



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LIX, Number 1

Chicago, Illinois

September 1998

Brian Pohanka on "When History Meets Hollywood"

by Barbara Hughett

Today, for better or worse—and usually for worse—millions of people get what little they know about history through films shown in theaters and on television. Do these filmmakers have a duty to "get it right" when it comes to historical accuracy? Will they ever get it right? Do any of these "Hollywood" types really care to get it right?

Brian Pohanka will attempt to answer some of these questions when he addresses The Round Table on September 11. Having served as historical consultant for a number of films and as a reenactor, extra, and trainer on others, he is particularly qualified to speak on this topic. Pohanka was a researcher and writer on the staff of Time-Life Books from 1978-1988. For the past ten years, he has been a freelance researcher and writer and historical consultant for various book, photography, and film projects. Some of these productions—such as "Glory"—were critically acclaimed, while others (such as "Gettysburg"), though flawed, have helped to spark interest in the Civil War. Pohanka's credits also include the TV miniseries, "North and South"; "Gore Vidal's Lincoln"; "Sommersby"; and, most recently, "The Day Lincoln Was Shot"—like "Gettysburg," a project of Ted Turner Productions.

Hollywood and the entertainment industry have the power to inspire or to trivialize the subjects on which they focus. It is Pohanka's belief that, though it is often frustrating, it is better for historians to attempt to work with Hollywood, rather than to ignore it. The films will be made in any case. "Perhaps," he says, "by striving to get history more right than wrong, we can at least retain some historical integrity while bringing history to a wider audience who may never, otherwise, be exposed to it." In his presentation, he will discuss some of these films, with behind-the-scenes stories of what transpired on the set. The program will be illustrated with slides.



Brian Pohanka

Brian Pohanka received his bachelors degree, *cum laude*, from Dickenson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Among books he has written or co-written are *Distant Thunder: A Photographic Essay on*



573rd Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

Brian Pohanka on "When History Meets Hollywood"

☆ ☆ ☆

Friday, September 11

☆ ☆ ☆

Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$25 - The Civil War Round Table of Chicago members
\$30 - Nonmembers

Entree: Grilled Chicken with Mushrooms and Tarragon or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, September 9, by calling Registrar Carole Le Claire at 847-698-1438. 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. **No last-minute orders for the Catch of the Day can be honored. The chef must have at least twenty-four hours notice.**

The Union League Club is located at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Federal Street. Federal Street runs north and south between Dearborn and Clark Streets.

Parking is available at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club, at the rate of \$8 per car if you park between the hours of 4:30-10:30 p.m. If you do not get your ticket validated or park beyond the hours listed, you must pay the full amount.

the American Civil War (1988); *Custer's Field* (1987); and *Fighting for Time: The Battle of Monocacy* (1985). He has written numerous articles and is a regular contributor to several national Civil War magazines. He participated in archaeological surveys of the Custer/Little Big Horn

(continued on page 3)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817
Chicago Illinois 60605
Phone: 847-698-1438

Officers

President	James Nethery
Senior Vice President	Charles Bednar
Vice President	Bruce Allardice
Vice President	Roger Bohn
Treasurer	Janet Linhart
Secretary	Norman Poteshman
Assistant Treasurer	Donni Case Hewitt
Assistant Secretary	Ted Birndorf
Inspector General	Bruce Allardice
Membership Registrar	Carole Le Claire
Tour Registrar	Carole Le Claire
Newsletter Editor	Barbara Hughett
Contributing Editors	C. Robert Douglas, David Richert Larry Gibbs, Mary Munsell Abroe Roger Bohn

Founding Newsletter Editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968

Board of Trustees

Terms expiring in 1999: Paul Feiss, Michael Marienthal, Frank Patton, Marge Smogor
Terms expiring in 2000: Paul Eastes, Larry Hewitt, Nancy Jacobs, Jerri-Jennifer Smart

Committee Chairs

Spring Battlefield Tour	Bruce Allardice
Co-chair:	To be Announced
Battlefield Preservation Fund	Mary Munsell Abroe
Ways and Means	Kurt Carlson
Membership	Ted Birndorf, Eleanor Leichenko
Publications/Printed Material	David Richert
Publicity/Public Relations	To Be Announced
Hospitality	Jerri-Jennifer Smart
Nominating	Robert Girardi
Field Artist/Archives	Jerry Warshaw
Nevins-Freeman Award	Mary Munsell Abroe
Honors	Norman Poteshman
Battlefield Preservation Raffle and Schimmelfenning Boutique	Nancy Jacobs Paul Eastes, Bing Owens
Tape Record Librarians	Robert Girardi, Roger Bohn
House	Paul Eastes

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, 601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

The Fifteenth Annual Midwest Civil War Collectors Show will take place on Saturday, September 19, from 8:30 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. at the DuPage County Fairgrounds, 2015 Manchester Road, Wheaton. For information, call Robert (Hawkeye) Nowak at 773-539-8432.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION ☆ UPDATE ☆

by Mary Munsell Abroe

Renewal of "ISTEA" Yields Potential Millions for Battlefields: Congressional reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) in late May has the potential to support future battlefield preservation efforts with substantial funding. As reported in this column in November 1997, ISTEA was a federal program that charged any state administering federal highway funds to use ten percent of the allotment for transportation enhancement activities within the state. The new Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) authorizes the expenditure of \$217 billion over a six-year period on public works projects (e.g., highway and bridge rehabilitation/improvement) throughout the United States.

The promise of TEA-21 in the realm of battlefield preservation rests in its provision for financing transportation enhancement ventures: many of the projects permitted under the legislation can immediately advance preservation interests. Such undertakings include (but are not limited to) the acquisition of scenic easements and scenic/historic sites; preservation, renovation, and operation of historic transportation structures and facilities (e.g. railroads and canals in battlefield vicinity); regulation and removal of outdoor advertising; and archaeological planning and study. It is projected that TEA-21 will provide about \$630 million yearly in transportation enhancement monies—an increase of about 47 percent over the amount generated by ISTEA.

In addition, the new enactment authorizes spending for individual projects that benefit Civil War sites and structures in Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley: (1) \$1 million in 1999 to rehabilitate the Tredegar Iron Works, which will become the new visitor center for Richmond National Battlefield Park; and \$500,000 over the coming two years to support the work of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Commission, whose responsibility is development of a plan to preserve and interpret ten Valley battlefields.

Cooperation Supports Preservation at Pilot Knob: Earlier this year, the collaboration of several public- and private-sector organizations resulted in preserving forty acres of Missouri's Pilot Knob battlefield and appending the tract to the state historic site at Fort Davidson, which was central to the September 1864 battle of Pilot Knob. Working together in this exemplary endeavor were the Conservation Fund, Civil War Trust, Gilder Foundation, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and Iron County Committee to Preserve and Protect Pilot Knob Battlefield. Grassroots support from the St. Louis Civil War Round Table and Arcadia Valley Chamber of Commerce also figured in the project's success. For information, contact the Conservation Fund, 1800 North Kent Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22209, 703-683-2996.

Former President Marshall Krolick and Trustee Frank Patton, will address the Union League Club Civil War Round Table luncheon on Monday, September 28. The topic is "U.S. Grant: Spotsylvania Courthouse through Cold Harbor." Lunch is served at noon. The cost is \$15. For reservations call 312-435-5000.

☞ JUNE MEETING ☞

by Larry Gibbs

On June 12, John Michael Priest addressed 104 members and guests at the 572nd regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table on the subject of "Into the Fight: Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg." He is the author of eleven books on the Civil War, including one with the same title as this speech. A high school U.S. history teacher in Hagerstown, Maryland, Priest demonstrated his teaching skills with an interesting and challenging presentation. His controversial conclusions reassess previously-held beliefs about the most famous charge in American history—Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg.

Concerning the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg (July 3, 1863), Priest asked an obvious question, "What could be simpler than 15,000 Rebel soldiers marching across an open field to get slaughtered?" A subsequent question was, "Why wasn't Confederate morale crushed by the horrendous repulse of Pickett's Charge?" Priest hypothesized that far fewer than 11,500 Rebels crossed the Emmitsburg Road than previously thought, thus resulting in fewer casualties. These conclusions were based on Priest's research of the two foot frontage per soldier, changes in terrain since July 3, 1863, and anecdotal evidence.

Priest claimed there were inconsistencies in some maps which show a zigzag movement of Confederate troops as they approached the Emmitsburg Road. In addition, he argued that not enough space existed to confine 11,500 men. He estimated that the actual number of Confederates participating in Pickett's Charge was closer to 6,000 than the previously acknowledged 11,500.

The terrain at the site has changed since 1863: the stone wall in front of the copse of trees—the "high water mark for the Confederacy"—was higher then, with a rail rider on top of it. "A hollow is gone where George Pickett was during the battle," he noted. "A drainage ditch of two to three feet deep existed on the eastern side of Emmitsburg Road, but it does not exist today." The creek bottom of Plum Run was deeper in 1863 than at present.

Civil War enthusiasts have often conjectured that the amazing statistic about Pickett's Charge was that the casualty rate was relatively low, considering the extremely intense fire from Union artillery and rifles coming from three sides. Priest addressed this issue as well as the question of the morale of the Army of Northern Virginia. He hypothesized that many Rebels in the three divisions of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble never crossed the Emmitsburg Road. These troops, he said, either did not seriously advance with their regiments or they headed back to Spangler's Woods as soon as possible on an individual basis. If only 6,000 Rebel soldiers actually attacked, this would explain the fewer number of casualties than would be anticipated. To illustrate this, Priest stated, "At the far left flank of the Rebel line, Colonel John Brockenbrough's brigade did not approach the Emmitsburg Road during the attack and these units had a very low casualty rate."

Priest does not condemn the Confederates who did not charge with their fellow soldiers. He claimed, "I cannot fault these soldiers for making the decision to live and fight another day. Civil War historians have found little fault in the lack of valor by some Union soldiers at

the Battle of Cold Harbor. Why should some Confederates at Pickett's Charge be considered any differently?"

In arriving at his conclusions, Priest evaluated many eyewitness accounts. He cited anecdotal evidence from Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, and their staff members to support these conclusions. For example, he said, "After the battle, Longstreet reassured the distraught Pickett that his division was not entirely lost as Pickett feared. Longstreet told Pickett that Pickett would be able to find an impressive number of his men." Priest indicated that many survivors of the attack did not write about hiding or retreating during the attack, but decided on discretion over valor.

In assessing the blame for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, Priest proclaimed, "The attack was ultimately Robert E. Lee's responsibility. Lee's corps commander, James Longstreet, should have coordinated the charge much more than he did. However, the commanding Rebel generals did not take into account the obstacles of the fence lines." Priest then asked a salient question about the overall Rebel strategy on the third day of Gettysburg. He asked, "Why did Lee not have a diversionary attack in order to deceive the Union command? With no deception, the last great glorious charge of the Army of Northern Virginia was doomed."

BRIAN POHANKA (continued from page 1)

Battlefield in Montana in 1987 and 1989 and of the Big Hole Battlefield in Montana in 1991. He is a former secretary of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites; a member of the board of directors of the Manassas Battlefield Coalition and the Brandy Station Foundation; and a member of the executive committee of the Grant Monument Association. He last addressed this Round Table in February 1995 when he spoke about General George Armstrong Custer.

To honor the memory of Round Table Founder Ralph G. Newman (see special insert), Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois, has created a professorship chair in Abraham Lincoln and Civil War Studies. Donations to The Ralph Newman Chair would be appreciated and may be sent to: The Ralph Newman Chair, Lincoln College, 300 Keokuk Street, Lincoln, Illinois 62656.

For additional information, contact Marvin Sanderman (847-520-3525) or Barbara Hughett (773-973-5822 or via e-mail, linbarb@aol.com). Thank you.

The Chicago Historical Society is hosting a day-long Civil War Symposium on Friday, September 25. The topic is "The Experience and Meaning of Conflict in the Civil War." Speakers will include Earl J. Hess, Edward Miller, Eric Dean, and Lawrence Hauptman. Admission is \$35 per person. For additional information, call 312-642-5035, extension 272.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Ladd, David L. and Audrey J. *Bachelder's History of the Battle of Gettysburg*. Morningside Bookshop. 1997. \$60.00.
- Langellier, John P. *Bluecoats: The U. S. Army in the West 1848-1897*. Greenhill Publications. 1995. Pbk. \$12.95.
- Leslie, Edward E. *The Devil Knows How to Ride — The True Story of William Clarke Quantrill and his Confederate Raiders*. Random House. 1996. \$30.00.
- Lindsay, John B. *The Military Annals of Tennessee, Confederate*. Morningside Bookshop. 1996. 2 vols. \$75.00.
- Livingston, Gary. *Fields of Gray: The Battle of Griswoldville, Georgia*. Casson Press. 1996. \$25.00.
- Lowry, Don. *Towards an Indefinite Shore: The Final Months of the Civil War, December 1864-May 1865*. Hippocrene Books. 1995. \$35.00.
- Luvaas, Jay; Bowman, Stephen; & Fullenkamp, Leonard, eds. *Guide to the Battle of Shiloh*. U. Press of Kansas. 1996. \$29.95.
- Marlow, Clayton C. *Matt Ransom, Confederate General from North Carolina*. McFarland & Co. 1996. \$24.50.
- Martin, David J. *The Shiloh Campaign: March-April 1862*. Combined Books. 1996. \$24.95.
- Martin, Samuel J. "Kill-Cavalry", *Sherman's Merchant of Terror: The Life of Union General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick*. Associated U. Presses. 1996. \$48.50.
- McArthur, Judith N. and Burton, Orville V. *A Gentleman and an Officer — A Social and Military History of James A. Griffin's Civil War*. Oxford U. Press. 1996. Pbk. \$15.95.

We recently learned of the death last spring of longtime member and frequent battlefield tour companion **Joe Moore**. Our heartfelt condolences go to Joe's widow and family.

The 19th R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture of The Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana, will be presented on September 19 at 7:30 p.m. The lecture will be given by noted Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and William Herndon scholar Dr. Douglas L. Wilson. His topic is "Herndon's Dilemma: Abraham Lincoln and the Privacy Issue." For information, call Bob Jones, 219-455-3208.

Schimmelfennig Boutique

The history of The Round Table, *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship*, by Barbara Hughett, is available for \$30 per copy. You may purchase the book at the monthly meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

In addition to The Round Table history and *The Continuing Civil War*, the essays from the Fiftieth Anniversary Proceedings, the following items are available at each monthly meeting: Lapel pins, Mugs, Meeting Tapes, Civil War Buff posters and T-Shirts, CWRT T-shirts, polos, and sweatshirts.

Proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the programs of The Civil War Round Table.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

September 11: Brian Pohanka on "When History Meets Hollywood"

October 9: Nevins-Freeman address: William C. (Jack) Davis on "Civil War Mythology"

November 13: Robert O'Neill on "The Federal Cavalry in the Peninsula Campaign"

December 11: Paul Finkelman on "Lincoln, Emancipation, and the Limits of Constitutional Change"

January 15, 1999: Marshall D. Krolick on "Council of War: Meade and His Generals on July 2, 1863" (This is the **THIRD** Friday)

February 12: Edwin C. Bearss, topic to be announced

March 12: Peter Cozzins, topic to be announced

April 9: Gary Gallagher, topic to be announced

May 14: Michael Andrus, topic to be announced

June 11: To be announced

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

James Brenner, 5309 Mariners Drive, Plano, TX 75093

Terry Carr, 935 Daniel Drive, Bensenville, IL 60106

John Coulson, 41 Knox Circle, Evanston, IL 60201

Dorothy and William Grice, 2468 W. Armitage, Chicago, IL 60647

Alfred Levinson, 1470 Countryside Drive, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089

Bing Owens, 5912 N. Navarro, #19-K, Chicago, IL 60631

Jeff Reis, 1020 Pleasant View Road, Middleton, WI 53562

Norman Stevens, 20 Sterling Center, #103, Wheaton, IL 60187

William and Sean Vinck, 450 Hupp Cross, Bloomfield, MI 48361

Peter Voss, 35 W. Huron, #708, Chicago, IL 60610

John Votaw, 603 E. Illinois Street, Wheaton, IL 60187

Gordon Whitney, 159 Parkview Drive, Madison, IN 47250

Susan and Joseph Wisehart, 302 Park Avenue, Grayslake, IL 60030

The Thirteenth Annual Lincoln Colloquium will be held this year at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, on Friday and Saturday, September 25-26. The theme is "Lincoln and Liberty" and speakers will include Douglas L. Wilson, William C. Harris, Gerald J. Prokopowicz, Michael Burlingame, John R. Sellers, and David E. Long. Registration is \$35 and includes a lunch on Saturday and refreshments. The colloquium is cosponsored by the Lincoln National Home Historic Site, the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College, The Lincoln Museum, Galesburg Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Illinois State Historical Society, Knox College, Lincoln Group of Illinois, and the Quad-City Civil War Round Table. For additional registration information, call Dr. Rodney O. Davis at the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College, 309-341-7158 or via e-mail at rdavis@knox.knox.edu.