

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XXXVII, Number 2

Chicago, Illinois

October, 1976

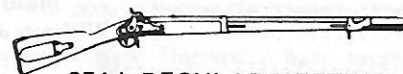
## WILLIAM W. HASSLER ON 'THE HAUNTING MYSTERY OF A. P. HILL'

One of the Civil War's most enigmatic figures will be the topic for the evening on October 8, 1976 as Dr. William W. Hassler, President of Wesley College in Dover, Delaware appears for the first time as our featured speaker. In his remarks, Dr. Hassler will penetrate for us the aura of mystery which has for a century surrounded the military life of Confederate General Ambrose Powell Hill. While of course detailing Hill's actions on the battlefield, particular emphasis will be focused by our speaker on the General's personality in an attempt to more closely examine the nature of the man whose fame through the years has been obscured by the dominating characteristics of his famous colleagues, Lee, Jackson and Stuart.



William W. Hassler began his professional life as an industrial research chemist, engaging in that activity for four years after receiving his undergraduate degree at Juniata College and his doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania. Since entering the field of higher education, he has served as chairman of the Department of Chemistry and Physics at Beaver College, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and President of Indiana University of Pennsylvania before accepting his present position. In addition to numerous articles and book reviews, his writings on the Civil War include several books, two of which are "A.P. Hill: Lee's Forgotten General" and "Colonel John Pelham: Lee's Boy Artillerist", both published by the University of North Carolina Press. For many years, he has also been a regular contributor to Civil War Times Illustrated. Among the honors Dr. Hassler has received for his literary efforts are the Bronze Plaque award of the Lincoln Civil War Society of Philadelphia and the Freedom Foundation Essay Award.

A.P. Hill was born in Culpeper, Virginia, November 9, 1825. He attended West Point Military Academy graduating with the Class of 1847. After service in Mexico and against the Seminoles, he resigned from the United States Army on March 1, 1861 to enter Confederate service as colonel of the 13th Virginia Infantry. Advancements came swiftly for Hill, including promotion to brigadier general in February, 1862 and major general in May, 1862. Hill soon proved to be an aggressive, as well as an impatient officer. During the opening battle of the "Seven Days", at Mechanicsville, he decided to attack the heavily entrenched Union forces under Fitz-John Porter behind Beaver Dam Creek. This was



354th REGULAR MEETING

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William W. Hassler  
on

The Haunting Mystery of A. P. Hill

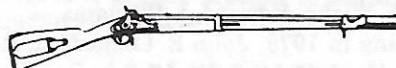
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Friday, October 8, 1976

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Chicago Bar Association, 29 South LaSalle Street  
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



### PLAN TO ATTEND

Fall trip to Galena, Belvidere, and Freeport —

October 9 & 10

National Congress of Civil War Round Tables —

October 21-23

directly contrary to Lee's instructions that Hill was to wait until he had made contact with Stonewall Jackson before starting the assault. Lee's plan called for Hill's troops to make the frontal attack, while Jackson came in on the Union flank. Without Jackson's aid, Hill's advance was a complete failure, resulting in heavy casualties.

Later, however, Hill and his famous fast marching Light Division were to prove invaluable to Jackson at Cedar Mountain and to Lee at Antietam. A.P. Hill's greatest moment came during the latter battle on September 17, 1862, when, late in the afternoon, he saved Lee's army from certain defeat by attacking Burnside's corps at the lower bridge on Antietam Creek. He had just arrived on the field after a forced march from Harpers Ferry and, with perfect timing, turned the tide of the conflict. Hill was promoted to lieutenant general on May 24, 1863 following the death of Stonewall Jackson. He was given command of the newly formed 3rd Corps, which was to open the battle of Gettysburg.

He fought through most of the Wilderness campaign of 1864 and in the defense of Petersburg in 1864-1865. However, from the time he assumed corps command his performance was erratic and he was ill much of the time when it appeared a major engagement was to take place. Dr. Hassler will point out for us the probable causes for the uneven behavior of Hill during this period of his career. Tragically, A.P. Hill was killed on April 2, 1865 while attempting to rally his troops during Grant's final assault on the Petersburg lines.

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street  
Chicago Illinois 60611  
Phone: (312) 944-3085

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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 Ward C. Smidl, 1104 Whippoorwill Lane, Palatine, Illinois 60067.



Once again, the same old problem has arisen regarding meeting reservations. Too often those making reservations do not attend or those without reservations do appear. This causes serious problems with regard to food service and can cost the Round Table financially when there are enough "no-shows" to affect our guarantee to the Bar Association. Therefore, we earnestly request all who plan to attend to make a reservation, by either mail or phone, and to cancel that reservation if last minute events prevent attendance. Only with such cooperation can we avoid the imposition of rules barring those without reservations and charging those who fail to appear. Also, please be sure to include the names of any guests and specify if fish is desired.

Honorary Award Life Member and Nevins-Freeman Award recipient Bruce Catton has been appointed Honorary Chairman of the National Congress of Civil War Round Tables. As had been pointed out in several recent issues of The Newsletter, the Congress, which will attract over 150 delegates from around the country, will be held October 21-23, 1976 at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Among the many prominent historians who will address the assembly will be our own founder, Ralph G. Newman, who will be the featured speaker at the concluding banquet on the 23rd. Again we ask that all members who can possibly attend this Congress make plans to do so.

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Our own member, Richard Blake, whose brilliant portrayals of Abraham Lincoln are unequalled, recently completed a two-week tour of fourteen downstate Illinois cities, during which he re-enacted the sixteenth president's career as a circuit-riding lawyer. The project was part of the Illinois Conservation Department's Heritage Days program. At each stop, Dick presented his unique interpretation of Lincoln during the latter's years on the 8th Judicial Circuit.

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In what may be a first, Past President Gordon Whitney is now serving in a similar position with a second major Round Table. After a successful term as our President in 1973-74, Gordon is currently the leader of the Louisville Round Table. In September, he presided over their first meeting of the new year, an evening devoted to honoring their founder and guiding light, Frank Rankin. Frank, who has been our speaker on several occasions, was presented with several gifts during what was a well-deserved ceremony.

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The staff of The Newsletter wishes to extend congratulations for a job well done and best wishes for the future to Ray Randolph, who has served for many years as editor of Hardtack, the official publication of the Indianapolis Round Table. Ray has been an active worker on behalf of Battlefield preservation projects and also was one of the first to support the concept of a National Round Table Congress. He has recently retired to Florida, but we know his efforts in preserving the heritage of the Civil War will continue.

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Our good friend and scheduled January speaker, Dr. James I. "Bud" Roberston, Jr., is fortunately recovering rapidly from leg injuries suffered in a freak accident in his home. As he, his wife and four of Bud's students were visiting on his second floor sun deck, it collapsed, dropping them onto the patio below. All received various-injuries, fortunately none of which were too serious. The worst was a broken leg suffered by one of the students.

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In what must qualify as one of the most despicable acts that has come to our attention, hundreds of irreplaceable woodcut prints have been stolen from Civil War era magazines in the Northwestern University Library, Evanston, Illinois. The thefts were discovered in recent weeks during checks prompted by reports of similar thefts in Eastern colleges. Most of the stolen prints were by American artist Winslow Homer and were taken from bound copies of Harper's Weekly, dating back to the 1860's and 1870's. The prints, each worth between \$40 and \$60, appeared to have been removed from the books in a professional manner. In addition to the irreplaceable loss, the inevitable result of such destruction is to limit the accessibility to these works by legitimate students. In fact, Northwestern has already placed similar volumes on a restricted basis.

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

Seventy-six members and guests were in attendance as President Terry Carr opened the first meeting of The Round Table's thirty-seventh year. Joining us as our speaker for the evening was an old friend and eminent historian, Joseph P. Cullen of the National Park Service. Joe's topic was, as he put it, the battle which changed the Civil War from a conflict of maneuver to one of siege, Cold Harbor. The events of that fateful day in June, 1864 were to establish firmly the principal that had been hinted at after Gettysburg and Fredericksburg, that well manned, well supported intrenchments combined with the effective use of artillery were impregnable to an assault utilizing the weapons and tactics of the nineteenth century.

The campaign that began in May, 1864 was, less than a month later, already indelibly stamped with the personality of U.S. Grant. Southern leaders already realized that the new Union commander was a man of single purpose whose only direction was straight ahead. Grant understood the concept of total war and was willing to live with its bloody consequences. Few others recognized, as he did, that more soldiers were dying in hospitals and prison camps than in battle and thus he was prepared to exchange short range suffering for long range relief.

By the end of May, the Armies of the Potomac and Northern Virginia had marched and fought through the Wilderness, past Spotsylvania, and across the North Anna. Each conflict had been inconclusive despite the unprecedented casualty lists, but after each the federals had advanced further south, rather than retreated as all of Lee's former adversaries had done. By May 31, the Confederate cavalry, anticipating Grant's next flanking movement, had occupied the tiny crossroads hamlet of Cold Harbor, located eight miles from Richmond on the peninsula between the York and James Rivers. The next day, before Lee's infantry could arrive, Sheridan's Union troopers attacked and drove off the Southern horse. In an attempt to recapture the important road junction, Lee ordered Anderson's First Corps to attack on June 1, but the Federal VI Corps had reinforced Sheridan and the Confederates were beaten back. That evening, Grant in turn ordered an assault which was partially successful, but eventually repulsed.

Encouraged by what had been accomplished, Grant became convinced that an attack in strength would prove victorious. He directed that such a move be made early on the next morning. However, the guide leading Hancock's II Corps to its place in the line became lost and, when the men finally arrived, they were exhausted by their tedious march in the oppressive heat. Thus the attack was postponed until later in the day, but a severe rainstorm caused a further delay until the next morning, June 3. Lee used the extra day to best advantage as he brought up the remainder of his army and added well constructed fortifications to the ravines, gullies, and creeks which protected his six mile front. Despite all his preparations, he could not provide his army with a reserve as, if he shortened his line, it would be flanked, while if he weakened it, it would be broken.

Grant, in the meantime, had determined to make the assault with three corps, the II, VI, and XVIII, whose positions occupied approximately one-half of the total line. The distance between the opposing forces varied from a mere fifty yards to one-half mile. The federal corps commanders were ordered to examine thoroughly the terrain over which they would advance, but each failed to do so, disobedience which would have disastrous results. At 4:30 A.M. on June 3, 1864 the attack began. In less than ten minutes it was over

## TO THE CAMPFOLLOWERS (LADIES)

At our September meeting, Miner T. Coburn, Honorary Award Life Member of The Round Table delivered a most informative talk on "Illinois In The Civil War". Because so many members of The Round Table had given their wives glowing reports of Roger Holloway's speech on "Great Britain and the American Civil War," it has been decided to play the tape of it as our October program, instead of having a live speaker. We will meet again in the Little Corporal Restaurant, State and East Wacker Drive, with bar service beginning at 5:30 pm., to be followed by the running of the tape, and dinner. This promises to be a very interesting evening, so please join us and bring an interested friend. Add your reservation to your husband's card, or write or telephone Margaret April at 787-1860, 175 E. Delaware Place, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Scientists from Rice University have located the U.S.S. Hatteras, a former sidewheel merchant vessel converted into a Civil War ironclad. The Hatteras, which was sunk on January 11, 1863 after a thirteen minute battle with the Confederate ship Alabama, is lying in sixty foot deep water in the Gulf of Mexico near Galveston, Texas. Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, professor of history at Rice, who made the announcement, considers this a very significant find because of the rapidity of the ship's sinking. This, he believes, means that most of Hatteras' stores, armaments and other equipment are still on board. Because the ship is buried in sand on the ocean bottom the feasibility of raising it intact has not yet been determined. However, divers have already brought to the surface a number of items, including the ironclad's nameplate.

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The government of West Germany has honored one of its region's native sons, who went on to prominence as an American soldier and legislator. As part of its recognition of our Bicentennial, West Germany has issued a postage stamp bearing the likeness of Carl Schurz, Civil War general and U.S. Senator from Missouri. Schurz, who fled his homeland after the unsuccessful revolts of the 1840's, served with distinction as a division and temporary corps commander in the often maligned XI Corps of the Army of the Potomac. After the war, he served as Secretary of the Interior and, while in the Senate, sponsored the bill establishing the permanent civil service merit system.

and seven thousand names had been added to the Union casualty lists. Those who were not hit were immediately pinned down and forced to dig in until the cover of nightfall would allow them to pull back.

In analyzing the defeat, the leaders of the three northern corps erroneously each blamed the other for not supporting him. In truth, the rough terrain had caused Hancock on the left to veer to the left and Smith on the right to oblique right, while Wright in the center moved straight ahead. Thus each presented his flank to the enemy. Whatever the cause of the defeat, Grant readily accepted the blame. In his memoirs, written twenty years later, Grant was to admit that he had always regretted the attack at Cold Harbor. Yet, mistake or not, the costly defeat did not shake his determination. Although he would bypass Richmond for the time being, he would still continue south. On June 5, he gave the orders for the movement of his entire army across the James River to Petersburg, a military operation whose brilliance would help erase the horrible blunder that had been Cold Harbor.

# THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Aimone, Alan C. *Bibliography of Military History*. A Selected and annotated listing of reference sources. 2nd ed. West Point, New York: United States Military Academy, 1975. Free for the asking from the Military History Librarian, USMA Library, West Point, N.Y. 10996

Alvarez, Eugene. *Travel on Southern Antebellum Railroads, 1828-1860*. University: University of Alabama Press, 1975. \$8.95

Berns, Laurence and others. *Abraham Lincoln: The Gettysburg Address; and, American Constitutionalism*. Edited by Leo Paul S. de Alvarez. Irving, Texas: University of Dallas Press, 1976.

Billings, John D. *Hard Tack and Coffee*. Williamstown: Mass.: Corner House Publishers, 1973. \$12.50

Dabney, Robert L. *Life and Campaigns of Lieut.-Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, (Stonewall Jackson)*. Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle Publications, 1976. \$15.95. Reprint of the 1865 edition. With two new appendixes: (1) A notice of the Christian Character of Stonewall Jackson by Capt. James Power Smith, D.D. (2) A Brief History of General Jackson's Colored Sunday School by Margaret Junkin Preston.

Davis, Burke. *Runaway Balloon: The Last Flight of Confederate Air Force One*. Drawings by Salvatore Murdocca. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1976. \$5.95. For young people.

Edwards, John N. *Noted Guerrillas, or, The Warfare of the Border*. Introduction by Albert Castel. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1976. \$20.00. Facsimile of 1877 edition.

Gordon, John B. *Reminiscences of the Civil War*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Civil War Times Illustrated, \$10.00

Hay, Thomas Robson. *Hood's Tennessee Campaign*. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1976. \$17.50. Facsimile of 1920 edition.

Hermann, Isaac. *Memoirs of a Confederate Veteran, 1861-1865*. Lakemont, Georgia: CSA Press, 1974. \$15.00. Reprint of 1911 edition.

Jackson, Mary Anna. *Memoirs of "Stonewall" Jackson*. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1976. \$25.00. With new introduction by Lowell Reidenbaugh. Facsimile of the 1895 edition.

Jones, J. William, compiler. *Army of Northern Virginia: Memorial Volume*. Introduction by James I. Robertson, Jr. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1976. \$17.50. Reprint of the 1880 edition.

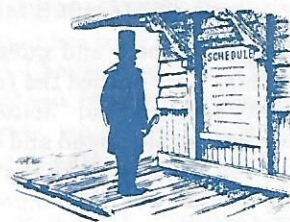
Murfin, James V. *The Gleam of Bayonets*. 4th casebound printing. Autographed. Rockville, Md.: Forecast Books. \$6.00

*Ordnance Manual for the Use of Officers of the Confederate States Army (1863)*. Prepared under the direction of Colonel Josiah Gorgas. With new introduction by Sydney C. Kerksis. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1976. \$25.00. Facsimile reprint.

Owens, Leslie H. *The Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. \$12.95

Roland, Charles. *Albert Sidney Johnston*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975. \$8.50

Sewell, Richard H. *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. \$12.95



## BULLETIN BOARD

### FUTURE MEETINGS

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

October 8: William W. Hassler on "The Haunting Mystery of A.P. Hill."

October 9 & 10: Fall Tour to Galena, Freeport, and Belvidere.

November 12: Brooks Davis on "The Mississippi Marine Brigade."

December 10: Robert Orr Baker on "The Battle of Brices Cross Roads - June 10, 1864."

January 14: Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr. on "Lee and Jackson: The Confederacy's Premier Team."

February 11: Mark E. Neely, Jr. on "To Distinguish Myself: Lincoln and the Mexican War."

March 11: Dr. William E. Parrish on "The Bohemian Brigade: The East Covers the War in Missouri in 1861."

April 8: Elden E. (Josh) Billings on "Sherman: A Critical Character Sketch."

May 4-8: Annual Battlefield Tour to Middle Tennessee.

May 13: Dr. Richard J. Sommers on "Petersburg."

June 10: Ladies night, Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner and Installation of Officers.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at Wieboldt's Men's Grill, 9th Floor, State and Madison; all members welcome.

### NEW MEMBERS

Robert G. Beaman, 1013 Darius Lane, Naperville, Illinois 60540.

George M. Felbinger, Felbinger & Co., 5116 N. Cicero Ave., Suite 302, Chicago, Illinois 60630.

Allan W. Follett, 315 Virginia Terrace, Madison, Wisconsin 53705.

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