

GENERAL ORDERS



The Newsletter of the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc. Since 1947 and The Iron Brigade Association



General Orders No. 04-05

May, 2004

The **May 13th, 2004** meeting is to be held at **Wisconsin Club**, Milwaukee

Speaker: Bruce Tap, author of *Over Lincoln's Shoulder*

Bruce Tap on The Committee on the Conduct of the War: Its Origins, Assumptions, and Significance

The Committee on the Conduct of the War was one of the most controversial congressional committees of investigation in American history. In the course of its tenure during the American Civil War, the committee was simultaneously applauded by proponents and savagely criticized by opponents.

Our May speaker, Bruce Tap, will examine the origins of the committee, the assumptions that governed committee investigations, and the lasting significance of its investigative work.

What motivated Congress to form and empower the Committee on the Conduct of the War? Since the investigation of battlefield defeat was a primary function of the committee, what strategic considerations and assumptions shaped its examination of military affairs? Finally, what was the significance of the committee's investigation? Did it materially improve the Union's military fortunes or did the committee prove to be a hin-



drance to the war effort?

Bruce Tap is an independent historian who resides in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Tap received his M. A. in American history from Western Michigan University, where he studied with Albert Castel. He received his doctorate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he studied with Robert W. Johannsen, noted scholar of the Mexican

War and Stephen A. Douglas.

Tap is the author of *Over Lincoln's Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of the War* (University of Kansas Press, 1998). He has also published in numerous scholarly journals, including *Civil War History*, *Michigan Historical Review*, *Gateway Heritage*, the *Illinois Historical Journal*, *North & South*, and the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*.

Tap is currently engaged in two book length projects for the Greenwood Press. The first volume is entitled *Shapers of the Great Debate on the American Civil War* (with R. Daniel Monroe) and should appear in 2004. The second volume pertains to civil-military relations during the American Civil War and will appear in 2005. He also writes about contested congressional elections and is working on a biography of Michigan Republican Senator Zachariah Chandler.

Schedule of Events

- Staff Meeting (open to all members) 5:30 PM
- Registration and Social Hour 6:15 PM
- Dinner 6:45 PM
- Program Begins 7:30 PM

Annual Patriotic Event Adds Civil War School Day June 4, 2004

This year, Reclaiming Our Heritage is opening its Civil War encampment one day early, on Friday, June 4, to allow elementary and middle school students to experience camp life and Civil War history on a personal level. The Civil War School Day will be open 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Participating reenacting groups will include: 29th U.S. Colored Troops, two Union Field Hospitals, General Pettigrew's Brigade, and civilians. Presentations will focus on camp life, a tour of an officer's quarters, camp cooking, civilian life, the care of the wounded during and after the Civil War, and a young person's experience.

Reclaiming Our Heritage Multi-Era Encampment, June 5-6, is a one-of-a-kind event in our area, featuring every major military era from the American Revolution through the present day. Roundtable member Lance Herdegen will speak and narrate the Civil War Skirmish on June 6. Member Donna Agnelly will speak June 5 and 6. Lantern-light tours of Wood Na-

tional Cemetery will be offered on June 5 only.

Reclaiming Our Heritage Multi-Era Encampment was created in 2002 as a way of honoring our nation's veterans and inviting the community to experience history in a vibrant and engaging format at the Milwaukee Soldiers Home Historic District.

The Civil War School Day and June 5-6 events are free. Pre-registration is required for the School Day. For information, visit www.soldiershome.org, call (414) 389-4135 or contact Patricia Lynch (414) 427-3776. Interested re-enactors and sutlers should contact Laura Rinaldi at (414) 389-4135.

Period Costume Wear Invited at the May Meeting

Traditionally our May meeting is a gala event, where gentlemen often don their uniforms (without sidearms or swords, please) and ladies their prettiest frocks that show how our ancestors may have appeared in the Civil War. These reenactors are further encouraged to answer questions about their attire from inquisitive members and guests.

The Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc. admits members of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges and activities of the Round Table.

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Board of Directors, Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc., as of Sep., 2003

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Preludes to Shiloh: The Confederacy's Crisis, Part III

To meet the threat marching up the Tennessee River, Johnston decided to embrace Beauregard's plan. In it, the Confederates would draw together all the forces in the theatre, from Florida to Louisiana, and borrow some from other areas; collect them in Corinth, Mississippi; march swiftly and decisively north and attack Grant's army at Pittsburg Landing, 23 miles away, before it joined with Buell's; crush Grant's army; destroy Buell as he came up; and finally retake Nashville.

Confederate forces that Johnston commanded included those under Braxton Bragg of North Carolina, who commanded some 16,000 in western Florida. John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, a former vice-president of the United States who had run against Lincoln in 1860, had about 7,000 in northern Mississippi. Leonidas Polk of Louisiana had about 9,000 in Mississippi. And William Hardee of Georgia controlled some 6,000 scattered around Mississippi, Alabama and south Tennessee.

On paper the plan made sense. Collected together, his command would have a decided (48,000 or more to 39,000) superiority over Grant's army at Pittsburg Landing, and much better over Buell's if they did not join. With only one plan before him and that one apparently sound, Johnston put out the word on 6 March to all his major commands to send their troops to him at Corinth.

In addition, Earl Van Dorn of Mississippi commanded the Trans-Mississippi Department, a polyglot of competing districts and interests containing some 40,000 men scattered throughout Missouri, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. They were far from Tennessee, and there was little hope they could reach Corinth in time, even though they said they would try. But if they

did make it the Confederates would have an overwhelming numerical advantage in Tennessee.

Time was one commodity that Johnston lacked. He collected all the arms and ammunition he could find, all the artillery he could move, and rations for his men for three days. When all were gathered he set them marching north on three separate roads, to meet about five miles southwest of Pittsburg Landing (roughly a mile from the furthest extent of the Federal camps), the supply base and camping ground of Grant's army. They started out in a drenching rainstorm on 3 April, fully expecting to begin the attack on Friday, 4 April.

Problems started the moment the plan went into motion. A polluted water source compelled Johnston to leave some 7,600 sick behind (about as many men as in a Federal brigade, and more than Breckinridge commanded in the battle). Poor staff work, torrential rains, mud, non-existent traffic coordination, and a great deal of other confusion caused one delay after another. Some units had to march nearly forty miles to get to their start point. Some others had not eaten for a week before, and consumed all their rations as soon as they were issued. To maintain secrecy and surprise, fires were forbidden — an admonition heartily ignored by soldier and officer alike.

Finally, on the night of Saturday, 5 April, the army was in place for the attack. Johnston told his army that the attack would start at daybreak. But it was two days late, and nearly all the men had already eaten all their rations. Most southern soldiers went into the battle of Shiloh hungry, a battle they simply had to win.

Author's Note: Any comments on this feature will be greatly appreciated—JDB.

2004 Schedule

All meetings are at the Wisconsin Club unless otherwise noted. *Speakers and topics are subject to change without notice.*

- June 10 (CARROLL COLLEGE): Brent Nosworthy, topic to be announced.

Civil War Round Table Dinner Reservation for: May 13th, 2004

Mail your reservations by May 7th to:

Paul Eilbes, 1809 Washington Ave. Cedarburg, WI 53012-9730

ALSO, call in reservations to (262) 376-0568

Enclosed is \$_____ (meal price \$20 per person) for _____ reservations for the next meeting of the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee. (Please make checks payable to the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee, Inc.)

Name of Member: _____

Meet the New Members

RICH AND CHRIS TONELLI, Green Bay, Wi. Interest, General



***Killer Angels* Held Over**

The Lifeline Theatre production of *Killer Angels* has been held over to May 23. Based on the Michel Shaara novel of the same name, the play has received critical acclaim by the Chicago Sun-Times, the Tribune and several Round Table members. Call (773) 761-4477, or go to www.lifelinetheatre.com for more information

In the Event of Inclement Weather...

Since we live in a part of the Union that has such wonderful weather, the President will decide if there is to be any change in a meeting due to winter storms. Listen to WTMJ or WISN radio for news of meeting cancellations if the weather turns on us.

GO Submissions and Editorial Policy

All submissions to the *GO* are used on a space-available, date-required basis. Electronic submissions are preferred over paper. The Editor/Publisher reserves the right to edit all submissions for length, propriety, content, and house style.

Submissions with a direct Civil War interest, or those that are date-sensitive, will be published first.

All submissions must be received by the Editor/Publisher at jdbeatty@amcivwar.com no later than the 10th of the month before the next *GO* (for example, submissions for the January *GO* must be received by 10 December). All address changes, or problems receiving the *GO*, are handled through the Membership Chairman, Paul Eilbes.

A Gentle Reminder

The Wisconsin Club and the Board of the Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee would like to remind our members that jackets are required for the dining room. Please contact club management if you have any questions.