

THE CHARGER

January, 2001

384 Meeting

Vol.22 #5

Tonight's debaters and their terrible Generals:

♦ John Bell Hood

Presented by Roundtable member: Mel Maurer

John Bell Hood was a Confederate general who fought both in the East with Robert E. Lee and the West with Joseph E. Johnston. See Page 4 for details.



♦ George B. McClellan

Presented by Roundtable member: Glenna Kimble

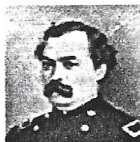


George B. McClellan was twice commanding general of the Army of the Potomac. His most famous battles were the Peninsula Campaign and Antietam. See page 5 for details.

♦ James H. Ledlie

Presented by Roundtable member: John Syrone

James H. Ledlie was a Union General. He became famous after the battle for the Crater at Petersburg, Virginia. See page 7 for details.



♦ Braxton Bragg

Presented by Roundtable member: John Fazio



Braxton Bragg was a Confederate general who fought in many battles including Perryville, Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and Ft. Fisher. See page 8 for details.

♦ Nathaniel P. Banks

Presented by Roundtable member: Maureen Goodyear

Nathaniel Banks was a Union political General most famous for the Red River Campaign. See Page 9 for details.



Tonight's Debate:

The Absolutely Worst General of the Civil War

Tonight five members of our Roundtable will present their choice for *Absolutely the Worst General of the Civil War*. Our winner will make the best case that their general was the worst.

Many people say the political generals were the worst. However, three of our five candidates were West Point graduates and decorated in the Mexican War. Remember that "Black Jack" Logan, John B. Gordon and Nathan Bedford Forrest never attended West Point.

**Date: Wednesday,
January 10, 2001**

**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 or Sirloin**

About the
Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

The 127 men and women of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable reflect the ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of Greater Cleveland. Members range in age from 17 to 94 years old. The common bond is the belief that the American Civil War was the *defining* event in United States history.

Dinner meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. The Roundtable meets at a private club of the Cleveland Playhouse 8501 Carnegie Ave. near the Cleveland Clinic.

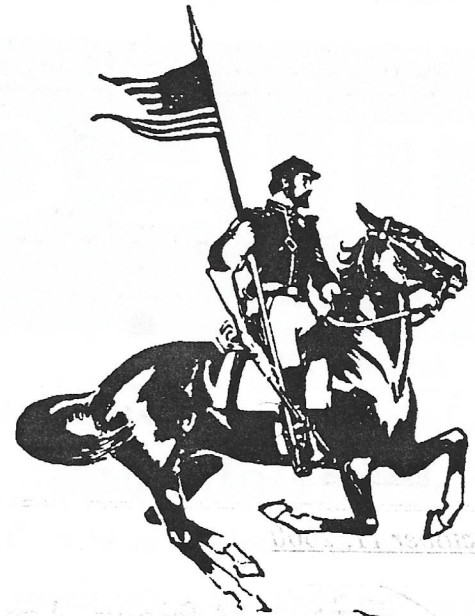
Dinner is \$20.00. Club dues are \$40.00 per year.

Membership information can be obtained from
 Dick Crews, daytime phone (800) 800-8310.

2000/2001 Dues: Cleveland CWRT
 c/o Bill Doty
 30460 Adams Lane
 Westlake, Ohio 44145

**Cleveland Civil War Roundtable
 Presidents**

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



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
 PO Box 18900 CLEVELAND, OH 44118

(800)800-8310

Email: RCrews5369@aol.com

Web site: <http://members.aol.com/rcrews5369>

President: William Vodrey
Vice President: Bill McGrath
Secretary: Lou Braman
Treasurer: Bill Doty

Executive Committee:

Manard Bauer
 Bob Boyda
 Dick Crews
 Ty Somersshield
 Dale Thomas
 Dan Zeiser

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2000/2001 SCHEDULE**

September 13, 2000



The Novelist
as Historian

Shelby Foote

October 11, 2000



African-American
Troops in the
Civil War

Noah Andre Trudeau

November 8, 2000

Island No.
10

**Brian
Kowell**



December 6, 2000



The Battle of Shiloh

Ed Bearss

January 10, 2001

The Great Debate:
The absolutely worst general of the War

Moderator: Dick Crews



(Some good candidates from a long list of prospects)

February 14, 2001



Gen. John B. Gordon

Warrior & Survivor

Bob Boyda

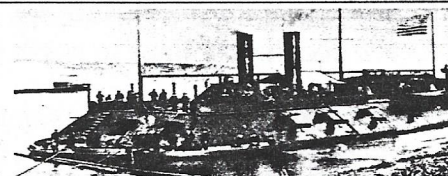
March 14, 2001



The Life
of the Common Soldier

**The 51st Ohio Volunteer
Infantry, Co. B**

April 11, 2001



"Infernal Machines"
and the sinking of the USS Cairo

Bill McGrath

May 9, 2001



An Evening
with General
William T. Sherman

E. Chris Evans

Membership in the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable: Call (800) 800-8310

Visit our web site <http://members.aol.com/rcrews5369>.

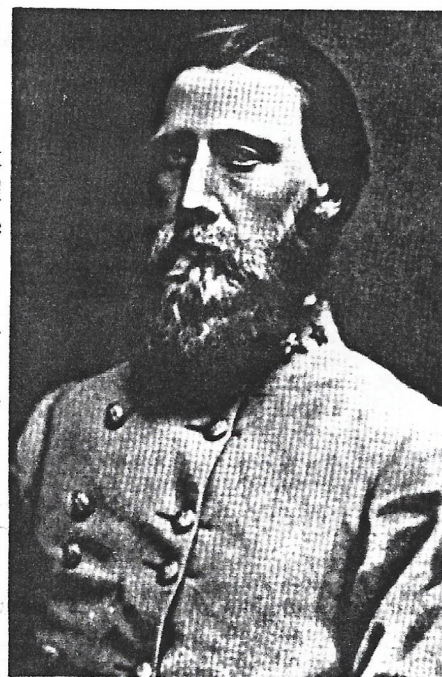
John Bell Hood

1831—1879

Lacking neither courage nor fighting skills, Hood's deficient strategic abilities and ill-suitedness to high command helped cause the destruction of the Confederacy's Army of Tennessee late in the war.

The tall and imposing Kentucky native graduated in the bottom fifth of his class at West Point, and his early military service included a stint in the elite 2nd Cavalry, during which he had already begun to demonstrate bold, if reckless, tendencies.

Leaving the U.S. Army in April 1861 to join the Confederacy, he and his famed brigade of Texans made noteworthy showings in the Seven Days battles, Second Bull Run, and Antietam, where they sustained heavy casualties breaking the Union's initial attack. A gunshot wound at Gettysburg crippled Hood's left arm, and strapped to his horse before each day's fighting, but the injuries did not slow his military advancement.



As Joseph E. Johnston's chief officer in the 1864 defense of Atlanta against William T. Sherman's invading Union army, Hood roundly criticized his superior's cautious strategy. In July, he was given the chance to do better, when Jefferson Davis, eager for a hard fighter, appointed Hood to take over the Army of Tennessee from Johnston in the middle of the campaign. Within two days of gaining command, Hood went on the offensive, playing into Sherman's hands. His three attacks against the Union army—at Peachtree Creek, near Decatur, and at Ezra Church—cost him 15,000 men, and he was forced to retreat back to Atlanta strong fortifications. The city was besieged and, a month later, fell to the North. Hood still managed an effective withdrawal of his troops and, with help from Nathan Bedford Forrest, attacked the Union's Union supply lines in north Georgia and Tennessee.

Hardly halting Sherman's relentless "March to the Sea," though, the impetuous conceived a bolder—and hopelessly unrealistic plan: an all-out invasion of Tennessee. Along with forcing Sherman to turn he hoped to retake the state altogether, then, advancing further northeast and collecting reinforcements, he could even crush Ulysses S. Grant's forces in Virginia the rear.

Instead, Hood's outnumbered men wound up confronting John Schofield's entrenched troops in Franklin. On November 30, over the furious objections of his lieutenants, he ordered a massive assault on the fortified Union line. After over a dozen valiant but futile charges, Hood lost a quarter of his army. Losing the confidence of the survivors as well, he nevertheless proceeded north to Nashville, this time encountering George Henry Thomas.

With his depleted force camped outside the city, Hood ran out of ideas and waited, first for reinforcements that never arrived, then Thomas' inevitable attack. When it came, an overpowering two-day onslaught in mid-December, the Army of Tennessee virtually disintegrated. Retreating deeper and deeper South with what was left of his force, Hood resigned his command in January.

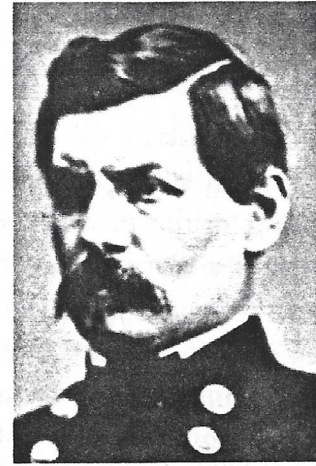
After the war, he went into business in New Orleans, where he, his wife, and eleven children died in a yellow fever epidemic four years later.

George Brinton McClellan

Born: December 3, 1826, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Died: October 29, 1885 in Orange, New Jersey

Pre-war Profession: Railroad President



George Brinton McClellan graduated second in his class from West Point in the famous class of 1846. He was commended for zeal and gallantry in the Mexican War. In 1857 he left the Army to take a position in the railroad industry.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he was living in Cincinnati as President of the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad. In April, 1861, McClelland was made a major general of the Ohio volunteers, by Ohio Governor William Dennison.

After leading the Ohio units to early victories in small battles in West Virginia; McClelland was appointed commander of Army of the Potomac. He reduced the several dissident commands to a state of discipline, and won for himself a regard by his men which would not soon be equaled. The description of McClellan's subsequent military operations amounts to lost opportunities and frustration. Greatly against his own judgment, but on orders of the administration, he moved against the Confederates via the Virginia Peninsula in the spring of 1862. Against his strenuous protests, a part of his army was retained for the defense of Washington. He vastly overestimated the forces opposing him led by Joseph E. Johnston, who was wounded at Seven Pines and replaced by Robert E. Lee for the subsequent battles of the Seven Days, and when McClellan retired to Harrison's Landing on the James River after a campaign magnificent in conception but undistinguished in execution, he laid himself open to the charge made by Confederate Colonel William Allan: "*He was not conspicuous for his energy and skill in handling large bodies of troops. He directed strategy . . . , but left tactics . . . almost entirely to his subordinates.*" Insisting that his failure lay in lack of support from Washington, and, as usual, greatly overestimating the enemy's forces, McClellan refused to reassume the offensive until given reinforcements which the administration and Henry W. Halleck, now general-in-chief, were unwilling to provide. As a result the Army of the Potomac was ordered north by water, and as its units arrived at Alexandria, they were assigned to General John Pope's Army of Virginia—a force organized to attempt the capture of Richmond via the line of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad. This expedition soon foundered on the rock of Pope's bombast

[George McClellan continued]

and ineptness as a tactician, and McClellan was once again called upon to reorganize the weary and dispirited forces in the eastern theater. Some gauge of his popularity with the troops may be appreciated by the veritable tempest of cheers, echoing over the Manassas plains, which greeted the news that "Little Mac" had been restored to command. Again he was at his best doing the job he knew best—and in short order hope revived in the ranks, in the halls of Congress, and at northern firesides. As Lee moved toward and crossed the upper fords of the Potomac, McClellan protected Washington on a line between Frederick and the river. A few days later on September 17, 1862, the battle of Antietam Creek (Sharpsburg) occurred—the bloodiest one day fight of the war—where McClellan fought Lee's numerically inferior Confederates in a drawn battle which elicited few laurels on either side. The great Lee had no business being where he was, having left a large portion of his footsore and ragged troops as stragglers in Virginia; and the great organizer McClellan permitted the battle to be fought in detail by subordinates. Subsequently McClellan could not be induced to move against Lee again until what he deemed serious shortages of equipment and horses could be made good which exasperated the administration, although there is some evidence that certain items were deliberately withheld by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. In any event on November 7, 1862, he was handed an order by the War Department messenger General C. P. Buckingham directing him to turn the army over to his good friend Ambrose K. Burnside and to proceed to his home in Trenton, New Jersey, to await orders which never came. Nominated for President by the Democratic party on a "peace at any price" platform in 1864, he attempted, without success, to reconcile the party line with his own oft-stated conviction that the war should be vigorously prosecuted and won the electoral votes of only three states. He resigned his army commission on election day. His post bellum career was marked chiefly by the three years, 1878-81, during which he served as governor of New Jersey. He died on October 29, 1885, at Orange, New Jersey, and was buried in Riverview Cemetery, Trenton.



James Hewett Ledlie

Born:

April 14 1832, Utica NY

Died:

August 15 1882, Staten Island NY

Pre-War Profession:

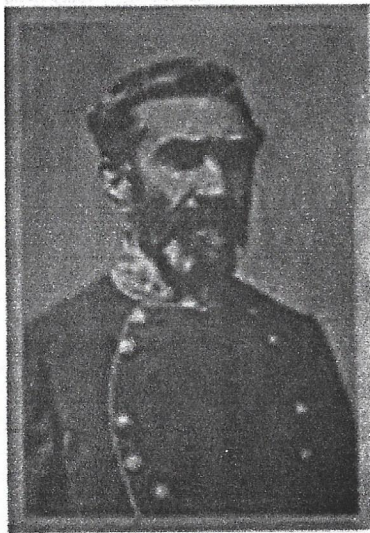
Civil engineer.



James Hewett Ledlie was born in New York, he was educated at Union in Schenectady and became engineer engaged in railroad construction. Shortly after the out-war he became major of the 19th New York Infantry, subsequently named the 3rd New York Artillery. This regiment, at the expiration of its original term of service, mutinied and 23 of the original 206 offenders were sentenced to the Dry Tortugas. Ledlie was promoted lieutenant colonel, colonel, and then brigadier general on December 24, 1862; the latter rank expired on March 4, 1865, for lack of Senate confirmation.

(He was reappointed on October 27, 1863, and in due course confirmed.) Meantime, Ledlie had served unexceptionably on the Carolina coast, commanding an artillery brigade under John G. Foster, and in district and post command at various points in the Federal Department of Virginia and North Carolina. In the course of the fierce fighting around Spotsylvania Court House in May, 1864, Ledlie joined the Army of the Potomac and was assigned to the command of a brigade in Ambrose E. Burnside's IX Corps. The following month, after Petersburg was invested, he became commander of the 1st Division of the corps. At the end of July his division was selected to lead the Federal assault upon the Confederate works after the explosion of the celebrated Union mine. At 4:45 A.M. on the morning of July 30, 170 feet of Confederate entrenchment was disintegrated, creating a "crater" 60 feet across and 30 feet deep. While Ledlie's men struggled to get over their own parapet—no provision had been made for ladders or steps and while the possession of Petersburg and the end of the war may have rested in the palms of their hands, Ledlie huddled "in a bombproof ten rods in rear of the main line.

In September he was criticized by a court of inquiry, and in December was virtually read out of the service by George G. Meade on U. S. Grant's orders. He resigned on January 23, 1865. After the war he continued his career as a railroad engineer in the west and south. Ledlie died at New Brighton, Staten Island, on August 15, 1882, and was buried in Forest Hill Cemetery, Utica.



Braxton Bragg

Born:

March 22 1817, Warrenton NC

Died:

September 27 1876, Galveston TX

Pre-War Profession:

Graduated West Point 1837, Seminole War, Mexican War, Lt. Col., resigned 1856, planter.

Braxton Bragg, a North Carolinian, was graduated from West Point in 1837, fought in the Seminole War and saw distinguished service in Mexico, where he won acclaim for the performance of his battery at Buena Vista in February 1847. He resigned from the army in 1856 to become a planter in Louisiana.

Appointed a brigadier general in the Confederate army in February 1861, he commanded the coastal defenses between Mobile and Pensacola. He helped Albert Sidney Johnston reorganize the Army of Tennessee in northern Mississippi in the early spring of 1862 and led Johnston's right wing at Shiloh in April. Promoted to full general shortly after the battle, he took charge of the Army of Tennessee in June. In late August, Bragg launched his invasion of Kentucky, with the political aim of drawing the state into the Confederacy. After the drawn battles of Perryville (October 1862) and Stones River (December 1862-January 1863) he withdrew to Tullahoma, the campaign a failure.

Federal forces under William J. Rosecrans maneuvered Bragg out of Tullahoma, and then out of Chattanooga, in the summer of 1863. Bragg attacked Rosecrans along Chickamauga Creek on September 19 and 20, driving the Federals back to Chattanooga with heavy losses. This was potentially a great victory, but Bragg failed to exploit his initial advantage. Instead of pressing the attack, he drew his army up into the hills above Chattanooga and besieged the city.

U.S. Grant reopened a supply line into Chattanooga in October and launched a attack on Missionary Ridge, forcing Bragg to retreat into north Georgia. Joseph E. Johnston relieved him of command of the Army of Tennessee on December 2, 1863.

Bragg's difficult personality compounded his lack of battlefield success. Irritable, disputatious, dyspeptic, he made many enemies among the senior officers and inspired little affection in the ranks. Senior subordinates such as James Longstreet, D. H. Hill and William Hardee had no confidence in him. "The tone of the army among its higher officers toward the commander was the worst conceivable," Longstreet's aide, G. Moxley Sorrel, wrote of the period after Chickamauga. "Bragg was the subject of hatred and contempt, and it was almost openly so expressed."

Bragg served as an adviser to President Jefferson Davis through most of 1864. He returned to the field toward the war's end and fought his last battle against W. T. Sherman's forces in North Carolina in March 1865. He joined Davis in his attempt to escape Union forces; taken prisoner on May 9, he was paroled shortly thereafter.

He worked as a civil engineer in Texas and Alabama after the war, served a four-year term as Alabama's commissioner of public works and supervised a harbor improvement scheme at Mobile. He died in Galveston, Texas.

Nathaniel Prentiss "Commissary" Banks

Born:

January 30 1816, Waltham MA

Died:

September 1 1894, Waltham MA

Pre-War Profession:

Cotton mill worker, lawyer, politician, US congressman, House Speaker, state governor.



Nathaniel Prentiss Banks had little formal education. At the age of twenty-three he was admitted to the bar, but failed seven times to become a member of the Massachusetts legislature before winning a seat. He was speaker of the Massachusetts house, presided over the Constitutional Convention of 1853, and the same year was elected to Congress—the first of ten terms under five different party affiliations. Elected Speaker of the House of Representatives after 133 ballots in 1856, Banks showed moderation in deciding among factions during the bitter slavery debates. In 1858 he was elected governor of Massachusetts, serving until January, 1861, when Lincoln appointed him a major general of volunteers after Banks proffered his services. Many West Point officers could not be made to understand that, however substandard Bank's qualifications were for the. job of a field commander, he contributed immeasurably in recruits, morale, money, and propaganda to the Federal cause. He was expelled from the Shenandoah with the loss of 30 per cent of his force during Stonewall Jackson's celebrated Valley campaign and, in August, 1862, was again defeated by Jackson at Cedar Mountain. Banks was responsible for costly assaults at Port Hudson, which was compelled to surrender anyway after the capitulation of Vicksburg, and was the commander, if not the author, of the ill-fated Red River campaign of 1864. After the evacuation of Alexandria during the retreat of the expedition, Banks was superseded by General E. R. S. Canby. Having received the thanks of Congress for "the skill, courage, and endurance which compelled the surrender of Port Hudson," General Banks was mustered out of military service in August, 1865, and was almost immediately elected to Congress—his first of six terms, five as a Republican and one as a Democrat, in the postwar years. During the same period he was elected once to the Massachusetts senate and served nine years as United States marshal for the state.

Before the end of his last term in the house, he retired to his home in Waltham where he died on September 1, 1894.

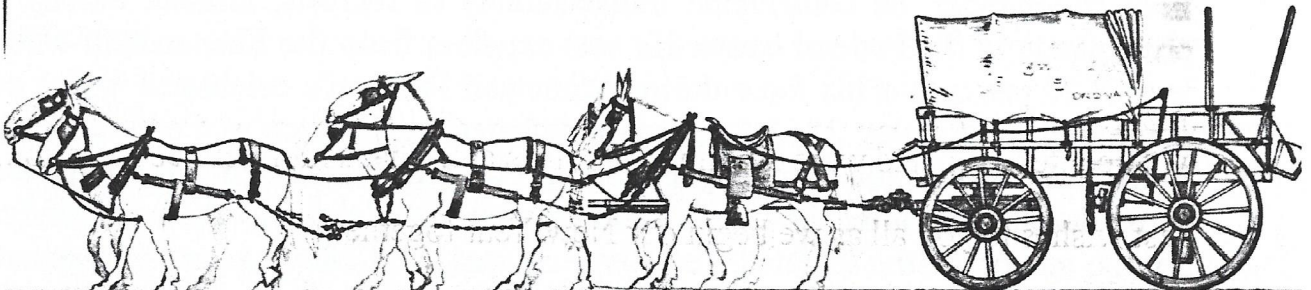
Mule Drawn Wagon Trains

Among the many responsibilities of the Union and Confederate quartermaster departments was that of furnishing army supply wagons, the mules and horses to draw them, and the support and repair facilities.

A standard wagon body was ten feet long. A canvas top, which usually bore the corps and unit names and identified the nature of the contents, could be drawn closed at both ends. At the front of the wagon there was a box for tools. At the rear was the feed box, and when it was time to feed the mules, the feed box could be set up on a pole to feed the mules three to a side. Grease and water buckets hung under the rear axle.

Although a mule was not as steady under fire as his half-brother the horse, mules were generally used in preference to horses for wagon trains because they could more readily endure the rough roads, poor fodder and generally hard treatment. Horses were ordinarily used for artillery teams where stability and speed were more important. While horses were also preferred for ambulances, most units used the more available mules.

Mule teams were hitched to wagons in three pairs, the lead pair in front, then the swing pair, then the pole (or wheel) pair nearest to the wagon. The driver, called a mule skinner, rode the near (left) pole mule, which had a saddle, and guided the lead team with a long single rein that traveled through loops on the harness of the swing pair to the bit of the near leader, from which an iron rod led to the bit of the off (right) leader. A steady pull on the rein while shouting "Haw!" would head the team to the left; short jerks and "Geel!" would head them to the right ("Yay!" meant straight ahead.). For downhill travel, a wagon brake could be operated from the saddle.



Principal source: Jack Coggins, Arms and Equipment of the Civil War

Mule skimmers were reputed to have used original and colorful vocabularies when addressing their mules, but a skimmer with a good team could guide them using only his voice. Although a six-mule team was the norm, fewer mules could be and frequently were used depending upon the load.

Typically, twenty-five wagons were needed to supply a thousand men. Sherman used some five thousand wagons during the Atlanta campaign. His trains in one line would have strung out along sixty miles of road. The order of wagon priority on the narrow roads of the era was ammunition, then troops and artillery, and lastly quartermaster supplies.

Wagons were built and repaired and horses and mules re-shod at large wagon parks, which contained repair shops, saddlers, carpenters, harness makers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and other craftsmen, and could service hundreds of wagons and animals at one time.

There aren't many Civil War photos of wagon trains, especially close shots, since mules and horses would not stay still for the requisite ten seconds, as existing photos attest.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another year has passed, a new year has just begun, and I welcome you back for our continuing exploration of America's great shared drama. This month the Roundtable meets to debate who was the absolutely worst general, in blue or gray, of the Civil War. As always, Dick Crews has proven himself a skilled impresario, lining up an expert panel of members for our annual debate. I hope you'll listen closely, share your opinions, enjoy yourselves, and maybe even learn something you didn't know before. But please: no wagering.

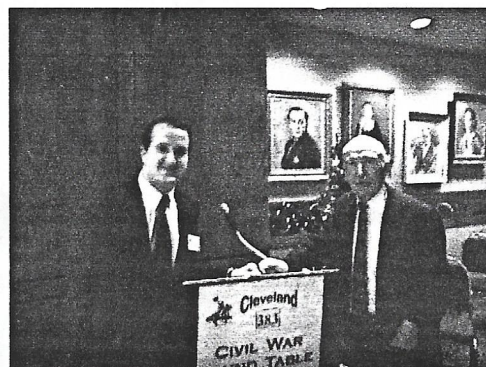
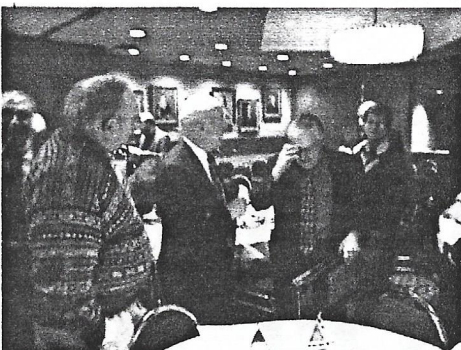


President emeritus John Moore has done a great job in arranging for Roundtable lapel pins, and they'll be available at our January meeting. All current members are entitled to one pin each, free of charge; extra pins (for yourselves, friends, family, spouses, lovers, companions, henchmen, adjutants, aides-de-camp, lackeys, cronies and hangers-on) are \$5 apiece. Proceeds benefit the Roundtable's general fund.

Please be sure to call early for your dinner reservations. We've been fortunate enough to have some record-breaking crowds this year, which makes it all the more important that we let JAC Communications know as soon as possible how many will be attending, and what our dinner choices are. Thanks for your cooperation.

Best wishes to you all as we begin our New Year together.

WILLIAM VODREY
PRESIDENT, CCRWT



Cleveland CWRT President William Vodrey with Ed Bearss



Nathaniel Banks



Braxton Bragg



John Bell Hood



George McClelland



James Ledlie

**The absolutely
Worst general
of the Civil War**

**Wednesday,
January 10, 2001**