



The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P.O. BOX 5028 • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

FEBRUARY, 1979

186th Meeting

VOLUME 24 NO. 3

DATE: FEBRUARY 13th
SPEAKER: PRESIDENT WILLIAM BATES
SUBJECT: "ACTION AT ARABY"
PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB
PRELIMINARIES: 6:00 P.M.

DINNER: 7:00 P.M.

VINDICATION OR REDEMPTION OF LEW WALLACE?

A larger than life-size figure Wallace, volunteer soldier of two wars, author and politician, was thrust upon the stage of the Civil War early in 1861. Then came Shiloh and Lew's failure to find the battle. As Grant's star(s) rose Wallace's sank until he finally obtained command of the Baltimore Military District. This was a safe command under Washington's eye but with no combat until Jubal Early came roaring down the valley in July, 1864.

As Early routed several Union forces, Washington became uncertain and befuddled, reaction was slow - too slow! Wallace made a fateful choice to fight a no-win action at Monocacy. Was this an attempt at redemption or a real vindication of his real character?

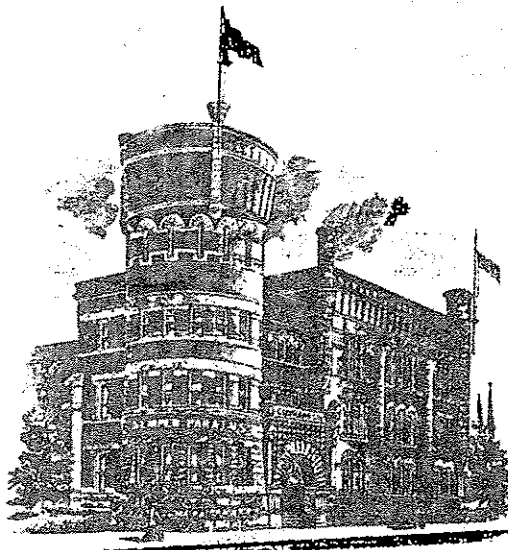
Bill Bates will attempt to provide some insight to Lew Wallace - the Original Hoosier Hotshot!

JANUARY MEETING HELD AT CLEVELAND GRAY'S ARMORY

Twenty-one members met at this historic landmark and enjoyed a tour conducted by Captain John Morgan, U.S.A. Retired, manager.

After a catered meal that even Bayless pronounced good, Captain Morgan gave a brief resumé of the history of the Grays, which was organized in 1837.

The Civil War participation of this colorful regiment chronicles: April 19, 1861...left for war as Co. E 1st OVI under Col. A.M. McCook. First under fire at Vienna, Va., June 17, 1861.



(continued on page 4)

THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
Founded Nov. 19, 1957

President: Bill Bates
Vice Pres.: Chuck Spiegle
Secretary: Tom Geshke
Treasurer: John Harkness

Executive Committee: 1979
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1980
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JOHN WILKES BOOTH COMMITTS SUICIDE

THE ASSASSIN OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN TAKES HIS OWN LIFE, ACCORDING TO HIS RELATIVES AND PROMINENT ACTORS

SAINT LOUIS, June 3.—A dispatch to the Globe-Democrat from Enid, O. T., says:

Junius Brutus Booth, the actor, and nephew of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, has identified the remains of the man known as David E. George, as his uncle.

George, or Booth, committed suicide here January 14 last, and in his effects was found a letter directed to K. L. Bates, of Memphis, Tenn.

Mr. Bates came here at that time and fully identified the body as John Wilkes Booth. He then went east and obtained positive identification of the re-

maina from the dead man's nephew and from Joseph Jefferson, Miss Clara Morris and others who knew him in his early days.

According to Mr. Bates' story, he had acted as Booth's confidential agent and attorney for nearly forty years.

After Lincoln was shot the assassin escaped to the Garrett plantation in Virginia. Mr. Bates said the man who was killed was named Ruddy. Being warned Booth left Garrett's and was taken care of by friends in Central Kentucky. He later settled at Glenrose Mills, Tex., where he conducted a store for several years as John Saint Helen.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 1969

Cleveland Daily World

THE MAN WHO SHOT

THE MAN WHO SHOT LINCOLN

Many are the hoaxes that have centered around the assassin, of which the old clipping above is one. As recently as 1977 a book and movie, The Lincoln Conspiracy, was branded by investigators of The Civil War Times Illustrated as a phoney based upon forged documents and a myth.

There is no doubt that many mysteries are shrouded in the military trial of the conspirators, the hiding of Booth's body, the shady actions of Lafayette C. Baker, head of the U.S. Secret Service. (continued on page 4)

HOW I BECAME INTERESTED

From Sea Island, Georgia, came a welcome letter from Jack Cullen, from which the following quote was culled.

"Charlie Clarke's letter has inspired the following. Too, some of our newer members might like to know how the CWRT came into being.

"We had some friends for Thanksgiving dinner along with their house guests from Milwaukee. That was back in 1955. When the subject of the Civil War arose and I expressed a certain interest I was asked, "Don't you have a Civil War Round Table?" It was suggested that I write to Ralph Newman in Chicago, which I did, and was told to contact the late Ken Grant as another Civil War enthusiast. Ken and I made a trip with ^{them to} the Chattanooga - Atlanta area; those were the days to see the battlefields, and on our return decided to take action. Each of us invited six interested Civil War buffs to a dinner meeting and the Cleveland CWRT was born." JACK CULLEN * * * *

Our Treasurer, John Harkness, at a recent meeting gave the writer a quickie run-down on how HE became interested in the Civil War. It seems that when he was a callow youth (have often wondered what that means,) he did not evidence much interest in athletics, girls and other such activities, so his parents took him on some extended tours of Civil War battlefields. Naturally, this engendered an everlasting interest in all phases of that period, which has persisted up to the present, much to the benefit of our organization. * * * * *

Some of our membership may be unaware of the fact that our former active, and now out-of-town member, BOB THUMB, writes a column for the Bennington Banner (Vt.), a retirement project at which he excells. Starting next month will be a series of these interesting articles, perforce condensed, to continue this feature of your Charger. SEND IN YOUR STORY!!!

Lincoln Lore



*Gleaned from
here and there*

Thomas Nast, cartoonist for Harper's Weekly left for posterity not only the cartoon symbols of the donkey for the Democratic Party and the elephant for the Republican, but the first modern version of Santa Claus. Many of his cartoons favored enlistment in the Union Armies, and Lincoln referred to Nast as "our best recruiting sergeant." * * * * *

Lincoln's youngsters Tad and Willie had a doll named "Jack" which was dressed in a Zouave uniform. One day at play they imagined him sleeping on duty, so they sentenced him to death and prepared a grave beside a bush on the WhiteHouse lawn. A gardner advised them to appeal to the President before the execution. The result was a note written on Executive Mansion stationery which read, "The doll Jack is pardoned. By order of the President. A. Lincoln"

* * * * *

That Lincoln shocked many people with his crude brand of humor there is little doubt. This was mentioned in many books; a sample quote will suffice: Lincoln struck many as simply uncouth; the frontier stories he told and some of his hilarious remarks, as they went the rounds of Fourteenth Street (near location of the Herald, Tribune, Times, World, Daily News and Journal of Commerce) went beyond what a newspaper could print.

Reporting the Civil War

Louis M. Starr

In searching for examples of these "dirty stories," one was finally unearthed in a book about Arkansas folklore by Vance Randolph. It is the story involving a name, written in the snow, of the son of a neighbor who recognized his daughter's handwriting.

* * * * *

Lincoln was not averse to lending his name to a (using the modern word,) "commercial," with reservations. When one Prof. Gardner applied to the President-Elect for a soap testimonial, he good humoredly complied thus:

Springfield, Ill. Sept, 28, 1860

Dear Sir:

Some specimens of your Soap have been used at our house and Mrs. L. declares it to be a superior article. She at the same time protests that I have never given sufficient attention to "the soap question" to be a competent judge. A. L.

* * * * *

In the same source, The Wit and Wisdom of A. Lincoln by Jack Lang, was found this wire in reply to an urgent S.O.S from Gen. Daniel Tyler: Gen'l. Tyler, Martinsburg:

If you are besieged how do you dispatch me?

Why did you not leave before being beseiged? A.L.

* * * * *

In 1897 LaSalle Corbett Pickett, widow of the Rebel General whose name will forever be linked with Gettysburg, was a popular Lyceum and Chautauqua speaker. This lady was the young bride to whom the older George Pickett was always writing love letters throughout his service under Longstreet, from Gaine's Mill to Five Forks.

One of the anecdotes with which she dramatized her war experiences occurred after the fall of Richmond. Rumors were that Pickett had been killed at Five Forks, but she never believed that "her soldier" would not come home to her. They were anxious hours, what with the city burning and full of Yankees.

The day after the most severe fire there was a sharp rap at her door, which she answered, her baby under her arm. When she

opened the door she looked up at a tall, gaunt, sad-faced man. "Is this the home of George Pickett?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, "and I am his wife and this is his baby."

"I am Abraham Lincoln."

"The President," she gasped.

"No, Abraham Lincoln, George's old friend." With that he fondled the child, informed her that her husband was, indeed, alive, and then said, before leaving, "Tell your father, the rascal, that I forgive him for the sake of your bright eyes."

We have only Mrs. Pickett's word for this dialogue, but give her the benefit of the doubt when considering the fact that Lincoln knew and had liked young Pickett well enough to have secured an appointment for him to West Point.

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THE MAN WHO SHOT THE MAN WHO SHOT LINCOLN (continued from page 2)

But the facts are clear that the man cornered in a barn by a troop of U.S. Cavalrymen and shot by one of them was John Wilkes Booth. Herold, the only other conspirator who accompanied Booth on his flight, surrendered, but Booth refused to come out, so they set fire to the place and a trooper by the name of Boston Corbett plugged him through a crack in the boards.

Booth, the Clark Gable of his day, was easily recognized when they dragged him out and was laid to die on the porch of the farm. Captain E.P. Doherty and a dozen of his men looked upon the dying assassin and cursed him.

Boston Corbett, a religious nut who had spent a few months as a prisoner at Andersonville, was arrested for disobeying the order to bring Booth back alive. The bullet entered the back of Booth's head in exactly the same place where his bullet had hit Lincoln. Corbett always claimed that it was the hand of the Lord who directed his shot.

Contrary to many stories, Boston Corbett was not adjudged insane and put away after Stanton released him from arrest. He migrated to Kansas as a homesteader, and became a local character. In 1887 he was appointed sergeant-at-arms in the State House at Topeka. For a short time he discharged his duties proudly and properly, pacing the legislative halls with pistols dangling from his belt, adornments he had always worn, along with shoulder-length hair. All went well until one day he became suspicious of some employees loitering in the hall and whipped out his guns, threatening to kill them. The police were called and a couple of detectives disarmed him, under his vigorous protests. His reputation for erratic behavior had caught up with him. In 1887 Corbett was declared insane and sent to the state asylum.

A year later he climbed a fence, jumped on a saddled horse and galloped out of sight. It was later learned that he had made his way to Neodesha, Kansas, to the home of one Richard Thatcher, a fellow-prisoner at Andersonville. It was learned from the latter that Corbett had boarded a train, telling his friend that he was going to Mexico, and that he had been inhumanly treated ever since he'd killed Booth.

Nothing was ever heard of Boston after that.

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CLEVELAND GRAYS (continued from page 1)

July 21, 1861... Covered retreat of Union troops at Bull Run. Recruited two companies for 84th OVI, 1862. Left Cleveland May 12, 1864, as 150th OVI. Guard of Honor at obsequies for President Lincoln, Cleveland, 1865.

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CORBETT
from a
photo
16th
N.Y.
CAV.

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PART TWO. THE MAGICIAN WHO BECAME AMERICAS'S FIRST AIRFORCE

Dawn mists over the Chickahominy River were swiftly disappearing in the first rays of the sun. The air was clear on this spring day in 1862, an excellent morning for a balloon observation from Gaine's Hill, six miles from Mechanicsville, Virginia.

Professor Lowe, the most shot at man in the Union, bobbed up into the sky, his ground crew paying out the ropes that would anchor him a mile high where he could scan the Rebel forts to the south. Moving slowly upward, he looked apprehensively at a certain clump of trees where even now he could see tiny figures in gray scurrying around a long-barrelled^{gun} which he knew to be a rifled Whitworth that greeted him every day. So far, he had outwitted them by changing his point of ascension a few yards every time he went up.

Beyond range above 300 feet because it was impossible to elevate the guns of that day, although the balloon did dip and circle, making a difficult target, the first few minutes must have been terrifying. The professor knew what it felt like to have whole batteries banging away at him. He could hear them booming, and shells screamed over and under the big bag, filled with 20,000 cubic feet of inflammable hydrogen gas. These were not solid-shot shells coming at him, but fused, and they burst. The first ack ack! But his luck always held.

Thaddeus Lowe had trained nine other aerial reconnaissance balloonists, The Corps eventually numbering seven of the big bags, painted with The U.S. flag. They made 3,000 ascensions during the first two years of the War. (Note: there is a paucity of information about these others after Lowe quit following Chancellorsville. There the weather was too bad most of the time to send them up, and when Lowe did go up, his observations were ignored, which certainly was a God-send to Jackson's famous flanking movement.)

These observers could determine the number of troops on the march by noting the time required for a column to pass a given point, or estimate the size of an encampment by counting the tents or campfires. Cavalry, no matter how well hidden by trees and ridges, could be detected by their clouds of tell-tale dust. Lowe took cartographers aloft to sketch much-needed maps, and even experimented with photography.

Another innovation the doughty aerialist introduced was his direction of artillery fire, reporting points of impact, so gunners could correct their range and direction. His invention of portable gas generators greatly improved the operation, freeing them from depending upon municipal gas outlets. The horse-drawn tanks produced hydrogen gas by a chemical reaction between iron filings and sulphuric acid.

Professor Lowe was first to introduce the aircraft carrier! Secretary of the Navy Welles provided him with a coal barge and he converted it by adding a flat top. The 122-foot vessel was christened "G.W. Parke Curtis" and was used for reconnaissance on the York and James Rivers, rendering valuable service during the Peninsular campaign.*

But not all turned out as well as expected. The weather had to be just right; there was trouble with ground crews, usually recruited from the incompetent backwash of the army, mechanical breakdowns and so on, turning off a good many generals on this branch of service.

*With a steam tug to pull it, and a gunboat escort, "The Coeur de Lion"

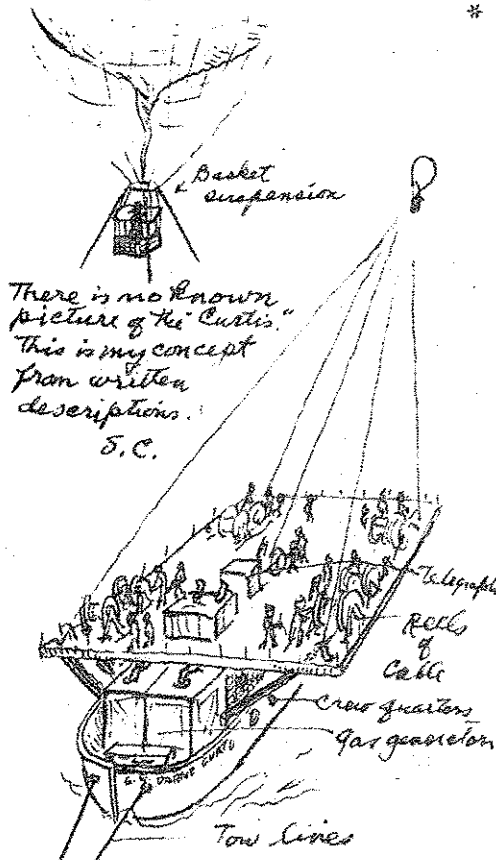
Lowe, who had worked so arduously night and day for eighteen months, contracted malaria and was in a run-down condition when the final blow fell. The balloon service was placed under the jurisdiction of the Corps of Army Engineers. Gone were McClellan, Fitz Hugh Porter and other generals who had appreciated the value and accomplishments of the professor. One Cyrus B. McComstock, Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac made life so miserable with his high-handed administration and pettifoggery over supplies that Lowe became despondent and quit. Several of the assistant aeronauts followed suit and went home. Thus in 1863 it would seem that the Union armies ceased to use aerial surveillance.

After his army experience (he was always a hired civilian and never commissioned,) Lowe perfected the use of compressed ammonia, leading to the building of the first ice-making machine, a direct forerunner of modern refrigeration. This, and other projects (a refrigeration ship) were financed by money he earned from Emperor Dom Pedro, of Brazil, for building and training a Balloon Corps for the Brazilian army.

Next he moved his family to Pasadena, California, where he held patents on important improvements in producing water gas, a hydrogen carbon monoxide mixture. He built a beautiful home and laboratory, and in the late 1880's purchased a mountain top, which he called Mount Lowe, and on it had an observatory built, with a 16-inch reflecting telescope made in his own lab.

Still the showman, he then opened a cog-wheel electric railroad running up to the observatory, and charged admission to the public to take a spectacular ride up to look at the stars. In 1897 Lowe's greatest financial triumph was his invention of a coke oven that produced a domestic coke cheaper and better than European imports. With money pouring in, the old magician and aeronaut spent the remainder of his days studying astronomy, his head still in the clouds. He died at the age of 81 in 1913.

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Thaddeus Sobieski Constantine Lowe was not the first balloonist to interest Abraham Lincoln in the idea of aerial observation. John Wise, a veteran exhibition balloonist, under the President's sponsorship, followed Gen. McDowell's army to Bull Run, a crew dragging the inflated balloon. Eight miles short of the battlefield, it was punctured by trees. Wise went back to W. Virginia and organized a cavalry troop. During the Mexican War he had proposed the use of balloons to carry bombs over the fortifications of Vera Cruz.

Another exhibition balloonist, who was probably the first used by the Union in one of Gen. Burnside's early commands, was John Allen, who made many ascensions of value, but his balloon too, was worn with age and finally burst. He became one of Lowe's assistant aeronauts.

Early in the war a young Confederate lieutenant acquired an ancient balloon and made several reconnaissances for General Lee, who highly approved. But he could only go up 800 feet which was ineffective. The Army of Northern Virginia recognized his talents in another branch..he became General E. Porter Alexander, Lee's great artilleryman.