

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLX, Number 3

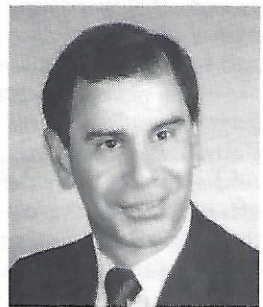
Chicago, Illinois

November, 1989

Herbert Schiller on "The Bermuda Hundred Campaign of 1864"

by Barbara Hughett

General Benjamin F. Butler met with General Ulysses S. Grant on April 1, 1864 at Fort Monroe, Virginia. At this meeting the two generals agreed on a campaign plan which was full of bright potential. The Army of the Potomac, under General George G. Meade, was to move against Robert E. Lee to the north; Butler's Army of the James was to ascend the James River and land on the Bermuda Hundred peninsula, halfway between Richmond and Petersburg. From there Butler was to move north and cut all lines of communication between Richmond and the lower south. This partial envelopment of Richmond was supposed to force Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to fall back toward the city. At this point, the Army of the Potomac would join with the Army of the James, trap Lee's army, and seize Richmond, capital of the Confederacy. Grant made his major goal very clear to Butler: "That Richmond is to be your chief objective point, and that there is to be cooperation between your force and the



Herbert Schiller

Army of the Potomac, must be your guide."

This auspicious plan came to little. The reasons for the failure of the Federal forces can be attributed not only to Butler's ineptitude, but also to the ineffectiveness of his two corps commanders, William F. Smith and Quincy Gillmore. As Butler developed his plan for a surprise ascent up the James River, Smith schemed for independent command of a force to invade northeastern North Carolina. Gillmore proved to be tardy and closemouthed. Furthermore, Smith and Gillmore did not work well together. All this hardly made for a winning combination, especially when Butler spent the first half of the campaign menacing Petersburg instead of Richmond.

The Federals did not have a monopoly on errors. The Confederate War Department at first did not take the threat of the Federal landings seriously. They allowed only limited reinforcements, in part because Lee needed every available man for the fighting in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania Court House. The Confederate commander in Petersburg, George Pickett, suffered a nervous breakdown five days after the campaign began. General P.G.T. Beauregard, recently appointed department commander, arrived to take over on May 10th and was able to assemble a creditable



485th Regular Meeting

Herbert Schiller
on
"The Bermuda Hundred
Campaign of 1864"

Friday, November 10, 1989

Quality Inn
Halsted and Madison
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
\$15.00 per person
Entree: Roast Sirloin of Beef Bordelaise,
Baked White Fish, or Fruit Plate



force to defend Richmond from the south. He turned over command in Petersburg to his long-time friend, W.H.C. Whiting, a decision which would have disastrous results on May 16th, the date of the climactic battle.

"The Bermuda Hundred Campaign of 1864" will be the topic of Dr. Herbert Schiller's address to The Civil War Round Table on November 10th. Dr. Schiller will review the development and organization of the campaign plan, the Confederate responses, and the actions which led to the final Federal defeat. He will discuss the mistakes made by both sides, and even talk about a few successes on the Federal side.

Dr. Schiller is a pathologist who lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He is a graduate of Wake Forest College and the Bowman Gray School of Medicine. He took his pathology training at the Medical College of Virginia and, for the past twelve years, has served as Labora-

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut 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 Dan Weinberg, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, IL 60611.



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tory Director of National Health Laboratories. While working on his book, *The Bermuda Hundred Campaign*, he attended graduate school at Wake Forest University. He received his Master of Arts degree in history from that institution in 1987. Dr. Schiller's interest in the Bermuda Hundred campaign began when he was in Richmond during his medical residency in the late 1960s.

The USS Abraham Lincoln, a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier and the largest military ship ever constructed, will be commissioned on November 11th in Norfolk, Virginia. Artifacts on board will tell the story of Abraham Lincoln, a symbol of strength, courage, and equality.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Mary J. Abroe

This edition of the battlefield preservation report might be subtitled "A Tale of Two Developers." One of the stories—an update, really, on Johnson's Island, Ohio—still unfolds and its outcome remains in doubt. The second, however, presents a different scenario. It has been described by *Blue and Gray* editor David Roth as "a preservation story with a happy ending." Most importantly, this "tale" of preservation efforts in the Bermuda District of Chesterfield County, Virginia sets a promising example of what cooperation and good will among preservationists, concerned local officials and sensitive developers can accomplish in protecting our tangible Civil War heritage.

As related in the September newsletter, Johnson's Island, near Sandusky, Ohio, is the site of a Civil War cemetery and the remains of two forts and a prison that housed about 9,000 Confederate officers between 1862 and 1865. Strong local resistance to a proposed \$37-million housing and marina project on the island has constituted a stumbling block for developer Carl Zipfel, but the issue is far from dead. In mid-August NPS chief historian Ed Bearss visited Johnson's Island to determine if its historic sites might merit national historic landmark status. After the visit, in a telephone interview with the *Sandusky Register*, Mr. Bearss indicated that the sites appeared to warrant further study by the state and the NPS. He also noted that Zipfel's approval of the study and of any future historic landmark designation would be required; moreover, such designation of certain sites on Zipfel's land would not necessarily deter the planned development. Still, the newly formed Johnson's Island Historical Society hopes that the potential designation will result in the federal government's "taking" of the land in question by eminent domain and the subsequent preservation of the prison area under the NPS; in the meantime, the group continues its efforts to keep the issue alive in the public eye.

Although a recent ruling by the local zoning board of appeals prevents Carl Zipfel from proceeding with actual construction of his "planned unit development," Bill Stark of the Cleveland CWRT notes that Zipfel is preparing for construction by sinking wells and building roads on his property—actions permitted by the existing zoning laws and actions which seem to point to his confidence that he will prevail. In fact, in the August 16 issue of the *Sandusky Register*, Zipfel indicated that "he intends to proceed with building something as soon as possible." The burgeoning interest of the state of Ohio and the concern and commitment to preservation of Ed Bearss are indeed positive developments for the historic sites on Johnson's Island; however, neither the hostility which has continued to escalate between Zipfel and the local preservation coalition nor Zipfel's apparent determination to forge ahead seem to bode well for the sites.

Standing in stark contrast to the confrontation over historic preservation on Johnson's Island is the alliance between preservationists and developers in Chesterfield County, Virginia. As related by David Roth in the October issue of *Blue and Gray*, cooperation between the county and a number of developers has resulted in the preservation of six forts and other sites related to the 1864 Bermuda Hundred Campaign. This effort began in 1985 and had in its forefront county engineer George Fickett and builder B. Forace Hill, who altered his plans for a proposed housing

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October Meeting

by Barbara Huggett

While General Edward Porter Alexander's *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, published in 1907, is considered a classic in American Civil War literature, historians have lamented the absence of a more personal narrative by Alexander. However, though it lay undiscovered for many years, Alexander did write a true personal reminiscence. Written years before *Military Memoirs* appeared, it was intended only for his family. In July 1989, the University of South Carolina Press published the 1200-page *Fighting for the Confederacy*, edited by Gary W. Gallagher. "Edward Porter Alexander: Fighting for the Confederacy" was the topic of Dr. Gary W. Gallagher's address on October 6th, when he spoke before 98 members and guests at the 484th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. The published works of Dr. Gallagher, an associate professor of history at Pennsylvania State University, include *Stephen Dodson Ramseur: Lee's Gallant General* (1985) and *Antietam: Essays on the 1862 Maryland Campaign* (1989). He is currently working on a biography of Confederate General Jubal Early.

"Porter Alexander," Dr. Gallagher observed, "was a remarkable character, any way you look at him." Born into a prominent Georgia family, he graduated third in the West Point class of 1857 and was asked to join the faculty immediately following his graduation. He was one of two officers chosen to assist surgeon Albert J. Myer in developing the wigwag system of signals just before the war. He was on an assignment in the Washington territory when war clouds began to gather back east. Though his friend James B. McPherson tried to persuade him to remain in the Union Army, when Georgia seceded, he headed for Richmond to offer his services to the Confederate Army. He served in numerous capacities including captain of engineers, signal officer, chief of ordnance, and artillery commander. His superiors respected his brilliantly analytical mind and his willingness to assume wider responsibilities. "His first-rate mind," Dr. Gallagher noted, "was open to innovation. If someone had a good idea, he would take it, play with it, and try to make it even better, if he could." Alexander was involved in nearly all the great eastern battles from First Manassas through Appomattox.

For years he had resisted his family's urgings that he write his personal reminiscences of the war by pleading that he simply didn't have the time. He was sent, in the late 1890s, to Nicaragua by his good friend President Grover Cleveland to help adjudicate a border dispute between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Shortly after his arrival there, he received a package from one of his daughters. In it were two blank ledger books, a pen, and a note from his daughter. The note said: "Papa, please write your wartime reminiscences for your children. Now you have time. I know you do. Here are the blank books. Here is a pen. Start to write." He began writing—reluctantly at first; but within weeks, he was immersed in it. He filled the two books and continued his writing on foolscap. Since this was intended only as a legacy for his children, he had a tremendous freedom of observation. Thus, he said exactly what he thought.

The result is what Dr. Gallagher describes as "an absolute cornucopia of wonderful anecdotes and brutal, frank assessments of both comrades and opponents, together with brilliant insights into the battles and campaigns." Upon returning home, he showed *Fighting for the Confederacy* to his friends, who urged him to publish it. First, though, they told him he should get rid of all the personal

accounts and then expand his detailing of military history. That's what he did with *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*.

On April 2, 1865, when the Army of Northern Virginia abandoned Richmond, Porter Alexander was among the last people to leave. At that point, as he retells it in *Fighting for the Confederacy*, much of the waterfront was in flames. He describes how the smoke climbed and then formed a black canopy over the capital city of the Confederacy. As the last of the guns crossed over the bridges, Alexander turned to look back one last time. "No other instance of the whole war," he said, "impressed itself so beautifully" on him. When he'd taken all this in and turned to ride away, he did so with what he described as a "feeling of orphanage." Dr. Gallagher called this "a marvelous image that captures the feelings which thousands of men in Lee's army must have shared as they left the city that they had poured so much effort into defending over four long years of war."

Moments in Round Table History

In anticipation of our 50th Anniversary celebration next October, each month we will be featuring highlights in the history of The Civil War Round Table.

November 5, 1954: Joint meeting with the Milwaukee Round Table at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

November 4, 1960: 20th Anniversary meeting, with our first speaker, Percival Hart, returning to speak on "Chancellorsville."

November 10, 1967: Special meeting at the Kungsholm Restaurant, with Ralph G. Newman speaking on "Readin' Writin' and Round Tables."

Ashfield, Massachusetts' Belding Memorial Library

was recently the site of an exciting discovery, according to *Old Baldy* the newsletter of the Civil War Round Table of Philadelphia. While cleaning out the basement of the library in preparation for a book sale, a worker found a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation. Experts have determined it to be one of 48 copies signed by Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward. Although it's uncertain how it came to be in the library, there is a theory that George William Curtis, a friend of Lincoln's and a summer resident of Ashfield, may have been responsible. The library trustees voted to sell the document. The estimated price is between \$70,000 and \$90,000.

A group in Murphysboro, Illinois has purchased a house adjacent to the birthplace of Union General John A. Logan and has set it up as a museum and interpretive center. They plan to purchase the land once owned by the Logans, on which they will construct a reproduction of the home in which the general was born. Donations and inquiries can be directed to: The General Logan Committee, City Hall Annex, 10 South 14th St., Murphysboro, IL 62966.

Annie Snyder, head of the Save the Battlefield Coalition, has been named as the recipient of the Third Annual Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. Award. The Civil War Round Tables of Greater Boston and Massachusetts presented her with the award on September 30th in Marlboro, Massachusetts.

The New Books compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Cavanaugh, Michael A. & William Marvel. *The Petersburg Campaign: The Battle of the Crater—"The Horrid Pit" June 25-August 6, 1864.* H. E. Howard, Inc. 1989. \$16.95.

Corby, William. *Memoirs of Chaplain Life. Three Years with the Irish Brigade in the Army of the Potomac.* Fordham University Press. 1989. \$29.95. Original of 1894.

Haselberger, Fritz. *Yanks from the South. Past Glories Press.* 1987. \$22.00.

Henderson, William D. *The Road to Bristoe Station.* H.E. Howard, Inc. 1987. \$16.95.

Nichols, James L. *General Fitzhugh Lee: A Biography.* H.E. Howard, Inc. 1989. \$19.95.

Paludan, Philip S. *A People's Contest: Impact of the Civil War on the North.* Harper & Row. 1988. \$27.95.

Parrish, Tom Z., *The Saga of the Confederate Ram Arkansas: The Mississippi Valley Campaign, 1862.* Hill College Press. 1988. \$15.00.

Pfanz, Donald C. *The Petersburg Campaign: Abraham Lincoln at City Point—March 20—April 9, 1865.* H.E. Howard, Inc. 1989. \$10.00.

Priest, John M. *Antietam: The Soldiers' Battle.* White Mane Publ. Co. 1989. \$34.95.

Radley, Kenneth. *Rebel Watchdog: The Confederate States Army Provost Guard.* LSU Press. 1989. \$29.95.

Sauers, Richard A. *A Caspian Sea of Ink: The Meade-Sickles Controversy.* Butternut and Blue. 1989. \$32.50.

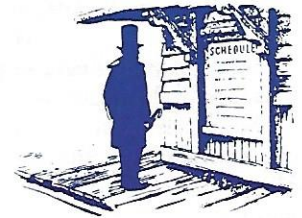
The Stephen A. Douglas Association has recently issued a brochure describing its activities and has published the first issue of its quarterly newsletter, *The Little Giant*. For information, call 787-1860.

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development and donated part of his property to the county when informed of the particular's area's historical significance. The preservation movement, which has grown out of the initial willingness of these two to work together, now numbers other local developers, the NPS, and the Richmond National Battlefield Park among its advocates and assistants.

This model of a restrained and enlightened approach on the part of development interests demonstrates that they can be allies in the crusade to save Civil War sites; it is a fact of life in contemporary America that developers now constitute a necessary element in the course of almost every preservation effort. Since the sites "belong" to all of us, caring for them is everybody's business. Developers in Chesterfield County, Virginia have listened to preservationists' concerns and have joined them in a creative campaign to protect the area's historic treasures, solidifying their own standing in the community in the process. Ultimately, this type of cooperative venture is one of the best and perhaps last hopes for the future of battlefield preservation; more to the point, it illustrates that there is an alternative to the kind of preservation "war" that casts a shadow over the fate of Civil War sites on Johnson's Island.

BULLETIN BOARD



Future Meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Quality Inn, Halsted and Madison, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

November 10: Herbert Schiller, M.D. on "The Bermuda Hundred Campaign of 1864."

December 8: Armin Weng on "The Gods of War and the Prince of Peace."

January 12, 1990: William J. Sullivan on "Heartland of Freedom: Chicago During the Civil War."

February 9: Chicago Historical Society, "A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln."

March 9: Michael Andrus on "General Edward 'Allegheny' Johnson."

April 13: Richard McMurry on "Confederate Journalism."

May 2-6: Annual Battlefield Tour, The Maryland Campaign of 1862.

May 11: William Parrish on "Confederate Governors."

June 8: Jerry Rodgers, topic to be announced.

New Members

William W. Cole, Jr., 1433 Briergate Dr., Naperville, IL 60540, 708/357-1503.

Julian Coupland, 21 W. Goethe St. #10L, Chicago, IL 60610, 312/664-4965.

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