The Battle of Chickamauga has been called the “lost opportunity” of the Confederacy. For the one time in its checkered history, the Confederate Army of Tennessee won a smashing victory, routing the main Union army of the West. Yet the victory proved curiously hollow.

Historians have spilled a “Caspian Sea of ink” discussing the paralysis of Confederate general Braxton Bragg when presented with a victory. That victory could have had profound ramifications. Instead, it resulted in severe recriminations that further poisoned the command relationships in the Army of Tennessee and planted the seeds of the Confederate disaster at Missionary Ridge two months later.

Of our January speaker, Parker Hills, Slate Magazine has written: “His command of the material is daunting, yet he’s also possessed of a courtly charm that helps the history go down smoothly. He’s like Shelby Foote, with a touch of Warren Buffett.”

Parker Hills has conducted scores of military staff rides since he organized and conducted the first one in Mississippi in 1987. He has traveled the nation to conduct these staff rides, as well as to England at the request of Sandhurst Royal Military Academy. He has also conducted dozens of civilian tours of battlefields for non-profit organizations involved in battlefield preservation, and is a regular speaker at Civil War Roundtables, battlefield preservation groups, civic clubs and seminars.

During his 31 years as a Regular Army and National Guard officer, he served in various command and staff positions. He served as president of an advertising agency for 15 years in Jackson, Mississippi, and established “Battle Focus” (a tour group) upon his military retirement in 2001. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Commercial Art; a Master’s Degree in Educational Psychology; is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College; and is the author of A Study in Warfighting: Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Brice’s Crossroads and co-author of Vicksburg Campaign Driving Tour Guide. Hills retired with the rank of Brigadier General in May, 2001.

Parker Hills
on
Chickamauga

by BRUCE ALLARDICE

707th REGULAR MEETING
Parker Hills on “Chickamauga”
Friday, January 13

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA
350 North Orleans Street
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.
Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
$45 - Members/Non-members

Entrée: Chicken Napoleon, Baked Tilapia, Vegetarian Platter or Fruit Platter

Call by Wednesday Jan. 11

Parking at the Holiday Inn is $12 with a validated parking sticker.

please note
Make your reservations by Wednesday, Jan. 11, by emailing dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org, or calling 630 460-1865 with the names of your party and choice of entrée.

If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please call the number before 9 a.m. Thursday.

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 $10 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is $12 with a validated parking sticker.
Historic Fort Monroe, Virginia Named A National Monument

— (by Scott C. Boyd)
Hampton, VA—Bypassing stalled congressional legislation aimed at making historic Fort Monroe a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), President Barack Obama accomplished the same thing on November 1st via a proclamation invoking the 1906 Antiquities Act. That act gives the president authority to restrict the use of specific public land owned by the federal government by declaring it a national monument. Fort Monroe National Monument became the nation’s 396th NPS unit.

Virginia Governor Robert F. McDonnell thanked Obama in a November 7th letter and added, “Your decision and subsequent actions are key to Fort Monroe taking its rightful place as a recognized monument to our nation’s history.”

Obama’s proclamation was enabled by a September 9th letter from McDonnell proposing terms for the Commonwealth of Virginia to convey certain portions of its property at Fort Monroe to the federal government for a national park.

Glenn Oder, new executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority (FMA), the political subdivision responsible for operating and managing the fort after the Army garrison closed, far earlier than even in our fondest hopes,” he said....

According to the NPS Fort Monroe includes 170 historic buildings and nearly 200 acres of natural resources, including 8 miles of waterfront, 3.2 miles of beaches on the Chesapeake Bay, 110 acres of submerged lands and 85 acres of wetlands. The fort’s website is www.nps.gov/fomr.

Civil War Trust Needs $1.2 M For 285 Acres At Gaines Mill

Washington, D.C—The Civil War Trust is raising $1.2 million to complete the $3.2 million purchase of 285 acres at Gaines’ Mill, a site Trust President James Lightzrner calls one of the three most important pieces of hallowed ground the Trust has ever tried to save.

Gaines’ Mill is also one of the most unprotected battlefields. Out of more than 2,000-plus battleground acres, the National Park Service (NPS) owns 60 acres, the Richmond Battlefields Association recently acquired 4 acres and the Trust owns 1.8 acres.

The Trust anticipates receiving $1 million in grants from the Commonwealth of Virginia and $1 million committed from other donors. The Trust’s share must be raised before the July 15 closing.

The target parcel includes the entire western flank of the battlefield, which is most of the land covered by five brigades of General James Longstreet’s Confederate right wing when they attacked on June 27, 1862.

According to Civil War Trust Deputy Director, Communications, Mary Koik the tract, which is comprised of three contiguous parcels, “retains tremendous integrity and similarity to its wartime appearance.” She said, “Today, much of the land is currently being farmed in soybeans, but significant wooded portions of the property are wetland—just as the area around Boatswain’s Creek was swampy in ’62.”

The NPS land on the south side of Boatswain’s Creek abuts the target property and is open to visitors with trails and interpretive markers.

NPS historian Robert E. L. Krack told the Civil War Trust in an interview: “Although the poor state of preservation at Gaines’ Mill is the bad news, the really encouraging thing is that most of the battlefield is intact. We have not lost it. Nearly all of the battlefield survives in better than average condition, and the potential truly is enormous.”

Battle history, photos, video and maps of the site can be seen at www.civilwar.org (from December issue of Civil War News)
On December 9, 2011, James I. "Bud" Robertson addressed the 706th meeting of the Chicago Civil War Round Table on his current book, The Untold Civil War: Exposing the Human Side of War. The book had its genesis in a series of 350 vignettes originally broadcast on National Public Radio, in which Professor Robertson delivered talks on little-known but captivating aspects of the Civil War. The National Geographic Society commissioned Robertson to collect these essays into book form for its sesquicentennial offering on the war.

The book is organized around six central themes. In "The Human Side of War," Robertson delves into stories such as the two brothers from Maryland, estranged for years and fighting on opposite sides, holding hands while dying on a battlefield at the end of the war. Others are lighter, such as those displaying Lincoln's humor. In 1863, upon denying a request for leave to travel to Richmond, he remarked, "I wouldn't gladly give you the pass if it would do any good, but in the last few years I have given passes to 200,000 soldiers and not one of them has managed to get to Richmond yet." And in referring to Ben Butler, whose eyes pointed in different directions, he told his cabinet Butler "doesn't see things the same way we do." He also called cartoonist Thomas Nast "my best recruiting sergeant" for his work supporting the war.

"The Life of Soldiers" covers the contributions of families and everyday life in the camps. Robertson highlighted regimental mascots, which included not only dogs and cats, but pigs and a camel! "Little Sally," a pup who campaigned with the 11th Pennsylvania, was found guarding unit dead at Gettysburg. Killed in action and buried at Hatcher's Run, she is memorialized on the regiment's monument at Gettysburg. The most famous mascot was "Old Abe," the eagle adopted by the 8th Wisconsin who took flight in battle. His statue perches atop the Wisconsin monument at Vicksburg, and his visage is displayed on the patch of the 101st Airborne Division.

Unforgettable characters make up the folklore of the war, particularly spies like the well-educated daughter of a prosperous Richmond merchant, Elizabeth Van Lew. A staunch unionist who feigned insanity, she obtained permission to visit prisons where she gathered important information; her home was a way station for escaping union prisoners. Following the war, President Grant appointed her Richmond's postmaster, to her former neighbor's chagrin. Another character was Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, who seized Arlington, the estate of his former friend R.E. Lee, and converted it into a garden. The Supreme Court later returned the property to the Lee-Custis mansion.

Farragut's head, he issued orders "slops" were poured on Admiral Farragut's head, he issued orders treating disloyal local women as prostitutes. Jefferson Davis declared Butler an outlaw.

The conflict of the 1860s is often called "A War of Firsts." Because the ironclad Monitor had no convenient way for sailors to relieve themselves, John Ericsson invented the "water chest." Among other firsts were women wearing slacks, canned goods, standard time, prothetic limbs, and home delivery of mail. Santa Claus first appeared in a Christmas, 1862, Thomas Nast cartoon. Called "nasty" for the sarcastic nature of his work, Nast also introduced the donkey and elephant as symbols of our major political parties.

A heartfelt description of animals suffering the horrors of war, the female surgeon awarded the Medal of Honor, the legacy of left-handed veterans, and the improvement in weather Stonewall Jackson felt upon taking a dose of brandy, all demonstrate Professor Robertson's guiding principle: "History is most appealing when it underscores human experiences and their accompanying emotions." A destructive war whose sides reconciled without apology as the nation bound its wounds, the Civil War was, after all, a human experience. To understand it, one must comprehend the deep emotions of that time.
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.

Feb. 10: Harry Bulkeley, “I Propose to Fight it Out”
March 9: A. Wilson Greene, “Nevins–Freeman Address”
May 8: Bruce Holden Reid, TBA
June 8: Dennis Frye, “Antietam”

Upcoming Civil War Events
Jan. 4th, Lake County CWRT: Film and discussion on “The Battle of Wilson’s Creek”
Jan. 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Rob Girardi on “Illinois and the Civil War”
Jan. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Ed Bearss on “Battlefield Medicine”
Jan. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: Parker Hills on “Chickamauga”
Jan. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Nora Titone on “My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Booth Brothers”
Jan. 20th, Salt Creek CWRT: Art Foley on “General James Blunt”
Jan. 26th, South Suburban CWRT: Brian Conroy on “Seeing the Elephant”
Jan. 28th, Kenosha Civil War Museum: Steve Michaels on “Our Invisible Civil War Memorials”
Jan. 28th, McHenry County CWRT: Discussion Group, on “Raising the Armies”

2013 Tour – Antietam

1055x537 to 1137x647
In November, author/historian Gail Stephens presented to the round table on the story of the 1864 Valley Campaign and its significance to the war as a whole. Historians often refer to Gettysburg as the high water mark of the Civil War and say that Gen. Robert E. Lee never again ventured so far north as he did in Pennsylvania in 1863. However, in terms of threatening Washington, DC, nothing came closer than Early’s 1864 Valley Campaign.

In the aftermath of the battle of Cold Harbor, as it became obvious to Lee that he and the Army of Northern Virginia were going to be besieged in Petersburg, he decided to take one last stab at the Federal capital. The opportunity arose as Grant was preoccupied with crossing the James River. Lee detached the recently promoted Gen. Jubal Early with his Second Corps (formerly Jackson’s and Ewell’s) to the Shenandoah Valley.

In an army that contained some pious souls, Early was anything but; he had a vulgar mouth and habits of chewing tobacco and drinking and was as mean as a snake. Lee referred to him as “my bad, old man.”

This foray into Northern territory was very ambitious. Union General David Hunter had just shoved Confederate forces out of the Valley by beating Gen. William “Grumble” Jones at Piedmont on June 5, killing Jones in the process. Early was tasked with repelling Hunter, going into Maryland by way of the Valley (with the firm hope of scaring the Northern populace), rescuing Confederate prisoners being held at the prisoner of war camp at Point Lookout, MD, and attacking Washington.

On the other side, Hunter had as an immediate objective the capture of Lynchburg, Virginia. Lynchburg had a hospital and a supply facility and was an important railroad stop for the Army of Northern Virginia. Hunter had his own problems. He was to wait for help from Gen. Philip Sheridan (which never came because of Sheridan’s setback at Trevilian Station). At the same time, Hunter’s own supply situation was reaching a critical stage because of Colonel John S. Mosby’s constant raids.

On June 18, an outnumbered Jubal Early beat Hunter at Lynchburg, and Hunter retreated (for never-clearly thought out reasons) into West Virginia. This move gave Early free access to the Valley and to Maryland. Meanwhile, Ulysses Grant’s intelligence service was failing him. It was not until July 5, when Early was already in Maryland, that Grant was even aware of his having been detached from the Army of Northern Virginia.

Enter Major General Lew Wallace, the same Lew Wallace who had been maligned for not reinforcing Grant in a timely manner at Shiloh. He was now in command of the Middle Department (Baltimore and MD), but he was a general without troops. Luck came his way, however, in the form of Henry Wager Halleck and more specifically the Fox Valley’s own 8th Illinois Cavalry Regiment. The regiment had been dispatched by Halleck on July 4 to deal with Mosby’s increased raiding activity in Maryland. Wallace commandeered the unit with the full cooperation of the 8th’s commander, Lt. Colonel David Clendenin. By July 7 (an “oppressively” hot day according to the unit history) at 10 a.m. near the railroad trestle west of Frederick, MD, they were engaged with cavalry officially attached to Early’s Second Corps, the brigade of Gen. Bradley Johnson. Eventually the 8th was reinforced by other elements of Wallace’s growing force and a five-hour battle erupted, running well into the hour of 8 p.m. On July 9 the larger battle of
Monocacy began, with what amounted to no more than a scratch force under Wallace’s command. Add to that the fact that most of his men (except the 8th Illinois and newly arrived brigades of the Federal Sixth Corps) were green as grass.

The July 9 fighting began with Union artillery firing at 10 a.m., and the action was in doubt until around 3:30 p.m. when the final Confederate attack dislodged the Yankees. The battle at Monocacy had delayed, but did not completely halt, Early’s thrust toward Washington City. For various reasons, which brought Early at odds with one of his division commanders, Gen. John Gordon, the attempt to free Confederate prisoners at Pt. Lookout was deemed no longer practicable.

Two days later the exhausted Confederates attacked Washington from the north but were blunted by more scratch units that held on until reinforced by elements of the Sixth Corps and the Nineteenth Corps. President Lincoln came by to witness the fighting at the outskirts of Washington near Ft. Stevens and almost became a casualty. If not for the likes of Lew Wallace and the men of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry, Washington might very well have been seized by what was truly the Confederates’ closest approach to the nation’s capital.

Editor’s Note—Thanks to Tom DeFranco and Jerry Allen for furnishing a draft for this article.