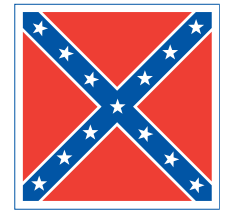


THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXVII, Number 1

Chicago, Illinois

September, 2006



653rd REGULAR MEETING

MICHAEL KAUFFMAN

ON

AMERICAN BRUTUS

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Friday, September 8

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA
350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

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

\$30 - Members/Non-members

Entrée:

London Broil.
Catch of the Day.
Vegetarian Plate
or Fruit Plate

PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservation by **MONDAY, Sept. 4**, by calling 630-460-1865. We now also have our online dinner reservation system at <http://www.thecwrt.org/commiss.htm>. Reservations made after Wednesday, Sept. 6, will be surcharged \$5.

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.

We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:30 p.m., for a charge of \$5 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is \$8 with a validated parking sticker.

MICHAEL KAUFFMAN

- on -

“American Brutus”

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

On the night of April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot by an assassin as he sat in Ford’s Theater in Washington. At almost the same moment, Lincoln’s secretary of state was savagely attacked in his home a few blocks away. Investigation soon revealed a coordinated conspiracy, headed by renowned actor John Wilkes Booth, to murder the heads of the executive branch of the Federal government. At the time, and to many since 1865, Booth seemed an unlikely head of such a history-changing conspiracy.

On September 8th Michael Kauffman will speak about the challenges of studying John Wilkes Booth, one of history’s most reviled, and fascinating, characters. Though much has been written about the killer of Abraham Lincoln, Booth’s image has always been formed around historical accounts of the assassination, rather than on contemporary views before and after the shooting. By conducting a day-to-day, hour-by-hour study of the fatal conspiracy, Kauffman reveals Booth as a cold-blooded, cunning man whose



Michael Kauffman

intrigues have misled the public. His examination also uncovers some surprising twists in the traditional story of the assassination.

Political historian **Michael W. Kauffman** has written numerous articles on the Lincoln assassination, and has been a guide for the John Wilkes Booth Escape Route tours for more than twenty years. He has appeared on A&E, C-SPAN, The Learning Channel, the History Channel, and the Discovery Channel. In 1995 he testified as an expert witness in the Booth exhumation hearings held by the Baltimore

Circuit Court. He is the editor of Samuel B. Arnold’s *Memoirs of a Lincoln Conspirator*, and more recently (2004) he wrote *American Brutus: John Wilkes*

Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies, a book which won the Walt Whitman Award for the best Civil War-related book of the year. Mr. Kauffman will be one of the guides on our Round Table’s 2007 battlefield tour.



Battlefield Preservation Update

BY DAVID ZUCKER

Beauvoir Damage. Beauvoir, the postwar house of the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, was badly damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Water rushed in and the porch collapsed. With the columns gone, the front of the roof fell away. As a result, furniture, paintings, and other relics were soaked with rain and salt water. Two small out-buildings, the Hayes Cottage (which was a guest house), and the Library cottage (where Davis worked on his memoirs), were swept away by the storm. A former veterans' hospital which had been turned into a Confederate museum was destroyed. The Jefferson Davis Presidential Museum suffered severe damage with much of its holdings scattered into the woods.

Meetings are being held to determine if FEMA (and thus us taxpayers) will cover any part of the restoration costs. Grants totaling \$600,000 from the Federal Government's Save America's Treasures Program and the State of Mississippi have been received, along with a check for \$25,000 from developer Donald Trump. The Winterthur Museum of Delaware assisted with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and is also consulting with the Beauvoir staff on the restoration efforts. The staff hopes to reopen Beauvoir by June 2008, the bi-centennial of Davis's birth. However, the rebuilding of the cottages and library may be finished later. More information can be found in the July-August issue of *Preservation Magazine*.

"Slaughter pen" deal is set to close. The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) is acquiring a key part of the battlefield of Fredericksburg. The \$12 million deal on the 205 acre Pierson farm closed in June. The farm is on Tidewater Trail east of Shannon Airport and is adjacent to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. The deal is the largest in the history

of the CWRT and was done in record time.

The farm has been at the top of the preservation property wish-list for years. CWRT president Jim Lighthizer has described the "Slaughter pen" this way: "Hands down, this is the single most important piece of ground" connected with the battle. "If you don't have this, you don't have the Battle of Fredericksburg." The "Slaughter pen" is a key part of the area on the Confederate right where Union forces assaulted Stonewall Jackson's Corps. Of the 9,000 men killed or wounded on the battle's southern end, some 5,000 met their fate on the farm, with five Union soldiers earning Medals of Honor there. While the National Park Service has more than 8,300 acres of historically significant land from the four major battles fought in the area, important sites are outside the park boundaries and are at risk of being developed.

Gettysburg Casino. The Adams County (Gettysburg) Chamber of Commerce may decide to terminate its public support of a proposed casino to be built near Gettysburg. A survey of the Chamber's members closely reflected a near tie vote of the Chamber's Board of Directors last April. At that meeting, the Board voted 7 to 6 in favor of a declaration of support for the project. In late May, a group started to collect signatures seeking a special meeting to reverse the Chamber Board's previous action. The Board and the petitioners agreed to survey its members. When the ballots were counted, 214 of the Chamber's nearly 600 members had cast a vote, 59 to maintain support, 68 to take a neutral position, and 62 to oppose the project.

Fortress Monroe. Concerns have been raised about the future of Fortress Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. The historic army post,

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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 Membership Committee, 9670 N. Dee #205 Des Plaines, Illinois 60016, or contact webmaster@www.thecivilwar.org.

built in the early 19th century, has been closed by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Half the land, mostly infill on the 508 acre base, is owned by the Defense Department, with the other half reverting to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

But so far Virginia state political leaders haven't paid much attention to the fort's future. That job has now fallen to the city of Hampton, a city struggling to meet its current expenses which suddenly finds itself with a valuable property and a national treasure in need of protection. Upkeep of the fort is likely to cost \$15 million per year. Plus Hampton will lose tax revenue from the fort's work force, 1,000 of whom live in Hampton.

The good news is that the city has started the planning process for the fort's future and appears to be doing so on an open and accessible basis. The bad news is that the city has decided that redevelopment comes first, and historic preservation, second.

Hampton's Mayor, Ross Kearney, has committed to protect Fort Monroe's integrity. However, some question Hampton's ability to protect the fort, feeling that state and/or federal protection is needed.

JUNE MEETING

BY LARRY GIBBS

On June 9th George Rable gave an interesting speech entitled "Fredericksburg and the Larger Civil War Universe" before 75 members and guests at the 652nd regular meeting of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago. Rable studied under famed Civil War historian T. Harry Williams at LSU, and is currently a professor at the University of Alabama. His recent book on the battle of Fredericksburg, *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!*, was the basis of his presentation.

Rable discussed the history of the battle, emphasizing the important, but almost entirely ignored, aftermath of the battle. A wide variety of people are associated with the Battle of Fredericksburg (Dec. 13, 1862), but modern Civil War historians have virtually ignored the battle. Rable declared, "Fredericksburg was a Confederate victory but a Union story. Fredericksburg had horrific bloodletting but accomplished nothing, according to most historians." Although Fredericksburg is a depressing battle to study, Rable advanced the case that it was a profoundly important battle.

A central character in the Fredericksburg dram was the Union army commander, General Ambrose Burnside. Modest and likable, Burnside repeatedly claimed he wasn't prepared for the position of army commander. Rable suggested that Burnside's first mistake was to reorganize his army into three "grand divisions", then to cross the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg. Burnside wanted pontoon bridging material to be available when his army reached the river, but due to administrative foul ups, the bridging material arrived late. Thus the river crossing, and the subsequent battle, had to be delayed. Many questions have arisen over Burnside's decisions. Should he have ordered the army to cross early, when the Confederates had only an observation force opposing him, despite the lack of pontoons? Should he then have crossed upstream or downstream from Fredericksburg, rather than directly at the city?

In another blunder, General Burnside didn't properly explain his battle plan to his subordinates. This blunder led to

command confusion. Fredericksburg was actually two distinct battles. Burnside intended the main Union attack to be on the Confederate right, in the hopes of splitting Robert E. Lee's army. The cautious attack penetrated a gap in the Confederate right and achieved initial success. However, Confederate counterattacks at the "Slaughter pen" farm repulsed the Union forces, after which this phase of the battle ended.

Most Civil War buffs think of the attack on Marye's Heights, the second phase of the battle, as the "real" Battle of Fredericksburg. Burnside ordered repeated attacks on James Longstreet's Confederate corps, holding the Confederate left with a magnificent defensive position along the sunken stone wall below Marye's Heights. The Federals faced a 500 yard advance along open, unsheltered ground, under withering fire from Confederate artillery and musket fire. After several successive attacks failed, Burnside finally ordered the costly assaults stopped. Rable asserted, "Most (Federals) were veterans, so they obeyed orders. They were caught between duty and fear, so they advanced."

Union losses were staggering: over 12,000 casualties with 1,200 dead and many more missing. The Confederate suffered 5,200 casualties with 600 dead. Hundreds more blue-clad troops were left on the field of battle amidst screams of the wounded. Eventually, even the stubborn Burnside called it quits. "By December 16, Burnside did his best tactical movement of the campaign, when Union forces achieved a masterful retreat," observed Rable. Lee had won a frustratingly incomplete victory.

Rable proclaimed, "The battle was a prelude to the significance of Fredericksburg." Rable believes that Civil War historians need to pay more attention to factors such as weather, rumors, battle conditions, topography, medical facilities, autopsies, battlefield news, telegraphic communication, politics, sense of patriotism, and memory of sacrifice. For example, how can historians use rumors to detect morale?

What were the general physical conditions of the troops? Why did soldiers pay intense attention to the first deaths in camp and battle? How many soldiers had post-traumatic stress syndrome, and how (if at all) was it treated? Why did troops on both sides think that Fredericksburg was a larger Union defeat than it was in reality?

Reading the first telegraphic report of Fredericksburg, President Lincoln thought the battle was going well for the Union. As the reality of the stunning defeat set in, Lincoln responded, "If there is a worse place than Hell, I am in it!" Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, worried that a discouraged Lincoln would renege on the Emancipation Proclamation, a worry that proved groundless.

Union soldiers exhibited exemplary patriotism in their reactions to Fredericksburg. The rank and file of the Army of the Potomac blamed incompetent Union generals for the defeat, but they thought that they had done their duty and fought their best. Union soldiers overcame the demoralization and despair of many politicians, civilians and even generals. Looking at the bigger picture, one Federal soldier wrote that if the Union failed in the Civil War, the hopes of millions around the world would suffer. Concluded Rable, "Fredericksburg has a fascination after 140 years for us today!"



CIVIL WAR COLLECTORS SHOW

Coming again to the DuPage County Fairgrounds is the semi-annual Midwest Civil War Collectors Show & Sale. Items connected with the Civil War, Revolutionary War and Spanish-American War will be on display and for sale, along with book dealers selling old and new books. The show is Sept. 16th, 2006 at the fairgrounds (at County Farm & Manchester in Wheaton), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and admission is \$6. For more information call (715) 526-9769 or go online at www.zurkopromotions.com.

GRAPESHOT



CWRT ex-president **Rob Girardi** will speak on "Civil War Engineers" at the Northern Illinois CWRT Friday, Sept. 29th at 7:30 p.m. at the Arlington Heights Public Library.

Tour reminder—our 2007 CWRT Battlefield Tour will be May 2-6. We will be visiting "War Time Washington DC and the Booth Escape Trail".

CWRT Archivist **Jackie Wilson** would ask anybody with possible material for the CWRT archives to contact her at jawgen@comcast.net.

The 23rd **International Winston Churchill Conference** will be held Sept. 27-Oct. 1, 2006 at the Drake Hotel in Chicago. The theme will be "Churchill in the Land of Lincoln". Civil War historians Harold Holzer and Frank Williams will be among the presenters, comparing Churchill and his handling of World War II with Lincoln and his handling of the Civil War. For more information, contact Philip Larson at www.winstonchurchill.org.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at bsallardice1@peoplepc.com or (847) 375-8305.

SCHIMMELFENNIG BOUTIQUE

Lapel pins, Meeting Tapes and other items are on sale at each monthly meeting, with proceeds to go to battlefield preservation. There is also a book raffle, with proceeds again going to benefit battlefield preservation.

A silent auction is held at each monthly dinner meeting, for books donated by Ralph G. Newman and other members. The minimum bid is \$5 per book, with a minimum raise of \$1 per bid. Five minutes after the conclusion of the speaker's presentation, bidding will close and the highest bid is the winner of each book. Proceeds benefit battlefield preservation.

Dues Reminder—It's that time of year again, to get in your dues for the CWRT's 2006-2007 year.

President **Nancy Bates** would like to personally thank **Bob Miller** for the fine job he did as President in the 2005-2006 year. A donation to The Friends of Raymond Battlefield has been made in Bob's name.

IN MEMORIUM

The Chicago Civil War Round Table lost a friend this summer. Longtime member and ex-President **Marv Sanderman** passed away June 28th. In helping out with tours, in meetings, in everyday life, Marv's hard work, ebullient personality and seemingly endless supply of stories made everyone his friend. We offer our sincere condolences to Roslyn and the entire Sanderman family.

Bulletin Board



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

Sept. 8: **Michael Kauffman**, "American Brutus"

Oct. 13 (Nevins Freeman Address): **Dr. Gordon Dammann**, "Father of Battlefield Medicine—Dr. Jonathan Letterman"

Nov. 10: **Bob O'Neill**, "Eastern Cavalry"

Dec. 8: **Tom Chaffin**, "CSS Shenandoah, Ship of Gray"

Jan. 12, 2007: **Kurt Carlson**, "Chicago During the Civil War"

Feb. 9: **Dan Paterson**, "A Longstreet Pictorial History"

March 9: **Pete Cozzens**, "The Valley Campaign"

April 13: **Robert E. L. Krick**, Topic to be determined

May 11: **Rebecca Cumins**, "Battlefield Preservation"

June 9: **John Coski**, "The Confederate Battle Flag"

FORD TO APPEAR IN "MANHUNT"

Harrison Ford has signed on to play Col. Everton Conger in the upcoming movie "Manhunt". The movie is based on the acclaimed James L. Swanson book ("Manhunt") about the search for President Lincoln's assassin.