

Letters To The Editor

Major Hanson Outlines History Of McLean Barn

Editor, Journal Messenger:
In the Journal Messenger of June 19, in Section C, was a photograph titled, "Historic Structure Leveled," with the explanation that the driving rains and high wind of the previous Wednesday night in Yorkshire had left only the remains pictured "of an old barn used as a military hospital during the Civil War." The explanation was accurate, but entirely inadequate to indicate the real significance of this building, which is one of the most interesting in northern Virginia in its associations with the War Between the States.

The present writer referred frequently to this barn, which was built in 1856 by Wilmer McLean on his "Yorkshire" plantation, in his book on the history, traditions and landmarks of the Manassas campaigns, **Bull Run Remembers**, published in 1953, second edition, 1957. Anyone interested in the history of the "McLean barn" and Yorkshire plantation in general can find much about them in this book, especially on pages 96 to 101; also in the **Official Records, War of the Rebellion**. It will be enough here to merely mention the

salient facts briefly.
Having been built in 1856, a fact chiselled in a foundation stone near the southwest corner of the building, today in 1958 it is 102 years old; an "antique" according to the strict meaning of that term. It must be understood that the significant part of the structure was not destroyed by the recent storm. It is only the massive stonework, built of blocks of native sandstone, which dates from before the 1860s. The flimsy wooden framework above which was swept away, was the third "haymow" to surmount this sidehill stone barn. Wilmer McLean's original haymow was, according to tradition, demolished by fire or wind sometime after the war, a second one replacing it later suffered the same fate, and the third has just now been destroyed. So history has suffered no loss; it is, in fact, a good riddance, since a superstructure more in keeping with the historic character of the massive barn can now be placed upon it.

Wilmer McLean's residence, which stood a few hundred feet west of the barn, disappeared many years ago and no picture of it is known to exist. It was the headquarters of Gen. Beauregard, commanding the Confederate army defending Bull Run and Manassas Junction, from July 18 to July 21, 1861, while Gen. McDowell's Union army was attempting to drive the Confederates from this position. On July 18 a Confederate field hospital was set up in McLean's barn and ambulances and wagons, as well as mounted men of Beauregard's staff, appeared around it. Union batteries on the hills north of Bull Run, about a mile distant, observing the wagons and men and mistaking the hospital flag on the barn for a Confederate emblem, opened fire on the buildings. There were the first shots fired in the first major battle of the war.

Surgeons Abandon Barn
One shell demolished the chimney of the McLean house and wrecked the dinner of Gen. Beauregard and staff, while the closeness of the fire caused the sur-

theatre" with plenty of room for stage and an auditorium for an audience of 150 to 200 people. It would be particularly appropriate in this historic locality for the presentation of American historical plays during the coming centenary of the war, 1861 to 1865.
It is said that Baileys Cross Roads, Vienna, Warrenton and other nearby places have such theatres. Why not Manassas, more notable historically than any of them? The barn itself, beneath the theatre would be the natural place for a refreshment room with a local historical museum, souvenir sales display, and a patio outside the archways for tables and outdoor service overlooking the beautiful view of the Bull Run valley and the distant, wooded hills of Fairfax County. Influential people and organizations in Washington have expressed sympathy toward some such utilization of the McLean barn, and concern about the future of this fine old symbol of the past. But some practical local interest in the subject in Manassas itself, and concrete action for the preservation of the building in the immediate future must be forthcoming before any such projects can be materialized. Will the people of Manassas realize their responsibility, as well as their opportunity, while there is yet time?
Yours sincerely,
Joseph Mills Hanson

ANONYMOUS 'YANKEE' PLEADS FOR NEAT TOWN
Editor Journal Messenger:
I am sending you a few suggestions to improve the looks of Manassas.

Manassas is a fine place to live—I would like to keep it so. I like the people and have been happy while living here. But I do not like to see church members hang out long lines of washing on Sunday when there are six days of the week to do such work, and these people are at home.
The garbage cans which are left out on our streets all day are unsightly. Women go to work, put the cans out, and they are left until night. Also, there is no way to clean those cans. We had a first class system when the men collected the cans and left a clean one. Now you cannot clean the cans with lye and that's what it takes. I will not bring the mess

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●Never satisfied! The same persons who were complaining about the cold weather last Winter were the first to gripe about the summer heat. Must admit the over 90-degree temperatures the past week have had us all sweltering.

●Barbara Southworth received the title Miss Freestone in ceremonies highlighting the weekend activities at Freestone Point. Miss Southworth, 16, is the attractive daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Southworth, Woodbridge. She is a student at Garfield. Congratulations, Barbara!

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●We were taking our case in the backyard Saturday afternoon after a rough day in the office when Carl Hill called to invite us to Freestone to judge the semifinals in the beauty contest. Needless to say, we enjoyed the occasion. We were quite surprised at the new attractions added to the amusement center adjoining the swimming pools, such as a ferris wheel, merry-go-round, miniature train, etc. Carl says work on the new marina, with accommodations for 110 boats is expected to get under way soon. Ground will be broken for a motel this fall. As usual Carl was the usual genial host.

●Bank statements in this issue reveal steady growth of the county's financial institutions with a big jump in assets as compared with June 30th last year.

●Electric power consumption for Manassas hit a new high in June. This is indicated in the purchase of kilowatt hours from Veppo. In June, 1957, the town purchased 385,200 KWH. The same month this year the total was 562,800. This is a gain of approximately 45 percent.

●Town Manager Elliot tells us that the town's water and sewer projects are estimated at more than 60 percent completed. The new water tank is practically ready, except for painting it.

●"Pat" Ware, who is resigning as our Woodbridge correspondent as of this week writes: "I have enjoyed working for the newspaper the past year and regret that I am unable to continue. Since the news of my resignation came out last week I have had so many phone calls and inquiries that I almost feel like a celebrity." Money wise there's not much compensation in a correspondent's job. But there is a great deal of satisfaction in doing such an important service for one's community.

●Is our face red! Ads appearing in last week's J-M for the Bank of Nokesville and the Bank of Occoquan erroneously carried 4 percent interest on savings instead of 3 percent. Cashier Bob Byrnes of Nokesville was the first to call the error to our attention. We haven't heard from Cashier Rex Bond as yet, but understand both banks were kept busy explaining why they couldn't accept savings deposits at 4 percent. So sorry!

●Short-handed at the J-M this week. News Editor Bob Graves is enjoying the breezes sailing with parents on a cruise of the Chesapeake... Linotype operator Melvin Warden is on a motor trip to Florida... Handy-Man John Courtney couldn't make it to work Monday because of a long, strenuous 4th holiday.

●Lucky guy! C. E. Fry, manager of the local Woolworth's store got a phone call last week that took him by complete surprise. Seems he bought a ticket in a car raffle about 8 months ago while store manager at Danville, Pa. You guessed it, he won the car... a bright new Edsel.

hospital flag on the barn for a Confederate emblem, opened fire on the buildings. Theirs were the first shots fired in the first major battle of the war.

Surgeons Abandon Barn

One shell demolished the chimney of the McLean house and wrecked the dinner of Gen. Beauregard and staff, while the closeness of the fire caused the surgeons to abandon the barn as a hospital. The locality was also under fire three days later when, on July 21, Longstreet's brigade, advancing from Blackburns Ford, and D. R. Jones' brigade, advancing from McLeans Ford, tried unsuccessfully to reach Centreville and cut the line of Union retreat to Washington. The place remained within the Confederate lines until March 9, 1862.

Wilmer McLean in 1861 was an elderly man, too old for military service in the Southern army. He was well to do and able to live about as he liked. His rather alarming experiences during the three day battle along Bull Run disgusted him with living in the frontier of warfare. So he left "Yorkshire" in the charge of caretakers and took his family to the deep interior of Virginia, where he bought a comfortable home in the village of Appomattox Court House, about 90 miles west of Richmond, where he felt sure the war would never reach him again.

Here he dwelt peacefully for about three and a half years. Then, on the morning of April 9, 1865, while walking down the village street, he encountered two mounted officers, one in blue uniform, the other in gray. They inquired of him where they might find a house with a room in it large enough to accommodate a party of officers for a conference. His own house was the most commodious in the village, so he invited them there. Presently the party of officers came, those in blue accompanying General U. S. Grant, commanding the Union Army of the Potomac, and one in gray accompanying General Robert E. Lee, commanding the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. The two commanders sat down in Mr. McLean's parlor and drew up the brief terms by which the Confederate army surrendered to that of the Union.

Beginning And End

Thus, by one of the strangest coincidences in all history, the war which virtually began with the bursting of a shell in the kitchen chimney of Wilmer McLean's house at "Yorkshire," virtually ended in his parlor at Appomattox.

The dimensions of the McLean barn, inside the 28 inches thick stone walls, are about 75 feet long, north to south, 40 feet wide, and nine or ten feet high under the heavy whipsawed roof beams. At wide intervals the roof (which was the floor of the haymow) is supported by large, squared wood columns. The west side is built into the hill. On the east side, which looks down a long slope of former pasture land to the woods along Bull Run near old McLeans Ford, the entrenchments of D. R. Jones' brigade and the steep hills beyond the run, there are three great archways, each ten feet wide and eight feet high at the apex. They light the interior fully in the daytime. The floor is all concrete. In his day Wilmer McLean had ample room in this huge barn for his work teams, milk cows, farm machinery and probably for a sheep-fold. His hay and perhaps his grain was in the haymow above.

Proposes Model Theatre

In the place of that haymow could now be built a model "little

these people are at home.

The garbage cans which are left out on our streets all day are unsightly. Women go to work, put the cans out, and they are left until night. Also, there is no way to clean those cans. We had a first-class system when the men collected the cans and left a clean one. Now you cannot clean the cans with lye and that's what it takes. I will not bring the mess in my home — if you keep your grounds nice there is no place to put the lye. So what to do?

I would like to see uptown buildings kept neat and clean, also the grounds. You have a magnificent new bank, the People National, always spotless, and across the street on the Battle street side of the Episcopal Church the grounds are grown up in weeds, trash is everywhere and the shrubs are badly in need of cutting.

I would like to sign my name but I am a Yankee in Manassas, and I want to stay here.

Yours for progress for a clean, attractive Manassas, Va.
Anonymous

PRaises OSBOURN CHORUS SINGING AT CATHEDRAL

Editor, Journal Messenger:

I have read with profound pride and interest... the article in the Washington Star. We were privileged to attend this wonderful service (given by the Osbourn High School Chorus) and proud of the fact that our daughter made her contribution with this fine group. But nevertheless the performance of the group was superb to the ears of this amateur and their ability was rewarded by the honor of singing in the Cathedral in Washington.

Their journeys to several schools and churches in the Washington area has been most warmly received and the experience has proved an asset.

Their performance in the Cathedral was a most befitting climax to the efforts of the chorus and Mr. Myers.

I think Manassas citizens should be very proud of their very fine showing and the columns of The Journal Messenger could go a long way in bringing about this recognition.

Thank you,
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph E. Wells

Mr. and Mrs. William B. Fletcher and son Mike, house guests for several days of Mr. and Mrs. John K. Brown Jr., have returned to their home in Waynesboro. Frankie Fletcher is the house guest this week of John K. Brown III.

Rocky Run Garden Club Meets At Mount Gilead

CENTREVILLE — The Rocky Run Garden Club held its July meeting at Mount Gilead, the home of Mrs. Fred Winant. Co-hostesses with Mrs. Winant were Mrs. Anne Turberville and Mrs. Richard Reidel.

Mrs. Marvin Reese, president, conducted the business meeting. Plans were discussed for the September Flower Show, and members voted unanimously to write their congressmen and oppose the extension to the George Washington Memorial Parkway in the Great Falls area. Mrs. Aubrey Graves, conservation chairman, brought this matter to the attention of the club and arranged for speakers and information.

national and state commissions would meet soon with local park officials and interested community citizens in planning the local Centennial observance. He urged the support of the community and the Chamber in helping to make Manassas the focal point during the big centennial.

He briefly outlined plans in the making for the further development of the Manassas Battlefields including an addition to the museum and the acquisition of more land in the area.

In and

Dr. and Mrs. Marvin L. Gillum and daughters, Cindy and Debby, are vacationing for several weeks at Ocean City, Md.

Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Droste had as their house guests for several days recently Mrs. R. G. Boehme and Donald Boehme of Springfield, Ohio.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Frowe have had as their guests recently Mr. and Mrs. Dean Sims and daughter Susie of Philadelphia.

and Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Huhn and son Teddy of Atlanta, Ga. Teddy is the house guest of the Frowes for two weeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bryan and daughter Penny of Richmond were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Charlton Gnaadt on Sunday. Lynn and Charlton Gnaadt Jr. have returned to their home after a week at camp. Lynn attended the PFA-FHA camp at Smithfield, Va., and Charlton attended 4-H camp at Jamestown.

Mrs. C. C. Lynn was accompanied by her daughter, Mrs. Callie Stipe on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Sinar of Norfolk over the 4th of July holiday.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Ross and son of College Park, Md., were the weekend guests of Mrs. Ross' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Coleman.

Georgia Frowe and Sharon Leggett left Sunday for a week's stay at Roslyn Conference Center at Richmond.

Capt. and Mrs. M. N. Wehmuller and family of Quantico were the dinner guests on Sunday of M-Sgt. and Mrs. Edwin G. Barbee.

Mrs. Frances Patten-Knight gave a stimulating talk on the propagation of the azalea.

Mrs. Patten-Knight, an azalea expert who lives in Fairfax, discussed the British, Japanese and American varieties, giving useful tips on their idiosyncracies of growth and how to overcome them.

Refreshments of melon balls and fresh fruit, held attractively in a huge scooped-out watermelon, were served with ice cream, cake and punch. Mrs. Robert Backman, mother of Mrs. Richard Reidel, formerly of Johnson City, Tenn., and currently living in Hillcrest Heights, Md., was a guest of the club.

Journal Messenger, Duane, 19 June 1958, p. C1.



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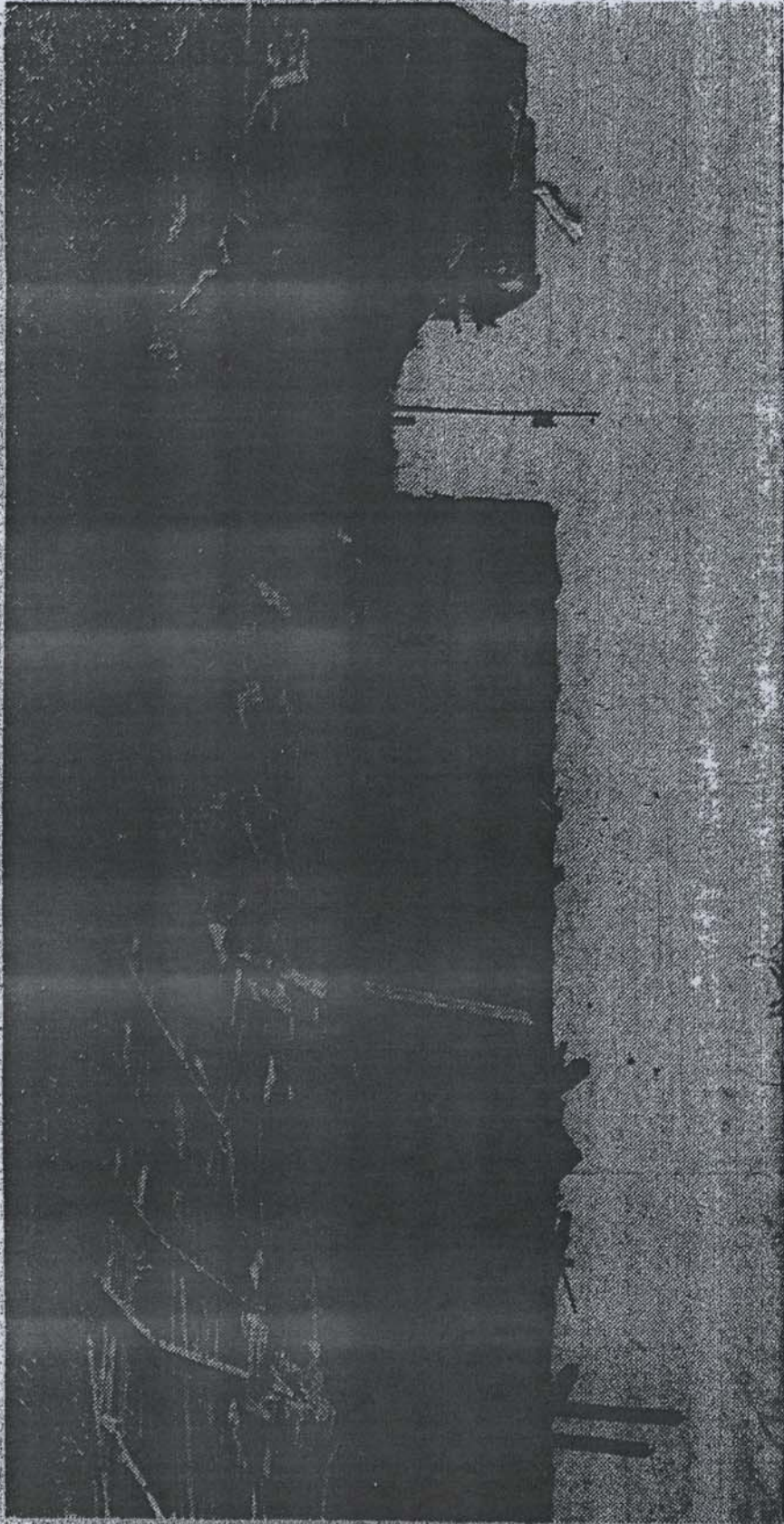
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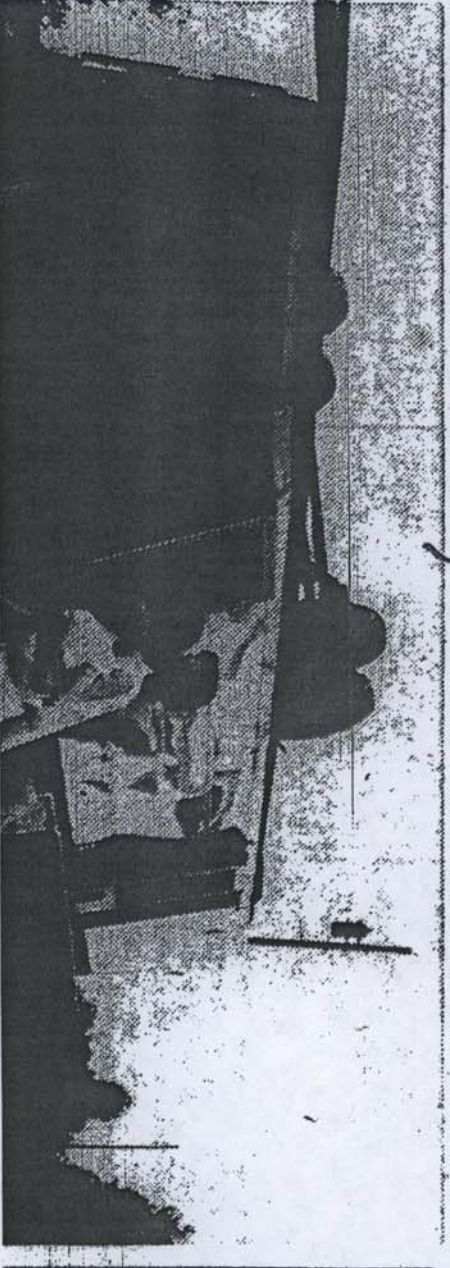
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Tab. April 1958



HISTORIC STRUCTURE LEVELLED—Driving rain and high winds last Wednesday night swept through York-shire damaging homes and property. Shown above are the remains of an old barn, used as a military hospital during the Civil War.



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