



# The Charger

## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P.O.Box 444, Vermilion, Ohio 44089

JANUARY 1984

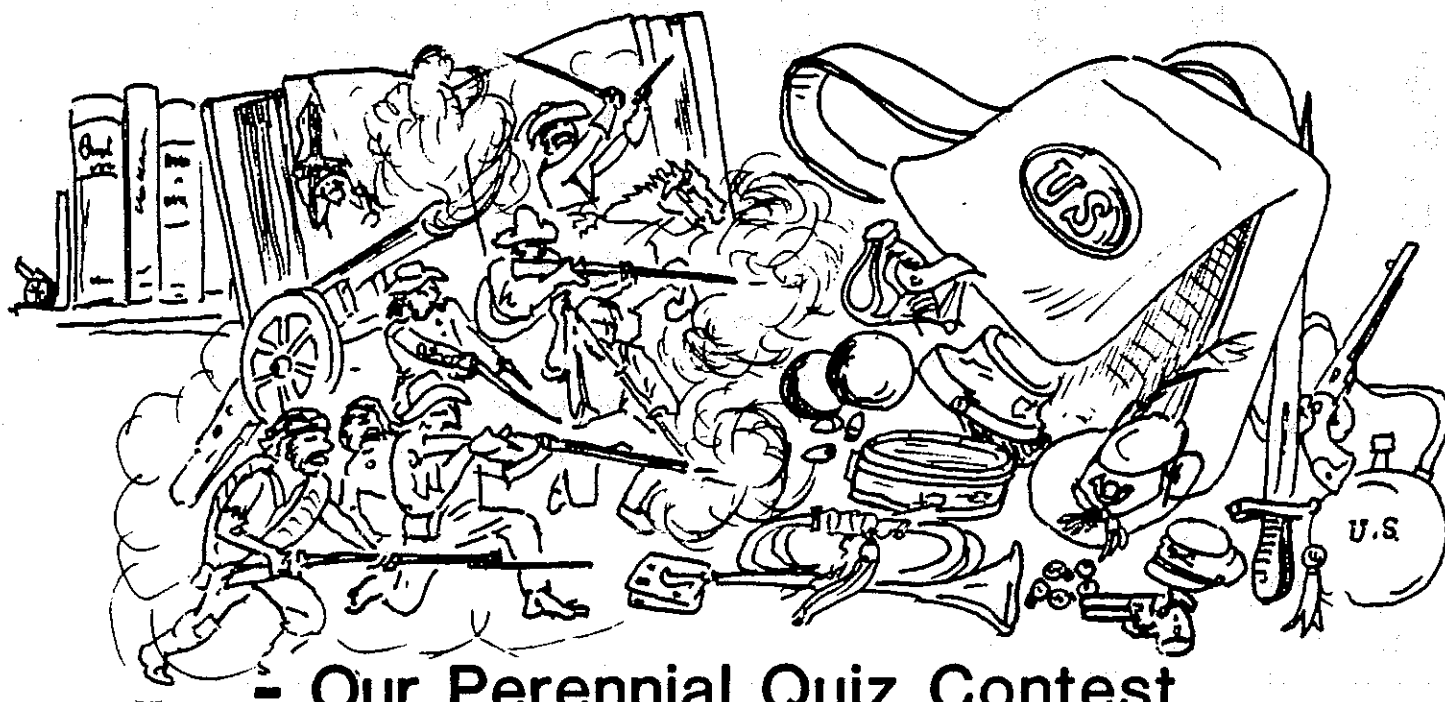
VOLUME 6 NUMBER 12

230th Meeting

DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 10  
PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB  
PROGRAM: Annual Book Sale and Quiz Contest  
TIME: Preliminaries 6:00 P.M.  
Dinner 7:00 P.M.

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## Annual Book and Artifact Sale +



## - Our Perennial Quiz Contest

Once again Bernie Drews and Don Heckaman are handling the details of our Annual Sale. Bring your offerings at 5:30 P.M. and be sure your name is on them along with your asking price. Either Bernie or Don will be glad to help you price them if you wish. They'll even come and get your stuff if you give them a ring. DO try to bring in something - the variety is what makes this affair so interesting. All American history is eligible.

The Quiz Contest is always a lot of fun. This year the quiz is being prepared by George Vourlojianis and Tim Beatty. Names on the two teams may be found on the next page.



## **CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE**

President Neil Evans  
 Vice Pres. Brian Kowell  
 Secretary Tim Beatty  
 Treasurer George Vourlojianis  
 Sgt.-at-Arms Jack Allison  
 Executive Committeemen:  
     Tom Van Sickle  
     Ray Channock  
 Editor and Illustrator of  
The Charger Stu Cramer  
 Assistant Editor Hazel Cramer  
 Editorial Office: P.O. Bx  
 444, Vermilion, Ohio 44089  
 216-967-5971  
 Dues: \$20 Sept. to Sept.—  
 Non-resident members \$10

## **Di Carlo Draws Record Crowd**

Fifty-two members and guests turned out to welcome our favorite son and hear his very fine presentation on

### QUIZ TEAMS:

Grays... Marty Graham, Don Hamill, and Frank Gillen.  
 Blues. . . Bill Schlesinger, George Skoch, and Bill Kostic.  
 These experts (without any coaching from the audience, please) should give the judges a lively time.

## **"The American Bastille"**

Guy's talk centered upon the Old Capital prison located on Washington D. C.'s First Street. Originally intended only for prisoners of war; but, though Confederate soldiers continued to form the largest single groups, the filthy old building soon housed a motley assortment of inmates. The political prisoners ranged from spies to persons vaguely suspected of disloyal sentiments. Rebel mail carriers, smugglers, blockade-runners, Federal military offenders and people incarcerated upon the whims of Sec'y of War Stanton and Lafayette C. Baker were guests.

Slides were used to show parts of the vermin-infested place as Guy Di Carlo detailed the famous people who suffered in duration vile there after the writ of habeas corpus had been suspended by President Lincoln. These included such personages as Belle Boyd and Mrs. Greenhow. All in all the events that took place in Washington and the Old Capital prison were just as disgraceful as our treatment of the American-born Japanese in World War II's prison camps in this country.

## **Reservations a Must**

Of the large crowd attending the December meeting about one third had neglected to make reservations. This puts the staff of the Hermit Club and our officers on the spot. Some Round Tables with the same problem have had to put a different price on the meals for those who fail to take the time to call in.

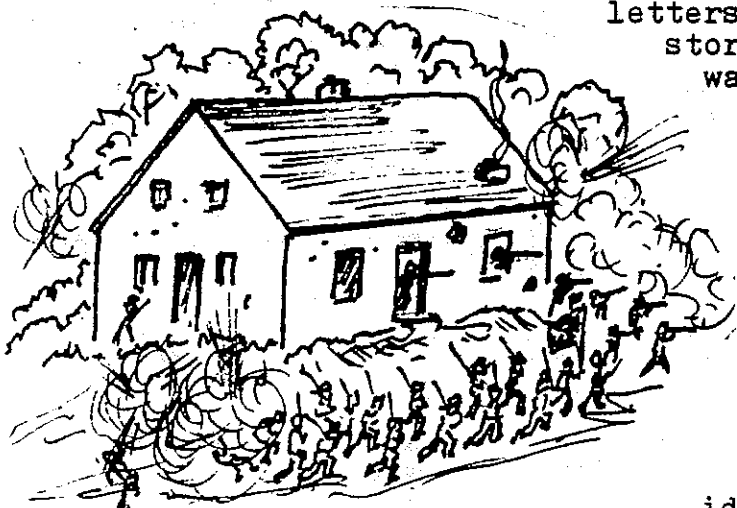
CALL NEIL EVANS 621-0150

# FRED GILL'S BOOK REVIEW

The War's Bloodiest Day

Sears, Stephen W. Landscape Turned Red, Tickner and Fields, 1983.

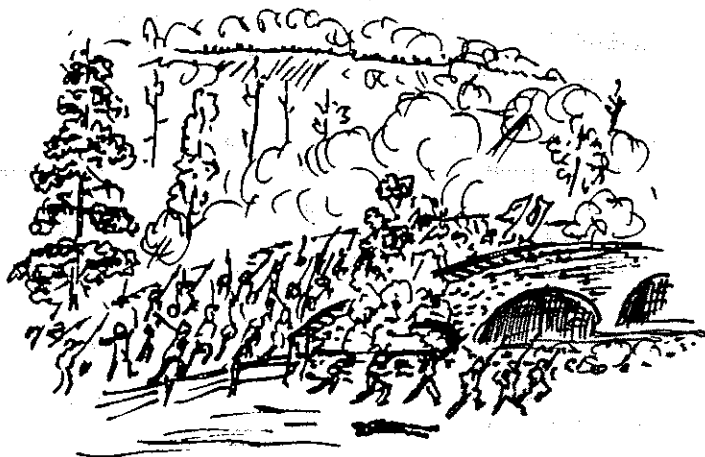
Allen Nevins wrote somewhere that there is always room for another good book on any subject. This is a good enough book and there even may be room for it on the shelves of Civil War aficionados if nobody else. It can be called a scholarly work if for no other reason than the author uses until now unpublished works and letters of Antietam veterans. But for the story of this bloodiest single day of the war, the author's narrative does not come even close to the dazzling clarity of Catton's seventy-three pages in Mr. Lincoln's Army. In several places in the author's account I wondered if it was ever going to get to the point.



It is all too easy to grind away at McClellan's peculiarities, to pick away at his military derelictions on that tempestuous day, but to suggest, as the author does, that Little Mac's timidity was based on thoughts of treachery is going much too far. McClellan certainly is a puzzle. He lacked a will to win and the nerve to gamble the way Lee gambled, and he certainly deluded himself about his own abilities. But to infer, even faintly, that his mind was devious enough to countenance treachery is ridiculous.

In any battle to get things almost right is a stunning achievement. Getting things exactly right on the hard circumstances of a battlefield would be a miracle, and this rarely happens. At Antietam it was Lee not McClellan who got things nearly right. After all he gathered his dangerously split forces in time and in a manner that won a tactical draw instead of what could have been a war-ending defeat.

To write a book like this a historian must look backward but he needs not to think backward and that is what has happened in this book. In spite of this I enjoyed reading the book but I will not shell out \$17.95 to add it to my Civil War shelf. It is just not that important.




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**welcome New Members**

Norman Furst, Michael Fegen, Neil Glaser and Lynn Lazzaro

# THE GRAYBEARDS

by: GEORGE F. SKOCH



Ed. Note: This is a much condensed version of the article by the same name that appeared in The Civil War Times Illustrated magazine for May, 1981, by George Skoch. We are grateful to our fellow member for permission to run this and the accompanying illustrations.

The Civil War service record of the 37th Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry, a regiment unique to any other that has served in the United States Army, offers an inspiring example against the backdrop of despair that swept the north during the second year of the War Between the States.

The prospects for a Union victory looked dismal in the summer of 1862. The popular notion of a quick, decisive end to the conflict that was tearing the nation apart had vanished. The sobering realization that it would be a long and bitter struggle had been driven home with shattering impact at places named Manassas, Shiloh, and Malvern Hill.

Battle casualties and rampant disease exacted a frightful toll of the soldiers who had first responded to "Father Abraham's" call for volunteers in 1861. Thousands of young men laid in shallow graves throughout the south, and thousands more filled makeshift hospitals to the bursting point.

The North's will to continue the war was sorely tested in the wake of these grim realities. Enlistments dropped sharply as men grew increasingly reluctant to join the army. What began as a crusade against the evils of secession had deteriorated into a bloody war of survival.

In the midst of this turmoil George Washington Kincaid, a farmer and community leader from Muscatine, Iowa, proposed a novel idea in an attempt to boost morale and counter the distressing course the Union war effort was taking. He suggested that a regiment of troops be raised consisting of men who, like himself at age forty-nine, were beyond the legal age of military obligation. (ages 18 thru 45) Kincaid envisioned the regiment performing a dual role--assuming behind-the-line duties to free younger troops for battle, and acting as a patriotic symbol to spur the nations crippled enlistment campaigns. After the War Department granted permission to raise the regiment George Kincaid was appointed Colonel and commanding officer. Its ranks were filled within two months.

The regiment was largely composed of men in their fifties and sixties, with a few beyond the age of seventy. The oldest recruit was eighty. Their former occupations were as varied as their ages and some of the men had previous military experience dating back to the War of 1812.

The regiment totaled 914 officers and men. When the group was mustered into Federal service as three year volunteers they achieved the unique status of becoming the oldest regiment ever to serve in the United States Army; a distinction maintained to this day. Officially designated the 37th Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry they were nonetheless proud of the nickname bestowed upon them: "The Graybeards."

On January 1, 1863, the Graybeards embarked on a tour of duty that would span two and one half years and encompass six states. Beginning with garrison duty at St. Louis, Missouri in the thick of a Midwestern winter they performed their tasks with a resiliency that few younger troops could match. Although the Graybeards were restricted from participating in frontline combat, they were entrusted with vital duties that ranged from guarding thousands of rebel prisoners of war confined in stockades throughout the North, to escorting military supply trains through enemy held territory.

During a mission in July 1864, a detachment of Graybeards was ambushed by a band of rebel guerrillas while riding as guards aboard a train on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Two of the Graybeards were mortally wounded during the brief firefight that ensued. While this loss pales in comparison to the casualty lists of fighting units, it illustrates the risks taken by the old men of the 37th.

Disease was the chief cause of deaths among the Graybeards. They frequently labored under harsh weather conditions and often had little more than their "dog tents" for shelter. During the course of the war 145 Graybeards died of disease and another 364 were discharged because of disabilities.

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## Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation

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One of the souvenirs in your editor's miscellany of Civil War junk is a certificate which says I own a square foot of the Gettysburg battlefield. I bought this from the late Cliff Arquette, known better as TV's "Charlie Weaver"...and to older ones of us as an orchestra leader who used to compete with Sammy Kay, whose slogan, "Swing and Sway with Sammy Kay" was countered with "Swing and Sweat With Cliff Arquette."

At the time of my acquisition Cliff was heading the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association (called then "Brigade") to raise funds to purchase privately owned property for the Military Park. It wasn't until I read it in the Kentucky C.W.R.T.'s excellent newsletter that I learned the organization has been reactivated - at the request of the National Park Service to continue that service. Since 1961 they have purchased 172 acres of land which was added to the Park. There are still some 251 acres that are of immediate concern to the Park Service for which purchase money is not available.

A donation of \$5 sent to The Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association, Box 1863, Gettysburg, Pa. 17325 will make you a member of the Brigade.

### Confederate Prisoner Uniforms

Last month we ran a story about the United States government issuing gray uniforms to Confederate prisoners, thus outfitting the Rebel Army when these prisoners were exchanged. Curious, we wrote to Professor Frank L. Byrne, Department of History at Kent State University, to see if he could throw any light on the subject. Professor Byrne, who will be one of our speakers next year, wrote back quoting a secondary source, Hesseltine, William B. Civil War Prisons: A Study in War Psychology, 1931; republished in 1964. It makes it evident that neither belligerent issued clothing regularly. The Federal side did sometimes furnish clothing if urgently needed, but the stated policy being to issue items that would not last long after exchange - such as defective clothing rejected for Union service. Imprisoned officers on Johnson's Island were occasionally permitted to buy clothing or to receive it from friends and either case it was required to be gray, undoubtedly to distinguish the prisoners from their guards.

The reference to buttons in the quotation from Haythornthwaite suggests that he may be referring to the episode early in 1865 when the Confederates were permitted to ship cotton from Mobile to be sold by an agent in New York City, the proceeds to be used to buy food and clothing for their men in Northern prisons. Union General Henry W. Halleck observed that all the money was spent for clothing suitable for the field. The nearly 20,000 "suits bought for the prisoners were the Confederate uniform in all but buttons." (Hesseltine, p. 208, which cites O. R.) Most of these uniforms were issued to prisoners who were almost immediately exchanged and thus benefitted the Confederate Army.

### Graybeards continued

Ironically, the Graybeards also suffered at the hands of their own commanding officer. Colonel Kincaid, a forceful man and zealous patriot, proved to be a severe disciplinarian and the center of much controversy and disenchantment within the ranks. His brand of leadership may be the principal reason why the 37th Iowa also suffered its share of desertions despite the high ideals for which the regiment was organized.

Kincaid's command responsibilities were reduced as the war progressed. When the war ended in April 1865, the Graybeards had a well established reputation for being a conscientious and dependable organization.

However the contribution of the Graybeards is measured, it must be weighted heavily with that intangible ingredient which compelled these men to go to the service of their nation at a time when the needs of their families were most keenly felt. The most fitting tribute was paid the Graybeards by Union General August Willich, under whose command they served at Cincinnati, Ohio, when he wrote in 1865: "The high patriotism displayed by these men in devoting a few years of their old age to their country's service is unparalleled in history. . ."

# SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



## The "Black Terror"

During the Vicksburg Campaign the Union ram Queen of the West, commanded by the daring 20-year-old Col. Charles Ellet, had run past the Vicksburg batteries wreaking havoc on Confederate shipping. Eventually the ship was disabled and captured, and the Rebels soon had the fast, formidable river raider repaired and in devastating operation. To attempt to recapture the ship, Admiral Porter sent one of his best-equipped battleships Indianola past the batteries. This ship also was captured and the Confederates were working day and night to get their great prize back in battle shape.

The Admiral knew that eventually he would have to move his entire northern fleet down the Mississippi, if Vicksburg were to be taken. But the successful running of the batteries by Queen of the West and Indianola had impelled the Confederate commander to stud every level spot on the hillsides with additional guns. At the water's edge piles of wood were ready to be set fire at the first alarm. As a consequence, the entire S curve of the river in sight of the city would be lighted up at night so as to turn every enemy ship into a perfect target.

Always one to try out a gimmick, Admiral Porter conceived the idea of rigging up an imitation battleship to draw fire and induce an extraordinary expenditure of ammunition. The hoax ship would have to be of such huge proportions that all of Vicksburg's guns would go into action. Soldiers and sailors cheered the idea and everyone set to to help build the fake.

A raft of logs 300 feet in length was used as the foundation, and an old coal barge formed the mock ship's hull. In 12 hours a most formidable looking battleship was ready to be launched. Two wheelhouses, made of thin boards, stood on her quarterdeck, and in the center two huge smokestacks, built of porkbarrels, indicated great power. Under each stack the men built mud ovens in which to burn tar and oakum to provide an abundance of black smoke. The wooden planks which formed the sides were laid at a rakish angle,

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and, most awe-inspiring, was a row of Quaker guns, made of charred logs protruding from the bow and portholes. A thick, over-all coat of tar inspired the name Black Terror, causing some jokester to hoist the black pirate flag with skull and crossbones.

On the night of February 26, 1863, the Black Terror was towed out into the mainstream. Before she had reached the upper river batteries the Confederates espied her and began to fire vigorously. In minutes the entire shore was ablaze, the long-prepared bonfires were kindled, lighting up the whole width of the river, and every gun sent forth deadly missiles. Black Terror kept its course majestically, keeping pace with the current. Shot after shot found its mark on hull, deck and pilothouse, but the ship was apparently impervious, the gunners not realizing that their shots were passing right through. Terror spread - here was some new Yankee secret weapon!

Queen of the West, steaming upstream, attracted by the cannonade, suddenly was confronted by this invulnerable monster bearing down on her, turned and fled, spreading a warning to other vessels as its frantic crew and frightened officers tried to escape.

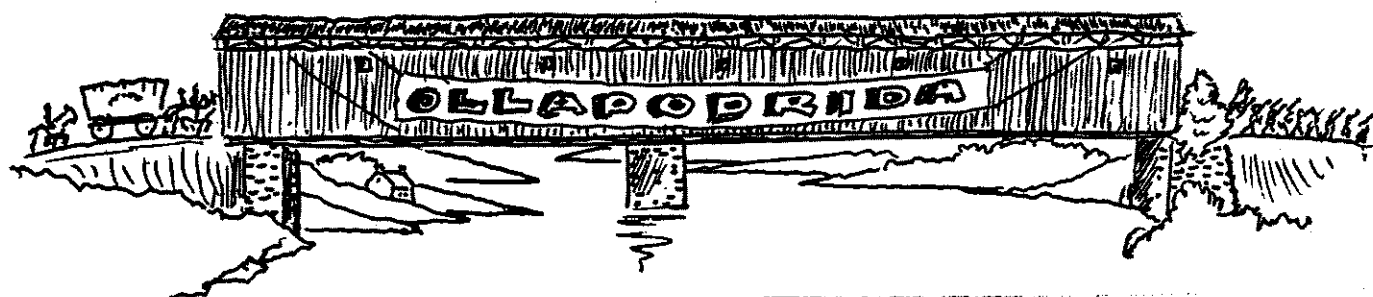
Admiral Porter's hoax was a huge success. Not only did the batteries exhaust their ammunition permitting his fleet to move south, but for fear it might be recaptured, the Confederate work crew on the Indianola blew it up (salvaging only the liquor stores). Black Terror soon reached the end of its short but exciting life. She drifted a mile or so past Indianola and was rapidly consumed by fire, the skull and crossbones waving derisively in the breeze after the hull had disappeared under the murky waters of Ol' Man River.

## Civil War Smiles by STU CRAMER



'Course it's movin' ...  
you think them worms  
is ALL sleepin'?

Last minute news flash  
(nothing to do with the  
cartoon) - How many of  
you saw our Treasurer  
George Vourlojianis in  
full Cleveland Grays  
uniform interviewed on  
TV New Year's Day?



We learned from Tom Kohl that the only sovereign state in Europe to recognize the Confederate States of America was the Vatican. Tom also sent in an interesting clipping about coffee. When it was issued to the Union soldiers, it was in the form of coffee beans, which the individual had to roast and grind. Most of the grinding was done with the butt-end of a rifle. The grounds were then boiled. Yuk!

\* \* \* \* \*

A young Colonel at the Battle of Chickamauga advanced but then halted his regiment well out of range of the enemy. His commanding general rode up and asked, "Why have you stopped?"

"I am convinced that any greater display of valor by my troops," replied the youthful Colonel, "will bring them into contact with the enemy."

-From The Bushwhacker, CWRT of St. Louis

\* \* \* \* \*

At a dinner party held in Washington in 1877, former Confederate Major General Henry Heth was seated beside Gen. William T. Sherman. During a discussion of their wartime experiences, Sherman jestingly used the phrase, "you damned rebels." To which Heth quickly responded: "Stop and think, Sherman. If there are two men in the world that should go down on their knees and thank the Almighty for raising up the rebels, those two are Grant and yourself. But for the rebels, you still would be teaching school in the swamps of Louisiana, and Grant would be tanning bad leather in Galena."

Sherman, with a laugh, placed his hand on Heth's shoulder and said, "That is so, old fellow."

-From The Memoirs of Henry Heth - thanks to  
The Kentucky CWRT newsletter

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### The New Rock Group

