

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LIII, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

April 1993

## Carol A. Reardon on "Images of Pickett's Charge in Southern History"

by Barbara Hughett

Pickett's Charge has been called the central moment of our nation's history, the high-water mark of the Confederacy, and even the "fountainhead of modern America." Much has been written about the great charge made by the troops of Major General George Edward Pickett at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, in which 7000 men were killed, wounded, or captured. Historical accuracy, however, has not always been well served.

Almost as soon as the smoke had cleared from the valley between Cemetery and Seminary Ridges, the attack took on a deep significance as a symbol of a nation spared, a cause lost, and Southern military prowess reaffirmed. For over fifty years, Southerners allowed state pride, personal feuds, reunion spirit, and New South imagery to color their impressions of the events of July 3, 1863. We have, therefore, several versions of what happened that day, with a variety of shadings and nuances.

The modern version of Pickett's Charge is somewhat of a historical "chameleon" that often reflects the pride and prejudices of generations past. As people who care about history, it is important that we attempt to unravel the "real" story. "Images of Pickett's Charge in Southern History" will be the topic of Carol A. Reardon's address to The Round Table on April 16.

Assistant professor of history at Penn State University, Carol Reardon received her B.S. degree from Allegheny College, her M.A. from the University of South Carolina, and her Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky, Lexington. Before coming to Penn State, she taught at the University of Georgia. From July 1993-June 1994, Reardon will be Harold Keith Johnson Visiting Profes-



Major General George E. Pickett



### 520th Regular Meeting

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Carol A. Reardon on "Images of Pickett's Charge in Southern History"

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Friday, April 16

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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.  
\$20.00 per person

Entree: Baron of Beef Bordelaise, Orange Roughy,  
or Fruit Plate



### A Reminder

Please make your reservation by Wednesday, April 14. Mail the enclosed postcard or call the book shop at (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.

sor of Military History at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks.

She has written numerous articles and chapters for books, including "Images of Pickett's Charge in Southern History" for *The Third Day at Gettysburg*, by Gary Gallagher, to be published soon by Kent State University Press. Reardon has delivered papers before several professional associations and has spoken to historical groups throughout the country.

(continued on page 2)

## 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.



### Reardon (continued from page 1)

She is the author of *Soldiers and Scholars: The U.S. Army and the Uses of Military History, 1865-1920* (1990) and was coeditor, with Melba Porter Hay, of *The Papers of Henry Clay: Volume X* (1991). Carol Reardon also serves on the editorial board of *The Journal of Military History*, and has just received a book contract from the University Press of Kansas to produce a volume tentatively titled *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The American Inheritance*.

## BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites has challenged the state of Arkansas to purchase three key tracts of land at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park. The APCWS has agreed to provide up to \$86,000 of a \$405,000 total cost toward the acquisition of nearly 175 acres in the heart of the battlefield. The state has \$147,000 set aside for land acquisition and will try to raise the remainder by seeking additional land acquisition monies and private contributions from area corporations.

The Battle of Prairie Grove, which occurred December 7, 1862, is one of twenty-five priority Civil War sites named by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Arkansas State Parks currently owns about 130 acres at Prairie Grove, but has identified another 247 acres as critical to the integrity of the battlefield. The need to acquire additional acreage was documented by the park in a battlefield protection plan, funded in part by the American Battlefield Protection Program.

The land in question includes a large portion of the final Federal battle line that assaulted more than 11,000 Confederates under Major General Thomas Hindman. Troops from Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin attacked Confederates from Arkansas and Missouri in an engagement that cost 2465 casualties. The battle was a tactical draw, but provided the Union a strategic victory.

The terms of the APCWS challenge stipulate that the Association will pay either one-third of the appraised value of the parcels (less the \$147,000 already available in state funds) or \$86,000, whichever is less, toward acquisition of all three tracts. APCWS Director John Bass considers this a textbook example of how partnerships in battlefield preservation should work. "The federal government's help with Prairie Grove's battlefield protection plan set the stage for an effort that will involve state government, local corporate interests, and the nonprofits as represented by the APCWS," said Bass. "Everyone pitches in and the cost burden is shared."

**We reported in September that the state of Kentucky** had awarded \$2.5 million in federal highway money to fund preservation projects at Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site in Perryville, Kentucky. Fellow Round Table member Brooks Davis recently brought to our attention additional preservation efforts at Perryville.

The citizens of the Perryville area are in the process of restoring a section of the village along the river dating from the Civil War known as "Old Perryville," as well as a property overlooking the Chaplin River and Old Perryville. That property, the Carpenter House, is being made over into an inn that will include a dining room and twenty guest rooms. Its location makes the inn most attractive to those touring the battlefield. A local group has been able to have the structure stabilized and a new copper roof installed, but the rest of the work awaits funding. Local banks are behind the project, but are insisting that the local historical association raise the rest of the equity money before they will release the construction loan. The funding requirement is \$1,524,882. According to Brooks, a very sizeable tax credit can be passed on to equity investors. For further information, contact Brooks at (312) 944-5082 or Mrs. Cecil Wallace, Boyle Landmark Trust, Box 215, Danville, KY 40423-0215.

## MARCH MEETING

by Barbara Hughett

The image of deliberate mistreatment of prisoners-of-war developed as a result of the post-Civil War memoirs of former prisoners—especially those written by men who spent time in Confederate prisons. The effects of the post-war trial, condemnation, and execution (in November 1865) of Captain Harry Wirz, Confederate commandant at Georgia's Andersonville Prison, enhanced this image.

How many of these commonly-held impressions are based on reality, and what proportion of them might be the result of Northern war propaganda? On March 12, Civil War scholar Frank L. Byrne addressed 134 members and guests at the 519th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table. His topic was "Civil War Prisons: Myth and Reality."

John McElroy, a former prisoner at Andersonville, writes, in his memoir *Andersonville* (1879), referring to the mortality rate in several Southeastern prisons: "It was in the year 1864, and the first three months of 1865 that these twenty-five thousand youths were cruelly and needlessly done to death ..., victims of the most barbarous and unnecessary cruelty recorded since the Dark Ages. Barbarous, because the wit of man has not yet devised a more savage method of destroying fellow-beings than by exposure and starvation; unnecessary because the destruction of these had not, and could not have the slightest effect upon the result of the struggle.... Had they all been turned loose as soon as captured, their efforts would not have hastened the Confederacy's fate a single day..."

Who was responsible and why? According to McElroy's account, "Men capable of doing all that the Secession leaders were guilty of—both before and during the war—were quite capable of revengefully destroying twenty-five thousand of their enemies by the most hideous means at their command. That they did so set about destroying their enemies, willfully, maliciously, and with malice prepense and afterthought, is susceptible of proof as conclusive as that which in a criminal court sends murderers to the gallows."

William B. Hesseltine, in his *Civil War Prisons* (1930), tried to dispel the myth of intended cruelty on the part of Southern prison keepers. He attributed deteriorating conditions in the South's prisons to Confederate poverty and lack of system. Byrne suggested that Hesseltine's Southern background and his pacifist philosophy may have strongly influenced his point-of-view. Byrne further suggested that later historians have tended to accept, with some modifications, Hesseltine's views.

Unpublished diaries of former prisoners—which Byrne called the most reliable sources—tend to confirm what the memoir writers said about bad conditions. Byrne pointed out that when one compares conditions in Northern and Southern prisons, the more striking differences are often found between prisons for enlisted men and prisons for officers than are found between the prisons of the two sides.

Technical factors, such as shortages of supplies and lack of system, certainly played a part in the less-than-optimal conditions in Southern prisons. "Aside from the inadequacies of individuals, no attempt was made to create a systematic administration of Southern prisons until late 1864." As a possible reason for why this happened, Byrne stated that the Confederates had hoped "to avoid keeping prisoners more than briefly."

Byrne concluded that while both sides did mythologize about the treatment of prisoners for their own propa-

ganda, and Northerners made long-term political use of the question, "both sides could also point with factual reality to many instances of unnecessary harshness." And both sides "could also attack the others' leaders for manipulating the treatment and exchange of prisoners for political and military purposes. The leaders of both sides were more responsible for the magnitude of the suffering than were the underlings directly in charge of the prisons. ... In reality as in myth, neither South nor North was free of responsibility for the dreadful conditions of its prisons."

### PLEASE NOTE

If you are registered for the upcoming battlefield tour to Vicksburg and have *not* indicated your choices for dinner menus or have failed to let us know whether you will need bus service from the Jackson airport to Vicksburg and what time your plane is arriving, please do so immediately! Call either Barbara Hughett (312-973-5822) or Don Anderson (708-296-2780), co-chairs of the 1993 tour. **If you do not make a menu choice now, we will choose for you. If you do not reserve a space on a bus by letting us know when your flight arrives in Jackson, you will have to find your own transportation to Vicksburg.**

**The Stephen A. Douglas Association is sponsoring a program and dinner on Friday, April 23**, in honor of the 180th anniversary of the birth of Senator Stephen A. Douglas. A "Reader's Theatre" dramatization—"Douglas and Lincoln in Chicago"—and a reception and exhibit of Douglas artifacts will be held at the Harold Washington Library from 5:00—7:00 p.m. This will be followed by a dinner at the Prairie Restaurant at the Hyatt on Printers Row and an address by Harold Holzer, editor of *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: The First Complete, Unexpurgated Text* (1993), and coauthor of several previous books on Lincoln and Civil War history. The cost for the evening is \$27.50 per person. For information and to make reservations, call (312) 787-1860.

**President Mary Abroe** will speak to the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table on April 15 on "Battlefield Preservation Efforts in the Late Nineteenth Century." She will also deliver a paper entitled "Civil War Battlefields as Cultural Landscapes, 1861-1900," at the annual meeting of the National Council on Public History, in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, on April 29.

**Former President Paul Kliger** addressed the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table on March 5, and the Salt Creek Civil War Round Table on April 2. His topic on both occasions was "The Confederate Invasion of New Mexico."

**Former President Richard McAdoo** presented a program on Civil War artillery to the Quad-City Civil War Round Table in Davenport, Iowa, in February. Member Gordon Dammann presented a program on Civil War medicine to the same group at its March meeting.

**Member Wayne Anderson** will speak to a meeting of the Old Northwest Territory Area Chapter of the Company of Military Historians, in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on April 17. His topic will be "The 15th Wisconsin Infantry."

## The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Abel, Annie H. *The American Indian in the Civil War, 1861-1865*. U. of Nebraska Press. 1992. Pbk. \$12.95.
- Alexander, Bevin. *Lost Victories: The Military Genius of Stonewall Jackson*. Henry Holt & Co. 1992. \$29.95.
- Ambrose, Stephen E. *Upton and the Army*. LSU Press. 1992. Pbk. \$9.95. Original of 1964.
- Andrews, W.H. *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollection of the 1st Georgia Regulars*. Longstreet Press. 1992. \$19.95.
- Benson, Susan W., ed. *Berry Benson's Civil War Book: Memoirs of a Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter*. U. of Georgia Press. 1992. \$19.95. Original of 1962.

**The Midwest Civil War Round Table Conference** will take place from April 15-18, at Monroe Community College in Monroe, Michigan. The keynote address will be delivered by James I. (Bud) Robertson, Jr. Speakers will include former Round Table President Marshall D. Krolick, Edwin C. Bearss, Robert K. Krick, William Glenn Robertson, and Dennis Frye. For information, call (313) 242-7300.

### SPECIAL AUCTION TO BE HELD AT APRIL MEETING

Jerry Warshaw has donated some rare Civil War printed materials to be offered in a special silent auction at the April 16 meeting. The proceeds will be donated to The Round Table's battlefield preservation fund. The following collections will be offered as units (individual issues will not be available):

- American History Illustrated*: Vol. I, #1, April 1966 through Vol. 26, #6, March/April 1992
- American Heritage*: Vol. 6, #2, February 1955 through Vol. 36, #1, December 1984
- Civil War Times Illustrated*: Vol. 1, #1, April 1962 through Vol. 28, #1, March 1989

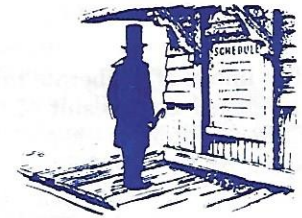
The following reissues, which were mailed on corresponding dates during the Civil War Centennial period (1960-1965) will also be raffled off, each collection as a unit:

- Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*: Weekly—January 5, 1860 through May 25, 1865
- Harper's Weekly*: December 29, 1860 through December 16, 1865

**Whoever takes possession of any of the items above must be able to pick them up at Jerry's apartment in Evanston no later than April 30! Jerry is moving on May 1.**

The history of The Round Table, *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship*, by Barbara Hughett, is available for \$30 per copy. You may purchase the book at the monthly meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

## BULLETIN BOARD



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street (Buttons, 15th Floor), the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

*April 16*: Carol A. Reardon on "Images of Pickett's Charge in Southern History."

*May 6-9*: Annual Battlefield Tour—Vicksburg.

*May 14*: William Piston on "Clio and the General: James Longstreet and the Writing of Southern History."

*June 11*: Frances Kennedy on "Community Benefits of Battlefield Preservation"

### New Members

- Mark Abate, 11 NO 71 Johnstown Road, Elgin, IL 60123, (708) 931-7381
- Mick Angotti, 2620 W. 57th Place, Merrillville, IN 46410, (219) 980-2157
- James S. Brady II, 5038 Allardowne Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49001
- James W. Brady, 3318 Lake Hill Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49008
- C.J. Brannen, S.J., Loyola University, 6525 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626-5385, (312) 973-1168
- Erik Ernst, 2026 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60614
- Randall Gingiss, 200 E. Chestnut Street #1721, Chicago, IL 60611, (312) 988-4303
- Dean A. Kinzer, 304 Elm Avenue, Elmhurst, IL 60126
- Leslie MacDonald, 2744 W. Rascher, Chicago, IL 60625, (312) 878-1599
- John Novick, 10514 Avenue L, Chicago, IL 60617, (312) 768-7631
- Bing Owens, 1094 W. Pratt, Chicago, IL 60626, (312) 465-2984
- S. Waite Rawls, 1260 Astor Street, Chicago, IL 60610, (312) 280-9601
- Douglas Royster, 4255 Winston Place, Bettendorf, IA 52722, (319) 332-6752
- Patrick Snyder, 843 Hazel Avenue, Deerfield, IL 60015, (708) 945-7481

### Change of Address

- Ken Hoffman, 5945 N. Glenwood, Chicago, IL 60660

**Rally 'Round the Flag, a book about Chicago during the Civil War**, written by Loyola University history professor Theodore J. Karamanski, has recently been published by Nelson-Hall. Karamanski, founder of Loyola's public history program, begins his book with a description of the Republican National Convention, which met in Chicago in May 1860, and ends it with the stop in Chicago of Abraham Lincoln's funeral train on May 1, 1865. The chapters in between describe events in Chicago during those critical intervening years.

**Garry Wills was recently awarded a National Book Critics Circle Award** for his *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (1992). Wills was also the recipient of this year's Barondess/Lincoln Award of the Civil War Round Table of New York.