BRUCE CATTON TO RECEIVE NEVINS-FREEMAN AWARD—JUNE 14, 1974

A most historic and gala evening is in store for Round Table members, their ladies and guests on June 14, 1974. On that occasion, the Civil War Round Table will inaugurate what is to be an annual event, the presentation of the Nevins-Freeman Award to an individual who has made a distinguished contribution to our study and knowledge of the history and heritage of the Civil War. The award ceremonies, honoring the first recipient, Bruce Catton, will include remarks by our founder, Ralph Newman, our Past President and Mr. Catton’s collaborator, E. B. “Pete” Long, Samuel S. Vaughn, President of Doubleday Publishing Co., and others, as well as a response by Mr. Catton. The evening’s program will also feature the bestowal of several Honorary Life Memberships, as recently conferred by the Executive Committee, as well as our Installation of Officers. The site for these festivities, as well as the dinner that will precede the program, will be the impressive Grand Army of the Republic Rooms, located in the Chicago Public Library at Randolph Street and Michigan Avenue.

Allan Nevins (1890-1971) and Douglas Southall Freeman (1886-1953) were both Honorary Life Members of The Civil War Round Table. During their lifetimes these two journalist-historians made significant and impressive contributions to the literature of American history and particularly to that of the American Civil War, 1861-1865. We were privileged to have both of these gentlemen and scholars in our midst on numerous occasions. Dr. Nevins appeared as a speaker before our organization and generously shared his valuable time in providing counsel and companionship to many of us. Dr. Freeman made his last speech about the War Between the States when he addressed us on the occasion of our Battlefield Tour to Richmond in 1953. He also was a most gracious host, entertaining us at his home on the last day we were in the former Confederate capital.

Allan Nevins was born in Southern Illinois, at Camp Point, and received both his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Illinois. After spending his early professional career as a war correspondent and editor for several New York newspapers, he turned to teaching. In 1931 he became the DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, a chair he was to occupy for twenty-seven years. In 1957 he followed Horace Greeley’s advice and accepted the position of Senior Research Associate at the Huntington Library in California. Here he was to remain until shortly before his death. Among Dr. Nevins’ numerous awards were two Pulitzer Prizes for biography and the Bancroft Prize for history. He received the latter in recognition of the first two volumes of his brilliant study of the war, “Ordeal of the Union.”

The career of Douglas Southall Freeman closely paralleled that of Dr. Nevins, both in profession and outstanding achievement. Dr. Freeman, who was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, received a B.A. from Richmond College and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. During his thirty-five years as Editor of the Richmond News Leader, he also spent many years on the faculties of some of our most outstanding universities. In 1934 he received a Pulitzer Prize for “R. E. Lee” which, along with his “Lee’s Lieutenants” written in 1944, still stand today as the definitive works on the great Confederate general and his army.

What finer example than these could we have by which to measure the candidates for the highest honor The Civil War Round Table can bestow? By giving the Award the names of Dr. Nevins and Dr. Freeman we have indicated the high (Continued on Page 4)
them and knowing their dreams, there is no question that they will learn and they will succeed.

And know them, I am proud to say, I do. Over the years a relationship has developed between God and I, and between our wives, which, to me, cannot be simply described as “friendship.” He and I have walked the battlefields together, sat in each other’s libraries, and spent money (too much) together at The Gettysburg Sutler. But on all these, and many other occasions, the talk has not been just of Civil War, it has been of life itself. Thus I have come to know Gordon and Marilyn Whitney and I am a better person for it, for maybe part of their dedication to our American heritage, their spirit, and their ability to strive toward their goals has rubbed off on me. At least, I hope so.

As I wish them well for the future, I know that one thing the miles of distance will not alter is the relationship we share, a companionship which developed from a common interest and because a group in Chicago was organized to pursue that interest. In that realization, maybe I have learned what Ralph Newman and our other founders already knew in 1941; that such a relationship, such companionship is really what this Round Table is all about.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The first item on the agenda of the Executive Committee at its meeting on May 10, 1974, was the selection of the site of the 1975 Battlefield Tour. While the choice itself, Richmond, was almost unanimous, a full discussion was had pertaining to the type of activities and programs the tour should include. It was finally decided to leave such matters to the recommendation of the Tour Chairman, but many interesting suggestions were put forth for their consideration. In-coming President Ward Smidt then announced the appointment of Brooks Davis, Bob Walter and Terry Carr as Tour Chairmen for next year.

Among the other matters approved were an increase in the membership of the Board of Trustees from six to eight, the design of the Nevins-Freeman Award, and the designation of the Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner as our annual Ladies Night event. A committee, to be headed by Jerry Edelstein, was appointed to study the question of the location of our meetings for the 1974-1975 year. The meeting concluded with reports by the Treasurer and the Chairmen of the Research Center Fund Committee.

MAY MEETING

A reunion with an old friend, the election of officers for the coming year, and a guest quizmaster were just a few of the highlights of our May meeting, which was attended by 68 members and guests. In our usual “democratic” fashion, the slate of officers proposed in April by the Nominating Committee was elected unanimously. Our new leaders are headed by Ward Smidt, as President, and Jerry Edelstein, as Senior Vice President. The quiz for that night, prepared by Past President Warren Reeder, challenged our expertise in local Civil War affairs as well as general knowledge of the war. As the scores attest, we did not meet the challenge head on, thus indicating the need for some serious studying over the summer.

The “old friend” was, of course, our speaker for the evening, Albert P. Scheller, seasonal historian at the Vicksburg National Battlefield Park. Most of us had not seen Al since he and Ed Bearss guided us through the Vicksburg area on our 1972 Battlefield Tour. The memory of that visit two years ago led us to anticipate a most informative and enjoyable talk and, in his vocal re-creation of the Red River Campaign of 1864, Al certainly lived up to our expectations.

He began by pointing out that the campaign was the product of “Olds Brains” Halley who felt it would accomplish three basic purposes, the establishment of a solid base for
loyal federal governments in Louisiana and Texas, the securing of a supply of cotton for New England mills, and the presence of a federal military force in Texas to deter expansion by Maximilian. Both Grant and Banks felt an expedition to capture Mobile would be more beneficial to the war effort, but they were overruled by Halleck. The original plan called for a combination of troops from the Department of the Gulf and from Union forces near Vicksburg to cross Louisiana, unite with a federal army from Arkansas under Steele and then, together, drive for Shreveport. Support and transport were to be provided by Admiral Porter’s river fleet.

The advance, under A. J. Smith, set out on March 10, 1864 and by the 14th had captured Fort De Russey. Confederate troops under Richard Taylor then abandoned Alexandria, which they did not have the strength to defend, and the Navy occupied the city on March 16th. Banks’ army did not reach there until nine days later because of bad weather. Banks now under pressure to move rapidly, as Grant ordered the return of Smith’s troops by mid-April, so he marched immediately for Grand Ecore which he reached on April 2. There he was faced with three choices as to the best route to Shreveport. Instead of going by water or by the river road, he chose the inland route. This was a mistake as it deprived Banks of naval supply and support.

The federal march from Grand Ecore reached to within three miles of Mansfield where, on April 8, Taylor decided, against the orders of his superior, Kirby Smith, to make a stand. Banks hesitated, so, after waiting until 4:00 for the Northerners to move, Taylor assaulted both Union flanks. The ferocity of his attack caused a complete rout of the Federal line within forty-five minutes. The Confederates pushed on for almost six miles until they were stopped by a reserve line established by the XIX Corps. The next day Banks retreated to Pleasant Hill where he deployed.

Taylor, by a rapid march, was in position to attack by 3:00 but was compelled to rest his troops because of their exhausted condition. His attack, at 5:00, was misdirected and failed to hit his objective, the federal left flank. Thus, he presented his own flank to A. J. Smith who was prompt to take advantage of the opportunity. The Confederate right was rolled up and their entire line gave way just as Kirby Smith arrived on the field. He ordered a retreat back to Mansfield. Banks’ original thought was to pursue, but he let his subordinates persuade him to return to Grand Ecore, much to the disgust of A. J. Smith.

Taylor’s objections, Kirby Smith divided the Confederate forces, taking a portion with him to unsuccessfully chase Steele who, bogged down by a supply shortage, never even came close to uniting with Banks. Taylor, with only six thousand troops left, nevertheless pursued Banks who, rejoining Porter at Grand Ecore, continued on to Alexandria. En route, the Confederates harassed the retreating Federals, but no major engagement occurred. On the river, the ironclad Eastport was ordered destroyed after striking a mine and an underwater raft. Low water prevented the fleet from passing the falls above Alexandria and threatened the capture of the ships. However, Union engineers under Major Bailey of Wisconsin constructed a series of dams which raised the level of the river, thus permitting Porter to pass.

On May 16 Banks evacuated the city after burning it and, by May 20, he had recrossed the Mississippi, thus ending the campaign. In summary, Al stated that in addition to failing to achieve any of its three objectives, the campaign had adverse effects on the Union cause in other areas. It delayed the advance on Mobile for ten months, thus freeing fifteen thousand Southern troops for duty in Georgia, and also deprived Sherman of A. J. Smith’s soldiers for the Atlanta campaign. Thus, the Red River Campaign can truly be referred to as one of the most monumental Federal failures of the entire war.

*********

TO THE CAMP FOLLOWERS (LADIES)

At the May meeting of the Camp Followers, the Krolick tapes were most thoroughly enjoyed. We found there were no time lapses in these tapes and they were chock full of information. We all had quite a good laugh at Marshall’s “roasting”, but thereafter we settled down to listen to his very good speech on a controversial subject, his opinion that Robert E. Lee was the complete cause of the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg.

This was my last meeting as the president of the Camp Followers and I was extremely proud of the quality of the programs we had. So many members of the Round Table including, Ward Smidt, Don Skorski, Elmer Underwood and Mike Lerner spoke before our group, as well as some members of the Camp Followers, Ella Clausius and Roberta Krolick.

June will be a special meeting at which we will join the Round Table in their special award night. It will be held in the GAR Room in the Chicago Public Library on June 14th. Call Margaret April at WH-3095 to make your reservations for this very special meeting.

1974 BATTLEFIELD TOUR

It must be reported that despite a vigorous assault by 101 gallant campaigners from North of the Mason-Dixon line, the heights of Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain are still standing. Even Private John Hunter’s solo charge up the mountain, Colonel Henry Kennedy’s inspiring addresses to the troops, and the daring leadership of Generals Warren Reeder and Jerry Edelstein failed to cause the capture and destruction of those imposing Southern eminences. By way of alibi, many of our number laid their inability to instill fear into the Confederate hearts to the extreme privation of a lack of liquid refreshment on the first night of the Tour. It seems that the laws pertaining to a local election held that day caused the cancellation of our hallowed Command Post.

A true highlight of the trip was the unique Chattanooga Choo-Choo Hilton, our headquarters during our four-day visit. Its fine dining facilities and shopping arcade are housed in the remodeled Southern Railway Depot. Parked on the tracks extending from the former station are numerous Pullman cars which have been transformed into fully furnished rooms. Those who desired standard sleeping quarters were housed in the adjacent modern hotel building, which features a sunroofed pool and waterfall alongside the coffee shop. Any trip to Chattanooga must certainly include a stay at this excellent hotel.

Our stops on Thursday included Orchard Knob, the National and Confederate Cemeteries, and the Jewish Cemetery where Jerry Edelstein delvered a talk on the Ochs family. That night Dr. James Livingood described for us the fighting around Chattanooga, which we retraced on Friday during stops on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Our speaker on Friday evening was Ed Tinney, historian of the Chickamauga National Battlefield Park and one of our guides on the tour. Ed spoke to us on the fight for battlefield preservation around the country. Saturday found us spending the day at Chickamauga after visits to Dug Gap, McLemore’s Cove and the Lee and Gordon mansion. Saturday night was our traditional fun night, featuring the Buster Keaton silent film classic, “The General”, with brilliant narration by our own Jerry Warshaw, ably assisted by the piano mastery of Arnold Alexander. The concluding events on Sunday included a boat ride on the Tennessee River and a tour of the Chattanooga Railroad Museum.
THE NEW BOOKS

(Compiled by Dick Clark)


BATTLEFIELD TOUR (Continued from Page 3)

No article summarizing the Battlefield Tour can be complete without reference to the infamous Confederate Purple Heart, that magnificent memorial created by the equally infamous Dr. John Margreiter of St. Louis and awarded each year for gallantry above and beyond the call of duty on the trip. This year's winner (?) of the priceless prize was our beloved Jack Kahl, who had the honor to be advised by Delta Airlines officials that he had been bumped off our overbooked (by the airline) return flight. Jack's marks, both on that occasion and on his being told of his selection as this year's recipient of the matchless medallion can best be described by the currently popular phrase "expletives deleted."

*** *** *** *** *** *** ***

BRUCE CATTON (Continued from Page 1)

standard of excellence we have established for the recipient.

In applying that standard to determine the first person to receive this prestigious award, the committee found that one individual was foremost in everyone's mind. He is, of course, Bruce Catton, the man who epitomizes scholarship and achievement in the field of Civil War history. His books form the foundation of the library of every true student of the war. Included in the imposing list of titles are: "The War Lords of Washington", 1948; "Mr. Lincoln's Army", 1950; "The Glory Road", 1952; "A Stillness at Appomattox", 1953; "U. S. Grant and the American Military Tradition", 1954; "Banners at Shenandoah", 1965; "This Hallowed Ground", 1966; "America Goes to War", 1968; "Grant Moves South", 1969; "The Coming Fury", 1961; "Two Roads to Samter", 1963; "Terrific Swift Sword", 1963; "Never Call Retreat", 1965; "Grant Takes Command", 1969; "Waiting for the Morning Train", 1972.

Mr. Catton, who is also an Honorary Life Member of The Round Table, was born in Petosky, Michigan in 1899. Like Freeman and Nevins, his background lies in newspaper journalism, but as he passed the age of fifty, he determined to devote time to writing a history of the Army of the Potomac.

BULLETIN BOARD

FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held on the second Friday of each month, except as noted. Location of 1974-1975 meetings will be announced in the September issue of the Newsletter.


August 3: Summer Executive Committee Meeting, 11:30 A.M.—Book and Bottle, 17 East Chestnut Street, Chicago.

September 13: Edwin C. Bearss, topic to be announced.

October 11: Harold M. Hyman on "The Johnson Impeachment—From Appomattox To Watergate.

November 8: Wilbur Kurtz, Jr. on "Lincoln, Sherman and Lloyd Lewis."

December 13: Frank Rankin, topic to be announced.

January 10: William C. "Jack" Davis on "The Battle of New Market."

February 14: Program to be announced.

March 14: Gordon Whitney on "The Other Jeff Davis."

April 11: Harold Simpson on "The Texas Brigade, Lees Grenadier Guard."

May 1-4: Annual Battlefield Tour to Richmond.

May 9: Ralph G. Newman on "The Last Full Measure of Devotion—Abraham Lincoln's Incredible Funeral."

June 13: Ladies Night, Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner, and Installation of Officers.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at LaSalle Hotel coffee shop; all members welcome.

NEW MEMBER

James H. Huber, 865 Hinman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202

CHANGE OF ADDRESS


Dan Lapinski, 263 Timber View Avenue, Oak Brook, Illinois 60521

Thomas L. Jarnowski, U.S.S. Patterson DE 1061, FPO New York, New York 09501

Bruce Catton, 63 E. 79th Street, New York, New York 10021

The result was his famous trilogy, the last volume of which, "A Stillness at Appomattox", won for him the Pulitzer Prize in 1954, as well as a National Book Award. From that point his name has become synonymous with Civil War literature, as his accomplishments in the field attest. In addition to his books, he has also served twenty years as an editor for American Heritage, the last fifteen as Senior Editor.

In addition to this opportunity to again be with, and honor, Mr. Catton, our Award Dinner will also allow us to welcome an old friend and meet a new one, both of whom have been instrumental in the career of our Award recipient. Visits with our own E. B. "Pete" Long have become all too few since his move to Wyoming, but his absence has not dimmed our pride in his own literary and educational achievements, details of which are well known to all. Samuel S. Vaughn has had a distinguished career with Doubleday & Co., Inc. and its subsidiary, Doubleday Publishing Co. It was his firm which agreed to publish "Mr. Lincoln's Army" after two other companies turned it down. Doubleday and Mr. Vaughn have been closely associated with Mr. Catton ever since.