

# THE CHARGER

November, 2007

445th Meeting

Vol. 29 #3

*Tonight's Program:*

## George H. Thomas at the Battle of Chickamauga

In 1863, Union and Confederate forces fought for control of Chattanooga, gateway to the deep South.

Following a masterful campaign of maneuver in Tennessee, Union General William Stark Rosecrans forced Confederate General Braxton Bragg to retreat to Chattanooga and beyond. Rosecrans then hoped to cut the railroad that was Bragg's supply line from Atlanta. Seizing an opportunity, Bragg attempted to strike Rosecrans's separated columns. Failing twice, he succeeded on the third attempt. By this time, though, the Union forces had consolidated.

On September 19 and 20, the second bloodiest battle of the war was fought in northern Georgia, along a meandering creek known as the Chickamauga. On the first day, Bragg attempted in vain to get between the Northern Army and Chattanooga. To do so would put the Federals in jeopardy, but the attempt failed. On the second day, Bragg, reinforced by James Longstreet, broke through the Union lines and routed half of the Union army. The left wing of the Army, commanded by George Thomas, remained. Remnants of the routed units gathered on a knoll known as Snodgrass Hill. There, led by Thomas, they fought off numerous attempts to finish them. Here Thomas earned his sobriquet, The Rock of Chickamauga.

*Tonight's Speaker:*

## Dan Zeiser

Dan Zeiser has been a student of the Civil War since childhood. A history major in college, the Roundtable has permitted him to continue to indulge his fondness for historical figures such as George Thomas. Over the years, Mr. Zeiser has contributed many articles to *The Charger* and has made presentations to the Roundtable on several occasions. He is known, mostly by himself, for his quirky, yet scholarly, pieces and always appreciates the kind forbearance of members for his historical ramblings. Mr. Zeiser has been a member of the Roundtable since 1992, is a past president and currently serves as Editor of *The Charger*. Dan is married and has three children.

*Date:* **Wednesday,  
November 14, 2007**

*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:* **Roasted Breast of  
Chicken or Pasta Aglio et Olio**

# 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  
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### Directors:

Dave Carrino                      John Fazio  
Marilyn DeBaltzo                Rick Maurer  
Phil DiBianca                      Marge Wilson

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**Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser**

## Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2007 John Fazio	1981 Thomas Geschke
2006 Dave Carrino	1980 Charles Spiegle
2005 Mel Maurer	1979 William Bates
2004 Warren McClelland	1978 Richard McCrae
2003 Maynard Bauer	1977 James Chapman
2002 Bill McGrath	1976 Milton Holmes
2001 William Vodrey	1975 Thomas Gretter
2000 Bob Boyda	1974 Nolan Heidebaugh
1999 Dick Crews	1973 Arthur Jordan
1998 John Moore	1972 Bernard Drews
1997 Dan Zeiser	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1996 John Sutula	1970 Frank Schuhle
1995 Norton London	1969 Donald Heckaman
1994 Robert Battisti	1968 Frank Moran
1993 Kevin Callahan	1967 William Schlesinger
1992 Bob Baucher	1966 Donald Hamill
1991 Joe Tirpak	1965 Lester Swift
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1989 Neil Glaser	1963 Paul Guenther
1988 Martin Graham	1962 Edward Downer
1987 George Vourlojianis	1961 Charles Clarke
1986 Tim Beatty	1960 Howard Preston
1985 Brian Kowell	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1984 Neil Evans	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1983 William Victory	1957 Kenneth Grant
1982 John Harkness	

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### NOVEMBER, 2007

The 2007-08 campaign of the Roundtable is off to a fast start. We opened with the spirited Lincoln-Douglas show. Since then, the 2007 part of our march into the Civil War has been concentrating on Chickamauga. Ranger/Historian Jim Ogden of the National Park Service and the Chickamauga Battlefield gave us a short but intensive course on the Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge battles, complete with maps. Ranger Ogden delivered his comments in a distinct Ed Bearss style. Ed Bearss is the well known former Chief Historian of the NPS who has appeared at the Roundtable and on the Ken Burns Civil War Series.

At our October meeting, member Marge Wilson gave a great presentation on Gen. Barnett and the 1st Ohio Volunteer Light Artillery. The 1st OVLA fired the first land artillery shot of the war with McClellan in western(now West) Virginia. The 1st OVLA went on to see extensive service. It was at Chickamauga, where its batteries or companies were sent individually to various divisions and brigades. It fought on several fields at Chickamauga and, should you visit the park, you will see the many 1st OVLA monuments scattered over Chickamauga.

While on the tour, Ranger Ogden made the assertion that Gen. Thomas, "The Rock of Chickamauga," spent only an hour and a half at Snodgrass Hill before retreating back to Chattanooga. This leads us to the upcoming November meeting where Charger Editor Dan Zeiser discusses Thomas at the Battle of Chickamauga. I am sure Thomas's actions on Snodgrass Hill will be discussed in detail.

The December meeting will feature Gregg Biggs of Clarksville, Tennessee, who will be speaking on Nathan Bedford Forrest. Forrest was also at Chickamauga.

The Annual Dick Crews Debate will concern the alternative history question of whether the Confederacy was a viable state following its victory in 1865. This debate will be staged in January with William F. B. Vodrey as moderator. I hope the debate will generate some lively discussion.

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  
Canon 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 Briggs**

January 9, 2008

**The Annual Dick Crews  
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

**Jesse James: The  
Last Rebel**

**Mel Maurer**



May 14, 2008

**The USS Kearsarge vs.  
the CSS  
Alabama  
John Fazio**



## THE PROCLAMATION THAT SAVED A NATION

© 2007 John Fazio Part 2 of a Series

Ed. Note: In last month's installment, John began his examination of the interpretations of the Proclamation. This issue concludes the series.]

### **B. The First Interpretation**

The first interpretation is that the Proclamation freed no slaves. Those slaves who were in states and parts of states that were in rebellion remained slaves because the power of the Federal Government could not reach them, or in any case had not reached them. Their masters, obviously, completely ignored Lincoln's edict. Those slaves who were in states or parts of states that had never been in rebellion, or that were no longer in rebellion because they were then in Union hands, were exempt from emancipation. Therefore, it follows that the document did not free one single slave.

Though there was much truth in this sentiment, it was never entirely true, which is to say that the Proclamation did in fact give *de facto* as well as *de jure* freedom to some slaves, albeit only a few, immediately. These were slaves who were being held by Union forces as "contraband of war," in contraband camps, after escaping from their masters and reaching Union lines. Upon the effective date of the Proclamation, they were told by their keepers that they were free to leave. Still other slaves had stayed behind on the Sea Islands off the coast of Georgia after their occupation by Union forces early in the war and after whites had fled to the mainland. They, too, were told that they were free to leave after the Proclamation became effective and after it was read to them.

It needs to be said, further, that Lincoln did not have the constitutional authority to abolish slavery in the entire nation. He could do so in the South because of his war prerogatives, but that authority did not extend to areas where there was no war, i.e. free states and border states.

### **C. The Second Interpretation**

The second interpretation is that the Proclamation freed some slaves, but left others in bondage. The only distinction between this and the first interpretation is the recognition that the slaves in states and parts of states that were in rebellion were free *de jure* even if not yet free *de facto* - a distinction of enormous significance. According to the first interpretation, the slaves in the Confederacy were simply, and conveniently for the scoffers, interpreted as being still in bondage because their masters willed it and because the physical power to undo their masters' will had not reached them. The second interpretation rests upon the premise, as Lincoln and his Attorney General, Edward Bates, contended, that the states that comprised the Confederacy were never out of the Union; that the Constitution made no provision for secession; and that the Union was, therefore, perpetual.

Accordingly, the slaves in states and parts of states still in rebellion on January 1, 1863 (and they are named in the Emancipation Proclamation), were, from that date forward, free in law, and when the Union armies regained control of those states and parts of states, they would encounter not slaves, but free men and women whose status as such had already been proclaimed by a document that had the force of law (unless and until a court of competent jurisdiction would declare otherwise) because it had been prepared and issued by the Commander in Chief of the Union Armies as a measure whose purpose was to subdue persons who had taken up arms against those armies. The slaves remaining in bondage, of course, were those in border states and those in areas that were then in Union hands but could not yet be said to be parts of states that were not in rebellion.

### **D. The Third Interpretation**

The third interpretation is that the Proclamation freed all the slaves everywhere. As with the second interpretation, this interpretation rests on the premise that the states and parts of states that were in rebellion were never out of the Union, but also upon the premise that once the slaves in the states or parts of states that were in rebellion were given their *de facto* freedom by conquering Union armies, slavery was as good as dead in the border states as well because its maintenance therein would have been a hopeless anachronism in a Union of free states. All of this was quite likely foreseen by William Lloyd Garrison, the foremost and fervent abolitionist, when he said that the Emancipation Proclamation was "an act of immense historical consequence," and by Frederick Douglas, who wrote that "We shout for joy that we live to record this righteous decree."

## **IV. EFFECTS**

### **A. In General**

If the genesis of the Proclamation was multifaceted, and the interpretations fluid, there never was the slightest ambiguity about its effects. They were immediate, profound, and changed the course of history. Lincoln, of course, knew that his Proclamation would be very controversial. But Lincoln also knew that the benefits far outweighed the risks. When the dust had cleared, it was obvious that the Proclamation had changed the whole character of the war because it had infused the Federal Government and the forces fighting for it with a new purpose, greater even than the cause of Union. That purpose, of course, was freedom and its extension to a class of persons who had been torn from their native habitats and brought to our shores by force and under the most despicable conditions and who, once here and for two and half centuries thereafter, had been yoked to

endless toil and poverty and made to suffer virtually every indignity, every cruelty and every atrocity that one people could conceive of visiting upon another. This, more than any other factor in the Civil War, with the possible exception of John Francis Adams's diplomacy, assured Union victory.

### **B. The Political Fallout**

Reaction, of course, was mixed. Predictably, the radicals and abolitionists said the Proclamation did not go far enough. Conservatives and Northern Democrats, particularly Copperhead Democrats, who opposed the war and who were willing to accept both secession and slavery, said it went too far. But most Northerners were neither radical, nor abolitionist, nor anti-war Democrats; they were a part, rather, of the great middle ground that eschews extremes, and it was not long, therefore, before there were celebrations all over the land as the new spirit - the moral impetus provided by the Proclamation - took hold of the minds and hearts of most citizens, black and white. Later, however, the enemies of emancipation would have their say, expressing themselves violently in the New York draft riots of July, 1863, in which blacks were specially targeted, even a black orphanage, and in which many were killed, including orphans. In the mid-term elections, the Democrats, running on an anti-emancipation platform, gained 28 seats in the House and also captured the governorships of New York and New Jersey. The results persuaded some historians to conclude that most Northerners were opposed to the Proclamation, but it was not so. Critics pointed out that Democratic victories were by narrow margins, that the Republicans had actually gained five seats in the Senate and that soldiers who were unable to vote because they were in the field were mostly Republican. Moreover, even with the Democratic gains, and even with the loss of support of some War Democrats, who had supported Lincoln on the goal of Union, but who would not support emancipation as a war goal, the Republicans maintained a comfortable control of the Congress due to their alliance with the Unionist Party of pro-war Democrats.

### **C. The Slaves**

The slaves heard and believed, because, of course, they wanted to believe. Legal niceties had no meaning for them. All they knew was that they were free because "Mistuh Linkum said they were. His Proclamation was read to them wherever it could be, usually by a Union soldier. They rejoiced, they wept. Booker T. Washington, writing 35 years later (*Up From Slavery* (1901)), remembered 1865, when he was a nine year-old boy:

As the great day drew nearer, there was more singing in the slave quarters than usual. It was bolder, had more ring, and lasted later into the night. Most of the verses of the plantation songs had some reference to freedom... Some man who seemed to be a stranger (a United States officer, I presume) made a little speech and then read a rather long paper - the Emancipation Proclamation, I think. After the reading we were told that we were all free, and could go when and where we pleased. My mother, who was standing by my side, leaned over and kissed her children, while tears of joy ran down her cheeks. She explained to us what it all meant, that this was the day for which she had been so long praying, but fearing that she would never live to see.

The slaves did not have to be literate (word of mouth would do) to know that the Proclamation was an open invitation to desert their masters and make their way to Union lines, where they would not only acquire their *de facto* freedom, but also be "received into the armed service of the United States." What more could a slave ask for? - freedom and a uniform to go with it! The effect was immediate and electric. A Union officer in Virginia said that he saw slaves in his camp that had come all the way from North Carolina, that the slaves "know all about the Proclamation and they started on the belief in it." Then and later, slaves told how they had been motivated to run by the Proclamation, how they considered it their ticket to freedom. The Union officers noted that the attitude of "the negroes" had changed dramatically, that they no longer considered themselves slaves, but free and independent men and women. Nothing could more unfit a man or woman for slavery than a belief that he or she was no longer a slave, but free. And why should they not believe it? Did not the Proclamation say that "...the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom." And did it not also say that "...such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service." If the invitation had been embossed in gold it could not have been clearer or more effective. All it lacked was an R.S.V.P. The meaning of these lines was as clear to Southern leaders as it was to slaves. On January 12, 1863, Jefferson Davis said that the Proclamation meant the extermination of the Negro race. He also said that it encouraged mass assassination of their masters. Well, not quite, but Davis knew that the trickle of runaway slaves would soon become a flood and that the Union's gain in manpower and soldiers was the Confederacy's loss in labor.

Interestingly, when the war was over and as time passed, it was the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation rather than any of the piecemeal measures that had preceded it, and rather, even, than the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment, that blacks remembered as the defining moment in their long and painful march from bondage. For many years, they would assemble on New Year's Day, at some convenient location - most likely a church - and listen to a reading of the Proclamation, usually

accompanied by singing, prayer and/or an oration. In commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Proclamation (1913), James Weldon Johnson, a black poet, penned these memorable lines:

**Fifty Years**

O Brothers mine, to-day we stand  
Where half a century sweeps our ken,

Since God, through Lincoln's ready hand,  
Struck off our bonds and made us men.

Just fifty years--a winter's day--  
As runs the history of a race;  
Yet, as we look back o'er the day,  
How distant seems our starting place!

Then, in a more assertive tone, making certain that humility did not replace self-confidence, he said:

This land is ours by right of birth,  
This land is ours by right of toil  
We helped to turn its virgin earth,  
Our sweat is in its fruitful soil.  
To gain these fruits that have been earned,  
To hold these fields that have been won,  
Our arms have strained, our backs have burned,  
Bent bare beneath a ruthless sun.

Then should we speak but servile words,  
Or shall we hang our heads in shame?  
Stand back of new-come foreign hordes,  
And fear our heritage to claim?

No! stand erect and without fear,  
And for our foes let this suffice--  
We've brought a rightful sonship here,  
and we have more than paid the price . . .

That for which millions prayed and sighed  
That for which tens of thousands fought,  
For which so many freely died,  
God cannot let it come to naught.

Blacks, indeed, had a very long way to go to achieve true equality of opportunity and equality before the law. Years, decades, more than a century of intimidation, violence, lynchings, disenfranchisement, and discrimination lay ahead of them. But the Proclamation represented a beginning, a first step, and no one knew it better than they.

**D. The Armies**

Many in the military protested the Proclamation, as Lincoln knew they would. It was not, they said, what they had signed on for, not what they were fighting for. Some soldiers even deserted. But when it became clear that the effect of the Proclamation would be to put more numbers in their ranks, thereby increasing their chances of victory and hastening the war's end, the great majority of servicemen accepted the Proclamation and the blacks who were soon in uniform, if not as equals, then at least as the enemy of my enemy and therefore my friend. Further, it would not be long before they proved their worth on the battlefield and therefore came to be regarded as more than the enemy of my enemy, but as comrades in arms.

Between 1863 and 1865, 300,000 blacks fought for the Union. By the end of the war, 186,000 blacks were in uniform, armed and fighting for the cause of Union and "a new birth of freedom," 93,000 from Confederate states, 40,000 from border states and 53,000 from free states. In addition, another 19,000 blacks served in the Navy. This was a tremendous plus for the Union cause and a deathblow to the Confederacy. Further, it should not go unsaid that 38,000 black Union soldiers gave the last full measure of devotion, many of whom were killed in cold blood when they were taken prisoner.

### **E. Foreign Intervention**

The Proclamation put an immediate end to the threat of recognition of the Confederacy and intervention in the war by England or France, the only countries that posed the threat of either. Regardless of what the ruling classes in each country thought about the democratic experiment across the ocean, and regardless of the advantages that might accrue to them by a division of the United States, their governments simply could not ignore public opinion, which, after the issuance of the Proclamation, was solidly on the side of the Federal government now that it had committed itself to the abolition of slavery, which both countries had previously abolished. Neither country's government could afford to be seen as supporting slavery.

### **V. THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT**

Towards the end of the war, when it became increasingly clear that the Union would prevail, Lincoln and those who supported emancipation, by then a clear majority in the North, became concerned that the Proclamation, as a war measure, would not survive a legal challenge when the war was finally over. "A question might be raised," Lincoln said, "whether the proclamation is legally valid. It might be urged that it only aided those that came into our lines, and that it was inoperative as to those who did not give themselves up." There was also concern for the freedom of those slaves who had not been freed by the Proclamation (about 40,000 in Kentucky; somewhat less than 2,000 in Delaware) as well as for the children of slaves who had been freed by it, but whom, the court's might decide, were not affected by it. For these reasons, Lincoln pushed hard, during his 1864 campaign for re-election, for a constitutional amendment that would prohibit involuntary servitude throughout the country and thus make its return to any part of the country impossible. His work was made easier by the abolition of slavery by state action in the border states of Maryland and Missouri. Maryland's new Constitution, which abolished slavery, passed by a narrow vote of its people, including its loyal soldiers in the field, in October, 1864, and took effect the following month. In Missouri, the institution was ended on January 11, 1865, by an executive proclamation of Governor Thomas C. Fletcher.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provided that:

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The Amendment was first introduced in the House in the spring of 1864 and failed to pass. It was re-introduced and finally passed by the House on January 31, 1865, after Lincoln took energetic measures to support it. He insisted that its passage be added to the Republican Party platform for the Presidential election of 1864. Further, he persuaded fence-sitters of the necessity of passage, sometimes with promises of patronage. He even went as far as to release from military prisons certain Confederates who were related to Democratic members of Congress. Lincoln prevailed, but by means that caused Thaddeus Stevens to remark that "The greatest measure in the nineteenth century was passed by corruption, aided and abetted by the purest man in America."

The Amendment was proposed to the legislatures of the several states by the 38<sup>th</sup> Congress on January 31, 1865. The following day, Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed Amendment. It was declared, in a proclamation of the Secretary of State (Seward), dated December 18, 1865, to have been ratified by the legislatures of 27 of the 36 states. Dates of ratification extended from February 1, 1865, through December 6, 1865. The Amendment was subsequently ratified by eight additional states, from December 8, 1865, through March, 1865.

The last nail had finally been driven into the coffin of slavery in the United States, but it was a nail that would not have been driven had not the Emancipation Proclamation paved the way by preserving the United States as one nation. The Amendment, of course, made the Proclamation superfluous and moot any challenge that might have been made to its legality. But all of this was merely legal conclusion. Though superfluous in law, it remained a beacon in fact, a brilliant burst of light that had illuminated a dark and dreary landscape and that finally brought reality in line with the principle set forth in the Declaration of Independence four score and seven years earlier: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...

## **THAT'S DEBATABLE**

If you would like to be considered as a debater in the Dick Crews Annual Debate on January 9, 2008, please let William Vodrey know as soon as possible at 216-664-3643 weekdays. Our topic this year is "The Southern Victory of 1865: Was the Confederacy a Viable State?" If selected, you would speak for a maximum of five (5) minutes, take questions for a maximum of five (5) minutes, and participate in the membership's discussion. Members will then vote on the winner of the debate. It is easy, it is fun, and no particular level of expertise is required. Just how did Jeff Davis & Company triumph in some alternative universe? You decide!

## **NEXT MONTH**

**NATHAN BEDFORD  
FORREST:  
NAPOLEONIC  
CAVALRYMAN**

**GREG BRIGGS  
CLARKSVILLE  
TENNESSEE  
CIVIL WAR  
ROUNDTABLE**