

Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



The 5th Annual Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table

Summer Picnic and Jamboree

Featuring: the 51st O.V.I. Reenactment Regiment and Band

Sunday July 12th 2009 Time: 2 pm until Dusk

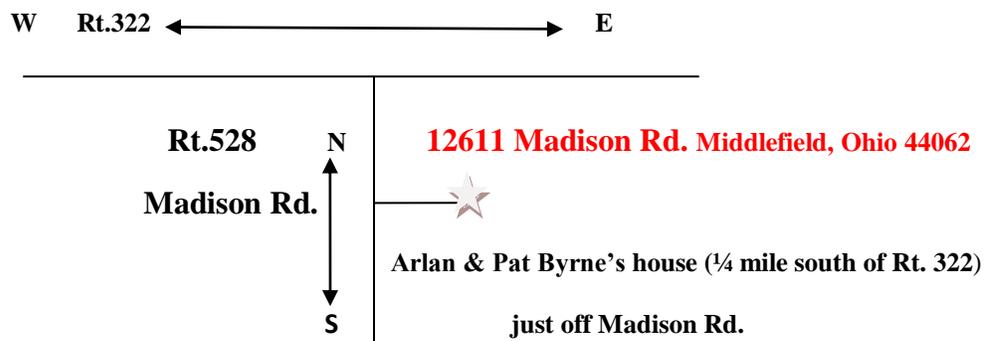
Where: 12611 Madison Road (Rt. 528) Middlefield, Ohio 44062

Reservations required Please call Steve Abbey

Phone 440 255 8375 e-Mail: abbeysr@yahoo.com



The NEOCWRT will gather to celebrate the summer of 2009 with our 5th annual picnic at the colonial plantation of **President Arlan and First Lady Pat Byrne on Sunday July 12, 2009.** The 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry will be returning to demonstrate the manual of arms and present a mock battle. In addition, we hope to add an authentic regimental band with period music and some not-so authentic sounds of the summer! We encourage everyone to join us for this unforgettable event. Please bring the following items: the entre that you will be having along with a side dish that you will be sharing with other members and their guests. The side dish may also be an appetizer and/or a desert.



CIVIL WAR MINUTES by Franco M. Sperrazzo Special Events Coordinator



Executive Committee meeting Tuesday June 9, 2009 at Dino's Restaurant



Thirty members and guests celebrated the 100th official meeting of the **NEOCWRT**. Past **President Bill Meissner** had the honor of doing a power point presentation on Union General George B. McClellan. **Bill** attempted to be objective in his report of the much maligned general. When teacher Meissner detailed 15 possible reasons for McClellan's failure as a field commander it generated divided reactions to his findings. Clearly, Editor **John Sandy** has researched McClellan in a more positive light and challenged "Ole Gunner" on his premise. While McClellan's troops were always proud to serve under him, Mr. Meissner's talk sparked a good and healthy round table debate that **General JET** stated is what we strive for. **Bill Meissner** performed admirably in his first ever **NEOCWRT** lecture.

Spring One Day Trip: We shared quality time on May 9th as our group journeyed to Canton, Ohio to visit the **National First Ladies Library & Museum**, Coordinated by Mary **Rhodes**. We dined at the **356th Fighter Group Restaurant** near the **Akron/Canton Airport**. Owner **Bob Scofield** and staff greeted us with great food, outstanding service and even a mug raffle won by **Mike Sears**. A tasteful atmosphere of military artifacts is an added touch to a place that if you have never experienced you should make a point to do so. The first ladies of our group enjoyed our discovery of the **MAPS (Military Airplane Preservation Society) museum** in a hanger at the airport. Our contact **Dennis Dickey** did a splendid job by assigning two docents and dividing up our troops for more one on one discussion. We had a Vietnam veteran in his sixties, and an eighty-nine year old WWII veteran. This facility thrives on the loyalty of a great staff of volunteers, and is worthy of a second visit. Perhaps one of their docents can make a future visit and speak to our club.

Executive Committee Meeting: We will convene June 2, 2009, in one of the smaller back rooms at **Dino's**. Plan to arrive between 6-6:10 pm. We will be seated by 6:15 to order diner. There is much business to discuss especially the Fall Field Trip.

Memorial Day May 25th: **Soldiers President Byrne, Terry Reynolds, Ted Karle** and **Franco Sperrazzo** represented the **NEOCWRT** at our 7th annual wreath ceremony at the **Willoughby Cemetery**. We honored 96 Union soldiers and 1 Confederate that served in the Civil War from Lake County, following the parade.

WHRS: Remember I have secured passes for free admission to the **Western Reserve Historical Society**. They have been great to work with, led by John **Grabowski** and **Ann Sindelar** when we bring authors and historians to visit. Call **Captain Franco** at 440-567-2414 or 440-442-4824 if you wish to use them.

Salute to General George G. Meade: Where have you gone Peter Holman? A club member since 1999, **Peter** and his wife **Lynn** have relocated to Bloem Fontein, South Africa. They will work with orphans and street kids developing Sunday school programs. **Peter** is also taking a pastoral program and will be their indefinitely. We pray for their safety and good health. **Peter** will be placed on our voluntary retired roster.

Fall Field Trip 2009: will commence on the confirmed dates Thursday Oct. 1st-Sunday Oct. 4th. **Founder Norton London** has been giving us updates on Richmond, and the outlying areas after the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. Try to send your \$100.00 deposit to **Mike Sears** this summer to show your intentions. On-site coordinator **Brent Morgan** will provide a complete program with guide **R.E.L. Krick**.

Summer Picnic: We have confirmed Sunday July 12th, for our 5th annual **NEOCWRT** picnic at **President Arlan & First Lady Patricia Byrne's** colonial farm. Again grills, charcoal and beverages are provided. Bring your main dish, meat, chicken, etc. and a side dish to share. Arrive at your leisure after 1:00pm to enjoy diner together. **Please call Steve Abby at 440 255 8375** to reserve your table at Pat and Arlan's summer gala!

Have a great summer, see you in September!

Captain Francis Sperrazzo

CHEATING DEATH ALONG THE NORTH ANNA by Norton London

Following Hancock's push across the Chesterfield Bridge, on May 24, the Fox house fell into Union hands and became the headquarters for that general. At this point, the house and grounds became the target of Southern artillery, who threw shot and shell at the Union. In the yard, a number of Union generals discussed their situation while the iron rained down among them.

Some of these shells passed through the grove where the regimental reserve had remained, and where several noted Union generals had congregated. The central figure of the group was Gen. Hancock. On his left stood honest Burnside; on the right division commander, Birney; while immediately in front facing them was Crittenden. An earnest consultation took place, the rebel shell passing occasionally over their heads. Finally, they broke up the council and at once repaired to the house. And not a moment too soon did they leave their meeting place, for right there is where the four Union generals just missed death, as they scarcely moved around to the front of the house, landed in the exact spot they had a moment before occupied, exploding with terrific force; but luckily harmless. Lee had to reconsider his plans. The North Anna was not as defensible as he had assumed. If he attempted to fortify the river's southern bank, Warren would enfilade his formation. Lee met with Ewell, Anderson, and an assortment of engineers. The solution that evolved was a masterpiece of defensive engineering.



Lee drew his earthworks in the shape of an upside-down V, skillfully exploiting both the terrain and Grant's penchant for offensive operations. The tip rested on bluffs commanding Ox Ford, midway between Jericho Mills and Chesterfield Bridge. The left, or western, leg of the V slanted southwest along a shallow ridge and anchored firmly on the Little River, a mile and a half to the rear. The V's right, or eastern, leg cut southeast across a patchwork of woods and fields, covered Hanover Junction, and terminated behind a swamp.

Lee's clever deployment invited Grant into a trap. The beauty of the plan was that Grant could assist the beleaguered portion of his army only by laboriously bringing reinforcements across the North Anna, shifting them past Ox Ford along tortuous roads, then sending them across the river again. By then, Lee expected to have his victory. In a master stroke, he had suited the military maxim favoring interior lines to the North Anna's

topography and given his smaller army an advantage over Grant. Confederate engineers worked feverishly all night positioning the Army of Northern Virginia.

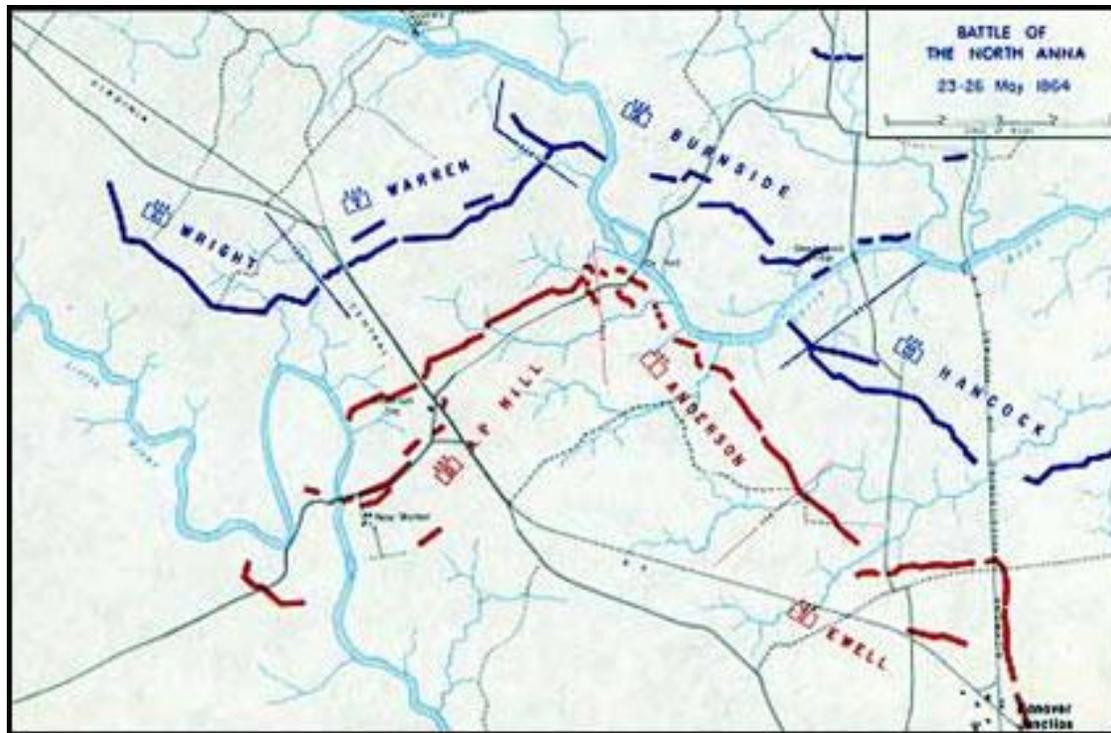
Grant was encouraged by the ease Lee's North Anna defenses. It was critical, he decided, to catch the Confederates before they could take up another fortified line. Lee monitored reports from the front with satisfaction. Grant was doing exactly as he had hoped. The time was approaching to spring the trap.

The only opposition, which Grant took to be from a rear guard, appeared on the heights above Ox Ford. Grant directed Burnside, who had remained on the northern bank, to eliminate this annoyance.

With the ford secure, Burnside directed Major General Thomas L. Crittenden to cross his division at Quarles' Mill, follow the river's southern bank to Ox Ford, and attack the Confederates from the west.

Rain began falling as the Federals stepped from the woods. The blue-clad line immediately became jumbled. "It was just a wild tumultuous rush where the most reckless were far to the front and the cautious ones scattered along back, but still coming", a participant related. Mahone's soldiers marveled at their good fortune. Waiting until Ledlie's Federals came within range; they raked them with musketry and canister. Ledlie's survivors broke and scrambled back to Quarles' Mill.

“General Ledlie made a botch of it,” Colonel Weld wrote in his diary. “Had too much (alcohol) on board, I think.” Ledlie was to bedevil his men until the end of July, when he was cashiered for drunkenness during **the battle of the Crater**.



Map of the North Anna River from the West Point Atlas of American Wars

The futile assaults at Ox Ford and the Doswell house did nothing to improve tempers. Meade lost his composure over a dispatch from Major General William T. Sherman, commanding the Union armies in the West, which assured Grant that he would win the war if could only get the Army of the Potomac to fight, “Sir” Meade barked. “I consider that dispatch an insult to the army I command, and to me personally. The Army of the Potomac does not require General Grant’s inspiration or anybody else’s inspiration to make it fight!” Grant mollified his distraught subordinate. Burnside was to report directly to Meade, and the Ninth Corps was to be incorporated into the Army of the Potomac.

Lee’s trap had worked precisely as the rebel commander had hoped. Fate, however, snatched his prize from him. Succumbing to the strain of campaigning, Lee contracted a debilitating intestinal ailment. As the Confederacy’s best opportunity of the campaign passed, Lee lay confined to his cot, helpless to direct the offensive and lacking a suitable subordinate to take his place. “We must strike a blow—we must never let them pass again—we must strike them a blow,” Lee repeated as he lay in his tent. But he lacked the means for executing his design.

By late afternoon, the union commanders began grasping the nature of their predicament. Grant at last recognized that Lee had assumed a formation that divided the union army. He immediately ordered his generals to stop advancing and start entrenching.

Grant pondered his next move. The lessons of Spotsylvania Court House remained fresh. “To make a direct attack from either wing would cause a slaughter of our men that evens success would not justify,” Once again, Grant would maneuver around Lee’s right flank, as he had done after the battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court house.

Lee’s failure to attack at the North Anna persuaded Grant that the Army of Northern Virginia’s days were numbered. “Lee’s army is really whipped,” he crowed to Washington. “A battle with them outside of intrenchmentes cannot be had.” He added, “I may be mistaken, but I feel that our success over Lee’s army is already ensured.”

The 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment – Company B, a Short History by Arlan Byrne

The 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment was organized on October 3rd, 1861 at Camp Meigs, which is the present site of the Tuscarawas County Fairgrounds, in Dover, Ohio. The regiment was discharged from the Union Army on November 3rd, 1865 in Texas. During the four years between 1861 and 1865, the 51st covered practically the entire western theater of war, participating in battles at Perryville, Stones River, Chickamauga, and Lookout Mountain. They also took part in the Atlanta campaign with General Sherman, fighting at the Battle of Resaca, Kennesaw Mountain and Peachtree Creek. However when Sherman set off on his famous march to the sea, the 51st was assigned to follow Confederate General Hood north, fighting battles at Franklin and Nashville. The 51st Regiment suffered a total of 108 men and 4 officers killed in battle. 233 men and 1 officer also died of disease, for a total of 346 casualties suffered in the four years of active duty.

Today the 51st OVI Company B reenactors under the leadership of **Staff Sergeant Eric Muehlenbein**, has approximately 30 members drawn from all over Northeast Ohio. Recently I was privileged to spend a Saturday and Sunday afternoon with the 51st OVI at the Burton Ohio Historical Society Civil War reenactment where I observed that reenacting is really a family affair. Husbands, wives and children all participate. The women wear long dresses even a few with hoop skirts; while little children run around in period clothes, some even barefoot. Each soldier must furnish his own civil war era uniform and equipment, from his shoes to his eyeglasses and of course his rifle. The tents and camp equipment are all as authentic as possible. The women prepare meals from scratch that are cooked over outdoor wood fires in iron pots and kettles. [Friday night's meal was chicken stew with dumplings, sweet corn and 6 kinds of homemade pie.]



After the mock battle on Sunday, the men of the 51st kicked back for some much needed rest. They discussed both the Saturday and Sunday battles and although the battles are scripted the bearing and leadership of the officers is readily apparent. Although civil war reenactment is a hobby, these men and women take great pride in what they do and what it represents.

As Sunday drew to a close and the public visitors left, long dresses and uniforms were replaced by shorts and t-shirts. Coolers with ice and beer appeared and the job of taking down tents and packing equipment into vans and trailers began. Everyone had a job and knew just what to do. In minutes tents were down, rolled up and packed away. Dresses and uniforms were hung on racks. Cooking utensils, furniture and odds and ends were stored in their places with everything fastened securely with bungee cords. By the time somebody had replaced the sod in the fire pit and policed up a few stray pieces of paper, you would never know that anybody had ever camped there.

The largest Civil War Reenactment event in Ohio is the annual “**Battle on the Ohio-Erie Canal**” held in Zoar. This year's event will be held on September 19 – 20th and over 1000 reenactors will be present to participate in period baseball games, a Civil War wedding and performances by the famous **Camp Chase Fife and Drum Corps**. This event is being hosted by our own 51st OVI Company B Reenactors. I know that Sergeant Eric and his men would love to see the membership of the NEOCWRT at this special event.

The Courier is the Monthly Newsletter of the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table John Sandy Editor

Staff writers: Ted Karle Franco Sperrazzo Joe Tirpak Tom Horvath Norton London Carl Dodaro
Arlan Byrne Richmond Correspondent: Brent Morgan

Please submit all articles by e-mail to: jschez47@yahoo.com

Mathew B. Brady by Wayne Youngblood and Ray Bonds Book Review by Tom Horvath

Last Christmas I received a book of Mathew Brady photographs – a big book of Mathew Brady photographs. I am talking about the physical dimensions of the volume. It is 12 inches high and 16 inches wide, and that is the great advantage of this volume. Brady's photographs are printed as they were intended to be viewed: some spread across most of two pages, an image 12 inches high by 30 inches wide. What this provides is the ability to see interesting details. The overall quality of some of the photos is somewhat fuzzy, a natural result of the five second exposure time. Others are quite clear and have clarity of detail like HD TV. There simply is no comparison between even the blurriest images and the smaller versions we usually see as illustrations in history books.

The volume is divided into six sections: "Introduction", "**Portraits in the Studio and the Field**", "**Battles and Battlefields**", "**Life During Wartime**", "**War on Water**", and "**A Land Laid Waste**". In addition to photographs from different periods, "Introduction" includes a short biography of Brady. Brady's eyesight was poor due to a teenage inflammation, yet he studied photography under Samuel Morse, the inventor of the telegraph. Brady began his photography business taking portraits. He became well known and was chosen to take Abraham Lincoln's portrait before his Cooper Union speech. Over the years, Brady took a number of portraits of the president and came to regard Lincoln as a friend.

Brady prospered until the Civil War. He believed it was his duty to record the images of the war, and he received special permission from the President and War Department to travel with Union troops. Brady's staff did just that, using portable horse-drawn dark rooms. The bulk of photographs taken during this time were not actually taken by Brady, but by employees of his studio. As was common practice at that time, all of those photographs were labeled "Photo by Brady".

Unfortunately for Brady, the war lasted longer than he or anyone expected and, once the war was over, demand for war photos came nowhere near covering the cost of the project. He suffered a series of financial reversals and died a poor man in 1896. It was not until much later that his photographs became the valued historical record that we now recognize and take for granted.

The biography is interesting, but the photographs are the real reason the book was published. "Portraits in the Studio and the Field" contains photos of a wide variety of people – people famous then and now, famous then but unknown now, and people who never were famous. Many are familiar portraits: Lincoln and Tad, Lincoln and McClellan, Grant, Jefferson Davis. Others, like Custer and a Confederate friend, are interesting because they are new discoveries. Not all are Civil War figures – Michael Faraday, Kit Carson, Washington Irving, and Samuel Morse – though most are.

Despite the title "Battles and Battlefields", only one photograph was taken of actual combat. Most were taken after the battles, with the dead often posed for more dramatic effect. What these photographs show us is the geography and landscape at the time of the battles, things that have long since changed.

In "War on Water", I was surprised to find new information. For the first time, I realized that monitors were a type of warship, not just a single ship. The ship involved in the sea battle between the Monitor and the Merrimac (more properly, the CSS Virginia), was named "Monitor". So it is referred to as "the Monitor", which led me to believe that there was only one. If I read anywhere that there were a number of monitors, it never stuck. But after seeing photographs of several different monitors, my eyes were opened. In the same way, the photos showed that the monitors were much larger than I had envisioned. In the final section, "A Land Laid Waste", the photographs are worth more than the proverbial "thousand words". There is one photograph of two men standing by the remains of their home. They are photographed from behind, yet one man's posture conveys emotion and poignancy in a way that no other medium can achieve.

Together with a few words in the caption, or no words at all, these images impart knowledge and feeling in ways that no history can.

Published in 2008, this book contains 250 pages with literally every page containing at least one photograph. As books of this quality go, this volume is inexpensive. Its list price is \$29.99, but is available on Amazon for \$24.48, bn.com for \$23.98, and Borders.com for \$29.99. Neither the ClevNet system nor the Mentor library owns a copy.

The Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table Fall Field Trip

There is nothing like walking the fields where history was made, it gives you a perspective that you can't get from a book or DVD. The fellowship, education and memories are priceless! Join us this fall when we return to Richmond, Virginia to examine The Battle of the North Anna River, Yellow Tavern and Cold Harbor. Call Mike Sears at 440 339 0114 and make your reservations today.



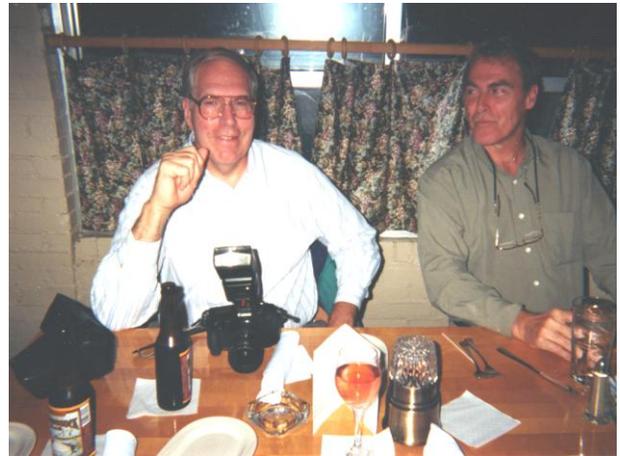
Captain Franco, George Grim and Peter Holman



Dr. Bob Battisti and Bob Baucher



"We band of brothers"



Brent Morgan and Bob Bayless

Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table _ FALL FIELD TRIP OCTOBER 1, 2, 3, 4, 2009

National Historic Park Guide: R.E.L. Krick

This year we are touring the second half of Grant's Overland Campaign, May-June 1864. Areas of study will include **North Anna, Hanover Junction, Cold Harbor, Haw's Shop, Totopotomoy Creek, Yellow Tavern and Drewry's Bluff.**

We are staying at the Virginia Crossings Resort, 1000 Virginia Center Parkway, Glen Allen, VA, 23059. Telephone: **1-888-444-6553 or 808-727-1400.** The facility has golf, swimming a work-out area, 2 restaurants and a lounge on premises. A FULL breakfast is included with your room.



Virginia Crossings Resort Hotel
TO RESERVE YOUR SPACE< SEND A \$100 DEPOSIT TO:
Mike Sears, 5843 Marine Parkway, Mentor, OH, 44060



Memorial Day May 25, 2009 ceremony at Willoughby Cemetery: Franco Sperrazzo, Ted Karle, Arlan Byrne and Terry Reynolds