

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LII, Number 4

Chicago, Illinois

December 1991

## Mary Munsell Abroe on "Battlefield Commemoration and Preservation: The Reason Why, 1863-1890"

by Barbara Hughett

Most of us who care about the study of the American Civil War also care about preserving its battlefield sites. We support the work of organizations, such as the APCWS, that have been formed to spearhead efforts to save those sites threatened by developers who would turn historic land into shopping malls.

The knowledge and understanding of Civil War history is important to us. Yet what most of us, ironically, are less knowledgeable about is the history of the preservation movement itself.

With the construction of monuments at Yorktown, Monmouth, Saratoga and other fields of the American Revolution, the United States government began its commitment to preserving historic battlefields. That commitment had gained momentum by the 1890s, by which time five national military reservations had been established on six Civil War battlefields. In addition to honoring the men who fought on both sides in that great conflict, the preservation of these lands as they were in the 1860s offers historians, military professionals, and all of us opportunities for on-site study and interpretation. We can "be there where it all happened" and learn on a more personal level what the Civil War meant to those who experienced it.



Mary Munsell Abroe

What circumstances moved private citizens and the national government to memorialize historic battlefields generally and Civil War fields specifically? Mary Munsell Abroe will address this question when she speaks to The Civil War Round Table on December 13. Her topic will be: "Battlefield Commemoration and Preservation: The Reason Why, 1863-1890."

She will discuss how the special meaning of the Civil War gave rise to the commemorative impulse, and how favorable conditions in Victorian-era America encouraged the expression of deep-seated values and ideals. Led by the veterans themselves, the American public—and eventually Congress—moved beyond the idea that erecting monuments and markers constituted sufficient recognition of the importance of historic battlefield sites. As a result of this process, substantial groundwork was established for our current national preservation program.



505th Regular Meeting

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Mary Munsell Abroe  
on

"Battlefield Commemoration and Preservation:  
The Reason Why, 1863-1890."

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Friday, December 13, 1991

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Holiday Inn Mart Plaza  
350 North Orleans Street  
Buttons—15th floor

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.  
\$17.50 per person

Entree: Roast Round of Beef, Orange Roughy,  
or Fruit Plate



### A Reminder

Please make your reservation by Tuesday, December 10, as the Holiday Inn needs 72 hours advance notice. Mail the enclosed postcard or call the book shop at (312)944-3085. If you make a reservation and must cancel, please call the book shop as soon as possible.

If you are driving and coming from the south, turn left into the Mart Plaza lot just after crossing the river on Orleans. From the north, turn right from Orleans on Hubbard, left on Kingsbury, right on Kinzie, and left into the Mart Plaza lot. Parking is free. Have your ticket validated at The Round Table registration table.

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Mary Abroe holds a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College and a master's degree from Northeastern Illinois University. She was admitted to doctoral candidacy by the history department at Loyola University of Chicago in 1989. She has taught at elementary, secondary, and college levels, and is currently a lecturer of history at Loyola. Among her academic honors is a 1990-91 Loyola University Dissertation Fellowship.

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# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



**Founded December 3, 1940**

357 West Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60610  
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 Dan Weinberg, 357 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610.



**A champagne toast will be offered** at the December meeting in honor of Ralph G. Newman's 80th birthday. Those who missed our November 5 party have another opportunity to wish happy birthday to our founder.

The officers of The Round Tale and the newsletter staff wish everyone a happy holiday season and a bright and prosperous new year.

## Battlefield Preservation Update

by David Richert

The Save Historic Antietam Foundation is seeking funds to buy 40 acres of the 140-acre Grove Farm, between Sharpsburg and Sheperdstown, West Virginia. The farm is the site where Lincoln met with General George B. McClellan following the Battle of Antietam. During the battle the farm was the headquarters of Union General Fitz-John Porter and his 10,000 men. Wounded Union and Confederate soldiers were treated in hospital tents on the property.

Thomas G. Clemens, president of SHAF, which has been working to preserve the site since 1985, said the current owner had intended to build homes on the Grove Farm site but depressed economic conditions persuaded him to sell the property. However, another developer owns 20 acres on the other side of the Grove farmhouse. The developer's plans for that land have included a shopping center and eight acres of houses. About half of the 20-acre tract is now up for sale. In addition, an area American Legion post owns five acres of the Grove Farm. It planned to build a new hall, but in recent months the post has said it is considering other locations.

Contributions to help buy the site can be sent to SHAF, P.O. Box 550, Sharpsburg, MD 21782.

## Here's your chance to own a piece of Civil War history.

The Central Maryland Heritage League recently purchased 22 acres and two houses at the site of the Battle of South Mountain, and is selling one-square-foot parcels for \$25 each to pay off the \$325,000 loan. The three-year-old League bought the land because it was threatened with development, according to Steve Stotelmeyer, the group's historian. He said a developer had approached the landowner.

The land purchased by the League was the scene of heavy fighting on September 14, 1862. It includes a stone house, built in the 1700s, which later served as a tavern along the National Pike. Long-range plans are to use the house as a place where visitors can stop and learn about the battle.

For more information contact the League at P.O. Box 721, Middletown, MD 21769.

**A suit has been filed in Henrico County, Virginia** to stop a planned gravel excavation on the battleground of Malvern Hill, southeast of Richmond. David Covington, a plaintiff in the case, claims there may be as many as 200 Confederates buried on the land that West Sand & Gravel plans to excavate. The part of the hill to be excavated was where Union General George B. McClellan lined up his cannon on the high ground in the last of the Seven Days battles.

**The Conservation Fund recently donated** the 125-acre Roberson farm to the National Park Service as an addition to the Shiloh National Battlefield Park. The farm was the site of the left flank of the Confederate battle line at nightfall on April 6, 1862, the first day of the Battle of Shiloh.

The Conservation Fund, of Arlington, Virginia, acts to safeguard the nation's land and water resources by working with other organizations, public agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals. Since 1985 it has helped protect over 200,000 acres of wildlife habitat and historic sites, including land on 14 Civil War battlefields. The \$100,000 for the Roberson farm was donated by 350 individuals and organizations across the nation.



## November Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

The prevailing assumption in most analyses of Confederate military leadership is that General Robert E. Lee is the great success story. In the 1989 edition of *Encyclopaedia Americana* he is called "one of the greatest, if not the greatest, soldier who ever spoke the English language." Lawyer and historian Allan T. Nolan has questioned the accuracy of such accolades in his controversial new book, *Lee Considered: General Robert E. Lee and Civil War History*. On November 8, Nolan spoke before 116 members and guests at the 505th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His topic was "The Generalship of Robert E. Lee."

While conceding that Lee was frequently an effective tactician and that his operational strategy was sometimes successful, Nolan contended that he misperceived the South's grand strategy and thus his generalship was flawed. General Ulysses S. Grant, Nolan stated, was correct in deciding that both his tactics and strategy must be offensive. It was obvious to Grant that the longer the war lasted, the less likely would the North hold out. The *true* grand strategy of the North was to destroy the South's capacity to resist; and this required the destruction of Southern armies before the Northern people gave up the contest.

The South's expressed goal, Nolan noted, "was to be released from the Union. It neither desired to conquer the North nor had the need or the resources to do so. Accordingly, the *true* grand strategy of the Confederacy, the only grand strategy that afforded a chance to win, was the defensive." The Confederacy's only chance was to "wear the north out." For this to happen, it was essential that Lee maintain the viability of his army.

That viability depended on the Southern armies retaining sufficient strength for mobility and maneuver, in order to avoid a siege and also "to permit timely and promising operationally strategic offensives and the tactical offensive." Nolan asserted that Lee could have accomplished this had he pursued a defensive grand strategy and that his offensive grand strategy prevented his accomplishing it.

While conceding that Lee's 1864-65 defense of Richmond was remarkable, Nolan suggested that by that time it was too late for a masterful defense. "During the two years prior to the Virginia Campaign of 1864," he continued, "lacking a real understanding of the practical circumstances of the antagonists, or lacking the capacity to relate his grand strategy to those circumstances, [Lee] had pursued the counter-productive grand strategy of the offensive.... Lee's strategy and tactics had unilaterally accomplished the depletion of his army that was the objective of the *true* Federal grand strategy." It was Lee's risky and costly offensives at Gettysburg and in the Wilderness that "helped to seal him up in the trenches around Richmond."

To further clarify his point, Nolan quoted Colonel George A. Bruce, who wrote in 1913: "The population of the Confederate States was a little less than half that of the Northern States. If the resolution of one was equal to that of the other, it would be easy to calculate the end of a war where the losses on each side in every contest were equal. To illustrate, if a manufacturer or merchant worth a million dollars should enter into a trade warfare with a competitor worth two million, and so aggressively carry it on as to entail a loss to each of \$250,000 a year, the result would be that at the end of four years, one would be bankrupt and the other still rich. This was the kind of war inaugurated by General Lee."

"In sum," Nolan stated at the conclusion of his talk, "it is contended that Lee's counter-productive grand strategy contradicted the South's *true* grand strategy and thereby contributed to the *loss* of the Lost Cause. If one covets the haunting romance of the Lost Cause, the inflicting of casualties on the enemy, tactical victory in great battles and audacity are enough. On the other hand, in the words of Colonel Bruce, 'If the art of war consists in using the forces of a nation in a way to secure the end for which it is waged, and not in a succession of great battles that tend to defeat it,' a very different answer is suggested."

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**The Military Order of the Stars and Bars** has given its 1991 Douglas Southall Freeman History Award to Robert K. Krick, for his recent book, *Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain*. Krick was the recipient of The Civil War Round Table's 1988 Nevins-Freeman Award.

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**The following book review appeared** in the May 13 issue of *AB Bookman's Weekly*:

Barbara Hughett. **The Civil War Round Table: Fifty years of Scholarship and Fellowship**, 8vo., xviii, 206p, \$30.00. The Civil War Round Table (357 West Chicago Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60610) With notes, index, and 13 appendices, including a list of the presidents of the CWRT and a list of Confederate Purple Heart winners.

In emphasizing the extent of interest in and literature on the Civil War period, the eminent Chicago rare book dealer Ralph G. Newman points out, in an introductory note to the volume, that on average at least one book or pamphlet on the subject was published for every day since April 12, 1861, when the Confederate guns fired on Fort Sumter.

Starting in the mid-1930s, Newman, who was proprietor of a book shop in downtown Chicago, would meet for lunch once a week at a local restaurant with a number of customers who would join him to rap about the American Civil War. They kept this up on an informal basis until the end of 1940, when Newman and 15 of his cohorts decided to form a permanent group. The Civil War Round Table came into being in Ralph Newman's shop on December 3, 1940.

Today the Chicago Civil War Round Table, the grandfather of some 150 similar groups around the country, has a membership of about 350.

Barbara Hughett's admirable work chronicles the beginnings and the 50-year history of the Round Table phenomenon, which has become an essential part of Americana and American history. In general, the Civil War Round Table groups include collectors and buffs as well as a fair proportion of historians, with the different categories of members taking turns addressing the regular gatherings.

For her raw material, Hughett tapped records and correspondence and conducted numerous interviews, and the result should delight any collector, dealer, or armchair historian interested in the American Civil War.

**The history of The Round Table, The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship**, by Barbara Hughett, is available for \$30 per copy. You may purchase the book at the December meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.



## The New Books compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Brooks, Noah. *Washington in Lincoln's Time*. Edited by Herbert Mitgang. University of Georgia Press. 1989. \$14.95. Original of 1895.

Cohen, Stan B. *A Pictorial Guide to West Virginia's Civil War Sites and Related Information*. Pictorial Histories Publ. Co. 1990. Pbk. \$9.95.

Hatlock, Judith L. *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat. Vol. II*. University of Alabama Press. 1991. \$29.95.

Hoehling, A. A. and Mary Hoehling. *The Day Richmond Died*. University Press of America. 1991. Pbk. \$16.95.

Royster, Charles. *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson and the Americans*. Knopf. 1991. \$30.00.

Scott, Robert G. *Fallen Leaves: The Civil War Letters of Major Henry Livermore Abbott* (20th Massachusetts Infantry). Kent State University Press. 1991. \$27.00.

Swanberg, W. A. *Sickles the Incredible. A Biography of Gen. Daniel E. Sickles*. Stan Clark Military Books. 1990. \$27.50; pbk. \$17.50. Original of 1956.

Trudeau, Noah A. *The Last Citadel: Petersburg, Virginia, June 1864-April 1865. The 11-Month Siege of Petersburg*. Little, Brown. 1991. \$22.95.

**John Y. Simon, 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award recipient**, has written the Foreword for a regimental history which was recently reprinted by Crossfire Press. *History 31st Regiment Illinois Volunteers, Organized by John A. Logan*, an account of a southern Illinois Civil War regiment written by three of its veterans, has not been available to the public since 1902. The book is available at some book stores (\$24.95 cloth; \$12.95 paperback) or can be ordered from Crossfire Press, P.O. Box 365, Herrin, Illinois 62948. Illinois residents should add 6.25% sales tax; the publisher pays the postage for individual orders. For further information, call (618)942-3856.

**James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia** is developing a Civil War Institute which could open early next summer.

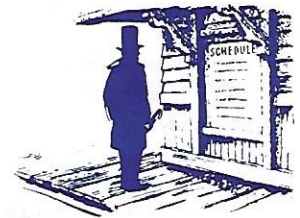
**The granddaughter of Stonewall Jackson** died on September 17 in High Point, North Carolina at the age of 104. Active until recent years, she wrote humorous essays, some of which were published, including one titled "On Reaching Maturity at 91."

(continued from page 1)

She has delivered papers before a number of groups, including the Eleventh Annual Illinois History Symposium in December 1990.

A member of The Round Table since 1982, Abroe currently serves as senior vice president. She previously held the positions of assistant treasurer, treasurer, and vice president. Since September of 1989, she has written the "Battlefield Preservation" column for this newsletter. The Battle of Antietam has been a special area of study for Abroe for many years. She was chairperson for The Round Table's 1990 battlefield tour of Antietam.

## BULLETIN BOARD



### Future Meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans (Buttons, 15th Floor), the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

December 13: Mary Munsell Abroe on "Battlefield Commemoration and Preservation: The Reason Why, 1863-1890."

January 10: Karen K. Osborne and Virginia Crane on "A Woman's War: Two Perspectives—North and South."

February 14: W. Glenn Robertson on "General Thomas J. Wood at Chickamauga: The Fatal Order Revisited."

March 13: Herman Hattaway on "How They Teach Civil War History at West Point."

April 10: Dennis Frye on "Mosby vs. Sheridan in the Shenandoah."

April 30-May 3: Annual battlefield tour—Gettysburg.

May 8: Lawrence Hewitt on "Port Hudson: The Most Photographed Battlefield of the Civil War."

June 12: Steven Newton on "Joseph E. Johnston: Rationalizations, Ego, and Politics After the Battle of Seven Pines."

### New Members

Anne Bannor, 6933 N. Kedzie #302, Chicago, IL 60645, (312)973-1078

Joseph L. Broccolo, 393 Huntington Lane, Elmhurst, IL 60126, (708)530-4406

Ronald K. Courtney, 2547 W. Fargo, Chicago, IL 60645, (312)465-4909

Eileen M. Crowley, 5411 W. Lawrence, Chicago, IL 60630, (312)545-6253

Thomas A. Durr, 5461 N. East River Road, Chicago, IL 60656, (312)380-0715

Erik A. Ernst, 1134 W. Loyola Avenue, #237, Chicago, IL 60626, (312)475-1438

Michael Hawkins, 2421 W. Pratt Blvd., #501, Chicago, IL 60645, (312)845-6131

Mark Herr, 19 Charing Cross, Chicago Heights, IL 60411, (708)754-3582

Ken Hobin, 1702 Mill Street, #405, Des Plaines, IL 60016, (708)296-5626

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Stuart McCarrell, 2144 W. Concord, Chicago, IL 60647, (312)235-4911

Howard T. Walder, 223 East Delaware Place, #2W, Chicago, IL 60611

### Change of Address

Karl E. Sundstrom, 2512 2nd Avenue, North Riverside, IL 60546

**Round Table President Joseph L. Wisheart** has a new business telephone number. It is (708)367-1171.