

BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

MEETING – March 5, 2019

“ONCE LOST AND NOW FOUND: THE LONG LOST GETTYSBURG ADDRESS ”

SPEAKER – David Dixon

Historian David Dixon furnished a smorgasbord of felicitous facts about Charles Anderson’s Gettysburg address. Anderson’s background — brother of **the** Major Anderson who surrendered Ft. Sumter, nephew of that William Clark who explored the Louisiana Purchase, son of **that** Anderson who served as the Marquis de Lafayette’s Aide-de-Camp in the Revolution, Charles himself an Ohio state assemblyman and, briefly, state governor, a wounded Civil War colonel of very short career, a Lincoln antagonist (who would have rather seen the president paddling a canoe up Niagara Falls with a feather than support him), and a slave-owning abolitionist and escapee from a Confederate prison camp — spelled hero to the Union.

For Dixon, regardless of the voluminous personal history, Anderson’s key in the Civil War lay in his place among the intentional triumvirate of Gettysburg Cemetery speakers: Everett, Lincoln, Anderson. But for us at BCWRT the impetus for Dixon’s March speech, his enthusiasm and fascination for his listeners, blossomed in the serendipity of unearthing a plethora of dusty boxes with the long-lost third Gettysburg address.

The hook of obscure discovery drew us to Dixon’s story and his enthusiasm carried us through his hour. Unafraid of hundreds of eyes watching his every move, Dixon abandoned hiding behind the lectern and paced casually across the stage, stroking his chin, waving an arm (knocking off his earpiece microphone), unapologetic for his casual approach, in fact, apparently oblivious to his presentation. Historians generally know their history, but that doesn’t make them good speakers. Dixon’s studied informality with his tieless shirt and loose sport coat offered a smokescreen hiding a polished presenter. His speech seeming more conversation than prepared thoughts for a thousand nonetheless took us into his vision of Charles Anderson and especially into Dixon’s happy fortune of the treasures accompanying the third Gettysburg address.

As fellow co-conspirators, we felt Dixon's delight over Anderson's archive. Not only over thirty pages of lost Gettysburg speech emerged, but also personal letters, diaries, even books filled with personal marginalia. The dusty boxes held far more than paper; they formed transparent windows into the mind of a man who walked with famed leaders from Lincoln to Robert E. Lee. Knowing even how a man reacted to what he read fed Dixon's glee as a biographer. In some ways with his constant tendency to give speeches against secession in the midst of the Texas secession meetings, his move to the South at the beginning of revolt, his antipathy for Lincoln, his unlucky multiple wounds, Anderson may not have been a hero for the modern day, however, Dixon's enthusiasm piqued our interest.

Hero or heel, Anderson lived a colorful life. Dixon's explanation of why he was tapped to speak at Gettysburg comes down to canny Republican politics. Everett argued reconciliation for the secessionist South and the country. Lincoln gave us inspiration, a vision of what our country is in the future. Anderson, Lieutenant-Governor of the always key presidential election state of Ohio, spoke for the past, a voice of toughness on the rebels who had wounded him and his country. The contrast, with the addition of the third and long-missing voice from the three viewpoints, could not have been greater.

By Jim Medeiron