

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLX, Number 2

Chicago, Illinois

October, 1989

Gary W. Gallagher on "Edward Porter Alexander: Fighting for the Confederacy"

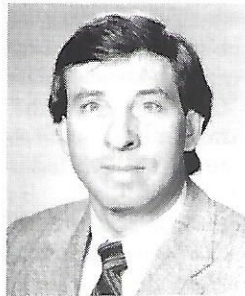
by Barbara Hughett

Edward Porter Alexander's *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, which was first published in 1907, has long been considered a classic of Civil War literature. Douglas Southall Freeman called it "the most valuable single commentary on the operations of the Army of Northern Virginia." In 1962, T. Harry Williams edited a reprint of the book, in which he observed that "probably no book by a participant in the war has done so much to shape the historical image of that conflict." Williams felt that the book's biggest weakness was Alexander's decision to include very little about his own activities during the war. "One could wish that he had written two books," concluded Williams, "a general history and a personal narrative." Freeman also lamented Alexander's failure to tell more of what he had seen during his Confederate career.

Others have echoed the sentiments of Freeman and Williams, unaware, as were those eminent historians, that Alexander did write a true personal reminiscence. Completed years before *Military Memoirs* appeared and intended only for his family, it is one of the richest personal accounts in the vast literature on the Civil War. In July of 1989, the University of North Carolina Press published the 1,200 page *Fighting for the Confederacy*, edited by Gary W. Gallagher. "Edward Porter Alexander: Fighting for the Confederacy" will be the topic of Gary W. Gallagher's address to The Civil War Round Table on October 6th.

Porter Alexander was involved in nearly all the great eastern battles from First Manassas through Appomattox. His reminiscences are rich with insights into the various campaigns and are filled with candid appraisals of leaders on both sides. His adventures were incredibly diverse. He coordinated the Confederate balloon warfare during the Seven Days campaign, for example, and formed the last battle line of Lee's army at Appomattox.

Fighting for the Confederacy is studded with memorable scenes, such as: Alexander riding through the smoldering Wilderness with Jeb Stuart just a week before Stuart fell mortally wounded at Yellow Tavern; Lee erupting in anger at his staff in the fall of 1864; and Alexander taking one long last look at Richmond in flames as Lee's army began its painful march toward Appomattox. Alexander's personal memoirs are of special value because of his stature in the



Gary W. Gallagher



484th Regular Meeting

Gary W. Gallagher
on
"Edward Porter Alexander:
Fighting for the Confederacy"

Friday, October 6, 1989

Quality Inn
Halsted and Madison
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
\$15.00 per person
Entree: Sautéed Pepper Steak, Baked White Fish,
or Fruit Plate



Please Note

The October meeting is being held the first Friday of the Month, October 6, instead of the second Friday. The site is our usual meeting place, the Quality Inn.

Confederate service, his presence at key places and contact with key people, and his bluntness in recounting his part of the war. The book also includes Alexander's own hand-drawn maps, together with heretofore unpublished photographs.

Gary W. Gallagher grew up on a farm in Colorado, received his B.A. degree (summa cum laude) from Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado, and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Texas at Austin. He served as Merle Miller's research assistant during Miller's writing of *Lyndon: An Oral Biography*. He worked as an archivist at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library in Austin, and taught as a visiting professor at the University of Texas before joining the faculty at Pennsylvania State University in 1986. An associate professor of history, he teaches

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
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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 Dan Weinberg, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, IL 60611.



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undergraduate and graduate courses on the Civil War and Reconstruction, United States military history, and biography. His published works include *Stephen Dodson Ramseur: Lee's Gallant General* (1985) and *Antietam: Essays on the 1862 Maryland Campaign* (1989). Dr. Gallagher last addressed The Round Table in March of 1985, when his topic was "Stephen Dodson Ramseur: Lee's Gallant General."

The Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association noted, in its annual report that the recently completed Jamesway/Festival Foods Plaza has all but destroyed what remained of Hospital Woods, the site of Camp Letterman.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Mary J. Abroe

In observance of the 1862 Maryland Campaign's recent anniversary and in anticipation of our upcoming tour to its battlefields, it seems appropriate to update the current preservation scene at Antietam. In the January 1989 newsletter, Dan Josephs reported that G.S. Communications had been stopped temporarily in its bid to set up a 160-foot cable television tower on Red Hill. The Save Historic Antietam Foundation had anticipated that the tower's construction would impair the view of the historic skyline from Antietam battlefield, and that organization was instrumental in halting the tower's installation. In late July, however, SHAF president Tom Clemens reported that the tower was an accomplished fact, final approval having been given by the FCC and the Washington County Board of Zoning Appeals. Still, Clemens and fellow SHAF member Dennis Frye have voiced satisfaction that SHAF was successful in blocking placement of a microwave dish on top of the tower. The group indeed can take pleasure in this fact, for the tower itself (to this observer) is relatively inconspicuous. Topped by a microwave dish, however, it would have an obvious and negative impact on the scenic landscape.

Another Antietam matter needing updating is the Grove Farm/American Legion hall situation. Grove Farm, scene of the famous photo of Lincoln visiting McClellan after Antietam as well as the site of a Union/Confederate hospital and Fitz-John Porter's headquarters during the battle, has been the object of a virtual tug-of-war between preservationists and developers for the past few years. Dennis Frye states that the most serious issue facing the entire Antietam area today is the threatened construction of a new hall by the local American Legion on land directly in front of the Grove farmhouse. At present, the proposed site is being filled in preparation for grading and construction. Although it is not too late to halt the project and repair the damage already done, it soon will be. SHAF requests that we write to Maryland Governor William Schaefer (c/o State House, Annapolis, Maryland 21404), urging that the state of Maryland buy the Grove Farm and possibly designate it a state historic site; SHAF also suggests writing to the editor of the *Hagerstown Herald-Mail* (100 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland 21740) to express our concern over the Sharpsburg Legion's apparent lack of interest in maintaining Grove Farm's historical integrity.

From the Shenandoah Valley comes news of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation's efforts to preserve that site. Currently, the only battlefield land safe from development is the 100 acres surrounding Belle Grove Plantation, the 18th-century mansion that served as General Philip Sheridan's headquarters during the October 1864 battle; this acreage and the house itself are owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. However, the foundation has signed a contract with local developers to acquire 158 acres of the battlefield and is negotiating the purchase of an additional 300 acres from neighboring owners. The September 1, 1989 deadline for a downpayment of \$125,000 on the first property has passed, without donations quite reaching that mark. The foundation has received a 30-day extension on the deadline and directors are confident that the additional time will bring in necessary funding. A September 1, 1994 date for payment of the entire purchase price of \$450,000 remains in place. All the money must be raised through public contributions; donations thus are

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September Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

The Civil War Round Table conferred its 16th annual Nevins-Freeman Award on Mark E. Neely, Jr. on September 8th, at its 483rd regular meeting, before 103 members and guests. The award was established in 1974 to honor individuals for their contributions to the preservation of our nation's heritage and our understanding of the past, especially the years 1861-65. Renowned Lincoln scholar and author, and director of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum, Dr. Neely has recently completed *Lincoln and the Constitution*, which will be published in the fall of 1990 by Oxford University Press. For his acceptance address, Dr. Neely chose to explore the question "Was the Civil War a Total War?"

The term "total war" was coined in 1921 by Italian Fascist Julio Douhet, who wrote that: "The prevailing forms of social organization have given war a character of a national totality; that is, the entire population and all of the resources of a nation are sucked into the maw of war." The term was first applied to the American Civil War by Sherman biographer James B. Walters in the 1940's. The concept of the Civil War as a total war has been accepted by such eminent Civil War historians as T. Harry Williams, Bruce Catton, and James M. McPherson. The very first sentence in Williams' *Lincoln and His Generals* (1952) is: "The Civil War was the first of the modern wars and the American democracy was almost totally unready to fight it." While noting that "any idea about the Civil War that has been championed by T. Harry Williams, by Bruce Catton, and by James McPherson can surely be called accepted wisdom on the subject," Dr. Neely nevertheless challenged the concept.

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines total war as "warfare that uses all possible means of attack—military, scientific, and psychological—against both enemy troops and civilians." Dr. Neely contended that the Civil War did not qualify as a total war as measured in these three areas. He maintained that the impact of military technologies developed during the war—such as rifled firearms, artillery, trenches, breech-loading weapons, aerial observation, railroad transport, telegraphic communications, and land mines—on the Civil War battlefield was limited. Civil War military tactics, he held, did not differ markedly from the way battles were fought in the 18th century, although the armies had the technological ability to generate greater fire power. He noted that, "although Civil War rifles were more accurate," due to a lack of marksmanship training, "Civil War infantryman were not more accurate." The effectiveness of Civil War artillery, he said, has been exaggerated, pointing out that General McClellan decided that the Army of the Potomac only needed one rifled cannon for every two smooth-bores.

"The role of science," Dr. Neely remarked, "was, by and large, what it had been in 18th century warfare. Science was too important to be disrupted by war, and was in no direct or constructive way linked to either side." Joseph Henry, head of the Smithsonian Institution, ordered that no flag be flown over the great symbol of science, in order that science might plead its stated mission to *all* mankind. Despite public criticism, Henry clung to the no flag policy throughout the war.

When one thinks of science and technology in the war, Thaddeus Lowe often comes to mind. Though General Winfield Scott twice turned down Lowe's request to

develop a balloon corps, Abraham Lincoln, who was fascinated by technology, saw merit in the idea and authorized the corps' development. Eventually, Lowe's balloon corps had seven balloons, some of them situated on a vessel on the Potomac—the first aircraft carrier, in a sense. Yet, the army never found a niche for the corps and the experiment was curtailed in 1863.

Dr. Neely acknowledged that whether the Civil War qualified as a total war in the psychological area is more difficult to determine. "The nearest thing to psychological warfare in the Civil War," he asserted, "and by far the most important event of the war in assessing whether it became a total war or not, is, of course, Sherman's march to the sea and his march through the Carolinas." General Sherman, whom Dr. Neely described as having the "peculiar gift" of sounding like a 20th century man, said: "We are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people and must make old and young, rich and poor feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies." This sounds very much as if, psychologically, the Civil War fits the dictionary definition of total war. However, Dr. Neely warned that one should "watch what Sherman *did*, not what he *said*." To illustrate this point, he cited Gamaliel Bradford, who said in *Union Portraits*, which was written during World War I: "Events have made the vandalism of Sherman seem like discipline and order. The injury done by him seldom directly affected anything but property." Similarly, statements made by Generals Grant and Sheridan, Dr. Neely emphasized, should be measured by the same yardstick as Sherman's: what they did, not what they said.


In Dr. Neely's opinion, the Civil War was "a premodern war, in which a lot of men with muskets were the problem." He said that a total war "makes every person, citizen or soldier, an object of attack." "This," he claimed, "no one in the Civil War did, including General Sherman." Dr. Neely closed his address with this observation: "Whatever it was in the 19th century that led men to give themselves so violently to public and political causes, that made Lincoln president with 80% national voter turnout, that let 620,000 die in the war, that let fully one-fourth of the able-bodied white males in the Confederacy die... whatever it was that led Americans to fight harder than they ever fought before or since—that all, to me, seems past and gone, distant, and difficult to understand. Abraham Lincoln's world to me is a lost world and the Civil War a premodern conflict, the last of the Napoleonic-style wars, fought by 18th century techniques and rules, fought by a long lost agrarian society that had an unimaginable appetite for self-sacrifice and individual heroism."

A reminder: Please submit any Round Table memorabilia you may have to the 50th Anniversary Committee. The Committee will pay for the copying of materials and will return all photographs. When submitting photographs, try to identify as many people as possible. Bring these items to a meeting or send them to Jerry Warshaw, 748 Hinman Ave., Evanston, IL 60202.

Fellow members Dr. Gordon Damann and Marshall Krollick were featured speakers at The Civil War Society Symposium and Exhibition, held in Tyson's Corner, Virginia on August 10-13. Gordon spoke on "Civil War Medicine." Marshall's topic was "Cavalry in the Chancellorsville Campaign."

The New Books

compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Baird, W. David, ed., *A Creek Warrior for the Confederacy: The Autobiography of Chief G. W. Grayson*. University of Oklahoma Press. 1988. \$16.95.

Bergeron, Author W., Jr. *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units 1861-1865*. LSU Press. 1989. \$24.95.

Blight, David W., *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee*. LSU Press. 1989. \$27.50.

Boatner, Mark M., *The Civil War Dictionary*, Revised Edition. David McKay Co. 1988. \$29.95. Original of 1959.

Bowers, John. *Stonewall Jackson: Portrait of a Soldier*. William Morrow & Co. 1989. \$19.95.

Carter, W. H. *From Yorktown to Santiago with the Sixth U.S. Cavalry*. Texas A&M University Press. 1989. \$24.95.

Gallagher, Gary W., *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of Edward Porter Alexander*. University of North Carolina Press. 1989. \$34.95.

Gavin, Bill. *Campaigning with the Roundheads (100th Pennsylvania Infantry)*. Morningside Bookshop. 1989. \$40.00.

Harris, William C. *North Carolina and The Coming of the Civil War*. North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources. 1988. Pbk. \$4.00.

Johannsen, Robert W. *The Frontier, the Union and Stephen A. Douglas*. University of Illinois Press. 1989. \$34.95.

Klement, Frank L. *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies and Treason Trials in the Civil War*. LSU Press. 1989. Pbk. \$9.95.

Leskie, Shirley A., ed. *The Colonel's Lady on the Western Frontier. The Correspondence of Alice Kirk Grierson*. University of Nebraska Press. \$24.95.

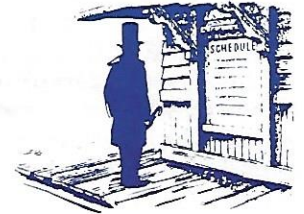
Litwack. Leon and August Meier. *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*. University of Illinois Press. 1988. \$19.95.

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much needed and gratefully accepted. Please remit them to the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, P.O. Box 229, Middletown, Virginia 22645.

One final note—on the legislation now before Congress to expand the Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania National Military Park. This bill proposes addition of significant areas to the multi-battle park; among these are the sites of Gibbon's attacks at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, land along Sickles Avenue, land between the Orange Turnpike and Orange Plank Road, and land east of the Brock Road-Plank Road intersection. According to NPS historian Will Greene, the bill has passed in the House and is now before the Senate. He asks us to write our senators (Paul Simon and Alan Dixon, c/o Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20410), urging them to vote in favor of the legislation. (Be sure to refer to it by number—S. 1559.) Greene notes that 10-12 letters on a specific issue constitute a veritable landslide in the eyes of our representatives in Washington; moreover, letters from Illinois concerning a battlefield in far-off Virginia should make an even greater impression. If those of us who are "converted" do not act, then who will? Please respond!

BULLETIN BOARD



Future Meetings

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

October 6: Gary Gallagher on "Edward Porter Alexander: Fighting for the Confederacy." (Note: This is the first Friday of the month.)

November 10: Herbert Schiller, M.D. on "The Bermuda Hundred Campaign of 1864."

December 8: Armin Weng on "The Gods of War and the Prince of Peace."

January 12, 1990: William J. Sullivan, topic to be announced.

February 9: Chicago Historical Society, "A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln."

March 9: Michael Andrus on "General Edward 'Allegheny' Johnson."

April 13: Richard McMurry on "Confederate Journalism."

May 11: William Parrish on "Confederate Governors."

June 8: Jerry Rodgers, topic to be announced.

New Members

Eugene W. Jones, Jr., 121 Commons Way, Goose Creek, SC 29445, 803/764-0413.

Irwin Samuel Levin, 1030 John Drive, Hoffman Estates, IL 60194, 312/882-6064.

Paul E. Niemeyer, 34 W. 65th St., #1, Westmont, IL 60559, 312/969-1199.

Gene Zollman, 7035 Grace Ave., New Carlisle, IN 46552.

Changes of Address

Keith Cantine, 1034 N. Oakley Blvd., Chicago, IL 60622.

Donald E. Mohr, 655 N.W. Lofall Rd., Poulsbo, WA 98370, 206/779-6927.

In conjunction with its 50th anniversary, The Round Table will publish a history of the organization, written by newsletter editor Barbara Hughett. As you can well imagine, this is a costly undertaking, and The Round Table hopes that some of our members can help out.

Among the items needed are a personal computer for Barbara to use for about six months, typesetting, printing paper, printing, and binding. Perhaps you, or someone you know, is in the computer, printing, typesetting, paper, or binding business and can get us some price breaks. If so, we'd like to talk to you as soon as possible. Contact Dave Richert or Barbara Hughett after the meeting, or give them a call. (Dave: work-558-6900; home-761-6937. Barbara: 973-5822.)