

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLIV, Number 7

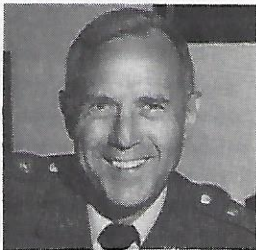
Chicago, Illinois

March, 1984

Colonel Roy K. Flint on Eight Minutes to Live: Defeat of the Federal Assault at Cold Harbor, 3 June 1864

Colonel Charles S. Venable of Lee's staff would describe it as "perhaps the easiest victory ever granted to the Confederate arms by the folly of the Federal commanders." In his memoirs, Grant wrote, "I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made." At The Round Table meeting on March 9, Colonel Roy K. Flint, professor and head of the Department of History at the United States Military Academy at West Point, will share with us his conclusions about Lee's defense and Grant's attack in a review of this bloody battle.

After the battles of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania Court House in May, 1864, Grant shifted his forces eastward and southward, trying to get around Lee's right flank. After inconclusive attacks on Lee's positions at Hanover Junction on May 23, 1864, Grant again moved the Army of the Potomac east and south, crossing the Pamun-



Colonel Roy K. Flint

key River near Hanover town. Lee's countermove brought the Army of Northern Virginia to new positions along the bank of Totopotomoy Creek, arriving there on May 29th. After testing Lee's lines along the Totopotomoy, and major cavalry actions at Haw's Shop on May 29th and Old Cold Harbor on May 30th, both sides dug in along a seven-mile front from the Totopotomoy to the Chickahominy River. This development was most disappointing to Grant, for another southeasterly move could mire the army in the Chickahominy swamps where McClellan had come to grief two years earlier. Grant now planned a frontal assault before Lee had time to prepare elaborate fortifications like those Grant faced at Spottsylvania.

A preliminary attack on June 1st drove in some exposed Confederate units, and June 2nd, a day of heavy rains, was spent preparing for the assault the next day. This delay would permit Lee to prepare an awesome line of interwoven infantry and artillery earthworks.

Promptly at 4:30 a.m. on June 3rd, three corps of Union infantry—the II, VI and XVIII, with more than 50,000 men—emerged from their lines along a mile and a half front and began a wild rush toward the Confederate works, located just several hundred yards west. Although there was some early success on the Union left by Barlow's division of the II Corps, the Federal assault degenerated into one of the most severe slaughters of the war. Most regiments of the three corps found themselves in a lead

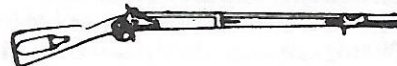


429th Regular Meeting

Col. Roy K. Flint
on
Eight Minutes to Live:
Defeat of the Federal Assault at
Cold Harbor, 3 June 1864

Friday, March 9, 1984

Hotel Continental
505 N. Michigan
Camelot Room, 3rd Floor
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
\$13.00 per person
Entree: Lasagne



hailstorm, since Lee's engineers had arranged the rebel lines to create interlocking fields of fire. Approximately an hour after the attack began, the three corps found themselves hopelessly pinned down. Meade, in field command, was forced to halt offensive operations at 1:30 p.m., and all units were ordered to entrench in place.

Union casualties were estimated at 7,000, the vast majority sustained during the first 30 to 50 minutes of fighting. Lee's loss was put at 1,500 for this bloody struggle, bloodier even than Pickett's charge at Gettysburg.

A graduate of the University of Michigan in 1950, Colonel Flint enlisted in the Army and graduated from the Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Geor-

(continued on page 2)

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 60007.



(continued from page 1)

gia, a year and a half later. He spent a year with the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea and then moved to Hawaii with the 25th Infantry Division. He subsequently served with the 82nd Airborne Division, and in 1968 rejoined the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam, where he commanded a battalion. His other assignments included service with theater army staffs in Germany and Vietnam; an ROTC instructor and graduate student at the University of Alabama; and instructor of military history at the United States Military Academy. He attended the Army Command and General Staff College, the British Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the Air War College.

Colonel Flint has a Master's degree from the University of Alabama, where his thesis was "The Battle of Missionary Ridge." He has a Ph.D. from Duke University and his current duties at West Point include the teaching of the core course, "History of the Military Art", an elective on "The American Military Experience," and a senior seminar on "Small Wars." During the academic year 1980-81, he was a Fellow of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Institute for Historical Research at the Smithsonian Institute, while he completed work on a book dealing with generalship and the evolution of limited war during the Korean War. His writings include: "Battle of Chickamauga", an article published in the *Encyclopedia of Southern History*; and "A Nation Divided", in *The American Civil War*, a USMA text used in "History of the Military Art."

Even more talks on tape

The following cassette tapes of previous talks to The Round Table have been added to the list of those available for purchase (see the October and January newsletters for a list of earlier offerings).

22. James I. "Bud" Robertson, "The Stonewall Brigade" (7/14/72).

23. James I. "Bud" Robertson, "Civil War Chaplains" (3/10/78).

24. Frank Vandiver, "Confederacy and the New South" (4/7/61).

25. Harry Hershenson, "Thaddeus Stevens: Thorn in Lincoln's Side" (1/16/53).

26. Richard N. Currant, "The Continuing Civil War" (3/10/61).

27. Ray Billington, "The Frontier Origins of the Civil War" (3/7/58).

28. Bruce Catton, "The Battle of Five Forks" (4/30/53).

29. Bruce Catton, "The Civil War" (4/12/57).

Tapes are \$5 each and may be ordered at meetings or by mail from Research Center Committee Chairman Leslie MacDonald, 2744 W. Rascher Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60625. When ordering by mail, please include \$2 per order for postage and handling. Make checks payable to The Civil War Round Table.

BONUS OFFERING: Because of the interest shown in the excellent February program, "Senate Confrontation: November-December, 1860," the tape of the program is being made available immediately at a cost of \$10. It, too, can be ordered from Leslie MacDonald.

We regret to report that long-time member Don Russell is in Elmhurst Hospital (200 Berteau Ave., Elmhurst, Ill. 60126) with a broken hip suffered in a fall in mid-February. Your cards and letters would be appreciated.

February Meeting

The tumultuous days of the United States Senate just prior to the onset of the Civil War were recreated in exciting fashion at the 428th regular meeting of The Round Table on February 17th. During an intense debate of the issues of secession and states rights, 125 members and guests were able to gain insight into the mood of the nation as the highest body of the land argued those troublesome subjects.

Ralph Newman, as President Pro Tempore of the Senate, convened the 2nd session of the 36th Congress. This Congress had to consider the rights of the several states and faced an "awesome task", in that it had to rise above petty differences to deliberate on matters of great import. The President announced that Major Robert Anderson had reported the weakness of the garrison at Fort Moultrie in Charleston harbor and that he had asked for the reinforcement of Fort Sumter there. President Buchanan had called a general convention of the states to devise some plan of adjustment of sectional differences.

At this point, Senator William Sullivan of Virginia, as a voice of moderation in the Southern group of states, secured the floor and stated that order was the prime necessity in every community, and that the Federal Union was the only tangible representative of order. The "equal rights of each state will be lost if secession is allowed," he said. Sullivan stated that those favoring secession consider the election of Lincoln as an affront to Southern honor; that the aggrieved feel that they must break with the Federal government and form a new one. He noted that the Constitution of the United States recognizes slavery, and asked that law and the Constitution be upheld.

Next, Senator Gordon Whitney of Indiana, as spokesman for moderate views in the North, took the floor. He felt that the nation couldn't afford to let the voices of reason be stilled. Since 1820, he explained, sectional struggles had increased and compromises of various types had been necessary. "If compromise is not the answer to current problems," he said, other choices are beyond comprehension. If a breach occurs, a disaster will fall upon us." Whitney also said that "We in the western states must be allowed to grow," and he railed against the oppressive tariffs that force the farmers of his region to pay 3 and 4 times what they should. He expressed fears about the onset of a business depression in which farm products would remain to rot in granaries and warehouses. "The time is now when settlement of national problems must be accomplished," he stated.

Senate president Newman then noted that a committee of thirteen members had been appointed to look into conditions of the country. Senator Marshall Korlick of Massachusetts was then allowed to present his views. "The time has come to say: *Enough!* The road we are being asked to follow will force us to surrender the right to govern. We do not threaten their investment in that peculiar institution, and take no action against those states where slavery already exists. The present laws provide proper means of compensation for escaped slaves." Krolick termed slavery as the greatest of moral wrongs, but guaranteed by the Constitution. "Extremists ask expansion of slavery into the new territories," he said, "but if we appease, will the government be worthy of defense? If the Union is to be destroyed, let it be dissolved with our honor intact. Secession will not be tolerated; our forefathers formed a permanent union. Secession is illegal and suppression of secession is the proper response. The act of secession will be met with measures to reverse it. The will of the majority will be the

law of the land. It is true that we seek an end of slavery, but it will be gradual through peaceful means." Krolick then called for "no more compromises—no more conciliation. Let the conflict come—the result is certain—the Union will be preserved."

Then Senator James Vlazny of South Carolina was recognized to speak. He said, "I speak to you for the last time, on behalf of a righteous and just cause. I speak with sadness tempered by anger. It is not my purpose to answer compromises. It is true that our property will not be protected by the North, and our institutions are threatened. It is my purpose to state the truth; let truth guide us on the path the South must take to protect our lives and honor." He referred to Article IV—Section 2 of the Constitution as guaranteeing that any escaped slave shall be delivered up on presentation of rightful claim to that party to whom the slave's service is due. "The North has fomented insurrection and threatens our very way of life", he said. "Black Republicans will lash out against everyone. Lincoln, in June 1858, stated that agitation on the question of slavery will not cease, and that a nation half slave and half free cannot endure... The North has robbed us of our property and capped it all by electing Abraham Lincoln. The aim of the Black Republicans is the subjugation of the South and the ruin of her social, industrial and other economic institutions."

At this point, President Newman announced the distressing news that the state of South Carolina, in convention, had voted to secede by a vote of 159 to 0.

A reminder: the Third Annual Midwest Civil War Conference will be held April 28, 1984 in Indianapolis. Among the speakers will be Alan T. Nolan on "Indianapolis and the Civil War;" James I. "Bud" Robertson on "Robert E. Lee;" Wiley Sword on "Shiloh;" Kent Master-son Brown on "Lt. Alonzo H. Cushing and his Battery at Gettysburg;" and Mark E. Neely, Jr.

The cost of the program, which includes lunch and dinner, is \$35 per person. Further information and reservation forms will be available at the March meeting.

A new general management plan/environmental assessment has been adopted at Manassas National Battlefield. Among other things, the new plan calls for development of interpretive facilities and roads and trails for visitor access at the Brawner Farm to interpret the site of the beginning of the Battle of Second Manassas; acquisition of non-federal land to preserve historic sites and vistas; and removal of trees to reestablish open fields and allow regeneration of trees in the historic pattern.

In addition, Congress, just before adjourning before the holidays, adopted a Park Service budget which included \$300,000 for land acquisition at Manassas, finally funding the expansion which was approved in 1980.

(The above information comes from the CWRT Associates newsletter.)

Tickets are still available for the concert of Civil War music which will be presented by the 1st Brigade Band of Milwaukee on April 14 from 2-5 p.m. at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center. Tickets, \$4 for adults and \$2 for children, will be available at the March and April meetings or at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop. They will not be available at the door.

THE NEW BOOKS



(compiled by Dick Clark)

Munson, John W. *Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerrilla*. Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co., 1983. 284 p. \$19.95. Original of 1906.

Rossbach, Jeffery. *Ambivalent Conspirators: John Brown, the Secret Six, and a Theory of Slave Violence*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. 298 p. \$23.50.

Stein, R. Conrad. *The Story of the Monitor and the Merrimac*. Chicago: The Childrens Press, 1983. \$7.95.

Stevenson, Augusta, *Abraham Lincoln, The Great Emancipator*. Illustrated by Jeffy Robinson. Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1982. pbk. Copyright 1959.

Stroud, David V. *Inscribed Union Swords, 1861-1865*. Kilgore, Texas: Pinecrest Publishing Company, 1983. 192 p. ills. \$27.50.

Toomey, Daniel Carroll. *The Civil War in Maryland*. Harmans, Md.: The Author, 1983. \$12.95.

Wallace, Elizabeth Curtis. *Glencoe Diary: The War-Time Journal of Elizabeth Curtis Wallace*. Edited by Eleanor P. Cross and Charles B. Cross, Jr. Wendell, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1983. 157 p. \$20.00.

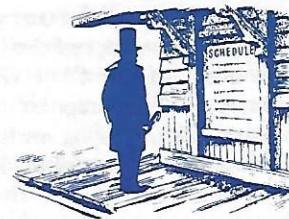
The Annual Confederate History Symposium will be held on April 14 at Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas. The subject of the symposium will be "Robert E. Lee," and among the speakers will be Grady McWhiney on "Mexican War and USMA Superintendent;" Dr. Harold Simpson on "Texas Years and Resignation from the Army;" Dr. Frank Vandiver on "The War Between the States;" and Dr. Ralph Widener on "The College President."

The Illinois State Historical Society is seeking proposals for papers, or sessions, to be delivered at the Fifth Annual Symposium on Illinois History, November 30-December 1, 1984. Papers, or sessions, will be considered on any aspect of the history, literature, art and culture, politics, geography, archeology, anthropology, and related fields of Illinois and/or the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. The Symposium will be held in Springfield.

Individuals who wish to submit proposals should send a 300-600 word summary, along with resumes of intended participants to: Roger D. Bridges, Director of Research, Illinois State Historical Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois 62706. Proposals must be received by April 2, 1984. Individuals will be notified of the Committee's decision by June 1.

Nominating Committee Chairman Marvin Sander-man has announced there will be a meeting of the Committee on Saturday, March 10 at 2:30 p.m. at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington (3rd Floor Conference Room, Washington Street side). All past presidents are encouraged to attend.

BULLETIN BOARD



Future meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Hotel Continental, 505 N. Michigan, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

March 9: Col. Roy K. Flint on "Eight Minutes to Live: Defeat of the Federal Assault at Cold Harbor, 3 June 1864."

April 13: Richard McMurry on "John Bell Hood."

May 2-6: Battlefield Tour to Washington, D.C.

May 18: Walter N. Trenerry on "John Pope." **Note:** This is the third Friday of the month.

June 8: Dan Jordan on "John S. Mosby."

July 29: Picnic

New members

Daniel J. Josephs, 5940 South Cass Avenue, Apt. 2E, Westmont, Illinois 60559 (312) 963-4565.

Larry Rines, 100 North Franklin Street, Apt. 4, Holbrook, Massachusetts 02343 (617) 1-767-4290.

Louis I. Szathmary, 2218 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60614.

Changes of address

Win Stracke, 300 South Remington Avenue, Fort Collins, Colorado 80524.

Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, President, Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas 77843.

Both Win Stracke and Dr. Vandiver are Honorary Life Members.

Confederate Historical Institute

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Confederate Historical Institute will be held April 12-14 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The meeting, which will concentrate on Chancellorsville, will include talks by John Schildt on "People and Places Jackson Knew;" Dennis Frye on "Joe Hooker—Still Fighting;" Col. Joe Mitchell on "Chancellorsville: The Artillery;" Bob Krick on "Chancellorsville: Hazel Grove, May 2-3;" and David Ruth on "Chancellorsville: Salem Church, May 3." Also included will be a tour of the Chancellorsville Battlefield lead by Ed Bearss and Bob Krick.

The cost of the meeting is \$140 for Institute members; \$155 for Civil War Round Table Associates members; and \$175 for all others (\$10 discount for registration before April 1). The fee includes all meals, sessions and tours but not lodging. For further information contact Civil War Round Table Associates, P.O. Box 7388, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217.

The National Parks Protection Bill passed the House 321-82 in October; the Senate has not yet acted. The bill would require a 'State of the Parks' report every two years; a review by the Interior Secretary of any federal action—either inside or outside park boundaries—that would threaten a particular unit of the park system; and cooperative efforts with local jurisdictions for park protection.