

Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

February, 2000

NEWSLETTER

Editor: George Slaton

LEE'S MISERABLES

Life in the Army of Northern Virginia From the Wilderness to Appomattox

An Evening With J. Tracy Power

February 10 Meeting
St. John's Episcopal Church
Social Hour 7:00 pm.....Program 7:30 pm

"This is one of the dozen best books ever written about Lee's fabled army." With these remarkable words, Robert K. Krick describes Dr. J. Tracy Power's peerless contribution to the literature on the Army of Northern Virginia. *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia From the Wilderness to Appomattox* was published in 1998 by the University of North Carolina Press and is now in its second printing.

Tracy Power is a historian with the State Historic Preservation Office at South Carolina Department of Archives and History where he works with the National Register of Historic Places and directs the SC historic marker program. A native Georgian who has lived in SC since 1981, Dr. Power was educated at Emory University (B.A. 1980) where he was a student of the legendary Bell I. Wiley and the University of South Carolina (M.A. 1984, (Ph.D. 1995). He has also taught American history at USC and at Midlands Technical College in Columbia. He serves as a consultant to the Time-Life Series *Voices of the Civil War*. Dr. Power has just begun work on a biography of Robert E. Lee's eldest son, George Washington Custis Lee.

Lee's Miserables was the second-place prize winner of the 1999 Lincoln Prize from the Lincoln and Soldiers Institute, Gettysburg College; it also received the 1998 Jefferson Davis Award from the Museum of the Confederacy, the 1998 Richard Barksdale Harwell Award from the Atlanta Civil War Round Table, and the Jerry Coffey Memorial Book Award from the Grady McWhiney Research Foundation.

Robert Krick's review continues: "It displays on every page the salutary results of exhaustive research, judicious analysis, and adroit prose. *Lee's Miserables* is certain to be an instant classic." And Gordon Rhea writes: "Power has put his finger on the pulse of the Army of Northern Virginia and captured the spirit of Lee's army during its final year."

You're encouraged, as always, to bring your friends to what will be a superb program!

! SPECIAL THANKS !

To The Sponsor of Our Christmas Evening at the Bellamy Mansion

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SABRE STROKES

R.E. LEE: THE EXHIBITION is a major presentation on the life of General Robert E. Lee which opened on January 16 at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond VA. It's the centerpiece of the Museum's year-long focus on Lee.

The Museum has the world's largest collection of Lee's wartime possessions. Lee's camp chest and equipment, hat, boots, and saddle, Colt's revolver and holster, his Appomattox sword and coat and the pen with which he signed the surrender documents are among the items long displayed in the Museum's permanent exhibit, "The Confederate Years." In addition to these, the exhibiton will feature original photographs (most notably, the few so-called 'source images' of Lee), paintings and prints which trace Lee's changing physical appearance. Newspapers, magazines, postcards, sheet music covers, and other popular media document the use of Lee's image during his own life and in the 130 years since his death.

The Museum library's collection is a particularly rich source of featured items. Manuscripts from the library include signed copies of Lee's General Orders No. 9, the original page of the Appomattox parole list signed by Lee and his staff officers, a pre-war calling card of Colonel R.E. Lee, USA, a map that Lee drew during his service in the Mexican War, Lee's commission as a full general, and the December 1862 document by which Lee emancipated the 63 slaves of his late father-in-law, George Washington Parke Custis. Also featured in the exhibit is Lee's April 20, 1861 draft letter of resignation from the US Army to his commanding officer, General Winfield Scott.

Reflecting the Museum's origins during the postwar "Confederate Memorial Period," the collections are also rich in Lee souvenirs. Some of these are literally souvenirs of Lee himself (locks of hair and autographs) or his beloved horse, "Traveler" (locks from his mane and tail). Most are souvenirs of the several Lee monuments erected throughout the South and of the organizations, especially Richmond's R.E. Lee Camp No. 1, Confederate Veterans, that borrowed Lee's name and image.

Finally, the exhibit will not only present the life of Robert E. Lee himself, but will introduce the people who were close to Lee: his family, his military staff, and some of his closest or most colorful lieutenants. Showcased among the latter are effects of Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, AP Hill and Richard S. Ewell.

For more information, call (804) 649-1861 or visit the museum on the web at www.moc.org.

THE BATTLE OF BENTONVILLE REENACTMENT will take place Saturday and Sunday, March 18-19 at the Bentonville Battleground State Historic Site in Four Oaks NC. Thousands of Civil War reenactors and spectators will converge on the fields and woods of Johnston County for North Carolina's largest reenactment on the 135th anniversary of the battle.

Selected engagements of the decisive battle will be fought again by costumed reenactors on portions of the original battlefield. "Morgan's Stand" will be held on Saturday afternoon and "The Fight at Morris Farm" on Sunday afternoon.

Staged only once every five years, this reenactment is sponsored by the State Historic Site and the Bentonville Battleground Historical Association, a preservation group. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster at \$10 per person per day or \$20 for the weekend. Children under 10 admitted free. Call (910) 594-0789 or see the website: www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/bentonvi/bentonvi.htm.

THE NORTH CAROLINA CIVIL WAR TOURISM COUNCIL holds its sixth and largest annual conference in Raleigh NC on April 14-15. Over thirteen different topics will be featured, ranging from CW medicine to the role of railroads to an indictment and defense of Braxton Bragg. Speakers include Joseph Glathaar, Mark Grimsley, Robin Reed and others. Richard McMurry will present the keynote address. The program will also include first person interpretations at the State Capitol, a pre-session on genealogy, and tour options for Sunday.

Registration brochure and further information is available at (919) 788-9643 or by email at: nc_civilwar@yahoo.com.

COLONEL JOHN SINGLETON MOSBY, CSA A Fresh Appraisal

I just finished reading a brand new book on John S. Mosby, the legendary Confederate partisan raider. James A. Ramage, whose fine account of the wartime exploits of John Hunt Morgan appeared a few years ago, has just published this biography of Mosby which, in the words of Lee and Stuart biographer, Emory Thomas, "represents the very best on Mosby that can be done." Thomas does not exaggerate. Ramage's work goes far beyond a mere recounting of Mosby's wartime activities, many of which have been described exhaustively in previous accounts, and gives us a good interpretive biography tracing Mosby's development, not only as an interesting personality, but as a tactician and fighter.

Ramage demonstrates how Mosby, a frail and delicate boy, learned how to aggressively defend himself from the taunts of his peers. The inclination to counterattack, combined with a lifelong dislike of any sign of bullying or injustice, led to the well-known incident in which Mosby, while at the University of Virginia, shot a fellow student who threatened to thrash him. This same pattern was later reflected in Colonel Mosby's wartime successes, creating fear in his Union opponents who never knew when he and his command would appear as if from nowhere, sweeping down on their camp or formation and scattering, killing or capturing them.

Mosby seemed to possess an innate sense of how to wage guerrilla warfare. Though he deeply admired his mentor, the flamboyant Jeb Stuart, he was himself a very careful, secretive and non-nonsense commander. He developed a number of rules for combat which he followed and from which he never strayed. Early on, Mosby recognized, for instance, that the saber was obsolete for his tactical purposes and, from then on, he scorned the cavalry saber charge. His innovation was to arm each of his men with two Colt revolvers, thereby increasing the firepower of a small group of men on fresh horses who stormed through the enemy and won victory after victory.

In October, Jim McCallum and I attended a Conference on the Art of Cavalry Command in Middleburg VA where Dennis Frye, a leading Mosby authority, gave a presentation on the partisan commander. Though Dennis argued convincingly that Colonel Mosby's postwar claim to have tied down half of USA General Philip Sheridan's 40,000 troops in 1864 and preserved Richmond from capture by six months was an exaggeration, it can be said that, given his more limited actual wartime objectives, Mosby enjoyed incredible success as an effective raider.

Frye credited Mosby with a number of useful tactics. Mosby had one rule "from which I never departed," and that was to always charge the enemy, even when vastly outnumbered or in a tight spot. Further, the Confederate commander practiced thorough scouting before he planned a raid, sometimes riding fifty miles a day to identify his targets and analyze routes of attack and exit. Mosby confided his plans to no one; his men only learned their destination when they neared their objective, sometimes after many hours in the saddle. Mosby's larger goals, said Frye, were to destroy supply trains, sever communications, and isolate the Union army from its base.

I found James Ramage's Mosby biography particularly fascinating because he writes at length about the veteran's postwar career. As is well-known to many students of the war, Mosby joined the Republican party in the early 1870's and became friends with his old enemy, President Ulysses Grant, outraging many former admirers throughout the South. Drawing on his career as an attorney, he served as consul in Hong Kong, worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad, directed the Land Office in Akron, Colorado, and worked at the Justice Department in Washington DC. Interestingly, Mosby's inclination to right injustices and prosecute corruptive abuses whenever he encountered them led to more than one dismissal. In his later years, fortunately, Mosby enjoyed a resurgence of appreciation by Southerners and Northerners alike. Living until 1916, he was a familiar and well-loved figure on the streets of the nation's capitol.

This Confederate partisan chieftain remains one of the best known and admired figures of the War Between the States. *Gray Ghost: The Life of Colonel John Singleton Mosby* (James A. Ramage, University of Kentucky Press, 1999) deserves a place on your bookshelf.

BATTLE REPORT January 13 Meeting

RT members enjoyed a fascinating overview of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, the 1864 clash between PGT Beauregard's Southern troops and Ben Butler's Army of the James. A slide presentation enhanced the program led by Mark Jacobson and Jerry Netherland. Mark and Jerry will be our tour guides when we journey to Chester VA in March for the spring tour.

Wayne and Bernice Carver have done a great job this year of coordinating refreshments for our meetings. Sally Mack and Mary Royal served up a feast of delicious homemade goodies at our January meeting, and we thank them both for their efforts! Mike and Karen Budziszewski continue to make superb selections for our monthly raffle, and Mike has donated many of the raffle items himself. In January, Palmer Royal and Wilbur Jones contributed raffle items, and Jean Lynch gave two books from her late husband, Ted's, library. We apologize for not having the names of our raffle winners, but the raffle receipts totalled \$104.00. Thanks to all of you who buy raffle tickets to benefit the RT.

We are very pleased to welcome new member, Drew Pierson, into the ranks of the CFCWRT!

SPRING BATTLEFIELD TOUR The Bermuda Hundred Campaign

It's time to sign up for our annual spring tour to be held March 24-26! That Friday, RT members and their guests will be arranging transportation on their own to the Howard Johnson Hotel at I-95 and Hwy 10 in Chester VA (about 15 miles south of Richmond). At 7:00 pm, we'll have dinner with Jerry Netherland and Mark Jacobson who will orient us to the Saturday field trip. Our group will spend all day Saturday touring sites of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign. That evening, again at 7:00 pm, we'll host one of the historians from Petersburg's Pamplin Park who will speak to us about the Union breakthrough at Petersburg. Then, Sunday morning, we'll head to Pamplin Park for a tour of the new museum and the well-preserved Confederate entrenchments and a walking tour of the field of combat.

The cost is \$150 for double occupancy and \$210 for single occupancy. You may forward your payment to Treasurer Dan Geddie, CFCWRT, Box 10535, Wilmington NC 28404 or bring to the next RT meeting. We hope that many of our members will plan to attend. These events are wonderful firsthand learning experiences, and members always enjoy getting to know each other better during the weekend.

A PARTING SHOT

En route to Gettysburg, (CSA Brigadier General Cadmus Marcellus) Wilcox directed that none of his men leave camp to forage for fruit or even for a pair of chickens that patriotically wished to give themselves to the Confederate cause. In plain violation of all warnings and orders, Wilcox caught Private Pat Martin near HQ with a handsome string of chickens. Pat was small and young and had been assigned to drive the HQ wagon because of his tender years and immaturity. If, now, Pat was old enough to go foraging, he was old enough to take his place in the line of battle. So reasoning, Wilcox reprimanded the boy and sent him back to his regiment. The next sight the General had of the forager was at the most furious stage of the battle of July 2. Wilcox was under heavy fire. One courier had been killed, another had a bloody wound. The General's bridle rein had been cut by a bullet; his horse was rearing. In this confusion, with shells bursting everywhere, Pat appeared with a file of men whom he promptly ordered into line to face Wilcox. Smartly, the boy saluted. "Here are your chickens, sir," he said. They were sixteen Federal prisoners he was conducting to the rear.