

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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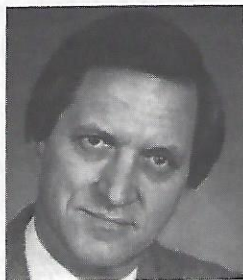
James C. Vlazny on Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession

by C. Robert Douglas

In a speech delivered to his constituents in July, 1850, Robert Barnwell Rhett stated: "I have been born of Traitors, but thank God, they have ever been Traitors in the great cause of liberty, fighting against tyranny and oppression." A South Carolinian and voice of the *Charleston Mercury*, Rhett fought vigorously, consistently and proudly against what he saw as the tyranny and oppression, first of the United States government and then of the Confederate States government. On January 8, 1988, our fellow member, James C. Vlazny, will address The Round Table and in his presentation, take us down the path that Rhett unswervingly trod in this struggle. Through his remarks, Jim will try to bring Rhett's personality to life through the use of excerpts from his speeches and writings before, during and after the Civil War.

Rhett's long public life began with his election to the South Carolina legislature in 1826 at the young age of 26. His career as a crusader and revolutionist was launched through his opposition to the Tariff of 1828. In 1833, during the Nullification crisis, he set the tone for his career when he spoke out against the despotism of the Federal government. Here he urged his state to take action for its own protection, stating... "A people owning slaves are mad, or worse than mad who do not hold their destinies in their own hands."

In 1836, he was elected to the United States Congress as Representative from South Carolina, a post he would hold until 1848. During these years he continued to fight against the Tariff, launched the "Bluffton Movement" for separate state action on this issue, and worked closely with John C. Calhoun in Calhoun's unsuccessful efforts to obtain the Democratic presidential nomination. When Calhoun died in 1850, Rhett was elected to Calhoun's seat in the U.S. Senate and there he continued his struggle to take South Carolina out of the Union. When the "Palmetto State" failed to follow his lead, he dramatically resigned his seat in the Senate in protest. About this time, he began his long and close association with William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama, a relationship that would bear fruit in Charleston in 1860.



James C. Vlazny



467th Regular Meeting

James Vlazny
on
Robert Barnwell Rhett:
Father of Secession

Friday, January 8, 1988

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



Two events occurring in 1852 combined to cause Rhett to withdraw from public life until 1858—his resignation from the U.S. Senate and the death of his beloved wife, Elizabeth, a gentle woman whose influence over her nervous, fiery husband was very great; her absence was noticeable in his later career. In 1858, he and his son became sole owners of the *Charleston Mercury*, and shortly thereafter he and Yancey started planning for the upcoming presidential election campaign of 1860. This planning culminated successfully when South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 17, 1860. Rhett's "Address to the Slaveholding States," written to justify this action, stressed self-government and Southern nationality, subjects of great meaning to him.

In February, 1861, Rhett headed the South Carolina delegation in Montgomery, Alabama, where the new Confederate constitution was written and a provisional government was formed. He was bypassed for any important position in the new government and had to settle for the post of chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. In this capacity, he waged an unsuccessful fight for strong treaty concessions to England in exchange for English

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

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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.



The Lincoln Newsletter reports that Rutgers University Press is planning to reprint the collected works of Abraham Lincoln. They will be assisted by the Abraham Lincoln Association. This will be the first reprinting.

The Lincoln Symposium will be held in Springfield on February 12. Its focus will be on the Lincoln family. Papers by John Y. Simon and Jean Baker, author of a biography of Mary Lincoln, will be among those presented.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

I had the pleasure of touring the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, just outside Marietta, Georgia, this past October. Ralph Bullard, then the superintendent there, pointed out new and planned improvements and explained the history of the park.

As reported in this newsletter in 1983, the Kennesaw Mountain Park has not always been used for strictly historical purposes. In fact, the major activities at that time were the drinking of alcohol, playing of baseball games and other sports, and other recreational activities; the historical aspects of the park were largely neglected. Also as reported in this newsletter in 1985, Mr. Bullard became superintendent in 1984 and immediately worked to reverse the trend of recreational activities. As he explained, the area north of Atlanta, including Marietta, was and is one of the fastest growing urban areas in the country. Prior to Mr. Bullard, the relaxed management of the park, in combination with the increase in population, caused the park to be used for recreational activities instead of historical purposes.

In 1984, Mr. Bullard, with the assistance of the county government and police force, and the city of Marietta, set down and enforced regulatory provisions as stated in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. The main problem was alcohol consumption; with the assistance of the county police the park management has been able to enforce successfully the general ban on use of alcohol. In addition, recreational activities and picnics are now limited to a few specific areas. The park has denied numerous requests from the community to hold automobile, road, and motorcycle races, weddings, and other events.

To further historical purposes, the park has set up numerous signs showing where buildings and homes stood at the time of the battle in 1864, and the gunpits and fortifications which remained have been restored and preserved through the use of vegetation and historical interpretive signs. On Cheatham Hill, Confederate earthworks have been preserved. The Illinois monument has been cleaned and restored, and fortifications have been preserved and marked on Kennesaw Mountain.

Mr. Bullard said there is a plan to install an interpretive guided tour at the battlefield areas in the next 12 to 18 months. Another project is to interpret the 24 gun battery of Union artillery which shelled the Confederate positions. There is also further development planned for Kolb Farm, the site of General Hood's unsuccessful attack upon the Union lines.

Kennesaw Mountain, like other military parks, faces urban encroachments such as the attempted widening of the Dallas Highway which runs through the park and construction of an access road across park land in the Gilbert Road area. And, there is a housing subdivision on the western portion of the battlefield.

Mr. Bullard is no longer the superintendent, but the current acting superintendent indicated to me how impressive the accomplishments of Mr. Bullard and his staff, including Dennis Kelly and Emmet Nichols, were in establishing and promoting historical purposes.

One small feature of the battlefield clearly highlights its historical significance—the grave of an unknown soldier simply yet respectfully preserved in its natural setting in a wooded area.

December meeting

by Barbara Hughett

"Saw Bones," "Knife Happy," and "Blood Thirsty Ghouls" are some of the terms which have often been used to describe Civil War surgeons. On December 11th, Dr. Gordon E. Dammann spoke before 107 members and guests at the 466th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. In his talk, titled "In Defense of the Civil War Surgeon," Dr. Dammann, fellow Round Table member and expert on Civil War medicine, sought to refute the negative image of surgeons in the 1860s.

Dr. Dammann suggested that we "go back in time and find out how physicians/surgeons were trained and what knowledge influenced their decisions before we pass judgment on them." When the war began in 1861, there were no advances, such as the sterilization of instruments, the surgeon's hands, or operating tables; there were no x-rays. Orthopedic surgery was unheard of, as were field hospitals or the medical evacuation of the wounded. Medical education from colonial times through the early 1800s was defined as a preceptorship program, usually a three-year term, in which a student went from an indentured servant to a medical technician. The student's duties included making pills, mixing potions, cupping, bleeding, and doing bedside nursing. The entire cost of this program was between \$100-\$500. When the teacher (preceptor) decided the pupil was qualified, he was issued a certificate. The quality of education varied, of course, depending on the quality of the preceptor. The next phase in the progression of medical education included the addition of a series of lectures at hospitals, along with the preceptorship system. This gradually gave way to actual medical schools, as we know them today.

Since it was widely believed and taught that most gunshot wounds to the limbs required amputation and that immediate amputation after injury would offer the best chance of survival, many of what we now know to be unnecessary amputations were performed. However, more Civil War soldiers died from disease than from gunshot wounds, largely due to unsanitary conditions and improper nutrition in the army camps. Bronchitis, pneumonia, measles, mumps, dysentery, scurvy, diarrhea, and typhoid fever were among the more prevalent camp diseases. There were some effective medications in existence at that time. "Wonder drugs" of the Civil War were quinine, opium, morphine, chloroform, and ether.

Dr. Dammann focused on the careers of several Civil War surgeons, such as Surgeons General Hammond and Barnes, Surgeon Bontaque, who was the first medical photographer, and Surgeons Letterman and Meens. Dr. Jonathan Letterman was appointed Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac in July, 1862. At that time, Dr. Dammann noted, "the Army was a sick and demoralized group, in misery on the banks of the James River;" 20,000 men were in makeshift hospitals, without food, shelter, or enough medical supplies or doctors to relieve their suffering. Dr. Letterman, born on December 11, 1824 in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, the son of a physician, and 1849 graduate of Jefferson Medical College, accepted the challenge. He asked General George B. McClellan for full authority over medical matters of the Army of the Potomac, and received it. He enforced a rigid sanitary discipline, moved the sick and wounded to Fortress Monroe, developed a network of field hospitals and supply stations, and

began an efficient ambulance corps, which had its first real test at the Battle of Antietam. The basic system of medical evacuation devised by Dr. Letterman is still in effect today, using helicopters instead of horse-drawn wagons.

Over 12,000 Union surgeons served in the Civil War; 32 were killed in battle; 82 were wounded and 9 later died from these wounds; 285 died from disease. A total of 326 Union surgeons died in the war. Dr. Dammann summed up his opinion of Civil War surgeons by saying, "The majority were competent, caring professionals. They were not butchers, the saw bones, or the hackers." With this comment, he rested his case.

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recognition of the Confederacy. During the balance of 1861, he waged a fight on the floor of the Confederate Congress and in the pages of the *Mercury* for an offensive, rather than a defensive war strategy against the Union. Throughout the war years, Rhett and his son battled continuously and bitterly with Jefferson Davis on the subjects of foreign relations and war strategy.

When the war ended, he went into semi-retirement, but kept busy through writing editorials for the *Mercury*. He continued the defense of his views and the castigation of Davis, remaining unrepentant for his role in the secession of South Carolina to the extent that he refused to seek a pardon from the Federal government. At his death in 1876, the *Charleston News and Courier* depicted him as "the paramount advocate of the secession of South Carolina which through him, more than any other, became an accomplished fact." Repudiated often by Southern leaders, frequently defeated and pronounced politically dead only to seem justified by the events, he was for all his life a storm center in Southern politics.

A native of Chicago's South side, Jim Vlazny received his Bachelor of Science degree from Loyola University (1963) and his Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin (1968). He also secured an M.B.A. degree from the University of Chicago (1976). His first teaching assignment took him to Virginia Military Institute as assistant professor of chemistry for a two-year stint. He then worked for Morton Chemical Company and G.D. Searle before joining Abbott Laboratories in 1983. He now serves Abbott as Director of its Corporate Licensing department.

A member of the Chicago, Northern Illinois and London, England Round Tables, Jim has addressed the Salt Creek, Northern Illinois and London groups on the battle of New Market. He has appeared before us in the panel dealing with the subject, "Senate Confrontation—November, December, 1860" at our February, 1984 meeting. His most recent appearance before us occurred on January 10, 1986 in the panel dealing with our ethnic ancestors in the Civil War.

More than 75,000 bonds issued by the Confederate States of America to raise money during the Civil War were found recently in a London vault. They had been placed there in 1920, when the owners decided they were completely worthless. The bonds, which had a face value of \$60 million when they were issued between 1861 and 1864, were to be sold at auction. Sotheby's estimated their value at \$378,400. The bonds were discovered by descendants of the original owners.



The New Books

compiled by Dick Clark

Paris, Comte de. *The Battle of Gettysburg: from The History of the Civil War in America* by... Introduction by Richard Sauers. Baltimore, MD: Butternut and Blue, 1987. \$30.00.

Pfanz, Harry W. *Gettysburg—The Second Day*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987. \$34.95.

Piston, William Garrett. *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and his Place in Southern History*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987. \$24.95.

Schott, Thomas E. *Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia: A Biography*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987. \$37.50.

Still, William N., Jr. *Confederate Shipbuilding*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987. \$17.95. Original, University of Georgia, 1969.

Turner, Justin G. and Linda Levitt Turner. *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*. Edited by... With an introduction by Fawn M. Brodie. New York: Fromm International Publishing Corp., 1987. pbk \$12.95. Original of 1972.

Wilmer, L. Allison, J.H. Jarrett, George W.F. Vernon. *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5*. Prepared under authority of the General Assembly of Maryland by... Silver Spring, MD: Family Line Publications, 1987. 2 vols. \$75.00. Original of 1898-99.

Wert, Jeffrey. *From Winchester to Cedar Creek: The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864*. Carlisle, PA: South Mountain Press, Inc. 1987. \$22.50.

Wood, James M. *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987. \$18.00.

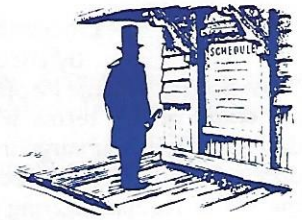
The first annual "Civil War at Sea" seminar will take place March 5-12, 1988 aboard the S.S. Canada Star. The cruise, from New Orleans to Mexico, will be led by Dr. William N. Still, and will only include talks about events that happened at sea. The cost of the tour starts at \$795 per person. For further information, contact John T. Hunley, 7240 Crowder Blvd. #100, New Orleans, LA 70127 (504) 241-7997.

The 181st birthday anniversary of Robert E. Lee will be celebrated in Washington, DC on January 16 at a ceremony in the Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol Building. The speaker will be Dr. James I. Robertson who will discuss "Robert E. Lee: Southerner and American." The ceremony begins at 11 a.m.

That same day the Col. Harry W. Gilmore Camp 1388, Sons of Confederate Veterans, will hold a ceremony in Baltimore to celebrate the January birthdays of both Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Various reenactment groups will march and the United Daughters of the Confederacy will place wreaths.

And in Richmond, the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society will honor Lee, Jackson, and Maury on January 19 with a memorial service in the Old House of Delegates Chamber in the State Capitol.

BULLETIN BOARD



Future meetings

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

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: Gerald F. Linderman on "The Experience of Combat in the Civil War."

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

New members

H. Scott Barker, 2271 Hiram Dr., Wheaton, IL 60187 (312) 653-6803.

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Agnes Q. Meyer, 731 S. Plymouth Ct., Apt. 514, Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 663-0478.

Change of address

Dennis D. Donnellan, 1257-C Ballantrae Pl., Mundelein, IL 60060 (312) 367-0886.

Work on the rehabilitation of the gravesite of Union general George H. Thomas in Oakwood Cemetery, Troy, New York, was completed in August. According to Thomas Gravesite Fund chairman George Craig, the last of the rehabilitation involved placing the eagle with a restored beak and wing atop the monument. The restoration was made possible by contributions from throughout the country. However, to insure that the monument does not again fall into the deplorable condition that it was in before the restoration, a perpetual maintenance contract in the amount of \$5000 is needed. Contributions can be sent to the Thomas Gravesite Fund, c/o George Craig, 83-12 St. James Street, Elmhurst, NY 11373.

A similar effort will be required to restore Grant's Tomb in New York to its original glory. According to an article in the *New York Times*, the Tomb today is an eyesore. It is daubed on all sides with graffiti, the steps are overgrown and weeds stand several inches high in the plaza's cracks.