



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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Karen Osborne on Women in the Civil War

In the tumultuous years of the 1860's, the lives of America's women underwent revolutionary changes which thrust them into new and ever broadening roles. The 426th meeting of The Round Table on December 9 will be the setting for Karen Osborne's review of some of these roles. This will be Karen's second appearance as a speaker at our meetings, as she spoke to the Nevins-Freeman Assembly last June on "The Saga of Mother Bickerdyke."

During the Civil War, women entered fields that had been traditionally closed to them. For the first time in America, to any great extent, women shared in the nation's agricultural, business and industrial enterprises. As the men disappeared from farms, wives and daughters went into the fields. In every state, women put their shoulders to the plow. Though most of the women returned to home duties after the war, they still had proved that when the crisis came, they were able and willing to share the load. The times were such that women also entered all parts of the military, from the newly created army nursing corps of the North to espionage. Dressed as men, they even entered the ranks as common soldiers.



Karen Osborne

Our speaker's involvement in the Civil War developed through her husband's strong interest and his participation in the activities of the Milwaukee Round Table. Bill Osborne is currently Program Chairman for the Milwaukee group. Though Karen was unable to participate in the activities of many of the groups that Bill joined, her exclusion led her to question the roles of women during those eventful times of the 1860's. She states, "I found that few women had time to stand around in starched crinoline dresses, sipping mint juleps and waiting for Rhett Butler. They were too busy working to be just pretty ornaments. I have found that there was a stirring movement going on in the lives of these women, a movement of responsibility and awareness, a movement founded in response to the needs of the country and of their husbands, and formulated to fill the spaces left by the men fighting in the lines. It was truly a revolutionary era for women. This total involvement of the women was so obvious that an Englishman visiting in this country during the war was prompted to remark, 'I question whether ancient or modern history can furnish an example of a conflict which was so much of a woman's war as this.' "

Karen is a native of Elkhorn, Wisconsin and received a



426th Regular Meeting

Karen Osborne
on
Women in the Civil War

Friday, December 9, 1983

Hotel Continental
505 N. Michigan
San Juan/Kingston Room, 11th Floor
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
\$13.00 per person
Entree: Cantonese Combination Plate



Bachelor of Music Education from Milton College, Milton, Wisconsin in 1973. While her husband Bill was stationed at the Camp LeJeune Marine Corps Base, she taught at nearby Coastal Community College in Jacksonville, North Carolina in 1975-76. She has spoken before various groups on women's roles during the Civil War, including history classes at Carroll College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is currently a cornet player in the First Brigade Band of Milwaukee, which organization is a recreation of the band that marched with Sherman in the campaigns of 1864-65. Her participation in the band also includes service as narrator and assistant historian for the group. She is preparing a history of the First Brigade band which she hopes will be completed and in print next year. The Osborne family includes two children, Van and Jessica, who will be sure-fire Civil War buffs growing up with Karen and Bill as parents.

November meeting

The problems of discipline and ability to command were the focal points of Dr. William M. Anderson's talk on "Colonel Lawler and the Lawless 18th Illinois, when he spoke to the 89 members and guests at the November 11th meeting of The Round Table.

Civil War soldiers, Dr. Anderson said, have been characterized as free-spirited, independent, egalitarian and amateur. The Civil War was the conflict in which amateurs were led by amateurs. It appears that these citizen-soldiers were most responsive if officers used consideration, persuasion and good example. At the outset, the leadership style that worked best appeared to be one that was a mixture between strength on one hand and motivation, discipline and affection.

The 18th Illinois was raised in John A. Logan's old 9th Congressional District, made up of the 15 most southern counties of the state. It was the first volunteer regiment out of southern Illinois and thus it should have represented the flower of Egypt, and the best and most loyal men from the section of Illinois that was certainly suspect in terms of loyalty.

The regiment was sworn-in in May, 1861 and the mustering officer was Capt. U. S. Grant. Grant was impressed. He wrote to his wife, "I have really been disappointed in the people of Egypt. It is the prevailing opinion abroad that the people of this section of the state are ignorant, disloyal, intemperate and generally heathenish. The fact is that the regiment formed here is the equal, if not the superior of any other regiment raised in this state for all the virtues with which they are charged as being deficient."

Despite Grant's good first impression, Dr. Anderson maintains that when you study the 18th Illinois, you'll find it uncharacteristically bad. Any regiment will have its share of troublemakers and bad characters. However, problems of conduct, lack of discipline and an abundance of bad actors seemed to be very prevalent in this regiment. Col. Lawler himself admitted that this regiment's reputation for fighting among themselves was notorious.

When the war began, Mike Lawler was 46 and a farmer down on the Ohio River in Gallatin county. Unlike many of the elected officers, he was experienced, having served as a captain in the militia. But more significantly, he had commanded a company in the 3rd Illinois in the Mexican War and had led them well. However, his successor, Daniel Brush, wrote, "Evidently there has been a great lack of discipline in this regiment. I like the colonel on some accounts but sense that he has not the ability or systematic ability to manage a regiment of men. The great and very necessary lump of order is very slightly developed in his cranium."

In Anderson's view, Lawler's leadership style can be characterized as being reactionary and compulsive; he took very forceful measures and his style was to make examples out of people and to use reprisals. Given the nature of the 18th Illinois, it would have taken exceptional leadership and finesse to control this bunch and Lawler wasn't equal to the task.

Dr. Anderson feels that anyone would agree that the 18th Illinois was a tough bunch to handle. During a campaign in Kentucky, one man robbed a post office; two men were shot by guards; six men drowned while drunk; and 15 officers were arrested.

In December, 1861, there was a crisis brewing between Lawler and his men, and it came to a head with an order for the court-martial of Lawler. In essence, the regiment was

challenging Lawler's authority. The first charge was the most serious. Lawler had allegedly allowed a man to be executed without a trial on or about October 2, 1861. The second charge involved 7 sets of specifications of conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman. The third charge was false muster. The 4th charge involved conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline. The last charge was a violation of an army regulation that a commander had to consult his officer cadre before appointing a chaplain.

Lawler struck back and on December 19, 1861, he asked McClernand if a commission could be appointed for the examination of officers as to their military qualifications. The next day charges were brought against the lieutenant who had brought the false muster charge against Lawler. Grant became aware of the proceedings and questioned the propriety of charges brought by an officer on trial (Lawler) and stated that an officer on trial should be under arrest. Two of the officers who had made accusations against Lawler were themselves under arrest for months, and both of them ultimately resigned from the service.

In July, 1862, Lawler was exonerated and was promoted to a division commander. His successor, Daniel Brush, was a 'Puritan in arms' and during his first two months of command he had 56 men court-martialed for various offenses. The regiment soon got tired of Brush's style and in May, 1863, a court of inquiry was called and Brush was charged with being overbearing, tyrannical and unfit to command troops in the field. After five days, he too was exonerated.

The 18th's finest hour on the battlefield came on February 15, 1862 at Fort Donelson. This was their first combat. Grant had encircled the Confederate forces and their commanders knew that the only way out was to knock a hole through the Union lines. The 18th's position was the focal point of the rebel attack, and they found themselves facing odds of 3 to 1 against them. Most green regiments would have broken and ran, but they stood and slugged it out. Lawler was wounded and Brush took over. Finally, the regiment ran out of ammunition, but still maintained its position by taking ammunition off the bodies of dead soldiers. On that day, the regiment lost 211.

To Dr. Anderson, Lawler and the lawless 18th Illinois were similar in that they both had militant and pugnacious qualities. As a combat leader, Lawler was daring, pugnacious and bold. Both he and the regiment were at their best when they were engaging the enemy.

Friends of Virginia Civil War Parks

An organization of individuals interested in conserving, protecting, and interpreting the historical resources of Virginia's Civil War parks, known as the Friends of the Virginia Civil War Parks, was formed at a meeting at Fort Harrison on October 15. According to Fredericksburg Superintendent Jim Zinck, the group will assist the parks by sponsoring public lectures, specialized tours, concerts and seminars; help in the publication and provision of free brochures and literature; aid in acquiring works of art, artifacts and historic furnishings; help raise funds for special projects; and respond to threats to the parks.

The Friends has no official connection with the Department of the Interior or the National Park Service. A committee of interested citizens has been organized to plan the group's future activities. For further information, contact James R. Zinck, Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. P.O. Box 679, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404.



THE NEW BOOKS

(compiled by Dick Clark)

Aptheker, Herbert. *American Negro Slave Revolts*. With a foreword by John H. Bracey. New York: International Publishers, 1983. pbk. \$4.95.

Baker, Jean H. *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. \$39.50.

Burnett, William G. *Better a Patriot Soldier's Grave. The History of the 6th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry*. Youngstown, Ohio: Patriot Press, 1983. \$16.00.

Calkins, Chris. *From Petersburg to Appomattox: A Tour Guide of Lee's Withdrawal and Grant's Pursuit*. Petersburg, VA. \$3.25.

Symonds, Craig L. *A Battlefield Atlas of the Civil War*. Cartography by William J. Clipson. Annapolis, MD: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1983. 128 p. 7 x 10. 43 two-color full page maps. \$11.95 pbk.

Taylor, Richard. *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War...* Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1983. Original of 1879. \$19.95.

Wittenmeyer, Annie. *A Collection of Recipes for the Use of Special Diet Kitchens in Military Hospitals*. Mattituck, NY: J. M. Carroll & Company, 1983. Plastic bound. \$8.95. Original of 1863?

Bearss honored

Edwin C. Bearss, chief historian of the National Park Service, received the Department of the Interior's Distinguished Service Award at a departmental convocation on September 20. The citation read, in part:

"...Mr. Bearss is unquestionably the most productive historian in the history of the National Park Service. As Chief Historian he has proven to be a manager of outstanding leadership and administrative talent who leads by example and who inspires excellence in those with whom he works. Throughout his career, Mr. Bearss has devoted his energies unselfishly and at times courageously towards raising the national level of responsiveness to Park Service goals and priorities. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to American history and to the mission of the National Park Service, Edwin C. Bearss is granted the highest honor of the Department of the Interior, the Distinguished Service Award."

Ed is an Honorary Award Life Member of The Civil War Round Table and received our Nevins-Freeman Award in 1980. The Round Table extends its heartiest congratulations to Ed for this well-deserved honor.

On behalf of the newsletter staff and the officers of The Round Table, we wish all members and their families a Happy Holiday Season and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

BULLETIN BOARD



Future meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Hotel Continental, 505 N. Michigan, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

December 9: Karen Osborne on "Women in the Civil War."

January 13, 1984: Mike Cohn on "Civil War Telegraphy."

February 17: Marshall Krolick, Bill Sullivan, Jim Vlazny and Gordon Whitney in "Senate Confrontation, November-December, 1860" with Ralph Newman as Pres. Pro. Tem.

March 9: Col. Roy K. Flint on "Cold Harbor."

April 13: Richard McMurry on "John Bell Hood."

May 2-6: Battlefield Tour to Washington, D.C.

May 11: To be announced.

June 8: Dan Jordan on "John S. Mosby."

New members

Marlan H. Polhemus, 1853 N. Fremont St., Chicago, Illinois 60614 (312) 664-0422.

Jack W. Roadman, 23W231 Windsor Dr., Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137 (312) 858-3014.

A. L. Robertson, Jr., M.D., 947 S. Adams, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521.

Sally Rudy, 4218 S. Hoagland, Ft. Wayne, Indiana 46807 (219) 744-9519.

Peter Solber, 180 N. LaSalle, Suite 3100, Chicago, Illinois 60601.

Changes of address

Theodore Birndorf, 636 Schubert, Chicago, Illinois 60614.

George L. Curry, 4228 Andover, Richton Park, Illinois 60471.

Robert M. Markunas, 6105 W. 64th Place, Chicago, Illinois 60638.

Grady McWhiney, 3701 Lawndale Ave., Fort Worth, Texas 76133.

Tom Peters, 4026 N. Keystone, Apt. 3E, Chicago, Illinois 60641.

James B. Schroeder, 505 Livingston, McHenry, Illinois 60050 (312) 587-0406.

In order to ensure an up-to-date roster, anyone who has moved, changed employment, or changed his or her telephone number in the past year, and who has not notified The Round Table, should do so promptly. You may use the meeting reservation card for this purpose.

The Atlanta Round Table newsletter reports that Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park has decided to ban all alcoholic beverages from key historic areas of the park. Although a ban on alcohol throughout the park would have been preferable, this action is a victory for preservationists. (The Round Table supported a total ban; see the September issue of the newsletter.)