

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLII, Number 5

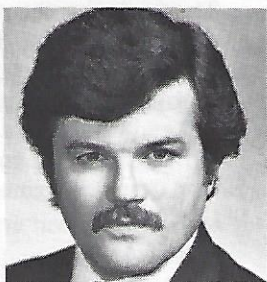
Chicago, Illinois

January, 1982

WILLIAM C. "JACK" DAVIS ON THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTON, 1861-1865

Since it was both the birthplace of secession and a strategic port, Charleston, South Carolina remained an important Union objective throughout the Civil War. And yet, attempts to take it failed and the city held out until almost the end of the war. Telling the story of the siege of Charleston, 1861-1865, at The Round Table meeting on January 8 will be one of the country's leading Civil War scholars, William C. "Jack" Davis. Jack, the author of numerous books and articles about the war and former editor of *Civil War Times Illustrated*, is president of the National Historical Society.

Of his topic, Jack says, "Certainly one of the most interesting and ironic, and least known, episodes of the Civil War was the 'siege' of Charleston, South Carolina. Regarded as the longest investment of the war, the fact is that the city never suffered a single day of genuine siege in the common military definition of the term. For much of the war its defense was entrusted to Confederate officers who were natives of the North, while many of the Federal officers trying to take it hailed from the South.

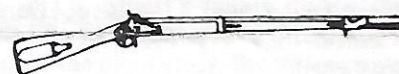


WILLIAM C. DAVIS

"Aside from the first bombardment of Fort Sumter, relatively little else is generally known about the siege. Yet here underwater mines and submarines achieved some of their first successes in action, here black troops went into one of their earliest pitched battles, here the art and science of military engineering made giant strides, and here some of the most interesting and engaging characters of the war figured prominently: Robert E. Lee—P.G.T. Beauregard—the hard-drinking Nathan G. Evans—the always detestable David Hunter—and of course, the 'saviour of Gettysburg,' Alexander Schimmelfennig.

"The full story of the siege needs a book and more. But we can experience some of the flavor of the people and events that highlighted not only the armies themselves, but also the indomitable people of Charleston who, with their small band of defenders, refused to give up. As one of them declared, 'We aim to die hard!'

Although he is only 35 years old, "Jack" Davis has already accomplished more than many do in an entire lifetime. Born in Kansas City in 1946, Jack received both his B.A. (1968) and M.A. (1969) from Sonoma State University in California. Having spent his summers working for Bob Fowler at *Civil War Times Illustrated*, in 1969 Jack declined an invitation to pursue doctoral studies at the University of Chicago to become an assis-

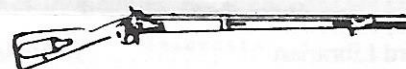


407th REGULAR MEETING

WILLIAM C. "JACK" DAVIS
ON
THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTON, 1861-1865

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 1982

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.

tant to the managing editor of the magazine. Rising rapidly through the ranks, he became editor of CWTI, then Editorial and Managing Director of Historical Times, Inc., and finally President of the National Historical Society.

Jack published his first book in 1974, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol*; it received considerable critical acclaim and several awards. These included the Jules F. Landry Prize for the Best Book in Southern History, Literature and Biography (1974); The Phi Alpha Theta Prize and the Jefferson Davis Award for the Best Book in the History of the Confederate State of America (1975); and a Pulitzer Prize nomination in

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chesnut 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.



Paul Beaver, editor of the *Lincoln Newsletter*, wishes to express his appreciation to the many members of The Civil War Round Table who have sent in contributions to support that publication. Paul was able to join us at the December meeting.

The 1981-82 Round Table membership cards are being sent with this newsletter to those who did not attend the December meeting. If you have not received a card, please call assistant secretary Bill Margeson at 428-8518.

Ralph Newman, whose 70th birthday was recognized by The Round Table at the November meeting, has sent the following message:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For forty-one years it has been my great privilege to be associated with one of the greatest groups ever assembled on this planet. Some of the faces have changed, the cast is different but the affection, spirit, and fellowship continues.

I am deeply indebted to you for your beautiful gift and for the evidence of your feeling toward me. It is I who should be sending you all gifts for the joy, warmth, intellectual stimulation and happiness you have brought to my life.

The calendar says "seventy," my heart and bones (at least now) say it "aint so!"

God bless you all.

The Fourth Annual Civil War Institute, "Campaigning will Lee," will be held June 19-26, 1982, in Fairfax, Virginia. Two all-day bus tours will cover battlefields and historic sites stretching from Harper's Ferry to the Washington suburbs. A number of side trips will be available.

Serving again as program director will be Dr. James I. "Bud" Robertson, Jr., C. P. Miles Professor of History at Virginia Tech and recipient of The Round Table's 1981 Nevins-Freeman Award. In addition to the battlefield tours, the seven-day seminar will include classroom study, panel discussions and the opportunity for informal conversation with others interested in the Civil War.

The seminar will be based on the campus of George Mason University. The fee of \$285 includes instructional materials, bus tours, seven breakfasts, four lunches, seven dinners and lodging (in dormitories, double occupancy). Registration will be limited to 129 and will be on a first come, first-serve basis. For further information, please contact: Dr. Linda G. Leffel, Donaldson Brown Center, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061 (703) 961-5510.

The Louisville Round Table newsletter reports that a Tennessee monument is now under construction at Gettysburg. Of the 29 states whose sons fought at Gettysburg, only Tennessee had never erected a monument. However, due to the efforts of Donald A. Ramsay, Sr., that exception will be a thing of the past. Although he failed to get funding from the Tennessee legislature, Ramsay raised much of the \$25,000 needed from veterans' and historical groups and construction got underway October 2.

The monument will be in the shape of Tennessee and pointed at the "high water mark" across the valley from Seminary Ridge where Pickett's Charge began. It commemorates the three Tennessee units that took part in the battle. The dedication is scheduled for July 3, 1982.

Last April 2 (the date Lee's troops evacuated the lines at Petersburg in 1865) Fred Albertson, age 60, and his brother Gene, 55, began retracing on foot Lee's 110 mile route from Petersburg to Appomattox. They dressed in Civil War uniforms and carried muskets and camping gear in an effort to recreate the march as closely as possible. The brothers averaged 18 miles a day, arriving at Appomattox April 8. The advance scout for the expedition was Fred's wife who would get permission from farmers for the men to camp for the night. She also drove the supply wagon.

DECEMBER MEETING

One of the most dramatic, colorful and enduring features of nineteenth century warfare, cavalry raiding, was the subject of The Round Table meeting on December 11. Describing it for us was Edward Longacre who discussed many of the "rules of raiding" that developed during the war as well as various successful and unsuccessful raids. He said that although raiding was good for enhancing the reputation of cavalry commanders, few raids were very important strategically. And, most of them failed for a number of reasons, including lack of skill, lack of a clear objective and lack of coordination.

Ed noted that most of the successful raids early in the war were conducted by the Confederates; later the situation reversed. He attributed this to the changing nature of war itself. A strategy of quick thrusts predominated early in the war—and this applied to cavalry raids as well. Not much actual fighting occurred during these raids. However, the new style of warfare called for total war, and cavalry raids too became more violent—they were aimed at destroying the enemy. The north was much more successful at this type of warfare.

Although cavalry raiding was about 300 years old at the time of the Civil War, Americans had only used it on a limited scale in the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War. Many of the Civil War cavalry leaders learned about it from the Indians, but mostly they did so by trial and error. However, by the end of the war, certain rules of raiding, although unwritten, had developed. According to Ed, they included:

- 1) Speed. This was essential since raiders always had fewer men and were no match for infantry. Mobility, not mass, was their main advantage.
- 2) A tactically independent role. Cavalry raids could not depend on coordination with the main army because such coordination was too difficult. However, the raids had to have a bearing on overall strategy.
- 3) A clear objective. Many raids fell short of success since they were aimless forays.
- 4) A good sense of timing. Raiders had to strike and get away.
- 5) Endurance.
- 6) A sure knowledge of the area to be covered.
- 7) Secrecy.
- 8) Boldness. Leaders had to be bold, but they also had to be prudent; and they had to have the ability to change plans according to conditions.
- 9) Maintenance of authority. Leaders had to maintain authority but give subordinates discretion when necessary.
- 10) Marching in the lightest possible way. This often forced raiders to live off the land, and, hence, gave them their reputation as looters.
- 11) Good luck. This was important since there were always so many variables beyond a commander's control.

One of the most successful raiders was J.E.B. Stuart. Ed said that although Stuart was immature, vain and impulsive, he was also an able strategist, brave, could inspire his men, and could outguess the enemy. His reputation was made before the end of 1862, most notably by his ride around McClellan in June of that year. He covered 150 miles and brought back information that was invaluable to Lee. His ride also boosted Confederate morale.

Other examples of successful raids which occurred in 1862 were those conducted by Forrest, Morgan and Van Dorn. Their raids through Kentucky, toward Nashville, and at Holly Springs were designed to curtail Union advances. They forced Grant to pull back, enabling Vicksburg to remain in Confederate hands for another seven months. Ed did note that

although most successful raids early in the war were conducted by the Confederates, Samuel Carter conducted an effective raid against Confederate rail lines in the upper Tennessee Valley late in December, 1862. The raid had little effect, but did show that the Confederates had no monopoly on raiding.

In 1863 Grant sent Grierson on his 16-day foray in Mississippi which was designed to distract attention and confuse the enemy. It enabled Grant to land above Vicksburg unopposed. Also in that year, Ed said, Sheridan rejuvenated the Union cavalry in the east. During 1864 the Union cavalry became stronger, and by the end of that year it had become dominant; the Confederates could no longer oppose Federal raiders.

Turning his attention to raids that were unsuccessful, Ed showed how failure to observe the "rules" he mentioned earlier contributed to the lack of success. For example, lack of a clear objective was behind the failure of Morgan's July 1863 raid through Indiana and Ohio. It had been planned to cover for Bragg, but Morgan exceeded his orders by going beyond Kentucky. He did hurt northern morale, but the raid was ultimately aimless and the raiders finally surrendered.

According to Ed, Stuart's failure during the Gettysburg campaign was due to an unrealistic attempt to coordinate a raiding force and the main army. Stuart was supposed to protect the flank of the main army. However, it took him longer than expected to get around the Union army and coordination between the raiders and the main army broke down. As an example of the effect of lack of secrecy, Ed pointed to the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid on Richmond in February 1864. Kilpatrick talked about it freely beforehand and the Confederates were ready.

In concluding his talk, Ed described Wilson's Selma Campaign of 1865 in which he used not only cavalry but mounted infantry as well. It was a small army that proved to be invincible; the five week expedition didn't just destroy a few bridges or tear up some rail lines, it laid waste to the area through which it passed, almost like a Panzer division of World War II. That raid, Ed said, bridged the gap between the old and new style of raiding.

Membership-Hospitality committee co-chairmen Ward Smidl and Matt Lorenz are seeking members to assist them in greeting and making welcome new members and guests at meetings. If you are interested, contact Ward or Matt at the next meeting or through the Book Shop.

The fourth annual meeting of the Confederate Historical Institute will be held at Manassas March 25-27, with a program line-up headed by Army of Northern Virginia authority Robert K. Krick, author and chief historian at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania battlefields, and Col. Joseph B. Mitchell, national commander-in-chief of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The highlight of the meeting will be an all-day battlefield tour on Saturday, led by Ed Bearss. Significant sites relevant to both battles, First Bull Run (July 1861) and Second Bull Run (August 1862), will be visited.

The registration fee is \$140 for Institute members, \$155 for Civil War Round Table Associates, and \$175 for non-members; this will cover all meals, program presentations, and the tour, but not lodging. There will be a \$10 discount for persons registering prior to February 15, 1982, and a limit of 110 persons for the bus tour. For further information, contact Civil War Round Table Associates, P.O. Box 7388, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 (501) 225-3996.

THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Collins, Bruce. *The Origins of America's Civil War*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981. 169 p., pbk \$11.50; reg. \$22.00

Davis, Burke. *Gray Fox: Robert E. Lee and the Civil War*. New York: Fairfax Press, 1981. \$5.98. Originally pub. by Rinehart 1956.

Grant, Ulysses S. *Mr. Lincoln's General, U.S. Grant: An Illustrated Autobiography*. Edited and arranged by Roy Meredith. New York: Bonanza Books, 1981. Originally pub. by Dutton, 1959. \$6.98

Kinchen, Oscar A. *General Bennett H. Young, Confederate Raider and a Man of Many Adventures*. West Hanover, Mass.: Christopher Publishing House, 1981. 163 p., illus. \$8.95

Lord, Francis A. *They Fought for the Union*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981. Originally published by Stackpole 1960. \$49.75.

Meredith, Roy. *The Face of Robert E. Lee in Life and in Legend*. New York: Fairfax Press, 1981. 144 p., illus. \$5.98. Originally pub. by Scribner's 1947

Paludan, Philip S. *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981. \$11.95. Shelton Laurel Valley, N.C., massacre, 1863.

Sutton, Robert M. *The Illinois Central Railroad in Peace and War, 1858-1868*. New York: Arno Press, 1981. 240 p., plates. \$25.00. Reprint of 1948 ed published by the University of Illinois.

Walker, Clarence Earl. *A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church during the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981. \$18.95

Williams, T. Harry. *Lincoln and his Generals*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981. \$29.75. Originally published by Knopf. 1952.

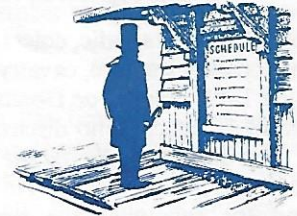
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biography. That work was followed by *The Battle of New Market* (1975); *Duel Between the First Ironclads* (1975); *Battle at Bull Run* (1977); and *The Orphan Brigade* (1980).

Earlier this year the first volume of *The Image of War 1861-1865*, which Jack edited, was published. Jack conceived this project, spent six years in the pictorial research, directed the work of the various authors, and wrote several chapters and over 4,000 captions. Ultimately there will be six volumes. Also in the works are Jack's as yet untitled three-volume general narrative of the Civil War and *Jefferson Davis, The Man and his Hour*, which is due from Louisiana State University Press in 1983.

In addition to the awards he received for *Breckinridge*, Jack's *Battle at Bull Run* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in History in 1977 and he received the Fletcher Pratt Award for Continuing Contribution to Civil War History in 1977. Jack speaks often on Civil War and historical topics (he last addressed The Round Table in 1975 on the Battle of New Market). He also takes part in significant current historical investigations, most recently the exploration of the wreck of the ironclad Monitor aboard a four-man mini-submarine off the coast of Cape Hatteras.

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 8, 1982: William Davis on "The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865"

February 12: David Lilley on "The Atlas of the Antietam Battlefield?"

March 12: Gordon Whitney on "The Mystery of Spring Hill?"

April 9: Pat Newman on "Julia Dent Grant?"

May 5-9: Annual Battlefield Tour: Gettysburg.

May 14: Zenos Hawkinson on "Mr. Lincoln's War and the Immigrant Imagination?"

June 11: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner and installation of officers. Recipient of award: Frank E. Vandiver.

NEW MEMBERS

Kevin F. Bowen, 1058 Cherry Lane, Lombard, Illinois 60148 (312) 629-6976. Kevin works for U.S. Gypsum in Chicago and is interested in military aspects of the war.

Robert Dawson, 34734 N. Oden Avenue, Ingleside, Illinois 60041 (312) 546-5285. Bob is a teacher at the Magee Middle School in Round Lake, Illinois, and is interested in military and political aspects of the war as well as anecdotal information.

Neil F. Hartigan, 1120 West Albion, Chicago, Illinois 60626 (312) 338-3992. Neil is affiliated with The First National Bank of Chicago and is interested in Lincoln and political aspects of the war.

Jack Margeson, 622 E. Maude, Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004 (312) 259-6498. Jack works for Intangible Marketing in Chicago.

Joseph Wisheart, 1306 Deer Run, Gurnee, Illinois 60031. Joe works for Mid America Title Company in Waukegan and is interested in military and political aspects of the war.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Jeffrey Goldsher, 4432 Greenwood Avenue, Lincolnwood, Illinois 60645.

We record with sorrow the passing of Honorary Award Life Member Harry Hershenson. Our sincere condolences are extended to his family.

The Round Table Research Exchange was created in 1979 to make information about the Civil War interests of members available to other members. Resource Exchange committee chairman Paul Klinger is now in the process of bringing his records up-to-date. If you have not recently provided him with information about yourself, please fill out the form enclosed with this newsletter and return it to Paul, either by mail or at the next meeting. Paul plans to compile and make available this information as soon as possible.