



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LIX, Number 6

Chicago, Illinois

February 1999

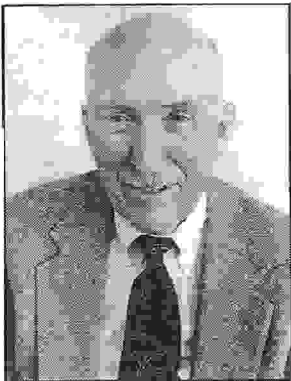
## Edwin Cole Bearss on "John Wilkes Booth and His Attempted Escape"

by Barbara Hughett

AFTER murdering President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington on April 14, 1865, assassin John Wilkes Booth was at large until April 26, when he was finally tracked down by federal authorities. While Booth and accomplice David Herold were sleeping in a tobacco barn near Bowling Green, Virginia, they were surrounded by Union cavalry. Herold surrendered, but Booth refused to be taken alive. The soldiers set fire to the barn to smoke him out, but a shot fired by Sergeant Boston Corbett mortally wounded the young actor, scion of a famous acting family. The story of what transpired in those twelve days—during which Booth and Herold managed to elude a massive government manhunt—will be related on February 12, when Edwin Cole Bearss addresses The Round Table. His topic will be "John Wilkes Booth and His Attempted Escape."

Ed Bearss needs no introduction to members of the Chicago Round Table. He has been leading our annual spring battlefield tours since 1961; he has spoken to us five previous times at regular meetings and many other times during seminars, battlefield tours, and at our 50th Anniversary festivities in October 1990; and he is the recipient of our 1980 Nevins-Freeman Award.

A native of Montana, Ed grew up on his grandfather's ranch where he named the cattle for Civil War generals and battles. (His favorite milk cow was named "Antietam.") After graduating from high school, he immediately joined the United States Marine Corps. During World War II, he was with the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion and 1st Marine Division in the invasions of Guadalcanal and New Britain. Badly wounded by machine gun fire, Ed spent 26 months in various hospitals. He later received his B.S. in foreign service from Georgetown University and his M.A. in history from Indiana University.



Edwin Cole Bearss

Ed's career with the National Park Service began in 1955 at Vicksburg, Mississippi, where he was park historian. While there, he did the research which led to the discovery of the long-lost resting place of the Union gunboat *Cairo*. In 1956, he founded the Missis-

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**578th Regular Meeting**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**EDWIN COLE BEARSS ON  
 "JOHN WILKES BOOTH AND HIS  
 ATTEMPTED ESCAPE"**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**Friday, February 12**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**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: Braised Lamb Shank or  
 Catch of the Day*



**Please Note**

Make your reservation by Wednesday, February 10, 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.

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## THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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

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

The Union League Club Civil War Round Table's regular luncheon meeting will be on Monday, February 22. Kurt Carlson, former president of the Chicago Round Table, will speak on "Patrick Cleburne: What Makes a General Great?" A reception begins at the Union League Club at 11:30; lunch is served at noon. The cost is \$15 per person. For reservations, call 312-435-5000.

## BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

### ☆ UPDATE ☆

by Roger E. Bohn

"Why Preserve Our Battlefields?" That's a good question *and* that was a good title for the first Junior Essay Contest of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS). Their newsletter, *Hallowed Ground*, reported this contest and asked: "What would you say to landowners who want to sell their land to developers? What would you say to the developers themselves? Why should our hallowed grounds be preserved? Why should people in the 20th century care about the past? Why, indeed, preserve our battlefields?"

The APCWS Junior Essay Contest was open to students age 15 and under. Essays were to be approximately 250 words in length. Teachers were encouraged to share in the project with their students, and, no doubt, many parents were also involved. Winning essays will be published in the *Hallowed Ground*; the first-place prize is a \$100 savings bond. Personally, I look forward to reading the students' answers to those questions. Having done numerous living-history presentations to students in that age group, their comments sometimes amaze me. It leaves me to wonder if we in The Civil War Round Table of Chicago should not ask ourselves the same questions and examine our answers in light of our own individual interest and commitment to this part of our American history. The APCWS seems to have found an excellent way to encourage young minds and efforts into the "right direction."

**Murfreesboro, Tennessee ...** As reported in *Civil War News*, a 50-acre farm at the core of the battlefield has been purchased for \$3.6 million by the National Park Service at Stones River National Battlefield. This property is the site where repeated lines of Confederates marched against Union troops in the "Slaughter Pen" and in "Hell's Half Acre." The plans are to restore the property to its original battlefield appearance. This is good news, since our CWRT Tour 2000 will be to the Stones River area.

**A Kentucky Memorial at Vicksburg ... finally?** A Kentuckian visiting Vicksburg National Military Park recently found that her home state was the only one of 28 states invited to place monuments in the park that had not done so. With that motivation, she has organized an effort to raise \$250,000 for a monument depicting both Union and Confederate soldiers. This seems fitting since both presidents, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, were born in Kentucky.

**The Ralph G. Newman Silent Auction books** continue to add to the Battlefield Preservation Fund every month. Remember to: *Sign up early ... sign up often.* You owe it to yourself.

**Former President Donald Anderson** suffered a heart attack on January 26 and underwent angioplasty surgery. We are delighted to report that the surgery was very successful—Don is back at home and is doing very well. Cards can be sent to him at his home, 363 Dover Drive, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016.

## ❧ JANUARY MEETING ❧

by Roger E. Bohn

At the 577th regular meeting of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago on January 15, 1999, former President Marshall D. Krolick presented "Council of War: Meade and His Generals, July 2, 1863." A native Chicagoan, Krolick became a member of the CWRT in 1961 when he was a law student at Northwestern. He is now a partner in the Chicago law firm of Deutsch, Levy & Engel. His interest in the American Civil War has been since childhood and his primary areas of expertise are the cavalry and the battle of Gettysburg.

On the morning of June 28, 1863, Major General George Gordon Meade was in Frederick, Maryland, and had just been made commander of the 5th Corps of the Army of the Potomac. In spite of misgivings and protestations, Meade accepted the command, since he had been given an order, not an invitation. The political "climate" in the Washington, DC area was not to Meade's liking, but he set about immediately to transfer the command from Joseph Hooker. To facilitate matters, he retained Daniel Butterfield as his chief-of-staff, a move which he was to deeply regret. Krolick gave us a thumbnail sketch of Meade's long and successful military career to this point and indicated that he had earned the respect of friend and foe alike. "Meade will make no mistake in my front" was the quote from General R.E. Lee. Lincoln liked Meade because he was non-political and belonged to none of the army cliques.

Meade was given two directives: 1) Given the invasion of the North by Lee's army, Washington and Baltimore must be protected at all times; 2), the invading Rebels must be defeated. The conflict of *defending* the Capitol and at the same time *offensively* defeating the enemy was a source of frustration. However, on July 1, he committed his forces to proceed to the area of Gettysburg which he felt was where Lee was going to concentrate his troops. Meade then sent to all his Corps commanders the "Pipe Creek circular" which outlined their positions, *dependent upon Lee's movements*.

The morning of July 2 saw the offense of Longstreet's troops against the Federal left. Meade was able to successfully move his troops, however, so that the end of the day's action saw no appreciable Confederate gain. On the evening of July 2, Meade summoned eleven of his generals to the small house serving as his headquarters. He included Generals Butterfield and Gouverneur Warren. The cavalry commander, General Alfred Pleasonton was conspicuously absent. Meade called this meeting to learn: 1) the extent of the losses by straggling on the march and by two days of heavy fighting, and 2) the physical and mental condition of the troops. With this information, he could form judgements of how to proceed with the next day's action. An informal report from each general followed.

Opinions, of course, were varied; the consensus was "to make the best of it." Butterfield then proposed a list of specific questions for each of those present, in order to determine a course of action. This, then, went from an informal meeting with Meade listening to opinions, into a very formal *Council of War*. This was not Meade's original intent, but he agreed to the list of questions. Questions: 1) Should the Federal position remain where it was or should it re-locate nearer their base of supplies; 2) If the position remains the same, should they attack or await the attack of the Confederates; 3) If Federals await attack, for how long should they wait. Responses: 1) All voted to remain at Gettysburg; 2) Unanimous in favoring a defensive posture; 3) Majority said wait one day to see what Lee would do.

Krolick quoted Meade: "Such then is the decision," and with no further comment, the meeting ended.

On July 3, Meade's opinion that Lee would attack on the center held true, and the Federals defeated Lee that day. On July 4, Lee began to withdraw his army back into Virginia, and this victory should have won for Meade the respect and gratitude of his country. This was lost when he decided not to pursue and further attack Lee, who was by then firmly entrenched at the banks of the flooded Potomac River. By the time Meade decided to again pursue Lee, it was too late, and Lee was safely across the river. President Lincoln strongly censured Meade, who felt he had only followed the consensus of his own commanders, and that Lincoln did not understand the situation or the circumstances. The Joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War then entered the picture and targeted Meade for investigation.

The Committee, mostly Radical Republicans, joined with Meade's rivals and enemies to accuse him of intending to *retreat* all along and used the "Pipe Creek circular" to justify this accusation. Meade made his point that he had never advised, favored, or insisted upon retreat, and that the circular had been merely a *contingency plan*. Neither Lincoln nor the public opinion was swayed by the report, but the controversy continued ... and continues.

Krolick feels that the Committee's criticisms of Meade were false, misleading, and improper. Meade, says Krolick, has never been accorded the praise and respect that he earned by his skill and handling of his army in those three fateful days. Meade, moreover, is ignored while his opponent, Lee, is venerated. Francis Walker, in *Battles and Leaders*, was quoted: "There is probably no other battle of which men are so prone to think and speak without a conscious reference to the commanding general of the victorious army as they are regarding Gettysburg."

At the conclusion of his presentation, Krolick graciously continued with a prolonged question-and-answer period. These in-depth comments that followed were, in themselves, worth the "price of admission." Anyone who missed this most instructive and enlightening presentation should order an audio-copy ... in fact, those who were there would also do themselves a favor in ordering a tape as a very worthwhile reference.

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### EDWIN COLE BEARSS (continued from page 1)

Mississippi Civil War Round Table, which later consolidated with the Jackson Civil War Round Table. In 1966, he was transferred to Washington, D.C., and in 1981 he became chief historian of the National Park Service, a position he held until 1994. He served as a special assistant to the NPS director until his retirement in 1995. Since then—through lectures, television commentary, writing, and as a frequent battlefield guide for various historical associations—Ed continues his fifty-year association with our nation's military history.

His many published works—in addition to his renowned three-volume history of Vicksburg—include *Forest at Brice's Crossroads* (1975); *The Battle of Wilson's Creek* (1975); and *Hardluck Ironclad: The Sinking and Salvage of the Cairo* (1966; reprinted 1980). In addition to the Nevins-Freeman Award, he has been the recipient of many honors. In 1983, Ed Bearss was chosen to receive the Department of the Interior's Distinguished Service Award, the highest award given by the department.

## The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Snell, Mark A., ed. *Dancing Along the Deadline: The Andersonville Memoir of a Prisoner of the Confederacy* by Ezra Hoyt Ripple (52nd Pennsylvania). Presidio Press. 1996. \$19.95.

Southwick, Thomas P. *A Duryee Zouave: Journal and Reminiscences of Camp Life and the Personal Experiences on the March and in the Field, of an Ordinary, Common Soldier of the Civil War* (5th New York Vols.). Patrick A. Schroeder Publications, Rt. 2, Box 128, Brookneal, VA 24528. 1995. Pbk. \$12.95. Original of 1930.

### Lincoln's Birthday Events in Springfield

The following annual events this year commemorate the 190th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln:

**The George L. Painter Lectures begin at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, February 12, at the Lincoln Home Visitor Center.** This year, papers will be presented by Robert Marcus and *State Journal-Register* reporter Doug Pokorski. The lectures are named in honor of the late George L. Painter, historian at the Lincoln Home from 1976 until his death in December 1995. There is no charge for the lectures. For information, call 217-492-4241, extension 241.

**The annual Abraham Lincoln Symposium will be held in the Hall of Representatives in the Old State Capitol.** This year's theme is "Lincoln's Nationalism" and speakers include James A. Rawley, Drew McCoy, and William Lee Miller. The event is sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Association, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Illinois State Historical Library, with support from the Illinois State Historical Society. The program begins at 1:30 p.m.; admission is free of charge. For information, call Tom Schwartz, at 217-728-2118.

**The Abraham Lincoln Association banquet** will be held the evening of February 12 in the main ballroom of the Renaissance Springfield Hotel. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist James B. Stewart, author of the bestseller *Bloodsport*, about the Clinton White House, will be the main speaker. Tickets are \$45 per person and reservations must be made by February 9. For information about the banquet, call Linda Potts at 217-753-7123.

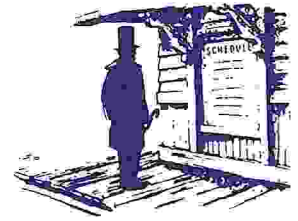
### Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

*February 12:* Edwin Cole Bearss on John Wilkes Booth and His Attempted Escape"

*March 12:* Peter Cozzins on "My Poor Little 9th"

*April 9:* Lance J. Herdegen on "How the Iron Brigade Won Its Name" (plus a special surprise, to be announced later)

*April 29-May 2:* Annual Battlefield Tour, Fredericksburg

*May 14:* Michael Andrus on "The Confederate Cover-up at Seven Pines"

*June 11:* Thomas P. Sweeney on "General 'Fightin' Tom Sweeney"

### NEW MEMBERS

George Bratsakis, 4288 W. Morse, Skokie, IL 60077, 847-677-5743

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William J. Murphy, Jr., 1219 Oakmont Avenue, Flossmoor, IL 60422-1433, 708-957-9081

Jim and Bonnie Quirke, 338 Brainerd, Libertyville, IL 60048, 847-362-0776

Harvey Rabin, 6030 N. Sheridan Road #2009, Chicago, IL 60660, 773-989-1873

Robert Siekman, 10157 Avenue J, Chicago, IL 60617, 773-721-9507

Bryan Seiter, 9812 S. California, Evergreen Park, IL 60805, 708-425-4030

Donald Tracy, 1121 S. Walnut, Springfield, IL 62704

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Mike and Jackie Cohn, 9340 East Redfield Road, #1074, Scottsdale, AZ 85260, 602-614-4564

**The Eighth Annual Civil War Symposium in Kankakee, Illinois**, will be held this year on Saturday, March 27. Speakers will be John Y. Simon, John Marszlek, and Stacey Allen. The all-day event includes a luncheon, and costs \$40. For information, contact Wayne Carlson, at 815-939-1551.

We learn from Jerry Russell that **Annie Snyder** is very ill. Annie, dubbed "The Angel of Manassas" because of her unflagging efforts to protect the Manassas Battlefield and environs, suffered a heart attack and also has pneumonia, emphysema, and a collapsed lung. Cards can be sent to her at 6312 Pageland Lane, Gainesville, Virginia 22065.

**Former President Brooks Davis** will be speaking on "The Union Veteran and the Grand Army of the Republic" at the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table meeting on February 5. He will also be speaking at St. James Episcopal Cathedral on February 10, when his topic will be "Abraham Lincoln: Man of Faith."