

The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 444
VERMILION, OHIO - 44089

FEBRUARY, 1981

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 10

Third Lincoln Edition

Meeting Number 204

DATE: Tuesday, February 10th
SPEAKER: John Harkness
SUBJECT: Civil War Arms -- Materials and Manufacture
PLACE: The Hermit Club, Dodge Court, Cleveland
TIME: Togetherness: 6:00 P.M. Dinner: 7:00 P.M.

John's talk will cover the materials used in the production of the 1855-1863 Springfield and 1853* rifled muskets, and the manufacturing methods employed to produce these weapons which formed the backbone of both Union and Confederate armies. The talk will be illustrated with slides showing the machine tools, manufacturing steps, and inspection procedures as well as showing microstructures and mechanical novelty data obtained by the speaker during metallurgical investigations of selected antique weapon parts. In addition, unique problems in the production of Colt and Adams revolvers, and a general survey of cannon production methods, both smoothbore and rifled guns will be presented.

* * *

* Enfield

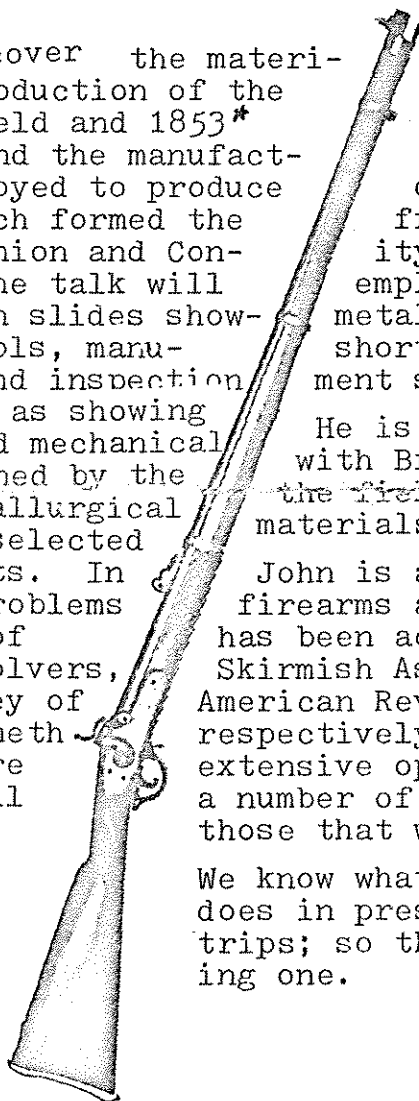
John Harkness, our present Vice-President, holds both Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Metallurgy from Case-Western Reserve University (1968 and 1973.) He has been employed in the capacity of a research metallurgist since 1968, serving a short stint in metallurgical equipment sales in 1976-77.

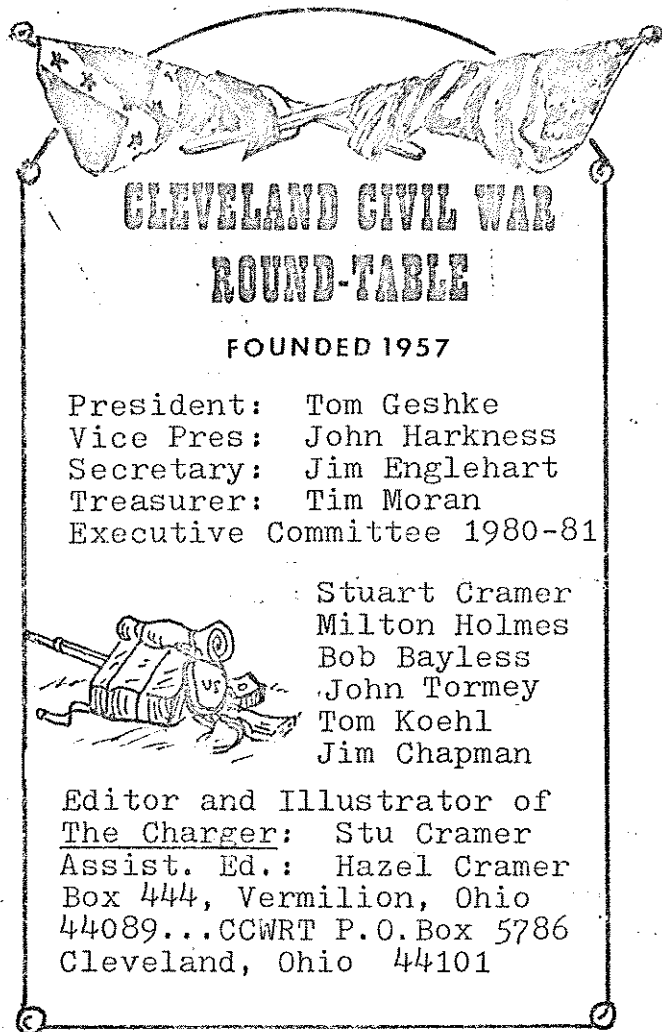
He is currently Senior Metallurgist with Brush Wellman, Inc., working in the field of electronic connector materials.

John is a collector of antique military firearms and British edged weapons, and has been active in both the North-South Skirmish Association and the Brigade of the American Revolution since 1964 and 1973 respectively. During this period he has had extensive opportunities to examine and fire a number of antique firearms, particularly those that will be discussed in his talk.

We know what a good job our V.P. always does in presenting his slides of our field trips; so this meeting should be an outstanding one.

* * * *





President: Tom Geshke
 Vice Pres: John Harkness
 Secretary: Jim Englehart
 Treasurer: Tim Moran
 Executive Committee 1980-81

Stuart Cramer
 Milton Holmes
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 John Tormey
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Tormey Last Month

In an obviously well-researched talk at the December meeting, Member John Tormey took the members back to the hot sands of the Southwest in 1861-62 when that vast area was denied to the Confederacy.

Detailing the important Battles of Glorietta, Valveta and Apache Canyon, John showed how the struggle between Sibley and Canby finally was won by the Union. Canby lost battles but won the campaign. His scorched earth policy combined with the forces of nature to defeat the dreams of Jefferson Davis to add Arizona, New Mexico and California to the Confederacy.

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Notes on Board Meeting²

On Thursday, January 29th, President Tom Geshke called an Executive Board Meeting. Present in the private room (filled with steins of beer) at Kiefer's German Restaurant were: Jim Chapman, Jim Englehart, Neville and Bob Bayless, John Tormey, Bernie Drews, Chuck Spiegle, Don Heckaman, Stu Cramer, Tom Koehle, Dr. Bill Chamberlin. We missed Bill Schlesinger, who was reported as doing fine.

Among other things, the following items were discussed, cussed, resolved, unresolved and moved forward....

Roster and mailing list gone over for changes and deletions and additions. If you change your address, tell SOMEONE.

Finances...LOW. Treasurer Tim Moran was ill, but President Geshke gave the financial report. Our only source of income is the dues, and 66 are paid up while 35 have forgotten to send them in.

Assignments were made to contact those on the latter list. It was agreed that OUT OF TOWN MEMBERS PAY \$5, which covers postage for the CHARGER - when the postage goes up, that amount will be increased accordingly.

The FALL FIELD TRIP will be to the Battlefields at Chattanooga and Chickamauga under the leadership of veteran Field Trip Marshals Spiegle and Bayless (R.E.Lee Bayless.) Probably the latter part of next September. ALL THIS IS TENTATIVE. The "Mini-summer field trip, under the direction of a distinguished committee composed of Bernie Drews, Don Heckaman, Chuck Spiegle and Neville Bayless will be devoted to the French and Indian War - Forts Necessity, Fort Mifflin, and Fallen Waters - parts of the campaigns of Washington, 1754, Braddock, 1755, and Forbes, 1758. Overnight at famed Summit Hotel, near Uniontown, Pa..a car caravan. TENTATIVE!

A nominating committee was appointed to replace executive directors Cramer and Holmes, whose terms expire this year. President Tom has lined up a great speaker for Ladies' Night in April - Dan Tyler Moore...and the May meeting will be held at the home of Ken Callahan with a panel discussion entitled "What If?" composed of Dr. Abel Robertson, Charlie Clarke (hopefully) and S.Cramer. Rebuttles by those members present.

Fred Gill's Book Review

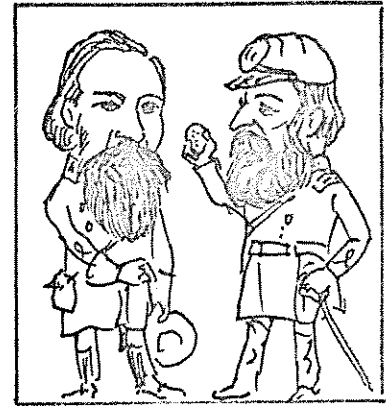
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FACT AND FICTION- BOTH BAD

Confederates, by Thomas Keneally. Harper & Row: N. Y. 1979

Here is a book with a title hard to resist by anyone interested in the Civil War. The book drew rave reviews in England, where it first appeared, and American reviews, including one in our own Cleveland Plain Dealer, continued the raving. All of these reviews sounded more like sales pitches than critical appraisals, but, because I tend to take the writings of my betters at face value, I read the book. Or, I should say, I read as much as I could stomach, and there is only one word to describe it: boring. Resist it, then, unless you enjoy boredom and spurious history.

Others have pointed the finger of scorn at the historical fluffs and I can do no less: the Second Battle of Antietam, "Jimmy" Longstreet and many other big and little historical inaccuracies. Maybe a game could be made from picking them out as you read. For me it is not worth it, for the story and the characters simply are not interesting.



Jimmy and Tom talk over Bob's plans

Several reviewers, in their benighted ignorance, compare Confederates with the Red Badge of Courage. About the only thing the authors of these two books have in common is that neither was ever in a war. In no parallel way does the interminable pedestrian writing about two dimensional characters compare with Crane's cadenced prose about Henry Fleming, the imaginative, inarticulate soldier who came to understand battle and himself.

Beyond that, The Red Badge of Courage must be the only Civil War book these reviewers ever read, probably under duress in American Lit II, and the appeared to have forgotten it. There are so many well written, accurately researched novels about the War: The Killer Angels for example, or McKinlay Kanter's Long Remember or Don Robertson's The River and the Wilderness. At least they are believably about believable characters.

I must, however, award Confederates author a gold star for sheer nerve. He is an Australian and must have put forth prodigious effort and concentration to write, even poorly, about a long-ago war in a far-away place.

* * * * *

The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln 4



Lincoln always knew that he was homely and ungainly, but actually, he was sensitive about his appearance, and to cover this, he never lost an opportunity to poke fun at himself. His sense of responsibility was almost overwhelming. He died a thousand deaths at the toll of dead and wounded, and the misery he knew was the result of the decisions he had to make as President...and took full blame upon himself. He often said that it was only his sense of humor that carried him through. He made it a life-long habit to always look for the ludicrous and funny side of any situation. And there is a precious secret! Look for the humor in any problem and it will serve to keep you thinking straight. This works!

For years I have kept a file of Lincoln stories and jokes, and the following are a sample of them:

He loved to tell the story about the repulsive-looking stranger who came up to him one time when he was a circuit-riding lawyer. The man said he had something that belonged to Lincoln, and presented him with a jack-knife. "This was given to me one time," said the stranger, "to give to anyone I ever came across who was uglier than I am. This knife, sir, belongs to you."

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One of my very favorites, discovered recently in an old book, was a crack he made about the plague of office-seekers that had filled the halls of the White House from the moment he had taken office. He made it a point to try and see them all, but they were impossible to satisfy. For about a week in 1862 he was confined to his bed by a mild case of smallpox. "Where are all those office-seekers?" he quipped to his doctor, "now I have something I can give everyone."

* * * *

Early in the war, after Lincoln had tried one after another of generals to command the Army of the Potomac, P. T. Barnum's circus played Washington and the midgets in the show were the main attraction. "General Tom Thumb" was the most admired general in town, and both he and "Commodore Nutt" were received at the Executive Mansion, where they sang "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean" for the Cabinet. Lincoln cracked to Barnum that he too had some pretty small generals.

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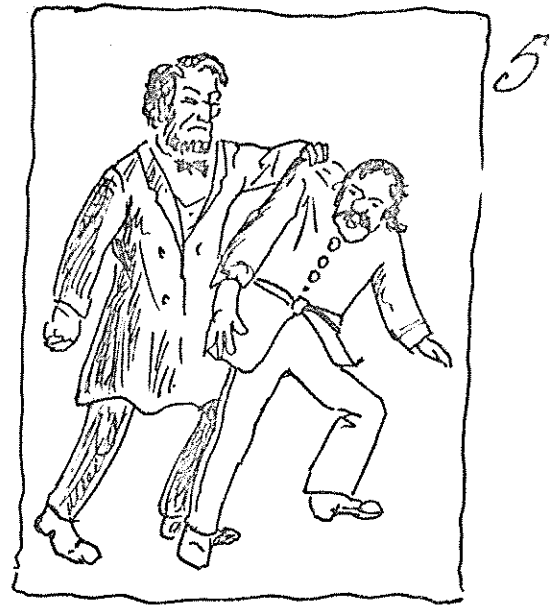
The governor of Massachusetts was always at logger-heads with Major General Ben Butler, and once went to the President with his usual complaints. Lincoln recognized Butler as an aggressive and successful general at the time and wanted to keep peace with both these powerful Democrats. "You must bear in mind, Governor," he said, "that Ben is cross-eyed....he sees things differently than other people."

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One time on a cruise aboard the "River Queen" down Chesapeake Bay, the steward served champagne to the party and offered the President a glass. "No thank you, son; in my time I have seen too many get seasick on dry land using that same article."

Lincoln Lore

Lincoln's patience was proverbial but there were occasions when, pushed too far, his ire would be aroused. A cashiered officer, seeking to be restored through the power of the executive, was permitted to tell his side of the story. Convinced the man was guilty, the request was denied, and then the disgraced officer became abusive. He shouted, "You'd made up your mind not to do me justice before I even came in here!" Lincoln quickly jumped up, grabbed the fellow by the coat collar and danced him over to the door. "I can bear censure, sir, but not insult," said the irate President, "don't ever let me see your face around here again," and ejected him into the hallway.



* * *

When told about Mosby's extraordinary feat of riding into the center of the Union camp, and then out again, taking with him several prisoners, including General Stroughton, plus about 60 horses in excellent condition, Lincoln didn't seem much worried about the general, whose reputation was ruined by this exploit. Cracked the President, "Hate to lose those horses. I can make generals but not horses."

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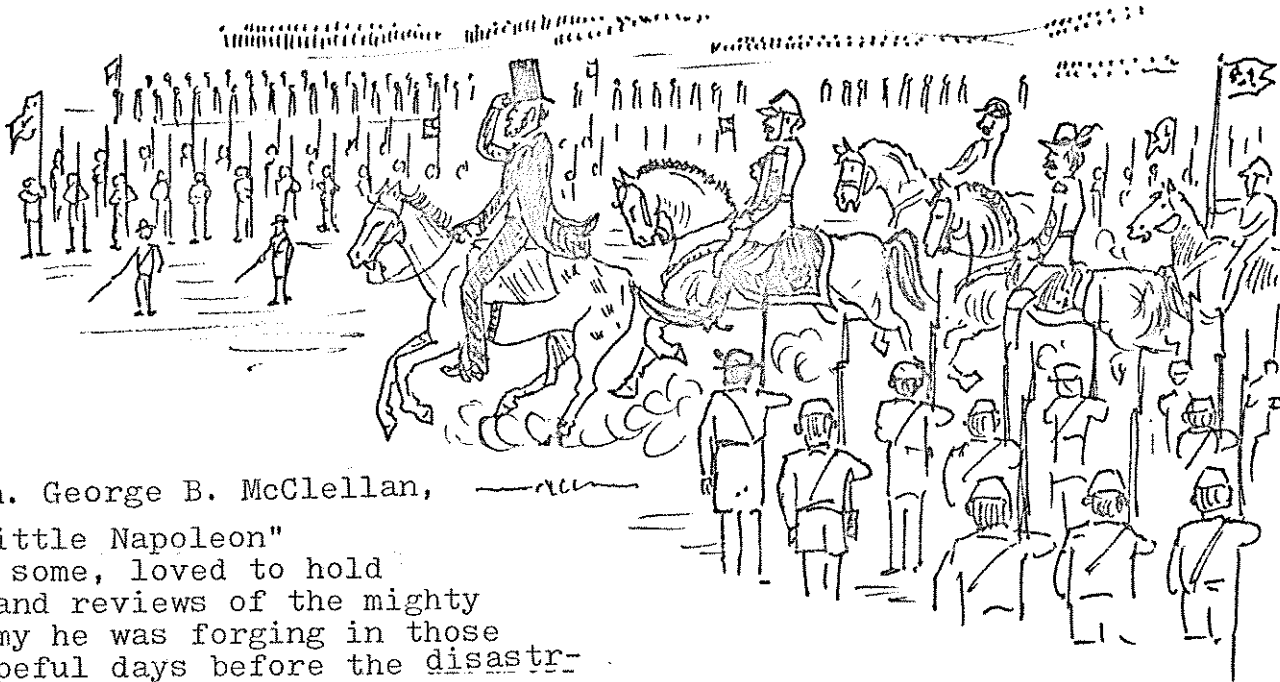
Lincoln liked to tell the story about a colonel whose fright cured a big boil on the part of his anatomy that made horseback-riding very painful. On one occasion, the colonel was ordered to take his cavalry out on a reconnaissance. He finally dismounted and ordered his troops on without him. Soon he was startled by the sound of many pistols and rebel yells and saw his men tearing back helter-skelter in full retreat. He forgot everything but the yells, sprang into his saddle and raced over fences and ditches 'til safe within his lines. The pain was gone, and so was the boil. "There's no cure for boils like the rebel yell," Lincoln would say.

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Many requests and petitions made to President Lincoln were ludicrous and trifling, but he always entered into them with that humor-loving spirit that gave him relief from the grave duties and unpleasant tasks of his great office. Once a small politician called on behalf of a friend explaining that this friend was his former washwoman, whose husband had gone off to join the rebs, and who wanted to go home from New York, but was afraid of the Yankee soldiers. The man earnestly asked the President to give her a "letter of protection." The appeal struck Lincoln as uncommonly ridiculous, but masked his humor behind a serious exterior. Finally, Lincoln wrote on a card, "Let Betsy Ann Dougherty alone as long as she behaves herself. A. Lincoln"



"Tell Betsy to hang this around her neck on a string and I guarantee none of our soldiers will molest her" he said in answer to the man's objection that a more formal letter might be better.



Gen. George B. McClellan,
"Little Napoleon"
to some, loved to hold
grand reviews of the mighty
army he was forging in those
hopeful days before the disastr-
ous Peninsular Campaign.

It was his custom to ride at a gallop, followed
by his gaily caparisoned staff, a staff, one congressman
observed, large enough to constitute a whole battalion of Reb Cavalry.

It was fashionable to go out to see these spectacles, and many times Pres-
ident Lincoln took his guests to the reviewing stand. On one occasion
McClellan persuaded the President to participate. The long-legged Lincoln
provided quite a sight compared to the superbly mounted officers in blue
and gold.

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A Blood-Stained Flag

An article in hand from a Scranton, Pa. 1980 newspaper tells about
a recent acquisition of a 36-star American flag with red brown stains, by
the Pike County Historical Society. The relic was presented by the descend-
ants of Thomas Gourlay, who have been in possession of it ever since the
fateful April 14th, when Lincoln was assassinated. The story is that
Gourlay and four members of his family were in the audience at the Ford
Theatre that night, and another daughter, Jeannie Gourlay, had a leading
part in "Our American Cousins." Gourlay claimed to have covered the stricken
President with a flag that was part of the decoration of the box where the
murder took place, and helped carry him across the street, presumably
making off with the flag after the martyr's blood had soaked in.

In his exhaustive study of the assassination the late Harlowe R. Hoyt,
who had a popular lecture on the subject wrote, "The crime was evident. One
man shot another and ran away. But of this simple action more misinformation
has been distributed in more books and interviews and articles than any other
murder in the history of crime. Some was the natural result of the witness
magnifying the part played in the affair. Some was deliberate falsehood
inspired through fear of implication, or share in the reward money or from
bitter hatred inspired by the rigors of war, or through hope of political
advancement.....This, then, is an attempt to simplify the story of
what happened that night and why it has been so distorted by various indiv-
iduals seeking to enhance the little roles they played."

Inauguration Fun

7

Inaugural festivities last month approached the fantastic, and whether you approved or not the vast expenditures that made the word "gala" pale into insignificance, the contrast between them and the description below of another one in our country's history is thought-provoking.

The date is March 4th, 1865, the place, The White House; the celebration, a reception to honor the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln's second term as President. The war has another month to go, he has six weeks to live.

He looks not only sick but feeble, the long strain has almost worn him to the breaking point. Thirty pounds underweight, his hands and feet are always cold; his weariness is so deep he moves mechanically. Two thousand people storm through the gates and plough into the stifling Blue Room in scrambling, elbowing masses as the front door is opened and closed to let in each batch. Lincoln dutifully stretches out his cold, aching hand for hours on end, until finally it is midnight, and the last of the well-wishers, drunks and curious stagger out to the street.

The President looks around in distress. The receding tidal wave of people have left wreckage behind. A yard square of red brocade has been cut from the draperies in the Red Room, lace curtains hang in shreds, upholstery in furniture has been slashed, big pieces cut out by the craze for mementos; heavy cords and tassels cut from the East and Green Rooms, gilded ornamental shields wrenched off - paper pulled off the walls.

On the Monday following this Saturday orgy, at the Inaugural Ball, held at the big Patent Office, the same thing was repeated, but the mess was even worse after the midnight elegant supper. A beautifully arranged buffet became a shambles in short order, with the mob carrying off whole chickens and legs of lamb, scattering garbage an inch thick on the floors of the ballroom and dining area. Smashed glass and debris beyond description were left in the wake of the celebrants.

"The White House and Patent Office," wrote the body guard William Crook "looked as if a regiment of rebel troops had been quartered there - with permission to forage."

* * * *

Department of Goofs

Last month, it seems, the gremlins got at us, and so the following corrigende must be made: (1) The title of the book that Fred Gill reviewed was The Secret Six, not "Select"...by Otto Scott. (2) General Grierson was not born in Youngstown, but rather in Pittsburgh, although he spent his boyhood in the Ohio city. (3) The young lady who sent in the material on Ben Hur was Amy Foxworthy, not Foxwell. (4) We forgot to mention that John Harkness showed his excellent slides of recent field trips after the December meeting. To all concerned, our humble apologies.

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Slow-Burn Department

The crude hand-lettered heads in this issue can be chalked up to inflation. Heretofore, your editors have tried to jazz up the appearance of this rag by investing in what is called "Press-Type" or various forms of same. You slip each letter off the sheet to make the heads look like they were professionally typeset. So they went up to \$4.95 a sheet and we said to hell with it. Maybe this is the real answer to inflation...STOP BUYING STUFF THAT YOU KNOW YOU CAN DO WITHOUT - make the greedies who raise their prices just because they know they can get away with it SEE THE WRITING ON THE WALL. They'll come down!

OLLAPODRIDA

From the Courier-Journal, Sunday, April 16, 1978 headed "Lincoln's heart was failing, doctor believes."

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — President Abraham Lincoln had a bad heart and probably would have died in office even if he had not been assassinated, a doctor says.

Although his diagnosis is based on circumstantial evidence, Dr. Harold Schwartz says he feels certain that Lincoln suffered from a genetic condition known as the Marfan Syndrome. Indications of the syndrome are abnormally long arms and legs, a sunken chest, crossed eyes and a leaking heart valve.

Lincoln had the long arms and legs, the sunken chest, frequent crossing of the eyes and most likely had a leaking heart valve when he went to the Ford Theater April 14, 1865, Schwartz said.

Schwartz, who is on the staff at the University of Southern California School of Medicine, also has turned up genetic evidence that Lincoln had the Marfan Syndrome. In fact, the doctor became interested in Lincoln's case in 1953, when he treated a young boy who had the syndrome. Schwartz learned that the boy and Lincoln had a common ancestor.

Schwartz then made an extensive study of the Lincoln family and drew up genealogical charts based on his inferences.

Schwartz said he believes he has found the family that introduced the Marfan Syndrome gene to the Lincoln family in England in the 15th Century.

In the last two months of his life, Schwartz said, Lincoln became easily fatigued, suffered frequent headaches and was bedridden for a time. Schwartz said this is an indication that Lincoln's heart was failing.

Lincoln's Memorial

WASHINGTON—When most people visit the Lincoln Memorial, they climb up the steps to see the spectacular statue of Abraham Lincoln. I went below the monument to see the "soda straws" and "fried eggs."

The soda straws actually are long, thin and hollow stalactites, and the fried eggs are yellowish stalagmites that cover much of the ceiling and floor of a 59-foot high cave beneath the 57-year-old memorial. Making it sound even more like a restaurant for underground gourmets, the cavern also has some "bacon rind"—brownish pieces of "flowstone" that flow along the ceiling instead of dripping down to form either stalactites or stalagmites.

And there's lot more to feast your eyes on during the National Park Service's free, hour-long guided tour called "looking under Lincoln." On this recently established tour you should wear boots and bring a flashlight. It's wet down in the pitch-black cavern housing the memorial's foundation, and the footing isn't always sure.

The first item of note that your flashlight beam hits is some wiring. The wiring is all that remains of the loudspeaker system used by the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. when he delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech from the steps of the memorial in 1963.

* * *

New Jersey was the only Northern state that did not vote for Lincoln in either election.

* * *

Thanks to members Thum, Swanson, Holmes, Hoover and others who have sent in items which will be used in future issues. Keep 'em coming!

Bloody Flag Cont'd.

The newspaper article intrigued this writer because he had never read elsewhere of anyone's draping a flag over the wounded Lincoln - it just didn't ring true - why a flag? The wound was in the back of the head, the head supported all the way across the street by Dr. Leale.

In all of the books consulted, it is agreed that the three doctors and four soldiers were the ones who carried Lincoln - all coming from eyewitnesses.

Bishop, author of The Day Lincoln Was Shot, mentions no flag, nor does Margaret Lamb, in her Reveille in Washington, nor Townsend's The Life, Crime and Capture of John Wilkes Booth nor Anne Cover, in her Mr. Lincoln's Wife, all of which detail the events from the time of the fatal shot to the deathbed scene. Other authors such as Catton, Foote and Davis make no mention of anyone's draping a flag over the wounded man.

Further, none of the pictures that were published in Leslie's Weekly, or Harper's Weekly showed Lincoln being carried indicate any flag, and you can't imagine those artists overlooking a dramatic touch such as that.

Do you suppose anyone has ever had the stain analyzed? This all seems like such trivia, but I find historical frauds fascinating.

Like the 44 caliber, single-shot, muzzleloading derringer Booth used and dropped on the floor of the box next to Lincoln's chair. There have been over 120 "authenticated" derringers sold, and repose in the proudly owned cases of collectors far and wide.

