

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVIII, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January 1998

Daniel E. McCarthy on "The 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry"

by Barbara Hughett

Perhaps in no other war was the *esprit* of the regiment more important than it was in the American Civil War. The regiment became a second home to the young soldiers. Usually, the men were from the same area of the country and often had known each other in civilian life. While there was pride in nation, army, corps, division, and brigade, it was the regiment that usually counted most to the individual soldier. For the Union, 3,559 separate units included regiments, companies, or batteries; of this total, 2,144 were infantry regiments.

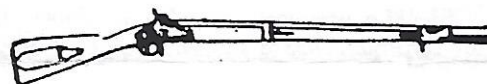
In the town of Monmouth in west central Illinois, in August of 1862, the 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry was formed. Its membership came predominantly from Warren and Knox Counties. The 83rd entrained and proceeded to Tennessee, where it was assigned guard duty against guerrillas and Confederate Cavalry as part of the Reserve Corps of the Army of the Cumberland.

The 83rd successfully fought off Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest at the second battle of Fort Donelson in February of 1863. Led by Colonel A.C. Harding, the 83rd was assigned garrison duty and served under General Rousseau guarding railroads against raids by Confederate Generals Forrest and Joseph Wheeler during the decisive Atlanta Campaign. The 83rd Illinois was a typical Union regiment that distinguished itself not by extraordinary deeds of valor, but simply by doing its duty under trying circumstances. On January 9, Daniel E. McCarthy will address The Round Table on the topic of "The 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry."

Dan McCarthy's interest in the Civil War began at the age of nine when his father gave him a copy of *The American Heritage Golden Illustrated History of the Civil War*. He attended Lyons Township High School and earned a B.A. in history at Loyola University Chicago. Since then, McCarthy has served as a communications consultant, government bureaucrat, maintenance manager, and purchasing agent. Currently he is employed both as a sales associate and a substitute teacher. Throughout it



Daniel E. McCarthy



567th Regular Meeting

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Daniel E. McCarthy on "The 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry"

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Friday, January 9

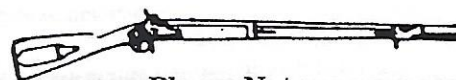
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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 Noodles
or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, January 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.

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.

(continued on page 2)

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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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.

DANIEL E. MCCARTHY (continued from page 1)
all, he has continued his study of the Civil War.

He is a past president and current board member of the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table. He began reenacting in 1989 and is now a First Sergeant of reactivated Company E, 1st Michigan Engineers & Mechanics. McCarthy's other interests include books, golf, live theater, and opera. He is a resident of Western Springs.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by Mary Munsell Abroe

LWCF Preservation Decision Now Rests with Interior: As reported in the October, 1997, *Newsletter*, members of the U.S. Senate and House met in conference committee to determine how much money from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) might be used for Civil War battlefield preservation. Senators James Jeffords (R-VT) and Robert Torricelli (D-NJ) headed the 1997 lobbying effort that led to congressional consideration of the LWCF as a possible preservation vehicle. Jeffords and Toricelli hoped to obtain \$50 million from the fund—half for use in preserving sites not within national parks and half for sites within the boundaries of National Park System (NPS) battlefield areas.

The decision that emerged from the committee was as follows: the sum of \$285 million in LWCF financing was allotted to the secretary of the interior for "various projects," with no express provision for battlefield preservation. The secretary's mandate is to allocate and prioritize the funds with the consequent approval of the leadership of the House and Senate Interior Appropriations committees. Thus Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt will judge whether or not Civil War battlefields receive the \$50 million anticipated by preservation advocates in the public and private sectors.

Please contact Secretary Babbitt and urge him to earmark \$50 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for Civil War site preservation, with \$25 million for land acquisition where no national park exists and \$25 million for acquisition inside the confines of federal battlefield parks. He can be reached at 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240; his office telephone number is 202-208-7351. It is not too late to communicate with Mr. Babbitt. This column will inform Civil War Round Table members of his decision as soon as possible.

Conservation Fund SHAF Cooperate at Antietam:

The September 1997 issue of the newsletter of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF) reported a successful preservation collaboration of that organization; the National Park Service; and the Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit organization that works with other agencies to conserve land. In 1990, the Conservation Fund was involved in a highly publicized venture that brought D.R. Miller's "cornfield" under federal ownership through the philanthropy of Pittsburgh's Mellon Foundation. This time around, the property is not as famous. Nevertheless, with preservation-minded landowners, the Conservation Fund, SHAF, and the NPS working together, a twelve-acre tract that was occupied by part of the Union First Corps contesting Jeb Stuart's troops on Nicodemus Heights has been added to NPS holdings at Antietam.

The type of public-private partnership represented by this undertaking is a significant preservation vehicle. Support for entities like SHAF, the Civil War Battlefield Campaign of the Conservation Fund, and the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) offer the battlefield tour "junkies" among us the opportunity to put our money where our mouths are. Please consider such support as the new year begins.

☪ DECEMBER MEETING ☪

by Roger E. Bohn

At the 566th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago on December 12, 1997, former President Larry Gibbs graciously stepped into the breach to fill in for our scheduled speaker, Tom Sweeney, who was unable to make the trip. Larry Gibbs gave an interesting and very thought-provoking presentation, titled "Reconstruction: The Legacy of the Civil War." In his many years as a high school and college instructor, Larry has pursued this topic in considerable depth.

"Reconstruction is the period after the Civil War that illustrates the effects of that devastation upon the peoples involved." Gibbs said that most of the interest in the Civil War is centered on the great and glorious battles, the stalwart officers and men, the dedicated and truly patriotic governmental leaders on both sides, but the aftermath that still has direct bearing on this country today is largely overlooked. There is nothing "glamorous" about the trials and tribulations of the Freedmen's Bureau, the legal maneuvering involved in the Southern states re-entering the Senate or the House, whether or not a President could fire his Cabinet officers, or just who could or could not vote; but the repercussions of these events do indeed still affect American lives over one hundred years later.

Gibbs feels that one of the reasons people don't want to discuss Reconstruction is that it is clearly an issue involving "race," and *that* is an issue that many people are not comfortable in confronting. Another reason for Reconstruction being an unpopular subject is that the only military involvement was as "occupation forces," and there is nothing glorious about that. A common misconception is that Reconstruction was sordid, a terrible time for many people, and that nothing really *good* came out of that whole period in our nation's history. Many of our views of Reconstruction were shaped by movies, such as "The Birth of a Nation" and "Gone With The Wind," which present highly dramatized and historically inaccurate information.

Reconstruction raised four major questions: (1) Upon what terms should the Confederate states be reunited with the United States government? Charles Sumner's theory that the seceded states had committed suicide would lead to questioning the legality of secession itself, as well as the question of handling the "conquered territories." (2) Should the readmission terms be administered by the Radical Congress or by the President? Some of the Radicals felt that the seceded states should be punished, but not all agreed. Gibbs feels that Andrew Johnson was the worst possible president for the trying times of Reconstruction. (3) What should be the future of the Southern whites returning from the battlefields? (4) What should be the place of the blacks in the political and social life in the South?

As early as 1863, Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction was *reconciliation*, including a very liberal policy of amnesty for the Confederate soldiers and government officials, and the provision that a ten-percent vote from the Southern electorate would be sufficient for re-admission into the Union. The Radical view held in 1864 by the Wade-Davis bill was that there should be a *majority* of votes for readmission. Johnson, at war's end, wanted to

pardon all Southern whites with the exception of the wealthy planters and government officials. Gibbs noted, also, that Johnson was very racist, especially regarding the four million freedmen, but he was trying to follow Lincoln's lenient policy as best he knew how. The elections following the war, however, restored many of the wealthy plantation owners to power, and the lack of any really decisive action on the part of Johnson or the Congress resulted in the return of these same people who had been in power in the Confederacy. Had Lincoln not been assassinated, Gibbs suggests that the outcome of Reconstruction would have been very different.

Southern whites who regained power enacted state laws which kept the freedmen at a social and political disadvantage, however, and this caused great consternation among the Radical Republicans. In late 1865, Congress refused to seat the elected Southerners, and in 1866, sent to Johnson the Freedmen's Bureau bill and the Civil Rights bill. This conflict, which was the real beginning of the impeachment process against Johnson, was the first of the government-initiated welfare programs and was the first involvement of the Federal government into states' affairs to protect the rights of citizens. A period of civil, political, and social unrest followed, including the birth of the Ku Klux Klan, and the military occupation of many Southern states.

In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was passed, giving all citizens due-process and equal rights. In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment passed, giving all male citizens over twenty-one the right to vote. States were re-admitted if they had a "legitimate" legislature and that also ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. All former Confederate states were re-admitted by the end of 1870, and "Scalawags" and "Carpetbaggers" were the result. Gibbs noted that in 1868, Johnson had been *impeached*, but was not *removed* as president. U.S. Grant became President in the election of 1868, and Reconstruction issues were clouded by the corruption found in his administration. The results of the election of 1876 gave Southern Democrats the power to throw out the military occupation forces, as well as the "Scalawags" and "Carpetbaggers." By 1877, the period of Reconstruction was at an end, and Southern whites had regained much of what they had "lost" in the Civil War.

In comparing the period of Reconstruction following the American Civil War to the same periods following the French, Russian, or English Civil Wars, Gibbs states that there has never in history been a more lenient transition, nor one that produced so many positive changes in the social and political conditions of the common people. There were, of course, some instances of inequity, misuse of power, and treachery; but Gibbs feels that these are blown out of proportion to an extent which belies their historical impact. "All Americans must live up to the promise that all Americans are created equal" is the main point of Gibbs's argument.

In conclusion, Gibbs asserted that Reconstruction was not a period of "dismal failure," and did have, in fact, some minor, but very real successes. While a stronger president, such as Abraham Lincoln, might have done a better job of it, hindsight always seems to be "20/20" in such cases. In point of fact, "Reconstruction" continues to this very day.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Bastian, David F. *Grant's Canal: The Union's Attempt to Bypass Vicksburg*. White Mane Publ. Co. 1996. Pbk. \$6.95.
- Baumgartner, Richard A. *Blue Lightning: Wilder's Mounted Infantry Brigade in the Battle of Chickamauga*. Blue Acorn Books. 1997. \$30.00.
- Beaudry, Richard E., ed. *War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry, Fifth New York Cavalry — The Diary of a Union Chaplain, Commencing February 16, 1863*. McFarland & Co. 1996. \$31.50.
- Bertera, Martin and Oberholtzer, Ken. *The 4th Michigan Volunteer Infantry at Gettysburg: The Battle for the Wheatfield*. Morningside Bookshop. 1997. \$24.95.
- Bilby, Joseph. *Civil War Firearms: Their Historical Background and Tactical Use*. Combined Books. 1996. \$34.95.
- Bird, Kermit M., ed. *Quill of the Wild Goose: Civil War Letters and Diaries of Private Joel Molyneux, 141st Pennsylvania Volunteers*. Burd Street Press. 1996. \$30.00.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

President Robert Girardi has announced that there will be a special meeting of the Executive Committee of The Civil War Round Table on Saturday, January 24, beginning at 9:00 a.m. It will be held in the library of Notre Dame High School, 7655 Dempster, in Niles. The main item on the agenda will be the selection of the meeting site for 1998-1999. All former presidents, current officers, and committee chairs are urged to attend.

According to *The Old Liner*, the newsletter of The Baltimore Civil War Round Table, filming will begin between the Spring and Fall of 1999 on the movie based on Jeff Shaara's book, *Gods and Generals* (1996). The book is the prequel to Jeff's father Michael's book, *The Killer Angels* (1975). The movie "Gettysburg" was based on the 1975 book. Many of the actors who appeared in "Gettysburg" will also be cast in the new movie, some of which will be filmed in Hagerstown, Maryland. Casting tryouts for reenactors will be set up by Antietam Filmworks.

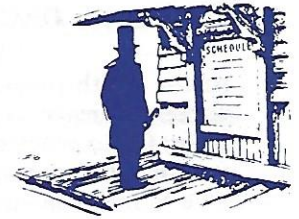
Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

January 9: Daniel E. McCarthy on "The 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry"

February 13: Scott Hartwig, topic to be announced

March 13: Mark Bradley on "Bentonville"

April 17: Keith Rocco on "Civil War Art" (**This is the THIRD Friday**)

April 29-May 3: Annual Battlefield Tour, "Western Armies on the Carolina Campaign"

May 8: Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes on "Writing Civil War History"

June 12: John Michael Priest on "Pickett's Charge"

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Janet Linhart, P.O. Box 4674, Wheaton, IL 60189-4674, 630-510-9177

We recently learned of the death of Ella Clausius, widow of longtime and beloved Round Table member Gerhard P. Clausius, on November 11, at the age of 92. Our deepest sympathies go to her family.

We are saddened to report the death of renowned Civil War and Lincoln scholar Don E. Fehrenbacher, in Palo Alto, California, on December 13, at the age of 77. Our sincerest condolences go to his widow and family. Don Fehrenbacher, Professor Emeritus at Stanford University, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1979 for his study of the Dred Scott case. (Ironically, December 13 also marked the 179th anniversary of the birth of Mary Todd Lincoln.)

Former President Marshall Krolick and Trustee Frank Patton, president of the Union League Club Civil War Round Table, will address the luncheon meeting of the Union League Club Civil War Round Table on Monday, January 26. Their topic will be "Grant's Military Victories at Vicksburg." A reception begins at the Union League Club at 11:30 a.m.; luncheon is served at noon. The cost is \$15 per person. For reservations, call 312-435-5000.

A new National Health Museum will be built on the Mall in Washington, D.C. It will house some interesting Civil War curiosities, such as the bullet that killed Abraham Lincoln, Union General Daniel Sickles's leg, which was removed after he was wounded at Gettysburg, and a collection of Civil War skeletons. The old museum was established in 1862.