

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVIII, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

April 1998

Keith Rocco on "Civil War Art: 'On Campaign'"

by Barbara Hughett

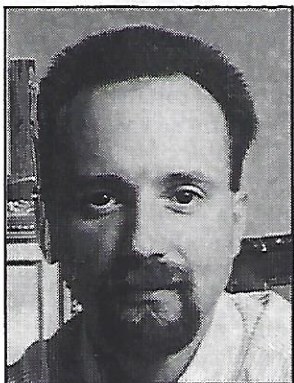
THE exceptional quality of Keith Rocco's work lies in his talent to capture history in its own time frame—as if the window next to his easel looked out on another century. His work has been compared to the masters of historical art: deNeuille, Detaille, Messonnier, and Pyle. These artists, Rocco says, were his most important teachers.

"What I found being taught in art school didn't help nearly as much as what I found in the works of these artists," Rocco says. "They not only depicted life, they infused it with an intensity of feeling. All of those artists, whether they were painting a soldier considering the rations in his haversack or the rage of battle—did it in such a way as to make you feel you are right there. Looking at their paintings, you can smell the sulphurous smoke from the gun and feel the sun fall across your back. They go beyond a simple rendition of a scene, and I set that as my standard. My goal is to portray history, not only with accuracy, but to somehow go beyond that and make it possible for the viewer to experience the sensation of being in the scene itself."

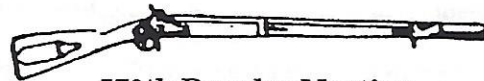
The topic of Keith Rocco's presentation to the Round Table on April 17 is "Civil War Art: 'On Campaign.'" The program will include a slide presentation of his paintings along with firsthand accounts by the veterans who provided the artistic stimulation for the work. The lecture is based on Rocco's book, *On Campaign*, a compilation of his work. It follows the rank and file's experience, both North and South, from camp to campaign through battle to its inevitable aftermath. This show is a visual story of the experiences of soldiering during the American Civil War.

Keith Rocco was a member of this Round Table for a number of years before moving to Virginia; his Traditions studios are located in Woodstock, Virginia. His

passion for history has its roots in his childhood. When he was nine years old, his parents gave him a book on the Civil War. The book was filled with photographs and paintings from the period, and Rocco—already a budding artist—spent hours copying from it. His Civil War interest further developed three years later when he bought his first artifact: a cavalry saber, purchased on a class trip to Gettysburg.



Keith Rocco



570th Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

Keith Rocco on "Civil War Art: 'On Campaign'"

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Friday, April 17

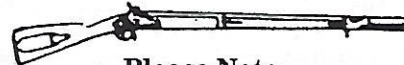
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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

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

Entree: Braised Lamb Shanks with Noodles
or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, April 15, 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 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.

After he graduated from high school and was looking around for art schools, he faced a dilemma. "In the 1960s and 70s," he recalled, "the word at most art schools was anti-realism. Obviously, being a realist, I found that unsettling." After two attempts at art schools, Rocco realized that if he was truly interested in realism, he was going to have to teach himself and began to hone his craft

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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
Vice President	Bruce Allardice
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Founding Newsletter Editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968

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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.

President Robert Girardi has announced that volunteers are needed to staff The Civil War Round Table of Chicago's table at the upcoming Civil War show in Westmont, Illinois, on April 17-19. A crew is needed to staff the table on Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19. For more information and to volunteer your services, call President Girardi at 773-625-7225.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION ☆ UPDATE ☆

by Mary Munsell Abroe

Shenandoah Valley Commission Receives Funding and Chooses Chairman: As reported in last month's column, the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Historic District Commission recently began its congressionally mandated task of formulating a management/preservation plan for ten of the Valley's battle sites. Under its authorizing legislation, the commission is entitled to a maximum of \$250,000 in federal funding to complete its work; in fact, it will receive that amount from the FY 1998 Interior Department appropriations for the National Park Service's Heritage Partnership Grants Program. Unfortunately, Congress did not see fit to provide the commission with funding of its own, thus requiring the use of monies from Interior's regular appropriations that could be used elsewhere to meet the many demands on an overtaxed budget that is never adequate. Interior also will provide technical aid in the planning process and in the evaluation and interpretation of historical resources.

Another significant and positive development of late is the election of Carrington Williams as the commission's chairman. Williams, a lawyer practicing in northern Virginia and a former member of the Virginia General assembly, is a trustee of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites as well as its general counsel. In an interview with *Civil War News*, he noted that a matter of urgency at present is the employment of a full-time executive director. (Part-time staff assistance will be provided by the National Park Service's Sandy Rives, who for the next year-and-a-half will combine work for the Shenandoah Valley commission with his new job as superintendent of Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania.) Williams also indicated that a major challenge for the commission, which has about three years in which to finish its work, is prioritization of tasks: the commission's legislative mandate is quite extensive, involving not only Civil War battlefields but also natural and cultural resources.

Funds Allocated for Restoration of Four Structures at Antietam: With the expediency typical of federal bureaucracy, \$3.6 million has been allotted to Antietam National Battlefield for work on four significant buildings sixteen years after the initial application for funding. Happily, the monies will be devoted to restoring the Mumma house and barn (as well as some outbuildings) in the battlefield's core, in addition to the Sherrick and Otto houses near Burnside's Bridge in the southern sector.

The homestead of Samuel Mumma, torched by D.H. Hill's troops on the morning of the battle so that it could not serve as a haven for sharpshooters, was rebuilt quickly; the barn experienced a similar fate. Work on the Mumma property will use about \$1.5 million of the designated monies; the house will be stabilized and put to adaptive use as the park's administrative offices and archives/library, while the barn will be restored to its 1862 appearance and, as a "building within a building," it will shelter Antietam's natural and cultural resources personnel.

(continued on page 3)

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Casdorff, Paul D. *Prince John Magruder: His Life and Campaigns*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1996. \$30.00.
- Clarke, Asia Booth. *John Wilkes Booth: A Sister's Memoir*. U. Press of Mississippi. 1996. \$20.00. Original of 1938.
- Coco, Gregory A. *The Civil War Infantryman: In Camp, on the March and in Battle*. Thomas Publications. 1996. \$19.95; Pbk. \$12.95.
- Cooling, Benjamin F. *Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Tennessee and Kentucky, 1862-1863*. U. of Tennessee Press. 1997. \$38.00.

KEITH ROCCO (continued from page 1)

on his own. Over the next six years, he did commercial art for an advertising agency by day and painted scenes out of history by night. Many of his early canvases were inspired by artifacts in his own collection.

Now, he not only does Civil war art but is also well known and respected for his works on the Napoleonic era. "Spreading out into more than one area inspires perspective," he says. "When I come back to the Civil War after, say, Waterloo, I am seeing the whole century rounded out. Every bit of information about every scenario I have ever researched gets used in every painting, whether it's literal or not. Because what you are learning is always there, shaping your understanding of how and why things happened the way they did."

"What I strive to do in military art," Rocco says, "is to portray that moment that most communicates how the common soldier experienced himself. Sometimes the point of take-off is a reflective moment, and sometimes, of course, it's a moment in battle. The point in either, however, is to make history something real, something that carries the viewer out of himself and into another world where it is his response, literally, that keeps history alive."

The annual luncheon of the Stephen A. Douglas Association will be held on June 6 this year, instead of in April, as it has been the past few years. S.A.D.A. members will receive additional information later this month in *The Little Giant*, and this newsletter will give more details in next month's issue.

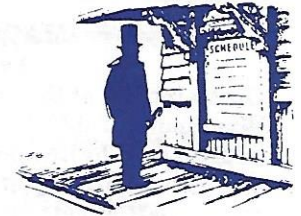
Schimmelfennig Boutique

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 17: Keith Rocco on "Civil War Art: 'On Campaign'" (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"

NEW MEMBER

William D. Barnhart, 606 West Cornelia, #570, Chicago, IL 60657, 773-973-5822

We are saddened to announce the death of an old and dear friend and Honorary Life member of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago, **Elden C. "Josh" Billings**, on March 20 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He was a longtime resident of Georgetown, and was very active in historical associations in our nation's capital. A noted Civil War and Lincoln scholar, he was a popular lecturer around the nation. After retiring from his position as an economist for the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress in 1973, he devoted more time to his Civil War interests. In April 1977, he addressed The Chicago Round Table on "Sherman: A Critical Character Sketch." He received many awards for his work, including the Bruce Catton Award of the District of Columbia Civil War Round Table. Our deepest condolences go to his wife Margaret and all of his family.

We are sorry to report the death, on January 25, of Round Table member, **Rev. Charles Brannon, S.J.**, at the Colombiere Jesuit Community in Clarkston, Michigan. A retired theology professor at Loyola University Chicago, Father Brannon—known better to Round Table members as "Charlie"—had a distinguished academic career and was very active in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and cared very much about American Civil War history. A colleague of his said that "He just believed in looking for God, not only in prayer but in all the circumstances of your life." Our deepest condolences go to his family.

The Civil War Round Table of New York presented its 1998 Barondess/Lincoln Award to the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield, Illinois. The Site, administered by the National Park Service, was honored for "its innovative interpretation of the life of Abraham Lincoln." In accepting, Superintendent Norman Hellmers cited the efforts of his staff and acknowledged "the fine work done by their predecessors, especially the late George L. Painter."