

The Spies from Sullivant's Hill
The Southern Cross

Episode 1

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Episode 1

The Light Cannon

April 16, 1861 - First Evening of the Civil War



A fine racehorse pulling a rotten old farm cart seemed strange.

Yet, under this night's crescent moon, only the night watchman noticed it stop beside the St. Albans Munitions Plant in Vermont.

As the long, tall young rider detached that rickety wagon, that guard yelled at him from the catwalk:

“Hey! You can’t park that thing here! Move it now!”

“It will all be gone in a flash,” Animus responded as he raced away on that fine stallion.

KA-BOOM!

24 Years Later

Columbus, Ohio

March 6, 1885, 4:02 PM



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 city 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 direct-current electrical lighting system was “actually” new.

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



Columbus’s opera house was 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 more new products that will forever enlighten our world!”

In the 1880s, his phonographs and light bulbs made him the most famous person (living) in the Western World.

Articles about Edison increased newspaper sales so dramatically that six hundred reporters from eight nations had rail-rolled into Columbus to cover this historic event.

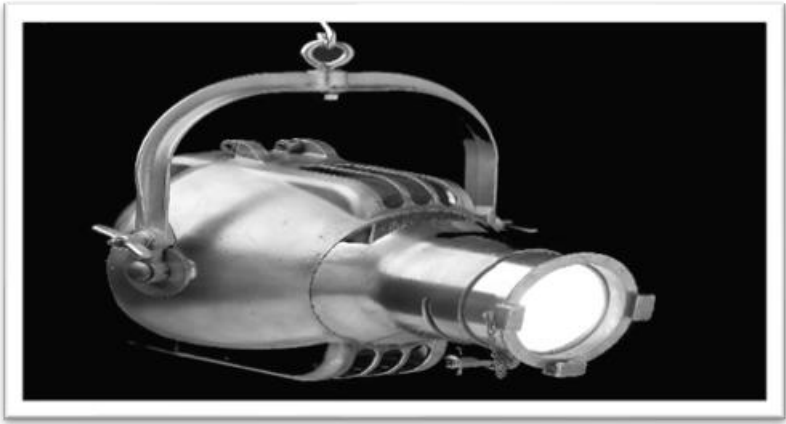
Even before revealing these new products, he drew the second-largest crowd in Columbus’s 72-year history.

Weeks earlier, Edison supplied sixty-three VIPs with railroad and show tickets, paid hotel rooms, and whiskey vouchers. 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 (who gave the world toilet paper).

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

After seeing Edison’s 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.



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

After standing on the ‘X’ he had painted on the stage floor, Edison showed off another of his extraordinary talents, 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 instead gasped.

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

His lightbulbs were not bright enough to power his Light Cannons, so he used a method called “Voltage Arcing,” the first electric lighting method patented. That happened forty-five years before Edison was even 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.

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, his old friend James A. Garfield, had him set up the country’s first covert intelligence agency inside what was originally an underground weapons factory built during the Civil War.

In 1865, just months after President Lincoln’s assassination, President Andrew Johnson set up the Secret Service.

However, Secret Service agents weren’t exactly secret. They wore Secret Service badges and hung around Secret Service offices and the President.

This covert agency had to look like a boring federal operation that just happened to move around very rapidly.

Secret Commander Hayes's first task was to explain why Edison and his 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 city's old opera house to explain his presence.

"That's perfect," Hayes instantly responded.

Edison and his electrical engineers were secretly in town to convert it into the country's headquarters for domestic espionage.

This vast (for 1885) underground facility sat seven miles west of the music hall, 30 feet beneath the crest of "Sullivant's Hill" (today's "Hilltop").

By the Civil War, Columbus had become the mathematical center of the nation's railroad network.

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

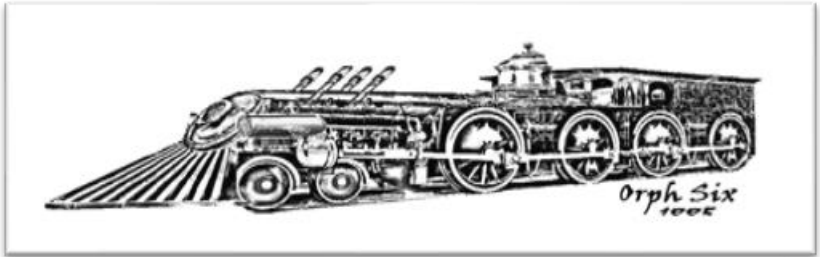
To explain the short trains racing in and out of the shabby barn above the underground fortress, Lemont suggested a government program that rushed emergency medical aid to America's orphan children.

FYI: After the Civil War, European nations began dumping what would reach 1.7 million orphan children into America's open arms. Most of these kids were scattered around the nation's farms.

Publicly, Garfield appointed Hayes as 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 newest D/C generator increased the secret facility's electric power from 16 to 1240 amps.

By now, NORA ran 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 red flashing 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 this cover story. This tiny clinic occasionally treated an injured orphan child.



Initially (during the Civil War), the ORPH barn pretended to be a wheel replacement facility for commercial box cars. This barn hid the underground factory's entrance, called "Plant One." Box cars were loaded with munitions in this barn.

Anyway, after tonight's premiere of *The Maids of Armando* began, Edison's audience gasped each time another Buckeye Beauty was spotlighted. The Buckeye Beauties were the opera house's full-time song and dance girls.

Their gorgeous leader, Sara Kilbourne, was born and raised in Worthington, a small upscale settlement seven miles north of Columbus. Sara's five lovely companions 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 Edison's "Electro Wonder Coach," the most advanced vehicle to roll over America's horse-crap-covered roads!

Along with teams of Clydesdales (gigantic horses), he shipped in the first twenty versions 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 dribbled drool down the chin of nineteenth-century nerds, this was not their only revolutionary feature.

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

It was 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.

Naturally, Peter reserved the first Electro Wonder Coach lined up in the alley beside the stage door for his 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).

After seating them in the coach, he shook his head and told them, "They (the VIPs) are all in the lobby, sucking up to reporters."

Suddenly, just as Peter closed the coach's door, its enormous 'whip man' (driver) cracked his tool. His dinosaur-sized ponies launched onto North High Street and swung a hard left.

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 fluttered 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 driver saw Animus chuck his Edison-provided chauffeur cap away like a Frisbee.

As that top hat was still airborne, a dark cover draped around the speeding coach. It covered 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.

Before 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, instead of bricks, his head slammed into a massive pile of still-steaming Clydesdale dung, preventing physical injury.

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

"Go after who?" he 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 replaced his coach's pin with a toothpick as he sat right above it.

As that dung-coated whipman staggered to his feet, this team sideswiped him before turning north onto High Street.

Who says lightning doesn't strike twice? That guy, again, was saved by another massive horse pie.

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 on its downtown (south) side. In front of that entrance, screaming fans packed the sidewalk. So, no one heard Peter squealing until he reached them.

Two equestrian constables (Columbus police officers on horses) had been keeping the crowd out of the road. Once Peter convinced them to rush off in hot pursuit, the only visible thing moving on High Street was that third team of Clydesdales.

The Buckeye Beauties were gone!

Sensing a desperate commotion out front, Colin Mclaughlin, Sara's almost handsome man-friend, twisted through the crowded lobby to see what was happening.

As a teen, Colin was a Civil War hero and prize-fighter, then a local constable, and now the second most popular entertainer in Columbus, after Sara. He leads a three-man tavern band called the Irish Orphans on the city's Irish Broadway with two of his former orphanage mates.

Almost no one knew that Colin and Lemont Freeman were ORPHAN's first secret agents. His girlfriend, the suddenly abducted Sara Kilbourne, was unaware of their hidden lives.

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

"WHO?"

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

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

"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.

Colin 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.

With one mighty tug, the gigantic beasts launched.

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

Seventy-six seconds later, he reached the mounted constables. They were blocked 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 Edison's event created a massive glut of parked trains, blocking off every north or eastern route a stagecoach could take.

Naghten Road (the Irish Broadway) was the only eastbound route left. However, it was already blocked off 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, the tunnel was flooded due to high water in the Scioto River, which overwhelmed its drainage system.

"That coach is either in or hidden behind these (eleven) railroad buildings!" The other constable responded, "Unless it boarded a train."

"Stagecoaches are too tall to fit into boxcars. They transport them on flatbed cars, which we would still see," McLaughlin said while pointing out 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.



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, there was 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.

As that giant door slammed shut, Animus leaped from the coach's bench while four darkly dressed men shoved wooden lever jacks under the coach like an Indy 500 pit crew.

The coach's leaf springs, axles, wheels, and jacks were stowed away in under two minutes. The coach now sat on four dollies that resembled modern skateboards. This lowered the coach enough to fit inside the first of the two box cars.

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

The hijack team froze; Animus waved for them to keep working as he moved over to the door.

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

Also attached to that suitcase-sized battery was a small box with a switch and three wires; one hung loose.

Animus then threw the switch. About a second later, an earth-shaking **KABOOM** rocked Columbus.

A blazing mushroom cloud suddenly lit up the sky 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 having an extended length (50 feet), the two boxcars looked ordinary 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, which allowed 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 from one to the ground. Both methods were in use here.

Next, Animus 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 second 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.

Five minutes after Animus remotely blew up that abandoned riverboat; these two phantom boxcars began rolling east on track #9 as the eighty-fourth and eighty-fifth units on an eighty-three-car haul.

This professional hijacking took less time than buying a train ticket on a busy day, 21 minutes.

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

A warning torch was burning on the track four miles north of Columbus. Typically, this meant something blocked the rails within the next half mile. So, the engineer brought his train to a complete stop.

This cargo train 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 train 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 and rolled itself far enough back for the hijackers to push those extra-long cars onto the southbound track.

As his men shoved, Animus displayed his cat-like agility as he slipped inside that northbound caboose.

Next, he plucked a tiny yellow dart from the napping engineer's neck.

For the next 30 seconds, Animus gazed into his unconscious face from six inches out. Then he gently 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, pressure-latching all three cars to the phantom train.

As Animus slipped out of the northbound caboose, he tossed that dart into the woods, then joined his crew as they boarded the southbound caboose.

From the outside, you would have never noticed that this was the most luxurious caboose in the country. Inside was a five-star kitchen with a highly accomplished French chef.

He was preparing crocks of sweet onion soup, topped with cheese imported from Switzerland and Colorado's most delicate prime rib, the ideal midnight meal after a hard day's work.

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

"The track is clear,' they reported to their engineer. Seconds later, both trains began rolling.

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

Phase one of this covert operation took fifty-eight of its sixty allotted minutes.

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

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

April 17, 1863

(2 years into the Civil War

The Invisible Factory

(ORPHAN's Future Fortress)

After four months of lime lighting system delays, a five-car train with “Consolidated Canned Foods” painted on its three boxcars arrived at the Train Wheel Replacement Barn” on Sullivant’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 four New York theaters.

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

The biggest problem with lime lighting was that it took twenty-four men working 12-hour shifts to keep the underground factory lit up without blowing it up. But unlike all other 1861 factories, this one operated 24 hours a day.

That Consolidated Food Train secretly delivered General Rutherford B. Hayes, in plainclothes, to the wheel replacement barn above the hidden factory.

After Animus began blowing up Northern weapons factories, Hayes and Engineering General John Newton managed Plant One’s construction for nearly two years.

The majority of the army’s engineers came 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. At its peak, it held seven thousand Confederate prisoners, so no one questioned why two army security battalions constantly surrounded Sullivant's Hill.

Standing beneath this (old-looking) train barn's entrance, Hayes congratulated General William Tecumseh Sherman for finally starting production thirty feet below.

Unless you saw the hidden platform inside hoisting boxcars up and down from the munitions factory, you would never guess that this shabby structure had become vital to the war effort.

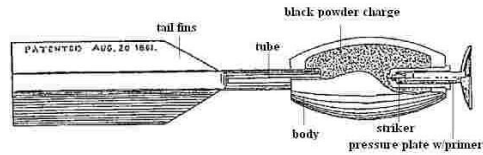


This 1863 image shows the (fake) train wheel replacement barn above Plant One during the Civil War. The 12' walls around Camp Chase sat about a thousand feet beyond those background trees.

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 a thousand convicts working by seven o’clock last night. I expect to reach 1500 within a week.”

“Thank God for criminals.”

“Ha, ha, ain’t that the truth?”

“I didn’t mean it.”

Even though seven thousand Confederate prisoners of war were confined about one mile away, they had nothing to do with Plant One.

Imprisoned criminals were not accepted into the Union Army. However, the army could commandeer them for war-related labor. So, General Hayes borrowed 1500 offenders from the Ohio State Penitentiary, seven miles away, in Columbus.

The railroad ran beside the prison; the convicts were stuffed into cargo cars inside an enclosed prison terminal and then unloaded inside the fake wheel replacement barn, so no one ever saw them coming or going.

After Hayes complimented Sherman on his 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 quite well, but I’m too busy to start practicing a new sport right now. You may recall that I won Ohio’s Leapfrog championship back in 49 and again in 50.”

“Oh no, I meant, do you enjoy watching a boxing match?”

“Sure, don’t all real men?”

“Well, naturally.”

“The Camp’s Toughest Man championship bout for the 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 after one punch.”

“Sounds more 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; there are too many loose details 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 run 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’m seventeen; I’ll be eighteen next month.”

“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-handedly knocked both out! Then hog-tied the other two!” Colin proudly corrected the comment 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 confident.”

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

Colin parked a freshly dumped manure wagon inside the barn’s railroad entry six minutes later.

“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. It’s a 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 dung wagon, Hayes asked, “Why does a Columbus boy have an 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, do you know him?”

“Yes, 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:

Dear 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 discussing this with me first.

These clever lads are incredible athletes and gifted hunters with sharp minds to match. Both are 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 included in my prayers.

Father John

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

“Aye, from point-blank. I’ve known him for two years. Being world-class athletes, we understand each other.”

“General Sherman told me that he 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. After five rounds, I won the 25-dollar purse.”

“I’m impressed,” Hayes replied.

“I like Freeman; he is as smart as he is big. He knows something about almost everything. I do not doubt that he is the second smartest teenager on this Hill tonight.”

Hayes thought, “I know better than asking who’s first,” so he asked, “He sounds multi-talented. Is he educated?”

“Aye, sort of. When Freeman was a little squat, his mother could borrow books. So, she taught him to read, then made damn sure he read every book she could borrow. He learned because he had no choice.”

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

“Freeman 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 couple of hours and got to know each other. We are both highly competitive athletes.”

“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 Camp Chase’s 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-handedly 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 lonely ladies for every man down in Columbus. Most of those men are too old, hindered, or disinterested to comfort hundreds of young ladies. Great-looking, studly men like me are nonexistent around town. So, I donate my free time and energy to comfort as many of them as possible.”

“Okay.”

“Jesus must have given me his Greek God looks to please girls. 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 it didn’t work.

“By cheering up two or three ladies daily, God 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 17-year-old orphan testified.

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

“He was beaming like a proud daddy when Governor Denison made me a second lieutenant after saving General Grant.”

“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 shacks used by officers. It was one room, and four visitors were already using it. As Hayes quickly changed into his uniform, Colin relieved himself between the shacks and 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's inn last year."

This Southern-style visitor's inn was under construction a mile east of the camp where Sullivant's Hill overlooks Columbus and Ohio's new statehouse.

Hayes used Camp Chase's war prisoners for this labor.

"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 Lemont Freeman and his opponent, a muscle-bound fellow larger than McLaughlin, were already seated in their corners.

The seething mad challenger just stared at Lemont as he stretched and yawned.

Seconds later, a boy hauling a burlap sack entered the crowded arena and squeezed into Lemont's corner.

“Jemima,” (Lemont’s mother), “say they ain’t feeding 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 weekly meal 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 allowed her to read cookbooks.

Eighteen years earlier, Jemima used her talent, wisdom, and charm to buy freedom for her family. She set out for a new 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 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, slipping 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 driving that dung wagon downtown."

"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 left the oil lamp-lit mess hall.

While Freeman picked his lamb leg clean, Hayes coughed on a nasty cigar and gagged on a cup of 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 whipped off his hands and face, 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 over the ropes like a gymnast half his size.

"Damn," Hayes mumbled as the building shook from Lemont's nailed landing.

Still acting like he did not see Hayes, he flung his enormous army jacket over his almost naked body.

"Amazing punch, son," Hayes said as he reached Lemont's back.

Spinning around, he snapped to attention. “Yes, 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 stated while standing at attention.

“Relax, son, have a seat; let's talk.”

“Yes, sir.”

“A friend of yours told me about you.”

“May I ask who, sir?”

“Ah, McLaughlin, Lieutenant Colin McLaughlin.”

“He just left here. He saw you destroy that guy, but he had a hard pressing engagement downtown.”

“I was unaware that he had become an officer. I knew he would rapidly rise; he's nearly as impressive as he believes.”

“He certainly leaves a lasting impression.”

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

“Why are you still in basic training, son?”

“The governor held me out 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 started at age 13.”

“That’s quite a raise.”

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

“Screw them!”

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

“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 because she would have chased me with her broomstick.”

“After I saved up \$170 from my winnings, I bought the house she rented and gave her the deed. I 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 to McLaughlin.”

“I did not lose to McLaughlin! I’ve never lost against anyone!”

“Is that what he told you?”

“Yes, he said it took him five rounds to win the 25-dollar prize.”

“Ha, Ha, Ha! The mess hall shook again as Lemont cracked up. Colin Mclaughlin can run faster backward than most men can run forward! He won that cash for still standing after five rounds!”

“Odd incentive.”

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

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

“He kept me amused with jokes, frightened faces, and slick escapes, so I let him live.”

“Actually, he did not say that he beat you, just that he won the prize money.”

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

“Hum. He also said that you love to read.”

“Yes, reading brings me the world.”

“What do you read?”

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

“That’s tough for a beginner.”

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

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

“Then you recall that the day after Napoleon sold Louisiana to us, 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 including their first assignment.

Lemont’s package was much larger than anyone else’s. All the others came from General Rosecrans of Camp Chase; however, Lemont’s came from Ohio’s new Governor, David Todd.

Inside, a little gold bar and a letter promoting him to First Lieutenant, a rank 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 Lemont would be the world’s largest, strongest, and toughest secretary.

Jemima was delighted her little boy was not about to be the biggest target on a Civil War battlefield.

April 9, 1865

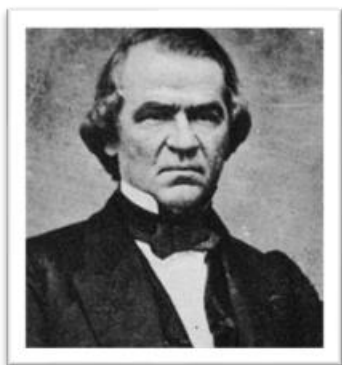
Two years after Lemont won the Camp Chase tournament, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant in Virginia, supposedly ending the Civil War.

Five days later, Republican President Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theater.

Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat, was sworn in as the seventeenth US president.

Bonus Section for Central Ohioans

Not meant for TV
The Whitehouse
Friday, April 28th, 1865



“Hello, heroes!” President Andrew Johnson proclaimed as Civil War Generals Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, and James A. Garfield walked into the Oval Office.

After a minute of back-patting, President Johnson looked down at his notes and said, “I see you want to keep a war prisoner camp open.”

Grant responded, “Yes, Mr. President, Camp Chase is more important than you have been told.”

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

“We know, sir. However, we,” General Hayes said before President Johnson interrupted: “We no longer need war camps; war was a problem of America’s past that we have conquered. Any remaining Confederate war criminals will be used to rebuild Southern cities.”

“Because we only discuss military secrets on a need-to-know basis, you were not briefed on several secret operations running along the Camp Chase railroad,” Garfield explained,

“What secret operations?”

“Camp Chase is not just the 135-acre prison camp we led everyone to believe. It cuts across a 12 square mile hill, which has worked perfectly for hiding weapon development, manufacturing, storage, and espionage training,” Garfield responded.

“Camp Chase is in Columbus, right?”

“Sullivant’s Hill is seven miles west of Columbus. Because of a natural obstacle, it remains highly secluded.”

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

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

Hayes added, “In-between Sullivant’s Hill from Columbus is a two-mile valley that looks more like a lake after heavy storms or thaws. This frequent flooding prevents Columbus from expanding west toward Camp Chase.”

“Mathematically, Columbus is the center of America’s railroad network. These and other advantages make the scarcely used Camp Chase railroad the country’s most strategically perfect location.”

“Look, I know y’all’s Ohio’s greatest warriors, but the USA is no longer in the business of war. We do not want or need more secret programs or prisoner camps.”

“Sir, we are not asking for anything new; we are just trying to keep something too important to abandon. We need to keep Camp Chase open to justify the army security guarding the secret operations already along this rail,” Hayes added.

“Taxpayer’s dollars must be spent rebuilding our southern cities instead of squandering our wealth on more ways to destroy them!” Johnson countered.

“We have powerful enemies who are constantly plotting against us!” Grant inserted.

“Nonsense. Your Civil War prison camp deception would only last a year, maybe two, before everyone asks, “What the hell is Washington hiding on Sullivant’s Hill?”

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

“That doesn’t matter; y’all should be more concerned about reentering civilian life.”

“I do have some great news for you. I just signed off on a 30-dollar-a-month pension for all retiring Union generals. That is a whole dollar every day for staying home.”

Grant reacted, “This is far more important than the men in this room. This is our nation’s future!”

“This planet is packed with wicked kings, dictators, and despots who would sell their nuts to take out the world’s only democracy.”

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

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

Johnson rebuked, “Enforcing world peace has nothing to do with the US Constitution, nor should it.”

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

Glancing at the grandfather clock, President Johnson concluded, “I’m not sorry to rush y’all off, but I have an important meeting this afternoon.”

“Mr. Moore” (Johnson’s assistant), “please show these distinguished Ohioans out of my office.”

“What an asshole,” the three future presidents 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 century,” as he handed Hayes a copy of the Daily Statesman newspaper.”

The article was about Dr. William Awl, Ohio’s Commissioner of Lunatic and Imbecil asylums, who referred to himself as Dr. Cure Awl.

Dr. Awl had asked the state legislature to replace the Central Ohio Lunatic Asylum on Columbus’s east side with a new facility, about eighteen times larger.

“It would be as large as every downtown Columbus building combined,” Lemont added.

The article reported that Dr. Awl could not prove any need for this massive facility, so his request was overwhelmingly rejected.



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 looks like a big European city. “

“It’s just a single building,” Lemont replied.

“It says this plan was overwhelmingly rejected for Columbus’s east side.”

“Boss, that lunatic asylum this large would need a security force even larger than what we used at Camp Chase. Since this would be a state-run force protecting society from crazed lunatics, they could secure the entire hill without raising suspicions, as army security would. This would be a perfect cover.”

“We just need to get the Ohio State legislature to approve this new lunatic asylum for Sullivant’s Hill instead of East Columbus.”

While staring at the drawing, Hayes responded, “Brilliant idea, son! These lunatic asylum guards could tell intruders, “Get off of this hill; several murder-crazed lunatics have just escaped!”

“By building it on the eastern ridge, overlooking the city, this thing would scare almost everyone away in the first place.”

“Indeed. No one wants to hang around several thousand lunatics.”

“We would still have to find some serious funding to reimburse Ohio, Boss.”

“We have a secret fund.”

“Do you know something that I don’t?”

“Yes, that seems hard to believe.”

“However, we must first take President Johnson’s advice.”

“What advice?”

“Get civilian jobs.”

Six months later, during midterm elections, General Garfield was elected as Ohio’s 19th District Congressman, which just happened to include Sullivant’s Hill.

During the next presidential election (1868), General Grant defeated Horatio Seymour. The same day, General Hayes defeated Allen G. Thurman to become Ohio’s new governor.

Governor Hayes was sworn in on January 13, 1869. Two months later, President Grant was inaugurated in Washington, D.C.

However, on November 18, 1868, fifteen days after these Ohio generals won their elections, that old East Columbus lunatic asylum suddenly burned down.

At that time, this was the largest fire in Columbus’s history.



The East Columbus lunatic asylum that burned down 15 days after the 1868 election. Fortunately, the fire raged during the only two hours per week that the inmates were allowed to gather for “Social Time” in the asylum’s front hall, so they were all saved.

However, the asylum had seven female inmates who preferred staying locked up over being at least molested by three hundred and forty penis-packing lunatics.

All seven women perished.

Months later, Ohio’s new Governor, Hayes, presided over the Hilltop Lunatic Asylum’s groundbreaking ceremony.

This monstrosity would be America’s largest building (in square footage). It would hold that spot until the Pentagon passed it in 1942.



Time for Episode 2