

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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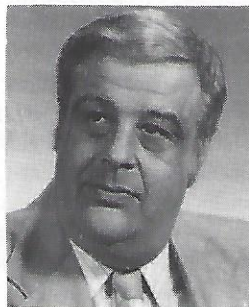
June, 1989

## John Y. Simon on "Edward D. Baker, Ball's Bluff, and the Politics of Command"

by Barbara Hughett

The battle of Ball's Bluff, on October 21, 1861, was a minor military engagement with major consequences. Leesburg, Virginia, forty miles up the Potomac River from Washington, was being held by rebel forces. Hoping to dislodge them, General George B. McClellan ordered General Charles P. Stone to make a "slight demonstration" from the Maryland side of the river, while other Union regiments marched upriver on the Virginia side to threaten the Confederate flank. To command this mission, Stone chose Colonel Edward D. Baker. Baker, a United States senator from Oregon and former Illinois politician, was a close friend of President Lincoln; the Lincolns had named their second son for him. The day before the battle he had been their guest at the White House.

This poorly planned mission turned into a fiasco with disastrous effect on morale and far-ranging political and military repercussions. When fire from the Confederate forces succeeded in pushing the Union troops back at Ball's Bluff, Colonel Baker was killed. His troops attempted to withdraw; but panic and confusion, as well as the steep and hilly terrain along the river bank, prevented an orderly retreat. Union losses were severe, as men were drowned and shot in their efforts to escape. The disorderly and costly defeat brought forth a public outcry. Baker was acclaimed a hero and a martyr. Lincoln said that the loss of his friend "smote like a whirlwind." Ten-year-old Willie Lincoln wrote a moving poem about Baker on tear-stained pages, which was later published in the *Washington National Republican*. Stone, Baker's division commander, was imprisoned for 189 days, though he was never charged with a specific crime. Congressional demands for information about Ball's Bluff led to the formation of a permanent Committee on the Conduct of the War; Stone's arrest and imprisonment gave dramatic evidence of committee power.



John Y. Simon

"Edward D. Baker, Ball's Bluff, and the Politics of Command" will be the topic of Dr. John Y. Simon's presentation to The Civil War Round Table on June 9th. Dr. Simon will talk about the career of Colonel Baker and present an analysis of the Ball's Bluff expedition, which he describes as "poorly planned, ill-advised, and a textbook



482nd Regular Meeting

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John Y. Simon  
on  
Edward D. Baker, Ball's Bluff,  
and the Politics of Command

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Friday, June 9, 1989

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Quality Inn  
Halsted and Madison  
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.  
\$15.00 per person  
Entree: Roast Pork Loin, Fish, or Fruit Plate



example of tactical ineptitude." In dealing with the political and military repercussions of the battle, he will discuss the people who were most significantly affected by the encounter. These would include Lincoln; General Winfield Scott, who was pushed into retirement; and McClellan, whom Dr. Simon believes may have been "the intended target of Baker's attack."

Dr. Simon, longtime friend and honorary lifetime member of The Round Table, was the recipient of our 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award. He spoke to us last in March of 1986 at the Grant Assembly. Professor of history at Southern Illinois University, he is the editor of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, with 16 volumes of a projected 25 now published. A native of Highland Park, he received his bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College, and his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University. Lincoln College honored him as a Doctor of Humane Letters. During his undergraduate years, he was a stock clerk at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, working for our founder, Ralph Newman. Since 1962, Dr. Simon has served as executive director of the Ulysses S. Grant Association. His

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# 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 E. Chestnut St., Chicago, IL 60611.



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books, in addition to *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, include *Ulysses S. Grant Chronology* (1963); *General Grant by Matthew Arnold with a Rejoinder by Mark Twain* (1966); and *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant* (1975). He has written many articles for professional journals and has served as consultant on a number of historical and editorial projects. His awards include the Award of Merit from the Illinois State Historical Society (1970); the Harry S. Truman Award, from the Kansas City Civil War Round Table (1972); and the Distinguished Service Award, from the Association for Documentary Editing (1983).

## Battlefield Preservation Report

by Daniel J. Josephs

According to an Associated Press story in the *Joliet Herald-News* on April 26, the Gettysburg battlefield is facing an enemy which is neither a developer nor urban growth. That enemy is acid rain, which is slowly ruining battlefield monuments. The state with the most acid rainfall is Pennsylvania, according to the Pennsylvania Sierra Club and the Pennsylvanians for Acid Rain Control. Pennsylvania is also one of the top three areas for sulfur dioxide: a major cause of acid rain is sulfur dioxide from coal fired power plants. Gettysburg is one of two national parks with an acid rain monitoring program. The system involves collection of rain samples which run off the bronze and marble memorials. The samples are then analyzed by the Illinois State Water Survey Division of Illinois Natural Resources.

David Ballard, maintenance director at Gettysburg National Military Park, said that marble is susceptible to damage because the calcium in the marble slowly breaks down and dissolves, causing the marble to crumble. Bronze, limestone, and sandstone are also susceptible to damage. However, many monuments, especially some of those constructed in earlier days, are made of granite which is resistant to acid rain. Though there are only a few marble monuments, one of these is the Soldiers National Monument, a major work of art. Mr. Ballard describes this monument as "probably the most endangered piece we have in the park right now." Unfortunately, there are approximately 1600 markers, monuments, and plaques at the battlefield made of bronze; 400 of these are considered to be major works of art. There are only one or two limestone monuments, while there are several made of sandstone.

As there is no way to prevent or cure the deterioration of marble, the only remedy is to move the marble memorials inside a building. Mr. Ballard noted that the practice in Greece and Italy has been to move their ancient marble sculptures inside buildings, placing replicas made of durable materials outside. According to Mr. Ballard, there is a process to clean and preserve bronze material on memorials. It includes the blasting of the bronze, which removes some of the corrosive material and surface dirt, but is not that effective. The blasting material is ground walnut shells. To preserve the bronze, two coats of wax are put on the memorial. The first coat is warm. When it hardens, a cold coat is put on and the bronze is then buffed. Mr. Ballard compared the process to polishing a shoe. The wax protection only lasts from 6 months to 1-1/2 years before it must be repeated due to the corrosive effect of the acid rain breaking down the wax covering.

The process is time-consuming and expensive. According to Mr. Ballard, in 1988 this treatment was done to seven or eight memorials. He estimates that approximately \$115,000.00 was spent. These funds came from private donations and Mr. Ballard's maintenance operating budget. Thus, only a small percentage of the bronze memorials have been treated. Currently, according to Mr. Ballard, there is a moratorium on treating memorials. This summer, art and architectural historians will be reviewing the work done in the past, and will attempt to improve and identify better techniques to fight the corrosive effect of acid rain. Mr. Ballard does not request private funds or donations until the completion of the study. He desires that those who care about preserving Civil War battlefields know of this acid rain problem, and urge their congressmen to take action to stop it.

## May Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

By the summer of 1864, the U.S. Navy's blockade of the South had essentially closed off its long Atlantic coastline, with one notable exception. Wilmington, North Carolina, located six miles up the Cape Fear River, was the one gateway which remained partially ajar, enabling a thin trickle of supplies to flow to Lee and Johnston. Its key defense was the massive, L-shaped Fort Fisher which had the reputation of being the strongest earthwork fort in the world. "Something must be done to close the entrance to Cape Fear River and the port of Wilmington," Navy Secretary Gideon Welles wrote in his diary on August 30, 1864. On May 12th, Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret.) addressed 96 members and guests at the 481st regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His topic was "Fort Fisher: Amphibious Finale to the Civil War." Director of Marine Corps History and Museums since 1972, General Simmons has had a long and distinguished military career and has written extensively on military history. His latest book is *Marines, Volume I* in the new Bantam Book series, *The Illustrated History of the Vietnam War*.

For months, Secretary Welles had been urging an amphibious attack on Wilmington; on September 2nd, the War Department finally agreed to a joint operation. This operation got underway in December, with Rear Admiral David Porter commanding the naval fleet and General Benjamin Butler in charge of troops from the Army of the James. The Union plan called for the army to storm and capture the fort after naval bombardment had sufficiently weakened its defenses. "Someone," General Simmons noted, "came up with the idea of a powder ship. The Navy put the blame on Butler, but Porter did agree to it." The idea was to explode an old steamer filled with gunpowder close to the fort. The resulting blast was supposed to knock down the walls of Fort Fisher and stun its defenders. The *Louisiana*, filled with 215 tons of gunpowder, was exploded within 300 yards of the fort at 1:40 a.m. on December 24th. But, because the open air absorbed the shock wave, little damage was done. "The results were so feeble," General Simmons observed, "that Confederate Colonel Lamb, commanding the fort, didn't even recognize the effort for what it was. He thought a Union gunboat had been destroyed rather than captured." Though the naval bombardment which followed did some damage, Butler decided the effort was hopeless and ordered his landing forces to reembark for a return to Hampton Roads. After this fiasco, General Grant requested permission to remove Butler from command. President Lincoln agreed, and Butler was ordered home to Lowell, Massachusetts, and out of the war.

In January 1865, Grant ordered Major General Albert Terry to command a second expedition. On the morning of January 13th, Porter's fleet of 59 ships began bombarding Fort Fisher. By 3 p.m., Terry had 8,000 men ashore and was throwing up a line of field fortifications. On the 14th, he landed 10 pieces of light artillery and put them where the naval gunfire would do him the least good. Terry and Porter met that evening and decided to proceed the next morning with a heavy bombardment which would lift with Terry's signal. Meanwhile, on the Confederate side, Colonel Lamb realized that he did not have sufficient forces to withstand the assault. He sent an urgent, but unsuccessful appeal for assistance to General Braxton Bragg, who had troops to the north of the fort.

Porter's armada opened up fire on Fort Fisher at 8 a.m. on the 15th. Terry's soldiers went against the western half of the land face, while a landing party of sailors and marines stormed the northeastern bastion where the land and sea faces came together. Although the Confederates were able to repel the poorly coordinated efforts of the sailors and marines, they were unable to resist the attack by Terry's men who were closely supported by bombardment from Porter's gunboats. By 9 p.m., Terry was able to signal Porter that he had the fort.

Lamb, seeing that the battle was lost, rowed up the river to Bragg's position to report the calamity. Bragg decided that he would not hold the remaining Cape Fear defenses, and ordered Fort Caswell blown up and the lesser fortifications evacuated. Wilmington soon fell to the Federals, putting what general Simmons called "the final seal of doom on the Confederacy." To support this assertion, General Simmons closed by quoting Douglas Southall Freeman, who wrote: "Loss of the mouth of the Cape Fear River destroyed the last contact of the South with the outer world, except for the remote and undeveloped route through Mexican territory."

### Summer Executive Committee Meeting

President-elect Richard McAdoo has announced that the summer meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on Saturday, June 17, beginning at 10 a.m., at the Quality Inn at Halsted and Madison. All 1989-90 officers, committee chairpersons, and past presidents are urged to attend.

### 1990 Battlefield Tour

The Round Table Executive Committee, at its meeting May 12, selected the Maryland Campaign of September 1862, with a focus on Antietam, for the 1990 battlefield tour, to be held May 2-6, 1990. The tour will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Antietam as a National Battlefield Site. Mary Abroe will serve as tour chairperson.

**Tee-shirts and hats**, with The Civil War Round Table emblem, are now available. You can purchase the shirts (at \$7.50 each) and hats (at \$6.50 each) at the June meeting. If you are not attending the meeting, contact Paul Kliger (864-4029) or Jerry Warshaw (866-6667) to place your order. In anticipation of the 50th Anniversary in 1990, gold-plated Round Table lapel pins have been designed and produced. To purchase pins, priced at \$6 each, contact Jerry Warshaw. Proceeds from the sale of these items will go to support the programs of The Round Table.

**Treasurer Mary Abroe won first prize** in the American History category in a competition sponsored by Phi Alpha Theta, for a paper she wrote on "The Enlightenment Ideal: The Challenge to Slavery in Late 18th Century America." The award was presented to her at the national history society's Northern Illinois Regional Conference at Loyola University on April 8th.

**Actor Matthew Broderick** will star in a film about Union Colonel Robert Shaw, the 26-year old white commander of an all black Massachusetts regiment that fought at Fort Wagner, North Carolina. "Lay This Laurel" will be filmed in Georgia.

## The New Books compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Alotta, Robert T. *Civil War Justice: Union Army Executions Under Lincoln*. White Main Publ. Co., P.O. Box 1521, Shippensburg, PA 17257. 1989. \$24.95.

Calkins, Chris M. *The Final Bivouac: The Surrender Parade at Appomattox and the Disbanding of the Armies, April 10-May 20, 1865*. H.E. Howard, Inc. 1988. \$19.95.

Dowdey, Clifford. *Death of a Nation: The Story of Lee and His Men at Gettysburg*. Butternut and Blue. 1988. \$25.00; pbk. \$12.95. Original of 1958.

Eckert, Ralph L. *John Brown Gordon: Soldier, Southerner, American*. LSU Press. 1988. \$32.50.

Gaines, W. Craig. *The Confederate Cherokees: John Drew's Regiment of Mounted Rifles*. LSU Press. 1988. \$19.95.

Hargrove, Hondon B. *Black Union Soldiers in the Civil War*. McFarland & Co., Inc., P.O. Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. 1988. \$22.95.

Jordan, Ervin L. *Charlottesville and the University of Virginia in the Civil War*. H.E. Howard, Inc. 1988. \$16.95.

Kloppel, James E. *Danger Beneath the Waves*. Adele Enterprises, 4470 Pullen Lane, College Park, GA 30349. 1987. \$7.50.

Lee, Richard M. *General Lee's City: An Illustrated Guide to the Historic Sites of Confederate Richmond*. EPM Publications, 1003 Turkey Run Road, McLean, VA 22101. Pbk. \$16.95.

Longacre, Edward G. *To Gettysburg and Beyond: The 12th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, II Corps, Army of the Potomac, 1862-1865*. Longstreet House. 1988. \$36.00.

McGuire, Judith W. *Diary of a Southern Refugee*. Ayer Co. Publishers, P.O. Box 958, Salem, NH 03079. 1988. \$29.95. Original of 1867.

Nine, William G. & Ronald Wilson. *The Appomattox Paroles: April 9-15, 1865*. H.E. Howard, Inc. 1989. \$19.95.

Peskin, Allan, ed. *North into Freedom: The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880*. Kent State University Press, Kent, OH 44242. 1988. \$4.95.

Radley, Kenneth. *Rebel Watchdog: The Confederate States Army Provost Guard*. LSU Press. 1988. \$29.95.

Robertson, James I., Jr., ed. *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry by John H. Worsham, F Company, 21st Virginia Infantry*. Broadfoot Publ. Co. 1987. \$25.00; pbk. \$7.95. Original of 1912.

Schott, Thomas E. *Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia: A Biography*. Louisiana State University Press. 1988. \$37.50.

Stanton, Donald J., Goodwin F. Berquist and Paul G. Brown, eds. *The Civil War Reminiscences of M. Jeff Thompson*. Morningside House, Inc. 1987. \$25.00.

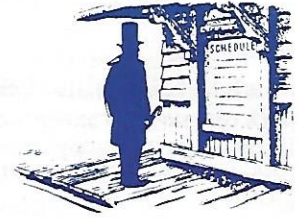
Tapert, Annette. *The Brothers' War: Civil War Letters to Their Loved Ones From the Blue and the Gray*. Times Books, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022. 1988. \$18.95.

Vandiver, Frank E. *Mighty Stonewall*. Texas A&M University Press. \$27.50; pbk. \$13.95. Original of 1957.

Wheeler, Richard. *Witness to Appomattox*. Harper & Row. 1989. \$19.95.

Wheeler, Richard. *Witness to Gettysburg*. New American Library, Meridian Imprint. 1989. Pbk. \$8.95. Original of 1987.

## 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 9: John Y. Simon on "Edward D. Baker, Ball's Bluff, and the Politics of Command."

June 17: Summer Executive Committee Meeting.

July 23: Annual picnic.

September 8: Nevins-Freeman Award Dinner. Recipient of Award: Mark E. Neely, Jr.

October 6: Gary Gallagher on "Porter Alexander's Unpublished Reminiscences." (Note: This is the first Friday of the month.)

November 10: Herbert Schiller, M.D. on "The Bermuda 100 Campaign of 1864."

December 8: Armin Weng on "The Gods of War and the Prince of Peace."

January 12, 1990: To be announced.

February 9: Chicago Historical Society, "A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln."

March 9: Mike Andrus on "General Edward 'Allegheny' Johnson."

April 13: Richard McMurry on "Confederate Journalism."

May 11: William Parrish on "Confederate Governors."

June 8: To be announced.

### New Members

Ernest Griffin, 3232 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Chicago, IL 60616, 312/842-3215.

Danny Jones, 111 E. Chestnut, #416, Chicago, IL 60611, 312/337-0712.

Hamilton Pitt, 1509 N. Wicker Park, Chicago, IL 60622, 312/235-9614.

George Roe, 638 Naples Court, Glenview, IL 60025, 312/699-7447.

Thomas Rogers, 612 Argyle Ave., Flossmoor, IL 60422, 312/957-9251.

**A reminder:** Please submit any Round Table memorabilia you may have to the 50th Anniversary Committee. The Committee will pay for the copying of materials and will return all photographs. Bring these items to a meeting or send them to Jerry Warshaw, 748 Hinman Ave., Evanston, IL 60202.

**Irene DuVal-Lewis**, granddaughter of President Benjamin Harrison and niece of pirate Jean Laffite, died recently at the age of 105. Her father, Harvey DuVal, was a colonel in the Confederate Army. According to *The Dispatch*, the newsletter of the Civil War Round Table of New York, she was asked a few months ago if she recalled the 1889-93 White House days, when her grandfather was president. She replied, "I lived there, you silly fool."