



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

NOVEMBER 1968

Vol. 12 No. 2

96th Meeting

DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1968

SPEAKER: Dr. Eugene C. Murdock

SUBJECT: THE DRAFT SYSTEM DURING THE CIVIL WAR

PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB, DODGE COURT

PRELIMINARIES: 6 PM DINNER 7 PM

THE DRAFT SYSTEM

Problems of Civil War mobilization in the United States and in the Confederate States were those of modern warfare. Oddly, centralized control over mobilization was asserted first by the Confederacy.

The United States land force in being in early 1861 was the Regular Army. The Militia was largely a paper force. The Regular Army on 1 January 1861 included 1,098 officers and 15,259 enlisted men organized in 19 regiments (10 infantry, 4 artillery, 2 dragoon, 2 cavalry, and 1 mounted rifles). Of 198 company-sized units in these regiments, 183 were scattered at 79 posts along the frontiers. The other 15 manned posts along the Atlantic Coast and the Canadian border, and the arsenals.

After Lincoln's call for 75,000 three month volunteers, Congress met and authorized him to call up to 500,000 volunteers to serve for from six months to three years. Quotas were to be apportioned among the states according to population. Accounting became so chaotic that for the rest of the year the War Department discontinued formal assignment of quotas to states.

The War Department had two alternatives: increase bounties or draft men. There was no direct Federal statutory authority for a draft, but a clause in the Militia Act of 17 July 1862 provided that for states without adequate Militia laws "the President is authorized. . .to make all necessary rules and regulations." Lincoln's request for a draft of 300,000 Militia to serve for nine months brought protests from governors, riots and threats of riots quickly followed by a rescinding of the draft call.

Congress on 3 March 1863 passed "An Act for enrolling and calling out the National Forces." This draft law made all male citizens and resident aliens between 20 and 45 liable to service. It excepted Federal and state officials, felons, those physically and mentally unfit, several other obvious categories, and those able to hire substitutes or pay \$300 for exemption. Even with its defects, the Enrollment Act provided for raising armies by Federal administrative machinery, ignored the state governments, and thus fundamentally changed the system for military mobilization. The principal importance of the Enrollment Act lay not in the number of men it raised but in the fact that it established the principle that the Federal Government could impose a military obligation directly on the citizen. Of more than 2½ million men raised by the Union during the Civil War, only 6% were raised directly by the draft.

Problems of mobilization were essentially the same in the Confederacy as in the Union, but on a different scale. (cont. p.2)

CLEVELAND CWRT
BULLETIN BOARD

IN MEMORIAM

It is once again my sad duty to report the deaths of two of our members. Our beloved and highly respected Edward T. "Ned" Downer, and Roy H. Smith Jr. Ned passed away during the summer and Roy only two weeks ago. Ned was Registrar emeritus of Western Reserve University, director of the Stonewall Jackson Memorial, Inc., and author of numerous articles for Civil War publications such as "The Civil War History Quarterly". His book on Jackson's Valley Campaign is still the main stay of the shops in the Valley. Ned was also a member of the Richmond CWRT. A simple and well spoken eulogy was given by Dr. Schlesinger at our October meeting. We will all miss his very wise knowledge. Roy H. Smith Jr., was one of the finest gentlemen anyone would ever want to meet. I was privileged to have been on our annual fieldtrip to West Point with Roy in early October. An outdoor man--a man's man--Roy had been in poor health as of late. Words are always so inadequate when man looks into his heart to say what he feels about those he holds close. Goodnight Ned and Roy.

DECEMBER BOOK SALE

All those members who would like to see a repeat of our book sale in December of last year, please make your wishes known to Guy Di Carlo (me) at the November meeting. If possible bring along a list of the books you would like to place on sale. The quicker we move on this the better the reality. I won't have time to chase everyone down about his list or the books themselves. Will give more details at meeting.

NEW MEMBERS

With the acceptance of two regular members and one junior member we are again at full strength. Our waiting list after the above inclusions stands at a low number so if you have a potential new member bring him to the November meeting. The two new regular members are:

Mr. William T. Bodoh--2650 Clague Road, Westlake, Ohio 44115

Mr. Charles G. Hammond Jr.--24220 Shaker Boulevard, Shaker Hts., O. 44122

new junior member is:

Mr. Edward C. Schaefer--1114 Cook Avenue #24, Lakewood, Ohio 44107

Congratulations gentlemen--you've joined a good group.....

LUCKY STRIKE EXTRAS

Your Secretary was impowered by the recent convening of the executive committee to look into three VERY INTERESTING situations. Two involving women and one stag. Curious--I thought you would be...Look me up at the meeting and get an earful.

THE DRAFT SYSTEM (cont)

No complete compilation of the size of the Confederate Army has ever been made. Estimates of the total strength of the Confederate Army throughout the war range from 600,000 to 1,650,000 men. About 1,000,000 is probably the most accurate.

By the spring of 1862 things were going badly for the Confederacy. As the 1 year volunteers were not reenlisting in appreciable numbers, Congress abandoned States' Rights and on 16 April 1862 passed a conscription law. It empowered the President to draft all white males between 18 and 35 for a period of 3 years, and extended the term of service for all men already in the army. Persons not liable for service could substitute for those who were. Exemption was provided for Confederate and state legislative, executive, and judicial officials and their clerks and employees; There were many more exempted but too numerous to list here. This law, and later acts which widened the age range, controlled the exemptions, forbade substitutions and authorized use of slaves as soldiers, made the Confederate system a truly selective one.

The selected material on the draft system came from the U.S. Army Magazine, "The Official Army Information Digest." The article entitled "Raising the Armies", by Colonel Marvin A. Kreidberg and Merton G. Henry. Article appeared in August, 1961.

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

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CIVIL WAR SECRET SERVICE

The term "Secret Service" as we know it today did not come into existence until July 5, 1865. The Secret Service of the Treasury Department was not created to suppress disloyalty. It was to be the first national detective agency in the peacetime history of the United States to cope with common crimes against the United States.

Then to what does the term "Civil War Secret Service" really refer? Before answering such a question it is necessary to realize that at the outset of the Civil War the Federal authorities were neither disposed nor prepared to cope with the growing bitterness of the sectional controversy. The Federals had no central organization that even faintly resembled a military secret service or bureau of political espionage. This at a time when they were both imperative. It is to the military and political aspects that the term "Civil War Secret Service" really addresses itself.

This need for a Federal police force brought a familiar figure back to the Washington scene. Three months after Lincoln's election, Allan Pinkerton became the first chief of an authorized and organized Federal Secret Service. However, Pinkerton's Federal Secret Service had more the overtones of the military aspect than the political. He did delve into the latter but not as greatly as his successor, LaFayette C. Baker. The newly established Federal Secret Service, with Pinkerton, or "E.J. Allen", in charge, acquired for its headquarters a dwelling on I Street. It had been plain ever since the rout at Manassas that the government's problem of suppressing Southern spies was a grave one. General McClellan, however, wished Pinkerton to accompany him as a staff officer in the field and bring his secret service with him. The organization of secret service, in reality a military counterintelligence system, thus began as an adornment of the army rather than a bulwark of the whole government.

Before delving into the military aspects of Pinkerton's agency a word about his activities in cleansing Washington of rebel spying or at least his attempts to make it difficult to get information South. As to the delicate job of counter-espionage within Washington itself, Pinkerton made one valuable contribution in his closing of the gilded salon of Mrs. Rose Greenhow. It was Thomas A. Scott, then assistant secretary of war, who called upon Pinkerton to submit a report of her activities. A widow, and reputed to be wealthy, with high placed friends, she was an aggressive rebel agent. She had launched her career as a military secret agent in April of 1861, and by November of that year the War Department and Pinkerton were suspicious of her. It was not difficult to arouse such suspicions as Mrs. Greenhow refused to offend her own conscience with any pretenses of neutrality. After her arrest and thanks to pressure exerted by her high placed friends, she did not suffer long internment, but instead was passed through the military zone and permitted to enter Richmond.

Pinkerton, while concentrating practically his entire force upon the intricacies of the Federal Secret Service, never had at his disposal a large body of disciplined or specially trained operatives. He held the not implausible notion that a good private detective can, automatically, become an expert secret agent in time of war; and nowhere, either in the performance of his duties or in subsequent records dictated by him, is there to be discovered any conception of the essentially military character of the work he sought to direct.

Because of this philosophy Pinkerton made the understandable blunder of using much the same small group on both spying and counter-spying. As a result of this diversion of effort many of Pinkerton's men were new and woefully inadequate to the task of military espionage. Remember it was from these amateurish reports that Pinkerton advised McClellan on the numerical strength of the Army of Northern Virginia. The outright contribution of Pinkerton to the Intelligence Department of the Federal Army is certainly open to question. Because of these estimates of strength some felt that Pinkerton himself qualified for promotion to the command of the much misled Army of the Potomac.

It is felt that Pinkerton did build up a basic organization of agents and scouts. It is difficult at times to differentiate between the terms "scouts" and "spies". A spy was usually considered an agent who was located behind or within enemy territory for the purpose of gathering any and all information of value to his military commander. The spy's risk is much greater. While the spy remained in one spot usually the scout was given various assignments by his commander. These assignments were one of the commander's methods of remaining in touch with his spies. Therefore the scout carried dispatches, helped locate the enemy, and gathered vital information for his commander as to bridges, available roads, fordable streams, etc. There were plenty of chances for the scout to suddenly turn spy.

PINKERTON RESIGNS

With McClellan's removal as commander of the Army of the Potomac and replaced by General Burnside, Pinkerton would have none of him. Though Pinkerton and Burnside had been well acquainted, the detective was loyal to McClellan and severed all connections with the Army of the Potomac, and with the military affairs of the government. As it was to turn out, Pinkerton did not really do much more than effect a change of front, for he was active on behalf of the government as long as the States were in conflict. Meanwhile, the military espionage department which Allan had initiated continued to expand, operating under the fairly skillful direction of various officers.

On a lower level, within the Army of the Potomac, Colonel George H. Sharpe, 120th New York regiment, drawing on the ranks for personnel, reorganized Pinkerton's secret service department of the Army of the Potomac. From March 30, 1863, until the close of the war, Colonel Sharpe headed what came to be known as the Bureau of Military Information. He was to serve in this capacity until the end of the war. This early military secret service required no complicated machinery. A simple and effective routine channeling whereby the commanding officer in every department appointed a chief detective who in turn selected a force of soldiers and or civilians to handle the outright investigations and espionage. Therefore these operators were directly responsible to the heads of the military departments.

STANTON'S SECRET POLICE

When Stanton became Secretary of War on January 20, 1862, he immediately recognized the tremendous potentialities of arbitrary arrests. He had been in office only three weeks when he had Lincoln transfer this power over the liberty of citizens exclusively to the War Department. On February 14, 1862, the President issued Executive Order No. 1, signed by the Secretary of War. It was then that the United States War Department took on some of the characteristics of the Soviet secret police. Its leaders, Stanton, Watson, Baker, and Wood were zealots who believed that, if the end didn't justify the means, nothing else could. Whereever possible, they operated in secrecy through military, rather than civilian courts. Guilt by association became a

fundamental axiom; perjury was richly rewarded. Lord Acton's observation that all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely has become a cliché. In surveying the record of War Secretary Stanton's political police apparatus, one may add that absolute power also stupefies those who wield it.

Stanton created a secret service of his own, under the guidance of his devoted assistant, Peter H. Watson. This Assistant Secretary of War had been a patent attorney in Washington and had been associated with his chief in the unsavory McCormick reaper case. Under his direction a system of secret police was organized, consisting of only one man at first, L.C. Baker, but developing gradually into a regular force called "National Detectives", commanded by Colonel L.C. Baker. This army of about two thousand, of which Watson remained the general commander, was a law unto itself. Eventually, Baker was appointed special provost marshal of the War Department, which gave him practically uncontrolled power. The Pinkerton detectives, who up to that time had played a part in the secret service of the War Department, were discharged, and Baker became the czar of his own realm, subject only to Stanton's orders.

LAFAYETTE CURRY BAKER

Baker was a curious choice for this highly responsible post. Born in Stafford, New York, October 13, 1826. His father, Remember Baker, was the grandson and namesake of the Vermont border warrior who shared with Ethan Allen the fame or notoriety derived from leadership of the "Green Mountain Boys." From 1848 to 1860 La Fayette was an itinerant mechanic, becoming a bird of passage, stopping only for brief residences in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. In the 1850's he was in San Francisco and there distinguished himself as a vigilante, using lawless methods to rid the country of gamblers and ballot-box stuffers. In the spring of 1861 he was part of the vast horde which descended on Washington to find employment from the administration.

Referring to himself in the third person, the great detective wrote modestly in his memoirs:

"In General Baker's personal appearance, there is nothing, to a casual observer, remarkable. However, physically he is an extraordinary man...His frame is of the firmest texture and its powers of endurance very great.... "He is of medium height, lithe, and sinewy, and his movements are quick, yet having the air of deliberateness natural to a profession in which circumspection and habitual self-control are among the first conditions of success. Around his forehead of intelligent outline lies a profusion of brown hair, and his face is partially covered with a heavy brown beard. His gray eye, in repose, wears a cold expression; in his naturally cheerful mood, and in the unguarded enjoyment of social life, it is changeful and playful; and engaged in his special duty of detecting crime, it becomes sharply piercing, often making the victim of its vigilance to quail before its steady gaze. Indeed, he was evidently the man for the place he filled during the national struggle. The personal peril to which he exposed himself, and the untiring service performed, at the head of a division or even a regiment, would have sounded his name over the land as a daring, untiring and heroic leader. He is probably the best 'shot' in the country, and also a fine horseman...."For nearly twenty years he has not tasted intoxicating drinks, but has been enrolled among the Sons of Temperance; and what seems still more remarkable... he has never been addicted to the shameless profanity so common in the army...His fidelity and kindness of heart in his domestic relations and toward kindred less fortunate than himself, are well known. Such are the general characteristics of the first national chief of a Detective Bureau in the war record of this country."

"The work of the detective," ran Baker's definition, "is simply deception reduced to a science or profession." He took pride in his disguises, glibly recounted how he could swiftly change from a loafer in slouch hat to an honest farmer, a Jew peddler, or a mumbling drunk, and the disguise would pass. To hear him tell it he had repeatedly sprung at a man about to fire on him, disarmed the man and arrested him; or he could handcuff a desperado with a left hand while keeping him covered with a pistol in the right hand. But for treachery and corruption in other departments of the government Baker with his bureau alone would have ended bounty-jumping so his narrative implied. He pictured himself the heroic foe of spies, fraudulent contractors, draft-evaders, forgers of draft papers, saloon-keepers, gamblers, dealers in bawdy pictures, and other miscellaneous blackguards.

Congressman Albert Gallatin Riddle who became a great admirer of Baker wrote in his "Recollections of War Times," that Baker was a "man of little culture, dark, taciturn, square-shouldered, and of powerful frame. . ." He added that "having almost irresponsible power, the limit of which was his relentless will," Baker committed "many acts of oppression..."

In his book "The Battle Against Disloyalty", Nathaniel Weyl portrays Baker in this light: "Pinkerton's successor, General LaFayette Curry Baker, the adroit, sinister and unscrupulous head of the military secret service during the Civil War. . . . "An enormously vain and unscrupulous person, Baker was also a congenial liar, intriguer, and twister. A talented counterspy, he was a wretched administrator. Instead of concentrating on smashing the Copperhead plots, he allowed his energies to spill over into such inconsequential matters as arresting smugglers and petty thieves, unraveling military frauds, and warring on grog shops and brothels. He enjoyed shadowing suspects personally and spent much of his time wandering around the country in disguise. Whenever a beautiful Confederate spy was thrown into the Old Capitol Prison, General Baker would spend long hours interrogating her and doubtless making the most of his opportunities."

In Richard W. Rowan's "The Story of Secret Service" Baker is described as follows: "In the preceding months while Detective Pinkerton was rattling around in a position for which he seems to have had every qualification save experience and imagination, a new star was rapidly rising in the dim, uncrowded firmament of Federal military espionage. His name was Lafayette C. Baker; and he proved to be an artful officer, one of the few spies in America whose career, and methods have engaged the studious appreciation of European experts."

Professor Allan Nevins refers to Baker in his "Ordeal For The Union" thusly: "Baker appointed a special provost marshall, had become head of an alert body of War Department spies, and enjoying the use of the Department's secret funds, he came perhaps as near a FOUCHE as the United States could produce. His jurisdiction touched political offenders as well as deserters, bounty jumpers, shady speculators, and saboteurs, and his zeal outran his sense of propriety."

In "Spies For The Blue and Gray," Harnett Kane continues the Baker legend. "Here was a man who would burn down a barn, not to rid it of rats, but of a few roaches. 'Lafe' Baker might have had two or three friends in the capital, but the rest of the population strongly detested him. No more enigmatic figure ever operated in Washington although ultimately he acquired a degree of power held by almost no other official of his day. . . . Mr. Baker's career demonstrates the effectiveness of a single-minded purpose in life. The pleasant-looking Lafe knew precisely what he wanted--advancement for himself; whoever stood in his way found the position painful in the extreme. For him any means was justified, provided it worked for Lafayette Baker's ends.

. . . But it was the Baker eyes that offered the real clue to the man's character: light gray, shrewd, and penetrating, they were hard as ice."

Philip Van Dorn Stern in his "Secret Missions of the Civil War" rewards us with his version of Baker. "As a reward for his services early in the war, Baker was made a colonel and a special provost marshall in 1862. Not until 1865 did he attain the rank of General, but almost from the beginning he arrogated to himself much more power than his rank warranted. When McClellan was removed from command in November, 1862, Pinkerton, who had served him well, followed him by retiring from the Eastern Theatre of war to investigate cotton frauds in the New Orleans area. Baker rose rapidly to power.

Baker is best known for his work in apprehending the Lincoln conspirators. His book, "History of the United States Secret Service," is filled with much valuable material, but is marred by the sensationalism, charlatanism, and shameless mendacity that characterized the man himself."

Lucius E. Chittenden, Register of the Treasury pictured Baker and his organization in these words: "The Detective Bureau was established as one of the regular bureaus, not under the control of the commissioner or internal revenue, or the commissioner of the customs, as it should have been, if permitted to exist, but as an annex to the office of the Secretary. One L.C. Baker, who had acquired some notority as a detective, was appointed its chief. By some means, never clearly understood, his jurisdiction was extended to the Army, and he exercised his authority in all the departments and throughout the United States.

Baker wore the uniform, and probably had authority to assume the rank of a colonel in the army. He took into his service, from all parts of the country, men who claimed to have any aptitude for detective work, with recommendation, investigation, or any inquiry, beyond his own inspection, which he claimed immediately disclosed to him the character and abilities of the applicant.

With this force at his command, protected against interference from the judicial authorities, Baker became a law unto himself. He instituted a veritable reign of terror. He dealt with every accused person in the same manner; with a reputable citizen as with a deserter or petty thief. He did not require the formality of a written charge; it was quite sufficient for any person to suggest to Baker that a citizen might be doing something that was against the law. He was immediately arrested, handcuffed and brought to Baker's office, at that time in the basement of the Treasury. There he was subject to a brow-beating examination, in which Baker was said to rival in impudence some heads of the criminal bar. This examination was repeated as often as he chose. Men were kept in his rooms for weeks, without warrant, affidavit, or other semblance of authority. If the accused took any measures for his own protection, he was hurried into the Old Capitol Prison, where he was beyond the reach of the civil authorities. Baker's subordinates in other cities emulated and often surpassed their chief's example. Powers such as they exercised were never similarly conferred by law under any government claiming to be enlightened.

Corruption spread like a contagious disease, wherever the operations of these detectives extended. It soon became known that impunity for frauds against the government could be procured for money. Men who, but for the detective system, would never have thought of such enterprises, went into the regular business of illicit distilling, bounty-jumping, smuggling, defrauding the customs, and other similar practices. Honest manufacturers and dealers, who paid their taxes, were pursued without mercy for the most technical breaches of the law, and were quickly driven out of business. The dishonest rapidly accumulated wealth, which they could well afford to share with the protectors. Good citizens became discouraged, and ceased to take any interest in the administration of justice, or the suppression of fraud. The worst predictions of the opponents of the detective system were speedily verified.

I never did understand under what authority Baker exercised his unendurable tyranny. He never hesitated to arrest men of good position, put them in irons, and keep them imprisoned for weeks. He seemed to control the Old Capitol Prison, and one of his deputies was its keeper. He always lived at the first hotels, and had an abundance of money, and I am sure did more to disgust good citizens and bring the government into disrepute than the strongest opponents of the system had ever predicted.

It is probably too late now to dispense with the detective system. The system itself created a class of criminals who now require its continuance. Training and attention have developed a better class of officers for the secret service of the Treasury. Here and there a few men of ability have taken up the detection of crime as a science, and among them the Pinkertons, and Inspector Byrnes, of New York City, may be recognized as useful officers of great ability. But they are conspicuous exceptions to a very general rule, and do not affect the estimate of conservative men with old ideas of integrity and principle in regard to the system as a whole. Such men will not approve the use of such means, although the multitude may cry out, "Let us do evil, that good may come!"

Finally, Carl Sandburg's "Abraham Lincoln, The War Years," brings the "great detective" into perspective from the Executive branch of the government.

"Baker had a way of talking and writing as though he were a confidant and trusted operative of the President, as though the President often sent for Baker, and unbosomed himself of some difficulty on which Baker then went out and got action. "I was sent for by Mr. Lincoln," Baker would say. Or he would write, 'I was summoned to report in

person to Mr. Lincoln," or, 'I was summoned to the White House.' And though he sought to convey an impression that he was often consulted on weighty matters, there was no record of the President writing any communications to Baker or to anyone else about Baker. Baker's habitual boasting simply won Lincoln's habitual mistrust of the secret-service head."

BAKER'S WAR TIME CAREER

Baker possessed two invaluable qualities in a spy--poise and effrontery. Sent by General Winfield Scott on a secret mission to Richmond, Baker succeeded in reaching his objective as a Confederate prisoner, secured the desired information while no less than Jefferson Davis was trying to determine whether he was a spy, then escaped and returned to Washington. His bureaucratic rise after this exploit was meteoric to say the least. In February, 1862, Baker's Detective Bureau was transferred from Secretary of State Seward to War Secretary Edwin M. Stanton.

Department of State
Washington, February 15, 1862.

Sir--Permit me to introduce Mr. L.C. Baker, who has been employed by the State Department in the detective service, and who, so far as known, has discharged his duties in a manner entirely acceptable. In consequence of Executive Order No. 1, dated February 14, this department has no further use of his services. He is commended to your consideration as a capable and efficient officer.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

W.H. Seward

Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War.

"...This creation of regiment of detectives could be explained by nothing except a growing spirit of absolutism in the War Office," commented Provost Marshal Major William E. Doster, whose own business at that time was the arrest of the government's enemies. However, "the establishment of a special prison...and the subjection of people to mental torture by a thousand lawless characters, appeared entirely inexcusable. Baker could arrest, the detectives could arrest, the military governor could arrest, the provost marshal could arrest, the Secretary of War and each of his two assistants could arrest, but none of them could discharge without running great risk of getting into trouble with some or all of the others..."

Baker was an important part of the powerful personal machine that War Secretary Stanton had so carefully created. Baker made his reports to Stanton verbally. He used secret funds provided by Stanton. All things considered Stanton rated Baker an able sleuth. Provost Marshall Doster in his effort to learn more about the mysterious Mr. Baker went to the Assistant Secretary of War, who explained that the department used the man of the general principle of "set a rogue to catch a rogue."

The overnight departmental promotion of Baker as its "special provost marshal," caused heads to stir and rest uneasy. Now Baker could operate unchecked and Doster commented that "such an extension of power I esteemed a dangerous thing." It started in this official's words, "a reign of terror." All kinds of people, infamous, questionable, or only vaguely suspect, suddenly disappeared, sent secretly to the Old Capitol Prison by Lafe and a new found friend--none other than Superintendent William P. Wood, who had at one time told Doster that his opinion of Baker was "not good"! Something happened to change his mind.

WILLIAM P. WOOD

Colonel Wood was erratic, picturesque, shrewd, but always intensely human. This was the noted historian Otto Eisenschmil's evaluation of Wood in his book "In the Shadow of Lincoln's Death."

Margaret Leech's "Reveille in Washington" describes Wood with more detail. "The jailer, however, was reputed to have unusual influence with the War Secretary. Young Major William E. Doster, who became the Washington provost marshal, said that Wood 'was deeper in the War Office than any man at Washington, and it was commonly said that Stanton was at the head of the War Office and Wood at the head of Stanton. Doster concluded "that it was dangerous to interfere with Wood."

"Wood was a modelmaker by trade. Though Wood was an undersized man of more than forty years, he had great physical strength." Contrary to the fashion of his day, Wood wore no mustache, or beard.

"Nevertheless, Wood was regarded with anything but affection in the Old Capitol Prison. His abolitionist views and his loyalty to the administration would have been enough to earn him the animosity of most of the inmates. They hated him, moreover, for his detective system; and were convinced that he accepted bribes and drew large profits from the swindling prison commissary, in which his nephew was a partner. "

During the Civil War, Wood's talents were put to use by Stanton who had hired him to uncover thieving contractors seeking to defraud the government, and to detect and arrest any other criminals "getting fat" on the government's urgent wartime needs. Stanton and Woods had first met in 1854, when Stanton, then a practicing attorney was representing a client being sued by Cyrus H. McCormick, inventor of the reaper. The whole case depended on the shape of the divider blade on a reaper that had originally been bought from McCormick and had been in use for 15 years. It was simple enough--if the divider was straight--McCormick lost; however if the divider was curved McCormick won. The reaper was brought into the courtroom. When examined the divider was straight and McCormick lost.

The divider was straight because modelmaker William P. Wood straighten it. Wood's death bed affidavit in 1897 swore that Peter Watson, also one of the lawyers opposing McCormick, ordered him to straighten it. Wood claimed that Stanton had no knowledge of this skulduggery. The fact remains, however, that Stanton, after he became Secretary of War, was apparently instrumental in having Wood placed on the Government payroll in various capacities. Was Stanton easing a guilty conscience, or was he merely repaying an old debt of his loyal and trusted Assistant, Peter Watson.

Wood was appointed by Secretary Stanton to be keeper of the Old Capitol Prison, where offenders of many kinds were confined. It was here that Wood initiated an intelligence system that cobwebbed all sorts of valuable information, in a way, that was downright unlawful. One included plans for Lee's northern advances which ended in the Battle of Gettysburg.

The new team of Baker and Wood, or Wood and Baker, set up an inquisition that rivaled those of old Spain. Besides it alarmed many who saw it in action. A victim would be placed in bleak confinement for weeks or months; he would be approached only when this grim isolation began to tell. Then Superintendent Wood called as "a friend". He wanted to help; he could get the prisoner out if only he would sign a confession. If the prisoner remained obstinate, an accessory was brought in and their conversation was overhead and noted. If not an accessory then Baker or Wood sent in a detective who pretended to be guilty of the same offense and urged the victim to confide in him.

If the prisoner still did not yield, Doster claimed, "counterfeit testimony by others was prepared and read to him. He might be advised to speak in his own defense. But spurious passages were inserted in his testimony and when it was read back to him the captive would sometimes become so hopelessly confused he would "through himself on the mercy of his torturers."

Under the coldly efficient direction of Secretary Stanton, Baker distinguished himself for ruthlessness. With increased funds he delved into all kinds of irregularities. He investigated Samon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, and even the neice of Montgomery Blair was arrested by Baker. To his credit, Baker did trap a good many spies, corruptionists, deserters, and the like.

THE OLD CAPITOL PRISON

The prison derived its name from its use as a meeting place for Congress, after the British had burned part of Washington in 1814. Of all the military strongholds under Stanton's domination, the Old Capitol Prison became the best known and the most feared. It stood only a block away from the nation's capitol, yet it became in the course of time the symbol of unlimited tyranny.

Shortly after the war the Old Capitol Prison ceased to exist. A Washington resident wrote in 1869: "...there can be no doubt that the old prison held many an innocent victim of political hostility and official malice. Many a good man, whose most earnest prayers were for the success of the Union armies, was immured within these walls in consequence of having offended some high official. We all know that there were many grave faults committed by the administration during the Rebellion, not the least of which was its readiness to disregard the liberty and personal rights of the citizens of the Union. Stanton was an able and true man, and a good Secretary, but he was a despot also, and too hasty to arrest men upon very slight proof; and Mr. Seward was too fond of tinkling his "little bell." Ex-Chief Detective Baker sent, perhaps, the majority of prisoners to this institution. He had reduced blackmailing and intimidation to a science, and those who would not comply with his unlawful demands were moderately sure of a residence in this place. These arbitrary acts are a blot upon the country, which ought never to have been cast upon it."

BAKER'S RANGERS

Finally by the spring of 1863 Baker had convinced Lincoln and Stanton that he needed an elite corps of troops responsible only to himself to take care of the recently growing numbers of saboteurs and subversives.

The news of such a fantastic organization was met with utter amazement by the Union generals. The idea of Baker raising a battalion of four companies of cavalrymen simply did not sit well with them. They had already had enough of Baker and his spies who were constantly in and out of the military camps.

In his own characteristic way, Baker proceeded with the job of recruiting his new force. If there was anything the Secret Service head wanted, it was the recognition an officer's commission would give him. Baker discovered that there was already in existence an act of Congress permitting the raising, and equipping, a battalion of infantry and cavalry for service within the District of Columbia--a unit whose work would be to maintain law and order in the federal capital. Battlefield service definitely was not envisioned by the sponsors of this legislation; and of course it was not designed to place in the hands of an ambitious detective a powerful weapon for his use as he saw fit.

By May of 1863 Baker had Lincoln's signature on an order authorizing the creation of the First District of Columbia Cavalry and conferring upon Baker the rank of colonel. However, by the summer of 1863, Mosby, the war's most long-standing emergency, helped Baker, indirectly of course, by simply being Mosby, in his request for an additional battalion of cavalrymen. The eight hundred men in eight companies were all from Maine.

Baker's view of his elite cavalrymen was that of a super bodyguard for his detectives while on their missions; they would also cut off pursuers and were often used to cordon off hideouts of known and unknown suspects.

A fantastic sidelight was that the nucleus of the Baker Rangers had been recruited from seasoned soldiers who had served under "Bobbie" Lee up to the very day he decided his loyalty belong to Virginia. Captain Joseph S. Baker, cousin of Lafayette, and Captain of the battalion, chose Sgt. W.F. Lunt as his first lieutenant. Lunt was a close and trusted friend of Lee during Lee's leadership of the Second Dragoons; for his orderly, Captain Baker chose Sgt. William Wonderly, Lee's chief bugler, and a magnificent drillmaster.

Allan Pinkerton, an excellent detective for railroads and other corporations, an accomplished counter-spy, had managed to protect President Lincoln when half the population of a rebellious state was plotting to prevent his inauguration. Now, after four years of fighting, the secret service had improved in espionage. The leadership and integrity of Abraham Lincoln were surely the greatest asset in the possession of the government. And Lafayette Baker and his men failed, and failed miserably, in their prime duty of protecting it. Even though Lincoln would have objected strenuously, Baker's was a secret service, and, though always tracking down applause, it might have learned through the long desperate struggle to protect its great leader unobtrusively and in spite of himself.

Baker, in ruthless methods, shady deals and unflagging self-interest was unmistakably poured from the Von Stieber mold. But the Prussian spy-master never relapsed in vigilance or failed in loyalty to his chief, Prince Bismarck. Operatives of the Secret Service did nothing to detect and explode the incipient conspiracy, or at least it appeared as much until recently (new material has been discovered in Baker's own handwriting that knowledge of a plot did exist and was known by Stanton and others in high Federal positions).

Instead of the oblivion to which his later involvements have consigned him, Lafayette Baker would survive as one of the most celebrated Union officers of the Civil War if he had done as much for Lincoln in 1865 as Pinkerton did in 1861.

However, after the great President Lincoln lay wounded and dying, Baker and his secret service sprang into a frenzy of activity. They became so active, they all but overran the fugitive assassins. The usual controversy weighing responsibility for President Lincoln's death against the prompt apprehension of the conspirators at once began to rage. Those who had signally failed to safeguard the President were among the most frantic to avenge him. Lafayette Baker, shrewdly entrenched on the Washington political front, claimed for himself and his Secret Service so much unjustified credit that he avoided most of the justified blame.

SELF DESTRUCTION

Even so, the Secret Service, now that the war was over, suffered a marked degree of eclipse. Baker dodged about behind the scenes, making himself indispensable to the dominant clique of politicians while resolutely investigating everything that might be connected with their opponents. After the Civil War the Secret Service entangled itself in most of the corrupt practices it might properly have labored to expose.

When President Johnson was impeached by savage political headhunters, who were prepared to manufacture evidence if need be, to rid themselves of the "drunken tailor". Baker at once set about impressing the nation with the extraordinary value of his abilities and services. He endeavored to prove that a certain Mrs. Lucy Cobb had given bribes to members of Johnson's cabinet by way of procuring an easy pardon for ex-Confederates. This proved to be Baker's own downfall. Judge George Fisher, in answer to a question of postponement answered: "General Baker is charged with arrest and false imprisonment and also assault and extortion. These are serious accusations. He is entitled to a prompt opportunity to defend himself."

The whole case against Baker rested with Lucy Cobb's testimony. The jury was out only one hour and twenty minutes. Foreman Young replied: "We find the defendant guilty of false imprisonment and not guilty of extortion." Baker froze, it was the first time he had been convicted of a criminal offense.

The New York Herald said: "We learn that Detective Baker was found guilty as charged in the indictment. We await impatiently the next scene in this drama and trust that Baker will have full justice meted out to him. ...and we trust that Judge Fisher, in passing sentence, will take into consideration the enormity of his crimes."

THE WHISKEY RING

Meanwhile, the very funds used in promoting the impeachment of Johnson were, it was said, contributed by distillers. None of Baker's investigators was clever enough to discover or detect this fact. This notorious "Whiskey Ring" was said to have very exclusive membership. It was restricted to distillery magnates and officials of the Republican administration.

General O.E. Babcock of Grant's personal staff was widely believed to be a member of the Ring. When subsequently tried in St. Louis he was acquitted, which did not blind the American public to his guilt. Only Grant's personal influence, people maintained, had secured the acquittal. Babcock was definitely linked with the Secret Service and District Attorney Harrington in a scheme to have the latter's office robbed--whereupon they were ready to produce sworn "confessions" from the hired burglars, implicating in their "crime" a Mr. Alexander, whose integrity and outspoken accusations were making the Ring nervous and resentful.

DEATH OF THE CIVIL WAR SECRET SERVICE

Prompt exposure of this shabby plot concerning the "Whiskey Ring", with many another example of misdirected espionage zeal, caused the Congress to abolish the Secret Service by a simple expedient of refusing to make appropriation for its agents' pay. Only a small force attached to the Treasury Department, under the direction of William P. Wood, survived this exasperated massacre, and its activities were restricted to problems of currency and banking, the pursuit of counterfeiters or forgers of government documents and vouchers. Wood was the first chief of a peacetime secret service. However, he resigned May 5, 1869, over the payment of a \$20,000 reward from Secretary of the Treasury McCulloch for the apprehension of a notorious counterfeiter named William E. Brockway, who also was known as "The King of the Counterfeiters". Wood had been promised the reward but McCulloch refused to pay it.

BAKER'S EPILOGUE

On January 15, 1866, Stanton sent word to Baker that he would be mustered out of the service. Assured that it was only routine and that others such as Rosecrans were also being mustered out to reduce the rolls of military officers. However, The Richmond Times cackled: "The notorious Government detective, General L. C. Baker, ceases to be a brigadier-general with this day. By an order from the War Department, his commission was canceled and he is mustered out of 'service.' . . . This detective had had his day; he can no longer, at his own bidding, bring to his aid the strong arm of the Government to protect him from the vengeance of outraged citizens who have been sufferers in person and property from the unconstitutional and utterly illegal acts."

On March 28, 1866, Judge George Fisher pronounced sentence on Baker with these words: ". . . I have come to the conclusion that though you may have been guilty technically of the offense of false imprisonment, there are not apparent in it any circumstances of moral turpitude or of malice, or of such ill-treatment of the party complaining as would warrant me in visiting upon you a heavy punishment. The case presents itself to me in the aspect of one where an officer of the Government, in a zealous effort to discharge his duty, may have been led by his zeal to go a hairs-breadth too far, and done an act which, though it can not be justified in law, yet which, in a moral point of view, has much to mitigate the punishment. The sentence of the court therefore is that you pay to the United States the sum of one dollar and the costs of the prosecution." Everyone who waited to see Baker receive his justice, the newspapers such as the New York Herald who clamored for it, were sadly disappointed. This did not remove the stain of guilt from Baker. He paid the fine of one dollar plus thirty-five dollars to cover the costs of his trial. Baker left Washington that same night for Philadelphia and his patient young wife, Jennie.

On April 26, 1866, the House of Representatives voted on the motion by Congressman Columbus Delano to divide the Booth reward money. Congress had rejected Baker's claim to the major share of the rewards for the successful pursuit of Booth. General Baker was denounced by none other than the Pennsylvania Congressman Thaddeus Stevens in these words: "He sat here in the capital. He risked nothing, I think he ought to be thankful he gets anything." Congressman Hotchkiss lost his fight to award Baker \$17,500. The final settlement agreed upon by the legislators was to give Colonel Everton J. Conger \$15,000; Lieutenant Doherty, 16th New York Cavalry \$5250; General Baker \$3750; Byron Baker \$3000; and O'Beirne, provost marshall \$2000; and divide the remainder of the \$75000 among Doherty's 25 soldiers.

On July 3, 1868, Lafayette Curry Baker, died at the age of forty-two. Family physician Dr. William M.L. Rickards signed the death certificate and listed "meningitis" as the cause of death. However, the story of Lafayette Curry Baker does not end here. There is a continuing mystery that surrounds him that will probably never be resolved.

WAS STANTON BEHIND LINCOLN'S MURDER?

"Lafayette C. Baker, the 'master spy' of the Union cause, left a coded message in which he accused Edwin M. Stanton of plotting the murder of Abraham Lincoln. A New Jersey chemist has brought to light both this startling charge and the possibility Baker was poisoned to keep him quiet about Stanton. Whether true or a monstrous hoax by Baker, this is a fascinating historical detective story."

So read the headline of Robert H. Fowler, Editor of the Civil War Times, in his story concerning Mr. Ray A. Neff, the New Jersey chemist.

This story, for Ray A. Neff began in 1957 when he innocently bought a bound volume of "Colburn's United Service Magazine" at Leary's Bookstore in Philadelphia. He paid 50 cents for the volume which contains issues of the journal for the last half of 1864.

"Some months later" he recalls "I noticed that there were numbers and letters written in pencil in the inner margins next to the binding. They appear as cipher but are not grouped as cipher usually is."

TEXTS OF CIPHERED MESSAGES

The first was a "substitution cipher" of the so-called "sliding" variety. Each letter in the message was replaced by another letter with frequent changes or slides to make solution difficult. Each word was separated from the next by a number. This was the message, as Ray Neff and two cryptographers have deciphered it:

Page 181: I am constantly being followed. They are professionals. I cannot fool them. 2-5-68

Page 183: In new Rome there walked three men, a Judas, a Brutus and a spy.

Page 185-211: Each planned that he should be the kink(g) when Abraham should die. One trusted not the other but they went on for that day, waiting for that final moment when with pistol in his hand, one of the sons of Brutus could sneak behind that cursed man and put a bullet in his brain and lay his clumsey corpse away. As the fallen man lay dying Judas came and paid respects to one he hated, and when at last he saw him die, he said, "Now the ages have him and the nation now have I." But Alas (as) fate would have it Judas slowly fell from g(r)ace, and with him went Brutus down to their proper place. But lest one is left to wonder what has happened to the spy. I can safely tell you this, it was I.

Lafayette C. Baker 2-5-68

The other cipher, beginning on Page 106 used dots under letters on the printed page to form words. This easily decipherable message reads:

- Page 106: It was on the tenth of April, Sis(x)ty-five when I first knew that the plan was in action.
- Page 107: Ecert (Thomas Thompson Eckert, an aide to Stanton?) had made all the contacts, the deed to be done of the fo(u)rteenth. I did not know the identity of the assassin but I knew most all else when I approach E.S. (Edwin Stanton?) about it.
- Page 108: He at once acted surprised and disbelieving. Later he said, "you are a party to it too. Let us wait and see,
- Page 109: what comes of it and then we will know better how to act in the matter." I soon discovered what he meant that I was a party to it.
- Page 110: when the following day I was shown a document that I knew to be a forgery but a clever one, which made it appear that
- Pages 111: I had been in charge of a plot to kidnap the president, the vice-presi-
112: dent being the instigator. Then I became a party to that deed even though I did not care to (This could also read: "I had been in charge of a plot to kidnap the president, (and) the vice-president. Being the instigator then, I became a party to that deed even though etc.)
- On the thirteenth he discovered that the president had ordered (that) the Legislature of Virginia be allowed to
- Page 113: assemble to withdraw that states troops from action against the U.S. He fermented immediately into an insane tirade. Then for
- Page 114: the first time I realized his mental disunity and his insane and fanatical hatred for the president. There are few in the War Department that respect the president or his
- Page 115: strategy but there (are) not many who would countermand an order that the pres (ident) had given. However during that insane moment he sent a telegram
- Page 116: to Gen. Weitzel countermanding the presidents order of the twelfth. Then he laughed in a most spine chilling manner and said, "If he would to know who recinded his order
- Page 117: we will let Lucifer tell him. Be off Tom (Eckert?) and see to the arrangements. There can be no mistakes. This is the first th(at) I knew that he was the one responsible
- Page 118: for the assassination plot. Always before I thought that either he did not trust me, for he really trusted no one, or he was protecting someone
- Page 119: until it was to his benefit to expose them. But now I know the truth and it frightens me no end. I fear that somehow
- Page 120: I may become the sacrificial goat. There were at least eleven members of Congress involved in the plot, no less than twelve Army officers, three Naval officers and at least 24 civilians, of which one was a governor of a loyal state. Five were bankers of great repute, three were nationally known newspaper men and eleven were industrialists of great repute and wealth. There were probably more that I know nothing of. The names of these. . .
- Page 126: known conspirators is presented without comment or notation, in Vol. one
- Page 127: of this series. Eighty-five thousand dollars was contributed by the named persons to pay for the deed. Only eight persons knew the details of the plot and the identity of the others.
- Page 245: I FEAR FOR MY LIFE LCB.

EPILOGUE

The forgoing pages have only scratched the surface. I have tried to tell the story of "The Civil War Secret Service" through the words, deeds, etc., of those who participated and recorded their observations. I have tried to mention each an every source I consulted. My apologies to those inadvertently left out.