

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLV, Number 3

Chicago, Illinois

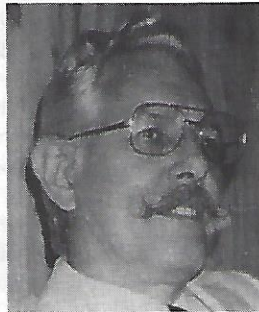
November, 1984

Merlin Sumner on Grant's Staff: A Plus or a Minus?

A change in a trial date for attorney Kent Masterson Brown, the originally scheduled speaker for our November 9th meeting, has forced him to cancel and caused a revision in the sequence of speakers. Our past president, Merlin Sumner, has agreed to speak this month instead of in January; past president Brooks Davis will speak in January.

Merlin's remarks will begin with a series of 'thumbnail' sketches of the immediate members of U. S. Grant's staff. His talk will describe their positions on the staff, how each discharged his duties, their career during and after the Civil War, and will conclude with an appraisal of their total performance. The staff included men of diverse backgrounds and talents, such as:

Orville E. Babcock, an engineering graduate of West Point in 1861, who would serve as Chief Engineer of the Left Grand Division in the Fredericksburg campaign. He became Grant's aide-de-camp at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor and the



Merlin Sumner

Petersburg siege. Babcock was the officer designated to lead General Lee to the McLean house at Appomattox Court House, and continued as Grant's aide-de-camp until 1877.

Adam Badeau, who would serve as Grant's military secretary from March, 1864 to July, 1866. During Grant's presidency, he served in various legations and consulates and traveled through Europe with the president. In 1885 he published his 3-volume work, *The Military History of Ulysses S. Grant, from April, 1861 to April, 1865*, which *Civil War Books* describes as 'an overly sympathetic account of Grant's campaigns.'

Theodore S. Bowers, an aide-de-camp to Grant as early as April, 1862, would be brevetted a brigadier general for war service and die in a tragic accident in 1866.

William S. Hillyer, a personable Kentuckian who recommended Grant for St. Louis county engineer. He became an aide-de-camp to Grant in September, 1861, and would be brevetted a brigadier general for war service. When he died, he was the last surviving member of Grant's original staff.

Robert Todd Lincoln, Lincoln's oldest and only surviving son, who joined Grant's staff in 1864 after graduation from Harvard and who would serve for the balance of the war. After law studies in Chicago, he became an able corporate attorney in both Chicago and Washington, and the law firm survives today as Isham, Lincoln and Beale.

Ely S. Parker, a Seneca Indian and son of a famous chief



435th Regular Meeting

Merlin Sumner
on
Grant's Staff: A Plus or a Minus?

Friday, November 9, 1984

Chicago Press Club
410 N. Michigan

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$13.00 per person

Entree: Roast beef or whitefish



of that tribe. After studying law, he was refused admission to the bar because he wasn't an American citizen. With an engineering degree, he became a friend of Grant while working in Galena. He served as Grant's military secretary from August, 1864 to July, 1866 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. At Appomattox, it was Parker, at Grant's orders, who transcribed the official copies of the document that ended the Civil War.

Horace Porter, an ordnance graduate of West Point in 1860, would serve as Chief of Ordnance for both the Army of the Department of the Ohio and the Cumberland. In April, 1864, he became an aide-de-camp to Grant for the balance of the war. In civilian life, he served as a railroad official and contributed articles on Five Forks and the surrender at Appomattox to *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*.

William R. Rowley, a New Yorker who settled in Galena before the war where he knew Grant and served as sheriff. At Shiloh, he rode from the 'Hornet's Nest' toward Crump's Landing to direct Lew Wallace to the battle area.

John A. Rawlins, a Galena native who served as city attorney in 1861. When Grant became a brigadier general,

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
 18 East Chestnut Street
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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 60007.



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he asked Rawlins to become his aide-de-camp. Rawlins became Grant's "alter ego", as his intimate friend, political and military advisor. Grant referred to him as "the most nearly indispensable man he had around him." When Grant appointed him Secretary of War in March, 1869, he had only five months to live, as tuberculosis was to claim him.

Joseph D. Webster, a Dartmouth graduate, joined the regular Army as a topographical engineer and served in the Mexican War. He would serve as Chief of Staff to both Grant and Sherman, and was Grant's chief of artillery at Shiloh. An engineer of exceptional ability, he was a distinguished citizen of Chicago, serving as both city assessor and collector of internal revenue.

James Harrison Wilson, one of the war's "boy wonders" and a major general five years after his 1860 graduation from West Point. He would join Grant's staff in October, 1862, with engineering duties. In February, 1864, he was selected to head the newly established Cavalry Bureau in Washington, and would win laurels as a cavalry commander in both Eastern and Western campaigns in 1864-65. He served in both the Spanish-American War and the Boxer Rebellion. He wrote biographies of Grant, Rawlins and Charles A. Dana, as well as his 2-volume autobiography, *Under the Old Flag*.

Cyrus B. Comstock, a West Pointer and career engineer, who would serve first in the East and then in the Western theatre as engineer and Inspector General. He served as Grant's aide-de-camp from 1864 to 1866.

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, (like past president Gordon Whitney), Merlin remembers the GAR encampment there and traces ancestry to Union General Edwin Vose Sumner. Two of his ancestors served in the 67th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in Butler's Army of the James. Merl studied business administration at Northwestern University and saw duty with the 10th Army Corps in Korea. Now retired, Merlin served the Lincoln-Mercury division of the Ford Motor Company for 31 years in various marketing and sales capacities. He is active in five Round Tables, is a member of M.O.L.L.U.S.-Illinois Comandery, and the U. S. Grant Association. He has spoken to Round Tables in six states and has maintained a perfect attendance record at our Round Table functions since joining in September, 1974. His wife, Pat Krelle Sumner, is also most active in our group's activities, and currently serves as Vice President.

Distinguished Lecturers Series

The following cassette tapes of previous talks to The Round Table are now available.

50. Frank L. Klement, "Vallandigham and the Civil War" (12/8/66)

51. Marshall D. Krolick, "The Battle of Brandy Station" (4/14/78)

52. Grady McWhiney, "Jefferson Davis and His Generals" (9/10/71)

53. William B. Hesseltine, "Lincoln and Reconstruction" (2/6/59)

All orders should be sent to: Pat Sumner, 403 Hatlen, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056. The cost of each tape, unless otherwise noted, is \$7; add \$2 per order for shipping.

For a complete list of available tapes, see previous newsletters or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Pat Sumner at the above address.

October meeting

Our fall regular meeting schedule began on a positive note on October 12 with Jim and Alice Trulock's impressive presentation of the career of Union hero Joshua L. Chamberlain in word and picture. Sixty-eight members and guests were on hand to hear Jim narrate, and Alice project slides of, the important scenes in Chamberlain's life as an educator, soldier, public servant and businessman. In their view, General Chamberlain was a multi-faceted man, who had trained for the ministry and was also the epitome of the citizen-soldier. Chamberlain rose from lieutenant colonel to brevet major general in just two years of service. Gen. Charles Griffin described him as "absolutely indifferent to danger in the field." He had horses shot from under him five times in battle, and died 50 years after being severely wounded in the fighting around Petersburg.

The oldest of five children, Chamberlain was subject to a family tug-of-war; his father wanted a military career for him, while his mother hoped that he would prepare for the ministry. After graduation from Bowdoin College in 1852, he spent the next three years at Bangor Theological Seminary. In December, 1855, he married Frances 'Fanny' Adams, and two children were born of that marriage. That same year he became an instructor in logic and natural theology at Bowdoin. He was opposed to slavery and secession, and felt compelled to answer the nation's call to arms. Despite the protest of the Bowdoin faculty of his lack of military knowledge, he took a leave of absence "for the purpose of visiting Europe." However, in June, 1862, he offered his services and Governor Washburn appointed him lieutenant colonel in the 20th Maine, which would be led initially by Col. Adelbert Ames.

The regiment joined the 3rd Brigade of the 5th Corps, and Chamberlain would serve here throughout the war. Though the 5th Corps wasn't engaged in the fighting at Antietam, it followed Lee's retreat from Maryland. At Fredericksburg, the 20th Maine would be a part of the Center Grand Division and supported the Right Grand Division in its advance. Since the regiment was quarantined with smallpox, it didn't participate in the battle of Chancellorsville. In May, 1863, Ames was promoted to general and Chamberlain was appointed colonel of the 20th Maine.

The 2nd day at Gettysburg brought great laurels to Chamberlain and his regiment. Gen. G. K. Warren, chief engineer on Meade's staff, saw that Little Round Top was crucial to the successful repulse of Confederate forces massing for an attack there and that it was unfortified. Col. Strong Vincent took the responsibility and moved his brigade (including the 20th Maine) to Little Round Top. Chamberlain established the 20th Maine on the left of the Union there, first repelling the attacks of the 4th and 47th Alabama regiments. Later, when the 15th Alabama, under Col. William C. Oates, prepared a flanking attack, Chamberlain set up his lines at right angles to his original battle line. Oates' men attacked four times and were beaten back.

With the Alabama troops massing for another attack, Chamberlain decided to counterattack with bayonets. In this attack, the Confederates ran like cattle, with many throwing down their arms, and 400 prisoners were taken. In his book, Col. Oates wrote: "There never were harder fighters than the 20th Maine men and their gallant Colonel. His skill and persistency and the great bravery of his men saved Little Round Top and the Army of the Potomac from defeat." Chamberlain was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his work that day.

In November, 1863, he collapsed from malarial fever and returned to Washington to recuperate. He resumed command of his regiment at Spotsylvania Court House. At Petersburg on June 18, 1864, he led an attack on a strong position to silence the artillery posted there. Although he questioned the wisdom of the attack, he led the charge against a storm of fire and was struck by a minie ball which passed through him from hip to hip, causing severe injuries. Field surgeons gave him no chance of survival but he was taken to Annapolis and lay near death for two months. Gen. Grant gave him a battlefield promotion to brigadier general for his gallantry.

He returned to the army for raids on the Weldon Railroad in December, 1864, but a relapse forced his return to Brunswick, Maine to recuperate. He returned to lead his brigade in an attack on Lee's right on the Quaker Road, near Petersburg. Though wounded in the chest and arms and his horse shot from under him, his attack drove the enemy from their position and opened the way to the Boydton Plank Road. For this work, he was brevetted major general by President Lincoln. When the Confederates were overwhelmed at Five Forks, Chamberlain, in command of two brigades, played a prominent role in the rout of the rebel troops. When fighting ceased at Appomattox, the first flag of truce came to Chamberlain. Grant designated Chamberlain for the honor of receiving the surrender of the arms and colors of Lee's army on April 12, 1865. In his work, *The Passing of the Armies*, Chamberlain captures in beautiful language the emotional tribute paid by each army to the other.

Chamberlain was given command of the 1st Division of the 5th Corps in May, 1865 and led the 5th Corps in the Grand Review in Washington. In 1866, he was elected governor of Maine and served three terms. In 1871, he was elected president of Bowdoin College and filled that position capably for 12 years. From 1885 to 1900 he was involved in land development and railroad building in Florida. In 1900, he was appointed surveyor for the port of Portland, Maine and held that post until his death in 1914. A remarkable man, he played many important roles in our nation's history and the Trulocks' presentation did full justice to the career of this valiant servant of the Union.

The Capitol Preservation Committee in Pennsylvania is seeking funds to do conservation work on the collection of about 360 Civil War flags and 23 Spanish-American war flags in the Capitol Rotunda in Harrisburg. The cost is about \$1000 per flag. For further information, contact the Capitol Preservation Committee, Hon. J.R. Pitts, Chairman, 144 Main Capitol, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120.

The Committee also plans to publish a book that will include a brief history of each Pennsylvania regiment and illustrations of its flags. The military historian who is researching this book is seeking historical materials by or about Pennsylvania soldiers, such as letters, diaries, post-war reminiscences, newspaper clippings and photographs. For further information, contact Richard Sauers, House PO Box 231, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120.

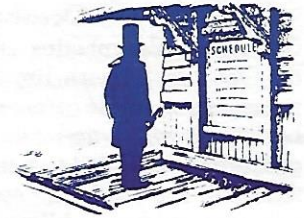
We have learned that our good friend and battlefield tour companion John Divine received the Purcellville Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy's Jefferson Davis Medal last July for his work in revealing and preserving the history of the war.

THE NEW BOOKS

(compiled by Dick Clark)



BULLETIN BOARD



Dyba, Thomas. *Seventeen Years at Eighth and Jackson: The Story of Life in the Lincoln Home*. 68 p., illus., pbk. Lisle, IL: Illinois Benedictine College, 1983. \$5.00.

Judson, Amos M. *History of the Eighty-third Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers*. New introduction. Alexandria, VA: Stonewall House, 1984. \$20.00. First issued 1866.

Lytle, Andrew N. *Bedford Forrest and his Critter Company*. Seminole, Florida: Green Key Press. \$25.00?

McDonald, William N. *History of the Laurel Brigade, Originally Ashby Cavalry*. Arlington, VA: R. W. Beatty, 1969. \$39.95. First issued 1907.

McDonough, James Lee. *Chattanooga, a Death Grip on the Confederacy*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984. \$19.95.

Mosby, John Singleton. *Mosby's War Reminiscences and Stuart's Cavalry Campaigns*. Carlisle, PA: Stuart-Mosby Historical Society, 1984. Original of 1887. \$24.00.

Mosby, John Singleton. *Stuart's Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign*. Carlisle, PA: Stuart-Mosby Historical Society, 1984. Original of 1908. \$23.00.

Myers, Frank M. *The Comanches: A History of White's Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, Laurel Brigade., Hampton Div., ANV, CSA*. Alexandria, VA: Stonewall House, 1984. \$32.50.

Nye, Wilbur Sturtevant. *Here Come the Rebels!* Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1984. 412 p. \$25.00.

Seward, William Henry. *The Papers of William H. Seward: Guide and Index to the Microfilm Collection*. Edited by Janice L. Budeit. Woodbridge, CT: Research Publications, 1983. \$500.00[!]

Smith, Gene. *Lee and Grant: A Dual Biography*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984. 414 p. \$17.95.

Stark, William F. *Along the Black Hawk Trail*. Photos by Don Davenport, Sheboygan, WI: Zimmerman Press, 1984. \$25.00.

Sylvia, Stephen W. and Michael J. O'Donnell. *Civil War Canteens*. Orange, VA: Moss Publications, 1983. 8½ x 11 pbk. \$12.50.

"The Nevins-Freeman Award—The First Decade," has been published by the Round Table. The pamphlet contains biographical notes and appreciations of our first ten recipients. Jointly researched and written by founding member Ralph Newman and Round Table Archivist Glen Wiche, the booklet was distributed at the Nevins-Freeman Assembly in September. Members who were unable to attend the Assembly will be mailed their copies in the near future.

Through the generosity of our 11th Nevins-Freeman Award recipient, Richard B. Harwell, we also have available a limited number of keepsakes produced for the Assembly. Those who attended the Assembly will receive a copy of "Fallen Ladies Marching: A Ballad of the Civil War" by mail; copies are available to others on a first come, first serve basis from Glen Wiche. Write to him at 1360 N. Lake Shore (504), Chicago, Illinois 60610 or call during business hours at (312) 642-8417.

Future meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Chicago Press Club, 410 N. Michigan, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

November 9: Merlin Sumner on "Grant's Staff: A Plus or a Minus?" **Note:** Our originally scheduled November 9 speaker, Kent Brown, was forced to cancel due to an unavoidable professional conflict on that date.

December 14: David Finney on "The Death of Stonewall Jackson."

January 11, 1985: J. Brooks Davis on "The Grand Army of the Republic."

February 8: Herman Hattaway on "How the North Won the Civil War."

March 8: Gary Gallagher on "General Stephen D. Ramseur."

April 12: William Sullivan on "The War in the Trans-Mississippi."

May 1-5: Annual Battlefield Tour to Richmond/Petersburg/Appomattox.

May 10: Jeffrey D. Wert on "The 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign."

New members

William L. Bowlus, 5N359 Fairway Lane, Itasca, Illinois 60143 (312) 773-0664.

Ali El, 1637 E. 85th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60617 (312) 978-1678.

Duke Frederick, 2219 Lincoln, Evanston, Illinois 60202.

Judson H. Jones, 941 N. Hayes, Oak Park, Illinois 60302 (312) 383-4665.

Ruth Kliger, 1923 Warren Street, Evanston, Illinois 60202.

Mark Miller, 5226 N. Potawatomie, Chicago, Illinois 60656 (312) 693-5666.

Dennis Read, Judson College Library, 1151 N. State, Elgin, Illinois 60120.

Changes of address

Peter Carlson, 750 N. Dearborn, Apt. 305, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

Dr. Gordon E. Dammann, 500 Butternut Drive, Box 754, Lena, Illinois 61048-0754.

Neil F. Hartigan, Attorney General of Illinois, 160 N. LaSalle Street, Room 900, Chicago, Illinois 60601 (312) 793-2503.

Gerald Kallman, 2305 Stratton Drive, Potomac, Maryland 20854 (301) 249-0962.

Gretchen Rapp Long, 16 Parkside Ct., #1, Vernon Hills, Illinois 60061.

Joseph P. Moore, 1812 W. Eddy, Chicago, Illinois 60657.

Larry Rines, 78 Donald Street #57, Weymouth, Massachusetts 02188.

David G. St. John, 312 Willow Road, Wauconda, Illinois 60084.