

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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May 1997

William J. Cooper on "Jefferson Davis and the Politics of Command"

by Barbara Hughett

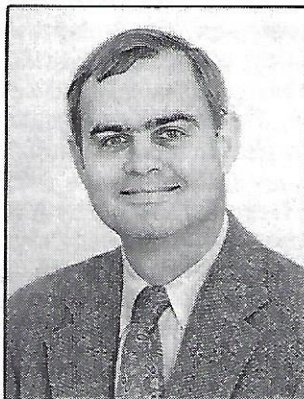
JEFFERSON DAVIS was pruning his roses in the garden of his Mississippi plantation early in 1861, when the telegram arrived informing him of his election as president of the provisional government of the Confederate States of America. His wife Varina wrote in her memoirs that he told her the news "as 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 Franklin Pierce. According to *The Times* of London correspondent William Howard Russell, even William Seward held that Davis was the only man in the South with "the brain, or the courage and dexterity to bring [secession] to a successful issue."

Davis faced many problems during his presidency, and two of them were his own hot temper and his ill health. His wife once referred to him as "a mere mass of throbbing nerves," and almost everything that transpired during his presidency simply aggravated his personal condition. He was constantly quarreling with most of the other Confederate leaders, military and civilian, and those he chose as his most loyal friends—such as Judah Benjamin—were often unpopular with many Southerners.

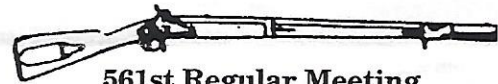
William J. Cooper will address The Round Table on May 9; his topic will be "Jefferson Davis and the Politics of Command." In his presentation, Dr. Cooper will discuss the interaction between political forces and military policy. His focus will concentrate on Davis: the outlook he

brought to the presidency, his attitude toward politics and his comprehension of the connections between politics and military decisions, his relationships with certain key generals, and how his views and actions affected the fate of the Confederacy.

Currently Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, William Cooper received his A.B. degree (*cum laude* in history) from Prince-



William J. Cooper



561st Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

William J. Cooper on "Jefferson Davis and the Politics of Command"

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Friday, May 9

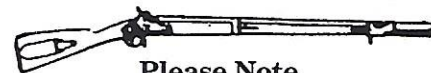
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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

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

Entree: Beef Stroganoff with Buttered Noodles
or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, May 7, by calling Registrar Carole Le Claire at 847-698-1438. 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 available at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club, at the rate of \$5 per car.

ton University and his Ph.D. from John Hopkins University. Prior to assuming his current position in 1989, he served as assistant professor (for two years), associate professor (for eight years), and professor (for eleven years)—all at Louisiana State. He also was dean of the graduate school from 1982-1989.

(continued on page 3)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817
Chicago Illinois 60605
Phone: 847-698-1438

Officers

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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, 601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817, Chicago, Illinois 60605.



The Salt Creek Civil War Round Table is sponsoring the fourth annual concert by the 97th Regimental String Band on Sunday, June 15, from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at the College of DuPage. This is a fundraiser for battlefield preservation. Tickets are \$5 per person. For information, call Cindy Intravartolo at 708-788-3246

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

The Georgia Civil War Commission has received \$1.4 million to purchase a large portion of the Resaca battlefield. Resaca is the largest unprotected battlefield in Georgia and its acquisition has been the top priority of the Commission. Aside from being bisected by Interstate 75, most of the battlefield looks as it did in May 1864. The Battle of Resaca took place near the outset of Sherman's Atlanta campaign. The Commission sees a state park at Resaca as a link in a chain of national, state, and local parks retracing the route of Sherman's campaign.

The Robert W. Woodruff Foundation provided \$1 million toward the purchase and the other \$400,000 came from an anonymous donor. The Commission previously received \$500,000 from the Civil War Trust as well as donations from the non-profit Friends of Resaca. Donations can be sent to: Friends of Resaca, PO Box 1098, Resaca, Georgia 30735.

In Kentucky, the Mill Springs Battlefield Association has received a \$200,000 federal grant for future land acquisition and expansion of the battlefield site. The funds are from the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. That law sets aside 10 percent of Kentucky's annual Surface Transportation Program funds for projects or activities that add community or environmental value to any planned or completed transportation project. Since its formation in 1992, the Mill Springs Battlefield Association has acquired more than sixty acres of the battlefield. For further information, call 800-642-6287.

The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites has received the Civil War Round Table of New York's Bell I. Wiley Award, which is presented to those whose outstanding non-literary/artistic talents have contributed to a greater understanding and preservation of that which pertains to the Civil War. The award was presented to APCWS President Dennis Frye on April 9.

The Bristoe Station battlefield in Virginia is being threatened by a proposed gasoline station/convenience store and a nine-hole golf course. The gas station would be adjacent to the battlefield and the golf course across its eastern end. Bristoe Station and its environs, including the battlefield, are still largely undeveloped. The battlefield was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places in the 1980s, but property owners, who feared they would be unable to sell, blocked the listing. In addition, the Virginia General Assembly reversed Bristoe's status as a Virginia Landmark in 1991.

The Battle of Bristoe Station (October 14, 1863) occurred when Union forces under George Meade were falling back toward nearby Centreville, followed by A.P. Hill. Hill was surprised by troops of the Union II Corps and the Confederates fell back with heavy losses, ending Lee's pursuit of the Union army. Of the 143 Confederate dead, most were buried on the battlefield, but their graves are unmarked. The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission has declared Bristoe Station one of the top fifty priority sites in need of preservation.

☛ APRIL MEETING ☛

by Larry Gibbs

On April 11, at the 560th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, 113 members and guests heard David Ruth make a splendid presentation on "The Army of Northern Virginia: A Study in Leadership and Indoctrination." Mr. Ruth is a veteran of service in national parks—Fredericksburg, Manassas, Ft. Sumter, and currently Richmond. He has appeared on several episodes of "Civil War Journal," telecast on the History Channel. He will be one of the tour guides on our Richmond battlefield tour on May 1-4. In an interesting and stimulating fashion, Ruth issued a series of four hypotheses about the development of the Army of Northern Virginia during the 1862 Peninsular Campaign.

When Confederate General Joseph Johnston was wounded in the Battle of Seven Pines (May 31-June 1, 1862), the command was handed to General Robert E. Lee. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia faced a serious challenge with extremely high stakes. With an army in nearly total disarray, the entire future of the Confederacy rested on Lee's performance.

In his first hypothesis, Ruth proclaimed, "Lee performed the impossible against the largest Union army in June of 1862." He developed a strategic plan to unite six disparate divisions into one army, improved his army's discipline, reduced the number of furloughs, ended remoteness of headquarters, and supervised every detail from company to division level. Earning the sobriquet "King of Spades," Lee fortified Richmond with earthworks, which allowed more soldiers to fight for the Confederacy.

Second, Ruth indicated that the 1862 Seven Days Campaign of June 26-July 2 revealed Lee's limitations in staff relationships. Some ineffective staff work was not Lee's fault. "Many on Lee's staff were untrained in war and no staff procedures were written," explained Ruth. Furthermore, there was not a sufficient number of staff officers; Lee had only seven staff members available to face McClellan's 85,000 troops in the Peninsular Campaign. Major inadequacies also appeared in mapmaking and engineer staff positions.

"The Seven Days Campaign revealed the capabilities of the Army of Northern Virginia, if properly organized," continued Ruth. However, when Lee inherited the army, the artillery and infantry were poorly organized and led. For example, at Malvern Hill (July 1, 1862), the Confederates had only one cannon left while the Federals had 29. Many Rebel cannons were obsolete, with several varieties of make. At this time, the infantry leadership was experiencing petty bickering within the officer ranks. Ruth believes that Lee deserves some criticism for drafting orders that were not explicit. For example, the Battle of Malvern Hill began in the hands of a brigadier general with an order carried out with a battle yell.

Ruth noted that, "The relationship between Lee and President Jefferson Davis after the Seven Days became one of trust and respect." Davis, a frustrated general, was a spectator who meddled with military orders during a battle. Lee reacted with a stern rebuke. After this incident Davis and Lee not only tolerated, but trusted each other; Davis stepped aside, allowing Lee to develop his keen sense of strategy that nearly won the

Civil War for the Confederacy.

Lessons learned by Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia during the Peninsular Campaign were invaluable for future struggles. Although Lee's army missed an opportunity to inflict a major defeat upon McClellan's Army of the Potomac, the Army of Northern Virginia became a toughened, united fighting machine for the duration of the conflict. Confederate soldiers now believed in "Marse Robert" and the Confederate cause. Eventual Rebel victory loomed as a possible result.

WILLIAM J. COOPER (continued from page 1)

He has received many awards and honors including being named Outstanding Teacher by the LSU Student Government Association in 1993 and Centennial Scholar by the Museum of the Confederacy in 1995. Books he has written include *The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877-1890* (1991) and *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (1983). Books he has edited include *A Master's Due: Essays in Honor of David Herbert Donald* (1995). He served as editor of the Southern Biography Series, published by LSU Press, from 1979-1993.

William Cooper has written numerous articles and essays for professional journals, and has served on several program committees and advisory commissions. He has presented papers or served on panels at over two dozen scholarly conferences and meetings.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Carole Cierniak, chair of the Nominating Committee, has announced the following proposed slate of officers for the 1997-98 term:

President	Robert Girardi
Senior Vice President	James Nethery
Vice President	Charles Bednar
Vice President	Bruce Allardice
Treasurer	Roger Bohn
Secretary	Norman Poteshman
Assistant Treasurer	Janet Linhart
Assistant Treasurer	Ted Birndorf

New Trustees, terms ending in 1998:
Donni Case, Paul Eastes, Scott Graham
*(Thomas Herres is the fourth trustee, but has another year to serve in his two-year term.)

New Trustees, terms ending in 1999:
Paul Feiss, Michael Marienthal, Frank Patton, Marge Smogor

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

The committee in charge of the recent Midwest Civil War Round Table Conference would like to express special thanks to Brooks Davis and Jerry Feinstein for a job well done in preparing and leading the Civil War tour of Chicago on Sunday, April 20..

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Ackinclose, Timothy. *Sabres & Pistols — The Civil War Career of Colonel Harry Gilmor, C.S.A.* Stan Clark Military Books. 1996. \$28.50.
- Ambrose, Stephen E. *Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff.* LSU Press. 1996. Pbk. \$11.95. Original of 1962.
- Bearss, Edwin C. *River of Lost Opportunities. The Civil War on the James River, 1861-1862.* H.E. Howard, Inc. 1995. \$19.95.
- Dana Charles A. *Recollections of the Civil War.* U. of Nebraska Press. 1996. Pbk. \$12.95. Original of 1898.
- Daniel, Larry J. and Lynn N. Bock. *Island No. 10 — Struggle for the Mississippi Valley.* U. of Alabama Press. 1996. pbk. \$24.95.
- Eicher, David J. *The Civil War in Books — An Analytical Bibliography.* U. of Illinois Press. 1996. \$39.95.
- Fehrenbacher, Don E. and Virginia, eds. *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln.* Stanford U. Press. 1996. \$60.
- Finch, L. Boyd. *Confederate Pathway to the Pacific: Major Sherod Hunter and Arizona Territory, C.S.A.* Arizona Hist. Soc. 1996. \$36.95.
- Gibson, Charles D. and E. Kay. *Dictionary of Transports and Combatant Vessels Steam and Sail Employed by the Union Army 1861-1868.* Ensign Press. 1995. \$43.
- Good, Timothy S. *We Saw Lincoln Shot: One Hundred Eyewitness Accounts.* U. Press of Mississippi. 1995. \$17.95.
- Hard, Abner. *History of the Eighth Cavalry Regiment, Illinois Volunteers.* Morningside Bookshop. 1996. \$40. Original of 1984.
- Hearn, Chester G. *Admiral David Dixon Porter: The Civil War Years.* Naval Institute Press. 1996. \$35.
- Jordan, Thomas and J.P. Pryor. *The Campaigns of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and of Forrest's Cavalry.* Da Capo Press. 1996. Pbk. \$19.95. Original of 1868.
- Logue, Larry M. *To Appomattox and Beyond — The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace.* Ivar R. Dee. 1996. \$22.50.
- Popcock, Barry, ed. *Soldier Boy: The Civil War Letters of Charles O. Musser, 29th Iowa.* U. of Iowa Press. 1995. \$25.

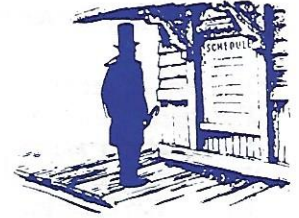
Schimmelfennig Boutique

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 30–May 4: Annual Battlefield Tour: Richmond
May 9: William J. Cooper on "Jefferson Davis and the Politics of Command"

June 13: Mark Grimsley on "Sherman's March to the Sea"

September 12: Wiley Sword, Nevins-Freeman Address
October 17: Chris F. Onvielle on "The Wilmington Campaign"

November 14: Ted Karamanski on "Chicago Civil War Monuments"

December 12: To be announced

January 9: Dan McCarthy, topic to be announced

NEW MEMBERS

Unis Davis, 9255 S. Wallace, Chicago, IL 60620, 773-483-8627

Jerome Kowalski, 206 E. Grantley, Elmhurst, IL 60126, 630-833-3235

Malcolm P. Macht, 49 Washington, Malone, NY 12953-2416

Change of Address

Millie Jarvis, 3810 N. Greenview, Chicago, IL 60613
Paul and Ruth Kliger, 825 W. Willow St., Louisville, CO 80027, 303-661-0734.

The Mt. Prospect Park District is sponsoring a **Civil War Experience** on Saturday and Sunday, June 14–15, at Lions Park in Mt. Prospect. The Civil War Experience will include encampment, civil and military demonstrations, 1860s baseball, period music and dance, children's games, and more. Admission is free. A pancake breakfast will be served on Saturday from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. by members of the Mt. Prospect Lions Club. The sponsors are looking for additional sutlers, food vendors, and baseball enthusiasts. For information, call Nancy Radtke (847-255-5380) or Randy Toelke (847-640-1000).

Ray, Frederic E. *"Our Special Artist": Alfred R. Waud's Civil War.* Stackpole Books. 1994. \$22.95. Original of 1974. Talbert, Bart R. *Maryland — The South's First Casualty.* Rockbridge Publ. Co. 1995. \$25.

Trudeau, Noah A. *Voices of the 55th: Letters From the 55th Massachusetts Volunteers, 1861-1865.* Morningside Bookshop. 1995. \$29.95.

Williams, Edward R., ed. *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts.* Texas A. & M. Press. 1995. \$35.

Wooster, Ralph A., ed. *Lone Star Blue and Gray: Essays on Texas in the Civil War.* Texas State Historical Association. 1995. Pbk. \$16.95.