



CAMPAIGN 32 - SKIRMISH 9

Program: Dr. James M. McPherson--*The Lincoln/McClellan Relationship*



Prof. James M. McPherson (photo courtesy of Princeton University)

We welcome to our round table this month the world-renowned historian of the American Civil War, Dr. James M. McPherson. Dr. McPherson is the George Henry David Professor Emeritus of United States History at Princeton University. Born in Valley City, North Dakota, he received his Bachelor of Arts (magna cum laude) from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota and his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. He has authored a host of books on the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln along with countless articles for Civil War and historical publications. Many of his books are award-winning works, which include *For Cause and*

Comrades (Lincoln Prize), and his recent work, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief*, co-winner of the Lincoln Prize in 2009. Dr. McPherson's most famous work, the one-volume popular general history of the Civil War *Battle Cry of Freedom*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988.

Dr. McPherson is a strong supporter of battlefield and historic preservation. In 1993-94, he was president of Protect Historic America and lobbied against construction of a commercial theme park at the Manassas Battlefield. He also has served on the boards of the Civil War Trust, Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (now the Civil War Preservation Trust), and the Civil War Sites Advisory Committee. Dr. McPherson served as president of the American Historical Association in 2003. He is currently a member of the editorial board of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. In 2000, he was named Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 2007, he was awarded the Pritzker Military Library Literature Award for lifetime achievement in military history - the first person to be awarded the prize.

Join us on this very special night. Dr. McPherson, with his very busy schedule, does not make many speaking engagements so we are indeed honored to have him join us. Do not miss this opportunity to invite guests. Students are especially welcome. Be sure to get your dinner reservations in early as we expect a large turnout.

TUESDAY, May 4, 2010

Attention to Field Orders:

All Members and guests of the Lehigh Brigade are ordered to the **Four Points by Sheraton, 3400 Airport Rd., Allentown, Pa.**, on the above date.

Sutler’s Call 6:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Mess Call 6:30 p.m.

Program7:30 p.m.

SpeakerDr. James M McPherson

The deadline for making dinner reservations is

Thursday, April 29, 2010.

Please call one of the Brigade Clerks listed below:

Jeff Stocker -----610-867-5178

jsmw@ptd.net

Carol Detweiler ---- 215-234-4884

cdetweiler01@comcast.net

Website: www.cwrteasternpa.org

BRIGADE COMMAND

Brigade Commander-Larry Kern

Regimental Commander-Michael Cavanaugh

Company Commander-Susan Kovacs

Adjutant-Bruce Rissmiller

Paymaster-Jack Minnich

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Term Ending 2010

Nancy Keigher & Kim Jacobs

Term Ending 2011

Bob Ashcraft & Kay Bagenstose

Webmaster-Peter Detweiler

ptetweiler@comcast.net

Brigade Recruiting Officer-Jeff Gates

jefgates@ptd.net or 610-966-5773

Newsletter Editor Tony Major

Nomination of Officers:

In compliance with the by-laws of the Civil War Roundtable of Eastern PA, Inc., we submit the following list of officers and directors for your consideration. Voting will take place at the May 2010 meeting.

2010-2011 Campaign Year

Brigade Commander-Larry Kern

Regimental Commander-Michael Cavanaugh

Company Commander-Susan Kovacs

Adjutant-Bruce Rissmiller

Paymaster-Jack Minnich

Board of Directors Term Ending 2012

Mike Farris & Kim Jacobs

Term Ending 2011-Bob Ashcraft & Kay

Bagenstose

Appointed Positions with Board Approval

Brigade Clerks -Jeff Stocker & Carol Detweiler

Webmaster-Peter Detweiler

Brigade Recruiting Officer-Jeff Gates

Newsletter Editor-Joe Riggs

Quartermaster-Tony Major

Brigade Call: Ed Root



Photo by Ed Root

The course of the Civil War took many twists and turns during its duration. Edward Bonekemper took us through six of these “turning points.” The sixty-eight members and guests found him to be entertaining and convincing as to why Fort Donaldson, Antietam, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chattanooga and Atlanta meet his criteria. Thanks Ed for for your presentation and for bringing longtime CWRT of Eastern PA friend Dr. Ed Baldrige with you.

Brigade Call Continued:

Our Spring Preservation raffle is getting closer and closer. Have you purchased your tickets yet for Don Troiani's print, *Lions of the Round Top*? Released in 1995 this print is sold out and is valued on the secondary market unframed at over \$1,000! In addition, the following autographed books will be included in the raffle: *Generals in Bronze* by Bill Styple, *Don't Shoot That Boy* by Tom Lowry, *Custer* by Jeffry Wert, *The Battle of the Crater* by Bill Marvel and signed by our very own Mike Cavanaugh. On top of all this, on June 12th Mike Snyder will lead all those who purchase \$25.00 worth of tickets on a tour of Brooke's Brigade assault at Gettysburg. See Jack and Jeff at the Preservation Table at the May meeting to get your tickets for what will be a great day on the field!



A packet of ten tickets for only \$5.00 is a bargain and all proceeds benefits historic preservation!

Our newsletter should ALWAYS be in your hands no later than one week prior to any monthly meeting. So, if you have not received it by USPS or e-mail delivery by then, please email jorriggs@ptd.net or call Joe Riggs at 610-797-5225. Note, we prefer e-mail delivery. Along those same lines of communication PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE contact our Brigade Clerks with your dinner reservations no later than the THURSDAY prior to the monthly meeting. Your faithful servants (i.e. Round Table volunteers and the hotel staff) have to scramble at the last minute to accommodate last minute additions and if we end up short we are charged for those unused dinners. Sometimes things fall through the cracks, but if we all do our part things will run much smoother. Thanks for your help! See you on May 4th.

Book Raffle Winners:



Photo by Ed Root

The book raffle winners for the April 2010 meeting were Donald Boyer, Rick Houck, Dennis Hartman, Bill Frankenfield, Robert Dinger, and Emerson Wagner. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to everyone for supporting the preservation cause!

A Report from the Field . . .Part 1
The 18th Annual Sarasota Civil War Symposium
by John Hildebrandt-Ohio Member CWRT of Eastern PA, Inc.

There are relatively few Civil War sites in Florida, but for three days every winter Sarasota is the center of the Civil War universe. This past January, my wife, Marie, and I attended the Civil War Education Society's 18th Annual Civil War Symposium at the Helmsley Sandcastle Resort on Lido Beach in Sarasota, Florida. For most of us, the Civil War is best studied on the field of battle—be it Gettysburg, Antietam, Shiloh, Ft. Sumter, or Vicksburg—but in the midst of an Ohio winter the beach on Lido Key is a better than fair substitute. This was our fifth symposium, spaced over the past eight years, and it has become a January tradition.

The event begins with a reception on Wednesday night. The symposium presentations run Thursday and Friday until mid-afternoon—allowing plenty of time for personal pursuits—and conclude by noon on Saturday. This year's faculty was excellent, including Ed Bearss, William "Jack" Davis, Joseph Glatthaar, Gary Ecelbarger, Robert Krick, Charles Roland, Dale Phillips, and Terrence Winchell. Jeffrey Wert was a last-minute scratch. Each year the symposium attracts about 100 participants, Civil War enthusiasts from all around the U.S., though the biggest representation is from Florida and the southeast. This year, Marie and I were the only representatives from the Buckeye State. There were three attendees from Pennsylvania.

Jack Davis, longtime editor of *Civil War Times* and now a professor at Virginia Tech University served as Head of Faculty, organizing the presentations and handling introductions.

Robert Krick, a leading authority on the Army of Northern Virginia and the author of many books, opened the symposium with a presentation on Robert E. Lee's greatest victory: Chancellorsville. The basic story of the battle is familiar, but Krick provided some interesting insights. Although Jackson is mainly identified with the famous flank attack which turned the battle in the Confederate's favor, Krick argues it was Lee's idea and Jackson was the person who executed it, albeit brilliantly. As evidence, he cites a post-war letter from Lee to Jackson's widow in which Lee

wrote "it was decided," a gentleman's way of saying it was Lee's idea, not her fallen husband's. He also noted that Lee opened the campaign with a major mistake—allowing Hooker to maneuver into a position where he could seriously threaten Lee's Army—but managed to turn things around completely. Krick is an excellent presenter with a dry wit and a folksy style.

Terrence Winchell, Chief Historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, gave an excellent presentation on the civilian experience during the siege of Vicksburg. He illustrated his talk with a number of photographs of Vicksburg residents. The civilian experience is often overlooked in books about the Civil War, and Winchell really brought home the tremendous suffering experienced by non-combatants involved in the siege of Vicksburg. He noted that just about the only time shooting stopped was when the Yankee soldiers stopped to eat. Of the city's 1860 population of 5,000, about 1,500 were slaves. About 15 civilians were killed during the siege. Interestingly, the Confederate authorities did not attempt to evacuate the civilian population prior to the siege. Many civilians spent much of the siege in caves dug into the hills around the city. According to Winchell, there are still six in existence, although all are in private hands and not accessible.

The famous **Ed Bearss**, retired Chief Historian for the National Park Service, gave a talk on the Battle of Monocacy and attempted to answer the question: Did it really save Washington? In Ed's view, I think the answer is a qualified "maybe." Bearss is a master storyteller. After seeing him so often on TV, it was a real treat to see him in person. He did not disappoint.

After lunch, there was a roundtable discussion on the best—and worst—of recent Civil War books. It was a lively exchange. Most everyone came down hard on British historian John Keegan's new book: *The American Civil War: A Military History*. Keegan has a peerless reputation as a military historian—his *Face of Battle* is one of the best books ever written about war—but his Civil War book is full of factual errors—too many to

forgive, in the opinion of all but one of the faculty, Jack Davis, who feels Keegan's "unique insights" outweigh his problems with the facts.

Terry Winchell lauded Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*. Jack Davis recommended *Vicksburg 1863* by Winston Groome, also the author of a great book on the 1864 Nashville campaign—*Shrouds of Glory: From Atlanta to Nashville: The Last Great Campaign of the Civil War*—and, of course, *Forrest Gump*. Winchell also recommended *The Strange and Blighted Land: the Gettysburg Aftermath* by Greg Lococo. Robert Krick recommended *Lincoln and His Navy* by Craig Symonds.

There was plenty of discussion during the Thursday evening reception around the hotel pool. The average age of attendees was what you would expect at a Civil War gathering, but a variety of backgrounds, Civil War interests, and life histories. Faculty members are open, friendly, and ready to talk. In the evenings, you could find a number of attendees and faculty members gathered around the Tiki Bar to sip a libation, perhaps smoke a cigar, and press their point of view on John Bell Hood, the Battle of the Crater, or what would have happened at Gettysburg if Stonewall Jackson had been there. After each presentation, there was lots of Q&A, even a few polite disagreements.

The highlight of Friday morning's session was a presentation by Charles Roland, retired professor of history at the University of Kentucky and the author of many Civil War books, including a well-respected biography of Albert Sydney Johnston. A World War II veteran (like Ed Bearss), Roland is an excellent presenter. However, he gave himself a tough assignment: "Slavery and Secession in the Eyes of a Contemporary Southern Moderate." He read an 1860 letter from a Louisiana planter to his old college friend, a businessman in Indiana, offering a rationalization for both slavery and secession. The letter was fictional, written by Charles Roland, and created to provide the perspective of a reasonable, moderate, educated Southern man doing his best to calmly and logically explain to a dear friend why slavery was a good thing and secession, though regrettable, was legal and necessary. Roland is Southern by birth and speaks in a careful but beautiful drawl. Close your eyes and you are transported back to 1860. The letter is very well written—a credit to Roland—and in its context you can understand why and how people like this fictional planter rationalized human

bondage and secession.

Gary Ecelbarger, author of several Civil War books, including *Three Days in the Shenandoah: Stonewall Jackson at Front Royal and Winchester*, and *The Great Comeback: How Abraham Lincoln Beat the Odds to Win the 1860 Republican Nomination*, followed Charles Roland with a presentation on how Lincoln managed to win the 1860 nomination against some very long odds. As was the custom in 1860, Lincoln was not in attendance at the convention. In fact, none of the candidates were present. Judge David Davis, Lincoln's unofficial campaign manager, was the person who really masterminded the strategy that gave Lincoln the nomination. His plan: trash Seward (the leading candidate); spread the message Lincoln was not interested in the VP slot; push the idea Lincoln is the ideal compromise candidate; make sure Lincoln gets 100 votes on the first ballot (he got 102). It worked.

Robert Krick gave a spirited talk on a little known but very interesting ANV officer, General Roswell Ripley. Krick titled his talk: "General Roswell S. Ripley . . . 'A big fat whiskey drinking loving man.'" A colorful character who managed to irritate and offend both Beauregard and Joe Johnston, Ripley fought at Antietam and Gettysburg, wrote a very good history of the Mexican War, and thought Robert E. Lee was a buffoon. A strange man who graduated with U.S. Grant from West Point in 1843 (where he ranked fifth in his class) nothing has ever been written about him. He is buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Richmond.

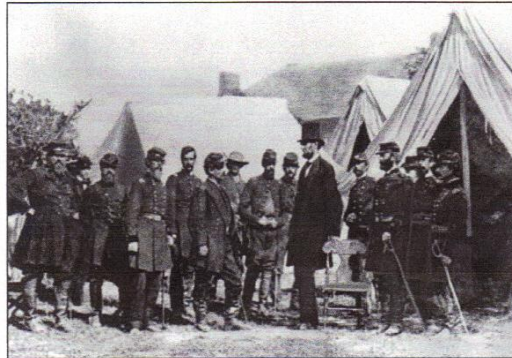
Rounding out Friday was a presentation by Jack Davis on "Numbers, Nonsense, and Secession." He made the point that although "statistics are enormously dangerous things" they can also tell the truth in a way nothing else can. The focus of his talk was using statistics to dispel the notion—often promulgated by Lost Cause adherents, both contemporary and historical—that slavery was not the cause of the war. As he points out, all you have to do is look at the contemporary writings, speeches, letters, newspaper articles, etc. of the time to know the war was about slavery and really nothing else. In 1860, virtually all Southern leaders wholeheartedly endorsed slavery. He noted 65% of all Southern farms used slaves, and the truth is probably closer to 75%. He stated 31% of households in the 11 states of the Confederacy had one or more slaves. CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

DINNER MEETING May 4, 2010

Reservation Deadline Thursday, April 29, 2010

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Antietam, Battle of: Lincoln and McClellan meet at headquarters



Abraham Lincoln meeting with General George B. McClellan (facing him at left) at McClellan's headquarters after the Battle of Antietam, October 1862; photograph by Alexander Gardner.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
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