

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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June 1995

John Y. Simon on "Forging a Commander: Ulysses S. Grant and the First Year of the Civil War"

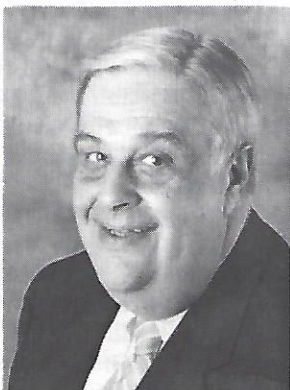
by Barbara Hughett

A man who might have been voted as "least likely to succeed" in 1861, Ulysses S. Grant emerged as the great military leader of the Union. Grant was nearly thirty-nine years old when the Civil War began. His military and civilian careers had been drab and unsuccessful. By the time he turned forty, he had the battles of Belmont, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh behind him.

At Appomattox in 1865, Grant received the surrender of a general fifteen years his senior. Yet if relative youth offered advantages, what happened to George B. McClellan, Grant's junior in age? By seeking to balance issues of age, experience, and personality, John Y. Simon will attempt to explore Grant's rapid rise *in a single year* from small-town leather store clerk to major general. The topic of Simon's address on June 9 is "Forging a Commander: Ulysses S. Grant and the First Year of the Civil War."

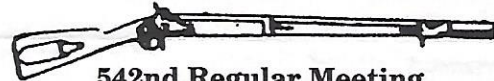
What role, if any, did luck play in Grant's remarkable change of fortune? After the first year of war, Grant went on to greater military responsibility, including larger armies and higher rank, but his accomplishments in the first year presaged his future—his weaknesses as well as his strengths.

A native of Highland Park, Illinois, John Y. Simon earned his bachelor's degree at Swarthmore College, and his masters and doctoral degrees at Harvard University. In the summers during his undergraduate years, he worked as a stockboy in the book shop of Round Table Founder Ralph G. Newman. Simon claims that he learned more working for Mr. Newman than he did in all his years of graduate school.



John Y. Simon

John Simon taught at Ohio State University, began editing *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* in 1962, and in 1964 moved to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he is professor of history as well as editor of the *Grant Papers* and executive director of the Ulysses S. Grant Association. The first volume of the *Papers* appeared in 1967, and nineteen more have been published since then. Simon's Grant project is noted both for



542nd Regular Meeting

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John Y. Simon on "Ulysses S. Grant and the First Year of the Civil War"

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Friday, June 9

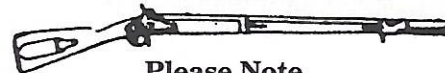
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Union League Club
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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

\$25 - The Civil War Round Table of Chicago members
\$30 - Nonmembers

Entree: Grilled Sirloin with Mushroom Sauce or
Catch of the Day



Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, June 7, by calling The Civil War Round Table offices at 312-341-1865. People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If you make a reservation and then find you cannot attend, please call to cancel or you will be billed for a dinner. **No last-minute orders for the Catch of the Day can be honored. The chef must have at least twenty-four hours notice.**

The Union League Club is located at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Federal Street. Federal Street runs north and south between Dearborn and Clark Streets. Parking is free at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club.

its prodigious output and for its qualities. He is the dean of documentary editors, a founder of the Association for Documentary Editing, and a spokesperson for the craft before groups ranging from committees of the United States Congress to interested students.

In addition to his diligence as an editor, he is also a

(continued on page 3)

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940
 410 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 841
 Chicago, Illinois 60605-1402
 Phone: 312-341-1865
 Fax: 312-341-1863

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Battlefield Preservation Raffle and Schimmelfenning Boutique	Ted Birndorf
House	Thomas Herres Charles Ten Brink
Picnic	Paul Klekner Robert Dawson

The only requirement for membership in The Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 410 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 841, Chicago, Illinois 60605-1402.

The annual Round Table picnic will be held on Sunday, July 30, at Grant Woods. See the enclosed flyer for further details.

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

Each year the American Battlefield Protection Program awards partnership monies to local and state battlefield preservation organizations to be used for battlefield preservation, interpretation, planning, community consensus building, and staff support. Funding totalled \$450,275 in 1995. Following is a partial list of 1995 partnership award recipients.

- Alcorn County Board of Supervisors for an archaeological survey of the Corinth Contraband Camp. Contraband camps, comprised of freed and fugitive slaves, appeared behind northern lines as the Union army advanced south. The Corinth camp was one of the longest running and best organized. This award will support a search for the camp to identify its exact location and to evaluate the importance of any remaining subsurface resources.
- Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield, Brushy Mountain Line District Conservation Plan. The area from Brushy Mountain to Lost Mountain was a twelve-mile-long outer defense line of sophisticated trench works, forts, and batteries. This project will support a study of the surviving fortification system.
- Lord Fairfax Planning District Commission, Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Heritage Plan. The Commission will develop and implement regional strategies to preserve critical battlefield lands and to provide technical assistance to Shenandoah County for Cedar Creek, Fisher's Hill, Toms Brook, and New Market.
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Pilot Knob Battlefield Protection Plan. The objective of this project is to formulate a strategy to protect tracts of land, like Sheperd Mountain, that were part of the battlefield as well as other surviving landmarks.
- The Trust for Public Land, Inc., The Atlanta Campaign Land Protection Initiative. The Trust will provide planning and training in negotiating conservation easements within the Atlanta Campaign Corridor. Under a conservation easement, landowners continue to own and manage the use of the property, but may agree to restrict development. The project will focus on the site of the Battle of Resaca.
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Survey. The VDHR will expand and build on a program for completing a survey of Civil War battlefields in Virginia. The final data will be distributed to appropriate local governments. The VDHR will also produce a *Guidebook to Virginia's Civil War Battlefields*.
- Frederick County, Resource Management Plan and Site Preparation for the Kernstown Battlefield. A detailed plan will be prepared for the management of the Grim Farm and Sand Ridge portions of the Kernstown Battlefield. Appropriate provisions for public access, trails, signs, and other interpretive features will be considered.
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Port Gibson Preservation Plan. A battlefield preservation plan for Port Gibson will be developed. It will identify significant Civil War sites, assess current and potential threats, and develop preservation strategies.

☛ MAY MEETING ☛

by Larry Gibbs

On May 12, at the 541st regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, Tamara (Tam) Moser (Melia) Smith gave a spirited presentation on "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army" to 93 members and guests. Smith, who is writing a biography of McPherson, made a number of interesting observations about his life. She noted that, in general, McPherson is better known for his death at the age of 35 than for his life. Known to most historians as the highest-ranking Union officer killed in battle, McPherson perhaps represented the best of the Old Army ideals. General Ulysses Grant was inconsolable when told of McPherson's death on July 22, 1864, at the Battle of Atlanta, calling him "one of the ablest and most competent generals in the Union Army."

McPherson was the most popular cadet at West Point, and ranked first in his class. After graduating, he took a teaching position. This was followed by the chief engineering assignment for the construction of Alcatraz in San Francisco harbor. In 1862, General Henry Halleck sent McPherson as an aide to Grant at the battles of Forts Henry and Donelson. In the Vicksburg campaign in 1863, McPherson was the only commander under Grant who succeeded in constructing canals. "Both Halleck and Grant held McPherson in very high regard," explained Smith.

As a foremost advocate of Old Army ideals, McPherson subordinated independent thought to the orders of superiors. He was a follower, not a leader. His faithful obedience to orders became both his greatest strength and biggest weakness. A turning point came at the Battle of Resaca. McPherson was ordered to take the position unless his command received stiff opposition. If resistance came, he was to retreat. At the battle, General Sherman's cavalry did not arrive to aid McPherson, so he retreated five miles to Snake Creek Gap. Although he had superior numbers, McPherson did as he was ordered—he retreated. This retreat brought McPherson severe criticism. Smith said "he was accused of being too timid, then too nervous." In effect, he carried out his orders too well. McPherson wanted to deflect these criticisms; he would be given a chance to vindicate himself around Atlanta.

In the early summer of 1864, Confederate President Jefferson Davis replaced General Joseph Johnston with the aggressive General John Bell Hood. McPherson, a former roommate of Hood's at West Point, correctly predicted that Hood would attack Union forces at Atlanta before eventually leaving the city. McPherson, stinging from criticism of his retreat at Resaca, did not desire a repeat performance. During the second Rebel attack on July 22, he was mortally wounded. McPherson felt he could not suffer any more indignities and perhaps he took an unnecessary risk to prove his courage.

McPherson's troops later reacted with fury and revenge against the Confederates in Georgia and South Carolina. On November 30, 1864, they captured Ft. McAllister, and other battles were won by his former troopers with tremendous ferocity. These actions were an attempt to honor their fallen leader. After the war, McPherson's soldiers thought so much of him that his officers started a Society of the Army of the Tennessee. "This organization honored McPherson as an irreplace-

able officer, martyred for the ideals of the Old Army," asserted Smith.

The army trained McPherson well, but he had a major flaw. He obeyed orders, but no more. Although his leadership was unquestioned and he never lost a battle, he was overly cautious. "His subordination to orders never gave him a chance to exhibit any boldness or originality as a military leader," Smith concluded. "McPherson had the potential to be great, but his premature death abruptly ended that promise."

JOHN Y. SIMON (continued from page 1)

prolific writer. More than fifty of his articles have appeared in professional journals. He is the editor of *General Grant by Matthew Arnold with a Rejoinder from Mark Twain* (1966; reprinted 1995); and *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant* (1975; reprinted 1988). He is coeditor of *Ulysses S. Grant: Essays and Documents* (1981) and *The Continuing Civil War: Essays in Honor of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago* (1992).

His many awards include the Distinguished Service Award of the Association for Documentary Editing (1983) and the 1985 Nevins-Freeman Award of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. He is a very popular speaker on the lecture circuit, and is currently at work on volumes 21 and 22 of the *Grant Papers*.

Simon has appeared before The Round Table on a number of occasions over the years. He last spoke to us at our Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration in October 1990, when his topic was "Fifty Years of The Civil War Round Table." He last addressed a regular meeting *exactly* six years ago—on June 9, 1989—when he spoke on "Edward D. Baker, Ball's Bluff, and the Politics of Command."

Illinois Monument at Vicksburg

As reported in the February newsletter, the Illinois Memorial Temple at Vicksburg is undergoing restoration, and additional monies are required. Our friend Terry Winschel, National Park Service historian at Vicksburg, has asked for help from Round Tables and individuals in Illinois in order to finish the project. His request is part of a larger program being implemented at Vicksburg—one in which the private sector of various states is being asked to contribute to the restoration of monuments commemorating their own. We who delight in annual battlefield tours—like the recent trip to Vicksburg—might consider our debt to those who fought there and remember them by returning their gift. Personal donations to the project may be sent to Supt. William Nichols, Vicksburg National Military Park, 3201 Clay St., Vicksburg, Mississippi 39180; please make your check payable to "National Park Service," with "Illinois Monument at Vicksburg" noted on the memoline. For additional information, contact Mary Abroe, at 708-251-4745.

As decided at the 1995 Summer Executive Committee Meeting, the destination of the 1996 Annual Battlefield Tour of The Civil War Round Table will be Chickamauga and Chattanooga. Tour chair will be Robert Girardi. His co-chair is Past President Kurt Carlson. Mark your calendars for May 1-5.

The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Alexander, Bevin. *How Great Generals Win*. Norton. 1993. \$25.00
- Andrews, William H. *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollection of the 1st Georgia Regulars, 1861-1865*. Longstreet House. 1992. \$19.95
- Bennett, Brian A. *Sons of Old Monroe: Regimental History of Patrick O'Rorke's 140th New York Volunteer Infantry*. Morningside House Inc. 1992. \$45.00
- Brady, James P., ed. *Hurrah for the Artillery: Knap's Independent Battery "E", Pennsylvania Light Artillery*. Thomas Publications. 1992. \$29.95
- Brooksher, William R. and David K. Snider. *Glory at a Gallop: Tales of the Confederate Cavalry*. Brassey's U.S. 1993. \$22.00
- Browning, Robert W., Jr. *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron During the Civil War*. U. of Alabama Press. 1993. \$39.95

SUMMER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

President-elect Carole Cierniak has announced that the summer meeting of the Executive Committee of The Civil War Round Table will be held on Saturday, July 8, in the library of Notre Dame High School, 7655 Dempster, in Niles, beginning at 9 a.m. A luncheon will be provided. Committee members will receive additional information in the mail. All past presidents and 1995-96 officers and committee chairs are urged to attend.

Paul Klekner will speak to the lunchtime Union League Club Civil War Round Table on Monday, June 26. His topic will be "Hood's Tennessee Campaign." The cost of the luncheon is \$15 per person. To make reservations, call ULC Member Relations at 312-427-7800. Cocktails are served at 11:30 a.m.; lunch is served at noon.

The ULC luncheon on Monday, July 31, will feature Jim Davids, speaking on "The Election of 1860." Our own Marshall D. Krolick and Frank Patton will address the meeting on Monday, August 28. Their topic will be "First Bull Run."

Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

In addition to The Round Table history and *The Continuing Civil War*, the essays from the Fiftieth Anniversary Proceedings, the following items are available at each monthly meeting: Lapel pins, Mugs, Meeting Tapes, Civil War Buff posters and T-Shirts, CWRT T-shirts, polos, and sweatshirts.

Proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the programs of The Civil War Round Table.

BULLETIN BOARD



FUTURE MEETINGS

- Regular meetings are held at the Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.
- June 9: John Y. Simon on "Forging a Commander: Ulysses S. Grant and the First Year of the Civil War"
- July 8: Summer Executive Committee Meeting, Notre Dame High School
- July 30: Annual Picnic, Grant Woods
- September 8: Grady McWhiney on "Braxton Bragg"
- October 13: Nevins-Freeman Address: Richard N. Current on "Rediscovering the Civil War"
- November 10: David Herbert Donald on "The Most 'Shut-Mouth' Man: The Reticence of Abraham Lincoln"
- December 8: William C. (Jack) Davis on "Davis, Johnston, and Beauregard: A Triple Play that Crippled the Confederacy"
- January 12: Brigadier General Harold W. Nelson on "Teaching Generalship on Civil War Battlefields"
- February 16: James Ogden on "The Battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga" (Please note: this is the third Friday of the month.)
- March 8: Brian S. Wills on "The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Battle From the Start"
- April 12: John C. (Jack) Waugh on "The Class of 1846"
- May 1-5: Annual Battlefield Tour: Chickamauga and Chattanooga
- May 10: Charles P. Roland on "Reflections on Lee: A Historian's Assessment"
- June 14: Michael W. Kauffman on "The Lincoln Assassination—The Investigation Continues"
- Telephone Number Correction**
Sylvia Gordon, 312-440-0278

The Salt Creek Civil War Round Table is holding two summer programs. Peter Cozzens will speak on June 23 on "Ambrose Bierce" at 8:00 p.m. at the College of DuPage. On June 26, the group will hold its Second Annual Concert of the 97th Regimental Band, at 7:30 p.m. at the College of DuPage. (Admission is \$5.) For additional information, call Roger Bohn (708-858-2956) or Robert Girardi (312-625-7225).

Round Table Founder Ralph G. Newman will give the Thomas J. Dyba Lecture, "Fifty-six Years with Mr. Lincoln," at the annual meeting of The Lincoln Group of Illinois on Saturday, June 10, in the Krasa Center at Illinois Benedictine College in Lisle. Also featured will be a video presentation by Lewis P. Mallow. A box lunch (\$6) at 11:30 a.m. will precede the program, which will run from 12:30-4:30 p.m. To make reservations, call Philip Bean at 708-960-1500, extension 4510.

Past President Marvin Sanderman will be presented with the Al Meyer Award at the June meeting.