



General Orders

Franty's Texas Brigade

Vol. 20
No. 6
Feb, 2009

www.houstoncivilwar.com

MEETING – THURS, Feb 19, 2009

Briar Club
2603 Timmons Lane @ Westheimer
6:00 Cash Bar
7:00 Dinner & Meeting

E-Mail drzuckero@sbcglobal.net
OR call him at (281) 479-1232 to Reserve
by Monday 6 PM Prior to Feb 19
Dinner \$30; Lecture Only \$5
E-Mail Reservation is Preferred;
No Need to Reserve for Lecture Only

PARKER HILLS PRESENTS: “1862: THE WINTER OF DISCONTENT”



Parker Hills, Brig. Gen. (Ret.)

In November of 1862, Major Gen. Ulysses S. Grant initiated his first attempt to capture Vicksburg by deploying his troops southward from

Grand Junction, Tennessee along the Mississippi Central Railroad. His initial objective was the city of Jackson, Mississippi. Such a seizure would enable him to flank Vicksburg and lead to his control of the Lower Mississippi River Valley.

In early December, Grant devised a two-pronged attack strategy with which to achieve his goal. His plan provided for his land forces to progress down the railroad while Major Gen. William T. Sherman would lead a waterborne expedition from Memphis downriver to Vicksburg.

Confederate cavalry under Brig. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest along with Major Gen. Earl Van Dorn, however, struck Grant's railroad line of communication in late December, thereby forcing Grant to turn back and leaving Sherman to fend for himself against a determined Confederate defense in the Yazoo River swamps above Vicksburg. Grant's first attempt on Vicksburg therefore ended in defeat, adding credence to the comments of Lt. Col. G. F. R. Henderson, a leading British military theorist of the day, that "Railways in war are good servants, but bad masters."

A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Parker Hills was born in Jackson, Mississippi and is a 1969 graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and earned a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology from Sul Ross University in Alpine, Texas. He is also a graduate of the United States Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Enter-

ing active military service in October, 1969, he served almost thirty-two years in uniform and retired in 2001 with the rank of brigadier general.

Shortly after his retirement, Parker established *Battle Focus*, a training company with the mission to develop ethical, effective leaders and to enhance teamwork through on-the-ground battle and leadership studies. Inducted into the USM ROTC Hall of Fame in 2003, he has conducted battlefield tours and military staff rides nationwide. He has also lectured British military officers in Purbright-Surrey, England at the request of Sandhurst Royal Military Academy.

The author of numerous writings on American history and the American Civil War, his writings include *A Study in Warfighting: Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Brice's Crossroads*. He also co-authored the *Vicksburg Campaign Driving Guide*, published in 2008 by the Friends of the Vicksburg Campaign and Historic Trail, and he is currently editing a National Geographic Society book of Ed Bearss' tours of the Vicksburg and Gettysburg Campaigns.

On a final note, Parker is active in historic preservation and is President of the Friends of the Vicksburg Campaign and Historic Trail, Past-President of Friends of Raymond, and Vice-Chair of the Mississippi Civil War Battlefield Commission.

Join us at the Briar Club on the evening of February 19 and listen, learn, and enjoy as we focus on Grant's first foray into and around Vicksburg's "unassailable" defenses.



Marsha Franty, President

How fantastic it was to have so many members and guests at our January meeting with Ed

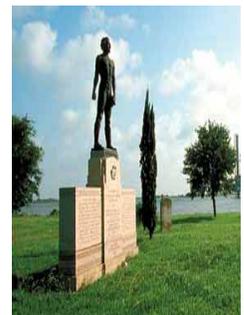
Bearss! We do hope you will all make a repeat visit for our fabulous February program. Parker Hills is an authoritative speaker whose presentations are always engaging and informative, so do plan to join us on February 19 for another memorable evening.

With February's arrival we begin to mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. Also important to note is that some states, notably Virginia and West Virginia, have already begun the **sesquicentennial celebration** of events of the years just preceding the actual beginning of the War. And, of course, the expected outpouring of new books and special periodicals related to Lincoln and the War, is also just beginning. Please share with our RT membership your knowledge of or recommendations concerning these celebrations and new publications.

Unfortunately, just as we anticipate these anniversaries, budgets at all government entities and many private ones are being cut, thus curtailing the services and programming at many historic sites. Please take time to remind our officials how critically important it is for us and for future generations to keep these facilities and functions available. Your individual efforts in education and preservation are significant contributions to this need. Thank you for fostering awareness and interest in our shared history!

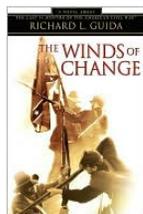
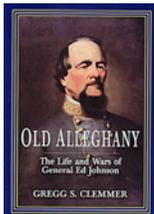
FRIENDS OF SABINE PASS BATTLEGROUND

Our own Ed Cotham and historian Bill Quick have recently set up the *Friends of Sabine Pass Battleground* association and hope that many of our Round Table members will become charter members of this much needed organization. An Individual charter membership for 2009 is only \$25. Your check or money order should be made payable to Friends of Sabine Pass Battleground, 130 Lena Lane, Lumberton, Texas 77657. Please be advised that *FSPB* has applied to the IRS for 501(c)(3) status.



FEBRUARY BOOK RAFFLES by Mike Pierce

February **special book raffle** offerings are: *Old Alleghany: The Life and Wars of General Ed Johnson* by our October, 2008 speaker Gregg Clemmer, donated by Karen Stone; and two copies of *The Winds of Change*, an historical novel focused on the last fourteen months of the Civil War by HCWRT member Richard L. Guida, kindly donated by the author.



Then, on our **regular monthly offering**, the following books will be offered: *River Run Red: The Fort Pillow Massacre in the American Civil War* by Andrew Ward, donated by Adrain Huckabee. Included in this offering is a VHS tape of the movie *Glory*, donated by Scott Shuster. Also offered will be *Seed Corn of the Confederacy: The VMI at New Market* by James Gindlesperger, donated by Jim Godlove. Included in this offering is a VHS tape of the movie *Shenandoah*, donated by Scott Shuster. Our third offering will be *Vicksburg: 47 Days of Siege* by A. A. Hoehling, donated by Frank Parma. Our final offering is a set of *First Bull Run Maps* with detailed explanation and an overlay with modern roads and structures. (These unique maps are designed for a driving/walking tour of battlefields because the overlay of present-day landmarks assists the bearer in pin-pointing the exact location of unfolding events of almost 150 years ago). Round Table member Gary Chandler recommended these maps. To view them, go to www.heritagecenter.com > bookstore > maps by Collins.



HCWRT SPEAKERS 2008 – 2009 CAMPAIGN

Feb 19	Parker Hills
Mar 19	Patrick Falci
Apr 16	Anthony Waskie
May 21	William M. S. Rasmussen

FEBRUARY QUIZ QUESTION by Jim Godlove



Vicksburg has many nicknames, including the “Gibraltar of the West,” “City of Terraces,” and “City of a Hundred _____?_____.”

WAL-MART’S PROPOSED WILDERNESS BUILDING SITE

Harry Bounds sent us a write-up featuring Civil War filmmaker Ken Burns and Pulitzer Prize Author David McCullough among others who have sent a protest letter to Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott relative to its proposed location for a new supercenter that borders Salem Church Battlefield. Some 253 scholars and others initiated the letter and consider this Wilderness location hallowed by the deaths of so many Americans within its perimeters. Approximately 2700 acres of the



battlefield are protected as part of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park.

The Wilderness area was the location of a May 4, 1864 battle that involved more than 100,000 Union troops and 61,000 Confederates. More than 4,000 men died there and 20,000 were wounded. Though the specific site Wal-Mart selected was not an area where men fought and died, it was used as a staging ground by Union troops and was part of the battlefield. As such, protestors have taken the position that Wal-Mart should build further away from their proposed site. County planners will hold hearings in February and March.

THE REEL CIVIL WAR: THE CIVIL WAR IN CINEMA

Marsha Franty has alerted your editor to an upcoming event on March 27-28, 2009 in Lynchburg, Virginia. Liberty University will be presenting its thirteenth annual Civil War Seminar over the two-day period. Speakers include Bruce Chadwick, speaking on "Myth-Making in American Film;" Ron Maxwell, producer/director of the film "Gettysburg" and "Gods and Generals;" and Ken Elston, presenting "Raising the Ghost: Composing Engaging Theatre from the Story of John S. Mosby," among others. More information is available at (434) 592-4366.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Houston Civil War Round Table is dedicated to the study of the civilian, military, and cultural aspects of United States history during the period of 1861 – 1865 and to the preservation of historical sites and artifacts.

Name _____

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How did you Hear About us? _____

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Mail To: **Houston Civil War Round Table**
P. O. Box 4215
Houston, TX 77210-4215

NEW MEMBER

\$40 – Individual joining in Apr – Dec
\$20 – Individual Joining in Jan – Mar
\$45 – Family joining in Apr – Dec
\$22 – Family joining in Jan – Mar
\$15 – Student or Out-of-State

RENEWAL

\$40 – Individual
\$45 – Family
\$15 – Student or Out-of-State

NEW BOOK OFFERING: *HEROES AND COWARDS* by D. Costa & M. Kahn

Several weeks ago as your editor sat reading during a lunch break at work, I saw an article in the January 17th issue of the *Wall Street Journal* by David Courtwright that dealt with a wartime dilemma, in this case the Civil War, that has long held sway over me—the "fight or flee" response of ordinary soldiers in moments of great danger and crisis. What causes some to run or freeze up rather than stay and perform their soldierly duty? Can those who run later develop coping methods of handling fear and become good soldiers, even "heroic" ones?

This new book, *Heroes & Cowards: The Social Face of War*, appears to deal primarily with the related subject of desertion and is written by husband-and-wife economics professors Costa and Kahn. According to the article, the couple, in scrutinizing the records, relied primarily on Union archives because there were no comparable Confederate records maintained on desertions. The writers analyzed 41,000 digitized life histories of Union troops (35,000 white and 6,000 black) and found that 200,000 federals (roughly 10%) deserted during the war. The assumption is made that Southern armies, particularly late in the war, faced similar desertion rates.

So, at exactly what conclusions did the authors arrive? Principally, Costa and Kahn found that “companies composed of volunteers of similar age and occupation who were born in the same areas were the least likely to suffer desertion.” So from this study result, we can conclude that the conscription system of mustering into like regiments brothers, fathers, sons, cousins, and home town friends and acquaintances, though devastating for their communities should casualty rates be high, did benefit the war effort in general.

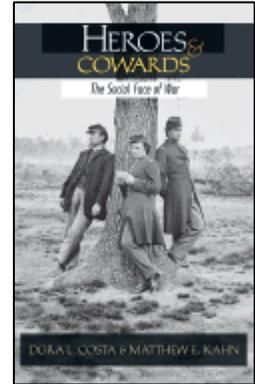
An interesting quote by Ardant du Picq, a 19th century French colonel and military theorist, is cited in the article: “Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare to attack a lion. Four less brave, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently of mutual aid, will attack resolutely”—a bit of a disarming thought, isn’t it?

Mr. Courtwright, who reviewed the book for the *WSJ*, surmises that this work is only secondarily a book about the Civil War or about heroism as opposed to cowardice. He thinks that desertion was not necessarily an act of betrayal; sometimes it was just an act of walking away from war in general (remember hero Inman in *Cold Mountain*?) and from the hardships of military life. He concludes that men often deserted **in groups** after weighing the likelihood that the war would be lost, that the sacrifices were too great, and so forth. Soldiering on during the Civil War, when injury from minie balls shattering bone almost certainly spelled amputation under little or no anesthesia, could be a daunting dilemma for the average conscript.

Proceeding on, just as social cohesion increased the chances that a Civil War soldier would remain with his company and perform his duty, the likelihood also rose that he would be wounded or killed while doing so (this brings to mind my two great-grandfathers, left on the killing fields of Gettysburg, sent to a Union hospital and thence to Point Lookout prison, later paroled—and one of them, by 1864 promoted two levels to sergeant, left a second time on the field of battle at Fishers Hill). However, if a man were captured along with fellow soldiers with whom he were already well acquainted, the greater the possibility that he

would survive the rigors of prison camps (yes, from my Carolina forebears I know this to be true as well—they also survived the camps).

The article also brings to my mind Grant’s *Memoirs* and the general’s comments concerning those demoralized soldiers from both armies who cowered under bluffs in the Shiloh battle area in order to escape the deafening roar of artillery and the chaos of a first-time war experience. Grant felt that many such men later learned to control their fear to the point that they could function well as soldiers and bravely carry out their duty. He did not condemn them as cowards or “skulkers,” as many of us dispassionately tend to do today.



All of these points well taken, I still personally have difficulty understanding how some Civil War soldiers, especially Southerners with few of the privileges of rank, no vested interest in the perpetuation of bondage (my ancestors owned no slaves), and far away from home, could do it—keep on fighting day after day, often hungry and exhausted, many often without shoes or warm clothing, watching family or friends fall all around them, enduring pneumonia in their camps and the horrors of prison life if captured, most slowly realizing they were embroiled in a struggle that was doomed to fail. How **did** they keep going? And, were we in their place, could we have fought on to the end, or near-end, as did so many just ordinary people of the time? Their forbearance in the face of extreme adversity, far more than individual acts of heroism on the battlefield, is the legacy they leave to the living. And, would you agree with your editor that in today’s world we Americans need that legacy now—those priceless gifts and lessons gleaned from **history**—more than ever?

QUOTABLE QUOTES— THE BATTLE OF VICKSBURG

“Vicksburg is the key. The war can never be brought to a close until the key is in our pocket.”
President Abraham Lincoln, Spring, 1863

“Vicksburg is the nailhead that [holds] the South’s two halves together.”

President Jefferson Davis, circa 1863

“Vicksburg is daily growing stronger. We intend to hold it.”

Lt. Gen. John S. Pemberton, Dispatch to Richmond, January, 1862

“It was my judgment at the time that to make a backward movement as long as that from Vicksburg to Memphis, would be interpreted, by many of those yet full of hope for the preservation of the Union, as a defeat, and that the draft would be resisted, desertions ensue and the power to capture and punish deserters lost. There was nothing left to be done but to go forward to a decisive victory. This was in my mind from the moment I took command in person at Young’s Point.”

Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, Chapter XI, page 262, re the Vicksburg Campaign, 1862-63

“With all the pressure brought to bear upon them, both President Lincoln and General Halleck stood by me to the end of the campaign. I had never met Mr. Lincoln, but his support was constant.”

Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, Chapter XI, page 272, re the Vicksburg Campaign, 1862-63

“The useless effusion of blood you propose stopping by this course can be ended at any time you may choose, by the unconditional surrender of the city and garrison. Men who have shown so much endurance and courage as those now in Vicksburg, will always challenge the respect of an adversary, and I can assure you will be treated with all the respect due to prisoners of war. I do not favor the proposition of appointing commissioners to arrange the terms of capitulation, because I have no terms other than those indicated above.”

Grant to Pemberton, *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, Chapter XIII, page 328, re the Vicksburg Campaign, 1862-63*

“The value of the capture of Vicksburg, however, was not measured by the list of prisoners, guns, and small arms, but by the fact that its possession secured the navigation of the great central river of the continent, bisected fatally the Southern Confederacy, and set the armies which had been used in its conquest free for other purposes; and it so happened that the event coincided as to time with another great victory which crowned our arms far away, at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. That was a defensive battle, whereas ours was offensive in the highest acceptance of the term....”

Personal Memoirs of Gen. W. T. Sherman, on the Battle of Vicksburg

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