

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LI, Number 4

Chicago, Illinois

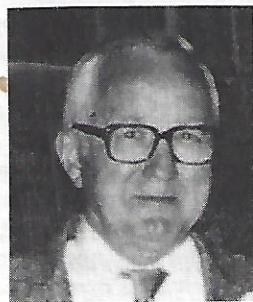
December 1990

C. Robert Douglas on "Granny Lee: Fiasco in Western Virginia"

by Barbara Hughett

"Poor Lee! Rosecrans has fooled him again.... Are the roads any worse for Lee than Rosecrans? The people are getting sick of this dilly-dally, dirt-digging, scientific warfare: so much so that they will demand that the Great Entrencher be brought back and permitted to pay court to the ladies." With these comments, which appeared in his column on October 14, 1861, George W. Bagby, Richmond correspondent for the *Charleston Mercury*, established the tenor of Southern newspaper criticism of General Robert E. Lee's ill-fated campaign in western Virginia.

Less than a month after Virginia seceded from the Union on April 17, 1861, the state's westernmost counties became a battleground—largely due to the proximity of the Ohio River and the presence of the vital Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. In defiance of Confederate authorities in Richmond, the mountainous western counties seceded from Virginia on July 11, 1861, with intent to join the Union.



C. Robert Douglas

General George B. McClellan, commander of the department of the Ohio, was sent into the region with a force of 20,000. To oppose this threat, the Confederacy sent General Robert S. Garnett and 4500 men. On July 6th, McClellan began an advance on Garnett's positions on Rich Mountain. In actions there on July 11th, Union attacks pushed rebel forces off the crest. During the retreat, Garnett was killed. Lee left Richmond on July 28th to assume command in western Virginia, with directions from Confederate President Jefferson Davis "to strike a decisive blow at the enemy in that quarter; or, failing in that, ... to organize and post our troops so as to check the enemy."

"Granny Lee: Fiasco in Western Virginia" will be C. Robert Douglas' topic when he addresses The Civil War Round Table on December 14th. Douglas, a past president and Honorary Life member of The Round Table, will discuss Lee's fruitless endeavors to stall the Union invasion of the western counties of Virginia during the summer and fall of 1861. His talk will focus on Lee's problems and the reasons for his inability to effectively deal with them. He will detail the difficulties Lee encountered in attempting to coordinate Confederate offensive efforts—difficulties so unsurmountable that, on November 1st of 1861, Robert E.



496th Regular Meeting

C. Robert Douglas

on

"Granny Lee: Fiasco in Western Virginia"

Friday, December 14, 1990

Holiday Inn Mart Plaza

350 North Orleans Street

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

\$17.50 per person

Entree: Roast Round of Beef, Fish, or Fruit Plate

Meeting Site

The December meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street. The command post and dinner will be in the Wolf Point on the 16th floor; you must change elevators on the 15th floor or walk up the stairs from 15 to 16. Space is limited in the Wolf Point. Persons making reservations late may have to eat dinner in another room and move to Wolf Point for the talk. You are encouraged to make your reservations by Monday, December 10. Either mail the enclosed reservation card or call the Book Shop, (312) 944-3085.

If you are driving and coming from the south, turn left into the Mart 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 free. Have your ticket validated at The Round Table registration table.

Lee returned to Richmond in virtual disgrace.

Now in his 40th year of membership, Bob Douglas was Round Table president for the 1960-1961 term. A native of Maywood, he served in the Army Air Force during World War II in North Africa, Corsica, and Italy. He graduated from Beloit College and has spent the bulk of his business career in the insurance field. He currently maintains an

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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.



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insurance broker's license and is employed in an administrative capacity for a commodity trading advisory firm.

Douglas serves on the board of governors of the Illinois St. Andrew Society, a charitable organization which supports a home for elderly Scots in suburban North Riverside, and is head usher at the First United Methodist Church. His interest in the Civil War began when, as a young man, he read a biography of Robert E. Lee. His wife Kitty shares his interest in Civil War history and is an active participant in Round Table activities. Bob Douglas last addressed The Round Table in February of 1983, when his topic was "General George H. Thomas: Time and History Will Do Me Justice."

Battlefield Preservation Report

By Mary Munsell Abroe

The proposed Civil War Sites Advisory Commission is about to become reality, due to passage of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act by the Senate shortly before Congress adjourned in late October. Provision for establishment of the Commission was one of a number of titles in the noted legislation, which now awaits the president's signature. As specified in the enactment, the thirteen-member Commission will include the chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Director of the National Park Service, five members chosen by the Secretary of the Interior, three members selected by the House, and three members selected by the Senate. Of the five members named by Interior Secretary Lujan, three are to be nationally recognized experts on Civil War history and two must be acknowledged authorities on historic preservation/land-use planning. Park Service staff will assist the Commission in carrying out its duties.

Funded at \$500,000 for fiscal year 1991, the Commission has two years in which to complete its study of endangered Civil War sites and to make recommendations on their preservation and interpretation to Congress; monies for the second year of the study have not yet been appropriated. Although the Commission's role is strictly advisory, preservationists anticipate that its work will increase public awareness of the battlefields and the perils they face from greed and indifference. Most importantly, the Commission should address issues related to the impact of these historic landscapes on local communities, hopefully pointing out viable alternatives to pillaging the sites in efforts to further their neighbors' economic interests and emphasizing ways in which such cultural resources can enhance local quality of life.

As has been related in this report and elsewhere, the idea to undertake a nationwide study of threatened Civil War fields grew out of a more limited proposal to assess the status of endangered areas in the Shenandoah Valley. Fortunately, the original Shenandoah Valley project emerged from the legislative process intact and, according to A. Wilson Greene of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, with a more well-defined function than the general Civil War sites study. The purpose of the Valley study is the production of a report on the feasibility of creating a national battlefield park there. Provisions of the law place the Secretary of the Interior in charge of the Valley study, and he is directed to name at least two Civil War historians of national repute to participate in the process. Will Greene has indicated that the Shenandoah Valley Commission may be a subsidiary of the main body, although the Valley study has received separate funding—\$100,000 for its one-year duration.

The prospects for battlefield preservation seem promising in light of this latest federal initiative. Those of us who are concerned deeply about the fate of the battlefields applaud the efforts of all involved in passage of this important legislation. Now we offer our continued support in the hope that the work of the Commission yields *real* and *practical* results in terms of battlefield protection, and thus lives up to that promise.

The officers of The Round Table and the newsletter staff wish everyone a happy holiday season and a bright and prosperous new year.

November Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

Over four million foreign-born people were living in the United States in 1861; of this number, all but a quarter of a million resided in the North. Twenty percent of all soldiers in Union uniforms had been born abroad. "Ethnic Soldiers in the Union Army" was the topic of Dr. William L. Burton's address on November 9th, when he spoke before 88 members and guests at the 495th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. Dr. Burton, professor of history at Western Illinois University, is the author of *Melting Pot Soldiers*, published in 1988 by the Iowa State University Press.

Burton believes that many foreign-born soldiers volunteered in order to demonstrate to native Americans that they were loyal to their adopted country. To illustrate this point in his book, he tells about a letter written in 1861 by Hans Mattson of Red Wing, Minnesota, relating why he, a Swedish-American, joined the American army: "...The honor of 'our nation' (Sweden) was at stake, he explained, 'and the Americans made it clear that they expected us to help in the great struggle.' In other words, Mattson believed that he had to show native Americans that Swedish-Americans were just as patriotic as they were—and after the war the Americans would remember this and think more kindly toward the Swedes. Irish-Americans often shared this feeling. Knowing that they still faced actual or potential prejudice, they believed that military service would convince nativist Americans that Irish immigrants were loyal to their new homeland, and that valor on the battlefield would erase prejudice at home. Ethnicns fought, not to free the slaves, but to free themselves from prejudice."

An intriguing aspect of the Civil War was the appearance of ethnic regiments. When the war broke out, neither the War Department nor state governors really wanted to recruit ethnic regiments. The governor of Wisconsin at first refused to accept the offer of a German regiment from Milwaukee; the pressure put on him by German-American politicians quickly changed his mind. The power of ethnic politics was very potent in 1861 and it fostered the formation of German, Irish, Scandinavian, Scotch, French, and multiethnic regiments. A shared language and "being among one's own kind" were two major reasons that many foreign-born chose to join such units.

One of the more colorful leaders of ethnic regiments was Thomas Francis Meagher. Born in Ireland in 1823, Meagher was a leader in the Irish uprising of 1848 and was banished to Tasmania. He escaped to New York City and assumed a position of leadership in the Irish community there. He played a key role in recruiting his countrymen for the Union Army. He rose to the rank of general and at one point had four Irish regiments under his command. A master orator, handsome, and ambitious, Meagher's addiction to alcohol led to his downfall. At the Battle of Antietam, where the soldiers of his Irish Brigade were nationally acclaimed for their courage and bravery, Meagher was reported by eyewitnesses to have been carried off the field in an alcoholic stupor. He died in 1867 when he got drunk, fell off a river steamer, and drowned.

Hans Christian Heg, leader of a Wisconsin Scandinavian regiment, had emigrated to the United States with his family when he was eleven years old. Heg did what most of his fellow-immigrants did not do in those days: he learned to speak and write English very well. He became one of the few Norwegians who could interface between the Norwegi-

ans and the rest of the community in Wisconsin.

When Wisconsin's governor accepted the German regiment, the Norwegians—not wanting the Germans to get ahead of them—hastily called a meeting. Since they feared they could not recruit a sufficient number of Norwegians for a regiment, they decided to organize a Scandinavian regiment, including Swedes and Danes. They recruited in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois and formed the 15th Wisconsin Infantry, with Heg as its colonel.

Burton called Heg "an extraordinary human being—very warm, honest, and candid." An articulate man, he wrote articles on the war for a Madison, Wisconsin newspaper. In describing his first battle, Heg said that, as the balls were whistling around him, he found himself edging behind a small tree. He gradually realized that the tree was only three inches in diameter. As soon as that had sunk into his consciousness, he simply stepped out and never looked back.

One of the most important things to learn about the ethnic units, Burton emphasized, is that they did change over time. By 1863, ethnic colonels were hoping for any warm bodies and ethnic regiments gradually lost their ethnicity. The shared boundaries of all Civil War units became much greater than their differences.

Burton concluded his address with this observation: "Lawrence Stone, one of my favorite living historians... because he thinks about the meaning of history and its purpose more than just history itself, has written that 'It is a truism that historians tend to ask questions about the past that are of direct relevance to the societies in which they live.' My own book is only partly about the Civil War. It's about us and it's about 1990 and it's about the society in which we live and the kind of society in which we want to live in the future. I'd like to end with the words of one of our great folk philosophers in the United States, Erma Bombeck: 'If the past isn't relevant, neither will be the future.'"

Executive Committee Meeting

Round Table President David Richert has announced there will be an Executive Committee meeting on Saturday, December 15, 1990 at 1 p.m. at the Quality Inn, Halsted and Madison. The main item on the agenda is Round Table finances. All current officers, committee chairpersons, and past presidents are urged to attend.

An organization begun in 1880 by the veterans of the Iron Brigade is holding a special reunion at the December meeting of the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table. The Iron Brigade Association was founded by veterans of the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin; the 19th Indiana; and the 24th Michigan. In 1896, Association members voted to make all of their children official members of the society.

Three sons of two Wisconsin Civil War veterans have declared the December meeting of the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table as an "official" reunion of the Iron Brigade Association. They are William H. Upham II, of Milwaukee; his brother Frederick, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado; and James Fitzpatrick Sullivan, of New Port Richey, Florida. The Uphams are the sons of William H. Upham, who served in the 2nd Wisconsin Infantry; Sullivan is the son of James Patrick ("Mickey of Company K") Sullivan, of the 6th Wisconsin Infantry.

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The New Books

compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Cuomo, Mario M. & Harold Holzer, eds. *Lincoln and Democracy*. Bessie Book/Harper Collins. 1990. \$24.95.

Davis, Kathleen, ed. *Such are the Trials: The Civil War Diaries of Jacob Gantz* (4th Iowa Cavalry). Iowa State University Press. 1990. \$15.95.

Neely, Mark E., Jr. *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties*. Oxford University Press. 1990. \$22.95.

Shaara, Michael. *The Killer Angels*. David McKay. 1990. \$19.95. Original of 1974.

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 the book by writing The Round Table (add \$3 for postage and handling), or purchase a copy at the December meeting or at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 357 West Chicago Avenue.

Walter H. Hebert

by Ralph G. Newman

Walter H. Hebert, one of the early members and speakers of The Civil War Round Table, died at St. Vincent's Hospital, Santa Fe, New Mexico on Monday 5 November 1990. He was 82 years old.

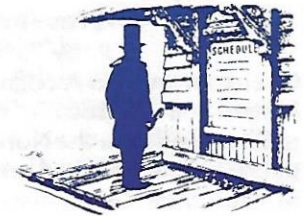
Walter Hebert had been a championship tennis player and later a coach at the University of Chicago. He spoke at our 20th meeting in February 1943. His subject was "Fighting Joe Hooker," which was later published in expanded form as a book by Bobbs-Merrill. During World War II he was assigned to our atomic energy effort at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and then in New Mexico.

He returned to speak at our 423rd meeting in September 1983. His subject, repeated for the benefit of new generations of Round Tablers, was again "Fighting Joe Hooker." Many of us saw him at the 50th anniversary of The Civil War Round Table on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 12-14 October of this year. His son, who called me to relay the sad news, said that Walter thoroughly enjoyed coming here. A draft of a letter to me was on his desk when he was stricken with a heart attack and taken to the hospital. A quiet gentleman, he was a loyal member of The Round Table and later became one of the mainstays of the Houston Civil War Round Table. His last writing was a short book (never published), which took as its theme, "If 'Stonewall' Jackson had not been killed at Chancellorsville."

We recently learned of the death of Eleanor Smith, one of the founding members of The Camp Followers and the widow of longtime Round Table member William Smith. We extend our sincerest condolences to her family.

Round Table Vice President Mary Munsell Abroe will deliver a paper at the Eleventh Annual Illinois History Symposium on November 30th in Springfield. Her topic is "A Study in American Nativism: Chicago's Response to Its German and Irish Populations, 1850-1856."

BULLETIN BOARD



Future Meetings

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

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: Terry Winschel on "To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg."

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

Charles Bednar, 616 Iowa, Oak Park, IL 60302, (708)383-0624

Richard E. Harder, 115 Luray N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504, (616)453-8344

Gary L. Livacari, 822 S. Washington, Park Ridge, IL 60068, (708)318-6354

David Whitcher, 1133 Lundvall Ave., Rockford, IL 6110, (815)399-7344

Change of Address

William Alban, 133 N. Guyler #26, Oak Park, IL 60302

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Since the sons are bonafide members, the Iron Brigade Association never really went out of existence, although it has not met for at least fifty years. "As sons of original members of the society, and as members ourselves, we are taking this special occasion to formally convene a meeting of the Iron Brigade Association," said William Upham II, who is the current president of the Milwaukee Round Table. The "reunion" will begin at 6:15 p.m. on December 6th at the Milwaukee Club. To make a reservation, call Lance Herdegen at (414)354-5561.

Former Round Table President Marshall D. Krolick delivered an address at a ceremony held on November 19th in Chicago's Daley Center Plaza, commemorating the 127th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address. Members Jerry Feinstein, Bob Girardi, and Ernest Griffin participated in a reenactment that was a feature of the program.