

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH 2020

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Don't miss our March 11 meeting!

The Story of United States Colored Troops
Presented by: Anthony Gibbs

Almost 200,000 black soldiers fought for the United States during the Civil War. Their story is a unique chapter in the American conflict. These men were freedom fighters who fought for emancipation and for full citizenship rights. Mr. Gibbs discusses events significant to these men that led up to the Civil War, and what made these men different from other thousands who fought and died in the War Between the States.



Our speaker: Anthony Gibbs has traveled throughout the State of Ohio as a teaching artist and living history performer. Anthony has portrayed living history characters such as John Parker, an Underground Railroad conductor from Ripley, Ohio; Milton Holland, a soldier and Medal of Honor recipient of the 5th U.S.C. T; and other key figures in African American History. For 12 years Anthony has presented historical workshops and performances on the United States Colored Troops and their participation in the Civil War. Anthony is a graduate of The Ohio State University. He is currently employed by the Ohio History Connection as the Manager of Local History Services. He is a founder and Creative Director of Historic Impressions, an organization dedicated to the remembrance, appreciation, and exhibition of African American Contributions to American history.

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

U.S. Colored Troops, the Battle of Chaffin's Farm, and Powhatan Beaty

by Dennis Keating

In the Civil War, around 180,000 African-Americans served in 175 regiments in the Union Army. Of the more than 5,000 from Ohio, many joined the 127th OVI, later re-designated as the 5th U.S. Colored Troops (USCT).

Among these volunteers was Powhatan Beaty. Born into slavery in 1837 in Richmond, Virginia, he moved to Cincinnati in 1849. In 1862, Beaty was among Cincinnati's African-Americans who were recruited in September, 1862 to build defenses in Kentucky against a possible raid by John Hunt Morgan.

On June 7, 1863, Beaty enlisted for a 3-year term. After training in Camp Delaware outside Columbus, his unit headed for service in North Carolina and Virginia. Beaty became first sergeant of Company G of the 5th USCT.

The 5th participated in the siege of Petersburg and then was part of the division of Black troops in the Army of the James that attacked Richmond's Confederate defenses at New Market Heights on September 29, 1864. Called the battle of Chaffin's Farm, the Confederate defenders were John Gregg's Texas Brigade, defended by two lines of abatis and one line of palisades. In the initial attack, Company G's color bearer was killed and Beaty returned through enemy fire to retrieve the flag. Of Company G's eight officers, all were wounded. Beaty then led a second attack, which drove the Confederates from their entrenched position. In this battle, of the 91 officers and enlisted men of Company G, only 13 (including Beaty) survived the two attacks unwounded. Over 50 percent of the attacking division were killed, wounded, or captured. For their actions at Chaffin's Farm, four members of the 5th USCT were awarded the Medal of Honor (among a total 14 in the USCT), including Powhatan Beaty.

In December, 1864, the 5th was assigned to the XXV Corps and took part in the first unsuccessful attempt that month to capture Fort Fisher protecting Wilmington, North Carolina and then in the second and successful attack in January, 1865. In March, 1865, the 5th was re-assigned to the X Corps and joined Sherman's Carolinas campaign's advance into North Carolina, culminating in the occupation of Raleigh and Johnston's surrender at Bennet Place on April 26, 1865.

The 5th was mustered out on September 20, 1865. It lost a total of 249 during its two years of existence, including 4 officers and 77 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded. Beaty received a brevet promotion to lieutenant but was denied promotion to commissioned officer. He participated in 13 battles.

After the Civil War, Beaty returned to Cincinnati where he became engaged in the arts. He helped form the city's Literary and Dramatic Club and became its drama director. He died in 1916 and was buried in Union Baptist Cemetery.

References:

Powhatan Beaty: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powhatan_Beaty

5th United States Colored Infantry Regiment: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_United_States_Colored_Infantry_Regiment

Dudley Taylor Cornish. *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865.*

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH, 2020

VOL. 43 #3

Parkchester: A Bronx Tale of Race and Ethnicity, Jeffrey S. Gurock, New York University Press, 2019, 308 pp. \$ (Hardcover), ISBN 978-1-4798-9678-7



“Negroes and whites don’t mix. Perhaps they will in a hundred years, but they don’t now” (p. 99) – a Southern segregationist in the Jim Crow era? No, it was Frederick Ecker, President, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MLIC), in 1943, defending his racial segregation policy in the Parkchester planned community in the Bronx in New York City, opened in 1940. That same year, MLIC announced plans to build a similar planned community in Manhattan to be known as Stuyvesant Town (p. 51)*. The Parkchester development preceded the similar post-World War II suburban residential communities of Levittowns, which also adopted racial segregation exclusion policies.

Under Ecker’s leadership, MLIC built a “City within the City” on 129 acres in the Bronx. Consisting of 12,271 apartments, the architectural style was that of “the Tower in the Park”. Opened in early 1940, Parkchester proved extremely popular and its post-World War II population boomed with babies, giving it the moniker of “Storkchester”. It would eventually house around 40,000 residents. Its early demographics consisted of primarily Irish and Jews, mostly from elsewhere in the Bronx. Its pool of residents was mostly working class with most women being homemakers (after World War II).

MLIC applied strict standards for admissions, including inspections of applicants’ housing. In return, it offered extensive onsite services while its strict tenant behavioral policies were enforced by the Parkchester cops. Efforts to challenge its occupancy and use rules by the Jehovah’s Witnesses regarding access for their missionary work and by a Women’s Committee challenging evictions failed.

Ecker’s policy was to exclude racial minorities. In 1950, a Parkchester Committee to End Housing Discrimination sued and mounted an attempt to protect a Black tenant (with a sublet from a member of the committee) against eviction. Both failed and MLIC continued its racial exclusionary policy until 1968. That year marked an order by the New York City Commission on Human Rights to desegregate Parkchester, resulting in the arrival of many Black tenants, who received a mixed reception from the white tenants.

It also saw the MLIC sell the community to the Helmsley-Spear real estate company. The sale would lead to major conflicts between the new owners and many tenants. Helmsley-Spear’s aim was to sell as many of the apartments as could be converted to condominiums. However, this would be made difficult as long as tenants remained in place and were protected by the city’s rent control and rent stabilization regulations. Meanwhile, Parkchester would suffer from the departure of many tenants seeking more modern housing in the Bronx and the suburbs, the development of the nearby massive Coop City development, the decline of the Bronx (especially after the 1977 blackout and fires) and increasing crime. Parkchester had no air conditioning and too few larger apartments for bigger families (especially Orthodox Jews).

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH 2020

VOL. 43 # 3

The author, Jeffrey Gurock, Professor of Jewish History at Yeshiva University, who himself lived as a child in Parkchester, chronicles the evolution of Parkchester and its conflicts in considerable detail. His history of life in Parkchester is made interesting by the many profiles of its residents from the earliest to the more recent (many of whom are immigrants). He details the religious communities (initially Jewish, Catholic and Protestant and more recently Muslim) and the aging of many of the residents. By Parkchester's 50th anniversary in 1990, the diversity of its population was celebrated. By 2010, more than 80 percent of the residents were either Black or Latino and 12 percent were Asian.

Complaints about mismanagement, higher rents, and the attempted condo conversions led to a 1995-1996 rent strike by members of the Parkchester Alliance and then the sale of the community by the Helmsley-Spear company to a non-profit Parkchester Preservation Corporation (PPC) with plans for major rehabilitation of the property. After extensive negotiations, the sale took place and in 1999 two-thirds of the residents approved the PPC rehabilitation plan. According to Gurock, PPC's plans have mostly improved Parkchester, while attracting some higher income residents.

Gurock also states:

“New York is among America's most paradigmatic multicultural urban areas. Much of the best of this sensibility is reflected in racial, religious, and national relationships today in Parkchester. However, though the community is open to all who can afford the apartment charges, a different, if more subtle form of integration has been required to maintain that get-along spirit”. (p. 260)

There is still some tension between various groups of residents notwithstanding a general atmosphere of tolerance. But, generally since its desegregation beginning in the late 1960s, Parkchester is portrayed as a longstanding example of successful residential diversity. Given New York City's history of religious and racial conflicts including those in various neighborhoods, this is indeed a signal accomplishment. Therefore, Parkchester's history is well worth reading about, especially the opposition to the MLIC's racist admission policies and the efforts to keep its housing affordable for its residents.

Reference

*R. A. Woldoff, L. M. Morrison, and M. R. Glass. (2016) *Priced Out: Stuyvesant Town and the Loss of Middle-Class Neighborhoods* (New York University Press)

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THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH, 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

Some Little Known Civil War Sites in Our Own Backyard

Sometimes as we go through our daily routine we tend to forget about the many historic sites we have right here in Cleveland. Many of the city's Civil War structures are still standing and need to be reviewed and I dare say appreciated by the general public. The Ohio City neighborhood is a prime example of this and is loaded with structures that have a connection to the Civil War. So lets take a short walk around this historic area and see if we can identify just a few of the historic buildings that date from that period in time. I was and I think most people will be pleasantly surprised at the wealth of such sites.

We will start at the corner of Taylor St. (W.45) and Bridge Ave. there stands the old Methodist Church. It was in this church the Boston Corbett gave several sermons while residing in Cleveland and while he worked at the Barrett Hat Manufacturing Co. on Superior Ave. Corbett was the member of the 16th New York Cavalry who on the night of April 25, 1865 shot John Wilkes Booth as he hid in a tobacco barn on the Garrett farm near Bowling Green, Va. After the War Corbett moved around a bit but finally ended up in Cleveland, Ohio, and preached at the Methodist Church in Ohio City. Later he moved to Kansas and eventually vanished from the scene.



Further down Bridge Ave. stands the last home of Michael Mulcahy. Mr. Mulcahy was a member of General Sheridan's staff and was one of the three staff officers who rode with Sheridan from Winchester to rally the troops at Cedar Creek. This helped turn the tide of battle and turned a Union defeat into a Union Victory. After the War Mulcahy moved to Cleveland and joined the fire Department. He remained there until after a severe injury he retired on his pension in early 1905. He resided in a house near the corner of Harbor (W.44 St.) and Bridge Ave. which still stands today. He is buried in St. Josephs Cemetery on Woodland Ave.

Walk down Bridge Ave. heading east and you will come to one of the few Federal style brick homes in Cleveland. Here in the early years of the Twentieth Century lived Charles Griswald. Mr. Griswald at the time of his death was the past president and one of the last survivors of the "Andersonville Survivors Association" Wounded at Chickamauga and captured he was taken to Andersonville Prison. He survived Andersonville and was taken to Florence, South Carolina where he was liberated by General Sherman's Army in 1865. According the The Plain Dealer's series "The Fading Blue Line" Mr. Griswald is quoted as saying "When I saw the U.S. soldiers I dropped down unconscious and woke up in the hospital." According to the Plain Dealer, after the War Mr. Griswald went west and fought Indians and now he always enjoys visitors and will talk for hours about his life experiences. He also fought at Shiloh, Corinth, Stones River, and Hoo-vers Gap. Mr. Griswald's home is at 3043 Bridge Ave.

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

Turn around and proceed west down Bridge Ave. and one comes to the intersection of Bridge Ave. and Fulton Rd. Here stands the former barber shop of Mr. Curtis Phillips. Mr. Phillips was born in Salem, Ohio and in 1862 enlisted in Co. B 12th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. He patrolled the mountains of North Carolina and East Tennessee. He was mustered out at Nashville in 1865, and After the War he went into the tanning business with his father, but after the elder Phillips died young Curtis moved to Cleveland. He resided on Jay Ave. in Ohio City and operated his barber shop on Fulton Rd. He eventually moved in with his daughter on Clarence Ave. in Lakewood ,and when he died in 1942 he was the last surviving Civil War Veteran living in Cuyahoga County. Mr. Phillips is buried in Butternut Ridge Cemetery in North Olmsted.



In our last visit we will stop in at Station Hope at Church Ave. and W. 26th St. Station Hope was the code name for Cleveland and St. John's Episcopal Church in Ohio City. The church claims to be the oldest church building in Cuyahoga County dating from 1838. During the 1850s it served a station on the Underground Railroad. Many fugitives hid out in the basement while informers looked from the steeple to catch the signal light off Lake Erie that told them the ship was ready to take them to Canada. While many locations surmise that they were stations on the Underground Railroad St. John's has the written proof of its participation and so was awarded a state historic plaque presented by Congressman Louis Stokes which can still be seen today.



So if we take the time to stop and look we can find that the Civil War is still alive and well in Cleveland. From the witness tree on Prospect Avenue to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on Public Square, to the many graves at Lakeview, Woodland, and the many cemeteries throughout the city we can come in direct contact with the men and women who helped save the Union from dissolution and gave us the great country we have today.

THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

More on Changing, Dismantling and Removing Confederate Symbols

By John C. Fazio

On June 17, 2015, in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a well-known African-American church in Charleston, South Carolina, one Dylann Roof, a 21-year old white supremacist, shot to death nine worshipers, all of whom were African-American. At the time, they were engaged in bible study and had only shortly before graciously accepted Roof's request to participate in their study, never imagining his true purpose and the carnage that was to follow. Roof had previously posted photos on his website with emblems associated with white supremacy and with the Confederate battle flag. The tragedy, of course, shocked the nation and gave rise, immediately, to calls for banning the display of the Confederate battle flag, and for dismantling and removing statuary, monuments and other symbols of the Southern Confederacy, in public places. Not surprisingly, these calls generated, and continue to generate, a lot of heat between those favoring the same and those opposed. It is also unsurprising that proponents and opponents are often identified by race, so that a political and regional conflict morphs, in some degree, into a racial one.

For this and other reasons, we need to ask ourselves if what appears to be such a good idea, and one whose time has come, i. e. action against Confederate symbols, is really that, or if our country and its citizenry would be better served by a different approach, one more in keeping with "the better angels of our nature", to use Lincoln's immortal phrase from his First Inaugural Address.

Let me make myself clear: I am a dyed-in-the-wool Unionist and therefore believe that the right side won the war. The alternative, in my judgment, would have resulted in the Balkanization of the country, with interminable fratricide. Further, I also believe that it was time for slavery to go. All the major powers of the time (Great Britain, France and Russia), and most of the lesser powers, had already abolished it. Its existence in our country was therefore anachronistic even in 1860. The Confederate government's rear-guard action on the path that led to the future, therefore, stood no chance against the locomotive of history. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge, if we are honest, that the South put up an incredible fight for independence, despite a multitude of disadvantages, and I believe that recognition of that fact should be given. Southerners are justifiably proud of the tenacity with which their ancestors fought against great odds. It is also true that there were dreadful black flag excesses --rape, pillage, plunder, terrorism and horrible neglect and abuse of prisoners of war--committed by both sides, and that this too should be acknowledged. When I was president of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable, in 2007, I provided for recognition of the fight made by the South (not the rightness of the cause of Southern independence, but honor to the courage and bravery of those who fought and died for that cause) to be written into our Wikipedia entry. It was and it is still there.

THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

I believe, further, that it is reprehensible and counter-productive for victors to gloat over their victory and to “rub it in” to their enemies or former enemies. Ulysses S. Grant instinctively knew this when he signaled his men to desist from celebrating when Robert E. Lee left Wilbur McClean's home at Appomattox after his surrender there, to Grant, on April 9, 1865. As Grant wrote in his Memoirs, “When news of the surrender first reached our lines, our men commenced firing a salute of a hundred guns in honor of the victory. I at once sent word, however, to have it stopped. The Confederates were now our prisoners, and we did not want to exult over their downfall.” And Lincoln instinctively knew it, too, when he urged his commanders to “Let em up easy”, referring, of course, to the fallen enemies of the Union.

The Allies rubbed it into Germany and her people after WWI . They held Germany solely responsible for the war, contrary to fact; they required demilitarization and occupation of the Rhineland; they took all her overseas colonies; they required the transfer of 13% of her pre-war territories to other countries; they interned the German High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow, where many of the ships were scuttled at German order; and, worst of all, they required her to make enormous reparation payments that simply couldn't be made and therefore drove the country into hyper-inflation and a resort to ersatz everything. The Allies should have known better. And maybe some of them did. One does not treat a great nation and a proud people that way without consequence. And there were, of course, consequences, namely Adolf Hitler, Naziism, another world war, another 70 to 85 million dead, innumerable maimed and wounded and incalculable property damage.

Recognition should also be given to the fact that the South was not entirely responsible for the institution of slavery. When the South was first settled, in the 18th century, by Englishmen, such as James Oglethorpe, Southerners had no interest in slavery. They were encouraged to make use of slave labor by New England slave traders from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut, who earned huge profits buying or otherwise acquiring Negroes in Africa, transporting them here and then selling them to Southern farmers. In the Constitutional Convention of 1787, it was the Southern states that demanded the cessation of the slave trade. This was resisted by the New England slave traders, which led to a compromise to stop the trade by 1800, which was later extended to 1808 at the insistence of the New Englanders. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 made the production of cotton so profitable that the institution, which had previously had only a tenuous existence, became, in the eyes of the plantation owners, an absolute necessity. Lincoln himself acknowledged the truth of these historical facts when he said that he fully understood why the slaveholders were fighting to preserve the institution and that if he were in their shoes, he would be doing the same thing. Putting himself in the shoes of his adversaries to gain a better understanding of the issues was typically Lincoln.

The South, therefore, largely because of the intervention of outsiders and the happenstance of human invention, was soon confronted by the reality of enormous economic loss and equally enormous social disruption in the event of the emancipation of its slaves, a reality not faced by any other region of the country. Does all this justify the rupture of the Union, four years of black flag warfare, somewhere between 620,000 and 750,000 dead and as many wounded, and spending billions of dollars of our treasure, trillions in today's money? Of course not, but it does serve to give us a greater understanding of the ultimate causes of the war and thereby to cast the conflict in a somewhat different light, with relevance to the modern-day issue that is be-

THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

before us, namely what to do about Confederate symbols.

We need to understand the psychology involved in this issue. When one attacks flags, monuments and other symbols, one is really attacking more than these; one is attacking those who support the existence of the symbols, who want them, who feel a need for them and who identify with them. The symbols, therefore, are merely outward manifestations of a commonality, which projects strength and therefore facilitates survival. To put the matter directly, an attack on symbols is perceived, at both conscious and unconscious levels, to be a threat to one's survival and the survival of those who share the commonality. Further, one can identify with, and most people do identify with, more than one commonality. That is to say that one can be both a proud American and a proud Southerner, indeed a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy or the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and see no conflict in such dual loyalties. Threats to survival are taken extremely seriously, are resisted most forcefully and set up the "us" and "them" dichotomy as nothing else does or can. Such polarization should therefore be avoided if it can be, in the same way that one avoids poking a hornet's nest if one can.

Premature removal of the symbols, therefore, will cause a backlash, just as the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's led to a backlash and, in fact, to the erection of more symbols. Witness, more recently, the demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia, in opposition to the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, and similar demonstrations elsewhere, as well as the demonstrations in Richmond, Virginia, in opposition to gun control legislation, by many who share the same commonalities as those defending the continued existence of Confederate symbols. Indeed, since the movement to remove and in some cases destroy the symbols began in 2015, in the wake of the Charleston atrocity, Alabama and North Carolina passed legislation to preserve and protect their Civil War symbols. Five states (Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia) already had monument protection laws on their books.

Let there be no doubt that, because the Civil War period is so recent in our history, regional conflict in the United States still exists. Southerners and Northerners cannot even agree, for example, on what to call the war. Most of the country calls it the Civil War, but this term is not favored by Southerners; they prefer to call it the War Between the States, the War for Southern Independence or even the War of Northern Aggression. Nor is there anything even close to unanimity of opinion as to the cause or causes of the war. Northerners generally hold that slavery was the root cause, but Southerners favor states' rights as the root cause. Nor have epithets lost favor: Southerners still call Northerners yankees (always in a pejorative sense) and snowbirds, and Northerners still call Southerners rednecks and crackers.

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THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

Another consideration that weighs in favor of going slowly and carefully on this issue is the difficulty of knowing where to stop. There are some 1,747 Confederate symbols in public places nationwide, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Included are monuments, public school names, college names, county and city names, nine state holidays and the names of 10 United States military bases. Excluded are thousands of monuments, markers and other tributes located in battlefields, museums, cemeteries and other places that are largely historical in nature and markers apparently approved by historical commissions. In addition, there are eight statues of Confederate leaders in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol Building. The difficulty of knowing what to change, what to dismantle and move and what to leave untouched is immediately apparent, a difficulty that will engage a lot of people, create a lot of work and take a lot of time before anything remotely like agreement will be reached.

Accordingly, I am inclined to the view that more time should be permitted to pass before we begin to change and to dismantle and remove the iconic symbols of the Southern Rebellion from public places, bearing in mind the fact that Southerners do not view it as a rebellion, but as a struggle for independence. The symbols must become irrelevant to identities, or nearly so. Irrelevance comes with time. That time is not yet. More of it needs to pass for the wounds caused by the war to heal and for greater attention to be given to the things that unite us and less to the things that divide us. Time favors assimilation. Who thinks of Englishmen today as Celts, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, Vikings, Normans, Royalists or Cromwellians. Yet these labels, and many more, once divided and distinguished the inhabitants of the island nation, with such intensity, that those who were so identified spent a great deal of time killing each other. But today, those identities are all but gone. Everyone is just an Englishman. No questions asked. So it will be with us too if we allow more time to pass. After all, it has been more than a thousand years since the Celts, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Danes arrived in Britain, almost a thousand since the Normans arrived and almost 400 since the end of the English Civil War. By comparison, it has been only 155 years since the end of our Civil War and barely a half century since the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the official end of Jim Crow. Clearly, we need more time to effect the assimilation that will truly make us one people.

Rather than forcing the change, dismantling and removal of symbols upon an unwilling people, therefore, a better policy, in my judgment, is benign neglect of such symbols until such time as their change, dismantling and removal will not stir feelings of great hostility. And even then, the symbols should not be destroyed, but placed in cemeteries, museums, etc., where they will continue to memorialize, without celebrating, a terrible time in our history, the crossroads to true nationhood, a time that scholar and historian Shelby Foote described as "a helluva crossroads". I am prepared to make exceptions for symbols that honor, or purport to honor, the most egregious offenders, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was responsible for the massacre at Ft. Pillow, Tennessee, on April 12, 1864, of prisoners of war, women and children, and who was an early member and the first national leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

As for the atrocity that occurred in Charleston almost five years ago and that has provided the impetus to change, dismantle and remove the iconic symbols, no one with a brain in his head and a heart in his chest would dare to minimize that tragedy. No one is more sympathetic to African-Americans and their experience since the first slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619 than I am, including 246 years of slavery, 11 years of Reconstruction, in which thousands of them, perhaps tens of thousands, were slain and their property destroyed, and 100 years of Jim Crow, when they were murdered, abused, degraded, humiliated and exploited. I therefore fully understand their feelings on the matter. Nevertheless, I appeal to them to accept the reality that ridding the South of iconic Civil War-related symbols at this time will not improve race relations in our country, but will make them worse, and that the last thing African-Americans need, not only in the South, but throughout the country, is worse race relations. The racial disparities in the country, especially in the deaths of unarmed blacks, will not be reduced one degree by the removal of the symbols, because the disparities are not caused by the symbols, but by economic injustice, i.e. income inequality, unemployment and underemployment. Since the massacre in Charlotte, on June 15, 2015, more than 100 symbols have been removed in 22 states and the District of Columbia, including 48 monuments, three flags and 35 name changes. Can anyone honestly claim that there is less racial conflict in the country now than there was almost five years ago? Clearly, better race relations do not *follow* action against symbols, but must precede such action. Indeed, better race relations will make such action largely superfluous. The symbols will pass from our body politic almost without notice or incident.

As for the extension of the removals to historical figures who were not of the Civil War period, here too we need to be careful. If one merely owned slaves at a time when doing so was acceptable and lawful (e.g. Washington and Jefferson), and did not abuse his slaves, it is not an offense such as would justify the removal of statuary, monuments and other symbols relating to such men. But if one abused one's slaves, or owned slaves where and when it was unlawful to do so, then symbols relating to them should be removed. I am prepared, however, to make exceptions for good reason, such as historical figures whose pluses outweigh their minuses (e.g. Columbus). We all have minuses, many of them quite serious. The person whose life is without minuses does not deserve to be put on a pedestal, but in a museum. To remove a symbol on the grounds that the putative honoree had faults, even serious ones, therefore, makes no sense at all. With such logic, we should have to take them all down.

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by

John C. Fazio

THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

HISTORY BRIEF – CCWRT – DANIEL J. URSU, HISTORIAN – copyright 2/12/20 What was happening during the Civil War on or about Lincoln's February 12th Birthday?

Since last month's regular meeting fell on Lincoln's birthday it was thought appropriate to highlight what was taking place during the Civil War years 1861 through 1865 on or about Lincoln's birthday. I will return to highlighting the Vicksburg campaign in March.

On February 12th, 1861 how happy was Lincoln on his birthday??? Open hostilities had not yet begun between north and south and President Elect Lincoln was on a train from Illinois for Washington D.C. to attend his first inauguration. Lincoln already knew that he had his work "cut out for him" and that's putting it mildly. In December of 1860, defiant South Carolina had seceded from the Union followed quickly and ominously in January of 1861 by the states of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and in early February, Texas. On February 4, the newly seceded states met for a convention in Montgomery, Alabama and on the February 8th adapted a Constitution for a Confederate Government and on the 9th elected Jefferson Davis President of the Confederacy - some birthday present! As Lincoln left Illinois, he knew that he was going to have at the very least, a tumultuous term ahead of him as President. His train was making numerous whistle stops and on February 12th, Lincoln spent part of his birthday giving a speech in Cincinnati to the "German Industrial Association" but to the chagrined press did not reveal his plans for the widening crisis. I guess that one could say that Lincoln had a happy birthday since he had been elected president and was about to be inaugurated, but he surely was greatly troubled by secession. On a scale of one to ten with ten being the best, and let's say Lincoln's happiness quotient on his 1861 birthday as only a "five".

By February 12, 1862 the war was well underway. However, Lincoln had reason to be enjoying shall we say a "happier" birthday than in 1861. Grant was on the move in the west with a superb combined arms effort having skillfully deployed both army and brown water navy assets to capture Fort Henry on February 6th and was in process of placing Fort Donelson under siege in Tennessee. Grant would soon capture Donelson and these two great tactical victories opened up the Cumberland River making the industrial center of Nashville vulnerable. In the east, in another display of good use of both army and naval resources, General Burnside captured Roanoke Island on the North Carolina Coast on February 8th; the important Federal Blockade of the Confederate seaboard began to take shape and most of the North Carolina coast would fall to Burnside over the next few months. On the scale of one to ten, Lincoln's birthday happiness in 1862 had to be close to an "eight" pushing "nine"!

By February 12, 1863 one could say that things had worsened and Lincoln probably was less happy on his birthday. General Lee looked invincible having recently defeated the Union Army of the Potomac the previous December at Fredericksburg. After a frustrating string of failed commanders, Lincoln appointed "Fighting" Joe Hooker Commander of that army. In late January, Lincoln wrote a

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CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH.. 2020

VOL. 43 #3.

MUSINGS ON LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

By February 12, 1863 one could say that things had worsened and Lincoln probably was less happy on his birthday. General Lee looked invincible having recently defeated the Union Army of the Potomac the previous December at Fredericksburg. After a frustrating string of failed commanders, Lincoln appointed "Fighting" Joe Hooker Commander of that army. In late January, Lincoln wrote a now famous letter to the boisterous Hooker in response to rumors of Hooker seizing the reins of government saying, (quote) "Only those generals, who gain successes, can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship". Lincoln further urged him to (quote) "beware of rashness". Hooker nevertheless in February continued to infamously and rashly boast while preparing for what became known disastrously to the north as the Chancellorsville campaign: "My plans are perfect. May God have mercy on General Lee for I will have none!". Due to the continued bleak military results in the east, we'll call Lincoln's happiness on his 1863 birthday a "three".

On his birthday in 1864, things were relatively quiet. The great victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg had been achieved the previous summer. It must have been quite a pensive time for Lincoln as his reelection fight for the coming fall was taking shape and his soon to be presidential challenger General McClellan had announced in October 1863 that he was interested. Abe however was in process of finding the solution to the military puzzle in the east formulating his plans to put Grant in complete command. Lincoln would and on March 12th promoted Grant to General in Chief of all Union armies. On a scale of one to ten because of the justifiably high hopes for Grant in the east, let's call Lincoln's February 12th happiness quotient a "seven".

In 1865, one presumes that this was the happiest of Lincoln's Civil War birthdays. He had won reelection – the first president to do so since Andrew Jackson in 1832 - and the Electoral College convened to confirm it on his birthday. Lee's army was virtually trapped at St. Petersburg south of Richmond (that's a teaser for Steve Pettyjohn's upcoming field trip) and Sherman's march to Savannah had made complete victory look certain. Lincoln's goal of reuniting the country was nearly at hand and his famous - and I think his best speech out of so many good ones - the second inaugural address, must have been gestating in his presidential mind. On that February 12th, Lincoln was 56 – and on a scale of one to ten, let's call this one a very happy "ten"!

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Ursu

Historian CCWRT

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**Program: The Story of the United States Colored Troops
Speaker: Anthony Gibbs, Manager of Local History Services for the
Ohio History Connection. Founder & Creative Director of Historic
Impressions.**

**JUDSON MANOR Drinks 6pm : Dinner 6:30
Judson Manor , East 30 th 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**

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