

# THE CHARGER

November 2012

490th Meeting

Vol. 34, #3

*Tonight's Program:*

## Fort Pillow

In April 1864, the Union garrison at Fort Pillow, a Confederate-built earthen fortification and a Union-built inner redoubt, overlooking the Mississippi River about forty river miles above Memphis, comprised 295 white Tennessee troops and 262 U.S. Colored Troops, all under the command of Maj. Lionel F. Booth. Confederate Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest attacked the fort on April 12 with a cavalry division of approximately 2,500 men. Forrest seized the older outworks, with high knolls commanding the Union position, to surround Booth's force. Rugged terrain prevented the gunboat *New Era* from providing effective fire support for the Federals. The garrison was unable to depress its artillery enough to cover the approaches to the fort. To make matters worse, Rebel sharpshooters, on the surrounding knolls, began wounding and killing the Federals, including Booth, who was killed. Maj. William F. Bradford then took over command of the garrison. The Confederates launched a determined attack at 11:00 am, occupying more strategic locations around the fort, and Forrest demanded unconditional surrender. Bradford asked for an hour for consultation and Forrest granted twenty minutes. Bradford refused surrender and the Confederates renewed the attack, soon overran the fort, and drove the Federals down the river's bluff into a deadly crossfire. Casualties were high and only sixty-two of the U.S. Colored Troops survived the fight. Many accused the Confederates of perpetrating a massacre of the black troops, and that controversy continues today. The Confederates evacuated Fort Pillow that evening so they gained little from the attack except to temporarily disrupt Union operations. The Fort Pillow Massacre became a Union rallying cry and cemented resolve to see the war through to its conclusion.

Taken from [www.civilwarhome.com/ftpillow.htm](http://www.civilwarhome.com/ftpillow.htm)

*Tonight's Speaker:*

## Dr. John V. Cimprich

Dr. John V. Cimprich, chairs the history department at Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, KY. He is the author of several books on the Civil War including, *Fort Pillow*, *A Civil War Massacre*, and *Public Memory and Slavery's End In Tennessee* as well as many articles. Dr. Cimprich grew up in rural southwest Ohio. After receiving his A.B. from Thomas More College in 1971, he earned a M.A. (1973) and Ph.D. (1977) from The Ohio State University. He joined the faculty of Thomas More College in 1986, primarily teaching courses on World Civilizations and United States History. Specializing in the American Civil War Period, particularly race relations, he is currently researching Northern reformers and runaways slaves during the war. Dr. Cimprich has served as chairperson of both the History Department and the Humanities Division at Thomas More.

*Date:* **Wednesday,  
November 14, 2012**

*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](mailto: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, rolls, salad, and dessert.**

**CLEVELAND  
CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE  
FOUNDED 1957**

*President:* **Michael Wells** m.wells@csuohio.edu  
*Vice President:* **Jim Heflich** laureldoc@gmail.com  
*Treasurer:* **Patrick Bray** pbray360@aol.com  
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## Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2012 **Paul Burkholder**  
2011 **Lisa Kempfer**  
2010 **Dennis Keating**  
2009 **Jon Thompson**  
2008 **Terry Koozer**  
2007 **John Fazio**  
2006 **Dave Carrino**  
2005 **Mel Maurer**  
2004 **Warren McClelland**  
2003 **Maynard Bauer**  
2002 **Bill McGrath**  
2001 **William Vodrey**  
2000 **Bob Boyda**  
1999 **Dick Crews**  
1998 **John Moore**  
1997 **Dan Zeiser**  
1996 **John Sutula**  
1995 **Norton London**  
1994 **Robert Battisti**  
1993 **Kevin Callahan**  
1992 **Bob Baucher**  
1991 **Joe Tirpak**  
1990 **Ken Callahan Jr.**  
1989 **Neil Glaser**  
1988 **Martin Graham**  
1987 **George Vourlojianis**  
1986 **Tim Beatty**  
1985 **Brian Kowell**

1984 **Neil Evans**  
1983 **William Victory**  
1982 **John Harkness**  
1981 **Thomas Geschke**  
1980 **Charles Spiegle**  
1979 **William Bates**  
1978 **Richard McCrae**  
1977 **James Chapman**  
1976 **Milton Holmes**  
1975 **Thomas Gretter**  
1974 **Nolan Heidelbaugh**  
1973 **Arthur Jordan**  
1972 **Bernard Drews**  
1971 **Kenneth Callahan**  
1970 **Frank Schuhle**  
1969 **Donald Heckaman**  
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

When we were on our field trip in September, we picked up several hints that the controversy surrounding Fort Pillow still resonates. On our visit to the Tilghman House I was interested to hear the house guide try to explain Fort Pillow by comparison to Ball's Bluff. It was a sort of negative stretch implying that white soldiers could die in mass without the event being called a massacre, while for black soldiers the description of an engagement with heavy loss was given an extra emotional tag. We also heard repeatedly about the greatness of Nathan Bedford Forrest, at least in the minds of some of our roundtable colleagues in Tennessee. I was also told that our November speaker, Dr. John Cimprich, has written a book about Fort Pillow that leaves some of these same colleagues cold. Come to Judson in November and see and hear what this is all about.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Wells

Ft Pillow Massacre [Kurz & Allison, Chicago, 1885]



**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE  
2012-2013 SCHEDULE**

*September 12, 2012*

***South Mountain***

**John  
Michael  
Priest**



*October 10, 2012*



***Morgan's Raid***

**Lester Horwitz**

*November 14, 2012*



***Fort Pillow***

**Dr. John V.  
Cimprich**

*December 12, 2012*

***The Irish and the  
Civil War***

**Dr. W. Dennis Keating**



*January 9, 2013*

***Dick Crews Annual Debate:  
President Lincoln's Biggest Mistake***

**Moderator: William F. B. Vodrey**

*February 14, 2013*



***Edwin M. Stanton  
Buckeye Warlord***

**William F. B. Vodrey**

*March 13, 2013*

***The Assassination***

**Michael Kaufman**



*April 10, 2013*

***Lincoln***

**Harold Holzer**



*May 8, 2013*

***Cleveland Civil War Roundtable  
Players Present:  
Grant and Lee at the White House***





## **A Return to Johnson's Island**

**by William Vodrey**

On October 13, a contingent from the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable helped with the archeological dig at the former Confederate POW camp on Johnson's Island, near Sandusky, Ohio. Dr. David Bush of Heidelberg University, director of the project, welcomed us at the well-maintained Confederate cemetery, armed us with clipboards and helped us hone our powers of observation with several exercises. We then went out in the woods to the dig site, which is protected by a large semi-permanent tent. After brief training, we used small metal trowels to scrape away the dirt within marked grids, looking for fragments of ceramic, metal, vulcanized rubber, glass, brick, bone and anything else which might reveal something about the rebel officers' prison camp, which was open from 1862-65. We mostly found rocks of various sizes, but a few small treasures, too. The day began cold and overcast, becoming warmer once the autumn sun showed itself. It was a great day to be outside, unearthing tangible reminders of Civil War history here in Ohio.

Our group included Paul and Nancy Burkholder and their three children; Jean Rhodes; Wally Forkman; John Moore; Brooke Collier and a group from Hawken School; Mark Hansen and his family; and I. Longtime CWRT member Kirk Hinman, a board member of the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island, the nonprofit group which owns the site, was also there. Dr. Bush gave us all Friends and Descendants pins as mementos of the day's work.

This was the second time our Roundtable has helped with the dig; the first was in April 2004. We have also made several donations to the Friends and Descendants, and I encourage you to consider doing so yourself. For more information, go to <http://johnsonsisland.heidelberg.edu/>.

## **BOOTH IN THE CONFEDERATE SECRET SERVICE**

**By John C. Fazio © 2012 (Part 2 of 2)**

Some have questioned the reliability of this testimony on the grounds that some of the witnesses were later shown to have perjured themselves and some of the conversation allegedly overheard was unlikely, due to its sensitivity (plots against Lincoln), to have been discussed openly. The details of the conversations are not really very important. What is important is that the Canadian Cabinet saw fit to host John Wilkes Booth for ten days and Booth felt it necessary to take ten days from his busy schedule to travel to Montreal to be so hosted. We may be certain he did not simply pop in on them unannounced. We may be certain the conference had been previously arranged and that both parties, Booth and the Cabinet, felt the conference was at least desirable, if not absolutely necessary, to refine their plans and coordinate their efforts, at least those that pertained to Booth and the role he was to play in saving the Confederacy. Clearly, Booth was no longer a bit player; he had moved up the ladder and was now mingling with the major-domos of Confederate espionage. Major-domos of espionage do not spend ten days with an actor discussing theater, the weather, or sports. Sanders, especially, was reported by Hosea B. Carter to have been observed in "intimate association with Booth,"<sup>9</sup> and by John Deveny as having been seen "talking with" Booth, "talking confidentially and drinking together," and "(having) a drink together."<sup>10</sup> This is the same Sanders who was a known advocate of assassination as an effective means to bring about change; the same Sanders who, in 1853, had hosted, as U.S. Consul in London, such famous European revolutionaries as Lajos Kossuth, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini, Felice Orsini, Andre Ledru-Rollin, and Aleksandr Ivanovich Herzen. Sanders was said to have been very impressed by Mazzini's "theory of the dagger," i.e., tyrannicide, and advocated the assassination of Napoleon III "by any means, and by any way it could be done."<sup>11</sup>

It appears that the master had taken the pupil under his wing. Sanders, already a grizzly bear, was at this time a wounded grizzly bear, because his son, Major Reid Sanders, a prisoner of war, had died in captivity at Fort Warren in Boston just six weeks earlier.<sup>12</sup> He would therefore have been all the more eager to seek revenge against the man he considered to be the ultimate author of his son's demise and the demise of so many others and all the more disposed, therefore, to groom and patronize the possible agency of it.

Booth is also known, while in Montreal, to have spent much time with Patrick C. Martin and his family. It was probably Martin or Sanders, perhaps both, who gave him the names of and letters of introduction to persons in lower Maryland and northern Virginia whom he could rely upon for help. We know only that he was given such letters to, at least, Dr. William Queen, Dr. Samuel Mudd, and Marshal George P. Kane, the former Police Commissioner of Baltimore and a Confederate sympathizer, and that he later contacted these people when he was in lower Maryland and when he was making his escape.<sup>13</sup>

On October 27, Booth and Martin went to the Bank of Ontario, in Montreal, to exchange currency. Booth traded \$300 in gold coins for £60 sterling and bought an exchange receipt for \$455. He returned to Washington on November 9 and opened an account at the Washington office of Jay Cooke & Co., Bankers, into which he deposited \$1,500. This gave him the funds he needed to finance his work and, if need be, to escape abroad or into the Confederacy.<sup>14</sup>

In early November he was in Charles County, Maryland, with Dr. William Queen and his family and Dr. Mudd. On November 14, he was back in Washington at the National Hotel, but in December he was back in Charles County, this time to solicit the help of Confederate agent Thomas H. Harbin, whom he met through Dr. Mudd. Harbin agreed to and did help Booth in his escape after the assassination. Significantly, Harbin fled the country after the assassination and disappeared. Five years later he was back in the country working as a clerk in the National Hotel in Washington. He remained there until he died in 1885.<sup>15</sup>

In late November, Booth stopped to see Asia in Philadelphia. He offered to show her the cipher he was using, but she would have none of it. Then he took a large packet from his breast pocket, handed it to her, told her to keep it in her safe and to open it, alone, if anything happened to him. Following the assassination, she did. It contained paperwork relating to the disposition of his property, as well as a farewell letter to his mother and another letter addressed "To Whom It May Concern," but apparently intended for his brother-in-law, John Clarke. The greeting was an allusion to Lincoln's letter to Confederate commissioners attending a peace conference at Niagara Falls in July 1863, which letter ended the conference, such as it was. In the farewell letter, a tender, heartfelt missive that left no doubt of his love for his mother, he sought to justify his parting from her on the grounds of "liberty and humanity due to my country," "the cause of liberty and justice," and "the justice of my cause."

The letter to Clarke was considerably longer and was a general defense of the Confederate cause and of what Booth was now planning to do to serve it. It was in this letter that he wrote:

Right or wrong, God judge me, not man...

This country was formed for the *white*, not for the black man. And looking upon *African slavery* from the same standpoint held by those noble framers of our Constitution, I for one have ever considered *it* one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us) that God every bestowed upon a favored nation...Yet Heaven knows *no one* would be willing to do *more* for the negro race than I, could I but see a way to still *better their* condition. But Lincoln's policy is only preparing the way for their total annihilation...

The South...stand *now* (before the wonder and admiration of the *world*) as a noble band of patriotic heroes. Hereafter, reading of *their deeds*, Thermopylae will be forgotten...

Alas...day by day has she (the American flag) been draged [*sic*] deeper and deeper into cruelty and oppression...

Nor do I deem it a dishonor, in attempting to make for her a prisoner of this man to whom she owes so much of misery...

A *Confederate*, ~~at present~~ [deleted in the original by Booth] doing duty *upon his own responsibility*.<sup>16</sup>

Is that what Samuel Arnold, William Tidwell, and others called an "intelligent" man? Why did he delete "at present" from the last line? Had it ceased to be true? Need I say that his exculpation of the complicity of others, by implication the Confederate Government and its Secret Service, is proof positive of their complicity? Who asked for the exculpation? The man doth protest too much, methinks.

It was about this time – the latter part of 1864 – that Booth, unquestionably under orders from his superiors to do so, began to pull some loose strings together to form a team for a stated purpose. It should be noted at the outset that, if Booth had his sights on murdering Lincoln and only Lincoln, what need had he of an action team? This is something he could very well have accomplished entirely on his own, especially if he were willing to sacrifice his life in exchange. That he began to assemble a team, therefore, is a clear indication that he had grander intentions than the elimination of one man. Of course, they were not intentions he could reveal to the members of his team, because to do so would, first, surely drive most if not all of them away, because multiple killings are not something many have a taste for and, second, take an unacceptable risk of leakage. So he would lure with the pretense of a different purpose, and this despite that, on at least three occasions from late 1864 to April 1865, he had attempted to induce Lewis Powell to murder Lincoln.

To facilitate recruitment, Booth advised his prospects that his purpose was nothing more malignant than the abduction of President Lincoln, who would be whisked off to Richmond and held as ransom for the release of Confederate prisoners of war, as if anyone in the Federal government would negotiate with



the Confederate government in those circumstances. No harm was to come to anyone. As an inducement to come aboard, Booth promised fame, the eternal gratitude of the Confederate States of America, whose continued existence as a separate nation they would play a major role in securing, and lots of money. As for the last, he promised enough to ease their lives for the present and enough, ultimately, with the success of their common enterprise, to assure that they would never have to work for a living again. At least eight loose strings, whom we know of, took the bait.

By so doing, four would wind up at the end of a rope, three would spend nearly four years in hell on earth, one of the three suffering the agony of yellow fever and dying of it, and one would live a full life after spending nineteen months abroad as a fugitive and then enduring the ordeal of a two-month trial. Let no one suppose that Booth gathered this motley band entirely of his own volition or that any of them, with the possible exceptions of John Surratt and Lewis Powell, knew what he was really about or the true dimensions of his conspiracy. He was daft and bizarre, but he knew how to compartmentalize his work; only those closest to him knew his true purpose.

<sup>9</sup> Benn Pitman, *The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators*, Moore, Wiltach & Baldwin, 1865, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Tidwell, Hall and Gaddy, pp. 331, 332.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Herald*, September 6, 1864.

<sup>13</sup> William Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, University of Illinois Press, 1989, p. 44; Kauffman, p. 141; Tidwell, Hall and Gaddy, p. 331.

<sup>14</sup> Kauffman, p. 141; Tidwell, Hall and Gaddy, p. 344.

<sup>15</sup> Tidwell, Hall and Gaddy, p. 342.

<sup>16</sup> Clarke, pp. 104-110.

John Fazio is a former present of the Roundtable and a frequent contributor to the Charger. He is writing a book on John Wilkes Booth and the assassination. Part 1 of his chapter on Booth in the Confederate Secret Service was in the October Charger.



The Presidential Box at Ford's Theater.



Above: An artist's depiction of Lewis Powell attacking Frederick Seward.

Left: John Harrison Surratt Jr.  
Born: April 13, 1844  
Died: April 2, 1916

## UPCOMING & ONGOING CIVIL WAR EVENTS IN OHIO

- 5 November:
  - [Portsmouth: Portsmouth Public Library Civil War Series, "Medical Advancements During the Civil War" \(6:00 pm\)](#)
- 6 November:
  - [South Webster: Portsmouth Public Library Civil War Series, Movie Showing "Glory" \(3:00 pm\)](#)
- 8 November:
  - [New Boston: Portsmouth Public Library Civil War Series, "Scrapbooking: Then and Now" \(3:00 pm\)](#)
- 10 November:
  - [Portsmouth: Portsmouth Public Library Civil War Series, "John Morgan's Civil War Raid through the Scioto Valley" \(2:00 pm\)](#)
- 17 November:
  - [Cincinnati: "Tri-State Germans in the Civil War" \(11:00 am\)](#)
  - [Medina: A Civil War Christmas \(1:00 pm\)](#)
- 20 November:
  - [Webinar: "Civil War Dynasty: The Ewings of Ohio" \(6:00 pm\)](#)
- 27 November:
  - [Wooster: Wayne County Civil War Roundtable \(6:30 pm\)](#)

Courtesy of [www.ohiocivilwar150.org](http://www.ohiocivilwar150.org)

### **Holiday Lighting and Santa at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument**

Celebrate a Victorian Christmas with the  
Cuyahoga County Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument

There will be old fashioned Victorian hospitality  
and an opportunity to learn about Christmas  
during the Civil War.

**Saturday, November 24**

**9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

**Visit Santa Claus**

**Noon to 6:00 p.m.**

[www.soldiersandsailors.com](http://www.soldiersandsailors.com)

**NEXT MONTH**

**THE IRISH AND THE  
CIVIL WAR**

**DR. W. DENNIS  
KEATING**



# FORT PILLOW

