

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVII, Number 9

Chicago, Illinois

June 1997

Mark Grimsley on "The Mythology of Sherman's March"

by Barbara Hughett

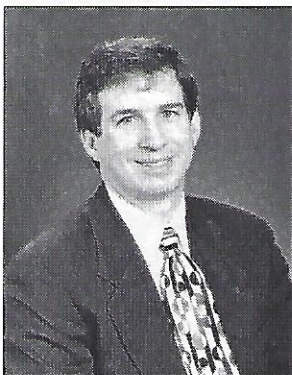
FEW images in American history are more deeply etched than that of the troops of General William Tecumseh Sherman burning Atlanta and then carving a 220-mile swath of destruction in his fiery "March to the Sea." The memory remains strong, even after the passage of more than a century. Just two years ago—130 years after Sherman began his momentous march—the North Carolina Secretary of Cultural Resources blocked a proposed monument to Sherman's soldiers at Bentonville, the state's principal Civil War battleground, asserting that these troops had been commanded by a man "more evil than Ivan the Terrible or Genghis Khan." Her bitter words echoed a powerful piece of mythology.

Mythology, however, is not synonymous with falsehood or misconception. Myths are seldom true in the strictest sense, but they usually contain a larger truth that is conveyed all the more powerfully because they are not restricted by mundane points of accuracy.

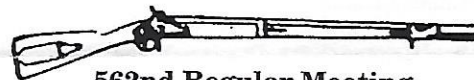
Mark Grimsley will address The Round Table on June 13. His topic is "The Mythology of Sherman's March." Grimsley's presentation will address three questions about the mythology surrounding Sherman's March to the Sea: (1) What is the factual basis of the myth? (2) What purposes did it serve when originally created? (3) What purposes does it serve today?

Mark Grimsley received his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University, in Columbus, Ohio. He holds an M.A. in War Studies from Kings College London, U.K., where he completed a special study on the ethics of war.

Currently an assistant professor in the Department of History at The Ohio State University, Dr. Grimsley specializes in American military history with a research focus on the American Civil War. He also has a long-standing interest in the problem of war and moral judgment. His first book, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) received the Lincoln Prize in April 1996. and was a selection of the History Book Club. His current work includes an edited vol-



Mark Grimsley



562nd Regular Meeting

☆☆☆

Mark Grimsley on "The Mythology of Sherman's March"

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Friday, June 13

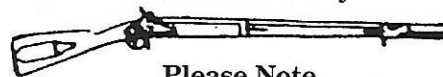
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m

\$25 - The Civil War Round Table of Chicago members
\$30 - Nonmembers

Entree: Beef Stroganoff with Buttered Noodles
or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, June 11, by calling Registrar Carole Le Claire at 847-698-1438. People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If you make a reservation and then find you cannot attend, please call to cancel or you will be billed for a dinner. **No last-minute orders for the Catch of the Day can be honored. The chef must have at least twenty-four hours notice.**

The Union League Club is located at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Federal Street. Federal Street runs north and south between Dearborn and Clark Streets. Parking is available at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club, at the rate of \$5 per car.

ume on *The Collapse of the Confederacy* and a study of the Wilderness-James campaign of May-June 1864.

In addition to his academic pursuits, Grimsley has long maintained a commitment to writing history for the non-specialist. His first published work of popular history appeared in *Civil War Times Illustrated* magazine when he was twenty. Since then he has written numerous

(continued on page 2)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817
Chicago Illinois 60605
Phone: 847-698-1438

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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 Membership Committee, 601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

Secretary and Inspector General (Quizmaster)
Bruce Allardice is the author of an article in the current issue of *America's Civil War*, entitled "Curious Clash at Blair's Landing," about the only major attack of Confederate Cavalry on a Union ironclad throughout the Civil War.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

The American Battlefield Protection Program has announced 1997 funding awardees. Included are: the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, \$10,000 for a Prairie Grove Battlefield plan; the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, \$30,000 for a land acquisition workshop; Bentonville Battleground Historical Association, \$24,000 for Bentonville Battlefield mapping; the city of Franklin, Tennessee, \$11,500 for a Carter House area preservation plan; Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, \$22,000 for reevaluation and revision of the Gettysburg National Battlefield Historic District; Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield, \$30,000 for a Bushy Mountain Line lands conservation plan; Maury County Visitors Bureau, \$15,600 for Spring Hill Battlefield Interpretation; Mill Springs Battlefield Association, \$10,000 for a Mill Springs Battlefield Interpretation Project; and Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, \$19,800 for Rich Mountain Battlefield Education for Preservation.

Gettysburg National Military Park is preparing its first General Management Plan since 1982. Among the ideas being considered are an increased focus on restoring the 1863 landscape, possible curtailment of access to areas of the park that suffer from excessive wear and tear by visitors, and widening the interpretation of the battle to provide visitors with the broader context of the Civil War. A series of public meetings to solicit suggestions and comments will be held into the fall. For further information, call the park at 717-334-1124, ext. 452.

MARK GRIMSLEY (continued from page 1)

articles on American history for popular publications. Grimsley's interest in the Civil War dates back to a twenty-page "novel," set during the conflict, which he wrote at age ten. Two years later, this interest was fanned into a lifelong passion when he read *A Stillness at Appomattox* by Bruce Catton, an author whose stylistic gifts and quality of insight he still admires.

SUMMER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

President-elect Robert Girardi has announced that the summer meeting of the Executive Committee of The Civil War Round Table will be held on Saturday, July 12, in the library of Notre Dame High School, 7655 Dempster, in Niles, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and lasting probably until around 1:00 p.m. A luncheon will be provided. Committee members will receive additional information in the mail. Please send any suggestions for additions to the agenda to President-elect Girardi. **All past presidents and 1997-1998 officers and committee chairs are urged to attend.**

☛ MAY MEETING ☛

by Larry Gibbs

On May 9, at the 561st regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, 91 members and guests heard Dr. William J. Cooper, Jr. make a stimulating and engaging presentation on "Jefferson Davis and the Politics of Command." A professor of history at Louisiana State University, Dr. Cooper has written several books on the Civil War era, including *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics in 1860* (1983), and numerous articles for professional journals. He is in the process of finishing a biography of Jefferson Davis. In his address, Cooper offered some revealing explanations of the decisions of Jefferson Davis as the Confederate president.

In summarizing the early career of Jefferson Davis, Cooper emphasized Davis's nationalistic beliefs. Before 1860, Davis was a seasoned professional politician who had a notable career. With the advent of the war, Davis had a personal conflict. Cooper asserted, "Jefferson Davis was no fire-eater; he believed in the right of secession but not in the act of secession. Since Davis was the son of a Revolutionary War soldier he hoped to avoid secession." The failure of the Union affected Davis personally. He referred to the South as the "true" America; the South, according to Davis, acted on the principles of the U.S. Constitution. Davis believed in absolute commitment to the Confederacy. He could not comprehend the thought of a Confederate loss in the conflict.

According to Cooper, "Civil War history is written as if totally devoid of politics with only military aspects being emphasized. This is preposterous because all American wars — especially the Civil War — were fought in a political environment." Cooper claimed that Jefferson Davis knew he could not operate outside politics. He discussed Davis and the politics of command in three critical areas — strategic fundamentals, major appointments, and command relationships.

The huge area that the Confederacy defended should have been a decided advantage, but the vastness created problems. The president had to make difficult decisions about the best way to defend this area. "The greatest motive for the average Rebel soldier was to defend home and family," stated Cooper. "There was little national loyalty and Davis accepted the fact that loyalty to the Confederacy was tenuous." In 1861, the brigading of Rebel troops by states indicated an almost nonexistent desire for national unity among Confederate military leaders. Davis tried to build loyalty to the Confederacy but did not succeed.

Jefferson Davis was aware that political aspects of military appointments were unavoidable. Cooper maintained that he dealt with these situations in a realistic and capable manner. Davis accepted the reality of political generals who would benefit the Confederacy. Urged to replace General John Pemberton at Charleston, Davis simply moved him to Vicksburg. Robert Toombs, the first Confederate Secretary of State, wanted to go to war. Cooper opined, "As a brigadier general at the Battle of South Mountain (September 14, 1862) and at the Battle of Antietam (September 17, 1862) Toombs proved to be dangerous on the battlefield — not to the enemy but to Rebel troops." Toombs desired a promotion but Davis did not grant one. Cooper proclaimed that Davis was politi-

cally aware as commander-in-chief.

In dealing with command decisions Davis failed to effectively deal with people. Cooper indicated that the key to Davis's failure revolved around his commitment to the Confederacy. Davis viewed the Confederacy as a mission where every Confederate sympathizer had to put aside negative attitudes in order to support the Confederacy wholeheartedly. Davis felt that generals Joseph Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard did not exhibit total commitment. He believed they were vain and self-centered, concerned only about their own reputations. Conversely, Davis supported General Braxton Bragg totally because he felt Bragg was completely committed to the cause.

Cooper concluded, "Davis was consumed in leading a holy mission for the Confederate cause. Hence, he did not use the three generals cited above nearly as well as he could have. His misuse of generals in high command was his greatest failing. In my opinion, Jefferson Davis was the best choice for the Confederate presidency, but there is a great irony in Jefferson Davis—his holy, unswerving commitment to the Confederacy undermined the possibility of eventual success for the Confederate government."

48th Annual Battlefield Tour: North Carolina "The Closing Campaigns of the Western Armies"

*A Preview by Chuck Bednar,
1998 Tour Chair*

Using the tour theme "The Closing Campaigns of the Western Armies," our annual battlefield tour, April 29-May 3, 1998, visits a region previously overlooked in our itinerary of Civil War sites.

Rather than emphasize a major battle site, the itinerary is designed to provide a broad understanding of the activities of Sherman's army in the closing months of the war. From Wilmington to Kinston to Bentonville, the culmination of these campaign activities would result in the surrender of Johnston's troops at Raleigh Durham.

Our tour will originate at the Raleigh Durham International Airport on April 29, where we will proceed by special charter buses to Dunn, a central point for exploring inland battlefields sites such as Bentonville and Aversboro. From there the itinerary will shift to the east coast via a corridor of brief stops at sites associated with the campaign. Utilizing Wilmington as a headquarters on May 1 and 2, we will learn about the strategic importance of this city to the Confederacy, the blockade of Wilmington, capture of Ft. Fisher and surrender of the city.

On May 3, we will return to the Raleigh Durham area to visit the state capitol and historic Oakwood Cemetery. The trip will conclude with a special presentation at the famous surrender site, Bennett Place State Historic Site. Our tour will be under the leadership of Ed Bearss, supported by a cast of major historians such as Mark Bradley, Chris Fonvielle, Jr., and John Goode.

Don't miss it! Some exciting events are scheduled that will make this tour a most informative and memorable occasion.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Marvel, William. *The Alabama and the Kearsarge — The Sailor's Civil War*. U. of N. Carolina Press. 1996. \$34.95.
- Bacarella, Michael. *Lincoln's Foreign Legion—A Regimental History of the 39th New York (The Garibaldi Guards)*. White Mane Publ. Co. 1996. \$34.95.
- Baldwin, James J. *The Struck Eagle: The Biography of Brigadier General Micah Jenkins*. White Mane Publ. Co. 1996. \$34.95.
- Clemmer, Gregg S. *Valor in Gray — The Recipients of the Confederate Medal of Honor*. Hearthside Publ. Co. 1996. \$29.95. *Warrior*. John F. Blair, Publisher. 1996. \$24.95.
- Barnett, Louise. *Touched by Fire: The Life, Death and Mythic Afterlife of George Armstrong Custer*. Henry Holt. 1996. \$30.
- Barrow, Charles K., J. H. Segars and R. B. Rosenberg, eds. *Forgotten Confederates: An Anthology About Black Southerners*. Southern Heritage Press. 1996. Pbk. \$15.

A reminder: The Milwaukee Civil War Round Table will be having a gala 50th Anniversary Celebration on Friday and Saturday, October 3 and 4. The Milwaukee Round Table was the second Civil War Round Table, of the now over 200 all over the world, to be formed. Many of the Milwaukee members helped us celebrate our 50th in October 1990, and we hope to do the same for their celebration. Included in the festivities, to be held at the historic Wisconsin Club (the regular meeting site for the Milwaukee Round Table), will be a reunion of the Iron Brigade Association, and the presentation of the Iron Brigade Association Award to Alan T. Nolan (winner of the 1994 Nevins-Freeman Award of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago).

Speakers will include Alan T. Nolan, Alan D. Gaff, Peter Cuzzins, Kent Gramm, and D. Scott Hartwig. Also featured will be performances by Milwaukee's own First Brigade Band. **For information about different registration packages, call Lance Herdegen at 414-524-7198. (Also, brochures will be available at the Schimmelfennig Boutique Table at our June 13 meeting.)**

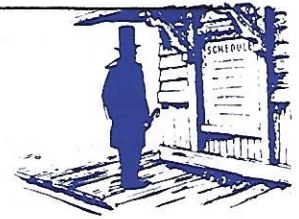
Schimmelfennig Boutique

The history of The Round Table, *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship*, by Barbara Hughett, is available for \$30 per copy. You may purchase the book at the monthly meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

In addition to The Round Table history and *The Continuing Civil War*, the essays from the Fiftieth Anniversary Proceedings, the following items are available at each monthly meeting: Lapel pins, Mugs, Meeting Tapes, Civil War Buff posters and T-Shirts, CWRT T-shirts, polos, and sweatshirts.

Proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the programs of The Civil War Round Table.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

- June 13:* Mark Grimsley on "The Mythology of Sherman's March"
- July 12:* Summer Executive Committee Meeting, Notre Dame High School, 7655 Dempster, Niles, 9:00 a.m.
- September 12:* Wiley Sword, Nevins-Freeman Address
- October 17:* Chris Fonvielle on "The Wilmington Campaign"
- November 14:* Ted Karamanski on "Chicago Civil War Monuments"
- December 12:* Tom Sweeney on "The Trans-Mississippi Campaign"
- January 9:* Dan McCarthy, "The 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry"
- February 13:* D. Scott Hartwig, topic to be announced
- March 13:* Mark Bradley on "Bentonville"
- April 17:* Keith Rocco on "Civil War Art"
- April 29-May 3:* Annual Battlefield Tour, "Western Armies in the Carolina Campaign"
- May 8:* Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, topic to be announced
- June 12:* John Michael Priest on "Pickett's Charge"

NEW MEMBERS

- Jim Brenner, 3212 Treyburn Road, Naperville, IL 60564, 630-904-2006
- Ralph Lee De Falco, c/o The De Falco Group, Inc., P.O. Box 1295, Valparaiso, IN 46384-1295, 219-465-0787
- Hadley Donenberg, 2001 Churchill Lane, Highland Park, IL 60035, 847-831-2997
- Tom Gaard, 13125 Pinecrest Lane, Clive, IA, 515-226-1961
- Judd Goldfine, 3313 University Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035, 847-432-6308

Change of Address

- Donni Case Hewitt and Larry Hewitt, 2417 N. Geneva Terrace, Chicago, IL 60614

Senior Vice President and President-elect Robert Girardi addressed the Springwood Middle School in Hanover Park on May 29. His topic was "The Common Soldier in the Civil War."

The Mt. Prospect Park District is sponsoring a Civil War Experience on Saturday and Sunday, June 14-15, at Lions Park in Mt. Prospect. The Civil War Experience will include encampment, civil and military demonstrations, 1860s baseball, period music and dance, children's games, etc. Admission is free. A pancake breakfast will be served on Saturday from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. by members of the Mt. Prospect Lions Club. The sponsors are looking for additional sutlers, food vendors, and baseball enthusiasts. For information, call Nancy Radtke (847-255-5380) or Randy Toelke (847-640-1000).