

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LI, Number 6

Chicago, Illinois

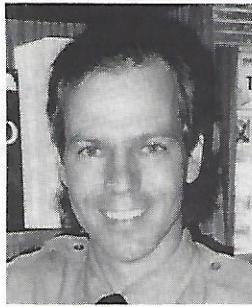
February 1991

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

by Barbara Hughett

"See what a lot of land those fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key . . . Let us get Vicksburg and all this country is ours. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket." These words of President Abraham Lincoln vividly illustrate the strategic importance during the Civil War of the city that became known as the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy."

"To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg" will be the topic of Terrence J. Winschel when he addresses The Civil War Round Table on February 8. Confederate cannons were mounted on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River at Vicksburg. The Southern forces commanded the "Father of Waters," shutting off the important avenue of commerce to Northern shipping. Vicksburg was also crucial to the South because it was the connecting link between the eastern and western portions of the Confederacy and sat astride a major supply route over which the armies of Braxton Bragg and Robert E. Lee received much-needed food, clothing, medicine, and ammunition, as well as fresh troops. Thus, their defense of the city was vital. The loss of Vicksburg would be disastrous; split in half, the South could not very long survive.



Terrence J. Winschel

In the spring of 1863, as Union threats along the Mississippi began to unfold, Confederate Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith, commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department, sought to augment his forces in Louisiana. He ordered Major General John G. Walker's ragged Texas Division to Monroe, Louisiana, from which point it could be thrown against either Grant (operating against Vicksburg) or Banks (operating against Alexandria).

On April 24, 1863, the Texans took up the line of march from Pine Bluff, Arkansas to Monroe. The men of Walker's command embarked on a campaign that would be marred by lack of unity, inept leadership, and the rigid design of Confederate departmental structure. Though placed in a position to strike a crippling blow to either General Grant or General Banks, the Texans were used ineffectively and the opportunity to thwart either Federal thrust slipped away. Indecision led Smith to direct the Texans aimlessly about Louisiana, while Grant hammered his way to the gates of Vicksburg and placed his army as a



498th Regular Meeting

Terrence G. Winschel
on

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

Friday, February 8, 1991

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: Stuffed Breast of Chicken, Fish, or Fruit Plate

Meeting Site

Due to a significant increase in the meal cost at the Quality Inn, and the imposition of a \$4 parking charge, we have moved our regular meeting place to the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago. Dinner will be in Buttons on the 15th floor; cocktails in Mad Anthony's Lounge, adjacent to Buttons.

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.

Please make your reservation by mailing the enclosed postcard or calling the Book Shop at (312) 944-3085. The Holiday Inn requires 72 hours advance notice, so make your reservation by noon on Tuesday, February 5. If you make a reservation and must cancel, please call the Book Shop as soon as possible. More than 30 people failed to show up for the January meeting and The Round Table had to pay for the meals—over \$500 worth.

cordon around the city. Not until the situation at Vicksburg became desperate, did Smith commit the Texans to action.

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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.



The Collected Writings of James T. Hickey has recently been published by the Illinois State Historical Society. Hickey, 1987 recipient of The Civil War Round Table's Nevins-Freeman Award, was curator of the Lincoln Collection at the Illinois State Historical Library for twenty-seven years. During that time, he wrote numerous articles for *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, reflecting his research in Lincolniana and Illinois history. The articles have been compiled in a 242-page book, illustrated with over 100 photographs. To order the book, send a check to the Society at the Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois 62701. The hardbound edition is \$25 (\$20 for members of the Society); the paperback version is \$13.50 (\$11 for Society members). Add \$1.50 for postage and handling.

Battlefield Preservation Report

by Mary Munsell Abroe

A crucial judgment should be made soon regarding the fate of Johnson's Island, Ohio, site of a Federal prison for Confederate officers and a 206-grave Civil War cemetery. For over two years, preservationists have been trying to stave off development of the site by Cleveland-area businessman Carl Zipfel. Intense public interest generated by the threat to Johnson's Island set in motion a chain of events which led to its designation as a National Historic Landmark in June 1990. Such designation does not forbid development of the privately-owned property on the site. However, the fact that a federal agency (i.e. the Army Corps of Engineers) must issue permits for a phase of Zipfel's project allowed the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to review and comment upon the effect of development on historic Johnson's Island; results of that review process have not been made public. What we *do know* is that enough local authorities "caved in" to clear the way for the proposed multi-million-dollar housing and marina complex; on October 16, 1990, the Ottawa County (Ohio) Regional Planning Commission voted 12-10 (with four abstentions) to approve the final plat of the "Baycliffs" subdivision. At this point, then, the key decision appears to rest with the Corps of Engineers, which has not yet issued its ruling on permits for the development's marina but which probably will do so in the coming months.

As part of this decision-making procedure, Dr. Ray Luce of the State Historic Preservation Office asked the National Park Service to review the Baycliffs Corporation's marina permit application. Commenting for NPS Mid-Atlantic Regional Director James Coleman, Sandra Rosencrans stated categorically in a letter of December 6, 1990: "[Johnson's Island's] designation [as a National Historic Landmark] denotes national significance... It is our belief that the project will have an adverse effect on the NHL status of Johnson's Island." Ms. Rosencrans went on to describe the negative impact of specific aspects of Zipfel's plan. The intended marina and boat channel into the island's interior quarry will damage archaeological resources of part of the old Federal barracks and also will harm Fort Hill, one of two earth-work forts on the site. Proposed residential development will destroy—among other areas—parts of the old prison compound. Ms. Rosencrans concluded that Johnson's Island's "high degree of integrity" would be gravely imperiled by the project as planned presently, and she "strongly recommended" that the Corps of Engineers *not* issue the necessary marina permits.

The final irony here is a chilling one. Popular concern for a fragile historic resource helped effect its elevation to NHL status; the hope—at least in some quarters—was that enhanced visibility and national recognition would protect the resource. The closing remark in the NPS letter quoted above dashes that hope: "If the Baycliffs Corporation were to proceed with this project as it is currently planned, we would be forced to recommend the *dedesignation* of Johnson's Island as a National Historic Landmark." Thus, the island prison's standing as a nationally acknowledged historic treasure is as *vulnerable* as the site's actual physical remains, for both are subject to the "bottom-line" mentality of some—thankfully not all—in the development community. Please add your voice to that of local preservationists at Johnson's Island, who sometimes feel that they are

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January Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

The Seventeenth Annual Nevins-Freeman Award of The Civil War Round Table was conferred on noted Civil War scholar and longtime Round Table member Marshall D. Krolick at the 494th regular meeting on October 12, as part of The Round Table's fiftieth anniversary celebration; however, because of time constraints, his formal acceptance address was not delivered at that time. That address was presented at the 497th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table on January 11. One hundred members and guests braved a snowstorm to hear Marshall Krolick speak on "The Forgotten Field: The Cavalry Battle at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863." (One hundred thirty-three people had made reservations, but the weather conditions caused some last-minute cancellations.)

The Army of Northern Virginia's advance into Pennsylvania during the summer of 1863 was greatly hindered by the absence of a major portion of its cavalry. These troopers had separated from the main army when their commander, the flamboyant J.E.B. Stuart, acting within the discretion of his orders, took them off on a ride around the Federal positions. When Stuart and his cavalymen rejoined the army of Robert E. Lee on July 2, the Battle of Gettysburg was already in the second day of fighting.

On July 3, Stuart was ordered around the Confederate left in an attempt to attack the Union rear as the famed assault of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble advanced against the Federal center. In the fields along the Hanover Road, three miles east of the town, Stuart unexpectedly met the Union troopers of David Gregg's division and George Custer's brigade. The resulting clash involved some of the fiercest and most dramatic fighting of any cavalry battle of the Civil War.

Stuart began his attack at approximately 2:00 p.m.; it was repulsed by a Northern cavalry force which was showing the same aggressive fighting qualities and competent leadership that had been exhibited at Brandy Station, Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville. At 3:00 p.m., although he was already two hours late in reaching the position Lee had requested he achieve, Stuart was not ready to give up. Increasing the numbers in his force, he again attacked, coming at the Federal forces from a wooded area to the south of the crossroad. Of this movement, Captain William Miller of the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry wrote: "A grander spectacle than their advance has rarely been beheld.... Their polished saber blades dazzled in the sun. All eyes turned upon them."

When the Southerners came within three-quarters of a mile of the Hanover Road, Federal batteries opened a devastating fire, tearing gaps in the charging Confederate line; but the rear ranks quickly closed and filled in the empty spaces. When the Confederates were only fifty yards away, Custer raised his saber above his head and turned in his saddle, shouting to the troopers behind him the legendary words, "C'mon you Wolverines!"

The two forces met with a tremendous clash. Captain Miller said the encounter was "like the falling of timber, so sudden and violent that many of the horses were turned end over and crushed their riders beneath them." But it wasn't over yet. Disobeying orders, Miller ordered his command to fire a volley and then, shouting to his men to draw their sabers, he led them in a mounted charge which pierced directly through the Confederate column, cutting off the rear one-third of it and driving that portion back toward

Cress Ridge. Captain James Hart's squadron also charged into the Confederate left flank, hitting it south of the point Miller had struck. Without even coming close to the Federal batteries and the Hanover Road, the Southerners were forced to retreat. The great turning movement Stuart had attempted had failed.

This cavalry battle was certainly one of the more important actions in the Battle of Gettysburg. "Yet today," Marshall observed, "as thousands of tourists rewalk the path of the charge of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble, and visit the historic ground at the Bloody Angle and Copse of Trees, the fields around the intersection of the Hanover Road and Low Dutch Road, now referred to as 'East Cavalry Field,' are empty and forgotten."

Why has this event been so neglected by historians? Among the possible reasons, Marshall cited the egotistical nature of the commander of the Union Cavalry Corps, Alfred Pleasonton, who would not want to draw attention to any portion of the Battle in which he was not involved. By contrast, David Gregg, the hero of that day, was too modest to seek attention for his accomplishments. Also, there were no journalists traveling with Gregg's staff to report to the nation the action of his division.

"Finally," Marshall noted, "there was Pickett's charge itself, an event which has attracted as much attention as any other single occurrence during the Civil War. How could a cavalry clash three miles away...hope to compete for recognition?...Yet, the men of Gregg and Custer, and Stuart too, are entitled to that recognition—for they did, in fact, play a significant role in the eventual outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg and the preservation of the Union. Neither they nor the ground they contested should be forgotten."

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Walker was finally directed to move with his division to Madison Parish, opposite Vicksburg, and strike the Federal enclaves at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. The Texans struck savagely at Milliken's Bend in a pre-dawn attack on June 7, but their efforts were hampered by poor planning. After fierce combat with United States Colored Troops, the Texans were forced to yield the field. Confederate efforts at Young's Point also ended in failure.

In his address, Winschel will detail the organization of Walker's division and analyze the leadership ability of Walker and his brigade commanders. Using transparencies, he will trace the corresponding movements of the Union and Confederate forces during the campaign for Vicksburg and will discuss in detail the operations which culminated in the Battle of Milliken's Bend.

A native of Pittsburgh, Terry Winschel is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University and holds both M.S.S. and Ed.S. degrees from Mississippi College. A thirteen-year veteran of the National Park Service, Winschel has served at Gettysburg and Fredericksburg National Military Parks and Valley Forge National Historical Park, and is currently historian at Vicksburg National Military Park. Winschel has written numerous articles and book reviews on Civil War topics. With Michael Mullins, he is the co-author of *Vicksburg: A Self-guiding Tour of the Battlefield* (1990). He is the author of *The Corporal's Tale* (1979), a 19-page booklet which eloquently describes the Battle of Fredericksburg from the viewpoint of a common Union footsoldier.

The New Books

compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Andrus, Michael J. *The Brooks, Farquier, Loudon and Alexander Artillery*. H. E. Howard, Inc. 1990. \$16.95.

Armstrong, Richard L. *Jackson's Valley Campaign: The Battle of McDowell*. H. E. Howard, Inc. 1990. \$16.95.

Frank, John P. *Lincoln As A Lawyer*. Americana House, Inc. 1991. \$30.00. Original of 1960.

McFeely, William S. *Frederick Douglass*. Norton. 1990. \$24.95.

McPherson, James M. *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*. Oxford University Press. 1990. \$19.95.

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 February meeting or at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 357 West Chicago Avenue.

A Message From the President

I would like to thank all of you who completed and returned the membership surveys distributed last summer. Please be assured that we do intend to follow up on your suggestions and concerns. For example, many of you requested that we make available a compilation of the interests, Civil War and otherwise, of other members to facilitate conversation and information exchange. We are in the process of doing so. As a first step, member Dennis Reed is putting the information on computer. Anyone who has not returned a form and who would like to be listed should send their form to The Round Table as soon as possible. If you need a form, please contact me.

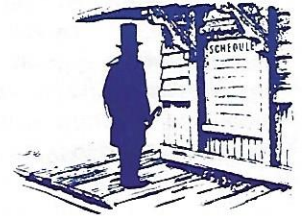
A number of members expressed interest in getting more actively involved in Round Table activities and serving on committees, but said they didn't know where they could be helpful. Here are a couple of examples. We need someone, or a couple of people, to do public relations for us—to make sure our activities and meetings are included in appropriate listings and made known to the media. Some writing ability would be useful, but basically what's needed is a willingness to search out and make contacts. Also, we would like to have someone take over the Schimmelfennig Boutique before each meeting. As you know, the Boutique sells various Round Table related items—copies of our history, pins, mugs, tee shirts, etc. It's not hard work and it's a good way to meet people.

If you are interested in either of these jobs, or in serving on any of the committees listed on page 2 of this newsletter, just give me a call at (312) 761-6937.

Finally, several people said that The Round Table should make tapes of previous talks available. In fact, we do. You can obtain a list of available cassette tapes, and an order form, by writing Hal Ardell, 6781 N. Keota Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60646.

David Richert

BULLETIN BOARD



Future Meetings

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

February 8: Terrence G. 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

Paul D. Benson, 2020 Lincoln Park West, #7L, Chicago, IL 60614, (312)525-4843

Mark Matranga, 201 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, IL 60302, (708)524-8141

John F. Votow, 603 E. Illinois St., Wheaton, IL 60187, (708)260-0454

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waging this campaign alone. Urge the Corps of Engineers (c/o Hugh F. Boyd III, Colonel, U.S. Army Commanding, Department of the Army, Buffalo District, Army Corps of Engineers, 1776 Niagara St., Buffalo, New York 14207) to deny marina permits for this project. Such action is not our option; it is our responsibility!

Round Table founder Ralph G. Newman was a featured speaker at the fortieth anniversary meeting of the Civil War Round Table of New York on January 16. The main address that evening was given by Civil War author and recent media personality Shelby Foote.

A Lincoln's Birthday Open House will be held at the Mount Pulaski Court House on February 9. Activities are scheduled from noon to 8:00 p.m. A lecture will be given by G. Cullom Davis at 2:00 p.m. For further information, call Richard Schachtsiek at (217)792-3919.

The Lincoln The Lawyer Award will be given to attorney John P. Frank at the annual banquet of the Abraham Lincoln Association on February 12 in Springfield. Frank is the author of *Lincoln As A Lawyer*.

According to *The Scout's Report*, the newsletter of the Knoxville Civil War Round Table, PBS will follow their highly successful "The Civil War" series with a documentary on the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, featuring extensive material about the individual soldier. Filmed in Boston and South Carolina, it is scheduled to air in February.