



# *The Charger*

## **CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE**

P.O. BOX 5028 • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

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JANUARY, 1979

VOLUME 23 NO. 2

185th Meeting

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DATE:	JANUARY 9th, 1979
SPEAKER:	Captain Henry Morgan, U.S. Army, Ret.
SUBJECT:	Interesting Facts about, and a Tour of The Cleveland Grays' Armory
PLACE:	Grays' Armory, 1234 Bolivar Rd. (parking lot next door)
PRELIMINARIES:	6:00 P.M. (no fancy drinks)
DINNER:	Catered, 7:00 P.M.
NOTE:	RESERVATIONS ARE AN ABSOLUTE MUST Call Bill Bates: 579-6876 or Chuck Spiegle: 464-5335
REPEAT:	RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY Jan. 5 !!!!!

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### **CLEVELAND GRAYS' ARMORY**

If you have never had the opportunity of seeing this LANDMARK BUILDING, this is the time to see it.

Grays' Armory is the home of the famous CLEVELAND GRAYS, organized in 1837 as a defensive force for the City of Cleveland. At that time they were the only uniformed troops west of the Alleghenys.

During the Civil War, The Grays' first baptism of fire was at the Battle of Bull Run as 90-day volunteers, a part of the National Guard. In 1898 they marched off to the Spanish-American War, and in 1916 went to Mexico to chase Pancho Villa. During World War I the Grays were a part of the 37th Division, and after World War II started to break up.

In 1893, this colorful organization raised money on their own and built the present structure. It is an imposing building resembling a Medieval castle, the front doors protected by a heavy metal gate, the tower, with massive three foot thick walls, commanding a good view of downtown Cleveland. At one time it was the social center of the City, where the Cleveland Orchestra gave its first concert.

Today The Armory is the Headquarters of the Ohio National Guard, and the shooting range in the basement is used by the Police Department.

This is a rare opportunity for our members to visit this historic edifice and experience its living past - while there is still time before it becomes one more victim of the insidious growth of urban removal.

Excerpts from "The Pioneer," newsletter of the  
Early Settlers Association of the Western Reserve  
Submitted by Neville Bayless

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  
Paul Schilte  
Robert Fricke  
1980  
Milton Holmes  
Stuart Cramer

The Charger Editor:  
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DECEMBER MEETING

Forty-two members attended this meeting and heard Mr. Morris Everett, an authority on Confederate stamps give a talk on the philately of the C.S.A. He traced the development of the Southern postal service from the confused days at the beginning of the War, when U.S. stamps were still used (with special marking) on through to the time when the Confederacy ran out of paper and ink. Authentication (of which Mr. Everett is a recognized expert) we learned, is limited almost entirely to "covers" or the complete envelope with its cancelled stamps.

Other interesting facts some of us never knew before: That in 1860 the South had no paper mills.... Packetboat captains were paid 2¢ per letter for carrying regular mail between specific points; that these were stamped "steam"...Postmaster General Reagan operated the only postal system in our history that made a profit (Man, is he needed today! )..... Postmasters in various cities and locations were independent, could make their own stamps and sell stamped envelopes for personal profit...The first stamp published by the Confederate Government was in October, 1861, with, natch, Jeff Davis' picture; blue were 3¢ and red 10¢, both using the same

HOW I BECAME INTERESTED IN  
THE CIVIL WAR

"You asked how I got interested in The Civil War. I think it was when I first found out I no longer could be drafted to fight in it.

"I had a distant cousin on my mother's side (this was the better side to be on) who played in the Union band out of Wellington, Ohio. His wife mate was a gent named Arch Willard. Wonder what ever became of him.

"Ken Grant, co-founder of the Civil War Round Table of Cleveland, sparked my interest. Ken, now deceased, was the first prexy of CWRT of C. We met through a mutual interest in barber-shop quartet singing - he was prexy of a local chapter, Lakewood as I recall. So one note led to another and I joined his CWRT as a charter member and served as the fourth president, thereby proving you can fool all of the people some of the time."

Sincerely,  
Howard Preston

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plate....sometimes wallpaper and old insurance policies were used as envelopes.

The talk was interesting, but in the opinion of this non-stamp collector, it was too long, with too many slides, and could have been spiced up with some stories about imitations and counterfeits, and the cross-the-lines pony express systems, and what some of the covers sell for among collectors.  
S.C.

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IMPORTANT TO ALL

1. Secretary Tom Geshke and Treasurer John Harkness are compiling a new roster. If you have moved in the past year, or do not receive the notices regularly, please write to them and give correct information.
2. There were several guests present at the last meeting. This is good..were they asked to join? We do need new members, and that is the way to get them...bring guests.

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BOOK SALE

Next year Don Heckaman and Bernie Drews will handle the Book Sale! Bravo!

## THE MAGICIAN WHO BECAME AMERICA'S FIRST AIR FORCE

Thaddeus Sobieski Constantine Lowe was born in Jefferson Mills, New Hampshire, in 1832 and was named for a popular novel's hero. From early childhood his head was high in the sky. He was forever designing and flying kites, watching them by the hour and carefully recording their actions. He had finished the little schooling available in Jefferson Mills when a fortuitous opportunity arose. An itinerant magician came to town.

A search of magic history books has convinced the writer that this magician must have been one William Henry Young, who spent 30 years, from 1840, traveling throughout the New England states with his show, which included several "scientific experiments," one undoubtedly the popular water to wine, and wine to water trick. Anyway, teenage Lowe was fascinated, his curiosity for science being aroused to the extent that he obtained the permission of his father to become the magician's assistant, and spent the next seven years traveling and studying.

He had read about the first balloon ascension in America, by Blanchard, at Philadelphia in 1793, and also of the popular balloonists of his own day, John Wise, La Mountain and Allen, and the subject became almost an obsession

At the age of 22 Thad Lowe took his own show on the road and became very successful, being a handsome fellow with a melodious voice and who had learned his showmanship thoroughly. He was finally able to afford to have a balloon made, and his first important ascension was at Ottawa, Canada, as a part of the celebration honoring Cyrus Field's successful completion of the trans-Atlantic cable. After that he traveled the country using his balloon ascensions to publicize his magic shows and to garner extra income by charging admission to watch the proceedings and to carry paying customers aloft. But he continued his studies of air currents and visited aeronautica scientists in France. He then started to give lectures on the subject, and during one of these sessions in New York fell in love with one of the ladies in his audience. She was the beautiful 19-year-old daughter of a Royalist refugee who had fled to America following the overthrow of Louis Philippe.

It was love at first sight. He married the French girl, Leontine Gashon, a week later on St. Valentine's Day, 1855. The happy marriage produced three sons and seven daughters and was a stabilizing influence in Lowe's eventful career. By now he had, as was the custom of magicians of that time, taken to calling himself "Professor Lowe."

He dreamed of making a cross-Atlantic flight, and through his powers of persuasion, backed by careful research, and air current theories that were endorsed by his friend Joseph Henry, a scientist on the staff of Smithsonian Institution, obtained the backing of some Philadelphia industrials and investors.

In 1859 Lowe assembled at Hoboken, New Jersey, the balloon "City of New York," for his projected trans-Atlantic flight. This "aerostat" as they were called, was enormous, with a gas capacity of 725,000 cubic feet (average balloons then were 20,000) and having a lifting power of 22.25 tons. The gondola could accommodate six persons plus provisions, signal lights, and assorted scientific instruments. The plan went awry due to inclement weather and severe damage to the gas envelope during its maiden inflation. The next summer, after a lot of newspaper publicity and a successful shakedown flight, a half hour before taking off for Europe the huge twilled muslin gas envelope burst, ending the project.

Undaunted by these misfortunes, Professor Lowe took his 20,000 cubic foot "Enterprise" to Cincinnati, where, under the sponsorship of Murat Halstead, editor of the Cincinnati Commercial, he completed his preparations for an overland flight from there to Chesapeake Bay. He ascended at 3:30 A.M. on April 20, 1861, taking along several morning editions of the Commercial as proof of his departure time. The Enterprise was caught in the current and was swept through the cloudless night at 100 miles an hour.

After the aerostat passed the Cumberland Mountains, Lowe descended (by releasing gas) to get his bearings, whereupon the balloon was deflected by a north wind from its intended eastern course and carried to Unionville, South Carolina.

When the local inhabitants saw the abolitionist Cincinnati Commercial papers in the gondola, they thought Lowe was a northern spy and threw him into the jug. A week before, the fireworks had started in Charleston, South Carolina.

Fortunately, some professors at South Carolina College were familiar with the now famous Professor Lowe and secured his release, but in Columbia he was assailed by a lynch mob and again thrown into jail for protection. Finally released, he was allowed to return north with his balloon, but en route he observed the fever of war; so when he arrived at Cincinnati he informed Halstead that he would give up his trans-Atlantic plans and offer his services as a balloonist to the Union Army. Halstead wrote to Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, who summoned Lowe to Washington. An interview was arranged with President Lincoln.

Lowe was bubbling with ideas. He had invented a portable gas generator. He would take a telegrapher aloft and report directly to headquarters as well as to the War Department. He would be the eyes of the Army. Lincoln was interested and gave him a letter to General Winfield Scott, the Union's Supreme Commander. But Scott, ossified in imagination, and hidebound by his Mexican War experiences would not even see "that cheap showman." In exasperation, Lincoln took Lowe with him to see Scott and some other generals, but Scott went to sleep during the Professor's explanations.

Finally a test was arranged, and on April 18th, 1861, accompanied by Herbert Robinson of the American Telegraph Company, Lowe ascended from the grounds of the District of Columbia Armory. At 500 feet a message was tapped out "To the President of the United States." Reception was perfect, and the President returned a message of congratulations, adding that his ground base was being changed. With that, the balloon was towed, still aloft, and anchored on the White House Lawn.

Later Generals McClellan and Porter became enthusiastic and instructed Lowe in military observations: what was to be of value, what to look for, and commissioned him to organize a corps of aeronauts.

To be continued next month. Part Two will tell of Lowe's important role in the Peninsular Campaign and of his fantastic life after he resigned his two year stint as a civilian serving the military at \$6 a week.

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#### FLYING BRYANT

From Miller's Photographic History of the Civil War we learn that the South also had an observation balloon, but it made only three ascensions. Someone got the idea that if the ladies of Richmond and a couple of other patriotic cities would donate their largest silk dresses, a balloon could be made. This was done, seamstresses working day and night to complete the crazy quilt affair, because by then the North's "pesky peeping Tom"

was driving Joe Johnson nuts. So the big bag was completed, filled with coal gas, and private Bryant made two observation flights that elicited great praise from the General. On the third flight disaster struck. One of the ground crew became entangled in an anchor line and would have been cut in two had not someone sliced the cord. Bryant shot up into the sky two or three miles, was caught in the wind currents and swished far into Northern territory.

Bryant, inexperienced, descended, and was caught by a northern wind and blown south. Still descending and being carried into the Confederate lines far from his starting place, he was mistaken for a Yankee, and was greeted by blasts from cannon and volleys from infantry. Sweeping low along a river, the balloon was caught in the branches of trees and the dresses were ripped to shreds. Bryant landed unharmed, but gave up the Confederate Air Corps.

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#### RUSTY GLAMOUR

Recent Congressional investigations of Pentagon spending have revealed many irregularities - huge orders for unneeded supplies, warehouses unaccountably emptied, and so on. T'was ever thus.

Fraud and chicanery were everyday occurrences in both Armies, North and South. They were probably more predominate in the Union Army simply because the supplies, numbers and amounts of money available were so much greater.

Here are a few of the popular items with which the sharpers "worked" the naive soldiery: Bum, showy watches that were peddled tent-to-tent for \$20; photographs...every new chevron that was sewn onto a sleeve was a potential customer for the "photographic artists" who followed the armies. Supplying soldiers memorial certificates was a lucrative business. Lithographs printed with blank spaces for name, date of enlistment, company, regiment and other information sold by the thousands for \$1.50 each.

The list is endless: counterfeit money, bills and bonds of worthless banks, junk jewelry, and the notorious sutler's whiskey, watered and doused with cayenne pepper. Probably the most extensive and varied type of con game was in the buying and selling of cotton by both sides. Here fraud, bribery, fake entries, theft and unpatriotic behavior thrived. Fortunes were made and many a hero lived on his ill-gotten gains "happily ever after."

None of the above mentions the big time frauds in "shoddy" material furnished the Union armies by corrupt manufacturers who "knew" buyers in high positions. Cardboard soles on shoes, blankets that disintegrated in rain, horses bought by the hundreds at inflated prices, horses that were too used, old, sick or dying to be of any use.

All of this kind of activity seems to be traditional in the military affairs of world history.

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On May 31, 1865, General John Bell Hood, who had given an arm, a leg, his professional career and reputation to the Lost Cause, rode into Natchez and surrendered. He was the last of the leading Confederate generals to do so. He was 34 years old at the time of his surrender, and 14 years remained in his lifetime. In that time, crippled and humiliated as he had been, he managed to survive marriage and bankruptcy and become the father of eleven children, including three sets of twins. Hood was always an optimist.

From Hood: Cavalier General

By Richard O'Conner, 1949

O L L A P O D R I D A

Have you ever noticed that pictures of Belle Boyd, "the beautiful Confederate spy," look sort of like a younger Jimmy Durante?

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Herman Haup, who won the rank of Brigadier General directing Union military railroad operations (and who was as much responsible for winning the war as any of them) entered West Point at the age of 14. He is said to have been the youngest cadet ever to attend the Academy.

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When General Grant was pushing his lines forward during the siege of Vicksburg, there was a considerable amount of mining and countermining going on. On June 25th a Union mine was exploded under the Confederate works. Dust, dirt, smoke, stockades, timber and gun carriages rose hundreds of feet in the air. Some spectators even said they saw bodies of the poor wretches who moments before had lined the ramparts. General Grant "remembers one coloured man...who was thrown to our side. He was not much hurt, but terribly frightened."

Richard Wheeler  
Voices of the Civil War BK

Addenda to above: The mine accomplished little, but somehow lofted a Negro cook, Abraham by name, all the way from the Confederate hilltop into the Federal Lines. An Iowa outfit claimed him, put him in a tent and got rich charging 5¢ a look. Asked how high he had been blown, Abraham always gave the same answer, coached perhaps by some Iowa Barnum. "Dunno, massa," he would say, "but tink bout tree mile."

Shelby Foote  
The Civil War, Vol. II

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Not such a hot general, but Daniel Edgar Sickles was an unbelievable man. He had his leg shot off at Gettysburg and was carried off the field smoking a cigar. He also took his leg with him and offered it to Smithsonian Institution. Early in his career he shot and killed the son of Francis Scott Key on the streets of Washington to discourage the latter from continuing to monkey around with Mrs. Sickles' affections. This veteran of Fredericksburg and Antietam lived to become embroiled in an international scandal with a lady of royal blood. He lived to be 92 and was the last ranking general to attend the Grand Encampment, the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

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Ben Butler and "Brains" Halleck were a couple of beauties who loved that old Napoleon pose - scratching cooties under the front of their coats.

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