

PREFACE

Childhood curiosity led to nagging questions throughout years of playing and fantasizing in Leakin Park. Who lived in the spooky old watchtower-topped mansion overlooking the meadow? How did the owners get so rich? Who was buried in the abandoned cemetery littered with tottering headstones and surrounded by a negative aura that repelled us so viscerally? What was the mysterious waterwheel used for since there was no sign of a mill nearby? Why were two life-sized, snarling metal lions flanking the mansion's front porch? How did our unusual cliff-side playground—seemingly gouged from the hillside—get formed? Who rode the exquisite black horses which often appeared in the meadow and galloped away apparition-like? Why were there cannons behind the mansion and why were they pointing toward the bucolic valley? And was that an underground dungeon below those big guns? What kind of people lived and worked in the ruins dotting the area? Was Franklinton Road really an old Indian trail as portrayed by legend? Were battles between Indian tribes fought in the area as rumored?

The names Crimea and Winans meant nothing to most Edmondson Village kids in the 1950s. Inexplicably they lingered with *me* across the decades, periodically commandeering my attention and

chafing my curiosity till I took action in the form of research. The Winans' spirits were cajoling me to spread their story in return for silencing the sporadic and vaguely unnerving prodding from another dimension. With their direct male lineage extinguished, Baltimore's railroad legends, the Winanses, the masters of Crimea—now named Leakin Park—had no direct living namesake to do so.

The mysteries of childhood demand immediate answers, so young adventurers fancifully conjure solutions evoking dungeons, warfare, and hounds on the moor. Adult research, oftentimes regrettably, unravels those mysteries with definitive but disappointingly banal answers. But answers are better left obscured by childhood's fantasies if the alternative is to offer mundane realities of no use to anyone. Vestiges of Santa, Oz, the Arabian Nights, Peter Pan, and Sherlock Holmes reserve a "safe harbor" in the adult psyche for those times when Thoreau's admonition to "simplify" begins beating like Poe's "telltale heart." Allure vanishes with the revelation that the legendary dungeon in the meadow is merely an abandoned root cellar, an innocuous utility predating air-freight and gourmet supermarkets.

Charles Darwin said: "It is difficult to believe in the dreadful but quiet war of organic beings going on in the peaceful woods and smiling fields." Leakin Park is so gorgeous its appeal masks that it's simply a battlefield from the perspective of insects, birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, trees, and plants. But the reality is that each day millions of violent, ugly pieces are magically assembled to make a spectacularly beautiful jigsaw puzzle, which men in arrogant detachment and proprietary delusion call nature.

It's doubtful that many animal species are endowed with the intellect, emotions, and leisure time to enjoy the beauty of nature. Upon reflection, it's reasonable to assume that even among the humans who inhabited the area during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the poor hadn't the energy and the wealthy hadn't the time to enjoy the land much more than the "lower" creatures of Darwin's focus. The stresses of life for those who settled the Dead Run valley—rich and poor alike—were daunting and relentless. But *their* burdens helped glacially nudge civilization forward to where finally, even the poorest laborers have sufficient opportunity to enjoy at length what were rare, fleeting moments of pleasure for early settlers.

Sadly, most squander that legacy's gift of opportunity by filling the leisure time modern technology provides with mind-embalming, intellectually vacuous activities that are as stress-producing as life's essential pursuits. Nature's justice makes the indulgent self-absorption of the comfortable as stressful as the desperate self-absorption of the poor. Thoreau's advice to "simplify" goes largely ignored in pursuit of ephemeral pleasures, a pursuit evocative of Sisyphus.

For the fortunate few, simplification is an inherent drive compelling them to treasure history and its lessons while enabling them to enjoy those "peaceful woods and smiling fields." But the rest of the world thinks them insane for dancing to no apparent music. Tom Winans fought internal demons—nurtured by the emotional strictures of primogenitor and Victorian society—to win self-permission to dance to that music. Leakin Park is a providential escape from the world of those people who spend their lives doing work they hate to make money they don't need to buy things they don't want to impress people they dislike.

The only publicly accessible Winans property that remains as they knew it, historically true and vast enough to transport one back to the mid-nineteenth century to touch their spirits;

is Leakin Park. Contiguous mill lands and original buildings are equally well-preserved and add resonance to an almost mystical connection to America's first generation of industrial revolutionists. Leakin Park is land where you can feel the spirit of Ross and Tom Winans and easily visualize the Union cavalry on one of its periodic raids of Crimea.

The history and character of Leakin Park ironically has little to do with the Leakin family beyond their bequeathed wealth, which enabled the second largest urban wilderness area in America to become a public space. It's improbable that philanthropist James Wilson Leakin ever saw Crimea. Similarly, its history has little to do with the Hutton family, the Winans descendants of Tom's daughter Celeste, who were the eventual purveyors of the land to Baltimore City. The Huttons preferred the sailing, fishing, and social dynamics of Newport, Rhode Island.

Instead, an historical peek at Baltimore's Leakin Park must focus on those who imbued the land with its character, identity and romance. Surrounding property owners and civic leaders with names like Gwynn, Aschudi, Dickey, Freeman, Wethered, Gary, and the thousands of less ambitious or less privileged souls who merely populated the first neighboring mills, churches, villages, and farms, defined and in some cases preserved the

environment to the delight of those now discovering—as Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. once did—the wild beauty of the Dead Run and Gwynns Falls valleys.

Preeminently, there were the Winanses. Tom particularly, whose presence is almost palpable as one walks the land in the twenty-first century. At Leakin Park, the Winans mansion—called Orianda by Tom—is the *only* “country” retreat of any wealthy Baltimore industrialist still surrounded by the original mid-nineteenth century landscape and mill-towns. Others that survive as tokens—such as Johns Hopkins’ “Clifton”—are pathetic remnants of grand estates, shrunken and disrespected by a twenty-first century populace’s history-oblivious search for economic vitality and safe living space in the crime-ridden urban cores of America. Hopkins’ will dictated that his university be sited at Clifton, but the will was broken and his beloved estate’s forlorn mansion is now engulfed by a low-quality public golf course and an architecturally bereft structure housing one of the city’s most violent high schools.

A Baltimore mayor once declared Leakin Park “too remote” and prepared to sell it, until he walked the land, enabling its beauty to cast an immediate spell on him. To walk Tom Winans’ country estate’s neighborhood through the Dead Run and Gwynns

Falls Valleys and the surrounding mill towns of Dickeyville and Franklinton is to transport oneself 150 years back in time. Witnessing the land facilitates an understanding of America during the birth of industry and ignites appreciation for the rugged beauty Tom so desperately craved to possess, only to forsake once his beloved Celeste died tragically. His precipitate abandonment of beautiful Crimea suggests that its original assembly into a near thousand acre estate had more to do with an entrepreneur's addiction to deal-making, status building, and contest living than with a need for a Thoreau-like retreat. Or perhaps its association with Celeste would not allow his grief to diminish until he distanced himself from the property.

To stand on the threshold peering into the Winans' world is to glimpse the hardscrabble grist and textile mills, in the midst of which Tom Winans' elegant Crimea grew like a pearl nestled in an oyster. To cross that threshold and explore his estate is to immerse oneself in the birth of the world's railroads, an event in which the Winans' role was unsurpassed. It is to immerse oneself in the puberty of American cities, a phenomenon in which the Winanses were integral in Baltimore. It is to immerse oneself in the American Civil War, a cataclysm in which Baltimore served as the "poster-child" for America's

ambivalence and which once again found the Winanses pivotal figures in a tumultuous flow of events. It is to immerse oneself in the roiling population upheaval which is a required step in the recipe for a "melting pot" society—an upheaval necessarily fueled by liberal immigration policies. It is to immerse oneself in the early evolution of our nation's social paradigm for blacks and women. That evolution is clearly manifested throughout the coming-of-age story of Tom and Celeste Winans, encompassing their courtship in Russia and lives together at Alexandroffsky in the city, Crimea in the Baltimore countryside, and Bleak House overlooking the Narragansett Bay. All of the foregoing societal dynamics were integral to the couple's coming-of-age, and Leakin Park is the time machine which transports one to their world.

I am not a great believer in communicating with the dead, but I believe the Winanses reached beyond the grave to me and made writing this book an irresistible compulsion. Some force repeatedly pulled me back to Crimea for visits; each trip inspiring additional research.

The story of Ross and Tom Winans is one of America's most colorful and compelling untold adventure stories. Without the

historic preservation that saved Crimea for my childhood adventures, it would have remained untold.

The magic of historic preservation is in making the entrancing explorations of my childhood an alluring possibility for future generations—of children as well as adults—with the ultimate prize a deeper understanding of the origins and essence of current American ethics and mores. I hope the personal magic that flows to readers of the Winans' story takes the form of a deeper understanding of what freedom truly means.

Responsibility, not licentiousness is the nearer synonym, and as Tom learned, it's also the only certain life path to peace and happiness. I hope the lives of the book's characters will resonate with a few, in a society ominously growing more materialistic and secular, and convey the theme that one can achieve power or joy but not both.

For these reasons, and simply because the story is fascinating, I wrote *The American Opus*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This novel took seven years and two months to research and write, with the most exciting work being the transcription of handwritten letters from Tom, Bill, and Ross Winans along with minutes from B&O Board of Directors meetings. It's about 75% historically correct, including a verbatim copy of Ross's poignant letter attempting to convince Tom not to marry in Russia. If the novel gains a following, a companion photo/history book on the family may be made available for those wishing a 100% accurate history of the family along with pictures of the novel's people and places.

The book is based on the true story of the life of railroad mechanic and entrepreneur Tom Winans; his genius father Ross; his mentor, Baltimore's quintessential Renaissance man John H. B. Latrobe; his best friends—the two sons of Latrobe—Ferdy, who later was elected mayor a record seven times and Osmun, who became Confederate General Longstreet's chief of staff; Tom's great love Celeste, whose charitable passions led to opening the first large Soup House in America and for whom *The Sun* published its first obituary for a woman; Tom's kingmaker Major George Washington Whistler, father of artist James Whistler and head of

Czar Nicholas I's project to build Russia's first railroad; the great underground railroad leader William C. Goodrich of York, Pennsylvania; the Confederate master spy Rose Greenhow; and Tom's country neighbor Josh Zimmerman. I'm grateful for the lives of this fascinating assemblage of characters.

A few family dates have been changed in the novel to accommodate the flow of the storylines, but otherwise the novel accurately chronicles historical events.

One storyline is partially fictional. Ross clearly opposed Tom's marriage in Russia, and, as a Catholic, Celeste would have been despised by Baltimore's politically dominant Know-Nothings. But the extent of any enduring animus between Ross and Celeste is uncertain and the book's version is fictional.

Completely fictional are the storylines involving Celeste as part-time organist for the Church of St. Catherine, Celeste as Underground Railroad leader, Celeste's affair with John Calley, the Zimmerman/Greenhow relationship, and Tom's love affair with Rose Greenhow following the death of Celeste; although all were feasible, given their personal convictions, mutual acquaintances, time frames, and geographical proximity to one another. Greenhow and Mary Wethered were, in fact, good friends. Zimmerman's farm was an easy walk from the Wethered home and since Washington D.C.'s race track had long been

closed, Central Racecourse drew aristocrats from the nation's capital who socialized at the Franklin Inn after the races.

Celeste did become an accomplished organist while growing up in St. Petersburg, and, since she was a Roman Catholic, it is highly likely that she practiced or played for services at the Church of St. Catherine, which was the Revillon family's regular church on the Nevsky Prospect. Celeste's father George's funeral was held there on March 28, 1859.

Underground Railroading was not an activity in which record-keeping was prudent, but it is highly likely that Baltimore-born William Goodrich was aware of Celeste Winans' unique Soup House. Given his extensive commercial railroad activity it is also likely that he personally knew some of the Winanses as well as John H. B. Latrobe. Alexandroffsky's tunnel from the mansion's gymnasium to the stables was a much-gossiped about item in Baltimore.

During Alexandroffsky's construction, Tom was frequently absent on buying trips and Celeste was left to monitor construction progress and facilitate access to the property for contractors. She was in close contact with architect Niernsee's general contractor John Calley, but there is no evidence of an illicit relationship or of a tunnel from Alexandroffsky to the Soup House across the street. The Soup House's actual location

was directly across W. Baltimore Street in a line with the mansion's tower, as shown on Sachse's 1869 map of Baltimore.

Rose Greenhow and Tom were high profile supporters of the Confederacy living in adjacent Union cities and were physically attractive, personable, and highly visible in their communities. Rose had a far-reaching social net. Since two of Dolly Madison's closest friends were Rose Greenhow and Mary Wethered (the daughter of the B&O's first president, Mary received history's 2nd telegraph message—from Dolly), it is likely that at some point Rose became acquainted with Baltimore's railroad icons. That meeting could well have occurred at one of the Winans' balls or at the trendy Central Racecourse, which was only a few miles from the home of Mary Wethered.

Rumors abounded during the Civil War of a Winans weapons cache hidden in a Baltimore convent. Union officers threatened to search area convents but were prevented by Lincoln's need to keep the city's emotions under the boiling point. General Butler had enraged the populace by conducting unauthorized searches of private homes. While there is no evidence that any convent was involved in such activity, Mt. de Sales would have been a prime suspect. It had a huge building, a country location near the National Road, and its first two mother superiors were from

wealthy, old southern families, as were many of its early students.

In addition to the people whose lives were integral to *The American Opus's* story-lines, I appreciate those who fought past political battles on behalf of Crimea's preservation, those who continue to articulate its history and protect its artifacts, and those who propelled my book project with their encouragement, skills, or tangible resources.

Without my friend and muse Debby Waranch, I would not have begun to write.

Foregoing my career and marriage to shepherd my parents through their final years created the opportunity and time to pursue writing, and for that I am grateful to them.

My eldest brother Eugene is a retired English educator and one of my life's unsung heroes, to whom I'm indebted for his generous encouragement and proofreading.

Senator Barbara Mikulski ignited her career by defeating the road proposal, which would have sent an Interstate highway within yards of Orianda's front door and split Crimea/Leakin Park in two. Now-deceased civic activist Mary Louise Wolf worked tirelessly for many years fighting the same campaign. She initiated the annual Leakin Park Herb Festival, which is now one of the largest on the East coast.

I am grateful to the Maryland Historical Society for its resources and to Mary Markey, an assistant curator of photos who was frequently assigned supervision/assistance duty in the rare book/papers reading room. Her body language conveyed a love for the work, a welcoming demeanor, and a smile, which increased her busy workload by encouraging researchers' inquiries. As I transcribed delicate letters, diaries, and expense books written 160 years ago, she was patient and helpful in her twin role to protect documents and facilitate research.

The B&O Railroad Museum was gracious in allowing me to handle (with white gloves) the Board of Directors' minute books from as far back as the railroad's inception in 1828. I can't adequately convey my sense of awe and the feeling that I was sharing the room with some very important ghosts from our nation's railroad infancy. From 1828 until the mid-'30s, the B&O was considered the world's "Railroad University" as it foolishly shared most of its innovations and secrets.

I am grateful to the Enoch Pratt Library and *The Sun* newspaper for collaboratively enabling free viewing and inexpensive printing at the library of microfiche copies of nearly every paper since the inception of the Baltimore daily.

Leakin Park historian Rick Smith is an enthusiastic caretaker of all things Crimea/Leakin Park, and was eager to share his knowledge and display Winans' artifacts.

"Friends of Leakin Park" leader and civic activist Heide Grundmann was very accommodating with her time and knowledge.

The 1998 Maryland Historical Magazine piece by author Wallace Shugg was a useful distillation of cigar-boat information as was the Internet site of Michael and Karen Crisafulli, which also contains fascinating illustrations of the ship.

Acknowledgement is made to Gary Baker for his article on Baltimore's Pratt Street riot, titled "First Blood in the Streets of Baltimore," found at the web site:

<http://www.civilwarinteractive.com/ArticleFirstBloodBaltimore.htm>

The website of Jacobus Van Berg contains stories illustrating the history of Vernon Township, New Jersey. It provided me with details of the childhood and insight into the personality of Ross Winans.

Acknowledgement is made to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for making so much history readily available through its electronic editions of Southern memoirs.

Acknowledgment is also made to Colin S. Ward's essay "The Changing Face of Victorian Public Parks in England, 1840-1860"

appearing on the website

<http://www.gober.net/victorian/reports/parks.html>

Acknowledgment is made to Larry E. Johnson for his article "The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad survived numerous hardships of war in its service to the Union." It appeared in the March 2006 issue of *America's Civil War*.

Acknowledgment is made to Nancy L. Struna for her article "The North-South Races: American Thoroughbred Racing in Transition, 1823-1850." It appeared in the summer 1981 issue (vol. 8, no. 2) of *Journal of Sport History*.

Will Reed's website describes in detail the fascinating match race between Fashion and Boston in 1842.

Acknowledgment is made to Carl Schoettler and the Baltimore *Sun* for his essay "History's Tracks" which appeared on April 17, 2001.

Acknowledgment is made to Dan Fesperman for his biographical essay about Hetty Cary titled "Belle Run" and published in Baltimore's *The Sun* on October 25, 2000.

Acknowledgment is also made to Baltimore's *The Sun* for its article "In and About Town," November 30, 1892, which lists the specific contributions of Ross Winans to the railroad industry.

Acknowledgment is made to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum for use of the B&O Archives and the pamphlet "A

Communication to the President & Directors of the B&O RR Co. on the Subject of Locomotive Engines for Transporting Freight on Railroads," by Ross Winans, published by John D. Toy in Baltimore in 1856. Also for use of the Board of Directors Minutes for February 11, 1857, which contains a report of abuse of Tyson at the hands of Ross Winans.

Acknowledgment is made to Raymond Lindquist for his proverb: "Courage is the ability to let go of the familiar."

Acknowledgment is made to Richard E. Hall for his essay "The Gunpowder River Bridge" written in 2004 for the *Transfer Table*, the newsletter of the Wilmington Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society.

Acknowledgement is made to Mr. Paul O'Neill, manager of the Baltimore Civil War Museum at President Street Station," for generosity with his time in 2006, handling my inquiries about conflicting facts found in various accounts of the Pratt Street riot.

Acknowledgment is made to the Maryland Historical Society for preserving and making available Ernest H. Wardwell's 33-page memoir of the Pratt Street riot, in a volume which includes a brief memoir of another eyewitness, Richard D. Fisher, and a 1908 letter to Wardwell from Colonel Edward F. Jones, commanding officer of the 6th Massachusetts troops.

For information on Franklinton, acknowledgment is made to the Woodlawn Recreation & Parks Council, which produced a bicentennial history in 1977 titled, "Woodlawn: Franklinton and Hebbville." Also appreciated was Virginia Sandlass's 1960 unpublished "History of Dickeyville."

Acknowledgment is made to Kathryn A. Jacob for her January 1974 article in *The Johns Hopkins Magazine*, "Mr. Johns Hopkins."

Acknowledgment is made to the *Boston Globe* newspaper for its Sunday, April 19, 1908 essay on the Pratt Street riot, especially General Albert Pike's poem and the description of Baltimore's streetscape from a non-native's perspective.

Acknowledgement is made to the 1920 book "The First Defender," by Heber S. Thompson and to Alice J. Gayley for her related Internet page:

<http://www.pa-roots.com/~pacw/firstdefenders.html>.

Acknowledgement is made to Alice J. Gayley for her website on the service record of the 28th Pennsylvania Volunteers infantry regiment. The site is:

<http://www.pa-roots.com/~pacw/infantry/28th/28thorg.html> and the source for its data is: Dyer, Frederick H., *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion Compiled and Arranged from Official Records of the Federal and Confederate Armies, Reports of the Adjutant Generals of the Several States, the Army Registers, and Other*

Reliable Documents and Sources. Des Moines, Iowa: The Dyer Publishing Company, 1908.

Acknowledgement is also made to Patrick Laviolette and Alastair McIntosh for their Internet article from www.AlastairMcIntosh.com, titled: "Fairy Hills: Merging Heritage and Conservation." The article was first published in ECOS, Journal of the British Association of Nature Conservation in 1997 and was inspired by LaViolette's MSc dissertation at the Centre for Human Ecology at Edinburgh University, where McIntosh was the teaching director. Some of their fascinating insights on fairies are incorporated into dialogue between John Latrobe and Ross Winans.

Acknowledgement is made to Cornell University's "Making of America" Internet resource for making available "The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

The following history books provided important research:

- (1) *Admiral Franklin Buchanan: Fearless Man of Action* by Charles Lee Lewis, The Norman, Remington Company, Baltimore, 1929.
- (2) *John H. B. Latrobe and His Times 1803-1891* by John E. Semmes, The Norman, Remington Company, Baltimore, 1917.

- (3) *Whistler's Father* by Albert Parry, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis and New York, 1939.
- (4) *Creating the South Carolina State House* by John M. Bryan, University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- (5) *The Great Iron Ship* by James Dugan, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1953.
- (6) *The Strange Story of Harper's Ferry*, by Joseph Barry, Thompson Brothers, Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1903.
- (7) *Turnpikes and Toll Roads in Nineteenth-Century America*, by Daniel B. Klein and John Majewski, California.
- (8) *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, by Col. J. Thomas Scharf, Turnbull Brothers, Baltimore, 1874.
- (9) *A Maryland Boy in Lee's Army*, by George Wilson Booth, privately published, Baltimore, 1898.
- (10) *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861; A Study of the War*, by George William Brown, N. Murray, Baltimore, 1887.
- (11) *A Southern Girl in '61: The War-Time Memories of a Confederate Senator's Daughter*, by Mrs. D. Giraud Wright, Doubleday, Page & Company, New York, 1905.
- (12) *Baltimore Harbor: A Picture History*, by Robert C. Keith, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1991.

- (13) *History of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad*, by John F. Stover, Purdue Research Foundation, Indiana, 1987. Stover describes Ross Winans' railroad legacy on page 92.
- (14) *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*, by Eric Mills, Tidewater Publishers, Centreville, Maryland, 1996.
- (15) *Wild Rose*, by Ann Blackman, Random House, New York, 2005. (This book provided the research material concerning Georgetown College and slavery.)
- (16) *The American Turf Register & Sporting Magazine, Vols. 2 & 3*, edited and published by John S. Skinner, Baltimore, 1831 and 1832.
- (17) *The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, And an Unnecessary War*, by Thomas J. DiLorenzo, Forum/Random House, New York, 2002.
- (18) *Hopkins: A Silhouette*, by Helen Hopkins Thom, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1929.
- (19) *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl 1864-1865*, by Eliza Frances Andrews, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1908.
- (20) *William and Henry Walters, The Reticent Collectors*, by William R. Johnston, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1999.

Steve Walk of Newport, Rhode Island is the great, great, grandson of Tom Winans through the line of Tom's daughter Celeste. He is a passionate keeper of the flame for the Winans' legacy and was very generous with family memorabilia.