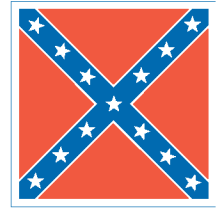


THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

Volume LXIX, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January, 2009



677th REGULAR MEETING

Frank O'Reilly

on

“Hidden Fredericksburg—the Battle We Thought We Knew”

★★★★★

Friday, January 9

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$40 - Members/Non-members

*Entrée: Chicken Napoleon,
Catch of the Day, Vegetarian
Plate or Fruit Plate*

please note

Make your reservation by **Monday, Jan. 5** by calling 630-460-1865. Reservations can also be made by emailing chicagoewrttdinner@earthlink.net with the names of your party and their choice of entree. If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please call the number before 9 a.m. Thursday. We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:30 p.m., for a charge of \$5 per person. *Parking at the Holiday Inn is \$10 with a validated parking sticker.*

Frank O'Reilly

On

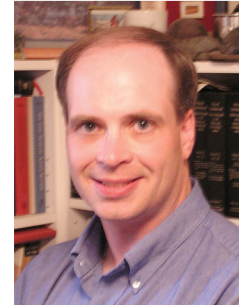
“Hidden Fredericksburg—the Battle We Thought We Knew”

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

The Union debacle at the December 13, 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg, incited a wave of anger that swept the North, an anger exceeded no other Union defeat. Interestingly, much of the civilian's ire was not directed at the Union army commander, the hapless Ambrose Burnside, who manfully admitted his incompetence and assumed full responsibility. Rather, the Northern critics attacked the Lincoln administration for a bloody defeat that seemed to them part of a larger pattern of failure. As the outraged Senator Morton Wilkinson of Minnesota asserted, the only hope for the country was “the death of the President and a new administration.” Even President Lincoln wondered if the country was “on the brink of destruction ... I can hardly see a ray of hope.”

What happened at Fredericksburg to cause such despair? Were the Union attacks there “sheer murder,” as historian Bruce Catton later described them? Was it the case, as a Cincinnati newspaper put it, that “It can hardly be in human nature for men to show more valor, or for generals to manifest less judgment...”?

On January Frank Reilly will address our Round Table and answer these and other questions surrounding this battle. Those of us fortunate enough



Frank O'Reilly

to have taken a battlefield tour with Frank know that his expertise on this battle is unrivalled, and we look forward to a great presentation.

Frank O'Reilly graduated from Washington & Lee University in 1987, and joined the National Park Service at the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. After a brief stint at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, he returned to Fredericksburg in 1990 as the permanent historian for the “Stonewall” Jackson Shrine.

Frank has written numerous articles on the Civil War and Mexican War, and introductions to several books. His

first book on the Fredericksburg Campaign, *Stonewall Jackson at Fredericksburg*, appeared in 1993.

His latest book, the award-winning *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*, received a 2003 nomination for the Pulitzer Prize in Letters. He is currently researching a book on the Battle of Malvern Hill and the Seven Days' Campaign.



Battlefield Preservation

BY DAVID ZUCKER

“STAFFORD, Va. — “It was from these camps that the army emerged that won at Gettysburg,” said Glenn Trimmer about several Union Army campsites and fortifications in Stafford County, north of Fredericksburg.

These sites on 25 acres of county-owned land are now two steps closer to being preserved in a park thanks to a presentation Trimmer made before the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on Oct. 7. He is director of the local preservation group Friends of Stafford Civil War Sites (FSCWS).

Trimmer proposed a partnership with the county where the FSCWS would raise money to fund a one-way road, interpretive signs, footpaths and a small family picnic area in the new historic park.

According to the proposal, all the county would have to do is to permanently set aside the land and pay for an engineering study to evaluate the feasibility and cost of various options for the road and footpaths connecting the individual sites in the park.

The engineering study would be funded from the Landfill Dividend, Trimmer suggested. This is money the county and City of Fredericksburg earn at the jointly owned landfill adjacent to the proposed historic park.

Trimmer later reported there was some resistance to this funding idea when he met with the board.

He estimates the study could cost as low as \$10,000 or up to \$50,000. He said in an interview that the county might look at funding the study as a small price to pay to end up with a new historic park, since the FSCWS would cover all the other costs of putting in the road, footpaths, signs and picnic tables.

The FSCWS plan includes a pledge to raise all the money for the project within three years. If they fail, the county may withdraw from the agreement and is under no further obligation.

The Supervisors advanced Trimmer's proposal with unanimous votes on two measures. First, to forward the proposal to the County Historical Commission for a 30-day review. Second, to request the County Planning Commission amend the Land Use Plan to designate the 25-acre site a public park.

The 25 acres include four fortifications, a campsite and a bridge abutment across nearby Accokeek Creek. There is also a section of a corduroy road, still buried under the anaerobic dirt that preserves the wooden logs from decomposition.

“Soldiers on both sides spent far more time in such camps and fortifications than they ever did in combat, and yet preservation of such areas which contain both is extremely rare,” Trimmer said in a March public presentation.

The Union Army occupied camps like the one Trimmer is fighting to preserve over the winter of 1862-63, licking its wounds after the bloody disaster it faced at the Battle of Fredericksburg on Dec. 13, 1862.”

“GETTYSBURG, Pa. — Saving architect Richard Neutra's Cyclorama Center at Gettysburg may not be as impossible as once thought despite National Park Service/Gettysburg Foundation plans to demolish it in December:

- The federal magistrate judge hearing the suit to save the building recently gave the park a week to spell out its plans. The park now says it will delay demolition until the court rules.
- The company that moved an airport terminal, the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and other historic structures says the Cyclorama building can be moved.
- Two local businessmen have offered sites for the building, one just across from the park entrance on Steinwehr Avenue.

Despite years of effort to save the Cyclorama building, the plan has been

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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, 9670 N. Dec #205 Des Plaines, Illinois 60016, or contact bsallardice1@earthlink.net.

for it and the old visitor center to be demolished as part of the Gettysburg Foundation's \$7 million Cemetery Ridge restoration.

Architectural historian Chris Madrid French, with allies including Richard Neutra's son Dion, has led the effort to save the building. It is in the National Register of Historic Places and is one of four cyclorama buildings in the U.S. The World Monuments Fund listed it among the most 100 endangered sites.

French charges the park service has not met the requirements of Section 106, a lengthy part of the National Historic Preservation Act that requires federal agencies “to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties.”

French, Neutra and the Recent Past Preservation Network, a volunteer non-profit French heads that tries to preserve architecture that is less than 50 years old, filed suit in December 2006. The U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Park Service (NPS), Supt. John Latschar and NPS Director Mary Bomar were among those named.”

Material from November and December 2008 *Civil War News*.

December Meeting

BY TOM TRESPOTT

Not much has been written on Abraham Lincoln and the United States Navy during the Civil War. On December 12, at the 676th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, Craig Symonds spoke to 60 members and guests on this tiny niche in Lincoln lore.

T. Harry Williams' pioneering study of Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief, *Lincoln and His Generals* (1952), which focused exclusively on the land war, was the inspiration for Mr. Symonds' new book *Lincoln and his Admirals*, the basis of his talk that helped illustrate Lincoln development as Commander-in-Chief with three case studies.

The first instance was in the Navy's role in foreign policy. Lincoln's foremost goal in this area --- with the example of the Revolutionary War clearly in mind --- was to avoid conflict with foreign powers, especially Great Britain and France, and to get them to acknowledge the blockade and stay at arm's length. What nearly destroyed this was the *Trent* Affair, which became Lincoln's Cuban Missile Crisis, a decision between capitulation or catastrophic war. This crisis was precipitated by Captain Charles Wilkes, the "Peck's Bad Boy" of the U.S. Navy.

On November 8, 1861, a British Royal Navy mail packet, the *Trent*, was intercepted by Wilkes, and the two Confederate diplomats on board were forcibly taken off. Despite acting without orders and interfering with the sovereignty of a foreign power, Wilkes became a national hero and got a triumphant tour, with Lincoln initially supportive.

After visiting with Attorney General Edwin Bates, Lincoln realized Wilkes had violated international and U.S. law. While the North celebrated the seizure, it risked war with England. So Lincoln played out the crisis to the last possible moment, in order to weaken the consequences. Lincoln eventually "blinked", re-

leasing the prisoners, but the British halted war preparations, and the two countries never came close to hostilities again. Meanwhile, Capt. Wilkes was eventually suspended from active duty, court-martialed and publicly reprimanded.

The second case study examined involved the inland waterways, which when the War began was army territory. With the western armies in need of gunboat support, three wooden vessels were reconfigured into gunboats, but it was unsure who would be in charge of the crews. Neither service would accept fiscal responsibility for the new "bomb" vessels, flat rafts with 13" mortars. The Army and Navy (in those days separate cabinet departments) only intersected via Lincoln.

Compelled to step in, Lincoln ordered the naval officers in charge of the gunboats to telegraph every day with progress reports, and the President directly ordered ammunition, steamer support, and payment for the gunboat service. When Attorney General Bates suggested to Lincoln that the gunboats be turned over to the Navy he eventually did so, but only after showing how the two services could work together.

The final example our speaker provided was in tactical matters, and an instance where Lincoln was personally involved. In May of 1862, after the historic battle between the *Virginia* and the *Monitor*, Lincoln was shown the site at Hampton Roads by Adm. Louis M. Goldsborough. After surveying the scene, Lincoln "suggested" to the Admiral an attack take out the Confederate Battery at Sewall's Point, with a further "suggestion" that the *Monitor* (which Lincoln had personally toured) then scout to determine if the attack was a success, in preparation to find a landing site so that Norfolk could be taken. This led to the incredible scene of Lincoln himself, along with two of his cabinet officers, Secretary of War Edwin

Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase, doing a personal reconnaissance for such a site at Williamsburg Spit. Union troops soon landed, Norfolk fell without a shot fired; and with her base gone, the *Virginia* was blown up to avoid capture. So a key Confederate city was taken and a dangerous weapon destroyed due to Lincoln's personal intervention.

As for Lincoln's admirals themselves, while he wanted the pros to run the war, Lincoln found he had to suffer dealing with such officers as Samuel Francis DuPont (a nautical George McClellan) and David Dixon Porter (a nautical Joe Hooker). The two admirals Lincoln worked best with were John A. Dahlgren and Farragut. Dahlgren was Lincoln's best friend in the Navy, who worked hard, reported daily, and was constantly loyal. And Lincoln appreciated and admired Farragut, perhaps mostly because he was completely non-political, best demonstrated by his public declaration of such at a giant rally outside the Cooper Union in New York.

Our speaker thus gave the Round Table an excellent reminder of not only how Lincoln grew as Commander-in-Chief but also how important nautical matters were to his presidency. In fact, Lincoln spent part of the last day of his life aboard the monitor *Montauk*. After touring the vessel with the first lady, an officer recalled that the president was "very happy", and that he invited the officers and crew to Ford's Theatre to see *Our American Cousin* as his guests.

A recording of this (and every) meeting is available from **Hal Ardell**, audio librarian. Contact Hal at (773) 774-6781 or hal229@ameritech.net

GRAPESHOT



Longtime CWRT member and former president **Glen Wiche** has written a new book, *Dispatches from Bermuda: The Civil War Letters of Charles Maxwell Allen, U.S. Consul at Bermuda, 1861-1888*. Allen represented U. S. interests in Bermuda, and his reports on Confederate supply and blockade running efforts shed new light on this vital but often overlooked part of the Civil War. The book can be ordered via Kent State's website, www.kentstateuniversitypress.com.

On Feb. 12th **Rob Girardi** will speak on his new book, *Campaigning with Uncle Billy*, at the Bradley, Illinois Public Library, starting at 6:30 p.m.

Larry Hewitt will speak to the Austin, Texas, CWRT this January 15th on "Port Hudson: The Most Photographed Battlefield During the Civil War."

As part of their Lincoln Bicentennial series, the Glen Ellyn History Center will have Mark Pohland present "The Camera and Abraham Lincoln" on January 11th.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at bsallardice1@earthlink.net or (847) 375-8305.

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Fifty-seven years of audio recordings of CWRT lectures by distinguished historians are available and can be purchased in either audio cassette or CD format. For lecture lists, contact Hal Ardell at hal229@ameritech.net or phone him at (773) 774-6781.

Each meeting features a book raffle, with proceeds going to battlefield preservation. There is also a silent auction for books donated by Ralph Newman and others, again with proceeds benefiting battlefield preservation.

CWRT Executive Committee Meeting

President Jerry Allen would like to remind all that the next meeting of the CWRT's Executive Committee will be at 9 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 7th, at the Chicago History Museum.

Battlefield Tour

A reminder—start thinking about the **CWRT's 2009 battlefield tour!** It's April 22-26, 2009, and we'll be visiting Civil War sites in Kentucky. As usual, the incomparable Ed Bearss will be our main guide, with Wil Greene on Bus # 2.

Our base is the Campbell House in Lexington, KY. Among the sites we're touring are the **Perryville** battlefield (Thursday), the **Mill Springs** and **Wildcat Mountain** battlefields (Friday). **Lincoln's birthplace** and **Tebb's Bend** (Saturday), and the **Richmond** battlefield (Sunday).

Attached to this newsletter is a flyer with details on the tour. We only have room for two busses, so space is limited. Sign up soon!

Bulletin Board



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

Jan. 9, 2009: **Frank O'Reilly**,

"Hidden Fredericksburg - the Battle We Thought We Knew"

Feb. 13: Nevins Freeman Address.

Bruce Allardice, "Lincoln as a War Leader"

March 13: **John Latschar**, of the NPS Gettysburg, TBD

April 17: **Stephen Wise**, of the Parris Island Museum, TBD

May 8: **James Ogden**, "Rescue at Horseshoe Ridge"

June 12: **Thomas Cartwright**, TBD

Bjorn Skaptason at the **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop** reminds us that the next "Virtual Book Signing" will be January 15th, featuring former senator **George S. McGovern** talking about his new book, *Abraham Lincoln: the 16th President, 1861-1865*. Registration is required. For more information on this and upcoming events, visit www.virtualbooksigning.net or www.alincolnbookshop.com, or phone the McCormick Freedom Museum at (312) 222-7871.

Larry Hewitt and **Bruce Allardice** will be making a joint presentation at the Union League Club Round Table Tuesday, January 6th. They will have copies of their new book, *Kentuckians in Gray* (U. Press of Kentucky) there. For more information, contact Frank Patton at FrankP414@gmail.com.