

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVI, Number 2

Chicago, Illinois

October 1995

Nevins-Freeman Address: Richard Nelson Current on "Rediscovering the Civil War"

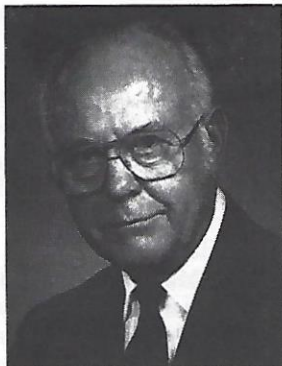
by Barbara Hughett

THE NEVINS-FREEMAN AWARD, named in honor of distinguished historians Allan Nevins and Douglas Southall Freeman, was established by The Civil War Round Table in 1974, to annually honor an individual who has made a significant contribution to our study and knowledge of the American Civil War. On October 13, the twenty-second annual Nevins-Freeman Award will be presented to renowned Civil War scholar and author Richard Nelson Current. The topic of his acceptance address will be "Rediscovering the Civil War."

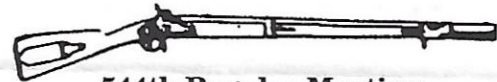
The central idea of Dr. Current's talk will be that people rediscover the war for themselves, and he will indicate and expand upon some of the things he has rediscovered himself during the past half-century. He will particularly focus on what he has rediscovered for himself regarding the following questions: Who was responsible for the first shot? How many Southerners fought for the Union? How did R. E. Lee motivate his men in battle? Did the Civil War lead to the rise of the United States as a world power?

Dr. Current, the University Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, is a native of Colorado Springs. After graduating from Oberlin College, he received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Tufts University and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. He has served on the faculties of several universities, including the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) and the University of Wisconsin (Madison). He has held the post of Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford University, Fulbright Professor at the University of Munich and the University of Chile (Santiago), and has been a lecturer under various auspices in India, Japan, Australia, and Antarctica. He currently resides in South Natick, Massachusetts.

His awards include the Bancroft Prize, which he received jointly with J. G. Randall, for *Lincoln the President: Last Full Measure* (1955), and the Logan Hay Medal of the Abraham Lincoln Association (1989). His numerous books



Richard Nelson Current



544th Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

Nevins-Freeman Address

Richard Nelson Current on "Rediscovering the Civil War"

☆ ☆ ☆

Friday, October 13

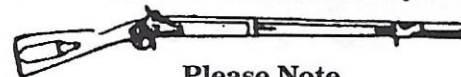
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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

\$25 - The Civil War Round Table of Chicago members
\$30 - Nonmembers

Entree: Sliced Sirloin of Beef with Black Truffle Sauce or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, October 11, by calling The Civil War Round Table offices at 312-341-1865. People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If you make a reservation and then find you cannot attend, please call to cancel or you will be billed for a dinner. **No last-minute orders for the Catch of the Day can be honored. The chef must have at least twenty-four hours notice.**

The Union League Club is located at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Federal Street. Federal Street runs north and south between Dearborn and Clark Streets. Parking is free at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club.

(1942), *Pine Logs and Politics* (1950), *Daniel Webster and the Rise of National Conservatism* (with J. G. Randall, 1955), *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (1958), *Lincoln and the First Shot* (1963), *John C. Calhoun* (1963), *The Carpetbag Governors* (1967), *Northernizing the South* (1983), *Speaking of Abraham Lincoln: The Man and His Mean-*

(continued on page 3)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
410 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 841
Chicago, Illinois 60605-1402
Phone: 312-341-1865
Fax: 312-341-1863

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Founding Newsletter Editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968

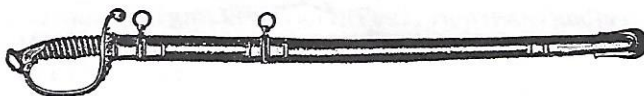
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Picnic	Paul Klekner Robert Dawson

The only requirement for membership in The Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 410 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 841, Chicago, Illinois 60605-1402.



BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

A 250-acre parcel has been added to the Port Hudson State Commemorative Area. The land, which was purchased by the Conservation Fund and the Port Hudson Campaign Committee, includes the ground over which the 1st and 3rd Louisiana Native Guard Regiments made their assault on May 27, 1863, during the siege of Port Hudson. The assault was the first use by the U.S. Army of African-American soldiers at regimental strength in a major assault. It occurred seven weeks before the charge of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry at Fort Wagner. Adding this property to the state commemorative area will insure its preservation and enhance the interpretation of that aspect of the siege.

Two important Civil War sites in Loudoun County, Virginia, have been awarded federal transportation grants totalling nearly \$250,000. A total of \$192,000 has been designated to save Mount Zion Church outside Aldie, and another \$56,000 to landscape two spots along the historic Snickersville Turnpike, including a corner where a critical action of the June 1863 battle of Aldie was fought. The funds were provided by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act.

Mount Zion Church, whose walls are buckling and which is in danger of toppling over, was used by John S. Mosby as his very first rendezvous point with his band of rangers in 1862. In July of 1864 a battle took place around the church between Mosby and federal cavalry, and the church is thought to have served as a hospital. A dozen federals are buried in an adjoining graveyard. Loudoun County is considering using the church as a tourism center and a site for living history events.

The Civil War Round Table of Austin, Texas, has established the Dan and Marilyn Laney Prize for Civil War Battlefield Preservation. The prize will go to the author of a book that best promotes the heritage and preservation of endangered battlefields of the War Between the States. Any book on the subject of the Civil War might qualify for consideration, but it must concern itself directly with a specific battlefield that stands in need of protection, improvement, or enlargement in the face of neglect, misuse, and development. The first award will be made for a book published in 1996. The winning author will be invited to appear as a guest speaker before the Austin Round Table. For further information, contact the Austin Civil War Round Table, 2112 Rio Grande, Austin, Texas 78705.

The Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg has purchased six acres at Little Round Top. The site is on the east side of Little Round Top where Co. B of the 20th Maine deployed along a stone wall. During the assault on the main body of the regiment by the 15th Alabama, Co. B opened fire into the flank of the Confederates. The property is near the 20th Maine monument. The Friends are also considering acquisition of an easement on an adjoining twenty-four acres. The Park Service has been negotiating for the easement but has no funds to complete the deal.

☪ SEPTEMBER MEETING ☪

by Larry Gibbs

At the 543rd meeting of The Civil War Round Table on September 8, Grady McWhiney, professor of American history at Texas Christian University, offered a provocative address on Confederate General Braxton Bragg. Speaking before 135 members and guests, McWhiney challenged several perceptions on the life and significance of Bragg.

Most historians have been relentless in their harsh criticism of Bragg, referring to him as incompetent and inflexible. He has been described as "one of the most abased generals of the Civil War." Historian Richard McMurry claimed that Braxton Bragg "lost his nerve and panicked in battle." However, even his most severe critic will indicate that Bragg was a great organizer. Furthermore, McWhiney proclaimed that "only Robert E. Lee exerted more authority in the Confederate military effort." After Bragg left active service on November 30, 1863, he became a chief military advisor to President Jefferson Davis for the remainder of the war.

Have Civil War historians given Braxton Bragg his complete due? McWhiney argued that the historiography concerning Bragg's importance to history has changed over the past decade. "Rather than defend Bragg," McWhiney declared, "I have tried to understand him." Certainly Bragg "made hasty, unwise decisions on the battlefield. He became too engrossed in detailed tactics rather than the overall strategy. He did not learn from his mistakes and had poor support from his staff." Bragg, according to McWhiney, exercised little imagination or common sense in rash attacks on the battlefield. "As a result Bragg, as a commander, only achieved one major military success—Chickamauga (September 19-20, 1863)," stated McWhiney.

Bragg's strengths as a commander were not properly used, asserted McWhiney. At the outset of the conflict, few doubted his abilities. He rose from brigadier general to general quickly. He organized his troops very well with good discipline. According to McWhiney, Bragg contributed to the Confederate cause as well as to the eventual Confederate defeat. McWhiney explained that "the irony of Rebel military history was that Braxton Bragg was not properly placed in a position where his talents could have been used better." In McWhiney's opinion, perhaps Bragg could have been a tremendous inspector general or possibly chief-of-staff.

To counteract Bragg's poor reputation, historians recently have concentrated on his high moral character, his poor health, and his disloyal and ineffective staff members. This more balanced view emphasizes Bragg's poor health which may have contributed to his personality clashes with other Rebel officers and his impulsive battlefield decisions. A revised view of Bragg also indicates that his staff was disloyal, contributing strongly to his reputation as an ineffective general. Leonidas Polk, opined McWhiney, deserves strong criticism for disloyalty toward Bragg. In letters to Davis, Polk undermined Bragg. James Longstreet, Joseph Wheeler, and Nathan Bedford Forrest also received stinging criticism by McWhiney. These officers failed Bragg at important times. McWhiney proclaimed that "Bragg should not be singled out for sole criticism in Rebel defeats under his command."

In conclusion, said McWhiney, "Bragg was cursed by an excess of hidden weaknesses because he was a good man in the wrong place." McWhiney stated that "Bragg was neither as outstanding as his 1861 reports indicated, nor as incompetent as later reports suggested." Bragg lacked the stamina and will to prevail in battlefield strategy. However, Confederate leadership needed Bragg's organizational skills.

RICHARD NELSON CURRENT (from page 1)

ing for Our Times (1983), *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (1988), and *Lincoln's Loyalists: Soldiers from the Confederacy* (1992). He received a diploma of honor from Lincoln Memorial University in 1960, an honorary degree from Lincoln College in 1985, and is a former president of the Southern Historical Association. His numerous publications have made him a leading interpreter of our Sixteenth President, and he is often referred to as "the dean of Lincoln scholars."

Dr. Current is presently finishing a biography of Loie Fuller, one of the most famous dancers in the world, who was born in Hinsdale and brought up in Chicago. There is no connection with Lincoln or the Civil War—except that she was born during the war (1862) in an inn where Lincoln supposedly stopped on his way between Chicago and Springfield.

Previous Nevins-Freeman Honorees:

Bruce Catton, 1974	John Y. Simon, 1985
Ralph G. Newman, 1975	Harold M. Hyman, 1986
T. Harry Williams, 1976	James T. Hickey, 1987
Lloyd D. Miller, 1977	Robert K. Krick, 1988
Bell I. Wiley, 1978	Mark E. Neely, Jr., 1989
E. B. Long, 1979	Marshall D. Krolick, 1990
Edwin C. Bearss, 1980	Gary W. Gallagher, 1991
James I. Robertson, 1981	Shelby Foote, 1992
Frank E. Vandiver, 1982	Stephen B. Oates, 1993
John Hope Franklin, 1983	Alan T. Nolan, 1994
Richard B. Harwell, 1984	

Former President Glen N. Wiche gave the second annual Ralph Geoffrey Newman Lecture at the Harold Washington Library Center on Sunday, September 10. His topic was "The Prairie President and the City: Abraham Lincoln and Chicago."

The Lincoln Museum, created by the Lincoln National Corporation in 1928 and maintained by the Lincoln National Life Foundation, opened its new facility in Fort Wayne, Indiana, last month with a gala celebration. Former United States President Gerald R. Ford gave the keynote address for the Inaugural Opening on September 21. The Sixteenth Annual R. Gerald McMurry Lecture was presented by Dr. David Herbert Donald on September 22. The museum, which houses the largest privately-owned Lincoln collection in the world, has eleven new galleries—including several computerized displays and interactive exhibits—to interpret and preserve the history and legacy of Abraham Lincoln. For additional information, contact The Lincoln Museum, 200 East Berry, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801, 219-455-3864.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



For the listing of books, see the special supplement to the *Newsletter*.

NEW MEMBERS

- Sandra Armstrong, 3524 Highway Avenue, Highland, IN 46322, 219-838-2059
 Patricia Aylward, 3180 N. Lake Shore Drive, #8-C, Chicago, IL 60657, 312-472-8565
 Norman Bannor, 6933 N. Kedzie, #302, Chicago, IL 60645, 312-973-1078
 Lisa Bathey, 1 S. Ingersoll Lane, Villa Park, IL 60181
 Caroline N. Beebe, 1294 Asbury Avenue, Winnetka, IL 60093, 708-446-9135
 Madge Bennett, 644 S. Stone Avenue, La Grange, IL 60525, 708-354-5665
 Scott R. Britton, 33 N. La Salle Street #2800, Chicago, IL 60602, 312-871-6292
 Bob Calder, 1509 Asbury Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201, 708-864-1299
 Darlene Campione, 5650 Deerpath Lane, Downers Grove, IL 60516, 708-960-0764
 Lew Campione, 5650 Deerpath Lane, Downers Grove, IL 60516, 708-960-0764
 Neil Dubner, Serendipity Farm, RR 2, Box 207, Dublin, VA 24084, 703-674-1230
 Michael B. Fodor, 1928 Briarcliffe Boulevard, Wheaton, IL 60187, 708-653-4731
 Scott Graham, 2538 W. Logan Boulevard, #2, Chicago, IL 60647, 312-292-1449
 Kevin Johnston, 510 E. 30th, Davenport, IA 52803, 319-323-5009
 Catherine O'Flaherty, 9357 S. Avers Avenue, Evergreen Park, IL 60642, 708-423-4897
 Major James N. Pritzker, 1309 Sutton Place, Chicago, IL 60610, 312-951-9011
 Margaret M. Sampson, 7355 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626, 312-761-6554
 George E. Sweeney, Jr., 861 East Avenue, Park Ridge, IL 60068, 708-823-0042
 Idamae Unger, 1601 Habberton, Park Ridge, IL 60068, 708-825-4175
 Richard E. Walker, 1520 Franklin Avenue, River Forest, IL 60305, 708-771-5682

Schimmelfennig Boutique

The history of The Round Table, *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship*, by Barbara Hughett, is available for \$30 per copy. You may purchase the book at the monthly meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

In addition to The Round Table history and *The Continuing Civil War*, the essays from the Fiftieth Anniversary Proceedings, the following items are available at each monthly meeting: Lapel pins, Mugs, Meeting Tapes, Civil War Buff posters and T-Shirts, CWRT T-shirts, polos, and sweatshirts.

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 Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

October 13: Nevins-Freeman Address: Richard Nelson Current on "Rediscovering the Civil War"

November 10: David Herbert Donald on: "The Most Shut-Mouth Man: The Reticence of Abraham Lincoln"

December 8: William C. (Jack) Davis on "Davis, Johnston, and Beauregard: A Triple Play that Crippled the Confederacy"

January 12: Brigadier General Harold W. Nelson on "Teaching Generalship on Civil War Battlefields"

February 16: James Ogden on "The Battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga" (Please note: this is the **third** Friday of the month.)

March 8: Brian S. Wills on "The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Battle from the Start"

April 12: John C. (Jack) Waugh on "The Class of 1846"

May 1-5: Annual Battlefield Tour: Chickamauga and Chattanooga

May 10: Charles P. Roland on "Reflections on Lee: A Historian's Assessment"

June 14: Michael W. Kauffman on "The Lincoln Assassination — The Investigation Continues"

The **Tenth Annual Lincoln Colloquium** will be held on Saturday, October 21, at the University of Illinois at Springfield (formerly Sangamon State University). This year's theme is "Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom." Speakers will include David Herbert Donald, John Y. Simon, Harold Holzer, Edna Greene Medford, and David E. Long. The event is chaired each year by George L. Painter, historian at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.; the program will run from 10:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m. The \$35 per-person fee includes a luncheon. The annual event is cosponsored by the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Eastern National Park and Monument Association, Sangamon State Historical Society, the Lincoln Group of Illinois, and the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Checks should be made payable to Eastern National Park and Monument Association, with the word "colloquium" written on the "memo" line of the check. You may send your registration fee to: Lincoln Colloquium, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, 413 South Eighth Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1905. For additional information, call Tim Townsend at 217-492-4097.

The **lunchtime Union League Club Civil War Round Table** will hold its next meeting at noon on Monday, October 23, at the Union League Club. Frank Patton and Marshall Krolick will continue their presentation on the first year of the Civil War. The cost of the luncheon is \$15; to make reservations, call 435-5000.