

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

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CCWRT Officers 2014/2015

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President's Message for January 2015 Charger

What Best Instructs Us?

The answer to the question above is biography according to the great 18th century English writer Samuel Johnson. We here at the Roundtable certainly go for biographies in our lecture series as the Civil War seems to have an endless parade of interesting characters caught up in the crucible of war. Now that Civil War biographies are no longer restricted to “great men” we have an even wider and richer universe to explore with the lives of “ordinary” men and women.

Of course, biographies can range from hero worship to debunking. And they sometimes serve contemporary purposes more than historical accuracy. A good example is what James McPherson has called “The Lost Cause Textbook Crusade” begun in the late 19th century in which Confederates could only be portrayed as doomed heroes fighting gallantly for nobles causes having nothing to do with slavery. Robert E. Lee was apotheosis of this quest, but even Jefferson Davis, who was widely despised in the South at the end of the war, lived long enough to see himself figuratively placed on a pedestal (but not long enough to see his carved image along with that of Lee and Stonewall Jackson on Stone Mountain, Georgia).

Without the deep need to rationalize defeat and devastation, the North produced less extensive hagiography with some exceptions, most notably the martyred Abraham Lincoln. When considering the literally thousands of books written about Lincoln, it helps to have a grasp of the original magnum opus: the 10 volume, 1.2 million word biography of Lincoln written by his two secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay. At last month's Roundtable a new book on this topic, *Lincoln's Boys* by Joshua Zeitz, was expertly discussed by our very own Dan Zeiser. Although the original biography by Nicolay and Hay was not extensively read, it was highly influential as it set the agenda and even the template for future Lincoln biographers.

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Coming soon at the Roundtable are more biographical discussions including John Fazio's talk on John Wilkes Booth, William Vodrey's on US Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells and Anthony Gibbs' recreation of the archetypical black Civil War soldier.

Even if our topic is not biographical, you can always be "well-instructed" by attending our Roundtable session the second Wednesday of each month. Share the wealth and bring a guest!

Patrick Bray

The Confederate Battle Flag, Personal License Plates, and Litigation

By Dennis Keating

In Tony Horowitz's *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Random House, 1998), he devotes a chapter entitled "Dying for Dixie" to the killing of a neo-Confederate in Kentucky devoted to the Confederate flag by a black teen-ager and the antipathy of African-Americans to Confederate symbols that defended slavery. In contrast, many Southerners regard the flag as a symbol of Southern patriotism and reject attempts to ban it from public places. The definitive history of the Confederate battle flag and the contemporary controversies over its display is *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Harvard University Press, 2005) by John Coski, Library Director of the Museum of the Confederacy.

Perhaps the best known controversy was the flying of the flag over the state capital of South Carolina, the birth place of the Confederacy, beginning in 1961. The NAACP mounted a campaign in 1987 to remove the battle flag from the capital domes of Alabama and South Carolina and from the state flags of Georgia and Alabama. Corsi recounts these political and legal battles in a chapter entitled "What We Stood For, Will Stand For, and Will Fight For". The South Carolina controversy resulted in an NAACP-declared national tourism boycott in 1999 and it became an issue in the 2008 presidential campaign. In 2000, South Carolina removed the flag from the dome and moved it to Confederate soldiers memorial on the capital grounds (an unsatisfactory decision to the NAACP).

Among other flag controversies has been the issue of personalized special auto license plates that feature the battle flag by Southern states. Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and North Carolina issue such license plates. On December 5, 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal over this issue from Texas: *Walker v. Texas Division, Sons of the Confederate Veterans (SCV)* (No. 14-144). The lead plaintiff is a professor of civil engineering at Texas A & M. The Texas SCV applied for the plate to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in 2009. After public hearings and several divided votes by a special committee that reviewed such requests, it was denied in 2009 and then again in 2011 by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Board (DMVB). The SCV then sued in the federal courts, claiming that the denial violated their First Amendment right to Free Speech. They also claimed racial discrimination in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment because Texas approved a special license plate proposed by the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum to honor the black soldiers who served in the 19th century frontier U.S. army.



Keating cont

In a 2013 decision, a federal district court judge ruled that under the First Amendment Texas' content-based regulation was reasonable. The SCV appealed to the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (only on the First Amendment claim). In a split (2-1) decision, it reversed the lower court opinion in favor of the SCV: 759 Federal Reporter, 3d 388 (July 14, 2014). The majority ruled that first the issuance of a license plate was private speech, not government speech, despite the state's regulation of specialty license plates. It then ruled that the denial was impermissible viewpoint discrimination violating the First Amendment rights of the members of the SCV despite the Board's implicitly crediting "the view that the Confederate flag is an inflammatory symbol of hate and oppression". Instead, it held that "By rejecting the plate because it was offensive, the Board discriminated against Texas SCV's view that the Confederate flag is a symbol of sacrifice, independence, and Southern heritage". In a lengthy opinion, the dissenter interpreted a 2009 U.S. Supreme Court precedent to conclude that this was in the realm of government speech, not subject to a First Amendment claim. Federal courts have divided on this issue. The Supreme Court is expected to hear the case this Spring.

"Beyond the Battlefield"

by **William F.B. Vodrey**

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The Ohio History Connection (the newly-rebranded Ohio Historical Society) on November 8 hosted a symposium on Ohio's home front during the Civil War. Nine historians, professional and amateur, explored various topics in three panel discussions.



First panel

Prof. Carol Lasser of my alma mater, Oberlin College, led off with a talk about Ohio soldiers' courtship-by-letters. Many of the young men were eager for a commitment from their sweethearts (or the young women they hoped would be their sweethearts) as they went off to war. Some of those courted were taken aback by the hurried ardency of the soldiers, but many agreed to marry their boys in blue. One of those who married the woman he wooed by mail was Giles Shurtleff, a U.S. Colored Troops officer after whom Shurtleff Cottage (now an Oberlin B&B) was named.

I then spoke about Ohio's Civil War governors, William Dennison, David Tod and John Brough. The first was a Whig-turned-Republican, the other two War Democrats. Each did well in office, strongly supporting the Lincoln Administration's military policies. In time, however, all three lost political support and were denied reelection, each worn down by the demands of civilian wartime leadership of the state.

Dr. David Bush of Heidelberg University, head of the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island (on the board of which CWRT members Kirk Hinman and I serve), discussed the POW camp for Confederate officers on Johnson's Island near Sandusky, and recent discoveries at the archeological dig there. Bush talked about binge drinking among the prisoners' guards while they were on leave (several dozen saloons in Sandusky were glad to take their money), and the recent reenactment of the historic 1864 base ball game between two teams of rebel prisoners.

Second panel

After lunch, Prof. George Vourlojianis of Lorain County Community College (president of our Roundtable in 1986-87) reported on the American "well-regulated militia," with its roots in English levies and the widespread fear of slave insurrections in the antebellum South. Blacks were long kept out of the Ohio militia; black troops would be raised when the need



was great, but then excluded again once war ended. President Harry S. Truman desegregated the U.S. military in 1948, but it was not until Gov. Frank Lausche's 1954 executive order that the Ohio Natl. Guard followed suit.

Prof. Kelly Selby of Walsh University talked about the USCT and Ohio's black regiments. There was early resistance to black units, as Vourlojianis noted, but support grew after early heavy casualties among white troops and recruiting became more difficult. The General Assembly passed a special tax to support the families of families of white troops in the field, but not those of blacks. Gov. Tod spoke to a regiment of black troops in June 1863, noting that blacks still lacked too many rights in Ohio, but urging the troops, "Go forth and fight for them!" Despite their battlefield heroism, equality would still be a long time in coming.

Rebecca Urban of the Peninsula Foundation discussed the Grand Army of the Republic, the most prominent (but not the only) social organization of Union veterans. The GAR initially had a grade system corresponding to wartime rank, but it was scrapped when members proved to be much more egalitarian - everyone, generals and privates alike, were simply known as "comrades." GAR badges were made from melted-down Confederate cannons (I hadn't known that - and wonder if there were enough captured cannons to go around!). No more than an estimated 30% of U.S. veterans ever actually joined the GAR. There were small and generally secretive chapters in the South. Membership peaked in 1890 at 409,000 nationwide, and 49,000 in Ohio, and then declined as the Civil War generation died off. Only six veterans were able to attend the last encampment in 1949. The last member, a Minnesotan named Albert Woolson, died in 1954. Even today, however, there is an 84-year-old woman in North Carolina who receives a pension for her father's service.

Third panel

Christie Weininger of the Hayes Presidential Center talked about Rutherford and Lucy Hayes's marriage and his legal and military careers. Hayes represented runaway slaves and murder suspects as a young lawyer and attended the hangings of several convicted clients, which turned him strongly against the death penalty. He successfully mounted one of the earliest insanity defenses in the U.S. for a young woman accused of several poisonings. As a green officer of the 23rd Ohio, Hayes wrote home, "What we don't know, we guess at, and you may be sure we guess quite a bit." Lucy visited him in the field often, nursed him - and others - in field hospitals when he was wounded, and brought their children to see him - one of whom, at age 18 months, died of dysentery. (Weininger said none of the couple's diaries or letters refer to the child's death with any sense of guilt for having brought the child into such an unhealthy setting). Hayes became beloved by his men, and stood up for them when they were chewed out by Maj. Gen. Jesse Reno shortly before South Mountain for taking fence logs for firewood. Hayes retorted, "I hope you're as tough on the rebels as you are on my men!" Hayes was reluctant to accept promotion, saying, "I would rather be one of the good colonels than the bad generals." He was long active in veterans' affairs and the GAR after the war.

Mark Holbrook of the Ohio History Connection spoke about the Ohio manufacturing, mining and agriculture during the Civil War. Ohio was the North's biggest producer of wool, corn and wheat, and had the most railroad track mileage in the entire country. There was a wartime boom in iron ore mining, with 69 blast furnaces in southeast Ohio alone. Coal mining also boomed. Several Ohio men made or got started on their vast fortunes in the war, including John D. Rockefeller, Orlando Scott of later seed and lawncare fame, and William Procter and John Gamble, who sold vast quantities of soap and candles to the War Department.

The last speaker of the day, Prof. Stacey Robertson of Bradley University, discussed American slavery, its abolition and aftermath. Convict labor and sharecropping became postwar forms of virtual slavery under Jim Crow. She also talked quite a bit about modern-day slavery and human trafficking, and the need to be aware of and fight against it, as she's doing through the group Historians Against Slavery. "We need a latter-day 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" she said. The Food Empowerment Project explores the link between our love of chocolate and slavery today, and Slaveryfootprint.org estimates how many enslaved people it takes to support a modern Western lifestyle. She quoted the great British abolitionist William Wilberforce: "You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know."

A MONUMENT TO SERVICE: THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' MONUMENT BY TIM DALEY AND RICHARD T. PRASSE

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument commemorates in stone, bronze and glass the service of those enlisted and appointed from Cuyahoga County during the Civil War. Their names are captured in marble inside the Monument's Memorial Tablet Room, etched alongside those with whom they served during the national struggle.



The story of the Monument's creation was also a struggle. The idea to erect a monument was first proposed by William Gleason in October 1879 to the Soldiers and Sailors Society in Cleveland. Gleason with two others were charged to test the idea the following week at a reunion of Union Veterans. The project was approved with a committee appointed to seek funding support from the State of Ohio. Their advocacy resulted in eight different legislative acts by 1894 in support of the construction of the Monument.

With funding provided for, a Union Army Veteran, Levi Scofield, was selected to develop the plan. Scofield had served in the war as an officer in the 103rd O.V.I., fighting in the Western Theatre. Returning to Cleveland after the war, he became an architect, responsible for the design of large public works such as the Ohio State Penitentiary, the Ridges Institution in Athens, Ohio and the Mansfield Reformatory (made famous more recently as the prison in the *Shawshank Redemption*).

For this project, Scofield worked for expenses, never charging a fee for his services. However, local objections slowed down the plan. Returning to the Ohio General Assembly, the committee was replaced in 1888 by an appointed Monument Commission which today remains the body responsible for the use and control of the Monument and the southeast quadrant of Public Square in Cleveland. The battle for approval and construction wound its way to the Ohio Supreme Court which approved the General Assembly's power to delegate the authority to the Monument Commission. A later attack in Federal Court also resulted in victory for the veterans and the Monument. The more complete story on the Monument's construction and labor pains has been told by Bill Stark in the Ohio Historical Society's *Timeline* in February 2003 under "Legal Maneuvers." Reprints are available at the Monument

Once the legal battles were won, the site preparation and construction began in earnest with the removal of the Oliver Hazard Perry statue in December 1892. The Monument was formally dedicated on July 4, 1894 with veterans (6,000 marched in the accompanying parade), dignitaries galore, clergy, choirs and bands.

One hundred and twenty years later, those veterans would recognize their Monument honoring their service to the Nation and their principles. The interior has been renovated to recapture the vibrant colors now accented by museum-quality lighting. The marble tablets and life size bronze reliefs have been cleaned and returned to their original colors. The lighting has been updated to highlight the surrounding busts. The project, led by the then Monument Commission President Neil Evans, was supported by Cuyahoga County, the State of Ohio, and a long list of foundations, organizations, and individuals. Former County Architect Berj Shakarian (now a member of the Monument Commission) recalls: "Scofield's original idea for the Monument was that it have a lot of color and ornamentation. . . . Here was a place that was meant to celebrate everyone in the county who had served in the Union, not just those who had died. We understand this to be a different kind of memorial, one that commemorates life and color."



The Monument itself, beyond the Memorial Room, is an important representation of the late-Victoria era with textured stone and masonry designed with symmetry and decorated with military symbols instead of classical motifs. The exterior honors the Navy, Artillery, Infantry, and Cavalry service branches with its four main bronze statuary groupings surrounding the Monument on the south, east, north and west, respectively. The stained glass windows on each side incorporate the arms and accoutrements of those four groupings and are visible from inside and out.

However, the Monument does not stand alone. Instead, it is set apart by its lower Court of Honor encircled and decorated by its gardens with plantings of medals of service, corps badges and organizational shields. These both continue the story of service and separate the Monument from the day-to-day life of Public Square.

Today, as when opened 120 years ago; the Monument is in the center of the City but separated forever by its purpose of honor, meaning and reflection on service of 9,000 veterans from our County. As we move forward with the redesign and updating of Public Square, the Monument Commission has encouraged many changes to the design to maintain the Monument's special place. It's Court of Honor and gardens will be redesigned and renovated, its quadrant will flow within the new design, but its legal separation will be maintained al-



lowing for the purpose of the Monument to be continued through as yet unknown renovations sought by future leaders of our City and County. This Monument to service by its generation is designed to be here for the future to remember in perpetuity.

Mr. Daley is the Executive Director and Mr. Prasse serves as President of the Monument Commission



Remember: Our Next Meeting

Jan. 14th—The Annual Dick Crews Debate

Who was the best corps. commander in the Civil War (excluding Jackson)?

Debaters:

Lisa Kempfer— Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest

Syd Ooverall— Gen. David S. Stanley

Brian Kowell— Gen. John B. Gordon

Jon Thompson— Gen. George H. Thomas

Dan Ursu—Gen. John Reynolds

Moderator— William F. B. Vodrey

Brief/Non-Scholarly Biographies of our Debate Generals

David Stanley (1828-1902) Union

Campaigns/Battles: Upper Mississippi, Corinth, Stones River, Franklin.

Medal of Honor Winner. Later explored the Yellowstone River.

Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821-1877) Confederate

Campaigns/Battles: Kentucky, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Fort Pillow, Chickamauga, Alabama, Brice's Crossroads.

Later first Grand Wizard of the Klu Klux Klan. Remains controversial. Considered by Shelby Foote to be a genius.

John B. Gordon (1832-1904) Confederate

Campaigns/Battles: 1st Bull Run, Seven Days, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spotsylvania CH, Opequon, Cedar Creek, Petersburg, Appomattox.

Later US Senator from and Governor of Georgia. Part of Gordon/Barlow story of "reconciled brothers."

George H. Thomas (1816-1870) Union

Campaigns/Battles: Mill Springs, Perryville, Corinth, Stones River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Franklin-Nashville. Highly regarded by Bruce Catton and Carl Sandburg. "The Rock of Chickamauga."

John Reynolds (1820-1863) Union

Campaigns/Battles: Seven Days, 2nd Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg. Considered by Shelby Foote, "the best general in the army."

Judson Manor 1890 East 107th St. // Cocktails: 6pm Dinner 6:30pm

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