

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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William Safire on Lincoln's Excesses: Their Effect on Modern Presidents

by C. Robert Douglas

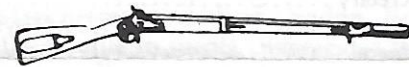
On April 27, 1861, President Lincoln issued an order to his aging army commander, Gen. Winfield Scott, as follows: "You are engaged in suppressing an insurrection against the laws of the United States. If at any point between the city of Philadelphia and the city of Washington, you find resistance which renders it necessary to suspend the writ of habeas corpus for the public safety, you personally or the officer in command at the point at which resistance occurs, are authorized to suspend that writ." This action by President Lincoln would be only the first of several instances in which the Civil War president, in his zeal to preserve the Union, would assume broad or unusual powers that our democratic system of government would not customarily permit. On October 9th, William Safire, journalist and author, will address The Round Table and discuss the effect on later presidents of Lincoln's acts that he deemed necessary to suppress the rebellion and reunite the republic.



William Safire

Lincoln felt that he had to assume unusual powers to meet the threat posed by the seceding states who were then banding together to form the Confederate States of America. He had begun the war without the needed declaration by the Congress, which was not then in session. Also, he had usurped the powers of the absent Congress to raise the necessary military forces and provide for their pay. With the instructions to General Scott to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, he was grasping that right which was the citizen's basic protection against dictatorship.

Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus was soon challenged by the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Roger B. Taney. A Maryland citizen, John Merryman, had been arrested for allegedly recruiting for a Confederate regiment and had been imprisoned in Baltimore by order of Gen. George Cadwalader. *Ex Parte Merryman* would become a much debated case, with Cadwalader's claim that President Lincoln had authorized him to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in such instances. In his ruling of May 27, 1861, Chief Justice Taney would hold that the President did not have the authority to suspend this privilege of a citizen. President Lincoln later held that he did

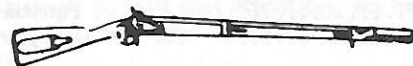


464th Regular Meeting

William Safire
on
Lincoln's Excesses: Their Effect
on Modern Presidents

Friday, October 9, 1987

Quality Inn
Halsted and Madison
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
\$15.00 per person
Entree: London Broil, Fish, or Fruit Plate



have the power of such suspension and continued to exercise it during the course of the war.

A native of New York City, Mr. Safire studied at Syracuse University before serving as a reporter for the New York Herald Tribune Syndicate and as a correspondent for New York radio and television stations. He then joined a public relations firm and established his own firm, Safire Public Relations, Inc. in 1960. From 1969 to 1973, he served as a special assistant and senior speechwriter for President Nixon. Since 1973, he has been a columnist for the *New York Times*, based in Washington, D.C. His writings include: *The Relations Explosion* (1963); *Plunging into Politics* (1964); *Safire's Political Dictionary* (1968, with revised editions in 1972 and 1978); *Before the Fall* (1975); *Full Disclosure* (1977); *Safire's Washington* (1980); *On Language* (1980); *What's the Good Word* (1982); (with Leonard Safir) *Good Advice* (1982); *I Stand Corrected* (1984); and *Take My Word for It* (1986). His recently published novel, *Freedom*, is concerned with the first 21 months of the Civil War and concludes with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
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The only requirement for membership in The Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address John Peterson, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois 60611.



Joining the newsletter staff this year are Barbara Hughett and Daniel J. Josephs. Barbara will prepare the summary of the previous month's talk, while Dan will keep us up to date on battlefield preservation problems and progress in a series of regular reports. Bob Douglas will continue to write the page 1 article about the upcoming meeting, as he has so ably done for several years. Our thanks to Wayne Anderson for preparing the previous month's meeting summary for the past few years.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

This is the first in an ongoing series of articles about the many problems currently facing the National Park Service and local historical organizations regarding preservation of Civil War battlefields and monuments. There are currently two problems facing the National Park Service in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. In this report, these problems will be reviewed.

Bolivar Heights, in Harper's Ferry, was the scene of a battle between Stonewall Jackson's Confederate troops and Union General Julius White's troops in September of 1862. In early March of this year, a local developer cleared a corridor through a wooded tract of land on the west face of Bolivar Heights on land belonging to the National Park Service. This land was cleared for the purpose of constructing a waterline and a sewerline for a planned subdivision.

According to the Harper's Ferry Civil War Round Table Newsletter, the mayor of Harper's Ferry approved construction of the waterline, but failed to notify the National Park Service. This corridor of land, which is approximately ¼ of a mile long and 35 feet wide, is within the land on Bolivar Heights owned by the National Park Service, according to Mr. Preston Smith and Mr. Harvey Sorenson of the Harper's Ferry National Park Service office. Upon being advised of the developer's actions, the National Park Service rangers immediately notified the developer he was on federal property. Work was stopped before the waterline could be constructed.

The actual damages to the area are being evaluated by the National Park Service, according to Mr. Sorenson. It is not yet known how to restore this area since so many trees were cut down. Actual damage to the land is as yet unknown. The decision as to whether or not to pursue a lawsuit to prosecute the developer is still being evaluated by the National Park Service.

According to Mr. Smith, the local Harper's Ferry developer searched the title of the land at the courthouse, but apparently did not go back far enough to discover the deed which originally conveyed the land to the national government several years ago.

The other problem facing the National Park Service in Harper's Ferry is the proposed construction of a 100 foot tower on Bolivar Heights. The tower would be erected on land owned by the city of Harper's Ferry where the town's water towers are now located, but it would cast a shadow upon the National Park Service battleground. The tower is to be utilized for cable television for the area of Harper's Ferry and Bolivar, West Virginia. It will be crowned by an 8 foot microwave dish. The problem, according to Mr. Smith and Mr. Sorenson, is that the tower would be far above the tree line and would be highly visible on Bolivar Heights. It would seriously damage the aesthetic value and hallowed sanctity of the battlefield.

The National Park Service has formally presented its opposition to the tower to Harper's Ferry. There has been support in the town of Harper's Ferry to oppose the tower, and alternatives are being considered by the town council. The National Park Service has offered to the town engineers and technicians to find alternative high ground locations.

Letters of support for the National Park Service regarding either of these issues can be addressed to: National Park Service, Regional Director, National Capital Region, 1100 Ohio Drive, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20242.

September Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

For his contributions to the preservation of our nation's heritage and expanding our knowledge of the past, The Civil War Round Table bestowed its Nevins-Freeman Award on James T. Hickey on September 11, 1987, before 117 members and guests. Jim Hickey's accomplishments as a Lincoln scholar and historical detective are many and varied. He was instrumental in the reorganization of the Lincoln Museum of Lincoln College and, from 1959-85, he was curator of the Lincoln Collection at the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield. In 1976, it was he who made the very exciting discovery of the "MTL Insanity File" and Robert Lincoln's letter books in a double-locked closet in a bedroom at Hildene, Robert Todd Lincoln's home in Manchester, Vermont. Jim's research has been invaluable to other Lincoln scholars. In his introduction, Ralph Newman called him "the unnamed co-author of many of the important books about Lincoln."

For his acceptance address, Jim chose to speak about Robert Todd Lincoln's relationships with authors and artists. As a result of his desire to try to prevent the publication of inaccuracies about his father, and some experiences he had with authors who were doing this, Jim believes that Robert has been unfairly branded as aloof and uncooperative. Although he was very helpful to a number of his father's biographers, incidents involving three people, Jim noted, were largely responsible for Robert's gaining this reputation. Old "friends" of Abraham Lincoln sought to use this friendship after his death by publishing books containing sensational falsehoods presented as fact, probably presuming this sort of thing would sell more of their books. When William Herndon, in his biography of his former law partner as well as in articles and lectures, created and spread the story of a romance between Lincoln and Ann Rutledge, which never existed, he was undoubtedly motivated in part by his long-standing personal animosity toward Mary Lincoln. In perpetuating this and other myths, Robert stated that he felt Herndon to be "actuated by an intense malice" and "possessed of an ingenious imagination," and that this malice might exist because "my father could not find his way, in view of Herndon's personal character, to give him some lucrative employment during the War of Rebellion."

Another offender was Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's colleague from the days on the Eighth Circuit, who published a book, claiming (among other falsehoods) that President Lincoln's birth was illegitimate. In 1883, when Robert was secretary of war, he opposed Lamon's appointment as postmaster of Denver and his opposition was influential in Lamon's failure to get that appointment. In a long letter, Robert explained his objections to Lamon. In this letter, replying to an accusation of Lamon's, Robert said: "I cannot say whether my action in this matter is, as you say, unlike anything my father ever did or was capable of doing. He was charitable to the last degree. But, I think that no man attempted, while he was living, to give him such a wound as you tried to deal when his friendship was no longer of practical use to you except to advertise the sale of your merchandise."

The third person to cloud Robert's reputation among biographers was Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University and an acquaintance of Robert's, who claimed to have seen Robert burning papers which Butler

alleged were the papers of Abraham Lincoln. Although the Lincoln Papers were already deposited in the Library of Congress when the event was supposed to have occurred, belief in the story persisted. Since the discovery at Hildene in 1976 (which included copies of 20,000 letters), we have had substantial evidence that the story is not true.

Comparable to Robert's experiences with authors, a controversy with one artist clouded his reputation. The statue created by George Gray Bernard in 1910, erected in Cincinnati as a gift to the family of President Taft, was to be duplicated in 1917 in London. Robert, calling it "dreadful," made no secret of his efforts to prevent a repetition of the statue in London. (He had some support in this critique; *Art World* magazine called the work "a mistake in bronze.") This put the English government in a considerably embarrassing position, not wanting to offend Robert or the Taft family, who had contributed \$100,000 to the project. Eventually, a compromise was reached, with the statue erected in Manchester instead of London. Between the years of 1910-22, due to media coverage of this controversy, there was hardly anyone in the country who did not know that Robert had strong feelings about the way his father was depicted by artists, sculptors, and photographers. He was brutally honest with those who sought his opinion of their works, and he did like many of them. George Peter Healey and Francis Carpenter were among those artists whose works he thoroughly approved.

Throughout his life, Robert was pursued with requests for information about his father, most of which he either took the time to personally reply to or referred the people to John Nicolay and John Hay, his father's former secretaries. Due to the new information we now have, it is known that he gave generously, always with a request for anonymity, to many worthy causes and projects.

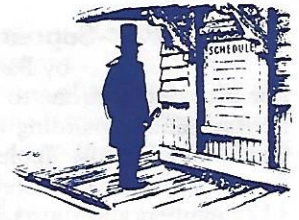
Robert had a long and successful career as a businessman and lawyer. He also served his country as secretary of war and minister to England. In concluding his talk, Jim told us he felt that Robert, "perhaps even more than his father, lived his life as a public man, under constant public scrutiny. He never sought that attention, yet he handled it with dignity, tolerance, and patience." Though the Herndons and the Lamons did their work well in creating a negative image of Abraham Lincoln's only child to live to adulthood, as a result of the research and publications of Jim Hickey and others, this and future generations may benefit from a more realistic portrayal of Robert Todd Lincoln.

The Confederate Museum in New Orleans is seeking donations to help pay for replacing the heating and air conditioning system which is beyond repair. Prompt replacement is necessary in order to protect the artifacts the museum contains. Contributions can be sent to the Confederate Museum, 929 Camp St., New Orleans, LA 70130.

Fellow member Gordon Whitney of Madison, Indiana would like to thank the many members of The Round Table who expressed concern over his recent illness. He reports that it has been diagnosed as diverticulosis, and can be controlled with medicine and diet. Gordon will speak to the Cincinnati Round Table on November 19 on "General Jefferson Davis, USA."

The New Books

compiled by Dick Clark



BULLETIN BOARD

Neely, Mark E., Jr., Harold Holzer, and Gabor Boritt. *The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987. 257 p., 8½x11, color plates. \$32.50.

Richardson, H. Edward. *Cassius Marcellus Clay, Firebrand of Freedom*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987. 192 p. \$16.00.

Robertson, William Glenn. *Back Door to Richmond. The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April-June 1864*. Cranbury, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1987. 284 p. maps, photos. \$38.50.

Safire, William. *Freedom. A Novel of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War*. New York: Random House, 1987. 1125 p., sources & commentary. \$24.95.

Schreiner, Samuel A., Jr. *The Trials of Mrs. Lincoln*. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1987. 333 p. \$18.95.

Schweitzer, George K. *Civil War Genealogy*. Knoxville, TN: The Author, 1987. 61 p. \$5.00. 316 sources & precise instructions for tracing your Civil War ancestor.

Scott, Samuel W. and Samuel P. Angel. *History of the Thirteenth Regiment Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry, U.S.A.* Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1987. 510 p. \$21.95.

Stiles, Charles B. *Grandfather was a Drummer Boy. A Civil War Diary and Letters of Charles B. Stiles*. Edited by John Stiles Castle. 147 p., spiral bound. Ltd. 500. \$17.50. On the 36th Illinois.

Straubing, Harold Elk. *The Fateful Lightning: Civil War Eyewitness Reports*, compiled and edited by... 1st pbk ed. New York: Paragon House, 1987. \$3.95. Originally published 1985 as *Civil War Eyewitness Reports*.

Thomas, Emory M. *Travels to Hallowed Ground: A Historian's Journey to the American Civil War*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986. \$19.95. pbk \$9.95.

Woodruff, W.E. *With the Light Guns in '61-'65, Reminiscences of Eleven Arkansas, Missouri and Texas Light Batteries in the Civil War*. Little Rock, AR: Eagle Press, 1987. \$24.95. Original of 1903.

Although the *Atlas* that accompanies the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* contains over 1000 maps, those maps are arranged roughly chronological, not geographical, and finding maps of a particular area has always been difficult. *Civil War Maps: A Graphic Index*, by Noel S. O'Reilly, David C. Bosse, and Robert W. Karrow, Jr., published recently by the Newberry Library, provides a clear and direct geographic approach to the maps. It shows, by means of rectangles overprinted on state and regional maps, the actual areas shown on maps in the *Atlas*. *Civil War Maps: A Graphic Index*, is available for \$6 (plus \$1.50 postage and handling) from the Newberry Library Bookshop, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago 60610. (Illinois residents add \$.48 sales tax.)

Future meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Quality Inn, Halsted and Madison, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

October 9: William Safire on "Lincoln's Excesses: Their Effect on Modern Presidents."

November 13: James Ramage on "John H. Morgan: Folk Hero of the Confederacy."

December 11: Gordon Dammann on "In Defense of the Civil War Surgeon."

January 8, 1988: James Vlazny on "Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession."

February 12: Hon. Paul Simon. Subject to be announced.

March 11: Harold Holzer on "The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause."

April 8: Michael Snyder on "The Battle of Seven Pines."

April 28-May 1: Annual Battlefield Tour: Chancellorsville.

May 13: To be announced.

June 10: Edward Longacre on "The Army of the James."

New members

Max Daniels, 202 N. Pierce, Wheaton, Illinois 60187 (312) 462-7286.

Robert L. Krasner, 8503 W. Catherine, Chicago, Illinois 60656 (312) 693-2784.

Hugh M. Martin, 801 S. Plymouth Ct., #817, Chicago, Illinois 60605 (312) 939-5306.

Joanne Johnson Morosky, 6033 N. Sheridan Rd., Apt. 21A, Chicago, Illinois 60660 (312) 878-3259.

Changes of address

Robert J. Anderson, 316 W. Jefferson, Wheaton, Illinois 60187.

Edward F. Cosentino, 53 Brodick Ln., Inverness, Illinois 60067.

Terry M. Hatch, 510 W. Rockland, Libertyville, Illinois 60048.

Ira Kaplan, 2609 Hampden Ct., Chicago, Illinois 60614.

Dale L. Weitman, 1031 Todd Farm Dr., Elgin, Illinois 60123.

1988 Nevins-Freeman Award

Robert K. Krick, chief historian for the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, has been selected by The Round Table Executive Committee as the recipient of the 1988 Nevins-Freeman Award. Bob, the author or editor of numerous books and articles on the Civil War, has spoken to The Round Table on a number of occasions and served as a guide on several Battlefield Tours. The award will be presented next September.