



THE COURIER



Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



Tuesday, November 9th, 2010 Meeting #111

Dino's Restaurant at I90 & State Rt. 306 Willoughby, Ohio

Guest Speaker: Brian Kowell

Topic: "George Gordon Meade, the Unappreciated General"

Canteen at 6:00 pm Dinner at 7:00 pm Guests are welcome

Reservations required Please call Steve Abbey

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

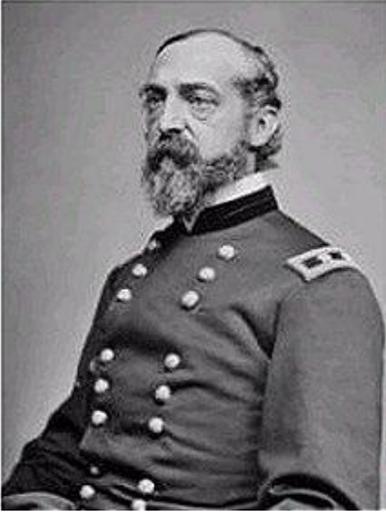
Brian Kowell has been researching the American Civil War since he was in the fifth grade, nearly fifty years ago. His knowledge of the War Between the States and especially the cavalry forces of both the Federal and Confederate armies is legendary. Brian grew up in Parma Heights, Ohio and graduated in 1969 from Valley Forge High School. He is a 1973 graduate of Baldwin Wallace College with a degree in Biology. He and his wife Carol reside in Hinckley, Ohio. Carol and Brian have five children and 3 grandchildren.

Brian Kowell was a sales representative for 3M Pharmaceuticals for more than 35 years before moving on to pursue his passion for tennis. While most individuals would be content to just retire and enjoy the good life, Mr. Kowell has found his second wind. He has become an accomplished tennis teaching professional. Brian is certified as a Level One Teaching Professional by the United States Professional Tennis Association. The Level One teaching professional is the USPTA's highest ranking and reflects not only a superior knowledge of tennis but also the highest standards in the instruction of the game.

Brian Kowell has presented a number of programs to the NEOCWRT including: "The General's Horse, The Battle for Island #10 and The Dahlgren Raid." On March 11, 2008, Brian teamed up with best friend, Peter Holman to present "A Civil War Quiz." Captain Franco won the quiz and the grand prize which included a number of current civil war books donated by our presenters. He recently had an article entitled: "The Buckland Races" published in *The American Civil War Magazine*. We are honored to have Brian Kowell as a valued member of our round table. We are equally honored to have him present his program "General George Gordon Meade: the Unappreciated General." A special note: Peter Holman spent many years researching the life of General Meade. Peter planned to present a talk to our club on General Meade but he and his wife were called to South Africa to do the Lord's work. Brian Kowell is dedicating his presentation to Peter Holman.

George Gordon Meade, the Reluctant General

On July 4, 1863, the news of two great Union victories echoed throughout the divided nation. General Ulysses S. Grant captured the besieged Mississippi bastion of Vicksburg, while the Army of the Potomac turned back General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at the small crossroads town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Grant's 80,000 federal troops faced John Pemberton's rebel army of less than 40,000 men. The Vicksburg campaign had begun in earnest in December 1862 and required the assistance of the Union Navy's ironclad gun boats on the Mississippi River. Vicksburg was a difficult city to capture because it was fortified with heavy artillery and surrounded by swamp land and steep rocky bluffs.



General Meade was new to command and accepted the position of Commander of the Army of the Potomac with a great deal of reluctance. Meade was well aware of the fate of his predecessors. Most General officers in the Army of the Potomac were not held in high esteem by the **Radical Republicans** in the U.S. Congress or by President Lincoln's cabinet. They had seen enough inertia in George McClellan, the lack of good judgment with Ambrose Burnside and the want of courage and mettle in Fighting Joe Hooker. There was a general distrust of all West Point graduates and especially those officers who were associates of General George McClellan.

General Meade was appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac during the early morning hours of June 28, 1863. At first Meade thought that the officer sent to present him his orders, Colonel James Hardee was there to arrest him and take him away under guard. The Army of the Potomac was rife with rumors and intrigue. Anything was possible when a nation was at war with itself.

Meade was instructed by General in Chief Henry Halleck to insure that he positioned his forces between Lee's Army and Washington, D. C. Meade was also charged with protecting the city of Baltimore, Maryland. He was ordered to pursue the Army of Northern Virginia and give it battle but not at the expense of risking the loss of the nation's capital. Meade's strategy during the entire Gettysburg Campaign was based on Halleck's dictum: protect the capital. With this goal in mind, General Meade developed his **Pipe Creek Line**, a 20 mile long defensive position near Taneytown, Maryland. The Pipe Creek line protected the major roadways south to Washington and Baltimore. The Pipe Creek line would be Meade's fallback position for it afforded the Army of the Potomac an excellent location to engage Lee's Army and protect its own lines of communications.

General Meade and his Staff, Library of Congress photograph



Meade allowed the Rebels to slip away unscathed even though Lee's Army was trapped on the northern banks of the rain swollen Potomac River.

The Battle of Gettysburg cost the Army of the Potomac nearly 24,000 casualties, 27 % of its forces. The command structure of both armies was decimated by losses but the Federal Army was especially affected. In addition, the Federal Army lost thousands of horses, mules and wagons that undoubtedly hampered its ability to maneuver quickly and engage Lee's Army. That being said, President Lincoln was angered by what he saw as General Meade's lack of an aggressive pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia following the Battle of Gettysburg. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton believed that

The United States Congress Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War opened hearings on General Meade's handling of the Army of the Potomac's action during the Battle of Gettysburg in the fall of 1863. Generals: Dan Sickles, Alfred Pleasanton and Abner Doubleday testified that General Meade mishandled the army during the Battle of Gettysburg and that he did not desire to attack the Confederate Army but rather wanted to retreat. They

all testified that had General Meade ordered a counter attack on the Rebel Army after it was repulsed on the afternoon of July 3rd 1863, the Civil War would have been won. Sickles, Pleasanton and Doubleday all testified that Meade lacked the determination to attack Lee's badly wounded army. It is ironic that these 3 officers, who were rebuked by General Meade for failing to do their duty during the battle, collectively sought to destroy George Meade's reputation with their testimony before Congress. The story of their testimony was front page news in all of the Northern newspapers.

General Dan Sickles

In the fall of 1863, President Lincoln did his utmost to spur General Meade into attacking Lee's army but to no avail. Was Meade just too cautious or was it possible that he just could not find the right opportunity to attack Lee? General Meade's army lost a number of regiments after the Battle of Gettysburg when their enlistments were up. The Army of the Potomac was being resupplied with more regiments but they were filled with green inexperienced troops. Meade was reluctant to attack Lee with untested officers and enlisted men.

Nevertheless, Lincoln decided to promote General Grant after he rescued the besieged Army of the Cumberland at Chattanooga, Tennessee and defeated Braxton Bragg's army at Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain in November 1863.

In January 1864 General Grant was summoned to Washington D.C. and promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General, Commander of all the armies. Grant brainstormed with General William Tecumseh Sherman and devised a plan to subdue the Southern Confederacy and end the war. Sherman was given command of the western armies and in the spring of 1864 proceeded to attack Georgia. Grant made the Army of the Potomac his headquarters and ordered General Meade to begin the Overland Campaign, with the goal of destroying the Army of Northern Virginia.



General Meade was still the commander of the Army of the Potomac but he was always under the shadow of General Grant, his superior officer. Meade could not help but feel awkward by this arrangement and offered to relinquish his command for the good of the nation. Grant reassured Meade that he was a respected and valued commander, his knowledge and good judgment were necessary for defeating General Lee's army and ending the war. Despite Grant's assurances, Meade came to feel less like a commanding officer and more like a high priced messenger.

General Meade's temper and lack of self control became legendary during this period. Meade was badly wounded during the Peninsula Campaign and suffered with back pain and a lack of sleep for the rest of his life. Note the circles and baggy eyes in most of his later photographs. His trusted aid Theodore Lyman commented on the General's temper in his book, *Meade's Army*: "I don't know of any gentleman, who when he is wrathful, exercises less Christian Charity than my well beloved Chief."

It was difficult for George Gordon Meade, the man who commanded the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg to sit quietly while Grant, Sherman and Sheridan were showered with praise and glory. It was especially humbling to see officers he outranked in the regular army promoted ahead of him. In the spring of 1865, General Grant had to present a special request to Congress in order to get Meade promoted to major general. There were no more promotion slots available at the time.

Historians have been divided on their evaluation of General Meade. He is not listed among the best battlefield commanders. Some believe Meade had his one great moment of triumph on July 1-3rd, 1863 in south central Pennsylvania then stumbled trying to do an encore. I believe that this is a shortsighted view. Meade assumed the command of a defeated army, his good judgment and courage helped to save the union through four years of service to his country.

THE “NUTS AND BOLTS” OF THE CIVIL WAR

COMPILED BY CARL DODARO

FROM THE ARTICLE

“THE GREAT GUN MERCHANT”

PART 2

By JOSEPH E. PERSICO

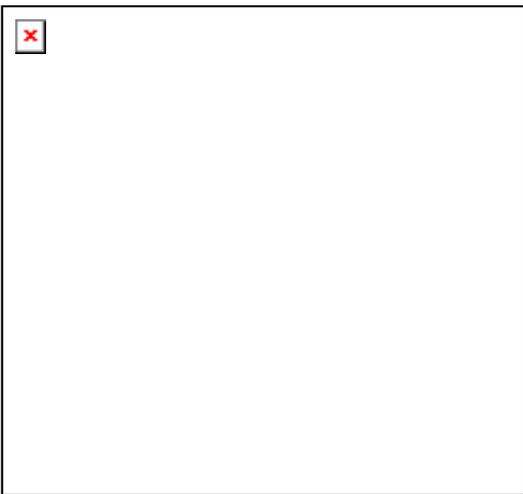
Copied in part from “AMERICAN HERITAGE MAGAZINE”, August, 1974 Vol. 25, Issue 5

As Bannerman’s business prospered the firm outgrew one larger location after another, finally occupying an entire block at 501 Broadway in lower Manhattan. This property became the main salesroom and the site of Bannerman’s Military Museum, a superb exhibition of weaponry from harque-buses to artillery, which the owner proudly displayed to the public. But this space could not hold the massive Bannerman purchases from the Spanish-American War, and New York ordinances prohibited the storage of live ammunition in the city. Bannerman now needed an arsenal. **From “Bannerman’s 1927 Catalog”**



U.S. Army Bronze Six Pounder Smooth Bore Cannon. Relic of the war 1861-65. Weight 880 pounds. In serviceable order. Mounted on Field Carriage. Complete with gunner’s utensils. Price \$500. Handsome gun.

In 1900 his son David was cruising the Hudson River with a friend who showed him six and a half acres of scrub-covered rock called Polopel’s Island, about fifty-five miles north of New York City. Polopel’s Island offered Frank Bannerman space to store his munitions and room to indulge his Scottish affinities. He bought the island in December of 1900 for fifteen hundred dollars from a private owner and bought seven acres more of underwater land in front of the island from the state of New York. He ringed the submerged area with sunken canal-boats, barges, and railroad floats to form a breakwater. On the island Bannerman built a huge arsenal styled after his idea of a Scottish castle. On a hill in the middle of the island he built a smaller castle as the Bannerman family home. The island was under continuous construction for eighteen years. Yet hardly an architect or engineer had a hand in the work. The castle was Bannerman’s vision and his execution. It was creviced and encrusted with battlements, towers, turrets, crenellations, parapets, embrasures, casements, and corbelling. Huge iron baskets suspended from the castle corners held gas-fed lamps that burned in the night like ancient torches. By day Bannerman’s castle gave the river a fairyland aspect. By night it threw a brooding silhouette against the Hudson skyline.



FROM THE “BANNERMAN'S 1927 CATALOG” -View in our ordnance yard, Brooklyn, N.Y. Note cannon No. 117 and 340 marked “Hartford”. These two cannons, which are 9-inch smoothbores and weigh over 9,000 pounds each, are vouched for by U.S. Navy Department as having been part of the battery of the U.S. Frigate Hartford under Admiral Farragut at the battles of New Orleans and Mobile Bay. Price \$1,250 each. Also guns No. 176, 177 the only 2 rifled cannons on the U.S. Frigate Brooklyn at the battles of New Orleans and Mobile Bay, which fired 100-lb rifled shot. These guns were made at Parrot Foundry, Cold Spring, N.Y.; they weigh nearly 10,000 lbs. Each and are vouched for by letter of Admiral Sampson while Chief of Ordnance, U.S.N., as bearing record that these rifled cannon formed part of the battery of the old Civil War Frigate Brooklyn. These rifles are for sale at \$1,250 each.

Bannerman chose well in selecting Polopel’s Island for his designs. Just past the rugged Hudson heights of Breakneck, Crownest, and Storm King Mountain the river opens into a lovely inland sea containing the island. Visitors approached the place along a breakwater bristling with cannon and then passed through an opening flanked by two watchtowers. After tying up their boat at a large unloading dock they crossed a moat spanned by a drawbridge and passed under a portcullis crowned

by the Bannerman coat of arms carved in stone. The coat of arms had been designed by Bannerman and included a grapnel symbolizing the grappling he used to do in New York Harbor for old anchors and pieces of chain. Once through the portcullis, visitors passed along walks flanked by alternating flower beds and gun emplacements that ran between the munitions storehouses and the family’s living quarters. All the rooms in the smaller castle contained proverbs from the Bible, molded on the walls in concrete. Visitors who brought a thirst to Bannerman’s castle were out of luck, since the teetotaling owner had readily signed a covenant when he bought Polopel’s prohibiting any drop of liquor from profaning his island. Armed guards with watchdogs roved the island around the clock and discouraged the uninvited.



This embellished rock in the Hudson was the Bannerman family home in all but the most bitter of winter months. Bannerman grandchildren, their friends, and the employees’ children romped amid history—a gun from Admiral Farragut’s flagship, a cannon from the battle of Yorktown, memorabilia from the sunken U.S.S. *Maine*.

The family also lived on a virtual powder keg crammed with hundreds of cannon, tens of thousands of rifles, hundreds of thousands of rounds of live ammunition, and tons of gunpowder. Once a workman melting down scrap mistakenly put live ammunition into the pot, “with fatal results,” as a Bannerman publication described the outcome. Another time a cannon being tested against a nearby-mountain jumped, lifting the shell over the intended target and sending it through somebody’s barn. And on a lazy Sunday summer afternoon the powder house blew up, hurling shells and debris over the island but, miraculously, injuring no one. The cause of the blast was never determined.

Bannerman's sales of military weapons to civilians declined during the early 20th century as a result of state and federal law changes. After the sinking of the ferryboat *Pollepel*, which had served the island, in a storm in 1950, the Arsenal and island were essentially left vacant. The island and buildings were bought by New York State in 1967, after the old military merchandise had been removed, and tours of the island were given in 1968. However, on August 8, 1969, fire devastated the Arsenal, and the roofs and floors were destroyed. The island was placed off-limits to the public. Today, the castle is property of the State of New York and is mostly in ruins. While the exterior walls still stand, all the internal floors and non-structural walls have since burned down. The island has been the victim of vandalism, trespass, neglect and decay. Several old bulkheads and causeways that submerge at high tide present a serious navigational hazard. On-island guided hard hat - tours were recently made available through the Bannerman's Castle Trust. The castle is easily visible to the riders of the Metro-North’s Hudson line and Amtrak. The sign is easily visible to southbound riders.

UPDATE JANUARY 26, 2010:

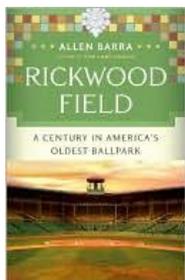
More of Bannerman's Castle collapsed in yesterday's storm, including all of the north wall of the tower, which had not yet collapsed to any degree. The photograph below, taken this afternoon, January 26, by Thom Johnson, shows that only the west wall and part of the south wall of the Tower remain. The lodges, the Number Two Arsenal and the Number Three Arsenal still stand. From [Mid-Hudson News](#) .



THIS ARTICLE IS ONLY PART OF A LARGER ARTICLE IN AMERICAN HERITAGE MAGAZINE – AUGUST, 1974, VOL. 25, ISSUE 5 “THE GREAT GUN MERCHANT” By JOSEPH E. PERSICO



***Rickwood Field* by Allen Barra Book Review by Tom Horvath**



Rickwood Field is located in Birmingham, Alabama. According to the National Park Service's Historic American Building Survey, it is the nation's oldest baseball grandstand on its original site, making it the oldest existing baseball park in America. It was built in 1910, a year before Fenway Park, and a year later than Shibe Park (later renamed Connie Mack Stadium), which has since been torn down. Rickwood Field is patterned after Shibe Park. In fact, Connie Mack, who was instrumental in laying out Shibe Park, helped with the layout of Rickwood Field.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that a baseball park that has seen 100 years has also seen its share of history. Many baseball greats, most well known and a few unknown, trod Rickwood Field. It is their stories that provide much of the interest.

It was home field to, most notably, Willie Mays and Satchel Paige. And if you answered, "The Oakland A's" to the question, "On what team did Rollie Fingers, Joe Rudi, Dave Duncan, and Reggie Jackson play together?", you'd be only partly correct, because they also played together at Rickwood Field.

Add players from other teams who played meaningful games at Rickwood: "Cool Papa" Bell, Josh Gibson, and Jackie Robinson, to name just a few. Rickwood also hosted a number of exhibition games featuring major league teams who trained in Florida and were making their way back north. The Yankees with Ruth and Gehrig, DiMaggio and Berra; the Dodgers with Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snyder, and Roy Campanella; Rogers Hornsby; and Ty Cobb all played at Rickwood. (Portions of the movie *Cobb* were filmed at Rickwood.)

The structure of the book is a bit unusual in that the primary text occupies little more than half the volume. The appendices cover more than 100 pages. Appendix 2 is a narrative by "Piper" Davis, a star of the Birmingham Black Barons in the 1940s, and later manager of the team. He was one of Willie Mays's first managers in professional ball, and his stories from many years of association with Rickwood provide a number of anecdotes for the volume. Appendix 3 is entitled "Voices of Rickwood" and contains excerpts from interviews with others associated with Rickwood. These are much shorter, normally one to two pages, and include remembrances from Reggie Jackson, Ernie Banks, Willie Mays, and a number of other fans, players, and personnel. One is a very brief non-memory from Rollie Fingers. He was struck by a batted ball the first time he pitched at Rickwood, was knocked unconscious and doesn't remember a thing about the game or the park.

All in all, this is a fairly interesting read for baseball fans. Allen Barra has written a number of baseball books and, apropos of the genre, this is pretty light reading. The text moves smoothly and the stories of the various players contain a number of interesting tidbits.

Published in 2010 by W. W. Norton & Co., the volume contains several substantial appendices (as noted above), a notes section, bibliography, index, numerous photos throughout the volume, and credits for the illustrations. Amazon has the hardcover edition available for \$17.99 and the Kindle version for \$15.37, while B & N has the hardcover for \$22.36 and the ebook version for \$15.37. Mentor Library does not own a copy but can obtain one of two copies through its SearchOhio network. The Clevelnet System owns 10 copies with two more on order.

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

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CIVIL WAR MINUTES by Franco M. Sperrazzo Events Coordinator/V.Pres.

OCTOBER 12th Meeting: In spite the Cleveland Browns 1win and 4 loss record at the time of our gathering, interest in the team was at a fever pitch. Anticipation of the stellar performance by member **Robert Tribby** may have been a key factor. Bob was well prepared in his research, articulation, thoroughly knowledgeable in his post game interview and even brought some of his marvelous collection of memorabilia. The pre-game DVD helped his audience of 44 strong members and guests to recognize many of the personnel mentioned in his trivia quiz. **Paul Siedel** was the recipient of the donated Browns 2010 baseball cap. It was good to see some members present that have not been with us lately like **Herb Jacobs, Mark Averbach, Bob Stabile, Les West and Dale Fellows**. **Bob Tribby** was in no hurry to go home after the meeting adjourned. He entertained **Bill Wilson, Editor Sandy** and Yours Truly with his continued enthusiasm in Dino's parking lot following his presentation. We hope Bob will consider another talk in the future. Hopefully, he will return in a few years to share with us the present day glory years of our beloved Browns?

Dr. Phillip Price: Our own Lincoln scholar will be a guest speaker on the **Western Reserve Historical Society Civil War Circuit on Saturday November 6th at 1:30 Pm.** His topic will be the spouse of our 16th President Lincoln. Mary Todd is featured with Honest Abe in the current Geico Insurance commercial, testing her husband's notable honesty by asking him if the hoop dress she is wearing makes her look too big? The Western Reserve Historical Society is located at 10825 East Blvd. in Cleveland, Ohio (Phone# **216-721-5722**). I can provide guest passes to those interested.

2010 Fall Field Trip Aftermath: Norton London re-caped some of the events of our recent journey to the Shenandoah Valley. Norty expounded on a matter many members on the executive committee have been conferring about over the past 3-4 years: our strained economic state and continuing to plan field trips in a cost effective manner. The 2010 Fall Field Trip was judged to be one of the very best by the 12 members that attended. It would have been better, if at least two dozen or more members and guests had attend. The tour bus would have been at near capacity, the cost per member would have been less and it would have added to the fellowship of the event. During our January 2011 annual meeting a major topic will be the possibility of a joint field trip with another round table.

Member Presentations: If you are a member currently developing a talk that you would like to share with the NEOCWRT, please contact Program Chairman Joe Tirpak. We are already booking programs for our 2012 calendar year.

Dr. Ethan S Rafuse: Recently I corresponded with our May 11, 2010 special guest. Ethan went over extremely well with our troops and achieved strong kudos. The following is a communication to share with all from our friend at the United States Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. **Quote:** "Hi Franco, I had a great time with your group and your team were absolutely terrific hosts. Thank you for a great time on the waterfront in Cleveland. If you are ever looking for speakers, let me know, as I have (in addition to myself) a bunch of friends who I am sure would have a absolute blast and do a great job speaking to the NEO Round Table." Ethan.

James A. Garfield National Historic Site: As 2010 winds down do not forget the programs at the beautiful Lawnfield home for the forthcoming holiday season. Phone their Park Ranger **Scott Longert** at 440-255-8722. Or visit their website www.nps.gov/jaga for the calendar of events.

See you all November 9, when member Brian D. Kowell will give one of his masterfully researched talks.

Captain Franco