

THE CHARGER

April 2009

459th Meeting

Vol. 30 #8

Tonight's Program:

The 54th Massachusetts Regiment and the Battle of Olustee, Florida (aka Ocean Pond)

The date is February 20, 1864. The place is northern Florida. It is the North's 4th invasion of Florida. This one is designed to guarantee Lincoln's reelection in the fall by occupying Florida and claiming the three electoral votes for Lincoln in the election.

Three black units were involved in this invasion, the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments, and the 8th United States Colored Troops (USCT). The 54th was one of, but not the first, colored unit of the war. The 55th was the sister regiment of the 54th. When forming the 54th, so many volunteered that the 55th was formed. Both units were international since they contained men from every northern state and from foreign countries! The 54th had several notable members besides Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. Lewis H. Douglass, son of Frederick Douglass, was a Sergeant Major in the unit. Garth Wilkinson James, brother of author Henry James and philosopher William James, was a captain.

The 54th Massachusetts had about 130 men from Ohio, including 13 men from Cleveland.

This is the story of the Regiment after the Battle of Battery Wagner until the end of the war. Besides Olustee, it fought at Honey Hill and Boykin's Mill in South Carolina. The latter was the last battle fought in that state.

Tonight's Speaker:

Dr. Michael J. Dory

Dr. Dory holds AA, BS, and PhD degrees in History, has taught on three continents (Europe, Asia and North America), and is a certified regular education and special education teacher. He is presently employed at Tri-C East. Dr. Dory also has an AS in Marine Biology, BS in Geology and Physics and an MSIR in International Relations. Additionally Dr. Dory has an EdD (ABD) in Educational Administration and Curriculum & Instruction from the University of Southern California. He is a Marine and Army veteran, having seen combat in Vietnam. Dr. Dory has been a member of the Roundtable for twenty years and was a spearhead for changing the constitution to include women.

Date: **Wednesday,
April 8, 2009**

Place: **Judson Manor NEW!
1890 E. 107th Street
Cleveland, Ohio**

Time: **Drinks 6 PM
Dinner 7 PM**

Reservations: **Please Call NEW!
Dan Zeiser (440) 449-9311
Or email ccwrt1956@yahoo.com
By 8 pm Tuesday before meeting**

Meal choice: **Includes entree,
vegetable, potato or rice, salad,
and dessert**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Jon Thompson** (440) 871-6439
Vice President: **Dennis Keating** (216) 397-0188
Secretary: **Marge Wilson** (216) 932-6558
Treasurer: **Lisa Kempfer** (440) 526-1318
Historian: **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249

Directors:

Terry Koozer John Fazio
C. Ellen Connally Paul Burkholder
Hans Kuenzi Steve Wilson

website: clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com

email: pburkholder@ameritech.net

Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

APRIL 2009

Greetings,

It has been said, "The best laid plans of mice and men go oft agley," and so it is for the original plans for our April Roundtable meeting. Regrettably, Donald Korb, former IRS Chief Counsel and our April speaker, has been forced to cancel. We have rescheduled Mr. Korb for April, 2011, two years hence.

Instead, longtime CCWRT member and Cuyahoga Community College history professor Dr. Michael Dory has agreed to be our April speaker. Mike will present on the little known Battle of Olustee, Florida, fought in February, 1864. Among the Union forces involved in the fighting were the 54th and 55th Massachusetts regiments; of particular local interest is that several Cuyahoga County soldiers served in the famed 54th Massachusetts. In retrospect, I realize now that most of my own Civil War study through the years involved battle tactics and strategies. However, a look at this year's CCWRT program schedule reveals that Mike Dory's topic will be the first presentation this year on an actual battle. So, please join us on April 8th to hear Dr. Michael Dory present on "The Battle of Olustee."

Our May speaker, Barbara Whalen, author of *The Fighting McCooks*, has offered to arrange for a Roundtable tour of the McCook House in Carrolton, Ohio. We hope to plan this trip for late April or early May, prior to her CCWRT appearance. Watch for announcements.

Hoping to see you on April 8th.

Respectfully,

Jon Thompson

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2008 Terry Koozer	1982 John Harkness
2007 John Fazio	1981 Thomas Geschke
2006 Dave Carrino	1980 Charles Spiegle
2005 Mel Maurer	1979 William Bates
2004 Warren McClelland	1978 Richard McCrae
2003 Maynard Bauer	1977 James Chapman
2002 Bill McGrath	1976 Milton Holmes
2001 William Vodrey	1975 Thomas Gretter
2000 Bob Boyda	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1999 Dick Crews	1973 Arthur Jordan
1998 John Moore	1972 Bernard Drews
1997 Dan Zeiser	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1996 John Sutula	1970 Frank Schuhle
1995 Norton London	1969 Donald Heckaman
1994 Robert Battisti	1968 Frank Moran
1993 Kevin Callahan	1967 William Schlesinger
1992 Bob Baucher	1966 Donald Hamill
1991 Joe Tirpak	1965 Lester Swift
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1989 Neil Glaser	1963 Paul Guenther
1988 Martin Graham	1962 Edward Downer
1987 George Vourlojianis	1961 Charles Clarke
1986 Tim Beatty	1960 Howard Preston
1985 Brian Kowell	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1984 Neil Evans	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1983 William Victory	1957 Kenneth Grant

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2008/2009 SCHEDULE**

September 10, 2008

**Varina Davis:
First Lady of the
Confederacy**

Dr. Joan Cashin



October 8, 2008



**The Supreme Court
During the
Civil War**

Chris Fortunato

November 12, 2008

**Blood, Tears, and Glory:
How Ohioans Won the
Civil War**

Dr. James Bissland

December 10, 2008

**Restoring
the
USS
Monitor**



Dr. Sean Brossia

January 14, 2009

**The Dick Crews Annual
Debate**

*The Hitherto Unknown Meeting
Of Abraham Lincoln and
Jefferson Davis at Hampton Roads in January, 1865
Lincoln will be portrayed by Mel Maurer
Jefferson Davis will be portrayed by John C. Fazio*

Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

February 11, 2009

**The Great
Emancipator
As Lawyer
Dr. Paul Finkelman**



March 11, 2009

**Meet Me at the Fair: The Northern
Ohio Sanitary Fair of the Cleveland
Chapter of the United States Sani-
tary Commission
Tim Daley**

April 8, 2009

**The Battle of Olustee:
The 54th Massachusetts Regiment
After Battery Wagner**

Dr. Michael J. Dory

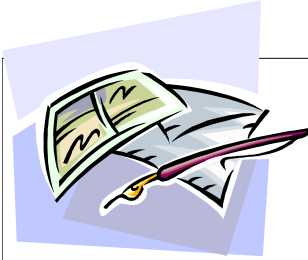
May 13, 2009

The Fighting McCooks



**Barbara
Whalen**

Letters from the Front, Part 2



The following letters were given to one of our members by a kindly fellow from Tallmadge, Ohio, named Bob Lowry, after the member addressed a group there. They appear to have been written in 1862 from Ft. Scott, Kansas, by a Union soldier named George C. Ashmun, who was from Tallmadge, though some of his letters were addressed to West Virginia and Indiana, too. Interestingly, there are still Ashmuns living in Tallmadge. Additionally, a Google search revealed a publication in Ohio Mollus - Sketches of War History, Vol. Two, transcribed by Larry Stevens, titled "Recollections of a Peculiar Service," by Second Lieutenant George C. Ashmun. This may or may not be our Ashmun, though an intelligent guess is that it is.

This is what is known about Ashmun. He was born on January 31, 1841, in Tallmadge, Ohio. During the Civil War, he served as a musician in the 2nd Ohio Volunteer Cavalry and was then recruited into a special Ohio unit charged with providing personal bodyguard services to President Lincoln. He was a lieutenant in this unit and took part in Lincoln's second inauguration. After the war, he became a physician, described as an "allopath," specializing in public health. He was educated at Tallmadge Academy and Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine, graduating in 1873, and was affiliated with St. Vincent's Hospital. He taught at the University of Wooster Medical Department, Charity Hospital Medical College, CWRU School of Medicine, and Cleveland Medical College. He later served as a surgeon in the Spanish-American War with the 5th Ohio Infantry. During World War I, he served with the Case School unit of the Students Army Training Corps. He died on June 25, 1929 in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Provided by John C. Fazio



Fort Scott, Kansas

Fort Scott was named in honor of General Winfield Scott and established on May 30, 1842 at the Marmoton crossing of the Fort Leavenworth - Fort Gibson military road. It was among nine forts originally planned to line the area between the Great Lakes and New Orleans to separate proposed Indian lands and white settlements. Normal daily activities included the general construction of the fort and drill by Dragoons (horse soldiers). On occasion, map-making expeditions were made. The post was virtually abandoned in April 1853 when the garrison was transferred to Fort Riley and other western posts. The buildings were sold at public auction on May 16, 1855 as the government did not own the land. After the outbreak of the Civil War, Fort Scott was reactivated in March 1862 and again assumed importance as a military outpost. In 1865, the fort was once again abandoned.

Provided by John C. Fazio

Ft. Scott
Aug 21st 1862

Dearest Mother

Although I have not yet received any letters from you or Son & Mary, still I expect one at least tonight and as the mail must all be in before the mail is distributed, I have to write and mail my letter before I can know whether I am to get one or not. We have heard nothing reliable from our regiment yet, but there is a report that they have gone to Lexington and will not be back here at all as they hope to be transferred from this department to some place east. There have been reports circulating since the troops left here, of fights at different places, but we can't find out anything certain about it — in fact I think it quite doubtful whether they have had anything more than little skirmishes. Today I have had my first experience in taking care of a man with the delirium tremors

and I have seen enough to last me sometime. Sunday they brought “Gib” over to the “Post Hospital” (begin second page of letter) where I am and I guess the excitement of taking care of him has done me good for I feel almost well again. The Doctor thought when “Gib” first came over that he was going to be very sick but he seems to be doing very well and I hope will get along without being any worse. The necessary papers for having the Band discharged have been made out and it looks a little as tho we might get out after a while but I’m afraid we shall be dissappointed in someway. We have a new chaplain for this post who is to preach regularly in the Hospital — some Home Missionary I think who does this as extra duty. I think he is a very good man but is not a man to suit the sick for he is one of the sleepest of speakers & seems to think men can think much better because they are sick. How do you get along while the children were gone? I thought of you and them everyday and imagined how you were and where they were. They must have had a splendid time so many going up they were acquainted with. Now the most we can hope for is to get home by the time of the state fair and if we do then I shall think we are doing well. I must wind up as I have to go to camp and see about some of my papers. Write often when your eyes will let you. Love to all. Your own

George

Quiz

Name the exact location of the Civil War monument below and win Shelby Foote’s Book, *Stars in Their Courses, The Gettysburg Campaign*.

One entry per Roundtable member.

Email your guess to:
dickrews@bellsouth.net



ANDERSONVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY

RESTING PLACE OF HONOR



Andersonville's "Clerk of the Dead"

By Dick Crews

Civil War prison Andersonville was only in operation for fourteen months, but is considered the most notorious United States prison. During this short period of just over a year of operation, 45,000 Union soldiers would suffer miserably and 13,000 would die.



Dorence Atwater

Andersonville commandant Henry Wirtz would hang for his alleged mistreatment of prisoners. However, less well known is the trial and punishment of a Union prisoner from the 2nd New York Cavalry, **Dorence Atwater**. Atwater would become known as the "Clerk of the Dead".

Atwater, a private in the New York Cavalry, was captured in Maryland pursuing Robert E. Lee's army as it retreated following the battle of Gettysburg. He was shifted around to various Confederate prisons, finally ending up in Andersonville.

In Andersonville he was assigned to the hospital. For prisoners *going to the hospital* meant a one way ticket to the cemetery.

Dick Crews is a 18 year member of the Cleveland CWRT

He was assigned to keep track of the dead for the Confederates. He also made a secret list for himself so he could publish the list at the end of the war. He hoped to notify families of the dead so they would know what had become of their loved ones.

Atwater was exchanged in February of 1865. He immediately took the list to the War Department, which promised to copy the list and publish the names. It never said when, however. The first thing the War Department did was use the list as evidence in the trial of camp commandant Henry Wirz.

Atwood got his list back after the war when he and Clara Barton returned to Andersonville to mark the graves. Because of the accuracy of the list, only 460 graves at Andersonville National Cemetery would be marked as unknown.

After marking the graves, Atwater refused to return the list to the War Department. He then was arrested, court-martialed, and sent to jail. Petitions from Clara Barton, Horace Greeley, and others got Atwater a release after only two months in prison.

To get even with the War Department, Atwater used the 20th century method of giving the list to New York newspapers, which published the list in July of 1866.

President Johnson, recognizing the public relations nightmare, appointed Atwater to be Consul to the Seychelles Islands. Remember, that is where former Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes was sent. Dorance Atwater was later posted to Tahiti. There he married the daughter of a English businessman. He lived his life out in Tahiti and there he is buried.

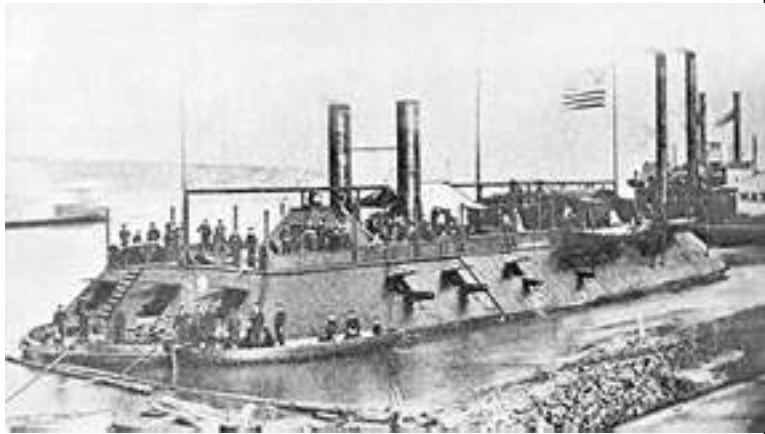
Dick Crews



Two of my relatives are buried in Andersonville. One, William Crews is incorrectly marked as Y. Crews, 7th Tennessee Cavalry (Union). Why the "Y;" we do not know as his name is William. Atwater must have made a mistake. The other is Ephraim M. Crews, 5th Indiana Cavalry, which is correct.

The U.S.S. *Cairo*

The U.S.S. *Cairo* was one of seven ironclad gunboats named in honor of towns along the upper Mississippi and Ohio rivers. These powerful ironclads were formidable vessels, each mounting thirteen big guns (cannon). On them rested in large part, Northern hopes to regain control of the lower Mississippi River and split the Confederacy in two.



Civil War image of the USS *Cairo*

The "city class" gunboats were designed by Samuel M. Pook and built by river engineer James B. Eads. *Cairo* was constructed at Mound City, Illinois, and commissioned in January 1862. The *Cairo* was destined to see only limited action in the engagement at Plum Point in May and in the battle of Memphis in June. Her most significant action came six months later when she kept a rendezvous with destiny.



The USS *Cairo* today

The *Cairo's* skipper, Lt. Commander Thomas O. Selfridge, Jr., was rash and ambitious, a stern disciplinarian, but an aggressive and promising young officer. On the cold morning of December 12, 1862, Selfridge led a small flotilla up the Yazoo River, north of Vicksburg, to destroy Confederate batteries and clear the channel of torpedoes (underwater mines). As the *Cairo* reached a point seven miles north of Vicksburg the flotilla came under fire and Selfridge ordered the guns to ready. As the gunboat turned towards shore disaster struck. *Cairo* was rocked by two explosions in quick succession which tore gaping holes in the ship's hull. Within twelve minutes the ironclad sank into six (6) fathoms (36 feet) of water without any loss of life. *Cairo* became the first ship in history to be sunk by an electrically detonated torpedo.

Taken from the National Park Service website.

NEXT MONTH THE FIGHTING MCCOOKS

BARBARA WHALEN