

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LIX, Number 3

Chicago, Illinois

November 1998

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

by Barbara Hughett

Much has been written about the Confederate cavalry during the Peninsula Campaign (March-July 1862)—especially about General J.E.B. Stuart's famous "Ride Around McClellan" on June 12-15. The efforts and accomplishments of the Federal cavalry in that campaign have not been so well documented. On November 13, Robert O'Neill will address The Round Table on the topic of "The Federal Cavalry in the Peninsula Campaign."

O'Neill relates that several years ago, when he was asked to write an essay on Federal cavalry operations on the Peninsula, he was concerned whether he would find anything to write about, as Stuart's Ride had already been covered, at length, in an earlier volume of the publication. "But as I worked on the piece," he says, "I was quite surprised at the *forgotten*, and now ignored, effort of the Union troopers." He was surprised to learn that "the men and boys who have so long been regarded by history as inept, or worse, were as involved in the campaign as their commanders allowed them to be; and that, when they were properly used, they often made a valuable contribution to the Federal effort."

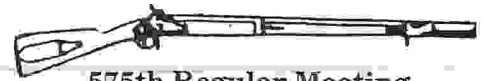
In his address, he will discuss the obstacles that had to be overcome by the mounted Boys in Blue in the months between Bull Run and the Peninsula. Further, he will examine their role in the Battle of Williamsburg, the advance to White House, and their contribution in the expedition to Hanover Court House, Gaines' Mill, and Willis Church.

"The difference," O'Neill observes, "at this point of the war, between the gray and the blue horse was not yet as pronounced as it would be. When they first met on the field, the Federal troopers were as likely to meet with success as were their counterparts. The difference for victory was generally Jeb Stuart. The blame for their failure still falls on McClellan and his senior commanders."



Robert O'Neill

Bob O'Neill, a native of Detroit, moved to Virginia in 1977; he is currently a resident of Stafford County, Virginia. He has a degree in criminal justice from American University, and is employed as



575th Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

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

☆ ☆ ☆

Friday, November 13

☆ ☆ ☆

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 Minute Sirloin Steak, with Mushroom Sauce or Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, November 11, 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.

an investigator with the Fairfax County Police Department. In addition to his book, *The Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville*, he has published several other articles and essays. Among these are: "A Passage of Blood and Regrets: The Battle of Thorough-"
(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	Kurt Carlson
Battlefield Preservation Fund	Mary Munsell Abroe
Ways and Means	Kurt Carlson
Membership	Ted Birndorf, Eleanor Leichenko
Publications/Printed Material	David Richert
Publicity/Public Relations	Larry Hewitt
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, Scott Graham

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.

Please Note

Registrar Carole Le Claire reminds all members who have not yet paid their 1998-1999 dues by November 14 that they will not receive a December newsletter and will not be included in the new roster.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by Mary Munsell Abroe

Restoration, Interpretation, and Visitor-Access Work continues at Manassas: Several completed and ongoing projects at Manassas aim to protect a Civil War-era structure there, as well as enhance the park's interpretive program and visitor experience. National Park Service (NPS) preservation experts recently jacked up the small, wood-frame Sudley Post Office and stabilized its foundation. While the building has been altered over time, it is one of only three on the battlefield remaining from the Civil War era—the other two are the Stone House and the Dogan House—and an abiding objective of Superintendent Robert Sutton is the old post office's preservation. The past summer's limited work constituted a holding action; hopefully, it will prevent additional decline while Sutton seeks financing to complete the project.

Renovations are underway in the park's visitor center to accommodate an enlarged bookstore, indoor observation space, and a total change in the center's museum displays. Also figuring into this undertaking is a new orientation video, which will redirect the traditional "generals and tactics" focus of such films to include the battle's impact on common soldiers and involved civilians. According to Superintendent Sutton, work on this interpretive "package" will continue into 1999 at a cost to Manassas National Battlefield Park of about \$1 million.

Impending upgrades of the park's infrastructure include repaving roads and moving several parking lots, including the one at the Stone House that abuts the busy, dangerous intersection of historic Warrenton Turnpike (Virginia Route 29) and Sudley Road (Virginia Route 234). While Sutton thus far has resisted pressure from Congressman Frank Wolf (R-Virginia) to relinquish park land for traffic "improvements" at the site, construction of the new parking lot at a safer distance from the intersection may set a problematic precedent that gives Wolf further ammunition: the state transportation department, in fact, requires that the park give up acreage to build a turning lane into the new lot. In the meantime, NPS personnel at Manassas (including Mr. Sutton) continue to urge the investigation of potentially wiser safety measures (e.g., sequenced lights to control traffic flow) that do not involve the forfeiture of historic land. At any rate, there is no funding quest for this large, user-friendly project: federal highway monies totaling \$1 million are earmarked for the infrastructure work (probably because the roadways involved carry heavy commuter traffic).

For the "what's wrong with this picture?" department: There are millions of dollars for development-intensive activities with the potential to please congressional constituents, but the park superintendent at Manassas must scramble to find dollars to preserve/restore a structure "in deplorable condition" that, according to archaeological evidence, stood during the Civil War. While many are quick to criticize the National Park Service for apparent failures to care for such vulnerable cultural resources as the Sudley Post Office, it is the

(continued on page 3)

☞ OCTOBER MEETING ☞

by Larry Gibbs

On October 9, William C. (Jack) Davis became the twenty-fifth person to receive the prestigious Nevins-Freeman Award from The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. Before 111 members and guests, at the 574th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, Davis made a splendid presentation entitled "Myths and Realities of the Civil War." Davis is a popular television personality on "Civil War Journal," lecturer, and the author of over forty books on the Civil War. This was Davis's fourth appearance before our Round Table.

According to Davis, "Mythology is an example of a living, vibrant, breathing aspect of life, even though it is built on faith, with only a degree of reality. Myths are not lies. Myths are used to explain supernatural or inexplicable things. Inevitably, losers create more myths than winners in order to rationalize a crushing defeat." Thus, all the "Lost Cause" myths of the Confederacy.

Davis cited several examples of myths that permeate Civil War study. In his view, slavery was the cause of the war—even though most Confederate soldiers fought to protect their homes and loved ones, not to protect slavery. In an explanation of this seeming contradiction, Davis stated that the Civil War would not have been fought if slavery had never existed in North America. Diaries from southern soldiers indicated that slavery was seldom written about because only 25 percent of all southern soldiers owned any slaves. "Most Confederate soldiers," Davis said, "complained mostly that their native soil was being invaded by the hated Yankees."

Secession was another myth. The Civil War proved that secession is not a viable reality. That issue was settled on the battlefields, but secession is still a live issue even today. Rumblings concerning secession recently have involved sections of West Virginia, Wisconsin, Michigan, and California. "Conditions change, so the question of secession could have a different result," claimed Davis.

To many pro-Confederates, the name of the conflict should be renamed "The War Between the States" or "The War of Northern Aggression." In 1928, Congress actually passed a resolution that the conflict of 1861-1865 should be referred to as "The War Between the States." To clarify the controversy, the "Civil War" referred to a war between different groups within one country. "The War Between the States" implied that the conflict was between two distinct governmental bodies. Davis said that the war is correctly called "The Civil War" because even Confederate General Robert E. Lee and his soldiers used that term throughout the entire struggle. "The War Between the States" was a term used by "Lost Cause" defenders after the end of the war.

Another myth of the Confederacy was that the South was not defeated, but merely withdrew from the Civil War voluntarily. Robert Toombs of Georgia argued that the Confederacy was not defeated, but simply worn out from killing Yankees. "Of course, this is pure nonsense; it is a sad fact but the Confederacy was utterly, devastatingly defeated," emphasized Davis.

The recent controversy over the present-day use by some southern states of the Confederate battle flag involved several myths and misconceptions. The defenders

of the flag point to it as a symbol of pride and southern heritage. The problem with this, according to Davis, is that the states that display the Rebel flag waited until the Brown desegregation case of 1954 to begin using it. By the mid-1950s, the southern states wanted to symbolically protect segregation by using the Confederate battle flag. To critics, the Rebel flag represented slavery and racism. To defenders, this flag was never the actual flag of the Confederacy, but just a battle flag, so its relevance is questionable anyway.

Davis concluded, "History and myth mean different things from generation to generation. Myths tell us more about how we would like to see ourselves. The Confederacy does not have to excuse or apologize for its efforts. The North and South were caught up in the follies of history in the 1860s. This story—the Civil War—belongs to all of us. However, the real story is so much richer than the myths created by the war. We do not need mythology because often it obscures the fantastic, true story of the Civil War."

ROBERT O'NEILL (continued from page 1)

fare Gap," in *Virginia Country's Civil War Quarterly*; "The Fight for the Loudoun Valley," in *Blue and Gray*; and, most recently, "Federal Cavalry Operations in the Peninsula Campaign," an essay which appeared in Volume Three of *The Peninsula Campaign of 1862*, published by Savas Publishing.

Battlefield Preservation Update (from page 2)

responsibility of Congress to fund the work of the Interior Department, including the National Park Service, which is perpetually underfunded. Unfortunately, many members of Congress remain clueless about that obligation—or, if they have a clue, do not care.



SILENT AUCTION

A reminder: We are continuing each month to hold a Silent Auction, with the books donated to The Round Table by our late founding member, Ralph G. Newman, and his wife Patricia. A few words of instruction for those of you not familiar with Silent Auctions: About twenty books will be offered each month; a bid sheet will be with each book. The minimum bid is \$5 per book, with a minimum raise of \$1 per bid. Write your name on the first available line and indicate your dollar bid. Someone wishing to raise the bid places his/her increased bid on the next line. Five minutes after the end of the speaker's presentation, the bidding will close and the last highest bid is the winner of each book. All proceeds go to benefit battlefield preservation.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Mercer, Philip. *The Life of the Gallant Pelham*. Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1995. \$35.00. Original of 1929.
- Meredith, Lee W. *Guide to Civil War Periodicals, VOL. II*. Savas Publ. Co. 1996. \$34.95.
- Miller, Edward A., Jr. *Lincoln's Abolitionist General: The Biography of David Hunter*. U. of S. Carolina Press. 1997. \$29.95.
- Miller, William J., ed. *Fallen Soldier — Memoir of a Civil War Casualty by Private Andrew Roy — Medical Commentary by Clyde B. Kernek, M.D.* Elliott & Clark Publishing. 1997. Pbk. \$14.95.
- Miller, William J., ed. *The Peninsula Campaign of 1862: Yorktown to the Seven Days. Vol. 3*. Savas Publ. Co. 1996. Pbk. \$16.95.
- Mobley, Joe A., ed. *The Papers of Zebulon B. Vance: Volume 2, 1863*. Historical Publications Section, Division of Archives and History, 109 E. Jones St., Raleigh, NC 27601-2807. 1995. \$35.00.
- Moore, Albert B. *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*. U. of S. Carolina Press. 1996. Pbk. \$18.95. Original of 1924.
- Morrell, Carl A., ed. *Seymour Dexter, Union Army: Journal and Letters, New York Volunteer Regiment of Elmira with Illustrations*. McFarland & Co. 1996. \$22.00.
- Nevins, James H. and Styple, William B. *What Death More Glorious — A Biography of General Strong Vincent*. Belle Grove Publ. Co. 1997. \$24.00.
- Noe, Kenneth W., ed. *A Southern Boy in Blue: The Memoir of Marcus Woodcock, 9th Kentucky Infantry*. U. of Tennessee Press. 1995. \$32.95.
- Oates, Stephen B. *The Approaching Fury — Voices of the Storm, 1820-1861*. Harper Collins. 1997. \$28.00.
- O'Brien, Kevin E. *My Life in the Irish Brigade — The Civil War Memoirs of Private William McCarter, 116th Pennsylvania Infantry*. Savas Publ. Co. 1996. \$24.95.
- Palladino, Anita, ed. *Diary of a Yankee Engineer — The Civil War Diary of John Westervelt*. Fordham U. Press. 1996. \$27.00.

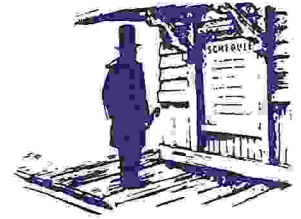
Former President Marshall Krolick gave a presentation on "Jews in the Civil War" at the Beth Judea synagogue in Buffalo Grove on November 1.

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.

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

April 29–May 2: Annual Battlefield Tour, Fredericksburg

May 14: Michael Andrus, topic to be announced

June 11: Thomas P. Sweeney, topic to be announced

NEW MEMBERS

David Kazmierczak, 1378 Westport Ridge, Crystal Lake, IL 60014, 815-455-9361

Carol and Howard Mishoulam, 530 Turnberry Drive, Schererville, IN 46375-2928, 219-865-1887

Thomas D. Postema, 5505 Silentbrook Lane, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008, 847-303-5030

Eric W. Wiser, 1758 N. Neva Avenue, Chicago, IL 60635

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

William Tate, 1243 Pensacola Drive, Lillian, AL 36549, 334-961-1737

NEW PHONE NUMBER

Richard McAdoo, 252-745-7762

Former President Marshall Krolick and Trustee Frank Patton, president of the Union League Club Civil War Round Table, will address the luncheon meeting of the Union League Club Civil War Round Table on Monday, November 30. They will be discussing "Ben, Baldy, and Grant at Bermuda 100." A reception begins at the Union League Club at 11:30 a.m.; luncheon is served at noon. The cost is \$15 per person. For reservations, call 312-435-5000.

This item appeared in a recent issue of *General Orders*, the newsletter of the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table: "Last April a check for \$250 was presented by Tony Daly, Chairman of the American Civil War Round Table, United Kingdom, to Michael Macy, the Assistant Cultural Affairs Attache with the American Embassy. The donation was made to support the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation Trust, for the preservation of the Cedar Creek battlefield in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. 'It is a first,' Macy remarked, 'British citizens raising money for preservation of a historic site in the United States. ...'"