

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LIII, Number 5

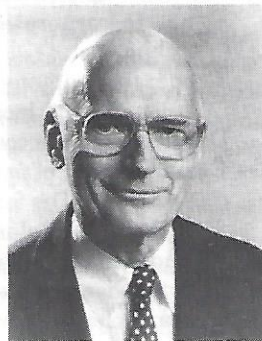
Chicago, Illinois

January 1993

Brooks Davis on "Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln as Commanders-in-Chief"

by Barbara Hughett

Jefferson Davis was pruning his roses in the garden of his Mississippi plantation early in 1861, when the telegram arrived informing him of his election as president of the provisional government of the Confederate States of America. His wife Varina wrote in her memoirs that he told her the news "as a man might speak of a sentence of death." It was a military command, not a political position, that he had hoped for. A graduate of West Point, Davis had served with distinction in the Mexican War, was chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, and had been secretary of war in the administration of President Franklin Pierce.

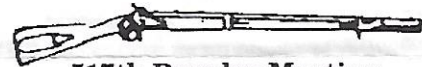


Brooks Davis

In contrast, Abraham Lincoln's entire military experience had consisted of fifty-one days' service in the Black Hawk War, a brief Native American conflict in 1832. He later joked about his "military heroism." In an 1848 speech in the United States House of Representatives, he recalled leading his men in "charges upon the wild onions" and his "many bloody struggles with the musketoes [sic]." Yet when he was frustrated by the failed efforts of a series of inept generals during the early years of the war, President Lincoln proved to be a skillful strategist, taking over the organization of high command until he finally found his capable general—Ulysses S. Grant.

How did these two men compare as commanders-in-chief of their opposing nations during the American Civil War? "Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln as Commanders-in-Chief" will be the topic of Brooks Davis's address on January 8. Points of discussion will include comparisons of the two leaders' skill in establishing partnerships, war strategies, styles of diplomacy, crisis management, and their capacity to learn.

Brooks Davis has been a member of The Civil War Round Table since 1958. An Honorary Life member of The Round Table, he was president in 1965-66—a term that included both the 250th meeting and the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. He has been a participant in twenty-five of the annual Round Table battlefield tours. He chaired three annual tours, and led a special fall tour to the Perryville, Kentucky area (1972) as well as several "Civil



517th Regular Meeting

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Brooks Davis on "Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln as Commanders in Chief"

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Friday, January 8

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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.
\$20.00 per person

Entree: Stuffed Pork Loin, Orange Roughy, or Fruit Plate



A Reminder

Please make your reservation by Wednesday, January 6. Mail the enclosed postcard or call the book shop at (312) 944-3085.

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.

War Tours of Chicago"—most recently in October 1990.

Fascination with the Civil War began for Davis in childhood, when he learned that his grandfather had served in the Union Army. "After the conclusion of the war," Davis related, "he was at Fort Monroe when Jefferson Davis was brought in there. His was one of the three companies detailed to guard the former Confederate president. They discovered at that time that they were distant cousins. Jefferson Davis gave him a brass candlestick—which I still have—as a memento." Because of his grandfather's service in the Union Army and his kinship to Jefferson Davis,

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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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Picnic	Paul Kleckner

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.



"Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom" will be shown on Channel 11, Chicago's PBS station, sometime in January. The documentary, which examines the Emancipation Proclamation, features interviews with Lincoln and Civil War scholars John Y. Simon, James M. McPherson, and Harold Holzer, and New York Governor Mario Cuomo. Check the newspaper listings or call Channel 11, at (312) 583-5000, for the day and time.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

A warning about the status of unprotected Civil War battlefields was issued, and some strategies for dealing with the problem were proposed, during the first regular meeting of the Battlefield Preservation Advisory Coalition held in Washington in September. As reported by Robert W. Meinhard in his "Battlefield Update" column in the December issue of *Civil War News*, speakers at the meeting warned that we have very little time to save the remaining unprotected battlefield sites. They said the situation is analogous to that facing General G.K. Warren on July 2, 1863 as he stood on the summit of Little Round Top and watched thousands of Confederates advance towards him. Only through immediate and decisive action by Warren was this vital position saved. Such immediate and decisive action is required to save unprotected battlefields.

The speakers proposed the following strategies:

- A high-visibility national fundraising effort and educational campaign to raise the level of public interest in battlefield preservation. To raise the several hundred million dollars necessary, preservationists must reach out to corporations, foundations, and the general public.
- Cooperation among preservationists, land owners, developers, and local government.
- Development of a comprehensive national land use plan.
- Establishment of priorities regarding what land is to be preserved. The focus must be on saving key core areas of the battlefields.
- All those in the preservation movement must put aside petty disagreements, bickering, and jealousies, and work together toward the goal of preserving our fast-disappearing Civil War heritage.

Among the speakers at the meeting were Under Secretary of the Interior Frank Bracken; Frances Kennedy, director of the Civil War Battlefield Campaign of the Conservation Fund; and Bruce Craig, cultural resources director of the National Parks and Conservation Association. The Battlefield Preservation Advisory Coalition is made up of representatives of numerous Civil War Round Tables and preservation groups. The president is Jerry Russell of Civil War Round Table Associates.

The Civil War Trust has given \$35,000 toward the \$50,000 needed to purchase nineteen acres at the Mill Springs Battlefield in south-central Kentucky. The money will enable the Mill Springs Battlefield Association to preserve a significant portion of the battlefield that was the site of a Federal victory (January 2, 1862) that won control of Kentucky for the Union. Of the additional \$15,000 needed, land owners in the area are donating \$5000, and the state of Kentucky \$4000. The Battlefield Association has raised the remaining \$6000 from the community. The Association hopes to erect several interpretive signs on the new property and install split-rail fences to restore the wartime appearance. The Kentucky Heritage Council is working to list Mill Springs on the National Register of Historic Places and also to win designation of the site as a National Historic Landmark. Mill Springs is on Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan's list of the twenty-five Civil War battlefields most in need of protection.

❧ DECEMBER MEETING ❧

by Barbara Hughett

After the Battle of Chickamauga (September 19-20, 1863), Colonel Moses Walker, an aide de camp to General John Brannon, offered his opinion that "the Twenty-first Ohio saved the day at Chickamauga." On December 11, Civil War scholar and author Peter Cozzens spoke before 108 members and guests at the 516th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His topic was "The Real Rock of Chickamauga: The Twenty-first Ohio on Horseshoe Ridge."

"When I first started work on my book on Chickamauga four years ago," Cozzens stated, "the Twenty-first Ohio was just another regiment to me. I had no special interest in it nor any particular feeling about its performance during the battle. Now, however, I can honestly say I feel precisely as Colonel Walker did. I firmly believe that no other regiment—Union or Confederate—fought more gallantly or made a greater contribution than did the Twenty-first Ohio. It not only saved nearly half the Union Army on the second day of the battle, but it made possible the famous stand on Horseshoe Ridge that earned General George Thomas the nickname "Rock of Chickamauga."

Before the battle one might not have predicted the Twenty-first's being cast in a hero's role. The unit had minor, but persistent, discipline problems due, in large part, to their easygoing regimental commander, James Neibling. The regiment did have "one important thing going for it," however. It was one of a very few regiments to receive the newly-developed Colt Revolving Rifle.

After an attack by forces under Confederate General James Longstreet on the battle's second day, most of the federal troops—nearly half the army—fled the battlefield by noon. "A dazed, but still resolute remnant from Major General John Brannon's division, however, drifted back onto a heavily-forested series of hills, ridges, and ravines that after the war became known as Horseshoe Ridge." It was on the second of these hills that the men of the Twenty-first took heavy enemy fire and held their line.

Seventeen year-old Wilson Vance, a second lieutenant in Company D, described what he saw from atop that hill: "Scattered over the burning and smoking hillside lay a number of wounded men belonging to the regiment, who had fallen in our swift advance or slow and stubborn retreat to the old position, and soon their cries for relief became fairly appalling, as the agony of being roasted was added to the pain of their wounds. Volunteers rushed forward and drew the poor fellows back; but some of them were piteously burned, the white, cooked flesh peeling back from their charred finger bones, and in the case of an old schoolmate of mine, great flakes falling off his cheeks. And so they died."

By sunset, at 6:00 p.m., the Union lines were rapidly thinning and ammunition supplies were desperately low; what remained was used to repel one last Confederate attack. The inevitable surrender came soon thereafter. But the brave actions of the Twenty-first Ohio had held off the Confederate advance, thus giving General Thomas time to regroup and retreat in a more orderly fashion.

Cozzens concluded his address with this anecdote: "One day, several weeks after the battle, the survivors of the Twenty-first were drawn up for inspection by General Thomas. As he rode along the line, Thomas remarked that the Twenty-first looked like a mere fragment of a regiment. Captain Canfield told him that what he saw was all that

was left of the Twenty-first Ohio.

"I'll let Captain Canfield tell the rest of the story: 'At this the general dismounted from his horse, and moved down to about the center of the little line, and spoke a few words to the men. He said that he knew how well the Twenty-first had fought, and the circumstances of their loss; that no doubt we felt greatly discomfited at the loss of our comrades and colors, but that our losses and sacrifices were to our credit and honor. It was not a speech. It was more a fatherly talk, and when he moved away, there was not a dry eye in the line.'"

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Brooks belongs to both the Sons of Union Veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Davis, whose career in the furniture business has spanned over forty years, was manager of the Baker Knapp and Tubbs showroom in the Merchandise Mart for twenty years, and currently operates his own showroom consulting business. He has served as an officer of numerous furniture industry-related organizations and has received many awards, including three from the American Society of Interior Designers. He was the first and only recipient of the Merchandise Mart's Distinguished Benefactor Award in 1988, and was the recipient of the 1990 Chairman's Award of the Design Industries Foundation For AIDS (DIFFA). He and his wife Betsey—a Round Table member since 1977—are very actively involved in charitable outreach programs of the Episcopal Church. Both are past wardens of the Chapter of St. James Cathedral. Brooks is a member of the 1993 Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions.

In 1991, Davis was named chairman of the Lincoln College Board of Trustees. Lincoln College, a two-year liberal arts college in Lincoln, Illinois, was chartered as a university in 1865, and is the only institution named for Lincoln during his lifetime.

He is a member of the board of regents of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois and has served as president of the Stephen A. Douglas Association since 1986. He is a past vice president of the Illinois State Historical Society and is a life member of the board of directors of the Illinois Association for the Advancement of History.

His additional historical affiliations include the Abraham Lincoln Association; the American Civil War Roundtable, United Kingdom; and the Confederate Historical Association of Belgium (CHAB). Last May, he addressed the CHAB's twentieth anniversary celebration convention, held in Roodebeek Park, Belgium. Currently, Davis is coordinating a Lincoln/Civil War study group at Northwestern University's downtown campus.

This will be Brooks Davis's fifth address at a regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His previous topics were: March 1969, "The Battle of Perryville"; November 1976, "The Mississippi Marine Brigade"; December 1978, "The Perryville Campaign"; and January 1985, "The Grand Army of the Republic."

Simon Pleiter, husband of Honorary Life member Barbara Long Pleiter, died recently. We extend our sincere condolences to Barbara and the Pleiter family. You may send cards or letters of sympathy to Barbara at 2 Briar Knoll Court, Asheville, North Carolina 28803.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Longacre, Edward G. *Jersey Cavaliers: A History of the First New Jersey Volunteer Cavalry, 1861-1865*. Longstreet House. 1992. \$35.00.
- Lowry, Don. *No Turning Back: The Beginning of the End of the Civil War*. Hippocrene Books. 1992. \$24.95.
- Mahr, Theodore C. *The Battle of Cedar Creek: Showdown on the Shenandoah October 1-30, 1864*. H.E. Howard, Inc. 1992. \$25.00.
- Marszalek, John F. *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order*. Free Press. 1992. \$29.95.
- Miller, William J., project editor. *The Peninsula Campaign of 1862: Yorktown to the Seven Days*. Campaign Chronicles, 1475 S. Bascom, Suite 204, Campbell, CA 95008. 1992. \$10.00.

Virginia Tech's Fifteenth Annual Campaigning With Lee Seminar, directed by James I. Robertson, Jr., will be held on the campus of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, from June 19-26. This year's seminar will feature a number of distinguished speakers; a presentation on Civil War medicine by a panel of physicians; and an all-day tour retracing Jeb Stuart's "Ride Around McClellan," led by J. E. B. Stuart IV. Registration is limited. For further information and applications, contact Don Anderson at (708) 296-2780, or see Don at the January meeting.

Gary Wills, author of the critically-acclaimed *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America*, will be the featured speaker at the annual banquet of the Abraham Lincoln Association, to be held on Friday, February 12, at 7:00 p.m., at the Ramada Renaissance Hotel in Springfield. For information and to make reservations, call (217) 782-4836.

The Old State Capitol State Historic Site in Springfield will be closed until the first of March while wooden flooring and heating equipment are replaced. **However, the site will be open on February 12—for one day only—for the annual Abraham Lincoln Symposium.**

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 monthly meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

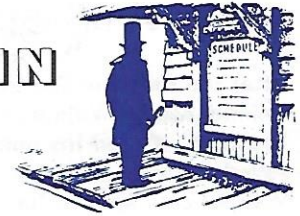
Schimmelfennig Boutique

In addition to The Round Table history, the following items are available at each monthly meeting:

- Lapel pins \$3.00 each, two for \$5.00
- Mugs \$2.00 each, two for \$3.00
- Meeting tapes \$7.00 each
- Civil War Buff posters \$10.00 each

Proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the programs of The Civil War Round Table.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

- Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street (Buttons, 15th Floor), the second Friday in each month, except as noted.
- January 8:** Brooks Davis on "Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln as Commanders in Chief."
- February 12:** Brian Pohanka on "Digging into Custer's Last Stand: New Perspectives on the Little Big Horn."
- March 12:** Frank Byrne on "Civil War Prisons: Myths and Realities."
- April 16:** Frances Kennedy on "Community Benefits of Battlefield Preservation" (Please note: this is the **third** Friday of the month.)
- May 6-9:** Annual Battlefield Tour—Vicksburg.
- May 14:** William Piston on "Clio and the General: James Longstreet and the Writing of Southern History."
- June 11:** Carol Reardon on "The Image of Pickett's Charge in American History."

New Members

- Paul O'Flaherty, 9357 S. Avers Avenue, Evergreen Park, IL 60642, (708) 423-4897
- Hyde H. Murray, 432 Rosier Road, Fort Washington, MD 20744-5532, (301) 839-1324
- Jeff Reis, 925 S. 8th Avenue, #11, LaGrange, IL 60525, (708) 352-5060
- David E. Rossi, 18W743 Chateaux East, Oak Brook, IL 60521, (708) 852-4438
- Chris Smith, 1909 Morningson Court, #101, Schaumburg, IL 60194, (708) 519-9060
- Dr. Walter F. Watts, 10 N. Tower Road, Oak Brook, IL 60251, (708) 620-1442

The Twentieth Annual Abraham Lincoln Symposium, co-sponsored by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the Abraham Lincoln Association, will take place in Springfield on Friday, February 12—the one hundred eighty-fourth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. "Lincoln the Whig" will be the theme of the symposium, which will begin at 1:30 p.m. in the Hall of Representatives of the Old State Capitol. Papers will be given by Drew McCoy, Daniel Walker Howe, and Major L. Wilson. Comments will be made by John Niven. For information, call (217) 782-4836. Additional activities in Springfield in honor of Lincoln's Birthday include the Lincoln Heritage Lecture series at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, beginning at 9:30 a.m. on February 12. Speakers this year are Harold Holzer and Douglas L. Wilson. For information, call (217) 492-4150.

"Tenting Tonight"?

Is anyone interested in singing, playing, and researching the music of the Civil War era? Member Eileen Crowley is seeking to form a group if sufficient interest is indicated. You can reach Eileen at (312) 413-1490, from 8:00 a.m. till 3:30 p.m., or at (312) 545-6253, from 5:00 till 8:00 p.m.