

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LV, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

April 1995

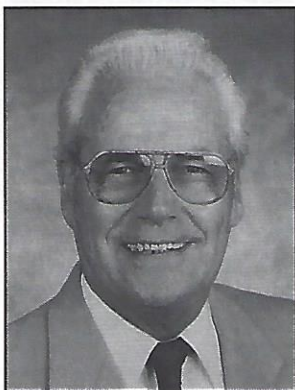
William Hanchett on "Lincoln's Assassination After 130 Years"

by Barbara Hughett

Exactly one hundred and thirty years ago—on Good Friday, April 14, 1865—Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States, became the first American president to be assassinated. This year—on Good Friday, April 14, 1995—one of the world's leading scholars of the Lincoln assassination, Professor William Hanchett, will address The Civil War Round Table. His topic, appropriately, will be "Lincoln's Assassination After 130 Years."

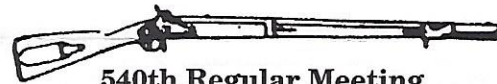
In his address, Hanchett will present some revisionist views of the murder of President Lincoln. Professor Hanchett has observed that: "Among the more persistent romantic myths of the American Civil War is that which claims that John Wilkes Booth and his small circle of ne'er-do-well friends were solely responsible for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. In recent years, this simplistic view of the assassination has been challenged by the presentation of new evidence—most notably in *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln* (1988), by William A. Tidwell, with James O. Hall and David Winfred Gaddy—and the reevaluation of evidence which has long been a matter of historic record."

Come Retribution demonstrates that the original plans to capture Lincoln originated with the Confederate government, not with Booth. It also notes that, at the end, the doctrine of military necessity, ruthlessly employed by the Union against the Confederacy, justified direct action by Confederates against Lincoln and other officials of the United States government. Although the United States originally charged Confederate President Jefferson Davis and five Confederate officials operating in Canada with having conspired in the assassination of Lincoln and the attempted assassination of Secretary of State William Seward with Booth and his group, the case against them fell apart when some of the government witnesses were exposed as perjurers.



William Hanchett

Evidence of high-level Confederate complicity remained, but was not pursued, for political leaders in the



540th Regular Meeting

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William Hanchett on "Lincoln's Assassination After 130 Years"

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Friday, April 14

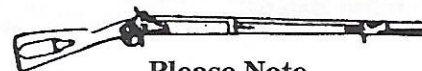
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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

\$25 - The Civil War Round Table of Chicago members
\$30 - Nonmembers

Entree: Breast of Chicken with Lemon Herb Sauce or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, April 12, by calling The Civil War Round Table offices at 312-341-1865. People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If you make a reservation and then find you cannot attend, please call to cancel or you will be billed for a dinner. **No last-minute orders for the Catch of the Day can be honored. The chef must have at least twenty-four hours notice.**

The Union League Club is located at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Federal Street. Federal Street runs north and south between Dearborn and Clark Streets. Parking is free at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club.

North recognized that holding the South responsible for Lincoln's death might prevent the reunion of the sections for many years. The assassination was thus depoliticized and blamed on the madness of Booth.

William Hanchett is a native of Evanston, Illinois, and first became interested in Lincoln and the Civil War

(continued on page 3)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
 410 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 841
 Chicago, Illinois 60605-1402
 Phone: 312-341-1865
 Fax: 312-341-1863

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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 Membership Committee, 410 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 841, Chicago, Illinois 60605-1402.



BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

Legislation regulating the expansion of national parks in Virginia has been introduced by Virginia Congressman Thomas J. Bliley, Jr. Under the original provisions of his bill, the boundaries of the Richmond National Battlefield Park would have been locked in place at the existing 763 acres, making expansion contingent upon approval by Congress — even if land was given to the park. However, following objections by the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, which has already raised about \$1.2 million toward the purchase of 750 acres at Malvern Hill, Bliley amended his bill to permit that gift to the park.

However, Bliley did not budge with regard to other expansion of the park, even by future gifts of land. "This Congress will not grant a blank check because the Park Service already nationally has more land than it can adequately maintain," he said. Bliley claims his legislation responds to worries of constituents who feared the larger, authorized boundaries of the park "constitute a cloud over their property titles."

National Park Service Director Roger Kennedy said a careful inquiry is underway into what battlefield lands the Richmond park should include. It will be wrapped up this summer and should not be cut off prematurely. "We'd like the public to have a chance to talk about it, to present a reasoned approach, before debate gets cut off pre-emptorily by congressional action," he said.

Kennedy also noted his concern that people be permitted to give historic lands in which Congress already has shown interest. "It isn't as if these boundaries were made up out of somebody's imagination," he said of the authorized park boundaries. "They represent the action of the great war."

Another provision in Bliley's bill would redraw the boundaries of Shenandoah National Park to the roughly 196,000 acres the government owns, from the 521,000 acres authorized by Congress. A land study at Shenandoah by the Park Service is underway. Bliley's bill also would preserve Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley. The government would acquire battlefields there through gifts, by buying them with donated or appropriated money, or by exchanges. However, the bill forbids government condemnation to acquire land.

A proposed four-lane highway that would have cut through portions of the Cedar Creek Battlefield in the Shenandoah Valley has been rejected by the Commonwealth Transportation Board of Virginia. However, the West Virginia portion of the 114-mile highway still is scheduled for construction starting in September. The highway would affect approximately 1200 historic sites, including the Civil War battlefields of Corrick's Ford and Moorefield.

The site of the Battle of Buffington Island, Ohio (July 19, 1863), may become a gravel quarry. The Meigs County Historical Society is trying to purchase the site to preserve it. The Society also plans to erect markers indicating the path of Confederate General John Hunt Morgan's Raid through Meigs County.

☞ MARCH MEETING ☞

by Larry Gibbs

On Friday, March 10, at the 539th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, 115 members and guests heard Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., speak about blacks who fought for or served the Confederacy. His topic, "Give Us a Flag: Afro-Confederate Loyalty in Civil War Virginia," provided a unique perspective and fresh insights on previously unexplored areas of Civil War study.

Jordan is an assistant professor of history and associate curator of the Special Collections Department, at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia*, recently published by the University Press of Virginia. Jordan used two chapters from this book as the basis for his speech.

According to Jordan, many misconceptions exist about blacks and their role in the Confederacy — as he put it, "In the study of war, the first casualty is truth." From Jordan's research, the truth was that Afro-Confederate patriotism was apparent in several ways. Some blacks spied for the Confederacy. In addition, there was an all-black Confederate artillery regiment at the Battle of First Bull Run (July 1861), and black Rebel pickets were at the Battle of Fredericksburg (December 1862). When Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, thirty of the 27,000 surrendering Rebel troops were black. Jordan also noted that about twenty-five percent of free Southern African-Americans owned slaves themselves.

A key question in the study of Afro-Confederates revolves around their motivation. Jordan speculated that slaves and free blacks fought for the South to improve civil rights for their race, and to possibly hasten the end of slavery.

According to Jordan, in 1865 the Confederate government had second thoughts about Afro-Confederate soldiers, and began a long overdue public relations campaign to entice slaves to join the Rebel army. On April 2, General Robert E. Lee sent President Jefferson Davis a list of Confederate officers to lead black troops. A total of 300,000 black Confederate soldiers was the objective.

Confederate independence may have been achieved if the Confederacy had encouraged more blacks to join the Confederate army", claimed Jordan. "A large number of black Confederate troops early in the conflict would have been the master stroke of the Civil War," he said. British diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy might have occurred if the Confederate government had actively recruited blacks in 1861.

As the war progressed, great division existed in the Davis administration about Afro-Confederate troops. Davis himself was ambivalent about black soldiers. In the end, any chance of successfully using African-Americans in the war disappeared due to the hesitation and reluctance of the Confederate leadership.

In response to a question from the audience, Jordan stated that today many blacks ignore the study of Civil War history because it has been poorly taught. Most slaves are depicted as one-dimensional, faceless victims of a terrible social evil. Slaves and free blacks are not usually personalized or even given names. A case in point, said Jordan, is the movie "Glory," in which there is

President's Note

For the fourth (and last) time in this century, Good Friday falls on April 14, as it did in 1865 when our sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, was assassinated. It is the first time this has occurred since 1933. Because of this unusual historic significance, we are holding our April meeting this year at its regular time on the second Friday of the month, April 14. Our speaker is one of the world's leading authorities on the assassination of President Lincoln, Professor William Hanchett, who will speak on "Lincoln's Assassination After 130 Years." We hope that Christians commemorating Good Friday and Jews observing Passover will respect our reasons for this scheduling and will not be offended. Thank you very much for your understanding. We hope that many of you will be with us as we commemorate the 130th anniversary of the assassination of President Lincoln on Good Friday, April 14, 1995.

no mention of the first African-American to win the Congressional Medal Of Honor, Sergeant William Carney. In addition, wives and families of black soldiers were not mentioned in the movie. These distortions, Jordan believes, gave the public an inaccurate depiction of the lives of blacks in the Civil War.

WILLIAM HANCHETT (continued from page 1)

when, as a child, his mother took him to the Chicago Historical Society. He received his bachelor's degree at Southern Methodist University and his masters and doctoral degrees at the University of California at Berkeley. He served as a historian in the U.S. Air Force and taught at the University of Colorado and Colorado State University, before coming to San Diego State University, where he taught for thirty-two years. He currently is Professor of History Emeritus at San Diego State. He is the author of *Irish: Charles G. Halpine in Civil War America* (1970), *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies* (1983; paperback edition, 1986), and *Out of the Wilderness: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1994).

He was historical consultant and author of the text for two documentary videos produced by Gary L. Beebe for White River Pictures: "Black Easter: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln," released in 1992; and "Out of the Wilderness: The Life of Abraham Lincoln," released in 1994. "Black Easter" has been televised several times on the Discovery Channel.

Additionally, Bill Hanchett has written numerous articles for historical journals and is a popular speaker on the lecture circuit. He has participated in several Lincoln conferences and symposia, including the recent HistoryAmerica Lincoln symposium in San Diego. He last addressed The Round Table on February 12, 1988, when his topic was: "Abraham Lincoln: Man in the Middle."

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Phillips, Charles & Alan Axelrod. *My Brother's Face: Portraits of the Civil War in Photographs, Diaries and Letters*. Chronicle Books, 275 Fifth St., San Francisco, CA 94103. 1993. \$16.95.
- Priest, John M. *Antietam: The Soldier's Battle*. Oxford University Press. 1993. Pbk. \$-4.95. Original of 1989.
- Scaife, William R. & William E. Erquitt. *The Chattahoochee River Line: An American Maginot*. William R. Scaife, P.O. Box 98094, Atlanta, GA 30359. 1993. \$29.00.
- Scott, Robert. *Glory, Glory, Glorietta: The Gettysburg of the West*. Johnson Printing, 1880 S. 57th St., Boulder, CO 80301. 1992. \$21.95.
- Scott, Robert G. *Into the Wilderness with the Army of the Potomac* (Revised). Indiana University Press. 1993. \$29.95; pbk. \$14.95. Original of 1985.
- Sears, Stephen W., ed. *For Country, Cause & Leader: The Civil War Journal of Charles B. Haydon* (2nd Michigan). Ticknor & Fields. 1993. \$25.00.

The Charleston Museum in Charleston, South Carolina, is sponsoring a "Civil War Week" from April 18-22. Among the speakers are Edwin C. Bearss, Charles Perry, David Ruth, and Rick Hatcher. For information, call 803-722-2996.

A 130th Anniversary of Appomattox Surrender Re-enactment and Encampment will take place at Rosehill Cemetery on Sunday, April 9. The all-day program will feature exhibitions, music, and living history presentations. For information, call David Wendell at 312-561-5940.

John Y. Simon, The Round Table's 1985 Nevins-Freeman honoree, will address the 20th Anniversary Dinner of the Stephen A. Douglas Association on Sunday, April 23, at the Hyatt on Printers Row. Simon was the speaker at the first meeting of the Douglas Association on April 23, 1975. For information on making reservations for the event, see the enclosed flyer which was provided by the Douglas Association.

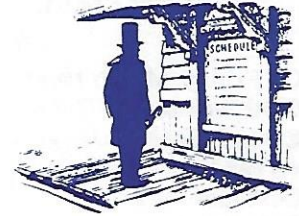
Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

In addition to The Round Table history and *The Continuing Civil War*, the essays from the Fiftieth Anniversary Proceedings, the following items are available at each monthly meeting: Lapel pins, Mugs, Meeting Tapes, Civil War Buff posters and T-Shirts, CWRT T-shirts, polos, and sweatshirts.

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 Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

- April 14*: William Hanchett on "Lincoln's Assassination After 130 Years"
- May 3-7*: Annual Spring Battlefield Tour—Charleston, Columbia, and Savannah
- May 12*: Tamara Moser Melia on "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army"
- June 9*: John Y. Simon on "Forging a Commander: Ulysses S. Grant and the First Year of the Civil War"

New Members

- Rick Branham, 946 Forest Road, La Grange Park, IL 60525, 708-352-3768
- Scott M. Bumpus, 5404 Mesquite Road, Memphis, TN 38120, 901-763-3468
- Bill Langowski, 3144 Patton Drive, Des Plaines, IL 60018, 708-299-8045
- James T. Mace, 151 N. Michigan Avenue, #2111, Chicago, IL 60601, 312-616-8669
- Hugh J. Schwartzberg, 853 W. Fullerton, Chicago, IL 60614, 312-525-5256

Change of Address

- George Linhart, 3263 Vineyard Avenue, #189, Pleasanton, CA 94566, 510-846-0932

Lincoln and the Illinois Supreme Court, by Dan W. Bannister, a unique presentation of Abraham Lincoln's practice before the state's highest tribunal, was recently published. President Barbara Hughett served as editor of the volume, and member Muriel Underwood was the book's designer/typographer. To order a copy of the 208-page casebound book (\$23.95, plus \$2.50 for postage), call 217-787-6534, or contact Barbara or Muriel.

The Lincoln College Story: 1865-1995, by Barbara Hughett, with a Foreword by John Y. Simon, is available in both casebound (\$24.95) and paperback (\$14.95) editions. The book, which includes 45 photographs, tells the story of the first institution of higher learning named for Abraham Lincoln, and the only one named for him during his lifetime. The college is located in Lincoln, Illinois—thirty miles northeast of Springfield. Founder Ralph G. Newman has served on the college board for many years, and Past President Brooks Davis is a former chairman of the college's board of directors. A number of Round Table members have been involved in the work of the college over the years. Member Muriel Underwood was the designer/typographer of *The Lincoln College Story*. To order a copy (add \$2.50 for postage), send a check to the Lincoln College Museum, 300 Keokuk Street, Lincoln, Illinois 62656.