



The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

PO Box 444
Vermilion, OH 44089

DECEMBER, 1980

VOLUME 24 No. 8

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

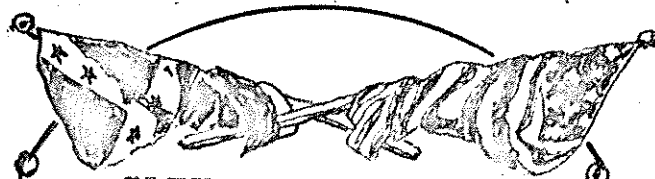


202nd Meeting

DATE: DECEMBER 9th
 SPEAKER: Bob Krick, National Park Service
 SUBJECT: The Civil War Adventures of General E. P. Alexander
 PLACE: The Hermit Club
 TIME: Convivialities 6:00 P. M. Dinner 7:00 P.M.

Our speaker is the Park Historian at Fredericksburg Military Park. Author of several books on the war, he has spoken to many Civil War Round Tables and comes to us highly recommended.

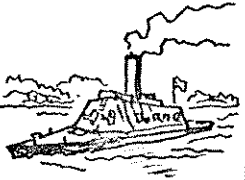
Mr. Krick's subject, Confederate General Edward Porter Alexander, should be a fascinating one. Longstreet's Artillery Commander, Alexander, fought in every major battle from First Manassas to Appomatox. He was the author of the classic Military Memoires of a Confederate, published in 1907. We look forward to a very informative and interesting evening.



**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR
ROUND-TABLE**

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Field Trip Pictures

Our indefatigable photographer, V.P. John Harkness, successor to Guy DiCarlo, and constant snapper of shots here, there, and everywhere on the field trips, will display the results of his exposures during the Ft. Monroe and Shiloh sojourns directly following the speaker at the December 9th meeting.

John always does a super job of editing and coordinating his photographic records into an interesting presentation of these excursions. Stay after and enjoy them.

Treasury Notes

We noticed at the last meeting that our treasurer, Tim Moran, was singularly quiet. This may have meant that most of the dues are in, and yet.... there are still many outstanding. So if you haven't sent in your \$17.00, please do so - it is the only way we have to keep the ball rolling. Send your check TODAY: To Tim Moran, 3105 West 146th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44111. Sit down and do it NOW.

November Quizz & Book Sale a Fun Time

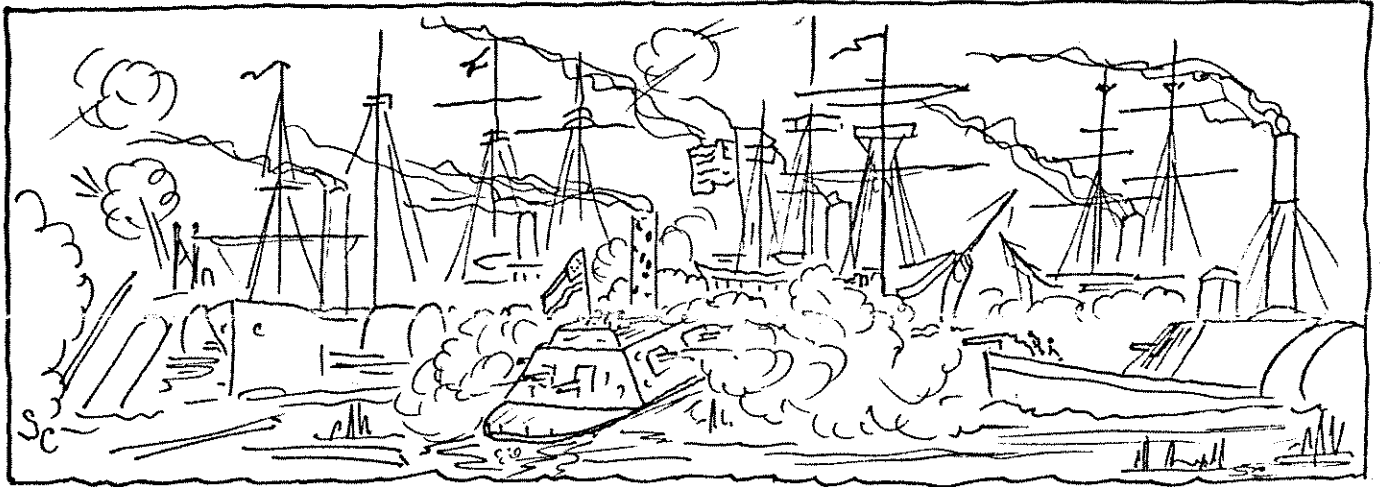
As always, the Annual Quizz Contest was a great success, due to the interesting questions devised and delivered by our ingenious Quizz-master and club secretary Jim Englehart. The team of Tim Moran, Tom Koehl and Jack Allison won; but Frank Moran, Jim Mayer and Brian Kowell gave them a tough battle. The question that stumped them was the general who was not present at Cold Harbour - Gen'l. Kearny. A lot of wrong steers whispered by the audience didn't help.....

Referee Tom Geshke had his hands filled keeping up with the buzzers, but it was a really fun evening.

The book and artifacts sale supervised by Bernie Drews and Don Heckaman provided a lot of bargains (?) and otherwise, but both buyers and sellers went home happy. We noticed that as the sale progressed into the second and third libation that the sales came easier and more confused - a couple of the members buying what they had brought to sell. Let's hope this affair continues into the future - it is a lot of work getting ready for the sale - laying out the displays, etc., but well worth the trouble, as evidenced by the intense interest shown.

One of the most dramatic battles of the entire Civil War took place on July 15th, 1862, at the bend in the Mississippi just above Vicksburg. It was a complete Confederate victory, accomplished by determination and uncommon courage.

That was the day the "Arkansas," a home-made fighting vessel if there ever was one, attacked and damaged the combined entire United States river fleets, including Admiral Farragut's Ocean Squadron of capital warships.



In 100 degree heat that summer, 200 soldiers and laborers, driven by the indomitable will of Lieutenant Isaac Newton Brown, C.S.A., started from scratch - from felling trees for lumber, hauling "railroad iron" and rails from far and near Yazoo City - the work progressed slowly but with feverish activity. Time was essential, because the U.S. fleets were bombarding Vicksburg day and night, and the opportunity of surprise ebbed with each day.

Finally the monstrosity was as finished as it could be, the obstacles and disappointments recorded in the hundreds; a ship built largely of improvisation and ingenuity. Brown and his chief officer George Gift began rounding up a crew: 100 seamen from Confederate ships already sunk, 60 more from the swashbuckling Missouri guerrillas of Gen. Jeff Thompson, and rounded out by volunteers from Louisiana units. The water level of the rivers was sinking, so after a day or two of training, the "Arkansas" chugged down river from Satartia to Haynes Bluff, arriving at midnight, where it was reported from General Van Dorn at Vicksburg that thirty-seven Federal men-at-war had been counted.

At dawn on the 15th, when Lieutenant Brown started his historic day, he was chagrined to discover three U.S. ships bearing down on him - his surprise attack evidently having been discovered. The "Carondelet" of Island No. 10 fame, the "Queen of the West," a ram, and the "Tyler," the timberclad that had fought at Shiloh that spring, all converged on him. The "Arkansas" blasted the Carondelet, leaving her crippled and sinking, and the other two turned tail and highballed for the rest of the fleet.

A bursting shell hit Brown on the head, and a second later another smashed into the pilot house, killing the pilot, but Jim Brady, one of Thompson's guerrillas took over the wheel, and recovering, Lt. Brown forged ahead. Strangely, the big standing fleet WAS surprised as the "floating junkyard" plowed into their midst, many of the Federal vessels without enough steam to maneuver. Thousands of people lined the bluffs and rooftops to watch this incredible David and Goliath fight.

Aboard the "Arkansas" was much death and agony. An unlucky shot had carried away the flue connecting furnace and smokestack. Raw flame was pouring into the engine room, raising the temperature to 130 degrees. Men could work only in relays; yet on plunged the "ugly duckling with falon's claws," hugging the enemy ships like a boxer in a clinch. Brown trained his sights on Farragut's flagship, the famous "Hartford," and raked it unmercifully. With vast clouds of smoke obscuring everything, the men could only direct their aim at the flashes of enemy guns, firing in all directions, sure of a hit every time.

The mighty "Hartford," the "Iroquois," "Benton," the "Lancaster," and many others felt the blows of the now crippled "Arkansas" With faltering engines, aided by the current, the valiant ship headed for a Vicksburg wharf under the protection of the fort's guns. Steam pressure was down to 20, the smokestack a leaning sieve, the interior a mass of bloody gore; several guns shot out of action; Brown finally tied up, and started the task of unloading the dead and wounded.

On the flagship "Hartford," Farragut surveyed the wreckage around him. He raged at the evidence of "damnable neglect, or worse." It was unthinkable that a hybrid Rebel craft had made a joke of two Union fleets, and still mocked him under the guns of Vicksburg. He determined to take his fleet down for the kill. With his gunboats engaging the shore batteries, Farragut led his ships down past the cripple at bay, pouring broadside after broadside as they passed in the twilight. The inert "Arkansas" answered in kind, her guncrews "worked as though the fate of the nation hung on each man's individual effort," as George Giles later reported. Great damage was further wrought on the Federal ships, until darkness fell, ending a long bloody day.

Still immobile, with only two gun crews, the "Arkansas" fought off a final attack on July 22, by the rams "Essex" and "Queen of the West." Secretary of Navy Welles had wired the frustrated Farragut that the dastardly Rebel ship be sunk. But on the 24th, the Admiral gave up and took his fleet downstream, while Admiral Davis steamed north with the upper fleet.

Secretary Welles expressed his disgust with the whole Vicksburg operation:

"The most disreputable naval affair of the war was the descent of the steam ram "Arkansas" through both squadrons....and the Flag Officers abandoned the place..."

Sources: The Final Fortress, by Samuel Carter III
and Civil War At Sea, Vol II by V.C.Jones

Third Bull Run Won (AGAINST DEVELOPERS)

The "Third Battle of Manassas," which went on longer than the Civil War itself, is finally over. On October 14 President Carter signed a bill authorizing a 1500 acre addition to the Manassas National Battlefield Park - about 800 acres outright and 700 acres in scenic easements. Areas included in the legislation are the entire Brawner Farm, the Stone Bridge and the Wheeler tract. The only significant exclusion is about 200 acres at the Park's entrance. The bill appropriated \$8.7 million for the expansion.

Although not a complete victory for the battlefield preservationists, the efforts of the Civil War Round Table Associates, and your letters did, in fact, help. (That's putting it mildly.)

'A thundering paradox of a man'

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By Member Bob Thum
(From the Bennington Banner, 1978)

I HAVE JUST FINISHED a book I would hope every American might read: "American Caesar," a biography of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, by William Manchester. A relative who majored in English at Yale under William Lyon Phelps wished to write such a book, but Manchester, a World War II combat marine, did it instead, and a superb job it is. I had the distinct feeling that he started out to be as dispassionate as possible, but as the book progressed, the reader could not help but feel that Manchester became more and more an admirer of this American hero.

"He was a thundering paradox of a man, noble and ignoble, inspiring and outrageous, arrogant and shy, the best of men and the worst of men. No more baffling, exasperating soldier ever wore a uniform. Flamboyant, imperious, and apocalyptic, he carried the plumage of a flamingo, could not acknowledge errors, and tried to cover up his mistakes with sly, childish tricks. Yet he was also endowed with great personal charm, a will of iron, and a soaring intellect. Unquestionably he was the most gifted man-at-arms this nation has produced." These are Manchester's words.

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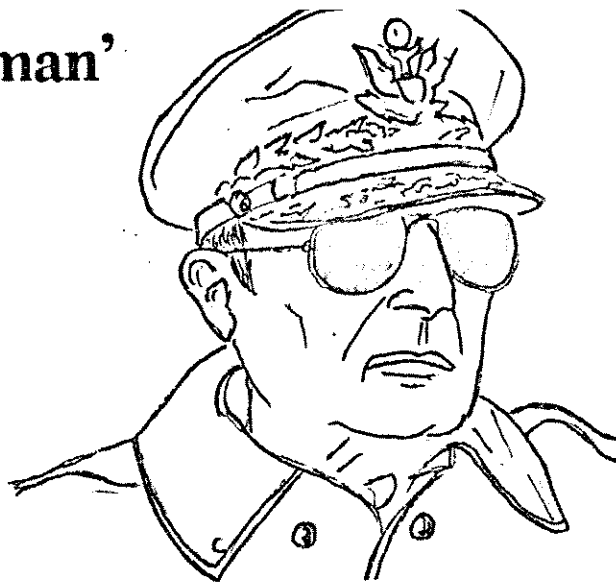
DOUGLAS MACARTHUR'S FATHER, Arthur, won the Congressional Medal of Honor for exceptional gallantry at Missionary Ridge and was breveted a full colonel at the tender age of 19. Young Douglas spent his boyhood days on frontier army posts and grew up to the sweat and dust of cavalry and infantry close-order drill, and the nostalgia of twilight retreat. At West Point he graduated first in his class, and at age 38 became a general, commanding the Rainbow Division in France in World War I, decorated nine times for heroism. By 1933 he was army chief of staff, after serving as superintendent of West Point. 1936 found him in the Philippines as Field Marshal and subsequently Far East commander. Here he was in 1941 when the Japanese attacked.

MacArthur's two military blunders were his inexplicable military behavior at Manila when he let his air force be destroyed on the ground nine hours after he was notified of the Pearl Harbor attack. A friend of mine was flying P40s at that time and told me how his squadron was ordered to fly south and returned to Manila almost out of gas to meet the devastating Japanese air attack. MacArthur's other military blunder was his New Guinea Buna-Gona-Sananda operation, his bloodiest, and except for Bataan and Corregidor, his darkest hour.

MacArthur's bypassing of the Japanese strongpoint at Rabaul and the campaign up the length of the island of New Guinea were masterpieces. His Hollandia invasion, with the loss of only 150 GI lives can be compared only with the later Inchon amphibious operation as one of the great military operations of all time. In 1945 he flew into Japan — unarmed — to accept the surrender of 83 million Japanese.

Ed. Note:

Fred Gill's popular Book Review will be resumed next month. Fred underwent some painful surgery on his hands, which made it a little too tough to type. How can we expect a comrade to function with his mitts shot off? The wounds are healing... I've saved Bob Thum's review for a couple of years because I thought it was so well done. Whether you are an admirer of Gen. MacArthur or not, (which I am), as Bob says, this book is a MUST.



THE PERIOD of his postwar rule of Japan was probably his finest hour. He earned the respect and almost love of the Japanese people by his liberal and fair writing of a Japanese constitution and its implementation. Then the Korean war struck the U.S., which was critically reduced in its military strength after World War II. MacArthur became the United Nations commander, executed the brilliant Inchon maneuver, and when the end of the war was within his grasp, was denied victory at the last moment by the flood of Chinese infantry that engulfed his forces. He was unable to cope with a war that denied him complete command to carry it to its conclusion, and he was recalled to the U.S. by the president, its commander.

Although his military plans for victory were specious, the facts are that the limited objective warfare following MacArthur's recall resulted in 60 percent of all the U.N. losses in Korea — over 80,000 of them American. This type of warfare dictated by politicians foreshadowed the debacle of Vietnam. It is interesting that although he was gung ho to have his fling at the Chinese at his recall from Korea, he later on his deathbed begged Lyndon Johnson to stay out of Vietnam. He vainly advised him that no American soldier should be made to fight on Asian soil.

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WHEN MACARTHUR DELIVERED his farewell address to Congress in April of 1951, I kept my three school aged sons home to watch the address on television. It might have been the only time they saw their father openly weep as the general intoned, "The world has turned over many times since I took the oath on the Plain at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have long since vanished. But I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads of that day, which proclaimed, most proudly, that 'Old Soldiers never die. They just fade away.' And like the soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away — an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty." The last word was a hushed: "Good-bye."

The warrior, a consummate orator, topped this with his farewell speech at West Point. Speaking without a note, these words: "The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here... I listen vainly, but with thirsty ear, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll. In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory, I always come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes in my ears — Duty, Honor, Country. Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps; and the Corps; and the Corps. I bid you farewell."

THE BLUE & GRAY IN EGYPT

BY MEMBER TOM KOEHL



In the late 1860's, Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, which was then a part of the Turkish Empire, had grand ideas for the development of his country and its ultimate independence. This necessitated a build-up of military potential.

Thaddeus Mott, an American soldier of fortune and former colonel of U.S. Volunteers, due to his sister's marriage to the Turkish Ambassador, and his own marriage into an influential Turkish family, had the Khedive's ear on military matters. The Khedive accepted his recommendation on hiring military talent for two reasons. First, for their recent Civil War experience and second, because the U.S. had no imperial designs on Egypt, as did England and France. If you remember, the Suez Canal had just been completed.



The roster of those hired, according to Civil War records, included 3 Union Brigadier Generals, 2 Confederate Major and 3 Brigadier generals with a good number of majors, captains and lieutenants from both armies. Brig. Gen'l. Charles P. Stone (the American Dreyfus) was the Khedive's Chief of Staff, while the two best known Confederate generals were W.W. Loring and H.H. Sibley.

The status of these officers was unique in military annals. They were something more than the traditional and romantic soldiers of fortune who appear on the battlefields of the world. They were something less than a military mission loaned by one state to another for the purpose of instructing the armies of the host. The Americans were professional soldiers, employed under contract to perform a variety of military services. Perhaps we should class them with the wandering knights of the Middle Ages who sold their services to petty princelings. Among these knights-errant were many of proved capacity and experience. Their tenure was roughly between 1870-82.

Altogether, the Americans who served the Khedive chalked up some remarkable accomplishments. They made contributions to Egyptian education, brought engineering skill to the aid of a progressive Khedive who was trying to modernize his country, made significant geographical discoveries, and conducted extensive physical and sociological surveys on distant frontiers. Paradoxically, it was only in the area of military affairs that they had but limited success.

The only battle of any size or importance was fought at Gura against the army of King John of Abyssinia. Major General W.W. Loring was the ranking American officer, but had no real authority, as the Egyptian prince and his military guru, who accompanied the expedition, were the only persons the Egyptian soldiers would obey. The soldiers themselves were soldiers in name only, despite the fact that they were armed with the latest Remington rolling block breech loaders with fixed ammunition; against ancient muskets, spears and swords, they were ineffectual. The reason being Egyptians were notorious for their bad eyesight and couldn't see the enemy they were shooting at. The whole expedition was a military blivitt that ended in a draw. As for General Loring, it was a far cry from his defense of Fort Pemberton at the head of the Yazoo, where he earned the sobriquet of "Old Blizzards."

The veterans of the Blue and Gray who worked for the Khedive Ismail on the Nile were far more than refugees seeking employment, far more than knights-errant seeking a crusade. They were the advance guard of a newly invigorated nation whose representatives - technicians, soldiers, salesmen, cultural agents, missionaries, administrators - would soon go forth to every part of the world.

Source: The Blue and Gray on the Nile, by William B. Hesseltine and Hazel C. Wolf, 1961, University of Chicago Press

Scenes I'd Like to Have Seen



In the weeks preceding Bull Run, Washington was treated daily to the colorful spectacles of arriving units from various states, with bands blaring and banners streaming; uniforms of all descriptions.

The seventy-ninth New York, commanded by Secretary Cameron's brother, marching in kilts and tartans; four German regiments, led by Col. Louis Blenker, in red-lined capes; the sixty-ninth New York Zouaves, with their scarlet bloomers and their Captain Thomas Francis Meager, draped in gold lace; and many others.

Another picturesque outfit from New York was a collection of scamps known as the Garibaldi Guard, who affected the plumed bersaglieri hats of that galloping Italian regiment, with red blouses and green pants. It was made up of Hungarians, Germans, Italians, French, Spanish and Swiss, mixed with a few Cossacks, Sepoys, Croats and English deserters; and beside the companies marched vivandieres in feathered hats, jaunty jackets, and blue gowns. The Washington Intelligencer informed its readers that the vivandieres had husbands in the ranks; but the Star reported that some of them were runaways and ladies of easy virtue.

The Garibaldi Guard was led by Colonel D'Utassy, who was reputed to have been a dancing master, adventurer, and former circus rider. He played a splendid part in the Washington pageant of 1861, but he would eventually land in Sing Sing for embezzling and cheating and persuading soldiers to desert.

The Guard marched off to Bull Run eventually, carrying their rations of bread on their bayonets, in the best French style. Not much was heard of them after that fiasco.

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New Books

The New York Times Book Section reported recently that a lot of new Civil War novels have surfaced. The Crater, by R. Slotkin, Elkorn Tavern, by Douglas Jones and Armored Giants, by F. Van Wyck Mason are a few. That last one, about the Monitor and Merrimac, in this writer's opinion, is a sloppy work to say the least. It reads as though the author wrote each chapter without bothering to ever reread the preceding one, there are so many repetitions of facts and phrases. There are confusing time-lapses, and historical inaccuracies. I also found a non-fiction, huge picture book entitled America at War, have forgotten the editor but cannot forget the shock of reading the identifying caption, "Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America" under a big picture of Judah P. Benjamin.



It is assumed that only six Civil War veterans went on to become Presidents. They were U. S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester Arthur, Benjamin Harrison and William McKinley. There was one more, however. He was Emil Frey, who rose from sergeant to brevet major while serving in the 24th and 82nd Illinois Volunteer Regiments. He fought at Bowling Green, Ky., Nashville, Tenn., Tusculumbia and Huntsville, Ala., at Chancellorsville, Va., and was made prisoner at Gettysburg, as a captain. Paroled in Jan., 1865, he was mustered out as a brevet major "for gallant and meritorious services during the war." Returning to his native Switzerland, he was repeatedly elected to the Swiss House of Representatives, and from 1882 to 1887 served as the Swiss Ambassador to the United States; later became Secretary of War. On Jan. 1, 1894, Emil Frey was elected President of the Swiss Confederation.

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During the war the South suffered from shortages of all kinds. A powder mill in Selma, Alabama, tried to solve one such shortage in late 1862 in an unusual way. It seems the mill was hard-pressed for nitre, one of the chief ingredients of gunpowder. John Harrolson, an employee at the mill, conceived the idea of extracting it from urine and posted a request for same from the ladies of Selma (most of the men being gone.) Wagons with barrels were sent about the town to collect the contents of chamber pots. Somehow soldiers in the field had a tough time taking this plan seriously, and some wag composed the following:

"Johnny Harrolson, John Harrolson! You are a wretched creature.
You've added to this bloody war a new and awful feature.
You'd have us think, while every man is bound to be a fighter,
The ladies, bless the dears, should save their pee for nitre.

Johnny Harrolson, John Harrolson, where did you get the notion,
To send your barrels around the town to gather up the lotion?
We thought the girls had work enough in making skirts and kissing,
But now you've put the pretty dears to patriotic pissing.

Johnny Harrolson, John Harrolson do pray invent a neater
And somewhat less immodest mode of making your saltpetre.
The thing's so queer you know, gunpowder like and cranky,
That when a lady lifts her skirt she shoots a bloody Yankee."

Thanks to the St. Louis CWRT's Bushwhacker

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Washington, D.C. was in a turmoil after First Bull Run, the city crowded with soldiers and visiting civilians. The hotels were filled with anxious friends and relatives of soldiers who had been in action. To the sanguine expectations of the North, the reverse had been a cruel disappointment. Yet business boomed, the new drama of "Eily O'Conner" packed every nook and cranny of the Washington Theatre. Wyman, "the unrivalled necromancer and ventriloquist," held huge audiences spellbound at Odd Fellows' Hall.

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At Benton Barracks, St. Louis, some men purchased bullet-proof vests from a sutler there. On a steamer down the river they decided to test the vests. One was tied to a bag of oats and stood up against a board, then shot at with a Springfield. You guessed it. The Minie ball went right through the vest, the sack of oats and the plank, and then continued down the river. Cost of vests - \$7 to \$20. No more sales.

From History of the 4th Minnesota