

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 odd to see two fine racehorses pulling that rotten old wagon.

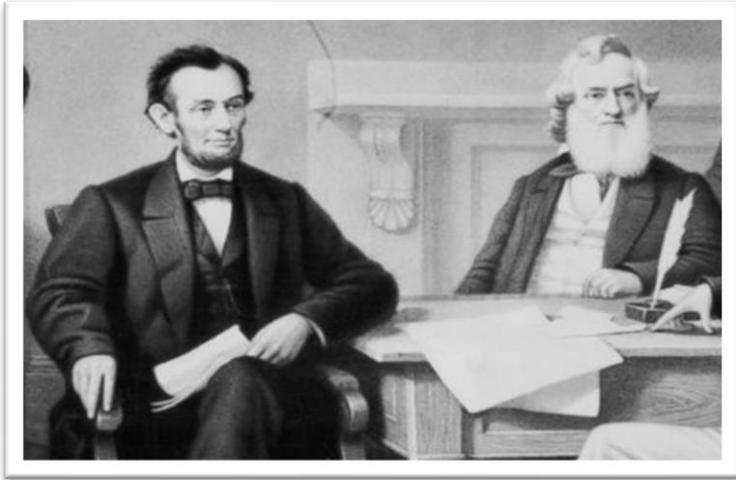
Yet, under a bright crescent moon, only one man saw it stop beside the Union Federal Munitions Factory.

As the night riders unhitched and mounted the stallions, the watchman yelled at them through a window above.

“Hey, you can’t park that wagon here! Move it now!”

“No problem. It will be gone in a moment,” the tall one replied while the other lit the 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 rubble. There could have been hundreds if 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 apparent. Most of our factories were built before dynamite.”

“They were built when our worst enemies had to cross an ocean to screw 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.

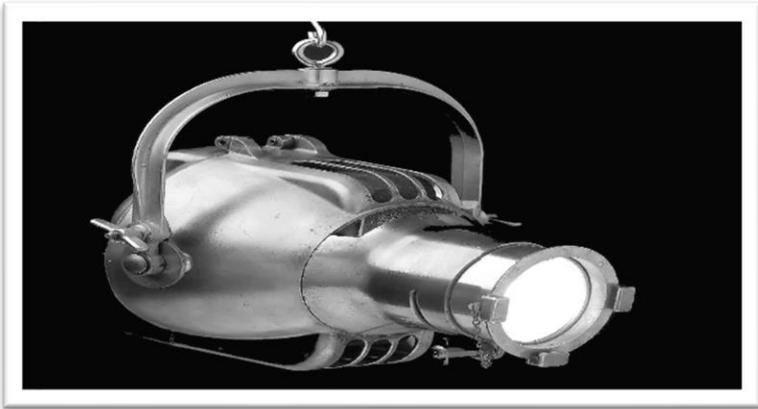
Articles about him increased newspaper sales so dramatically that six hundred reporters from eight nations had rail-rolled into town for this historic event. Even before revealing these new products, he drew the second-largest crowd in Columbus’s 72-year history.

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 inventor).

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.



About two hours before ‘The Maids of Armando’ would become the first spotlighted musical, anxiety replaced Edison’s excitement.



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

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

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

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!

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

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 instead gasped.

Edison suddenly glowed so intensely that everyone watching had to cover their eyes for a moment. 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 music halls and newspapers; Columbus barely had one of either.

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

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

Sixteen years earlier, President Andrew Johnson set up the Secret Service soon after 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 had to be a very boring government service that just happens to move very 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 headquarters for secret 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").

Sullivant's Hill 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 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.

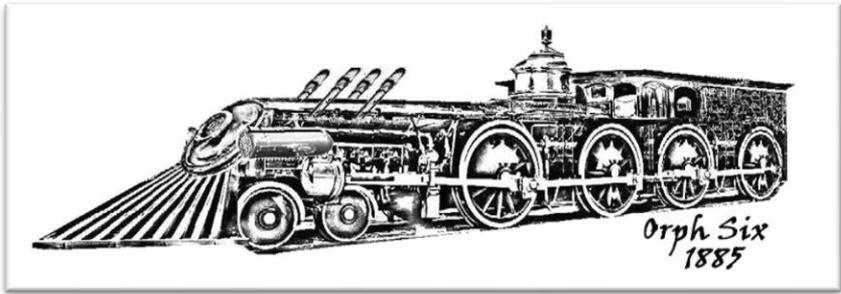
FYI: Immediately after the Civil War, European nations began dumping what eventually reached 1.7 million orphan children into America's open arms. Most of them ended up on farms scattered around the country.

They officially named this aid program The National Orphan Relief Agency, "NORA" for short. Internally they called the country's first genuinely secret agency "ORPHAN."

On March 4, days before tonight's big event, Edison's D/C generator increased the secret facility's electric power from 16 to 1240 amps.

At this time, NORA ran five 'Orphan Ambulance trains' with another constantly under construction. ORPHAN agents affectionately called these low-slung, hidden-weapon-packed rail rockets "ORPHS."

Painted white with big red crosses and flashing red light bulbs, ORPHS hid in plain sight while zooming over the nation's rails. Their secret features and stats, like their world-record speeds, and concealed weapons, were greatly understated or not mentioned.



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

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

Ten feet north of the Orphan Ambulance barn, a house-sized hospital for orphan children was erected to complete the cover story. This clinic did occasionally treat an injured orphan child.

Initially (during the Civil War), the ORPH barn's cover was a steel-wheel replacement building for railroad cars. It hid the entrances to the underground factory, then called "Plant One," where the train cars were loaded.

President Johnson ordered both structures sealed up and abandoned one month after the war ended.

Anyways, once the show (The Maids of Armando) began, Edison's audience continued gasping each time another Buckeye Beauty was spotlighted.



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

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 did not want his VIPs walking the 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 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 lacked 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 theater closed down 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, “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 then swung a hard left at full speed.

The six beauties screamed as their coach skidded around that icy corner on two wheels before racing off to the north. Unfortunately, this was not their only problem; 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.

They stayed unaware as the VIPs, journalists, and fans 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 away 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 does not 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 driver picked 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?" the driver 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. This driver was again fortunate enough to land on another massive horse patty.

Instead of being fooled three times, Peter 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 taken.

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 thing still visible 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 mamma cheetah out to get her baby's back, he sprinted barefoot up that icy brick road towards that third team of Clydesdales. They were now meandering as if waiting for him.

He leaped like that mad mamma 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."



Columbus's Union Train Station in 1885

"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.

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 then touched it to the positive post.

A massive **KABOOM** suddenly rocked Columbus as its flaming mushroom cloud lit the sky from about a quarter mile 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-foot), the two boxcars looked typical while rolling outside. However, this was not the case inside this building; their customized ends fully opened above them, creating a large enough entrance for a team of six enormous horses to enter.

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 out 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 1500 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, in-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 sat 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 itself 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 that this was the most luxurious caboose in the country from the outside.

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 feast.

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 Sullivant's Hill. This shabby-looking structure hid the secret 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's 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.

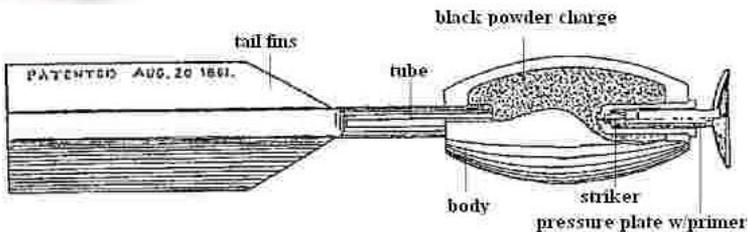


This 1863 image shows the (fake) train wheel replacement barn above Plant One during the Civil War. The Camp Chase walls were about a thousand feet beyond those trees.

As Sherman pointed out four cargo cars parked beside the barn, he explained, “Three are packed with five hundred thousand “Minnie Balls” (the most common bullet of the Civil War).



Minnie balls were muzzleloading bullets but pre-loaded with gunpowder. This feature cut the time to reload existing muzzleloading firearms in half.



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

“You produced all of this today?” Hayes asked.

“The engineers finally had the Lime-lighting working safely around noon yesterday. I had over a thousand convicts working at 7:00.”

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. But the army could commandeer criminals already serving hard labor.

So, Hayes borrowed 1500 felons from the Ohio State Penitentiary, seven miles away.

It took two years to open Plant One for several reasons, like army intelligence losing four months just figuring out which convicts supported the Union.

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 wheel replacement barn.

After Hayes complimented 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.”

Note: Although the North would win this war to free Black people, their military would continue segregation for another eighty-two years.

“Now that sounds relaxing.”

“This year, they have a humungous boy who knocks out every challenger in seconds. Usually with 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; 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, “And, 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 obeys orders and has a sharp mind that somehow spots spies in a crowd.”

“He can run like the wind, and he’s a deadeye marksman.”

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 did dump 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, “Where 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 out 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, Rud, so they never
learn that I intervened.

I keep you and Lucy in my daily prayers.

John

“Lieutenant, have you ever seen this big black fellow fight yet?” 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 prize.”

“I’m impressed,” Hayes replied.

“I like Freeman; he is as intelligent as he is big. He knows something about almost anything. 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 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 contest?”

“No, the army ain’t ready for that. But I 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.”

“This was definitely Divine Intervention,” Hayes knew.

“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 thousands of local ladies. Young, great-looking, overly fertile men like me are almost nonexistent around town. So I donate my free time comforting as many lonely young ladies as I physically can. Jesus must have given me his Greek-God looks to help please ladies. This is just another way he helps me do my patriotic duty.”

“You needn't explain, Lieutenant,” Hayes said to again 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 good, ooh, 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.”



Construction of this Confederate-prisoner-built, Southern-style mansion was a mile east of the camp, where Sullivant's Hill overlooks Columbus and Ohio's new white limestone statehouse.

"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.

The pampered children eating her fix' ins called her "Aunt Jemima."

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 and pulled a twenty-inch lamb leg from the bag; then, he 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 back 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 taking that dung hauler 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 then gagged on some New Jersey whiskey, which reminded 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 then 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 as if he did not see Hayes, Freeman grabbed his enormous uniform jacket, then flung it over his almost naked body.

In these early decades of boxing, like wrestling, it was a nude male-only 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 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).

“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 humorous. 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, I do. It shows 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 sort of 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 big, bright, well-behaved boy was not about to become the most prominent target on a Civil War battlefield.

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.

Loyalty to the US constitution was vastly more important than devotion to any political party in those days.

Within a month, Johnson decided to close most of the nation's military bases and discharged most of his soldiers, generals, and officers.

To the dismay of Sherman, Hayes, Grant, Garfield, and many other Ohio-born generals, Johnson also ordered Plant One (and the fake train wheel replacement barn above it) closed, sealed, and abandoned.

For four reasons, Ohio Generals Hayes, Grant, and Garfield assumed that Plant One would be used for hidden weapon development and secret programs after the war.

First, Sullivant's Hill sat dead center inside America's massive railroad network (based on miles of track). Because trains were the swiftest form of transportation in the 1800s, Sullivant's Hill offered the quickest average time to reach the entire nation.

Secondly, the often-flooded land between Sullivant's Hill and Columbus isolated the Hill, supplying natural privacy.

Thirdly, this secret underground facility had already been installed. Lastly, they were confident that electrical lighting would soon be available.

Two years later (first postwar elections), General Ulysses S. Grant ran for President, and General Rutherford B. Hayes ran for Ohio's governor. General Garfield had already become the Congressman from Ohio's 19th District (Central Ohio).

On January 13, 1869, Hayes became Ohio's 32nd governor. Two months later (March 14), Grant was sworn in as the nation's 18th President.

With help from his secretary Lemont Freeman, Governor Hayes's plan for Sullivant's Hill was ready for President Grant the day he took office.

Sullivant Hill's seclusion had diminished since the war. The often-flooded settlement of Franklinton was no longer blocking Columbus from expanding up Sullivant's Hill, and it was mainly Hayes's fault.

Eleven wealthy Columbus businessmen had built mansions along the hill's eastern ridge for its view of Columbus and Ohio's white limestone statehouse. Well, that is what several of these men told their wives.

These rich guys quietly wanted to be neighbors with that Southern-style visitor's mansion General Hayes used war prisoners to build. It had become this very exclusive gentlemen's club.

When President Johnson ordered Camp Chase “liquidated” a month after the war, he included that nearly finished Army Visitor’s Inn.

Five months later, Reggie (that boxing tavern owner) made the first and only offer. He bought that mansion for one cent on the dollar (based on building costs in Columbus). He rapidly turned it into the most beautiful bordello/inn east of Washington, DC.

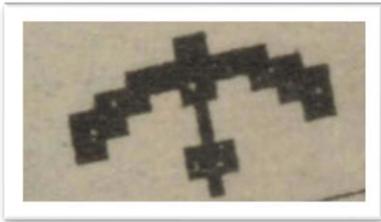
Because it overlooked Ohio’s statehouse, he kept it (and his lovely working girls) packed with state representatives, VIP visitors, and those rich neighbors. Reggie even swindled the disappearing Union Army into unknowingly paying for sixteen complete rooms of ultra-luxury furnishings, Persian rugs, and Turkish draperies.

Two months before President-Elect Grant took office (4/4/1869), Ohio was quietly infused with enough money to build (by far) the most expensive project in the state’s history. This cash came from several undisclosed tons of gold that Confederate President Jefferson Davis tried to keep for himself after the war.

Sullivant’s Hill no longer had four Army Security Battalions surrounding it. Washington needed a proven way to scare unrelated citizens and developers away.

At first, Governor Hayes used this cash for Eminent Domain payments, which forced Reggie and those wealthy homeowners to sell their mansions to the state. To keep them happy and quiet, Hayes generously overpaid them.

Washington seemed uninvolved by involving only state, county, and city governments to build this the largest and most intentionally frightening building in America's history. Governor Hayes demolished those mansions a month before President Grant was sworn in.



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

This lunatic asylum was designed to resemble a vampire bat overlooking Columbus. Lunatic asylums were the most frightening government structures in America. Almost no one wanted to come near them, thus restoring Sullivant Hill's seclusion (behind it).

Two weeks after construction began, ground broke for the Columbus Imbecile Asylum next door. This, the largest imbecile asylum on the planet, was given every inch of that land

overlooking Columbus that was not already reserved for lunatics.

Climbing up Sullivant's Hill was like passing between the gates of hell. These two frightening structures restored the Hill's seclusion (about ten square miles behind them).

Also, days before construction began, Hayes had Columbus annex this ridge. They instantly renamed Sullivant's Hill to the second most generic name Lemont Freeman suggested, "The Hilltop." His first was just "Hill."

Changing its name prevented former soldiers, convicts, and anyone with knowledge of the hidden complex from being reminded of it.

A year and a half after the lunatic asylum opened (Saturday, March 30, 1879, at 1:00 AM), all public records and maps of those deleted mansions and Sullivant's Hill were incinerated inside the Franklin County courthouse's iron vault. The arsonists were thoughtful enough to relock that vault and the courthouse building as they left.

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