

# The Charger

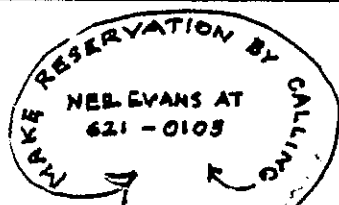
## CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P.O. BOX 5028 • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

MARCH 1984

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 2

232nd Meeting



DATE: Tuesday, March 13

PLACE: The Hermit Club

SPEAKER: Dennis E. Frye, NHP Historian  
at Harpers Ferry

SUBJECT: "The Guns of Harpers Ferry"

TIME: Preliminaries 6:00 P.m. Dinner 7:00 P.M.

Our speaker was born in Pleasant Valley, Maryland, only six miles from Harpers Ferry. He graduated from Shepherd College, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, on the banks of the Potomac River; summa cum laude in 1979 and was named as Shepherd's "Outstanding History Major."

At the age of 13 Dennis began service with the National Park Service as a volunteer at Antietam Battlefield and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. In 1979 he became the permanent fulltime historian there, his present position. He is Past President of the Hagerstown and Harpers Ferry Civil War Round Tables. Right now he is in the process of researching and writing a multi-volume series on Harpers Ferry during the Civil War.

Dennis Frye's talk on the guns of Harpers Ferry will focus on the following: **HARPERS FERRY** **FREDERICK**

Why was Harpers Ferry selected for the location of a United States armory and arsenal? What evolutionary developments in firearms manufacturing occurred at Harpers Ferry from 1800 to 1860? What impacts did the smallarms' evolution have on military strategy and tactics? Why were efficiency and modern production techniques at the Harpers Ferry plants always lagging behind the sister armory at Springfield? and finally, what impact did civil war have on gun manufacturing at Harpers Ferry?

Several actual weapons will be shown to illustrate the answers to the above questions.



## CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

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 444, Vermillion, Ohio 44089  
 216-967-5971  
 Dues: \$20 Sept. to Sept.—  
 Non-resident members \$10

## Last Month's Meeting

Thirty-seven out of the thirty-nine who attended the February meeting had called in their reservations - keep it up!

Your editor was gratified and flattered by the number who came up after the "Lincoln and Magic" talk to tell how much they had enjoyed it. Especially pleasant was a letter from Bill Schlesinger saying nice things like "entertaining and outstanding program"..... "both the discussion of Lincoln and the disclosure of the tricks he enjoyed..... we all saw through them of course."

Several unplanned incidents tickled my funny-bone; Doc Wilson's loud beeper going off just as I was introduced, and just as I said I was about to tell one of Lincoln's dirty stories, Neil Evans got up and opened a window.

\* \* \* \*

## HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

The Harp of Erin flew on the green flags over every major battlefield during the Civil War.

Two Massachusetts regiments were pure Irish, as were three others in New England, four in New York, and two each from Pennsylvania and Indiana.

Brigades and regiments came from Ohio and Illinois.

New York's Irish Brigade (under Thomas F. Meagher), one of the most famous, was virtually wiped out at the Battle of Fredericksburg - much of the blood spilled by a corresponding brigade of Confederate Irishmen.

## Civil War Smiles by STU CRAMER

"All promising a quick victory raise your hands."



*Stu Cramer*  
(19)

# FRED GILL'S BOOK REVIEW

Russell, William Howard. My Diary North and South, Edited by Fletcher Pratt, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954.

This is an obscure book. It would probably not make it on a list of the hundred best books on the Civil War. It contains no great pronouncements. It carries no great strategical or practical military information; it paints no far reaching political picture, but in its clear small way it is an important Civil War book.

Russell was a correspondent for the London Times and responsible for the professional coverage of the events in the Crimea. His editors, smelling the coming dust-up in America, sent him here early in 1861. Because of his sure feeling for what really happened in the disaster at Bull Run and the stories about it in London, he became a bad boy to Stanton. When Russell applied for a pass to cover the upcoming Peninsula campaign, Stanton turned him down.

Having no recourse, Russell returned to London in 1862, but his one year journey in North and South produced some of the most acute pictures of people, their attitudes and conditions you can read anywhere. It is surprisingly good writing compared to the fancy stilted style of so many writers of the time.

Some of Russell's descriptions of people he met and little comments about them are delights. Take this of Governor Pettus of Mississippi... .."dropping a portentous plug of tobacco just outside the spittoon, with the air of a man who wished to show you he could have hit the center if he liked."

Through introductions by British consuls and diplomats Russell met most of the prominent people in the cities he visited, and he reveals a bitterness on both sides that is hard to imagine today. People in the North spoke ruefully or angrily about those Americans who had gone South and become enemies. Those in the South, especially those who had always been there, were more rancorous and lost no opportunity to express their violent enmity. Russell reported all this to his editors and his stories in the London Times, widely read by both sides, did little to soothe anybody.

In Russell's vignettes of plantation life the contrast of squalor of the slave cabins and the masters' richly furnished mansions rub

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## Book Review Continued

together with a rasping not felt by the masters. Russell balances the mush and fat-back he sees in a slave cabin with this: "Three juleps before breakfast of grilled fowl, prawns, eggs and ham, fish from New Orleans, pot-  
 ted salmon from England, preserved meats from France, claret, iced water, coffee, tea, varieties of hominy and African vegetable preparations." Maybe it wasn't States Rights at all that motivated some of the Southrons. Maybe it was just the juleps and fancy foods.



The only place in Russell's stories where his scorn shows through is his descriptions of American cities, transportation, and hotels. Just read about the dust, the mud, the noise, the mosquitoes and assorted insects and you will see how far we have come. However, I wondered if London or Liverpool or English inns were very different.

We truly lost something, when Stanton booted Russell out. It would be great to have read Russell's dispatches sent to London on Antietam and Chickamauga had he been able to be there. Or to read his comments on Jackson, Sherman, Lee and Grant. I bet he would have loved Joshua Chamberlain.

If you can lay your hands on a copy of this book, do so, for you will get a better feeling of the people North and South, some querulous, some despairing, some on both sides just doing the best they could.

(Note: Thanks to Tom Koehl for springing this book on me.)

## A Confederate Flag in a South African Museum?

During July, August and September of 1863 the Alabama visited Cape Town and cruised off the coast of South Africa. One of her officers was killed ashore in a hunting accident and buried in a Dutch family cemetery under a tombstone which still exists. The ship coaled and was repaired there and sold the cargo from at least one prize through an agent in Cape Town, William Anderson. She then made a long voyage in the Indian Ocean and returned to the Cape on March 20, 1864. Meanwhile her "Stars and Bars" had been replaced by the new "Stainless Banner" adopted by the Confederate Navy, and Capt. Raphael Semmes gave one of the new flags to Confederate Agent Anderson in gratitude for his good work. On March 25 the Alabama left for Europe and was sunk by the USS Kearsarge off Cherbourg on June 19, 1864.

The flag given to William Anderson is now in the South African Cultural History Museum in Cape Town. Another memento of the Alabama's visits to the area is a song written in Afrikaans, "Daar kom die Alabama", which is still popular today.

Thanks to Col. Wm. Jones  
 C.W.R.T. of The District of Columbia

# SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



So desperate was the situation along Lee's sagging center toward the end of the second phase of the "single bloodiest day" at Antietam, that he contemplated making a counterattack back on his left, where in the cornfield, the West and East woods, and Dunkard Church had seen such fierce fighting. A reconnoitering Stonewall Jackson had found this impossible. Then a lull occurred, the thin gray line in the center, the colorbearers flourishing their tattered battle flags and hiding the weakness behind gestures of defiance, seemed to stall the bluecoats massed along the sunken road. But the lull was short-lived, for just then a new catastrophe threatened the harassed Confederate Commander. Burnside had finally crossed the bridge and his blue hordes were pouring down upon the Confederate right.

All day this threat had been held at bay by the delays of the petulant mutton-chopped Burnside, his lack of cooperation - plus a plucky 550 Georgians under Colonel Toombs in a commanding position; causing Little Napoleon McClellan to stamp and fret. Four blue divisions, quite scattered across the cornfields and hillocks, were slowly but surely converging upon the town of Sharpsburg, its streets now filled with wounded and disorganized rebels.

Then several things happened to lift the spirits of Robert E. Lee, whose small army had been so reduced that he not only had no reserves left, but couldn't even find enough men to pull from one end to bolster the threat to another, as he had been doing all day.

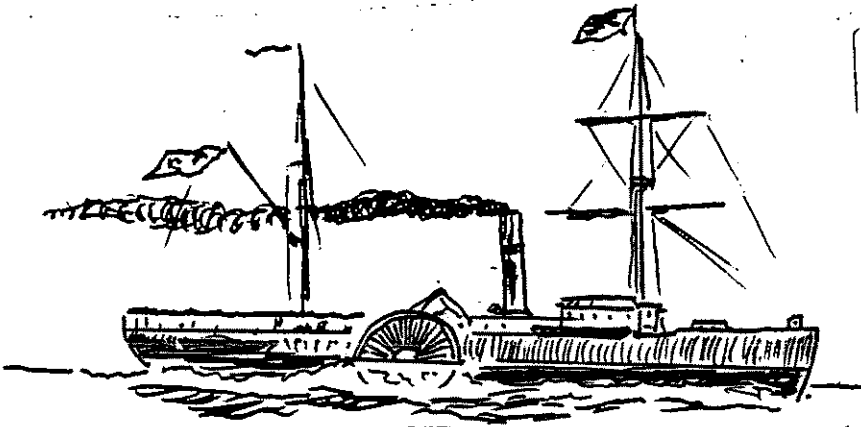
The first was a cloud of dust that appeared on the road coming up from

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# Whatever Happened to *The Star of the West*?

Star of the West was the unarmed U.S. steamer that was fired upon in Charleston Harbor by South Carolina troops on January 9, 1861, while attempting to take reinforcements and supplies to Major Anderson's command besieged in Ft. Sumter. This was the first overt act of the war.

Following this unsuccessful service she subsequently sailed on trans-



port duty to Indianola, Texas, where she was seized on April 17, 1861, by Texas volunteers under General Van Dorn. On May 4, in Confederate service, she became the St. Philip and was made the receiving ship of the C.S. Navy at New Orleans.

When Admiral Farragut successfully passed the forts of New Orleans, the St. Philip fled with other vessels up the Mississippi River taking refuge finally in the Yazoo. In March, 1863, when the Union ships of the Yazoo Pass expedition descended the windings of the Tallahatchie to attack Fort Pemberton, they found the river barricaded by the hull of a sunken ship, which was none other than the once famous Star of the West.

From Battles and Leaders Vol.I pp.625  
Civil War Dictionary pp. 793

Thanks to Brian Kowell

## SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN \* \* \* \*

Harpers Ferry. And as though to give this dust cloud time to materialize into the relieving force of A. P. Hill, a large portion of the attacking Union Corps ran out of ammunition, and had to stop and wait to be replaced by others.

Since early morning Powell Hill had been prodding his panting troops starting seventeen round-about miles away. The crash and rumble of gunfire had spurred them on. Jacket off because of the heat Hill rode in his red checkered shirt, often using his sword to persuade laggards onward.

With no periodic rests, always pressing forward, the stragglers left behind, about 3,000 of Hill's "Light Brigade" struck the flank of the renewed Union attack. Many of the Confederates had on new blue coats, foraged from the vast supplies captured at Harpers Ferry, which added to the general confusion of the milling Burnside forces, many of them green troops. The result: the Union surge gave way and turned back, scrambling for safety, with Hill's troops in hot pursuit, panic spreading through the unpinned blue lines. The day was saved for Lee. And what a sight that must have been - Ambrose Powell Hill coming on in the nick of time!

# Murder AT HARPERS FERRY

Some time ago member Tom Koehl sent in some excerpts from a book called Battleground Adventures in the Civil War by Clifton Johnson. Published in 1915, it consists of 55 chapters, each one an interview with some person who had gone through a notable event. The following is from Chapter One, entitled "The Storekeeper's Son at Harpers Ferry."

"I was eight years old then (1959). My father had a dry goods store here and I'd seen him talking to old John Brown in the store. Father even furnished Brown with a team to haul some supplies over to his house.

"Every working day at Harpers Ferry the armory bell rang twice each morning. There was a first bell which was sort of a warning to the men to get up and eat breakfast; it rang somewhere about half-past five, I reckon. There was a second bell along toward seven, and then the men were supposed to hustle into the armory and begin work. On the Monday of the raid the old bell-ringer, Tommy Darr, went to the armory at the usual time, and the raiders made him prisoner. So the bell didn't ring. By and by the workmen stirred out to see what the trouble was, but Brown had fellers at the gates, and they picked the men up and held 'em with the other prisoners.

"Soon after I got out of bed I heard shots and went out on the front porch. Our house wasn't far from the armory gates and I could see something of what was going on. One man had been killed in the night. He was a free negro who bunked at the Baltimore and Ohio depot and took the luggage back and forth between that depot and the one of the Shenandoah Railroad, an' his body laid out in fron' of the place all day.

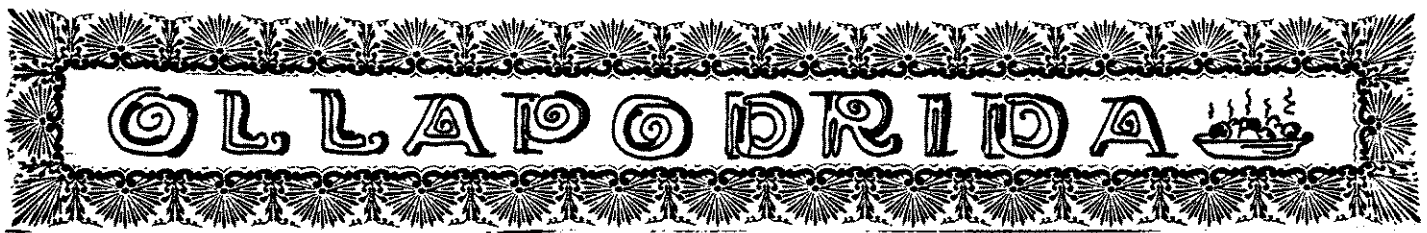
"The second man the raiders killed was my father. He walked down the street from the store to the corner, and a feller who had scrooched in behind the arsenal wall shot him. Father was a big, powerful, raw-boned Irishman, and he could have whipped all the men Brown had if they'd been unarmed. After he was shot he walked up the hill pretty near home. Then his strength failed, and some townspeople brought him into the house. He

died two hours later. The third man murdered by the raiders was Farmer Turner. I seen a black feller do the shootin'. Turner come into town on horseback, an' brought his gun, but he rode down too far. Jake Bagent was up the street in a silversmith shop, and pretty soon after Turner was killed, Jake saw this black feller at the arsenal peeking around the corner. So Jake poked his gun out the door and whacked him. Like everybody else, Jake had only an old gun that was made for hunting rabbits and other small game, but he had loaded it with a six-inch spike an' it got the negro in the neck.

"The U.S. Marines arrived on Tues. early morning, and while they was getting ready for business, one of the townsmen named Murphy had a few drinks on, decided to rush the engine house, but got nicked in the jaw."



*The engine house where  
crazy Brown, his 20 followers,  
and prisoners held up.*



When Confederate troops captured Chambersburg, Pa., in the heart of the German-Pennsylvania area, one of the first things the famished rebels demanded from the inhabitants was barrels of sauerkraut. The rebels knew that the "Sauerkraut Yankees" made tons of the delicious stuff. But the Chambersburgers could only shrug their shoulders. No one made or ate sauerkraut in the summertime. Sauerkraut was a cold-weather food, made in the first freeze of fall - strictly a fall-winter-early-spring dish. It was all gone by that July!

.... From reader Betty Johnson, Huron, Ohio

\* \* \* \* \*

Pennsylvania provided five full regiments of all-Germans to the Union Army. Many of these were the descendants of captured Hessians, who had preferred to stay in the United States after the Revolutionary War, and settled in what we know as "Pennsylvania Dutch" country.

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Here is an unconfirmed story that has appeared in several American folklore books:

In the days before the Civil War, Europe provided a new spectacular entertainment - the exhibition of balloonists. They were a rarity and attracted huge crowds. At least one of these performers made his way to New Orleans, and after one "free ascension" came down <sup>out of the heavens</sup> in a cotton field. The frightened slaves working the field fled into the woods, all but one venerable darky, too old and feeble to run. When the astronaut climbed out of his basket to ask his whereabouts, arrayed in silks and spangles like a circus performer, approached the old man, the latter bowed and said, "Good mawn'n Lawd Jesus, how's yer Paw?"

\* \* \* \* \*

The last letter that Abraham Lincoln wrote to his wife was sold at the Sotheby Parke Galleries in New York for \$48,000.00. The purchaser was Malcolm Forbes, publisher of Forbes Magazine. The letter was sent from General Grant's headquarters at City Point, Va., on April 2, 1965, less than a week before Robert E. Lee's surrender and 12 days before the assassination. It was signed, as all of his letters were, even to his wife, "A. Lincoln."

Thanks to the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table

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When Henry Everett Hale was Chaplain of the Senate, someone asked him, "Do you pray for the Senators, Dr. Hale?" "No," he replied, "I look at the Senators and pray for the country."