

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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Chicago, Illinois

December, 1980

DR. ROBERT G. HARTJE ON GENERAL EARL VAN DORN

A reexamination of the checkered career of Confederate general Earl Van Dorn will highlight the Round Table meeting of December 12. Speaking that evening will be Dr. Robert G. Hartje, Professor of History at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and author of a book about Van Dorn. In his talk, Dr. Hartje intends to apply some new theories and interpretations of Confederate generalship to his subject.

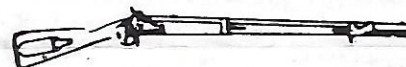
Earl Van Dorn was born in Mississippi in 1820 and graduated from the Military Academy in 1842 (52 in a class of 56). He distinguished himself in the Mexican War under Generals Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott, and fought the Indians in Texas as a member of the famous Second Cavalry. In 1861 he entered the Confederate Army and was assigned to Texas where some Union forces surrendered to him. Late that year Van Dorn was transferred to the critical Virginia theater where great things were expected of him by his personal friend and commander in chief Jefferson Davis. By this time he had been promoted to major general.



DR. ROBERT G. HARTJE

In January, 1862, Van Dorn was made commander of the Army of the West in the Trans-Mississippi, but, finding himself in command of a sizable army, failed. He was defeated at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, and, later, with the Army of Mississippi, at Corinth. Van Dorn was promptly relegated to the secondary role of cavalry commander in Mississippi and Tennessee. An expert horseman, he flourished as a cavalry officer adept at harassing and springing raids on enemy troops movements and outposts. One of his most noteworthy achievements was the destruction, in December, 1862, of Grant's supply depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi. This action temporarily disrupted Grant's projected operations against Vicksburg. Van Dorn was shot to death in his headquarters at Spring Hill, Tennessee in May, 1863, allegedly by a jealous husband.

Robert G. Hartje joined the history department of Wittenberg University in 1956 and has been a full professor there since 1965 (he also served for a period as chairman of the department). He received the B.A. (1948), M.A. (1950) and Ph.D. (1955) from Vanderbilt University. In 1964 he received a Danforth Foundation award for post-doctoral studies at Yale University. In addition to Wittenberg, he has taught at Arkansas State Teachers College, the University of Georgia Centers at Augusta and Columbus, the



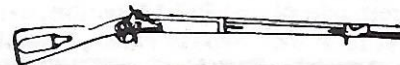
396th REGULAR MEETING

* * *

ROBERT G. HARTJE
ON
GENERAL VAN DORN

* * *

Midland Hotel, Wright Room
172 W. Adams
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



NOTICE: MEETING SITE

As noted above, the December meeting will be held at the Midland Hotel. The Wright Room is on the lower level.

University of Nebraska, Ohio State, and Middle Tennessee State.

A frequent contributor of book reviews and articles to various journals, Dr. Hartje is the author of *Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General and Bicentennial, U.S.A.: Pathways to Celebration*. Dr. Hartje is a member of the Southern Historical Association and the Ohio Academy of History among other organizations. From 1970-1972, he directed the bicentennial project of the American Association for State and Local History in Nashville.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chesnut 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 Ward C. Smidl, 1104 Whippoorwill Lane, Palatine, Illinois 60067.



The Williamsburg Round Table has decided to erect a four-foot granite marker with a simple inscription at the place where John Pelham was mortally wounded in the Battle of Kelly's Ford, March 17, 1863. It will replace the old, weather-beaten wooden sign. The new marker will cost \$700. Contributions can be sent to Williamsburg CWRT, P.O. Box 1866, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185. Make checks payable to Pelham Marker Fund, Williamsburg CWRT.

An ad hoc committee of friends and students of Dr. Bell I. Wiley have begun a drive to raise at least \$2,500, the minimum necessary to establish a Bell I. Wiley Memorial Book Fund in the Emory University Library. Such gifts to the Library, Dr. Wiley once told Mrs. Wiley, would be the best way he would wish to be remembered. The interest from this fund will be used for the purchase of books in the field of history. Each volume will have an appropriate book plate with his name.

Last year Emory received a Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and gifts to the book fund in Professor Wiley's memory will qualify for matching funds. Of course, they are also tax deductible. Contributions should be sent to: Bell I. Wiley Memorial Book Fund, Treasurer's Office, c/o Challenge Grant Program, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia 30322. Make your check payable to Emory University.

John Hope Franklin, who was recently elected an Honorary Award Life Member, has sent this message to The Round Table: "Thanks for your letter as well as the pleasant surprise in the form of an Honorary Life Membership in The Civil War Round Table. It is a most generous recognition of my efforts in the field, and it will inspire me to press ahead on some projects that are germane to the interests of the Round Table." Dr. Franklin retired as a professor of history at the University of Chicago last spring and now lives in Durham, North Carolina. His life and work was the subject of an article in the September issue of *Chicago* ("The unfinished history of John Hope Franklin" by Jack Star).

The National Park Service wants to buy the site of the Battle of New Market Heights near Richmond where nine regiments of colored troops won a bloody engagement with the Confederacy. A bill is before Congress to authorize expenditure of \$2.6 million to buy the 201 acres in Henrico County, Virginia where the battle took place. However, Irwin G. Rice, a research associate at Auburn University in Alabama who calls history his hobby, and who claims to have dedicated the last five years to researching the battle, says the government has missed the actual battle site by a mile. The Park Service is standing its ground, however, relying on the opinion of Ed Bearss who visited the site and showed precisely where the action took place.

A rare Civil War cannon, found at Appomattox Park and valued at nearly \$25,000, may become part of the collection at the Museum of the Confederacy. The bronze 3 1/2 inch Clark rifle, Model 1861, was manufactured by John Clark & Co. of New Orleans. It was acquired by the state of Virginia in 1932 and placed at Appomattox's Wayside Park. The cannon would be on permanent loan to the Museum.

PERMANENT MEETING SITE

At a meeting just prior to the regular meeting on November 14, the Executive Committee selected the Como Inn as the permanent site for Round Table meetings. However, as noted on page 1, the December meeting will be at the Midland Hotel. Space was unavailable at the Como Inn that month.

NOVEMBER MEETING

A fascinating, well-illustrated talk about Civil War medicine was presented to the 99 members and guests who attended The Round Table meeting on November 14. The speaker was Dr. Gordon E. Dammann who brought along his personal collection of medical instruments and equipment.

Gordon began with a discussion of the medical service itself and some of the people who were important to the story of Civil War medicine. He noted that the outbreak of the War caught the medical service unprepared. And, because the surgeon general at the time thought the War would be over quickly, few preparations were even begun.

In April, 1862, Dr. William A. Hammond was named surgeon general with the rank of brigadier general—he thus jumped numerous men who were senior to him and made many enemies. Hammond was a man of great stature who began turning the medical service around. However, he also issued Circular Number 6 banning the use of calomel, a therapeutic agent, which was widely used but which he suspected was dangerous (he was later proved right). This was seized upon by his enemies and he soon found himself replaced by a new Surgeon General, Joseph Barnes. Fortunately, as Gordon explained, Barnes was far-sighted enough to keep going what Hammond had started.

The Confederate medical service was headed by a surgeon named Moore. His right hand man was Hunter McGuire and in charge of Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond was Dr. McGaw. Chimborazo's extremely low mortality rate, Gordon explained, was due to McGaw's policies which stressed cleanliness and putting ambulatory men to work in the gardens growing fresh food.

Overseeing much of the work of the Union medical service during the war was the Sanitary Commission which was founded in 1861 by Reverend Henry Bellows and Dr. Elijah Harris. The Commission helped insure cleanliness, mail delivery, etc. throughout the War. (After the War, Harris founded the Public Health Service).

The main problem the medical service had to deal with was disease. Three out of four deaths were due to such diseases as typhoid fever, dysentery, T.B., diphtheria, pneumonia, measles, scurvy, etc. The surgeons combated them with hospital alcohol, a mercurial compound (calomel), quinine (to lessen fever), bromide (against gangrene), iodine, arrowroot, morphine and opium. (Gordon noted that many men came back addicted to the latter drugs, and that until the turn of the century they were openly available in apothecary shops). Bleeding as a form of treatment had largely gone out of fashion by the time of the Civil War, although it continued to be used into the 1880s and 1890s. In the south, Gordon explained, drugs were often not available because of the blockade and doctors used a lot of roots and bark.

Gordon explained that most injuries during the Civil War were caused by the minie ball. Because it was made of soft lead, it would do a great deal of damage. The next most frequent cause of injury was artillery. Sword wounds, by comparison, were quite infrequent. Gordon laid to rest the idea that Civil War surgeons were knife-wielding barbarians. Of about 174,000 gunshot wounds to the extremities, only 29,000 resulted in amputations (about 7,000 of the amputees died).

Primary amputation (within 48 hours) was an accepted form of practice at the time. It reduced the spread of infection and it was a rapid and efficient means of treating

many casualties. The anesthetic of choice was chloroform. After putting a man under, the surgeon would probe for the bullet, often with his finger so as not to puncture an artery. If there was much damage to muscle and tissue, the arm or leg would be amputated (Gordon noted that they usually tried harder to save arms). There were two techniques of amputation—the guillotine and the flap. The latter left two flaps of skin which could be sewed.

In order to transport the wounded and sick, an ambulance corps was established (Gordon noted that casualties had laid on the field after First Manassas for weeks because there was no way to transport them). In the western theater hospital ships were often used to bring the wounded back to major cities—in the East they used hospital trains.

The ambulance corps was only one of the innovations to come out of the Civil War. Another was a vast network of hospitals, a nursing corps, new surgical techniques, and greater use of anesthetics. In general, Gordon said, the war was a boon to medical knowledge. (He added that even though the reason for surgical cleanliness was not understood until later, some Civil War surgeons began sterilizing their instruments when they discovered infection and mortality were decreased as a result).

In concluding his talk, Gordon also briefly mentioned two of the nonmedical duties of Civil War surgeons. They were in charge of the fife and drum corps—these men would be used as stretcher bearers during battles. Surgeons also had to keep track of the weather and send regular reports back to Washington.

THE IGNORED WAR

Are contemporary historians ignoring the Civil War? Yes, says Eric Foner, professor of history at City College of the City University of New York. In an excerpt from his new book, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, which appeared in *The New York Times* on September 14, Foner maintains that "Apart from the centennial observance of 1961-65, the war goes unmentioned." In explaining this situation, he says that "Traditionally, the war framed and provided unity to the inquiries of American historians...the eclipse of Civil War studies...was intimately related to the rise of the 'new histories,' which fostered a concern with the culture and life styles of 'anonymous Americans' and a retreat from the analysis of institutions and events, politics, ideas...For these new fields, the war seemed to have little relevance."

Foner believes this development is very unfortunate because "No satisfactory portrait of the American experience can emerge from an attempt to read the Civil War out of American history. From the standpoint of physical destruction, loss of life, structural changes in the economy, the introduction of new ideas and the diffusion of enduring sectional passions, the war shaped and altered the lives and consciousness of several generations of Americans...The age of the Civil War, moreover, raised the decisive questions of our national existence—war and peace, relations between the states and the Government, the balance between force and consent in generating obedience to authority, and, of course, the pervasive problem of race." Foner concludes that "If historians wish to recapture the general reading public and student audience that now seem alienated from the discipline, (of history) perhaps they should again direct their attention to the Civil War."

THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Carter, Samuel. *The Final Fortress: The Campaign for Vicksburg 1862-1863*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980. \$19.95.

Clausius, Gerhard P. "Mr. Lincoln Goes to Gettysburg." *Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin Bulletin* #35. (Madison) 1980.

Miller, Rex. *Croxtan's Raid*. Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1979.

Foster, Samuel T. *One of Cleburne's Command. The Civil War Reminiscences of Capt. Samuel T. Foster, Granbury's Texas Brigade, CSA*. Edited by Norman D. Brown. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980. \$14.95

Keeler, William Frederick. *Aboard the USS Florida, 1863-1865*. The Letters of Paymaster William Frederick Keeler, U.S. Navy, to his Wife, Anna. Edited by Robert W. Daly. New York: Arno Press, 1980. \$20.00. Reprint of the edition of 1968 issued by the United States Naval Institute.

Lattimer, John K. *Kennedy and Lincoln. Medical and Ballistic Comparisons of Their Assassinations*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980. \$19.95

Pullen, John J. *The Twentieth Maine. A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1980. \$17.50. A welcome reprint of the 1957 edition.

Perry, Lewis and Michael Fellman, eds. *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979. \$20.00

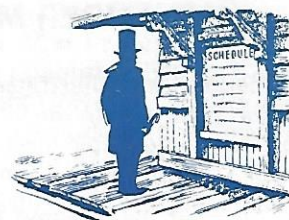
Wiley, Bell I., editor. *Slaves no More. Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980. \$21.50

Wilson, Charles Reagan. *Baptized in Blood. The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980. \$19.95

The Virginia Division United Daughters of the Confederacy has begun the task of writing the histories of all of Virginia's regiments that fought in the Civil War. It is an awesome undertaking since there were approximately 90 Virginia regiments and batteries and over 100,000 men involved in the War. Historians who have already consented to give their aid and direction in the actual writing of these histories include Dr. James I. "Bud" Robertson of VPI and Robert Krick, chief historian at Fredericksburg. The goal now is to have six regimental histories in print by the summer of 1981.

To aid in the project, the Virginia Daughters are seeking the help and support from all who had ancestors who fought with Virginia units. They are asking that such persons send them the following: veteran's full name, unit, date of birth, date and place of death, letters, diaries, photographs, etc. This information and material should be sent to Harold E. Howard, 808 Sanhill Drive, Lynchburg, Virginia 24502. Or call him at (804) 237-0928.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Como Inn, 546 N. Milwaukee Avenue, the second Friday in each month except as noted.

December 12: Robert G. Hartje on "General Van Dorn". Meeting will be held at the Midland Hotel.

January 9: Howard C. Westwood on "The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War".

February 13: Marshall D. Krolick on "Stuart's Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign".

March 13: To be announced.

April 10: 400th Regular Meeting.

April 29-May 3: Annual Battlefield Tour to Vicksburg.

May 8: Archie P. McDonald on "Jed Hotchkiss, Jackson's Topographer".

June 5: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner and installation of officers. Recipient of award: James I. Robertson, Jr.

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

NEW MEMBER

Patricia A. Pepin, 100 West Thackery Place, Mt. Prospect, Illinois 60056. (312) 392-6722. Pat's special interest is in Abraham Lincoln.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Richard J. Percy, 1142 Florence Avenue, Apt. B, Westmont, Illinois 60559.

Hamilton Pitt, 515 W. Briar, #705, Chicago, Illinois 60657.

An association has been formed in Memphis to collect money for the erection of a memorial to Patrick R. Cleburne on the field on which he gave his life—Franklin, Tennessee. The proposed monument will be an eight foot tall granite memorial fronted by a bronze bust of the general. Anyone wishing to make a contribution may write: Patrick Cleburne Memorial Association, 4613 Forrest Oak Way #3, Memphis, Tennessee 38118.

A research team using ground-penetrating radar has found what may be the foundation of the Taylor house which was destroyed by the Union army during the first weeks of the Federal assault on Petersburg in June, 1864. Petersburg National Battlefield Park superintendent Wallace Elms says that "From the size, location, and depth of the feature the radar found, we believe this is the 'big house' . . . that means that a 16' x 34' standing foundation located nearby is an outbuilding rather than the main house." Exploratory trenches must be dug before a final determination can be made. During the siege of Petersburg, the ruins of the Taylor house served as a convenient reference point for artillerists. Similar radar explorations have been carried out at Fort Morton where they revealed where the Union forces had constructed defense earthworks, and at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.