

THE CHARGER

January, 2009

456th Meeting

Vol. 30 #5

Tonight's Program:

The Dick Crews Annual Debate

*The Hitherto Unknown Meeting
Of Abraham Lincoln and
Jefferson Davis at Hampton Roads in January,
1865*

*Lincoln will be portrayed by Mel Maurer
Jefferson Davis will be portrayed by John C.
Fazio*

Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

President Lincoln attended a peace conference in February, 1865 at Hampton Roads Virginia. Our play imagines that Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, also attended. After the failed conference, the two leaders are found in a parlor by Franklin Boyd, a reporter who is allowed to ask each some questions. Their answers enable Lincoln and Davis to debate their respective positions on the Civil War. Our actors know the questions to be asked but not each other's answers, so rebuttals will be spontaneous.

The roles will be played by Mel Maurer as Lincoln, John Fazio as Davis, and William Vodrey as Boyd, (an actual reporter for the Plain Dealer at that time). All will answer questions in a press conference format after the one hour play. President Jon Thompson will serve as host.

Join us for a fun and entertaining evening.

Tonight's Speaker:

**Mel Maurer
John Fazio
William Vodrey**

Are three participants are well known to us. All are past presidents of the Roundtable and have spoken to our group. They also frequently speak to other Roundtables. Mel is a retired executive of Dana Corporation. John is a lawyer and retired businessman. William is a Magistrate Judge with the Cleveland Municipal Court.

**Date: Wednesday,
January 14, 2009**

**Place: Judson Manor NEW!
1890 E. 107th Street
Cleveland, Ohio**

**Time: Drinks 6 PM
Dinner 7 PM**

**Reservations: Please Call NEW!
Dan Zeiser (440) 449-9311
Or email ccwrt1956@yahoo.com
By 8 pm Tuesday before meeting**

**Meal choice: Buffet includes
entree, vegetable, potato/rice,
salad, and dessert**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Jon Thompson** (440) 871-6439
Vice President: **Dennis Keating** (216) 397-0188
Secretary: **Marge Wilson** (216) 932-6558
Treasurer: **Lisa Kempfer** (440) 526-1318
Historian: **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249

Directors:

Terry Koozer John Fazio
C. Ellen Connally Paul Burkholder
Hans Kuenzi Steve Wilson

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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 2009

Greetings to all,

And greetings, as well, for a happy 2009 to each and all. The ghosts of Christmases past are indeed past, but there are still ghosts in our future, as you will soon see. Next week CCWRT will be visited by three ghosts of the past when roundtable members John Fazio, Mel Maurer, and William Vodrey portray Jefferson Davis, Abraham Lincoln, and journalist Franklin Boyd, respectively, in a rip-roaring debate set in the salon of the in February, 1865. When journalist Boyd stumbles inadvertently upon Lincoln and Davis in secret conference, they agree to submit to several questions in return for his silence. Ah, the scoop of the century! Yet Boyd's promise forbids him from reporting their meeting or publicizing their responses. But, YOU will be there, eyewitnesses to history (oh, very well, imagined history) as these two great politicians verbally duel in our concocted debate.

Please join in the fun at our January 14 meeting. Afterwards, Lincoln and Davis will even answer some of YOUR questions.

Respectfully,
Jon Thompson

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2008 Terry Koozer	1982 John Harkness
2007 John Fazio	1981 Thomas Geschke
2006 Dave Carrino	1980 Charles Spiegle
2005 Mel Maurer	1979 William Bates
2004 Warren McClelland	1978 Richard McCrae
2003 Maynard Bauer	1977 James Chapman
2002 Bill McGrath	1976 Milton Holmes
2001 William Vodrey	1975 Thomas Gretter
2000 Bob Boyda	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1999 Dick Crews	1973 Arthur Jordan
1998 John Moore	1972 Bernard Drews
1997 Dan Zeiser	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1996 John Sutula	1970 Frank Schuhle
1995 Norton London	1969 Donald Heckaman
1994 Robert Battisti	1968 Frank Moran
1993 Kevin Callahan	1967 William Schlesinger
1992 Bob Baucher	1966 Donald Hamill
1991 Joe Tirpak	1965 Lester Swift
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1989 Neil Glaser	1963 Paul Guenther
1988 Martin Graham	1962 Edward Downer
1987 George Vourlojianis	1961 Charles Clarke
1986 Tim Beatty	1960 Howard Preston
1985 Brian Kowell	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1984 Neil Evans	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1983 William Victory	1957 Kenneth Grant

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2008/2009 SCHEDULE**

September 10, 2008

**Varina Davis:
First Lady of the
Confederacy**

Dr. Joan Cashin



October 8, 2008



**The Supreme Court
During the
Civil War**

Chris Fortunato

November 12, 2008

**Blood, Tears, and Glory:
How Ohioans Won the
Civil War**

Dr. James Bissland

December 10, 2008

**Restoring
the
USS
Monitor**



Dr. Sean Brossia

January 14, 2009

**The Dick Crews Annual
Debate**

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Of Abraham Lincoln and
Jefferson Davis at Hampton Roads in January, 1865
Lincoln will be portrayed by Mel Maurer
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Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

February 11, 2009

**The Great
Emancipator
As Lawyer
Dr. Paul Finkelman**



March 11, 2009

**Meet Me at the Fair: The Northern
Ohio Sanitary Fair of the Cleveland
Chapter of the United States Sani-
tary Commission
Tim Daley**

April 8, 2009

**The Fight for Money:
The Income Tax Laws
Of the Civil War**

Donald Korb

May 13, 2009

The Fighting McCooks



**Barbara
Whalen**

The Battles of Nashville

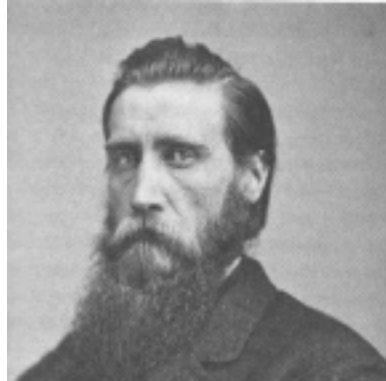
By Mel Maurer

Whatever hope the rebellious South had for continuing its fight until the North grew tired of the bloody struggle died - not with the surrender of Lee at Appomattox Court House in April 1865 - on the hills outside of Nashville, Tennessee, when Confederate General John Bell Hood and his Army of Tennessee were crushed in the last great battle of the Civil War in December 1864.

This last desperate clash of armies that December 15th and 16th, however, was just one of the battles fought in Nashville that month. Commanding Union General George Thomas, while preparing to fight Hood, also had to fight President Lincoln, Secretary of War Stanton, Army Chief of Staff Halleck, and Commander in Chief U.S. Grant to retain his job and confront the enemy according to his plan and timetable. Hood, with his ruined left arm and missing right leg, already struggling with pain, medication, and alcohol, also had to fight a crippling winter storm.



Gen George H. Thomas



Gen. John Bell Hood

As that December began, almost everything was going the Union's way: Lincoln had been reelected, Grant still had General Robert E. Lee and his army of Northern Virginia under siege at Petersburg, while General William T. Sherman was about to take Savannah after his devastating march through Georgia. All was going well, except Hood's army was marching towards Nashville with 25,000 to 30,000 men (Thomas thought he had a larger force) to take that city and then to move on to threaten Kentucky and Ohio - actions which, even if partially successful, could change the outcome of the war.

Nashville, which fell to the Union without a fight in 1862 after the fall of Ft. Donelson, had grown in importance and population during the war from 30,000 to about 100,000 as it became "a communication, transportation and supply center for Federal military operations in the west." The South's failure to even try to retake Nashville during the war was a measure of its inability to defend its territory.

Given Nashville's extensive fortifications, encircled with forts and redoubts, along with the Cumberland River acting like a moat around some of it, Hood could have taken months to

plan an attack with 120,000 men and still have failed, but this was Hood – and nothing would stop him from trying.

Jefferson Davis (“You must first beat him (the enemy)...and advance to the Ohio River”), in picking Hood to replace General Johnston in Atlanta that July, followed Lincoln’s example in his selection of Grant – he needed a fighter and he got one. Hood did fight, first by attacking General William T. Sherman outside Atlanta, and then by invading Tennessee to try to relieve the pressure on Lee in Virginia and the people of Georgia. Despite the great odds against him, he could have achieved some level of success had his tenacity been matched by wisdom.

As the Army of Tennessee made its way towards Nashville, Hood, due to command failures, let General John M. Schofield’s army, sent by Sherman to reinforce Thomas, slip through his lines outside the small town of Spring Hill, thirty miles south of Nashville, on November 29th. The next afternoon, Hood (“We shall make the fight”) launched a frontal assault against entrenched Union rear guard positions in Franklin, eighteen miles south of Nashville, as Schofield continued his march to reinforce Thomas.

Hood’s army was badly beaten, suffering over 8000 casualties, including six generals killed, in just four hours. In recent years, as the Battle of Franklin has received more attention, it has become popular to treat Nashville as almost an afterthought – a historical mistake. As one writer puts it: “Hood was knocked down at Franklin - but he was knocked out in Nashville.”

Unchallenged on their way, Hood, still dreaming of reinforcements from Texas, reached the outskirts of Nashville and began to prepare a defense for the attack he knew would be coming. But first he and his men would have to fight the weather. Thomas’s men had the same weather, but their forts and redoubts were built, most were well rested, all were well clothed, shod and fed, and the delays caused by the soon to be frigid climate worked to Thomas’s advantage, giving him time to refit his cavalry. It was a far different story for Hood’s be-draggled army.

The relatively mild Tennessee weather in early December took a sudden turn for the worse the night of the 8th. A cold rain soon turned to snow and by the next morning the ground was frozen, covered with snow and sleet. This was followed by six days of rain, freezing rain, and sleet. Nashville and its environs were encased in ice. These conditions were brutal for the mostly barefooted rebels (one historian says only twenty-five men in the whole army had shoes or parts of shoes on their feet), already severely weakened in Franklin, without warm clothes or much in the way of food, and their cannons, caissons, and wagons up to their hubs in mud. Demoralized, cold, hungry troops now had to break frozen soil to try to establish defenses for the attack they knew would be coming when the weather broke. It must have seemed that even the Lord was against them. (I once lived through one of these ice storms as a resident in that area. We were paralyzed for days).

Thomas, meanwhile, was under attack from his superiors in Washington and Petersburg for what, in their growing panic at the advancing southern army, was their perception that he was just too slow in taking on Hood. Thomas, although not as ready as he wanted to be, gave

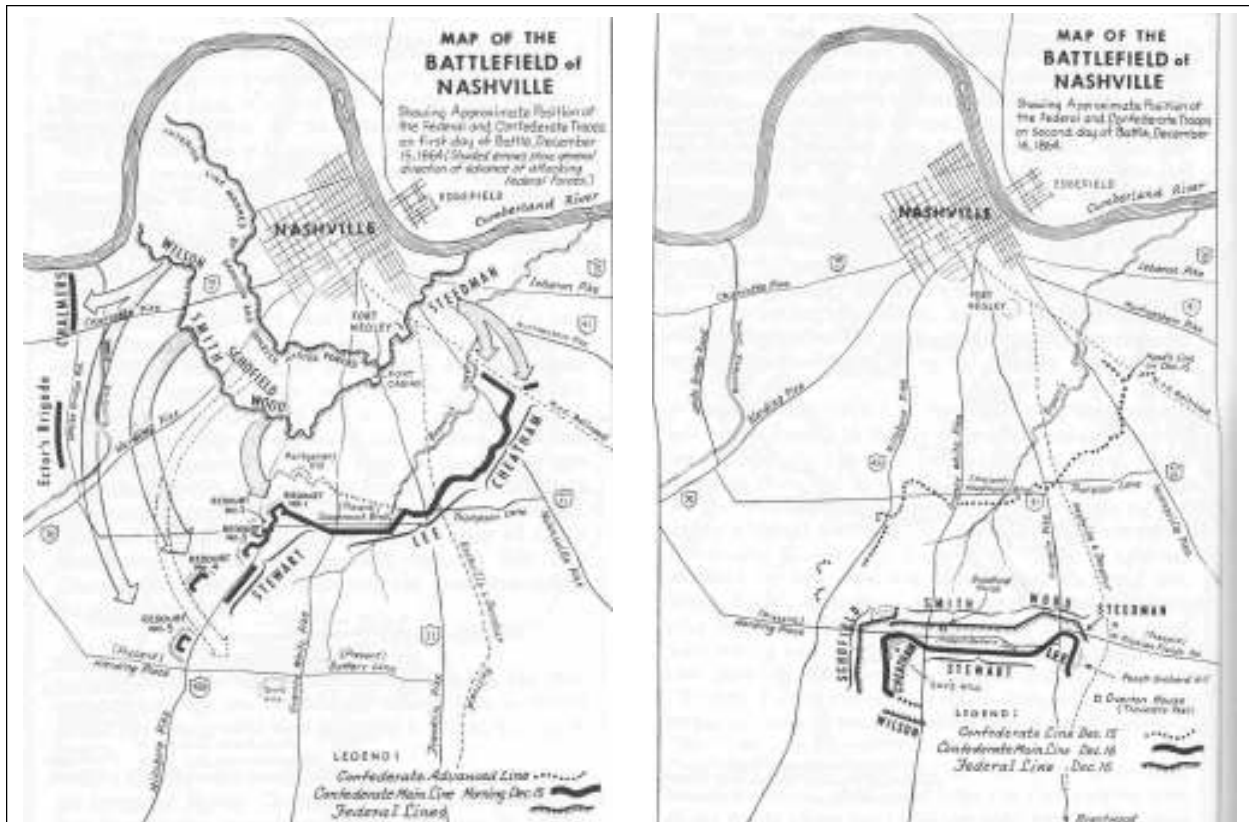
into pressure and was going to attack on the 10th when the ice storm hit the area suspending his plans. (“A terrible storm of freezing rain has come today which will make it impossible for our men to fight”). When Grant (“I was never so anxious during the war as at that time.”) heard of further delay, he asked Halleck to draw up orders relieving Thomas, to be replaced by Schofield (who may have been behind misleading information getting to Grant). Halleck resisted (“No one here wishes General Thomas’ removal”) and these orders were never sent.

The six day weather related delay finally exhausted Grant’s patience and he ordered General John A. Logan sent west to assume command at Nashville. Logan got as far as Louisville when the weather cleared enough on the 15th for Thomas to finally launch his attack on Hood. Logan was recalled. It is still uncertain whether Thomas knew how close he came to losing his job.

The battle lines shown on two maps of the 15th and 16th tell the story of the conflict. It was, “according to at least one military authority, a perfect exemplification of the art of war.” Another authority said: “No battle of the war was better planned and none was so nearly carried out to the letter of the plan as the Battle of Nashville.” General Thomas’s battle plan in this engagement is the only one of the Civil War that is “now studied as a model in European military schools.” It was the only battle of the war that destroyed an army.

Thomas’s forces moved out under cover of an early morning fog and attacked with a diversionary action on Hood’s right, and then hit his thinly defended lines very hard on the left, while holding back reserves units to respond as needed. Hood, without reserves, could only fall back – doing so miles to the south as the first day ended with him barely avoiding a rout. It is a tribute to the courage of the rebels that, despite their conditions and the losses they sustained the first day, they were able to mount a vigorous defense of their remaining positions the second day. But they could not hold on forever in the face of overwhelming numbers. Their lines broke on Overton Hill and what is now Shy’s Hill. It was then “everyman for himself” as the battle finally turned into a rout. Pvt. Owen J. Hopkins of the 182nd Ohio Infantry called Thomas, “A God of battles,” writing, “Hood’s demoralized and badly whipped Rebels are flying towards the south...the victory is complete.” The once proud Army of Tennessee would be no more.

Thomas followed in pursuit of the fleeing rebels almost immediately, but was hampered by more bad weather – heavy rains that made even streams impassable. Once again he would hear from Halleck stating the obvious. (“Permit me, General, to urge the vast importance of a hot pursuit...if you can destroy Hood’s army Sherman can entirely crush out the rebel Military force in the Southern states.”) Finally, Thomas, who would have made his life a little easier had he reported on conditions in more detail throughout December, had enough and replied with an angry telegram: “We cannot control the elements...pursuing an enemy through an exhausted country, over mud roads, completely sogged with heavy rains, is no child’s play!” Stanton got Thomas’s message in more ways than one and immediately sent him a telegram assuring him of “the most unbounded confidence in your skill, vigor and determination...to destroy the enemy.” Grant also sent congratulations on the great victory. Thomas would not be bothered again. He continued his pursuit until there was no more army left to pursue.



Mercifully, for the numbers engaged at Nashville (Blue – 50,000 vs. Gray – 23,000), the casualties on both sides were relatively modest (Blue – 3061 vs. Gray – est. 1500 with 4500 captured). Hood had lost his last battle. Thomas won – against Hood and those who tried to interfere with his plans. He would later receive “The Thanks of Congress” for Franklin and Nashville, “one of only 15 army officers so honored during the entire war.” Had the war continued, it was likely that Hood would have been court-martialed for his actions at Franklin.

The North – the United States – was the biggest winner. There would now be no doubt we would remain one country. That fact made this engagement the “most decisive battle of the Civil War” according to Sir Edward Creasy in his “Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World.” Creasy defined a decisive battle as one “of which a contrary event would have essentially varied the drama of the world in all its subsequent scenes.” Other historians agree: “It was the crushing defeat of the Army of Tennessee at the Battle of Nashville that sealed the fate of the Confederacy.”

References:

- “The Decisive Battle of Nashville” by Stanley F. Horn
- “The Longest Night” by David J. Eicher
- “Advance and Retreat” by John Bell Hood
- “Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant by U. S. Grant

Mel Maurer is a retired executive of Dana Corporation and a student of history. He is the Roundtable’s Historian as well as a past president. An Abraham Lincoln scholar, Mel attends the annual Lincoln Forum Symposium and gives several talks on Lincoln.

The Hampton Roads Conference

The Hampton Roads Conference was an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate an end to the American Civil War. On February 3, 1865, near Fort Monroe in Newport News, Virginia, aboard the *River Queen*, President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward, representing the United States government, met with Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, Senator Robert M. T. Hunter, and Assistant Secretary of War John A. Campbell, representing the Confederate States of America. At first, President Lincoln refused to take part in any such conference until it was agreed to beforehand that the Southern states abandon their attempt to secede from the Union. Meekly, but somewhat equivocally, the representatives of the CSA acceded to that demand.

Francis P. Blair had conceived that the war might be brought to a close and the two embattled areas of the nation reunited by directing the armies of both the North and South to attack Emperor Maximilian in Mexico. The enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine would be used to justify the attack on the French in Mexico. The possible absorption of Mexico by the United States was included in the plan.

The conference lasted for four hours, but no agreements were produced. President Lincoln dominated the proceedings. The three men who represented the CSA made little or no impression on those representing the Union and were not authorized to accept any offer other than independence. The Confederate Commissioners immediately returned to Richmond at the conclusion of the conference. The war continued.

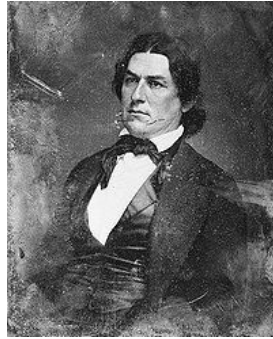
Adapted from wikipedia.com



Vice President
Alexander H.
Stephens



Assistant Secretary of
War John A. Campbell



Senator Robert M. T.
Hunter



Secretary of State
William H. Seward

**NEXT MONTH
THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR AS LAWYER**

DR. PAUL FINKELMAN