

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

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President's Message

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable September, 2014

This September the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable (CCWRT) will hold its 507th meeting. Our speakers for 2014-2015 are mostly "home grown", that is, arising from our membership. Because our bench is deep we should expect our 58th consecutive season to be yet again a winning one.

On September 10 our first speaker, Gene Schmiel, will present "Jacob Dolson Cox, Ohio Citizen-General" which will set the stage perfectly for our field trip to Franklin, Tennessee September 18-21. In his book (available for purchase at the meeting!) Mr. Schmiel asserts--and I agree--that General Cox is the unsung hero of the Battle of Franklin. Mr. Schmiel, a Cleveland native, assures me that it's not just Buckeye pride that backs up this claim. Come, bring a friend, and decide for yourself!

Speaking of the field trip to Franklin later this month, it is almost *but not quite* too late to join us. Please contact me ASAP at PBray360@aol.com or by phone at 216-407-7878. If there is any way, we will make room for you on "the best thing we do!" As I have often—perhaps too often-- said, Franklin is my hometown. I have good reasons to believe that this year we Ohioans will get a friendlier reception than that of 150 years ago. Join us!

Patrick Bray

Jacob Dolson Cox

As Eugene Schmiel concludes in his biography of Jacob Dolson Cox, he was a Renaissance Man in the Gilded Age. Schmiel recounts his many pursuits as a Citizen-General. These include his life as a lawyer, politician, corporate executive, educator, author, and Civil War general.

Born in Montreal, Canada, Cox entered Oberlin College in 1847 and married the daughter of its president two years later. He then dropped out of its Theological Seminary to first become superintendent of Warren's public schools and then a lawyer. He became a founder of Ohio's Republican party. In his life he would interact with many of those notable Ohioans prominent in the Civil War – among them Chase, Garfield, Grant, Hayes, McClellan, Rosecrans, Sherman, and Stanton and Ohio's wartime governors. In 1859 he was elected to the Ohio legislature.

With the outbreak of the Civil War George McClellan put Cox in charge of training volunteers at Camp Dennison. Cox soon followed McClellan to West Virginia in the successful campaign to secure its secession from Confederate Virginia. Cox enjoyed his first military successes there. In September, 1862, he would rise to Union military prominence when at South Mountain he succeeded a mortally wounded Jessie Reno as commander of the Ninth Corps of McClellan's Army of the Potomac. He then played an important role at Antietam commanding that corps at the battle for Burnside Bridge and the failed attempt to destroy Lee's army. After the battle, he became the target of criticism by General Hugh Ewing of the prominent Ohio Republican Ewing clan for his actions at Antietam.

He then was sent back to West Virginia and then to Ohio with Burnside after the latter's disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg. He briefly was made commander of the 23rd Corps, only to be replaced by John Schofield under whom he would serve as a division commander in Sherman's 1864 Atlanta campaign. Cox distinguished himself by taking the Macon railroad, forcing John Bell Hood to abandon the city.

He then fought his most well known battle as Schofield's appointed defender of Franklin against Hood's unexpected assault on November 30, 1864. While successful, he became embroiled in a long lasting dispute with fellow Ohioan Emerson Opdycke over the primary credit for repelling the

bloody attack. Following the Battle of Nashville, Cox was sent to North Carolina to join Sherman's war—ending Carolina campaign.

Cox's postwar life included several different phases. In 1865 he was elected governor of Ohio after publishing his controversial Oberlin letter advocating internal colonization of the freed slaves but opposing their being granted suffrage. After a short stint as a lawyer in Cincinnati, Grant appointed Cox Secretary of the Interior but Cox soon resigned, largely because of his conflict over civil service reform with Grant's administration. His return to Cincinnati was short lived as he moved to Toledo to become head of a railroad. In 1877, he left that post for a seat in Congress after Hayes' disputed election as President. Again disillusioned with Republican opposition to civil service reform, he served only one term. He returned to Cincinnati to become dean of the University of Cincinnati's Law School (and to later also serve as its President). He left the university in 1897 and he and his wife returned to Oberlin to retire.

Over this post-political period Cox became a prolific historian, writing several books, his version of the battle of Franklin, articles and reviews of many of the memoirs of other Civil War generals. He finished his own war time memoir but died in 1900 before it was published.

Dennis Keating

THE CASE FOR THE UNION

by

William Tecumseh Sherman

Following is a letter written by General William Tecumseh Sherman, Commander of the Western Theater of the War, to James M. Calhoun, Mayor, and E. E. Rawson and S. C. Wells, representing the City Council, of Atlanta, in reply to their petition to revoke his orders for the civilian population to evacuate the city. Italics are mine. Commentary is also mine.

John C. Fazio

Gentleman: I have your letter of the 11th, in the nature of a petition to revoke my orders removing all the inhabitants from

statements of distress that will be occasioned, and yet shall not revoke my orders, because they were not designed to meet the humanities of the cause, but to prepare for the future struggles in which millions of good people outside of Atlanta have a deep interest. We must have *peace*, not only at Atlanta, but in all America. To secure this, we must stop the war that now desolates our once happy and favored country. To stop war, we must defeat the rebel armies which are arrayed against the laws and Constitution that all must respect and obey. To defeat those armies, we must prepare the way to reach them in their recesses provided with the arms and instruments which enable us to accomplish our purpose. Now, I know the vindictive nature of our enemy, that we may have many years of military operations from this quarter; and, therefore, deem it wise and prudent to prepare in time. The use of Atlanta for warlike purposes is inconsistent with its character as a home for families. There will be no manufacturers, commerce, or agriculture here, for the maintenance of families, and sooner or later want will compel the inhabitants to go. Why not *go now*, when all the arrangements are completed for the transfer, instead of waiting till the plunging shot of contending armies will renew the scenes of the past month? Of course, I do not apprehend any such things at this moment, but you do not suppose this army will be here until the war is over. I cannot discuss this subject with you fairly, because I cannot impart to you what we propose to do, but I assert that our military plans make it necessary for the inhabitants to go away, and I can only renew my offer of services to make their exodus in any direction as easy and comfortable as possible.

You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty,* and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices to-day than any of you to secure peace. *But you cannot have peace and a division of our country. If the United States submits to a division now, it will not stop, but will go on until we reap the fate of Mexico, which is eternal war.** The United States does and must assert its authority, wherever it once had power; for, if it relaxes one bit to pressure, it is gone, and I believe that such is the national feeling. This feeling assumes various shapes, but always comes back to that of Union. Once admit the Union, once more acknowledge the authority of the national Government, and, instead of devoting your houses and streets and roads to the*

to the dread uses of war, I and this army become at once your protectors and supporters, shielding you from danger, let it come from what quarter it may. I know that a few individuals cannot resist a torrent of error and passion, such as swept the South into rebellion, but you can point out, so that we may know those who desire a government, and those who insist on war and its desolation.

You might as well appeal against the thunder-storm as against these terrible hardships of war. They are inevitable, and the only way the people of Atlanta can hope once more to live in peace and quiet at home, is to stop the war, which can only be done by admitting that it began in error and is perpetuated in pride.

We don't want your Negroes, or your horses, or your lands, or anything you have, but we do want and will have a just obedience to the laws of the United States. That we will have, and if it involved the destruction of your improvements, we cannot help it.

You have heretofore read public sentiment in your newspapers, that live by falsehood and excitement; and the quicker you seek for truth in other quarters, the better. *I repeat then that, by the original compact of government, the United States had certain rights in Georgia, which have never been relinquished and never will be; that the South began the war by seizing forts, arsenals, mints, custom-houses, etc., etc., long before Mr. Lincoln was installed, and before the South had one jot or tittle of provocation.* I myself have seen in Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi, hundreds and thousands of women and children fleeing from your armies and desperadoes, hungry and with bleeding feet. In Memphis, Vicksburg, and Mississippi, we fed thousands and thousands of the families of rebel soldiers left on our hands, and whom we could not see starve. Now that war comes to you, you feel very different. You deprecate its horrors, but did not feel them when you sent car-loads of soldiers and ammunition, and molded shells and shot, to carry war into Kentucky and Tennessee, to desolate the homes of hundreds and thousands of good people who only asked to live in peace at their old homes, and under the Government of their inheritance. But these comparisons are idle. I want peace, and believe it can only be reached through union and war, and I will

will ever conduct war with a view to perfect an early success.

*But, my dear sirs, when peace does come, you may call on me for anything. Then will I share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter.****

Now you must go, and take with you the old and feeble, feed and nurse them, and build for them, in more quiet places, proper habitations to shield them against the weather until the mad passions of men cool down, and allow the Union and peace once more to settle over your old homes in Atlanta. Yours in haste.

W.T. Sherman, *Major-General commanding*

* On another occasion, he was not quite so civil, characterizing it, rather, as "hell".

** Perhaps better stated as the "Balkanization" of the continent, where political division follows political division in the wake of each factional or regional dispute.

*** Following the war, Sherman's erstwhile antagonist in the field and in their correspondence, General John Bell Hood, visited Sherman's home in Lancaster, Ohio. While there, he asked for Sherman's help in getting his memoirs published. Sherman, of course, said he would do all he could, and did.

Base Ball on Johnson's Island

by William Vodrey

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On August 27, 1864, Confederate prisoners played a base ball (as it used to be spelled) game on Johnson's Island near Sandusky, Ohio, on the grounds of the U.S. Army prison camp there. The Confederate and the Southern base ball clubs took to the field, and when all was said and done, the Southern team won by a score of 19-11.

On August 24, 2014, a century and a half later almost to the day, vintage base ball players reenacted the game on Johnson's Island. Members of the Great Black Swamp Frogs played the

the Confederate club, all in red shirts, while the Ohio Village Muffins, in white, portrayed the Southern team. Members of the Army of the Ohio, a Civil War reenactment group including members from the 6th, 30th and 41st Ohio, served as prison guards (and, for those who showed up in gray or butternut, prisoner/spectators).

Base ball historian John Husman spoke to the crowd before the game, noting that the 1864 game is thought to be the first organized base ball game ever played in Ohio. Many of the prisoners were members of antebellum base ball clubs in New Orleans. Base ball lingo was different in 1864; players were "ballists," a batter was a "striker," an error was a "muff" (hence the Ohio Village team's name), a run was an "ace," and you encouraged a striker to run fast by shouting, "Leg it!" And of course, we all shouted "Huzzah!" and not "Hooray!"



The rules were different back then, too. The umpire stood to one side and back just a bit from home plate ("home base"), not right behind the catcher. He would call foul balls immediately, but not fair ones (hits were presumed fair unless he said otherwise). He also called strikes only after warning a striker who repeatedly let good pitches go by, but would not call balls. A striker would be out after three called or swinging strikes. Ballists in the field could catch a ball in the air or - big difference! - after a single bounce to put the striker out. All pitches were underhand. Ballists wore no gloves. (I had the chance to hold one of the balls,

which was a little larger and a little squishier than a modern baseball; the wife of the ballists told me that the balls are hand-stitched and cost \$40 apiece

The 2014 game proceeded with high energy and with everyone in good spirits, as the guards in blue kept a watchful eye around the edge of the ball field



("playground"). The Confederates batted their way into an early lead over the Southerners and never yielded it. As happened back in the 1860s, players loudly made bets with each other as to this or that ballist getting on base or scoring an ace. Not all of the action was on the playground, either. Ballists occasionally tried to escape, but only one - an outfielder from the Southern team - got away from his guards for long. He was captured out in the scrub brush beyond left field after just a few minutes, and was marched back by three guards. The guards also intercepted a young woman in hoop skirts who was apparently trying to kiss her prisoner beaux. There was no scoreboard, but the score was announced from time to time - once, a member of the Southern team declared mournfully, "The Confederates have scored too many runs to count, and the Southerners, too few to admit." The final score was Confederates 23, Southerners 9, so history did not quite repeat itself. Fortunately, I had no money riding on the Southerners!

About 3,000 people are reported to have watched the 1864 game. It was a smaller but still appreciative crowd of 200-some fans - including, I was glad to see, CWRT members Jean Rhodes and Kirk Hinman - who enjoyed the 2014 game under clear skies and brisk Lake Erie breezes.

The event was sponsored by the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island, on the board of which Kirk and I have the honor to serve. For more information: <http://johnsonsisland.heidelberg.edu/>

REMEMBER!

Our next meeting: Wednesday, September 10, 2014

Judson Manor

1890 East 107th St.

Cocktails: 6:00pm

Dinner: 6:30 pm
