

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLIX, Number 6

Chicago, Illinois

February, 1989

James M. McPherson on "Lincoln and Liberty"

by Barbara Hughett

Northerners and Southerners alike claimed to be fighting for liberty in the American Civil War. The South took up arms for what they saw as a fight for the right of state sovereignty; the North for the preservation of the Union "conceived in Liberty." According to Jefferson Davis, the South was "forced to take up arms to vindicate the political rights, the freedom, equality, and State sovereignty which were the heritage purchased by the blood of our revolutionary sires." Northerners decried the Confederacy's claim to be fighting for freedom. "Their motto," wrote poet and editor William Cullen Bryant, "is not liberty, but slavery." In his message to Congress on July 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln questioned whether "discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration" could be allowed to "break up their government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth." "Must a government," he continued, "be too strong for the liberty of its own people or too weak to maintain its own existence?" By the time of the Gettysburg Address in November, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation had been in effect for nearly eleven months and the North was fighting for a "new birth of freedom."



James M. McPherson

On February 10th, James M. McPherson will address The Civil War Round Table on the topic of "Lincoln and Liberty." His focus will be on the transformation and expansion of the concept of liberty accomplished under Lincoln's leadership. He will trace the progression of the American concept of liberty from a pre-war emphasis on "negative liberty" in which the concentrated power of government was seen as the greatest threat to individual liberty to the notion of "positive liberty" in which the government became an agency to protect and expand freedom. The key to this transition, Dr. McPherson contends, was the institution of slavery. Before the Civil War, the right to property in slaves was one of the principal liberties enjoyed by Southern whites, one of the liberties which they went to war to defend. Slavery elevated all whites, slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike, to an equal status and thus functioned as a bulwark of liberty for all whites. Lincoln did not accept this exclusive notion of liberty that defined certain groups of people entitled to liberty. During the Civil War, he presided over the expansion of freedom accomplished by the abolition of slavery. At the same time,



478th Regular Meeting

James M. McPherson
on
Lincoln and Liberty

Friday, February 10, 1989

Quality Inn

Halsted and Madison

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$15.00 per person

Entree: Roast Sirloin of Beef Bordelaise, Fish, or
Fruit Plate



he justified the temporary denial of civil liberties to certain groups of whites who opposed this policy in the name of a broader concept of liberty to be consummated by a Union victory in the war.

Dr. McPherson, who was born in North Dakota and grew up in Minnesota, graduated, Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude, from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, and received his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. Currently Edwards Professor of American History at Princeton University, he has been a faculty member of that institution since 1962. He has been the recipient of numerous prestigious fellowships and grants. Dr. McPherson has authored seven books, edited and contributed to a number of others, and has written many articles for professional journals. His books include *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1964), winner of the Anisfield-Wolf Prize in 1975; *Marching Toward Freedom: The Negro in the Civil War* (1968); *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (1982); and *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (1988), which is Volume VI in the Oxford History of the United States series. The *New York Times* reviewer said of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, "It is the best one-volume treatment of its subject I have ever come across. It may actually be the best ever published. . . . This is historical writing of the highest order."

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
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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 Dan Weinberg, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, IL 60611.



A reminder: Please submit any Round Table memorabilia you may have to the 50th Anniversary Committee. Bring the materials to a meeting or send them to Jerry Warshaw, 748 Hinman Ave., Evanston, IL 60202.

A series of special events will be taking place in Virginia to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Siege of Petersburg (May 3-6), and the 125th anniversary of the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House (May 5-14). For information about these events, contact the Friends of Virginia Civil War Parks, P.O. Box 34936, Richmond, VA 23234-0936.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

Much of the concern of Civil War battlefield preservationists has been directed towards the many battlefields from Pennsylvania to Georgia on the east coast and from Kentucky to Louisiana. Due to the many problems facing these battlefields, the concern is both valid and vital. But there is a spot relevant to the Civil War much closer to home that also needs our concern and attention—the Lincoln Home National Historic Site and the surrounding four city block area in Springfield, Illinois. The area includes the home that Abraham Lincoln and his family lived in for the 17-year period prior to his departure for Washington D.C. as the nation's 16th president. Also included as part of the National Park Service area are many restored buildings.

The Lincoln Home had been badly in need of repair. According to Gentry Davis, Superintendent of the Lincoln Home Historic Site, the home had been built to accommodate a family of five, not to withstand the 10 million people who have visited it in the 17 years since the National Park Service took possession of the home in 1971. Because of this, on May 20, 1987, the Lincoln Home was closed for major renovation. According to Mr. Davis, to stabilize the building, structural support steel beams were put in the areas through which people tour the home. Stairs leading to the second floor needed support. Siding had to be replaced and the house was insulated from the outside in. A climate control system was put into the home in order that the artifacts inside the home would be preserved. With the new heating and air conditioning, the windows can be kept closed so that soot, dirt, and sunlight are kept out of the house. In addition, a humidity system was installed which will also protect the home and the artifacts.

Some very interesting items were found during the 13-month restoration, according to Gentry Davis. In wall cavities behind the kitchen letters of the family were found. When a stairway was opened, children's shoes were discovered. A closet was found in the boys' bedroom and a hidden stairway was discovered at the back of the house. As a result of the extensive research done during the restoration period, the color of the house, its furnishings, and the decor were altered to more closely resemble the way they looked when the Lincolns lived there.

Funding for the restoration came from a grant by Congress, through the rehabilitation program of the National Park Service. The regional office of the National Park Service, Congressman Durbin from Springfield, Senator Simon, and Illinois Governor Thompson assisted in obtaining this funding. The restoration project was completed after 13 months, and the Lincoln Home reopened on June 16, 1988 with special ceremonies and events. According to *The State Journal-Register*, over 2,500 people attended. Although it took \$2.2 million to restore the house, it is Mr. Davis' estimate that the home will not have to be totally restored for the next 100 years.

Approximately 600,000 people have visited the home since it reopened. During the two week Christmas period when the home was decorated for the holidays, 15,000 people visited the historic site, according to Mr. Davis. The Lincoln Home attracts many foreign dignitaries. Mr. Davis said this large influx of visitors requires more staff people to show the home, and for preventative maintenance for the whole area, including utility service. The Lincoln Home National Historic Site needs more funding for staff and

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January Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

Typical accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg end with Lee abandoning his efforts to dislodge Meade and retreating southward with his troops. The curtain falls; everyone goes home. But, since this contest is heralded as the greatest battle ever fought on the North American continent, there had to have been a huge mess to clear up after the troops left the field. Yet, very little has been written about this. On January 13th, Bruce Bazelon addressed 134 members and guests at the 477th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His topic was "Gettysburg—After the Fight." The address he delivered was written by J. Duncan Campbell, Director Emeritus of the State Museum of Pennsylvania, who, because of illness, is not able to give an entire lecture. Mr. Bazelon is Acting Director of the Bureau of Historic Sites and Museums for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in Harrisburg.

"At daybreak, on Saturday, July 4, 1863," Mr. Bazelon related, "there was heralded the 87th anniversary of United States independence. Dawn broke that day on a scene of horror and death along the southern outskirts of a sleepy little Pennsylvania village called Gettysburg. Battle shattered survivors of three days of bitter fighting looked out over the field spotted with lifeless figures cast in the awkward molds of sudden death." A soft, soothing rain became a drenching downpour as silent figures set about to bury their dead comrades in single, shallow graves. By nightfall on the 4th, it became apparent to the townspeople that all fighting had ceased. By the morning of the 5th, many felt a desire to assist with the wounded. "Fewer," Mr. Bazelon observed, "wanted to see the dead, who were lying open in the field." Horses killed in the various actions had been totally neglected by burial details. Amputated limbs were strewn in areas around the buildings which had been used as makeshift hospitals.

On Monday, July 6th, a hot sun followed the previous day's rain, adding a nauseous stench to the sight of horror. Union soldiers went over the field to recover ammunition and equipment. Official reports testify to the fear and confusion surrounding men in mortal combat. Among 24,000 loaded muskets picked up at random on the field, only one-fourth were loaded properly. As the days progressed, grieving relatives began to swarm over the area, armed with shovels, indiscriminately opening the shallow graves in search of a familiar face. People who lived on the site of the battle suffered severely. Some of their homes were used as field hospitals; others served as headquarters for officers. Their food supplies and livestock were eaten; their clothing was torn asunder to bandage the wounded; their fences, and sometimes pieces of furniture, were used as firewood.

Visiting a few days after the fighting had ended, Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin was shocked by the appearance of the battlefield. From this experience came a deep personal interest in initiating a formal project to set aside grounds for an honorable interment for the Union dead. As his direct agent in this project, he selected Gettysburg attorney David Wills. Wills, through correspondence with authorities in northern states whose troops were engaged in the battle, received pledges of cooperation and financial assistance in creating a national cemetery. Land was purchased and a formal contract was drawn up, with a request for bids for the removal of the Union dead to selected sites. The contract was awarded to the lowest

bidder, whose work was closely supervised by an agent of Wills', Samuel Weaver. In his report, Weaver wrote: "There was not a grave permitted to be opened or body searched unless I was present." Meticulous efforts were made to attempt to identify each soldier. Although the official work ended in March of 1864, bodies of fallen men continued to be discovered and reburied until the 1880s.

The process of exhuming the dead was curtailed for one day, Thursday, November 19th, widely publicized as the day President Lincoln would dedicate the cemetery. A throng of some 15,000 assembled in the tiny town to view the ceremonies. Those in attendance agreed that the crowd grew very quiet to hear Lincoln's words and were surprised at the brevity of his speech. The *Harrisburg Patriot* began its editorial the next day by saying, "We will pass over the silly remarks of the president." This dubious fame, Mr. Bazelon noted, continues to haunt today's *Patriot* every time a new historian finds this editorial and quotes it.

In 1913, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, some of the original veterans reenacted Pickett's Charge. Participants were positioned in the line in blue and the line in gray, approximating where they had been fifty years earlier. Newspaper accounts tell how, as the gray line surged up toward Seminary Ridge, the men were embraced by their blue comrades. The Civil War was finally over. According to Mr. Bazelon, that's not quite the way it happened, or at least, its not all of the story. "The men in blue," he contended, "had their GAR canes and, as the men in gray came close, they said: 'You didn't get up here in '63, and you're damn well not going to get up here now!' " "Some things," he concluded, "never change, and perhaps that's good."

Fellow member Max Daniels and his wife Donna will present "An Evening With Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln" at Hadley Junior High School, 240 Hawthorne Street, Glen Ellyn, on February 11th and 18th at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$4 for students and senior citizens, and \$3 for children under 12. In addition, a dinner theater performance is scheduled for Sunday, February 12th at the Lincoln Inn in Batavia. Tickets for this event are \$12 and reservations are required. For more information, call 462-7286.

Margie Riddle Bearss recently received the A.P. Andrews Memorial Award, presented by the Jackson, Mississippi Civil War Round Table. According to their newsletter, "this prestigious award is in recognition of her scholarship and record of outstanding activity in the preservation of Civil War history." Among Mrs. Bearss' many accomplishments are the recently published book, *Sherman's Forgotten Campaign: The Meridian Expedition* and work done in the salvaging and cataloging of artifacts from the Union gunboat "Cairo." She has written numerous articles on Civil War history for newspapers and historical journals.

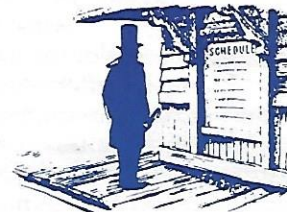
An autographed, folded letter sheet, dated May 6, 1861, signed by Abraham Lincoln and sent to the commissioner of pensions, asking that the bearer, "Albert I. Brooks, formerly of Ill., now of Ky.," be considered for appointment to a vacant clerkship, was sold for \$7,700. The pre-auction value of this item was estimated to be between \$3,500-\$5,000.

The New Books

compiled by C. Robert Douglas



BULLETIN BOARD



Aaron, Daniel. *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. 1987. \$37.50; pbk \$12.95.

Bowden, J.J. *The Exodus of Federal Forces from Texas, 1861*. Austin, TX: Eakin Press. 1988. \$11.95.

Chambers, Lenoir. "Stonewall" Jackson. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1988. 2 vols. \$59.95. Original of 1959.

Cooling, Benjamin F., III and Walton H. Owen II. *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*. Foreword by Edwin C. Bearss. Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publ. Co., Inc. 1988. \$29.95; pbk \$18.95.

Crawford, Martin. *The Anglo-American Crisis of the Mid-Nineteenth Century. The "Times" and America, 1850-1862*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press. 1987. \$24.00.

Drake, Samuel. *The Battle of Gettysburg*. Introduction by William F. Howard. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1988. \$19.95. Original of 1892.

Durham, Walter T. *Reluctant Partners: Nashville and the Union July 1, 1863 to June 30, 1865*. Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Society. 1987. \$19.95.

Eckert, Edward K., ed. *Fiction Distorting Fact: The Prison Life, Annotated by Jefferson Davis*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press. 1987. \$39.95.

Gates, Arnold, ed. *The Rough Side of War: The Civil War Journal of Chesley A. Mosman, 59th Illinois Volunteer Infantry*. Garden City, NY: The Basin Publ. Co. 1987. \$25.00.

Hunter, Alvah F. *A Year on a Monitor and the Destruction of Fort Sumter*. Edited by Craig L. Symonds. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. 1987. \$19.95.

Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself*. Edited, with an introduction by Jean Fagan Yellin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1988. \$37.50; pbk \$9.95.

Manger, Blake A. and Michael A. Cavanaugh. *Battlefield Commanders, Gettysburg*. Collingswood, NJ: C. W. Historicals. 1987. \$6.95.

Murdock, Eugene C. *The Civil War in the North: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*. New York, NY: Garland Publ. Inc. 1987. \$58.00.

Parish, T. Michael and Robert M. Willingham, Jr. *Confederate Imprints: A Bibliography of Southern Publications*. Austin, TX: The Jenkins Company. 1987. \$95.00.

Porter, John A. *The 76th Pennsylvania*. Compiled and edited by Dr. James Chisman, Michael Cavanaugh and Dr. William Brockington. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1988. \$24.95. One of Fox's Fighting 300.

Schiller, Dr. Herbert M. *The Bermuda Hundred Campaign*. Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop. 1988. \$29.95.

Scott, Samuel and Samuel Angel. *History of the Thirtieth Regiment Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry U.S.A.* Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press. 1987. \$21.95.

Sparks, A.W. *The War Between the States, As I Saw It. Reminiscences, Historical and Personal*. Longview, TX: D&D Publishing. 1987. \$22.50.

Future meetings

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

February 10: James M. McPherson on "Lincoln and Liberty."

March 10: Jerry Russell on "Pea Ridge."

April 14: Charles Wesselhoeft on "The Army of the Tennessee Under Grant."

May 4-7: Annual Battlefield Tour—The Atlanta Campaign and Andersonville.

May 12: Brig. Gen. Edwin Simmons, USMC (Ret.) on "The Assault on Fort Fisher."

June 9: John Y. Simon, topic to be announced.

New Members

James Anderson, 106 W. Countryline Rd., Barrington, IL 60010, (312) 382-1772.

Joan Anderson, 106 W. Countryline Rd., Barrington, IL 60010, (312) 382-1772.

Jerome Schur, 2416 Meadow Dr. South, Wilmette, IL 60091, (312) 251-3122.

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maintenance. Mr. Davis would also like to install wayside exhibits throughout the historic Lincoln district. The Springfield community has been very supportive of the historic site. In 1988, the Lincoln Site received 10,000 hours of volunteer service, according to Mr. Davis.

Mr. Davis said the Lincoln Site has received funding from the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service for the 1989 fiscal year; however, it needs funding for the 1990 fiscal year. According to Mr. Steve Blakely of Congressman Durbin's office, after the home was reopened, the volume of people wanting to visit the home was overwhelming. In November, 1988, Congressman Durbin met with the Regional Director of the National Park Service. Mr. Blakely said that existing resources were allocated so that he estimates \$25,000 was made available for staffing. Congressman Durbin, according to Mr. Blakely, is working towards an increase in funding for the Lincoln Site for visitation and staffing purposes for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 1989. Mr. Davis concurred, stating that the process has begun to seek additional funding from the federal government. He said that historic leases on some of the 31 buildings owned by the National Park Service are a goal. One of the houses in the Lincoln home block is presently being leased by the Junior League of Springfield. A tenant, according to Mr. Davis, is able to utilize a building as an office, but cannot change the historical decor.

The Lincoln Home Historic Site Visitors' Center is open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. The Lincoln Home is a beautiful historical memorial to Mr. Lincoln, one of the most important figures in the Civil War period.