

THE CHARGER

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE
P.O. BOX 18900, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44118

NOVEMBER 1995

337TH MEETING

VOL. 17 #3

DATE: Wednesday, November 8, 1995

PLACE: The Hermit Club

SUBJECT: "Who Is Robert E. Lee?"

SPEAKER: Joseph E. "General Jet" Tirpak.



General JET will offer an in-depth presentation and viewpoint on one of America's most admired and most complex personalities. When speaking of Lee one must speak in the present tense because he has become an "Icon", a legend bigger than life.

Born to southern aristocracy, Robert E. Lee was an ideal child, student, cadet, officer, general and post Civil War hero. Lee's heritage included two descendants who signed the Declaration of Independence. His father, Lighthorse Harry Lee, was a famous Revolutionary War hero. His mother, Ann Hill Carter Lee, came from the wealthiest family in America at that time. Lee's wife, Mary Ann Randolph Custis, was a descendent of George and Martha Washington.

JET will also present information he has uncovered suggesting Douglas Southall Freeman may have suppressed evidence that Lee murdered a person in Ohio. Could this be true?

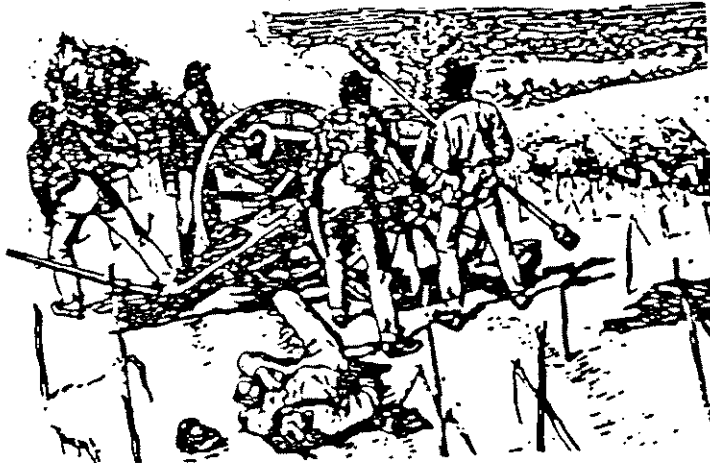
Come hear what JET has to say about Lee the man, Lee the myth, and Lee the legend!

TIME: Drinks 6PM Dinner 7PM

RESERVATIONS: Please call JAC Business Communications
at 861-5588. RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST!

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

1957 * 1995



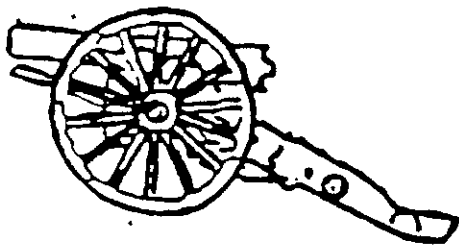
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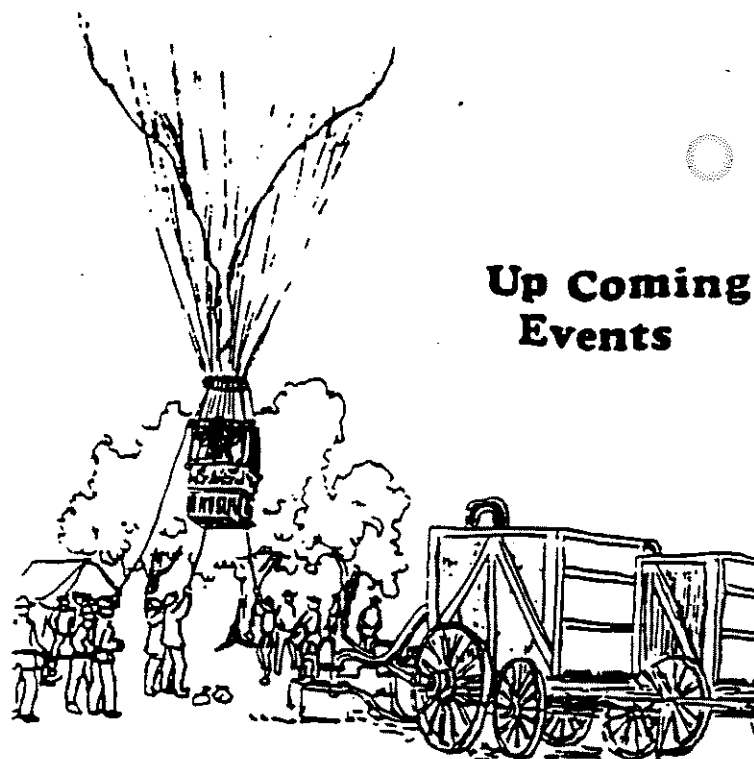


PLEASE LET US KNOW
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
YOUR NEW ADDRESS...



Preserve Your Battlefields

Up Coming Events



NEXT YEAR'S SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & SPEAKERS

- December 13 - William McGrath -
"Civil War Navy"
- January 10 - Quiz - prepared by
Kevin Casey
- February 14 - Hugh Ernhardt -
"Lincoln"
- March 13 - Panel Discussion -
"Opportunities Lost"
Bob Boyda moderator
- April 10 - Jeffery Wert -
"Custer"
- May 8 - Ladies Night -
William A. Young, Jr.
"Rev. Findley at
Pickett's Charge"



The Civil War Round-Table

of Cleveland

VICKSBURG - FIELD TRIP 1995

The song *Dixie* says, "I wish I was in the land of cotton"; well, the Men of the Cleveland Civil War Round-Table indeed went south to the land of Cotton. We saw mile after mile of cotton fields that would stretch to the horizon. Trucks carrying Cotton littered the highway with white as if it were covered in snow. No wonder they needed so many slaves.

Now of course the picking is done by machine. We travelled the back roads in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi seeing cotton, soybeans, and poverty. Peter Holman as usual, made the classic comment of the trip. While following the route of General McPhearson Corps. driving on Vicksburg, we passed through the town of Edwards, Mississippi. Edwards is a typical Mississippi town. Stores in the town were all board up and most of the residents living in shacks. Peter asked our guide Colonel Parker Hills, "Colonel, what's the major industry in this town?" The Colonel's reply, "**Welfare Checks.**"

The Hotel Offered free drinks around the pool in the evening. Then the pool was where you could find the men from Cleveland.

The first evening we had a presentation by Vicksburg Military Park Chief Historian Terry Winschel who came in costume of a confederate artillery sergeant. He also spoke in character. When asked if General

Robert E. Lee could have beat Ulysses S. Grant at Vicksburg Terry replied, "how could a mere Sergeant answers such a question?" In addition Club Member Bill McGrath gave us a introduction to the **USS Cairo** which we were to see the next day.

The next day at the Vicksburg Military Park ... We were impressed with the large selection of cannon the Park had on display including some large Dahlgren's. The large cannons were dragged off the Mississippi River gun boats to break down the confederate fortifications. The terrain around Vicksburg was much more rugged than the Wilderness. The landscape featured deep gullies, swamps, and thick underbrush.

The Union Army during the siege was digging "Z" trenches toward the Confederate lines. When they got close then drilled shafts and blew up mines under the confederate position. This was a year before Grant's army would try the same tactics at Petersburg, Virginia. The exploding of mines and then charging the confederate line was no more successful at Vicksburg then it would later be at Petersburg.

The highlight of the morning was a battlefield presentation under a old oak tree. Bob Battisti and Bob Baucher sat down on a nearby tree stump. One minute later they jumped up and started moving in circles. *They had sat on a fire ant nest.*

Lunch was at the Walnut Hills restaurant in Vicksburg. The restaurant features large tables with Lazy Susans in the middle. We had catfish for lunch, of course. We sat down with some *locals* who started telling Yankee jokes:

"What is the difference between a Yankee and a **Damn Yankee**?"

"A Yankee comes for a visit and leaves."

"A Damn Yankee comes and stays."

The afternoon was spent at the **USS Cairo**. The Ship is under a canopy but open to the outside air. Experts think the ship has about 30 years before the wood completely rots away. The metals parts: the steam boilers, the engines, paddle wheel and cannons are in excellent shape and should last forever.

Two things strike you about the boat; first the large size and second the fact that the back half of the boat has no steel plating. The armour plate is clearly to protect the vital parts of the ship with the crew expendable.

The gift shop next to the ship features Bill McGrath's painting of the sinking of the Cairo. That of course made Bill happy.

That night the hard core of the group hit the casino gambling boats along the Mississippi River.

Saturday was spent with Colonel Parker Hills of the Mississippi National Guard. Colonel Hills gave us a time schedule in military time showing what we would be doing every ten minutes through out the day. **15:05 said Dairy Queen**. At 15:05 or 3:05 PM for you civilians, we indeed we were at the Dairy Queen.

The Colonel started the tour in the State Capital of Jackson. These battlefields are not marked and are in very poor areas of town. We did go to a battlefield Park. A very seedy place which shows confederate trench lines. They were not Confederate but Union lines. The trenches were missed marked because the City Fathers would not spend money to honor Union positions. The Colonel took us to battlefields at Raymond, Mississippi, Champion Hill and the Black River. There are no Parks or markers at these sites.

It was interesting to hear the Colonel discuss are own Union General McPhearson from Clyde, Ohio as *General Grant's Pet*. McPhearson was a Major General while he was still in his twenties. He had been a Lieutenant 18 months earlier.

We ended a great day at a excellent lake side restaurant north of Jackson. Dinning on Catfish of course.

Sunday had us driving through the cotton fields again headed for Little Rock, Arkansas and our plane to Cleveland.

A great time was had by all....

Dick Crews



PRESERVATION REPORT

John D. Sutula
President
Civil War Round-Table
Terminal Tower, Suite 920
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Re: Cuyahoga County Soldiers and Sailors Monument Education Program

Dear John:

As you know, I am one of the Trustees of the Cuyahoga County Soldiers and Sailors Monument at Cleveland Public Square. Presently, the Commission has two employees who handle the maintenance of the monument and its grounds. We have no employee who is qualified to conduct a properly prepared educational tour.

The Commission is looking for volunteers to help organize, prepare and conduct educational programs at the monument. The monument is open six days a week (closed Sundays) and we would probably need coverage for educational programming from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day. Some schools bring school children through on tours; other commercial tours pass by the monument in buses; other people just walk in and need an explanation.

We need to tell the story of the monument so that interest in the Civil War is developed and maintained.

I would appreciate your assistance and that of the members of the Cleveland Civil War Round-Table in finding volunteers to help the Commission.

Cordially yours,



Neil K. Evans

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cc: Russell R. Peck
Carl R. Withers
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MORE THAN YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT

JUSTUS McKINSTRY

Brigadier General Justus McKinstry was chiefly celebrated for having been one of the most thorough-going rogues ever to have worn a United States uniform.

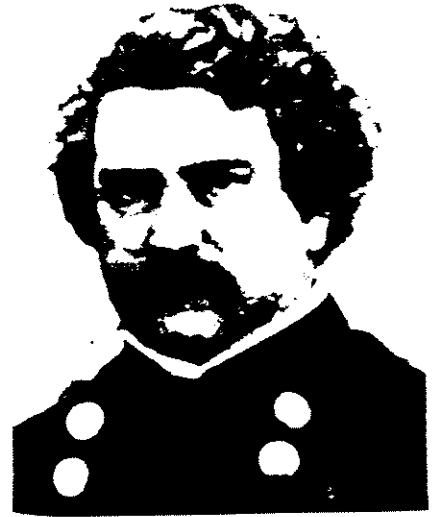
McKinstry was born July 6, 1814, in New York State, probably in Columbia County. He moved with his parents to Michigan as a young boy and was appointed to the United States Military Academy from there. He was graduated in the class of 1838.

McKinstry's early career was meritorious, and at the battles of Contreras and Churubusco in the Mexican War, while a quartermaster with the rank of captain, he commanded a company of volunteers in such a gallant fashion that he was awarded the brevet of major. He subsequently served on quartermaster duty on the United States-Mexico boundary and in California.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, McKinstry was in St. Louis as chief quartermaster of the Department of the West under General John C. Fremont. McKinstry held this post from January 1860 to November 1861, with a brief reprieve when he was made a brigadier general of volunteers on September 2, 1861 and commanded a division under Fremont in the latter's march to Springfield, Missouri.

Serving as chief quartermaster under Fremont early in the war, and with the influx of large numbers of volunteers into the Department, Fremont gave McKinstry free rein in all purchasing matters. He subsequently proved to be a textbook example of the corrupting influence of money. He found ample opportunity to line his own pockets at the expense of the government. McKinstry favored companies soon found that they could make large sums of money while providing inferior quality goods for the army, and much of the government issued equipment became known as shoddy. One St. Louis firm admitted later profits of \$280,000 on sales of \$800,000 in a few months under the McKinstry administration. As the contractors reaped profits so did McKinstry. Among the many extractions levied upon the contractors who wished to do business with his office was a three thousand dollar silver service for Mrs. McKinstry. For those contractors who questioned the practice or balked at extortion, bribes, and kickbacks, they were threatened, cajoled, and in some cases, summarily arrested and thrown into jail.

For months Washington had been hearing complaints about the blatant way in which government contracts were being awarded in St. Louis. Illinois Congressman Elihu B. Washburne, one of Lincoln's closet associates, was appointed chairman of a congressional subcommittee to investigate the matter. General Fremont was replaced by General Halleck who appointed Captain Philip Sheridan to do a comprehensive audit of the department's accounts.



McKinstry, meanwhile, was promptly arrested and jailed pending the outcome of the audit and investigation. After a year in arrest, it was found that the department had "mislaidd" \$12million in government funds during McKinstry's administration. McKinstry was subsequently court martialed and cashiered from the army on January 28, 1863, "for neglect and violations of duty, to the prejudice of good order and military discipline" - the only Civil War commander to be so dismissed.

McKinstry's later record is obscure. For a time he was a stock-broker in New York; then he went to Rolla, Missouri, as a land agent. He died in St. Louis on December 11, 1897, and was buried in Highland Cemetary, Ypsilanti, Michigan, the home of a son.

- Generals in Blue by Ezra J. Warner
- Sheridan: The Life and Wars of General Phil Sheridan
by Roy Morris, Jr. pp 44-46

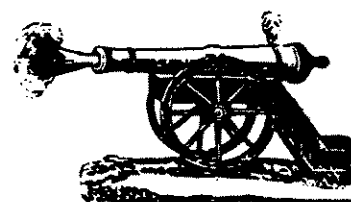
LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Mr. Donald Breen, co-author of a booklet published by the Ohio Historical Society entitled: "Ohio's Military Prisons of the Civil War", spoke on "A Taste of Purgatory: The Story of Johnson's Island." The prison stockade was for Confederate officers and was opened on April 13, 1862. Mr. Breen detailed daily prison life of the inmates and related various stories of prisoner escape attempts. Did you know that food for the prisoners was plentiful until April 1864 when rations were cut 20% in retaliation to the treatment of Union prisoners at such camps as Andersonville. During this time a group of prisoners, known as the "Rat Club", supplemented their reduced rations by clubbing to death and then dressing rats found in the camp for their consumption.

Diversions were varied. Besides crafts and theatricals, baseball was played at the prison. One game drew 3000 spectators. The Southern Nine (composed of officers of the rank of Captain or below) defeated the Confederate Nine (composed of officers above the rank of captain). Did you know that one birth was recorded in the prison by an inmate who had disguised herself as a Confederate officer? Did you know there were only 12 successful escapes from Johnson's Island and that most attempts occurred during the winter months? On successful Confederate made ice skates and skated to Sandusky and freedom? All this and more were shared by Mr. Breen in his fascinating October presentation.

PLEASE MAKE RESERVATIONS

PLEASE CALL 861-5588



SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



Just after the battle of 1st Manassas, General Beauregard sent notice to General Longstreet that French Prince Jerome Napoleon (nicknamed "Plon Plon") was visiting and suggested that Longstreet get up something of a review of his best-clad troops. Longstreet borrowed a regiment from Stonewall Jackson's brigade and one from D.R. Jones' brigade (a South Carolina regiment) and his own First Virginia Infantry to make the parade. With Beauregard, the Prince, and Longstreet watching the review, the three regiments with a good band leading the way, marched past. As they passed the dignitaries couldn't help notice that some of the men of the First Virginia were a "bit thin at the seat". Their Colonel, who had joined the onlookers, was a bit embarrassed but said to the Prince as they marched by, "The enemy won't see that part of them."

from Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer
by G. Moxley Sorrel pp 10-11
illustrated by Stu Cramer





OLLAPODRIDA

The eye is a better teacher than the ear. Robert E. Lee rang true in thought, word, and deed. He practiced what he preached. He always said the right thing, but what was more important, he always did the right thing. His actions spoke volumes about his character.

One of my favorite stories about Marse Robert is the time he gave away his overcoat. It was a bitter, cold night in the dead of winter, 1869. Lee was president of little Washington College (now Washington & Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia. He and his wife Mary lived by themselves in the tiny, but comfortable president's cottage on the campus.

The old soldier had just one more year to live. He was sitting by the fire in the living room, and Mary sat across from him. It was almost bedtime. It had been a long, hard day, and the general was beginning to doze. There was a soft knock at the front door. Lee opened his eyes.

"See who it is, dear," Mrs. Lee said. She was an invalid and confined to her chair.

The general went out into the hall and opened the front door. Mrs. Lee could hear him talking softly with someone, but she could not catch a word that was said. After a minute or two, Lee went to the hall closet, opened the closet door, walked back to the front door, and talked softly for a few moments. Then he said "good night". He shut the front door, came back to the living room, sat down in his chair by the fire, and closed his eyes.

Mrs. Lee's curiosity was up. "Who was that, dear?", she asked.

"An old soldier," the general replied. "What did he want?"

"He was down on his luck. He was cold and asked if I had a coat I could spare. I gave him my old army overcoat. It should keep him warm."

"You gave him your overcoat? What old soldier? Who was he?"

"I don't know," the general said.

"Well, what was his name?" she persisted.

"I don't know, my dear," the general said wearily.

"You don't know? And you gave him your coat? Shame on you, Robert" she scolded. "I thought you prided yourself on knowing the name of every man who served under you."

"I try," the general said, "but this man was a stranger."

"A stranger? And you didn't even ask him his name? Robert, that's no way to treat a man who was in your army!"

The general smiled and said, "He wasn't in my army, my dear. He served in the Union Army."

Gamaliel Bradford, Jr., recollected meeting the great Southern commander at Gettysburg. As he lay wounded, Lee and some of his staff passed by.

"I recognized him and though faint from exposure and loss of blood, I raised up my hands and shouted, 'Hurrah for the Union!'"

"The General heard me, looked, stopped his horse, dismounted, and came toward me. I confess that I thought he meant to kill me. But as he came up he looked down at me with such a sad expression upon his face that all fear left me. He extended his hand to me and, grasping it firmly and looking right into my eyes, said: 'My son, I hope you will soon be well.'"

"If I live to be a thousand years, I shall never forget the expression on General Lee's face. As soon as the General left me, I cried myself to sleep there upon the bloody ground."

From The President's Desk

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From The President's Desk



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This month Joe Tirpak will be speaking concerning one of his favorite topics General Robert E. Lee. From the past we all know that Joe does an excellent job in his presentations, thoroughly researching his material and presenting a scholarly presentation. Please note that this is a change in the previously announced speakers schedule as Frank Mercante took ill and required surgery and was unable to present his talk concerning George Armstrong Custer. However, we will have Jeffrey Wert later in the year who will give his presentation concerning Custer.

Last month Don Breen of Amherst did a wonderful job in presenting the historical picture of Johnson's Island, the makeup of the prisoners held there and of the daily life of the camp. Probably the most entertaining segment was the discussion of the various escapes that occurred and the methods that the prisoners utilized in freeing themselves, if only for a short period of time, from Johnson's Island.

Dick Crews reported of a various successful field trip to Vicksburg wherein it was decided that the next year that we will visit the Manassas battlefield and surrounding sites next September. Jerry Mauk will be in charge of the field trip as he was drafted (volunteered) for that duty. As time goes on Jerry will get appropriate information to everyone concerning the details of the trip.

We are still looking for somebody to handle the local spring fieldtrip. If anybody is interested in doing so please contact me or Dan Zeiser with any suggestions or to volunteer.

I would like to say that all the members were quite surprised as well as I at last months dinner, it was fabulous. Not only did we have dessert but somehow we all ended up having filets. I don't know if I can promise anything more than hardtack this month but I will certainly try and come up with something good again. I look forward to seeing all the members this month. Please make your reservations early at 861-5588 with Ann Caputo. Reservations must be in by November 6. If you need to cancel a reservation, please cancel prior to the date of the meeting. We have everybody calling in for their reservations but if something happens and you need to cancel please call to cancel by at least by the 7th in the morning.

I look forward to seeing you on November 8th.



The Cleveland Civil War Round-Table
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