

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN. 2020

VOL. 43 #1

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Message from the President – Ellen Connally

January 2020

For those who attended our December meeting, I am glad to report that our speaker, Peter D’Onofrio, survived his minor medical misstep and is doing fine. After a night of test and observation at University Hospital, he was given a clean bill of health, was released and returned home safely. His wealth of information about medical advancements during the Civil War was extremely informative.

We look forward to our annual debate at the January meeting on the subject of “Who was the most important Ohioan of the Civil War” and thank our moderator, William Vodrey for his efforts in putting this annual event together.

February 12, 2020 will be a special meeting. Marking the 211th birthday of President Abraham Lincoln, we will be honored with a presentation by Judge Frank J. Williams, Chief Justice Retired, of the Rhode Island Supreme Court and founder of the Lincoln Forum. He will discuss “Reconstruction: What Went Wrong – Lincoln’s Big Mistake Selecting Andrew Johnson”. I would personally like to thank Mel Mauer for making Judge William’s appearance possible. We ask members to bring their favorite piece of Abraham Lincoln memorabilia to grace the dinner tables.

During our January meeting, the officers and I will be discussing financial challenges facing the Roundtable in the coming year. The rising cost of meals at Judson has caused us to search for a different location that could be more cost effective. However, we have been unsuccessful in that regard. We are negotiating with Judson to alter the menu to lower the cost.

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN. 2020

VOL. 43 #1

We are also facing a significant cash outlay to update our webpage. Paul Burkholder has done a wonderful job over the years, but as technology changes, changes must be made to the webpage – and that cost money. But the good side of that is that an updated website can draw more attention to our organization and help us grow our image.

As with everything else, the cost of getting interesting and meaningful speakers has increased. As a result, we will be discussing the possibility of raising dues. The cost of the meal at each meeting covers just that - the meal. The money gained from dues pays for the speakers, flyers and promotions, maintaining the website, gifts for the speakers and other miscellaneous charges that are required to keep the Roundtable functioning. In order to continue have interesting speakers and maintain our operations we will be forced to consider an increase in dues.

The 50-50 raffle has been very successful, raising close to \$200 a meeting. We thank those members who won the raffle and contributed their winnings back to the organization. I thank Treasurer, Mark Porter for the idea and implementing the change.

I look forward to the remainder of the year and the cooperation of my fellow officers in making another successful year of study of the Civil War. I encourage all members to bring a friend and help grow our membership.



The
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of

the Assassins Skull and Whatever Happened to the Remains of Lewis Thornton Powell? Paul Siedel

During the early 1990s The U.S. Supreme Court delivered a ruling that permitted Native American Tribes to reclaim the remains of their ancestors that had been commandeered by historians and archeologists over the years. It was during a search of these remains that archaeologist Stuart Speaker of the Smithsonian Institution's Anthropology Department took up a box containing some long forgotten remains that he wished to catalogue. In among the Native American bones he found a skull that he at once identified as not being that of a Native American. The tag on the skull identified it as belonging to one Lewis Thornton Powell one of the four conspirators hung on July 7, 1865 for planning and partaking in the assassination of President Lincoln. The Army Medical Museum identified it as exhibit number 2244. Several Lincoln experts were contacted, James O. Hall, Michael W. Kauffman and Betty J. Owensby viewed the skull, they compared the dental records with those in the National Archives, and they did indeed match those of Lewis Thornton Powell. How did his skull become part of the Native American archives and where were the rest of his remains?

Lewis Thornton Powell was born in 1844 in Randolph County, Alabama. The family moved to Georgia and then to Live Oak Station, Florida. Lewis's father George was a Baptist Minister and part time farmer. They owned several slaves which were the playmates of young Lewis during his early years. Powell was just 16 years old when he enlisted in the Hamilton Blues which would become Company I of the Second Florida Infantry.

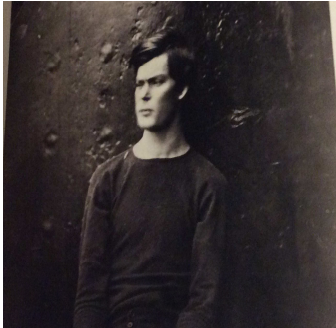
THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN. 2020

VOL. 43 # 1



Young Lewis was shipped north and eventually fought with the Army of Northern Virginia in its major battles until being wounded and captured at Gettysburg. Young Powell being only slightly wounded became a doctor's assistant and was taken to the U.S. hospital in Baltimore; there he met miss Margaret Branson and her sister Mary, both very dedicated southern sympathizers. They helped him walk away from the West Building of the U.S. General Hospital, and he immediately began looking for his old unit and eventually ended up in Warrenton, Virginia. It was here that he became acquainted with the Payne family of that area. Warrenton and the Fauquier County area was part of what is called "Mosby's Confederacy," and it was to Mosby and his band of irregulars that Powell gravitated. He became one of Mosby's most daring men and it was while escorting a band of prisoners to Richmond that that he may have become involved with the Confederate Secret Service. He came back from Richmond a changed man according to his comrades in Mosby's band. He left Fauquier County in January, 1865, and this part of his life becomes very unclear. Some say he met with Judah Benjamin during his Richmond sojourn, some say he met Booth earlier in the war while attending a play in Richmond and was attracted by the actor's magnetic personality. There is no proof of any of this; however he showed up again in Baltimore, and with the help of the Branson sisters, began running messages into the dying Confederacy.

At this time he met John Surratt also a Confederate agent and friend of John Wilkes Booth. Some say Powell went to New York and then on to Canada with Booth, no one is really certain, but in March, 1865, he became part of the plot to kidnap the president and, this having failed, fell in with the assassination plan. He met with Booth and John Surratt at Mary Surratt's boarding house in Washington, and on the night of April 14 made his way to the house of Secretary of State William Seward. Pretending to have a prescription for the injured Secretary, Powell forced his way upstairs, when he was confronted by Fredrick Seward. He pistol whipped Fred and forced his way into Seward's bedroom. Slashing violently at the Secretary he wounded George Robinson, the male nurse, pushed Fanny Seward to the floor, and attacked Seward's other son Augustas Seward. He then ran from the house shouting "I'm mad, I'm mad." Although the Secretary of State was gravely wounded he would survive. Two days later Powell showed up at the boarding house of Mary Surratt just as she was being arrested by several U.S. Army officers. They took Paine, as he was calling himself, into custody, and it wasn't long before the Seward's butler identified him as the man who assaulted five members of the Seward household on the evening of April 14. The rest is pretty much documented history: the confinement aboard the



THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN... 2020

VOL. 43 #1

“U.S.S. Montauk;” the trial; and his execution along with Mary Surratt, David Herold, and George Atzerodt. After the execution all four bodies were buried next to the gallows. Henry Wirz the Commandant at Andersonville was eventually buried next to them. In October of 1865 the bodies were disinterred and buried in the floor of Warehouse Number 1 in the Arsenal complex. In 1869 Edwin Stanton eventually relented and said that the bodies could be reclaimed by the respective families. All were, and were taken to the various cemeteries where they rest today. All that is except the remains of Lewis Thornton Powell. The family could not afford to come to Washington from Florida, and so the remains were buried at Holmead Cemetery at 19th and T Streets in Washington D.C. According to Betty Ownesby in her well researched book “Alias Payne” that cemetery was eventually vacated and the remains moved to Graceland Cemetery. Powell’s body was thus disinterred three times and it was sometime probably in January 1885 that the skull was detached and became anatomical specimen number 2244 at the Army Medical Museum. However when the large wooden coffin was moved from Holmede to Graceland Cemetery it contained only a skull and a pair of broadcloth trousers, the same in which Powell had been buried. What happened to the rest of the remains is still a mystery.

In 1993 the skull was turned over to the members of the Powell family in Stuart, Florida. They buried the skull with all the dignity afforded a family member who had been lost but then returned. There the remains of Lewis Thornton Powell lie buried today along with members of the Powell family long since deceased.

Was Powell a member of the Confederate Secret Service? No one really knows and much has been speculated. There is no concrete proof that he knew Judah Benjamin or any other member of the Confederate government. What ultimately happened to his remains? Until someone discovers some long lost papers in some long lost location the file on Lewis Thornton Powell still remains open.



HISTO-



RY BRIEF

– CCWRT – DANIEL J. URSU, HISTORIAN – copyright 12/11/19 “The Battle of Chickasaw Bayou” Grant’s First Attempt to Vanquish Vicksburg.

The “war was won in the West”...or so they say; and has been our monthly focus of these history briefs paralleling the same months in 1862...and so we come to December of 1862 which is widely known as the start of Grant’s Vicksburg campaign.

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN... 2020

VOL. 43 #1.

History Brief cont.

However, we pick up where we left off in November 1862 in the wake of the “Second Battle of Corinth” which secured that major and important rail junction for the North and for Grant’s thrust toward central Mississippi; his ultimate target being the Confederate bastion of Vicksburg on a 200 foot bluff overlooking a fish hook like bend in the Mississippi River. To capture it would fulfill the Western Theater’s role in the north’s strategic “Anaconda Plan” essentially cutting the south in two- and coupled with the seaboard blockade - strangling the heart of the Confederacy.

As mentioned last month, Vicksburg was the largest city in Mississippi by the time of the Civil war and a major port for cotton and other goods flowing north and south on the mighty river.

Grant’s initial strategy was somewhat obvious (see top map) and the most direct geographical-ly. He would send his trusted friend and General Tecumseh Sherman with several divisions south from Memphis in transports along the Mississippi River, disembark them on the marshy terrain, but very close to Vicksburg in the vicinity of the Yazoo River tributary and pressure Confederate commander Pemberton in Vicksburg; effectively pinning him in position. Meanwhile, Grant himself would lead two divisions south from the vicinity of Corinth (see map) along the Central Mississippi railroad and put Pemberton’s smaller force on the horns of a dilemma. That is: should Pemberton emerge from Vicksburg in the direction of Grant to stop him while leaving only a small garrison to hopefully keep Sherman out - or stay put and defend the fortress which would then submit Pemberton to a siege? This would put the north’s numerical and naval superiority to its optimal employment in December of 1862.

In mid December, Grant indeed headed south with two divisions along the railroad as planned using it as a line of supply; and at about the same time Sherman boarded vessels with his troops, using the Mississippi River and Union naval dominance as his line of supply.

However, on December 20th, while Grant penetrated to Oxford and beyond, Confederate General Earl Van Dorn with a mere 3500 cavalry circled behind Grant’s advance and raided his second largest supply depot at Holly Springs (see map) destroying much of the food, horse forage and ammunition that Grant relied on to sustain his force. Not to be outdone, that Devil Nathan Bedford Forrest and his cavalry had been ranging widely in north Mississippi and further destroyed rail and telegraph communications in that vicinity. His supply lines disrupted, Grant now begrudgingly withdrew. However, the cut telegraph lines proved critical since when Grant decided to fall back from Oxford, Sherman failed to timely learn of Grant’s retreat. Thus, Pemberton was now off of the horns of the dilemma and could turn his full attention to Sherman’s impending assault.

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN... 2020

VOL. 43 # 1

Hist. Brief cont.

On December 26th, Sherman's troops landed at "Johnson's Plantation" (see lower map) on the banks of the Yazoo River only about a half dozen miles north of Vicksburg. With Grant in retreat, Pemberton adroitly repositioned troops he had previously sent toward Grenada to bolster the Vicksburg garrison. They rapidly occupied prepared positions along the top slopes of a long line of cliffs and ridges known as Chickasaw Bluffs that dominated the ground Sherman's four divisions would have to cross.

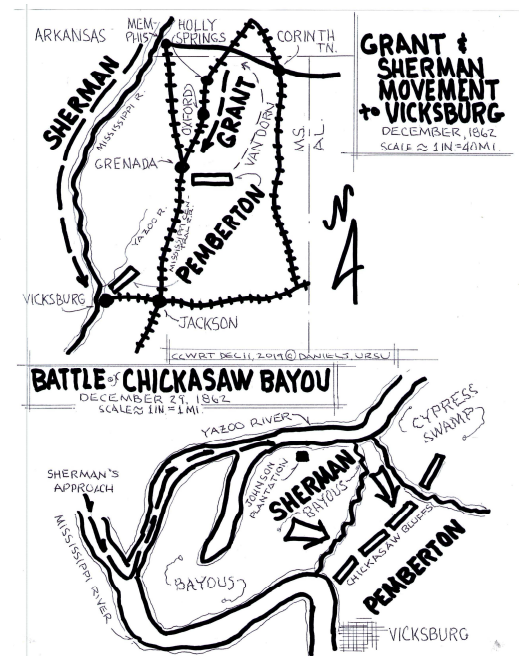
Sherman would have to push through a tangle of lakes, swamps and bayous inundated from recent rains and the uphill before he would reach the confederate lines. The attack began on the morning of the 29th, with Sherman's numbers only slightly greater than Pemberton's and violating the three to one maxim for an attacking force to carry a prepared position. The result was a Union slaughter with a loss of about 2,000 killed, wounded or missing. In stark contrast, Confederate losses in killed, wounded or missing were only about 210. Sherman accepted the defeat in his memoirs, but despite the daunting odds, pointed to the cowardice of one of his divisional commanders George W. Morgan for the tactical failure, asserting he did not accompany his troops to the point of advance which he told Sherman he would do. Morgan hotly disputed this, saying that Sherman rashly attacked the strongest position of the Confederate line.

Grant said of the battle in his memoirs: "The waters were high so that the bottoms were generally overflowed, leaving only narrow causeways of dry land between points of debarkation and the high bluffs. These were fortified and defended at all points. The rebel position was impregnable against any force that could be brought against its front." And he shortly later wrote "the real work of the campaign and siege of Vicksburg now began."

From the south's perspective, President Davis' controversial decision to put Confederate General Pemberton, a northern native from Philadelphia in charge of Vicksburg, now looked smartly done. Further, the north's cavalry had shown it was still inferior to their southern counterparts led by the likes of Nathan Bedford Forrest.

That said, U.S. Grant indicated that he learned important lessons from the defeat - such as to seek dry ground from which to stage further assaults on the fortress Vicksburg. We'll see next month whether Grant learned enough!

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Ursu, Historian CCWRT



THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN.. 2020

VOL. 43 #1.

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Take Note: From Dennis Keating

Ohio Civil War Heroes Jewels Statue in Columbus

The “My Jewels” statue featuring prominent Ohio Civil War heroes stands in the Capitol Square area in Columbus: ohiostatehouse.org/about/capitol-square/statues-and-monuments/these-are-my-jewels

Camp Cleveland in Tremont talk

On February 22, 2020 (1 PM) in the St. Theodosius Meeting Hall in Cleveland’s Tremont neighborhood local historian Chris Roy will do a presentation sponsored by the Tremont History Project on the Civil War Camp Cleveland Union army training facility that was located there.

As background to the January debate From Dennis Keating

- "Presidents Who Were Civil War Veterans" Essential Civil War Curriculum: <https://www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/>
- "Three Ohio Civil War Presidents" (2007): Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Articles Archiv

Jan. 8, 2020 Dick Crew’s Annual Debate

Who Was the Most Important Ohioan of the Civil War?

That's the topic of our January 8, 2020 Dick Crews Annual Debate, as chosen by President C. Ellen Connally. Plenty of contenders, of course, as Ohioans played a vital role in the victory of the United States in the war. The Buckeye State also played a key role in providing troops – some 320,000 men – along with officers and enormous quantities of supplies to the U.S. military. Several leading generals came from Ohio, including Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, William Rosecrans, James B. McPherson and Philip H. Sheridan. Consider, too, the important work done by Edwin M. Stanton, Salmon P. Chase, John Sherman, Benjamin Wade, Joshua Giddings and John Bingham, to say nothing of John Brown and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Five Ohio-born Civil War officers would, of course, later serve as President of the United States – U.S. Grant, James A. Garfield, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison and William McKinley.

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN... 2019

VOL. 42 #3.

**Program: Dick Crew's Annual Debate
Who Was the Most Important Ohioan of the Civil War?**

Steve Wilson -U.S. Grant
Dan Zeiser - Salmon P. Chase
Bill Frank -Phil Sheridan
Gerald Teizrow - Jacob Cox
Mark Porter - John Brown

JUDSON MANOR Drinks 6pm Dinner 6:30

Drinks @ 6 pm, Dinner @ 6:30

Judson Manor , East 303th St. & Chester

Program: Reservations: You must make a dinner reservation for any meeting you plan to attend no later than three days prior to that meeting (so we can give a headcount to the caterer). Make your reservation by sending an email to ccwrt1956@yahoo.com

clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com/

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