

THE CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101



NOVEMBER, 1978

VOL. 22 No. 12

183rd Meeting

DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7th
SPEAKER: GREGORY J. W. URWIN
SUBJECT: "General George Armstrong Custer and His Wolverines"
PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB, Dodge Court, Cleveland, Ohio
PRELIMINARIES: 6:00 P.M. DINNER: 7:00 P.M.

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE BECAUSE
HERMIT CLUB NOT AVAILABLE ON 14th

Our speaker for this meeting is one of those rare young men in whom we may place our trust and hopes for the preservation of the study and research of this country's historical experience.

Greg Urwin is presently a graduate assistant in the Department of History at John Carroll University, where he is teaching and working for his M.A. He graduated Summa Cum Laude in history from Borromeo College of Ohio, and has since been writing professionally for such nationally published magazines as Combat Illustrated, Air Classics, Air Classics Yearbook, Air Progress Review, and Campaigns, the internationally noted magazine of Military Miniatures.

For the past ten years he has been studying the life of General Custer, in fact the subject of his forthcoming master's thesis is "The Lasting Letters on the Pages of History: Gen. George A. Custer and the Civil War." In preparation for this and the talk he will give, he is spending a week at Monroe, Michigan, Custer's boyhood town and adopted home, researching the special collections there.

Mr. Urwin is currently a member of the Company of Historians; Little Big Horn Associates; the Brigade of the American Revolution (in which he is a corporal in the reactivated 64th Regiment of Foot); Ohio Historical Society; and Phi Alpha Theta, the International Honor Fraternity for History.

With his background, and his use of visual aids, we can look forward to an outstanding program.

BOOK SALE AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING

A large number of interesting books were brought in to the October meeting. These are being priced and the prices confirmed with the sellers, and will be exhibited for your browsing pleasure at this November 7th meeting. If any additional books are brought the night of the sale they MUST HAVE A SLIP IN THEM WITH PRICE AND SELLER'S NAME. There are some great bargains awaiting you.

Unless there are any violent objections, from now on this newsletter will be called "The Charger." To the man in the street a charger might mean an electrical contrivance or someone who pays on credit. To a Civil War buff, however, the word charger denotes a noble steed that carries its warrior into battle. There have been so many famous chargers that they could provide stories in themselves. A few will remind you: Lee's "Traveler", Jackson's "Old Sorrel", Grant's "Cincinnati", McClellan's "Daniel Webster", Sherman's "Sam", Sheridan's "Rienzi", Meade's "Baldy", Stuart's "Highfly", Thomas' "Billy", and cross-eyed Butler's "Almond Eye" to name but a few of these great war horses.

A WORD FROM A CIVIL WAR HORSE HEIR

Fellow Members of the Civil War Round Stables:

Those of us who are descendants of horses who participated in the War are particularly anxious that due credit be given to our brave ancestors. The place of man in the Conflict is secure. The role of our forebears has been sadly neglected. Were this not true, their feats would be celebrated with such Civil War motion pictures as "The Soldier Horses", the "Red Saddle of Courage" and "Gone With the Whinny." This is partly our fault, because not one of us has entered the writing field where we could really make hay. There isn't a single Civil War book written by a horse. Neigh - not one! Not even by a hack writer. Surely some talented steed could have given us such titles as "The Ordeal of the Equine," "The Emergence of Lincoln's Horse," or "Traveler's Lieutenants."

Certainly our ancestors merit greater attention. During the first two years of the War, two hundred and eighty thousand horses were furnished the Union cavalry alone. There were not 30, 60 or 90-day horses, but entered for the duration. In no case did they attempt to evade service. In New York there were no draught horse riots. Horses were not exempt because they were father, or mudders with large families. And there is no instance of a single equine offering another a bounty of oats as a substitute. (Parenthetically, there were in military service, many thousands of half brothers of our ancestors - the brave army mule - from whom, unfortunately, for scientific reasons, none of us can claim descent.)

During the course of the War, hundreds of thousands of our progenitors became casualties - most of them being buried six hooves under the ground. The tragic number of fatalities among these noble creatures was due to many causes besides death in battle. There were untrained soldiers who knew neither how to ride nor take care of our ancestors. Had the situation been reversed and we had been in the saddle, few of us would have been guilty of such poor manhorseship! During a raid, some of those raw soldiers would gallop one of our unfortunate ancestors until he was dead tired, halting for too brief a rest and then running him again. It was a situation filled with whoa.

As the War progressed, it became more difficult to replace veteran equines who had become casualties. Perhaps this was due to the falling birth rate. For, as it has been aptly said, "You can foal all of the horses some of the time, and some of the horses all of the time, but you can't foal all of the horses all of the time." Humans use the expression "horse sense" to denote wisdom. Yet, it is a matter of record that never once was a single horse on either side consulted about military strategy. Take Burnside's assault at Fredericksburg- any horse, or portion thereof would have known better. And this isn't just a plug for us horses.

Had we been in a position of authority, there would have been no Civil War in the first place. For what stallion, northern or southern, who ever eyed a likely filly, would fail to subscribe to the dictum that Union must be preserved!

Although forced to be mere beasts of burden, our ancestors accepted their grave responsibility without shirking. At any rate, there is no record of President Lincoln or Jefferson Davis ever having to issue a single pardon to a condemned deserting horse. Today the famous steeds of yesteryear are forgotten.....Sic Transit Horsa Mundi.

Yet though neglected by the herd, their deeds should serve as an inspiration to us all. For, in the words of the poet.....

(Article condensed from one that appeared in "The Dispatch," published by the New York C.W.R.T., which in turn was taken from "Minie News," a publication of the Australian C.W.R.T.)

Lives of great steeds remind us,
We can make our lives sublime....
And departing, leave behind us
Hoffprints in the sands of time.

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

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A hearty thanks to member Brian Kowell who, at the last meeting handed you a whole sheaf of excerpts of interesting items he had jotted down from several books recently read. From now on when you see the initials "BK" after the credit, that means Brian did the research.

For instance:

"There was an Abraham Lincoln on each side of the war. The President and a Confederate, Abraham Lincoln of Co. F. 1st Va. Cavalry, from Jefferson City. He was reported as a deserter in 1864, so that the North ended with both." Burke David, "Our Incredible Civil War" BK

BULLY FOR TOM GESHKE

Our October 10th Meeting was not over-populated, but this was made up for by the appearances of Ed Wells and Jack Cullen. We also had an excellent program by President Roosevelt, Secretary Tom Geshke. And wine, courtesy of John Tormey.

Tom did a great job impersonating Teedy Roosevelt, giving his autobiography complete with mustache, wire-rimmed glasses and snapping galluses. As he approached the period of the presidency in the narrative, he adroitly donned vest and familiar frock coat. A lively question and answer period demonstrated how well Tom had done his homework by the way he fielded the sly, knowledgeable questions of our erudite comrades.

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CLUB'S FUTURE UP TO YOU

We need new members. It is up to the individual members to bring along guests who may be given an opportunity at first hand to see what this club is all about: the good fellowship; the exchange of ideas and knowledge; the chance to learn more about the fascinating subject of our common interest. Let's make the effort!

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

On October 5th invasion forces of the Cleveland C.W.R.T. converged on Columbia, South Carolina, some by aircraft and others by land vehicles for the 22nd Annual Field Trip. Accompanying the members was a contingent of W.A.C.S. (Wives Along Come to See.)

Planned by the late Art Jordan with his local friend, Alderman Duncan, who acted as genial host with his charming wife, and coordinated by our Vice-President Chuck Spiegle, the four days went off with military precision. Mr. Duncan was with us all the way, acting as guide and arranging, among other things, a luncheon at his private Palmetto Club and dinner at the Carolina Yacht Club. Present were members Bates, Clarke, B. Bayless and N. Bayless, Schlesinger, Gill, Chamberlin, Swanson, Harkness, Koehl, Drews, Corfield, Cramer and six ladies; Bonnie B., Mary G., Hazel C., Connie C., Cornelia S., and Ginny C.

About half the group arrived the day before, and after a sumptuous meal at a lovely restaurant with the unlikely name of "A.J's" (Fred Gill said it sounded like a hardware store) The Marching, Singing and Bourbon Society swung into action and sang its bawdy songs far into the night. Our medical corps, Schlesinger and Chamberlin, were in particularly good voice, with judge advocate Clarke supplying the "dum de dums" in place of the naughtier words in deference to the only lady present, Hazel C.

After a shower Thursday after lunch, all trooped over to the State Capitol, observed the metal stars marking the hits made by Sherman's gunners, then overran the Senate and House rooms, met Governor James Edwards, the first Republican to hold that office since the Reconstruction Days, then proceeded to the Confederate Museum. The shower at the beginning of this paragraph does not mean a communal shower bath, but refers to the only bit of inclement weather encountered on the entire trip. That evening a cocktail party was attended as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Langley in their luxurious home.

Friday saw a cavalcade of seven cars heading south for Charleston, the first stop being the ruins of the Wade Hampton mansion. Only five large columns remain, shorn on the top and covered with vines and the twisted branches of nearby oaks..... mute evidence of the violence that once surged about this peaceful place. Then on to "Borough House," the home of Confederate General Richard H. Anderson, with the present owners and descendants acting as host-guides.

Situated at Statesburgh (never saw any town), this pre-Revolutionary War plantation of 5,000 acres held vast treasures of antiques and memorabilia. The main part of the house was once a tavern, then wings were added, with separate buildings housing a century-old library; kitchen; slave quarters; spring house.....all made of "rammed-earth" clay blocks. Beautiful live oaks festooned with graceful Spanish moss, a profusion of shrubs, flowers and great variety of trees, such as the cork-screwlike Crepe Cyprus.....an arbor of Scuppernong grapes and ever all the sweet smell of blossoming tea olive trees.....the whole effect a movie-like set. Mr. Anderson then lead the gang a short distance to a lovely old 18th Century edifice, the Church of the Holy Cross, a miniature cathedral, still used by its Episcopal congregation.

On to Charleston, about which so much has been written that only a few impressions must suffice for want of space: Friday's high light was the dress parade of the cadets at The Citadel, South Carolina's West Point. We happened to be there on the special occasion of the reunion of the Fifth Army, honoring General Mark Clark, who reviewed the hundreds of young men marching in full dress..... with flags and pennants.....swords flashing, the stirring music of a big band with bagpipes.....the booming of a 17-gun salute.....spectacular! And then they marched off the field to "Dixie."

Next day a boat ride out into the big bay to partially restored Ft. Sumter where a pleasant and savvy young National Park historian told the story of the start of the war and the subsequent attempts of the Union to retake it.....then a walking tour of Charleston, (where, as the governor told us, the natives stand at sea level and look down upon the rest of the world).....the fine gardens, antebellum homes.....narrow streets, some of the group taking in Ft. Moultrie, Charleston Landing, the Old Market, and other points of interest.

Many absorbing sights.....the high bridges overlooking the bay.....with its ocean freighters.....the giant "Yorktown".....quaint stores.....commercial and military aircraft zooming over the motel.....Robert E. Lee rising majestically out of the pool - no, that was Neville.....Chuck Spiegel looking more like Stonewall Jackson every day. Only complaint - the service in the restaurants, on some occasions actual waits of over two hours before food was served after ordering.....then there was Rex Corfield the last night, infused with the juice of the Juniper, vivacious when all others drooped with weariness. It was truly a great fun trip, even though the intake of good food and drink was somewhat in excess of Civil War education. Memories of local color are, as usual, priceless.

Perhaps next year we should consider roughing it.....at say, Shiloh?

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A GEORGIA LAWYER - FAME IN TWO OTHER FIELDS

"He's most the prettiest thing you ever did see on a field of fight." It'd put fight into a whupped chicken jes' to look at him." So spake an admiring soldier of Confederate General John B. Gordon, Citizen-Soldier.

First gaining the esteem of his superiors at Seven Pines for his daring leadership of Rhode's Brigade, he distinguished himself in all the major battles of the Army of Northern Virginia, right up to Appomattox. He combined a gift of oratory with instinctive generalship. In Lee's Lieutenants, Douglas Freeman says, "A certain freshness, a boldness, a freedom, an originality in sound military design was Gordon's. He differed from most orators in that his actions outdid his exhortations."

Not too many are aware that in later life, after serving as Governor and Senator for Georgia, his ability as an orator brought him more nationwide fame.

This write has a brochure, issued by the Southern Lyceum Bureau, season 1895-6, describing Gordon's popular lecture, "The Last Days of the Confederacy," with several pages of laudatory excerpts from the press of that time. His first appearance was at the Tabernacle of Brooklyn, N.Y. before an audience of 5,000 (in those days before P.A. systems speakers knew how to project their voices); cheers and a standing ovation on that occasion became commonplace thereafter.

Some of the phraseology of the plaudits from newspapers coast to coast give an idea of how General Gordon stormed the country 30 years after the surrender: "speaker of magnificent eloquence"....."prominent men from every profession laughed at his humor, wept at his pathos and wildly applauded his sentiments"....."threw upon his vast audience a spell which enchanted and enchained them through every word"....."ladies stood and huzzahed, and waved their handkerchiefs"....."simply superb"....."each syllable was emotional, each shade of accent an inspiration to higher patriotism"....."brings the Northern and Southern sections into closer harmony and brotherhood"....."Madison Garden's" largest crowd to date was stirred to enthusiastic demonstrations lasting several minutes each time"....."the bullet-scarred veteran spoke for two hours, but at 10:15 when he hinted to stop, the great audience shouted, "Go on!"....."every boy and girl in the land should hear him."

Would that they could.

Our late Bill Clark of fond memory once remarked that it would be a great idea if some of our members who served in the armed forces would share their humorous experiences. Of course this was and is often done at field trip bull sessions, but it would make a good running series. Bill's point was that no matter what war, soldiers and sailors experience similar situations. Even though it could not have happened in the Civil War, an example was a story told by Bill Chamberlin on this last trip.

In Europe during WWII at one location, Dr. Bill repeatedly had to go out and chase and search for shell-shocked patients who took to the woods every time some amorous pilot buzzed the hospital to let the nurses know he was back. How about sending in YOUR yarn?

Fred Gill had another good idea for an entertaining series. Simply have members tell how they became interested in the Civil War! I'll give a personal sample to start the ball rolling, and I'm sure many of you have a more intriguing tale to tell. While in a lower grade school in Belleview, Fla., a teacher gave a vivid one-sided description of Lee and Grant which stayed in my subconscious for years. At Heights High School, Cleveland Heights (Class of '30), in the library I came across "Miller's Photographic History of the C.W." and was flabbergasted by the slovenly appearance of the Confederate soldiers. Guess I'd always imagined them looking like Robert E. Lee, although I was not at all surprised by the sloppy Federal uniforms. This led to my reading other books about the war and from then on I was hooked.

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THAT'S OUR BOY!

Saw this in the excellent "C.W. Round Table Digest".....

"The Annual Dinner Meeting of the Tennessee Valley CWRT (Huntsville, Ala.) in June will feature GUY DI CARLO of CWRT New York and editor of its "Dispatch", who will impersonate Hosea Rood, a wounded soldier from a Wisconsin outfit, and tell of his experiences in an Atlanta hospital, nursed by "Mother" Bickerdyke, a nurse with Sherman's army."

* * * * *

OLLAPODRIDA:

(Chop Suey, Hash, Stew, or in other words, odds and ends)

Footnote to recent field trip: Mrs. Anderson showed an old document which indicated that when cash was scarce the planters sometimes paid their taxes in slaves.....

* Name for hardtack in the Union army was "Lincoln pies".....

* John Mosby, "The Gray Ghost" who plagued the Federal lines no end in Fairfax, Fauquier and Loudon counties after the war became a Republican and campaigned for U. S. Grant.....

* Johnny Clem, "the drummerboy of Chickamauga", actually entered the Union army at the age of TEN, killed a Confederate Officer with his saw-off Springfield, re-joined the army after the war and..... wound up as a MAJOR GENERAL!

* "Pumpkin slingers" was a term used by the bluecoats for low grade Belgian rifles imported early in the war.....

* The bounty business boomed after the war. One T.W. Talmadge advertised "in business of prosecuting claims against the government for 30 years." Another, John Wedderburn, advertised in the Washington, D.C. papers, "Rejected Claims Revived."

* A picture from the National Archives shows Union soldiers practising with bayonets with a ball on their end.....OOF!! Hurt anyway.