

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XL, Number 8

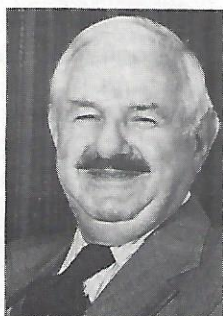
Chicago, Illinois

April, 1980

RALPH G. NEWMAN ON THE LIGHTS GO ON AGAIN AT FORD'S THEATER

Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., is probably the best known site of a crime in American history. There, in April, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was mortally wounded. At The Round Table meeting on April 11, the founder of our Round Table, and thus Civil War Round Tables everywhere, Ralph G. Newman, will tell the story of the Theater—from its beginnings to its reopening in 1968. It is a subject Ralph knows well since he was instrumental in getting the lights turned back on.

From 1865 until 1968, Ford's Theater ceased to exist. It was used as an office building, a storage facility and then as a second rate museum. Attempts to secure federal funds for the restoration of the building met with opposition from those who objected to creating what might be called "a monument to murder." Finally, a plan was evolved to restore the building as a theater, exactly as it was on the fatal Good Friday, April 14, 1865, when it



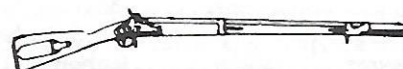
RALPH G. NEWMAN

became associated with one of the most infamous crimes in history. The restoration was to pay tribute to Lincoln's love for the theater and it would be operated as a living theater. It would not present "Our American Cousin," and reenact the assassination of our sixteenth president, but present fresh theatrical productions, many of which it was hoped would be by young American writers. A museum would be created under the theater so that persons might be exposed to the Lincoln story and so that the events of April 14 could be related and presented in an accurate manner.

An organization was created to function on behalf of the National Park Service and operate the theater—the Ford's Theater Society. Ralph became the president and the reopening was sponsored by the Illinois Sesquicentennial Commission of which he was chairman. The theater was formally reopened early in 1968. It functions today as an exciting, beautiful theater which has been meticulously restored to the exact condition of 1865, except for some unobtrusive modern conveniences.

In his talk, Ralph will tell the story of the theater from its original beginnings as a converted church to its emergence as the leading theater in wartime Washington; its subsequent history during the century following Lincoln's death; and its present status including the political maneuvering needed to accomplish the restoration.

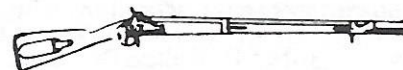
To describe Ralph Newman's many activities and accomplishments is almost impossible in the space available here.



390TH REGULAR MEETING
RALPH G. NEWMAN
ON
THE LIGHTS GO ON
AGAIN AT FORD'S THEATER

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 1980

Adventurer's Club
310 South Michigan Avenue
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



SPECIAL MEETING SITE

Due to the unavailability of our regular meeting room at the Bar Association, the April meeting, as noted above, will be held at the Adventurer's Club, 310 South Michigan Avenue. Since the Adventurer's Club must know in advance exactly how many to prepare for, it is *very important* that you return your reservation card, or call the Book Shop, by April 8.

The best we can do is point out the highlights. As most know, Ralph, at the age of 22, established a general bookshop in Chicago. As everyone knows, that shop is now the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop. And, as everyone also knows, Ralph organized the many customers of the Book Shop in 1940 and The Civil War Round Table was born. He has been its guiding light ever since. Appropriately, he is a Honorary Award Life Member and received the Nevins-Freeman Award in 1975.

Ralph is the author, co-author or editor of nine books including *The American Iliad*, *The Civil War Digest*, and *Abraham Lincoln: His Story in His Own Words*. He has been recognized for his work with honorary degrees and other

(Continued on page 2.)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chesnut Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Phone: (312) 944-3085

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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 Ward C. Smidl, 1104 Whippoorwill Lane, Palatine, Illinois 60067.



(Continued from page 1.)

awards from seven universities and numerous other organizations. He currently serves as a trustee of Lincoln College; president of both the Ulysses S. Grant Association and the Stephen A. Douglas Association; a member of the Board of Regents of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois; and a member of the executive committee of the Urban Libraries Council. Among the countless positions he has held are President of the Illinois State Historical Society; the Board of Directors of the Chicago Public Library; and, of course, President of The Civil War Round Table.

The 95th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, a Belvidere, Illinois, High School Civil War Round Table, will conduct a full day of activity related to the Civil War and its era on Saturday, May 17 in Belvidere. At 2 p.m., Tom Zito of Galena, who portrays General Grant, will assist the high school students in the presentation of a headstone at the grave of a Confederate soldier buried in Belvidere's city cemetery. The soldier, Private P. G. Lafevere, died in 1897 in Belvidere and was buried by members of the local G.A.R. The Belvidere High School Band will play appropriate music.

That evening, at 7:30 p.m., Mr. Zito will present a program concerning the life of General Grant. Zito, as Grant, answers questions from the audience about almost every aspect of Grant's life. The cost of tickets for the evening program is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and senior citizens. To order tickets, or receive further information, write: Tickets, 95th Ill. Vol. Inf., Belvidere High School, Belvidere, Illinois 61008. Phone: (815) 547-6345.

Members on the speaking trail recently included: Marshall Krolick who addressed the Kansas City Round Table on March 25 and the St. Louis Round Table on March 26 on "Stuart's Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign"; William Mallory who spoke to the Prison Round Table in Richmond in February; and Donald Sikorski who presented a slide talk on the war in Virginia to the Salt Creek Round Table on March 7.

Although the military treasure room in the National Archives in Washington was always locked, and the combination known to only six persons, an 1861 note handwritten by President Lincoln to his Army Adjutant General disappeared. The theft was discovered last July, but nobody knows when it actually disappeared. The note had an archival stamp on the back. Access to the military treasure room has been cut to three persons, and no one is permitted in the room alone now.

The Virginia Senate recently voted to restore a law giving pensions to widows and daughters of Confederate soldiers, first passed in 1895 but accidentally wiped out two years ago in a streamlining of state codes. The legislation was only a formality—there was still money in the pension fund and pensions were not stopped when the modernized code was passed. In fact, no one noticed until recently that the code no longer contained the authorization. Two widows and 211 daughters now receive the pensions.

Virginia is one of several Southern states which has established pensions for Civil War widows. Another is South Carolina where the House recently voted to raise the pension from \$200 annually to \$1,200. The only surviving widow in that state is Daisy Cave, 92. She is the widow of Confederate veteran Benjamin Cave whom she married when she was about 20 and he 75. According to Daisy, "even long years after the war, he never wanted to have anything to do with Yankees."

The U.S. Veterans Administration reports that, nationwide, 60 Union spouses and 30 Confederate spouses are drawing pension payments. There are also 106 children of Union veterans and 24 children of Confederate soldiers receiving benefits. Three Confederate spouses and five Union veterans' children are in Illinois.

MARCH MEETING

Sherman's march through the Carolinas in early 1865—and why he did it—was the subject of remarks by Dr. Ralph G. Barrett when he addressed 107 members and guests at The Round Table meeting on March 14. The march, Dr. Barrett explained, was in keeping with Sherman's philosophy of "total war". Although little of major military importance occurred, it did have the demoralizing effect Sherman sought.

Dr. Barrett began his talk by noting that Sherman did not conduct "total war" out of a sense of cruelty or barbarism. Instead, he believed that by destroying the enemy's resources, both his capacity to wage war and his spirit would be destroyed. This would be both the quickest and the most efficient means of winning. He developed this philosophy in 1862 and applied it in both Mississippi and, on a larger scale, in Georgia. Because of what he did in Georgia, Dr. Barrett noted, Sherman's star rose to great heights even though he fought no enemy soldiers. Some even believed that he should replace Grant.

In discussing the march through the Carolinas, Dr. Barrett first pointed out that all the rules of warfare called for Sherman to move quickly from Savannah to Richmond to aid Grant against Lee. But, Sherman was convinced that total war in the Carolinas would have a devastating effect. His first objective was Columbia, South Carolina; from there he would move to Goldsborough, North Carolina. During this campaign Sherman cut himself off from supplies, meaning he had to forage. However, this was to be an orderly activity. The wanton destruction which took place was not authorized or condoned.

When Sherman began his march the meager Confederate forces available to oppose him were scattered. Thus, the Federal troops advanced unimpeded and they left the lower part of South Carolina through which they passed in smoldering ruins. Columbia, which was crowded with refugees fleeing the advancing Union army, fell on February 17. As Dr. Barrett explained, there were already many fires (burning cotton) before Sherman entered the city. However, these were extinguished and were not the cause of the major fire which destroyed the city. That fire, he said, was primarily the result of whiskey (drunken soldiers) and the wind which helped spread the flames. But however it started, Sherman felt the burning of the city was a relatively trifling matter since it might hasten the end of the war. He thus refused to apologize, a fact that incensed southerners.

Sherman remained in the city two days and then resumed his march. North Carolina, toward which he was heading, was in a state of despair. However, Sherman issued orders for the more gentle treatment of that state, but nothing about not burning the pine forests, which were burned whenever possible. The federal advance was impeded by heavy rains and by the great number of refugees who were following Sherman's army.

By mid-March, Sherman was across the Cape Fear River and on his way to Goldsborough. However, he was moving carelessly. He let his columns string out and, as a result, was surprised and almost beaten by Joe Johnston at Bentonville on March 19. Only by bringing up the rest of his army at the last minute was he able to drive back the Confederates.

Upon reaching Goldsborough, Sherman visited Grant at City Point and asked to join him in the fight against Lee. Grant told him to get ready to move on Richmond even though he knew Richmond would fall before Sherman got there. (Grant did not really want the unruly Westerners to join him, but did not want to say no to Sherman.)

With the fall of Richmond, Sherman had nothing left to do but move west in search of Johnston. Johnston visited the fleeing Jefferson Davis in Greensborough seeking permission to negotiate surrender terms with Sherman—Davis reluctantly consented. Sherman and Johnston met in Raleigh and Sherman gave very generous terms—too generous. What he offered was of doubtful legality and even opened the door for the restoration of slavery. But these generous terms, Dr. Barrett pointed out, did show that with Sherman total war was a strategic, not a vindictive matter.

Grant arrived in Raleigh on April 24 and met with Johnston to negotiate new terms. A few days later New York papers arrived carrying stories about Stanton's charges that Sherman disobeyed Lincoln's orders and would allow Davis to escape for Banker's gold. Sherman was enraged and departed Raleigh on April 29 for Washington to try and clear his name.

In retrospect, Dr. Barrett said, Sherman considered his march through the Carolinas his most important action—he felt it had a direct bearing on the end of the war. In Dr. Barrett's opinion, however, although it was a triumph of physical endurance, this method of warfare had little direct effect on Lee (he believes the defeat of Hood in Tennessee was more important). Even Lee's shortages of rations were not due to Sherman's actions. Nevertheless, Sherman did help undermine the morale of the south and many of Lee's men did desert to go and protect their families.

In summing up, Dr. Barrett said that Sherman, as a strategist, was far ahead of his time—his movements were more like a modern panzer unit. And, he was not a barbarian. Total war was a necessity—as Sherman himself said, "war is cruelty and you cannot refine it."

The 2nd Confederate History Symposium will be held at Hill Jr. College in Hillsboro, Texas on Saturday, April 19. Five historians, including Dr. James Pohl of Southwest Texas State and Dr. Ron Taylor of Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, will speak on "Texas in the Confederacy, 1861-1865." A film will be shown during the luncheon, and several re-activated Civil War units will be on hand to stage a simulated skirmish and demonstrate marching and firing techniques. For further information and reservations, write: The Confederate Research Center, Hill Jr. College, P.O. Box 619, Hillsboro, Texas 76645.

The annual reenactment of the Battle of New Market will be held Sunday, May 11, 1980, at the New Market Battlefield Park in New Market, Virginia. There will also be an artillery and infantry drill competition on Saturday, and the winners of the artillery competition will represent the Confederates and the Union in a night firing demonstration on Saturday night prior to the reenactment. For further information, write: New Market Battlefield Park, P.O. Box 1864, New Market, Virginia 22844.

The drawing for the free 1980 Battlefield Tour to the Shenandoah Valley will be held at the April meeting. Tickets, at \$5 each, will be sold up to the time of the drawing. They are also available by mail: write to treasurer Marv Sanderman, Civil War Round Table, 18 E. Chestnut, Chicago 60611.

THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Bauer, Charles J. *The Lincoln-Douglas Triangle*. Silver Spring, Md.: Charles J. Bauer, 1980. \$7.95

Eyereit, Frank Edgar, Jr. *Brierfield; Plantation Home of Jefferson Davis*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980. \$8.95

Clark, Clifford E., Jr. *Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman for a Middle Class America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979. \$14.95

Franks, Kenny Arthur. *Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation*. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1979. \$14.95

Huggins, Nathan Irvin. *Slave and Citizen: The Life of Frederick Douglass*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1980. \$9.95

Nitchkey, Charles R. *Gettysburg, 1863 and Today*. Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1980. \$8.50

Powell, Lawrence N. *New Masters: Northern Planters during the Civil War and Reconstruction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. \$20.00

Schildt, John W. *Four Days in October*. The Author, 1978. \$1.50. Lincoln's trip to the valley of the Antietam, Oct. 1-4, 1862.

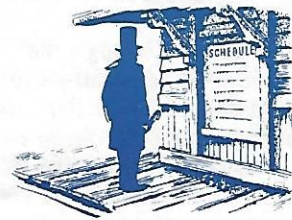
Webb, Ross A. *Kentucky in the Reconstruction Era*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979. \$4.95

Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi, is developing plans for a "Deep South Civil War Studies" program. In an announcement issued to interested individuals in December, the College said, "Central Mississippi is rich in history. The activity in this area during the Civil War gives historical romance to the region not found in any other part of the country. Mississippians need to give life to this history through study, media, historic preservation, research, exhibits and restoration of historical sites."

The College hopes to have some phases of the program in operation by this June. Early emphasis will be given to four areas: Exhibits and media presentations suitable for tourist viewing; short non-credit courses on Civil War subjects; full college credit courses; research by students on the Civil War in that area; restoration of several small Civil War period buildings on the college campus; and incorporation of the program into the national Elderhostel activity for retired persons.

For further information, or to offer suggestions, write: Deep South Civil War Studies, Mississippi College, Clinton, Mississippi 39056.

Chicago Chapter # 858, United Daughters of the Confederacy, is holding a banquet on Saturday, May 17, to honor the president general of the United Daughters, Mrs. Zack Huggins of Yazoo City, Mississippi. All Round Table members are invited to attend. For further information, call or write: Mrs. Richard A. Wilkin, 16700 S. Oconto Avenue, Tinley Park, Illinois 60477. (312) 532-3901.



BULLETIN BOARD

FUTURE MEETINGS

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

April 11: Ralph G. Newman on "The Lights Go On Again At Ford's Theater."

May 9: Dr. Walter L. Brown on "Albert Pike as Confederate General."

May 14-18: Annual Battlefield Tour to the Shenandoah Valley.

June 13: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner and installation of officers. Recipient of Award: Edwin C. Bearss.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at Wieboldt's Men's Grill, 9th Floor, State and Madison; all members welcome.

Last Tuesday of each month: Informal noon luncheon meetings at Caravelle Motel, River Road and Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont; all members welcome.

NEW MEMBERS

Kevin W. Dillon, 228 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 1540, Chicago, Illinois 60601.

Erik A. Ernst, P.O. Box 61, Glenview, Illinois 60025.

Paul M. Klekner, 1310 Larkin Lane, Ingleside, Illinois 60041.

Apologies to Win Stracke for misspelling his name in the change of address section of last month's newsletter.

Harold Holzer, an author, lecturer and researcher on the subject of portraits, prints and sculptures of Abraham Lincoln has received the 1980 Barondess/Lincoln Award of the Civil War Round Table of New York. The award, given annually since 1962 in memory of the late Dr. Benjamin Barondess of New York, 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." It was presented on February 12 at the Cooper Union, site of Lincoln's most important speech in New York.

Holzer, Director of Promotion at WNET, New York, has lectured widely to Lincoln groups and Round Tables and has engaged in research with such Lincoln authorities as Stefan Lorant and Lloyd Ostendorf. He is a regular columnist for the *Lincoln Herald* and a contributor to *Civil War Times Illustrated* and other publications.

As might be expected, Federal Communications Commissioner Robert E. Lee has experienced a number of humorous incidents because of his name. One of his favorites concerns the time he checked into a hotel in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. As Lee signed the register, the clerk looked up at him and exclaimed, "You didn't sign in *last time* you were here."