

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH 2017

VOL. 38 #8

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Message From the CCWRT President: The Value of Letters

I recently finished a book on the last days of Robert E. Lee. Now you might ask, what more could possibly be written about Robert E. Lee. The author had recently been given access to many letters written by Lee which gave insight into the last few years of his life. According to the author, the book was full of many letters and anecdotes which had never been published. Many recent books on the Civil War include in the preface the fact that the author has been able to use new material.

Early books on the War used information in the Official Records, the memoirs of officers or recollections of their subordinates, often self-serving. As time went on and family letters became available we could obtain a different perspective of the Civil War. We saw how the war affected the families themselves, their relationships, their homes, local news, soldiers writing home telling what life was like for them and many, many personal experiences.

Letters are still surfacing from old trunks and dressers and each one sheds another ray of light on the events of that time. How priceless these pieces of paper have become. I have no letters written by my ancestor which survived but have read a letter written by an ancestor of a friend of mine. The letter was written outside the city of Savannah in December of 1864 by a soldier serving under General Sherman. He wrote a lot about “Uncle Billy” and how they were just going to have to go to Virginia and get Grant out of his mess after cleaning up Georgia. We have learned so much of our history through these pieces of personal correspondence which have been saved.

Now I have a question. One hundred and fifty years from now, what will our descendants learn about us, about our daily lives? They can access newspapers and learn about events, but what about how we lived, what we thought, what our families were like? There will be no pile of emails, no text messages and probably not many journals. The few letters we did write were in cursive which presently is not taught to our schoolchildren. What will we leave for them?

Jean

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A VISIT TO CAMP MOORE, LOUISIANA'S PRIMARY CONFEDERATE TRAINING CAMP

While visiting New Orleans this past winter, I decided to check out Camp Moore, Louisiana's main training facility for volunteers during the Civil War. I had my misgivings, it being well off the beaten path of Civil War sites but I decided to risk it. As it turns out, I made the right decision. Camp Moore is a well maintained site complete with a book store and shop., The Confederate Cemetery is very well maintained. Being about fifty miles north of New Orleans via Interstate 55 , Exit 57 and Rt. 440 it is a good days activity for any Civil War Buff.

Camp Moore was established in May of 1861 as one of the largest Confederate training camps in the South. In 1861 the states main training camp was at Metairie Racetrack in New Orleans, today the site of Metairie Cemetery. The state was determined to move the base away from the disease prone environment of the closely packed city of New Orleans and away from the temptations that a major city would offer to young men. Camp Moore was selected because it was on high ground, had an abundance of water and was in close proximity to the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad.

During the war, thousands of troops from Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas were trained and based at what became the largest Confederate training camp in the western theater of war. Named after Louisiana Governor Thomas Moore, Camp Moore received authorization directly from Jefferson Davis to serve as the principle base of operations in the region.

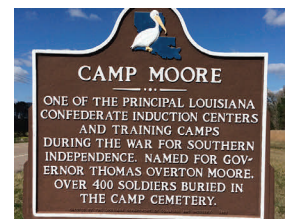
Camp Moore also served as the focal point for many offensive operations on the part of both Confederate and Federal armies.

During the course of the war, the Federals made four efforts to destroy Camp Moore. It was however overrun and completely destroyed in the fall of 1864. This left the camp virtually useless for the duration.

Camp Moore gradually went back to it's natural state until veterans and ladies organizations reclaimed the cemetery in 1903. Additional acreage was purchased and the museum was built in 1964. Today all that remains of the original camp is 6.5 acres including the cemetery.

Other than the cemetery the site contains several monuments to the many men that died of disease there. A very moving site well worth the visit for any Civil War buff visiting New Orleans and curious about it's lesser known historical sites.

Paul Siedel



This Month:

President-elect Abraham Lincoln turned to the top men of the Republican Party in late 1860, his celebrated "team of rivals," in forming his Cabinet. First among equals was William Henry Seward, who just about everyone expected to have been the GOP nominee that year, a giant of the party who, at least initially, perhaps still thought himself as the rightful occupant of the White House and the better man to be leading the country. In time he came to be one of Lincoln's most trusted advisors, even as he recognized the prairie lawyer's wisdom and skill; in time they also came to be close friends. Seward's early life and his service as Secretary of State will be the focus of William Vodrey's talk.



NEXT MONTH *What's All the Hoop-la*, a presentation of Civil War Clothing by Heather Nichols.

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Rosa Parks' Historical Rhyme by David A. Carrino

This history brief was presented at the February 2017 meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. The following version of the history brief contains information that was not included in the version that was presented at the meeting.

There is a witty quote about history repeating itself, which conveys the notion that history repeats itself in a poetic way. The quote has been attributed to Mark Twain, although there is no evidence that Mark Twain ever said or wrote it. It is easy to believe that this is a Mark Twain quote, because its pithiness sounds like Mark Twain. This quote exists in a few different forms with slightly different wording, but all of the versions of this quote convey the same notion. One version of the quote states, "History does not repeat itself, but it does tend to rhyme." This notion was expressed in a more sublime if less succinct way in the October 1845 issue of a religious periodical named *The Christian Remembrancer*.



(As an aside, when the October 1845 issue of *The Christian Remembrancer* was published, Mark Twain was one month shy of his tenth birthday, so unless he was spouting witticisms as a young boy, then the notion about history rhyming was in print long before Mark Twain began to dispense creatively crafted aphorisms, which means that he almost certainly did not originate this notion.) The rendering of this notion that appeared in *The Christian Remembrancer* reads, "History repeats her tale unconsciously, and goes off in a mystic rhyme; ages are prototypes of other ages, and the winding course of time brings us round to the same spot again." The statement about history rhyming rather than repeating is a clever way of expressing the fact that many events in history bear strong resemblance to earlier events. Whoever rightfully deserves credit for originating this notion, it applies in a fascinating way to a person who is familiar to virtually everyone, namely Rosa Parks. Almost everyone knows about Rosa Parks and is familiar with what she did to earn her place in history, how, on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, she refused to relinquish her seat on a bus to a white person and move further into the back of the bus where blacks were required to sit. More than 100 years before Rosa Parks took a stand by not relinquishing her seat, a person who is Rosa Parks' historical rhyme took a similar stand. What's more, this incident, which happened on July 16, 1854, occurred almost 900 miles northeast of Montgomery, Alabama in a place that was never part of the Confederacy.

The person whose actions foreshadowed those of Rosa Parks is Elizabeth Jennings. She was born into a family of free blacks in New York City. Elizabeth's exact birthdate is unknown, and there is even conflicting information about the year of her birth. Based on available information she was born between 1826 and 1830. Her father was Thomas Jennings, who was a prominent member of the black community in New York City. He was a tailor who received a patent for a dry cleaning process and is reputedly the first African-American to receive a U.S. patent. Elizabeth's mother was also named Elizabeth, and the elder Elizabeth was a vocal advocate for the rights of blacks, particularly black women. She is best known for an 1837 speech that she delivered, which was titled "On the Cultivation of Black Women's Minds." In this speech, she counseled her listeners that failure to nurture the intellect will cause blacks to remain in a lower social status than whites. In light of the parents who raised her, the younger Elizabeth received a thorough education and grew up in an environment of notable accomplishments and of strenuous advocacy for civil rights.

Like her parents, Elizabeth was very active in her church. When Elizabeth was in her mid-20s she was the organist at her church, and on Sunday, July 16, 1854 she was running late for church services. Elizabeth and a friend named Sarah Adams were at the corner of Pearl and Chatham Streets when they hailed a streetcar. Streetcars in New York City at that time were horse-drawn vehicles that ran on rails, and only a few streetcars were designated for "colored persons." Because Elizabeth was running late, she did not wait for a streetcar that displayed a sign indicating that she was allowed to ride in the car. She simply boarded the first car that arrived, and as it happened that streetcar was for whites only. After Elizabeth and her friend boarded the car, the conductor ordered the two women off.

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Rosa Parks cont.

Elizabeth refused to leave the car, and the conductor then attempted to physically remove her. According to Elizabeth's account of the incident, she clung to a window frame, and after the conductor pried her hand off the frame, she grabbed the conductor's coat and held it tightly.

The conductor told the driver to drive quickly, pick up no more passengers, and continue driving until they saw a police officer. When an officer was spotted, he joined the fray, and with his assistance Elizabeth was removed from the streetcar. Elizabeth later claimed that the officer "pushed me down, and tauntingly told me to get redress if I could."

Elizabeth and her parents were not the type to quietly tolerate the kind of treatment that Elizabeth received that day, and with or without the added incentive provided by the police officer's remark, they did not hesitate to seek redress. A letter that Elizabeth wrote describing the incident was read at her church, and once news of the incident began to spread, there was outrage within the black community. Elizabeth's letter was published by Frederick Douglass in his newspaper and by Horace Greeley in the *New-York Tribune*. With her parents' urging and support, Elizabeth sued the streetcar company. Elizabeth's father engaged the services of a white law firm, and Elizabeth was represented in court by the firm's junior partner, Chester A. Arthur, who later in his life held a position of greater authority than junior partner in a law firm. Elizabeth won her case against the streetcar company, and the court awarded her \$250. Presiding Judge William Rockwell stated that the streetcar company was "liable for the acts of their agents, whether committed carelessly and negligently, or willfully and maliciously." The judge also declared, in a less than complimentary statement, "Colored persons if sober, well behaved and free from disease, had the same rights as others and could neither be excluded by any rules of the Company, nor by force or violence." It is unclear if the judge felt that this statement also applied to whites, or if inebriated, misbehaving, diseased whites were allowed to ride on streetcars. Nevertheless, the streetcar company ended its policy of segregated cars on the day following the court's ruling, and this ruling led to all streetcar companies in New York City putting an end to segregated cars within several years.

Not much is known about Elizabeth Jennings' life after the incident on the streetcar. She married Charles Graham, and they had a son who was named Thomas, the same name as Elizabeth's father. Their son died at the age of one in 1863 and was laid to rest in Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn during the time that New York City was recovering from the draft riots. Elizabeth's husband, Charles, died five years later. Elizabeth had been a teacher most of her adult life, and she eventually established a kindergarten for black children in her home. Elizabeth Jennings Graham died on June 5, 1901 and is buried in Cypress Hills Cemetery with her husband and son. One of Elizabeth's legacies is that an area along Park Row in New York City is now named Elizabeth Jennings Place. The movement which led to this was initiated in 2007 by grade school students in New York City.

In an article which appeared in 1976 in *American Quarterly*, historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich wrote, "Well-behaved women seldom make history." This statement certainly applies to Elizabeth Jennings and Rosa Parks, both of whom made history by disobeying rules. When Elizabeth Jennings refused to leave a streetcar in New York City, she had no way of knowing that 101 years later a black woman would engage in a similar defiant act on a bus almost 900 miles away in Montgomery, Alabama. civil rights paradigm and resonates through all ages.

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Elizabeth Jennings was simply running late and needed to board a streetcar as soon as possible, but she ended up making an important if little-known contribution to civil rights. Rosa Parks' act of defiance became much more widely known, and it would not be surprising if Rosa Parks did not know about Elizabeth Jennings, although it is irrelevant whether Rosa Parks knew about Elizabeth and was motivated by Elizabeth's actions. What is important is that both women chose to take a stand against unjust policies and in so doing contributed to the eradication of those policies. In a larger sense, by taking a stand against discrimination on a streetcar in New York City and on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, these two women helped to make indisputably clear that any policy of racial or ethnic discrimination is irreconcilable with our country's defining principle that "all men are created equal." Elizabeth Jennings and Rosa Parks, two misbehaving women who were simply trying to use public transportation to go where they needed to go, rode their acts of defiance into history. They were separated in time by a century, but they are forever linked in an inspiring historical rhyme that serves as a powerful civil rights paradigm and resonates through all ages.



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March 8 in the Civil War

By Dennis Keating

1862

Two significant battles occurred on this date:

Pea Ridge and Elkhorn Tavern, Arkansas

On the second day of this Western battle, Union forces drove Earl Van Dorn's Confederates off the battlefield, securing Missouri for the North.

Hampton Roads, Virginia

On the first day of this historic naval battle, the CSS Virginia (formerly the Merrimac) attacked wooden U.S. naval vessels, only to have the Monitor arrive the next day, producing a standoff of the Ironclads.

1864

Lincoln and Grant

U.S. Grant arrived in Washington City and at the White House in the East Room he and President Abraham Lincoln met for the first time.

Wilson's 1865 Raid

By Dennis Keating

On March 22, 1865, 13,480 Yankee cavalry in three divisions left their camps at Eastport, Alabama on the south shore of the Tennessee River for the biggest raid of the Civil War. Armed with Spencer carbines whose purchase for the expedition was arranged by its commander James H. Wilson, this corps would have devastating firepower as it aimed at the destruction of the South's remaining war manufacturing centers in the deep South of the states of Alabama and Georgia. Wilson had successfully argued with George Thomas for this campaign in the waning weeks of the Civil War.

Wilson spent the early part of the war in the East, including serving on George McClellan's staff at South Mountain and Antietam. He then went West and served as a staff officer for U.S. Grant in the Vicksburg and Chattanooga campaigns. Wilson became the youngest Union brigadier general. He was next assigned to the War Department as head of the Cavalry Bureau. In Spring, 1864, he took the field as commander of the Third Division of Phil Sheridan's Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac. His performance in the Wilderness and his Ream's Station raid south of Petersburg in June, 1864 were not auspicious but Grant sent him back West in October, 1864 and he commanded ably at the battles of Franklin and Nashville in the destruction of Hood's Army of Tennessee.

Originally scheduled to depart on March 5, Wilson's army was delayed by heavy rains. It also was without its fourth division for lack of enough horses. Wilson's cavalry consisted of 23 regiments, including the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Ohio. Notable among its commanders were First Division commander Edward McCook, one of the many Fighting McCooks of Ohio, Fourth Division Commander Emory Upton, best known for his assault at Spotsylvania, and Fred Benteen, commander of the 10th Missouri, best known for his role in the defeat of the 7th Cavalry at the battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

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Wilson's Raid cont.

Opposed to this huge Union cavalry force were the small, scattered Confederate forces in Mississippi and Alabama under the command of Nathan Bedford Forrest, the "Wizard of the Saddle" and the nemesis of William Tecumseh Sherman and other Union commanders.

As Wilson pushed through Northern Alabama without resistance, Forrest desperately tried to concentrate what few forces were available while the Confederacy also attempted to defend the port of Mobile against the attack of Edward R.S. Canby, who had been reinforced by another of Wilson's cavalry divisions.

On April 1, 1865, Wilson's army was met by Forrest at the village of Ebenezer Church, north of Selma, the first target of Wilson's raid. Forrest, without two of his forces, could not hold back the flood of charging Union cavalry. Wounded by a Union officer, Forrest personally killed a Yankee for the last time.

Selma, Alabama was a center of Alabama's iron works region and produced a wide variety of weapons for the Confederate armies and navy, along with food from Alabama's agricultural black belt. It was lightly defended with extensive but some unfinished defensive works. On April 2, the wounded Forrest conferred with Richard Taylor, the department commander, as he prepared to entrain for Mississippi. To defend the city, Forrest had only a few thousand troops and those civilians that he gathered in the city. Against them was arrayed Wilson's army (but without John Croxton's brigade detached to destroy the facilities at Tuscaloosa, which became "lost" and did not rejoin Wilson until April 29).

Late on April 2, Wilson launched his attack and overwhelmed the undermanned Confederate defenses. 2,700 Confederates were captured. Wilson's casualties were 46 killed, including the commander of the 4th Ohio, and 300 wounded, including the commander of the Second Division. Forrest escaped but only a few days later he met Wilson, ostensibly to discuss a prisoner exchange (but Wilson was attempting to determine the whereabouts of Croxton's "lost" force). Wilson wrote in his diary: "Forrest did not impress me as I expected-neither as large, dignified nor striking as I expected-seemed embarrassed". Forrest told Wilson: "Well, General, you have beaten me badly, and for the first time I am compelled to make such an acknowledgment". Forrest's attempt to defend Selma was his last Civil War battle.

Wilson's men followed their victory with the destruction of the Confederacy's war plants (as they had previously done en-route to the city). Wilson's army then headed east to capture Montgomery, the original capital of the Confederacy, which surrendered without a fight on April 10. Wilson then headed for the rail center of West Point, Georgia, which was captured on April 16 and hundreds of locomotives and rail cars were destroyed. That same night, Wilson's troops also successfully routed the defenders of Columbus, Georgia in the last battle of the Civil War east of the Mississippi (and a week after Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia). Like Selma, Columbus was a major war manufacturing center. While his army again wrecked Confederate plants, Wilson stayed in the home of an avowed opponent of secession.

The next night, Wilson's army headed for Macon, the state's new capital following Sherman's capture of Milledgeville on his March to the Sea. Its commander, having learned of the Sherman-Johnson truce in North Carolina, surrendered on April 20 along with four other Confederate generals.

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Wilson's raid cont.

This effectively ended Wilson's Raid. Over the course of two months, his corps had killed and wounded over 1,000 enemy soldiers and captured 6,820 Confederates, while losing 99 killed and 598 wounded. His troops seized 288 artillery pieces and almost one hundred thousand stand of arms. His path of industrial destruction included seven wrecked iron works, seven foundries, seven machine shops, two rolling mills, five collieries, thirteen factories, four niter works, three arsenals, one naval yard, and one powder magazine. They also destroyed five steamboats and the railroad stock plus many miles of tracks. And they destroyed huge amounts of military supplies.

Wilson's troops capped this saga with the capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his fleeing refugee party on May 10 and then Andersonville prison camp commander Henry Wirz. Following the Civil War, Wilson served in the Corps of Engineers until 1870. He later served in Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Spanish American War and in China during the Boxer Rebellion in 1901.

Post-Script:

In 2000, a monument of Nathan Bedford Forrest honoring his 1865 defense of the city was unveiled by the Friends of Forrest at a Civil War museum in Selma. After many protests, the monument was moved to a cemetery. On March 12, 2012, the head of Forrest was stolen and never recovered. In May, 2015, the Friends of Forrest and the United Daughters of the Confederacy erected a new bust of Forrest. After a dispute over restoring the monument, the Selma City Council by a vote of 5-3 had deeded an acre in the cemetery to the Daughters of the Confederacy, as well as settling a lawsuit over the delay in permitting construction of the new monument.

Reference:

James Pickett Jones. *Yankee Blitzkrieg: Wilson's Raid through Alabama and Georgia*. 1976.

ATTENTION HUGE, HUGE BOOK SALE



Our Roundtable has been the recipient of several boxes of books which we will be offering for sale at the March meeting. Plan to come early and do some shopping. Paul Burkholder has had these boxes stored at his house for several months and has probably been told not to bring them back so please help him out. Proceeds will go into our general fund.

SAVE THE DATE ! July 13th at The Grove , 425 N Commons Blvd,

Mayfield, OH 44143

“Decapitating the Union:” an illustrated lecture on the Confederate conspiracy to assassinate the chief officers of the American government.” by John Fazio

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JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEETING



March 8, 2017

Program: William Henry Seward & Civil War Diplomacy William Vodrey

Drinks @ 6pm, Dinner @ 6:30 Judson Manor

East 107th St & Chester

BECAUSE YOU ASKED.....

In response to several requests, beginning in December, our meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m.
Please mark your calendars accordingly.

Jean



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