

The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. Box 444 • Vermilion, Ohio 44089

NOVEMBER 1983

Volume 6 Number 10

228th Meeting



DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB

SPEAKER: DR. MELVIN DRIMMER

SUBJECT: EMANCIPATION

TIME: PRELIMINARIES 6:00 P.M.

DINNER: 7:00 P.M.

RESERVATIONS: CALL NEIL EVANS 621- 0150



The Emancipation Proclamation

This document changed the objective of the war from the preservation of the Union to the freeing of the slaves. It made it impossible for European governments to recognize the Confederacy; it was a triumph for the rabid abolitionists (who never dreamed of permitting their wives to vote) and opened the doors of racial strife that has accelerated down to this day.

Dr. Wilbur T. Winterbotham

Our speaker Dr. Melvin Drimmer, according to Who's Who in America, is a Professor of history at Cleveland State University. He received his B.A. in History at City College of New York, where he graduated Cum Laude, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his PH.D. in history at the University of Rochester, in 1965, with a post doctoral study the next two years at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

Courses taught include History of American Slavery, Black History of Slavery, Social Thought of Black Americans, Seminar on Slavery in the Americas, American History Survey, Readings Course in Black and American History and others.

Dr. Drimmer is the author of Black History: A Reappraisal, Doubleday and Company, 1968, and in paperback by Anchor.



President Neil Evans
 Vice Pres. Brian Kowell
 Secretary Tim Beatty
 Treasurer George Vourlojianis

Sgt-at-Arms Jack Allison

Executive Committeemen:

Dr. T. Van Sickle
 Ray Channock

Editor and Illustrator
 of the Charger Stuart
 Cramer

Assistant Editor Hazel
 Cramer

Editorial Office 967-
 5971, Box 444, Vermilion,
 Ohio 44089

Dues: \$20 Sept. to Sept.
 Non-resident members \$10

Kowell and Victory on C.W. Humor at Oct. Meeting

After thanking the Hermit Club crew for removing all sharp objects from the room and for making sure a path was cleared to the nearest exit, I gave a brief history of the humor and humorists of the Civil War period (i.e. Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, Petroleum V. Nasby, Josh Billings, etc.).

I emphasized that much of the humor of the Civil War days does not remain funny by today's standards. But only humor softened the harsh realities of war and provided an escape from the hardships of soldiering. The various forms of humor were theatre, minstrel shows, medicine shows, and print. Print was in two forms - cartoons and humorous writings. But the prime source was the soldiers themselves.

This was followed by Bill and I reading numerous stories and anecdotes which had been gleaned from a wide variety of C.W. literature. Bill and I sometimes took the parts of the protagonists in the stories and read the dialogue.

The stories followed somewhat the course of the war from humorous confrontations between inept officers and independent volunteers to the years of total war as on Sherman's March. This was followed by a couple of Lincoln's stories without which no expose of C.W. humor would be complete. Lastly were a few anecdotes of post war humor.

One yarn the members particularly delighted in was the one in which a sentry challenged a uniformed figure entering his camp, who turned out to be one Major Jones, the camp's strictest disciplinarian.

"Who goes there?"

"Major Jones."

"Sorry, sir, 'fraid I can't let you proceed without the password."

"Dammit man, I've forgotten it, but you know ME well enough."

"Can't help it, sir. I must have the password."

From a nearby guardhouse came a voice. (It was that of Neville Bayless.)

"Don't stand there arguing all night. Shoot the son of a bitch."

By Brian Kowell

Ed. Note:

This program provided by Brian and Bill

FRED GILL'S BOOK REVIEW

Loewenberg, Peter. Decoding the Past, The Psychohistorical Approach, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983.

This is a dull book. It is also nearly incomprehensible. The sub-title does not suggest a racy plot but the title itself promises something interesting. Maybe the interesting and important theme is there but it is successfully hidden in the jargon. Dops psychoanalysts really talk like this? Or are they like lawyers so taken with the hocus-pocus of their argot that they can talk only to one another? Reading much of this book is like reading a Supreme Court opinion and struggling to make everyday sense from the words.

Try decoding this: "It is time to lay at rest the idea that psychoanalytical explanations are necessarily uncausal or that they are inherently incompatible with quantitative data such as demographic, election, consumption and health statistics. Indeed, psychoanalysis can give these macrodata new coherence and meaning, thus adding a vital quantitative dimension to history."

Or this: "While we may crave total explanations and definitive syntheses, partial insights and new integrations must suffice, for they are all we have or ever will have in history and in the present."

Hoo boy! And these are only two of the muddy patches you must sloop through trying to pick up a hint of what the hell the author is saying. You keep colliding with words like "armentarium" and "unambivalent." The big dictionary will tell you the meanings of these rogue words but discourages you from finding the real meaning of the passages containing them.

Several of the more easily read essays in the book are psychiatric explanations of people prominent in German history. One of them is an analysis, of all things, of Heinrich Himmler's adolescence. The information dug out of Himmler's dull diary does not tell me why his fear of his father made him a monster. Reading this and the other German essays suggest that historical conditions, even today, might well be better if Caesar had pressed on in Europe and rooted out those Teutonic savages lurking there behind the oaks and beeches of the Hercynian forest, scowling and stinking in their uncured bear skins, swinging their clubs and waiting for the tide of civilization to ebb.

In the midst of the author's mumbo jumbo, however, sometimes a clear sentence creeps in. This clings: "No history will speak with the relevance or accuracy to the contemporary human condition if it fails to assess realistically the profound capacity of the irrational to move men." * Right on, eh?

In spite of this one sentence I cannot recommend investing the effort required to read the book. The whole idea of psychohistorical analysis is too elusive.

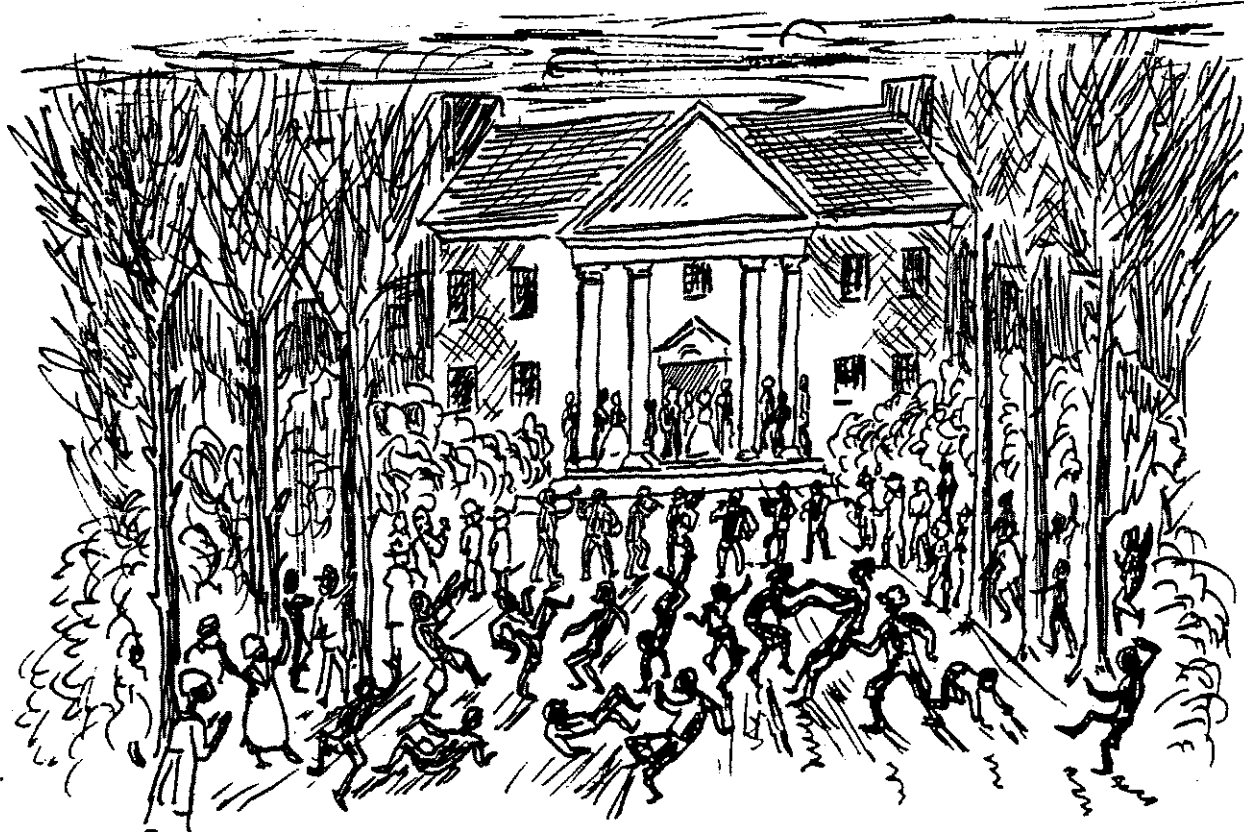
*Ed Note: This puts one in mind of the fiery southern orators ranting for secession in '60 as well as the raging abolitionists of the north. Or is it brannis talk like caboshan growing out of seedle fornstaff or didn't you know? If so, name one.

* * * * *

CORRECTIONS FROM LAST MONTH

In describing one of the talks heard by the Field Trippers, we misspelled the name of speaker Robert K. Krick, whose subject was General William Barksdale, flamboyant politician and soldier of the South. Also think we have Tom Van Sickle's right.

Scenes I'd Like to Have Seen



After General Sherman had captured Atlanta, Confederate authorities moved thousands of Federal prisoners from their prisons in southern Georgia, namely Andersonville and Millen, to a railroad junction called Florence. Here a stockade was in the process of being constructed; the inadequate facilities caused untold misery to the underfed, diseased and ragged inmates.

The chaotic conditions at Florence were indicative of the already rapidly deteriorating command structure of the Confederacy. As the prisoners poured in, thousands died. In October 1864 there were 12,362; in November 11,424; in January 1865, 7,538 survived.

One who survived both Andersonville and Florence was a Pennsylvania private infantryman, Ezra H. Ripple. Altogether, he endured nine months in prison, and this can be attributed to a special skill - he could play the fiddle. The camp commander at Florence discovered his talent. A lover of music, he had Ripple give him a command performance. Knowing a good thing when he saw it, the industrious fiddler rounded up some friends who could play various simple instruments and organized a band. Soon the band was not only serenading the Confederate officers, but playing at dances at surrounding plantations. Warm clothing, better food and a chance to scrub up with soap was their reward. In after years Ripple recalled the wild antics of the slaves at the plantations where the band played. The music sent them into ecstasies.

The Ripple band came to a sad end. The members could not resist the opportunity to escape, and they tried it, breaking their parole, but all were hunted down with bloodhounds, caught and were hanged. Ripple preferred to sit it out and continue with his special privileges.

The sight of those darkies cavorting in the moonlight must have been an interesting one.

The Civil War on the Banks of Lake Erie

With the threat of developers putting up condominiums on Johnson's Island, this resumé of the action that took place in Sandusky Bay in 1864 seems appropriate.

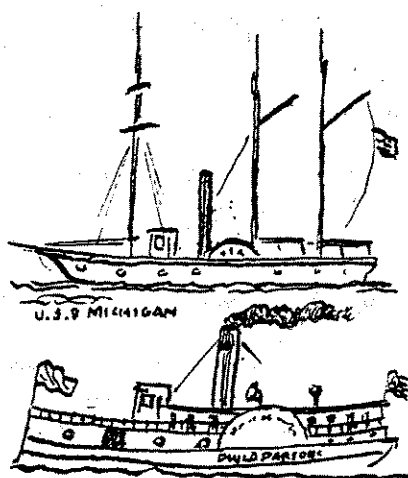
THE WARM LAND breeze blew gently over the water carrying the last heat of summer as the commando peered into the gathering darkness waiting for the signal flare which would trigger the attack. First the gunship anchored in the harbor would be captured, and then the 8,000 prisoners of war being held on the island would be released. Finally rebellion would flame through the land. The Mideast? South America? Africa? No—Sandusky, Ohio.

The two principals involved in the plot were desperate and dashing Rebel spies. John Yates Beall was a Master in the Confederate Navy. The slender 28-year-old carried a musket ball in his leg from a nearly fatal wound received early in the war. Overcoming both his wound and a persistent case of tuberculosis, Beall organized and led a guerilla naval detachment on Chesapeake Bay. The other spy, Capt. Charles Cole, had ridden with the daring cavalry genius Nathan Bedford Forrest and was made prisoner while under the command of the guerilla warfare expert John Morgan. Cole engineered an escape from his squalid prisoner of war camp and remained behind enemy lines as an undercover agent. If either man were to be caught, he ran the risk of being hanged as a spy.

Beall and Cole met in Toronto in September, 1864, to lay their plans. The booming Great Lakes maritime trade was protected by the 14 guns of a single Federal gunboat, the *USS Michigan*, a schooner-rigged paddle-wheel steamer stationed by the large prisoner of war camp on Johnson Island in the northeast section of Sandusky Bay. Inside the prison camp some 8,000 Confederate prisoners were quartered. The plan was a simple one. The first step called for Beall to capture a large commercial lake steamer and then grapple with the *Michigan*, which would be sabotaged through Cole's efforts.

Simultaneously the 8,000 Rebel prisoners on Johnson Island would start an uprising with smuggled weapons

while the prison would be attacked from the outside by a copperhead organization which called itself the "Order of the Sons of Liberty in the Northern States." The liberated prisoners would then capture the weakly defended Federal armory at Sandusky and form the beginnings of a Rebel army behind enemy lines; meanwhile the *Michigan*, by then under Beall's command, would attack Great Lakes ports with impunity. It was hoped that the northwest states and territories, in which there was strong antiwar sentiment, would then erupt into rebellion.



The battle would begin with a signal flare, which Cole was to fire from the deck of the *Michigan* when all was in readiness.

The early stages of the plan proceeded without a hitch. Cole established a cover for himself by posing as a spendthrift Philadelphia businessman. He soon wheedled his way into the graces of Capt. Carter, the commander of the *Michigan*, by staging sumptuous champagne dinner parties for the captain and his officers. Ultimately, Cole was invited aboard the vessel as a regular visitor, which gave him the opportunity to bribe a ship's engineer to sabotage the engines on the night of the battle. With Capt. Carter's aid, Cole became friends with the commandant of the Johnson Island prison and found ample opportunity to smuggle in the weapons needed for the prison uprising. Somehow, in the midst of all this activity, Cole found time to woo and fall in love with the niece of a local Ohio merchant. It was to be his downfall.

The plan came to ripeness on the night of Sept. 19. Cole, in his room at

Sandusky's prestigious West House Hotel, began to dress for another of his infamous champagne parties given patriotically for the officers of the *Michigan*. This time, however, the party would take place on the gunboat rather than in town, and this time the champagne would be drugged.

Meanwhile, Beall and another raider boarded the lake steamer *Philo Parsons* on one of its regular runs from Detroit to Sandusky. At a Canadian port of call more disguised raiders boarded the boat, carrying a closed trunk full of weapons. At 4 p.m. on Sept. 19 the *Philo Parsons* stopped at Kelley's Island just outside Sandusky harbor. Here Beall drew his Colt revolver, pointed it at the captain of the steamer and claimed the *Philo Parsons* as a prize of the Confederate Navy. Then, Beall and his Rebel raiders waited for Cole's signal. They could see the lights of the *Michigan* against the background nightglow of Sandusky. But Cole's signal never came.

The young lady of whom Cole had become enamored became suspicious of her beau, and when he started dropping hints about himself to her in intimate moments she decided that her country was more important to her than this dashing, young agent who would disappear when his adventure was over. She told the U.S. Secret Service her story.

On the *USS Michigan* the drugged champagne was ready to be poured when Cole was arrested in his hotel room.

The uprising on Johnson Island never occurred. The "Sons of Liberty in the Northern States" skulked away into the darkness. Beall, frustrated by being thwarted so close to his longtime goal, steamed the *Philo Parsons* toward Canada, beached her on Fighting Island and escaped into the haven of the neutral country to the north. Eventually, though, he was captured and hanged in 1865.

Cole was indicted and convicted as a spy, but at the last moment before his hanging he saved his life by confessing his crimes and swearing the amnesty oath. After being released he disappeared forever.

Above clipping was taken from a 1982 issue of The Lake-land Boater.



Among the many Patent Medicines peddled before the Civil War, Hostetter's Celebrated Stomach Bitters was probably the best known. During the first years of The Hostetter and Smith Company, manufacturers of this specific (good for colic, constipation and "the Intermittents") its young proprietors put every cent they could in printer's ink (newspaper advertising) and paint (to mark the name on billboards, fences, covered bridges, barns and boulders.)

When the war came in 1864, the name Hostetter so impressed the War Department that they were soon buying the Bitters in carload lots for the Union Army. At this period the Bitters contained modest amounts of cinchona bark, gentian root, orange peel, anise and a less than moderate dose of alcohol, which ran to approximately 47% by volume. This nostrum was unquestionably of some service to the Union Army, as witness the postwar observation of a Pittsburg historian. "Hostetter's vaunted remedial properties were sadly lacking," he wrote, "but many a frightened Yankee at Gettysburg knew he faced Pickett's Charge as bravely as he did because of the swig of Hostetter's under his belt."



The label under which the Bitters was registered displayed cavalryman St. George riding down and spearing the Dragon.

By war's end Hostetter's Celebrated Stomach Bitters was grossing \$750,000 a year. And by then David Hostetter was facing the competition of more brands of bitters than one would have believed possible. No matter what the "medicinal ingredients" they were all rectified by a healthy percentage of hard cider, whiskey, brandy, rum or wine. Some readers recall the phenomenal success of Hadacol, as recently as 1950.

"...He was sick and tired.... of being told about what Lee was going to do: 'Some of you always seem to think he is suddenly going to turn a double somersault and land in our rear and on both our flanks at the same time.' As for the panicky officer himself, Grant had a curt order: 'Go back to your command and try to think what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do!'"

Bruce Catton, A Stillness at Appomattox

Thanks to the CWRT of Texas