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## DR. CRAIG SYMONDS

- presents -

### *The River War*

May 15th, 2012

6:40 PM Tuesday

Civic Center Library (Auditorium)

Dr. Craig L. Symonds is Professor Emeritus of History at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. The first person to win both the Naval Academy's "Excellence in Teaching" award (1988) and its "Excellence in Research" award (1998), he also served as History Department chair from 1988 to 1992, and received the Department of the Navy's Superior Civilian Service medal three times. He was Professor of Strategy at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island (1971-1974) and at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, England (1994-1995).

Symonds is the author or editor of 25 books, including prize-winning biographies of Joseph E. Johnston (1992), Patrick Cleburne (1997) and Franklin Buchanan (1999), as well as *The American Heritage History of the Battle of Gettysburg* (2001). *Decision at Sea: Five Naval Battles that Shaped American History* won the Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt Prize for Naval History in 2006. His 2008 book *Lincoln and His Admirals: Abraham Lincoln, The U.S. Navy, and The Civil War* won the Barondess Prize, the Laney Prize, the Lyman Prize, the Lincoln Prize, and the Abraham Lincoln Institute Book Award. He also won the Nevins-Freeman Prize in 2009. His latest work is *The Battle of Midway*, published by Oxford University Press (October 2011).

**Meets @ Civic Center Library**  
3839 N Drinkwater Blvd Scottsdale  
on the 3rd Tuesday of the month  
6:45 PM—8:45 PM

.September thru May (no meeting December)

.\$35 Annual Dues (individual)

.\$45 Annual Dues (family)

EVERYONE WELCOME



### DID YOU KNOW?

.The U.S.S. Monitor was the first warship to have flush toilets.

.The mascot of the 6th Iowa was a mongrel named "Jeff Davis".

.In the years immediately after the Civil War, the largest public health expenditure for the State of Mississippi, were for prosthesis to replace missing limbs .



## FROM WES' DEN:

I hope you have enjoyed the long running Wes' Den. I can't even guess how long ago that started; but I know the den door is closing. I still remember when 10 people was a good attendance and 24 was still a goal for next year. I am so pleased to see the membership at 247, AND growing. The 16 years as president was a labor of love and I appreciate your warm support.

Our last speaker, David Duncan, from the Civil War Trust, does not know of any Round Table our size except the Chicago unit (500). So, we are a solid #2 in size in the world of Civil War Round Tables. I call that wonderful. Everyone should be rightfully proud of this and appropriately the "new blood" officers are sure they can achieve a 300 member base and build on that. Publicity is at an all time high, and what is the real purpose of all this?

Since 2004, \$13,333 has been turned in for battlefield preservation. We were formed in 1978, and donations were made; but concise records are lacking. I am sure we can honestly say we have passed a \$15,000 total. This is a real validation for being!

Charles Madigan, Treasurer, just called to tell me that the May National Geographic magazine has a good Civil War article. That is always a real positive.

In closing, let me say that I am still looking forward to many more good lectures, and I am serving on our board for a 2 year term, God willing and I Remain Your Most Obedient Servant,

*WES SCHMIDT*

## NEXT SEASON'S LINEUP

Sept 18...**Dave Shultz**

*Gettysburg July 2nd: Attack and Defense of the Union Center on Cemetery Ridge. A Tragic Waste of Young Men & for What?*

Oct 16...**Richard McMurry**...TBA

Nov 20...**Greg Mertz**...TBA

Jan 15...**Ed Bearss**

*The War in the Trans-Mississippi: Did it Really Matter?*

Feb 19...**Rev. Bob Macfarland**

*Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain*

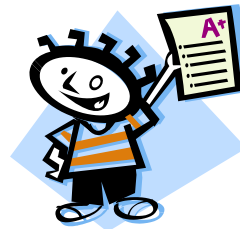
Mar 19...**Clark "Bud" Hall**

*The Battle of Brandy Station: The Beginning of the End of the War*

Apr 16...**Gail Stephens**

*Lt. General Jubal Early: Lee's Bad Old Man*

May 21...**Gordon Rhea**...TBA



## CIVIL WAR ESSAY CONTEST

The Scottsdale Civil War Round Table has partnered with the Scottsdale Unified School District to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War by sponsoring a Civil War essay contest to promote awareness of the Civil War among Scottsdale's middle and high school students. Winners have been chosen and will be announced at the May 15th meeting. **A BIG THANK YOU** goes out to Scottsdale Civil War Round Table members, **Janet and John Cotton** who helped sponsor the High School prize winners and **George Mitchell**, the middle school winners.

## MAY MEETING START TIME



**6:40 PM**

Lots going on at the May meeting...student essay contest winners will be presented as well as voting on the new slate of officers to carry us into the future. PLUS...one of the foremost Civil War experts in the country..**Dr. Craig Symonds**. You won't want to miss this one!

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We are happy to report we now have 247 members and of those members, 102 have agreed to receive their *Grapeshot* by e-mail. We are hoping the remainder will get on board and agree to receive their *Grapeshot* by e-mail, saving the SCWRT money in postage costs. Money we save goes to battlefield and historic preservation as well as obtaining quality speakers.

## UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Elections will be held at the May meeting for the following slate of officers for a two year term, pending approval by our membership:

President: John Bamberl  
Vice President: Dean Becraft  
Secretary: Karen Becraft  
Treasurer: Charles Madigan





## Proclaiming Emancipation

by  
Mary Lannon  
SCWRT Member

Abraham Lincoln would write nothing as president that would be more celebrated or considered more important than his Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. Frederick Douglass, the black abolitionist who had been one of Lincoln's harshest critics, considered the Proclamation to be "the greatest event of our nation's history." Lincoln himself reportedly referred to the Proclamation as "the central act of my administration" in 1864. Since his assassination, Lincoln's worldwide reputation as the Great Emancipator has become legendary. Although, as Douglas Wilson has noted, legends emphasize symbolism and simplicity at the expense of complexity and fact, Lincoln's central role in the momentous ending of slavery in the United States is impossible to ignore.

Despite this, the text of the Emancipation Proclamation differs considerably from Lincoln's other famous writings. The Proclamation struck the legal shackles from four million black slaves and set the nation toward the total abolition of slavery. However, today it is probably best known for what it did not do, beginning with its failure to rise to the level of eloquence Lincoln achieved in the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address. In the 1960s, Karl Marx (having written a few proclamations of his own) stated that the Emancipation Proclamation reminded him of "ordinary summonses sent by one lawyer to another on the opposing side." In addition, despite the profound importance of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address were the writings of Lincoln chosen for quotation on the Lincoln Memorial. The most famous and often quoted criticism of the language of the Emancipation Proclamation came from Richard Hofstadter in 1948, who wrote (in a rather scathing account of Lincoln) that the Proclamation "had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading." Hofstadter argued that the Emancipation Proclamation accomplished nothing because it was intended to accomplish nothing beyond its propaganda value.

Yet Hofstadter was not the only reader of the Emancipation Proclamation to wonder why the language is so bland and legalistic. The answer, as

William Miller has so succinctly stated, is that the Emancipation Proclamation reads like a legal document because it is a legal document. It does not carry the lift of a moral argument because it is not making a moral argument. Lincoln was not making an argument at all; he was making law. The Proclamation was not giving inspiration, it was giving an order. As such, the legal and lawyerly prose was not a literary or moral failure but a necessity. The Proclamation was at its core an act of law in a time of war. It was a military order instructing military commanders to liberate slaves in conquered territory, amid the strong resistance of the enemy. The tedious specificity and carefully delimited areas in which slaves were to be set free was central to Lincoln's justification for issuing the Proclamation. As a military chief he could command, on his own authority, the freeing of the slaves in states of rebellion as a necessary military measure. He could not, therefore, do the same in states and areas that were not in rebellion.

As Douglas Wilson has recognized, the Emancipation Proclamation had to be emotionally chaste. It had to avoid words and phrases that would appeal only to partisans and be land mines for opponents. The paradox was that Lincoln's role in ending slavery was a moral accomplishment that required he not admit that it was a moral accomplishment. Although Lincoln did consider slavery to be a moral wrong, he did not believe that presidents could simply assert as law their own moral convictions. In a letter written to a group of Kentucky leaders in April 1864, Lincoln wrote, "I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon the judgment and feeling [that slavery was wrong]" but he understood "that in ordinary course of civil administration this oath [of the Presidency] even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery." Lincoln believed not only that his oath of office did not permit him to act upon his judgments and feelings, but that it explicitly forbade him to do so. The oath did, however, require him to defend the United States, and when events made such an extraordinary action necessary as a measure of defense, he chose emancipation by federal decree as an instrument of war. As such, the Emancipation Proclamation had to be composed with the understanding that every syllable would likely be subject to the most concentrated legal scrutiny by the federal court system.

Readers of the Emancipation Proclamation

may also ask whether it actually did anything, or whether it was merely a puff of political air, or propaganda, as Hofstadter claimed. This argument is made easier by the fact that the Proclamation limited emancipation only to the states or parts of states still in rebellion, and did not include the slaves in the four loyal slave states; Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Critics have argued that the Proclamation freed no one because it applied where the Union had no power and did not apply where it did have power. However, as Allen Guelzo has reminded us, laws are not any less as laws merely because circumstances render them inoperative at a given place or time. Lincoln may not have had the power available to him to free every slave in the Confederacy, but he did have the authority to do so, and in law the authority is as good as the power. The Proclamation turned the Union armies into armies of liberation wherever they advanced. Allen Guelzo has also reminded us that the proof is in the pudding: No slave declared free by the Emancipation Proclamation was ever returned to slavery once he or she had made it to the safety of Union-held territory. Without the legal freedom conferred first by the Emancipation Proclamation, no runaway slave would have remained self-emancipated for very long. Without the Proclamation, the Confederacy would have retained legal title to its slaves, even in defeat, and there is little to suggest that Southerners would not have been willing to reclaim as many of their self-emancipated runaways as possible. William Miller has recognized that by its inescapable symbolism the Proclamation encouraged acts of self-liberation even in areas where the Union army already had control and the Proclamation technically did not apply. In this regard, its symbolic significance completely outran its technical application. Despite the fact that it lacked moral grandeur and was filled legalistic prose, the moral reach of the Emancipation Proclamation far exceeded its legal grasp.

Readers might also ask whether Lincoln issued the Proclamation only to ward off European intervention or to inflate Union morale. However, if these were Lincoln's primary concerns, the Emancipation Proclamation would likely have been the worst method at the worst time to accomplish either of these things. Abroad, there was as much danger that the Emancipation Proclamation would trigger foreign intervention as there was that it would discourage it. Those in England and France, unsympathetic to the Union, without close awareness of the fugitive slave controversy or the actual American conditions, and from their own colonial experiences and ideologies inclined to fear mass insurrections, read something in

the Emancipation Proclamation that many Americans did not. They seized on the order that the military would recognize and maintain the freedom of emancipated slaves to insist that Lincoln was proposing slaves revolt and that the Union army support their insurrection. The army was not to "repress" but to "maintain" "any efforts" the slaves would make for their "actual freedom." Many in Europe took this to mean a Union-supported slave insurrection. A statement in the London Times read that "He [Lincoln] will appeal to the black blood of the African; he will whisper of the pleasures of spoil and of the gratification of yet fiercer instincts; and when the blood begins to flow and shrieks come piercing through the darkness...he will rub his hands and think that revenge is sweet." Lincoln was also aware of the political effect of the Proclamation at home. He knew that for all he hoped the Proclamation would forestall the generals and put the Union case unreservedly on the side of the angels, it might just as easily convince them to accelerate plans for an intervention or put Lincoln's administration on losing side. Indeed, Republicans had lost ground in the 1862 elections, although they retained their majorities with reduced margins in Congress. The Republicans had lost the governor's seat in New York and lost also in Illinois, New Jersey, and Wisconsin. However, these political situations both abroad and at home made no dent in Lincoln's determination to sign the Proclamation in January 1863.

What Hofstadter could not have realized when criticizing the Emancipation Proclamation for having "all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading" was that a bill of lading was a surprisingly important commercial document in the antebellum economy. In 1846, P.C. Wright wrote that "there is no one instrument or contract used in commercial transactions made to subserve so many various, useful, and important purposes, as the Bill of Lading." Wright wrote that a bill of lading "is defined to be an instrument signed by the master of a ship, or by someone authorized to act in his behalf, whereby he acknowledges the receipt of merchandise on board his vessel, and Engages...to deliver the same at the port of destination in safety..." If this is what the Emancipation Proclamation was intended to do, then Hofstadter was offering Lincoln more of a compliment than he intended. Allen Guelzo has eloquently stated that although it may have had little more moral grandeur than a bill of lading, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was nonetheless a bill that itemized the destinies of four million human beings, bound in the way of danger for the port of American freedom.