THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FEB.. 2019 VOL. 40 # 6

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Message From the President

American Civil War historians – welcome to the February issue of the Charger!

At our January 9th meeting we were thoroughly entertained, enlightened and educated by our four debaters during "The Dick Crews Annual Debate" who argued one of the great "What ifs?" of American Civil War: "If Lee had won at Gettysburg, could he have gone on to capture Washington, D.C.?" Thanks to our debaters Mike Wells, Paul Siedel, Dennis Keating and Lily Korte; and toWilliamVodrey who once again very dependably and professionally moderated this enjoyable evening.

Lily Korte and Dennis Keating asserted that General Lee would have failed; Mike Wells and Paul Siedel argued that Lee would have succeeded. Although they did not debate as "teams" per say, Moderator Vodrey asked that the two sides review their positions with their colleagues ahead of time to minimize "topic" overlap. All four debaters performed fabulously and in my mind, when the verbal "thrusting and parrying" subsided and the vote by those in attendance was called for, *I had trouble deciding who had won and for whom to cast my vote.*

However, once the votes were tabulated, it was clear that Lily Korte had made the deepest impression. One of her main arguments was that Lee could never have overcome the array of fortifications that had been constructed around the Union Capital. By 1863, they were nearly all completed in accordance with plans put in place by Major John Gross Barnard. He was appointed to that task by none other than General George B. McClellan in August of 1861 after the Union disaster at the Battle of the First Bull Run. . The works made the capital one of the most heavily fortified cities in the world at that time. The forts bristled with well placed long range heavy artillery with cleared lines of sight and were manned by trained garrisons. Lily Korte more successfully than her peers argued that this would have made it too daunting a task for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, already attritted and fatigued from the major three day battle of Gettysburg, to vanquish the Union Capital. Congratulations to all of our debaters for a job well done and to Lily Korte for having been voted our 2019 Dick Crews Annual Debate winner!!!

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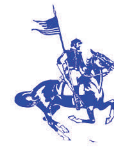

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Coming up at our next meeting on February 13th, Matt Borders will be with us for his presentation: "A Last Roll of the Dice: the Third Confederate Invasion – 1864". Matt is currently a Park Ranger at Monocacy National Battlefield, and additionally is a licensed guide at Antietam. He has been in Maryland and held positions in various historic associations there since 2007.

Matt's presentation will be an especially timely and splendid follow on to our debate as the "third invasion" is none other than Jubal Early's maneuver up the Shenandoah Valley which caught the Union by surprise as he approached Washington, D.C. from the North.

A harrowing delaying action by just enough northern soldiers at the Battle of Monocacy north of D.C. stopped Early's Corps a sufficient amount of time for Grant's hastily sailed defensive force to reach and man the Union forts. The forts had been essentially stripped of their garrisons earlier by Grant to reinforce his "Overland Campaign". By the time of Early's offensive, Grant had brought the Army of the Potomac, through a sequence of hard fought battles with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia past Richmond, over the James River and to the outskirts of Petersburg where they would be in siege nearly the rest of the war.

A real and serious threat loomed over the Union Capital. Early's assault on D.C. would bring President Lincoln "hands on" to the front lines of the battle - and perilously close to Confederate sharpshooters whose rounds whizzed over Lincoln's head and presumably his iconic Top Hat! As at least one historian has fantasized, *a person could almost imagine* Lincoln arriving in his carriage, getting down from his buggy while brandishing a large Bowie knife kept since the Blackhawk War and uttering a brief but moving Lincolnesque leadership statement something like: "Boys, there ain't much to be said. But, I'm in a lather to stay 'n' fight if you will!"

Looking forward and continuing my Series Theme of "Southern Invasions and Raids of the North", we will begin a two month study of what most historians assert was the most important battle of the American Civil War - and therefore it follows one of the most important battles in the history of the world: ***Gettysburg***. The March 13th meeting will focus on the lead up to the battle with Daniel Welch's presentation "How Did They Get Here? –The Gettysburg Campaign". Our April meeting will be an in depth look at a Gettysburg generalship example when Wayne Motts presents: "Trust in God and Fear Nothing: Confederate General Lewis A. Armistead".

Emerging from a series of conferences shortly after the battle of Chancellorsville, General Lee's immense prestige by that time of the Civil War and well reasoned, rational arguments - had convinced Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Secretary of War James Seddon that the summer of 1863 would be ***the*** optimal time for the South to launch an invasion into Pennsylvania.

Lee envisioned a minor Confederate force pinning the - still General Hooker led – Army of the Potomac along the Rappahannock River; and then covering a thrust by his main force into the Shenandoah River Valley with a dense cavalry screen shielding the move from the Union. With his right flank protected by the Blue Ridge and South Mountain ranges, Lee would cross the Potomac River near Harper's Ferry and penetrate into the Cumberland River Valley of Pennsylvania. Lee's plan was then to isolate and destroy piecemeal elements of the Army of the Potomac as they approached to confront him. *As we all know, things did not quite exactly unfold that way*. Come on March 13th to listen to Daniel Welch advise on why not!

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Respectfully submitted.

Daniel J. Ursu, President

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Doan's Corners and The Underground Railroad by Paul Siedel

Not very long ago there came into my possession a copy of a map of Cuyahoga County dating from 1858 shortly before the Civil War. There were several things that struck me as I began to study this fascinating piece of history, one being the fact that most of the main arteries including the railroads were in place by that time, and that the names of the property holders throughout the County were on each parcel and very easy to read. The other fact of which I was not aware was that there were many small villages which once existed as separate entities but have since vanished into the mile after mile of urban sprawl which today has become greater Cleveland. Villages such as Albion, Newburgh, Dover Center and Brooklyn Center were once separate and distinct places each serving the surrounding farmland and the people who lived there. One such place was the village of Doans Corners which stood at the intersection of E 105 and Euclid Ave.

According to the Encyclopedia of Cleveland History the village of Doan's Corners was located at the intersection of The Buffalo Road (Euclid Ave), Doans Road (E 105) and Fairmont Road. (E. 107). The entire line of unbroken residential and commercial buildings extended along Euclid Ave. from Mayfield Road west to Crawford Road and played a very important part in the area's Underground Railroad movement. Many freedom seekers made their way here from other parts of the Western Reserve. From here they waited for nightfall and either were smuggled aboard a coach to Buffalo, where they made their way to Canada, or simply followed Doans Brook northward to the Lake where a prearranged meeting would take them by boat out of U.S. jurisdiction . Many of the families that founded and resided at Doans Corners, such as the Fords, Doans, Cozads and Bates were very much involved in the abolition movement and were instrumental in helping freedom seekers attain their ultimate goal of freedom in Canada.
Doans Corners takes it's name from Nathanial Doan who decided to relocate his blacksmith shop from Superior Ave. in downtown Cleveland four miles east. Here he built a blacksmith shop and store. Stage coaches stopped here on their way to Erie, Pennsylvania and Buffalo, New York and the intersection eventually became a bustling village of stores, churches, homes and a hotel. It was part of East Cleveland Township, but was ultimately annexed by Cleveland in 1872. Case and Adelbert Colleges were established and the village took on the atmosphere of a college town. By 1900 the expanding city had largely engulfed Doan's Corners and by the 1930s the village had become the home to several theaters, commercial blocks, hotels and homes, which brought thousands to the area. By this time however, the old village had become completely engulfed by the giant to the east and Doans Corners vanished as a separate entity forever. It became known however as Cleveland's second downtown and bustled with nightlife and commercial activity. By 1970 however Doans Corners was overcome by the epidemic of urban blight which overwhelmed the surrounding neighborhoods.
By 1980 all of the old buildings had been razed and the area took on the appearance of an urban wasteland.
Now, however, new life has come to Doans Corners. The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Case-Western Reserve University and an active neighborhood organization have reclaimed and breathed new life into the now vanished village along the old Buffalo Road.
Doans has once again become a destination for people from all over the U.S. seeking medical attention. The old settlers would no doubt be proud of their village which today has totally vanished, and has been replaced by a world class institution putting Cleveland once again in the forefront of progress in the medical world. Just as the first settlers became involved in the social progress that was to set millions free.

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Lew Wallace

by Dennis Keating

His best selling novel *Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ* has overshadowed Lew Wallace's role in the Civil War, including his controversial march decision at Shiloh and his heroic defense against Jubal Early's invading army at Monocacy.

Lew Wallace grew up in rural Indiana. His father David was a West Point graduate, a lawyer, a Congressman, and a governor of Indiana. Wallace was studying the law when the Mexican war began. At 19, he volunteered but his regiment stationed in Texas did not see combat. He became a lawyer, served in the Indiana Senate, and organized a Zouave militia unit.

When the Civil War began, Wallace became the state's adjutant general and then was given command of the 11th Indiana regiment. It won a minor battle at Romney,(West) Virginia on June 5, 1861, leading to Wallace's promotion to brigadier general of U.S. Volunteers and command of a brigade. Wallace's brigade participated in U.S. Grant's 1862 campaign that resulted in the capture of Nashville. Wallace distinguished himself at the battle of Fort Donelson, leading an important counterattack that led to his promotion to major general (the youngest in the Union Army) and command of Grant's 3rd division as his army headed for Corinth, Mississippi.

As Grant's army was surprised by Albert Sidney Johnson's attack at Shiloh on April 6, 1862, Wallace's division was stationed in reserve several miles north of Pittsburg Landing where Grant's army was concentrated. Grant verbally ordered Wallace to join him. Wallace chose a route that he thought would lead him to support William Tecumseh Sherman's division. When word reached him of Sherman's retreat, Wallace ordered a countermarch that delayed his arrival at the battlefield until the fighting had ended. Wallace's division did participate in the battle next day that routed the Confederates. However, despite this successful ending Grant came under considerable criticism considering the rout the first day and the horrific number of casualties. He placed much of the blame for this on Wallace's failure to arrive earlier on April 6. Later that month, Henry Halleck removed Wallace from his command. Wallace then and for the rest of his life argued that he was not negligent in choosing his route to join Grant. In 1894, Wallace attended a Shiloh reunion and returned in 1901 to retrace his march route. In his Memoir Grant did somewhat relent of his earlier criticism of Wallace.

Wallace was then without any major command for the next two years. He did participate in the defense of Cincinnati during Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, commanded the prisoner of war camp in Columbus, and defended a key point during John Hunt Morgan's raid into Indiana and Ohio in July, 1863.

In March, 1864, Wallace was given the command of the VIII Corps, headquartered in Baltimore. On July 9, 1864, Wallace distinguished himself at Monacacy Junction by having his outnumbered makeshift force delay Early's invading force and thereby saving Washington City from a possible attack. Wallace was belatedly recognized for his invaluable service this day.

In January, 1865, Grant ordered Wallace to southern Texas to investigate the operations of Confederate forces in the Trans-Mississippi Department and while there he met with Mexican officials about expelling the French occupation forces from Mexico.

Returning to Washington City, Wallace was a member of the military commission that tried and convicted the Lincoln assassins. He then headed the military commission that tried and sentenced to death Henry Wirz, the Confederate commander of the notorious Andersonville prisoner of war camp. Following this, Wallace joined the Mexican army under the Juarez government to defeat the Emperor Maximilian but returned to Indiana in 1867 to practice law.

He twice unsuccessfully ran for Congress. In 1876 he was sent to Florida to investigate voter fraud in the controversial presidential election. For his service that helped elect Ohio governor and Civil War General Rutherford B. Hayes President, Wallace was appointed Governor of the New Mexico territory.

While there, Wallace became entangled in the Lincoln County range wars that featured Billy the Kid (alias William Bonney). Wallace attempted to tame Bonney but the outlaw continued on his criminal path until he was killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett, a few month after Wallace's tenure ended. While in Santa Fe, Wallace completed the manuscript of *Ben Hur*.

In 1881, President James Garfield appointed Wallace U.S. Minister to the Ottoman Empire. Wallace succeeded former Confederate general (and now a Republican) James Longstreet in the post. Wallace served in Constantinople until 1885 (and later wrote a novel set there).

Returning to Indiana, Wallace wrote a campaign biography of fellow Hoosier and Civil War General Benjamin Harrison, who was elected President. His residence in Crawfordsville outside Indianapolis became the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, a 71-year old Wallace volunteered to raise and lead troops but his offer was declined. He then tried to enlist as a private but was rejected, probably because of his age.

Wallace died in 1905 before he completed his autobiography. His statue representing Indiana stands in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol.

Wallace's career, including his military service during and after the Civil War, makes for one of the most melodramatic in U.S. history.

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September 2019 Field Trip
Visit the land of Lincoln – Springfield, Illinois
September 19 – 21, 2019

The annual Cleveland Civil War Round Table Field Trip is set for September 19 – 21, 2019 in historic Springfield, Illinois. The trip will include a visit to the Abraham Lincoln Museum and Library - one of the most visited presidential libraries - which combines history with modern age technology. Our group will be hosted for lunch on the premises with a speaker from the museum. The itinerary will include a visit to President Lincoln's home and tomb and the State Capital Building, where he served. Springfield is also the home of the Illinois State Military Museum, which includes artifacts from all of America's conflicts with many Civil War items and the Grand Army of the Republic Civil War Museum. For those wanting a unique experience, there will be an opportunity to go on a Lincoln's Ghost Walking Tour on Friday evening. Our group will be welcomed to Springfield Thursday evening by none other than Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's long-time friend and body guard (portrayed by local historian and guide Garrett Moffett) and the President (portrayed by a local Lincoln impersonator) will join us for dinner Saturday evening at our hotel.

Please mark your calendars to that you can experience this unique opportunity to experience the Land of Lincoln!

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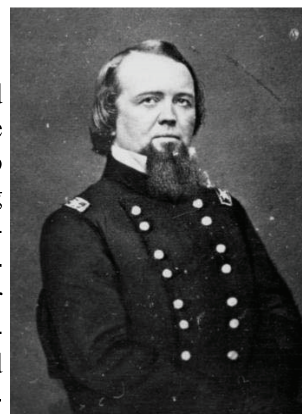
Two Wars at a Time: the War within the Civil War by David A. Carrino

This history brief was presented at the January 2019 meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. The following longer version of the history brief contains additional information that was not included in the version that was presented at the meeting.

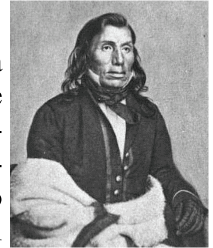


On September 4, 1957, Ford Motor Company introduced a car that it predicted would revolutionize American automobiles. That car was the Edsel, and rather than revolutionize American automobiles, the Edsel was, without exaggeration, a spectacular failure, so much so that the name Edsel is now synonymous with commercial failure. As part of the marketing campaign for the Edsel, Ford Motor Company coined a slogan to describe its new car, specifically, the car of the future. That dynamic slogan was intended to instill in people a high regard for the Edsel and to motivate them to purchase one. But the future for the so-called car of the future lasted only two years, because production ceased in 1959, and that slogan became a source of ridicule. In the Civil War, there was a slogan that someone introduced which also sounded dynamic and was intended to instill in soldiers a high regard for the person who introduced the slogan and to motivate the soldiers to buy into that person's leadership. The Civil War leader in question is John Pope, who truly was an Edsel of an army commander. When Pope was given command of a Union army in the East, he introduced something of a slogan about himself when he wrote that his headquarters would be in the saddle. Pope's intent with this slogan was to indicate to his men that he would not dawdle when it came to campaigns against the enemy. Instead, he would be aggressive and continuously on the move. But after Pope's dismal failure at the second battle of Bull Run, many people twisted Pope's slogan and said that if Pope's headquarters really were in the saddle, then his headquarters were where his hindquarters should be.

After John Pope's disastrous defeat at Second Bull Run, he disappeared from the Civil War as certainly as if he had fallen off the Earth. Shelby Foote, in his three-volume history of the Civil War, wrote that after Second Bull Run, Pope received orders "to pack his bags for the long ride to Minnesota." In an earlier book about the Civil War, Bruce Catton wrote that after Second Bull Run, Pope "was under orders to go back into obscurity in the Northwest, far from the Rebel generals." I remember when I read those words many years ago, I wondered why Pope was sent to Minnesota. Tonight's history brief focuses on that.

The reason for John Pope's trip to Minnesota was precipitated on August 17, 1862, 11 days before the beginning of the second battle of Bull Run. On that day, four Dakota Indians in southern Minnesota were returning from an unsuccessful hunting expedition and came upon a farm owned by white settlers. Minnesota had been a state for only four years, but during that time the white population had continued to increase significantly, and the Dakota were progressively squeezed into smaller territory. Prior to Minnesota's statehood, treaties had been made between the U.S. and the Dakota which stipulated that the U.S. government would provide annuity payments to the Dakota for the purchase of food from white traders, and in return the Dakota would allow white settlement on land previously used by the Dakota as their source of food. However, these payments were consistently late, which caused the Dakota to frequently live in hunger, and after a poor crop season in 1862, the Dakota faced starvation.

Because of this situation, there was a meeting on August 15, 1862 between government officials and members of the Dakota, including their chief, whose Dakota name was Taoyateduta and whose English name was Little Crow. At this meeting the Dakota once again complained about the late annuity payments and made clear that they had a desperate need for food. Although the white traders had ample food in their storehouses, the traders were unwilling to release it on credit. When the Dakota emphasized that many of their people were facing starvation, one of the white traders, a man named Andrew Myrick, reputedly scoffed, "So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry, let them eat grass or their own dung." (Myrick may have made this remark at the meeting or sometime prior to it. The historical record is not clear when Myrick made this scathing remark, but the historical evidence is clear that Myrick said this, or some variation of this, in the presence of some of the Dakota.) Because of the dire situation that the Dakota were facing, tensions were very high between the Dakota and the white settlers in Minnesota, and when the unsuccessful hunting party happened upon a farm two days after the heated meeting, the four Dakota men killed five white settlers who lived on that farm.



That night, after Taoyateduta and the other Dakota leaders were told of this incident, a council was convened, and the Dakota decided to go to war against the whites. There is evidence that the Dakota were aware that the U.S. was engaged in a civil war, and this influenced those Dakota who favored war, because they felt that the attention of the U.S. government was focused elsewhere. Taoyateduta opposed the decision to go to war and insisted that the Dakota had almost no chance of victory. But he also pledged to lead the Dakota, because he proclaimed in the council that he is not a coward and that he will die with them. Beginning on August 18, the day after the killing on the farm, Dakota war parties attacked whites, first white traders and government employees and then white settlements. The attacks were primarily along the Minnesota River in southern Minnesota, and in the next few days hundreds of whites were killed. One of the first whites to be killed was Andrew Myrick, the man who told the Dakota to eat grass. Myrick's body was later found with grass stuffed in his mouth. Between the killing of whites and their fleeing from the region in panic, whole townships became depopulated.

Some of the survivors of the initial Dakota attacks of August 18 fled to Fort Ridgely, a federal garrison on the Minnesota River that was built to protect the settlers in the region, and the white settlers who managed to reach Fort Ridgely told the men there about the Dakota attacks. Captain John Marsh, who had fought in the first battle of Bull Run, but was now stationed at Fort Ridgely, left the fort with 46 U.S. soldiers. This force moved several miles along the bank of the river toward the Dakota, but it ran into an ambush that the Dakota prepared. There was fierce fighting in which a number of soldiers were killed. The survivors attempted to escape by swimming across the river, and some were able to escape this way. However, Marsh was pulled under the water and drowned. In all, 23 of the men in that force were killed. On August 19, the Dakota attacked the town of New Ulm, but a downpour caused them to end the attack after two hours, and the town was spared. The Dakota made two attempts to take Fort Ridgely, but the fort successfully rebuffed both attacks, one on August 20 and one on August 22.

Whites fleeing Indians. 1862

When word of the Dakota attacks reached St. Paul, the state capital, the governor, Alexander Ramsey, appointed Henry Hastings Sibley to lead the militia against the Dakota. (Henry Hopkins Sibley, a distant cousin of Henry Hastings Sibley, commanded a small Confederate army at the battle of Valverde and at the battle of Glorieta Pass, both of which are in present-day New Mexico.) The force of over 1,000 men led by Henry Hastings Sibley reached Fort Ridgely on August 28, and Sibley directed that a party be sent out to look for survivors and to bury the bodies of those who had been killed, because those bodies were still unburied. This party was attacked by the Dakota on September 2 at a place called Birch Coulee. Sibley sent reinforcements, and the battle of Birch Coulee became one of the most intense of the war. Subsequently, the Dakota attacked some settlements further north in central Minnesota, but by this time the residents were prepared to resist the attacks and fared much better against the Dakota.

In the meantime, Governor Ramsey contacted Abraham Lincoln and asked for assistance from the federal government. But the federal government was not inclined to send troops to Minnesota, because it considered other hostilities a higher priority. Nevertheless, the War Department did designate that region the Department of the Northwest, and on September 6, 1862 John Pope was ordered to assume command of that department and to take overall command of the military effort. The directive that Edwin Stanton sent to Pope told him to make his headquarters not in the saddle, but in "Saint Paul, Minn." and to "take such prompt and vigorous measures as shall quell the hostilities and afford peace, security, and protection to the people against Indian hostilities." Although the federal government was reluctant to send troops to Minnesota, it evidently felt that it could spare John Pope. However, there were some Minnesota volunteer infantry regiments that had been organized for the Civil War, but these units were retained in the state for use against the Dakota.

John Pope arrived in Minnesota on September 16, the day before the battle of Antietam. By the time of Pope's arrival, the war in Minnesota had begun to turn in favor of the U.S. A week after Pope arrived, a force led by Henry Hastings Sibley fought a battle against the Dakota at Wood Lake. At this battle, as at the two clashes at Fort Ridgely, the U.S. used artillery against the Dakota, which was decisive in defeating them. (The battle of Wood Lake occurred on September 23, 1862, the day after Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.) After the battle of Wood Lake, the Dakota under Taoyateduta withdrew westward, and the war that came to be known as the Dakota War of 1862 was essentially over. Although accurate numbers are not known, it is estimated that there were approximately 80 U.S. military casualties, 150 Dakota dead, and 450 to 800 civilians killed during the war. There were more deaths in the Dakota War of 1862 than in the much more well-known Great Sioux War of 1876, which is the war that included the battle of the Little Bighorn.

Prior to the battle of Wood Lake, Sibley learned that the Dakota held almost 300 white captives. Negotiations between Sibley and the Dakota led to the release of almost all of the captives on September 26, and the remainder within the next few days. When John Pope received word of Sibley's victory at Wood Lake and of the release of the captives, he replied in a dispatch to Sibley, "The horrible massacres of women and children and the outrageous abuse of female prisoners, still alive, call for punishment beyond human power to inflict....It is my purpose utterly to exterminate the Sioux...They are to be treated as maniacs or wild beasts, and by no means as people with whom treaties or compromises can be made." Shortly after the release of the captive whites, over 1,600 Dakota women, children, and old men were taken into custody, and in early November they were marched to Fort Snelling near St. Paul and held there until the spring of 1863 when they were relocated further west, outside of Minnesota. Two months later the federal government passed legislation, the Dakota Expulsion Act, which made it illegal for any Dakota to live in the state of Minnesota. To this day, the Dakota Expulsion Act has not been repealed.

At the time of the release of the captive whites, many of the Dakota warriors, but not Taoyateduta, surrendered and were held as prisoners. Taoyateduta eventually fled to Canada. One of the real ironies of this war was that Taoyateduta was the person who led the Dakota in battle. Prior to the war, he recognized the necessity of negotiating

with the U.S. government if the Dakota had any chance of being treated fairly, and government officials considered Taoyateduta a reliable spokesman for the Dakota. In 1858 Taoyateduta traveled to Washington and met with federal officials to discuss the plight of the Dakota and the failure of the government to adequately fulfill the terms of its treaties with the Dakota, although this meeting did nothing to alter the treatment of the Dakota by the government. Taoyateduta even adopted some white customs, such as the clothes he wore. When the Dakota decided to make war against the whites, Taoyateduta returned to his Dakota clothing. He also admonished the Dakota not to kill women or children. After the Dakota were defeated, Taoyateduta lived for several months in Canada and then attempted to return to Minnesota. Taoyateduta, along with his fifteen-year-old son, Wowinapa, snuck into Minnesota and had traveled to near the town of Hutchinson, which is about 70 miles west of St. Paul. On the morning of July 3, 1863, the day when a Confederate force under George Pickett made a doomed assault on a strong Union position in southern Pennsylvania, Taoyateduta and his son were picking wild raspberries when they were seen by a white man and his son, Nathan and Chauncey Lamson, both of whom shot Taoyateduta. Taoyateduta died of his wounds, and his body was later identified. Nathan Lamson received a $500 bounty for the killing of Taoyateduta. Taoyateduta's body was mutilated, scalped, and decapitated, and his remains were not returned to his descendants for proper burial until 1971.

The Dakota men who surrendered on September 26, 1862 were tried in a military court for war crimes against civilians. Almost 400 Dakota men were tried from September 28 to November 5, 1862. There is no question that the Native Americans in Minnesota were treated atrociously by the U.S. government prior to the Dakota War of 1862. But there is also no question that atrocities were committed by some Dakota during the war. Unarmed civilians were murdered in cold blood, and women were raped. According to one gruesome eyewitness account, a Dakota warrior cut open the abdomen of a pregnant woman and ripped out the fetus. The story of the Duley family demonstrates the brutality that civilians experienced. William Duley became separated from his family when some civilians were fleeing from the Dakota. When the Dakota caught up to the group, two of William's children, ages ten and four, were killed. William's pregnant wife, Laura, and his three remaining children, one of whom was a baby, were taken captive. While in captivity, Laura miscarried the child she was carrying, and her baby died. After the war ended, Laura and the surviving children were released, but Laura had endured repeated assaults by Dakota men. Because of many such accounts of atrocities committed by the Dakota, there was profound anger toward them and intense sentiment for retribution. In all, 392 Dakota were tried, 323 were convicted, and 303 were sentenced to death. The men on trial did not have counsel and likely did not fully understand the proceedings, which in some cases lasted only a few minutes. Nevertheless, Pope and Sibley were satisfied that justice had been administered properly, and on November 7 Pope asked Lincoln for approval to carry out the sentences for the 303 who were condemned to die. Pope did this in a lengthy telegram to Lincoln which simply listed the names of those who were to be executed and did not include any of the information in support of the sentences. This long telegram was sent at a cost of $400 ($10,000 in 2018 dollars), an expense for which Pope was strongly criticized.

Rather than hastily comply with Pope's request for approval to execute the 303 convicted Dakota, Lincoln, on November 10, insisted that Pope send him "as soon as possible the full and complete record of their convictions," and, as a jab at Pope's telegraphic monetary excesses, Lincoln instructed Pope, "Send all by mail." Once in possession of the trial records, Lincoln had this information examined by two lawyers with the goal of determining if the death sentences were justified.

After this analysis, Lincoln decreased the number of death sentences from 303 to 39. The principal criterion that Lincoln used in this decision was proof of participation in some kind of atrocity, such as murder of civilians or rape, as opposed to participation in a battle. Ultimately one more death sentence was commuted, and on December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota men were executed by hanging in Mankato, Minnesota. This remains to this day the largest mass execution in U.S. history. For the execution, a very large scaffold was built, on which there were 40 trapdoors, all of which could be opened by cutting a single rope. In this way all of the condemned men would be hanged simultaneously. On the day of the execution, the 38 Dakota were put in position on the scaffold, and the rope opening the trapdoors was cut by William Duley, the man who lost three of his children and an unborn child in the war with the Dakota and whose wife was held as a captive by the Dakota along with other of his children.

During the Trent Affair, Lincoln famously said, "One war at a time." When hostilities erupted in Minnesota in August 1862, Lincoln had a second war thrust upon him and was required to fight two wars at a time. Fortunately for Lincoln, the war in Minnesota, which was a war within the Civil War, was limited in scope and of short duration, certainly compared to the Civil War. But when the Dakota War of 1862 ended, Lincoln faced a major challenge, specifically how to respond to the 303 death sentences imposed on Dakota men, which was the determination that was made in part by John Pope, the person whom the Lincoln administration had chosen to oversee U.S. operations in that war. Lincoln's decision was to sentence 38 of those 303 to death, because he believed that only those 38 deserved to be executed. However, Lincoln received harsh criticism for this decision, including from members of his own political party and particularly from the citizens of Minnesota, who let Lincoln know of their discontent in the election of 1864. Although Lincoln won the popular vote in Minnesota, his margin of victory was less than in 1860. After the 1864 election, Alexander Ramsey, the Republican governor of Minnesota during the Dakota War of 1862, said that the Republicans would have fared better at the ballot box, "if he (i.e., Lincoln) had hung more Indians." Lincoln replied to Ramsey's assertion, "I could not afford to hang men for votes." In light of the harsh criticism that Lincoln received over his decision, one question to consider is whether Abraham Lincoln correctly handled the situation regarding the Dakota executions. Should Lincoln have ordered the execution of all 303 who were sentenced to death? Or, because of the way that the Dakota were treated prior to the war, should Lincoln have ordered that none of the Dakota be executed, in spite of what they did? Or did Lincoln, by putting 38 men to death, correctly resolve this complex issue, which arose out of the war within the Civil War?

The CHARGER

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Feb.. 2019 Vol. 40 #6.

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Matt Borders

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