

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LV, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

May 1995

Tamara Moser Melia on "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army"

by Barbara Hughett

Major General James Birdseye McPherson was one of the best products of the "Old Army"—the antebellum regular army of the United States of America. At West Point, his professors considered him a model cadet, and he conformed to the academic and behavioral code of the Academy. In his later career, he was often described as an "ideal soldier," and his gentlemanly behavior and military bearing advanced his career.

During the Civil War, McPherson became a trusted confidant and student of Ulysses S. Grant, a friend of William Tecumseh Sherman, and an active member of the Union high command in the West. He quickly rose in rank from a captain of engineers to a major general of volunteers. After leading his Seventeenth Army Corps through victory after victory in the forefront of Grant's campaign for Vicksburg, he succeeded Grant and Sherman in command of the Army of the Tennessee.

It was at the head of that army that McPherson finally began advancing his military education. In Sherman's Atlanta campaign, he proved to be an able commander who overcame early over-cautiousness to save his army in the Battle of Atlanta, where his death in July 1864 at the age of thirty-five reduced him to little more than a statistic: the highest ranking officer killed in the Civil War.

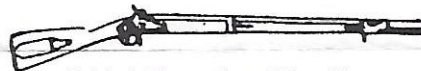
From the first, McPherson followed the ideals of the Old Army, ideals that were never defined and are only vaguely understood today. Sherman cried when learning of his death, but more important, Grant cried too, claiming him as a "brother," with whom he had shared "more than friendship." "The nation had more to

expect from him than from almost any one living," Grant later claimed.

On May 12, Tamara Moser Melia (now Smith) will address The Civil War Round Table; her topic will be "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army." Tamara Moser (Melia) Smith is a native of California, and a graduate of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where she received her Ph.D. under Dr. John Y. Simon after assist-



Tamara Moser Melia



541st Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

Tamara Moser Melia on "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army"

Friday, May 12

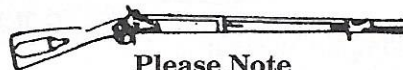
☆ ☆ ☆

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: Roast Loin of Pork with Applesauce or
Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, May 10, 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.

ing in editing six volumes of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. She spent ten years as a historian for the United States Navy, the last five years afloat as the Fleet Liaison, documenting contemporary naval history in events such as the USS *Iowa* explosion, Operations Earnest Will and Desert Storm. She then served as a visiting assistant professor in the Strategy and Policy Depart-

(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

Officers

President	Barbara Hughett
Senior Vice President	Carole Cierniak
Vice President	Larry Gibbs
Vice President	Robert Girardi
Treasurer	James Nethery
Secretary	Bruce Allardice
Assistant Treasurer	Charles Bednar
Assistant Secretary	Michael Marienthal
Inspector General	Bruce Allardice
Membership Registrar	Carole Le Claire
Tour Registrar	Carole Le Claire
Newsletter Editor	Barbara Hughett
Contributing Editors	C. Robert Douglas, David Richert Larry Gibbs, Robert Girardi

Founding Newsletter Editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968

Board of Trustees

Terms expiring in 1995: Gene Holland, Carole Le Claire, Frank Patton, Jerome Schur
Terms expiring in 1996: Robert Dawson, Karen Krieger, Eleanor Leichenko, Norman Poteshman

Committee Chairs

Fall Kentucky Tour	Brooks Davis
Spring Battlefield Tour	Larry Gibbs Richard McAdoo
Battlefield Preservation Fund	Mary Munsell Abroe
Financial Planning	Kurt Carlson
Membership	Glen N. Wiche C. Robert Douglas
Publications/Printed Material	David Richert
Publicity/Public Relations	Donni Case
Hospitality	Susan Phillips Janet Linhart
Nominating	Kurt Carlson
Field Artist/Archives	Jerry Warshaw
Nevins-Freeman Award	Glen N. Wiche
Honors	Paul I. Kliger
Union League Club Liaison	John Higginson
Tape Record Librarians	Robert Girardi Roger Bohn
Battlefield Preservation Raffle and Schimmelfenning Boutique	Ted Birndorf
House	Thomas Herres Charles Ten Brink
Picnic	Paul Klekner Robert Dawson

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

The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites has approved a project to acquire land at five battlefields in five states. The total cost will be \$3.5 million. The acquisitions include 222 acres at Third Winchester (\$2.5 million); 110 acres at Spring Hill, Tennessee (\$880,000); 20 acres at Griswoldville, Georgia, the site of the only battle fought by Sherman enroute to Savannah (\$23,000); 6.25 acres at Fort DeRussy, Louisiana, built to defend the Red River and containing nearly 80 percent of the earthen fort's original breastworks and rifle pits (\$12,500); and 6 acres at Grand Gulf, Mississippi, the site of a massive naval bombardment on April 29, 1863 (\$3,000).

According to ACPWS chairman Tom Richards, when the acquisitions are completed, a total of 33 sites with a combined value of more than \$6.8 million will have been saved through the auspices of the Association.

The Conservation Fund has transferred an 83-acre portion of the Chancellorsville battlefield to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. At the request of the National Park Service, the Fund purchased the land when it was offered for sale last year. The Park Service reimbursed the Fund for the land's \$161,000 purchase price in January. It is near the junction of the historic Orange Turnpike and the old Orange Plank Road.

In Corinth, Mississippi, the Conservation Fund is trying to raise \$130,000 to purchase Battery F, once part of the arc of fortifications that guarded the rail lines of Corinth. The site of Battery F is already circled by suburban housing and was destined for residential development when the Fund began the campaign three years ago. About \$73,000 of the purchase price has already been raised.

At Gettysburg, the Fund provided a loan to the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg to complete the purchase of a preservation/development easement on 28 acres on East Cavalry Field. The land is owned by Clyde Mummert and is within the Park boundary. The rights will be donated to the Gettysburg National Military Park. The Friends are also assisting the Adams County Farmland Preservation Program in purchasing the development easement on another 34 acres of the Mummert property.

A plan to purchase and tear down the National Tower at Gettysburg has been abandoned by James Holocek, a retired Maryland advertising executive. Holocek had announced a \$6.6 million fund-raising campaign to get rid of the tower last October. Although the tower is within the park boundary, the National Park Service has never had the money to purchase and raze it.

Holocek faced local opposition to the notion of losing the tower as a source of tax income. In addition, the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg and the Park Service were concerned that his fund-raising efforts would be in competition with private funding being sought for a Civil War museum at the Park. The museum, to be built on 40 acres on Taneytown Road, would house the park's cyclorama.



☛ APRIL MEETING ☛

by Larry Gibbs

On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. On Good Friday, April 14, 1995, 158 members and guests heard an address on this important historical event at the 540th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. This interesting and controversial presentation was by William Hanchett, Professor of History Emeritus at San Diego State University. Hanchett believes that recently uncovered evidence will cause a reevaluation of the accepted version of the responsibility for Lincoln's murder.

The popular historical interpretation of the events at Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865, is that John Wilkes Booth and his motley associates plotted the assassination and killed Lincoln. However, Hanchett believes that Jefferson Davis and the Confederate government conspired with Booth and his friends. In the aftermath of the assassination, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton dropped the investigation. He felt that Confederate involvement would be impossible to prove due to a lack of concrete evidence. Hanchett posed this question: "Did the U.S. government rashly sacrifice justice for expediency?"

Hanchett claimed that "what has been accepted for 130 years is largely a myth that has outlived its usefulness." His controversial views are partially based on a recent book, *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln* (1988), by William A. Tidwell, James Hall, and David Winfred Gaddy. A major aspect of this challenging interpretation concerns the concept of military necessity. General Order No. 100 stated that rules of warfare permitted retaliation, starvation, and capture of the military leaders of the opposing side. From an 1863 Union cavalry raid, Lincoln learned that Richmond was defenseless at that time and that Confederate President Jefferson Davis could have been captured. In an 1864 cavalry raid, Union officer Colonel Ulric Dahlgren was killed with orders on his body to kill Davis and burn Richmond. According to Hanchett, the Rebels pledged retaliation.

In *Come Retribution*, and in Hanchett's opinion, "the capture of Lincoln for a hostage was a Confederate plan, not a Booth plan." Hanchett speculated that Booth and his friends were brought into the plot in 1864. In early 1865, Confederate goals changed from complete military victory to using Lincoln as a hostage or assassination victim. This last-ditch effort was part of the make-or-break Confederate strategy to victory. Jefferson Davis realized that as long as Lincoln was in power, the Confederacy was doomed. Many spies and clandestine operations existed in the Civil War; Davis approved of using \$2 million in gold for such activities. Davis thought, according to Hanchett's theory, that Lincoln's capture or assassination was not only proper, but a military necessity.

Although Hanchett and the authors of *Come Retribution* admit that there is no "smoking gun" to prove their theory conclusively, they claim that circumstantial evidence makes their theory the "most plausible" of all the explanations for Lincoln's murder. For example, George Azeroldt, a conspirator with Booth, refused to kill Vice-President Andrew Johnson because his charge was to capture, not kill. Other cited evidence includes the fact that Confederate cabinet member Judah P. Benjamin

withdrew \$1500 in gold from a Rebel secret service fund on April 1, 1865. This money, according to Hanchett, could have been used to pay off Booth and the others. Additionally, a high-ranking Confederate official involved in clandestine activities stated that he sent witnesses to the trial of the conspirators with disinformation to cause the case of Rebel involvement in Lincoln's assassination to collapse.

Why would Secretary of War Stanton and other Radical Republicans drop the charges of a Confederate conspiracy? Should every Confederate official and Copperhead have been brought to justice — Federal justice — after a devastating Civil War? Hanchett speculated that such charges and trials would have been "too disastrous for a chance to reunite America and heal the wounds." In the interests of reunion and reconciliation, Hanchett believes, Lincoln's murder was deemphasized and forgotten, even dehumanized. By the end of the Reconstruction era in 1877, Lincoln was no longer controversial or criticized, but a beloved martyr. The healing process after the Civil War included the necessity of a coverup concerning the possibility of Confederate involvement in Lincoln's assassination.

Nominating Committee Report

Kurt Carlson, chair of the Nominating Committee, has announced the following proposed slate of officers for the 1995-96 term:

President	Carole Cierniak
Senior Vice President	Larry Gibbs
Vice President	Robert Girardi
Vice President	James Nethery
Honorary Vice President	Ernest A. Griffin
Treasurer	Charles Bednar
Assistant Treasurer	Robert Dawson
Secretary	Bruce Allardice
Assistant Secretary	Jerome Schur

Trustees (terms expiring in 1997):

Donni Case, Gene Holland, Janet Linhart,
Frank Patton

Trustee (to complete the unexpired term of Robert Dawson, who is nominated for the position of Assistant Treasurer):

Susan Phillips (term to expire in 1996)

Three current trustees—Karen Krieger, Eleanor Leichenko, and Norman Poteshman—remain in office as they complete their two-year terms, which expire in 1996.

The election will be held during the May 12, 1995, meeting, at which time additional nominations for any of the above offices may be made from the floor.

MELIA (continued from page 1)

ment of the Naval War College, from 1992-94.

Her history of U.S. Naval Mine Countermeasures, from Farragut to the present, "Damn the Torpedoes," was published by the Government Printing Office. She is currently completing a history of Desert Storm mine warfare, entitled *Desert Slash*, as well as a biography of General McPherson, for publication. She is a former president of The Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Silber, Nina. *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*. U. of N. Carolina Press. 1994. \$34.95.
- Smith, Stuart W., ed. *Douglas Southall Freeman on Leadership*. White Mane Publ. Co., Inc. 1993. \$25.00.
- Steinmetz, Lee, ed. *The Poetry of the American Civil War*. MSU Press. 1991 Pbk. \$12.95.
- Summers, Festus P. *The Baltimore and Ohio in the Civil War*. Stan Clark Military Books. 1993. \$32.50. Original of 1939.
- Tucker, Philip T. *The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain: Father John B. Bannon*. U. of Alabama Press. 1992. \$32.95.
- Vandiver, Frank E. *Blood Brothers: A Short History of the Civil War*. Texas A & M University Press. 1992. \$24.50; pbk. \$10.95.
- Walther, Eric. H. *The Fire-Eaters (Southern Radicals)*. LSU Press. 1992. \$39.95.
- Wert, Jeffery D. *General James Longstreet — The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier*. Simon & Schuster. 1993. \$27.50.
- Wiley, Bell I., ed. *Reminiscences of Confederate Service — 1861-1865 by Francis W. Dawson*. LSU Press. 1993. \$11.95. Original of 1882.

Round Table Founder Ralph G. Newman will give the Thomas J. Dyba Lecture at the annual meeting of the Lincoln Group of Illinois on Saturday, June 10, at the Theodore Lownik Library at Illinois Benedictine College. Also on the program is a video presentation by Lincoln Group of Illinois board member Lewis P. Mallow.

A box lunch (\$6) at 11:30 a.m. will precede the program, which will run from 12:30-4:30 p.m. For additional information and to make reservations, call Philip Bean at 708-960-1500, extension 4510.

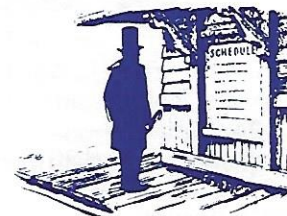
Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

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"

September 8: Grady McWhiney on "Braxton Bragg"

October 13: Nevins-Freeman Address: Richard N. Current on "Rediscovering the Civil War"

November 10: David Herbert Donald on "Abraham Lincoln: According to Herndon, 'The Most Shut-Mouthed Man'"

December 8: William C. (Jack) Davis on "Davis, Johnston, and Beauregard: A Triple Play that Crippled the Confederacy"

NEW MEMBERS

Carl B. Philips, 309 N. Lafayette, Valparaiso, IN 46383, 219-462-6685

Donald A. Sender, 213 White Oak Drive, Wheaton, IL 60187, 708-668-1897

Ruth E. Sender, 213 White Oak Drive, Wheaton, IL 60187, 708-668-1897

Jack Shapiro, 2832 W. Greenleaf, Chicago, IL 60645, 312-761-3477

Nazar H. Tiwana, 2620 W. Pratt Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60645, 312-274-4134

Change of Address

Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS), 305 Charlotte Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Lance Herdegen, of the Milwaukee Round Table, has been named director of an Institute of Civil War Studies, to be established at Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The Institute will highlight the college's Norman W. FitzGerald Civil War Collection. FitzGerald, an early member of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago, founded the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table in 1947. Herdegen is also the director of media relations for Carroll College, a noted author, a former newspaper reporter, and former editor of the newsletter of the Milwaukee Round Table.

The 1995 National Convention of the American Blue & Gray Association will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, on July 26-30. Topics to be presented will include Civil War railroads, naval operations, and the War in Maryland. Among the speakers are Richard M. McMurry, Leslie Gordon-Burr, and John M. Priest. For information, call Bob Maher at 1-800-298-1861.

Former Round Table member Hugh Matchett died recently. We extend our sincere condolences to his family.