

May, 2004

415 Meeting

Vol. 25 #9

Tonight's Program:

Lincoln & His Generals

Lincoln had no lack of confidence in his ability to make political decisions; but in military matters, he sought to rely on the judgment of others. In the war's first year, he met frequently with , first Winfield Scott and then McClellan.



In July 1862, when he called Henry “Old Brains” Halleck to Washington to become general in chief, he expected Halleck to be his personal military adviser.

Lincoln's lack of confidence in his military judgment is suggested by the difficulties he experienced in trying to get his generals to act more aggressively. From McDowell to McClellan on the Peninsula, to Buell in East Tennessee, after Gettysburg, to Thomas in Nashville, Lincoln sent orders, suggestions, pleas, and threats to try to spur his generals on. In every case, as he admitted to John Hay, “nothing I could say or do could make the army move.”

Tonight's Speaker:

Norty London

Cleveland CWRT past president Norty London, who normally talks on Union General Ulysses Grant, will be discussing one the great stories of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln and his generals.

Lincoln who had almost no military training was forced early in the war to rely on his generals. Unfortunately for Lincoln and the North most of them failed to perform.

Date: **Wednesday,
May 12, 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: **Salmon or
Flat Iron Steak**

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

Trustees:

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

PROPOSED CWRT OFFICERS SLATE, 2004-2005

The Nominating Committee, duly appointed by the President, hereby proposes the following slate of officers. If elected, they will serve from September 2004 to May 2005. All of those whose names appear below have consented to be nominated.

PRESIDENT - Mel Maurer

VICE PRESIDENT - David Carrino

TREASURER - Lynn Loritts

SECRETARY - Marilyn DeBaltzo

HISTORIAN - Dale Thomas

TRUSTEES - Warren McClelland (immediate past president, ex officio); Maynard Bauer (past president, ex officio); David Novak; Terry Koozer; Hans Kuenzi; George George

Respectfully submitted,

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Hon. John D. Sutula
Hon. William F.B. Vodrey
Daniel G. Zeiser, Esq.

April 28, 2004

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE— MAY, 2004

A large number of members attended the day trip to Johnson's Island on April 17th. We had great weather and a very enjoyable day as Dr. Bush, our February speaker took us on a tour of the prison site, the Confederate cemetery and Union defenses. The work of Dr. Bush and his students is, I believe, extremely important and I hope that, in the future, this organization sees fit to lend regular support to protect this invaluable local resource from relentless development. It is hard for me to believe that this is my last message as president. The year has just flown by. I hope that you have enjoyed this roundtable season as much as I have. I would like to thank Dave Carrino for his exceptional service as this year's treasurer. It is a difficult and time consuming job and he has done a great job. Also, I would like to thank Dick Crews for advice and another great season of "The Charger". Thanks as well to William Vodrey for his hard work on behalf of the roundtable, from fund raising to organizing events, not to mention another fine presentation. Finally, I owe a great deal to the assistance of George George, whose help went far beyond pushing raffle tickets. This year has been a great experience for me. This is a great organization, with a wonderful history and a marvelous future. I know that we are in good hands with Mel Maurer, the incoming president. I hope he enjoys his year as much as I have mine.

Make your dinner reservations early and I will see you Wednesday evening.

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

Warren McClelland

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

**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

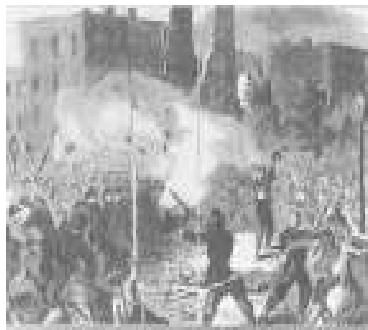
Painting by Joseph Parker
Courtesy of the Western Reserve
Historical Society

**The Cleveland Grays
George Vourlojanis**

November 12, 2003

**New York
Draft Riots**

**William
Vodrey**



December 10, 2003



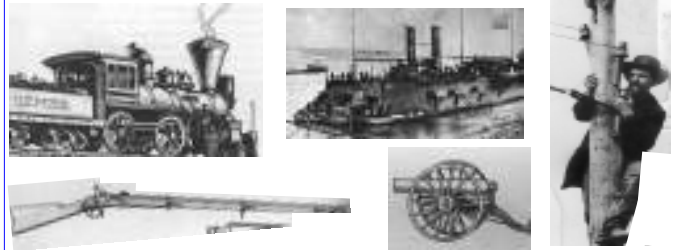
Clara Barton

**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

The Peter Principle and George B. McClellan

By Dan Zeiser

We are all familiar with the business theory known as the "Peter Principle." According to this concept, a person continues to rise in an organization until he or she reaches a level that requires more ability than the person has. Put another way, a person advances until reaching a level of incompetence. This principle applies in more areas than just business and the Civil War is one of those areas. George Brinton McClellan is perhaps the perfect model of this theory in the Civil War.

We love to bash our generals. In the Civil War, there are many to bash -- Braxton Bragg, John Bell Hood, Benjamin Butler -- all good targets. McClellan, though, proves the Peter Principle best of all. McClellan was an intelligent and talented man with a lot of ability. Raised and well-educated in Philadelphia society, he attended West Point and graduated second. A hero of the Mexican War, he had a successful military career until he left the Army in 1857 to enter business. McClellan became a successful railroad executive, where he met Abraham Lincoln, one of the railroad's lawyers. He gained a reputation for bringing intelligence and thoroughness in all he undertook.



George Brinton McClellan
(1826-1885)

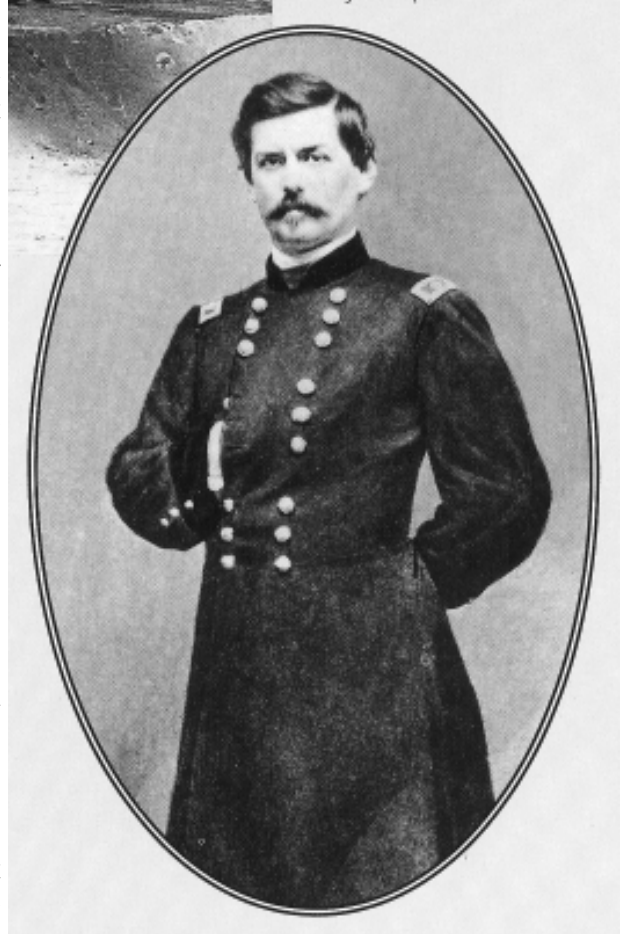
When war broke out, McClellan, with the aid of William Stark Rosecrans and Jacob D. Cox, organized the troops raised by the states of Ohio and Indiana. When events in northwestern Virginia (soon to be West Virginia) required troops, McClellan (with Rosecrans's and Cox's help) was largely responsible for victory at Rich Mountain. Called to Washington to head the Division of the Potomac, McClellan showed his greatest skills -- the ability to organize, train, and prepare troops for battle. He improved their discipline and morale and, when Winfield Scott retired as commander of all troops in late 1861, Lincoln promoted him to overall commander. It was here that McClellan was exposed to his level of incompetence.

As head of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan was a brilliant organizer and morale builder. He trained the troops and made them one of the most effective fighting forces on the face of the earth. They loved him and would follow him everywhere. However, for some reason, he difficulty leading them into battle. It certainly was not a lack of confidence in his own ability. McClellan's ego rivaled that of anyone in history. Anyone who has the temerity to tell the president to sit back while he took care of the country does not doubt one's self. Nor did he doubt the ability of his men. After all, he trained and led them.

He hated to see his men die in battle. He could train them to die, he could lead them to battle, but when it came to ordering them to die, he hesitated. Not that any general wants to see his men die in battle, none do. But the great ones know that wars cannot be won without men (and women these days) dying. They understand that, sometimes, the sooner men die, the fewer that do. Grant was one of these. In 1864 he understood that his greatest advantage was in men and materiel. He realized that, if he pressured Lee, kept him fighting, costing him casualties, he would win. While many saw the casualties that mounted during the summer of 1864 as evidence that Grant was a butcher, it was exactly the opposite. The more he fought, with the resultant casualties, the sooner the war would be over.

McClellan failed to realize this. It was almost as if McClellan thought that, if he did not fight, the war might simply go away. He rarely fought of his own accord, doing so when it was forced upon him by events, such as Lee's invasion of Maryland, or by politics, when Lincoln pressured him. He simply could not comprehend that winning the war meant sending young people to die and that, by not doing so, the war would be lengthened, eventually costing even more casualties. He could lead men. He loved to lead men and hear their cheers as he rode by inspecting them. He loved being the commander of all the armies. With his ego, he loved the attention and adulation his soldiers heaped upon him as the savior of the country. He simply could not lead them to their deaths.

Of course, such a fault is mortal to the commanding general. Promoting him to overall commander raised him to his level of incompetence. The question remains, what was his highest level of competence? I believe McClellan would have served well in the Army's 20th century position of chief of staff. With his intelligence and thoroughness, he would have served well someone like Grant, someone who could lead troops in battle. Whether he could have, with his ego, is another question.



The Young Napoleon
George B. McClellan

Dan Zeiser

THE WIDOW



Here but not here
In my heart always
Causes me to fear
Life without him near.

His cause was gallant
And he, full of life,
No one could guess
The agony and strife.

At first war was bitter
With conditions so bad
Turning men into litter,
And families so sad.

The clashing of swords,
The thunder of guns,
Seeking to end
Our husbands and sons.

The bullets sped at him
So fast he couldn't see
The one who took
My husband from me.

My beloved husband
Here...but not here
Lies underground, but
His spirit is near.

By Lisa Pogue

**Lisa Pogue is the 2004 Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Essay Contest winner.
Lisa is an 8th grade student at Lee Burneson Middle School in Westlake, Ohio.
Her plaque and cash award will be presented at our May 12, 2004 meeting.**

“Hood’s Last Hurrah” The Battles for Middle Tennessee

Roundtable Field Trip 9/30 – 10/3/2004



John Bell Hood
1849
United States Military Academy at West Point

A reporter, Catherine Watson, recently wrote, on a major reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg: “Whenever the action swept toward me, the cavalry came so close that I could hear the clang of saber on saber and see the lathered sweat shining on the horses’ sides. Big cannons were blasting nearby, their explosions so loud that my lungs shuddered. Gunpowder smoke hung over the field like clouds of sulfurous fog. This was time travel, pure and simple, a Civil war painting come to life, a photograph in living... color.”

Those going on our field trip this year will experience similar sensations as they witness the 12,000 man strong reenactment of the Battle of Franklin – expected to be the highlight of our trip.

Our annual debate several years ago judged John Bell Hood and Braxton Bragg to be the two worst generals of the Civil War. Our field trip this year will take us to several of their most significant battles: Bragg’s Stone’s River (Battle of Murfreesboro) and Hood’s, Spring Hill, Franklin and Nashville campaign.

We’ll tour the Stone’s River National Battlefield Park with a park ranger in Murfreesboro. Tom Cartwright, the most knowledgeable person on the Battle of Franklin will guide us in Franklin to Winstead Hill, the Carter House, Fort Granger, Carnton Plantation, Roper’s Knob. We’ll also visit sites in Nashville.

We’ll spend Saturday, 10/02, at the reenactment of Battle of Franklin in Spring Hill. An alternative program of dining and shopping is planned for Saturday for anyone not wishing to go back in time for the battle. We’ll all visit the World Famous Opryland Hotel on Sunday before returning home that afternoon.

We estimate the cost for those flying to be about \$300 without meals.

**Please let me know if you plan to make the trip by the end of May:
Mel Maurer – 440-808-1249 or Melmaurer@aol.com.**



LINCOLN & HIS GENERALS

WEDNESDAY,
MAY 12, 2004