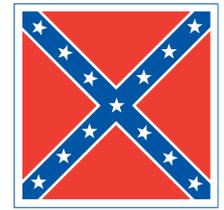


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXVI, Number 6

Chicago, Illinois

February, 2006



## 648th REGULAR MEETING

JAMES MCPHERSON

ON

“ABRAHAM LINCOLN AS  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Friday, February 10**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**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 Venetian.*

*Catch of the Day.*

*Vegetarian Plate or*

*Fruit Plate*

### PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservation by **MONDAY, February 6**, 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, February 8, 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.*

## JAMES MCPHERSON

- on -

### Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE



James McPherson

When the Civil War began, the President of the United States was at a distinct disadvantage to his adversary in Richmond. Jefferson Davis had graduated from West Point, commanded a regiment in the Mexican War, and served as an excellent Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce. By contrast, Abraham Lincoln's only military experience was his brief tenure as a militia captain in the Black Hawk War, in which he did not hear a shot fired in anger.

Lincoln faced a steep learning curve as commander in chief, but he was a quick study and by 1862 his analytical acumen and common-sense pragmatism had given him a better grasp of both national and military strategy than most of his military commanders, who repeatedly disappointed him until the rise of Grant and Sherman put in place a command team that shared Lincoln's view of how the war should be fought and had the skill and determination to do it.

On Friday, February 10th, Professor James McPherson will discuss the evolution of Lincoln's war strategy through four stages: 1) a militia action to quell an insurrection; 2) an invasion to conquer Confederate territory; 3) a war to destroy enemy armies; 4) a war to destroy the resources (including slavery) and the

will of the Southern people to continue fighting.

Perhaps the country's most eminent historian of the Civil War, James McPherson was born in North Dakota and grew up mostly in Minnesota, where he graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in 1958. He received his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University in 1963. McPherson taught at Princeton University for 42 years, from 1962 to 2004, and currently holds the position of George Henry Davis 1886 Professor of American History, Emeritus. He was president of the Society of American Historians in 1999-2000 and of the American

Historical Association in 2003-04. Professor McPherson has written 15 books, mostly on the Civil War era. His books have won several prizes, most notably the Pulitzer Prize in History

(1989) for *Battle Cry of Freedom* and the Lincoln Prize (1998) for *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*. He has been a board member or advisory board member of several battlefield preservation groups and Civil War museum projects.



## Battlefield Preservation Update

BY MARY MUNSELL ABROE

**CWRT Receives Thanks for Donations:** The Civil War Round Table recently received notes of gratitude from two preservation organizations to which we contributed in December. From Christopher Kolakowski, executive director of the Perryville (Kentucky) Battlefield Preservation Association (PBPA), came the following words of thanks for our membership dues: "On behalf of the...PBPA, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your donation of \$250 to help preserve and interpret the history of Perryville....As the PBPA looks ahead, the year 2006 promises to be an exciting year. Stuart [Sanders, former executive director] left a strong foundation to build on, and I plan to move forward with several interpretation and preservation projects in the next few months—including buying more land to add to the battlefield.... Again, thank you for your generous support. The PBPA cannot do its job without enthusiastic support from our members and partners. Your gift will help move us toward our goals...." For additional information on the Perryville organization and its activities, see its Web site at [www.perryville.net](http://www.perryville.net).

Dr. David Bush, chair of the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island (Ohio) Civil War Prison, expressed his group's thanks for our donation to help reduce the mortgage on seventeen acres of the prison compound and (earthen) Fort Johnson: "Thank you very much for your recent gift of \$500....Your support of historic preservation allows our organization to remain steadfast in our goal to permanently safeguard and maintain the island for future educational and research programs. As you are well aware, Johnson's Island is considered one of the best-preserved examples of a Civil War prisoner-of-war facility in the United States....With the financial support of donors such as you, present and future generations will continue to discover and understand the captivating history of Johnson's Island and its role in one of the most devastating periods in American history. Again, many thanks for your commitment to the Friends and Descendants of Johnson's Island Civil War Prison and our mission of preserving a significant Civil War site. You have our continued gratitude and appreciation."

Johnson's Island, named a National

Historic Landmark in 1990, was a Civil War prison—virtually all of whose occupants were Confederate officers—located in Sandusky Bay near Lake Erie. The prison opened in early 1862 and eventually housed many more than the 1,000 intended inmates. The total number for the prison's forty months of active use is estimated at 10,000-15,000; at the war's end, there were roughly 3,000 prisoners at Johnson's Island. In the northeast part of the island, 206 men who died there are buried in a one-acre cemetery enclosed by an iron fence; watching over them is a bronze statue of a Confederate private soldier that was raised by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Of those who survived their stay on Johnson's Island and among its more well-known occupants were Isaac Trimble, Henry Kyd Douglas, and Basil Duke (brother-in-law of John Hunt Morgan) as well as a number of Morgan's Raiders.

CWRT member Gale Pewitt has been a longtime advocate for the preservation of Johnson's Island, and his request on our "Preservation Suggestion Clipboard" at the December meeting was responsible for our group's donation. We thank Gale for his advocacy and support, and ask other members to speak up—either through the clipboard, which is available at monthly meetings, or through contact with a member of the BPF Committee—about worthwhile projects and organizations that could use our help. (Members of the BPF Committee are Mary Abroe, Jerry Allen, Larry Gibbs, Rob Girardi, Nancy Jacobs, Marshall Krolick, President Bob Miller, and Steve Stewart.) For further information on Johnson's Island, see the following Web site, [www.johnsonsisland.com](http://www.johnsonsisland.com).

**Here Are Ways to Give Input and Receive Information at Monthly Meetings:** At our January meeting, member Jackie Wilson used the clipboard "system" to urge support of the Civil War Preservation Trust and the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. She will be gratified to know that we recently renewed our group membership in the CWPT in addition to the fact that one recipient of last year's Bearss Preservation Award (and \$1,000 from our Battlefield Preservation Fund) was the CWPT's Franklin campaign. And, as reported in this column in the

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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](mailto:webmaster@www.thecivilwar.org).

December 2005 newsletter, last fall the National Museum of Civil War Medicine received a \$750 donation (covering dues and a gift for the museum's new satellite facility at Antietam, the Pry House Field Hospital Museum) from the Chicago Civil War Round Table.

Also available at monthly meetings are recently received newsletters of the preservation organizations to which we as a group belong; these organizations also could use support from individuals through memberships. Please take a look at this information and consider a personal membership.

**Congress Authorizes Study of Franklin Battlefield:** The fall 2005 edition of *Public History News*, a publication of the National Council on Public History, reports that in November Congress passed the Franklin National Battlefield Study Act, a measure (H.R. 1972) that was introduced by Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn (R-TN). According to authors Bruce Craig and Nathaniel Kulyk, the law empowers the Secretary of the Interior to "conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of including in the National Park System certain sites in Williamson County, Tennessee, relating to the Battle of Franklin...."

According to Representative Blackburn, "This bill is a first step toward preserving and protecting sites that contributed to this important Civil War landscape and achieving a solution to save the area as a national heritage through partnerships with the local communities."

## JANUARY MEETING

BY LARRY GIBBS

On January 13, the CWRT was treated to a panel discussion on “The Most Significant What-Ifs of Civil War History”. Three CWRT members made counterfactual presentations on three disparate topics before 83 members and guests at the 647th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. Ex-CWRT president **Mary Abroe** introduced the three presenters, all former presidents of our Round Table. **Bruce Allardice**, history teacher and author, spoke on “What if the Confederates hadn’t fired on Fort Sumter?” **Rob Girardi**, Chicago detective and author, presented “What would have happened if the Corinth Campaign had been fought more aggressively by Union forces?” History teacher **Larry Gibbs** posed the question, “What would have happened if President Lincoln had never issued the Emancipation Proclamation?”

As moderator, Mary Abroe noted that “The history of our Civil War was a history of contingencies from which choices were made. These choices indicated that the inevitability of historical events was not certain or obvious.” History is the telling of what did happen; that shouldn’t diminish the importance of the counterfactual. What-ifs cast a reflective—and oftentimes informative—light on what actually happened.

Bruce Allardice’s presentation focused on the beginning of the war. After the secession of seven southern states in early 1861, the Federal government held three forts within the borders of the new Confederacy. In history, President Davis eventually ordered the bombardment of one of these forts, Fort Sumter, when the North made an effort to reinforce the fort, and this bombardment inaugurated a war. What if Davis had made a different decision and waited for Lincoln and the Federal government to make the first move? As Allardice explained, in Lincoln’s first inaugural address he pledged “to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Federal government... Had the Confederacy not fired on Sumter, Lincoln’s choices were 1) do nothing; 2) declare war on the Confederacy; or 3) maneuver to reclaim Federal authority and force the

Confederacy to fire the first shot.” Allardice opined that Lincoln probably wouldn’t have chosen options 1 or 2, at least not immediately.

The war would have been delayed several months, giving the Confederacy more opportunity to organize their new government and army. Lincoln may still have maneuvered the Confederacy into firing first, but the changed political and legal situation could only have benefited the Confederacy. Allardice speculated that Lincoln’s likely maneuver would have been to use the navy to close southern ports, thereby cutting off the new Confederate government from all trade and tax revenue.

Rob Girardi’s counterfactual involved what he termed the missed opportunity to aggressively advance on Corinth, Mississippi in 1862. After a string of victories in the west in 1862, most notably Shiloh, Girardi asserted that “the Confederate army was physically and emotionally exhausted.” General Henry Halleck organized an army of 120,000 soldiers to attack 70,000 Confederate defending Corinth. Rather than advancing rapidly and striking a decisive blow, Halleck took almost six weeks to move 20 miles. When he reached Corinth after May 30, 1862, “The Federals found the town evacuated and literally ‘won’ an empty victory!” Proclaimed Girardi, “This lack of Union aggression was the greatest missed opportunity of the war.” A more rapid advance may have trapped the Confederate army in Corinth, and eliminated the one Confederate army that could oppose it.

Another missed opportunity, in Girardi’s judgment, occurred after Corinth was taken. Halleck’s huge army could have been sent to take Chattanooga or Vicksburg, but instead was dispersed and ordered to occupy ground already taken. Girardi concluded, “At a time when the might of Union arms was at its zenith in strength, and poised to strike a beaten and demoralized enemy, it [the Union army] did NOTHING!”

Larry Gibbs began his presentation with a series of questions on President Lincoln’s commitment to emancipation. Gibbs asserted, “A credible amount of evidence appeared to indi-

cate that Lincoln was insincere and ambivalent about the emancipation of slaves!” It would thus be plausible that Lincoln could be dissuaded from presenting the Emancipation Proclamation to the public. For a number of different reasons, a majority of his cabinet opposed immediate emancipation when Lincoln first presented the idea. Lincoln admitted that the document didn’t free any slaves in the border states, only slaves in areas controlled by Confederate forces. What if Lincoln put the proclamation away, never to be seen or referred to again?

Gibbs forecast several possible results. Since few slaves would enlist in the Union army absent a promise of freedom, Union victory on the battlefield would be more difficult. Northern whites, more of whom would be put in the army, would seriously listen to the northern Copperheads, who promised peace without victory. Absent any pledge of emancipation, England and France would threaten to support the legitimacy of the Confederacy. Gibbs predicted that the war would last until 1867, at which point the Union would lose its resolve to continue the conflict with the mounting losses. A negotiated peace settlement would 1) allow slavery to survive; 2) restore the Union; and 3) pass a Constitutional amendment to provide for gradual, compensated emancipation by 1900. Gibbs claimed, “This compromise created an unhappy reunification for the nation!”



### SCHILLER TO SPEAK

On Thursday, Feb. 2 from 7 to 9 p.m., Civil War reenactor and Northwestern University fencing coach Dr. Laurence Dana Schiller will take an in-depth look at the arms, equipment and uniforms used by Civil War soldiers from the Midwest. Presented in conjunction with the Evanston Historical Society’s current exhibit, “A Great War Enthusiasm: Evanston and the Civil War,” the talk takes place at the Dawes House, 225 Greenwood St. Tickets are \$5 per person, or free for EHS members. Reservations are recommended. Call (847) 475-3410 or visit [www.evanston-historical.org](http://www.evanston-historical.org) for more information.

## GRAPESHOT



On Thursday, February 2nd, 2006, at 6:00 pm, **Richard J. Carwardine**, author of the Lincoln Prize winning book, *Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power*, will present his views on Abraham Lincoln in the Pritzker Military Library at a live event co-sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop and the Pritzker Military Library. For more information, contact the Pritzker Military Library at (312) 587-0234 or online at [www.pritzkermilitarylibrary.org](http://www.pritzkermilitarylibrary.org).

The new **Kenosha Civil War Museum** is seeking donations of letters and artifacts for use in the museum. For donations or for more information, contact the Kenosha Public Museum at (262) 653-4140 or [www.kenoshapublicmuseum.org](http://www.kenoshapublicmuseum.org).

The **Kankakee Valley CWRT Symposium** April 1st will feature a talk by our own Dan Weinberg, Craig Symonds, Gene Salecker and Jack Waugh. The location is the Quality Inn in Bradley, and the cost is \$50. Contact Art Schumacher at (815) 939-1041 or [mhess@yahoo.com](mailto:mhess@yahoo.com) for more details.

CWRT ex-president **Larry Gibbs** will be speaking on "Reconstruction" at the Blue Island Park District's Civil War Round Table Wednesday, March 1st, at 7:30. For more information phone Annie Anderson, Blue Island Park District, (708) 388-3872.

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](mailto: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.

### LINCOLN SYMPOSIUM

The **Abraham Lincoln Association** will be holding its annual symposium and banquet on Sunday, Feb. 12th at the Old State Capitol in Springfield. The theme of the symposium, which is free and open to the public, will be "The Lincoln Family". Featured speakers include Catherine Clinton, Daniel M. Epstein, Joshua Shenk and Gerald Prokopowicz. The banquet, at the adjoining Lincoln Hotel, will be \$75 per person, with Doris Kearns Goodwin as speaker. Contact the Lincoln Association at [www.alincolnassoc.com](http://www.alincolnassoc.com) for more details. For banquet reservations, call Cathy LeConte at (217) 747-5502.

### MCPHERSON DINNER DEAL!

At our Feb. 10th get-together with Professor McPherson, the CWRT will be making a special dinner offer. Any one guest of a CWRT-Chicago member gets **\$10 off** their meal that night! If you have a friend who loves history, and who loves the company of like-minded people, bring that guest Feb. 10th and get them to join!

## 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*.

**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"

### LINCOLN MOVIE IN PRODUCTION

The shooting on Steven Spielberg's **Abraham Lincoln** movie started recently. **Liam Neeson**, the "King of the Biopics" and the star of *Schindler's List*, *Rob Roy*, *Michael Collins*, and *Kinsey*, will play Lincoln. The movie will be based on *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, a biography of Lincoln by historian **Doris Kearns Goodwin**.