



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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March 1991

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

by Barbara Hughett

Salisbury Prison, the Confederate prisoner-of-war camp, had been built around an abandoned cotton mill in the west central part of North Carolina. Conditions there, especially during the final year of the Civil War, were very grim. By October of 1864, nearly ten thousand men were confined in the six-acre prison camp. Among those held captive there at that time were three war correspondents: *New York Tribune* reporters Junius Browne and Albert Richardson and William Davis, correspondent for the *Cincinnati Gazette*. The three writers masterminded an escape from Salisbury, which they effected on December 18, 1864. They were joined by two others: Connecticut merchant marine Captain Thomas Wolfe and Sergeant Charles Thurston of the 6th New Hampshire Infantry. The event became known to contemporaries as "The Walk of the Journalists."

"The 'Walk' of Correspondents Browne, Davis, and Richardson: 340 Miles to Freedom" will be the topic of Gerald A. Regan's address to The Civil War Round Table on March 8. Regan played the part of Albert Richardson in a 125th anniversary symbolic reenactment of the escape in Salisbury, North Carolina in December of 1989. The reenactment and commemorative program, sponsored by The Society of Civil War Correspondents and the Historic Salisbury Foundation, culminated in dramatic readings from the Civil War memoirs of Browne and Richardson.



Gerald A. Regan recites the poem, "Sheridan's Ride," at the Sheridan Monument in Washington, D.C. in November 1989. Photo by Nancy Jennis Olds.



499th Regular Meeting

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Gerald A. Regan

on

"The 'Walk' of Correspondents  
Browne, Davis, and Richardson:  
340 Miles to Freedom"

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Friday, March 8, 1991

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Holiday Inn Mart Plaza  
350 North Orleans Street  
Buttons—15th floor

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

\$17.50 per person

Entree: Roast Beef, Fish, or Fruit Plate



### Parking

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.

Regan's address, which will be illustrated with slides, is based on the material in these memoirs.

Included in the reminiscences of the two journalists are descriptions of a Confederate artillery bombardment at the time of their capture in Mississippi in 1863 and the violent suppression of a prison insurrection. Recalling his living quarters at Salisbury, Browne wrote: "There with rats and vermin, filth and odors, we passed the long, cold, desolate nights, shivering in our light blankets and striving for many a dreary hour, in vain, to sleep. What a dismal den it was! . . . I often wished I could obtain a photograph of that room, for I can give no idea of its repulsiveness and superlative squalor." As 1864 drew to a close, the men in Salisbury Prison were dying at the rate of thirty to forty per day.

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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.



**John Y. Simon, The Round Table's 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award recipient**, will be delivering a lecture at the Chicago Historical Society on Sunday, April 14. He will be speaking on "In Search of Lincoln" in the Arthur Rubloff Auditorium at 2:00 p.m. The lecture is free with admission to the Society.

**Merlin E. Sumner, 1979-80 president of The Civil War Round Table**, is the new president of the Richmond Civil War Round Table in Richmond, Virginia. His wife, Patricia K. Sumner, The Round Table's 1986-87 president, serves as the editor of the Richmond Round Table's newsletter.

## Battlefield Preservation Report

by Mary Munsell Abroe

The February issue of *Historic Preservation News* reports that the government finally has settled with the Hazel-Peterson Company on the William Center tract at Manassas—\$81 million for approximately 400 acres of historically crucial land adjacent to the national battlefield park. Developer Phil Hazel has done well at the expense of the American taxpayer. He purchased the 500-plus acre property for about \$11 million in 1986 and later sold about 150 acres to other developers; the government settled the claim of these two, HV Home and William Center Limited Partnership for \$34 million in May 1990. Hazel receives a very tidy return—well over seven times his initial investment in this payment alone; the payment includes \$13.6 million in accrued interest. Of course, Hazel will not be able to reap the profits of the massive commercial/residential development planned for the site—but then nobody said life was fair. Additionally, while preservation forces were in the final stages of their ultimately successful battle during the fall of 1988, developers hurriedly built model homes on the site. These and other "improvements"—roads and sewer lines, for example—then had to be removed; much of this restoration work has been completed, fortunately, and the land saved from development is now open to the public.

Learning the hard way seems to be something Americans do well. The Manassas episode—a costly lesson, as it turned out—nonetheless did draw public attention to the pillaging of our historic Civil War landscapes. The incursion of commercial, industrial, and residential development into largely rural battlefield areas has been a phenomenon of post-World War II America, and it seems that until the controversy erupted in 1988, there was no popular awareness of the peril to these national treasures. With Manassas came enhanced preservation awareness and the battlefields have indeed benefited. The goal now is to maintain our commitment in the face of all the concerns that properly demand our attention. Those who jumped on the bandwagon because preservation was "trendy" will lose interest eventually—such is the nature of those who live for the latest "cause." However, the outcry over Manassas indicates that there is a deep popular concern for our tangible Civil War legacy and, when tapped, that concern can be a powerful, positive force for their well-being. Manassas indeed was worth the price, but only if we refuse to allow its lessons—the importance of unified effort and preservation planning, for example—to be lost.

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**A dedication ceremony was recently held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania** at the Grand Army of the Republic Post 9 building. The event celebrated the completion of a two-year restoration program. The 1822 structure was used as a hospital during the Civil War.

**Ken Burns, producer of the recent PBS series, "The Civil War,"** is the 1991 recipient of the New York Civil War Round Table's Bell I. Wiley Award. This award is presented to honor those whose outstanding non-literary artistic talents have led to greater understanding of the Civil War. Burns will also be given an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Springfield College in Illinois at its commencement ceremonies on May 17. This is only the fourth time the college has awarded an honorary doctorate in its sixty-one-year history.



## February Meeting

by Barbara Hughett

Early in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln gathered the ranking civil and military leaders to discuss strategy for opening the Mississippi River in an effort to hasten the end of the "rebellion" of the Southern states. Lincoln made a wide sweeping gesture with his hand and then placed his finger on the map and said, "See what a lot of land these fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key . . . . The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket . . . . We may take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can defy us from Vicksburg. It means hog and hominy without limit, fresh troops from all the states of the far South, and a cotton country where they can raise the staple without interference . . . . I am acquainted with that region and know what I am talking about, and, as valuable as New Orleans will be to us, Vicksburg will be more so." On February 8, Terrence J. Winschel, historian of the Vicksburg National Military Park, spoke before 86 members and guests at the 498th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His topic was "To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg."

Confederate cannons mounted on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River at Vicksburg commanded the river, denying the important avenue of commerce to Northern shipping. Vicksburg, often called the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy," was the connecting link between the eastern and western parts of the Confederacy and sat astride a major supply route over which the Southern armies received much-needed food, clothing, medicine, and ammunition, as well as fresh troops.

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 this point, the division 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 and inept leadership. Though placed in a position to strike a crippling blow to the forces of either Grant or 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 cordon around the city. Not until the situation at Vicksburg had become virtually hopeless, did Smith commit the Texans to action. Walker moved his division to Madison Parish, opposite Vicksburg, with orders to 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 under the command of Colonel Hermann Lieb, the Texans were forced to yield the field. Confederate efforts at Young's Bend also ended in failure.

Reasons cited for these Confederate failures are numerous. They include a rigid departmental structure which created a disunified Confederate response and a lack of railroads which hampered troop movements. Indecision on

the part of Confederate officers, poor positioning, and inefficient guides were additional factors leading to the defeat of the Southern forces. "The list," Winschel noted, "goes on and on and on."

In closing, Winschel asked, "Could the movement have been successful?" He answered the question by quoting from Ed Bearss' three-volume work on Vicksburg: "If undertaken at an earlier date, in late April or early May, a slashing Southern onslaught against one or more of Grant's Louisiana enclaves or his long, exposed supply line close to the great river might have jeopardized the Union campaign. It was not until . . . the situation had become desperate that the Trans-Mississippi soldiers were committed to battle. And when they were, it was too little and too late."

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**The U.S.S. *Eastport*, the largest ship in Admiral Porter's fleet during the Red River Campaign of 1864, has been found buried, under nearly fifty feet of sediment, close to the Red River near Montgomery, Louisiana. After being run aground, the *Eastport* was scuttled and blown-up by the Union Navy on April 26, 1864.**

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**The 1991 battlefield tour is now over three-fourths filled, and Tour Chairman Kurt Carlson is receiving more reservation forms with deposits every day! If you want to go to Shiloh in May, mail your \$25 deposit immediately to Registrar Joan Carlson, 1636 Wadham Place, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, or see her at the March meeting. A number of people were disappointed last year when they waited too long to sign up for the tour!**

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(continued from page 1)

The journalists knew they had no hope but escape. Receiving help from slaves, Union sympathizers, and an East Tennessee scout with a price on his head, the men finally reached Union-held East Tennessee on January 14, 1865. They had survived a trek of more than 340 miles across the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains. On that day of arrival, Richardson telegraphed his newspaper: "Out of the jaws of Death; out of the mouth of Hell."

Gerald A. Regan, a journalist and student of Civil War news reporting, is a resident of Garden City, New York. He has been a Civil War reenactor for four years and is the author of the "Notes From The Field" column in *The Civil War News*. Founder and secretary of The Society of Civil War Correspondents, he also serves as secretary of Company M of the 1st New Jersey Cavalry reenacting unit.

A student at HB Acting Studio in Manhattan, Regan has portrayed figures from the war in historical video productions and at National Park Service events at the Gettysburg and Antietam Battlefields. He will appear in the role of a Southern newspaper editor in the upcoming cable television movie, "The Ironclads."

Regan earned a bachelors degree in mathematics, *magna cum laude*, from Duke University and spent a year studying British and Irish history at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. He received a masters degree in journalism from New York University, and was a reporter and editor for Gannett Westchester Newspapers for five years. Among Regan's passions is the poetry of the Civil War era, much of which he recites from memory.



## The New Books compiled by C. Robert Douglas



Ball, Douglas B. *Financial Failure and Confederate Defeat*. University of Illinois Press. 1990. \$29.95.

Bohannon, Keith S. *The Giles, Allegheny & Jackson Artillery*. H. E. Howard, Inc. 1990. \$16.95.

Conway, W. Fred. *Corydon: The Forgotten Battle of the Civil War*. FBH Publishers, P.O. Box 711, New Albany, IN 47151. 1991. Pbk. \$9.95.

Davis, Varina. *Jefferson Davis: A Memoir*. Introduction by Craig L. Symonds. Nautical & Aviation Publ. Co. of America. 1990. 2 vols. \$68.50. Original of 1890.

Dillon, Merton L. *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1619-1865*. LSU Press. 1990. \$39.95; pbk. \$16.95.

Harrison, Noel G. *Chancellorsville Battlefield Sites*. H. E. Howard, Inc. 1990. \$19.95.

Howard, William F., compiler. *The Gettysburg Death Roster: The Federal Dead at Gettysburg*. Morningside Press. 1990. \$22.50.

Mahood, Wayne. *The Plymouth Pilgrims: A History of the 85th New York Infantry in the Civil War*. Longstreet House. 1989. \$30.00.

Scaife, William R. *The March to the Sea*. Washington Printing Co. 1989. \$30.00.

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

**The following is an excerpt from a letter to The Round Table** from A. Wilson Greene, executive director of The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites: "Dear Friends,

Merl Sumner passed along a very welcome gift on the day before Christmas: a \$1,000 check from The Civil War Round Table to The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites. On behalf of the officers and directors of APCWS, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your generosity and confidence. A contribution of this magnitude is always a little humbling, and we pledge to you that we will put your donation to the best possible use for the good of the battlefields we all respect.

Thanks to the help of the good folks from Chicago, and all the rest of our friends across the country, 1990 has been a banner year for battlefield preservation and our Association. We have acquired five parcels of land this year, lobbied successfully in Washington for national legislation to study Civil War history, and helped allied groups like the Brandy Station Foundation, the Cedar Creek Foundation, and New Market Battlefield realize their preservation goals. The APCWS raised nearly \$200,000 in 1990, and despite current economic conditions, we expect to exceed that figure in 1991. Your \$1,000 check is a fantastic start on our fundraising goal."

## 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.

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

Linda Ray Cochran, 655 W. Irving Park Road, #1312, Chicago, IL 60613, (312)935-2122

Jay Jorgensen, 70 Valley Road, Colonia, NJ 06067

Michael C. Lewis, 85 Cumberland, Lincolnshire, IL 60069, (708)940-1567

Robert B. Parrish, 15385 Woodbridge Road, Brookfield, WI 53005

Nina B. Smith, 400 Manda Lane, #203, Wheeling, IL 60090, (708)808-0213

Richard O. Walker, Jr., 1204 Trace 12, West Lafayette, IN 47906, (317)463-9913

**The 1991 R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture will take place on Thursday, May 16**, at The Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Merrill D. Peterson, Thomas Jefferson Professor Emeritus at the University of Virginia, will be speaking on "'This Grand Pertinacity': Abraham Lincoln and the Declaration of Independence." The lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m. and will be followed by a reception. For further information, call (219)455-3864.

**The Thirteenth Annual Civil War Institute "Campaigning with Lee" seminar**, led by James I. Robertson, Jr., The Round Table's 1981 Nevins-Freeman honoree, will be held on June 15-22 at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. For information, contact Linda G. Leffel, Donaldson Brown Center, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061, (703)961-5182.

**Regimental Studies, Inc. has begun publication of a new journal**. Each quarterly issue of *Civil War Regiments* will feature in-depth articles by leading Civil War scholars on two regiments or units of note—one Union and one Confederate. The journal will also include capsule histories of distinguished regiments, book reviews, and battlefield preservation updates. The premiere issue features articles written by Chris Calkins, Robert K. Krick, and Michael A. Mullins. Yearly subscriptions are \$27.00 (\$25.00 for members of Civil War Round Tables). To subscribe, send a check to *Civil War Regiments*, 1038 Leigh Avenue, Suite 100, San Jose, California 95126.