

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLVI, Number 3

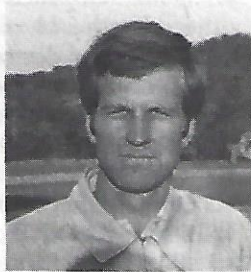
Chicago, Illinois

November, 1985

## Donald C. Pfanz on Negligence on the Right: The 11th Corps at Chancellorsville

After the battle of Chancellorsville, Major James F. Rusling, Assistant Quartermaster of Sickles' III Corps, wrote home, "The army did well except the Eleventh Corps. That broke and ran discreditably. 'I fights mit Sigel' is played out. Tell S. that his Dutchmen can't begin to stand up against the fury and rush of Americans, even if they are Rebels!" On November 8th, Donald C. Pfanz, historian at the City Point unit of Petersburg National Battlefield Park, will explore the causes of the rout of the Federal 11th Corps by 'Stonewall' Jackson's legions in the masterful flank attack executed in the late afternoon of May 2, 1863.

Following the disastrous battle of Fredericksburg, the Union Army of the Potomac received a new commander in Joseph Hooker. Having won the sobriquet 'Fighting Joe' for the energy and bravery he displayed at the battle of Williamsburg in the 1862 Peninsula campaign, Hooker had realized that his first job was to restore morale and discipline to the Union army. He abandoned the cumbersome Grand Divisions created by his predecessor, Burnside, and reorganized the army on a corps level, forming the cavalry into a separate corps. The quality and quantity of the rations increased, sanitation and living conditions were improved and better morale was furthered by granting furloughs to those deserving them. By the spring of 1863 the Army of the Potomac, numbering about 130,000 men, was assuredly the largest and best equipped and supplied army that the country had ever seen. Hooker himself termed it 'the finest army on the planet.'



Donald C. Pfanz

With the Army of Northern Virginia situated just west of Fredericksburg, Hooker in late April put the Army of the Potomac in motion. His bold plan was to take at least three corps up the Rappahannock River to Kelly's Ford (25 miles northwest of Fredericksburg), then cross both the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers to get on Lee's left flank and rear. To retain the Confederates in their lines at Fredericksburg, Sedgwick with the I and VI Corps would demonstrate actively there. The remaining two corps would be held ready to go wherever the best opportunity might present itself. The cavalry under Stoneman was to destroy Lee's communications.

Lee himself had been planning an offensive movement in the Shenandoah Valley. The extent of Hooker's move-



445th Regular Meeting

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Donald C. Pfanz  
on  
Negligence on the Right:  
The 11th Corps at Chancellorsville

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Friday, November 8, 1985

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Quality Inn  
Halsted and Madison  
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.  
\$13.00 per person  
Entree: London Broil, Fish or Fruit Plate



ments puzzled him. The Federal advance had gotten between him and Stuart, so that it took considerable time for Stuart's dispatches to reach him. On April 29th, Lee moved the three divisions on his right flank closer to Fredericksburg and sent Anderson to occupy a position near Chancellorsville. Once there Anderson quickly determined that a withdrawal was needed.

By 3:00 p.m. on the 29th, Hooker had three corps in Lee's rear near Chancellorsville, and then halted there to await reinforcements. Chancellorsville was a lone brick house at a minor crossroads in a desolate area known as 'The Wilderness.' Dense second-growth pine and oak, tangled with undergrowth, severely limited visibility and made movement off the few roads difficult for individuals and next to impossible for formed bodies of troops. The area was further cut up by swampy little streams. In such terrain artillery and cavalry could seldom operate except along the roads; the full impact of numbers could not be employed because there was little opportunity to deploy or maneuver.

Hooker delayed in the area and didn't advance from Chancellorsville until about 11:00 a.m. on May 1st, even  
*(continued on page 2)*

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



**Founded December 3, 1940**  
 18 East Chestnut Street  
 Chicago, Illinois 60611  
 Phone: (312) 944-3085

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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 Dan Weinberg, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.



(continued from page 1)

though his commanders realized that Hooker had outflanked Lee. With little cavalry available, Hooker had to advance blindly most of the time. He did move forward in three columns, with Meade's V Corps moving across the flank of the Confederate line. Hooker's observation balloons had detected Lee's movement, and the weakness of Early's forces on Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg. Then, with every opportunity available for a decisive victory, Hooker lost his courage and ordered his troops back into their positions of the previous night around Chancellorsville. With the Union position constructed of log breastworks and strengthened by abatis (interlaced felled trees), Lee felt that these defenses were very formidable. He realized that he couldn't hope to assault Hooker's positions east and south of Chancellorsville successfully. Also, Early wouldn't be able to stop Sedgwick's VI Corps if the Union attack there was a vigorous one. Aware of the need for quick action and the need to find a weakness in the Union defenses, Lee began to consider the possibility of an attack on Hooker's right. Then Stuart arrived with the news that the Union right was exposed and vulnerable to a surprise attack. Although the risk was high, with the attacking force forced to make a flanking march of some 12 miles across the front of the Federal army, it was decided that Jackson would make this wide envelopment with his entire corps of some 28,000 men. Lee, in the meanwhile, with about 17,000 men, would keep Hooker engaged on the present front. The Confederate army would be divided into three segments, with each one out of supporting distance of the others. If either Hooker or Sedgwick took the offensive, the army might be destroyed.

Jackson began his march about 6:00 a.m. on May 2nd, and when Hooker was advised of this movement about 9:00 a.m., he immediately suspected an attempt to turn his right flank. He warned O. O. Howard, commander of the XI Corps defending there, but Hooker didn't visit Howard's sector to verify Howard's disposition of his troops.

When Sickles saw the passage of Jackson's troops across the Union front, he urged an attack and when authorized, he converted an initial reconnaissance in force into an attack. This did some damage but couldn't halt Jackson's march. Sickles' modest success for some reason convinced Hooker that Jackson was actually retreating toward Gordonsville. He gave orders to prepare for pursuit and ordered Sickles and Sedgwick to attack on their fronts.

Jackson had completed his flanking movement and had begun forming for his attack about 2:30 p.m. However, the heavy woods slowed this process. At approximately 6:00 p.m. Jackson launched his devastating attack that would quickly rout the XI Corps.

Donald Pfanz grew up in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and his active interest in American history has continued since childhood. A 1980 graduate of William and Mary College, he studied Colonial and Revolutionary War history before beginning his service at Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park four years ago. Pfanz was assigned to City Point this past summer. He has published an article on the Union XI Corps at Chancellorsville and is currently preparing an article on General Richard S. Ewell.

**Round Table treasurer Dick McAdoo** reminds members that 1985-86 dues must be paid by November 1. Persons not paid by that date will be dropped from the rolls.

### October meeting

On October 11, Kent Brown addressed the 88 members and guests who attended the 444th Regular Meeting of The Civil War Round Table on "Alonzo Cushing and His Battery at Gettysburg."

Alonzo Cushing was born on January 19, 1841 in Delafield, Wisconsin, the son of Dr. Milton and Mary Cushing. His parents were well-educated, strong-willed Easterners who emigrated to Wisconsin in 1837. In 1844, the Cushing family moved to Chicago. By this time, they had seven children, of whom five had survived. Later that year, Dr. Cushing became sick while on a business trip to Memphis and died. Mary Cushing and her children then made an arduous journey in winter to Fredonia, New York, Dr. Cushing's boyhood home. Alonzo's mother supported herself by teaching school in her house. Her children also worked to make ends meet. Alonzo worked part-time in a grocery store.

Through the help of an uncle who was a congressman, Alonzo received an appointment to West Point and entered on July 1, 1857. While at West Point he received 299 demerits. His fellow cadets described him as fun-loving and mischievous, but Cushing was also serious and hard working. He graduated 12th out of 34 in his class and was a cadet captain. On June 12, 1861, he was commissioned both as a second and first lieutenant and assigned to the 4th U.S. Artillery.

Because his regiment was posted in Kansas, Cushing was attached to B Battery, 2nd Artillery, near Washington. He served with his battery during the First Battle of Bull Run, seeing some action at Blackburn's Ford. Shortly afterward, he caught typhoid fever and was hospitalized for several months. In January, 1862, Cushing was assigned to General Edwin Sumner's staff as ordnance officer. When Sumner's command became the 2nd U.S. Army Corps, Cushing was made topographical engineer.

Cushing served in the Peninsula Campaign from Yorktown to Malvern Hill. He was constantly in the advance, making maps, marking roads, and guiding units on the march. He had two horses shot from under him and was slightly wounded by a spent Confederate bullet. Cushing also served on Sumner's staff during the Antietam and Fredericksburg campaigns. For his performance as topographical engineer, he was promoted to captain. During the winter of 1863, he was given the command of A Battery, 4th U.S. Artillery.

Commanding a battery is a large responsibility. Cushing's battery consisted of 6 rifled guns, 12 limbers, 6 caissons, 100 horses, and over 100 men. A Battery was assigned to the artillery brigade of the Second Corps. It saw little action during the Chancellorsville campaign, but Gettysburg would be a different story. On the evening of July 2, Cushing and his battery reached the Gettysburg battlefield and camped behind the Round Tops. On the morning of the 3rd, A Battery moved to its position near the "Copse of Trees." When the Confederate artillery bombardment began, Cushing's battery was in support of the "Philadelphia Brigade."

During the bombardment, Cushing's battery suffered heavily. The six guns were ordered to the stonewall and fired cannister at the approaching Confederate infantry. Caissons and limbers were blown up and over half the battery were casualties. When the Confederates reached the wall, A Battery was reduced to two guns and both lieutenants were seriously wounded. Cushing was severely

wounded in the groin and while giving orders to his gunners was fatally shot through the mouth.

Union infantry counterattacked and drove the Confederates away. However, A Battery was wrecked as a combat unit. The body of Captain Cushing was shipped to West Point and buried with full military honors on July 12, 1863. After the war, Cushing was posthumously promoted for his services at Gettysburg and a monument was placed near the "Copse of Trees" where his battery met Pickett's Charge.

### Grant Assembly

Don't forget to get your registration in for the all-day assembly on "Lt. General U.S. Grant: The Civil War Years," to be held on Saturday, March 15, 1986 at the Holiday Inn in Hillside, Illinois. The speakers include: Thomas Arliskas on "Grant at Belmont;" Wiley Sword on "Grant at Shiloh;" Marshall Krolick on "Grant's General Order Number 11;" Edwin C. Bearss on "Grant at Vicksburg;" Gordon Whitney on "Grant at Chattanooga;" Robert K. Krick on "Grant from the Rapidan to the James;" Richard J. Sommers on "Grant at Petersburg;" and John Y. Simon on "Grant as Commander."

The program will be preceded by a reception and book sale on Friday, March 14 from 6-10 p.m. The registration fee for the assembly is only \$35, which includes luncheon. To register, send your check (made payable to The Civil War Round Table) to The Civil War Round Table Assembly, 18 E. Chestnut, Chicago, Illinois 60611. For further information, call (312) 787-1860.

**A Civil War Conclave featuring the War in the West** will be held at French Lick Springs, Indiana, November 15-17, 1985. Among the speakers will be Ed Bearss, Gordon Whitney and Jerry Russell. For further information, write Elbert L. Watson, Conclave Director, P.O. Box 208, Carmel, Indiana 46032 or call French Lick Springs at 1-800-457-4042.

**Larry J. Daniel**, author of *Cannoneers in Gray*, received the 1984 Fletcher Pratt Award of The Civil War Round Table of New York. The award is presented annually to the author or editor of the year's best non-fiction book about the war. It is named for author and journalist Fletcher Pratt, a charter member and former president of the New York Round Table. Mr. Daniel, an ordained Methodist minister, has contributed historical articles to the *Tennessee State Historical Journal* and *Civil War Times Illustrated*. Previous recipients of the Award include Bruce Catton and Steven W. Sears.

**The annual Illinois History Symposium** will be held in Springfield, Illinois December 6 and 7, 1985. Scheduled to speak is our 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award recipient John Y. Simon who will tell, "The Grant Story." For further information about the symposium, call (217) 782-4836.

**We regret to report** that our 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award recipient, John Y. Simon, suffered a heart attack in late September. However, he is reported to be recovering well.

**Fellow member William J. Sullivan** spoke to the Milwaukee Round Table on October 10. His subject was "The Trans-Mississippi in 1864."

# The New Books

compiled by Dick Clark



Downey, Fairfax. *The Guns at Gettysburg*. Gaithersburg, MD: Butternut Press, 1985. \$22.00. Original of 1958.

Groene, Bertram, *Tracing Your Civil War Ancestor*. New revised edition. Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 1985. \$8.95. Details the new forms needed in applying to the National Archives.

Hoffmann, John. *The Confederate Collapse at the Battle of Missionary Ridge: The Reports of James Patton Anderson and his Brigade Commanders*. Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1985. 92 p. \$15.00.

Townsend, William H. *The Lion of Whitehall*, Address to the Civil War Round Table, Chicago, October 17, 1953, on Cassius Marcellus Clay. Cassette recording. Chicago: Ralph Geoffrey Newman, Inc., 1985. \$7.50.

Tunnell, Ted. *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877*. Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1984. xi, 257 p., maps, bibliog., index. \$25.00.

Wightman, Edward K. *From Antietam to Fort Fisher: The Civil War Letters of Edward King Wightman, 1862-1865*. Edited by Edward G. Longacre. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985. 295 p., illus., bibliog., index. \$36.50.

Williams, Kenneth P. *Lincoln Finds a General. A Military Study of the Civil War*. Volume One. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. Reprint of the 1949 publication. The succeeding volumes to appear on a periodic basis. Cloth: \$27.50; paper \$10.95.

Wyckoff, Martin A. *United States Military Buttons of the Land Services, 1787-1902. A Guide and Classificatory System*. Illustrations by the author. Bloomington, IL: McLean County Historical Society, 1985. xxi, 121 p., illus., bibliog. Pbk \$10.00.

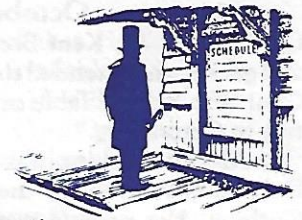
Years, W. Buck, editor. *The Confederate Governors*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985. qto., 259 p., \$27.50.

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**The monument and resting place of Major General George H. Thomas** in Oakwood Cemetery in Troy, New York, is in disrepair. Although some rehabilitation has been accomplished since 1983, over \$5,000 is still needed to help finance further work and to establish a perpetual maintenance fund. Tax deductible donations can be sent to Thomas Gravesite Fund, Civil War Round Table of New York, c/o George Craig, 83-12 James Street, Elmhurst, New York 11373.

**The Fifth Annual Civil War Show and Sale** sponsored by the Central Virginia Relic Hunters Association will be held at the Virginia State Fairgrounds in Richmond on November 23 and 24, 1985. Antique guns, swords, bayonets, uniforms, buckles, books, paper items, and other Civil War related items will be available for sale, show and trade. Show hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$2. For further information, contact Steven W. Sharpe, 4609 Gaardahl Drive, Sandston, Virginia 23150 (804) 737-3035.

## BULLETIN BOARD



### Future meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Quality Inn, Halsted and Madison, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

November 8: Donald C. Pfanz on "Negligence on the Right: The 11th Corps at Chancellorsville."

December 13: Christopher Calkins on "The Ragged and Starved Confederates: An Examination of the Condition of Lee's Army, 1864-65."

January 10, 1986: "Our Ethnic Ancestors in the Civil War;" a panel featuring Wayne Anderson, Marshall Krollick, Bill Sullivan, Karl Sundstrom, and Jim Vlazny.

February 14: Mark E. Neeley, Jr., on "Lincoln and Douglas: A Relationship to Consider."

March 15: All day assembly on "Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant: The Civil War Years."

April 11: Edgar Archer on "Orthopedic Surgery in the Civil War."

May 1-4: Annual Battlefield Tour: The 1862 Peninsula Campaign.

May 9: Gordon Whitney on "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address."

June 13: James I. "Bud" Robertson on "Confederate General A. P. Hill."

### New members

Dr. Daryl M. Allman, 25720 W. Marshfield Road, Lake Villa, Illinois 60046 (312) 587-7032.

Steve Cerza, 406 Meier Road, Mt. Prospect, Illinois 60056 (312) 593-7191.

Jeanette T. Gallanis, 1346 Somerset Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025 (312) 998-5536.

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Keith A. Rocco, 5324 S. Benton, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515 (312) 960-2873.

Thomas F. Schwartz, 1234 W. Governor, Apt. B, Springfield, Illinois 62704.

### Changes of address

Wayne J. Anderson, 5441 W. Gale Street, Chicago, Illinois 60630 (312) 282-9017.

David Richert, 6959A N. Hamilton, Chicago, Illinois 60645.

William C. Vinck, 1605 Hatch Place, Downers Grove, Illinois 60516.

"North and South," ABC's 12-hour miniseries version of John Jakes' best seller about events leading up to the Civil War, will air November 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10. Stars include Johnny Cash (as John Brown), Hal Holbrook (as Abraham Lincoln), Gene Kelly, Robert Mitchum and Elizabeth Taylor. "North and South, Book II" is to be shown next spring. It is based on Jakes' *Love and War*, which follows the nation through the war, to Appomattox.