



# THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

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MAY, 1978

VOL. 22 NO. 9

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-----180th Meeting-----

DATE: Tuesday, May 9, 1978  
SPEAKER: Professor Ray P. Stonesifer, Jr.  
SUBJECT: The Little Round Top Controversy  
PLACE: The Hermit Club, Dodge Court  
PRELIMINARIES: 6:00 p.m. DINNER: 7:00 p.m.

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Who was the TOP BANANA at LITTLE ROUND TOP?

In the mid-Sixties our speaker became involved in a bitter controversy with Congressman Joseph Vigorito (D-24th Dist. Pa.) who claimed on the floor of Congress that Col. Strong Vincent, a local hero from Erie, should receive the "credit" for the Union victory at Little Round Top. Prof. Stonesifer countered with the traditional view that Gen. Warren was the key person. In 1977 Dr. Paul Barclay, a Civil War enthusiast from Erie, asked why there were two separate markers at Little Round Top claiming that Col. Vincent was mortally wounded on that spot. This set off another go-around. Our speaker will cover both controversies and the whole subject in detail... A native of the Gettysburg area, Prof. Stonesifer received his B. A. at Gettysburg College and his Doctorate at Penn State. He now teaches at Edinboro State College in Pennsylvania.

UPCOMING BOOK SALE (memo from Stu Cramer)

Several members have expressed their laments that our annual book sale of Civil War books has passed into limbo since our infatigable Guy Di Carlo went on to greener pastures. To resurrect this popular event, Charlie

Spiegle and I have volunteered to handle this affair come next October.

All of you who have books you would like to clear out of your libraries to make room for others, should bring said books to the next several meetings so that we can look up the prices in various catalogues and mark them down 50% in preparation for the Grand Sale.

Let's keep these books "in the family" and provide our members with the opportunity of reading those we may have missed, as well as giving you a chance of acquiring some that you have long wanted to own, to say nothing of converting old, read, no-longer-interested-in volumes into dollars.

Bring 'em in next meeting!

#### CLEVELAND AND THE CIVIL WAR

From time to time information is requested about Civil War military organizations which were made up largely of men from Cleveland. Our dear friend, the late Ned Downer, submitted the following list of organizations. He stated that he secured much of his information from S. P. Orth's "History of Cleveland."

| <u>Infantry</u><br><u>Reg. No.</u>    | <u>Personnel</u><br><u>from</u><br><u>Cleveland</u> | <u>Infantry</u><br><u>Reg. No.</u>    | <u>Personnel</u><br><u>from</u><br><u>Cleveland</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 7                                     | 610   | 103                                   | 461   |
| 23                                    | 341   | 107                                   | 251   |
| 37                                    | 152   | 124                                   | 567   |
| 41                                    | 407   | 128                                   | 291   |
| 60                                    | 178   | 150*                                  | 801*  |
| 65                                    | 103   | 177                                   | 399   |
| 67                                    | 212   | *ONG 100 day men                      |   |
| Light Artillery                       | 886   |                                       |   |
| <br><u>Cavalry</u><br><u>Reg. No.</u> |   | <br><u>Cavalry</u><br><u>Reg. No.</u> |   |
| 2                                     | 317   | 10                                    | 55  |
| 6                                     | 268   | 12                                    | 75  |

It should be noted that all Clevelanders who served in the Union Army were not members of the foregoing organizations. The list contains only those organizations which were recruited largely in Cleveland.

### DIDJA KNOW?

Never before in the history of warfare had any army "burrowed in" like Union and Confederates at Petersburg. If the sum of all fortifications were laid end to end, they would easily extend from Cleveland, Ohio to Indianapolis -- a distance of 300 miles. All of this was created in an area about 50 miles long (Petersburg to Richmond and the area).

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Lincoln was the only president who never served as a governor, U. S. Senator, cabinet minister, vice-president or general before entering the White House.

In the 1860 presidential election Lincoln received 39.87% of the total popular vote. In the 1972 election, Nixon received 60.6% of the vote.

### THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| PRESIDENT      | RICHARD MCCREA  |
| VICE PRESIDENT | WILLIAM BATES   |
| SECRETARY      | CHARLES SPIEGLE |
| TREASURER      | ROBERT BAYLESS  |

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 1978: RAY SWANSON  
WILLIAM CHAMBERLIN

1979: PAUL SCHILDT  
ROBERT FRICKE

#### NEWSLETTER

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Neville Bayless, Ray Swanson  
P. O. Box 5028, Cleveland, OH 44101

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### WHY THE CIVIL WAR?

The most sanguinary of American conflicts cannot be charged to aggression by limeys, mexicans, spiks, krauts, japos or Commies. "The American Civil War of 1861-5 can be blamed upon nobody but the American participants themselves. It is partly for this reason that the causes of our Civil War have had an irresistible fascination for Americans. Virtually every imaginative writer of any importance in the United States since the 1860's has felt obliged to deal with this brothers' war and the subsequent reconciliation. Novelists as diverse as Mark Twain and Henry James, Stephen Crane and Thomas Nelson Page, Margaret Mitchell and William Faulkner have exhibited a recurring, almost obsessive interest in this wholly American war. Almost every major historian of the United States has also been concerned with the problem; one thinks, for example, of Henry Adams, Edward Channing, James Ford

Rhodes, John Bach McMaster, James Schouler, Hermann E. vonHolst, Albert J. Beveridge, James G. Randall, David M. Potter, Henry Steele Commager, C. Vann Woodward, Frank Freidel, and, especially, Allan Nevins from Lincoln Reconsidered.

Though united in concern to explain the appalling catastrophe that befell America in the 1860's, historians of the United States have agreed upon very little else about that conflict. Many have continued to support James Ford Rhodes's flat contention that the American Civil War had "a single cause, slavery"; others have accepted Allan Nevins's modification that the cause was not Negro slavery alone but the concomitant problem of race adjustment. Disciples of Frederick Jackson Turner have found the cause of the Civil War in the growth of sectionalism, especially in the competition between sections for the newly opened West. Followers of Charles A. Beard, on the other hand, have traced the essential origin of the war to the clash of economic classes, chiefly to the inevitable conflict between Northern capitalism and Southern agrarianism. The "Revisionists" of the 1930's and 1940's, headed by Avery O. Craven and James G. Randall, argued that the Civil War had no basic causes; that it was a "repressible conflict," a "needless war," precipitated through want of wisdom in the "blundering generation" of the 1850's. More recently critics, who style themselves "New Nationalists," have replied sharply that the Revisionists were blind to the enormous evil of slavery and sought "in optimistic sentimentalism an escape from the severe demands of moral decision."

#### VIGNETTES CUM VINAIGRETTE

##### CONFEDERATES

"These Rebels are not half-starved and ready to give up--a more sinewy, tawny, formidable-looking set of men could not be. In education they are certainly inferior to our native-born people; but they are usually very quick-witted within their own sphere of comprehension; and they know enough to handle weapons with terrible effect. Their great characteristic is their stoical manliness; they never beg, or whimper, or complain; but look you straight in the face, with as little animosity as if they had never heard a gun."

GENERAL SHERIDAN, "There comes a staff officer with a dispatch. I attacked with two divisions of the 6th Corps. I captured many thousand prisoners, etc., P. H. Sheridan."

"'Oh,' said Meand, 'so General Wright wasn't there.'"

"'Oh, yes!' cried the staff officer, as if speaking of some worthy man who had commanded a battalion, 'Oh, yes, General Wright was there.' Meade turned on his heel without a word, and Cavalry Sheridan's dispatch proceeded -- to the newspapers!"

##### ON GENERAL BUTLER

"Our camp was this morning taken by assault by a cavalcade which turned out to be Abou Ben Butler and a portion of his Staff. He is the strangest sight on a horse you ever saw: it is hard to keep your eyes off him. With his head set immediately on a stout shapeless body, his

very squinting eyes, and a set of legs and arms that look as if made for somebody else, and hastily glued to him by mistake, he presents a combination of Victor Emmanuel, AEsop, and Richard III, which is very confusing to the mind. Add to this a horse with a kind of rapid, ambling trot that shakes about the arms, legs, etc., till you don't feel quite sure whether it is a centaur, or what it is, and you have a picture of this celebrated General. Celebrated he surely is, and a man of untiring industry and activity. Woe to those who stand up against him in the way of diplomacy! (Politics)"

#### APPEARANCE OF REBEL PRISONERS

"Really these men possess a capacity for looking 'rough' beyond any people I ever saw, except the townsmen of Signor Fra Diavolo. They grew rougher and rougher. They looked brown and athletic, but had the most matted hair, tangled beards, and slouched hats, and the most astounding carpets, horse-sheets and transmogrified shelter-tents for blankets, that you ever imagined.

GENERAL CUSTER, "This officer is one of the funniest-looking beings you ever saw, and looks like a circus rider gone mad! He wears a huzzar jacket and tight trousers, of faded black velvet trimmed with tarnished gold lace."

(These marvelous descriptions are from MEADE'S HEADQUARTERS - The Letters of Theodore Lyman to Louis Agassiz).

#### ON TREASON AND TRAITORS

Here is the West Point oath taken by General Lee and a current oath taken by all cadets. The current oath is divided into three sections of which Section I is the most significant. (Section II deals with the terms of military service and Section III covers the marital status).

Section I reads as follows: (note: I filled in the underlined words and numbers).

I, Ulysses S. Grant, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and bear true allegiance to the National Government; that I will maintain and defend the sovereignty of the United States paramount to any and all allegiance, sovereignty, or fealty I may owe to any state, county, or country whatsoever; and that I will at all times obey the legal orders of my superior officers and the rules and articles governing the armies of the United States.

In contrast, the oath taken by the cadets prior to 1838 (Lee graduated in 1829) was as follows:

I, R. E. Lee, a cadet born in the State of Virginia, age 22 years and 5 months, do hereby acknowledge to have this day, voluntarily engaged with the consent of my mother to serve in the Army of the United States for a period of 3 years, unless sooner discharged by proper authority. And I do promise upon honor that I will observe and obey the order of the Officers appointed over me, Rules and Articles of War, and the

Regulations which have been or may hereafter be established for the government of the Military Academy.

It is believed that this oath was used until the change in regulations in January, 1839.

The important difference in the two oaths is that Lee's oath made no reference to the allegiance to the Federal Government.

If Lee had resigned after his first hitch with the Army, no one would question his allegiance. When Lee resigned his commission in April 1861, military leaders, including General Winfield Scott, recognized that he and other Southerners acted in a proper manner. As civilians they were free to make their choice, just like millions of other civilians, who never had to declare a formal oath of allegiance.

- From the Newsletter of the Salt Creek, Ill. CWRT

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"When, after long and trying mental wrestling, Lee threw in his fate with Virginia, he knowingly sacrificed everything which man prizes most,--his dearly beloved home, his means of support, his professional standing, his associates, a brilliant future assured to him. Born a slaveholder in a race of slaveholders, he was himself no defender, much less an advocate of slavery; on the contrary, he did not hesitate to pronounce it in his place "a moral and political evil." Later, he manumitted his slaves. He did not believe in secession; as a right reserved under the Constitution he pronounced it "idle talk:" but, as a Virginian, he also added, "if the Government is disrupted, I shall return to my native State and share the miseries of my people, and save in defence will draw my sword on none." Next to his high sense of allegiance to Virginia was Lee's pride in his profession. He was a soldier; as such rank, and the possibility of high command and great achievement, were very dear to him. His choice put rank and command behind him. He quietly and silently made the greatest sacrifice a soldier can be asked to make. With war plainly impending, the foremost place in the army of which he was an officer was now tendered him; his answer was to lay down the commission he already held. Virginia had been drawn into the struggle; and, though he recognized no necessity for the state of affairs, "in my own person," he wrote, "I had to meet the question whether I should take part against my native State; I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home." It may have been treason to take this position; the man who took it, uttering these words and sacrificing as he sacrificed, may have been technically a renegade to his flag,--if you please, false to his allegiance; but he stands awaiting sentence at the bar of history in very respectable company. Associated with him are, for instance, William of Orange, John Hampden, the original Pater Patriae, Oliver Cromwell, the Protector of the English Commonwealth, Sir Harry Vane, once a governor of Massachusetts, and George Washington, a Virginian of note. In the throng of other offenders I am also gratified to observe certain of those from whom I not unprudently claim descent."

- From an address in 1909 by Charles Francis Adams, a direct descendant of that "traitor," John Adams.

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Probably the definitive definition of Rebels, Traitors and Heretics was made by Adam Smith who said they were "those unlucky persons who, when things have come to a certain degree of violence, have the misfortune to be of the weaker party."

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During the Civil War more than four hundred thousand men drawn from every section of the country and from all ranks of society were confined under charge of perhaps one hundred thousand others, also drawn from every stratum of society. More than one hundred and fifty prisons, scattered over the country served to confine these men.

As might be expected, there was a wide divergence of opinion and testimony as to the treatment of prisoners. There was little Congressional legislation on the prison question but policies were fixed by the War Department which issued orders for the care of prisoners. Later, the distinguished publicist, Francis Lieber, was selected to draw up rules for the conduct of armies in the field. These were published as General Orders No. 100 on April 24, 1863, and constitute a long and minute code including regulations for prisoners. On the Confederate side, only one act of general legislation pertaining to prisoners was enacted on May 22, 1861, although several special acts were passed such as the one declaring that the men of Butler's command would not be treated as prisoners of war.

There are three distinct time periods which concerned the treatment of prisoners. The first, from the beginning of the war to the adoption of the cartel for exchange on July 22, 1862; a transition period covering the operations of that instrument until its suspension on May 25, 1863, and the third extending until the end of the war.

During the first period there was little complaint except sometimes of a frivolous nature. A Confederate officer at Alton complained that his breakfast bacon was too salty and his coffee too weak. Union officers at Richmond complained of the harsh voice of one of the keepers and another complained that a woman visitor looked scornful. This does not mean that conditions were ideal; few prisons were clean, for neither army had learned to live in crowds. Union officers taken at First Manassas and Ball's Bluff and confined at Richmond had an easy life. Negroes came and went, making purchases for men who had money. Prisoners under guard went out to buy provisions. There was little or no restrictions on visiting and some men made social calls in company with young officers of the guard. Confederate prisoners at Fort Warren were completely satisfied with their treatment as shown by the remarks of Virginia men confined there.

During the transition period from July 22, 1862 to May 25, 1863, conditions slowly worsened on both sides. On the Northern side, this was not due because of a lack of clothing or provisions; instead it was often caused by inefficient management of prison keepers and sometimes the over crowding of prisoners far beyond the intended capacity. For

example at Elmira, New York, unheated tents were used until mid winter before the barracks were finally constructed. At Fort Delaware, many prisoners slept on the bare damp ground where water was kept out by dikes. At Camp Douglas, in Chicago, unsanitary drainage ditches existed which could easily been avoided by proper engineering.

On the Southern side, conditions rapidly became much worse because of the effects of the tightening blockade. Food and medicine were in short supply. Generally speaking, Union prisoners received the same rations as the Southern soldiers- when available.

During the last period of the war much suffering and many deaths of prisoners occurred on both sides due to conditions in the prisons. At Elmira, New York, in the midst of plenty, many Southern prisoners contracted scurvy, caused by lack of fresh vegetables. At Camp Douglas, the mortality rate reached ten per cent during February, 1863. In the South the horrors of Andersonville are too well known to repeat here. Thousands of prisoners were crowded together with little food, sparse clothing and practically non-existent shelter. Men died like flies.

Both sides were allowed to send food and clothing to prisoners. It was widely believed in the North that much of the food sent to Richmond for prisoners was appropriated for the Confederate army but there seems to be no evidence to support such a conclusion. Irresponsible statements and charges were made on both sides which were often based on false rumors. Many threats of retaliation for the alleged mistreatment of prisoners were made during the war. Few were carried out. In one case where Union prisoners were kept in Charleston which was under fire by Union forces, in retaliation, six hundred Confederate officers were brought from Fort Delaware and confined in a stockade on Morris Island which was under fire by Confederate batteries. The Union prisoners were finally withdrawn after which the Confederates were removed from Morris Island.

Late in 1863 and in 1864, reports multiplied as to the suffering in Southern prisons and the belief that much of it was intentional spread through the North. By edicts of April 20, 1864 and again on June 1, 1864, rations issued to Confederate prisoners were greatly reduced. The distribution was at the discretion of the prison commandant who sometimes was in collusion with a crooked contractor. Both the quality and quantity of food issued declined immensely.

In 1908, the adjutant-general of the United States published a memorandum summarizing the results of his investigation as to mortality rates. Records show that 211,411 Union soldiers were captured of which number 16,668 were paroled on the field and 30,218 died while in captivity; and that 462,634 Confederate soldiers were captured during the war, of which number 247,769 were paroled on the field and 25,976 died while in captivity. From these records, mortality in Federal prisons was twelve per cent while in Confederate prisons it was fifteen and one half percent.