

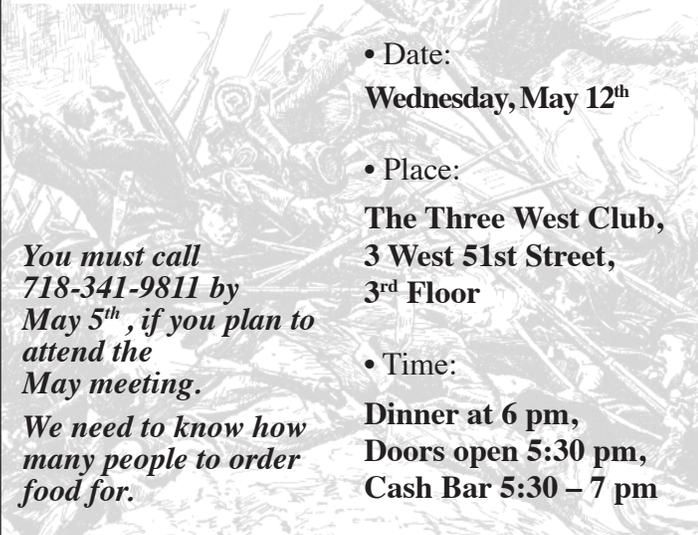
THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 59, No. 9

540th Meeting

May 2010

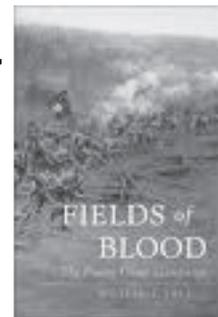


- Speaker:
Fletcher Pratt Winner
William L. Shea
- Cost:
Members: \$35
Non-Members: \$45
- Date:
Wednesday, May 12th
- Place:
The Three West Club,
3 West 51st Street,
3rd Floor
- Time:
Dinner at 6 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm

You must call 718-341-9811 by May 5th, if you plan to attend the May meeting.

We need to know how many people to order food for.

Fletcher Pratt Winner 2009, William L. Shea *Fields of Blood*



Our guest, the Fletcher Pratt Literary Award winner for 2009 is professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. A native of Louisiana, he has a B.A. from Louisiana State University and a Ph.D. from Rice University. He has been a Fulbright Scholar in China, a consultant for the National Park Service, and a Battlefield guide for the Smithsonian Institute. He is the author or co-author of numerous books and articles on American military history, especially the Civil War west of the Mississippi River. His books include *Wilson's Creek*, *Pea Ridge*, and *Prairie Grove: A Battlefield Guide*, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River*, and *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West*.

53rd Annual Battlefield Tour

The 53rd Annual Battlefield Tour will take place May 14th–16th, 2010. The destination will be Manassas, VA. We will cover the first and second battles of Bull Run, and Ball's Bluff. Tour Participants will depart by bus from the 7th Regiment Armory, 66th Street and Park Avenue at 7:30 am on Friday.

The trip will cost \$750. Any remaining balance should be remitted (made out to CWRT/NY) now. We still have places available if you mail a check to **139-33 250th Street, Rosedale, N.Y. 11422**.

For more information, call John J. Sheehan at 917-539-1417.

2010 Election Slate

The 2010 election slate for the CWRT-NY is as follows:

President: Charles Mander
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VP/Operations: Bill Finlayson
Treasurer: John J. Sheehan
Secretary: Rochelle Schumer

Board of Directors (Term Exp. 2013)

Michael Connors
Len Rehner

As always, the election will be held at the May meeting.

2010 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2010

• June 9th •
Patrick Falci
*The Man in the Red
Battle Shirt*

• September •
TBA

• October •
TBA

President's Message

The month of May at the Round Table brings two important topics. As spelled out in the By-Laws, we will be holding our annual elections. More importantly, each May the Civil War Round Table awards its Fletcher Pratt Award to the best Civil War non-fiction book of the previous calendar year. This year, the Committee has selected "Fields of Blood" by William L. Shea. Mr. Shea's book is on the Prairie Grove Campaign of December 1862 in Arkansas. It is a wonderful book.

Lastly, I mentioned last November that we Americans were lucky to have two holidays to celebrate our veterans since most of Europe only celebrate November 11th to honor veterans. We use that holiday to honor all veterans, living and dead. But, thanks to Confederate widows, mothers and daughters, we have Memorial Day to honor all those veterans who gave, as President Lincoln said, the last full measure of devotion. Please honor our deceased veterans: fly the flag (at half staff until noon), plant flowers on their graves and remember that without their sacrifices we might not be able to enjoy the liberties we continue to enjoy.

— Charles Mander

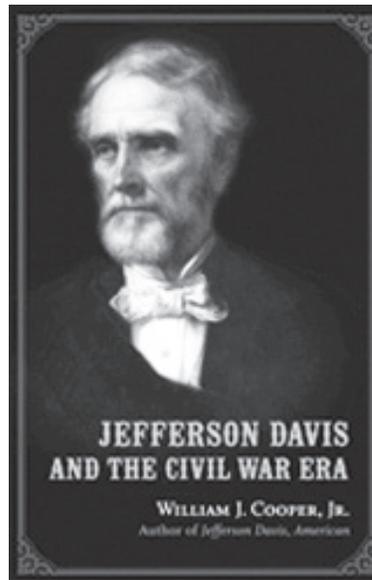
Book Review

Jefferson Davis and the Civil War Era

by William J. Cooper

William J. Cooper is the Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University. In 2000, he published *Jefferson Davis, American*, a massive biography of one of the most simultaneously reviled and revered figures in American history. It won many awards and is certainly the definitive biography of the Confederate president.

This book (2008) consists of nine short, informative, and cogently argued essays, each of which originated as a lecture. In his opening essay, Cooper briefly reviews the judgments of other historians over the past fifty years. He writes, "I have no intention here of challenging the overwhelmingly prevailing view of Davis's political delinquency as Confederate president. Rather, I will ask why it occurred." He readily concedes – and describes – Davis's 1861–1865 deficiencies but demonstrates that in two decades prior to the war, Davis was very much a devoted patriot. Davis loved his country and was no secessionist. "He never advocated disunion, though he did believe in the constitutional right of secession. . .He repeatedly argued that the situation of the South was not so desperate as to call for breaking up the Union. . . He agreed to serve on the committee of Thirteen, charged by the Senate to search for a way to reconcile Republicans and Southern Democrats. Davis was a close friend of New York's senator, William Henry Seward, and Cooper writes, "I am convinced that Davis' major hope for a deal between Republicans and the South rested on his relationship with



Continued on page 4

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Founded January 24, 1951

The Dispatch is published monthly, except July and August, by

**The Civil War Round Table
of New York, Inc.,**

139-33 250th Street,
Rosedale, N.Y. 11422
Telephone CWRT/NY at (718) 341-9811

During business hours.

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May in the Civil War

1861

9 – James D. Bullock is selected by the CSA to purchase arms and vessels from the allegedly neutral Brits. His two nephews live on 20th Street just off Broadway. One will become president some day and the other's daughter will marry a future president. The boys' initials are T.R and E.R.

10 – Nathaniel Lyon, former captain, now general, marches pro-secessionist prisoners through the streets of St. Louis. A small riot occurs and many civilians are killed. Two future heroes witness it all: William T. Sherman and U.S. Grant.

1862

9 – David Hunter decides on his own Emancipation Proclamation in South Carolina but he is a bit too early for that. President Lincoln writes him a Dear Stupid letter and makes him renege on the deal.

30 – Fighting Henry Halleck finally gets hold of Corinth, Ms. after creeping toward it for what seems like a month of Sundays.

1863

2 – The famous flank march by T.J. Jackson. He is mortally wounded by N.C. troops in the gloom, creating one of the great "what ifs" of the war.

25 – Grant tries, à la the Petersburg Crater, to blow up Confederate defenses at Vicksburg with 2,200 pounds of gunpowder. This doesn't work, either.

1864

8 – Rebels win the race to Spotsylvania as Lee reads Grant's mind once more.

9 – John Sedgwick disparages Southern marksmanship with an elephantine comment and is killed by a sharpshooter.

War of the Brothers

The extraordinary military exploits of the Irish abroad is the subject of a fascinating new study by Irish historian Ian Kennelly. Of all the conflicts of the past five centuries in which Irishmen fought on both sides, none compares to the sheer slaughter that took place in the course of the American Civil War. That was is one of the events covered by historian Ian Kennelly in *Courage and Conflict*, an engrossing study of Irish military exploits around the world and over the last two centuries.

The contrasting attitudes of the Irish generals who served North and South, in a fratricidal bloodbath that claimed over 600,000 dead soldiers, is well illustrated by the roles and sentiments of opposing Irish-born generals Thomas Francis Meagher and Patrick Cleburne.

During the course of the war, Cleburne distinguished himself as a brave and innovative general, but he destroyed his chances of further career advancement when, towards the end of the struggle, with the South reeling from the superior manpower and manufacturing strength of the North, he advocated that slaves who agreed to fight for the Confederacy should be given their freedom.

Like Cleburne, Meagher was an outstanding leader of the Irish Brigade, but for reasons possibly connected with the biased view some of the North's military

hierarchy, known as Nativists, the Brigade was given many lethal tasks, and eventually, after a long litany of horrendous casualties, Meagher resigned his commission in frustration, although he continued to fight under General Sherman in the West.

The author draws on a story by David Power Conyngham, a journalist from County Tipperary, who has written about a bizarre and tragic incident from the heated fighting outside Richmond in 1862 that displays in microcosm the divided loyalties of the Irish. During a charge by the Irish Brigade down the slopes of Malvern Hill, they came under fire from Confederates among a clump of trees. A Sergeant Driscoll was ordered to take a detachment of men to deal with the enemy. Driscoll led his men in a charge and personally shot the Confederate commanding officer, causing the Rebels to break away. Driscoll checked to see if this officer, a young man, was dead. Turning him on his back, he saw that the officer was his own son, who had gone to work in the south before the war. Minutes later, Driscoll charged into the Confederate fire, being killed by multiple shots.

Around 2.2 million men formed the Union armies, with 900,000 enlisting in the Confederate cause. Of these numbers, 150,000 of the Union side were Irish, while between 20,000 and 40,000 Irishmen took up the Southern flag.

From *Ireland of the Welcomes* November/December 2009

Continued from page 2

Seward.” All efforts at compromise failed and Davis wrote of his “unutterable grief” when the Union for which he fought (and was wounded) in Mexico and “for which my father bled” (In the Revolutionary War) was dissolved. “Those who knew Davis...testified to the emotional and psychological agony that gripped him.”

However, once the die was cast, Davis devoted himself to the Confederate cause: “Awareness of this mind set is essential to comprehend Davis’s approach to his presidential task...Disagreement or questioning or any hint of egotism became for him a challenge to the cause, a sign of limited commitment...Jettisoning politics for a holy calling, Davis wounded himself and his cause, perhaps fatally.”

The final essay is about Davis’ significant role in the Mythology of the Lost Cause. “Nowhere in Davis’s exposition of Lost Cause ideology... does slavery appear ... In his book, he downplays slavery as causing secession. That contrasts fundamentally with Davis’ clearly expressed view in 1861 (and before) that he regarded slavery as basic to secession and the Confederacy.”

We are always thinking of Lincoln. This book reminds us of the complexities and foibles of the other government of 1861–65. And of the “almosts” and “ifs” of history.

By Michael Wolf



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OF NEW YORK

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The Fletcher Pratt Award

At a meeting of the Board of Directors held in June 19, 1956, James D. Horan proposed that a Fletcher Pratt Award be established as a memorial to a distinguished charter member and former president (1953-54). Unanimously approved as proposed, the award, in form of an appropriate plaque, is presented to the author or editor of the best non-fiction book on the Civil War published during the course of a calendar year.