

THE CHARGER

February 2011

475th Meeting

Vol. 32, #6

Tonight's Program:

Lincoln's Commando: William Cushing

William Barker Cushing was born in Delafield, Wisconsin, on November 4, 1842, but spent most of his childhood in Fredonia, New York. He attended the U.S. Naval Academy from 1857 until March 1861, when his high-spirited behavior led to his resignation. The outbreak of the Civil War brought him back into the service, and he soon distinguished himself as an officer of extraordinary initiative and courage. Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in mid-1862, Cushing served as Executive Officer of the gunboat *Commodore Perry*, then was given command of the tug *Ellis*, which was lost under heroic circumstances on November 25, 1862. He subsequently commanded the gunboats *Commodore Barney*, *Shokokon*, and *Monticello*. During this time, he led several daring reconnaissance and raiding excursions into Confederate territories.

On the night of October 27-28, 1864, Cushing and a small crew took the Navy steam launch *Picket Boat Number One* upriver to Plymouth, North Carolina, where they attacked and sank the Confederate ironclad ram CSS *Albatross* with a spar torpedo. This action made him a national celebrity, and he was quickly promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. In January 1865, Cushing helped lead the Navy landing force in the conquest of Fort Fisher, again distinguishing himself.



Tonight's Speaker:

William F. B. Vodrey

William F. B. Vodrey is a magistrate of the Cleveland Municipal Court. He has often spoken to this and other groups about the Civil War. He was president of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable in 2000-1, is a member of the Civil War Preservation Trust and of the Ohio Historical Society, and is a former reenactor with the 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Company B. Through his many efforts on the Roundtable's behalf, William continues to make valuable contributions to the Roundtable.

**Date: Wednesday,
February 9, 2011**

**Place: Judson Manor
1890 E. 107th Street
Cleveland, Ohio**

**Time: Drinks 6 PM
Dinner 6:45 PM**

**Reservations: Please Call
Dan Zeiser (440) 449-9311
or email ccwrt1956@yahoo.com
By 9 pm Sunday before meeting**

**Meal choice: Beef pot roast,
roasted potatoes, broccoli and
cauliflower, salad, and dessert.**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Lisa Kempfer** (440) 526-1318
Vice President: **Paul Burkholder** (440) 918-0222
Secretary: **Marge Wilson** (216) 932-6558
Treasurer: **Michael Wells** (216) 371-8449
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Directors:

Dennis Keating	Jon Thompson
Garry Regan	Syd Overall
Jim Heflich	Gordy Gates

website: clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com

email: pburkholder@ameritech.net

Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2010 Dennis Keating	1983 William Victory
2009 Jon Thompson	1982 John Harkness
2008 Terry Koozer	1981 Thomas Geschke
2007 John Fazio	1980 Charles Spiegle
2006 Dave Carrino	1979 William Bates
2005 Mel Maurer	1978 Richard McCrae
2004 Warren McClelland	1977 James Chapman
2003 Maynard Bauer	1976 Milton Holmes
2002 Bill McGrath	1975 Thomas Gretter
2001 William Vodrey	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
2000 Bob Boyda	1973 Arthur Jordan
1999 Dick Crews	1972 Bernard Drews
1998 John Moore	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1997 Dan Zeiser	1970 Frank Schuhle
1996 John Sutula	1969 Donald Heckaman
1995 Norton London	1968 Frank Moran
1994 Robert Battisti	1967 William Schlesinger
1993 Kevin Callahan	1966 Donald Hamill
1992 Bob Baucher	1965 Lester Swift
1991 Joe Tirpak	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1963 Paul Guenther
1989 Neil Glaser	1962 Edward Downer
1988 Martin Graham	1961 Charles Clarke
1987 George Vourlojianis	1960 Howard Preston
1986 Tim Beatty	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1985 Brian Kowell	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1984 Neil Evans	1957 Kenneth Grant

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 2011

Commandos and The Great Debate: Round Two

Commandos, special ops. Where did they get their start? Our own William F.B. Vodrey will let us know in his February talk, Lincoln's Commando: William Cushing. Cushing was born in Wisconsin, raised in New York, and attended the Naval Academy from which he was kicked out for pranks and poor grades. The Civil War started, he asked to be reinstated in the Navy, he was, and the rest is history. His defining moment involved the CSS *Albemarle*. Come to the February 9 meeting to learn what commando tactics Cushing used to defeat the Confederate navy!

If at first you don't succeed, try again. Thomas Edison said he tried 10,000 times to create the light bulb. We only need one more try, March 9, 2011, to hold our Annual Dick Crews Debate and obtain a definitive answer to the not often asked question, "Would foreign intervention have won the war for the South?" Arguing for the affirmative are Tom Barnard and Steve Wilson. Steve Pettyjohn and Dennis Keating will argue that foreign nations would not have helped the South win the war. I hope you can join us for this interesting and stimulating debate!

Since we have had a two-month hiatus, our schedule for the rest of the year has changed. Here is the new line up:

April 13, 2011

Donald Korb

The Fight for Money: The Income Tax Laws Of the Civil War

May 11, 2011

John Marszalek

Ulysses S. Grant

June 8, 2011

Scott Longert

Garfield's battles in Eastern Kentucky

Ed Haney and Debbie Weinkamer

General James A. and Lucretia Garfield Reading their Civil War Letters

Finally, Steelers 21, Packers 18.

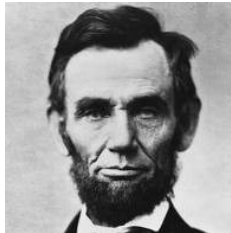
Respectfully,

Lisa

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2010/2011 SCHEDULE**

September 8, 2010

***Abraham Lincoln's Effect on
Constitutional
Interpretation***

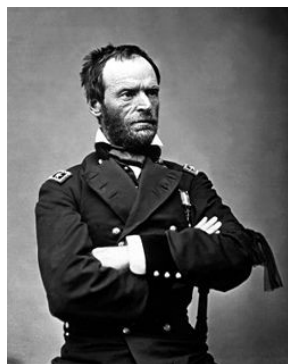


Wilson Huhn

October 13, 2010

***William Tecumseh
Sherman***

**Frank
Bullock**



November 10, 2010



Dr. Mary Walker

***Civil War Female
Spies***

December 8, 2010

***Letters From the Front:
General James A. and
Lucretia Garfield***

**Ed Haney and
Deborah Weinkamer**

January 12, 2011

**The Dick Crews Annual
Debate**

*Would foreign intervention have won
the war for the South?*

Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

February 9, 2011

***Lincoln's
Commando:
William Cushing***

William Vodrey



March 9, 2011



***Garfield's battles in
Eastern Kentucky***

Scott Longert

April 13, 2011

***The Fight for Money:
The Income Tax Laws
Of the Civil War***

Donald Korb

May 11, 2011



Ulysses Grant

John Marszalek

**For membership in the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable, please visit our web site:
<http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>**

Ulysses Grant: Dual Personality?

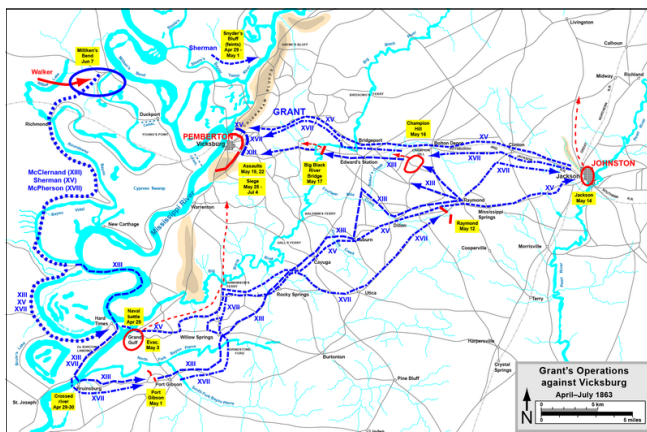
By Dan Zeiser © 2011

I have often thought that Ulysses Grant exhibited far different command skills in the west than he did in the east during the Civil War. Generally, my thoughts were that Grant used maneuver much better in the west than when he was in overall command. Look at the Vicksburg Campaign, which is still used today by the U.S. Army as an excellent example of feint and maneuver to keep the enemy off guard. Once Grant crossed the Mississippi at Bruinsburg, he kept Confederate General John Pemberton guessing as to his next move. This resulted in Confederate paralysis and led to the siege at Vicksburg and inevitable victory. In the east, however, Grant's movements appear much more predictable and less inspired. He seemed simply to attempt to hammer away at Lee until the latter became exhausted and lost enough troops. Recently, however, I have come to re-examine my conclusions. Was Grant a different commander in the west? Did he come east and become simply the butcher he was decried as being? I think not.

First, let me say that I believe Grant was an excellent strategist. His movements during the war show he understood some factors that others did not. A westerner, Grant understood that rivers were key. Roads in the west were not the same as those in the east. There were far fewer large population centers west of the Appalachians and fewer good roads connecting them. Rivers had been the main thoroughfares of commerce for decades and steamboats the movers. The ten largest cities in the U.S. in 1850 were, in descending order, New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Brooklyn, St. Louis, Spring Garden (now a suburb of Philadelphia), and Albany. Note that only three were west of the Appalachians and that all the eastern cities were seaports except Albany. However, the Hudson was navigable up to Albany, so it can be considered a seaport. Finally, all three western cities were river cities. (New Orleans can be seen as both a seaport and river city.) Also, all three are in the Mississippi River basin. This is no coincidence.

In 1860, the ten largest cities were New York, Philadelphia (the result of consolidation), Brooklyn, Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Buffalo.

Again, except for Buffalo, the eastern cities were seaports. Buffalo, of course, is on Lake Erie and is a port city. Four of the cities are western, Chicago growing to number 9. In the 1850 census, it was the 24th largest city. Chicago was the world's fastest growing city in the 1800s. Chicago's growth is the result of its unique position. On Lake Michigan, it connected to the east through Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and the Erie Canal. Roughly fifteen miles from Lake Michigan runs the



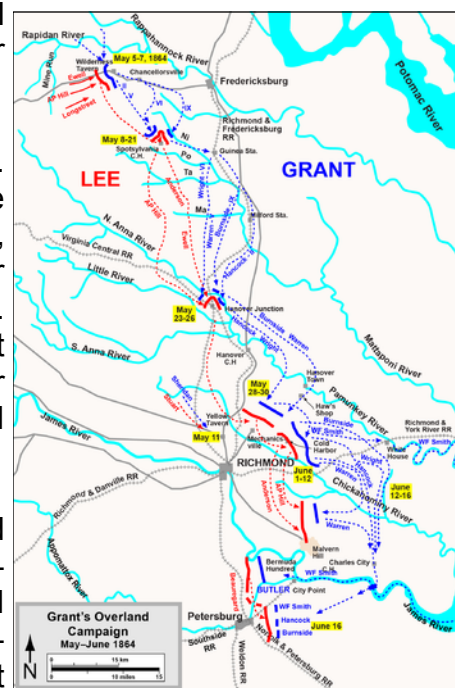
Des Plaines River, a tributary of the Mississippi River. Connecting the two made Chicago the link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. It also made it possible to travel, via water, the cheapest form of travel, from anywhere on the Mississippi to the Great Lakes and, via the Erie Canal, to the east coast, particularly New York City.

Grant understood this. He knew rivers were the best mode of transport in the west. How did he use this understanding? His first campaign was to travel upriver to Forts Henry and Donelson. Situated on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, respectively, Grant knew they were the key to Nashville and the heart of the western Confederacy. Take them and the road, i.e., the rivers, was open. His next move was further upriver on the Tennessee to Shiloh. What was the objective? Corinth. Corinth was the major railroad center of the western Confederacy. The Mobile & Ohio, the major north-south railway, and the Memphis & Charleston, the major east-west axis, crossed at Corinth. Take Corinth and you controlled these arteries. Of course, Grant could have marched overland. But river travel was quicker, easier, and gave him the extra firepower of the brown water Navy.

When he moved east, Grant also understood that his main advantage was manpower and materiel. He knew that the North had a greater population from which to draw soldiers. He could replace losses that Lee could not. Grant also understood that the North could produce more guns, ammunition, cannon, ships, food, and just about everything except cotton than the South. He could fight a war of attrition, Lee could not. And he did just that. While casualties might have been greater in the short run, Grant also understood that casualties now can mean fewer casualties in the future and fewer overall. Rather than fight a battle, regroup, and fight again, which might lead to fewer casualties, he had to fight, fight, and continue fighting. By doing so, he drained Lee of men and supplies that could not be replaced or, if they could, could not be transported to Virginia, given the South's limited rail capacity. He could shorten the war and cause fewer casualties than fighting several years more would.

As a tactician, however, Grant was flawed. His main tactic was the frontal assault, even in the west. He, like many other Civil War commanders, apparently did not see how the increased firepower of the Civil War defeated almost any frontal assault. Few frontal assaults succeeded, especially against entrenched troops. One need only ask Pickett or Hood about their experiences at Gettysburg and Franklin, respectively.

So, in the west, Grant maneuvered. He used the rivers. He kept his enemy guessing. At Vicksburg, rather than move directly to that city, he moved upon Jackson, using several roads that kept his options open. If one were blocked or did not pan out



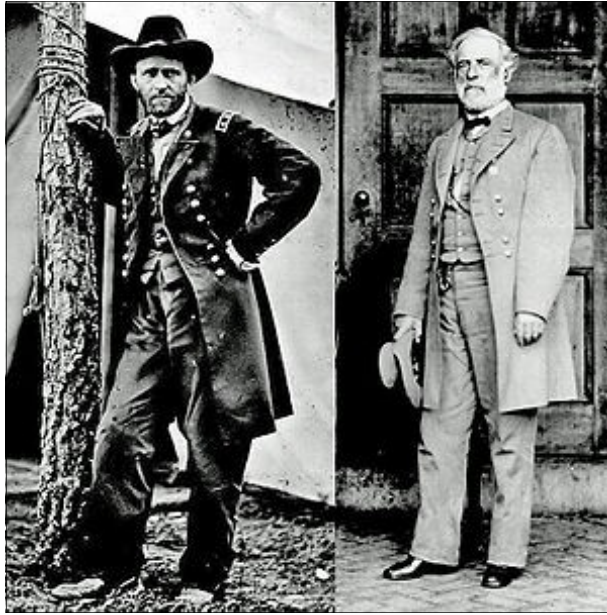
for some reason, he could move elsewhere. Several times, he feinted in one direction only to move in another. In the east, though, Grant appears different. He did not maneuver as well. He went overland rather than via water. Did he keep Lee guessing? Probably not, as Lee probably knew he meant to take Richmond. He did not feint in one direction only to move in another. In short, Grant was a different commander.

Or so I thought. Recently, though, several conversations have led me to me to reconsider. First, in the west, distances were vast and railroads and good roads were few and far between. In Virginia, however, distances were short. Washington City and Richmond were about 100 miles apart. There simply was not as much room to maneuver as in the west. Railroads and good roads were not short in supply. Virginia had a number of railroads, almost all in the eastern half of the state. Additionally, there were a number of good roads, including turnpikes and planked roads. Overland travel in Virginia was not what it was in the west. There was no particular need to use the rivers. Grant could move overland, using the railways to supply his army, and not have a lengthy supply line. Nor was he ever far from a river and the Navy. Ships could help supply him via the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. At Petersburg, City Point became one of the largest ports in the world.

Second, Richmond was a powerful draw. In the west, Grant could concentrate on military targets, Forts Henry and Donelson, Corinth, Shiloh. He could pick and choose his targets. He could ignore political targets. In Virginia, while Richmond had certain military assets such as the Tredegar Iron Works, its main draw was as the Confederate capital. There could be no denying that its capture would have great effect on the South's will to fight. Though its capture was not a necessity, Grant knew that Lee would have to defend Richmond. Therefore, moving on Richmond meant Lee had to fight and keep fighting until Grant was defeated or Richmond fell. In short, Richmond became key to his strategy and handcuffed his movements somewhat. Feinting toward the Shenandoah Valley or Hampton Roads would not have the same effect as feinting toward Vicksburg and moving on Jackson. Lee knew that the Valley or Hampton Roads or any other place was not Grant's target. Richmond was the target.

So, was Grant different in Virginia? Perhaps not. Grant did maneuver, even though his movements were constrained by geography. After the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Yellow Tavern, North Anna, Cold Harbor, and the others, Grant did not retreat to lick his wounds. He did not simply attack Lee in the same place. He moved south in an effort to outflank Lee and get between him and Richmond, forcing Lee to attack him. After Cold Harbor, especially, he totally perplexed Lee and moved across the James River to Petersburg. This is the Grant of the west. He used movement to keep his enemy guessing. Was Lee fooled? Not really. He knew Grant wanted Richmond. It was only a question of where he would show up next, at least until crossing the James. Here Grant showed he was the same commander as in the west.

Unfortunately, Grant's faults as a tactician continued to show. Though he attempted to flank Lee and get around him, when that failed he continued to use the frontal assault, the one tactic that seemed to constitute his arsenal. I will give Grant



the benefit of the doubt at the Wilderness. There the terrain prevented movement and coordinating units. It was essentially a series of smaller unit actions. At Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor, particularly, Grant simply assaulted the entrenched Confederates. It was as though he ran out of ideas. While it did force Lee to fight and cause him casualties he could not replace, it cost Grant unnecessarily. He could have attempted flank attacks that would have forced Lee to fight, without the same amount of Union casualties. Grant eventually admitted that his attack at Cold Harbor was a mistake.

Petersburg is another matter and must be the subject of another time. Did Grant admit that his strategy of moving ever to the left to get between Lee and Richmond had failed and he could not bring Lee into the open? Did it mean a change in strategy, from trying to get Lee to fight to political and geographic targets, i.e., Richmond and Petersburg and the Confederate supply lines? Did Grant accept that the campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley and Bermuda Hundred had failed, that only Sherman was still advancing, and shift his focus. Historians do not agree. I think there are arguments to make for all. But it also tied Lee down and forced him to fight. He had to keep extending his lines, requiring more and more resources he did not have. It also kept Lee from taking advantage of his best asset, the light infantry of the Army of Northern Virginia. Movement had always been one of its best attributes. Lee had shown repeatedly that he could move quickly, appear where least expected, and hit hard. At Petersburg this was not possible. Petersburg also allowed Grant to use some of the North's assets to his advantage. He could reinforce and supply his army from City Point. He had the manpower to continue investing Petersburg and extend his lines toward the various railroads. He could use the Navy and the ability of the North to manufacture artillery, mortars, and other firepower.

Put simply, perhaps Grant was the same commander in the west and the east. Perhaps it was only changes in geography, terrain, distance, and political factors that cause Grant to change his methods. This is certainly the sign of a good, if not great, commander. Though I still have not made up my mind, I find myself returning to the subject, turning it over and over in my thoughts to examine and re-examine it in different lights. Perhaps I will never reach a final conclusion. Perhaps I will see it one way at this time and another at a later time. This is something that makes the Civil War so fascinating for me. You can look at a particular subject in different ways and reach different conclusions. Maybe this is what makes the Civil War so fascinating for so many. I can say some things for certain. It is what brings me back to our monthly meetings, to hear someone else's ideas. And it is what keeps my bookshelves full.



Lakeview Cemetery has added a new historical walk
"Visiting Lake Views Civil War Veterans"

Our own Marge Wilson will be conducting a dress rehearsal for the walk on Saturday, April 9, at 1:00 pm.

Members are welcome to attend. If you plan to do so, please let Marge know at mrw8107@roadrunner.com.

Wednesday June 8, 2011 Special Meeting
Scott Longert, Garfield's Battles in eastern Kentucky and
Ed Haney and Deborah Weinkamer, General and Mrs. Garfield Read Their Civil War Letters

Local historian Marge Wilson will be presenting "Cleveland, Ohio Goes to the Civil War: Stories of Clevelanders Who Made a Difference" an entertaining Who's Who of little known local heroes from the Civil War. Marge traces the War of the Rebellion as it interfaces with Cleveland history and the personal lives of individuals. Enjoy the close to home anecdotes as Marge delves into the lives of many volunteers with famous connections, including John D. Rockefeller's younger brother, future president Garfield, and the defiant uncle of Francis Payne Bolton. The program will be on February 3 at 7 pm at the Shaker Historical Society, 16740 South Park Boulevard in Shaker Heights.



The Sherman House Museum
Lancaster, Ohio
PROUDLY PRESENTS
A CIVIL WAR SYMPOSIUM

Gen. William T. Sherman & Gen. Joseph E. Johnston:
The Men, the Battles, & the Agreements
Guest Speakers will include:
John Marszalek & Craig Symonds
-----APRIL 16 & 17, 2011-----
For information or reservations contact us at:
fairfieldheritage@sbcglobal.net
or visit: www.shermanhouse.org

NEXT MONTH
THE DICK CREWS ANNUAL DEBATE
WOULD FOREIGN INTERVENTION HAVE WON THE WAR
FOR THE SOUTH?

AFFIRMATIVE
TOM BARNARD
STEVE WILSON

NEGATIVE
STEVE PETTYJOHN
DENNIS KEATING

MODERATOR: WILLIAM VODREY