



HARPERS FERRY

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO BOX 1079, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 29 September 2009 No. 01

DATE: Wednesday, September 9th, 2009

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

PLACE: Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

SPEAKER: Robert Krick

SUBJECT: Lawyers, Politicians, and Clerks: The Regimental Command of Lee's Army

The Speaker:

“He is,” writes Dana L. Wooley on his “unofficial (but tepidly authorized)” web site <http://rkkrick.com>, “a right-smart, curmudgeonly old fellow....a retired, ersatz Virginia gentleman awaiting his dotage.” With friends who write such glowing tributes, who needs foes? Generally not to the liking of the humor-challenged, and perhaps also not to those hostile to the Army of Northern Virginia or the U.S. Marines in World War II, Bob Krick takes as his role-model H.L. Mencken, that Baltimore rapsallion who collected enemies with ill-concealed glee.

But of course, he is much more. New Jersey-born, and Michigan and California-raised, Bob holds degrees from Pacific Union College and San Jose State University. Retired from a long career as a chief historian with the National Park Service, most notably (1972-2002) at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Bob has found time to write and edit an astonishing number of well-researched books, book reviews, and articles, as well to speak at nearly a hundred distinguished venues, in the

process garnering a host of awards and honors, including a House Joint Resolution (No. 296, 2002) from the Virginia Legislature devoted to singing his praises. In addition, he has put his shoulder to the wheel as have few others in the effort to preserve the Virginia battlefields of the War Between the States. Revealing yet another facet of his achievements, he is a consultant to the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

A random and incomplete selection of Bob's books includes *The Smoothbore Volley That Doomed the Confederacy*; *Civil War Weather in Virginia*; *Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain*; *Conquering the Valley: Stonewall Jackson at Port Republic*; *Parker's Battery, C.S.A.*; *Neale Books: An Annotated Bibliography*; *Lee's Colonels: A Biographical Register of the Field Officers of the Army of Northern Virginia*; and *A Virginia Marine on Iwo Jima*. Whew!

Bob these days rarely speaks in public, and then doubtless only when large sums of cash are directed his way, sums which the Harpers Ferry Round Table is quite unable to pay. But away back on August 14, 1979, he inaugurated our group with a riveting talk on that larger-than-life Mississippian General William Barksdale, and as evidence of his gift for friendship (which he is unlikely to admit to), has agreed to return to our rostrum to speak on our 30th anniversary. May the good fortune Bob originally bestowed on our group be reignited September 9, 2009, and continue for at least another thirty years!

The Subject

R. E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia included about 150 regiments of infantry and cavalry, commanded at any given time by nearly 500 field-grade officers. Because of attrition and evolution in command, nearly 2,000 men held such commissions during the war's four-year duration. Despite VMI and other military schools, the South had far too few men with military educations or experience to fill all--or even a large portion--of those slots. As a result, a great many civilian amateurs wound up in important military roles for which they were ill-prepared. They included a substantial cross-section of scoundrels and misfits, as well as many civilian soldiers who accomplished great results. This is the story of the regimental command in Lee's army, a command held to an astonishing degree not by professional soldiers, but rather by lawyers, politicians, and clerks.

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, September 6th**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can e-mail her at alsdorf@comcast.net

Three Decades of Round Table Camaraderie in Harpers Ferry

As long ago as July 1979 - though it hardly seems like it - an enthusiastic group of potential Civil War Round Tablers, through the kindness of then-owner Bill Gavin, met in a small building adjacent to what was then the Cliffside Best Western Motor Inn on

Route 340 in Harpers Ferry. The group's purpose was to organize a regular gathering devoted to the study of the American Civil War, and in this they were eminently successful. For those with insatiable curiosity, this building is now (August 2009) the newly opened "Three Points Cycle Shop," just to the left of Confederate Veterans marker Number 24 ("The Point Where Federals Surrendered at Harpers Ferry"). Much has changed in Harpers Ferry since then, including the location of the marker (though not by a lot) and the name of the motel, now the Quality Hotel. The Harpers Ferry Civil War Round Table, however, continues to attract devotees and casual visitors alike. It is, and has always been, open to anyone, of any gender, race, nationality, or religion, with an interest in the events and personalities of the years 1861-1865.

Round Tables are created by self-institution and operate under no central authority. The first such group, founded in Chicago in 1941, was known as "The Civil War Round Table," a name it proudly continues, with no geographical qualifier. The name is metaphorical, suggesting an exchange of views, and derives from the then-popular Chicago Business Round Table. As attendees soon discover, there is no eponymous furniture in evidence. Dozens of Civil War Round Tables have since come into existence around the country.

The first regular meeting of the Harpers Ferry group, and its first presentation, took place on August 14, 1979, at the main building of the Cliffside. We are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Round Table on September 9, 2009, because some years ago we decided to suspend the monthly meetings, held the second Wednesday of each month, each July and August. The first speaker was Robert K. Krick, on Gen. William Barksdale. We are honored to have Bob, who has largely retired from the Round Table speaking circuit, as our speaker for our anniversary meeting, this time addressing the subject of regimental command in the Army of Northern Virginia. It is appropriate to note that, despite the Confederate theme of Bob's presentations, our Round Table strives to offer an even mix of Union, Confederate, and non-partisan subject matter each year.

Over the years, in addition to the Cliffside, and our long-customary and current home at the meeting hall of the Camp Hill-Wesley United Methodist Church on Washington Street near Gilmore in Harpers Ferry, the Harpers Ferry Civil War Round Table has for at least a season or two met at the Neersville Fire Hall, in Neersville, Virginia, and the Hilltop House Hotel in Harpers Ferry. In fact, the best attended meeting was one on "The Ghosts of Gettysburg" with Mark Nesbitt, when the surge of attendees spilled out into the Hilltop's parking lot.

As may readily be imagined, there have been a large number of speakers over the years. A top-of-the-head selection includes Edwin C. Bearss, Ira Berlin, Russell Weigley, William C. "Jack" Davis, Gary W. Gallagher, Joseph Glatthaar, James I. "Bud" Robertson, Dennis E. Frye, Lee Kennett, Mark Snell, Clark B. "Bud" Hall, Horace Mewborn, Brian Pohanka, James A. Morgan, III, Thomas P. Lowry, Steve French, John Coski, Richard Sauers, Doug Perks, Richard J. Sommers, John Hennessy, Edward Steers, Jr., Betsy Estilow, DeAnne Blanton, James O. Hall, Terry Alford, Ted Alexander, and Michael W. Kaufman. Many others, equally worthy, could be named. June has come to be reserved for period musical performances, and these have ranged from George Wunderlich on the history of the banjo to Denis Reen and the Second Maryland Fifes and Drums.

Several dedicated Round Table members have passed on, and we miss them all. Among the many are John Divine, Ted Hainsfield, George Blundell, Carl Lukac, and the Rev. J. Lester Link.

To everyone who has contributed to the good fellowship and knowledge gathered each month, our deepest thanks. Mike Musick bears responsibility for getting speakers and books for the raffle. Notably and most recently, we are especially indebted to Al and Alison Alsdorf for overseeing the treasury and putting up speakers at the Harpers Ferry Guest House, as well as for seeing that we have meals and a place to meet; to Mike Smith for assiduously editing our newsletter; and to Bob Becker for stellar service as president and in opening and closing meetings. To the many, many additional officers, donators of books, and contributors whose names do not appear in the very brief sketch above, our heartfelt appreciation. You know who you are.

The American Civil War Round Table UK

The American Civil War.....A Very British Affair: the British Perspective

"So, why are you interested in the American Civil War?" just about every member of the Round Table will be asked at some point – and very often by Americans! And there will be as many answers as members, who come from a variety of backgrounds and from all across Great Britain.

Perhaps it all started with the film version of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, which generated a great amount of interest in the glamour of the Civil War during a period of sustained austerity in post-war Britain. In 1953, a gathering of interested people formed the Confederate Research Club, making it pretty obvious where their interests - and possibly sympathies - lay. But the Club sustained itself under the guidance of the late Patrick C. Courtney. At the approach of the anniversary of the Civil War the CRC was invited to become a "corresponding member of the Civil War Centennial Commission", through which it was made aware of the existence of Civil War Round Tables in the USA. The CRC changed its name to conform and also demonstrate its wider interests resulting from membership growth.

Our members have a wide variety of hooks for their interest: from the blockade-runners into Southern ports to the evolution of modern warfare: from the ancestry of those who fought on both sides to concerns about the scenes of their exploits disappearing forever to development (and perhaps worse, to ignorance). From the politics of slavery to the politics of reform and the literature generated by both. We even owe our current political system to the outcome of that war.

And unlike the Confederate Research Club we have some superb advantages for the historian and enthusiast. Travel to the USA is now almost a routine and many members will have seen for themselves the places that would have been largely inaccessible to our founders. And of course we have the Internet and the possibility of instant communication with anyone, anywhere who shares our interests. So in spite of our title, we are not parochial: we are a band of enthusiasts who often astound each other and our contacts in the USA with the knowledge of something that happened nearly a century and a half ago, yet which clings to our popular culture as much as it does in the USA.