

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVIII, Number 1

Chicago, Illinois

September 1997

NEVINS-FREEMAN ADDRESS Wiley Sword on "Southern Invincibility: The Civil War's Mental Confrontation"

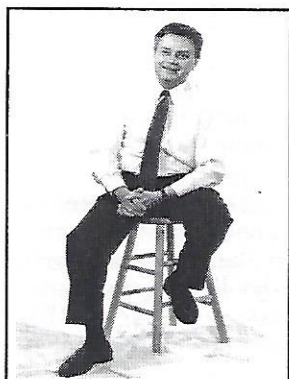
by Barbara Hughett

The Nevins-Freeman Award, named in honor of distinguished historians Allan Nevins and Douglas Southall Freeman, was established by The Civil War Round Table of Chicago in 1974. It is presented to individuals to honor their outstanding contributions to the preservation of American history, especially that occurring between the years 1861-1865.

On September 12, distinguished historian Wiley Sword will become the twenty-fourth annual recipient of the Nevins-Freeman Award. The title of his acceptance address will be "Southern Invincibility: The Civil War's Mental Confrontation."

The Civil War yet looms as the greatest defining moment in Southern history. Marked by an attempt to establish a separate North American nation based upon a unique slaveholding culture, it was a statement to the world that Southerners were different. Yet, if you had asked many of the gray soldiers who fought for four agonizing years what they were fighting for, the answer most likely would have been a conventional one: "in defense of our homes and freedom."

It was a matter of conditioned perspective. What they saw and read, what they knew and perceived, how they were raised and taught—it was a reflection of the South inbred. To "live and die in Dixie" meant a commitment to the soul and spirit. The poorest dirt farmer and the aristocratic planter could claim a common ideological heritage—that of Southern efficacy. Many Southerners of the 1860s were an independent-minded, "can do" people.



Wiley Sword

They believed in their ability to accomplish, persevere, and shape their existence. Essentially, it was a "superior" attitude held in common, based upon the longstanding and proven self-reliance of a people who had overcome much adversity to establish a flourishing civilization.

Thus, the mental side of the Civil War era holds an enormous fascination and latent importance, even more than a

(continued on page 3)



563rd Regular Meeting

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NEVINS-FREEMAN ADDRESS

Wiley Sword on "Southern Invincibility: The Civil War's Mental Confrontation.

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Friday, September 12

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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: Roast Cornish Game Hen with Rice
or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, September 10, 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.

NEW PARKING POLICY: Effective immediately, the new parking rate is \$8.00 if you park between the hours of 4:30-10:30 p.m. in the lot adjacent to the Union League Club. If you do not get your ticket validated or park beyond the hours listed, you **MUST** pay the full amount.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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

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- Vice President Charles Bednar
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Larry Gibbs

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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 Fifteenth Annual Midwest Civil War Collectors Show will take place on Saturday, September 20, from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. at the DuPage County Fairgrounds, 2015 Manchester Road, Wheaton. For information, call Robert (Hawkeye) Nowak at 77-539-8432.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

Developers are trying to buy two parcels of land at Gettysburg that represent virtually all that is left of the original ten-acre "Hospital Woods". Their plans to erect two supermarkets would obliterate the remnants of Camp Letterman, which was the largest general hospital ever established on a battlefield of the Civil War.

According to the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Letterman represented the consolidation of more than sixty small field hospitals in Gettysburg homes and barns. It was established a mile east of town in the second week of July 1863. The commission is calling for preservation of the site "as a memorial to those who suffered and died after the battle and a tribute to the surgeons and nurses."

The American Battlefield Protection Program has published "Altogether Fitting and Proper: Saving America's Battlefields," a special issue of the National Park Service's CRM magazine. It includes articles about conservation easement programs, battlefield preservation efforts, legal aspects of land protection, heritage tourism, landscape treatments, computer technologies for battlefield planning and management, and creating successful battlefield preservation partnerships. The forty-eight-page periodical is available without cost by contacting Larry Hunter, Publications Coordinator, Heritage Preservation Services, National Park Service (202) 343-9538, Fax (202) 343-3803, or Larry_Hunter@nps.gov. It is also available on the web — www.cr.nps.gov/crm/.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has named the Vicksburg Campaign Trail as one of the nation's eleven Most Endangered Historic Sites. The Trust issues its most endangered list once a year to identify and call attention to extremely significant historic properties that may be lost if immediate action is not taken.

The trail includes more than forty individual sites. Many have been altered very little since the Civil War, but today they face threats from timber operations, highway construction, casino development, and neglect. For example, the Jackson battlefield has been lost to development, and the Shaifer House in Claiborne County and the Coker House in Hinds County are collapsing due to deterioration and erosion.

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The Milwaukee Civil War Round Table is celebrating its 50th anniversary on October 3-4. Please see the enclosed flyer for details. For more information, call Lance Herdegan, 414-524-7197.

Since many of our members are planning to drive to Milwaukee, especially to attend Saturday's programs, Marv Sanderman has volunteered to coordinate car-pooling. If you plan to drive, or you need a ride, please call Marv at 773-561-4400 at his office, or call him at home at 847-520-3525 (before 9:30 p.m., please).

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☞ JUNE MEETING ☞

by Larry Gibbs

On June 13, at the 562nd regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, 123 members and guests heard Dr. Mark Grimsley's provocative and interesting presentation on the controversial subject of "The Mythology of Sherman's March." Dr. Grimsley, an assistant professor of history at The Ohio State University, has written articles for various Civil War magazines. He is the author of the highly-praised book, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians 1861-1865* (1995). Using material from this book, Grimsley challenged perceptions about Union General William Tecumseh Sherman and the infamous "March to the Sea."

From November 15 to December 21, 1864, General Sherman and 62,000 soldiers marched 220 miles from Atlanta to Savannah. The Union army faced only token military resistance, proving that the Confederacy was "a hollow shell." "Few Civil War images have entrenched themselves more vividly than Sherman's March to the Sea," stated Grimsley. "The larger mythology involved the mistreatment of Georgian civilians. This myth is so powerful that Confederate sympathizers hold to it despite obvious contradictions." Grimsley explained that myths are not necessarily intentional and complete falsehoods or misconceptions, but distortions or exaggerations that became accepted as factual. Myths that Sherman's army developed a record of pillage and vandalism in warfare are indelible, but unverifiable. Grimsley asserted, "Sherman in one Confederate diary was more evil than Ivan the Terrible or Genghis Khan." He indicated that virtually no evidence exists to substantiate the horrible impression of Sherman's mistreatment of southern civilians. To prove his point, Grimsley noted that a sizable number of antebellum plantation residences survived the "March to the Sea."

"The official Union policy did not condone wanton destruction of civilian property, and the Union soldiers adhered to the policy for the most part," explained Grimsley. "There were no instances of southern civilians being raped or killed by Sherman's command." Main residences, especially if civilians were present, stood unscathed. However, crops and cattle were taken or destroyed; warehouses were also destroyed. Since South Carolina was "the birthplace of secession," Sherman's men treated that state more harshly than Georgia. One Union soldier proclaimed that "South Carolina was a desert wasteland." When the Yankees marched into North Carolina, Sherman's soldiers showed milder treatment than they had in South Carolina.

According to Grimsley, "One obvious question emerges—why have so many previous interpretations insisted on the version of indiscriminate destruction by Sherman's army? The unfavorable interpretations filled several agendas, including: (1) They helped southern conservative whites convince other southern whites that a terrible wrong had been committed; (2) The South was beaten down by brute force, not by failure of national will by the Confederacy; and (3) Economic disasters in the South for the rest of the 19th century could be explained by this gross and unnecessary destruction by Sherman's soldiers."

Refuting these arguments, Grimsley countered pro-

southern agendas with evidence to challenge previously-held perceptions. He explained that the economic downturn in the South was due primarily to the emancipation of the slaves and the worthlessness of Confederate money and bonds. The myth that any southern responsibility should be diverted to the "evil, vindictive Yankees" was kept alive by constant retelling of survivors of the "March to the Sea." Grimsley claimed, "The mythical retelling can hardly be exaggerated; the murderous severity of the Union army became an article of faith among southern civilians. The retelling of the myth of Union destruction kept alive the fear of domination and sense of violation over loss of property by Georgian civilians."

Sherman's March to the Sea anticipated the use of total war in the 20th century. Warfare inventions in the Civil War increased the capability for destruction. Sherman's March symbolized the first step toward total annihilation of civilian populations that evolved during World War II, according to many present-day historians. Grimsley indicated that these historians do a disservice to history because they perpetuate the horrific version of the mythology of Sherman's March. According to Grimsley, modern historians should reexamine the evidence of Sherman's fateful march before assigning the mistaken image of savagery to Sherman and his soldiers.

WILEY SWORD (continued from page 1)

century after the last shot was fired. Why did the Southern soldiers fight so long and so well? Why did they think they could win? Why did they continue to make such enormous efforts—even in the face of imminent defeat? Why, following total defeat, does much of the pride and passion still remain deeply rooted in the South? These are themes of profound interest and meaning so long as the South is regarded as a distinct American culture. Indeed, these issues reveal much about the American experience as a whole.

Wiley Sword is a businessman, author, historian, and collector of antique historical American weapons. A resident of Detroit, he is a graduate of the University of Michigan and is the owner of Techni-Cast, Inc., a manufacturer's representative agency of automotive lines. He is also president of Environmental Biotech of West Oakland-Livingston Counties, Inc., a bioremediation firm. He is an avid golfer, a member of the National Advisory Board of The Civil War Library and Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a former member of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society of Michigan.

His published books include *Mountains Touched With Fire: Chattanooga Besieged, 1863* (1995); *Embrace an Angry Wind: The Confederacy's Last Hurrah* (1992), which won the Fletcher Pratt Award as the year's best book published on the Civil War; *President Washington's Indian War* (1985); and *Shiloh: Bloody April* (1974). Mr. Sword has also written numerous articles and book reviews and has served as a consultant on historical projects. He has appeared as a commentator on the television series, "Civil War Journal" and is a frequent speaker on the lecture circuit. He last appeared before this Round Table in September of 1992.

(A list of previous Nevins-Freeman Honorees is on page 4)

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas

- Barefoot, Daniel, W. *General Robert F. Hoke, Lee's Modest Warrior*. John F. Blair, Publisher. 1996. \$24.95.
- Barnett, Louise. *Touched by Fire: The Life, Death and Mythic Afterlife of George Armstrong Custer*. Henry Holt. 1996. \$30.
- Barrow, Charles K., J. H. Segars and R. B. Rosenberg, eds. *Forgotten Confederates: An Anthology About Black Southerners*. Southern Heritage Press. 1996. Pbk. \$15.
- Baumgartner, Richard A. and Larry M. Strayer. *Echoes of Battle: The Struggle for Chattanooga. An Illustrated Collection of Union and Confederate Narratives*. Blue Acorn Press. 1996. \$40.
- Bennett, Brian A. *The Beau Ideal of a Soldier and a Gentleman: The Life of Col. Patrick Henry O'Rourke From Ireland to Gettysburg*. Triphammer Publ. Co., PO Box 45, Scottsdale, NY 14546-0045. 1996. \$22.95.

The Twelfth Annual Lincoln Colloquium will be held on Saturday, October 25, at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Speakers include Frank J. Williams, Harold Holzer, Philip Shaw Paludin, Douglas L. Wilson, Rodney O. Davis, and Dwight T. Pitcaithley. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. (at which time an exhibit area will also be opened), the program at 10:30 a.m. A luncheon will be served, and the program will continue until 4:30 p.m. Registration fee is \$35 per person (including lunch), or \$40 if you wish to have the printed papers from the Colloquium sent to you upon their publication.

To register, send a check, made out to the Eastern National Park and Monument Association, with "Colloquium" written on the memo line of the check, to: Lincoln Colloquium, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, 413 South Eighth Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1905. For additional information, contact Tim Townsend at 217-492-4241, or via email at liho_colloquium@nps.gov.

"Chicago and the Midwest in the Civil War Era" will be presented at the Chicago Historical Society on September 26-27. See enclosed flyer for details.

Vice President and Quizmaster Bruce Allardice will address the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table on September 5 at Allgauer's in the Lisle/Naperville Hilton.

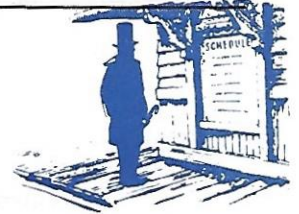
Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

- September 12: Wiley Sword, Nevins-Freeman Address
 October 17: Chris F. Onvielle on "The Wilmington Campaign" (*This is the third Friday*)
 November 14: Ted Karamanski on "Chicago Civil War Monuments"
 December 12: Tom Sweeney on "The Trans-Mississippi Campaign"
 January 9: Dan McCarthy on "The 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry"
 February 13: Scott Hartwig, topic to be announced (*This is the third Friday*)
 March 13: Mark Bradley on "Bentonville"
 April 17: Keith Rocco on "Civil War Art"
 April 29-May 3: Annual Battlefield Tour, "Western Armies on the Carolina Campaign"
 May 8: Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, topic to be announced
 June 12: John Michael Priest on "Pickett's Charge"

NEW MEMBERS

- Stephen Gorman, 6633 N. Ponchartrain, Chicago, IL 60646, 773-792-3013
 Peter Voss, 1233 East 36th St., Chicago, IL 60637, 773-643-2722
 Pepper Zenger, 9830 S. Nottingham, #10, Chicago Ridge, IL 60415, 708-422-4608

Change of Address

- Lynn Nichols, 4840 Twin Lakes Rd, Apt #1, Boulder, CO 80301, 303-530-0910
 Vera M. Pallin, 4431 N. Monticello Ave., Chicago, IL 60625-5943, 773-267-7804
 Muriel Underwood, 4431 N. Monticello Ave., Chicago, IL 60625-5943, 773-267-7803
 David & Gail Westfall, 589 Jennie Lane, Oregon, IL 61061, 815-732-6664

Previous Nevins-Freeman Honorees

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| Bruce Catton, 1974 | Harold M. Hyman, 1986 |
| Ralph G. Newman, 1975 | James T. Hickey, 1987 |
| T. Harry Williams, 1976 | Robert K. Krick, 1988 |
| Lloyd D. Miller, 1977 | Mark E. Neely, Jr., 1989 |
| Bell I. Wiley, 1978 | Marshall D. Krolick, 1990 |
| E. B. Long, 1979 | Gary W. Gallagher, 1991 |
| Edwin C. Bearss, 1980 | Shelby Foote, 1992 |
| James I. Robertson, Jr., 1981 | Stephen B. Oates, 1993 |
| Frank E. Vandiver, 1982 | Alan T. Nolan, 1994 |
| John Hope Franklin, 1983 | Richard N. Current, 1995 |
| Richard B. Harwell, 1984 | James M. McPherson, 1996 |
| John Y. Simon, 1985 | |

Registrar Carole LeClaire reminds us that 1997-98 membership dues were to be sent in by August 31, 1997. If you have not sent yours in yet, please do so. Only current members will receive future Newsletters, beginning in October 1997.