

# THE CHARGER



## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN. 2019

VOL. 40 # 5

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### **Message From the President**

American Civil War historians – Happy New Year and welcome to the January issue of the Charger!

*We were honored at our December meeting to have as our speaker once again Ed Bearss, Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service! Mr. Bearss continued my series theme “Southern Invasions and Raids of the North” and remained in the Western Theater as he enlightened us on Nathan Bedford Forrest with the topic: “Nathan Bedford Forrest Vanquishes Union Cavalry – While Allowing Sherman to Capture Atlanta”. It was a sensational visit – adding to his many previous occasions at our Round Table – and he recounted that his first visit during October 1962 was not only memorable to him as his first time to our Cleveland Civil Round Table - but also since it was during a tremendously historic moment in history no less – that being the Cuban Missile Crisis.*

Mr. Bearss graciously interacted individually with members before and after the meeting; renewing old acquaintances, making new ones and signing books and autographs. During the time that I spent with him, he continually remarked how nice it was to be back with the Cleveland Round Table, to see old friends, make new ones and recall good memories – and he said several times how knowledgeable and engaged our membership is! Special thanks once again to Ohio Expatriate Member Dick Crews who had lunch with Mr. Bearss last winter and broached the idea of a visit by Mr. Bearss to Cleveland - and for subsequently putting me in touch with him.

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Coming up at our January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 meeting – and speaking of Dick Crews - we will have “The Dick Crews Annual Debate”. Keeping with my series theme of “Southern Invasions and Raids of the North” our topic this year is, "If Lee had won at Gettysburg, could he have gone on to capture Washington, D.C.?" Thanks to our debaters and William Vodrey who will again moderate this enjoyable evening.

As mentioned previously, one of my favorite aspects of military history is the “What if”? History is overflowing with examples of one or two apparently insignificant – *or significant* - things that might have gone differently at the time, and result in a completely different outcome. All of us can think of an aspect during the battle of Gettysburg which could very well have gone differently. On day one: what if Heth had not bungled the opening action against Buford’s cavalry; what if Early had been quicker on getting his division into action; what if Stuart’s cavalry had been present for reconnaissance instead of on an ultimately fruitless raid? On day two: what if Lee had been less ill and could more closely supervise Hill, Ewell and Longstreet to better coordinate their assaults; what if Longstreet would have taken a shorter march and attacked earlier in the day; what if Ewell had not waited until nearly 8PM to move against Culp’s Hill on the Union right? On day three: what if the Confederate 150 gun artillery barrage – the largest of its type in history up until that point - had been even marginally more accurate; what if Lee had heeded Longstreet’s advice and refrained from attacking at all and instead “pulled up stakes” and attempted to maneuver around one of the Union flanks; or what if Lee didn’t attack on the third day and instead hunkered down to entice Meade to attack the Southerners instead?

The potential scenarios are endless...but, following this path of logic the result would be that General Lee would have prevailed and the door to our nation’s capital appear to be wide open.

Or, maybe not??? By this time, the series of protective forts planned around D.C. had mostly been completed. Heavy artillery covered nearly every viable route into the Capital with previously well cleared lines of sight; and the Union defenses would have been anticipating the assault. It is unlikely that Lee could have settled into a siege with his own lines of supply questionable at best and not nearly enough troops to wrap a secure cordon around the city...and another one of my favorite what ifs: would there be enough time for Lincoln to dismiss a vanquished Meade and bring Grant east earlier than he did?...And the remnants of the Army of the Potomac stoked up to follow his leadership fresh on the heels of the well-generated, spectacular and important victory in the Vicksburg Campaign? We’ll see what our debaters come up with on January 9<sup>th</sup> in what promises to be an invigorating evening!

Looking ahead to our February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, we will have Matt Borders speak to us with his presentation: “A Last Roll of the Dice: the Third Confederate Invasion – 1864”. Matt is currently a Park Ranger at Monocacy National Battlefield, and additionally is a licensed guide at Antietam. He has been in Maryland and held positions in various historic associations there since 2007.

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Matt's presentation will be a nice follow up to our debate as the "third invasion" is none other than Jubal Early's thrust up the Shenandoah Valley catching the Union by surprise as he approached Washington, D.C. from the North. A harrowing delaying action by just enough northern soldiers at Monocacy delayed Early a sufficient amount of time for Grant's hastily collected defense force to reach and man the Union Forts that had been essentially stripped to reinforce his "Overland Campaign"; which had by that time brought Grant's forces past Richmond, over the James River and to the outskirts of Petersburg where they would be in siege nearly the rest of the war. Early's assault on D.C. would bring President Lincoln "hands on" to the front lines of the battle - and perilously close to Confederate sharpshooters whose rounds whizzed over Lincoln's head and presumably his iconic Top Hat!

Be sure to join us for the January debate and next month for all of the details on the often overlooked 1864 Southern Invasion of the North - when the Union Capital's survival was truly in question!

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel J. Ursu

President

**In preparation for the January Debate be sure to read**

**Mark Leepson, "Capital Defense-Washington, D.C. in the Civil War" History Net: <http://www.historynet.com/capital-defense-washington-dc-in-the-civil-war.htm>**

**U. S. National Park Service. Civil War Defenses of Washington: <https://www.nps.gov/cwdw/index.htm>**



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### The Battle of Nashville and a Visit to “Travelers Rest” By Paul Seidel

Several years ago knowing I was going to be in the Nashville, Tennessee area I became interested in the Battle of Nashville fought in December 1864. I was also interested in how much of the battlefield still existed. Knowing that the commercial, residential and industrial growth of the city had long ago engulfed the battlefield, I wondered just how much was still visible and could be experienced by history buffs or anyone interested enough to make the effort. Surprisingly many sites of the old battlefield are still in existence and can be visited by anyone, as I said, diligent enough to brave the traffic and the “no trespassing signs”. I contacted The Nashville Civil War Round Table and they put me in touch with a gentleman who specialized in tours of the battlefield. I would highly recommend this approach if one does not know the layout, traffic patterns and sites to be visited. I met my guide at old Fort Negley a Civil War fort just southeast of downtown, and presented him with a list of sites I thought may still be in existence. Many of them were, although one needs to be with someone who knows how to access them. Our first stop was along the Nashville and Chattanooga R.R. just east of Rains Hill and Granbury’s Lunette where heavy fighting occurred on Dec. 15, 1864. Using a map of the city and environs from that time, we visited many sites. The Ackley House which today is on the campus of Belmont University, the Compton House on the Hillsboro Pike, Comptons or Shys Hill, and Redoubt # 2 which anchored the center of Stewarts Corps during the first day. This site is in a gated community and access is limited. We were able to see the stone wall along the Hillsboro Pike behind which the left of Stewarts corps took cover on the first day of battle. The site of the Granny White House on the Granny White Pike, the site of “Leland” Hood’s headquarters during the second day, and “Bell Meade” Plantation on Harding Rd. One of the most impressive sites was Peach Orchard Hill just off I 65 as one exits the freeway on Harding Place. It was the center of S.D. Lee’s Corps and where the 13 USCT attempted to take the hill but was driven back with heavy losses. General Thomas’ opinion of African-American troops was completely changed because of this incident. The Hill was finally abandoned when flanked late on the second day. Peach Orchard Hill was in 1864 on the John Overton estate which we visited later. We also visited the Battle of Nashville Monument on the Granny White Pike at Woodmont Blvd.



My tour was just about done when my guide took me to “Travelers Rest” the John Overton home and Hood’s headquarters on the first day of the battle. It is well preserved and open to the public. Here one can see a typical upper middle class Tennessee home from the early 1800s. On the side of the home is the two story gallery where General Hood ,with the help of his

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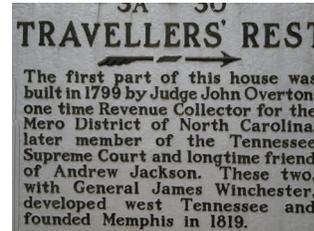
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staff, mounted his horse after spending the night at the house. Shortly afterward the site was overrun by The U.S. forces as Hood and his army were swept back toward Franklin and ultimately Tupelo, Mississippi.



My tour took about five hours and was well worth the fee I paid. I have mentioned just several Battle of Nashville sites we visited that day, but there were many more. My decision to read up on the Battle was a good one as it put me in touch with sites I never would have known about. My main source of reference for the tour was “Nashville Battlefield Guide” by Ross Massey. Several other publications with excellent maps are “Guide to Civil War Nashville” by Mark Zimmerman, and the December 1964 issue of Civil War Times Illustrated which can be accessed on line. Also on line are maps of the battlefield overlaid with the present day street layout. Also of note in Nashville for history buffs, are City Cemetery, and Mt. Olivet Cemetery where Richard Ewell and Felix Zollicoffer are buried. These cemeteries have substantial Civil War memorials. There is also the major site of note in Nashville, the Tennessee State House of which guided tours are given daily each hour.

Although the tour took all day it was truly a memorable experience for anyone willing to get off the beaten path and find some hidden Civil War History.

### **September 2019 Field Trip Visit the land of Lincoln – Springfield, Illinois September 19 – 21, 2019**



The annual Cleveland Civil War Round Table Field Trip is set for September 19 – 21, 2019 in historic Springfield, Illinois. The trip will include a visit to the Abraham Lincoln Museum and Library - one of the most visited presidential libraries - which combines history with modern age technology. Our group will be hosted for lunch on the premises with a speaker from the museum. The itinerary will include a visit to President Lincoln’s home and tomb and the State Capital Building, where he served. Springfield is also the home of the Illinois State Military Museum, which includes artifacts from all of America’s conflicts with many Civil War items and the Grand Army of the Republic Civil War Museum. For those wanting a unique experience, there will be an opportunity to go on a Lincoln’s Ghost Walking Tour on Friday evening. Our group will be welcomed to Springfield Thursday evening by none other than Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln’s long-time friend and body guard (portrayed by local historian and guide Garrett Moffett) and the President (portrayed by a local Lincoln impersonator) will join us for dinner Saturday evening at our hotel.

Please mark your calendars to that you can experience this unique opportunity to experience the Land of Lincoln!

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### JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

Jan. 9, 2019

Program: Dick Crews Annual Debate

Topic: "If Lee had won at Gettysburg, could he have gone on to capture Washington, D.C.?"

Moderator: William Vodrey

Drinks @ 6 pm, Dinner @ 6:50

Judson Manor , East 108th St. & Chester

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