Thanks to Randall Jimerson for his talk on The Private Civil War. Professor Jimerson kept the 75 members in attendance well entertained with his anecdotal and personal approach to Civil War. We look forward to having Dr. Jimerson appear in the future.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday April 11th, 1996 at the Yankee Diner. 6 PM Social Hour with dinner served at 7 PM. Swiss Steak or Roast Turkey served with Caesar Salad, Biscuits, fresh vegetables, potatoes or rice along with coffee or tea. $16.00 per person. Please write your menu choice, name and the name of any guests on the enclosed postcard and mail it ASAP

Program

For our April meeting a surprise guest. Richard Shenkman, author of such books as One Night Stands of American History, Legends, Lies & Cherished Myths of American History, I Love Paul Revere Whether He Rode or Not, will speak on How They Get History Wrong at Shrines, such as Abe Lincoln’s Birthplace, Salem Village & Lincoln’s Law Office in Springfield. Mr. Shenkman is currently working on a television series on US History.

Civil War Book Notes this month contains a guide to books and articles on Andersonville.

A BRAVE MAN

One of the Alabama regiments was fiercely attacked by a whole brigade in one of the battles around Richmond. The Alabamians, unable to withstand such great odds, were compelled to fall back about thirty or forty yards, losing, to the utter mortification of the officers and men, their flag, which remained in the hands of the enemy. Suddenly a tall Alabaman, a private in the color company rushed from the ranks across the vacant ground, attacked a squad of Yankees who had possession of the flag with his musket, felled several to the ground, snatched the flag from them, and returned safely back to his regiment. The bold fellow was of course immediately surrounded by his jubilant comrades and greatly praised on the spot, but the hero cut everything short by the reply "oh, never mind, Captain! Say no more about it, I dropped my whisky flask among the Yankees and fetched that back, and I thought I might just as well bring the flag along!"

NEW BOOKS

Two new collections of essays on Civil War related topics have appeared in local book stores. Gary W. Gallagher has edited a collection of 24 essays on Lee: The Soldier. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 $45.00. These essays cover the range of opinion on Lee’s generalship. An added feature is an annotated bibliography of the 200 best books on Robert E. Lee. James M. McPherson has published a collection of essays Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. $25.00. The fifteen essays included in this volume cover a wide range of topics from "Why the War Came, Lincoln, to Why the North Won, and War and Society. Both volumes would be valuable additions to a library.

Speakers Wanted

Pat Brady is looking for speakers for next year. If you would like to present a talk next year, either a
full program or a short topic, please give Pat a call at 689-8570 or 935-3648

**Preservation News**

Members can choose a new unique way to contribute to The Civil War Trust. American Forests, 8555 Plummer Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32219 is offering small trees grown from the seed of trees located at historic sites such as a honey locust tree from Gettysburg or a sycamore tree from Antietam. Each sale of these direct offspring tree provides a direct dollar benefit to the Civil War Trust. For a free full color booklet call 904-765-0727.

**This Month in the Civil War**

April 11, 1861 marked an important date in the Civil War as Gen. P. T. G. Beauregard demanded the surrender of Fort Sumter, which was rejected by the fort’s commanding officer Major Anderson. War commenced the next day. A year later Union forces captured Fort Pulaski, Georgia on April 11, 1862, tightening the blockade of Savannah. On April 11, 1863 troops from Longstreet’s corps began a month long siege of Union forces in Suffolk, Virginia, thereby missing the Chancellorsville campaign. In Little Rock Arkansas on April 11, 1864 a pro-Union governor was sworn into office. President Lincoln gave a short speech on the night of April 11, 1865 to an enthusiastic crowd from a window at the White House. It was to be his last public address.

**Upcoming Events**

Special speakers will highlight our last two meetings of the year. May 9, 1996 Suzanne Lebsock, author of the highly regarded *The Free Women of Petersburg* will talk on post war society. In a special meeting to be held June 18, a Tuesday night.

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**COMING HOME**

They are coming home, coming home
Brother and lover, father and son,
Friend and foe,—they are coming home
To rest, for their work is done.

They come from the hospital, picket and field—
From iron boat and frowning fort—
In silent companies, slowly wheeled,
In the rhythm of a doleful thought.

This was a father of women and men,
Gray-haired, but hale and strong of limb,
The bayonet flashed and flashed again,
And the old man’s eyes grew dim.

Here was a form of manly grace;
The bomb-shell groaning through the air
Drenched with his blood a pictured face
And a curl of silken hair.

This was a bright-eyed venturesome boy;
Back from the perilous picket-ground
They bore him, waked from his dream of joy
To a ghastly, fatal wound.

And thus for three days lingering,
He talked in wandering, rapid speech,
Of mother and home, and the cooling spring
His lips could almost reach.

They are coming home: but not as they went,
With the flying flag and stirring band;
With the tender word and message sent
From the distant waving hand.

Mark L. Bradley, author of the best selling new book *Last Stand in the Carolinas: The Battle of Bentonville*, will speak. That evening we will also be holding our 2nd silent auction of the year. If you would like to contribute please contact Tom McCarthy.

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**New Music**

Eastern National Park & Monument Association is offering a delightful new CD of Civil War Music performed by Jay Unger and Molly Mason, well known for their accompaniment of Ken Burns series *The Civil War*. *Civil War Classics* is a collection of 15 Civil War songs performed live at Gettysburg College and includes such traditional tunes as *Lorena*, *Hard Crackers* and the *Yellow Rose of Texas*. To order call toll free 1-800-821-2903 CD is #3-2246 and sells for $19.95 Cassette is #3-1444 and is $10.00.
"A Hard Place"

The recent broadcast of "Andersonville" on TNT may leave round table members looking for more information on the infamous prison camp and wondering how much of the TV movie was true. Yet the search for the "true" story of Andersonville was 130 years of controversy. As the noted historian William B. Hesseltine has written "no controversy ever evoked such emotions as the mutual recriminations between Northern and Southern partisans over the treatment of prisoners of war." Early in the war published accounts such as William C. Harris's Prison Life in the Tobacco Warehouse at Richmond, Ely's Journal of Alfred Ely: A Prisoner of War in Richmond and The Captivity of General Corcoran engaged the Northern public with their tales of mistreatment in Southern prisons. After the war the idea of a criminal conspiracy by Confederate authorities to mistreat Union prisoners was kept alive by politicians who waved the "bloody shirt" in their pursuit of political power and by ex-prisoners who wrote lurid accounts of their personal experiences to document their eligibility for pensions [Many of these accounts were just plagiarized from earlier books, so one falsehood fed another] Southern partisans answered with their own accusations and atrocity stories, blaming Union authorities for failure to carry an exchange of prisoners in 1864. As Hesseltine notes "an objective student must tread carefully in separating truth from propaganda, deliberate distortions from misunderstanding, malicious intent from tragic accident."

Booknotes this month recommends the following books and articles for those who would like to make up their own mind about regarding the truth of "Andersonville."

- **Andersonville.**
  MacKinlay Kantor.

  This novel won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, and was regarded by Henry Steele Commager and Bruce Catton as "the greatest Civil War novel of all time." Kantor relied heavily on the accounts of John McElroy and John Ransom listed below for his depiction of a living hell on earth. TNT based their movie on this novel.

- **Andersonville: A Story of Rebel Military Prisons, Fifteen Months a Guest of the So-Called Southern Confederacy. A Private Soldier's Experience in Richmond, Andersonville, Savannah, Millen, Blackshear and Florence by John McElroy.**
  Toledo: Published by D. R. Locke, 1879.

  Perhaps the best known account of Andersonville, this highly successful work by a member of the 16th Illinois Cavalry depicted the Confederate prison as a "monstrous tragedy of human depravity." The original edition may have sold over 600,000 copies and has been reissued many times. Sales do not equal to being factual however, as Ovid L. Futch in his book listed below labels this work as "preposterously exaggerated."

- **Andersonville Diary, Escape and List of the Dead, with Name, Co., Regiment, Date of Death and No. of Grave in Cemetery.**

  Perhaps the best known of the published diaries of a Union prisoner at Andersonville, this work has gone through numerous editions including a recent paperback reissued because of the TNT movie. In his forward to the 1963 edition Bruce Catton called this "one of the best of the many fine firsthand accounts that have come down from the Civil War. But readers beware!"

A devastating critique of the Ransom book which represents the so-called diary as almost a work of fiction, written to help secure the author a post war pension. Marvel documents numerous mistakes and errors in Ransom's account and labels it untrustworthy.


This recent history of Andersonville is a well researched and written account of the Confederate prison camp. Marvel based his book on extensive research in primary documents, diaries and letters rather than "spurious postwar recollections and diaries." The author paints a picture of Henry Wirz, the Confederate officer in command of the interior of the prison, as a man unable to handle a crisis caused by events out of his control. Virulent disease, severe shortages of vegetables, medical supplies, and other necessities all contributed to the numerous deaths at the prison. If you had to read just one book on Andersonville, this is the one to read.


Another good scholarly history of the Confederate prison camp. Marvel criticizes this work as relying too much on published postwar accounts.


Five diaries by Union prisoners at Andersonville. Futch considered Forbes' diary to be among the best ever published.

These accounts are more objective than many of the post war memoirs, due in part because Forbes, James and Smedley all died in captivity.


Twelve articles which focus on who was "really" responsible for the condition of the Union prisoners at Andersonville. Includes a useful bibliography of books and articles on the prison.


A special issue devoted to Civil War prisons. Also published in book form by Kent State University Press. The introductory essay by Hesseltine is an excellent summary of the controversies which have surrounded Civil War prisons. Essays included focus on Fort Warren, Rock Island Prison Barracks, Elmira Prison, & Johnson Island in the North and Andersonville, Libby and Cahaba prisons in the South.