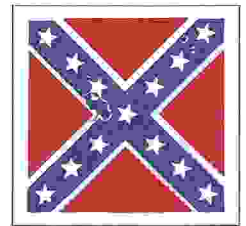


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE.

Founded December 3, 1940



Volume LXI, Number 4

Chicago, Illinois

December 2000



## 596th REGULAR MEETING

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### GORDON C. RHEA ON "THE OVERLAND CAMPAIGN"

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**Friday, December 8**

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HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA  
350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

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

\$30 - Members    \$35 - Nonmembers

*Entree:  
Roast Pork Loin  
with Dijon Mustard  
Demi-Glaze  
or Catch of the Day*



#### PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservation by **MONDAY, December 4**, 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.

**PARKING:** If you are driving and coming from the south, turn left into the Marr Plaza lot just after crossing the river on Orleans. From the north, turn right from Orleans on Hubbard, left on Kingsbury, right on Kinzie, and left into the Mart Plaza lot. **Parking is \$7 with a validated parking sticker.**

## GORDON C. RHEA

~ on ~

### "The Overland Campaign"

#### LEE'S ARMY SUFFERED GRIEVOUSLY

BY BARBARA HUGHETT

Robert E. Lee's army suffered grievously during the Overland campaign. His entire command structure collapsed during the three weeks of brutal fighting from the Wilderness to the North Anna River in May of 1864.

Lee began his campaign early in the month with four strong corps commanders—James Longstreet, Richard S. Ewell, Ambrose P. Hill, and James Ewell Brown (Jeb) Stuart. Longstreet was seriously wounded on May 6; Hill became too ill to command on May 7; Stuart was mortally wounded on May 11; and Ewell made poor showings on May 12 (Bloody Angle) and May 19 (Harris Farm), finally succumbing to illness on May 27.

Division, brigade, and regimental commanders disappeared at an equally dizzying rate, compelling Lee to make radical changes in his entire command structure while fighting against his most wily foe yet, Ulysses S. Grant. On December 8, Gordon C. Rhea will address The Round Table; his topic will be "The Overland Campaign."

In this presentation, Rhea will focus on the impact of attrition on Lee's performance, underscoring how Lee was forced to abandon his traditional leadership style of granting discretion to his subordinates and instead to himself become a micro-manager of his army. The story reaches a climax on May 24, when Lee devised a clever fortified line below the North Anna



Gordon C. Rhea

River that finally afforded him tactical advantage over his opponent.

However, at the crucial moment to act, sickness confined him to his tent and the exasperated general could find no one capable of exercising command in his absence. Rhea has promised "an evening of fascinating characters and events and a perspective on Lee guaranteed to incite hot partisan debate."

A native of Virginia, Gordon Rhea received his B.A. from Indiana University and his M.A. from Harvard University—both in history. At Harvard, he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. He received his J.D. from Stanford University School of Law. Currently a partner in a South Carolina law firm, his past positions have included that of Assistant United States Attorney in the U.S. Virgin Islands for one year and in Washington, D.C., for five years.

He also served in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia and as Special assistant to the Chief counsel, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities from 1975-1976. Books he has written include *The Battle of the Wilderness, May 5-6, 1864* (1994) and *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the road to Yellow Tavern: May 7-12, 1864* (1997). His latest book, *To the North Anna River: Grant and Lee, May 13-15, 1864* (2000) is a main selection of the History Book Club and winner of the Landry Award.

**RESERVATIONS  
BY MONDAY,  
DECEMBER 4**

## THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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

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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 LaSalle Building, Suite C-817, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

## BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION UPDATE

BY MARY MUNSELL ABROE

Thank You for Recent Gift to the CWRT Battlefield Preservation Fund: Members of the Civil War Round Table recently learned of the sudden death of longtime member John McManus. In John's memory—and in acknowledgement of his love for the battlefields and our battlefield tours—his widow, Carol McManus, has made a generous contribution to the Battlefield Preservation Fund. John was a fine gentleman whose delight in visiting and learning from our Civil War sites was clear to all who knew him. We are deeply grateful to Carol for her thoughtfulness during a time of sorrow, and we want to extend to her our deepest condolences. John will not be forgotten.

**South Branch Valley Civil War Society (WV) Seeks Information about Illinois Units:** The Civil War Preservation Trust, as successor to the APCWS, currently owns (eastern) West Virginia's Fort Mulligan, built by the 23rd Illinois Infantry and Battery L, First Illinois Light Artillery in late 1863. Preservationists in the vicinity of the fort have formed the South Branch Valley Civil War Society to cooperate with the CWPT as the site's managing partner; local camps of the UCV and SUV are assisting in this undertaking. The society has received some state funding and installed a walking trail with markers and a guide brochure. Currently it is looking for information on the 23rd Illinois and Battery L to continue its commemorative and interpretive efforts at Fort Mulligan; primary documents like soldiers' letters and diaries would be especially useful. If you are in possession of information or would like to help the group financially, please contact Bob Mohr, c/o South Branch Valley Civil War Society, HC-63 Box 331, Wardensville, WV 26851. Mr. Mohr also may be reached by phone (home) at 304-874-3803 or by e-mail (bmohr@alleghenywood.com).

**Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Commission's Work Winds Down:** In late October the office of Bruce Babbitt, secretary of the interior, approved the preservation/management plan crafted by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic Dis-

trict Commission. Created by Congress in 1996, the commission's charge was to devise a blueprint for preserving and administering the valley's battlefields as components of a "national historic district." Those battlefields include Second Kernstown, Second and Third Winchester, Cedar Creek, Fisher's Hill, Toms Brook, McDowell, Port Republic, Cross Keys, and New Market.

Since receiving Interior's endorsement of its effort, the commission has been converting the management plan into an implementation plan, according to executive director Howard Kittell. The commission will hold its final meeting in early December, after which time the majority of its members will constitute the new, non-profit Shenandoah Valley Battlefield's Foundation. In its final form, the foundation will be the lead managing collaborator among several groups, possibly also encompassing the National Park Service, Virginia state agencies, local government bodies, and/or local preservation groups; the foundation itself will be responsible for supervising and helping to execute the preservation program designed by the commission.

Congress and the president have approved financing for this project in the amount of \$1.4 million for FY2000-2001, rather than the \$1.6 million requested. The bulk of the funding—\$1 million—has been designated for land acquisition, with the remaining \$400,000 set aside for the foundation's start-up costs.





## NOVEMBER MEETING

BY LARRY GIBBS

On Saturday, November 11, The Civil War Round Table of Chicago celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary—and thus the 60th Anniversary of The Civil War Round Table movement. Sixty years after the founding of the first Round Table, there are now over 400 American Civil War Round Tables now meeting regularly around the world.

An all-day symposium followed by a gala banquet and concert, attended by 216 members and guests, marked the 595th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. The event took place at the Fountain Blue Banquet Hall in Des Plaines, Illinois. Symposium speakers were Marshall D. Krolick, Lance J. Herdegen, Edwin C. Bearss, Jean H. Baker, and Stephen Ambrose. Following is a brief synopsis of those presentations.

The lead-off speaker was Marshall Krolick, who spoke about John Singleton Mosby, the "Gray Ghost" of the Confederacy. Mosby was a guerilla leader who created turmoil and consternation for Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia. Krolick indicated that, "Although Mosby led only 200 cavalry men and participated in no major battles, to Virginians he was a hero; to Federals he was a monster with superhuman powers." Under his command, Mosby's cavalymen ambushed, raided, and stole from Union forces, but committed no atrocities or massacres.

The fortunes of Mosby's Rangers changed when Union General Philip Sheridan replaced David Hunter on August 6, 1864. With Sheridan, civilized warfare ceased. A few soldiers on both sides were executed for revenge. Millions of dollars of property and farm products were destroyed by Sheridan's "scorched earth" policy. The Shenandoah Valley was laid to waste. Mosby and his Rangers became spectators to the destruction of the "bread basket of the Confederacy"—the Shenandoah Valley.

Lance J. Herdegen presented a speech on "Those Damned Black Hats: the Iron Brigade at Gettysburg." In the summer of 1861, the regiments that eventually made up the Iron Brigade were not involved in any battle, but that soon changed with the Battle of South Mountain (September

14, 1862). This battle preceded Antietam by three days. General George McClellan noticed a ferocious fighting unit in the attack on South Mountain and talked with pride about their iron will to fight—hence the name, Iron Brigade.

At Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, the Iron Brigade slowed down the Rebel advance. This unit suffered the highest casualty rate of any brigade at Gettysburg. On the first day, the Iron Brigade fought at the railroad cut northwest of the town. Driven from McPherson's Ridge to the front of the Lutheran Seminary, this unit—surrounded by Confederates on three sides—fought valiantly. This action allowed the Union time to position Union troops on Cemetery Hill and Cemetery Ridge.

Ed Bearss, the peripatetic Civil War historian and guide, allowed himself to be questioned by the audience in a "Stump Ed" session. As usual, Bearss adroitly answered all questions—even identifying the St. Cloud Hotel on Fort Negley in Nashville. In responding to a question, he stated that he thought Strong Vincent was a more effective and capable commander than Joshua Chamberlain at Little Round Top on July 2, 1863. Bearss opined, "I know the Chamberlain fans may be upset, but Vincent was responsible for the placement of the various Union regiments holding the extreme Union left. Unfortunately, he was killed in the fighting, but Vincent deserves more credit than Chamberlain for the Union success."

According to Bearss, the Battle of Vicksburg (July 4, 1863) was more important than Gettysburg. General Grant became a national hero and the Union gained complete control of the Mississippi River. He said that he thought that General Ulysses S. Grant was more of a modern general than his Confederate counterpart, General Robert E. Lee, and that the Vicksburg campaign (May–July 4, 1863) was the most brilliant in the entire war.

Noted historian and Civil War and Lincoln scholar Jean H. Baker discussed "Mary Lincoln: The White House Years." At first, the physical aspects of the White House were disappointing to Mrs. Lincoln. She dramatically changed the White House

interior with new curtains, china, furniture, and wall paper—all very needed. "The White House took on added significance during the Civil War," Baker explained, "because of its symbolic and real importance during a time of national crisis, especially for ceremonial and administrative functions."

Mary Lincoln took her role as White House hostess very seriously and realized, from her own education and training, that particularly diplomats from foreign countries had high expectations for ceremony and protocol. Yet she was constantly criticized by the press and the political opposition for entertaining during a time of war. One critic who objected to her low-cut ball gown complained about the exposure of her "milking apparatus" in public.

The Lincolns were the first presidential family since that of John Tyler, who served in the early 1840s, to have young children. The public had tremendous interest in the youthful exuberance of the two youngest Lincoln boys, Willie and Thomas (Tad). The Lincolns were inconsolable after the death of Willie in February 1862. That, added to the grief of the death of son Eddie several years earlier, haunted Mary Lincoln for the rest of her life.

The final speaker of the afternoon was the renowned historian Stephen Ambrose. His presentation dealt with two topics: the early history of the Civil War Round Table movement and Abraham Lincoln's role in the development of the transcontinental railroad. Ambrose claimed, "The Civil War is the central theme in U.S. history."

The emphasis of Lincoln upon the development of the transcontinental railroad was considerable. Until recently, this facet of Lincoln's life has been largely ignored. Abraham Lincoln made the Council Bluffs, Iowa, area the starting point for the Union Pacific Railroad, whose tracks would eventually meet the Central Pacific in 1869 in Utah.

On November 17, 1863, President Lincoln decided to use private companies with private financing to build the railroad. He approved the first one hundred miles of track and set the gauge for track at 4 feet, 8+ inches. Additionally, Lincoln had been influential in the passage of the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862.

## THE NEW BOOKS

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Wilson, Clyde N. *The Most Promising Young Man of the South: James Johnston Pettigrew and His Men at Gettysburg*. McWhiney Foundation Press. 1999. Pbk. \$12.95.

Wilson, Douglas L. and Rodney O. Davis, eds. *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews and Statements About Abraham Lincoln*. U. of Illinois Press. 1998. \$49.95.

Wilson, Douglas L. *Lincoln Before Washington: New Perspectives on the Illinois Years*. U. of Illinois Press. 1997. \$26.95; pbk. \$15.95.

Wittenberg, Eric J. *Gettysburg's Forgotten Cavalry Actions*. Thomas Publications. 1998. Pbk. \$12.

Woodworth, Steven E. *Civil War Generals in Defeat*. U. Press of Kansas. 1999. \$29.95.

Woodworth, Steven E., ed. *The American Civil War: A Handbook of Literature and Research*. Greenwood Press. 1998. \$99.50.

Woodworth, Steven E., ed. *The Art of Command in the Civil War*. U. of Nebraska Press. 1998. \$39.95.

Woodworth, Steven E. *The Musick of the Mocking Birds, the Roar of the Cannon—The Civil War Diary and Letters of William Winters*. U. of Nebraska Press. 1999. \$32.50.

Wearns, w. Buck. *From Richmond to Texas: The 1865 Journey Home of Confederate Senator Williamson S. Oldham*. Morningside Press. 1998. \$29.95.

Zwemer, John. *For Home and the Southland (48th Georgia Inf.)*. Butternut and Blue. 1999. \$25.00.

### SILENT AUCTION

A silent auction is held at each monthly dinner meeting, for books donated by late Round Table founding member Ralph G. Newman. The minimum bid is \$5 per book, with a minimum rise of \$1 per bid. Five minutes after the conclusion of the speaker's presentation, bidding will close and the last highest bid is the winner of each book. Proceeds go to benefit battlefield preservation.

### 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.

### SPECIAL SILENT AUCTION AT DECEMBER 8 MEETING

Former President Brooks Davis has announced the contribution of two bound volumes of *Harper's Weekly* magazine, covering the years 1861-1865, which will be the objects of a special silent auction to be held at the December 8 meeting. The proceeds from the sale will go to the cause of battlefield preservation and battle flag preservation. The volumes have been appraised at \$200.

For additional information, contact Brooks at 312-944-5082.

**Union General George Thomas (aka Assistant Treasurer Jerome Kowalski)** has been very busy lately, making presentations throughout Illinois! He recently appeared before grammar schools in Marengo, Shorewood, and Lockport; a Lions Club in Orland Park; the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table, and the Saulk Valley Civil War Round Table in Dixon. On December 7, he will be speaking at the South Suburban Civil War Round Table and on January 5 to the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table. During the second week of January, he will be conducting an all-day Civil War event at Holy Angels School in Chicago, the largest black Catholic elementary school in North America.

Trustee Steve Stewart has been elected Camp Commander of the Philip H. Sheridan Camp of the Sons of Union Veterans.

## Bulletin Board



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street, the second Friday of each month, unless otherwise indicated.

*December 8:* Gordon Rhea, "The Overland Campaign"

*January 12:* Terry Winschel, "The Vicksburg Campaign"

*February 9:* Jack Welsh, "The Medical Histories of Civil War Generals"

*March 9:* Mark Bradley, "The Surrender in North Carolina"

*April 20:* Richard McMurray, topic to be announced

*May 2-6:* Annual Battlefield Tour, Antietam-Northern Maryland

*May 11:* Anne J. Bailey, "The Recruitment of African-American Troops"

*June 8:* Lesley Gordon, "General George Pickett"

### NEW MEMBERS

Sarsfield Vincent Deaver, 9651 South LaSalle, Chicago, IL 60628, 773-468-8108

Marc Gaynes, 6719 N. Newgard Street, Chicago, IL 60626-4211, 312-761-7765

Mark Herr, 420 Eagle Drive, #208, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007, 847-640-9014

Barbara Leff, 2933 N. Sheridan Road, #1501, Chicago, IL 60657, 773-281-8774

### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

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Patricia Sumner, 4525 W. Twain #258, Las Vegas, NV 89103, 702-221-9806, pksumner@mymailstation.com

## SEASONS GREETINGS

TO ALL

FROM THE OFFICERS OF  
THE CIVIL WAR ROUND  
TABLE OF CHICAGO  
AND  
THE NEWSLETTER STAFF