

Since 1957

THE CHARGER

November, 2001

391 Meeting

Vol.23 #3

Tonight's topic:

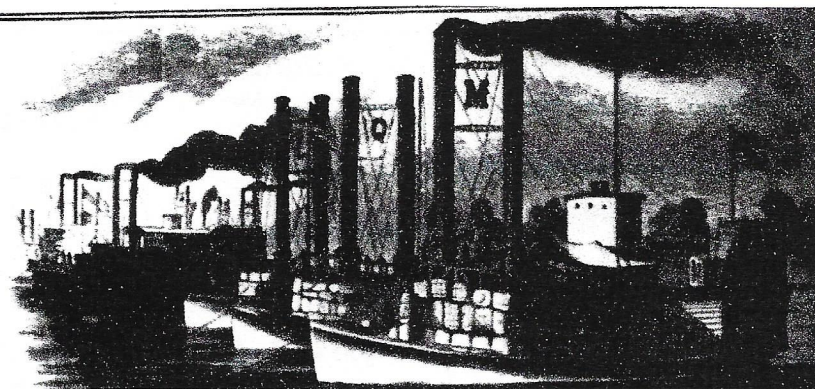
The Army is not supposed to have a Navy but in the Civil War it did.

During the Civil War, 3,500 merchant vessels were employed by the Union Army Quartermaster Corps. These Army ships were used as primary transportation as well as in cooperation with the nation's rail system.

Besides supply, the U. S. Army also employed armed combatant craft on inland rivers within the coastal zone, in addition to the logistical function of the owned and chartered transportation fleet.

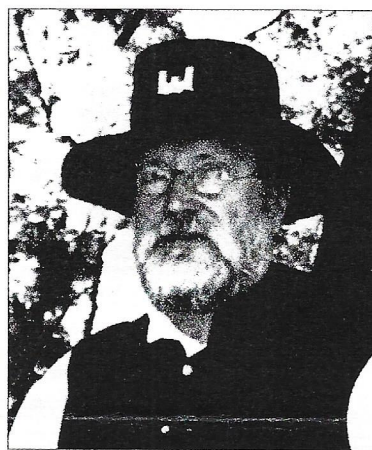
One such Army fleet was commanded by Colonel Charles Ellet. His combat armada had seven ships. These ships had no iron plating or guns. They were rams, featuring a bow heavy with timber. The ships were called "brown paper rams."

Although not given respect by the Navy, these *kamikaze* ships proved to be quite effective in the battle for Memphis, Tennessee, the South's fifth largest city. The simple strategy was to find a enemy ship and at full speed crash into them.



Tonight's speaker:

Roger E. Bohn



Roger Bohn is currently President of the Chicago Roundtable.

He is an reenactor with the 1st Michigan Engineers.

He has done background research on several books, including Frank Allston's *Ready for Sea: The bicentennial History of the U.S. Navy Supply Corps*, and has co-edited a volume on the 2nd Ohio Volunteer Calvary.

**Date: Wednesday,
November 14, 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 swiss steak

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2001/2002 SCHEDULE**

October 10, 2001



Lincoln

The Great Emancipator: Did he dream of a lily white America?

Gabor Boritt

Robert C. Fluhrer Professor
of Civil War Studies

Gettysburg College

February 13, 2002



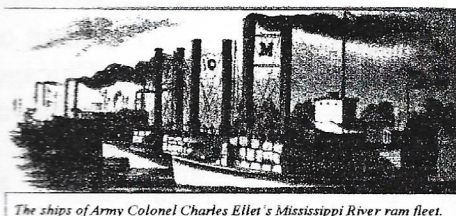
*"The Rock
of Chickamauga"*

George Thomas

Dan Zeiser

Past President Cleveland CWRT

November 14, 2001



The ships of Army Colonel Charles Ellet's Mississippi River ram fleet.

The Army's Navy

1861-1865

Roger Bohn

President of Chicago CWRT

March 13, 2002



An Evening With

Mary Todd Lincoln

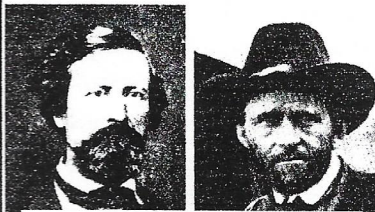
December 12, 2001 "Period Dress"



Marines in the Civil War

Maj. David A. Dawson

April 10, 2002



John C. Pemberton > < Ulysses S. Grant

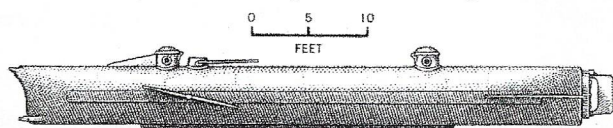
"Unvexed to the Sea" The Vicksburg Campaign

Terry Winschel

Park Historian, Vicksburg Military Park

January 9, 2002

World's first submarine



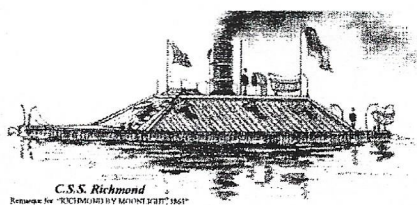
H.L. Hunley

South Carolina State Senator

Glenn McConnell

Chairman, Hunley Commission

May 8, 2002 "Guest Night"



C.S.S. Richmond
Rebuilt for "EXTERMINATOR" (1862)

Capital Navy

*Confederate Navy
guarding Richmond*

John Coski

Historian and Library Director, Museum of the Confederacy

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THE WARRIOR GENERALS: COMBAT LEADERSHIP IN THE CIVIL WAR

CIVIL WAR BOOKSHELF

By William F.B. Vodrey

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When I was in the Roundtable contingent which visited Richmond two years ago, I noticed Dan Zeiser reading a thick book with one of Julian Scott's fine old Civil War paintings on the cover. When Dan finished the book, he lent it to me, and I'm glad he did.

Thomas B. Buell's *The Warrior Generals: Combat Leadership in the Civil War* (Three Rivers Press 1997) is an overview of the Civil War as fought by six very different men, three on each side: Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, John B. Hood, George H. Thomas, John B. Gordon, and Francis C. Barlow. Buell's great innovation, and the key to his book, is to use each man as a kind of military exemplar: Grant the Yeoman, Lee the Aristocrat, Hood the Knight-Errant, Thomas the Roman, Gordon the Cavalier, and Barlow the Puritan. The metaphors and comparisons are sometimes strained, but it's an intriguing conceptual approach to Civil War history. By and large, it works.

Buell is iconoclastic, and highly opinionated; not for him the "on the one hand, but then again on the other" style of some recent historians. His confident assertions, including lavish praise of some generals (especially Thomas) and harsh criticism of others (particularly Lee) sometimes cross the line from historical analysis to outright advocacy. As does any enthusiast, he sometimes strays into hyperbole. The author (no relation to the Union general of the same name) accuses John C. Fremont of "madness," and says that William T. Sherman was "erratic and distraught... succumb[ing] to panic" in his botched East Tennessee expedition in late 1861. Buell derides David Hunter as "a nonentity who took days to find the front door [of headquarters]" after Fremont was sacked in November of that year.



Robert E. Lee
The Aristocrat



Ulysses S. Grant
The Yeoman



John Bell Hood
The Knight-Errant

William F.B. Vodrey is a Cleveland magistrate and past president of the Cleveland CWRT.

The author blasts Grant for writing self-serving reports and lacking good tactical sense. He takes Lee to task for misleading top Confederate authorities (including President Jefferson Davis), and needlessly spilling blood by continuing to fight when he knew that the war was all but lost. Lee alone, Buell implies, would have had the prestige to make the Confederate public acknowledge that it was time to stop the slaughter. Sherman is raked over the coals for numerous mistakes during the Atlanta campaign, and for embarking on the March to the Sea without adequately dealing with Hood, thereby dumping the problem in Thomas's lap. Buell condemns Hood for not realizing his own limitations, being overly ambitious, and for wantonly throwing his army away during the doomed Tennessee campaign of late 1864.

I learned the most from this book about Gordon and Barlow, two very different men. In contrast to the rough handling he gives Grant, Lee, Hood and Sherman, the author seems to genuinely like Gordon and Barlow. Some of his most enjoyable writing focuses on their early lives and backgrounds, and their growth as military leaders over the four years of the Civil War. After Appomattox, Gordon was a very successful Georgia politician (and never shy about tooting his own horn, sometimes exaggerating his military record), while Barlow briefly served in New York politics before withdrawing in disgust at the corruption of the Gilded Age. I knew little about either man before reading this book, and learned a great deal.

Buell is an even greater admirer of George H. Thomas, and praises "the Rock of Chickamauga" for solid, capable, unflashy leadership that made the Army of the Cumberland "the most professional and modern of all the armies in the Civil War," Thomas won battle after battle, despite carping from the War Department and backbiting from Grant and Sherman, and never let his successes go to his head. I'm a Thomas fan, too, but Buell's only criticism of the general seems to be that he didn't always appreciate the political motivations and needs of President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton. As criticisms go, it's a pretty minor one, and it ends up being a compliment, anyway: Thomas as an apolitical general in a war full of the other kind. Thomas obviously had other faults, but you won't read about them in Buell's book.

There's a lot of good stuff in this book, not all of which you'll agree with, but which you'll enjoy reading just the same. It's worth noting that two former Roundtable presidents (Dan Zeiser and Bob Boyda) both found it invaluable in preparing speeches about two of the generals whom Buell profiles (Thomas and Gordon, respectively), I, too, highly recommend *The Warrior Generals*.

WILLIAM F. B. VODREY



George Thomas
The Roman



Division commander Francis C. Barlow. (Leslie's)

Francis Barlow
The Puritan



John Gordon
The Cavalier

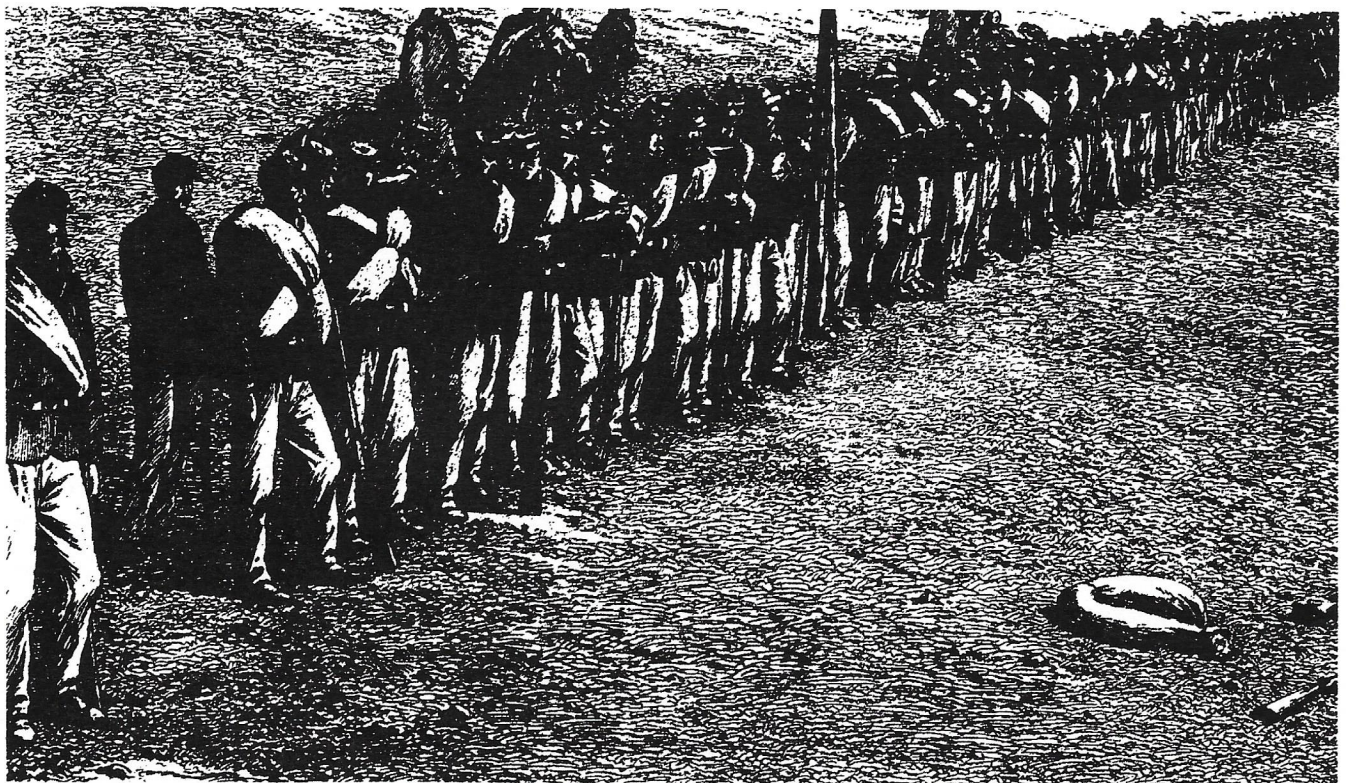
TACTICS

By Matt Slattery

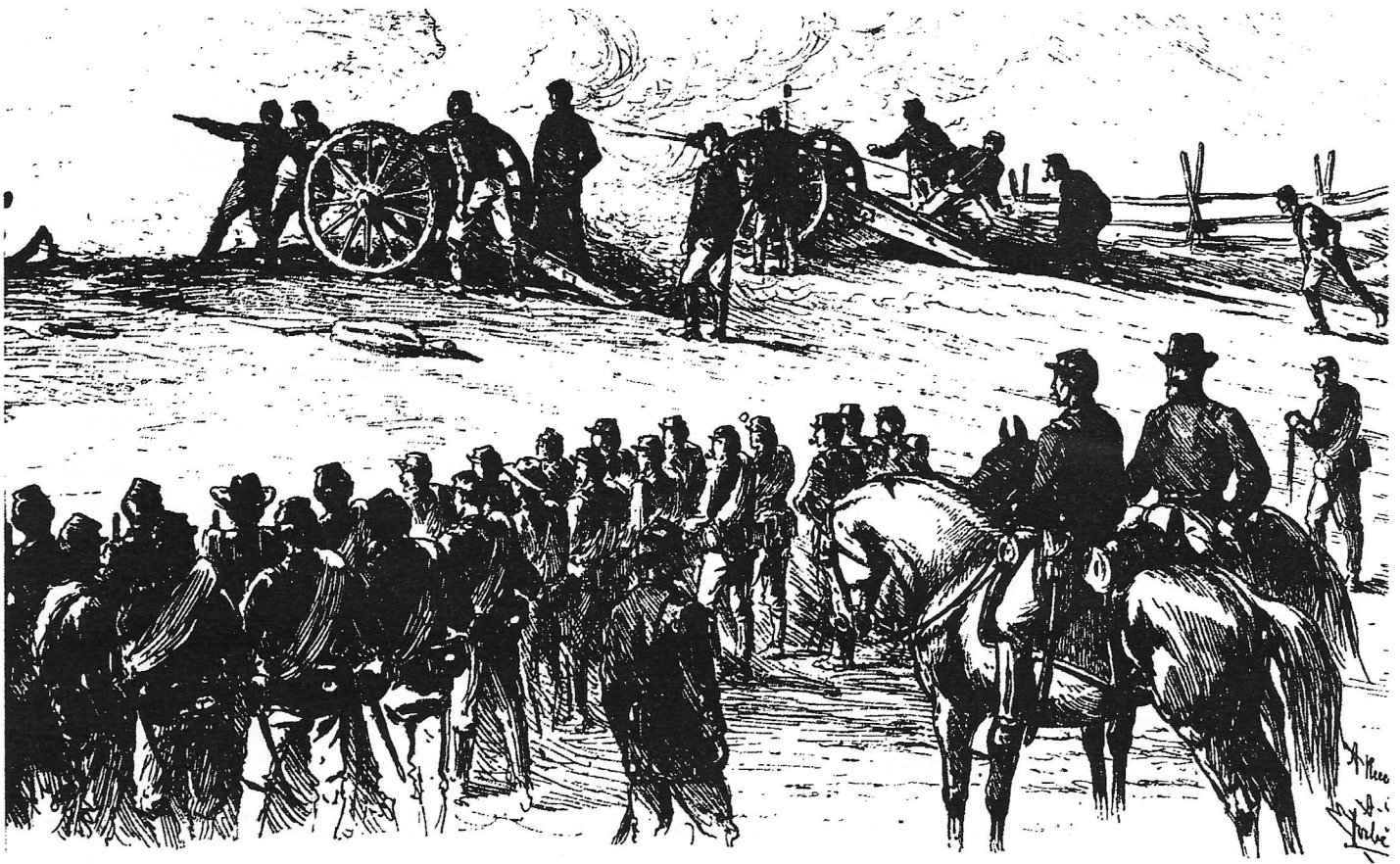
Many of the books on the Civil War (the fighting Civil War) deal with the strategy of the governments, north and south, and as carried out by their leading generals. Then there is a great break and many books then turn to deal with the story of the individual soldier, the young man in blue or gray, and his contention with the terrors of battles and the risks of years' long campaigning.

In between these extremes lies a vast military field known to both practitioners and historians as Tactics, the actual fighting of battles. In the Civil War the unit of the tactical command, both north and south, was the regiment. On paper, and often at the beginning of the war it consisted of 1,000 men. In fact, and after the war had become deadly, it counted some hundreds of troops.

To illustrate the problems and failures of the tactical command, we have herewith created the mythical 75th Michigan Volunteer Infantry (sorry Michigan). Oh, how often we have come across some version of the following: "The battle was fought between evenly matched bodies of divisional strength, but the 75th Michigan holding the right wing collapsed, and with the threat of encirclement what should have been a Union victory turned to abject defeat.



Matt Slattery is retired and a Cleveland CWRT member since 1984.



We are left guessing. The 75th is the goat, but what really transpired? Herewith are some possibilities - tactical errors, oversights, and failures:

1. The Union line was well established except for the 75th, which had to make an all-night march in the rain to get to its position and arrived dead tired and hungry. A determined Confederate assault drove them from their position.
2. The Union line was well established along a stretch of high ground except on the far right which was on low, exposed land and which the unfortunate 75 was given to hold. The rebel commander immediately saw this and sent in a heavy force to break it.
3. In a quartermaster goof, the 75th was short of ammunition. **Or** early in the war when there were a variety of rifles, the wrong caliber bullets were sent.
4. The unfortunate 75th had no artillery support. **Or** the rebel artillery was concentrated on it.
5. **Or**, and too often, the fault lay with the regiment's own colonel who failed to get his men into the right position or on time.

When we are reading the story of a battle and come up against "the right wing broke down" or some other anomaly, we should seek to know what caused it, or take a charitable attitude. The odds are that the troops of the 75th were as competent and as brave as those of their fellow regiments or as those of the enemy. War is a complex affair and often does not follow the laws of logic.

Matt Slattery

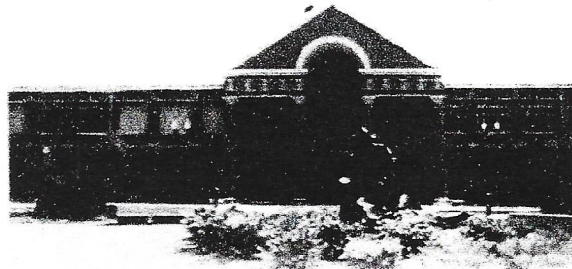


PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

I'd like to thank all who attended our last meeting. Garbor Boritt's presentation was very stimulating and informative.

I am trying to reschedule our original September speaker, Senator McConnell, (HUNLEY) for February, 2002. The only problem is that he cannot come to Cleveland on Wednesdays due to State business. He can give his presentation on a Friday. I would like to change the meeting date in February, but need our members input. The Friday (Feb 15) would be the one following our originally scheduled Wednesday (Feb 13) meeting. Would all members please consider this date change. If this is not acceptable, call me at 216 491-9314 within 7 days of receiving the charger. If the majority favors moving the meeting to Friday, I will try to reschedule Senator McConnell. Thanks for your speedy reply.

Bill McGrath



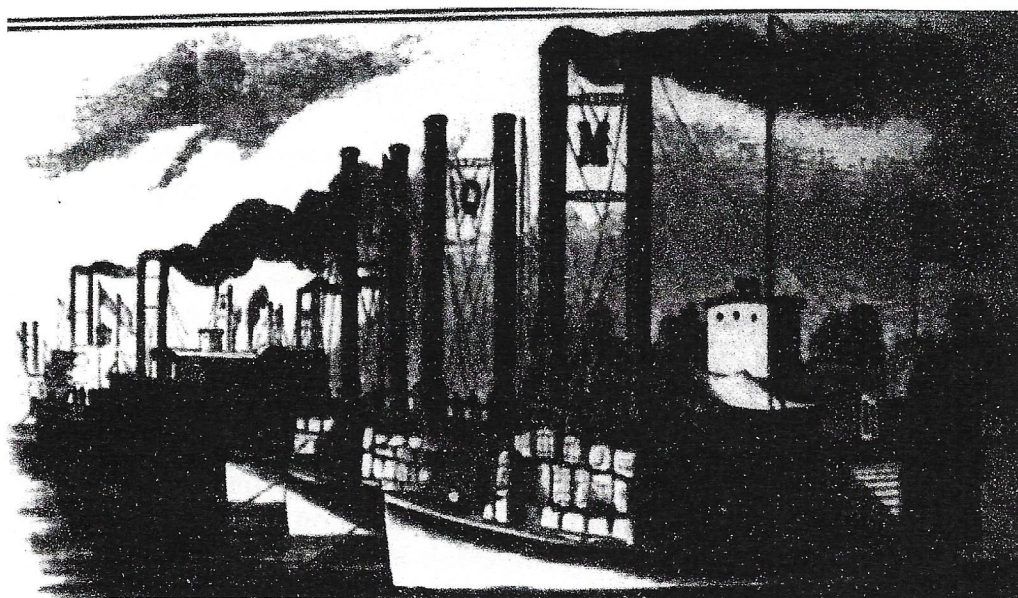
SADDLE AND RIDE - VISIT THE NATIONAL CIVIL WAR MUSEUM!

Join us as we visit the big, new, much-praised National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, Pa. on Saturday, November 10, 2001. We'll be caravanning, leaving at 6AM so that we can have a full day there before returning that evening.

The NCWM has many important Civil War artifacts and interactive displays, spread across a dozen galleries and 27,000 square feet of exhibition space. Since it opened on Lincoln's Birthday this spring, it's attracted 45,000 visitors from 26 states and six foreign countries.

The Museum's website is at www.nationalcivilwarmuseum.org. The Museum is open from 10AM-5PM on weekends, and is on the eastern edge of Harrisburg in Reservoir Park, Pa., about 200 miles east of Pittsburgh. Take the Pa. Turnpike to Exit 19, and follow Route 283 North to Interstate 83 North. At Exit 30, go about 2.5 miles west on Route 22/Walnut Street, staying on Walnut Street when it splits from Route 22. Turn left at the Parkside Cafe into Reservoir Park. The Museum and parking are at the top of the hill. Admission is \$7/adults, \$6/seniors, and \$5/children.

If you'd like to go, be sure to call William Vodrey at (216) 321-0082 immediately so that he knows how many to expect.



The Army's Civil War NAVY

**November 14,
2001**