BRUCE TAP

- on -

“The Committee on the Conduct of The War: It’s Origins, Assumptions, and Significance”

“over Lincoln’s Shoulder”

BY BARBARA HUGHETT

The congressional committee that received the most attention and created the most controversy in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Congress formed the committee in December of 1861, granting it broad powers to investigate military matters—such as military contracts, trade with the enemy, treatment of the wounded, and the causes of Union defeats in battles. However, its greatest efforts were directed toward ensuring vigorous war effort—endorsing emancipation, the use of black soldiers, and the appointment of generals.

The committee was dominated by the so-called Radical Republicans, who were very progressive and determined in their support of the abolition of slavery and the protection of freed African Americans. But they also wanted the guilty white southerners punished severely and the South remade in the image of the North. This did not go down well with many northerners, who wanted a conservative and conciliatory post-war policy toward the rebels. In the course of its tenure, the committee was simultaneously applauded by proponents and savagely criticized by opponents.

“The Committee on the Conduct of the War: Its Origins, Assumptions, and Significance” will be the topic of Bruce Tap, when he addresses The Round Table on May 14. He will examine possible answers to some major questions: What motivated Congress to form and empower the committee?; What was the significance of the committee’s investigation?; Did it materially improve the Union’s fortunes or was its work more of a hindrance to the war effort?

Bruce Tap, an independent historian who resides in Grand Rapids, Michigan, received an M.A. in American history from Western Michigan University, where he studied with noted military historian Albert Castel. He received his doctorate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he studied with Robert W. Johannsen, renowned scholar of the Mexican War and Stephen A. Douglas.

Tap is the author of the highly-acclaimed Over Lincoln’s Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of the War (1998). A reviewer in Historian called this book "an exemplary study" and said that it “will no doubt stand for a long time to come as the definitive account of the Committee on the Conduct of the War.” He has also published in numerous scholarly journals including Civil War History, North and South, the Illinois Historical Journal, and the Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association. He has spoken before historical associations all over the country, including a presentation to the 2000 Abraham Lincoln Symposium in Springfield.

Bruce Tap is currently engaged in two book-length projects for Greenwood Press: Shapers of the Great Debate on the American Civil War, with R. Daniel Monroe, scheduled to appear in 2005; and a volume about civil-military relations during the Civil War, due out in 2006. He is also interested in contested congressional elections, as well as a scholarly biography on Zachariah Chandler, a prominent Radical Republican senator during the Civil War. I have also been informed by a reliable source that Tap is an authority on nineteenth-century-style baseball.

631st REGULAR MEETING

BRUCE TAP ON


Friday, May 14

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: Sliced Sirloin or Beef with Remoulade, Mustard, Bœuf Bourguignon or Catch of the Day

(Please are offering, on a Trial Basis, the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:30 p.m., for a charge of $10 per person.)

PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservation by MONDAY, MAY 10, by calling Carole Le Claire at 847-698-1438, or by faxing her at 847-698-3228.

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.

Until the end of the year, parking is at the lot at the corner of Hubbard and Orleans Streets. The hotel is providing shuttle bus service for guests between the lot and the hotel.

Parking is $8 with a validated parking sticker. Tickets will be validated by the Round Table treasurer at the meeting.
"Save the 36th Illinois Flag Project" is well underway, as reported by The Civil War News. Help is needed to save the Civil War national colors battle flag of the 36th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This famous regiment, also known as the "Fox Valley Regiment," fought in nearly every major engagement in the Western Theater. Of 1,376 enrolled, 204 men lost their lives in battle, and the silk flag displays these battle honors. The flag is stored at the Illinois National Guard Museum in Springfield, where it will be displayed when the preservation work is completed.

The Civil War Round Table of Chicago, the Illinois Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table are working together to raise the estimated $22,000 needed to preserve the flag. Funds raised will be used specifically for the flag's restoration. Donations are tax-deductible, payable to the ING MHS, Inc., and specified for the 36th Illinois flag. Available, for a donation of $5 at any meeting of the sponsoring groups, are 8.5" X 11" photographic prints of the actual flag, courtesy of the Department of Military Affairs, Illinois State Military Museum, Springfield.

Contact person is Steven Stewart, Secretary of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago, 773-233-0624; e-mail sjstewart99@hotmail.com.

The 97th Regimental String Band is presenting their 11th Annual live concert, sponsored by the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table, with all the net proceeds going to battlefield preservation. The 97th recreates an actual string band of the Civil War era, singing a wide variety of traditional American songs in authentic living history style. Rich vocal harmonies accompanied by guitar, fiddle, banjo, mandolin, harmonica, bass fiddle and tambourine provide for an evening of family oriented fun with a historic flavor.

The concert will be held on Friday, June 18, 2004 at the Edison Middle School Auditorium, 1125 South Wheaton Ave., Wheaton, Illinois. Tickets are available at the door or mail checks to: Salt Creek Civil War Round Table, PO. Box 4873, Wheaton, IL 60189. Tickets are $8 for adults and $5 for sixteen and under. If you have questions, call Brian Ruxton at 630-858-6500.

It's for a worthy cause, and it's fun!

The recipient of the CWRT of Chicago's 3rd Annual Ed Bearss Preservation Award will be announced on the May Annual Tour. The winner and the Donor Muster Roll will be published in the June Newsletter. This project has been an excellent way to raise money for a specific preservation effort and to say "thank you" to Ed Bearss in a very personal way...and we thank you for participating!
On April 16, James Ogden gave an interesting presentation, entitled "...Inflicting All the Damage You Can ..." Sherman Targets the War Resources." He spoke before 74 members and guests at the 630th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. Ogden, historian at Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, is a popular and respected speaker, teacher, and author on Civil War subjects.

In his speech, Ogden indicated that the South had been very creative, adaptable, resilient, and inventive in developing a Confederate military-industrial complex by the spring of 1864. At the height of this important industrial development, Union General William T. Sherman began his assault on the Confederate ability to produce the necessary industrial output with his famous and infamous "March to the Sea."

A vast connection of industrial and railroad complexes gave Confederates the ability to compete on an even basis, but this ended with the Union destruction of industries in Georgia and Alabama. A daily production of 7,000 pounds of gunpowder at Augusta's powder works allowed Confederate armies to compete until late 1864. However, the Union produced three times more artillery pieces than did the Confederacy. Ogden states the caveat that the South never approached the North's industrial capacity. The Confederacy created something special to keep alive the eventual success of the South.

How were Confederate batteries still fighting with effectiveness three years after the conflict started? "The military-industrial complex," Ogden replied, "was the most remarkable and best manifestation of the Confederate States of America as a reality of its nation building." For example, the Confederates were able to replenish their supplies within months of the Vicksburg defeat on July 4, 1863.

Although, at the outset of war, the South had relative little industry, it was not a totally impoverished region. The industrial base increased development from 1850 to 1860. The Confederacy suffered from a lack of capital, therefore investment was inhibited. Most southern capital before 1860 was linked to slaves, land, and cotton. Most historians claimed that slave labor retarded introduction to southern industry. As a result, the industrial growth rate in the South was much slower than in the North.

In February of 1861, when the Confederacy began, few people could envision a long, destructive war. The southerners badly miscalculated northern resolve, although they did develop a true military-industrial complex. Jefferson Davis, prior to becoming president of the Confederate States of America, served as secretary of war in the United States government in the mid-1850s and was responsible for overseeing military commissions and inventions. This gave the South an early advantage. The Tredegar ironworks of Richmond was a key production site, important to the production of machine tools and other pieces of iron for other southern sites in Nashville, New Orleans, and Memphis. Another area of great capacity for production of war material was central Georgia and Alabama—the focus of Union destruction by General William T. Sherman's forces.

"Sherman," Ogden noted, "targeted Confederate ability to produce gunpowder, cannons, rifles, ammunition, and ironworks." This strategy was part of the plan of "total war" that Sherman used to eventually bring an end to the Civil War. Union General U.S. Grant instructed Sherman to inflict as much destruction as possible to the rebel ability to struggle to survive.

Sherman and Grant identified the Atlanta area as a genuine key industrial and distribution center of the Confederacy. Roswell, a small town near Atlanta, became a clothing center. In 1863 and 1864, three thousand women sewed 37,000 jackets, 45,000 pairs of pants, and 99,000 shirts for Confederate soldiers. In July of 1864, Sherman's soldiers destroyed the clothing factory. To ensure that these women did not further support the Confederacy with their labor, they were sent to northern states.

The southerners encountered many problems in the quality of production, but their greatest problem lie in the distribution of war material to the battlefields. The cluster of facilities in the Atlanta region was a strategic target for Sherman. The breakup of the railroads was very effective in achieving this. Often, the capture and destruction of ironworks and factories was unnecessary because railroads were unable to bring in raw materials required for the production of goods.

Ogden concluded, "The Confederacy could survive after the losses of Nashville, New Orleans, Memphis, and the Trans-Mississippi regions. However, the Confederate States of America could not and did not survive the capture and control of Central Georgia and Alabama. Five months after Savannah, Georgia, fell at the conclusion of Sherman's "March to the Sea," and the South collapsed. This event was the manifestation of the death knell of the Confederacy!"

DeBlack, Thomas A. With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874. U. of Arkansas Press. 2003. $34.95; pbk. $18.95.


Morrill, Dan. The Civil War in the Carolinas. Nautical & Aviation Publ. 2002. $34.95.


Dr. Lonnie G. Bunch III, president of the Chicago Historical Society, will deliver the Commencement address at Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois, on Saturday, May 15, and receive an honorary degree from the college. Also receiving honorary degrees that day will be Michael Bishop, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission; Dr. Gabor S. Boritt, noted Lincoln scholar and director of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College; and Dr. Jack D. Nutt, former president (for over 20 years) of Lincoln College.

The Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table and the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table will hold a joint annual dinner this year on June 4. Richard McMurry will speak on "A New Framework for Civil War History."

Past President Merl Sumner became seriously ill a few weeks ago while traveling in Missouri, where he has been hospitalized since then. However, he has recovered sufficiently to be returning home soon to continue his recovery. He can be reached by cell phone at 702-807-5741, or by mail at 4525 West Twain, #258, Las Vegas, Nevada 89103, or via email at merlinssummer@summerlin.net. We send Merl our heartfelt get-well wishes!

A silent auction is held at each monthly dinner meeting, for books donated by late Round Table founding member Ralph G. Newman. The minimum bid is $5 per book, with a minimum rise of $1 per bid. Five minutes after the conclusion of the speaker's presentation, bidding will close and the last highest bid is the winner of each book. Proceeds go to benefit battlefield preservation.
Chicago CWRT Membership Renewal

Renew your membership with the blue and the gray for less green! Yes, this year the Chicago CWRT took a look at what it was doing and how it was being done, and we have reduced dues for Regular and Family members by $15 per year. There are also dues reductions for some members who take their newsletter via e-mail. We will provide you with the same high level of service but at a lower cost. What has changed with the Chicago CWRT? Just look at the list!

- All membership dues for Regular and Family members have been reduced by $15 a year.
- Members can now save an additional $5 a year on membership dues by electing to take the newsletter via e-mail.
- For those who wish to hear our excellent speakers but attend the talk only, we offer a “just listen” option for $5.
- Members now receive a 10 percent discount on purchases from the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, just identify yourself as a member to get your discount!
- You can now reserve for monthly meetings via e-mail. Just give us your e-mail address and we will send you a reminder every month allowing you to reserve for the dinner, or just to listen, and of course you can make your meal selection right from your keyboard!
- Make sure that you get to be one of the first people to reserve your place on next year’s tour to Vicksburg. This year’s battlefield tour to Atlanta was fully subscribed less than two months after registration forms were first made available; the form was never even put on the web. The way to ensure that you have a chance to participate in this popular event is to renew now.
- Enjoy reduced fees on both Chicago CWRT events and other events co-sponsored by the Chicago CWRT. Last year our members saved $10 on attendance at the Chicago Historical Society Civil War Day.

One of the changes that were made to allow us to be more efficient is this change in the dues renewal effort. We have moved our first renewal reminder up about three months to minimize special mailing costs. Your membership period still runs from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, only the timing of the renewal effort (and the dues) have changed.

Types of Membership (Choose the type that is right for you!)

**Sustaining Membership $80** – As a sustaining member you receive special recognition in our annual roster, and you provide much valued support to the educational and preservation efforts of the CWRT.

**Regular Membership (was $60, now $45)** – If you live within 250 miles of Chicago, this may be the membership for you! All of the privileges of membership are available at this rate!

**Family Membership for two family members (was $75, now $60)** – This type of membership allows both spouses, or a parent and child to participate at member rates.

**Family Membership for three family members (was $100, now $85)** – This type of membership allows both spouses and a child, or a parent and two children to participate at member rates.

**National Membership $35** – This type of membership is a great value for those who enjoy the newsletter and participating in the tours. This type of membership is limited to people who live more than 250 miles from Chicago.

**Student Membership $27.50** – This type of membership is restricted to full time students. Because colleges and universities routinely offer e-mail service, and because the school year coincides with the CWRT year, students are encouraged to take their newsletter via e-mail. Please provide your e-mail address when completing the form below.

(over)
Life Membership $0 – This is a price you just can’t beat! The Life Membership designation is awarded by the Executive Committee to members who have distinguished themselves in service to the CWRT. If you are a Life Member, please send us the form below to allow us to update the information in our files, and if you have an e-mail address, we would love to add that so we can communicate with you more quickly. Any donation you wish to make is very much appreciated and will be used to support the education and preservation activities of the Chicago CWRT. If you don’t know if you have been awarded Life Membership, please contact Pepper using the information below.

Interested in receiving your newsletter by e-mail? If you have e-mail, you can receive your newsletter that way. It is the fastest way to get your CWRT news. If you would like to see a sample e-mail newsletter before you decide, just drop an e-mail to pepper@millnet.net and request a sample!

Please return the form below with your payment.

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Address_______________________________________________________________________

City, State & ZIP__________________________ Cell Phone (____) ______________________

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FAX (____) ______________________ e-mail* ______________________________________

*An e-mail address is required for people electing to receive the newsletter via e-mail. We would appreciate your e-mail address even if you want your newsletter mailed so we can communicate with you more easily.

☐ Check here if you do not want the phone numbers and/or e-mail address you provided published in our roster. (Please do provide this information even if you don’t want it published, we would like it for our records).

Dues

Please circle the dues option you select and enclose check with form when you mail.

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Make checks payable to: The Civil War Round Table

Please send to: Pepper Zenger, Registrar, 4332 W. 109th Street, Oak Lawn, IL 60453, or you can call her at (708) 425-2384, or e-mail her at pepper@millnet.net if you have questions.