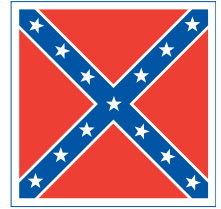


THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

Volume LXIX, Number 7

Chicago, Illinois

March, 2009



679th REGULAR MEETING

John Latschar

on

“Reinterpreting Gettysburg”

★★★★★

Friday, March 13

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$40 - Members/Non-members

*Entrée: Sliced Sirloin,
Catch of the Day, Vegetarian
Plate or Fruit Plate*

please note

Make your reservation by Monday, March 9 by calling 630-460-1865 with the names of your party and choice of entrée. DO NOT email in your reservations this month.

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 \$5 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is \$10 with a validated parking sticker.

John Latschar

on

“Reinterpreting Gettysburg:
Lessons from the Civil War?”

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

Historian John Hope Franklin once described the art of history as “connecting the dots. The more dots that are connected,” he explained, “the better the history.” In a sense, that’s what National Military Parks attempt to do – connect more of those dots. Though for the Battle of Gettysburg in particular, the stories NMPs tell visitors inevitably leave a lot of basic historic dots unconnected.

But Dr. Franklin was also speaking of another kind of connection – the art of connecting today’s visitors with a bygone past, with which they have little understanding or familiarity. To be truly effective, Dr. Franklin was saying, historians need to find points of connection between the present and the past. Without those connections, history truly does become irrelevant.

On March 13th, **John Latschar** will speak on how the Gettysburg NMP connects the historical dots, to tell visitors a more complete, a more balanced, a more nuanced story of how this nation descended into and emerged from the hell of a Civil War, and how Gettysburg strives to connect the visitors of today to those events of long ago.

Dr. John A. Latschar has been the Superintendent of Gettysburg National Military Park since 1994.



John Latschar

He is responsible for the long-term strategic planning as well as day-to-day operations for the battlefield and the Eisenhower National Historic Site. A 30-year veteran of the National Park Service (NPS), Dr. Latschar earned both his bachelor’s of art and master’s of art in history from Kansas State University. He was awarded a Ph.D. in American History from Rutgers University in 1978. He is a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, serving in action there in the U.S. Army during 1970-1971. He retired from the U.S. Army Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1994.

Under Dr Latschar, the park constructed of a new Museum and Visitor

Center, which was completed in Spring 2008. A battlefield rehabilitation project returned the Gettysburg landscape as close as possible to its 1863 appearance, and the newly renovated Gettysburg Cyclorama opened to the public in late September of 2008.



Battlefield Preservation

BY DAVID ZUCKER

WASHINGTON — The drama resumes at Ford's Theatre for the Feb. 12 bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth.

The theater and its popular museum will reopen in February after being closed 18 months for renovations.

A series of opening events during the next few months will feature such luminaries as filmmaker George Lucas, actor Sam Waterson, historians Harold Holzer and James McPherson and comedian Conan O'Brien, among others.

The upgraded theater will have a number of changes designed to increase visitors' comfort, including new seats, improved sound and lighting systems, modernized heating and air conditioning systems, refurbished restrooms, a new lobby and entrance, and an elevator to access different levels. The stage capabilities will also be updated.

The basement museum will show a facelift as well. Since the historic theater was first reopened in 1968, the museum contained an assortment of Lincoln memorabilia as well as assassination relics, such as the overcoat that Lincoln wore to Ford's on the evening of April 14, 1865.

The museum has been expanded and given a storyline: Lincoln's life in Washington. But the assassination artifacts will still be displayed.

"We would be remiss if Booth's deringer was not there," says Hannah Olanoff, communications director until recently for the Ford's Theatre Society, the nonprofit corporation that produces stage performances at the theater and raised funds for the restoration.

Other famous items that will remain on display include the blood-flecked Lincoln overcoat and the diary that

assassin John Wilkes Booth kept for several days after fleeing Washington.

"Since we are a theater, we have a lot of experience in story-telling," explains Olanoff. The Ford's Theatre Society has "re-imagined" the experience that they want visitors to have when they walk through the museum, theater and nearby buildings that comprise an expanded Ford's "campus" on Tenth Street.

The experience is designed as a drama in four acts, says Olanoff. Visitors will be encouraged to visit the setting for each of the four acts in sequence.

Act 1 will be the museum, which will paint a social and political picture of Washington, D.C., and the United States during the 1860s. "Lincoln really became the man who we know today as a result of his time in Washington," Olanoff observes.

Act 2 will be the theater itself, where visitors will either see a one-act play or hear a talk by a National Park Service ranger about the events of April 14, 1865.

Act 3 will take place at the Petersen House across the street, where visitors will learn more about Lincoln's final hours and the vigil at his deathbed.

Act 4 will take place in a recently purchased building adjacent to the Petersen House. The ground floor, which will be called the Education and Leadership Center, will house exhibits dealing with Lincoln's legacy, exploring how his life has influenced the nation's subsequent history.

The center will also contain classrooms for educational programs, especially for younger students. Planning for the center has only begun,

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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.



and it is not expected to open to the public until 2010.

The theater refurbishing has eliminated some of the seats with obstructed views, leaving a total of 650 seats, down from the previous 682.

The seats were upgraded for greater patron comfort. Instead of straight-backed wooden chairs on the orchestra level, the new seats are more like traditional theater seats, which are padded and can be flipped up. They are reproductions of seats used in Ford's Theatre in Baltimore during the 1860s.

The reproduction of the theater box in which Lincoln was assassinated was left untouched." (All information from Civil War News, January, 2009)

NOTE: The CWRT is collecting for its annual **Ed Bearss Award**. Bring your checks to the next (March) meeting. If you can't make it, mail your contributions to Brian Seiter, CWRT Treasurer, 9812 S. California, Evergreen Park, IL 60805.

February Meeting

BY TOM TRESMOTT

On February 13, at the 678th Regular Meeting of the Civil War Round Table, Historian **Bruce Allardice** -- loveable rogue, amiable zany, and the 35th annual recipient of the **Nevins-Freeman Award** --- spoke to 79 members and guests on "Lincoln as a War Leader", in a venue just across the Chicago River from the "Wigwam" where Abraham Lincoln was nominated.

In his December 1, 1862 Message to Congress, President Lincoln said "We cannot escape history". Nearly 150 years after his death, and as we celebrate his 200th birthday, we cannot seem to escape Lincoln. His image is everywhere, selling us virtually anything. This would greatly surprise anyone reading the major newspapers in 1864. Lincoln was hated by many, ridiculed as a moron and a hick, as an ideologue or a man without ideology. His general-in-chief called him "the original gorilla". His presidency was thought a colossal failure, and his handling of the Civil War was criticized as a disaster. Yet today Abraham Lincoln is remembered as among the greatest, if not the greatest, of our presidents.

There was much more to his administration than running the war. The Transcontinental Railroad, the Morrill Land Grant Act, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the 13th through 15th Amendments were all accomplished during his term of office. In fact, there was more major domestic legislation signed into law by President Lincoln than by all previous presidents put together.

But, like no presidency before or since, Abraham Lincoln's was defined by war; the capital itself was on war footing. As historian James McPherson has observed, the Civil War, like no other war in American history, forced the president to be aware of the political context in which military decisions were made, and to be aware of the military consequences of his political decisions.

Historians agree that a civilian war leader must be judged on five criteria:

- 1) Did he mobilize public opinion in support of the war?
- 2) Did his government supply the army the sinews of war?
- 3) Did he successfully manage the political side of the war?
- 4) Was he a competent commander in chief of the army?
- 5) Did he win the war?

Before answering these five questions, a little examination of Abraham Lincoln's background is in order to more fully evaluate the man. He was born dirt poor; was self-educated; had very limited military experience; was a state legislator who served one relatively undistinguished term in Congress; and never ran anything larger than his law office. A Whig in a Democratic state, he was used to being in the minority; in fact that helped shape his view of life. He advocated causes more than himself.

So would hire this man as president? William Seward, his Secretary of State, had a much better resume, as did Jefferson Davis, his Confederate counterpart. But back to the criteria:

1) In the 1862 and 1864 Congressional elections, Republicans not only maintained, but increased their control of Congress. Lincoln, the greatest phrase-maker president, eloquently stated the Union cause in the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural.

2) Lincoln presided over a vast expansion of government, with the budget expanding from \$66 million in 1861 to \$1.3 billion in 1865, and the implementation of an income tax on incomes above \$600.00 a year, ranging from 3% to (eventually) 10% on those above \$10,000.00. The North gained in population and prosperity during the war (with Chicago supplying much of the food, clothing, etc.).

3) Clausewitz famously wrote "War is an extension of politics by other means". Lincoln was unmatched as a party leader, managing both Seward and Secretary of Treasury Salmon P. Chase. He was an amiable rival with his political oppo-

nents, most notably Stephen A. Douglas. In 1864 the Union Party won over many opponents, and the Democrats were marginalized until the next century, when the Civil War generation had died out. In 1865 Lincoln was stronger politically than in 1861, unlike Jeff Davis, whose support eroded as the war went on.

4) To make up for his lack of military experience, Lincoln read military books from the Library of Congress. His early ventures --- First Bull Run; his order for all armies to advance on Washington's birthday in 1862; and the Valley Campaign of that year --- were failures. His first efforts to choose top generals did not go well: Scott, McClellan, Hitchcock, Halleck. But Lincoln grew and matured. By 1864 he let Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and General Ulysses S. Grant handle most of the war effort. Lincoln had recognized his limitations, unlike Jefferson Davis, who never did, never delegated responsibility, and never brought in new people to help the Confederate cause.

5) The North won. Would it would have been so if Seward or any other Republican been elected? Probably. But by the end of the war, Abraham Lincoln was an incomparable war leader. When once asked about the many crises he faced, he responded that "There is no alternative but to keep pegging away". This simple statement is emblematic of a man who still inspires us with his skill and leadership in the country he saved.

A recording of this (and every) meeting is available from **Hal Ardell**, audio librarian. Contact Hal at (773) 774-6781 or hal229@ameritech.net

GRAPESHOT



Save March 21st for the **Kankakee Valley CWRT's annual symposium**. The stellar list of presenters includes **Lance Herdegen** on "The Iron Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign," **Dr. Craig Symonds** on "Lincoln & His Admirals," **Ken Noe** on "The Battle of Perryville," and our own **Leslie Goddard** as "Clara Barton." Cost is \$50 and includes lunch. For registration and further details, phone (815) 939-1041 or email Sharon Schumacher@aol.com.

Rob Girardi will speak to the Macoupin County CWRT March 12th on "William P. Carlin, Fighting General." For details look to Rob's new website at www.robertgirardi.com.

On March 7th Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt (Max Daniels and R. J. Lindsay) will "get together" at the **Glen Ellyn Historical Society** to discuss the Civil War, the Great War, and their presidencies. The fun starts at 2 p.m. For more details, contact the Glen Ellyn Historical Society at 630 469-1867.

This month **Dave Corbett** and the **Battlefield Balladeers** will be performing at the Batavia Public Library (March 15th), the Calumet Historical Society (March 22nd), the Naperville Public Library (March 25th), and the Winfield Public Library (March 26th).

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.

Upcoming Civil War Events

March 4, Lake County CWRT: Carol Bradbury on "Women Soldiers on the Civil War"

March 6, Salt Creek CWRT: Ron Carlson on "The Significance of the Civil War on Trans-Mississippi in American History"

March 6, Northern Illinois CWRT: Doug Dammann on "Colonel Ephraim Elmer Ellsworth"

March 10, McHenry Co. CWRT: Donald V. Plum on "Admiral Porter's Red River Disaster"

March 10, Kenosha Civil War Museum: Theatre program featuring Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon. Phone 262 653-4140 to register.

March 14, Huntley Library: "An Afternoon with Mr. Lincoln"

March 17, Blue Island CWRT: Leslie Goddard as "Clara Barton"

March 26, South Suburban CWRT: Gale Peewitt on "Johnson's Island Prison"

May 5, Union League Club CWRT: Bruce Allardice and Larry Hewitt discuss "Abraham Lincoln" (rescheduled from March 2)

Battlefield Tour

A reminder—sign up soon for the CWRT's **2009 battlefield tour!** It's April 22-26, 2009, and we'll be visiting Civil War sites in Kentucky. As usual, the incomparable Ed Bearss will be our main guide, with Wil Greene on Bus # 2.

Our base is the Campbell House in Lexington, KY. Among the sites we're touring are the **Perryville** Battlefield (Thursday), the **Mill Springs** and **Wildcat Mountain** battlefields (Friday). **Lincoln's birthplace** and **Tebb's Bend** (Saturday), and the **Richmond** battlefield (Sunday).

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 13: John Latschar, of the NPS Gettysburg, "Reinterpreting Gettysburg: Lessons from the Civil War?"

April 17: Stephen Wise, of the Parris Island Museum, "Gate of Hell: Campaign in Charleston Harbor, 1863"

May 8: James Ogden, "Rescue at Horseshoe Ridge"

June 12: Thomas Cartwright, "Cleburne and Cherman at Missionary Ridge"

Aug 22: CWRT of Chicago's Lincoln Seminar, at the Lisle Hilton

Answer to Last Month's Trivia Question: How often did President Lincoln sleep in what is today known as the "Lincoln Bedroom"? **Never.** The room was used as a cabinet office during Lincoln's presidency.

Bjorn Skaptason at the **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop** reminds us that the next "Virtual Book Signing" will be noon, March 5th, featuring **Michael Burlingame** talking about his new multi-volume biography, [Abraham Lincoln. A Life](#). On March 28th **Lance Herdegen** talks about his new book, [Those Damned Black Hats: The Iron Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign](#), and **Tom Campbell** his new book, [Fighting Slavery in Chicago](#). Registration is required. For more information on this and upcoming events, visit www.alincolnbookshop.com.

Former CWRT President **Nancy Bates** is currently in Alexian Brothers Hospital with pancreatitis. Cards and calls can be directed to Room 640, Bed 2, St. Alexis Hospital, (847) 843-2000, 1555 Barrington Road, Hoffman Estates, IL 60169.