



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 30 May 2011 No. 09

DATE: Wednesday, May 11th, 2011

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

PLACE: Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

SPEAKER: Benjamin Franklin Cooling III

SUBJECT: Perspectives on the Sesquicentennial

The Speaker:

Dr. Benjamin Franklin Cooling III is a highly regarded historian who has authored numerous books on the American Civil War, including works on the Union defenses of Washington, DC; warfare in Kentucky and Tennessee and, of course, General Jubal Early's raid on Washington, DC. Among his recent publications are *Studies of the Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky, Fort Henry and Donelson: Key to the Confederate Heartland, Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862 – 1863* and *To Franklin*, and *Nashville and Beyond: Ending the Civil War in the Upper Heartland, 1864 – 1866*, which will become available in June, 2011. Dr. Cooling has been employed by the Federal Government for many years. Among his assignments was the Chairman of the Grand Strategy Department at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces at Ft. McNair, Washington, DC. Earlier assignments in his distinguished career included Assistant Director for Historic Services, U S Army Military History Research Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA, Chief of the Special Histories Branch, Office of the Chief of Air Force in Washington, DC, Teacher PMC Colleges (Weidner University), George Washington University, Chief Historian, Department of Energy and Associate

Dean and Professor of National Security Studies, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University.

Dr. Cooling is a native of Washington, DC and a graduate of Calvin Coolidge High School. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rutgers University and a Master of Arts and a Ph. D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

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, May 7th**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can email her at alsdorf@comcast.net. The meal will be Fried chicken, Asian Slaw, baked beans. Iced Tea, Rolls, Butter & Dessert.

On this Day, May 14th, 1863 Engagement of Jackson, Mississippi

By midmorning McPherson's and Sherman's corps of Grant's army neared Jackson, Mississippi, in a driving rainstorm. Johnston, knowing it was futile to oppose Grant with twelve thousand men, began to evacuate vital supplies and withdrew to the north. He left two brigades to delay the Federals. The Yankees easily overcame the two Confederate brigades and by midafternoon occupied the capital. McClelland, meanwhile, was in part solidly on the rail line from Jackson to Vicksburg, between Johnston and Pemberton. Grant's task was now to turn west from Jackson and move against Pemberton near Edwards' station.

South of Vicksburg, General Nathaniel Banks left Alexandria, Louisiana, for operations against Port Hudson above Baton Rouge. Port Hudson was the only other major Confederate bastion on the Mississippi. In the area of Boyce's Bridge on Cotile Bayou and near Merritt's Plantation on the Clinton Road there was brief fighting. Skirmishes occurred at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, and in Virginia near Warrenton Junction.

Hooker had written Lincoln of his problems with the Army of the Potomac, which had delayed further operations since the Battle of Chancellorsville. Lincoln, in turn, wrote the general that he would not complain if he kept the enemy at bay but would not restrain him from renewing the attack. He warned Hooker that he had intimations that "some of your corps and Division Commanders are not giving you their entire confidence." (Excerpted from *The Civil War Day by Day*, E. B. Long, published by Doubleday)

To Joseph Hooker

Major General Hooker
My dear Sir

Head-Quarters
Army of the Potomac
May 7th, 1863

The recent movement of your army is ended without effecting it's [sic] object, except perhaps some important breakings of the enemies [sic] communications. What next? If possible I would be very glad of another movement early enough to give us some benefit from the fact of the enemies communications being broken, but neither for this reason or any other, do I wish anything done in desperation or rashness. An early movement would also help to supersede the bad moral effect of the recent one, which is sure to be considerably injurious. Have you already in your mind a plan wholly or partially formed? If you have, prosecute it without interference from me. If you have not, please inform me, so that I, incompetent as I may be, can try [to] assist in the formation of some plan for the Army. Yours as ever

To Joseph Hooker

Executive Mansion, Washington,
May 14th, 1863

Major General Hooker

My dear Sir: When I wrote you on the 7th, I had the impression that possibly, by an early movement, you could get some advantage from the supposed facts that the enemies [sic] communications were disturbed and that he was somewhat deranged in position. That idea has not passed away, the enemy having re-established his communications, regained his positions and actually received re-inforcements [sic]. It does not now appear probable to me that you can gain any thing [sic] by an early renewal of the attempt to cross the Rappahannock. I therefore shall not complain, if you do no more, for a time, that to keep the enemy at bay, and out of other mischief, by menaces and occasional cavalry raids, if practicable; and to put your own army in good condition again. Still, if in your own clear judgment, you can renew the attack successfully, I do not mean to restrain you. Bearing upon this last point, I must tell you I have some painful intimations that some of your corps and Division Commanders are not giving you their entire confidence. This would be ruinous, if true; and you should therefore, first of all, ascertain the real facts beyond all possibility of doubt. Yours truly (Excerpted from *Abraham Lincoln, Speeches and Writings 1859 – 1865 Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings, Presidential Messages and Proclamations*. Published by *The Library of America*)

Civil War Sesquicentennial

Let the Smithsonian be Your Guide

Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life (Closing May 30th)

Explore the life and times of the 16th president through this museum's unique and unparalleled Lincoln collection. This is made possible by the generous support from *Ford Motor Company Fund* and *the History Channel*.

So Much Need of Service – The Diary of a Civil War Nurse (Closing July 29th)

See the diary of Civil War nurse Amanda Akin, on loan from the national Library of Medicine.