



Fire On the Mountain

Bill Miller

For students of the Civil War, the Battle of South Mountain is replete with memorable images. General D.H. Hill, knowing he was outnumbered, standing atop the mountain watching the Army of the Potomac wend its way toward him over the national turnpike; confederates firing down the steep slopes from the cover of rocks and trees, waves of blue infantrymen surging across meadows and clearings as General George McClellan dramatically rose in his stirrups and pointed toward the smokey crest; and General Jesse Reno, badly wounded in the fight at Fox's Gap, foretelling his own death as he was carried to the rear.

For 129 years and 5 months the terrible fighting in that Maryland mountain has remained in the shadow of the titanic battle of three days later at Sharpsburg. Now, our speaker gives us the first, full-scale scholarly study of this important battle.

Mike Priest is well suited to educate us about this prelude to Antietam. He lives in Boonsboro, Maryland, literally in the morning shadow of the mountain. The small village at the western foot of the mount was a major hospital center in the last half of September 1862.

Mike ranks among the more successful and productive Civil War historians working today. His books include *Antietam: The Soldiers' Battle* and *From New Bern to Fredricksburg: Captain James Wren's Diary*. He speaks often to Round Tables and seminar groups and will be leading a tour--a tactical field study--of Antietam and South Mountain for the American Blue & Gray Association in May. His new book on the Battle of South Mountain is, unfortunately, still at the printer (we'd hoped it would be done in time for Mike's visit, but no such luck), and his next book will be on the Battle of the Wilderness.

Don't miss the opportunity to hear Mike at our April 9th meeting, 7:30 p.m. at the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

The Flag Pole: A Symbolic Act

For months now we have been talking about doing something to help support the Manassas National Battlefield Park and the overworked, underpaid, knowledgeable and handsome staff. We now have an excellent opportunity by purchasing a flagpole for the new visitor center. At the March meeting, the members present voted to commit the Round Table to raising the necessary money, about \$650. The new visitor center is not yet open to visitors, but it is, right now, park headquarters. The structures on the site used to be White Oak Nursery on Rte. 29 just west of the Brawner Farm.

This land, of course, was part of the controversial Stuart Hill tract that was to be developed into a shopping mall. Congress saved the nation from a terrible embarrassment and took the land, later compensating the owners, and the property is now part of the Battlefield Park. What we have the chance to do now is very symbolic. We can help raise the first flag over that property. Some of us worked long and hard to keep that land from being a mall parking lot, and the fight in Congress often left us in doubt as to who would win. Well, we won, and now our Round Table has the chance to perform the symbolic final act in the drama, raising the United States flag over the land the whole nation rose up to save. The "Battle of Third Manassas" is over, and we have the honor of celebrating the victory with a gift that will last for years.

We'd like everyone to donate. Gifts of \$10, \$15 and \$20 would be most welcome and will likely be needed to meet the required amount. A lack of donations may force us to raid the fund for Round Table normal operations, so please be generous. In the unlikely event that donations exceed costs, we will probably donate the surplus to Manassas National Battlefield Park, but we will discuss that if it happens.

When the pole is bought, paid for and in place, we will have a dedication ceremony, to which everyone will be invited. We expect the media will attend. Everyone who makes a donation of \$10 or more will receive a letter of thanks from Superintendent Apschnikat.

This is a great opportunity to do something for "our" battlefield and make our presence known to our community. Let's get our flag flying over our land. Please use the coupon below to mail your donation as soon as possible.

Flag Pole Donations

Name _____

Address _____

Member of Bull Run Civil War Round Table yes _____ no _____

Amount of donation \$10 _____ \$15 _____ \$25 _____ Other _____

Make checks payable to the Bull Run Civil War round Table. Be sure to indicate that the check is for the flagpole, and include this form with your donation so that you can be properly credited. Please mail donations to Martha Hendley, Treasurer, Bull Run Civil War Round Table, 5704 Featherbed Lane, Manassas, VA, 22110.

In Defense of Stonewall Jackson

61 people heard Joe Mitchell give a reappraisal of Stonewall Jackson's leadership in the Seven Days War. Joe reminded us that even though historians haven't looked too favorably upon Jackson's activities during the Seven Days, Lee never faulted Jackson. According to Joe, there was no need to. In spite of Stonewall's unfamiliarity with the terrain, in spite of his riding 100 miles shortly before the altercation and fighting many battles before it, in spite of a pass that was exceedingly difficult and unknown (including a broken down bridge), Jackson still performed admirably.

Joe argued that the blame must be placed on Jackson's commander and colleagues, including Lee and A.P. Hill. The arrangements made by the confederate headquarters were inadequate and didn't give Jackson nearly enough time to accomplish what he was asked to do. While none of the other divisions were confronted with real obstacles, Jackson on the left flank confronted them all, had to go farther, and possessed no maps. He also had to rebuild a bridge and confront the White Oak Swamp.

Lt. Colonel Mitchell's talk was aided by some very helpful maps and excellent analysis. He has the ability to place his listeners within the war, explaining what went wrong and why. If you missed the meeting, you unfortunately missed an excellent one.

Fall In for Brandy Station!

Armando Mancini

FALL IN FOR BRANDY STATION!!! Bring your checkbook to the next meeting and enlist for the May 16th field trip. As of 23 March, only 9 people have joined the campaign and we need many more to cover expenses. For your convenience, we will have a special booth at the April meeting so you can sign up easily and quickly. Jay Corbalis will be on duty at the booth so gallop directly over to him when you first arrive and get it over with. We'll give you other details about the tour at that meeting.

Civil War Trading Cards

Tuff Stuff, Inc., has produced a new 100-card Famous Battles of the Civil War set. The series was researched and written by Virginia author and historian, David D. Ryan. It is the first of a five-part series that will eventually cover 28 battles and when completed will offer a comprehensive look at the war.

In addition to the 100-card set, Tuff Stuff has also produced a 10-card limited edition set and an advertising card featuring young Civil War drummer boy Johnny Clem. All three items are available in hobby shops across the U.S. or may be purchased directly from Tuff Stuff by calling 1-800-229-4487. The 100-card set retails for \$12.95, the 10-card limited edition for \$7.95 and the advertising card for \$9.95. Bulk rates are also available.

Gettysburg Eyesore

In August of 1990, President Bush signed P.L. 101-377, "Gettysburg National Military Park Boundary Revision." P.L. 101-377 directed the National Park Service to acquire certain in-holdings within the Gettysburg Battlefield boundaries. It also authorizes the monies necessary for the Park Service to buy properties, but sufficient funds have not yet been appropriated by Congress.

The National Park Service has publicly announced in the national media its determination to buy and tear down the infamous, long standing commercial tourist attraction, the "national tower," which, as a result of P.L. 101-377, is now entirely within the Gettysburg Battlefield boundaries.

The Bull Run Civil War Round Table has been asked to write our Senators and Congressman and urge them to appropriate the funds necessary for the National Park Service to buy and remove the tower from the historic Gettysburg Battlefield scene. We have also been asked to write the Park Service to move more expeditiously in its efforts to get rid of this tower.

Confederate Courage

The following was written by David E. Johnston of the 7th Virginia Infantry Regiment, in his book, *The Story of a Confederate Boy in the Civil War* (this excerpt is presented as proof that Bil Miller has at least one book in his library that views the north as the "bad guys"). It shows the day to day sacrifices required of men serving in the war, and the pathos surrounding the final days of the skirmish.

From the time Amelia Court House was left at noon on the 4th until Thursday, the 6th (of April 1865) the close of the battle of Sailor's Creek, there was scarcely an hour, day or night, that we were not engaged in skirmishing with the enemy. They were on the flank, and everywhere, after our beleaguered troops. We were forced to halt and form line of battle, once or more a square, to prevent capture. The march was necessarily slow on account of the wagon and artillery trains, which moved at a snail's pace through the mud, drawn by famished animals, which had had but little food for days. While soldiers may live for a time on enthusiasm, mules and horses must have corn or oats. As for ourselves, we were without food, save a little parched corn, when we could stop long enough to parch it; otherwise we took it raw, shelling it from the cob and eating it as we marched. The small ration issued to us at Deep Creek had only been sufficient for one square meal. Many of the men were overcome with fatigue, hunger and want of sleep, some actually going to sleep walking along, stumbling and falling in the road.

No food was to be had in the country along the road upon which we were marching, as the people had been stripped of everything in the way of food by those who had preceded us. It was unsafe to venture far from the command on account of the enemy's cavalry now on all the roads, and many of our men were made prisoners by going away from the line of march in search of food. We halted for rest but once during the night of Wednesday, the 5th, then only for a few minutes, in line of battle, for the enemy was close upon us.

It was the general expression that if all of our marchings, sufferings, hardships, privations and sacrifices for all of the preceding years of the war were summed up, shaken together and pressed down, they would not equal those we were now undergoing on this tramp.

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