



Battle Lines

Newsletter of the Civil War Round Table of Atlanta

Founded 1949

November 2009

567th Meeting

Leon McElveen, Editor

November Meeting

Reservations Are Required

PLEASE MAIL IN YOUR DINNER
RESERVATION CHECK OF **\$32.00** PER
PERSON TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

David Floyd
4696 Kellogg Drive, SW
Lilburn, GA 30047- 4408

TO REACH DAVID NO LATER THAN NOON ON
THE FRIDAY PRECEDING THE MEETING

E-mail and telephone reservations will
not be accepted

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Time: Cocktails 6:00 pm
Dinner 7:00 pm

Place: Ansley Golf Club
196 Montgomery Ferry Road

Price: \$32.00 per person

Program: *The Cairo*

Ed Bearss

Ed Bearss and The Cairo

Ed Bearss, frequent speaker, honorary life member and friend of our Round Table returns in November to present a program, as only he can, on his long-term effort to locate and recover of the Federal gunboat, USS Cairo.

While a historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, Ed, by studying contemporary documents and maps was able to plot the approximate site of the wreck. With the help of a pocket compass and iron bar probes, Bearss and two companions, set out to discover the grave of the *Cairo* in 1956. The three were reasonably convinced they had found the *Cairo*, but three years lapsed before divers brought up evidence to confirm the find. Local interest began to grow in 1960 with the recovery of the pilothouse, an 8" inch smoothbore cannon, and other artifacts well preserved by the Yazoo River mud. With financial support from the State of Mississippi, the Warren County and funds raised locally, efforts to salvage the gunboat began in earnest.

Following his service at Vicksburg, he was promoted in 1958 to Southeast regional historian. As popular interest in the Civil War increased with the centennial celebrations starting in 1961, Bearss was recognized as more knowledgeable on the battlefields than virtually anyone else. He was instrumental in developing new parks at Pea Ridge, Wilson's Creek, Stones River, Fort Donelson; battlefields around Richmond.

In 1966 Bearss was transferred to Washington, D.C. In 1981, he was named Chief Historian of the National Park Service, a position he held until 1994. With his retirement in 1995, he received the title Chief Historian Emeritus, which he holds to this day.

William J. Cooper in October

In is now clear why our October speaker, William J. Cooper, is considered the current authority on Jefferson Davis. He presented a refreshing new assessment of the performance of the Confederate Commander-In-Chief, His insight brought a new perspective to the common perception that Davis was responsible for a vast majority of the Confederacy's problems.

2009 - 2010 Program Preview

- December 12, 2009**.....Jim Lewis
Stones River
- January 12, 2010**..... Tim Smith
Shiloh
- February 12, 2010**..... Glenn LaFantasie
Twilight at Little Round Top
- March 9, 2010**.....James McPherson
Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief: Tried by War
RICHARD BARKSDALE HARWELL AWARD
- April 13, 2010** Jeffery Wert
The Stonewall Brigade vs. the Iron Brigade
- May 11, 2010** Robert E.L. Krick
The Peninsula Campaign
- June 8, 2010** Jack Davis
The Siege of Charleston

Upcoming Events

- November 1 & 15, 2009:** Artillery Demonstrations, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, 11:00 am, 12:00 pm, 2:00 pm, and 3:00 pm, , Free, For information: 770.427.4686 x0.
- November 14, 2009:** [Rescheduled] Living history, "Through the Ages: A Living History Timeline," at Swift Cantrell Park in Kennesaw. 10 am - 4 pm Saturday, noon - 4 pm Sunday and Monday. \$5/adult, \$3 ages 4 - 12. www.southernmuseum.org, hharris@kennesaw-ga.gov or 770-427-2117.
- November 16, 2009:** Lecture, "The Battle of Ringgold Gap", Dr. Keith Bohannon, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Visitor Center Auditorium, 7:00 pm, Free, For information: 770.427.4686 x0.
- November 19, 2009:** Lecture, "From Reluctant Confederates to Boisterous Rebels: Bartow County and Northwest Georgia During the Secession Crisis", Dr. Keith Herbert, Dalton State College, The James E. Brown Center, Room 105, 7:00-8:00 pm, Free, For information: 706.272.4452, hhowell@daltonstate.edu.

Dues are Due: Final Notice

If you haven't paid your dues, you will shortly be dropped from the roster. Do it today.

The Cairo

The *Cairo* was built in 1861 by James Eads and Co., Mound City, Illinois, under contract to the United States Department of War. She was commissioned as part of the Union Army's Western Gunboat Flotilla, naval Lieutenant James M. Prichett in command.

Cairo served with the Army's Western Gunboat Fleet, commanded by Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote, on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and their tributaries until transferred to the Navy in October 1862 with the other river gunboats.

Cairo was active in the occupation of Clarksville and Nashville, Tennessee, in February 1862. *Cairo* escorted mortar boats in the lengthy operations against Fort Pillow. Later in June 1862, *Cairo* joined seven other Union ships in a victory over eight Confederate gunboats off Memphis. That night Union forces occupied Memphis. *Cairo* then returned to patrol the Mississippi until November when she joined the Yazoo Expedition.

On 12 December 1862, while clearing mines from the river, *Cairo* struck a torpedo detonated by volunteers hidden behind the river bank and sank in twelve minutes; there were no casualties. *Cairo* became the first armored warship sunk by an electrically detonated mine.

Over the years the gunboat was soon forgotten. Shrouded in silt and sand, *Cairo* became a time capsule in which her priceless artifacts were preserved. Her whereabouts became a matter of speculation until Park Service Historian, Ed Bearss, found her in the late 1950's.

Officers for the 2009 -2010 Campaign:

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