

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLI, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January, 1981

HOWARD C. WESTWOOD ON THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

A reappraisal of the famous and often controversial Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War will be offered at The Round Table meeting on January 9. The speaker that evening will be Howard C. Westwood of Washington, D.C., who has devoted considerable effort to digging into the Committee's record. What he has found challenges much of the conventional wisdom.

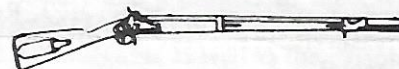
The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was created by the 37th Congress in December 1861 in a resolution of the two Houses giving it a sweeping mandate to inquire into "the conduct" of the war. Expiring in April 1863 after the end of that Congress, it was revived in January, 1864 by the 38th Congress, continuing until May, 1865. No doubt influenced by the fact that its chairman throughout was Senator Ben Wade of Ohio, scholars have characterized the committee as an instrument of the Radical faction or, at least, as anti-administration. The impression has been conveyed that it persistently harassed Lincoln during the war.

In an article in the Spring, 1978, issue of the Lincoln Herald, Mr. Westwood examined in detail the committee's record during the war and challenged these judgments. In his talk here he will point out elements in the committee's work that scholars have overlooked and some of their mistakes of fact. He will suggest that during the war the committee was truly bi-partisan and that, in the main, it gave support to the Executive.

Howard C. Westwood, who has been described as the nobleman of the Washington, D.C. bar and dean of that city's aviation lawyers, recently retired from the Washington law firm of Covington & Burling with which he has been associated since 1934 (he is still counsel to the firm). During his law career he helped write the legislation creating the Civil Aeronautics Board in 1938 and was in charge of Covington & Burling's aviation department.

During almost all of that time, however, he retained an intense interest in the Civil War. Now in substantial retirement, he is trying to devote most of his time to Civil War and Reconstruction research and writing. He has published several articles, most recently "The Singing Wire Conspiracy," which appeared in the December, 1980, *Civil War Times Illustrated*.

Mr. Westwood was born in Iowa and grew up in Tecumseh, Nebraska. He attended Swarthmore College for three years and then entered Columbia Law School from which he was graduated in 1933. He served as law clerk to Mr. Justice Stone of the U.S. Supreme Court from



397th REGULAR MEETING

* * *

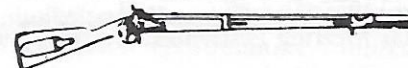
HOWARD C. WESTWOOD
ON
THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE
CONDUCT OF THE WAR

* * *

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1981

* * *

Como Inn
546 N. Milwaukee
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



MEETING SITE

As noted above, we will return to our regular meeting site, the Como Inn, for the January meeting.

1933-1934 before joining Covington & Burling. During World War II he served in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Mr. Westwood says he became interested in Civil War history soon after he arrived at Covington & Burling when a partner loaned him a book on the life of Stonewall Jackson, supposedly to help Westwood pass the hours on the Pullman car during a rail trip to Boston. "Never did leave the hotel room," he recalls. "Never saw anything else in Boston, and was absolutely fascinated by the book." He joined the District of Columbia Civil War Round Table in 1953.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

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

OFFICERS

President..... Robert G. Walter
Senior Vice President..... Robert H. Franke
Vice President..... Marvin Sanderman
Vice President..... Donald E. Anderson
Secretary..... Marvin Goldsher
Assistant Secretary..... Henry Pomerantz
Treasurer..... J. Robert Ziegler
Assistant Treasurer..... Daniel R. Weinberg
Inspector General..... Ted Eberly
Commissary General..... William J. Sullivan
Newsletter Editor..... David R. Richert
Contributing Editors..... Richard E. Clark
Marshall D. Krolick

Founding Newsletter Editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Terms expiring in 1981: J. William Gimbel, Jr., James Girman, Paul I. Klinger, Richard J. Percy.

Terms expiring in 1982: Margaret April, Robert C. Grossman, Karl Sundstrom, Helmut Waedt.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Membership-Hospitality..Ward C. Smidl,Karl Sundstrom
Publicity..... William and Mary Vinck
Nominating..... Merlin Sumner
Battlefield Tour..... Marvin Sanderman
Research Center..... Daniel R. Weinberg
Nevens-Freeman Award Dinner..... J. Robert Ziegler
Battlefield Preservation..... Wayne J. Anderson
Members' Resource Exchange..... Paul Klinger
House..... Bill Margeson, Helmut Waedt
Oral History..... Brooks Davis, C. Robert Douglas
Tape Record Librarian..... J. William Gimbel, Jr.
400th Regular Meeting Festivities..... Glen Wiche

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.



An iron works in Columbus, Georgia, which was run by the Confederate navy during most of the Civil War to produce pistols, cannonballs and steam engines, has been converted into a convention center by the city. However, the buildings were restored to look largely as they did in 1865. The water-powered factory on the Chattahoochee River was established in 1852 to manufacture cauldrons, kettles and cast-iron columns and store fronts. One week after Lee's surrender, Union troops burned the iron works. It was later rebuilt and used until 1974.

from the Editor's pen



Editor's note: Gordon Whitney of Madison, Indiana, a past president of the Louisville Round Table as well as our own, recently had a letter published in the Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Daily News Journal in which he comments on battlefield preservation in general and the restoration of the Stones River Battlefield in particular. We thought what he had to say would be of interest to you.

by Gordon Whitney

In America's great Conflict of 1861-1865 the heaviest fighting was centered in two states—Virginia and Tennessee. Through the years following the armistice, the State of Virginia was quite fortunate in that so much of the hallowed ground of those battlefields was preserved.

Regretfully, Tennessee did not fare so well. Many of the great campaigns and battlefields in the Volunteer State are to be found only in the history books. The site of the tragic and bloody battle of Franklin, where five Confederate Generals died, is now a junk yard. The Battlefields of Nashville have been lost to urban expansion and growth. Very little is left of the Donelson campaign. Missionary Ridge, outside of Chattanooga, is a mass of super highways. Only Shiloh, truly one of the most beautiful parks, remains as it did in 1862.

Of the great fight that was waged along Stones River in the bitter cold of December, 1862, few reminders exist. Where once men of Blue and Grey fought is now the site of a factory. Through the years, highways have literally divided the battlefield to where it is almost unrecognizable today. But now how fortunate for the country, Tennessee and especially for the people who live in and about Murfreesboro that the Stones River Battlefield Park will be receiving new life. Extensive plans have been formulated for the restoring of the park to bring it as close as possible to its original state.

Two hundred eighty acres will be added, original roads will be reestablished, correct military installations and placements will be created and developed. The power and high tension wires are to be removed and relocated. All this and more to give the battlefield its original look.

For the Civil War buff and historian, this is a dream come true. The pleasure is not only in having a famous historic event restored but, more important, in the way that it will be done. All commercialism will be deleted. There will be no overcrowding with souvenir and junk food stands and no ugly edifice such as the gigantic tower that disgraces the Battlefield of Gettysburg today.

The citizens who will be affected by this most welcome transformation will benefit too. There will be new shelters, picnic areas, hiking paths, etc.—a chance for all to enjoy a bit of beautiful nature close to home.

But most important will be the increase of tourism which means a steady increase in employment which will bring about prosperity to the area. A check on attendance through the years of Civil War Battlefield Parks reveals sharp and steady increase every year. Now with what should be the most completely and authentically restored Battlefield Park in the country, the sky is the limit.

So, Murfreesboro, sit back and count your blessings.

DECEMBER MEETING

Some new perspectives on why Confederate General Earl Van Dorn acted as he did in the Civil War were offered to the 90 members and guests who attended The Round Table meeting on December 12. The speaker was Dr. Robert Hartje, who, as he put it, tried to bring his earlier study of Van Dorn, *Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General*, up to date. He did so by using some theories of psychology and middle management, and by examining Van Dorn as a southerner and in terms of what his assassination suggests about the man.

Why a man did what he did is one of the most interesting but difficult questions for the Civil War historian. In Van Dorn's case, Dr. Hartje explained, the research is even more difficult because Van Dorn's reputation as a ladies' man has gotten in the way—for example, Van Dorn's sister burned most of his papers to avoid scandal. In researching Van Dorn, Dr. Hartje said, he was "overwhelmed by the lack of material." However, he said, some new perspectives were opened by reading the works of several historians, including Bud Robertson and Michael Shaara's *Killer Angels*, which led him to believe there might be a different way to look at Van Dorn.

From a psychological perspective, Dr. Hartje said, Van Dorn can be viewed as a "splendid performer." He was a colorful person who liked to steal the show. Unfortunately, like many such persons, impression was everything and once the show was stolen he didn't know what to do with it. Van Dorn was handsome, a splendid horseman, charming and brave. More than money he desired glory, particularly military glory. Even in the midst of battle he was concerned with his place in history. His desire for moments of grandiose achievement can be seen in such actions as rushing forward during a Mexican War battle to put up the flag. As Dr. Hartje pointed out, such courage, often called valor, was glorified in the nineteenth century and Van Dorn was a definite part of this tradition.

As a middle manager, Dr. Hartje said, Van Dorn was superb. He could handle small situations (which Dr. Hartje described as ones where he could see both ends) and he was always able to achieve his objectives in the Mexican War, against the Indians, and even at Holly Springs where he was operating with about 2500 men. However, Van Dorn was an example of the Peter Principle at work. Dr. Hartje feels he simply lacked the final, large judgment needed for big situations. He wound up in too high a command—primarily because of the need of the Confederacy for generals.

In the nineteenth century, and particularly the years before the Civil War, the south was losing power and believed it was being mistreated by the north. Ultimately, in response to this reality, it developed an ideology of southern superiority. However, this ideology in the hands of mediocre people led to misdirected action. Complicated philosophical and political ideas were reduced by them to simplistic romantic ideals and fierce pride. Van Dorn was born in Mississippi with great expectations imposed on him by his father. He, as many others did, acted on the basis of such expectations, romantic ideals and a great belief in himself without reference to the south itself or the larger issues. Of course, as Dr. Hartje pointed out, when such men fought the north they fought as if they had an ideology, as if they really knew what they were fighting for—they fought well.

As Dr. Hartje explained, we often know more about a person when he is killed—the killing puts him into focus. Such is the case with Van Dorn. To illustrate, he pointed

out that since Van Dorn couldn't relate to and was almost afraid of women, he had to conquer them to prove himself as he had to prove himself in battle. In a sense, Dr. Hartje concluded, Van Dorn fell to his romantic ideals and beliefs (which grew out of the traditions and ideology of the south as well as his own psychological makeup) as much as to the bullet of a jealous husband. His death was the culmination of a life that never really had a purpose or objective.

William Mallory, a member of our Round Table as well as the Richmond Round Table, received the Richmond Round Table's first J. Ambler Johnston Award at their annual dinner meeting on December 4. The evening also featured a talk by Dr. James I. "Bud" Robertson, Jr., on Ambler Johnston. Bud discussed Ambler's efforts to have all the Southern Historical Society papers indexed and how Ambler got him involved in the project.

J. Ambler Johnston, an honorary award life member of our Round Table, was the last survivor of the Southern Historical Society and a pioneer of the Civil War Round Table movement (he died in 1974). He helped establish the Richmond Round Table as well as the Prison Round Table in Richmond, and his work as chairman of the Richmond Civil War Centennial Committee earned that agency the National Commission's highest award.

An assistant to Dr. Douglas S. Freeman, Ambler helped lay out battlefield sites and was a member of the Richmond Battlefield Commission. He was in great demand as a speaker to other Round Tables, including ours. He was also a companion on a number of our Battlefield Tours.

Bill Mallory, like Ambler Johnston, was one of the founders of the Richmond Round Table and is active in numerous other historical organizations. In addition to receiving the Johnston Award, he was named a life member of the Richmond Round Table.

The unusual number of new novels with Civil War settings was the subject of Herbert Mitgang's *New York Times Book Review* column, "Book Ends", on November 16. In fact, he points out, there are more novels about the Civil War than about the Vietnam War this season.

Among the novels: *The Crater* by Richard Slotkin about the Battle of the Crater in July, 1864. *The Crater* is an alternate selection of the History Book Club—the first novel ever chosen by that club, according to Mitgang. Also recently published is Douglas C. Jones's *Elkhorn Tavern*; F. Van Wyck Mason's posthumous *Armored Giants*, about the battle between the ironclads Monitor and Merrimac; and Thomas Keneally's *Confederates* which takes place primarily in the spring of 1862 and which reaches its climax at the Battle of Antietam. *Elkhorn Tavern* was reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review* on November 16 (page 15) and *Confederates* on October 5 (page 3).

Anyone interested in a piece of Virginia and Civil War history might want to consider buying the property for sale in western Powhatan County. It's Derwent, a restored farmhouse used by Robert E. Lee as a sanctuary in the summer of 1865. The property is owned by the Lee-Jackson Foundation which cites high operating costs and low tourist volume as the reason for selling the property. According to the Foundation, it costs about \$5,000 per year to maintain, and since 1973 less than two persons per day have visited the house. The asking price for the property is \$185,000.

THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Abzug, Robert H. *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. \$19.95

Buckingham, John E. *Reminiscences and Souvenirs of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*. Port Tobacco, Md.: Old Quenzel Store, 1980. \$22.50. Facsimile reprint of 1894 publication.

Dumond, Dwight L. *Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980. \$15.25. Reprint of 1959 publication from the University of Michigan Press.

Flayderman, Norm. *Flayderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms and their Values*. 2nd ed. Northfield, IL: DBI Books, 1980. Pbk \$15.95.

Forrest, Douglas French. *Odyssey in Gray: A Diary of Confederate Service, 1863-1865*. William N. Still, Jr., editor. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979.

Hall, Harry H. *A Johnny Reb Band from Salem: The Pride of Tarheelia*. New York: De Capo Press, 1980. \$12.50. Reprint of 1963 ed.

Murdock, Eugene C. *One Million Men: The Civil War Draft in the North*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980. Reprint of issue from State Historical Society of Wisconsin 1971. \$29.75

Nelson, Larry E. *Bullets, Ballots, and Rhetoric: Confederate Policy for the United States Presidential Contest of 1864*. University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980. \$14.00

Nunn, W. Curtis, editor. *Ten More Texans in Gray*. Hillsboro, Texas: Hill Junior College Press, 1980. \$10.50

Rawley, James A. *The Politics of Union: Northern Politics during the Civil War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980. Pbk \$3.95 Reprint of 1974 publication.

Shaw, Acher H., compiler. *The Lincoln Encyclopedia*. The Spoken and written words of A. Lincoln arranged for ready reference. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980. \$39.75. Original of 1950, Macmillan.

Stewart, George R. *Pickett's Charge. A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863*. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1980. \$15.00 Original of 1959.

Thomas, Benjamin P. and Harold M. Hyman. *Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980. \$49.50 Original of 1962.

A sword that may have once belonged to Confederate General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson was obtained recently by a Virginia antique gun and sword collector. It is a U.S. Army sword engraved, "To Thomas J. Jackson, from friends." The collector, Donald Johnson, bartered for the sword at a gun show in Harrisonburg. For the sword, he traded 24 antique pocket watches, a 17th century flintlock brass pistol valued at \$1,800, a 7½-inch barrel Colt pistol, and a "bunch of small stuff."

Johnson believes the sword was given to Jackson when he was a U.S. Army officer. He intends to keep it until he can sell it to someone who will promise that it will go to VMI for display.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Como Inn, 546 N. Milwaukee Avenue, the second Friday in each month except as noted.

January 9: Howard C. Westwood on "The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War".

February 13: Gerhard P. Clausius on "Mary Lincoln".

March 13: Marshall D. Krolick on "Stuart's Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign".

April 10: 400th Regular Meeting.

April 29-May 3: Annual Battlefield Tour to Vicksburg.

May 8: Archie P. McDonald on "Jed Hotchkiss, Jackson's Topographer".

June 5: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner and installation of officers. Recipient of award: James I. Robertson, Jr.

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

NEW MEMBER

Randle E. Pollard, M.D., 3303 North 39th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53216 (414) 444-3485. Dr. Pollard is interested in military and political aspects of the War as well as in Abraham Lincoln.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Arnold Gates, 168 Weyford Terrace, Garden City, New York 11530.

Barry S. Pokorny, 23497 E. King St., Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74012.

A box of letters and business papers belonging to Confederate president Jefferson Davis went on display in late November at Memphis State University. The papers had been kept in a strongbox at the First Tennessee Bank until two years ago when they were turned over to the John Willard Brister Library at Memphis State. The Davis Family Association, a group of Davis descendants, in September finally granted title to the university for use of the papers by historians.

The collection includes 35 personal letters and an assortment of financial records. Among the latter are bills for medical care and a funeral for Jefferson Davis, Jr., a victim of the 1878 yellow fever epidemic in Memphis. Most of the letters were written by Davis to his son-in-law Joel Addison Hayes, Jr., between 1864 and 1882. They provide a fascinating view of life among what had been the Southern aristocracy and reveal Davis as a man who cared deeply about his family and worried about the Southern soldiers and civilians who suffered because of the war. Despite his imprisonment and years of financial distress, none of Davis's letters express anger at his treatment.

Please note this schedule change: Marshall Krolick will speak in March; Gerhard Clausius in February.