Terrence J. Winschel on "To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg"

by Barbara Hughett

"See what a lot of land those fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key.... Let us get Vicksburg and all this country is ours. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." These words of President Abraham Lincoln vividly illustrate the strategic importance during the Civil War of the city that became known as the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy."

"To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg" will be the topic of Terrence J. Winschel when he addresses The Civil War Round Table on February 8. Confederate cannons were mounted on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River at Vicksburg. The Southern forces commanded the "Father of Waters," shutting off the important avenue of commerce to Northern shipping. Vicksburg was also crucial to the South because it was the connecting link between the eastern and western portions of the Confederacy and sat astride a major supply route over which the armies of Braxton Bragg and Robert E. Lee received much-needed food, clothing, medicine, and ammunition, as well as fresh troops. Thus, their defense of the city was vital. The loss of Vicksburg would be disastrous; split in half, the South could not very long survive.

In the spring of 1863, as Union threats along the Mississippi began to unfold, Confederate Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith, commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department, sought to augment his forces in Louisiana. He ordered Major General John G. Walker's ragged Texas Division to Monroe, Louisiana, from which point it could be thrown against either Grant (operating against Vicksburg) or Banks (operating against Alexandria).

On April 24, 1863, the Texans took up the line of march from Pine Bluff, Arkansas to Monroe. The men of Walker's command embarked on a campaign that would be marred by lack of unity, inept leadership, and the rigid design of Confederate departmental structure. Though placed in a position to strike a crippling blow to either General Grant or General Banks, the Texans were used ineffectively and the opportunity to thwart either Federal thrust slipped away. Indecision led Smith to direct the Texans aimlessly about Louisiana, while Grant hammered his way to the gates of Vicksburg and placed his army as a cordon around the city. Not until the situation at Vicksburg became desperate, did Smith commit the Texans to action.

(continued on page 3)
Battlefield Preservation Report
by Mary Munsell Abroe

A crucial judgment should be made soon regarding the fate of Johnson's Island, Ohio, site of a Federal prison for Confederate officers and a 206-grave Civil War cemetery. For over two years, preservationists have been trying to stave off development of the site by Cleveland-area businessman Carl Zipfel. Intense public interest generated by the threat to Johnson's Island set in motion a chain of events which led to its designation as a National Historic Landmark in June 1990. Such designation does not forbid development of the privately-owned property on the site. However, the fact that a federal agency (i.e. the Army Corps of Engineers) must issue permits for a phase of Zipfel's project allowed the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to review and comment upon the effect of development on historic Johnson's Island; results of that review process have not been made public. What we do know is that enough local authorities "caved in" to clear the way for the proposed multi-million-dollar housing and marina complex; on October 16, 1990, the Ottawa County (Ohio) Regional Planning Commission voted 12-10 (with four abstentions) to approve the final plat of the "Baycliffs" subdivision. At this point, then, the key decision appears to rest with the Corps of Engineers, which has not yet issued its ruling on permits for the development's marina but which probably will do so in the coming months.

As part of this decision-making procedure, Dr. Ray Luce of the State Historic Preservation Office asked the National Park Service to review the Baycliffs Corporation's marina permit application. Commenting for NPS Mid-Atlantic Regional Director James Coleman, Sandra Rosen crans stated categorically in a letter of December 6, 1990: "[Johnson's Island's] designation [as a National Historic Landmark] denotes national significance... It is our belief that the project will have an adverse effect on the NHL status of Johnson's Island." Ms. Rosen crans went on to describe the negative impact of specific aspects of Zipfel's plan. The intended marina and boat channel into the island's interior quarry will damage archaeological resources of part of the old Federal barracks and also will harm Fort Hill, one of two earth-work forts on the site. Proposed residential development will destroy—among other areas—parts of the old prison compound. Ms. Rosen crans concluded that Johnson's Island's "high degree of integrity" would be gravely imperiled by the project as planned presently, and she "strongly recommended" that the Corps of Engineers not issue the necessary marina permits.

The final irony here is a chilling one. Popular concern for a fragile historic resource helped effect its elevation to NHL status; the hope—at least in some quarters—was that enhanced visibility and national recognition would protect the resource. The closing remark in the NPS letter quoted above dashes that hope: "If the Baycliffs Corporation were to proceed with this project as it is currently planned, we would be forced to recommend the redesignation of Johnson's Island as a National Historic Landmark." Thus, the island prison's standing as a nationally acknowledged historic treasure is as vulnerable as the site's actual physical remains, for both are subject to the "bottom-line" mentality of some—thankfully not all—in the development community. Please add your voice to that of local preservationists at Johnson's Island, who sometimes feel that they are (continued on page 4)
January Meeting
by Barbara Hughett

The Seventeenth Annual Nevins-Freeman Award of The
Civil War Round Table was conferred on noted Civil War
scholar and longtime Round Table member Marshall D.
Krockick at the 494th regular meeting on October 12, as part
of The Round Table's fiftieth anniversary celebration; how-
ever, because of time constraints, his formal acceptance
address was not delivered at that time. That address was
presented at the 497th regular meeting of The Civil War
Round Table on January 11. One hundred members and
guests braved a snowstorm to hear Marshall Krockick speak
on "The Forgotten Field: The Cavalry Battle at Gettysburg
on July 3, 1863." (One hundred thirty-three people had
made reservations, but the weather conditions caused some
last-minute cancellations.)

The Army of Northern Virginia's advance into Pen-
nsylvania during the summer of 1863 was greatly hindered
by the absence of a major portion of its cavalry. These
troopers had separated from the main army when their
commander, the flamboyant J.E.B. Stuart, acting within the
discretion of his orders, took them off on a ride around the
Federal positions. When Stuart and his cavalrymen re-
joined the army of Robert E. Lee on July 2, the Battle of
Gettysburg was already in the second day of fighting.

On July 3, Stuart was ordered around the Confederate
left in an attempt to attack the Union rear as the famed
assault of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble advanced against
the Federal center. In the fields along the Hanover Road,
three miles east of the town, Stuart unexpectedly met the
Union troopers of David Gregg's division and George Cus-
ter's brigade. The resulting clash involved some of the
richest and most dramatic fighting of any cavalry battle of
the Civil War.

Stuart began his attack at approximately 2:00 p.m.; it
was repulsed by a Northern cavalry force which was show-
ing the same aggressive fighting qualities and competent
leadership that had been exhibited at Brandy Station, Aldie,
Middleburg, and Upperville. At 3:00 p.m., although he was
already two hours late in reaching the position Lee had
requested he achieve, Stuart was not ready to give up.
Increasing the numbers in his force, he again attacked,
coming at the Federal forces from a wooded area to the
south of the crossroad. Of this movement, Captain Wil-
liam Miller of the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry wrote: "A
grander spectacle than their advance has rarely been
beheld.... Their polished saber blades dazzled in the sun.
All eyes turned upon them."

When the Southerners came within three-quarters of a
mile of the Hanover Road, Federal batteries opened a dev-
astating fire, tearing gaps in the charging Confederate line;
but the rear ranks quickly closed and filled in the empty
spaces. When the Confederates were only fifty yards away,
Custer raised his saber above his head and turned in his
saddle, shouting to the troopers behind him the legendary
words, "C'mon you Wolverines!"

The two forces met with a tremendous clash. Captain
Miller said the encounter was "like the falling of timber, so
sudden and violent that many of the horses were turned end
over and crushed their riders beneath them." But it wasn't
over yet. Disobeying orders, Miller ordered his command
to fire a volley and then, shouting to his men to draw their
sabers, he led them in a mounted charge which pierced
directly through the Confederate column, cutting off the
rear one-third of it and driving that portion back toward

Cress Ridge. Captain James Hart's squadron also charged
into the Confederate left flank, hitting it south of the point
Miller had struck. Without even coming close to the Fed-
eral batteries and the Hanover Road, the Southerners were
forced to retreat. The great turning movement Stuart had
attempted had failed.

This cavalry battle was certainly one of the more
important actions in the Battle of Gettysburg. "Yet today,"
Marshall observed, "as thousands of tourists rewalk the
path of the charge of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble, and
visit the historic ground at the Bloody Angle and Copse of
Trees, the fields around the intersection of the Hanover
Road and Low Dutch Road, now referred to as 'East
Cavalry Field,' are empty and forgotten."

Why has this event been so neglected by historians?
Among the possible reasons, Marshall cited the egotistical
nature of the commander of the Union Cavalry Corps,
Alfred Pleasonton, who would not want to draw attention
to any portion of the Battle in which he was not involved.
By contrast, David Gregg, the hero of that day, was too
modest to seek attention for his accomplishments. Also,
there were no journalists traveling with Gregg's staff to
report to the nation the action of his division.

"Finally," Marshall noted, "there was Pickett's charge
itself, an event which has attracted as much attention as any
other single occurrence during the Civil War. How could a
cavalry clash three miles away.... hope to compete for
recognition?... Yet, the men of Gregg and Custer, and
Stuart too, are entitled to that recognition—for they did, in
fact, play a significant role in the eventual outcome of the
Battle of Gettysburg and the preservation of the Union.
Neither they nor the ground they contested should be
forgotten."

(continued from page 1)

Walker was finally directed to move with his division
to Madison Parish, opposite Vicksburg, and strike the Fed-
eral enclaves at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. The
Texans struck savagely at Milliken's Bend in a pre-dawn
attack on June 7, but their efforts were hampered by poor
planning. After fierce combat with United States Colored
Troops, the Texans were forced to yield the field. Confer-
date efforts at Young's Point also ended in failure.

In his address, Winschel will detail the organization
of Walker's division and analyze the leadership ability of
Walker and his brigade commanders. Using transparencies,
he will trace the corresponding movements of the Union
and Confederate forces during the campaign for Vicksburg
and will discuss in detail the operations which culminated
in the Battle of Milliken's Bend.

A native of Pittsburgh, Terry Winschel is a graduate of
Pennsylvania State University and holds both M.S.S. and
Ed.S. degrees from Mississippi College. A thirteen-year
veteran of the National Park Service, Winschel has served
at Gettysburg and Fredericksburg National Military Parks
and Valley Forge National Historical Park, and is currently
historian at Vicksburg National Military Park. Winschel
has written numerous articles and book reviews on Civil
War topics. With Michael Mullins, he is the co-author of
Vicksburg: A Self-guiding Tour of the Battlefield (1990). He is
the author of The Corporal's Tale (1979), a 19-page booklet
which eloquently describes the Battle of Fredericksburg
from the viewpoint of a common Union footsoldier.
The New Books
compiled by C. Robert Douglas


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 at $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 February meeting or at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 357 West Chicago Avenue.

A Message from the President
I would like to thank all of you who completed and returned the membership surveys distributed last summer. Please be assured that we do intend to follow up on your suggestions and concerns. For example, many of you requested that we make available a compilation of the interests, Civil War and otherwise, of other members to facilitate conversation and information exchange. We are in the process of doing so. As a first step, member Dennis Reed is putting the information on computer. Anyone who has not returned a form and who would like to be listed should send their form to The Round Table as soon as possible. If you need a form, please contact me.

A number of members expressed interest in getting more actively involved in Round Table activities and serving on committees, but said they didn't know where they could be helpful. Here are a couple of examples. We need someone, or a couple of people, to do public relations for us—to make sure our activities and meetings are included in appropriate listings and made known to the media. Some writing ability would be useful, but basically what's needed is a willingness to search out and make contacts. Also, we would like to have someone take over the Schimmeltenig Boutique before each meeting. As you know, the Boutique sells various Round Table related items—copies of our history, pins, mugs, tee shirts, etc. It's not hard work and it's a good way to meet people.

If you are interested in either of these jobs, or in serving on any of the committees listed on page 2 of this newsletter, just give me a call at (312) 761-6937.

Finally, several people said that The Round Table should make tapes of previous talks available. In fact, we do. You can obtain a list of available cassette tapes, and an order form, by writing Hal Ardell, 6781 N. Keota Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60646.

David Richert

BULLETIN BOARD

Future Meetings
Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.
February 8: Terrence G. Winschel on "To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg."
March 8: Gerald A. Regan on "The 'Walk' of Correspondents Browne, Davis, and Richardson: 340 Miles to Freedom."
April 12: A. Wilson Greene on "The 11th Corps on the First Day at Gettysburg."
May 2-5: Annual Battlefield Tour—Shiloh.
May 10: Michael Hughes on "The Battle of Chattanooga."
June 14: Jean Baker on "Mary Todd Lincoln."

New Members
Paul D. Benson, 2020 Lincoln Park West, #7L, Chicago, IL 60614, (312) 525-4843
Mark Matranga, 201 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, IL 60302, (708) 524-8141
John F. Votow, 603 E. Illinois St., Wheaton, IL 60187, (708) 260-0454

(continued from page 2)

waging this campaign alone. Urge the Corps of Engineers (c/o Hugh F. Boyd III, Colonel, U.S. Army Commanding Department of the Army, Buffalo District, Army Corps of Engineers, 1776 Niagara St., Buffalo, New York 14207) to deny marina permits for this project. Such action is not our option; it is our responsibility!

Round Table founder Ralph G. Newman was a featured speaker at the fortieth anniversary meeting of the Civil War Round Table of New York on January 16. The main address that evening was given by Civil War author and recent media personality Shelby Foote.

A Lincoln's Birthday Open House will be held at the Mount Pulaski Court House on February 9. Activities are scheduled from noon to 8:00 p.m. A lecture will be given by G. Cullom Davis at 2:00 p.m. For further information, call Richard Schachtsiek at (217) 792-3919.

The Lincoln The Lawyer Award will be given to attorney John P. Frank at the annual banquet of the Abraham Lincoln Association on February 12 in Springfield. Frank is the author of Lincoln As A Lawyer.

According to The Scout's Report, the newsletter of the Knoxville Civil War Round Table, PBS will follow their highly successful "The Civil War" series with a documentary on the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, featuring extensive material about the individual soldier. Filmed in Boston and South Carolina, it is scheduled to air in February.