

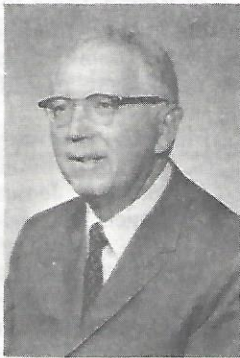
# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XXXIII

Chicago, Illinois

May, 1973

## E.C. Johnson on Civil War's Embalming Surgeons



Edward C. Johnson

The Civil War had many unplanned and unexpected consequences that had little to do with its causes or campaigns. One of the great but little recorded social changes was in funeral customs in which the United States departed sharply from European conventions and those of most of the rest of the world. Edward C. Johnson, a member of the Civil War Round Table and recognized international authority on mortuary customs will tell us about it at the meeting Friday, May 18, 1973, at the Chicago Bar Association. Note that this meeting is held on the third Friday of the month because of

the Gettysburg Battlefield Tour of the preceding week-end.

The talk will be illustrated with a small number of slides, representing almost all of the known photographs recording the work of the embalming surgeons.

In outlining his subject matter, Mr. Johnson said:

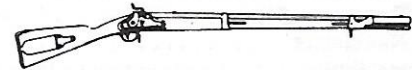
Infrequently, if ever, has a historical study been made of the mortal casualties of the Civil War. Their ultimate disposition has been of little concern to anyone but relatives and comrades in arms.

One of the seldom publicized chapters of the Civil War concerned the works of a small group of civilians known as Embalming Surgeons. The wartime activities of the embalming surgeons demonstrated the practicality of embalming procedure to permit the return home of numbers of battle and hospital dead for the viewing and solace of relatives and friends.

The practice of embalming, even the term embalming, almost unknown to the average American before the war, or at best in some way connected to a practice of the ancient Egyptians of producing mummies, became familiar to most Americans during the war by its frequent use in newspapers, magazines and advertising posters, and handbills.

The work of the wartime embalming surgeons was in the years to come to be recognized as the beginning of a great social change in the American funeral customs. The principal difference between present day American funeral customs and those elsewhere in the world is that embalming is routinely practiced here in the USA and only sparingly elsewhere in the world.

E. C. Johnson will tell the story of the Embalming Surgeons and illustrate his talk with slides. Ed is a retired Army reserve lieutenant colonel who served in the Quartermaster Graves Registration Section and in the office of the Army Chief of Military History. He is a practicing embalmer operator



321st REGULAR MEETING

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Edward C. Johnson

on

Embalming Surgeons of the Civil War

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Friday, May 18, 1973

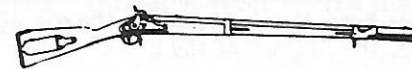
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Chicago Bar Association  
29 South LaSalle Street

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Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE meeting is scheduled at the Chicago Bar Association at 5 p.m. Friday, May 18, immediately preceding the regular meeting. Important matters, including next year's Battlefield Tour, are to be discussed.

of a funeral home and a well-known writer, teacher and lecturer, having published more than 300 articles, mostly on technical subjects, and having addressed funeral association groups on every continent. He is revising a manuscript on the Embalming Surgeons of the Civil War.

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street,  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
Phone: Whitehall 4-3085

## OFFICERS

President ..... Charles V. Falkenberg, Jr.  
Senior Vice President ..... Gordon Whitney  
Vice President ..... Charles D. Wesselhoeft  
Vice President ..... Ward C. Smidt  
Secretary ..... Burt Rovens  
Treasurer ..... Donald E. Jensen  
Assistant Secretary ..... Terry Carr  
Assistant Treasurer ..... Gerald M. Edelstein  
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Contributing Editor ..... Dick Clark  
Judge Advocate General ..... Philip R. Davis

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES (Executive Committee)

Terms expiring in 1973: Richard Cohen, George Fleming,  
Don Sikorski.

Terms expiring in 1974: Elmer Pendarvis, Edward Johnson,  
Norman Toberman.

Founding Newsletter editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968



*from the  
Editor's pen*



Dana M. Wegner gave us a rundown on Commodore William D. Porter, known as "Dirty Bill" at the April meeting. Dana confessed that he could not definitely account for the "Dirty Bill" nickname, but the connotation was different in Civil War times from what it is now, and generally meant a bad actor, which Bill definitely was. Some of his insulting letters were written on smudged and dirty paper, perhaps as an added insult, and one of these may have been the origin of "Dirty Bill." He was born March 11, 1809, the son of Commodore David Porter, the "Porter of the Essex" of the War of 1812. Bill was one of 11 children, one of whom was David Dixon Porter the "second admiral." The first admiral, David G. Farragut, was a foster brother, and Bill was married in 1830 to Jane Marchant, Farragut's sister-in-law, but she died in 1838.

At the age of 12 Bill went to sea as stowaway on the U.S.S. Franklin. He was black sheep of the family, and was accused by his father and mother of stealing a Mexican deed that never did show up. An illegitimate child did not add to his standing at home. His navy career was equally tempestuous. He was courtmartialled for stealing cabbages and other misdeeds, but got off with a reprimand. Assigned to duty as lighthouse inspector, he claimed to be the father of the lighthouse system. He developed an explosive shell and blew up a building in Washington Navy Yard in one of his experiments. A secret retiring board ousted him in 1855, but he was reinstated by President Buchanan and given command of the sloop St.

Mary's in which he chased pirates and quelled a riot in Panama. At the beginning of the Civil War a mysterious letter accused him of disloyalty, without basis. He was assigned to the Mississippi River flotilla, as were others deemed somehow undesirable. He served under Commodore Foote, who was a religious fanatic. Porter was assigned to the timberclad New Era, which was damaged at Fort Henry, and Porter seriously injured and disfigured. He spent \$94,000 repairing the New Era, far in excess of his \$20,000 authority, and renamed it the "SX" or Essex, for his father's frigate. He fought the U.S.S. Arkansas July 22, 1862, and claimed the sinking of that ironclad in August, and in this he probably was correct. He was promoted commodore and went before a Navy Retiring Board, but was not retired. However, in April, 1864, he was admitted to St. Luke's Hospital, New York, and died there in May.

Dana supplied a three-page folder including portrait, map, and outline of Porter's career.

## Election of Officers

Nominations for offices in the Civil War Round Table for 1973-74 were offered at the April 13 meeting by a nominating committee headed by Marshall Krolick. Other nominations may be made prior to the election to be held at the May 18 meeting. The slate offered follows:

President ..... Gordon Whitney  
Senior Vice President ..... Ward C. Smidt  
Vice President ..... Donald E. Jensen  
Vice President ..... Francis R. Geigle  
Secretary ..... Terry Carr  
Treasurer ..... Gerald M. Edelstein  
Assistant Secretary ..... Daniel Vetter  
Assistant Treasurer ..... Glen Wiche  
Trustee ..... Burton Rovens  
Trustee ..... Robert H. Franke  
Trustee ..... Myron Cohn

The nominating committee included Allen Meyer, Brooks Davis, Charles Wesselhoeft, Arnold Alexander, Dan J. Lapinski, and acting chairman Krolick.

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## TAPS

Dr. Herbert V. Livesay, president of Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee, died February 28, 1973. At the April meeting Lloyd Miller collected \$150 to augment a memorial scholarship program in Dr. Livesay's honor.

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William Sullivan, father of CWRT Member William J. Sullivan died recently. The Civil War Round Table extends sympathy to our fellow member and to all of his family.

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## GETTYSBURG TOWER

According to a UPI dispatch from Harrisburg, Pa., Commonwealth Court ruled April 3 that a Maryland land developer may construct a tourist tower overlooking Gettysburg Battlefield. The state went to court when Thomas F. Ottenstein, Bethesda, Md., refused to halt construction of the 307-foot tower. Commonwealth Court upheld an Adams County Court and said the state failed to show that construction of the tower would harm the battlefield. Many CWRT groups have opposed this entire idea, and protesters are urged to write Governor Milton J. Shapp, State Capitol, Harrisburg, Pa., 17101.

## STRANGE NICKNAMES

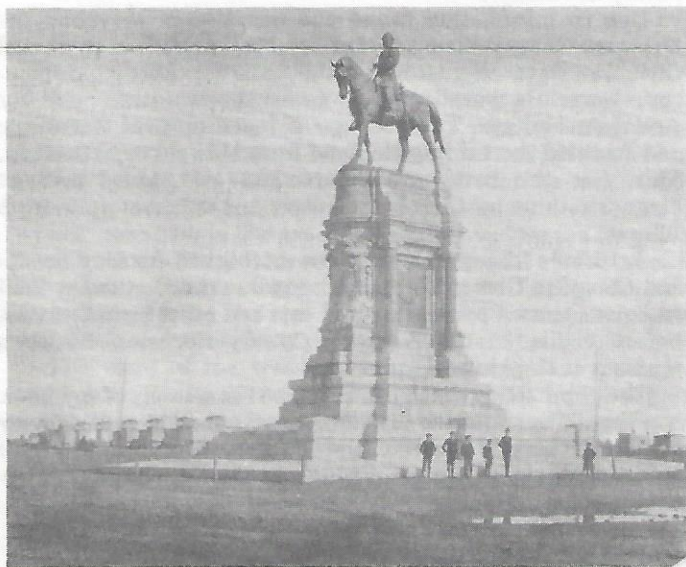
Ashpoll True Boys	(Co. F, 51st No. Car. Inf.)
Assumption Creoles	(Co. C, 26th La. Inf.)
Attala Yellow Jackets	(Co. B, 4th Miss. Inf.)
Baker Fire Eaters	(Co. H, 6th Ga. Inf.)
Barbour Yankee Hunters	(Co. A, 45th Ala. Inf.)
Bartow Raid Repellers	(Co. C, 9th Batln. Ga. State Guards)
Bartow Yankee Killers	(Co. A, 23rd Ga. Inf.)
Beaufort Plow Bloys	(Co. B, 61st N. C. Inf.)
Beech Creek Jerkers	(Miller's Co., Local Defense Troups, Tenn.)
Bell's Babies	(McDowell's Indep. Co., Tenn. Cav.)
Blood Mountain Tigers	(Co. F, Smith's Partisan Rangers)
Buncombe Farmers	(Co. E, 60th N. C. Inf.)

(From the *Lone Star Banner* of the CWRT of Texas)



## MESS AT MANASSAS

Rezoning of a portion of Second Manassas Battlefield to permit construction of a \$35,000,000, 537-acre "Great America" amusement and light industrial park by the Marriott Corporation, is opposed by the District of Columbia CWRT, George E. Hill, II, president, 1500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Those who wish to join in the protest are urged to write: C. Scott Winfield, chairman, Prince William County Board of Supervisors, 9250 Lee Ave., Manassas, Va. 22110.



LEE MONUMENT, Richmond, Virginia. This photograph from the 1890s shows surroundings that have changed considerably in three quarters of a century.

## TO THE CAMP FOLLOWERS (LADIES)

Time: 5:30 p.m., Friday, May 18, 1973  
Place: Mayor's Row Restaurant, 131 North Dearborn Street (\$5.)

Program: Dr. Gerhard Clausius, member of CWRT, on "Lincoln's Thoughts Prior to the Gettysburg Address."

Reservations: Write or phone Betty Walter (Mrs. Robert) 1511 East Miner Street, Arlington Heights, Ill. 60004, phone 312-253-7053.

Last Meeting: Only good luck was present for the thirteen ladies who met on Friday the thirteenth to discuss superstitions. In fact it was extremely lucky for the ladies, because Marilyn Whitney (Mrs. Gordon) agreed to be our president in the coming year.

## HERE AND THERE

The Journal of the Confederate Historical Society, England, dated Autumn, 1972, (Volume X, No. 3) pays tribute to Glen Wiche of Chicago CWRT and Warren Pabst from New Jersey, who, on a Saturday, helped in "making up the Journal and carrying the mailbags to the Post Office down King's Road, Chelsea." A recent announcement indicated that the next issue, Volume X, No. 4. will be the last because of lack of funds. For further information, or back issues at 50¢ a copy, address the Hon Secretary, Kenneth M. Boughton, 19, Montague Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9, 35L.

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Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table held its organizational meeting in January and scheduled Elbert Watson, editor, for an address on "Federal General Ormsby McKnight Mitchell: Military Genius or an Eccentric Visionary?" at the Huntsville Public Library, February 22. For further information address Elbert Watson, P.O. Box 443, Huntsville, Alabama.

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Alan Conrad Aimone, CWRT member employed in the Special Collections Division of the U.S. Military Academy Library, has supplied us with several publishable items used in recent issues of the CWRT Bulletin. He now comes out with a work of his own, "Official Records of The American Civil War: A Researchers Guide," published as USMA Library Bulletin No. 11. He discusses both the O.R. and the Naval O.R., telling how they came about, their editing and publication schedules, and their shortcomings. Reproductions of title pages, maps, and an appendix are included.

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Volume I, Number 1 of Stars & Bars of the Confederate Generals Historical Society has arrived and seems off to a good start. It is a four-page newsletter, in format similar to this, with many illustrations and many small articles, a longer sketch of Patrick Ronayne Cleburne, and book reviews. Subscription is \$6 a year or \$10 for two years for the quarterly publication and each new member gets a 25-word want-ad free. The address is P.O. Box 677, Helena, Arkansas 72342.

## THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Aimone, Alan. *The Official Records of the American Civil War: A Researcher's Guide*. Foreword by Egon Weiss. West Point, N.Y.: United States Military Academy. USMA Library Bulletin No. 11.

Barney, William. *The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South*. New York: Praeger, 1972. \$7.50. Paper \$2.95

Bassett, Margaret Byrd. *Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln*. With an introduction on "The Presidency" by Henry F. Graff. New York: Crowell [1973]. \$3.95. Paper \$1.95

Boker, George Henry. *Poems of the War*. New York: Arno Press, 1972. \$10.00. Reprint of the 1864 edition.

Brownell, Henry Howard. *War-Lyrics and Other Poems*. New York: Arno Press, 1972. \$12.00. Reprint of the 1865 edition.

Draper, John William. *History of the American Civil War*. 3 vols. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press [1973]. Reprint of the 1867-70 edition. \$82.50

Galloway, B.P., compiler. *The Dark Corner of the Confederacy; Accounts of Civil War Texas as told by Contemporaries*. 2nd ed. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co. [1972].

Hawkins, Hugh, editor. *The Abolitionists; Means, Ends, and Motivations*. 2nd ed. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath [1972]. Paper \$2.50

Hayman, LeRoy. *The Road to Fort Sumter*. Illustrated by Louis S. Glanzman. New York: Crowell [1972]. \$4.50

Johnson, Andrew. *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*. Vol. 3 for the years 1858-1860. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972. \$20.00

Jones, Robert H. *Disrupted Decades: America in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: Scribner's, 1972. \$15.00. Paper \$5.95

Kolchin, Peter. *First Freedom; the Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press [1972].

Pease, Jane H. and William H. Pease. *Bound with them in Chains; a Biographical History of the Antislavery Movement*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press [1972]. \$12.50

Purdue, Howell and Elizabeth Purdue. *Pat Cleburne: Confederate General*. Hillsboro, Texas: Hill Junior College Press, 1973. Limited edition full green leather, 50 copies \$32.50. Regular edition, cloth, 500 copies \$10.50

Redway, Murine Whorton. *Marks of Lee on our Land*. San Antonio: Naylor, [1972]. \$6.95

Rozwenc, Edwin C. *Reconstruction in the South*. Edited and with an introduction by . . . 2nd ed. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath [1972]. Paper \$2.25

Simms, William Gilmore, editor. *War Poetry of the South*. New York: Arno Press, 1972. Reprint of the 1866 edition. \$22.00

Trelease, Allen W. *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. \$15.00

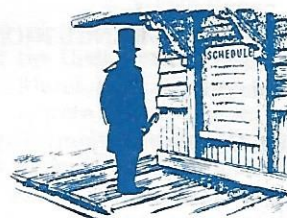


IOWA CIVIL WAR DAYS

Editor:

I want to thank you for mentioning my book *A Star for Patriotism* in your February News Letter. I spent seven years researching the story of an Iowa college, Bowen Collegiate Institute, and the Civil War Monument on its campus. The

## BULLETIN BOARD



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Chicago Bar Association, 29 South LaSalle, second Friday in each month except as noted.

May 10-13: Annual Battlefield Tour, Gettysburg and the Army War College, Carlisle, Pa.

Friday, May 18: Edward C. Johnson on Embalming Surgeons of the Civil War.

June 8: George B. Hartzog, Jr., Former Director, National Parks Service.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at LaSalle Hotel coffee shop; all members invited.

Change of address:

Robert Bermant  
1334 Rosewood  
Deerfield, Ill. 60015

Kenneth J. Sayce  
5 Massey Square, Apt. 2714  
Toronto, Ont. M4C5L6 Canada



challenging thing here is that there are no official records available today from this college. The College was named by one of the Bowen brothers when he contributed \$500 towards its construction. The Bowen brothers operated a dry goods business in Chicago and built the finest building in that city in the 1850s. The Bowens also helped establish the first public library in Chicago.

Due to information found and recorded in my book the Delaware County Historical Society has established an annual Civil War Days celebration on the former campus at Hopkinton, Iowa. Its purpose is to promote patriotism and our American heritage. The program is based on Civil War music and featured the 1st Brigade Band from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This year the band will return and also added will be demonstrations by Civil War artillery and infantry units from Illinois.

A 16 mile hiking trail has been established for Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls. This trail is known as the Monument Trail and visits three Civil War monuments and other historical sites before ending at the Delaware County Historical Society's museum at Hopkinton.

The third thing which has developed as a result of my book is giving talks about the Civil War to school children. Last year I talked to over a thousand 5th and 8th graders about the Civil War. We always have a good time and they can ask an endless amount of questions.

Thank you again.

William E. Corbin, President  
Cedar Rapids Civil War Round Table