

THE CHARGER

March, 2000

377 Meeting

Vol.21 #7



Braxton Bragg

1817—1876

Braxton Bragg pre-Civil War career was highly distinguished. After seeing action against the Seminoles, he went on to win three brevets in the Mexican War, in which his battery of "flying artillery" revolutionized, in many respects, the battlefield use of that arm. In 1856 he resigned his captaincy—he was a lieutenant colonel by brevet—in the 3rd Artillery and became a Louisiana planter.

At the beginning of the Civil War he started by commanding in Louisiana, he was later in charge of the operations against Fort Pickens in Pensacola Harbor. Ordered to northern Mississippi in early 1862, he briefly commanded the forces gathering there for the attack on Grant at Shiloh. During the battle itself he directed a corps and was later rewarded with promotion to full general. As such he relieved Beauregard when he went on sick leave and was then given permanent command in the West.

In September, 1863 he won the one major Confederate victory in the West, at Chickamauga, but failed to follow up his success. He had been engaged in a series of disputes with his subordinates especially Leonides Polk, James Longstreet, and William J. Hardee that severely injured the effectiveness of the Army of Tennessee. Bragg then was routed at Chattanooga and was shortly removed from command.

For a time after the war he served as Alabama's chief engineer and then settled in Galveston, Texas where he died September 27, 1876, while walking down the street with a friend. He is buried in Mobile, Alabama.

Tonight's Speaker:

DAVID M. SMITH

Dave Smith is *Mr. Cincinnati CWRT* to people in Cleveland. Dave is a past President of the Cincinnati CWRT and long time editor of the Cincinnati Roundtable's newsletter. He has been helpful to our Roundtable over the years on suggestions for speakers.

Dave has been a guest speaker at many of the roundtables in Southern Ohio and Indiana but this is his first trip to the Cleveland CWRT.

His talk will deal with certainly one of the most controversial generals of the Civil War, Braxton Bragg.

Date: **March 8, 2000**

Place: **The Hermit Club**

Time: **Drinks 6 PM**

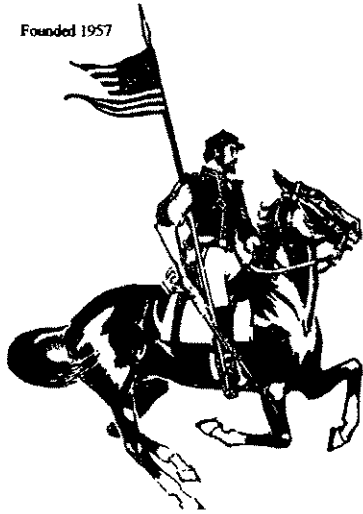
Dinner 7 PM

Reservations: **Please Call**

JAC Communications

at (216) 861-5588

Founded 1957



The Cleveland Civil War Round Table PO Box 1880 Cleveland, Ohio 44118
(800)800-8310 email R.Crews.5369@aol.com

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 16 to 93 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 historic private club in the Playhouse Square area of downtown Cleveland.
Dinner is \$20.00. Club dues are \$40.00 per year.

PAST CLEVELAND C.W.R.T. PRESIDENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 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 |
| 1978 Richard McCrae | |

March 8, 2000



Braxton Bragg

Was he really that bad?

DAVE SMITH

April 12, 2000



THE SONS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

DAVE WOOD

MAY 10, 2000

"GUEST NIGHT"



PATRICK CLEBURNE

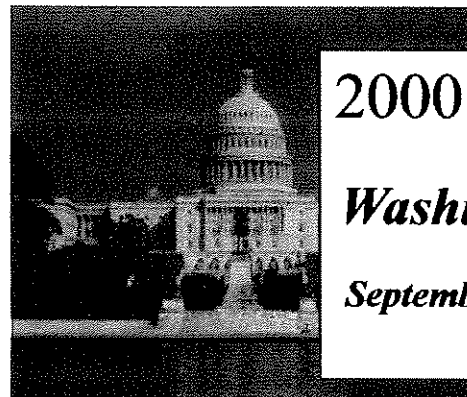
CRAIG SYMONDS

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OFFICERS & TRUSTEES

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Treasurer: Bill Doty

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Dick Crews
John Moore
Ty Somersfield
Dale Thomas
Dan Zeiser



2000 Field Trip

Washington, D.C.

September 21, - 24, 2000

Mutiny in the 54th

by Dan Zeiser



Much is known about the valor of the 54th Massachusetts. The bravery it showed at Battery Wagner helped recruit tens of thousands of black soldiers. Having fought to prove that blacks could be soldiers, the 54th now had to fight for the pay of soldiers. The July 1862 Militia Act authorized \$10 a month for black soldiers, minus a \$3 clothing allowance. This meant they received \$7 instead of \$13 – about half the pay of white soldiers. For eighteen months the 54th refused to accept pay. “Because I am black they tamper with my rights,” wrote George E. Stephens of Company A. Anger brewed in the 54th and other black regiments. Few ever realized how close the black troops came to mutiny.

Shortly after arriving in South Carolina, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw learned the War Department had broken its promise and would pay black troops only what it paid to noncombatant “contraband” laborers. Almost to a man, the 54th, including officers, rejected the unjust offer. Sergeant Frederick Johnson of Company C wrote to Massachusetts Governor Andrews that the men felt they had been duped and, if the unit did not received full pay, should be recalled for home defense or discharged. Protest letters from supporters of the 54th flooded Governor Andrews’s office.

At noon on September 30, 1863, the U.S paymaster visited the 54th and presented the government’s offer of \$7 a month, explaining the law offered him no alternative and the men might accept the pay under protest. Colonel Milton S. Littlefield and a few other officers urged the men to accept. One officer recorded “The regiment to a man refuses the insolent \$10 or rather \$7.” Reflecting the racism among some of the unit’s officers, several officers found the men’s resolution “inconsistent with many traits of character that have been ascribed to their race.”

After Col. Shaw’s death, Col. Edward N. Hallowell became the new commander. He supported the regiment’s stance. He urged the state to honor its pledge to give the men equal pay and lobbied the governor’s office, the state’s congressman, and the regiment’s recruitment committee to gain the men their rights.

On December 12, 1863, Major James Sturgis and Edward w. Kinsley, Governor Andrews’ personal representatives, addressed the 54th. They advised the men that while Governor Andrews was working to change federal policy, the state had adopted legislation to pay the men the difference between white and black pay rates. After discussing the proposal, the regiment told Sturgis and Kinsley that, although they appreciated the state’s generosity, they could not accept the plan without compromising their principles. Most white officers supported the decision and Col. Hallowell informed Andrews that nothing short of full pay from the federal government would satisfy the regiment.

The crisis quickly spread beyond the 54th. Most officers in the 55th Massachusetts Regiment also repudiated the government’s actions and for months refused pay. The 55th gathered at their camp on Folly Island and determined to follow the 54th, taking nothing until given full pay.

By the end of the year, morale in the 54th was at its nadir. It improved when the unit sailed to Florida as part of a campaign to capture Jacksonville. The campaign began to crumble when General Truman Seymour, in command of the expedition, decided to take the state capital at Tallahassee. Violating orders, he marched his command west. Met at Olustee by a confederate force, the Union troops were defeated, despite an extraordinary effort by the 54th that prevented a rout. Morale sank once again and dissension surged in the Department of the South due to unequal pay and the War Department's refusal to commission blacks as officers. Executions in the 55th Massachusetts, intended to quell dissent, had the opposite effect and drove the 54th closer to mutiny.

By January of 1864, Governor Andrews had received so many disturbing reports of conditions in the state's black regiments that he once again sent his advisor, Kinsley, to investigate. Trust between the 54th's men and officers was crumbling. One officer told Sgt. Stephens that "noncommissioned officers were not as good as they are in white regiments." When men in the 54th petitioned their superiors for a commission for the regimental hospital steward, three white officers protested. White officers did not want a black doctor or black officers.

The 54th reached near mutiny in early 1864. Col. Hallowell received anonymous letters before the Battle of Olustee threatening that the men would refuse to fight if not awarded equal pay immediately. Nearly half the regiment talked openly of refusing duty until given full pay. Word filtered throughout the army that blacks in other regiments had stacked arms in response to the pay issue and had been shot for it. The first case of mutiny occurred on February 29, 1864 when Sgt. William Walker of the 3rd South Carolina Volunteers (21st USCT) faced a firing squad for protesting unequal pay. Walker had instructed his company to stack arms in front of their colonel's tent. Warned he would be shot for mutiny, Walker refused to "do duty any longer for seven dollars a month."

Conditions in the 54th deteriorated as well. When the regiment remained camped outside of Jacksonville in April, discipline disintegrated. On April 12, Col. Hallowell announced he planned to visit Washington about the pay issue. He warned the regiment against insubordination and advised the men he had given Major John Appleton authority to shoot anyone who refused duty. When Appleton returned to his tent, he found an anonymous note stating he had no right to take the regiment into action without equal pay. Carrying out Hallowell's orders, he was warned, would cost him his life. When the unit left Florida, several soldiers planned to seize the transport and steam to New York, but they failed to persuade their comrades. When it moored at Folly Island, the soldiers refused to disembark. Appleton had to reboard the ship and physically shove the first soldier down the gangplank. The others followed.



Conditions in the 55th were worse. Col. Alfred Hartwell found his soldiers refused to man picket lines. He assembled the men and informed each company commander, in a voice loud enough for all to hear, that anyone refusing orders would be court martialed and shot. All but one complied. Hartwell ordered the soldier bucked and gagged until the doctor said he could take no more.

On May 1, 1864, Private Wallace Baker was the last man to assemble for a company inspection. When he fell in without this weapon and equipment, Lt. Thomas Ellsworth asked why he was not ready. "I'm not going to hurry" was the reply. Baker refused to be silent and mocked Ellsworth. When ordered to his tent, Baker refused. Ellsworth grabbed Baker by the collar and shoved him toward his tent. Baker knocked his hands away and struck him in the face twice. Ellsworth drew his sword and the two men struggled for it. Ellsworth called for a guard to remove Baker, but the hundred or so men standing aside refused to move. Baker was finally subdued and confined to the guardhouse. Baker was court martialed and sentenced to death. Three bullets to the head and four to the chest ended his protest.

Anger swept through the 54th over the pay crisis and Baker's execution. Col. Hallowell worried he was losing control of the regiment. On May 12, Lt. Robert Newell ordered six men to fall in. Each refused. Newell struck one with his sword and repeated the order. When the men still ignored his orders, Newell sent for his revolver. When the soldiers balked again, he shot one in the chest. The others quickly fell into line. Newell, who had an easy going reputation, turned white as a sheet and brought the man to the hospital. If Newell would not hesitate to shoot them, what would the others do, the men wondered.

A week later, Capt. Charles Tucker shot another man for disobeying orders. When a detachment of Company A refused guard duty, Hallowell ordered his captains to get their pistols. When some of the men approached the officers with muskets in hand, Hallowell ordered his major to beat them back. Those who refused to move felt the butt end of a pistol against their skulls. Hallowell and Appleton turned to the protestors, pointed their revolvers at each man's head, and gave them a three count. "Do you refuse to go on guard? One, two, ..." "No, Sir!" was the reply. All fell in and the crisis passed.

Back in Massachusetts, Governor Andrews pressed even harder to convince the federal government to change its policy. The unrelenting pressure finally persuaded the government to act. In June of 1864, Congress adopted legislation authorizing equal pay retroactive to January 1, 1864. Unsatisfied, Andrews and his allies pressed further. In July, Attorney General Bates reversed his opinion and ruled that the Militia Act of 1862 did not apply to blacks who had been free at the start of the war. This covered most of the men in the 54th, but excluded other regiments such as the 1st South Carolina Volunteers. In March of 1865, Congress finally agreed to full equal pay.

So ended the mutiny of the 54th. Equality had been won and a black victory achieved. Not money but rights had been gained.

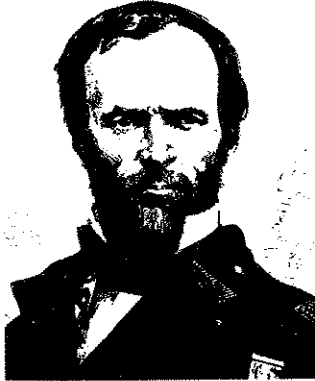
Dan Zeiser

This is the second part of the story of General William T. Sherman's March in North Carolina in early 1865. The first part ended with Sherman's army crossing into North Carolina from South Carolina.

SHERMAN'S FINAL CHALLENGE: NORTH CAROLINA

>PART II<

BY DORIS WALKER



As the Union Army crossed over into North Carolina, though, around March 1, 1865, Sherman measurably softened his "hard war" policy. He ordered his troops to exercise more restraint now, citing that North Carolina was one of the last states to pass an ordinance of secession. He also felt, rightly or wrongly, that a strong Union sentiment prevailed among many Tar Heels. Consequently, there were fewer acts of wanton destruction in North Carolina than any other place with exception of Savannah, GA, and starting with the capture of Atlanta. While North Carolinians were understandably fearful of the Yankees' visit to their state, Sherman really had no harsh treatment for them in mind. Had it not been for the fierce and final battles that were eventually fought on North Carolina's soil, it might have been a relatively undisturbed marching route, interspersed with visits to key points important to Sherman's overall strategy and with only limited destruction of war materials mostly. Obstacles, confronting the Federals in the Tar Heel State, would still have been formidable even if limited only to the elements and the swampy nature of the terrain, keeping them plenty busy corduroying mud and swamp infested land in order to advance their trains.

The army entered the first key point in North Carolina, the town of Fayetteville, on March 1. Here, Sherman established contact with the Federal fleet, awaiting his arrival off the coast of Wilmington, and transports were soon steaming up the Cape Fear River. He rid himself of thousands of civilians that had followed his army along the way, both freed blacks and Unionist whites, as these were being sent north on navy boats. His army also received much welcomed mail for the first time in many months. Sherman sent dispatches to General Grant in Virginia, informing him of his army's condition and requested that his troops be resupplied with shoes, clothing, food, and other essentials as soon as possible. His hard-marching veterans were by now dressed all but in tatters. Many had supplemented their worn-out uniforms along the way with a mixture of civilian attire of both, the male and female variety. It must have been a sight to behold some long striding and rugged soldiers donning women's bonnets to shield against the sun and rain. No doubt, a nice contrast to the Spencer rifles draped over their broad shoulders; or, perhaps, a civilian frock coat with swallow tails worn over threadbare, patched-up army issue jerseys. In many cases these regulation pants were hanging around the men's "splendid" legs in shreds if not already replaced with a pair of civilian trousers, naturally, in all different colors and designs. A good number of soldiers marched barefooted after the soles of their shoes had become too hole-riddled; others wrapped their feet in cloth to have at least some protection against the elements. In other words, this was a rag-tag looking, rough and tumble sort of army, but a superb army; every man worth his weight in gold in his importance to the Union cause---only badly in need of fresh supplies.

Sherman planned to outfit his troops at the next key point in North Carolina, Goldsboro. This small town, located along the Neuse River, was chosen by him earlier as the point where he expected to make junction with Generals Schofield and Terry, arriving from the eastern part of the state with the 23th, A.C. One of the primary reasons for choosing Goldsboro, was the availability of good rail connections.

there would be supplies awaiting his army and rail service available to the coast. In order to accomplish this, some fighting had to be done. The Confederates surely were not about to hand over these strategically important regions of North Carolina to the Union without battle. Ultimately though their gallant efforts proved unsuccessful. General Terry and his forces secured the coastal region and the port of Wilmington for the Union, and the 23 A.C. under command of Generals Schofield and Cox, who skirmished with Rebel forces led by General Braxton Bragg in what became known as the Battle of Kinston, or Wise's Forks, captured the important railroad. This engagement was the climax of Union General Cox's advance from the town of New Bern in the Federal drive to occupy Goldsboro. Cox's victory at Wise's Forks ensured that Sherman would have the interior base of supply at Goldsboro, which, quite possibly, ensured the ultimate success of the Carolinas Campaign.

By March 9, all had gone, more or less, according to Sherman's plan and he had no real reason to worry. There was never any indication that he expected to personally lead his troops into battle in or around the Fayetteville/Goldsboro area, which he considered too far south for a full-scale offensive move by the Confederates. Perhaps, he figured, around the capital city of Raleigh, or points north, some battle might have to be fought, but even that limited mostly to such points Sherman deemed strategically necessary. Anything that could have aided the Confederacy in any way was of course reduced to rubble. That meant that aside from occasional looting and burning of some private residences, only the Fayetteville arsenal, three newspapers, grist mills and textile factories fell victims to the torch. Foraging continued as needed and horses and mules were confiscated along the way. Old and used-up animals of the wagon train were left behind, and the sickest of these shot and left to litter the countryside or floating in the Cape Fear River. Not a pretty sight and certainly not a pleasant odor, but, all in all, relatively selective destruction.

It is hard to evaluate the real reasons behind the few incidents of unauthorized burning that occurred. It is possible that some cases were truly unfortunate accidents, when flames from buildings slated for destruction, spread to other nearby structures. It is also possible that other incidents were brought on by the inhabitants themselves. Harsh words and insults carelessly uttered at the blue coats were at times swiftly repaid with a lit match. Sherman's aide-de-camp, Brevet Major George Ward Nichols, attested to the fact that the city of Fayetteville was "offensively rebellious," making it clear that there was virtually none of that "Union sentiment" Sherman had expected to find, among its citizens.

Then, of course, there were always a few bad apples in the batch; lawless men that habitually misbehaved. The enormous freedom this army enjoyed, provided ample opportunity for such individuals to work their mischief. Such men were a small minority, though, and not reflective of the bulk of Sherman's army. Lawless men could just as easily be found, as in fact they were, in the Army of the Potomac or the Confederate Army, at any given time. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that Sherman did not generally punish the disobedient elements in his veteran army as long as the offenses pertained to looting and burning. He understood first-hand the difficulties in evaluating what had caused the infractions in the first place or to isolate the perpetrators. He usually favored his troops to retaliate for insults directed at his boys, or for any threats or opposition rendered, but more importantly, Sherman knew that such actions, even when not officially sanctioned, still aided in hastening the end of the war. People that were tired of seeing their home land destroyed would soon enough lay down their weapons, he reasoned. He under-

stood furthermore that all this was also quite humiliating for the Southerners. It pulled the veil aside that covered the Confederacy's facade, and revealed that beneath its appearance, it had crumbled. A Confederacy that is consistently unable to protect its citizens and homesteads from an invading foe, is obviously hollow. In a very blunt and no nonsense fashion, Sherman exposed that fact to the South, to the country, and, for that matter, to the world. He was also a commander who was more likely than others to shrug his shoulders at such destruction and consider it "a natural consequence of war." A war, he would be quick to add, the North did not start.

Offenses he considered serious, such as murder or rape, were swiftly and severely punished by him, and the latter two occurred amazingly seldom. It is indeed amazing when one merely a calculated possibility and nothing he foresaw as chiseled in stone. He felt more inclined to place any serious fighting closer to the Virginia border, and then certainly within Virginia itself.

The amount of destruction to the city of Fayetteville during Sherman's occupation was limited mostly to such points Sherman deemed strategically necessary. Anything that could have aided the Confederacy in any way was of course reduced to rubble. That meant that aside from occasional looting and burning of some private residences, only the Fayetteville arsenal, three newspapers, grist mills and textile factories fell victims to the torch. Foraging continued as needed horses and mules were confiscated along the way. Old and used-up animals of the wagon train were left behind, and the sickest of these shot and left to litter the countryside or floating in the Cape Fear River. Not a pretty sight and certainly not a pleasant odor, but, all in all, relatively selective destruction.

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>Next Month the South strikes back

Doris Walker

MARCH, 2000 – PRESIDENT’S LETTER

Congratulations:

My congratulations to our February speaker, Norty London - he sure packed the house. What a great story he had to tell. Also, my congratulations to all of us as an organization. In prior letters I have urged everyone to call in their reservations ahead of time. We have done a great job and we have been able to return to the level of preregistration success we have enjoyed in the past. So please remember to call JAC with your reservation for the March meeting at 216-861-5588. Having the registration issue solved made our January and February meetings a fun experiences.

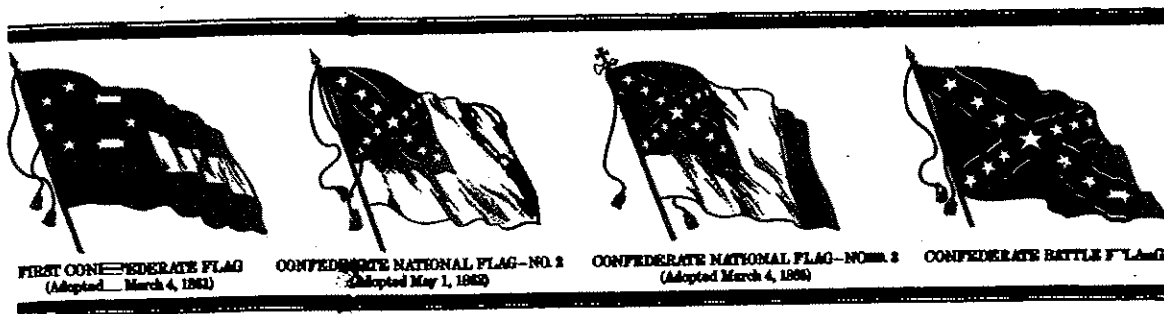
March Topic:

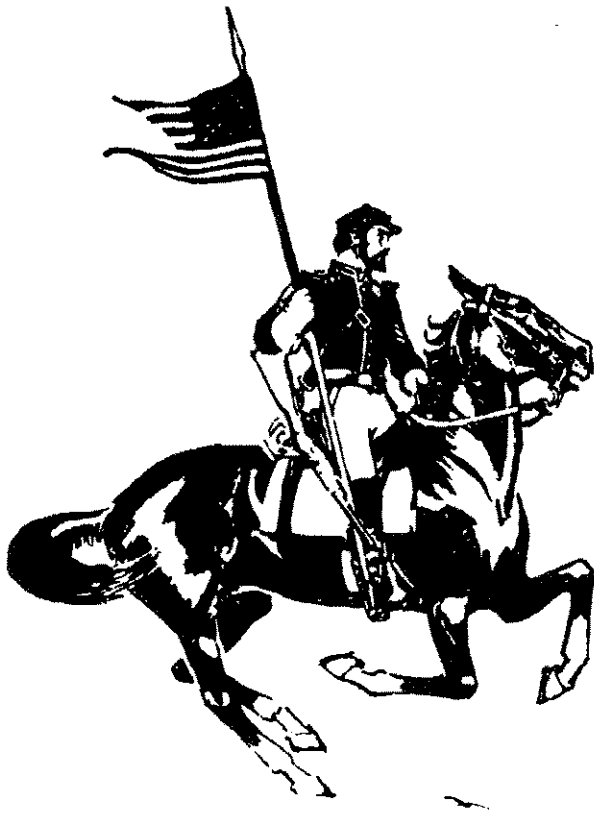
This month we are honored to have a speaker from the Cincinnati CWRT, Mr. Dave Smith. This is of special interest to me as I spent my college days at the University of Cincinnati. Unfortunately, Dave is an alumnus of UC's archrival Xavier. Twice in recent years UC has been knocked out of the No. 1 NCAA basketball rating by X - but I digress.

By now everyone knows of my interest in the western theater of the Civil War and the personalities involved. One of the most prominent and enigmatic was Braxton Bragg. I have referred to Bragg as one of the Union's greatest allies. In my talk on Nathan Bedford Forrest I gave great emphasis to Forrest's disgust with Braxton Bragg. Dave's topic will be on this great friend of Jefferson Davis. Perhaps Dave will help us understand if Bragg was really that bad.

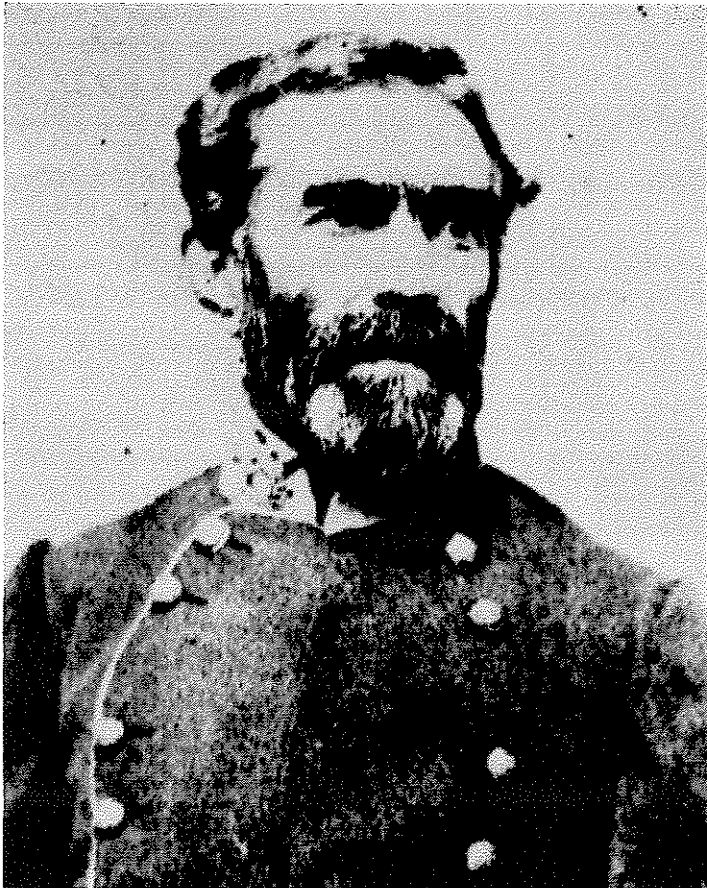
So, again, I have the pleasure of choosing a topic in which I am personally interested. I hope that the rest you share this interest and will make plans to attend.

Bob Boyda





Cleveland Civil War Roundtable PO Box 18900 Cleveland, OH 44118



Braxton Bragg

*Was he without doubt
the worse general of
the Civil War?*

**Wednesday
March 8, 2000**