



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 389, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 28 January 2009 No. 5

- DATE:** Wednesday, January 14th, 2009
- TIME:** 7:00 PM - CWRT Members Dinner
(Dinner Reservations Required)
- 8:00 Speaker's Presentation and Book Raffle
(Open to the Public)
- PLACE:** Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV
- SPEAKER:** Doug Perks
- SUBJECT:** "...All Quiet Along the Potomac"

The Subject:

In Jefferson County, Virginia (now West Virginia), from April, 1861 until April, 1865, nothing was further from the truth. Due to its strategic significance, Jefferson County was occupied by the Union Army early in "The War." This occupation disturbed the day to day life of Jefferson County citizens who were non-combatants. It caused the loss and destruction of both public and private property.

Jefferson County, Virginia's experience was not any worse than any other place in the valley that encountered occupation or was the site of battle. However, by examining a few of the things that happened in Jefferson County during the "The War," some written by the men and women who experienced those events, we can gain a better understanding

of how “The War” not only changed the lives of the men who fought but it also how it changed the lives of the men, women, and children who remained at home.

The Speaker:

Douglas Perks is a resident of Charles Town, WV, having graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education from West Virginia University. Doug continued his education, graduating from James Madison University with a Master of Arts in teaching.

Along with being a frequent public speaker on a variety of local history topics, Doug teaches Jefferson County history for the Jefferson County Schools Community Education program. He is education coordinator for the Harpers Ferry Historical Association and is a curriculum specialist contractor at the Jefferson County Museum located in Charlestown.

Doug is a social studies teacher and department chair at Charles Town Junior High and Jefferson High School. He further divides his time among being education coordinator for the *Friends of Peter Burr*, chair for *Eastern Panhandle Environmental Education Consortium*, and director for *Jefferson County Parks & Recreation*.

THE MEAL

A family-style meal will be served at 7:00 PM prior to the program. The cost of the meal is \$15.00 per person. Reservations for the meal **must be phoned in no later than Sunday, January 10th**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can e-mail her at alsdorf@comcast.net

On This Day, January 12th, 1864

In the early evening the immense Federal war fleet of about sixty vessels and a large number of troop transports bearing eight thousand army men arrived off Fort Fisher. The seas were calmer now and Adm. Porter’s Fleet and Gen. Terry’s expeditionary force were anxious to erase the stain of the first failure to take the vital fort that had kept Wilmington partially open to blockade-runners. Landings, however, had to be put off until the thirteenth. Onshore, Col. William Lamb at Fort Fisher learned of the expedition’s arrival and notified Gen. Bragg, who commanded the Wilmington area.

President Davis wrote Lieut. Gen. Richard Taylor, son of President Zachary Taylor, “Sherman’s campaign has produced bad effect on our people, success against his future operations is needful to reanimate public confidence. Hardee requires more aid than Lee can give him, and Hood’s army is the only source to which we can now look.” Davis said some troops should be kept by Taylor in the West to hold Thomas in check, but the main part of what was left of the Army of Tennessee should be sent “to look after Sherman.” Hood resigned the next day. (Excerpted from *The Civil War Day by Day*, E. B. Long, published by Doubleday)

Abraham Lincoln Election to the Presidency

In February 1860, Lincoln made his first major political appearance in the Northeast when he addressed a rally at the Cooper Union in New York. He was now sufficiently well known to be a presidential candidate. At the Republican national convention in Chicago in May, William H. Seward was the leading candidate. Seward, however, had qualities that made him undesirable in the critical states the Republicans had lost in 1856: Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and New Jersey. As a result Lincoln won the nomination by being the second choice of the majority.

He went on to win the presidential election, defeating the Northern Democrat Douglas, the Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge, and the Constitutional Union candidate John Bell. Lincoln selected a strong cabinet that included all of his major rivals for the Republican nomination: Seward as secretary of state, Salmon P. Chase as secretary of the treasury, and Edward Bates as attorney general.

By the time of Lincoln's inauguration in March 1861, seven states had seceded from the Union. His conciliatory inaugural address had no effect on the South, and, against the advice of a majority of his cabinet, Lincoln decided to send provisions to Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. The fort was a symbol of federal authority—conspicuous in the state that had led secession, South Carolina—and it would soon have had to be evacuated for lack of supplies. On Apr. 12, 1861, South Carolina fired on the fort, and the Civil War began.

A British Perspective

The War Between the States 1861-1865 was an almost entirely family affair. Not simply the fratricide of any civil war, but in that the majority of participants were of British stock. Given the nature of primary immigration into the United States before the 1870's this is not surprising. A glance at the histories of the War tells the story plainly with such names as Wright, Jackson, Sheridan, Grant, Lee, Thomas, Johnson, Smith, and Cleburne leaping from the page. Admittedly Van Dorn, Heintzelman and Hoke upset things a bit, but exceptions prove the rule.

To this litany of homely surnames can be added the British building and manning of commerce raiders, blockade running to Southern ports (and, hardly less, supply to the North's armies), pro-Confederate and anti-slavery movements and politicking in Britain itself, together with an unworthy desire to see Jonathan trip up and concern for the security of British Canada jostling for position simultaneously. On top of all this consider the many thousands of Britons who crossed the Atlantic to fight - Keogh, Currie, Morley, Jenkins, Wyndham, Gordon, Broudeur, Carwardine - some in blue some in gray, for motives good and better than good - there was little enough money to speak of and so many were left lying on fields where imagination should not tread. You have, in numerous ways, a very British affair.

This is not to take away the American-ness from this sad and strange conflict, for the tragedy was American and so was the nation-forging catharsis and reconciliation that followed. Still, the interest in the war on this side of the Atlantic is very real and very intimate. It is an interest for which many of our forbears paid in full measure, and the price extracted was blood. (Excerpted from American Civil War Roundtable UK by *James Falkner*)