

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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Chicago, Illinois

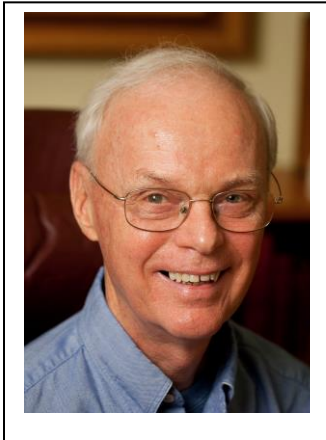
March 2023

816th REGULAR MEETING, Friday, March 10th, 2023

Dwight Hughes on

"Unlike Anything That Ever Floated: The USS Monitor and the Battle of Hampton Roads"

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Mar. 10th, 2023, 07:30 PM CST.
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



The USS Monitor was an ingenious but hurried response to both the imminent threat of the Confederate ironclad, CSS Virginia (ex USS Merrimack), and to the growing prospect of international intervention backed by powerful British or French seagoing ironclads. The United States had no defenses against either menace. This presentation takes Monitor from her inception in the mind of her brilliant inventor through the dramatic first clash of ironclads at Hampton Roads.

Dwight Hughes is a public historian, author, and speaker in Civil War naval history. Dwight graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1967 with a major in History and Government. He served twenty years as a Navy surface warfare officer on most of the world's oceans in ships ranging from destroyer to aircraft carrier and with river forces in Vietnam (Bronze Star for Meritorious Service, Purple Heart). Dwight is a contributing author at the Emerging Civil War blog and author of: [A Confederate Biography: The Cruise of the CSS Shenandoah](#) (Naval Institute Press, 2015), and [Unlike Anything That Ever Floated: The Monitor and Virginia and the Battle Hampton Roads, March 8-9, 1862](#) (Savas Beatie, 2021) for the award-

winning Emerging Civil War series. His new book as editor and contributor, The Civil War on the Water: Favorite Stories and Fresh Perspectives from the Historians at Emerging Civil War (Savas Beatie), is due out in April 2023.

Battlefield Preservation

Today, we have the opportunity to lead 104 acres of pristine battlefield land at Cedar Mountain and Brandy Station into preservation forever...

Tapping the state funds requested by Governor of Virginia Glenn Youngkin and appropriated by the legislature to help save the land at Brandy Station, and applying for additional federal and state matching grants, we hope to cover fully a whopping \$5,244,382 million (92%!) of what we need through those sources.

With the various grants we are applying for, and with a generous match of all gifts up to \$225,000 from a donor who loves this battlefield, ***the value of your gift today is multiplied \$25-to-\$1!***

It would connect — *forever* — the land that you have helped preserve, from the western edge of Fleetwood Hill extending northward for nearly four miles!

This will be our only chance to protect these 97 acres at Brandy Station and 7 acres at Cedar Mountain, **and we urgently need your help to close these transactions soon.**

If we don't save the Brandy Station property now, it will certainly be lost to the development of warehouse distribution centers!

Will you be the leader we need to help secure this land at these two battlefields — *as well as at endangered battlefields all across our nation* — with your generous support?

Very sincerely yours,

David Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust

February Meeting

By Mark Matranga

Charles R. Knight presented The Civil War Round Table an introspective view of Robert E. Lee at its 816th Regular Meeting on February 10, 2023. With materials taken from his book "From Arlington to Appomattox – Robert E. Lee's Civil War," Knight set out to

recreate Lee's experience from a personal perspective with the goal of providing a more rounded portrait of the General's life during the war.

Lee left little for the historian to mine other than his wartime correspondence. Lee's major biographers mainly produced hagiographies. Historian Douglas Southall Freeman, who knew more about Lee than anyone before or since according to Knight, never said anything negative about him. John B. Gordon rightly said it was "a great loss to history and posterity" that Lee did not write his memoirs, but otherwise his assessment was based not in fact but "mostly in his head." Thus historians have had to rely on those who knew him best, his personal staff.

Among Lee's top subordinates were Charles Marshall, assistant adjutant general and author of Lee's campaign reports; Walter H. Taylor who served for four years as aide-de-camp and published two books covering his war experiences; and Armistead L. Long, military secretary, who wrote his own memoirs. Also, E. Porter Alexander, noted artilleryman, produced a memoir which includes candid appraisals of Confederate commanders, including Lee. Other significant contributors to Lee's legacy were his son, Robert E. Lee, Jr., who wrote "Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee," Fitzhugh Lee, nephew and postwar Lee biographer, and aide Charles Venable whose unpublished memoir Knight called a "goldmine" of information.

Lee's letters and his close staff members' memoirs reveal aspects of Lee's character that typical campaign studies miss. For example, Walter Taylor wrote of the "small circle" of staff where there existed "between General Lee and his military family a degree of camaraderie that was perfectly delightful." There, conversation "was free from restraint, unreserved as between equals, and often of a bright and jocular vein." Taylor noted Lee was "very fond of a joke and not infrequently indulged in the pastime of teasing those about him in a mild way." And while staff was always "perfectly deferential" toward the General, "there was an utter absence of the rigid formality and the irksome ceremonial" some regarded necessary for such a high-ranking officer.

Lee revealed an emotional side following the death of John A. Washington, his aide-de-camp and relative by marriage who died at Cheat Mountain. In a letter to Washington's teenage daughter, Lee wrote "with a heart filled with grief I have...the saddest tidings. Your dear father.... fell in the cause to which he had devoted all his energies and in which his noble heart was enlisted." In Knight's mind, the war had hit home for R.E. Lee. In contrast, when writing his wife from Cumberland Island in January 1862, he casually mentioned visiting his father's grave. With little apparent emotion, he informed Mary "I had the gratification at length of visiting my father's grave."

Lee's expressed concern when called north in March 1862, writing Cassius M. Yule "I fear I shall be able to do little in the position assigned me (military advisor to President

Davis).” He was willing to take “any position; but the more humble the position the more agreeable to and better qualified I should feel to fill it.” This was not ‘audaciousness personified’ but a Lee unsure of himself. Perhaps success during the Seven Days bestowed a confidence that carried through to triumph over “the miscreant Pope” at 2nd Manassas and afterward. But personal grief overtook him in October 1862 when Walter Taylor entered Lee’s tent unannounced and found him “overcome with grief, an open letter in his hands,” which told of his daughter Annie’s death. It was not until after the war that the General was able to visit her grave. Another close relative, son Fitzhugh’s daughter Charlotte, died that December. Lee wrote her mother “I felt she would be such a comfort to you....I can say nothing to soften the anguish that you must feel....”

Come 1863 Lee took ill with a cardiac condition that likely affected his performance during the Gettysburg campaign. Meanwhile, he had to deal with his wife who complained he wrote too little. After returning from Pennsylvania, he offered to resign, citing his “attack” from the past spring. “I am becoming more and more incapable of exertion,” he told President Davis. Late that year his son Rooney’s wife died; Lee wrote “I am filled with sadness, yet can do nothing.”

But Lee’s temper could rise. Porter Alexander recalled an event in October 1864 when the General was ‘mad enough to bite nails,’ according to Col. Venable, this because he told his staff to meet at two a.m. but mistakenly thought he had said one. And his excitability during battle – “Lee to the rear” – is well known.

The monumental responsibilities Lee shouldered required that he stoically face personal tragedy. Knight’s Lee is far from a Marble Man.



BULLETIN BOARD

Our in-person meetings are currently held at:

Holiday Inn Oak Brook

17W 350 22nd St., Oakbrook Terrace

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE

Dinner \$40.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

The **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is putting on the following in-person/virtual programs:

Sunday, March 5th, 2-4. Blue House Books & The Civil War Museum present Documenting History: The Process and Importance of Military History Books.

Join us on March 5th as five authors of military history gather to discuss their careers documenting historical events, led by Civil War Museum Curator Doug Dammann

For more on programs at the museum, visit
<https://museums.kenosha.org/civilwar/events/>

Leslie Goddard will present "Clara Barton" at the Twin Cities (MN) CWRT March 21st.

Bruce Allardice will be speaking on "Conscription and the Civil War" March 18th, at the Lake County Genealogical Society.

Rob Girardi has a busy presentation schedule this month.

March 7, Patty Turner Center, Deerfield Park/The Midwest Fights the Civil War

March 13, CWRT of Northeast Indiana/The Murder of Major General William Nelson

March 14, CWRT of Southwest Michigan/Abraham Lincoln and the Common Soldier

March 16, McHenry County College/The Murder of Major General William Nelson

More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

Mar. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: **Rob Girardi** on "Lincoln and the Common Soldier"

Mar. 4th, Two Old Goats in Cedar Lake: **Bruce Allardice** on "The Election of 1864"

Mar. 6th, Rockford CWRT: Kevin Levin, "The Myth of the Black Confederate Soldier"

Mar. 9th, Milwaukee CWRT: Dwight Hughes on "Unlike Anything That Ever Floated"

Mar. 14th, McHenry County CWRT: Steve Alban on "Was Lincoln Our Only Assassination?"

Mar. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Eric Wittenberg on "Seceding from Secession"

Mar. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Gail Stevens on "Lew Wallace at Shiloh"

Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

Apr. 14th: Richard Holloway on "The Red River Campaign"

May 12th: Sean Michael Chick on "Grant's Left Hook: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign"

June 9th: Mark Zimmerman on "The Retreat from Nashville"

The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** facebook page airs "Take a Break with History", every first and third Friday of the month at 1 pm CST. Their next "House Divided" author interview is Mar. 15th, 3:30 CST, with Edward Achorn discussing his new book on Lincoln, "The Lincoln Miracle." For more, visit <https://alincolinbookshop.com/>

Annual Bearss Fund

As Round Table members know, every year our group raises funds in memory of our beloved friend and Tour Guide extraordinaire, ED BEARSS, to donate during our annual battlefield tour to deserving groups. This year we will be touring battlefields in Louisiana connected with the Red River Campaign of 1864. So please dig deep and pledge a donation, or give right now, for our annual endeavor on Ed's behalf. Make checks payable to The Civil War Round Table and either donate at the meetings or mail checks to Mark Matranga, 201 N. Elmwood Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302.

Red River 2023 Tour Update....

The tour will be a one bus tour on a bus with a capacity for 56. Early registration for the tour includes a \$200 deposit to reserve your seat on the bus and a free Tour T-Shirt. After we have reached 56-person capacity there will be a wait list for the tour. The deadline for early registration was Feb 1, 2023 after which the total tour cost will need to be paid.

To register for the tour see Curt Thomasco at upcoming meetings for a copy of the Tour Itinerary and Tour Registration Form along with your deposit. Also please note that the Tour Itinerary and Tour Registration Form can be downloaded from the Chicago CWRT website. **Regarding tour meal options**, please contact Curt or fill out the online form at <https://chicagocwrt.org/Tours/Meal2023.pdf>