THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FEB. 2017 VOL. 38 #7

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MESSAGE FROM CCWRT PRESIDENT: AN UNPOPULAR PRESIDENT?

In 2007 I visited Washington D.C. and had occasion to take a tour of the monuments by night. It was just after dusk when I began to climb the stairs of the lighted Lincoln Memorial. There was a small chorus of children sitting on the steps singing *We Shall Overcome*. As we approached the top of the steps in front of the statue of Lincoln they began to sing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. It was by far the most emotional moment I've had in my Civil War travels.

It's no secret to anyone that Abraham Lincoln is my idol, the person I most admire from the pages of our country's history. I, along with many others, have come to revere him for who he was as well as what he accomplished. Would we be a nation today if Lincoln hadn't preserved the Union?

While watching the events of the past month on television, I was reminded that we look at Lincoln today through the filter of those who have sought to perpetuate the notion that Lincoln was almost infallible and have forgotten that he, too, had his share of people who sought to destroy him and all he stood for. His decisions were not always popular and, in fact, not always correct.

Many fought against Lincoln on issues such as habeas corpus, the draft, keeping McClellan, prisoner exchange, prolonging a war that seemed endless and, oh yes, emancipation. Two of his best generals were defined as either crazy or a butcher. His own party in 1864 was planning another convention to remove Lincoln from the ticket as he ran for re-election. Even as he led the Union to victory, refusing to back down on the premise that a state could secede from the Union, he was described as "weak as water" and not having the qualities fit for his position. He was scoffed at for his lack of education and his appearance.

And that was in the North! It doesn't even take into consideration how people in the South felt about him. In fact, some still revile him. Upon entering a book store in Virginia, I saw a variety of anti-Lincoln books on a table in the front of the store.

Thankfully history has been kind to Abraham Lincoln. He is recognized for his great leadership during our country's most divisive period. He is praised for his intellect and political savvy. He is thought to be one of our greatest presidents. We have a holiday to celebrate his birthday. He made a short speech in a Pennsylvania town which has been memorized by millions of school children. And there is that magnificent monument in Washington D.C. where children can come to sing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and people like me can come to say "thank you".

Jean

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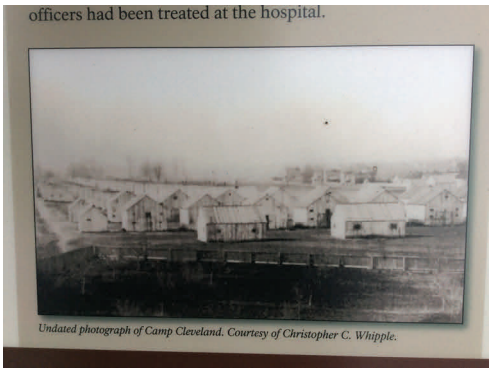
Whatever Happened to Camp Cleveland?
Paul Siedel


officers had been treated at the hospital.

Undated photograph of Camp Cleveland. Courtesy of Christopher C. Whipple.

The largest Civil War training camp in Northeast Ohio was Camp Cleveland, located in the Tremont neighborhood just to the south of downtown. Along with the U.S. General Hospital it covered approx. 80 acres and according to the Encyclopedia of Cleveland History eventually trained 15,230 U.S. troops. It also served as a transit camp for troops moving from one front to another and housed two groups of Confederate prisoners. Camp Cleveland was however the only west side facility. Camps Wood, Taylor, Tod and Brown were located along Woodland Ave. between E 55 and Ontario St. This is now the route of the Innerbelt. Along with the training camp the U.S. Army General Hospital was located just to the east of the site on what today is W. 5th St. One of the men affiliated with the hospital was Dr. George Miller Sternberg. He is considered by some to be the Father of American Bacteriology. Sternberg was in the U.S. Army and served in the Battles of Bull Run, Gaines Mill and Malvern Hill. He was later assigned to the Cleveland Hospital and was here from May 1864 to July 1865 when the Camp closed. In later years he documented the cause of Yellow Fever and Malaria and confirmed the roles of bacilli in both T.B and Typhoid Fever. In 1886 he was instrumental in establishing the Army Medical School known today as Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. Dr. Sternberg died in 1915 and is buried at Arlington.

One of the most commonly asked questions on the Civil War Tour of Cleveland is: "Are there any buildings from Camp Cleveland left". The answer is not on their original site. In 1865 the Camp was closed and the Government was in a hurry to demobilize and downsize. Several auctions were held to liquidate the various camps. In November 1865 an auction was held at Camp Cleveland and the "Cleveland Leader" advertised such items as " spades, rakes, garden tools of all kinds, horses, working harnesses, boots, shoes, and leather good of all types, roles of telegraph wire, cook stoves, wash boilers, frying pans and kitchen supplies of various types." The list goes on and on. Camp Cleveland was systematically disassembled, the property was returned to the lessor Mr. Silas Stone who sold it to a group of investors, and they had the property surveyed off into building lots.
When the Camp was liquidated many of the barracks were sold to private individuals and therefore ,although it has never been researched, many probably ended up as tool sheds or chicken coops on various properties. In that case there is no telling if there are indeed any left today. I personally don't believe it's probable, but as we know nothing is impossible.

This Month:

As residents of the Greater Cleveland area, I wonder how many of us have visited the many sites related to Cleveland's role in the Civil War or know what Cleveland was like during that period. Paul Seidel will present a glimpse into what it was like to live in Cleveland during that period and how our city contributed to the conflict. Paul is a retired teacher and a member of the Northeast Ohio Civil War Roundtable., as well as the CCWRT. NEXT MONTH…

Seward and Civil War Diplomacy with William Vodrey

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Monticello's Tortuous and Tortured Odyssey to Preservation

I remember when my wife, Karen, and I were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit Paris, France in 2001. From the window in our hotel room we could see Notre Dame Cathedral. On the Sunday during our stay there, we attended Mass at Notre Dame. I remember that during the Mass, I looked around the inside of Notre Dame and thought, "I'm celebrating Mass in a place where Mass has been celebrated for over 800 years." Here in the U.S., when we visit places in our country's history, these places are typically no more than two or three centuries old. Moreover, too many of the historic places in our country no longer exist, even though these places are not close in age to places like Notre Dame. Civil War enthusiasts are all too familiar with this tragic reality as it pertains to Civil War battlefields. One historic site in the U.S. that came perilously close to passing out of existence is Monticello, the home of the person who authored the document that defines our nation. For those of our generation, who have lived all our lives with places such as Mount Vernon, Peacefield, and The Hermitage existing as public monuments to great individuals from our nation's past, it is hard to fathom that Monticello was once privately owned by someone who did not value the historical significance of the estate and cared not to preserve the place for public visitation. Imagine the shock and horror of contemporary Americans were they to read the notice which appeared in a newspaper on July 12, 1828 under the heading "*Valuable Lands for Sale*" and which read in part, "The Lands of the Estate of THOMAS JEFFERSON, deceased...will be offered on the premises, if not previously sold privately, on Monday, the 22d of September next...Likewise MONTICELLO...will be offered on the premises, if not previously sold privately, on Monday, the 29th of September next."

When Thomas Jefferson died in 1826, Monticello was inherited by his only surviving child, Martha Jefferson Randolph. Thomas Jefferson was not, to say the least, adept at managing his finances, and the large debt that he left to his daughter forced her to sell Monticello. As the sale notice in the newspaper indicated, "The sale being made for the payment of the testator's debts, the desire to sell is sincere." Martha hoped to receive a sale price of $20,000 in an auction of Monticello, but the final price fell far short of her expectations. In August 1831 Monticello was purchased for $7,000 by James Barclay, a Charlottesville druggist. Because of the deep financial problems of Jefferson's heirs, there was little choice but to accept the offer. At the time of the purchase, Monticello was in a state of disrepair. Someone who visited Monticello in 1824 (two years before the death of Thomas Jefferson) said that the house was "old and going to decay" and that the grounds were "slovenly." For the Jefferson family, the sale of Monticello was heartbreaking, but the sale was considered a necessity due to the large debts that had been accrued by Thomas Jefferson. One of Jefferson's granddaughters, Mary Jefferson Randolph, wrote in a letter, "(I)t was a dreadful sacrifice but the debts are pressing, the place going to ruin." After James Barclay purchased Monticello, he not only failed to bring an end to the dilapidation of the house, he contributed greatly to its continuation. Barclay, who has been described as eccentric and was called a "mad man" by Martha Jefferson Randolph in a letter to her daughter, purchased Monticello with the idea of using it for a silkworm farm. He put silkworms in the conservatory, cut down many of the trees on the estate, and did nothing to repair any of the damage to the house that was present at the time of purchase or that occurred thereafter.

While Monticello was gradually going to ruin, a man named Uriah P. Levy, who was an ardent admirer of Thomas Jefferson, was looking for a way to commemorate the author of the Declaration of Independence. (A short biography of Uriah Levy can be found in the December 2016 history brief. This history brief was included in *The Charger* of January 2017 and is also posted on the Roundtable web site.) Levy had a long career in the U.S. Navy and went to France in 1832 to study naval tactics. While in France, Levy met with the Marquis de Lafayette and told the Marquis of his plan to build a

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statue of Thomas Jefferson, which would be given to the U.S. government for display in the U.S. Capitol. Levy felt that the absence of a statue of Jefferson in the Capitol was a serious omission, because, as Levy wrote, a statue of Jefferson was warranted in that place due to Jefferson's "determined stand on the side of religious liberty." Levy's strong feelings about Jefferson's contributions to religious liberty may have arisen from the antisemitism that Levy experienced during his career in the navy. The Marquis de Lafayette lent Levy a portrait of Jefferson, and this portrait was used by a renowned French sculptor to produce a statue of Thomas Jefferson. In March 1834, two months before the Marquis died, Levy presented this statue to Congress, and the statue still stands in the rotunda of the Capitol.

When Uriah Levy met with the Marquis de Lafayette, the Marquis reputedly asked Levy about Jefferson's daughter, Martha, and also asked about Monticello. Levy answered that he had no knowledge about either Jefferson's daughter or about Monticello, but he promised to find out after his return to the U.S. Soon after Levy returned, he travelled to Monticello and was deeply saddened by the dilapidated house that he saw. He immediately began to make preparations to purchase Monticello for the purpose of restoring the house and grounds. Fortunately for Levy, James Barclay's bizarre scheme of using Monticello for a silkworm farm proved disastrous, and Barclay was anxious to sell the property. In April 1834, only weeks after Levy had presented the statue of Jefferson to Congress, Levy and Barclay agreed on a sale price of $2,700 for Monticello, a price that was far less than the price that Barclay had paid for the property three years earlier. One confounding issue with the sale was the amount of land that was still part of the estate, because Barclay had sold much of the land, and it was unclear how much land remained as part of the property. After complicated legal proceedings, the sale was settled in May 1836, and Levy took possession of the house and 218 acres of land. At its greatest extent during Jefferson's life, the estate contained about 5,000 acres of land. Levy, who was wealthy from real estate dealings in New York City, began to fund a restoration of Monticello. Efforts were begun to clean and repair the house and to restore the grounds.

In 1860 Uriah Levy hired a man named Joel Wheeler to be the caretaker at Monticello. Because of his duties in the navy, Levy spent only short periods at Monticello and needed someone as overseer. Initially Wheeler shared Levy's goal of restoring Monticello to its earlier state. But as time went on Wheeler no longer endeavored to renovate Monticello and actually had a hand in furthering its decline. Uriah Levy died in 1862, and his death was followed by a prolonged and contentious litigation regarding Levy's will. In addition, with the outbreak of the Civil War, Monticello fell into Confederate territory. Because the property was owned by a Northerner, the Confederate government seized Monticello. Joel Wheeler continued to live at Monticello and continued to contribute to its physical decline. Wheeler allowed pigs to forage throughout the grounds, and he used the basement of the house as a stable for cattle. Many of the windows were broken, and the shutters sagged on the outside walls. Wheeler's failure to tend to the upkeep of the house led to the gutters falling off and the roof leaking. Wheeler's disinterest in maintaining Monticello may have stemmed from the fact that he was no longer being paid by the Levy family during the time that Uriah Levy's will was being contested. Wheeler charged groups a fee to use the house and grounds for parties, which caused further damage to the property, in part due to the taking of souvenirs by many who visited the estate. One woman who visited Monticello in the summer of 1864 wrote, "The place was once very pretty, but it has gone to ruin now…The parlour retains but little of its former elegance, the ball room is on the second floor, and has a thousand names scratched over the walls."

Eventually the Confederate government, which had seized Monticello, put the property up for sale at auction. On November 17, 1864 Monticello was purchased by Benjamin Franklin Ficklin for $80,500, paid for in Confederate currency. Ficklin was someone who had an adventurous nature. He had attended the Virginia Military Institute prior to the Civil War, but his grades were poor. He was expelled from VMI, not because of his grades, but because of his pranks,

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which included burying the superintendent's boots in snow, painting the superintendent's horse with stripes to resemble a zebra, firing a blank charge from a howitzer at a cadet barracks, which resulted in a large amount of broken glass, and placing buckets of water over a door that led to a faculty room and smearing the door handle with "a quantity of filth."

Following his expulsion, Ficklin enlisted in the army and served in the Mexican-American War, after which he managed to gain readmission to VMI, from which he graduated in 1849, 48th in a class of 51. He spent much of his time after graduation in the West and had a role in the creation of the Pony Express. When the Civil War began, Ficklin sided with his native Virginia. He participated in the charge up Malvern Hill in the Seven Days battles, but quickly turned his efforts to becoming a blockade runner. In this capacity he operated three ships and amassed sufficient profit to purchase Monticello. Ficklin did not obtain title to Monticello until March 17, 1865, a few weeks before Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox. In April 1865 Ficklin was arrested in Washington, because he was suspected of being involved in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The person who reported Ficklin to the authorities said that Ficklin had "the appearance of a refined pirate." He spent a few months in prison, but was released without ever being tried. Ficklin returned to the West and operated a mail delivery service. On March 10, 1871, nearly six years after officially taking title to Monticello, Ficklin was at a dinner at the Willard Hotel in Washington when a jagged fishbone caught in his throat. A physician attempted to remove the fishbone, but cut an artery, and Ficklin died by drowning in his own blood. Ficklin's ownership of Monticello has never been recognized by the U.S. government.

After the Civil War, the Levy family was able to regain ownership of Monticello, but Uriah Levy's will was still in dispute. The litigation continued for 17 years after Uriah Levy's death in 1862. During this time, which included part of the Civil War, Monticello was subject to the neglect of Joel Wheeler. A visitor to Monticello in 1870 described the house as "moss-covered, dilapidated, and criminally neglected." A photograph of Monticello taken sometime around 1870 shows the decrepit condition of the house. Wheeler, who had become senile, repulsed every effort of the Levy family to have him removed as Monticello's caretaker. Finally, on March 20, 1879, when Monticello was sold at public auction for $10,500, a definitive owner assumed oversight of the property. This person was Jefferson Monroe Levy, the nephew of Uriah Levy. Because of a lawsuit, Jefferson Levy was not able to officially take ownership until May 1, 1882.

Jefferson Levy was extremely wealthy. Like his uncle, Uriah, Jefferson Levy made his fortune in New York real estate. He never married, was one of the most prominent individuals in Tammany Hall, and served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives between 1899 and 1915. Jefferson Levy was able to purchase an additional 500 acres of land to add to the 218 acres that were part of the Monticello property at the time that it was purchased by Uriah Levy. After an intense struggle of several years, Jefferson Levy was able to remove Joel Wheeler, who was replaced by Thomas L. Rhodes, a man who not only had skillful abilities as an engineer and architect, but also had as strong a devotion to restoring Monticello as Jefferson Levy did. With Rhodes' skills and Levy's funds, Monticello was painstakingly restored. In contrast to his uncle, Uriah, who spent little time at Monticello due in part to his naval duties, Jefferson Levy lived there at least four months a year. By 1900 most of the restoration was completed, and Monticello was in better condition than at any time since 1809.

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Around this time, many visitors began to come to Monticello, as many as 60 a day, and a movement began to make Monticello a public facility. One particular outspoken proponent of this was a woman named Maud Littleton, who was originally from Texas, but was married to Congressman Martin Littleton of Brooklyn. After a visit to Monticello, Maud Littleton proclaimed emphatically that she did not feel during her visit that she was in the home of Thomas Jefferson, because in her opinion the house had not been renovated in a way that made it a monument to the author of the Declaration of Independence. Maud Littleton then began an aggressive and confrontational campaign to pry Monticello from Jefferson Levy for use as a public facility. She lobbied Congress to intervene and purchase Monticello. She published a pamphlet in which she described the history of Monticello in a way that made an emotional appeal to the public for her goal of making Monticello a public monument to Thomas Jefferson. She accused Jefferson Levy of being selfish and of denying the American people a monument to one of the most important Founding Fathers. She even went so far as to cite the will of Uriah Levy, in which he had bequeathed Monticello to "the People of the United States." Maud Littleton's nationalistic campaign and pamphlet, which were suffused with veiled antisemitism, were intended to pressure Jefferson Levy to sell Monticello.

One person who was swayed by Maud Littleton's campaign was William Jennings Bryan, who at that time was secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson and who suggested that Monticello could be a summer retreat for the president. Jefferson Levy claimed to like this idea and agreed to sell Monticello to the U.S. government for $500,000, which Levy asserted was half the value of the property. In spite of public support for this proposal, Congress did not approve the sale. Then World War I intervened, and the issue fell out of the limelight. After World War I, Jefferson Levy became more interested in selling

Monticello, primarily due to financial difficulties in the post-war depression, and in 1923 he sold Monticello for his $500,000 asking price to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation (now the Thomas Jefferson Foundation), which was incorporated for the purpose of purchasing, preserving, and operating Monticello. The following year Jefferson Levy died. With the sale of Monticello to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Uriah Levy's dream of restoring Monticello and preserving it as a public monument to Thomas Jefferson became a reality.

To paraphrase a line from the song "Big Yellow Taxi," "They paved history and put up a parking lot." If not for the efforts of Uriah Levy and his nephew, Jefferson Levy, this atrocious fate may have befallen Monticello, which might have been replaced by something grotesque like the Little Mountain Shopping Mall. The often dispassionate advance of progress is certainly one aspect of the U.S. that has allowed our country to remain great. However, there are places where preservation is a higher priority than progress, and Monticello clearly qualifies as one of these places. Uriah Levy and Jefferson Levy thought that this is so. More importantly, they saw to it that it happened.

David Carino

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JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

Feb. 8, 2017

Program: Cleveland's Role in the Civil War Paul Siedel

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