

The CHARGER

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable



Oct. 2020

Vol. 44 #2

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Message from the President

"While the pandemic prevents us from meeting in person at this time, we will continue to present our scheduled speaker program each month. This month our speaker's presentation is extremely timely. On the 150th anniversary of Robert E. Lee's death, Codie Eash will present the views of Frederick Douglass regarding Lee and his iconic status in American History. I am delighted to have Mr. Eash as our speaker. He is one of the young Civil War Historians, part of the Emerging Civil War group, who are struggling to develop ways to continue their contributions to the study of the Civil War even if not part of academia. I am looking forward to his presentation and hope you will join us on October 14 at 7 pm. We will be sending Zoom invites and instructions on how to log in later this week.

Last month, we had 49 members join for Wil Greene's insightful presentation regarding the Petersburg campaign. We hope to have smoother sailing this month as we gain more experience using the Zoom internet application. We are still having technical problems with our webpage, so please follow us on Facebook and Twitter where Lily Korte, our secretary, continues to post updates regarding our group and the Civil War. Also, we will continue to send email using the clecwr@gmail.com email address and ask Dan Zeiser to back us up with his address list. If you get Dan's email but not one from clecwr@gmail.com, please contact me and we will investigate.

Last but not least, our treasurer Bob Pence wants me to remind you that dues are due. Please send your annual dues of \$60 payable to Cleveland Civil War Round Table [or Cleveland CWRT]. The dues are used to fund our speaker programs. Bob's address is:

[1419 Honeygold LaneBroadview Heights, OH 44147.](mailto:1419HoneygoldLaneBroadviewHeights,OH44147)

In the meantime, stay safe and "Hurrah for the Union!"

Steve Pettyjohn
President

The CHARGER



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct. 2020

Vol. 44 #2

Speaker for October 14, 2020

'Pray for Oblivion to His Memory': Frederick Douglass on the Legacy of Robert E. Lee

When Robert E. Lee died in October 1870, the former Confederate commander rose to the status of an American deity, and in the 150 years since his death he has remained one of history's most celebrated soldiers. Despite such laudations, however, many of Lee's contemporaries felt his renowned status was undeserved—most notably, the formerly enslaved social activist, newsman, and army recruiter Frederick Douglass. At the end of the Civil War, and especially after Lee's demise, Douglass penned a series of articles that reflected negatively on the fallen Rebel general's legacy and attempted to reconsider his proper place in studies of the past. Douglass's criticisms of Lee's morality and prowess provide valuable insight to an alternative view of an icon, and serve as a reminder that modern debates over collective memory of the conflict and its principal players are embedded in unfinished conversations among the wartime generation itself.



Codie Eash serves as Visitor Services Coordinator at Seminary Ridge Museum, Gettysburg, and is a 2014 graduate of Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, where he earned a bachelor degree in communication/journalism and held a minor in history. He contributes to the blog "Pennsylvania in the Civil War"; serves as a co-host on "Battles and Banter," a military history podcast; and maintains the Facebook page "Codie Eash - Writer and Historian," which primarily focuses on the heritage and legacy of the Civil War era.

Notes On Frederick Douglass and Cleveland

by Dennis Keating

Frederick Douglass visited Cleveland in the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s. Perhaps one of the most important was in 1848 when he came as President of the National Convention of Colored Freedmen.

Reference: Frederick Douglass's Visits

Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: <https://case.edu/ech/articles/f/frederick-douglass-visits>

The city of Cleveland has a park named after Frederick Douglass and the School District has a school named after Douglass.

Read about the Frederick Douglass High School.

<https://www.fdhhigh.org/>



The CHARGER

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct. 2020

Vol. 44 #2



Robert E. Lee's Legacy under Attack

Dennis Keating

Removal of Confederate monuments and statues has grown with the Black Lives Matter movement. One of the most important targets has been Robert E. Lee, the epitome of the Lost Cause effort to cleanse the Confederacy of its defense of slavery.

Lee memorialized as a statue first notably came down in New Orleans on May 19, 2017 after being in Lee Circle since February 22, 1884. Last month Lee's statue in Charlottesville Virginia came down three years after the violence surrounding the racist Unite the Right rally that resulted in the death of a protester. And also Virginia's Governor this summer ordered the removal of Lee's statue from Memorial Row in Richmond, once the capitol of the Confederacy. In August, the Commission for Historical Statues in the United State Capitol also ordered the removal of Lee's statue from the Capitol's Statuary Hall, to be sent to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture in Richmond. Lee's Relief Monument with Jackson and Davis at Stone Mountain, Georgia still stands

Not only statues but also Lee's name is being removed. Arlington, Virginia's Lee Highway Alliance announced in July that it was convening a working group to develop a shortlist of new names for the Lee Highway. That same month, students, faculty, and alumni have petitioned to have Lee's name removed from Washington and Lee University, where Lee became its president after the Civil War and its name was changed to include his name.

Lee's Civil War military legacy certainly survives but his public presence is being much diminished as the debate over Confederate symbols continues.

References Amber Nicholson, Shelby Narike & Herbert Spurlock. Robert E. Lee Monument: <https://neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/1279>

[Robert E. Lee Monument - Stop 1 of 4 in the Confederate Monuments in New Orleans tour | New Orleans Historical](#)



The Lee Monument stood at the center of what is today called “Lee Circle” a busy traffic roundabout for streetcars and automobiles. In the aftermath of the Charleston massacre of 2015, all symbols associated with the Confederacy faced renewed scrutiny and calls for their removal became commonplace. What follows—below and in the images for this entry—is the story of this monument’s ...

neworleanshistorical.org

The CHARGER



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct. 2020

Vol. 44 #2

Confederate statue taken down in Charlottesville near the site of violent 2017 rally (September 12, 2020): <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics>

Robert E. Lee statue: Virginia governor announces removal of monument (June 4, 2020): <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52920610>



[Robert E Lee statue removed from from park with same name](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52920610)

Virginia's governor says the monument to the Confederate general will be taken down in Richmond.

www.bbc.com

Gabrielle Leung. Robert E. Lee Statue to be Removed from U.S. Capitol (August 21, 2020): <https://hypebeast.com/2020/8/robert-e-lee-statue-us-capitol-removal>

Matt Blitz. Robert E. Lee's Name is Still All Over Arlington, But That Could Be Changing (August 10, 2020): <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/08/10/900918527/robert-e-lee-s-name-is-still-all-over-arlington-but-that-could-be-changing>

County Kicking Off Lee Highway Renaming Process (July 17, 2020): <https://www.arlnow.com/2020/07/17/breaking-county-kicking-off-lee-highway-renaming-process>

Students and faculty ask Washington and Lee to change its name (July 2, 2020): <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/07/02/-students-faculty-ask-washington-and-lee-to-change-its-name>

Eric Foner. The Making and Breaking of the Legend of Robert E. Lee (August 28, 2017): <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/books/review/eric-foner-robert-e-lee.html>

Joseph Connor. Unforgiven: Robert E. Lee's Conflicted Legacy

The CHARGER



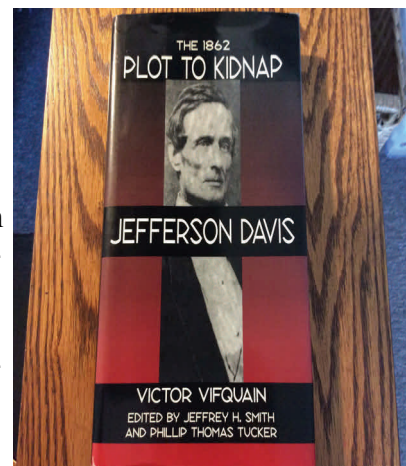
Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct. 2020

Vol. 44 #2

The 1862 Plot to Kidnap Jefferson Davis By Paul Siedel

Who knows what secret are contained in the old diaries and notebooks which lie moldering in attics and the accounts of wartime adventures they may contain. One such discovery of an old manuscript was made in Nebraska in the mid 1990s. It was made by the descendants of one Victor Vifquain, and was the account of an attempt by four Union soldiers to kidnap Confederate President Jefferson Davis and bring him to Washington D.C. Although the original handwritten manuscript has been lost, it was transferred to a typewritten format in 1903 by Mr. Vifquain and put away only to be published by his descendants in 1998. It is a fascinating Civil War adventure story and one of the best I've ever read.



The story begins in the spring of 1862 when four French immigrants members of the 53rd New York Infantry decide on the risky adventure. The 53rd was made up of French immigrants from Brooklyn and dressed in the uniforms of the French Zouaves, it was known as d'Epineuil's Zouaves. The four comrades decided to disguise themselves as farmers and go deep into Virginia and kidnap President Davis who at that time was taking weekly inspection trips to Norfolk to observe progress being made on the CSS "Virginia". The plan was to kidnap him during one of these excursions and bring him to Washington D.C. They romanticized themselves by giving themselves the names of Alexander Dumas' Three Musketeers. D'Artagnan was used by Victor Vifquain, (a native of Brussels, Belgium), Armanis was used by one Maurice de Beaumont, Arthos by Alfred Cipriani, and Porto's by Armond Duclos. This was done in order to keep their family names out of circulation.

These three men took the train to Manassas from Alexandria and then walked south through Virginia headed for Richmond. I was able to trace their progress through Prince William Co. to the town of Occoquan. They made their way south and soon were captured by a contingent of Fitz Lee's Cavalry. Upon being introduced to the cavalry colonel himself they presented him with a letter of introduction written by the Confederate General in Louisiana, Camille Armand Jules Prince de Polignac who served on the staff of General P.G.T. Beauregard. The letter was not authentic as was discovered later and almost caused them to be hanged as spies. They finally made their way to Richmond where they met such personages as Judah Benjamin, and President Davis. The object of the mission was aborted when Davis no longer made his weekly trips, and the famous battle between the "Monitor" and "Merrimack" took place. Now they had to find a way to get back to their units in Washington D.C. One of the men, Aramis' (Marie de Beaumont) had fallen in love with a woman in Richmond, and she provided them with a contact near Orange Court House. They made their way to Orange via Gordonsville where they stayed at the Stannard home. They became involved in several intrigues and confronted a spy and some Confederate marauders who had intimidated people throughout the countryside.

The CHARGER



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct. 2020

Vol.44 #2

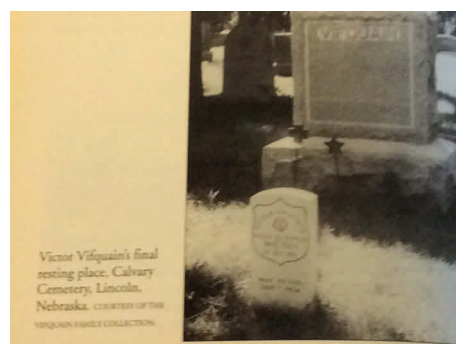
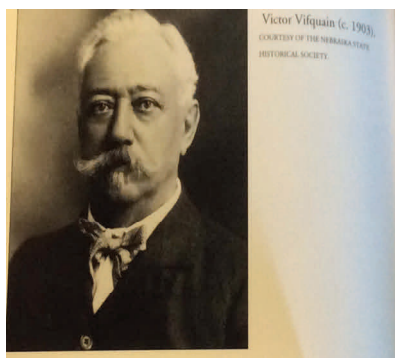
Leaving the Orange Court House they made their way up through the Shenandoah Valley via New Market and joined their old unit who at that time was taking part in the Antietam Campaign. All in all they made it through the Confederate lines, and though they didn't accomplish their original objective they picked up much information that helped McClellan later on in his Maryland Campaign.

Afterwards Victor Vifquain was transferred to the western theater and was with the 97th Illinois when they entered Atlanta and for the final assault on Ft. Blakey near Mobile. He later went home to Nebraska and was active in the statehood preparations taking place there. In 1901 Victor transferred his account of their Virginia adventure into a typewritten format. He died in 1904 and his wife inherited the manuscript. She died in 1924 and the type written pages were relegated to the attic and passed down through the generations until 1998 when the first edition was published. The book was edited by Jeffery H. Smith and Philip Thomas Tucker. The Epilogue written in 1901 is just as interesting.. Athos (Alfred Cipriani) was promoted to the staff of General Winfield Scott Hancock but was killed on July 2, 1863 at Gettysburg. Arimis, (Maurice de Beaumont) married the girl he met in Richmond, Miss Alice Denison, at the French legation in Washington D.C. They lived in Paris and he was killed at the battle of Sedan in 1871. As of 1901 when Vifquain retyped his notes both he and Porthos (Amond Duclos) were alive and well, meeting every two years in New York where Duclos was a practicing physician.

The manuscript was resurrected and brought into print by Victor Vifquain's great-great grandson Jeffery H. Smith who in 1998 was a professor of history at the University of Nebraska. He also wrote several articles and is the author of "A Frenchman Fights for the Union: Victor Vifquain and the 97th Illinois"

Being a Civil War buff for over fifty years I have read my share of books about the Civil War; this however was a totally different adventure story, and one I would highly recommend if it is still available.

Vifquain, Victor, edited: Jeffery H. Smith and Phillip T. Tucker, *The 1862 Plot to Kidnap Jefferson Davis.*, Stackpole Books, 1998. ISBN 0-8117-1271-0



The CHARGER



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct... 2020

Vol. 44 #2.

Compassionate Confederate: Another Barlow-Gordon Incident by David A. Carrino

This history brief was presented at the January 2012 meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. The following longer version of the history brief, which has never before appeared in *The Charger*, contains additional information that was not included in the version that was presented at the meeting.

In the September 2020 issue of *The Charger*, there is a superb article by Paul Siedel about the Barlow-Gordon incident. This famous incident, which occurred during the battle of Gettysburg, is noteworthy because a seriously wounded Union officer was given aid by an enemy officer. In Paul's article, he discusses the Barlow-Gordon incident and also suggests, correctly in my opinion, that there were many incidents in the Civil War for which, as Paul wrote, "truth is stranger than fiction." As evidence of this, the Barlow-Gordon incident is not the only time during the Civil War that a wounded soldier was given life-saving assistance by an enemy combatant, and more than that, the Barlow-Gordon incident is not even the only time that this happened during the battle of Gettysburg. The Barlow-Gordon incident occurred on July 1, 1863, the first day of the battle of Gettysburg. On the second day of the battle, another pair of enemy soldiers had a similar encounter in which the Confederate soldier gave aid to a seriously wounded Union soldier.

Anyone who has read about the Civil War is familiar with William Tecumseh Sherman's grim characterizations of war. As Sherman noted, "War is all hell," and as he further elaborated, "War is cruelty and you cannot refine it." Sherman's coldly truthful words encapsulate the stark ethos of war. But sometimes even in the midst of hell, some small speck of heaven is present, an unexpected act of kindness for the enemy that runs counter to the primary objective of the perpetrator. Civil War enthusiasts know about the famous encounter between John B. Gordon and Francis Barlow. But not well known is another such encounter that occurred during the battle of Gettysburg. This other and lesser known encounter involved two men whose names are not as prominent in history as those of Gordon and Barlow, but whose encounter is every bit as amazing.



James Jackson (Jack) Purman was a schoolteacher in Pennsylvania. In July 1862, he enlisted in the army and became first lieutenant in the 140th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment. About a year later on July 2, 1863, the 140th Pennsylvania was among the Union forces that fought in the Wheatfield at Gettysburg. Unable to withstand the Confederate assaults, the Union troops, including Purman and the 140th Pennsylvania, fell back. Almost 50 years later, Purman wrote, "After fighting for nearly two hours with the loss of all of our field officers and with 241 out of 340 of my regiment out of combat and surrounded by the enemy on three sides, we fell back in some disorder." As Purman and a sergeant of the regiment, James M. Pipes, were scrambling to safety, they heard a voice call out to them for help. It was a wounded comrade pleading to be carried off the field. Purman and the sergeant knew that that was not possible, but they moved the wounded soldier, John Buckley, to a nearby place of safety out of the line of fire. When Purman continued his flight from the Wheatfield, he heard Confederates yell at him to stop. Purman continued running toward

The CHARGER



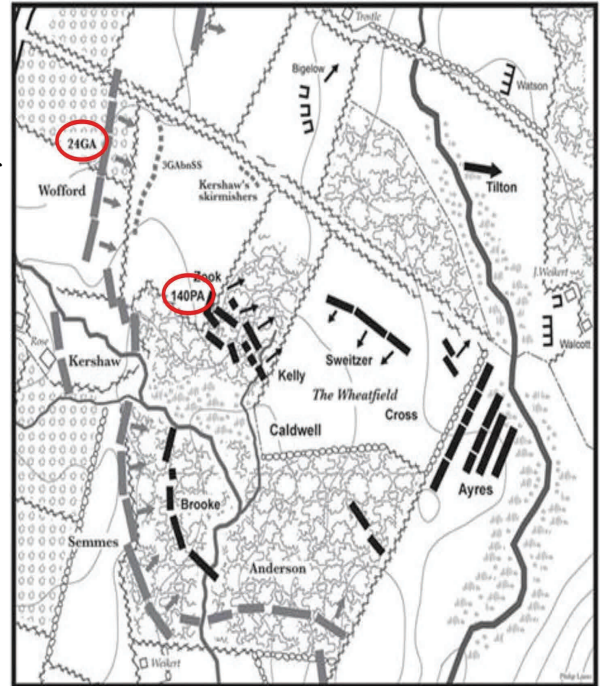
Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct... 2020

Vol. 44 #2.

Purman later wrote, "Many have attempted to tell how it feels to be shot. At first there is no pain, smarting nor anguish. But that delusion soon passes, and the acute pain follows, and you know that a missile has passed through the tender flesh of your body."

Purman spent that night on the field among the many dead and wounded of both sides, which was, in Purman's words, "a ghastly scene of cold, white upturned faces." As difficult as that night was, the following day was much worse with the hot sun and the minie balls that passed across the field. Sometime during the day, Purman was struck in his other leg. Since he was closer to the enemy's lines, he called out to a Confederate soldier for water. Initially the soldier refused because he feared being shot by a Union sharpshooter. But after further pleading from Purman, the Confederate crawled to Purman and gave him a canteen. Purman then prevailed upon the Confederate to carry him to the Confederate lines. Again Purman's request was initially refused when the Confederate said that, with all the minie balls whizzing by, both of them would likely be shot. However, Purman convinced the Confederate to crawl back to his lines with Purman on his back. After they made it, the Confederate left Purman in the shade of a tree with a canteen.



That evening Union forces took possession of the area, and Purman was transported on a stretcher to a Union field hospital where he spent the night. On the next day, July 4, his left leg was amputated. Purman later learned that the man he had moved to safety died on the field. But for his self-sacrificing heroism, Purman was awarded the Medal of Honor, as was Pipes, the other man who moved Buckley to safety. Purman received one other reward for his act of heroism. When he was convalescing from his wounds, he met a nurse named Mary Witherow, who later became Mrs. Purman.

After the war, Purman sought to identify the Confederate who carried him to safety. When he was lying in the Wheatfield after receiving his first wound, Purman had the presence of mind to notice that the colors of the Confederate unit that charged past him bore the name 24th Georgia. He also noticed that the person who brought him to the Confederate lines was a lieutenant. With this information and some assistance from ex-Confederates, including Alexander Stephens, Purman was able to identify the person who saved him as Thomas P. Oliver. In 1874 Purman "succeeded in locating my confederate friend who had saved my life at the risk of losing his own" and "kept up a pretty regular correspondence with him ever since."

The CHARGER



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct... 2020

Vol. 44 #2.

When Purman first contacted Oliver after the war, this must have been quite a shock for the former Confederate in light of Oliver's last thought while parting from Purman on the Gettysburg battlefield. Oliver said in a post-war interview that when he left Purman near the Wheatfield, "I...bade him good-bye, never for a moment believing that he would live." Purman and Oliver finally met in Washington, D.C. in June 1907, which was the first time that they were in each other's presence since their encounter on the Gettysburg battlefield. The timing of their post-war meeting was extremely fortuitous, because Oliver died six months later on December 7, 1907. Of his life-saving act, Oliver said after the war, "I have never regretted taking the chances I did to save his life." Purman died in 1915, his life extended 52 years thanks to one of his war-time enemies. In an account of their battlefield encounter that Purman gave for a newspaper, Purman said, "For the brave and generous act of this 'old reb'—Thomas P. Oliver, adjutant 24th Georgia Infantry—I shall ever hold a warm spot in my heart—I love him."

Anecdotes such as this and the Barlow-Gordon incident seem in some ways to be the height of incongruity. Here are two large bodies of men that are organized for the sole purpose of killing and maiming each other, and when one chapter of that endeavor has ended, some of the participants make an effort to heal the wounded adversaries whom they were trying to kill only moments before. In light of the overall goal of those involved in the conflict, this is completely irrational. But maybe this irrationality makes complete sense, because acts like these do not arise so much from careful reasoning, but from a common humanity. Maybe incidents like these are evidence of an indomitable compassion in human nature, even at times of utmost hostility. Maybe the lesson in this is that, despite the inhumanities that human beings too often inflict on other human beings, *Homo sapiens* is a species whose existence is worthy of continuing.

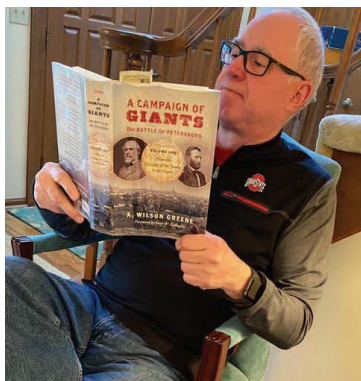
The CHARGER



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct... 2020

Vol. 44 #2.



Our new president Steve Pettyjohn hard at work preparing for the next CCWRT season. Have a safe autumn.

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