



News Letter

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

CLEVELAND, OHIO

December 1, 1958

"MEET GENERAL GRANT." On Wednesday, December 3, General Ulysses S. Grant III will speak on "The Strategy of the Civil War and Ohio's Contribution." This will be a joint meeting with the Western Reserve Historical Society.

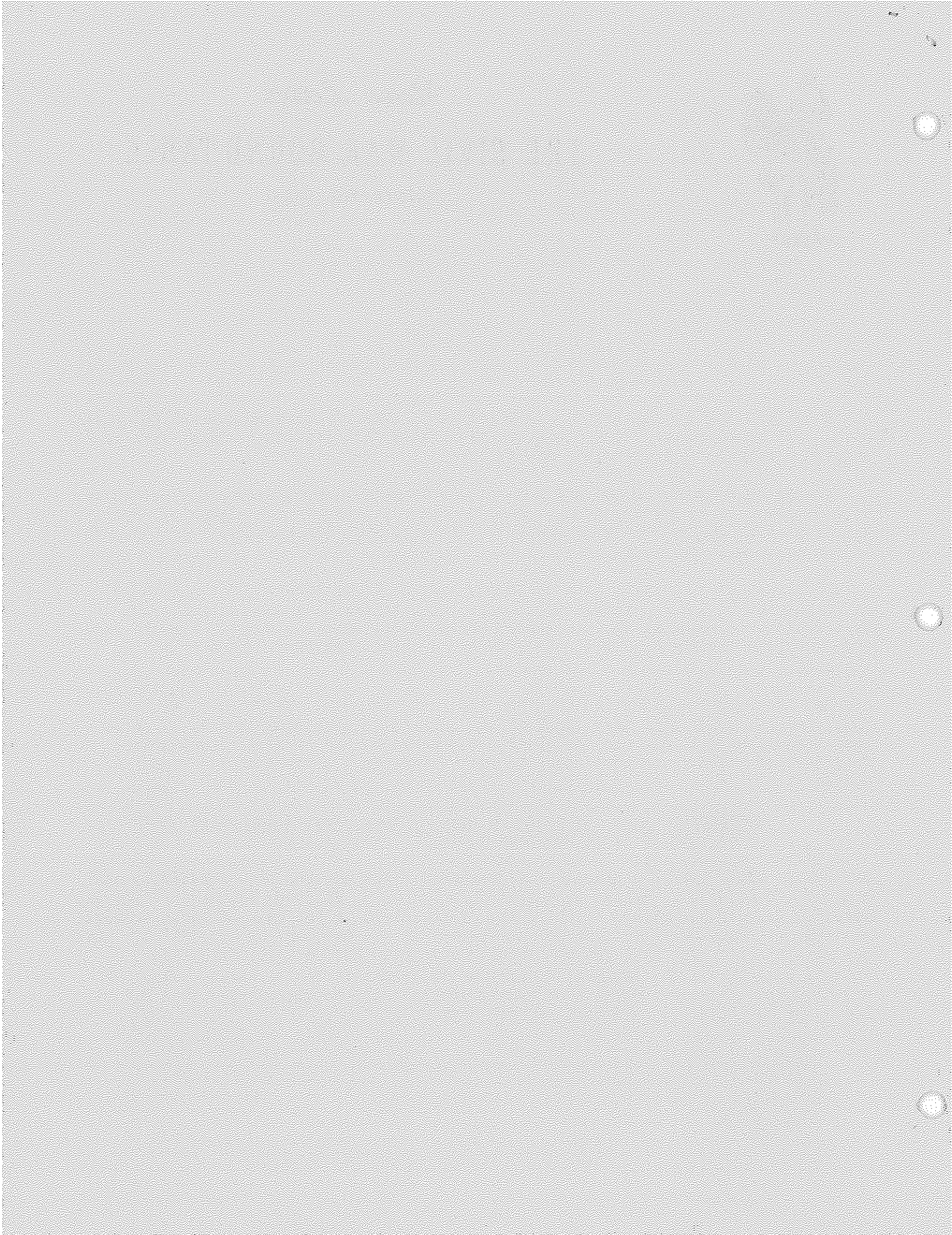
We will have dinner in the Red Room of the Western Reserve University Cafeteria at 7:00 p.m., conduct our meeting there, and then proceed to the Historical Society building at 10825 East Boulevard, a short distance from the University campus. The dinner price will be \$3.00.

The University Cafeteria is a one-story gray building located on the east side of the Severance Hall parking lot. The entrance to the Severance Hall lot is from Bellflower Road, which enters East Boulevard between the W.R.U. Library and the Cleveland Institute of Art. Enclosed is a parking sticker. Show it to the guard at the gate if you are challenged.

GENERAL GRANT, OUR GUEST AT LUNCH. The next day, Thursday, December 4, at 11:45 a.m., General Grant will have lunch at the University Club with as many of us as can attend. He will discuss the plans and program of the Civil War Centennial Committee of which he is chairman. We will gather in a private dining room, reserved for us by our fellow buff, Fred Kopf, Secretary of the University Club.

Please return the enclosed card at once, indicating which or both of these meetings you will be attending.

ULYSSES S. GRANT III is a grandson of President Grant and the son of Major-General Frederick Dent Grant. He was graduated from the U. S. Military Academy in 1903 and advanced through the grades of the Corps of Engineers to the rank of Major-General. His many military services include active duty on the Mexican border, 1913-17; member Gen. Staff Corps, 1917-20; member of the Supreme War Council, Versailles, France, 1918-19 and the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Paris, 1919. For his distinguished services at home and abroad he has been decorated with a D.S.M., Legion of Merit, and by six foreign countries.



MEETING OF NOVEMBER 11. The Turning Point of the Civil War was the topic which furnished a lively evening for 33 members and 3 guests. A panel, made up of Paul Guenther, Charley Clarke and Ned Downer at the command of Rex Corfield, moderator, pulled the lanyards on the signal guns and "opened the ball."

Guenther took the position that "the North had too much." With impressive figures on population and resources he pointed out the heavy advantages in man power and materials of war on the side of the North.

Clarke challenged the school of thought which explains all historical trends in terms of physical environment to the exclusion of the human factor. As for the Civil War, he traced the turning point to "Private Mitchell's wandering foot," which kicked up Lee's Special Orders 191 at Frederick City. The information thus gained enabled McClellan to turn back Lee's Maryland invasion at Antietam (Sharpsburg to our Southern members). A victory by Lee, he claimed, probably would have resulted in the capture of Washington and European intervention on the side of the Confederacy.

Downer contended that the election of McClellan in 1864 would have given the South, at least, a negotiated peace. He doubted if Lincoln would have been re-elected without military successes in the fall of 1864. The capture of Atlanta turned the tide, giving the North the stamina to carry on and breaking the morale of the South. His turning point was the battle of Atlanta on July 22 which presaged the fall of Atlanta.

All three panel members were kept busy with challenging questions. Among the "turning points" for which claims were made were: Grant's decision to advance after the Wilderness battle, the effect of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on British public opinion, the loss of Jackson, the battles around Chattanooga in 1863, the Monitor and the Merrimac, and Fort Donelson. It seemed as the discussion proceeded that almost every military, naval, political and diplomatic event was vital in determining the outcome.

Neville Bayless, thinking that the importance of the blockade did not receive adequate attention, has submitted a statement by Charles Francis Adams, United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James, on the point, portions of which follow:

"Thus the two decisive defeats of the Confederacy . . . were not in the field at all; they were sustained, the one, almost by default, on the ocean; the other,

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most fatal of all, after sharpest struggle in Lancashire. . . Ten years before Harriet Beecher Stowe had launched through the press her Uncle Tom's Cabin. Translated into every civilized tongue, it soon became world literature . . . 'The emancipation of the negro from the slavery of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's heroes is the one idea of the millions of British who know no better, and do not care to know.' Like the Cherubim with the flaming sword this sentiment stood between Lancashire and cotton; and the inviolate blockade made possible the subjugation of the Confederacy."

Tom Hamlin writes "to get my two cents worth in." He says, "there can be no doubt but that the election of Jefferson Davis was the beginning of the end so far as the Confederacy was concerned. . . If the war was lost, it was at the beginning."

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION. Enclosed are seven amendments to the constitution which will be recommended by the Executive Committee for action at the next meeting. Accompanying the amendments is an explanation of each from President Cullen.

SUBSCRIBE TO CIVIL WAR HISTORY. If you wish to subscribe or renew your subscription to Civil War History, the quarterly journal devoted to the Civil War, published by the Iowa State University Library, Iowa City, at the group rate of \$4.00 instead of at the regular \$5.00 subscription price, tear off, fill out and mail the form below to Edward T. Downer. Accompany the form with your check to the sum of \$4.00 made out to Civil War Round Table of Cleveland.

Edward T. Downer, Western Reserve University, Cleveland 6, Ohio.

Please order a subscription to Civil War History for the year 1959 (four issues). Enclosed is my check for \$4.00.

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BELLONA ARSENAL

by John W. Cullen, Jr.

Perhaps you have heard of Bellona Arsenal; I hadn't when a visitor from Richmond mentioned it to me last summer. When none of my Civil War reference books was able to supply information, my interest increased. Three months later and after a big of digging here and there, I have some of the answers.

Bellona Arsenal is located about twelve miles west of downtown Richmond on the south side of the James River. When it was erected by the federal government at the close of the War of 1812, it was a spot immediately to the west of a cannon factory that was already in existence. This older establishment, which also bore the name of Bellona, was owned and operated by Major John Clarke, a man of considerable experience in the manufacture of lethal weapons. Bellona, by the way, was the Roman goddess of war, sometimes described as the wife of Mars.

Construction of the arsenal began in the early part of 1816 and continued into 1817. The completed installation consisted of a walled enclosure, within which were located eight brick buildings. The two largest of these were the main arsenal, three stories tall, which was situated at the north side of the quadrangle, and the equally high barracks on the south. Other structures were officers' quarters, workshops and storerooms. Security was provided by the seventeen foot brick wall, by iron gratings at all windows and loopholes in the walls of every structure. Gunports in the main arsenal would permit the use of cannon.

From 1816 to 1821 the post was garrisoned by a small detachment of ordnance troops. The fact that the arsenal was located in an area in which slaves were relatively numerous resulted in anxieties on the part of the civilian population. In view of this, it was not surprising that by 1832 "the business of repairing arms" at Bellona was discontinued by departmental order. The fort's garrison was transferred to Fort Monroe in September of the following year.

Bellona arsenal from 1833 on served as a storehouse for cannon manufactured in Major Clarke's foundry, but it soon became clear that there was much more space than was needed for this purpose. When a Virginia civilian requested permission to lease the arsenal buildings, now admitted to be almost useless to the government, the War Department listened with interest. Several tenants occupied the buildings, which by now were showing visible signs of neglect, until finally in 1856, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis decided to dispose of the arsenal, selling the same for \$2,650, an installation that had cost the United States almost \$200,000 to construct.

Five years later, Virginia seceded from the Union and the heirs to Major Clarke's foundry set to work manufacturing ordnance for the Confederacy. For the first two years of the war, the shops were operated as a private undertaking supplying guns to the government at Richmond under contract. On January 1, 1863, both arsenal and foundry were leased to the Confederacy.

Local tradition would have it that Bellona Arsenal served in the sixties as a vital military installation, that it was "Lee's secret munitions source." Its neighbor, Bellona Foundry, was obviously useful, but no evidence has been found to substantiate the imagined importance of the arsenal to the Confederacy.

Today there are only a few building left to suggest that the property was once

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dedicated to the arts of war. Visitors can still see ruins of the powder magazine and the two eastern workshops, the latter has been converted into a private residence but visible are the loopholes designed for use against imagined enemies. Out of respect for the past, the present owner has restored to as great a degree as possible every surviving vestige of the arsenal.