

# THE COURIER

## Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



**Date: January 13<sup>th</sup> 2009 Meeting # 96**

**Place: Dino's Restaurant I90 & Rte. 306 exit Mentor, Ohio**

**Canteen: 6PM Rations: 7PM**

**Speaker: Mike Sears**

**Topic: Reconstruction and its Impact on the Nation**

**1865-----1877**

**Reservations required Please call Steve Abbey**

**Phone 440 255 8375 e-Mail: [abbeysr@yahoo.com](mailto:abbeysr@yahoo.com)**

**Mike Sears** will be ushering in the New Year at the NEOCWRT on Tuesday January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 with a special talk entitled **“Reconstruction and its Impact on the Nation, 1865-1877.”** Although Mike retired from his marketing and supply management position at General Electric, he still lives an active life devoting much of his time to the St. Vincent de Paul project at St. John Vianney's Church in Mentor, Ohio. Mr. Sears is a past president of the NEOCWRT and has been chairman of a number of Fall Field Trips. He is a graduate of Western Kentucky University and served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He reached the rank of captain. Mike Sears is an avid reader of history and has spent many hours researching his family history. Two of his great uncles fought for the South in the War of Northern Aggression. Mike and his wife Donna have two children: Michelle and Michael P.

Our January speaker will examine the aftermath of the American Civil War and its impact on both the people of the South and the North. He will further analyze the impact of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the Federal government's efforts to enforce them. The assassination of President Lincoln only served to intensify the Radical Republicans' desire to punish the South with harsh measures of reconstruction. Many historians see the election of Barak Obama as evidence that all Americans are finally free and equal not just by Federal law, but also in the minds and hearts of its citizens. Has Reconstruction finally ended?

**CIVIL WAR MINUTES 1/13/09: Franco M. Sperrazzo, Special Events Coordinator**

**Dale Fellows** entertained 30 members and 15 guests on a special Ladies night to coincide with our annual holiday season gathering on December 9, 2008. **Dale's** topic was the American Constitution of 1787. Following the Revolutionary War the southern states argued for their individual rights. The Founding Fathers recognized the cultural and economic differences between North and South and structured the articles of the Constitution to help achieve their identity. In 1787, the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia. Delegates representing the commercial interest of the North clashed on a number of issues with the delegates representing the planter interest of the South. The regulation of commerce and the slave trade were at the forefront. **Dale** energized his talk by offering a media slide show with the assistance of his wife **Nancy**. Judging by the ten or so questions that his talk provoked, **Dale** may be asked to give another presentation sooner than he thinks. Great job fellow member!

The executive committee is meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup>, to discuss plans and activities for 2009. We encourage our members to contact President **Arlan Byrne** for fun raising ideas; **Joe Tirpak** Speaker/ Program Director for presentations; **John Sandy** News letter Editor for articles and **Franco** for planning special events to be arranged. It is not too early to think about what our group will explore in spring 2009 for our one day excursion. Your ideas are welcomed and appreciated. One idea I would like to see brought back is to have a presentation on either the American Revolution as **Dale** just did or the two World Wars and Korean War. I recently visited a veteran of WWII at the Cleveland Clinic who served and fought in the Bastogne Campaign. His stories were fascinating to me and could be insightful for our group.

We want to extend a special get well soon wish to **John Krouse** who is recovering from a recent operation. We all enjoyed his article in the Courier and look forward to future efforts.

Remember our modest dues increase of \$55.00 covering our 10 scheduled months of 2009. Either mail to **Bill Wilson**, Treasurer, at 9772 Willow Lane, Concord Ohio, 44060, or bring a check at our January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. Due to illness our February program will feature **George Grim**. He will discuss "Retreat of the Confederate Government April – May 1865". We look forward to our Youngstown representation, and wish **George** the best of health and a speedy recovery from his unexpected set back. In January, member **J. Michael Sears** will flip flop to discuss the complex matter of Civil War reconstruction. **Mike** did an excellent job on this subject in 2005 at the Borders Book Club. I am confident he will demonstrate his organizational skills for this presentation. Arguably the best book on this period may be "A Short History of Reconstruction 1863-1877" by author **Eric Foner**.

Finally and sadly **Carol Baucher** wife of 54 years to founder **Bob Baucher** passed away during the holidays after a long illness. **Carol** was instrumental in assisting over 2000 Mentor High school students preparing for College and financial aid. A meaningful eulogy profiling **Carol's** life was offered in the Lake County News Herald the weekend of December 26 and 27<sup>th</sup>. Our thoughts and prayers are with **Bob** and his family during this difficult time. Contributions may be made in **Carol's** memory to the Hospice of the Western Reserve. **Captain Franco!**

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**The Courier is the monthly newsletter of the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table**

**John Sandy.....Editor**

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## SCOTT DORSEY'S BOUNTY

By Theodore J. Karle

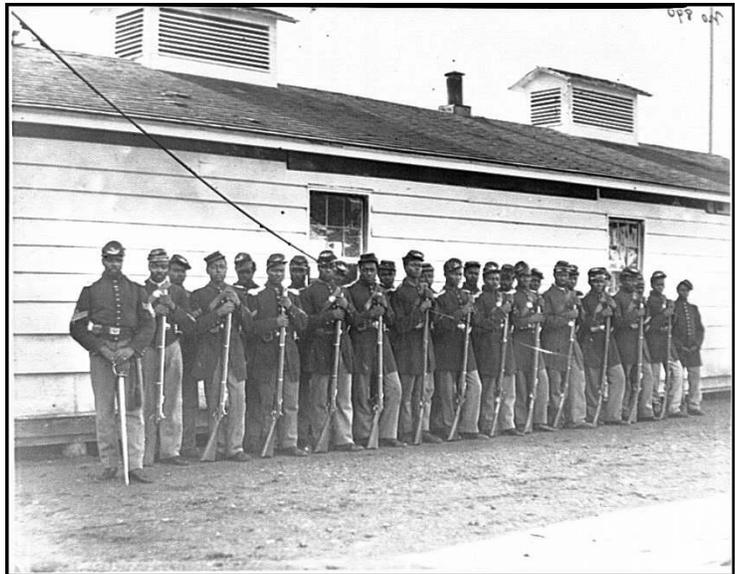
The inauguration of Barack Obama, our first bi-racial President, is an opportunity to relate an older, less conspicuous story about the pursuit of racial justice in America. The stakes in this Civil War drama involve issues of advancement, death, and compensation.

Scott Dorsey was a colored Union soldier who fought in our great national conflict. Other participants in his story were his mother, Milky and Robert Davey of Somerset County, Maryland. Their accounts were cobbled from documents that survived apart for more than a century. The story of the quest for his bounty shows the impact of the War upon the slave and the slave owner. When combined with Obama's achievement, it demonstrates the strides America has made towards achieving its ideals.

In July of 1866, Milky Dorsey, a widow aged 56, hired a Baltimore attorney to assist her in executing an affidavit attesting that she was the mother of Scott Dorsey who had died childless while serving in the Army. As Scott's heir, she believed that she was entitled to apply for the unpaid bounty due to him from Maryland. Two individuals attested to her veracity by signing that they had known her for the past 30 years. The document was notarized and filed with Maryland's Attorney General. That office soon affixed to the form a separate notation that Scott Dorsey was "...missing in action July 30<sup>th</sup> 1864 at Petersburg, Va."

What is known of Dorsey's mother, the widow Milky? Like our new President, she had a name that Americans would find unusual. An "Alex Haleyest" type of name from our Black community not unlike "Chicken George" from "Roots". Was she called Milky because she been fond of milk as an infant? Was she of light complexion? Worked as a milkmaid or a wet nurse? Her name might have had no special meaning, just an unusual name by today's standards. What is known from the document is that she could not sign it. She marked her "Request for Bounty" form with an "X" indicating her illiteracy.

The witnesses that attested to the mother's statements regarding her missing son must have been friends or neighbors, or perhaps, her former owner. She had been a slave. The witnesses stated



*(The photograph above left is of the District of Columbia Company E. 4<sup>th</sup> US Colored Infantry. Library of Congress)*

that they knew her for 30 years, so it can be assumed they were aware of her loss. By their kindness, they endeavored to help an illiterate black woman qualify for a benefit due her under the law. Altruistic, as well as political motivations, assisted citizens registering to vote in our recent election.

Scott Dorsey's home state of Maryland was a slave-holding border state with a considerable population of pro-slavery advocates. At the start of the War, the Lincoln Administration coerced the State into remaining loyal to the Union. The Administration always handled border state politics very carefully. In March of 1864, Congress passed a law that paid a \$300 bounty to loyal owners of slaves (primarily in Border States) who were drafted or had

volunteered for United States service. By joining the U.S. Army, the slave would be free; this is simply just. Scott Dorsey, a slave, that same month took advantage of the new law; he enlisted in the 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment of U.S. Colored Volunteers being

raised in Baltimore. His enlistment was to gain freedom, but it was fraught with the risks inherent in military service during an on-going war as well as potential Confederate retribution for his being Black.

At stake was his life for his personal freedom and an opportunity to advance the cause of others of his race. Dorsey accepted the hazards in exchange for his emancipation.

Barack Obama accepted career risk by striving for his party's nomination. While not a life and death decision, it showed that he was correct in believing that the American system was ready to support him. He sought the top prize of the Presidency for himself. His success, he knew, although he is bi-racial, would also advance the Negro race in America in which he is identified.

Milky Dorsey's affidavit bears the troubling notation by Maryland's Attorney General, "Scott Dorsey...was missing in action July 30<sup>th</sup> 1864 at Petersburg, Va.". The notation indicates how quickly (within four months of muster) that the 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Regiment was in the field. The fighting at Petersburg had devolved into trench warfare. To break the stalemate, General Grant approved a plan whereby, Pennsylvania coal miners secretly tunneled and placed explosives under a Confederate bastion. Colored troops were to lead the assault following the explosion of the mine. The Union generals, unsure of the outcome and afraid of potential criticism should the plan fail, decided to depend upon white troops to lead the charge. Colored brigades, along with the 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment of U.S. Colored Volunteers were held in reserve. Upon the explosion of the mine, the white units advanced to become trapped in the crater left in the blasted and breached Confederate line. The Colored troops were sent forth to their aid, only to be mauled by the recovering Confederate forces. The day, known as the Battle of the Crater, was a fiasco for the Union forces. Five thousand Union casualties to 300 Confederate dead. General Grant called it "the saddest affair I have witnessed in this war...a stupendous failure."



*(Troops filling canteens at Fredericksburg, Va. Library of Congress photo)*

Scott Dorsey did not return from the assault upon the crater. A battle report commented he was "Missing in action, known to be badly wounded." His last thoughts might have been of his mother. His final resting-place within enemy lines was never known. He lies as an Unknown Soldier in an unmarked (probably mass) grave. The closest that Scott Dorsey and many of his comrades came to freedom was their four months of service in the 30<sup>th</sup> Regiment of US Colored Volunteers. Commentaries on the battle do note that the courage of the Colored troops served to advance the courage of their race.

The Union setback at the Battle of the Crater did not alter the outcome at Petersburg nor of the War. Scott Dorsey's life of limited opportunity demonstrated in 1864, as we know today, that liberty often comes at an unjust price. Dorsey rode the 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Regiment as a vehicle to freedom. His enlistment papers were his tickets to a new life. It is ironic that had he remained a slave until April of 1865, he would have been both alive and free along with his mother. Soon she would be an illiterate, elderly free black woman for the first time facing life on her own. Her son's unpaid bounty was the only thing he in death had unwittingly provided for her.

Service records at the National Archives divulge that Milky Dorsey was not alone in seeking benefits from her son's enlistment. Under the 1864 Federal law, his former owner was entitled to up to \$300 compensation for his slave enlisting in the 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Regiment. A Robert Davey of Somerset County, Maryland came forward with a signed affidavit titled "Claim for Compensation for Enlisted Slave". Davey swore that Scott Dorsey was his "slave for

life" from birth until his enlistment. As a result, he was entitled to compensation for the loss of his property through enlistment, distinct from Dorsey's loss of his own life. The law presented a method whereby the slave owner could be compensated for the loss of slaves before success of Union arms compelled emancipation. Davey may have insisted that Dorsey volunteer for service. To perfect his compensation claim, Davey submitted an "Oath of Allegiance to the U.S. Constitution" and another form called

"Evidence of Title" to Scott Dorsey. form demeaning human dignity to the status of a chattel once permitted by the Constitution. Davey's statements were attested to by two loyal citizens of Maryland and duly notarized.

Did Robert Davey's "Claim for Compensation of an Enlisted Slave" preclude Milky Dorsey from receiving her missing in action son's unpaid bounty? No, because these were different entitlements: hers under Maryland law (\$100) and Davey's under Federal law (\$300). Interestingly, more compensation was offered for the loss of a chattel, than for the enlistee facing the enemy. The Federal law states that the owner of the slave is entitled to bounty provided that the owner is loyal to the U.S. Government. Davey met the requirements and was undoubtedly compensated. Justice was served.

Justice was served again, when Milky received her son's unpaid Maryland bounty. The payment was, perhaps, the largest sum she ever had. It came at a terribly high price. Freedom is indeed a costly asset. It is not surprising that both Milky and Davey knew their rights and applied for the unpaid bounties. Human nature was not changed by the War. Justice was not served if mothers of 30th U.S. Colored troops went uncompensated for their losses out of ignorance of their rights?

The story of Scott Dorsey's bounty, gleaned from separated documents, shows the gritty aspects of race relations at the end of the Civil War. The changing institutions impacted the lives of those involved. Scott Dorsey was the loser in the drama. His mother and former owner took steps to gain their respective entitlements from a system that recognized some obligations to rectify injustice. Slowly, racial relations in America improved by such recognition. Small steps lead to larger leaps. The system is not perfect, the inauguration of the new President, once deemed impossibility, is evidence that sacrifices like those of Scott and Milky Dorsey did eventually contribute in some small measure to improving racial justice in this land of opportunity.

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### ***The Summer of 1787* by David O. Stewart Book Review by Tom Horvath**

If Dale Fellows' talk on the work and politics that went into the creation of our Constitution piqued your interest in the subject, you may want to pick up *The Summer of 1878* by David O. Stewart. At 347 pages, the book provides more information than is possible to relate in an hour-long talk. At the same time, it is short enough to provide a good introduction to what seems to be a very deep subject.

The volume begins by describing the problems created or ignored by the original Confederation of States and enumerates the steps that led to the Constitutional Convention. The author proceeds to explain deals and politics that went into the creation of the Constitution. He attempts to bring understanding to how enlightened men, some belonging to abolitionist societies, could agree to a document that extended and protected slave trade. Linked with that is the battle of smaller states to maintain some clout in the new government.

As the story progresses, Mr. Stewart also gives a brief background of key figures as they impact the process. This would have been extraneous had Washington, Franklin, and Madison been the key players, as common lore would have it. But as Dale Fellows pointed out, there were a number of other people who played very important roles, many of whom are relatively or completely unknown to our generation. Mr. Stewart describes all of the participants, famous, less famous, and unknown, with an even hand. Their strengths and faults are all examined, and we are left realizing that our government was created by talented, but mortal, men. The resulting story is all the more interesting, and the idiosyncrasies of our Constitution all the more understandable because of it.

Mr. Stewart completes the story with a brief history of ratification and the lives of the main characters following the convention. To round things out, the second appendix is the text of the Constitution. I probably have not read the entire Constitution since grade school and, for the first time, some of the euphemistic language, such as "other persons", carries much more meaning and emotion. It is worth reading.

On the negative side, the author's sentence structure, in a few instances, required a second reading. It interrupts what is otherwise a smooth flowing story. Nor does the author shrink from sprinkling his own opinions in with the text. An obvious example is the first appendix. In it, he takes a one-sided stance against the Electoral College. A more fair-minded author would at least enumerate the arguments on the other side. Finally, I was somehow left with the impression that there is much more to be known about the Constitutional Convention. There was a paucity of humorous incidents and comments, which could have added more humanity to the players (and made for a more enjoyable book). I find it difficult to believe there weren't more than were contained here. All in all, the book is a good follow-on to Dale Fellow's presentation. The book has an index. There are no footnotes, but a "Notes" section lists page-by-page references. The hardback edition retails for \$27.00, but a paperback version can be purchased new on Amazon for \$10.95. The Mentor Public Library has one copy and the Clevnet system has more than 30.

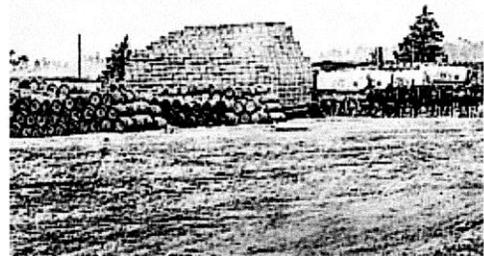
## UNION HARDTACK & CONFEDERATE JOHNNIE CAKE THE SOLDIER'S FOOD OF THE CIVIL WAR

COMPILED BY CARL DODARO

Civil War food kept the soldiers fed and not much else. Lets take a look at the diet that comprised the typical Civil War food ration.

There were several issues that affected the food that was supplied to the Civil War soldier. These included the organization of the Commissary Department - which was tasked with the acquisition and distribution of food to the soldiers in the field, the season which determined if fresh food was available or if it was to be preserved in some way and the ability of the food to stay good for long term storage and transportation.

Prior to the war, the concentration of Commissaries was in the North, so when the Civil War began, the North had a great advantage as they already had an existing Commissary Department that was already trained in how to acquire and transport food to soldiers in the field. Their job was to work with troop numbers and schedules and keep a constant supply of foods going to each area where troops were stationed so that soldiers could keep on fighting without worrying about where their next meal would be coming from. It took the Confederacy several years to develop a working Commissary so being a soldier in the South was more difficult. It required real dedication to be fighting when you didn't know when or where your next meal was coming from. Because of this lack of infrastructure, the South had to do a lot of foraging for food between battles until the supply lines were up and operational.



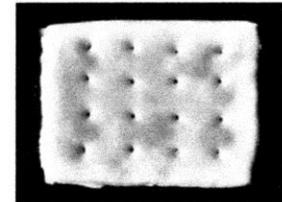
(This photograph shows what a temporary Union Commissary depot looked like during the war. Large wooden barrels containing salted meat, coffee, beans and sugar are stacked next to crates of hardtack. It took a great amount of food to feed the army even for one day.)

Civil War soldier food was typically very simple fare - often consisting of meat, coffee, sugar and hardtack - a type of dried biscuit. The meat was often salted or smoked while other items such as fruits and vegetables were dried or canned. They did not understand proper nutrition so often there was a lack of certain foods necessary for good health. Each side did what they could to provide the basics for the soldiers to survive. Because it was so difficult to store for any length of time, the food soldiers received during the Civil War was not very fancy and they did not get a great variety of items.

The daily allowance of food issued to soldiers was called rations. Everything was given out uncooked so the soldiers were left up to their own ingenuity to prepare meals. Small groups would often gather together to cook and share their rations and they called the group a "mess", referring to each other as "messmates". Others prided themselves in their individual taste and prepared their meals alone. If a march was imminent, the men would cook everything at once and store it in their haversack, a canvas bag made with a sling to hang over the shoulder. Haversacks had a inner cloth bag that could be removed and washed, though it did not prevent the bag from becoming a greasy, foul-smelling container after several weeks of use.

Union soldiers and Confederate soldiers typically had a different mix of rations. A Union soldier might have salt pork, fresh or salted beef, coffee, sugar, salt, vinegar, dried fruits and vegetables. And if they were in season, they might have fresh carrots, onions, turnips and potatoes. A Confederate soldier typically had bacon, corn meal, tea, sugar, molasses and the very occasional fresh vegetable. If a Confederate soldier needed a quick dish while on a march, bacon would be cooked in a frying pan with some water and corn meal added to make a thick, brown gravy similar in consistency to oatmeal. The soldiers called it "coosh" and though it doesn't sound too appetizing, it was a filling meal and easy to fix.

The other difference in the Civil War food between the Union and Confederate armies was the type of bread product they had available to them. Confederate soldiers had something called "Johnnie Cake" that they made in the field (see recipe below) while Union soldiers had hardtack (also see recipe below).



Hardtack is a thick cracker made of flour, water, salt and sometimes fat. When properly stored, it will last for years. Before the Civil War soldiers called it biscuit or hard bread, sailors referred to it as sea biscuit or pilot's bread, but to the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War it was known as hardtack, a name that stuck and spread to other units, including the Confederacy. Because it could be prepared cheaply and last so long, hardtack was the most convenient food for soldiers, explorers, pioneers or anyone else who needed to be able to pack light and move fast. While hardtack was furnished to the army by weight, the biscuits were doled out by number. In some units, a ration of hardtack was nine, while in others it was ten, but usually there was enough to go around because some soldiers refused to eat it. Although it was nutritious, soldiers complained that they could eat ten of them in a short time and still be hungry. But the most common complaint was that they were often so hard that they couldn't be bitten into, that it took a very strong blow to even break them. Another common problem with hardtack was when they were moldy or wet, as sometimes happened. Sometimes they became infested with maggots or weevils during storage, conditions that seldom afflicted the hardest hardtack. According to accounts, it was not uncommon for a soldier to find his coffee swimming with weevils after the hardtack was broken up in it, but they were easily skimmed off. Hardtack was eaten by itself, or crumbled into coffee, which seemed to be the most preferred way. Some soldiers soften them with water and fried the hardtack with some bacon grease or salted pork and this was called "skillygallee".

**CONFEDERATE JOHNNIE CAKE RECIPE** - 2 cups of cornmeal, 2/3 cup of milk, 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, 2 teaspoons baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon of salt. -- Mix ingredients together into a stiff batter and form eight biscuit-sized "dodgers". Bake on a lightly greased sheet at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes or until brown - **OR** - spoon the batter into hot cooking oil in a frying pan over a low flame. Remove the corn dodgers and let cool on a paper towel, spread with a little butter or molasses, and you have a real southern treat!

**UNION HARDTACK RECIPE** - 2 cups of flour, 1/2 to 3/4 cup of water, 1 tablespoon of vegetable fat (Crisco), 6 pinches of salt. -- Mix the ingredients together into a stiff batter, knead several times, and spread the dough out flat to a thickness of 1/2 inch on a non-greased cookie sheet. Bake for one-half an hour at 400 degrees. Remove from oven, cut dough into 3-inch squares, and punch four rows of holes, four holes per row into the dough. Turn dough over, return to oven and bake another one-half hour. Turn oven off and leave the door closed. Leave the hardtack in the oven until cooled. Remove and enjoy!

ALL THIS INFORMATION WAS FOUND ON THE INTERNET, WITH THE MOST COMMON CONNECTION BEING [WWW.NPS.GOV/ARCHIVE](http://WWW.NPS.GOV/ARCHIVE) SITE RUN BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## WHAT A YEAR IT WAS!

I hope everyone enjoyed 2008 as much as I did.

**January** began with a celebration of our club's tenth year of existence. Our founders revisited some of the events, trips, and people that brought us so far.

In **February** Dan Cudnick gave us an update on the state of medicine, surgery, and wound treatment of battle injuries during the Civil War. It made us all thankful that we are living in the twenty-first century.

The **March** program gave us all many laughs as 'Professor' Brain Kowell and his able 'sidekick' Peter Holman presented, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" on a Civil War theme.

Our own Ted Karle in **April** used a classic short film, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek" from a short story by Ambrose Bierce that had each of us thinking about mortality.

**May** was a busy month for NEOCWRT with a Ladies Night Dinner at Dino's II, a field trip with them to Fort LeBoeuf and Erie to tour the ship Niagara and the naval museum there.

Those who attended Arlan and Pat Byrne's summer picnic in **July** enjoyed wonderful food and fellowship. A demonstration provided by the members of the 51<sup>st</sup> Ohio Volunteers Infantry (51<sup>st</sup> O.V.I.) Co. B made the day a memorable one.

In **September** Mike Gorman our guide on our fall field trip to Richmond gave a talk on George B. McClellan that prepared us for the trip south. The Richmond trip, thanks to Brent and Sharon Morgan, was one of our best. The twenty or so members were joined by several local people who helped with tour and guide expenses.

Tom Horvath, in **October**, gave us an entertaining and Informative presentation with films and displays on the Anderson Raid (also known as The Great Locomotive Chase).

**November** saw Joe Tirpak and Norty London in 'costume' leading us in a discussion of how to view generals Grant and Lee in perspective, rather than in contrast. This was a true roundtable discussion and a model for future meetings.

Member Dale Fellows enlightened our members, wives and guests in **December**, discoursing on our Founding Fathers and how the question of slavery was constantly in their thoughts as they drew up our country's constitution.

### **All were wonderful meetings!**

My year serving as your president was a privilege. I would like to thank the Executive Committee and club members and all who contributed so much to making NEOCWRT the cohesive group it is. No one officer or member could go it alone. We can be proud that our club is truly a group effort with all contributing to its success. My grateful appreciation to each of you.

Sincerely,  
Bill Meissner