

Sample - First Episode (Chapter) The Southern Cross

The Southern Cross

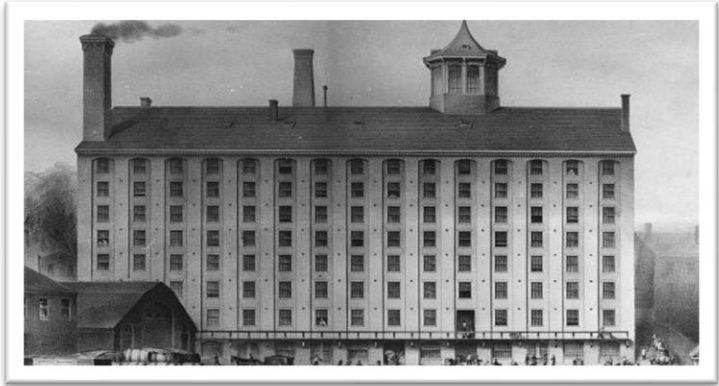
Chapter 1+ sample

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1. Light Cannons

April 16, 1861, 8:30 PM St. Albans, Vermont



It was strange to see that pair of lovely racehorses pulling a rotten farm cart.

Yet, under the crescent moon, only one man saw it stop beside Vermont's American Union Munitions Plant.

As the night riders unhitched and mounted those fine stallions, the factory's watchman yelled at them through a window above.

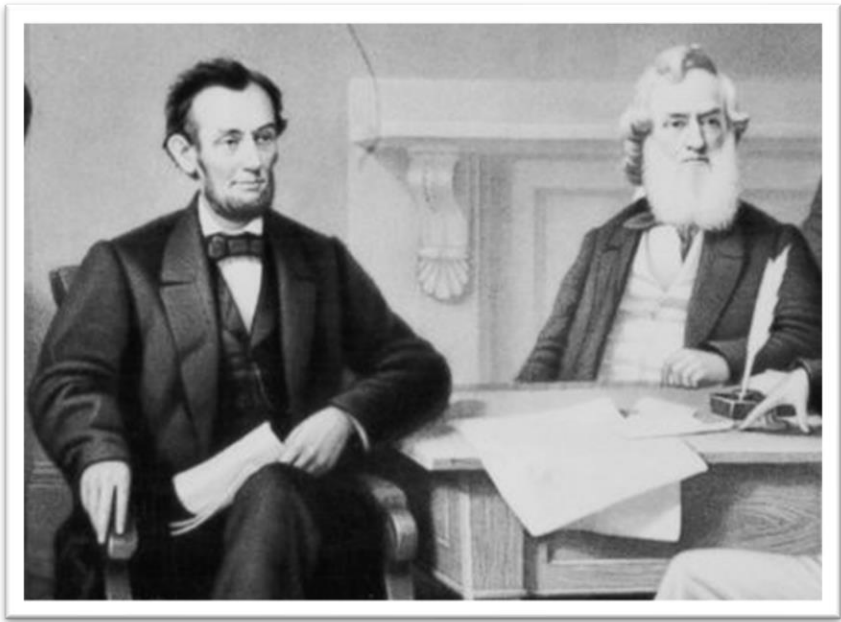
"Hey, you can't park that wagon here! Move out now!"

"Yes, sir!

"We'll be gone in a flash!" the long, tall marauder replied.

Then he lit his fuse.

The Oval Office, April 17, 1861, 8:02 AM



“Mr. President?” asked John Nicolay, one of Lincoln’s assistants.

“Yes, John.”

“Secretary (of war) Stanton is waiting to see you.”

“Send him in.”

“Good morning, Edwin, have a seat.”

“I wish it were, Abraham,” Stanton replied.

“What’s happened?”

“Last night, Confederate spies destroyed four of our weapon factories. Two in Philadelphia, one in Syracuse, and a munitions plant in Vermont.”

“Damn. This war is not even twenty-four hours old yet. How many Casualties?” Lincoln asked.

“Only one so far; they may find more bodies in the ashes. There could have been hundreds had they attacked during daylight.”

“War only makes truly good news by ending. Did we capture or kill any enemies?”

“No. They were long gone before help arrived.”

“How did they attack?”

“They parked dynamite-loaded wagons against their outside walls; as they rode off on their horses, the buildings exploded.”

“Our factories are so exposed children could have pulled this off.”

“A witness heard one holler “White Knights Forever!” as he fled.”

“White Knights?”

“Yes, White Knights.”

“With such success, we must presume that these White Knights will attack again before they think we can respond. Most likely tonight!” Lincoln predicted.

“Yes, that’s clear. Most of our factories were built before dynamite.”

“They were built when our worst enemies had to cross an ocean to mess with us. Now they live here, so our factories have become sitting ducks,” Lincoln responded.

Several years earlier, Alfred Nobel (the Nobel Peace Prize guy) naively began selling his invention (dynamite) to mining companies.

Nitroglycerin was already available, but it could explode by gently shaking it, so militaries avoided it. However, dynamite was stable; it used a fuse, so armies and militias bought all they could.

“Order defensive brigades to stop and search all vehicles approaching our weapon factories and depots for dynamite.”

“I issued that order before I arrived here. Our communications officers are currently wiring (sending telegrams) to all division commanders.”

“That won’t stop them; they’ll simply switch to softer targets like foundries, railroad bridges, warehouses, and food plants.”

“Undoubtedly.”

“We need invisible facilities that are fortified against dynamite.”

“I will speak with General Sherman and his engineers as soon as I leave here. I will report back here tomorrow morning, Abraham.”

“Try to bring better bad news tomorrow.”

“I’ll try.”

24 Years Later - March 6, 1885, 4:02 PM Columbus, Ohio



Thomas Edison was as excited as a spoiled child on Christmas eve.

He and his Manhattan-based engineers had been rolling in and out of Ohio's capital for three years to open the world's first fully electrified music hall.

Finally, the grand opening of Columbus's new Metropolitan Opera House was just four and a half hours away.

Although Edison’s promotion called this a “new” music hall, only its name, paint, curtains, upholstery, and his direct-current electrical lighting system were ‘actually’ new.

Not that it matters, but twenty-four years earlier, it was “The Cotton Block and Comstock’s Opera House” at its first grand opening.



Columbus’s opera house sat at 127 North High Street; until a fire destroyed it in 1892.

At a New York press conference four months earlier, Edison boasted, “This event will be far more than just electrifying a music hall. I will introduce two new products that will forever enlighten our world!”

In the nineteenth century, Americans and Europeans worshiped the great inventors like we do great athletes today. In the 1880s, Thomas Edison was the most admired man (living) in the Western World.

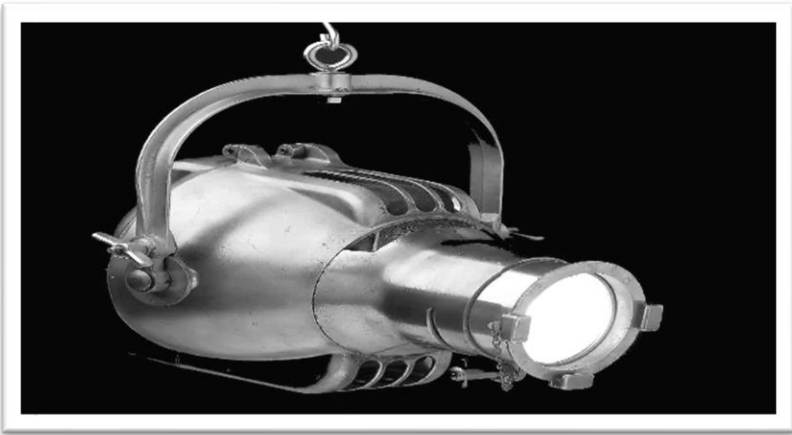
Articles about him increased newspaper sales so dramatically that six hundred reporters from eight nations had rail-rolled into town for this historic event. Even before revealing these new products, he drew the second-largest crowd in Columbus's 72-year history.

Weeks earlier, Edison supplied railroad and show tickets, paid hotel rooms, and whiskey vouchers to sixty-three VIPs. Sixty-one attended.

His guests included ex-presidents Hayes and Grant, author Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), composer John Philip Sousa, inventors Alexander Graham Bell, George Eastman, Harvey Firestone, Skyler Wheeler, Elisha Gray, and his favorite, Joseph Gayetty (toilet paper).

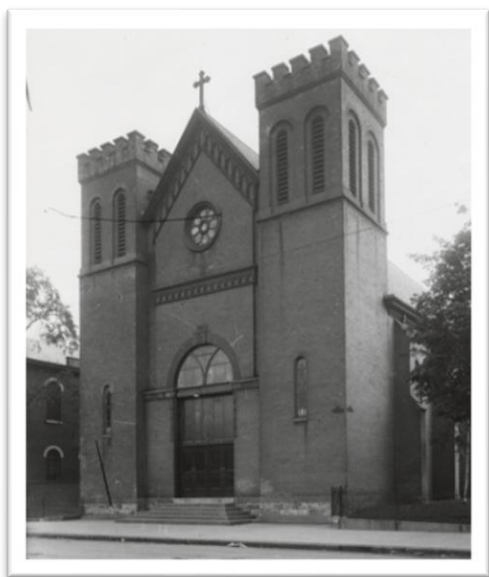
As with the opera house, one of these 'new' products was not that new.

After seeing Edison's first prototype in 1881, lame-duck President Hayes ordered the first one thousand for the US Navy. Edison agreed to produce them secretly until this month (March 1885). Edison named these "Light Cannons"; however, the press dubbed them "Spotlights," which stuck.



A week before Edison's big reveal, Columbus's three hotels were over-booked, leaving no rooms for hundreds of reporters. In response, Ohio's Governor Hoadly ordered a battalion from the Columbus Arsenal (now Fort Hayes) to erect twenty troop tents on the statehouse grounds, several blocks south of the Opera House.





Columbus's St. Patrick's Church (Built 1851)

So, he slipped and skidded over six icy blocks to Saint Patrick's Church to make a \$100 donation, a significant contribution for 1885.

As Reverend John Furlong's thick, powerful hands clamped around the five gold pieces, Edison asked him to pray that this show runs "glitch-free."

After dropping the coins into the collection box, Father John took Edison's hands. Then in his rich Irish accent, he recited a beauty. Amen!

Anxiety replaced Edison's childish excitement about two hours before 'The Maids of Armando' would become the world's first spotlighted musical.

He worried that one tiny malfunction could become a headline disaster.

“Damn, I should have asked him to get spring sprouting already,” Edison thought as he slipped and skidded back to the theater.

In hindsight, Edison should have asked Father John to protect the entire evening.

Five minutes before showtime (8:25 PM), under the flickering glow of the theater’s original gaslights, Governor Hoadly opened the show by thanking the dignitaries and reporters before introducing Edison.

After America’s first Elon Musk stood on the ‘X’ he had painted on the stage floor, he showed off his most extraordinary talent, marketing:

“Ladies, gentlemen, oh and you reporters,” cracked up everyone not holding a pencil.

“The Annals of Time will remember this evening as one of the most significant nights in human history! Tonight, we forever leave the darkness behind!”

His adoring crowd laughed at everything he said until “LET THERE BE LIGHT!” And everyone gasped instead.

Edison suddenly glowed so intensely that everyone watching had to cover their eyes momentarily. They all expected the world’s first fully electrically illuminated musical, but nothing this bright.

His lightbulbs were not bright enough to power his Light Cannons. So, he used “Voltage Arcing,” the first electric lighting method patented.

That patent was issued in 1804, forty-five years before Edison was born.

Then he said, “Let the Show Begin!”



“The Buckeye Beauties” would soon be spotlighted under Edison’s horrifying headlines.

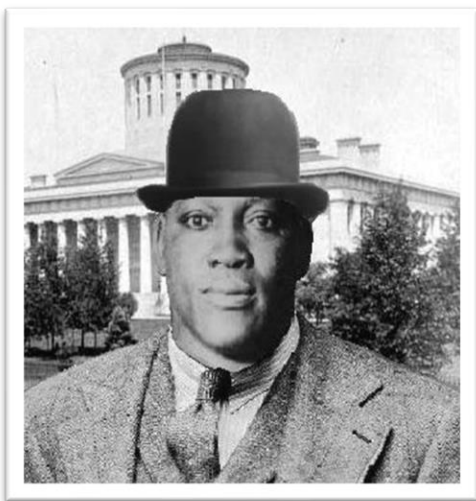
Why would Edison hold this reveal in this small town when his company was based in Manhattan? New York City had dozens of opera houses and newspapers; Columbus had only one of each.

Although Edison was born and raised in Ohio, he would have never chosen this music hall. Former President Hayes selected it as a cover story.

Upon leaving office in 1881, Hayes's replacement, President Garfield, secretly appointed him commander of the country's first 'actually' secret agency.

President Andrew Johnson set up the Secret Service six years earlier after President Lincoln's assassination.

However, Secret Service agents carried Secret Service badges and worked from their town's Secret Service office, which ain't exactly "secret." This needed to be a very boring government service that just happens to move rapidly.



Secret Commander Hayes's first quandary; explain why Edison and his's engineers would be rolling in and out of Columbus for the next few years.

Hayes's brilliant, 6'9" secretary/bodyguard, the former child slave Lemont Freeman, suggested having Edison also electrify the old opera

house to explain his presence.

"That's perfect," Hayes instantly responded.

Edison and his men were secretly in Columbus to convert an invisible Civil War weapons factory into the nation's secret headquarters for covert projects, programs, and espionage.

This vast (for 1885) facility sat seven miles west of the music hall, 30 feet beneath the crest of “Sullivant’s Hill” (today’s “Hilltop”). Columbus sat dead center of the nation’s railroad network (mathematically).

Because trains were humanity’s swiftest form of transportation, Sullivant’s Hill offered the quickest private access to the entire country.

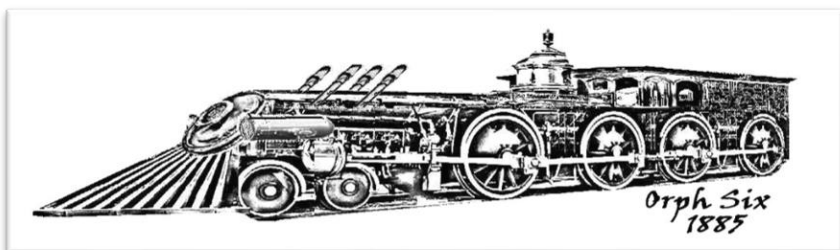
To explain the short trains racing in and out of the shabby barn above the underground complex, Lemont also suggested a federal program that rushed emergency medical aid to America’s rural orphan children.

FYI: European nations began dumping 1.7 million orphan children into America’s open arms after the Civil War. Most were scattered around the country’s farms.

Publicly, President Garfield appointed ex-president Hayes, Director of The National Orphan Relief Agency, or “NORA” for short. Internally they called the country’s first genuinely secret agency “ORPHAN.”

On March 4, three days before Edison’s big event, his latest D/C generator increased the underground facility’s electric power from 16 to 1240 amps.

By this time, NORA already operated five ‘Orphan Ambulance trains’, with the next always under construction. ORPHAN agents affectionately call these low-slung, hidden-weapon-packed rail rockets “ORPHS.”



While still in dark primer, ORPH Six was about to be rushed into service.

Painted white with big red crosses and flashing red light bulbs, ORPHS hid in plain sight as they zoomed across the nation's rails. Their secret features and stats, like their world-record speed and concealed weapons, were drastically understated or never mentioned.

NORA built ORPHS one at a time, so each became the next generation, offering new features, slicker weapons, and improved performance.

Ten feet north of the Orphan Ambulance barn, NORA built a house-sized hospital for orphan children to complete the cover story. This tiny clinic occasionally treated an injured orphan child.

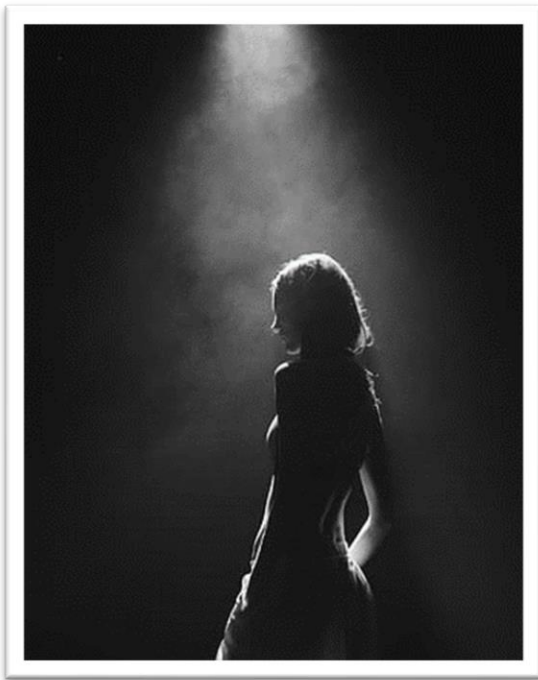
Initially (during the Civil War), the barn pretended to be a wheel replacement facility for railroad cars. It hid the entrances to the underground factory, originally called "Plant One." This was where box cars were loaded with munitions.

Back to Edison's big event:

Once the show (The Maids of Armando) began, Edison's audience gasped each time another Buckeye Beauty was spotlighted.

Sara Kilbourne, their gorgeous leader, was born and raised in a small upscale settlement called Worthington, which was only seven miles north of Columbus.

Sara's five companions (Armando's other maids tonight) were also from Ohio and closer than most sisters.



Sara and Elizabeth were natural redheads, auburn, and copper, respectively, as Dolly, Daisy, Dotty, and Dorothy were natural blondes (so they claimed).

The show's producers, Peter D. Legend and Edison, planned a lavish after-party three blocks south of the opera house in the Neil house's ballroom.



The Columbus Neil House (1885) sat across from Ohio's Statehouse on South High St.

Edison didn't want the VIPs walking three blocks to the after-party (through thousands of fans), so he turned that issue into tonight's second product reveal.

These celebrities would ride inside the most advanced vehicle to ever roll over America's horse-crap-covered roads, Edison's "Electro Wonder Coach!"

Along with teams of Clydesdales (gigantic horses), he shipped in the first twenty built from his New York facility (by rail).

He proudly called their most significant advancement: "The Dome Light!"



Although light bulbs glowing on a stagecoach's ceiling sent drool dribbling down the chins of nineteenth-century nerds, this was not their only revolutionary feature.

These were also the world's first coaches with a removable table in between their two (facing) bench seats.

Very advanced stuff, but these tables still needed cup holders.

The battery under the forward bench seat was powerful enough to keep the dome light glowing past midnight.

Six months earlier, the musical "Ladies Come First" (written by Sara and John Phillip Sousa) was the last show before the opera house closed for its electrical rebirth.

So, Peter naturally reserved the first Electro Wonder Coach lined up in the alley, beside the stage door, for the Buckeye Beauties.

Anxiously he checked his glowing radium (radioactive) pocket watch before telling them, “Damn, the VIP parade was supposed to start in one minute!” (11 PM).

As he closed their coach’s door after seating them, he shook his head and mumbled, “They (the VIPs) are all in the lobby, sucking up to reporters.”

As Peter stepped back from the coach, its enormous 'whip man' (driver) suddenly cracked his tool. His dinosaur-sized ponies launched onto North High Street and swung a hard left at full speed.

The six beauties screamed as the wonder coach skidded around that icy corner on two wheels before racing off to the north. Unfortunately, this was only one of their problems; that after-party was three blocks to their south.

"STOP! YOU'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY!" Peter uselessly yelled as his arms flopped around like bird wings.

The VIPs, journalists, and fans remained unaware as they partied in the lobby near the theater's south side. Only Peter and the second coach's whipman saw that giant hijacker fling his Edison-provided top hat like a Frisbee.

A dark cover draped around the speeding coach as that hat sailed away. It spread over its windows and doors before tightening, preventing the girls from escaping or seeing anything outside.

Peter dove into the second coach, shouting, "Go after them! That lunatic doesn't know where he's going!"

The driver launched his team faster than ever before. However, that extra speed had nothing to do with giant horses wanting to save pretty ladies.

Somehow, right in front of that driver's eyes, someone had replaced the iron pin connecting the team's rigging to the coach with a toothpick. With nothing to pull, his giant beasts launched faster than ever.

However, he had grasped his reins so quickly that they wrapped around his wrist, flinging him face-first onto the brick pavement below.

Fortunately, a massive pile of warm, steaming Clydesdale dung prevented physical injury.

Before that crap-coated driver could pick himself up, Peter dove into what had been the third coach waiting in line, shouting, "Go after them!"

"Go after who?" the whipman replied.

"The coach that just stole the Buckeye Beauties!"

"Where did it go?" he asked.

"It went that way! North! Go now!" Peter yelled and pointed out the coach's opened door.

"GO, GO!" the whip-man yelled as he cracked his whip while maneuvering his team around the horseless coach in front.

His beasts obeyed as they shot around it, then turned north in hot pursuit.

"What the hell!" that third whip-man yelled as the reins tore loose from his left hand. Somehow someone had also replaced his coach's pin with a toothpick as he sat right above it.

This team sideswiped that second whipman as he staggered to his feet, then they also turned north around the corner. Who says lightning doesn't strike twice? That driver was again fortunate to land on another massive horse patty.

Peter was not about to be fooled three times, so he ran south toward the music hall's lobby, screaming for help!"



This photo, taken after the 1892 fire, shows the alley where the Buckeye Beauties were hijacked.

The opera house's lobby was near its downtown (south) side. In front of that entrance, screaming fans packed the sidewalk. So, no one heard Peter's squeals until he reached them.

Two equestrian constables (Columbus police officers on horses) kept the crowd out of the road. Once Peter explained enough to send them off in hot pursuit, the only visible thing moving up North High Street was that third team of Clydesdales.

The Buckeye Beauties were gone!

Hearing a commotion out front, Colin McLaughlin, Sara's man-friend, squirmed his way through the crowded lobby to see what was happening.

Colin was a former prizefighter and Columbus constable turned local bandleader (among many other things). He was also the second most popular entertainer in Columbus. Sara was number one.

Almost no one knew that Colin and Lemont Freeman also became Orphan's first two secret agents in 1881. His girlfriend, the suddenly abducted Sara, had no clue about Colin and Lemont's covert lives.

Peter yelled, "Colin, they just snatched Sara and the girls!"

"WHO DID!?"

"I don't know! Their coach took off like a bat out of hell!"

"They went that way!" Peter said as he again pointed north.

"Those Turds!" Colin yelled as he ripped his boots off. Then like a momma cheetah out to get her baby's back, he sprinted barefoot up that icy brick road toward that third team of Clydesdales. They were now meandering as if waiting for him.

He leaped like that mad momma kitty onto the team, snatching the loose reins as he belly-flopped over the rigging. He instantly bounced to his feet, straddling the rear horses.

After a mighty tug, the gigantic team blasted off.

Colin extracted all the speed they could muster as he stood above them, resembling a water skier.

A minute later, he reached the mounted constables. They were stopped by trains parked across High Street in front of Columbus's Union Train Station, a half-mile north of the opera house.

They explained that tonight's event had created a glut of parked trains, blocking every north or eastern route a coach could take.

Naghten Road, also called "the Irish Broadway," was the only eastbound route left. However, it was blocked by police as firefighters doused a burning home. No escape roads were heading west, as the Scioto River was in the way.

North High Street did have a streetcar tunnel running under the tracks. However, it was flooded due to high water in the Scioto River, which reversed the tunnel's drainage system.

"That coach is either in or hidden behind these (eleven) railroad buildings!"

The other constable responded, "Unless it boarded a train."

"Coaches are too tall to fit into boxcars. They ship them on flatbed cars, which would not hide them," McLaughlin said while pointing at the ten flatbeds that brought all twenty Electro Wonder Rides from New York.

As they split up to search the railroad complex, Colin surfed his team around all eleven buildings, yelling, "SARA!" repeatedly.



Columbus's Union Train Station in 1885

The cops were right; that hijacked coach had turned into Union Station's industrial park. Then just before it slammed into the massive door of the station's locomotive maintenance building, that steel door shot open.

It slammed closed an instant after the coach entered.

Like 99.9% of buildings in 1885, Union Station's locomotive garage did not have electricity.

However, tonight it did have temporary electric lighting. To the left, just inside the door, a 25-watt lightbulb was connected to a suitcase-sized battery with adhesive tape.

Adhesive tape was another invention that Washington had tagged “secret.” A Google search claims this stuff was not invented until around 1920.

A second after that door slammed, the huge hijacker leaped from the coach's bench while four darkly dressed men shoved wooden lever jacks under the coach like an Indy pit crew.

The coach's leaf springs, axles, wheels, and those jacks were stowed away in less than three minutes. Its body now sat on four dollies that looked like modern skateboards. This lowered the coach enough to fit inside the first of the two boxcars the hijackers had waiting.

Ironically, Colin leaped off his Clydesdales, only six feet away from that locomotive-sized door. Then from pure frustration, the barefoot agent hammered it with his fists raised high above his head.

The hijack team froze; their gigantic leader waved for them to keep working as he moved to the door.

Colin was pounding from frustration, not to enter. He did not suspect that Sara was only thirty feet away.

Also taped to the top of that suitcase-sized battery was a small box with two wires; one hung loose, and the other was attached to the battery's negative ground.

That giant leader picked up the dangling wire and touched it to the positive post.

An earth-shaking **KABOOM** suddenly rocked Columbus. Its blazing mushroom cloud set the sky on fire about 1500 feet west of the train station, down by the river.

Mclaughlin and the constables feared the worst. Naturally, they, and now hundreds of reporters, raced toward the flames.

Besides doubled length (60 feet), the two boxcars looked typical while rolling outside. However, this was different inside this building; the car's customized ends fully opened above them, creating a large enough entrance for a team of six enormous beasts.

When closed, these end walls had walk-through doors, like typical passenger cars, allowing car-to-car access while rail-rolling.

Beneath these end walls were thick steel sheets that folded out to form a bridge between two cars or a ramp to the ground. Both methods were in use here.

Next, their huge master escorted the Clydesdales (still attached to the coach) up the ramp into the first custom boxcar. Once in place, he pulled the iron pin and led the horses into the next car. His men then retracted the platforms and bolted down those end-wall doors.

They attached the lowered coach to hooks, hidden beneath something unexpected for a boxcar, removable tiles, from its exquisitely tiled floor.

Besides being extended to double standard length, that second boxcar, now filled with horses, suspension, and wheels, was designed to transport animals.

Typical stable cars had vented sidewalls. However, this one only had vents along the center of its roof. These resembled the hood scoops from muscle cars, still eighty years away.

Five minutes after the big man remotely dynamited a derelict riverboat, his phantom boxcars began rolling east on track #9. They were now the eighty-fourth and eighty-fifth units on an eighty-three-car haul.

This professional hijacking took less time than just buying a train ticket here on a busy day, 22 minutes.

About six minutes later, railroad controllers switched the train to a northeast track, headed for Cleveland, its next scheduled destination.

Four miles north of Columbus, a warning torch was burning on the track in front of the train. Typically, this meant something blocked the rails 2500 feet past the torch. So, the engineer brought the train to a complete stop.

This cargo hauler had four workers, two engineers (drivers), and two boilermen (hard workers) aboard. Once stopped, the boilermen walked a half-mile forward but found nothing. The train's alternating engineer remained deeply asleep inside the caboose.

Besides the hijackers, no one saw those two custom boxcars being pushed onto the switch track between the north and southbound rails.

As they reconnected the northbound caboose, another flair suddenly warned a southbound train of a blockage. This private nine-car cargo hauler stopped far enough past the northbound train that only their cabooses remained side-by-side (with the two custom cars in-between on the switch track).

Seconds after that private southbound stopped, it did something strange. Its caboose self-detached, then rolled itself far enough back for the hijackers to push those extra-long cars onto the southbound track.

As his men shoved, their sprawling leader, also displaying cat-like agility, slipped inside that northbound caboose.

He then plucked a tiny yellow dart from the napping engineer's neck.

For the next 30 seconds, he gazed into the man's unconscious face from six inches away. Then he straightened the man's collar.

Suddenly he yelled, "Damn Yankee!" splattering spit across those snoozing cheeks before his vast left hand slapped them.

Simultaneously, that southbound caboose rolled back, automatically locking all three cars to the phantom southbound train.

He slipped out, tossed that dart into the woods, and rejoined his men as they boarded their double-length caboose. You would have never noticed from the outside that this was likely the most luxurious caboose in the country.

Inside was a five-star kitchen and two highly accomplished French chefs.

They were baking crocks of sweet onion soup, topped with cheese imported from Switzerland and Colorado's most delicate Prime Rib—an ideal midnight meal.

Just as the hijackers closed their caboose's door, the boilermen returned to the locomotive (still nearly a half-mile away from the car switch).

"Nothing is blocking the track," they reported to the conductor engineer.

Seconds later, both trains began rolling.

This evening (now 11:58 PM) went exactly as planned. Well, that is for whoever controlled that private southbound train.

So far, this covert operation took fifty-eight of its sixty allotted minutes.

Two and a half hours later, the train crossed the Ohio River into Louisville, Kentucky, from Indiana.

It was then switched to an eastbound rail running along the southern bank of this, the nation's second-largest river.

Invisible Factory - April 17, 1863

(two years into the Civil War)

After months of lime lighting system delays, a five-car train with "Consolidated Canned Foods" painted on its three boxcars arrived at the "Train Car Wheel Replacement Barn" on Sullivan's Hill. This shabby-looking structure hid the entrance to 'Plant One,' thirty feet below.

Before lightbulbs, Lime lighting was a labor-intensive method of illuminating underground mines and several New York theaters.

Unlike Columbus's new Cotton Block and Comstock's Opera House, seven miles away, Sullivant's Hill did not have natural gas for lighting. So, lime lighting was selected for Plant One.

The biggest problem with this lighting system was that it took twenty-four men working 12-hour shifts to keep the underground factory illuminated without blowing it up.

That Consolidated Canned Food train secretly brought General Rutherford B. Hayes, in plainclothes, to the wheel replacement barn.

Hayes and Engineering General John Newton planned and managed the secret factory's construction for nearly two years. Most of the army's engineers had been conscripted (drafted) from the railroad industry.

Within a thousand feet of Plant One, generals and almost everyone wore civilian clothing. However, dozens of uniformed army guards constantly surrounded Plant One's 88-acre site from a distance. You see, its only neighbor on this 12-square-mile Hill was Camp Chase.

Camp Chase was one of the Union Army's most extensive training centers and prisoner-of-war camps. It detained seven thousand Confederates, so no one wondered why so much security surrounded Sullivant's Hill.

Standing under this new (old appearing) wheel replacement barn's entrance (above the secret factory), Hayes congratulated General William Tecumseh Sherman for finally starting production.

Unless you saw the secret platform inside, hoisting boxcars to and from the munitions factory thirty feet below, you would never guess that this shabby structure would become vital to the war effort.

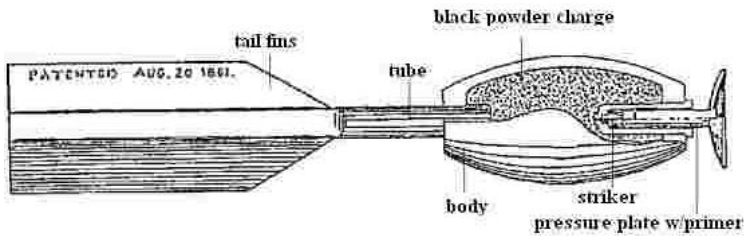


This 1863 image shows the (fake) train wheel replacement barn above Plant One during the Civil War. The 12' walls around Camp Chase sat about a thousand feet beyond those background trees.

As General Sherman pointed out four cargo cars parked beside the barn, he explained, “Three are packed to their ceilings with ‘Minnie Balls’ (the most common bullet of the Civil War).



Minnie balls were muzzleloading bullets pre-loaded with gunpowder. This cut the time to reload existing muzzleloaders by more than half.



The fourth car was packed with ten thousand Ketchum Hand Grenades, which used a flint striker to explode on impact.

“We produced all of this today?!” Hayes excitedly asked.

“The engineers finally had the lime-lighting working safely at noon yesterday. I had over a thousand convicts working by 7:00 last night.”

Even though seven thousand Confederate war prisoners were imprisoned a half mile away, they knew nothing about Plant One.

Imprisoned criminals were not accepted into the Union Army. However, the army could commandeer those already serving hard labor. So, General Hayes borrowed 1500 offenders from the Ohio State Penitentiary, seven miles away.

Railroad line 51 ran past this fake wheel replacement barn and the state prison. To ensure no one saw the convicts coming and going, they were stuffed into cargo cars inside a new prison terminal. Then they were unloaded inside the fake wheel replacement barn.

After Hayes complemented Sherman for this rapid efficiency, he recommended parking the explosive-loaded boxcars at least a hundred yards away.

“Rud (Hayes’s nickname), what do you think about boxing?” General Sherman asked.

“I’m sure I would do well, but I’m too busy to start practicing a new sport right now. You may recall that I won Ohio’s Leapfrog championship.”

“Oh no, I meant watching a boxing match.”

“Sure, doesn’t every real man?”

“Well, naturally.”

“The Camp’s Toughest Man championship bout for our Negro recruits; starts in an hour.”

“Now that sounds relaxing.”

“This year, they have a humungous boy who knocks out every challenger in seconds. Usually with one punch.”

“Sounds like a man to me.”

“I am staying at the camp for four days anyway, so let's go.”

“I can’t go tonight, Rud; too many loose details are still flopping around here. But that huge fighter is worth seeing. It's only a ten-minute walk.”

“I’ve walked it a dozen times. But I need to bring my lap desk and bags along. Do you have a horse and wagon I can borrow?”

“I’ll have a security officer drive you over.”

“That will work.”

After glancing around, Sherman mumbled, “Excellent,” before yelling, “McLaughlin, come over here!”

Seconds later, that strapping young man stood between the plain-clothed generals. Colin McLaughlin recognized General Hayes from earlier visits.

“Sorry, sir, orders are “no saluting” while undercover.”

“I know; I issued that order, son. I even selected this location.”

“I should know that. I grew up around Columbus,” McLaughlin said.

Hayes responded, “I was born and raised about 20 miles north of here.”

Sherman added, “I was born and raised 20 miles south of here.”

“That’s because most great generals come from Ohio,” Colin patronized.

“Rud, this is Lieutenant Colin McLaughlin. He has proven to be our most capable security officer.”

“Nice to meet you, son,” Hayes said as he shook his hand.

“The pleasure is all mine, sir.”

“You look incredibly young to be a Lieutenant. How old are you?”

“I’ll turn eighteen in a couple of days.”

“Rud, did you hear about the assassination attempt on General Grant down in Columbus,” Sherman asked.

“Ulysses mentioned it, but we were meeting with Lincoln in the Oval Office, so he did not go into detail.”

“Lieutenant McLaughlin disarmed that assassin about one second before he would have blown Ulysses’ head off!”

“Sorry, sirs, that story’s been exaggerated. It was two loaded assassins and two more guarding their escape route. About three seconds before the two shooters would have turned Grant into Swiss cheese, I single-handily knocked both out! Then I ran down and hog-tied the other two!” Colin proudly corrected before adding, “General Grant is also from Ohio.”

“Well, I’m obviously in capable hands,” Hayes said to Sherman while patting McLaughlin’s back.

“I think I’ve heard your name somewhere before, Lieutenant.”

“It must have been one of me many accomplishments, sir. I’ve caught nine Confederate agents over the last year.”

“You are a true hero; thank you for your service!”

“Aye, sir. There’s no telling how many souls I’ve saved!”

“I’ll fetch a wagon and be back in five minutes.”

“Excellent.”

As Colin walked away, Hayes told Sherman, “He’s certainly confident.”

“He seems full of himself, but he backs his words. He usually obeys orders and has a sharp mind that spots spies in a crowd. He can also run like the wind and is a deadeye marksman.”

Six minutes later, Colin parked a freshly dumped manure wagon inside the barn's railroad entry.

"Double sorry, sir," he told Hayes as he bounced out, "this is the only wagon still here this evening. The others must be at the camp for the fight tonight. I dumped its load first. Good thing it tizz windy tonight."

Before loading the General's things into the dung-soaked bed, Colin spread a filthy canvas over it.

"I've ridden in worse," Hayes remarked as he boarded.

As they began this short ride in this one-horse crap wagon, Hayes asked, "How did a Columbus boy get that Irish accent?"

"I thought it was gone by now. My parents came from Belfast. Then Father John and the nuns who finished raising me came from Dublin. Their accents rubbed off on me."

"What happened to your parents?"

"Cholera took them when I was eight."

"It was rough, but everything has worked well, sir."

"Does Father John happen to be Reverend John Furlong?"

"Aye, you know him?"

"He is an old friend. He must have mentioned your name to me before."

"What did he say?"

“Oh, hmmm, I can’t remember, but it must have been something extraordinary,” Hayes lied since he suddenly remembered this message:

My Dear friend Rud,

15-year-old twins Colin and Lucas McLaughlin are like sons to me. I raised them after their parents died.

However, the day the war began, they rushed to enlist without first discussing this with me.

These clever lads are incredible athletes and gifted hunters with sharp minds to match. Both are also fine musicians and great protectors of our Lord's other orphans and His church.

Their abilities, mines, and high morality make them ideal for protecting America's leaders and secrets. They will excel.

Help our Lord and America by appointing them directly into security after basic training at Camp Chase.

Let's keep this between you and me so they never learn I intervened.

You and Lucy are always in my daily prayer.

John

“Lieutenant, have you ever seen this big black fellow fight?” Hayes asked to change the subject.

“Aye, from point-blank range. I’ve known Freeman for a couple of years. Being world-class athletes, we understand each other.”

“General Sherman told me that Freeman knocks out every opponent in seconds.”

“Well, not everyone.”

“Is that so?”

“Aye. A couple of months before the war, no one would fight him. So, I took him on at Reggie's Boxing Tavern. It took me five rounds, but I won the 25-dollar purse.”

“I’m impressed,” Hayes replied.

“I like Freeman; he is as intelligent as he is big. He knows something about almost everything. He’s the second smartest teen on this Hill tonight.”

Hayes thought, “I’m not going to ask who’s first,” so he responded, “The guy sounds multi-talented. Is he educated?”

“Well, sort of. When Freeman was a little squat, I mean ‘young child,’ his mother could borrow books. So, she taught him to read, then made damn sure he read every book she borrowed.”

“He learned because he had no choice.”

“Smart momma. How do you know all this?”

“He told me. After winning that prize money, we went to the Florentine Restaurant next door for a late dinner.”

“That was the first time I ever ate in a restaurant, well, almost.”

“Almost?”

“They would only serve us, I mean him, in a little room behind the kitchen.”

“Oh yes, of course.”

“After dinner, we drank fine wine for a few hours and got to know each other. We are both highly competitive.”

“Sure, two top fighters would naturally respect each other.”

“That’s right, sir.”

“I also won this tournament when I was in basic training.”

“You won the negro boxing contest?”

“Oh no, the army ain’t ready for that. But I surely abused the white recruits.”

“Now, if gambling money is to be made, Reggie would have green folks fight orange people in his tavern. When I was a squat, his saloon was a pig barn. I remember seeing its hogs float away after a storm.”

Colin continued, “Reggie turned it into that saloon at the bottom of this hill.”

“I’ve seen the place.”

“He put a budget bordello upstairs. Even young boys can afford it.”

FYI: Before 1880, Ohioans had to be at least ten years old to drink, gamble, and XXXX in saloons.

Before Colin offered further detail, Hayes changed the subject: "What do you think about serving so close to home?"

"I was devastated at first. But after saving General Grant and single-handily bagging most of a dozen Confederate spies, I knew I was meant to be right here."

"That was divine intervention," Hayes responded.

"Aye, I mean, yes, indeed. The Good Lord now has me doing wondrous work two or three times a day."

"Like what?" Hayes asked a millisecond before realizing he shouldn't have.

"This war has left seven ladies for every man down in Columbus. Most of those men are too old, hindered, or disinterested to comfort hundreds of young local ladies. Young, great-looking, overly fertile men like me are almost nonexistent around town. So, I donate my free time to comfort as many ladies as possible."

"Jesus must have given me his Greek God looks to please females. This is just another way he helps me do my patriotic duty."

"You needn't explain any farther, Lieutenant," Hayes tried again to change the subject. But this time, it didn't work.

"By cheering up two or three ladies daily, he has me nibbling away at this sad imbalance as efficiently as possible."

"I guess that's one way of seeing things."

“You know the Lord’s work can also be satisfying and relaxing,” the nearly 18-year-old orphan testified.

“What does Father John say about all your, ah, good work?”

“He was beaming like a proud daddy when the governor made me an officer after saving General Grant’s life.”

“But I do not tell him everything; he would only want me to herd all those lonely ladies to church like some shepherd.”

“I don’t need to drive them to God’s house; most go on their own a day or two after I cheer them up. I’ve increased donations, and I won’t tell Father John about that either.”

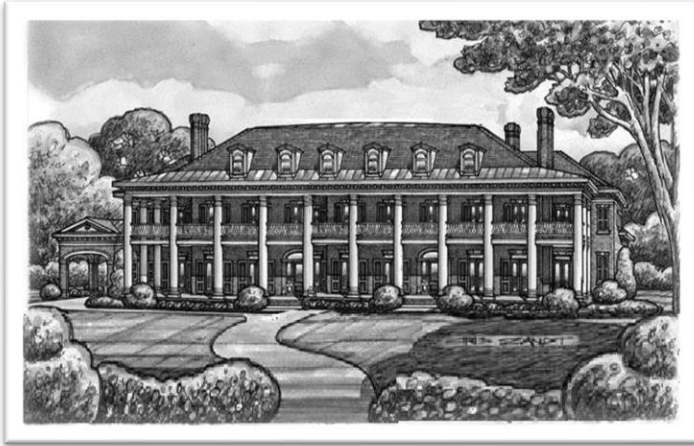
“Oh, I see,” Hayes said while feeling relieved they were approaching Camp Chase’s “Westgate.”

“You know, sir, when you get down to it, I keep doing my patriotic duty day and night.”

McLaughlin carried Hayes’s bags into one of the visitor’s shacks used by officers. It was one room with four visitors already using it. As Hayes quickly changed into his uniform, Colin relieved himself between the shacks, then waited for the General.

As they walked two hundred feet to the camp’s packed arena (mess hall), Hayes mentioned, “I wish we would have started building the visitor house last year.”

This Southern-style mansion was going up one mile east of the



camp, where Sullivant's Hill overlooks Columbus and Ohio's new white limestone statehouse.

Camp Chase's Confederate prisoners were building it.

"They finally started the foundation yesterday, sir."

"I will check on it tomorrow."

They took the last two seats left in the back row seconds later.

The massive fighter, and his opponent, a muscle-bound fellow larger than McLaughlin, were already seated in their corners. The seething mad challenger just stared while Lemont stretched and yawned as if bored.

Seconds later, a boy hauling a burlap sack entered the crowded arena, then squeezed up to Lemont's corner.

“Jemima,” (Lemont’s mother), “say they ain’t feed’n you enough meat!” The boy explained as he handed the bag to the colossal boxer.

Jemima often claimed, “The reason Lemont grew so big, I raised him on mountains of rich white folk’s leftovers.”

Jemima had become famous among wealthy Columbus families and inns. She prepared one meal a week for six well-to-do families, including Sara Kilbourne’s folks. She would work one day a week for each, but Sundays were only for church.

She would tell them, “If I worked for you more than one day a week, you would not appreciate me as much.”

When Jemima was eight, her kitchen skills became so clear that her master’s wife taught her to read. But then she only gave her cookbooks.

Seven years earlier, Jemima used her food, wisdom, and charm to buy freedom for her family. She immediately set out for a home “100 miles north of slavery, cause things can change down here!”

She ended up in Franklinton, the small, often flooded settlement between Columbus and Sullivant’s Hill. She managed to rent a two-story shack for \$1 a month, but she had to pay a full year upfront.

Since she had no surname, she chose “Freeman” to celebrate her family’s freedom.

“Thanks, Lil’ Willie,” Lemont replied as he slipped his right glove off. He stood up, pulled a twenty-inch lamb leg from the bag, and took an enormous bite.

“Ding!” About one second later, the bell rang; the fight had begun.

As his pissed opponent ran across the ring to take full advantage, Colin warned Hayes, “Don’t blink, sir.”

As Lemont turned to protect his snack behind his back, his left hand launched an insane backhanded uppercut into his challenger’s chin. The instantly unconscious fighter cleared the ropes before landing on the crowd.

Lemont did not celebrate (Colin danced around the ring two years earlier); instead, he sat down and took another bite.

“Let’s go congratulate him,” Hayes suggested to McLaughlin.

“Sorry, I’d love to, sir, but I’ve been off duty for nine minutes,” Colin responded while nodding at the wall clock and sliding a little appointment book out of his jacket pocket.”

“If I don’t leave now, I’ll get stuck riding that dung dragger down to Columbus.”

“I never interfere with the Lord’s work, Lieutenant, so you best be on your way.”

“It has been great speaking with you, General,” Colin’s voice faded as he joined the crowd walking out of the oil lamp-lit mess hall.

While Freeman picked his lamb leg clean, Hayes coughed on a nasty cigar and gagged on some New Jersey whiskey, reminding him of camel spit. Since the quality versions of both products came from Southern states, they had become as rare as hen's teeth in Ohio.

After Lemont poured a canteen of water over his head and toweled off, Hayes stood and walked towards the ring.

“BURP!” Lemont erupted just before noticing General Hayes approaching. Acting as if he did not see him, he grabbed the ropes, then flung himself out of the ring like a gymnast, one-third his size. He considered doing a double flip but did not care to look like a showoff.

Hayes felt the building shake as Lemont nailed the landing. “Damn,” He mumbled.

Still acting like he did not see Hayes, Freeman grabbed his enormous uniform jacket and flung it over his almost naked body.

In these early decades of boxing, like wrestling, it was often a nude sport. Thankfully, the army required all Black boxers to wear loincloths.

“Amazing punch, son,” Hayes said as he reached Lemont from behind.

Lemont spun around, then acted surprised as he jumped to attention. “Yes, sir, thank you, sir.”

“At ease, soldier,” Hayes said while returning the salute, “I just wanted to say how impressed I am with you.”

“Thank you again, sir,” the six-foot-nine muscle repeated while standing at attention.

“Relax, son, have a seat; let's talk. A friend of yours told me some interesting things about you.”

“May I ask who, sir?”

“Lieutenant Colin McLaughlin. He just left. He watched you win this tournament, but he had pressing business in town.”

“I was unaware that Colin had become an officer. I knew he would rapidly rise; he is almost as impressive as he believes.”

“He certainly leaves an impression.”

“The last time I saw him was two years, one month, and eleven days ago, when we were both in line to enlist.”

“Why are you still in basic training?”

“The governor made me wait for two years.”

“Why?”

“When I was eleven, my mother got me a job at a slaughterhouse near our shack, loading beef sides into ice cars” (boxcars half-loaded with ice from Canada).

“After a year, I was loading four times more meat than the next strongest worker could manage.”

“When this war started, most of the workers enlisted. Since the army needed even more meat, the slaughterhouse owner asked the governor to deny my enlistment. But he only blocked it for two years. So here I am.”

“Better late than never.”

“My mother is a fine chef. She prepares dinner for the governor and his family on Saturdays. She complained that his decision had prevented me from earning a far larger soldier’s wage. So, he ordered the slaughterhouse to pay me sixty-five cents a day.”

“That’s a sergeant’s wage, son.”

“I know; they deserved it. They paid me one penny a day when I first started at age 13.”

“That’s quite a raise.”

“I was making more than the General Manager, which pissed him and a few older white workers off.”

“Screw them!”

“I thought it was ironically funny. I did more work than those three together. They finally paid me what I deserved.”

“McLaughlin said you were a professional boxer before the war.”

“True, sir. I fought at Reggie’s Tavern on Friday and Saturday nights while my mother was helping rich folks throw parties.”

“I did not tell her at first because she would have beat me with her broomstick.”

“After I saved \$150 in prize money, I bought the house she rented with it. Then I gave it to her and explained how boxing paid for it.”

“Once I showed her that no one has come close to beating me, She was ok with it.”

“That must have been before you lost a fight with McLaughlin.”

“I never lost to McLaughlin! I’ve never lost to anyone!”

“Is that what he told you?”

“He said it took him five rounds to win the prize money.”

The building shook again as Lemont broke up, “Ha, Ha, Ha! Colin Mclaughlin can run faster backward than most fighters can run forward! He won that money for standing after five rounds with me!”

“Odd incentive.”

“Reggie, the tavern owner, could not get anyone to fight me, so he put up \$25 for anyone that could last five rounds against me.”

“Mclaughlin ran away from me for five rounds; he never threw a punch, so not to anger me.”

“But he kept me laughing with jokes, frightened faces, and slick escapes, so I let him live.”

“Actually, he never said he won that fight, just the prize money.”

“That’s how deviously honest people fib without lying, sir.”

“He said you love to read.”

“Yes, reading brings me the world.”

“What do you read?”

“Well, I’ve read every history, geography, and science book my mother could borrow. She taught me to read using the Bible when I was four.”

“That’s a tough book for a beginner.”

“Since the war started, I’ve only read newspapers and novels. I just finished reading War and Peace by Liev Tolstoy.”

“Sure, The Great Russian author.” Hayes guessed based on his name.

“Then you recall the day after Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States; he invaded Europe?”

“Of course,” Hayes thought he recalled this history.

“Louisiana was far larger when France sold it in 1812; it nearly reached Canada.”

“You know that was a decade before I was born, son.”

Lemont pushed Hayes’s intellect to its limits for another hour. If the word “nerd” existed in 1863, Hayes would have added it to the big boxer’s lengthy list of abilities and qualities.

A week later, at the basic trainee completion ceremony, each recruit was given a package holding their first assignment.

Lemont’s package was much larger than anyone else’s. All the others came from W S Rosecrans, the General in charge of Camp Chase; however, Lemont’s came from Ohio Governor William Dennison.

Inside, a little gold bar was glued to the letter congratulating him for being promoted to First Lieutenant (a step above Second Lieutenant Colin McLaughlin). This officer rank paid a whopping \$3 a day.

It also held an assignment letter ordering him to report to General Rutherford B. Hayes (for clerical duties) in two weeks.

Hayes figured that Lemont would be the world's largest secretary.

Jemima was delighted that her extra-large, well-behaved boy was not about to become the most prominent target on a Civil War battlefield.

Bonus Ohio Section:

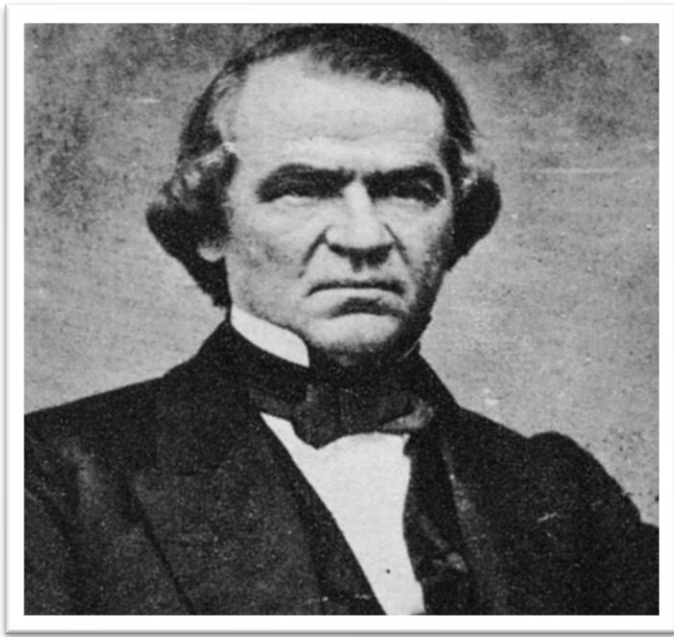
April 9, 1865

Two years after Lemont enjoyed that lamb leg, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia, ending the Civil War.

Five days later, Republican President Lincoln was assassinated inside Ford's Theater. His Vice President, Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat, was sworn in as the seventeenth US president.

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The Whitehouse Friday, April 28th, 1865 Luckily



“Hello, heroes!” President Andrew Johnson said to Union Generals Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, and James A. Garfield as they entered his Oval Office.

After a few minutes of congratulatory talk, President Johnson looked down at his notes, “This says you want to discuss keeping a prisoner of war camp open in Ohio.”

Grant responded, “Yes, sir, that camp is more important than you have been informed.”

“You know I am about to pardon all confederates who swear loyalty to the US Constitution,” Johnson responded.

“Of course, sir. However, we/” General Hayes said before the President interrupted: “We no longer need prisoner-of-war camps; we are no longer at war. Any remaining die-hards will be placed in chain gangs that help rebuild southern cities.”

Garfield explained, “Because we only discuss military secrets on a need-to-know basis, you were never briefed on the secret operations of Camp Chase.”

“What secret operations?”

“I know you have not seen Camp Chase, but it covers 12 square miles, not just the 135 walled-in acres the world has been led to believe.

“I have been through Columbus numerous times.”

“Camp Chase is seven miles west of Columbus on a hill called Sullivant’s. Because of a natural obstacle, Sullivant’s Hill stays highly secluded.”

“Columbus is flatland. What natural obstacle?” The president asked.

Grant grunted, “It would look like flatland to someone from South Carolina” (President Johnson’s home state).

“Between Sullivant’s Hill and Columbus is a valley that becomes a lake after strong storms and heavy winter thaws. This problem keeps the city from expanding towards Sullivant’s Hill.”

“Hmm.”

Grant continued, “This natural seclusion has allowed us to operate dozens of weapon development and warehousing programs and a huge underground munitions factory.”

“Because Sullivant’s Hill is so close to Columbus, it shares the city’s greatest advantage.”

“What advantage?”

Hayes responded. “Columbus is the mathematical center of our nation’s railroad network. By running our ahh, peacekeeping efforts from Sullivant’s Hill, the average time to reach the rest of the nation is swifter than from any other location.”

“Look, fellows, I know that y’all are Ohio’s greatest warriors, but you no longer have a war to fight. The USA no longer wants or needs secret weapon programs or prisoner-of-war camps.”

“I will use our remaining resources to rebuild our cities instead of squandering them on more new ways to destroy them!”

“Sir, America has powerful enemies who are constantly plotting against us!” Hayes inserted.

The President continued, “That is nonsense, and so is your story of holding war prisoners to explain the Union Army guarding that hill. That deception could only work for one, maybe two years before everyone starts asking, “What is Washington hiding on that hill?”

“I respectfully disagree, Mr. President,” declared Garfield.

“Agree or not, y’all should be more concerned about reentering civilian life.”

“There is good news if you don’t find new jobs; I just approved small pensions for former Union Generals.”

Grant reacted, “Mr. President, this is far more important than the men in this room. This is about our nation’s future. This planet is packed with narcissistic kings, dictators, and despots who would relinquish their nuts to take us out.”

“America no longer wants warriors; she now wants peacemakers. Ironically, the reward for you winning soldiers is your obsolescence.”

“By expanding upon our already advanced military technologies, we can become the world’s peacekeeper,” Garfield took another shot.

Johnson rebuked, “Enforcing world peace is not part of the US Constitution, nor should it be our business.”

“It is our business to keep our enemies from becoming threats to us,” Grant snarled back.

Glancing at the grandfather clock, President Johnson concluded, “Sorry to rush y’all off, but I have several important meetings this afternoon. Mr. Moore” (Johnson’s assistant), “please show these distinguished gentlemen out of my office.”

“What an asshole,” the generals agreed as they left the Whitehouse.

Lieutenant Lemont Freeman told his boss (General Hayes) several days later, “With a few political adjustments, this could secure Sullivant’s Hill for a hundred years.” He then handed Hayes a copy of the Daily Statesman newspaper.”

The article was about Dr. William Awl, Ohio’s Commissioner of Lunatic and Imbecil asylums. He often introduced himself as Dr. Cure Awl.

Dr. Awl had asked the state legislature to replace the Ohio State Lunatic Asylum on Columbus’s east side with a new facility, about fifteen times larger. This building would be larger than every building in downtown Columbus combined.

The article reported that Dr. Awl could not prove the need for a massive new facility, so his request was overwhelmingly dismissed.



The drawing from that Daily Statesman newspaper article

“I’m not sure what you are seeing here, son,” Hayes responded after reviewing the report. “It says that Dr. Awl had proposed

this new lunatic asylum to replace the state's current asylum, and he was laughingly rejected.

Lemont responded, "A lunatic asylum this big could operate a security force as large as an army battalion without ever raising suspicions."

"I did not suggest this would be easy; you will need some serious political clout to approve and move this over to Sullivant's Hill."

Hayes responded, "Another great idea, son. Those state guards could tell intruders that murder-crazed lunatics escaped! Get away from here as fast as you can!"

"Can you imagine how frightening this thing would look sitting on top of a Sullivant's Hill, overlooking the city?" Lemont added.

"Indeed, that could scare off citizens and developers from miles away!"

"You would still have to find funding, Boss."

"That may be the easiest part."

"Do you know something that I don't know?"

"That seems hard to believe, but yes, I do know some things you don't know. "However, we need to take President Johnson's advice for now."

"What advice?"

“Find new jobs.”

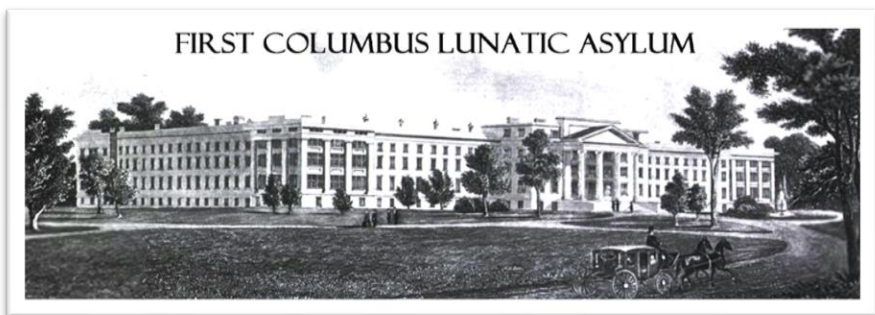
Six months later, during midterm elections, General Garfield became Ohio’s Congressman from the 19th District (Central Ohio, including Sullivant’s Hill).

During the first postwar presidential election (two years later), General Grant became the 18th US president, and General Hayes defeated Allen G. Thurman to become Ohio’s 32nd governor.

On January 13, 1869, Governor Hayes took office. President Grant was inaugurated two months later (March 14) in Washington, DC.

On November 18, 1868, just days after Hayes and Grant were elected, Ohio’s first Lunatic Asylum (on Columbus’s east side) burned to the ground. Luckily the fire occurred during the only two hours per week that the lunatics were permitted to gather in the building’s front hall for “Social Time.”

The fire started in the rear of the building, behind the small lady’s ward. So almost everyone escaped unscathed. However, the asylum’s seven female inmates perished. They chose to remain locked up in their ward over being molested and raped by three hundred crazy males during social time.



While the fire was still smoldering, local officials were claiming that it was caused by a faulty fireplace flue, in the lady's ward.

After one of the Daily Statesman articles (from the next day) mentioned that the inmate wards were heated by steam pipes (lunatics and fireplaces don't mix well), not another article was written, and the local and state officials stuck with this being an accident.

Also, during that November 1868 election, George W. Meeker, a wealthy real estate attorney became Columbus's new mayor. He took office in January 1869, just days before Governor Hayes was sworn in. He did not even live in Columbus.

His first official act was to close the Columbus Police department and fire every member. He then appointed his best childhood buddy, Charles Engelke, who had no experience in law enforcement, to build a new Columbus Police department.

Speculation is that the Columbus police department declared the Lunatic Asylum fire a mass murder and arson, so Meeker closed the entire department. Soon after Engelke's new police department opened (about eight months later) Meeker walked

away from his mayor gig to reopen his real-estate office. He barely served one year of this four-year term.

Also, after three years without the army securing Sullivant Hill, it's seclusion had diminished. The often-flooded settlement of Franklinton was no longer blocking Columbus residents from expanding up Sullivant's Hill, and this was Hayes's fault.

Eleven wealthy Columbus businessmen had built or were building mansions along the hill's eastern ridge for its panoramic view of Columbus and Ohio's white limestone statehouse. Well, that was what several of these rich guys told their wives.

They quietly wanted to be neighbors with that Southern-style visitor's mansion that Hayes used Confederate prisoners to build. It was now an exclusive gentlemen's club.

When President Johnson ordered Camp Chase "liquidated" right after the war, he included that all-but-finished visitor's inn. Five months later, Reggie (that boxing tavern owner) made the first and only offer.

He bought that mansion for two cents on the dollar (based on building costs in Columbus). He rapidly turned it into the most beautiful bordello-inn east of Washington, DC.

Because it overlooked Ohio's statehouse, Reggie kept it (and his lovely working girls) packed with county representatives, VIP visitors, and those wealthy neighbors. He even tricked the disappearing Union Army into delivering sixteen complete rooms of ultra-luxury furnishings, plus Persian rugs, and Turkish draperies, that General Hayes had ordered two years earlier.

The day after Hayes became governor, Ohio's treasury was infused with enough gold to build (by far) the most expensive project in the state's history.

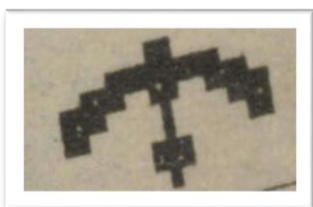
This treasure came from several undeclared tons of gold that Confederate President Jefferson Davis tried to keep for himself after the war, which Grant and Secretary of War Stanton had secretly tucked away.

Hayes forced Eminent Domain on Reggie and those wealthy homeowners to sell their mansions to the state. To prevent complaining, he massively overpaid them. He had all twelve mansions demolished before President Grant even took office.

Washington seemed uninvolved by involving only state, county, and city governments to build the largest and most intentionally frightening building in America's history.



Ohio's Lunatic Asylum overlooked Columbus from the eastern ridge of Sullivant's Hill. After seven years of construction, it opened in 1877 with over 5 million square feet; it would remain the largest building in America until the Pentagon slipped past it in 1942. It took another seven years to demolish in the 1990s. The left image shows its flying bat shape from above.



Lunatic asylums were already the most frightening buildings in America, and this one was the architectural version of a vampire bat overlooking the city.

Two weeks after construction began, ground broke for the Columbus Imbecil Asylum across the street (Rt 40). This, the largest imbecile asylum ever was issued every inch of that ridge overlooking Columbus that had not already been reserved for the lunatics.

Climbing up Sullivant's Hill was like passing between the gates of hell. These two frightening structures and their security forces would keep about ten square miles behind them secluded for another fifty years when aircraft started leaving trains in their dust.

Also, Hayes helped Mayor Meeker annex this ridge several days before construction began. Meeker instantly renamed Sullivant's Hill to the second most generic name Lemont Freeman could imagine, "The Hilltop." His first suggestion was "The Hill."

This name change prevented former soldiers, state convicts who built it, and anyone else with knowledge of the secrets of Sullivant's Hill from being reminded of them.

On Saturday, March 30, 1879, at 1:00 AM (a year and a half after the lunatic asylum opened), arsonists soaked all public records and maps of those demolished mansions and Sullivant's Hill in coil oil, then incinerated them inside the Franklin County courthouse's vault.

The arsonists were thoughtful enough to relock that vault and the courthouse building as they left.

What about that phantom train?

Go to UpperColumbus.Com or contact craig@uppercolumbus.com