

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLVIII, Number 4

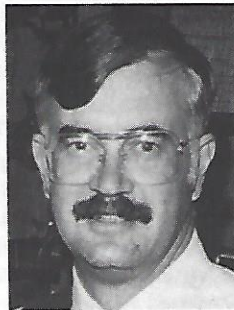
Chicago, Illinois

December, 1987

## Dr. Gordon E. Dammann on In Defense of the Civil War Surgeon

by C. Robert Douglas

In a letter of September 25, 1862, to "my dear wife" from a field hospital for wounded near Keedysville, Maryland, Dr. Theodore Dimon, Acting Surgeon of the 2nd Maryland (U.S.) regiment, wrote of his plight after the carnage of Antietam: "I am slowly traveling through the disposal of and provision for 140 poor fellows under my care here. Surgery, surgery, surgery. Food, food, food. Nurses, nurses, nurses.... Everybody employed looking out for No. 1; nobody caring for anybody else. Surgeons come here to get me to take care of their sick not knowing or caring to do anything but shirk them off on to me, in addition to my other cases; and when I refuse asking and arguing about what they shall do with them.... Besides fingers and toes I have made eleven amputations here of legs, thighs, forearms, arms and at shoulder joint. The minnie ball striking a bone does not permit much debate about amputation. It is more destructive than small grape, for it flattens up and then comminutes the bone and drives Dr. Gordon E. Dammann the fragments into the neighboring soft parts..."



The anger and frustration expressed by Dr. Dimon were not unique in the early years of the war, but conditions like those of which he complained had improved in the later war years. On December 11, 1987, Dr. Gordon E. Dammann, a fellow member and an expert on Civil War medicine, will address The Round Table and will offer his defense of the surgeons of the 1860s who cared for their country's wounded soldiers. In his view, the terms 'Saw Bones', 'Knife Happy', 'Blood Thirsty Ghouls' and 'Incompetent' have been associated with the Civil War surgeon for too many years. Gordie feels that we should at last assess the state of medicine in the 1860s through the eyes of the physicians of that era, with their learning and expertise. His talk will focus on the education, selection and training of medical personnel for the army, as well as on the lives of notable medical personalities such as Surgeon General Hammond and Surgeons Letterman, Smith and McMeen. His presentation will be illustrated by slides and should provide his listeners with a better perspective on Civil War medicine and its practitioners.

By far the greatest controversy of the war centered on



466th Regular Meeting

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Gordon Dammann  
on  
In Defense of the  
Civil War Surgeon

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Friday, December 11, 1987

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Quality Inn  
Halsted and Madison  
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.  
\$15.00 per person  
Entree: Turkey Divan, Fish, or Fruit Plate



### A reminder

Please make a reservation if you plan to attend The Round Table meeting. Last month 20 people showed up without reservations, causing problems for the Quality Inn in preparing extra meals. Use the card enclosed with this newsletter, or call 944-3085 to make a reservation.

the issue of amputation and injured limbs, split between those who advocated "conservative" measures and save limb and those who believed in prompt amputation. European surgeons had leaned toward "conservative" surgery, since amputations during the Crimean War had shown a very high mortality. The British Surgeon General Guthrie had gone so far as to advise against amputation except where the limb had been struck by a cannon ball. Guthrie's pamphlet, which was reprinted by the U.S. Sanitary Commission, undoubtedly did much to strengthen the "conservative" surgical approach.

The Commission, in December, 1861, brought out a  
*(continued on page 3)*

# 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 John Peterson, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois 60611.



**In Hampton, Virginia, Police Captain John Crigger** rescued a full-length portrait of Confederate General A.P. Hill, done by artist M.D. Fraydeck sometime between 1861-65, from a neighbor's garage and donated it to the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. The neighbor, who had bought the painting at an auction 10 years ago, along with other items in a "box of junk," sold it to Captain Crigger, a Civil War enthusiast, for \$50.

## Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

This writer had the opportunity to visit the Chickamauga and Chattanooga Battlefield areas recently, and to meet with Ann Belkov, the superintendent of the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park. Ms. Belkov reported on the status of Georgia Highway 27 as well as many improvements to the park.

Highway 27 is the old Lafayette Road, which was fought for during the bloody battle of Chickamauga in September, 1863. It is also a two-lane road through the middle of the battlefield park area and a major commuter road for people traveling to and from Chattanooga. As reported in the December, 1985 issue of this newsletter, citizens and congressmen of the state of Georgia wanted to widen the highway to four lanes to accommodate more traffic and relieve congestion. The National Park Service opposed widening and supported the more expensive proposal to build a new highway around the park to prevent further encroachment upon the sacred battlefield by commuter traffic and highway construction.

According to Ms. Belkov, Congressman Darden of Georgia has introduced a bill, HR 2121, in Congress that authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide a grant to be used to assist the state of Georgia to relocate the 3.7 mile portion of Highway 27 around the western boundary of the park. The bill calls for a sum up to \$30 million, but it cannot exceed 75 per cent of the total cost of the project. The bill has been approved by the House, and a similar bill is being considered by the Senate. Although these bills grant permission to the federal government to raise its share of the money, they do not actually appropriate any money.

The Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, which is the oldest national military park in the country, is preparing for its 100th anniversary in 1990. Of the 660 monuments and plaques which dot the park, 390 have already been cleaned and restored, according to Ms. Belkov. The Illinois monuments are scheduled to be cleaned next summer (any contributions would be gladly accepted by: Superintendent, Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, P.O. Box 21260, Ft. Oglethorpe, GA 30742).

Another change at the park is restoration of the vegetation and the landscape to the condition it was in September, 1863. The Jays Mill Field, scene of some of the fighting that took place on the first day of the battle, has been cut and cleared to resemble its appearance on that day.

Finally, there is a new visitors center at Point Park on Lookout Mountain, and a separate room for the James Walker painting, entitled "Lookout Mountain," has been built. Mr. Walker, an American artist, was paid \$20,000 by Union General Joseph Hooker to do the painting, which is about 112 years old. As you might expect, General Hooker is prominent in the center of the painting. Mr. Walker spent over six months in Chattanooga soon after the battle of Lookout Mountain sketching the landscape and interviewing the military commanders who fought there. He is unique among Civil War artists in that he was an American and did the painting only a year after the battle. (Walker's original canvas, not the one now on display, was done in 1864.) The painting at the visitors center, which measures 13 feet by 31 feet, is an incredible monument to the brave men who fought in the "Battle Above the Clouds" and should not be missed by any visitor to the Chickamauga-Chattanooga area.

## November Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

The military career of one of the more colorful and charismatic Confederate leaders was reviewed by Dr. James A. Ramage on November 13th, when he spoke about "John H. Morgan: Folk Hero of the Confederacy" before 101 members and guests at the 465th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. Dr. Ramage, professor of history at Northern Kentucky University and author of numerous articles for scholarly journals and historical publications, has written two full-length books: *John Wesley Hunt: Pioneer Merchant, Manufacturer and Financier* (1974) and *Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan* (1986). His biography of General Morgan won the Douglas Southall Freeman Award for the most outstanding book on Southern history for 1986 and was co-winner of the 1987 Kentucky Governor's Award for the most outstanding book on Kentucky history published during the past four years.

John Hunt Morgan personified the Southern ideal of the chivalrous gentleman; he was a romantic hero in an age of romance. And he looked the part: he was a tall, attractive man who wore his clothes well and possessed beauty of movement. Recognized as the guerilla par excellence of the Confederacy, he was a man of courage who exposed himself to hazard for the thrill of it. Often compared to "swamp fox" Francis Marion, the most famous guerilla leader of the American Revolution, General Morgan was the only Confederate hero to be continually connected to a hero of the Revolution.

One example Dr. Ramage gave of General Morgan's successful exploits was his attack on the forces of Colonel Absalom B. Moore, commander of Union General William S. Rosecrans' 39th Brigade. On Sunday morning, December 7, 1862, Morgan surprised Moore's camp before breakfast and captured the entire brigade. "Shuddering at the chill this would bring from Washington," Dr. Ramage noted, "Rosecrans telegraphed to one of his brigade commanders, 'It seems to me impossible that the entire brigade could have surrendered. Are there none left?'" For three days, President Lincoln demanded the name of the officer who was responsible and he was finally given the name of Absalom B. Moore. Moore was condemned for ignorance and negligence and reassigned to administrative duty. Another incident related was Morgan's Christmas raid at Muldraugh's Hill, Kentucky in 1862, when he captured the entire 71st Indiana Infantry. General Morgan had his telegraph operator, George Ellsworth, send a message to Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton, thanking him for the winter outerware and suggesting that next time he just send the oilcloths and overcoats, without the men.

It is suggested by some that after Morgan's marriage to the beautiful Tennessee belle Martha (Mattie) Ready on December 12, 1862, his attention was diverted and he lost his single-minded devotion to the war; that he neglected his men and his reputation declined. Dr. Ramage contends that one of the reasons he risked the Indiana-Ohio raid in June of 1863, without authorization, was "to restore his status in the eyes of the people and, more important, in the eyes of his wife." The raid did dazzle the people, but he was captured and incarcerated in the Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio, a maximum security prison for felons. However, on November 27, 1863, he and several other prisoners managed an ingenious escape through a tunnel they had dug underneath the prison. Once again, he was a hero to the South. A Richmond newspaper exclaimed, "The

leopard is free, is free!" The experience was so traumatic for Morgan that he vowed, to himself and to Mattie, never to be captured again. Ten months later, he was killed while attempting to escape from Union soldiers, while making a surprise raid at Greeneville, Tennessee. He had been given warnings by the Union soldiers, but continued to run, gambling his life on escape, rather than surrendering.

His body was laid to rest in Richmond, where he was given full rites and honors, until 1868, when it was returned to Lexington to be buried in the Hunt-Morgan plot. At that time, his body was taken from the train and escorted to Christ Church and, after the funeral, transferred through the streets to the cemetery for a graveside service. According to Dr. Ramage, "there were no cat calls, taunts or yells, no bitterness, no bravado. Many Union veterans attended the services and marched in the cortege with the large contingent of Confederate veterans. Everyone seemed bound together in sincere regret. It was as if the dreadful years of conflict had never occurred." A newspaper writer covering the ceremonies remarked, "Even now, an air of romance surrounds his forays, and friend and foe begin to speak softly and gently of Morgan."

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(continued from page 1)

pamphlet prepared by Dr. D.D. Slade of Boston. Slade's more orthodox views on amputation seem to have won gradual acceptance by a majority of the military surgeons. He held that where the limb was badly lacerated, or had suffered a compound fracture with much splintering, it was best to amputate at once, especially where joints were involved. The crude conditions under which wartime surgery had to be performed precluded such attempts to save a limb as might be proper in civil practice. Quite understandably, injured soldiers sought to retain their arms and legs, and were prone to suspect surgeons of having a callous desire for practice when the surgeon recommended amputation. Some tried to influence the doctor to the "conservative" approach by bluster, bribery, or even the point of a gun.

A native of Peoria, Gordie secured his doctorate in dental surgery from Loyola University in 1969. He served for 2 years in the U.S. Army Dental Corps with the rank of captain, and began private dental practice in Lena, Illinois in 1971. He has been active in the Illinois State Dental Society, serving as executive councilman, chairman of its finance and planning committee, and chairman of its history committee. He has served for the past three years on the State of Illinois Dental Examining Committee. He is a member of three Round Tables (Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison), the Society of Military Surgeons, and the Company of Military Historians. He has presented lectures or displays at the meetings of eight Round Tables, including our own, and in 1983, published the book, *Pictorial Encyclopedia of Civil War Medical Instruments and Equipment*, now in its fourth printing. He serves as an instructor in Civil War history at Highland Community College, Freeport, Illinois. He was designated "Outstanding Young Man of Stephenson County" in 1978, and in 1985, Lena named him its "Outstanding Public Servant." He last spoke to us at our November, 1980 meeting on the subject, "Civil War Medical Instruments and Equipment."

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**Round Table Treasurer Mary Abroe** reminds members that 1987-88 dues must be paid by December 1. Persons not paid by that date will be dropped from the rolls.

## The New Books

compiled by Dick Clark



## BULLETIN BOARD



Jones, Virgil Carrington. *Ranger Mosby*. McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1987. pbk \$12.95. Original of 1944.

Kent, Zachary. *The Story of Sherman's March to the Sea*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1987. \$9.95.

Korn, Jerry and the editors of Time-Life Books. *Pursuit to Appomattox: The Last Battles*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1987. \$19.95.

Lee, Richard M. *General Lee's City: An Illustrated Guide to Historic Sites of Confederate Richmond*. McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1987. 184 p., illus., maps, bibliog. pbk \$16.95.

McDonough, James Lee and James Pickett Jones. *War So Terrible: Sherman and Atlanta*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987. \$19.95.

Mapp, Alf J. *Frock Coats and Epaulets*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1987. pbk \$9.95. Original of 1963.

Miller, Ernest. *John Wilkes Booth in the Pennsylvania Oil Region*. Meadville, PA: Crawford County Historical Society, 70 p., illus., index. \$15.00. A revision of the author's 1945 monograph with additions.

Reck, W. Emerson. *A Lincoln: His Last 24 Hours*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1987. Illus., bibliog., index. \$22.50.

Sauers, Richard A. *Advance the Colors!* Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1987. 320 p., 202 col. photos, 66 black & white illus., maps, bibliog. ltd ed. \$47.50. First in a series of two volumes on Northern states' Civil War flags.

Smith, C. Carter, editor. *The Civil War*. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1987. \$95.00. (American Historical Images on File).

Starr, Louis M. *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. \$35.00, pbk \$13.50. Original of 1954.

**A group of concerned historians, preservationists, and Civil War buffs** recently established The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, Inc. to take firm measures to preserve the legacy of the Civil War. The group will raise funds through membership and donations to be used to acquire historic property threatened with destruction.

Gary Gallagher is president of the Association and Bob Krick is vice president. Merle and Pat Sumner are serving as co-treasurers. Initial funding came from Dan Jordan who donated a \$250 speaker honorarium. For further information, write: Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, Inc., P.O. Box 23, Arlington, VA 22210.

On behalf of the newsletter staff and the officers of The Round Table, we wish all members and their families a joyous holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year.

### Future meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Quality Inn, Halsted and Madison, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

December 11: Gordon Dammann on "In Defense of the Civil War Surgeon."

January 8, 1988: James Vlazny on "Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession."

February 12: Hon. Paul Simon. Subject to be announced.

March 11: Harold Holzer on "The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause."

April 8: Michael Snyder on "The Battle of Seven Pines."

April 28-May 1: Annual Battlefield Tour: Chancellorsville.

May 13: To be announced.

June 10: Edward Longacre on "The Army of the James."

### New members

Todd Fisher, 6010 N. Marmora, Chicago, Illinois 60646 (312) 763-9299.

John M. Gannon, 15955 S. Ellis Ave., South Holland, Illinois 60473 (312) 596-2518.

Robert C. Grossman, 5301 Dempster St., Suite 306, Skokie, Illinois 60077 (312) 966-4010.

Timothy J. O'Connell, 1357 E. Washington, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016.

Richard R. Thomphsen, 823 S. Euclid, Oak Park, Illinois 60304 (312) 383-0558.

**A committee has been formed to erect a bronze statue of General John Gibbon at Gettysburg.** In the early 1900s, the state of Pennsylvania appropriated \$50,000 to erect five statues of native sons who served as general officers at Gettysburg—Humphreys, Hays, Geary, Crawford and Gibbon. In 1913, money ran out and statues to Gibbon and Crawford were never erected.

The projected cost of the Gibbon statue is \$75,000, and it is hoped the funds can be raised by July, 1988, the 125th anniversary of the battle, so that a dedication of the statue (or at least the base) can be held.

Further information can be obtained from, and contributions sent to, General John Gibbon Memorial Committee, 1805 Pine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 (215) 735-8196.

**According to an item in the Charlotte Observer**, two Marines and a Navy corpsman became Civil War casualties last summer. The three were attempting to defuse an artillery round made to be fired from a Parrot rifled cannon when the accident occurred. Apparently, explosives are sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, by historical societies who ask to have them rendered inert and returned. All three victims were reported to be in satisfactory condition.