites, monuments, and museums, including manuscripts, documents and artifacts to be displayed at or in such sites, monuments or museums."

The above motion passed by a clear majority.

Mel Maurer

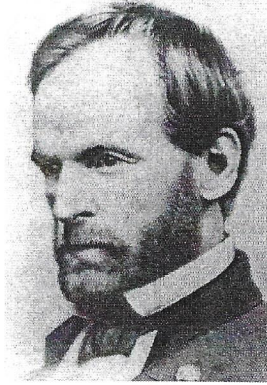
Secretary

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2002/2003 SCHEDULE**

September 11, 2002

**Sherman on Trial
A Military Court of Inquiry**

**E. Chris Evans
as Gen. William T. Sherman**



October 9, 2002

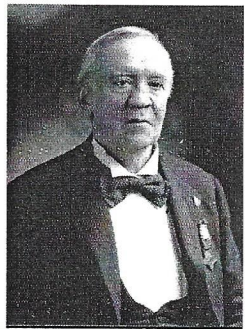
**Union General Nathaniel Lyon
killed at the ..
Battle of Wilson Creek**

**“Ranger Rick”
Richard Hatcher**



November 13, 2002

400th meeting, Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

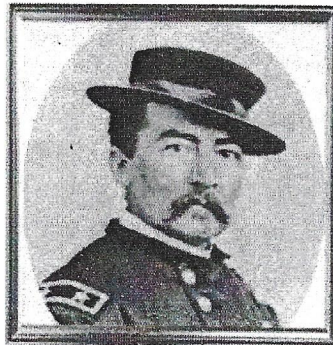


James Madison Cutts
“Hero of the Republic”

Civil War Triple Medal of Honor Winner
Sex scandal court-martial

Bing Spitler

December 11, 2002



Philip Sheridan

**Little Phil:
A Critical Appraisal
of Civil War Generalship**

Eric Wittenberg

January 8, 2003



The Great Debate

*Cleveland Roundtable members
will debate: Was Mary Surratt*

1. Guilty?
2. Should she, a civilian, have been tried by a military tribunal?
3. Should she have been hanged?

Moderator: Dick Crews

February 12, 2003

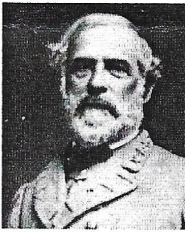


Major John Pelham

Pelham was famous for his “flying artillery”. Robert E. Lee called him, “gallant and courageous,” at the Battle of Fredericksburg. He was killed five months later.

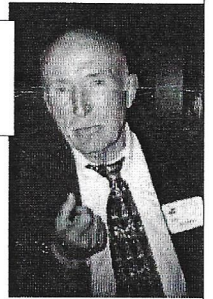
Peggy Vogtsberger

March 12, 2003

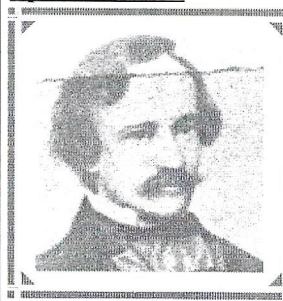


*Ed Bearss
“Mister Civil War”
discusses*

**Robert E. Lee
At
Chancellorsville**



April 9, 2003



**General Pettigrew’s
Journal**

The story of North Carolina General Johnston Pettigrew. He led the confederate left in Pickett’s Charge and died in the retreat from Gettysburg.

Dan Bauer

May 14, 2003 “Guest Night”



During the Civil War, Canada was a British Colony

**Canada
and the
American
Civil War**

Mark Vinet

Membership information: Call 800-800-8310

email: a-bell@msn.com

Web site: <http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>

THE TOP 15 CIVIL WAR GENERALS

Recently, the Usenet newsgroup alt.war.civil.usa held a poll among its readers for their top 15 generals of the Civil War. No naval officers were accepted.

Rank	Name	Votes
1.	Lee, Robert E.	388
2	Grant, Ulysses S.	360
3	Jackson, Thomas J.	280
4	Thomas, George H.	271
5	Sherman, William T.	240
6	Forrest, Nathan B.	207
7	Longstreet, James	197
8	Cleburne, Patrick R.	143
9	Hancock, Winfield S.	112
10	Sheridan, Philip	88
11	Stuart, J.E.B.	53
12	Buford, Jno.	36
13	Gordon, John B.	33
14	Hooker, Joseph	19
15	Reynolds, John F.	19



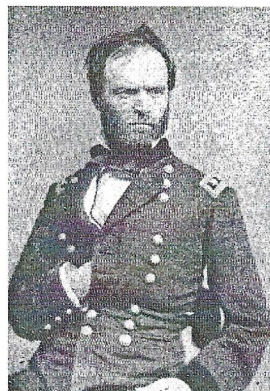
T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson



Patrick R. Cleburne



George Thomas



William T. Sherman



Phil Sheridan



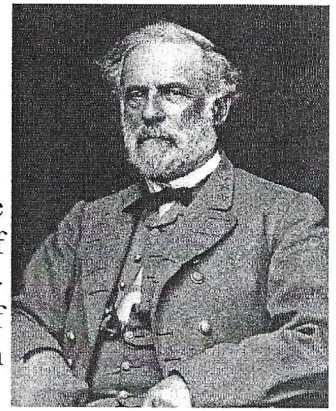
James "Pete" Longstreet

The general who came in 40th was Hiram Granbury. **Who?** Which side did he fight on?



GRANT VS. LEE

BY DAN ZEISER



The age old question. The two best known generals of the war. The commanders who battled one other at the end of the war. Lee's surrender to Grant is generally, and incorrectly, considered the end of the war. Given his besting of Lee, is Grant the better general? Much has been written over the years, yet the question remains. Here we go again.

Lee, second in his West Point class, an engineering officer, a career military officer, truly was a great general. As a tactician, he was head and shoulders above Grant. (Thomas, however, is another question.) Good defensively, Lee was even better on the offensive. He was bold and decisive, a calculating gambler. Can anyone who has studied the battle of Chancellorsville deny it? Splitting his army on several occasions, he surprised his opponents and won the day. Lee was a master of the holding attack, a tactic George Marshall would later instill as the only tactic taught at the Army War College prior to World War II.

As do all great generals, Lee knew his commanders and his opponents. With Jackson as his right arm, he had the confidence to divide his command and attack whenever he saw the opportunity. After Jackson's death, he realized his subordinates were not cut from the same cloth. Never again would he attempt a Chancellorsville type maneuver. He was a wise evaluator of his opponent's capabilities, also. Prior to Antietam, with McClellan again in command, Lee knew he would have time to take Harpers Ferry before McClellan attacked. At Gettysburg, Lee realized Meade was a solid, if not spectacular, commander who would likely not make a mistake.

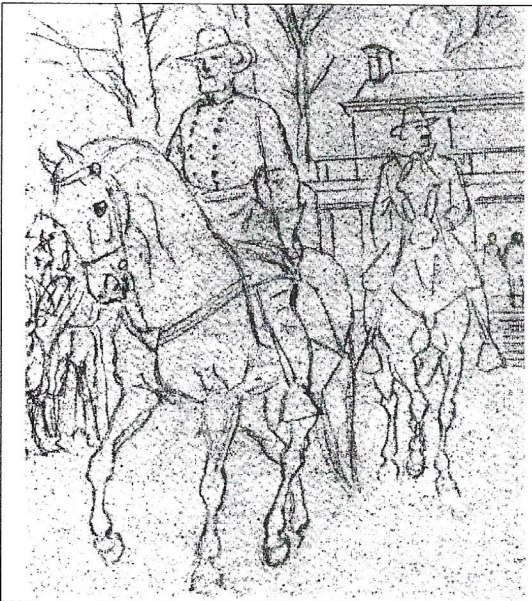
Because of these traits, he won battles – one of the measures of a great general. His men loved him and would do anything for him. They fought when they were cold, tired, hungry, and hopeless. They did everything he asked, except win the war.

However good he was, Lee was flawed. Two come to mind, one minor, one major. As a minor flaw, Lee was not a good quartermaster. The Army of Northern Virginia was always poorly equipped. Much of its equipment and supplies were taken from the Army of the Potomac after their numerous victories, but there was never enough. Not all of this blame can be laid at the feet of Lee, though. The Confederacy was woefully short of the industry needed to supply its armies and the Northern blockade prevented adequate supplies from being imported as the war dragged on. Some may lay additional fault on the South's lack of railroads to deliver supplies. Virginia, however, did not suffer from this lack. Finally, northern Virginia was fought over so much that it simply could not feed the army. While these factors played a role, Lee, as commander, shouldered much of the blame. He never seemed overly concerned about the supply situation, leaving it to the government in Richmond. For instance, a major reason Lee invaded the North in 1863 was the lack of food to be found in northern Virginia following the wintering of both armies there. Rather than deal with the supply problem at home, he chose to invade Pennsylvania and live off the land. But how long could he possibly stay? This only solved part of his problems. More important, a battle was inevitable. He would have to return to deal with his wounded and replace his losses, even if he were victorious.

Lee's major flaw, though, was as a strategist. In a word, he was not. His concern was northern Virginia and nothing else. Throughout the war, he resisted attempts by Jefferson Davis to draw forces from the Army of Northern Virginia to reinforce the western armies. Only once did it happen, when

Longstreet went west and fought at Chattanooga, but not without Lee's efforts to stop it. He also opposed attempts to make him commander-in-chief of Southern forces until it was too late for it to be of any benefit. Additionally and most importantly, he failed to realize that the Confederacy's best hope of survival was to hold out. Since the South had a lack of fighting men compared to the North, its best hope was to keep casualties to a minimum, to live to fight another day. Lee's offensive tactics ensured the Army of Northern Virginia sustained greater casualties than it could afford. Had he fought defensively most of the time, Lee would have saved soldiers who could fight again, perhaps outlasting the North's will to win.

In some ways, Grant is the mirror image of Lee. He was a mediocre student, 21st of a class of 39, and a failure as a career military man. He was not very good as a civilian, either, failing as a farmer and a president. And, unlike Lee, he was a good quartermaster who made certain his men were well-supplied. In other ways, they were very much alike. Like Lee, Grant was decisive and bold. The Vicksburg campaign alone proves this. Grant also was not afraid to fight. He won battles and his men loved him. Grant also had his flaws. As a tactician, he was horrible. He seemed to know only one tactic – the frontal assault. Time and time again, he threw troops at entrenched positions, only to suffer incredible casualties. At Vicksburg, he attacked strong fortifications and suffered accordingly. Did he learn to try other methods? No. At Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor he did it again on an even grander scale, suffering even grander casualties. Grant seems to be one of those Civil War generals, of whom there are quite a few, who did not understand the changes the rifled musket forced on tactics. Frontal assaults no longer worked, but many a general seemed to think if only another division were thrown in, the result would be different. Only once did Grant try a flank attack. At Chattanooga, Sherman was to strike the right flank of Bragg's army, but was defeated by Cleburne's division. Seeing it fail, Grant seems to have discarded the idea as antiquated.



A.R. Waud's famous sketch of Robert E. Lee following his surrender at Appomattox .

Grant's true talent lay as a strategist. He saw the big picture clearly. His Vicksburg campaign was brilliant, even though the battles were won in a pedestrian manner. He outmaneuvered his opponent and prevented him from combining forces. As commander of all the armies in 1864, Grant understood two aspects of the war that those before him did not. First, the North had to keep pressure on all of the South's armies simultaneously to keep the Confederacy from using its interior lines of communication to shift forces quickly. Second, he realized the North had greater manpower and could replace its losses more easily than the South. If he kept pressure on Lee's army and kept it fighting, eventually Lee would run out of men. While this increased Grant's casualties in the short term, it shortened the war and lessened overall casualties.

So, who was the better general? Both were fighters who won battles. Both were decisive, bold men. Lee was clearly the better tactician. In the end, however, Grant must be seen as the better of the two. No man, other than Lincoln, did more to win the war than Grant. His strategic vision enabled him to maximize his advantages and Lee's disadvantages. He forced Lee to fight and continue fighting without rest. Grant could replace his losses, Lee could not. In the end, this is what proved the difference. At Appomattox, the Army of the Potomac continued to grow stronger. The Army of Northern Virginia could field no more than 20,000 men, many of whom could no longer fight. As a result of Grant's strategic talent, the Army of the Potomac was able to do the one thing Lee's Army of Northern Virginia could not – they won the war.

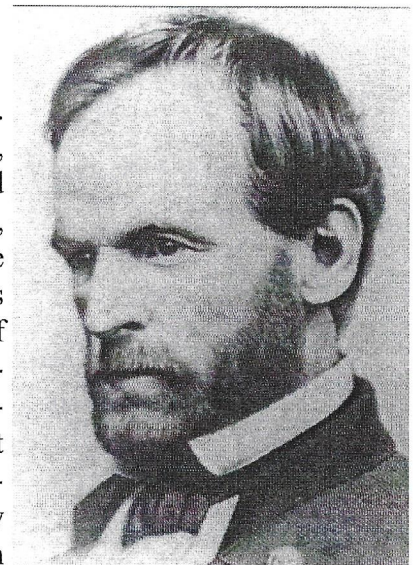
Dan Zeiser

THE SWORD WAS MIGHTIER THAN THE PEN

BY
JOHN FAZIO



John Bell Hood



William T. Sherman

A funny thing happened on the way to Atlanta. The warriors - William Tecumseh Sherman, 43, lean, tough, methodical, ruthlessly efficient and with a passion for order, and John Bell Hood, 32, impetuous, reckless and incredibly brave (strapped on his horse because of his wounds) —took time out from the business of killing to engage in relatively civil correspondence, but not too civil. Their letters were couried through the lines under flags of truce. It started after the bombardment of Atlanta on August 9, 1864, which far exceeded in intensity anything prior to that date and which resulted in the terrible deaths and maiming of many civilians. Hood charged that Sherman's actions

“violated all rules of civilized warfare.” (An oxymoron?) Sherman replied that civilians had no business in Atlanta. Later, Hood offered to exchange prisoners, a proposal that Sherman turned down on the grounds that freed Confederates would find immediate use in Hood's army, whereas freed Federals would have to be sent away from Sherman's army to their own regiments — a bonehead decision that consigned thousands of loyal and brave Union soldiers to Hell on Earth (Andersonville). Sherman then advised Hood (September 7) that the citizens of Atlanta would have to leave the city in “the interest of the United States,” but also for their own good. Hood responded (September 9) by agreeing (“... I have (no) alternative ...”), but adding that Sherman's proposal “... transcends in studied and ingenious cruelty all acts ever before brought to my attention in the dark history of war” and protesting against the same “in the name of God and humanity.” Sherman responded on September 10 by charging that Hood, as well as Confederate Generals Johnston and Hardee, had defended Atlanta and other southern cities in such a manner as to cause greater injury to civilians, and then recited a litany of offenses committed by the South that “plunged a nation into war” (“...dared and badgered us to battle, insulted our flag, seized our arsenals and forts”... etc.). So that “silence (would not) be construed as acquiescence,” Hood accepted the challenge, and in a very lengthy missive (September 12) denied wrongdoing by himself, Johnston and Hardee, berated Sherman for not giving notice prior to shelling Atlanta, and then, after first appearing to beg off argument as to the causes of the war, gave the Southern answer to each of Sherman's accusations (“You say ... The truth is ...; You say ... The truth is ..., etc.) Sherman concluded the correspondence, “with satisfaction:” in a short letter dated September 14, saying that such discussions by “two soldiers” was “profitless,” defending his failure to give notice of his bombardment on the grounds that Atlanta was a “fortified town, with magazines, etc.”, and making one final point about his “Negro allies,” or the absence of them.

Well, as we all know, Sherman took Atlanta, marched to the sea and then northward to win the war (with help from Grant and Thomas), not with his pen but with cannons, mortars, muskets and miniballs, which had the last word.

Interestingly, after The Issue had been decided, Hood visited Sherman at Lancaster (Ohio) and remained on good terms with him until Hood's death in 1878 at the ripe old age of 47.

Sherman even helped him with the sale of his war papers. Confederate Generals Joe Johnston, Braxton Bragg, James Longstreet and Gideon Pillow also remained on good terms with their erstwhile foe for the remainder of their lives. Sherman died in 1891 at the age of 71. Joe Johnston died shortly after in the same year, at 84, from pneumonia, which he contracted while standing hatless in the rain at Sherman's funeral.



PHILIP SHERIDAN

**LITTLE PHIL:
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL
OF CIVIL WAR GENERALSHIP**

WEDNESDAY

DECEMBER 11, 2002