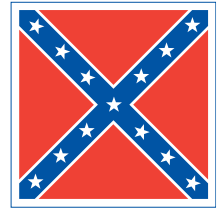


THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940

Volume LXVIII, Number 8

Chicago, Illinois

April, 2008



670th REGULAR MEETING

Jennifer Weber

on

“Copperheads”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Friday, April 11

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HOLIDAY INN MART PLAZA

350 NORTH ORLEANS STREET

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

\$35 - Members/Non-members

Entrée:

Chicken Trevino, Catch of the Day, Vegetarian Plate or Fruit Plate

please note

Make your reservation by **MONDAY, Apr. 7** by calling **630-460-1865**. Reservations can also be made by emailing chicagocwrttdinner@earthlink.net with the names of your party and their choice of entree.

Reservations made after Wednesday, Apr. 9, will be surcharged \$5.

People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please call the number before 9 a.m. Thursday to avoid a charge.

We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:30 p.m., for a charge of \$5 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is \$10 with a validated parking sticker.

Jennifer Weber on Copperheads

BY BRUCE ALLARDICE

During the Civil War Union loyalists applied the name of a particularly venomous snake, “Copperhead”, to their political opponents, the Northern anti-war Democrats. While consigned to the “dustbin of history” by the Union victory, during the war the Copperhead movement seemed likely to derail Northern victory.

On April 11 Professor Jennifer L. Weber will remind us that the Copperheads came perilously close to defeating Lincoln and ending the war in the South’s favor. Indeed, by the summer of 1864, they had grown so strong that Lincoln himself thought his defeat was “exceedingly likely.”

The talk is based on her recent book, Copperheads, which has garnered rave reviews. As described by noted historian Gary Gallagher, “This excellent study of ... the Democratic Party during the Civil War offers a powerful reminder that the North, even as it sought to put down the Confederate rebellion, suffered from deep political divisions. It fruitfully argues that Copperheads more than once threatened the Union war effort before ending the conflict as a group despised only slightly less in the North than the vanquished rebels. Weber’s study supersedes older works and is now the obvious place to begin any study of the Copperhead movement.”

Passionate defenders of civil liberties and states’ rights (at least verbally) the Copperheads deplored Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus and his moves toward emancipation. The battle over



Jennifer Weber

these issues grew so heated, particularly in the Midwest, that Northerners feared their neighbors would kill their livestock, burn their homes, even murder them. Some Copperheads went so far as to conspire with Confederate forces and plan armed insurrections, including an attempt to launch an uprising in Chicago. Other Copperheads promoted the draft riots that convulsed New York in 1863, inspiring the blockbuster 2002 movie “Gangs of New York”. So extreme were the anti-war Democrats that Union soldiers, furious at Copperhead attacks on the war effort, moved firmly behind Lincoln and helped insure his re-election.

An Assistant Professor of History at the University of Kansas, Jennifer L. Weber started her professional life as a journalist and later worked as a political aide in the California State Legislature. A lifelong interest in the Civil War eventually spurred her to pursue academics as a career. She left the Golden State for Princeton, where she studied

under James M. McPherson. Her dissertation, “The Divided State of America: Dissent in the Civil War North”, won the 2005 Hay-Nicolay Prize for the best graduate work related to Abraham Lincoln. Her book, Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North, was published in 2006 by Oxford University Press.



Battlefield Preservation

BY MARY MUNSELL ABROE

Mississippi's Coker House Receives Assistance: In April 2007 this column reported that the historic Coker House near Jackson appeared doomed. The National Historic Landmark, still bearing bullet holes and cannon ball damage from the battle of Champion Hill, was in extreme disrepair and the state, its owner, had neither the funds to restore nor, ironically, to deconstruct the deteriorating building. However, the March/April 2008 issue of *Preservation*, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, reports a changed and more optimistic situation: "Under an agreement to get federal transportation money for part of the project, the state committed funds to finish the (restoration) job. Also, the Trust's southern office secured \$13,000 from the Battlefield Preservation Fund for architectural help. Plans are now to have the house back in shape by next spring."

Newtonia (Missouri) Battlefields Preservation Association (NBPA) Is Free of Debt: The January 2008 newsletter of our friends of the NBPA reports the good news that the organization's debt (for the purchase of the historic Ritchey Mansion) has been retired: "Thanks to a generous anonymous donor, the final red ink is gone with the payment of \$87,000...." The NBPA's indebtedness for the acquisition and maintenance of the Ritchey Mansion had gone as high as \$300,000-plus, but the group's hard work and wise collaboration with partners in both the public and private sectors—as well as the support of preservationists nationwide—has brought this campaign to preserve an irreplaceable Civil War-era building to a successful conclusion. As a member of the NBPA and financial supporter of the Ritchey Mansion project, the CWRT can take great pride in this accomplishment.

CWRT Receives Thanks for Donations: Within the past few months, we have received letters of gratitude for contributions and/or membership renewals to several preservation groups. An October 2007 note from the Kernstown Battlefield Association (winner of the Second Annual Bearss Preserva-

tion Award) thanked the CWRT for its \$250 membership renewal, indicating that our financial help is essential as the KBA pursues its goals of acquiring, maintaining, and interpreting the battlefield at Kernstown.

In a January letter Carolyn Elstner, vice president and Ellwood restoration chair of the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield, addressed her organization's thanks to members of the CWRT: "On behalf of Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield, I thank you for your generous contribution of \$500.00 to the Ellwood Restoration Project. As you know, Ellwood is a ... home situated in the Wilderness Battlefield. Following ... Chancellorsville, the house served as a hospital for the Confederate wounded and during the Battle of the Wilderness, headquarters for Union General Gouverneur K. Warren. General 'Stonewall' Jackson's amputated arm is buried in the family cemetery nearby."

Ms. Elstner noted that restoration and renewal of parts of the structure's interior as well as the furnishing of certain rooms is underway currently, but "there is much left to do in the rest of the house, and your gift will make those phases of the restoration possible in the very near future."

Also in January Suzanne Chilson, executive director of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, relayed the following sentiments: "On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, I wish to thank...the members of (the) CWRT of Chicago for your gift of \$500.00 for our Battlefield Land Preservation fund. Your contribution is ... appreciated as we work towards our goal of retiring our outstanding debt on the earthworks property and restoring the Heater House. With your support, ... we have purchased over 300 acres of the Cedar Creek Battlefield which is now preserved in perpetuity for generations to come."

We also received a thank-you letter from Jim Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Preservation Trust, for renewal of our membership in that organization at the "Color Bearer" level of \$1,000: "I am pleased to tell you that

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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 Membership Committee, 9670 N. Dee #205 Des Plaines, Illinois 60016, or contact bsallardice1@earthlink.net.



more than 25,000 acres of battlefield land have been protected because of your support. Your gift of \$1,000 will allow us to continue to expand our mission, and I can't thank you enough."

January 2008 ended with a note from Linda Wandres, executive director of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT): "The ... Trust wishes to extend its sincerest thanks and appreciation for your ... generous recent 2007 donation of \$500.00. Pursuant to your request, we have earmarked your gift for the purchase of the Slaughter Pen Farm. It is the generosity of persons such as you that inspires us in our efforts to save historically significant land...."

Our most recent effort, in partnership with the Civil War Preservation Trust, is the 208-acre Slaughter Pen Farm on the Fredericksburg battlefield.... As you know, the price of this farm was steep, set at more than \$12 million. CVBT has pledged to provide a total of \$1 million toward this effort, quite an undertaking for a small, local organization such as ours. But due to the generosity of our members, we are pleased to announce that we are now more than two thirds of the way toward reaching this goal. Your additional support will help us tremendously as we strive to meet this major fundraising challenge."

March Meeting

BY TOM TRESMOTT

On March 14, Brian Wills spoke to 91 members and guests at the 669th regular meeting of the Civil War Round Table on "The Civil War in Cinema", giving a talk based on his new book, Gone with the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema, a work that came about because of two of his great loves, history and film.

Mr. Wills related how as a child, while he loved TV, especially sitcoms, for this son of a 4th grade teacher and a horseman, going to the movies was an adventure, especially the historical epics with such stars as Charlton Heston. Our speaker was greatly moved by the emotional return of the boy in the Jimmy Stewart Civil War movie *Shenandoah* (1965).

In the process of writing his book, rather than relying of the unreliable shooting scripts, Mr. Wills would repeatedly watch the 93 Civil War films listed in order to exactly quote the dialog. In the course of viewing these films, two things were clear: each one reflected the time it was made --- and thus changing perspectives; and that entertainment trumps history --- the stories were more than the history.

In the silent era, the most famous Civil War movie was D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Griffith believed he was re-creating history, but while ground-breaking cinematically, despite Woodrow Wilson's endorsement of the film as "writing history with lightning", it was product of the Jim Crow era. The 1950's was the heyday of Civil War movies, a decade of the Cold War which needed cinematic "villains". North and South would join together against Native Americans in such films as *Two Flags West* (1950). In the '60's, *Journey to Shi-*

loh (1968, with a young James Caan and Harrison Ford) expressed the growing anti-war movement.

In regards to entertainment, the acronym KISS (Keep it simple, stupid) applies. While a huge Civil War epic, *Gone With the Wind* (1939) was really just a story about an arrogant young lady trying to grow up. On the other hand, *Ride With the Devil* (1999), one of the best Civil War movies, suffered (at the box office, anyway) because there was no one character to focus on.

Among the worst instances in Civil War cinematic history cited by our speaker was *The Last Rebel* (1971), featuring "Broadway" Joe Willie Namath. One of his favorite moments, on the other hand, was the exchange at the beginning of *The Undefeated* (1969), starring John Wayne and Rock Hudson, which could serve as a microcosm of the whole war:

Union Colonel (Wayne): Major, I've just received word that Lee surrendered to Grant three days ago.

Confederate Major (Royal Dano): Yes, sir.

Colonel: You knew it?

Major: We received news yesterday

Colonel: I don't think you understand, major. The war is over.

Major: No, sir.

Colonel: Are you telling me that you intend to keep fighting?

Major: Haven't we just proven it?

Colonel: But why?

Major: Cause this is our land, and you're on it.

Colonel: We're all Americans.

Major: Yes, sir. That's always been the saddest part of it.

As for the future of Civil War movies, it appears to our speaker that the Shaara literary trilogy that started with *The Killer Angels* and continued with *Gods and Generals* (Larry Gibbs' favorite movie) will not see its cinematic completion. *The Last Full Measure* ends with the end of the War, which the South didn't win, which wouldn't play well on the other side of the Mason-Dixon Line. And the question remains, who would play Robert E. Lee? (John Wayne himself was once rumored to be set to play Marse Robert in a movie). As Mr. Wills pointed out, perhaps nobody can --- like Gatsby, everybody has his or her own image of Lee, and a less than flattering depiction could result in violence in certain quarters. There have been, however, some good movies in recent years. *Glory* (1989) certainly stands out, with Denzel Washington in an Oscar-winning role, and *Pharaoh's Army* (1995) starring Chris Cooper, is very much in your face (and shows how one person's requisition is another person's stealing).

In conclusion, the Civil War was a horrible and bloody disaster, where people were torn to shreds by each other, and to depict it on film remains almost impossible. Movies go for a big splash, and the necessary compression of time can't capture the true sense of the war. Perhaps, as the late Brian Pohanka said, the best thing about the Civil War in cinema is that while it is not history, it will hopefully get someone to read and find out more about what really happened.

A recording of this (and every) meeting is available from Hal Ardell, audio librarian. Contact Hal at (773) 774-6781 or hal229@ameritech.net

GRAPESHOT



On March 7th, 16 year old **Eric Girardi** addressed the Salt Creek CWRT on "the 69th New York State Volunteers." A chip off the old (?) block, Eric became the youngest speaker in SCCWRT history, supplanting Pete Cozzens, who gave his first talk at age 17.

Our old friend **Richard McMurry** will be addressing the Blue Island Park District CWRT this April 8th on "Sherman at Atlanta". It's a dinner meeting, buffet style starting at 6 p.m., and for \$10 one can eat a good meal and listen to one of the most entertaining speakers in the Civil War field. For more information, phone (708) 385-3304 or log onto www.blueislandparks.org.

General and Mrs. George H. Thomas (**Jerry and JoEllen Kowalski**) will be appearing at the Messiah Lutheran Men's Club in Park Ridge on April 6th, at St. Patrick's School in Joliet on April 8th, and at the Joliet Library on April 13th. In May they have on the schedule a talk at the Gurnee Historical Society (May 5th), all-day presentations to Rockford area students (May 8-9) and to Milwaukee area students (May 30th).

On April 12th the Sons of Union Veterans and other organizations are sponsoring the 52nd annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony, commemorating the 143rd anniversary of President Lincoln's Assassination. It will be held at the Lincoln Tomb, Oak Ridge Cemetery, starting at 10 a.m. The luncheon, at noon at "The Inn at 835", will feature a talk by CWRT ex-president and author **Bruce Allardice**. For more information, phone Jerry Kowalski at (630) 833-3235.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at bsallardice1@earthlink.net or (847) 375-8305.

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Fifty-seven years of audio recordings of CWRT lectures by distinguished historians are available and can be purchased in either audio cassette or CD format. For lecture lists, contact Hal Ardell at hal229@ameritech.net or phone him at (773) 774-6781.

Each meeting features a book raffle, with proceeds going to battlefield preservation. There is also a silent auction for books donated by Ralph Newman and others, again with proceeds benefiting battlefield preservation.

Visit our Website!

The CWRT's website (www.thecwrt.org) has been revamped to include recent CWRT newsletters, links to other CWRTs, links to Civil War information, membership application and battlefield tour information, and much much more. Stop on by and take a look!

Only a few spots left for the Battlefield Tour

We're going to Shiloh, Corinth and Brice's Crossroads May 1-4, 2008. HQ is the Holiday Inn Express in Corinth, and as usual Ed Bearss will be the lead tour guide, with the able assistance of the Shiloh NBP's Stacey Allen. The tour reading list and schedule information is on the website at www.thecwrt.org. Only a few spots are left, so sign up NOW.

CWRT News

At the Executive Committee's Winter Meeting, the dates and locations of the 2009 and 2010 battlefield tours were announced. The 2009 tour will be of Kentucky, including the Battlefields of Mill Springs, Munfordville, and Perryville, and will take place April 22-26, 2009. The 2010 will follow the 1864 Overland Campaign, and will take place April 21-25, 2010. Note that due to local events, these tours will be held a week earlier than usual.

Bulletin Board



FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans Street, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

- April 11:* **Jennifer Weber**, "Copperheads"
May 9: **Vernon Burton**, "The Age of Lincoln"
June 13: **Bill Farina**, "U. S. Grant"
Sept. 12: **Pete Cozzens**, "The 1862 Valley Campaign"
Oct. 17: **Gloria Swift**, TBD
Nov. 14: **Rick Hatcher**, TBD
Dec. 12: **Craig Symonds**, TBD
Jan. 9, 2009: **James Ogden** of the Chickamauga NBP, TBD
Feb. 13: Nevins Freeman Address. **Bruce Allardice**, "Lincoln as a War Leader"

Upcoming Seminars in Virginia

For the travel-minded, the Stonewall Jackson House in Winchester, Virginia, will be holding its bi-annual Stonewall Jackson Symposium April 18th-20th in Lexington, Virginia. For more information, phone the Jackson House at (540) 463-2552. And the College of William & Mary will be holding a seminar on the 1861-62 campaigns of the Virginia Peninsula. It's a week long program, April 20th-25th. For more information, phone (757) 221-3649 or email elderh@wm.edu.