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A Walk in the Sun

The Literary Club

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James R. Adams, Member

It was hot that day ... humid ... not a long walk ... its path crossed a wide open gradually rising field ... ending with a crest on which stood a low stone wall ... today the surrounding farming countryside looks as it might have back ...

... well, you may have identified this place, a place of a particular walk 158 years ago ... 'twasn't a walk in the park but the climax of a horrific battle in America's Civil War, a battle which killed and wounded almost **50,000 Union and Confederate soldiers.**

At Gettysburg, Robert E. Lee was defeated, never again able to assume the role of aggressor. Instead, 'til the end of the War, he was compelled to undertake a defensive strategy ... ending in Lee's trenches outside Petersburg and from there to Appomattox, all the while chased by Generals Grant and Sheridan and the entire Union Army of the Potomac.

Sheridan won the chase and placed his troops and cannons directly in front of Lee, blocking further running away. Lee then surrendered.

The Civil War was highly personal - Mary Lincoln had relatives on both sides. A Club member may have had a relative on that field in 1863. As you walk, you may even hear their voices. We might feel a personal relationship with President Abraham Lincoln ... particularly so after Gettysburg ... for there, he summarized the nature of the Civil War ...

[This nation was] **“dedicated to the proposition that all men are equal”** ... [this Battle was necessary that] **“that nation might live”** ... that men were called to complete] **“unfinished work”** ... [so that this nation might find a] **“new birth of freedom”** ... [and that those who we honor at this place] **“shall not have died in vain”** [but by undertaking this task, to assure us this nation would be governed] **“by the people, for the people”** [so that] **“it shall not perish from the earth.”**

In his renowned autobiography, “Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant” (1895), in the first sentence of his chapter titled, “Conclusion”, he writes, **“The cause of the great War of Rebellion against the United States will have to be attributed to slavery.”**

In her 2016 annotation of “Personal Memoirs”, the author, a professor at West Point, writes,

“The canonization of Southern heroes ... served to cloth with sentimental ritual the programmatic social and political injustice of Jim Crow.”

The author continues,

“The battles being fought today in the media and on the streets of American cities and towns over Confederate commemoration are the reckoning for more than a century long perversion of Civil War memory.”

In 1861, the United States faced several states which had withdrawn from the United States of America to continue a culture supported on the backs of slaves.

They chose to defend that right by waging war against the United States of America, their intention being to kill as many Northern soldiers as necessary. They were traitors in doing so.

Tonight, I bring a few comments of four aspects of this horrific engagement in Pennsylvania.

1. Why Gettysburg?
2. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlin A professor of rhetoric defending the left flank of the Union line?

3. General Longstreet and Pickett's Charge across that open field.
4. Then what happened?

I have included sometimes graphic words as spoken by the person at the scene at the time and contemporaneous nicknames of some the generals.

I

Why Gettysburg?

General Lee had invaded the North once before but was turned back at Antietam.

One argument for Lee to try it again was that time was running out for the South to gain formal recognition by Great Britain or France.

Another reason was the fact that the North's population was about twice the size of the South, so as the War continued, the North could replace soldiers, particularly officers, faster than the South.

Another problem was Vicksburg, which appeared to be lost. It was surrounded, and it did not look like Ulysses "**Unconditional Surrender**" Grant was going to give up, pull out and go back North.

Even faced with a Vicksburg defeat, Lee believed a Confederate victory in this invasion might force the United States to negotiate a peaceful solution quelling recent vocal demand of the North's Copperheads.

Invasion of the North was a complicated matter. Armies still had to depend on its cavalry for timely information for movements of the opposing army. That responsibility at Gettysburg fell to the South's General J.E.B. Stuart who then commanded the largest cavalry unit of the Civil War.

Outside Gettysburg, the Union Army and Lee's Army simply bumped into each other. Lee didn't know if this was the main body of the Union troops. Fighting escalated with the continuing arrival of the troops from both sides.

... the South undertook an aggressive attack and the Union forces started to "**skedaddle,**" the word used for what happened at First Bull Run in 1861 in which the Union Army simply ran away abandoning the field to the South.

The South undertook an aggressive effort to push the Union troops right through Gettysburg's streets. Did the Union troops, again, simply run away? Yes, they did, but this time there was a difference – they didn't abandon the field to the South.

When the Union troops stopped running outside town, it found itself in a secure defensive position on Cemetery Ridge outside Gettysburg. The Ridge was anchored by hills at both the extreme right and left of the Union's line, its center facing that wide open field.

Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was gathering and setting up a line at the same time ... directly opposite the Union forces.

I wonder if the Union troops, looking across that field were thinking, **"We dare ya' ... com'on ... just try ta' take this hill ... we dare 'ya."**

That night, Longstreet argued hard with Lee about staying at Gettysburg insisting Lee, a better defender than aggressor, should maneuver his Army to seek a better defensive position forcing Meade to be the aggressor ... but Lee won the argument.

The Battle of Gettysburg was an exceptionally bloody affair so it's important to have a feeling for the state of the medical treatment of the wounded. It's not often included in any detail in the history books, my professors skipped that subject.

For the North and South, the early stages of the War from the medical viewpoint were rough, to say the least, for medicine was learning the ways to treat the wounded in the field. This, while at the same time, warfare was modernizing its ability to kill. Take for example, the Minie' ball. This shot cut raw **"messy wounds"** starting with its large entry point then **"tearing up the soldier's inner-organs."**

One writing noted that medical treatment of the soldiers at Gettysburg was at the end of medicine's **"Middle Ages."**

Physicians complained about blood and **"pus-stained"** surgical coats. The field hospital was seen as **"hell on earth"**.

If you were hit by a cannon ball, you died, or at best suffered a crushed arm or leg or hand; whatever was left had to be removed quickly, doing so cleanly

probably wasn't common. A cannon ball would hit the ground and bounce along sometimes striking as many as forty men before it stopped.

Civil War amputation was the major medical procedure; three out of four surgeries were amputations, 3 of 4. An amputation took ten minutes, more often less. Arms and legs were cut off with large butcher knives and saws and thrown in the corner creating large piles of limbs. Surgeons kept using the same knives and saws with little pause between removals. Photographs of the amputations themselves and the results are **"ghastly"**. Walt Whitman, a nurse during the Civil War, commented on the scene at one medical station of a **"heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, etc."** He also said that many of the amputations he saw **"had to be done over again."**

At that time, canister shells were key to stopping massed charging troops. Its effective range was 400 yards, and its blast was like a 12-gauge shotgun blast. More devastating was the double canister, simply the firing of two canisters simultaneously, usually at *extremely* close range, with added pieces of whatever was available ... nails, scrap iron, pipes, stones, lead, wire.

The Battle concluded the evening of the 3rd with the failure of Pickett's Charge. A day or so later, the South's wagon train carrying the wounded left the battlefield headed back to Virginia.

Lee's wagon train of the wounded had to be a horrific sight. Someone standing on the road of the passing wagons would hear the moans and cries of **Lee's 8,000** wounded soldiers crowded into this seventeen-mile-long wagon train, **8000** on a train **17** miles long, some said **20**.

Imagine the herky-jerky motions of those wagons, the roughness of unpaved roads, the bouncing and tossing inflicting additional anguish for most were bearing only field dressings. Imagine gangrene's odors, the moaning cries, perhaps the dropping of the newly dead ... the agony worsening ...the day it left, it rained several days ... a lot ... night and day.

The victorious General Meade didn't chase Lee's retreating army. This angered President Lincoln and almost cost Meade his newly obtained position as the new General of the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln was talked out of it, saying, **"Our army held the war in the hallow of their hand and they could not close it."**

I'd like to believe my fantasy that if any of these three generals – Grant, Sherman, Sheridan - had been in Meade's shoes, they would have caught Lee before or during or shortly after his crossing the Potomac.

II

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Bowdoin, Class of 1851

I've long thought my second subject explains much about why the *ultimate* result of this battle was the start of the death of the Confederate States of America ... yes, it took two more years, but the fact is that the Confederacy was going to be crushed.

Our oldest son graduated from Bowdoin and during his school years, I paid more attention to Chamberlin's role.

Chamberlin, leader of the 20th Maine unit, like many others on that field was an untrained soldier, not a West Point graduate or Mexican War veteran. He had never previously engaged in a battle. He was just a guy, a professor of Rhetoric, Oratory and Modern Languages at Bowdoin. Chamberlin called the war a **"great adventure."**

Bowdoin didn't want its professor to go to war, so he told the college he was taking a **"two-year leave of absence"** to visit Europe. He went to the governor and secured a commission as a Lieutenant Colonel in the 20th Maine. The Governor offered him a commission as a full colonel, Chamberlin declined, saying **"No, I'll start a little lower and learn the business first."**

The Union army's line of defense on Cemetery Ridge is what someone called **"an upside-down fish-hook-like"** configuration.

The National Park Service recently undertook great efforts reviewing contemporary photographs, examination of drillings and excavations of this Battlefield, all for the purpose of bringing slopes of the hills, the stone wall and plantings back as close as possible to the way it looked in July 1863.

Envision the Union army's extreme left, the end of the line. It was wide open to Confederate attacks to roll up and flank much of the Union line, perhaps pushing Meade off his strong defensive site.

A Union officer inspecting the line the morning of July 2nd spotted this defect and the resulting wide-open rear of the Union position. Union troops were quickly moved to extend the line to cover it. He, Colonel Strong Vincent, **Harvard '59**, immediately placed the 20th Maine with Chamberlain in command at that point and the 20th Maine became the tip of the very end of the extreme left of the Union line. Twice, I've stood at that very point.

As Professor Chamberlain was moving the 20th into position, Vincent ordered our professor to defend that position ... to the last man ... no surrender, no retreat, no skedaddling.

Lee saw Vincent's and the 20th's movements to cover the exposure, so he ordered an all-out attack to turn the Union left flank. Just as the 20th was moving into position, Lee's Texans and Alabamians charged up that slight hill, ... right into the face of the 20th's line.

The 20th quickly received the full impact of several charges by the men in Gray ... some penetrated the 20th's line, the line thinned and weakened ... the carnage was thinning the ranks of both sides. Chamberlain frequently felt surrounded by the South, like **"wild whirlpools and eddies"**, troops using rifles as clubs, ammunition running out ... **"empty bullet cartridge boxes"** ... casualties mounting.

Half of the line of the 20th's defenders were going down, a late attack barely repulsed. It seemed the next attack would succeed breaching and collapsing the 20th Maine's line and opening the door of the South's cannon and gun into the backs of the full left flank of the Union's line.

At that moment, our professor saw that perhaps the Confederates were tiring. Maybe they had but one more attempt in them to take that hill. Most of the men of Maine were out of ammunition. Chamberlain feared they could not hold off another charge ... and as he wrote, all he could think of at that moment was his order to hold this position at all costs.

The moment of truth for the Union Army at Gettysburg had arrived ...its outcome in large measure in the hands of our professor of rhetoric.

Chamberlain saw the Alabamans and Texans coming, and seeing no other option, and drawing his saber, shouted, **“Fix Bayonets”** and immediately, not even awaiting the shouting of the order to charge, the much-outnumbered surviving men of the 20th Maine, many without ammunition, on their own, crashed down that slope into the very faces of those charging Alabamans and Texans.

These men of Maine hit the enemy **“with a roar and a wild yell”** flinging themselves hard into the attacking troops. The Confederates were caught by surprise, the melee descending into primitive hand-to-hand combat. Some of the Texans and Alabamans were throwing down their arms, giving up **“in wild confusion.”** As the line of Blue charged, their direction bent slightly to the right pushing the retreating Confederates across the front of the main Union Lines above the fray on the crest of Cemetery Ridge. the 20th Maine looked as though it was moving as **“a great gate upon a post.”**

Years later, Chamberlin wrote about this explosive clash ...

“The two lines met and broke and mingled ... increasing fury ... cuts and thrusts, grappling and wrestling ... around me more of an enemy than of my own men ... gaps opening, closing ... with sharp convulsive energy ...all around, a strange, mingled roar, shouts of defiance, rally, desperation ... gasping prayers, snatches of Sabbath songs ... men torn and broken, staggering, creeping, quivering on the earth and dead faces with strangely fixed eyes”

The attacks ended, the 20th, prevailing. The Union left had not given way.

What was left of Chamberlin’s 20th Maine? Well, for **“resting purposes”**, those soldiers still mobile were moved quickly to the left center of the Union line right behind General **Old Fuss and Feathers** Winfield Hancock’s unit which was stationed directly in the front line facing that wide open field. The next day, the 3rd, General Pickett brought thousands of men across that field right into the center of Hancock’s unit which felt the brunt of Pickett’s Charge.

For his actions on the 2nd, Chamberlain received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Just a short aside about Joshua Lawrence Chamberlin. He continued with the 20th Maine participating in a host of other engagements. He was wounded at Petersburg while leading a charge, shot clear through both hips nicking organs as the Minie' ball passed through. He was wounded so grievously "The New York Times" published his obituary. In March 1865, just back in action, he was wounded again, and New York newspapers reprinted his obituary. Somehow, he recovered.

III

Longstreet and Pickett's Charge

General James **Bull of the Woods** Longstreet spent the evening and most of the night of the 2nd arguing with Lee trying to talk Lee out of ordering General George Pickett's charge. Unfortunately for him, Pickett's nickname was **Goat**.

And it was Longstreet who had to give the order to start the South's walk across the field.

General J. E. B. **Blinky** Stuart finally arrived the evening of the Second – *the 2nd!* – only just in time for the very final preparations for the next day. On arrival, the gentile General Lee took Blinky to the woodshed. No one else was present. Neither ever spoke nor wrote of what was said.

At dawn of the third, not giving up the argument, Longstreet started to move troops around to Meade's right. Noting this, Lee promptly reversed that order and ordered Longstreet to prepare Pickett for the assault.

This open field was around 1000 yards wide depending where one measured. An old low stone wall ran across the top of ridge.

Pickett men were to be preceded by a two-hour Confederate artillery barrage, a "**critical element of the assault.**"

It failed. Many of the shells harmlessly past over the front-line four deep Union troops laying behind that stone wall.

The barrage also had to be shortened since Lee had not ordered enough artillery ammunition to sustain a bombardment of two hours. Moreover, there was a

serious portion of the Confederate ammunition which was defective and didn't explode.

There was even a delay to the launching of Pickett for no one told him to have his men in position by dawn, so the order of advancement did not come until around 2:00 in the afternoon giving the Union troops more time to prepare.

There were three fences which ran across that open field. Two were weak and didn't present any delay ... they were simply pushed over.

About 400 yards from the Union line, the third was encountered, higher and more substantial. Pickett's attacking troops had to stop and climb over. This became a large problem ... to begin with, it was closer to the Union lines and couldn't be simply pushed over. Pickett's units had to stop and under fire climb over, bunching up in the process, carrying their clumsy ten-pound rifles with bayonets attached.

Union cannons were directly in front of the forward marching Confederates who were climbing over that last fence. They were met by a raft of Union cannon blasting grapeshot and canister across an ever-decreasing range of fire.

It was said by those who were there that the grapeshot and canister blasts produced vivid sounds of **"moans"** at the moment of impact.

At that point, to make matters worse, Union troops were flanking both sides of the attacking men enabling the Union soldiers to fire repeatedly into the charging Confederates ... the Confederates still had to proceed dozens and dozens of yards to reach that low stone wall.

The men in Gray continued forward. By count, 375 Union cannon were located that day on the crest of that slight hill fired blast-after-blast of grapeshot and canister into the very faces of the attacking Confederates.

The South's General Lewis Armistead, known as **"Lothario,"** for his abilities of seduction, breached that low stone wall and kept moving forward. From the start of Pickett's Charge, Lothario had led his men from the front of the Confederate line while most led from the rear, the usual custom. Waving his sword with his hat still stuck on his sword so all could follow, shouting his men forward, as he crossed that stone wall, he was screaming, **"Give 'em cold steel boys!"**

He and his men were the only ones to breach the Union line. That point was marked as **The Angle**. It was said, **“The Virginians fought with desperation, cool and courageous, until surrounded ... [out of ammunition] finding stones to hurl at the Yankees.”**

This center of the Line became one massive brawl of **“rifle fire, double canister, bayonets and fists”** ... but there were no Confederate soldiers to secure the breach ... the Confederates waivered. All Confederates who did breach were killed by grapeshot and canister, General Lothario Armistead by **“three bullets in the face.”** The Union line was closing.

Today, this spot is marked as **The High-Water Mark of the Confederacy**.

Pickett’s men slowly started to drift away and start the long walk back receiving active steady fire of gun and cannon into their backs, the Union forces shouting **“Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg”** as payback for the South’s similar shouts at the Union troops failing to reach solid Confederate lines at the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Lee was beaten. He’d lost. The Union’s battle line had not collapsed. Of the almost 13,000 troops of Pickett’s advance, **half** were casualties.

Pickett’s action report afterwards was **“so bitter”** Lee ordered him to destroy it. A copy has never been found.

On the 4th or 5th, and continuing thereafter, the wagon train of wounded moved that 17-mile-long load carrying 8,000 wounded.

In July 1913, on the **50th anniversary of the Battle**, the last reunion of *all* Civil War veterans took place at Gettysburg ... 53,407 attended. Chamberlin was deathly ill and could not attend, 6 months later he died of his wounds. The climax of the affair was an opportunity for these veterans again to walk across that open field on a hot July afternoon. It’s unclear how many were veterans of Gettysburg and how far these 90-year-old gentlemen actually walked. One comment made by a Union veteran at the stone wall that day was that he saw the South approaching with **“canes and crutches,”** not guns and bayonets. There is a photo taken at this reunion of several soldiers reaching across that low stone wall and shaking hands. Emotions were high, and it is said that as the men in Gray approached the wall, the Union men could not stand the emotions being

generated and somehow, they crossed the wall and joined hands with the men in Gray in mutual respect.

IV

Then what happened?

a.

... with this ... the fate of the Confederacy was sealed ...

Several bloody battles and engagements pushed Lee south to Petersburg.

Following his defeat there, Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia was pushed west toward Appomattox, aggressively pursued by Grant's Army of the Potomac and General Phil Sheridan's unit.

But **Little Billy** Sheridan's Cavalry and his cannon won the race and beat Lee to Appomattox and greeted Lee the next morning ringed around the top of a hill which surrounded Lee. That ring around included Wilbur McClean's home.

Just a couple words about Sheridan. He was 5'3" tall, a graduate of West Point and acted as would a 5'3" soldier. Lincoln said, **"... his neck wasn't long enough to hang him"** and his arms so long, **"... if his ankles itched, he could scratch them without bending over."** His keystone accomplishment was his laying waste to 400 square miles of the long-time **"Breadbasket of the Confederacy"**, the Shenandoah Valley, where Little Billy gave birth to warfare's scorched earth policy, brought to perfection by General William Tecumseh Sherman, to his friends, **Cump**. He's also known as the **"first modern"** general.

Back to Appomattox ... and facing this loop of cannon and Union troops, with the arrival of Grant and the Army of the Potomac, the loop closed, Lee finally surrendered that morning.

The hastily written surrender document was signed in the front parlor of Mr. McLean's home. He had moved with his family to this spot for the sake of safety because the first battle of the Civil War, First Bull Run, had taken place in his front yard.

At Appomattox, a messenger simply knocked on Mr. McLean's front door and asked if the Union troops could borrow his home to receive Lee's surrender.

Seeing Sheridan's cannon and Grant's massed Army of the Potomac, Mr. McClean, **"reluctantly agreed."**

Palm Sunday ... Grant and Lee met in the front parlor chatting as if meeting at a wedding reception. Lee hesitated and called Grant's attention to the serious business at hand. Lincoln and Grant had agreed upon the terms of surrender ... lay down your arms and battle flags, and go home as free men as citizens, keep your horses and mules for Spring planting, and yes, Grant knew Lee's army had no food, so Grant provided 25,000 rations. Lee tendered his sword, but Grant refused it.

The Civil War was over.

It has been said that by its terms and intentions, Lincoln and Grant had chosen **"reconciliation over retribution."** The author of a 2016 biography of Grant said, Grant was known as **"hard-war warrior"** [but this day, he offered a] **"magnanimous peace"**.

Leaving Mr. McClean's front parlor, Grant and Lee walked to the porch and as Lee mounted Traveler, Grant tipped his hat as a mark of respect, Lee returning the gesture, all the while the Union generals were inside stripping most of McClean's furniture as souvenirs. Sheridan grabbed a table from the parlor and **"tossed it"** to General Custer and told him to, **"Bring it back."** Custer's wife kept it. Somehow, sometime, it found its way to the Smithsonian where it now resides maybe the only surviving piece of furniture this souvenir hunt.

A noise of celebration rose from the Union troops, Grant immediately ordered all celebration to stop, saying, **"The war is over; the rebels are our countrymen again"** and another source quoted Grant as saying, **"We do not want to exalt over their downfall."**

In accordance with the solemnity of the surrender of the General Lee, Grant gave General Chamberlin the high honor of receiving the formal surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. General J. B. Gordon led the surviving Confederate troops to surrender to Chamberlin and present the stacking of arms and delivery of the Confederate's battle flags and ribbons.

Envision Gordon leading the Confederate troops down the road between rows of Chamberlin's 20th Maine, other Union troops standing at attention. In

Chamberlin's words, Gordon's men appeared **"defeated, dragging, hungry, wounded, dirty ..."**.

As they approached Chamberlain, at a sign, the Union line snapped to attention, as Chamberlin, on his own, called and ordered shoulder arms. It was a salute in the Professor's words, seemingly **"not by enemies,"** but now together **"both citizens of the Union."**

Gordon returned Chamberlin's call. His men tightened ranks strengthening even more so the solemnity of the occasion.

At that command, that moment, Gordon's horse reared in front of Chamberlin. Gordon drew his saber touching sword to boot, again in Chamberlin's words, **"honor answering honor"**.

Later, Chamberlain wrote

"On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer nor word nor whisper of vain-glorying, nor motion of man standing again at the order, but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead."

b.

Jubilation was universal ... in the North.

It was over ... but what happened to the 4 million slaves freed by the Civil War?

The feelings of joy were followed by some positive results of Reconstruction. Some newly freed slaves were elected to the House Representatives and one to the Senate and many to state and local offices ... schools and other programs started.

But clouds of discontent were gathering. Gradually, there appeared groups of Southern night riders whose mission was intimidation ...the raids became more frightful. Groups such as the Klu Klux Klan were emerging.

Restriction was becoming the focus, not reconstruction.

What was the cause of all this negativity?

History tells us the country was sick and tired of this bloody War and its programs of Reconstruction and wanted *nothing to do with anything associated with the Civil War*.

They were tired of the long-time inability of Congress to resolve issues arising before and after the War creating an atmosphere of perpetual deadlock, all aggravated by the deadlock of the presidential election of 1876.

There was anger addressed to Reconstruction itself, of course that feeling always ran throughout the South but now, this same feeling was emerging in the North.

The South was angry with the continued presence of Union troops.

The Republican Party sensed the days of being able to elect a president were in jeopardy given that no Southerner would thereafter vote Republican considering the party's leadership in the War itself and in Reconstruction.

People in general, businesses and elements of the government were more interested in aggressively expanding the development of the country's financial and heavy industries. Railroads were expanding everywhere – *except* in the South where the Union Armies had destroyed virtually all industries and most rail tracks using **“Sherman's neck-ties.”**

Attention of the citizenry was focused on the newly available vast areas of farmland in the western territories, the lure capped by discovery of gold and silver.

Somewhat surprising to me, there were people throughout the country who believed the country was on the verge of collapse, extreme perhaps.

With all these concerns just described ... could the country really be heading to another actual secession?

I've always been mystified by how all this happened. My American History professors were vague ... they were clear, however, that when the election of 1876 failed to elect a president, the citizenry's anger and anxiety, violence, increased.

At this point ... this much is certain: On election night, November 1875, Samuel Tilden won the popular vote, 4.3 million votes to Rutherford B. Hayes' 4 million

votes. The raw votes translated into Tilden's 184 Electoral college votes. 185 were needed to elect. Hayes' votes converted to 165 Electoral votes. A few days later, the voting results in several states appeared but were clouded by vociferous cries of fraud asserted by both Republicans and Democrats.

Between the November election and the end of President Grant's term of office in early March, the arguments had grown in number and intensity, but Congress had not settled the problem.

Then, it was suddenly resolved.

How so? ... but could it really be true there was some sort of a secret deal hammered out by back door, silent, dead-of-night pedestrian wheeling and dealing?

Well, yes, ... that's exactly what happened.

After debating for months and failing to act as Congress was charged to do, a committee was assembled *probably* by the House and Senate leadership to resolve the dispute a week or less before Grant's term ended. It was a secret committee. There was no press release.

Exactly who was and wasn't on the committee is unclear but there are many guesses. There were two known members, John Sherman, and Cincinnati Stanley Matthews who by the way with others had founded The Literary Club in 1849. Rutherford B. Hayes, Matthews' roommate at Kenyon College, around 1850 also became a Club member. It's certain a raft of active and aggressive assistance was provided through the nights by unknown persons – I suppose by those with the most political power.

The deal made and the official Electoral college votes results changed and, without more, Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio was promptly and secretly sworn in as the next president of the United States. This came within a day or so of the end of President Grant's term of office. Hayes was sworn in a second time at his formal inauguration ceremonies held shortly thereafter.

This weekend deal was known as the "Wormley Bargain," named for a meeting place, a hotel owned and managed by James Wormley, an African American who

“personally fought against increasing segregation after the Civil War.” Who participated is unknown ... there’s been a lot of guessing. One source said a **written pledge** was delivered by a

“... trusted Hayes’ aide” Charles Foster “to John Y. Brown, a Democrat from Kentucky and cemented a strange alliance between Hayes’ Ohio Republicans and Tilden’s southern Democrats.”

The nature of that “strange alliance” is not known but based on subsequent events, one can make a reasonable guess for a deal was soon made ... swapping Reconstruction for the American Presidency.

As one source said, **“the most spectacular act of injustice in American history.”**

Hayes was **“quickly stunned”** by the effect the deal had on the former slaves. He denied having prior knowledge of the deal but apparently some people say his papers say otherwise. Investigations were undertaken subsequently but Congress did nothing. A fist fight even broke out in the Senate over the deal. But, again, Congress did nothing ... it just gave up.

Hayes was dubbed **“Ruther**fraud**”** B. Hayes.

The Bargain was never reduced to writing. No notes were ever made or found. No participant ever wrote anything or spoke about the discussions and the deal. Historians have looked but posset no certainty of all the terms of the deal.

But the essential terms of the deal were obvious, electoral votes in exchange for an end to Reconstruction and removal of Union armed troops. The South paid in Electoral votes thereby receiving the right to govern 4,000,000 people pretty much as the South wished. The North received the presidency ... a true *quid quo pro*.

The South’s Jim Crow restrictions had started right after the end of the Civil War— you are all familiar with them ultimately including testing to vote, accumulation of years of unpaid poll taxes, second- and third-class education facilities,

restrictions on availability of public parks and recreational businesses, hotels, restaurants, segregated housing, and more.

By the 20th Century, Jim Crow reached maturity.

When you visit Battlefield, the gun and cannon and the shouts and screams of the Blue and Gray appear silent ... But listen ... Listen for the voices of those where were there, those who paid the final price... What are they saying?

Maybe, they ask,

**“Was the 1877 Wormley Bargain
the intended consequence of their sacrifice?”**

*

A Postscript.

It would not be surprising if a Member of The Literary Club would be able to point to a relative who served at Gettysburg. Jonathan Adams is the closest I come. Jonathan was a private in Alabama’s Thirty-first Regiment. He was captured at Chickamauga, held prisoner, and according to his prison records, he escaped but was recaptured. The “Commission of Exchange” dated in 1865, the original of which I have, states that for his travels home to Alabama, he was given **“two days rations.”**

He returned to Alabama and in 1866, his wife gave birth to a son named James Lafayette Adams and in 1866, he moved to Germania, Arkansas.

With the anti-German hysteria of the Great War, the Germania name was changed to “Vimy Ridge” in recognition of an Allied victory at Vimy Ridge France in the Great War.

Son James Lafayette Adams lived for 85 years. He operated a sawmill in Vimy Ridge. He was known throughout his life as “Fate.” He operated a sawmill in Vimy Ridge and a photograph of that sawmill with workers on horseback surrounding a very large tree trunk lashed to a wagon being pulled by two mules.

I have three other photographs of Fate: one shows him sitting on his horse holding a pump action rifle; another, again on his horse this time holding his Bible.

There is a third photograph. Included are Fate, *his son* Clovis, and *his son* James R. Adams.

Yes, I am the great-grandson of Jonathan Adams, 31st Alabama Regiment, CSA.

So I say again ... walk Gettysburg's fields ... walk across that wide open field ... the Park Service has mowed a clean path through the tall grass ... do it on a nice hot summer day ... I can promise you won't be hit by canister and grapeshot ...

When you get to that low stone wall ... stop ... listen ...

What *are* the voices saying to you?

