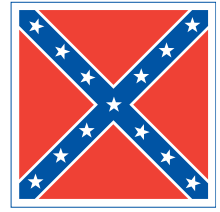


THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

Volume LXVIII, Number 7

Chicago, Illinois

March, 2008



669th REGULAR MEETING

Brian Wills

on

“The Civil War in Cinema”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Friday, March 14

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$35 - Members/Non-members

Entrée:

London Broil, Catch of the Day, Vegetarian Plate or Fruit Plate

please note

Make your reservation by **MONDAY, Mar. 10** by calling **630-460-1865**. Reservations can also be made by emailing chicagocwrtdinner@earthlink.net with the names of your party and their choice of entree.

Reservations made after Wednesday, Mar. 12, will be surcharged \$5.

People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please call the number before 9 a.m. Thursday to avoid a charge.

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 \$10 with a validated parking sticker.

Brian Wills

on

The Civil War in Cinema

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

From the 1915 classic “Birth of a Nation” to “Cold Mountain” in 2003, hundreds of directors, actors and screenwriters have used the Civil War to create compelling drama. Director D. W. Griffith, the son of a Confederate army major, used “Birth of a Nation” to powerfully dramatize the “unreconstructed” view of southerners. “Gone With the Wind” mythologized the “magnolia and juleps” plantation life, but contrasted it with the harsh realities of an Atlanta army hospital. “Gettysburg” gave us battle, faithfully portrayed by re-enactors on the actual sites of the fighting.

On March 14th historian Brian Wills will take our Round Table on a journey through the portrayal of the war in film, exploring what Hollywood got right and wrong, how the films influenced each other, and, ultimately, how the movies reflect America’s changing understandings of the conflict and of the nation.

“In the case of the American Civil War, the tableau is rich in color, conflict and character,” Wills points out. “Yet some producers, directors and performers have less interest in, or knowledge of, the demands of history than others. Many will use the war as a mere backdrop or context rather than seeking to inform audi-



Brian Wills

ences of the issues and complexities of the conflict itself. Others cast the struggle in the simplest forms. Even in the best of situations there is always a tug-of-war between two powerful poles: entertainment value and historical accuracy. ...”

Brian S. Wills, the Kenneth Asbury Professor of History at the University of Virginia’s College at Wise, combines two of his passions--history and movies--in his latest book, Gone With The Glory: The Civil War in Cinema. Wills came to U.Va.-Wise

in 1992 and has been chair of the department of history and philosophy since 1997. After graduating from the University of Richmond, Wills earned an

M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. Professor Wills has published numerous articles on the Civil War and several books, including The War Hits Home, a study of the Civil War’s impact on Suffolk County, and A Battle from the Start, a biography of General Nathan Bedford Forrest.



Battlefield Preservation

BY DAVID ZUCKER

Shenandoah Valley: Preservationists have filed a lawsuit to stop a project to double the size of Interstate 81 through the Shenandoah Valley, impacting seven of the valley's most significant battlefields. "I'm all for keeping this idiocy from ruining Fisher's Hill and the Shenandoah Valley," said Larry Allamong, a farmer and landowner at the Fisher's Hill Battlefield. Allamong owns 32 acres on the west side of I-81 including a portion of Ramseur's Hill, a key feature of the battlefield.

Allamong and a coalition of conservation groups in the northern valley filed suit December 17th in Federal District Court in Charlottesville, VA. They seek to prevent the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration from going ahead with the plan.

VDOT proposes to widen the highway currently four lanes, to eight to twelve lanes through most of the state, at a cost of \$11.4 billion.

Howard Kittell, Executive Director of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, said his non-profit group is not party to the suit but supports its goals.

"The foundation has said from day one there's no question there's a need for safety and operational improvements", Kittell said. "But that can take place in the median without taking any more right-of-way."

Kittell cited "substantial impacts" to seven battlefields. This reflects the fact, he noted, that I-81 parallels route 11, the Old Valley Pike, and the battles developed along this key transportation artery of the 19th Century.

Kittell asserted that VDOT had failed to take into account the corridor's historic assets when drafting an Environmental Impact Statement.

Most impacted by VDOT's plans would be the New Market, Fisher's Hill and

Cedar Creek Battlefields, according to Kittell. Second and Third Winchester would be hard hit as well, he said, where the "Weave and merge lanes would extend a great distance back from the interchange, taking land that's been preserved by Federal Funds."

The Foundation and other organizations, along with several local Governments, are proposing an alternative that involves widening only in certain spots, and greater use of rail for freight travel.

Norfolk Southern has announced plans for a \$2 billion rail up grade that reportedly will eliminate 25 percent of truck travel in Virginia.

Steven Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, said that at present, many of the Civil War battlefields retain their historic setting. VDOT's plan, with its acres of new asphalt, would result in a "much more urban" appearance.

"It's completely at odds with a sustainable historic and preservation approach," Schwartz said. "It's a 1950's approach. There's a better way to do this that preserves historic, economic and farmland assets."

Megan Gallagher, Director of the Shenandoah Valley Network, said VDOT has failed to listen to valley residents.

"It's extremely frustrating for civilians to be battling a plan that all agree is stupid," VDOT's approach has been unresponsive to local concerns and out-of-the-ball-park expensive. The suit will be successful, if it forces VDOT back to the table," Gallagher said. "We want them to start listening to the citizens of the Shenandoah Valley, who are telling them, all your plans are too big and expensive, and they hurt resources like Civil War Battlefields and farmland."

VDOT's plan was approved by the Federal Highway Administration last June. A 180-day deadline for legal challenge

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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 bsallardice1@earthlink.net.



ended December 17th, the day the coalition filed its lawsuit.

Gettysburg: Gettysburg National Military Park put a new tour ticketing and reservation system in place January 2nd that the Association for Licensed Battlefield Guides (LBG) says will cause financial hardship for the Guides. In addition, they believe it will result in less service for visitors.

At issue is the scheduling of car tours at times visitors choose. Supt. John A. Latschar says "Under the new system, visitors will be able to secure an LBG in advance, at the date and time that best suits their schedule."

The reservation system can handle an entire visit with timed tickets for venues including the theater/cyclorama, Eisenhower National Historic Site, Wills House and guided battlefield tours, according to Latschar. It can be accessed by web, telephone, and in person.

The new system does not efficiently use guide time, says LBG executive council member and spokesman Chris Rebman, because it results in a "Random scattering" of reservations.

(from Civil War News and other sources)

February Meeting

BY TOM TRESMOTT

On March 4, 1864, during the “Dahlgren Raid” on Richmond (an event seldom mentioned by historians), an attempt was made on the life of Jefferson Davis. On February 8, David E. Long spoke to fifty-five members and guests at the 668th Regular Meeting of the Civil War Round Table on “Lincoln, Davis, and the Dahlgren Raid”.

The question that has divided historians ever since is: Was Dahlgren acting independently in trying to capture or kill Davis, or was he acting under Lincoln’s or Stanton’s orders? And if Lincoln approved it, why? Why has such an important matter not been more divisive, especially since Lincoln went over his department heads to okay the raid? Two reasons: first, because Lincoln became a secular saint after his assassination, and the idea that he would initiate a “black flag” mission didn’t fit. Secondly, Admiral John Dahlgren, father of the slain Ulric Dahlgren, said the incriminating documents found on his son’s body were forgeries, citing as evidence the misspelling of “Dalhgren”.

According to David Long, another problem in the study of this event is that historians have not looked at it beyond January of 1864. The origins of the raid go back to Lincoln’s taking office in 1861, when security in D.C. was very much in question. At Kate Chase’s wedding reception, Lincoln met Admiral Dahlgren, commander of the Washington Navy Yard. Lincoln was so impressed by Dahlgren that he was authorized to visit the White House anytime; the Admiral began preparing the defense of the capital, far more effectively than General Winfield Scott. This was a debt Abraham Lincoln would never forget.

Dahlgren’s son Ulric was a “fair-haired child”. He knew Richmond,

and he knew the South. Studying law in Philadelphia, he was sent for by his father when the secession crisis heated up. The following year, when Lincoln, the elder Dahlgren, and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton lamented “Stonewall” Jackson’s escape in the Shenandoah Valley, young Dahlgren gave an intelligence report surpassing that of General George B. McClellan. Because of his work, Stanton made Ulrich Dahlgren a Captain in the Army of the Potomac, serving on the staffs of Generals Sigel, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade, and acting as a White House “mole” among the officers in that army. Rapidly becoming a model officer, Dahlgren was a whirling dervish during the Gettysburg Campaign, capturing a messenger trying to let Robert E. Lee know that he could expect no reinforcements. In pursuit of Lee’s army, Dahlgren was shot in the leg; ignoring the wound, the leg became infected, and had to be amputated. While in a coma, Dahlgren was visited by a “who’s who” of Union dignitaries, including Lincoln. After his fever broke and he started to heal, Dahlgren became even more determined in his “quest for glory”. In late January, a prosthesis, one that would enable him to mount a horse, was secured.

On February 1 Ulrich Dahlgren met with Lincoln, discussing “things military and political”, and soon a raid on lightly-defended Richmond was okayed by both Lincoln and Stanton. Planning began on February 22, with General Judson “Kill-Cavalry” Kilpatrick and Ulrich Dahlgren, now a Colonel, to lead this mission. According to David Long, the objectives were to free the Union prisoners at Belle Island and Libby Prisons, burn the Tredegar Iron Works, AND capture Jefferson Davis and his cabinet -- knowing that Davis could get killed in the process.

The raid, commenced on February 28, 1864, with Kilpatrick leading 5000 men to the environs of Richmond. The following day he split his command, sending Dahlgren and 500 men to approach the capital from the south, while the main force were to come in from the north. However, rain, a 40 degree drop in temperature, and Confederate resistance caused Kilpatrick to lose his nerve, despite only 500 Rebels facing him, and the raid sputtered out by March 1. Dahlgren’s retreating command split in two, with Dahlgren and 100 men becoming detached from the rest (who eventually got away successfully). Dahlgren’s men were ambushed, and the one-legged colonel was killed. The remaining Yankees were captured, and, more importantly, papers detailing the mission and its objectives were discovered on Dahlgren’s body. The documents were sent to Richmond within 24 hours, examined by Davis and other Confederate authorities, and photographed, with the photographs distributed to newspapers North and South. David Long noted that most historians believe the papers were genuine: the seeming misspelling of Dahlgren’s name was owing to bleeding ink from another page.

Was Dahlgren acting independently in trying to capture or kill Davis, or was he acting under Lincoln’s or Stanton’s orders? And if Lincoln approved it, why? In David Long’s eyes, Lincoln would have approved because Jefferson Davis was a zealot opponent, in a war with 427 Americans dying a day. In that context, the taking of one life could be justified, especially since Lincoln knew and worked well with Alexander Stephens, the Confederate Vice-President.

In conclusion, this raid was a symbol of how determined Lincoln was not to lose the war, and that he would do whatever it took to secure victory.

GRAPESHOT



The **Civil War Museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin**, will have its grand opening the weekend of March 28-29th. Friday night March 28th the museum will host a "Red, White & Blue" fund-raising gala reception. The next day at noon there will be a dedication ceremony featuring period bands, a cannon salute, special activities, and a preview of the exhibits. Sounds like a lot of fun, and it's all free. This museum focuses on the Midwestern states in the war, and features state-of-the-art presentations of all aspects of the war. Our friends in the Milwaukee CWRT are involved in this project, and it deserves our support. For more information, visit the museum website at <http://www.kenosha.org/civilwar/index.html>.

CWRT ex-president **Brooks Davis** recently gave a talk to the Appellate Lawyers Association on "Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas—Friendly Enemies?" In July Brooks will be giving the same talk at Hildee (Robert Todd Lincoln's Vermont home) and a talk on "The Montague Generals" for the White Lake (MI) Historical Society.

Executive Board member **Jo Ellen Kowalski** and her husband will be addressing the Decatur Civil War Round Table on March 13, and they will be greeting VIP guests at the Preview of the Kenosha Civil War Museum on March 28.

On April 6th CWRT member and Shiloh NMP volunteer **Bjorn Skaptason**, and Dr. Jeff Gentsch, will be leading a series of battlefield walks of Shiloh on the anniversary of that battle. For more information, see www.nps.gov/shil/parknews/anniversaryhikesandtalks.htm

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at bsallardice1@earthlink.net or (847) 375-8305.

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Fifty-seven years of audio recordings of CWRT lectures by distinguished historians are available and can be purchased in either audio cassette or CD format. For lecture lists, contact Hal Ardell at hal229@ameritech.net or phone him at (773) 774-6781.

Each meeting features a book raffle, with proceeds going to battlefield preservation. There is also a silent auction for books donated by Ralph Newman and others, again with proceeds benefiting battlefield preservation.

Visit our Website!

The CWRT's website (www.thecwrt.org) has been revamped to include recent CWRT newsletters, links to other CWRTs, links to Civil War information, membership application and battlefield tour information, and much much more. Stop on by and take a look!

Only a few spots left for the Battlefield Tour

We're going to Shiloh, Corinth and Brice's Crossroads May 1-4, 2008. HQ is the Holiday Inn Express in Corinth, and as usual **Ed Bearss** will be the lead tour guide, with the able assistance of the Shiloh NBP's **Stacey Allen**. The tour reading list and schedule information is on the website at www.thecwrt.org. Only a few spots are left, so sign up NOW.

Winter Meeting Note

At the winter meeting of the CWRTs Executive Committee (EC), the EC voted to raise dinner costs to \$40, starting next year (2008-09). This reluctantly-taken action was in response to the increase in meal and room fees the CWRT is being charged.

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*.

- March 14:* **Brian Wills**,
"CivilWar in Cinema"
April 11: **Jennifer Weber**,
"Copperheads"
May 9: **Vernon Burton**,
"The Age of Lincoln"
June 13: **Bill Farina**,
"U. S. Grant"
Sept. 12: **Pete Cozzens**,
"The 1862 Valley Campaign"
Oct. 17: **Gloria Swift**,
TBD
Nov. 14: **Rick Hatcher**,
TBD
Dec. 12: **Craig Symonds**,
TBD

Virtual Book Signings

On Thursday, April 3rd at 6:00 p.m., our friends at the **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop** will host renowned historian **Gary Gallagher** and author **Ruth McAllister** as part of their continuing series of "Virtual Book Signings". Professor Gallagher will discuss his new book on recent popular memory of the Civil War, *Causes Won, Lost & Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shaped What We Know About the Civil War*. Ruth McAllister will sign and discuss her elegant new edition of her great-grandfather Sam Watkins' famous memoir of soldier life, *Co. "Aytch" First Tennessee Regiment, or A Side Show of the Big Show*. For more details, phone the shop at (312) 944-3085. The web address for accessing and watching these signings is www.VirtualBookSigning.net.