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General Orders

Altavilla's Brigade

Vol. 35
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May
2024



MAY, 2024 MEETING
Thursday, May 16, 2024

Rudi Lechner's Restaurant
2503 South Gessner Road
6:00 (or sooner) Dinner
7:00 Program Begins

E-mail reservations are preferred. Please
e-mail Barry Brueggeman at
bgbrueg@aol.com or call (281) 480-1130
by 6 pm Monday, May 13, 2024

***** Reservations are Required *****

There is no cost for dues-paid members.
\$10.00 charge for visitors.

The HCWRT Presents **Ted Savas speaking on:**

**“Handshakes, Gambling, and
Gunpowder: How Jefferson Davis
and George W. Rains Changed the
Course of the American Civil War”**

Battles and campaigns are all the rage, but wars are and always have been about logistics. If you can't feed an army, the men can't fight. If you can't put gunpowder in their weapons, pulling triggers becomes useless. Few students of the Civil War are aware that the Confederacy had almost no gunpowder with which to fight the war when Fort Sumter fell, and no viable means to produce it. In fact, other than two small

blasting mills that were wholly useless when it came to waging war, not a single gunpowder mill existed across the entire South. A couple of major campaigns would have ended the fighting. Steady skirmishing alone would have drained away what little the Confederacy had within a few months. The shocking truth is that none of this was a secret to anyone in power on either side.

Upon taking office, Jefferson Davis made the critically important decision that a national mill had to be built to produce military grade gunpowder, and that the Union armies had to be kept at bay long enough to do so. Finding the right man to execute such a feat was nearly impossible, but he arrived in Richmond in July 1861 in the form of George Washington Rains. In the most important meeting no one has ever heard of, Davis and Rains struck a bargain that would make the Civil War we know today possible. The result was the establishment of a grand and intricate two-mile



Ted Savas

long mill complex in Augusta, Georgia that began satisfying the needs of a nation at war from early April 1862 through Appomattox.

But what about the first year of the war? How did the Confederacy manage to survive with so little gunpowder? The discovery of unused primary source material and other documents paint an entirely different picture of Union and Confederate strategy during the first year of the war than we have been led to believe. We'll explore what really happened during those crucial months - and why.

About Ted Savas

Theodore P. Savas grew up in Northern Iowa, attended a community college for an AA degree, and then the University of Northern Iowa for a BA in American History and a minor in European History. Following work on his master's in history, he transferred to the University of Iowa College of Law and graduated in 1986 with a Juris Doctorate (Honors). Ted relocated to California and practiced law for many years in Silicon Valley. In the early 1990s, he started Savas Woodbury Publishers (with David Woodbury) and launched the journal *Civil War Regiments*. The publishing company expanded as Savas Publishing and was sold to an east coast company in 2000. He began Savas Beatie (with Russel H. "Cap" Beatie) in 2004 and remains its director. He was involved with the Clive Cussler search that found the submarine *Hunley* in Charleston harbor in 1994.

Ted has published widely in magazines, worked a side gig for several years as a newspaper columnist, and is the author or editor of many books (in six languages) including *Never for Want of Powder: The Confederate Powder Works in Augusta, Georgia* (co-author), *Silent Hunters: German U-boat Commanders of WWII* (editor), *A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution* (co-author), and *Nazi Millionaires: The Allied Search for Hidden SS Gold* (co-author). He has always had a wide variety of interests, including classical piano, scuba diving, and caving. Ted

toured the Midwest in a rock band early in life and still plays bass and opens concerts for larger acts in Northern California with the band Arminius. He is the father of two grown children. He and his wife Zoe recently moved to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.



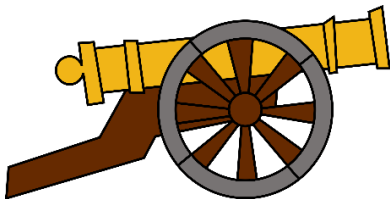
PRESIDENT'S POST *By Keith Altavilla*

Hello Round Table, and congratulations on the completion of another successful campaign. It has been another great year of dinner, conversation, and speakers, made all the better by sharing it with the fine folks in Houston! It has been an honor to spend the last two years as president of the group, and I look forward to seeing where the new leadership takes us in the campaigns ahead.

One of our accomplished members, Stephen Kinnaman, gave us an interesting talk in April about the Gosport Navy Yard, another reminder of the talented historians we have in our group. We close the year with another excellent choice, this year's **Vandiver Award recipient Ted Savas** of Savas Beatie Publishing. I know many of us are fans of Savas Beatie's work, and I'm sure Ted will have some great stories for us this final evening. If you enjoyed this year's speakers' list, be sure to look ahead to the group Walker Agnew has put together for the coming campaign. You'll find a listing of the speakers for the 2024 – 2025 campaign on the last page of this newsletter. It's going to be another fun

and interesting year for the Round Table, and we are in excellent hands going forward.

As we come to the end, please get those renewals in to Barry. I'll have mine to hand in for the meeting. You don't want to miss the newsletter, or any updates about the coming year. Your membership is part of what keeps us going, and brings in great speakers and provides the fellowship we all enjoy. Speaking of enjoyment, the other thing we enjoy seeing is new faces, so please take some time this summer to spread the word about the Round Table. I look forward to seeing everyone at Rudi's on May 16th, and seeing all of you back with us in September.



NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCED FOR HCWRT OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

By Eugene Boisaubin, Past President

As Chairman of the Nominating Committee, it is my distinct pleasure to announce our newly nominated officers and directors. Keith Altavilla is now completing a very successful second year as our President and will be stepping into his new role as Past President. Walker Agnew, having completed his role as Vice-President for this past year, will now take the primary leadership role as the President. Scott Wilkey has agreed to move from his position as Secretary to accept the role of Vice-President. Yours truly will now assume the role of Secretary, with Scott's transition. Barry Brueggeman, who has been a fixture with the Round Table for many years, most recently serving as our Treasurer, will be stepping down from that role. At this time, we do not have a replacement and will be vigorously looking for one before the new campaign begins. A Programs Committee, comprised of Walker Agnew, Vince Trovato, and Keith Altavilla, will also assist Vice-President Wilkey in his role of selecting topics and speakers for the 2025 – 2026 campaign.

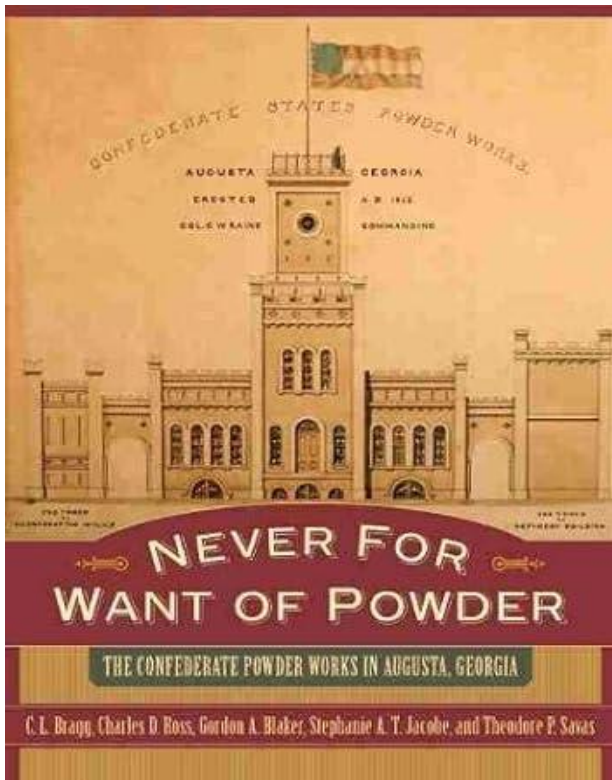
Our Board of Directors will be comprised of a seasoned group of Round Table members, including Michael Clennan, Jim Godlove, Roland Bienvenu, and Vince Trovato.

Pursuant to our organization's bylaws, the above-referenced nominees for officer and director positions will be voted upon by the general membership present at the May 16th meeting. Additionally, nominations may be made from the floor at that time. We also encourage our newer members to consider becoming involved in the leadership roles of the Round Table. Feel free to ask any of the officers before or after our meetings about the various opportunities that our committees and board afford.

MAY QUIZ *By Jim Godlove*



On May 9, 1864, a Union corps commander was chiding his men for ducking, saying "They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist ... " **Who was this beloved general and what was the battle?**



President Keith with last month's speaker Stephen Kinnaman

BOOK RAFFLE
By Rita Campbell

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Michael Glennan

The HCWRT membership and guests are going to have a great time on Thursday, May 16th! Bring a friend or venture out alone. All visitors, old members and new potential members are welcome!

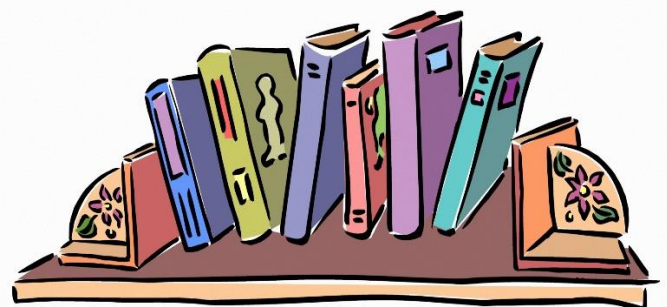
First, let's meet at 5:45 at Rudi's for a hearty German beer and an optional selection of excellent German food. At 7:00, we venture over to our meeting room for a book raffle, a challenging Civil War quiz contest, and announcements. Finally, settle back and get comfortable for an informative presentation by our 2024 Vandiver Award of Merit recipient, Ted Savas!

If you haven't yet paid your membership dues, I encourage you to bring a check to Barry on the 16th.

I'm looking forward to welcoming you at the door at this month's meeting. Should you have any questions at all, you can reach me at (713) 864-1204. Please join us!

This month, our book raffle has another five picks that will keep you captivated until our fall meeting. Please celebrate our last meeting of the 2023 – 2024 campaign by purchasing tickets for these jewels!

Our offerings this month are **HIGH TIDE AT GETTYSBURG** by Glenn Tucker, **THE WARRIOR GENERALS** by Thomas Buell, **THE TERRIBLE SOUND: THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA** by Peter Cozzens, **AMERICAN SCOUNDREL: THE LIFE OF THE NOTORIOUS CIVIL WAR GENERAL DAN SICKLES** by Thomas Keneally, and **LEGAL CASES OF THE CIVIL WAR** by Robert Bruce Murray.





HOUSTON CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE 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. For additional copies of this form please go to www.HoustonCivilWar.com

Membership Type

(CHECK ONE BOX ONLY.)

- \$50 – Individual
- \$60 – Family
- \$25 – Student/Faculty or Out-of-Town
- Existing Member - Address / Information Update Only

JOINING BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND MAY 31

NON-RENEWING members joining in the months of January through May will automatically be enrolled as members for the current and following year's speaker series ("campaign").

Name: _____
(FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST)

Address: _____

City: _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Cell, Home, Work

Email Address: _____

In which format would you like to receive your newsletter?

Email (PDF), U.S. Postal Service (Printed)

How did you learn about us? _____

FOR FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS ONLY

Family Member Name: _____
(FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST)

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Phone: _____ Cell, Home, Work

Email Address: _____

Note: For memberships or subscriptions outside the U.S., extra cost of postage to mail the newsletter may be added. Cost will vary; please write or email to inquire.

Mail your completed application and dues to: **Houston Civil War Round Table**
C/O Barry G. Brueggeman
3706 Lonnie Wood Drive
Houston, TX 77059

2023 – 2024 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

May 16, 2024: Ted Savas, 2024 Vandiver Award Recipient: “Handshakes, Gambling, and Gunpowder: How Jefferson Davis and George W. Rains Changed the Course of the American Civil War”

2024 – 2025 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

Sep. 19, 2024 Lorien Foote: “The Yankee Plague”
Oct. 17, 2024 Jeremi Suri: “How Slaves Became Union Soldiers (and Veterans)”
Nov. 21, 2024 Brian Matthew Jordan: “Battle of South Mountain, Maryland”
Dec. 12, 2024 Reserved for Graduate Student Award Recipient, topic TBA
Jan. 16, 2025: Sean Michael Chick: “Creole General: P. G. T. Beauregard”
Feb. 20, 2025: Jeff Hunt: “Battle of Palmito Ranch, Texas”
Mar. 20, 2025 Neil Chatelain: “Treasures and Empire in the Civil War: The Panama Route, the West, and the Campaigns to Control America’s Mineral Wealth”
Apr. 17, 2025: Andrew Bledsoe: “Decision at Franklin: The Nineteen Critical Decisions that Defined the Battle”
May 15, 2025: Reserved for 2025 Vandiver Award Recipient, topic TBA

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