

Ontario County Brother Against Brother in Civil War

COURIER-JOURNAL
Friday, Jan. 27, 1964

U.S. Summary

What of the war? In the North, people are usually thinking of divided families along the border states of Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia, and of the U.S.A. and Colonel William C. F. Breckenridge, C.S.A. Or even of Virginia brothers like General William A. Rorer, U.S.A., and General William B. Franklin, C.S.A.

Border states did indeed witness the greatest amount of cleavage. But there were also families far to the north which were divided on the national issue.

Take, for example, the brothers Edward and Alexander McCrahen. They lived in the hamlet of Fishers Station, near Vinton, in Ontario County, New York. Edward was a carpenter and Alexander was a school teacher.

The McCrahen boys were natives of County Kerry, Ireland. The elder child, was born in 1838, and Alexander, the third child, in 1846. Their parents, Alexander, Sr., and Bridget, brought them and three other little ones to America in 1849, and settled in Fishers, at that time a small railroad center. McCrahen became a railroad engineer. He raised his three children, two Irish-born and their American-born brother in a neat little white house which still stands at 27 Log Cabin Road.

Since their father was a railroad engineer, the older boys were naturally attracted to the railroad career. When Eddie was old enough, he got a job as a fireman on a wood-burning locomotive. Aleck, who looked up to his big brother, aimed for the day when he, too, might achieve the same highly honorable position.

His dream came true; if not at once, still sooner than he had anticipated. One day, says family tradition, while Alexander was walking near the tracks after a heavy rainstorm, he noticed that the swollen Ironsides quit Creek had washed out the railroad embankment. His prompt report to the railroad officials probably prevented a serious wreck. It also won their thanks and the query as to how they might reward the young hero. Alexander's answer was ready: a job as a fireman. Young as he was, he was given the job. For him it was "the thrill that comes once in a lifetime."

By 1861, Edward McCrahen had tired of railroad work and entered the employ of Hiram A. Barry, the noted Rochester firm in nearby Rochester. The nurseryman put him on their staff of traveling salesmen.

School Boycott Said 'Massive Bad Example'

Boston — (RNS) — A Boston Conference on Religion and Race proposed to foster a children's boycott of local public schools as a protest against racial imbalance, which was denounced by the Bishop of Boston, Cardinal Archbishop John A. O'Connor, as "un-Christian and ill-considered."

A resolution urging the boycott was adopted here at a Conference on Religion and Race attended by some 500 Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish citizens. The local boycott would coincide with a nationwide Lincoln Day protest of racial imbalance in schools.

An editorial in The Pilot described the proposed demonstration here as a "massive bad example to young people in their relationship with the school and law."

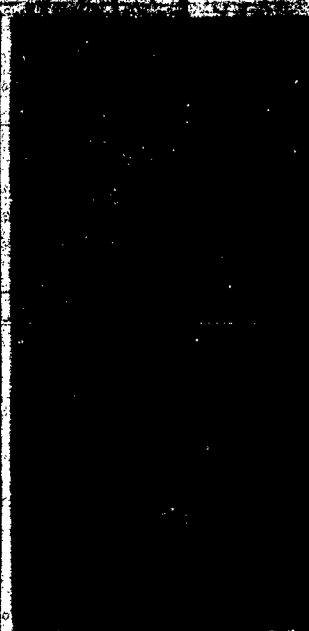
The paper admitted that educational conditions in Boston public schools "needs continuing attention to be brought to a state where they meet our present and future needs."

It noted, however, that school committees and superintendents "have shown willingness to cooperate with other resources in the community to improve conditions."

Laymen In The Pulpit

Santiago — (RNS) — Paul Cardinal Silva Henríquez, Archbishop of Santiago, has called a "Synod" in the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America by authorizing qualified and specially trained laymen to preach at Sunday Masses in his archdiocese.

The cardinal's initiative was seen as a move to cope with the clergy shortage that has become a critical problem of the Church in most Latin American countries.



Alexander McCrahen, U.S.A. (Picture courtesy Mrs. Kenneth Cowley, Rochester)



Edward McCrahen, C.S.A. (Both sketches, courtesy Christopher Pross, Rochester)

One of his business trips landed in New Orleans in early April, 1861. A secessionist excitement was running high. Then came the 13th of April, when Southern troops, under a Louisiana commander, fired on Fort Sumter, and the Civil War was on. In the early days that followed, a certain number of straggled Northerners were impressed into the Confederate forces. But Edward McCrahen did not enlist with the "rebels" under pressure. He did so of his own free will.

How that came about is not known. But there were many Irishmen then living in Louisiana, and some of them quite likely charmed the twenty-three-year-old Fisher's Kerryman into committing himself to their romantic cause. The unit he joined was the 7th Louisiana Infantry. It was commanded by Colonel Harry Thompson Hays.

The Louisiana regiments were still raw when they were sped northward in time to take part, on July 12, 1861, in the great battle of Bull Run, the War's earliest major engagement. Having won its spurs, the 7th was kept busy thereafter in the Virginia-Maryland-Pennsylvan-

ian campaign. As a unit in the First Louisiana Brigade it formed a part of the first combat assigned to General Thomas Jonathan Jackson, whose steadfastness at Bull Run had already won him the legendary nickname of "Stonewall."

Like so many of the men who served under this unit, he fought brilliant at West Point, Ed McCrahen virtually worked the ground he trod. Led by Jackson, the 7th Louisiana played an active role in the great contest for the Shenandoah Valley. It was a war-hardened veteran that they took part in the battles of Front Royal, Winchester, Port Republic and Cross Keys, and other operations during the spring and early summer of 1862. Edward McCrahen felt even closer than most of his comrades to General Jack-

son. He went over to the neighboring village of Meadon and enlisted in the 106th New York Volunteers, which was in the process of organization. His was Company "D," captained by J. George Cramer.

The 106th left Rochester on August 10th, and received its baptism of fire on September 17th at the battle of Antietam. In that bloody, if indecisive, engagement, Edward and Alexander McCrahen, although unaware of the fact, were killed against each other. Both fortanely survived the fight in which the 106th New York had nearly three hundred casualties, and the 7th Louisiana was decimated in the notorious "Cornfield."

Another fierce brother a second time at Gettysburg, once again without knowing it. Here Ed McCrahen's good luck continued. Although one-half of his unit was captured on July 2nd, when the 7th made an unsuccessful charge on Cemetery Hill, he belonged to the half that escaped. On July 3rd, Alexander saw action with the regular artillery, to whom 4th Regiment (Company "C") he had transferred in the previous October. Less fortunate than his Confederate brother, Alexander was wounded in the lower leg. The wound was so serious that he was an invalid for the rest of the year.

Not even the good luck of Ed McCrahen was running about. Since the tragic accidental death of General Jackson the previous May, his old Louisiana troops seemed to have lost some of their earlier fire. Now, on November 7, 1863, Jackson's original command — or what was left of it — came to a rather ignominious end.

The 7th and some other Southern units had been assigned to defend a bridge near Rappahannock Station. Here Federal troops, principally Colonel Clark S. Edwards and his 5th Maine Infantry, surrounded and took prisoner six hundred Louisiana soldiers. Private Edward McCrahen was one of those caught in the roundup. After three months imprisonment, he decided to take the oath of allegiance to the United States, and was released. Aleck, having meanwhile recovered, had returned to his artillery regiment. He served out the war, and was honorably discharged at Camp Salley, Maryland, on August 1, 1864.

Neither of the McCrahen veterans settled in Fishers permanently after peace returned, but both did go back to railroading. Alexander McCrahen (as he spelled the name) never married. He

worked as a railway employee in the West and in Mexico. Edward remained the New York Central and saw long service as an engineer. He married Margaret O'Connell of Syracuse, had ten children, and became a substantial Syracusean.

"Reconversion" to Northern ways apparently caused Ed little difficulty, but he remained to the end of his life a staunch defender of the "Lost Cause," and a ready eulogist of General Jackson. He named one of his sons Francis Robert E. Lee McCrahen. He was ever prepared to take on all comers along his railroad, run in good-natured argument over the late war.

And when family weddings and funerals brought himself and Aleck together again, these former enemies would always fight out the campaigns once more from their rocking chairs.

Small wonder that few people who knew Ed McCrahen called him by his Christian name. They had dubbed him "Stonewall" McCrahen; and that was the name that stuck.

"Stonewall" died on August 24, 1916, and was buried in St. Agnes Cemetery, Syracuse. Aleck died at the Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C., on November 17, 1925, and was buried in the adjacent Soldiers Home National Cemetery.

The tale of Fishers' war-divided family thus comes to a curious and rather ironic conclusion. The "rebel" brother, Stonewall Jackson's devoted orderly, rests in peace in the pure Yankee loam of central New York. The "Federal" brother slumbers, equally at ease, in the golden sand of Dixie!



The McCrahen homestead, 27 Log Cabin Road, Fishers, N.Y., prior to remodeling. (Photo courtesy J. Sheldon Fisher, Ontario County historian.)

God's World Peacemakers

By REV. LEO J. TRENE

As you assist at Mass with your missal, you will have noticed that several times in the course of the Mass we pray for peace — peace for all men, peace for Christ's Church, peace for ourselves. This recurrence of the theme of "peace" is not surprising, since peace is the fruit and the expression of charity, the greatest of all the virtues. Where there is love for God there is peace in one's own heart. Where there is love for neighbor, there is peace between man and man.

It is no wonder that our Lord Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Here is a path to heaven guaranteed effective by Jesus Himself: to be a peacemaker. We need not look for sensational or heroic things to do for God. He will be more than content if we do, but this one small thing for Him — be a peacemaker in our own circle of family, friends and neighbors.

We are peacemakers between man and God whenever we do anything to deter another from sin or to restore a soul to grace. We have a friend, for example, who is contemplating marriage outside the Church. By kind but earnest reasoning we try to dissuade him, or her from this abandonment of God. Or, we have a neighbor who has not received the sacraments for months, perhaps years.

We try to persuade him or her to accompany us to confession. These are seemingly small acts, but they loom large in God's eyes.

We are peacemakers between man and man any time that we try to prevent or to mend a rift between individuals or groups. Two of our fellow-workers, for example, are bitterly at odds with each other. We find opportunity to point out to each in turn the good points of the other; we try to clear up misunderstandings between them and try to effect a reconciliation. We follow the same procedure with the couple next door who are feuding with each other and threatening divorce; if our own efforts fail, we try to persuade them to consult a marriage counselor.

Or a Negro family is about to move into our previously all-white neighborhood. We try to rally together a few other Christian-minded families, to give aid to the incoming wife of prejudice and to bid the newcomers welcome.

If it is in our own homes, of course, that we learn and first practice the role of peacemaker. Parents make a great contribution to the peace God so loves when they teach their children not to carry tales, not to harbor grudges, not to surrender to petty jealousy and not to make rash judgments. The greatest reinforcement of these admonitions will be the parents' own example.

A great disappointment to one's loved ones is being a peacemaker who, professing to love God, nevertheless can watch unceremoniously while friends fall out and while families develop rifts. There are times when it is a virtue to stand one's ground.

Hoodlums Retaliate For Franco Criticism

Barcelona — (RNS) — A gang of hoodlums reportedly wrecked the interior of a Barcelona building connected with the famous Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat, where superior, Dom Aurelio Escarte, has been critical of the Franco regime.

In an early morning incident, the property was set afire. However, did not go beyond the first floor. Furniture on the second floor had been sprinkled with gasoline and pictures defaced.

On a wall, the thugs wrote: "Spain — One First, One Fatherland, One Language."

This was a denunciation of the separatist movement popular in this region, the historic province of Catalonia. Dom Escarte, who is known for his ardent support of Catalan autonomy, recently assailed the Franco regime as being in opposition to Roman Catholic principles.

His criticisms were contained in an interview with the Spanish correspondent of Le Monde, a Paris daily.

Dom Escarte told Le Monde that press freedom was restricted in Spain. He said "lack of information is contrary to the doctrine of the Church," and

condition challenging "the consciences of Catholic rulers of a state which, if it does not change its political principles, cannot be termed Catholic."

The permissives raised here were the headquarters of Boy Scout organizations connected with the abbey, which is located 20 miles from Barcelona. Some have attributed the raid to Falangist elements as a reprisal for the interview given by Dom Escarte.

Abright, 72, an emérite professor of Semitic languages at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, will receive the medal at the university April 19. He will give an address at that time.

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- ITEM 2—Another line—helpful to the Xerox Company and others—will be looped from Walworth to Webster.
- ITEM 3—The 115,000-volt electrical transmission line connecting Rochester with the Genesee Valley will be completed. This will interconnect with the transmission line of New York State Electric and Gas.
- ITEM 4—Our Station 80 on the West Henrietta Road will be enlarged to handle power from a second circuit interconnection on the New York State Power Authority's 345,000-volt transmission line.

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