

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XL, Number 6

Chicago, Illinois

February, 1980

DR. JAMES LEE MCDONOUGH ON THE FINAL DAY AT STONES RIVER

Although the Battle of Stones River was not one of the major engagements of the Civil War, it was nevertheless a significant battle. Every foot of ground on both sides was stubbornly contested, and the casualties on both sides were heavy—about 13,000 Union and 10,000 Confederate soldiers killed or wounded. And, as a result of the battle, the Union drive south was stalled. Discussing the final day at Stones River, at The Round Table meeting on February 8, will be Dr. James Lee McDonough, Justin Potter Distinguished Professor of History at David Lipscomb College, Nashville. In his talk, Dr. McDonough will also set the battle in proper perspective relative to the broad spectrum of the war and provide a brief summary of the first day's engagement.

Late in 1862, the military high point of the Confederacy had been reached and passed. Lee had been stalled at Antietam and Bragg's invasion of Kentucky had been aborted. As 1863 approached, the Union began to take the offensive initiative. General William Rosecrans was installed as commander of the Army of the Cumberland with orders to move against Chattanooga; he left Nashville on December 26. General Bragg and the Army of Tennessee placed themselves astride the Nashville and Chattanooga Railway in Murfreesboro, 27 miles southeast of Nashville.



Dr. James Lee McDonough

On the evening of December 30, the two armies faced each other at the Stones River, about three miles northwest of Murfreesboro. Both generals decided to launch attacks the following morning with their left wings. The Confederate offensive got underway first, however, and by noon of December 31 the right and part of the Union Center had been folded back four to five miles. It had been a morning of bloody hand-to-hand combat. The Federal soldiers were able to entrench and hold their position until darkness fell.

On January 1, 1863, the armies rested. Then, on January 2, Bragg ordered an attack on the Union left wing which had advanced and taken up a new position during the night. That attack, by General John C. Breckinridge, drove the Union troops in headlong retreat across Stones River. However, Union General Thomas Crittenden, commanding the Union left, ordered artillery to support the withdrawing infantry.



388th REGULAR MEETING

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JAMES LEE MCDONOUGH
ON

THE FINAL DAY
AT STONES RIVER

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1980

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Chicago Bar Association
29 South LaSalle Street, Chicago
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.



With incredible speed 57 pieces were assembled and began firing—in less than one hour 1,800 Confederates fell dead or wounded. The Confederates retreated and the Union troops regained their positions on the east bank of the river. Neither side was able to continue the fight.

Dr. James Lee McDonough, a native of Nashville, was educated at David Lipscomb College, Vanderbilt University, and Florida State University from which he received his Ph.D. in history in 1966. He has written numerous articles, essays and reviews on the Civil War and Reconstruction for scholarly publications such as *Civil War History*, the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, and the *Missouri Historical Review*. He is also the author of *Shiloh—in Hell before Night*, published in 1977, and *Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, published in 1972.

Scheduled for release in the fall is Dr. McDonough's new book about the battle of Stones River. Like *Shiloh*, it will deal with strategy, tactics, personalities, human interest stories, analysis and interpretation. Also, Dr. McDonough has a book concerning the 327/401 Glider Infantry Regiments of the 101st Airborne Division, co-authored with Richard Gardner, scheduled for publication in the spring.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



FOUNDED DECEMBER 3, 1940

18 East Chestnut Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

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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 Ward C. Smidl, 1104 Whippoorwill Lane, Palatine, Illinois 60067.



Like everything else, the price of Round Table Battlefield Tours keeps going up—this year's visit to the Shenandoah Valley will cost about 15-20 per cent more than last year's tour to Shiloh. However, someone is going to pay just \$5 for the 1980 Tour. That's because The Round Table is raffling off a free trip, and tickets for the drawing are \$5 each. The drawing will be held at the April meeting. Tickets may be purchased at meetings or by mail: write to treasurer Marv Sanderman, Civil War Round Table, 18 East Chestnut, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

from the Editor's pen



by Marshall D. Krolick

All of us who are dedicated to the study and preservation of our national heritage are readily aware that among our best friends are the men and women of the National Park Service. These dedicated individuals have made it possible for us to better appreciate and understand the events which helped to mold our country's growth. It is their daily task, one that they perform extremely well, to conserve and interpret the sites upon which these events took place.

When we realize the constant obstacles which they face in performing their duties, our appreciation and gratitude for their accomplishments becomes even greater. The constant threat of the commercial developer, the persistent expansion of our nation's highway system, the unconcerned negligence and vandalism of the American tourist, and the tremendous scarcity of fiscal resources are just some of the problems which endanger the preservation of our historic locales. However, these are hazards that the employees of the National Park Service have learned to anticipate. Although oft-times devastating, such frontal assaults can be defended against. The real danger lies, just as it did in the days of 1861-65, in the attack from the rear. Unfortunately, it is from that direction that our friends in the Park Service have received the latest bombardment. It comes from their very own boss, the Director of the National Park Service, William Whalen.

In recent interviews and speeches before various groups, Mr. Whalen has made the following statements, all of which are direct quotations:

"I've had it up to here with battlefields."

"We have a hefty budget in the cannon ball circle. We know the genealogy of every Civil War general's horse."

"If it was up to me, there would only be three Civil War Battlefields in the National Park system—Ft. Sumter, Gettysburg, and Appomattox."

Believe it or not, these are the remarks and sentiments of the man charged with the responsibility for directing the preservation of our national historic sites. With attitudes like these emanating from their very own director, what possible cooperation and encouragement can the staffs of our battlefield parks receive? Facing the daily struggles caused by the problems enumerated above and many others, what level of morale can they sustain with a William Whalen standing behind them?

We understand from Mr. Whalen's other comments that he prefers to place his emphasis on scenic vistas, environmental projects, and the honoring of individual Americans. There is no question that all of these are worthy goals. The very fact that we recognize this places us far above Mr. Whalen, for what he is missing is the realization that his responsibilities are all of the things within his jurisdiction, not just the few he enjoys. We have never called for the diversion of dollars from Grand Canyon to Antietam, although the availability of such funds would permit the purchase of much needed additional battlefield land. We have never suggested the closing of Grand Teton because we have enough pretty landscapes at Yellowstone.

If we are correct that the preservation and development of historic sites is an integral part of our national heritage, then we must sadly conclude that the retention of William Whalen in his present position is a national disgrace. We have never

met Mr. Whalen and it is extremely possible that he is a very competent administrator. However, his views, in our opinion, render him unfit to carry out the duties of his office. In making these statements, we are speaking only for the staff of this Newsletter. However, if you should agree with us, we urge you to communicate your feelings to your governmental representatives in Washington, including the President of the United States. Only in this manner can we secure for all Americans the many benefits to be derived from the continued development of all aspects of our National Park system.

JANUARY MEETING

Grant the general is often the subject of discussion, but very seldom does anyone consider Grant the writer. In his talk to the 87 members and guests who attended The Round Table meeting on January 11, however, Dr. John Y. Simon did discuss Grant the writer. In particular, he examined the writing of Grant's *Memoirs*.

John began with a brief review of Grant's career—his meteoric rise from a store clerk to President of the United States in eight years. He noted that Grant's potential as a writer was always there. He was always a reader, always interested in books. The letters which he wrote as a general are characterized by informality, directness and a sense of humor. He also wrote his own reports during the War, partly, John said, out of a sense of duty, but also because he knew his staff could not write well.

However, Grant did delegate the writing of proclamations after victories, and he also disliked writing anything which would appear in the newspapers—he did not even respond to attacks on him which appeared. Thus, his background, while indicating his potential as a writer, also indicated a reluctance to discuss himself in print.

In 1870 Grant met Mark Twain; in 1882, Twain suggested that Grant write a book. Grant gave three reasons why he should not 1) he was not a trained writer, 2) his work wouldn't sell, 3) he didn't need the money. Two of the three reasons, as John noted, had to do with money. And, ultimately, Grant became a writer because he needed money.

Grant had invested heavily in his son's firm, but it collapsed and Grant needed to do something for his family's financial security. He was approached by *Century* to write articles. Grant hesitated but finally agreed to write four—one each on Shiloh, Vicksburg, the Wilderness and Appomattox. Grant soon found he enjoyed writing. The editor's liked his first piece, but felt it was too much like the official report—they wanted more of Grant's reactions. Grant made the revisions and enjoyed doing so.

The Century Company then began to push for a book by Grant, and, by October, 1884, he was working on his *Memoirs*. But also by this time he knew he had throat cancer and he was beginning to deteriorate. There was a question about whether or not he would complete the book. When Twain learned he was writing a book, he felt he should publish it since he had first suggested the idea to Grant. Twain offered Grant two options—70 per cent of the net profits or 20 per cent royalty. Grant chose the former. In view of Grant's health, John noted, the venture was a gamble for Twain.

Grant was both scrawling out the book in longhand and dictating. He was assisted for awhile by Adam Badeau who had been his aide during the War. Badeau, John explained, was a rather slimy character who smelled money. As Grant's health worsened, Badeau began to consider himself indispensable and demanded more money. Grant finally let him go.

Although the *Memoirs* were almost complete by early summer, 1885, Grant kept thinking of more he wanted to say and kept making changes. Twain finally took the work away from him, and Grant died a few days later—Twain believed the book kept Grant alive an extra few months. Twain's company rushed the *Memoirs* out and they became a publishing success—300,000 sets were sold in three years and the family ultimately made about one-half million dollars.

In examining the finished *Memoirs*, John noted that although they were written by a dying man, there is nothing in them to suggest that to the reader. He also pointed out that Grant comes through with some new information—that he had joined the Know-Nothings at one point after losing a job to a foreigner. That fact about Grant had never been uncovered before. However, Grant left out a lot. For example, he says nothing about his drinking, very little about his years of poverty, and nothing about his general order expelling Jews. Certain important people are not given much attention, and Grant's prejudices come through in places with regard to other persons.

Nevertheless, John said, the *Memoirs* have a sense of humor and grace that make the reader want to keep reading. The work has been praised by such critics as Henry James, Gertrude Stein and Edmund Wilson (Wilson called them a "unique expression of the national character"). Unlike the authors of some recent memoirs, John maintains, Grant does not try to foist his views on the reader. And, because Grant insisted on the truth, his work lacks dramatic highlights. All in all, John concluded, Grant's *Memoirs* are "well worth reading."

The Museum of the Confederacy is holding its second annual series of lectures this month and next. Speaking on February 17 on "Three Saints and a Sinner" is Dr. Daniel P. Jordan. On March 9, Leslie D. Jensen, Curator of Collections at the Museum will be featured. His topic is "If Only It Could Talk". In addition, the Museum, together with the Departments of English and History of Virginia Commonwealth University is sponsoring a series entitled, "Images of the South in History, Fiction and Film". Films to be shown include "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", "Intruder in the Dust", and "To Kill a Mockingbird". For further information, contact The Museum of the Confederacy, 1201 E. Clay St., Richmond 23219.

The October newsletter reported the efforts of Maryland senator Charles Mathias to obtain reimbursement from the federal government for \$200,000 "ransom" money paid by Frederick, Maryland, to J.E.B. Stuart in 1864. Stuart threatened to burn the town if they didn't pay. Now we have learned that Pickens County, Alabama, is also seeking "war reparations"—\$5 million worth—from the U.S. On April 5, 1865, U.S. troops led by Capt. William A. Sutherland, under the command of Brig. Gen. John T. Croxton, burned the Pickens County Courthouse in Carrollton. Today the county is in need of a new judicial building, and Judge Robert H. Kirksey has proposed that the federal government foot the bill.

Kirksey believes there is solid precedent for the payment in an 1884 act of Congress. That act gave 40,080 acres of public land to the State of Alabama to help the University of Alabama restore buildings "heretofore destroyed by fire." The same Union troops that burned the university buildings in Tuscaloosa came into Pickens County the next day and burned the courthouse there, according to Kirksey.

THE NEW BOOKS



(Compiled by Dick Clark)

Davis, David Brion, editor. *Antebellum American Culture: An Interpretive Anthology*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1979. pbk \$6.95

Gildersleeve, Basil Lanneau. *The Creed of the Old South, 1865-1915*. New York: Arno Press, 1979. Reprint of Johns Hopkins issue of 1915. \$12.00

O'Toole, George J.A. *The Cosgrove Report*. Being the private inquiry of a Pinkerton detective into the death of President Lincoln. An annotated novel presented by... New York: Rawson, Wade Pubs., 1979. \$12.95

Thompson, Mitchell Andrew. *Dear Ella. The Letters of Mitchell Andrew Thompson, May, 1862—August, 1864*. Edited by Mary Bess Henderson, Evelyn J. Young and Anna I. Nahelhoffer. Carter Press ???

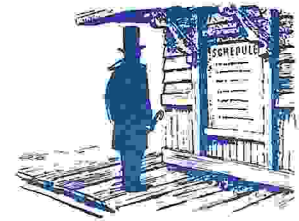
Ward, Evelyn Douglas. *The Children of Bladensfield: With an essay by Peter M. Matthiessen*. Marie Koenig, editor. New York: Viking Press, 1978. \$14.95

Over the years, many people have noted the need for a comprehensive and accurate index-guide to *The Southern Historical Society Papers, 1876-1959*. One of them was J. Ambler Johnston, and although he did not live to see the index completed, he did work with others in getting the job started. Next month such an Index-Guide will be available from KTO Press, a U.S. division of Kraus-Thompson Organization, Ltd., Route 100, Millwood, New York 10546. Compiled and edited by Bud Robertson, the Index-Guide is available as a two-volume work at a cost of \$95. *The Southern Historical Society Papers* are also available from KTO Press.

The Second Annual Confederate Historical Institute will be held April 3-5, 1980, at Richmond, Virginia. Topics to be covered include Andersonville prison, Confederate veterans, the Confederacy in the West, Confederate ironclads, business and the war effort, the Confederacy in the mountains, foreign observers, and the battle of Fredericksburg. There will also be a half-day tour of Battle Abbey and The Museum of the Confederacy. Among the speakers being lined up for the Institute are: Dr. Ludwell Johnson of William and Mary; Dr. Dan Jordan of Virginia Commonwealth University, Dr. James Breeden of Southern Methodist; Dr. Haskell Monroe of Texas A&M; Dr. William White of Texas Lutheran College, and many others—18 in all. The registration fee for non-members is \$150 (\$10 discount for registrations paid prior to March 1). For further information, contact Jerry Russell, Confederate Historical Institute, P.O. Box 7388, Little Rock Arkansas 72217, (501) 225-3996.

The 46th Illinois Vol. Infantry, member, Civil War Shooting Team, will hold a new member meeting on February 17 at 2 p.m. at the Aurora G.A.R. Hall (downtown Aurora on the Fox River). The meeting will feature a history seminar on the 46th Illinois, uniform displays, weapons, and black powder shooting displays. For further information, contact Thomas Arliskas, 401 Sansouci, Aurora, Illinois 60505.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular Meetings are held at the Chicago Bar Association, 29 South LaSalle, second Friday in each month except as noted.

February 8: Dr. James Lee McDonough on "The Last Day at Stones River".

March 14: Dr. John G. Barrett "From Glory to Disrepute: Sherman in the Carolinas".

April 11: Ralph G. Newman on "The Lights Go On Again At Ford's Theater".

May 9: Dr. Walter L. Brown on "Albert Pike as Confederate General."

May 14-18: Annual Battlefield Tour to the Shenandoah Valley.

June 13: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner and installation of officers. Recipient of Award: Edwin C. Bearss.

Every Monday: Informal noon luncheon meetings at Wieboldt's Men's Grill, 9th Floor, State and Madison; all members welcome.

Last Tuesday of each month: Informal noon luncheon meetings at Caravelle Motel, River Road and Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont; all members welcome.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Robert J. Younger, P.O. Box 1087, Dayton, Ohio 45401.

The McLean County (Illinois) Historical Society recently opened a time capsule—an etched glass bottle—sealed up in 1879 by a Bloomington man, John McNulta, who served as a general in the 94th Illinois during the Civil War. An inscription in the base of the capsule read: "Souvenirs of the meeting of the Society of the Army of Tennessee. Held at Chicago November 1879. To be kept unopened for 100 years."

The time capsule contained: pictures of McNulta and his wife; the menu and program for the lavish dinner the Tennessee Army veterans held at the Palmer House; an 1868 reunion ribbon; wartime money; a set of newspaper clippings which detailed the "Grant boom" that struck Chicago during the former President's visit in 1879; and a "Cigar given to John McNulta by General U.S. Grant, November 14, 1879, must not be opened for 100 years and then smoked by some one of the descendants or by some soldier who has rendered good service to his country."

Round Table members appearing on the speaker's platform recently included our president, Merlin Sumner, who spoke at Deerfield High School on U.S. Grant, and Ver Lynn Sprague, a founder of the Naples (Florida) Civil War Round Table, who addressed that group on Mrs. Lincoln.

In order to insure that the new Round Table membership directory is as complete and accurate as possible, all members are being asked to fill out and return as quickly as possible the form enclosed with this newsletter. Please return it, along with your meeting reservation card, in the envelope provided. (Be sure to return the form even if you are not planning to attend the meeting).