

HARDTACK

A Publication of the Indianapolis Civil War Round Table – April 2004

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Quiz Master – Tony Trimble

April 12, 2004

Monday – 7:30 p.m. at the Indiana Historical Society
450 W. Ohio St.

(Parking in lot north of the Society off New York St. – Please enter via Northeast Door)

A New Framework for Civil War History

Presented by Richard McMurry

Few events in American history have been studied as extensively as the Civil War. Its causes, the grim reality of warfare, decisive battles, the abilities of commanders, the life of the common soldier, the war's aftermath, and how it altered the course of history – have all been studied by millions. As a key part of this ever-expanding body of work, respected author Richard McMurry will help us to gain a clearer understanding of the war and attempt to answer some of the questions that persist to this day. His discussion, from both a Union and Confederate perspective, will focus on the key battles and campaigns of this great conflict and will allow for a better understanding of why they occurred and their significance.

About the Speaker: Richard McMurry is a native of Atlanta, Georgia. He attended public schools in Atlanta and Decatur, Georgia, received the B. A. degree from the Virginia Military Institute, and the M. A. degree from Emory University. Richard is a veteran of the United States Army. From 1967 until 1988, he taught at Valdosta State College and North Carolina State University. Since 1988, he has been a freelance writer and speaker, and tour guide. Richard has authored more than 100 articles on various facets of the American Civil War. His books include, John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence, Two Great Rebel Armies: An Essay in Confederate Military History, Atlanta 1864: Last Chance for the Confederacy (a volume in the *Great Campaigns of the Civil War* series), and The Fourth Battle of Winchester: Toward a New Civil War Paradigm.

His books and articles have earned Richard a number of awards, including the Mrs. Simon Baruch University Award (presented by the UDC), the Fletcher Pratt Award (presented by the NYCWRT), and the 2001 Daniel M. & Marilyn W. Laney Prize (awarded by the Austin CWRT). Richard has spoken to Civil War groups, schools, historical, literary, and library societies, and civic clubs in 25 states and the District of Columbia. He is a member of numerous historical societies and is active in such organizations as the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Blue and Gray Education Society. Richard currently lives and writes in Roanoke, Virginia.

Please bring a friend to hear our speaker.

DINNER AT SHAPIRO'S

ALL MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE INVITED TO SHAPIRO'S DELI AT 5:30 P.M.
TO ENJOY DINNER AND FELLOWSHIP PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

From the Board

Hardtack Editor

Please send book reviews, interesting articles, etc. to place in the Hardtack to me at the following: **Debby Chestnut, 441 S. Catherwood Ave., Indianapolis, 46219; E-Mail: dchad@indy.net or chestnud@mail.ips.k12.in.us. Phone: 356-5117 (home) or 226-4101 (work): Fax: 226-3444. Deadline for May Hardtack: April 26.**

Treasurer

We still plan to deliver the Hardtack via e-mail for as many members as possible. Please make your e-mail address available to Dorothy Jones joejones@iquest.net and Doug Wagner dougwag@msn.com.

Civil War Quiz

By Tony Trimble

1. Name the Confederate Colonel who was killed leading the 1st Missouri at Franklin.
2. What technological improvement was made by the Fretwell-Singer torpedo?
3. Who was known as the "Hellcat in Calico"?
4. What was the "Peripatetic Coffin"?
5. Name the future Brevet Union General who won the Medal of Honor at Wilson's Creek.

Answers to March Quiz: 1) "The Lost tribes of Israel"; 2) Claiborne Jackson resigned to join the Confederacy; 3) Robert H. Chilton; 4) A projectile with spring-loaded wings to stabilize it in flight; 5) Vicksburg.

Has Your Address Book Been Up-Dated?

The Indiana Historical Society received a flyer from Hewlett Packard that was addressed to: Governor Oliver Morton, President, Indiana Historical Society. This flyer was promoting some new advanced technology. It was suggested they might want to use some of their old technology and update their mailing list.

Kunstler Painting to Show Hunley For First Time

Long Island historical artist, Mort Kunstler, who specializes in Civil War and has been named official artist of the Hunley preservation project in South Carolina, will unveil his latest painting of the Hunley and its crew "The Final Mission." What sets this painting apart from previous paintings is that there are no known photographs of the men who were aboard and Kunstler has painted the crew based on forensic archaeology recreations of their faces. Kunstler has also included every artifact removed from the silt inside the Hunley, with one exception: the gold coin good luck charm carried by the mission commander.

The painting will eventually be displayed with the Hunley. In the meantime, prints will be signed by the artist in Charleston to help pay for the preservation work during the weekend of April 17-18, when the painting will be officially unveiled and an elaborate funeral will be held for the interment of the crew's remains.

Book Reviews

Bright Starry Banner by Alden R. Carter – This Civil War novel brings to life all the horror

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and glory of the Battle of Stones River. Set in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, at the turn of 1862-63, the book is Civil War fiction like you've never experienced. The kaleidoscope narrative follows generals and privates, amateur soldiers and weathered professionals through one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. Carter is confident of his materials and masterfully describes massive military maneuvers while also shifting to the viewpoint of individuals caught up in the horrific action. Historian Peter Cozzens says: "Alden Carter brings Civil War conflict to life like no novelist since Joseph Pennell."

Battles and Leaders of the Civil War – By Peter Cozzens – When the first four volumes of **Battles and Leaders of the Civil War** were published in the late nineteenth century, they became the most sought after Civil War sources. Now this illustrious collection has expanded with two additional volumes. Cozzens adds his exhaustive research into Civil War reports from newspapers, magazines, personal memoirs and letters.

In **Volume 5**, he presents articles written by prominent leaders including Generals Grant, Beauregard, and Sherman as well as President Hayes. Many of these selected articles were first published decades after the war in well-known magazines.

Volume 6 provides a great collection of information from primary sources and includes accounts from key personalities of the war like Jefferson Davis and William S. Rosecrans, but also adds the voices of those in lower positions. Through the eyes of volunteers, draftees, soldiers and lower-ranking officers, Cozzens presents a fuller picture of the reality of Civil War marches, battles and encampments.

The Plot To Burn New York

By 1864, the Confederates had lost many of the battles and Grant's appointment as Commander of all Union armies in March of that year was viewed by Confederates as doom to Lee in the East. The Richmond government decided that at that point the best way to beat the Union was to terrorize the North into peace by fostering revolution. Many secret meetings were held to formulate a master plan. Various chapters of the Northern Copperheads, identifying themselves at times as Knights of the Golden Circle, the Order of American Knights and the Sons of Liberty, formulated a common plan over long distance. Getting messages back and forth between the North and South was becoming increasingly difficult. Spies and blockade-runners were utilized to transmit messages from one order to another. At times, even personal ads that had been specially coded were printed in the Richmond Whig with a notation that "New York papers please copy." Such messages were invariably reprinted by at least the New York Daily News as the paper was a Southern sympathizer.

It was an incredible scheme. When finalized, New York City was their target and the plot was thus: One group was to be responsible for setting off a series of fires as a diversion while another group was to seize Federal buildings and municipal offices, still another to take control of the police department, and yet another to free prisoners from Fort Lafayette and throw the Army Commander in New York, Major General John Adams Dix, into a dungeon. By sunset a Confederate flag would surely fly over New York City. This would surely be a coup for the Confederacy.

About the time the plot was finalized, Richmond learned from its spies that Washington was beginning to obtain bits and pieces of the plan to capture the North. It was then decided that, since everything but the date had been formalized, no more messages would be sent by runners. It was further decided that for two reasons carrying out the plot would wait. One reason was to "lay low" to give Washington the impression that the plot had died, and two, the most opportune time to best capture the North off guard would be soon after another Union victory. Since Southern newspapers could still freely travel to Canada, members were instructed to keep reading the Richmond newspaper for an editorial advising that a "Northern city" should be burned in retaliation. (It is not known just how it was accomplished, but the same editorial also appeared in the New York Times a few days later). At that time they were to congregate in New York's St. Dennis Hotel and begin to put the plot in motion. The October 15, 1864 edition of the Richmond Whig carried the awaited for word.

The leader of the "fire brigade" was a Confederate by the name of Robert Kenney. Kennedy and the rest of his group met at the St. Dennis Hotel like planned. At that time final coordinates were made. Over the next few days his men were to each register for a week's stay in several assigned hotels, each using assumed names and towns. This was to gain them access to rooms in the hotels.

Arrangements had been previously made with a chemist residing in New York, a Southern sympathizer, to pick up a load of "Greek fire." This was a special chemical combination that looked like water but, when

exposed to air, after a delay, would ignite in flames. When Kennedy picked up the valise, he found it contained dozens of small bottles of the liquid with each bottle sealed with plaster of Paris. Instructions were to use the bed

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in each room, pile it with clothing, rugs, drapes, newspapers, and anything else that would burn. Next, they were to empty two bottles of the "Greek fire" on top of the pile. In about five minutes, flames would ignite the pile. This delay gave them plenty of time to escape unnoticed before the fire started. After starting one fire, the man would then proceed to the next location and do the same. Each man would thus be capable of setting off several fires blocks from each other.

Still making final arrangements on November 2 to finish the deed, a disturbing telegram was sent by the Secretary of State, William Seward, to the Mayor of New York. It read: "This Department has received information from British Provinces to the effect that there is a conspiracy on foot to set fire to the principle cities in the Northern States on the day of the Presidential election. It is my duty to communicate this information to you." Later that afternoon the telegram was made public. At this time MOST of the Order members decided to abandon the plan and get out of the city in an attempt to save their own lives—ALL that is except for Kennedy and five of the seven members of his band. After several meetings, it was decided by Kennedy and the rest of his gang to go ahead with the plan and set New York City on fire. They wouldn't be in a position to capture New York after all but at least they could retaliate for Sherman's March to the Sea.

On the evening of November 25, 1864, the fires began. Before the night was over almost every hotel in New York City had been set ablaze. These hotels included the St. Nicholas, St. James, Fifth Avenue, LaFarge, Metropolitan, Tammany, Hudson River Park, Astor House, Howard, United States, Lovejoy's, New England, and the Belmont. There were also fires on the Hudson River docks and a lumberyard. As a last minute thought, Kennedy decided to go into Barnum's museum and up to the fifth floor where he could obtain a good view of Broadway and several of the fires. After watching for several minutes, Kennedy started going down the stairs. The remaining bottle of "Greek fire" dropped from his coat pocket and broke in the stairwell. Wasting no time, Kennedy ran from the museum, out the front door and on down Broadway.

Meeting his band of men the next morning at the Exchange Hotel, one of the few that they hadn't set fire to, Kennedy and his men read the morning papers. While there were some reports of fires, the news didn't fill the front page like they hoped it would. Both the Times and the Herald however headed the news of the fires as a "Rebel Plot." Kennedy and his men managed to get out of New York City on November 28. Soon a \$25,000 reward was offered. This, combined with Kennedy's boasting of his role in setting the fires, led to his capture three months later. After a short trial, Kennedy was found guilty on all counts. At this time, Kennedy signed a confession but refused to name anyone else involved in the plot. On March 24, 1865, just three weeks prior to Lincoln's assassination, Kennedy was hung.

The editor of this article in his research came across some interesting tidbits regarding the Lincoln assassination. John Wilkes Booth arrived in New York the same day that Robert Kennedy did and they had a couple of meetings together. Robert Martin, a member of Kennedy's gang in New York, but who didn't get caught, was a member of Booth's gang that attempted to kidnap Lincoln barely a month before the assassination was carried out. This leaves one to wonder that if Kennedy hadn't been caught for the arson in New York, would he have also been with Booth on April 14, 1865?*

INDIANAPOLIS CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE CAMPAIGN 2003-2004

(Programs Co-Sponsored by the Col. Eli Lilly Civil War Museum)

<u>MEETING DATE</u>	<u>PRESENTOR</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
Sept. 8, 2003	Greg Briggs	N.B. Forrest and Napoleonic Cavalry Tactics
Oct. 13, 2003	Steve Jackson	My Boys in Blue
Nov. 10, 2003	Patrick Field	A.P. Hill, A First Person Presentation
Dec. 8, 2003	Gerald Jones	Munfordville, The Forgotten Battle
Jan. 12, 2004	Nikki Schofield	The Perils of Spying by Belle Boyd
Feb. 9, 2004	Ken Knouf	Napoleon Collins
Mar. 8, 2004	Marshall Brinkman	Civil War Telegraphy
Apr. 12, 2004	Richard McMurry	A New Framework for Civil War History
May 10, 2004	Jeff Johnston	Recovery and Restoration of the USS Monitor
Jun. 14, 2004	Lloyd Hunter	18 th Indiana Infantry Regiment