



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXVI, Number 4

Chicago, Illinois

December, 2005



646th REGULAR MEETING

STEVEN FRATT

ON

“CIVIL WAR TACTICS AND TECHNOLOGY”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Friday, December 9

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**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:

Chicken Frevinc.

Catch of the Day.

Vegetarian Plate

or Fruit Plate

PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservation by **MONDAY, December 5**, 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, December 7, 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.

STEVEN FRATT

- on -

“Civil War Tactics and Technology”

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE



Steven Fratt

The American Civil War has been called “The First Modern War” by some historians, who point to the use of trench warfare, rifled muskets and rifled artillery and the impact these new inventions had on tactics. Other historians argue that the war yielded few tactical innovations or lasting lessons, and that in reality the war was fought mainly with Napoleonic-era weapons and outdated Napoleonic tactics. In the evolution of armed conflict, some have dubbed our Civil War the precursor of 20th Century warfare, while others have dubbed it the end phase of 18th Century warfare.

On Dec. 9th Dr. Steven Fratt will be speaking to the CWRT of Chicago on “Civil War Tactics and Technology”. Using his expertise in battle tactics of the Civil War, Dr. Fratt will argue that muzzle-loading tactics were appropriate for the war despite the innovations in technology usually associated with the “military revolution” of the 1860s. Technical augmentations did exist and these will be highlighted by Dr. Fratt. However, improved technology is not the only ingredient necessary to create a revolution in military affairs. Such revolutions need the appropriate intellectual and bureaucratic culture in military institutions which aim to foster change and welcome it. Americans lacked the appropriate progressive attitude in and

necessary support of their prewar military institutions which were needed to bring about an American revolution in military affairs. Because of these deficiencies, the Europeans, rather than the Americans, led the way towards the next revolution in military affairs in the West in the late nineteenth century.

Steven D. Fratt is director of the School of Humanities, chair of the History Department, and associate professor of history at Trinity College in Deerfield. He earned the Doctor of History and the Master of Arts from the University of California at Santa Barbara, California. He received the Bachelor of Arts in philosophy and history from Westmont College. Fratt’s areas

of expertise include battle tactics in the American Civil War, battle tactics in all 19th century wars, Western European intellectual history, the history of warfare, and the philosophy of

history. He has contributed a number of articles to publications such as *Strategy & Tactics* and *North & South*. Fratt has written and performed a one-person show on General Joshua L. Chamberlain. He continues to research the battle of Gettysburg and serves as a corporal in his Civil War reenacting unit.



Battlefield Preservation Update

BY MARY MUNSELL ABROE

National Museum of Civil War Medicine Sends Thanks for CWRT Donation:

In a recent letter to this writer, Karen Thomassen, deputy director of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine (NMCWM), expressed gratitude to the CWRT for a \$750 donation; that donation included \$500 in membership dues and a \$250 gift to the museum's new satellite facility at Antietam National Battlefield, the Pry House Field Hospital Museum. Karen expressed the following sentiments: "Please thank the members of the CWRT of Chicago for their support. It means a lot to all of us!" Also sending his gratitude was George Wunderlich, executive director, who stated the following: "The Museum takes great pride in the progress that it has made and we are very pleased to have been recognized by members of your organization. Support from organizations such as yours enables the Museum to continue expanding and providing activities that will help us to achieve our mission of telling the story of the men and women who provided care and healing during the Civil War to thousands of sick and wounded soldiers."

As many Round Table members know, the NMCWM is the brainchild and life's work of our fellow member, Dr. Gordon Dammann, whose own Civil War-era medical artifacts constitute the core of the museum's collection. Financially supporting this excellent educational institution (which received accreditation from the American Association of Museums in 2002) and the work of its dedicated staff while also demonstrating our respect for a fine gentleman and scholar is a win-win situation for the CWRT. At this particular point in time, our contribution also honors Gordon, in a very tangible way, as the CWRT of Chicago's Nevins-Freeman awardee for the year 2006.

Newtonia's Ritchey House Mansion Receives Needed Restoration Treatment: The November 2005 newsletter of the Newtonia (Missouri) Battlefields

Protection Association (NBPA) reports that "it was a very good year" for the Ritchey House Mansion. CWRT members can take pride in the fact that we participated in this year's efforts to restore the building that witnessed the 1862 and 1864 battles of Newtonia. As members will recall, the generosity of Ruth Kliger, widow of late CWRT member Paul Kliger, provided us last year with a Keith Rocco print for which the Battlefield Preservation Fund committee then sponsored a drawing to benefit the Ritchey Mansion.

Last December we were able to send the \$500 in proceeds from that drawing to the NBPA for use in providing the structure with urgently needed restoration treatment. The association's newsletter lists the specific steps that it took in 2005: 1.) tuck-pointing the house; 2.) putting on a new roof; 3.) installation of a new septic system; 4.) repair of the kitchen area; 5.) removal of the old porch (which actually was a modern-era addition that was deteriorating and thus threatening the historic fabric); and 6.) addition of a new porch similar to the original. The newsletter also indicated additional achievements over the past twelve months, among them the inclusion of the battlefields of both First and Second Newtonia in the National Register of Historic Places and the NBPA's acquisition of the Ritchey family cemetery.

Civil War Preservation Trust Announces Collaboration to Save Gettysburg's Lady Farm:

In a November 22 update on activities of the CWPT, president Jim Lighthizer announced the following good news about the Daniel Lady Farm: "...the six-year effort to protect the Daniel Lady Farm was concluded successfully this past week. On Friday, November 18, CWPT joined with the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association, the Land Conservancy of Adams County, and the US Department of Agriculture for a news conference to announce preservation of the 145-acre farm. The...Lady

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Des Plaines, Illinois 60016

Phone: 630-460-1865

www.thecwrt.org

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.

Farm was the scene of fighting during the Battle of Gettysburg, served as Confederate General Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's headquarters during the battle, and later served as a hospital and temporary cemetery.

The key ingredient in this preservation victory was a \$180,000 federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) grant. The grant, when matched with state and non-profit grants (including \$32,000 from CWPT), will be used to place a conservation easement on the property. Since 2002, more than \$2 million in FRPP grants have been awarded for battlefield preservation, resulting in the rescue of 1,900 acres of hallowed ground. Several sites in and around Gettysburg have been saved as a result of FRPP."

The most effective modern preservation efforts often involve collaborative arrangements like this one. And members of the CWRT can be pleased that we are supporters of both the CWPT—through our group membership and donations to several land-acquisition campaigns—and the Land Conservancy of Adams County, winner of the 2004 Bearss Preservation Award. Additionally, while our organization did not contribute specifically to the CWPT's Lady Farm fund, it did contribute \$250 to the Lady Farm fund of the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association in FY2001-2002. Together we are making a difference.

NOVEMBER MEETING

BY LARRY GIBBS

On November 11th Edward Bonekemper III gave an interesting speech entitled "A Victor Not a Butcher—U. S. Grant's Overlooked Military Genius" in front of 85 members and guests at the 645th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. A resident of Fairfax Station, Virginia, Bonekemper is presently a visiting lecturer on military history at Muhlenberg College. His presentation concentrated on attempting to correct what he considered the sullied reputation of General Grant. In Bonekemper's re-evaluation, Grant was the greatest general of the Civil War.

Bonekemper made a case for improving the image of General Grant and devaluing the reputation of General Robert E. Lee. At the start of the war the Confederacy had an apparent advantage in its sheer size, a territory larger than Western Europe. Yet in the end they could not hold it and last the war. The major problem, according to Bonekemper, was Lee, who made several inconsistent and damaging decisions for the Confederacy. The Confederacy only had to achieve a tie to win its independence; thus, a defensive strategy should have been strongly considered by Lee and the Confederacy. Bonekemper argued that Lee was the war's greatest practitioner of an aggressive, offensive strategy, including frontal attacks on strongly entrenched positions, strategy and tactics ill-suited to the Confederacy's lack of numbers and overall strategic aims.

"How do we [historians] get the idea that Lee was the greatest general while Grant was a drunk and an incompetent general?" queried Bonekemper. "The Civil War was the one war where the winners did not write the history." Ex-Confederate generals developed the "Lost Cause" mythology soon after war's end. This "mythology" (as Bonekemper termed it) stressed that the valiant Confederate armies lost only because they were seriously outnumbered, and that Robert E. Lee was the greatest military genius in the conflict. Bonekemper observed that the South needed a morale boost after the war because most of the war was fought in the South, because the war had ended

slavery and the Southern way of life, and because so many Southerners (1 of every 4 soldiers) died.

General Lee, the Confederacy's greatest commander, not only became a hero in the South, but a great American hero. Adulation was heaped on Lee by the famous author, Douglas Southall Freeman, who wrote a glowing biography of Lee in the 1930s. Bonekemper claimed "Freeman's biography appeared to be neutral, but it wasn't! Lee walked on water, and many subordinates were blamed for mistakes of Lee. Recently, Lee has been taken down a few pegs while Grant is now deemed the best general in the Civil War!"

Bonekemper proclaimed that Lee's vision and concern extended only to his home state of Virginia, to the exclusion of the rest of the Confederacy. Bonekemper also presented statistics showing that Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia suffered casualty rates at battles such as Antietam and Gettysburg that were higher than the opposing Union army, staggering losses that the Confederacy simply didn't have the manpower to afford.

Grant's rise to commanding Union general was meteoric. He was a complete failure in every venture until the war began, but the war seemed to unleash his latent abilities. Starting as a colonel of an Illinois regiment, Grant rose in rank and reputation after early victories at Belmont, Fort Henry, Fort Donelson and Shiloh. At Fort Donelson Grant forced the surrender of 14,000 Confederate troops, in keeping with his aim of going after enemy armies, not places or territories.

The Vicksburg Campaign executed by Grant was one of the greatest campaigns in American military history. Using decoy maneuvers and deceptions such as Grierson's raid through Mississippi, Grant kept Confederate General Pemberton off-stride in his defense of Vicksburg. Grant crossed the Mississippi River into enemy territory, at that time the largest amphibious crossing in history. He cut loose from his supply lines, and with swift movements befuddled the (admittedly) easily-befuddled Pemberton. After a 47-day siege, Pemberton surrendered his 29,000 man army, the largest capture of prisoners of the war.

The notion of Grant as a "butcher" gained the most credence in the Overland Campaign of 1864, and particularly the assault Grant ordered against entrenched Confederate positions at Cold Harbor. Bonekemper admitted that Grant made a major mistake in that assault. For his part, Grant admitted that Cold Harbor was his greatest mistake.

Grant's armies, occasionally outnumbered, suffered fewer casualties than the Confederate armies that he faced. Totaling all of Grant's battles and campaigns Grant's losses, by Bonekemper's reckoning, totaled 153,000 while Confederate losses totaled 190,000, a lesser loss for Grant even though Grant was usually the aggressor!

In the spring of 1864, Grant was under tremendous pressure to produce victories that could rally Union pro-war opinion. In the Overland Campaign, Grant showed great moral courage in persevering in this campaign, an advance that eventually led to the surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox and the winning of the war. In Bonekemper's words, "Grant almost singlehandedly won the Civil War!"

GORDON WHITNEY PASSES AWAY

Ex-President Gordon Whitney passed away on November 13, 2005. After serving as a captain of the Hammond, Indiana fire department and as a member of the 104th Reactivated Illinois Infantry, Gordon relocated to Madison, Indiana. There he had the distinction of also serving as President of the Louisville, Kentucky and Jefferson County, Indiana Round Tables. A dedicated student of the Civil War, Gordon was a direct descendent of a hero of the defense of Snodgrass Hill at Chickamauga. Gordon spent many years researching the career of Union General Jefferson C. Davis and this resulted in his co-authorship, with Nat Hughes, of a biography of the general entitled, *Jefferson Davis in Blue*. We extend our sincere condolences to Gordon's son Eli, his daughters Chris and Cathie, their families, and to his legion of friends who will deeply miss his warmth, humor, knowledge and caring nature.

GRAPESHOT



On November 5th **Jerry and JoEllen Kowalski** in the persona of General and Mrs. George H. Thomas addressed the Mishewauka CWRT and The Daughters of the Union 1861-1865 – Department of IL Encampment. Jerry also addressed the Des Plaines Optimist Club Nov. 17th on the Civil War origins of Thanksgiving.

In Highland Park on Nov. 28th **Jerry Schur** addressed the JCC Men's Club on "The Battle of Vicksburg".

On Dec. 7th **Oscar Walchirk** will address the Highland Park Hadassah on "Jewish Soldiers and Sailors in the American Civil War". If you'd like to attend, phone Maxine Simon at (847) 432-6589.

"Jeff Davis's Colonels" will be the title of **Bruce Allardice's** Dec. 15th talk to the Houston, TX, Civil War Round Table. The talk is based on his forthcoming book.

The Galena Historical Society will be hosting "A Victorian Dinner and Dance" in Galena on Dec. 3rd, at 8 p.m. Period music will be provided by a 10-piece orchestra. Tickets are \$50. For reservations, phone (815) 777-9129. For more information, visit www.galena.org.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at bsallardice1@aol.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.

DRESS UP IN DECEMBER!

Our December speaker, Steve Fratt, is a reenactor and plans to appear in uniform. President Bob Miller would like to encourage CWRT members attending that meeting to get their crinolines and uniforms out of the closet and wear them that night!

2006 BATTLEFIELD TOUR

The 2006 battlefield tour will be to Bull Run (Manassas) May 3-6, 2006. Remember to set aside those dates! More information, including the tour registration form, will be forthcoming.

FRANK PETTICE PASSES AWAY

Longtime CWRT member August "Frank" Pettice passed away Nov. 25th, after a long illness. Frank conducted our book raffle for many years, and whenever something needed to be done, Frank volunteered. With his strong resemblance to President Lincoln, Frank often gave talks at schools about Lincoln and the Civil War. He will be missed.

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.*

December 9: **Stephen Fratt**, "Civil War Tactics and Technology"

January 13, 2006: **Round Table Panel Discussion** (Panel: Bruce Allardice, Rob Girardi, Larry Gibbs; Chair: Mary Abroe) "The Most Significant 'What-If's' of Civil War History"

February 10: **James McPherson**, "Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief"

March 10: **Gail Stephens**, "Lew Wallace"

April 21 (3rd Friday, due to Holy Week): **Horace Mewborn**, "John S. Mosby"

May 12: **Mark Noll**, "How the Bible Helped Start the Civil War"

June 9: **George Rable**, "Fredricksburg in the Larger Civil War Universe"

ROSEHILL CEMETERY

In honor of Veteran's Day, our CWRT, the Salt Creek and Northern Illinois CWRTs, the Sons of Union Veterans and other groups sponsored a memorial service at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago honoring our war dead. The service, which featured reenactors from America's wars, was covered by several local television stations.