



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 29 December 2009 No. 04

DATE: Wednesday, December 9th, 2009

TIME: Dinner 7:00 PM; Program 8:00

PLACE: Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

SPEAKER: Roger S. Durham

SUBJECT: Like a Great Lion at Bay - Sherman Reaches the Sea

The Speaker:

Mr. Roger S. Durham is the former Director of the US Army Heritage Museum in Carlisle, PA. A Viet Nam veteran, he has worked for the Department of the Army as the Director of the Fort Stewart Museum, Ft. Stewart, GA, and the Supervisory Curator for the Fort Bliss Museum, Fort Bliss, TX. While with the Texas Historical Commission, Mr. Durham operated the Sam Rayburn House in Bonham, TX, and served as a state Museum Field Consultant and provided assistance and consultation to local historical societies and agencies in the northeast Texas region. Working with the Department of the Interior in the National Park Service, he was the Supervisory Museum Curator for the Thomas Edison National Historic Site, West Orange, New Jersey.

Mr. Durham has published extensively on the American Civil War and among his publications are The Blues in Gray – The Civil War Journal of William Daniel Dixon and the Republican Blues Daybook (Nominated for the Museum of the Confederacy's Founder's Award.), University of Tennessee Press, 2000, A Confederate Yankee – The Journal of Edward William Drummond, A Confederate Soldier from Maine (Nominated for the Museum of the Confederacy's Founder's

Award.), University of Tennessee Press, 2003, High Seas and Yankee Gunboats – A Blockade Running Adventure from the Diary of James Dickson (Nominated for the Madigan Award, US Army War College; the Lincoln Book Award, Gettysburg College; and the Lyman Book Award, North American Society for Oceanic History.), and his most recent publication being Carlisle Barracks – A Pictorial History, by Arcadia Press, 2009.

Mr. Durham has a M. A. Degree in History from Georgia Southern University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in History and Library Science from the University of Wisconsin.

The Subject

The focus is on the capture of Fort McAllister on 13 December, 1864, which removed the last obstacle to Sherman reaching the sea. Rather than discussing the event in detail, his presentation will examine the photographs taken by Samuel Cooley from Beaufort, SC, of Fort McAllister three days after its capture. Cooley took about 25 images of the fort and many of these images have never been seen by the general public. They show the fort as it appeared to those who fought there, and are significant because they are the only known images of Sherman's soldiers in the field at the end of the March to the Sea. Mr. Durham's recent research has been able to identify the date the images were taken and what is taking place in many of the images. Several surprises have also been uncovered and these will be addressed during the course of the presentation. These images are "windows in time" and we will have an opportunity to look through them during the course of the evening.

The Meal

A family-style meal will be served at 7:00 PM prior to the program. December's menu is Fried chicken, coleslaw, baked beans, Iced Tea, Rolls, Butter & Dessert. The cost of the meal is \$15.00 per person. Reservations for the meal **must be phoned in no later than Sunday, December 5th**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can email her at alsdorf@comcast.net

Gettysburg Grows by 45 Acres: December/January 2010

Gettysburg residents Wayne and Susan Hill recently donated 45 acres to the Gettysburg Foundation. Located near the eastern base of Big Round Top at the southern end of the battlefield, the acreage encompasses an area where Union skirmishers maneuvered on July 2, 1863, and Federal cavalry units participated in some of the final engagements of the three-day battle on July 3.

To date, the Gettysburg Foundation has helped to preserve more than 600 acres. Gettysburg National Military Park Superintendent John Latschar summed up the most recent addition's significance to the battlefield: "This is a win-win for everybody because there was battle action in this area, but the real significance is environmental. It's Plum Run, which is a famous name on the battlefield as well as critical wetlands and wildlife habitat." Wayne Hill, a former board member of the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, said, "The land is a natural, beautiful spot, and now we're sure it will stay that way." (Civil War Times Magazine)

A Promise Fulfilled

January 1, 1863

In one regard, January 1, 1863 was no different than all the other New Year's Days in recent Washington memory—Civil War notwithstanding. Ushers threw open the doors of the White House around 11 a.m., and ordinary citizens surged inside to mingle with dignitaries. Towering above the throng was Abraham Lincoln, patiently greeting visitors by the hundreds, “his blessed pump handle working steadily,” marveled journalist Noah Brooks. But this was to be no ordinary New Year's Day in the nation's capital. Today history would be made.

Around 2 p.m. the president [sic] quietly slipped out of the East Room and walked upstairs to his office (now the Lincoln Bedroom) on the second floor. Waiting for him was Secretary of State William H. Seward, along with Seward's son Frederick, who served as his father's private secretary, and a few members of Lincoln's staff. On the large table near the center of the room rested a vellum document written out by a professional “engrosser”—and corrected a final time only hours before, after Lincoln himself noticed an error.

Solemnly, Lincoln sat down at his accustomed spot at the head of the table. Now, at last, he would sign the most important order of his administration, perhaps of the century: the Emancipation Proclamation.

Exactly 100 days earlier, Lincoln had issued a preliminary proclamation, vowing to free the slaves in all states still in active rebellion against the federal authority on this day, January 1. The rebellion had continued, but many doubted until the very last minute that Lincoln would make good his threat. One persistent rumor held that Mrs. Lincoln, the daughter of a slaveholder, would bewitch her husband into reneging. “Will Lincoln's backbone carry him through?” wondered New Yorker George Templeton Strong. “Nobody knows.” Lincoln took a steel pen in hand, dipped it in an inkwell, but then paused and put the pen down. To his own surprise, his hand was trembling.

It was not, Lincoln later insisted, “because of any uncertainty or hesitation on my part.” As he put it at that decisive moment, “I never in my life felt more certain that I am doing right than I do in signing this paper.” But the day had taken a toll. “I have been shaking hands since 9 o'clock this morning, and my hand is almost paralyzed,” the president lamented. “If my name ever goes into history it will be for this act,” he told the witnesses, “and my whole soul is in it. If my hand trembles when I sign the proclamation, all who examine the document hereafter will say, ‘He hesitated.’”

Hesitation was the last thing on his mind. “The South had fair warning that if they did not return...I would strike at this pillar of their strength,” Lincoln insisted. “The promise must now be kept.” Lincoln again took up his pen. Slowly but firmly, he wrote “Abraham Lincoln” in large letters at the bottom of the document that declared all slaves in the Confederacy “forever free.” Letting out a burst of relieved laughter, he glanced at his effort and declared, “That will do.” (Civil War Times Magazine)