

# THE CHARGER

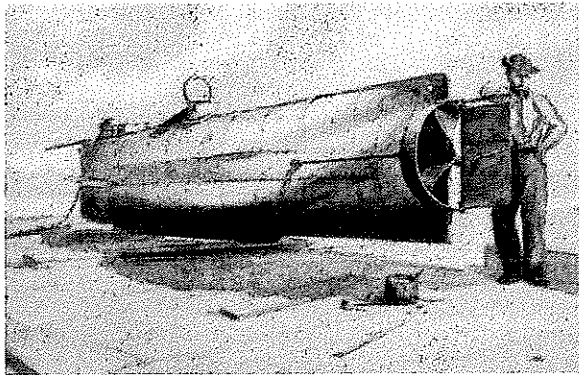
October, 1998

363 Meeting

Vol.20 #2

*Tonight's Program:*

## CSS Hunley

*The world's first Submarine*

The CSS Hunley was developed by the Confederacy to break the Union blockade of Charleston, South Carolina. It was a completely submersible craft hand propelled by a crew of eight at a speed of four miles per hour.

This new technology was not fully developed and became a death trap. Three crews drowned in the craft including the inventor Horace L. Hunley.

The CSS Hunley sank one union ship the USS Housatonic. This battle to sink the Housatonic also sent the Hunley to the bottom of Charleston bay forever.

*Tonight's Speaker:*

## William McGrath

William "Bill" McGrath is a nationally known civil war artist and a long time member of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable.

Bill is a native Clevelander. Graduating from Chanel High School in Bedford and then graduating from Kent State University with a degree in Architecture.

Bill is best known for his naval paintings but recently has done paintings of Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah during the civil war years of 1861 to 1865.

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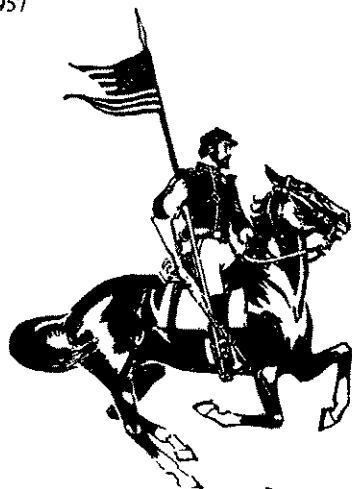
**Date: October 14, 1998**

**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 ROUNDTABLE  
PO BOX 1800 CLEVELAND, OHIO 44118

**President: Dick Crews**

**Vice President: Bob Boyda**

**Secretary: William Vodrey**

**Treasurer: Peter Holman**

**Executive Committee:**

**Bob Battisti, Dan Zeiser, John Moore,  
Bill Doty, John Howard, Bill McGrath.**

**Editor of THE CHARGER**

**Dick Crews**

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**Shaker Heights, OH 44122**

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**Anne & John Caputo**

*About the*

## ***Cleveland Civil War Roundtable***

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable is open to all who have an interest in the American Civil War and its time period in American history.

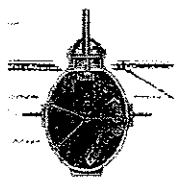
Dinner meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. The Roundtable meets at the *Hermit Club*.

The *Hermit Club* is a historic private club in the Playhouse Square area of downtown Cleveland.

Dinner is \$20.00. Club dues are \$35.00 per year.

**Membership information can be obtained from  
Dick Crews, daytime phone (800) 800-8310.**

October 14, 1998

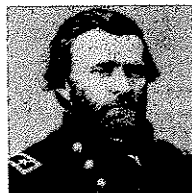


## **CSS Hunley**

*World's first Submarine*

**BILL MCGRATH**

November 11, 1998

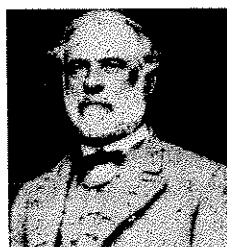


## **Grant's Canal**

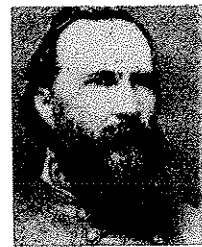
*Vicksburg*

**DAVID F. BASTIAN**

December 9, 1998



**Lee  
&  
Longstreet  
at**



## **Gettysburg**

**ED BEARSS**

January 13, 1999

*The Great Debate*

## **How Could the South have Won?**

**MODERATOR: ROBERT E. BATTISTI**

February 10, 1999



## **Abraham Lincoln**

*Reelection of 1864*

**JOHN C. WAUGH**

March 10, 1999



## **William T. Sherman**

*The Most Hated man in the South*

**SCOTT MAYBAUM**

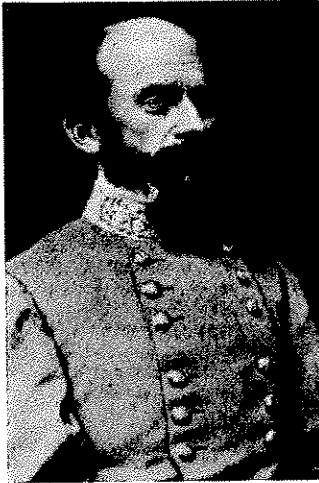
April 7, 1999



## **John Hunt Morgan**

*The confederate who almost  
attached Cleveland*

**LESTER V. HORWITZ**



*Richard Stoddert Ewell*

# Richard S. Ewell

## *A Soldier's Life*

By Donald C. Pfanz

Dick Ewell has received a disproportionately small share of attention for a man of his importance and wartime accomplishments. As one of only nine men ever to command a corps in the Army of Northern Virginia, Ewell has never been the subject of a full-sized biography, despite the survival of a huge amount of his lifetime correspondence. Most students of the war dismiss Ewell after describing his three peculiarities: **a wooden leg, an extensive vocabulary of profanity, and a talent for subordinating himself to domineering women.** These colorful characteristics undoubtedly have overshadowed Ewell's more substantial achievements, most notably a long string of tactical successes on battlefields from 1861-1864.

Ewell was born in 1817 in Georgetown (D.C.) into a reasonably prominent family. He did well at West Point, where he forged friendships with future Civil War generals Sherman and Thomas. For more than two decades, Ewell served the United States as an officer of dragoons, making substantial contributions during the Mexican War, in the rugged southwest, and against the Apaches. When the Civil War erupted, Ewell chose fidelity to his state over that of his country. He was a Lt. Col. of Cavalry very early on, and managed one of the first skirmishes of the war - June 1, 1861, at Fairfax Court House. He was a brigadier general by First Manassas, a major general by spring 1862, and a corps commander by June 1863. As Stonewall Jackson's second-in-command during the Shenandoah Valley Campaign, Ewell consistently fought well and produced victories, especially at Cross Keys. For much of the campaign, Donald pointed out, Ewell commanded 12,000 of Jackson's 17,000 men. But his run of success ended on August 28, when Ewell suffered a horrible wound at the Battle of Brawner's Farm. A bullet shattered his kneecap and ranged downward, creating a devastating wound that led to amputation and nearly ended the general's life.

After a lengthy convalescence that included marriage to a widow, Lizinka Brown (referred to by Ewell as Mrs. or Widow, as in "This is my wife, the Widow Brown.") , Ewell took command of the Second Corps in time for the invasion of Pennsylvania. His brilliant capture of Winchester in mid-June often is overlooked (if not forgotten entirely) by the controversy of **Gettysburg**, where Ewell's failure on July 1 to capture any of the high ground on the town's outskirts led to an insurmountable disadvantage later. Our speaker noted that Ewell made the most of this demotion, actively defending the city and helping save it on September 29, 1864, during the Battle of Fort Harrison. He surrendered on April 6 at Sailor's Creek when his command, escaping from Richmond, was finally overhauled and surrounded.

After the war, Ewell began his decline into obscurity, quietly farming in Tennessee and Mississippi. His death came in 1871, just two days after that of his wife, due to a deadly virus that besieged the entire Ewell household.

The executive committee voted to put the following constitution revision to a membership vote at the October 14, 1998 meeting.

The highlight is the creation of a family membership class.

*The Cleveland CWRT Constitution now reads under:*

**Article II      Membership**

**Section 1. Classes of Membership**

The members shall consist of four classes:

- (a) Active members
- (b) Junior members who shall be under the age of 25, and who shall be eligible for this membership while enrolled only as a student in a high school, preparatory school, college or university and for one year thereafter.
- (c) Honorary members, who shall be elected as such by the membership at a regular meeting upon the nomination of the executive Committee or a member in good standing provided that no more than two persons can be elected to honorary membership in any one year.
- (d) Out of town members, who shall be those persons who reside 50 miles from Cleveland.

——— *Proposed Constitution revision:* —————

**Article II      Membership**

Membership in the Cleveland Civil War Round Table shall be open to all who have an interest in the American Civil War and its period in United States History.

**Section 1. Classes of Membership:**

- (a) Active members
- (b) Family members who are related to active members entitled to all privileges of active membership but do not receive a personal issue of our newsletter **THE CHARGER**.
- (C) Honorary members— elected by the membership.



**WE WILL VOTE ON THIS CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE  
AT THE OCTOBER 14, 1998 MEETING.**

# Rifle Musket in the Civil War

By Neal Miere\*

When the Civil War began neither the North nor South was prepared for the great struggle that would take place. This lack of preparation was especially true in regard to the tactics that Civil War soldiers used. The efficiency of infantry assault tactics to move men into position to use shock action was decreasing. At the same time the killing power of the standard infantry weapon was increasing due to technology.

These two forces on Civil War battlefields in a violent and lethal combination. The standard weapon before the Civil War was smoothbore musket, which had a maximum effective range of 75 yards and was generally ineffective after 50 yards. Generals of the time had accepted the tactics that had proven successful on the battlefield for more than 200 years, most recently in America's successful war with Mexico.

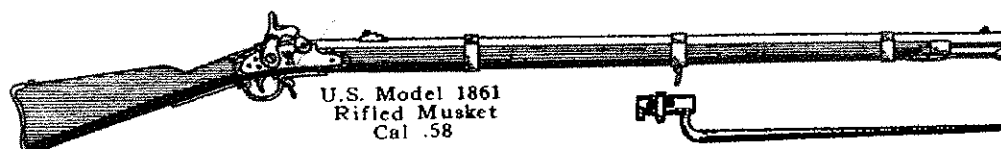
Attackers were to march to within 50 to 75 yards of the defenders, fire a volley with the musket, and then charge the enemy works, all the while shouting "Hurrah!" The soldier's principal weapon then became the bayonet.

Once engaged in close combat, attackers and defenders bayoneted, butt-stroked, or clubbed each other until one side broke and ran. These tactics were fundamental warfare when the armies of the North and South first clashed at Manassas.

The smoothbore musket was virtually little more than a pipe with a trigger and a firing mechanism attached to a shoulder stock. The infantryman loaded his weapon pouring gunpowder down the musket's barrel, tamping the powder down with a long rod, and then adding small, packed wad of cloth to hold in the powder. Next he added the musket ball, a one-ounce round sphere also tamped down with the long rod. This eighteen-step process took more than 30 seconds to accomplish.

When the infantryman fired his weapon, the expanding gases of the exploding gunpowder forced the musket ball out of the barrel. It is at this point that the problem with the accuracy of the smoothbore musket began. As the musket ball left the barrel, whatever side the barrel it touched last gave it a spin in that direction.

CIVIL WAR SMALL ARMS



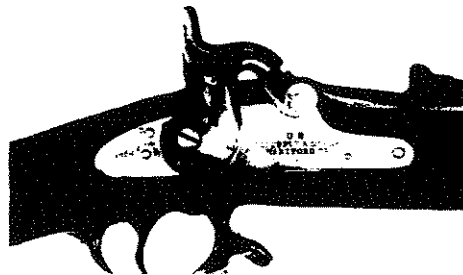
Much like a "curve ball" in baseball, the musket ball's spin imparted a distinct direction of flight. But, unlike the well-practiced curve ball, the direction of flight could not be predicted.

Various Civil War authors hold different opinions on the effective range of the smoothbore musket. One oft-quoted source, Jack Coggins, contends that the smoothbore was not very effective after 50 yards. Other sources give ranges that vary, but the majority agree with Coggins, who did his own research with British Army smoothbores. Coggins' work showed that at 50 yards the smoothbore could put most of its shots into an 18-inch diameter circle, but at 100 yards the 18-inch circle widened to three or four feet

Statistically, that meant a man-sized target presenting a two-foot wide exposure at chest height would be missed by every second round fired at him. The accuracy dropped off in geometric proportion as the range to the target increased. When Coggins fired at a target 11.5 feet high and 6 feet wide from a range of 200 yards, he could not get one in ten rounds to hit it. An attacking soldier 200 yards from a defender equipped with a smoothbore musket was safe except from the occasional stray round.

But in the first half of the nineteenth century, the smoothbore musket had undergone a number of evolutionary changes to increase its effectiveness and simplify its use. One of the changes that simplified usage was the addition of the percussion cap. In 1807 a Scottish clergyman, Alexander Forsythe, developed a method of putting explosive powder in a small metal cap. The cap would be snugly fitted over the touchhole of a musket and then struck with the weapon's hammer, igniting the powder. The ignition would flash through the touchhole and subsequently ignite the powder in the weapon. Forsythe's invention, the percussion cap, within a few years became a copper cap filled with fulminate of mercury. The advantage of the percussion cap was that it gave the infantryman a relatively all-weather weapon.

**Special Model 1861 and Model 1863**



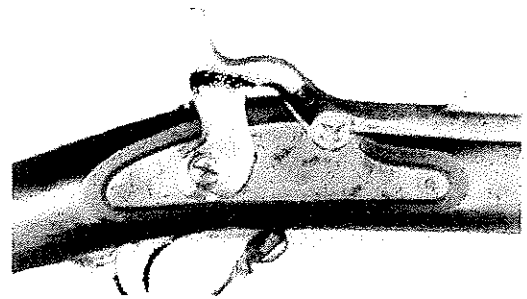
*Special Model 1861 by Colt.*

Then in 1848 French captain Claude Minie' introduced a revolutionary change to the standard infantry bullet which previously was the round musket ball. Minie's development seems so simple when compared to the technological advances of modern weapons, but what the French captain had done was startling for his day. He removed the curve-ball effect by shaping a conical bullet with a point on one end of what had up to that time been a round bullet. At the other end, he added a cone. This innovation evolved into the famous "*minnie ball*" (derived from his name) of the Civil War.

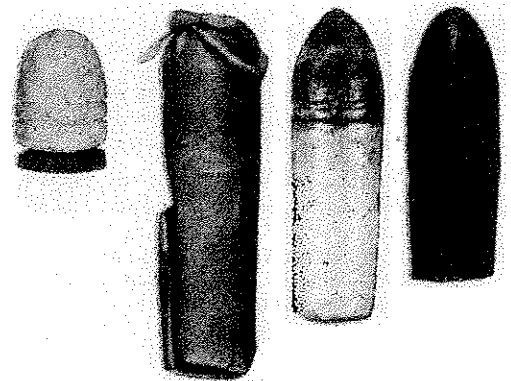
When Minie' bullet was combined with a musket that had a rifled barrel, the two fused for a deadly combination. When a soldier fired the rifled musket, the force of gases from the exploding gun-powder expanded the soft lead cone at the base of the projectile, the "*minnie ball*". The lead of the cone was forced into the spiral grooves - the rifling of the musket. As the bullet began its trip out of the barrel, the lead in the rifle grooves gave the bullet a rapid spin on its long axis. It exited the rifled musket's barrel and literally screwed itself through the air. Because it was no longer subject to the curve-ball effect, the "*minnie ball*" greatly increased range and accuracy and as a concomitant effect increased killing power. These changes increased the lethal effects of the musket by giving it almost five times the range of its predecessor and a far greater ability to penetrate its target. Before *Minie* an infantryman was safe from musket fire on the battlefield to almost within rock throwing range of his enemy. *Minie's* innovation put an end to that.

Another improvement was that the "*minnie ball*" was loaded in a similar manner to the musket ball, but no cloth wadding was necessary. The conical bullet was tamped directly onto the powder. This simplified the loading drill, reducing the loading time for a weapon from 30 to 20-25 seconds, sometimes less.

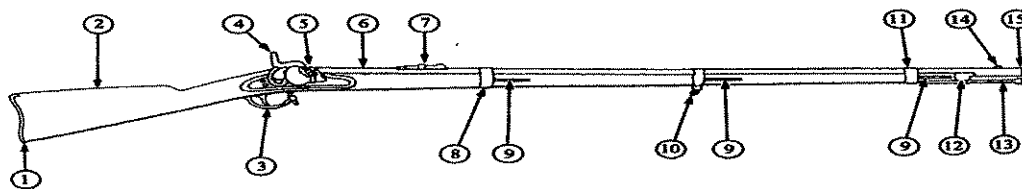
The new standard weapon, the rifled musket, had an effective range of 300 yards and was deadly out to 500 yards. Defenders armed with this new weapon could put attacking enemy soldiers under killing fire at a far greater range than ever before. If a Johnny Reb or Billy Yank could be seen on the Civil War battlefield, he could be hit.



M1863 rifle musket.



# Parts of a Rifle Musket



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ① Butt and Butt Plate                         | ⑨ Bandsprings                          |
| ② Stock (wood, usually walnut)                | ⑩ Middle Barrel Band with Sling Swivel |
| ③ Trigger and Trigger Guard with Sling Swivel | ⑪ Front Barrel Band                    |
| ④ Hammer and Lock                             | ⑫ Nose Cap                             |
| ⑤ Cone  | ⑬ Ramrod                               |
| ⑥ Barrel                                      | ⑭ Front Sight                          |
| ⑦ Rear Sight                                  | ⑮ Muzzle                               |
| ⑧ Rear Barrel Band                            |  |

One soldier serving with the Confederate Army of Tennessee, Wink Baxter, wrote a friend back home: "Yesterday we tried [a rifled musket] against a Sharps rifle and it beat it both in range and accuracy. The distance being 1200 yards. A day or two ago three of us shot at a buoy (at a range of] 900 yards. My ball [rifled musket round] grazed it and the other two did not miss it [by] more than six inches. The buoy was not larger than my leg. Don't you think that is good? The Enfield Musket (rifled musket) is the best musket I ever saw. I will bet I can kill a Yank every time [at] 300 yards."

The "*minnie ball*" did the same thing when it encountered the soft tissues of the human body as it did when it "screwed" its way through the air. It had the tendency to screw its way into its target, sometimes flattening as it went and causing additional damage. The lateral spin made it a far more lethal projectile than the spinning musket ball, which occasionally caromed off its target.

Dr. Samuel David Gross, a U.S. Army surgeon in the Civil War, wrote a surgical and field hospital guide that clearly indicated the lethal effects of the rifled musket round. He explained that, "The old round ball is a much less fatal weapon than the conical, which seldom becomes flattened, and which has been known to pass through the bodies of two men and lodge in that of a third some distance off" Surgeon Gross further explained that the bone in a limb hit by a musket ball was likely to be a simple fracture that could be treated with removal of the ball and splinting of the limb. But the bone in a limb hit with a conical round normally shattered, requiring the limb to be amputated. Thus in addition to its increased range, the rifled musket possessed the ability to inflict a larger number of casualties who could not return to duty because of amputation.

The destructive fire of the rifled musket became a primary consideration when Civil War soldiers were on the defense in the relative safety of field fortifications, which increased their ability to aim and fire accurately. Yet the defensive position *per se* did not pile up attackers on the battlefield. The rifled musket did.

\*NEAL MEIER, a retired Marine officer, earned a masters degree at Virginia Tech studying under the esteemed James I. Robertson, Jr., and is a former Assistant Editor of *Blue & Gray*. He is presently Academic Dean at the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas, and is a Ph.D. candidate at Ohio state where his mentor is Allan Millett, an internationally recognized scholar of military history.



## Mosby Hat

After that worn by J.E.B. Stuart, the curling ostrich plume that Col. John Singleton Mosby used to decorate this hat is remembered as the Confederacy's second most famous.

When he enlisted as a private in the Confederate army, Mosby was a lawyer who came to his profession after having been jailed for shooting a fellow student in a provoked incident at the University of Virginia. By 1862, the 29-year-old cavalryman was a commissioned lieutenant and the scout for Jeb Stuart on his famous June "ride around McClellan" (see Confederate Double-Breasted Shell Jacket p. 141). In January of '63, Mosby was given permission to organize his Partisan Rangers and engage in guerrilla warfare around Northern Virginia's Loudoun Valley. It was there that the rebel officer captured Gen. Edwin H. Stoughton by awakening the Union brigadier in his cot with a slap on the rump and the command "General—get up—dress quick—you are a prisoner."

Described by biographer V.C. Jones as a slight man with medium blond hair, Mosby wore a gray cape lined in scarlet thrown back over his shoulder. His pictures show the aspect of an agile and fearless soldier who was never cruel despite a ruthless determination.

During the Wilderness campaign, much Union strength was dedicated to tracking Mosby down, and Jones advances the theory that Mosby's Rangers prolonged the life of the Confederacy by diverting Grant's forces. The futility of these actions was demonstrated during the last winter of the war, when the region known as "Mosby's Confederacy" arose in western Virginia in defiance of Federal countermeasures. Rather than surrender, Colonel Mosby disbanded his Rangers on April 20, 1865 and returned to the practice of law. Mosby died during World War I, having served as U.S. consul in Hong Kong.

Clearwater Hat's Mosby is a flat-crowned ("pork-pie") derby replicating that made famous by the Confederate colonel and his Rangers. It features a leather sweatband and a grosgrain beribboned brim.

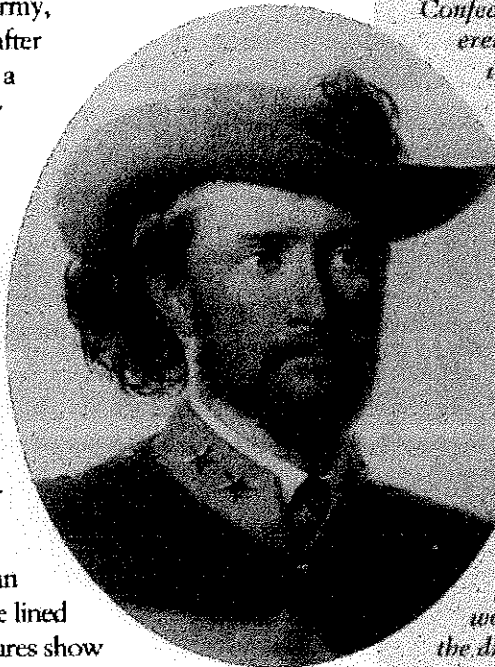
Price: \$65.

Clearwater Hat Company  
Box 202  
Newnata, AR 72680  
Phone: 501-746-4324

## Officers' Unusual Headgear

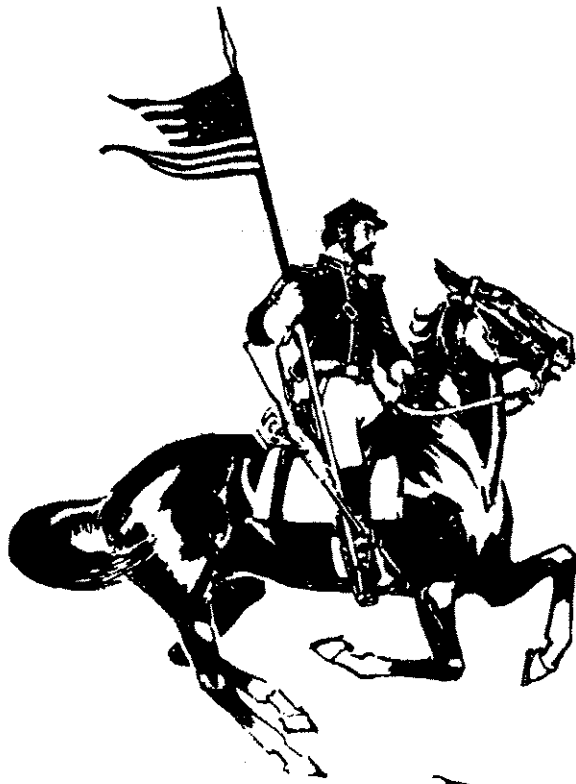
*Stuart and Mosby weren't the only Confederate generals to fight in feathered hats. Jubal Early's headgear was also be-plumed, although with a distinctly non-ostrich-like black feather, while other Southern officers kept out of the sun and rain in variously idiosyncratic ways: Brig. Gen. Albert Pike's headpiece was believed by some to have come from the American Revolution; Texas Gen. Ben McCulloch wore a white felt affair that inspired a reference to him as "a very big and very bald eagle"; while the authentically bald Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, owner of several hats, wore one or another even while at the dinner table.*

*Union officers who required special toppers to match their individual preferences and exalted status included Brig. Irvin McDowell, who warded off the sun with a hat of bamboo and canvas; Cavalryman Alfred Pleasonton, whose straw hat did the same while imparting "a most jaunty air"; and the millionaire and former French Legionnaire Brig. Gen. Philip Kearny, who, in addition to his gold-braided kepi, sported the uniform of a dandified French nobleman riding out to dazzle his Prussian foe.*



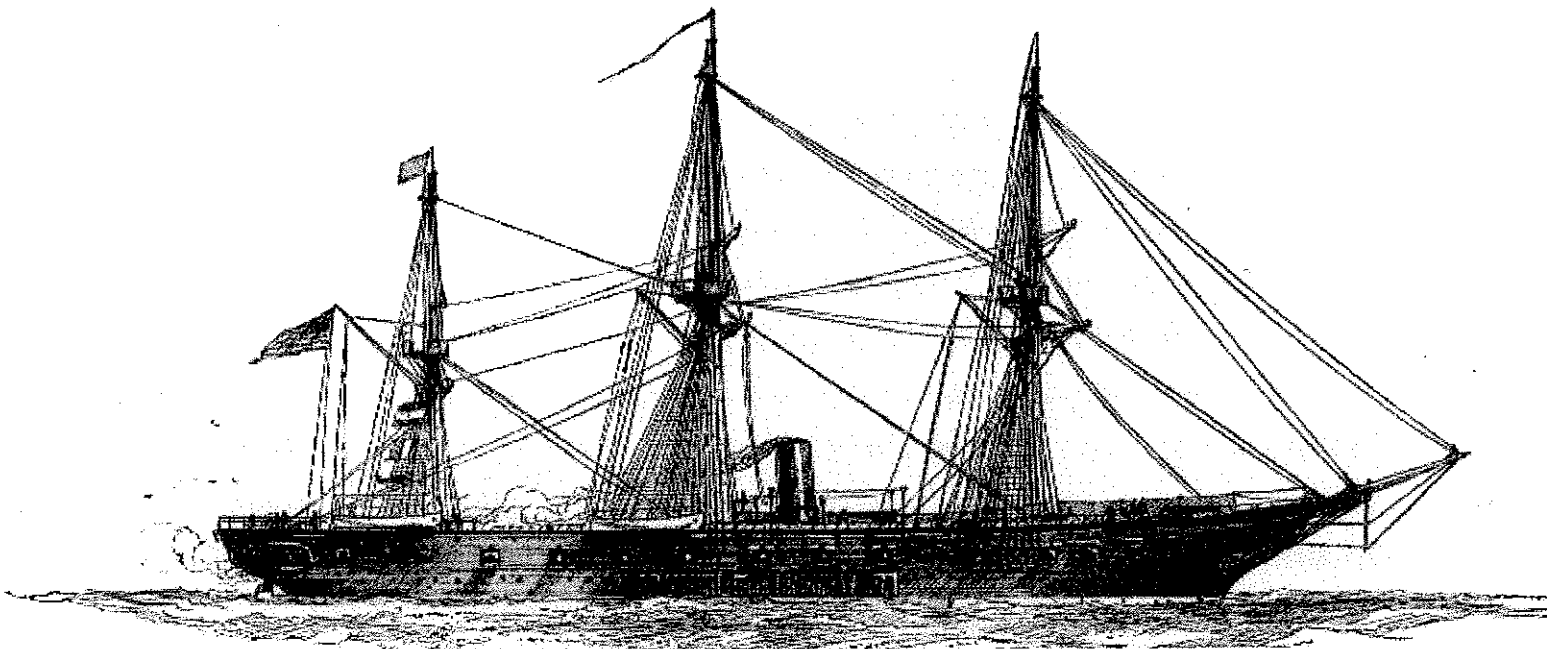
Col. John S. Mosby





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Cleveland Civil War Roundtable PO Box 18988 Cleveland, OH 44118



*The Union Navy now has to worry about the enemy below.*

# CSS Hunley, October Meeting

Wednesday, October 14, 1998