



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

MARCH, 1978

VOL. 22 NO. 7

-----178th Meeting-----

DATE: Tuesday, March 14, 1978

SPEAKER: William C. Stark

SUBJECT: "Meet the Men of the 103rd Ohio Volunteer
Infantry, 1862-65" (slides and lecture)

PLACE: The Hermit Club, Dodge Court

PRELIMINARIES: 6:00 p.m. DINNER: 7:00 p.m.

Bill Stark is currently President of the Western Reserve Civil War Round Table.

He is a graduate of John Marshall High School, received his B.A. at the University of Toledo, and his Master of Arts in Teaching at John Carroll University. He is a social studies teacher in the Cleveland Public School, and a Deputy Ranger in the Cleveland Metropark System.

Bill was recently President of the 103rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Foundation, and is now curator of their museum in Sheffield Lake, Ohio, located by the shores of Lake Erie on the 103rd's "camp grounds". Members of our Round Table who have not seen this museum will be interested in learning more about it, and may want to visit the museum sometime after the "white stuff" departs from Cleveland.

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE

THE NEW ROSTER was recently mailed to all members. If there is any inaccuracy or change in your listing, please notify our Secretary, Charles Spiegle. ...Longtime member, Leigh Tanger, now residing in Arkansas where he is our Southern Spy, advises that a Round Table may soon be formed in the Ozarks, to be known as the White River CWRT...Mark Holmes has changed from a Junior to a Regular Member... Member Bill Chamberlin sent us an editorial from the Preservation News attacking "THE" tower and the concomitant carnivalese at Gettysburg. The editorial is too long to quote in toto but its blistering tone can be sensed in this sentence; "Steinwehr Avenue at the foot of Cemetery Hill is becoming one great fast food complex, a monument to the importance of the hamburger in American Life." The editorial is accompanied by a cartoon of Lincoln delivering "The Confettysburg Address" with the tower etc., as a background.

ROBERT E. LEE IS ALIVE, WELL AND PEDDLING BOURBON

(The following article with a different heading is reprinted from the Palm Beach Post, 1/19/77, via the Lee-Jackson Quarterly Review. Written by Steve Mitchell)

"I was talking to Robert E. Lee this morning," I said to one of the city editors. "He admitted that Gen. James Longstreet may have been right about taking the defensive instead of the offensive at Gettysburg."

"I think you need a week of vacation, Mitchell," the city editor said. "Robert E. Lee has been dead for over 100 years."

"He's alive, I tell you," I said. "We had coffee together at the Holiday Inn in Palm Beach. We talked about the battle of Gettysburg, and he gave me some little bottles of Virginia Gentleman bourbon from Fairfax County, Va."

"I see," said the city editor as his eyes darted about the room as if in search of several burly security guards. "Uh, did anybody else witness this historic meeting?"

"Oh, sure," I said. "Jimmy Durante's nephew. He and Lee are good buddies. Incidentally, did you know Lee is a Yankee? Well, he is."

The city editor edged warily toward the executive offices and soon returned with the editor. "What's this about you talking to Robert E. Lee this morning, Mitchell?" the editor said.

"Oh, that," I said casually. "Yes that was Robert E. Lee IV, who is Gen. Lee's great-grandson. He's in town for a few days."

"He also said Lee was a Yankee and he was with Jimmy Durante's nephew," the city editor said, "I swear he did."

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Neville Bayless, Ray Swanson
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"He was with Jimmy Durante's nephew," I said calmly, "Al Durante." Lee is vice president in charge of sales and public relations for the A. Smith Bowman Distillery and Durante is a promotions expert.

"And Lee is a Yankee. He was born in New York City, where his father was the doctor at the Plaza Hotel for many years. He was national advertising manager for the San Francisco Chronicle for almost 20 years before he came with Smith Bowman in 1970."

The city editor stalked away and the editor looked at him thoughtfully. "I wonder how he got the idea you meant Gen. Lee?" he said.

"I can't imagine," I said. "Maybe he needs a vacation or something."

Lee, a large and affable man, said he takes a lot of ribbing from motel and hotel clerks because of his famous name. "They say 'Oh, yeah? Where's your horse Traveler?' or 'What time does the steamboat dock?'" Lee said.

The most amusing incident, Lee said, occurred during a Civil War Centennial ceremony in 1965 commemorating Gen. Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Va. At that ceremony, Lee met Ulysses S. Grant III, Gen. Grant's grandson, and the two became friends.

Lee and his new friend Grant listened as Civil War historian Bruce Catton recreated the surrender. Suddenly, the stillness at Appomattox was shattered by the scream of a siren. A police car pulled up, the patrolman got out and handed Lee a telegram.

"Because Appomattox is such an isolated place, I was sure it had to be a death in the family," Lee said. But it wasn't. Lee tore open the telegram and read:

"SIGN NOTHING. AWAIT FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. LETTER FOLLOWS. JEFFERSON DAVIS."

The telegram was the prank of a friend of Lee's on the San Francisco Chronicle, Lee recalled with a chuckle.

Lee, who lives with his wife and two children in McLean, Va., said he enjoys working for a small, family-owned distillery that produces only 160,000 cases of bourbon a year. It must be informal, since one of the company's five directors is a golden retriever owned by one of the Bowman brothers.

"People write to us all the time, since our address is right on the label," Lee said. "One woman wrote and said she had spilled a drink down the front of her dress and she was glad it was a Virginia Gentleman instead of a dirty Old Grandad."

There are lots of Lees in Virginia, of course, but Lee pointed out that there are even more in San Francisco.

"They are, however, all Chinese," he said with a grin.

PRISONERS AND PRISONS OF THE CIVIL WAR

-First of a series, by member Ray Swanson

From first to last, omitting the armies surrendered in April and May, 1865, over four hundred thousand prisoners, North and South, were confined for periods ranging from a few days to years. In the beginning, little or no preparations for the care of prisoners was made on either side. In the South, many believed there would be no war while in the North a general belief that the South would be crushed in ninety days saw little need in making provision for captives.

The first prisoners of war were taken before a battle had been fought when General Twiggs, commanding the Dept. of Texas, surrendered without resistance, the military posts and public property to a Texas Committee. While en route to a port of departure, war was declared and the 2684 officers and troops were held as prisoners until later parolled.

An early attempt in 1861 by U.S. authorities was made to try the officers and men of the captures Confederate privateer Jeff Davis at Philadelphia as pirates. They were convicted on October 28th and sentenced to hang. When the news reached Richmond quick action followed. By lot, the highest ranking Union officer prisoners were chosen to receive the exact sentence imposed on the Confederate privateers. The United States was forced to back down from its position which was untenable.

Other early prisoners were taken in Texas, New Mexico and Missouri. All of these officers and men were parolled and did not serve again until properly exchanged. Then on July 21, 1861, came the battle of Bull Run, when the Confederates took more than a thousand Union prisoners. The war was on in earnest. Mrs. Greenhow, the Confederate spy, had sent a cipher message to Beauregard, "Order issued for McDowell to move on Manassas tonight." Acting promptly, the Southern army was deployed for the attack while Johnston and Jackson hastened from the Valley to his aid. Mrs. Greenhow was arrested August 26th by Allan Pinkerton and confined in Old Capitol prison until June 2, 1862, when after pledging not to come North until after the war

ended, she was escorted beyond the Union lines and set free.

There are several estimates as to the total number of prisoners of war. General F.C. Ainsworth of the United State Record and Pension Office states that Union soldiers captured during the war numbered 211,411, of which 16,608 were parolled on the field, and 30,218 died while in captivity. The difference between the number of Union and Confederate prisoners is due to the inclusion in the Confederate number of the armies surrendered by Lee, Johnston, Taylor and Kirby Smith during April and May, 1865.

There were more than one hundred places where prisoners were confined but of that number not more than twenty were of major importance. They are classified as follows: (representative ones listed for each type).

- (1) Fortifications
 - a. Fort Warren in Boston Harbor
 - b. Fort Lafayette at New York City
 - c. Fort McHenry at Baltimore
 - d. Castle Pinckney at Charleston, S.C.
- (2) Buildings previously used to hold criminals
 - a. Penitentiary at Alton, Illinois
- (3) Buildings originally constructed for other purposes but altered for prison occupancy.
 - a. Old Capitol at Washington, D.C.
 - b. Gratiot Street Prison at St. Louis, MO.
 - c. Libby Prison at Richmond, Va.
- (4) Enclosures surrounding barracks, some originally built for other purposes and some built for prison use.
 - a. Johnson's Island Prison in Lake Erie
 - b. Camp Morton at Indianapolis, Ind.
 - c. Rock Island Prison at Rock Island, Ill.
- (5) Enclosures within which tents were pitched.
 - a. Point Lookout, MD. located at Point Lookout.
 - b. Belle Isle, VA., on an island in the James River near Richmond
- (6) Open stockades in which men were placed to secure shelter as best they might.
 - a. Andersonville - near Americus, Ga.

A brief example will be given of the above mentioned groups.

- (1) Except for Fort Delaware (not mentioned above), most of the Forts held political prisoners suspected of disloyalty, general officers, privateersmen and other specialized ranks. Fort Delaware was a poorly constructed prison, much of the ground being below high water level kept out by dikes. No other Northern prison was so dreaded in the South as this one.
- (2) Alton penitentiary was established as a war prison by General Halleck on Feb. 4, 1862. This prison was always crowded and its commandants were of low quality. The water supply was scanty and the drainage poor. Mortality rates often exceeded five per cent per month.
- (3) Libby Prison at Richmond was originally a tobacco warehouse constructed of brick and light and ventilation were good. This famous prison from start to finish confined 125,000 Union prisoners. The office

books containing the names, regiment, date of capture, etc., were afterward deposited in Washington and found to be very accurate. Old Capitol in Washington was hastily constructed in 1814 as a meeting place for Congress until the permanent Capitol building was erected. Later it became a boarding house until in 1861 it was made in a prison. Here in 1865, Captain Wirz, the keeper of Andersonville prison was kept until his trial and subsequent execution on a gallows in the yard there.

(4) Johnson's Island Fort and prison was constructed in the fall of 1861. The prison fence enclosed seventeen acres of land but unforeseen Confederate military surrenders raised the number of prisoners to an average of twenty-five hundred men. Conditions were generally good although during a bad winter storm on Jan. 1, 1864, a number of men froze to death.

(5) Point Lookout prison was established Aug. 1, 1863 as the largest Federal prison in the North. It was located on the low peninsula where the Potomac joins the Chesapeake Bay. No barracks were constructed within the enclosure; only tents were used. At times nearly twenty thousand Confederate prisoners were confined here. Black troops were used as guards. The main problem was procurement of water for drinking purposes which had to be brought in by boat as the local wells were contaminated by iron salts. Belle Island prison located on an island in the James River near Richmond was used after 1862 as a prison for Union officers and men. Originally planned for three thousand men by Nov. 18, 1863 over sixty-six hundred men were confined there. An effort was made to get more tents but many men lay on the ground without any protection.

(6) Open stockades without any shelter were found only in the deep South. The classic example was Andersonville, Ga. It was constructed in 1863-64 and was originally intended for ten thousand prisoners. Because of scarcity of men and materials impressed slave labor was used to construct it and by Feb. 10, 1864, the first batch of Northern prisoners arrived. Although an addition was completed in June, 1864, the number of Union prisoners rose to a high of 32,900 in August. Living conditions because of crowding and scarcity of food and clothing were almost intolerable in spite of efforts to better them. Elmira prison in Elmira, N.Y. was one of the worst Northern prisons. Unheated tents were provided until barracks were constructed in the early winter of 1864. The mortality rate was over ten per cent for several months.

JUST WHAT IS CWRT ASSOCIATES?

JUST WHAT IS CWRT ASSOCIATES? Civil War Round Table Associates is a national organization whose membership is composed of Civil War enthusiasts, Civil War Round Tables, battlefield parks, libraries, and other institutions and organizations interested in the continuing study of the Civil War. Persons who are members of a local Round Table are not necessarily members of CWRT Associates. The national organization was founded in 1968 by Little Rock, Ark., public relations executive Jerry L. Russell, who had served for two years (1964-65) as charter president of the CWRT of Arkansas. Russell is now national chairman. CWRTA's purpose is to provide a vehicle of information, through its monthly newsletter—CWRT Digest. The Digest strives to keep members informed of current developments and activities inspired by an interest in the Civil War. CWRT Associates began sponsorship, in 1975, of the National Congress of Civil War Round Tables. The main emphasis of CWRT Associates is on the protection and preservation of Civil War historic sites, and on the support of existing RT's and the encouragement of new ones. Dues are \$7.50 per year, and entitle the member to a Roster of CWRT's & Related Organizations, a one-year subscription to the Digest, and free classified ads in the Digest. The address is Box 7388, Little Rock, AR 72217. Membership is open to everyone interested in the American Civil War. YOUR membership is welcomed!