

February, 2004

412 Meeting

Vol. 25 #6

Tonight's Program:

Johnson Island Prison

1862—1865

In 1861 it became apparent to Federal authorities that the war would not end quickly and plans were made for construction of prisons to errantly house thousands of Confederate prisoners.



Unpopulated Johnson's Island within Sandusky Bay seemed a good choice. It's size was about right, 300 acres, and the island was mostly wooded with hickory and oak providing good fuel source. Half the island could be leased for \$500 per year and the 40 acres already cleared made a good building site. The new owner, L. B. Johnson was more than willing to allow the government to clear the land thereby increasing its agricultural and limestone quarrying value when the war ended.

The prison's stockade was a four-sided area of approximately 16 acres with a 15 foot high wooden fence surrounding it. At the base of the fence was a ditch to prevent tunneling, since the ditch reached bare limestone. Inside the stockade were 13 two-story prisoner barracks or "blocks", each roughly 25 by 125 feet. Twelve blocks were barracks and the thirteenth was the hospital.

Tonight's Speaker:



David Bush

David Bush joined Heidelberg College's Center for Historic and Military Archaeology in 1998 to focus exclusively on the Johnson's Island Prisoner of War Depot. He is also chairman of the Friends and Descendents of Johnson's Island, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of this National Historic Landmark site.

Date: **Wednesday,
February 11, 2004**

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: **Roasted Chicken or
Pistachio Meat Loaf**

**CLEVELAND
CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE**
FOUNDED 1957

President: **Warren McClelland** (216) 751-4477

Vice President: **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249

Secretary: **Evelyn Hayes** (216) 381-3878

Treasurer: **Dave Carrino** (440) 843-9088

Historian: **Dale Thomas** (440) 779-6454

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Maynard Bauer	Lou Braman
Bill McGrath	Terry Koozer
Kathleen Platt	George George

website: clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com

email: a-bell@adelphia.net

Editor_ THE CHARGER– Dick Crews

The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable is open to anyone with an interest in the American Civil War. The 133 members of the Roundtable, who's membership varies from 14 to 90 years old, share a belief that the American Civil War was the **defining** event in United States history.

The Roundtable normally meets on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May, at a private club of the Cleveland Playhouse, 8501 Carnegie, next to the Cleveland Clinic.

Dues: \$40.00 per year
c/o David Carrino
4470 Coral Gables Dr.
Parma, OH 44134
Check: Cleveland CWRT

**Cleveland Civil War Roundtable
Past Presidents**

2003 Maynard Bauer	1980 Charles Spiegle
2002 Bill McGrath	1979 William Bates
2001 William Vodrey	1978 Richard McCrae
2000 Bob Boyda	1977 James Chapman
1999 Dick Crews	1976 Milton Holmes
1998 John Moore	1975 Thomas Gretter
1997 Dan Zeiser	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1996 John Sutula	1973 Arthur Jordan
1995 Norton London	1972 Bernard Drews
1994 Robert Battisti	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1993 Kevin Callahan	1970 Frank Schuhle
1992 Bob Baucher	1969 Donald Heckaman
1991 Joe Tirpak	1968 Frank Moran
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1967 William Schlesinger
1989 Neil Glaser	1966 Donald Hamill
1988 Martin Graham	1965 Lester Swift
1987 George Vourlojianis	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1986 Tim Beatty	1963 Paul Guenther
1985 Brian Kowell	1962 Edward Downer
1984 Neil Evans	1961 Charles Clarke
1983 William Victory	1960 Howard Preston
1982 John Harkness	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1981 Thomas Geschke	1958 George Farr, Jr.
	1957 Kenneth Grant

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
FEBRUARY, 2004**

Despite inclement weather there was a large turnout on hand for this year's Great Debate. All of the presenters did a marvelous job in advocating their position. In the closest vote in anyone's memory, Mike Dory and the rifled musket took home the win. Again, congratulations and thanks to all the participants for providing an entertaining and informative evening.

This month, Dr. David Bush will speak on Johnson's Island. Johnson's Island is an easy day trip for Clevelanders and is well worth the trip. I urge the members to take the pleasant drive and check out Dr. Bush's work and this important site. We too often overlook the great things that are close by.

Remember tickets will be on sale for the fine Johnson's Island print during this month's meeting and the winning ticket will be drawn at the end of the meeting. Please see George George or myself for tickets.

Make sure to make your reservations for dinner by Monday, February 9th, with JAC. I will look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

I remain, with great respect, your obt. servt.

Warren McClelland

Mark your calendar

Cleveland CWRT field trip
September 30—October 3, 2004

Franklin, Tennessee

140 year anniversary re-enactment
of the battle of Franklin

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2003/2004 SCHEDULE**

September 10, 2003



Lee vs. Burnside

**Fredericks
-burg**

**Frank
O'Reilly**

October 8, 2003



Grays
on
Public Square
1839

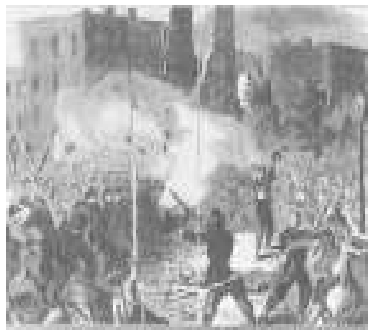
Painting by Joseph Parker
Courtesy of the Western Reserve
Historical Society

**The Cleveland Grays
George Vourlojanis**

November 12, 2003

**New York
Draft Riots**

**William
Vodrey**



December 10, 2003



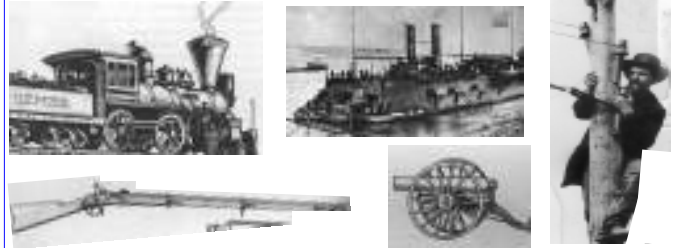
Clara Barton

**Carol
Starre-Kmiecik**

January 14, 2004

The Great Debate: What equipment or innovation had the most effect on the Civil War?

Moderator: Dick Crews



February 11, 2004

Johnson's Island

David Bush



March 10, 2004

**Irish
in the
Army of Northern Virginia**

Kelly O'Grady



April 14, 2004

**George B.
McClellan**

Thomas Rowland

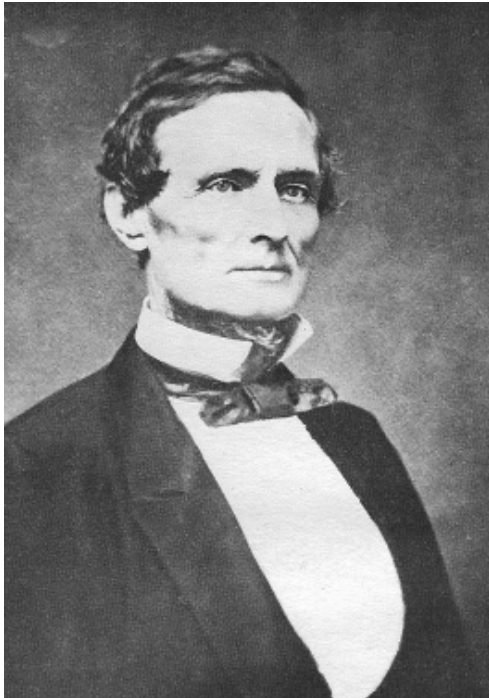


May 12, 2004



**Lincoln
and His Generals**

Norty London



Jefferson Davis
as a senator from Mississippi

Was Jefferson Davis the reason the confederacy lost the war?

By Dick Crews

Jefferson Davis would have described himself as a loyal American. His hero's were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, James Madison, and Zachary Taylor. All these American hero's were Presidents, Southerners, and slave owners. His heroes founded the country, wrote the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution.

These men didn't have any problem with slavery, why was it an issue, he asked?

Jefferson Davis served his country well. He graduated from West Point, served in the Mexican War, ran for Congress and won, ran for governor of Mississippi and lost, but was then appointed a United States Senator from Mississippi.

He married well. His first wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, was the daughter of President Zachary Taylor. Wow, how much more American can you get than by marrying the President's daughter?

Zachary Taylor, like many fathers in the military, did not want his daughter to marry an Army officer. Taylor was also unhappy that Davis had not followed his suggestions during a court-martial in which Davis was a member.

Taylor initially refused to allow his daughter to see Davis. Davis became so angry that he told his friends that he was going to challenge the General to a duel.

Luckily, Davis's friends convinced him that a duel with a superior officer was not a good idea. This however, clearly illustrated the temper that was to cause Jefferson Davis and the confederacy so much trouble in the war years.



Sarah Knox Taylor, first wife of Jefferson Davis

Unfortunately, Sarah died three months after the wedding. Davis spent the next ten years as a bachelor. Then he met and married Varina Howell. She was 19 younger than Davis. She was also from an aristocratic up bringing as her grandfather was a former governor of New Jersey.



Politically, Jefferson Davis did not favor Mississippi seceding from the Union. He held his senate seat until he received the telegraph that the Mississippi had voted to succeed.

Davis also had little interest in becoming President of the confederate states who were meeting in Montgomery, Alabama.

He declined to attend and was very surprised when he was unanimously elected President. He really wanted to be appointed commander of the confederate army.

Jefferson Davis did however, accept the Presidency and moved to Montgomery, Alabama. A dusty little town of 9,000 people, half of whom were black.

Jefferson Davis did not take care in appointing his vice president and cabinet members. He concentrated on appointments representing different states and not on ability. His approval of Alexander Stevens as Vice President was his biggest blunder. Stevens spent the entire war blaming Davis for every problem the South confronted. In fact, Davis spent much of the war shuffling and reshuffling his cabinet. Davis, who's health was never good, spent the war micromanaging the government and never relied on his cabinet.

Abraham Lincoln on the other hand, did reshuffle his cabinet early in his administration but after that, let his cabinet members do their work without much interference.



Jefferson Davis's worst nightmare
Vice President
Alexander Stevens

We have a presentation this year about Lincoln and his generals but very few discuss Davis and his generals.

Davis had General P.G.T. Beauregard who was a southern George B. McClellan. Beauregard thought he should have been appointed President of the Confederacy after the first battle of Bull Run. He filled a report three months after the battle saying he could have taken Washington following his victory at Bull Run but was ordered by Jefferson Davis not to do so.



P.G.T. Beauregard

Thought he should be appointed Confederate President for life

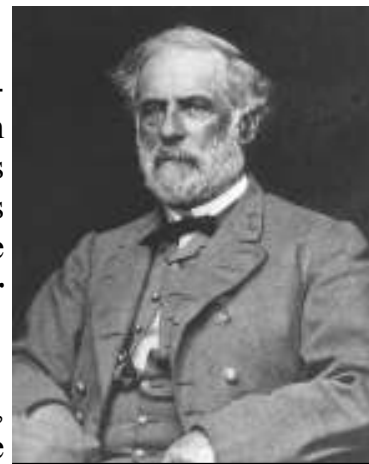
Davis, who did not issue any such orders, was furious. He should have fired Beauregard but showed another of his weak qualities which hurt the South the war, his inability to actually get rid of a poor or lying general. By the end of the war Generals Beauregard, Bragg, Pemberton, and Joseph Johnson were still Army Generals even though they failed in the field or actively worked against Davis.

Clearly, the biggest problem Jefferson Davis had was developing a strategy for the war. The South of course didn't have to win the war. A draw would be fine. Davis was always mulling the problem on whether to try to defend the entire country which he felt was necessary politically. However, militarily, the South need to concentrate their limited forces to effectively oppose the much larger Union Army.

The Union on the other hand started with the Winfield Scott's Anaconda plan until Ulysses S. Grant took over in early 1864. Grant made the Union strategy *smash mouth* against the Confederate Army and *total war* against Southern farms, factories, and civilian population.

In the meantime the confederate government went from defending the entire southern border to military concentration as at the battle of Chickamauga then back to defending as much of the South as possible. Because Jefferson Davis never made a clear policy his generals like Robert E. Lee and Bratton Bragg developed a strategy that served **their** ideas.

Robert E. Lee, commander of the confederacy largest army, was touring southern Pennsylvania while Davis's home town of Vicksburg, Mississippi, including 31,000 confederate troops surrendered to the Union Army.



Robert E. Lee

developed his own ideas on how to win the war.



Braxton Bragg

Bragg had his own strategy to win the war, get rid of southern generals he did not like.

General Braxton Bragg who got to see first hand how concentrating the southern army at Chickamauga produced victories; sent the General Longstreet and the First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia away because he didn't like Longstreet. .

Jefferson Davis journeyed to see Bragg's army in Tennessee as other generals in Bragg's command were demanding Bragg be replaced. Davis did not replace Bragg nor did he leave him a strategy to fight the war.

The result was a crushing victory for Ulysses Grant and the Union Army at Chattanooga. A victory that set the stage for the fall of Atlanta and the elimination of the Confederate Army of the Tennessee.

It's easy to point out Jefferson Davis's mistakes and weaknesses, as we could for Abraham Lincoln. So let's give him some credit. He started with no country, no army, and no government. Also after eight months the capital was moved to Richmond.

The Confederate government raised, equipped, and fed an army of 860,000 men. A huge number for the time. Although the lack of supplies to the confederate army is well known, no battle was every lost by the lack of rifles or bullets. The confederate army gave the Union Army all it could handle for four years even though the northern population was four times that of the south.

People at the time did not lay single blame on Jefferson Davis for losing the war. He drew enthusiastic crowds during a speaking tour of the south in the 1880's. He like Longstreet suffers today from the myth of Robert E. Lee. The myth says Lee never made any mistakes so someone has to be blamed. Jefferson Davis and Longstreet are convenient people on whom to place that blame.

Robert E. Lee said about Davis, " I know of no man who could have done better."

We started with the question, "Was Jefferson Davis, the reason the confederacy lost the Civil War?"

Jefferson Davis made serious mistakes. The most critical of which was not providing his generals a strategy to win the war. However, Lincoln also made serious blunders. Ah, but the north could afford to make serious mistakes but the south could not.

Both sides made serious mistakes and guess who won?

Dick Crews

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

The Prison

