

# THE CHARGER

December, 2007

446th Meeting

Vol. 29 #4

*Tonight's Program:*

## **Nathan Bedford Forrest: Napoleonic Cavalryman**



Regarded as one of the most brilliant generals on either side, Forrest was born in Tennessee and moved to Mississippi at an early age. With little formal education, Forrest amassed a fortune as a planter and slave trader. He moved to Memphis in 1851 and entered the real estate business.

When the war broke out, he soon had recruited and equipped a cavalry battalion at his own expense. In February of 1862, he was with the forces under siege at Fort Donelson and, when it was decided to surrender, Forrest led his command and some infantry through the Union lines. He went on to participate in several battles as a cavalry commander, but was most famous for his raids in Tennessee during July 1862 and December 1862-January 1863. He was wounded at Shiloh and shot by a disgruntled subordinate in June 1863, whom he promptly killed. After quarreling with Bragg following the Chickamauga campaign, President Davis gave him an independent command in northern Mississippi and western Tennessee.

Forrest was in command when Fort Pillow was attacked in April 1864. Perhaps his best moment came at Brice's Crossroads where he defeated more than twice his number. His last action was at Selma, Alabama in April 1865, where he was defeated. He surrendered in May. Come learn about this remarkable general.

*Tonight's Speaker:*

## **Greg Biggs**

Greg Biggs' is a former Associate Editor of *Blue and Gray Magazine* and is a founder and current President and Program Chair of the Clarksville, Tennessee Civil War Roundtable.

Greg is the author or co-author of several forthcoming books on Confederate Civil War flags. He has served as a tour guide to a number of groups. He has spoken to a wide variety of groups on topics including the Atlanta Campaign, Nathan Bedford Forrest, flags of the Confederate Army, Ohio's Confederate generals, and the Confederate Army of Tennessee.

*Date:* **Wednesday,  
December 12, 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:* **Roasted Cod with  
lobster sauce or Ravioli**

## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

*President:* **Terry Koozer** (216) 226-7527  
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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

### Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

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2000 Bob Boyda	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
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1985 Brian Kowell	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1984 Neil Evans	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1983 William Victory	1957 Kenneth Grant
1982 John Harkness	

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### DECEMBER, 2007

Our comprehensive study of the Battle of Chickamauga continues. Last month Charger Editor Dan Zeiser gave a well done presentation on George H. Thomas at the Battle of Chickamauga. The Rock of Chickamauga's reputation remains intact as Dan pointed out that reports indicate that Thomas stayed at the pivotal action at Snodgrass Hill long enough to solidify the last line of defense for the Army of the Cumberland. Thomas thereby saved the army and earned his reputation.

In December, we will welcome Grigg Biggs, well known Civil War Roundtabler, tour guide, and lecturer from Clarksville, Tennessee. Biggs will present Nathan Bedford Forrest: Napoleonic Cavalryman. Forrest, who had a controversial career, before and after the War, was also in action at Chickamauga. Forrest tried to turn the Federal's left flank at Reed's Bridge where he engaged the Union Cavalry led by Robert Minty. Biggs will probably touch on this action. Forrest is usually considered the best cavalry leader during the war, with the possible exception of J.E.B. Stuart.

Forrest was a self made man who was not a West Pointer and had no formal military training. Yet, Forrest was a great recruiter and became famous for bold military maneuvers. We will be able to discuss these bold moves at the Dec. 12 meeting. Forrest's controversial career included the alleged massacre of African-American troops at Ft. Pillow and his part in establishing the Klu Klax Klan. Our speaker has been questioned on these topics before and is expecting your questions.

Our professionally done website is tied into Amazon.com and if you link into it you will find a listing of books on Forrest. The Roundtable receives a donation on any books purchased through Amazon if you go there from our website. Speaking of donations, our website now includes a link for donations, where visitors to the website can make a donation with a click.

On January 9, at the Annual Debate, we will debate the alternative history of the victorious Confederacy becoming a viable nation. There are two issues to consider: (1) What was the military turning point that led to the Southern victory and (2) Did the CSA have the economic and social strength to survive as an independent nation, with a resentful and powerful neighbor ready to pounce on it. We will go deeper into this next month.

Sincerely,

Terry Koozer

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE  
2007/2008 SCHEDULE**

September 12, 2007

**The Lincoln-Douglas Debates:  
A Reenactment**



**George  
Buss**

October 10, 2007

**Brevet Brigadier General James B.  
Barnett of the 1st Cleveland Light Ar-  
tillery and the Firing of the First Land  
Canon Shots of the War**

**Marge Wilson**

November 14, 20067

**George Thomas at  
the Battle of  
Chickamauga**

**Dan Zeiser**



December 12, 2007



**Nathan Bedford  
Forrest:  
Napoleonic  
Cavalryman**

**Greg Biggs**

January 9, 2008

**The Annual Dick Crews  
Debate**

*The Southern Victory of 1865:  
Was the Confederacy a Viable  
State?*

**Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey**

February 13, 2008

**A Civil War Quiz**

**Presented by  
Brian Kowell**



March 12, 2008

**Raid!: The Confed-  
eracy Comes to St.  
Albans, Vermont**



**William F. B. Vodrey**

April 9, 2008

**Jesse James: The  
Last Rebel**

**Mel Maurer**



May 14, 2008

**The USS Kearsarge vs.  
the CSS  
Alabama  
John Fazio**



# George Crook

By Dennis Keating

## Introduction

Ohio general George Crook had one of the most adventurous and interesting Civil War and post-Civil War military careers. This included participation in many of the major battles of the Civil War (both East and West), acrimonious feuds with Phil Sheridan and Nelson Miles, and post-war campaigns against such notable Native American chiefs as Crazy Horse and Geronimo. George Crook, of Scottish heritage, was born on a farm near Dayton, Ohio in 1828. He graduated from West Point in 1852, where a close friend was fellow Ohioan Phil Sheridan. He was assigned to the Pacific Northwest, where he fought Indians in northern California and southern Oregon and was wounded.



Portrait of George Crook, date unknown

## Civil War

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Crook was appointed colonel of the 36<sup>th</sup> OVI, and in September, 1862, after being wounded, was promoted to Brigadier General commanding the Third Brigade of the Army of West Virginia. It fought at Second Bull Run, South Mountain, and at Antietam at the fight over the Burnside Bridge. Crook was then transferred to the Army of the Cumberland in command of its Second Cavalry Division. It participated in the Tullahoma campaign and in the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. In 1864, he was transferred back to the Army of West Virginia as its commander. It was ordered to join the Army of the Shenandoah under David Hunter. He unsuccessfully protested Hunter's torching of VMI. When Hunter was replaced by Phil Sheridan, Crook's force was renamed the VIII Corps. Crook and his command then took part in all of Sheridan's 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign. After being defeated at (Second) Kernstown, Crook initiated flanking attacks at the Union victories over Jubal Early at Opequon (Third Winchester) and Fisher's Hill, causing postwar controversy when Sheridan claimed credit for these manoeuvres. Crook bitterly resented Sheridan's claims. At Cedar Creek, it was Crook's first division which was routed by Kershaw's surprise attack in the fog, before the epic ride and arrival of Sheridan from Winchester that galvanized the army and led to a reversal of fortunes and the defeat of Early's army. A hero of that Union victory was another fellow Ohioan, Rutherford Hayes, commander of Crook's second division. Crook and this future President of the United States became close friends. Following the end of the Shenandoah Valley campaign and his promotion to Major General of Volunteers, Crook went into winter quarters at Cumberland, Maryland, the home of his future wife. There, on the night

of February 21, 1865, a sleeping Crook and another general were captured in a daring raid by guerillas (one of whom was his wife's brother). Crook was sent to Libby Prison in Richmond but was exchanged a month later at the insistence of Ulysses Grant, in time to participate as a cavalry commander in the Army of the Potomac's last campaign against Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Crook fought at the battles of Five Forks and Saylor's Creek and was present at the surrender at Appomattox. He was overshadowed by others like Phil Sheridan and George Custer.

### Post-Civil War

Crook, now a lieutenant colonel, helped to subdue the Paiute and Snake Indians in the Northwest. He was then re-assigned to Arizona in 1871, where he successfully fought Apaches. Promoted to Brigadier General in 1873, he was re-assigned in 1875 to serve under Sheridan, whose wedding he attended. He then played a key role in the Great Sioux War of 1876. He commanded one of the three columns ordered to force hostile Indians led by Sitting Bull in Montana back to the reservation in a pincer movement. On June 17, 1876, his force (accompanied by Crow and Shoshone Indian allies) was unexpectedly attacked on Rosebud Creek by Crazy Horse. After a stand-off, Crook retreated back to his supply base, not being able to communicate this battle to either of the commanders of the other converging columns – George Armstrong Custer and John Gibbon. For this, he was blamed by some for being at least partly responsible for Custer's disastrous defeat eight days later at the battle of the Little Bighorn. Crook would participate in the battles that would end this war the following year with the surrender of Crazy Horse (who was later killed while in captivity). In 1882, he returned to Arizona, where he defeated the Chiricahua Apaches whom he pursued into Mexico and twice persuaded their chief Geronimo to surrender, but who still later escaped. This led Crook into conflict with Miles, who relieved him in 1886 and eventually sent Geronimo, his band, and also Crook's Apache scouts into exile in Florida. Crook never forgave Miles (later commander of the U.S. Army) for this. Criticized by then U.S. Army commander Phil Sheridan for his lenient treatment of Indians, Crook nevertheless, in 1888 was promoted to Major General and appointed to head the military department of the Missouri. Sheridan died that same year. Crook died in 1890 and was eventually buried in Arlington National Cemetery, where Crook Walk is named after him. As the U.S. Army's most successful Indian fighter, Crook (called the "Gray Fox" by Indians) was known for his extensive use of Indian scouts, his relentless pursuit of Indians, and his readiness to negotiate rather than force conflict (in contrast to Sherman, Sheridan and Miles). His death was lamented by Native American leaders who had once been his foes. Never a flashy general, haphazard in his attire, and caustic in his criticism of some of his fellow officers, nevertheless, Crook should be remembered for his considerable accomplishments, both military and in championing the cause of those Native Americans whom he so ably fought.

### References

- Aleshire, Peter. 2000. The Fox and the Whirlwind: George Crook and Geronimo. Wiley.  
Crook, George. 1946. George Crook: His Autobiography. University of Oklahoma Press.  
Hedren, Paul. 1991. The Great Sioux War, 1876-77. University of Nebraska Press.  
Lewis, Thomas. 1988. The Guns of Cedar Creek. Harper & Row.

A professor of Urban Studies at Cleveland State University, Dennis is currently Treasurer of the Roundtable.

# Civil War-era ship found in watery grave

USS Arizona located by sonar in river south of Belle Chase

By Steve Cannizzaro

St Bernard/Plaquemines bureau

Rob Christopher, a native of Arizona, was looking for a master's degree thesis topic eight years ago when he learned about the first USS Arizona, a former Confederate blockade runner that was captured, made into a Union gunboat then caught fire and sank in the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish on Feb. 28, 1865.

A history instructor at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, Christopher, 36, decided he wanted to find the sunken 200-foot ship. To raise money for the effort, he established the non-profit USS Arizona Civil War Gunboat Foundation.

Using information about the river and a court of inquiry report on the ship's sinking, Christopher said the iron-hulled, steam-powered vessel was found June 28 south of Belle Chase in nearly 100 feet of water. He declined to reveal the exact location because the Navy wants to protect the sunken ship from looters.

"Honestly, I got a little choked up" over the find, Christopher said. "It was amazing that there it was, right where it should be."

Christopher, who lives in Castle Rock, Colorado said he got excited when "we got a clear image of the smokestack on the sonar. Then you could see the side-wheel housing."

Preliminary measurements taken matched those of the USS Arizona, he said. "The week of July 23, we're hoping to go back and do an electronic survey using digital sonar to allow us to start a site map, actually measuring the ship."

## Raising ship a possibility

A study will be done to determine the feasibility of raising the ship, he said, and divers will start trying to bring up artifacts this fall.

"First we have to get a museum or archive to house artifacts", he said. "It could be a history or science museum or a state museum."

If the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C., says it's OK, Christopher said, attempts will be made to raise the ship. But such an effort would require grant money, he said.

Wendy Coble of the Naval Historical Center said that if the ship is the Arizona, it would be Naval property. The Navy has about 4,000 shipwrecks that come under its purview, she said, and most probably will never be removed from their watery graves. Christopher is among several people who have been granted permits to work with sunken vessels, she said.

Before artifacts can be removed, a museum or archive must agree to house them on a loan basis, Coble said, and that agency must meet certain criteria, including adequate security and financing to guarantee that it will stay open.

## Local owner, Western name

The USS Arizona was built in Wilmington, Del., in 1858-59 for Charles Morgan, who owned the Southern Steamship Co., in New Orleans.

Christopher said he doesn't know why the ship was named Arizona when, at the time, Arizona was a territory rather than a state. But he speculated that it may be linked to Morgan's

railroad business, which took him to the Western territories.

There has been several ships named Arizona over the years, Christopher said, including the one that sunk at Pearl Harbor during the 1941 bombing by Japanese forces.

He said the first Arizona carried passengers and goods along the Gulf Coast and to England. During the Civil War, the Arizona became a Confederate blockade runner. In October 1862, it was captured by Union forces and refitted as a gunboat. The Arizona was part of Union Ad. David Farragut's Western Gulf Blockade Squadron, Christopher said.

The ship was supposed to patron the Texas Gulf area, but it was determined that it worked well on rivers and was used on the Mississippi, Red and Atchafalaya rivers in Louisiana, Christopher said.

## Explosion causes sinking

In 1865, the ship's boiler was rebuilt, but because of poor design, it was installed too close to the floor of a storage room above it, which apparently resulted in a fire as the ship sailed from Mobile, Ala., to New Orleans on Feb 27, 1865, Christopher said.

"It burned very quickly, and they had to abandon ship," he said. There was an explosion, which caused it to sink, he said. Five men were killed: One burned to death, another died of smoke inhalation and three drowned, he said.

A court of inquiry said the boiler blew up, Christopher said. "I personally don't believe that," he said. Christopher said his research indicates the Arizona sank because of an explosion in its magazine, where its ammunition was stored.

Capt. George Brown, who later became a rear admiral in the Pacific Squadron, ordered the magazine flooded to prevent an explosion, Christopher said, but he wasn't successful.

Through sonar imaging, he said, a large hole can be seen on the deck, but not where the boiler would have been. "The evidence points to the magazine exploding," he said.

Christopher said he hopes one day to place a historical marker at the site of the sinking.

He thinks there are at least two other Navy vessels at the bottom of the river in Plaquemines, and that he may try to find them too.

From the Times-Picayune Tuesday, July 17, 2001, reprinted with permission.

Photo # NH 58759 "Destruction of the 'Queen of the West' by Union Gun-Boats"



Destruction of the "Queen of the West" by Union Gun-Boats.

The USS *Arizona* (second from right) helps to destroy the CSS *Queen of the West* at Grand Lake, Louisiana on April 14, 1863. She is assisted by the USS *Estrella* (extreme left) and USS *Calhoun* (extreme right).

## Late Winter/Early Spring Field Trip?

The American Civil War Museum of Ohio is located in Bowling Green, just a couple of hours from Cleveland. On the way is the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center. William Vodrey and Dan Zeiser are working on a possible field trip in February or March, weather cooperating.

We could meet for a trip to the museum and stop at the presidential center on the way there or back. We may even be able to arrange for someone at Bowling Green State University to speak to us on a civil war topic. Of course, we will arrange for a lunch stop along the way.

If anyone is interested, please contact William at [wfbvodrey@aol.com](mailto:wfbvodrey@aol.com) or Dan at [danzeiser@aol.com](mailto:danzeiser@aol.com). You can learn more about the museum at [www.acwmo.com](http://www.acwmo.com) and the presidential center at [www.rbhayes.org](http://www.rbhayes.org). Any suggestions for other local field trips are welcome. Please consider joining us.

**NEXT MONTH  
THE ANNUAL DICK CREWS DEBATE  
THE SOUTHERN VICTORY OF 1865:  
WAS THE CONFEDERACY A VIABLE STATE?  
MODERATOR: WILLIAM F. B. VODREY**