

# THE CHARGER



## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

Nov. 2018

VOL. 40 # 3

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### **Message From the President**

American Civil War historians – welcome to the November issue of the Charger.

We had a magnificent time on our Field Trip at the end of September to Antietam and Harper's Ferry! I would like to thank our guide Steve Recker for the wonderful presentation – I thought especially effective was his explanation of the confused early morning fighting in the “Cornfield” beginning with Hooker's assault - whereby Steve positioned and used a number of us on site as regimental and brigade units to physically chart the movements across the field of battle. No matter how many times I've visited the site or read about it in books - it is always hard to envision and to establish the timing, sequencing and direction of the attacks and counterattacks in and around the Cornfield. Steve's approach was quite illustrative.

Speaking of the Field Trip, I would also like to thank Jim Heflich and Treasurer Steve Pettyjohn for the Field Trip photo slide show at our October meeting and Historian Dave Carrino for handling the projection technology; Treasurer Steve Pettyjohn & Rich Hronek for handling the field trip iced waters & coolers; also a triple thanks to Treasurer Steve for being ready at my hip with checks and cash for the various presenters and vendors; and to Frank O'Grady for appearing in his Union soldier uniform during the field trip which must have been incredibly warm and uncomfortable - and Judge Charles Patton

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For his excellent Thursday evening primer on the “Trial of John Brown.”

Also, at our October meeting we honored America’s participation in WWI and in particular the 100th year anniversary of Pershing’s crucial October and November 1918 Meuse-Argonne offensive that turned the tide in favor of the allies – thanks to Kirk Stewart for displaying his impressive WW I edged weapons collection. At November’s meeting will be Kirk’s display of his WW I firearms.

Our October meeting continued my series theme of “Southern Invasions and Raids of the North” – with a follow up on the subject of our Antietam/Harper’s Ferry field trip by Dr. Gene Schmiel with his presentation “The Controversy over the Union Command in the Maryland Campaign: McClellan, Burnside, Porter, and the role(s) of Jacob D. Cox”. I particularly enjoyed how Dr. Schmiel explained not only Cox’s immediate role in the battle, but also the lead up and overall context to his involvement - which was important to understand in regards to how things ultimately unfolded and went awry - especially on the Union left wing after it finally after numerous attempts successfully assaulted “Burnside’s Bridge” and crossed the Antietam Creek. Which was followed by the preparation for and final charge toward the outskirts of Sharpsburg which should have turned the Southern right flank and vanquished Lee’s army but for the timeliest arrival of A.P. Hill’s “Light Division”; by the way, whose complete route from Harper’s Ferry we travelled in total early Saturday morning during our field trip.

Back in September of 1862, at about the same time as Lee was advancing over the Potomac and into Maryland, that invasion of the north was being duplicated in the west for arguably the only time during of the entire war. After setbacks at the hands of U.S. Grant at forts Henry & Donaldson, Shiloh and Corinth earlier in the year; and then with the fall of Nashville, Confederate General Beauregard was moved east and replaced by the argumentative, prickly; ulcer and migraine suffering – General Braxton Bragg.

With nearly *zero* friends in the Confederate command structure, he had the most important Civilian friend that a Confederate General could have - that being none other than President Jeff Davis - who put Bragg in charge in the West. Although unliked by his peers, Bragg was a bright and industrious West Point grad, an able administrator and once in command, *he was determined* to reverse the South’s lost western fortunes.

Having just been driven from the Confederate Tennessee heartland --- and *in perhaps the only time* that truly imaginative & creative strategic thinking would be employed by a Southern Army commander in the West, Bragg devised a bold and improbable plan to invade Kentucky - by railroading about 30,000 troops from Tupelo, Mississippi - to Mobile, Alabama - to Atlanta, Georgia and finally arriving at Chattanooga, Tennessee – and brilliantly beating to that spot a plodding Union army under Don Carlos Buell coming from central Tennessee - who like McClellan in the east, seemed to have as Lincoln would have characterized it “*the slows*”. It was *the largest* Confederate deployment by rail during the war – more than double the size of



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Longstreet’s better known movement from Virginia in time for the Battle of Chickamauga.

The Union strategic left flank therefore was open in Kentucky and toward Ohio, and Bragg resolved to meet up with a 10,000 man Confederate force under Kirby Smith - who skillfully went around the well defended Cumberland Gap and snuck into eastern Kentucky - and with hard mountain marching he was already in Lexington – now Bragg envisioned uniting with Smith in Bardstown for an advance on Louisville - and with luck maybe even into Ohio! *What happened next?* We shall learn when November’s speaker Christopher L. Kolakowski will be with us for his presentation “Perryville: Battle for Kentucky”.

I’ll see you at our next meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup> – in the meantime, don’t forget to follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

P.S. – I spoke with Mr. Ed Bearss several times this past week to arrange his flights and lodging for his visit to us on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Ed said that he is looking forward to coming back to Cleveland and speaking to our great Round Table once again!

Dan Ursu

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### THE WITNESS TREE OF PROSPECT AVENUE

Many times as we go through our daily routines we pass by historic places and structures that should mean something, but unfortunately they don’t connect with us. As they don’t have the capability of reaching out we need to know where they are and something about their significance . One such landmark is the old Elm tree in front of 3643 Prospect Ave. on the near east side of Cleveland. According the Cleveland Landmarks Commission the tree was planted in 1858 as part of and is the only remaining vestige of the city’s first tree planting operation. This 160 year old remnant of the past has survived for many years in the urban environment. Growing tall and flourishing, prying up the sidewalk and providing shade to many passers bye. One can only wonder about how many old vets stood under the tree and reminisced about what they did at Shiloh, where they were during the Overland Campaign, or how their post war businesses were doing. The tree has stood there and seen the rise, demise and rebirth of the once prosperous Prospect Ave. Although the homes of the once well heeled folks that made Prospect what it once was have long since vanished, the tree remains. Among other things it has seen the growth and decline of the great industrial society that once fueled this area, and as I stood there I couldn’t help but wonder did folks gather under the tree to read the headlines announcing the assassination of President Lincoln, the collapse of the stock market in 1929, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crises and the assassination of J.F.K.? As I looked at the tree’s trunk I saw that it is gnarled, broken and full of carbuncles depicting insect damage,

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Witness Tree cont.

damage, but the tree still lives on and although by the looks of things is nearing the end of it's life, it hopefully still has a few more good years left. As I said before the tree cannot of course reach



out to us but if it could one can only imagine what stories it could tell and what lessons we could learn. It could tell us about the many Congresses that never seemed to do much, the Presidents that never seemed to do much. The ones that seemed bigger than life and carried the nation on to victory and prosperity, and the ones that died before they could accomplish much. Through all these ups and downs the tree has survived, right along with the nation.

So the next time we're rushing through our daily routine and in a hurry to get home or wherever we're going, stop and take a look at the old witness tree there on Prospect Ave. I'm sure it will get folks thinking, thinking about it's past and it's future, about our past and our future, and with that it will continue to have a positive influence on the community and in doing so it will have accomplished one of it's main purposes.

Paul Siedel

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### History Brief

#### What I did on my Summer Vacation by David A. Carrino

This history brief was presented at the September 2018 meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. The following longer version of the history brief contains additional information that was not included in the version that was presented at the meeting.

The stereotypical first assignment for students who are returning to school after the summer is to write a report about what they did on their summer vacation. Since the September meeting is routinely the first meeting after the Roundtable's summer break, this history brief is about something that I did on my summer vacation. The Roundtable's president for 2018-2019, Dan Ursu, chose Southern invasions and raids of the North as the theme for this session. With that in mind, this history brief focuses on an invasion of the North, in fact, an invasion of that state up north, which all Ohioans know is the correct pronunciation for the state whose name is spelled M-i-c-h-i-g-a-n. The invasion that is the subject of this history brief was not a Southern invasion, but a British invasion. And not the British invasion of the 1960s that was led by the Beatles, but a British invasion that occurred during the War of 1812.



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History Brief cont.

However, there is a Civil War connection, which will become clear below. The subject of this history brief is the battle of the River Raisin, which took place in southeastern Michigan from January 18 to 22, 1813. Like a number of Civil War battles, the battle of the River Raisin goes by a couple of names, one for the body of water near its location and one for the town near its location. Hence, this battle is known as the battle of the River Raisin and the battle of Frenchtown.

I learned about this battle several years ago when my wife, Karen, and I were driving to visit our daughter and her family in Holland, Michigan. Our usual driving route takes us north on U.S. route 23. Just before exit 15, there is a brown sign indicating the presence of a National Park at that exit. This sign states that the park at exit 15 is the River Raisin National Battlefield Park, which is one of only four National Battlefield Parks in the U.S. Most people who are reading this are now probably thinking that that number cannot be correct, because there are certainly more than four battlefields in the National Park System. The explanation is that there are a few different designations for battlefield sites in the National Park System, including National Military Park, National Battlefield, National Battlefield Site, and National Battlefield Park. In the National Park System, there are four National Battlefield Parks: River Raisin, Manassas, Richmond (Virginia, not Kentucky), and Kennesaw Mountain. This makes River Raisin the only one of the four National Battlefield Parks that is a non-Civil War site, and it is the closest of the four to Cleveland. This past summer, after driving by that brown sign numerous times, I finally was able to visit the River Raisin battlefield.

The battle of the River Raisin was one of most terrible defeats in U.S. military history, in particular because of what happened in the aftermath of the battle. In August 1812, the British captured Fort Detroit, which gave them a base for invasion of the U.S. Frenchtown, which lay on the northern bank of the River Raisin, was less than 40 miles south of Fort Detroit and in the path of a British invasion into Ohio. As a prelude to an invasion, a small British force and their American Indian allies occupied Frenchtown. The U.S. army that was in that area was under the command of Major General William Henry Harrison and was at that time in northwest Ohio. Harrison's objective was to retake Fort Detroit, and he split his army into two columns, one under his direct command and the other under his second in command, Brigadier General James Winchester. Harrison began to make preparations for a winter campaign, and he ordered Winchester to keep his column in contact with Harrison's column. But when Winchester received a report that the British and Indians had occupied Frenchtown, Winchester sent a detachment of about 700 men under the command of Colonel William Lewis. This force, which consisted of largely untrained troops, most of whom were from Kentucky, was able to drive the smaller British and Indian force out of Frenchtown on January 18, 1813. Winchester and 300 more men arrived following this engagement, and Winchester decided to occupy Frenchtown, even though he was 30 miles from the army's other column. The action on January 18 is usually referred to as the first battle of the River Raisin.

Although Winchester had disobeyed his order to stay in contact with the other column of the army, Harrison was pleased when he learned that Winchester had driven the British out of Frenchtown. Accordingly, Harrison dispatched some reinforcements to Frenchtown, and also sent a messenger, Captain Nathaniel Hart, with orders to hold Frenchtown. When Hart arrived at Frenchtown, he was horrified to find that Winchester had made no preparations for a likely British counterattack. The Kentucky militia who were part of Winchester's force were housed in various buildings in Frenchtown, and the regular army troops were camped in the open east of the town on the right flank of the American force. There were no fortifications facing north, the likely direction of a British attack, other than a picket fence that happened to be on the northern side of Frenchtown. Moreover, Winchester stayed in a house south of the River Raisin and had the army's supply of ammunition and gunpowder kept at that house. These poor dispositions were made in spite of reports from civilians that a large British and Indian force was on the move toward Frenchtown. Winchester believed that it would be some time before the British could mount a counterattack, but at that time, a force of 600 British troops and 800 Indians, under the command of Colonel Henry Procter, was advancing toward Frenchtown.

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### History Brief cont.

The British and Indian force arrived within striking distance of Frenchtown on the night of January 21, 1813 and took up positions for a dawn attack the following day. The American perimeter was so poorly guarded that reputedly the enemy force was able to move within musket range before it was detected. When the British attack was launched, the Americans were caught completely off guard. The troops on the right, who were camped in the open, were overwhelmed in 20 minutes. Although these troops returned fire, many were quickly killed or wounded, and their position soon became untenable, with artillery and musket fire from the British to their front and attack by the Indians on their right flank. The surviving troops were routed and ran across the frozen River Raisin in their rear. However, they were pursued by the Indians, and of the approximately 400 American troops on the right who fled, over 200 were killed or mortally wounded, and the remainder were captured. Among those captured was James Winchester, who had been awakened by the sounds of battle and rushed to the front.

The troops on the left, who took position behind the fence, held out longer and maintained strong musket fire and a stiff defense, and even repulsed some British attacks on their position. However, when Winchester was brought to the British commander, Henry Procter, Procter warned Winchester that if the Americans did not surrender immediately, then Procter would not guarantee their safety from the Indians once they did surrender. In light of this warning, Winchester signed a letter of surrender, which was sent under a flag of truce to the U.S. troops who were holding out on the left. After seeing the letter, these troops wanted to continue to fight rather than risk a fate at the hands of the Indians. But with their ammunition dwindling and a pledge of safe treatment from their British captors, the Americans decided to surrender. One person who was instrumental in negotiating the guarantee of safe treatment of the U.S. prisoners was an American officer who was one of the troops behind the fence, a man named George Madison, who was a cousin of President James Madison. After the battle, George Madison, who was born in Virginia but moved to Kentucky sometime prior to 1784, was held as a prisoner of war in Quebec for a year until a prisoner exchange.

The fighting on January 22, 1813 is usually called the second battle of the River Raisin. The grim U.S. toll for this battle was over 300 killed, about 90 wounded, and about 500 captured. British commander Henry Procter was concerned about a U.S. counterattack and departed Frenchtown with most of his British troops and with those prisoners who could make the trek through the cold and snow. Left at Frenchtown were the Indians and some British troops. The small number of British troops were ostensibly left to protect the American wounded who, because they were too weak for the journey, remained at Frenchtown. Before Procter left, he promised to send sleighs to transport the wounded Americans. But on January 23, 1813, the day following the battle, the remaining British troops departed, and the wounded U.S. troops were left with the Indians, who were already filled with a desire for vengeance because of U.S. expansion into their lands and the losses that they had suffered in the battle. What followed was a massacre of wounded U.S. prisoners, who were helpless to defend themselves. According to accounts of survivors, the Indians tomahawked wounded men and also set fire to buildings in which wounded Americans were housed and then tomahawked men as they fled from the burning buildings. Some of the wounded men died in the flames.

The Indians were under the overall command of Tecumseh, but Tecumseh was not present at the battle or the massacre. Rather, other Indian chiefs were in command of the Indians at the battle and its aftermath, and it has been surmised that had a strong commander like Tecumseh been present, he may have been able to prevent the massacre, had he been of a mind to do so. Those Americans who were not massacred at Frenchtown were led northward by the Indians to Fort Detroit. Along the way, those who were too weak to keep up were killed, and their bodies were left where they were murdered. This brutal march of wounded men, a number of whom were killed for being unable to keep up, was a War of 1812 equivalent of the Bataan Death March more than a century before the World War II atrocity. Exact numbers of American deaths in what became known as the River Raisin Massacre are not known, but estimates range from 30 to 60, which brought the total number of U.S. deaths at the battle of the River Raisin to as many as 400. [Of the approximately 1,000 Americans who fought at the battle of the River Raisin, only 33 were able to avoid death or capture.](#) The bodies at Frenchtown and along the route to Fort Detroit remained unburied for months until Frenchtown again came under U.S. control. The battle of the River Raisin was the worst U.S. defeat in the War of 1812 and had the highest number of American deaths of any battle in the war. In fact, 15% of the American combat deaths in the War of 1812 occurred at the battle of the River Raisin. The massacre that occurred after the battle led to the rallying cry "Remember the Raisin."

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### History Brief cont.

Graves and Hart quickly left the room. The Indians removed Dudley's coat, hat, and shoes, and as they were leaving the room, they tomahawked Hickman. Dudley managed to leave the building onto a porch, and from inside the building he heard Hart negotiating with an Indian for passage to a British prison in return for \$600. The Indian agreed and placed Hart on a horse, but after they went only a short distance, Hart was shot off of the horse and died, although it is not clear if Hart was shot by the Indian with whom Hart had negotiated passage to the British prison or by another Indian. Hickman, the man who had been tomahawked, was then brought out of the building and thrown into the snow, where, according to Dudley's account, "he breathed once or twice and expired." Dudley stood in the snow for some time while Indians passed by him, which caused Dudley to wonder what fate awaited him. Then a young Indian approached Dudley, who showed the Indian his shoulder wound. The Indian put a coat around Dudley's shoulders and led him off for the trek to Fort Detroit. When the Indian saw that Dudley lacked shoes, he gave his prisoner a spare pair of moccasins. Along the march, the Indian gave Dudley some food and also gave him a blanket at night. Dudley also wrote about seeing the Indians displaying the scalps they had taken. The following day, the Indians and their prisoners reached Detroit, where the British took charge of the prisoners. Dudley credited the young Indian who cared for him with saving his life and wrote, "Let me here say my Indian captor exhibited more the principle of the man and the soldier than all the British I had been brought in contact with." Eventually Dudley was paroled and allowed to return to the U.S., where, as he wrote near the end of his account, "I lived to be fully avenged upon the enemies of my country in the battle of the 8th of January below New Orleans." Dudley, of course, was referring to Andrew Jackson's victory at the battle of New Orleans.

After the battle of the River Raisin, William Henry Harrison canceled his winter campaign against Fort Detroit and instead constructed Fort Meigs in present-day Perrysburg, Ohio to protect against invasions by the British and also to use as a base of operations for another advance into Michigan. After the battle of Lake Erie in September 1813, a U.S. force captured Frenchtown. The British army under Henry Procter retreated from Michigan into present-day Ontario, where they were defeated at the battle of the Thames by an army under William Henry Harrison. It was in the battle of the Thames that Tecumseh was killed, perhaps by Richard Mentor Johnson. Johnson never claimed to have killed Tecumseh, but the legend that he was the man who killed the famous Indian chief came to life after the battle. This legend became a campaign slogan in 1836 when Johnson was the Democratic candidate for vice president, and his slogan was "Rumpsey Dumpsey, Rumpsey Dumpsey, Colonel Johnson killed Tecumseh." Although Johnson did not receive enough electoral votes to win the vice presidency, he became the only vice president ever elected by the Senate under the provisions of the Twelfth Amendment.

Another casualty of the battle of the River Raisin was the settlement of Frenchtown. Before the Indians left Frenchtown, they set fire to all of the buildings, and the entire town was destroyed. When Frenchtown was rebuilt after the war, it was renamed Monroe after President James Monroe. Monroe, Michigan has a connection to the Civil War in that it is the place in which George Armstrong Custer spent much of his childhood. In fact, travelers who use exit 15 off of U.S. 23 to drive to Monroe go part of the way on South Custer Road. Monroe, Michigan also has the distinction of having hosted four presidential visits. The first was by Andrew Johnson on September 4, 1866 as part of a midterm campaign tour to support Congressional candidates. Johnson was accompanied on the trip by Secretary of State William Seward, Ulysses Grant, and George Armstrong Custer. Monroe was a stop for Johnson between Toledo and Detroit, but the crowd that gathered in Monroe reportedly was disappointed, because the people did not see Grant, who left the train in Cleveland. The second of Monroe's presidential visits was on June 4, 1910 by William Howard Taft, who attended a dedication ceremony of an equestrian statue honoring George Armstrong Custer. The statue, which still stands, was unveiled by Custer's wife, Elizabeth, and is only about a mile from the River Raisin National Battlefield Park. The third presidential visit was by Bill Clinton on August 15, 2000. This visit included both the president and the vice president. The visit was part of a campaign tour for Al Gore, and both Clinton and Gore were present. Moreover, they were accompanied by their wives, Hillary and Tipper, which made this visit particularly distinctive, and the Clintons were also accompanied by their daughter, Chelsea. The fourth presidential visit to Monroe was by the man who defeated Al Gore, George W. Bush, who visited Monroe on September 15, 2003, three years and one month after the Clinton-Gore visit. The purpose of Bush's visit was to tour the Monroe Power Plant as a way of highlighting his policies for energy generation and energy security.



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History Brief cont.

The U.S. presidents who visited Monroe, Michigan did not tour the River Raisin battlefield, but that battlefield is nevertheless worth visiting because of the historic and tragic events that took place there. [Although there is a connection between the city of Monroe and the Civil War](#), the battle that was fought on the land which Monroe occupies was part of the War of 1812, not the Civil War, and the National Park which preserves that battlefield is quite small compared to Civil War battlefields such as Gettysburg and Antietam. Nevertheless, the River Raisin battlefield is worth a visit by Civil War enthusiasts. After all, touring battlefields is what Civil War enthusiasts do, and the River Raisin National Battlefield Park is only about a two-hour drive from Cleveland. But if Civil War enthusiasts insist on seeing something related to the Civil War when they visit a battlefield, then they can go for a look at the statue of George Armstrong Custer in downtown Monroe.



### JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

Nov. 14, 2018

Program: Battle for Kentucky

Speaker: Christopher Kolakowski

Drinks @ 6 pm, Dinner @ 6:30

Judson Manor , East 108th St. & Chester

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