

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LI, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

April 1991

500th Meeting

A. Wilson Greene on "From Chancellorsville to Cemetery Hill: The Eleventh Corps at the First Day of Gettysburg"

by Barbara Hughett

The 500th Meeting of The Civil War Round Table will take place on Friday, April 12. The evening will feature a champagne toast by President David R. Richert and the viewing of a videotaped message from founder Ralph G. Newman, who will be out of town and unable to attend. "Round Table History" will be the topic of the dinner quiz. Everyone in attendance will receive a special commemorative program. The main address, "From Chancellorsville to Cemetery Hill: The Eleventh Corps at the First Day of Gettysburg," will be delivered by A. Wilson Greene.

It is generally believed that the Eleventh Corps was a demoralized and poorly-led unit and was responsible not only for the disaster at Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, but also for the failures of the Union Army at Gettysburg on July 1 of that year. A. Wilson Greene, in questioning this conventional wisdom and examining the performance of the corps, has arrived at some different conclusions.

In his talk, he will present and explain both the popular viewpoint and a revised assessment based on his study. He will give particular attention to the leaders of the corps and will attempt to analyze their leadership between Chancellorsville and Gettysburg.

The actions of Corps Commander Oliver Otis Howard will come under special scrutiny. Some of the controversy surrounding the corps on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg include: General Howard's role in selecting Cemetery Hill as the Union's defensive line; the wisdom of posting two divisions of the Eleventh Corps north of town; the refusal of Howard to reinforce those divisions, or conversely withdraw them, when the Confederates appeared; the nature of the retreat through Gettysburg; and the nature of the Union rally on Cemetery Hill itself. Touching on all of these points and others, Greene will present his theories about what happened and who was responsible.

A native of Wheaton, Illinois, Will Greene received his bachelor's degree from Florida State University and his master's degree from Louisiana State University, where he served as a graduate assistant under the direction of T.



A. Wilson Greene



500th Regular Meeting

A. Wilson Greene
on
"From Chancellorsville to Cemetery Hill:
The Eleventh Corps at the
First Day of Gettysburg"

Friday, April 12, 1991

Holiday Inn Mart Plaza
350 North Orleans Street
Buttons—15th floor

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
\$17.50 per person

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



Parking

If you are driving and coming from the south, turn left into the Mart Plaza lot just after crossing the river on Orleans. From the north, turn right from Orleans on Hubbard, left on Kingsbury, right on Kinzie, and left into the Mart Plaza lot. Parking is free. Have your ticket validated at The Round Table registration table.

Harry Williams. Currently the executive director of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, he was employed for seventeen years by the National Park Service. Included among his positions with the NPS were those of historian for the Petersburg National Battlefield and historian for the Fredericksburg National Military Park. Co-author of *Antietam: Essays on the 1862 Maryland Campaign* (1989) and *The Civil War Battlefield Guide* (1990), he has written numerous articles and book reviews for magazines

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
357 West Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60610
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 Dan Weinberg, 357 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610.



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and professional journals and has spoken to many groups throughout the country on topics related to Civil War history. His last appearance before The Round Table was in November 1986, when his topic was "The Bloody Angle of Spotsylvania: May 12, 1864."

The first annual \$50,000 Lincoln Prize, bestowed by Gettysburg College, went to Ken Burns, producer of the highly-acclaimed PBS series, "The Civil War." The award is to go annually to the best work of Lincoln or Civil War scholarship produced during the previous year, according to a panel of three jurors. This year's jurors were Robert Bruce, James M. McPherson, and Tom Wicker.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Mary Munsell Abroe

The recent obliteration of historic earthworks and part of the "Railroad Cut" at Gettysburg is a preservationist's nightmare, and it is one for which the National Park Service allegedly bears some responsibility. In discussing the disaster, the current newsletter of Civil War Round Table Associates applies the following adage, by way of "Pogo": "We have met the enemy and he is us." The chain of events leading to the destruction of these irreplaceable resources at Gettysburg is under investigation currently. Meanwhile, it is interesting, albeit quite discouraging, to note that "we"—people who ought to know better—continue to constitute the "enemy" at too many sites, even in this period of heightened preservation consciousness. A proposed expenditure of Park Service monies at Manassas graphically illustrates that Pogo's identification of the *real* problem is right on target.

The March/April issue of *National Parks*, published by the National Parks and Conservation Association, reports that expansion of existing riding stables at Manassas to accommodate Vice President's Quayle's family and entourage will be funded out of the park's already strapped budget. Although the Park Service insists that the new stables will provide necessary housing for NPS horses, John Hennessey, former Manassas park historian, and NPCA Cultural Resources Program Manager Bruce Craig disagree. Hennessey indicates that a well-connected politico who heads the Manassas mounted ranger program and who has established "a constituency for horseback riding at Manassas at the upper levels of government" is a prime mover behind the project. According to Craig, "without the connection to Quayle, these stables probably wouldn't be built. They've been shown to be unneeded and damaging to the park's historic character."

The stables to be enlarged under this project are located at Sutton Farm in the park's core historic area. The existing structures are incompatible with the restoration policy established in the park's General Management Plan, which calls for restoration of Sutton Farm to its 1860s appearance; thus, any addition only makes an unfavorable situation worse. Moreover, the proposed stable expansion comes at a time when the NPS at Manassas is hard pressed financially to fulfill its dual mandate of public education and resource management. Several historic structures require repair, and the tract recently acquired as a result of Congress' "legislative taking" in 1988 has not yet been fully restored. There also have been cutbacks of late in staffing and interpretive programs.

Manassas National Battlefield Park, as all other Civil War sites under NPS stewardship, serves two crucial purposes. It commemorates the Americans who struggled and died there, and it links us—their descendants—with them over time as it teaches us about the central event of our common past. The inappropriateness of recreational horseback riding within a fragile historic setting aside, it is unconscionable that limited public funds would be used to pamper a spoiled few while the park's true mission is thwarted. Please protest this potential abuse of public land and monies to the director of the NPS at the following address: James Ridenour, Director, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127. The bottom line here is quite simple: *if we are the problem, then we also must be the solution.*

March Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

Over nine thousand captured Federal soldiers were surrounded by filth, misery, and despair in the Confederacy's Salisbury Prison by the fall of 1864. Thirty to forty men were dying each day at Salisbury, which had been built around an abandoned textile mill in the west central part of North Carolina. Supplies of food and clothing were sorely inadequate. Because of overpopulation, many of the men were quartered outside—even in the bitter cold of winter. Confined there at that time were three Northern war correspondents: *New York Tribune* reporters Junius Browne and Albert Richardson and William Davis, correspondent for the *Cincinnati Gazette*.

The three were determined to find a way to escape their intolerable situation. "Tunnels," Browne wrote in his memoirs, "were my thought by day and my dream by night. I fancied that Adam must have climbed into Paradise through a tunnel." But it wasn't through a tunnel that their successful escape was achieved. "The 'Walk' of Correspondents Browne, Davis, and Richardson: 340 Miles to Freedom" was the title of Gerald A. Regan's address on March 8. Regan, a journalist and actor, spoke before 88 members and guests at the 499th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table.

It is often said that a journey begins with the first step. The three journalists, joined by Merchant Marine Captain Thomas Wolfe, took that first step toward freedom on the evening of December 18, 1864. Browne, Davis, and Wolfe—as nurses in the prison hospital—had passes to get them past the first row of guards, where medicine was stored. These passes were used to get themselves and Richardson through on that night of escape. Mistaken as Confederate doctors or nurses, they managed to pass through the second row of guards.

Observing this scene was an astonished Charles Thurston, a sergeant of the 6th New Hampshire Infantry. "Somehow," Regan related, "he had gotten hold of a uniform of a Confederate private, and in a bold move, he fell in behind two Confederate soldiers and headed toward the gate. He was intercepted by Lieutenant John Welborne, of the prison staff, who escorted him through the two sets of guards and let him spend the night at his place." Welborne was a member of the Sons of America, a secret, oath-bound society whose members assisted Union soldiers. The other men spent the night in the barn of a local Union sympathizer.

The next night the five men resumed their journey. Their escape route was to the west, across the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains. They were sick and malnourished and dressed in ragged clothing; yet they struggled on, driven by a greater fear of what lay behind than ahead.

After walking eleven miles, they stopped at the home of Lieutenant Welborne's sister, where they received directions to other "safe" houses along the route they would follow. Slave families were among those who fed and sheltered them. They were joined by others as they continued their trek, including two Confederate deserters. On January 8, they met up with fifteen men trying to reach Union lines and shortly thereafter by seventy others who were led by Dan Ellis, the preeminent Union scout in East Tennessee. For seven miles, they were led by Melvina Stevens, a teen-aged girl.

"The frozen earth cut through our boots like knives," Browne remembered, "and lacerated the tender flesh." Browne's motivation to press on was strong; like Richard-

son and Wolfe, he been confined at Libby and Thunder Castle prisons before coming to Salisbury. "I believed I could walk to the ends of the earth," he wrote, "if I could find the sweet goddess of liberty at the end of my long, long journey."

Browne described what it was like at the end of that 340-mile journey, which came on January 14, 1865: "Just before the dawn, the fires of the Union pickets crimsoned the somber sky in our front, and a few minutes of hurried striding brought us within the voice of the challenging sentinel, who asked, 'Who comes there?'" Browne said, "Friends without the countersign. Escaped prisoners from Salisbury." The sentinel replied, "All right, boys. Glad to see you!" Thus ended the nightmare. Three months later came Appomattox and the blessings of peace.

A new Round Table has recently been formed in New Jersey. Jay Jorgensen, president of the Robert E. Lee Civil War Round Table of Central New Jersey, welcomes any information or program suggestions from members of our Round Table. He may be contacted at 1162 St. George Avenue, Suite 194, Avenel, New Jersey 07001, (908) 283-0900 or (908) 396-4320 (evenings).

Joyce and Jerry Warshaw will give a talk about The Civil War Round Table at a luncheon meeting of the Evanston Rotary Club, at noon on May 30 at the North Shore Hotel, 1611 Chicago Avenue, in Evanston.

The following book review, by Stephen Davis, appeared in the April 1991 issue of *Blue & Gray* magazine.

***The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship*, by Barbara Hughett. The Civil War Round Table, 357 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60610, 206 (plus XVIII) pp. \$30.**

With all the Civil War seminars, reenactments, and other activities going on now, it seems odd that there was a time when Civil Warriors had no forum to get together and talk about the war. But that was indeed the case for a long time. Then, back in the 1930s, Chicago Civil War bookseller Ralph Newman and some of his regular customers began holding weekly lunches. These they changed in 1940 to monthly dinner meetings, featuring a speaker and some war topic. Thus was born The Civil War Round Table, and it's been going strong for fifty years. Not only that, but the CWRT of Chicago has spawned over a hundred other such groups for Civil War buffs all over the world.

The Chicago Round Table has thus always been special, so it is fitting that a special volume has been prepared to celebrate the group's semi-centennial. Barbara Hughett, a Round Tabler herself, has compiled a sparkling chronicle of this bustling club, highlighting its local organizers, program speakers, meetings, field trips, and other activities. Her story, based on interviews and Round Table records, is filled with anecdotes and is brightened further with frequent photos. Appendices include a complete list of topics and speakers at each of the Round Table meetings from 1940-1990, recipients of various awards, and even the "Ballad of General Hurlbut," sung at the Round Table meeting of October 19, 1973.

Hughett's Civil War Round Table is an excellent organizational history, very handsomely published. Like the group itself, the book is a model for others to follow.

The New Books compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Armstrong, Richard L. *25th Virginia Infantry & 9th Virginia Infantry Battalion*. H.E. Howard, Inc., Inc. 1991. \$16.95.

Bearss, Edwin C. *Rebel Victory at Vicksburg*. Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1989. \$24.95. Original of 1963.

Bailey, Anne J. *Between the Enemy and Texas: Parson's Texas Cavalry in the Civil War*. Texas Christian University Press. 1990. \$29.95.

Bryant, William O. *Cahaba Prison and the Sultana Disaster*. University of Alabama Press. 1990. \$21.95.

Hagood, Johnson. *Memoirs of the War of Secession*. J. J. Fox, 9 Precipice Road, Camden, SC 29090. 1989. \$30.00. Original of 1910.

Lappin, Zoe Von Ende, ed. *Yours in Love: The Birmingham Civil War Letters*. Kinseeker Publications, P.O. Box 184, Grawn, MI 49637. 1990. \$15.00.

Palfrey, Francis W. *The Antietam and Fredericksburg*. New introduction by A. Wilson Greene. 5th volume—Campaigns of the Civil War. Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1989. \$25.00. Original of 1882.

Parker, Sandra V. *Richmond Civil War Prisons*. H.E. Howard, Inc. 1991. \$16.95.

The history of The Round Table, The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship, by Barbara Hughett, which made its debut at the fiftieth anniversary celebration, is available for \$30 per copy. You may order the book by writing The Round Table (add \$3 for postage and handling), or purchase a copy at the April meeting or at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 357 West Chicago Avenue.

The Houston Civil War Round Table will honor Robert Younger of Morningside Press with its 1991 Frank E. Vandiver Award of Merit, which is presented each year to an individual or group for their contributions to preserving our Civil War heritage. The award will be presented to Younger on May 16.

Six letters written by Union General George A. Custer were discovered in the Rochester Public Library in Rochester, New York. The library purchased the letters twenty-six years ago for \$100, and then forgot about them.

The equestrian statue of Union General Winfield Scott Hancock at Gettysburg National Military Park has recently been restored, thanks to \$5000 raised by the Hancock Restoration Committee.

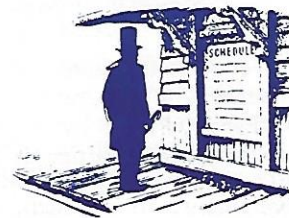
Schimmelfennig's Boutique

In addition to The Round Table history, the following items are available at each monthly meeting:

Lapel pins	\$ 5.00 each
Mugs	7.00 each
Meeting tapes	7.00 each
Fiftieth Anniversary photos	10.00 each

Proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the programs of The Civil War Round Table.

BULLETIN BOARD



Future Meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans (Buttons, 15th Floor), the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

April 12: A. Wilson Greene on "From Chancellorsville to Cemetery Hill: The Eleventh Corps at the First Day of Gettysburg."

May 2-5: Annual Battlefield Tour—Shiloh.

May 10: Michael Hughes on "The Chattanooga Campaign of 1863."

June 14: Jean Baker on "Parallel Lives: The Marriage of Abraham and Mary Lincoln."

New Members

Ronald Abernathy, Sr., 17314 S. University, South Holland, IL 60473, (708)339-0975

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Wayne Dworniczek, 1411 Woodland Lane, McHenry, IL 60050, (815)385-0998

Paul J. Feiss, 701 Potomac Ave., Naperville, IL 60565, (708)961-2458

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Coleman Tuggle, 214 E. Fuller, Hinsdale, IL 60521, (708)325-5905

Paul Wydra, 703 N. Gibbons, Arlington Heights, IL 60004, (708)394-9305

We recently learned of the death of Dr. Vernon Schick, a Round Table member for many years. Our sincere condolences are extended to his family.

The Tenth Annual Midwest Civil War Round Table Conference will be held on April 19-20 at the Omni Netherland Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati, Ohio. Speakers will include James I. Robertson, A. Wilson Greene, Alan Nolan, and our own Gordon Dammann. For information, contact Kevin Preece, (606) 491-3757.

The New England Civil War Conference will be held in Connecticut on June 21-23. Speakers include Edwin C. Bearss, Dennis Frye, Robert K. Krick, and Richard M. McMurry. For information, contact Dave Ward, The Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, Connecticut 06039.

A special exhibition opened in February at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. "Lincoln and His Contemporaries: Photographs by Mathew Brady from the National Portrait Gallery's Frederick Hill Meserve Collection" will continue through July 12, 1992.