

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

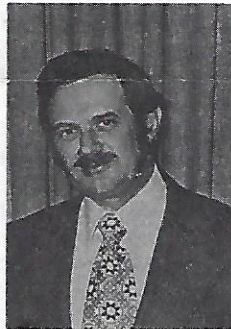
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Chicago, Illinois

February, 1975

## GORDON WHITNEY ON THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE—FEBRUARY 14

Immediate Past President Gordon Whitney returns to the head table on February 14, 1975, this time in the role of our featured speaker of the evening. His topic will be Nashville, the only major battle of the Civil War which resulted in the complete destruction of the losing army as an effective fighting force.



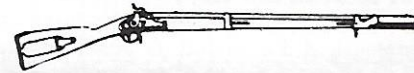
Gordon Whitney

After the fall of Atlanta, John B. Hood, commander of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, spent several weeks in northern Georgia ineffectively maneuvering against Sherman's line of communications. Then, gambling that he could draw the Federal horde out of the deep South, Hood marched north, away from his enemy. However, Sherman refused to take the bait. Detaching the XXIII and IV Corps, as well as a portion of his cavalry, under the combined command of George H. Thomas, to look after Hood, Sherman set out on his famed March to the Sea.

Fortunately for the Union, Hood delayed for three weeks in Alabama while he gathered supplies and repaired the railroads in his rear. During this interval, Thomas had time to organize his defense force in and around Nashville. His advance, under Schofield, was posted at Pulaski, but on November 22, 1864 was forced to evacuate that town and march north as Hood threatened to take Columbia on the Duck River. Schofield reached Columbia first but could not hold the river's south bank and was forced to cross.

At this time, Hood cleverly left one of his corps, ably led by S. D. Lee, to detain the Federals at Columbia while the rest of the Confederates crossed the Duck upstream in an attempt to cut Schofield off from Nashville. When the Union commander finally realized his danger, he marched for Spring Hill where occurred one of the most controversial incidents of the war. Even today the debate continues on the reasons why the Federals were able to escape the trap the Confederates had prepared for them at that place. But escape they did all the way to Franklin where on November 30th they inflicted severe losses on Hood as the latter foolishly committed his army to a frontal attack.

Despite his victory, Schofield withdrew, this time into the defenses at Nashville which Thomas had prepared. Once more Hood delayed. As he camped south of the city, the Federals continued to strengthen their forces. Finally, after two weeks of planning and bad weather, Thomas attacked on December 15 and 16, 1864. As Gordon describes to us this last great battle of the Civil War in the West, he will delve into the personalities of the principal leaders and the political intrigue that prefaced the combat, as well as the tactics employed on the field. Also highlighted will be the prominent role played



338th REGULAR MEETING

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Gordon Whitney

on

The Battle of Nashville

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Friday, February 14, 1975

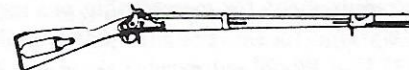
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Chicago Bar Association

29 South LaSalle Street

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



by the Federal cavalry, led by its brilliant new commander, James H. Wilson. As a final touch our speaker will speculate on what might have resulted had Hood been victorious.

Although born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Gordon Whitney has spent most of his life as a resident of Hammond, Indiana. He served that city for twenty-three years as a member of its fire department, rising to the rank of Senior Captain. While a member of the department, he authored a history of it and instituted an archives in the main fire station. After retiring from municipal service, Gordon spent several years in private business before moving with his family this past spring to a farm just outside the Ohio River community of Madison, Indiana.

In addition to his able leadership of The Round Table last year, Gord has also served as president of the Hammond Historical Society. His ties to the Civil War are strong as he had relatives in both the 1st Michigan cavalry and the 22nd Michigan infantry. Gord's interest in the latter regiment and his resulting study of the western theater of the war in which it served, has led to his becoming one of our foremost authorities on the campaigns of the Army of the Cumberland. He has already spoken before several other Round Tables, including St. Louis and Milwaukee, and this, his first appearance as speaker before his own Round Table, is long overdue.



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

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

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The only requirement for membership is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Donald E. Jensen, 335 East Woodland Road, Lake Bluff, Ill. 60044.



## from the Editor's pen



Probably nothing we have written for the Newsletter has elicited as much response and comment as the editorial which appeared in the November, 1974 issue. In that column we commented on the seeming inability of the entertainment industry to produce Civil War related programs and movies with any degree of historical accuracy. Since the article appeared, we have received countless correspondence, all in agreement with our position. Many readers called our attention to additional examples of Hollywood's callous inattention to factual detail. However, when we wrote that editorial, we certainly had no idea that, in light of the many error-filled productions of the past, the worst was yet to come.

As we mentioned, on December 3, 1974 NBC was to air, as a made-for-television movie, a remake of "The Red Badge of Courage." Well, they did and, after watching it, we sincerely wish they hadn't. The script was amateurish, a fact made even more disgusting when one realizes that it was an adaptation of

one of the finest examples of writing this country has ever produced. The quality of the acting indicated that the actors' drama coach was a former professional wrestler. But writing and acting are beside the point for those components of a show are judged by subjective standards and we are not drama critics.

What is relevant is the unbelievable number of technical mistakes present in this "masterpiece." By way of illustration, we offer the following examples: infantry wearing red kepis and yellow or red pants stripes; infantry kepi insignia upside down; crossed saber insignia on infantry kepi; the regiment involved was the 304th New York; infantry officers with yellow shoulder straps or no shoulder straps at all; not one soldier in the entire movie, including those in combat, was wearing or carrying a cartridge box; post Civil War weapons; Battle of Chancellorsville described as a four day event; an infantry charge over what appeared to be miles of open ground (in the middle of which the troops sat down for a coffee-break.) The foregoing list is by no means meant to be exclusive and we are sure other viewers spotted more.

The question is how long are we going to endure such insults to the intelligence of every student of Civil War history. Surely its easy to rationalize, as the studio heads no doubt do, that the average person doesn't know, and probably doesn't care, about historical accuracy and detail. But, based on your response to our November article, you care. You are the ones who look forward to a Civil War movie or program with special anticipation. So the time has come to do something about this situation. Our suggestion is that instead of writing to us to agree that there is a problem, write to the networks, the studios, and the production companies to protest. We strongly propose that the secretary of The Round Table be authorized to immediately prepare and mail such a letter to NBC and anyone else responsible for the new, and certainly unimproved, version of "The Red Badge of Courage." We urge other Round Tables and Civil War students elsewhere to do the same.



At its meeting held just prior to the regular January meeting, the Executive Committee selected Elmer Brinkman to serve as a Vice President, filling the unexpired term of the late Francis R. Geigle. Also on the agenda were reports by the Treasurer and the Chairman of the Research Center project, and a reorganization of the various bank accounts required for the operations of The Round Table.

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The co-chairmen of the 1975 Battlefield Tour have confirmed that we will be leaving for Richmond at approximately 3:00 P.M. on Wednesday, April 30th, rather than on Thursday as has been our custom in the past. Headquarters for the tour will be the new Howard Johnson Motor Lodge in Richmond. Among the battlefields we will visit will be the 1864 campaign from Spotsylvania to Cold Harbor, the Seven Days, Petersburg, and Drury's Bluff. Special highlights will include a program honoring the late J. Ambler Johnston, cocktail parties at Berkley and the Confederate Museum, an optional trip to Williamsburg, the Quartermaster Museum at Fort Lee, and the many sites of Richmond itself. Joining us as speakers or guides will be Ed Bearss, Joe Cullen, and many local experts headed up by Hobson Goddin and Bill Mallory. The exact details and program will be available in the Battlefield Tour issue of the Newsletter which will be in the mail before April 1st.

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Treasurer Glen Wiche advises that anyone who remitted an additional \$6.50 with his dues payment to cover the cost of a subscription to Civil War History should disregard any renewal notice which may be received from the magazine. Several such notices were apparently mailed just before our check for the subscriptions was received.



## JANUARY MEETING

Combining a thorough knowledge of the military movements with a lively sense of humor, William C. "Jack" Davis presented seventy-eight members and guests with a most entertaining account of the Battle of New Market. After briefly outlining the reasons for the strategic importance of the Shenandoah Valley, Jack described the command situation in the valley in early 1864. On the federal side, in February of that year Franz Sigel had replaced Benjamin Kelley as chief of the Department of West Virginia. Despite his poor military performances in Europe and during the early years of the Civil War, Sigel's political influence continued to obtain important posts for him. One month after Sigel's appointment, the former Vice-President of the United States, John C. Breckinridge, was given the post of leading the undermanned Southern force in the Valley.

Sigel, with over 9,000 troops, began to move south at the same time as the Union force under Crook showed signs of advancing from West Virginia. Breckinridge, realizing he could only meet one of them with his small 5,100 man army, chose to march north toward Sigel so as to protect Lee's flank from attack through New Market Gap. The guerilla attacks of Imboden, McNeill and Mosby, bad weather, supply problems and incompetent planning slowed the federal column and caused numerous troop detachments. However, an advance party sent out by Sigel was still able to occupy New Market before the Confederates arrived.

Breckinridge at first determined to fight a defensive battle and thus took up position along Williamson's Hill, south of the town. However, the federals did not assault and, after receiving word that Crook had stopped, Breckinridge decided to attack. The federals immediately withdrew from New Market to the heights to the north, there establishing two lines approximately one-quarter mile apart. However, in one of the several erroneous decisions he was to make, Sigel had elected to leave two regiments as a rear guard at Mt. Jackson, far to the north.

After a lengthy artillery duel, the Confederates moved out and easily routed the first federal line. As the first line retreated, it caused serious disruption in the second line, thus illustrating the faulty nature of Sigel's tactics. Breckinridge continued his attack against the second line which, despite its momentary disorganization, put up stout resistance in the area of the Bushong House. During the assault a serious gap opened in the center of the Confederate line which Breckinridge was compelled to fill with his only available reserves, the V.M.I. cadets. Missing a golden opportunity to take advantage of this gap, Sigel did nothing until after the cadets had closed it. Only then did the Federal leader order a charge, but instead of first employing infantry, he initially sent his cavalry forward and the horsemen were easily repulsed.

Finally, Sigel did order an infantry assault, but by this time the fight had gone out of his troops and this charge too was beaten back with heavy loss. When the Confederates immediately counter-attacked, the Union army fled the field in a headlong rout. It was during this phase of the battle that the cadets participated in the assault on an artillery position, an episode that has become glamorized in song and story. As Jack pointed out, contrary to the legend, the gunners had already abandoned their position before the cadets reached it. Thus there was no hand-to-hand combat for possession of the battery and the one gun the cadets did capture was disabled and had been left behind by the Federals. However, much credit is still due the cadets who fought with the bravery of veterans and suffered ten of their number killed in action.

In retreat, Sigel and his army travelled in twenty-two hours the same distance it had taken him five days to cover in his advance. Ironically, he blamed his defeat on his being greatly outnumbered. In fact, he held the numerical advantage, but lost the battle because he was never able to employ his troops so as to utilize that advantage. Even his political connections could not save his command, as the government's eyes were

## TO THE CAMPFOLLOWERS (LADIES)

Our January program consisted of an excellent talk on Mary Lincoln by Dr. Gerhard Clausius. The doctor's version of Mary was done as if in play form wherein, in his mind's eye, her melodramatic life was unfolded to us complete with scenery, background music and choreography. Through the enthusiasm and imagination of Dr. Clausius, we watched the figure of Mary Lincoln, sometimes gay, often tragic, with her co-star, Mr. Lincoln, and a few supporting actors, play their parts on stage, directed admirably by Dr. Clausius.

To celebrate the birth month of our dear friend, Mr. Lincoln, the Campfollowers will be treated to readings from various works of Civil War literature. The February program will be presented by Pat Newman, Betsy Davis, and Mary Ellen Wehler. Try to be with us. Consider this a special invitation to all of you ladies who have husbands in the Round Table, but may not be aware that we gals also meet on the same night. The date for February is the 14th, the time is 5:30 P.M., and the place is The Book & Bottle, 17 E. Chestnut Street. To make your reservation, write or call Mary Ellen Wehler, 244 S. Elmwood Drive, Aurora, Illinois 60506, Phone 896-0169.



FOR SALE: Sharps "New Model 1863" .52 cal. percussion cavalry carbine in A-1 condition. Inspectors government markings clear and all original parts intact. Contact Frank A. Palumbo, 957 N. Springfield Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60651, or after 6:00 P.M. telephone 342-5489.

FOR SALE OR TRADE: Louisiana sword belt plate as Gavin, fig. 111(6). \$300.00 or will trade for Civil War Illinois material, books, etc. Contact R. Paprochi, 2754 N. Oak Park Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60635.

WANTED: Any information, documents, items, etc. pertaining to the whisky industry during the Civil War period. Contact Oscar Getz, The Barton Museum of Whisky History, 200 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60604.



finally opened to his incompetence. Within a few weeks he was replaced by David Hunter. Breckinridge, on the other hand, had performed brilliantly and by his victory had temporarily saved the Valley for the Confederacy, thus protecting its rich harvest and Lee's flank.

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The Lincolniana collection of J. Henri Ripstra will be auctioned off on February 13, 14 and 15 at the Ramada Inn in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Included in the sale will be a library of over 500 volumes, a Volk life mask, a Lincoln letter to Sheridan, and numerous examples of Lincoln-related medallion art. Anyone wishing a catalogue should send \$5.00 to Wm. O. Coats Agency, Auctioneers, Union City, Michigan 49094.

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Chicago newspapers have recently carried several reviews of new books on Civil War subjects. Glowing tributes were paid to the third volume of Shelby Foote's narrative series by Paul Angle in the Sun-Times and E. B. "Pete" Long in the Tribune. Both of these eminent reviewers are honorary life members of The Round Table. A well deserved hearty recommendation was given in the Sun-Times to Michael Shaara's brilliant novel "The



## THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Ankeny, Henry Giese. *Kiss Josey for Me!* Compiled and edited by Florence Marie Ankeny Cox. Santa Ana, California: Friis-Pioneer Press, 1974. Letters written 1861-1865 by Ankeny to his wife. \$10.00

Breihan, Carl W. *Quantrill and His Civil War Guerrillas*. New York: Promontory Press, 1974. c1959. Reprint. \$5.00

Coolidge, Olivia. *The Apprenticeship of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Scribner's, c1974. \$6.95

Jackson, Samuel Trevena. *Lincoln's Use of the Bible*. Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1974. c1909. \$5.00

Rogers, Hugh Cuthbert Basset. *The Confederates and Federals at War*. London: I. Allen, 1973. \$10.00



"Killer Angels" by Paul Sassone, a suburban journalist. Mr. Shaara's story of Gettysburg reads more like living history than fiction as he describes the battle through the eyes of its actual participants. As much as we agree with those three reviews, we must disagree with the criticism levied by Hoke Norris in the Tribune at Wiley Sword's "Shiloh, Bloody April". Our own reading and the comments of other newsletters indicate that this book is a magnificently researched description of a complicated battle. It deserves far better than Mr. Norris saw fit to give it.

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Our upcoming speaker for April, 1975, Col. Harold Simpson, was recently the recipient of two awards for his excellent research and writing in the fields of Confederate history. The Texas Chapter of the Stars and Bars presented him with their Dick Dowling Medal and the Texas Division of the U.D.C. awarded him their Certificate of Appreciation.

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The January, 1975 issue of the National Geographic contained a most informative article entitled "How We Found The Monitor" written by John G. Newton of the Duke University Marine Laboratory. Included with the text were many fine protographs, drawings and sketches of the ship, then and now, and the discovery procedure.

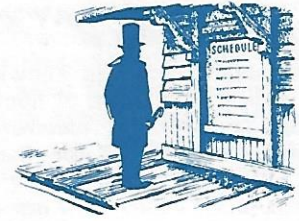
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In addition to being an outstanding Civil War authority and head of the history department at V.P.I., our old friend Dr. James I. "Bud" Robertson is also an experienced football official in the Atlantic Coast and Mason-Dixon Intercollegiate Conferences. In a recent talk before the Kentucky CWRT, Bud combined these two interests by announcing his All-Civil War football team. Among his selections were Abraham Lincoln as offensive coach, Jefferson Davis as defensive coach, Robert E. Lee as quarterback (for "his genius in calling the unexpected play"), U. S. Grant as fullback, John Hunt Morgan as cornerback, and Nathan Bedford Forrest as wide receiver. Although leaving him off the playing squad, Bud did assign William T. Sherman to the grounds crew in the special role of "fire marshal".

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In the 1890's, many Southern groups, including Confederate veterans' associations and the U.D.C., attempted to persuade Congress to authorize the return by the War Department of captured Southern battle flags. After the passage of the necessary legislation in 1905, those flags which could be identified were delivered to the various states whose regiments had carried them. However, approximately 200 flags could not be traced and these were sent to the Museum of the Confederacy. There they remain, a most unique collection illustrating almost every type of banner utilized in the Confederate armies. Recently, the collection has served as the basis for the research of

## BULLETIN BOARD



### FUTURE MEETINGS

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

February 14: Gordon Whitney on "The Battle of Nashville."

March 14: Frank Rankin on "The Orphan Brigade."

April 11: Harold Simpson on "The Texas Brigade, Lee's Grenadier Guard."

April 30, May 1-4: Annual Battlefield Tour to Richmond.

May 9: Ralph G. Newman on "The Last Full Measure of Devotion - Abraham Lincoln's Incredible Funeral."

June 13: Ladies Night, Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner, and Installation of Officers.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at LaSalle Hotel Coffee Shop; all members welcome.

### NEW MEMBER

Albert W. Indeck, 491 Monroe, Glencoe, Illinois 60022

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Raymond J. Jankovich, 1132 Hinswood Drive, Darien Illinois 60559

H. Michael Madaus as he prepared his forthcoming book, "The Battle Flags of the Confederate Army of Tennessee." Mr. Madaus, assistant curator of history at the Milwaukee Public Museum, plans to continue his project with future volumes on the flags of other Southern armies.

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The Defense Department has once again denied the recurring rumor that the oldest classified document hidden in government files is a Civil War memorandum detailing funds spent by General George A. Custer on a mistress. The woman, Annie Jones, claimed to have been a Confederate spy who slept with many federal officers, including Custer. During his lifetime, the cavalryman denied there was any truth to the story. The government states it has no proof that such a document ever even existed.

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A peak in the Great Smoky Mountains has been named for Stand Watie, the Cherokee chief who became a general in the Confederate army. Principal speaker at the dedication ceremonies was General William C. Westmoreland.

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The Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia has recently ruled that the owners of the famed Willard Hotel in Washington may tear it down to make way for a modern office complex. While the present structure is not the building made famous during Civil War days, it too has seen its share of history since being erected in 1897 on the site of the original hotel. Many groups dedicated to the preservation of historic architectural landmarks had joined in what now seems to have been a losing battle to save the Willard.

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Included in the Cumberland National Forest in eastern Kentucky is a 7,300 acre tract of wilderness that is set aside solely for the use of hunters who use only primitive weapons, such as muzzle-loading rifles.