

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLVIII, Number 9

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May, 1988

## Gerald F. Linderman on Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War

by C. Robert Douglas

In his memoir, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life In the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865*, Private Carlton McCarthy of the elite Richmond Howitzers wrote of the expectations of a soldier in battle: "In a thousand ways he is tried... in the varying conditions of the soldier, every quality is put to the test. If he shows the least cowardice he is undone. His courage must never fail. He must be manly and independent, or he will be told he's a baby, ridiculed, teased and despised."

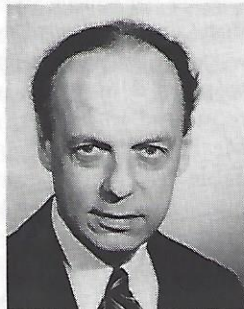
Many other soldiers, Yankees as well as Rebels, joined young Private McCarthy in filling their diaries, their letters to loved ones at home and their memoirs with the moral values which they knew were at issue in the war between the states—manliness, godliness, duty, honor and even knightliness. At the center of these stood courage.

On May 13th, Dr. Gerald F. Linderman, professor of history at the University of Michigan, will address The Round Table and examine how Confederate and Union soldiers alike were deeply affected by the war, as they found the reality of combat frighteningly at odds with their original expectations. As the war ended, once idealistic soldiers found themselves profoundly disillusioned and were forced to question this nation's concept of courage.

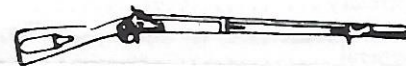
Among the moral values at issue in the conflict was manliness. Many Civil War soldiers used "courage" and "manhood" interchangeably, and called combat the test of manhood. A failure of courage in war was a failure of manhood. A Union staff officer cautioned that cowardice robbed the soldier of all his manhood.

Many soldiers deemed their faith as a special source of bravery; religious belief would in itself endow one with courage. Conviction of God's direct intervention was in itself an inducement to courage, for soldiers agreed that a principal foe of courage was the apprehension rooted in fear for one's safety. Thus, it was common to find in both armies on the eve of battle men who sought to shore up their courage by trying to reinforce their religious faith.

Duty would seem to be a more inclusive value than courage, but that inclusiveness denied it the focus and force



Gerald F. Linderman



471st Regular Meeting

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Gerald F. Linderman  
on  
Embattled Courage: The Experience  
of Combat in the Civil War

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Friday, May 13, 1988

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



### Executive Committee meeting

President Dan Weinberg has announced there will be an Executive Committee meeting on May 13 at 5 p.m. at the Quality Inn. The main item on the agenda is selection of the 1989 Battlefield Tour site. All current officers, committee chairmen and past presidents are urged to attend.

of courage as a prescription for behavior in war. Civil War soldiers, particularly officers, spoke as if they knew their duty, but they seldom felt it necessary to discuss or analyze it. Whatever the individual might conceive to be the object of his duty, the principal way to satisfy it was to act courageously.

Honor deferred to the central nature of courage as a moral value, but was of a still different quality. While courage had to be demonstrated, honor did not. In the words of the South's writer-soldier John Esten Cooke, participation in the war was held to be in itself a mark of honor. The connection between honor and courage manifested itself in Civil War soldiers' frequent references to the

(continued on page 4)

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940  
18 East Chestnut Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
Phone: (312) 944-3085

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Picnic .....	Nate Yellen

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.



**William Safire, author of *Freedom***, a novel about Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, has received the 1988 Baroness/Lincoln Award of the Civil War Round Table of New York. The award, presented annually since 1962 in memory of Dr. Benjamin Baroness, a Lincoln scholar and charter member of the New York Round Table, is for "contribution to the greater appreciation of the life and works of Abraham Lincoln." Last year's recipient was our founder, Ralph G. Newman.

## Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

The problems at the Manassas battlefield have received national publicity during the past several weeks. In this column I would like to highlight a couple of other battlefield areas which are attempting different methods to resolve their problems and preserve their areas.

At the Champion Hill battlefield in Raymond, Mississippi there is an 1850 Greek Revival-style residence called the Coker House. The home had been restored in 1930. Although several families have lived in the house since the Civil War, currently the home is in disrepair according to the Jackson, Mississippi Civil War Round Table newsletter of March, 1985. Fortunately, the Coker House has been donated to the Jackson Civil War Round Table which is attempting to restore it.

Although the Coker House has a National Historic Landmark designation, that does not necessarily guarantee funds to maintain the property nor protect it from commercial development. Originally, the designation was meant to precede federal acquisition of the property. However, due to lack of funding, federal acquisition of land is rare. The National Park Service is attempting to publicize the problems facing the landmarks and to seek private assistance to help alleviate the problems.

At Chattanooga, Tennessee the Union trenches built by General Sherman's men on Billy Goat Hill during the battles in November 1863 were facing possible destruction; Billy Goat Hill is close to Tunnel Hill near Missionary Ridge. The hill had been targeted as a source of fill dirt needed for a large riverport project. The J. Stein Construction Company purchased a total of 40 acres on the heavily wooded Billy Goat Hill to obtain the fill dirt. However, it stopped demolition of the hill (and the trenches) when requested to by battlefield preservationists, according to Mr. Robert Housch of the Chattanooga Civil War Round Table. Mr. Housch stated the plan was to raise \$100,000 to purchase Billy Goat Hill for the purpose of developing a historical park and a multiuse recreational area. An organization called The Chattanooga Venture is administering the fundraising project. According to Mary Price of the Chattanooga Venture, an appropriation bill is being considered by the Tennessee State legislature to make a "one-time" appropriation of \$50,000 for this project.

Several months ago, the issue of State Highway 27 at the Chickamauga battlefield was examined. There had been a proposal to widen Highway 27 to relieve increased traffic congestion. Highway 27 was the old Lafayette Road which runs through the middle of the battlefield. Battlefield preservationists and the National Park Service had opposed this plan and had suggested building a bypass around the western boundary of the battlefield. Last summer a bill to build this bypass was approved by the United States House of Representatives. On December 12, 1987 the U.S. Senate approved the bill; it became public law on December 24, 1987. The new statute directed the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior to make a grant to the state of Georgia to relocate that portion of the state highway which is within the park by creating a bypass around the battlefield.

In the above situations alternative approaches to the preservation problems other than federal acquisition of the land have been utilized. Alternative methods such as these must be used more in the future due to the scarcity of federal funds.

## April Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

"The Battle of Seven Pines" was the topic of Michael T. Snyder's address on April 8th, when he spoke before 100 members and guests at the 470th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. Mr. Snyder is an instructor of instrumental music in Pottstown, Pennsylvania and president-elect of the Civil War Round Table of Eastern Pennsylvania.

"The year 1862 had started out on a very bad note for the Confederates," Mr. Snyder noted. Their misfortunes included the losses of Fort Donelson and Fort Henry, a Northern victory at Pea Ridge, and the loss of New Orleans. The Merrimac had been sunk, and it appeared inevitable that Richmond would be crushed between McClellan's army, which was now less than 10 miles to the east on the Peninsula, and McDowell's 1st Corps, whose 38,000 men were moving south of Fredericksburg. As Abraham Lincoln had said a couple of months before about his own situation, "it looked like the bottom was going out of the top." There was, however, Mr. Snyder related, "a little ray of sunshine shining through this dark cloud hanging over the South." There were orders which came to McDowell from Washington, telling him to turn his 38,000 men around and head them back up to Fredericksburg. On the 28th of May, General Joseph Johnston found himself positioned where he no longer had to worry about linkups between McDowell's corps and McClellan's army and was now free to concentrate all his energies into devising a way of destroying the 3rd and 4th Corps of the Army of the Potomac who, at this point, were separated from the rest of the army by the Chickahominy River. Because of incessant rains during the Spring of 1862, the normally calm Chickahominy was a major obstacle. Only two bridges could be of any possible use. Johnston's plan would lead to a battle, starting Saturday, May 31st and ending Sunday, June 1st, known as either Fair Oaks or Seven Pines.

Johnston planned a complex attack on the two Union corps south of the river, while A.P. Hill and Magruder's troops were to contain Union forces north of the river. The Union position was very poor. General Keyes had sent a dispatch to McClellan's headquarters at Gaines Mill, across the river, saying that he would be attacked pretty soon, his position was weak, and he didn't have enough men to defend it. Johnston's plan, however, ran into trouble immediately on the 31st. The only offender, Mr. Snyder contends, was General Longstreet. Nobody knows exactly what happened between Longstreet and Johnston when they met on May 30th, ostensibly to discuss the battle plans but, judging from Longstreet's actions, there must have been a substantial misunderstanding. Longstreet took the wrong road, crossed Gilley's Creek, with his 14,000 men, ahead of Benjamin Huger's troops, who were supposed to cross at that point, thus causing the battle to begin at 1:00 p.m. with 8,000 men instead of 8:00 a.m. with 22,000 men, as Johnston had planned. Nevertheless, the Confederate forces pushed ahead. D.H. Hill attacked Casey's and Couch's divisions by advancing simultaneously over the swampy and wooded area on both sides of the Williamsburg Road, inflicting heavy casualties. Union General Edwin Sumner was probably the hero of that day's fighting. He was a man who believed in following orders, no matter what adverse circumstances he might encounter. When the Union engineers told him that he couldn't cross the booming Chickahominy River because it was not safe, he replied:

"I have orders. I must cross. I will cross." And that's what he did. The arrival of his forces was crucial to the Union's efforts in turning back the Confederate attack.

When Johnston finally received word from Longstreet at 4:00 p.m., requesting support, he left immediately, taking with him three brigades from Williams' division. When they came through the clearing at 5:00 p.m., they started taking heavy artillery fire. Johnston was wounded, and G.W. Smith assumed temporary command. Darkness ended the fighting on the 31st. Although Smith ordered attacks to continue at dawn, the Confederate charge was easily repulsed. Confederate casualties numbered over 6,000; Union losses were more than 5,000.

Though the Battle of Seven Pines was, at best, a draw, it helped the Confederates in two ways. It stopped McClellan's drive south to Richmond. And, when Joseph Johnston was seriously wounded in this battle, permanent command of the Confederate forces in Northern Virginia was given to a man named Robert E. Lee.

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A series of events marking the 125th anniversary of the campaign and siege of Vicksburg are taking place now through July 4. Included are bus tours to Grand Gulf, Jackson, and Champion Hill, walking tours, and symposium dinners with speakers such as Dr. Grady McWhiney and Ed Bearss. Reenactors will portray life in the trenches on July 2 and 3, and on the 4th the Confederates will file out of the trenches and stack arms while the Union forces move to the courthouse and raise the American flag. For further information, call or write: Vicksburg National Military Park, 3201 Clay St., Vicksburg, MS 39180(601) 636-0583.

Efforts are underway to save the Margaret Mitchell house in Atlanta from demolition. Mitchell penned *Gone With the Wind* from 1926-32 while living in a two-room apartment in the house on Peachtree Street. Trammell Crow Co. of Dallas wants to level the house to make way for a park that would serve a development the company plans to build. Restoration of the house will cost an estimated \$800,000.

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### Nominating Committee report

Paul Kliger, Chairman Pro Tem of the Nominating Committee, has announced the following proposed slate of officers for the 1988-89 year:

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Trustee . . . . . Keith Rocco  
Trustee . . . . . Robert J. Schell

The election will be held during the May meeting, at which time additional nominations for any of the above offices may be made from the floor. Four current trustees, Robert Balzekas, Joan Carlson, Ben Carlton, and Leslie W. MacDonald, will remain in office as they complete their two year terms.

## The New Books

compiled by Dick Clark



Adamson, August Pitt. *Brief History of the Thirtieth Georgia Regiment*. Jonesboro, GA: Freedom Hill Press, 1987. 157 p. Original 1912. \$12.00.

Anderson, Nancy Scott & Dwight Anderson. *The Generals—Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee*. New York: Knopf, 1988. \$24.95.

Beilenson, Nick. *Wit and Wisdom of the Civil War*. Edited by... With illustrations by Rachel A. Peden. New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1987.

Bowen. *Civil War Days: Everyday Life During the War Between the States*. Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1987.

Brown, Varina Davis. *A Colonel at Gettysburg and Spotsylvania: The Life of Colonel Joseph Newton Brown and the Battles of Gettysburg and Spotsylvania*. Baltimore: Butternut and Blue, 1987. Original of 1931. \$25.00. The 14th South Carolina.

Busey, John W. *These Honored Dead: The Union Casualties at Gettysburg*. Hightstown, NJ: Longstreet House, 1988. 404 p. \$24.00.

Cavanaugh, Michael, Dr. James Chisman and Dr. William Brockington, eds. *The 76th Pennsylvania*. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Pub. Co., 1988. \$25.00.

Chambers, Lenoir. "Stonewall" Jackson. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Pub. Co., 1988. 2 vols. boxed. Original of 1959. \$59.00.

Clark, Walter Augustus. *Under the Stars and Bars: Service with the Oglethorpe Infantry of Augusta, Georgia*. Jonesboro, GA: Freedom Hill Press, 1987. 248 p. Original of 1900. \$12.50.

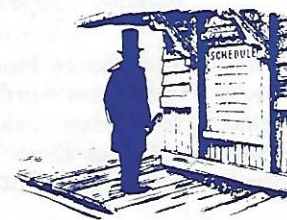
Comstock, Cyrus. *The Diary of Cyrus Comstock*. Edited by Merlin E. Sumner. Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop, 1988. \$37.50.

*Confederate P.O.W.'s: Soldiers and Sailors who Died in Federal Prisons and Military Hospitals in the North*. Nacogdoches, TX: Ericson Books, 1984. 525 p., index. \$32.50. Compiled 1912 in the office of the Commissioner for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead, War Department.

Current, Richard Nelson. *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. 475 p. \$24.95.

**Last month's Battlefield Preservation Report** discussed the attempt by a developer to put a large shopping mall adjacent to the Manassas Battlefield. Contributions to the Save the Battlefield Coalition were requested—here are some other things you can do to help. Write to Mrs. Kathleen Sefeldt, Chairman, Board of Supervisors, Prince William County, 1 County Complex Court, Prince William, VA 22110 to protest the development; send postcards to your senators and representative to protest the mall and ask them to stop federal approval of an I-66 interchange to serve it; write letters protesting the mall to the editors of *The Journal Messenger*, 9009 Church St., Manassas, VA 22110, *Potomac News*, 14010 Smoketown Rd., Woodbridge, VA 22193; and *The Washington Post*, 1150 15th St., NW, Washington, DC 20071; sign the petition that will be available at the May meeting; and, of course, make another contribution to Save the Battlefield Coalition, P.O. Box 110, Catharpin, VA 22018.

## BULLETIN BOARD



### Future meetings

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

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

May 13: Gerald F. Linderman on "Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the Civil War."

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

September 9: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner. Recipient of Award, Robert K. Krick.

October 14: Gordon Whitney on "Sherman's Lieutenants."

November 11: To Be Announced.

December 9: Charles Wesselhoeft on "The Army of the Tennessee."

### New Members

Dick A. Cooper, 2006 Briarcliffe Blvd., Wheaton, IL 60187(312) 668-1561.

Harold T. Duffy, 10340 S. Ridgeway, Chicago, IL 60655(312) 233-8825.

Michael G. Dunnington, 1409 Madison Dr., Buffalo Grove, IL 60089(312) 913-8005.

Edward C. Jansky, 2520 S. Gunderson Ave., Berwyn, IL 60402(312) 788-1025.

Charles R. Rusin, 9304 S. Turner Ave., Evergreen Park, IL 60642(312) 424-7697.

(continued from page 1)

"honorable death"—inevitably the courageous death—and the "honorable wound"—inevitably suffered in the course of courageous action.

Manliness, godliness, duty and honor were in varying degrees the values that Union and Confederate soldiers were determined to express through their actions on the battlefield. However, each remained secondary to courage. These young Americans most frequently cited "duty" as having prompted them to enlist and "honor" as having held them to soldiering through their term of enlistment.

A native of Marshfield, Wisconsin, Dr. Linderman secured his bachelor's degree from Yale University (1956) and his master's and doctorate from Northwestern University (1964 and 1971). From 1959 to 1966, as a representative of the U.S. State Department, his posts included Kaduna, Nigeria, Madras, India, and Leopoldville, Republic of the Congo. He was an instructor in history at Northwestern University from 1968-69, and then joined the University of Michigan, becoming a full professor in 1986. His publications include: *The Mirror of War: American Society and the Spanish-American War* (1974), and a book bearing the same title as his address to The Round Table, published in July, 1987. This latter work was the August, 1987 selection of the History Book Club and a dividend selection of the Book of the Month Club.