



General Orders

Rains' Regiment

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DECEMBER 2010 MEETING
Thursday, December 16, 2010

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

E-Mail Reservation is Preferred;
at drzuckero@sbcglobal.net
or call Don Zuckero at (281) 479-1232
by 6 PM on Monday Dec. 13, 2010
Dinner \$33; Lecture Only \$5

Reservations are required for Lecture Only!

The HCWRT PRESENTS

Donald (Don) Jones **"Irish Brigade"**

The December program will feature one of HCWRT's members, Don Jones, who has written a very detailed book entitled, "The Harp and the Eagle" on the interesting leader of the Civil War Irish Brigade, Thomas Meagher. Don spent many years studying, traveling and researching the life of Meagher before writing the book.

Don was born in Chicago and grew up in Los Angeles attending UCLA where he acquired a BA degree in geology. After two years in the U.S. Air Force as an intelligence officer he had a long, successful career in the oil and gas industry retiring in 2000. Don had many technical articles published during his working career. He and his family lived in different locations in Texas and Colorado before settling in Houston.

Don has had a lifelong interest in history even placing high on national history contests while in high school. His history interests have always included the Civil War and several years ago he developed a particular interest in the Irish Brigade and its leader, Thomas Meagher. Please join us on December 16 for Don's presentation to learn more about this interesting Irish-American character.

Thomas Francis Meagher Irish Brigade Leader *By David Rains*



Thomas Francis Meagher was born in 1823 in Waterford City, Ireland and educated at Catholic boarding schools. When Meagher was eleven he began his studies at Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare where he developed his skill of oratory, becoming at age 15 the youngest medalist of the Debating Society. After six years, Meagher left Ireland to study in England at Stonyhurst College where he established a reputation for developed scholarship and "rare talents." At Stonyhurst he acquired an Anglo-Irish upper-class accent but despite his English accent and what some people perceived as a "somewhat affected manner", Meagher had so much eloquence as an orator as to lead his countrymen to forget his English idiosyncrasies.

In January 1847, Meagher, together with John Mitchel, William Smith O'Brien, and Thomas Devin Reilly formed a new repeal body, the Irish Confederation. In 1848, Meagher and O'Brien went to France to study revolutionary events there, and returned to Ireland with the new Flag of Ireland, a tricolour of green, white and orange and the design used was similar to the present flag.

Following the incident known as the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848 or "Battle of Ballinacorney" in August 1848, Meagher, Terence MacManus, O'Brien, and Patrick

O'Donoghue were arrested, tried and convicted for sedition. Meagher and his colleagues were sentenced to be "hanged, drawn and quartered". But, due to public outcry and international pressure, royal clemency commuted the death sentences to transportation for life to "the other side of the world." In 1849 all were sent to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania, Australia).

Meagher escaped Tasmania and arrived in New York City in May 1852. He studied law and journalism, becoming a noted lecturer and a United States citizen. He eventually founded a weekly newspaper called the Irish News. Meagher and John Mitchel, who had also escaped, published the radical pro-Irish, anti-British Citizen.

"It is not only our duty to America, but also to Ireland. We could not hope to succeed in our effort to make Ireland a Republic without the moral and material support of the liberty-loving citizens of these United States." Thomas Francis Meagher: On deciding to fight for the Union

Meagher's decision to serve the Union was not a simple one; before the onset on the war, he had supported the South. He had visited the South to lecture and was sympathetic to its people. Furthermore, his Irish friend John Mitchel, who had settled in the South, supported the secessionists.

Meagher implored the Irish of the North to defend the Union and he began recruiting, advertising in local newspapers to form Company K of the 69th Regiment. It became known as the "Fighting 69th" of the New York State Militia. He recruited a full company of infantrymen to be attached to the U.S. 69th Infantry Regiment New York State Volunteers and on April 29, 1861 the regiment was added to Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell's Army of Northeastern Virginia. Colonel Corcoran initially commanded them but was captured during the First Battle of Bull Run. Despite the Confederate victory, the Irish of New York's 69th fought bravely, winning praise from the media and support from the Irish of New York.

Following the First Battle of Bull Run, Meagher returned to New York to form the Irish Brigade. He was commissioned brigadier general to lead them in the Peninsula Campaign of 1862. In late May during the Battle of Fair Oaks, part of the Peninsula Campaign, Meagher saw his first battle as a brigadier general. The Union was defeated at Fair Oaks, but the Irish Brigade developed a reputation as fierce fighters.

The Irish Brigade suffered huge losses at the Battle of Antietam that fall. Meagher's brigade led an attack at Antietam on September 17 against the Sunken Road (later referred to as "Bloody Lane") and lost 540 men to heavy volleys before being ordered to withdraw. The Irish Brigade suffered its largest losses at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Meagher led 1,200 men into battle and only "two hundred and eighty men appeared under arms to represent the Irish Brigade" the next morning. Meagher spent the next four months recovering from his injuries and took charge of his command three days prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville. After limited engagement at Chancellorsville, Meagher resigned his commission on May 14, 1863. The Army had refused his request to return to New York to raise reinforcements for his battered brigade. The brigade was 4,000 strong in mid-May 1862,

but by late May 1863 it had only a few hundred combat-ready men left.

Following the death of Brig. Gen. Michael Corcoran, another leading Irish political figure, the Army rescinded Meagher's resignation on December 23. He was assigned to duty in the Western Theater beginning in September 1864. Meagher briefly commanded a provisional division within the Army of the Ohio from February 9-25 1865, and resigned from the U.S. Army on May 15, 1865.

After the war, Meagher was appointed Secretary of the new Territory of Montana; soon after arriving there, he was designated Acting Governor. In the summer of 1867, Meagher traveled to Fort Benton, Montana, to receive a shipment of guns and ammunition sent by General Sherman for use by the Montana Militia. On the way to Fort Benton, the Missouri River terminus for steamboat travel, Meagher fell ill and stopped for six days to recuperate. When he reached Fort Benton, he was reportedly still ill. Sometime in the early evening of July 1, 1867, Meagher fell overboard from the steamboat G. A. Thompson, into the Missouri. The pilot described the waters as "...instant death - water twelve feet deep and rushing at the rate of ten miles an hour". His body was never recovered. (summarized from Wikipedia)



DECEMBER BOOK RAFFLE

By Donnie Stowe

For the December meeting the book raffle begins with a book donated by Mike and Linda Pierce - ***THE DAMNED RED FLAGS OF THE REBELLION*** – *The Confederate Battle Flag at Gettysburg* by **Richard Rollins**. Next up is ***PLAIN FOLK'S FIGHT*** – *The Civil War & Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* Written by **Mark V. Wetherington**; The Donor is unknown. This month's third book is ***JOHN BROWN'S WAR AGAINST SLAVERY*** by **Robert E. McGlone**. This book details John Brown's failed effort to create a slave rebellion before the Civil War and was donated by James Godlove. Coming in last, but not least is a volume from my own collection: ***THEY FOUGHT LIKE DEMONS*** – *Women Soldiers in the American Civil War* by **DeAnne Blanton & Lauren M. Cook**.

I wish to thank the members who are turning in some very interesting books and encourage everyone to help support the round table with your used books and magazines. Since this is our last meeting before Christmas, I want to wish each and every one of you a Blessed Christmas & a Very Happy New Year.

DECEMBER QUIZ

By Jim Godlove



At Antietam, the Irish Brigade attacked a sunken farm road in the confederate center. After the battle this sunken road became known by another name.

What is this more infamous name?

Book About The Missouri Compromise Is Concise, Readable, Well Researched By C. Michael Harrington

(As published in the December 2010 edition of *The Civil War News*)

At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise that Saved the Union. By Robert V. Remini. Illustrated, endnotes, index, 200 PP., 2010, Basic Books, www.basicbooks.com, \$24.

Robert Remini's new little book is a delightful departure from the run-of-the-mill accounts of the Great Moments in American History that too often leave the reader with glazed eyes, muttering to himself: "Too much information!"

Remini recounts in a mere 155 pages the Compromise of 1850, including its origins, components, proponents, opponents and historical significance, thus covering the subject matter without bogging down the reader in endless detail.

The heart of the book is a condensed account of how the sick and elderly Henry Clay of Kentucky, the Great Compromiser, reluctantly came out of political retirement in 1849, returned to a U.S. Senate wracked by sectional tensions, and brokered a complex legislative compromise that forestalled secession for nearly a decade.

Convinced that America was teetering on the brink of disunion, Clay proposed several pieces of legislation, all rolled into a single act or omnibus, that he hoped would dissipate secessionist forces gathering steam in the South without provoking a backlash in the North.

Parts of Clay's omnibus, like the admission of California as a free state or the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, were designed to appeal to Northern interests while other parts, like strengthening the fugitive slave laws, appealed to the Southern states.

Clay miscalculated, however, in promoting the omnibus as opposed to its constituent parts. Many

Senators wanted the privilege of voting for some measures in the package and against others. Presenting them all as a package resulted in uniting all of the opponents of any of the measures. When the Senate finally voted down the omnibus, Clay was devastated, and he left Washington for a lengthy vacation.

During Clay's absence, Sen. Stephen Douglas of Illinois, recognizing Clay's error in insisting upon the omnibus, adroitly managed the separate passage by the Senate of the six component bills that made up the omnibus.

The House of Representatives fell into line behind the Senate and eventually approved each of the bills. When President Millard Fillmore quickly signed them, the Compromise of 1850 became the law of the land.

In a brief epilogue to his text, Remini first delves into counterfactual history. He declares, "Had secession occurred in 1850, the South unquestionably would have made good its independence." But instead of directly pursuing that tantalizing hypothesis, Remini returns to more factual history and assesses the likely effect of the Compromise of 1850 upon U.S. history.

Specifically, Remini argues that the Compromise of 1850 accomplished more than just avoiding disunion in the early 1850s. Remini contends that the compromise, by delaying civil war for roughly a decade, was largely responsible for the South's failure to secure its independence.

His rationale is twofold. First, the compromise gave the North 10 years to strengthen its industrial base, which, in turn, enabled the North to wage and win a protracted war. Second, the delay of secession and war until the 1860s gave the North 10 years to find a political leader capable of saving the Union - namely, Abraham Lincoln.

Remini is a prize-winning historian whose prose is clear, crisp and lively. Although his book lacks a bibliography, the lengthy endnotes attest to the author's thorough scholarship.

In researching his book, Remini clearly scoured multiple manuscript and archival resources as well as period newspapers and other secondary sources. The result is a scholarly yet concise treatment of the Compromise of 1850 that can be read on a long plane ride.

This reviewer highly recommends "*At the Edge of the Precipice*", especially to readers interested in the politics of the Civil War era.

HCWRT 2010-2011 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

Jan 21, 2011	Ed Bearss - <i>Receding Tide: Vicksburg & Gettysburg</i>
Feb 17, 2011	Ed Bonekemper - <i>Six Turning Points of War</i>
Mar 17, 2011	James Bevill - <i>Confederate Money</i>
Apr 21, 2011	Don Frazier
May 19, 2011	Jack Waugh

COMMANDER'S CORNER

By David Rains

We enjoyed an excellent presentation in October from Brian McGinty on John Brown's Trial as he made the case that it was the most significant trial in U. S. history considering the eventual consequences and the contemplation had John Brown been killed in the raid and the trial had not taken place. Also at the November meeting Troy Banzhaf gave us a very detailed picture of the Pea Ridge Battle with some excellent graphics.

Please take time from your busy holiday schedule to attend our December 16 meeting to learn about the controversial Irish Brigade commander, Brigadier General Thomas Meagher from our own Don Jones who researched his life thoroughly and wrote a detailed book about him.

Also we need more diners at the meetings – we did not meet our Briar Club minimum at the November meeting. Some have complained about the price increase but the \$33 is actually less than the Briar Club charges our organization. Bring your spouse or a guest and enjoy a good meal and a nice break from the holiday turmoil.

DUES PAYMENT - Our dues revenue is substantially less than last year – if you haven't paid your annual dues please do so. The dues are used to pay the speakers' expenses and hence are required to continue to bring quality speakers to our meetings.

LIVING HISTORY DAY

By Heather Turner

The Pearce Civil War & Western Art Museum in Corsicana, TX will host a Living History Day on Saturday, April 9, 2011 from 10 a.m to 5 p.m. in remembrance of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War.

We expect to have area reenactors, Civil War Round tables, regional Civil War museums, and college clubs take part in the event. The Museum will be open, free of charge, all day.

A major advertising push will bring the general public from around the region; schools will be specifically asked to encourage their students to participate.

We are located on the campus of Navarro College about an hour south of Dallas on I-45 and have space available for information and recruiting tables. We will also have green space for living history displays.

We want to extend an invitation for your group to participate in any way possible. Please contact Heather Turner by phone at 903-875-7655 or email at heather.turner@navarrocollege.edu.

For further information visit us on the web at <http://www.pearcecollections.us>.



Houston Civil War Round Table
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