



The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P.O. Box 5786, Cleveland, Ohio 44101

MAY 1991

298th MEETING

VOL. 12 #9

SPECIAL EVENT:

LADIES NIGHT

DATE:

MAY 14, 1991

PLACE:

The Hermit Club

SUBJECT:

"Personal Reflections on the Surrender at Appomattox."

SPEAKERS:

General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee. George P. Dauler, L.I.S.W., has been presenting U.S. Grant programs since 1976. Mr. Dauler is a graduate of Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana; Case-Western Reserve University; and McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois. He is presently in private practice as an individual, marriage, and family therapist, and a therapist at Ravenwood Mental Health Center, Chardon, Ohio.

Bill Martin, L.I.S.W., is a graduate of Duke University Durham, N.C. Mr. Martin received a Masters Degree from Case-Western Reserve University. He is presently in private practice as an individual, marriage, and family therapist and is also employed by the Ravenwood Center Chardon, Ohio. During Mr. Martin's research into General Lee, his discovery of his kinship to the General reinforced his interest in portraying this Legendary American.

TIME:

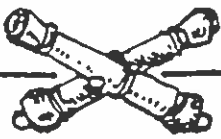
Drinks 6PM

Dinner 7PM

RESERVATIONS:

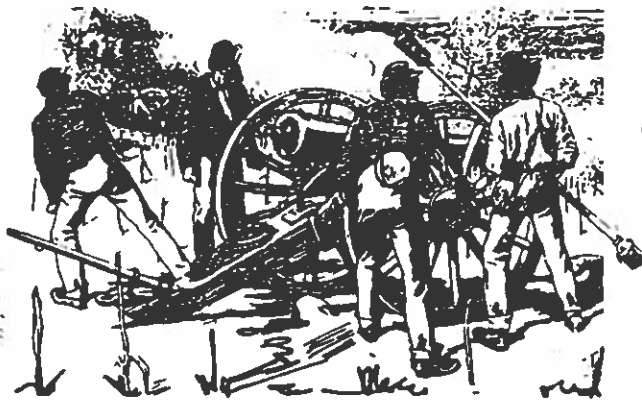
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CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

1957 * 1991



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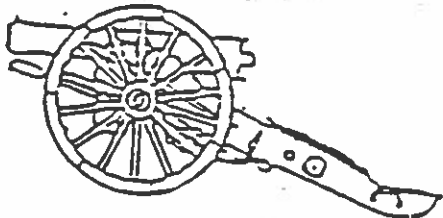
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Last Month's Meeting

Retired Brigadier General Bill Tidwell, author of the book Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln, spoke before 50plus members last month.

While researching the history of the Confederate Secret Service, the speaker uncovered startling documents which, when assembled, gave plausible evidence of a Confederate plan to overthrow the Union by capturing Lincoln. It was hoped that his capture would bring the war-weary Union forces to capitulation.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, the South set up a route between Washington and Richmond to transfer people and information. After the unsuccessful Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid in 1864 during which inflammatory Union documents were captured outlining the death or capture of Jeff Davis and his cabinet, the South decided to seize Lincoln, with John Wilkes Booth as the agent. When Booth's attempts failed, the Confederates intrigued instead to blow up the White House during a conference of Senoir Union officials. When this plot failed and Richmond fell, the ardent Booth pressed on and planned Lincoln's death.

Gen. Tidwell said records support the covert operation by Booth and the South. After the assassination of Lincoln, Booth fled southward by the Secret Service route where he was met at each stop by known Confederate agents. Southern officials however, realized the harshness that would be dealt if the North could establish their complicity with Booth. This they denied and covered up.

Gen. Tidwell's interpretation is totally new to the history of the assassination, and introduces new controversy to a topic that has never ceased to stimulate heated opinion.



More Than You Ever Wanted To Know About

Elizabeth "Crazy Bet" Van Lew

1818-
1900

For four full years of Civil War, Elizabeth Van Lew operated as a dedicated and resourceful Union spy. According to several Northern generals, she was the best one inside the Confederate Capitol.

Miss Van Lew was an unusual woman spy in that she used neither charm nor beauty to acquire and relay military information. She let her natural "oddness" and her open support as a Union sympathizer mask her operations. Only someone crazy would be so vocal in her political opinions and draw attention to her and still act as a spy. Richmonder residents came to call her "Crazy Bet", because she so foolishly and openly was attached to the North that most Richmonders considered her a silly, hysterical woman.

Elizabeth was prim and angular, nervous in movement. She had once been pretty, but by the outbreak of the War, she was 42 years old, never married, and considered an old maid. Tiny, with blondish, curly hair, high cheekbones and a sharp nose, Miss Van Lew went about with what was described as an "almost unearthly brilliance" in her blue eyes.

Elizabeth was born in Richmond in 1818. Her father, John Van Lew, was originally from Long Island. He was descended of a Colonial Dutch family. Her mother was the daughter of the Mayor of Philadelphia. John Van Lew had come to Richmond with his bride and after an unsuccessful venture in the commerce business, he became a successful and wealthy hardware dealer. Of the three children born to the Van Lews, Elizabeth was the least robust. She was tutored and given the best academic and social training. After school in Philadelphia she returned to Richmond and soon grew proud of her family's magnificent home on Church Hill, across from the church in which Patrick Henry called for Liberty or Death. (The house, though not designated a historical site, stands today.) Many great Americans and dignitaries from Europe visited the home --- Jenny Lind, Chief justice John Marshall, Swedish novelist Fredericka Bremer, and Edgar Allen Poe.

Elizabeth's father died in 1843 and her brother John took over the family business. The bond between Elizabeth and her mother, always close, grew stronger after her father's death.

In the late 1850's, Elizabeth freed all the family servants and slaves. (Most stayed on at their jobs.) Hearing that the children or relatives of the Van Lew slaves were to be sold, she bought and freed them also. After John Brown's raid and during Virginia's Secession Convention, Miss Lizzie started writing to Federal authorities telling them what was transpiring in Virginia's capital.

At the outbreak of Civil War, many Richmond ladies were recruited into making uniforms and clothes for the new Confederate troops. When a delegation asked Elizabeth and her mother to make shirts for the troops they refused, instead taking religious tracts to the camps. After Bull Run and hearing of the suffering in Libby Prison, Miss Lizzie went to



Lt. Todd, the Confederate prisonkeeper (and Mrs. Lincoln's half-brother) and asked to be hospital nurse. Turned down at this shocking offer, she pleaded her case to Secretary of Treasuery Memminger who gave her a note to Provost Marshal Winder. She later told a friend, "I can flatter almost anything out of old Winder; his personal vanity is so great." She told Winder, "Your hair would adorn the Temple of Janus. It looks out of place here." A few more such remarks and she got her pass. From then on she regularly called at the prisons --- carrying clothes, bedding, medicines in and information out which she sent to the Northern authorities. Her servants were always ready to carry dispatches through the lines in the soles of muddy brogans or in a basket of eggs, one of which was empty concealing a coded message.

This fraternization with the enemy caused much bitterness from her fellow citizens. When Confederate bitterness intensified against "Crazy Bet", she went directly to President Jefferson Davis to request protection. Not many spies for one government ask the head of the opposing government for aid. Mr. Davis politely referred her to Richmond's Mayor as her request fell under the jurisdiction of the local authorities not the national. Rebuffed and still fearing reprisals against her home, she learned that Lt. Todd was being transferred and that his replacement needed a place to stay for himself and his family. She offered the Captain rooms in her home and while he stayed there the Van Lews were left in peace to continue there activities.

"Crazy Bet's" spy network increased. She enlisted the help of slaves, farmers, shopkeepers, and factory workers. She had contacts in almost every department within the Confederate government. She enlisted Mary Elizabeth Bowser, a slim, intelligent slave that she had libertated, and, at "Crazy Bet's" urging, became a house servant for Jefferson Davis. Miss Lizzie now had a spy in the Confederate White House.

Many times Confederate detectives trailed her to get incriminating evidence to have her arrested. Her home was repeatedly searched. There were rumors of secret passages and hidden rooms. In February, 1864, Miss Van Lew help in a prison escape. (This wasn't her first time.) Colonel A.W. Rose led 108 Union officers through a tunnel under Libby in the most successful escape attempt in Richmond; 48 were recaptured and two drowned, but 59 eventually made it to Union lines. Many of the officers were given directions and maps to safe houses from Miss Van Lew. Among those successful was Colonel Abel Streight who was hidden by Miss Van Lew in her home for over a week until he could safely escape with her help.

By this time Elizabeth was in regular contact with Gen. Butler at Fort Monroe. He sent her a cipher, the key of which she hid in her watch case which she retained until her death. It was her information to Gen. Butler about the transfer of prisoners to the deep south that resulted in the ill-fated Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid on Richmond. Colonel Dahlgren (son of Rear Admiral Dahlgren) was killed in the raid. His body was searched--- an incriminating memorandum detailing the destruction of Richmond and the death of Jefferson Davis and his cabinet found--- a finger cut off for its ring, his artificial leg removed, and hastily buried in secret in Richmond. It wasn't secret to "Crazy Bet", however, as one of her "friends" had been in the cemetery that night and marked Dahlgren's grave. She arranged for his remains to be removed and placed in a new metal coffin, and reinterred on Robert Orrick's farm outside of town. When Dahlgren's grieving father asked Davis to return his son's remains and the request granted, Confederate soldiers dug and found nothing. Not until the end of the war was the mystery of Dahlgren's remains cleared up.

As General Grant moved closer to Richmond, Miss Van Lew's communications with the Union command reached a new peak. She forwarded messages almost daily. It was said that flowers from her garden often arrived fresh and dewy on Grant's breakfast table.



In April, when Richmond fell, Miss Lizzie ordered a big American flag that had been smuggled through the lines, to be raised above her house. This was the first Union flag to be unfurled again in the Confederate Capitol. An angry, howling mob soon gathered outside her home. "Crazy Bet" confronted the crowd pointing at and screaming their names and saying, "I know you and you and you. General Grant will be in town in an hour. You do one thing to my home, and all of yours will be burned before noon." Grant soon sent an aide-de-camp to protect her property and the home went undisturbed.

When General Grant finally arrived in Richmond, he paid Miss Van Lew a formal visit to thank her for all she had done. They had tea and talked pleasantly on the columned porch. "Crazy Bet" was very proud and for the rest of her life she kept Grant's calling card. Later Grant put his gratitude on paper, writing to her: "You have sent me the most valuable information received from Richmond during the war."

After the war, Elizabeth Van Lew continued to live in the mansion on Church hill, reviled by the citizens of Richmond. "No one will walk with us on the street," she wrote, "no one will go with us anywhere; and it grows worse and worse as the years roll on." When a little girl demurred against meeting a female "Yankee", Elizabeth bridled, "I'm not a Yankee." She maintained until her death that she was only a good Southerner, holding to an old Virginia tradition of opposition to human bondage. "She had been the loyal one," she said, "they the traitors...." She died in 1900 in abject poverty. A monument was placed on her grave and the inscription read:

She risked everything that is dear to
man --friends, fortune, comfort, health,
life itself, all for the one absorbing desire
of her heart --that slavery might be
abolished and the Union preserved.

It was erected by admirers from Boston.

- Spies for the Blue and Gray by Harnett T. Kane pp165-179
Encyclopedia of the Civil War by Patricia Faust
Spies, Scouts, and Raiders by Time Life Books pp86-89
General John H. Winder C.S.A. by Arch Fredric Blakey pp173



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CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE **FIELD TRIP** GETTYSBURG SEPTEMBER 20,21,22

- * Meet Friday afternoon in Gettysburg for check-in
- * Dinner at Historical Fairfield Inn on Friday night
- * Tour Battlefield on Saturday
- * Dinner Saturday night at Colonial Dobbin's House
- * Tour Battlefield on Sunday
- * For reservations contact Kevin Callahan 861-7200

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HUMAN INTEREST STORIES *of the* BATTLES AT GETTYSBURG

CONFEDERATE GIRL DIES WITH HUSBAND IN BATTLE



SOUTHERN GIRL, wife of a confederate soldier who participated in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, paid the supreme sacrifice with her gallant husband and was buried on the hillside at the high water mark of the Rebellion, both bodies draped with a Confederate flag embroidered with the hair of Virginia women. These few facts tell one of the most pathetic and tragic stories emanating from the three-days engagement at Gettysburg. It is a story so filled with pathos and tragedy as to move even the most stoic. It illustrates the splendid faith of the southern confederacy at the peak of its bloom and typifies all that is good together with the untarnished love of a united pair.

There is a story of a woman Confederate soldier who was killed and buried at Gettysburg. On the third day, after General Hancock was wounded, the command of the Second Corps was given to Brigadier General William Hays. On July 17, 1863, official reports show that General Hays made a report to his superior officer in which he stated that the number of dead buried at Gettysburg by his command from July 2 to July 5, was Union, 387; Southern, 1242. He also reported the burial of one female private in Confederate uniform.

The second story advances the theory that two women were killed at Gettysburg. It is only natural to presume that Union soldiers would have prized a Confederate flag too highly to use it for burial purposes. The second story is given as authentic.

She is unknown, yet her heroic deeds are recounted by many. She has also been remembered because of her young and innocent face, as seen in the ranks.

Captain A. R. Fitzhugh who told the incident first noticed the girl about dusk of the second day of the Battles at Gettysburg. The soldiers, worn out with the day's fighting, lay on the ground sleeping. Among them was the pale face of a boy, light-haired and innocent, pillowed on one arm. Beside the boy, a man sat, apparently guarding his companion. The two had been noticed before, but it was thought that they were father and son. The soldier slept on, unconscious with the exhaustion of battle. When a gray strip of light showed in the east, they stirred.

Later in the day the cannons boomed between Seminary Hill and the Highwater Mark. Pickett's famous charge was on, and so the advance is made, nearing General Meade's army on the hilltop, until the remnant of Pickett's force climbs the enemy's breastworks.

At that moment a confederate flag bearer is shot down. The next moment the flag is raised by the youth with the childish face. It floats for the barest possible instant and then comes down with its bearer, and husband and wife lay dead on the blood soaked ground. But for the sentiment of a few soldiers who found the bodies later and discovered the relationship, this story would never have come to light. The bodies were buried on the hillside.

SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



In his highly readable Memoire of the Confederate War of Independence, Heros Von Borcke, the Prussian hussar on Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's staff, tells an interesting incident involving Stonewall Jackson.

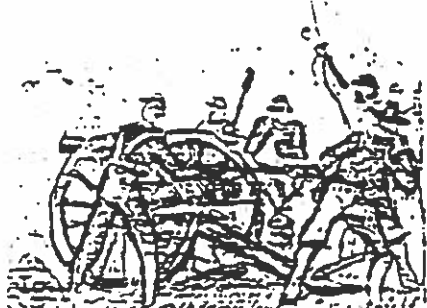
On October 12, 1862, Gen. Stuart sent Major Von Borcke to Gen. Jackson's camp to present him with a gift of a magnificent new coat. The coat had been secretly made by a Richmond tailor with gilt buttons, shiny facings, and gold lace on expensive gray woolen cloth.

Jackson was very pleased, thanked Von Borcke, and sent his thanks to Gen. Stuart when the coat was taken out of its box in Jackson's tent. He started to put it away but the Major insisted that he put it on so he could tell Stuart he'd seen it worn. Reluctantly, old Stonewall removed his weathered and gun-smoked stained coat, faded from the sun and rain and minus its buttons, which had been snipped off by patriotic ladies.

They went outside to have dinner and the staff was in ecstasy at the General's brilliant appearance. The Negro servant was so stunned he nearly dropped a tray. Rumors of the event spread rapidly, and Jackson's men came running to see the sight.

Submitted and illustrated by Stu Cramer





PRESERVATION REPORT by BILL STARK

Two more J.I. suits filed

by ELLEN TIETJEN

Two more legal actions involving the Johnson's Island development controversy were filed in Ottawa County Common Pleas Court last week.

Cleveland area archaeologist David Bush, a consultant for developer Carl Zipfel, is suing Civil War historian Roger Long, Port Clinton, and the Johnson's Island Historical Society for defamation of character.

And Zipfel has asked the court to consider as contempt of court the Danbury Township Trustees' most recent revoking of his dock permit on the island.

Bush Suit

Bush, a Ph.D. who has his own archaeological consulting firm in addition to working at Case Western Reserve University, claims that Long made "a number of false and defamatory statements" in a letter to Earthwatch.

Earthwatch is the educational organization in Watertown, Mass., which cosponsored two archaeological "digs" at the former Civil War prison site this past summer.

Long's letter, written on Johnson's Island Historical Society stationery and dated March 5, 1990, states that

a report by Bush was "riddled with factual errors."

"There were misspellings, poor grammar, and appalling misunderstandings of Civil War prison history," Long wrote.

Bush wants a jury trial and asks for "a sum of money sufficient to fully and fairly compensate him...and to deter the defendants from further defamation," according to the suit, filed on March 5, 1991.

The lawsuit claims that Bush "has lost professional prestige and sustained reputational injury which has and/or may result in a loss of income and income producing opportunities."

"The first defense in a libel suit is the truth," was Long's comment in a phone interview Tuesday.

Dock Permit

On March 8, 1991, Bay Cliffs Corp., Carl Zipfel's development company, asked the Common Pleas Court to order the Danbury Board of Township Trustees "to show cause why it should not be held in contempt of court" for revoking Bay Cliffs' permit to place 100 docks in Sandusky Bay near the proposed development.

The trustees had been ordered by
(See PERMIT, Page 7)

the court on Oct. 15, 1990, to reinstate the permit which they had first revoked on Dec. 20, 1989.

In revoking the reinstated permit, the trustees claimed that on the original permit application Zipfel had misrepresented himself as the owner of the finger pier area off the island where the docks were to be installed. In fact, the submerged land is owned by the State of Ohio and leased to the landowner.

In last week's suit, Zipfel denied the charge. He enclosed an undated permit application request which states that Johnson's Island, Inc. is the lessee of a state submerged land lease.

The claim of misrepresentation "is blatantly contemptuous," according to the latest filing.

Please note that a documentary on the Civil War Prison on Johnson's Island is in the offing by a free-lance cinematographer. It will feature Roger Long, historian from Port Clinton, and will not mention the current development/preservation controversy on the island. The documentary will hopefully be purchased by PBS for airing in 1992. This was reported in the PENINSULA NEWS, March 7, 1991.



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Gettysburg desecration insults Wisconsin



Hunter

An irate Stoughton schoolteacher, John M. Wedeward, a dedicated supporter of Civil War battlefield preservation, has leveled an angry blast at Gettysburg Military Park officials for bulldozing part of the historic battlefield.

The cause of his distress was an acknowledged mistake that found park officials allowing the destruction of a famous Gettysburg defense line that earned Wisconsin soldiers a place of valor in American history.

Wedeward joined Jerry Russell, the president of the Civil War Round Table Associates and a leading battlefield preservationist, in denouncing the action.

While most of us have had our attention focused on the war in the Persian Gulf, Russell and Wedeward are heartsick over the mistaken destruction of an irreplaceable portion of the 1863 Gettysburg battlefield.

What, you say, is so precious about an earthworks and about 20 feet of the "railroad cut" — destroyed by bulldozer operators act-

ing under orders from Gettysburg National Military Park Superintendent Jose Cisneros?

That railroad cut was the goal of hundreds of Wisconsin soldiers who died 127 years ago at Gettysburg. The action came on the first day of a crucial three-day battle that ended forever the Confederates' hopes of winning the war.

"As Wisconsinites, we should be appalled at this action, which is a slap in the face to Wisconsin history and its Civil War soldiers," Wedeward said in a letter to The Capital Times.

The first federal infantry on the field that fateful morning were members of the 1st Corps, spearheaded by the famous Iron Brigade, made up of soldiers from Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan.

While the Iron Brigade and the rest of the 1st Corps were slowing the initial Confederate advance, the brigade's 6th Wisconsin Volunteers were ordered into action, attacking approaching Mississippi and North Carolina Confederate riflemen.

Wedeward recalled that valiant charge across open country toward

the rebel soldiers sheltered in an unfinished railroad cut. That charge saved the day for Gen. Meade's Union troops.

Historians say that had not the rebels been stopped, the Confederates might well have won the battle of Gettysburg.

After fierce fighting, the men of the 6th captured the entire rebel force. Frank Wallar, a young Vernon County rifleman, won the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award for valor, for his role in the attack.

What upsets Wedeward and Russell and other Civil War buffs is that the destruction of the railroad cut was due to "bureaucratic mismanagement." The bulldozers ripped up the wrong section of a ridge.

It all came about because park officials wanted to swap land with Gettysburg College for an 8-acre strip at the foot of Oak Hill, in order to move the privately owned Gettysburg Railroad away from the college's athletic fields.

"The National Park Service is supposed to be on the side of historic preservation," Wedeward wrote.

The Stoughton schoolteacher,

who frequently serves as a "living history" volunteer on Southern battlefields, urged the public to "have your senators and representatives contact National Park Service Director James Ridenour and find out how such an outrage could occur."

"It is a horrible and indefensible snafu," Russell said in a telephone interview. He said that Cisneros, who assumed the Gettysburg post last year, and Bob Davidson, a 15-year assistant at Gettysburg, must be held responsible for the mistake.

Russell proposes giving the Gettysburg Military Park officials a "Pogo Evaluation Award," named for the famous comic strip character. "As Pogo once said, 'We have met the enemy and he is us,'" Russell told The Capital Times this week.

The Gettysburg officials richly deserve the award.

John Patrick Hunter is an associate editor of The Capital Times.



BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION ALERT

Congress passed a bill to establish a Civil War Sites Commission, to work closely with Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr. The Senate and the House were to select commissioners and forward the names to the President Pro Tem of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, to then be forwarded to Secretary Lujan. A bottleneck has developed. The names have not been sent to Secretary Lujan.

Senator George Mitchell (D-Maine) is President Pro Tem of the Senate. Representative Tom Foley (D-Washington) is Speaker of the House. Please write these two gentlemen and ask them to expedite the sending of the names to Secretary Lujan, so the Commission can start work. It only has two years from the time legislation passed (early November) and nearly five months have already passed with NO activity.

Make the point that you are writing them in their national capacity

YOUR HELP IS BADLY NEEDED ON THIS! PLEASE WRITE TODAY!

Senator George Mitchell
President Pro Tem, U.S. Senate
176 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington DC 20510

Representative Thomas Foley
Speaker of the House
1201 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington DC 20515

Who Study Must Also Strive To Save!
John M. Wedeward
John M. Wedeward

Hollywood celebrity holds Garfield letters

by KAREN FARKAS
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

An unidentified Hollywood celebrity is believed to have five stolen letters written by former President James A. Garfield to the grandfather of a Cleveland lawyer, and officials do not know if they can recover them.

A Cleveland man, Reed Varney Jr., 32, who stole the letters last summer and sold them to a Beverly Hills collector pleaded guilty last week to grand theft and faces up to two years in prison when sentenced April 15 by Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Patricia Anne Gaughan.

According to Assistant County Prosecutor Craig Weintraub and Cleveland police Detective Frank Acierno, the five letters were given to Lockwood Thompson in 1910 by his grandfather, C.B. Lockwood.

"Lockwood was a close personal friend and adviser to Garfield," Weintraub said. Thompson, 89, cherished the letters and planned to donate them to the Smithsonian Institution.

The letters were written when Garfield was in Congress, in the White House, and from Lawnfield, his home in Mentor. In one of them, Garfield asked Lockwood whether he should run for president.

Garfield

FROM 1-B

raub said. Varney bought a car and other items with the money.

By the time police contacted the collector, he told them the letters had been sold. He would not say how much he sold them for or who owned them, other than the person was a Hollywood celebrity, Weintraub said.

Varney was arrested Aug. 29. He told police he had found the letters while cleaning out Thompson's attic and Thompson had told him earlier to keep anything he found while cleaning. Weintraub, however, said Thompson had kept the letters in his bedroom dresser drawer.

Weintraub said it was determined the letters are worth about \$50,000, but they are priceless to Thompson. "He deeply regrets the letters are

Elsewhere, Garfield invited Lockwood to the 1880 Chicago convention, where he received the nomination. One letter was signed, "I am ever your friend."

In 1980, Varney called Thompson for some legal advice, and the two became friends. Acierno said. Thompson hired Varney to take care of his Carlton Rd. house. Varney lived in the home from 1988 until Jan. 1, 1990, and cleaned and cooked.

Thompson told Varney about the letters, Weintraub said. Thompson, who has close ties to the Cleveland Museum of Art, also helped Varney get a job there as a night watchman about two years ago, he said.

In June 1990, Varney, of W. 65th St., approached several people in the museum and told them he had inherited from his grandfather five letters written by Garfield. Weintraub said. "He wanted to know how to dispose of them, and one person he contacted knew Thompson and knew those letters did not belong to Varney," Weintraub said.

When he was told of Varney's claim, Thompson discovered the letters were missing and contacted police. But Varney flew to Beverly Hills on June 13 and sold the letters to the collector for \$18,200. Wein-

SEE GARFIELD/8-B

no longer in the family, and he cherished them for 80 years," Weintraub said. "He intended them to be a national treasure."

Varney showed the letters to people at the museum, who said they were in excellent shape, Weintraub said. In addition, Varney made copies of them, which is part of the court file. Varney would not comment on the case.

Acierno said Varney told the dealer in Beverly Hills he had inherited the letters and the dealer did not know they were stolen. Weintraub said the prosecutor's office and police were exploring ways to recover the letters.

Acierno said they were trying to find the buyer to either get the letters back or to have them donated to the Smithsonian. "But now we don't know if they will ever be recovered," he said.

Civil War treasures tell tales

Forgotten items are dusted off

By TRUDY TYNAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Generations after Union veterans donated Civil War mementos in hopes their war would be remembered, the medals and portraits have been discovered molding in the basement of a city-owned building.

"It was like walking into a magical attic," said Joseph Carvalho, director of the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum. "All those faces staring at you out of the darkness and the dust. You could almost feel the eyes of the portraits following you."

The collection, about 100 artifacts plus uncounted documents, included ornately carved chairs used by commanders of the veterans' group. "It was a ghostly feeling to see those empty chairs," Carvalho said.

James Denver, a city forester, came upon the trove about 18 months ago, and since then lawyers have been working to figure out a way to preserve the mementos.

Denver is one of five trustees appointed by the mayor to oversee the maining assets of the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic, a Civil War veterans' organization. The trustees, who must by law be veterans, took over after the last officers the more than 2,600 Springfield men who fought in the Civil War died in the 1930s.

"I'd been on the board for years, but like everybody else I thought the stuff had all been packed away and taken care of proper," Denver said. "I didn't find out different until I had the custodian unlock the door and looked in the cellar."

"Everything was just piled in there, and there was dust 8 inches thick over it all," he said.

Following the war, veterans from this New England city, whose munitions plants had armed the Union side and whose hospitals had cared for thousands of wounded, had built a grand building. But it was taken by the city and torn down in the 1970s to make way for a new county courthouse.

"It was a gorgeous building, all marble and terrazzo," said Denver. "And they had everything on display in there under glass."

But sometime after the building was razed, veterans' organization from more recent wars were given use of a city building, and artifacts from the Grand Army of the Republic Hall ended up in the basement.

"No one knows exactly when or how," said Wayman Lee, assistant city solicitor.

Medals and banners were not the only things neglected. Denver said money the city had paid for taking the hall two decades ago ended up forgotten and collecting 5.5% interest in several city savings accounts.

"I don't know how much we would have had if it had been properly invested, but since November the \$360,000 we took out of the city accounts is already up to \$390,000," Denver said.

Eventually, he said, trustees hope to build a new veterans' hall with display areas. In the meantime, trustees and city officials have been struggling to get the Civil War collection out of the basement.

The museum inventoried the materials, and got an estimate of \$50,000 for restoration work. But their legal authority to seek grant for restoration was still in doubt.

After months of negotiations with the Grand Army of the Republic, trustees voted recently to spend \$5,000 on stabilizing the materials and to seek legal permission to place the items on loan with the historical museum, with the provision they could be returned if a new veterans hall is built.

The agreements are still being drafted, Lee said. "We want to figure out a way to fulfill the wishes of the Civil War veterans," said Carvalho. "What they were saying is, 'Remember us who came before you,' and that is very important."

"We have to learn from human experience. And a number of individuals, who lived in this city, The trustees, who must by law be veterans, took over after the last officers the more than 2,600 Springfield men who fought in the Civil War died in the 1930s."

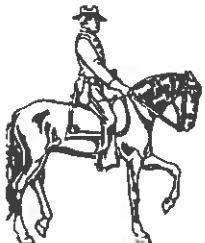
CPD March 13, 1991





OLLAPODRIDA

The 114th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry was a Zouave regiment - Collis' Zouaves. Among its ranks was a vivandiere - Marie Tebe (Mary Tepe), or "French Mary". To blend with the colorful Zouave uniforms of the regiment, "French Mary" wore a blue blouse, a yellow bodice, scarlet trousers, and a straw hat with a large feather. She was described as being about five feet tall, robust and strong, educated, and well spoken. She carried a small keg of whiskey for medicinal purposes, and a pistol to protect herself and the keg.



--- Gettysburg: The Second Day by Harry W. Pfanz pp13

An ancient colored woman appeared at the office of the Freedman's Bureau at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and asked if that was the place where they kept the freedmen's bureaus? The clerk was momentarily nonplused, but instantly recovering his gravity, blandly replied in the affirmative. Dinah, with an air of mystery and speaking in a confidential whisper said, "I have come for my bureau; now give me a pretty large one with a glass top; I have a washstand at home, but it's too small to put my fixins' in."



--- The Civil War in Song and Story by Frank Moore pp130

A squad of Indiana Volunteers, out scouting, came across a female in a log cabin in the mountains. After the usual salutations one of them asked her, "Well, old lady, are you a secesh?"

"No," was the answer.

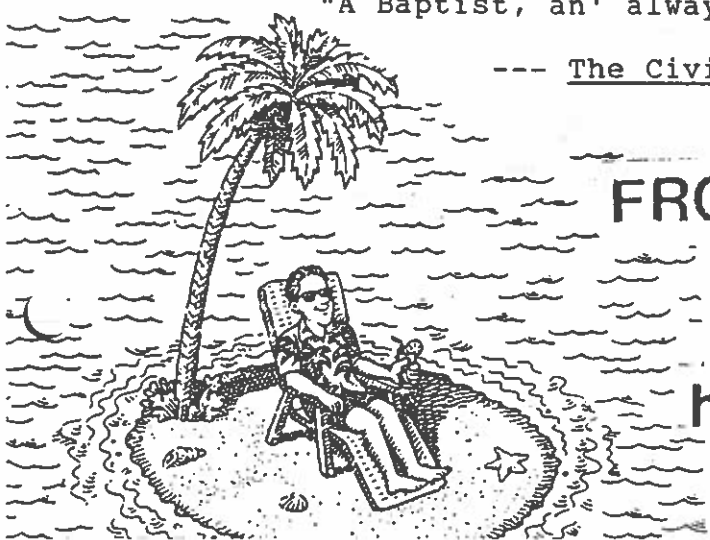
"Are you Union?"

"No."

What are you then?"

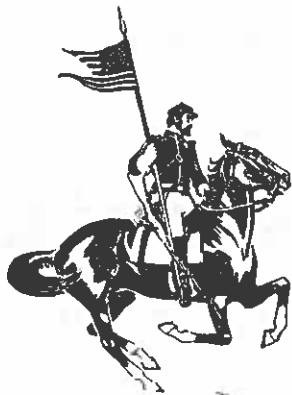
"A Baptist, an' always have been."

--- The Civil War in Song and Story by Frank Moore pp253



FROM THE STAFF OF
The Charger
have a nice summer





THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P.O. BOX 5786, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

SPECIAL ALERT

"Lost Civil War Letters"

Member, Marty Graham received a call from:

George Hall
25 Mynderse Street
Seneca Falls, NY 13148
(313) 568-6307

Mr. Hall called to inquire about Civil War letters written by his relative, Captain James Stanley of the 36th O.V.I. Killed at Cloyd's Mountain, W. VA.

He was told that someone from our Roundtable may have purchased these letters from a dealer by the name of Jerry Duvall.

Mr. Hall would like to buy these letters (sold by mistake).

If you know something about this please call him.

Thank you!

Brian Kowell
Marty Graham
Joe Tirpak

From The President's Desk



Greetings!

The Good News:

Fifty-Eight members and guests mysteriously showed up for dinner for our April 9th meeting. This was a real tribute to our speaker Bill Tidwell who addressed the theory that the assassination of Lincoln was indeed a Confederate Secret Service Plot.

The Bad News: as of Friday, preceding the meeting I had heard from only 22 members. The Hermit Club has repeatedly bent over backwards to accommodate us and I don't think there's another facility in town that would. We had to scramble for seating which was a circus.

I'm appealing to those of you who do not call on time or worse yet do not call at all to please do so. If this continues we may have to go to a two tiered pricing structure. Come on troops you can do it!

This will be my last letter as "General Jet" and I would be remiss if I did not thank the Officers and Executive Committee for their support and loyalty this year. Also, a very special thanks to Brian Kowell who in his quiet, capable way always gets the job done as Editor of "The Charger". We've had a fine year by any measure and I'm grateful to be a member. My only frustration has been reservations and I'm sure "Major" Baucher who will assume the reigns at the June 11th Executive Committee meeting will be able to resolve this!

Let's have another fine turnout for "Ladies Nite!"

PLEASE CALL BY FRIDAY MAY 10th!

"Gen. JET" (Ret.)

P.S. Shelby Foote has applied for membership. After a critical review by Officers & Executive Committee we rejected his application. He just didn't have the credentials or insights required. Yes, our requirements are stringent!!!



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P.O. BOX 5756

CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101