



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XXV, Number 5

Chicago, Illinois

January, 1965

"The Ironclad Gunboat Cairo" - Edwin C. Bearss - Friday, January 15



Edwin C. Bearss (left), historian, and Capt. W. A. Bisso, Jr., salvager of the ironclad gunboat Cairo.

Edwin C. Bearss, regional research historian of the National Park Service and stationed at Vicksburg, Miss., virtually has lived for eight years the subject of the talk, "The Ironclad Gunboat Cairo", that he will give to our meeting Friday, January 15. The boat has just been recovered—but in three pieces.

The Cairo, 512 tons and 176 feet long, was built in the James B. Eads yards at Mound City, Ill., in 1861. Many of the skilled workmen were rushed there from the Illinois Central car shops in Chicago. Illinois timber and railroad iron went into the boat. It was launched into the Ohio river, operated on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, and then was in the battles of Plum Point, Fort Pillow, and Memphis on the Mississippi.

On December 12, 1862, it was on a minesweeping operation in the Yazoo river, about 15 miles north of Vicksburg. There it became the first victim of an electrically activated torpedo (mine). Lt. Comdr. Thomas O. Selfridge got his 160 man crew—many from Illinois—off without loss of life. The ram Queen of the West pulled down the smokestacks and spars to hide her grave from the Confederates. There she lay for years.

Bearss, with Warren Grabau, geologist, mulled the subject, and with Ed's research pinpointed the spot of the sinking. With Don Jacks of the Vicksburg National Military Park, they boated to the spot. Using a compass as a dip needle they found the Cairo.

Since then, Operation Cairo, to recover the hulk has been exciting. First, skin divers and derricks brought up hundreds of artifacts—the pilot house, a gun and carriage, ammunition, rifles, revolvers, articles of clothing, mess equipment, drugs, and supplies. These have been carefully preserved under the direction of Al Banton, Vicksburg military park historian, Bearss, and their wives.

Operation Cairo to raise the vessel was under way when Chicago Civil War Round Table was on a battlefield tour to Vicksburg in 1961 and gave \$500 toward the project. The operation proceeded with anxiety, disappointments, and tragedy - the drowning of Dr. Walter Johnston, a beloved and spirited citizen of Vicksburg who spoke to our 1961 tour on the subject of the ram Arkansas, which battled a Union fleet in front of Vicksburg.



237th REGULAR MEETING

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Edwin C. Bearss

on

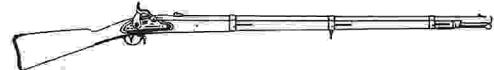
"The Ironclad Gunboat Cairo"

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 1965

St. Clair Hotel
162 East Ohio Street

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



The first effort to raise the Cairo was a failure, perhaps because of too light equipment. Then, financed by \$50,000 voted by the Mississippi legislature, Capt. W. A. Bisso, Jr., a professional salvager, moved in heavy equipment and a cutter dredge. It was difficult to stay ahead of sand and silt in the murky, fast flowing Yazoo and to remove deposits from within the vessel.

Cables were slipped under the Cairo and it was lifted out of its trough, preparatory to setting it on a submerged barge then to be floated. In a hoisting operation the three bow gunports showed above water, but a lifting cable sawed into the hull and the Cairo was set down again. In another effort the Cairo broke into halves. Then, the heavy mid-section with the boilers broke away from the bow. By December 5, all three sections had been retrieved, but in sad condition.

And, Ed Bearss was in the mud of the salvaged sections grubbing for artifacts. He took them home and his wife, Margie, scrubbed away the mud. Margie, editor of the newsletter of the Mississippi CWRT, writer and photographer, took numerous photos of the recovery operation and has prepared slides which Ed will show at our meeting.

The crew roster of the Cairo shows that many of the personnel were from Illinois. Ed discovered 30 pages of the diary of George Roberts Yost of Chicago who was on the Cairo from the time it was commissioned until he was one of the last two men to leave the boat.

Despite the breakup of the Cairo in salvage, the recovery and artifacts still present a picture of a vessel practically frozen in time for 102 years. Personal articles include wood carvings, perhaps done in sailors' spare time; hundreds of buttons of officers' and enlisted men's uniforms; a watch with James D. Calihan of Illinois scratched on it, and mess equipment with names.

Ed Bearss can tell us about the 13 recovered cannon and many more items, and what the finds contribute to

(Continued on Page 2)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street,
Chicago 11, Illinois
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CAIRO (Continued from Page 1)

knowledge about naval warfare and life aboard a gunboat 100 years ago. He will be asked whether the Cairo could have been brought up intact and about plans for preserving and displaying the artifacts.

Ed is known to many of our members who were on the 1961 tour and to others who have visited Vicksburg military park. He won \$10,000 on a national quiz show and directed its contribution to the salvage operation. Ed spoke to our 179th meeting, March 12, 1959, on "Crisis in Movement, the Battle of Champion Hill". He is the author of "Decision in Mississippi" and "Rebel Victory at Vicksburg," and numerous articles in scholarly journals. He ranks with our own Pete Long among the most knowledgeable researchers of the Civil War.

Ed has been interested in the Civil War since he was a boy in Montana. He named cattle on his father's ranch for Civil War generals. In World War II he was with a marine raider battalion in the invasions of Guadalcanal and New Britain. He was wounded and spent 26 months in hospitals. He studied at Georgetown University and at Indiana University, where he gained his M.A. degree in history.

Ed and Margie have two children, Sara and Edwin Cole II. He was organizer of the Civil War Round Table of Mississippi.

MALCOLM MACHT, a new member, but a founder and president of the Park Forest CWRT, solved a mystery raised by a woman's letter to The Chicago Tribune. She wrote of a "lost Indian cemetery" back in a field off Route 45 near Frankfort, Ill. She said, "There is a General Davis grave with a head marker of 1861 which was in the Civil War . . . I feel if their kinfolks knew of this or even the government they would take care of a General's grave who died for our country." Well, Malcolm investigated. He found the headstone broken and scattered. On the top half was Ge (n?) erel Davis/ Died . . . The bottom half had: Dec. 17, 1861/ Aged/ 18 yrs 3 ms 17 ds. So, Malcolm concluded that General, or something like it, was the first name. Also, that Davis was not the youngest general in the Civil War!

from the
Editor's pen



Due to the blizzard and its aftereffects, only fifty-seven hardy souls made it to the Venetian room of the Allerton hotel on Friday, December 4, to hear Stanley F. Horn give a masterful account of the Battle of Nashville. With a large wall map and pointer, he detailed the action. He noted that the Federals had held Nashville since 1862 and were in a strongly fortified positions with greater numbers of men when the battle was fought Dec. 15-16, 1864. But Horn equipped, "The Yankees weren't safe until Forrest surrendered." Lincoln, Stanton, and Grant were impatient with the slowness of Thomas and even had John A. Logan ticketed for his job. Despite the Federals' superior numbers, "the cavalry was the turning point on both days", Horn said. "The infantry did not succeed until the cavalry had turned the enemy." The cavalry fought dismounted and had the greater firepower with their 7-shot Spencers. "John B. Hood's men left blood-stained footprints in the Franklin pike as they retreated that night," Horn said.

The question period was active and to the point. To one question, Horn replied, "If Hood had succeeded, he would have restored the military status quo of several years before at a time when the North was war-weary." To another, he said, "Hood was too brave, too pugnacious, too belligerent. He was in over his depth." Horn pointed out that Hood was in pain from previous battle wounds.

President Arnold Alexander was ill and Brooks Davis presided at the meeting.

* * *

Membership has dropped below 300 for the first time in a number of years and President Alexander has named a special group to seek new members. George Barclay and Julian Jackson are co-chairmen of the group with Ver Lyn Sprague, Mike Lerner, and Gilbert Twiss as members. Elmer Pendarvis has been appointed chairman of the regular membership committee to fill a vacancy. Herbert W. Kuehnle has been named co-chairman of the auditing committee.

* * *

Some excellent applications have come in for the \$3,000 Fellowship Award. Most inquiries have come from the east and south. The application period closes February 1 and a determination of the winner will be made soon afterward, perhaps by February 12. Publisher's Weekly, the book industry journal, of November 9, had an item telling of the Round Table's Fellowship Award. The newsletter of Pensacola CWRT said the award "is a worthwhile contribution to Civil War scholarship, it is a highly imaginative undertaking, one that will be applauded by Civil War buffs everywhere."

* * *

Stuart Golding, a founder and former president of Rockford CWRT, is now a member of our Round Table . . . Dr. Raymond E. Mulrooney, who was baptized by a fall into the water at Fort Desperate on our tour to Port Hudson last spring, has been elected president of Decatur CWRT . . . Our Lloyd D. Miller speaks to the Baton Rouge CWRT on the "Battle of Franklin" on January 21 . . . Our Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz was the first to hold a hearing in the new federal courthouse at 219 S. Dearborn in his courtroom on the 19th floor . . . Long time member John W. Barriger was honored by friends and associates at a breakfast in the Chicago Club on his retirement as president of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie railroad, part of the New York Central system.

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If you have a friend who is interested in the Civil War, now is the time to invite him to membership. Half-year dues of \$7.50 are now in effect until July 1.

Centennial Publications

The National Civil War Centennial Commission has issued definite titles and authors of the 14-volume Impact Series, "a broader study of the Civil War and its effects upon ensuing generations". Publication is to begin soon. Emphasis is on civil history. They will represent original scholarship and fresh research. They will cover all sections of the country and as much time before and after 1861-65 as is needed. The volumes will be 100,000 to 125,000 words. The volumes, all beginning "THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON..." are as follows:

1. Agriculture, North, South, and West, by Paul Gates of Cornell U.
2. Poverty, Crime, Charities, and Corrections, by Robert H. Bremner, Ohio State.
3. Literature, Scholarship, and Art, by Daniel Aaron Smith, and Edward Lurie, Wayne State.
4. Constitutional and Statutory Law and Interpretation, by Harold M. Hyman, University of Illinois.
5. Business Organization and Leadership, by William Greenleaf, U. of New Hampshire.
6. Medicine and Surgery, by William Bean, U. of Iowa, and William F. Norwood, Loma Linda.
7. Entertainment and Recreation, by Richard Harwell, Bowdoin.
8. Science and Technology, by Robert Bruce, Boston U.
9. Women, North and South, by Mary Elizabeth Massey, Winthrop College.
10. The Negro, by Leon Litwack, U. of Wisconsin.
11. Government, by Daniel J. Elazar, U. of Minnesota.
12. Development of Military Ideas and Practices Throughout the World, by Capt. Cyril Falls, military editor of the Illustrated London News.
13. The North to Posterity, by James I. Robertson, Jr., executive director of the national CWC commission.
14. Life and Liberalism in Europe, by H. C. Allen, London U.; Harry Bernstein, Brooklyn College; David H. Pinkney, U. of Missouri; Hans Rogger, California; George N. Shuster, Notre Dame; John A. Williams, U. of Washington.

The series is under the editorial supervision of Dr. Allan Nevins, chairman of the national commission. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., will publish the books with maps, illustrations, and bibliographies.

FORD'S THEATER in Washington, D.C., was closed November 30 for about two years to permit restoration as it was the night President Lincoln was assassinated. Congress appropriated \$2,730,600 for the work. Since 1932 the building has housed on its ground floor the Lincoln Museum. The museum items, including the Osborn H. Oldroyd Collection, will be protected in storage during the restoration. The plans call for a new museum in the basement of the building. The theater, built in 1863, was closed after the assassination of Lincoln, April 14, 1865. The interior was converted into three floors and used for government record storage. A second tragedy happened when the floors collapsed on June 9, 1893, killing 22 clerks and injuring 68 others. The building was restored the next year and renovated again in 1931 for the Oldroyd collection.

Ford's had a seating capacity of about 1,700 in the orchestra, parquet, dress circle (first balcony) and family circle. There were four private boxes on each side of the stage. When the restoration is completed, visitors will see the theater virtually as it was on the night of the assassination, including the scenery of "Our American Cousin" on the stage, just as it was when John Wilkes Booth fired the fatal shot.

BULLETIN BOARD

PROBLEMS related to meetings continue. One can be relieved by marking your card for fish if it is desired. This is to aid the caterer, who does not always have extra orders available. Meeting nights for the remainder of the year are set, but a referendum will be taken later on a choice of Thursdays or Fridays for next year's meetings.

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NEW MEMBERS: Stuart Golding, 205 Washington Ave., Rockford, Ill.; Norman C. Wiche, 655 Thornwood Dr., Naperville, Ill.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: A. L. Marovitz to: 219 S. Dearborn St.; W. M. McCardell to: 5809 S. Evanston, Tulsa, Okla., 74105; Harry E. Rice to: 141 W. Jackson Blvd.;

* * *

AVAILABLE at meetings: Gold filled lapel pin, \$1; Cloth patch of emblem, 50¢.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Centennial Commission, of which Paul Sedgwick of Washington CWRT is chairman, has scheduled a commemoration of the second Lincoln inauguration, a memorial service observing the assassination, and a re-enactment of the Grand Review. In cooperation with the Congressional Committee and local groups, the inauguration observance will be at the east front of the Capitol on March 4. President Johnson's inaugural stand will be left in place for the event.

The assassination memorial service will be held April 16 in the New York Avenue Presbyterian, the church attended by Lincoln on Palm Sunday, 1864. Plans contemplate the attendance of President Johnson, and participation of the Marine Band, the U.S. Army chorus, and the Combined Color Guard.

Plans for the Grand Review call for a march along Pennsylvania Avenue, with units from the Naval Academy, West Point, and all branches of the services, plus military colleges and other groups. It is hoped that President Johnson will do the review.

THE HOTEL GETTYSBURG, which was our headquarters on two battlefield tours, closed December 14 because of steadily declining patronage. The present three-story, 105 room structure on the town square dates to 1910, and its predecessors were on the same spot as far back as 1803. Henry M. Scharf, owner-manager of the hotel, said the closing was due to a combination of circumstances. He cited the 1962 opening of a visitor's center at the battlefield park, which gravitated tourists to that area, the increased number of motels around the battlefield, and the opening of a highway bypass which enabled tourists to go directly to the battlefield area without going through the square. Scharf said the hotel auditorium, which was used as a press room when former President Eisenhower was at his farm home near Gettysburg, will remain in operation.

PLANS FOR THE SPINGFIELD meeting of Civil War Round Tables, the last meeting of the national Civil War Centennial Commission and various state commissions, and the Illinois State Historical Society are going forward. In the next newsletter it will be possible to announce with a degree of definiteness the details of the April 30-May 4 meetings to commemorate the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's funeral. Our visit to Springfield will be classed as a special meeting, rather than a tour, and members will be welcome to take part in the various other events of the program.

THE NEW BOOKS



FUTURE MEETINGS

ADELBERT AMES, 1835-1933: Broken Oaths and Reconstruction in Mississippi, by Blanche Ames Ames (Argosy-Antiquarian, limited edition, 625pp, \$12.50). The first full-length biography of the Union general, reconstruction governor of Mississippi, and Senator.

THE MISSOURI FUR TRADE, 1840-1865, by John E. Sunder (U. of Oklahoma, 272pp, \$5.95). The era when St. Louis was center of the fur trade and the trade's decline in the Civil War.

LINCOLN AND THE PATRONAGE, by Harry James Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin (375 pp, \$5.50); **RECONSTRUCTION IN MISSISSIPPI**, by James Wilford Garner, 422 pp, \$6); **RECONSTRUCTION IN TEXAS**, by Charles William Ramsdell (324 pp, \$5), all Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass., reissues of notable works.

A HOUSE DIVIDED: A Study of Statehood Politics and the Copperhead Movement in West Virginia, by Richard Orr Curry (U. of Pittsburgh, 203 pp, \$5).

THE SOUTH TO POSTERITY: An Introduction to the Writing of Confederate History, by Douglas Southall Freeman (Port Washington, N.Y., 235 pp, \$6.75). Reprint of 1939 work.

THE WILD LIFE OF THE ARMY: Civil War Letters of James A. Garfield, ed. and intro. by Frederick D. Williams (Michigan State U., 325 pp, \$8.50).

ACCOUTREMENT PLATES NORTH AND SOUTH, 1861-1865, by William G. Gavin (Philadelphia, 236 pp, \$12). Detailed study of Civil War personnel equipment.

THE CONFEDERATE HUNDRED: Bibliophilic selections of Confederate Books, by Richard B. Harwell (U. of Illinois, \$5).

WHEN SHERMAN CAME: Southern Women and the Great March, by Katharine M. Jones (Bobbs, Merrill, 353 pp, \$6).

SOUTHERN HISTORY IN THE MAKING: Pioneer Historians of the South, by Wendell Holmes Stephenson (Louisiana State U., 294 pp, \$7.50).

A CIVIL WAR ALBUM OF PAINTINGS BY PRINCE DE JOINVILLE, Preface by the Comte de Paris, texts by Andre Maurois and Gen. James M. Gavin (Atheneum, printed in France, \$25).

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY, by James M. McPherson (Princeton, 490 pp, \$10). Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN PEACE AND WAR, by Earl Schenck Miers and Paul M. Angle; **IRONCLADS OF THE CIVIL WAR**, by Frank R. Donovan and Bruce Catton (American Heritage Junior Library, \$3.95 each).

PAPERBACKS

PRELUDE TO GREATNESS, by Don E. Fehrenbacher (McGraw-Hill, \$2.65). How Lincoln shaped the Republican party in Illinois.

THE GENERAL WHO MARCHED TO HELL, by Earl Schenck Miers (Collier, \$1.50). The life of William T. Sherman.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, Selections from his writings, ed. and intro. by Philip S. Foner (International Pub., 95 pp, 75¢).

HIGH TIDE AT GETTYSBURG, by Glenn Tucker (Charter, 462 pp, \$2.50).

SEA DOGS OF THE SIXTIES: Farragut and Seven Contemporaries, by Jim Dan Hill (New York, 265 pp, \$1.95).

NEVADA: The Gamble that Lincoln Won, by Jock Taylor (Reno, Nev., 23 pp, \$1). Events and circumstances that made creation of the state mandatory.

Friday, Feb. 19—Ladies' Night, Dinner at Racquet Club; Film, "Red Badge of Courage", at Chicago Historical Society. Co-Chairmen, Clement Silvestro and Allen Meyer.

Friday, March 12—Gen. Jim Dan Hill, "Command Structure in the Union and Confederate Navies".

Friday, April 9—Frank Vandiver, Subject to be announced.

Friday, May 14—Glenn Tucker, "Experiences in writing 'Chickamauga' and 'Gettysburg', Little Circumstances Which Controlled Big Events".

Friday, June 11—T. Harry Williams, "The Valley Campaign of 1864".

SPECIAL EVENTS

April 9—Appomattox Court House, Va., Commemoration of the Surrender; Tours of the Reconstructed area.

March 4—Washington, D.C., Commemoration of President Lincoln's second inauguration.

April 16—Washington, D.C., New York Avenue Presbyterian church; Lincoln assassination memorial service.

April 30-May 4—Springfield, Ill. - Centennial of Abraham Lincoln funeral; Special meetings of national and state Civil War Centennial commissions, Civil War Round Tables, and Illinois State Historical Society.



GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION has published a 195-page work, "Georgia Civil War Historical Markers." The indexed booklet provides inscriptions on and locations of more than 1,800 highway markers throughout the state. Copies of the guide, \$1, may be ordered from the Georgia Historical Commission, 116 Mitchell St., S. W. Atlanta, Ga., 30303.

DR. HOLMAN HAMILTON was elected president of the Kentucky CWRT to succeed the late William H. Townsend. Hamilton is a professor of history at the University of Kentucky and is author of the recent "Prologue to Conflict" and earlier, the two-volume biography of President Zachary Taylor.

SLAVERY IN THE SOUTH, edited by Harvey Wish (Farrar, Straus, \$2.25).

SPECIAL

BATTLE OF NASHVILLE, souvenir edition of the Nashville, Tennessean (Sunday, December 6, 1964); also has accounts of the Battle of Franklin and the Tennessee campaign. Send 50¢ to Circulation Department, 1100 Broadway, Nashville, Tenn.

PENSACOLA HARBOR CHART OF 1859, as it was about the time the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Barrancas, by Alan J. Rick. Send \$1 to Pensacola Civil War Round Table, 1801 N. Yates Ave., Pensacola, Fla.