

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LI, Number 3

Chicago, Illinois

November 1990

## William L. Burton on "Ethnic Soldiers in the Union Army"

by Barbara Hughett

America as a nation of immigrants is one of the prevailing themes in our nation's history. One of the more intriguing and revealing aspects of the American Civil War was the appearance of ethnic regiments. A significant portion of the soldiers and sailors fighting for both the Union and the Confederacy were foreign-born. While the South denounced immigrants who served in the Union forces as mercenaries, she regarded her own immigrants as Confederate patriots. Nearly one-fifth of all Union soldiers were foreign-born. A fraction of these served in the unique ethnic regiments, each of which mirrored the national origin of its members.

"Ethnic Soldiers in the Union Army" will be the topic on November 9th, when Dr. William L. Burton addresses The Civil War Round Table. Dr. Burton is the author of *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union's Ethnic Regiments*, published in 1988 by the Iowa State University Press. Based on material from regimental files, state archives, historical societies, and papers of soldiers and political leaders of the time, *Melting Pot Soldiers* presents the first scholarly analysis of the regiments of foreign-born soldiers serving the Union cause during the Civil War.

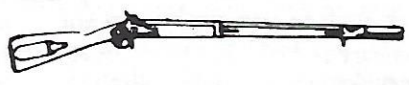


William L. Burton

In this book Burton focuses on the social and political situation in the North that fostered the formation of German, Irish, Scandinavian, Scotch, French, and multiethnic regiments and follows the formation of these regiments by group and by state. He tracks the regiments throughout the war, tracing and analyzing internal changes that mirrored changes in social and political attitudes of American society toward ethnics, attitudes of ethnics about themselves, and the positions and roles of ethnics in American society.

"Like the other volunteer regiments," Burton notes in the book's Preface, "the ethnic regiments were a direct outgrowth of state and local politics. Their formation, their relationships with the larger society, and their evolution tell us much about the mechanisms and attitudes of Civil War society. A vital concern of the historian is *change over time*. Almost no attention is given to this critical matter in previous studies of ethnic regiments. One of the most important things to learn about Civil War ethnic units is that they did change over time, and the changes tell us much about the role of ethnics in America."

Burton's address will stress the regimental culture, relationships with non-ethnic units, a consideration of



495th Regular Meeting

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William L. Burton  
on  
"Ethnic Soldiers in the Union Army"

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Friday, November 9, 1990

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Quality Inn  
Halsted and Madison  
Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.  
\$16.00 per person  
Entree: Turkey with Dressing, White Fish or  
Fruit Plate



**Please note:**  
The November meeting is being held at the Quality Inn, located at Halsted and Madison.

what these regiments tell us about ethnic politics in American history, and the benefits and dangers of ethnic hagiography. He will illustrate his presentation with appropriate slides.

Professor of history at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois, William L. Burton also serves as director of the school's travel-study programs. A native of West Virginia, he received a B.A. in history and political science from Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A longtime student of Civil War history, he serves on the editorial boards of the *Illinois Historical Journal* and *The Journal of Developing Areas*.

In addition to *Melting Pot Soldiers*, Burton is the author of *Annotated Bibliography of Civil War Manuscripts in Illinois* (Northwestern University Press) and numerous articles about the Civil War. He is also the author of other historical articles as well as the author or coauthor of history textbooks and teaching materials for elementary, secondary, and college students and educators.



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940  
357 West Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60610  
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, 357 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610.



**The gravesite of Thomas Hamilton McCray**, Colonel of the 31st Arkansas and an officer many scholars believe was promoted to general, was tracked down in Chicago by Round Table member Bruce Allardice. Allardice, who is doing research for a book on Confederate generals, has determined that McCray was buried in an unmarked grave in Cook County Cemetery at Dunning. This cemetery was a "potter's field" for the county and had been forgotten until developers building homes on the property unearthed human remains. Barry Fleig, of the Chicago Geological Society has confirmed that McCray would be buried in the "new" section, an area that has been staked out to prevent development. Allardice has been in touch with McCray's relatives.

## Battlefield Preservation Report

By Mary Munsell Abroe

"We're disappointed, but we're not going to roll over and play dead." Such was the response of Clark B. Hall, leader of the campaign to prevent a massive development on the Brandy Station battlefield, when the Culpepper County (Virginia) Board of Supervisors ignored the counsel of its own Planning Commission and recently approved rezoning of key acreage on the field to accommodate development. Of the 1400-plus acres rezoned from agricultural to light industrial, about 250 have been pledged for preservation and public use by developer Lee Sammis; according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, these include stretches of land at Fleetwood Hill and St. James Church. However, critics call Sammis' concessions unsatisfactory; in a *Washington Post* article of September 26, Hall states that the specific acreage offered is land "where there wasn't a lot of fighting, (and) he (Sammis) can't build on it because it's a slope." Marilyn Nickels of Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan's staff echoes Hall's words in the October issue of *Civil War News*. She indicates that Sammis' proffers "certainly don't protect in any way" the most critical battlefield land.

The *Washington Post* article also points out the probable course of action of development opponents: preservationists have stated that they will "fight Sammis every time he seeks a permit and may file suit against the supervisors." As far as Sammis' plans are concerned, his project director, Michael Armm, notes that ground for the industrial park "may be broken in two years or less, depending on the availability of financing and other factors." An update in the noted issue of *Civil War News* suggests that the current soft real estate market could be a "wildcard" in future dealings between Sammis and preservationists; according to Armm, it is still possible to save the entire battlefield "if someone is willing to... purchase the land"—at a cost that could run into millions of dollars.

The Brandy Station scenario is reminiscent of the Manassas controversy of 1988, with one notable exception: it is a virtual certainty that the federal government is *not* going to provide those "millions of dollars" to save the battlefield. Instead, Secretary Lujan's inclination is to help state/local governments and private groups take on the task of preservation by providing technical assistance and other incentives. In this sphere, a computerized mapping of the battlefield at Brandy Station, which pinpoints key scenes of heavy fighting and areas of maneuver, has been completed by the NPS; this tool allows potential users of the site to see how new construction will affect different viewsheds. Use of such technology was invaluable in creating the buffer zone currently guarding visual integrity at Antietam; at Brandy Station, however, it appears that the existence of the study will not prevent loss of the site's integrity upon completion of Sammis' project.

The situation seems fluid at present, with spokesmen for the developer and for the preservation coalition stating that there is room for compromise. Unfortunately, if tensions escalate, compromise will be hard to come by. The non-profit Brandy Station Foundation can provide timely information on preservation activity and will gratefully accept donations to support its efforts. Please contact the Foundation at: P.O. Box 165, Brandy Station, VA 22714.

**Round Table Treasurer Kurt Carlson** reminds members that 1990-91 dues must be paid by November 1. Persons not paid by that date will be dropped from the rolls.



## The Civil War Round Table's 50th Anniversary Celebration

by Barbara Hughett

The Civil War Round Table commemorated its fiftieth anniversary with a gala celebration on October 12-14 at the Sheraton North Shore Inn in Northbrook, Illinois. Over 350 people, many from out-of-town, were in attendance.

The Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner, the 494th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, took place on Friday, October 12th. Included in the program was music from the 4th U.S. Army Band; an invocation by the Honorable Abraham Lincoln Marovitz; the cutting of The Round Table birthday cake (with an authentic Civil War officer's sword) by Margaret April; the presentation of a gift of a print of Abraham Lincoln to Margaret April, in appreciation for her years of service to The Round Table; the presentation of the Al Meyer Award to Al Meyer for "dedication and devotion to the fellowship and good life which you have so nobly advanced"; the conferring of the 1990 Nevins-Freeman Award to Marshall D. Krolick; Round Table reminiscences by Marshall D. Krolick (He will give his formal acceptance speech at the January meeting.); an address on the significance of The Round Table by John Y. Simon; a talk on The Camp Followers (the "ladies auxiliary" which existed before women were admitted to Round Table membership) by Betsey Davis; and recognition of the two surviving Round Table founders—Ralph G. Newman and Elmer Gertz.

Both founders were presented with engraved desk sets. Newman, in recognition of his outstanding and continuous contributions to The Civil War Round Table, was given a very special gift. A plaque was unveiled by John Duff, Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, proclaiming that the Civil War Collection of the Chicago Public Library will henceforth be known as The Ralph G. Newman Civil War Collection. "Future generations," Duff emphasized, "will know that they benefited from the foresight and generosity of Ralph G. Newman." The presentation was followed by some remarks by Ralph Newman.

The all-day symposium, held on Saturday, October 13th, featured addresses by James I. Robertson, Jr., Robert K. Krick, Gary Gallagher, Jerry L. Russell, Mark E. Neely, Jr., and Edwin C. Bearss. The theme of the symposium was "Decisive Leadership in the Civil War." Pulitzer prize-winning author James M. McPherson was the speaker at the banquet on Saturday evening. His topic was "The Civil War: The Struggle for a Unified Nation and the Legacy for the Future." All of these addresses will be published by Morningside Press and audio cassettes of the addresses will be made available by The Round Table. The weekend's festivities concluded with a Civil War Tour of Chicago on Sunday, October 14th.

In his reminiscences, Marshall Krolick spoke fondly of the many Round Table members no longer with us. "These people," he said, "and so many others like them, are what this organization is all about. They're not gone. They're in this room tonight; they're on the bus each time we go on a battlefield tour—because the spirit they created is here, it's there, it's everywhere. That's what The Round Table is all about—its people." Noting the growing number of Civil War Round Tables, John Y. Simon, in his address, stated that "conclusive evidence exists that what began in Chicago fifty years ago is here to stay, not only in Chicago, but across the nation."

Ralph Newman entitled his remarks "Footsteps in the

Corridor Behind Me: An Aged Veteran's Recollection of Civil War II." Reflecting that it seemed like "only yesterday" that the founders met for that very first Round Table meeting fifty years ago, he spoke of the essence of that early group. "We simply loved each other and we shared an interest in a special period of American history. We were lawyers—old and successful and young and ambitious, bankers, businessmen, successful and barely solvent merchants, and a realtor. We became a family. The personal bond between most of us was very strong."

"In the year 2040," Newman predicted, "a speaker—possibly one of you—will be standing at The Civil War Round Table rostrum and this organization will be celebrating its centenary. Those future Round Tables will be carrying on the noble tradition of the G.A.R. and the U.V.C., as all of you here tonight are doing. And like you, they will be doing something special—taking a period of American history and making it a unique part of their day-to-day lives. By doing so, the members of The Civil War Round Table, and all of the satellites it has spawned, will continue to advance the heritage of our common country—both North and South.

"In many ways, it has been through the efforts of The Civil War Round Table that the war remains and will remain a real presence in the life of Americans. Through your readings, writings, speaking, and travels, you continue to make the great conflict of 1861-1865 alive. It's as if Grant, Lee, Sherman, Jackson, and all of their contemporaries have just stepped out of the room and will be returning momentarily."

At the conclusion of his remarks, Newman told of a meeting he had attended at the White House during the Civil War Centennial. It was at this time that President John F. Kennedy asked historian Allan Nevins to assume the position of chairman of the Civil War Centennial Commission. "Allan walked over to the president," he recalled, "and patted him on the head and said: 'This is from George Washington.'"

"Allan then explained that in 1790, when our nation's capitol was in New York City, a successful businessman of that city called on President Washington. With him was his seven-year-old son, a namesake of the president. Washington patted the lad on the head. More than fifty years later, the boy—now the nation's leading author, Washington Irving—was in the office of his publisher, George Palmer Putnam. Also present was George Haven Putnam, the ten-year-old son of the publisher. Irving patted the boy on the head and then told him the story.

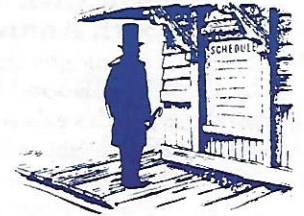
"Years passed and in 1923, Allan Nevins, a young graduate of the University of Illinois and an editorial writer for the *New York World*, spoke at the prestigious Century Club in New York. After the speech, an old man came up to congratulate Allan Nevins and to pat him on the head. It was George H. Putnam, who had been the boy Washington Irving had patted seventy years earlier. After hearing this story, I immediately asked Allan to pat me on the head.

"A few years later, when Allan inducted Douglas Southall Freeman into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he told him the story and patted him on the head. I was present and promptly asked Dr. Freeman to repeat the honor for me. Tonight, I will close my all too personal contribution to this anniversary by figuratively patting you all on the head. The pat comes from George Washington, by way of Allan Nevins and Douglas Southall Freeman. God bless you all."



# The New Books

compiled by C. Robert Douglas



## BULLETIN BOARD

Bernstein, Iver. *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War*. Oxford University Press. 1990. \$29.95.

Blakey, Arch F. *General John H. Winder, C.S.A.* University Presses of Florida. 1990. \$29.95.

Emilio, L. F. *A Brave Black Regiment (History of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-65)*. Ayer Publishing Co. 1990. \$34.95; pbk \$19.95.

Fowler, William M. *Under Two Flags—The American Navy in the Civil War*. Norton. 1990. \$22.50.

Freehling, William W. *The Road to Disunion, Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*. Oxford University Press. 1990. \$30.00.

Glatthaar, Joseph T. *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*. Free Press. 1990. \$24.95.

*Memoirs of a Confederate Soldier: Soldiering with the Orphan Brigade* by John S. Jackman, 9th Kentucky C.S.A. University of South Carolina Press. 1990.

Robertson, James I., Jr. ed. *The Medical and Surgical History of the Civil War*. Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1990. \$125.00 per month (2 volumes/month). Original of 1870-88.

Sweet, Timothy. *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography and the Crisis of the Union*. Johns Hopkins University Press. 1990. \$28.95.

Weinert, Richard P., Jr. *The Confederate Regular Army*. White Mane Publishing Co. 1990. \$24.95.

**We recently received a letter from Kathy Wilshin**, informing us of the death of her husband, Honorary Life member Francis F. Wilshin, on April 25, 1990. Mrs. Wilshin said that her husband "was most appreciative of the honor [of being an] Honorary Life member since April 30, 1960, and remembered with such pleasure his visit with The Round Table in November 1968, as the speaker on the subject of 'First Bull Run.'" "It is my sincere wish," she added, "that The Civil War Round Table successfully continues, as it has since 1940, to perpetuate the 'genuine interest in the Civil War and its era.'" We extend our sincere condolences to the Wilshin family.

**We have been informed of the recent death** of member Charles E. Dornbusch. Our sincere condolences are extended to his family.

**The Houston Civil War Round Table is sponsoring its Second Annual Civil War Round Table Workshop** on February 9th at Rice University. Ed Bearss will act as moderator of an in-depth inquiry into the Battle of Shiloh. "Shiloh!—Inquest Into Armageddon" will feature two complete staffs representing the Union and Confederate Armies which fought at Shiloh in April of 1862. Journalists will be attending to ask questions of the respective staffs. For information, contact Dan Kennerly, 804 South Post Oak Lane, Houston, TX 77056, (713)621-9214.

### Future Meetings

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

November 9: William L. Burton on "Ethnic Soldiers in the Union Army."

December 14: C. Robert Douglas on "Granny Lee: Fiasco in Western Virginia." **(The December meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza.)**

January 11, 1991: Marshall Krolick, Nevins-Freeman Address.

February 8: To be announced.

March 8: Gerald A. Regan on "The 'Walk' of Correspondents Browne, Davis, and Richardson: 340 Miles to Freedom."

April 12: A. Wilson Greene on "The 11th Corps on the First Day at Gettysburg."

May 2-5: Annual Battlefield Tour—Shiloh.

May 10: Michael Hughes on "The Battle of Chattanooga."

June 14: Jean Baker on "Mary Todd Lincoln."

### New Members

William R. Alban, 900 N. Forest Ave., Oak Park, IL 60302, (708)386-5135

Howard B. Lapin, 521 Harris Court, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089, (708)459-0932

### Change of Address

Ira Kaplan, 1115 Gradon Ave., Norfolk, VA 23507-1203

**The history of The Round Table, *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship***, by Barbara Hughett, which made its "debut" at the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, is available at \$30 per copy. You may order it with the form provided with this newsletter or purchase a copy at the November meeting.

**Annie Snyder, chairperson of the Save the Battlefield Coalition**, sent a letter of congratulation to The Round Table on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, expressing deep gratitude "for all you have done and are doing to protect and preserve our Civil War battlefields."

**Member and former Round Table President Marvin Sanderman** recently received a Distinguished Graduate Award from the University of Illinois.

**The Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania announced** its plans to erect a statue of Abraham Lincoln in Gettysburg. Noting that there is no statue of Lincoln in the town of Gettysburg proper, a recently-issued news release stated that the Fellowship is realizing a fifty-year-old dream by commissioning the creation of the statue, which will be placed in front of the Wills House, where Lincoln completed the Gettysburg Address.