

December, 2004

419th Meeting

Vol. 26 #4

Tonight's Program:

Ghosts of Gettysburg



It has been said that Gettysburg is the most haunted place on earth. This is understandable, given the carnage that occurred over the three days of battle one hundred forty-one years ago. With casualties of over 50,000, of which 6,000 to 7,000 were killed, there were certainly plenty of souls going to the afterlife. Of course, given the deplorable state of medical knowledge at the time, many of the wounded died later. Let us not forget, also, those whose health was crushed by the battle, but who did not succumb until much later. Given the deaths caused by Gettysburg, it is no wonder that many people have encountered unexplainable events that are attributed to ghosts.



Gettysburg is immersed in ghosts. There are tours of haunted places, books, and websites dedicated to the subject. Tonight, we will learn about the Ghosts of Gettysburg. Drs. Neil Glazer and Lynn Shields will instruct us on some of the stories behind these spirits.



Tonight's Speaker:

Neil Glazer Lynne Shields

Drs. Glazer and Shields have several things in common. They hold PhDs, are career educators, and share a common interest in the battle at Gettysburg. They have co-authored "Asleep for Eternity," scheduled for publication in Gettysburg Magazine.

Dr. Shield has done research on the Farnsworth House, from which Jennie Wade reportedly was shot, the only civilian casualty of the battle. Dr. Glazer is interested in the 8th Ohio and its commander Col. Franklin Sawyer.

**Date: Wednesday,
December 8, 2004**

**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: Chicken Florentine
or Vegetarian Pasta**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER, 2004

It was good to see our November meeting so well attended – our best crowd of this season. We were rewarded with good company, good food and drink, and a great talk by our own **Dan Zeiser** on **Winfield Scott Hancock**. Civil War personalities are a favorite topic for the Roundtable and **Hancock** is one of the largest of the war. We now know much more about him than we did before, leaving us to wonder anew what would have happened if a man of his ability had been given more responsibility earlier in the conflict.

Gary Regan won the “**Zeiser Zinfandel**” and then graciously presented it to **Dan Mark Cohen** and **Anthony Kellon** tied as winners of the night’s quiz – by acting quizmaster, **Hans Kuenzi** - and then each tried to present the other with the grand prize. What great members we have. It may be harder to present this month’s wine to its namesake – “**George Meade Merlot**” but considering the subject of this month’s talk, maybe not – spirits to the spirit?

I’d like us to think of this month’s meeting as our **Christmas Meeting**, an opportunity to socialize with our friends and their friends as the holiday season begins in earnest. Ghosts have been a part of Christmas since **Charles Dickens** introduced the ghosts of Christmases past, present, and future to the world in his “**A Christmas Carol**.” We just may become acquainted with some Civil War ghosts of times past when our December speakers, **Neil Glazer** and **Lynne Shields**, tell us about the “**Ghosts of Gettysburg**.”

Joshua Chamberlain once wrote “In great deeds something abides. On great fields something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear; but spirits linger to consecrate ground for the vision-place souls.” Do they linger? It’s a fascinating question even for those not particularly interested in the Civil War. Plan to attend and to bring a guest or two - and there’s no charge for attending spirits.

Our officers, trustees and I wish you the very best of Holiday Seasons and the happiest of New Years as we look forward to seeing you on December 8th.

Mel Maurer

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2004/2005 SCHEDULE**

September 8, 2004



Lincoln and Douglas

**Voices of the
Civil War:
D o u g -
las, Lincoln,
and Echoes on
the Prairie**

George Buss

October 13, 2004

**Henry
W.
Halleck**



John Marszalek

November 10, 2004

**Winfield Scott
Hancock**

**Dan
Zeiser**



December 8, 2004



**Ghosts of
Gettysburg**

**Neil
Glazer**

January 12, 2005

The Great Debate

*Which is the best book, fiction or
non-fiction, on the Civil War?*

Moderator: William Vodrey

February 9, 2005

**Stonewall
Jackson in the
Valley
Bob Boyda**



March 9, 2005

**Myths of
Shiloh**

**Tim Smith
Shiloh National Park Historian**



April 13, 2005

**Abraham
Lincoln
Portrayed by
Jim Getty**



May 11, 2005

**U. S. Grant Seen
and Heard**

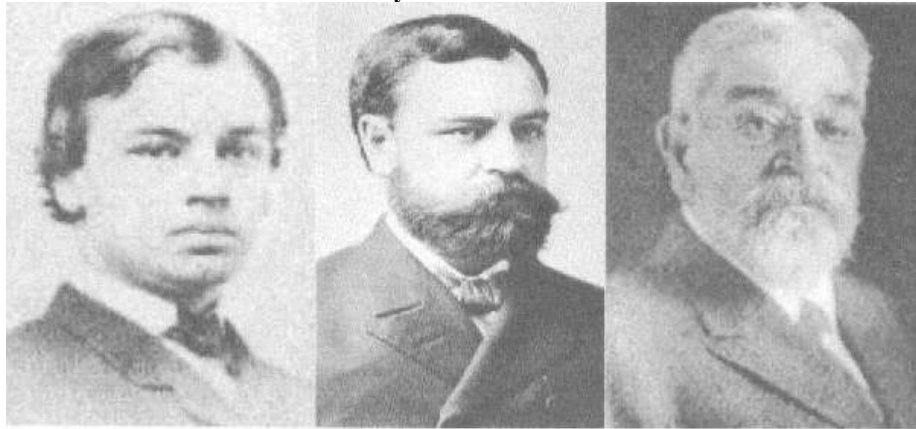
Harold Holzer



“The Prince of Rails”

Robert Todd Lincoln

By Mel Maurer



Robert at age 17, in mid-life, and in his upper 70's (Ostendorf Collection Photographs)

Robert Todd Lincoln – “Bob” to his family and friends – was dubbed the “Prince of Rails” during his “Railsplitter” father’s 1860 campaign for president, after a visit to this country by England’s Prince of Whales. Robert was a prince that would never ascend to the throne.

He was the oldest of the four children – all boys - of Mary and Abraham and the only one to reach maturity. He lived a long life. Born in 1843, he died in 1926. In examining his life, it is difficult to know what was his toughest challenge – living in the shadow of his immortal father or living with his tempestuous ever-mourning mother after his father’s death. These challenges would be reflected in his career as lawyer and public servant, his contentious relationship with his mother, and the life he declined to have in politics.

Physically, Robert was more of a Todd than a Lincoln. When he was three, his father wrote that, “Bob is short and a little low and I expect, always will be.” He was also different in personality than either parent. “Shy and reticent, he lacked the personal magnetism of his father and the vivaciousness of his mother.”

The contrast between Robert’s and his father’s early years and education could not be greater. Although he was born in a room above a tavern, his family soon moved to a cottage and then their own home in 1844. He received his early education from a local academy and then Illinois State University, a preparatory school. After initially failing his entrance exams to Harvard, he enrolled at the well known and respected Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. After a year at Exeter, he was accepted at Harvard – a member of the class of 1864. He ranked 32nd in his graduating class of 99. He then enrolled in Harvard’s Law School but would soon leave there to become a captain – with the help of his father – in the Union Army, assigned to General Grant.

Robert was with Grant for Lee’s surrender and at his father’s bedside when Lincoln died. His mother was in another room, hysterical with grief. Robert represented the family at all of the funeral services in Washington and Springfield. His mother, in deep mourning, could at-

Mel Maurer is the current president of the Cleveland Civil War Round Table and a huge Lincoln fan. He attends the Lincoln Forum each year, where his insatiable appetite for things Lincoln is fed and his knowledge of our 16th president continues to grow..

tend none. She would stay in black for the rest of her life. Upon leaving the White House, Mary, Robert, and his brother Tad moved to Chicago – Springfield had “too many memories “ for Mary. He completed his studies for the law at the University of Chicago, becoming a lawyer in February 1867. Tad would die in 1871, barely 18 years old, of pleurisy, adding to Mary’s sorrow. Robert and his mother, never close, went their separate ways.

Robert married Mary Eunice Harlan, the daughter of a friend of his father’s, in 1868. They would have three children – Mary in 1869, Abraham II, called “Jack,” in 1873, and Jessie in 1875. Mary Eunice was described as shy and often sickly. It is no surprise that she did not get along with her mother-in-law.

Most people did not get along well with Mary Todd Lincoln – before, during, and after her husband’s presidency. It has been written that in the midst of her hysterical mourning for their son, Willie, while in the White House, her husband showed her the roof of a nearby asylum and told her that unless she improved she would have to be committed. Robert gave her no such warning and surprised her in 1875 with a trial to determine her sanity. He believed she became insane with the death of her husband. With the “good ole boy” network, including her “defense” council, supporting him, she was judged insane and committed to an asylum. One of her biographers, Jean H. Baker, believes that Mary suffered from the personality disorder of narcissism. “Today,” she writes, “her behavior would be seen as annoying, improper, and unnatural but dangerous neither to herself or to society – and therefore not an instance of medical or legal insanity.” She would be in the asylum only long enough for her to regroup and force her way out – three months and three weeks.

We will never know what eventually drove Robert to take the drastic step he did with Mary’s commitment, with all the family embarrassment and estrangement it caused, but certainly the situation could have been handled much better. Robert always sought the advice of his father’s old friends, but this time they let him down. Perhaps they, having to put up with Mary longer than Robert, had finally had enough of the president’s widow. He and his mother remained estranged the rest of her life. She died in 1882.

Robert would have a distinguished career in law and government service. He became a very successful attorney during the 1870s. He turned down President Hayes’s offer to be an Assistant Secretary of State in 1877, but then accepted President Garfield’s appointment as Secretary of War in 1881, serving until 1885. President Harrison appointed him minister to England in 1889, where he served for four years. After serving as acting president for four years, Robert became the president of the Pullman Company in 1901 and its Chairman of the Board in 1902. The “Prince of Rails” had become the king of railroad cars. He continued in that position until 1922.

He had the career and life he desired, but not the life in politics at the highest level others sought for him beginning in 1884 with efforts to have him run for vice president. “I am so sincerely not a candidate,” he said at the time. In 1888, it was thought that a dream ticket of Lincoln for president and Frederick Grant (Ulysses’ son) could not lose. However, the dream dissipated quickly when Grant lost an election in New York and Robert refused to even consider seeking the nomination. He said, “The presidential office is but a gilded cage. The care and worry outweigh to my mind, any honor...” His name would be mentioned again for the highest office in every presidential cycle through 1912 when he was 69 years old, prompting him to say, “A man ought not to shirk public duties, but equally he ought not to take them if he knows he is unfit to do them.”

Robert had a distinguished life in law, business, and public service and accumulated

much wealth, but he fell somewhat short of meeting his family challenges. He never escaped the shadow of his father, telling a friend that every position he held was because he was Lincoln's son, and he let the family down with his treatment of his mother. His last public appearance was in 1922 at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial.

He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery and not the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield. This was his wife's decision after his death. She felt that he "was a personage, made his own history independently of his great father and should have his own place in the sun!" The Lincoln name died with Robert's son, Jack, in 1890 and the Lincoln lineage died in 1985 with the death of Robert's grandson, Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith.



Mary Eunice Lincoln nee Harlan.



Robert and Mary Lincoln's children, Mary, affectionately called "Mamie," Abraham II, known as "Jack," and Jessie.



The Lincoln family tree.



Robert's daughters Mary and Jessie, circa 1890.

IMPORTANT CIVIL WAR DECEMBER DATES

1861

DECEMBER 2 – Lincoln authorizes Maj. Gen. Halleck to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in any areas he finds necessary.

DECEMBER 4 – The Senate votes 36 to 0 to expel Sen. John Breckenridge of Kentucky.

DECEMBER 10 – Kentucky is admitted as the thirteenth, and last, state of the Confederate States of America.

DECEMBER 20 – England sends 8000 troops to Canada in the event the Trent affair cannot be settled without war.

DECEMBER 26 – The Cabinet decides Mason and Slidell were captured illegally and are to be released, thus resolving the Trent affair.

1862

DECEMBER 4 – Gen. Joseph E. Johnston assumes command of the Confederate armies in the west.

DECEMBER 7 – The battle of Prairie Grove in northwestern Arkansas occurs. Gen. Thomas Hindman's 10,000 Confederates attacks the combined forces of Union Gens. James Blunt and Francis J. Herron. The Confederates withdraw during the night.

DECEMBER 10 – Congress passes a bill creating the new state of West Virginia.

DECEMBER 13 – Gen. Burnside finally attacks Lee at Fredericksburg. The attack is a complete disaster, causing the Federals almost 13,000 casualties. The Confederates suffer approximately 5,200 casualties.

DECEMBER 20 – Confederate Gen. Earl Van Dorn raids Grant's supply depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi, destroying over \$1,500,000 in supplies. This cancels Grant's plan to attack Vicksburg over land, eventually leading to his infamous Vicksburg Campaign.

DECEMBER 21 – Congress authorizes the Medal of Honor for Navy personnel. In February, 1862, Congress authorizes the medal to be awarded to Army personnel.

DECEMBER 29 – Maj. Gen. Sherman's troops fight the battle of Chickasaw Bayou to gain the bluffs north of Vicksburg. Sherman loses and Grant fails for the second time to take Vicksburg from the north.

DECEMBER 30 – Lincoln finishes his draft of the Emancipation Proclamation and circulates it to the Cabinet for comment.

The first day of the battle of Stone's River (Murfreesboro) is fought, with the Confederates driving the Union forces back. The second day of battle takes place after the new year.

DECEMBER 31 – The *USS Monitor* founders off Cape Hatteras and sinks with a loss of 16 officers and men. The *USS Rhode Island* rescues 47 officers and men.

GENERAL HENRY ALEXANDER WISE 1806-1876

Wise served as a general in the Confederate Army, but it was as governor of Virginia that he laid his claim to history. Born in Virginia, he practiced law and served as a US Representative from 1833-44. Between 1856-1860, he served as governor. Aware that Virginians living along the northern and western borders of the state tended to be non-slaveholders, he urged that John Brown be put to death as an example. When war broke out in 1861, Wise took a commission as brigadier general in June and led the forces that tried to hold western Virginia to the Confederate cause. He failed and then fought to hold Roanoke Island, North Carolina, in February, 1862. He was again defeated, losing his own son and some 2000 prisoners. Wise returned to fight in the final defense of Richmond and Petersburg and in the retreat leading to the surrender at Appomattox. Wise practiced law after the war and refused to ask pardon from the federal government. He was George Meade's brother-in-law.

Taken from the Civil War Almanac (Bison Books, 1983).

NEXT MONTH – THE GREAT DEBATE

Which is the best book, fiction or non-fiction, on the Civil War?