



# WESTERN RESERVE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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Volume 52

October 2017

Number 2

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Meeting: Wednesday, October 11, 2017  
6:15 PM Assemble  
6:30 PM Buffet Dinner  
7:30 PM Business Meeting  
7:45 PM Presentation

Place: Colony Room in the Student  
Union at Baldwin Wallace  
University, Corner of East  
Grand & Tressel, Berea OH  
(440-570-0009)

Presenter: David Castle

"Succession: Self-Determination or Rebellion"

Before Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as our 16<sup>th</sup> President in March, 1861, seven states had formally seceded from the Union, with four others to follow afterwards as the nation entered into Civil War. The process of how a State determined secession required that a State hold a State convention, where representatives from around the State attended, and had the opportunity to speak out in favor of or against the State formally withdrawing from the Union. What happened here? Who were these representatives? And, in following Texas's act of secession on 2-1-61, in which Texas became the 7<sup>th</sup> State to secede, just 42 days following South Carolina's climatic decision to withdrawal from the Union, the Southern Confederacy was also formed, with Jefferson Davis chosen as its first president. These are events we are all familiar with, but perhaps less known are the details of just how this all had happened.

To help us understand better, our speaker this month is history professor David Castel, from Ohio University – Eastern Campus, who will talk to us about this process of secession and of who it was that got to decide on the question of state secession. He will also talk to us about how Jefferson Davis was selected to head the Southern Confederacy and of his early actions as President. Be sure to join us.

We'll also take some time at this meeting to begin to dissect some of the findings of our first ever, survey. By now you have hopefully reviewed the comments by members. We'll begin talking about some of these responses at this month's meeting, so that we can proceed in making our group more vital and promising to future members. See you soon.

# Maker's Mark found on the USS Monitor's Turret

By Joan Wenner, J.D.

Newport News, Va.—The Mariners' Museum and Park is excited to announce the discovery of the very first maker's mark found in the USS *Monitor's* turret. Over a multi-year effort, various portions of the *Monitor* were recovered and placed in conservation, a process that also involved excavation of larger artifacts such as the turret. Now in the later stages, conservation involves the finer work designed to eliminate corrosion products and further stabilize the historic vessel's components. During this more detailed work, unexpected historically significant details have emerged.

Beginning in August 2016, conservation staff of the USS *Monitor* Center began using dry-ice blasting technology to remove corrosion on many large wrought-iron artifacts within the *Monitor* collection. This work was financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service through the U.S. Department of the Interior.

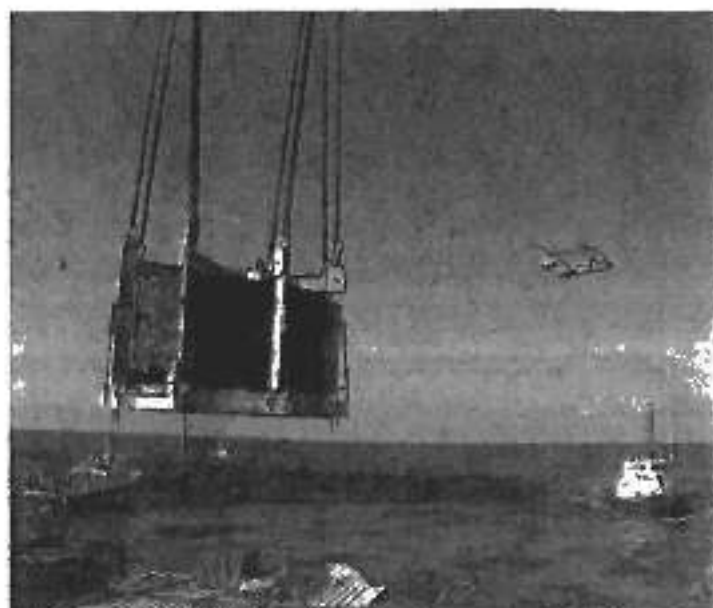
Among the cleaned artifacts were engine room structural bulkheads, gun slides, and the ironclad's turret's forward and aft diagonal support braces. During the dry-ice cleaning, conservators

made a remarkable discovery on the aft diagonal brace. As the corrosion flaked off, a maker's mark was found stamped into the artifact spelling "ULSTER."

Research indicated that Ulster Iron Works was located in Saugerties, Ulster County, N.Y., about 100 miles north of New York City on the Hudson River. According to the 1884 Directory of Iron and Steel Works of the United States, Ulster Iron Works was built in 1827 and had an annual capacity of 6,700 net tons of iron products. During the Civil War, one primary source of its income was U.S. Navy contracts.

While this firm was never mentioned as a supplier during the *Monitor's* construction at Continental Iron Works, it is now believed that Ulster provided materials for modifications to the ship while it was undergoing sea trials at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The museum is still working on deciphering the lineage of the company.

*Joan Wenner, J.D. has contributed for many years to the Civil War News and The Artilleryman among other history publications and has a law degree. Comments are welcomed at joan\_writer@yahoo.com*



Monitor's turret lifted from the wreck site in 2002.  
(The Mariners' Museum and Park/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.)



Diagonal brace with a closeup of the "Ulster" inscription.  
(The Mariners' Museum and Park.)

Civil War News September 2017

## Western Reserve CWRT - 2017-2018 Volunteers --- Our 52nd Year



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## Western Reserve CWRT - Membership Dues

**Annual Dues:**           **\$30.00 Individual**  
                                  **\$40.00 Couple**

Dues are to be paid each year on the anniversary month of each person's membership. For example, if a person joins the CWRT in March, then March is the anniversary month for future dues memberships. A member can see their dues status and anniversary month at check-in.

The Buffet Dinner Fee is \$20.00 plus a \$5.00 Speaker Fee for a total of \$25.00 per meeting. If a person chooses not to attend dinner, then the Speaker Fee of \$5.00 is requested to help defray the cost of our speakers.

### Civil War Trivia

**Last Month's Question:**   Ulysses S. Grant spelled out the surrender terms of General Lee's army in McLean's parlor at Appomattox Courthouse. The writing table used to draft these terms was afterwards, purchased by Phil Sheridan and then given to Mrs. Libbie Custer as a tribute to her husband, George Custer.

What price did Sheridan pay Mr. McLean for this writing table?

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| Nothing | \$10 |
| \$2     | \$20 |
| \$5     | \$25 |

**Answer:**                   One Jackson - \$20.

**Source:**                   J. V. Stiles, Custer's Trails, p. 206

**Next Month's Question:**   This event of 10/24/61 involving Abraham Lincoln led to the end of the Pony Express out of business. What was it?

**Next Month: At the Front**

**November 8, 2017**

**Christopher Phillips**

**"The Rivers Ran Backward"**



# Stunning attic find leads to book

BY BOB KARLOVITS

Carleton Young's work as a historian also has made him into a detective.

In putting together a book based on more than 250 letters from the Civil War, the retired history teacher uncovered a mystery about his family's past.

Working in both roles, Young came up with "Voices from the Attic: The Williamstown Boys in the Civil War" (William Morris, \$19.95), the story of two soldiers' march through some of the most significant battles in the war.

"I just wanted to let the two brothers tell their stories," says Young, who taught history at Thomas Jefferson High School in Clairton.

Young also is taking the story of the two members of the Old Vermont Brigade on the road, doing speaking engagements in libraries, schools and for clubs. He will present his talk May 14 at the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall in Carnegie.

He also will visit with the Greater Greensburg Civil War Round Table on June 2 and, in October, talk at the home of the two Civil War veterans in Vermont.

The self-published book is a compilation of the letters Young found when cleaning out his deceased parents' home in Churchill. He organized them chronologically and added brief transitional sections to create a historical narrative.

But the story of his finding the letters and the transcription of them probably are as good as the tale from the War Between the States.

In 2002, Young says, he was clearing out his parents' home after his father, William, died. He came across a wooden box jammed with letters, brought it home and quickly discovered the letters were from the Civil War.

That led to the first element of mystery: "I have no idea why my dad never said, 'Hey, you're interested in history. I have these old letters you might like to see,'" he says.

Young, who has a doctorate in history of education from the University of Pittsburgh, admits he is no Civil War expert, so he called a friend, Edd Hale, then a history teacher at Keystone Oaks High School in Dormont.

Hale went over to Young's home in Castle Shannon, looked at the letters and realized they demanded the knowledge of a person who knew even more about the Civil War: Bill Lutz, a math teacher at Keystone Oaks and a history buff.

"When Edd called me, I jumped in my car and was over there in 15 minutes," says Lutz, who lives in Scott. "I was just labbergasted when I saw the amount of letters he had."

*"I have no idea why my dad never said, 'Hey, you're interested in history, I have these old letters you might like to see.'"*

CARLETON YOUNG

RETIRED HISTORY TEACHER WROTE A BOOK BASED ON MORE THAN 250 LETTERS FROM THE CIVIL WAR HE FOUND IN THE ATTIC OF HIS PARENTS' HOME

Hale was amazed at the amount, too. "They were so tight in that box if you took one out, you never got it back in," he says.

The three teachers — all now retired — were thrilled at this look at the war.

The letters tell the story of Henry and Francis Marton in the early Peninsula Campaign, then at South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness and Cedar Creek.

But to get to that story, they had to read and transcribe the letters — no mean feat considering they were on flimsy, thin sheets. Sometimes, Young says, the letters were filled with "cross-writing" in which sections were written at a 90-degree angle over what had already been penned to save space.

For about five years, the three teachers, Young's wife, Carol, and Hale's wife, Nancy, got together for three or four hours every Wednesday night to read and transcribe the letters.

Hale even came up with a way of using Photoshop to separate and make the cross writing easier to solve.

Another mystery emerged. Who were these guys and why did Young's father have the letters?

The five transcribers began visiting battlefields and the home of the two soldiers, the small community of Williamstown, Vt.

Young finally was able to determine the Marton brothers were from the family of his grandfather's first wife, who died. Letters: Young's father found them when he cleaned out her house after her death

in 1980.

"Why she kept the letters, I don't know," Young says. "They weren't from anybody in her family."

Young says when he began compiling the letters, he wanted them to tell a personal story.

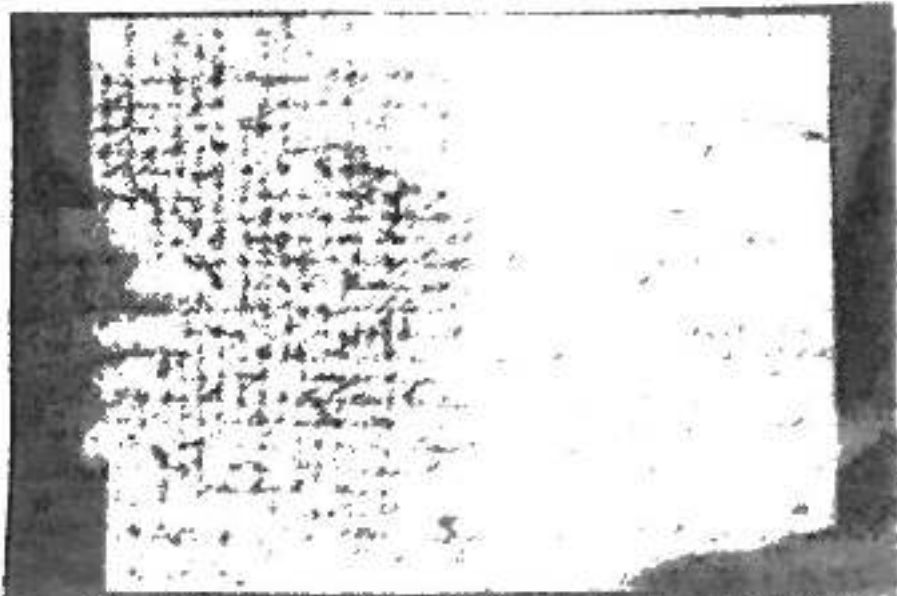
"Their accounts of the battles and of camp life are just so different than what you often find," Young says.

Hale believes he accomplished his aim.

"It is not an annotated, academic work," he says. "(Young) wanted them to tell their stories, and that's what he got."



Carleton Young holds a box that contained Civil War letters he found in his parents' attic. He researched the letters and turned them into a book, "Voices from the Attic: The Williamstown Boys in the Civil War."



Some of the Civil War letters contained cross-writing, a technique used to get the maximum writing on a sheet, writing vertically and horizontally.



# Who a Steal Lincoln's Hand? Art Theft Baffles Police and Museum in Illinois

By MITCH SMITH

KANKAKEE, Ill. — Someone stole Abraham Lincoln's hand.

The crime had no witnesses. There are no suspects. The police are not even certain when the hand disappeared.

About all anyone knows is that a plaster sculpture of the 16th president's hand, proudly displayed for years at the Kankakee County Museum, has been missing from its shelf since at least Dec. 11.

Any art theft would be jarring in Kankakee, a working-class city about an

## Hoping the better angels of someone's nature prompt a sculpture's return.

hour's drive south of Chicago, but because of its connection to Lincoln, the loss of this sculpture has touched a nerve here.

More than 150 years since the former Illinois legislator ascended to the presidency, Lincoln remains ubiquitous in this state. His face is on the license plates. Illinois calls itself the "Land of Lincoln." And along the interstate near the Kankakee exit, a giant statue of Honest Abe greets passing motorists from the parking lot of an equipment rental company.

"Lincoln is a local treasure for us,"

said Chief Larry Regnier of the Kankakee police, whose department is investigating the theft. So far, Chief Regnier said, promising leads have been hard to come by.

Museum officials had thought that the theft might have been a prank, and that the plaster study would resurface in a few days. The police hoped someone might provide information about the theft after seeing a Facebook post by the department, which included photographs and described the hand as roughly "the size of a 8-10 pound ham." The local newspaper, The Daily Journal, published an editorial pleading for the thief to come forward.

"We are blessed to have such a fine museum with an impressive inventory," the editorial said, "but the collection is not complete without Lincoln's hands."

The hand was the work of George Grey Barnard, a sculptor who spent part of his boyhood in Kankakee around the time that Lincoln was assassinated, and whose admiration of Lincoln was a recurring theme in his art. The sculpture was displayed along with other renderings of Lincoln in a wing of the county historical museum built specifically to showcase Mr. Barnard's work.

Connie Licon, the museum's executive director, said the hand sculpture had been on display since at least 1991. This was the first art theft she said she could remember in more than 20 years at the museum.

"We were devastated. It just brought us all to the floor," said Ms. Licon, who was alerted to the theft by a custodian who noticed the vacant spot on the shelf. "We're a small museum, and we just don't acquire pieces like this."

The police report estimated its worth at \$5,000, but described the artwork as "invaluable."

"There's almost no way to put a value on something like that because there's no market," said Jack Klasey, a long-time museum volunteer and local historian.

The theft occurred at the beginning of the museum's busiest month. In December, groups of schoolchildren and others streamed through the museum — past the Barnard sculptures, tributes to local sports heroes and artifacts honoring three Kankakee County natives who served as Illinois governor — to admire Christmas trees decorated by civic groups.

"I saw it in the newspaper and just thought, 'Who would go into that small museum and walk out with that hand?'" said Trisha Campbell, who stopped by with her co-workers days after the theft was discovered to browse the Gallery of Trees at the museum.

In addition to being outraged, museum visitors were perplexed. "I think it's kind of crazy," said Kelly Lambert, a college student whose aunt works at the museum. "Why would someone want to

walk off with a fake Abraham Lincoln hand?"

Since the theft, Ms. Licon said curators had removed other small Barnard pieces from the display, fearing that they might also disappear. "Now we're paranoid," she said. "And we're wondering: Is this person going to come back?"

There is a precedent for stealing Lincoln memorabilia, said James Cornelius, a curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Ill. In recent decades, Dr. Cornelius said, manuscripts and books with ties to Lincoln have been reported stolen. And more dramatically, in the 1870s, a band of criminals failed in an attempt to steal Lincoln's body from his tomb in Springfield.

Many in Kankakee said they assumed that the hand thief lived in the city, and that the crime was more of an impulse than a well-planned heist.

Ms. Licon said she hoped the hand resurfaced soon.

"What makes people think what's someone else's belongs to them?" she asked. "Just return it in a quiet way. Just put it in a bag and leave it somewhere."



A study of one of Abraham Lincoln's hands, by the sculptor George Grey Barnard, before its disappearance from the Kankakee County Museum.

# THE WATCHDOG

By CRAIG L. BARRY



## Longstreet's Sidearm

The question came up recently on a Civil War Internet chat forum: "Does anyone know what kind of pistol James Longstreet used as his personal sidearm?"

Revisiting such discussions are not new or unusual. A few posts followed about the likelihood of the famous Confederate general owning a Colt Navy (like Gen. Robert E. Lee), a Beaumont Adams (like Gen. Thomas J. Jackson) or a LeMat (like Gen. J.E.B. Stuart) even though Stuart also carried a Whitney.

Stuart, before he was mortally wounded at Yellow Tavern, fired his Whitney Revolver Serial #3110 — now in the collection of the Virginia Historical Society — until empty into the Union troops charging through his lines.

It seemed timely for a look at the surviving records. I will quote myself (the following 10 paragraphs) from an earlier thread on the same Internet forum some years ago, because to my knowledge nothing has changed nor is it likely to change:

Arthur Fremantle of the Coldstream Guards noted from his travels with the Army of Northern Virginia that "...neither Lee nor Longstreet was in the habit of carrying a sidearm."

While Lee is known for owning the Colt Navy revolver, there is no record of which I am aware that documents what type sidearm Longstreet owned. If there is no record, we may have to accept that this detail (and many others) are lost to history.

There were, of course, instances, though not common, where Civil War generals shot and killed enemy combatants in battle with their personal sidearms. One Confederate commander who springs immediately to mind is Gen. N.B. Forrest who routinely put his brace of Navy Colts to the purpose for which they were intended.

Gen. Joseph Shelby is another and he commented at length about the qualities of the Colt revolver. Carrying and using a revolver was not only a feature of the Western Theater and Trans-Mississippi

cavalry commanders, though.

In the Army of Northern Virginia, Lt. Gen. Wade Hampton carried an ivory handled Colt and the following was noted:

"Hampton acquired a small ivory-handled Colt revolver from a captured Yankee lieutenant and decided to try it out. The target was a tree, no larger than a man's arm, some twenty yards away. He opened fire and every bullet hit the tree."

Staff officer Nathan Davis complimented the general on his marksmanship, but [Hampton] said he personally preferred the heavier Colt Navy pistol. Hampton replied that he expected to use his new weapon only in close quarters, adding that he never sighted a handgun, only "looked at his target and opened fire."

It was further noted by Manly Wade Wellman in his 1949 *Giant In Gray: A Biography Of Wade Hampton Of South Carolina* that he also shot two Federals from their saddles, an event which Hampton commemorated by carving notches in the handle. Technically, Hampton could have carved a few more notches, too.

The book went on to say that some years after the Civil War had ended, a clerk with the South Carolina Supreme Court and part-time historian named U.R. Brooks, asked the aging Confederate general how many Federals he had killed.

Hampton replied, "Eleven. Two with my sword and nine with my pistol." Brooks believed that number too low and reminded the general of at least two Union soldiers killed at Trevilian Station (June 1864). "Oh," replied Hampton, "I did not count them, they were running."

While Lee owned a personal sidearm, he apparently did not normally carry it in battle. According to Floyderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms, in 1870 after Lee had passed away, his Colt Navy revolver was still loaded and had to be emptied out. It was carrying the rounds last placed in its cylinders sometime during the Civil War.

Lee, for his part was, like Longstreet, not known for carrying either a personal revolver or a saber in



Wartime image of Gen. James Longstreet (Library of Congress)

March 2016

Civil War News

November 2016

## Franklin Antebellum Home Burns

By Gregory L. Wade

FRANKLIN, TENN.—An antebellum home finished just as the Civil War ended, recently burned just outside of Franklin, Tennessee, and is considered a total loss. Banker Joseph Wilson, who was blind, started the home's construction in 1840 and was known to personally feel every board as it was erected. The two-story mansion was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. Standing on the corner of Wilson and Cloverland Pike, itself was the scene of constant troop movements and skirmishes during the war. At one-point construction stopped when federal troops threatened to burn it down but backed off when local women fed them. When the north to south Franklin Pike that was to the west became too dangerous for federal troops, Wilson Pike was an important alternate route from Brent-

combat. While such items as swords and revolvers were considered "badges of rank" and hence often carried by ranking officers, it would appear that the best answer is some generals did and some generals did not carry personal sidearms.

Considered another way, since General Longstreet was accidentally injured and lost use of his right arm in 1864, if it had gotten to the point where he had needed a revolver during a battle, things were very bad indeed.



Historic two-story Joseph Wilson House before the devastating fire.

wood to the Murfreesboro Pike. The home no doubt witnessed a lot of these troubles, and its completion was delayed because of the war.

Franklin historian Rick Warwick noted the Greek Revival style was one of the most popular in the area at the time, and the Wilson house was one of the best. "There's not many of what was that quality left," he said. The current owners of the home had planned to convert the property into a school of music and the arts. Owner Robin Woolaver said she is hopeful "we will see the way clear on how to take this and draw beauty from ashes."

According to local reports the home had been a focal point of a contentious divorce until it was recently sold for \$850,000. There were no injuries in the blaze, and a routine investigation is being conducted by the local fire marshal.



Historic Joseph Wilson House burns to the ground only leaving the two brick chimneys.



# The World of an Antislavery Warrior

John Parker helped hundreds of people find their freedom in Ohio, but he was not alone.

By MONICA DRAKE

Eliza was fleeing her captors with her young son in her arms when she was stopped short by the banks of the frigid Ohio River. But that didn't stop her. With the unthinking courage that comes from desperation, she leapt from one ice floe to another, occasionally falling into the freezing water and hoisting herself up, until arriving on the riverbank across the state line. After witnessing her harrowing journey, a white man who should have captured her ended up helping her ashore instead, directing her to a safe house rather than into the arms of her pursuers.

The story of a white man moved to save a slave so tugged at the heartstrings that the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe included a version of it in her novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin." For many who were assigned the book to read in school, the tale of Eliza is their first indelible image of escape from slavery.

The actual flight of Eliza began in Kentucky and ended on the riverbanks in Ripley, Ohio, abolitionists at the time said, making a white character based on a patrolman one of the best-known saviors. But the true Moses of Ripley was a former slave

named John P. Parker, who helped make the town a major nexus in the path of kidnapped Africans and their descendants determined that their lot in life was not to be thought of as property.

Parker helped hundreds of people find their freedom. The exact number is unknown because successful passage on the Underground Railroad meant it was undocumented, Dewey Scott, a docent at the John P. Parker House in Ripley, pointed out when I took a tour there in December. Parker was the rare conductor who, heavily armed, would cross the river into Kentucky and extract refugees who wanted freedom. His memoir reads like an action film: One of his most daring exploits was to deliver a sleeping child from the room of a white captor to parents who had yet to cross the river.

I had never heard of Parker or of Ripley, though I grew up about an hour and a half north of the town, on State Route 68. Fortunately, the story of Parker has not been entirely lost. It lives on, partly in the house and former foundry he owned that has been turned into a museum and a National Historic Landmark.

The red-brick building where Parker worked and lived is, quite frankly, stunning. As I pulled up to it, the late-afternoon sun was setting over the hills in Kentucky, and its reflection in the glassy river bathed the facade in amber from below. Still I wondered, given the modest size of the struc-

ture, whether it held enough of Parker to tell his tale. It didn't quite, but Mr. Scott took care of what the house and its relics couldn't. So did "His Promised Land," a gripping memoir sold there based on an interview with Parker, which revealed a man who seemed never to shrink from a challenge.

John Parker was born to a black woman and white father in Norfolk, Va., and was sold from his family to a slave merchant and then resold for profit to a doctor in Mobile, Ala., all by the time he was 10. If the prospect of never again seeing his mother didn't persuade him that slavery was atrocious, watching a fellow member of a chain gang being beaten to death convinced him that the institution was evil. Still, his time with the doctor wasn't the worst that forced labor had to offer: He learned a trade (working at a foundry) and the doctor's children sneaked him books and taught him to read.

Parker made sure to avoid the same fate of my own forefathers who toiled in the hot fields of the Deep South. When he learned that the doctor planned to sell him at auction, he persuaded a woman named Elizabeth Ryder to buy him, and he promised to repay her with earnings from a foundry. Because he had learned a trade, the widow could lease him to the foundry, earn money

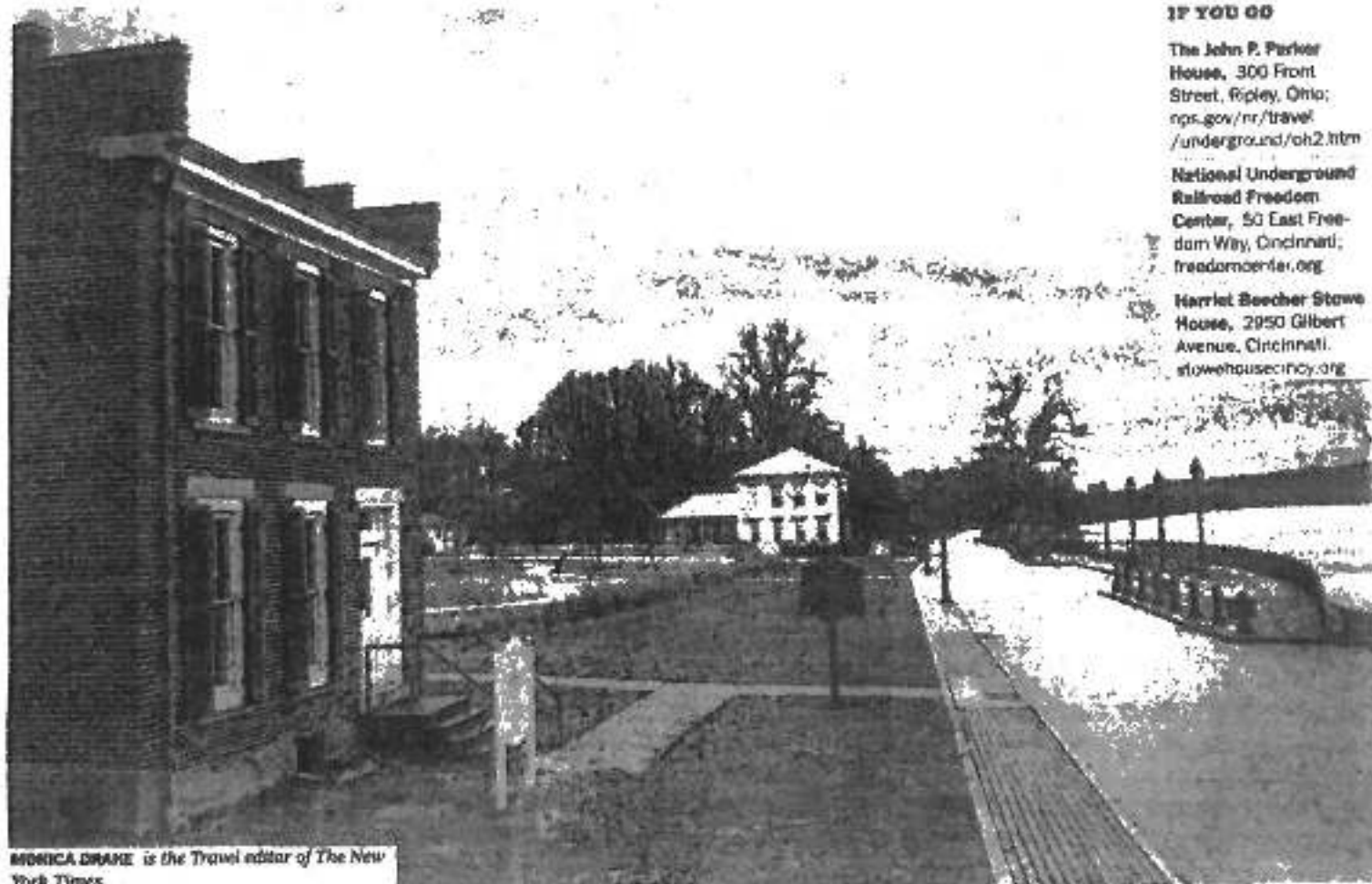
*Continued on  
next page*

## IF YOU GO

The John P. Parker House, 300 Front Street, Ripley, Ohio; [nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/oh2.htm](http://nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/oh2.htm)

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 50 East Freedom Way, Cincinnati; [freedomcenter.org](http://freedomcenter.org)

Harriet Beecher Stowe House, 2050 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati; [stowehousecincy.org](http://stowehousecincy.org)



MONICA DRAKE is the Travel editor of The New York Times.

on his labor, and anything above the promised amount of the lease would be his to keep. The arrangement was common, but resulted in freedom only for some.

Rather than stay in the South, Parker settled in Ripley, making enough money to build the home next to his workshop, to marry and to raise children there. His career as a foundryman is the stuff of lore. He obtained a patent for a part that was in demand at tobacco factories, and became one of the richest men in the region, at that time a major trade hub in the United States.

He constantly risked it all for what he called his "war with slavery." The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 strengthened penalties for those who helped people escape slavery. For that reason, perhaps, he rarely sheltered runaways, and a tour of his house does not feature the crawl spaces and secret passageways that some on the Underground Railroad do.

What it does contain are the sort of exhibits you'd expect: a mural detailing accomplishments like Parker's appearance at a world exposition for a part he created. But the real story lay in the relics from the foundry that are on display and adorn the home. Some door hinges on the ground level (an item that I'd never thought of as decorative) are from Parker's foundry. Tools made from the foundry are shown as well. The stars at the front entrance were made in the foundry, too; they just needed a fresh coat of paint.

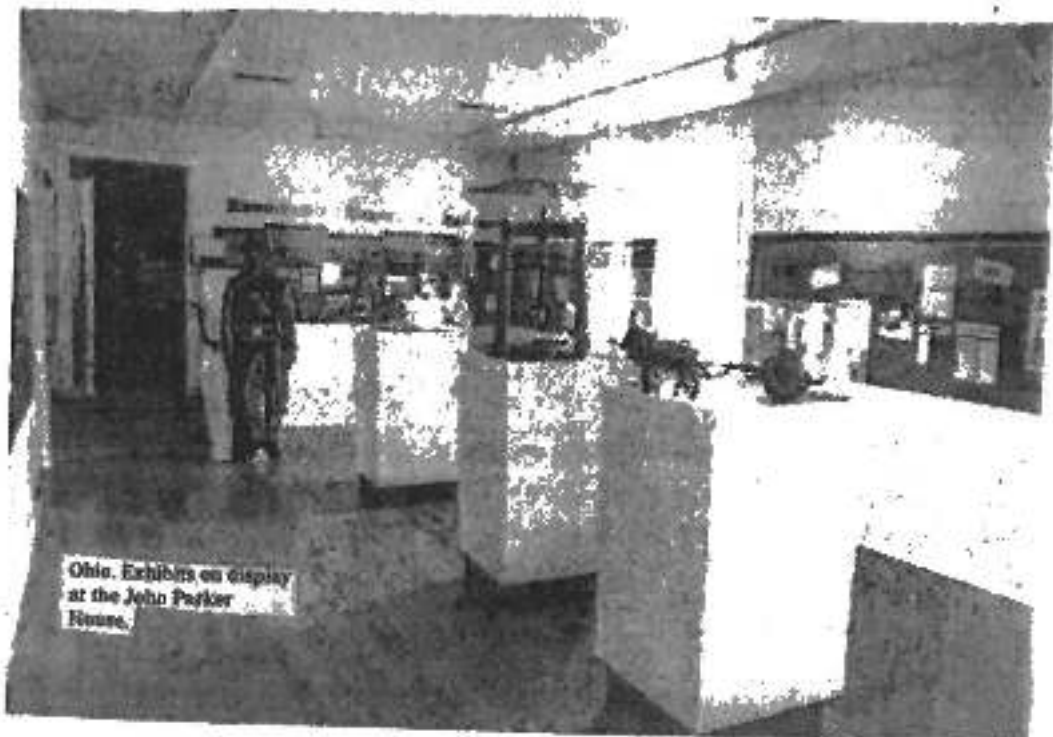
And there is plenty that isn't made from the foundry but tells his life. The house does its job best in the room made up to appear as it would have in Parker's day, complete with Ivory soap and a brush. The hardwood floors, in poplar, are from the original construction.

I peered from the window to look at the river. The sheer hominess of the space highlighted a lovely domestic life that he and his wife risked daily.

On the lower level sits a boat that doubles as a frame for a series of paintings depicting Parker's life. The craft is one he took night after night, combing the river for people who needed a hand on their way from a slave state to a free one.

Parker may have been a warrior against slavery, but he was not a lone one. Many who escaped stayed with one of the more than 300 people in Ripley estimated to be in service to the Underground Railroad, making it the largest network in the region. The Ripley chain included John Rankin, a clergyman who hosted the refugees and is the town's best-known participant in the Underground Railroad; his house, which has been restored and is open to the public, sits on a large hill now named for him. And of course nearby Cincinnati has no shortage of sites to visit, like the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, or the fantastic National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, stocked with a replica of a slave cabin and immersive programming.

The fervent belief in the fundamental freedom of all people, regardless of color, was built into the foundation of Ohio. The land within the state's bounds was originally settled as part of the Northwest Ordinance, the federal statute that set forth a westward expansion that would be propelled by settlers' own grit rather than that



Ohio. Exhibits on display at the John Parker House.

of enslaved laborers. The first American settlement was created in 1788 in Marietta, Ohio, farther east along the river, and its residents outlawed slavery when the territory became a state 15 years later. Ohio's free status ensured that refugees fleeing to the North would have to cross the state's southwestern border, a formidable river.

These days, the rich history of the land along that border is largely hidden, when you drive along the water. Along Route 52, I stopped at a diner where nobody asked if you wanted your grilled cheese sandwich on whole wheat or seven-grain, nor did they ask what sort of cheese you wanted, because it was assumed the answer would be American. I passed a town called Utopia, whose boarded-up windows and stillness suggested it was anything but. There was another called Higginsport, which was a bit more pulled together but still contained an assemblage of buildings in disrepair.

Somewhere around there, I saw it: the Confederate flag. It was on the wrong side of the Ohio River (notwithstanding the short-lived occupation by a Confederate general that was mainly a looting mission).

That flag flying so close to the river represented both abolition's triumph and its fail-

ure. The borders between states may have become less significant, and the river is little more than a lovely landscape, complete with migrating birds. Yet it also means that even in Ohio, the flag of the rebel army, which fought for the right to keep people in bondage, flies. The whole of America may be a free state but it is still tainted with the residue of the institution that the state's first settlers knew was a sin.



Door hinges in Parker's house were made in his foundry.



A plaque where an escaped slave named Eliza crossed the frozen Ohio River with her baby.