

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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May 1994

Robert K. Krick on “Lawyers, Politicians, and Clerks: The Regimental Command of the Army of Northern Virginia”

by Barbara Hughett

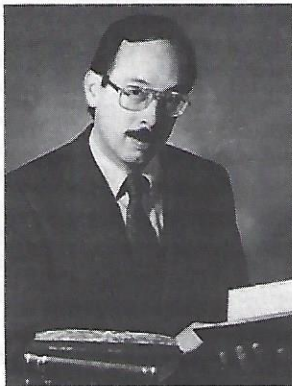
STUDENTS of the American Civil War throughout the years continue to examine with much care and interest the options which were available to the generals on both sides, and the results of the choices those leaders made. The results, however, often depended on what was accomplished by colonels. In the great majority of instances, these regimental commanders who executed the generals’ decisions had neither the training nor the ability to accomplish their responsibilities adeptly. “Lawyers, Politicians, and Clerks: The Regimental Command of the Army of Northern Virginia” will be the topic of Robert K. Krick when he addresses The Civil War Round Table on May 13.

General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia included about 150 regiments of infantry and cavalry, commanded at any given time by nearly 500 field-grade officers. Because of attrition and evolution in command, nearly 2000 men held such commissions during the war’s four years. Many of these individuals brought nothing to their assignments to commend themselves beyond an aptitude for politics, legal matters, or making money.

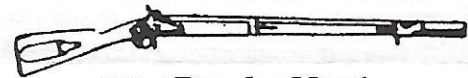
Most of Lee’s colonels were relatively prosperous, surprisingly young, and far better educated than the mid-nineteenth-century norm. Over 400 of them were lawyers and/or politicians of one sort or another. Nearly a hundred of the army’s field-grade officers had practiced medicine before the war, and a score of them had been ministers. Their colleagues included barbers, saloon keepers, jewelers, druggists, hotel owners, auctioneers, poets, and the two men who founded the Pony Express.

Despite employing the graduates of Virginia Military Institute and other military schools, the South had far too few men with military education or experience to fill regimental positions. The stories of the lawyers, politicians, and clerks who made up Lee’s mid-level command offer interesting insights into the way his army operated and throw light on the problems he faced in directing an army of civilians.

Robert K. Krick has been chief historian at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National



Robert K. Krick



531st Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

Robert K. Krick on “Lawyers, Politicians, and Clerks: The Regimental Command of the Army of Northern Virginia”

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Friday, May 13

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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: Roast Pork with Stuffing,
Orange Roughy, or Fruit Plate



PLEASE NOTE

Please make your reservation by Wednesday, May 11. Mail the enclosed postcard or call the book shop at 312-944-3085.

The Holiday Inn parking garage is closed, as it undergoes repairs. **Free parking is available only if you opt for valet parking service. Make sure you tell the valet at the entrance of the building that you are coming to The Civil War Round Table dinner.**

Military Park since 1972. A native of northern California, he received a bachelor’s degree from Pacific Union College and an M.A. from San Jose State University. He has been the author, editor, or coauthor of over twenty-five books. Books he has written include: *The Gettysburg Death Register* (1981); *The Fredericksburg Artillery* (1987); *A Virginia Marine on Iwo Jima* (1987); *Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain* (1990), which won several awards, including the 1990 Douglas Southall Freeman Award; and *Lee’s Colonels*:

(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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| Tape Record Librarian | Hal Ardell |
| House | Charles Bednar |
| | Larry Gibbs |
| Picnic | Paul Klekner |

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.

Krick (continued from page 1)

A Biographical Register of the Field Officers of the Army of Northern Virginia (1993).

Bob Krick has written numerous articles for magazines and professional journals, and lectures widely throughout the country. He is vice president of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites and is a fellow of the Company of Military Historians. In 1988, he was awarded the Nevins-Freeman Award of The Civil War Round Table. He last addressed The Round Table at the Fiftieth Anniversary Symposium on October 13, 1990, when his topic was "Jackson and Banks in the Valley."

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

A \$163 million package of highway improvements and other incentives for the proposed \$650 million Disney's America theme park and surrounding complex near Manassas was approved in March by the Virginia General Assembly. The 100-acre theme park would be the center of a 3000-acre development in Haymarket, Virginia, four miles from the Manassas National Battlefield Park. In addition to the theme park up to 2300 residential units, a business park, and a mall are planned.

The \$163 million package includes improvements for roads and interstates, signage, workforce training, and advertising. Four miles of Interstate 66 and a portion of U.S. 15 will be widened and an I-66 interchange, an access road to the theme park, and roads within the Disney property will be built. Opponents of the Disney complex, which include a number of environmental groups, are trying to determine if the project can be stopped on the basis of its impact on Northern Virginia's polluted air — air polluted primarily by automobile exhaust. Northern Virginia is already in "severe non-compliance" with federal clean air regulations.

At Brandy Station, Virginia, the Culpeper County Board of Supervisors has voted in favor of granting a conditional use permit to allow construction of a 3.1-mile Formula One racetrack on 526 acres of the battlefield. However, issues such as how the traffic the racetrack will generate will be accommodated, and who will pay for the highway and road upgrades that will be needed, have yet to be resolved. In addition, the developer must still assemble financial backing and commitments from racing organizations. Some in racing say the track is a far-fetched proposition.

The operational budget of Grant's Tomb in New York is slated for an extra \$450,000 next year — more than three times the site's current budget. As reported in the December Battlefield Preservation Update, the tomb and the surrounding area are in a sad state of repair. The additional funds will pay for rangers to man the site two additional days a week and for 24-hour security guards. It is hoped the increased hours and security will help ward off graffiti and vandalism. In addition, the site is funded for \$400,000 in repairs this year, a one-time allocation mainly to replace the roof. The money will also pay for cleaning of the exterior and replacement of some graffiti-marred granite pieces.

The city of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, has donated the remnants of the Civil War-era Fortress Rosecrans to the National Park Service. The earthworks fortress was built by Union troops occupying Murfreesboro in 1863 to protect the railroad and road used to supply troops waging the Tullahoma and Chattanooga Campaigns. The 26-acre site includes about ten percent of the original fort. The transfer will allow the National Park Service to stabilize the earthworks and to develop a parking lot and interpretive trail.

The Third Annual American Battlefield Protection Conference announced for May 20-23 has been postponed. It will be rescheduled for later this year.

☪ APRIL MEETING ☪

by Barbara Hughett

Charleston, South Carolina, represented the very soul of the Confederacy. The United States Navy, Army, and Marine Corps fought an extended, bitter, and ultimately unsuccessful littoral campaign aimed at reducing the city where the Civil War began. "Confronting Charleston: A Combined Campaign" was the topic of Major Kenneth F. McKenzie, USMC, on April 8, when he addressed 116 members and guests at the 530th meeting of The Civil War Round Table.

In his talk, Major McKenzie briefly outlined the overall development of the naval war against the Confederacy, then narrowed his scope to the combined campaign against Charleston. He explained the strategic value of the city and why it was so difficult a prize to capture. Finally, he examined two operations in greater detail: the ironclad attack on Fort Sumter in April 1863, and the boat attack against the fort in September 1863.

"The United States Navy," Major McKenzie explained, "fought three wars against the Confederacy—the war on western waters, fought with and really under the Army; the war against the Confederate raiders; and, lastly, the close blockade and littoral operations along the Gulf and South-eastern coasts. The Navy fought the war on western waters essentially as an adjunct to the Army—it had mixed success in the war against the privateers—but only along the coasts of the Gulf and the Atlantic was there any opportunity for the Navy to achieve significant independent success."

Charleston, the fountainhead of disunion, a city of incandescent treason, excited Union strategic planners for reasons as much political and psychological as military. The port of Charleston was of no greater inherent strategic value than that of Wilmington, New Orleans, or Mobile. But, because of the psychological implications, Charleston "exerted a profound influence upon the Lincoln administration and the Navy Department."

Geography was the city's strongest defense. The harbor, Major McKenzie noted, "was much like a closed sack with a narrow neck. Any fleet was required to pass between Morris Island on the southern side of the harbor and Sullivan's Island on the northern side. The distance between Cummings Point and Sullivan's Island was less than 3000 yards. Once in the harbor proper, the main ship channel was bounded by James Island to the south and Mount Pleasant to the north. The city itself was on a peninsula to the west. Batteries on any of these points were able to concentrate fire with withering effect on any ship in the harbor. It was quite unlike New Orleans or Mobile; the batteries couldn't be run, for ships—even inside the harbor—would still be within a concentric circle of fire. By mid-1863, there were 149 guns in the harbor. Fort Sumter, perched on a shoal in the harbor . . . and designed to mount three tiers of guns, two in casemate and one *en barbette*, made entry into the mouth of the sack even more dangerous."

The United States Navy maintained a blockading fleet off Charleston harbor, beginning in 1861. Gradually, the wooden hulls of the early blockaders gave way to the ironclad designs of the *Monitor* and her successors. In April 1863, Rear Admiral Samuel F. DuPont's attempt to breach the harbor in an ironclad-fort duel ended in his decisive defeat. The following August, after months of deflecting shots from the shore batteries on the South Carolina coast

and dodging the mines that protected Charleston Harbor, Rear Admiral John Dahlgren determined to retake the elusive Confederate prize, Fort Sumter. His attack was also unsuccessful. Sumter remained in Confederate hands and the harbor inviolate until February 1865, when the garrison was evacuated in response to the approach of the troops of General William T. Sherman.

"The great operational failure of the U.S. Navy in the Civil War," Major McKenzie said, "was the lengthy siege and blockade of Charleston. New technology and promising careers were dashed against the harbor forts, and in the ironclad attack in April and the boat attack in September, the Navy and Marine Corps were badly embarrassed by unrelieved tactical disasters. Both attacks sprung from the Navy's desire to seize Sumter ahead of the Army; while these actions were partially based on operational requirements, the plans were also driven by a strong interservice rivalry and ego. Once having decided to assault Sumter by boat, the inability of the Army and Navy to fashion a reasonable cooperation foredoomed the operation."

In fact, the limited agreement achieved wasn't really cooperation at all. Instead it was really an agreement not to cooperate, resulting in two independent expeditions, without possibility of mutual support. The essence of successful operational art lies in placing your strengths against your opponent's weaknesses, while protecting your own vulnerabilities.

"In Charleston," Major McKenzie observed as he concluded his address, "neither the Army nor the Navy was able to design a plan that avoided the strengths of the defenders, while reaching the city proper. Confederate General Beauregard, a relatively ineffective field commander, was at his best in a relatively static defensive problem, and he shone in this campaign. The final verdict on operations in Charleston may very well lie in the words of Marine Captain McCawley, penned in his report to Dahlgren on the boat attack: 'It was very dark near the fort and there was great confusion.'"

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Nominating Committee Report

Mary Abroe, chair of the Nominating Committee, has announced the following proposed slate of officers for the 1994-95 term:

- President Barbara Hughett
 - Senior Vice President Carole Cierniak
 - Vice President Larry Gibbs
 - Vice President Robert Girardi
 - Secretary Bruce Allardice
 - Assistant Secretary Michael Marienthal
 - Treasurer James Nethery
 - Assistant Treasurer Charles Bednar
- Trustees (terms expiring in 1996):
 Robert Dawson, Karen Krieger,
 Eleanor Leichenko, Norman Poteshman

Four current trustees—Gene Holland, Carole Le Claire, Frank Patton, and Jerome Schur—remain in office as they complete their two-year terms.

The election will be held during the May meeting, at which time additional nominations for any of the above offices may be made from the floor.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Abel, Annie Heloise. *The American Indian and the End of the Confederacy*. Introduction by Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green. U. of Nebraska Press. 1993. \$12.95.
- Aimone, Alan C. and Barbara A. Aimone. *A User's Guide to the Official Records of the American Civil War*. White Mane Publ. Co. 1993. Pbk. \$12.00.
- Angle, Craig. *The Great Locomotive Chase: More on the Andrews Raid and the First Medal of Honor*. Craig Angle, P.O. Box 347, Rouzerville, PA 17250. 1992. \$25.00.
- Bilby, Joseph G. *Forgotten Warriors: New Jersey's African American Soldiers in the Civil War*. Longstreet House. 1993. \$7.95.
- Bilby, Joseph G. *Three Rousing Cheers: A History of the Fifteenth New Jersey Infantry from Flemington to Appomattox*. Longstreet House. 1993. \$36.00.

Former President Mary Abroe delivered a paper on "Civil War Battlefields: Symbols of Late Nineteenth-Century American Culture" at the Fourth Annual American Studies Graduate Conference, held on April 2 at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. She also addressed the Union League Club Civil War Round Table on March 28; her topic was "Civil War Battlefields as Cultural Landscapes, 1861-1900."

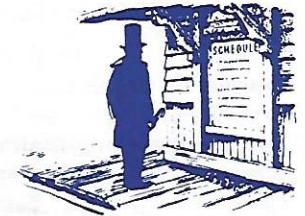
Stephen B. Oates, this Round Table's 1993 Nevins-Freeman Award recipient, will address the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table on Friday, June 3, at their annual banquet meeting at the Watercress Restaurant in Palatine. His topic will be "John Brown," about whom he wrote a biography, *To Purge This Land With Blood*, which was named "one of the most outstanding books of 1970" by the *New York Times*. For information and to make reservations (\$25 per person), call Roger Prouty at 708-358-8657.

The Chicago Bar Association will present a reenactment of one of Abraham Lincoln's murder trials on Thursday, May 5, from 3:00-6:00 p.m., at the Dirksen Federal Court Building. Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz and other prominent attorneys will reenact the famous case of the *People v. Harrison*. Cullom Davis, director of the Lincoln Legal Papers Project, will participate in a panel discussion which will follow the mock trial. Admission is free. To make a reservation, call 312-554-2056.

The Round Table Fall Tour of the Perryville battlefield and Kentucky Lincoln sites is set for October 12-16. Additional information, including tour costs, will be announced at the May meeting and will appear in the June newsletter.

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. **Beginning with the September 9 meeting, our regular meeting place will be the Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard.**

- May 5-8: Annual Battlefield Tour—Shenandoah Valley
- May 13: Robert K. Krick on "Lawyers, Politicians, and Clerks: The Regimental Command of the Army of Northern Virginia"
- June 10: Stacey Allen on "New Discoveries at Shiloh"
- July 31: Annual Round Table Picnic
- September 9: Frank J. Williams on "Abraham Lincoln: Our Ever Present Contemporary"
- October 7: Alan T. Nolan, Nevins-Freeman Address (Please note: this is the **first** Friday of the month.)
- October 12-16: Fall Kentucky Tour
- November 11: Terry Van Meter on "The Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac"
- December 9: David E. Long on "I Shall Never Recall a Word": Emancipation and the Race Issue in the 1864 Presidential Election Campaign"
- January 13: James I. (Bud) Robertson, Jr., on "New Viewpoints on Stonewall Jackson"

New Members

- John Chalmers, 1461 West Farragut Avenue #2-W, Chicago, IL 60640, 312-878-0442
- James Mueting, 1727 Morse Avenue, Des Plaines, IL 60018, 708-390-9757
- Lynn Nichols, 3412 Meadow Lane, Glenview, IL 60025, 708-998-8572

The Lincoln Group of Illinois will hold its annual meeting on Saturday, June 11, from noon-5:00 p.m., at Illinois Benedictine College (IBC) in Lisle. The Thomas J. Dyba Lecture will be given by Wayne Weslowski, a professor at IBC and the creator of a model of the Lincoln funeral train. Former Round Table President Daniel Weinberg will participate in a panel discussion which will follow the lecture. For information, call Philip Bean at 708-960-1500, extension 4510.

The American Blue and Gray Association will hold its 1994 annual meeting at the Springfield Hilton, in Springfield, Illinois, on July 27-30. Speakers will include former Round Table President Marshall D. Krolick; John Y. Simon, The Round Table's 1985 Nevins-Freeman honoree; Lincoln Home Historian George L. Painter; William C. Davis; Richard McMurry; and William Glenn Robertson. The theme of the conference is "The Last Year of The War: 1864-65." Registration fee is \$250 for Association members, and \$325 for non-members. Single-day rates are also available. For additional information, call 1-800-992-1863.