

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVI, Number 7

Chicago, Illinois

March 1996

## Brian S. Wills on "Nathan Bedford Forrest: The Uncivil Warrior"

by Barbara Hughett

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a very complicated man who, nevertheless, waged war in the simplest fashion. As he put it, "War means fighting and fighting means killing." Born in Chapel Hill, Tennessee, in 1821, Forrest had a storybook life that took him from the lowest levels of society to the heights of Confederate leadership. A self-made man with barely six months formal education, he assumed responsibility for his family at the age of sixteen, following his father's death. Life in the Southern backcountry, the demands of Southern honor, and a constant struggle for control, conditioned his life. Forrest rose from semi-subsistence to planter status, acquiring substantial property and wealth, largely through the slave-trade.

Following Tennessee's secession from the Union, Forrest enlisted as a private in Captain Josiah White's Tennessee Mounted Rifles, with his youngest brother and his fifteen-year-old son. Shortly afterward, the governor of Tennessee summoned him to Memphis and authorized him to raise a regiment of mounted troops. As a lieutenant-colonel, he recruited and equipped his command, generally at his own expense.

In February 1862, Forrest established a reputation for boldness when he led his men out of Fort Donelson before its surrender, having participated actively in its defense. Following his election as colonel, the cavalry commander fought at Shiloh, suffering a severe wound during the final phase of that battle. For his performance, he was rewarded with a new command, and he won promotion to brigadier general following a daring raid against the Union garrison at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on July 13, 1862.

Following the Chickamauga Campaign (August-September 1863), Forrest quarreled with his superior, General Braxton Bragg. Confederate President Jefferson Davis resolved the dispute by promoting Forrest to major general and giving him an independent command in northern Mississippi and western Tennessee.

In April 1864, Forrest was involved in one of the most controversial actions of



Brian S. Wills



### 549th Regular Meeting

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Brian S. Wills on "Nathan Bedford Forrest: The Uncivil Warrior"

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Friday, March 8

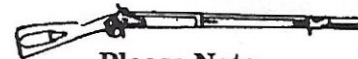
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Union League Club  
65 West Jackson Boulevard

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 Breast of Chicken with Pesto Cream Sauce or Catch of the Day



### Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, March 6, 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.

the war. He was in charge of the Confederate troops surrounding Fort Pillow, Tennessee, when the Union commander refused Forrest's request to surrender. Forrest's troops moved into the fort with little resistance, losing only 14 dead and 86 wounded. However, the Union casualties were 231 killed and 100 seriously wounded—

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## 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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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.

Former President Brooks Davis spoke to the Oak Park Rotary Club on February 14; his topic was "Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln as Commanders in Chief."

## BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) has completed its \$1.7 million fund-raising campaign for 500 acres of the Malvern Hill battlefield nearly two years ahead of schedule. The campaign, launched late in 1993, raised \$1.1 million from individual members of APCWS. Other major funding came from the sale of the Civil War commemorative coins, matching grants from philanthropist Richard Gilder, and a Richmond foundation.

Malvern Hill is a "priority one" Civil War site, signifying the battle's importance as well as the extreme threat of development in the area. The property comprises the majority of the ground at the foot of Malvern Hill and the sloping hillside itself where Confederates assaulted Union artillery and infantry on July 1, 1862, in the last of the battles of the Seven Days. The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites will donate the property to the Richmond National Battlefield Park. APCWS is also working to buy 250 contiguous acres associated with the battle of Glendale.

**The 4th Annual Virginia Civil War Preservation Conference**, sponsored by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, will be held March 30-31 in Fredericksburg. This year's theme is "Preserving Sites in the Rappahannock Valley." The conference will include tours of the Fredericksburg, Kelly's Ford, and Brandy Station battlefields and a banquet with guest speaker John Hennessy. For further information, contact Mac Wyckoff, Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, PO Box 7632, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404; 540-786-2470.

**The American Battlefield Protection Program** is developing a database to track all preservation activity on battlefields, primarily focusing on the fifty Priority I sites identified by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission. The database will cover a range of topics including historical significance of the site, current condition of the battlefield, a history of preservation activity at the site, total acreage covered by the battlefield, total acreage of areas that are protected, and individual contacts who are closely related to ongoing preservation and land acquisition efforts. The information will be made available to local and national preservation organizations.

**A report titled "The Preservation and Interpretation Plan for Sherman's 'March to the Sea' Savannah Campaign,"** sponsored by the American Battlefield Protection Program and prepared for the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, describes the significant military operations that occurred between Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia, in November and December, 1864. It presents a methodology for preserving and interpreting the March to the Sea corridor and includes specific recommendations for development of a single interpretive route. The report includes color maps of troop movements. For more information, contact APCWS, 305 Charlotte Street, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401; 703-371-1860; fax: 703-371-3489.



## ☞ FEBRUARY MEETING ☞

by Larry Gibbs

On February 16, at the 548th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, 128 members and guests heard James Ogden speak on "To the Edge of Glory: Rosecrans's Campaign for Chattanooga." Ogden, Site Historian at the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, effectively whetted our appetites for the upcoming 1996 Battlefield Tour to Chickamauga-Chattanooga, May 1-5, with an analysis of events leading to the Battle of Chickamauga (September 18-20, 1863).

Union General William Starke Rosecrans defeated Robert E. Lee in 1861 in western Virginia before he was transferred to the western theater. After a Union victory at the Battle of Corinth in October 1862, Rosecrans was promoted to commander of the Department of the Cumberland. He was to drive the Rebels from central and eastern Tennessee and Kentucky. A major battle ensued at Stones River (December 31, 1862 and January 2, 1863) which resulted in a Union claim of victory because the Rebels left the field first.

The 1863 Chattanooga campaign was an important part of the Union's Anaconda Plan. This plan was to divide the Confederacy with a thrust from central Tennessee to Savannah, Georgia. This divide-and-conquer strategy emphasized the conquest of Chattanooga and its railroads. Rosecrans, although urged by President Lincoln to move, postponed an immediate departure from Murphreesboro, Tennessee, his major supply base.

At Tullahoma in central Tennessee, the Army of the Cumberland met Confederate resistance. Ogden explained the action: "First Rosecrans feinted left, then right. His army then advanced on a broad front with a stalled attack on the right flank of the Rebel army." A major part of the plan was to threaten the rear supply lines of the Rebels. Eventually the Confederates, led by General Braxton Bragg, retreated, but the operation was not as successful as Rosecrans desired. "This strategy at Tullahoma was used again two months later by Rosecrans in the advance for the Chattanooga campaign," stated Ogden. Two other events — the Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg — overshadowed the Tullahoma victory, which rankled Rosecrans.

Ogden asserted that "the geography of rivers and mountains in the area was the greatest factor in preparation to conquer Chattanooga." The only viable option open to Rosecrans, according to Ogden, was to cross the Tennessee River after moving south and east near the cities of Stevenson and Bridgeport, Tennessee. This river is 400 feet wide at those locations. Next the army would climb the rugged Sandy Mountain and Lookout Mountain, which has 1,200 feet of vertical inclines.

Logistical problems, created by the geography of the Chattanooga region, were a constant constraining element for Rosecrans. The supply line stretched 350 miles from Louisville, Kentucky, to Stevenson, Tennessee. "A deployment of 37,000 Union soldiers and cavalry was essential to protect supply lines, while 58,000 Federal soldiers fought at the Battle of Chickamauga. Many bridges were destroyed by Rebels," claimed Ogden. About 210,000 pounds of food were required daily for Rosecrans's army. Many animals (44,000) were necessary to pull 4,000 wagons along the supply line. An 1863 drought

created a scarcity of supplies in central Tennessee. "In spite of all of these problems of logistics and geography, the Army of the Cumberland crossed the mountains in early September of 1863," said Ogden.

In the attack of Chattanooga, Rosecrans used the same strategy as he had at Tullahoma, i.e., feint to flanks followed by a broad advance, then a major frontal attack followed by a threat to the rear supply lines. The key section of this strategy was for the Union cavalry to threaten the Confederate supply line — the Western and Atlantic Railroad — sixty miles south of Chattanooga. To counteract this strategy, Bragg moved his army twenty miles south of Chattanooga to the Chickamauga River. After realizing that the Union cavalry posed no serious threat, Bragg's army attacked on September 10 and 11. In the Battle of Chickamauga a week later, Rosecrans gave an ill-conceived order on September 20 that led to a disastrous Federal defeat, sending the Union army reeling back to Chattanooga.

**BRIAN S. WILLS** (continued from page 1)

and most of the dead were African Americans. The North charged that Forrest had allowed his men to kill the black soldiers as they were surrendering; the Southerners claimed that the men were killed because they refused to surrender. Many studies agree that this was most likely a massacre.

On March 8, Brian S. Wills will address The Round Table on the topic of "Nathan Bedford Forrest: The Uncivil Warrior." In his presentation, he will focus on Forrest, the man. He will try to get behind the myths of the controversial but brave and determined general, who allegedly had twenty-nine horses shot from under him.

A native of Portsmouth, Virginia, Wills received his bachelor's degree, with honors, from the University of Richmond, and his master's and doctorate from the University of Georgia. He is an assistant professor of history at Clinch Valley College of the University of Virginia, in Wise, Virginia.

He is the author of *A Battle From the Start: The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (1992), which was a main selection of the History Book Club and an alternate selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. He was a contributor to the *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy* (1993, Richard N. Current, editor-in-chief) and wrote the Introduction to the reprint of Carlton McCarthy's *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia* (1993; original of 1882). Brian Wills served as a consultant for the Nathan Bedford Forrest episode of "The Civil War Journal" television series on the Arts and Entertainment network.

### Nominating Committee Meeting

Nominating Committee Chair Barbara Hughett has announced that the annual meeting of the Nominating Committee will take place on Saturday, March 16, at 10:00 a.m., at the offices of Deutsch, Levy & Engel, 225 West Washington Street, Suite 1700. All Committee members are urged to attend. (The Nominating Committee is comprised of all Past Presidents who are current members in good standing.) Committee members will receive further notification in the mail. For additional information or to make suggestions for nominations, call Barbara at 312-973-5822.



## The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Sawyer, Franklin. *8th Ohio Volunteer Infantry*. Blue Acorn Press. 1994. \$30.00. Original of 1881.
- Scaife, William R. *Order of Battle: The Campaign for Atlanta*. Published by author. 1992. Pbk. \$6.00.
- Schiller, Herbert M., ed. *A Captain's War: The Letters and Diaries of William H.S. Burgwyn, 1861-1865*. White Mane Press. 1993. \$24.95.
- Schroeder-Lein, Glenna R. *Confederate Hospitals on the Move: Samuel H. Stout and the Army of Tennessee*. U. of South Carolina Press. 1993. \$19.95.
- Scribner, Benjamin F. *How Soldiers Were Made*. Blue Acorn Press. 1995. \$25.00. Original of 1887.
- Sensing, Thurman. *Champ Ferguson: Confederate Guerrilla*. Vanderbilt U. Press. 1994. Pbk. \$14.95. Original of 1942.

We are saddened to announce the death of member **Susan Wiche** on February 10. She was the wife of Glen Wiche, former Round Table president and current membership committee chair. We offer our deepest condolences to Glen, and to the families of Susan and Glen.

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Just a reminder: Please call in your dinner reservation EARLY! To sweeten our request, we will have an Early Bird Raffle for those who call in their reservation by March 5. You may be one of two lucky winners of a free cocktail! Help us out and be a winner!

The 15th Annual Midwest Civil War Round Table Conference will take place on April 19-20, 1996, in Cincinnati, Ohio, hosted by the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table. Speakers will include A. Wilson Greene, John Hennessy, and Jim Ogden. The cost is \$100 per person; special hotel rates are \$72 per night. For more information, call Michael Rhein at 513-831-4031.

The luncheon meeting of the Union League Civil War Round Table will be held on Monday, March 25. The reception begins at 11:30 a.m.; lunch is served at noon. The cost is \$15 per person. For further information or to make reservations, call 312-435-5000.

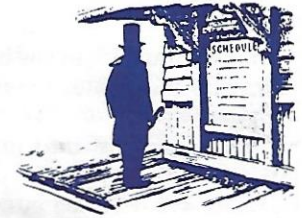
### Schimmelfennig Boutique

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.

*March 8:* Brian S. Wills on "Nathan Bedford Forrest: The Uncivil Warrior"

*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"

### New Members

Nicholas Bach, 6020 Arbor Lane, #103, Northfield, IL 60093, 847-441-8378

Charles Larimer, 4604 Grand Avenue, Western Springs, IL 60558-1547, 708-246-5491

William W. Oelman, 120 N. Washington, Hinsdale, IL 60521, 708-325-0666

Fred B. Parker III, 2331 Byrd Street, Raleigh, NC 27608, 919-787-1650

Steve Pozen, 345 S. Stone Avenue, LaGrange, IL 60525, 708-352-4466

Ms. Michal Rooney, 2005 W. Pratt Court, Evanston, IL 60201

Daniel A. Sullivan, 2005 W. Pratt Court, Evanston, IL 60201

### Silent Auction

A silent auction of a beautiful needlepoint of Abraham Lincoln will be held at the March 8 meeting. The needlepoint is the work of member and Newsletter designer Muriel Underwood, who has donated it for the auction. The Lincoln profile is in black, surrounded by red, white and blue stripes. Proceeds will go toward preservation of our Civil War battlefields.

**James M. McPherson**, Pulitzer prize-winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and author of numerous other Civil Warbooks, will be the recipient of The Round Table's 1997 Nevins-Freeman Award. The Executive Committee made this selection at its summer meeting. He will give his acceptance address at our October 17 meeting.

The **Stephen A. Douglas Association** will hold an annual luncheon at the Hyatt on Printers Row on Saturday, April 20, which will feature an address by Illinois State Historian Thomas F. Schwartz. The luncheon will be preceded by ceremonies at the Douglas Tomb State Historic Site. For information, call Brooks Davis at 312-944-5082 or Barbara Hughett at 312-973-5822.