

January, 2006

429th Meeting

Vol. 27 #5

Tonight's Program:

**The Great Debate:
The Most Overrated
Leader (Military or Political)
of the Civil War
Moderated by William Vodrey**

Bob Boyda - *James Longstreet*

Neil Evans - *Ulysses S. Grant*

Dennis Keating - *Phil Sheridan*

Donald Kellon - *P. G. T. Beauregard*

John Sutula - *Robert E. Lee*

By vote of the membership at the December 14, 2005 meeting, the debate will henceforth be known as the "Dick Crews Annual Debate," in recognition of his many years of distinguished service as moderator.

Our debaters have chosen three Confederate and two U.S. generals; none chose a political leader, although that was an option. The order of speaking will be determined by random draw just before the debate. Each debater will speak for no more than five minutes, then take questions from the audience for another five minutes. The Roundtable membership will vote on the winner, who will receive amazing prizes.

Let the debate begin!

Tonight's Debaters:

The tradition continues. This month's meeting will again pit five of our members against each other in another stirring round of THE GREAT DEBATE. And the contestants are:

**Bob Boyda
Neil Evans
Dennis Keating
Donald Kellon
John Sutula**

Date: **Wednesday,
January 11, 2006**

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: **Grilled Pork Rib
Chop or Vegetarian Dinner**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Dave Carrino** (440) 843-9088
Vice President: **John Fazio** (330) 867-1535
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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2005 Mel Maurer	1980 Charles Spiegle
2004 Warren McClelland	1979 William Bates
2003 Maynard Bauer	1978 Richard McCrae
2002 Bill McGrath	1977 James Chapman
2001 William Vodrey	1976 Milton Holmes
2000 Bob Boyda	1975 Thomas Gretter
1999 Dick Crews	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1998 John Moore	1973 Arthur Jordan
1997 Dan Zeiser	1972 Bernard Drews
1996 John Sutula	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1995 Norton London	1970 Frank Schuhle
1994 Robert Battisti	1969 Donald Heckaman
1993 Kevin Callahan	1968 Frank Moran
1992 Bob Baucher	1967 William Schlesinger
1991 Joe Tirpak	1966 Donald Hamill
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1965 Lester Swift
1989 Neil Glaser	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1988 Martin Graham	1963 Paul Guenther
1987 George Vourlojanis	1962 Edward Downer
1986 Tim Beatty	1961 Charles Clarke
1985 Brian Kowell	1960 Howard Preston
1984 Neil Evans	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1983 William Victory	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1982 John Harkness	1957 Kenneth Grant
1981 Thomas Geschke	

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JANUARY, 2006

Hdqrs. ClvInd. Civil War Rtbl.

January 11, 2006

The December Roundtable meeting gave us an opportunity to examine a truly unappreciated aspect of the Civil War, namely, the enormous responsibilities of quartermasters. While their duties and deeds have been chronicled far too little, every commander understood the importance of what quartermasters did. Our speaker, Dr. Lenette Taylor, with assistance from her husband, Larry, gave a thorough, highly informative presentation, focusing on Simon Perkins Jr., a Union quartermaster. Lenette's presentation, which included several amusing anecdotes to demonstrate some of the obstacles quartermasters encountered, provided a detailed inspection of an obscure, but essential, component of the war. Lenette's study of Perkins's papers makes her uniquely positioned to provide insight into the day-to-day duties of a quartermaster, such as the breadth of tasks they needed to perform, the often urgent needs they were required to satisfy, the frequently exhausting work days, and the ingenuity they demonstrated to surmount obstacles thrown at them. Among Perkins's records are many documents with signatures of notable individuals, such as several future U.S. presidents, as well as what may be the first use of the smiley face. It was especially interesting to hear about a Civil War topic to which little attention has been devoted, and we are grateful to Lenette for an enlightening and enjoyable presentation.

My thanks to Lisa Kempfer for handling the sale of raffle tickets for the Künstler print, and due to her efforts, the Roundtable has made a very good start in this important fundraiser. Raffle tickets for the print will be sold at future meetings. As mentioned in an item elsewhere in this issue of the Charger, there was a glitch in the selling of the raffle tickets due to an oversight on my part. If you purchased raffle tickets at the December meeting, please take the time to read the item about the error.

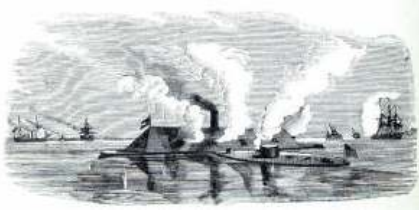
Very respy. your obt. srvt.

D.A. Carrino

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2004/2005 SCHEDULE**

September 14, 2005

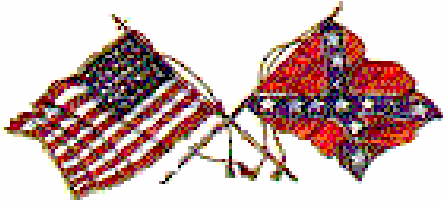
**T h e y
H a d
N a v i e s,
T o o???**



Bruce Smith

October 12, 2005

How the Civil War Still Lives



James I. Robertson Jr.

November 9, 2005

**The Transformation of
Abolitionism in War and
Peace: Oberlin, Ohio as a Case
Study**

**Carol Lasser and Gary J.
Kornblith, Oberlin College**

December 14, 2005

**The Supply for Tomorrow
Must Not Fail: The Civil War of
Captain Simon J. Perkins Jr., a
Civil War Quartermaster**

**Lennette Taylor
Summit County Historical Society**

January 11, 20056

The Great Debate

*The Most Overrated Leader
(Military or Political) of the
Civil War*

Moderator: William Vodrey

February 8, 2006

**Joshua Lawrence
Chamberlain:
Scholar, Citizen,
Soldier
William F. B. Vodrey**



March 8, 2006

**The Trial of Henry
Wirz
A Play by
Dale Thomas**



April 12, 2006

**A New Framework for Civil
War Military History**

Richard McMurry

May 10, 2006

**Union Jacks:
Yankee Sailors
In the Civil
War**



Michael Bennett

FRANCIS AND ARABELLA

John Fazio, CWRT Vice President, First in a Series

The Civil War is filled with touching, poignant, human interest stories, which is not surprising given the human drama that comprised this American Iliad. Examples abound of men who had cushy private lives and could therefore have easily avoided service, but chose, instead, to storm the roaring cannon because of their sense of duty (the most sublime word in the English language, said Robert E. Lee) and their dedication to their country, of men given up for dead by doctors, but who defied the odds and lived to fight another day, of angels of mercy wending their way through enemy lines to be with their beloveds, finding them, snatching them from the jaws of death, as only love and devotion can do, only to later succumb to disease, disease, disease that was all around them, of combatants who stepped away from the maelstrom for a few golden moments to give care, comfort and kindness to a gravely wounded enemy, only to face that very enemy in mortal combat at another time and on a different field, and of men who, when the national fratricide was over, continued the fight for right, as they saw it, in a different arena, and by different means, and succeeded in felling mighty predators. One Civil War story combines all of these scenes. Here it is.

Francis is Francis Channing Barlow, a very colorful figure with a storied life both in and out of the war. He was born on October 19, 1834, in Brooklyn, New York, but after his father, a Unitarian Minister, abandoned his family in 1838, Francis, his two brothers and his mother, Almira, moved to the Utopian community of Brook Farm, Massachusetts, where he was raised. After graduating at the top of his class from Harvard in 1855, he studied law. He was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1858 and practiced in New York City, with George Bliss, until the outbreak of war in 1861. He also wrote occasional editorials for the *New York Tribune*. He responded immediately to Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers after Fort Sumter. On April 19, 1861, Francis C. Barlow, a Harvard Valedictorian and a privileged New York lawyer, enlisted as a private for three months in Mr. Lincoln's army. He had absolutely no prior military experience or education, but he had qualities that neither experience nor education can give, as events would soon reveal.

The day after his enlistment, Francis and his sweetheart, Arabella, were married. She was Arabella Wharton Griffith, a New York item and ten years his senior. Accustomed to New York intellectual circles, she was probably the last woman anyone would have expected to marry a lawyer ten years younger than she and then, with him, and for her country, throw herself into the cauldron of war, but she did. George Templeton Strong, the famous diarist, a Unionist to the core and a New York item himself, described her as "Certainly the most brilliant, cultivated, easy, graceful, effective talker of womankind, and (one who) has read, thought and observed much and well." We should not be surprised, therefore, that she once said that "Women rule everything and can get anything." (Somebody finally got it right!) Strong was one of the founders of the United States Sanitary Commission, which was organized in 1861 to promote cleanliness and sanitation in the Union army camps and to care for the sick and wounded in field hospitals. In the summer of 1862, Arabella joined the Commission and, thereafter, devoted the

remainder of her life to caring for disabled, diseased and dying men. Mercifully, however, she did find time to be with her husband when his duties as a soldier did not keep him from meeting her.

The day after he and Arabella were married, Francis sailed for Fortress Monroe and the defense of Washington. He served with General Robert Patterson in the Shenandoah Valley, but did not participate in First Bull Run. On May 1, 1861, he received the first of his many promotions, to first lieutenant, and, on June 19, he received the second, to captain. When his term was up, he re-entered (on November 9, 1861) as a lieutenant colonel in the 61st New York Infantry Regiment (the "Astor Regiment"), which became part of the II Corps of the Army of the Potomac under McClellan. He was in the thick of it on the Peninsula, heavily engaged at both Yorktown and Fair Oaks (Seven Pines). On April 14, 1862, he was promoted to a full colonel. Clearly his bravery and leadership qualities had not gone unnoticed. In the bloodiest single day of the war, September 17, 1862, at Antietam, he was again in the vortex (the Sunken Road/Bloody Lane), but this time did not escape unscathed, taking wounds in the face from an artillery fragment and in the groin from grapeshot. Because of his performance he was promoted to brigadier general on September 19.

September found Arabella in Baltimore. When she learned that Francis was with the army moving west to check Lee's advance into Maryland, she left Baltimore to be with him, arriving at Antietam on the day of the battle. She found him and nursed his wounds, but it would take him seven months to fully recover. He returned to service on April 17, 1863, just in time for the big battles of that year. Strong, who was also on the Antietam battlefield, recorded that "In the crowd of ambulances, army wagons, beef-cattle, staff officers, recruits, kicking mules, and so on, who should suddenly turn up but Mrs. Arabella Barlow, ne'e Griffith, unattended, but serene and self-possessed as if walking down Broadway. She is nursing the Colonel, her husband (badly wounded), and never appeared so well. Talked like a sensible, practical, earnest, warm-hearted woman, without a phrase of hyperflutination (sic)."

At Chancellorsville, Francis commanded an XI Corps brigade that was attached to Sickles' III Corps at the time. It was the only brigade that was not annihilated by Jackson's famous surprise flank attack. He got through this battle without injury, but he would not be so fortunate in the next major clash of the armies. At Gettysburg, on the first day of the battle, he commanded a division of Howard's XI Corps on the extreme right of the Federal line, north of the town. On an eminence known later as Blocher's Knoll, but more recently renamed Barlow's Knoll in his honor, both of his brigades disintegrated when his position was overrun by a brigade of Early's division.

The brigade was commanded by John B. (for Brown) Gordon, a dashing, chivalrous, and high-minded Confederate officer who rode into battle on a coal-black charger. During the melee that ensued, Gordon saw Barlow, who was trying to rally his men, fall. A minie ball had lodged near his spine, paralyzing him. After the field had been cleared of the men in blue, who retreated in disorder, leaving many dead and wounded behind, Gordon rode up and saw Barlow lying on his back, the last thin reeds of life apparently slipping from his grasp. He dismounted to attend to his dying foe. But let's hear him tell it:

Riding forward with my rapidly advancing lines, I discovered that brave officer lying upon his

back, with the July sun pouring its rays into his pale face. He was surrounded by the Union dead, and his own life seemed to be rapidly ebbing out. Quickly dismounting and lifting his head, I gave him water from my canteen, asked his name and the character of his wounds. He was Major-General Francis C. Barlow, of New York, and of Howard's corps. The ball had entered his body in front and passed out near the spinal cord, paralyzing him in legs and arms. Neither of us had the remotest thought that he could possibly survive many hours. I summoned several soldiers who were looking after the wounded, and directed them to place him upon a litter and carry him to the shade in the rear. Before parting, he asked me to take from his pocket a package of letters and destroy them. They were from his wife. He had but one request to make of me. That request was that if I should live to the end of the war and should ever meet Mrs. Barlow, I would tell her of our meeting on the field of Gettysburg and of his thoughts of her in his last moments. He wished me to assure her that he died doing his duty at the front, that he was willing to give his life for his country, and that his deepest regret was that he must die without looking upon her face again. I learned that Mrs. Barlow was with the Union army, and near the battle-field. When it is remembered how closely Mrs. Gordon followed me, it will not be difficult to realize that my sympathies were especially stirred by the announcement that his wife was so near him. Passing through the day's battle unhurt, I despatched at its close, under flag of truce, the promised message to Mrs. Barlow. I assured her that if she wished to come through the lines she should have safe escort to her husband's side. In the desperate encounters of the two succeeding days, and the retreat of Lee's army, I thought no more of Barlow, except to number him with the noble dead of the two armies who had so gloriously met their fate.

And Arabella came, making her way through both lines with the help of Confederate officers and of General Howard. And, despite the doomful prognostications of Confederate doctors and at least one captured Union surgeon, all of whom examined Francis and pronounced him all but dead, she saved him from oblivion. For reasons that are not clear from the record, Francis was returned to Union control. (Three good possibilities are: 1) The Confederates abandoned him when they retreated on July 4, because they felt that he was sure to die; 2) The Confederates left him in the care of his wife and, moved by her devotion, allowed both of them to return to Union lines; 3) He was exchanged.) In any case, Arabella took him to Somerville, New Jersey, her original home, to recuperate, after the army gave him a leave of absence. Under her care, he improved rapidly. He returned to the army in January, 1864, again in fighting condition. Arabella went back to her work with the Sanitary Commission.

After a couple of months of recruiting duty, and when he was not yet thirty years old, Francis was given command of the First Division of the II Corps in March, just in time for Grant's Overland Campaign. This division, 8,000 strong, spearheaded Grant's drive on Richmond. Francis was not popular with his men. He was a strict disciplinarian who was obsessed with stragglers. His men thought he was a petty tyrant, but he did not care what they thought of him, as long as they fought well. He presented a striking contrast to other Union officers. Colonel Theodore Lyman, one of Meade's staff officers, wrote that Francis looked like "a highly independent minded newsboy; he was attired in a flannel checked shirt, a threadbare pair of trousers, and an old blue kepi (Note: a kepi is a cap with a flat circular top and a visor); from his waist hung a big cavalry saber; his features wore a familiar sarcastic smile . . . (yet) it would be hard to find a general officer to equal him." He was often referred to as "the boy general" because of his slight build, his clean-shaven, youthful appearance, and his pale complexion. He was immediately recognizable by his slouching gait and his casual dress. Military decorum meant little to him,

though he was known to don a proper uniform occasionally and wear it in a manner that befitted his rank. More often he wore his lumberjack shirt, over which he wore his uniform jacket unbuttoned. He did not carry a regulation sword, but the biggest and heaviest saber he could find, the better to whack stragglers with. It looked dreadfully incongruous with his spare frame, but he did not care about that either.

He was in the thick of it again in the Wilderness (May 5 and 6, 1864), but escaped without injury despite the II Corps leading the way with Francis's First Division in the van. At Spotsylvania he knew his finest hour. Grant, who had seen a massed assault by Colonel Emory Upton almost succeed in breaking the Confederate line on May 10, ordered Hancock to strike a single point on the Mule Shoe the next day. Hancock called on his Division Commanders, Barlow, Mott, and Birney, to lead the charge, with Gibbon's men in reserve. They did, at 4:35 a.m. on May 12, overrunning almost a mile of Confederate lines, taking some 3,000 to 4,000 prisoners, capturing 18 or 20 guns and 30 flags and almost tearing Lee's defenses wide open. Almost, but not quite, because . . .

Into the breach rode none other than John B. Gordon on his black charger. Exhorting his men, with his trumpet-like voice, to turn and face the enemy, he first stemmed the advance of the blue tide and then drove it back to the original line of Confederate entrenchments before the men in gray were themselves stopped, thus forcing them to construct a new interior line of defense and precipitating twenty straight hours of the most ferocious combat of the war at what became known as "the Bloody Angle," where, when it was finally over, the dead were piled four deep. Francis had once again shown his astonishing fighting abilities. Unfortunately for the Federals, all they had to show for 12,000 dead and wounded was a square mile of worthless real estate. Again, Francis survived a major engagement without injury.

Both Francis and Gordon moved, with their respective armies, to Cold Harbor (June 3), a Union disaster because of an ill-advised frontal assault that Grant later acknowledged was a serious error. (It is refreshing when a commander of such rank and skill tells us how human he is.) Despite frightful losses, both commanders lived to continue the struggle in and around Petersburg. The stress of the siege there, the heat, and the residual effects of his earlier injuries caused Francis to write home that "nothing could be worse than life here," but he was soon to realize how wrong he was.

Continued next month.

John Fazio is a frequent contributor to the Charger and currently the Vice President of the CWRT. He will assume the presidency in June of this year. As President, he is also in charge of the 2006 field trip. John is accepting suggestions for the field trip. He assures that all will be considered before being rejected.

Raffle Glitch

There was an error with the raffle tickets sold last month for the Künstler print, *Morgan's Ohio Raid*. Because the tickets for this raffle will be accumulated over several months, the name and phone number of the purchaser of each ticket must appear on the ticket in the event that the winner is not present in May. To correct this error, all of the tickets have been put in numerical order and will be brought to future meetings so those who purchased them can put the information on the correct tickets. Alternatively, these individuals can give me their name and phone number along with the ticket numbers (e-mail: dac5@po.cwru.edu; home phone number: 440-843-9088), and I will add it on the correct tickets. If you know of any guests who purchased tickets at the December meeting, please provide the information needed for these tickets, or have these individuals contact me. All of the raffle tickets will be included in the drawing, and if a ticket without a name is drawn, then I will track down the winner. I apologize for my mistake and for any inconvenience that this causes. With your assistance, my error can be corrected.

Civil War Times

Bernetta O'Hearn, a Roundtable member, made a very generous donation of her collection of *Civil War Times* magazines from the 1960s and from 1979-1980. These magazines are in superb condition and contain numerous articles of interest, including articles about lesser known topics and individuals as well as articles by authors such as Bruce Catton and Stephen Ambrose. To make these magazines available to the Roundtable, they can be borrowed by members. Anyone who is interested in these magazines should contact me (e-mail: dac5@po.cwru.edu; home phone: 440-843-9088) and I will bring some to the meetings for members to borrow. As an aside, Bernetta attempted to join the Roundtable many years ago when membership policy prohibited her from doing so. Thankfully, that policy no longer exists, but it is unfortunate that the Roundtable was for so long denied the opportunity to have members like Bernetta. Bernetta's donation can serve as her legacy as a valued Roundtable member whose tenure was regrettably delayed. My thanks to Bernetta for her generous donation.

FEBRUARY, 2006
JOSHUA LAWRENCE CHAMBERLAIN:
SCHOLAR, CITIZEN, SOLDIER

WILLIAM VODREY