

THE CHARGER

December, 2000

383 Meeting

Vol.22 #4

Ed Bearss Topic:

The Battle of Shiloh



Ulysses S. Grant lost his command following the Battle of Shiloh. He was blamed for not anticipating the surprise confederate attack which almost pushed his Army into the Tennessee River.

Albert Sidney Johnston was the confederate general who planned the surprise attack on the Federals at Pittsburg Landing which turned into the Battle of Shiloh. He was killed during the attack.



William T. Sherman was made to look foolish for not setting up defensive positions or sending out scouts and saying the day before the confederate attack, "there isn't a rebel within 30 miles."

P.G.T. Beauregard took control of the confederate army following the death of Albert Sidney Johnston. Confederate President Jefferson Davis blamed Beauregard for the loss at Shiloh.



Nathan Bedford Forrest was wounded at Shiloh. However, he fought so well his reputation as an outstanding Confederate Calvary officer was established.

Tonight's speaker:

Ed Bearss

Mr. Civil War Ed Bearss is Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service and a 38 year friend of the Cleveland CWRT.

Ed Bearss has spoken to our Roundtable more than any other speaker. He is a person who makes our hobby of the Civil War fun.

Remember, always remember that you must come to hear Ed as he has threatened to take the Civil War with him when he dies.

Date: Wednesday,
December 6, 2000

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: Steak or Grilled Marlin

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.

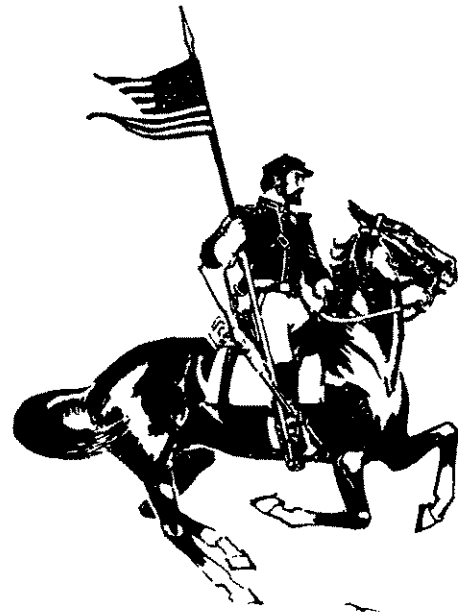
Dinner is \$20.00. Club dues are \$40.00 per year.

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 Somersfield
Dale Thomas
Dan Zeiser

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

September 13, 2000



The Novelist
as Historian

Shelby Foote

October 11, 2000



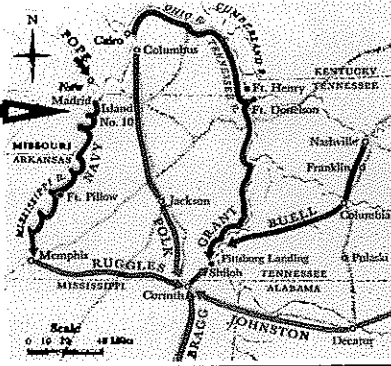
African-American
Troops in the
Civil War

Noah Andre Trudeau

November 8, 2000

Island No.
10

**Brian
Kowell**



December 6, 2000



The Battle of Shiloh

Ed Bearss

January 10, 2001

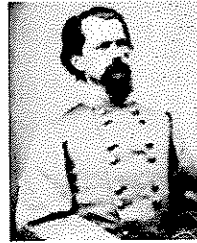
The Great Debate:
The absolutely worst general of the War

Moderator: Dick Crews



(Some good candidates from a long list of prospects)

February 14, 2001



Gen. John B. Gordon
Warrior & Survivor

Bob Boyda

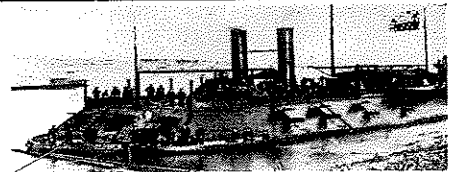
March 14, 2001



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>.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

As the 20th century draws to a close, we'll gather to hear Edwin C. Bearss, historian emeritus of the National Park Service and a longtime honorary member of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. Ed first spoke to our Roundtable at its 47th meeting on Oct. 23, 1962, about Vicksburg; we're delighted that he's with us for our December meeting to speak about Shiloh.



I want to thank several people this time around for their service to the Roundtable: Dick Crews, for his tireless and diligent editing of THE CHARGER; John Moore, for his work in arranging to have Roundtable lapel pins made; Ty Somersfield and Bill McGrath, for handling meal payments at the November meeting; and last (but not at all least), Lou Braman for beginning the process of revising our 1994 membership directory. Please fill out the directory questionnaire you'll find at the back of this issue (if you didn't already at the November meeting), and send it to:

Lou Braman
Secretary, Cleveland Civil War Roundtable
13800 Shaker Blvd. #304, Cleveland OH 44120

In the November issue of THE CHARGER, there was a comparison of Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy. Intriguing as the article was, I noticed a few errors. Both of their wives didn't "lose their children" in the White House; each lost one child. Lincoln's secretary wasn't named Kennedy; he had two, Nicolay and Hay. Both assassins weren't known by their three names; Oswald was known to his friends and family simply as "Lee." Finally, Lincoln wasn't in Monroe, Maryland a week before he was shot; he was in Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia. And President Kennedy wasn't "with Marilyn Monroe" a week before he was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963; she died over a year earlier, on August 5, 1962.

Any questions, comments or suggestions for the Roundtable? Let me or your other officers know. This is your Roundtable, and we want it to be the best it can be.

Best wishes to everyone for the holidays!

WILLIAM VODREY

President, CCWRT

An ancestor at Shiloh

By Dale Thomas

I did not have any ancestors who fought in the Civil War since they were still back in Europe, but my wife, Lea, had a great grandfather, John J. Babbitt, who served three years in the 50th Illinois. A farmer living in St. Augustine, Illinois, Babbitt was twenty years old when he and his uncle, along with a number of cousins, volunteered on September 24, 1861. After less than a month of training in Quincy, Illinois, the Regiment crossed the Mississippi River and began operations against guerrillas in Missouri that continued until late January of 1862. In February, the 50th Illinois was reassigned and ordered to Tennessee where it saw action at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson and then took part in the occupation of Clarksville and Nashville. At the end of March, the Regiment was sent by river boat to Pittsburg Landing.

During the morning and early afternoon of April 6, the 50th Illinois fought on the left flank of the Federal line about 700 yards east of the Peach Orchard where General Albert Sidney Johnston was mortally wounded. After the Federal retreat toward the Tennessee River, Colonel Sweeny, Babbitt's brigade commander, was ordered to occupy another position, Grant's Last Line, which ran from above Dill Branch Ravine to the river. The 50th Illinois held ground between the 36th Indiana and 11th Iowa, five hundred yards from Pittsburg Landing where most of the Federal shirkers had fled in terror. The Confederates attacked until the approach of dusk. James Chalmer's brigade of Mississippians made the last charge and came within a hundred yards of Stone's Missouri artillery. A private in the 50th Illinois later recalled: "As soon as they reached the top of the hill in front, the batteries opened upon them, and such a cannonading I never heard before. It completely checked the rebels."

In 1882, Babbitt applied for a disability pension. His former company commander, Captain S. W. King, wrote a letter confirming the disability: "State of Illinois, county of Hancock. John J. Babbitt, Co. G, 50th Illinois.... On the 6th of April at or near Pittsburg Landing, state of Tennessee, said soldier incurred deafness in his left ear almost totally and partial in his right ear. And that said deafness continued up to the time of his discharge as I could very plainly discover from my association and conversing with him. The circumstances attending the contracting of said deafness was as followed. The regiment and company to which said soldier belonged was placed in position to support... a Missouri battery. We were placed very close to the battery. The Rebels charged on it several times. The firing was very rapid and intense, both artillery and small arms. From firing and cannonading, said soldier contracted deafness as above stated and so stated to me at the time and different times afterwards and was plainly discoverable during the remainder of his time in the service."

Last August, more than 138 years after the battle, my son, Geoffrey, and I toured Shiloh National Military Park. We found the hill where the 50th Illinois had fought until sunset of the first day. Today it is an open area near the Visitor's Center. A marker outlined the events of that terrible afternoon:

**"50th ILLINOIS INFANTRY, SWEENEY'S (3d) BRIG.,
W. H. L. WALLACE'S (2d) DIV., ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE.
At 4.30 P.M. April 6, 1862**

this regiment formed 50 yards in front of this place and held that position one hour and then fell back here, to the support of Stone's battery, and remained in line Sunday night."

After walking in the cemetery among the tombstones lined up like soldiers in ranks, we drove down to the Tennessee River and later took the Hamburg - Savannah Road to the Johnston Monument. Then we went on foot in search of the place where Geoff's ancestor had faced the overwhelming Rebel attack on that long ago Sunday morning in April. As it had been in 1862, the hilly terrain was overgrown and difficult to traverse. Markers were scattered about the area. After half an hour of fighting tree branches and insects, we came upon a large stone monument, partially illuminated by sunlight filtering through the thick canopy of leaves. Somehow, we knew this was the one -- "ILLINOIS, 50th Infantry went into position on this line about 10:30 A. M., April 6, 1862, and held its ground until about 2:00 P. M., when the Regiment retired toward the Landing. Its loss in the battle was 12 men killed; 2 officers and 66 men wounded; 4 men missing; total 84."

Walking back to the car, we talked about John J. Babbitt, who was five years younger than Geoff at the time of the battle. After Shiloh, Babbitt took part in the siege and battle of Corinth, Mississippi and suffered wounds at Resaca, Georgia. At the time of his discharge in September of 1864, he was a corporal in the color guard of the 50th Illinois. Two years after the war, he married Lizzy Abell, whose parents had known Lincoln when they lived outside of New Salem. Babbitt later became a lifetime member of the Grand Army of the Republic.



John J. Babbitt in 1867

As we drove north to Illinois, I wondered what my life would have been like if John J. Babbitt had been killed at Shiloh. Geoff sitting next to me, and another son, Scott, back in Ohio, would not be there since my wife, Lea, would never had been born. Then I thought of a passage from Shakespeare's *Henry V*:

*Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day.*

Dale Thomas

Bedford Forrest losing in Selma again



Nathan Bedford Forrest's worse military defeat was the battle for Selma, Alabama in early April of 1865. Now in the year 2000 he is having problems in Selma again.

This time it's political not military. Admirers of Nathan Bedford Forrest received approval three years ago to erect a statue of Bedford Forrest on City land across the street from the Selma City Hall. The statue was paid for with private donations. Now three years later the statue is unveiled in Selma.

Nathan Bedford Forrest is known by his admirers as a outstanding military leader and Southern Patriot. To his detractors he is a defender of slavery; a war criminal, because of the random killings at Fort Pillow; and founder of the Ku Klux Klan.

So what disaster did Bedford Forrest run into in 2000?

Selma, Alabama just elected a black Mayor. A mayor who said, "take that statue down, **now.**"

***We don't know how this will work out so let's look at
Forrest's other set back in Selma in 1865. By Dick Crews***

Nathan Bedford Forrest's confederate cavalry was on it's last legs in March of 1865. Defeated at Franklin, then Nashville Tennessee, then riding non stop for 200 miles to avoid capture by the Federals; they were not no longer an effective fighting force.

When it became clear that the Union cavalry was heading for Selma. Nathan Bedford Forrest organized the locals to defend their city. Selma was quite a military prize. It ranked third in military production after Richmond and Atlanta.

General George Thomas sent a Union army of 14,000 Cavalry to destroy Selma. This Union Cavalry was no longer the stumble bums that fought the confederates early in the war. They were veterans under the command of James H. Wilson who spent years with Ulysses S. Grant. They also had learned from Jon Buford and perfected by Phil Sheridan, the use of fast moving dismounted cavalry.

So the stage was set. 14,000 Union veterans against shopkeepers and blacksmiths. Selma however, did have formidable fortifications as confederates knew some day the Federals would come to destroy the Arsenal at Selma.

Union General James H. Wilson received the kind of luck Bedford Forrest was famous for. First, Union troops captured a confederate courier with a map of where Forrest's troops were deployed. Second, captured an English engineer who had worked on Selma's fortifications. He was only too happy to make drawings of the Selma's defenses.

Bedford Forrest met the Union forces 30 miles north of Selma. He was only able to slow their advance. The battle for Selma began the evening of March 31, 1865.

Wilson deployed three columns of dismounted cavalry at sundown. At a cannon signal all three charged with freed slaves with axes in front cutting through the breast works. It was over in less than an hour. Bedford Forrest escaped but Selma was in Union hands and ablaze.

700 miles away another city was on fire, Richmond. The end of the War was near.



Major Gen. James H. Wilson

Dick Crews

THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

Membership Roster

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____

Street Address _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work telephone: _____ (area code) _____

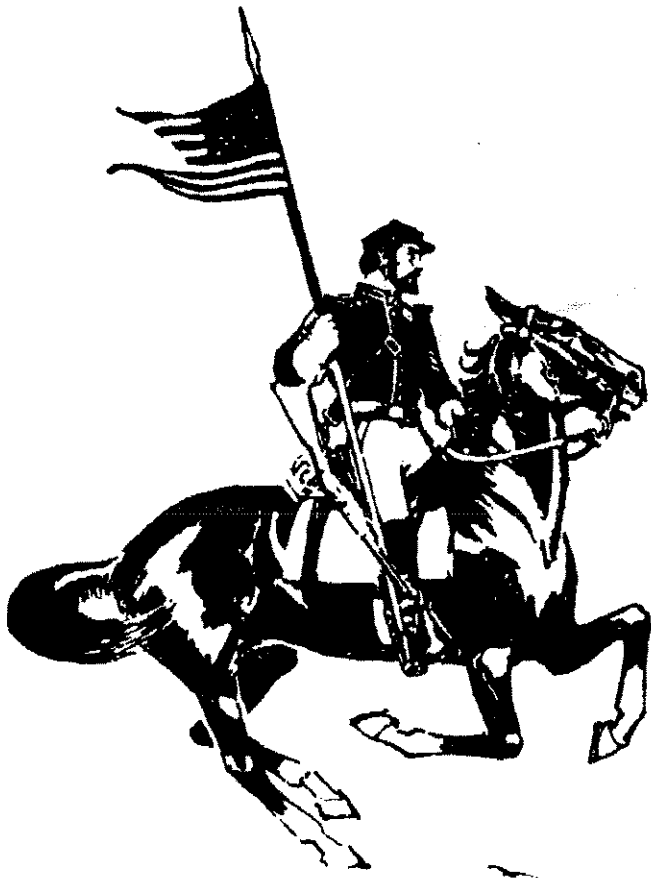
Home telephone: _____ (area code) _____

E-mail address: _____

Profession: _____

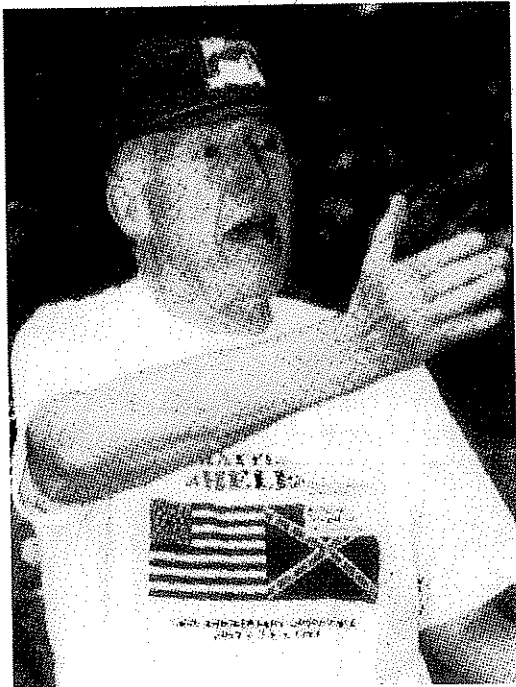
Joined in _____ (year)

Bring this form to the December meeting or
mail to the Roundtable's Secretary
Lou Braman
13800 Shaker Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44120



Dan Zeiser
815 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable PO Box 18900 Cleveland, OH 44118



The Battle of Shiloh

Wednesday,
December 6,
2000

Ed Bearss