

# THE CHARGER

May, 2008

451st Meeting

Vol. 29 #9

*Tonight's Program:*

## Jesse James: The Last Rebel

Jesse James is considered "the most famous outlaw in American history. His is surely one of the best known names to have come out of the Civil War era.

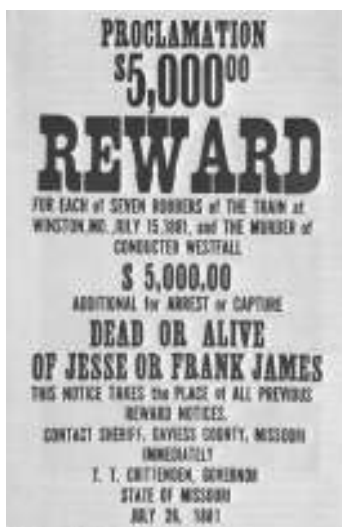
Jesse's life - from farm boy to southern guerilla to outlaw to a symbol of ongoing rebellion to legend during the most tumultuous times in our history - is one of great drama, real and imagined.

In his talk, Mel will touch on a number of facets of James's life and character, digging for truth in the often mythological tales of the bandit's adventures during the war and its aftermath.



From *Franklin D. Howard, Omaha, Nebraska*  
JESSE JAMES

So come ride with Jesse, his brother, Frank, and their gangs as they spread terror, rob banks and stagecoaches – killing anyone that stands in their way – while Jesse becomes a political activist representing resistance during heavy handed reconstruction.

*Tonight's Speaker:*

## Mel Maurer

Mel Maurer is a retired executive of Dana Corporation and a student of history. He is the Roundtable's Historian as well as a past president. He is a past president of the Philosophical Club of Cleveland and a member of the Titanic Historic Society. An Abraham Lincoln scholar, Mel attends the annual Lincoln Forum Symposium and gives several talks on Lincoln. He is also a budding thespian.

Mel and his wife, Elaine live in Westlake. They have four children and eight grandchildren. His interests include writing and speaking on community affairs, charitable causes, history, political issues and personal experiences.

**Date: Wednesday,  
May 14, 2008**

**Place: The Cleveland  
Playhouse Club  
8501 Carnegie Ave.**

**Time: Drinks 6 PM  
Dinner 7 PM**

**Reservations: Please Call  
JAC Communications  
(216) 861-5588**

**Meal choice: Cod with Risotto  
or Ravioli**

## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

*President:* **Terry Koozer** (216) 226-7527  
*Vice President:* **Jon Thompson** (440) 871-6439  
*Secretary:* **Lisa Kempfer** (440) 526-1318  
*Treasurer:* **Dennis Keating** (216) 397-0188  
*Historian:* **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249

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**Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser**

### Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2007 **John Fazio**  
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2005 **Mel Maurer**  
2004 **Warren McClelland**  
2003 **Maynard Bauer**  
2002 **Bill McGrath**  
2001 **William Vodrey**  
2000 **Bob Boyda**  
1999 **Dick Crews**  
1998 **John Moore**  
1997 **Dan Zeiser**  
1996 **John Sutula**  
1995 **Norton London**  
1994 **Robert Battisti**  
1993 **Kevin Callahan**  
1992 **Bob Baucher**  
1991 **Joe Tirpak**  
1990 **Ken Callahan Jr.**  
1989 **Neil Glaser**  
1988 **Martin Graham**  
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1986 **Tim Beatty**  
1985 **Brian Kowell**  
1984 **Neil Evans**  
1983 **William Victory**  
1982 **John Harkness**

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1980 **Charles Spiegle**  
1979 **William Bates**  
1978 **Richard McCrae**  
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1976 **Milton Holmes**  
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1971 **Kenneth Callahan**  
1970 **Frank Schuhle**  
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1965 **Lester Swift**  
1964 **Guy DiCarlo, Jr.**  
1963 **Paul Guenther**  
1962 **Edward Downer**  
1961 **Charles Clarke**  
1960 **Howard Preston**  
1959 **John Cullen, Jr.**  
1958 **George Farr, Jr.**  
1957 **Kenneth Grant**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### MAY, 2008

Hdqtrs. Cleve. Civ. War Rdtble  
Cleveland, Ohio May 14, 2008  
After Action Report, 2007-08 Campaign

The 2007-08 Campaign of the CCWRT started quickly with the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. George Buss played Lincoln and Tim Connors played Stephen Douglas, bringing the two great politicians to life. In late September, the Roundtable Field Trip Regiment traveled to Chickamauga and Lookout Mountain. Ranger Jim Ogden of the Park Service gave us an intensive course on the battles and we made our headquarters at the Captains' Quarters B&B that at one time housed the Captains and families of the 6th US Cavalry. Gregg Biggs of the Clarksville, TN Roundtable gave a lively presentation on Nathan Bedford Forrest, Napoleonic Cavalryman. Other programs were carried by veteran members. Marge Wilson, incoming Secretary, spoke on the 1st Cleveland Light Artillery, Dan Zeiser spoke on Gen. George Thomas at the Battle of Chickamauga. Several members took part in the Annual Dick Crews Debate on the viability of the CSA as a country. Brian Kowell presided over the Civil War Quiz, William F.B. Vodrey described the Confederate Raid on St. Albans, John Fazio spoke on the engagement between the USS *Kearsarge* and CSS *Alabama*. Finally, Mel Maurer will speak this month on Jesse James. The members performed in the best traditions of the Roundtable.

In this regard, Webmaster Paul Burkholder, Charger Editor Dan Zeiser, Vice President Jon Thompson, Treasurer Dennis Keating, Secretary Lisa Kempfer, Historian Mel Maurer, and Marge Wilson on the History Day Program all made great contributions.

#### Signal and Communications

We conducted a major offensive against mailing costs by taking The Charger on line. This should result in major savings for the Roundtable.

#### 2008-09 Campaign

Jon Thompson, presumptive President, has worked on a late Sept. Field Trip to Gettysburg and a great lineup of speakers for the next campaign, so be ready to re-enlist for next year.

Sincerely,

Terry Koozer

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE  
2007/2008 SCHEDULE**

September 12, 2007

**The Lincoln-Douglas Debates:  
A Reenactment**



**George  
Buss**

October 10, 2007

**Brevet Brigadier General James B.  
Barnett of the 1st Cleveland Light Ar-  
tillery and the Firing of the First Land  
Cannon Shots of the War**

**Marge Wilson**

November 14, 20067

**George Thomas at  
the Battle of  
Chickamauga**

**Dan Zeiser**



December 12, 2007



**Nathan Bedford  
Forrest:  
Napoleonic  
Cavalryman**

**Greg Biggs**

January 9, 2008

**The Dick Crews Annual  
Debate**

*The Southern Victory of 1865:  
Was the Confederacy a Viable  
State?*

**Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey**

February 13, 2008

**A Civil War Quiz**

**Presented by  
Brian Kowell**



March 12, 2008

**Raid!: The Confed-  
eracy Comes to St.  
Albans, Vermont**



**William F. B. Vodrey**

April 9, 2008

**The USS Kear-  
sarge vs. the  
CSS Alabama  
John Fazio**



May 14, 2008



**Jesse James: The  
Last Rebel**

**Mel Maurer**

## **The Fox and the Hedgehog The Hampton Roads Conference**

By Mel Maurer

Just east of Petersburg, Virginia, near the rim of “the Crater” on Sunday, January 29, 1865, a white flag appeared on the Confederate side of the lines. A delegation of commissioners from Jefferson Davis (Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, John A. Campbell, a former U. S. Supreme Court Justice, now assistant Secretary of War, and Robert Hunter, president pro tem of the Senate) had arrived to be taken to a meeting with Union representatives to discuss “issues and options for peace.” Hopeful rumors the war was ending soon circulated on both sides of the lines. The ensuing meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup> aboard the steamer “River Queen” became known as the Hampton Roads Conference.

This last hope for some sort of negotiated end to the war was arranged through the friendship of Francis Preston Blair Sr. with Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. Blair was an anti-slavery Missouri politician and advisor to presidents back to Andrew Jackson. With a stagecoach version of shuttle diplomacy between Washington and Richmond in January, Blair was able to get both presidents to send representatives to try to discuss a way to end hostilities. Since Davis, in his authorizing letter referred to “two countries” while Lincoln referred to “one country,” in his letters, the odds were against any success.

With his reelection and the continuing success of Grant and Sherman as they squeezed whatever life there was left in Lee’s forces between their armies, Lincoln could afford to be magnanimous in agreeing to this conference while Davis, under fire in the south for his handling of the war, needed some political cover to show he was open to other options to end the conflict. Shelby Foote notes that, during the diplomatic exchanges leading to the meeting, Lincoln, the sly political fox and Davis, the stubborn, prickly hedgehog, “swapped roles.” Lincoln was intransigent and unyielding on his terms for peace while Davis became “politically shifty, and secretive” to hold off disgruntled opponents in the Confederate Congress while not yielding anything.

Lincoln had initially sent secretary of state William Seward to meet with the Stephens Delegation, but, after General Grant sent a letter to Stanton reporting that he “was convinced, . . . intentions are good and their desire sincere to restore peace and union” and expressing regret “that Mr. Lincoln cannot have an interview with the two named in this dispatch, if not all three now within our lines.” Lincoln, encouraged by Grant’s telegram, and maybe believing for the first time that there was a chance for some success, sent him these words: “Say to the gentlemen that I will meet them personally . . . as soon as I can get there.” He then left two hours later taking only his valet. Although Grant was responsible for Lincoln’s attendance at the conference, he does not speak of his role in doing so in his memoirs – most notably saying of the delegation, for which he was a gracious host, in true Grant fashion, “I never was ready to admit they were representatives of any government.”

The Hampton Roads Conference deserves more attention than it usually gets in the few paragraphs accorded it in most histories, if only for the insights it provides into its participants as they tried to find a way, against great odds, to stop the killing. It was a four hour drama of give and take with argued positions and some humor as only Lincoln could provide in tense situations. By agreement, it was an informal conference with no clerks or secretaries to take any notes, so we have only the memory of its participants for the record.

While each side wrote a report on the conference summarizing it for their respective

governments, I have found the best detailed account of the meeting in a two volume set of books by Alexander Stephens written in 1867, "A Constitutional View of the late War Between the States its causes, character, conduct and results." I have used several sources for this article, but most of its details come from Stephens's account, which also seems to be the prime source for briefer accounts in other histories. (Unlike Davis – who he seldom saw - Stephens knew the war was lost and had become known along with others in the South as a "submissionist.")

The Stephens group entered the meeting salon first. Lincoln and Seward then came in, greeting the delegation – some as old acquaintances and friends – and being introduced to others. Memories of past associations were shared and various inquiries made about mutual friends – with Stephens reminding Lincoln how they had worked together while congressmen for the election of Zachary Taylor in 1848. (It was also during the re-acquaintance period that Lincoln, remembering Stephens as a small man, first saw him there as a much larger man until Stephens removed his heavy coat, prompting the president to remark later to Grant, "Did you ever see such a small ear in such a large shuck.")

Introductions over, Stephens asked Lincoln: "Well Mr. President, is there no way of putting an end to the present trouble, and bringing about a restoration of the general good feeling then existing between the different states and sections of the country?" Lincoln replied that there was only one way that he knew of and that was for those resisting the laws of the Union to cease that resistance. Stephens then explored the plan put forth by Blair, when Blair had met with Davis, which called for an armistice while the two sides somehow joined together to drive the invading French out of Mexico - enforcing the Monroe Doctrine. Lincoln told Stephens that he knew that Blair had certain ideas, but that he did not hear of them before Blair's initial trip to Richmond, telling Stephens as he did, after Blair's first trip, in a letter to Davis, that his condition for peace was the restoration of the Union. Stephens asked if a policy could be developed "which would probably lead to a restoration of the Union, without further bloodshed, would it not be advisable to act on it even without the pledge of ultimate restoration being required?" Lincoln replied that the settlement of the existing difficulties was of supreme importance and the only basis on which he would entertain a proposition for a settlement was the recognition and reestablishment of the National Authority throughout the land.

Judge Campbell then asked about conditions for restoration if the South would consent to Lincoln's terms. The delegation had agreed to ask these questions if the Monroe Plan proposal failed, although it is doubtful that Davis would have wanted this line if inquiry pursued. This request led to a discussion of slavery. Seward said that Lincoln could not express himself more clearly or more forcibly than he had in his recent message to Congress – "In presenting the abandonment of armed resistance to the National Authority, on the part of the insurgents as the only indispensable condition to ending the war, I retract nothing heretofore said as to slavery...while I remain in my present position, I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation..."

Seward then informed the commissioners that Congress had just passed a constitutional amendment banning slavery throughout the country, the whole country, while they were making their way to the meeting. Lincoln added that he still favored some sort of compensation for the loss of slaves if Congress approved. Shelby Foote says this news of the amendment came as "a considerable shock to the delegates but that was mild compared to what followed when Hunter attempted to summarize Lincoln's terms with a question" – "Mr. President, if we understand you correctly, you think that we of the Confederacy have committed treason; that we have forfeited our rights and are proper subjects for the hangman. Is that what your words imply?"

Lincoln answered: "Yes, you have stated the proposition better than I did. That's about the size of it." After further discussion and a few Lincoln "tension easing stories," Hunter was able to conclude that "We shall not be hanged as long as you are president: if we behave ourselves."

Stephens's account of the amendment news has Seward making the point that the passing of the amendment was a "war measure" and, if the war were to end, it would probably not be adopted by enough states to make it a part of the Constitution. By inference, he was suggesting "end the war and defeat the amendment." Stephens then asked if the Confederates states would be restored to representation in Congress with Lincoln saying, in his opinion, that they ought to be, but that he could not enter into any agreement on this or any subject with "parties in arms against the government." Hunter suggested to Lincoln that he might follow the precedent of Charles I of England, who had negotiated with people in arms against him. Lincoln replied that while Seward was the expert on history, he knew enough history to recall that Charles eventually lost his head. During the discussion on slavery, Stephens also writes that Lincoln referred to the Emancipation Proclamation as a war measure and that he would leave it to the courts to decide its future after the war, but that he would "never change or modify the terms of the Proclamation in the slightest particular." There was more somewhat legalistic discussion on slavery and how it should be ended according to Stephens, but the result in all scenarios was the same – it would be ended and slavery would be no more in the United States.

Had the delegates strictly followed Davis's directions, the conference would have ended quickly, as soon as Lincoln made it clear there would be no temporary cessation of war for any reason, no "two country" solution, and no slavery. However, as we have seen, the meeting did not end abruptly, but continued, in the hope they might yet find some way to achieve an honorable peace. It also seems apparent the southerners knew their cause was lost and began to look ahead to how they and their states might be treated and brought back into a united country. In the end, despite the common good will, Davis had not authorized his delegates to negotiate, while Lincoln would not negotiate with rebel forces. The issues would be settled on the battlefield.

In saying good bye, Lincoln said to Stephens, "Well Stephens, there has been nothing we could do for our country. Is there anything I can do for you personally." The latter first replied "Nothing," but then said, "Unless you can send me my nephew who has been a prisoner on Johnson's Island." (Lincoln also politely promised to have Grant consider an exchange of prisoners and, according to Stephens, to reconsider an armistice, saying – as if granting a favor – "I will re-consider it but I do not think my mind will change ...") George Meade recorded the end of the attempt for peace in a letter to his wife: "Today they (the delegation) returned to Richmond, but what was the result of their visit no one knows. At the present moment, 8 p.m., the artillery on our lines is in full blast, clearly proving at this moment there is no peace."

Upon returning to the White House, Lincoln had Stephens's nephew, Lt. John A. Stephens, captured at Vicksburg, brought to a meeting with him in Washington, where he gave him a pass through Union lines. (He also gave him some pictures of himself saying, "They are a curiosity down your way.") Upon their return, the Stephens Delegation reported to Davis. He thought Lincoln had acted in bad faith. Davis said it was clear that there would be no peace short of "unconditional submission on the part of the people of the Confederacy with an entire change of their social fabric throughout the south." He would then use this conclusion to promote "the necessity of renewed and desperate efforts for the preservation of themselves and their institutions." Stephens writes that "When the program of action, thus indicated by Mr. Davis...was clearly resolved upon, I, then, for the first time, in view of all the surroundings,

considered the Cause to be as utterly hopeless.” He then left Richmond after telling Davis he was going home to Georgia to stay, where he eventually welcomed his paroled nephew – the only tangible result of the Hampton Roads Conference.

### **Something to think about for our Gettysburg field trip: "Lost Triumph: Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg— and Why It Failed" by Tom Carhart**

"Union artillery and rifle fire brutalized the nine attacking brigades of Pickett's Charge. By three-thirty, they reached the Clump of Trees, but could not hold. They retreated, bleeding, back across the open field, and Lee, it is said, was there to receive them, loudly telling one and all, 'It's all my fault!' But was it really?" This passage from the book "Lost Triumph: Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg - and Why It Failed" by Tom Carhart succinctly captures the question addressed in the book. Carhart's thought-provoking and provocative book explores the issue of Robert E. Lee's battle plan for the third day at Gettysburg. The author is a graduate of West Point and a Vietnam veteran. He received a law degree from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in American and military history from Princeton University.

To give credit where due, the book was brought to my attention by Dr. David Burke of Holden Arboretum and Case Western Reserve University, who professes a deep interest in the Gettysburg battle. As the title implies, Lee's plan entailed more than merely Pickett's Charge. Carhart's book presents his argument that Pickett's Charge was one component of a planned three pronged attack on the Union fishhook defenses on Cemetery Ridge, Cemetery Hill, and Culp's Hill. The details of Lee's real plan, as articulated by Carhart, have been intentionally omitted from this review to avoid spoiling the book for those who have not read it. Suffice it to say that Lee's real plan at Gettysburg required the kind of timing and coordination that characterized his battle plans in the Kanawha Valley and Seven Days battles. In those instances, the inexperience and failings of some of Lee's subordinates caused his plans to fall far short of the objectives. By the battle of Gettysburg, the Army of Northern Virginia had become a highly cohesive fighting force capable of executing Lee's complex plans, which gave Lee the confidence to devise an intricate plan for the destruction of the Army of the Potomac. As the book's title further implies, Carhart explains why Lee's real plan was unsuccessful, and a prominent figure in this, according to Carhart, is someone remembered not for his actions at Gettysburg, but for his own disastrous failure thirteen years later.

As an ardent admirer of Lee, I need no motivation to enthusiastically support any argument vindicating Lee from what is widely considered, as Carhart states, "Lee's faulty decision making on July 3, 1863," and am more than happy to put my eyes to a book enhancing Lee's already lofty status by removing the one blemish from his stellar military record. But for those skeptics whose opinion on this issue is solidified, the author's view is endorsed by no less a Civil War authority than James M. McPherson, who wrote the book's Foreword and who, according to the Acknowledgments, provided guidance and additional evidence to the author and acted as devil's advocate to assist the author in honing his case. McPherson wrote in the Foreword, "Given the vast number of writings on Gettysburg, it seems impossible to come up with new information and insights about the battle. But Tom Carhart has done it." Carhart's argument can be summarized in a single paragraph from his book. "Upon considering Lee and his life experiences to date, it is readily apparent that he was a consummate military strategist and tactician. When he defeated McClellan in the Seven Days, Pope at Second Manassas, Burnside at Fredericksburg, Hooker at Chancellorsville, and, despite the fact that the Union force was nearly twice the size of his own, fought McClellan to a draw at Antietam, Lee never left any of his forces inactive at the critical moments of those battles. I believe it frivolous and professionally insulting to think that Lee did not have some major plan...for the rest of his army during Pickett's charge by 13,000 - less than 20 percent of his available force - against the heart of the Union defenses on July 3."

Dave Carrino's review can be read in full on the Roundtable website. Dave highly recommends the book for anyone interested in the field trip to Gettysburg this fall.

**2008-9 Proposed  
Executive Committee**

President: Jon Thompson  
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Secretary: Marge Wilson  
Historian: Mel Maurer

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Webmaster: Paul Burkholder  
Editor of the Charger: Dan Zeiser

**2008 History Day Winners to Join Us  
At Our May Meeting**

David Wemer, from Shaker Heights High School and Katherine Cavanaugh from Oberlin High School will exhibit their prize-winning projects at our May 14 meeting. The History Day jurors awarded David first prize in the Civil War category for his exhibit, "A War of Civility: John Morgan's Indiana and Ohio Raid." Katherine won the second prize for her project, "Striking Out: The New York Draft Riots." David and Katherine's parents and teachers will also be with us.

Last year, The Cleveland Civil War Round Table arranged for a Civil War category to be included in History Day's judging and our prize went to 8<sup>th</sup> grader, Chloe Pruitt, for her outstanding performance: "Out of Tragedy: The Citizens of Gettysburg and Their Noble Struggle for the Wounded." Since then, member Norty London scheduled Chloe's performance as part of his Civil War series for the Baldwin-Wallace East Retirement series.

Marge Wilson