

February, 2007

439th Meeting

Vol. 28 #6

Tonight's Program:

Ohio's Civil War Governors

"Dennison, Tod & Brough: Ohio's Civil War Governors" explores the role that Ohio's chief executives played during the tumultuous years of the Civil War. Each in his own way, Ohio's governors rallied and led one of the Union's biggest states during a time of unprecedented crisis, challenge and opportunity. Despite a strong Copperhead presence here, the Buckeye State's leaders enabled President Abraham Lincoln to finally and accurately note, "Ohio has saved the Union."



William Dennison

David
Tod



John Brough



Tonight's Speaker:

William F. B. Vodrey

William F.B. Vodrey is a magistrate of Cleveland Municipal Court. He has often spoken to this and other groups about the Civil War. He was president of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable in 2000-2001, is a member of the Civil War Preservation Trust and of the Ohio Historical Society, and is a former reenactor with the 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Co. B. Through his many efforts on the Roundtable's behalf, William continues to make valuable contributions to the Roundtable.

Date: **Wednesday,
February 14, 2007**

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: **Braised Leg of
Duck or Stuffed Acorn Squash**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **John Fazio** (330) 867-1535
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Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2006 Dave Carrino	1981 Thomas Geschke
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 Heidebaugh
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 Vourlojianis	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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY, 2007

William Vodrey will speak to us at our February meeting about Ohio's governors during the war. I thought it appropriate, therefore, to touch upon a few other aspects of Ohio's role in the war. Lincoln carried the state in both elections. In his Cabinet were Ohioans Edwin M. Stanton and Salmon P. Chase. Prominent in the Senate were Ohio Republicans John Sherman and Benjamin F. Wade. Generals Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Buell, Cox, Crook, Custer, Garfield, McDowell, McPherson, Rosecrans, and McCook were all born or resided in Ohio. Two Confederate generals, Bushrod Johnson and Robert H. Hatton, were also born in Ohio. Five Ohio soldiers, Grant, Garfield, Hayes, Harrison and McKinley, became President. The leader of the Copperheads was Ohioan Clement L. Vallandigham, whom Lincoln banished to the South after he was convicted of "declaring sympathies for the enemy."

There are two battle sites in the State, both having to do with Morgan's Raiders - Buffington Island and Salineville. Ohio contributed more men to the Union cause than all but two states, about 320,000, including about 5,100 free blacks. About 35,500 were casualties and about 7,000 gave the last full measure. There were two major military posts in the State - Camp Chase in Columbus and Dennison near Cincinnati. Camp Chase also served as a prison for Confederates, as did Johnson's Island near Sandusky. Over 100 Ohio soldiers earned the Medal of Honor.

Major collections of war relics, artifacts and literature are in the Ohio Historical Society, the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center and Library, "Lawnfield," the home of James A. Garfield, the Western Reserve Historical Society, and the Center for Archival Collections of Bowling Green State University. The final accolade: It was President Lincoln's practice, before a battle, to inquire as to how many Ohio men would participate. Asked why he did so, he said that if there were many, he would have greater confidence of victory because "they can be relied upon in such an emergency."

John C. Fazio

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2006/2007 SCHEDULE**

September 13, 2006

**The 13th Tennessee (Union),
The Men Who Killed
The Invader of Ohio,
John Hunt Morgan**

Dick Crews

October 11, 2006

Images

Karen Thyer portrays Mother Bickerdyke (1817-1901), Botanical Physician, "Cyclone in Calico," and Don Allen portrays a U.S. Sanitary Commission Inspector, singing songs of the Union and Confederacy

November 8, 2006

**Cleveland CWRT
50th Anniversary Celebration**



Lincoln at Gettysburg

Mel Maurer

December 13, 2006

**The Confederacy's New
Mexico Campaign
The Battles of Valverde and
Glorieta Pass**

Dan Zeiser

January 10, 2007

**The Annual Dick Crews
Debate**

*Resolved: That the Institution of
slavery was the cause of the Civil
War*

Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

February 14, 2007

Ohio's Civil War Governors



**William F. B.
Vodrey**



March 14, 2007

**Custer's Last
Stand**

Harold A. George



April 11, 2007

**The Lincoln-Baldwin
Conference**

James Epperson

May 9, 2007

**The Civil War Letters
of Private Alfred Weedon,
26th Ohio Volunteer Infantry - A
Hands-on Lesson in
History**
Jon Thompson



MORE ON THE GREAT DEBATE

By John Fazio

The great debate was great. The negative won (i.e. slavery was *not* the cause of the war). The vote was 25 to 19. Whether this was a reflection of the cogency of the arguments or the persuasiveness of the debaters, I am not sure. I think the result disturbed a few members, maybe more than a few, because the conventional wisdom that slavery caused the war is very strongly believed by most scholars, students, enthusiasts, etc. Indeed, one member told me that he absented himself intentionally because he felt so strongly that slavery was the cause of the war that just listening to the negative on the issue would cause his blood pressure to go up to a dangerous level.

Anyway, I would like to throw in my two cents, even though nobody asked for it. Do I think slavery caused the war? Well, yes, but with a qualifier, which I will get to in a few minutes. First let us nail slavery down.

Slavery was an issue that divided the states even in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Though the Constitution sanctioned it and this was clearly understood by all the states (some said they would not ratify the Constitution if it did not sanction slavery), the Founding Fathers appear to have contemplated its extinction by providing for a termination of the slave trade after 1807. Significantly, however, provisions for the return of fugitive slaves, and for counting slaves for purposes of apportioning Congressional representatives (i.e. a slave equals 3/5 of a person), were written into the highest law in the land and stayed there until the 13th Amendment made them moot. References to slaves and slavery, however, were made euphemistically, which is further evidence that most of the Founding Fathers viewed the institution as an evil, though perhaps a necessary one.

From 1787 right up to the eve of war, Senators and Congressmen never stopped debating the issue. When the debate reached crisis proportions, they compromised. The first major compromise, known as the Missouri Compromise, was made in 1820. It prohibited slavery north of a certain point, following the example of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, but permitted it in Missouri and the Arkansas Territory. This cooled things off for a while, but it was not long before they were at each other's throats again. The squabbling grew red hot on the issue of whether slavery would be permitted in the territories acquired from Mexico after the war of 1846-1847, so they compromised again. This was the Compromise of 1850. Again, there was a breather, but again it was followed by more invective, more insults and more threats over everything and anything relating to the peculiar institution and particularly its extension or non-extension into the territories, including the Wilmot Proviso (1846), the Ostend Manifesto (Cuba - 1854), the Kansas-Nebraska Act ("Bleeding Kansas" - 1854), the Topeka Constitution (Kansas - 1855), the sack of Lawrence (Kansas - 1856), John Brown's depredations at Pottawatomie Creek (Kansas - 1856), the Lecompton Constitution (Kansas - 1857), the Dred Scott decision (1857), John Brown's depredations at Harper's Ferry (1859), and the election of 1860. Rhetoric reached such a fever pitch that on May 22, 1856, Rep. Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina took a cane and beat Massachusetts Sen. Charles Sumner with it, mercilessly, in the Senate Chamber, because of a speech by the latter opposing slavery in Kansas and insulting one of Brooks's relatives.

O.K. So if the elected representatives of the people, or at least of some of the people, fought each other viciously over the issue of slavery for 73 years (1787 to 1860), which struggle culminated in the rupture of the Union, a civil war, 620,000 dead, the end of slavery, the 13th Amendment and the assassination of the savior of the Union and the Great Emancipator, then what more needs to be said? What about that qualifier?

The qualifier is simply this: To say that slavery caused the war is a little bit like saying we work for money. It is perfectly obvious, is it not? Or is it? Do we really work for money? Or do we work for the things that money will give us, namely power and comfort and sometimes

independence. If we could have power, comfort and independence from some means other than money, would we care about money? If one of us were the last person on earth and there was no one else to give us a product or service, would money have any meaning for us? When we are at death's door, will money mean anything to us, or will we gladly give every last dime we have to be restored to good health? St. Paul said that the love of money is the root of all evil, and we do carry some sense of this into our daily pursuit of the stuff, which finds expression in such terms as "filthy lucre." Nevertheless, we pursue it because it will give us power and comfort and sometimes independence, which will improve our chances of survival, which, after all is said and done, in the final analysis, is what really motivates everybody all the time. In the same way, it was not slavery as such that caused the war, but slavery as the engine that drove the southern economy, slavery as a means to ends for slaveholders and for nonslaveholders who benefitted from the institution. What were the ends? Power and comfort and sometimes independence. So what, ultimately, caused the war? The love of power, comfort and independence. And what is that if it is not economics? About this time I can almost hear the cries of "Sophistry! What difference does it make if slavery was an end in itself or a means to an end? It is still slavery and without it the war would not have been fought. If the Founding Fathers had prohibited it in the Constitution, there would have been no Civil War." True. And if a fog had not moved in at night to conceal Washington's retreat from Brooklyn across the East River to Manhattan, in 1776, thereby saving his army and the revolution, there would have been no United States! The point is that the Founding Fathers did not prohibit slavery in the Constitution, but actually preserved and protected it, and that is the fact that we have to live with, not what might have been, but what was. So it is not sophistry.

Slavery was guaranteed by the Constitution in the states where it already existed. Northern fire-eaters and abolitionists could rail against it as much as they wanted to, but those who knew anything about the Constitution knew that the institution was untouchable in those states. Lincoln himself said, on the stump and in his First Inaugural, that he had no intention of interfering with the institution in those states where it already existed because, he said, he did not believe that he had the Constitutional authority to do so. And he was quite right about that; he did not. Even his Emancipation Proclamation was on shaky legal ground, because it was passed as a war measure (Taney was still on the bench!), which is why he pushed so hard for the 13th Amendment. So why did the South secede? Because Lincoln's record was perfectly clear to Southern leadership, even if it was not quite so clear to abolitionists and members of his own party and even if it is not quite so clear to some students of the war today. Southern leadership knew that a Republican administration meant that they would no longer control things in Washington as they had done under Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan. Indeed, virtually every President of the United States from Jackson through Buchanan was a Southerner or a Southern sympathizer and therefore catered to Southern interests. Southern leadership knew that though Lincoln would not, because he could not, disturb slavery where it existed, he would draw the line on its extension into the territories. The territories would then be settled by free, white labor and the entire country, from sea to sea and from Canada to Mexico, would be free, except for the southeast, which would be slave. They foresaw increasing isolation and a pariah status in such a Union, difficulty in getting their runaway slaves back, and the possibility, always, of slave insurrections such as had occurred in Santo Domingo, where, between 1791 and 1804, a series of insurrections had resulted in the annihilation of virtually the entire white population and frightful atrocities. So they left because they felt that their chances of survival were better out of the Union than in it.

So much for the South. What about the North? Approximately what percentage of Northerners were opposed to slavery for ideological reasons that had nothing to do with economics, i.e. abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, Wendell Phillips, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau, John Greenleaf Whittier, Susan B. Anthony, *et al.*, and their supporters,

and how many felt, as one Army of the Potomac officer put it: "We'll take care of the secessionists first and worry about the niggers later." I maintain that the latter were in the majority at least for most of the war. The evidence is strong that abolitionists were not particularly popular in the North and were positively anathema in the South. They were frequently spat upon, shouted down and otherwise abused when speaking to Northern audiences. They did not even try to speak to Southern audiences: They would have been torn limb from limb. Anti-slavery newspapers were sometimes burned or trashed, as in Cincinnati. In New York, even as late as July, 1863, i.e. seven months after the Emancipation Proclamation, there were major riots that targeted blacks, even to torching a black orphanage, which of course resulted in the murder of many of them, including the orphans. Even Lincoln, though in my judgment there is no question that he loathed slavery, had to tread lightly on the subject and frequently make statements in his addresses that were politically expedient but inconsistent with abolitionist sentiment. He countermanded General Fremont's and General Hunter's orders liberating the slaves in their departments because he was advised that if he did not do so, many soldiers in his armies would lay down their arms and refuse to fight because they said they were not fighting to free slaves, but to save the Union. David Wilmot, author of the famous Proviso that would have prohibited slavery in the territories acquired from Mexico (which did not pass), announced that he had no higher motive than to open the territories for settlement by free, white labor and that he had no sympathy for slaves. Staring secession in the face, the Northern-dominated Congress caved. On February 28, 1861, the House approved the Corwin Amendment to the Constitution, which, incredibly, prohibited any future amendment of the Constitution that would abolish or interfere with slavery in the states where it existed, which is to say that it guaranteed slavery in those states in perpetuity! On March 2, 1861, the Senate approved it. It is to be noted that 45 Republicans accepted this concession because they knew that it was acceptable to Lincoln. The Northern fire-eaters and the Southern fire-eaters hated each other's guts because they were polarized by economics. The Northerners wanted, *inter alia*, their protective tariffs, a northern route for the Pacific railroad, money for internal improvements and settlement of the territories by free, white labor, all of which enhanced them economically. The Southerners wanted their bucolic fairyland, their Camelot, with lots of money from domestic and foreign sales of King Cotton, a lifestyle that Margaret Mitchell said went with the wind and is to be found now only in books. The Northern industrialists and merchants hated the Planter aristocracy more than they loved slaves. They, for the most part --with some notable exceptions, like Thad Stevens-- opposed slavery not so much out of any great compassion for "the negro," but because it made the Planters rich, powerful and arrogant. And, of course, the Planters returned the sentiment with respect to Northern industrialists and merchants who became rich, powerful and arrogant by what the Southerners referred to as "the smell of trade."

So what is the bottom line? The bottom line is that it is not true to say that slavery was the cause of the war if by so saying we mean that there was a great outpouring of compassion in the Northern states for the slaves; that Northerners, therefore, elected Lincoln to rid the country of the pestilential, odious and peculiar institution; that after the fashion of a white knight, he did so, at terrible cost, but a cost deemed by Northerners worth paying because they despised slavery so much. False. That is simply false. What is true is that the two regions were very different from the beginning; that their differences, social, cultural, economic and political, became greater with time rather than less; that slavery was the engine that drove the Southern agricultural economy with the sanction of the Constitution: that slaveholders had hundreds of millions of dollars invested in their slaves and that to free them would have been economically ruinous to them, besides the enormous social disruption that this would have caused (What were they going to do with 4,000,000 slaves? Annihilation? This was the term used by Jefferson Davis in his first commentary on the Emancipation Proclamation.); that some in the South

opposed slavery on ideological grounds, but they were a tiny minority; that some in the North opposed slavery on ideological grounds, but they were also a minority, albeit a somewhat bigger minority than the one in the South; that most Northerners were indifferent to slaves and slavery; and that many Northerners were downright hostile to slaves and had no wish whatsoever to abolish slavery, again, most probably for economic reasons, i.e. job competition. (Virulent racism persists in the North in our own time. Martin Luther King said that he saw more race hatred in Cicero, Illinois, than he every saw anywhere in the South.) Most Northerners supported their government because it was a democratically elected government that was fighting, first and foremost, as Lincoln himself said in his famous letter to Horace Greeley, to save the Union. The abolition of slavery went with the territory. It went along for the ride, as it were, when Lincoln deemed it necessary to emancipate slaves in order to keep foreign powers from intervening in the war (which was imminent and he knew it) and in order to deplete Southern manpower and (the opposite side of the same coin) increase Northern manpower, especially fighting men in his armies. Am I making excuses for the South? Not at all. Rupturing the Union is a terrible thing unless done for a very good reason. I submit that the preservation of the institution of slavery is not a good reason. Lincoln offered slaveholders compensated emancipation. Stupidly (there is no other word for it), they rejected the offer. Even the border states - even Delaware, which had fewer than 1800 slaves - rejected it. He therefore had no choice but to wage war. The war, therefore, was the quintessential American tragedy, occasioned, like Greek tragedy, by a flaw in our character. Grant said it best: All our troubles began with Mexico...Nations, like individuals, are punished for their transgressions.

Let the debate continue.

FEBRUARY 14 IN THE CIVIL WAR

1862 - AT MYSTIC HARBOR, CONNECTICUT, THE U.S.S. GALENA, AN EXPERIMENTAL IRONCLAD, IS LAUNCHED.

THE ASSAULT ON FT. DONELSON IS MADE BY GEN. GRANT AND FLAG OFFICER FOOTE. THE FORT, SITUATED ON HIGH GROUND, SUBJECTS THE FLEET TO PLUNGING FIRE. THE U.S.S. ST. LOUIS, FOOTE'S FLAGSHIP, IS HIT 59 TIMES, LOSES HER STEERING AND BEGINS TO DRIFT DOWNSTREAM. THE LOUISVILLE ALSO LOSES STEERAGE AND DRIFTS OUT OF THE BATTLE. FOOTE IS INJURED DURING THE FIGHT AND WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP COMMAND OF THE FLOTILLA LATER. THE ATTACK IS BROKEN OFF.

1863 - THE U.S.S. QUEEN OF THE WEST MEETS HER FATE WHEN SHE COMES UNDER HEAVY FIRE FROM THE SHORE BATTERY AT GORDON'S LANDING ON THE BLACK RIVER. ATTEMPTING TO BACK DOWN THE RIVER, SHE RUNS AGROUND DIRECTLY UNDER THE GUNS OF THE BATTERY. THE RAM IS ABANDONED AND FALLS INTO CONFEDERATE HANDS. THE CREW ESCAPES PRIMARILY BY FLOATING DOWN THE RIVER ON COTTON BALES.

1864 - SHERMAN'S SOLDIERS ENTER MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI AFTER A MARCH OF 140 MILES FROM VICKSBURG. GEN. POLK CONTINUES TO WITHDRAW HIS TROOPS IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMINGLY SUPERIOR FORCE.

1865 - SHERMAN'S TROOPS ARE ACROSS THE CONGAREE RIVER FROM COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA.

William Vodrey's Suggested Reading for this Month's Talk

* Abbott, Richard H., "Ohio's War Governors" (Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1962; introd. by William B. Hesseltine)

* Knepper, George W., "Ohio and Its People" (Kent State University Press, Kent, 1989)

* Roseboom, Eugene H., "The History of the State of Ohio: Vol. IV: The Civil War Era, 1850-1873" (Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, Columbus, 1944)

* Smith, Thomas H., ed., "An Ohio Reader: 1750 to the Civil War" (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids., Mich., 1975)



CAN YOU NAME THIS ARTILLERY WEAPON? A PRIZE TO THE FIRST 2 ATTENDEES AT THE MEETING WHO CORRECTLY TELL ME THE NAME.

NEXT MONTH

CUSTER'S LAST STAND

HAROLD A. GEORGE