



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

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MAY 1976

Vol 19 No 9

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----- 163rd Meeting -----

Date: Tuesday, May 11, 1976

Speaker: William Bates

Subject: "The Buchanan Administration - Last of a Species"

Place: The Hermit Club, Dodge Court

Preliminaries: 6:00 P.M. Dinner: 7:00 P.M.

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OLD BUCK. . .a Dumb Cluck?. . .or just a Lame Duck? The historiography of Buchanan and his administration has been almost universally harsh. Most followers of Clio have set off his "failure" as a foil for the conquering and triumphant "success" of the administration which followed. Yet some modern historians have taken a slightly more charitable view. For example, the eminent David Donald writes, "Buchanan faced a harder situation, perhaps, than any other President. . ."

Fellow member Bill Bates will give us new insight into the bachelor President and his problems. Bill comes from the heart of Lincoln Land, having been born in Springfield, Illinois. He is a graduate of Bradley University where he majored in political science.

Bill also holds a Certificate in Data Processing from the Institute for Certification of Computer Professionals/Case Western Reserve University. Bill has been associated with The Higbee Company for eight years, and since 1972 has been a company officer, responsible for corporate data processing functions.

Besides being a B.M.O.C. at Higbee's, Bill is a member of the Civil Service Commission in North Royalton and is Director of Public Safety for that city as Administrative Head of the Police and Fire Departments.

Bill has a collection of over 200 Civil War volumes, has traveled to many battlefields, rating Antietam as his favorite.

SNEAK PREVIEW OF NEXT SEASON'S PROGRAMS

Our vice-president, the indefatigable Judge (not Uncle) Milton Holmes has already lined up a complete series of stellar talks and programs for the season starting next Fall. Scholars, savants and just good old plain members will enlighten and/or titillate us. Here is a quick summary. Please note in some cases the titles are not exact, but merely indicate the general subject:

- September: Professor John H. Cary, Cleveland State University -  
"Revolutionary War"
- October: William Ellis of Ohio Story fame - "The Cuyahoga Valley During the Civil War"
- November: A Quiz of Whiz-Kid members directed by Bernie Drews
- December: Guy DiCarlo - "Mother Bickerdyke"
- January: Professor Alan Peskin, Cleveland State University -  
"Garfield Assassination"
- February: Dr. Mark Nelly, Jr. from Lincoln Life Foundation -  
"Abraham Lincoln"
- March: Edward Troxell - "Dred Scott Decision"
- April: Professor Louis Barone, Baldwin Wallace College -  
"Civil War Reconstruction"
- May: Jim Chapman - "Admiral Farragut"

THE FIRST KING OF THE MOUNTAIN

Member Fred Gill contributes the following interesting item about Washington A. Roebling and Little Round Top. "Wash" was the son of the famous Brooklyn Bridge designer; he was a brother-in-law of General Warren and served on his staff:

"Long after the war, at the request of a friend who was also at Gettysburg, he (Roebling) gave this account of what happened:

"At Meade's headquarters I found General Warren. After making myself familiar with the situation and looking around, Meade suddenly spoke up, and said Warren! I hear a little peppering going on in the direction of that little hill yonder. I wish you would ride over and see if anything serious is going on, and attend to it. (This is verbatim.)

"So we rode over. . . .Arriving at the foot of the rugged little knob, I ran up to the top while Warren stopped to speak to General Weed. One glance sufficed to note the head of Hood's Texans coming up the rocky ravine which separates little and big Round Tops. I ran down, told General Warren, he came up with me and saw the necessity of immediate action."

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Roebling. . . .characteristically laconic and self-effacing, 'I was the first man on Little Round Top.'"

from page 161 The Great Bridge: The epic Story of the Building of the Brooklyn Bridge, by David McCullough.

THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

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NEWSLETTER

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Neville Bayless, Ray Swanson  
P. O. Box 5028, Cleveland, Ohio 44101

MAY FIFTEENTH

"Died On The Field Of Honor"

For generations an impressive custom has been followed at the Virginia Military Institute on the fifteenth day of May. At 4:30 p.m. the entire Corps of Cadets in full dress uniform marches onto the Parade Grounds. Cadets in the several companies are assigned to represent those who were killed or mortally wounded in the battle of New Market. The names of the dead are called with the current rolls and as the name of each New Market hero is called, his representative steps two paces to the front, salutes, and reports, "Died on the field of honor."

This custom is based upon an incident of history graphically described by Col. J. C. Wise in his Military History of the V. M. I.:

"Latour D'Auvergne entered the military service of France in 1767 and fought with distinction throughout the early years of the Revolution in the armies of the Alps and the Pyrenees. Time and again he distinguished himself in battle, and was offered promotion, but each time he refused it. As a simple captain, he led 8,000 grenadiers, known on account of their murderous bayonet charges as the Infernal Column. He declined promotion, but Napoleon, in 1800, caused him to be officially borne on the rolls as the 'First Grenadier of France.' He was killed on the 22d of June of that year in Bavaria, whereupon the whole French army mourned for him three days. His heart was embalmed, placed in a silver vase carried by his company, and his saber was placed in the Church of the Invalides. Every morning until the close of the empire, at the roll call of his regiment, his name was called and the eldest sergeant replied: 'Mort sur le champ de l'honneur.'"

PRIVATEERING IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
by Ray Swanson

From 1775 to the early months of 1778 the British Navy had almost unchallenged supremacy at sea. The real menace to the British was the swarm of American privateers who waged an unrelenting war of seizure on supply vessels plying

the three thousand mile line of communication from England to America. With the outbreak of hostilities, over two thousand privately owned American vessels manned by seventy thousand hardy fishermen and smugglers had been furnished by Congress with Letters of Marque and Reprisal. In earlier years, an Act of King George II had decreed that to qualify for a Letter of Marque a vessel must be of a size to take ten guns - 3 pounders or bigger. So by 1775 there were plenty of American vessels that could qualify. Many of their masters had benefited from actual privateering in the French and Indian War.

With a constant stream of traffic for Boston and New York there was no lack of opportunity to capture valuable prizes. With the tremendous amounts of ammunition and supplies needed for the British Army in America it was not always possible to convoy the merchant ships protected by English warships. It was a very fortunate lone English merchant man who made port without encountering an American privateer too strong to be beaten off. For example, Captain John Manly seized the munition brig Nancy, off Boston and later through the years, thirty-four other prizes. Marblehead, Salem, Gloucester, New London, the Chesapeake and Charleston each furnished their quota of bold and enterprising privateers.

The damage done was grimly reflected in the English Board of Trade reports for each year of the struggle. In 1778, a report to Parliament revealed that there were 173 American privateers of which authentic account had been received, manned by 14,000 men and armed with 2,556 guns. Of these privateers, 34 had been captured leaving 3,217 prisoners in British hands. Conversely, the report indicated that 733 English craft had been captured by the Americans of which 127 had been retaken. The value of the remaining 559 was put at £2,600,000 plus loss of salvage and interest on cargoes.

The consequences of these steady losses caused a dramatic rise in ship and cargo insurance rates. For private owners the risks involved in an Atlantic crossing became so grave that many British consignors preferred to ship their cargoes under 'a foreign flag of convenience'.

The expulsion of American seamen from the Canadian and Newfoundland fishing banks ensured a ready supply of men who preferred to serve on a privateer rather than in the infant United States Navy. "There are at this time", wrote William Whipple of the New Hampshire Military Procurement Committee, "five privateers outfitting here which will take 400 men. You may depend on it that no public (Naval) ship will ever be manned while there is a privateer fitting out". Because of this widespread attitude, more men were engaged in privateering than served with Washington's Army in every year except 1776.

While privateering greatly helped the American cause, especially in obtaining needed ammunition, it was not decisive. Not until 1778, when French warships came to the aid of the Americans, was there a challenge to British naval supremacy.

Sources: The Bloodybacks, by Major Reginald Hargreaves; The American Privateer, by Donald Chidsey.

#### YOU PAYS YOUR MONEY AND YOU TAKES YOUR CHOICE

Kindergarten In The Sky "Herbert Mitgang, a member of the New York Times editorial board who wrote editorials criticizing the National Gettysburg Battlefield Tower during its planning stages, made his first visit to the tower and pronounced it a 'kindergarten in the sky'. He said the commentary on the battle which tower visitors get is 'baby stuff' and does not begin to tell the real story of the Battle of

Gettysburg. The commentary is 'full of inaccuracies' and it disposes of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address 'with one phrase. Mitgang said the tower gives a distorted view of the terrain--a view which the participants in the battle did not have and one which is 'cluttered up with all those pizzerias' which surround it. 'I'm shocked to see this marvelous place (Gettysburg) treated in this manner', he added. Mitgang gave his appraisal of the tower during a question period following his Fortenbaugh Lecture on Lincoln in the Gettysburg College Union. His attack on the tower drew bursts of applause from the crowd that jammed the lecture hall."

--from The Gettysburg Times, November 20, 1975

Try It, You'll Like It! Dr. R. H. Myers, editor of the Grape & Canister, newsletter of the Wilmington, Del. CWRT writes: "Much has been written in opposition to that 'awful tower at Gettysburg'. Your editor too initially opposed this commercial intrusion onto the Gettysburg battlefield. However, after spending two days at Gettysburg on July 4 and 5, his opinion has changed. While the tower can be seen from most parts of the battlefield, it is not that unsightly. In fact, it is a gracefully designed structure. Some may remonstrate 'but it wasn't there during the Civil War'. Neither was that hodge podge of motels, museums, hamburger stands and orange-roofed restaurants which clutter the Emmittsburg Road--right on the left flank of Pickett's charge of July 3, 1863. The purpose of the tower is educational--and it serves its purpose well, despite what one might have heard against it. The tower stands 307 feet tall, just back of the cemetery near Mead's Headquarters and the Visitor's Center (which wasn't there during the battle either!) and provides a wonderful view of the battlefield and an unique opportunity to study the terrain. To those who still don't relish this idea of such an observation platform, I can only say, 'Try it, you'll like it!'."

WHAT??? STILL ANOTHER!!!

Over 1,000 Civil War soldiers will reenact the Battle of Gettysburg this July. The Bicentennial Commission has urged that the nation celebrate all history in 1976, not just that connected with the Revolutionary period. The Battle of Gettysburg coming near July 4th ties in with the Declaration of Independence. One event created the nation, the second saved the nation.

Gettysburg has gone all out to plan for the largest battle re-creation it has ever seen. Four days of events are scheduled, and units from all over the nation will take part in the grand encampment.

An authentic Army campsite will be created and the public will be able to visit the bivouac area to experience a typical day in the life of a Civil War soldier. Napoleonic parade ground tactics of battle that were so fashionable but so disastrous to battle commanders in the Civil War will be demonstrated. There will be uniformed troops in blue and gray. You'll be able to see mounted cavalry, and witness an artillery duel with black gun powder. Other events include a military drill competition, a ladies' Civil War gown promenade, two parades, a Military Ball, and fireworks.

The actual battle will occur on July 4 at 2:00 p.m. A schedule of events and full information may be obtained by writing to: The Gettysburg Travel Council, Dept. 1863, 35 Carlisle Street, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325.

--from the Frederick News

### "CHATHAM" GIVEN TO NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The famed Lacy House, site of Federal headquarters during fighting around Fredericksburg, has now become part of the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. The house, which was also the site of a field hospital begun by Clara Barton, has for many years been the home of John Lee Pratt, the son of a Confederate soldier. Mr. Pratt bequeathed the property to the Park Service upon his death.

Originally named Chatham, the mansion was the ancestral home of the Fitzhughs (F F Vs). Here in 1829-30 Robert E. Lee wooed Mary Custis. Over 30 years later in 1862, Lee stood on the hills on the other side of the Rappahannock and looked through his glasses at Chatham on the other side. Chatham was then the headquarters of the Federal commander, General Burnside, and the Federal guns were bombarding Fredericksburg. Eagerly the Confederate artillerymen trained their guns on the big old house; but gently General Lee stayed their hand. "I could not bear to see Chatham shelled," he told his artillery chief. "It was under those trees that I courted my wife."

### EFFORTS TO PRESERVE CHAMPION HILL BATTLEFIELD

The Jackson, Mississippi Civil War Round Table is spearheading an effort to have the National Park Service acquire and preserve Champion Hill. (The family prefers the name to be without an apostrophe.) The battlefield covers about 12,000 acres and is essentially undeveloped and unmarked. The Jackson group have approached powerful Senator John C. Stennis for aid in federal purchase of the site. It is believed the owner of most of the land is agreeable to such a transaction.

In view of what has happened at Gettysburg and what is threatened at Manassas, this is a most worthy project. Certainly Champion Hill was the key battle of the decisive Vicksburg campaign. General Sanborn's study of Champion Hill carries the subtitle: "The Decisive Battle of the Civil War". Lord Wolseley in the North American Review, and the Comte de Paris in The Civil War in America express similar sentiments. William Swinton in The Twelve Decisive Battles of the War indulges in great hyperbole. Writing of the collapsing Confederacy as the war neared its end, Swinton wrote, ". . . as the doomed Confederate armies, compassed in fatal foils, looked southerly for an outlet of escape, there came rolling across the plains of the Carolinas, beating nearer and nearer, the drums of Champion Hill. . ."

NEW BOOK Revolutionary War afficiandos will be interested in the National Park Service Guide, 1776 - Guide to Historic Places of the American Revolution. 138 pages, many maps and full color illustrations. Price is \$3.15. Write: Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

### GRANT HOOKED ON GIFT STOGIES

General Grant is reputed to have smoked twenty cigars daily. The cigar habit was acquired after the battle at Fort Donelson, Tenn., in February, 1862. It is reported that Grant gave the following explanation to General Horace Porter:

"I had been a light smoker previous to the attack on Donelson....In the accounts published in the papers, I was represented as smoking a cigar in the midst of the conflict; and many persons, thinking, no doubt, that tobacco was my chief solace, sent me boxes of the choicest brands.... As many as ten thousands were soon received. I gave away all I could get rid of, but having such a quantity on hand I naturally smoked more than I would have done under ordinary circumstances, and I have continued the habit ever since." (Joseph N. Kane, Facts About the Presidents, New York, 1960)

Nota Bene: General Grant died of throat cancer.

--from Newsletter of Frankfort Ky CWRT