

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XXXII, Number 3

Chicago, Illinois

November, 1971

## Charles Wesselhoeft on Civil War Railroads, November 12

Charles D. Wesselhoeft, one of the old reliables of the Civil War Round Table, will be speaker at the meeting Friday, November 12, 1971, at the Chicago Bar Association, 29 South LaSalle Street. Everyone knows Charles Wesselhoeft. Last year he was secretary; this year he is treasurer, and we can be sure that next year he will be in there pitching at whatever needs to be done. His immediate sphere of interest is the railroads of the Civil War, and when the Camp Followers, the loyal ladies of our organization, appealed for a speaker last May, Charley agreed to speak to them on his favorite subject. Their enthusiasm inspired a demand that he be heard at a Civil War Round Table meeting and he has rewritten his speech for the longer time available. He outlines his subject matter as follows:



Charles Wesselhoeft

Railroads were developed in the first place for commercial purposes and those in the United States were no exception to the general rule. When the Civil War commenced, railroading in the United States was only about 30 years of age, and for the most part, had been devised to serve the commercial interests of port cities.

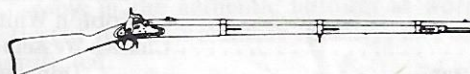
But the Civil War, among its other industrial innovations, was to demonstrate how railroads were a vital means of transporting troops and munitions to the front, and from place to place in the actual theatre of operations as well. Soon they came to influence not only the course of battles but the strategy of the contending armies.

Many of these roads, particularly in the South, were quite primitive by present day standards—or any other standards for that matter. The North had the industrial muscle to extend and improve the rail network, but the South did not. And struggle as they might, the many capable Southern railway men were frustrated more often than not in their efforts to support the gray armies.

Inefficiencies abounded. One problem was the failure of roads to connect physically at junction cities. Short sidings, light rail, rickety trestles, and tiny rolling stock all contributed to slow speeds. This was just as well for it served to make the frequent accidents somewhat less gory.

Many of the great campaigns of the war turned upon the use—or the denial of use—of railroads. First and second Bull Run, Shiloh and Corinth, Bragg's Kentucky invasion, Rosecrans movement on Chattanooga, Sherman's Atlanta Campaign, and Grant's march upon Richmond in 1864 and 1865 are some outstanding examples of the importance of railroads to the thinking of Civil War military men.

After the war was over, many of the Civil War soldiers became involved in rebuilding the railroads which they had



305th REGULAR MEETING

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Charles Wesselhoeft, treasurer,  
The Civil War Round Table

on

Civil War Railroads

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Friday, November 12, 1971

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Chicago Bar Association  
29 South LaSalle Street

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Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



helped to wreck. Many of them participated in the westward march of the iron horse which was to be so instrumental in finally taming the continent. Altogether an interesting part of American history.

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Crossfire, the Journal of the American Civil War Round Table of the United Kingdom, has resumed publication after a two-year lapse with issues dated November, 1970, and May, 1971. These are book-size publications of 20 to 30 pages and each contains a number of articles in addition to CWRT reports. A sampling: "Civil War Cavalry and Its Effect on Later Wars," by John Ventura; "The American Civil War In English Military Museums," "Mental Stability and Leadership" (Lincoln and Davis), by Hugh L'Etang; "The Confederate White Elephant" (the cruiser Rappahannock) by Michael Barrett; "The American Civil War and the British Stage," by Ventura. This last article gets separate notice, now or later. Editor is John Ventura, who wrote three of the mentioned items, 70 Madeley Road, Ealing, London, W5 2LU.

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street,  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
Phone: Whitehall 4-3085

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*from the  
Editor's pen*



We hope occasionally to give extended reports of the program talks as was done last month in attempting to outline Grady McWhiney's "Jefferson Davis and His Generals," but decline to promise it as a regular feature. There are various reasons. Some talks lend themselves more to this type of reporting than do others. On occasion the advance notice seems to cover the high spots. But the omission in the present issue is for no better excuse than that your editor is going awol. This bulletin is being put together in advance so that I can be off on an extended Western expedition that will include the meeting in Santa Fe of the Western History Association (of which I am an honorary life member). We'll be back for the meeting herein scheduled.

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In the October issue there was notice of the passing of W. Norman Fitzgerald, Jr. (1894-1971) including tribute to him published in the Milwaukee CWRT bulletin. Some additional details have since come to hand. Norman died July 2, 1971, after only three days of illness. Pneumonia was given as the cause of death. He was president of the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table for nearly 25 years. He was its founder, having conceived the idea after attending a Chicago meeting in 1945. He maintained membership in Chicago CWRT.

In the November, 1970, issue of the CWRT Bulletin, the late Hal Hixson invited attention to the book "Echoes of 1861-1961" by J. Ambler Johnston, our good friend and companion of many a tour of Virginia battlefields. The book was printed in a limited edition of 175 copies, so few could obtain it, but it has now been reprinted by P. J. Hohlweck, 4734 W. Brown Deer Road, Brown Deer, Wisconsin 53223 and can be obtained from him for \$3.50. Phil Hohlweck writes: "Ambler informed me that the reprint is better than the original because of the correction of errors and the addition of an important map on page 57, covering many important places. The cover is stiff paperback, and both front and rear covers have a picture of Union artillery firing over the Pamunkey River."

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Alastair Napier advises from the Isle of Man that a re-enactment of the Battle of Gettysburg was staged in England July 12, 1971 in Blenheim Palace Park. It was put on by members of the Southern Skirmish Association, wearing uniforms of both sides. The group is an English society devoted to research into the American Civil War.

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Fred Bentley of Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia, president of the local historical society reports that his group is restoring Big Shanty and hopes also to restore or preserve Picketts Mill.

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Colonel Hal Engerud of Munfordville, Kentucky, sends a folder describing the Munfordville Battlefield Trek held September 11, 1971, under the sponsorship of the Munfordville and Glasgow Lions Clubs. The trek covers the ground of two battles at Munfordville. The first was fought December 17, 1861, between Colonel August Willich's 32nd Indiana Infantry and the 8th (Terry's) Texas Rangers. Colonel Terry was killed. The second and more important battle began September 14, 1862, between the Union army of Don Carlos Buell and the Confederate army of Braxton Bragg. It was in Munfordville that John Hunt Morgan was sworn into Confederate service with his original company. Munfordville was the home of Confederate General Simon Bolivar Buckner and Union General Thomas J. Wood. Three forts and many buildings that were standing during the war are still intact.

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Those who have studied the science of joke-making tell us that a sense of humor is by no means an entity. Those who laugh at George Gobel are unmoved by Jonathan Winters, and in time both go off the air as old hat—yet the loudest laughs are produced by the jokes everyone knows. These observations were provoked by a New Yorker article, "Abraham Lincoln: Lawyer, Statesman, and Golf Nut," by Thomas Meehan. The emphasis is on golf, baseball, football, handball, water skiing and other sports unknown in Lincoln's day, and his interest in them is detailed with strait-faced improbability. (The Gettysburg Address was scrawled in pencil on the back of a golf scorecard.) To us it just did not seem funny. To others it might be hilarious.

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Brooks Davis returned from vacation with a clipping from the Muskegon Chronicle that has some of the earmarks of a hoax, but one we hesitate to denounce as without any foundation. Under the heading "And Yet Another Cover-up" writer Don Graff credits the West Virginia Hillbilly with bringing to light the story of the burning of Burning Springs, Virginia (now West Virginia) by Confederates on May 9, 1863. "Burning Springs, then called Oiltown, was a Yankee oil field

on the Little Kanawha River," says the article. "It had a population of 10,000 to 15,000 souls, hundred of wells and a normal daily inventory of 300,000 barrels of oil, worth \$1,500,000," further described as "50 per cent of the world's oil-producing capacity, destroyed in the raid." Now this is a lot of tall story. Oil was discovered in Pennsylvania in 1859, and if you must know, world production for 1863 was 247,427 barrels, considerably less than the daily (not yearly) output attributed to Burning Springs. But is it true that Confederate raiders fired the oil well on the Little Kanawha? (The oil production figure comes from Haydn's Dictionary of Dates, 1895 edition, where the figure is 8,907,365 gallons, which, as this is a British publication, we reduce by dividing by 36 imperial gallons to the barrel. The U.S. 31½ gallon barrel would come only a little closer to the 300,000—all of which proves that any old book may prove useful sometime.)

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Reproductions of four papers concerning John Singleton Mosby accompany the June, 1971, issue of Crossed Flags, published by the Civil War Round Table of Northern New Jersey at Upsala College, East Orange. Richard F. Lemal tells of the papers, which belong to Charles Alvord of Pleasant Lake, Massachusetts, inherited through his family. Of interest is a general order citing Mosby on which J. E. B. Stuart scribbled, "To Miss Laura with lasting regards." Lemal identifies her as Laura Ratcliffe, one of the "Spies of the Confederacy" in the book by John Bakeless. If so, the Union officer who captured this document, missed a bet. A commission for Daniel Hatcher and a pass for Henry Hatcher may also point to a bit of spying. Of importance is Mosby's commission as "Captain of Partizan Rangers," signed by James A. Seddon, Secretary of War, dated March 19, 1863.



## TO THE CAMP FOLLOWERS (LADIES)

Time: Friday, November 12, 1971, 5:30 p.m.

Place: The Book and Bottle, 17 East Chestnut Street, directly across the street from the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop.

Program: Gail (Mrs. Edward) Johnson on "The Surgeon Embalmers of the Civil War." The Johnsons are nationally known for their knowledge of and research into the history of embalming and funeral customs. Both are licensed embalmers. Gail is not given to discussing lurid and gruesome details, but she will tell how techniques developed during the Civil War permanently changed funeral customs in the United States which differ from those observed in most parts of the world.

Reservations may be made by calling Joyce Warshaw, 866-6667, or by writing her (Mrs. Jerry) 1319 Crain Street, Evanston, Illinois, 60202

Last meeting: Gordon Whitney on "The G.I. in the Civil War," came in the authentic uniform as worn by the 104th Reactivated Illinois Volunteer Infantry, and also armed, as he demonstrated.

December Meeting: The traditional Christmas fete is being planned.

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TO ALL CWRT MEMBERS: Your womenfolk always qualify as Camp Followers and are cordially invited to attend the meetings. Perhaps some of the newer members don't know this. We meet when they do, drink, eat and have a program—then break camp simultaneously with the gentlemen.



BULL RUN—BUT WHEN? This photograph, probably taken near the end of the 19th century, bears the legend: Scene of the last charge of the Pennsylvania Reserves on the hill near the Henry House. And that is about all we know about it. Perhaps our readers can tell more.

## THE NEW BOOKS

(compiled by Dick Clark)



McPherson, Edward. *The Political History of the United States of America during the Period of Reconstruction . . .* Second edition. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971. Original of 1875. \$26.50

Newby, Idus A., compiler. *The Civil War and Reconstruction*. N.Y.: Appleton [1971]. Paper, \$1.95

Pike, James Shepherd. *The Prostrate State; South Carolina under Negro Government*. Ed., with introd. to the Torchbook edition by Robert F. Durden. [Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1971, c. 1968]. \$5.00

Rowell, John W. *Through the Civil War with the Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, [1971]. \$7.50

Shanks, Henry Thomas. *The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847-1861*. N.Y.: AMS Press [1971]. Reprint 1934 ed. \$9.75

Simon, Paul. *Lincoln's Preparation for Greatness: The Illinois Legislative Years*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971. Paper, \$2.95

Stampp, Kenneth Milton. *And the War Came; The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861*. [Baton Rouge]: Louisiana State University Press [1971]. Paper. Reprint of 1950 edition with new preface by the author. \$2.95

Trelease, Allen W. *Reconstruction; the Great Experiment*. N.Y.: Harper [1971]. For young people. \$4.95

Weyl, Nathaniel and William Marina. *American Statesmen on Slavery and the Negro*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House [1971]. \$11.95

### DIXIE IN SOUTH AMERICA

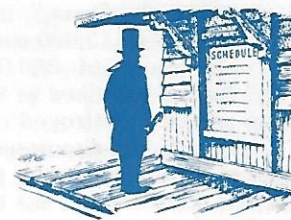
(From the Cleveland Civil War Bulletin Board)

When the Civil War ended in 1865, most Southerners reluctantly accepted the end of their way of life and steeled themselves to accept, or fend off, the consequences of defeat. A few, however, decided that all was not gone with the wind. If they couldn't carry on with the traditions of slavery and plantation life in the U.S., there was still one place to go where they could start all over again, under conditions similar to those of the pre-war South.

These men and their families went even deeper south, all the way to the southern part of Brazil. Several hundred ex-rebels sailed from Gulf Coast ports in 1865 and 1866 to form new settlements in Brazil. But disease, privation and homesickness took their toll, and all but one of the American colonies collapsed. The one that endured was started by Col. William Norris of Georgia on land granted to his group by the then emperor, Dom Pedro II. He called it Villa Americana, subsequently shortened to Americana. Located about 70 miles northwest of Sao Paulo and 100 miles west of Rio, Americana, Brazil, is a pleasant town of 42,000 with a thriving textile industry begun by one of the Confederate settlers. The American Descendants Association, composed of the 20 or so Brazilian families who trace their origin directly back to the Confederate emigrants, keeps the heritage and traditions of the colony alive. But the residents nowadays consider themselves Brazilians, and long ago gave up fighting the issues of the Civil War. Their language is Portuguese, and English is at best a second tongue.

Some of the original settlers had brought along loyal slaves to work the cotton plantations they began in Brazil, but, ironically, slavery was peacefully abolished in their adopted land a few years after they arrived. Though they did not succeed in creating a miniature Old South, the settlers did make a Little America, importing such standbys as a sewing circle, a Masonic lodge, and a circulating library in the midst of the Brazilian wilderness.

## BULLETIN BOARD



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Chicago Bar Association, 29 South LaSalle Street, 11th floor, second Friday in each month except as noted.

November 12: Charles Wesselhoeft on "Civil War Railroads."

December 10: E. B. (Pete) Long

January 14: James I (Bud) Robertson

February 11: Jay Luvaas

March 10: Alan Nolan

April 14: Robert Fowler

Late April or early May: Battlefield Tour, Vicksburg Campaign.

May 12: Damon Wells, Jr.

June 14: To be announced.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at Chodash Brothers Restaurant, 213 West Randolph Street; all members invited.



### HISTORY OF THE MINIE BALL

(By John Alexander, in The Lexington Leader)

She wasn't a woman though her name is almost always mispronounced as "Minnie" and though she was far more dangerous than any female camp-follower during the Civil War.

She was the first projectile fired from a gun that would allow anything approaching a true course, the first to use a hollowed out rear section roughly the reverse shape of the front end of the slug, and she was named from her inventor, Capt. E. C. Minie, a Frenchman, whose name should be properly pronounced "Min-a-ay."

She was called the "Minie ball," and while developed largely in France and England, her first combat was found in the American Civil War.

Harold L. Peterson, internationally recognized authority on the history of weapons and chief curator for the National Park Service, discussed her history for members of the Kentucky Civil War Round Table at their November dinner-meeting.

Prior to the development of the Minie ball, projectiles fired from smooth-bore guns were usually round balls and were subject to any number of things that would cause them to veer off course or to tumble in flight, though some experimental designs were tried.

Capt. Minie's invention overcame much of that problem, though it wasn't to be sophisticated until rifled barrels came into popular usage, and the design was further modified.

His bullet employed the flat base-cylindrical body—ogival head design further modified to have a conical base against which escaping gases from the powder would expand the slug to diameter of the barrel, thus producing more power and greater accuracy.

His shell employed an iron cup which was blown against the slug, and in turn expanded it to fit the barrel. Further developments utilized wood and clay intermediates and finally none at all, the current design.

It was the prototype of what became the current cartridge-bullet design. (From the bulletin of the Civil War Round Table of Lexington, Kentucky)