

December, 2006

437th Meeting

Vol. 28 #4

Tonight's

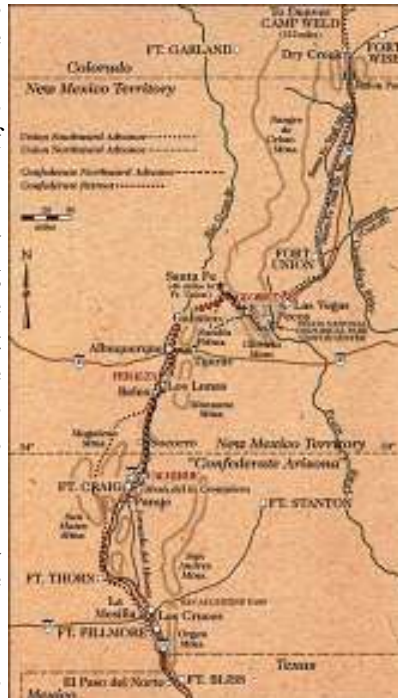
Program:

The Confederacy's New Mexico Campaign

It is 1861. The Civil War is on. While fighting in the east rages, Brig. Gen. Henry Hopkins Sibley proposes raising a brigade of Texans at San Antonio, marching west to El Paso, and invading the New Mexico Territory. Sharing the dream of a Confederate manifest destiny, President Davis consents and the Confederacy's New Mexico Campaign becomes reality.

Defending the territory is a series of frontier forts, the most notable being Ft. Craig, commanded by Col. Edward Canby, and Ft. Union, guarding the Santa Fe trail, but very few soldiers, as most have been sent east to fight. Moving north through the Rio Grande valley, the Confederates face Union soldiers at Val Verde and Glorieta Pass. The former is a Confederate victory, the latter a defeat, sometimes referred to as the "Gettysburg of the West."

Tonight we will learn why Sibley proposed the invasion and the benefits to be gained by it. We will also learn the particulars of the campaign, who participated, what happened, the mistakes that were made, and much more. Come hear more about the Civil War in the real west.



Tonight's Speakers:

Dan Zeiser

Dan has been a student of the Civil War since childhood. A history major in college, the Roundtable has permitted him to continue his fondness for historical figures such as George Thomas. He has contributed many articles for the Charger and is known, mostly by himself, for his quirky, yet scholarly, pieces.

Dan has been a member of the Roundtable since 1992 and is a past president. He currently serves as the Editor of the Charger.

Dan is married and has three children. He appreciates their patient listening to his historical ramblings.

**Date: Wednesday,
December 13, 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: Salmon or Grilled
Portobello Mushroom**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **John Fazio** (330) 867-1535
Vice President: **Terry Koozer** (216) 226-7527
Secretary: **Marilyn DeBaltzo** (440) 461-6804
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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2006 Dave Carrino	1981 Thomas Geschke
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2004 Warren McClelland	1979 William Bates
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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1988 Martin Graham	1963 Paul Guenther
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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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER, 2006

The 50th Anniversary meeting of the Roundtable was very successful. We had 138 members and guests there, which might be a record. The paintings by Kunstler, Troiani, and Gallon, and the drill performed by the 8th Ohio Infantry Division lent great color to the event. For the former, credit Laurie Allmenger and Nancy Eppelston, from BK Photo and Gallery in Troy, Ohio; for the latter, credit William Vodrey. The Chinese auction added \$845 to our Treasury (credit mostly Mary Adams Fazio and Linda Lester). The period music was delightful (credit Joey Sands) and the period food, by common consent, was great (credit the Play House Club and particularly Tom Hlepas). Mel's address on "Lincoln at Gettysburg" was, as expected, superb (credit his family for tolerating him while he prepared). Let this meeting serve as an example of the kind of entertainment, camaraderie and intellectual stimulation that the Roundtable provides and an inducement, therefore, to attend more in the future and get involved. I conclude by saying, in an appropriately pompous and stentorian tone, that if the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable lasts for a thousand years, men and women will still say "This was its finest hour."

Now we move a couple of thousand miles west of Gettysburg to Valverde (sometimes spelled Val Verde) and Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, two key battles in the often neglected and therefore poorly understood Trans-Mississippi theater of the war. (Speaking of often neglected, how about the Pacific Coast theater of the war? Now there's a subject for a future speaker.) Dan Zeiser will shed a lot of light at the December meeting not only on the two key battles (out of 75 recognized by the National Park Service), but also on the larger issues of who was trying to do what and for what ultimate purpose by fighting so far west. We can hardly think of ourselves as knowledgeable about the war if we are ignorant of these campaigns, their larger purposes, and their results. Most of us, I suspect, are so afflicted. We are indeed fortunate to have Dan to correct the deficiency.

John C. Fazio

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2006/2007 SCHEDULE**

September 13, 2006

**The 13th Tennessee (Union),
The Men Who Killed
The Invader of Ohio,
John Hunt Morgan**

Dick Crews

October 11, 2006

Images

Karen Thyer portrays Mother Bickerdyke (1817-1901), Botanical Physician, "Cyclone in Calico," and Don Allen portrays a U.S. Sanitary Commission Inspector, singing songs of the Union and Confederacy

November 8, 2006

**Cleveland CWRT
50th Anniversary Celebration**



Lincoln at Gettysburg

Mel Maurer

December 13, 2006

**The Confederacy's New
Mexico Campaign
The Battles of Valverde and
Glorieta Pass**

Dan Zeiser

January 10, 2007

**The Annual Dick Crews
Debate**

*Resolved: That the Institution of
slavery was the cause of the Civil
War*

Moderator: William Vodrey

February 14, 2007

Ohio's Civil War Governors



**William F. B.
Vodrey**



March 14, 2007

**Custer's Last
Stand**

Harold A. George



April 11, 2007

**The Lincoln-Baldwin
Conference**

James Epperson

May 9, 2007

**The Civil War Letters
of Private Alfred Weedon,
26th Ohio Volunteer
Infantry - A
Hands-on Lesson in
History**
Jon Thompson



The Most Effective General

© 2006 by Dan Zeiser

The debate has raged for decades. Was it George H. Thomas, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, William T. Sherman, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson? Each of us has his or her favorite. There are good arguments for those mentioned above and maybe a few others. In the end, perhaps there is no one right answer to the question who was the best general of the war. But ask who was the most effective general of the war and different names arise, names that would never be mentioned in response to the earlier question, names, mostly, of political generals. Benjamin Butler, Nathaniel Banks, and John McClelland, while clearly not the best in terms of military skill, were all effective generals. While the current notion is that all political generals were incompetent fools, while military generals won the war, that is not entirely true. Political generals acted in ways the military generals did not, often attaining goals military generals were simply incapable of accomplishing. When examined in this manner, the most effective general was none other than John A. “Black Jack” Logan.



John A. Logan

When determining who was the most effective general, one must look beyond battles or campaigns won or lost. Butler, victorious early in the war, eventually proved to be incompetent as a commanding general. Banks was ineffective on the battlefield the entire war. McClelland and Logan never commanded more than a corps. We must, though, look beyond purely military endeavors to answer this question. After all, this was a civil war, the army was woefully unprepared, as was the country and the government, northerners were sympathetic to the south, southerners were sympathetic to the north. The nation was rent at the seams and no one knew what would become of it. The nation needed generals and leaders.

Prior to the Civil War, the United States had a long tradition of amateur military commanders dating back to the colonial militia. George Washington had very little military experience when he was made head of the Continental Army. Before the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson’s experience was limited to Indian wars. Given this background, and his need for political support, it is little wonder that Lincoln relied so heavily on political generals. Some failed, some succeeded. Their successes, though, must be measured on a different scale.

Benjamin Butler was one of the first political generals. An early hero of the war and a Democrat, he donated his popularity to the Union cause with every newspaper account containing his name and every speech proclaiming his political support for the administration’s policies. He organized troops throughout New England and arranged a loan to pay to deploy the Massachusetts militia. In the fall of 1861, he recruited six (6) new infantry regiments and an artillery battery, troops that were used in 1862 to capture New Orleans and much of Louisiana. Butler’s early stand against returning runaway slaves, which he first labeled “contrabands of war,” removed a source of labor from the Confederacy and perhaps moved Lincoln towards the Emancipation Proclamation. When calm was needed in the streets of New York following the draft riots, Lin-

coln turned to Butler.



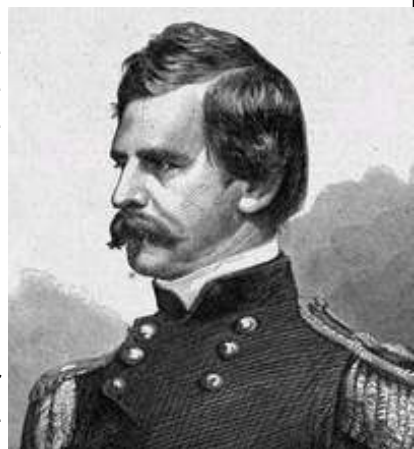
Benjamin Butler

As a military commander, Nathaniel Banks was a failure. However, he was not made a general to produce decisive battlefield victories. Like Butler, he used his prominence to garner support for the war effort and Lincoln's policies. As a moderate Republican, he rallied support from moderates, ex-Democrats, and Know-Nothings. He stumped for Lincoln's reelection in 1864. Perhaps Banks's greatest contribution came as commander of the Department of the Gulf. As military commander, he seized Baton Rouge, helped Grant clear the Mississippi by besieging Port Hudson, and established a Union presence in Texas. Employing his political experience as military governor of Louisiana, he almost single handedly reconstructed the state. He established a new labor system to replace slavery in cotton production, cut down on illegal trade with the Confederacy, re-created a political structure for the city of New Orleans, and began the rewriting of Louisiana's constitution. Lincoln had sufficient faith in Banks's political skills that the department became the testing

ground for the administration's policies on reconstruction. It is difficult to imagine Grant, Sherman, Lee, or even Thomas having the political skills necessary to accomplish these tasks.

John McClernand was another of Lincoln's politically appointed generals. His military experience consisted of being a private during the Black Hawk War (Lincoln was a captain). But it was not his military experience that was needed. A Democrat from southern Illinois, Lincoln needed friends in a region of questionable loyalty to the Union. McClernand began his military career by raising a brigade from southern Illinois and rallying support for the Union cause. He succeeded beyond expectations. In the fall of 1862, McClernand was charged with the task of raising troops from Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa for a campaign to open the Mississippi. In just two (2) months, he recruited forty thousand (40,000) new troops, an entire army at the time. No military general could say the same. These troops were vital in the capture of Vicksburg. Additionally, many of these were Democrats who opposed Lincoln's election and would likely not have enlisted but for McClernand's influence. As a military leader, McClernand was adequate. However, he was unable to get along with Grant, his commanding officer. He incurred Grant's ire by constantly inflating his role while criticizing others. Eventually, he was relieved of command.

The most effective general of the war was John A. "Black Jack" Logan. A southern Illinois Democrat, like McClernand, he was an able political and military general. He had almost no military experience. He served in the Mexican War, but saw no combat. When the Civil War broke out, Logan at first did not reveal his allegiance. After serving as an unattached volunteer with the 2nd Michigan at First Bull Run, he made his decision. Resigning



Nathaniel P. Banks

from Congress, Logan returned home, announced his support for the Union, and raised the 31st Illinois in the heart of divided southern Illinois. Lincoln gave him a commission for one reason – he was seen as a political leader who could rally Democrats to the cause. And rally them he did. With McClernand, Logan stumped all over Illinois and the old Northwest. His speeches were so effective that Lincoln often asked that Logan be granted leave to return to Illinois and rally its citizens to the Union cause. His efforts, along with those of Banks and others, during the election of 1864 should not be underestimated. Without them, Lincoln's re-election may not have occurred.

In addition to his political efforts, Logan contributed militarily. He developed into one of the finest combat leaders of the war, became an effective field officer, and rose to become one of Sherman's most experienced corps commanders. He had inherent leadership skills and natural bravery. In some ways, his tactical record was unsurpassed, even among West Pointers, as he never tasted defeat or was tainted with charges of incompetence. In his first action at Belmont, Logan led the 31st Illinois into the enemy camp and kept it together while other units collapsed after the arrival of Confederate reinforcements. He was wounded at Fort Donelson while halting a Confederate attack, for which he was promoted to brigadier general. He commanded a brigade and then a division under Grant during the Vicksburg campaign. Eventually, he commanded a corps under Sherman during the Atlanta campaign. Taking over upon the death of James McPherson, Logan shattered Hood's attack and drove the Confederates back with great loss. Sherman credited him with winning the day. Indeed, Logan was repeatedly credited by Grant and Sherman for his military capabilities.

Perhaps one reason Logan performed well as a tactical commander was that he had the opportunity to learn. Unlike Banks and Butler, he was not made a commanding general immediately. Serving as regimental, brigade, division, and, finally, corps commander, he was given the chance to learn to handle smaller units, see the battle from the front, and observe professionals such as Grant and Sherman perform. As an amateur soldier, though, Logan was never given the opportunity to command an army, save for that brief period during the battle of Atlanta, when he temporarily took over for McPherson before being replaced by Oliver O. Howard. Whether it were his standing as a non-West Pointer, or Grant's and Sherman's distaste after dealing with McClernand, Logan ended the war as perhaps Sherman's best corps commander.

Returning to our topic, the same names are tossed about when debating the best general of the war. Those names are typically West Pointers. History has left us with the notion that the professional generals were the only effective military leaders. This is not the case. Clearly, John A. Logan was an effective military leader, amateur though he was. Several other names can be added to the list, such as Jacob Cox,



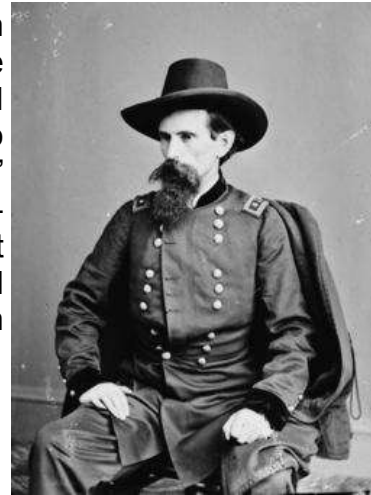
John McClernand



Jacob D. Cox

Lew Wallace, Alpheus Williams, while a number of West Pointers proved incompetent, namely, Ambrose Burnside and Braxton Bragg. Political generals brought other skills to the table, skills not in the repertoire of the professional soldier. They were extremely effective in recruiting troops and rallying support to the cause. They saw the war in terms of a political struggle, while military generals saw it as a military contest only. There is little doubt that a politician was much more adept at handling the reconstruction of Louisiana than a West Pointer would have been. These men kept the Union together and raised the troops that the military generals led to victory. Since we tend to view the “best” general as the one with the greatest influence on the battlefield, let us bypass that question and ask who was the most effective general. Because of his contributions in the political arena as well as the battlefield, that can be none other than John A. “Black Jack” Logan.

Dan Zeiser is the editor of the Charger, a frequent contributor, although he would much rather the members provide articles of interest to them, a past president of the Roundtable, and the dreaded Quizmaster.



Lew Wallace

THE CIVIL WAR ON DECEMBER 13

1862 - SUNRISE WAS AT 7:17 A.M. LONGSTREET WAS ON THE LEFT FLANK WITH JACKSON ON THE RIGHT. AT 10:00 A.M. ARTILLERY BEGAN TO ROAR AND THE CONFEDERATES WATCHED FROM MARYE’S HEIGHTS AS THE FEDERALS ALIGNED THEIR RANKS AND PREPARED TO CHARGE UP THE HILL. THE ASSAULT CAME AT 11:30 A.M. IT WAS A SLAUGHTER THAT LASTED UNTIL ALMOST 3:30 P.M., WHEN THERE WAS A LULL. AFTER ASSESSING THE SITUATION, THE FEDERALS MADE SIX (6) MORE CHARGES, ALL REPULSED. BY 6:00 P.M. THE FIGHTING WAS OVER. NEARLY 1300 UNION TROOPS WERE DEAD, ANOTHER 9600 WOUNDED, AND 1800 TAKEN PRISONER. THE CONFEDERATES LOST APPROXIMATELY 600 KILLED, 4100 WOUNDED, AND 650 MISSING.

1864 - SHERMAN HAD ARRIVED AT SAVANNAH AND WAS LAYING SIEGE TO THE CITY. AFTER BUILDING A 1000 FOOT BRIDGE OVER THE OGEECHEE RIVER TO REPLACE THE ONE THE CONFEDERATES HAD DESTROYED, HE ATTACKED THE FORT AROUND 5:00 P.M. IT FELL QUICKLY. THE LINK TO THE SEA WAS OPEN AND SAVANNAH WAS DOOMED.

AT NASHVILLE, THE WEATHER REMAINED ICY AND EVERYONE WAITED. GRANT HAD ORDERED GEN. JOHN LOGAN TO NASHVILLE TO RELIEVE GEN. GEORGE THOMAS IF HE DID NOT ATTACK WHEN THE WEATHER IMPROVED. THOMAS WOULD SOON DESTROY HOOD AND THE ARMY OF TENNESSEE .



**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS
TO ALL!
HERE'S TO OUR
NEXT 50 YEARS!**



ANNOUNCEMENT

At last month's auction, Marge Wilson donated a book, "Behind Bayonets, The Civil War in Northern Ohio," by Van Tessel and Vacha. She inadvertently donated her own copy. She would appreciate it if the winner would return it. In exchange, she will provide a fresh copy, autographed by John Vacha, one of the authors. She can be reached at mrw8107@adelphia.net or 216-368-5180 during the day. Thank you for your understanding.

**NEXT MONTH
THE ANNUAL DICK CREWS DEBATE
BE IT RESOLVED: THAT THE INSTITUTION OF
SLAVERY WAS THE CAUSE OF THE CIVIL WAR**