

# Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

November, 1997

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

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## STONEWALL JACKSON The Man, The Soldier, The Legend A ROUND TABLE PANEL DISCUSSION

Our November meeting will feature a Round Table panel and general discussion of the life and military service of this legendary Civil War general. **Bill Clark, Wilbur Jones, Joe Morrison, and Don Schmitt** have enthusiastically agreed to serve on our panel. Members will be free to share their own perspectives about Jackson in our first RT panel discussion and are urged to read *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend* (McMillan, 1997), by James I. Robertson, or other Jackson biographies prior to the meeting.

The meeting will be held at UNC-W, in Cameron Hall, Room 123. (A good map of the UNC-W campus is in the center section of your BellSouth directory). The room will open at 7:00, and the program begins at 7:30 pm.

### ! SPECIAL GUEST !

The Reverend Joseph Graham Morrison, a panel member, is the *grandson* of Captain Joseph Graham Morrison, CSA, who was the brother-in-law of Stonewall Jackson and served on Jackson's staff. Captain Morrison is mentioned extensively in Robertson's biography. You will enjoy meeting Joe and hearing his perspectives about Jackson!

*And men will tell their children  
Though all other memories fade  
How they fought with Stonewall Jackson  
In the old Stonewall brigade.*

-John Esten Cooke

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The RT has grown to 91 members paid for the 1997-1998 year! We welcome to our ranks: Bob Bankhead, Sylvia Bowles, Mike Budiziszewski, John Burney, Jim Burroughs, Tom Clifford, Richard Cranford, Sterling Dixon, Parks Downing, Walter Frost, Dumay Gorham, Joe Hooper, Roger Horne, Wilbur Jones, Richard Long, Cliff Mabry, Ray Martin, Warren McGuire, Larry Murray, Ralph Neville, Ken Newbold, Danny and Daniel Norris, Bill Oakley, David Paul, George Penick, Jim Pleasants, Don Rhine, Chet Rudolf, Everard Smith, Ken Stephens, Jim Vaughn, and Tim Winstead.

## THE BIRTH OF THE CONFEDERACY

### William C. Davis

One of America's leading CW historians, William C. (Jack) Davis, was the keynote speaker for the recent *North Carolina: The Civil War Connection* conference sponsored by the North Carolina Civil War Tourism Council and held in Wilmington. The large crowd warmed to Davis' presentation which combined humor with serious scholarship.

Davis began by noting that little study has been devoted to the process by which the Confederacy came into being. Since there are few records which shed light on the work of the Continental Congress eighty years before, a look at the proceedings in Montgomery, Alabama in early 1861 is an opportunity to watch Americans create their own democracy.

Davis pointed out that there was no coordination between the seceding states regarding their function as an independent nation. The state delegates met in Montgomery because Robert Barnwell Rhett suggested honoring William Lowndes Yancey, an Alabama secessionist. Alabama was also the geographical center of the first six seceding states. Delegates were sent to a "conference" in Montgomery simply to look at the matters of defense, interstate trade, and the prevalence of Unionism.

The delegates met in the Senate Chamber of the Alabama State House. Politics immediately came into play with coalitions forming quickly. The delegates were given no authority to act. Alexander H. Stephens, a guiding light of the Confederacy, wanted action, promoting the need to form a government. He was given the chore of writing a Provisional Constitution.

Davis described the framers of the CSA Constitution as a mix of reactionaries and idealists. As Congress could not make appropriations, there was no possibility of pork barreling. It was an easy process to impeach the President. The Constitution created a Supreme Court which was never convened. Congress had one house, the Senate.

Georgia had the biggest delegation, ten of the fifty attending delegates. Since Georgia luminaries, Howell Cobb, Alexander Stephens, and Robert Toombs were delegates, everyone expected a Georgian to become President. But the Georgia delegation was divided. Toombs may well have been elected, but it was soon observed that his frequent public intoxication would render him poor at foreign diplomacy. Jefferson Davis was elected by the states 4-2. He was a political moderate and was apparently not eager to serve as President.

Jack Davis made an interesting observation about the President's choices of the men with whom he would serve. Jefferson Davis appointed a Cabinet composed of six men, two of whom he had never met, two of whom he barely knew, and, finally, two of whom he had previously challenged to a duel!

In the early days of the Confederacy, there were so many volunteers eagerly clamoring to serve in the military that, at least briefly, the CSA army outnumbered the USA army.

Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina had worked for thirty years to achieve secession. An extremist, he believed that he should have been elected President. Predictably, it was Rhett who formed the anti-Davis faction.

Jefferson Davis was elected to a six-year term as President. He was never able to settle the issue of secession within the Confederacy itself. Ironically, because it threatened the existence of the Confederacy, he dodged the issue altogether.

One of the interesting points that William C. Davis made concerned Virginia's decision to join the seceding Southern states. Virginia recognized that its secession would insure that its territory, given such close proximity to Washington DC, would become a battleground. So Virginia insisted on Richmond as the Capitol of the Confederacy. The President could then take command of the army because he was near the seat of war. The Confederate Congress voted to move to Richmond on May 21, and the delegates left Montgomery within hours, leaving the citizens of the former capitol stunned and resentful. The government, said Davis, literally embarked for Richmond overnight. And, ironically, while Montgomery survived the war unscathed, Richmond was left in ruins.

Jack Davis concluded his presentation with the observation that the story of the creation of the Confederacy was the saga of fifty remarkable men who rose to a crisis with great imagination.

Much more can be found regarding these early weeks of the Southern republic in Jack Davis' *"A Government of Our Own: The Making of the Confederacy"* (Free Press, NY, 1994).

## SPRING BUS TOUR TO LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

RT members will visit some notable sites associated with both Lee and Jackson in Lexington, March 20-21. Our bus will leave Wilmington at 8 am Friday and return Saturday about 9:00 pm. This trip, with its one-night stay, should be easy for most members. We'll visit VMI and the Friday full dress parade, the museum with features Jackson artifacts, Lee's Chapel, Jackson's home, church, and grave, and have Friday dinner with our tour guide. The cost will again be reasonable. Go ahead and put this weekend on your calendar. More details will be provided in the coming weeks.

### LEE AND JACKSON A Recently Discovered Letter

A note from Robert E. Lee to Stonewall Jackson that surfaced in August indicates for the first time that the two legendary figures came very close to being photographed together. In the two-sentence note, written two weeks before Jackson's death, Lee tells his subordinate that he received too late Jackson's invitation to join him in having images taken by an "artist." Jackson consequently went alone to the photo session, which resulted in the second and last wartime photo of the great military commander.

"The tantalizing and exciting thing about this is that there has never been a notion that there was a prospect of the two of them being together for a photo," said Robert Krick, historian at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park and leading authority on the ANV. "That would have been one of the most famous photographs in all of American history, and the Confederate photo of all time."

The note was donated in August to Washington & Lee University by Mary Fray of Culpeper. The small, folded page was passed down through Fray's family, which was close to both Jackson and Lee. Fray's great-great uncle, John Thomas Lewis Preston, a founder of VMI in Lexington, and Thomas J. Jackson, a professor at VMI, married the Junkin sisters, daughters of the head of neighboring Washington College before the war. During the war, Preston served as a staff officer under Jackson.

(Jackson's first wife) Elinor Junkin Jackson died in childbirth in October, 1854. ...After Jackson's wounding, Mary Anna Jackson (his second wife) returned to Lexington and stayed several months with the Prestons while she broke up her house, according to Fray. Upon returning to her father's home in NC, she gave the Prestons, "as a token of appreciation," Jackson's shaving stand, a beaded string purse that Fray said he was supposed to have been carrying when he was mortally wounded, and the note sent a week beforehand from Lee, which Jackson had kept.

"From my earliest memory," Fray said, "I was aware that we had those possessions. My father valued them highly, though not in a monetary way at all. The note, particularly, was like the ark of the covenant." It was kept in a tin box, and Fray said there was an understanding in the family that the note, shaving stand and purse were among the most precious things in the household and were foremost among items to be rescued in case of calamity.

The note is in Lee's hand and is headed by the hour, 11:20 (a.m.), and the date, "25 Apl '63." It begins, "Genl," and reads, "I have just rec'd your note. It is too late for me to get to the Artist by the hour designated. Vy truly RE Lee."

Krick said the last photograph of Jackson was taken that day at Belvoir, a private home south of Fredericksburg where Jackson was staying during a visit from his wife. It was she who persuaded him to have his photo taken, and apparently Jackson invited Lee to come as well. Mary Anna Jackson later described the three-quarter view as the image of her husband that was "the most soldierly looking," partly because where he was seated the wind blew in his face, "causing him to frown." She arranged Jackson's hair, and he wore a handsome new uniform, a gift from Gen. J.E.B. Stuart.

Fray said that while some urged her to sell the note at auction, "It never was considered of monetary value," and she felt more comfortable donating it. She made the gift to W&L in the name of her family in honor of her nephew, John Holt Merchant, professor of Southern history at W&L.

Krick estimated that the note would have brought \$15,000 to \$20,000 at auction. (Reprinted by permission, *The Civil War News*, October 1997).

## MORE BOOKS ON THE WESTERN THEATER

If Craig Symonds' stirring presentation on Patrick Cleburne at our October meeting whetted your appetite for reading more deeply about the war in the West, you'll want to know about three recent and outstanding books on that subject.

For over twenty years, Wiley Sword's *Shiloh, Bloody April* was the sole authoritative book on the first big battle in the West. Now *Shiloh*, by Larry Daniel, (Simon & Schuster) joins the fray. Daniel's earlier work, published in *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, established him as one of the leading historians of the Confederate army in the West. In his current book, Daniel captures the importance of this Union victory.

*The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka and Corinth* (UNC) is a masterful study by Peter Cozzens, who has written similarly solid campaign accounts of Stones River, Chickamauga, and Chattanooga. This 1862 Confederate campaign, which pitted CSA generals Sterling Price and the colorful, but sometimes ineffective, Earl Van Dorn against USA generals Ulysses Grant and William Rosecrans, has long been neglected by historians. The poor coordination by the Confederate command and the high losses they incurred led not only to another Union success, but it left Union supply and communications in Mississippi intact and set the stage for Grant's aggressive Vicksburg campaign.

A recent main selection of the History Book Club is *Sherman's Horsemen: Union Cavalry Operations in the Atlanta Campaign*, authored by David Evans (Indiana University). This is an important addition to the growing scholarship devoted to the Atlanta Campaign, another formerly neglected area of study. Evans gives good accounts of Sherman's raids into the heartland of Georgia during a seven-week period in the summer of 1864. There is considerable information about the operations of Joe Wheeler CSA cavalry operations as well.

## LAST CALL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

There are still about twenty-five members from 1996-1997 who have not yet renewed their membership. Renewals must be received by Friday, November 28 to guarantee delivery of the December newsletter. Send your check for \$20.00 to CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28405 or bring to the November meeting.

## THE WILMINGTON CAMPAIGN

### Upcoming Bus Tour With Civil War Historian, Chris E. Fonvielle, Ph.D.

Our members' continuing interest in the Wilmington Campaign is very apparent! Forty of you have signed up for a bus tour to be led by Chris Fonvielle in the near future! Though the date for the tour has not yet been set, your interest guarantees that the steering committee will soon be planning this all-day Saturday tour to sites associated with the 1865 capture of Wilmington and Forts Fisher and Anderson. To sign up, call Chris Fonvielle (H. 792-9091) or George Slaton (O. 452-7370). Or, better still, put your name on a sign-up sheet which will be available at the November meeting of the RT. We'll get more information to you soon.

## A PARTING SHOT

This story comes to us courtesy of Conway Ficklen, a RT member and long-time student of the Civil War. At war's end, one of Stonewall Jackson's men was required to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States before he could vote. After taking the oath, he asked the Union officer, "Does that make me a Yankee?"

"Well, yes, I guess it does," replied the officer.

Then the veteran of the old Stonewall brigade said loudly, "Well, Old Jack sure did whip the hell out of us in the Valley of Virginia, didn't he?!"