

THE CHARGER



The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

September 2024

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SPEAKER – Kellie Gormley, a veteran, award-winning journalist, and author of a book on the Swope Manor titled *Cease Firing! Life and Death at the Swope Manor*.

LOCATION: The Holiday Inn Independence at 6001 Rockside Road, Independence, Ohio 44131, off US Interstate 77

TIME: Social Hour at 6:00 PM and Presentation at 7:00 PM

For reservations email:

ccwrtreserve@gmail.com. To ensure a dinner is reserved for you, the reservation must be made by Tuesday, September 3, 2024

Website:

<http://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>

MEETING – September 11, 2024

PROGRAM – “Swope Manor, the Grand Inn Located in Downtown Gettysburg”

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President's Message

Fellow Roundtable Members:

As the golden hues of summer give way to the vibrant tapestry of autumn, this can only mean one thing (outside of the return of school buses and football), the Roundtable is back in session for its 68th Year. I am thrilled to welcome you to our official 2024-2025 Program! We have a fantastic lineup of presentations and events planned.

Our Executive Committee has been busy over the summer, working hard to keep you engaged with an array of activities while reaching out to prospective new members. If you have not had a chance to explore the Summer Series on our website and Facebook page, I encourage you to do so. Special thanks to Dave Carrino for his dedication to showcasing these valuable resources. Our involvement in the community has also been notable. Many of you may have seen us at the Civil War Weekend events held in Burton and Hale Farm & Village. These events were not only a great opportunity to connect with other history enthusiasts, but also to deepen our collective appreciation for Civil War history.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Steve Pettyjohn, Bob Pence, and Gary Taylor, who were key to our Rack Card Campaign. With the help of the Executive Committee and other volunteers, we distributed Rack Cards to over 55 locations throughout Northeast Ohio. The combined efforts have been instrumental in expanding our reach and visibility. For those who have not yet had the chance, the display at the Westlake Library, curated by Steve and the

Membership Committee, is truly impressive and well worth a visit.

In addition to these activities, we had a fantastic field trip to Buffington Island Battlefield Memorial Park. This well-organized event, led by Judge William Vodrey, provided us with valuable insights into our "Buckeye Battlefield." It was not only a day of learning, but also an opportunity to perpetuate support for our shared American History. Thanks to your support of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable, our group was able to donate funds towards the preservation efforts at the site. Huzzah!

Looking ahead, we are particularly excited about our upcoming field trip to Gettysburg, PA. Past-President, Bob Pence, has been diligently planning this trip and keeping us informed with detailed updates. For instance, I was super impressed with the breakdown of the artillery units at Gettysburg (be sure to go back and check that out). His commitment ensures that our visit will be both educational and memorable, offering a profound experience of one of the most significant battlefields in American history.

Mark your calendars for our first group meeting on September 11th. Kellie will kick off our Gettysburg Trip with a presentation on Swope Manor, setting the stage for what promises to be an insightful and memorable experience. This meeting will be a great opportunity to reconnect and dive into the new season with enthusiasm.

As we prepare for this exciting year, please remember to send your dues to our Treasurer, John Syrone, to ensure you remain in good standing. Your support is crucial to our continued success and ability to offer enriching programs.

I am eagerly anticipating seeing all of you at the September Meeting and embarking on another incredible year of exploring and celebrating history together.

Your obedient servant,

Gene Claridge

The Editor's Desk



“The Blacksmith’s Tale” (with apologies to Geoffrey Chaucer)-----Henry Jacobs, my great-grandfather, was a blacksmith in Greene County, Pennsylvania, in the 1860s. After the war, and the birth of my grandfather, Joseph Warren Jacobs, in 1868, Henry moved his shop and family to a property on the southern edge of the county seat, Waynesburg, where he also built a facility for repairing and painting buggies and wagons. My grandfather, Warren, was artistic, so even as a child of ten or so he had the job of painting the wagons and placing any fancy writing on them. He said that men from all over town would stop by to watch the oddity of a such a young boy painting fancy scroll work, etc., on an old farmer’s wagon. When gypsies came through the area every summer, they would

stop at Henry Jacobs’ shop to get their horses shod, have their wagons repaired, and painted. One time, when young Warren was painting a wagon for a customer at a nearby village, so many men came round to watch that they filled the top rail of a nearby fence. Eventually the overcrowded rail snapped, sending the spectators sprawling on the ground, to the delight of the young boy, who hollered and laughed every time he told the story in later years.

In 1863, however, Henry Jacobs had his blacksmith shop on an isolated section of road along Smith’s Creek, south of Waynesburg. The road connected Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, with Blacksville, West Virginia, south of the Mason-Dixon Line, about fifteen miles from Jacobs’ shop. As Henry told the tale, one summer day in 1863 he was working in his shop when a group of riders stopped. There was about a half-dozen men or so. Their horses were exhausted, badly in need of shoes and attention from a blacksmith. As he worked on the men’s horses, he noticed that they kept taking furtive glances up north on the road back towards Waynesburg. They stayed off to themselves, whispering in muted tones, and seemed anxious for him to finish his work. When he was done, they hurriedly paid him, mounted their tired horses, and took off south down the road toward Blacksville. Their behavior that day puzzled Jacobs until he heard about Morgan’s Raid in Ohio. He then became convinced that the men he hosted that summer day were some of Morgan’s men who had somehow crossed the Ohio River and were escaping south toward western Virginia. The tale has been part of the Jacobs family lore ever since.



LINCOLN AND HISTORY

By John C. Fazio

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Before he passed, John sent us several articles for inclusion in "The Charger." He wanted to be sure that these articles were shared with the members of the CCWRT.]

I am of the opinion that major historical events, and some minor ones too, occur only in the fullness of time, which is to say that they occur only when conditions are ripe for their happening. Attempts to accomplish them in non-conducive circumstances, or at inappropriate times, will fail. Examples are endless and superfluous, but I shall give one because it is especially relevant to our area of interest.

The Northwest Ordinance, passed by the Continental Congress on July 13, 1787, under the Articles of Confederation (which created the Northwest Territory as the first organized territory of the United States out of the region south of the Great Lakes, north and west of the Ohio River

and east of the Mississippi River), contained the following language: "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Observe that the language is virtually identical to that of Section 1 of the Thirteenth Amendment, adopted 78 years later. Clearly, the former was the template for the latter. In 1787, four years after the successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War by thirteen united colonies, circumstances were such that the inclusion of this language in a document that was applicable north of the Ohio River made sense, but 78 years had to pass before its inclusion in another document that was applicable south of that river would make sense.

This is not to say (to plunge into a time-honored debate) that men (the word used herein to mean both men and women) are driven totally by historical circumstances rather than the other way around, because there can be no historical circumstances without men. To put the matter plainly: History makes men, yes, but men also make history. And occasionally, very occasionally, certain men make much and very profound history. The record of our species is replete with the names and deeds of such men - Pericles, Caesar, Jesus, Justinian, Theodora, Mohammed, Charlemagne, Leonardo, Columbus, Luther, Elizabeth I, Louis XIV, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Voltaire, Rousseau, Washington, Napoleon -- and Lincoln, to name but a tiny number and not to mention post-Lincoln individuals who, for better or worse, left their mark.

Institutionalized slavery had largely run its historical course in the western world by 1860, the year of Lincoln's election. In England the slave trade was prohibited in 1807 and made a capital crime in 1827. In 1833 and 1834, Parliament outlawed slavery and emancipated all slaves in the Empire, and in 1838 it abolished indentured servitude. Twenty million pounds was paid in compensation to plantation owners in the Caribbean, an example that might have been followed in the United States, but wasn't. France finally abolished the institution in its Empire in 1848, after prior repeals and re-establishment in some of its colonies. In Russia, slavery was abolished by Peter the Great and serfs were emancipated in 1861 by Tsar Alexander II.

In addition to these major powers, some 17 other nations had formally abolished slavery by 1860 and another dozen or so would do so in the century following the Civil War, though the practice persists secretly in many countries, for labor and for sex. Its existence in the American South, therefore, was anachronistic, and it was thus only a matter of time before it would come to an end, peacefully, as in England, France, Russia, etc., or violently. It ended violently because the regions had grown very far apart economically and culturally; because slaveholders had invested

hundreds of millions of dollars in their slaves and felt that they could not weather such an economic loss; and because Southern leadership and citizenry could not imagine what they would do with 4,000,000 suddenly free blacks in their midst.

This was the history, then, that would make men. Now let us talk about the man who would make history.

Was Lincoln a truly great man? Yes. Was he a truly great President? Yes. Was he a complex man, both good and bad, with strengths and weaknesses? No, there was nothing bad about him and he had no weaknesses worth talking about. Was he, then, a perfect human being? No, because he made mistakes, but to make mistakes is not necessarily to be weak. Was he forced into glory? No, he earned it and paid the ultimate price for it.

Lincoln, and at times it appears that only Lincoln, during his period, realized that goals had to be not only praiseworthy, but accomplished gradually, in stages, in the fullness of time. Without that acumen and foresight, it is likely that the Rebellion would have succeeded, that the United States would have ceased to exist as one nation and that human bondage would have continued in a country whose organic law, i.e. its Constitution, guaranteed it, and this despite the fact that it was anachronistic in the world even at that time. Even with the acumen and foresight, this scenario came perilously close to reality. The North, the Federal Government, the United States, was truly not out of the woods until 1863 and even then might have lost the war if Gettysburg had gone the other way. No one who knows anything about the war can doubt the fighting qualities of the Southern man, the superb generalship the South brought to the conflict and the tenacity of the people of the South in the face of an adversary that substantially outnumbered them and that had substantially more of virtually everything -- gold, railroads, ships, armaments, manufactured goods, lumber, food, etc. -- than they had. Despite this lopsided balance in resources, Lincoln would say, in late 1862, that if there was a place worse than hell, he was in it. Any why not, after Union disasters on the Peninsula and at Second Bull Run and Fredericksburg and with one commander who had a chronic case of "the slows", another whose braggadocio and cruelty made Lincoln cringe and another who did not hesitate to admit that he was unfit to command an army.

Lincoln knew that he could not get too far ahead of public opinion and that to try to accomplish too much too quickly would lose the whole game. Thus it was that he could entertain the notion

of colonization of blacks, despite, or perhaps because of, his profound sympathy for black Americans and his loathing of slavery. Under the then prevailing circumstances and taking account of the attitudes of most whites toward blacks at that time, colonization was not such an outrageous idea. But Lincoln had the good sense to withdraw the suggestion when it was made clear to him by black leaders that they had no interest in it.

And thus it was, too, that Lincoln would resist -- because he had to resist -- the demands of the abolitionists and the radicals and the unauthorized liberation of slaves by overly zealous commanders in the field who knew their departments well enough, but did not have the comprehensive overview of the big picture that only the Commander in Chief in the White House had. Had he not so resisted when he did and to the degree that he did, one or more and very likely all four of the border states would have joined the Rebellion, and the cause of Union would then have been lost. Indeed, Lincoln felt that the loss of even one of them - Kentucky - would have been fatal to the cause. It's a good thing he knew this, because it appears that no one else of consequence knew it.

So Lincoln was sagacious, more so than any of his contemporaries. He was also perceptive and patient. He also knew a great deal about human nature, no less than Shakespeare. He knew what he wanted and he knew how to get it. He would be forceful only when he absolutely had to be, when the success or failure of the cause was in the balance, which is to say when the continuation of the United States as one nation demanded it. Thus it was, for example, that he would suspend the writ of habeas corpus for a period without Congress's Constitutionally mandated authority. Thus it was, as another example, that he would order the arrest and incarceration in Fort McHenry of the Mayor and the City Council of the City of Baltimore, as well as several Maryland legislators who were preparing to vote to recognize the Confederacy, as well as Congressman Henry May, rather than allow the nation's capital to be geographically cut off from the states that supported it. And thus it was, too, that there was some interference with free speech and other civil liberties during his administration. But these measures were taken not with alacrity, but with much pain, because they offended his love of justice, of liberty and of the rule of law, as well as his finely tuned sense of right and wrong.

For the rest, he was the soul of kindness, of gentleness, of thoughtfulness, of generosity, material and spiritual. His Bixby letter is a splendid example of it, but so are his major addresses as President - the First Inaugural, the Gettysburg Address and especially his Second Inaugural, which David Lloyd George, a great admirer of Lincoln, is said to have described as the finest

thing ever written with a pen. His love and sympathy for humanity was so great, in fact, that it even extended to slaveholders, who, he knew, had inherited a system not of their making.

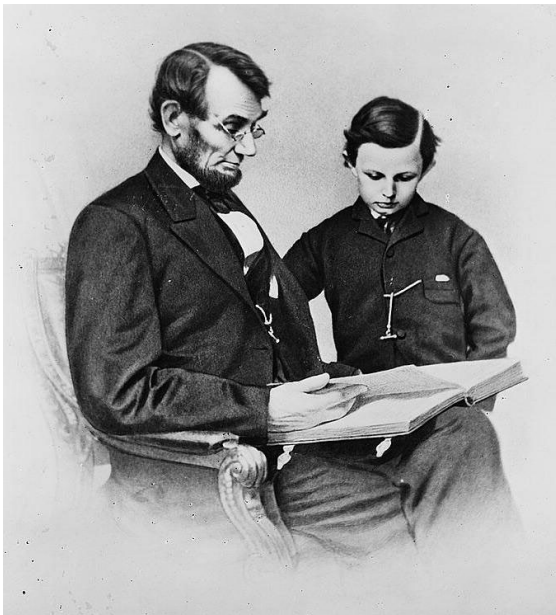
His capacity for mercy was legendary even in his own time. Time and time again he intervened to save the lives of soldiers who had run afoul of military discipline, who were charged with criminal negligence, cowardice or desertion. With a heavy heart, he would defer to the executioners only in the severest cases, i.e. multiple offenders, those who had already received clemency more than once and those who ignored repeated warnings. And time and time again he would make himself available to the lowly, to those without status, power or influence, to those who had only a need. So pervasive and well known were these attributes of Lincoln's character, in fact, that Robert E. Lee is said to have said that he surrendered as much to Lincoln's kindness as he did to Grant's cannons. No greater tragedy ever befell the South, before or after the war, than the half inch of lead that John Wilkes Booth's derringer sent into Lincoln's brain.

He was a man, too, who knew what pain, suffering and grief were about. He had experienced much, before as well as during the war, which no doubt had a lot to do with his gentle and merciful spirit. In 1850, he and his wife, Mary Todd, were devastated by the loss of their not quite four-year old son, Eddie Baker Lincoln, whom his parents called "a tender boy", to pulmonary tuberculosis. Having weathered that and much else by 1862, the Lincoln's were again driven to the edge by the loss of their eleven-year old son, William (Willie), on February 20 of that year, to a typhoid-like disease. Willie, who was probably his parents' favorite, had been described by Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, Mary's cousin, as a "noble, beautiful boy...of great mental activity, unusual intelligence, wonderful memory, methodical, frank and loving, a counterpart of his father, save that he was handsome". His death plunged both of his parents into inconsolable grief. But grief of a different kind was to follow in that terrible year for the North, with one lost battle following another, culminating in the debacle at Fredericksburg and the Mud March of January, 1863. Lincoln would at least be spared the loss of his third son, Thomas (Tad), who died on July 16, 1871, at the age of 18, a death that pushed Mary over the edge into insanity or something very close to it.

Lastly, a word about one other feature of his personality. It is said that there are only three things in life: God, human folly and laughter; that we can't understand the first, that we can't do anything about the second, and that we must therefore make the most of the third. Lincoln would probably agree that God is unknowable. He would not agree that we can do nothing about human folly; he did a great deal about it. But he most assuredly would agree with the value of

laughter, which is why, when he wasn't grieving or despairing, he did a lot of it and tried to get other people to do a lot of it and often. His sense of humor was as much a part of him as his height and his stovepipe hat. He loved a good joke and a good story and told both often. Sometimes his humor was a bit too earthy or ribald for some ears, but if he didn't always amuse his audience, he certainly had no problem amusing himself. When retiring, he was as likely -- perhaps more so -- to facilitate sleep with Artemus Ward and Petroleum V. Nasby than with government reports.

So what do we have? A very intelligent man, a self-taught man who rose from the humblest beginnings to the highest office in the land, a perceptive man, a patient man, a man who could be forceful but who preferred to be, and therefore most often was, a compassionate man. A kind, gentle, thoughtful and generous man. A merciful man, a humble man. A man who loved to laugh and to make others laugh. In a word, a man who had all the tools necessary to shepherd his country from a largely agrarian and loosely joined federation of semiautonomous states to an industrial and commercial giant which would think of itself and present itself to the world as one nation, indivisible.



It seems probable that no other man of his time could have succeeded in holding the country together, so great were the forces tearing it apart. Indeed, even with the qualities that he brought to the task, he came perilously close to failing. When we think of the long train of mediocre Presidents (not to say mediocre men) who followed him, that probability does not appear to be overstated: Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, McKinley. To a degree, therefore, history made Lincoln. But to an even greater degree, Lincoln made history as only a few others have made it.



Old Capitol Prison, Washington, D.C.

The American Bastille

Brian D. Kowell © August 2024

On a recent visit to our nation's capital, I found myself standing at the intersection of First and A streets, just east of the U.S. Capitol Building. Before me was the impressive United States Supreme Court Building. Constructed in 1935, it is the building where our country's laws are interpreted. On its portico are inscribed the words "Equal Justice Under Law." It wasn't until later that I learned that during the Civil War another government building had stood on that exact spot – the Old Capitol Prison.

In the early 1800s a red brick tavern and hostel called Stelle's Hotel stood on the site. The tavern and hotel later closed due to poor management. In August 1814, the British invaded Washington and burned the Capitol building. Without a meeting place, Congress looked for temporary quarters. A group of Washington real-estate investors heard rumors that Congress was considering relocating to another city. Realizing how that move would affect land values, the group offered to buy the land where Steele's stood, raze the building, and construct a three-story brick building in Federal style that Congress could use. Congress readily agreed to the plan.¹

As restoration to the Capitol Building commenced, the Congress and the Supreme Court moved into the completed brick building in December 1814. Known as “The Old Brick Capitol,” the name was shortened to “Old Capitol.” On March 4, 1817, President James Monroe was inaugurated in the Old Capitol. By 1819 the restored U.S. Capitol Building was opened, and Congress and the Supreme Court returned.

For a while, the Old Capitol Building was used as a private school. It was later sold and refurbished into a 40-50-room fashionable boarding house, patronized by the ‘crème de la crème’ of Southern dwellers in Washington. South Carolina Senator and Vice President of the United States John C. Calhoun resided there until his death in 1850. United States naval officer Commodore Stephen Decatur resided there before building a large home on Lafayette Square.

Other boarding houses, patronized by government officials, sprang up around the Old Capitol Building. One nearby was converted from the private residence of a man named Carroll. Another row house known as Duff Green’s Row House stood on the site of the present-day Library of Congress. A young Congressman from Illinois by the name of Abraham Lincoln stayed in one of these row houses from 1847-1849.ⁱⁱ

By the mid-1850’s, the Old Capitol Building was abandoned and fell into disrepair. It became dilapidated with its walls decaying, its doors, floors and stairs creaking, and its windows boarded up with wooden slats nailed across them. In 1861, the Old Capitol Building was purchased by the government and transformed into a prison. The wooden slats were replaced by iron bars, the interior remodeled, and the doors to the rooms fixed with secure locks. A high board fence enclosed the open areas between buildings, and extensions were built on the back and sides for a mess hall and additional quarters. Historian Allan Nevins described the Old Capitol Prison as:

A decaying jail hastily refurbished for captured Confederates, refugee Negroes, blockade runners, and state prisoners. The verminous rooms stank of open drains, sweating inmates and the eternal fare of salt pork, beans, and rice. A military guard clattered its arms on the cobblestones outside while patrols thumped up and down the wooden hallways. The dark, ill-ventilated cells, kept full to bursting, became breeding places for all kinds of maladies. During 1862 a midsummer influx of captured Confederates raised the population to 600. The only redeeming feature of this ramshackle barn was its convivial jollity, for most prisoners were herded into five large second-story rooms, partitioned out of great chambers which had been occupied by Congressⁱⁱⁱ

When prisoners were brought into Old Capitol Prison, they were processed in a large room on the first floor. They were searched and questioned. Colonel N. T. Colby, one of the prison commandants, was astounded by the number of pocket-knives that were confiscated from incoming prisoners – an entire full bushel.^{iv} From there they were escorted by the guards to their cells. These rooms were usually on the second floor where they had been used as chambers for the House of Representatives. One prisoner described the room:

Large and divided from the room in the front by folding doors, which were locked, and barred on the other side. Two windows without blinds opened on a large yard . . .

The room was one of mass dirt; spiders-webs hung in festoons from the ceiling and vermin of all kinds ran over the floor. The walls had been papered, but dampness had caused most of it to fall off, which all over that which was left were great spots of grease The furniture consisted of an iron bedstead, pillows, and a mattress of straw, a pair of sheets, and a brown blanket.^v

The vermin found in the Old Capitol Prison included rats, spiders, cockroaches, lice and bed bugs. Captain James N. Bosang complained that: “I could see them [bedbugs] by the hundreds all over me [and] all over my bed.” Ingeniously he placed cups filled with water under the legs of his bed and discovered “very few that even attempted to swim and they were drowned.”^{vi} But as one historian recorded, “As foul and uncomfortable as the prison was, prisoners in Old Capitol were better off than many inmates housed at other penitentiaries. Unlike many Civil War prisons, inmates at Old Capitol were served meals three times a day. And although the meals served in the dirty mess hall were said to have varied little from day to day, captives in Old Capitol Prison suffered less from malnutrition and from intestinal tract disorders that did inmates in other Civil War prisons.”^{vii}

Old Capitol Prison was designed for 500 inmates, and by October 1861, it was full. The incarcerated included soldiers captured from First Bull Run and Fairfax Court House, blockade runners, political prisoners, spies, Union officers convicted of various crimes, bounty jumpers, counterfeiters, local prostitutes and contrabands. The contrabands were soon segregated to Duff Green’s Row Houses.

By mid-1862, with the annexation of Duff Green’s Row House and the Carroll House Prison, the population of prisoners rose to 1,500. The most ever held there at one time was 2,763. “According to the official records a total of 5,761 POWs were held at Old Capitol Prison of which 457 died.”^{viii}

Some of the more famous inmates included 19-year-old Belle Boyd, who taunted the guards by singing Confederate songs at her window. One prisoner found that when she sang “Maryland, My Maryland” he had to avert his face so the other inmates did not see the tears welling in his eyes. Another famous prisoner was Rose O’Neal Greenhow



[pictured with her daughter], the infamous spy who relayed the Union plans to advance to Manassas to General Beauregard in 1861. She took her 8-year-old daughter to jail with her, and because the child could come and go as she pleased, Greenhow began using her as a courier, continuing to pass information to the South. The highest ranking Confederate general to spend some time in Old Capitol Prison was Edward “Allegheny” Johnson. His stay was brief before being transferred to other prisons. Some of Mosby’s Rangers were

held there as well as those people implicated in Lincoln’s assassination such as Dr. Samuel Mudd, Ned Spangler, Mary Surratt, Louis Weichman, John Llyod, John T. Ford (the owner of Ford’s theater), and Junius Brutus Booth, (the brother of Lincoln’s assassin John Wilkes Booth). After the war, Confederate Governors Vance of North Carolina, Letcher of Virginia and Brown of Georgia spent some time in Old Capital. The commandant of

Andersonville Prison, Captain Henry Wirz, was held there during his trial. When found guilty of war crimes against Union prisoners. Wirz was hung in the Old Capitol's cobblestone courtyard [pictured below].^{ix}

There were 60 guards under a captain or lieutenant daily detailed for the prison, and a number of commandants were in charge of the prison during the war. One was William P. Wood. Appointed to the post by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton in January 1862, Wood, acting more as an interrogator than as a warden, frequently interrogated inmates to gain information. He also scrutinized their mail and any critical information discovered was sent directly to Stanton. Prisoners had to be careful as Wood had spies posing as prisoners circulating amongst them trying to gain information.



There were no means at Old Capitol Prison to punish prisoners when they broke any rules. There was no dungeon or solitary confinement, but the guards were very strict. ^x They patrolled the outside of the prison and “No person was allowed to show any sign of recognition. If a person was seen loitering in passing the prison, or walking at a pace not considered satisfactory by the guard, he soon received a peremptory command to ‘pass on’ or ‘hurry up there,’ and if this warning was not heeded the offending person whether male or female was arrested and detained.”^{xi} Prisoners could look out their windows, but were not allowed to touch the bars. This didn’t stop one guard, after repeated warnings, from shooting and killing an inmate who refused to vacate his window.^{xii}

Unlike other prisons, guards not only walked a beat outside on the street, but also inside. The prisoners were locked in their cells most of the day and only were free at meal times. In their locked cells, the prisoners could hear “the steady tramp of the sentry up and down the halls all night, clanking of arms, challenging of the guards and the calls of the relief.”^{xiii} Apparently some guards were careless with their weapons as prisoners sometimes heard the report of a musket inside the building. One prisoner was in his bunk talking with his roommates when he heard a sharp report from the room below. Simultaneously a bullet passed up through the floor going through the slats in his bed, through his blankets and pillow, barely missing his head, before continuing through his ceiling. The accident was reported, but nothing came of it.^{xiv}

Prisoners learned to avoid Lieutenant Holmes of the guards. Nicknamed “Bullhead,” Holmes would slap and kick prisoners, both Union and Confederate. On one occasion he even entered a guardhouse where a sentry was incarcerated for being drunk and noisy, and Holmes slapped and kicked the sentry several times.^{xv}

There were few escapes – only sixteen- from Old Capitol Prison. One inmate fashioned a rope from his blanket and lowered himself out a second-floor window. Unfortunately the rope was not long enough, and he had to drop the rest of the way, landing almost at the foot of a guard. The guard aimed his musket at the man, but his cap failed to snap and fire the gun. The prisoner escaped only to be returned a month later when he was caught in

Baltimore. Another inmate tried to bribe a guard to let him climb out a window and lower himself with a rope. When the inmate was halfway down, the guard called out to his comrades that a prisoner was trying to escape and shot at the man shattering his kneecap. The inmate was hoisted back up into his cell by his roommates and later died after his leg was amputated.^{xvi}

After the war, the government sold the Old Capitol Building in 1867 to George T. Brown, then sergeant-at-arms of the U.S. Senate. He modified the building into three row houses known as “Trumbull’s Row.” In the early 20th century the National Women’s Party used it as their headquarters. In 1929 the site was acquired by eminent domain and the building razed to clear the site for the U.S. Supreme Court Building.^{xvii}

There is a lot of hidden history in Washington D.C. if you know where to look. Today, standing and looking at the majestic Supreme Court Building, my imagination can conjure the sight of the three-story Old Brick Capitol Prison and picture looking up to its barred windows and catching the furtive glances of its inmates while the sentries below walk their posts and tell me to “pass on” and “hurry up there.”

ⁱ Harold, H. Burton & Thomas E. Waggaman, “The Story of the Place: Where First and A Streets Formerly Met and What Is Now the Site of the Supreme Court Building,” Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington D.C., Vol. 51/52, 1951/1952. Speer, Lonnie R., *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, 1997. p. 41

ⁱⁱ McClure, Alexander Kelly, editor, *The Annals of the Civil War: Written by the Leading Participants North and South*, “The Old Capitol Prison” by Colonel N.T. Colby, Da Capo Press, New York, 1994. Pp. 502-512. Faust, Patricia L., editor, *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1866. p. 544

ⁱⁱⁱ Nevins, Allan, *The War for the Union: War Becomes Revolution: 1862-1863*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1960. p. 312. Speer, *Portals to Hell*, p. 41.

^{iv} Colby, *The Old Capitol Prison*, p. 504.

^v Lomax, Virginia, *The Old Capitol and its Inmates*, E. J. Hale & Son, New York, 1867. pp. 66-67. Qunit, Ryan T., *Dranesville: A Northern Virginia Town in the Crossfire of a Forgotten Battle, December 20, 1861*, Savas Beatie, El Dorado Hills, California, 2024. pp. 98-99.

^{vi} Bosang, James N., “Chinch Harbor”, *A Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends, and Folklore*. Ed. Benjamin A. Botkin, New York, Promontory Press, 1960. pp. 445-447

^{vii} Heidler, Davis Stephen, Jeanne T. Heidler, editors, *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York & London, 2000. Entry “Old Capitol Prison”, Alicia Rodriguez, pp. 1432-1434

^{viii} Speer, *Portals to Hell*, pp.329, 310. O.R. Vol. VIII, pp.990-1004 Carroll Prison Annex was torn down and is now the site of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

^{ix} Colby, *The Old Capitol Prison*, pp. 507-510. Speer, *Portals to Hell*, pp. 82, 291-292, <https://lincolnconspirators.com/2013/04/17/imprisoned-at-old-capitol-prison/>

^x Speer, *Portals to Hell*, p. 82. Mahoney, D.A., *The Prisoner of State*, New York, Carleton Publishing, 1863. pp. 29-30.

^{xi} Williamson, James J, *Prison Life in the Old Capitol*, West Orange, New Jersey, Williamson Publishing, 1911. pp. 26-27

^{xii} Ibid. pp 26-27

^{xiii} Ibid. pp. 25.

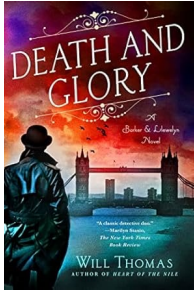
^{xiv} Mahoney, D.A., *The Prisoner of State*, p. 316. O.R. Vol. V, pp. 118, 316-317

^{xv} Speer, *Portals to Hell*, pp. 84, 164

^{xvi} Speer, *Portals to Hell*, pp. 83, 329. Colby, *The Old Capitol Prison*, pp.505-506

^{xvii} Harold & Waggaman, “Story of the Place.”

BOOK REVIEWS



Will Thomas. *Death and Glory* (Minotaur Books, 2024)

In the August 2023 issue of *The Charger*, I reviewed *The Lion and the Fox: Two Rival Spies and the Secret Plot to Build a Confederate Navy*. That featured a Confederate operative conspiring to have Confederate warships secretly built in Liverpool, England and his adversary, the United States consul there.

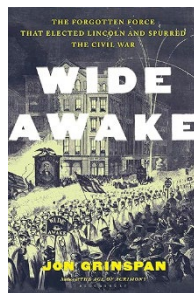
For those who like history mysteries, this novel is related to that event. It is the latest in a mystery series featuring British Enquiry Agents Cyrus Barker and Thomas Llewelyn. In 1894, four men come to their London office claiming to represent a revived Confederacy based in four Central and South American countries. They seek an introduction to the British Prime Minister. As the mystery unfolds involving the Knights of the Golden Circle* which they also claim to represent, they try to use Barker's connections with the Masons and the Knights Templar to obtain a meeting with the Prime Minister.

While the Prime Minister does agree to that meeting, he will not recognize the existence of a long-defeated Confederacy. The plot is linked to the 1862 *Trent* affair. An elderly Jubal Slidell, one of the two Confederate diplomats involved in that event and living in exile in London, is killed. Barker and Llewelyn determine that this was not accidental. Eventually, they find out that the four visitors are attempting to force the British government to release to them a warship that was built for but never delivered to the Confederacy.

In the novel, among other key characters are Robert Tod Lincoln and Confederate General Albert Pike. Fast moving events lead to a dramatic conclusion.

*The Knights of the Golden Circle was founded by a George W. L. Bickley from Cincinnati in the 1850s as a secret society with the goal of creating a slave state in the Central and South American regions to augment the Southern slave states in the United States. See David C. Keehn. *Knights of the Golden Circle: Secret Empire, Southern Secession, Civil War* (LSU Press, 2013)

--Dennis Keating



Jon Grinspan. *Wide Awake: The Forgotten Force That Elected Lincoln and Spurred the Civil War* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024)

I thought that I was knowledgeable about the emergence of Abraham Lincoln and the new Republican party's victory in the 1860 election that led to the Civil War. However, I admit that I was not aware of the history and role of the "Wide Awakes" told in this book by author Jon Grinspan, Curator of Political History at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. As a new graduate student in 2007 at the University of Virginia, he and his thesis advisor found references to the Wide Awakes that became his fixation and has resulted in this book.

The story begins in Hartford, Connecticut in February, 1860, following a Republican campaign rally featuring Cassius Clay, the Kentucky abolitionist. Thirty-six young working men (known as the “Originals”) met and formed an anti-slavery club, which they named after an article about Clay in the Hartford Courant newspaper. They adopted a uniform costume consisting of an oil cloth cape and became known for their torch-carrying marches. Their cheer was: “Hurrah, Huzzah! Hurrah, Huzzah! Hurrah, Huzzah!” The companies were led by captains. Two days later, Republican presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln arrived in Hartford and was accompanied to his downtown hotel by the newly-formed Wide Awakes. This would lead to a proliferation of Wide Awake clubs, first in New England and then across the North. They would play an important role in promoting Lincoln’s candidacy and electoral victory. Alarmed Southerners would claim that their militancy helped lead to the Civil War that followed.

Grinspan chronicles the explosion of the Wide Awake clubs, attacks on them by Democrat mobs, and their incorporation into the Union armies after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter. Cleveland’s Wide Awake club is described thusly:

“Cleveland’s Wide Awake companies published rolls, ranging from swells like the youthful mayor George B. Senter to carpenters, masons, police officers, and clerks. Some were fifteen, a few were over fifty, but most were in their twenties, averaging around twenty-four years old. Noticeably few had been born in Ohio. Young, mobile, employed-but-not-quite-established men seem to have gravitated to the rising movement.” (p. 83)

While the Wide Awakes were almost an all-White male movement (although supported by like-minded women, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony), Oberlin was an exception:

“In the abolitionist hotbed of Oberlin, John Mercer Langston liked what he saw in the Wide Awakes...As Chairman of the Oberlin Republican party, Langston organized the local Wide Awakes. He did the daily work of tracking down capes, procuring torch oil, coordinating with brass bands, and assembling a towering bonfire to celebrate Lincoln’s nomination. Though he preferred Seward or Chase, and worried about Lincoln’s insufficient “humanity toward the oppressed,” Langston campaigned hard across the summer of 1860. He gave speeches to Wide Awake audiences and led marches. When clubs from across Ohio joined with the Oberlin company for rallies, the otherwise entirely White corps of young men saw Langston, and a few other Black Oberlinites, marching with the club. Democratic papers mocked the “Oberlin Afrikan Linkun Guards.” Such participants were a rarity, but they hinted at the influence Black voices might have on the Republican Party. Langston hoped to push from the inside to make it “the great party of freedom.” His efforts were an act of hope, at a time when other Wide Awakes were openly racist, and Ohio only permitted Black men to vote if they “visibly” were predominantly of “Saxon blood.” But, despite these discouragements, John Mercer Langston make himself the first Black Wide Awake in America” (p. 92)

Lewis Hayden would also organize Black Wide Awakes in Boston and later recruit for the Black 54th Massachusetts regiment.

Many Wide Awakes appeared at the Republican convention in Chicago that nominated Illinois lawyer Abraham Lincoln. While enjoying their political support, Lincoln the candidate tried to keep his distance from the Wide Awakes. That proved difficult when on August 8, thousands of Wide Awakes poured into Springfield to rally for Lincoln. On October 3, the Wide Awakes

organized a series of pro-Lincoln rallies in several cities, including Cleveland. As to Lincoln's victory, Grinspan argues:

“Whether or not the Wide Awakes caused Lincoln's election, they certainly flavored Americans' interpretation of the outcome.” (p. 171)

Instead of disbanding after the election, the Wide Awakes remained an organization. As his train took him to the capital, Wide Awake companies greeted him along the route. With Lincoln being threatened, they volunteered to go to Washington City to protect him at his inauguration. However, Lincoln did not accept their offer of protection. Many did enlist in the Union army. James Sanks Brisbin, one of the Originals, became a brigadier general, and was wounded several times. He appears several times in the book, beginning with being mobbed by Southerners in Wheeling, Virginia at the beginning of the book and then going West after the war, where he commanded federal cavalry regiments.

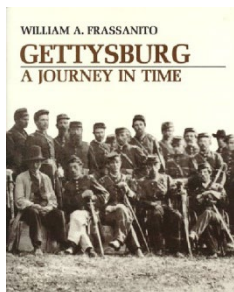
Grinspan ends with an 1889 Hartford re-union of the Originals. And he notes that five of the first nine post-war United States presidents had ties to the Wide Awakes.

I would highly recommend this fascinating account of the Wide Awakes and their contribution to American political history.

PS: In 1976, local author and historian Joann King began as the curator of the Medina County Historical Society's museum. She discovered that a banner hanging in the museum had been made and presented to the Medina Wide Awakes in the Fall of 1860. It has Lincoln's face and says: “Presented by the Ladies of Medina to the WIDE AWAKES 1860.” The society had the banner restored.

Mary Jane Brewer. “Medina County Historical Society restores 160-year-old Lincoln political banner.” (Medina Sun, January 25, 2021)

--Dennis Keating



Frassanito, William A., *Gettysburg A Journey In Time*, New York, N.Y. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.

Probably one of the most fascinating books on the Civil War I've ever read is one by a little known author William Frassanito. His work “Gettysburg A Journey In Time” focuses on photos taken by various photographers on the Gettysburg Battlefield shortly after the troops vacated it. The author studied photos of Gettysburg from among other sources The National Archives, Museums, and private collections and he found out that no one had ever studied or taken issue with the explanations with which the photographers labeled them, many of which were in error. So, let's take a look at what he discovered concerning them, much of which was totally new to myself.

After July 4, 1863 when Lee's Army of Northern Virginia headed south burial parties began to bury the northern dead. Almost all were buried where they fell. Burial parties began at the northern end of the battlefield and worked their way south. The first photographers to arrive at Gettysburg were Alexander Gardener and his associates Timothy O'Sullivan and James Gibson. These men had spent the first few days of July at The Farmers Inn in Emmitsburg, Maryland and therefore headed for Gettysburg as soon as the fighting ceased. They approached from the south on July 5 and since burials began near the town they came upon the last of the unburied dead all in the area around Little Round Top, Devils Den, and on and around the Rose farm. Almost without exception the photos of the dead at Gettysburg were taken by Alexander Gardner and Associates. According to the author Gardner was preoccupied with showing the public the devastation and the cost of war. He did, however, take photos of The Trostel Farm and Mead's Headquarters but almost totally dwelt on photographing the dead. Much of the battlefield was never visited by him and as soon as the dead were buried, he lost interest in staying any longer.

The next major photographer to arrive was Matthew Brady and Associates. Coming from New York where the Brady studios were located, they arrived on or about July 15. By this time all the dead had been buried and he dwelt on photographing battlefield landmarks. The Cemetery Gate, Big and Little Round Tops, photos of the town itself and he also covered the first day's battlefield around McPherson's farm and woods. Brady photographed the spot where General Reynolds was shot, Lee's headquarters and John Burns and his homestead. He also photographed in detail Gettysburg College (then called Pennsylvania College) and The Lutheran Seminary. Brady and his associates spent several days on the Battlefield and many of the famous landmarks were photographed at this time.

The third major photographic studio on the scene was the Excelsior Gallery of Gettysburg owned by the Tyson Brothers Charles and Isaac. Tyson Studios were located in Gettysburg itself and according to the author were actually open taking pictures of soldiers as the battle raged. When Confederates overran the town they locked the studio and fled with their wives. When they returned the studio was found undamaged (an artillery shell hit the second floor and can still be seen today.) Their studio is relatively unknown today and therefore little credit is given to their work. Although they were located in Gettysburg, they had trouble converting their equipment from studio photography to outdoor mode. Most of their views were taken in August of 1863 but they did a very good job of covering the whole field. The Tysons gravitated toward views of the town such as panoramic views of Gettysburg along the Chambersburg Pike, and views of the town and the buildings in it. They also took photos of the McClellan House where Jenny Wade was killed.

Many of the famous photos, especially those of the dedication of the Soldiers Cemetery where Lincoln spoke were taken by unknown photographers. It seems that over the years although photographers were efficient in labeling their work many collections were sold and re-sold, studios closed and were purchased by individuals and the collections were mixed. Frassanito spent six years sorting photos and then delving into where the photographers were located on the field and what photos they took. One of the more fascinating areas of study was placing the location of the photos and comparing the location to today's view. When this book was published in the 1970s much of the battlefield had been overgrown and held no resemblance to what it looked like in 1863. Today, however there has been a concerted effort to return some of

the sight lines as they appeared during the War. Frassanito dwelt on certain rock formations in the early photos when trying to identify today's locations. While studying photos he realized that several of the same corpses were featured in several different views pointing to the fact that the photographers "posed" some of the dead for a more dramatic effect. Many times photos were given the wrong location on purpose when labeled by the photographer pointing to the fact that they wanted people to believe they were in sections of the field that they had never really visited. We must remember that photography was a relatively new technology and rules and regulations were either vague or nonexistent. The photographers did what they had to do to get the most financial bang for their buck! Other photographers that were instrumental in depicting Gettysburg were the Weaver Brother P.S and H.E arrived later and dwelt on the entrenchments at Culps Hill and Devils Den, although as Frassanito points out many of their subjects at Devil's Den were actually live soldiers who were, I imagine being paid to pose for the Weavers. However their work at Culps Hill is invaluable. Fredrick Gutekunst did an excellent job of photographing the Second Corps Hospital at Rock Creek. Other unidentified photographers at Gettysburg were those taking pictures of Culps Hill and the area crossed by the Louisiana Tigers and their assault upon the 41st New York, and of course the unknown photographer who recorded the actual photo of Lincoln giving the Gettysburg Address.

All in all I found this a fascinating book and look forward to locating several of these shots while visiting the battlefield. William Frassanito also did exhausting work while studying photos of Antietam and The Overland Campaign which he published in separate works and which I would also recommend. I believe "Gettysburg A Journey In Time" may still be purchased at the gift shop in Gettysburg or if not it can of course be purchased on line at American Book Exchange, Abe Books or Amazon. Below are two more books authored by William Frassanito--all very good and which may be available at the above-mentioned sources:

Frassanito, William A., "Antietam The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day." New York, N.Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978.

Frassanito, William A., "Grant and Lee The Virginia Campaigns 1864-1865", New York, N.Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983.

--Paul Siedel

FINIS!