

THE MINIE BALL GAZETTE

LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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Dedicated to Historic Preservation and Enlightenment

TRUST IN GOD BUT KEEP
YOUR POWDER DRY

MARCH 2002
ISSUE 016

NEWS FLASH ----

MARCH 13TH MEETING . . .

**PRESIDENT LINCOLN RETURNS
TO ADDRESS "The First Year of the War"
Held at McCracken Middle School.
DINNER RESERVATIONS MUST BE
RECEIVED BY MARCH 4TH.**

Mail enclosed reservation form and check.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

PRESIDENT LINCOLN RETURNS!!

On Wednesday evening, March 13, President Abraham Lincoln will make a triumphal return to the Lowcountry when Mr. Jim Getty, the nation's foremost Lincoln re-enactor, joins our Round Table for dinner and an enlightening talk. His subject will be: "Mr. Lincoln looks at the first year of the Civil War." Those of you who were fortunate enough to have seen Jim Getty last year will recall the striking similarity of appearance he bears to our most-revered president. Jim has made the study of Lincoln his life's work, and is so well versed in Lincoln's speeches and writings that he can talk knowledgeably in first-person on virtually any topic with which Lincoln was associated during his lifetime. We are hopeful that President Lincoln will be escorted to the podium by an Honor Guard of the 25th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

(as portrayed by our friends from the 11th South Carolina Volunteers).

Mr. Getty has graciously consented to participate in a "Morning After" traditional Round Table on Thursday morning, March 14. This event, in which Getty will be in "civilian dress" will provide our members an opportunity to get "up close and personal" with this remarkable re-enactor. It is an event not to be missed! To reserve your seat at the "Morning After" please call Bob Eberly at 785-5393.

CAR POOLING

For those interested in sharing rides, please see the enclosed car pool form.

MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS

March 13 - General Meeting - President Lincoln "Looks at the First Year of the War"

March 14 - "The Morning After" with James Getty - Held at Palmetto Electric on Rte 278 near Sun City

April 10 - General Meeting - Prof. Jack Davis on "Forming the Confederacy"

May 8 - General Meeting - Dennis Frye on "John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry"

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MAIL CALL

By Bob Eberly

While prior editions of Mail Call have concentrated on soldiers' letters to their friends and loved ones at home, those soldiers waited anxiously for word from their loved ones as well. Ann Colwell of Carlisle, Pennsylvania wrote regularly to her husband, Captain James Colwell. Her letter of July 31, 1861, reflects the fear and loneliness that were the daily lot of those left behind when their husbands and fathers went off to war:

Carlisle July 31st 1861

My very dear good husband,

Oh, I cannot tell you how thankful I felt for your letter which I received this afternoon, for I was feeling so anxious that my heart almost grew sick as the mail time came round. . . .

John brought two soldiers in to tea this evening and seemed perfectly delighted at offering them hospitalities & when I think of your ever being placed in the same situation I feel as though nothing was too good for them. John's military enthusiasm is at a high pitch; he tells me that . . . he is bound to be a soldier. The inducements to run at large are very great . . . so I have to devise many plans to keep my boy at home. He has noble traits of character but he requires careful training.

Mr. Harkness informed me that your Co. had gone within 10 miles of Manassas. . . . Everything almost seems to devolve on McClellan & I do pray that an all seeing God may give him wisdom. . . .

My dearest husband my whole being seems wrapt up in this movement where you are concerned & I cannot express my solicitude regarding you, but I can look to a Higher Power & rely on His strength and know that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge.

If this war was only among the things that are past & we were all united & happy in the enjoyment of peace. Nan, Daisy and James are well & very good. Nan is my little comforter.

My darling husband good night; write soon as you possibly can & always think of me as your sincerely devoted wife.

Annie

I cannot leave this space without filling it up with kisses. If you think you will go away I could leave the baby at Cousin W. Lossoners [?] a day in B. & go to see you for a few hours. I cannot give you up. . . .

Ann Colwell would have to give her husband up forever in September of 1862, when he was killed at the Battle of Antietam. She never remarried.

From David G. Colwell, *The Bitter Fruits* (Carlisle, Pa.: Cumberland County Historical Society, 1998), 76-77.

“CAMPAIGNING WITH LEE”

**Hosted by James I. “Bud” Robertson and
William C. “Jack” Davis**

**Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center, New
Cumberland, PA**

June 15-22, 2002

For the past nine years my wife, Joyce, and I have attended the oldest of the summer Civil War programs, “Campaigning with Lee,” a weeklong combination of education and recreation. We have thoroughly enjoyed the diverse programs and the friendships we have made. This year, there will be twenty talks by noted Civil War historians, two all-day tours to southern Pennsylvania sites, and a special tour of

the new National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg. We will also be renewing friendships with some one hundred attendees from across the United States. The price for this very special event is \$895 per person based upon double occupancy, or \$1195 for single occupancy. The price includes seven nights' lodging, meals, bus tours, etc. If you have any interest in joining us for this spectacular summer Civil War event, please give me a call at 671-5260 for further information.

by Jack Keller

APRIL NEWSLETTER
DEADLINE IS MARCH 15TH

**A LEGEND IN THE
LOWCOUNTRY**

by Bob Eberly

Our Lowcountry Civil War Round Table was honored (and extremely fortunate) to host a Living Legend at our most recent dinner meeting. The irrepressible Edwin C. Bearss came directly to Hilton Head from a speaking engagement with the Atlanta Round Table on Tuesday evening, spoke to our members Wednesday evening and left Thursday afternoon for an engagement in Savannah. Before leaving, Ed spent Thursday morning regaling twenty-four of us with a number of wide-ranging stories at a spectacular "Morning After" event at Palmetto Electric.

Bearss, the retired Chief Historian of the National Park Service, is a preeminent battlefield tour guide, having led the prestigious Smithsonian Civil War tours for years. He is also a prolific

author, having written the definitive history of Grant's Vicksburg Campaign. Ed spoke to us on the Battle of First Bull Run (or, as he put it, First Manassas for the Rebels in the room). He related the way in which the battle surged back and forth,

finally turning in the Confederates' favor when a little known Virginian named Thomas Jonathan Jackson led his men in a line of battle that persuaded another Southern officer to exclaim "Look! There stands Jackson like a stone wall! Rally on the Virginians!" The legend of Stonewall Jackson was born that July day in 1861.

The legend that is Ed Bearss was born over the course of countless battlefield tours, and he is still going strong as he nears eighty years of age. We were very fortunate to enjoy his company for a delightful (and educational) evening, and kudos are due our own Jack Keller for contacting Ed and making the necessary arrangements. Now that we have experienced "the Legend" first hand, we will be making every effort to secure his return next year.

THEY ALSO SERVED

by Carol J. Cutrona

Under the broiling July sun, hundreds of corpses, garbed in uniforms of blue or gray that were tattered and torn, lay strewn about the field of Gettysburg.

After three days of horrific battle, the armies had moved on, leaving behind the fallen. Some regiments, lacking able-bodied men and appropriate vehicles, were still removing their wounded seven days after the battle had ended. Meanwhile, the days and nights were filled with the screams and mutterings of thirsty, dying, men, also lying on the field.

The smell of decaying flesh permeated the air. The citizens of Gettysburg wrapped rags around their faces while some smeared camphor ointment beneath their nostrils, trying to mask the putrid smell.

Elizabeth Thorn, wife of Peter Thorn, the caretaker of Evergreen Cemetery in Gettysburg assumed her husband's duties after he enlisted in the Union Army. Elizabeth, the mother of three and six months pregnant with her fourth child,

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found herself responsible for burying 91 soldiers. She dug the shallow graves in the rocky ground, almost single handily.

Men from the town offered assistance, but they soon departed for they could not tolerate the foul smell of decaying flesh.

The stories of other women who worked during the battle, Elizabeth Salome Myers, Tillie Pierce and Mary Virginia "Jennie" Wade, the only civilian to be killed during the battle, will be told in a later column.

Today, the country is honoring those women and many others by creating a "Gettysburg Civil War Women's Memorial" to be placed near the Evergreen Cemetery gatehouse where Mrs. Thorn lived and worked. Sculptor Ron Tunison has been commissioned to create the seven foot tall bronze statue of Elizabeth Thorn which will serve as a memorial to all women who served in various capacities during the Battle of Gettysburg. Along with the placement of the statue, the entranceway and walkways leading from the Soldiers Cemetery sidewalk through the archway to the statue will be rehabilitated.

According to Brian A. Kennell, president of the "Gettysburg Civil War Women's Memorial Foundation", this will be one of the few monuments erected honoring women during various wars. A replica of the statue is shown below.

Contributions can be sent to Evergreen Cemetery, 799 Baltimore Street, Gettysburg, PA., 17325. Call (717) 334-4121 for further information.

DEADLINES PUBLISHED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NECESSARY DATES. PLEASE TRY TO ADHERE TO THEM, ESPECIALLY WHEN RESERVING DINNER/PROGRAM MEETINGS.

ATTENTION ALL RECRUITS

Any trooper who attempts to fall in at the general meeting and is not wearing his/her name tag will be obligated to hand over \$1 to the guard. Those failing to comply may be seated in the brig for the evening.

JUST KIDDING GUYS! But we really do need you to bring or wear your name tags to each meeting.

IMPORTANT

DON'T MISS THE MARCH 13TH MEETING, HELD AT MCCRACKEN MIDDLE SCHOOL. FOR "MORNING AFTER" PROGRAM RESERVATION, CALL BOB EBERLY, 785-5393.