

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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June, 1988

Edward G. Longacre on Low Comedy and High Tragedy: The Union Army of the James, 1863-1865

by C. Robert Douglas

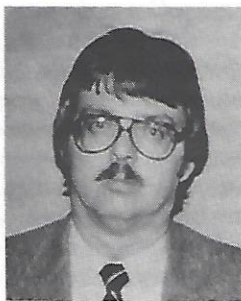
Its upper-echelon commanders included the smallest proportion of West Point-trained regulars and the largest percentage of political generals of any Civil War army, Union or Confederate. This lack of command expertise led the army to blunder through almost every battle and campaign in which it fought—until, in the last days of the war in Virginia, it won its moment of glory by stopping Lee's retreat from Appomattox and forcing his surrender.

On June 10, 1988, Edward G. Longacre, a well known author in the Civil War field, will address The Round Table on the campaigns of the Union Army of the James. In his view, it was the most highly politicized fighting force in American history. His talk will focus, with humorous touches, on the various components of the army and its commanders—especially Ben Butler, Quincy A. Gillmore, "Baldy" Smith and August V. Kautz.

In April, 1864, the X Corps joined with the XVIII Corps to form the Army of the James/Department of Virginia and North Carolina under Ben Butler. In early May, Butler would lead this army of some 39,000 men to operate against Richmond. Sent by transports, the army landed at Bermuda Hundred plantation, 15 miles south of the Confederate capitol. After destroying a railroad, Butler moved his army to Drewry's Bluff. When Butler canceled an attack, the Confederates under Beauregard attacked Butler's force and caused him to withdraw. Beauregard then set up works across the peninsula and in effect, 'bottled up' Butler.

On June 15, 1864, the XVIII Corps under 'Baldy' Smith joined with Hancock's II Corps to storm the outer lines of the Confederate defenses of Petersburg. However, the two commanders fumbled the opportunity to seize the weakly held rebel lines, now under Beauregard's command. Smith advanced too cautiously and Hancock failed to support Smith's feeble effort. Though Petersburg remained vulnerable until Lee was able to shift troops there, Union attacks over the next three days failed due to lack of coordination, contradictory orders and shoddy staff work.

It was not until September 29th that the Army of the James was reunited under Butler's command. In two days of fighting, his forces would cross the James and strike Rich-



Edward G. Longacre



472nd Regular Meeting

Edward G. Longacre
on

Low Comedy and High Tragedy:
The Army of the James, 1863-1865

Friday, June 10, 1988

Quality Inn

Halsted and Madison

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

\$15.00 per person

Entree: Turkey Tetrazzini, Fish, or Fruit Plate



mond's southern defenses near Chaffin's Farm. During the attacks, Fort Harrison fell but the more strongly defended Fort Gilmer withstood Union attack, with R. E. Lee supervising the flow of reinforcements to the area and directing attempts to recapture Fort Harrison.

On December 3rd, the X and XVIII Corps were discontinued and the Army of the James was reshuffled into the white XXIV Corps and the largely black XXV Corps. When Butler failed miserably in his attempt to capture Fort Fisher on the North Carolina coast, Grant removed Butler from command and replaced him with Edward O. C. Ord. Ord led four of his seven divisions back to Petersburg for the final battles there. He would lead the XXIV Corps and the attached V Corps in a forced march that provided the weight to the Union attacks on Lee's hungry and decimated army and forced the Army of Northern Virginia to surrender on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox.

A native of Camden, New Jersey, Ed received his B.A. from LaSalle University and his M.A. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is presently working on his Ph.D. in American history through Temple University. He has

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THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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 18 East Chestnut Street
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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 John Peterson, 18 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, Illinois 60611.



The annual Round Table picnic will be held Sunday, July 31 from noon to 4 p.m. at Gillson Park in Wilmette. Further details will be sent to members.

The Virginia Country Civil War Society will sponsor a one day symposium in St. Louis on September 24 featuring speakers such as Alan Nolan, Gary Gallagher, Will Greene and Dennis Frye. For further information, write The Civil War Society, P.O. Box 798, Berryville, VA 22611.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

Previously this newsletter highlighted the problems facing the Manassas Battlefield Park. The developer, Hazel-Peterson Company, changed their plans for the William Center site, adjacent to the Battlefield. Instead of an office park, they decided to construct a large shopping mall. Preservationists have opposed the mall due to its negative impact upon the battlefield.

According to the April 29, 1988 issue of *The Washington Post*, Interior Secretary Donald P. Hodel and National Park Service Director William Penn Mott have offered a compromise agreement to resolve the issue. The compromise proposal includes:

- The developer would construct the shopping center mall at a site farther away from the battlefield.
- The portions of Virginia Routes 29 and 234 which pass through the battlefield would be closed. The Park Service intends to convert them into gravel roads, as they were during the Civil War.
- A Route 234 bypass would be constructed for the local traffic which now passes through the battlefield.
- The Stuart Hill area, where General Lee's headquarters was located, would be preserved.

The *Post* article stated that the developer, the Department of the Interior and local congressional representatives all support this compromise to a degree.

According to Deborah Matthews, an aide to Congressman Michael A. Andrews of Texas, there are currently three bills in the House of Representatives concerning this issue:

- The Mrazek bill, which would prohibit federal funds for an interchange off Interstate Route 66 for the proposed shopping mall.
- The Andrews-Mrazek bill, which requests the federal government to purchase the William Center site and convert it into a national park.
- The Andrews Bill, which proposes to take away the tax benefits from constructing the shopping mall.

Battlefield preservationists have opposed the compromise proposal. Edward Wenzel of the "Save the Battlefield Coalition" stated that none of the parties involved in the compromise consulted his organization and other battlefield preservationists. According to Wenzel the compromise is not a viable solution since the shopping mall would be constructed within four years while the construction of the Route 234 bypass and the closing of the portions of Route 234 and Route 29 in the battlefield would take 15 to 20 years and would involve a multi-million dollar project. Wenzel is afraid that any type of compromise involving such a project would never be honored and completed. The *Post* article also expressed doubt about the feasibility of this portion of the compromise since the bypass has long been opposed by the local residents and there is no immediate funding for the closing of the portions of the local roadway and the construction of the bypass.

Although the Andrews-Mrazek bill, to purchase the land, has been gaining support, before hearings in the House it must be supported by at least one half of the representatives. Therefore it is important for you to write to your local U.S. congressman, requesting support of the Andrews-Mrazek bill to have the Federal government purchase the William Center site and convert it into a national park before too much bulldozing occurs. Bulldozing has already begun on the William Center site.

May Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

Dr. Gerald F. Linderman, professor of history at the University of Michigan and former U.S. State Department diplomat, spoke before 94 members and guests on May 13th, at the 471st regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. The subject of his address, which is also the title of his book, published in 1987, was *Embattled Courage, The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*. He is also the author of *The Mirror of War: American Society and the Spanish-American War* (1974).

At the outset of his talk, Dr. Linderman noted the contrast between the viewpoints of the combat soldiers of the 1860s and the veterans of the 1880s and 1890s who had, by then, redefined in their minds what they had experienced 20 or 30 years earlier. As an example of this, he cited the case of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who prayed during the Wilderness Campaign of 1864 that he might receive a bullet which would cost him a foot, thereby permitting him "an honorable exit from combat." Holmes felt, at that time, that the pressures of combat were driving him into insanity, and sought ways in which he might resign his officer's commission as quickly as possible. That same Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., some 30 years later, was speaking to large audiences of young men, talking to them about that which he called "the true and adorable faith which leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to a blindly accepted duty."

Limiting the focus of his study to the volunteers of 1861-62, Dr. Linderman found that it mattered little whether the volunteer was a Union volunteer or a Confederate volunteer; their experience of combat was much the same. Going to war in '61 or '62, the Civil War soldier felt no limitations; he felt that he was empowered and acting as part of God's plan. The soldiers were confident that they would achieve their objective to the degree that their values were the right values. Dr. Linderman listed these volunteers' values as: manliness, Godliness, duty, honor, and, in the case of the New England Brahman or Virginia gentleman, knightliness. Central to all these was courage. Dr. Linderman defined this courage as "one which is assertive, aggressive; a fearless courage, one of heroic action taken without fear." Parents, accompanying their sons to the depot to see them off to war, did not say, "be careful," but instead would say: "Die, if it must be, but never prove yourself a coward." or "Don't be shot in the back."

As time progressed, the shocks of war took their toll. The costs were higher than imagined. Disease took three times as many men as did combat. The smooth-bore musket was replaced by the rifle, which could kill many more men and at a far more distant range. Courageous men died. The Cold Harbor frontal attacks in 1864, perhaps a pivotal point, produced 8,300 casualties. Courage should have conquered, but it did not. Experience provoked disillusion. Furthermore, during the later years of the war, the soldiers began to resent the civilian community, who "still spoke with the old words," not understanding or appreciating the constant and grinding warfare the soldiers were experiencing. Businessmen were busy making money, sometimes at the expense of the soldiers' interests. Also prevalent at this time was a growing fear of anonymous death. Referring to the MIA issues of the Viet Nam War, Dr. Linderman asserted that, compared to the American Civil War, "the Viet Nam War is a battlefield swept clean, rendered immaculate." To illustrate this, he observed that, "of

the 15,000 bodies interred in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery, containing those who perished at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, those identified number 2,487."

In closing, Dr. Linderman returned to the topic mentioned at the beginning of his talk—that of the "post-war forgetfulness" of the Civil War veterans of the 1880s and the 1890s. He spoke of "that selective memory, that personal reconsideration of the experience of combat that, I think, lifted from soldiers the very harsh remembrance of that hard war of 1864 and 1865." "Shall we celebrate the experience of combat?" he asked. "Shall we celebrate it as a mercy to those who have already been asked to bear far more than human beings ought to bear? Or shall we deplore it because it so clearly augments American society's receptivity to another war, to the next war? History, it seems to me, is sometimes a cruel trickster."

Summer Executive Committee meeting

President-elect Bill Sullivan has announced that the summer meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on Saturday, July 16 beginning at 10 a.m. at the Cypress Restaurant in Hinsdale. All 1988-89 officers and committee chairmen, and all past presidents, are encouraged to attend. Further details will be sent prior to the meeting.

The 14th Annual Congress of Civil War Round Tables will be held October 6-9, 1988 in Nashville, Tennessee. Among the speakers will be Gordon Whitney, Dr. Richard McMurry, Ed Bearss and Dr. Grady McWhiney. In addition, Gordon and Ed will lead tours to Fort Donelson, Nashville and Spring Hill. The registration fee is \$160 for members of CWRT Associates and \$180 for nonmembers. Rooms at the Days Inn will cost \$44/\$53.

From November 7-8, 1988, the Third Annual West Coast Civil War Conference will be held in San Bernardino, California. Speakers will include Dr. Herman Hattaway, Robert Younger and Jerry Russell. The cost of this program is \$87 for CWRT Associates members and \$110 for nonmembers.

For further information about either or both of the above programs, contact CWRT Associates, P.O. Box 7388, Little Rock, AK 72207.

The 6th Annual Midwest Civil War Collectors Show will be held Saturday, September 17 at the DuPage County Fair Grounds in Wheaton, Illinois. For general information and table reservations, contact: Robert Nowak, 3238 N. Central Park, Chicago, Illinois 60618 (312) 539-8432.

The 50th Anniversary celebration of The Civil War Round Table will be held October 12, 13 and 14, 1990. It will feature a dinner on Friday evening, an all day symposium on Saturday, and possibly a Civil War tour of Chicago on Sunday. A committee, headed by Paul Kliger, is already hard at work planning the program. However, there is much to be done and volunteers are needed to work on program planning, budgeting and finance, publicity, and arrangements. To volunteer, or to find out more, see Paul at the June meeting or call him at 864-4029.

1989 Battlefield Tour

The Round Table Executive Committee, at its meeting May 13, selected the Atlanta area as the site of the 1989 tour, to be held May 4-7, 1989. Among the places to be visited are Kennesaw Mountain, Big Shanty, and Andersonville.



The New Books

compiled by Dick Clark

Conrad, W.P. and Ted Alexander. *When War Passed this Way*. 2nd printing revised. Greencastle, PA: Greencastle Bicentennial Publication in cooperation with the Lilian S. Besore Memorial Library, 1982. 448 p. \$24.95.

Current, Richard Nelson. *Arguing with Historians. Essays on the Historical and the Unhistorical*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987. 208 p. \$19.95.

Donovan, Timothy H. et al. *The American Civil War*. Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Group, 1987. 250 p. \$25.00; pbk \$18.00. In The West Point military history series.

Dowdey, Clifford. *Death of a Nation. The Story of Lee and his Men at Gettysburg*. Reprint. \$25.00.

Dowdey, Clifford. *Lee's Last Campaign*. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publ. Co., 1988. Original of 1960. \$25.00.

Dowdey, Clifford. *The Seven Days: The Emergence of Lee*. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Pub. Co., 1988. \$25.00. Original of 1978.

Drake, Samuel. *The Battle of Gettysburg*. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Pub. Co., 1988. Original of 1892. \$25.00.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. \$29.95. In The New American Nation Series.

Frey, Emil, 1838-1922. *An American Apprenticeship. The Letters of Emil Frey, 1860-1865*. Edited and Translated by Hedwig Rappolt, afterword by Hans Rudolf Guggisberg. NY: Peter Lang Publishers, 1986. \$25.00. Swiss American Historical Society Publications, #7.

Grant, Julia Dent. *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant)*. Edited by John Y. Simon. With an introduction by Bruce Catton. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. \$19.95, pbk \$10.95. Back in print.

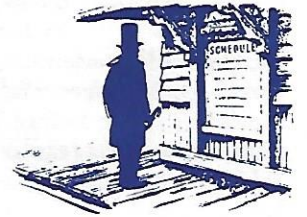
Hartzler, Daniel D. *Marylanders in the Confederacy*. Hafmans, MD: Toomey Press, 1986. 420 p. \$25.00. Lists 12,000 men.

Haselberger, Fritz. *Yanks from the South. The First Land Campaign of the Civil War: Rich Mountain, West Virginia*. Baltimore, MD: Past Glories, 1987. 332 p.

Hobson, Richmond Pearson. *The Sinking of the Merimac*. With an introduction and notes by Richard W. Turk. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988. \$21.95. Original of 1899.

Lee, Robert E. *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee*. Clifford Dowdey, editor; Louis H. Manarin, associate editor; with connective narrative by Clifford Dowdey and maps by Samuel H.B. Bryant. NY: Da Capo Press, 1987. pbk \$16.95. Original of 1961.

Four leather-bound volumes filled with letters and personal papers of Confederate generals and soldiers, and other memorabilia, were found recently at Florida Atlantic University. An anonymous benefactor apparently donated the cache to the university more than 15 years ago, but they were overlooked until last month. The collection includes a surgeon's account of Stonewall Jackson's final days, a letter written by Jefferson Davis 20 days before his inauguration as president of the Confederacy, and a plea from Robert E. Lee to George McClellan for an exchange of war prisoners.



BULLETIN BOARD

Future meetings

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

June 10: Edward Longacre on "The Army of the James."

July 16: Summer Executive Committee Meeting

July 31: Annual Picnic

September 9: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner. Recipient of Award, Robert K. Krick.

October 14: Gordon Whitney on "Sherman's Lieutenants."

November 11: To Be Announced.

December 9: Charles Wesselhoeft on "The Army of the Tennessee."

New Members

Joel L. Baum, 4635 N. Paulina, Chicago, Illinois 60640 (312) 334-5575.

Howard Green, 2952 W. Fitch, Chicago, Illinois 60645 (312) 274-0067.

Theodore Zimmerman, 3839 W. Sherwin, Lincolnwood, Illinois 60645 (312) 674-5833.

An exhibit, "The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause," is on display at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond through September 6. It brings together 61 original 19th century engravings and lithographs that once decorated the private parlors, schoolrooms and public buildings of the Confederacy and the post-war South.

James I. "Bud" Robertson., author of *General A.P. Hill: The Story of a Confederate Warrior*, has won the 1987 Fletcher Pratt Award presented by the CWRT of New York. The award, offered annually since 1957, goes to the author or editor of the year's best non-fiction book about the Civil War.

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served as an associate editor of *The Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of The Civil War*, published in 1986. His published work includes 75 journal/magazine articles and six books including: *From Union Stars to Top Hat: A Biography of the Extraordinary James Harrison Wilson* (1972); *The Man Behind the Guns: A Biography of General Henry Jackson Hunt, Chief of Artillery, Army of the Potomac* (1977); *Mounted Raids of the Civil War* (1975). His recent work, *The Cavalry at Gettysburg: A Tactical Study of Mounted Operations during the Civil War's Pivotal Campaign, 9 June-14 July, 1863* (1986) won the Fletcher Pratt Award for 1986. A new work, *To Gettysburg and Beyond: The Twelfth New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, II Corps, Army of the Potomac, 1862-1865* has just been released. He has presented addresses before a number of Round Tables, and in December, 1981, spoke to our group on "Cavalry Raids: A Critical Comparison."