

THE CHARGER

March, 2008

449th Meeting

Vol. 29 #7

Tonight's Program:

Raid!: The Confederacy Comes to St. Albans, Vermont

The Civil War dramatically came home to sleepy little St. Albans, Vermont, not far from the Canadian border, when a small party of Confederate raiders robbed its banks and tried to set the town ablaze in October 1864. The daring raid aggravated relations between the United States and British Canada, and put New Englanders on edge until the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. Several of the raiders, soon captured in Canada, won their freedom after two controversial trials marked by espionage, high-stakes diplomacy and allegations of judicial corruption. Come find out the true story behind the notorious St. Albans Raid.



St. Albans bank tellers being forced to pledge allegiance to the Confederacy



Confederate raiders in Montreal jail.

Tonight's Speaker:

William F. B. Vodrey

William F.B. Vodrey is a magistrate of Cleveland Municipal Court. He has often spoken to this and other groups about the Civil War. He was president of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable in 2000-2001, is a member of the Civil War Preservation Trust and of the Ohio Historical Society, and is a former reenactor with the 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Co. B. Through his many efforts on the Roundtable's behalf, William continues to make valuable contributions to the Roundtable.

**Date: Wednesday,
March 12, 2008**

**Place: The Cleveland
Playhouse Club
8501 Carnegie Ave.**

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

**Reservations: Please Call
JAC Communications
(216) 861-5588**

**Meal choice: Roasted Thai
Chicken or Eggplant Parmesan**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Terry Koozer** (216) 226-7527
Vice President: **Jon Thompson** (440) 871-6439
Secretary: **Lisa Kempfer** (440) 526-1318
Treasurer: **Dennis Keating** (216) 397-0188
Historian: **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249

Directors:

Dave Carrino	John Fazio
Marilyn DeBaltzo	Rick Maurer
Phil DiBianca	Marge Wilson

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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

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
1982 John Harkness	

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MARCH, 2008

As you know our big project this year is taking the Charger from a regular mailing to e-mail. The cost of mailing is over \$200 a month and \$1800 a year. This is \$1800 we could spend on speakers, programs, grants, or gifts to battlefield preservation, monuments, and so forth. The quality of the Charger on-line is quite good and is in color, though not in the mail edition. If you positively need the Charger to be sent by mail, please notify us. Otherwise, the assumption is that the Charger will be sent by e-mail.

On Saturday, February 2, several of our winter soldiers took a winter field trip to visit the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center at Spiegel Grove in Fremont, Ohio and the Civil War Museum in Bowling Green. Hayes was an officer in the 23rd Ohio Voluntary Infantry. He was wounded at South Mountain, near Antietam, in 1862. He went on to become governor of Ohio. After the contested election of 1876, Hayes was elected the 19th President of the U.S. At the Hayes Center, we heard comments by the resident historian and were allowed to handle Hayes' military tactics books and diary. We also toured the Hayes house, still furnished with items from the Hayes family. The Center has an extensive library and research facilities. We then traveled to Bowling Green to visit the American Civil War Museum of Ohio. It has many items in a small space, including rosters of the regiments of the Ohio Voluntary Infantry. I would recommend taking the one tank trip to Fremont and Bowling Green for a local Civil War field trip.

At our February meeting, Brian Kowell and his trusted assistant, Peter Holman, conducted a Civil War Quiz based on the "Who Wants to be a Millionaire." Stalwart members including John Fazio, Dan Zeiser, William Vodrey, Maynard Bauer, and Lisa Kempfer volunteered to be contestants and won valuable prizes. Lisa Kempfer, after reaching the million dollar level, won a rare signed copy of Douglas Southall Freeman's "Lee's Lieutenants." After selling some of the books that were not won as prizes, Peter generously donated \$100 U.S. to the Roundtable.

Sincerely, Terry Koozer

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2007/2008 SCHEDULE**

September 12, 2007

**The Lincoln-Douglas Debates:
A Reenactment**



**George
Buss**

October 10, 2007

**Brevet Brigadier General James B.
Barnett of the 1st Cleveland Light Ar-
tillery and the Firing of the First Land
Cannon Shots of the War**

Marge Wilson

November 14, 20067

**George Thomas at
the Battle of
Chickamauga**

Dan Zeiser



December 12, 2007



**Nathan Bedford
Forrest:
Napoleonic
Cavalryman**

Greg Biggs

January 9, 2008

**The Dick Crews Annual
Debate**

*The Southern Victory of 1865:
Was the Confederacy a Viable
State?*

Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

February 13, 2008

A Civil War Quiz

**Presented by
Brian Kowell**



March 12, 2008

**Raid!: The Confed-
eracy Comes to St.
Albans, Vermont**



William F. B. Vodrey

April 9, 2008

**The USS Kear-
sarge vs. the
CSS Alabama
John Fazio**



May 14, 2008



**Jesse James: The
Last Rebel**

Mel Maurer

The Search for the Lost Confederate Gold

Hans Kuenzi

In late May 1861, Jefferson Davis, the former Mississippi Senator and the reluctant president of the seceding Confederate States of America, moved the capital of the CSA from Montgomery, Alabama to Richmond, Virginia to boost the morale of the Confederate troops and weld Virginia to the Confederacy. Had he known that, in April of 1865, he, his cabinet, and about \$700,000 in gold and specie would have to evacuate Richmond to avoid capture during the waning days of the Civil War, he would have elected to remain in Montgomery.

Davis was attending church services on Sunday, April 2, 1865 when he learned that Lee's defensive line at Petersburg had been broken and the evacuation of Richmond was imminent. President Davis pleaded with Lee to form defense lines for just one more day and informed his cabinet that Richmond was to be evacuated and they would take the Confederate treasury with them. General Lee advised Davis that he had until 8 p.m. to load



the gold, valuables, and cabinet members onto two trains that would travel southward on the only line still open between Richmond and Danville, Virginia. All the Confederate officials would board the first train, while the second train would hold "special cargo." Navy Captain William H. Parker was placed in charge of the second train and, knowing that the special cargo was comprised of gold ingots, gold double eagle coins, silver coins, silver bricks, and Mexican silver dollars, he gathered the only available personnel to provide a military guard. This guard consisted of mostly young navy midshipmen from a training ship on the James River; some of them were only twelve years old.

The two trains left Richmond at midnight and, when the tracks ended at Danville, Davis and his staff began to travel south on horseback. Captain Parker and the treasure, now moved to wagons, were directed to the old U.S. Mint at Charlotte, North Carolina, which was considered the safest storage place. Unfortunately, Parker found the U.S. cavalry already in the immediate area and made alternate arrangements. The treasure was placed into all kinds of containers that had once been used for sugar, coffee, flour, and ammunition. Moving to the southwest, Parker and the wagons zigzagged across the South Carolina-Georgia state line several



times to evade capture and eventually the responsibility for the treasure was passed on to the Secretary of War, John C. Breckenridge, who then placed Brig. General Basil Duke in charge. With slightly less than a thousand men in his command, Duke transferred all the treasure into six wagons and began his journey south with

eight of his veterans on each wagon as guards, and the rest of his command, along with the midshipmen, as escorts. In Washington, Georgia, Jefferson Davis and his cabinet met for the final time, where Davis signed his last official order, making Micajah Clark the acting Treasurer of the Confederacy.

It was in Washington that the bulk of the treasure was captured along with Jefferson Davis and his staff. Some of the treasure had been retained by Brig. General Duke and his men as each man under his command received as payment the sum of \$26.25, which amounted to a total of about \$26,250. The balance of the captured treasure was assembled and loaded into wagons for transport to Washington, D.C. However, somewhere in Wilkes County, Georgia, the wagon train was bushwacked. The bushwackers were stragglers from both the Federal and Confederate armies who had heard of the treasure and the “handouts” being given to soldiers. Residents of Wilkes County who witnessed the event said that the bushwackers waded knee-deep in gold and silver coinage before loading it in all kinds of bags and sacks and riding away. It was said that many riders were so overloaded that they later discarded or hid large quantities of the coins all over Wilkes County.

The belief that Confederate gold is buried in Wilkes County, now called Brantley County, has persisted since the end of the war. However, despite searches conducted throughout the years, nothing of value has ever been found there. This rumor of buried treasure in Wilkes County nevertheless spawned a legend involving a family of local repute, the Mumfords, and the location of the lost Confederate gold.

This legend was first advanced by Martha Mizell Puckett, a former school teacher and Brantley County native, who spun her tale of Confederate gold in her book, *Snow White Sands*. Her book alleged that New York native and Confederate sympathizer Sylvester Mumford was present at the Confederacy's final cabinet meeting in Washington, Georgia, and claimed that Jefferson Davis divided the gold among those present and instructed them to use the money as they deemed best. Another account maintains Jefferson Davis entrusted the entire Confederate treasury into the care of Sylvester Mumford. A very prosperous merchant before the war, Mumford had established a cotton plantation near Waynesville. However, his business fortunes suffered great losses throughout the course of the war. It was said that, after taking possession of the gold, Mumford transported some of the Confederate treasury southeast to northern Florida and the Atlantic coast, where he boarded a British steamer bound for England. Puckett was rather vague about what Mumford did with the gold he allegedly transported to England, except to claim that he ordered enough seed corn from South America, by way of Great Britain, to replant the whole State of Georgia. The rest of the gold found its way into the hands of his daughter, Goertner “Gertrude” Mumford Parkhurst, in New York, where she lived and invested it well. Puckett claimed that when “Miss Gertrude” decided that the remainder of the Confederate gold should be returned to the people to whom it belonged, her personal lawyer, Judge J.

P. Highsmith, suggested that an educational trust be established for the descendants of the Confederate soldiers.

As heir to the Mumford estate, “Miss Gertrude” allegedly made provisions to return the balance of the Confederate treasure to Southern hands after her death. In fact, when she died in 1946 at age ninety-nine in Washington, D.C., she bequeathed almost \$600,000 to the children of Brantley County through an endowment and two scholarship funds. Initially, with one-third of her estate, the will established the Sylvester Mumford Memorial Endowment at the Thornwell Orphanage in Clinton, South Carolina, which was founded in 1875 and is now known as the Thornwell Home and School for Children. The remainder of her estate was divided between two scholarship funds. The first was given to the Presbyterian Church, headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, in trust “for the maintenance and education of white orphan girls of Brantley County.” By 1960, this scholarship fund was creating more income from its principal investment than there were recipients for the scholarships. The church petitioned the court to expand the scope of the scholarships by including residents of counties which immediately surrounded Brantley and by defining an orphan as a child who had lost at least one parent. Due to the moral and legal concerns about restricting the fund to white orphan girls, the church then petitioned the court to open the scholarship to all ethnic groups. In 2002, the church awarded \$32,000 to qualified women from southeast Georgia, and in October 2003 there were fifteen women attending colleges or technical schools who were funded by the scholarship program.

A second scholarship, known as the Sylvester Mumford Memorial Fund, was to be awarded to students from Brantley County who attend Georgia College, then known as Georgia State College for Women. In recent years, the number of students receiving tuition assistance has fluctuated between ten and twelve. Given the claim that the source of these scholarships was in fact a portion of the lost Confederate treasury, researchers throughout the years sought to confirm the veracity of the Mumford legend. However, their work created great doubt that any lost Confederate gold ever existed in the first place. Of particular note, Wayne J. Lewis researched the connection between the Confederate gold and the Mumford estate due to his personal interest in the legend. In April 1953, he and his three brothers were the first children from Brantley County to derive benefit from the Mumford funds at the Thornwell Orphanage in Clinton, South Carolina, after their father died from a heart attack in 1951 at age forty-seven. Lewis graduated from Thornwell High School in 1958 and Clemson University in 1962 before serving on active duty in Germany and Vietnam with the U.S. Army. He resigned his commission as a captain after almost six years, retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 2000, and still has family and friends in Brantley County.

Appreciative of the home the Mumfords provided and his opportunity for a college education, he set out to discover the facts behind the Confederate gold. Researching the archives

of the Thornwell Orphanage, he found no reference to the Confederacy or gold in any of the handwritten letters from Mrs. Parkhurst. He also interviewed local historians and librarians in Washington, Georgia, none of whom had heard of the gold's connection to Brantley County. Moreover, he was unable to find any mention of the name Mumford in any record of the period. After exhaustive research, Lewis concluded that gold from the Richmond banks and the Confederate treasury had in fact been evacuated from Richmond and shipped south to prevent it from falling into the hands of Union forces. However, although the banks and the Confederacy had shipped their gold on the same train, each had its own security forces and the gold was never commingled. Although Jefferson Davis's family was on the train with the gold shipments, Lewis wrote that Jefferson Davis was not. The treasurer of the Confederacy was on board and made numerous and well-documented disbursements along the way to meet military payrolls. Arriving in Washington, Georgia, Lewis reported that the Confederate treasury had dwindled down to about \$43,000 in cash. The funds were then stored there in a vault at a local bank and, within days after the war ended, the Richmond banks had their funds returned to Richmond on five wagons. However, this wagon train was robbed on the first night it stopped to make camp, the robbers improvising ways to carry the loot -- stuffed in their shirts, pants, boots, and whatever else would hold their plunder. Unfortunately for them, their booty leaked and made it easy for a posse to follow. All but about \$70,000 was recovered and transferred to Augusta, Georgia, where ownership of the funds was tied up in court until 1893. The courts eventually agreed with the federal government, which claimed the funds because the Richmond banks had aided a rebellion by making loans to the Confederacy.

Lewis concluded that the Brantley County Confederate gold legend was probably fabricated from a combination of the legend told in *Snow White Sands* and the actual gold shipments after the war. Indeed, no one who was an eyewitness to the events ever documented that the gold was actually lost. Martha Mizell Puckett, the author of *Snow White Sands*, had failed to include footnotes, references, or even a simple bibliography to support the presence of gold in Brantley County.

In conclusion, historical research has determined only \$70,000 of the gold belonging to the banks in Richmond is missing, but not lost, as it was accounted for in the robbery during its shipment back to Richmond. What remained of the Confederate treasury, in the form of gold and other valuable coins, was disbursed as payroll to Confederate troops during its transport south. By the end of the war, nothing remained in the coffers of the Confederate treasury except for its incalculable amount of debt.

Hans Kuenzi has been a member of the Roundtable since 1995. He is married and has two children. After much prodding, this is his first article for the Charger.

CCWRT Supports National History Day

Last year, the Cleveland CWRT voted to support National History Day by awarding a \$100 prize to the best Civil War project submitted to District 3 competition. In 2007 our award went to 8th grader Chloe Pruitt for her one-person performance as a young Gettysburg woman “*Out of Tragedy: The Citizens of Gettysburg and Their Noble Struggle for the Wounded.*” Chloe gave a superb performance at our June meeting. She certainly deserved to be among the winners and we were proud to present her with our first year’s award.

Two members of CCWRT, Dale Thomas and Bob Hook, served as judges last year and will do so again this year. Jon Thompson will also judge. This year’s topic is: Conflict and Compromise in History. The CCWRT looks forward to awarding another prize to another outstanding young history student.

Marge Wilson

The Charger is going to email.

As a cost saving measure, the Charger will be converting to email. Most of the members have email and many have stated a preference for electronic delivery. However, as Editor, I know there are some who do not have email or prefer to receive a copy through the mail. The Roundtable will continue to do so for those folks. Please let me know, either at one of the meetings or by calling me at 440-449-1391 that you want it mailed. The deadline is April 1. Thank you.

NEXT MONTH
THE USS KEARSARGE VS. THE CSS
ALABAMA
JOHN FAZIO