THE CHARGER

November 2011

481st Meeting

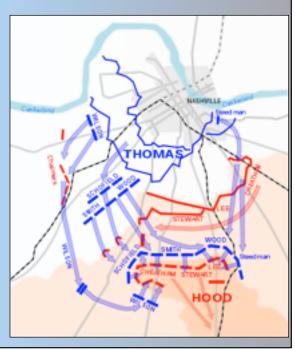
Vol. 33, #3

Tonight's Program:

The Battle of Nashville

After being forced from Atlanta, General John Bell Hood planned to invade Tennessee and march north. General William Tecumseh Sherman sent General George Thomas to Tennessee to deal with General Nathan Bedford Forrest as well as Hood. Following Union troops through Tennessee, Hood faced Thomas at Nashville, arriving on December 2, 1864. After preparing Nashville's defenses, Thomas, with 55,000 men, faced Hood with approximately 25,000. Set to attack, the weather turned sour, delaying Thomas. With telegrams flying from Grant and Washington urging the attack, an ice storm set in for three days. On December 15, Thomas launched his men at Hood. Union troops took about 1,200 prisoners and pushed the Confederates back a couple miles to a secondary position. December 16 saw the Union soldiers again drive the Confederates from the field, this time in a rout. Thomas pursued Hood all the way to Alabama. The Confederates suffered roughly 6,000 casualties, mostly in men captured. The

Army Tennessee a eliminated fighting force.



Tonight's Speaker:

Dan Zeiser

Dan Zeiser has been a student of the Civil War since childhood. A history major at Kenyon College, the Roundtable has permitted him to continue to indulge his fondness for historical figures such as George Thomas. Over the years, Dan has contributed many articles to The Charger and has made presentations to the Roundtable on several occasions. He is known, mostly by himself, for his quirky,



yet scholarly pieces and always appreciates

the kind forbearance of members for his historical ramblings. Dan joined the Roundtable in 1992, served as its president in 1997, and has been Editor of The Charger since 2004. He is a lawyer with a mediation practice here in Cleveland where he lives with his wife and three children.

Date: Wednesday,

November 9, 2011

Place: Judson Manor

1890 E. 107th Street Cleveland, Ohio

Time: Drinks 6 pm

Dinner 6:45 pm

Reservations: Please send an email to ccwrt1956@yahoo.com with your reservation, or call Dan Zeiser at (440) 449-9311 by 9 pm the Sunday before the meeting.

Meal: Entree, vegetable, salad, and dessert.

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

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Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

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1971 Kenneth Callahan

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1968 Frank Moran

1967 William Schlesinger

1966 Donald Hamill

1965 Lester Swift

1964 Guy DiCarlo Jr.

1963 Paul Guenther

1962 Edward Downer

1961 Charles Clarke

1960 Howard Preston

1959 John Cullen Jr.

1958 George Farr Jr.

1957 Kenneth Grant

President's Message November 2011

For our annual field trip this year we traced the path of Lee's 1865 retreat from Petersburg to Appomattox Court House. We toured the Petersburg area on Friday with Gary Helm, the Director of Education at Pamplin Park, the private historical park situated on the spot where Grant broke Lee's lines on April 2, 1865. On Saturday, we met up with Patrick Schroeder, the Park Historian at Appomattox National Military Park, who served as our guide for the next day and a half for our road trip to Appomattox. Our group of 22 hearty souls visited over 20 sites, covering more than 100 miles in 2½ days. This trip was quite a different experience from visiting places like Gettysburg or Antietam where events played out over a much tighter geography and timeline. I am not sure where the line is that separates a field trip from a forced march, but I think we crossed it sometime Saturday. Despite its borderline grueling nature, the trip was great fun and hugely worth it. Some highlights:

- We had lunch and dinner on Friday in the private dining room at Pamplin Park which was decorated with several framed Civil War art prints, coincidentally painted by acclaimed Civil War artist and CCWRT past president, Bill McGrath, who happened to be with us on our trip! While Bill did not seem especially impressed with his work being on display at Pamplin Park, the rest of us thought it was pretty darn cool.
- At Hatcher's Run, the site of Confederate General John Pegram's death on February 6, 1865, the farmer who lives across the street from the battlefield marker sauntered over to present us with a fistful of bullets he had dug out of his soybean fields over the years. When I told him he had just made a bunch of friends in Cleveland, Ohio, he squinted up and said, "As I recall, we killed a bunch of you Ohio boys back in 1865." All I could think to say in response was, "Why yes you did."
- The Battle of Five Forks is sometimes referred to as "The Waterloo of the Confederacy." On April 1, 1865, George Pickett lost a third of his command to Phil Sheridan here, triggering Grant's all out attack on Lee's lines the following morning and forcing Lee's evacuation from Petersburg. The site is fairly pristine, looking very much like it did in 1865. A great example of the details you learn on a field trip is the story of Pickett's absence from the battlefield at the time of Sheridan's attack. When the battle began, Pickett and his top two lieutenants were several miles away attending a "shad bake," leaving his army leaderless. Lee was furious when he found out and likely relieved Pickett of duty.
- Namozine Church was the site of a cavalry clash between Union forces under George Custer and Confederate forces under William Roberts and Rufus Barringer on April 3, 1865. No longer an active church, the original building that served as a field hospital is still there, though locked and not accessible to the public. Not accessible, that is, unless you know somebody with a key, which, fortunately, we did our guide, Patrick. Stepping inside was like stepping back in time 150 years. It was dark and musty with bloodstained floors and LOTS of atmosphere. Mel Maurer led us in a verse of Amazing Grace as we assembled on the altar for a photo. Surprisingly exciting and moving.
- On April 6, 1865 at Sailor's Creek, the Confederates suffered almost 8000 casualties (most taken prisoner), including 10 generals (Richard Ewell and Custis Lee among them). We were given a personal tour of the battlefield by Chris Calkins, the director and creator of the Sailor's Creek State Park and the author of what many consider the definitive book on the Appomattox Campaign.

This was my fourth CCWRT field trip. I know you have heard Dan Zeiser say many times that our field trips are the best thing we do. Well, it's true. You learn a ton in a very short period of time and get to spend three days with some of the smartest, nicest people you will ever meet. Stop thinking of reasons why you cannot go and just plan on joining us next year.

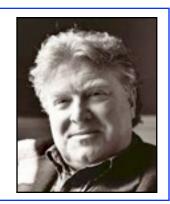
Respectfully submitted, Paul Burkholder

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE 2011-2012 SCHEDULE

September 14, 2011

Experiencing the Civil War

Robert Olmstead



October 12, 2011

The Battle of Monocacy

Marc Leepson

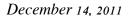


Destruction of the RR bridge over the Monocacy River



November 9, 2011

The Battle of
Nashville
Dan
Zeiser



How Sibling Rivalry Helped Spawn an Assassin

Nora Titone

January 11, 2012

The Dick Crews Annual Debate:
Lincoln and Douglas Debate
Mel Maurer as Abraham Lincoln
Chris Fortunato as Stephen Douglas
Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey

February 8, 2012

A. P. Hill at Gettysburg

Jon Thompson



March 14, 2012

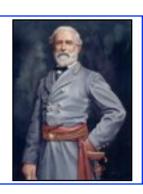
The Barlows and the Gordons

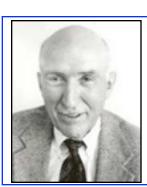
John Fazio



How Robert E. Lee Lost the Civil War

Edward H. Bonekemper III





May 16, 2012 (Note later date)

Vicksburg!

Ed Bearss

THE RIDDLES OF FRANCIS P. BURKE

by John C. Fazio

1. The first riddle: What was the name of President Lincoln's coachman?

The name of an earlier coachman was Patterson McGee. He was discharged on February 10, 1864, apparently under a cloud and against his wishes. Shortly after his discharge, the White House stables burned. Because he was observed at the scene of what was assumed to be a crime, he was arrested for arson, but had to be released for lack of evidence. It has been suggested that the deliberate torching of the stables may in fact have been an assassination attempt. In any case, after the assassination, McGee left for Europe, in late 1865, aboard the *Peruvian*, the same ship that carried John Surratt there.¹

According to *Mr. Lincoln's White House*, the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History, and the Lincoln Institute, Edward "Ned" Burke was a White House steward and coachman who left the President's employ in early 1862, but returned to White House service in 1865. During part of the interim period, he was replaced by McGee. It was this Burke, says the author of *Employees and Staff*, who drove the Lincoln's to Ford's Theatre on April 14.

George S. Bryan, however, writes that the name of the Lincoln coachman who drove the presidential party to Ford's theater was not Edward "Ned" Burke, but Francis Burke.² For authority, he cites Vol. II of the *Trial of John H. Surratt in the Criminal Court for the District of Columbia*, p. 792, and Burke's statement in the *Archives of the Judge Advocate General*. Page 792 of the transcript contains testimony given by Francis P. Burke, who identifies his employment in April, 1865, as "the coachman of President Lincoln," and who states that he drove the President's carriage to the theatre. This would appear to be quite authoritative. But there is more.

Edward Steers Jr., in one of his works, writes that the coachman was Francis P. Burke,³ which appears to be correct. But in another of his works, he identifies the coachman as Ned Burke,⁴ apparently a reference to Edward "Ned" Burke, which appears to be wrong. W. Emerson Reck also calls the coachman Ned Burke.⁵

Anthony Pitch agrees with Bryan and with Steers's *The Lincoln Assassination Encyclopedia* in claiming that the coachman was Francis Burke.⁶ He, too, references the Surratt trial testimony and the Archives statement. On the other hand, Jim Bishop wrote that the coachman who drove the carriage to the theater was Francis Burns.⁷ This appears to be wrong, a melding of a correct first name with an incorrect surname. Making the identical mistake are Michael O'Neal,⁸ H. Donald Winkler,⁹ Champ Clark,¹⁰ and even Carl Sandburg,¹¹ all of whom identified the coachman as Francis Burns. Even the very recently published (2011) *Killing Lincoln*, by Bill O'Reilly, makes the same mistake.

The preceding five examples clearly illustrate how historical error takes on a life of its own. One original source, William H. Crook, appears to confirm Bryan, Pitch and, partially, Steers. Crook makes two references to "Burke" and writes that:

When the President and his wife went to the theater, they would step into a carriage at the White House and drive directly to their destination, just as any other gentlemen and lady in private life would do. Burke, the big, burly Irish coachman, would pull up his horses, and the footman, Charley Forbes, would swing down to the sidewalk and open the door of the carriage...¹²



Another original source, Thomas F. Pendel, on the other hand, merely adds to the confusion by referring to "Ned Burke", "Burke" (twice), and "Edward Burke." (Charles Higham also adds to the confusion by referring to Lincoln's "regular coachman" as Francis Bourke.¹⁴

Though it appears that at least part of the confusion, probably the greater part, stems from repetition of the errors of others, part must also be due to a similarity of names. There was on the White House staff, for example, one Edward McManus, a doorkeeper described as a "genial little Irishman." He was called, affectionately, "Old Edward." Despite his surname, he was kept on the White House payroll as "Burke," i.e., Edward Burke, which must surely have something to do with the numerous erroneous references to Lincoln's coachman as Edward Burke, or Ned Burke, or Edward "Ned" Burke. He incurred Mrs. Lincoln's displeasure early in 1865 and therefore lost the post of doorkeeper, though he was not officially discharged until June of that year. He was replaced by Thomas Pendel. Another doorkeeper and steward was Thomas Burns, who was dismissed during the last winter of the war. Surely his name must tie into the erroneous references to Francis Burns as the coachman. 15

Conclusion: Lincoln's coachman was Francis P. Burke (not Edward Burke, Ned Burke, Edward "Ned" Burke, Francis Bourke, or Francis Burns). The testimony at the Surratt trial and the statement in the *Archives of the Judge Advocate General* are from the horse's mouth or, more accurately, from the mouth of the horse's driver.

2. The second riddle: Who did Burke drink with at the Star Saloon during an intermission?

Burke, "the big, burly Irish coachman" who also happened to be a heavy drinker (the Lincolns had chronic problems with the drinking habits of their coachmen), drove the presidential party, through Washington's muddy streets, from the White House to Ford's Theatre. Upon arrival at the theatre, with its impressive façade, Burke pulled the carriage up to a wooden platform, or horse block, that stood at the curb to facilitate the transfer of coach passengers from the carriage to the theatre. Forbes, the footman, swung down to open the carriage door. The presidential party then stepped onto the block and was escorted through the arched passageways of the main entrance into the theatre by Forbes and John Parker, who had gone ahead on foot and was now waiting for their arrival. After the presidential party had exited the carriage, Burke drove it forward some 30 to 50 feet, where he parked it for the duration of the performance. He would sit in the carriage until it was time to drive the presidential party back to the White House or, perhaps, to Senator Harris's home.

Almost, that is to say that on at least one occasion while the performance was in progress, Burke, by his own admission, left the carriage and, in the company of "two of my friends," went next door to Peter Taltavul's Star Saloon for an ale. 16 At the trial of John Surratt, in 1867, more than two years after the assassination,

there was this exchange between Burke and defense attorney Richard Merrick:

- Q. Were you on the box most of the night?
- A. I was all the time that night, with the exception that two of my friends whom I

knew asked me to go in and take a glass of ale with them. I left a man in charge of the carriage until I returned.

- Q. At what time did you go in and take a glass of ale?
- A. I think after the first act was over.
- Q. How long did you remain taking that glass of ale?
- A. I suppose about five or ten minutes.
- Q. And then returned to the carriage?

- A. I then returned to the carriage and went on to the box.
- Q. Did you remain there?
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. I understand you to say you remained all the time on the box, with the exception of these five or ten minutes.
- A. I remained after the carriage first came.
- Q. Did you observe anybody coming round your carriage and peeping into it?
- A. No; I took no notice. They may have passed by. I saw no one looking into the carriage. I did not see anybody...
- Q. You did not go to sleep, did you?
- A. O, no.

One wonders why Burke was called as a witness in Surratt's trial, but not in the trial of the conspirators two years earlier, but we will pass over that as another of the many quirks that so often occur in the record of the Lincoln assassination.

In the Archives of the Judge Advocate General, Burke states that his two friends were the "special police officer and the footman of the President." Virtually every historian of the assassination has concluded that the "special police officer" was Parker, inasmuch as he was a member of the Metropolitan Police Force who had been "specially" appointed to fill a vacancy in the White House detail in the spring of 1865, after the detail had been created in November 1864. This was known to all concerned. Another reason for so concluding was that Parker and Forbes were together when the presidential party arrived, had escorted the party to the presidential box, and then had assumed positions near the box for the rest of the first act of the play, then in progress, or at least some part of it. Other reasons favoring Parker were that drinking was one of his favorite pastimes (one of the earlier charges brought against him was drunkenness) and that, as a presidential bodyguard, he was reasonably well known to both Forbes and Burke. And still another reason is the way Burke words the invitation, namely "two of my friends whom I knew asked me to...take a glass of ale with them." It is more likely that "two of my friends whom I knew" would reference fellow White House personnel than a City police officer who was more likely than not to be a stranger to Burke.

Nevertheless, Michael Kauffman believes that the officer referred to is not Parker, but "a uniformed officer who was assigned to the front of the building, whether Lincoln was there or not." This officer is described in the transcript of the John H. Surratt trial as "one policeman from the City police" who was there to keep people from sitting or loafing in front of the theatre. Why Kauffman (who is otherwise a meticulous researcher and a fine writer) favors this officer as Burke's friend, rather than Parker, he does not say. We are asked to believe that Parker, who loved his pint, was still in the theatre guarding the President and party, even though it was not his responsibility to do so (per Kauffman), while his companions, Forbes and Burke, were next door imbibing with a police officer whose responsibility it was to keep people from sitting or loafing in front of the theatre. One may fairly ask: If this police officer went off with Forbes and Burke, who was policing the front of the theatre?

The preponderance of the evidence is that Burke's "friends," described as the "special police officer and the footman of the President," were Parker and Forbes and that Kauffman is simply mistaken. (Even the luminaries go astray occasionally.) That is the conclusion of virtually every historian but Kauffman and it is also mine.

But I will take it a step further and say that even if the "special police officer" were the City Police Officer who was responsible for the front of the building, which I and just about everyone who has addressed the issue regards as most improbable, we may be certain that Parker was not guarding the presidential box at the time, but was off somewhere else doing God knows what – chatting with patrons or flirting are possibilities – most likely in Taltavul's himself. Parker's temperament and style were not attuned to stationary guard duty, not where and when there was opportunity to better gratify his senses.

It is worth mentioning that Kauffman believes that Parker's culpability is a moot point inasmuch as "anyone would have allowed Booth into the box," and it therefore does not matter who was drinking with Forbes and Burke. I do not think so. Not when the evidence indicates that even the milquetoast Forbes challenged Booth. Does Kauffman really believe that Lincoln's self-appointed bodyguard, Ward Hill Lamon, a giant of a man who valued Lincoln's life more than his own, would have passed Booth? Or Eckert, another towering physical specimen? Or even Crook or Pendel? It is all but inconceivable.

It is entirely possible that Burke went into the adjacent bar more than once that evening. He was a pretty good tippler, as noted earlier, and it seems a bit of a stretch that he would spend almost two hours sitting on the box if he could enjoy a drink and company a few feet away, especially if he had someone to leave in charge of the carriage, as he said he did. We will probably never know. But what we can be reasonably certain of is that he was in the bar, when he said he was in the bar, longer than five or ten minutes. A drink is almost never taken in such a brief period of time, especially when one is with others, enjoying companionship and conviviality. The length of such periods and the amount of beverage consumed are almost always minimized, especially when there is good reason to do so, as there was in this case. (What police officer has not been told by a DUI, who has a blood alcohol content of more than twice the legal limit, that all he had was "a couple of beers?") The President had been shot and died as a result of it. The last impression that Burke would wish to create was that he was somehow careless of his duties, and in favor of drink no less. He knew that both Parker and Forbes had been severely chastised for failing the President, and he would not wish to be too closely associated with them at a time when they were seriously derelict in their duties. So he would put the best spin on it that he could, and he did. It is of little moment, as far as he is concerned, because it was never his duty to guard or protect the President, and no one has ever suggested that it was. The episode is significant, however, insofar as it demonstrates the almost unbelievable negligence of Parker and Forbes, particularly Parker, in leaving the President and his party completely unprotected at a time when they were most vulnerable, i.e., during an intermission. It is so bizarre, in fact, that one could read into it, if one is inclined to credit suspicions as to Parker's complicity in the crime, a foreknowledge on his part that no harm was to come to the President at that time.

Conclusion: Lincoln's coachman, Francis P. Burke, had at least one drink, in Taltavul's Star Saloon, with John F. Parker and Charles Forbes, during an intermission of the play, probably after the first act, and in so doing left the President and his party completely unguarded, an extremely reprehensible act.

References:

- ¹Charles Higham, Murdering Mr. Lincoln, New Millennium Press, 2004, pp. 118, 119, 238.
- ² George S. Bryan, *The Great American Myth*, Americana House, Inc., 1940, pp. 62, 165, 168, 175.
- ³ Edward Steers, Jr., *The Lincoln Assassination Encyclopedia*, Harper Perennial, 2010, pp. 106, 107.
- ⁴ Edward Steers, Jr., *Blood on the Moon*, The University Press of Kentucky, 2001, p. 104.
- ⁵ W. Emerson Reck, A. Lincoln: His Last 24 Hours; University of South Carolina Press, 1987, p. 60.
- ⁶ Anthony S. Pitch, *They Have Killed Papa Dead*, Steerforth Press, 2008, pp. 106, 112.
- ⁷ Jim Bishop, *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, Harper & Row, 1955
- ⁸ Michael O'Neal, *The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln: Opposing Viewpoints*, Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1949, p. 55.
- ⁹ H. Donald Winkler, *Lincoln and Booth: More Light on the Conspiracy,*
- Cumberland House, 2003, pp. 101, 102, 113.

 10 Champ Clarke, *The Assassination: Death of the President*, Time-Life
- Books, 1987, p. 82. ¹¹ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*,
- the Reader's Digest Association, 1954, 1970, pp. 580-581

 12 William H. Crook, *Memories of the White House: The Home Life of Our Presidents From Lincoln to Roosevelt*, comp. and ed. by Henry Rood, Little Brown, Boston, 1911, pp. 29, 30
- ¹³ Thomas Pendel, *Thirty-Six Years in the White House: A Memoir of the White House Doorkeeper*, Washington: Neale, 1962, pp. 13, 32, 33, 40.
- ¹⁴ Charles Higham, op.cit., p. 118.
- ¹⁵ Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865*, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941, p. 300.
- ¹⁶ Trial of John H. Surratt in the Criminal Court for the District of Columbia, Vol. 2, p. 792; Francis Burke Statement in the Archives of the Judge Advocate General
- ¹⁷ Michael W. Kauffman, *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*, Random House, 2004, p. 475, note 25.
- ¹⁸ Trial of John H. Surratt in the Criminal Court for the District of Columbia, Vol. I, p. 559.

John Fazio is a former president of the Roundtable. He is a frequent contributor to The Charger.



Ford's Theater today



NEXT MONTH

HOW SIBLING RIVALRY HELPED SPAWN AN ASSASSIN

NORA TITONE

November Civil War Events in Ohio

From www.ohiocivilwar150.org

- 1 November:
 - Oxford: Exhibit "The Deadliest That Ever Darkened Earth: Voices of the Civil War in the Walter Havighurst Special Collections" (all day)
 - Kent: Exhibit "On the Home Front: Civil War Fashions & Domestic Life" (all day)
- 2 November:
 - Newark: Book Discussion "Mrs. Lincoln: A Life" (6:30 pm)
- 4 November:
 - Newark: Exhibit "The Art of War" (all day)
- 5 November:
 - Massillon: Living History: Dr. Mary Walker (11:00 am)
 - Columbus: Finding Your Past: Basic Training for Your Civil War Ancestor Search (2:00 pm)
- 6 November:
 - Greentown: Exhibit "The CW- A Look at Art, Fashion and Everyday Living" (2:00 pm)
 - Greentown: Exhibit "The Civil War- A Look at Art, Fashion and Everyday Living" (2:00 pm)
 - Newark: Civil War Harvest Dinner (4:00 pm)
 - Canton: Canton Symphony Orchestra "In Remembrance: Civil War" (7:30 pm)
- 7 November:
 - Steubenville: Ohio and the Civil War Exhibit at Fort Steuben (all day)
- 9 November:
 - Cleveland: Robert Lincoln by James Emerson (6:00 pm)
 - Worthington: Civil War Sesquicentennial Series, Lecture "Camp Chase" (7:00 pm)
 - o Columbus: Gail Stephens Presentation On Major General Lew Wallace (7:00 pm)
- 10 November:
 - Canton: Speaker: Civil War Speculation (6:30 pm)
 - Toledo: Lecture "What Really Happened on Little Round Top" (7:30 pm)
 - o Toledo: Lecture Series "Greater Toledo Civil War Roundtable" (7:30 pm)
- 11 November:
 - Cleveland: Christine Dee Public Lecture and Book Signing (7:00 pm)
- 12 November:
 - Steubenville: Lecture "Women and the Civil War" (2:00 pm)
- 13 November:
 - Newark: CW Lecture Series "An Echo of War" (2:00 pm)